Who Were The Phoenicians?

The Phoenician civilization was a sea-faring nation that thrived in the Mediterranean for over a 1000 years before its last major city, Carthage, was destroyed by the Romans. It was just as advanced as the Greek and Roman civilizations that followed it, and its influence on other ancient cultures was enormous. Yet very little is known about these amazing people. Partly this is because many of their buildings and records were lost when their great cities were destroyed. But it is also because their history has been intentionally obscured.

The Punic Wars were a disaster for the Phoenicians. Thousands perished during the siege of Carthage, and much Carthaginian territory was lost to Rome. The Phoenicians who survived, however, decided to live among other nations and maintain their community by means of an extended trading network rather than by attempting to rebuilding their ruined capital.. They recognized that Rome could destroy or conquer any territory they attempted to hold independently, but if they dispersed themselves among many nations, and kept their activities obscured they could continue to prosper.

PHOENICIAN MERCHANT SHIP

For hundreds of years the Phoenician trading cities on the coast of Lebanon (mainly Tyre, Byblos, and Sidon) had worked to establish a network of colonies, and treasure stores throughout the Mediterranean and Black Sea. Rome had seized Carthage's main trading ports, but Phoenician allies controlled trade in dozens of port cities. Their forefathers had long-established marriage alliances with powerful families in dozens of trading centers. These resources made it possible for a network of Phoenicians to operate within the ancient world for hundreds of years after the fall of Carthage even after they lost their identity as an independent nation. This unit will explore both the historic city-states of Phoenicia, and the clandestine network that survived into the Roman era.

The Phoenician civilization was fascinating and complicated and it is impossible to understand the ancient world without a knowledge of its influence. Because the Phoenicians were explorers and traders, they established connections between nations and helped spread new ideas and technologies. Their influence, however, was both beneficial and harmful since their people possessed both admirable and deplorable traits. On the positive side, the Phoenicians were intelligent, industrious, courageous, sophisticated, and open to new ideas. To them we credit dozens of innovations in ship building, architecture, writing and map-making, industry, handicrafts, and especially

commerce. At the same time, some of their habits and religious rites were atrocious. The Phoenicians were known for child-sacrifice and other perversions as well as treachery and secretiveness. It is not without reason that the God of the Israelites raged against them.

What We Know from the Bible

In ancient times the people we now refer to as Phoenicians were identified by the city-states from which they came. The Bible makes many references to Tyre, Sidon, and Byblos as the primary Canaanite cites on the coast of Lebanon. The word 'Phoenician' is derived from the Greek word for Purple and referred to all of the merchant nations who sold a rare purple dye. The term refers to an ethic group rather than a location, so it is a convenient way to describe the Canaanite sea-farers who dominated trade and commerce in the Ancient World for over a thousand years.

> "Judge me Oh God, and distinguish my cause
> from the nation that is not holy;
> Deliver me from the unjust and deceitful man."
> —Psalm 42.

The Old Testament is one of the best sources of information about these people. It not only provides a historical record of the activities of the Tyrians and Sidonians, but it also provides insights into the religious rites and character of the people.

The Phoenicians were Canaanites, like most of Israel's neighbors. According to the Bible, Canaan was the fourth son of Ham, cursed by Noah because of the transgression of his father. It has been inferred that Canaan's wife was descended from fallen angels and that the Canaanite gods were demons. The religious practices of the Canaanites were abhorrent to the God of the Israelites and he exhorted them to drive the Baal worshipers out of Canaan and to destroy their civilization. The Decalogue can be read as admonitions to avoid falling into characteristic Canaanite sins, since in addition to worshiping idols, the Canaanites were known for lies and treachery (8th commandment), adultery (6th commandment), covetousness (10th commandment), and murder (5th commandment).

The God of Abraham assisted the Israelites in their battles against the Canaanites and implored them to avoid making any alliances with them or marrying their women. Unfortunately many Israelites defied these warnings and from Old Testament times, the history of the Jews has been intertwined with that of the Canaanites, and with the Phoenicians in particular. Under the Judges and early kings of Israel, many Canaanite tribes were destroyed or subjugated by the Jews, but even under King David, when the kingdom of Israel reached its maximum extent, the Phoenician cities of Tyre, Sidon, and Byblos remained independent, and their wealth and sophistication provided a constant temptation to the Israelites. The Phoenician women were attractive and alluring, and the Canaanite Gods promised wealth and worldly pleasures.

From the time of David, the Chroniclers and prophets constantly warned against intercourse with the Phoenician nations yet they were ignored by many of kings, with great harm to the Israelite nation. The Tyrian king Hiram II was extremely generous with Solomon, and provided the wood and architects to build his temple. He also invited the

Hebrews to participate in the highly profitable trade with Tarshish. Yet this munificence was but a lure, for in a single generation, the corruption of Solomon's sons led to the division of the Israelites, and the near total corruption of the northern kingdom.

