

PHROURION: History and Archaeology of a Word

Frúrion: história e arqueologia de uma palavra

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RESUMO

As antigas cidades sículas e sicânias, que entraram em contato com os *apoikoi* a partir do final do século VIII a.C., em muitos casos, na literatura histórica e arqueológica, assumiram o nome de *frúria*. Mas qual é o significado que os pesquisadores atribuem a essa palavra? É possível que, ao escolher esta definição, as interpretações das dinâmicas do contato sejam inevitavelmente filtradas através de um olhar helenocentrista? O objetivo desta pesquisa é analisar diferentes formas nas quais o substantivo “*frúrion*” tem sido e ainda é utilizado na produção científica, desde as antigas fontes textuais até a literatura da pesquisa arqueológica. O nosso é um convite para refletir sobre a agência das palavras no discurso científico e até que ponto nós, estudiosos da antiguidade, somos influenciados pelo vocabulário do “colonialismo” grego na interpretação da cultura material e das sociedades do passado.

Palavras-chave: *Phrourion*, Mediterrâneo Antigo, Agência das palavras

ABSTRACT

Historical and archaeological literature in many cases have named *phrouria* the ancient Sikel and Sikan towns, which were in contact with the *apoikoi* from the end of the 8th century B.C. But what is the meaning that the researchers attribute to this word? Is it possible that, in choosing this definition, the interpretations of the dynamics of contact were inevitably filtered through a Hellenocentric view? The purpose of this paper is to analyze different forms in which the noun “*phrourion*” has been and is still used in scientific production, from ancient textual sources to archaeological literature. It is an invitation to reflect on the agency of words in scientific discourse and to what extent we, scholars of Antiquity, are influenced by the vocabulary of Greek “colonialism” when interpreting material culture and societies from the past.

Keywords: *Phrourion*, Ancient Mediterranean, Agency of words

Considerations on the lexicon of Greek colonization in Sicily and in Magna Graecia are certainly not a new or little debated topic. The very word “colonization”, referring to the expansion of the Greek *apoikiai* in the Mediterranean, has been replaced by other definitions that better suited the nature of the phenomenon and that depart from the modern concept of colonialism. Here, we have no intention of lingering over this matter; rather we would like to deepen the understanding of the evolution and the different aspects of a word often used to indicate the ancient indigenous towns following the encounter with the Greek *apoikoi*. This reflection stems from the study of the territory of central Sicily and some of its most known archaeological sites (such as Vassallaggi, Gibil Gabib, Sabucina and others). In the scientific literature, many of these sites are referred to as “*phrouria*,” a term that means “fortified citadels,” as defined of Sikel and Sikan cities during the period of Greek expansion in Diodorus Siculus’ “Library of History”. Actually, Giuseppe Testa (1983) already pointed out that Diodorus indiscriminately alternated the words *polis* and *phrourion* when referring to indigenous settlements. We cannot overlook the fact that the Sicilian historian (a Greek writer, yet a Roman citizen) reconstructed events that occurred centuries before the composition of his work. Certainly, we cannot expect him to be familiar with the reality of Sicily of the 6th and 5th centuries B.C., and therefore, we should consider the influence of its own sources. The way Sikels and Sikans called their cities we will never know, because terms related to their dwelling could not be found in any of the indigenous languages in the rare epigraphic pieces of evidence that reached us (TESTA, 1983, p. 1006). The author says that, from the 5th century B.C., the Greeks used the words *phrourion* to indicate a military stronghold and *polisma* for the non-Greek towns smaller than a *polis* and inhabited by “barbarian or primitive” peoples (*Ibidem*). As it often happens, the typical contempt of the Greek mentality for all that was foreign to their model of civilization pervades most written sources, transmitting a distorted image of the world beyond their borders. Finally, Testa concludes that the Greek lexicon of “colonization” in Sicily was able to mediate the “qualitative difference between local housing modalities and settlers’ occupational choices”, therefore *polisma*, in reference to indigenous cities, does not necessarily assume negative or derogatory nuances (TESTA, 1983, p. 1014). And with this I agree, since I believe the way of dwelling and conceiving the space of the natives was certainly different from that of the Greeks and most likely the names that the two peoples gave to their settlements were different: the Greeks would have had to adapt the indigenous vocabulary to their lexicon and vice versa, generating a certain variety.

Phrourion in Ancient Sources

the most common meaning of the word *phrourion* (φρούριον) is “fortress” (LIDDELL; SCOTT, p. 1968), a fortified citadel, having distinct military characteristics for defensive purposes, which is located at the far end of the territory of a *polis* (WINTER, 1971, p. 42- 43; FREDERICKSEN, 2011, p. 13-15). Based on this definition, it can be deduced that *phrourion* was a typically Greek settlement mainly used to host troops. Because of this, we would expect to find a certain uniformity in the usage of this noun both in

ancient sources and in contemporary archaeological literature. However, the use of the term is very diversified.

