

Carthago Indiarum obsesa (sic) sed non expugnata: New Punic Wars in the New World

There is no denying that Philip II's attempt to conquer England with his Spanish Armada is still considered today a humiliation for Spain. All over the globe students learn about Spain's disastrous defeat at the hands of the English. Lesser known, however, is the Spanish victory over England's "Other Armada" (Victoria 2005). This war marked a turning point for the establishment of the Spanish empire in the New World. The victory was celebrated in *Carthago Indiarum obsesa (sic) sed non expugnata*, a Neo-Latin poem first published in Madrid in 1742 by a hitherto anonymous author. This poem stands as a witness to the vibrant Latinity and the classical tradition that flourished in the Spanish colonies. The paper will analyze the poem in three ways: first, it will situate the poem in the context of a crucial event that shaped a continent; second, it will offer a literary and linguistic interpretation of the poem highlighting the relationship between Cartagena de Indias and ancient Carthage; finally, it will consider the importance of Latin written either in the New World or about the New World, and the need to explore the immense and latent treasures which such Latin literature can offer to our understanding of both past and present events.

The work is an encomium of a military victory. The reader is introduced to a two-fold celebration, because both the poet and the city of Cartagena sing about its greatness, often times debasing the English navy and its homeland. This paper will offer a detailed analysis of the poem. It will also look into the parallels between Cartagena de Indias and ancient Carthage. Both cities were imperial strongholds and suppliers of wealth, since they were situated near many natural resources including silver and gold mines. The Caribbean was to Cartagena de Indias what *Mare Nostrum* was to Carthage; their seas were channels by which they transmitted wealth (Victoria 2005). Furthermore, Cartagena de Indias and ancient Carthage both resisted major expanding empires, one Rome, the other England. Finally, considering the reasons why the poem was written in Latin, this paper will address the

important role that Latin played in the New World even in the eighteenth century. After the expulsion of the Jesuits of the Americas in 1767 the use of Latin drastically declined (Laird 2006, 32). However, this poem is a witness that Latin and the classical patrimony were not abandoned. *Carthago obsesa (sic) sed not expugnata* is, like much of Neo-Latin in the New World, an underappreciated work which demands greater attention.

Bibliography

Carthago obsesa sed non expugnata. Madrid, 1742.

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