

Phoenician

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1. Introduction

“Phoenician” is a generic term applied to a number of mutually intelligible Canaanite dialects which were mainly used in the ancient city-states of Byblos, Tyre, and Sidon and their surroundings on the eastern shore of the Mediterranean Sea. The original speech area coincides more or less with the present state of Lebanon. Speakers of Semitic languages settled in that area as early as the third millennium BCE; during the Late Bronze Age (ca. 1500–1200 BCE), it was subject to Egyptian and Hittite rule. The Akkadian language and its syllabic cuneiform writing dominated administration, law, and diplomatic correspondence during this period. After the major political and socioeconomic upheavals on the threshold of the Early Iron Age, however, Byblos became the foremost center of alphabetic writing. The power vacuum between ca. 1200 and 900 BCE enabled public life to grow once again in some of the old cities and in several newly emerging chiefdoms. Those were the days when in Phoenicia, Israel, the Aramaean kingdoms, and Transjordan local dialects were promoted to chancery languages, perhaps indicating a novel cultural self-awareness of the ruling elites, and the Phoenician variant of the alphabet came to serve as the standard medium of writing. Due to Phoenician colonization and trade connections, this versatile script spread across the entire Mediterranean and was eventually adapted and modified by the Greeks.

The dialect of Tyre and Sidon soon became a kind of “Standard Phoenician” which replaced or influenced others. Its impact on later Byblian can still be observed, as some original forms of this dialect then seem to have given way to their Tyro-Sidonian counterparts. Texts from Cyprus and, from the fifth century BCE on, from the western Mediterranean too, exhibit certain peculiarities. As a language of local prestige, Phoenician remained in use on the mainland during the Achaemenid and Hellenistic ages beside Aramaic and Greek, presumably until the first century BCE. For the same reason, Phoenician influences have been suggested for some biblical books (e.g. Qohelet).

Between the eighth and seventh centuries BCE it was also employed in monumental inscriptions for public display in several kingdoms in Asia Minor. Punic, a North African offshoot of Phoenician, continued to be spoken after the destruction of Carthage (146 BCE), once a colony of Tyre but then the metropolis of the Punic empire, until at least the fifth century CE.

Ongoing discoveries of inscriptions and coins permitted a reliable decipherment of Phoenician and Punic. This process was initiated by the French polymath Jean-Jacques Barthélemy in 1758 and completed in the first half of the nineteenth century by the German theologian and Hebraist Wilhelm Gesenius, who, in 1837, also published the first comprehensive manual of the language with an edition of all the texts available to him. Since then, Phoenician and Punic studies has become a discipline in its own right. An estimated 10,000 Phoenician-Punic royal, funerary, and dedicatory inscriptions are known today, to which a few papyri and ostraca as well as certain passages in the Latin comedy *Poenulus* by Plautus may be added.

However, these texts, especially the late ones from Carthage and its surroundings, which constitute the lion's share of the evidence, are extremely formulaic. Only a fraction of the witnesses antedate the Punic period; many of them can be easily accessed in KAI 1–60, 280–294 (this added group without translation and commentary in the fifth edition of the first volume). Gibson (1982) provides an edition of the most important Phoenician inscriptions with translation and commentary in English, but the philological notes in Cooke 1903 can still be used with profit, too. The focus of the present survey rests on the texts from the mainland. Friedrich and Röllig (1999) provide more detailed information; the lexicon of Phoenician and Punic, together with comprehensive bibliographical references, is also included in Hoftijzer and Jongeling 1995. Eight tenth-century inscriptions from Byblos (KAI 1–8) mark the beginning of the textual record. Despite a number of archaisms and idiosyncrasies, they are conventionally included in the Phoenician corpus under the label “Old Byblian.” Some traditional personal names on arrowheads, assembled and discussed by Hess (2007), survive from an even earlier period but say very little about the language itself. Predecessors of the Phoenician dialects which did not yet serve as written idioms may have left some traces in texts composed during the Late Bronze Age in Akkadian and perhaps also in Ugaritic. Scientific, mythological, and historical works in Phoenician were celebrated in Antiquity; unfortunately, they have all been lost.

2. Phonology

Phoenician orthography remained purely consonantal for many centuries. Only in Punic did vowel letters (*matres lectionis*) become widespread for denoting long vowels as in the earliest Aramaic texts, and even in Late Phoenician they occur at most only in a few names. As a consequence, the phonology of the older forms of the language has to be reconstructed on the basis of names and loanwords principally in cuneiform, Greek, and Latin transcriptions on the one hand and comparative philology on the other. This information leads to a rough approximation at best, since other scripts cannot render all the characteristic sounds, and names in particular frequently reflect a more archaic linguistic stage. In addition, such transcriptions do not follow a consistent standard; hence it is often difficult to distinguish between phonemes and allophones.

2.1. Consonants

Each of the 22 letter-signs of the Phoenician alphabet corresponds to one consonantal phoneme. The underlying sounds can be grouped according to place and manner of articulation (voiced or unvoiced): the laryngeals /ʔ/ (glottal stop) and /h/; the fricative pharyngeals /ʕ/ (glottalic pressure sound) and /ħ/ (between *ch* in German *Bach* or Scottish *loch* and simple *h*); the velars /g/ and /k/; the sibilants /z/ and /s/; the dentals /d/ and /t/; the bilabials /b/ and /p/; the unvoiced palatovelar /š/ (as in *sh*). The unvoiced velar, sibilant, and dental have “emphatic” counterparts /q/, /ṣ/, and /ṭ/. Their exact pronunciation in Phoenician is debated, but the lowering of the following vowel found in some transcriptions may indicate that they were velarized. The liquids /l/ and /r/, too, are phonemes (they can alternate and, at least in later stages, both can disappear at the end of a syllable); likewise the nasals /m/ and /n/ and the semivowels /y/ (palatal) and /w/ (bilabial). Additional phonemes preserved in some Semitic languages like Ugaritic or Arabic can no longer be traced, not even in the most ancient sources of Phoenician, and, as throughout later Canaanite, have merged with other consonants: */θ/ > /š/; */ð/ > /z/; */θ/ (Arabic /z/) and */š/ (Arabic /d/) > /ṣ/; */ħ/ > /ħ/ and */ġ/ > /ʕ/ also occurred in Aramaic. The old lateral */ś/ seems to have shifted to /š/ but was pronounced differently, depending on region and period. All consonants could be lengthened (e.g., /mm/ or /tt/, as in Italian *mamma* or *fatto*), but, because they were articulated only once, appear as simple (non-geminated) consonants in writing (with a few late exceptions).

