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## <cn>Chapter 16

### <ct>Phoenician and Punic

<au>*Françoise Briquel Chatonnet and Robert Hawley*

#### <h1>Introduction

<p>“Phoenician” is the name given by the Greeks to the language and culture of “Phoenicia”, a loose grouping of cities, each with its hinterland, situated along the coastal strip of the Eastern Mediterranean seaboard, stretching roughly from Arwad in the north to Tyre in the south, with Byblos, Beirut and Sidon in between. The Phoenicians themselves did not employ a single global gentilic in this way, but instead defined themselves as Tyrians, Sidonians, etc. “Punic” (which derives from the Latin form for “Phoenician”) is the name given to the manifestations of the same language and script attested in the Carthaginian world of the Western Mediterranean. The terms “Phoenician” and “Punic” are here retained for convenience, as a necessary category for discussing the pertinent data, and as a consequence of the last century and a half of scholarship.

Phoenician and Punic are known almost exclusively from epigraphic sources. Archeologically, the earliest of the Phoenician inscriptions can be dated to the beginning of the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BCE, and the latest to the reign of the Roman emperor Augustus. Punic inscriptions are known from the mid-first1st millennium BCE through the first1<sup>st</sup> century BCE. Punic culture survived the destruction of Carthage, however, and continued to exist within the Roman Empire; this form of language and script is referred to as “Neo-Punic”, attested until the third3<sup>rd</sup> century of the common era (and even the fourth4<sup>th</sup>, although then transcribed into Latin characters, in the inscriptions of Sirte from Libya). Traces of even earlier stages of the language may be found sporadically in the cuneiform record, especially in the form of proper names, but also as isolated nouns and verbal forms appearing as substrate elements in the abundant diplomatic correspondence from the Late Bronze Age. Inversely, vestiges of Punic may also be found for example in Latin and Greek literature, as in the Latin works of the playwright Plautus and of Saint Augustine, and in the manuscript tradition of Dioscorides in Greek.

Although the language is, of course, attested in inscriptions from the heartland, ironically enough it is much better attested outside of Phoenicia proper. Indeed, the presence of Phoenician traders and merchants is attested not only in the North (Cilicia) and East (Mesopotamia), but also and especially in the West, where commercial colonies were founded throughout the Mediterranean, from Cyprus and Malta to Carthage and Cadix. This “Phoenician expansion” in the Mediterranean had almost certainly begun already in the ninth9th century BCE, and perhaps even earlier. Many of these “colonies” – and Carthage comes immediately to mind – rather quickly

acquired independence, although political, religious, and commercial connections with the heartland continued to be cultivated. Modern scholars, for linguistic reasons, nevertheless group the full documentation, whether from the heartland or from the various colonies alike, under the broader rubric of “Phoenician and Punic”.

Taken globally, the corpus of Phoenician inscriptions numbers upwards of 10 000 objects. This seemingly large number is deceptive, however, since many inscriptions are highly formulaic, and present virtually the same stereotyped wording, with the exception of personal names. The geographical distribution of the Phoenician corpus is also uneven. By far, the vast majority come from Carthage, and date to the third<sup>rd</sup> and early second<sup>nd</sup> centuries BCE.

The corpus is also essentially monumental, consisting of funerary or commemorative stelae intended for public display. This aspect of the corpus makes its linguistic study difficult, however, since very few documents from daily life are known, which ought, theoretically, to reflect more faithfully the language as it was actually spoken.

With respect to better known or better attested ancient languages, Phoenician appears to be linguistically most closely related to Old Hebrew, as attested in inscriptions and in the Hebrew Bible, for example. This linguistic proximity was even profound enough to lead early decipherers of Phoenician to use the square Hebrew block script for the publication of Phoenician inscriptions, a practice that continued until very recently.

## <h1>Textual evidence

<p>Throughout their history, Phoenician and Punic inscriptions used the same graphic system, the 22-sign consonantal alphabet, which derives from the older Canaanite alphabet which had emerged already in the second millennium BCE. Whether this 22-sign system was accurate and appropriate for representing the consonantal inventory of 1<sup>st</sup> millennium Phoenician, however, is uncertain (cf. the dual pronunciation for the sign § in Tiberian Hebrew for example, which may or may not be pertinent for Phoenician). Unlike Old Aramaic and epigraphic Hebrew, *matres lectionis* only appear very late, and mainly in Neo-Punic.

The Phoenician corpus may be conveniently divided in terms of its geographical distribution, with some indications of chronology for each geographical area.

## <h2>The Heartland

<p>Only a limited number of inscriptions are known from the heartland, but among these are some of the most significant, in terms not only of size and length, but also for chronology and political and cultural history. Typologically, Byblos provides the earliest sizeable substantial group of the

inscriptions, all monumental and royal. A *terminus post quem* for the beginning of the Yehimilk dynasty, no earlier than the tenth<sup>th</sup> century BCE, can be inferred from the fact that two of these are inscribed on monuments of the Egyptian pharaohs Sheshonq and Osorkon, but a later date cannot be excluded. In any case, the inscription on the Aḥirôôm sarcophagus precedes this dynasty.

A variety of isolated and often fragmentary inscriptions are known from the eighth<sup>th</sup>-seventh<sup>th</sup> centuries, from Beirut, Sarepta, Sidon and Tyre: private funerary stelae, cultic inscriptions, epigraphs on jars and some ostraca, for example. The following Persian period (sixth to fourth centuries<sup>th</sup>-<sup>th</sup> c.) has also yielded a number of quite important (and long) inscriptions, notably from Byblos (display inscription of Yehawmilk, funerary inscription of queen Batnoam) and from Sidon (funerary on the sarcophagi of Tabnit and **Ešmunazor**, dedicatory of king **Bod'aštar, Ešmunšillek**). Inscribed seals must also be mentioned.

For the Hellenistic period (fourth to second<sup>th</sup>-<sup>nd</sup> c. century), the epigraphic documentation covers the entire coast, from Arwad (Tartous) in the north to **Umm el-'Amed** in the south. Curiously, Tyre, as important as this city was in earlier periods, is best documented in the Hellenistic era. The latest known Phoenician inscription, from Arwad, is dated to 25 BCE. Its highly atypical character, in regard to both language and script, suggests that by that time the public usage of Phoenician for display inscriptions was no longer practiced. The Phoenician graffito inscribed in Greek characters from the Wasta cave near Tyre is consistent with such a scenario.

## <h2>*Anatolia*

<p>Perhaps owing to reasons linked with cultural prestige, Phoenician was employed outside of the heartland at a relatively early date in Cilicia for monumental display purposes, and this epigraphic habit would continue in subsequent centuries during the first half of the first<sup>st</sup> millennium BCE. In the mid-ninth<sup>th</sup> century, for example, Kilamuwa, the Luwian king of Sam'al (modern Zincirli), used Phoenician for his royal monuments, despite the fact that in all probability few if any residents of his kingdom actually spoke Phoenician. Later monarchs would use a local form of Aramaic for this purpose, and finally, standard Old Aramaic. During the eighth<sup>th</sup> c. century Phoenician came to be used alongside Luwian in bilingual royal monuments in this same region; such Phoenician--Luwian bilinguals are known from Çineköy, Ivriz, Incirli, and above all Karatape, the site that has furnished the longest Phoenician (and Luwian) inscription known to date, and moreover provided the basis for the decipherment of the latter. Phoenician monuments are known from the seventh<sup>th</sup> and sixth<sup>th</sup> centuries as well, not only farther to the west, from

Cebelireis Dağı near Antalya for example, but also to the southeast, from inland northern Syria (historically “Aramaic” territory), from Karkemish and (probably) Aleppo, for example.

