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## A Laodicean on Mount Casius

Julien Aliquot

► **To cite this version:**

Julien Aliquot. A Laodicean on Mount Casius. Michael Blömer; Achim Lichtenberger; Rubina Raja. Religious identities in the Levant from Alexander to Muhammed. Continuity and change, 4, Brepols Publishers, pp.157-167, 2015, Contextualizing the sacred, 978-2-503-54445-8. halshs-01708746

**HAL Id: halshs-01708746**

**<https://shs.hal.science/halshs-01708746>**

Submitted on 1 Feb 2020

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# RELIGIOUS IDENTITIES IN THE LEVANT FROM ALEXANDER TO MUHAMMED



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CONTEXTUALIZING THE SACRED

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VOLUME 4

Previously published volumes in this series are listed at the back of the book.

RELIGIOUS IDENTITIES  
IN THE LEVANT FROM  
ALEXANDER TO MUHAMMED

CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

Edited by

Michael Blömer, Achim Lichtenberger,  
and Rubina Raja



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BREPOLS

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

Continuity and change (Conference) (2010 : Danish Institute in Damascus), creator.  
Religious identities in the Levant from Alexander to Muhammed : continuity and change.

-- (Contextualizing the sacred ; 4)

1. Middle East--Religion--Congresses.
2. Middle East--Civilization--To 622--Congresses.
3. Identification (Religion)--History--To 1500--Congresses.
4. Sacred space--Middle East--History--To 1500--Congresses.
5. Religious architecture--Middle East--History--To 1500--Congresses.
6. Art and religion--Middle East--History--To 1500--Congresses.

I. Title

II. Series

III. Blomer, Michael editor.

IV. Lichtenberger, Achim editor.

V. Raja, Rubina, 1975- editor.

VI. Danish Institute in Damascus host institution.

200.9'394-dc23

ISBN-13: 9782503544458



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D/2015/0095/19

ISBN: 978-2-503-54445-8

Printed on acid-free paper

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## A LAODICEAN ON MOUNT CASIUS

Julien Aliquot

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.<sup>1</sup> 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 ques-

tions 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 Laodiceans 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.<sup>2</sup> But this unique document has survived only in the form of a copy made during the Roman period.<sup>3</sup> Some Roman coins of Laodicea show Sarapis’s bust on their reverse,<sup>4</sup> 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 revived, transformed, and reincorporated into the

1 The location of Antigoneia is unknown. Heraclea: P.-L. Gatier, ‘Héraclée-sur-mer et la géographie historique de la côte syrienne’, in *Studi ellenistici*, 20, ed. by B. Virgilio (Pisa and Rome 2008), pp. 269–83. Pella-Apamea: P. Bernard, ‘I. Une légende de fondation hellénistique: Apamée sur l’Oronte d’après les *Cynégétiques* du Pseudo-Oppien. II. Paysages et toponymie dans le Proche-Orient hellénisé’, *Topoi*, 5 (1995), pp. 353–82; J. Balty, ‘À la recherche de l’Apamée hellénistique: les sources antiques’, in *La Syrie hellénistique*, *Topoi*, Suppl. 4 (Lyon 2003), p. 211–22.

2 P. Roussel, ‘Décret des péliganes de Laodicée-sur-mer’, *Syria*, 23 (1942–1943), pp. 21–32 (*IGLS* iv 1261), cf. J. D. Sosin, ‘Unwelcome dedications: public law and private religion in Hellenistic Laodicea by the sea’, *CQ*, 55 (2005), pp. 130–39.

3 On this point, see H. Seyrig, ‘Poids antiques de la Syrie et de la Phénicie sous la domination grecque et romaine’, *BMB*, 8 (1946–48), p. 67; H. Seyrig, *Scripta varia* (Paris 1985), p. 397.

4 *BMC Syria*, p. 250, nos. 25–27 (first or second century AD); *SNG Copenhagen Syria*, no. 337 (after 48/7 BC).



