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## **The Shifting Leadership of Phoenicia in the Iron Age**

### **Introduction**

Of all of the trading civilizations of the ancient world, perhaps none are more intriguing than that of the Phoenicians due to being significantly ahead of its time as a maritime trading power. The different Phoenician city-states, while collectively a huge force in the economics of the Iron Age, were not equally influential. The reasons for these developments are numerous and variable. Most notable might be the utilization of colonization by Tyre and possibly Sidon and the resulting increase in both supply of needed goods and demand for exports. Yet another was destruction caused by conquest or revolts against various overlords, which frequently altered the balance of power in the region despite its effects being reversed over time by the predictions of the Solow growth model. Yet another factor was likely geography, motivating three of the four Phoenician city-states to develop a navy and allowing Carthage to seize control of the Mediterranean. All of these represent good examples of the impacts of external factors on a country's economic state.

## Section I: Background

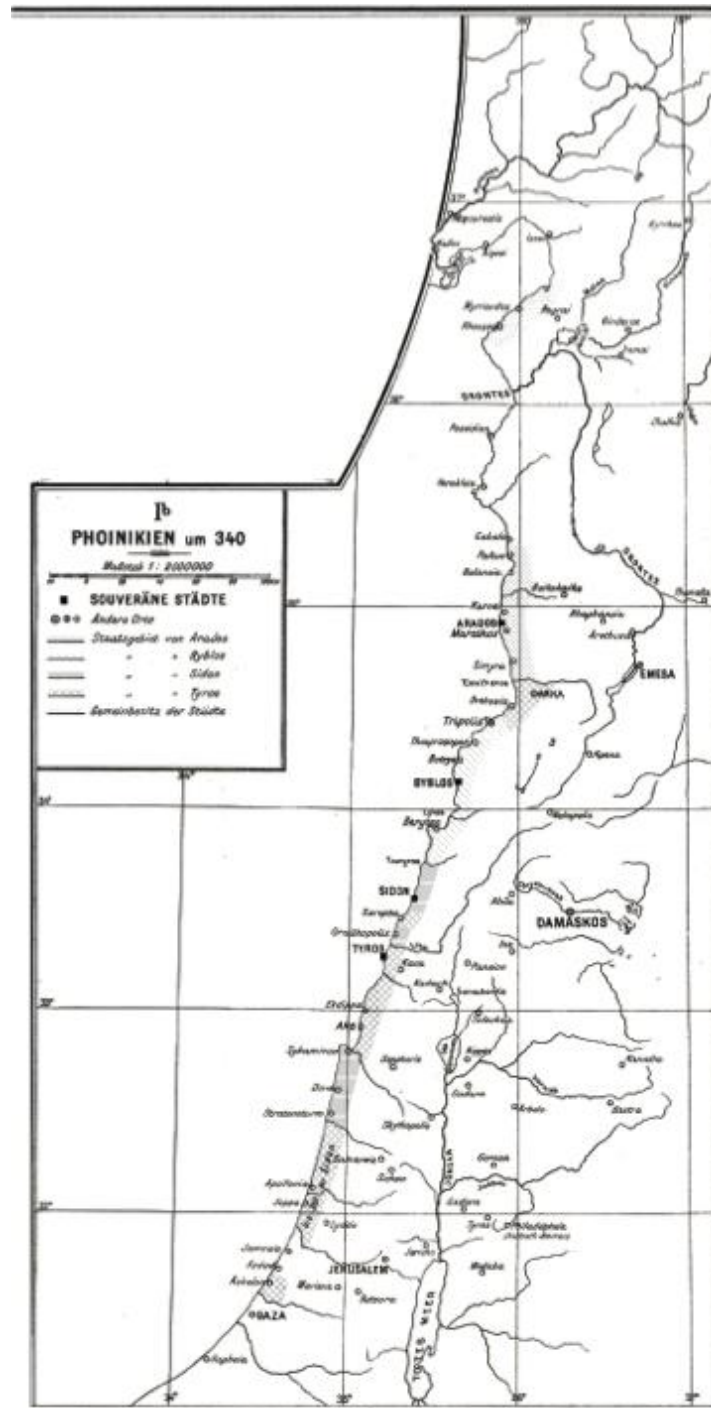


Figure 1

Image source: H el ene Sader, *The History and Archaeology of Phoenicia*, ed. Brian B Schmidt, Archaeology and Biblical Studies



Figure 2

Image source: Josette Elayi, *The History of Phoenicia* (Atlanta: ISD LLC, 2018).

