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The Phoenicians and the Formation of the Western World¹

John C. Scott

A small maritime region, Phoenicia lay on the Eastern Mediterranean coast. The Phoenicians, who were Semites, emerged as a distinct Canaanite group around 3200 B.C. Hemmed in by the Lebanon Mountains, their first cities were Byblos, Sidon, Tyre, and Aradus.²

Scholars agree that there are two sources of the Western tradition: Judeo-Christian doctrine and ancient Greek intellectualism. More generally, there is recognition that Western civilization is largely built atop the Near Eastern civilizations of Mesopotamia and Egypt. A basic question arises, however, as to which ancient people specifically prepared the way for the West to develop. While early Aegean cultures are often viewed as the mainspring, assessment of the growing literature reveals that the city-states of Phoenicia *stimulated* (Bronze Age) and *fostered* (Iron Age) Western civilization.

Phoenicia, the principal axis of Eastern influence, sent forth pioneering seafarers, skilled engineers, gifted artisans, and the master entrepreneurs of antiquity. Through a peaceful, long-distance exchange network of goods and ideas, they influenced the trade, communication, and civilizational development of the Mediterranean basin. The height of Phoenician shipping, mercantile, and cultural activity was during the Greek early Archaic period, especially the Orientalizing phase, c. 750-650 B.C., which appears to have laid the foundations for fifth century B.C., classical Greece.

Phoenician mercantilism also prompted European state formation in the Aegean, Italy, and Spain. Rome would succeed Greece and Carthage. Finally, Roman Carthage promoted Latin Christianity.

¹ For research assistance, the author is grateful to Texas A & M University, Institute of Nautical Archeology.

² Sanford Holst, "Origin of the Phoenicians: Interactions in the Early Mediterranean Region," a paper presented at Queen Mary College, London, England, on June 29, 2008, accessed May 6, 2014, <http://www.phoenician.org/originofphoenicians.htm>.

This past century, anthropologist Ralph Linton, in *The Tree of Culture*, confirmed the influence of the Phoenicians: “Their main role in the development of the Greek and other Mediterranean cultures was as intermediaries between Asia and Europe.”³ Modern Phoenician studies were launched during the early 1960’s by Sabatino Moscati and the Italian school. By the seventies there was an emphasis on the Phoenician expansion. *The Sea Traders* was introduced by archeologist James B. Pritchard. “They became the first to provide a link between the culture of the ancient Near East and that of the uncharted world of the West...They went not for conquest as the Babylonians and Assyrians did, but for trade. Profit rather than plunder was their policy.”⁴ Toward the close of the century, *La civilization phenicienne et punique: Manuel de recherché*⁵ appeared as a landmark collection of articles in the field of Phoenician-Punic studies. Reviewer Philip C. Schmitz’s concluding comment: “To the general historian, the volume offers an alternative history of the Mediterranean before Rome, balancing the hellenocentric narratives that have so long determined the shape of ‘Western’ civilization.”⁶

Bronze Age: Phoenicia and Embryonic Western Civilization

According to the prominent world-systems (ancient, non-Marxist) theory, fundamental structural changes radiated out of fourth millennium B.C. urbanized, southern Mesopotamia. By way of this expanding “core-periphery” system, from the Early Bronze through the Iron Age, North Africa and the whole of Europe were eventually integrated. The world-systems approach emphasizes long-distance trade and communication, and it includes the traditional concept of cultural diffusion. Diffusion involves ideas, technology, goods, and individuals; nevertheless, aspects of culture, may be modified or even rejected by local elites and their societies.

By the third millennium B.C., there were two core powers, Egypt and Mesopotamia. “Semi-peripheries” were capitalist polities that conducted trade between cores and the undeveloped peripheries. Just to the north of the Phoenicia region was the small Canaanite kingdom of Ugarit; it was semi-peripheral to Mesopotamia. Actually, many scholars treat Ugarit as a purely Phoenician city. Phoenicia proper formed a unique, westward-facing maritime region that served as a semi-periphery of *both* cores—thus stimulating the rise of a new civilization in the West.

³ Ralph Linton, *The Tree of Culture* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1956), 341.

⁴ James B. Pritchard, introduction to *The Sea Traders*, by Maitland A. Edey (New York: Time-Life Books, 1974), 7.

⁵ Veronique Krings, ed., *La civilization phenicienne et punique: Manuel de recherché* (Leiden: Brill, 1995).

⁶ Philip C. Schmitz, “A Research Manual on Phoenician and Punic Civilization,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 121 (2001): 636.

