Religious Identities in the Levant from Alexander to Muhammed
CONTEXTUALIZING THE SACRED

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Continuity and Change

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## Contents

List of Illustrations ........................................................................................................... viii

List of Ancient Authors and Texts ...................................................................................... xix

Abbreviations of Journals and Books .................................................................................... xxv

Acknowledgements ............................................................................................................ xxxvii

Between Continuity and Change: Religious Identities in the Levant from Alexander to Muhammed

MICHAEL BLÖMER, ACHIM LICHTENBERGER and RUBINA RAJA ........................................... 1

### Part I. General

Les signes du changement : réalités et faux-semblants

MAURICE SARTRE ............................................................................................................. 11

‘Familiar Strangers’: Gods and Worshippers away from Home in the Roman Near East

TED KAIZER ....................................................................................................................... 19

*Gymnasia*: Aspects of a Greek Institution in the Hellenistic and Roman Near East

FRANK DAUBNER ............................................................................................................. 33

The assembly rooms of religious groups in the Hellenistic and Roman Near East: A comparative study

INGE NIELSEN .................................................................................................................. 47

‘The God who is called IAO’: Judaism and Hellenistic Mystery Religions

LESTER L. GRABBE ........................................................................................................... 75

Conversion, apologetic argumentation, and polemic (amongst friends) in second-century Syria: Theophilus’ *Ad Autolycum*

JAKOB ENGBERG ............................................................................................................... 83

Politicising the Religious: Or How the Umayyads Co-opted Classical Iconography

NASSER RABBAT .............................................................................................................. 95
Part II. Northern Syria

The Re-emergence of Iron Age Religious Iconography in Roman Syria
GUY BUNNENS ................................................................. 107

Religious Continuity? The Evidence from Doliche
MICHAEL BLÖMER .......................................................... 129

The Jebel Khalid Temple: Continuity and Change
GRAEME CLARKE ............................................................ 143

A Laodican on Mount Casius
JULIEN ALIQUOT .............................................................. 157

Defining new gods: The daimones of Antiochus
MARGHERITA FACELLA ..................................................... 169

Images of Priests in North Syria and beyond
MICHAEL BLÖMER .......................................................... 185

Perduration, Continuity and Discontinuity in the sanctuary of Atargatis in Hierapolis (Syria)
ALEJANDRO EGEA ............................................................ 199

The Transformation of a Saintly Paradigm: Simeon the Elder and the Legacy of Stylitism
VOLKER MENZE .............................................................. 213

Part III. The Desert and Mesopotamia

Babylon in achämenidischer und hellenistischer Zeit:
Eine Stellungnahme zur aktuellen Forschungsdiskussion
WOLFGANG MESSERSCHMIDT ............................................. 229

Bel of Palmyra
MICHAŁ GAWLIKOWSKI .................................................. 247

Cult Images in Cities of the Syrian-Mesopotamian Desert during the First Three Centuries CE:
Continuity and Change
LUCINDA DIRVEN ............................................................ 255

St Sergios in Resafa: Worshipped by Christians and Muslims Alike
DOROTHÉE SACK ............................................................. 271
## CONTENTS

### Part IV. Southern Syria

Continuity and Change of Religious Life in Southern Syria during the Hellenistic and Roman Periods  
KL AUS STEFAN FREYBERGER ................................................................. 283

Nouveaux dieux et dieux nouveaux dans le Hauran (Syrie du sud) à l’époque romaine  
ANNIE SARTRE-FAURIAT ........................................................................ 297

New archaeological research at the sanctuary of Si’ in southern Syria:  
The Graeco-Roman divinities invite themselves to Baalshamin  
JACQUELINE DENTZER-FEYDY ............................................................... 313

### Part V. Palestine

The Hellenistic-Roman Sanctuary at et-Tell (Bethsaida) and the Question of Tradition in the Layout of the Holy Place  
ILONA SKUPIN S KA-LOVSET ............................................................... 329

More on the Intentionally Broken Discus Lamps from Roman Palestine:  
Mutilation and its Symbolic Meaning  
OREN TAL and MARCIO TEIXEIRA BASTOS .................................................. 345

### Part VI. Arabia

From Nabataea to the Province of Arabia: Changing Religious Identities and the Cults of Dushara  
PETER ALPASS .......................................................................................... 371