Before delving into the history of Iron Age Phoenicia, it is first necessary to cover what the term *Phoenicia* means. *Phoenicia* was an ancient Greek term for a series of settlements along the northern coast of the Levant or on islands off of the coast. Sader states that the term came from the Greek word for the color red due to either the Phoenicians' reddish skin complexion or the purple dye exported from the region. These settlements were ruled by four regional kingdoms centered on cities known as Tyre, Sidon, Byblos, and Arwad, as shown in Figure 1. Keep in mind that Figure 1 is accurate to the Persian period and that this paper will cover the borders of each kingdom at the beginning of the Iron Age. It is also worth noting that the Phoenicians did not have a name for themselves specifically. The Phoenician cities instead saw themselves as part of the larger Canaanite culture, which reached much further inland and to the south.<sup>1</sup>

The purple dye that became Phoenicia's namesake was made from crushed murex shells that were mixed with salt and boiled before being left in sunlight.<sup>2</sup> Known as Tyrian purple after the city of Tyre, murex dye was extremely expensive to make and was thus very valuable throughout the ancient world. In addition, it had the unique property of brightening instead of fading in sunlight, further increasing its value. Such was the status of this Phoenician export that during the later days of Rome, only the emperor was allowed to wear clothing that used it.<sup>3</sup>

Like the Middle East as a whole, the Phoenicians had a mixed economy, involving both public and private investment.<sup>4</sup> As for its exports, aside from the aforementioned purple dye,

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<sup>1</sup> Hélène Sader, *The History and Archaeology of Phoenicia*, ed. Brian B Schmidt, Archaeology and Biblical Studies 25 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2019).

<sup>2</sup> Hélène Sader, *The History and Archaeology of Phoenicia*.

<sup>3</sup> Kassia St Clair, *The Secret Lives of Colour* (John Murray, 2016).

<sup>4</sup> Karl James Moore and David Charles Lewis, "Multinational Enterprise in Ancient Phoenicia," *Business History* 42, no. 2 (April 2000): 17–42, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00076790000000219>

Phoenicia was known primarily for its cedar wood, pottery, and metalworking. Their wood supply was also useful for their own purposes, specifically for building ships.<sup>5</sup> This was important for the Phoenician people, as Phoenicia was notable for launching naval expeditions for the purpose of trading and setting up colonies as far away as modern Spain. This colonialism will be addressed later. The Phoenician kings would not only fund these expeditions but also utilize their naval fleets to protect its merchants against piracy. Such was the Phoenician focus on economic supremacy that merchants could even join the aristocracy.<sup>6</sup>

Arwad, otherwise known as Arados, was the northernmost city, resting on a 40 hectare island west of modern Tartus.<sup>7</sup> In today's terms, this is less than half the size of Vatican City.<sup>8</sup> The island has two natural harbors facing the mainland as well as a sweet water spring that diminished the island's need for imported water. Arwad likely had access to territory on the mainland, since it would have needed food, and the city had a well-known fleet which must have required wood.<sup>9</sup> The small size of the island of Arwad would not have had enough of either supply for the city. It is disputed among experts whether Arwad actually controlled any of its own territory on the mainland or whether the nearby kingdom of Amurru controlled the entire coast of the region and simply allowed Arwad an enclave within it.<sup>10</sup>

Byblos, otherwise known as Gubla, was located south of Arwad on two defensible hills and a depression between them, which were situated along a coastal plain. The city benefited from access to not only fresh water from a spring but also cedar trees which provided its primary

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<sup>5</sup> Hélène Sader, *The History and Archaeology of Phoenicia*.

<sup>6</sup> Moore and Lewis, "Multinational Enterprise in Ancient Phoenicia."

<sup>7</sup> Hélène Sader, *The History and Archaeology of Phoenicia*.

<sup>8</sup> "Europe :: Holy See (Vatican City) — The World Factbook - Central Intelligence Agency," CIA World Factbook, accessed January 2, 2021, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/vt.html>.

<sup>9</sup> Hélène Sader, *The History and Archaeology of Phoenicia*.

<sup>10</sup> Hélène Sader, *The History and Archaeology of Phoenicia*.

export, cedar wood. The city was only 7 hectares in size. In the north, Iron Age Byblos only controlled territory extending to Tripoli.<sup>11</sup> Tripoli's location is shown in Figure 2.<sup>12</sup> There is no evidence of any city controlled by Byblos to the south.<sup>13</sup>

Sidon was yet further south than Byblos. While the site is today on a peninsula, Assyrian records describe Sidon as if it was an island, suggesting that the peninsula actually was an island at that point. Only 5 to 6 hectares in area, Sidon contained a natural harbor in the north, which was well-protected by a reef and a number of islands, and which was also larger during the Iron Age than it was today due to later generations building over it. The harbor was prone to silting, as it still is, but the Sidonians solved this problem by cutting into the reef to allow ocean water to mix with the water in the harbor. A second harbor was located on the island of Zire, off the coast of Sidon. Prior to the beginning of the Iron Age, Sidon's territory did not extend to Beirut in the north, as Beirut was an independent kingdom of its own that is not as well represented in the literature as its neighbors are.<sup>14</sup> Sidon's southern border at the time is traditionally said to have reached the Litani River, as shown in Figure 2.<sup>15</sup>

Tyre was the southernmost of the four cities and, like Arwad and Sidon, was located on an island. The 16 hectare large island contained two harbors, one to the north and one to the south. Despite the city's advantageous natural harbors, a major obstacle for the city of Tyre was the absence of fresh water on the island, necessitating the import of water from the mainland.<sup>16</sup> This would have undermined Tyre's ability to withstand a siege. Tyre bordered Sidon to the

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<sup>11</sup> Hélène Sader, *The History and Archaeology of Phoenicia*.

<sup>12</sup> Josette Elayi, *The History of Phoenicia* (Atlanta: ISD LLC, 2018).