Minoan civilization (height, c. 1950-1450 B.C), combined with later Mycenaean Greek contributions, is duly acknowledged as the forerunner to classical Greece, which elevated Western civilization. Civilizations expert Fernand Braudel considers Minoan Crete a bridge between East and West. As such, his foundation of Western civilization: “Cut off from the [barbaric] Aegean world, Crete looked towards Cyprus, Ugarit, and Byblos; through these places it made contact with Egypt and Mesopotamia, without which any serious development would have been unthinkable. Crete was from then on enmeshed in a context of eastern civilization.”⁷ Many archeologists concur that the emerging Minoan elite gradually began to import Near Eastern exotic, prestige products and technologies, such as advanced sailing ships; that is, they favored a shift away from Aegean to Eastern Mediterranean models of culture.⁸ By the third millennium B.C., the Phoenicians had become major sea traders. As the bearers of Egyptian, Mesopotamian, and other Eastern cultures, Phoenician influence seems clear. Conversely, since the 1970’s, theories of (primarily) indigenous development on Minoan Crete have had a strong following.⁹

The rise of Crete’s monumental buildings, c. 1950 B.C., state Papadimitriou and Kriga, “with their bureaucratic administration and large-scale storage of agricultural surpluses...suggests political affiliations with, and considerable influence from the Near East.” Found within the buildings are exotic materials and luxury products (gold, ivory, and faience); new metalworking techniques are also introduced. Thus, “the evidence may suggest some kind of state-level relations with the Egyptian Middle Kingdom, perhaps via the Levantine coast.”¹⁰

⁷ Fernand Braudel, *Memory and Mediterranean*, trans. Sian Reynolds (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2001), 112-113.

⁸ Peter Tomkins and Ilse Schoep, “Crete,” in *The Oxford Handbook of the Bronze Age Aegean*, ed. Eric H. Cline (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 70.

⁹ Sanford Holst, “Minoans and Phoenicians: Indigenous Development versus Eastern Influence,” a paper presented at California State University, Long Beach, on June 24, 2006, accessed June 30, 2014, <http://www.phoenician.org/minoansphoenicianspaper.htm>.

¹⁰ Nikolas Papadimitriou and Demetra Kriga, “‘Peripheries’ versus ‘Core’: The Integration of Secondary States into the World System of the Eastern Mediterranean and the Near East in the Late Bronze Age (1600-1200 BC),” in *Exchange Networks and Local Transformations*, ed. Maria Emanuela Alberti and Serena Sabatini (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2013), 10, 11.

By importing monumental construction techniques, Minoan elites seem to have been emulating their Near Eastern counterparts.¹¹ L. Vance Watrous points to Near Eastern inspiration for Cretan Hieroglyphic and Linear A (and, thus, Mycenaean Linear B) syllabic writing, clay tablets, and sophisticated sealing practices as major elements in the administrative model.¹² Perhaps the leading theory is that the Cretan scripts derive from Old Phoenician.¹³ Economist Michael Hudson underscores the fact that accounting, along with writing, time (in base sixty), prices, and monetary silver, were first standardized in Sumer for the administration of the commercial sphere.¹⁴

The emergence of the later Middle Bronze to early Late Bronze Age elite at Mycenae took place during the Shaft Graves period. Similar to the Minoan, the Mycenaean elite favored a shift toward Near Eastern luxury products (Orientalization) in their cultural development.¹⁵

In economic history, Late Bronze Age political stability, which included royal protections, but also rules, for merchants and traders, spurred commerce. The Phoenician business model of the Bronze and Iron Ages represents an inheritance from Mesopotamia. Thus, mixed enterprise flourished as the crown (public) and merchants (private) each contributed capital to invest in manufacturing and long-distance trade.¹⁶

Byblites of the Late Bronze Age created a remarkable twenty-two letter alphabetic writing system, known as Phoenician. It was developed out of the Ugaritic script, which, in turn, had developed out of proto-Canaanite.¹⁷ Aside from its diplomatic and cultural merits, the commercial value of the Phoenician alphabet aided the region in its rise as a mercantile empire during the Iron Age. Simultaneously, it aided in the ongoing transfer of high culture from the Near East to the West.

¹¹ Ilse Schoep, "Social and Political Aspects of Urbanism in Middle Minoan I-II Crete: Towards a Regional Approach," in *Inside the City in the Greek World*, ed. Sara Owen and Laura Preston (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2009), 33-34.

¹² L. Vance Watrous, "The Role of the Near East in the Rise of the Cretan Palaces," in *The Function of the Minoan Palaces*, ed. Robin Hagg and Nanno Marinatos (Stockholm: Swedish Institute in Athens, 1987), 69-70.

¹³ See Jan Best, "The Oldest Scripts in Crete: Derivation, Development, Decipherment," in *Ancient Scripts from Crete and Cyprus*, ed. Jan Best and Fred Woudhuizen (Leiden: Brill, 1988), 1-29.

¹⁴ Michael Hudson, "Introduction: The Role of Accounting in Civilization's Takeoff," in *Creating Economic Order: Record-Keeping, Standardization, and the Development of Accounting in the Ancient Near East*, ed. Michael Hudson and Cornelia Wunsch (Bethesda, MD: CDL Press, 2004), 1-3.

¹⁵ Bryan E. Burns, "Trade," in *Oxford Handbook of the Bronze Age Aegean*, 292, 296.

¹⁶ Karl Moore and David Lewis, *Birth of the Multinational* (Copenhagen: Copenhagen Business School Press, 1999) 69-90; and Karl Moore and David Lewis, *The Origins of Globalization* (Abington, UK: Routledge, 2009), 85-90.

¹⁷ Glenn Markoe, *Phoenicians* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 110-111.

