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Phoenicians

William A. Ward

*The glory of Lebanon will come to you,
the pine, the fir and the cypress together,
to adorn the place of my sanctuary.*

—Isaiah 60:13

The word *Phoenician* comes from an ancient Greek nickname for the people and cities of the eastern Mediterranean littoral during the first millennium.¹ Phoenicia lies along a narrow coastal strip for roughly two hundred miles, from the island of Aradus (modern Arwad) in the north to Tyre in the south. The Lebanon mountain range to the east has throughout history created a political and cultural barrier between the coast and inland Syria. While rain falls in the region only during the winter months, mountain springs provide water the rest of the year for the rich agricultural land along the sea. The land is limited, however, and the cities founded around the natural harbors of the coast remained small. The great coniferous forests that once blanketed the mountains were the major natural resource of ancient Phoenicia and the basis for an active export trade in lumber, wood, oil, and resin.²

The present essay deals with the "classical" Phoenicians of the Iron Age (ca. 1200–332), though this civilization did not spring into history without antecedents.³ The Iron Age Phoenicians represent a later phase of the general

1. For the theories on the origin of the Greek term, see Claude Vandersleyen, "L'Étymologie de Phoinix, 'Phénicien,'" in *Phoenicia and the East Mediterranean in the First Millennium B.C.*, ed. Édouard Lipiński, *Studia Phoenicia* 5 (Louvain: Peeters, 1987), 19–22; Michael C. Astour, "Origin of the Terms 'Canaan,' 'Phoenician,' and 'Purple,'" *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 24 (1965): 346–50; James D. Muhly, "Homer and the Phoenicians: The Relations between Greece and the Near East in the Late Bronze and Early Iron Ages," *Berytus* 19 (1970): 24–30.

2. See John P. Brown, *The Lebanon and Phoenicia: Ancient Texts Illustrating Their Physical Geography and Native Industries*, vol. 1: *The Physical Setting and the Forest* (Beirut: American University of Beirut Press, 1969), chap. 5.

3. Wolfgang Röllig, "On the Origins of the Phoenicians," *Berytus* 31 (1983): 79–93; Robert R. Stieglitz, "The Geopolitics of the Phoenician Littoral in the Early Iron Age," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 279 (1990): 9–12.

Canaanite culture that goes back into the third millennium and beyond. They were still Canaanite, but are distinguished from their ancestors and neighbors by their own unique culture.

A true history of the Phoenician cities cannot be compiled since we lack sufficient written and archeological documentation. Most Iron Age texts from the Phoenician homeland are funerary in nature or treat the building and repair of temples and the dedication of objects to various deities. They yield very little of political import beyond the names of several kings of Byblos and Sidon.⁴ Much of what is recorded about Iron Age Phoenicia comes from Greek and Roman historians, the Old Testament, Mesopotamian and Egyptian records, and myths and legends from Homer and later classical works, though the latter deal primarily with Phoenician westward expansion.⁵ All of this material must be treated with varying degrees of caution since each source has its own bias and much of the information contained therein remains unverified by other evidence.

The archeological record is somewhat more informative, though very sparse for the earlier part of the period.⁶ Of the major coastal cities, Aradus has not been excavated due to its dense population. There are a few objects from Byblos or Beirut, though no architectural remains at all for the period 1200–600. Excavations at Sidon over several decades have uncovered splendid remains of the Persian period, including the well-known stone sarcophagi and a temple to Eshmun, but nothing of the city itself. The extensive work at Tyre has been concerned primarily with the Roman and Byzantine periods, though a recent excavation has gone down to Early Bronze Age levels in one area of the ancient island city. Lesser known coastal sites have also produced Iron Age material. In the region of Aradus, house remains and objects have been found at Tabbat al-Hammam, Tell Kazel (ancient Simyra), and Tell Arqa. At Amrit in the same region a sixth-century temple of Melqart has been excavated. South of Beirut an extensive tenth- to eighth-century cemetery has been found at Khaldé, and substantial material from

4. Collections of inscriptions include Herbert Donner and Wolfgang Röllig, *Kanaanäische und aramäische Inschriften*, 3 vols. (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1962–64); and Pietro Magnanini, *Le Iscrizioni Fenicie dell'Oriente* (Rome: Istituto di Studi del Vicino Oriente, 1973). Short texts naming owners of pottery vessels and the like continue to turn up in excavations from the Levant to Spain.

5. For a general orientation, see Guy Bunnens, *L'Expansion Phénicienne en Méditerranée: Essai d'interprétation Fondé sur une Analyse des Traditions Littéraires* (Brussels: Institut Historique Belge de Rome, 1979).

6. Surveys of the archeological material include James B. Pritchard, *Recovering Sarepta: A Phoenician City* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), chap. 2; Patricia M. Bikai, "The Phoenicians," in *The Crisis Years: The Twelfth Century B.C.*, ed. William A. Ward and Martha S. Joukowsky (Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall/Hunt, 1992), chap. 16.

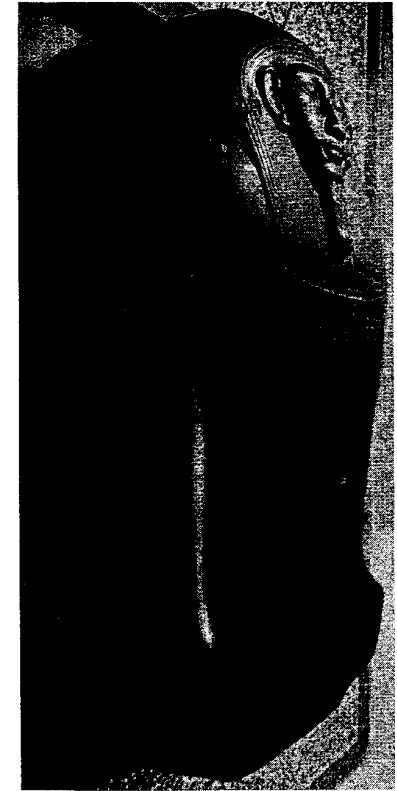
several cemeteries in south Lebanon has now been published. A major excavation has been carried out at Sarepta (modern Sarafand, biblical Zarephath where Elijah visited; 1 Kings 17:8–24) south of Sidon where houses, shrines, and a number of pottery kilns (all tenth century and later) have been found. There is also a growing body of evidence for strong Phoenician influence along the northern coast of Israel from Acco to the Yarkon Valley.

History

In terms of political events, the history of Iron Age Phoenicia can be divided into two phases: (1) from the advent of the Sea Peoples in the twelfth century to the initial Assyrian assault on the region in 876 and (2) from 876 to the conquests of Alexander in 332. Following 332, the Phoenician cities were gradually absorbed into the new Hellenistic Orient, losing their unique native character.

The first phase is little known and much must be inferred from indirect evidence. There is much disagreement about the role played by the western Sea Peoples in fostering the Phoenician maritime dominance of the Iron Age.⁷ To some, these invaders were instrumental in motivating the Phoenician cities to assume mastery of the sea after the collapse of a previous Late Bronze Age Mycenaean thalassocracy. Others argue that the Sea Peoples had little if anything to do with Phoenician enterprise; there is no hard evidence of the Sea Peoples in Phoenicia, the

7. Nancy K. Sandars, *The Sea Peoples: Warriors of the Mediterranean* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1978). The latest survey is Ward and Joukowsky, *Crisis Years*.



Sarcophagus of King Eshmunazar II of Sidon, 5th century B.C. (height: 7' 6")

Courtesy of the Louvre Museum

coastal cities already had a long history of dominance in East Mediterranean waters, and it is even possible that the Phoenicians became allies of these invaders from the west. Whatever their role, the arrival of the Sea Peoples was roughly concurrent with a series of major events that formed a watershed in the history of the Phoenician cities: the collapse of most empires and kingdoms around the Mediterranean and the appearance of new political entities such as the Philistines, Hebrews, and Arameans. The world order of the Late Bronze Age gave way to a time of readjustment, after which empires from the east established a new political orientation.