## <h2>Mesopotamia

<p>Phoenician epigraphy is only poorly attested in Mesopotamia, mainly in the form of small objects transported there probably either by soldiers of the Assyrian army (small ivory box from Ur) or by Phoenician artisans employed for the construction of Assyrian palaces (seal of ‘Abdiba’l found in Khorsabad).

## <h2>Egypt

<p>From Egypt, Phoenician inscriptions are also only very sporadically attested (Egyptian monuments with dedicatory inscriptions from Memphis, Abydos, etc.), no doubt emanating from Phoenician speaking people living there. The privileged climatic conditions there have also led to the occasional preservation of fragmentary Phoenician papyri. Two such documents are known, both letters. This lends them a certain importance grammatically and lexically, since they contain second<sup>nd</sup> person forms for example, and other features generally absent from monumental inscriptions.

## <h2>Cyprus

<p>A “Phoenician” kingdom was founded in the early first<sup>st</sup> millennium BCE, perhaps as early as the ninth century<sup>th</sup> c., on the eastern coast of the island of Cyprus, around the city of Kition. This kingdom expanded and thrived, both politically and economically, especially in the Persian (sixth to fourth centuries<sup>th-4th</sup> c.) and Hellenistic (fourth to second centuries<sup>th-2th</sup> c.) periods, eventually incorporating neighboring kingdoms such as Idalion into its sphere of direct control. Other Phoenician settlements are also known, at Amathus, Paphos and Lapethos, for example. This political and cultural background explains, perhaps, how it is that in terms of sheer numbers, it is Cyprus that has provided by far the greatest number of Phoenician inscriptions for the entire Eastern Mediterranean area, the heartland included. Ongoing excavations at the site of Idalion have yielded a sizable archive of administrative documents from the Persian period, a very important find since (contrary to the majority of the Phoenician corpus) it is not monumental in character, and thus better reflects the banal concerns of everyday life.

## <h2>Eastern Mediterranean

<p>A bronze bowl bearing a Phoenician inscription from a funerary context in Crete (Tekke, tenth10<sup>th</sup> c. century) perhaps reflects the elite exchange of luxury items, as illustrated in Homeric poetry. Scattered Phoenician inscriptions from Late Classical and Hellenistic periods (fourth to third centuries4<sup>th</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> c.) are also known from various other maritime cities of the Greek world (Rhodes, Cos, Delos, Rhenea, Athens, Pirea, Demetrias in Thessaly, etc.). These are mostly private monuments, largely funerary, sponsored by wealthy Phoenician expatriate families residing there.

## <h2>Western Mediterranean

<p>Phoenician expansion in the Western Mediterranean began early in the first1<sup>st</sup> millennium BCE, fueled by the search for metals. In this commercial context, Phoenician sailors and merchants left written documents, both display and banal inscriptions from daily life. Over the course of time, the entire Western Mediterranean came to be integrated within the Carthaginian sphere of influence and domination, observable through a graphic shift from Phoenician to Punic.

Malta and its smaller neighbor Gozzo are the compulsory stopover between the Eastern and Western Mediterranean. Beginning in the seventh and sixth centuries7<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> c. votive Phoenician stelae were erected, and as late as the second centuries2<sup>nd</sup> c. BCE two identical *cippi* with bilingual inscriptions were being offered by two Tyrian brothers (incidentally, these turned out to be instrumental in the eighteenth18<sup>th</sup> century decipherment of Phoenician). Other inscriptions – funerary, dedicatory, or ceramic epigraphs – are attested in Punic, as well as a long but fragmentary official inscription commemorating the renovations of three temples sponsored by the Gozzo authorities. Some very fragmentary Nneo-Punic inscriptions are also known from Malta.

In Sicily, votive and funerary inscriptions are attested, as well as ceramic epigraphs from the Punic period, the majority naturally coming from the Western part of the island, then under Punic rule. Very few Nneo-Punic inscriptions are known.

Sardinia was a major center of Phoenicians and Punic settlement, owing to its wealth from local silver mines. The oldest inscription, a monumental stele with eight lines dating plausibly to the eighth century8<sup>th</sup> c., is still of disputed interpretation, even though clearly legible. The island preserves numerous Punic inscriptions, both votive and funerary, but also those commemorating the construction of temples, with mention of the local authorities who were responsible. There are also several Neo-Punic inscriptions, one of which may have been written as late as the third century3<sup>rd</sup> c. CE, thus being one of the latest Nneo-Punic inscriptions known.

Few inscriptions have been found in mainland Italy, of which the most interesting, from Pyrgi, is inscribed on a small golden plaque which was part of a set of three: one in Punic and the

two others in Etruscan. It is the dedication of a sanctuary to the goddess ‘Ashtart by the Etruscan king of Caere around 500 BCE in the context of an alliance with Carthage.

Fragmentary inscriptions are known from Spain as early as the eighth century<sup>8<sup>th</sup></sup> c. BCE (Cadix), as well as in Southern Portugal, from coastal *comptoirs*. Phoenician, Punic, and Neo-Punic epigraphic data from Ibiza in the Balears islands also suggest an important presence there.

## <h2>*Carthage*

<p>The oldest inscription from Carthage is an inscribed gold pendant, an ex-voto to ‘Ashtart and Pygmalion (end of the eighth century<sup>8<sup>th</sup></sup> c. BCE). It was found in a tomb, and it could have been manufactured at Carthage or elsewhere. By far the largest group of inscriptions in Phoenician—Punic language comes from Carthage. The corpus includes several thousands of documents, although of a very repetitive and stereotyped nature. The main series is formed by ex-votos from the so-called tophet *tophet6ophet*, dedicated to Tinnit “Face-of-Baal” and to Baal Ḥammon. Variations occur almost only in the names of the dedicants, along with the occasional mention of a charge or occupation. Hundreds of funerary inscriptions were also excavated which shed light on the local urban elites in the last centuries of its history. There are also a few texts commemorating public constructions, which mention, as eponyms, city magistrates as well as the architects and supervisors in charge of the work. Punic epigraphy disappears with the conquest of Carthage by Rome in 149 BCE.

## <h2>*North Africa*

<p>Similar votive and funerary inscriptions were discovered elsewhere in Tunisia (e.g. Sousse, Dougga), and at Constantine in Algeria. Evidence of the use of Phoenician script is also found in the form of makers’ or owners’ marks on ceramics, a practice also attested in Algeria and even as far as Morocco (island of Mogador), where they can be attributed to the seventh<sup>7<sup>th</sup></sup> and sixth<sup>6<sup>th</sup></sup> c. century BCE. In Western Tunisia and Eastern Algeria, Punic epigraphy survived the fall of Carthage, in a form influenced graphically by contemporary cursive script. This corpus is also interesting graphically and linguistically, since it shows a much greater use of *matres lectionis* to indicate vowels. The same Neo-Punic script also developed in Libya.

## <h1>Language contact

<p>The Phoenician heartland had always been a place of cultural contact, where both Egyptian and Akkadian, for example, had long been known and used. Commercial expansion, as well as continued domination under successive Mesopotamian imperial powers (and the deportations

which resulted), also put the language in direct relation with many others, not only in Phoenicia proper, but also throughout the entire Near East and Mediterranean basin.

