Nomads of the Mediterranean: Trade and Contact in the Bronze and Iron Ages

Studies in Honor of Michal Artzy

Edited by

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Contents

CHAPTER 1

Tyre before Tyre: The Early Bronze Age Foundation

María Eugenia Aubet

I would like to express herewith my friendship as well as my personal and scientific admiration for Michal Artzy.

1 The Origins of the Settlement in the Archaeological Record

1.1 *Introduction*

Until 2010 the Tyre Project had focused exclusively on the excavation of the Iron Age Phoenician necropolis at al-Bass (Aubet 2010; Aubet, Núñez, and Trellisó 2014, 2016). In 2014, the Direction Générale des Antiquités du Liban (DGA) charged us with opening a new excavation area in the central part of the ancient island (Fig. 1.1a), with the goal of exposing a significant segment of the Phoenician city.[1]

Within the boundaries of Tyre's archaeological park, located in the middle of the ancient island, the density of monumental remains from Ottoman,

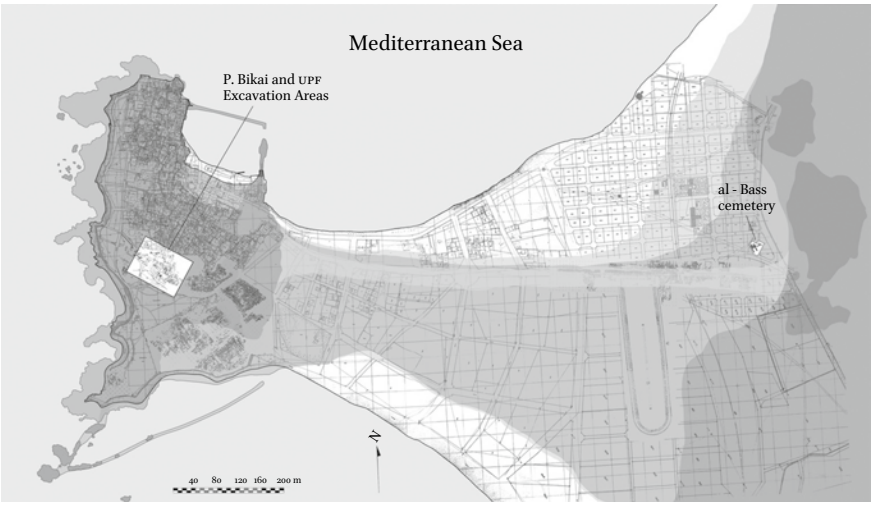

FIGURE 1.1A Map of Tyre with location of the excavation areas

1 The excavations were directed by Francisco J. Núñez, Ali Badawi, and the present author.

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medieval, Byzantine, Roman, and Hellenistic times make it extraordinarily difficult to access the pre-Roman occupational strata. For this reason, in 2014 we decided to open a large excavation area of 30 × 10 m (Area A) (Figs. 1.1b and 1.2) in the vicinity of the deep sounding that Patricia Bikai made in 1973–1974, adjacent to a modern road that rings the island. Area A was situated in one of the few places where the archaeological remains uncovered by Bikai all but guaranteed the presence of Iron Age occupational levels close to the surface. We followed the same north–south oriented grid used during the 1973–1974 excavations and, although the density of structures from various periods made it difficult to identify the exact location of the earlier excavations, the area we selected turned out to be close to the mark. During the 2016 campaign, upon enlarging Area A to the north into Areas 1–4, we encountered an area briefly excavated by Maurice Chéhab, in which the original 4 × 4 m squares grid system was still visible (Figs. 1.1b and 1.2).

The 2014 excavations in Area A were located in one of the central and most elevated parts of the ancient island—at 5.92 m above sea level—which we called the Acropolis. Area A is also about 100 m to the west of the medieval enclosure of the Crusader Cathedral. Among the structures identified in 2014, of particular interest were the remains of an Ottoman house (still inhabited in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries) and a partly-preserved monumental ashlar structure of Persian or Hellenistic date.

1.2 *Chéhab's Sounding* (*Area 1*)

During the months of May and June in 2014, the limits of Area A were expanded to the north of the Ottoman structure mentioned above, in keeping with the goal of obtaining wide exposure. Upon clearing away the brush from the area, however, we found the remains of a large stratigraphic sounding measuring 8 × 8 m, which is not mentioned in the literature (Fig. 1.2: Chéhab's sounding). Signs of it can be seen in aerial photographs taken in the 1960s by Emir Maurice Chéhab (Jidejian 1969; Chéhab 1972), indicating that the sounding was carried out before Bikai's excavations. Some witnesses suggest the possibility

