



***PHOENICIAN NETWORKS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN
FROM GREECE TO IBERIA, CA. 700-500 BCE***

OVERVIEW

Between the eighth and early sixth centuries BCE, Greek culture bears the clear imprint of its older neighbors in the Near East, the result of a process of contact and adaptation conventionally called the “orientalizing” phase or even “orientalizing revolution.” Monumental temples and sculpture, vase decoration, alphabetic writing, and mythological motifs all reflect fertile contact with the cultures of Syria-Palestine, Anatolia, Mesopotamia, and Egypt. The Phoenicians in particular, in their mercantile and colonial expansion throughout the Mediterranean, were crucial agents in this story of encounters. They are in fact held to be responsible for contemporaneous orientalizing phases in Italy (Etruria, Sardinia), ancient Iberia (Tartessos in modern Spain and Portugal), and in North Africa. In a novel monograph, I will offer the first systematic, comparative treatment of this transformative period *across* the Mediterranean, from Greece to Iberia, focusing on the contexts and outcomes of cultural contact. My study, multidisciplinary at heart, considers the adoption and marketing of tangible as well as intangible (literary, ideological) cultural capital of “oriental” stock as part of the transformative process through which Iron Age societies along the Mediterranean entered for the first time a new transnational (“global”) cultural and economic network.

This research time will be dedicated to produce a monograph, to be published by an academic press. Calling attention to this cultural horizon, where our concepts of the “Classical” and the “oriental” are questioned, contributes to the goals of “THE COMMON GOOD: THE HUMANITIES IN THE PUBLIC SQUARE” NEH initiative. My discussion should stimulate self-reflection in a time when issues of ethnicity and migration are under special scrutiny, and, on the other hand, when political conflict inflected with religious-ethnic overtones make the rift between the “West” and the “Levant” especially poignant.