Religion in the Roman Empire

The Role of Objects: Creating Meaning in Situations

Mohr Siebeck

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Edited by Reinhard Feldmeier, Karen L. King, Rubina Raja, Annette Yoshiko Reed, Christoph Riedweg, Jörg Rüpke, Seth Schwartz, Christopher Smith, Markus Vinzent

Andreas Kropp

The Tyche of Berytus:
A Phoenician Goddess on Civic Coinage

Abstract

This contribution deals with images of Tyche on the civic bronze coinage of the Roman colony of Berytus (Beirut). The visual type of this local patron goddess, a hybrid composition drawing on a variety of iconographic sources, was created in the late first or early second century CE and quickly adopted by cities across the Near East. The meanings of such local divine images are rarely explored. When examined in their proper context, the seemingly generic images of Tyche can be shown to be meaningful to the community in many different ways. With a wider appeal than any other coin types, the Tyche of Berytus stood as the universally acknowledged badge of the city and expressed the collective values of the community. The study of the genesis and meaning of this 'new' type of goddess throws a light on the cultural and religious life of Roman Phoenicia.

Keywords: Roman numismatics, Roman art, cult images, Beirut, Roman Phoenicia, Tyche, archaeological methodology

The coinage of cities under Roman rule is an extraordinary repository of information on all aspects of civic culture. Long neglected, these local bronzes are now receiving due attention thanks to the *Roman Provincial Coinage* project and a number of other publications.[1] It is estimated that in the three and a half centuries from Caesar to Diocletian, upwards of 500 cities minted coins, amounting to some 100,000 coin types.[2] The coin imagery depicts legions of gods, rulers and buildings, which are not only important as antiquarian or art-historical evidence, but more crucially could generate a sense of local identities. The topic of this contribution is one such civic icon, the goddess Tyche. Originally conceived as the goddess of fate and fortune,[3] she also took on a role as tutelary city goddess in the Hellenistic and Roman

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1   See e.g. the excellent collection of articles in Howgego et al. 2005. For the civic coins of the southern Levant, Meshorer et al. 2013 will no doubt establish itself as a much-needed standard reference.

2   Howgego 2005, 2.

3   *OCD* s. v. "Tyche" and *LIMC* VIII "Tyche" with literary sources.

periods.[4] In this paper, I will use the case study of the Tyche of Berytus and its role in the religious life of Roman Phoenicia in order to address more general methodological points relating to coinage, in keeping with the motto of this volume, to explore 'the role of objects: creating meaning in situations'.
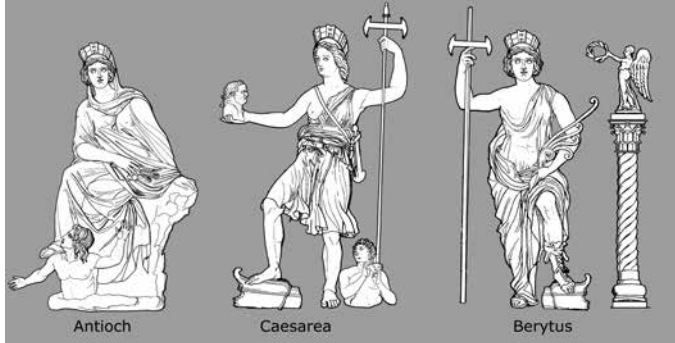
Fig. 1: The three main types of Tyches in the Roman Near East. © A. Kropp.

The visual image that one associates with Tyche is usually the famous Tyche of Antioch, a Hellenistic masterpiece created around 300 BCE by Eutychides (fig. 1). Its unmistakable characteristics are the mural crown, the sitting position with crossed legs, and the river Orontes at her feet. In recent years, the visual representations of Tyche have received much attention, with the publication of several monographs, an exhibition catalogue and various encyclopaedia entries.[5] Some progress has been made in the reconstruction of the Hellenistic original. It has been possible to show that there is a 'core group' of extant bronze statuettes which are more faithful to the original than the famous statue in the Vatican. E. g., while the statue shows her right forearm raised vertically towards the chin, its original position was evidently horizontal, the hand resting on her lap (as shown in fig. 1).

