

Religion of Phoenicia

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The religion of Phoenicia was based on a polytheistic system. The high degree of political fragmentation of the city kingdoms of the Levantine coast implied that each center had its own pantheon, characterized by specific features although structurally similar to that adopted in other cities. Usually, at the top of this system was placed a couple of divinities, considered as polyadic entities, owners of the territory. Thus, for example, Byblos was dominated by the Baalat Gubal (literally the "Lady of Byblos") and by a local Baal (identified by the Greeks with Adonis), while in Sidon, at the head of the city religion, Eshmun and Astarte were worshipped; further south, in the rich and powerful Tyre, Astarte was once again conceived as protector of the city, this time next to Melqart, the "King of the city" (as the name openly states, from milk, "king", + qrt, "city"). The polyadic gods were then joined, obviously, by other figures, each one - such as Baal Shamim, the "Lord of the heavens", Baal Hammon, "the lord of the house chapel (?)", or Shadrafa, the "healing genius" - playing a specific role within the particular conception of the world, of nature and society, developed by the Phoenician culture. A direct and privileged relationship existed between the gods and the various city kings: the latter, who must and must still be "just and righteous", were emanations of divine power itself and had the task of maintaining balance between gods and men, ensuring the continuous communication between the divine and human spheres. Not surprisingly, one of the main roles of the sovereigns, who sometimes defined themselves as "priests", was to celebrate the divinities erecting or restoring their houses (the temples). Unfortunately, almost nothing of Phoenician mythology has been preserved so far. However, the Greek and Latin literary sources allow us to know some episodes and some themes, even if reread in the perspective of the sources themselves. Fundamental, for example, is the contribution of Philo of Byblos who wrote in Greek a "Phoenician history" in the second century AD (collecting the legacy of a mythical Phoenician priest, Sanchuniaton), some fragments of which have come to us thanks to the mediation of Bishop Eusebius of Caesarea (4th century AD). Philo's work includes tales of cosmogony and theogony, in which it is possible to recognize elements of original Phoenician beliefs.



Date Range: 1200 BCE - 330 BCE

Region: Phoenicia

Region tags: Eastern Mediterranean, Galilee, Anatolia, Syria, Palestine, Jordan, Asia Minor, Levant, Egypt, Middle East, Lebanon, Israel, Asia

It is not easy to establish - maybe it is not even possible - the precise borders of Phoenicia. The same name "Phoenicians" represents a Greek invention (later also adopted by the Romans) that was never used by those people who were so named. Nowadays, therefore, Phoenicians (and also Phoenicia) is a definition that is used to circumscribe and delimit a specific historical object of study (a "culture"), marked by certain traits and constant aspects (such as language and writing, or some manifestations of thought and art). To defining the borders of Phoenicia, therefore, one must proceed

using conventions, aware that these are very fluid and mobile limits, depending from time to time on the movements of populations, enlargements and contractions in extension of the city kingdoms (and the territory on which they applied their influence), on intercultural relations, as well as on the role played by external powers - first of all Assyria. Conventionally, then, Phoenicia can be defined as that area which was included between the Mediterranean to the west and the mountains of Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon to the east; between the territory of Arwad in the north and of Ashkelon in the south. In this way, the region corresponds roughly to present-day Lebanon, with offshoots to the north, in Syria, and to the south, in Israel.

Status of Participants:

✓ Elite ✓ Religious Specialists ✓ Non-elite (common people, general populace)

Sources

Print sources for understanding this subject:

- Source 1: S. Ribichini, *Poenus Advena. Gli dèi fenici e l'interpretazione classica*, Roma 1985.
- Source 2: E. Lipiński, *Dieux et déesses de l'univers phénicien et punique*, Leuven 1995.
- Source 3: P. Xella, *Religione e religioni in Siria-Palestina*, Roma 2007.
- Source 1: C. Bonnet - H. Niehr, *La religion des Phéniciennes et des Araméens*, Genève 2014.
- Source 2: J.C. Quinn, *In Search of the Phoenicians*, Princeton 2018.
- Source 3: G. Garbati, *Divine Roaming: Deities on the Move between Phoenician, Aramaic and Luwian Contexts*, in *Rivista di Studi Fenici* 47, 2019, pp. 7-26.

Online sources for understanding this subject:

- Source 1 URL: <https://www.decf-cnr.org/>
- Source 1 Description: On line Dictionary of Phoenician Culture, including also lemmas dedicated to gods, goddesses and cults
- Source 2 URL: https://www.ispc.cnr.it/it_it/2021/01/26/phoenician-and-punic-research-group/
- Source 2 Description: Projects and lines of research directed in the CNR - Italy by the components of the ISPC (Institute of Heritage Sciences) "Phoenician Group"
- Source 3 URL: <https://base-map-polytheisms.huma-num.fr/login>
- Source 3 Description: Database (free access) of divine names and epiclesis in the Semitic and Greek worlds (directed by Corinne Bonnet, Toulouse)

General Variables

Membership/Group Interactions

Are other religious groups in cultural contact with target religion:

– Yes

Notes: The deep contacts the Phoenicians had with the other peoples of the ancient Near East (and of the central and western Mediterranean as well), due especially to the construction of a large network of trades, often resulted in mutual interferences, even from a religious point of view. This is evident, for instance, with regard to the Egyptian cultural influence, which, in certain phases, acted profoundly on Phoenician religious beliefs (e.g. the close relation between the Baalat Gubal [the main goddess of Byblos] and Hathor).

