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CHAPTER 40

THE GADIR–TYRE AXIS

MANUEL ÁLVAREZ MARTÍ-AGUILAR

THE CLOSE RELATIONSHIP between Tyre and its colonies is one of the most notable aspects of the phenomenon of Phoenician colonization. This relationship was mediated by the figure of its chief god Melqart, identified with Herakles and Hercules by the Greeks and Romans. In her seminal work on the figure of the Tyrian Herakles, Corinne Bonnet (1988) pointed out the special bond that existed between the metropolis and Gadir, the oldest Tyrian colony in the west, whose sanctuary to Melqart-Herakles was characterized by "l'omniprésence du modèle tyrien."

The city of Gadir/Gades, and particularly its Herakleion (of which sadly we have preserved no archaeological trace), inspired a notable amount of discussion and information handed down via the literary tradition of antiquity. In those times, the city and its temple constituted a well-known point of reference as the world's farthest western point, as well as a place of religious importance and international prestige. It is through this continuous discussion that we can begin to understand the deep symbolic and religious connection between Gadir and Tyre.

The bond between the two cities, forged at the founding of Gadir in the ninth century BCE, existed until the sixth century BCE, a time when there was a general disruption of the link between Tyre and its ancient colonies in the political and economic spheres (Aubet 2001). However, the following discussion will show that the religious and cultural sway held by Tyre over Gadir, as well as the links between the respective temples of Melqart continued to be strong throughout the history of both cities.

Tyre's Foundation Story

To understand the nature of the relationship between Gadir and Tyre, and the place of the figure of Melqart at its core, it is necessary to first discuss the founding myth of the city of Tyre as represented by Nonnus of Panopolis in his *Dionysiaca*. The story is composed of two parts, the first of which revolves around an oracle given by Herakles

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via dreams to the future founders of the city. The oracle orders the founders to construct a boat and sail to certain wandering islands, the "Ambrosial Rocks," where they would find an olive tree which is burning yet not consumed by the fire, and on the tree would be a snake, a pot, and an eagle. After the bird is sacrificed, the wandering islands would become fixed upon "immovable foundations," and it is here that Tyre should be founded. The second part of the story consists of the fulfillment of the oracle on the part of those to whom Herakles gave it, with the twist that the bird gives itself up voluntarily for sacrifice. Nonnus's account is dominated by the role of Melqart as the true founder of the city via the dream oracle and those whom he sends to found the city.

Although Nonnus wrote in the fifth century CE, a series of Tyrian coins from the third century CE show the Ambrosial Rocks schematically represented as a pair of cippi or stelae and connected with an olive tree. This indicates that the structural elements of the tradition handed down by Nonnus were strongly rooted in Tyrian civic identity from early Imperial times. Also attesting to this is a passage from the novel *Leucippe and Clitophon* (2.14) by Achilles Tatius which refers to the existence of a sacred precinct in Tyre that contains an olive tree growing beside a fire (Bijovsky 2005).

The Ambrosial Rocks on the Tyrian coins can be compared with the stelae which appear in the other surviving version of the story of the founding of Tyre contained in Philo of Byblos's *Phoenician History* (Euseb. *Praep. evang.* 1.10–9.11). In Philo's account, the origins of Tyre are connected to two mythical individuals, Samemroumos-Hypsouranios and Ousoos. The latter invents the art of sailing by using a burnt log as a boat after a storm burns the nearby forest. Afterwards, two stelae (pillars) are dedicated to Fire and Wind and worshiped thenceforth. The reference in Philo to these stelae associated with the founding of Tyre has, in turn, been compared to Herodotus's description (2.44) of his visit to the temple of Tyrian Herakles in the mid-fifth century BCE. Herodotus notes the richness of the offerings in the temple and assures the reader that there he saw two stelae, one of refined gold and the other of emerald.

As far as the rituals that may have characterized the cult of Melqart in the temple at Tyre, Flavius Josephus makes mention of the religious reforms of King Hiram, who built new temples to Herakles and Astarte and who was the first to celebrate the *egersis* ("awakening") of Herakles in the month of Peritius (Joseph. *Ap.* 1.116–19). The nature of this celebration of the *egersis* is not known, but it has been suggested that it might have been related to a cycle of death and resurrection of the god by means of fire, particularly since there is a reference in Clement of Alexandria (*Recogn.* 10.24) to the existence of a tomb of Herakles in Tyre in the place where he would have been cremated. (On Phoenician religion, cf. also chapter 19, this volume.)

