



# *Persian And Phoenician Empire*



Persia-600–530  
b.c.e.

Phoenicians- 1550  
BCE to 300 BCE

By Jason Meyers, Ian Buscaglia

# Geographic Impact on Society



The Persian Empire is located in the plateau of the Middle East, between the lowlands of Mesopotamia to India. The main country that takes up this chunk of land today is Iran. The Caucasus mountains and Iranian mountains are natural defenses from any outsiders but the empire's borders exceeded this. Most of the empire's land westward was flat fertile land while land eastwards was more mountainous. The aptly named Persian Gulf was the main body of water the empire had access to, they also had access to was the Mediterranean and Caspian Seas.

The Phoenicians lived in Asia, specifically in the Middle East, on the eastern coast of the Mediterranean Sea. Phoenicia is also bordered on all but one side by Syria and Israel. The remaining side touches and is bordered by the Mediterranean Sea. Today, the land where Phoenicia was is now mostly occupied by Lebanon. The Phoenicians were not at all separated from other civilizations, as the land surrounding them was mostly flat, allowing them to trade frequently through the region.

# Political System and Impact on Society

The Persians were more of a large political unit rather than a unified country. It had many different cultural and physical regions. It was similar to a large scale feudal system that would dominate Europe many years later. The Persians did have a king which made them a monarchy. The Persian court system was just the king and the people close to the king who decided the criminal's fate. The Persian leaders required cooperation and imposed a 20 percent tax on all agriculture and manufacturing. They also taxed religious institutions, which despite their wealth had previously not been taxed.



The Phoenicians lived throughout regions such as Spain and Egypt, around the Mediterranean Sea in small settlements, where based on era and region, the government system differed between monarchy, oligarchy, and democracy. Specific details aside, power was never absolute, as assemblies were also involved in decision-making. The Phoenicians lived in several city-states, so each city-state had a different ruler. For Phoenician monarchies, the focuses were the needs of the people. For Phoenician oligarchies, trade and travel were prioritized. For democracies, the focus was to find and punish citizens who act against the law.

# *Economic System and Impact on Society*



The Persians built a series of roads that spread throughout their country. They used these roads to move troops and news throughout the country. The king used it to communicate with the outmost areas of Persia. The surrounding countries copied these roads and morphed them into something more useful for their civilization. However this road was not used for much trade, the main interaction between Persia and the other countries was the trading of cultures.

The Phoenicians established several cities and colonies through their own region. These settlements provided other paths to other regions and cultures, both over the surrounding land and through the Mediterranean Sea. These paths allowed the Phoenicians to trade with other cultures to gain needed materials, such as papyrus, ivory, ebony, silk, and precious metals. From this concept, the Phoenicians created several other trade routes, which were used to economically thrive. Not only did the Phoenicians trade raw materials, but crafted unique items that were sought after by other nearby civilizations, such as glassware and Tyrian cloth.



## Beliefs and Religious Impact on Culture

They followed many religions from Islam to Christianity and even forms of greek beliefs. But for a large portion of time Hellenism influenced the culture of Persia. Hellenism represents taking ideals and the culture from greece and implementing it into your own country. Even during the Parthian age, in which Persia was slowly collapsing, they embraced the greek ideology and they were such big fans of greece that they even made greek their administrative language. The majority of Persians most likely followed a greek/polytheistic religion.

The Phoenicians were polytheistic, and had several deities, such as Eshmun and Melqart (gods of fertility), Shadrafa and Baal-Merappe (gods of healing), and Astarte (goddess of war, fertility, and love). These and various other gods make up the “assembly of the gods.” In Phoenician religion, the three most prominent types of cultic activity were rituals, sacrificial rites, and funerary rites, while the three centers of cultic activity were undeveloped natural sites, shrines, and temples. The cult of the dying god would perform sacrifices and lamentations for the god Adonis. The point of the festival is the seasonal cycle, which “lives and dies” like the dying and reviving god, Adonis. Phoenicians would make several offerings at shrines for various causes, such as help in a time of need. Phoenician funerary practices involved inhumation and cremations, showing a potential belief in an afterlife.