As in the rest of Canaanite and in Aramaic, /n/ assimilates to an immediately following consonant (e.g., ŠT /šatt/ 'year' from */šant-/ , KT /kattī/ 'I was' instead of */kantī/). This could also happen across word boundaries, but in that case it is not always reflected in writing (BYHMLK 'son of Yaḥūmilk' in KAI 7:3, but BN MLK 'son of the king' in KAI 14:2). Occasional spellings of etymological /n/ before dentals and sibilants may point to a dissimilation of long consonants by way of nasalization in some areas. Such instances occur more frequently in Late Punic (cf. YTNTY 'I gave', KAI 145:6; but with a laryngeal already in TNHL 'you inherit', KAI 3:4). In some morphemes, intervocalic /h/ is regularly lost, as with the definite article after a proclitic preposition. Especially word-medial /ʾ/ could disappear, too (cf. very rarely LŠMN 'for Ešmun' besides usual L ŠMN). However, the older witnesses exhibit a fairly standardized orthography which presumably lagged behind contemporary pronunciation. Some phonetic developments that can be observed regularly both in Punic and in other Semitic languages (aspiration of /k/, /p/, /t/; an increasingly weak articulation of laryngeals) may already have been under way in older Phoenician.

2.2. Vowels

The short vowel phonemes which can be reconstructed for Phoenician match the situation in other ancient Semitic languages: /a/, /i/, and /u/. In all likelihood, /i/ was realized as [e] and /u/ as [o] in pronunciation. Inherited long /ī/ (which when word-final and stressed seems often to have shifted to an open /ɛ/, as in German *spät*) and /ū/ were mostly preserved; etymological */ā/ has become /ō/ following the "Canaanite Sound Shift" (cf. the cuneiform spelling of the name *Ḫi-ru-um-ma* /Ḫīrōm/, Greek *Εἰρωμος*, 'my brother is exalted' from */ʾAḫīrām/). As in Ugaritic and Northern Hebrew, diphthongs had already been monophthongized in the earliest witnesses, hence */aw/ > /ō/ (MT /mōt/, pronounced [mūt], 'death', from */mawt-/) and */ay/ > /ē/ (BT /bēt/ 'house' from */bayt-/). Triphthongs are preserved in some (fossilized?) forms in the oldest Byblian texts from the tenth century but monophthongized soon afterward as well (contrast BNY /banaya/ 'he built' in KAI 4:1 with BN /banō/ in later texts). Older transcriptions indicate that the following sound changes had taken place already in Phoenician:

1. From at least the eighth century BCE on, originally short /a/ in the tonic syllable was pronounced [o] ("Phoenician Shift"), perhaps because it was lengthened under stress (which occurs quite

naturally) and thus became part of the general shift */ā/ > /ō/ (cf. the cuneiform spelling of the name *Ba-ḏa-al-ma-lu-ku* /Baʿl-malōk/ ‘Baal has become king’ from */-malák/; similarly Gk. *ναδωρ* /nadōr/ ‘he vowed’ from */nadár/ or Lat. *adom* /ʰadōm/ ‘human being’ from */ʰadám/). It was, however, preserved in a doubly closed syllable (as in the plant name *λασσουναλφ* /lašōn-ʰalp/ ‘ox-tongue’). There is no evidence for pretonic lengthening as in Tiberian Hebrew.

2. Long /ō/ (from original */ā/ or */aw/) mostly became [ū] in pronunciation (so in, e.g., Lat. *alonuth* for /ʰilōnōt/ [< */ʰilānāt/] ‘goddesses’; Gk. *κουλω* for /qōlō/ [presumably < */qawl-/?] ‘his voice’ or *Μωτ/Μουθ* for /Mōt/ [< */mawt-/] ‘death’). Since cuneiform writing does not distinguish between *o* and *u*, there are no examples from pre-Hellenistic times.
3. The allophonic variants [e] for /i/ and [o] for /u/ tend to appear in the tonic syllable, resembling Tiberian Hebrew. Examples date from a later period (cuneiform writing does not normally render the difference between *i* and *e*), but, in light of comparative evidence, this phenomenon may apply to earlier Phoenician as well (cf. *Βαλσιλληχ* and *Balsilech* for /Baʿl-šillíh/ ‘Baal has sent’ [from *šlh*, alternatively from *šlk* ‘to save’]; *Οζερβαλος* for /ʰŌzír-Baʿl/ ‘Baal is helper’ [participle of ʰzr]; *chen* for /kinn/ ‘thus’; also in an open pretonic syllable in, e.g., *Αβδηλιμος* for /ʰAbd-ʰilīm/ ‘servant of the gods’). Since Greek transcriptions seem to use η/ε at random (if η does not in fact render [i]!), a difference in quantity cannot be established. In doubly closed syllables, by contrast, /i/ and /u/ are mostly preserved. *Baliahon* (and variants) for /Baʿl-yahūnn/ ‘may Baal have mercy’ could be an exception, if the backing of /u/ is not due to the laryngeal and the long word-final consonant has not been simplified.

Further sound shifts can be observed in Punic, especially vowel reduction (mostly in open antepenultimate syllables: *bynuthi* ‘my daughters’ from /banōtī/); palatalization of /a/ to [ɛ] (as in the letter name *δέλτα* from DLT /dalt/ ‘tablet’ and, if not a reflex of later vowel reduction, the variation between *Φανη Βαλυς* and *Φενη Βαλ* for /panē Baʿl/ ‘face of Baal’ in *KAI* 175:2/176:2); and anaptyxis of word-final consonant clusters (especially with [syllabic?]) /r/, as in *συρις* for /šurš/ ‘root’). These, too, may continue processes which had already begun in earlier periods. Vowel harmony and the loss of syllables occur occasionally.