Tyre and Gadir

The information available about Gadir and its sanctuary of Melqart indicates the reproduction of several of the features seen in the metropolis (García y Bellido 1963;

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Bonnet 1988; Mierse 2004; Fear 2005; Marín and Jiménez 2004; Marín 2011). We have several sources for the founding of Gadir and the temple of Melqart. Pomponius Mela, a native of the area, refers to the god as "Egyptian Hercules" and mentions that his temple was "famous for its founders, its cult, its age, and its wealth." "The Tyrians," he adds, "founded the temple, and Hercules' bones (*ossa*) buried there show why the place is consecrated" (Mel. 3.46). Diodorus of Sicily (5.20.1–3) also mentions that the Phoenicians founded Gadir and a lavish temple of Herakles where they "instituted magnificent sacrifices which were conducted after the manner of the Phoenicians," and he notes that the shrine "has been held in an honor beyond the ordinary, both at the time of its building and in comparatively recent days even to our own lifetime."

The most complete account of the founding of Gadir, however, is in the *Geography* of Strabo (3.5.5–6), who is in turn relating the account of Posidonius, who had visited the Herakleion around 100 BCE. This story also begins with an oracle received by the Tyrians, and this oracle commands them to found a colony at the "Pillars/stelae of Herakles" (*Herakleous stelae*). The founders do not know the location of the intended "pillars" (later identified with the Mountains at both sides of the Straits of Gibraltar) and carry out two failed attempts to the east and the west of the straits, but on each occasion the omens are not favorable and they return to Tyre. On the third expedition, the Tyrians found Gadir, with the city and the temple on the edges of the island. This account reproduces a key component of the foundation myth of Tyre handed down by Nonnus—namely the oracle which directs the foundation of the city—but it appears to be quite altered by Hellenized elements (for instance, the lack of a dream component to the oracle).

More faithful to the original Tyrian model might be another story which has also been considered to make reference to the founding of Gadir and therefore to be parallel to Strabo's account. The narrative is preserved in Justin's *Epitome* of the *Philippic Histories* of Pompeius Trogus from the time of Augustus (Just. *Epit.* 44.5). In a passage in which Justin discusses the beginning of Carthaginian rule in Iberia, we find what seems to be a reduced version of the just-discussed story which only references one (and not three) voyages from Tyre to Hispania and which features the dream component of the oracle absent in Strabo.

This element of a dream oracle from the god is likewise contained in another story which centers on the Herakleion at Gadir. Porphyry of Tyre (*Abst.* 1.25) describes events which happened during the siege of the Herakleion by Bogud, king of Mauretania, in 38 BCE. Owing to the siege, there were not enough birds for the sacrifice, and a miracle occurs involving a dream oracle from the divinity. The priest at the temple has a dream in which he sees himself between the stelae of the Herakleion receiving a bird which offers itself voluntarily to be sacrificed. Porphyry then goes on to describe the fulfillment of the prophecy the next morning. Apart from the appearance of stelae as in Herodotus and Philo of Byblos, the parallels with the Tyrian model center on the phenomenon of an oracular dream, as well as the sacrifice of a bird which offers itself up voluntarily for death, as in Nonnus.

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This coincidence of themes suggests the existence at Gadir of a founding myth similar to the one at Tyre, and it also suggests that Melqart was considered in both cities to be not only the tutelary god of the city but also its true founder. This thesis may be strengthened by the tradition passed on by Claudius Iolaus in his *Phoenician Histories* (fr. 3) which attributes the founding of Gadeira to a certain Archaleus, son of Phoenix, a character who has been associated with Herakles and therefore with Melqart by extension (Ribichini 2000). The oracular theme present in the stories of Strabo, Justin, and Porphyry has a connection to one notable element of the sanctuary at Gadir—namely the oracle of Melqart-Herakles. The existence of the oracle is documented in two stories: that of Caesar's famous incestuous dream during his visit to the temple in 68 BCE while he was quaestor (Suet. *Iul.* 7.1–2; Cass. Dio 37.52; 41.24), and that of the consultation made in 215 CE by Caecilius Aemilianus, proconsul of Baetica, which caused him to be executed by Caracalla (Cass. Dio 78.20.4). Additionally, other famous visits to the sanctuary might have revolved around consulting the oracle. For example, Hannibal visits the temple of Melqart in Gadir in 219 BCE after his victory at Saguntum to fulfill his vows and perhaps also to consult the oracle before starting the war against Rome, in fact just before starting his long and "Heraklean" march from this corner of Iberia across the Pyrenees and Alps and onto Italian land (Sil. *Pun.* 3.1).