1 Typology

In the Roman Near East (modern Syria, Lebanon, Israel/Palestine, Jordan), three different types of Tyches can be distinguished. Beside the Tyche of Antioch these were the Tyche of Caesarea, and a third and almost ignored type, the so-called Tyche of Berytus. It should be noted that the names of

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4   In detail, Meyer 2006, 335–54.
5   See literature in Kropp 2011.

these types are modern, purely conventional names that do not necessarily reflect their real names or meanings. There is no indication that e. g. the citizens of Bostra, who used a variant of the Berytus type on their coins, considered it anything other than the Tyche of Bostra. The three basic types are art-historical terms based on formal criteria.

I will first speak about the iconography of the Tyches of Caesarea and Berytus: the elements and characteristics of the body type, dress and attributes; their models and precedents. A closer look reveals that the Tyche of Berytus draws on local traditions that are surprisingly remote in time. More importantly, and in line with the stated aims of this volume, I shall address the methodological issues pertaining to our study of the material evidence in order to determine what can be known about possible meanings of these Tyche images in their original contexts.

The 'Caesarea type', named after the coastal city in Palestine where it is first attested, appears on civic coins in the year 14 of Nero, i. e., 68 CE, just before the city became a Roman colony in 69 CE (fig. 1).[6] It shows Tyche standing in frontal position, but with her head turned to the left gazing on an imperial bust in her outstretched right hand. She is wearing a mural crown, short peplos with apoptygma and mantle hanging over the left arm, *parazonium* at the side. Her right foot is raised resting on a prow. Next to her left foot is the figure of a nude young man with long hair, cut off below the chest (like the river Orontes in the Tyche of Antioch). Sometimes he is depicted with some kind of harness for towing on his chest. Rather than a river, the figure has been identified as the harbour Sebastos.

The Caesarean Tyche holds an attribute in her left hand, a long staff with cross-bar at the top, planted on the soil with its spear-like tip. Interpretations of this item vary. German scholars have devised an apt name for it, calling it a 'Stabkreuz', a term that describes its appearance appropriately, while at the same time withholding judgement on its presumed purpose. In English it is sometimes interpreted as sceptre or military standard. But it is more plausibly identified as a *stylis*: a short mast fixed on the prow of Greek vessels, originally made to support an *aphlaston* and later used to carry a flame at its top.[7]

The distinctly Amazonian iconography of Tyche is derived from the goddess Dea Roma (and/or Virtus whose iconography is identical).[8] Combined

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6 BMC Palestine 13–15 nos. 5–29 pl. 2.11–14; Wenning 1986; *LIMC* V 'Kaisareia II'; Gersht 1984.

7 First identified by Babelon 1892, 208–17. See also Göttlicher 1981, *s. v.* 'stylis'.

8 *LIMC* VIII 'Roma'. Roma too was worshipped at Caesarea, together with Augustus, but she had a different appearance: Josephus *BJ* 1.414; *AJ* 15.339 describes the statue as emulating the Hera of Argos.

with the bust of the emperor in her hand as an object of worship, she conveys a message of close allegiance to Rome.

Fig. 2: Berytus under Valerian, 253–60 CE. d 28 mm, 18.3 g (twice enlarged). Reverse COL IVL AVG FEL BER. Tyche facing, being crowned by Nike on a column. Courtesy of Classical Numismatic Group, Inc., www.cngcoins.com. Electronic auction 181, lot 303 sold 06 Feb 2008. Drawing © A. Kropp.

The third type of Near Eastern Tyches should be logically called 'Berytus type' since it is in Roman Berytus that this novel type is first depicted on coins (figs. 2–3).[9] The Berytus type appears surprisingly late, on coin reverses under Trajan.[10] There are obvious parallels to its Caesarean predecessor. Tyche is shown standing in frontal position wearing a mural crown and holding a *stylis* in the right hand. Her left foot rests on a prow. But unlike the Amazonian Tyche of Caesarea, this Tyche is wearing a long dress which she is raising to her knee with her left hand. To the right, a miniature Nike is standing on a spiral column, crowning Tyche. In addition to the coins, there are also two little-known sculptures of this type of Tyche. One is a relief carving on a marble base (80 cm high) at the National Museum of Beirut, discovered in Beirut in the early 20th century and since forgotten.[11] The second sculpture, also in storage, is a life-sized marble statue of unknown provenance and yet unpublished.[12] It consists of a torso (106 cm height) and separately worked feet with plinth.