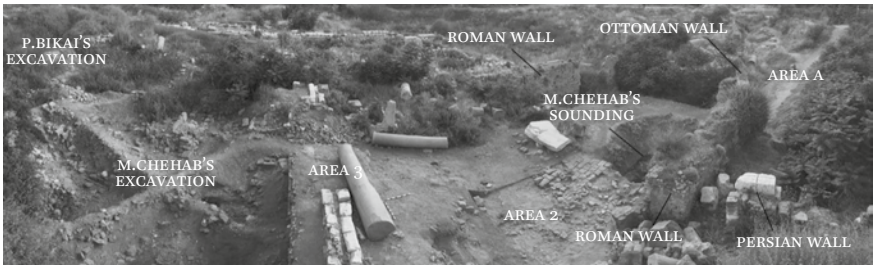

FIGURE 1.1B The excavation areas in 2014–2016

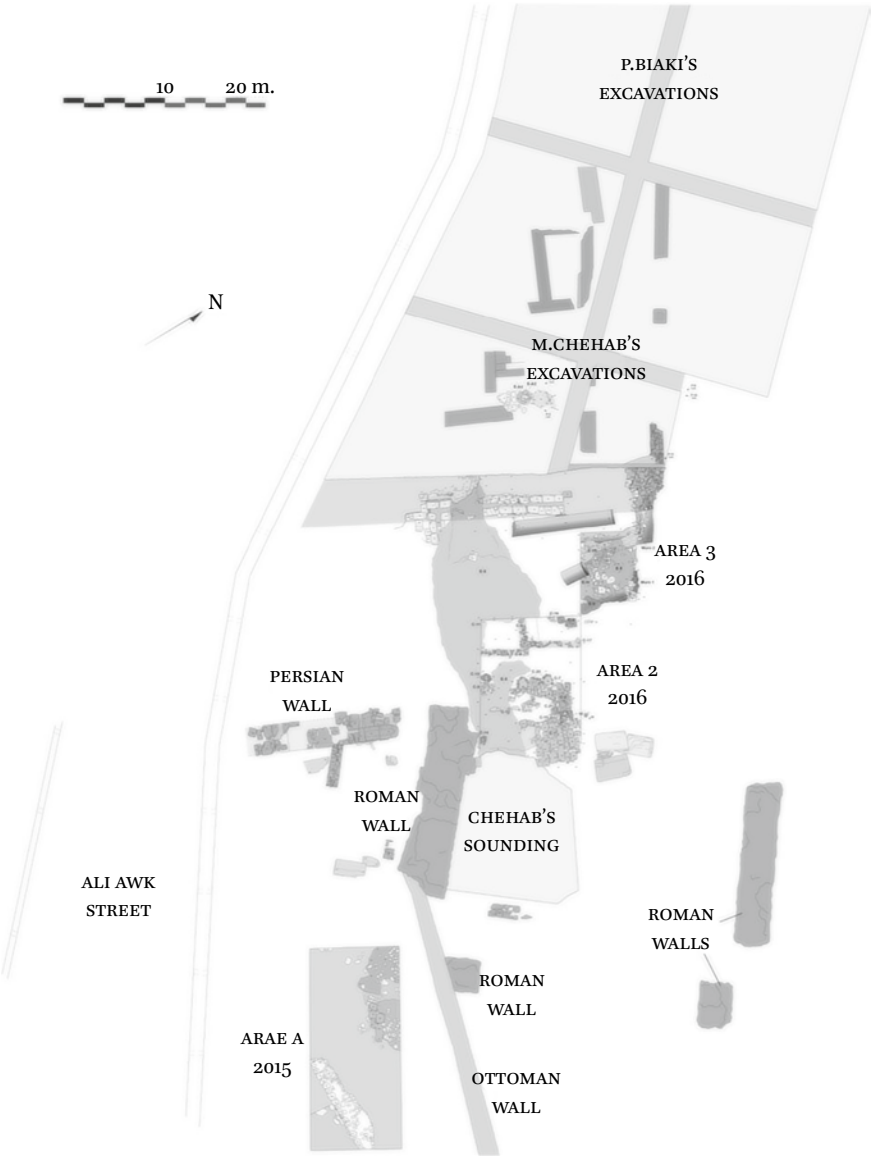

FIGURE 1.2 Plan of the excavation areas in 2014–2016

that this sounding was made in 1967–68 by Chéhab himself or by Michel Chami, Chéhab's assistant at the DGA. Either way, it is clear that the findings from this sounding served as a reference when, in 1972, Chéhab entrusted Bikai with the nearby excavations.

Despite the fact that the sounding was very poorly preserved and obstructed by collapses and recent disturbances—it had served as a dump and weapons cache during the civil war (1975–1990)—it was possible to reconstruct its outer limits and original north–south orientation. Given the sounding's characteristics, which clearly indicate the supervision of a professional archaeologist, it seemed judicious, in the context of our first campaign of excavations on the island, to obtain a partial record of the sounding's stratigraphic sequence from the surface (4.98 m above sea level), taking advantage of the window opened by a preceding excavation.[2]

A careful cleaning of the sounding's western section revealed interesting vertical stratigraphy, some 3.23 m high, which spans occupational layers dating from the origins of the city all the way to the late Iron Age (Fig. 1.3). In other words, the western section of the Chéhab sounding reveals the complete stratigraphy for pre-classical Tyre. A small quantity of ceramic and organic