Sweeping across the Eastern Mediterranean at the close of the period, c. 1200 B.C., were the invading or displaced Sea Peoples from the Aegean. The Hittite Empire collapsed, Ugarit was permanently destroyed, and Egypt went into decline, despite the victory of Ramses III. Fortunately, the Phoenician cities survived (one theory is that they allied themselves with the Sea Peoples). Ill-fated, the Mycenaean civilization also fell and, thus, Greece entered its “Dark Age”. Western culture was devastated and now largely isolated from the cosmopolitan Near East. Creating a vast, mercantile network—as well as filling the Aegean vacuum—was Phoenicia. Subsequently, Phoenician civilizational influence spanned (another) thousand years and traversed the Iron Age, not impacting but rather impelling the Occident.

Iron Age: Exploration, Mercantilism, and Cultural Diffusion in the West

The major Iron Age, starting c. 1200 B.C., city-states were Tyre, Sidon, Byblos, Aradus, Beirut, and Tripoli. Robert Stieglitz remarks that the “internationalism” of the Late Bronze Age was soon “replaced by the flowering of the Phoenician renaissance.”¹⁸ World historian Jerry H. Bentley points out that maritime commerce *actuated* the economic, social, and cultural integration of the Mediterranean basin. Initiated by the Phoenicians, then followed by the Greeks (who reflected the Phoenician pattern) and Romans, merchants organized networks of exchange and distribution. These networks encouraged the division of labor and the building of states.¹⁹

Early in the first millennium B.C., the Phoenicians set-up ports, bases, warehouses, and emporia, up to the southern Black Sea and across the Mediterranean basin and beyond. Initially, trading stations were established at strategic geographic and economic locations. Led by Tyre, in southern Phoenicia, territorial colonies were established in Cyprus, mineral-rich Sardinia and Iberia, the Balearic Islands, Sicily, Malta, and agriculturally-rich North Africa (first Utica and Carthage). Exploration and colonization went past the difficult Strait of Gibraltar or Pillars of Hercules. (Hercules was originally a Phoenician deity.) The Atlantic coasts of Africa and Europe, and, perhaps, the Canary Islands (visible from the shore) and the British Isles, were discovered.

¹⁸ Robert Stieglitz, “The Geopolitics of the Phoenician Littoral in the Early Iron Age,” *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 129 (1990): 9.

¹⁹ Jerry H. Bentley, “Sea and Ocean Basins as Frameworks for Historical Analysis,” *Geographical Review* 89 (1999): 215-219.

By 1200 B.C., the Phoenicians were building large merchant ships. In world maritime history, declares Richard Woodman, they are recognized as “the first true seafarers, founding the art of pilotage, cabotage, and navigation” and the architects of “the first true ship, built of planks, capable of carrying a deadweight cargo and being sailed and steered.”²⁰ Master shipbuilders, during the Bronze Age, they laid a keel. For sturdy hulls, pegged mortise-and-tenon joints were developed on the Levantine coast; this method spread westward, and it became standard until the Late Roman period.²¹ The brailed rig sail—so vital, because it enabled tacking against the wind—was likely a Levantine innovation. Transport amphorae that became standardized for volume, in use and imitated for over two thousand years until Byzantine times, were invented in Phoenicia. In stellar navigation, the North Star was discovered, which the later Greeks called the Phoenician Star; this enabled sailing at night on shorter distance, open-sea routes. They apparently invented the Mediterranean wind rose and the crow’s nest. The first evidence of maritime law also appears in the Levant.²² Iron Age contributions include the art of cartography;²³ artificial (and self-cleaning or flushing) harbors, such as those in Sidon, Tyre, Atlit, and Acre;²⁴ and, the revolutionary bireme or double-decked war galley.²⁵

Industry was another key to the success of the mercantile network. Both luxury and common goods were produced. The Phoenicians pioneered mass production. Their region, for example, emerged as the leading producer of glass, which now included *transparent* glass. Finished articles, such as flasks and beads, by the thousands, were shipped across the Mediterranean.²⁶ In Spain, wheel-turned pottery was introduced and mass produced.²⁷ The Carthaginians mass produced ships: parts were labeled with the Punic alphabet.²⁸

²⁰ Richard Woodman, *The History of the Ship* (New York: Lyons Press, 1987), 16. Cabotage refers to navigation along the coastline.

²¹ Cemal Pulak, “Uluburun Wreck,” in *Oxford Handbook of the Bronze Age Aegean*, 873; and George Bass, “Cape Gelidona Shipwreck,” in *Oxford Handbook of the Bronze Age Aegean*, 799-800.

²² Shelley Wachsmann, *Seagoing Ships & Seamanship in the Bronze Age Levant* (College Station, TX: Texas A & M University Press, 1998), 300, 51, 323-325, 332.

²³ Mark Woolmer, *Ancient Phoenicia: An Introduction* (London: Bristol Classical Press, 2011), 84.

²⁴ Arad Haggi, “Report on Underwater Excavation at the Phoenician Harbour, Atlit, Israel,” *International Journal of Nautical Archeology* 39 (2010): 283.