From the etymological point of view, *phourion* is a deverbal noun derived from *phroureo* (φρουρέω), which in turn is the result of the crasis of the preposition *pro* (προ) and the verb *horao* (ὁράω)¹: literally “looking ahead”. The verb has two main meanings: guarding and defending (LIDDELL; SCOTT, 1968). Like the word *phourion*, all other compounds and derivatives of the verb *phroureo* are related to the military sphere (BEEKES, 2010, p. 1592). In the case of the keyword of our study, a fair frequency is recorded only from the Classical period onwards. In the Homeric poems, as in Archaic writers, we do not usually find the term *phourion* but the term *teichos* (τείχος), indicating the walls surrounding the city² (FREDERICKSEN, 2011, p. 34 *et seq.*). The compounds of *phroureo* appear – in literary sources, but rarely in epigraphic ones³ – with a certain frequency only from the beginning of the 5th century B.C. Besides, Archaeology shows that *phouria* began to be systematically established beyond the borders of the *chora* in the Classical period⁴, with the function of defending the territory and the state or, in rare cases, for offensive purposes (FREDERICKSEN, 2011, p. 13).

The forms *phourá* (φρουρά, Attic -η) and *phroureo* often appear in Herodotus. In Thucydides, it appears to be more frequent the use of derivatives from *phroureo*, especially when the author describes war actions, but more specifically referring to temporary defenses aimed at protecting soldiers during a military operation. As Tréziny (2010a, p. 558) points out, the Greek historian uses the term *phourion* not to refer to a fortified settlement, but to the group of people who populate it.

In the 4th century B.C., Xenophon writes that Socrates reproaches his young disciple Glaucus for not giving priority to the defense of the *chora* (Memorabilia, III, 6, 10). In this passage, the word *phouroi* (φρουροί), that means garrisons, is found along with others, that derive from the verb *phylasso* (φυλάσσω) and allude to the act of defending. Certainly, through Socrates’ speech, Xenophon is expressing his thought both as a citizen and a mercenary (MUNN, 1993, p. 3). This discourse is articulated in a broader context in which Socrates explains to his disciples the importance of a good defensive strategy, conducted by men prepared to defend the borders, and of well localized fortresses (Mem. III, 5, 27).

The first book of *Anabasis* begins with the story of the war between Cyrus and Artaxerxes and in I, 1, 6, Xenophon illustrates Cyrus’ strategy: the prince’s first move is to send all the commanders of his fortified places – *oi phourarchoi* (οἱ φρουράρχοι) – the order to recruit men. Here, the importance of the *phourarchos* seems evident in the military context of the period between the end of the 5th and the beginning of the 4th century B.C. It is no coincidence that, precisely from Xenophon, the frequency in the sources of the compounds of *phroureo* increases. Indeed, this is a time of great change and the number of mercenary militias grew more than ever, as well as the number of centers occupied by the mercenaries themselves.

Between the 3rd century B.C. and the 2nd A.D., in Polybius the use of the word *phourion* is limited, while in Diodorus Siculus it is often repeated. It is interesting to note that it is precisely in Diodorus that this term is adopted for the first time to name

indigenous settlements. Similarly, Strabo also uses it for the same purpose, but usually to indicate settlements smaller than a city (TRÉZINY, 2010a, p. 559). Pausanias (as like Plutarch) uses φρούριον in the generic sense of a fortified settlement and always in opposition to *polis* (πόλις) (TRÉZINY, 2010a, p. 560).

We can conclude that the term *phourion* starts being specifically used in its meaning of fortress only in the 4th century B.C., mainly due to Xenophon's extensive use of it. In Greek writers of the Roman period, even if linked to its military purposes, the term assumes a very oscillating, almost indefinite meaning, which varies according to the context in which it is used.

Speaking of *phourion*, we cannot fail to mention the article written by Thomas H. Nielsen in 2002, in which the author proposes to trace the meaning that the historians of antiquity attributed to the term. At the end of his meticulous analysis, which focuses mainly on the work of Diodorus Siculus, Nielsen concludes that *phourion* is a word used only in the military context. Despite this, it cannot always be considered as opposed to *polis*, since there are cases in which the status of *polis* could not be denied to a community only because somewhere in the sources it was labeled *phourion* (NIELSEN, 2002, p. 62). This study, which attributes a rather fluid meaning to the term, has given rise to several criticisms, such as that of Dillon (2004): "This is one of those bloodless cataloging surveys which shows the power of the word-search, but most of us will continue to accept that a *polis* is a *polis* and a *phourion* is a garrison town or fort". Also Tréziny (2010a, p. 559) criticizes Nielsen's conclusion: in 403 B.C., Leontinoi, until then an independent *polis*, would have turned into a *phourion* of Syracuse; in this case, *phourion* can be considered an antonym of *polis*. Tréziny argues that "*phourion* is not used here with the sense of fortress, but rather with that of a secondary city" (TRÉZINY, 2010a, p. 559).