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9 Meyer 2006, 232–34 uses the same name.
10 *BMC Phoenicia* 65 no. 92; Sawaya 2009, 226–27 série 37. See also Kropp 2011 for the following remarks.
11 Ronzevalle 1942–43, 14–15 pl. 2.1. Now in storage at the National Museum of Beirut.
12 NM inv. 2020. Mentioned in passing in Seyrig 1972, 113 n. 1; to be published in Koçak et al. (in prep.).

The Berytus type is an eclectic creation drawing on a variety of models. The mural crown can be ascribed to both her predecessors, and the standing pose from the Caesarea type (and therefore indirectly from the goddess Roma). The maritime attributes of the Berytus type, the *stylis* and *aphlaston*, may however not be derived from foreign models, but from indigenous predecessors: both attributes can be seen in the hands of full-length female figures on the coins of Hellenistic Phoenicia.[13]

Fig. 3: Berytus under Diadumenian, 218 CE. d 28 mm (twice enlarged). Reverse COL IVL AVG FEL BER. Tetrastyle temple of Tyche. Within the temple, Tyche standing facing, crowned by Nike standing on a column; one winged cupid with a torch to each side. On the roof, Poseidon is snatching Beroe; at the sides Nikes with wreaths; at the bottom, cupids holding tridents riding dolphins. © A. Kropp.

The Berytus type of Tyche was very popular in the region, from Balanea in the north to Bostra in Arabia, the Decapolis and even Rabbathmoba. In Phoenicia the iconography became more elaborate. Beside the architectural framework, the images on coins of the second and third centuries are supplemented by several small 'Beifiguren' ('additional figures'). We have already seen the small Nike on a column to one side of Tyche.[14] Other cities combined their tutelary goddess with local deities, e. g. at Tripolis with the Dioskouroi.[15] Berytus coins in large denominations under Macrinus and Elagabalus increase the crowd to no less than 10 figures (fig. 3).[16] Here the central group of Tyche and Nike is enriched by two more figures, namely

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13 See literature in Kropp 2011, 393.
14 For details and literature see Kropp 2011, 394 n. 28.
15 *LIMC* III 'Astarte' nos. 27–29.
16 Sawaya 2009, 268 séries 92, 94–95. Smaller denominations keep the same type as before, without the extra figures, séries 90, 96, 112.

to each side one winged cupid holding up a torch. The roof of the façade is crowned by four acroteria. Over the apex one sees Poseidon snatching Beroe, the eponymous nymph of Berytus, and at the sides Nikes are holding up crowns with both hands.[17] At the bottom, to the left and right of the central stairway are cupids with tridents riding dolphins. There is also an impressive freestanding example of such a crowded assembly, the 'Laraire de Tortose' in the Louvre, a miniature bronze masterpiece from Antarados (Ṭarṭūs).[18] Its constellation of figures corresponds closely to that on coins of Tyre.

Fig. 4: Berytus under Gordian III, 238–44 CE. d 28 mm (twice enlarged). Reverse COL IVL AVG FEL BER. Temple of Tyche. within the temple, half-figure of Tyche facing; cornucopia and eagle on a pole to each side. On the roof, Poseidon snatching Beroe; at the sides Nikes holding up wreaths; at the bottom, a lion walking right. © A. Kropp.

It is widely held, almost as a matter of course, that this Tyche is to be identified with Astarte (Phoenician 'Ashtart'), a goddess of sensual love and fertility who is often identified as Aphrodite. This identification between Tyche and Astarte is by no means self-evident.[19] But there is a possible connection between the two goddesses that is not normally cited in this context, namely an iconographic link between the Tyche of Berytus and the cult statue of Venus Architis (Venus of Arca), described by Lucian as Astarte[20] and by Macrobius (early 5th century) as a 'Venus lugens'.[21] On the coins of

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17 For the myth, see Nonnos *Dionysiaca* 41–43.
18 Louvre, BR 4455 (H 28 cm); Fleischer 1983, 33 no. 9 pl. 8; 1983b, 256–58 fig. 2.
19 See in detail, Kropp 2011, 398–403.
20 Lucian, *Dea Syria* 9; cf. Lightfoot 2003, 55–56, 329.
21 Macrob. *Sat.* 1.21.5.

her hometown Caesarea ad Libanum/Arca near Tripolis she is depicted in a rare half-figure format.[22]