<sup>13</sup> Hélène Sader, *The History and Archaeology of Phoenicia*.

<sup>14</sup> Hélène Sader, *The History and Archaeology of Phoenicia*.

<sup>15</sup> Elayi, *The History of Phoenicia*; Hélène Sader, *The History and Archaeology of Phoenicia*.

<sup>16</sup> Hélène Sader, *The History and Archaeology of Phoenicia*.

north.<sup>17</sup> Akko, shown in Figure 2, was outside of the extent of Tyre's control, as it was another independent state, albeit one not particularly relevant to this paper.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Hélène Sader, *The History and Archaeology of Phoenicia*.

<sup>18</sup> Elayi, *The History of Phoenicia*; Hélène Sader, *The History and Archaeology of Phoenicia*.

## Section II: Independent Phoenicia and Assyrian Phoenicia

Mark Woolmer states that before the beginning of the Iron Age, Byblos and Tyre had been the dominant Phoenician city-states, but afterwards, they had been replaced by Sidon. He attributes Tyre's initial dominance to its geographical location. He argues that Sidon replaced Tyre because Tyre, being further to the south, had close ties with Egypt, which declined in power at this point due to weak leadership. Sidon, on the other hand, had enjoyed closer relationships with the stronger Hittites in the north.<sup>19</sup> Elayi credits this with Sidon's leadership as well, also noting its larger agricultural territory and strategic position by the route between Syria and the Jordan Valley.<sup>20</sup> However, while the dominance of Sidon during the early Iron Age seems solid, the greater power of Byblos as compared to Sidon in the Late Bronze Age is disputed by Sader, who gives Sidon as already being dominant before the Iron Age and being referred to as the "Great Sidon". Sader also cites Wenamun as mentioning fifty Sidonian ships trading with Egypt and only twenty Byblosian ships.<sup>21</sup> For these reasons, it appears that Sader is correct in her determination that Sidon was already the dominant Phoenician city-state at the beginning of the Iron Age.

Ancient sources cite Phoenician, particularly Tyrian, colonial expansion as beginning around the fall of Troy, or between 1190 and 1184 B.C., which was at the beginning of the Iron Age. However, there is no archaeological evidence for this. This has led to the conclusion that there may have been a pre-colonial era beginning at this point involving the establishment of overseas trading posts.<sup>22</sup> This would have of course helped Tyre become a stronger maritime

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<sup>19</sup> Mark Woolmer, *A Short History of the Phoenicians* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2017).

<sup>20</sup> Josette Elayi, *The History of Phoenicia* (Atlanta: ISD LLC, 2018).

<sup>21</sup> Hélène Sader, *The History and Archaeology of Phoenicia*.

<sup>22</sup> Woolmer, *A Short History of the Phoenicians*.



trading power by increasing both the supply of foreign goods and the overseas demand for Phoenician goods. This increase in economic prosperity will prove to be compounded later on in Tyrian history.

The first half of the Iron Age I is unfortunately not well known by archaeologists.<sup>23</sup> However, there is more archaeological evidence for the second half. The beginning of this point in time, around 1100 B.C., is notable for the reign of Tiglath-Pileser I in Assyria, who was responsible for collecting huge tributes from the wealthy Phoenician city-states as tributaries.<sup>24</sup> Sader states that Tiglath-Pileser's tribute lists did not include Tyre, perhaps due to it being unimportant or remaining independent.<sup>25</sup> If it remained independent, perhaps this was a result of its lack of importance combined with Assyria having already subjugated the rest of Phoenicia. Sader also explicitly states that Sidon appeared to be more important at this point, retaining its prominent position from the beginning of the Iron Age.<sup>26</sup> However, this situation would not last. Assyrian dominance only lasted until about 1056 B.C., when the Assyrian Empire collapsed. In addition, during the tenth century it would be replaced by a period of ascendancy for Tyre as a result of actions taken by the Tyrian king Hiram I, including securing a monopoly on Mediterranean trade and collaborating with the kingdom of Israel.<sup>27</sup> Some historians think that Ittoba'al I of Tyre, who ruled from 887 B.C. to 855 B.C., also ruled over Sidon during the ninth century as claimed by Josephus; however, Philip J. Boyes argues that Josephus does not give his sources.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Hélène Sader, *The History and Archaeology of Phoenicia*.

<sup>24</sup> Elayi, *The History of Phoenicia*.

<sup>25</sup> Hélène Sader, *The History and Archaeology of Phoenicia*.

<sup>26</sup> Hélène Sader, *The History and Archaeology of Phoenicia*.

<sup>27</sup> Woolmer, *A Short History of the Phoenicians*.

<sup>28</sup> Philip J. Boyes, "The King of the Sidonians': Phoenician Ideologies and the Myth of the Kingdom of Tyre-Sidon," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*, no. 365 (2012): 33–44, <https://doi.org/10.5615/bullamerschoorie.365.0033>.

