

Figure 2. Al-Bass: general view of the funerary area excavated in 2008, including the large, round holes left by Roman olive trees.



# THE PHOENICIAN CEMETERY OF TYRE

María Eugenia Aubet

Recent archaeological excavations in the Iron Age cemetery of Tyre have led to the recovery of the city's principal burial area during the tenth to seventh centuries B.C.E. Compared with the rest of the known Iron Age cemeteries in the region, the necropolis of Tyre-Al-Bass offers the most dense and homogeneous assemblage of burials to date in terms of form and typology, mortuary practices, and morphology of grave goods. The archaeological evidence allows us not only to reconstruct the associated Iron Age funerary rituals as a complex sequence of ceremonies that assisted the deceased in making the transition from this world to the netherworld but also to glimpse the egalitarian impulses of Tyre's social organization.

## The Landscape

The principal necropolis of Tyre during the Iron Age was discovered by chance in 1990 in the Al-Bass district, located on the mainland some 2 km away from the ancient island of

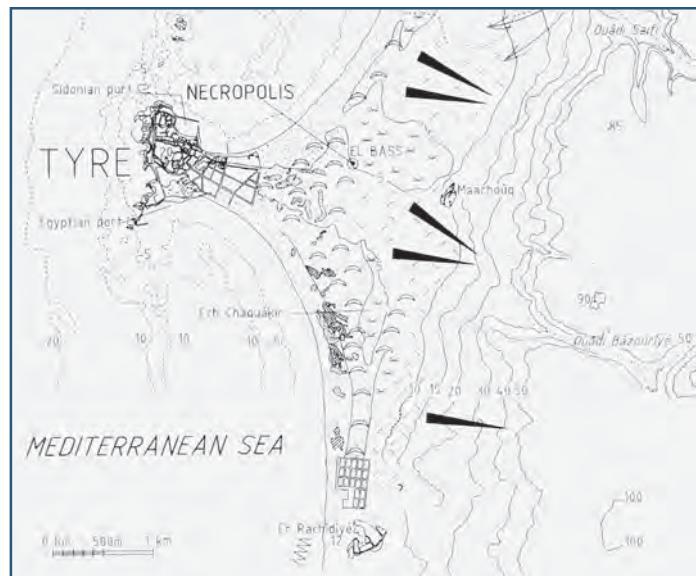


Figure 1. Map of the area of Tyre showing the location of the Phoenician cemetery.

Tyre (fig. 1). The cemetery had been established on a beach at the edge of the coast opposite the city. Nowadays, the beach is buried under substantial sediments of clay and sand that built up as a result of the formation of an isthmus, or *tombolo*, that transformed the ancient island of Tyre into a peninsula during the Hellenistic and Roman periods. As a result, the Phoenician graves are found at more than 3.5 m under the present ground level of Al-Bass.

The Phoenician necropolis lies on the southern edge of an ancient creek. Paleobotanical and faunal analyses of the sand sediment in the area show that the creek became a lake during the ninth and eighth centuries B.C.E.

For a long time, the principal necropolis of Tyre was thought to be located at Rachidiyeh, a tell located 5 km south of Tyre, where a few Iron Age graves were found in the 1970s (Doumet 1982). We know today that Tell Rachidiyeh was a coastal settlement—probably the Ushu or Palaeotyros of the written sources—with its own necropolis and that it was part of the immediate hinterland of ancient Tyre. This area was made up of an immense, densely populated fertile plain, judging by the numerous small tells—each with its own necropolis—located at the foot of the hills and all along the main valleys leading into the interior. At present, it is difficult to study and survey this hinterland due to political conditions in southern Lebanon.

The Iron Age settlements lying in a radius of some 15 km around Tyre, which includes Rachidiyeh, Qrayeh, Qasmieh, Khirbet Silm, Joya, and Qana (Chapman 1972, 179), formed part of a vast territory under the political control of Tyre. The cities of Achziv (25 km south of Tyre), Akko (30 km south) and, for a while, Sidon itself (30 km north) also belonged to the Tyrian territory. Of all the necropolises discovered in this region, Al-Bass is the most extensive known to date. Both its situation and density of graves indicate that it must have been the main urban necropolis for the city of Tyre.

In addition to a fertile hinterland with good means of communication, Tyre enjoyed an abundant supply of water, in particular from the extraordinary springs of Ras el-'Ain, south of Rachidiyeh, which provided the city with drinking water from the Late Bronze Age to the Roman and Byzantine periods.

