

Strabo and the Invention of Turdetania^{*}

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The work of recent years has been fundamental in unravelling key aspects for understanding the perception of ancient geographers and historians on the Iberian Peninsula, since it first appeared in the historical and cultural horizon of the Greeks. Strabo's book 3 has been central in achieving this aim, because it is a complete source, which synthesizes this image, as well as the entire tradition preceding it, up to the first century AD. It constitutes a *unicum*: there is no other ancient text on Iberia, which equals it in information or potential for analysis.¹

This chapter will not only focus on the particularities of Strabo's description of Turdetania. It will question whether this literary construct may also be explained as a redefinition of Roman imperial ideology and, subsequently, of romanization in Hispania.

The image of Tartessos as a lost and legendary civilization, with which the Greeks developed a special relationship of *amicitia* towards the seventh century BC, was an idea created by the geographer from Amaseia, which has been enthusiastically adopted by scholars in Spain and abroad from the nineteenth century onwards.² Hence, Turdetania, as a corollary of Tartessos, is also a part of Strabo's carefully crafted narrative.³

From the beginning of book 3, Strabo clearly attempts to establish a comparison between Turdetania–Baetica and the remainder of the Iberian territories (although these varied in degrees of transition between barbarianism and civilization). The first is the ideal example of a harmonious coexistence between nature and culture (a central principle of Greek geography), allowing for the expansion of a hitherto unparalleled *politeia* or political culture, understood in a broad sense, throughout the recently conquered western Mediterranean. From ancient times, the region recorded its laws and history in verse (in contrast to other Iberians, who used writing, but were illiterate)–Strab. 3.1.6–, implying a level of 'political organization' and 'historical consciousness', which increased gradually in time, leading to a successful development of urbanism, the economy and culture, later to be encountered and reinforced by the Romans, Gades being the region's paradigmatic city–Strab. 3.5.3 ss.–. According to Strabo, Turdetania was the most prosperous territory of the oecumene (Strab 3.1.6; 3.2.15), due to the association of: optimal natural conditions (the balanced combination

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¹ In general: Cruz Andreotti, García Quintela, and Gómez Espelosín 2015; especially: Cruz Andreotti, 44–66. Recently Lowe 2017, 69–78.

² Cruz Andreotti 2010, 17–53.

³ Cruz Andreotti 2007, 251–270.

of farming resources in the valley, sea wealth and mining activity in the mountains—Strab. 3.2.6 to 9); communications (a spacious river structuring the entire territory—Strab. 3.2.3 to 5—and a close knit network of cities and river and sea ports, later expanded by Roman roads—Strab. 3.2.1-2—); and the character of the Turdetanians.⁴ All the other lands in Iberia (from the coast of the Spanish Levant to those recently conquered by Augustus in the Cantabrian mountains, including the Celtiberian or Vaccean plateaus, Lusitania and Gallaecia), required, to a greater or lesser extent, some kind of Roman intervention to overcome the obstacles posed by barbarianism and the contradictions caused by varying degrees of civilizing development (cf. Strab. 3.4.20). Faced with the isolation caused by dispersed populations and a mountainous geography, the Romans grouped the natives in new cities along well communicated valleys—Strab. 3.3.5; 3.4.9.⁵ In order to dominate the wild character of some communities, these had to be defeated and pacified—Strab. 3.4.5; 3.4.17. All were forced to adopt cultivated lifestyles—Strab. 3.3.5; 3.3.7 and 8. So as to overcome the poverty inherent to ways of life based on plunder and warfare, communities were organized around large urban centres, which distributed and consumed the products of agriculture, herding and commerce. The history of these territories began with the Roman conquest;⁶ that of Turdetania, on the other hand, was traced to the times of Heracles, when the Greeks and Phoenicians navigated its coastline, constituting the seed of its civilization.⁷