***Phourion* between History and Archaeology**

Approaching the matter from a purely archaeological point of view, I wonder if there are univocal parameters that allow us to characterize a settlement as a *phourion*. In other words, is a *phourion* of the Attica of the Classical epoch equal to one of Southern Italy from the 4th century B.C.? I am convinced that these parameters are difficult to define, since the interpretation that scholars have given to literary and archaeological sources varies according to the lens through which they look to antiquity. And yet, in the historical-archaeological literature, there are various attempts to define a model.

The presence of walls alone cannot determine military function, for if this were the case, all *poleis*⁵ protected by a wall should also be considered fortresses at the same time. John McK Camp – citing the passage of Plato (Pol. 1331a10) about the concern with the aesthetic aspect of the walls at the time of its construction – emphasizes that the construction of a wall around the city was not only linked to a defensive necessity, but it could also be a symbol of prestige (MCK CAMP, 2000, p. 43). It is worth mentioning that the word *teichos*, mainly found in the literature of the Archaic period, has the double meaning of wall and fortress (FREDERICKSEN, 2011, p. 20). This fact suggests that the aesthetics of the construction contributed to its own solidity and defensive

efficiency⁶. However, there were also *atéichistoi* cities, that is, without walls (such as Elis and Sparta, both in the Peloponnese).

Besides the defense of the *asty*, the defense of the *chora* was very important. As shown by Fredericksen (*supra*), there are examples of fortresses already in the Archaic period, but it is from the Classical Era that the number of this type of settlement grew throughout the territory of mainland Greece. These establishments were designed and built with the sole purpose of defending, possibly attacking and controlling the surrounding territory. According to Winter, the main purpose of these ramparts was to dominate a road, a strip of land or a vulnerable stretch of coast; these were almost invariably positioned so that they had a view that fulfilled these functions ensuring that they remained impregnable (WINTER, 1971, p. 43 *et seq.*).

The best examples of fortified posts from the Classical and Hellenistic periods were located in the regions of Argolida and Attica. In particular, Attica has received much attention from archaeologists. In fact, the defense of the territory was one of the greatest concerns of the Athenians, who paid the utmost attention to the location of their fortresses. This choice was based on two fundamental elements: a natural defense that would guarantee the impregnability of the fortress and a physical conformation strategically adapted to the deployment of the garrison (MUNN, 1993, p. 5). This way the landscape was “built” to provide the best form of defense and control of the territory. For this reason, there were many fortresses in remote places, that only gained importance because they were part of a wider strategy of capillary control of a region. In Winter (1971, p. 45) we read that many fortresses, located in remote mountain districts, had importance only from a military point of view and that they were designed exclusively to house a small garrison. Their structure was usually very compact, and inside there was nothing but barracks for the troops and cisterns to store rainwater.

An example of this type of fortress is Phyle (Figure 1), built on a mountain’s plateau whose inaccessible sides constituted a great natural defense of its western face, while the exposed parts were surrounded by a towered wall. The entire Attica region was defended by a belt of forts⁷, many of which already existed before the Peloponnesian War and many were built during and after that conflict (MUNN, 1993, p. 15).

In Greece, the archaeological evidences, therefore, show that the characteristics to recognize a fortress are well defined: strategic positioning within the *chora*; ease of intercommunication and mobility; small size; presence of essential elements for the survival of the troops. In short, these settlements were not designed to accommodate the families of soldiers, neither a community of citizens, only a garrison. In the case of Attica, the forts were placed in such a way as to create a network of connections that would provide defense and control to the entire region. A *polis*, if necessary, could organize itself in such a way as to temporarily assume the characteristics of a defended place and ready for a possible attack by enemies. It is precisely in the light of this consideration that we must address the debate on the use of the term *phrourion* in sources in the context of continental Greece: since there was a specific intention at the time of setting up a defensive settlement, given its internal structural

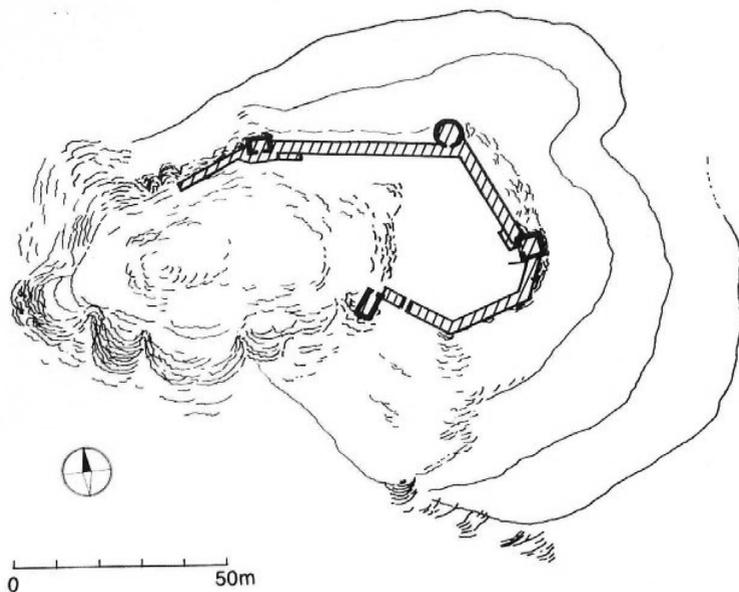


Figure 1 - Phylae (Attica), plan of the fort.
Source: Winter, 1971, p. 43, f. 35

limitations, this would hardly have assumed a status of *polis*; in the same way, a *polis*, with its complex system – aimed at the administration and development of a citizen community, of its economy and its power – cannot be reduced to a *phourion* only because, during a war, it had to prepare itself for defense.