This peculiar type shows obvious similarities to a striking version of Tyche depicted on one particular series of Berytus coins (fig. 4). They were issued under Gordian III and show a half-figure of Tyche enlarged to monumental proportions, filling out the intercolumniation of a tetrastyle temple crowned by a pediment.[23] The half-figure is wearing a scale-like costume consisting of horizontal registers of tiny dots, a thick collier and earrings. Below her, at the bottom of the stairs, a lion or, on other issues, a galley or a dolphin, is depicted in profile. The half-figure is flanked to each side by a cornucopia standing upright and the eagle of a Roman legion on a pole. A similar constellation is also found in a fragmentary relief sculpture at the temple of Baalmarkodes at Deir el-Qalaa in the foothills (at 730 m above the sea) overlooking Beirut (10 km to the southeast).[24] Here too she is flanked by birds, probably eagles.

Despite important differences from the full-figure Tyche, there can be no doubt that it depicts the same goddess: the temple depicted is in each case the same tetrastyle with a disc in the pediment and the same four acroteria, statues of Poseidon snatching Beroe flanked by Nikes. Both types are therefore just two different modes of representing the same goddess. Whether both of these represent two different statues is a different question to which we have no answer. The half-figure betrays a radically different approach to the same subject, the tutelary city goddess, and rather approximates her to Phoenician goddesses. The features she shares with 'Venus Lugens' suggest similarities without explicitly equating the two goddesses.

2 Some methodological questions (and some answers)

Let us turn to the question of how we are supposed to approach these coin images in order to gather their meanings. Methodological questions with regard to iconography are not often raised in numismatic studies, partly because experts are often interested in technical aspects rather than the imagery and partly because a medium that conveniently offers the handy combination of text and image may seem self-explanatory and not require further clarification. How should we handle these visual types and legends?

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22 Butcher 2003, 336, fig. 153.1; Kropp 2011, 401–3, fig. 3. Aliquot 2009, 151–52, fig. 66.
23 Ronzevalle 1942–43, 19; Sawaya 2009, 268 série 117.
24 Ronzevalle 1942–43, 18–20; Nordiguian 2005, 137. There is a matching relief with a Tyche flanked by a small Nike. On the sanctuary, see Aliquot 2009, 268–71.

In a classic article of 1956, A. H. M. Jones raised doubts about their useful-ness.[25] He polemically suggested:

'If a modern analogy is to be sought for the varying types and legends of Roman imperial coins it is perhaps to be found in the similar variations in the postage stamps of many modern countries other than our own. These often show a certain propagandist ten-dency, depicting the famous men of the country concerned, its artistic monuments, or its principal industries … They throw a sidelight on the history of the period, but they mainly reflect the mentality of the post-office officials. No serious historian would use them as a clue which revealed changes of government policy … [T]he political history of periods when coins are the sole evidence is irrecoverable.'[26]

Jones' tirade refers specifically to Roman imperial coins, but the argument can be easily extended to civic coins, which in fact correspond even more closely with postage stamps in advertising events and festivals, and celebrat-ing well-known landscapes, flora, fauna and architecture of particular loca-tions. Jones' radical critique was primarily aimed at the numismatists of his day who made extensive use of coin imagery to reconstruct the history of periods for which textual sources are lacking. One also notes Jones' unself-conscious use of the word 'propaganda', a problematic term with heavy his-torical baggage that has largely gone out of fashion.

Though few would now agree with Jones' extreme scepticism of the use-fulness of coin images, his authoritative contribution had the desired effect of shifting the focus of numismatic study away from the ideological to the economic. But in recent decades, questions about the significance of the designs and legends of imperial coins have once again resurfaced.[27] Most would now agree that coins send 'messages', but it is not clear how to best describe what they do: propaganda? self-advertisement? persuasion? And whose message do they articulate, who did they aim at? Or, the other way round, what did people look for when they inspected a coin?