Figure 12.1. Mount Casius seen from the site of the Hellenistic Doric temple at Seleucia.

Photo © J. Aliquot (2009).

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-Aqra‘) 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 (*spn*), identified it with the realm of their gods, especially that of Baal, the divine lord of storm and thunder.<sup>5</sup> 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.<sup>6</sup> 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,<sup>7</sup>

when Seleucus Nicator founded the cities of the Syrian tetrapolis. The link between Mount Casius and the rulers is also evidenced by the sacrifices the emperors Trajan, Hadrian, and Julian offered to Zeus on the mountain.<sup>8</sup>

In the 1930s, H. Seyrig and C. Schaeffer separately explored Mount Casius from bottom to top, which is now impossible to do. Both noticed that the peak, culminating at 1728 m above sea level, presents a more than six-metre-thick mound formed of ashes, bones, and stones reddened by fire.<sup>9</sup> In May 1937, C. Schaeffer briefly started excavations there. Even though he had to leave the place after less than three hours of work due to the stormy weather, he had enough time to identify the Hellenistic and Roman strata of the tumulus. The discovery of Hellenistic and Roman coins also points to journeys to Mount Casius and its open-air high place at that time.<sup>10</sup> The literary tradition is thus confirmed.

5 D. Pardee, *Les textes para-mythologiques de la 24e campagne (1961)*, RSO, 4 (Paris 1988), pp. 134–35, and *Les textes rituels*, RSO, 12 (Paris 2000), pp. 64–65, pp. 294–96 (with cautious remarks about the ritual hypothetically performed on the mountain in the Late Bronze Age), pp. 1200–01 (epigraphical index to the theonym and oronym *spn*); see also more recently É. Bordreuil, ‘La montagne d’après les données textuelles d’Ougarit’, *Res antiquae*, 3 (2006), pp. 179–91, with bibliography.

6 Phil. Bybl. *FGrH*, 790 F 2, quoted by Euseb. *Praep. evang.*, 1. 10. 9. On this passage, see J. Aliquot, *La vie religieuse au Liban sous l’Empire romain* (Beirut 2009), pp. 21–28.

7 A. Adler, ‘Kasios 2’, *RE*, 10. 2 (1919), col. 2265–67; A. Salać, ‘Ζεὺς Κάσιος’, *BCH*, 46 (1922), pp. 160–89. About the Egyptian interpretation of the cult, see also P. Chuvin and J. Yoyotte, ‘Documents relatifs au culte pélusien de Zeus Casios’, *RA* (1986),

pp. 41–63, and ‘Le Zeus Casios de Péluse à Tivoli: une hypothèse’, *BIFAO*, 88 (1988), pp. 165–80; H. Verreth, *The Northern Sinai from the 7th Century BC till the 7th Century AD: A Guide to the Sources*, Trismegistos online publication (Leuven 2006), pp. 477–91.

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

9 *Syrie-Palestine, Iraq, Transjordanie*, Les Guides bleus (Paris 1932), p. 287 (information provided by H. Seyrig); C. F. A. Schaeffer, ‘Les fouilles de Ras Shamra-Ugarit, neuvième campagne (printemps 1937). Rapport sommaire’, *Syria*, 19 (1938), pp. 323–27. See also J. Mécérian, *Expédition archéologique dans l’Antiochène occidentale* (Beirut 1964), pp. 61–62 n. 64, who reports that the Jesuit Father H. Lammens did not see any architectural remains on the summit in August 1904 (not 1906, cf. P. Peeters, ‘S. Barlaam du mont Casius’, *Mélanges de la Faculté Orientale*, 3. 2 (1909), p. 813).