For Phoenicia, this time of readjustment began what many have called its "golden age." Its cities were now free of foreign interference and there was no external power to challenge internal development. This golden age appears to have emerged slowly. Of the initial two centuries, there is hardly any archeological material. Scant though the evidence is, however, it is apparent that some coastal cities in Phoenicia survived through this little-known period, though foreign trade was drastically curtailed.

Two well-known literary documents date to this period. The Egyptian "Story of Wenamon" recounts the commercial travels of a temple official to purchase timber at Byblos in approximately 1075.⁸ Wenamon's journey took him to the Philistine towns of Dor, Tyre, Sidon, and Byblos, plus the isle of Cyprus. All the coastal cities are portrayed as active seaports, and since the papyrus preserving this account is almost contemporary to the events it describes, there is no reason to doubt its description of the region. The other contemporary document records the Mediterranean campaign of Tiglath-pileser I (1114–1076) during which he received tribute from Byblos, Sidon, and Aradus.⁹ The text does not state what this tribute was, although it does note that Tiglath-pileser came to the Lebanon Mountains to obtain cedar for the construction of a temple in his capital. The two texts thus show that four of the primary Phoenician cities—Tyre, Sidon, Byblos, Aradus—were in existence at the beginning of the eleventh century and that the trade in coniferous woods was active at that time.

Under the Assyrians

The campaign of Tiglath-pileser was little more than a probing expedition, for he made no effort to create provinces from the "conquered" territories, mainly because for the next two centuries Assyrian rulers were busy at home with innumerable local wars. During this time of Assyrian quiescence, west-

8. ANET 25–29; Hans Goedicke, *The Report of Wenamon* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975).

9. ANET 274–75.

ward Phoenician expansion began and the archeological record in Phoenicia itself becomes somewhat more abundant. The coastal cities were free of external political pressures, were growing larger, and were looking to the west for much-needed raw materials.

In the early ninth century, Assyrian expansion began in earnest, and the royal annals, beginning with those of Ashurnasirpal II (883–859), record an ever-widening series of conquests that soon engulfed the Phoenician city-states.

Ashurnasirpal II marched through northern Syria and reached the seacoast in 876. While he speaks of military conquests inland, he notes only the collection of tribute from Tyre, Sidon, Byblos, the island kingdom of Aradus, and other coastal cities.¹⁰ The tribute list includes precious metals and manufactured items, and probably the timber that Ashurnasirpal cut in the Amanus Range north of the Lebanon Mountains. Shalmaneser III (858–824) led several campaigns to the region and frequently notes that he received tribute from Tyre, Sidon, and Byblos and that he cut down cedar in the Amanus Mountains.¹¹ The first hint that any Phoenician city was involved in actual fighting is seen at the Battle of Qarqar in 853, when Aradus sent a small infantry company of two hundred to join a coalition against Shalmaneser.

Adad-nirari III (810–783) includes Tyre and Sidon among cities paying tribute,¹² and the annals of Tiglath-pileser III (744–727) record the names of Phoenician kings who paid tribute: Shipit-Baal of Byblos, Mattan-Baal of Aradus, and Mattan and Hiram II of Tyre. The town of 'Arqa now appears for the first time among the tribute cities.¹³ With Sennacherib (704–681) comes the first recorded Assyrian siege and destruction of a Phoenician city: Sidon was taken along with its dependencies, including mainland Tyre and the north Palestinian towns of Achzib and Acco. The Sidonian ruler 'Ilu'ili was forced into exile on Cyprus,¹⁴ and a new king of that city was installed by Sennacherib.

Esarhaddon (680–669) speaks again of the destruction of the unhappy Sidon, the beheading of its king 'Abdimilkut, and the construction of a new city there. He likewise describes the conquest of Tyre and the seizure of all Tyrian vassal towns. Baalu of Tyre, Milk'asap of Byblos, and Mattan-Baal of Aradus are among a list of twenty-two rulers of the area forced to transport cedar logs to Nineveh.¹⁵ The final Assyrian intervention in Phoenicia came under

10. ANET 276.

11. ANET 279–81.

12. ANET 281.

13. ANET 283.

14. ANET 287–88.

15. ANET 290–91.

Ashurbanipal (668–627) during his Egyptian campaign. This time it was the island stronghold of Tyre that surrendered after a siege in which its food and water supplies were cut off. Yakinlu of Aradus also submitted to the Assyrians, and, when he died shortly thereafter, Ashurbanipal installed one of Yakinlu's sons on the throne.¹⁶

It is not possible to correlate the history of Assyrian interference in the west with the archeological record of Phoenicia, which can do little more than confirm the existence of the main cities mentioned in the literary sources. While Iron Age Byblos, mentioned constantly by Assyrian kings, is not preserved, the sarcophagus of Ahiram, a series of local inscriptions, and three royal statues of the Egyptian Dynasty 22 indicate that the city was in existence in the tenth and early ninth centuries. Egyptian alabasters looted from Sidon by Esarhaddon have been found at Ashur, and a contemporary fragment of an Egyptian libation table was found long ago at Aradus.¹⁷ Tyre shows continuous occupation up to the beginning of the seventh century. The constant reference to "Tyre, Byblos, and Aradus" by Assyrian kings, possibly a cliché meaning all of Phoenicia, is thus supported by the meager archeological material. Sarepta, mentioned but twice in the Assyrian annals and once in an Egyptian Ramesside composition, was a thriving town throughout this period.¹⁸ Arqa, mentioned only by Tiglath-pileser III, shows occupation for much of the period. By the tenth and ninth centuries, sites such as Tabbat al-Hammam, Tell Kazel, Khaldé, and several southern cemeteries indicate growing habitation and settlement of the country.

It is clear from the Assyrian annals that the Phoenician cities were not destroyed or even occupied by Assyrian armies until the early seventh century with the siege of Sidon by Sennacherib. Prior to this, amid the constant theme in the Assyrian annals of the destruction, conquest, or punishment of Aramean and north Syrian states,¹⁹ runs the counter-theme that tribute was collected from the Phoenician cities but they were not attacked. The distinction between the hinterland and the coast is that the small but powerful in-

16. ANET 295–96.

17. Jean Leclant, "Les Relations entre l'Égypte et la Phénicie du Voyage d'Ounamon à l'Expédition d'Alexandre," in *The Role of the Phoenicians in the Interaction of Mediterranean Civilizations*, ed. William A. Ward (Beirut: American University of Beirut Press, 1968), 12–13.

18. Sarepta was not ordinarily mentioned by the Assyrians since it was a dependency of Sidon, as stated in the Esarhaddon text and 1 Kings 17:9. For the Egyptian reference see ANET 477 and Hans-Werner Fischer-Elfert, *Die satirische Streitschrift des Papyrus Anastasi I* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1986), 171–72.