↳ Is the cultural contact competitive:

– No

↳ Is the cultural contact accommodating/pluralistic:

– Yes

↳ Is the cultural contact neutral:

– Yes

Does the religious group have a general process/system for assigning religious affiliation:

– No

Does the religious group actively proselytize and recruit new members:

– No

Does the religion have official political support

– Yes

Notes: Actually, it is not properly correct to talk of "political support" (in the ancient times, religion and policy were not separated spheres of the social organization). In fact, the religion of Phoenician city-kingdoms had at its highest level the king, who was conceived as directly legitimated and protected and by the god(s); so he had to vouch for the preservation of the right balance between the divine dimension and the human one, and sometimes played the role of high/chief priest, and was often intimately bound to a polyadic goddess.

↳ Are the priests paid by polity:

– Field doesn't know

Notes: As for the ancient societies of Mediterranean, characterized by a polytheistic religious "system", religion was not separated from other dimensions of social life, such as politics. In Phoenicia, generally speaking, the priests should belong to the upper social classes (including the royal one).

↳ Is religious infrastructure paid for by the polity:

– Yes

Notes: Together with the highest magistrates, and primarily the kings, sometimes also private citizens, as clearly indicated by the inscriptions, offered their riches for the construction of sacred buildings (or of some of their parts).

↳ Are the head of the polity and the head of the religion the same figure:

– Yes

↳ Are political officials equivalent to religious officials:

– Yes

Notes: Usually they are

↳ Polity legal code is roughly coterminous with religious code:

– Yes

Notes: Unfortunately, the available data do not allow us to fully reconstruct the legal administration of the Phoenician cities; however, the legal "codes" should be largely combined with the religious rules and principles. This is indicated, for instance, by the Assyrian treaty stipulated between Esarhaddon and Baal I of Tyre [671 BC], in which Assyrian and Phoenician deities are evoked to act as guarantors for compliance with the clauses.

↳ Polity provides preferential economic treatment (e.g. tax, exemption)

– Field doesn't know

Is there a conception of apostasy in the religious group:

– No

Size and Structure

Number of adherents of religious group within sample region (estimated population, numerical):

– Field doesn't know

Number of adherents of religious group within sample region (% of sample region population, numerical):

– Field doesn't know

Are there recognized leaders in the religious group:

– Yes

Notes: The "leader" was the king. Besides him, other figures should exist, such as a "high priest" (sometimes defined as rab kohanim, "chief of priests"), maybe belonging to the royal family.

↳ Is there a hierarchy among these leaders:

– Yes

Notes: The king and the high priest should be surrounded by other figures with specific tasks and functions, such as the one "in charge of the door of the sanctuary" or the "chief of porters", known from Phoenician inscriptions.

↳ A single leader of a local community:

– Yes

Notes: The king was the leader of the city community (and its territory).

↳ Multiple religious communities each with its own leader, no hierarchy among these leaders:

– Field doesn't know

↳ "Regional" leaders who oversee one or more local leader(s) (e.g. bishops):

– Field doesn't know

↳ A single leader for the religious group that oversees all other leaders in the sample region:

– Field doesn't know

↳ A council or group of leaders for the religious group that oversees all other leaders in the sample region:

– Field doesn't know

↳ Estimate how many levels there are in the hierarchy of religious leadership:

– Field doesn't know

Notes: The hierarchical organization of priests seems to be attested to in Phoenicia in later times (until the Roman Imperial period) thanks to some Greek titles (deuterostates at Deir el-Qal'a, pemptostates and hebdomostates, both at Sidon) which could be understood as the continuation of older traditions (actually unknown). In Sidon at least seven degrees/classes could be possibly recognized.

↳ Are leaders believed to possess supernatural powers or qualities:

– Yes

Notes: Although it is not fully correct to speak of supernatural powers for the Phoenician kings, it is clear from the material data that the sovereign should function as a mediator between the

divine dimension and the human one. Not by chance, his power over the city was legitimized and guaranteed by the intimate relationship he had with the divinities; the king in this way should present himself as the defensor of his people. Moreover, it is possible that his specific status should give him a special position and role also during life after death. Unfortunately we do not have clear information for the Phoenician area from this point of view. However, the cultural continuity between the Iron Age and the Late Bronze Age cities in certain regions of the Levant should not be underestimated; in Ugarit, for example, the dead kings were the object of an almost process of divinization, thus becoming part of a category of illustrious and powerful dead, the Rapiuma. It is not excluded, therefore, that something similar could happen in Phoenicia, as the famous sarcophagus of Ahiaram of Byblos seem to overshadow (on a side of the sarcophagus a king seated on a throne flanked by sphinxes is depicted; in front of the figure is a padded table followed by a procession).

↳ Powers are acquired by individual deeds carried out in past lives:

– No

↳ Powers are acquired by individual deeds carried out in the current life:

– No

Notes: The king, however, was (theoretically) obliged to always maintain a "just" and "upright" behaviour.

↳ Powers are inherited:

– Yes

↳ Powers are culturally transmitted from a supernatural being:

– Yes

Notes: In the Yehawmilk inscription - he was the king of Byblos in the 5th century BCE - the sovereign claims to have had power directly from the Baalat Gubal (the "Lady of Byblos", the polyadic goddess of the city). He therefore thanks her with various gifts, which will further ensure the goddess blessing, together with the benevolence of the other gods, the respect of his subjects and of other kings. As it can be deduced, therefore, a sovereign became such only with divine favor.

↳ Powers are culturally transmitted from another human (e.g. teacher):

– No

↳ Powers are associated with leadership office they assume:

– Yes

↳ Are religious leaders chosen:

– No

Notes: The religious functions - as the politic ones - should be possibly inherited (we have very

few data at this regard).