### **The Cemetery and Its Spatial Organization**

The 1997–2008 Spanish archaeological excavations at Tyre–Al-Bass exposed an area of some 500 m<sup>2</sup> of cremation graves dating from the end of the tenth to the end of the seventh centuries B.C.E. (Aubet 2004). The graves appear in a stratum of sand overlaid with thick strata from the Roman and Byzantine periods (fig. 2; see opening photo on facing page). This sand stratum belongs to an ancient beach and was accumulated immediately on top of the sandstone subsoil, the surface

of which lies roughly at sea level. The Phoenician necropolis is located close to the northern edge of a monumental Roman necropolis. This explains the number of disturbances and intrusive elements from the late Hellenistic and Roman levels, such as poor and marginal Roman inhumation tombs (fig. 3) and large circular pits. The organic content of these pits (olea, a genus of the olive family), indicates that they correspond to an olive grove planted inside the Roman necropolis at the beginning of the Christian era.

To date, some 320 cremation urns have been identified at Al-Bass, making it the most densely occupied Phoenician cemetery known in Lebanon. The cremation rite is absolutely dominant here. The necropolis was used for adults, with the youngest individuals identified being between twelve and fourteen years



**Figure 3. (above)** Al-Bass 2004: In the background, a Roman inhumation dug into the Phoenician level. In the foreground, a pair of Phoenician cinerary urns. **Inset:** A close-up of the inhumation tomb.

of age. It is therefore safe to assume that children did not have access to formal burial in this funerary space. As a result, we can conclude that, not only did they have no right to be buried with adults, but that they were not entitled to full membership in the funerary community.

In terms of the spatial arrangement of the burials, three main types of graves are represented (Aubet 2004, 449–66). First, single-urn graves consist of a single urn and two jugs lying at the foot of the urn; one is a trefoil-rimmed jug, the other a mushroom-like or neck-ridge jug. The urn is covered with a plate or flat stone and generally has a cup or drinking bowl leaning against the shoulder. This type of burial is rare but in the few documented cases, such as Tomb 61 (fig. 4), is usually fairly rich in funerary offerings. In some cases, this type is accompanied by

a small stela engraved with a symbolic motif.

The second type of burial, the most numerous and representative of the necropolis, is made up of two urns placed back to back. This type of burial is called a “double-urn grave” (fig. 5). The two urns share the same trench and the same individual grave goods: two characteristic jugs (trefoil-rimmed and neck-ridge ones) and a bowl for drinking. In the vast majority of cases, the two urns are coeval and form a clear unit (figs. 6–7). Paleo-anthropological studies indicate that the twin urns contain the cremated remains of the same individual. One of the urns contains the ashes of the deceased; in the other, the deceased’s blackened bones are mixed with his or her personal possessions. It is therefore obvious that, once the funeral pyre was extinguished and the cremation of the deceased concluded, a careful

Figure 4. Al-Bass 2002: A single-urn grave (No. 61) with a small funerary stone stela. The offering consists of two jugs and a cup.





Figure 5. (left) Al-Bass 2002: In the foreground, double-urn graves (Nos. 62 and 63) inside a single pit. In the background, a single-urn grave (No. 61).



Figure 6. (below) Al-Bass 1997: Double-urn graves with burial gifts in the form of two jugs.



Figure 7. (left) Al-Bass 2008: Double-urn graves associated with a trefoil-rimmed jug and a bowl. On top of both urns, a plate (left) and an inverted half vessel (right).

sifting of the remains took place in order to separate the ashes from the bones.

The third type of burial consists of large groupings of urns found superimposed or leaning against each other, thus forming a horizontal development of the burial space. In almost every case, these clusters consist of several double-urn graves (fig. 8). The context shows that these groups of urns were deliberately deposited in the same space over several generations and that the spatial concentration of tomb groups probably corresponds to socially significant units. In some burials, for example, older urns were dug out and relocated beside or above newer ones (fig. 9; see also fig. 17). It seems that the memory of locations where relatives and ancestors were buried was preserved, indicating that some parcels in the necropolis were reserved for families.