10 M. Henty, ‘Roman and Byzantine Coins’, in W. Djobadze,

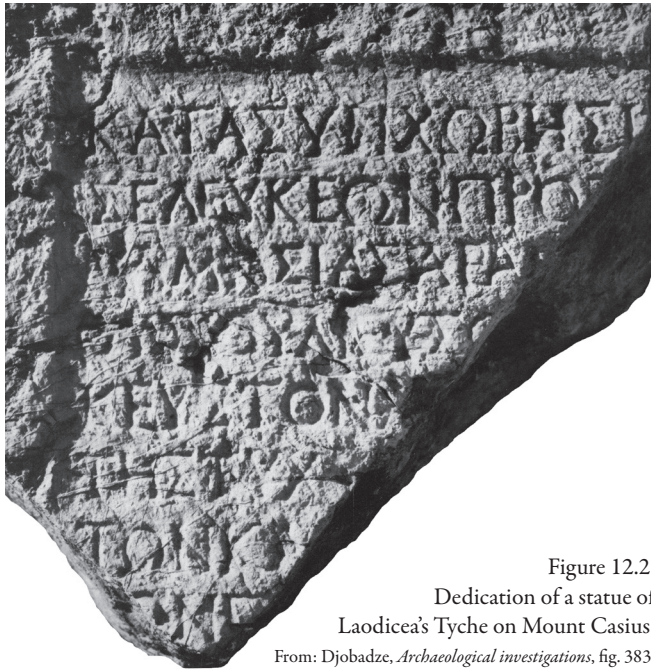


Figure 12.2.  
Dedication of a statue of  
Laodicea's Tyche on Mount Casius.  
From: Djobadze, *Archaeological investigations*, fig. 383.

However, as the archaeologist W. Djobadze assumed,<sup>11</sup> like others before,<sup>12</sup> 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.<sup>13</sup> In addition,

*Archaeological Investigations in the Region West of Antioch-on-the-Orontes* (Stuttgart 1986), pp. 217–18 (coins from the Saint Barlaam excavations); O. Callot, 'Notes de numismatique hellénistique', *Syria*, 75 (1998), pp. 84–85 (coins from the summit and from Saint Barlaam). See also the two Hellenistic hoards from Kassab, on the southern slope of the mountain: H. Seyrig, *Trésors du Levant, anciens et nouveaux* (Paris 1973), pp. 95–103, no. 30 = *IGCH* 1568 (c. 100 BC); *IGCH* 1571 (c. 95 BC).

11 W. Djobadze, *Archaeological Investigations in the Region West of Antioch-on-the-Orontes* (Stuttgart 1986), pp. 3–56, especially pp. 4–5, with additional remarks by H. Seyrig on p. 203.

12 See e.g., F. R. Chesney, *The Expedition for the Survey of the Rivers Euphrates and Tigris* (London 1850), p. 386, and W. B. Barker, *Lares and Penates: or, Cilicia and its Governors* (London 1853), p. 274.

13 For the temple at Seleucia, see R. Stillwell (ed.), *Antioch on-the-Orontes III. The Excavations 1937–1939* (Princeton 1941), pp. 33–34. On the other Doric temples in Hellenistic Syria (Pella, Jabal Khaled, Gadara, Laodicea ad Libanum, and maybe Dora), see

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. Djobadze 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).<sup>14</sup> 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.<sup>15</sup>

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. Djobadze published his reading and short comments with a photograph (Fig. 12.2).<sup>16</sup> 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:

Κατὰ συνχώρησι[ν τῆς]  
Σελευκέων προβ[ουλῆς]  
Δαμασίας Ἀγα[θοκλέ]-  
4 οὺς Ἰουλιεὺς ὁ [καὶ Λαοδι]-

also P.-L. Gatier, 'Évolutions culturelles dans les sociétés du Proche-Orient syrien à l'époque hellénistique', in *L'Orient méditerranéen de la mort d'Alexandre aux campagnes de Pompée*, ed. by F. Prost (Rennes and Toulouse 2003), p. 114, and S. R. Martin and A. Stewart, 'Hellenistic Discoveries at Tel Dor, Israel', *Hesperia*, 72 (2003), p. 128, with bibliography.

14 *IGLS* III, 1226; H. Seyrig, 'Inscriptions. A. Greek and Latin', in W. Djobadze, *Archaeological Investigations*, p. 203, figs 391–392 (*SEG* 36 1301).

