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Articles

Romanticizing etymology or cool reason? A note on the toponym *Salobreña*

¿Etimología romántica o razón fría? Una nota sobre el topónimo Salobreña

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Abstract

The article presents arguments for a Phoenician-Punic etymology of the toponym *Salobreña* proposing a reconstruction based on phonological, semantic and cultural evidence. It is argued that the original name was based on the expression *Ṣalam Baal* 'Face of Baal' which was an epithet of the goddess Astarte. The toponym is reconstructed as the so-called *nisba* adjectival form with the meaning '[a town] of Ṣalam Baal'. This reconstruction complies with the later Greco-Latin and Arabic versions of the name of the town and with the modern Spanish pronunciation which in part continues the Latinized form but which also shows an effect of reanalysis toward a semantically transparent adjective *salobre* with the meaning of 'brackish'. This analysis is supported by historical facts, such as the presence of an early Phoenician-Punic settlement in Salobreña and the cult of Astarte. It also takes into account other factors which increase the probability of the proposed reconstruction, such as the popularity of Semitic toponyms in the *nisba*-form and a good chance of naming a town in a new colony after the goddess who was a patroness of sailors.
Keywords: ancient Iberia; Astarte; onomastics; Phoenician culture; toponym *Salobreña*.

Resumen

El artículo presenta argumentos a favor de una etimología fenicio-púnica del topónimo Salobreña proponiendo una reconstrucción basada en evidencias fonológicas, semánticas y culturales. Se argumenta que el nombre original se basó en la expresión Ṣalam Baal 'Rostro de Baal', que era un epíteto de la diosa Astarté. El topónimo se reconstruye como la forma adjetival llamada *nisba* con el significado de "[una ciudad] de Ṣalam Baal". Esta reconstrucción cumple con las versiones subsecuente greco-latinas y árabes del nombre del pueblo y con la pronunciación del español moderno que en parte continúa la forma latinizada pero que también muestra un efecto de reanálisis hacia un adjetivo semánticamente transparente con el significado de 'salobre'. El estudio se apoya en hechos históricos, como la presencia de un asentamiento fenicio-púnico temprano en Salobreña y el culto a Astarté. También tiene en cuenta otros factores que aumentan la probabilidad de la reconstrucción propuesta, como la popularidad de los topónimos semíticos en forma de *nisba* y una buena posibilidad de nombrar un pueblo en una nueva colonia en honor a la diosa que era patrona de los marineros.
Palabras clave: antigua Iberia; Astarté; cultura fenicia; onomástica; topónimo Salobreña.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Salobreña is a town located on the Spanish Costa Tropical about 90 km east from Malaga. Its population of permanent residents slightly exceeds 12 000, but the town has become very popular with tourists during the summer season. Major tourist attractions include the 11th century Arab castle surrounded by the picturesque old town with the *pueblo* housing and the small peninsula El Peñón 'The Rock'. Apart from the tourism, Salobreña's economy is based on agricultural products, such as, sugar cane, custard apple, avocado, mango and other fruit and vegetables.

According to historical and archeological sources, the town was founded by the Phoenicians around the eighth to sixth centuries BCE and was under Punic influence later on. The ruins of a Punic sanctuary, dated 2nd century BCE (Arteaga Matute *et al*. 1992: 360, Ferrer Albelda 2004: 113), have been excavated on El Peñón – the protruded rock which at that time was a small island. The later rule by the Romans did not leave any known archeological traces in Salobreña itself, but remains of pottery and various constructions have been discovered in the neighboring area. Salobreña was under the Arab rule since the beginning of the 8th century until the 1492 when the emirate of Granada surrendered to the Castilians.

The contemporary Spanish name of the town has an apparently transparent etymology, being the feminine form of the adjective *salobreño*, i.e, *salobreña* which means 'brackish' or 'containing plenty of salt' and is used with reference to land[1]. However, the modern name is probably due to folk etymology, and the contamination of an earlier non-transparent toponym of a Greco-Roman, Phoenician-Punic, or perhaps other origin.

In the remainder of this paper, previous proposals on the toponym's etymology are sketched in Section 2. Section 3 provides some cultural background on the origin and cult of Salambó in Iberia and Section 4 analyzes phonological changes which affected the goddess's name. The main Section 5 focusses on reconstruction of the toponym in the most ancient form and subsequent phonological changes. The results are summarized in the conclusion.