The role played by Tartessos in Strabo's narrative is thus clarified. As has been pointed out in several occasions, it was Strabo, who constructed the entire mythology surrounding this culture:⁸ from its exclusively indigenous origin, to its association with the arrival of heroes (Heracles, Odysseus...) and Phoenician and Greek colonists, as a place of unparalleled wealth and prosperity, which forged the hard-working, cultured, refined, and hospitable character of the Turdetanians. In order to create this image, Strabo combined ancient sources (from Stesichorus to Anacreon, and Herodotus—Strab. 3.2.11; 3.2.14), with more recent ones (Eratosthenes, Polybius, Posidonius, Artemidorus, etc.—Strab. 3.2.11 and *passim*—, Timosthenes—Strab. 3.1.7—). He selected the best of Homer, as an informant on these lands during the Archaic period—Strab. 3.2.12 and 13—, associating this source especially with the Herculean myth—Strab. 3.2.13— (basing himself on the existence of the Heracleion of Gades, the ancient Eritia —Strab. 3.2.11—); Strabo even established broad equivalences between Tartessos / Baetis / Turdetania, in the Hellenistic scholarly fashion (Strab. 3.1.6 and 3.2.11). Everything was aimed at framing Tartessos / Turdetania / Baetica as the best example of the possibilities achievable by romanization, aided by such incomparable natural and

⁴ Castro Páez in this same volume.

⁵ Cf. Strab. 3.4.13 regarding the discussion between Polybius and Posidonius on the extension of inland cities in the Iberian world before the arrival of Rome. Contrary to them, Strabo believed the existence of urban centres in the Celtiberian world before the arrival of Rome was not possible.

⁶ Ciprés Torres 2012.

⁷ For the barbarian / civilization 'opposition' found in Strabo's work, see: Dandrow 2017, 113–124; Vliet 2003, 257–272. Especially: Cruz Andreotti, and Ciprés Torres 2011, 199–213; Cruz Andreotti 2014; for the entire geographical context before Strabo: Cruz Andreotti 2016a, 274–297; Cruz Andreotti, Le Roux, and Moret 2006 and 2007.

⁸ Cruz Andreotti 1993 and 2010.

historical conditions. Tartessos invested Turdetania with 'historical legitimacy', and therefore Strabo saw the need of contextualizing it in the past.⁹

The truth is that Turdetania (or Turdetanians) is a place name / ethnonym, which is not recorded before the Roman occupation.¹⁰ The explicit link with the Guadalquivir Valley only appears in Strabo and Ptolemy.¹¹ While virtually nothing is known of Strabo's sources, these are generally considered to be Polybius, Posidonius and Artemidorus, and to a lesser degree, Eratosthenes and Timosthenes, although it is impossible to agree with any certainty on who Strabo bases Turdetania's geographical adscription and its geo-historical link to Tartessos.¹² Turdetania does not appear in Posidonius or Artemidorus either, while Polybius, Strabo's other model, does not associate it with central Baetis, but with the Turdulian periphery. Hence, as suggested by Moret, the Turdetania / Turdetanians found in the sources—from Cato onwards—either refer to a city / territory / community in the environs of Saguntum, or, more probably, to the periphery of the Guadalquivir Valley (either the Saltus Castulonensis or the area of the mid-upper Guadiana River, linked to the south-western Celts, the Turduli from Extremadura or the southern-most Celtiberians near Carpetania).

Strabo's description of Turdetania is not completely homogenous. On one hand, it is an area virtually limited to the lower and mid-Baetis Valley, the core of Baetica province. Although, there is another Turdetania, *lato sensu*, which includes the area 'beyond' the Guadiana, towards the Celtic-Lusitanian territory (Strab. 3.2.1), the Bastulo-Phoenician coast on both sides of the Strait of Gibraltar (Strab. 3.1.7 and 8; 3.2.1), and the southern limits of Bastetania and Carpetania, in the surroundings of Castulo (Strab 3.2.1; 3.2.11). At times, it seems Strabo also echoed the peripheral Turdetania just spoken of. However, the existence of a central, ethnic territory does not exclude the possibility of other, similar territories being harboured inside its limits, specifically: Bastetanians, Bastuli, Turduli, Celts, coastal Phoenicians... This 'great Turdetania', was also spoken of by Ptolemy. In Strabo, both Turdetanias coexist, although he places more emphasis on the Turdetania, which is more ethnically cohesive and geographically homogenous. Located around the Baetis valley, it was comprised by a string of cities, roads and villas, historically traceable in legends and

⁹ If certain hypotheses proposed in the last years, are proven to be true, it may very well be that 'Tartessian' is an ethnonym, used as a synonym for western Phoenicians, which was used well into the Roman period, and understood both by Greeks and Romans. Vid. Álvarez Martí-Aguilar 2007, 2010 and 2012a.