19. Hélène S. Sader, *Les États Araméens de Syrie Depuis Leur Fondation jusqu'à Leur Transformation en Provinces Assyriennes* (Beirut: Orient-Institut der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft, 1987).

land kingdoms presented a threat to Assyrian border security; the coastal cities did not. Furthermore, the latter provided both annual tribute and access to the rich Mediterranean commerce. Being merchants rather than warriors, the Phoenicians seem to have accepted a subordinate vassal-like role rather than threaten their far-flung shipping interests. It was a small price to pay for semiautonomy.²⁰

Assyrian rule in Phoenicia was fairly mild. The internal administrative reforms of Tiglath-pileser III in the second half of the eighth century aimed at closer royal supervision over a far-flung empire, better communication between its parts, and above all the assurance of tribute payments.²¹ Typically, the penalty for rebellion or nonpayment was destruction. Thus, in Sennacherib's third campaign (noted above), Ilu'ili of Sidon and Sidka of Ashkelon, both of whom had refused to pay tribute, were replaced, their cities destroyed, and the tribute reimposed. Sennacherib also names many kings who paid tribute and were left alone. In some cases, at least, Assyrian officials were resident at important cities to oversee the collection of tribute and the tax on Phoenician exports.²²

Egyptian involvement in the affairs of Phoenicia during the Assyrian domination is documented but difficult to define. After the "Story of Wenamon" the next documents to prove contact are statue fragments of three pharaohs of early Dynasty 22 found at Byblos: Shoshenq I (945–924), Osorkon I (924–889), and Osorkon II (874–850).²³ Inscribed on the first two fragments are additional Phoenician texts of two rulers of Byblos, Abibaal and Elibaal. While none of these objects can be dated via its archeological context, the two inscribed pieces belong to a group of six Byblian texts that, on paleographical grounds plus the sparse related archeological material, can be placed in the tenth century.²⁴ The logical implication is that Egypt was still in contact with Byblos at this time. That this went beyond purely commercial ties is highly

20. Guy Kestemont, "Le Commerce Phénicien et l'Expansion Assyrienne du IX^e–VIII^e S.," *Oriens Antiquus* 11 (1972): 137–44.

21. Harry W. F. Saggs, *The Might That Was Assyria* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1984), 85–87.

22. For example, at Tyre: Harry W. F. Saggs, "The Nimrud Letters," *Iraq* 17 (1955): 127–28. The power over local economic affairs is clearly seen in the treaty between Esarhaddon and Baal of Tyre (ANET 533–34). The treaty is particularly concerned with shipping and trade goods.

23. Maurice Chehab, "Noms de Personnalités Égyptiennes Découvertes au Liban," *Bulletin du Musée de Beyrouth* 22 (1969): 38–40. He includes a fragment of an arm that names Osorkon I (but the fragment may belong to a second statue of this king).

24. P. Kyle McCarter Jr., *The Antiquity of the Greek Alphabet and the Early Phoenician Scripts*, Harvard Semitic Monographs 9 (Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1975), 31–39.

doubtful. Nor can the statue of Shoshenq I be related to his military campaign into Palestine, which did not reach the Phoenician cities and which created no new empire.²⁵

Alabaster vessels that name kings of Dynasty 22 have been found in burials at Almuñécar and other Spanish sites, but they may not be evidence of Egyptian royal contacts with Phoenicia, as is generally supposed. It is suggested that many of these vessels were Phoenician imitations manufactured for export, as these objects seem to have been especially popular abroad. In this regard, on Egyptian alabaster vessels discovered at Ashur, cuneiform texts were added that stated they were taken from the palace of 'Abdimilkut of Sidon when Esarhaddon destroyed that city.²⁶ It is thus probable that stores of such items, whether genuine or imitation, were maintained as trade goods in Phoenician emporiums such as Sidon. In any case, there is sufficient nonroyal Egyptian material in Iron Age Phoenician deposits to verify commercial ties with Egypt during this period, and objects made of coniferous Phoenician wood are known from Egyptian contexts.²⁷

Throughout the ninth to sixth centuries, Egypt was intermittently engaged in warfare with Assyria, usually sending contingents of troops to join Syro-Palestinian coalitions, for example, at the Battle of Qarqar (853) against Shalmaneser III, to help Hoshea of Israel against Shalmaneser V,²⁸ and against Sennacherib in 701. Such coalitions were defeated and ultimately the Assyrians under Esarhaddon were able to invade Egypt itself. Of the Phoenician cities, we hear almost nothing from Egyptian sources since the battlefields lay outside Egypt and since Phoenicia was more aligned politically with Assyria. An Egyptian text of Psammetichus I, dating to about the same year as the fall of Nineveh to Babylon (612), may be significant. This text notes that the chiefs of Lebanon "were subjects of the [Egyptian] palace, with a royal courtier placed over them, and their taxes were assessed for the resi-

25. Kenneth A. Kitchen, *The Third Intermediate Period in Egypt* (Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 1973), 432–47. Shoshenq I is Shishak of 1 Kings 14:25–28, which refers to the same campaign.

26. William Culican, "Almuñécar, Assur and Phoenician Penetration of the Western Mediterranean," *Levant* 2 (1970): 28–36; Ingrid Gamer-Wallert, *Ägyptische und ägyptisierende Funde von der iberischen Halbinsel* (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 1978), 224–28. A few genuine Egyptian alabasters at Spanish sites date several hundred years before their archeological contexts, supporting the idea of Phoenician storehouses full of such goods. Such vessels could only have arrived in the west through Phoenician initiative.

27. For example, Anthony J. Spalinger, "The Foreign Policy of Egypt Preceding the Assyrian Conquest," *Chronique d'Égypte* 53 (1978): 26–27. Egyptian material in Iron Age Phoenicia is surveyed by Gabriella Scandoni, "Testimonianze Egiziane in Fenicia dal XII al IV sec. A.C.," *Rivista di Studi Fenici* 12 (1984): 133–63.

28. Under Pharaoh Osorkon IV (730–715), who is King So of 2 Kings 17:4.

dence," implying at least the Egyptian claim of rule over Phoenicia.²⁹ One should not read too much into this kind of offhand remark, though an Egyptian claim to control over the Phoenician coast seems reasonable, since Psammetichus I undertook an active policy in western Asia against the imminent Babylonian threat to Egyptian interests in Canaan.³⁰

Under the Babylonians

With the fall of Nineveh in 612, the Assyrian Empire came to a close, except for its remnants in northern Syria, centered at Haran. In his closing years, Nabopolassar of Babylon (625–605), the conqueror of Assyria, fought a joint Assyrian and Egyptian army for control of Haran. Egyptian intervention in the north was finally stopped when the army of Pharaoh Neco II was defeated at Carchemish in 605, and Haran was taken by Nebuchadnezzar (biblical Nebuchadnezzar, 604–562) in the same year. That event sparked a series of western campaigns in which Nebuchadnezzar quickly brought Cilicia, Syria, Phoenicia, and Palestine under his control.³¹ At some time during his early years, Nebuchadnezzar could boast in a text carved in the Wadi Brissa in north Lebanon that the region was now safe from its enemies³²—meaning, of course, that Babylon had conquered the west. In another text, Nebuchadnezzar lists the kings of Tyre, Sidon, and Aradus, among other western rulers,³³ who presumably were now vassals of Babylon. That Nebuchadnezzar established a system like that of the Assyrians to maintain his control over foreign vassals is shown by a group of cuneiform tablets, three of which were written from Tyre. One of these mentions the Babylonian official responsible for Babylonian interests in that city.³⁴ Another text lists foreigners receiving rations in Babylon, among whom are Phoenician carpenters from Byblos and Aradus.³⁵ Babylonian supremacy in the west lasted little longer than the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, which spanned over four decades.

29. Cf. K. S. Freed and Donald B. Redford, "The Dates in Ezekiel in Relation to Biblical, Babylonian and Egyptian Sources," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 90 (1970): 477.

30. This policy is explored by Anthony J. Spalinger, "Egypt and Babylonia: A Survey (c. 620 B.C.–550 B.C.)," *Studien zur altägyptischen Kultur* 5 (1977): 223–25.

31. In his regnal years 1 through 11; A. Kirk Grayson, *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles* (Locust Valley: Augustin, 1975), 100–101. These campaigns were all directed against the land of Hattu, a broad geographical designation including all of northwest Syria, Phoenicia, and Palestine.

32. ANET 307.

33. ANET 308.

34. Eckhard Unger, "Nebukadnezar und sein Šandabakku (Oberkommissar) in Tyrus," *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 44 (1926): 314–17. A similar official residing at Qadesh is also mentioned.