However, in the context of Greek colonialism, all concepts and ideas go through a process of transformation, of adaptation to a new reality, determined by different geography, but mainly by the encounter with local communities, which had another social structure, another way to settle in the territory and to organize their cities. The *apoikoi* found themselves in need to extend and defend their *chorai* through alliances, treaties and defensive settlements. These structures were built from scratch (as in the case of Casmene and Akrai in the territory of Syracuse or Monte Palazzi in the territory of Locri Epizephirii) or created, through political negotiations, adapting the indigenous centers that were in strategically important regions.

Henry Téziny has devoted many of his studies to the fortification works of the *apoikiai* (ἀποικίαι) and the native settlements. Regarding the latter case, Tréziny warns us about the difficulties that can be encountered in the interpretation of indigenous fortifications:

In the western colonial world, the territory of the city brought together small indigenous settlements, often fortified, where it is difficult to say if they were occupied by the Greeks or indigenous people and, in the last case, if their function was to defend the indigenous territory against the Greek polis or, rather, the Greek village from an exterior aggressor. It goes without saying that their functions could vary with time and that only the literary sources grant us a historical interpretation. The archaeological data only allow us to say (at times) is the site was occupied by the Greeks or indigenous people (in Sicily, by the Punic?) and, with prudence, whether the construction and defense techniques utilized reveal one or more Greek traditions (TRÉZINY, 2010a, p. 557).⁸

An example of this interpretative challenge is represented by the site of Moio della Civitella, in the territory of Velia (Salerno). The site, at the beginning of the investigations, was characterized as a *phourion* controlled by Velia, founded around 410 B.C. to defend the *chora* from the Lucanian invasions (GRECO, 1967). New studies (BATS *et al.*, 2010, p. 171 *et seq.*), however, question its chronology (which was placed on the third quarter of the 3rd century B.C.), its function (*phourion* or fortified residential town?) and its origin (Greek or Lucanian settlement?). Not surprisingly, there are doubts about the origin of the settlement, since Greek and native construction techniques are similar in many cases due to mutual influence. Tréziny argues that most likely the Greeks who settled around the Mediterranean were influenced by local models for the construction of the first defensive works, as in the case of Megara Iblea⁹, whose first city wall was openly inspired by the local Bronze Age military architecture (TRÉZINY, 2010a, p. 560-561). This influence was also determined by the type of material available on the site and by the similar morphology of the environment (TRÉZINY, 2010b, p. 82). In the Basento valley, the fortifications are located at high points to facilitate the control of the communication routes; their walls, in Isodomic technique, have Greek letters carved on the blocks.

These sites date back to the second half of the 4th century B.C. and, apparently, they were built by the Lucanians to protect themselves from the passage of the armies of Alexander the Molossus. Therefore, in spite of the local origin of the settlement, the technique is influenced by the effects of Greek architecture (TRÉZINY, 1983). In the site only Greek ceramics dating from the 4th to the third quarter of the 5th century B.C. were found, the date after which there are no traces of occupation.

The strategic position for the control of the Rhegion's territory has certainly played a central role in the life of this small town, whether it was a *phourion* or not. Its structures, without comparison in the region, the material found, as well as the walls and the public character of the complex suggest that it was a fortified site that housed a small garrison able to guarantee control of the road that connected the plains of Gioia Tauro with the interior of the Rhegion *chora* (BRIZZI; COSTAMAGNA, 2010, p. 593).

Archaeological research in Southern Italy has made considerable progress in understanding fortified settlements and has been able to demonstrate that the Greeks began to build their *phouria* as early as the 6th century B.C.¹⁰, as in the case of Serro

di Tavola (figures 2 and 3), San Salvatore (in the *chora* of Rhegion) and Monte Palazzi (in the *chora* of Locri). Essentially Greek material was found on the three sites; all of them also have the same structural characteristics, the same dimensions and the same function, being located in strategic points in the *chorai* of the *poleis* of influence, and situated in places high enough to have an extended control (VISONÁ, 2010, p. 595). The habit of settling in high places seems well established in Southern Italy, as in the case of Monte Pruno di Roscigno (Salerno), where traces of occupation have been found since the 8th century B.C. Material culture shows that contact with the Greeks occurred in the 7th century B.C., but already in the 6th century B.C. the settlements began to be organized into units distributed over the mountains and strategically placed (GRECO, 2010, p. 189).