15 See the Georgian and Arabic versions of the *Life* of Barlaam, edited by N. Marr, 'Agiografičeskie materialy po gruzinskim rukopisjam Ivera [Hagiographic materials in the Georgian manuscripts of Ivron]', *Zapiski vostočnago otdelenija imperatorskago russkago arxeologičeskago obščestva*, 13 (1901), pp. 109–38 (Georgian), and P. Peeters, 'S. Barlaam', pp. 805–13 (Arabic); cf. W. Djobadze, *Archaeological Investigations*, pp. 4–5.

16 Seyrig, 'Inscriptions', pp. 201–02, fig. 383 (*SEG* 36 1297).

- κεὺς τὸν ἀ[νδριάντα]  
 τῆς Τύχης τῆς Ἰουλιέων  
 τῶν κα[ι Λαοδικέων]  
 8 [τ]ῶν π[ρὸς θαλάσση]  
 [τῆς ἱερᾶς καὶ ἀσύλου]  
 [καὶ αὐτονόμου καὶ]  
 [ναυαρχίδος πόλεως]  
 12 [ἐκ τῶν ἰδίων ἀνέστησεν].

Translation: By the consent of the presidency of the council of the Seleucians, Damasias, son of Agathocles, Julian and Laodicean, put up at his own expense the statue of the Tyche of the sacred, inviolable, autonomous, and nava-arch city of the Julians and Laodiceans-by-the-sea.

L. 2. About προβ[ουλῆς], see *IGLS* III, 1185, already quoted by H. Seyrig: dedication of a statue by ὁ δῆμος καὶ ἡ προβουλή, 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 Ἀγα[θοκλέ]ους too short, and wondering if the second letter of the name could be a *rho* instead of a *gamma*. The photograph leaves no room for doubt. A neglected argument also has to be taken into account: the name Ἀγαθοκλῆς 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,<sup>17</sup> 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.<sup>18</sup>

L. 5. H. Seyrig expressed some reservations about the reading of τὸν ἀ[νδριάντα], because he thought that the word ἀνδριάς 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 Σωτειρας · ὑπὲρ τῆς πρώτης καὶ μεγίστης μητροπόλεως τῆς Ἀσίας καὶ δις νεωκόρου τῶν Σεβ(αστῶν) καὶ φιλοσεβαστοῦ Ἐφεσίων πόλεως ἡ Ἀντιοχέων κολώνων Καισαρέων πόλις τὸν ἀνδριάντα ἀνέστησε, κτλ.

At the end, H. Seyrig only read: τῶν κα[ι Λαοδικέων - - - ]·ONE[- - -] (l. 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 (*theta*, *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 Ἰουλιέων τῶν καὶ Λαοδικέων τῶν πρὸς θαλάσση τῆς ἱερᾶς καὶ ἀσύλου καὶ αὐτονόμου.<sup>19</sup> 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.<sup>20</sup> 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 Antigonos in 301 BC. Immediately upon that, he founded cities on the Syrian

<sup>19</sup> *IG* II<sup>2</sup>, 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 (Cnidus, with ὁ δῆμος instead of ἡ πόλις), *I. Tyr*, 52 (Tyre, fragmentary), and maybe *CIL* v, 6984, with F. Battistoni, ‘Missing Relative?’, *ZPE*, 169 (2009), pp. 183–87 (Augusta Taurinorum).

<sup>20</sup> 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.

<sup>17</sup> *CIL* xvi, 15: *C(ai) Iuli Agathocli Laudiceni*.