Traces of wooden imprints at the edge of some graves suggest the presence of markers made of organic material and visible on the surface. Only in a few instances, in particular, in individual

urns and double urns, had a stone stela carved out of local sandstone been set up and placed on top of the graves (figs. 10–11). These stelae bore a sculpted human mask or engraved symbolic motifs and inscriptions with the name of the deceased and his familial position. During the course of excavation, the stelae are normally found fallen over, but originally they were placed upright, sticking up above the surface of the beach, so that signs

engraved or sculpted on the upper part were perfectly visible.

One aspect common to all burials of this type is the presence of stones and pebbles closing or marking out the graves.

after interment, as indicated by the presence of pottery remains such as plates, jugs, and bottles on top of the graves. These had been deliberately smashed when the tomb was closed. Some of these vessels contained remains of fish or meat.



Figure 8. (left) Al-Bass 1997: Urn groupings dating to the ninth and eighth centuries B.C.E.

## The Graves and Their Contents

Based on the content of the tombs, it is possible to describe the arrangement of the graves, the disposal of the dead, and the array of rituals, offerings, and ceremonies that accompanied the burials at Al-Bass. However, one must proceed with caution when it comes to inferring religious beliefs on the basis of the funerary record, especially if few written sources describing the treatment of the dead exist, as is the case with Phoenicia.

In some 20 percent of the urns containing bone remains, a scarab used as an amulet was found. It was located either in the upper part of the vessel or mixed with the blackened bones of the deceased (fig. 12). These scarabs, made either in Egypt or locally, show fire damage, as do the remains of rings, pendants, earrings, and other items of personal use. For example, imprints of bronze appear among the bones of the cranium in Urn 34, perhaps corresponding to the burnt remains of a diadem. All these suggest that such personal articles accompanied the deceased onto the funeral pyre. However, other personal items, such as gold earrings and a variety of scarabs, were deposited in the urn without going through the fire.

The urns also contained blackened osseous (bone tissue) fragments belonging to bovines and ovicaprids (domestic sheep

or goats). Small bits of meat corresponding to these fragments apparently were first cooked and then thrown on the pyre, since they were subjected to the same temperature as the body of the deceased. Among the fauna, the remains of an owl, a creature symbolic of night and darkness, are documented in Urn 8 (Aubet 2006, 40; Schmitz 2009). Similarly, the presence of blackened pottery sherds inside some urns suggests that part of the domestic pottery had also been deposited on some pyres, in addition to the deceased and the food remains.

As soon as the graves were dug in the sand, the urns were placed in position. Resting against the urn and at the bottom of the grave, the two characteristic jugs were then deposited together with a drinking cup on the shoulder of the vessel (fig. 13). These three grave goods appear to be directly associated with the burial and were certainly intended for the deceased's use. Throughout the three hundred years (ca. 900–700 B.C.E.) this sector of the necropolis was in use, the grave goods of the deceased were always the same (figs. 14a–b). The pottery types varied and evolved, but the structure of the tomb remained the same, reflecting a strong continuity of mortuary practices.

In some graves, such as Tomb 8, two small bonfires were lit inside the pit before closing the grave: one at the bottom of the pit, which blackened the lower part of the container; and



Figure 9. Al-Bass 2008: Double-urn grave with two jugs on each side of the urns. The stone slab and two long bone fragments belong to an older inhumation.

# Carved Stone Stelae

Figure 10. Al-Bass 2004: A stone stela, inscribed with Phoenician letters, was found fallen over several cremation urns. The Phoenician letters 'grp' represent the name of the deceased. Inset: Phoenician inscription on the stela.



“... originally they (stelae) were placed upright, sticking up above the surface of the beach, so that signs engraved or sculpted on the upper part were perfectly visible.”



Figure 11a. (left) Al-Bass 2008:  
An L-shaped stone stela fallen  
over a pair of urns.

Figure 11b: (right) The L-shaped  
stela set in an upright position.



the second on top of the urn, which left traces of burning on the lower part of the stones that closed the grave (Aubet 2004, 48–49; 2006). Paleo-botanical analyses of the carbon remains indicate that branches of local trees and shrubs were used for both fires, producing two types: one burning rapidly at the bottom of the trench and one for aromatic purposes at the top. Lastly, a wooden box containing apparently intact terracotta figurines (fig. 15a–c) was deposited once the fires were extinguished but before closing the grave.

Numerous plate and jug fragments appear on the surface of some tombs, corresponding to vessels intentionally broken over the grave and deposited on top of it after the burial pit was sealed with stones and pebbles. Occasionally, as in Tomb 7 (fig. 16), a third fire was lit near the outside edge of the grave.

