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Phoenicians (Peoples of the Past)

Glenn Markoe

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One of the great enigmas of the ancient world, the Phoenicians were both lauded and despised in antiquity. They were celebrated as learned scribes who passed on the modern alphabet, as skilled seafarers and explorers, and as gifted artisans and engineers. Historical sources show they were also perceived as unscrupulous profiteers and cheaters, and as a morally corrupt race of people who prostituted their daughters and butchered their infant children in sacrifices to their gods. But who were the real Phoenicians, and what do we know of their origins and culture?

The heartland of the Phoenician empire consisted of a narrow coastal strip between the Lebanon mountains and the Mediterranean sea, a slightly extended version of modern Lebanon. The Phoenicians who lived along this coastline explored and colonized far away lands. But in many ways the Phoenician civilization is lost and many facts about it are unknown since not a single Phoenician manuscript has survived in the original or in translation. Digging deep into the historical and archaeological sources, Glenn Markoe reconstructs what we presently know about these mysterious people and their maritime culture. He fleshes out Phoenicia, giving accounts of its history, cities, economy, language and literature, religion, and its commercial expansion abroad.

This richly illustrated book includes photographs of Phoenician artifacts and excavations, along with many maps and drawings. Unlike other works that have treated the Phoenician culture as an Early Iron Age phenomenon, Markoe focuses on the continuity in tradition that characterized Phoenician history over a period of more than 1200 years, from the beginning of the Late Bronze Age (c 1550 b.c.)—when Phoenician cities first emerged—to the start of the Hellenistic period around 300 b.c. This book provides a comprehensive, unified view of a culture consisting of many disparate ethnic and geographical entities.

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