35. ANET 308.

Following three short reigns taking up a mere four years came the last king of an independent Babylonia, Nabonidus (555–539), who presided over the defeat of Babylon by Cyrus II of Persia.

As previously with Assyria, a major problem for the Babylonians in Phoenicia and Philistia was Egyptian interference, now of Dynasty 26.³⁶ As noted above, one text of the founder of this dynasty, Psammetichus I, may indicate that Phoenicia was under his control. The statement of Herodotus (2:157) that this king laid siege to Ashdod for twenty-nine years certainly exaggerates the length of time but probably reflects a renewed Egyptian interest in the coastal cities. It is generally believed that the following Egyptian ruler, Neco II (610–595), built a short-lived empire in Canaan in the early years of his reign, though there is little evidence to support this. In any case, his defeat by Nebuchadnezzar at Carchemish in 605 put an end to any serious Egyptian ambitions in the north. Phoenicia was now in the hands of Babylon, and Philistia went the same way a short time later. It was Neco II who, according to Herodotus (4:42), sent a Phoenician fleet down the Red Sea and around the African continent, returning through the Straits of Gibraltar to Egypt. Since this account can be neither proved nor disproved, it has long been and will remain a matter of academic debate.³⁷ During the reign of Psammetichus II (595–589), there is nothing to indicate Egyptian activity in Phoenicia, though it has been suggested that he used Phoenician mercenaries in his Nubian campaign and there is mention of a Tyrian camp near Memphis.³⁸

For the reign of Apries (589–570), Herodotus (2:161) notes almost in passing that Apries “sent an army against Sidon and fought a naval battle with the Tyrians.” Whether this occurred before, during, or after the contemporary siege of Tyre by Nebuchadnezzar is still unknown, as is the reason for his attack.³⁹ A naval battle with Tyre, long experienced in sea-faring (as opposed to the Egyptians), was possible by Saite times since there was now a new Egyptian Mediterranean fleet outfitted with triremes. One can perhaps see in Herodotus’s enigmatic remark the attempt by Egypt to wrest Tyre from Babylonian dominance and reassert its own influence there.

36. Spalinger, “Egypt and Babylonia,” 221–44; Abraham Malamat, “The Twilight of Judah: In the Egyptian-Babylonian Maelstrom,” in *Congress Volume: Edinburgh 1974*, Vetus Testamentum Supplement 28 (Leiden: Brill, 1975), 123–45.

37. Alan B. Lloyd, “Necho and the Red Sea: Some Considerations,” *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 63 (1977): 148–54. See also Mary Cary and Brian H. Warmington, *The Ancient Explorers* (Baltimore: Penguin, 1963), chap. 5.

38. A Tyrian camp or mercantile settlement (the Greek term can mean either) at Memphis is mentioned only by Herodotus (2:112). The Phoenician graffiti at Abu Simbel are dated to the Nubian campaign of Psammetichus II on indirect evidence only and probably represent foreign individuals living at Memphis; see Freedy and Redford, “Dates in Ezekiel,” 476 n. 69.

39. *Ibid.*, 481–84.

Under the Persians

With the fall of Babylon in 539, Phoenicia came under Persian dominance and, along with Cyprus and a newly acquired Egypt, belonged to the Fifth Satrapy (province) of the Persian Empire.⁴⁰ The most important city was Sidon, seat of the Persian governor and his administration. The Persians were interested both in the western commercial ties of the coastal cities as well as the Phoenician fleets that became part of the Persian military forces in the long and ultimately unsuccessful attempt to take Greece. The Persian dominance gave Phoenicia a period of relative peace and great prosperity, situated as it was in the center of a trade network stretching from Gibraltar to Persia, from the Caucasus to Nubia. The introduction of coinage, first at Sidon around 450, greatly facilitated this international commerce; Tyre, Aradus, and Byblos began minting coins within the next quarter century. Evidence of the wealth of the period is reflected in the numerous stone sarcophagi from upper-class burials and the construction of imposing temples at Amrit and Sidon that show strong Persian influence in their architecture. Eastern elements also appear in Phoenician art, Egyptian influence is still prominent, and Greek features appear in the later part of this age.

The prosperous and peaceful life of the Phoenician cities was interrupted from time to time, especially in the fourth century, with both Greek and Egyptian encouragement. Several cities saw this as an opportunity to rid themselves of Persian dominance in local affairs, though they were internally divided between their Greek and Persian sympathies. In 392, Tyre either joined with or submitted to Evagoras I of Salamis, aided by Athens and Egypt, during his war to unite Cyprus and free the island from Persia. This failed, and, though Evagoras retained his throne, Tyre reverted to Persian authority. In 362, Straton I of Sidon joined a general revolt in the west, and Sidon revolted again under Tennes (Tannit) in 347. Each time, the rebellion was put down, in the latter case with the destruction of the city.⁴¹ Persia was thus able to maintain an uneasy control over the continuing unrest, but rising pro-Greek sentiments, the interference of Egypt, and the desire to escape Persian

40. For a general orientation of Phoenicia during the Persian period, see Josette Elayi, “The Phoenician Cities in the Persian Period,” *Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society* 12 (1980): 13–28; *idem*, “The Relations between Tyre and Carthage during the Persian Period,” *Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society* 13 (1981): 15–29; *idem*, “Studies in Phoenician Geography during the Persian Period,” *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 41 (1982): 83–110.

41. Dan Barag, “The Effects of the Tennes Rebellion on Palestine,” *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 183 (1966): 6–9. On the various uprisings of the fourth century against the Persians, see Muhammad A. Dandanaev, *A Political History of the Achaemenid Empire* (Leiden: Brill, 1985), chaps. 35–37.

domination made this increasingly difficult and helped pave the way for the Macedonian conquest.

Overseas Expansion

During the past quarter century, investigation of the Phoenician interest in the west Mediterranean has produced an extraordinary amount of new material.⁴² Dozens of archeological sites have been discovered there, and the massive amount of information gained is still being studied and analyzed. Any present attempt to assess the Phoenician colonial movement must therefore be a tentative one. Classical sources suggest that Phoenician colonization began in the twelfth or eleventh century, though intensive archeological work over the past few decades failed to produce evidence of settlement earlier than the eighth century.⁴³ Hints of earlier Phoenician penetration in the area suggest that there was a period of "precolonialization" without actual settlement. True colonies, including the building of towns, an agricultural base, and the like, began at the end of the ninth century, a short time before the Greek colonial movement got under way in the early eighth.⁴⁴

The reasons for the vast Phoenician movement toward the west have been variously given: pressure from the Neo-Assyrian Empire, an impetus from the arrival of the Sea Peoples, or simply to fill the vacuum left by the collapse of Mycenaean control of east Mediterranean waters at the close of the Bronze Age. But none of these adequately explain the expansion. Overpopulation may have been a contributing factor since the narrow coastal strip of agricultural land would not support much population growth.⁴⁵ Phoenician overseas interests were stimulated above all by a search for new sources of metal, both for their customers throughout the Orient and for their own rapidly growing industries in manufactured goods.⁴⁶ Hence, the initial objectives

42. Sabatino Moscati (ed.), *The Phoenicians* (New York: Abbeville, 1988), 46–53, 152–242.

43. On the chronological statements of classical writers, see Eunnens, *L'Expansion Phénicienne*, chap. 3.

44. One important object that belongs to the earliest phase of Phoenician westward expansion is the stele fragment from Nora, Sardinia, not to be confused with the later Nora Stone. While this fragment preserves only four words, paleographical considerations show that it can date no later than the eleventh century; Frank M. Cross, "The Oldest Phoenician Inscription from Sardinia: The Fragmentary Stele from Nora," in *Working with No Data: Semitic and Egyptian Studies Presented to Thomas O. Lambdin*, ed. David M. Golomb and Susan T. Hollis (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1987), 65–74. This and objects such as Phoenician bronzes (p. 71) indicate an early Phoenician presence in the west long before actual colonies were established.