The following king list is based on that presented by Elayi:

Arwad	Byblos	Sidon	Tyre
	Zakerbaal (c. 1090)	Weret or Mekmer (c. 1090)	Weret or Mekmer (c. 1090)
	Ahiram (c. 1000)		
	Ithobaal (c. 1000-970)		Abibaal (< 970)
	Yehimilk (c. 970-950)		Hiram I (c. 970-936)
	Abibaal (c. 943)		
	Elibaal (c. 922)		Baleazeros (c. 935-918)
			Abdastratos (c. 918-909)
	Shepitbaal I (c. 900)		Methusastratos (c. 909-897)
			Astharymos (c. 897-889)
			Phelles (c. 889-888)
			Ithobaal I (c. 888-856) <sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Elayi, *The History of Phoenicia*.

### Section III: Assyria, Babylonia, and the Rise of Carthage

Asurbanipal II of the Neo-Assyrian Empire reigned from 876 to 854 B.C. and incorporated the Phoenician cities into his empire as tributaries.<sup>30</sup> It was during this period that a particularly notable event occurred in Tyre, traditionally set in 814 B.C., that would lead to the founding of yet another Phoenician city – the African city of Carthage.<sup>31</sup>

Founded on a hill by the Gulf of Utica in what is today Tunisia, Carthage benefited heavily from its location, being in an ideal position to control trade passing between North Africa and the island of Sicily.<sup>32</sup> While it was not the only Phoenician colony in the region, it would also be notable for its vast agricultural territory which could support a massive population, though it would not settle this territory until the fifth century.<sup>33</sup> It would quickly grow to contain workshops, metalworking furnaces, kilns, and factories. Carthage, like its Phoenician relatives, would produce murex dye in these kilns and factories.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Woolmer, *A Short History of the Phoenicians*.

<sup>31</sup> Elayi, *The History of Phoenicia*; Woolmer, *A Short History of the Phoenicians*.

<sup>32</sup> Woolmer, *A Short History of the Phoenicians*.

<sup>33</sup> Richard Miles, *Carthage Must Be Destroyed: The Rise and Fall of an Ancient Civilization* (Penguin, 2011).; Woolmer, *A Short History of the Phoenicians*.

<sup>34</sup> Woolmer, *A Short History of the Phoenicians*.



Image source: Richard Miles, *Carthage Must Be Destroyed: The Rise and Fall of an Ancient Civilization* (Penguin, 2011).

It is uncertain how much of the traditional Carthaginian foundation story is true and how much is myth. In the account of events given by ancient historian Justin, Pumiyaton, king of Tyre, ascended to the throne at a young age. His sister, Elissa, married his uncle Zakerbaal, who was the high priest of Milqart, chief god of Tyre. Zakerbaal secretly possessed a massive hoard of treasure, and upon learning of this treasure, Pumiyaton killed Zakerbaal, wanting the treasure for himself. Elissa gave the treasure to him in order to deceive him into thinking that she was loyal before she escaped the city on a fleet of ships along with a number of nobles and relics of Milqart. They stopped in Kition in Cyprus first, picking up a number of women who desired to become sacred prostitutes of Astarte, then proceeded to Africa and founded Carthage. Pumiyaton did not pursue them due to the clergy backing Elissa.<sup>35</sup>

The following king list is again based on that presented by Elayi:

Arwad	Byblos	Sidon	Tyre
			Ithobaal I (c. 888-856)
Mattanbaal (853)			
			Balezeros (c. 848-830)
			Mattan I (c. 830-821)
			Pumiyaton (c. 821-774)
			Milkiram (c. 750)
			Ithobaal II (c. 740)
Mattanbaal II (c. 734-732)	Shepitbaal II (c. 737-732)		Hiram II (c. 739-730)
			Mattan II (c. 729)
Abdileti (c. 701)	Urimilk I (c. 701)	Ithobaal (c. 701)	Luli (c. 728-695)
		Abdilmilkot (c. 677)	Baal I (c. 677-671)

<sup>35</sup> Elayi, *The History of Phoenicia*.

Mattanbaal III (c. 673)	Milkyasap (c. 673)	Assyrian province (677-610)	
Yakinlu (c. 670-660)			
Ozbaal I (> 660)			
			Ithobaal III (c. 591-573)
		Eshmunazar I (c. 575-550)	Baal II (c. 572-563)
			Eknibal, Chelbes, Abbar (c. 563-562)
			Matta, Gerashtart (c. 561-556)
			Balazor (c. 556)
			Maharbaal (c. 555-552)
		Tabnit (c. 550-540)	Hiram III (c. 551-533) <sup>36</sup>
		Amoashtart (c. 539)	

Carthage was not fully separated from its mother city. Each year, Carthaginian elites would journey to Tyre to offer ten percent of Carthaginian funds to Milqart. The Carthaginians would also continue to refer to themselves as “sons of Tyre” and worship gods popular in Tyre such as not only Milqart but also Astarte and Eshmoun.<sup>37</sup> However, despite the continued links to Tyre, the Carthaginian population included not only settlers throughout the Phoenician world but also Libyan natives.<sup>38</sup> This native population retained its culture and resulted in a diverse city rather than just another Phoenician trading center.<sup>39</sup>

The colonization of overseas territories was not limited to Carthage. Following the vassalization of the Phoenician cities, Tyre underwent a number of voyages aimed at colonizing

<sup>36</sup> Elayi, *The History of Phoenicia*.

<sup>37</sup> Miles, *Carthage Must Be Destroyed*.