¹⁰ Pierre Moret and F.J. García Fernández in this volume.

¹¹ *Ibidem* and Moret 2011, 235-248.

¹² It is very significant that the Tartessos in Eratosthenes coincides with the Gaditanian area of influence between Calpe and Eritia, also inhabited by the Turduli (*apud* Strab. 3.2.11)—contrary to Artemidorus, who prefers to 'reinforce' the role of Cádiz—*ibidem* and *P.Artemid.* 4.12—; it is also remarkable how the 'so called' Strabonian, when speaking of the Tartessos River, places the homonym city at its river mouth, then inhabited by the Turduli (Strab. 3.2.11 = Ptol. 2.4.9), although Polybius (*apud* Strab. 3.1.6) located them to the north of the Turdetanians, leading to question what 'others' (Strabo?) understood as the 'the same people' (*súnoikos*), simply based on homophony, in order to avoid geographical confusion. It seems that Turdetania is presented in its broadest sense, including the Phoenician (and Turduli) area, which in Strabo's eyes (and Eratosthenes' and perhaps Polybius') coincided with the region of the (ancient) Tartessians, who are also the western Phoenicians (let us not forget they were the discoverers of Iberia— Strab. 3.2.13); a definition which is not explicitly accepted by Strabo. See extensively in Álvarez Martí-Aguilar 2012b.

historical testimonies regarding Tartessos, in sum, an ideal of descriptive geography, which, in modern terms, attempted at joining nature and culture harmoniously (Figures 1.1 and 2.2).

[PLACE FIGURE 1.1 HERE]

Fig. 1.1. The Iberia of Strabo (courtesy of Counillon 2007, 77).

Clearly, this Strabonian Turdetania / Turdetanians is a literary construct, as is a good part of ancient ethnography; from an outsider's point of view, it defines, bounds and describes a people or community. As much as it may disappoint nineteenth century essentialist philology or most of the twentieth century protohistoric archaeology,¹³ an ancient geographer or historian was not interested and was not able to define a culture or an ethnic group in terms, which would be understood by us today. They were not interested, and even so, were not able to do so, because their identity markers were completely different to ours; we do not even know if they were reflected in the 'other'. Observing and assessing a community according to their own cultural and political parameters did not generate any contradiction, i.e., there was no other perspective than their own, and in broad terms, no other identity than that of the observer. A perfectly demonstrated ancient *ethnos* could fulfil any nineteenth century illusion regarding what constituted a 'people', a 'language' or a 'culture'.¹⁴ Broken the old paradigm, the challenge faced by ethnohistory is, not only to find cultural parameters and historical circumstances to explain the appearance and development of specific literary ethnic groups, but also the elements which defined ancient communities at a determined moment and place.

The Strabonian model described for Turdetania is too coherent and articulated to actually respond, even slightly, to reality. As has been exposed by F.J. García Fernández or E. Ferrer Albelda (also in this volume), there did not exist a 'Turdetanian culture' or an equivalent *ethnos*. The simple identification between 'culture' and 'people' is no longer maintained by anyone, moreover, for a territory with such a long and complex history and ethno-cultural development, and with no genuine 'identities' or unifying ethnic groups.¹⁵ If forced to choose, the reality would have been much closer to the ethnic melting pot, which is revealed in parts of Strabo's work, resulting from the sum of many peoples, rather than the stereotypical image of Tartessos / Turdetania / Baetica.

In sum, what constituted Strabo's Turdetania in reality? Why was it created and for what purpose? These questions should be answered from alternative approaches, since internal readings of the text have already been exhausted.

Let us start by highlighting a point, which has not been sufficiently dealt with:¹⁶ the remarkable presence in southern Iberia of the author Asclepiades of Myrlea, as narrated by

¹³ Bellón Ruiz, and García Fernández 2009, 51–74; García Fernández, and Bellón Ruiz 2009, 75–132; García Fernández, and Fernández Götz 2010, 47–78.

¹⁴ Cardete del Olmo 2004, 15–29; Prontera 2003, 103–120; Cruz Andreotti 2016b.

¹⁵ As will be demonstrated ahead.

¹⁶ Very partially in the works of F. Gascó (1987; 1994), M. Salinas (1994), L.A. García Moreno (1979 = 2001; 2011); recently: Prontera 2017.