Another element of the Tyrian model present in the sanctuary at Gadir is the olive tree. In the biography of Apollonius of Tyana written by Philostratus, the author records the visit of the Neopythagorean philosopher to Gadir in the time of Nero and in so doing gives us one of the most detailed descriptions we possess of the sanctuary at Gadir. Among the offerings accumulated there, "the golden olive tree of Pygmalion" (*VA* 5.5) is especially noteworthy. In addition, in the *Punica* of Silius Italicus (*Pun.* 3.29), there is mention of the existence of altars with eternal flames in the sanctuary at the Herakleion, just as Achilles Tatius notes in his account of Tyre.

Perhaps the most obvious point in common among the narratives about the two temples is the presence of stelae. We have a number of references to the stelae as landmarks in the sanctuary at Gadir. Those stelae mentioned by Strabo (3.5.5) at the Herakleion, according to Posidonius, were made of bronze, were around 4 m tall, and contained an inscription in Phoenician with information concerning the costs of building the temple. To the contrary, the stelae mentioned by Philostratus (*VA* 5.5) were ½ m tall, four-sided, and contained inscriptions written in indecipherable characters. In turn, Porphyry (*Abst.* 1.25) mentions certain stelae in the story of the priest's oracular dream discussed earlier. To these references we can also add Pliny's brief mention (*HN* 2.242) of certain columns at Gades consecrated to Hercules.

Finally, yet another noteworthy parallel between the sanctuaries of Melqart in Tyre and Gadir would be the possible existence in both of a tomb of the god. In the case of Gadir, we have a reference from Arnobius (*Adv. Nat.* 1.36.5) according to which the "Tyrius Hercules" was buried at the furthest reaches of Hispania. This mention can in turn be connected with Sallust's reference (*Iug.* 18.3) to the belief that Hercules died in Hispania. The possibility that Melqart's tomb was located in the Herakleion at Gadir

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might likewise illuminate the assertion by Pomponius Mela (3.46) that the holiness of that place was due to the presence there of the bones (*ossa*) of the god. In the *Life of Apollonius* by Philostratus, we find references to the existence of a tomb, but of Gerion instead of Herakles (*VA* 5.5). Only a bit earlier, Philostratus (*VA* 5.4) mentions that Gadir is the only place in which triumphal hymns to death are sung, among other unique facets of the Gaditan's religious life. All these elements have been thought to suggest the possibility that, just like in Tyre, in Gadir the festival of the *egersis* of Melqart was celebrated, which in turn would imply a sacred narrative involving the death and resurrection of the god.

In Strabo, Philostratus, and Silius Italicus, we find the fullest descriptions of the sanctuary at Gadir in the Punic and Roman periods. The impression obtained from the description of Silius (*Pun.* 3.1) is of a sacred place with a strong imprint of Near Eastern elements, such as the description of the clothing and customs of the priests or the ritual taboos pertaining to women and animals like pigs, which are considered impure. But earlier Greek and Hellenistic elements are also not lacking in the sanctuary, such as statues of Themistocles (*VA* 5.4) and Alexander (Suet. *Iul.* 7.1–2; Cass. Dio 37.52). Silius emphasizes the absence of cultic images in the Herakleion, a fact which Philostratus also notes (*VA* 5.5) and which might also constitute another parallel with the Tyrian temple, in tune with the general tendency towards aniconism of the Phoenicians (Doak 2015).

To summarize, the Herakleion of Gades in the Republican and early Imperial periods appears to be a place in which characteristic elements of the Tyrian model are reproduced, such as the role played by Melqart in the metropolis and the noteworthy element of the founding myth (Bonnet 1988). Therefore, we possess on the one hand a fair amount of evidence about the parallels between the temples of Melqart in Tyre and Gadir, and on the other hand, very little evidence about the process by which this relationship of identity was constructed and evolved. We might ask if this link between Tyre and Gadir and their respective sanctuaries to Melqart was established only in the colonial period (ending in the sixth century BCE) and preserved afterward, staying "static" for centuries and evoked as a relic later; or whether these parallels provide an indication of a prolonged and evolving relationship down through the centuries of which we apparently have no evidence.