‘Romanisation’ through coins: The case of provincia Arabia  
CRISTINA M. ACQUA ............................................................................... 383

The Last Phases of the Cathedral Church of Jerash  
BEAT BRENK ............................................................................................ 399

Index ........................................................................................................... 415
When the Greeks and Macedonians decided to settle in the Near East following the victories of Alexander the Great, they first colonised the northwest of the country, on the Mediterranean coast and along the Orontes. There, Antigonus the One-Eyed founded Antigoneia, close to the mouth of the river, and most probably the two cities of Heraclea-by-the-sea, on the cape of Ras Ibn Hani, and Pella, in the middle Orontes valley, where Apamea was later to be established. It is also there that Seleucus Nicator chose to found the four cities of the Syrian tetrapolis after he had held Antigonus in check: Antioch-on-the-Orontes, Seleucia in Pieria, Laodicea-by-the-sea, and Apamea-on-the-Orontes, the first of which he eventually made the capital of his kingdom. The Greeks had already come into contact with the native peoples of Syria in this area from the Archaic period onwards, more particularly with the Phoenicians through the ports of al-Mina and Posideion. Nevertheless, the founding of new cities entailed a dramatic change. The arrival of settlers from all over the Greek world, in a proportion that remains difficult to assess, had unprecedented effects on local societies, cultures, and religions. Although it has been much discussed, the word ‘hellenisation’ is still useful to describe a movement which often appears in full light in the Roman period only, on account of the relative lack of Hellenistic sources—which raises important questions about continuity and change in the local traditions between this period and the previous ones.

The case of Laodicea-by-the-sea is no exception. Only one Hellenistic inscription is attested in the city, the famous ‘décret des péliganes de Laodicée-sur-mer’ of 174 BC, which records that a family of Laodicceans had founded a private sanctuary of Isis and Sarapis in the third or second century BC, and had demanded from the civic authorities that their property be protected when a faithful wished to erect a statue inside it. But this unique document has survived only in the form of a copy made during the Roman period. Some Roman coins of Laodicea show Sarapis’s bust on their reverse, which suggests that the sanctuary became a civic place of worship from the end of the first century BC onwards. Here, at least, we have enough information to trace the development of a local cult from its foundation in the Hellenistic period to its eventual transformation in the early Roman period. The aim of the present paper is to continue the investigation in this direction by building on research conducted since 2007 as part of the programme of the Inscriptions grecques et latines de la Syrie (IGLS). By placing emphasis on the Greek dedication of a Laodicean on Mount Casius, we will show how, and hopefully why, the Macedonian past was continuously revivified, transformed, and reincorporated into the


4 BMC Syria, p. 250, nos. 25–27 (first or second century AD); SNG Copenhagen Syria, no. 337 (after 48/7 BC).
religious traditions of the cities of the Syrian tetrapolis through the ages, even under Roman rule.

About fifty kilometres north of Laodicea, Mount Casius (today Jabal al-Aqrā’) marked in Antiquity a natural boundary between Laodicea and Seleucia (Fig. 12.1). It has been regarded as a sacred place, and even as a fully qualified divinity, at least since the Late Bronze age. Ugaritans, who called it the Sapunu (ṣpn), identified it with the realm of their gods, especially that of Baal, the divine lord of storm and thunder. In his Phoenician History, written in the late first century or in the early second century AD, Philo of Byblos kept this very ancient tradition alive, although he imagined Casius as a giant, in the same way as he imagined Libanus, Antilibanus, and Brathy, in keeping with his Euhemeristic ideas. The explanation of such a survival (or revival) could lie in the fundamental role assigned to the divine lord of the summit, henceforth Zeus Casius,


8 Suda, s.v. Κάσιον ὄρος (Κ 454); Anth. Pal., 6. 332; Hist. Aug., Hadr, 14. 3; Julian. Mis., 34 (361d); Amm. Marc., 22. 14. 4–6.


10 M. Hendy, ‘Roman and Byzantine Coins’, in W. Djobadze,
However, as the archaeologist W. Djebadze assumed, like others before, the famous sanctuary of Zeus Casius could have been built elsewhere than on the summit.