Strabo himself (3.4.3 = T4 *BNJ* 697 Trachsel). He was a grammarian and a philologist, originating, like Strabo, from Pontus (Bythina), a disciple of Apollonius of Rhodes. According to Strabo, he disembarked in Turdetania after a period in Rome, before the arrival of Artemidorus or Posidonius, closer to the late second century BC, than to the early first century BC. Like many Greeks, he lived off his teachings and the dissemination of his works among the young leaders of the Mediterranean power. In his masterpiece, *de Nestoris*, he interpreted the brief reference to Nestor's cup in the *Iliad* (11.632-37)—only five verses!!—as an allegoric allusion to the heavens, the stars and a spherical universe. He is also known for a *Bithyaniká* in ten books, where after narrating the country's mythical and heroic origins (evidently Greek), he went on to describe its geographical and natural peculiarities.¹⁷

Apparently, he did the same in his *Periegesis* on the communities of Iberia, the title of which reminds of the old works of the first Ionic writers. There are allusions to this work in Strabo's book 3. These include references to issues directly associated to the presence of Homeric heroes in Iberia (not only Turdetania), although more generally, in the use of homophones and etymologies to establish analogies between mythical and real geographies, or between the ancient and the new. Asclepiades is no doubt the source for references to a city, Odysseia, which lay behind Abdera (the current Adra, Almería) and to the remains of a temple of Athena, which still held votive offerings of the hero's passing (Strab. 3.2.13; 3.4.3 = F7 *BNJ* 697 Trachsel); there is also a reference to the Heraclean colonization, and Strabo attributes the foundation of cities in the north-west to diverse Trojan heroes: Helenus, Amphilocheus, Ocelas... (all in Strab. 3.4.3 = F7 *BNJ* 697 Trachsel); finally, his concern for the different names given to Iberia from the remote past (Strab. 3.4.19 = F8 *BNJ* 697 Trachsel) is also part of a general resource to etymology throughout the work. It is very probable that the derivation Tartarus- Tartessos also came from the same source (Strab. 3. 2.12), as well as the references to the ancient and proverbial Turdetanian culture (Strab. 3.1.6). Although Strabo does not explicitly acknowledge it, it may well be that most of his elaborate identification between the Tartessian past and the Turdetanian present came from Asclepiades.¹⁸ He is not the only one to address the heroic origins of ancient communities, which are interpreted to convenience. It is from Posidonius and Artemidorus, who presumably made use of Asclepiades, that Strabo came in contact with the author, although they used the source from a more critical perspective.¹⁹ In sum, a classical model for the reconstruction of origins is presented, where a foundational hero names and founds cities, conquers and organizes territories, a history, which is preserved in etymology and even in the archaeological record, reinforcing the authority and validity of the literary tradition.²⁰ Asclepiades introduces, as a

¹⁷ For the works of Asclepiades vid. L. Pagani (2007), especially the introductory chapter.

¹⁸ Polybius, one of Strabo's authors of reference, is very critical with the use of marvellous pasts in historical works (for example: Polyb. 16.12.9); he does not mention Tartessos, although he does locate the Turduli next to the Turdetanians.

¹⁹ References to one and the other are continuous (vid. the excessively descriptive work of Morr 1926). For the relation between Asclepiades, Posidonius, Artemidorus and Strabo vid. Trotta (1999), who sharply critiques the positions of Lasserre and García y Bellido on Strabo's sources (in the editions / translations of the geographer).

²⁰ The recent synthesis of Martínez-Pinna (2008), with new analyses, should be considered jointly with the known work of García y Bellido (1948).

novelty, a foundational network for Iberia, which practically did not exist in the preceding tradition, due to the frailty of Greek colonization, and was not seen until the arrival of Rome.²¹ As pointed out by E.J. Bickerman,²² the Greek vision on the origin of humanity is largely adaptable to local traditions and situations, because there was no written canon; its genealogical structure was etymological in nature, and therefore easily multiplied, developed and adapted to varied cultural and political contexts.

