



Phoenician Tyre was queen of the seas, an island city of unprecedented splendor. She grew wealthy from her far-reaching colonies and her industries of purple-dyed textiles. But she also attracted the attention of jealous conquerors, among them the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar and Alexander the Great.

Five Millennia of History

Founded at the start of the third millennium B.C., Tyre originally consisted of a mainland settlement and a modest island city that lay a short distance off shore. But it was not until the first millennium B.C. that city experienced its golden age.

In the 10th century B.C. Hiram, king of Tyre, joined two islets by landfill. Later he extended the city further by reclaiming a considerable area from the sea. Phoenician expansion began about 815 B.C. when traders from Tyre founded Carthage in North Africa. Eventually its colonies spread around the Mediterranean and Atlantic, bringing to the city a flourishing maritime trade.

But prosperity and power make their own enemies. Early in the sixth century B.C. Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, laid siege to the walled city for thirteen years. Tyre stood firm, but its probable that at this time the residents of the mainland city abandoned it for the safety of the island..

In the 332 B.C. Alexander the great set out to conquer this strategic coastal base in the war between the Greeks and the Persians. Unable to storm the city, he blockaded Tyre for seven months. Again Tyre held on. But the conqueror used the debris of the abandoned



Triumphal arch

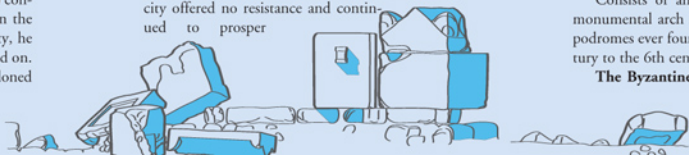
mainland city to build a causeway and once within reach of the city walls, Alexander used his siege engines to batter and finally breach for fortifications.

It is said that Alexander was so enraged at the Tyrians's defense and the loss of his men that he destroyed half the city. The town's 30'000 residents were massacred or sold into slavery.

Tyre and the whole of ancient Syria fell under Roman rule in 64 B.C. Nonetheless, for some time Tyre continued to mint its own silver coins. The Romans built a great many important monuments in the city, including an aqueduct, a triumphal arch and the largest hippodrome in antiquity.

Christianity figures in the history of Tyre, whose name is mentioned in the New Testament. During the Byzantine era, the Archbishops of Tyre was the Primate of all the bishops of Phoenicia. At this time the town witnessed a second golden age as can be seen from the remains of its building and the inscriptions in the necropolis.

Taken by the Islamic armies in 634, the city offered no resistance and continued to prosper



under its new rules, exporting sugar as well as objects made of a pearl and glass. With the decline of the Abbasid caliphate, Tyre acquired some independence under the dynasty of the Banu 'Aqil, vassals of the Egyptians Fatimides. This was a time when Tyre was adorned with fountains and its bazaars were full of all kinds of merchandise, including carpets and jewelry of gold and silver.

Thanks to the Tyre's strong fortifications it was able to resist the onslaught of the Crusaders until 1124. After about 180 years of Crusader rule, the Mamlukes retook the city in 1291, then it passed on to the ottomans at the start of the 16th century. With the end of World War I Tyre was integrated into the new nation of Lebanon.

Archaeological Tyre

For the period of nearly 50 years the General Directorate of Antiquities excavated in and around Tyre, concentrating on the three major Romans archaeological sites in the town, which can be seen today.