# Rise of Civilization

The start of Persia began with tribes from all over the place, but mostly from the Caucasus and Central Asia. These tribes were separated by clans and those clans separated by family. For example, Darius, son of Vishtaspa, belonged to the family of the Achaemenids, the clan of the Pasargadai, and the tribe of the Parsa. However the importance of these tribal allegiance were diminishing. The Assyrians most likely brought these people together into a unified confederacy and then into a kingdom. After a loss in a conflict to the north caused the Medes, what the tribes transformed into after the Assyrians unified them, to revolt against the Assyrians. Later on they too were overthrown, this time by the Persians lead by Cyrus II.



Phoenician civilization began in the Eastern Mediterranean region of the Levant (Southern Syria, Lebanon, and Northern Israel). For centuries after this, small settlements on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea began to get gradually larger and move outward into other regions further away with other existing civilizations within them. As a result of the rise of merchants and trading systems.. Civilization continued to expand outward both through frequent travel and trade.

# Art and Architecture

The best architecture was built during the Safavid dynasty by Shah Abbas. Some of these creations were built in the city of New Julfa, one of the still standing masterpieces is the Armenian Church. The Persians were also excellent craftsmen, they made great rugs and miniatures. People from across Europe and Asia visited just to acquire these items and see their buildings. People describe some buildings as eloquent and beautiful.



Most Phoenician art is on small carved or painted decorative objects, or on dyed fabrics or materials which were sought after. Some examples of these are carved ivory panels and colorful glassware. The Phoenicians were heavily artistically influenced by their neighbors. Phoenician architecture mostly contained temples, shrines, and large-scale projects, most commonly made of mud and limestone.

# Writing System and Written History

While under the Islamic rule, Persia changed its language more suited towards Arab-Islamic languages at the time and formed an Islamic-Persian language. They used this language in all foreign and governmental issues. Most of the ancient writings we have about the Persians were from Greek sources, we don't have many Persian sources. But from the sources we do have we know that their writing system was similar to the western and eastern powers.

The Phoenician alphabet was one of the first alphabets with a strict structure. It can be inferred that the Phoenicians' language system was heavily inspired by the early Semitic alphabet. However, the earliest similar language from the region was of Egyptian origin. The Greeks changed several characters from the Phoenician alphabet into vowels, making them closer to our modern English alphabet.







# Major Technological Advances

One major advancement that the Persians made was the alphabet, they were the first if not one of the first to make an alphabet mainstream. The size of their empire allowed them to spread in through Asia and Europe. The Royal road in the Persian Empire was used for many things but one thing was a postal service, which made communication much faster and easier. They also made their own form of the refrigerator, it was a large heat resistant structure that they'd keep insulated all year.



The Phoenicians introduced and spread their trading system and routes. These routes allowed not only trade to happen on them, but also allowed faster, more efficient transportation. This transportation allowed Phoenicia to increase in size more quickly compared to other civilizations while still thriving in most aspects. Additionally, the Phoenicians' language system was introduced and developed the alphabet that slowly "evolved" into our modern alphabet. However, the Greeks are responsible for the vowels in the English language, as they introduced vowels into the Phoenician alphabet.

# Golden Age

The Persian golden age is said to be when Darius led Persia, under his rule the empire grew to its largest size. The empire stretched from the Indus river to the Balkans. Darius also invaded southern Russia. He did other things too such as reorganizing the system of taxes and tributes, he instigated a revision of codification of the laws in use in various parts of the empire. Another thing he did was create a new division of satrapies or regions/provinces too. Nearing the end of his rule and the loss at Marathon put the empire on the defensive, with Egypt being the most rebellious state.



Phoenicians were often under the control of powerful civilizations that were near them, Egypt, the Hittite Kingdom, Assyria, and Persia. In 1200 BC, the Egyptian power weakened, and sent Phoenicia into its Golden Age. The Phoenicians became very rich due to high amounts of trading. At this point, Phoenician civilization thrived, but this only attracted more enemies, and this high point in Phoenician history was soon stopped when they were absorbed by the Persians.