## <h2>*Phoenician and Egyptian*

<p>Phoenician commercial ties with pharaonic Egypt are both very ancient and quite persistent, and are clearly visible not only on the level of material culture and monumental art, but also in certain chapters of the coast's "graphic history" (cf. the so-called pseudo-hieroglyphic corpus). The Late Bronze age and early Iron Age probably represent the apogee of this period of intense contacts, which became more moderate under Assyrian imperial domination. On the strictly linguistic level, contacts with Egypt are (curiously, perhaps) less perceptible in the written record, being limited to a handful of proper names constructed on Phoenician models but containing Egyptian divine names, especially frequent in the Hellenistic period.

## <h2>*Phoenician and Akkadian*

<p>Already in the Late Bronze age, the chancelleries of Egyptian pharaohs of the New Kingdom conducted their international correspondence in the then-current graphic-linguistic *koiné*: the pairing of the Mesopotamian cuneiform script with a somewhat simplified "international" version of the Babylonian language. This diplomatic situation dramatically affected the nature of Phoenician contact with Akkadian, since the scribes of Byblos, Beirut, Tyre, Sidon and other cities had thus to learn both script and language in artificial scholastic settings, which entailed a concomitant limited mastery of both. Such a situation is nevertheless advantageous for modern students of the history of Phoenician, however, since these "unusual" spellings and morphological patterns employed by Phoenician scribes writing in cuneiform often reveal facts about the otherwise undocumented Phoenician substrate in the fourteenth<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> thirteenth centuries BCE. Another window for assessing contacts between Phoenician and Akkadian comes in the form of Phoenician personal names mentioned in Neo-Assyrian royal inscriptions or administrative documents (ninth to seventh<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> c. centuries BCE). Though rich, these data are yet also elusive, for at least two reasons. In the first place, the royal names are sometimes simply traditional "Amorite" names, maintained as dynastic names by tradition, and not necessarily pertinent for contemporary trends in non-royal Phoenician onomastics. Secondly, sometimes the Assyrian graphic rendering of these Phoenician names shows signs of having been distorted through contemporary Assyrian phonological and morphological "filters" (for example, in regard to anaptyxis, or the progressive transfer of segment length from a long vowel to a following consonant). Illustrating both phenomena, cf. the writing *hi-ru-um-mu* for **\*Hirōōm**. This means



that such transliterations provide only indirect, and not direct access to the underlying pronunciation.

## <h2>*Phoenician and Ugaritic*

<p>The presence of a few locally written texts in the 22-sign (usually sinistrotgrade) cuneiform alphabet at Ugarit (which is poorly adapted to Ugaritic phonology, and probably better reflects the phonology of a southern “Canaanite” language such as Phoenician) suggests the likelihood that contacts between that kingdom and the Phoenician city-states to the south extended to certain forms of graphic exchange already in the thirteenth13<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Linguistic contact is also documented for the thirteenth13<sup>th</sup> century BCE, both in the form of phonological changes (the “Canaanite shift” was already operative in the thirteenth13<sup>th</sup> century Phoenicia, but not north of the ‘Akkār plain) and lexical contact (cf. the word \*gišm- for “rainstorm” in a letter – in Ugaritic language and script – from the king of Byblos to the king of Ugarit).

## <h2>*Phoenician and other Canaanite languages*

<p>One of the oldest known inscriptions in the linear alphabet, an agricultural calendar from Gezer, dates plausibly to the tenth10<sup>th</sup> c. century BCE. Though often considered to be written in Hebrew, on the basis of 1 Kings 9:16 which affirms that the town of Gezer was given to Solomon by the Egyptian Pharaoh, the calendar bears only one clear diagnostic linguistic marker: the apparent reduction of the diphthong \*ay (the word “summer” written as QS <qêš> where Hebrew should have had QYS <qays>) shows that the language is more coherently characterized as being Phoenician. This same phenomenon is also attested in another inscription from the “Philistine” region, from Ekron, in which the word for “house” is written BT as it is in Phoenician, and not BYT as in Judean Hebrew. This last inscription also shows formula very close to those known in Old Byblian, which suggests the possibility that the “Phoenician” language was used all extensively all along the coast, and it had also been adopted by Philistine rulers. A good number of them bearing perfectly good “Phoenician” names, incidentally, are mentioned in Assyrian annals.

It has sometimes been argued that Northern Hebrew, as attested mainly in the ostraca found in Samaria, was in fact Phoenician. While some isoglosses with Phoenician are observable, such as the form ŠT for “year” (instead of ŠNT), other characteristics nevertheless link this dialect more securely within southern (Judean) Hebrew. It would appear that Phoenician was the language of the coast, and Hebrew that of the hills.

## <h2>*Phoenician and Luwian*

<p>As already mentioned, Phoenician language and script was very present in Cilicia: several bilingual Luwian—Phoenician inscriptions are known, but also some unilingual ones. This is all the more striking since the political context and the onomasticon are entirely local. Such a situation is best explained through the prestige of the Phoenician alphabet brought there by merchants.

Incidentally, one current hypothesis for the transmission of the alphabet to the Greek world supposes a Phrygian intermediary, which implies an Anatolian (and thus) overland route, rather than a maritime one (directly from Phoenicia proper). If we entertain the overland hypothesis, the possibilities would include a Phoenician origin, but also an Aramaic one.

## <h2>*Phoenician and Aramaic*

<p>Phoenician and Aramaic are both Semitic languages, structurally related to one another, and having a considerable portion of shared vocabulary. The question of mutual comprehensibility must be left open, as well as the precise definition of the geographical frontier between the two language areas. In the absence of written evidence, it is difficult to know, for example, what language was being spoken in the Beqa' during the first millennium BCE. These two languages were both being written in the eighth century with the very same alphabet, which began to differentiate only in the eighth century. Aramaic was more largely diffused, owing to the deportation policies of the Assyrians, and even became an international language, used to a certain extent by the Assyrian administration (2 Kings 18:26; cf. the Aramaic juridical tablets), and above all in the Persian Achaemenid Empire (sixth to fourth centuries c. BCE). Some Phoenician inscriptions show words and expressions that can be best explained through Aramaic, and yet it is difficult to say whether they are Aramaisms or simply seem to be such since Aramaic is much better attested than Phoenician. What appears to be an Aramaism may simply be a hapax in Phoenician, since the Phoenician lexicon is still so poorly known. Aramaic expanded in Hellenistic times to Phoenician speaking regions, as exemplified by an Iturean Aramaic inscription found near Yanouh in the mountains behind Byblos, and the spread of Aramaic personal names in Phoenician cities in Roman times.

## <h2>*Phoenician and Greek*

<p>Links between Phoenician and Greek had already been recognized early on by Greek authors themselves, as a debt owed to them in the elaboration of the Greek alphabet, whose origins were thought to be Phoenician. This took the form of the legend linked with Cadmos, who

travelled to Greece in search of his sister Europe, abducted by Zeus, and thereby offered the Greeks the alphabetical script. This legend was adopted by the Phoenicians themselves, probably in Hellenistic times, and is illustrated in the Roman period on Sidonian coins.

In Cyprus, interaction between Greek and Phoenician flourished upon a local substrate language conventionally called Eteocypriote, which had its own script. Local Greek speakers adopted a form of this script, and thus left Greek inscriptions written with this local syllabic script, a practice that would be later superseded by the alphabetic Greek script. The long co-existence of Greek and Phoenician speaking communities in Cyprus explains the presence of bilingual inscriptions, in which the Greek version may be written either in syllabic or in alphabetic script, for example at Idalion.