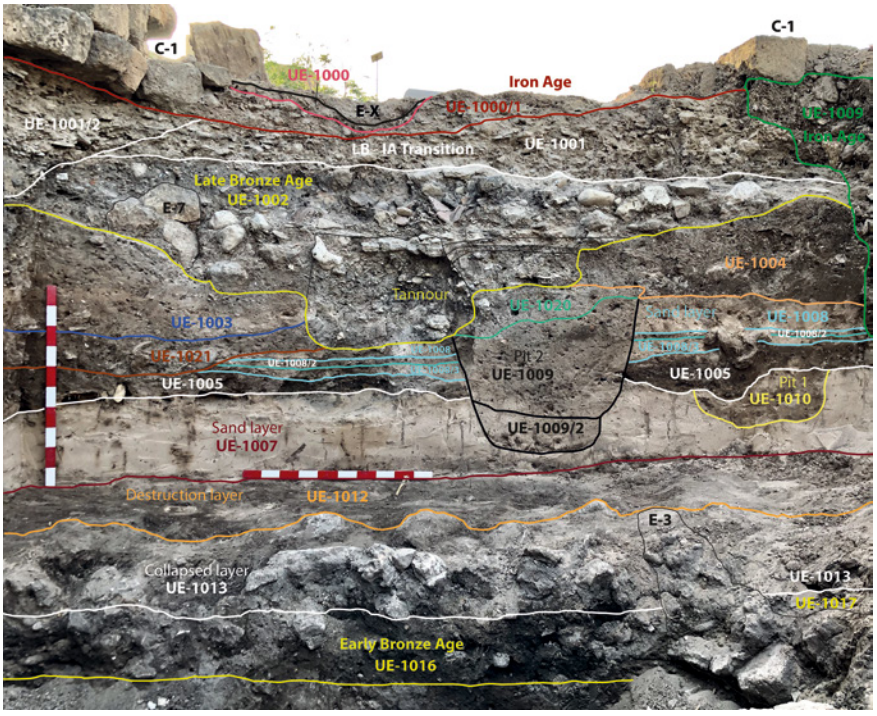

FIGURE 1.3 Chéhab's sounding, 2014; western section

2 The team members in the 2014 season were Antonio Esteban, Michal Krueger, Isabel Muntalt, Mohamed El Mhassani, Barbara Mura, and Ida Oggiano.

samples was collected from each stratum during cleaning, revealing a very complex occupational sequence. The following comments focus exclusively on the deepest levels of the old sounding from the 1960s and on a preliminary interpretation of the finds mentioned above. These observations are limited, of course, by the fact that they are based on a small archaeological sample that was not obtained through systematic excavation.

Overall, the structure and features of Chéhab's sounding provide yet another confirmation of the rigor and clarity of Bikai's assessment of Tyre's stratigraphy.

1.3 *The First Tyre*

Given the limitations of space and the risk of collapse, the cleaning of the sounding's section did not proceed all the way to bedrock, although it did reach a depth of 1.75 m above sea level. The deepest stratum exposed, about half a meter in thickness, contained abundant ashes, charcoal bits, and large, loose stones, in addition to a fine layer of sand. These features suggest an identification as Bikai's Stratum XX (1978: 6–7), which is a destruction horizon following the important occupational horizon of Stratum XXI. Over this lay a thicker layer (0.5–0.7 m) consisting of a collapse of large stones, wall fragments, ashes, and charcoal, which yielded comb-incised ware as well as abundant stone tools (Fig. 1.4). Given the morphology of the artifacts and the features of the layer itself, this level can be confidently identified as Bikai's Stratum XIX.

Immediately above these alternating unequal early layers attesting human frequentation, destruction, and abandonment, there is a substantial accumulation of sterile sand of eolic origin nearly 1 m thick—spanning 3.39 to 2.63 m above sea level (= Bikai's Stratum XVIII). It corresponds to an extended period of abandonment of the island, which appears to span the totality of the Middle Bronze Age (ca. 2000–1600 BCE). Over this we find the first Late Bronze Age levels (Strata XVII–XVI), which represent the first permanent settlement of the island (Bikai 1978: 64–65).

The lowest levels identified in the western section of Chéhab's sounding thus correspond to Strata XX and XIX in the 1973–1974 sequence, dated to the Early Bronze Age IV (ca. 2500–2000 BCE) (Bikai 1978: 6–7). These deposits are significant because the same levels were discovered also in the 1970s excavations, lying over a considerable ash destruction layer (Strata XXII–XXI), some 0.15 m thick, which sealed the remains of a large rectangular structure, of which one corner was exposed (Fig. 1.4). This structure was built very close to bedrock on the highest point of the reef, and was found to have thick stone walls nearly 1 m wide, a plaster floor, and, as in Byblos, stone pillar bases presumably meant to support wooden columns. Bikai estimated that this exceptional building,

FIGURE 1.4 Early Bronze Age building, 1973–1974
PHOTO COURTESY OF P.M. BIKAI

which she dated to the end of the Early Bronze Age III, a little before the mid-third millennium BCE, might have reached a length of 15 m (Bikai 1978: 5; 1992: 67; Bikai and Bikai 1987: 74–75).