↳ Are close followers or disciples of a religious leader required to obediently and unquestionably accept the leader's pronouncements on all matters:

– Yes

Notes: Actually, the documentation does not inform us about the behaviors that devotees or cult operators were required to have towards the priestly authorities. However, it can be envisaged that the precepts were not questioned and that any theological or ritual problem was discussed and resolved within the highest spheres of the social (political/religious) hierarchy.

Scripture

Does the religious group have scriptures:

Scripture is a generic term used to designate revered texts that are considered particularly authoritative and sacred relative to other texts. Strictly speaking, it refers to written texts, but there are also "oral scriptures" (e.g. the Vedas of India).

– No

Notes: It is not possible to speak properly of "scriptures" (it is not an appropriate term for the Phoenicians case study). However, there existed a number of votive, dedicatory and commemorative inscriptions, which seems to attest to the existence of codified and regular ritual behaviours, and which shed some light on the Phoenician understandings of the divine, and relations to the gods; probably also mythical traditions should circulate (being also at the base of certain ritual behaviours), even if the Phoenician literature is almost entirely lost (what came down to us is mainly preserved in later classical sources). The most important thing, however, is that it is not possible to define the texts mentioned as the result of a process of formalization or canonization (that is, there were no books that we can define as sacred or scripture but, possibly, written and oral traditions on cosmogony, theogony etc. that ideologically founded the reality in which one lived).

Architecture, Geography

Is monumental religious architecture present:

– Yes

Notes: The cities and their territories housed several temples (of different size and features) dedicated to the main deities (firstly to the polyadic ones). Moreover, some royal Phoenician inscriptions and some classic sources present the kings usually as the first promoter and supporter of the sanctuaries construction and restoration.

Are there different types of religious monumental architecture:

– Yes

↳ Tombs:

– Yes

↳ Cemeteries:

– Yes

↳ Temples:

– Yes

↳ Altars:

– Yes

↳ Devotional markers:

– Yes

↳ Mass gathering point [plazas, courtyard, square. Places permanently demarcated using visible objects or structures]:

– Field doesn't know

↳ Other type of religious monumental architecture:

– Yes [specify]: e.g. small shrines, chapel or altars in domestic and productive contexts.

Is iconography present:

– Yes

↳ Where is iconography present [select all that apply]:

– On persons

– At home

– All public spaces

↳ Are there distinct features in the religious group's iconography:

– Yes

↳ Eyes (stylized or not):

– Yes

↳ Supernatural beings (zoomorphic):

– Yes

↳ Supernatural beings (geomorphic):

– Yes

↳ Supernatural beings (anthropomorphic):

– Yes

↳ Supernatural beings (abstract symbol):

– Yes

↳ Portrayals of afterlife:

– Yes

↳ Aspects of doctrine (e.g. cross, trinity, Mithraic symbols):

– Yes

Notes: Actually it is not correct to speak of "doctrine" as for the Phoenicians; however, some elements and representations should be connected with specific beliefs and specific superhuman entities, as, maybe, the so called "Tinnit sign" (but its meaning remains debated).

↳ Humans:

– Yes

↳ Other features of iconography:

– Yes

Notes: The Phoenicians often mixed iconographic elements coming from other, different cultures (mostly from Egyptian and Greek figurative languages), giving life to new, contextualized meanings. Moreover, they were also used to apply a similar image to different divine entities; in this way sometimes it is really difficult to recognize a specific god or goddess behind a certain iconography without the help of further direct (and more clear) indicators (such as inscriptions, which could record the gods/goddesses names).

Are there specific sites dedicated to sacred practice or considered sacred:

– Yes

↳ Are sacred site oriented to environmental features:

"Environmental features" refers to features in the landscape, mountains, rivers, cardinal directions etc...

– Yes

Are pilgrimages present:

– Yes

Notes: Although the word pilgrimage is not fully appropriate (it preferably evokes a "Christian" imagery), it is highly possible that certain cultic places were destination of "sacred" journey. This concerns not only important and celebrated city temples (as that one dedicated to Melqart in Tyre, which was visited each year by a Carthaginian delegation), but also sanctuaries which were placed in the territory, and specifically in sites invested by particular religious meaning (as the holy spring at Afqa, in the mountains at the shoulders of Byblos, where "Adonis" was believed to have died).



How strict is pilgrimage:

– Field doesn't know

Beliefs

Burial and Afterlife

Is a spirit-body distinction present:

Answer "no" only if personhood (or consciousness) is extinguished with death of the physical body. Answering yes does not necessarily imply the existence of Cartesian mind/body dualism, merely that some element of personhood (or consciousness) survives the death of the body.

– Yes



Spirit-mind is conceived of as having qualitatively different powers or properties than other body parts:

– Field doesn't know



Spirit-mind is conceived of as non-material, ontologically distinct from body:

– Field doesn't know



Other spirit-body relationship:

– Field doesn't know

Belief in afterlife:

– Yes



Is the spatial location of the afterlife specified or described by the religious group:

– Field doesn't know

Notes: Unfortunately, the available texts (inscriptions most of all) do not describe the spatial location of the afterlife. However, it is not possible to exclude that the underworld was conceived in a similar way to the Ugaritic afterlife. Moreover, outside Phoenicia, specifically in North Africa, some Phoenician tombs have painted scenes and characters on the walls that

can be ascribed to the afterlife, as in the case of the representation of a city surrounded by walls, perhaps to be placed in the underworld.