<sup>18</sup> P. Bingen, 77. 17: Δόμνου τοῦ Ἀγ]αθοκλέους.

coast. On each occasion, he relied on the judgement of Zeus to locate his towns, starting with a sacrifice on Mount Casius. In return, an eagle sent by the god led him to the appropriate places, first that of Seleucia, its first capital, at the foot of the mountain, and that of Antioch, below the Silpius. The Macedonian king then founded Laodicea, before turning to Apamea and the Orontes valley:

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.<sup>21</sup>

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.<sup>22</sup> 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.<sup>23</sup> 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'),<sup>24</sup> 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.<sup>25</sup> 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.<sup>26</sup> 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.<sup>27</sup> 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.<sup>28</sup> 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.<sup>29</sup> In the early second century AD, the priestess of

21 Malal., 8. 17 (ed. I. Turn, p. 153): ἐκτίσσε δὲ ὁ αὐτὸς Σέλευκος ὁ Νικάτωρ καὶ ἄλλην παραλίαν πόλιν ἐν τῇ Συρίᾳ ὀνόματι Λαοδικεῖαν εἰς ὄνομα τῆς αὐτοῦ θυγατρὸς, πρῶν οὖσαν κώμην ὀνόματι Μαζαβδάν, ποιήσας κατὰ τὸ ἔθος θυσίαν τῷ Διὶ καὶ αἰτησάμενος ποῦ κτίσει τὴν πόλιν ἦλθεν ἀετὸς πάλιν καὶ ἤρπασεν ἀπὸ τῆς θυσίας· καὶ ἐν τῷ καταδιώκειν αὐτὸν τὸν ἀετὸν ὑπήντησεν αὐτῷ σῦαγρος μέγας ἐξελθὼν ἀπὸ καλαμῶνος, ὄντινα ἀνεῖλεν ὥστιν κρατεῖχε δόρατι· καὶ φοβησάσας τὸν σῦαγρον καὶ σύρας τὸ λείψανον αὐτοῦ ἐκ τοῦ αἵματος αὐτοῦ διεχάραξε τὰ τεῖχη, ἔασας τὸν ἀετὸν· καὶ οὕτως τὴν αὐτὴν πόλιν ἐκτίσεν ἐπάνω τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ σῦαγρου, θυσιάσας κόρην ἀδαῆ ὀνόματι Ἀγαυὴν (Ἀγανὴν ms.), ποιήσας αὐτῇ στήλην χαλκῆν εἰς τύχην τῆς αὐτῆς πόλεως. The translation given here is borrowed from E. Jeffreys and others, *The Chronicle of John Malalas: A Translation* (Melbourne 1986), p. 107.

22 P. Chuvin, 'Les fondations syriennes de Séleucos Nicator dans la chronique de Jean Malalas', in *Géographie historique au Proche-Orient (Syrie, Phénicie, Arabie, grecques, romaines, byzantines)*, ed. by P.-L. Gatier, B. Helly, and J.-P. Rey-Coquais (Paris 1988), pp. 99–110.

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

24 Steph. Byz. s.v. Λαοδικεῖα (Ράμιθα); Eust., *Comm. in Dion. Per.*, 915, 7–11 (Ράμανθαν).

25 Athen., 1. 18a.

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

27 *SNG Copenhagen Syria*, no. 319.

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).

29 Paus., 3. 16. 8. According to the *Hist. Aug., Ant. Hel.*, 7. 5, Orestes brought the statue to Laodicea.

Lady Artemis still claimed to be descended directly from Seleucus Nicator at Laodicea.<sup>30</sup>

All this led P. Chuvin 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.<sup>31</sup> 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.<sup>32</sup> 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

30 *IGLS* IV, 1264 (AD 116/7): Ἰουλίαν Τίτου θυγάτ(ε)ρα Βερενίκην τὴν ἀπὸ βασιλείως Σελεύκου Νικάτορος, ἱερασαμέν(η)ν τῷ δῆρ' ἔτει τῆς κυρία[ς] Ἀρτέμιδος, Κασσία Λε(π)ίδα ἡ μήτηρ. For another priestess of Lady Artemis, see *IGLS* IV, 1263 (AD 115/6).