THE CURSE OF CANAAN

As was common practice among Phoenicians, the Tyrians and Sidonians used their wealth and women to lure powerful men to their destruction. Jezebel was a Tyrian princess who brought the royal house of Israel to ruin, and her daughter Athaliah murdered all her own children and grandchildren so that she could rule unopposed in Judah. In a single generation both dynasties were destroyed by murder and civil war. Not only kings, but thousands of Israelite men became corrupted through marriage to Canaanite women and their children were raised to worship Canaanite gods and tolerate Canaanite abominations.

In spite of a series of prophets who warned against these evils, the Phoenician and Jewish nations continued to mix, and by the time Alexander and his armies subjugated both Jerusalem and Tyre, a covert Canaanite presence within Israel had become firmly established. In other words, as Phoenician cities came under the rule of foreign powers who destroyed their altars and condemned human sacrifice, communities of Baal worshipers embedded themselves within surrounding nations, including Israel. The existence of this evil presence within the Israelite nation becomes obvious when one reads accounts of the siege of Jerusalem, and other atrocities of ancient times attributed to the "Jews", and it is confirmed by John in Revelations 2:9 "I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan."

What We Know from History

In spite of the enormous wealth and sophistication of the Phoenician civilization, and its tremendous contributions in cultural fields and commerce, little of detail is known of its history, except by indirect accounts. Supposedly the great written works of the Phoenicians were lost when their cities were destroyed, but this is highly unlikely. Given that the Phoenicians were an extremely wealthy and powerful maritime nation with colonies, ports, and alliances all over the Mediterranean, it is doubtful the information was entirely lost. It is far more likely, considering the secretive and deceptive nature of the Phoenician character, that their extensive knowledge of geography, architecture, metallurgy, medicinal potions and poisons, treasure stores, covert alliances, and

national history was hidden and passed on privately to selected families, either orally or by secret texts. Such knowledge had already been successfully hidden from neighboring civilizations for centuries, and it would have been much too valuable to lose.

Nevertheless, a great deal of knowledge about the Phoenicians is provided indirectly by their supposed rivals, the Greeks and Romans, as well as by their Hebrew neighbors.

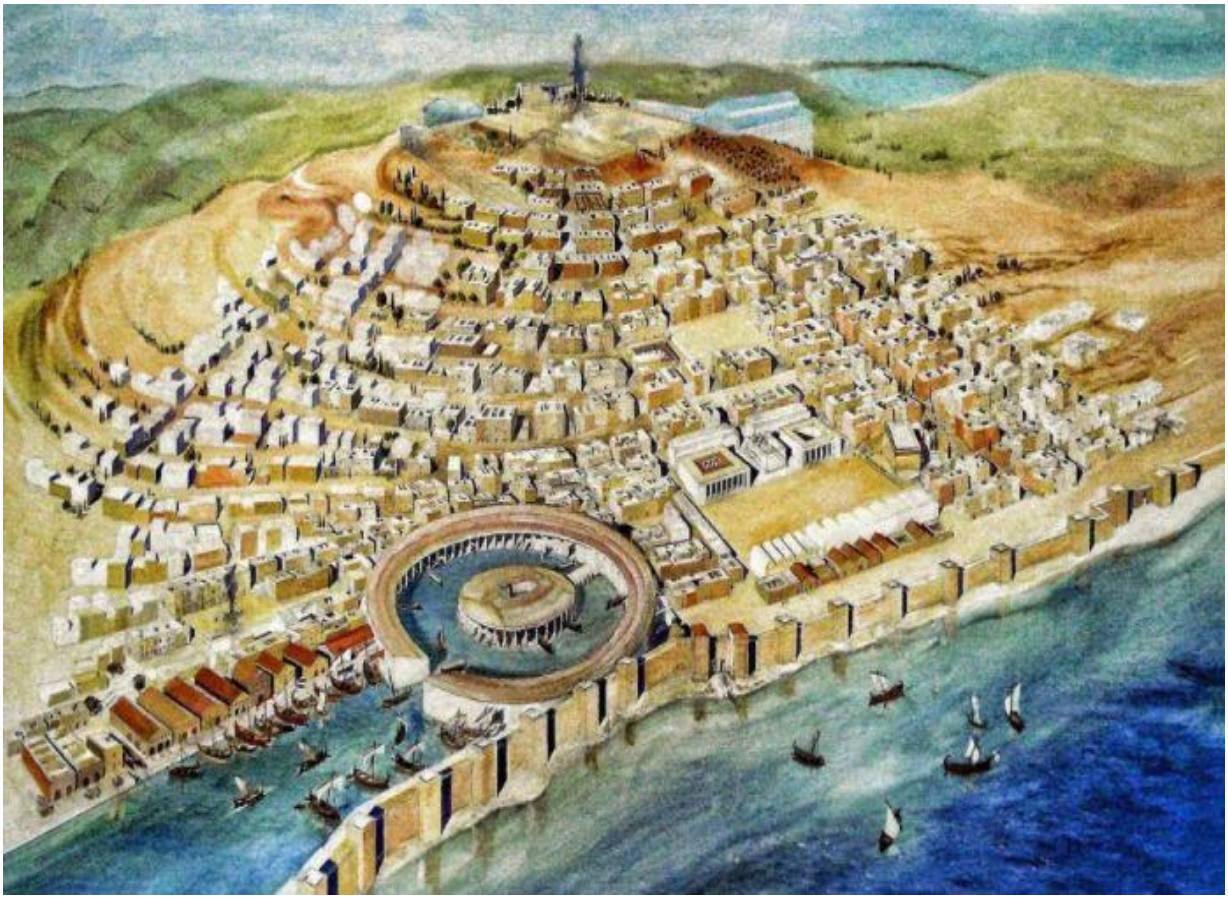
The first accounts of the cities of Tyre, Sidon, and Byblos appear in Egyptian records, and it seems that by about 2000 B.C. the Phoenicians had developed a mutually beneficial trading relationship with the Egyptians. One of the keys to the prosperity of these port cities lay in the "Cedars of Lebanon" which grew in the mountains above them. These forests were the best source of lumber in the Middle East and they were the main reason for the outstanding skills in ship-building and architecture for which the Phoenicians were famous. The Phoenicians developed these specialties while under the protection of the Egyptian Empire, so by the time they gained their independence, in about 1100 B.C., they were well positioned as the leading ship-builders and traders in the Mediterranean.