# Famous Citizens and their Achievements

The most famous people from Persia were mostly the leaders and kings. People such as Cyrus the great, Xerxes, and Darius. They did great things for the country and had great achievements. For example Cyrus the great was the person to form Persia itself, he lead the people to greatness. Darius is another and he carried the empire through its golden age and brought it to its largest size. Finally Xerxes, who inherited the throne from his father Darius, he was well known for his architecture and putting down many revolts from babylon and egypt. However he did lose a couple battles against the greeks which harmed his reputation.

Although the Phoenicians as a whole are famous, there are no significant leaders or figures from any Phoenician city-states. This is likely a result of the separate independence of each of these city-states, causing there to be a high amount of leaders. Additionally, Phoenician society was ever changing but did not have much power or any military leaders, or a generally powerful military force, so there are no highly memorable military figures either.



# Slavery



Slavery as a whole or in mass numbers was uncommon or even frowned upon in Persia. The most common form of slavery was semi-slaves, which is using prisoners of war for hard labor but not keeping them enslaved forever. Some regions the Persians conquered had lots of slaves such as Egypt and Babylon. Once the areas were taken, Persia set these people free and allowed them rights. The main place that slavery was implemented in was Greece due to the increasing tension between each other.

The Phoenicians did not use the concept of slavery strictly, but slavery did exist during the highest points of economic success and contribute to their success and societal processes within their empires until society began to decline. Then, from this point in time, the Phoenicians themselves were enslaved by the societies who conquered, split, and destroyed them.

## Fall of Civilization

The main cause for the fall of the Persians was Rome and the many battles the two fought. At this point in time Persia was called the Parthians. The Romans took advantage of the civil wars and disputes that the Parthian government was dealing with and invaded Mesopotamia and later invaded the city of Ctesiphon but could not hold it. Rome made many attempts to control this city, the struggle for control severely weakened the Parthians.



In 539 BCE, Cyrus the Great, the Persian leader, completely conquered Phoenicia. From this point, Phoenicia was divided into four areas, known as vassal kingdoms. After this, all means of Phoenician influence began to immediately decline. It is possible that during this period of conflict, citizens of Phoenicia migrated to Carthage and/or other areas away from the Persian Empire.

# World Wide Contributions



Probably the major contribution the Persians made to the whole world is the alphabet. The Persians modernized and spread the alphabet to the surrounding areas including the phoenicians, who would then trade and culturally diffuse the alphabet to the countries it interacted with. The Persians also invented an early form of a battery that we assume they used to put thin layers of gold onto other objects. But one mostly overlooked thing the Persians did was open a large communication line between Asia and Europe.

The most major contributions of the Phoenicians were their language, government, and trading system. Language and government are still important today, as we use language almost every second of our lives, and the Phoenician alphabet more similarities to our alphabet compared to any other language. As for government, the Phoenicians at one point used the Democratic government system. Today, the United States live by a democratic government system as well.