45. C. R. Whittaker, "The Western Phoenicians: Colonialization and Assimilation," *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society* n.s. 20 (1974): 58–79.

46. Wolfgang Röllig, "Die Phönizier des Mutterlands zur Zeit der Kolonisierung," in *Phönizier im Westen*, ed. Hans G. Niemeyer, *Madrid Beiträge* 8 (Madrid: Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, 1982), 15–30.

were the rich copper mines of Cyprus and the silver, tin, and copper of Spain. Between Phoenicia and Spain, then, we must think more in terms of a series of landing and victualing stations to support the westward sea routes running along the northern and southern coastal regions of the Mediterranean Sea. By the eighth century, many such stations had become permanent settlements, with colonists from the homeland bringing their material and spiritual culture to the west.

Phoenician settlement on Cyprus began somewhat earlier, as attested by archeological material from at least the ninth century, though there are clear indications that a strong Phoenician presence on the island began even before that⁴⁷—primarily at Kition (modern Larnaca), but also at Paphos, Amathus, and Idalion. Kition appears to have been under Tyrian rule, and it is probable that this important city became a staging point for journeys to the west.⁴⁸ The most active period for Phoenician settlement farther west was the eighth century, for which period there is ample archeological material from North Africa, Spain, Malta, Sicily, and Sardinia. By the seventh century, Phoenician settlements had spread as far as Mogador on the Atlantic coast of Morocco. Some of the original colonies established by the homeland Phoenicians mounted similar efforts of their own. Gadir (modern Cadiz) established settlements around the southern Spanish coast and in the Balearic Islands, notably Ibiza. From at least the fifth century, Carthage founded its own network of colonies on Sardinia, Sicily, and elsewhere. Colonies like these were the moving force behind the growth and spread of Punic culture in the west.⁴⁹

It has recently been proposed that in the eleventh century the Phoenicians invaded and settled the north Palestinian coast from Acco (near Tyre) to the Yarkon Valley (the northern border of Philistine territory). Ephraim Stern, who bases his views primarily on his excavations at Dor, forcefully defends

47. Patricia M. Bikai, "Trade Networks in the Early Iron Age: The Phoenicians at Palaepaphos," in *Western Cyprus Connections*, ed. D. W. Rupp, *Studies in Mediterranean Archaeology* 77 (Göteborg: Åströms, 1987), 125–28; idem, "Cyprus and the Phoenicians," *Biblical Archaeologist* 52 (1989): 203–9; Ora Negbi, "Evidence for Early Phoenician Communities on the Eastern Mediterranean Islands," *Levant* 14 (1982): 179–82.

48. Vassos Karageorghis, *Kition: Mycenaean and Phoenician Discoveries in Cyprus* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1976), 95–96. On Phoenicians in Cyprus in general, see Einer Gjerstad, "The Phoenician Colonization and Expansion in Cyprus," *Reports of the Department of Antiquities, Cyprus* 1979: 230–54.

49. The term *Punic* is an anglicized adjective from Latin *poeni*, itself taken from Greek *phoinikē*. Punic refers to the western Phoenician culture established during the colonizing period that soon took on its own character through separate development and influences from the native cultures of the region. While Punic civilization is usually equated with Carthage, it is found throughout the western Mediterranean coastal areas and islands.



Phoenician nobleman from Dor, 9th–8th century B.C. (height: 4")

Courtesy of Ephraim Stern and the Tel Dor Project;
photograph by Ilan Stulman

the doubtful thesis of Phoenician rule from around 1050 to 1000, at which time the region passed into the kingdom of David.⁵⁰ Within the framework of this southern Phoenician expansion, probably commercial rather than military, we find the first strong ties with the Hebrews: the agreements of Hiram I of Tyre (ca. 969–936) with David and Solomon of the then newly established kingdom at Jerusalem.⁵¹ The initial contact was under King David, who contracted with Hiram to send cedar wood, carpenters, and stonemasons to build his palace (2 Sam. 5:11). David also began collecting materials from Tyre and Sidon for the construction of the temple of Yahweh (1 Chron. 22:2–5), though it was left to Solomon to actually build it (1 Kings 5). Hiram supplied the usual coniferous woods and artisans, and Solomon provided the labor force and paid for the services of the Tyrian king in annual

50. Ephraim Stern, "New Evidence from Dor for the First Appearance of the Phoenicians along the Northern Coast of Israel," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 279 (1990): 27–34. Phoenician influence is certainly present at many sites, but an invasion and settlement remains unproved.

51. On relations between the Phoenicians and Israel, see Brian Peckham, "Israel and Phoenicia," in *Magnalia Dei, the Mighty Acts of God: Essays on the Bible and Archaeology in Memory of G. Ernest Wright*, ed. Frank M. Cross, Werner E. Lemke, and Patrick D. Miller Jr. (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1976), 224–48; Herbert Donner, "The Interdependence of Internal Affairs and Foreign Policy during the Davidic-Solomonic Period (with Regard to the Phoenician Coast)," in *Studies in the Period of David and Solomon and Other Essays*, ed. Tomoo Ishida (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1982), 205–14; Christopher J. Davey, "Temples of the Levant and the Building of Solomon," *Tyndale Bulletin* 31 (1980): 107–46.

shipments of wheat and olive oil.⁵² The export of Phoenician artisans is also evidenced in the well-known ivories from palaces at Samaria and Nimrud, where ivory decorative panels of Phoenician style have been found in profusion.⁵³ The other cooperative venture of Hiram and Solomon was maritime, from the Red Sea port of Elath (Ezion Geber) to Ophir, probably the Somali coast (1 Kings 9:26–27).⁵⁴ The mention of *tarshish* ships (which belonged to Hiram, not Solomon) in these joint trading efforts refers to large cargo ships named after the smelting installations, from whence they carried raw materials to the Levant.⁵⁵ The biblical narrative must refer to the use of these ships on the Ophir run due to the cargoes carried (1 Kings 10:22).

Culture

Phoenician culture must be viewed from two perspectives, that of the homeland and that of the western colonies. In the Levant, it is clear that while there is much that is new in Iron Age Phoenician culture, its roots are firmly planted in the older Canaanite traditions. In general, it is characterized by a synthesis of elements of the surrounding oriental cultures with that of the coast. A major feature in the west from the eighth century on was the integration of the homeland culture with the native cultures wherever colonies were established and (later) with the classical civilizations of the region.

Language and Writing

Phoenician is a later dialect of Canaanite or West Semitic, akin to Aramaic and Biblical Hebrew, all being descendants of older Semitic languages of the region.⁵⁶ Inscriptions are known around the east Mediterranean from the

52. The tradition was maintained in later times: cedar from Tyre and Sidon was again imported for the repair of the temple after the Babylonian captivity (Ezra 3:7).

53. Cf. Richard D. Barnett, *A Catalogue of the Nimrud Ivories*, 2d ed. (London: British Museum, 1975).

54. André Lemaire, "Les Phéniciens et le Commerce entre la Mer Rouge et la Mer Méditerranée," in *Phoenicia and the East Mediterranean in the First Millennium B.C.*, ed. Édouard Lipiński, *Studia Phoenicia* 5 (Louvain: Peeters, 1987), 49–60; see also Robert R. Stieglitz, "Long-distance Seafaring in the Ancient Near East," *Biblical Archaeologist* 47 (1984): 134–42; Patricia M. Bikai, "Rich and Glorious Traders of the Levant," *Archaeology* 43.2 (1990): 22–30.

55. Michael Koch, *Tarschisch und Hispanien*, Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, *Madrid Forschungen* 14 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1984).