Over hundreds of years, the Phoenicians developed other skills for which they became famous. Glass-working, metallurgy, navigation, map-making, ship-building, writing, dyes, herbs, luxurious furniture, bedding, and factory production of household items, were skills and goods associated with the Phoenicians, although it is unclear whether they invented these products, or merely perfected them. As the dominant trading nation of their age, they would have had exposure to inventions from throughout the known world and the opportunity to profit from them.

The height of the Phoenician dominance of commerce and trading was in the Biblical period, approximately 1200-800 A.D. During this period they had one of the most advanced civilizations in the west, and they were responsible for spreading knowledge of metallurgy, industrial, and commercial techniques to the less advanced regions of the west. The Phoenicians were very secretive, and sought to keep their 'technology' private but ultimately other more populous and virile civilizations, such as the Greeks, adopted such Phoenician innovations as a written language and ship building. In such a world it was difficult for the Phoenicians to maintain their dominance, but they used a variety of clever techniques to protect their trading network. (See the Phoenician Empire section for more details.)

Even more threatening to the Phoenicians than the Greeks was the rise of the Assyrian and Babylonian empires in the east. Although the Phoenicians were primarily a maritime nation, they depended on control of the coastal regions for many of their supplies and as a naval, rather than a land power, they could not defend their native territory from enormous armies of the east. In order to maintain their power they needed to change tactics. First, they submitted peacefully to the Eastern powers, paid generous tribute, and made key alliances with them. The Assyrians (from 875 B.C.), Babylonians (from 605 B.C.), and Persians (from 540 B.C.) all allowed the Phoenicians a great deal of autonomy in return for tribute and naval service. Secondly, they established trading colonies in regions far to the West. The most famous of these were Carthage in Africa and Cadiz in Spain, but by the 9th century B.C., there were Phoenician outposts on

islands throughout the Mediterranean and all along the coast of Africa. Some of these were established long before the Assyrian conquest, but the western colonies grew in power and population after the subjugation of the Phoenician homeland.