31 E. Vila and A.-S. Dalix, 'Alimentation et idéologie: la place du sanglier et du porc à l'âge du Bronze sur la côte levantine', *Anthropozoologica*, 39 (2004), pp. 219–36; A.-S. Dalix Meier, 'Ba'al et les sangliers dans CAT 1. 12', *Historiae*, 3 (2006), pp. 35–68. See also J. Weulersse, *Le Pays des Alaouites* (Tours 1940), p. 42, and P. Mouterde, 'La faune du Proche-Orient dans l'Antiquité', *MUSJ*, 45 (1969), p. 458, about boars in the forests of coastal Syria.

32 *Lib. Ep.*, 1392. 3–5, with D. Feissel, 'Laodicée de Syrie sous l'empereur Julien d'après des lettres méconnues de Libanios', *Chiron*, 40 (2010), pp. 77–88, especially pp. 84–85, who also remembers the first celebration of the Antoninia Pythia in Laodicea according to *IGLS* IV, 1265 (ἐν Λαοδικείᾳ τῆ πατρίδι μου, Πυθιάδι πρώτῃ ἀρχαίᾳ οἰκουμένην Ἀντωνεινιακὸν ἀνδρῶν πυνγῆν), and E. Meyer, 'Die Bronzeprägung von Laodikeia in Syrien 194–217', *JNG*, 37–38 (1987–88), p. 64 (coins celebrating the creation of the Antoninia Pythia under Caracalla, in 215–217). On the basis of this information, silver Seleucid tetradrachms and drachms of 142/1 BC with the Apollo on omphalos type (the god seated left on omphalos, testing arrow, and resting hand on grounded bow) should be attributed to Laodicea rather than to Seleucia. See *Seleucid Coins* II, nos 1929–1930 (Seleucia or Laodicea); cf. also no. 2018 (same type under Antiochus VI, probably from northern Syria, different in style, epigraphy, and control convention from the drachms of Antioch and Apamea).

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.<sup>33</sup>

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 struck by lightning, having been unwise 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.<sup>34</sup>

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.<sup>35</sup> Other issues bear the bust of the goddess in a distyle aedicula.<sup>36</sup> On the other hand, one detail refers more specifically to viticulture and the Dionysiac world at the same time: in a very original way, the Tyche of Laodicea wears earrings in the shape of grapes;<sup>37</sup> this can be interpreted as a reference to the renowned Laodicean wine, which was exported as far as India under the Roman Empire,<sup>38</sup> as well as to the cycle

of Dionysus, whose cult is well attested by the coins of Laodicea from 46/5 BC onwards.<sup>39</sup>

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,<sup>40</sup> perhaps after the grandson of Poseidon who was reputed to have reigned over Thebes for twenty years after Pentheus's death.<sup>41</sup> According to Malalas, Seleucia replaced Palaiapolis, a small city built by Syrus, the son of Agenor and brother of Cadmus.<sup>42</sup> 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.<sup>43</sup>

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.

35 M. and K. Prieur, *A Type Corpus of the Syro-Phoenician Tetradrachms and their Fractions from 57 BC to AD 253* (London 2000), nos 1112, 1147 (Septimius Severus), 1122–24 (Caracalla); *BMC Syria*, pp. 254–56, nos 55–74 (Antoninus Pius).

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 was inclined to interpret as a tomb.