Based on stratigraphic and architectural evidence, Bikai subdivided the Early Bronze Age strata in Tyre into three subphases: (a) a first occupational phase just above bedrock (Strata XXVII–XXIII); (b) the aforementioned structure (Strata XXII–XXI); and (c) a period following the abandonment of the structure (Strata XX–XIX). Following this, the second major period at the site is the occupational break attested by the sterile sand layer of Stratum XVIII (Middle Bronze Age) (Bikai 1978: 14).

Clearly, our section in Chéhab's sounding only reaches the third subphase of the Early Bronze Age, in which the large Strata XXII–XXI building was abandoned, as well as the upper part of the levels associated with the structure's construction.

As expected from a superficial section cleaning, the archaeological materials collected were not abundant, although they are significant. Among the finds, the lithic finds stand out—including a number of very fine blanks and a flint core (Fig. 1.5e)—as do bowls (Fig. 1.5d), juglets and a stone vessel of Egyptian origin (Fig. 1.5c). Of chronological relevance are large two-handled jars with combed incised decoration (Fig. 1.5a, b), typical of Tyre's Strata

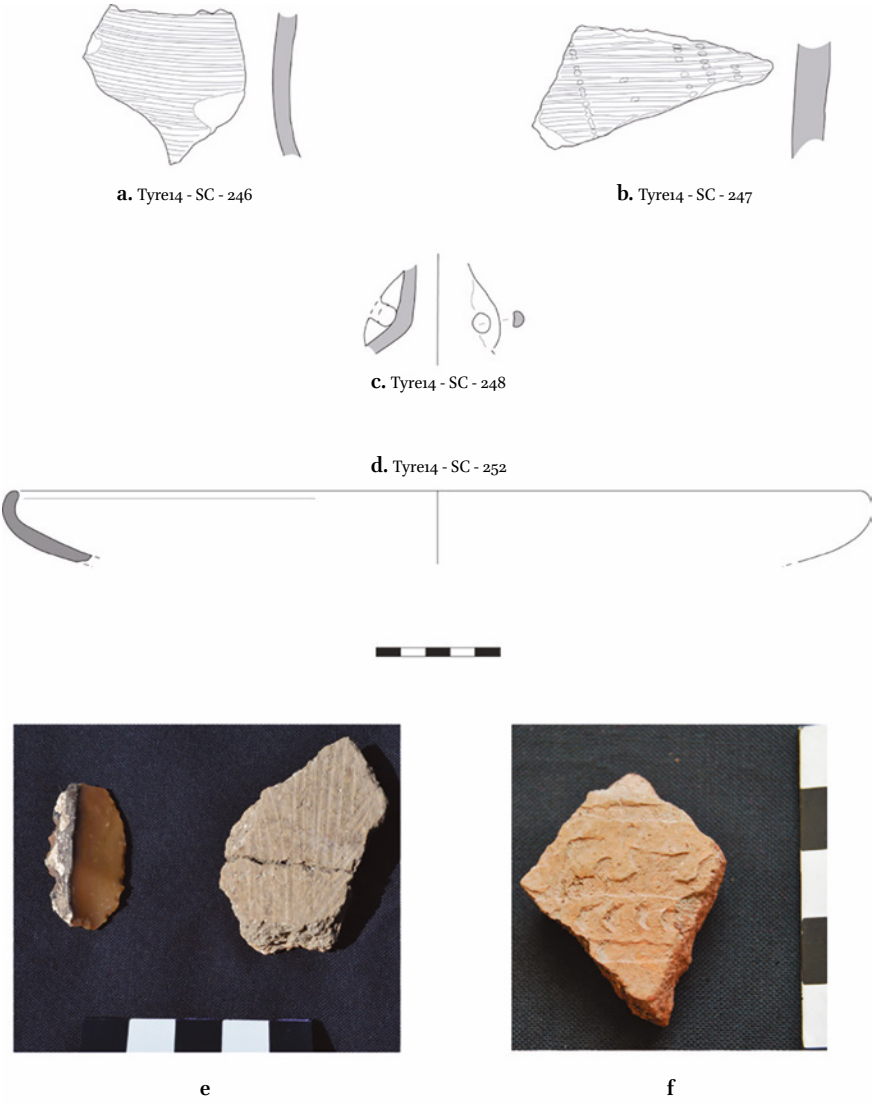

FIGURE 1.5 Early Bronze Age pottery and flint from the 2014 excavations

XXVII–XXI (Bikai 1978: 69, pls. LVI.22, LVII.69), and also attested at Sidon (Doumet-Serhal 2006a: 40–41; 2006b: 10, pl. 14) and in Levels 17–16 at Tell Arqa ("céramique peignée"), belonging to the late EB III (Phase R) and EB IV (Phase P), c. 2700–2000 BCE (Thalmann 2006: 17–28, pl. 46, 50–53). At Tell Arqa this pottery style is found in association with a lithic assemblage very similar to ours. In general, the combed wares at Tyre are slightly later than those at

Byblos or Tell Arqa, where they are especially abundant in the earliest Level 17 (2700–2500/2450 cal BCE).