<sup>38</sup> Miles, *Carthage Must Be Destroyed*; Woolmer, *A Short History of the Phoenicians*.

<sup>39</sup> Woolmer, *A Short History of the Phoenicians*.

the rest of the Mediterranean. It is worth noting that some of the settlements founded were not ruled by the city that they had been founded by, rather remaining autonomous. In addition, some of these colonies may have been Sidonian as well.<sup>40</sup> Perhaps this is why it will be clear throughout this paper that Tyre and Sidon appear to alternate as the leading city in Phoenicia (excluding Carthage, which will be discussed further later), with Byblos lacking the same prominence and Arwad only catching up later.

It is often believed that the Assyrian demands for Phoenician tribute were the primary motivation for the foundation of overseas colonies rather than mere trading posts. However, the large amount of tribute given by Tyre suggests that Tyre was extremely wealthy already and that Tyre could afford Assyrian tribute demands without significant implications on its economy. Woolmer suggests that the rise of Assyria instead compounded other factors to drive Phoenician colonization, including loss of Phoenician territory at the beginning of the Iron Age. This is significant because it decreased the Phoenician agricultural output, motivating the establishment of colonies in order to expand the amount of territory available for agriculture. Overpopulation and social unrest were also factors in the initiation of Tyrian colonization.<sup>41</sup> The impact of social unrest appears to be reflected in the aforementioned foundation legend of Carthage. Sader gives another reason for the establishment of colonies as being a need for sources of metals and other raw materials.<sup>42</sup>

Eventually, Tyre rebelled against Assyria under Hiram II but was defeated and paid significant tribute. However, Tyre was still a powerful Phoenician city at this point, with its prosperity indicated by the large tribute given to Assyria under Mattan II, the successor to Hiram

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<sup>40</sup> Woolmer, *A Short History of the Phoenicians*.

<sup>41</sup> Woolmer, *A Short History of the Phoenicians*.

<sup>42</sup> Hélène Sader, *The History and Archaeology of Phoenicia*.

II.<sup>43</sup> It appears that Tyrian colonization was proving a valuable tool for the city. However, Mattan's successor, Luli, rebelled against Assyria twice and was defeated the second time through a blockade that deprived Tyre of its water supply, followed by Luli's escape to Cyprus in 701 B.C.<sup>44</sup>

Whether Tyre was truly still stronger than Sidon is complicated by the recurring theory that Tyre and Sidon were in fact united. Hiram II was known as "King of the Sidonians", prompting some historians to believe that he ruled over Sidon as well as Tyre, but Boyes argues that said title likely referred to Ittoba'al's Phoenician heritage rather than the specific city of Sidon, as the Phoenicians as a whole were sometimes called "Sidonians". However, even Boyes agrees that Luli was king of both Sidon and Tyre, albeit being Sidonian instead of Tyrian.<sup>45</sup> If so, then Sidon would have replaced Tyre as the predominant Phoenician city-state. However, as Tyre and not Sidon was the city that was besieged under the reign of Luli, implying that Tyre was Luli's base of operations, it seems as if this was not the case and Tyre was still the dominant city.

Once Luli was defeated, the two cities were permanently split.<sup>46</sup> If Sidon enjoyed any time as the leading city in Phoenicia following the Tyrian rebellion, though, it didn't last, as Sidon was destroyed in 675 B.C. after yet another rebellion against Assyria.<sup>47</sup> Typically, this meant the deportation of the city's populace.<sup>48</sup> From 677 B.C. onwards, Sidon was an Assyrian province, granting Tyre undisputed leadership of Phoenicia. The other Phoenician cities, led by

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<sup>43</sup> Hélène Sader, *The History and Archaeology of Phoenicia*.

<sup>44</sup> Elayi, *The History of Phoenicia*; Woolmer, *A Short History of the Phoenicians*.

<sup>45</sup> Boyes, "The King of the Sidonians."

<sup>46</sup> Hélène Sader, *The History and Archaeology of Phoenicia*.

<sup>47</sup> Woolmer, *A Short History of the Phoenicians*.

<sup>48</sup> Daniel Sarlo, "The Economics of Mass Deportation in the Neo-Assyrian Period under Tiglath-Pileser III (744-727 BCE)," April 26, 2013.



King Ba'al I of Tyre, revolted in 671 B.C. upon the Assyrian invasion of Egypt. Interestingly, Assyria was unable to capture the city of Tyre despite the city's lack of fresh water. Ba'al remained an Assyrian vassal and lost his mainland territory, but Assyria was both unable and unwilling to destroy Tyre, a fact which in itself displays the sheer value of the city as an Assyrian trading partner at the time.<sup>49</sup> No doubt that Tyre would have been severely impacted by the loss of its mainland territory, however, since it relied on the mainland supply of resources such as water. With the same demand but lower supply, prices would have increased.