Among the ceramic imports accompanying the burials, items of Cypriot origin predominate, especially urns and painted cinerary kraters, followed in smaller numbers by cups and plates of Greek manufacture.

### The Sequence of the Mortuary Practices

The universal impact of death is such that mortuary rituals often express the ultimate meaning of life and death, a meaning that differs from one culture to another. As the natural end of life, death means a break with the world of the living, as expressed in the rites and treatment of the deceased's body. Every society develops mechanisms to soften the brutal reality of death, and these depend on social and cultural context. Mortuary practices also serve to foster and facilitate the deceased's passage from the world of the living to that of the dead, the netherworld, transforming death into a social mechanism for building social memory and identities.

There are three protagonists in the phenomenon of death: the souls or spirits of the dead, the corpse, and the living. According to the religious beliefs of the ancient Near East, the spirit of the dead person moves to an unknown, bleak, and sad state after death, where it is reunited with its ancestors in the underworld (Metcalf and Huntington 1991; Campbell and Green 1995). The act of burial represents a genuine "rite of passage," a transition that involves a series of rituals by means of which humans experience a transformation on their journey to the great beyond (van Gennep 1960). In this sense, the function of the tomb and interment is one of passage and entry into the underworld. The living facilitate this journey and descent into the world of the dead by means of their offerings and prayers. Since the journey is long and difficult, provisions are also needed.

Written sources as well as epigraphic evidence provide indirect information about the treatment of the dead in the Phoenician world. From the Ugaritic texts and a few references in biblical sources, one can infer that Canaanite/Phoenician beliefs about the abode of the dead focus on a subterranean world, a sad and silent abyss full of shadows. It is somewhere beneath the earth's



Figure 12. Al-Bass 1997: Scarab made of steatite of Amenophis III found inside Urn 53.

surface, a place to which the spirits of the dead travel to meet their ancestors, a journey into the kingdom of the dead or beyond, which is defined as an abode of rest—the biblical *sheol*—to which they "descend" with no possibility of returning. The only immortal spirits are those of gods and kings (Xella 1987, 1995; Berlejung and Janowski 2009). The relatives of the deceased have a duty to look after the spirit of the dead person by means of offerings of food, libations of water, and the celebration of commemorative rituals to evoke the name of the dead person, whose spirit continues to exist in the form of an ancestor. Funerals serve, to some extent, as a connection between the living and dead.

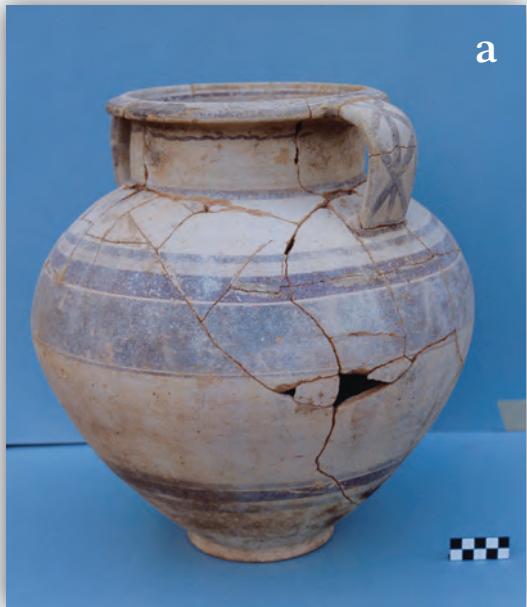
In cremation, the rites of passage can serve to transform and reconfigure the material identity of the deceased. As treatment received by the body after death, burning implies a rapid transformation of the body, a destruction by fire that purifies and purges, giving rise to a new form of existence for the deceased in a new dimension. Compared with inhumation, the display and ostentation often associated with funerals are minimized in cremation because, to a certain extent, inequalities and social divisions disappear (Stig Sørensen and Rebay-Salisbury 2008). At the same time, this funeral rite, which has many variations, both in Phoenicia and in the western colonies (Bienkowski 1982; Bénichou-Safar 1982, 237–39), involves greater distance in time and space between the rites performed at the funeral pyre and the rites of passage, that is to say, a greater lapse of time between death and interment than between death and inhumation.