As for Roman imperial coins, it was traditionally thought that what came across was the voice of authority, the emperor, speaking to his subjects, extolling his own virtues and advertising his achievements. Others have argued the reverse, in that the images were issued by junior officials and the target audience was in fact the issuing authority itself, the emperor.[28] This view finds some confirmation in the fact that the moneyers in Rome, the *tresviri monetales*, had a relatively low standing as junior senators. Wallace-Hadrill accepts this premise, but insists on the persuasive nature of coin

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25 Jones 1956.
26 Jones 1956, 15–16.
27 See esp. Wallace-Hadrill 1986; Levick 1999; Meadows and Williams 2001; Butcher 2005.
28 Levick 1999.

designs. The coin images may have been 'undirected and even unsolicited', but their tribute to the emperor was meant 'to persuade the coin-using public that they too should pay the same tribute to Caesar.'[29] Meadows and Williams in a recent article approach the question from a new angle by looking at the realm of ideas associated with the goddess Moneta and the presumed site of the mint on the Capitoline in Rome:[30] Having determined that Moneta was a goddess who 'could carry the function of "memory", or more actively "remembrancer" or "reminder",[31] they extrapolate this function to the coins themselves. They conclude that coin images were not there to persuade, but to *remind* people of the credentials of those who issued them. The coins were in this sense 'monumental'. This interesting proposition adds a semantic nuance, but it circumvents the question who was responsible for the design and who was being addressed.

Issues about authority and audience will for a long time continue to accompany numismatic studies. Whether it is Roman imperial coinage or production on a smaller scale, in most cases there are too many unknown variables to provide firm answers.

Fig. 5: The Stars and Stripes, from http://www.wallpapermurals.co.uk.
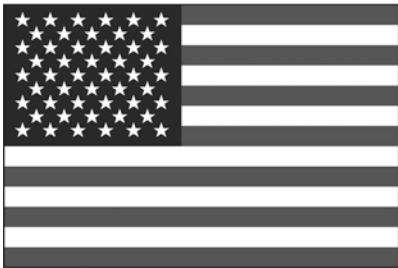
It may be worth thinking through our methodological principles with the help of a simple illustration. Our search for meanings may present itself as a sheer impossible task considering that the array of meanings is potentially boundless and infinite. Even common and generic symbols may be much harder to nail down than they would at first appear. Just because a symbol is familiar and often repeated, sometimes for centuries, it does not follow that it means the same to all people in all places at all times. Looking at the example of the US flag (fig. 5), the 'Stars and Stripes', there could hardly be a more generic and common symbol, one that is made and used millions of times

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29 Wallace Hadrill 1986, 68.
30 Meadows and Williams 2001.
31 Meadows and Williams 2001, 33.

all around the globe in all imaginable contexts. As random examples, one could cite, e. g., the use of the flag by the US military at Arlington (Virginia) to drape the coffins of fallen soldiers; or by cheering crowds at Independence Day celebrations across the US; or by angry protesters demonstrating against the US in Lahore (Pakistan). Yet there is nothing generic about its meaning. Each of the people handling the flag will have quite a clear idea what the flag means to them. And, of course, it seems clear that the people in Arlington (Virginia) will have a very different idea of what the flag means from the people in Lahore burning the flag, even though both are using the same symbol. In other words, the symbol alone cannot reveal its own significance.

And what is worse, even the search for origins, which we as archaeologists naturally engage in, does not necessarily reveal the meanings of a symbol in each specific situation. What the creators of the flag intended may be irrelevant for how other people understood it. The fact that the Stars and Stripes was first designed in June 1777 as a collective emblem of the original 13 states of New England is probably unknown to the flag-burning crowd in Lahore; nor is it relevant for the way they use and interpret it.

However, detaching the meaning of a symbol from its origins is not equivalent to asserting that its meaning is indefinable. The meaning is arbitrary in the same way as the words of our language are, in that there is no intrinsic connection between the symbol and the nation of the US, just like there is no intrinsic connection between the word 'chair' and the object itself. But this does not mean that the meaning is merely in the eye of the beholder, to be redefined by each successive user. The US flag has a core meaning that is attributed to it by convention: it stands for the United States of America. The symbol needs to be ascribed a universally recognised sense, or else it would be pointless and unintelligible. This agreed-upon meaning is the basis from which the users of the symbol will then proceed to interpret it as they see fit to make their own statements, either as a symbol of liberty and democracy, or of war and oppression, or of something else altogether, depending on the specific context.

What does this mean for our study of Berytus coins? The viewers and the creators of the coins bearing the Tyche of Berytus are unfortunately long dead. We cannot ask them and we will never know for certain what the Tyche meant to them and how they thought of the disparate elements of her images. But this aporia must not be an excuse to throw our hands up and bemoan the inadequate state of our evidence. We can assume that Tyche too has a core meaning that is ascribed to her by convention, and we can use circumstantial evidence to discover factors that restrict the range of possible meanings.