²⁵ Woodman, 16-21.

²⁶ Gerhard Herm, *The Phoenicians*, trans. Catherine Hiller (New York: William Morrow, 1975), 80.

²⁷ Moore and Lewis (1999), 128.

²⁸ Piero Bartoloni, “Ships and Navigation,” in *The Phoenicians*, ed. Sabatino Moscati (New York: Abbeville, 1988), 76.

Their most famous product, the expensive Tyrian and Sidonian purple dye, was exported either as powder or as dyed fabric, especially wool. The Greeks ascribed the ethnic name of Phoenicians (derived from the word *phoinos*, meaning red) probably because of their red to violet cloth. The Royal Purple of the ancient monarchies, as in Rome, became the Western standard of imperial adornment.

The artwork of the Phoenician cities was renowned in ancient times, and it is increasingly respected by experts today. Besides fine textiles and glassware, other major productions were woodworking with mortise-and-tenon seams; ivory work, often inlaid in furniture; metalwork, including bronze, silver, and gold cups and bowls; and, jewelry: perfected were the Near Eastern techniques of filigreeing, granulation,²⁹ repoussé, and gold sheeting (embossing pertains to bowls). By 1000 B.C., iron smelting and ironworking were mastered.³⁰

As sea merchants in the West, they brought Mesopotamian astronomy and weights and measures, as well as their own Phoenician alphabet: a phonetic code (not a pictographic system) to build words. This simplified writing system did not require professional scribes as in Egypt or Mesopotamia, and it could be written on a variety of media. The egalitarian alphabet was (and is) easy to learn—in fixed sequence. A long-distance network of trade involved contracts, correspondence, and record keeping.³¹

Preliminary trade with the Euboean Greeks was established during the tenth century B.C. This traffic introduced Eastern prestige goods, such as gold jewelry and fine cloth;³² weight standards;³³ and, Phoenician alphabetical writing,³⁴ perhaps the first in Greece.

The title of the synthesis *The Orientalizing Revolution: Near Eastern Influence on Greek Culture in the Early Archaic Age*, by Walter Burkert, exhorts Hellas-centered classicists. Its theme: the formative epoch, from c. 750-650 B.C., known as the Orientalizing period, was decisive. Under the influence of the high culture of the Semitic East (Assyrian, Phoenician, Aramean), Greece laid the foundations to create a culture that would eventually dominate the Mediterranean—classical civilization. The most important transmission was the Phoenician alphabetic script (Mycenaean Linear B had died out).

²⁹ Maria E. Aubet, *The Phoenicians and the West*, 2nd ed., trans. Mary Turton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 79.

³⁰ Maitland A. Edey, in *Sea Traders*, 62.

³¹ Linton, 112.

³² Susan Sherratt and Andrew Sherratt, "The Growth of the Mediterranean Economy in the Early First Millennium BC," *World Archeology* 24 (1993): 367, 369.

³³ John H. Kroll, "Early Iron Age Weights at Lefkandi, Euboea," *Oxford Journal of Archeology* 27 (2008): 37-48.

³⁴ Lincoln Paine, *The Sea and Civilization* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2013), 84.

Along with the concept of the book, Semites contributed traditional Mesopotamian literary forms, techniques, and motifs—besides the Phoenician pantheon—that find strong parallels in Hesiod, Homer, and Aesop.³⁵ Mentioned above are the scientific traditions of nautics, astronomy, and measures. Another Eastern tradition, including Phoenician, was fine music: inherited by the Greeks and handed down to the European Middle Ages. Phoenicia conveyed the religious-sport festival and athletic stadium (monumental architecture), forerunning the celebration of the Olympic games.³⁶

So the editors of *Debating Orientalization* reaffirm the centrality of the Phoenicians in the cultural process of Orientalization: defined as the indigenous adoption and reworking of Eastern goods and ideas. This practice is first seen on Cyprus, then in the Greek, Italian, and Iberian regions.³⁷

The prehensile Archaic Greeks modified the Phoenician alphabet in order to accommodate their vowel-intensive Indo-European tongue. This formed the basis of the West's (Latin and Cyrillic) alphabets. Marshall McLuhan, who famously quipped “the medium is the message,” and Robert K. Logan, in studying the alphabet, conclude that it is more than an efficient form of writing-communication. The alphabetical (like the numerical) system is how societies organize information. Beyond literacy and systematization, the alphabet stimulates both abstract and rational thought through the phonetic coding and decoding process. As a result, the adoption of Phoenician letters—especially in Ionia and Athens—created an intellectual environment for the development of Greek, and, subsequently, Western science.³⁸

In the Greek language, writes Burkert, there is a “marked presence” of Semitic loan words, thus proving Phoenician cultural influence. These are displayed in the critical areas of writing, commerce, trade, and craftsmanship. Following are selected examples: *alpha*, *beta*, *gamma*, and so forth, are letter names; *byblos*, the word for book (and later, Bible) since the Greeks imported Egyptian paper from Byblos; *mina*, the standard unit of weight and currency; *kanon*, the standard unit of measurement in architecture or measuring rod; *titanos*, lime, *gypson*, plaster, and *plinthos*, clay brick, are new construction terms; *gaulos*, the word for ship, *makellon*, market; and, *arrabon*, deposit.³⁹

³⁵ Walter Burkert, *The Orientalizing Revolution: Near Eastern Influence on Greek Culture in the Early Archaic Age*, trans. Margaret E. Pinder (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), 5-6, 128-129, 25, 29-33, chap. 3.