In the necropolis of Tyre, the rite of cremation included funeral practices that were quite prolonged in time, peculiar in that they formed a complex sequence not always easy to understand. The funerary remains indicate that these rites and ceremonies must have lasted several days, perhaps weeks, symbolizing all the successive stages of a complex process of transformation and passage.

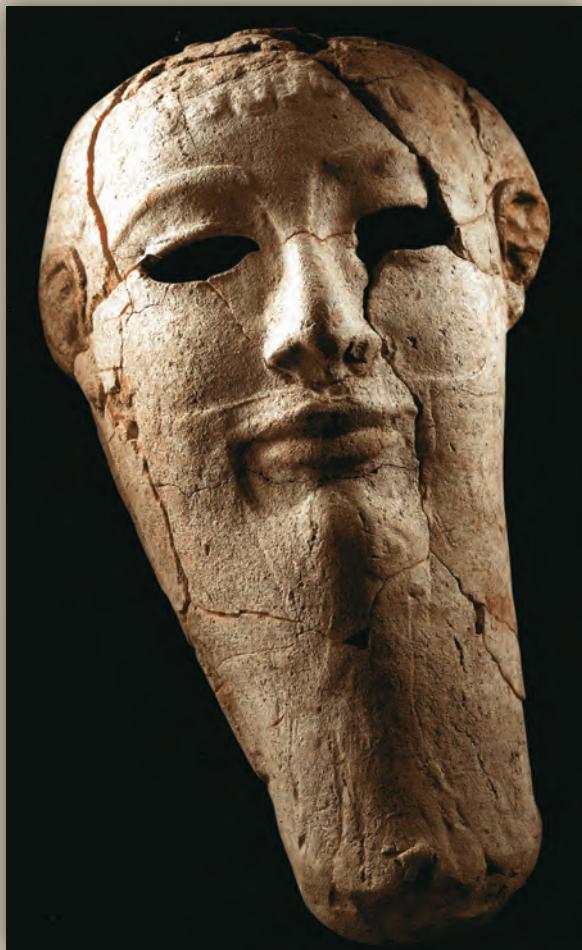
Based on archaeological evidence, I propose the following suc-



Figure 13. Al-Bass 2008: Double-urn grave with a trefoil-rimmed jug and a mushroom-like rim jug as burial gifts.



Figures 14a–b. Al-Bass 2002/2004: Painted urn and funerary jugs. This ensemble constitutes the typical grave offerings in the Al-Bass cemetery.



Figures 15a–c. Terracotta objects from Tomb 8: a mask (left), a rider (lower center), and at the lower right, a model of a temple.

cessive phases in the development of the mortuary practices at Tyre-Al-Bass.

### Cremation and the Consumption of Food and Drink

The exact place where the funeral pyres were located has not been found. To judge by other similar necropolises, such as the southern cemetery at Achziv (Mazar 2002), they must have been situated not far from the tombs, probably on the periphery. Nor do we know whether the deceased was placed on the pyre clothed or wrapped in a piece of cloth, since thus far no items typical of clothing (e.g., fibulae or pins) have been found. Be that as it may, the deceased was deposited on the pyre accompanied by a good many of his or her personal belongings, such as rings, amulets, and scarabs, which were consumed in the fire together with the body. The destruction of these items may have served to emphasize the deceased's transformation during the cremation ceremony from the plane of physical existence to the postmortem dimension.

Traces of burnt fauna inside some urns suggest that an act of sacrifice and consumption of food and drink were performed in front of the pyre or close to it, the remains of which, in the form of animal bones, bird bones, and broken pottery, have been identified among the osseous remains of the dead. In fact, a banquet honoring the deceased was an institutionalized practice in Ebla, Ugarit, Qatna, Byblos, and Israel (Amadasi Guzzo 1988, 106–7). In the Old Testament, places for the ritual banquet, *marzeah*, are described as around the grave, where funerary feasting was celebrated, consisting of the sacrifice of domestic animals and the eating of meat and drinking of wine afterwards. The banquet was held against a background of brotherhood and commemoration according to the established rules and norms whereby it was claimed that the participants shared food with the deceased. The aim of eating together, which was widespread in funerals of the ancient world, was simply to reinforce the bonds of social cohesion and to establish a continuous relationship with the dead person and links to the past. The prophets of Israel (Amos 6:4–7; Jer 16:5–8) condemned this practice in a funerary context and considered it to be peculiar to “foreigners,” as in Samaria, a city with a strong Phoenician imprint.