The hellenization of the southern territories, observed in Asclepiades / Strabo, which could explain the ‘Turdetanian question’, is also related to a deeply relevant and wider phenomenon: the recovery of the Homeric tradition in Greek Hellenistic culture. Homer’s particular role in ethno-geography acquired a new dimension, when the knowledge on the oecumene was finally bounded on the east and the west. The polemic on Homer’s authority in more recent times developed in a context of proliferation and specialization of knowledge. Each field of knowledge was preceded by an ‘academic genealogy’, where an ‘updated and modern’ Homer could have been, for some, a first landmark in the aspirations of any discipline. With the definition of Ocean as a central theme, the horizon of the archaic Homeric geography was widened. However, geographical features were still given place names and identified with phenomena described by the father of Greek culture: including tides, winds, the insularity of oecumene or the spherical condition of Earth.²³ If in the Late Archaic and Classical periods, Epic mythology gradually moved west, in a natural tendency to culturally appropriate newly discovered spaces,²⁴ as of the early Hellenistic period, this allegoric interpretation of Homer took a step further. Ultimately, Greeks were becoming conscious of their antiquity and claiming the pre-eminence of Greek culture as the first interpreter of the known world;²⁵ they also claimed poetry (although not without polemic)

²¹ Domínguez Monedero 1998.

²² 1952. A work, which has not been very used, with intuitive suggestions; precisely, when dealing with this ‘generalized hellenization of origins’ it briefly references the *Periegesis* of Asclepiades (p. 69). Recently: Schepens, and Bollansée 2004.

²³ Prontera 1993. The most exaggerated case is found in Crates of Mallus. His eagerness to attribute to Homer the origin of every discovery, led him to build a sphere, three metres in diameter, with which he explained to the Roman public his theories, viewing the quadripartite division of the hemispheres, with the river Ocean acting as a frontier, as no more than a deduction of the journeys of the Trojan heroes and a relocation of the mythical landscapes, which was harshly criticized by Aristarchus, Hipparchus and Geminus (Prontera 2017).

²⁴ Prontera 2004.

²⁵ A discussion, which goes far back: cf. for example, the debate between Herodotus and Hecataeus relative to the presumed antiquity of Greek culture in the light of the Egyptian culture (Hdt. 2.143 ss.). Following a ‘Homeric interpretation’ of the past, the Herculean saga played a fundamental role in western history, as the articulator of an ancient genealogy (vid. Giovannelli-Jouanna 2004).

as the literary genre per excellence, and the base of all learning and critique in the Hellenistic schools and academies.²⁶

In this context, Iberia became a definite part of the Greek geographical horizon, particularly as of Eratosthene.²⁷ The broad polemic between Dicaearchus, Eratosthenes, Hipparchus, Pytheas, Polybius, Artemidorus and Posidonius, in which Strabo finally intervenes, on the form and extension of the Iberian Peninsula, was part of a wider geographical debate, including the delineation of the European Atlantic coast, the final extension of the diaphragm of the oecumene, the northern limits of the inhabited world or the definition of the outer ocean.²⁸ These issues questioned the importance of Homer in relation to other, ancient or modern, ‘discoverers’ or ‘dilettantes’ of far off lands (particularly Pytheas). A careful autopsy was demanded as a mechanism for the refutation or reaffirmation of the readings of Homer, interpreted in geographical terms. Strabo is the last in a chain of scholars and scientists, who believed that the logic derived from ancient texts, conveniently analysed, was a more prestigious source of geographical knowledge than the one derived from empirical experience of travel and commerce.

If Strabo’s model of Turdetania, reconstructed in terms of epic history, did in fact originate from Asclepiades, this implies that the latter arrived to Iberia to teach and that his work was sufficiently well known, to have reached Artemidorus and Posidonius (in Iberia?), finally to be picked up by Strabo. While Greek culture and signs of identity spread to places, which were colonized from ancient times (hence the repeated local traditions among the *nostoi* of Sicily and Magna Graecia), the novelty lies in the extension of this phenomenon to the western Roman provinces. F. Gascó²⁹ suggested that this could be explained by the presence of a significant number of Greek colonizers from southern Italy in Iberia, potential disciples of Asclepiades. Although, why not explain such a phenomenon as a wider consequence of romanization? Greek origins would no longer be an exclusive ethnic attribute, but rather, a common heritage, shared by sectors of the population, integrated by Roman political hegemony and culture.³⁰

²⁶ In many cases, the search for erudition led authors to lose perspective between what was ancient and modern, even in geography, as would be denounced by Eratosthenes: “You will find the scene of the wanderings of Odysseus when you find the cobbler who sewed up the bag of the winds” (in Strab. 1.2.15), alluding to the known passage of the *Odyssey* (10.1–27), in which Aeolus gives Odysseus the bag holding all the winds, which led to all destinations, while discussing the famed passage of Aristotle, in which poetry is defended as an equally valid form of knowledge as history (*Poet.* 1451a–b).