2. PREVIOUS ETYMOLOGIES

In most previous analyses, the etymology of *Salobreña* is traced to its pronunciation in Greek as *Sēlámbina*[2]. This form of the toponym is mentioned by Claudius Ptolemy and could be used in Latin in the similar form, **Selambina* or **Salambina*, although, as Márquez Cruz (2005) observes, the toponym is not found in any of the original Roman sources. Assuming the Greco-Latin version to be the original name, there appeared proposals in favor of its Indo-European etymology. These analyses also assume that the town of Salobreña, in addition to being called **Selambina*, can also be identified with the toponym *Sel* (*Suel*) which is mentioned by Latin authors, such as Pomponius Mela and Pliny the Elder (cf. Jacob 1985, Márquez Cruz 2005, Correa Rodriguez 2016, and other references therein). Accordingly, the original name is judged to have had a complex structure consisting of the root **sal* in the meaning related to the sea, such as 'current of water', 'sea' or 'salt', and some descriptive term following it. Until recently, the most accepted theory seemed to be that the subsequent adjective was *ambi(s)na*, which reflected the Indo-European locative element **m$_o$bhi* 'around'. Some analyses construct

[1] Spanish Dictionary, *Real Academia Española*, https://dle.rae.es/salobre%C3%B1o, accessed on March 1st, 2023.

[2] In Greek Σηλάμβινα, with the stress on the penultimate syllable.

the meaning of the toponym as "the place surrounded by the sea", which, as Márquez Cruz (2005: 179) argues, seems inadequate for Salobreña, which in ancient times was built on a peninsula, not on an island[3]. This etymology is not convincing for other reasons as well. The major problem is the syntax of the alleged expression in which the locative element is postpositional, contrary to the normal use of prepositions in Indo-European languages like Greek, Latin or Celtic, which could be possible source languages of the expression[4]. A different interpretation of the compound structure is offered by Jacob (1985: 266), who argues that *ambina* was a Greek term indicating the 'border' position, which, according to the author, was an adequate name in the case of Salobreña, situated up the hill, but near the delta of the river Guadalfeo.

Based on the same root **sal*, a slightly different etymology is put forward in a more recent analysis by Correa Rodriguez (2016). According to him, the town of Salobreña, in addition to being called **Selambina* and identified with the toponym *Sel*, appears in documents of the Council of *Iliberri* (or *Elvira*, modern Granada) under the alternative name *Segalbinia* (Correa Rodríguez 2016: 441-442). The author proposes that the latter form consisted of the noun *Sel* and an adjective which could be Latin *albinea* 'whitish' or *galbinia* 'yellowish green'. Thus, the original toponym would have had the form **Selalbinia* or **Selgalbinia*. According to Correa Rodríguez, the former was Arabized as **Selaubenia* and later became *Šalawbinya* (*Šalūbinya*); still later, the Arabic form gave rise to the Castilian name *Salobreña*, with an additional epenthetic *r*.

The opinion that *Salobreña* is a hydronym related to the Indo-European root **sal* is also shared by García Sánchez (2007: 39). However, this author does not exclude the possibility of different etymologies, either related to the adjective *salobre* 'brackish' (García Sánchez 2007: 292), or even a Phoenician/Punic origin of the toponym, as in the case of other coastal towns, such as *Sexi* (presently *Almuñécar*), *Málaga*, or *Cádiz* (García Sánchez 2007: 49-50).

There are several weaknesses in the proposed Indo-European etymologies sketched above. The major problem lies in the fact that the postulated adjective-like elements are chosen *ad hoc*, on the basis of their sound similarity only and are not fully substantiated on semantic grounds. From a phonological perspective, it is left without an explanation why the root **sal* has a reflex with the *e*-vowel or the diphthong *ue* in *S(u)el*. There is also a doubt about the two names, *Sel* and **Selambina*, referring to the same place name because, possibly, they were two different toponyms. In this context, it is worthwhile to notice that the town called *Suel* (*Sualis*) in the Roman era is identified with a different location, Castillo de Sohail at the river Fuengirola (Simón-Vallejo *et al.* 2020: 248). Among the forms attested in the early sources, Latin *Segalbinia* cannot be assumed to be the original name, because it appears in the documents of the Council of *Iliberri* from the 4th until the 7th century only, while in the later Arabic sources from the 12th and 13th centuries the Arabic town's name resembles **Selambina* rather than *Segalbinia* (Arteaga Matute *et al.* 1992: 361, cf. also section 5). It is most likely, therefore, that *Segalbinia* was either a corrupted form or it referred to a different place. It should also be noticed that none of the analyses accounts for the fact that the Arabic adaptation of the name of the town starts with the initial consonant *š*, an issue to be discussed in Section 5. Taking into account the fact that ancient Salobreña was founded by Phoenicians, it had to have a name prior to the arrival of Romans and Greeks; therefore, one could also ask why the newcomers changed the name of the city instead of adapting the existing one to