Today the anthropology and archaeology of death attaches great importance to studying these rites of communal eating at funerals so as to infer data of the social and cultural context of the communities involved (Grottanelli and Parise 1988). It is a sacrificial rite in which humans share a banquet as a manifestation of union/communion among the members of a community. In ancient times, it was an expression of continuity with the past—the living and dead sharing the same food and drink—and a basis for defining the social, individual, and collective identity of the guests.

In Al-Bass, once the cremation and funerary banquet were over, the remains of the food and crockery were thrown into the



Figure 16. Al-Bass 1997: Urn 7 near a burning area.

fire of the pyre, and those present moved on to the actual burial.

### Interment as a Rite of Passage

Once the funeral pyre was extinguished, the remains were carefully sifted in order to separate the bones from the ashes and to deposit them separately into two urns. Before closing the vessels with plates or stone slabs, new objects for the deceased's personal use postmortem were placed inside them, such as gold pendants, amulets, and carnelian scarabs. Those

found during the excavations show no signs of having been impacted by fire.

Archaeological evidence demonstrates that the digging of the pits for the urns occurred in places that had been previously selected and occupied by more ancient burials. In those spaces, the urns were either placed one beside the other, to form a horizontal line with other earlier ones, or superimposed directly on the more ancient ones, barely disturbing them (fig. 17). In one instance, a double urn was deposited at a level deep in the necropolis and came into contact with an older inhumation burial, probably from the Early Iron Age. The remains of the older, inhumation burial and part of its stone cist were gathered up and integrated into the new burial (see fig. 9).

The burial of the urn (or pair of urns) was undoubtedly the central and most meaningful step of the whole ritual of passage, although the depositing of the two jugs and the drinking cup in the immediate environs of the urn(s) (see fig. 13) also played an important role. This collection was undoubtedly intended for the deceased's use, forming part of a normalized and repetitive ritual that varied little over the generations. The nonrandom character of the grave goods seems to point to a careful selection of a social nature. From the end of the tenth century B.C.E., a process of standardization can be observed that may have established a consistency in the forms associated with drinking. This



Figure 17. Al-Bass 1997: Urn group in horizontal depositional sequence. In the background, two stacked urns of different dates.

assemblage of pottery was probably destined to ease the long and arduous crossing over to the underworld, in which drinking would fulfill a principal role. To date, analyses of the contents of the two jugs—of the trefoil-rimmed and neck-ridge types—have not yielded any substantial results. (It must be remembered that they come from a sand stratum constantly washed and disturbed by the bed of the lower water table.) Nonetheless, the remains of wax found inside some mushroom-like jugs suggest that they may have contained honey or hydromel, a mixture of honey and water. The second jug, the trefoil-rimmed one, probably contained wine.

### The Tomb as a Place of Ritual and Ceremonies

Once the disposal of the dead and the placing of the urns, jugs, and drinking cups inside the pits was complete, participants engaged in various rituals that provide a rich fount of symbolic information about their social and cultural world. These secondary rites after burial can sometimes prove a better key to discovering social distinctions than the actual content of the tombs.

In a few graves, small aromatic fires were kindled inside and outside the trench. Purifying fire seems to have played an important role in Tyrian ceremony. It could be said that mortuary practices in Tyre began and ended with fire. Once the bonfires burned out, the burial process continued with the closing of the trench with stones or sand. This was followed by a new ritual consumption of food and drink near the grave, the remains of which—plates, bowls, and jugs—were deliberately smashed on the tomb. As with the fire ritual, the mortuary ceremonies began and ended with libations and a funeral banquet, and the practice of depositing items deliberately smashed served to keep alive the memory of the dead person.

Only in a few cases, such as in Tomb 8 (Aubet 2006), had a variety of terracotta artifacts of high symbolic, religious, or devotional value been placed on the grave. Some of these terracottas are models of temples in miniature (fig. 15c). These are the only known items of a strictly religious nature found thus far at Al-Bass.

### The Tomb as a Place of Memory

Once the ceremony of closing the tomb was finished, a stone funerary stela was erected (in some cases) on top of the grave. Only a minority of those interred at Al-Bass, probably the “notables” of the community, had the right to a stone funeral stela containing engraved symbols and funerary formulae inscribed as epitaphs for the deceased (figs. 10, 11a). The stelae were set up directly on top of the graves. Placed vertically, the upper part of the stela, containing the inscribed formulae, was visible on the surface of the ancient beach (fig. 18).

