

Around 3000 B.C., a group of individuals migrated from the Arabian Peninsula into the land of Canaan. Canaan is located between Egypt and Syria. These people were known as the Phoenicians. By 1200 B.C., the Phoenicians controlled a narrow strip of land that bordered along the Mediterranean Sea in northern Canaan where they built a number of cities and villages. These cities were bound to one another by culture, but were governed independently as separate city-states.

The Phoenicians were masters of the sea. Their economy was based on trade. Rather than moving goods over the land in massive caravans, the Phoenicians built large sailing ships. It is believed by many historians that the Phoenicians may have travelled to lands as distant as Great Britain and Spain.

In the artistic products of Phoenicia, Egyptian motifs and ideas were mingled with those of Mesopotamia, the Aegean, and Syria. Though little survives of Phoenician sculpture in the round, relief sculpture is much more abundant. The earliest major work of Phoenician sculpture to survive was found at Byblos; it was the limestone sarcophagus of Ahiem, king of Byblos at the end of the 11th century.

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