[3] Only El Peñón, a present day rocky promontory, was a small islet.

[4] The linguistic situation in ancient southern Iberia was very complex, cf. García Alonso (2022).

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their own pronunciation. In this respect, it is worthwhile to observe that neither Arabs nor Spaniards changed Salobreña's name for their own ones at the later times.

Another hypothesis on the etymology of this place-name is based on Phoenician-Punic roots of the toponym and the sound resemblance of **Selambina/*Salambina* to *Salambó* (*Salambo*) — the Greco-Latinized name of the goddess venerated in ancient Iberia. The phonological resemblance is so striking that the relevant etymology apparently does not need to be supported by any additional evidence. Millás Vallicrosa (1941: 315) just says: "[the toponym Selambina] is obviously related to the name of the goddess Salambó, whose cult was practiced by Punic-Iberians"[5]. The same conviction is shared by Ferrer Albelda (2004), who also links the ancient toponym **Salambina* to the name of the goddess Salambó, whose name was a Latinized version of Ṣalam Baal, one of the epithets of Astarte. However, as Ferrer Albelda (2004: 113) himself notes, "the Phoenician-Punic etymology of this toponym is judged by Solà Solé[6] as "extremely debatable""[7]. To my knowledge, no scholars have discussed the Phoenician-Punic hypothesis in detail.

In this paper, a number of arguments in favor of this line of etymology will be presented suggesting a linguistic reconstruction which, however, is not based on the Latinized name Salambó, but on its original Semitic pronunciation as Ṣalam Baal. With a so-called *nisba* suffix, the toponym is assumed to have the meaning of '[the town] of/dedicated to Ṣalam Bāl'. This etymology is strongly supported by the archeological and historical evidence, but most of all by the cultural traditions continued in the Mediterranean in general, and on the Iberian coast in particular.

3. FROM INANNA (ISHTAR) TO SALAMBÓ

A major goddess worshipped by Phoenicians was Astarte and her cult spread within their Mediterranean colonies between the 10th and 2nd centuries BCE (Bloch-Smith 2014: 167). As an important goddess of many different characteristics and powers, but most of all, as a patroness of sailors, "Astarte is bound up with the vicissitudes of the Phoenician colonization of the West" (Vázquez Hoys 1998: 99)[8]. The Astarte cult in the Iberian Peninsula is well attested not only in the coastal area, but also further into the interior (Ferrer Albelda 2004, Salinas de Frías 2013: 262).

Even though the Phoenician religion evolved over time and the deities' names changed, it was generally "conservative" in that it continued the earlier Babylonian cults and rituals (Markoe 2000: 115). The Levantine goddess Astarte, too, is traced to Ishtar, whose name was an Akkadian version of the Sumerian chief goddess Inanna as far back as the second millennium BCE (Frayne and Stuckey 2021: 143, Markoe 2000: 116). Like other major gods and goddesses, Astarte was known under many different names and epithets; according to Bloch-Smith (2014: 186), their number actually amounted to hundreds.

[5] „[el topónimo Selambina] seguramente ha de explicarse por el nombre de la diosa Salambó" (Millás Vallicrosa 1941: 315).

[6] Cf. Solà-Solé (1959: 499).

[7] "la etimología fenicio-púnica de este topónimo es juzgada por Sola Solé como "extremadamente discutible"" (Ferrer Albelda 2004: 113).

[8] "Astarté está unida a los avatares de la colonización fenicia de Occidente" (Vázquez Hoys 1998: 99).