One exceptional find associated with these materials is a sherd with a partially preserved impressed frieze featuring an animal, probably a lion (Fig. 1.5f). The piece belongs to a category of vessels characteristic of the EB III and IV, called cylinder-seal-impressed ware and represented, for example, by large jars in the Early Bronze levels at Ebla (Palace G), Hama, Tell Fadous-Kfarabida, and Sidon (Genz 2014: 300, fig. 21.4; 2015: 102, fig. 9; 2017: 77, fig. 4.3; Doumet-Serhal 2006a: 259–270). In large urban centers of this period, this ware appears associated with public structures or administrative activities, like commercial transactions and record keeping.

The first human occupation on the island of Tyre occurred during a period in which urban centers with public structures and fortifications were thriving on the northern Lebanese coast at Tell Arqa, Byblos, and Tell Fadous-Kfarabida (Dunand 1952; Saghieh 1983; Thalmann 2006; Genz 2014). In contrast to these centers on the northern coast, however, the Early Bronze Age has usually been understood to be a period of marked decline on the southern coast, a process reaching its peak with the occupational break at Tyre during the Middle Bronze Age. Compared with the great northern centers, understood to be incipient territorial states, the only EB IV site known in the south—the island of Tyre—would constitute little more than an "ephemeral campsite" (Genz 2015: 105; 2017: 76).

The great building of Strata XXII–XXI, dating to the mid-third millennium at Tyre, however, suggests a deliberate choice toward permanence on a small rocky islet, probably related to the construction of a temple—what we might understand as a symbolic appropriation of coastal reefs to serve as an outpost for a nearby center on the mainland. The discovery of cylinder-seal-impressed pottery implies that a range of commercial and administrative activities was taking place in the vicinity of the Tyre stone structure, since this ceramic style is associated with similar activities and notably with the use of weight systems in the northern urban centers. The discovery in 1973–1974 of an Early Dynastic Egyptian inscribed quartz cylinder seal in Stratum XIX (Ward 1978: 84) carries with it the additional implication of incipient interregional trade. The number of combed sherds—some handmade—related to large storage jars also suggests transport and trade activities in this period.

It is reasonable to assume that the population that first occupied the Tyre reef came from the nearby mainland. In my opinion, there is only one possible candidate: given its characteristics, the amplitude of its stratified deposits, and its location in a fertile plain, all signs point to the tell at Al Rashidiyeh, located on the coast just 4 km southeast of the island of Tyre, close to the important

freshwater springs at Ras el-'Ayn. It has not yet been possible to carry out excavations on Tell Al Rashidiya, due to the presence of a dense Palestinian refugee camp at the site; however, future research at this site may well yield surprises, especially as concerns the periodization of the Bronze Age on the southern Lebanese coast.

Without more details concerning this coastal tell, situated in an area bearing evidence of human occupation stretching back to the Neolithic, it is premature to speak of periods of decline, occupation, and abandonment on the southern Lebanese coast, based exclusively on the stratigraphy at Tyre, which was a settlement of little relevance before the Late Bronze and Iron Ages. We are informed about this by a reference to a "ruler (king) of Tyre" in an Egyptian Execration Text (ca. 1880 BCE), during the Middle Bronze Age, when the island of Tyre was deserted (Katzenstein 1973: 19; cf. Bikai 1978: 72). It seems clear that the Egyptian text is referring to a different Tyre, the "continental" one.

Later documentary sources also refer to this continental Tyre, calling it *Ushu*. In the Amarna period (fourteenth century BCE), Ushu supplied water to the island, was a faithful ally to Egypt, and was the capital of a monarchy. Much later, the Assyrian Annals mention that Ushu was the bridgehead for the assault on the island, and in the time of Alexander the Great, it was still the site of an old temple to the god Melqart (Katzenstein 1973: 14, 29). The classical geographers knew Ushu by the names *Palaityros* or *Palaetyros* (Old Tyre)—a late appellation that is first attested in Strabo (16.224)—as well as *Tirus vetus* (Just. *Epit.* 11.10–11).

1.4 *Tyre, "The Rock"*

As a whole, the remains discovered in 2014 and especially those from 1973–1974 reveal that the island of Tyre was occupied for the first time around 2700 BCE by small groups from the mainland, perhaps fishermen. Rather than "occupation," perhaps it would be more accurate to speak of the occasional or seasonal presence on the reef of a community otherwise residing at a nearby mainland center.

The reef could not have been very attractive for its first occupants. It was probably made up of two parallel sandstone islets, the largest of which did not rise much higher than 1 m above sea level (Fig. 1.6), offering only minimal space poorly suited to the establishment of a long-term settlement.[3] The original name of the islet was *Ṣur*, meaning "rock" or "outcrop"—a name that the city

3 Recent geophysical research suggests that from 6000 to 4000 BCE, that is, during the Neolithic and Chalcolithic periods, sea level was lower than it is currently, such that the exposed