Phoenician merchants of the early Hellenistic period (fourth to second centuries<sup>4<sup>th</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> c.</sup> BCE) left inscriptions in Phoenician, or more often bilingual, in the Aegean and Greece (Rhodes, Delos, Rhenea, Cos, Athens, Pirea, Demetrias in Thessaly). In the Phoenician heartland, however, people were then writing only monolingual inscriptions, either in Greek or in Phoenician. The only bilingual known from Phoenicia proper – from Arwad, and dated to 25 BCE – is the latest known dated inscription in Phoenician, and it shows unconventional characteristics which suggest that Phoenician writing was probably no longer in use, and that this monument was engraved for the purpose of affirming local identity. Interaction between Greek and Phoenician is also visible through some Phoenician or Punic inscriptions written in Greek characters known from these late periods (graffito of the Wasta cave from the region of Tyre; 3 votive inscriptions from El Hofra in Algeria).

Another window for assessing Punic–Greek contact comes in the form of the set of “glosses” accumulated in the Late Antique manuscript tradition of Dioscorides’ *Materia medica*, consisting of transcriptions into Greek characters of various plant names, labelled “African” in the gloss, but recognizably Punic (or Phoenician): for example **αλσουναλω** for *\*lašōn-’alp*, ““tongue-of-ox””.

## <h2>***Phoenician and Iberian***

<p>The presence of Phoenicians in Spain had a strong influence on the local culture in Spain as a stimulus to the emergence of the so-called Tartessian culture. Phoenician script was the basis for the apparition of the first local scripts, used for writing local languages around the eighth to seventh centuries<sup>8<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> c.</sup> BCE in Andalusia and Southern Portugal. These Iberic scripts combine alphabetic and syllabic characters.

## <h2>*Punic and Latin*

<p>The Latin author Plautus (third to second centuries<sup>3<sup>rd</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup></sup> c. BCE) wrote comedies for theater, among which *Poenulus* “The little Punic man”. The protagonist pronounces a series of speeches, which have been recognized as genuine transcriptions of oral Punic as such could have been heard in the time of Plautus. These passages provide a precious witness to the spirantization of some consonants (bgdkpt), for example, as well as for the vocalization of Punic, at least in his time.

After the destruction of Carthage and the Roman conquest of North Africa, Latin inscriptions developed while Punic was still being used. As already mentioned, a new form of script, Neo-Punic, appeared, which derived from Punic cursive script. Probably under Latin influence, vowels came to be noted more regularly through *matres lectionis*. Bilingual inscriptions were engraved, some of which show the introduction of new expressions into Punic intended to designate Roman institutions. This is particularly evident in Tripolitania where Punic was not written before this period. Calques, such as **RB MHNT THT RB MHNT** ““chief of army under the chief of army”” as equivalent of Latin *proconsul*, are testimony to this interaction. Some inscriptions in the Punic language but in Latin script are also known, dating roughly from the first to fourth centuries<sup>1<sup>st</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup></sup> c. CE, the latest of these being in a Christian context (Sirte).

Saint Augustine (fourth to fifth centuries<sup>4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup></sup> c. CE) also alludes in some of his writings to certain words, showing that at his time the Punic language was not a dead language. Even if he himself was unable to speak Punic fluently, and even if many people in Hippona would not have understood it, there were nevertheless others, mainly in the countryside, who were still speaking Punic in daily life and thus in need of a Punic speaking clergy. He cites several Punic words, such as *ilim* for ““God””, which he distinguishes from **elohim** *l l l e l o h i m*<sup>[3]</sup> in Biblical Hebrew.

## <h2>*Punic and Libyan*

<p>Finally, more than a thousand “Libyan” inscriptions are known, written with a distinctive alphabet and in a language (or languages) whose relationship with modern Berber languages remain unclear, provide testimony to the continued use of local languages after the fall of Carthage, and in distinct regions such as Numidia. These local languages were in contact with Punic, as shown by the presence of bilingual inscriptions (such as those of Dougga, KAI 100—101, one of which is dated in the tenth<sup>10<sup>th</sup></sup> year of Micipsa, that is, 139—138 BCE). Most of these inscriptions are in fact from the Numidian region in Western Tunisia (the Maktar region) or in Eastern Algeria. Others are known from Tripolitania as far West as Morocco, thus covering the whole area of distribution of Punic inscriptions.

## <h1>Sketch of Phoenician Grammar

<p>Confronting the available comparative data – and especially those from Hebrew, which was genetically quite close to Phoenician, but also those from Ugaritic and Arabic – with the internal evidence derived from the Phoenician corpus itself allows for a plausible and reasonably solid reconstruction of the principal features of the phonology and morphology of Phoenician. Our knowledge of Phoenician syntax and lexicon, however, is less complete.

### <h1>Phoenician phonology

#### <h2>Consonants

<p>As mentioned above, throughout its history Phoenician, like Hebrew and Aramaic, employed the 22-sign Northwest Semitic alphabet. Since this alphabet had already emerged in the second 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BCE, one cannot be absolutely certain that this 22-sign inventory corresponded perfectly to the consonantal phonology of first 1<sup>st</sup> millennium spoken Phoenician. Nevertheless, this very assumption – and it is a considerable one – is adopted here for convenience (Table 16.1).<TB16.1>

Obviously, given the defective nature of the textual sources (not only those in Phoenician script, but also the occasional transcriptions of Phoenician names and words in Assyrian, Greek and Latin script), beyond indicating their etymological reflexes, it is difficult, if not impossible, to specify the exact phonetic shape of these consonantal phonemes (some proposals, in IPA, are nevertheless proposed in square brackets), to say nothing of their conditioned or unconditioned allophones, which might have existed in spoken Phoenician over the course of the first 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BCE. As in many other Semitic languages, the Phoenician phonemic inventory included a tripartite series of contrastive articulations: voiced, voiceless and the so-called “emphatic” (perhaps ejective?) articulation, for certain stops and fricatives (and probably also affricates, assuming that these still existed in first 1<sup>st</sup> millennium Phoenician). See Table 16.1.<TB16.1>

|              | Bilabial | Dental                     | Alveolar                    | Lateral/palatal | Velar/pharyngeal           | Glottal          |
|--------------|----------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------|----------------------------|------------------|
| Stops        |          |                            |                             |                 |                            |                  |
| Voiceless    | <i>p</i> | <i>t</i>                   |                             |                 | <i>k</i>                   | <sup>ʔ</sup> [ʔ] |
| Voiced       | <i>b</i> | <i>d</i>                   |                             |                 | <i>g</i>                   |                  |
| “Emphatic”   |          | <i>t</i> [t <sup>ʔ</sup> ] |                             |                 | <i>q</i> [k <sup>ʔ</sup> ] |                  |
| Fricatives   |          |                            |                             |                 |                            |                  |
| Voiceless    |          |                            | <i>š</i> [s <sup>ʔ</sup> ]  | <i>l</i>        | <i>ħ</i> [ħ]               | <i>h</i>         |
| Voiced       |          |                            |                             |                 | <i>ʕ</i> [ʕ]               |                  |
| “Emphatic”   |          |                            |                             |                 |                            |                  |
| Affricates   |          |                            |                             |                 |                            |                  |
| Voiceless    |          |                            | <i>s</i> [ts <sup>ʔ</sup> ] |                 |                            |                  |
| Voiced       |          |                            | <i>z</i> [dz <sup>ʔ</sup> ] |                 |                            |                  |
| “Emphatic”   |          |                            | <i>š</i> [ts <sup>ʔ</sup> ] |                 |                            |                  |
| Approximants | <i>w</i> |                            | <i>r</i>                    | <i>Yy</i>       |                            |                  |
| Nasals       | <i>m</i> | <i>n</i>                   |                             |                 |                            |                  |

<tc>**Table 16.1.** Phoenician consonants (traditional transcription in italics, hypothetical IPA values in square brackets)