One of Astarte's popular epithets was the expression Ṣalam Bāl (e.g., Lapeyre and Pellegrin 1942: 138, Seow 1999: 322). The first component of the name contains the Semitic radical *ṣlm* with the initial "emphatic" consonant, that is, the ejective alveolar affricate *t͡sʼ*. Among the many meanings of *ṣalmu* in *The Assyrian Dictionary*, those which might be relevant for a goddess's name include 'statue' or 'image' (Oppenheim 1962: 79), 'face' of a deity (Oppenheim 1962: 83), or, metaphorically, 'likeness' (Oppenheim 1962: 85). Taking all these possibilities into account, it can be then proposed that *Ṣalmu Baal* may imply that the goddess is Baal's image, or, she is like, or perhaps even equal to Baal (cf. *ṣalam Marduk* 'the very image/ like Marduk', Oppenheim 1962: 85). Therefore, the epithet could have a highly honorific value, elevating the goddess's status to that of the principal male deity. There have been, however, various other hypotheses proposed to explain what that attribute actually meant; for example, that it implied the presence of Baal, or the goddess's dependence on him (e.g., Smith 2014: 63, Markoe 2000:130). This epithet of Astarte is attested in Phoenician/Punic inscriptions in another wording as *Pene Baal (Ba'lu)* 'Face of Baal' (Frayne and Stuckey 2021: 339, Markoe 2000: 130, Smith 2014: 62), and it also appears in texts in other languages, for example, in Aramaic (Smith 2014: 55).

With the Phoenician colonization of the Western coasts and islands of the Mediterranean Sea the Astarte cult began to acquire distinct features in particular regions. The goddess's attributes and conventionalized names were also prone tovariation. The principal goddess of Carthage was called Tanit (Tanith) and there is some controversy as to whether Astarte and Tanit were one goddess, with the latter name used in North Africa, or whether they were two different goddesses, or perhaps two faces of one (e.g., González Alcalde 1997: 330, Bloch-Smith 2014: 167, Markoe 2000: 118, Smith 2014: 62).

It is the Ṣalam Baal epithet of Astarte which became the source of her new name on the Iberian Coast. Under the Latinized form *Salambó* (*Salambo*) or *Salambina*, Astarte became worshipped in Cadiz, Seville and other Iberian towns (e.g., Lapeyre and Pellegrin 1942: 138, García y Bellido 1962, Santos Yanguas 2013). Her cult was attested until the 3rd century CE and presumably merged to some extent with the veneration of the Greek goddess Aphrodite and her Roman counterpart Venus. The festivals honoring Salambó, which took place in Southern Iberia, were similar in form to those devoted to Aphrodite in Greece known as *Adonia* (see e.g., Dillon 2003, Santos Yanguas 2013). In both regions the celebrations involved processions of women and focused on a female deity who mourns her lover Adonis — the disappearing and returning "dying" god. When describing the *Adonia* holiday in Athens, Dillon (2003) observes that even though it had a mournful aspect, it provided an occasion for joyful entertainment and drinking wine. The ceremonies also included a symbol of the god's resurrection in the form of fast growing plants.

There is a general consensus that the cult of Adonis, whose name was a Greek adaptation of the Semitic expression *adonai* 'my lord', had roots in Near East. The motif of a major female deity weeping over her lover — the dying-and-rising god — is already found in the oldest religious tradition of the second millennium BCE Mesopotamia. It is represented by Inanna and her relationship with Dumuzi who, due to his cyclic disappearances into the Netherland and resurrections, embodied "spring vegetation" (Frayne and Stuckey 2021: 76). It was already the Dumuzi festival which started a tradition of women's celebrations replicated throughout the Mediterranean. The Phoenician gods, Eshmun in Sidon and Melqart in Tyre, as well as the Egyptian god Osiris, were also worshipped as dying-and-rising gods (e.g., Markoe 2000: 115, Frayne and Stuckey 2021: 7, García y Bellido 1967: 8). It can be hypothesized that this motif was brought into Iberia with the Phoenician settlers in some —perhaps limited—

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form, and then revived under the influence of Greek *Adonia*; although further research is needed in order to explain how this merger may have proceeded.

Later, the cult of Salambó came into conflict with Christianity. The tension between the two religions is symbolized in the Christian tradition by a legend of two martyrs who lived in Seville at the end of the 3rd century (e.g., Farmer 2011: 249, Romero Mensaque 2016). According to the story, the sisters Justa and Rufina attempted to interfere with the "pagan" festival in honor of Salambó. In one version of the legend, they refused to sell their pottery needed for the celebration; in another, they did not want to contribute a donation. In a subsequent violent argument, the goddess's followers smashed the merchandise sold by the two young potters, while the latter retaliated by breaking the statues of the deity. This led to their imprisonment and tragic death. The saints are commemorated on the 17th July.