3. Morphology and morphosyntax

3.1. Personal pronouns

Independent personal pronouns (Table 1) distinguish three persons, two genders (masculine/feminine), and two number (singular/plural; no dual forms are attested). They mark a pronominal subject in nominal clauses (ʿNK YḤWMLK ‘I am Yaḥawmilk’, *KAI* 10:1) or after an infinitive absolute in narrative and reinforce the subject in verbal clauses (ʿNK TMKT ‘I, however, held’, *KAI* 24:13) or a suffix (WBYMTY ʿNK ‘but in my own days’, *KAI* 26 A II 5):

In light of comparative evidence, the (supposedly unstressed) final vowels of the pronouns were not fully long in pronunciation, since, e.g., */ā/ in such forms is assumed to have resisted the shift to /ō/ on analogy with Hebrew (whose corresponding 2masc.sg. form is rendered αθθα in transcriptions). However, the matter requires further investigation. One of the oldest Byblian inscriptions contains a byform HʿT /hūʿatu/(?) for the 3masc.sg. (*KAI* 4:2; here supposedly used to reinforce the subject). It has evolved from an old genitive-accusative variant which is preserved as HWT in Ugaritic in this function (‘of him’, ‘him’), yet the case distinction has been leveled in Phoenician, thus reducing HʿT to a variant of Hʿ in this text. The 3pl. pronouns, too, were once genitive-accusative forms but have been generalized in Phoenician at the expense of their nominative counterparts. The Punic reflex *anec(h)* for the 1sg. is, in all likelihood, secondary.

Enclitic suffixes express a genitive relationship with a pronominal possessor when attached to nouns and prepositions; with verbs, they encode a pronominal direct object. Phoenician preserves vestiges of an older linguistic stage in which a particular ending marked the genitive case. Here, too, certain word-final vowels may not have been fully long in pronunciation:

1masc./fem.: With nouns in the old nominative (as subject) or, mostly, accusative (as direct object) singular and feminine plurals /-ī/ ‘my’,

Table 1. Phoenician independent personal pronouns

Person	Singular	Plural
1 masc./fem.	ʿNK /ʿanōkī/ ‘I’	ʿNHN /ʿanaḥnū/ ‘we’
2 masculine	ʿT /ʿattā/ ‘you’	(unattested)
2 feminine	ʿT /ʿattī/ ‘you’	(unattested)
3 masculine	Hʿ /hūʿ(ʿ)/ ‘he’	HMT /humatu/(?) ‘they’ (m.)
3 feminine	Hʿ /hīʿ(ʿ)/ ‘she’	HMT /himatu/(?) ‘they’ (f.)

which remained at first unwritten (e.g., ³B /³abī/ ‘my father’; ŠM³ QL ‘hear my voice’). The suffix with the old genitive in */-i/ and masculine plurals in */-ay/ was */-ya/, which became */y/ after the loss of the short word-final vowels. Presumably it contracted with the preceding vowel, at least in the singular, but was preserved as Y in spelling (hence LRBTY from */li-rubbatiya/ ‘for my Lady’), which was soon thereafter extended to former nominatives (e.g., ³MY /³ummī/ ‘my mother’). The object suffix with verbs is /-nī/ ‘me’. For the plural ‘our’, original */-nū/ may be reconstructed, but later Punic ρβαθων (KAI 175:2) points to /-(ō)n/, whose origin remains unclear.

2^{masc./fem.}: K marks both the masculine (/kā/) and the feminine (/kī/; Late Punic -KY). The *2^{masc.pl.}* (/kum/) is only attested in Punic.

3^{masc./fem.sg.}: The original form of the masculine H /-hū/ (feminine presumably */-hā/) is only preserved in the oldest Byblian text after a genitive singular (ḤṬR MŠPṬH /ḥuṭr mišpaṭihū/ ‘the scepter of his jurisdiction’, KAI 1:2). Except for genitive forms, suffixes in later Byblian are written with W as a historical spelling for */-a-hū/ > */-aw/ (> /-ō/) after consonants (i.e., sg. and fem. pl., e.g., ŠNTW /šanōtō/ ‘his years’) and for */-ay-hū/ > */-ē-hū/ > /-ēw/ after vowels (masc. pl./du.). Following palatalization of /h/, the form in Standard Phoenician with singular nouns in the genitive is */-i-hū/ > /-i-yū/, with plural nouns */-ay-hū/ > */-ē-hū/ > /-ē-yū/, both spelled Y (e.g., L³BDY /li-³abdiyū/ ‘for his servant’; fem. presumably */-i-yā/, with plural nouns */-ē-yā/). Later Punic has the byforms M /-īm/ (sg. nouns) and /-ēm/ (pl. nouns). In the old accusative singular, which has probably been extended to the nominative, and the feminine plural, by contrast, the suffixes are */-a-hū/ > /-ō/ (masc.) and */-a-hā/ > /-ā/ (fem.), both of which remained unwritten (e.g., ŠM /šimā/ ‘her name’).

3^{masc.pl.} (fem. unattested): HM /-hum/ in Byblian, otherwise M /-ōm/ < */-a-hum/ after a consonant and NM /-nōm/(!) after a vowel.

3.2. Demonstrative pronouns

Just like the suffixes, the demonstrative pronouns, too, reflect dialectal variation. They generally follow the word to which they refer. Standard Phoenician has the near deictic (‘this’) Z in the singular, whose reconstructed vocalization may have distinguished between /zū/ (masc.) and /zō/ (< */zā/, fem.). Byblian has, besides Z, also ZN /zinā/(?) for the masculine and Z³ /zō³/(?) for the feminine; in Phoenician texts from Cyprus, the masculine and feminine form ³Z habitually occurs with a prothetic glottal stop (presumably to be vocalized /³azū/ and /³azō/ on analogy with the purported

situation in Standard Phoenician?). The plural is consistently ʾL /ʾillɛ/(?). Punic has many variant forms. For the far deictic ('that'), Phoenician, like Hebrew, uses the independent third-person singular and plural pronouns.