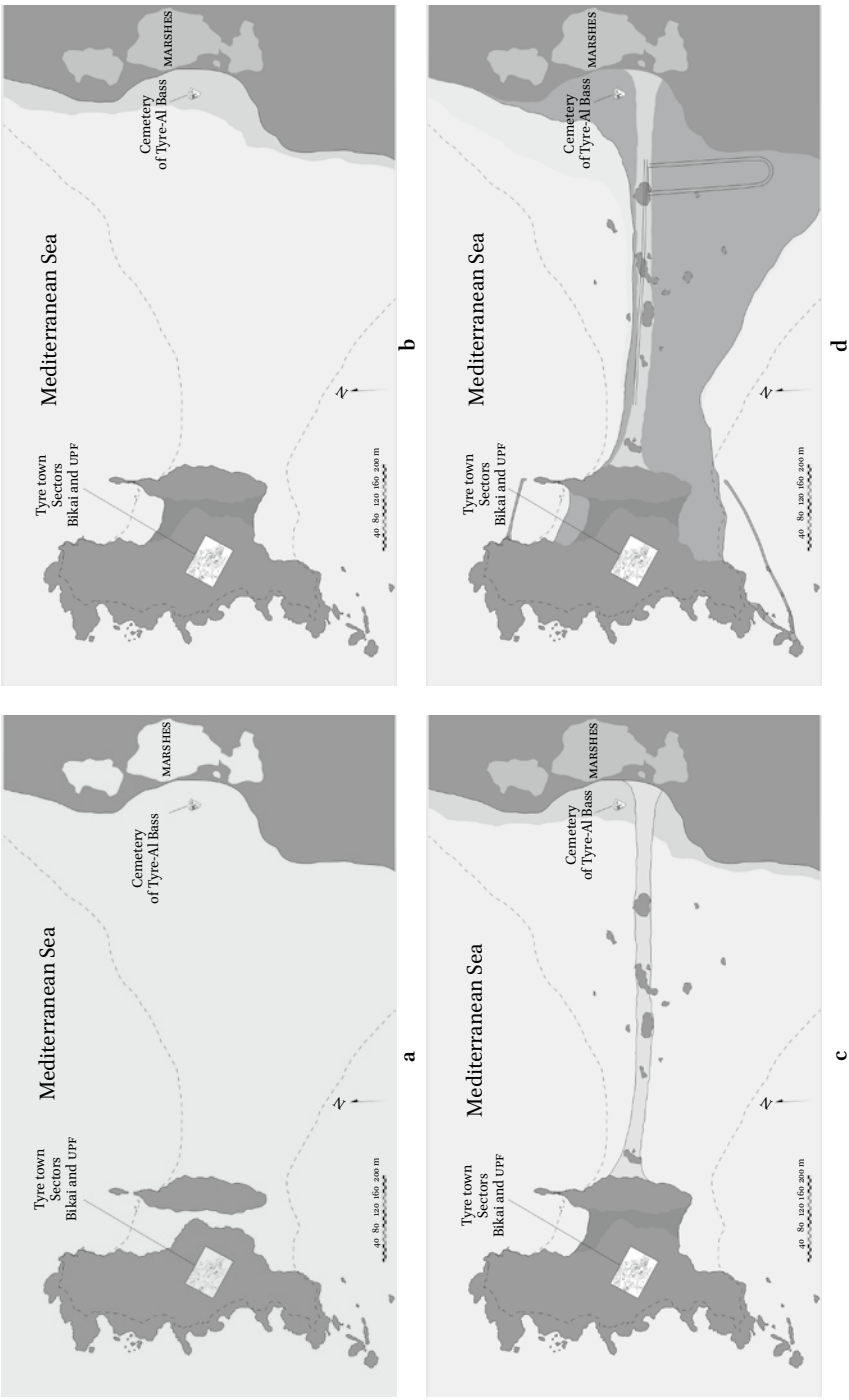

FIGURE 1.6 Reconstruction of the evolution of Tyre
BASED ON P.M. BIKAI 1992

has kept to this day, and from which the Greek transcription *Tyros* derives (Katzenstein 1973: 9).

The first evidence for deliberate, permanent occupation on the islet—a proper "foundation"—is the construction of the large structure of Strata XXII–XXI, ca. 2700/2500 BCE, which was set on one of the highest points of the reef, at a short distance to the west of the Crusader Cathedral (Bikai 1992: 74–75, pl. 13).

It is nevertheless surprising to read Herodotus's famous passage (Hdt. 2.44) describing his visit to insular Tyre in the mid-fifth century BCE in order to learn more about its famous sanctuary to Herakles (= Melqart). Herodotus describes the sanctuary and its famous stelae and, speaking with the temple's priests, the Greek historian asks them how much time has passed since the temple's foundation. The priests tell their visitor that the god's sanctuary was founded at the same time as Tyre itself, 2300 years ago (Katzenstein 1973: 18; Bikai 1978: 72; Bondì 1990: 258). Herodotus's reckoning, which was probably based on the temple's archives, yields a date of roughly 2750 BCE for Tyre's first "foundation." This reckoning is in broad agreement with the chronology attributed to the Early Bronze Age materials described above.