3 Audience

First, we should try to determine as closely as possible the context in which these images were used, received and understood. This means we need to explore the character of the medium that conveyed the images and think about who made them and who used them. Coins are used as money. They are small portable objects that people could put in their pockets and carry around or store or pass on in exchange for goods and services. From what little we can tell about distribution and circulation, many civic bronzes did not travel very far.[32] The coins are often found within the territory of the issuing authority. This and the remarkable fact that there seems to have been no effort to standardise weights and measures between the cities[33] suggest that civic coins were only accepted as currency within the city's territory.

Civic coins could be produced out of economic necessity. There is some evidence to show a correlation between spikes of coin production in a city and the presence of Roman soldiers nearby. In other words, the higher output of coins was a response to the presence of troops, which enabled the city to profit by forcing the soldiers to use the local currency in the city's market.[34] But the local economy was perhaps not the sole reason to persuade a city to produce its own coinage. Minting patterns often do not correspond to the presumed strength of a city's economy. The great city of Apamea in the Orontes Valley, for instance, was one of the largest and most prosperous cities in the region; it produced copious amounts of coinage in the Hellenistic period, but for reasons that are unknown it ceased producing any coinage at all after a final issue under Claudius.[35]

For the Berytus coins in question, it is fair to say that the audience was the local population. Occasional visits of soldiers apart, the coin types were not generally intended to convey information to outsiders, but should be seen as a kind of dialogue that the community was having with itself, a community that consisted of descendants of Roman veterans and of the native population.

It is hard to be more specific about makers and audience. Near Eastern civic coins, as opposed to those from Asia Minor, are notoriously tight-lipped about the persons or groups responsible for minting a specific issue. The region offers no examples of coin legends singling out local benefactors. Instead one only finds the routine ethnic designation of the minting author-

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32 Butcher 2003, 219.
33 Butcher 2003, 218; id. 2012, 472, 474.
34 Butcher 2012, 471.
35 Butcher 2012, 476.

ity, which is also a marker of identity. In the case of the Tyche coins in question the city signs off as 'Colonia Julia Augusta Felix Berytus'. The language used here, Latin, is standard of a Roman colony such as Berytus. By the early third century CE, most of the larger cities received the title of colonia, and many of them minted in Latin. But Berytus had the additional distinction of being Julia Augusta – a foundation of Augustus himself, and thus the very first of its kind on Near Eastern soil (13/12 BCE).

Broadly speaking, the target audience is therefore the very community that issued the coins. This means that the viewers in question were a fairly homogeneous group: they shared a common space (the city and territory of Berytus), and a common visual landscape (the same monuments and images), and shared for the most part a common language. More specifically, it has been argued that the issuing authorities and the target audience of civic coin types may be one and the same, namely members of the civic elite.[36] Hence the coins could be 'mainly intended to legitimate those elites in their own eyes, and were not messages or acts of legitimation aimed at social inferiors.'[37] If that was the case, namely the elite addressing the elite, our interpretation would be somewhat easier because the range of possible meanings given to the images would be restricted. The intended message would roughly correspond to the meaning that the audience took from it. On the other hand, what kind of audience the makers intended is not necessarily crucial. Many non-elite citizens of Berytus will have used the coins, looked at their images and come up with their own take on what they mean.

4 Generic vs. specific images

The question of whether the coin images aimed at the elite or at the community at large can also be tackled iconographically. I would suggest that there are some types that were made to appeal especially to the elite, while others were meaningful to both elite and non-elite, i. e., images that spoke for and to the community as a whole. One must judge each coin type on its own merit.

During the time when the coins were minted, in the second and third centuries CE, the cities of Roman Phoenicia produced massive numbers of coin types. This is the time of the so-called Second Sophistic which gave rise to manifold expressions of local patriotism and pride in the great past of one's community, especially in the area of cult and religion.[38] Civic coins are one

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36 Butcher 2005, 145, 152, 155–56.
37 Butcher 2005, 145.
38 See e. g. Borg (ed.) 2004; Whitmarsh 2005.

medium through which such ideas were expressed. They often provide a glimpse of local gods, heroes and mythologies that are specific to that community.[39] One example is a rare reverse type from Tyre depicting Pygmalion, the brother of Dido, with four stags.[40] The inscription spells out Pygmalion's name in Phoenician, a script that had long gone out of use at this point and must have seemed somewhat quaint. The myth depicted here and the use of this script are meant to evoke a pre-Hellenic past, but despite the Phoenician letters, the name is spelled the Greek way, PGMLYWN ('Pygmalion') rather than the Phoenician version PMYTN ('Pumiathon'), showing that the creators of this coin type were in fact not proficient in Phoenician. Thus it seems that even the distinctly local past, which is proudly presented as a non-Greek Phoenician heritage of the city, is projected through a Greek lens. Such exceptional coin types are often singled out by modern researchers as particularly significant examples to explain local identities.