3.3. Definite article

By way of grammaticalization, the deictic element /han/ (attested as a presentative marker HN 'look!' in, e.g., *KAI* 2:2 and 280:1) has produced the definite article /ha-/ with gemination of the first consonant of the word to which it refers, resulting from assimilation of the /n/ to the consonant (i.e., */han-C/>/haCC/). This phenomenon clearly emerges from the anomalous Punic spelling ʾMMQM for /ham-maqōm/ (< */han maqōm/) in an inscription from Sardinia (*KAI* 173:5; 2nd or 3rd c. CE), where, due to Latin influence, the long consonant is written twice. After a proclitic preposition, the /h/ of the article mostly underwent syncope, but it is occasionally preserved in some late texts. The oldest Byblian inscriptions do not yet contain an article. It first occurs in *KAI* 4:2f. (ḤWY KL MPLT HBTM ʾL 'he restored the ruins of all these buildings') and preferably accompanies nominal phrases which are already definite (i.e., identifiable within their context) and either act as direct object or govern a relative clause (e.g., WHDLHT ʾŠ L 'and the doors which it [scil. the gate] has', *KAI* 18:3f.). Its function as a definiteness marker thus seems to have emerged only in the course of time. With attributive adjectives, the article is repeated (HʾLNM HQDŠM 'the holy gods', *KAI* 14:9), distinguishing them from predicative ones, but not with demonstratives following a formally definite noun.

3.4. Interrogative pronouns

The interrogative pronouns distinguish, as in other Semitic languages, not between masculine and feminine, but between persons (MY /mī/ [< */mīya/] 'who?') and things (M /mō/ [< */mā/] , pronounced [mū], 'what?'). In this function, however, they are only attested in a Punic passage in Plautus (*Poenulus* 1010). More frequently, they serve as relative and indefinite pronouns ('whoever', 'everyone who', cf. *KAI* 24:10ff.).

3.5. Determinative-relative particle

Phoenician also has a proper determinative-relative particle ʾŠ /ʾaš(a)/ (presumably palatalized in pronunciation: [ʾeš(ɛ)]) with the rare but apparently original byform Š /ša-/ [še-]. The Old Byblian inscriptions only

use Z /zū/, which was replaced by Standard Phoenician ʾš in later Byblian. It can connect words forming a genitive relationship (rare in Phoenician, e.g., ḤTM ʾš- 'seal of X'; differences in function from the construct state are hard to identify) or clauses (BMQM ʾš BNT 'at the place which I built', *KAI* 14:4). At times, it occurs together with an interrogative pronoun (*KAI* 24:4).

3.6. Indefinite pronouns

The usual form of the indefinite pronoun for things is MNM (cf. Akkadian *mīnummē*). One text has the peculiar form QNMY (*KAI* 14:4, 20), which seems to be a combination of the noun QNʾM 'person' and the interrogative pronoun MY 'who?', but its exact interpretation remains controversial. ʾDM /ʾadōm/ and ʾš /ʾiš/, which both literally mean 'man, human being', act as gender-neutral indefinites, as does KL /kull/ 'totality (of)' = 'each'.

3.7. Nouns

Besides primary nouns, Phoenician uses many nominal patterns known from other Semitic languages. Due to the limitations of the consonantal script, however, only a few words attested in transcriptions can be clearly associated with a particular type. Nouns corresponding to the etymological patterns *qatl*, *qitl*, and *qutl* seem to appear, at least in the earlier period, in their original shape and did not undergo "segolization" as in Tiberian Hebrew (e.g., /šamš/ 'sun' or /šidq/ 'justice' in personal names preserved in cuneiform transcriptions as opposed to Hebrew *šēmeš* or *šēdeq* according to the Tiberian pointing). Presumably, their plural bases were expanded by an additional /a/ between the second and the third radical, as comparative evidence suggests (hence /milk/ 'king', /milak-īm/ 'kings'). Yet this /a/ later dropped out again as a result of vowel reduction, which can be directly observed in Punic (but may be older), so examples clearly illustrating this phenomenon are lacking. Among augmented patterns, those with the prefix /ma-, the affixes /-ōn/ (<*/-ān/) and /-ī/ (for *nisbe* adjectives, especially gentilics) are quite frequent; the prefix /ta-, abstracts in /-īt/ or /-ūt/, and the adverbial ending /-ōm/ (<*/-am/), by contrast, occur but seldom.

Nouns inflect for number (singular/dual/plural), gender (masculine/feminine), and state (the unmarked absolute, or unbound, and the construct, or bound, form for genitive relationships). Adjectives follow the same inflection and only differ from substantives in that they exhibit regular number and gender concord with the noun to which they refer (Table 2).

Table 2. Phoenician nominal inflection

		Masculine	Feminine
absolute	singular	(no ending)	-T /-t/ or /-ōt/ (< */-at/)
	dual	-M /-ēm/ (< */-aym/)	-TM /-tēm/ (attested in Punic)
	plural	-M /-īm/	-T /-ōt/ (< */-āt/), pronounced [ūt]
construct	singular	same as sg. abs.	same as sg. abs.
	dual	- /-ē/ (< */-ay/)	(unattested)
	plural	- /-ē/	same as pl. abs.

An older Semitic case system, which has been preserved in Ugaritic, distinguished between nominative, genitive, and accusative with the short unstressed word-final vowels /-u/, /-i/, and /-a/ in the singular, and in the plural between nominative and genitive-accusative with /-ū-/ and /-ī-/ respectively between the nominal base and the consonantal element of the ending. Following the disappearance of final short unstressed vowels, however, morphological case marking in the singular collapsed around 1000 BCE in Canaanite and Aramaic; as a consequence, the difference between nominative and genitive-accusative in the plural was leveled as well. The ending of the masculine absolute plural /-īm/ thus corresponds to the old genitive-accusative, which, presumably being more frequent, replaced the original nominative in */-ūm(a)/. Stress then fell on the last syllable for nouns. Since the spelling of three verbal forms in Old Byblian (‘LY /‘alaya/ ‘he ascended’, BNY /banaya/ ‘he built’, ḤWY /ḥiwwiya/ ‘he restored’) seems to presuppose the presence of short final vowels (/y/ in these forms had to be followed by a vowel; otherwise it would already have been monophthongized and omitted in writing), this archaic variant of Phoenician could, in theory, also have preserved case endings in the singular. Yet this is virtually impossible to verify for a transition period like the tenth century BCE when unstable forms and conservative orthography coexisted.