There are hardly any descriptions of "The Rock" before the Iron Age. The most famous account refers to Hiram I of Tyre, who, according to a local tradition reported by Flavius Josephus (*Ap.* 1.113), united the two reef islands in the tenth century BCE in order to found a new capital. In the tenth and ninth centuries, the city is already represented with impressive walls in the bronze gates of Balawat, and referred to as "the fortress" (2 Samuel 24:6–7). In the early sixth century BCE, Tyre is described as being "in the midst of the sea" (Ezekiel 27:32). But that is a later Tyre, the capital of a powerful kingdom and the metropolis of a colonial-commercial diaspora that sent its citizens and merchants across the Mediterranean and to the Atlantic. As has happened many times with other great metropoleis, like Rome, there is a temptation to judge Tyre's early days and prehistory in light of its future greatness. Before the Iron Age, the island of Tyre would have been a mere extension of the continental Tyre, Ushu. In the Middle and Late Bronze Ages, when the contemporary written sources do mention Tyre, they are referring above all to the city of Ushu, not to the island.

Thus, while the Early Bronze Age marks the foundation of Tyre's first insular settlement, the second and more definitive foundation belongs to King Hiram I in the tenth century BCE, this time the result of an explicitly political decision marking the creation of a great capital.

area of the Tyrian reef may have been considerably greater (Marriner 2008: 68–99; Marriner, Morhange, and Carayon 2008).

2 The Legends about Tyre's Origins

A discussion of the earliest Tyre attested archeologically is also an opportunity to review the textual data at hand regarding the site's beginnings. In the absence of direct written sources relating to Tyre's history, which are now lost, we are left with the translations of Phoenician works—for example, those of Menander of Ephesus (via Flavius Josephus) and Sanchuniathon (via Philo of Byblos)—as well as with various, often quite late, pseudo-historical sources that tend to conflate myth and real history.

As a starting point, a noteworthy source is the work of Flavius Josephus (37–100 CE), who states in *Contra Apionem* (1.107) and *Antiquitates Judaicae* (8.55) that he transcribed entire passages from the Hellenistic writers Menander of Ephesus (*The History of Tyre*, third–second centuries BCE) and Dius (*The History of the Phoenicians*), a Hellenistic historian cited by Josephus (*Ap*. 1.116). These, in turn, claimed to have translated into Greek the *Annals of Tyre* that were kept among the city's archives and official records (Katzenstein 1973: 77–79).

Josephus says (*Ap.* 1.113) that Tyre was originally formed from two islands, one larger than the other, and that in the tenth century BCE, King Hiram I united them in order to increase the city's size and erect the capital's primary public and religious structures.

Another description of Tyre's origins is related by Philo of Byblos, a grammarian from the time of Nero and the author of an eight-volume *Phoenician History*, part of which was transcribed in Eusebius of Caesarea's *Praeparatio evangelica* (1.10.9–11) in the third–fourth centuries CE. Philo's work was, in turn, a translation into Greek of the writings of a certain Sanchuniathon, who claimed to have lived at the time of the Trojan War. Philo prided himself in recovering ancient Phoenician traditions, and interpreted myths as memories of ancient events that actually occurred (Attridge and Oden 1981: 43; Baumgarten 1981: 159–165; Ribichini 1985: 20–22). According to this legend, Tyre's origins are connected with two rival, founding brothers: Samemrumos, also called Hypsuranios, and Ousoos. Hypsuranios lived in Tyre and clashed with his brother Ousoos, the first human sailor. One day, as a storm hit the coast and started forest fires near Tyre, Ousoos, a great hunter who wore animal skins, built a canoe and set out to sea. Then he consecrated two stelae to the fire and the wind—the divine forces that had helped him—founded the city, and offered sacrifices to these stelae in the form of blood libations from the animals he had hunted. For the first time the symbol of the two stelae or columns appears connected to a foundation myth, an allegory of the "twin cities"—the insular and continental Tyre (Ousoos, Usoos = Ushu?)—which is also communicated

through the two eponymous heroes or mythical ancestors (Grotanelli 1972: 52–53).

Classical mythology preserves another foundation myth, although this time we are dealing with very late sources. In this one, Tyre was founded on two rocks connected by the roots of a sacred olive tree (Nonnus, *Dion.* 40.468). The *Dionysiaca* is a text in verse by Nonnus of Panopolis, written in the fifth century CE, which describes the visit of Dionysus or Bacchus to the city of Tyre (*Dion.* 40.300–500). Fascinated as he beholds the temple of Herakles Astrochiton, he pays homage to the Tyrian god, who then invites Dionysus to his table, where they share a banquet of ambrosia—the elixir of immortality and drink of the gods—nectar, and wine (line 420). Later Dionysus asks Herakles about the origin of the city and who set the "rocks" in the sea. Herakles tells him that he himself did, using an oracle of dreams to instruct the first inhabitants of the region—the first men on earth or "sons of the earth"—in the art of navigation, of shipbuilding, and to set out at sea until they reached the appointed location. There they found two rocks drifting in the sea—the floating islands—that were named "Ambrosians" or immortals (lines 467–469). Herakles proceeds with the description: On one of these rocks a sacred olive tree was growing, as old as the islands themselves, permanently enveloped in flames without burning up. On the tree were a bird and a cup, and a snake was wrapped around its trunk. The men who were sent to the island had to capture the eagle and sacrifice it to Zeus, making a libation of its blood, which they were to pour over the Ambrosian Rocks in order to cement them together, fix them to the ocean floor, and found the two islands (lines 499–505). The eagle offered itself as a sacrifice, and, through this self-immolation and the blood sacrifice, the islands stopped wandering. Then the god ordered the construction of the city "by the sea of Tyre." "The place of the eagle sacrifice indicates where Tyre should be founded and the image of the island that emerges from the sea from two wandering rocks will remain as a metaphor for creation, the sacred birth, and the etymology of the original Phoenician name of the city" (Katzenstein 1973: 9; see Naster 1986: 361–363). Throughout this story, the protagonist is clearly Herakles-Melqart, the principal god of Tyre—the *Baal Ṣur*, "Lord of Tyre"—who, in turn, would also immolate himself in fire in order to achieve immortality.[4]