Among a small percentage of the persons buried at Al-Bass, the stone stelae constituted a permanent memorial to the deceased. With his name or that of his lineage inscribed, the deceased would never die, since the stela made him timeless, replacing him while keeping his memory alive, thus, constituting a metaphor for the continuity of life (Rowlands 1993). As a grave marker, it was a means of inscribing the social memory of

the deceased, a link between past, present, and future, something to preserve the name of the deceased through memory. In the myths and legends of Ugarit, it was the son’s duty to erect the stela of his ancestral clan as a monument to the family and as a symbol of the deceased.

In the double-urn graves and in the groupings of urns at Al-Bass, the tombs were superimposed one on top of the other, most likely in association with a more ancient tomb acting as a kind of “progenitor” of the group, creating spaces for the family as a response to their wish of bearing witness to the continuity of the line. Thus, the stela fulfilled the role of a permanent memorial even as it provided a place for commemorative rites in honor of the deceased. Where rites of communal eating near graves have been identified, they took place very close to the stelae. Some inscriptions reveal a fairly archaic epigraphy that gives the name or lineage of the most ancient dead person in the group, so it seems likely that they refer to family lineages buried in the same sector of the necropolis, in particular to the family ancestor.

The stela thus represents not only a grave marker and a focus for commemorative rites but also the place for the ancestor cult. At Ugarit, in the biblical texts, and in the Phoenician inscriptions, these ancestors are called *rephaim* and are invoked in order to obtain blessings, health, and peace (Ribichini and Xella 1979).

### The Social and Cultural Context of Al-Bass Cemetery

The traditional practice of using the richness or category of grave goods to infer the social organization or religious beliefs of a community is not much help in analyzing the necropolis at Tyre. It is frequently stated that mortuary traditions often reflect the social organization and dominant ideology of a particular group (see Tainter 1975; Chapman, Kinnes, and Randsborg 1981). Obviously, in the Tyre necropolis, the presence of imports, the monumental character of the tomb, or the energy expended in constructing the grave are not useful criteria for determining social distinctions or differences of wealth.

The structure of the cemetery at Tyre is in some ways reminiscent of the European urnfields, in which apparently little formal differentiation according to the sex, age, and content of the burials can be seen, although their structure in fact conceals



Figure 18. Computer reconstruction of the Al-Bass beach in Phoenician times with the city of Tyre in the background.

genuine social asymmetries. In Al-Bass, the arrangement of the grave goods shows scarcely any variation over time, and stability in funerary practices is noticeable over a span of three hundred years. One measure of value or richness for inferring social differences could be derived from the so-called “secondary rites,” that is, variations in the duration, content, and complexity of ritual and ceremonial activities around the grave as well as the volume and scope of the communal eating rites practiced at the beginning and end of funerals. The stelae and cult of ancestors are other elements of social differentiation. Rather than an “egalitarian” society for Tyre, we should probably speak of an egalitarian ideology, appropriate to a wholly urban and sophisticated society, characterized by the relative simplicity and lack of ostentation of its funeral customs. A communal ideology that concealed differences of wealth and power is evident.

Al-Bass was undoubtedly the main necropolis of Tyre, with the number of interments corresponding roughly to the average population of the city. Various probes in the immediate vicinity of this cemetery show that it may have extended over several kilometers. However, Al-Bass was not Tyre’s only necropolis. Some graves discovered in the immediate hinterland demonstrate the existence of other forms of burial, such as *hypogea* cut into the rock, family chambers, chambered inhumations, and stone sarcophagi. The necropolises in neighboring Sidon show that elites were buried in *hypogea* and sarcophagi located at the foot of the mountains in the hinterland, some 15 km from the city. Therefore, although the Al-Bass necropolis appears to reflect an egalitarian ideology, with only limited evidence of social stratification, such a conclusion should be regarded as tentative and subject to refinement on the basis of further and future excavations at Tyre.



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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

María Eugenia Aubet is Professor of Archaeology at the University Pompeu Fabra in Barcelona, Spain. She has studied Mediterranean and Near Eastern archaeology in Barcelona, Spain; Rome, Italy; and Tübingen, Germany. Professor Aubet is the director of excavations at the Phoenician colony of Villar (Malaga) and of the Iron Age cemetery at Tyre-Al-Bass, Lebanon.