Below the peak, on the site of the Byzantine monastery of Saint Barlaam, at 1316 m above sea level, a pavement was found in situ 60 cm below the floor of the Christian basilica. The excavator associated it with a number of isolated drums of fluted columns and with some elements of a Doric entablature. These remains may belong to a hypothetical Hellenistic temple that would be comparable with the very rare Doric temples of Hellenistic Syria, in particular with that of nearby Seleucia. In addition, other spolia, including fragments of inscriptions and decorated architectural elements dated between the second and the fourth century AD, were reused in later Christian structures. Their provenance and function have yet to be established. W. Djebadze suggested, rather unconvincingly, that some of them belonged to a funerary distyle monument from the second century AD containing a sarcophagus. Fragments of inscribed tiles indicate more surely that the pagan place of worship was consecrated to Zeus Casius, because they bear the name of the god in the genitive case (Διὸς Κασίου, Διὸς Κασσίου). The monastery itself is supposed to have been built at the end of the fifth or during the sixth century around the cult of Barlaam, a monk coming from the nearby Black Mountains (Amanus) who had been sent to Mount Casius to drive out the ‘prince of demons’ and who is said to have destroyed the devils and the statue of Dios (Zeus) there.

The above-mentioned facts are well known. As stated above, I will now focus on a Greek dedication discovered in the ruins of the Christian monastery of Saint Barlaam. The text has been deciphered by H. Seyrig, who died long before W. Djebadze published his reading and short comments with a photograph (Fig. 12.2).

The block of hard limestone on which it was engraved belonged to a large altar or a statue base of which only the upper left corner and its frame remained. It appears to be lost today, but the available picture enables us to improve the reading of the first editor. I read:

Katá συνήγωρος [n tís]
Seleukēw oí frou̱oúllêtis]
Δαμασίας Ἀγαθοκλέ-
ους Ἰουλίεως ὁ [καὶ Λαδή]-


16 Seyrig, ‘Inscriptions’, pp. 201–02, fig. 383 (SEG 36 1297).
L. 2. About προβολή, see IGLS iii, 1185, already quoted by H. Seyrig; dedication of a statue by ὁ δήμος καὶ ἡ προβολή, in an inscription from Seleucia of AD 121/2.

L. 3–4. H. Seyrig was reluctant to restore the patronymic name of the worshipper. He read APA[- - -]ους, considering Λαοδικείους too short, and wondering if the second letter of the name could be a ρχ instead of a γαμμα. The photograph leaves no room for doubt. A neglected argument also has to be taken into account: the name Λαοδικεύς is twice attested in the onomastic stock of the Laodiceans under the Roman Empire, as we know of a Laodicean named Caius Julius Agathocles who was a witness amongst soldiers from the Near East, mentioned in a Latin diploma published for the veterans of the Misenian fleet under Vespasian, and another Agathocles, father of the owner or operator of a Laodicean merchant ship laden with wine, mentioned in an Egyptian register of the second century AD.

L. 5. H. Seyrig expressed some reservations about the reading of τὸν ᾧ[νδριάντα], because he thought that the word ἄνδριας was not commonly used to refer to divine images outside Egypt. However, the dedication of a statue of the Tyche of Ephesos by the city of Antioch of Pisidia provides an excellent parallel (I. Ephesos 1238): Τύχης Σωτείρας · ὑπὲρ τῆς πρώτης καὶ μεγίστης μητρόπολος τῆς Ἀσίας καὶ δις νεωκόρου τῶν Σεβαστῶν καὶ φιλοσεβάστου Ἐφεσίων πόλεως ἢ Ἀντιοχέων κολώνων Καισαρείων πόλεως τὸν ἄνδριαντα ἀνέστησεν, κτλ.

At the end, H. Seyrig only read: τῶν καὶ[ι Λαοδικεῶν - - -] (I. 7–8). In fact, at the beginning of the eighth line, the stone bears a lacuna of one letter, the upper part of a round letter (σθε, omicron or omega), a nu, and the left upper corner of a square letter (gamma, epsilon or pi). Thus, it is possible to restore the usual titles of Laodicea according to a series of inscriptions of the same period where the city is referred to as ἡ πόλις Ἰουλιεῖων τῶν καὶ Λαοδικέων τῶν πρὸς θαλάσση τῆς ἱερᾶς καὶ ἀσύλου καὶ αὐτονόμου.19 The abridged version of the titulature, i.e. without τῆς ἱερᾶς καὶ ἀσύλου καὶ αὐτονόμου, is frequent on coins due to lack of space, and must be considered a less likely possibility here. The title ναυαρχίδος was most probably added after αὐτονόμου, as it was in Athens and in Tyre (see below). Finally, a dedicatory formula, e.g. [ἐκ τῶν ἰδίων ἀνέστησεν], may be restored, or tacitly implied.