It is difficult to date the origin of these legends, which seem to have been set down in writing quite late, since they do not appear before the fourth or fifth

4 The bibliography on Melqart and his Greek and Latin equivalents (Herakles and Hercules) is infinite, particularly regarding foundation myths and the well-known sanctuaries in Tyre and Gadir.

century CE.[5] The two versions of the myth, the one of Philo of Byblos and the one of Nonnus, contain early features that are clearly oriental and probably emerged from the same original tradition. Indeed, despite their differences, the myths encapsulate a number of common elements: the flaming olive tree, the blood sacrifice, the two rocks, the close relationship between the fire and the olive tree, etc.[6]

Earlier, in the third century CE, the legends passed on by Nonnus and Philo of Byblos had enjoyed tremendous popularity in the city of Tyre. Indeed, the motif of the Ambrosian Rocks and the flaming olive tree appear on bronze coins from the Tyrian mint even before they show up in Nonnus's erudite writings. Between the reigns of Elagabalus (218–222) and Gallienus (253–268) the Ambrosian Rocks appear on Tyrian coins accompanied by the Greek or Latin legend AMBROSIE PETRE or PETRAI (Cook 1940: 975–1015; Naster 1986: 364–368; Bijovsky 2005). The rocks are depicted as round objects on a joint pedestal, flanking a flaming olive tree (Fig. 1.7) and are sometimes accompanied by other motifs connected to Tyrian legends, such as the dog and the murex. Indeed, alongside the symbols explicitly related to the foundation myths, other legendary Tyrian figures are common on Roman coins from Tyre—the hero Cadmus, the bull representing Zeus in the myth of the abduction of

FIGURE 1.7
Bronze coin of Elagabalus (218–222 CE)
PHOTO COURTESY OF G. BIJOVSKY

5 Another author from this period, Achilles Tatius (fourth century CE), alludes to the same symbols: in his *Leucippe and Clitophon* (2.14), Tatius mentions the sacred precinct of Herakles in Tyre, where there was a burning olive tree.

6 Evidence dating to the beginning of the Roman Empire gives us an even earlier attestation of the myth. A small limestone relief, found in Tyre and now housed at the Museum of the American University of Beirut, depicts a strange scene, featuring a large tree with burning branches, an eagle sitting on it, a serpent wrapped around its trunk, and a deer (Will 1950–1951; Zanovello 1981). The Beirut relief is presently the earliest known representation of the legend about Tyre's origins.

Europa, the eagle, the murex, dolphins, Herakles-Melqart, Pygmalion, the two stelae, the palm tree, and a flaming altar. On the coins of Gordian III (238–244) there also appear two brief legends in Phoenician script (*lṣr*, "of Tyre") (Naster 1986: 364; Bijovsky 2000: 326).

Of course, there is some confusion surrounding the symbolic significance of these Tyrian coinages and regarding the possibility that the Ambrosian Rocks depicted on them represent the two islands, mountains, stelae, betyls, or even the famous Pillars of Herakles (Bijovsky 2005: 831; Butcher 2016: 236).

Whatever the case, in my opinion, the crucial question is not whether the iconography of the coins or the late texts of Philo of Byblos, Nonnus, or Achilles Tatius demonstrate the persistence into Roman times of a remote and ancient myth—one whose origin cannot even be dated today. Rather, the question is why such a remote past is being invoked—and with it the ancient Tyrian heritage, its foundation myths, and its heroes—in coinages and erudite texts within the heavily Hellenized context of the Eastern Roman Empire, in a sort of "renaissance" of early Tyrian heritage, a glorification of the past, with the goal of underscoring the unique nature of the cults and traditions of Roman Tyre (Bijovsky 2000: 326; Butcher 2016: 236, 252). The idea of using the remote, albeit reinvented, past as a means of promoting present greatness would seem to be typical of the elite culture of the second–third-centuries Eastern Roman Empire, which would have found in the supposed, or probable, antiquity of its foundational myths a measure of legitimacy for its political ambitions.

Thus, there were several versions of a legend surrounding the origins of Tyre, which was deformed and adapted to suit to present interests and circumstances. Poets and thinkers told myths designed to create a unifying referent that would cement the community around the idea that the foundation of a city is always a unique event, auspiciously ordained by the gods. Out of all these legends, collective memory latched onto the image of two islands, the flaming olive tree, and the "king of the city" in the divine origins of Tyre.

Acknowledgments

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