4. PHONOLOGICAL CHANGES: FROM *ṢALAM BAAL* TO *SALAMBÓ*

As indicated earlier, the assumed oldest version of the goddess name is [t͡sʼɑlɑmbɑːl], pronounced with the initial ejective alveolar affricate *t͡sʼ*. This "emphatic" consonant has different correspondences in ancient and modern Semitic languages. It occurred as an affricate in Phoenician/Punic, written with the letter *ṣādē*, although, as Krahmalkov (2001: 24) points out, its articulation may have varied at different times, rendered in Latin inscriptions by diagraphs, such as *ts (tz), st, ss*, or by the single letter *s* or *t*. According to this author, in the Neo-Punic era, the *ṣādē* sound merged with the plain *s*(Krahmalkov 2001: 24). Therefore, if the name of Salambó was propagated in Iberia by the Phoenicians later, it could already have been pronounced with the *s*. However, the Greco-Latin adaptation of the goddess's name would have to turn out with an *s* as the initial consonant, even if the original name of the goddess had preserved a different reflex of the Semitic *ṣādē* sound. This is because consonant inventories of Greek and Latin were poorer than those of Semitic languages and neither of them contained affricates or the postalveolar spirant *š*. In fact, in Greek and Latin, the sibilant *s* is the only voiceless spirant found in the alveolar-(pre)palatal area, hence the consonant *s* results from a natural Greco-Latin adaptation of *any* other similar sound, including the spirant *š* and the affricate *t͡s*, not to mention the "emphatic" consonants, which are rare and difficult to pronounce. Once the goddess's name started to be used by non-Semitic people in Iberia, the adaptation of her name with the initial *s* (whether this sound was already there or not) was to be expected and actually provided the only reasonable option.

The most natural sequence of changes which took place in the word-final position assumes a process of final *l*velarization, followed by the vocalization and eventual loss of the final consonant, although, without written records, it is hard to determine when these changes took place. Cross-linguistically, the word final position favors the velarization of /l/; this process can be observed in many languages, including English, with the "light" alveolar /l/ in the onset, as in *lamp*, and the "dark" retracted /ɬ/ in the coda, as in *wall*. It is also common that the velarized /ɬ/ undergoes a subsequent process of vocalization and turns into the glide /w/ or the vowel /u/ or /o/[9]. Presumably, the name *Salambó* was pronounced with the final accent, as usually indicated by its spelling in the literature. Probably the final accent was an original feature of the super-heavy syllable with the long vowel and a coda consonant and was

[9] Both these processes may occur allophonically, depending on syllable position or the quality of adjacent vowels; they may have a character of a permanent diachronic change, as well (cf. Kraska-Szlenk *et al*. 2018 for more discussion and relevant references).

preserved after the loss of the final consonant and vowel shortening. Millás Vallicrosa (1941: 315) observes that the change of the final *-al* into *-ó* was regular in the Greek adaptation of Punic names, cf. Hannibo as the Greek version of Hannibal.

The proposed phonological changes are sketched below, although the mutual order of the changes at the word onset and the coda is impossible to be determined. Therefore, for the purpose of the presentation in (1), only partial structures are shown (accent is not indicated).

(1) Phonological changes: t͡sʼɑlɑmbɑːl > sɑlɑmbo

Changes in the onset:	Changes in the coda:
t͡sʼɑ > t͡sɑ > (ʃɑ) > sɑ	bɑːl > bɑːɬ > bɑːw > (bɑo) > bo

5. RECONSTRUCTING 'THE TOWN OF ṢALAM BAAL'

The archeologists conducting research on Salobreña's rock El Peñón in 1992 discovered remains of a Punic sanctuary dated 2nd century BCE. Based on the material evidence, it turns out that this island sanctuary (*isla santuario*) was devoted to a female deity, presumably Tanit, although she might have been venerated under a different name (Arteaga Matute et al. 1992: 360-361, Ferrer Albelda 2004: 113).