Tyre and Carthage

The answer to this question can be found in Carthage, another colony of Tyre. Despite the fact that Baal Hammon and not Melqart is the principal god of Carthage, the information about the city's relationship with Tyre and the Levantine Melqart is abundant and reveals a link between metropolis and colony that endured throughout the centuries (Bonnet 2009; Quinn 2011; Garbati 2015). For instance, Herodotus (3.19.2) mentions the refusal on the part of the Phoenicians to participate in the campaign that Cambyses II was preparing against Carthage, for they were bound "by strong oaths"

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and to attack their own progeny would have been "an impious thing." We can place around the same time the embassy of Malchus to Tyre with tithes after victorious campaigns in Sicily (Just. *Epit.* 18.7.1–5). Something similar occurred a century later in 405 BCE when Himilco sent to Tyre the monumental bronze statue of Apollo captured at Gela (Diod. Sic. 13.108.2–4). The Carthaginian custom of sending spoils from their conquests to the metropolis throughout their history is also documented by Curtius Rufus (4.3.22).

The siege of Tyre by Alexander in 332 BCE is the source of much information about the links between Carthage and the metropolis, particularly because Carthaginian envoys were at the metropolis to attend some religious festival, perhaps the *egersis* of Melqart (Amitay 2008). The sources agree that the festival honored Melqart as "god of the motherland" (Arr. *Anab.* 2.24.5). In Curtius (Curt. 4.2.10) we find the following significant passage:

> Envoys of the Carthaginians had come at that time to celebrate an annual festival in the manner of their country; for the Tyrians founded Carthage and were always honoured as the forefathers of the Carthaginians.

The strength of the bond which united the North African city with the Melqart of Tyre was displayed in dramatic fashion a few years later in 310 BCE, when it was the Carthaginians themselves who were besieged at the hands of Agathokles of Syracuse. According to the account of Diodorus (20.14.1–2), the Carthaginians attributed their misfortunes to the anger of Herakles *para apoikois* ("who aids colonists"), since after the growth of the city they had abandoned the ancient custom of sending a tenth of the public revenues to the metropolis. In order to try to placate the god, they sent "a large sum of money and many of their most expensive offerings to Tyre."

In the passage from Diodorus we find summarized the key points of the historical pattern which has been suggested as the normal relationship between Tyre and its colonies: after an initial period of dependency, the colonies break their bonds of subordination with the metropolis in the political and economic sphere, but even so they do not lose the extremely strong religious and ethnic bond. This preeminence of the metropolis among the communities of the Phoenician diaspora could explain, for example, the allusion to "the people of Tyre" beside those of Utica and Carthage in the second treaty between Rome and Carthage in 348 BCE (Polyb. 3.24). The strong religious link between Carthage and Tyre is documented up until just before the destruction of the city, when Polybius mentions a ship which the Carthaginians are employing to send sacred offerings to Tyre (Polyb. 31.12.11–12).

The Founding God

A new reading (Álvarez Martí-Aguilar 2014, 2017) of the passage from Justin's *Epitome* (*Epit.* 44.5), traditionally interpreted as a shortened version of Strabo's account of the

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founding of Gadir, can also contribute to our knowledge of the relationship between Gadir and Tyre beyond the colonial period. The passage reads:

> Following instructions given in a dream, the people of Gades brought the *sacra* of Hercules to Spain from Tyre (also the country of origin of the Carthaginians) and founded a city there, but the neighbouring peoples in Spain, envious of the progress made by the new city, made war on them. The Carthaginians therefore sent assistance to their relatives. The expedition met with success; the Carthaginians both defended the people of Gades from aggression and also, by even greater aggression on their part, added an area of the country to their own empire. Later, encouraged by the success of their first expedition, they also sent their general Hamilcar with a large force to seize the entire country.

The new interpretation begins with the thesis that it was the Gaditanians and not the Tyrians, as in Strabo (3.5.5), who receive the oracle from Melqart and found a city at some undetermined point in their history. It is for this reason that they bring certain *sacra* of the god from the metropolitan temple in Tyre. After the growth of the new city and the attack by certain peoples of Iberia, the Carthaginians send an expedition to aid the Gaditanians, justified by the Tyrian kinship between the two cities. In so doing they take control of some territory in Iberia. This episode takes place at an indeterminate time, but not too long before the expedition of Hamilcar Barca, who lands at Gadir in 237 BCE (Diod. Sic. 25.2.10). In view of the historical situation and the archaeological findings pertaining to southwestern Iberia in the Punic period, it has been proposed to identify this new colony of Gadir with Carteia, a Phoenician-Punic city founded in the mid-fourth century BCE on the Bay of Algeciras near Gibraltar. Timosthenes of Rhodes (*apud* Strabo 3.1.7) attributes the founding of this new colony to Herakles (Álvarez Martí-Aguilar 2014, 2017).