³⁶ Labib Boutros, *Phoenician Sport, Its Influence on the Origin of the Olympic Games* (Amsterdam: Gieben, 1981).

³⁷ Corinna Riva and Nicholas C. Vella, “Introduction,” in *Debating Orientalization*, ed. Corinna Riva and Nicholas C. Vella (London: Equinox, 2006), 13-14.

³⁸ Robert K. Logan, *The Alphabet Effect: The Impact of the Phonetic Alphabet on the Development of Western Civilization* (New York: William Morrow, 1986), 25, 17-21, 187-191, 207, 103, chap. 6. McLuhan is quoted on p. 25.

³⁹ Burkert (1992), 35, 34, 28-40.

Orientalizing art is principally represented by fine metalworking, ivory carving, jewelry (gold filigree, granulation, and so on), ceramics, and the first large-scale architecture. Greece's monumental temples and statuary are based on an Eastern prototype, and they appear during the eighth century B.C.⁴⁰ Architectural features that were adopted include the Phoenician Proto-Aeolic capital, forerunner of the Ionic capital, and ashlar masonry. The Phoenicians also acted as intermediaries to carry Egyptian architectural techniques to Hellas. For the interior of buildings, beyond plaster, other materials used were wood (cedar) paneling, for example, Phoenician-built Solomon's Temple; alabaster slabs; and, stucco (Phoenician-Punic world). Originally, Phoenicians of the Bronze Age developed lime mortar with hydraulic properties from which the Greeks evolved true cement.⁴¹ Subsequently, the Romans would produce concrete.

Historian of science Leonid Zhmud comments on the preliminary data used in the first—in the world—mathematical proofs by the early Hellenes. “Semitic borrowings in the Greek related to weights, measures, and practical calculations confirm that this area was open to Oriental influence.”⁴² A fifth century B.C., contribution, the abacus, probably reached Greece from Phoenicia.⁴³ This valuable calculating device was in service in the West until the French Revolution.

The democratic and constitutional Athenian city-state—pivotal to the growth of the Western world—may be another adaptation. From the Bronze Age onward, observes Glenn Markoe, “true city-states” functioned in Phoenicia.⁴⁴ These autonomous, monarchical city-states with their councils of elders and peoples' assemblies are characterized as proto-democratic. With regard to Greece, preceding Athens, Sparta had a constitution. Aristotle, in his analysis of the Spartan and Carthaginian (Punic) constitutions, points to similarities: councils and popular assemblies. Thus, Simon Hornblower, Robert Drewes, and others assume that the Spartan system followed a Phoenician prototype.⁴⁵

The Phoenician models adopted or adapted by Archaic Greece, like the alphabet, allowed for commercial intercourse with leading societies, along with the development of Western civilization. It is generally accepted that Phoenician standards of weights and measures were universally employed by the Greeks, passed on to the Etruscans and Romans, and inherited by medieval Europe.

⁴⁰ Günter Kopcke, “What Role for Phoenicians?,” in *Greece between East and West: 10th – 8th Centuries BC*, ed. Günter Kopcke and Isabelle Tokumaru (Mainz: Zabern, 1992), 110-112.

⁴¹ Donald Harden, *The Phoenicians* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1962), 141, 136.

⁴² Leonid Zhmud, *Pythagoras and the Early Pythagoreans*, trans. Kevin Windle and Rosh Ireland (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 250.

⁴³ O.A.W. Dilke, *Mathematics and Measurement* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 21.

⁴⁴ Markoe, 87.

⁴⁵ Stephen Stockwell, “Before Athens: Early Popular Government in Phoenician and Greek City States,” *Geopolitics, History, and International Relations* 2 (2010): 123-133.

Hudson makes the convincing case that the financial customs of classical Greece and Rome were not indigenous to Indo-European societies as many assumed previously. Instead, during the Archaic period, largely through Phoenician maritime commerce, financial innovations were diffused to the Greeks and Etruscans, then transferred to the Romans: maritime law, insurance contracts, joint financing of business ventures, banqueting (aristocratic symposium), deposit (aforementioned *arrabon*) banking, and interest-bearing debt.⁴⁶

Finally, the example of Phoenicia's distant voyages and colonization was followed by Greeks. Starting in the eighth century B.C., the Euboeans and Corinthians led the colonization movement. Classicist Richard A. Billows affirms this meant learning ship construction technology, navigation skills, and the east-west trade routes of the Phoenicians.⁴⁷

On mainland Italy, Phoenician contact is evident by the tenth century B.C., and regular exchange commenced in the ninth century.⁴⁸ Etruscan mariners learned from the Phoenicians how to navigate by the stars.⁴⁹ Moreover, the foregoing Phoenician weights and measures and financial innovations would be conveyed to Archaic Italy, then received by the Romans.