From 644 or 643 B.C. until 611 B.C., Assyrian rule in Phoenicia disappeared due to the collapse of the empire. Now independent, Tyre was able to regain the nearby mainland, and Arwad did the same. In addition, Sidon regained its independence. In Assyria's place, however, stood the Babylonian Empire, which conquered Egypt in 605 B.C.<sup>50</sup> The Phoenician cities, along with nearby kingdoms, formed a coalition against Babylonia and resisted domination this time. However, they subsequently submitted once Tyre was captured by the Babylonians and its people deported, though the year in which this happened remains unclear.<sup>51</sup> Woolmer cites the year as 588 or 587 B.C.<sup>52</sup> However, Richard Miles gives it as 573 B.C.<sup>53</sup> Elayi allows more doubt as to the exact year.<sup>54</sup> Regardless of the exact year, this resulted in the replacement of Tyre by Sidon as the leading city in Phoenicia once again.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Elayi, *The History of Phoenicia*.

<sup>50</sup> Elayi, *The History of Phoenicia*.

<sup>51</sup> Hanspeter Schaudig, "A Tanit-Sign from Babylon and the Conquest of Tyre by Nebuchadnezzar II," n.d., 13; Woolmer, *A Short History of the Phoenicians*.

<sup>52</sup> Woolmer, *A Short History of the Phoenicians*.

<sup>53</sup> Miles, *Carthage Must Be Destroyed*.

<sup>54</sup> Elayi, *The History of Phoenicia*.

<sup>55</sup> Woolmer, *A Short History of the Phoenicians*.

At first glance, it may seem odd that despite Sidon's earlier destruction, the city was able to regain a dominant position in Phoenicia instead of the position passing to the city of Arwad. The Solow growth model explains this curious development. The Solow growth model theorizes that since the development of new capital exists alongside the depreciation of old capital, there is a steady state where the two cancel each other out. Therefore, economies will naturally shift towards that steady state with constant effective labor (labor once accounting for technology).<sup>56</sup> Thus, it is not surprising that Sidon was able to recover from total destruction, as the city could still support as many inhabitants as it once had and still had access to the same technology.

The impact of the destruction of Tyre was not limited to Sidon. As Tyre had possessed colonies throughout the Mediterranean, those colonies suffered significant economic damage from the loss of their mother city and primary trading partner. The exception was to be the colonies established in North Africa such as Carthage, which had focused more on trade across the Tyrrhenian Sea to the north and the Aegean Sea to the northeast. This power vacuum allowed Carthage to expand its trade throughout the Mediterranean as Tyre had once done, initiating the rise of Carthage as a superpower.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Martin Feldstein and Charles Horioka, "The Solow Growth Model," *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 1992, <http://www.fidrmuc.net/ec5518/01.pdf>.

<sup>57</sup> Miles, *Carthage Must Be Destroyed*.

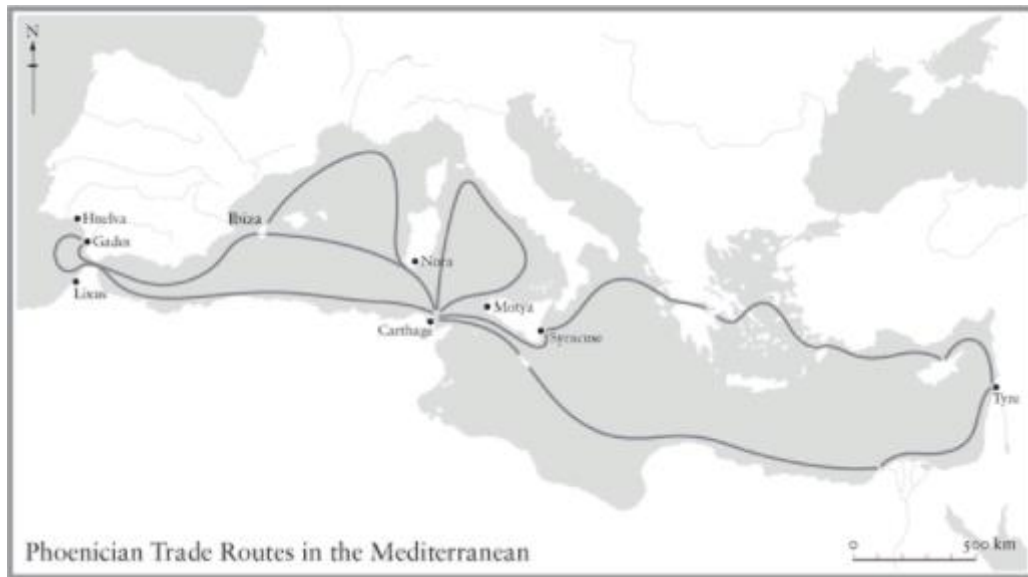


Figure 3

Image source: Richard Miles, *Carthage Must Be Destroyed: The Rise and Fall of an Ancient Civilization* (Penguin, 2011).