Reincarnation in this world:

– No

Are there special treatments for adherents' corpses:

– Yes

↳ Cremation:

– Yes

Notes: In the necropolis of Tyre Al Bass, the double urn tomb is attested: it is represented by the deposition of two urns both containing the ashes of the same individual.

↳ Mummification:

– Yes

Notes: Mummification was not a common practice; however, some famous exceptions are known, as it is testified in the necropolis of Sidon, where the finding of linen bandages remains talks in favour of corpses preparation. This is particularly the case, for example, of King Tabnit of Sidon, who was found housed in a sarcophagus and wrapped in a mixture of cedar resin, terebinth, bitumen and thyme leaves, mind and henna; the mixture implied a partial preservation of the body.

↳ Interment:

– Yes

↳ Corpse is extended (lying flat on front or back):

– Yes

↳ Cannibalism:

– No

↳ Exposure to elements (e.g. air drying):

– No

↳ Feeding to animals:

– No

↳ Secondary burial:

– No

↳ Re-treatment of corpse:

– No

↳ Other intensive (in terms of time or resources expended) treatment of corpse :

– No

Are grave goods present:

– Yes

↳ Personal effects:

– Yes

↳ Valuable items:

– Yes

↳ Significant wealth (e.g. gold, jade, intensely worked objects):

– Yes

↳ Some wealth (some valuable or useful objects interred):

– Yes

↳ Other valuable/precious items interred:

– Yes [specify]: Masks and terracottas figurines (mainly, but not only, connected with inhumation and chamber tombs).

↳ Other grave goods:

– Yes

Are formal burials present:

– Yes

↳ In cemetery:

– Yes

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↳ Family tomb-crypt:

– Yes

↳ Domestic (individuals interred beneath house, or in areas used for normal domestic activities):

– No

↳ Other formal burial type:

– Yes [specify]: In Amrit, for example, two tombs were characterized by two funerary towers of quadrangular and circular shape respectively called "meghazil", "spindles" (5th or 4th century BC), which gave access to the burial chambers.

Supernatural Beings

Are supernatural beings present:

– Yes

↳ A supreme high god is present:

– Yes

Notes: In the Western Semitic cultures, El is conceived as a cosmic and primordial god, creator of the world and deities (given his role, probably confined to the world creation, he was not at the center of ritual practices).

↳ The supreme high god is anthropomorphic:

– Field doesn't know

Notes: Philo of Byblos identifies the god El with the Cronos of classical traditions; according to the author, the god had four eyes, which folded two by two, and four wings, alternately open in pairs (these characteristics should be understood as symbols of the omniscience of the god).

↳ The supreme high god is a sky deity:

– Field doesn't know

Notes: Unfortunately the Phoenician documentation is very poor about El; it can be useful to remind, however, that a 8th century BCE inscription from Karatepe mentions him as "Creator of the earth".

↳ The supreme high god is chthonic (of the underworld):

– No

↳ The supreme high god is fused with the monarch (king=high god):

– No

↳ The monarch is seen as a manifestation or emanation of the high god:

– No

↳ The supreme high god is a kin relation to elites:

– No

↳ The supreme high god has another type of loyalty-connection to elites:

– No

↳ The supreme high god is unquestionably good:

– Field doesn't know

↳ Other feature(s) of supreme high god:

– Yes [specify]: The neoplatonic Damascius says that the Phoenician Cronos (probably El) had seven heads; he had dominion over the world.

↳ The supreme high god has knowledge of this world:

– Yes

↳ The supreme god's knowledge is restricted to particular domain of human affairs:

– Field doesn't know

↳ The supreme high god's knowledge is restricted to (a) specific area(s) within the sample region:

– Field doesn't know

↳ The supreme high god's knowledge is unrestricted within the sample region:

– Field doesn't know

↳ The supreme high god's knowledge is unrestricted outside of sample region:

– Field doesn't know

↳ The supreme high god can see you everywhere normally visible (in

public):

– Field doesn't know

↳ The supreme high god can see you everywhere (in the dark, at home):

– Yes

– Field doesn't know

↳ The supreme high god can see inside heart/mind (hidden motives):

– Field doesn't know

↳ The supreme high god knows your basic character (personal essence):

– Field doesn't know

↳ The supreme high god knows what will happen to you, what you will do (future sight):

– Field doesn't know

↳ The supreme high god has other knowledge of this world:

– Field doesn't know

↳ The supreme high god has deliberate causal efficacy in the world:

– Field doesn't know

↳ The supreme high god has indirect causal efficacy in the world:

– Field doesn't know

↳ The supreme high god exhibits positive emotion:

– Field doesn't know

↳ The supreme high god exhibits negative emotion:

– Field doesn't know

↳ The supreme high god possesses hunger:

– Field doesn't know

↳ Is it permissible to worship supernatural beings other than the high god:

– Yes

↳ The supreme high god possesses/exhibits some other feature:

– Field doesn't know

↳ The supreme high god communicates with the living:

– Field doesn't know

↳ Previously human spirits are present:

– No

↳ Non-human supernatural beings are present:

– Yes

Notes: Being polytheistic, the religion of the Phoenician centers included the existence of multiple deities, whose powers manifested in each natural and cultural element.