The strong Orientalizing tradition (750 to 580 B.C.) involved both goods and ideas. This period of economic growth, in fact, marks the beginning of Etruscan civilization.⁵⁰ Wine, a luxury product, was introduced to the Etruscans. They, in turn, shipped the beverage in Etruscan amphorae (imitation of Phoenician amphorae) and domesticated grapevines to southern France. Viniculture thence spread north into Europe, and eventually, the New World.⁵¹ Structurally, Orientalization is associated with the emergence of cities, urban planning, masonry houses with tile roofs,⁵² and wheeled vehicles. Moreover, urbanization coincides with the formation of Italian city-states.

⁴⁶ Michael Hudson, "Did the Phoenicians Introduce the Idea of Interest to Greece and Italy—And If So, When?," in *Greece between East and West*, 128, 134-141.

⁴⁷ Richard A. Billows, *Marathon* (New York: Overlook Duckworth, 2010), 61-62.

⁴⁸ Albert J. Nijboer, "Italy and the Levant during the Late Bronze and Iron Age (1200-750/700 BC)," in *Beyond the Homeland: Markers in Phoenician Chronology*, ed. Claudia Sagona (Leuven: Peeters, 2008), 428-431, 426.

⁴⁹ Baldassarre Giardina, *Navigare Necessè Est* (London: Archeopress, 2010), 6.

⁵⁰ Maurizio Sannibale, "Orientalizing Etruria," in *The Etruscan World*, ed. Jean Macintosh Turfa (London: Routledge, 2013), 99.

⁵¹ Patrick E. McGovern, "Beginning of Viniculture in France," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 110 (2013): 10147-10151.

⁵² Sannibale, 99, 120-122.

The architectural traditions of Etruria, largely Phoenician and Greek, were later transferred to Rome. Etruscan Orientalizing (as in Spain) is characterized by aristocratic emulation, including the model of the Eastern courts' stately display. Phoenician imports or their imitation include the following: "early togas and the use of the colour purple",⁵³ ceremonial axe, sceptre, horse, chariot, throne, banqueting equipment, and seals. These symbols of political authority were passed on to the Romans.⁵⁴

Subsequently, there arrived Greek colonists and merchants. Spreading Hellenic culture, early in the eighth century B.C., they introduced Greco-Phoenician letters to form the Etruscan alphabet. In turn, it was transmitted to and adapted by the Romans as the basic Latin alphabet of western Europe.

By 800 B.C., the intercontinental mercantile network of Phoenicia took shape, embracing the far west. The analysis of Moore and Lewis shows that Tyre's monarchy and private merchants—a mixed economy with capitalistic features—by 650 B.C., "presided over the most impressive business organisation in antiquity...able to internationalise trade and production on an axis stretching from the Atlantic shores of Spain to the shores of the Babylon Euphrates."⁵⁵ Additionally, West Africa (gold, ivory) became a direct trading partner, and the British Isles (tin), an indirect, overland trading partner.⁵⁶

The new chronology suggests an Atlantic exploration period, during the tenth century B.C., followed by later ninth century colonization.⁵⁷ Gades (Cadiz) was founded west of the Strait. Southwest Iberia held the most abundant silver deposits known in the ancient world. While there existed protohistoric indigenous mining, the Phoenicians introduced iron tools—announcing the Iberian Iron Age—to replace stone tools, advanced smelting techniques and cupellation, and systematic operations, resulting in a boom of silver production.⁵⁸

⁵³ Nijboer, 443.

⁵⁴ Annette Rathje, "Tracking Down the Orientalizing," *Bolletino di Archeologia on line* I 2010 Volume special F/F2/2, 2010, Ministero per i Beni e le Attivita Culturali, accessed October 15, 2016, <http://www.archeologia.beniculturali.it/pages/pubblicazioni.html>.

⁵⁵ Karl Moore and David Lewis, "Multinational Enterprise in Ancient Phoenicia," *Business History* 42 (2000): 34.

⁵⁶ Moore and Lewis (1999), 128.

⁵⁷ Maria E. Aubet, "Political and Economic Implications of the New Phoenician Chronologies," in *Beyond the Homeland*, 247-249.

⁵⁸ Moore and Lewis (1999), 116-119.

There is consensus on the local Late Bronze Age culture; that is, before Phoenician colonization starting in the eighth century B.C. Iberia was proto-urban—displaying simple ground plans in some areas.⁵⁹ Likewise, its tribal groups were in a transitional phase toward early state formation. The socio-economic bases were already in place. Joan Sanmartí, therefore, employs a combined endogenist (internal) and exogenist (external) theoretical approach to change. He acknowledges that “foreign contact had an important role in the evolution of the indigenous societies.”⁶⁰ Phoenician activity is associated with the technological change, economic intensification, and increased social differentiation that ushered in Iberian Age centralized polities (states).⁶¹

Scholarship thus focuses on the Phoenician period as related to the formation of Iberian culture and its first cities, beginning around 600 B.C. The Iberian Orientalizing phase embraced the late eighth and seventh centuries B.C. Technological transfers were iron, metallurgical techniques, the potter’s wheel, and “carts and chariots are the oldest wheeled vehicles in Iberia.”⁶² Agriculturally, crop specialization, technologies, commercial cereal (surplus) and olive oil production, and viniculture were spread by the Phoenicians.⁶³ Commerce introduced, for example, banqueting; transport amphorae; and, standardized weights, measures, and seals.⁶⁴

Phoenicia proper colonization in Iberia faded with the fall of Tyre to Nebuchadnezzar in 573 B.C. Yet, Carthage gradually assumed leadership of the western Phoenician cities.