<p>Working with the assumption of a complete correspondence between the 22-sign Proto-Canaanite alphabet and the Phoenician consonantal inventory, evoked above, the subsequent study of the Phoenician inherited lexicon then allows for the recognition of several mergers which must have taken place in Phoenician with respect to the consonantal inventory generally reconstructed for Proto-Semitic. With a few minor exceptions, these are by and large the same as those postulated for Hebrew. As in Ugaritic, for example, the Proto-Semitic lateral series did not survive as such in Phoenician, but instead the voiceless and “emphatic” laterals had merged in Pproto-Northwest Semitic with adjacent alveolar phonemes. Furthermore, as in Hebrew but unlike Ugaritic, the Proto-Semitic interdental series and the two velar-fricatives were also eliminated in Phoenician; they merged, respectively, with adjacent alveolar and pharyngeal phonemes (Table 16.2).<TB16.2>

|                  | Proto-Semitic (hypothetical) | phonemic reflex (hypothetical) | Phoen. traditional transcription |
|------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| laterals         | *l                           | → [l]                          | <i>l</i>                         |
|                  | *l̥                          | merged with [s <sup>ʔ</sup> ]  | <i>š</i>                         |
|                  | *l̥ʔ                         | merged with [ts <sup>ʔ</sup> ] | <i>š</i>                         |
| interdentals     | *ð                           | merged with [dz]               | <i>z</i>                         |
|                  | *θ                           | merged with [s <sup>ʔ</sup> ]  | <i>š</i>                         |
|                  | *θʔ                          | merged with [ts <sup>ʔ</sup> ] | <i>š</i>                         |
| velar-fricatives | *χ                           | merged with [ʕ]                | <i>ʕ</i>                         |
|                  | *x                           | merged with [ħ]                | <i>ħ</i>                         |

<tc>**Table 16.2.** The Proto-Semitic lateral, interdental, and velar-fricative series, and their presumed reflexes in Phoenician

<h2>*Vowels*

<p>Since vowels are not represented in the writing system, these must be reconstructed on the basis of two convergent lines of evidence: comparative data drawn from regularities observable in other (ideally closely related) Semitic languages, and the occasional transcription of Phoenician names and words in other writing systems (Mesopotamian or Cypriote syllabic scripts, Greek or Latin alphabets) in which vowels are represented graphically. The latter are notoriously difficult to control with any precision, since they often derive from proper names, and names do not necessarily obey the same phonological rules as other kinds of words, and since the foreign writing systems just mentioned were not necessarily adapted for the accurate representation of Phoenician vowels. While retaining an awareness of these inconveniences, we may nevertheless attempt an educated guess regarding the Phoenician vocalic inventory (Table 16.3).<TB16.3>

|      |           |              |
|------|-----------|--------------|
|      | front     | back         |
| high | i, ī      | u, ū         |
|      | e or ε, ê | ɔ or o, ô, ô |
| low  | a         |              |

<tc>**Table 16.3.** A plausible reconstruction of the Phoenician vowel phonemes

<p>Vocalic length probably remained phonemic throughout the first<sup>1st</sup> millennium BCE. In other words, we may plausibly assume that native speakers would discern a contrast for minimal pairs such as **ʾiṣ** “fire” and **ʾiṣ** “man”, for example. Historical long **/ā/** underwent an unconditioned shift to **/ō/** already in the mid-second<sup>2nd</sup> millennium BCE throughout the southern Levant in general; this development, the so-called “Canaanite shift” was thus also inherited in first<sup>1st</sup> millennium Phoenician. Some etymological short vowels seem to have developed conditioned allophones in certain syllabic or stress-related environments. When immediately followed by etymological *y* or *w* in syllable-final position, short *a* developed two conditioned allophones in Phoenician as in Ugaritic: the diphthongs *ay* and *aw* resolved to **ê** (< \**ay*) and **ô** (< \**aw*), respectively. Historical short **/i/** also appears to have been lowered and backed to something like **/ɛ/** or **/e/** in at least some syllabic or stress environments, and historical short **/a/** was apparently occasionally raised and backed to something like **/o/ or /ɔ/** as well. It is uncertain whether or not this vowel **/o/ or /ɔ/** (resulting from the raising and backing of historical short **/a/**) and the vowel **/ō/**

(resulting from the Canaanite shift) were audibly contrastive by timbre (for example, /o/ versus /ō/, respectively), by length (for example, /o/ versus /ō/, respectively), or had instead merged as a single vocalic phoneme (for example, /ō/). It is equally conceivable that the shifts described above “pushed” the vowel /ō/ (resulting from the Canaanite shift) even farther back, to /ū/, as implied by the form *sufes* in Latin (cf. biblical *šōp<sup>h</sup>et*). In latter periods, perhaps even as early as the Hellenistic or Roman periods, some etymologically short vowels may already have begun reducing (to /o/ or “*shewa lshewa*”) in certain circumstances.

## <h1>Phoenician morphology

<p>Inasmuch as the sources, both internal and comparative, are able to reveal such things, the major structuring principles of Phoenician morphology appear to be very similar to those, better known, of biblical Hebrew. As with other languages of the Semitic family, it is traditional to distinguish three related but distinct morphological systems for Phoenician; for nouns, verbs, and particles, respectively.

### <h2>Nominal morphology

<p>Phoenician nominal morphology may be conveniently described as bipartite and sequential: a “nominal base” is followed by a “grammatical suffix” (always in that order). The nominal base conveys specific semantic content, while the grammatical suffix expresses the accordable semantic and syntactic nuances of number, gender, and state. Only vestigial remnants of the Semitic case system survive in Phoenician.

### <h2>Nominal bases

<p>For nominal bases, in turn, two formative constituents may be distinguished: on the one hand, a bilateral or trilateral consonantal “root”, often linked with a particular broad semantic field, and on the other, an internal vowel sequence or “noun pattern” which refines or specifies the basic semantics of the consonantal root. These two elements are non-sequential, combining through Ablaut. For example, for the identically written substantives *yrh* “moon” (probably pronounced something like \**yarh* in the early first<sup>1st</sup> millennium) and *yrh* “month” (probably \**yarih*), one would identify their common “root” YRH, but distinguish (on the basis of comparative evidence) two different “noun patterns”, QaTL and QaTiL, respectively.

As in other Semitic languages, nominal bases may be augmented by prefixes or suffixes, or both. These include prefixes such as *tv-*, *mv-* and others (where *v* is “any vowel”), and suffixes (not to be confused with the “grammatical suffixes” on which see below) such as *-iyy*, *-ūi*, *-ōn*, and



others. Bases with the *tv-* prefix or the **-ūt** suffix often have abstract semantics, those with the *mv-* prefix often refer to concrete entities, and those with the suffixes *-iyy* and **-ōn** may be adjectival, but these are merely tendencies, and many exceptions exist. Some nominal bases possess both prefixes and suffixes, such as *mmlkt* “royalty” → “kingruler”.

## <h2>*Grammatical suffixes*

<p>Despite the ambiguity of the Phoenician writing system, it is probable that the grammatical suffixes pertinent for nominal morphology were similar to those of 1<sup>st</sup> first millennium Hebrew (and especially northern Hebrew). As in Hebrew, these Phoenician grammatical suffixes are relatively few in number, and express in various ways the semantic and syntactic notions of gender, number, and state.