Taking into account the characteristic "prestigious" location of El Peñón — at that time a small islet close to the seashore, at the foot of the settlement, it is reasonable to assume that the sanctuary was dedicated to the goddess who was the town's patroness. It is likewise probable that the name of the town itself could derive from the goddess's name or her epithet. From a semantic perspective, such an appellation is perfectly adequate for a town built in a new colony: it can be an expression of gratitude to the patroness of sailors for her guidance in their successful voyage or an act of glory and plea for further protection. Notwithstanding, ancient cities were often named after gods, e.g. Baalbek (Baal), Athens (Athena), Dionysos (Dionysus), Herculaneum (Heracles), Thebes (*niwt-'imn*, 'City of Amun'). A similar etymology is probable in the case of another Andalusian place-name, that of Seville; the original toponym could possibly contain the name of the god *Baal*, i.e. *Hisbaal* or *Išbaal*, later Latinized as *Hispal* (*Hispalis*) (Correa 2000: 190, Pascual Barea 2013: 73-74).

As to the structure of the hypothesized name of ancient Salobreña, the proposed form consists of the Ṣalam Baal epithet followed by the so-called *nisba* suffix which renders the ultimate meaning of the toponym as 'of', 'belonging' or 'dedicated' to Ṣalam Baal. The *nisba* suffixes occur among Semitic languages in a variety of similar forms, as: *-īy, -īyy, -ī, -āy, āwī, -ya* (Moscati 1964: 83, Lipiński 2001: 229). Krahmalkov lists the Phoenician/Punic form as -ī which is attested in inscriptions, and another unattested variant as -īyy. For the feminine gender (in the singular), only the short form *-īt* is given (Krahmalkov 2001: 148). However, the reconstruction of the full *īyy*-variant in the feminine *nisba*-form would lead to the suffix *–īyyat*. I regard this form as an original suffix with which the *nisba* name of the town was coined. It is worthwhile to add that the *nisba*-structure is very popular in Semitic onomastics, as illustrated by the examples of the following place-names in Arabic – all derived from personal names: Alexandria in Egypt (*al-ʾIskandarīyah*), Mahdiya in Tunisia (*al-Mahdīyah*), Latakia in Syria (*al-Lāḏiqiyyah*), etc.

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Thus, the oldest version of the toponym is reconstructed as **Ṣalambāliyyat* (phonetically: t͡sʼɑlɑmbɑːlijjɑt), except that the quality of the initial consonant might have already been simplified in the Phoenician/Punic pronunciation, as previously discussed in section 4. Further changes which affected the onset and led to the *s*-initial pronunciation in the Greco-Latinized form are assumed to have happened under the same scenario as already argued for the name Salambó; in short, that was the only fricative acceptable to the speakers of Greek or Latin.

In this context, however, it is worthwhile to bring into attention an Arabic version of the name of the town. In an Arabic source from the 13th century, the book Kitāb Muʿjam al-Buldān by Yāqūt al-Rūmī al-Hamawī (1179–1229), the name of the city is written with the initial postalveolar voiceless sibilant š (IPA ʃ) and appears as *Šalūbiniya* (in the simplified transcription, cf. 'Abd Al-Karīm 1974: 197, Márquez Cruz 2005: 177[10]). The same form is used in Modern Standard Arabic, for example, in the Arabic language Wikipedia[11], although an alternative spelling, based on the current Spanish pronunciation, also occurs in contemporary Arabic. The initial *š* preserved in the Arabized version of the name strongly supports the hypothesis of the Phoenician (Punic) source of the word. Taking into account the multicultural and multilingual character of the Andalusian population in the Middle ages, it can be suggested that at the time of the Arabs' arrival, the local population could pronounce the name of the city with the initial consonant other than *s*: presumably the fricative *š* or the affricate *tš*, even though the Latinized version of the toponym surfaced with the *s*. If the name of the city had been of Greek or Latin origin, it would have always had the initial *s*, also at the time of the Arabs' arrival in Andalusia, and there would have been no reason for the Arabs to change the initial *s* for š. The Arabic language has the "plain" spirant *s*, called *sin* in the Arabic alphabet, as well as the "emphatic" (pharyngelized) *ṣ* called *ṣad*, and each of these consonants could have served in the adaptation of the toponym in Arabic, if its original name had begun with the sibilant *s*. Given the allophonic nature of the Arabic vowels *a* and *e*, the most natural Arabic adaptation of the supposed Greek/Latin **Selambina* would be with the initial consonant *sin* and, if the alleged original pronunciation were **Salambina*, it would have been most likely adapted into Arabic with the initial *ṣad*. The initial *š* of the Arabic version might suggest that this consonant originally had a different pronunciation than *s*. On the other hand, the Greek/Latin adaptation of *š* or *tš* would have to be the *s*-sound as the only possible pronunciation, as already discussed in section 4. Therefore, the initial alveolar *s* in the name of the town found in Ptolemy's script could reflect either an *ad hoc* adaptation to the Greek phonemic inventory by the historian or an already conventionalized Greek name of the town.