Thus it is not surprising that our poor Tyche and her many sisters are often overlooked or dismissed. It is the unusual, and sometimes the spectacular, that is often given preference over the generic. But it is worth asking how representative such types really are of local identities. Pygmalion and other types celebrating local mythologies are indeed rare, sometimes consisting of a single issue, accounting for a mere fraction of the production of any Phoenician mint. Are we to suppose that they express values that are widely shared and apply to the entire community over lengthy periods of time? Considering how little we know about the issuing authorities and their motivations, other interpretations are possible. These could, for instance, be personal types of particular groups or individuals within the elite. Maybe one particular family in Tyre claimed Pygmalion for their family badge, a symbol to point out their special connection with, perhaps even descent from, this figure.[41] This would be analogous to the genealogies that the Roman elite constructed for itself, claiming descent from mythological figures such as Hercules and Neptune.[42] If it is the case that coin types were made primarily by the elite for the elite, as mentioned above, it would be plausible for particular elements within the elite to advertise their own credentials and therefore produce images that are both elite and elitist and thus not necessarily relevant to or representative of the entire community.

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39 Superbly illustrated in Franke 1968, 28–30 figs. 266–447. S. also the contributions in Howgego et al. 2005.
40 *BMC Phoenicia* 277 no. 408 pl. 33.5; Butcher 2003, 280, fig. 120.
41 Butcher 2005, 152.
42 See e. g. Meadows and Williams 2001, 38–40.

The case may be different for coin types that are both common and familiar, like our Tyche. Symbols like Tyche are sometimes called 'generic' or nondescript types, which are commonly repeated across space and time, sometimes for centuries. In this case, they are reproduced not only on coins, but in a variety of media, from gems to pottery to paintings to sculpture. All the evidence suggests that the image of Tyche was a universally acknowledged badge of the city. If we look for symbols that express collective values and that the community could identify with, the best examples for such symbols would have to be these local Tyches. Regardless of who the minting authority was or who it was aiming at in particular, coin types like the Tyche of Berytus could be taken to represent the community by universal consent.

5 Further iconographic hints

'Generic' images such as Tyche can therefore be interpreted as more popular than exotic one-off images. But the iconography can do more. A closer scrutiny of these images shows that although frequent and widespread they are not nearly as generic as they may seem. I will therefore come back to some iconographic questions I have not addressed before, with a particular view of what the original target audience could be expected to make of these images. It goes without saying that one cannot push this model too far. The 'ideal' viewer whose mind we are exploring is of course a construct, and there will have been as many opinions about what the images mean as there were people. But in the realm of probability, I think it is possible to favour some interpretations as more credible than others.

One way of finding the meanings of symbols is often to dissect them and to look for their sources and origins, all the while keeping in mind that they do not necessarily determine the meaning of any given specimen. In terms of format, iconography and composition, images of the Tyche of Berytus draw on a diverse range of sources that seem to point to the distant past. This does not mean that the goddess and her image must have such deep roots. The type is likely to be a new, conscious creation of the late first or second century CE whose creators made selective use of existing motifs, body types and attributes that were considered suitable for the intended purpose. In other words, the Tyche of Berytus type is probably a case of an invented tradition. But it is precisely the thinking that went into the creation that is at stake here.

When Berytus and other Phoenician cities decided to create figural representations of their communities, the Tyche of Caesarea was a predecessor that could have served as an obvious model. However, none of these cities

simply adopted the Caesarean version. Why? The differences between these images are in fact illuminating. Dressed as an Amazonian warrior, the Tyche of Caesarea embodies the martial and aggressive stance of Dea Roma. The association with Roman imperial power is further emphasised by the bust in her right hand which attracts all her attention. The Berytus type eliminates all the references to Rome and to war; instead of an Amazonian tunic, she wears a long chiton akin to other goddesses of the region. Her maritime attributes too refer back to Phoenicia: unlike her colleagues she holds an *aphlaston* in addition to the *stylis*. Both of these can already be seen on Phoenician city goddesses in the Hellenistic period. The historical context may have disqualified the Caesarean type, which was probably created in 68 CE, at the height of the Jewish War, when Vespasian's legions were garrisoned at Caesarea. The Tyche of Caesarea was perhaps too charged with militaristic overtones and associated with that particular state of emergency when Rome flexed its military muscle to quell the uprising.[43] This was a conflict that the Phoenician cities wanted no part of.