Phoenician possessed two grammatical genders, labelled for convenience “masculine” and “feminine”. Only feminine nouns are morphologically marked, by means of the morpheme */(a)t/*, which, owing to the presence of a consonant, can be overtly recognized in Phoenician orthography. Examples are *mlkt* “queen” (probably pronounced something like *\*malkōt*) and *’ḥt* “sister” (probably **\*’ahōt**), both of which show a graphic trace of this “feminine” morpheme. Morphologically masculine nouns are unmarked (compare *mlk* “king” and *’ḥ* “brother”), although some of these actually take feminine agreement, despite their morphologically “masculine” morphology (examples include *’rṣ* “earth” and *’m* “mother”). The inverse – morphologically feminine nouns which take masculine agreement – is apparently also attested (cf. *hmmlkt h’* “that ruler”, where the demonstrative pronoun *h’* is plausibly masculine), but much less frequent. Indeed, for both categories it is much more frequent for agreement to follow explicitly the morphological gender.

Phoenician probably had three productive numbers (singular, dual and plural). The dual and the plural would have been distinguishable by vowel quality: **-ī(m)** and **-ōt** marked the plural, and **-ē(m)** the dual, although this distinction may have fallen out of use in certain forms already in the early first<sup>1st</sup> millennium (see the following paragraph, on state). The singular (like the masculine gender discussed above) remained unmarked.

For the dual and plural – but not for the singular – and only in the case of masculine forms, nouns that are “bound” to a following genitive are distinguished morphologically from those that are “unbound” (that is, not bound to a following genitive). Unbound nouns are said to be in the “absolute” state, and bound nouns in the “construct” state. Pronominal suffixes are attached to nouns in the bound state. Only the unbound or absolute state is overtly marked: by means of the consonantal morpheme */m/* which appears after the vocalic grammatical suffix of the masculine

plural or dual. Table 16.4<TB16/4> illustrates how these three categories of gender, number and state combine to form the grammatical suffixes generally reconstructed for Phoenician.

Nouns in the syntactically “unbound” or “absolute” state

|          | vocalization (hypothetical)                                             | example in writing      |
|----------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| singular |                                                                         |                         |
| masc.    | <i>sōpir=∅</i>                                                          | <i>spr</i>              |
| fem.     | <i>sōpir=(∩)t</i>                                                       | <i>sprt</i>             |
| dual     |                                                                         |                         |
| masc.    | <i>sōpir=ê<sup>m</sup></i>                                              | <i>spr<sup>m</sup></i>  |
| fem.     | <i>sōpir=(∩)tê<sup>m</sup></i>                                          | <i>sprt<sup>m</sup></i> |
| plural   |                                                                         |                         |
| masc.    | <i>sōpir=î<sup>m</sup></i>                                              | <i>spr<sup>m</sup></i>  |
| fem.     | <i>sōpir=ô<sup>t</sup></i> (poss. becoming <i>sōpir=û<sup>t</sup></i> ) | <i>sprt</i>             |

Nouns in the syntactically “bound” or “construct” state (where different from above):

|          |                                                 |             |
|----------|-------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| singular | (same as unbound)                               |             |
| dual     |                                                 |             |
| masc.    | <i>sōpir=ê</i>                                  | <i>spr</i>  |
| fem.     | <i>sōpir=(∩)tê</i>                              | <i>sprt</i> |
| plural   |                                                 |             |
| masc.    | <i>sōpir=î</i> (poss. becoming <i>sōpir=ê</i> ) | <i>spr</i>  |
| fem.     | (same as unbound)                               |             |

<tc>**Table 16.4.** The markings of the nominal inflection in Phoenician, shown using the (unchanging) nominal base *\*sōpir* “scribe” as a placeholder example

<p>Of the Semitic case system, only frozen vestiges remain, visible for example in certain forms with suffixed pronouns.

## <h2>*Verbal morphology*

<p>As with nouns, Phoenician verbal morphology resembles nominal morphology to the extent that it consists of two discrete components: a “verbal base” (consonantal root and a vowel pattern), and a set of “grammatical affixes”. As indicated by the use of the word “affixes”, verbal

morphology is unlike nominal morphology (which employs only grammatical suffixes) in showing a combined distribution of these affixes with respect to the verbal base as both (and mostly) suffixes along with (occasional) prefixes.

Verbal morphology also differs from nominal with respect to the kinds of grammatical information conveyed by these affixes. The following grammatical categories are distinguished by such affixes in Phoenician: gender (masculine, feminine), number (singular, dual, plural), and “person” (with respect to the verb’s grammatical subject). Three categories of person are used: first, second and third.

## <h2>*Verbal bases*

<p>Like other Northwest Semitic languages and Arabic, Phoenician inherited two verbal conjugations, and each of these possesses its own morphological characteristics. These are here called the “suffixing conjugation” (or SC), and the “prefixing conjugation” (or PC). In the SC, the grammatical affixes are always suffixes, but in the PC they show a combined distribution of both prefixes and suffixes.

## <h2>*The suffixing conjugation*

<p>Even though the SC evolved historically from an earlier “stative” conjugation, and even if genuine stative manifestations continued to exist in Phoenician, it would nevertheless appear that, apart from stative verbs, the SC in Phoenician served most frequently as a tense, marking action having occurred in the past. Some statistically less frequent semantic usages of the SC are also possibly attested; in general parallels for these may be found in first1<sup>st</sup> millennium Hebrew. Table 16.5<TB16.5> shows the Phoenician SC as generally reconstructed. No forms are proposed for the dual; one may assume, on the analogy of Hebrew, that the historical dual forms had fallen out of use, and had merged with their plural counterparts.

|          | Vocalization (hypothetical)                          | example in writing |
|----------|------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|
| singular |                                                      |                    |
| 3ms      | <i>katoʔb=∅</i> (earlier <i>katab=aʔ</i> )           | <i>ktb</i>         |
| 3fs      | <i>katab=ʔ</i> (earlier <i>katab=ʔt</i> )            | <i>ktb (ktbt)</i>  |
| 2ms      | <i>katab=ta</i>                                      | <i>ktbt</i>        |
| 2fs      | <i>katab=t</i> (earlier <i>katab=tiʔ</i> )           | <i>ktbt</i>        |
| 1cs      | <i>katab=ti</i>                                      | <i>ktbt</i>        |
| plural   |                                                      |                    |
| 3mp      | <i>katab=u</i>                                       | <i>ktb</i>         |
| 3fp      | <i>(unattested)</i> (perhaps <i>katab=uʔ</i> as 3mp) |                    |
| 2mp      | <i>(unattested)</i> (perhaps <i>katab=timʔ</i> )     |                    |
| 2fp      | <i>(unattested)</i> (perhaps <i>katab=tinʔ</i> )     |                    |
| 1cs      | <i>katab=nu</i>                                      | <i>ktbn</i>        |

<tc>**Table 16.5.** The suffixing conjugation in Phoenician, with the verb KTB “to write” as a placeholder

## <h2>*The prefixing conjugation*

<p>As in other Semitic languages, the PC in Phoenician covered a broader range of semantic functions than the SC. It is plausible that at least two morphologically distinct “moods” had survived: a long form, often called the indicative, used aspectually to mark durativity or as a tense to express present and future action, and a short form, used modally to mark a speaker’s volition. In practical terms, however, these two historical moods of the PC are indistinguishable in writing, with the possible exception of the 3mp (see Table 16.6<TB16.6> below). As above with the SC, the historical dual forms had in all probability fallen out of usage in 1<sup>st</sup> millennium Phoenician, and merged with their plural counterparts. Finally, since the imperative is formally related to the PC, it too is presented under this rubric (see below, Table 16.7).<TB16.7>

|          |     | vocalization (hypothetical)           | example in writing |
|----------|-----|---------------------------------------|--------------------|
| singular |     |                                       |                    |
|          | 3ms | y=aktub=∅                             | yktb               |
|          | 3fs | t=aktub=∅                             | tktb               |
|          | 2ms | t=aktub=∅                             | tktb               |
|          | 2fs | long (unattested) (perhaps t=aktub=īn |                    |
|          |     | short t=aktub=ī                       | tktb               |
|          | 1cs | '=aktub=∅                             | ?ktb               |
| plural   |     |                                       |                    |
|          | 3mp | long y=aktub=ūn                       | yktbn              |
|          |     | short y=aktub=ū                       | yktb               |
|          | 3fp | (unattested) (perhaps y=aktub=na)     |                    |
|          | 2mp | long t=aktub=ūn                       | tktbn              |
|          |     | short t=aktub=ū                       | tktb               |
|          | 2fp | (unattested) (perhaps t=aktub=na)     |                    |
|          | 1cp | n=aktub=∅                             | nktb               |