The singular marks an individual thing or a collective; the dual presumably ceased to be fully productive and is confined to paired body parts, the numeral two, and similar categories (*iadem* /yadēm/ ‘[of] both hands’, KAI 178:1); the plural indicates plurality or, as with ʾLM /‘ilīm/ ‘god’ referring to one particular deity, an amplification of the singular. Feminine nouns can be distinguished from unmarked masculines by the ending (either */-t/ or, less frequently, */-at/ > /-ōt/, depending on the word; for the pronunciation, compare, e.g., *Ab-di-mil-ku-ut-ti* / ‘Abd-milkōt/ ‘Servant of Milkat’) or on the basis of concord with a verb or an adjective, as a number of unmarked nouns behave like marked feminines in concord. Some masculine nouns take a feminine plural ending

(e.g., ʾB ‘father’, ʾBT ‘fathers’) and the other way round (such as ʾBN ‘stone’, ʾBNM ‘stones’). This does not normally affect concord.

In the construct state, which marks a genitive relationship in the general sense, the substantive indicating the thing possessed (*nomen regens*) forms a stress unit together with the following one (*nomen rectum*), which denotes the possessor, and loses its principal stress. Possessive suffixes, too, are always attached to nouns in the construct state. The construct state of the dual /-ē/ was, as in Hebrew and Aramaic, expanded to the plural, thus replacing the old plural construct endings */-ū/ (nom.) and */-ī/ (gen.-acc.). Nouns in the construct state can form chains and usually do not carry suffixes or the definite article but take on the definiteness grade of the *nomen rectum* to which they refer. If the latter is formally definite because it is a proper name, has a suffix, or carries the definite article, the entire expression counts as definite (hence absolute ʾLM /ʾilīm/ ‘gods’ but construct ʾL GBL /ʾilē Gubl(a)/ ‘the gods of Byblos’). Alleged exceptions, like HMZBH NHŠT ZN ‘this altar of bronze’ (*KAI* 10:4), can also be explained as appositions. As in other Semitic languages, a periphrastic genitive construction by means of the preposition L or, especially, the relative particle increasingly competes with the construct state.

The peculiarities of some forms have parallels in other Semitic languages: examples include a (presumably long) vowel in the construct of ʾB /ʾab/ ‘father’ and ʾH /ʾaḥ/ ‘brother’ (cf. the Latin transcription of Punic *labunom* /l-abūnōm/ [*< */li-ʾabū-/*] ‘for their father’ or the names *Himilco* /('a)hī-Milkōt/ ‘Brother of Milkat’ and Αβιβαλος ‘Father of Baal’); the expansion of the base of some (generally monosyllabic) nouns in the plural (DL /dal/ ‘door’, DLHT /dalahōt/ ‘doors’; QRT /qart/ ‘city’, QRHT /qarahōt/ ‘cities’); or apophony (BN /bin/ ‘son’, BNM /banīm/ ‘sons’).

The following cardinal numerals are attested: 1 ʾHD (adjective), 2 ŠNM (noun in the dual), 3 ŠLŠ, 4 ʾRB, 5 HMS, 6 ŠŠ, 7 ŠB, 8 ŠMN(H), 9 TŠ, 10 ʾSR with feminines in /-t/ (but ‘one’ ʾHT /ʾaḥat(t)/ *< */aḥadt/*) and masculine plural forms of the respective units for the tens; 100 MʾT, 1000 ʾLP. Note that the unit always syndetically follows the ten with 11 to 19 (11 ʾSR WʾHD), and frequently with 21 to 99. Of the ordinals, only ŠNY ‘second’ and ʾRBʿY ‘fourth’ are attested, since the cardinals can also be used as ordinals. The numeral 3 to 10 take the opposite gender to the thing counted.

3.8. Verbs

Tense (past or present-future), aspect (an event presented as completed or in progress), and modality (possibility, reality, or desirability of a situation)

Table 3. Phoenician “perfect” inflection

Person	Singular	Plural
1 masc./fem.	KTB-T /katab-tī/	KTB-N /katab-nū/
2 masculine	KTB-T /katab-tā/(?)	(unattested)
2 feminine	KTB-T /katab-tī/(?)	(unattested)
3 masculine	KTB /katōb/ < */katab/	KTB /katab-ū/
3 feminine	KTB /katab-ā/ < */katab-at/	(unattested)

are expressed by finite verb conjugations. With the “perfect,” or “suffix conjugation,” endings (“affirmatives”) attached to the “perfect” base (e.g., */katab-/ ‘write’) inflect for person, number, and gender (Table 3).

An older form of the 3fem.sg. ending was preserved in verbs with object suffixes (e.g., P^cLTN /pa^cal-at-nū/ ‘she made me’, KAI 10:2). The short base vowel in the second syllable is lexical; fientive verbs (which describe an event) have /a/, as in other West Semitic idioms; /i/ and perhaps also /u/ for stative verbs, as in Hebrew, are as yet unattested in transcriptions.

The “perfect” normally occurs with different types of past events, both completed (e.g., DBR MLK ṣ^cŠMN^cZR ‘[in the fourteenth year] king Eshmunazor said’, KAI 14:2) and with an enduring relevance for the present (“resultative,” as in P^cL^cTB^cL ‘Ittōba^cl has made me’, KAI 1:1). In subordinate clauses, the temporal meaning of the “perfect” is relatively anterior to that of the main clause verb (cf. ṣ^cBL^cN KL HMLKM ‘[I conquered lands] which all the other kings had not conquered’, KAI 26 A I 18f.). The “perfect” of the root *kwn* ‘to be’ (see below) can be employed to mark states as past (e.g., KN BT ṣ^cBY ‘there was the house of my father’, KAI 24:5f.). This conjugation also features in performative expressions (BRKTK ‘I hereby bless you’, KAI 50:2f.), rarely in wishes (only attested in Punic, esp. in the greeting formula *avo* /ḥawō/ ‘may he live!’ from *ḥwy*).

With the “imperfect” (“prefix conjugation”), by contrast, person, number, and gender are marked by a combination of preformatives and, in some forms, endings attached to the “imperfect” base (e.g., /-ktub-/). Its base vowel is also lexical; with the base vowel /a/, the vowel of the preformatives may have dissimilated to /i/, following the so-called “Barth-Ginsberg Law” (i.e., */yiktab/ [< */yaktab/] beside */yaktub/ and */yaktib/) (Table 4).