Another argument drawn from the Arabic version of the toponym concerns the word ending. The Arabic version *Šalūbiniya*[12] is one syllable longer than the Greek/Latin **Selambina* and contains a sequence which looks like a *nisba*-ending *iya(t)*. Here again, a natural assumption is that this was the original pronunciation (with the original Semitic *nisba*), otherwise, why would the Arabs decide to lengthen the name of the city by adding an extra syllable and the *nisba*-like ending? On the other hand, the Greek/Latin version is most naturally explained by the reduction of the word ending.

[10] Correa Rodriguez (2016: 442) gives other alternative forms: *Šalawbinya* and *Šalūbinya*.

[11] Accessed March 1st, 2023.

[12] The presence of the round vowel *ū* in the Arabic version could perhaps result from the coloring due to the following labial consonant *b*.

What remains to be accounted for is the middle-word *n* consonant of both **Salambina* and *Shalūbiniya* which is distinct from the reconstructed **l*. This change can be seen as dissimilation of the lateral after another lateral in the same word. Sequences of liquids often undergo dissimilatory changes which typically result in an *l-r* exchange, cf. Latin *sol* 'sun' and the adjective *sol**ā**r**is* instead of the expected **sol**ā**l**is*, likewise *luna* 'moon' and ***l**unā**r**is*. For comparison, the regular form of the suffix *-ālis* remains when the base does not contain the *l*, as e.g. *autumnus* 'autumn' and the adjective *autumnā**l**is*. The opposite change of *r* turning into *l* can be illustrated with Latin *a**r**bo**r*** and its reflex in Spanish as *á**r**bo**l***. However, an *l-n* dissimilatory exchange is also possible, cf. Latin ***l**ibe**ll**a* 'level' and Spanish ***n**ive**l***, or, in the opposite direction, Latin *ve**n**ē**n**um* 'poison' (cf. Spanish *ve**n**e**n**o*) and its reflex in Italian as *ve**l**e**n**o*. Thus, the proposed change in which the subsequent *l* was replaced with an *n* finds many cross-linguistic parallels within dissimilatory patterns affecting sonorants.

Both, the Greek version of the toponym and the Arabic one, demonstrate the dissimilatory nasalization of *l*, as well as the loss of the final consonant *t* of the feminine suffix. Therefore, these are the earliest changes which took place, in whichever order. Likewise, I assume that the simplified pronunciation of the initial consonant, with an intermediate stage as *š* (preserved in the Arabic pronunciation), as well as the degemination of the glide *j*, also took place relatively early. The same can be said about the medial *i*-vowel which replaced the original *a* before the subsequent syllable with the high vowel followed by the glide *j*. This vowel copying has an obvious assimilatory (vowel harmony) character. For the purpose of presentation, all these early changes, which are hard to place in a chronological order, are indicated with respect to theposition in the word, as shown in (2) below. Few subsequent changes followed in the Greek/Latin and Arabic versions of the toponym independently of each other. At the final stage, the place name was adapted into Spanish by reanalysis so that its meaning could be semantically transparent. In the process of reanalysis, the toponym acquired a transparent meaning as 'brackish', in parallel to other place names containing the adjective *salobreño/a* 'brackish', e. g., Barranco Salobreña (Puebla de Arenoso, Castellón) or Fuente Salobreña (La Iruela, Jaén)[13]. It is likely that before folk etymology did its work, an intrusive *r* was inserted after the *mb* cluster, in a somewhat similar fashion as in the case of *Alhambra* which has its origin in Arabic *Al-Ḥamrā'*, pronounced as [ʔalħamraːʔ].