Also in the Sannio region¹¹ (DE BENEDITTIS; RICCI, 2007), many fortifications were built in the second half of the 4th century B.C. They were built on the peaks of the highest hills and, in many cases, walls were built only on the side without natural protection. The larger fortresses were actually inhabited, while the smaller ones had only a military function. The distribution of these buildings shows the close relationship they had with the streets.

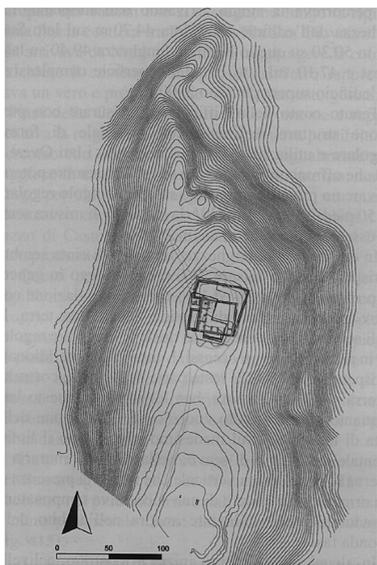


Figure 2 – The site of Serro di Tavola in Calabria and the building inserted in the topographical context.

Source: BRIZZI; COSTAMAGNA, 2010, p. 584, f. 415

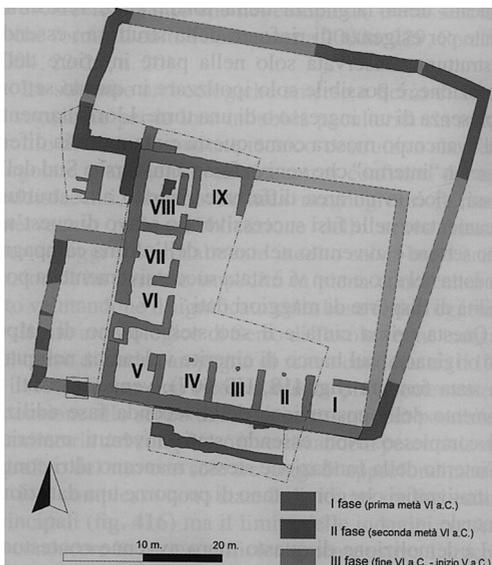


Figure 3 – Diagram of the structures in Serro di Tavola.

Source: BRIZZI; COSTAMAGNA, 2010, p. 584, f. 416

In Sicily, we find many examples of Greek *phourion*, dating from the 7th century B.C., such as, Akrai (663 B.C.) and Casmene (644 B.C.). Both settlements emerged as fortified posts to protect the confines of the Syracusan *chora*; they did not have a status of independent cities and never minted coins. Donatella Erdas (2006, p. 46) states that Casmene has all the formal characteristics of a *phourion*: 1) a high and strategic position for the control of the territory; 2) numerous *ex-votos* linked to the military sphere; 3) a very thick wall; 4) an urban structure dating back to the 7th century B.C., divided into *oikopeda*, without plateau and crossed by very narrow passages between the urban lots. Therefore, it is because of the way in which Casmene settles in the territory that it is characterized as a *phourion* (*Ibidem*). In order to substantiate its conclusions, Erdas cross-references the archaeological data and the textual ones¹², trying to demonstrate that the urban organization of Casmene is compatible with that one described as suitable to face a war, in Plato and Aristotle:

The compactness of the urban structures seems, in fact, to respond to the Platonic model, while the apparent absence of a *plateiai* network, and the presence of straight streets and blocks that are difficult to navigate, partly reflect the Aristoteleic proposal, revealing a consolidated demand of the *taxis* which falls into the discussed “hippodamic experience” (ERDAS, 2006, p. 50).¹³

Unlike the Attic *phouria*, however, Casmene, despite being considered a military post, offered public and religious spaces suited to the needs of its rather large community of citizens, which also regularly traded goods (COLLURA, 2012). Similarly, other settlements called *phouria* in Sicilian archaeological literature present together with the characteristics of a fortified place those of a “regular” city. There are, in fact, only a few traces of *phouria* with an exclusive military function, and these date mainly from the late 4th and the early 3rd centuries B.C. (see, e.g., CAVALIERI, 1998; FILIPPI, 2006; VASSALLO *et al.*, 2016).

