

Peopling the Past Video 3: The Phoenicians with Megan Daniels

Transcript

Video begins with instrumental music played over the title card which reads "Peopling the Past"

We hear Megan Daniels Speak: "Hi I'm Megan Daniels. I'm Assistant Professor of Ancient Greek Material Culture at the University of British Columbia and a proud member of the Peopling the Past team, and this is Peopling in the Past."

There is a woman sitting in front of the camera. She has dark hair and is wearing a black shirt. There are houseplants in frame behind her. The PowerPoint slide shows the Peopling the Past logo.

Daniels: "What topic are you talking about today?"

The slide shows the Neumagen Relief, which is a late Roman tomb sculpture that shows a school scene with pupils and a teacher. The text is read out by Daniels.

Daniels: "Well my research focuses mainly on the ancient Greek world, I've had long-standing interests in Phoenician history and culture as well. Both the ancient Greeks and Phoenicians migrated far and wide around the Mediterranean world in the early first millennium BCE, and since one of my main interests in studying the ancient Mediterranean is understanding how people migrated, interacted, and integrated, with one another, I found it impossible to ignore the Phoenicians."

Slide shows a map of the Mediterranean Sea, with highlighted portions along the coast of southern Europe, Western Sicily, Sardinia and Corsica, Cyprus, and Northern Africa, which indicates the places that the Phoenicians colonized. A highlighted portion in modern coastal Syria and Lebanon indicates the original homeland of the Phoenicians.

Daniels: " Now the Phoenician home and lies in the coastal Levant, and around important port cities like Tyre, Sidon, Byblos, and Beirut."

A closer map appears in the center of the slide that shows the eastern coast of the Mediterranean, with dots highlighting the important cities of Byblos, Beirut, Sidon, and Tyre.

Daniels: "I'm using the term Phoenician for simplicity's sake but it's important to note that there was no singular nation in antiquity called Phoenicia nor was there a singular group of people who referred to themselves as Phoenicians, and in fact our modern term comes from the Greek name Phoinix that was generally applied to peoples who came from this from this general region. What we do know from archaeological sources, inscriptions and literary sources, is that people from this region started early in the first millennium BCE, settling around Cyprus the coast of North Africa, southern Spain, Sicily, Sardinia, Corsica, the Balearic Islands, and all the way out to the Atlantic coast, as well on the coast of Morocco and Spain. In literary sources like Homer's epics they had reputations as being seafarers and traders of luxury goods, and in some cases were known to be greedy tricksters. In fact so much of what we know of the Phoenicians comes from Greek, Roman, and Hebrew literary sources and so it's really vital to illuminate the lives and histories of the Phoenicians, particularly through archaeological field work."

The slide shows scene from the Balawat Gates, the famous gates of the palace of King Shalmaneser III at Balawat. The scene shows the Phoenicians in their ships brining tribute to Shalmaneser III.

Daniels: "In my research I've mainly been interested in the Phoenicians' interactions with the Greeks and Romans as all of these diverse groups migrated around the Mediterranean world. My main line of research is how people found common ground with one another in migratory and colonial ceremonies through ... religion and how religious belief and ritual was a facilitator of cross-cultural interaction. Certainly we might be inclined in the modern world to see religion as something that's exclusive, perhaps even divisive, but in ancient polytheistic Mediterranean religion, and particularly the gods, seem to be incredibly translatable across cultural and regional boundaries. What sources or data do you look at?"

The slide shows three images. On the left is a statue in stone of a seated scribe from ancient Egypt. In the center is a cuneiform clay tablet from Mesopotamia. On the right is a wall painting from Pompeii known as the Sappho Tondo. Though it does not depict the famous author, it shows the portrait of a well-dressed woman with a writing utensil poised to her lip. The text on the slide reads "What sources or data do you look at?"

Daniels: "My research is focused on two main areas. The first is the god hero that we typically know as Hercules in a Latin language, or Heracles in the Greek language, and most people will be familiar with Hercules and Heracles, but few know of their counterpart in the Phoenician language and culture which is Melqart."

Slide includes an image of an 1831 engraving of a reconstruction of a Metope, a decorative carved relief, from the Temple of Zeus at Olympia. This carving shows the hero Herakles, nude, wielding a club and fighting the Cretan Bull. The text on the screen shows the different versions of the hero's name: Hercules in Latin, Herakles in Greek, and Melqart in Phoenician.