The 2fem.sg. and 2/3masc.pl. forms preserve the old morphological difference between the “long imperfect” ending in /-n/ (< */-na/; reconstructed on comparative grounds for the 2fem.sg.) and its “short” counterpart without such an expansion. Both types were once independent conjugations formerly distinguished by short word-final vowels in the other persons (i.e., the 3masc.sg. “long imperfect” was */yaktub-u/, but

Table 4. Phoenician “imperfect” inflection

Person	Singular	Plural
1 masc./fem.	ʾKTB /ʾa-ktub/	NKTB /na-ktub/
2 masculine	TKTB /ta-ktub/	TKTB(N) /ta-ktub-ū(n)/
2 feminine	TKTB(N) /ta-ktub-ī(n)/	TKTBN /ta-ktub-nā/
3 masculine	YKTB /ya-ktub/	YKTB(N) /ya-ktub-ū(n)/
3 feminine	TKTB /ta-ktub/	(unattested)

the “short imperfect” was */yaktub/). With the loss of these vowels (see above on the breakdown of inflectional case marking), however, the formal difference disappeared in all persons not expanded by /-n/ in the “long imperfect,” at least with sound roots.

Nonetheless, each type of “imperfect” has its own functional range and should thus be treated separately, even if it is not always possible to assign a form to one of the two inherited conjugations. The “long imperfect” is, on the whole, less clearly marked in terms of tense-aspect-modality than the “perfect”; contrary to the “perfect,” which often acts like a past-tense form, the “long imperfect” renders notions of modality and imperfective aspect. Its uses for present-future, ongoing situations independent of their location in time, and modality interact in a way difficult to define precisely. Hence the exact nuance is often hard to determine, e.g., YSGRNM ‘they will (future) / shall (deontic modality) deliver them’ (KAI 14:9); ʾŠT TK LH̄DY ‘a woman used to (durative) / could (dynamic modality) walk on her own’ (KAI 26 A II 5f.; word division controversial), similarly in the same text also WBMQMM . . . ʾŠ YŠTʿ ʾDM LLKT ‘and in places . . . where a man was afraid / had to be afraid to walk’ (lines 3f.).

The “short imperfect” or “jussive,” by contrast, renders wishes and commands; unlike the other conjugations, it takes the negation ʾL /ʾal/, thus expressing a prohibition. Only a few instances can be clearly identified as “short forms,” though (e.g., ʾL YKBD /ʾal yakabbidū/ ‘may they not honor’ [doubling stem of *kbd*], KAI 24:14; the 3masc.pl. form of the “long imperfect” would have been spelled YKBDN /yakabbidūn/, with final /-n/).

In fact, the Phoenician verbal system features a number of phenomena that are not yet well understood. Examples include the alleged “short imperfect” in the purpose clause LKN YDʿ HŠDNYM ‘so that the Sidonians may know’ (KAI 60:7; ὅπως εἰδῶσι in the parallel Greek version). A “long imperfect” would be expected but can be excluded on morphological grounds. This use seems atypical for Phoenician yet may resemble the so-called “subjunctive” */yaktub-a/ in some other Semitic idioms, a third type of the “imperfect” which often occurs in purpose

clauses. In forms ending with a long vowel, such as the 3^{masc.pl.}, the “subjunctive” cannot be formally distinguished from the “short imperfect.” At least in theory, one could imagine that even a late text like *KAI* 60 preserves remnants of another conjugation besides the “long” and the “short imperfect” not directly attested in earlier material. Alternative explanations should not be excluded, however.

The “imperative” is usually identical to the second person of the “short imperfect” without the preformative. Only singular forms are clearly attested; the expected difference between masculine /ktub/ and feminine /ktub-ī/ disappears in the spelling KTB. Likewise, one cannot say whether a (very short?) auxiliary vowel resolved the word-initial consonant cluster in pronunciation, which is especially likely with roots beginning with a glottal stop. Both the “(long) imperfect” and the imperative could perhaps have been expanded by the “energetic” ending /-an/, but the few possible attestations remain controversial. No functional distinction emerges.

Among the verbal substantives, Phoenician has a participle, KTB /kōtib/ (active) and /katīb/ (passive; cf. names like *Baric* ‘the blessed one’) in the basic stem, which, like other nouns, inflects for gender, number, and state, and the “infinitive absolute” /katōb/, also spelled KTB. The latter does not inflect and often marks assertion in “paronomastic” constructions (e.g., ʾM PTH TPTH ‘but if indeed you open’, *KAI* 13:6f.). Especially in Phoenician royal inscriptions, however, it occurs in clause-initial position with a following 1^{sg.} independent personal pronoun to mark the subject and refers to past events; it may have acted as a register-specific byform of the “perfect” there. Other forms of the infinitive (infinitive construct) appear with the prepositions B, L, and K (/ktub/, as in LP^ˈL /li-p^ˈul/ ‘in order to do’, e.g., *KAI* 10:11; cf. Punic *liful*) for temporal and purpose clauses, and perhaps also with suffixes (/kubt-/, like Tiberian Hebrew?). The quotative marker L^ˈMR ‘as follows’ (*KAI* 14:2) is, as in Hebrew, a fossilized adverbial infinitive of manner (‘saying’).

3.9. “Weak” verbs

Verbal roots that do not consist of three stable consonants (“weak” or “irregular” roots) exhibit a number of deviations from the sound paradigm hitherto discussed. As examples are rather few and cover a broad geographical as well as chronological range, any attempt to reconstruct the situation in Phoenician faces many difficulties.

1. Root-initial /y/, and presumably also /h/ in *hlk* ‘to go’, disappear in the “imperfect” and the imperative: TTN /tatin/(?) ‘may she give’

(KAI 10:9) and Late Punic *lech* for LK /lik/ 'go'. These roots also use a feminine verbal noun without the initial /y/ for the infinitive construct: LD˘T /li-da˘t/ 'in order to know', LLKT /li-lik˘t/ 'in order to go', etc. With *lqh* 'to give', /l/ in the "imperfect" of the basic stem seems to undergo assimilation as well (YQH), and the infinitive construct (QHT) follows a similar pattern.