The use of the definition *phourion* extended to the indigenous cities that, from the 7th century B.C., were under the influence of Greek cities. Such a terminological choice comes from the reading of Diodorus – Roman historian from Sicily, who wrote in Greek, and lived at the end of the 1 century B.C. – who, in the narration of the events of Sicily (books XI-XIII of the Library of History¹⁴), names “*phouria*” many of the native towns that have related to the Greeks. There are also Sikan cities which in some textual sources are called *polis*: Inykos (Hdt. VI, 23; Paus. VII, 4, 6); Kamikos (Hdt. VII, 170; Str. VI, 2, 6); Omphake (St. Byz. 493, 8); Palike (DS XI, 88, 6 and 90, 1) (HANSEN; NIELSEN, 2005, p. 178-179). Among these cities, we find the case of Kamikos significant. Herodotus (author of the 5th century B.C.) writes that King Kokalos hosted Daedalus in his city, Kamikos precisely. This provoked the indignation of the Cretans who surrounded the city for five years without success since Daedalus had endowed it with an impregnable defense. While in Strabo, Kamikos is counted among the *barbarikai poleis* (βαρβαρικαὶ πόλεις) that in his time no longer existed, in Diodorus (XXIII, 9, 5) it is a *phourion* occupied by the Romans in 258 a.C. Strabo and Diodorus are contemporaries, however, they

use two different denominations¹⁵ and this tells us a great deal about the perception of the meaning of the word “*polis*” in a chronological context very distant from the historical reality in which Greek *polis* had developed. In general, we note that Diodorus uses “*phrourion*” mainly in contexts of war narratives – as, for example, in the case of the settlement of Motyon¹⁶ (called *phrourion* in DS XI, 91, 4), that under Ducetius’ occupation had become his fortress (DS XI, 91, 1).

Fischer-Hansen (2002, p. 127) states that many cities of indigenous origin can be considered *poleis*, while others are excluded from the inventory of the Copenhagen Polis Center (HANSEN; NIELSEN, 2005), as their archaeological remains do not allow classification as *poleis*. The author continues:

The native settlements are often understood as being Hellenised in several phases: at first as sites under military control of Gela and Akragas and plying a role as *phrouria*; later through the sixth century and perhaps under influence of Akragas, by that time a powerful state, these developed into *poleis* proper. (FISCHER-HANSEN, 2002, p. 132)

This positioning is present in several places of archaeological literature, but I believe that it is a rather superficial and very generalized way of approaching the dynamics of contact and of settling. In such a complex territory as that of ancient Sicily, relations between Greeks and non-Greeks assumed such peculiar characteristics that deserve to be considered on a case-by-case basis.

The ancient people of Sicily, at different times and in different forms, became an integral part of politics and economy of the *polis* (MICCICHÈ, 2011; PANVINI; CONGIU, 2015). This made the Greeks, in the first phase of the expansion towards the interior of Sicily, take advantage of the location of the native towns, which by tradition were positioned in high and strategically significant places, instead of settling new military posts (LO MONACO, 2018, p. 93 *et seq.*). As we can see, there is no univocity in the nomenclature in the textual sources, so Archaeology is the only instrument available to us to understand the role of these settlements in the context of large-scale social organization that was established after contact. Probably adopting the word “*phrourion*” does not always prove to be an adequate or well-considered choice, since, in my view, it would determine a split between function and status which maybe, as Nielsen suggests, did not really exist in the ancient world.

The Agency of Words

especially in the past, the interpretation of material culture in the context of the Mediterranean Greek world was strongly affected by a sort of philhellenic perspective. Over the years, approaches have changed and many other points of view have arisen. Yet we often continue to use the same lexicon, so rooted in our scientific habits.

In the first half of the 20th century, the dominant approaches to the study of Western Greek *apoikismós* (αποικισμός) were dominated by the concept of “Hellenization”.

This was based on the idea that the native groups absorbed almost passively Greek models, gradually abandoning their original identity. The idea of “Hellenization”, then, carries with it the assumption that Greek culture was so charming and intrinsically superior to instantly stimulate the desire for its emulation (DIETLER, 1999, p. 476). Advances in archaeological research and new theoretical approaches have allowed this position to be overcome, but it is common to find the words “Hellenization” and mainly “Hellenized” in the texts dealing with the native people after contact with the *apoikoi*.

Another widely used concept is that of “Acculturation”, which is born in the American academic sphere within the framework of Colonial Archaeology. Generally, the word indicates all the phenomena of interaction that result from the contact between two cultures, but it has already been interpreted as a way to define the predominance of a “superior” culture over the other (CUSUMANO, 1994, p. 54). Therefore, also in this case we can find in some texts expressions such as “the acculturation of the natives”, “process of acculturation of the local people” and so on. Such a placement of the term “Acculturation” does not seem to imply reciprocity between the two parties involved, but rather a one-way influence, that is, of the Greeks on the natives. Perhaps the perception and use of such terms by many scholars today is free from bias, nonetheless, resorting to this terminology seems to imply unilateral participation in the process of the transformation of culture. This would consequently mean that the identity generated was not a result of the influences of both parties from the time of the encounter between Greeks and non-Greeks¹⁷.