# Sources Cited

- Frye, Richard N., R.N. Frye. "Persia." *Gale World History in Context*, New Catholic Encyclopedia, [go.gale.com/ps/advancedSearch.do?method=doSearch&searchType=AdvancedSearchForm&userGroupName=nysl\\_we\\_ken&inputFieldNames\[0\]=AU&prodId=WHIC&inputFieldValues\[0\]=%22R.+N.+FRYE%22](https://go.gale.com/ps/advancedSearch.do?method=doSearch&searchType=AdvancedSearchForm&userGroupName=nysl_we_ken&inputFieldNames[0]=AU&prodId=WHIC&inputFieldValues[0]=%22R.+N.+FRYE%22). Accessed 15 Oct. 2019.
- Schlager, Neil, N.S. and Josh Lauer, J.L., editors. "Persia Expands the Boundaries of Empire, Exploration, and Organization." *Gale World History in Context*, Science and Its Times, 1 Jan. 2001, [go.gale.com/ps/retrieve.do?tabID=Reference&resultListType=RESULT\\_LIST&searchResultsType=MultiTab&searchType=BasicSearchForm&currentPosition=1&docId=GALE%7CCV2643450070&docType=Topic+overview&sort=Relevance&contentSegment=ZXAG-MOD1&prodId=WHIC&contentSet=GALE%7CCV2643450070&searchId=R7&userGroupName=nysl\\_we\\_ken&inPS=true](https://go.gale.com/ps/retrieve.do?tabID=Reference&resultListType=RESULT_LIST&searchResultsType=MultiTab&searchType=BasicSearchForm&currentPosition=1&docId=GALE%7CCV2643450070&docType=Topic+overview&sort=Relevance&contentSegment=ZXAG-MOD1&prodId=WHIC&contentSet=GALE%7CCV2643450070&searchId=R7&userGroupName=nysl_we_ken&inPS=true). Accessed 15 Oct. 2019.
- Cooper, Alan M. "Phoenician Religion." *Gale World History in Context*, Macmillan Reference USA, [go.gale.com/ps/retrieve.do?tabID=Reference&resultListType=RESULT\\_LIST&searchResultsType=MultiTab&searchType=BasicSearchForm&currentPosition=1&docId=GALE%7CBT2350085315&docType=Topic+overview&sort=Relevance&contentSegment=ZXAG-MOD1&prodId=WHIC&contentSet=GALE%7CBT2350085315&searchId=R2&userGroupName=nysl\\_we\\_ken&inPS=true](https://go.gale.com/ps/retrieve.do?tabID=Reference&resultListType=RESULT_LIST&searchResultsType=MultiTab&searchType=BasicSearchForm&currentPosition=1&docId=GALE%7CBT2350085315&docType=Topic+overview&sort=Relevance&contentSegment=ZXAG-MOD1&prodId=WHIC&contentSet=GALE%7CBT2350085315&searchId=R2&userGroupName=nysl_we_ken&inPS=true). Accessed 1 Jan. 1987.
- Knight, Judson, and Stacy A. McConnell, editors. "Phoenicia, Syria, and Arabia." *Gale World History in Context*, Gale, 2000, [go.gale.com/ps/retrieve.do?tabID=Reference&resultListType=RESULT\\_LIST&searchResultsType=MultiTab&searchType=BasicSearchForm&currentPosition=1&docId=GALE%7CCX2587200017&docType=Culture+overview%2C+Geographic+overview&sort=Relevance&contentSegment=9781414422855&prodId=WHIC&contentSet=GALE%7CCX2587200017&searchId=R1&userGroupName=nysl\\_we\\_ken&inPS=true](https://go.gale.com/ps/retrieve.do?tabID=Reference&resultListType=RESULT_LIST&searchResultsType=MultiTab&searchType=BasicSearchForm&currentPosition=1&docId=GALE%7CCX2587200017&docType=Culture+overview%2C+Geographic+overview&sort=Relevance&contentSegment=9781414422855&prodId=WHIC&contentSet=GALE%7CCX2587200017&searchId=R1&userGroupName=nysl_we_ken&inPS=true). Accessed 17 Oct. 2019.
- Schlager, Neil, and Josh Lauer, editors. "The Phoenicians: Early Lessons in Economics." *Gale World History in Context*, Gale, 1 Jan. 2001, [go.gale.com/ps/retrieve.do?tabID=Reference&resultListType=RESULT\\_LIST&searchResultsType=MultiTab&searchType=BasicSearchForm&currentPosition=1&docId=GALE%7CCV2643450073&docType=Topic+overview&sort=Relevance&contentSegment=ZXAG-MOD1&prodId=WHIC&contentSet=GALE%7CCV2643450073&searchId=R1&userGroupName=nysl\\_we\\_ken&inPS=true](https://go.gale.com/ps/retrieve.do?tabID=Reference&resultListType=RESULT_LIST&searchResultsType=MultiTab&searchType=BasicSearchForm&currentPosition=1&docId=GALE%7CCV2643450073&docType=Topic+overview&sort=Relevance&contentSegment=ZXAG-MOD1&prodId=WHIC&contentSet=GALE%7CCV2643450073&searchId=R1&userGroupName=nysl_we_ken&inPS=true). Accessed 16 Oct. 2019.