<tc>**Table 16.6.** The prefixing conjugation in Phoenician, with the verb KTB “to write” as a placeholder

## <h2>*The imperative*

<p>As elsewhere in Semitic, the imperative (Table 16.9[4]) exists only for the second2nd person in Phoenician; gender and number are marked exclusively through suffixes, but these suffixes show an affinity with those found elsewhere for the PC. Moreover, since these suffixes are almost entirely vocalic, almost virtually no graphic representations of the imperative are distinctly marked for number and gender. Finally, as in Hebrew, there may well have been two historically distinct forms of the 2ms form; and as elsewhere in the PC, the historical dual forms had probably fallen out of usage in first1<sup>st</sup> millennium Phoenician.

|          | Vocalization (hypothetical)                    | example in writing |
|----------|------------------------------------------------|--------------------|
| singular |                                                |                    |
| 2ms      | <i>kutub=∅</i> and <i>kutub=a</i>              | <i>ktb</i>         |
| 2fs      | <i>kutub=ī</i>                                 | <i>ktb</i>         |
| plural   |                                                |                    |
| 2mp      | <i>kutub=ū</i>                                 | <i>ktb</i>         |
| 2fp      | <i>(unattested)</i> (perhaps <i>kutub=na</i> ) |                    |

**Table 16.7.** The imperative in Phoenician, with the verb KTB “to write” as a placeholder

### <h2>Verbal adjectives, verbal nouns

Phoenician also possessed verbal adjectives and verbal nouns. While these obey the principles of nominal (and not verbal) morphology (in terms of grammatical suffixes for example, and in not being overtly marked for person), they should nevertheless be mentioned here, since they do share certain (especially syntactic) features with verbs.

Verbal nouns are also called infinitives; their nominal base is largely a function of the verbal stem (see below) to which they belong. Verbal adjectives, also called participles, are often used substantivally as in related Semitic languages. Their nominal base is also largely a function of the verbal stem to which they belong; transitive verbs may have two morphologically different participles, one active and one passive.

### <h2>Verbal stems

The morphology of verbal bases in Phoenician varied as a function of the specific verbal “stem” used for expressing a given meaning. Four such principle stems may be identified for Phoenician; these are traditionally (and here) abbreviated G, D, Y, and N. Each of these stems may be loosely associated with certain semantics, though there is much variation. The semantics of G-stem nouns vary greatly, for example, from stative or intransitive (verbs of movement) to transitive. D-stem verbs are usually transitive, often with intensive or factitive meaning (with respect to the G-stem meaning). The Y-stem corresponds to the Hebrew *hiphil*; it is transitive (often doubly so), and often causative in meaning. Finally, the N-stem is used for passives or for agentless action. Table 16.8 presents hypothetical proposals for the verbal bases of the various conjugations and other verbal forms in the principle stems in Phoenician. The three active stems (G, D, Y) may also have possessed “internal” passives.

|   | SC               | PC                            | imperative                 | participle | infinitive     |
|---|------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------|------------|----------------|
| G | QaTaL-<br>QaTiL- | -aQTuL-<br>-iQTaL-<br>-aQTiL- | QuTuL-<br>QaTaL-<br>QiTiL- | QōTiL-     | (often) QaTōL- |
| D | QiTTiL-          | -aQaTTiL-                     | QaTTiL-                    | maQaTTiL-  | QaTTōL-        |
| Y | yiQTiL-          | -aQTiL-                       | yiQTiL-                    | maQTiL-    | yaQTōL-        |
| N | naQTaL-          | -iQQaTiL-                     | 'iQQaTiL-                  | naQTaL-    | naQTōL-        |

**Table 16.8.** Hypothetical reconstruction of the verbal bases of the principle stems in Phoenician, with the dummy verb QTL

Judging from certain contexts, where only a passive meaning makes sense, these three active stems (G, D, Y) probably also possessed internal passives, as in biblical Hebrew: Gp, Dp, and Yp, respectively, which would have been distinguished from their active counterparts by Ablaut (in all probability, by the presence of a short *u* vowel). Furthermore, in addition to the internal passives and the N-stem, verbs with passive, reciprocal or reflexive meaning could probably also have been expressed in Phoenician with the series of derived stems containing a *-ta-* infix. This infix would have been placed either before or after the first root consonant of the verb (thus, the abbreviations Gt, tD and tY); but such forms are all quite rare and at all events difficult to vocalize, so merely their plausible existence is mentioned here.

All of the stem patterns mentioned above would have shown allomorphic variation for certain types of “weak” or otherwise irregular verbal roots.

## *Particle morphology*

The morphological structure of particles is sequential (rather than governed by Ablaut) in Phoenician, as in other Semitic languages. Pronouns are the most common type of particle encountered in Phoenician texts, but other types of particles are also well-attested.

## *Pronouns*

The Phoenician pronominal system is somewhat conservative, and closely resembles that of Hebrew. Pronouns of various types existed: in addition to personal pronouns, one may mention impersonal, indefinite, interrogative and relative sets as well.

## <h2>Personal pronouns

<p>Personal pronouns include both independent and suffixed forms. Independent forms (Table 16.9)<TB16.9> usually – but not always – occur in a nominative context (that is, as the grammatical subject of the sentence). A formally distinct non-nominative paradigm must once have also existed in Proto-Phoenician, since a few isolated frozen forms have survived here and there (*hʾt*, *hmt*), but these are rare, and the oblique paradigm must have been absorbed into the nominative one early on in the first 1<sup>st</sup> millennium. Whatever their origin, the independent personal pronouns are often used redundantly, that is, “for emphasis”. No distinct dual forms of the independent pronouns seem to have survived in Phoenician.

|          | Vocalization (hypothetical)                        | example in writing |
|----------|----------------------------------------------------|--------------------|
| singular |                                                    |                    |
| 3ms      | <b>huʾa</b> (becoming <b>hû</b> )                  | <b>hʾ</b>          |
| 3fs      | <b>hiʾa</b> (becoming <b>hî</b> )                  | <b>hʾ</b>          |
| 2ms      | <b>ʾatta</b>                                       | <b>ʾt</b>          |
| 2fs      | <b>ʾatti</b>                                       | <b>ʾt</b>          |
| 1cs      | <b>ʾanōki</b>                                      | <b>ʾnk</b>         |
| plural   |                                                    |                    |
| 3mp      | <b>himūt</b> (replaced earlier <b>*humʾ</b> )      | <b>hmt</b>         |
| 3fp      | (same as 3mpʾ; replaced earlier <b>*hinʾ</b> )     | <b>hmt</b>         |
| 2ms      | <b>ʾattim</b> (replaced <b>*ʾattumʾ</b> )          | <b>ʾtm</b>         |
| 2fp      | <i>(unattested — perhaps same as 3mp, ʾattimʾ)</i> |                    |
| 1cp      | <b>ʾanaḥnu</b>                                     | <b>ʾnḥn</b>        |

<tc>**Table 16.9.** Reconstructed paradigm of the independent personal pronouns in Phoenician.