↳ These supernatural beings can be seen:

– Yes

↳ These supernatural beings can be physically felt:

– Yes

↳ Non-human supernatural beings have knowledge of this world:

– Yes

↳ Non-human supernatural beings have knowledge restricted to particular domain of human affairs:

– No

↳ Non-human supernatural beings have knowledge restricted to (a) specific area(s) within the sample region:

– No

↳ Non-human supernatural beings have knowledge unrestricted within the sample region:

– No

↳ Non-human supernatural beings have knowledge unrestricted outside

of sample region:

– No

↳ Non-human supernatural beings can see you everywhere normally visible (in public):

– Yes

↳ Non-human supernatural beings can see you everywhere (in the dark, at home):

– Yes

↳ Non-human supernatural beings can see inside heart/mind (hidden motives):

– Field doesn't know

↳ Non-human supernatural beings knows your basic character (personal essence):

– Field doesn't know

↳ Non-human supernatural beings know what will happen to you, what you will do (future sight):

– Field doesn't know

↳ Non-human supernatural beings have other knowledge of this world:

– Field doesn't know

↳ Non-human supernatural beings have deliberate causal efficacy in the world:

– Yes

↳ These supernatural beings can reward:

– Yes

↳ These supernatural beings can punish:

– Yes

↳ These supernatural beings have indirect causal efficacy in the world:

– Field doesn't know

↳ These supernatural beings exhibit positive emotion:

– Yes

↳ These supernatural beings exhibit negative emotion:

– Yes

↳ These supernatural beings possess hunger:

– Yes

↳ These supernatural beings possess/exhibit some other feature:

– Yes [specify]: The Phoenician religion was based on a plurality of superhuman beings conceived in a personal and anthropomorphic form, organized in a community and designated by epicleses that established their superiority over men. Usually the notion of "god/divine" is manifested as an exaltation to the highest degree of human qualities.

↳ Mixed human-divine beings are present:

– Yes

Notes: One of the most significant aspects of the religion of the Phoenician cities is the presence of a male divinity whose myth - handed down mostly from Greek and Latin literary sources - recalls a suffering episode of passion and death. The story generally involves a leading figure in the city's religion, as in the case of Melqart and Eshmun, and is sometimes presented as a self-immolation of the protagonist, followed by his entry into a new dimension. The presence of similar figures in the Phoenician religion is most likely to be understood as a reflection of more ancient ideologies and beliefs; conceptions that revolved around characters who, once dead, were believed to acquire a position of prestige in the afterlife, becoming part of a special and powerful host of ancestors, as in the case of the Rapiuma of Ugarit. In Ugarit itself, on the other hand, the main god, Baal, was revered as a dead and resurrected divinity, foreshadowing to a large extent the mythical "story" relating to certain Phoenician gods.

↳ These mixed human-divine beings can be seen:

– Yes

↳ These mixed human-divine beings can be physically felt:

– Yes

↳ Mixed human-divine beings have knowledge of this world:

– Yes

↳ Mixed human-divine beings have knowledge restricted to particular domain of human affairs:

– No

- ↳ Mixed human-divine beings have knowledge restricted to (a) specific area(s) within the sample region:
 - No
- ↳ Mixed human-divine beings have knowledge unrestricted within the sample region:
 - No
- ↳ Mixed human-divine beings have knowledge unrestricted outside of sample region:
 - No
- ↳ Mixed human-divine beings can see you everywhere normally visible (in public):
 - Yes
- ↳ Mixed human-divine beings can see you everywhere (in the dark, at home):
 - Yes
- ↳ Mixed human-divine beings can see inside heart/mind (hidden motives):
 - Field doesn't know
- ↳ Mixed human-divine beings know your basic character (personal essence):
 - Field doesn't know
- ↳ Mixed human-divine beings know what will happen to you, what you will do (future sight):
 - Field doesn't know
- ↳ Mixed human-divine beings have other knowledge of the human world:
 - Field doesn't know
- ↳ These mixed human-divine beings have deliberate causal efficacy in the world:
 - Yes
- ↳ These mixed human-divine beings can reward:

– Yes

↳ These mixed human-divine beings can punish:

– Yes

↳ These mixed human-divine beings have indirect causal efficacy in the world:

– Field doesn't know

↳ These mixed human-divine beings exhibit positive emotion:

– Yes

↳ These mixed human-divine beings exhibit negative emotion:

– Yes

↳ These mixed human-divine beings possess hunger:

– Yes

↳ These mixed human-divine beings possess/exhibit some other feature:

– Yes [specify]: They possess all the features of a god (according to the Phoenician conception of the divine).

↳ Mixed human-divine beings communicate with the living:

– Yes

↳ In waking, everyday life:

– Yes

↳ In dreams:

– Yes

↳ In trance possession:

– Field doesn't know

↳ Through divination practices:

– Yes

↳ Only through religious specialists:

– No

↳ Only through monarch:

– No

↳ Does the religious group possess a variety of supernatural beings:

– Yes

↳ Organized by kinship based on a family model:

– Yes

Notes: Actually, this type of organization is not particularly perceptible, due to the lack of specific data. We do know, however, that a pair of deities - a male and a female character - was usually placed at the head of the city's pantheons. In Tyre, for example, the polyads gods were Melqart and Astarte, while in Sidon the same goddess was associated with Eshmun. On the other hand, we know almost nothing about a possible "network" of other kinship ties among the deities.

↳ Organized hierarchically:

– Yes

Notes: Within the pantheon, it is often possible to recognize a tendentially hegemonic position of a specific deity placed in close relationship with the city and the king; this divinity - as the Baalat Gubal in Byblos, Melqart in Tyre and Eshmun in Sidon - seems to concentrate powers and popularity in his/her hands (with respect to other gods).