2. Root-final /y/ has been preserved in the 3masc.sg. "perfect" in some Old Byblian forms (e.g., BNY /banaya/ 'he built') but disappeared in later varieties of Phoenician as a result of monophthongization (BN /banō/). With the "imperfect," this must already have happened by then, since syntactic considerations require YGL /yaglē/ or /yiglē/ '[if . . .] he reveals' in KAI 1:2 (protasis of a conditional clause) to be a "long imperfect" (<*/yagliyu/ or */yiglayu/) instead of a "short imperfect" /yagl/ or /yigl/. Before consonantal affirmatives, the resulting diphthong has been monophthongized, presumably in a much earlier period (cf. Punic *canethi* for /qanēti/ [<*/qanay-ti/] 'I have acquired', if this is indeed a 1sg. "perfect"). As in Hebrew, the infinitive construct is expanded by T /-ōt/ (LBNT 'in order to build').
3. Verbs with a long second root consonant ("geminate roots"; e.g., TM /tamm/ 'he completed', KAI 60:1) form the "imperfect" with and without anaptyxis, as in Arabic (compare Punic *ythmum* /˘atmum/ 'I wish to complete', from *tmm*, with THN˘ /taḥunnō/ 'she will favor him', from *hnn*).
4. The "hollow roots" have an etymologically long vowel between the first and the last root consonant (as in the "perfect" /qōm/ 'he arose' in names preserved in cuneiform transcriptions). Many forms, however, have to be reconstructed in light of comparative evidence.

3.10. Verbal stems

Diathesis (middle and passive voice), as well as certain situation types like factitivity and causativity, are expressed by means of derivational verbal stems; that is, modifications of the unmarked basic stem (corresponding to the Hebrew *Qal*). Inflectional categories like the finite and infinite verbal forms previously discussed use the same morphemes as with the basic stem. The exact nuance of a given stem often depends on the meaning of the root:

1. The detransitivizing or mediopassive N-stem is only attested for transitive verbs in Phoenician and formed by adding an /n-/ prefix

(“perfect” NGZLT /nagzaltī/ ‘I have been seized’, *KAI* 14:2; participle NŠT^cM /našta^cim/ ‘feared, 26 A II 4), which assimilated in the “imperfect” (YQBR /yiqqabirū/ [< */yinqabirū/]) ‘they shall be buried’, 14:8). The infinitive construct may have had a prothetic vowel, but the situation remains unclear because of the scarcity of examples (cf. L-LḤM /li-(^c)illaḥim/ [< */^cinlaḥim/?] ‘in order to fight’, *KAI* 24:6, which, however, could also be explained as elision of an original /h/ prefix, as in the Hebrew N-stem, between vowels after a proclitic preposition or even because of a simple scribal mistake).

2. The D(oubling)-stem mostly acts as a factitive counterpart to the basic stem and is marked by lengthening the middle root consonant (“perfect” /šillim/ ‘he replaced’; “imperfect” /yabarrikū/ ‘may they bless’; participle with /ma-/ prefix). It has a corresponding middle voice form (often used for reflexive nuances) with a /-t-/ prefix (Punic HTQDŠ /hitqaddiš/ ‘he consecrated himself’, *KAI* 138:1). It is not known whether hollow and geminate roots formed the D-stem on analogy with sound roots or replaced it by another pattern (“*Pō^cel*” or lengthening stem) like Classical Hebrew.
3. The C(ausative)-stem (*Yif^cil*) takes the prefix /yi-/ (< */hi-/ due to palatalization, as in the 3sg. possessive suffixes in Standard Phoenician) in the “perfect” and expresses the causation of a particular state. Other forms lost the original */h-/ of the prefix between vowels (“imperfect” YŠḤT /yašḥit/ [< */yahašḥit/]) ‘he destroyed’, *KAI* 24:15f.; participle /manzir/ [< */mahanzir/]) ‘the one who dedicates’ in names).
4. Only the oldest Byblian inscription (*KAI* 1) has two attestations of a middle-voice or reflexive counterpart to the basic stem, formed by means of a /-t-/ infix. Both examples are “imperfects”: TḤTSP /tiḥtasip/ ‘may it wither away’ (from *ḥsp*) and THTPK /tihtapik/ ‘may it collapse’ (from *hpk*). If this feature is indeed an archaism, the considerable functional overlap with the N-stem is likely to have caused an early loss of this “Gt”-stem. One may compare the situation in Hebrew, where a similar form only survives in a few archaic place names.
5. There are no entirely clear attestations for “internal” (or “apophonic”) passives like Hebrew *Pu^cal* for the D-stem and *Hof^cal* for the C-stem.

3.11. Prepositions and particles

Various prepositions mark adverbial relations of time, place, and manner. Three proclitics, after which the /h/ of the definite article /ha-/ drops out, occur most frequently: B /bi-/ ‘in, by, with’, K /ka-/ ‘as’, and L /li-/ ‘to, for, at’, with the long, non-proclitic, byforms BN and, presumably, LN, identical in meaning; further the non-proclitic lexemes ʾḤR /ʾaḥar/ ‘after’, ʾL /il(ē)/ ‘to, toward’, ʾT /ʾitt/ ‘with’, BN /bēn/ ‘amid’, DL /dal/(?) ‘with’ (attested only in Punic), ʾD /ʾad(ē)/ ‘until, as far as’, ʾL /ʾal(ē)/ ‘on, above, against’ (long form ʾLT), and ṬḤT /taḥt/ ‘below, under’. MN /min/ is rarely used and attested only from the fourth century BCE on (first in *KAI* 33:2); its final /n/ can assimilate, turning MN into a proclitic which then also forms a stress unit with the word to which it refers. At least B and L are, as in Ugaritic (which has no preposition /min/) and Early Hebrew poetry, “deictically neutral” and can thus express ablative relations as well (e.g., B-MṢRM ‘from Egypt’, *KAI* 5:2). All these prepositions can govern both a noun and a pronominal suffix. Some of them, whose stem originally ended in */-ay/ (> /ē/), i.e., ʾL, ʾD, ʾL, presumably took the forms of the suffixes attached to a vocalic base, just like masculine plural nouns (compare Hebrew *bō* ‘in him’ with *alāw* ‘above him’), but this distinction often remains invisible in spelling in the attested examples (yet compare ʾLY ‘against him’ for assumed /ʾalēyū/ in *KAI* 24:8 with /ʾittō/ ‘with him’ in the name Ιθοβαλος/Ιθωβαλος). B and ṬḤT take the corresponding byforms expanded by /-n/ before suffixes.