Daniels: "Melqart was the Phoenician god worshipped in the city of Tyre, and you also had a famous temple established all the way out to the end of the Mediterranean at the mouth of the Atlantic at the ancient city of Gadir modern-day Cádiz. From literary sources like Herodotus we know that the Greeks saw Melqart as the older and more vulnerable version of their hero Heracles."

Slide shows a large map of the Mediterranean Sea and surrounding land, with the site of Tyre on the Eastern edge indicated, and the site of Gadir on the very southern part of the Iberian Peninsula indicated.

Daniels: "I study the relationship between these gods through literary sources and also religious iconography, using figurines and images and iconography on later coins to understand the traditions of the Greeks, Phoenicians, Romans, and others of this famous wandering hero who slew monsters who accomplished superhuman tasks and who eventually was made a god and brought up to Olympus."

Slide shows a bronze coin from Gadir showing Melqart on the left in profile and wearing a lionskin, and two fish on the right on the other side of the coin.

Daniels: "I'm interested especially in how people related to the idea of a wandering monster-slaying god hero since the imageries and stories of Hercules were so ubiquitous around the Mediterranean and I especially focus on the Phoenician contribution to this tradition, from the classic imagery of this hero with his club and his lion's skin cloak, to the myths that had Hercules wandered to the ends of the known world i.e., the Atlantic ... accomplishing once again his great feats and slaying of monsters. We tend to locate Hercules firmly in the Greco-Roman worlds but true to his nature as a hero who wandered to the ends of the earth, he was a hero for so many diverse peoples around the Mediterranean world. I also study Phoenician settlements in North Africa to see how people from different cultures lived together in colonial and migratory scenarios."

Slide shows the map of the Mediterranean Sea, highlighting the site of Gadir just to the west of the Straights of Gibraltar.

Megan: "From 2013 to 2015 I was part of an archaeological excavation that investigated a Phoenician settlement in southern Tunisia called Zita, near the modern day town of Zarzis and the island of Djerba. Zita was a domestic, religious, and industrial site producing metals, olive oil, pottery, salt, and possibly also fish paste. The settlement was established as early as the 6th century BCE by Phoenician migrants and was later the site of a Roman town starting in the first century CE. At the time of the Roman settlement the Romans had long since conquered and destroyed the powerful Phoenician city of Carthage and had slowly incorporated many parts of North Africa into the Roman Empire. So this site lets us see how Phoenician and Roman, Indigenous North Africans and foreign traders lived and interacted in one place."

Slide shows the map of the Mediterranean, with the sites highlighted, including Zita in North Africa, Rome in Italy, and Carthage in North Africa. Slide text gives the date of the 6th century BCE for the foundation of the Phoenician settlement, and the 1st century CE for the transition to a Roman town.

Daniels: "Areas of this site that were investigated include the Roman town center, the forum, established in the first century CE. Phoenician domestic areas that were later converted to industrial metal producing areas under the Roman occupation, and a Phoenician sanctuary that was in use both before and after the Roman occupation."

Slide shows an excavation plan of the site of Zita, based on the site survey results of 2013. Circle animations are added to indicate the Roman forum, the Phoenician settlement, metal production areas, and a Phoenician sanctuary.

Daniels: "And you can see an image of the excavations and process here."

Slide shows an image of the excavation of the Phoenician sanctuary in process. This includes a large, excavated square with objects and installations in place around the space. The slide text indicates that the sanctuary dates from 200 BCE at the earliest, to 200 CE at the latest.

Daniels: "I was part of a team studying the pottery that emerged from domestic, industrial, and religious areas in order to reconstruct human activities at these areas, and importantly establish dates for different areas of occupation based on the forms and styles of different types of pottery that were found. Pottery is virtually indestructible in the archaeological record and its forms tend to change over time as fashions change so it's a good method for establishing the chronology of a site."

Slide shows three images. In the top left is an image of three archaeologists seated around a table and studying broken pieces of pottery. In the bottom left is an image of the excavations happening, with archaeologists working in an excavation trench. In the top right are photos of two pieces of pottery, both from broken rims.

Daniels: "There are many other aspects of the site that were examined including the faunal remains, or the animal bones, plant remains, architecture, and other artifacts such as remains of religious dedications at the sanctuary—and in fact even before excavating the sanctuary over 600 remains of upright stone dedications what we call "stelae" were found on the surface of the site."