↳ Power of beings is domain specific:

– Yes

Notes: Usually, deities have very well defined and recognizable characters and functions, differentiating themselves from each other; Eshmun, for instance, often appears in the data as a very specialized figure, being mainly involved in healing cults. However, it is not uncommon for a certain god, as in the case of the polyadic ones, to own many functions, bordering on almost universal powers (Eshmun himself is defined in an inscription from Spain as "the one who protects day and night at all times").

↳ Other organization for pantheon:

– Yes [specify]: The pantheon of Phoenician cities can also be characterized by the presence of gods linked in the cult on the basis of their functional characteristics (for example thanks to the communion of certain tasks or the desire to enhance a missing trait in a certain god through the participation in the cult of another entity). It is not uncommon, therefore, to find dedications addressed to "double divinities", as in the case of Eshmun-Melqart (attested, however, not directly in Phoenicia, but in Cyprus and Ibiza, in Spain). At times two divinities can also be connected in a relationship of

dependence on each other, as in the case of Astarte when defined (in the inscription engraved on the sarcophagus of Eshmunazor II) as "name of Baal".

Supernatural Monitoring

Is supernatural monitoring present:

This refers to surveillance by supernatural beings of humans' behaviour and/or thought particularly as it relates to social norms or potential norm violations.

– Yes

↳ There is supernatural monitoring of prosocial norm adherence in particular:

Prosocial norms are norms that enhance cooperation among members of the group, including obviously "moral" or "ethical" norms, but also extending to norms concerning honouring contracts and oaths, providing hospitality, coming to mutual aid in emergencies, etc.

– Yes

Notes: Written documentation - as the inscription of Yehawmilk (5th century) - records the king's duty, for example, to be just and upright (that is, respecting what is required of him to govern in the most correct way). Moreover, the same text states that the deity of the city, the Baalat Gubal, assures the king the favor of the gods, the people and other kings. The "good government", therefore, had to be guaranteed by the relations with the divinities and, thanks to the benevolence of the latter, by the correct behavior to be held towards the people and other kings. Finally, other written sources, as in the case of the treaty signed between Baal of Tyre and Esarhaddon of Assyria (ca 671 BCE), attest to the sovereign's obligation to observe the rules of the pact so (also) that he does not disrespect the gods.

↳ Supernatural beings care about taboos:

– Field doesn't know

↳ Supernatural beings care about murder of coreligionists:

– Field doesn't know

↳ Supernatural beings care about murder of members of other religions:

– Field doesn't know

↳ Supernatural beings care about murder of members of other polities:

– Field doesn't know

↳ Supernatural beings care about sex:

– Yes

- ↳ Adultery:
 - Field doesn't know
- ↳ Incest:
 - Field doesn't know
- ↳ Other sexual practices:
 - Yes [specify]: Goddess Astarte was functionally linked to the sphere of sex; it is possible - according to some studies - that certain sanctuaries dedicated to her cult hosted the practice of sacred prostitution (as, maybe, in Kition - Cyprus).
- ↳ Supernatural beings care about lying:
 - Yes
- ↳ Supernatural beings care about honouring oaths:
 - Yes
- ↳ Supernatural beings care about laziness:
 - Field doesn't know
- ↳ Supernatural beings care about sorcery:
 - Field doesn't know
- ↳ Supernatural beings care about non-lethal fighting:
 - Field doesn't know
- ↳ Supernatural beings care about shirking risk:
 - Field doesn't know
- ↳ Supernatural beings care about disrespecting elders:
 - Field doesn't know
- ↳ Supernatural beings care about gossiping:
 - Field doesn't know
- ↳ Supernatural beings care about property crimes:
 - Field doesn't know

Notes: Some funerary inscriptions of Phoenician kings report formulas of curse, in which the gods are evoked with the aim of protecting the tombs and the remains of the dead (it is therefore a particular type of conception of property).

↳ Supernatural beings care about proper ritual observance:
– Yes

↳ Supernatural beings care about performance of rituals:
– Yes

↳ Supernatural beings care about conversion of non-religionists:
– No

Notes: Actually the concept of conversion (and of non-religionists as well) is not part of the ideological background of a polytheistic culture as the Phoenician one.

↳ Supernatural beings care about economic fairness:
– Field doesn't know

↳ Supernatural beings care about personal hygiene:
– Field doesn't know

Notes: Some inscriptions (in Cyprus and Carthage) record the existence of the function of "barber" among the operators who worked in the sanctuaries; it is possible that these figures had to do with the ritual hairdressing of the priests.

Do supernatural beings mete out punishment:

– Yes

↳ Is the cause or agent of supernatural punishment known:
– Yes

↳ Done only by high god:
– No

↳ Is the reason for supernatural punishment known:
– Yes

↳ Done to enforce religious ritual-devotional adherence:
– No

↳ Done to enforce group norms:

– No

↳ Done to inhibit selfishness:

– No

↳ Done randomly:

– No

↳ Other [specify]

– Yes

Notes: The punishment may eventually strike those who have not respected the will of the gods or who has not respected the clauses of a pact (as in the case of political treaties).

↳ Supernatural punishments are meted out in the afterlife:

– Yes

↳ Supernatural punishments in the afterlife are highly emphasized by the religious group:

– Field doesn't know

↳ Punishment in the afterlife consists of mild sensory displeasure:

– Field doesn't know

↳ Punishment in the afterlife consists of extreme sensory displeasure:

– Field doesn't know

↳ Punishment in the afterlife consists of reincarnation as an inferior life form:

– No

↳ Punishment in the afterlife consists of reincarnation in an inferior realm:

– No

↳ Other [specify]

– Yes

Notes: Sometimes, in the curse inscriptions, the evildoer is condemned to have no peace in the world beyond death (however, the exact role of the god in this context is

not specified).