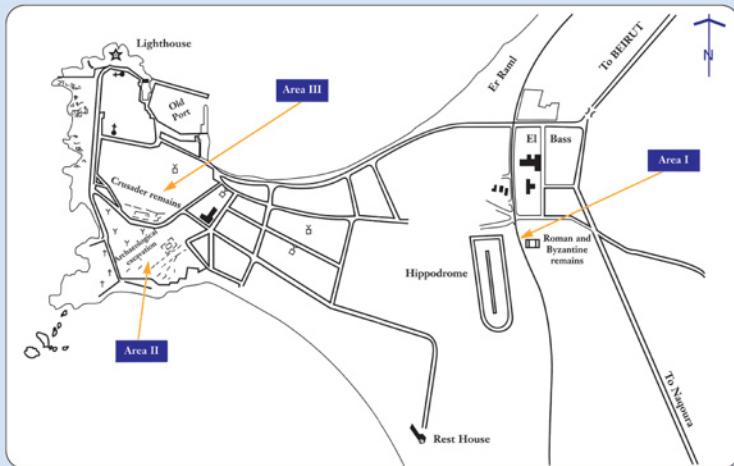
The most important recent archaeological find is a phoenician cemetery from the first millennium B.C. Discovered in 1991 during clandestine excavations. This was the first cemetery of its kind found in Lebanon. Funerary jars, inscribed steles and jewelry were among the objects retrieved from the site.

The importance of this historical city and its monuments was highlighted in 1979 when UNESCO declared Tyre a World Heritage Site.

Area I

Consists of an extensive necropolis, a three-bay monumental arch and one of the largest Roman hippodromes ever found. All date back from the 2nd century to the 6th century A.D

The Byzantine Road: more than 300m has been



Site Plan of Tyre



Roman baths

uncovered. Paved in herring bones well-preserved limestone slabs, delimited on both sides by the necropolis.

The Necropolis: excavated in 1962, has yielded hundreds of ornate stone and marble sarcophagi and burial complexes from the Roman and Byzantine periods.

The Tower Tomb: it is in the same style as some of those found in Palmyra. It consists of a tower like-shape with a vaulted lower section dating back to the 2nd century AD. The sarcophagus inside belongs to a later period

Church with garden (2): the complex has a main semi-circular room with marble floors, a garden and

many tombs. Built in the 3rd century and reused throughout the byzantine period.

The Apollo Shrine: dates back to the first century AD, and was a part of a funeral complex. It is endowed with a skene or shelter for rituals dedicated to Apollo.

The Colombarium (4): consisting of 12 tombs built in 3 levels with 4 burial loculus or cells each. There is a small mosaic on the floor. The complex dates back to the 2nd century AD, the loculus was closed by stone then plastered.

Funerary Chapel: dating back to the 6th century A.D, consisting of a small courtyard furnished with a small fountain, the threshold and the apse floor are paved with multicolored marble.

The Arch of Triumph (8): Built during the 2nd century AD. And collapsed due to an earthquake during the 5th or 6th century AD. The 20m high central gate has been reconstructed. It was preserved to its middle height when it was first discovered. Two lateral gates, once flanked by two towers, give access to the pedestrian road. It was plastered by lime bearing different colours.

The Roman Road: Dates back to the first century





Marble Sarcophagus (IInd c. A.D.)

AD. It is paved with large slabs of limestone on which the chariots wheels marks can still be seen. It is bordered on both sides by a doric colonnade and by a rainfall water drain.

The Pedestrian Road: Located on the southern side of the chariots roman road and on a higher byzantine level that still preserving its byzantine herring-bones slabs. It was bordered on its southern side by shops sheltered by the aqueduct.

The Sepulchral Fountain: is a part of a funerary complex, decorated with niches and various basins and preceded by a small courtyard paved with a mosaic. The deceased were buried in loculi behind the fountain.

The Aqueducts: Boardering the pedestrian road, and drawing its water from the springs of Ras el Ain, reaching as far as Tell el-Maashouk in eastern Tyre. It is carried on arcades, whose lower parts are porous, sheltering guard rooms and shops.

The Hippodrom: Dates back to the

2nd century AD. It is the best preserved & the second one in size after the Circa Maximus in Rome. Measuring 480m long and 160m wide with a capacity of 30000 spectators. The seating had the letter U shape, in the center of the track lies the Spina, around which charioteers would have to turn sharply during the racing.