#### Section IV: Persian Phoenicia and Carthaginian Expansion

In 539 B.C., Babylon was conquered by the Persians.<sup>58</sup> The new Persian Empire would thus follow Babylon as the new overlord of the Phoenicians in 528 B.C., with the Phoenicians accepting this integration peacefully. Phoenicia was initially part of the satrapy, or province, of Athura, which denoted what had formerly been Assyria. However, Phoenicia later became part of a new satrapy called Abarnahara.<sup>59</sup>

Persia, like Assyria and Babylon before it, allowed the Phoenicians to remain autonomous rather than fully absorbing Phoenicia into their empire. Additionally, under the Persians, the Phoenician cities' navies became the imperial Persian navy and even encouraged the creation of a Phoenician council to protect Phoenician political and economic interests.<sup>60</sup> This detail is of significant use to historians because of the navies of the four main Phoenician city-states, Sidon was listed first in classical sources, which Sader argues suggests the dominance of Sidon at this point.<sup>61</sup> However, this is far from the only evidence for Sidon's continued leadership. The Persian administrative headquarters in Abarnahara was also located in Sidon, along with Persian soldiers and even a new imperial garden. Sidon was even granted sole permission to depict the Persian king on its coins.<sup>62</sup> Sader even implies explicit Sidonian leadership of the satrapy of Abarnahara.<sup>63</sup>

Tyre was not Sidon's only competitor during the Persian period. Back in the Assyrian period, Arwad had already been becoming more powerful. While little is known about

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<sup>58</sup> Elayi, *The History of Phoenicia*.

<sup>59</sup> Woolmer, *A Short History of the Phoenicians*.

<sup>60</sup> Woolmer, *A Short History of the Phoenicians*.

<sup>61</sup> Hélène Sader, *The History and Archaeology of Phoenicia*.

<sup>62</sup> Woolmer, *A Short History of the Phoenicians*.

<sup>63</sup> Hélène Sader, *The History and Archaeology of Phoenicia*.

Babylonian Arwad, Sader cites the Persian period as having been the most prosperous period in Arwadian history. Sader also cites Arwad as being well-known for its navy but does not specify the time period.<sup>64</sup> It can be presumed that she is referring to the Persian period, given her depiction of Arwad's influence at the time.

While Arwad was strong enough to be on the order of Sidon and Tyre, the same cannot be said for Byblos. Elayi refers to Sidon, Tyre, and Arwad as being the backbone of the Persian navy but does not mention Byblos.<sup>65</sup> Sader suggests that Byblos had few if any warships.<sup>66</sup> In addition, the aforementioned Phoenician council was comprised of representatives of Sidon, Tyre, and Arwad, yet not Byblos. When the council decided to found a new Phoenician city in the fourth century, they called it Tripolis, or “the city of three cities”, as Woolmer puts it – those three cities of course being Sidon, Tyre, and Arwad.<sup>67</sup> Each of these three cities politically controlled one of three towns in Tripolis.<sup>68</sup> As clear as it is that Sidon was the preeminent Phoenician city-state during the Persian period, it is equally evident that Byblos was the weakest.

It could be that Byblos' weakness resulted from its geography. As Byblos was not on an island unlike the other Phoenician city-states, it is possible that its lack of warships was simply the result of a lack of necessity for a navy. As Phoenicia was in general a seafaring civilization that made its fortune from colonization and maritime trade, it can be concluded that the lack of Byblosian naval superiority was the reason for its weakness.

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<sup>64</sup> Hélène Sader, *The History and Archaeology of Phoenicia*.

<sup>65</sup> Elayi, *The History of Phoenicia*.

<sup>66</sup> Hélène Sader, *The History and Archaeology of Phoenicia*.

<sup>67</sup> Woolmer, *A Short History of the Phoenicians*.

<sup>68</sup> Elayi, *The History of Phoenicia*.

As the Persians ruled over the Phoenician homeland, Carthage was becoming increasingly influential in the western Mediterranean, founding colonies on Sardinia, Sicily, and Corsica. In Corsica, Carthage worked with the Etruscans to push back settlers from a group known as the Phoceans in 535 B.C. Carthaginian expansion in Sardinia pushed the native population back into the mountains. In Sicily, Carthage settled the western part of the island, founding colonies such as Lilybaeum, and frequently clashed with the Greek city-state of Syracuse in the east.<sup>69</sup>



Figure 4

Image source: Richard Miles, *Carthage Must Be Destroyed: The Rise and Fall of an Ancient Civilization* (Penguin, 2011).

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<sup>69</sup> Miles, *Carthage Must Be Destroyed*.

In addition, Carthage was equally bold with naval expeditions. During the fourth century, a Carthaginian commander known as Hamilcar ventured into the Atlantic Ocean, going as far north as the British Isles. In a subsequent voyage in the Atlantic, he went south around Africa and ventured as far as Mount Cameroun. This second voyage was notable for opening Morocco to Carthaginian settlement and trade.<sup>70</sup>



Figure 5

Image source: Richard Miles, *Carthage Must Be Destroyed: The Rise and Fall of an Ancient Civilization* (Penguin, 2011).

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<sup>70</sup> Miles, *Carthage Must Be Destroyed*.