There is an extensive bibliography on the role of Homer in Greek culture, particularly in education, and on the significance of Alexandrian ‘textual criticism’, specifically in the re-elaboration of works, literary genres and styles. For Homer, and poetry in general, in Strabo vid. Dueck 2005, Biraschi 2005 and Alganza 2008; for ‘textual criticism’ and the need to establish texts as the base for knowledge vid. Pagani 2011 (note: Crates and Asclepiades were both grammaticians!).

²⁷ In general: Cruz Andreotti 2016a.

²⁸ Prontera 2006, 15–29; 2007, 49–63; Moret 2017, 182–186.

²⁹ 1994.

³⁰ In contrast, Dandrow interprets this “Strabonian Hellenization” as a sort of cultural resistance to Rome: Dandrow 2017, 121–122; contra Johnston 2017, 125–189.

Hellenization was never a homogenous cultural phenomenon. Several local variations appeared—as first suggested by A. Momigliano³¹—which struggled between each other to gain supremacy. Much has been written on the hellenization of Roman origins.³² In the eastern Mediterranean, which developed and shared a common poliadic identity with the Greeks (the base of Classical identity), numerous communities competed among themselves for prestige and the antiquity of their foundations and traditions, re-elaborating their ancestral legends and adapting them to the new world.³³ This was undoubtedly the base for the progressive construction of a shared cultural heritage in many, different environments, which in turn created a base for the formation of leading, urban elites, at both ends of the Mediterranean, and which allows for the free circulation of ideas, books and scholars.³⁴

However, this phenomenon is not limited to the eastern Mediterranean. Hellenization in the west is also a subject of debate among historians and archaeologists, an even more complex issue, because it involved native societies with different degrees of socio-political development, joined in a poliadic world (Greek, Punic and Roman), which although militarily confronted, shared ways of life and cultural tendencies of all kinds.³⁵ The introduction of Greek, Carthaginian or Italian ideas in Iberia intensified as of the third century BC, as a result of a complex process of reinterpretation of these ideas, which affected the entire Mediterranean. Over the base of Greek cultural standards—assumed by everyone as superior—different layers of diverse cultural evolutions, including the Roman, were superimposed, creating hybrid phenomena of ‘cultural confluence’, of which Rome was the main promoter, to the point that ‘hellenization’ and ‘romanization’ became two sides of a same coin.³⁶

Some years ago, emphasis was placed on the positive role played by Phoenicians in Strabo’s historical scheme, for they constituted the link between the ‘mythical period’ and the ‘historical period’, as well as a key element in the transmission of western history to the Greeks.³⁷ Recently, the topic has been extensively and conclusively dealt with,³⁸ suggesting that the cultivated Tartessian-Turdetanian world, recreated by Strabo, with its own literature and historical memory, was actually reflecting the powerful western Phoenician world (with Gades at the head),³⁹ the identity of which was still alive and integrated into an on going process of romanization, among other reasons, because they shared a common civic

³¹ 1975.

³² Gabba 1974; Ferrary 1988; recently: Martínez-Pinna 2014.

³³ For the Phoenician world, so influential in southern Iberia, see: Millar 1983. C. López Ruiz (2010, among others) has masterfully developed the confluence between the Greek and Semitic world during the Archaic period, which leads to suggest that it was not a purely Hellenistic phenomenon; in the Roman period, Philo of Byblos was a paradigmatic case (vid. Kaldellis, and López-Ruiz 2009).

³⁴ Erskine 2005.

³⁵ Vid. Prag, and Quinn 2013.

³⁶ Keay 2013; contra: Dandrow cit. n. 30.

³⁷ Cruz Andreotti 2004, especially 269-70; and 2008, especially pp. 208-10.

³⁸ Álvarez Martí-Aguilar 2012b.

