

PHOENICIA

THE PHOENICIAN SHIP EXPEDITION



In August, Mrs. Asmaa al-Assad launched the ship Phoenicia from Arwad Island to Tartus, signaling the beginning of the trip that recreates the journey of a Phoenician ship around Africa that took place more than 2,600 years ago.

Phoenicia today carries to the world a message of peace and cultural communication that Syria has worked to spread throughout its history. It also expresses the continuing cultural connection between the Syrian generations, particularly since it was made by the hands of Arwad people who inherited their Phoenician ancestors' trade, becoming distinguished in manufacturing this type of ship that forms part of their history and heritage.

The trip commemorates the achievements of Phoenicians who gave humanity the first alphabet, and it also shows the global dimension of their civilization.



Above: Syria's First Lady with expedition leader Philip Beale

Mrs. Asmaa al-Assad's awareness is part of her interest in the factors of Arab culture that have helped to form the Arab identity throughout the ages.

After extensive research, it was discovered that the building of this type of ship was almost a dying art, with Arwad being the only island in the world capable of manufacturing a vessel similar to that made by the Phoenicians. It is hoped that this project could possibly lead to the revival of this rare art.

Although familiar with many types of construction, Shipbuilder Orwa Bader said this is the first time they have ever tried to build in the Phoenician style. "Usually it takes three men and two months to build any type of ship. But this time, we needed at least five to 10 builders to work on it over eight

months to make it ready. It was a hard but enjoyable job."

The vessel, designed on the basis of information from wrecked ships, pottery and other archaeological artefacts from the era, is made entirely of wood, with a single sail and no engine.

The only concession to 21st Century sailing equipment is its navigational system. Its top speed will be the equivalent of 10km/h on land.

The ship will travel 17,000 miles from Arwad past the eastern