The reflection on the meaning of the terms *polis* and *phourion* is a good starting point to think about the forms of aggregation and political organization in ancient Greece. The Athenocentric model and the tendency to interpret the ancient world through a view adulterated by the experiences of our modern and contemporary history sometimes prevented the coexistence of various forms of understanding the experience of *polis* in the Greek world, as indeed the archaeological record shows (MORGAN, 2003, p. 7; HALL, 1997). To address the question of identity and contact, many archaeologists have resorted to the concept of “Network” that has gained some ground in the contemporary literature of the Social Sciences. In the panorama of classical studies, Malkin was a pioneer in using Network Theory (2003) in opposition to the World System Theory, by Immanuel Wallerstein, that had great weight in the anthropological and archaeological literature (DAVERIO ROCCHI, 2010). This theory was based on the relationship between Center and Periphery – where the Center would represent the active part, propelling the changes, imposing itself on a passive Periphery, confined to the outer edges. Within the limits of this approach, there was inevitable negligence in considering local variations and the degree of agency of the periphery (DIETLER, 1999, p. 482). Malkin reverses this perspective and sees in the creation of the *apoikiai* the propelling phenomenon of the emergence and consolidation of Hellenicity. He finds in the Archaic period (from the late 8th and the early 5th century B.C.) the birth of a common and shared awareness of the cultural and religious roots that characterized the identity of ancient Greek people. This consciousness had a decisive impulse in the time of the Greek expansion through the Mediterranean thanks to the foundation of *apoikiai*. In fact, the groups that traveled from Greece to the Mediterranean and settled

on the coast carried with them their shared traditions, rules, cults, language and had to face the same problems (DOUGHERTY, 1993). The distance from the metropolis caused the *apoikoi* to seek a nexus that would bring them together in the “colonial” experience, since the consciousness of similarity does not occur when people are close to one another, but when they are distant¹⁸. The encounter with populations of different cultures, technical knowledge and religion helped create “peer-to-peer” connections. While aware of their own Hellenic identity, the Greeks who settled outside the motherland gradually developed a renewed awareness as the result of contact with local populations, which led them to experience a different reality (MALKIN, 2011).

It is also worth recalling Vlassopoulos’s discourse on the way we understand the World System Theory (VLASSOPOULOS, 2007, p. 17-19). He argues that this theory allows us to study how networks work. In fact, as he puts it, there is not only the Center-Periphery relationship within that system, but various forms of interaction and processes, several world-systems that are able to coexist. An alternative to network theories is offered by the notion of meshwork, formulated by Ingold (2011). The anthropologist proposes an understanding of the set of human experiences not as a system of distant points interconnected by lines, but as a tangle of wires that create an organic structure, similar to a spider’s web:

I return to the importance of distinguishing the network as a set of interconnected points from the meshwork as an interweaving of lines. Every such line describes a flow of material substance in a space that is topologically fluid. I conclude that the organism (animal or human) should be understood not as a bounded entity surrounded by an environment, but as an unbounded entanglement of lines in fluid space. (INGOLD, 2011, p. 64)

Although linked to the area of bio-anthropology, this perspective approaches that of mobility in a fluid world posed by Morris (2003, p. 38) and Vlassopoulos (2007, p. 16)¹⁹.

The idea of entanglement²⁰, in my opinion, offers the best perspective for the interpretation of the relationship between Greeks and non-Greeks, since it departs from rigid schemas and considers societies as a living, mutable element and with a determining agency in cultural changes. By observing the dynamics of acceptance or rejection of the alloying element, we can study the relations of power and dependence that were gradually created in the “colonial” context. The Theory of Consumption (DIETLER, 1999; 2010), which works precisely on material culture in terms of the consumer-object relationship, aims to place local histories within global processes in a flexible way, considering culture not only as a historical and inherited product (static), but also as a continuous creative project (dynamic) (DIETLER, 1999, p. 485. See also INGOLD, 2004). This model of interpretation is an instrument that helps to understand why certain practices and certain consumer goods have become part of people’s daily lives, while others have been rejected, provoking a process of entanglement and social transformation²¹ (DIETLER, 1999, p. 484).

In our so politically correct contemporary world, in which every word choice should be carefully examined, it is hard to find a universally embraced lexicon that pleases all scientific perspectives. So, what kind of solution can we propose? Undoubtedly, when we are approaching the past, the most honest behavior to be adopted by us, researchers, should be trying to avoid any bias and using words carefully and consciously. In this way, the content of our texts will carry the right weight in a wider scientific discourse. In the case of the subject of this paper, the *phrourion*, we saw how many facets a unique word shows and, consequently, how different approaches and understandings work together. This demonstrates that it is hard to sum up in simple definition experiences from the past which in turn were shaped by environmental, social, political and cultural contexts and contingencies vastly different from one another. Even so, we need to call the elements of our inquiries by name, and to do this, sometimes, it is more convenient to continue using familiar vocabulary, especially when this vocabulary is already deep-seated in the archaeological and historical literature, comfortable, well-known and easy to understand. That said, I believe that this attitude is acceptable as long as the words we choose do not influence our interpretation.

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Notes

¹ Supposedly, **pro-horos* is the reconstruction of an Indo-European form. With the contraction of the two vowels, the first consonant is subject to the Grimm's law, a phenomenon by which the sound -p (deaf occlusive) becomes -f (deaf fricative).