56. For a general orientation, see Sabatino Moscati (ed.), *An Introduction to the Comparative Grammar of the Semitic Languages* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1964). Recent works dealing specifically with Phoenician are the following: Corinne Baurain, Claude Bonnet, and V. Krings (eds.), *Phoinikeia Grammata*, *Studia Phoenicia* 13 (Brussels: Société des Études Classiques, forthcoming); J. Brian Peckham, *The Development of the Late Phoenician Scripts* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968); Stanislav Segert, *A Grammar of Phoenician and Punic* (Munich: Beck, 1976); Richard S. Tomback, *A Comparative Semitic Lexicon of the Phoenician and Punic Languages* (Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1977).

seventh to first centuries and in the west from the ninth to fifth centuries. From the latter date, the language is known in the west as Punic, used into the Roman times. While there are several thousand inscriptions preserved, the great bulk are Punic funerary texts of very repetitive nature, hence generally uninformative and often uncertain in meaning. Reflecting the language as spoken in different regions, several dialects of Phoenician can be discerned: for example, Byblian, Sidonian, Cypriot, Cilician, and Punic.

At one time, a considerable Phoenician literature existed: Menander of Ephesus (second century) is said to have written a history of the Phoenician kings using the official annals of Tyre, and Philo of Byblos (first century A.D.) reportedly translated Sanchuniathon's history of Phoenicia into Greek.⁵⁷ Of his literary tradition, nothing is extant save that quoted by later authors. Only rare historical texts are presently known, but these deal with affairs outside Phoenicia proper (e.g., from Zenjirli and Karatepe).⁵⁸

Phoenician is written in a consonantal alphabet, and it is for the transmission of this alphabet to Europe that the Phoenicians are most remembered. Around the mid-eighth century, inscriptions begin to appear in Greek in a script obviously borrowed from that of the Phoenicians, with a few changes to accommodate the phonemes of the Greek language.⁵⁹ It has become apparent in recent years that the origin and early history of the alphabet is not at all as straightforward as it was once thought to be, and scholars are now in the process of reassessing the scattered and often ambiguous evidence.⁶⁰ That the Iron Age Phoenicians transmitted alphabetic writing to the West is fairly certain, though the actual invention and early history of the alphabet may lie further south. Texts in what is incorrectly called the "Phoenician alphabet," usually consisting of only a few letters, go back to the seventeenth or eighteenth century in Palestine and are more properly designated Proto-Canaanite. The earliest known texts in the Phoenician language date to the eleventh century. This is not a reliable guide, however, since all these texts are

57. On Menander, see Bunnens, *L'Expansion Phénicienne*, 139–42. The information about Philo is provided by Eusebius and Porphyry; see Albert I. Baumgarten, *The Phoenician History of Philo of Byblos*, *Études Préliminaires aux Religions Orientales dans l'Empire Romain* 89 (Leiden: Brill, 1981), 41–42.

58. *ANET* 653–55.

59. McCarter, *Antiquity of the Greek Alphabet*, 65–66. Others suggest a date about a century earlier; note Joseph Naveh, "The Greek Alphabet: New Evidence," *Biblical Archaeologist* 43 (1990): 22–25. The great innovation of the Greeks was the assignment of some of the signs to represent vowels; Semitic alphabets were all consonantal.

60. See, e.g., Giovanni Garbini, "The Question of the Alphabet," in *The Phoenicians*, ed. Sabatino Moscati (New York: Abbeville, 1988), 92–102; Benjamin Sass, *The Genesis of the Alphabet and Its Development in the Second Millennium [sic] B.C., Ägypten und Altes Testament* 13 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1988).

inscribed on durable materials such as stone or bronze. Alphabetic writing in Phoenicia, or elsewhere for that matter, may have been used much earlier on a perishable material like papyrus that has not survived the wet climate of the region.

Art and Crafts

Phoenician art is characterized by its blending of styles borrowed from all the foreign traditions with which Phoenician artists came into contact.⁶¹ The true genius of Phoenician art is that, while many designs and motifs can be traced to foreign origins, it combined what it took from others into a distinct, new art form. Few artistic traditions have as successfully joined such diverse art forms as, for example, the free-flowing circular movement of Minoan and Mycenaean art with the static cubism of Egypt. It is this inventive syncretism that makes Phoenician art truly creative.

Phoenician art was popular in antiquity, and the products of Phoenician artisans are found throughout the Mediterranean. These, in turn, were copied by local artisans trained by Phoenician artists who had moved abroad. The complaint is sometimes leveled that Phoenician emphasis on manufacture for export fostered the mass production of trinkets. But while the Phoenicians were basically a mercantile people and needed a large and continuing inventory of objects for trade, many of these objects are technically superb and are genuine works of art in their own right. Phoenician artists excelled in making gold jewelry, metal dishes, ivories, and small varicolored glass bottles and flasks. They adopted the Egyptian scarab tradition, and one of their best products is the "Phoenician" (or Greco-Phoenician) scarab, a miniature masterpiece of engraving. All of these objects, made of expensive materials, were easily transported abroad for sale in the international marketplace. In the west, once the initial trade contacts and settlements had been established, local workshops carried on the artistic traditions of the homeland.

Funerary steles, known by the thousands from Punic sites, generally show the clumsy crafting of Phoenician stonework. These steles, as well as innumerable terra-cotta figurines, are characteristic of Punic art and show the Greek influence that features in Punic art from the seventh century on. In modeling, style, and iconography, such objects illustrate the international network of artistic influences that underlay the design and production of objects of all kinds. International commercial and political relationships created a kind of cultural *koine*, though local variations are quite in evidence. Cypriot art, for example, played a significant role in the origins of Punic art.

61. In general, see Moscati, *Phoenicians*, part 3.



Gold funerary mask from Phoenicia, 4th century B.C.

Courtesy of the Louvre Museum

The Phoenician Iron Age artistic tradition had long antecedents, since metal vessels, ivory carving, and fine jewelry were luxury items produced by Bronze Age Canaanite artists.⁶² The purple-dye industry also originated in the Bronze Age. A thirteenth-century dye works has been found at Sarepta, and imported purple (or red) cloth is mentioned in the contemporary Mycenaean texts. Purple-dyed fabrics are also mentioned in Ugaritic texts, though there is no evidence that they were manufactured there. During the Iron Age, this industry too was taken westward and dye factories were established at coastal sites in North Africa, Malta, Sicily, and Spain. This indelible—hence highly prized—dye ranges in color from deep red to violet and was made from mollusks of the *Murex* genus found in the shallow waters of the Mediterranean coastal region.⁶³

62. Glenn E. Markoe, "The Emergence of Phoenician Art," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 279 (1990): 13–26.

63. Lloyd B. Jensen, "Royal Purple of Tyre," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 22 (1963): 104–18; J. Doumet, *A Study on the Ancient Purple Color* (Beirut: Imprimerie Catholique, 1980); I. Irving Ziderman, "Seashells and Ancient Purple Dyeing," *Biblica: Archaeologist* 53 (1990): 98–103.

Religion

Although there are now over six thousand Phoenician and Punic inscriptions extant and the corpus of archeological material grows larger each year, there is relatively little in this material that defines Phoenician religious concepts.⁶⁴ We know the major deities, but have little idea of their nature. There are temples in the homeland and colonies, but the cultus practiced there is practically unknown. Without appropriate native written sources, then, Phoenician religious practice can only be described in the broadest terms.