MERCHANT AND NAVAL HARBORS AT CARTHAGE

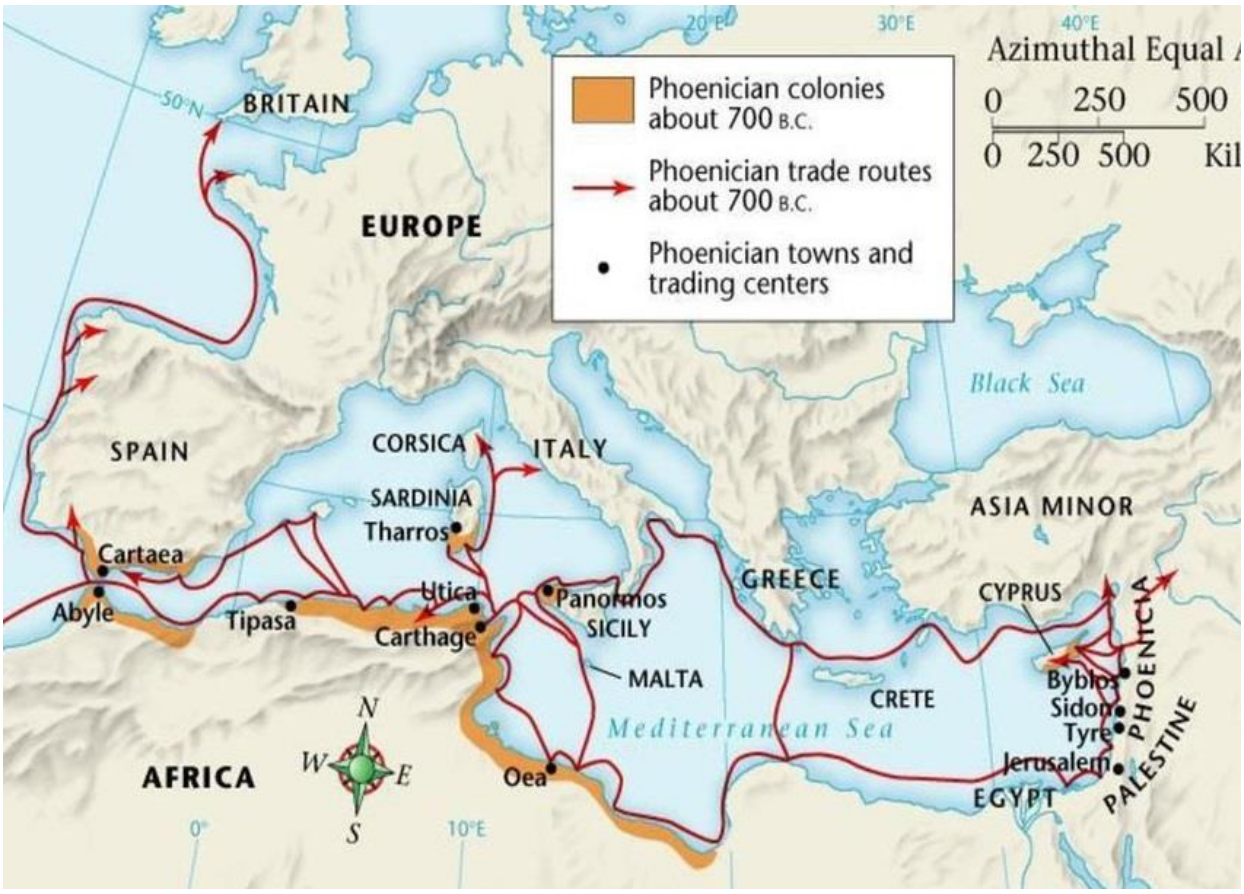
The rise of the Greeks as a competing naval power began in the 9th century B.C. and but at first Greek merchant ships confined their activity to the Aegean sea. By about 500 B.C., however, military conflicts between the Greeks and Phoenicians arose in both the west (Sicily), and in the East (Greco-Persian war). In both fields the Phoenicians lost ground over time. They were terrifically competitive in commerce and naval warfare but their mercenary forces were not as reliable as the citizen soldiers of the Greeks. The most notable Greco-Punic wars were in Sicily and lasted for over 200 years (480-276 B.C.) By the 4th century B.C., when the capital city of Tyre was destroyed the Phoenician city-states were already weakened, and the African colony of Carthage became the primary Phoenician port in the Mediterranean.

Even after the loss of Tyre, the Phoenicians maintained a great deal of influence in the east. Alexander, the conqueror of Tyre, died suspiciously a few years after completing his conquests and several of the Diodochi kingdoms that arose from the ashes of his Empire showed signs of Canaanite influence. Both the Ptolemy kingdom in Egypt (305-

30 B.C.) and the Seleucid Dynasty in Syria (312-63 B.C.) were hospitable to Phoenician merchants and under their protection Tyre was restored to a prosperous trading port with considerable independence. By 120 B.C. Tyre had completely regained its independence from and began minting its own coins. It maintained its sovereignty until the region came under Roman control.

The Phoenician Empire

The original Phoenician nation was based in a few important cities along the cost of Lebanon. These city states, especially Byblos, Sidon, and Tyre, became trading partners of Egypt and were heavily influenced by Egyptian culture, technology, symbolism, and secret knowledge. By the time the Egyptian Empire began to collapse, around 1200 B.C., the Phoenicians had become the best ship-builders, architects, and engineers in the ancient world, and they had already established a substantial trading network. Amazingly, this small group of tightly-knit people, who controlled very little territory directly, was able to maintain and expand a far-flung empire of colonies and trading ports throughout the known world for over a thousand years. How they managed to do this, involved both admirable traits of industry, courage, and inventiveness, and also far more sinister habits of secretiveness, deception, espionage, and treachery.



MAP OF THE PHOENICIAN EMPIRE

.One of Phoenicia's earliest and most important exports was lumber. The large beams that could be obtained from the 'Cedars of Lebanon' were of great importance for

construction of ships and large buildings, and the cedar is still the national emblem of Lebanon. Another product they were especially famous for was a purple dye derived from a sea creature. They were able to keep the source of the dye secret for hundreds of years, so they could maintain a monopoly on it. "Tyrian Purple" dye was a scarce luxury during ancient times, and came to be the distinctive color of 'royalty'.

