

**REVIEWER'S REPORT**

Manuscript No.: JNHST- 020

**Title:** A Historical and Geographical Reading of Rusadir (Melilla) through the Writings of Historians and Geographers,

**Recommendation:**

Accept after minor revision

Rating	Excel.	Good	Fair	Poor
Originality		✓		
Techn. Quality		✓		
Clarity		✓		
Significance	✓			

Reviewer's ID: JPR- 215

***Detailed Reviewer's Report***

The research article titled "A Historical and Geographical Reading of Rusadir (Melilla) through the Writings of Historians and Geographers" offers a meticulous and scholarly investigation into the ancient city of Rusaddir, known today as Melilla. By synthesizing classical Greco-Roman testimonies with modern archaeological data and the accounts of later medieval Arab geographers, the author reconstructs the spatial and cultural evolution of this strategic Mediterranean hub. The study is particularly significant for its ability to bridge the gap between "textual geography"—the descriptions found in the works of Strabo, Pliny the Elder, and Ptolemy—and the physical reality of the city's urban and commercial development over centuries.

The narrative begins by establishing the geographical primacy of Rusaddir. The author expertly describes its location on a rocky peninsula, emphasizing how its natural topography provided a dual advantage: a formidable defensive position and a sheltered port for maritime trade. This section effectively utilizes the

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accounts of ancient geographers like Pomponius Mela and Strabo to illustrate how the city served as a vital link between the Atlantic and the Mediterranean, and between the North African hinterland and the Iberian Peninsula. The analysis of the city's name, deriving from Phoenician roots meaning "Powerful Cape," provides an essential etymological foundation that underscores its long-standing status as a site of maritime authority.

A substantial portion of the article is dedicated to the transition of Rusaddir from a Phoenician-Punic settlement to a Roman *municipium*. The author provides a detailed critical analysis of the administrative and urban transformations that occurred during the Roman period, particularly under the reign of Emperor Claudius. The discussion on the city's integration into the province of Mauretania Tingitana is handled with academic rigor, highlighting how Roman infrastructure—roads, public buildings, and defensive walls—redefined the spatial landscape. The author's ability to correlate the "Itinerary of Antoninus" with physical routes in Northern Morocco adds significant empirical weight to the study, moving beyond theoretical speculation to provide a concrete map of ancient connectivity.

The paper's exploration of the medieval period, through the lens of scholars like Al-Bakri and later references to Ibn Khaldun, provides a necessary longitudinal perspective. The author evaluates how the city's function shifted following the Islamic conquests, maintaining its importance as a naval base and a commercial center for trade in gold, salt, and textiles. This section is particularly insightful as it addresses the city's role in the geopolitical struggles between various North African dynasties and its eventual significance during the European maritime expansion. The narrative effectively illustrates that Rusaddir/Melilla was never a static entity but a "palimpsest" of overlapping cultural and political layers.

Furthermore, the article addresses the methodology of using classical sources, acknowledging the limitations and biases inherent in ancient historiography. The author argues that while geographers like Pliny the Elder may have relied on earlier, sometimes outdated accounts, their descriptions are indispensable when cross-referenced with modern archaeological findings. This critical self-reflection on the sources themselves enhances the article's scholarly value, positioning it as not just a history of a city, but a study in the methodology of historical geography.

In summary, this article provides a comprehensive and deeply researched account of Rusaddir's historical trajectory. It successfully navigates the complexities of ancient and medieval sources to present a cohesive narrative of urban and maritime history. The author's multidisciplinary approach—combining philology, archaeology, and geography—makes this a vital contribution to Mediterranean studies. It is an essential read for historians and geographers interested in the long-term dynamics of North African coastal cities and the enduring impact of classical antiquity on the regional spatial landscape.

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**REVIEWER'S REPORT****Recommendations for Minor Revisions****Cartographic and Visual Enhancements**

- **Inclusion of a Comparative Map:** While the text describes the locations mentioned by Strabo and Ptolemy in great detail, the article would benefit immensely from a reconstructed map of the region as it appeared in the 1st century CE, juxtaposed with a modern map of Melilla. This would help the reader visualize the "spatial landscape" described in the methodology.
- **Archaeological References:** The paper mentions modern archaeological studies; however, it would be strengthened by including a brief description or a list of specific artifacts (such as Punic pottery or Roman coinage) found at the site that confirm the timelines established by the classical texts.

**Theoretical Integration**

- **Maritime Theory:** The analysis could be deepened by briefly engaging with Fernand Braudel's concepts of "the long durée" or the "Mediterranean world." Discussing Rusaddir as a constant point of exchange within a shifting geopolitical sea would provide a broader theoretical context for its persistent strategic importance.
- **Urban Morphology:** A more detailed discussion on the "grid" or urban layout of the Roman *municipium* versus the earlier Punic settlement would enhance the geographical reading of the city's physical growth.

**Technical and Citational Clarifications**

- **Greco-Roman Source Context:** The author should briefly mention the specific editions or translations of the classical texts used (e.g., Loeb Classical Library) to ensure future researchers can follow the exact citations.
- **Terminology:** In the discussion of the "Cape of the Three Forks," providing a brief geological explanation of the peninsula's formation would complement the historical reading of its strategic value.

**Recommendation:** Recommend for publication with minor revision.