There is, of course, some descriptive material in the works of classical writers and the Old Testament. But these express the Hellenized viewpoint of Greek and Latin authors or the openly anti-Phoenician bias of the Hebrew prophets. The Late Bronze Age literature of Ugarit is of limited value except as a general background, since it represents the pantheon, ritual, and beliefs of an earlier time that does not always apply to Iron Age Phoenicia. The one native author whose work is partially preserved is likewise of doubtful value. Philo of Byblos, writing in the first century A.D., is known only from quotations, almost exclusively in Eusebius. Philo is said to have translated from Phoenician an earlier history by Sanchuniathon; what little is preserved is concerned with creation, the early history of the gods, and the discovery of the necessities of life such as food, fire, boats, and medicine. There is probably some basis for believing that Philo does record a few genuine Phoenician beliefs, but his work is heavily overlaid with Hellenistic, especially euhemeristic, thought.⁶⁵

The deities honored in Iron Age Phoenicia are a mixture of gods and goddesses known from earlier Canaanite times and new ones who are evidenced only from the early first millennium. In some cases, the relative importance of the older deities has changed. For example, El, creator and king of the gods at Ugarit, is mentioned only once in texts from the homeland. Astarte, of minor importance at Ugarit, plays a dominant role in Iron Age Tyre and

64. For general orientation, see Sergio Ribichini, "Beliefs and Religious Life," in *The Phoenicians*, ed. Sabatino Moscati (New York: Abbeville, 1938), 104–27; Richard J. Clifford, "Phoenician Religion," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 279 (1990): 55–64; Paolo Xella, Giovanni Garbini, and Mitchell Dahood (eds.), *La Religione Fenicia*, Studi Semitici 53 (Rome: Centro di Studio per la Civiltà Fenicia e Punica, 1981); Corinne Bonnet, Édouard Lipiński, and Patrick Marchetti (eds.), *Religio Phoenicia*, Studia Phoenicia 4 (Brussels: Société des Études Classiques, 1986). The present essay generally omits references in the classical sources.

65. On Philo of Byblos, in addition to Baumgarten, *Phoenician History of Philo of Byblos*, see also James Barr, "Philo of Byblos and His 'Phoenician History,'" *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 57 (1974): 17–68; Harold W. Attridge and Robert A. Oden (eds.), *Philo of Byblos: The Phoenician History*, Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series 9 (Washington, D.C.: Catholic Biblical Association, 1983).

Sidon. While the extant texts are full of references to numerous deities, it is not possible to trace a national Phoenician pantheon. This should be expected since there was no national Phoenician state that would have required one. At Tyre, Melqart ("King of the City") was the chief deity, perhaps its dynastic god, while El may have been considered the head of the local pantheon. Other Tyrian deities include Baal-Shamem, Baal-Saphon, Astarte, and Eshmun, though the latter two are principally associated with Sidon. Other Sidonian deities are Baal-Sidon, Astarte/Face-of-Baal, and perhaps Reshep. The most important deity of Byblos was Baalat Gubla ("Mistress of Byblos") (= Anat or Astarte), with a long history at that city. Baal ("the Lord") and Baal-Shamem ("Lord of Heavens") also appear at Byblos. Shadrappa ("Shad the Healer") and Tannit are mentioned in texts from Sarepta, and Melqart, Eshmun, and Shadrappa were worshiped as gods of healing in the temple at Amrit. Even from this partial list, it is evident that an individual deity may be primarily associated with one city, as well as be prominent elsewhere.

The frequent term *baal* simply means "lord," and it is difficult to determine which deity is meant in any given case. Baals are often associated with mountains: Baal-Saphon, Baal-Lebanon, Baal-Hammon (= Amon), Baal-Shamem (usually identified as Hadad, though on uncertain evidence), Baal-Addir, Baal-Marqod, and Baal-Malage. In each instance, the meaning is "lord of" a place or attribute, though the deity involved can only be surmised. Baal-Sidon, for example, is probably Eshmun and Baal-Tyre is probably Melqart, but there is no conclusive proof to support this.

Wherever the Phoenicians established settlements or colonies, they took their deities with them. A well-known example is the construction at Samaria of a temple to Baal-Tyre by Ahab of Israel when he married Jezebel, a princess of Tyre (1 Kings 16:31–32, which refers to her father as king of the "Sidonians," used interchangeably with "Tyrians" in several traditions). In so doing, Ahab followed the example of Solomon who worshiped Astarte of Sidon (1 Kings 11:5) in shrines that were not torn down until the reforms of Josiah over two centuries later (2 Kings 23:13).

The spread of Phoenician cults and temples followed the path of Phoenician colonization. The list of Phoenician shrines in foreign places is impressive; many are known by actual remains, others from references in classical sources.⁶⁶ In Cyprus, the most imposing is the temple of Astarte at Kition, built in the mid-ninth century and the center of religious life of that city for

66. C. Grottanelli, "Santuari e Divinità della Colonia d'Occidente," in *La Religione Fenicia*, ed. Paolo Xella, Giovanni Garbini, and Mitchell Dahood; Studi Semitici 53 (Rome: Centro di Studio per la Civiltà Fenicia e Punica, 1981), 109–33.

the next five centuries.⁶⁷ Another temple of Astarte was used for many centuries at Palaepaphos. Phoenician texts from Kition mention the deities Eshmun, Baal-Shamem, and Reshep-MKL (who was especially popular at Idalion).⁶⁸

While many Phoenician deities appear at Carthage, by the fifth century Baal-Hammon and Tannit took the leading role. Baal-Hammon is identified as "[El], Lord of (Mount) Amon," and Tannit is perhaps the Canaanite Asherah, rather than Astarte with whom she is usually identified.⁶⁹ Both deities are known in the Phoenician homeland.⁷⁰ From Carthage, these two cults spread throughout the Punic world along with those of many other deities, though the original expansion from Phoenicia itself had established Phoenician deities like Melqart, Eshmun, and Astarte everywhere in the west.

Textual evidence is sparse on the ritual and theology of the Phoenicians, and one should treat with some caution the statements in non-Phoenician sources. Religious practice in Phoenicia probably differed somewhat from that in the west. For example, kings were the high priests of the major city gods in Phoenicia, but this function was exercised by important families in the west. The few Phoenician documents dealing with religious practice may not apply generally. A partial roster of temple personnel of the Astarte temple of Kition includes artisans, sacrificers, cultic barbers, and temple prostitutes;⁷¹ two "tariffs" of the Hellenistic period from Carthage and Marseilles list numerous sacrificial animals, the cost of each, and the disposition of the

67. Karageorghis, *Kition*, chap. 5.

68. The Apollo Amyklos of Idalion; Ancre Caquot and Olivier Masson, "Deux Inscriptions Phéniciennes de Chypre," *Syria* 45 (1968): 295–313.

69. Frank M. Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973), 24–34.

70. This accepts Cross's thesis that Baal-Hammon is an epithet of the old Canaanite El. Tannit was worshiped in Phoenicia from at least the seventh century; James B. Pritchard, "The Tanit Inscription from Sarepta," in *Phönizier im Westen*, ed. Hans G. Niemeyer, *Madriener Beiträge* 8 (Madrid: Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, 1982), 83–92; Pierre Bordreuil, "Tanit du Liban," in *Phoenicia and the East Mediterranean in the First Millennium B.C.*, ed. Édouard Lipiński, *Studia Phoenicia* 5 (Louvain: Peeters, 1987), 79–85. Tannit is also mentioned on the new funerary steles from the *tophet* at Tyre, now published by Hélène Sader, "Phoenician Stelae from Tyre," *Berytus* 39 (1991): 121–24; idem, "Phoenician Stelae from Tyre (Continued)," *Studi Epigrafici e Linguistici* 9 (1992): 53–79.

71. Mathias M. Delcor, "Le Personnel du Temple d'Astarté à Kition d'après une Tablette Phénicienne (CIS 86A et B)," *Ugarit-Forschungen* 11 (1979): 147–64. On the possible role of Phoenicians in the diffusion of temple prostitution, see Edwin M. Yamauchi, "Cultic Prostitution—A Case Study in Cultural Diffusion," in *Orient and Occident: Essays Presented to Cyrus H. Gordon on the Occasion of His Sixty-fifth Birthday*, ed. Harry A. Hoffner Jr., *Alter Orient und Altes Testament* 22 (Kevelaer: Butzon & Bercker/Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1973), 213–22.

animal parts after the sacrifice has been made.⁷² Because such documents are so rare, one is tempted to use them to interpret Phoenician religious practice in general, but since they apply to specific places at specific times, they may not describe the cultus elsewhere.