<tc>For the paradigm of suffixed personal pronouns, reanalysis of earlier forms consisting of (old) case vowel + suffixed personal pronoun has produced a considerably heterogeneous paradigm for these forms for the first 1<sup>st</sup> and second 3<sup>rd</sup> persons in Phoenician. Moreover, many of these forms continued to evolve diachronically, triggered by both phonological processes and by analogical leveling. The resulting “paradigm” is thus overly complex; Table 16.10<TB16.10> below provides what we hope is a plausible reconstruction.



|          | Hypothetical vocalization | example in writing                                                       |                                           |
|----------|---------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| singular |                           |                                                                          |                                           |
| 3ms      | on sg noun in acc.        | <b>-ô</b> (< *-aw, < earlier <b>-ahu</b> )                               | -ø                                        |
|          | on sg noun in nom.        | <b>-ô</b> (same as above, by paradigm pressure)                          | -ø                                        |
|          | on sg noun in gen.        | <b>-iyu</b> (< earlier <b>-ihu</b> , later becoming -iw→ <b>-im</b> )    | -y (earlier <b>-h</b> , later <b>-m</b> ) |
|          | on pl noun in oblique     | <b>-êyu</b> (< earlier <b>-êhu</b> , later becoming -êw→ <b>-êm</b> )    | -y (earlier <b>-h</b> , later <b>-m</b> ) |
|          | on pl noun in nom.        | <b>-êyu</b> (same as above, by paradigm pressure)                        | -y (earlier <b>-h</b> , later <b>-m</b> ) |
| 3fs      | on sg noun in acc.        | <b>-â</b> (< earlier <b>-aha</b> )                                       | -ø                                        |
|          | on sg noun in nom.        | <b>-â</b> (same as above, by paradigm pressure)                          | -ø                                        |
|          | on sg noun in gen.        | <b>-iya</b> (< earlier <b>-iha</b> )                                     | -y (earlier <b>-h</b> )                   |
| 2ms      |                           | <b>-ka</b>                                                               | <b>-k</b>                                 |
| 2fs      |                           | <b>-ki</b>                                                               | <b>-k</b>                                 |
| 1cs      | on sg noun in nom.        | <b>-î</b> (< earlier *-uya, analogical replacement <sup>3</sup> )        | -ø                                        |
|          | on sg noun in gen./acc.   | <b>-iya</b> (later becoming -î, by analogy)                              | -y                                        |
|          | on pl noun in oblique     | <b>-ay</b> (< earlier *-ayya)                                            | -y                                        |
|          | on pl noun in nom.        | <b>-ay</b> (same as above, by paradigm pressure)                         | -y                                        |
| plural   |                           |                                                                          |                                           |
| 3mp      | on sq noun in acc.        | <b>-om</b> (< *-awm, < earlier *-ahum)                                   | <b>-m</b>                                 |
|          | on sg noun in nom.        | <b>-om</b> (same as above, by paradigm pressure)                         | <b>-m</b>                                 |
|          | on sg noun in gen.        | <b>-inom</b> (< <b>-il + nôm</b> , via reanalysis; earlier <b>-hum</b> ) | <b>-nm</b> (earlier <b>-hm</b> )          |
|          | on pl noun in oblique     | <b>-ênom</b> (< <b>-ê + nôm</b> , via reanalysis)                        | <b>-nm</b>                                |
|          | on pl noun in nom.        | <b>-ênom</b> (same as above, by paradigm pressure)                       | <b>-nm</b>                                |
| 3fp      | on sq noun in acc.        | <b>-am</b> (analogy, based on 3mp and -o/-a in sg)                       | <b>-m</b>                                 |
|          | on sg noun in nom.        | <b>-am</b> (same as above)                                               | <b>-m</b>                                 |
|          | on sg noun in gen.        | <b>-inam</b> (analogy, based on 3mp and -o/-a in sg)                     | <b>-nm</b> (earlier <b>-hm</b> )          |
|          | on pl noun in oblique     | <b>-ênam</b> (analogy, based on 3mp and -o/-a in sg)                     | <b>-nm</b>                                |
|          | on pl noun in nom.        | <b>-ênam</b> (same as above)                                             | <b>-nm</b>                                |
| 2mp      |                           | <b>-kum</b> (later becoming -kom, by lowering)                           | <b>-km</b>                                |
| 2fp      |                           | (unattested — perhaps <b>-kin</b> <sup>3</sup> )                         |                                           |
| 1cp      |                           | <b>-nu</b>                                                               | <b>-n</b>                                 |

<tc>**Table 16.10.** Reconstructed paradigm of the suffixed personal pronouns in Phoenician.

## <h2>*Other particles*

<p>The Phoenician demonstrative pronouns (and adjectives) greatly resemble related forms in Hebrew (and to a certain extent Aramaic and Arabic). Various indefinite, impersonal and interrogative pronouns are also attested in the corpus. Some of these have well-known cognates in better known sister or cousin languages, be they earlier, contemporary or latter. Cf. MY (perhaps

\**mī*) for “who” and M (perhaps \**mō*) for “what”, which contribute to both interrogative and indefinite series.

Phoenician and Punic attest many other types of particles beyond pronouns. Many of these are part of a substantial lexical inheritance from earlier forms of Pproto-Northwest Semitic, and as such are fairly easy to recognize in comparative perspective. Where differences are observable, these are generally in usage or proportional distribution. The negative adverbial particle BL, for example, shows a much wider distribution in Phoenician than in Ugaritic or Hebrew.

Among common conjunctions, for example, one can cite the ubiquitous coordinator **W-** (*wa*), but also subordinating **K-** (*kī*). The inventory of prepositions is also conservative: most of the common West Semitic prepositions are attested in Phoenician and Punic, sometimes presenting variant or slightly evolved forms; for example, 'B- “in” (B- with “prosthetic alif”), etc. Another tendency is prepositional compounding. This may be observed in the concretion of two (or more) originally independent prepositions into compound forms, as in LB- or LMB-, but also in idiomatic expressions subsequently lexicalized as prepositions (as in BD-, which is also attested in earlier periods).

Other particles, some unused or unknown in the second<sup>nd</sup> millennium come to play important roles on the grammatical or syntactic level in 1<sup>st</sup> millennium Phoenician; as above, these are generally comparable to the situation in biblical Hebrew. Cf. the definite article H-, and the *nota accusativi* 'YT.

## <h1>Lexicon

<p>Our knowledge of the Phoenician and Punic lexicon is limited by the nature of the preserved corpus (see above, under Textual evidence). One important consequence of this situation is the frequency of encountering *hapax legomena* in inscriptions of an otherwise underrepresented or previously unknown nature or literary genre. For example, ongoing work on the Idalion administrative archive of the Persian period has recently allowed the identification of a “new” Phoenician word: KWT, a kind of container or volume measure, also known from the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium.

## <h1>Syntax

<p>As above with regard to lexicon, our knowledge of Phoenician and Punic syntactic structure is highly limited by the nature of the corpus. In addition, some literary genres (such as *ex voto* inscriptions) consist of such conservative and highly stereotyped formulas that one may question whether such language perhaps reflects literary tradition more than contemporary speech patterns.

Despite these drawbacks, certain general observations can be made, especially when such are reinforced through the presence of parallel patterns in biblical Hebrew or other closely related languages, as, for example, the preference for parataxis (rather than subordination).

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