

# Anatomy of a Phoenician goddess: the Tyche of Berytus and her acolytes

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The goddess Tyche is currently a popular subject. Recent years have seen the publication of several monographs, an exhibition catalogue and various encyclopedia entries.<sup>1</sup> The study of Tyche's visual representations, however, is overwhelmingly focused on the Tyche of Antioch and her derivatives and, to a lesser extent, on the Tyche of Caesarea. A third type of Near Eastern Tychai, that of Berytus (fig. 1), is given only a marginal rôle. The present article intends to give due attention to this member of the trio of body types which was adopted by almost all Phoenician cities as emblems of their communities during the Roman period.

My first purpose is to define the iconography of Tyche in Phoenicia through the imagery of municipal coins. When was the type created? What are its models or precedents? What are its messages? How does it evolve? How does it relate to other known types? More importantly, the exploration of the iconography will shed some light on the significance and rationale behind the creation of Tyche's images. It reveals her surprisingly deep roots and significance in the religious and cultural life of Roman Phoenicia.

## 1. Three types

To the ancient Greeks, Tyche was a goddess of fate and fortune, both good and bad.<sup>2</sup> She looked upon the deeds of men and governed human affairs. In the Hellenistic period, the cult of Tyche spread widely, and the character of the goddess became more nuanced. She revealed a darker side as blind fate, dangerous and inscrutable, but at the same time embodied a novel rôle as tutelary city goddess. In this regard Tyche was at first conceived as personification of a city or a citizen body, but later she developed into a city patron, a protector of the community but not identical with it.<sup>3</sup>

Tychai in the Hellenistic and Roman periods followed a limited set of body types and displayed their function through a range of distinctive attributes. In Roman times, such



Fig. 1. Berytus under Diadumenian, A.D. 218. D 28 mm (twice enlarged). Reverse: COL IVL AVG FEL BER. Tetrastyle temple of Tyche. Within the temple, Tyche standing facing, wearing mural crown, holding *stylis* in her r. hand, *aphlaston* in the l. hand; l. foot on prow; she is 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 Nikai holding up wreaths; at the bottom, cupids holding tridents riding dolphins (author).

1 The three main monographs are Prottung 1995; Christof 2001; Meyer 2006. Museum exhibit: Matheson 1994. See also *LIMC* II, s.v. "Antiocheia"; *LIMC* V, s.v. "Kaisareia II"; *LIMC* VIII, s.v. "Tyche"; as well as *LIMC* VIII *Supplements*, with entries on individual cities in alphabetical order.

2 *OCD* s.v. "Tyche"; *LIMC* VIII, s.v. "Tyche", with the literary sources.

3 In detail, Meyer 2006, 335-54.