As H. Seyrig stressed in his commentary, the dedication provides valuable information on the Casius sanctuary, its organisation and worshippers. The text was necessarily engraved after Caesar bestowed the name Iulia on Laodicea, together with other privileges, in 47 bc, and before Septimius Severus made the Greek city a Roman colony in AD 197. The shape of the letters fits this dating well. At least at that time, and it had most probably been the case since the beginning of the Hellenistic period, the summit of Mount Casius clearly had the status of a public place in the territory of Seleucia, for the presidency of the city council had to grant its approval to foreigners who wanted to erect a statue or a monumental offering there.20 The dedication also indicates that Laodiceans used to undertake a more than two-day-long trip to worship the Fortune of their home city on the sacred mountain of Zeus Casius. This point deserves more attention than it has hitherto received.

The dedication of the Tyche of the Laodiceans on the high place of Zeus Casius indeed hints at the foundation myth of Laodicea. The Antiochene Christian historian John Malalas reported the whole story in the sixth century AD by adapting older and local collections of patria. The scene takes place at the end of the fourth century BC, during the struggles between the successors of Alexander the Great. Seleucus Nicator defeated Antigonus in 301 BC. Immediately upon that, he founded cities on the Syrian

19 IG 11v’, 3299 (Athens); I. Ephesos, 614 (Ephesus); K. Korhonen, Le iscrizioni del Museo Civico di Catania (Helsinki 2004), pp. 172–73, no. 27, with M. Kajava, ‘Laodicea al Mare e Catania’, RPAA, 78 (2005–06), pp. 527–41 (Catania); cf. I. Knidos, 58 and 94 (Knidos, with ὁ δήμος instead of ἡ πόλις), I. Tyre, 52 (Tyre, fragmentary), and maybe CIL v. 6984, with F. Bartistroni, ‘Missing Relative’; ZPE, 169 (2009), pp. 183–87 (Augusta Taurinorum).

20 H. Seyrig referred to IGLS iv, 1261 (cf. above n. 2), about the involvement of the civic authorities of Laodicea concerning a sanctuary, but this text deals more specifically with the distinction between private and public property.
Seleucus Nicator also built another coastal city in Syria named Laodicea, after his daughter, which was formerly a village named Mazabda. He made the customary sacrifice to Zeus and when he asked where he should build the city, an eagle came again and seized some of the sacrifice. In his pursuit of the eagle he met a great wild boar, emerging from a reed-bed, and killed it with the spear he was holding. After killing the boar, he marked out the walls with its blood by dragging the carcass, and ignored the eagle. And so he built the city over the boar’s blood and sacrificed an innocent girl, named Agave, setting up a bronze statue of her as the city’s Tyche.21

In his article on the Syrian foundations of Seleucus Nicator in Malalas’s Chronicle, P. Chuvin highlights the main lessons to learn from this testimony.22 While denigrating paganism like other Christian writers, Malalas retrieves myths to make history following two methods dating back to the fourth century BC: either he presents the gods as important men once transfigured, like Euhemerus or Philo of Byblos, or he regards the myths as the transformation of events of daily life, in the manner of Palaiphatus. The desire to explain a cult by a custom leads him to justify the very common cult of the Fortune by the habit of sacrificing a virgin at the time of the founding of the city. Furthermore, in his narrative, the three stories of Seleucia, Laodicea, and Apamea seem modelled on that of Antioch, although it was not Seleucus’s favorite town. Regarding Laodicea, we read elsewhere that the city had received the name of the mother (or less likely the sister) of the king, and not that of his daughter.23 According to Philo of Byblos, quoted by Stephanus of Byzantium and Eustathius, the name of the settlement that preceded the town was not Mazabda, but Ramitha or Ramantha, and then Leuke akte (‘White Cape’),24 which does not necessarily contradict Malalas.