Another extremely important Phoenician export was tin. Tin was in great demand because it was a rare metal that could be mixed with copper to produce Bronze, the hardest and most durable metal of the age. It was primarily due to the tin mines in southern Spain and on the Cornwall peninsula of England that the Phoenicians established colonies there, and trading posts all along both routes. The exact location of the mines was one of their most carefully guarded secrets and the Phoenician influence on ancient Iberia and Britain were very important. Some scholars believe that the Celtic religion and Druid priests may have been influenced by Phoenician traders.

The Phoenicians were known to trade in an enormous variety of wares. Besides the Lebanon Cedar, Purple dyes, and tin for which they are most famous, they traded in other precious metals, glassware, jewelry, manufactured goods, ivory, linens, housewares, hand-crafted furniture and other luxury items. They transported exotic animals and plants from distant regions, and since slaves were a profitable commodity in ancient times, they were likely involved in slave markets as well.

The Phoenicians did not confine their activities to trade alone. Instead of merely going from port to port, trading whatever natives of a particular region already produced for export, their traders would attempt to determine the most profitable items, and whenever possible manufacture them or in some other way create a monopoly or control the market. Some colonies were founded specifically to produce or manufacture items for sale. Cadiz and other settlements in Spain for example, were established as mining and metallurgy centers to produce tin, silver, and other metals for exports. By 1000 B.C. the Phoenicians had had established several colonies on the Iberian Peninsula, most notably Cadiz, but also along the Guadalquiver river, dedicated mainly to the trade in precious metals

By the time the Assyrians conquered the Phoenician homeland in the 9th century B.C., a network of Phoenician trading stations and colonies already existed along the coast of Africa, and on many eastern islands such as Cyrus, Rhodes, and Crete. Shortly thereafter, Carthage was established as the leading city in the west. By that time there were Phoenician ports on Malta, Sicily, Sardinia, the Balearic Islands, and other Islands throughout the Mediterranean. From its colonies is Spain and Morocco, the Phoenicians set sail to even more distant ports. It is not known exactly how far the Phoenician empire extended, but there were ports in Britain, along the coast of France, and political alliances with several kingdoms on the Black Sea. Some scholars even claim there is evidence of Phoenician relics in in the Americas.

The Phoenicians are thought to have traded with the Biblical kingdom of "Sheba" in southern Arabia so they certainly must have had trading colonies along the Red Sea. And Herodotus reports that a Phoenician sailor, "Hanno the Carthaginian" circumnavigated the entire coast of Africa in 500 B.C. And as the naval experts of the Persian empire, were undoubtedly involved in the trade in the Persian gulf, and

throughout the Indian Ocean as well. Their trading network operated not only in seas and oceans, but inland, as far as they could ferry their wares along navigable rivers.

PHOENICIAN MERCHANTS

The Phoenician network was spread out most of the civilized world and it operated for centuries under many different rulers. Because the Phoenician nation existed as an interconnected web of semi-independent colonies, it could survive innumerable set-backs and conquests. Rome was a leading military power, and could crush any adversary whose power was confined to cities or territory. But the Phoenicians were very different type of foe, and thrived for centuries even under Roman rule.

Phoenician Stratagems and Tactics

The Phoenicians faced innumerable difficulties in maintaining their empire and protecting their monopolies over centuries. They were wealthy beyond measure and could hire mercenaries from all over the world when necessary, but their trading ports were far flung and they found that in most cases it was more productive to invest in developing local alliances than to win or hold territory by force. Mercenary forces were useful in subduing enemies, but were less useful in holding territory over time. It was the Phoenician experience that bribery, infiltration, espionage, and backdoor diplomacy,

that is, reliance on clandestine agents and secret agreements, was more effective than combat and yielded far more profitable results.

The first practical technique used to maintaining control over trade routes was to establish ports, storage facilities, and treasure troves on islands and peninsulas in preference to mainland ports when possible. The Phoenicians were skilled in naval warfare so bases that were surrounded by water easier for them to defend. But even more effective than relying on their own resources for protection was to develop powerful alliances with those nations with whom they traded. Bribery and commercial incentives were useful for this purpose of course, but there were other, more effective methods.

One of the ways the Phoenicians gained strategic allegiances was to marry into the existing nobility of powerful kingdoms. Daughters of Phoenician merchants could provide attractive dowries and by marrying into numerous prominent families in certain regions, the traders could develop a network of allies that persisted over generations. Sometimes this meant infiltration of royal families, or the families of influential ministers. Phoenician advisors were skilled spies and diplomats, and it was imperative to have controllable agents at ports throughout the Empire. Everywhere the Phoenicians traveled, informers and middlemen existed who were practiced at the arts of infiltration, espionage, bribery, blackmail, procurement, poisoning, and harlotry. All were employed in a systematic way to maintain a reliable network of Phoenician operators and to assure a favorable environment for commerce.