Sidon's reign as most powerful Phoenician city-state was not to last. In the early fourth century, under Baalshillem II, Sidon began to have trouble maintaining its navy amidst Persian conflicts, particularly one in Egypt in 385 B.C. In 373 B.C., the Phoenician fleet was defeated by the Egyptian fleet in yet another Persian war with Egypt, further increasing the cost of continued naval dominance.<sup>71</sup>

The following king list, like the previous two, is based on that presented by Elayi:

Arwad	Byblos	Sidon	Tyre
		Amoashtart (c. 539)	Hiram III (c. 551-533)
		Eshmunazar II (c. 539-525)	Ithobaal IV? (> 532)
		Bodashtart (c. 524-515)	
		Yatonmilk? (after 515)	
	Shipitbaal III (c. 500)		
Ozbaal II (< 480)		Anysus (before 480)	Hiram IV? (< 480)
Maharbaal (480)		Tetramnestus (480)	Mattan III (480)
	Urimilk II		
	Yeharbaal?		
	Yehawmilk (c. 450)		
		Baalshillem I (c. 425)	
		Abdamon	
	Elpaal	Baana	
	Ozbaal (c. 400)	Baalshillem II (401-366)	
		Abdashtart I (365-352)	
			Abdashtart (after 354-350)
	Urimilk III	Tennes (351-347)	
	Aynel		
		Evagoras II (346-343)	
		Abdashtart II (342-333)	
Gerashtart (339-333)			Ozmilk (349-333) <sup>72</sup>
Gerashtart	Aynel?	Abdalonym	

<sup>71</sup> Elayi, *The History of Phoenicia*.

<sup>72</sup> Elayi, *The History of Phoenicia*.



Sidon's worst problems were yet to come. After a Phoenician revolt led by Straton I of Sidon was defeated by the Persians in 355 B.C., Sidonian refugees were deported to Babylon and Susa, and Straton lost control of the satrapy of Abarnahara. To make matters worse, his successor, Tennes, allowed the Persians to assassinate 100 of the most distinguished citizens of Sidon before Tennes was himself killed by the Persians as well.<sup>73</sup> Woolmer gives the number as 600, however.<sup>74</sup> Sader's number nonetheless appears better supported, as she directly quotes Diodorus Siculus, an ancient Greek historian who is responsible for building on earlier historians whose work has been lost.<sup>75</sup> Sidon was looted, its ships were burnt, Sidonian territory was ceded to Tyre, and the rule of the following king is vaguely described by Sader as "bad".<sup>76</sup> Needless to say, there is absolutely no way that Sidon could have retained any sort of preeminence over the other Phoenician cities at this point.

Tyre was having its own struggles at the time. Elayi states that the silver content of Tyrian coins gradually diminished at around this time from 99 percent to a shockingly distant 68 percent. Confidence in Tyrian coinage was shaken by the resulting discoloration of the coins, and thus Tyre was forced to revert to coins made of 99 percent silver while also inflating its currency by reducing the weight of the coins. Elayi claims that the new weight was close to the Attic standard used in Greece and encouraged trade between the Greeks and Tyrians. However, Elayi fails to significantly address the negative economic impact that this inflation would have had on Tyre. Tyre's supposed leadership is further put into question in Elayi's work in its

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<sup>73</sup> H  l  ne Sader, *The History and Archaeology of Phoenicia*.

<sup>74</sup> Woolmer, *A Short History of the Phoenicians*.

<sup>75</sup> P. J. Stylianou, *A Historical Commentary on Diodorus Siculus, Book 15* (Clarendon Press, 1998).

<sup>76</sup> H  l  ne Sader, *The History and Archaeology of Phoenicia*.

account of a slave revolt sometime between 354 and 350 B.C. This slave revolt was successful, with only one Tyrian slave owner being spared, and a new king was placed on the Tyrian throne.<sup>77</sup> However, both Sader and Elayi claim that despite this, the downfall of Sidon had still left Tyre as the most powerful original Phoenician city, with Elayi explaining that the consequences of the aforementioned slave revolt had declined over time.<sup>78</sup>

It is thus in this position that the Phoenician kingdoms lay at the end of the Iron Age. Tyre was the preeminent city-state in Phoenicia. Sidon was a former power fallen from grace. Byblos was weak and unimportant. Arwad was well-known, being strong enough to earn a place among Sidon and Tyre. And Carthage, as previously mentioned, was building a maritime empire, taking advantage of Phoenicia's past struggles to become more powerful than any kingdom in Phoenicia itself had ever been.

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<sup>77</sup> Elayi, *The History of Phoenicia*.

<sup>78</sup> Elayi, *The History of Phoenicia*; H  l  ne Sader, *The History and Archaeology of Phoenicia*.

## Summary

At the beginning of the Iron Age, Sidon was the most powerful city-state in Phoenicia itself. Due to reforms made under the rule of King Hiram I of Tyre, Tyre would surpass Sidon as the greatest economic power in Phoenicia during the tenth century B.C.. Tyre would retain this position, even temporarily ruling over Sidon, until its conquest by the Babylonians in the sixth century B.C. Sidon would then rise to the position of strongest city-state in Phoenicia and remain so throughout most of the Persian period until its revolt against Persia, after which Tyre would resume its position as the leading city-state in Phoenicia, Arwad gained more power near the end of the Iron Age, and Byblos lacked the prosperity of any of the others.

Carthage was founded in the ninth century B.C. by the Tyrians. After the fall of Tyre created a power vacuum in Mediterranean trade, Carthage would fill this vacuum by expanding its trade. Carthage would expand its influence into Sicily, Sardinia, and Corsica during the fifth century B.C., as well as launching two expeditions into the Atlantic Ocean. Through these actions, Carthage became more powerful than any of the city-states of the Phoenician homeland.

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