Despite these variations, Malalas’s testimony remains interesting, and it is all the more so as there is virtually no other evidence concerning the origins of Laodicea. The intervention of the boar is a telling detail, as P. Chuvin already stressed. In the Greek world, wild boar hunting is a heroic feat, illustrated for instance by the legend of Meleager. In Macedonia, according to Athenaeus, it was necessary to kill a boar in order to win the right to eat lying down like a man and not sitting like a child.25 Seleucus’s exploits at Laodicea especially echo those of Androclus, the founder of Ephesus, who was also credited with defeating a boar flushed out of hiding by accident.26 The Syrian city, like Ephesus, was consecrated to the huntress goddess. Literary evidence, coins, and inscriptions testify to the local importance of Artemis in the Hellenistic and Roman periods. To our knowledge, the goddess first appears on the reverse of coins struck by Laodicea in 65/4 BC.27 Her head appears again on the obverse of coins minted after 48/7 BC, while the head of a boar is depicted on the reverse.28 The local cult of Artemis was closely linked to Seleucus Nicator. Pausanias reports that the Macedonian king himself had installed the statue of Artemis Brauronia in the Syrian city. The monument had been carried out from Athens by the Persians, then kept at Susa, and finally recovered.29 In the early second century AD, the priestess of

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21 Malal., 8. 17 (ed. I. Turner, p. 153): ἔκτισε δὲ ὁ αὐτὸς Σέλευκος ὁ Νικάτωρ καὶ ἀλλὰ παρὰλεῖ πόλιν ἐν τῇ Συρίᾳ ὑγιατί τοῖς Λαοδίκειοιν εἰς ὄνομα τῆς αὐτοῦ θυγατρός, πρῶτον οὐσαν κώμην ὄνομα Μαζαβδᾶν, ποιήσας κατὰ τὸ ἄφθος βυσσίας τῷ Δίῳ καὶ αἰτήσαμένος ποιήσας τὸν θυσίαν τῷ Δίῳ καὶ αἰτήσας κατὰ τὸ ἔθος θυσίαν τῷ Διὶ καὶ αἰτήσας τὸν θυσίαν τῷ Δίῳ, ἐν τῷ καταδιαστάτῳ τὸν ὕπτεθησαν αὐτῷ σώρημα μέγας ἔξελθων ἀπὸ καλαμῶν, ὡς οὐ θυσίας ἀνεπάχθην, ἀλλὰ αὐτὸς αὐτὴν ἐκαθηλώσας κατεβάσας καταδιαστάς τὴν πόλιν. The desire to explain a cult by a custom leads him to justify the very common cult of the Fortune by the habit of sacrificing a virgin at the time of the founding of the city. Furthermore, in his narrative, the three stories of Seleucia, Laodicea, and Apamea

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23 Strab., 16. 2. 4 (mother); Steph. Byz. s.v. Λαοδίκεια (mother); cf. Eust., Comm. in Dion. Per., 915, 1–4 (the three traditions), and 918, 27–28 (sister).

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24 Steph. Byz. s.v. Λαοδίκεια (Ῥάμιθνα); Eust., Comm. in Dion. Per., 915, 7–11 (Ῥάμιθναν).

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25 Athen., 1. 18a.

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26 Creophylus of Ephesus, FG 417 F 1, quoted by Athen., 8. 361c-c.

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27 SNG Copenhagen Syria, no. 319.

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28 BMC Syria, p. 249, nos 21–23; SNG Copenhagen Syria, no. 336. See also RPC I, nos 4394–403 (standing figure of Artemis, 45/4–25/6 BC).

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Lady Artemis still claimed to be descended directly from Seleucus Nicator at Laodicea.  

All this led P. Chouvin to assume that the foundation myth of Laodicea was based on that of Ephesus. Some neglected documents confirm and enrich this hypothesis. As regards the Near Eastern background of the local Greek legend, it is noteworthy that boar hunting could be related to ritual practices that may have mythological equivalents in the Ugaritic cycle of Baal.  

Regarding now the connections between Laodicea and Ephesus, it can be added that the two cities also had the cult of Apollo Pythius in common, and that they both held Pythian games. This echoes again the story of the Ephesians, who were credited with having consecrated at the same time a temple to Artemis on the agora and another to Apollo Pythius on the port, just after they had landed at the site of their town.