³⁹ In fact Strabo recognized to the phoenicians the ancestral domain of meridian land of Iberian peninsula (Strab. 1.1.4; 1.3.2; 3.2.13; 3.2.14; 17.3.15).

tradition.⁴⁰ Hybrid provincial elites, which began assuming Graeco-Roman signs of identity, did not exclude, rather to the contrary, they revived ancient western myths regarding Heracles (as shown in the coinage⁴¹), as well as a whole cultural background surrounding the idea of Tartessos / Turdetania, as a common historical space.⁴² In this context, ancient Semitic foundational rituals became fully integrated in the new world.⁴³

Considering Strabo and Turdetania in this light, it would be reasonable to suggest that Asclepiades found this environment favourable to teach grammar (i.e.: Classical culture) and write his *Periegesis*.⁴⁴ It was a civic and learned environment, developed in the sphere of a widespread, Greek culture, perfectly able to understand an aggregate ethnic concept, such as ‘Turdetanian’ (associated to Tartessos and the Greek historical-mythological tradition). This idea was a unifying point of reference for a cultural setting, which had already been multicultural for generations,⁴⁵ but where Hellenism– now represented by Rome–played a central role in the construction of identity.⁴⁶ From this perspective, we can now gain a better understanding of Strabo’s final, extensive paragraph, on the Turdetanian’s ‘civilized customs’ and their ‘capacity to live in society’, which allowed them to adopt the Roman character (which facilitated their promotion to the ‘Latin’ status, the last step in their progression), and finally led them to forget their native language, all of which contributed to their qualifying as *togati*, a synonym for ‘civilized behaviour’ (in Strab. 3.2.15). Are Strabo’s references to a certain ‘hellenization’ of a Gaditanian temple or the ‘500 Gaditanian equites’ a coincidence? Probably not. Let us recall that precisely in that moment, the Gaditanian Balbo, was becoming the first non-Italian consul of Rome.

Analogies or equivalencies were not at all innocent. The invention of Strabo’s Turdetania is much more than a literary construct or the idea of the author or his sources. It was a classical reference at the service of Romanism. Asclepiades knew it and went to Baetica to

⁴⁰ In a recent work, P. Xella (2014) denies the existence of a Phoenician ‘ethnic identity’ as such, claiming that what may have existed was a ‘civic identity’, which represented that which has conventionally come to be known as Phoenician.

⁴¹ Mora Serrano 2011a and 2013a, Mora Serrano, and Cruz Andreotti 2012a.

⁴² All of this was already put forth by Martín Almagro-Gorbea (2005), although this author, following his essentialist background, always traces back to the Archaic period.

⁴³ Álvarez Martí-Aguilar 2014b. For the combination between tradition and innovation, in order to understand the ‘hellenization’ of Phoenicia as of the Alexandrian conquest, see Bonnet 2014, 282-298.

⁴⁴ Prontera 2017 sees the inclusion of the Phoenicians in Strabo’s scheme, more as a contribution of Posidonius than of Asclepiades; it is true that the Phoenicians in Strabo appear in occasions as explicit references from Posidonius and Artemidorus.

⁴⁵ As exposed above, the idea that there never existed a homogenous Turdetanian culture has been growing in strength in the last years (F.J. García Fernández in this volume and 2012, with all the maps). If the different populations and areas of ethno-cultural predominance are plotted on a map of Strabo’s Turdetania, the result is that they overlap each other. This hybrid approach to romanization in Hispania, especially in the south, presided over the last great academic event on the subject (Santos Yanguas, and Cruz Andreotti 2012).

⁴⁶ From this perspective, it has been suggested that Posidonius, Artemidorus, and particularly Asclepiades, arrived to Iberia, and wrote on the ‘ancient history’ of Iberia from a Greek point of view, because they found a cultural ground, which was fertile and receptive (Woolf 2011, especially 24–27).

teach grammar, i.e., the common culture, as he did in Rome.⁴⁷ It is not a coincidence either that Turdetania should disappear with Pliny. The identity references signalled out by Pliny are civic-political, not ethno-cultural... Turdetania, an ethnonym used in the latter sense, was no longer an identity reference. Romanization had entered another phase, which would deserve a chapter of its own.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Certain references in the sources could be better understood this way, as when Artemidorus states that the Iberians of the coast used a grammar, much like the Italian (frg. 22 Stiehle).

⁴⁸ Ciprés Torres 2014; esp. Ead. 2016