The Cosmopolitan outlook of the Phoenician nation was far different from that of most other civilizations. The vast majority of peoples knew only their own language can customs, and did not concern themselves with matters far outside their own region. The Phoenicians studied and understood how people from a wide variety of cultures lived. They learned about foreign languages, customs, dress, and religion, used this knowledge to their advantage. Many Phoenician agents were bilingual and adept at communicating with native peoples and blending into foreign environments. Having knowledge of the circumstances, strengths, and weaknesses of many different peoples made them extraordinarily skillful spies, traders, and diplomats.

Probably the method for securing their fortunes that is most famously associated with the Phoenicians was their outstanding skill in the arts of secrecy, deception, espionage and treachery. In order to operate their trading networks and defend their monopolies, they required the use of hidden treasure stores, secret codes and symbols, and a code of conduct that put the protection of critical "trade secrets" above the protection of life or merchandise. There are numerous stories of Phoenicians dumping cargo or scuttling ships to avoid discoveries, and refusing to disclose secrets even on the pain of death. Some of these trade secrets included the location of certain mines, trading ports, and treasure stores; the identity of Phoenicians spies, agents and operators embedded with foreign governments; navigation techniques and technologies that were not known to other maritime powers; and recipes for certain potions, poisons, and dyes.

Likewise, many Phoenician agents were stilled in deception and treachery. They had operators in many countries who were born and raised in foreign nations, whose families had been acting as spies for generations. They employed such effective

deceptions that in some cases their spies didn't even know for whom they were spying. Historians from almost every country that dealt with Phoenicians identify them as secretive, crafty, and duplicitous. Few cultures in known history have used techniques of systematic lying, false identities, spy-networks, and deception as artfully as the Phoenicians. In ancient Rome, the term "Punic Faith" was always used to mean perfidy, treachery, and bad faith. Lies and deception were part of their culture and cause celebration rather than shame.

The Phoenician Religion

The Phoenicians worshipped Canaanite Gods—who were said to be demons—and participated in rituals that were almost unimaginably grotesque. Human sacrifice is the most famous rite associated with the worship of Baal but this was only one of many abominable perversions. Not only Canaanites, but many other ancient cultures worshiped pagan Gods and engaged in debauched festivities. But the Phoenician practices were exceptionally depraved, so that even other Pagan cultures, such as the Greeks and Romans, were appalled. Like the Hebrews, the ancients tolerated degenerate behavior, but their philosophers and moral teachers had clear ideas of civic and personal virtues. In the moral universe of the Phoenicians, however, black was white, up was down, and all was shameless.

The Canaanite Gods went by many names but had similar characters. In general, Baal (or some variant) was the primary God, and Astarte (or some variant) was the primary Goddess, but specific rites and festivals varied among Canaanite nations. In Tyre, for example, child sacrifice was associated with Baal, but in Carthage, it was dedicated to Tanit (a female deity), and among the Hebrews, it was identified with Moloch*. Among various Canaanite nations, alternative names for Baal are: Molech, El, Zeus-Belos, Belus, and Baal-Hammon, and other names for Astarte were Ashteroth, Isis, Ishtar, Inanna, Tanit.

[* Note: Notice that in the Hebrew language Moloch is the phonetic opposite of Shalom, the word for peace.]

Besides child sacrifice and occasional cannibalism, most of the other grotesque rites of the Phoenicians involved some form of sexual perversion. Temple prostitutes were not uncommon in pagan worship, but the Phoenicians insisted that *all women*, even those who were unmarried, offer themselves as prostitutes on a regular basis in honor of Astarte. And as they used their women as prostitutes, they also visited the sins of Sodom and Gomorrah on their sons. Some boys were even made eunuchs and dressed as women to serve the goddess Astarte. These examples give a general idea of the twisted and demonic character of Canaanite worship, but are not a complete catalog of their vices.

Many Phoenician practices are so abhorrent to Christians that they have difficulty understanding how such a corrupt civilization could have survived, and in fact, thrived for centuries. But the fact is, some of these perverted rites had a specific psychological effect on those who practiced to them, and were a form of brain-washing that fostered a fanatical and cult-like devotion to the sect. In the same way that Sparta's unique way of life and upbringing of children produced an unusually cohesive and martial culture, Phoenician rites and worship were employed to undermine close family ties, break

down inhibitions against all imaginable vices, and to increase dependency on the state. Phoenicians needed to possess an unshakable loyalty to their own kind, even in far flung colonies, and had to keep state secrets on pain of death. They had to be willing to live as spies, and to lie, deceive, betray, and even murder when needed. To the extent that malevolent activities were required of citizens, worship of malevolent Gods was necessary.