Two categories of gods appear to have played an important role throughout the region influenced by the Phoenicians. Healing deities (Melqart, Eshmun, and Shadrappa) can be verified for Phoenicia itself as well as in the west. Dying and reviving gods (Melqart, Eshmun, and Adonis) related to the seasonal pattern have been postulated, though here the evidence is all from classical sources.

Burial in Phoenicia was generally by inhumation with the usual grave goods: pottery, amulets, beads, and other small objects. Royal and upper-class tombs probably contained richer grave goods, though these were largely plundered in antiquity. Cremation was practiced alongside inhumation in both the homeland and in the west. At present, we cannot define the beliefs that lay behind the use of these two forms of burial, which sometimes occur at the same time and in the same (family?) tomb. Upper-class inhumation burials of the later period are known from Punic sites, with occasional evidence of embalming, though this was not a widespread practice. It is possible that burial rites included the *marzēah* ("funerary feast"), known at Ugarit, in the Old Testament, and elsewhere.⁷³

The subject of burial raises the most discussed question in the Phoenician-Punic religious sphere, that of the *tophet*, or child cemetery. The largest and best known is that of Carthage, which originally contained some twenty thousand cinerary urns with the remains of infant children and animals. Other *tophets* have been found at several sites in Sardinia and Sicily. Such cemeteries are outside the city walls and contain, besides the cinerary urns, many votive images and large numbers of stone steles that commemorate a rite called *mlk* to Tannit and Baal-Hammon. The long controversy over the significance of these *tophets* revolves around a single issue: is this evidence of purposeful child sacrifice? The debate has been fueled by remarks of classical authors who speak of the Punic practice of sacrificing children in times of calamity and by numerous Old Testament injunctions against Hebrew participation in the practice of "passing (children) through fire." There has been much contentious argument over this question simply because neither the archaeological nor the linguistic evidence is conclusive. There is, for example, little agreement on the meaning of the key technical terms used in the pertinent

72. ANET 656–57.

73. Marvin H. Pope, "The Cult of the Dead at Ugarit," in *Ugarit in Retrospect: Fifty Years of Ugarit and Ugaritic*, ed. Gordon D. Young (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1981), 176–79.

texts.⁷⁴ The remarkable 1991 discovery of a possible *tophet* near Tyre, the first to be found in Phoenicia itself, will introduce a whole new dimension into the debate and may offer evidence leading to a solution of this problem.⁷⁵

The Phoenicians probably shared the general concepts of an underworld as conceived by the Canaanites and other western Asiatic societies, but there is little trace of these beliefs. Which deity presided over this underworld cannot be determined; the general opinion is that, by analogy to Ugarit, it would be Môt. A "Mistress of the Underworld" has been seen in a Punic text, though this is uncertain and the phrase involved is also rendered "mistress of the bridal tent."⁷⁶ The latter is an excellent example of the many difficulties in understanding precise meanings of Phoenician words and phrases. There is no reference to the underworld itself in Phoenician texts, nor is there any clear allusion to the state of existence after death. There are certain hints, however, in the earlier funerary texts that regularly offer curses against any who desecrate or rob a tomb. These include the threat that such violators will be cut off with no offspring of their own, will have no tomb of their own, and will have no "resting place with the *rp'm*," the inhabitants of the netherworld.⁷⁷ One violation noted several times is the removal of the owner's name from the tomb or from a structure someone else has built. And in the funerary texts of kings and commoners alike is the wish for a long life. Now all this is reminiscent of the general belief prior to Hellenistic times that humans received what reward was due them in this life and that they had only the gloomy netherworld to look forward to in the next.⁷⁸ It therefore seems safe to assume that the earlier Phoenicians shared this grim view of life after death. However, the curses more or less disappear in Hellenistic times to be replaced by simple requests for a divine blessing, perhaps under the influence of the so-called salvation cults. This would appear to indicate that Phoenician

74. For the present state of the debate, see Lawrence A. Stager and Samuel R. Wolff, "Child Sacrifice at Carthage—Religious Rite or Population Control?" *Biblical Archaeology Review* 10.1 (1984): 30–51; Moshe Weinfeld, "The Worship of Molech and of the Queen of Heaven and Its Background," *Ugarit-Forschungen* 4 (1972): 133–54; C. Picard, "Les Sacrifices Molk chez les Phéniciens: Certitudes et Hypothèses," *Semitica* 39 (1990): 67–76; Michael Gras, Pierre Rouillard, and Javier Teixidor, "The Phoenicians and Death," *Berytus* 39 (1991): 127–76.

75. Several articles in *Berytus* 39 (1991) present the initial studies on this *tophet*.

76. Donner and Röllig, *Kanaanäische und aramäische Inschriften*, #83 (vol. 2, p. 100); H. Stocks, "Adoniskult in Nordafrika," *Berytus* 3 (1936): 31–32.

77. The *rp'm*, best known from Ugarit and the Old Testament, represent a somewhat complicated theology. At Ugarit, they seem to be mainly deceased ancestors or the like, which explains the Phoenician contexts admirably. Of the more recent studies, note Manfred Dietrich, Oswald Loretz, and Joaquín Sanmartín, "Die ugaritischen Totengeister *rpum* und die biblischen Rephaim," *Ugarit-Forschungen* 8 (1976): 45–52; Pope, "Cult of the Dead at Ugarit."

78. Clearly expressed in such works as the Babylonian "Poem of the Righteous Sufferer" and "Gilgamesh Epic," the Canaanite "Aqhat Epic," and the Old Testament Book of Job.

theology, like that of so many of its Hellenistic-Roman contemporaries, developed the idea of reward and punishment in the next life, which accordingly now consisted of a heaven and a hell.

Recommended Reading

In addition to the items listed below, special issues of two journals contain many articles on the Phoenicians: *Archaeology* 43.2 (1990) and *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 279 (1990). The items by Jidejian and Moscati, plus the special issue of *BASOR*, include extensive bibliography. Detailed annual bibliographies are published in the journal *Rivista di Studi Fenici* (Rome).

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Arameans

Wayne T. Pitard

Now Ben-hadad king of Aram mustered his entire army. Accompanied by thirty-two kings with their horses and chariots, he went up and besieged Samaria and attacked it.

—1 Kings 20:1

The Arameans were a large group of linguistically related peoples who spoke dialects of a West Semitic language known as Aramaic and who lived over a substantial part of the Fertile Crescent during the first millennium, largely in Mesopotamia and Syria. The Arameans in south Syria had numerous contacts with biblical Israel and appear quite often in the Hebrew Bible. This is especially the case with the Aramean state that had its capital at Damascus. Although never a unified political power like the Assyrians or Babylonians, the Arameans came to have a major cultural influence on the Near East, as their language slowly became the *lingua franca* of the Persian Empire and eventually replaced many of the local languages of the area, including Hebrew.

Origins

The Bible preserves some legendary material concerning the origins of the Arameans and their relationship to the Israelites. The genealogies in Genesis, apparently created to indicate the relation between the Israelites and their Near Eastern neighbors, provide two distinct traditions as to the place of the Arameans in the political makeup of the Near East. In the earlier genealogical notice (Gen. 22:21), Aram, the eponymous ancestor of the Arameans, is a grandson of Abraham's brother Nahor. This suggests that at one time Aram was basically considered an equal of Israel (= Jacob, grandson of Abraham). But in the priestly table of nations (Gen. 10:22), dating to a time when Aramean influence was widespread across the Near East, Aram is listed