Slide shows the earlier image of the excavated sanctuary again. White arrows are used to indicate some of the upright stone stelae that were found in this area. There is also an inset picture in the bottom right that shows charred olive pits found in the excavation.

Daniels: "How can this topic or material tell us about real people in the past?"

Slide shows four images. On the left is a Greek marble grave stele of a little girl holding a bird. To the right of this is a Greek vase painting scene that shows women weaving at a loom. To the right of that are model figures of bakers preparing and baking bread from ancient Egypt. On the right is a painted "mummy portrait" of a young man from the Fayum in Egypt. The text reads "How can this topic or material tell us about real people in the past?"

Daniels: "Both the study of Hercules / Heracles / Melqart and the excavations that Zita can illuminate the history of peoples who had such a significant impact on ancient Mediterranean history, but who are often sidelined by modern day interests in Greeks and Romans. the Phoenicians were often portrayed as the arch enemies of Romans in literary sources especially because Rome and Carthage fought a series of wars in the 3rd and 2nd centuries BCE known as the Punic Wars. The Phoenicians were also vilified for their religious practices like infant sacrifice and these stereotypes have persisted into modern day."

The slide shows the map of the Mediterranean again, with place names for Gadir, Carthage, Tyre, and Rome. Text below the map reads, "Punic Wars 3rd/2nd C BCE."

Daniels: "For example Italian director Giovanni Pasterone's 1914 film *Cabiria* tells the story of a Sicilian girl captured by Carthaginian pirates and chosen to be sacrificed to their gods."

Slide shows a film poster for "*Cabiria*". The poster shows a scene of ritual sacrifice.

Daniels: "And earlier Gustave Flaubert's 1862 novel *Salammbó* tells the story of the mercenary revolt at Carthage in the 3rd century BCE and the

ill-fated love between the Carthaginian priestess Salammbó and a Libyan mercenary and these depictions tended to push the Phoenicians into kind of a strange and exotic world outside of our own world for us to marvel at and be both intrigued and horrified by their 'savage' cultural practices.

Slide shows the cover of Salammbó, as well as a painting of Salammbó, by Glauco Cambon from 1906. The painting shows a partially nude woman in front of a sunset at sea, with a large serpent wrapping around her left arm.

Daniels: "In addition to being cast as the bad guys in the story of Rome it's often assumed that the Romans essentially stamped out Phoenician cultural and religious practices as the Roman Empire expanded into North Africa, and the general idea that Roman culture overrode local culture, cultural practices, was a process often referred to as "Romanization". Our work at Zita provides a much clearer picture of the Phoenician peoples who settled around the Mediterranean. It's shown that many local practices continued long after Roman occupation, for example an analysis of animal bones shows that local diet based largely on sheep and goat remained largely consistent despite the earlier belief that Romans introduced new dietary practices into the region. Religious practices at the sanctuary also continued well after the Roman town was established, based on the pottery that was used in the sanctuary. This work thus allows us to see better how diverse people actually live together in the face of migration and show that culture persisted despite Roman imperial conquest."

Slide shows the earlier image of the excavated sanctuary again with the inset picture in the bottom right of charred olive pits.

Daniels: "It also helps us just understand better the day-to-day life including what made up local diet, as well as other religious and cultural practices of the Phoenicians, who had such a significant impact in general in the ancient Mediterranean world."

Slide shows the archaeological team at Zita, surrounded by logos for funding agencies. Thank you texts reads: "Thank you to the following funding agencies; NSF, Technische Universiteit Delft, Institute for Field Research, Trudeau Foundation, Universiteit Leiden, Institut National du Patrimoine, the Joukowsky Institute for Archeology and the Ancient World, and the Cotsen institute of Archaeology at UCLA. Special thanks to: the

residents of Zarzis. Zita Project Directors: Brett Kaufman, Ali Drine, Hans Barnard, and Raed Khedher.”

Daniels: “Thanks for watching. To find out more check out peopleinthepast.com.”

Instrumental music plays. The last slide shows the credits for this episode:

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Intro Music: Marika Papagika, Kremetai I Kapota (Free Music Archive, CC BY-NC-ND 3.0)

Peopling the Past Logo: Caitlin Mostoway Parker, Instagram

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