Punic Carthage: Further Contributions in the West

Carthage was founded on the fertile coast of central North Africa in the late ninth century B.C. After Tyre fell, the city-state became fully independent. From the sixth century B.C., Carthage incorporated and expanded the western Phoenician colonies, founded new colonies, and acquired the ports of Corsica. The peak of Carthage’s power was during the fourth century B.C. Its prosperity is validated by vast reserves of gold and silver.⁶⁵ Carthage was likely the richest city on earth: the view of the ancients.⁶⁶

⁵⁹ Maria Carme Belarte, “Colonial Contacts and Protohistoric Indigenous Urbanism,” in *Colonial Encounters in Ancient Iberia*, ed. Michael Dietler and Carolina López (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2009), 105-107.

⁶⁰ Joan Sanmartí, “Colonial Relations and Social Change in Iberia (Seventh to Third Century BC), in *Colonial Encounters*, 50-52.

⁶¹ Joan Sanmartí, “Colonial Activities and Iberian Origins,” in *Journal of Mediterranean Archeology* 21 (2008): 279-280.

⁶² Richard Harrison, *Spain at the Dawn of History* (London: Thames and Hudson: 1988), 34.

⁶³ Ramon Buxó, “Botanical and Archeological Dimensions of the Colonial Encounter,” in *Colonial Encounters*, 157-159, 162-165.

⁶⁴ Sanmartí (2008), 279-280.

⁶⁵ Markoe, 103.

⁶⁶ B. D. Hoyos, *The Carthaginians* (Milton Park, Abington, Oxon, UK: Routledge, 2010), 59.

Punic Carthage (550-146 B.C.) was a mercantile and political superpower in the West. The republic was on a level with the Eastern powers and Greece.⁶⁷ Over 250 years of peace with budding Rome involved four written treaties.⁶⁸ The Carthaginian agricultural revolution began during the fifth century B.C. Mago's authoritative, twenty-eight volume work on agricultural science and economy was translated by the Romans and Greeks.⁶⁹ Punic Spain and Italy received from Carthage advanced (Levantine) technology: *plostellum Punicum*, a mechanical threshing machine. Carthaginian nautical contributions include the aforementioned standardized ship construction, the dry dock,⁷⁰ and lighthouses.⁷¹

Eric S. Gruen notes that the Greeks held the Carthaginian constitution in high regard. Aristotle, in the *Politics*, delivers praise for the merit-based document. The classical philosopher compares it with the respected Spartan constitution (mentioned previously, Sparta's may be based upon a Phoenician prototype). How would the Roman Republic's constitution compare? For Hellenistic political thinkers, "Carthage, as is clear, supplied the principal criterion by which to measure success."⁷²

Conclusion: The Quickening of Western Civilization

Phoenicia's cultural interaction with the Occident spanned two millennia. Led by Bronze Age Byblos, the region originated the true sailing ship, navigation by the North Star, maritime law, and so forth. The voyages of the Phoenicians constitute the "first systematic use of the sea."⁷³ Flowing out of their commercial activity of the Bronze and Iron Ages are foundational contributions to the Western world.

As distilled by William H. Hallo, the basic qualities of civilization are cities, capital, and writing.⁷⁴ Part of the Fertile Crescent, Phoenicia with its city-states possessed all three elements in abundance. Peaceful, long-distance trade and exchange was undertaken. Its artisans, merchants, and agents promoted urban growth, made major capital investments, and spread literacy. All in all, the enduring Phoenician influence—representing the urbanized Near Eastern cultures—both stimulated and fostered Western civilization.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 57-58. Although Carthage lost the Punic Wars, the military tactics of Hannibal are studied by modern strategists.

⁶⁸ Markoe, 54, 102, 190.

⁶⁹ Serge Lancel, *Carthage: A History*, trans. Antonia Nevill (London: Blackwell, 1995), 278.

⁷⁰ Richard Miles, *Carthage Must Be Destroyed* (New York: Viking, 2010), 215.

⁷¹ Giardina, 5-6.

⁷² Eric S. Gruen, *Rethinking the Other in Antiquity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 199-120.

⁷³ Braudel, 188.

⁷⁴ William H. Hallo, *Origins* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 1.

Bronze Age sea trade brought Phoenician merchants to Minoan Crete before and during its height (c. 1950-1450 B.C.). Consequently, embryonic Western civilization borrowed important Eastern concepts: monumental building techniques; luxury products of gold and ivory (later, glass); advanced sailing ships; monetary silver; weights and measures; and an administrative model, including clay tablets, seals, accounting methods, and syllabic (perhaps Old Phoenician) writing that became Linear A.