Even though the local legend of Laodicea was embroidered on an Ephesian canvas with very ancient Near Eastern material and later Greek elements, it has been stressed on sufficient occasions that the foundation myth of the city was, first and foremost, intimately linked to those of Seleucia, Antioch, and Apamea. Malalas did not mention any epithet to describe the god whose eagle had guided Seleucus to Laodicea, because there was no doubt of course that this Zeus was the thundering lord of Mount Casius himself, as in the case of the other three towns. The dedication of a statue of the Laodicean Tyche on the top of the mountain must be understood in this context, for it suggests that the high place of Zeus Casius, though under the control of the Seleucians, was conceived as a memorial site that could be shared by the four cities of the Syrian tetrapolis, at least under the Roman rule. According to Strabo, the Antiochenes used to honour Triptolemus as a hero, and they celebrated his festival on Mount Casius near Seleucia.

Another interesting piece of information, which has not been commented upon yet, is the name given to the girl sacrificed by Seleucus, and used as a model for the image of the civic Tyche: Agave. At first sight, this character should be one of the fifty Nereids, whose presence was to be expected in a harbour city. On the other hand, Agave was much better known among the Greeks as the daughter of Cadmus, the founder and first king of Thebes, and the mother of Pentheus, whose tale was part of Dionysus’s cycle. The story was primarily developed in Euripides’s Bacchae. Let us summarise it here. When her sister Semele was tricked by lightning, having been wise enough to ask Zeus to demonstrate his full power, Agave slandered her by spreading the rumour that she had had an affair with a mortal, and that Zeus had struck her with lightning for having claimed that he had got her pregnant. Later, Dionysus, the son of Semele, avenged his mother and cruelly punished Agave. Returning to Thebes, where Pentheus was king, the god ordered the women of the city to climb the mountain of Cithaeron to celebrate his mysteries. Pentheus objected to the introduction of the rite because he denied the divine nature of Dionysus. Then he tried to spy on the Bacchae. His mother saw him, believed him to be a wild beast, and in her frenzy, tore him to pieces. When she regained consciousness, terror-stricken, she left Thebes forever. Thus, by sacrificing Agave at Laodicea, Seleucus supposedly saved the city from misfortune while appearing as a new Dionysus, like Alexander himself.

30 IGLS IV, 1264 (AD 116/7); Ιουλίαν Τίττον θυγάτ(ε)ρα ἄνευ δικαιοσὺνης τῆς ἀπὸ βασιλέως Σελεύκου Νικάτορος, ἵππου τῆς νόμου τούτου, ἤτοι τῆς κυρίας Πυθιάνιας, Κασσία τῆς ἱερασαμόνης. For another priestess of Lady Artemis, see IGLS IV, 1263 (AD 115/6).


32  Lib. Ep., 1392, 3–5, with D. Feissel, ‘Laodécie de Syrie sous l’empereur Julien d’après des lettres méconnues de Libanius’, Chiron, 40 (2010), pp. 77–88, especially pp. 84–85, who also remembers the first celebration of the Antonia Pythia in Laodicea according to IGLS IV, 1265 (ἐν Λαοδικείᾳ τῇ πατρίδι μου, Πυθιάδι πρώτῃ ἀχθείσῃ, οἰκουμενικὸν ἄρθρον ἔθετεν τῷ Πυθιανίῳ έτει τῆς κυρίας). For another priestess of Lady Artemis, see IGLS IV, 1263 (AD 115/6).

33 Strab., 16. 2. 5.

34 Royal tetradrachms and other silver fractions with the Nike trophy type conflate Seleucus, Alexander, and Dionysus. They show on the obverse the head of a Dionysiac hero turned to the right, wearing a helmet covered with a panther skin, and adorned with bull’s ears and horns. See Seleucid Coins I, nos 173–76 (Susa, c. 305/4–295 bc), nos 195–99 (other official issues and imitations, perhaps from Persis, Babylonia, Seistan, and Helmand Valley, after 305/4 bc), nos 226–28 (from Drangiana, during the coregency of Seleucus I and Antiochus I, 294–281 BC or later); Seleucid Coins II, no. Ad92 (maybe an imitation from Persis).
The coins minted at Laodicea in the Hellenistic and Roman periods provide some clues that allow us to identify the local Tyche as the Theban Maenad. On the one hand, they present the ordinary features of a patron goddess of the town (turreted head, veiled or unveiled), of ship navigation (rudder in hand, sometimes carrying one or two small figures which could represent the harbour), and of the wealth derived from the fruits of the earth (cornucopia). Some of them show Tyche seated on a rock (one of the two hills of Laodicea or Mount Casius?), above the river-god Lycus swimming and holding the lighthouse. Other issues bear the bust of the goddess in a distyle aedicula. This can be interpreted as a reference to the renowned Laodicean wine, which was exported as far as India under the Roman Empire, as well as to the cycle of Dionysus, whose cult is well attested by the coins of Laodicea from 46/5 BC onwards.