If this is the case, then the passage from Justin would be passing down the story of the founding of a secondary colony by the Gaditanians. This founding would reproduce the central element of the Tyrian model: the dream oracle of Melqart-Herakles which in essence makes the god into the city's true founder. According to this interpretation, the similarity between the stories of Justin (*Epit.* 44.5) and Strabo (3.5.5) is not due to the fact that they reflect the same episode but, rather, to the fact they both reenact the same legendary model—namely the one relating to the foundation of Tyre. Indeed, the possibility that Gadir required the participation of the Tyrian temple of Melqart, as well as the presence of certain *sacra* from that temple when founding their own colony in the mid-fourth century BCE, suggests a very close connection between Gadir and Tyre. This scenario fits with what can be deduced of the relationship between Carthage and Tyre in the fourth century BCE from the presence of Carthaginian *theoroi* in the metropolis in 332 BCE, and from the episode of 310 BCE when gifts were sent to placate Melqart who "aids colonists" from Tyre (on Hellenistic Phoenicia, see also chapter 8, this volume).

The crucial role of Melqart among the communities of Tyrian origin might also be reflected in the bilingual inscriptions of the famous cippi of Malta (*CIS* I, 122), dated

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between the third and second centuries BCE, in which Melqart, *bʿl ṣr* ("Lord of Tyre") in the Phoenician version, is rendered as *Herakles archegetes* in the Greek version. The scene contained in the story of Justin (*Epit*. 44.5) in which the Tyrian Melqart participates in the founding of a colony of Gadir might be a good reflection of Melqart's role as *archegetes*, a term associated with the work of establishing the civic and religious origins and identity of new communities (Bonnet 2009).

Conclusions

From the middle of the fourth century BCE until the second century BCE, we find diverse testimonies demonstrating the existence of strong religious and cultural links between Tyre and its ancient colony Carthage. It is reasonable, however, to suppose that this relationship is not exclusive to the case of Carthage (for which we do have more extensive information due to the classical sources' interest in Rome's enemy) and might have extended to the other communities of the Tyrian diaspora, most notably Gadir (for which there are fewer or no preserved sources). The connection between Tyre and Gadir, cultivated as it was over a long period of time, sheds light on a number of aspects of the descriptions of the Herakleion at Gadir in the Roman period. These aspects include the intensely "Oriental" (almost "archaizing") nature of the rituals and priesthood in the sanctuary at Gadir, but also the "Hellenizing" elements of the sanctuary, such as the statue of Alexander contemplated by Caesar. Both phenomena can be associated with the sustained and fluid connection between the Levant and Gadir until at least the fourth century BCE. The same context of intense connection between east and west beyond the colonial period can explain the Egyptian component of the sanctuary as reflected in the very identity of the god, the "Egyptian" Hercules/ Herakles according to Mela (3.46) and Philostratus (*VA* 5.4–5).

This relationship also explains phenomena such as the worship of Milkashtart at Gadir (Marín 2011). This divinity was worshiped at Umm el-Amed, near Tyre, between the third and second centuries BCE, and his cult is also evidenced in Tas Silg, Malta (fourth century BCE), Carthage (ca. second century BCE), and Tripolitania (first century BCE). At Gadir, the cult of Milkashtart is documented by an inscription on a gold ring from the second century BCE, which has been interpreted as an indication that the priests of Melqart at Gadir remained in close contact with the cult of the metropolis (Marín 2011: 219).

The close relationship in the religious sphere between Tyre and Gadir throughout their history provides the ideal framework for the abovementioned rereading of the passage from Justin (*Epit*. 44.5) in which certain *sacra* are brought from Tyre to Iberia on the occasion of the founding of a new colony by Gadir. Although the possible chronology and the circumstances of the story are still hypothetical, its underlying logic matches up faithfully with that of the role played by Melqart of Tyre in the religious

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and cultural sphere among the communities of the Tyrian diaspora such as Carthage as documented in the fourth century BCE.

A common Tyrian origin is the basis for the ties of kinship and solidarity which were in turn established among this group of communities. The practices which permitted the construction and maintenance of this link revolving around the figure of Melqart of Tyre have as their best example the festival in honor of the god which was celebrated in the city upon the arrival of Alexander in 332 BCE, with Carthaginian delegates present. It seems reasonable to apply this model also to the relationship between Tyre and Gadir, the colony which most faithfully reproduces the characteristic elements of the figure of Melqart as an oracular and founder god housed in his famous temple at the end of the known world.

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