² According to Adamesteanu (1983, p. 958), the western *apoikiai* at the time of the foundation started to build the *teichos*, a fence that defined the perimeter of the city, only from the end of the 7th and the beginning of the 6th century B.C., when the first fortification works began.

³ Inscriptions related to fortifications are extremely rare, especially those referring to indigenous sites (TRÉZINY, 2010a, p. 562).

⁴ The greater diffusion of *phouria* in Classical times does not exclude its existence even in earlier times, for example, in Agathe, near Massalia (Strabo, IV, I, 5), where excavations have revealed sections of Archaic walls below those of the Classical and Hellenistic periods. For further examples, see FREDERICKSEN, 2011, p. 14-15 and MUNN, 1993, p. 15 *et seq.*

⁵ We will avoid entering into the extremely broad debate on the definition of *polis* and its characterizing elements. Since Polignac (1984), many studies have been carried out, such as the Copenhagen Polis Center, but it is also worth remembering the contributions of SNODGRASS, 1993, MORGAN, 2003 and CALIÒ, 2011, among others.

⁶ The city of Troy is famous for having a powerful wall that deserves in the Iliad the epithet of *euteichos*: "with the beautiful wall" or "with the well-built wall".

⁷ On the defenses of Attica, see: MC CREDIE, 1966 and OBER, 1985; 1989. On the road network and the forts in Attica, see VANDERPOOL, 1979. For an overview of modern and contemporary studies on Greek fortresses, see LO MONACO, 2019.

⁸ Dans le monde colonial d'Occident, le territoire de la cité jouxte de petits établissements indigènes, souvent fortifiés, dont on peine à dire s'ils étaient occupés par des Grecs ou par des indigènes et, dans ce dernier cas, s'ils avaient pour fonction de défendre le territoire indigène contre la cité grecque, ou au contraire celui de la ville grecque contre une agression extérieur. Il va de soi que ses fonctions ont pu varier avec le temps et que seules les sources littéraires nous permettent une interprétation historique. Les données archéologiques nous permettent seulement de dire (quelquefois) si le site était occupé par des Grecs ou par des indigènes (en Sicile, par des Puniques ?), et, avec prudence, si les techniques de construction et de défense utilisées révèlent plus ou moins d'une tradition grecque. (TRÉZINY, 2010a, p. 557)

⁹ The wall dates from the 7th century B.C. and its defensive technique is rudimentary. There is no indication of the presence of towers, but scholars do not exclude that the fortification had curvilinear bastions as one can find in Sikel cities, but also in other indigenous towns from the Bronze Age (SCALISI, 2010, p. 229).

¹⁰ E. Greco (2001, p. 165) says that it is not possible to speak of *phourion* until the 6th century B.C., because prior to that date, the *perípoloi* were assigned to the defense of the territory. These troops, who walked around the region, left no archaeological remains of their provisional facilities.

¹¹ Ancient Sannio today corresponds to an area between the regions of Molise, Abruzzo and Campania.

¹² The historian also brings epigraphic data (ERDAS, 2006, p. 46-47) that would demonstrate that Casmene did not have a very extensive *chora*, but was part of a wider political territory, since the city organization was not based on agriculture, but rather on military activities.

¹³ La struttura urbana sembra infatti rispondere nella sua compattezza al modello platonico, mentre nell'apparente mancanza di una rete di *plateiai* e nella presenza di strade strette e difficili da percorrere tra un isolato e l'altro, riflette in parte la proposta aristotelica, rivelando quanto consolidata nel tempo fosse l'esigenza di quella *taxis* che sfocerà nella discussa 'esperienza ippodamica'. (ERDAS, 2006, p. 50)

¹⁴ In the books XI-XIII Greek history is narrated from 480 to 405 B.C. Diodorus deals with the events that occurred in parallel in mainland Greece, Sicily, Magna Grecia and, to a lesser extent, Rome. See MICCICHE, 2016, p. 5-35.

¹⁵ It is a little surprising that Diodorus chose "*phourion*" for one of the most important Sikan centers and belonged to an important mythological tradition for Greek culture. Perhaps the different geographical origins and formation of the two authors influenced the perception of the Hellenic world, already so distant in time.

¹⁶ To this day the location of this town is still unknown, but many archaeologists and historians have suggested Vassallaggi or Sabucina to be the site where Motyon was once settled (see LO MONACO, 2018, p. 193-194).

¹⁷ About the origin of the idea of the superiority of Greek and Latin cultures and how it affected the culture of modern Europe, see DIETLER, 2005.

¹⁸ On this subject see also MOGGI, 2008, particularly p. 55-57.

¹⁹ The same concept is associated with the rhizome already considered by Malkin (2003, p. 56-57).

²⁰ There are several approaches that work with this concept, among the most recent ones, *cf.* DER; FERNANDINI, 2016.

²¹ The resignification of objects is part of this process of change and redefinition of culture. We point to the case study developed by the researcher Maritxell Ferrer (2013) on the acropolis in the native centers of central Sicily, during the transition phase between protohistory and the Archaic period.

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