Other Theban elements appear in the legends of the Laodiceans and their neighbours, sometimes in connection with the struggle between Seleucus and his main rival, Antigonus the One-Eyed. Information is lacking only about Apamea. In Laodicea, the river which has its source at the foot of Mount Casius and irrigates the territory of the city was named Lycus, perhaps after the grandson of Poseidon who was reputed to have reigned over Thebes for twenty years after Pentheus’s death. According to Malalas, Seleucia replaced Palaiapolis, a small city built by Syrus, the son of Agenor and brother of Cadmus. Just before he founded Antioch, Seleucus came to Antigoneia, made a sacrifice to Zeus on the altars built by Antigonus, and prayed with the priest Amphion, to learn by the giving of a sign whether he ought to settle in the city of Antigoneia, though changing its name, or whether he ought not to settle in it but build another city in another place.

As we know, Zeus’s eagle guided the king to another site. But it is also worth noting here that the soothsayer Amphion bears the name of the son of Zeus and Antiope, who succeeded Lycus as king of Thebes. In all these episodes, we are under the impression that the Agenorids and the Theban kings represent the native peoples of northern Syria who were ruled by Antigonus before his final defeat.

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36 *BMC Syria*, p. 257, nos 78–79 (Commodus), p. 261, nos 99–103 (Elagabalus); *SNG Copenhagen Syria*, nos 358–59 (Commodus), 374 (Elagabalus). The shrine could be identified with the distyle monument that W. Djobadze discovered on the site of Saint Barlaam and that he inclined to interpret as a tomb.


38 Strab., 16. 2. 9 (Laodicea, ἐπὶ τῇ βαλάττῃ κάλυπτῳ ιεσταμένῃ καὶ ἐυλίμονος πόλις χώραν τε ἄγχος πάλαινον πρὸς τῇ ἄλλῃ ικώτης, sending the bulk of its exports to Alexandria); *Per. mar. Erythr.*, 6 and 49 (οίκος Λαώδικης sold in Adulis and Barygaza); Alex. Trall. *Ther.*, 2. 483 Pushcham (Ἀλαδικης, sweet wine); *O. Petr.*, 241. 289–90 (shipment of ἀλδικην from Coptos to Myos Hormos and Berenice in the Nicanor archive, first century AD); *O. Stras.*, 788 (Upper Egypt, maybe second century AD); *O. Ber.*, 1. 8, 17, 39, 41–42, 46, 49, 64, 70, 73, 76, 78–79, 81–83, 88, 92–94, 116, and II. 145, 147–148, 153, 156, 198 (ἄλδικην, λαδικην, sweet wine); the discussion in *Syria who were ruled by Antigonus before his final defeat. 39 RPC I, nos 4415–16 (head of Dionysus / scorpion, in 46/5 and 45/4 BC); *BMC Syria*, p. 250, no. 24, with H. Seyrig, ‘Antiquités syriennes. 52. Le phare de Laodicée’, *Syria*, 29 (1952), pp. 54–55 (bust of Dionysus / lighthouse, under Domitian); *BMC Syria*, p. 257, no. 80 (laureate head of Commodus / Dionysus standing, holding grapes and thyrus, before panther seated).


41 Ps.-Apoll. *Bibl.*, 3. 5. 5. The figure of Poseidon appears on quasi-municipal bronze coinage minted at Laodicea under the Seleucids. See *Seleucid Coins* II, nos 1429–30 (Antiochi IV.), 1806–07 (Alexander I), cf. also the royal bronze coin no. 1932 (Demetrius II). Note that the reference to Lycus, a descendant of Poseidon, in the hinterland of the city fits well with the existence of the small coastal town of Posideion above Mount Casius too.

