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THE AMBIGUITY OF DRESS IN PHOENICIAN ART:
A CASE STUDY FROM SIDONIAN COIN IMAGERY

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Abstract: In recent decades, the study of ancient dress has thrived, resulting in a proliferation of academic conferences and edited volumes that critically examine dress and dress practices in the cultural contexts within which they were produced, consumed, and enacted. However, Phoenician dress is poorly represented in this boom of scholarship. Given the key role that dress plays in the construction and communication of identity and group belonging within and between societies, the study of dress requires more attention within Phoenician studies than it has received so far. The purpose of this article is to serve as a prolegomenon to the study of dress in Phoenician antiquity, with a focus on the challenges of interpreting the iconographic record, our primary source for the study of dress in Phoenician society. I begin with a brief background of the theoretical frameworks and methodological issues for the study of dress, especially in iconographic sources, followed by a case study of an example of how dress was deployed artistically in Phoenician visual culture: the chariot scene on the reverse of Sidonian double shekels in the 5th and 4th centuries BCE. Through this case study, I hope to correct some erroneous assumptions about depiction of dress in these images and highlight the ambiguity of dress and identity in Phoenician art.

Keywords: Dress; Clothing; Identity; Art; Phoenicia.

1. Introduction

She herself went down to the fragrant storeroom where
her robes were kept, the fine work of Sidonian women,
whom Aléxandros himself, divinely handsome,
had fetched back from Sidon, sailing the wide seas –
that voyage on which he brought high-born Helen home.
From these robes Hekabē picked her gift to bring to Athēnē –
the finest for its embroidery, and the largest,
that shone like a star, and lay beneath all the others.

Hom. *Il*. 6.286-296[1]

In Homer's epic portrayal of Troy, the Trojan queen Hekabē is described as having a wardrobe full of luxurious garments made by Sidonian women. The passage alludes to both the social and economic value of clothing; it also suggests that Sidonian-made garments were particularly valued and sought after. This is not just Homer's artistic license. Numerous ancient sources portray the Phoenicians as creators or tradesmen of fine cloth and clothing and Phoenicians are intimately tied in both ancient and modern imagination with

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1 Homer – Green 2015, pp. 126-127.

the purple-coloured garments that were so highly valued antiquity.[2] Even so, our understanding about Phoenician clothing and dress practices – what they wore, how they modified their bodies, and what it meant to them – remains rather poor. This is partly due to the paucity of evidence, but also partly due to lack of scholarly interest, which is unfortunate because elsewhere in ancient studies the study of dress is thriving, having matured into a richly multidisciplinary field.

Earlier studies of ancient dress practices (namely, from the 19th and much of the 20th centuries) were primarily concerned with documenting and recreating the various costumes of different population groups in antiquity. The focus was squarely on the realia of dress as far as it could be recovered from the fragmentary iconographic record.[3] Traditionally, art historians and archaeologists limited themselves to describing dress as depicted in art, rather than interrogating the social function and agency of dress or decoding the messages that depictions of dress communicate. This approach began to change a few decades ago when historians of ancient dress turned to the growing body of work in sociology, anthropology, and social psychology, which by the mid-to-late 20th century – in a connection with an academic interest in the body – had begun to critically consider the complex social functions and meanings of dress.[4] Academic research into clothing, adornment, and the body became acutely aware of the cultural specificity of dress practices, understanding dress as an encoded visual language that can both construct and communicate personal and social identities.[5] Today, the study of dress draws on theories and analyses from a wide array of disciplines, including anthropology, archaeology, art history, cognitive science, design, economics, history, politics, philosophy, psychology, religious studies, sociology, and textile arts.[6]

Since the turn of the 21st century, academic study of ancient dress has soared, resulting in a proliferation of academic conferences and edited volumes that seek to critically examine dress and dress practices in the cultural contexts within which they were produced, consumed, and enacted.[7] Dress in Greek and Roman societies is especially well represented in this body of work; that of the various societies of the Near East less so; that of the Phoenicians, hardly at all.[8] Given the key role that dress plays in the construction and communication of identity and group belonging within and between societies, the study of dress deserves more attention within Phoenician studies than it has received so far.[9] What did Phoenicians wear? How did they fashion their outward appearance? What connection did dress have to various social identities and what role did it play in social interactions? Could Phoenicians be identified as such on the basis of their dress, either by each other or outsiders?

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2   For example, Ezek. 27; Luc. 10.141; Tert. *De Pallio* 1.1.3. Although, it should be noted they were not the only producers nor even the originators of this craft (Marín Aguilera – Iacono – Gleba 2018).