The Early Iron Age saw the expansion of Phoenician civilization in the West. Leadership of the city-states was assumed by Tyre. Tyre's monarchy (public) and merchants (private) comprised a mixed economy with capitalistic features. During the tenth century B.C., they began to create an intercontinental mercantile network. Colonies were first planted on Cyprus, then Carthage was founded in 814 B.C.; settlements also stretched to the Atlantic coasts of Africa and Europe, which they discovered. The Phoenicians bore the cultures of the core Mesopotamian and Egyptian civilizations. Handed on were manufactured goods (luxury and common), bulk products, technologies, and information, as well as cultural, architectural, and artistic patterns. This network laid the foundation for the Roman Empire's Mediterranean as a single economic, political, and cultural unit.

Well before classical Greece and Rome, there arose macro-trends associated with Phoenicia: globalization, capitalism, and multinational corporations. In *The Origins of Globalization*, Moore and Lewis observe that the achievement of Tyre (and Carthage) was to expand world trade and at the same time to shift the center of finance and high culture westward.⁷⁵ *The Cambridge History of Capitalism* is introduced by Larry Neal. He cites the primacy of Phoenicia's market-driven capitalism and long-distance trade reaching the Atlantic.⁷⁶ Moore and Lewis, in *Birth of the Multinational*, hold forth that the merchants of Tyre created the first multinational business organization on an intercontinental scale.⁷⁷ These trends originated in Mesopotamia, yet it was the commercial activities of the Phoenicians that laid the economic and cultural bases of the Western world.

Between the protohistoric and classical eras was the decisive transitional epoch known as the Orientalizing horizon (eighth and seventh centuries B.C.). Phoenician mercantilism, capital, and routes, along with cultural elements (i.e. alphabetical script) encouraged European state formation: first, in the eighth century B.C., Aegean, then in seventh century Italy and Spain.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ Moore and Lewis (2009) 113, 111.

⁷⁶ Larry Neal, "Introduction," in *The Cambridge History of Capitalism*, vol. 1, *The Rise of Capitalism*, ed. Larry Neal and Jeffrey G. Williamson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 7.

⁷⁷ Moore and Lewis (1999), 69.

⁷⁸ Sherratt and Sherratt, 374-375.

Most important, classical historian Walter Burkert identifies the expansion of both maritime commerce and the alphabet (literacy) by Phoenicia as the determining factors that “caused the center of civilization to shift westward from the Near East to the Mediterranean.”⁷⁹ First arose the civilizations of Carthage and Greece, followed by Etruria, and finally, Rome.

Indeed, from the Phoenicians early Archaic Greece received alphabetical writing—and the book—forming the basis of the West’s (Latin and Cyrillic) alphabets; shipbuilding technology, navigation skills, the example of overseas colonization; and, commercial contracts (also in Italy). Brought to Greece, Italy, and Iberia were weights and measures, monumental art and architecture, and fine luxury goods as models that influenced early European art. The alphabet is considered the preeminent contribution of the Phoenicians for the establishment of Western civilization. Clearly, the Greek intellectual achievement would not have been possible, nor could it have been recorded for future generations of literate Europeans, without the egalitarian script.

Punic Carthage (550-146 B.C.) became a mercantile, political, and military superpower in the West. Among its introductions were large-scale agricultural methods and technologies, horticultural specialization, and new crops, as well as nautical innovations. The city-state also set a constitutional standard in the ancient world. The destruction of Tyre (Alexander the Great) and Carthage (Scipio) included the loss of their records, archives, and libraries. These collections could be substantially older than the Hellenistic library in Alexandria.⁸⁰

Afterwards, Roman Carthage became the focal point of emerging Latin Christianity. Above all, it produced the first outstanding—Tertullian—and the most influential—St. Augustine—Western Church theologians. The Protestant reformers, too, drew heavily upon Augustine’s conservative writings.

The last word is given to Hans G. Niemeyer, a Phoenician (Iron Age) specialist, who abstracts how this most ancient people, in effect, sparked Western civilization. First, the specific experience of Archaic Greece: the Phoenician transfusion of Eastern goods, technologies, and ideas that, in turn, became the foundations of Greco-Roman civilization. Secondly, the pan-Mediterranean influence: “The eminent role played by the Phoenician city-states in the dissemination of urban civilization, in the propagation of technical innovations, in the distribution of new [aristocratic] lifestyle paradigms and ‘modern’ economics.”⁸¹

⁷⁹ Walter Burkert, *Babylon, Memphis, Persepolis* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 6.

⁸⁰ Lancel, 358-359.

⁸¹ Hans G. Niemeyer, “The Phoenicians and the Birth of a Multinational Mediterranean Society,” in *Commerce and Monetary Systems in the Ancient World*, ed. Robert Rollinger and Christoph Ulf (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2004), 246, 250.

Today, the above contributions span Wilkinson's central civilization/world-system. Early modern European expansion, followed by Westernization—fittingly with large ships, capitalism, alphabetical writing, and colonization—spread the legacies of Phoenicia.