A History of Knowledge

Oldest Knowledge
What the Sumerians knew
What the Babylonians knew
What the Hittites knew
What the Persians knew
What the Egyptians knew
What the Indians knew
What the Chinese knew
What the Greeks knew
What the Phoenicians knew
What the Romans knew
What the Barbarians knew

What the Jews knew
What the Christians knew
Tang & Sung China
What the Japanese knew
What the Muslims knew
The Middle Ages
Ming & Manchu China
The Renaissance
The Industrial Age
The Victorian Age
The Modern World
What the Phoenicians knew

- Bibliography
Phoenicians and Greeks
What the Phoenicians knew

- No name for "Phoenician" people ("phoenician" means "purple people" in Greek)
- Canaanites (Northern Semitic people, ancestors of both Phoenicians and Hebrews, 2500 BC - 1000 BC)
- El chief god of the Canaanites, and his wife Anat
What the Phoenicians knew

• 1800 BC-1400 BC: Phoenicia occupied by Egypt
  – tin and lapis lazuli from Afghanistan to Egypt
  – copper from Cyprus to Egypt
  – timber from Phoenicia to Egypt

• 12th c BC: Collapse of Egyptian and Mesopotamian economies
  – Reshaping of the old trade routes
  – Phoenician merchants became the protagonists not the serfs of international trade
What the Phoenicians knew

- 1200 BC: Phoenicians move from Arabia to the Mediterranean coast
- Shipbuilding (1200BC) and navigation (north star)
- 11##: founding of trading post in Tunisia (Utica)
- 1104 BC: founding of trading post on the Atlantic (Cadiz): tin, gold, copper
- 11th c BC: urban expansion and commercial expansion abroad
- Sea trade
- Colonization
- Silver of Spain prompts the creation of a series of ports from Lebanon to Spain
- Trinity of gods: the father El/Baal, creator of the universe; the son Baal/Melqart, responsible for the annual cycle of vegetation; the heavenly mother
What the Phoenicians knew

- Ossuary of Azor, Canaan 3-4,000 BC shaped like a building of the era

(Metropolitan Museum)
Cyprus

Vessel of diabase stone
(5,500 BC)

Terracotta amphor
(2,000 BC)

Copper lingot
(1450-1050 BC)

Lebanon: copper statue
(2500 BC)
Cyprus

2500 BC

2000 BC

1650 BC

(Getty Villa)
What the Phoenicians knew

- Byblos
What the Phoenicians knew

• Byblos
  – Golden age 3rd millennium BC
  – Most important trading post in the Mediterranean
  – Crossroads of Anatolia, Mesopotamia, Egypt
  – Exporting cedar wood, resin, oil, wool, boats (eg boat for king Snofru)
  – Importing gold, linen, papyrus ("byblos"= collection of sheets in Greek) from Egypt, ebony (Sudan), lapis lazuli (Mesopotamia), copper (Cyprus)
  – 2150 conquered by Amorites
  – 1725 by Hyksos
  – 1580 by Egypt
What the Phoenicians knew

• Cosmogony of Philo of Byblos
  – Elioun first god, father of Uranus and Ge, grandfather of El
  – El is father of all gods, husband of Asherah and is dethroned by his son Baal
  – Elioun = Hittite god Alalu
  – Uranus = Hittite god Anu
  – El = Hittite god Kumarbi = Greek god Kronos = father of all gods
  – Baal = Teshub = Zeus
What the Phoenicians knew

• Language
  – 1500 BC: Canaanites develop an alphabet of 24 symbols by removing the vowels from the old Semitic cuneiform alphabet
  – 1000 BC: Byblos condenses original 30 signs to 22
  – Written from right to left
  – Ahiram sarcophagus from Byblos (10th c BC) with oldest Phoenician inscription (Beirut National Museum)
  – Right to left writing because stonemasons used a chisel in the left hand and a hammer in the right hand
What the Phoenicians knew

Oldest alphabetical inscription
Sarcophagus of king Ahiram of Byblos, 1000 BC
What the Phoenicians knew

Phoenician:

Greek:

Hebrew:

http://www.wam.umd.edu/~rfradkin/alphapage.html
What the Phoenicians knew

Sumerian

Phoenicians use their letters to mean numbers.

Greek Attic system

Ionic system (after 100BC, from Phoenician numbers)
What the Phoenicians knew

[Diagram of the Alphabet Family Tree]

http://phoenicia.org
Ugarit

- Independent city-state between 1500-1200 BC
- Cosmopolitan center with palaces, temples, vaulted tombs, archives in several languages
- Trade with Egypt, Mesopotamia, Aegean islands and the Hittites (Anatolia)
- 1,500 BC: alphabet

First alphabet, 1400 BC (Damascus museum)

Ugarit, 1350 BC (Damascus Museum)
What the Phoenicians knew

- Arameans or Syriacs
  - Semitic, nomadic people of Mesopotamia
  - Settled in Syria in the 14th century BC
  - Small tribes that never unified in an empire
What the Phoenicians knew

• Aramaic
  – Aramaic language (originally a dialect of Akkadian) written with the Phoenician alphabet
  – International trade language of the Middle East between 1000 and 600 BCE
  – Official language of the Persian Empire (539-337 BC)
  – Aramaic used as far as Egypt and China
  – Aramaic becomes the language of the Jews in Palestine (Jesus preaches in Aramaic)
What the Phoenicians knew

• Aramaic
  – Aramaic evolves into Christian Aramaic, Syriac (4th to 7th c. AD)
  – Aramaic declines with the Arab conquest (7th c. AD)
  – Aramaic survives as the languages of Christian communities in Syria, Lebanon, Turkey, Iraq, Iran
What the Phoenicians knew