But, again, the search for origins and precedents cannot be an aim in itself. Uncovering the iconographic origins of an image does not necessarily yield their meanings. If our aim is to discover what the coins meant to the people who made and who used them, we need to think about what they could and what they could not know. One cannot assume an omniscient viewer, one who is familiar with predecessors of centuries past. It would be wrong to use as our measuring rod the results that a modern academic can produce with all the research tools at their disposal. It is therefore open to question how much of the cited connections could have been picked up by actual viewers. While it is likely that many viewers knew the iconography of the Tyche of Caesarea, asking them to draw parallels to the more distant predecessor, is a rather tall order. The Second Sophistic was a time when Hellenised intellectuals delved deep into the (imagined) past of their communities; but it is not clear to what extent their findings were disseminated among the wider population. Most viewers in Berytus would probably take the maritime attributes as straightforward symbols of the city's credentials in trade and seafaring.

There are other distinctive elements that can further narrow down the meanings of the Tyche of Berytus. A typical feature of Phoenician Tyches is that they are never depicted alone, but with a small Nike and often also a more elaborate 'Figurenrahmen' (figure frame) of twin acolytes of cupids and genii (fig. 3). Figures like the crowning Nikes are obviously meant to

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43 Belayche 2003, 126.

celebrate the glory of the deity, but it is unclear whether the twin boys had a more precise significance.[44] Twin acolytes are a standard element of divine iconography in the Greek East. The bulls of Jupiter Heliopolitanus and the lions of Atargatis make sense as expressions of particular qualities of the referenced god, while the meaning of Tyche's cupids and genii is not entirely clear. Even so, the fact that Tyche is given twin acolytes at all and framed by her subordinates is a statement in itself. What the composition of these multi-figures scenes shows is that Phoenician Tyches commanded enough prestige to receive the same kind of retinue and paraphernalia as full-blown gods of the local panthea. Tyche is thus visually lifted to a level that is typically reserved for supreme local gods.

At Berytus, the popularity of cupids is perhaps due to the local legend, reported by Nonnos of Panopolis, that Berytus was the birthplace of Eros.[45] Especially at Berytus, Tyche was evidently well integrated into the local pantheon. Not only is she depicted in her temple, the Tycheion of Berytus (figs. 3–4), and hence assigned a precise location in the cultic topography of Berytus; the coin images also show the temple adorned with the statue group of Poseidon and Beroe. The founding myth of the remote past of the city is thus tied up with the city patron of the present. These images suggest a continuity of Berytus' fortunes through the ages and assign Tyche a historical role of upholding local traditions. This message was unmistakeable.

To conclude, the Tyche of Roman Berytus was the most recent of the three Near Eastern Tyche types. Its creation in the late first or early second century CE came in the heyday of civic coinage in the Greek East which produced a multitude of images that were meaningful to the community in many different ways. Tyche's image is a hybrid composition from a variety of iconographic sources. The seemingly generic images of Tyche gain a specific significance in their proper context, generated by the interplay of artists' creative use of disparate elements on the one hand and the viewers' expectations and responses on the other. These elements were adopted in order to spark and invite the viewer to make a mental connection with other familiar goddesses. To others who could not make such associations, the eclectic Tyche image at least conveyed its character as mistress of the waves and a full-fledged member of the local pantheon. These considerations on the genesis and meaning of a 'new' type of goddess help elucidate aspects of cultural and religious life in Roman Phoenicia.

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44 The twins are sometimes identified as Sun and Moon or Hesperos and Phosphoros, but their astral character is not shown in the coin images. See sculptural examples in *LIMC* III 'Azizos'.

45 *Dionys.* 41.129.

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Andreas J. M. Kropp
Assistant Professor in Classical Art
Department of Classics
University of Nottingham
Nottingham NG7 2RD
UK
andreas.kropp@nottingham.ac.uk

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