42 Malal., 8. 11 (ed. I. Thurn, pp. 150–51).

This makes sense if one remembers the somewhat troubled history of the relations between Antigonus and Thebes. The Boeotian city had been destroyed by Alexander in 335 BC. In 316 BC, Cassandros restored it, provoking outraged reactions among the old Macedonians. In 315 BC, in Tyre, Antigonus did not fail to order him to destroy the city again. Nevertheless, after Cassandros’s garrison was driven off from Thebes three years later, he did not only let the town intact and free, but also asked his son Demetrius to contribute funds towards its rebuilding, c. 304 BC. This reversal is naturally explained by the desire to create a network of alliances throughout Greece and Asia. The fact remains that the Diadoch and his numerous Near Eastern allies could be accused in their turn of being pro-Theban enemies. In the legends of Antioch, Seleucia, and Laodicea, the intervention of the Agenorids and other Theban characters could thus be considered as discreet, but effective, allusions to the opposition between Antigonus and the founder of the Syrian tetrapolis.

The common ancestry of the four sister cities of the Syrian tetrapolis was still celebrated under Roman rule, as Damasias’s dedication on Mount Casius reminds us. In this context, it is extremely surprising at first sight to find an official document in which Laodicea is presented as a daughter of the Phoenician city of Tyre. The text has been republished recently by J.-P. Rey-Coquais in his Inscriptions grecques et latines de Tyre accompanied by a useful photograph. It commemorates the erection of a statue representing Tyre, described as a metropolis, by a city whose name is only partly legible in the upper part of the monument (Fig. 12.3). Albeit with some reservations, the editor proposed to attribute the dedication to Citium because this Cypriot town was presented as a colony of Tyre. Nevertheless, the mention of the title of navarch leaves no alternative but to restore Laodicea’s name at the beginning. Thus I read:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{ἡ πόλις} & \text{τῶν Ἰουλιέων} \\
\text{τῶν καὶ Λαοδικίων τῆς ἱερᾶς καὶ ἀσυλου καὶ αὐτονόμου καὶ ναυαρχίδος}
\end{align*}
\]


47 One might expect to read \(\text{Ῥωσύς} \) instead of \(\text{Κιτιέων}\) (ed. pr.). Rhosus was deemed to have been founded by Cilix, son of Agenor, and could therefore be considered a colony of Tyre, but to our knowledge neither this city, nor Citium, were ever granted the title of navarch. About the title of ναυαρχίς and the cities it was bestowed upon, see most recently A. Gebhardt, Imperiale Politik und provinziale Entwicklung: Untersuchungen zum Verhältnis von Kaiser, Heer und Städten in Syrien der vorseverischen Zeit (Berlin 2002), pp. 164–222, and É. Guerber, Les cités grecques dans l’Empire romain: Les privilèges et les titres des cités de l’Orient hellénophone d’Octave Auguste à Dioclétien (Rennes 2009), pp. 343–74, with extant discussion and bibliography.
The important thing here is to highlight how the Macedonian past was reshaped in the Roman period. Strabo reports that at that time the four foundations of Seleucus still presented themselves as sisters (while under Alexander Balas, the common coinage of the Brother Peoples seemingly concerned Seleucia and Antioch only). However, even the finest Greek cities were involved in ongoing rivalries, and may insist on minor aspects of their legends in order to honour more powerful, although non-Greek, cities of Roman Syria. As it happened, the Laodiceans may have sought to get closer to the Phoenicians of Tyre, given their traditional opposition to the Antiochenes; and they certainly had at least two good reasons for taking advantage of kinship diplomacy: the first may have been that Seleucus Nicator had built their city on an ancient Phoenician settlement; the second, that their Tyche was the

Theban Maenad Agave, the daughter of Cadmus, and granddaughter of Agenor, the founder of Tyre. In this case, as in others, it would be wrong to think that such arguments were artificial constructions without consequences in real life. Let us not forget that Laodiceans and Tyrians were together on Septimius Severus’s side against Pescennius Niger and the Antiochenes during the war which set the East ablaze in AD 193, and that the African colony of Lepcis Magna, the city which Severus was from, also honoured Tyre as its mother city in the following years. Just as they were effective in leading worshippers to the mountain summits in peacetime, appeals to common ancestry, fictitious or real, also proved effective in strengthening political alliances in more crucial circumstances.

(English revised by Laurence Crohem and Adam Henderson)
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