- **Aramaic**
  - 850 BC: 22-character alphabet derived from Phoenician

Basalt stele in Aramaic (750 BC) from Sfire (Syria), a treaty between two kings, one of the oldest Aramaic inscriptions (Damascus Museum)
What the Phoenicians knew

- City-states (Tyre, 950 BC; Carthage, 814 BC)
- Straits of Gibraltar
- Celts
- 605 BC: Babylonian occupation (Nebuchadnezzar II)
- 600 BC: Phoenicians circumnavigate Africa
- 333 BC: Alexander annexes all Phoenician cities
- 198 BC: the Phoenician cities fall under Seleucid rule
- 146 BC: Rome destroys Carthage
- 64 BC: the Phoenician cities are conquered by Roman general Pompey
What the Phoenicians knew

- Carthage (Kart-Hadasht) before the Punic wars
- Founded by Tyre 9th BC
- Independent after Nebuchadnezzar’s invasion of Palestine
- Metal trade
- Society of merchants, not warriors
- Duty to sacrifice first-born
- Army of mercenaries
  - Numidians
  - Libyans
  - Spaniards
  - Gauls
  - Italians
  - Greeks
What the Phoenicians knew
What the Celts knew

- Megalithic culture (Western and Northern Europe, 4000-2000 BC)
  - 15,000 megalithic tombs found so far
  - Originally developed in France 5,000 BC, then spread to Iberia, British Isles (3,500 BC)
What the Celts knew

- Megalithic culture
  - Barnenez/Finistere (France, 3800 BC)
  - Gavrinis gallery-type dolmen (France, 3500 BC)
  - New Grange’s tomb (Ireland, 3400 BC, 90mx15m)
  - Carnac (Britain, 3000 menhirs, 3kms long)
  - Stonehenge’s cromlech (Britain, 2300 BC)
  - Ashdown (Britain)
  - Soto dolmen (Spain)
  - Los Millares’ necropolis (Spain)
  - Ggantija Temples (Malta, 3500-2400 BC)
  - Nuraghi of Sardinia (Italy)
Megaliths

Monte d'Accoddi (Sardinia, 2700 BC)

Gavrinis Island, Brittany, France, 3,500-2400 BC
oldest free-standing structures in the world

Ggantija Temples, Malta, 3500-2400 BC

Newgrange, Ireland

Monte d'Accoddi (Sardinia, 2700 BC)
Megaliths

Giganti di Mont'e Prama
(Sardinia, 800 BC)
Bronze Age in Germany

Nebra sky disk (1,600 BC)
What the Celts knew

• Malta

Hal Saflieni Hypogeum (Malta Tourism Authority)
What the Celts knew

• Megaliths
  – Menhir
  – Cromlech (a group of menhirs set in a circle)
  – Dolmen
What the Celts knew

• Megaliths
  – Cult of the Dead: the house of the dead are built of stone (the house of the living are built of wood)
  – Ritual communion with the ancestors
  – The megaliths might be substitute bodies for the dead
What the Celts knew

- Megalithic cultures of the 20th century
  - Indonesia
  - Melanesia
What the Celts knew

- Vinca culture (Balkans, 4000 BC)
  - Non-IndoEuropean
  - Proto-writing
What the Celts knew

- Urnfield culture (Central Europe, 1300-700 BC)
  - Non-IndoEuropean
  - Agriculture
  - Bronze
  - Cremation
  - Horse as a status symbol

- Atlantic region
  - Network of trading communities
  - Copper from Ireland, Iberia, Wales
  - Tin from Brittany, Galicia, England
  - Gold from Ireland, Iberia, Wales
What the Celts knew

- Hallstatt culture (Central Europe, 1200-500 BC)
  - Indo-European
  - Hallstatt C: early Iron Age (800–600 BC)
    - Vehicle burials for the aristocracy (Rhine to Bohemia)
    - Cavalry sword
What the Celts knew

• Hallstatt culture (Central Europe, 1200-500 BC)
  – Hallstatt D (600-450 BC)
    • Hill forts
    • Linking the river systems of the Rhone, Rheine, Seine, Danube
    • Four-wheel funerary wagon
    • Trade with Etruscans of the Po Valley
    • Trade with Greeks via Massalia/Marseilles
What the Celts knew

- Hallstatt culture (Central Europe, 1200-500 BC)

Celtic hill fort of Bopfingen
What the Celts knew

• LaTerre Culture (450-370 BC)
  – Decline of hill forts
  – Two-wheel chariot as a funerary cart
What the Celts knew

- Celts
  - Burials
  - Four-wheeled chariot
  - Iron
  - Indo-European language
  - Druids (both priests, scholars and teachers)
  - Human sacrifice
  - Naked warriors
  - War chariot
  - Endemic warfare
What the Celts knew

• Celts
  – Dualism between the male god of the tribe (Dagda) and the female god of the land (Morrigan)
  – Many other gods appearing in many guises
What the Celts knew

• Celts
  – 400 BC: Migration into the Po Valley
  – 390 BC: Celts/Gauls defeat the Roman army
  – 4th c: Celts migrate east through the Danube valley
  – 225 BC: Battle of Telamon/Talamone between the Gauls and the Romans (last European battle with chariots)
Scythians
Scythians

7th c BC

100-50 BC
Scythians

- Nomadic herdgers of the steppes north of the Black Sea
- Persian linguistic group
Scythian golden bottle of 6th-4th c BC (Hermitage, St Petersburg)

Scythian golden comb with Greek influence of 6th-4th c BC (Hermitage, St Petersburg)

Scythian object of unknown purpose of 6th-4th c BC (Hermitage, St Petersburg)
Scythian mirror with Chinese, Persian and Greek motifs of 6th-4th c BC (Hermitage, St Petersburg)