↳ Supernatural punishments are meted out in this lifetime:

– Yes

↳ Supernatural punishments in this life are highly emphasized by the religious group:

– No

↳ Punishment in this life consists of bad luck:

– Yes

↳ Punishment in this life consists of political failure:

– Yes

↳ Punishment in this life consists of defeat in battle:

– Yes

↳ Punishment in this life consists of crop failure or bad weather:

– Yes

↳ Punishment in this life consists of disaster on journeys.

– Yes

↳ Punishment in this life consists of mild sensory displeasure:

– Field doesn't know

↳ Punishment in this life consists of extreme sensory displeasure:

– Field doesn't know

↳ Punishment in this life consists of sickness or illness:

– Yes

↳ Punishment in this life consists of impaired reproduction:

– Yes

↳ Punishment in this life consists of bad luck visited on descendants:

– Yes

Do supernatural beings bestow rewards:

– Yes

↳ Is the cause/purpose of supernatural rewards known:

– Yes

↳ Done only by high god:

– No

↳ Done by many supernatural beings:

– Yes

Notes: Votive inscriptions often contain formulas of thanksgiving for the gods or formulas of request for grace; this indicates that the devotees could establish a relationship with the deities on the basis of the principle of "do ut des". Most of the time, however, the formulas remain generic and it is rarely possible, then, to know exactly the reasons behind a thanksgiving or a request.

↳ Done through impersonal cause-effect principle:

– No

↳ Done to enforce religious ritual-devotional adherence:

– No

↳ Done to enforce group norms:

– No

↳ Done to inhibit selfishness:

– No

↳ Done randomly:

– No

↳ Supernatural rewards are bestowed out in the afterlife:

– Field doesn't know

↳ Supernatural rewards are bestowed out in this lifetime:

– Yes

↳ Supernatural rewards in this life are highly emphasized by the religious group:

– No

↳ Reward in this life consists of good luck:

– Yes

↳ Reward in this life consists of political success or power:

– Yes

↳ Reward in this life consists of success in battle:

– Yes

↳ Reward in this life consists of peace or social stability:

– Yes

↳ Reward in this life consists of healthy crops or good weather:

– Yes

↳ Reward in this life consists of success on journeys:

– Yes

↳ Reward in this life consists of mild sensory pleasure:

– Field doesn't know

↳ Reward in this life consists of extreme sensory pleasure:

– Field doesn't know

↳ Reward in this life consists of enhanced health:

– Yes

↳ Reward in this life consists of enhanced reproductive success:

– Yes

↳ Reward in this life consists of fortune visited on descendants:

– Yes

Messianism/Eschatology

Are messianic beliefs present:

– No

Norms and Moral Realism

Are general social norms prescribed by the religious group:

– Field doesn't know

Is there a conventional vs. moral distinction in the religious group:

– No

Practices

Membership Costs and Practices

Does membership in this religious group require celibacy (full sexual abstinence):

– No

Does membership in this religious group require constraints on sexual activity (partial sexual abstinence):

– No

Does membership in this religious group require castration:

– No

Does membership in this religious group require fasting:

– No

Does membership in this religious group require forgone food opportunities (taboos on desired foods):

– No

Notes: For a long time, the rarity of material evidence in Phoenicia about pork consumption was explained with the belief that the Phoenicians did not eat pork, due, in particular, to ideological and religious prohibition. It must be said, however, that none of the documents available today seem to confirm the assumption relating to the existence of real prohibition laws. Rather, some studies have

made it possible to understand how pig farming and the production of the corresponding meat to be consumed must have been too expensive, especially compared to those economic activities reserved for cattle, sheep and goats. Of course, it is not to be excluded that the rarity in the use of the pig was then given an ideological explanation, which should depend on possible negative features recognized to the animal (even in this case, however, Phoenicians probably did not arrive at a rigid exclusion of consumption: many contexts to the West, for example, have provided important information on local pork consumption, which tells us that communities of migrants, in the course of their history, did not have to respond to original and generally accepted principles).

Does membership in this religious group require permanent scarring or painful bodily alterations:

– No

Does membership in this religious group require painful physical positions or transitory painful wounds:

– No

Does membership in this religious group require sacrifice of adults:

"Adults" here referring to an emic or indigenous category; if that category is different from the popular Western definition of a human who is 18-years-old or older and who is legally responsible for his/her actions, then please specify that difference in the Comments/Sources: box below.

– No

Does membership in this religious group require sacrifice of children:

"Children" here referring to an emic or indigenous category; if that category is different from the popular Western definition, please specify that different in the Comments/Sources: box below.

– Yes

Notes: The question of the bloody sacrifice of children in the Phoenician context is much discussed. Apart from a brief news from Curzius Rufus, the practice does not seem to be attested in the cities of the Levantine coast (even if some passages of the Old Testament seems to speak about them, as practised by Israelites and Canaanians near Jerusalem, in Tophet, a place in the valley of Ben Hinnom). However, in some colonies of the central Mediterranean, a particular type of sacred place is known, conventionally called the "tophet" (from the Old Testament context). According to a current group of studies, these shrines – characterized by fields of urns, containing children and/or small animals ashes – were intended for human sacrifice (mostly in honor of the god Baal Hammon, sometimes and in some periods and places accompanied by goddess Tinnit; however, not all the scholars, it must be remarked, agree with this interpretation). Since the tophets appear in some settlements (such as in Carthage, Sulky and Motya) already in the most ancient phases of the local history, the related ideologies have been interpreted as a cultural background brought from the East, carried by the first migrants into the new western territories: the ideologies of reference had therefore to be already well rooted in the Phoenician motherland.