37 M. and K. Prieur, *A Type Corpus*, nos 1107–11 (Hadrian).

38 Strab., 16. 2. 9 (Laodicea, ἐπὶ τῇ θαλάττῃ κάλλιστα ἐκτισμένη καὶ εὐλίμενος πόλις χώραν τε ἔχουσα πολύοιον πρὸς τῇ ἄλλῃ εὐκαρπία, sending the bulk of its exports to Alexandria); *Per. mar. Erythr.*, 6 and 49 (οἶνος Λαδικηρῶς sold in Adulis and Barygaza); Alex. Trall. *Theor.*, 2. 483 Puschmann (Λαδικηρῶν, sweet wine); *O. Petr.*, 241. 289–90 (shipment of λαδικηρῶν 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.*, I. 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 (λαδικηρῶν, λατικηρῶν, Berenice, first century AD); P. Bingen, 77. 17–18 (Laodicean ship transporting wine, maybe to Alexandria, in the second century AD). See R. Tomber, ‘Laodicean Wine Containers in Roman Egypt’, in *Life on the Fringe: Living in the Southern Egyptian Deserts during the Roman and early-Byzantine Periods*, ed. by O. E. Kaper (Leiden 1998), pp. 213–19 (identification of the λαδικηρῶν as a type of Dressel 2–4 wine amphora made with clay originating from the Syrian coast), and the discussion in R. S. Bagnall, C. Helms, and A. M. F. W. Verhoogt, *Documents from Berenike I* (Brussels 2000), pp. 16–21, and R. Tomber, ‘The Pottery’, in *Mons Claudianus: Survey and Excavation 1987–1993 III: Ceramic Vessels & Related Objects*, ed. by V. A. Maxfield and D. P. S. Peacock (Cairo 2006), pp. 168–69, pp. 214–15. Note that there was a wine of Mount Casius: Erotian. *Vocum Hippocraticarum collectio*, 89 Klein, s.v. Κάσιον οἶνον · ἴσως τὸν Συριακὸν λέγει, καλούμενον ἀπὸ Κασίου ὄρους.

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 thyrsus, before panther seated).

40 Strab., 16. 2. 16; Pomp. Mela, 1. 12. See J.-P. Rey-Coquais, *Arados et sa pèree aux époques grecque, romaine et byzantine* (Paris 1974), pp. 74–75, on the identification of the Lycus with the northern Nahr al-Kabir. The river is also mentioned in the *Oracula sibyllina*, 13. 131–32.

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 (Antiochus 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).

43 Malal., 8. 12 (ed. I. Thurn, p. 151, transl. E. Jeffreys and others, *The Chronicle*, p. 105): καὶ ἠῤῥατο ἅμα τῷ ἱερεῖ Ἀμφίονι μαθεῖν διαδιδόμενου σημείου, εἰ τὴν αὐτὴν ὀφείλει οἰκῆσαι πόλιν Ἀντιγονίαν μετονομάζων αὐτὴν ἢ οὐκ ὀφείλει αὐτὴν οἰκῆσαι, ἀλλὰ κτίσαι πόλιν ἄλλην ἐν ἄλλῳ τόπῳ.



Figure 12.3. Dedication of the statue of Tyre by the Laodiceans, Tyre.

Photo by J. Aliquot.

This makes sense if one remembers the somewhat troubled history of the relations between Antigonos 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, Antigonos did not fail to order him to destroy the city again.<sup>44</sup> 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.<sup>45</sup> 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 Antigonos 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 Tyr* accompanied by a useful photograph.<sup>46</sup> 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.<sup>47</sup> Thus I read:

[Ἡ πόλις τῶν]  
[Ἰουλιέων]  
[τῶν καὶ Λαο]-  
4 [δικ]έων τῆς  
[τε]ρᾶς καὶ ἀσύ-  
λου καὶ αὐτο-  
νόμου καὶ  
8 ναυαρχίδος

46 *I. Tyr*, 51. I thank P.-L. Gatier for drawing my attention to this inscription first published by J.-P. Rey-Coquais, 'Une double dédicace de Lepcis Magna à Tyr', in *L'Africa romana: Atti del IV convegno di studio, Sassari, 12–14 dicembre 1986*, ed. by A. Mastino (Sassari 1987), p. 598 and p. 601 (quoted in the commentary of *SEG* 37 1463). Kajava, 'Laodicea', p. 536, already suggested restoring the name of the Laodiceans in the first lines, but he failed to find an explanation (cf. n. 36: 'pur in mancanza della dimostrazione di un'effettiva origine coloniale della città pre-seleucida').

47 One might expect to read [Ῥωσ]έων instead of [Κιτι]έων (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 provinzielle 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.