'BABYLONIAN MARRIAGES' FOR ASTARTE GODDESS

Children who grow up witnessing the sacrifice of their brothers and sisters become numbed to ritualized murder and come to see all human life as expendable. Parents who submit to sacrificing their children to Moloch may come to see themselves and their children as property of the state. Women who are forced into prostitution at an early age are likely to become accustomed to indignities, and to accept arranged marriage or even more degrading subjugation as normal. And men who were abused as boys are likely to become predators themselves. And all Phoenicians learned from an early age that deceit and murder were respected occupations, and that there was no such thing as personal freedom or dignity. Turning away from the cult was not an option: they existed at the mercy of the state, and they would be killed if they betrayed cult secrets.

Fall of Carthage and Afterward

By the 6th century B.C. Carthage had grown to be the largest Phoenician city, and it was the military and commercial center of activity in the Western Mediterranean and Atlantic. Many Phoenician colonies in Spain, Sicily, Britain, and North Africa were older than Carthage, and had been governed independently for centuries, but for the purpose of simplicity, are often considered part of the Carthaginian Empire. It is true that the great general Hamilcar Barca (d. 228 B.C.) founded several new Carthaginian colonies in Southwest Spain, but they were far from the long established mining towns in the Guadalquivir river valley.

The first military struggle between Carthage and Rome did not begin until 264 B.C., almost 500 years after the city was founded. The struggle was primarily for naval but several important conventional battles did occur. The fact that Rome, a country with virtually no history of naval warfare was able to hold its own against Carthage during the First Punic War was one of the greatest upsets in military history. Hamilcar was so incensed at the audacity of Rome that he forced his son Hannibal to swear eternal enmity towards Rome. The Second Punic War lasted for over seventeen years but ended in a complete victory for Rome. The peace terms following the Second Punic War granted all Carthaginian colonies to Rome, but given that many towns were semi-autonomous, most treasure stores were hidden, and many Carthaginian loyalists had already (supposedly) surrendered to Rome, the amount of control Rome actually exercised in the region was limited, and it took Rome over 100 years to completely subdue Hispania.

The third and final Punic War was fought fifty years after the conclusion of the second war. From the beginning Rome was determined to destroy Carthage altogether, so it accused the Carthaginians of violating the peace agreement with Rome, and made demands they knew would be unacceptable. Rome first insisted that Carthage turn over all its weapons of war and send hostages. It then informed the Carthaginians that they must abandon their city and build a new one at least ten miles away from the ocean. As a sea-faring merchant civilization, this was an impossibility. The Carthaginians prepared for a siege. Probably due to strategic bribery, the siege of Carthage lasted for at two years, during which time much of the citizenry was able to escape. However, in 146 B.C., the city walls of Carthage fell, and the Romans destroyed the city and subjugated the remaining population.

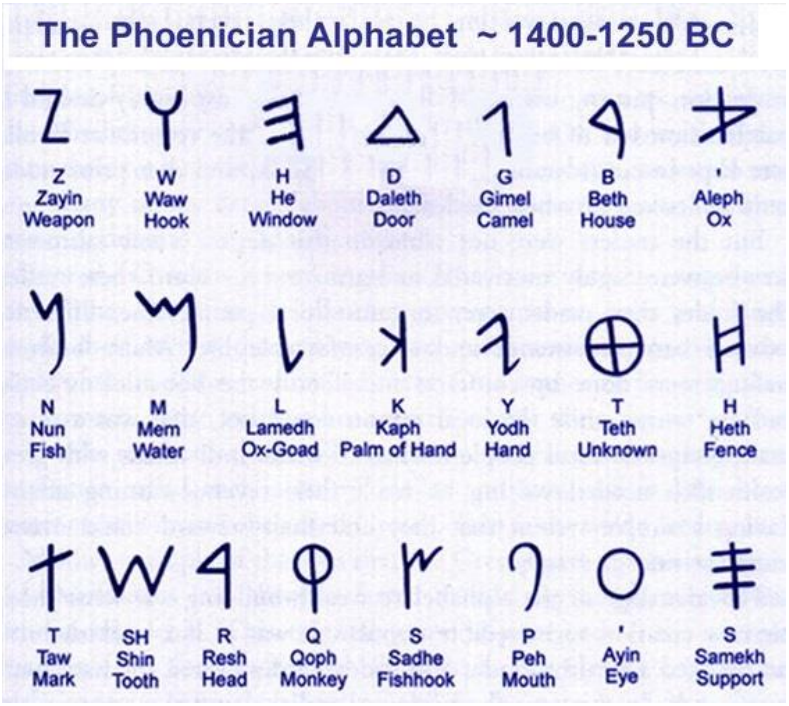
By the time the western capital city of the Phoenician Empire fell, Tyre, the eastern capital city, had been rebuilt and granted a great deal of independence from the Seleucid dynasty. By appearance, however, it was a Hellenized city and directed trade routes throughout the east. They Tyrians had already learned to adapt appearances to that of the conquering nation, while maintaining a secret network of Phoenician loyalists. This lesson was not lost on the Carthaginian refugees, many of whom settled in Roman territories.