Foreign, slaves:

– Yes

↳ Commoners:

– Yes

↳ Elites:

– Yes

Does membership in this religious group require self-sacrifice (suicide):

– No

Notes: Although it did not represent a real ritual practice, sacrificial suicide is known in the Phoenician context thanks to the stories of the classical authors relating to some characters of the myth and of the cult. If, for example, some passages tell of the bloody death of god Melqart, perhaps even self-immolating on a pyre of fire (Nonnos of Panopolis in the 5th century AD defines the character as anax pyros, in fact, "lord of fire": Dyon. XL 379), the most famous suicidal character is undoubtedly that of Princess Elissa / Dido: escaped from Tyre, after the murder of her husband Sicharbas, and arrived in North Africa where she founded Carthage, Elissa killed herself on a pyre of fire (again) not to give in to the flattery of the local king Iarbas and to remain faithful to the memory of her husband.

Does membership in this religious group require sacrifice of property/valuable items:

– No

Does membership in this religious group require sacrifice of time (e.g., attendance at meetings or services, regular prayer, etc.):

– Yes

Does membership in this religious group require physical risk taking:

– No

Does membership in this religious group require accepting ethical precepts:

– No

Does membership in this religious group require marginalization by out-group members:

– No

Does membership in this religious group require participation in small-scale rituals (private, household):

– Yes

Does membership in this religious group require participation in large-scale rituals:

I.e. involving two or more households; includes large-scale "ceremonies" and "festivals."

– Yes

↳ On average, for large-scale rituals how many participants gather in one location:
– Field doesn't know

↳ What is the average interval of time between performances (in hours):
Performances here refers to large-scale rituals.
– Field doesn't know

↳ Are there orthodoxy checks:
Orthodoxy checks are mechanisms used to ensure that rituals are interpreted in a standardized way, e.g. through the supervisory prominence of a professionalized priesthood or other system of governance, appeal to texts detailing the proper interpretation, etc.
– Field doesn't know

↳ Are there orthopraxy checks:
Orthopraxy checks are mechanisms used to ensure that rituals are performed in a standardized way, e.g. through the supervisory prominence of a professionalized priesthood or other system of governance, appeal to texts detailing the proper procedure, etc.
– Field doesn't know

↳ Does participation entail synchronic practices:
– Field doesn't know

↳ Is there use of intoxicants:
– Field doesn't know

Are extra-ritual in-group markers present:

E.g. special changes to appearance such as circumcision, tattoos, scarification, etc.

– Field doesn't know

Does the group employ fictive kinship terminology:

– Yes

Notes: It should be noted that there is no evidence of the use of such terminology to define cult participants and operators. Rather, terms such as "father", "mother" are very often referred to the gods, who, therefore, acquire parental qualities (in both a family and ancestral sense).

↳ Fictive kinship terminology universal:

– Field doesn't know

↳ Fictive kinship terminology widespread:

– Yes

↳ Fictive kinship terminology employed but uncommon:

– No

Society and Institutions

Levels of Social Complexity

The society to which the religious group belongs is best characterized as (please choose one):

– A state

Notes: For the political organization of Phoenician centres it could be useful to speak of "city-states" or, better, "city-kingdoms".

Welfare

Does the religious group in question provide institutionalized poverty relief:

– Field doesn't know

Does the religious group in question provide institutionalized care for the elderly and infirm:

– Field doesn't know

Education

Does the religious group provide formal education to its adherents:

– No

Is formal education available to the group's adherents through an institution(s) other than the religious group:

– Field doesn't know

Bureaucracy

Do the group's adherents interact with a formal bureaucracy within their group:

– Field doesn't know

Do the group's adherents interact with other institutional bureaucracies:

– Field doesn't know

Public Works

Does the religious group in question provide public food storage:

– Field doesn't know

Does the religious group in question provide water management (irrigation, flood control):

– Yes

Does the religious group in question provide transportation infrastructure:

– Yes

Taxation

Does the religious group in question levy taxes or tithes:

– Yes

Notes: According to some literary sources, the temple of Melqart in Tyre collected the tithe (in particular the sources refer to this activity when describing the relations between Tyre and Carthage).

Are taxes levied on the group's adherents by an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Field doesn't know

Enforcement

Does the religious group in question provide an institutionalized police force:

– No

Do the group's adherents interact with an institutionalized police force provided by an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– No

Does the religious group in question provide institutionalized judges:

– Yes

Notes: Administrative offices were not necessarily divorced from those related to religious practice.

Does the religious group in question enforce institutionalized punishment:

– Field doesn't know

Are the group's adherents subject to institutionalized punishment enforced by an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Field doesn't know

Does the religious group in question have a formal legal code:

– Yes

Notes: it is difficult to speak of a real formal legal code; through the so-called sacrificial tariffs, however, we know that there were certainly codified rules that had to be followed and respected, both by priests and by ordinary people, in the context of carrying out worship practices.

Calendar

Does the religious group in question possess a formal calendar:

– Yes

Is a formal calendar provided for the group's adherents by an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Field doesn't know

Food Production

Does the religious group in question provide food for themselves:

– Yes



Please characterize the forms/level of food production [choose all that apply]:

– Gathering

– Hunting (including marine animals)

– Fishing

– Pastoralism

– Small-scale agriculture / horticultural gardens or orchards

– Large-scale agriculture (e.g., monocropping, organized irrigation systems)

– Other [specify in comments]

Notes: Trades (on small, medium and large scale)

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