Combining various elements produces new and seemingly redundant compound prepositions, e.g., MʾT (MN+ʾT) ‘from’, LMN (L+MN) ‘from’, LB (L+B) ‘for’, LMB (L+MN+B) ‘concerning’. The exact meaning, however, always depends on the entire phrase. Nominal phrases, too, can be lexicalized as prepositions, such as BD /bōd/ (< */bād-/ < */bi-yad-/) ‘in/by the hand of’ = ‘by means of’. By the same token, several adverbs result from an adverbial use of nouns, e.g., ʾLM /ʾōlōm/ ‘eternity’ in prepositional expressions like L-ʾLM or ʾD ʾLM ‘forever’, as well as PNM ‘face, front’ in L-PNM ‘before’. The difficult form LPNYM ‘(their?) predecessors’ (*KAI* 24:5, 10) may be analyzed as an adjective ‘former’ derived from the prepositional phrase LPNM ‘before’ by means of the *nisbe* ending */-iy/.

The particle BL /bal/ serves as the most frequent means for negating affirmative expressions in Phoenician; it is attested with individual nouns (BL ʾTY ‘[I died] at my non-time’ = ‘[I died] before my time’, *KAI* 14:3, 12) and with verbs in main and relative clauses (WBL PʾL ‘and he did nothing’, *KAI* 24:3 and elsewhere). Occasionally, ʾY /ʾayy/(?) also

occurs (*KAI* 13:4bis and 14:5, all examples in clauses subordinated by K /kī/ and in a similar context). A combination of both, ³BL (/ʔēbal/ < *ʔay-bal/?), is attested in main and relative clauses. As in other Northwest Semitic languages, the “short imperfect” for volitive expressions, by contrast, takes the negation ³L /ʔal/. This construction replaces the negated imperative.

Following the loss of morphological case marking, the distinction between the grammatical roles of subject (nominative) and direct object (accusative) became blurred in Northwest Semitic. Hence Phoenician, too, developed a particle ³YT /ʔiy(y)ōt/ (often termed *nota obiecti*) which can optionally mark the direct object of a transitive verb, especially when the object is definite and thus prone to confusion with the prototypical subject. The unstressed byform ³T /ʔōt/ or /ʔot/ (cf. oθ in transcriptions) frequently occurs with suffixes and is further reduced to /ʔat/ [ʔet] in Punic (at times only written T), but the exact distribution is debated. Since this particle is still lacking in, among others, the Old Byblian inscriptions, some scholars suppose that Old Byblian still had a productive accusative case with nouns. Yet it seems more likely to assume that a certain chronological gap separated the loss of case inflection from the regular use of an object marker.

The most frequent conjunction is the proclitic element W /wa-/ ‘and’ (Punic transcriptions point to a later pronunciation /u-/ due to vowel reduction /wa-/ > /w-/ > /u-/), which occurs in all kinds of syndetic connections between clauses. Other conjunctions include ³P /ʔap/ ‘also’ and ³M /ʔim/ ‘if’ with “perfect” or (later more frequently) “imperfect” in the protasis and the apodosis (but ³M . . . ³M ‘either . . . or’). K /kī/, originally an emphatic particle (‘yes!’), can introduce causal subordinate (‘because’) and object clauses (‘that’). Compound conjunctions are KM ³Š ‘when’ (*KAI* 10:7), ‘as’ (19:9); LKN ‘so that’ (60:7); LM ‘lest’ (14:21); BLT ‘except that’ (13:5).

4. Lexicon and foreign influences

By and large, the lexicon of Phoenician and Punic corresponds to that of the closest relatives in the Semitic family. It partly agrees with Ugaritic against Hebrew, as in using the roots *ytn* ‘to give’ (mostly?) instead of *ntn* and *kwn* ‘to be’ (‘to be reliable’ in Hebrew) instead of *hyy*. Even shared words, however, differ in frequency: the negation BL /bal/ is rare and poetic in Ugaritic as well as in Hebrew, whereas the usual form there, **lā*/, does not occur in Phoenician; ³LP /ʔalp/ ‘ox’, on the other hand, hardly appears in Hebrew, although it is a normal lexeme in Ugaritic and

Phoenician. The preposition DL /dal/(?) 'with' even seems to constitute a peculiar feature of (Phoenician-?)Punic. The plural forms of some words differ from those of their Hebrew cognates (like ʾŠ /'iš/ 'man', pl. ʾŠM /'išīm/ instead of ʾanāšīm).

Dialectal differences, too, can be observed in the lexicon of Phoenician. The oldest Byblian text has the conditional particle ʾL (KAI 1:2) instead of ʾM as in the rest of Old Byblian and Phoenician; Old Byblian at large uses the title ʾDT 'Lady' for the city's patron deity as opposed to usual RBT. It is less easy to say whether the purported feminine gender of KS' 'throne' and ḤTR 'scepter' vis-à-vis masculine in Hebrew (but, in the case of KS', in accord with Ugaritic) are likewise Old Byblian peculiarities, for the lack of further unambiguous evidence. Some verbal roots evidently appear in unexpected stems, such as the G-stem for *brk* 'to bless' also for the "perfect" (as in βαραχω 'he blessed him', KAI 175:4f. and already in some Northwest Semitic personal names transmitted in cuneiform transcriptions) in contradistinction to the ubiquitous D-stem of this root in Hebrew and Aramaic, which is, however, also attested in Phoenician. A few shared expressions and phrases in various Northwest Semitic idioms may result from an erstwhile common oral poetic language that permeated large parts of ancient Syria-Palestine.

Phoenician and Punic were often used in multilingual situations. These have produced many inscriptions with a Greek or Latin parallel version (not perforce a verbatim translation), and occasionally also a Luwian, Etruscan, or Berber one. A few texts are even written entirely in the Greek or Latin alphabet. From the Achaemenid period on, Aramaic seems to have been the dominant language for many purposes of daily life on the mainland, as in post-Exilic Israel, but this fact is not immediately reflected in the primary sources, since Phoenician continued to act at least as a medium for public display. While Phoenician did not necessarily function as a vernacular in all places where inscriptions in this language have been discovered, it was, at any rate, subject to many external influences. Later texts from Cyprus and Greece feature Greek terminology, Punic inscriptions contain several Latin words relating to law and administration, and North African witnesses betray a few titles and other lexemes borrowed from Berber. Only in part were these adapted to the Semitic paradigm of nominal inflection. Other instances of language contact are more difficult to identify, but it is generally assumed that certain constructions in later texts have been patterned after Greek or Latin models. In a similar fashion, some phonetic developments in parts of the speech area may have been contact-induced.

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