The history of Rome, from the time of the fall of Carthage shows many signs of Phoenician bribery and corruption. A number of well-funded, well-organized enemies arose to resist the Romans, (Jugurtha, Mithridates, pirates, Sentorius, etc.), and a few wealthy 'Plebian' families and *novus homines* (new men) began to play a significant part

in Roman government, especially Marius, whose seven consulships greatly changed the methods of government of Rome. The vicious, murderous, promiscuous, behavior of the Julio-Claudian Caesars, shows unmistakable Phoenician influence. Other Roman emperors as well, exhibited certain Phoenician tendencies, but the Severans (193-235 A.D.) were the only Roman emperors to openly practice the Canaanite religion. Septimius Severus was from a Carthaginian town in Africa, and his wife Julia Domna, was the daughter of a Canaanite priest. After the fall of the Severan dynasty the Roman Empire suffered a century of chaos and anarchy.

Phoenician Influence on other Cultures

Because the Phoenicians dominated trade in Western regions for hundreds of years, they were in a position to greatly influence a number of civilizations. We have We have already seen the morally corrupting influence the cities of Tyre and Sidon had on the Hebrews. On some other regions, however they appear to have had a more instructive influence. In remote regions, such as Spain and North Africa, the Phoenician were a far more technically advanced civilization than were the native inhabitants. They introduced many of the innovations of eastern lands to the Iberians and Berbers. In Spain, for example, they taught the natives the arts of mining and metalwork, and in Africa they brought advances in irrigation, agriculture, and animal husbandry. In Greece they helped advanced the arts of writing, ship-building, and architecture. In some of the primitive nations they traded with, they introduced unheard of luxuries and temptations, and in some cases appear to have facilitated the trade in slaves.



PHOENICIAN ALPHABET

One of the most important legacies of the Phoenicians was the first phonetic alphabet. Writing had existed in ancient civilizations since at least 3000 B.C. in the form of pictograms or hieroglyphics. The problem with pictograms was that they were complicated and that only certain words could be represented. The Phoenicians were the first civilization known to have adopted consonant based set of symbols that could be used to represent a large variety of words, using a simplified script. The 22 letters of the Phoenician alphabet could be used as both pictograms to express concepts, and as phonetic symbols. The Phoenician alphabet was simple enough to be used effectively on papyrus paper which could then be rolled into scrolls. These scrolls were called 'books' or 'biblios' in Greek, taken from the name of the

Phoenician town that was famous for the production of papyrus paper. The English word Bible is taken from the Greek word for Book.

The Phoenician alphabet is the basis of both the Greek and Hebrew alphabets, and most other modern alphabets trace back to one of these ancient scripts. The Phoenician use of their alphabet however, was somewhat complicated since the symbols could be used to represented numbers and pictograms as well as letters. They also used a variety of symbols along with the alphabet to represent confidential instructions when communicating with distant operators. Phoenician writing is therefore associating with secret codes and double meanings, and has been used by secret societies and mystery religions throughout history.

Timeline—The Phoenicians

BC Year	Event
	PHOENICIA UNDER EGYPT
2000-1200	Phoenicia under the Influence of Egyptians and Hittites (Anatolia)
1500	Canaan is incorporated into Egyptian Empire.
1250	Hebrews occupy the 'promised land' of Canaan
1200	Invasion of the Sea Kings
1100	Phoenician Alphabet used as basis for Hebrew, Greek, others.
	PHOENICIAN SEA-FARING EMPIRE
1100-850	Height of Tyre and Sidon as independent trading civilizations.
1000	Phoenicians found Cadiz in southwest Spain, develop silver, tin mines .
980	Phoenician colonize Malta, establish a trading port
970	Tyre and Israel become trading partners, Hiram I helps construct of Temple
	ASSYRIAN, BABYLONIA, PERSIAN EMPIRES
875	Early Assyrian Conquest, Phoenician cities pay tribute.
850	Queen Dido Leaves Tyre to found Carthage as main Phoenician port
734	Phoenicians establish a colony at Palermo in Sicily.
605	Babylonian Conquest, Phoenician cities pay tribute.
540	Persian Conquest, Tyre and Sidona submit to Cyrus. Help in conquest of Egypt.
480-300	Greco-Punic Wars in Sicilian Wars
332	Siege of Tyre and conquest of city by Alexander the Great
323	Death of Alexander the Great, possibly by poison. Wars of the Diadochi.
	PUNIC WARS AND AFTERMATH
264-146	Punic Wars
200-50	Roman Conquest of Hispania
140-66	'Cilician' pirates terrorize Mediterranean, Put down by Pompey.
62	Catiline Conspiracy is discovered by Cicero
	PHOENICIAN INFLUENCES UNDER THE ROMAN EMPIRE
40	Praetorian Guard established by Antony and Octavio.
~50 A.D.	Roman 'Mystery-Cult' of Mithra established. Ancient 'Secret Society'.
193-235 A.D.	Severan Dynasty was the last openly Canaanite Roman Dynasty