(2) Chronology of phonological changes

a/ Early changes

word-initially:

t͡sʼalambaːlijjat > t͡salambaːlijjat (loss of glottalization) > ʃalambaːlijjat (spirantization)

word-finally:

ʃalambaːlijjat > ʃalambaːlijja (final t-loss)

word-medially:

ʃalambaːlijja > ʃalamaːnijja (lateral dissimilation) > ʃalambanijja (long vowel shortening) > ʃalambinijja (vowel copying) > ʃalambinija (degemination)

b/ Subsequent changes in Greek/Latin version:

[13] I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer for bringing these toponyms to my attention.

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ʃalambinija > salambinja (sibilant replacement) > salambina (reduction)

c/ Subsequent changes in Arabic version:
ʃalambinija > ʃalu:binija (m-loss with compensatory lengthening and vowel coloring)

d/ Spanish changes:
salambina > salambrina (r-insertion) > salobreɲa (reanalysis)

The sketched scenario assumes that at the time of the Arabs' arrival there were two slightly different pronunciations of the name of the town, spoken by different groups of people: [ʃalambinija] of a more "Semitic" touch and the Latinized and reduced version [salambina]. Each of these names underwent subsequent changes in parallel: the Arabized version [ʃalu:binija], attested in the 13th century, has been used until now in literary Arabic as an alternative form, while the present Spanish form has resulted mostly as an effect of reanalysis of a semantically opaque name toward a more transparent one.

An alternative, slightly different scenario is to derive the modern Spanish toponym *Salobreña* directly from the Arabic version (cf. Correa Rodriguez 2016: 441). Given that the Arabs' rule in Andalusia lasted for almost eight centuries, Spanish adaptation of Arabic toponyms is commonly found, for example, in the case of the toponym *Sevilla* 'Seville' (Latinized *Hispalis*) which developed from Arabic *Išbīliya* (Pascual Barea 2013: 67). If this had happened in the case of Salobreña, the phonological change of the initial consonant, long vowel shortening and the reduction of the ending would have to precede the final stage of reanalysis, viz. [ʃalu:binija] > [salubiɲa] > [salobreɲa]. Perhaps future research will reveal historical evidence which may shed light on this issue and the exact path which led to developing the modern Spanish version of the name of Salobreña.

CONCLUSION

This paper has provided arguments for a Phoenician-Punic source of the toponym *Salobreña* proposing that the original name of the town indicated devotion to the goddess Astarte referred to by the epithet Ṣalam Bāl. The same appellation provided a name for the Iberian goddess known as Salambó or Salombona. However, it has been argued that both these names evolved independently and the Greco-Latin version of the toponym *Salambina* could not directly derive from *Salambó*. Such a scenario would not have been possible on historical grounds, because the town was founded by Phoenicians, not Greeks or Romans; therefore, it must have had a Semitic name prior to the Latinization of Ṣalam Bāl as Salambó. Another crucial argument is presented by the Arabic version of the town's name *Šalūbiniya* which shows the initial postalveolar sibilant *š* which represents either an intermediate stage in the change from the original emphatic affricate *t͡sʼ*, presumably already present in the pronunciation of the town's founders, or, alternatively, the Arabization of the original affricate. The Arabic version of the name of the town also supports the proposed hypothesis of the original *nisba* form of the toponym which is not only semantically adequate in its meaning '[town] of Ṣalam Bāl' but finds its reflex in the *nisba*-like ending of the Arabic name.

The reconstructed phonological changes which led to the Latinized and Arabic versions of the toponym comply with the proposed etymology. In fact, all these changes are very natural as phonological processes and find cross-linguistic parallels. Perhaps the least obvious change

which affected the original form was an early substitution of the lateral *l* by the nasal *n*, but this type of sporadic dissimilation of sonorant sequences is also cross-linguistically attested. The proposed changes also conform to the structural requirements of target languages. This explains why the initial consonant of the toponym surfaced as an alveolar sibilant *s* in the Greco-Latin and Spanish versions and as a postalveolar *š* in the Arabized form.

The paper has also discussed the cultural background which provides an important support for the hypothesized original name of the toponym. The historical and archeological evidence argues without any doubt that Salobreña was founded by Phoenicians, hence, there is a good chance that the Romans and Greeks adapted an existing toponym to their own languages, as the Spaniards did many centuries later. The goddess Astarte occupied an important position in the Phoenician pantheon and was a patroness of sailors. This made her a very good candidate for a symbolic protector of a settlement founded in a new colony, with her honorary epithet immortalized in the name of the town.

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