44 Diod. Sic., 19. 61. 2–3.

45 Liberation of the city: Diod. Sic., 19. 78. 5. Gifts of Demetrius: *IG VII*, 2419, with M. Holleaux, 'Sur une inscription de Thèbes', *REG*, 29 (1895), pp. 7–48, reprinted in *Études d'épigraphie et d'histoire grecques I* (Paris 1938), pp. 1–40 (*Syll.*<sup>3</sup> 337); W. Ameling, K. Bringmann, and B. Schmidt-Dounas, *Schenkungen hellenistischer Herrscher an griechische Städte und Heiligtümer I* (Berlin 1995), pp. 131–33, no. 83. Cf. R. A. Billows, *Antigonos the One-Eyed, and the Creation of the Hellenistic State* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London 1990), p. 226.



Τύρον τὴν  
καὶ ἑαυτῆς  
μητρόπολιν.

Translation: The city of the Julians and Laodiceans, sacred, inviolable, autonomous, and navarch, (put up the statue of) Tyre, which is also its metropolis.

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).<sup>48</sup> 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;<sup>49</sup> 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;<sup>50</sup> the second, that their Tyche was the

48 Strab., 16. 2. 4. For the Brother Peoples coinage, see *BMC Syria*, pp. 151–52, nos 1–11, and *SNG Copenhagen Syria*, nos 394–397, with K. J. Rigsby, ‘Seleucid Notes’, *TAPhA*, 110 (1980), pp. 242–48, and A. Houghton, ‘A Tetradrachm of Seleucia Pieria at the Getty Museum: An Archaizing Zeus and the Accession of Alexander Balas in Northern Syria’, *GMusJ*, 10 (1982), p. 158 n. 22.

49 J. Aliquot, ‘Laodicée-sur-mer et les fondations de l’empereur Constance’, *Chiron*, 40 (2010), p. 64, pp. 75–76.

50 Literary sources sometimes place Laodicea-by-the-sea in Phoenicia without confusing this city and those of Berytus and Laodicea ad Libanum, which were indeed named Laodicea of

Theban Maenad Agave, the daughter of Cadmus, and granddaughter of Agenor, the founder of Tyre.<sup>51</sup> In this case, as in others,<sup>52</sup> 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.<sup>53</sup> 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)

Phoenicia at different stages of history. See App. *Syr.*, 57 (Λαοδικεῖα δὲ ἡ ἐν τῇ Φοινίκῃ, amongst the cities of the Syrian tetrapolis founded by Seleucus Nicator, hence the erroneous localisation of Antioch under the Lebanon, Ἀντιόχεια ἢ ὑπὸ τῷ Λιβάνῳ ὄρει); Eust., *Comm. in Dion. Per.*, 915. 1–2 (Λαοδικεῖα ἢ τῆς Φοινίκης ἀπὸ Λαοδίκης ὠνόμασται, ἀδελφῆς Ἀντιόχου), and 7–8 (τὴν δὲ ἐν Φοινίκῃ Λαοδικεῖαν). On the pre-Hellenistic occupation of the site and on the archaeological tell south of the ancient harbour, see G. Saadé, *Histoire de Lattaquié 1: Ramitha, problèmes des origines* (Damascus 1964), pp. 84–90, pp. 108–16; P. J. Riis, ‘L’activité de la mission archéologique danoise sur la côte phénicienne en 1963’, *AAAS*, 15. 2 (1965), p. 77, pls 11–12; G. Saadé, ‘Note sur les tells archéologiques du royaume ougaritien’, *Syria*, 67 (1990), p. 197; G. Saadé, *Ougarit et son royaume des origines à sa destruction*, ed. by M. Yon (Beirut 2011), p. 417.

51 Quint. Curt., 4. 4. 15 and 19. On Agenor at Tyre, see Aliquot, *La vie*, pp. 169–70.

52 C. P. Jones, *Kinship Diplomacy in the Ancient World* (Cambridge, MA, and London 1999).

53 *I. Tyr*, 48–49.

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