The Crusader Church: It was built first during the Byzantine period. It continued to be used during the Crusader time, Its walls were then covered with paintings and inscriptions of pilgrims (shields, horses boats, etc...)

The Blue Team Bath: This structure consists of a small bath with a mosaic on its entrance on which is written " Victory for Tyre and its blue team"

Area II

located on what was the Phoenician island, is a vast district of civic buildings, colonnades, public baths, mosaic streets, a rectangular arena and a palestra...

The Grande Allee or The Mosaic Road: Is a colonnaded street measuring 170m in length and 11m in width, the columns are of green marble known as cipolino. Paved by mosaic during the roman period, then by marble during the byzantine period

The Arena: It is the only rectangular Arena in the world., built in the first century AD. Primarily used for practicing sports like wrestling and boxing & was still

Tyre's Harbor



in use during the Byzantine period. The relationship between it & the 2 rows of rectangular vaulted cisterns lying around it still not clearly established.

The Bath (thermae): Its structure is divided into 2 symmetrical parts. The lower part consists of arched vaults giving considerable strength to the whole structure. The upper part consists of large hypocaust bricks covered with marble pavement. The hot air used to circulate between these superimposed backed clay disks, diffused the heat into the different parts of the bath

The Palestra: An area where athletes trained, built in the second century AD. Measuring 30mx30m and surrounded by granite columns from three sides and the fourth side used as seaside entrance. After the earthquakes during the sixth century AD. it was turned into a purple dye factory.

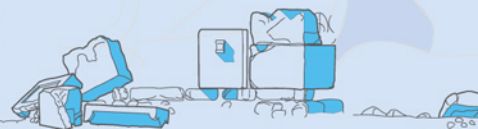
The Glass Furnaces: Are a sample of a glass factory and date back to the 6th 7th century AD. Large blocks of green glass can still be seen nearby.

The Petite Allee: This paved Roman road extends to the north under the new city, and to the west under the Crusader cathedral. One of the major roads during the roman period. It was bordered by small shops that continue further to the south under the Grand Allee

Area III

Its major point of interest is a Crusader cathedral. The area below has revealed a network of Romano-Byzantine roads and other installations.

The Crusader Cathedral : Built during the 12th century AD. and dedicated to st Marcus with reused granite columns. It was the site of the coronation of the kings of Jerusalem during the 13th century. it is said the German Emperor Frederic Barberousse was buried here.





Tyre Today

Tyre has a colorful souk (covered market) well worth exploring. Look for the Ottoman khan, or inn, just inside the market entrance. On a side street is the "Mamluke House," an Ottoman period residence. Also in the souk area is a white, double-domed Shia mosque of great interest.

Near the market you will see a busy fisherman's port, in Phoenician times referred to as the "Sidonian" port because it faced north towards Sidon.

Walk along the port with the sea on your right and you enter the city's Christian Quarter, a picturesque area of narrow streets, traditional architecture, and the Seat of the Maronite Bishop of Tyre and the Holy Land. One medieval tower still stands in a small garden. A second one is visible under the little lighthouse. During Crusader times towers similar to these ringed the city.

AMENITIES

The archaeological sites are open daily. Several seafood restaurants and pubs are located in the port area and fast food places have opened in the Hay Er-Raml area.

The International yearly Festivals are organized in the spectacular frame of the hippodrome. For more information visit: www.tyrefestival.com

Transport is included.

IF YOU HAVE TIME

Ras el-Ain (6 kilometers south of Tyre) has been Tyre's main source of water since Phoenician days. Its artesian wells gush up into stone reservoirs that have been maintained through the ages. One of the reservoirs fed the arched aqueducts of the roman period that once stretched all the way to Tyre. Remains of these aqueducts can be seen along the roman road running under the monumental arch on the necropolis at Area Three. A short stretch of the original aqueduct near the reservoirs continues to serve a part of Tyre's present day water-works.

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