3   For example, Lutz 1923 and Perrot – Chipiez 1885. On this point, see Cifarelli – Gawlinski 2017, p. ix; Gawlinski 2015, p. 98; Lee 2012, pp. 265-268; McFerrin 2017, pp. 147-149.

4   Eicher – Roach-Higgins 1992, pp. 8-12; Lee 2015, pp. 19-27; Cifarelli 2019; Entwistle 2023. See Mattson 2021, p. 5 for the emergence of embodiment and corporeal approaches in archaeology, which recognize «the individual body as the seat of agency and identity».

5   Cifarelli 2019, p. 1.

6   Olson 2021, p. 12; Hume 2021.

7   Batten – Olson 2021; Mattson 2021; Cifarelli 2019; Harlow 2017; Cifarelli – Gawlinski 2017; Harlow – Michel – Nosch 2014; Colburn – Heyn 2008; Gleba – Munkholt – Nosch 2008; Cleland – Harlow – Llewellyn-Jones 2005.

8   Of the edited volumes cited in the note above, there is not a single article pertaining to Phoenicians. Elsewhere, recent work related to dress in Phoenician studies has focused on aspects of trade and production, e.g. Frangié-Joly 2016; Manfredi – Mezzolani Andreose – Festuccia 2021; Ferrante 2022a. The tide may be turning, however, thanks to increased critical scrutiny into particular areas of Phoenician/Punic social identity; see, for example, Oggiano 2020 and López-Bertran – Garcia-Ventura 2023.

9   Particularly as identity is a central theme in Phoenician studies: Pedrazzi 2022; Garbati 2022; 2021; Xella 2014. The question of a collective "Phoenician" identity is somewhat of a flashpoint in the field. See further: Pedrazzi 2021; Martin 2021; Porzia 2018; Nitschke 2015.

The purpose of this article is to serve as a prolegomenon to the study of Phoenician dress in antiquity, with a focus on the challenges of interpreting the iconographic record, our primary source for the study of dress in Phoenician society. I begin with a brief background of the theoretical frameworks and methodological issues for the study of dress, especially in iconographic sources. As the iconographic sources remain for now our main source for dress in the Phoenician world, I follow this discussion with a case study in how dress was deployed artistically in Phoenician visual culture: the chariot scene on the reverse of Sidonian double shekels in the 5th and 4th centuries BCE. Scholarly debates about the interpretation of this iconography signify that there is some ambiguity surrounding the representation of dress in the visual record. But are these representations ambiguous because we lack necessary access to the code, or is such ambiguity intended? Through a close analysis of this scene, I hope to (a) correct some erroneous assumptions about dress and identity in the chariot scene that linger in the scholarship, (b) highlight the difficulties of using artistic depictions of dress as a proxy for real dress practices, and (c) interrogate the role of dress as an identity marker in Phoenician art. Finally, it is my hope that this discussion can point the way for further detailed study of dress in Phoenician visual culture and Phoenician studies more broadly.

2. What Is "Dress" and What Does it Communicate?

We should begin by clarifying terminology and scope. What exactly is meant by "dress"? A widely cited definition is that offered by anthropologists Mary Ellen Roach-Higgins and Joanne Eicher, whose work has had a major impact on the field of dress studies: «Dress of an individual is an assemblage of modifications of the body and/or supplements to the body. Dress, so defined, includes a long list of possible direct modifications of the body such as coiffed hair, coloured skin, pierced ears, and scented breath, as well as an equally long list of garments, jewellery, accessories, and other categories of items added to the body as supplements».[10] Dress thus refers to «any activity that is intended to adjust the body's appearance or, more broadly, alter its presentation» and can be considered «a form of art».[11] The term "dress" is distinguished from other related terms found in English-language discourse, which have more limited and specific meanings. For example, "clothing" refers to materials which are intended to provide cover for the body and thus excludes key aspects of bodily adornment; "costume" implies a type of dress that is purely performative; and "fashion" seems too narrow with its close connection to specific types of consumer culture in the modern world.

Dress is among the most ancient forms of material culture: humans were applying ochre to their body as early as 500,000 years ago; clothing was invented sometime between 170,000 and 83,000 years ago; and shells perforated for personal adornment have been found at sites dated to c. 100,000 years ago.[12] The reasons behind the emergence of these practices is debated.[13] but regardless of their origins, it is clear that dress is inextricably tied to the evolution of human cognition and behaviour, playing a pivotal role in shaping social conceptions of personhood.[14] The dressed body, whether through garments, tattoos, hair, or other modifications, constitutes what Turner describes as "the social skin": «the symbolic stage upon which the drama of socialization is enacted, and bodily adornment becomes the language through which it is expressed».[15] Dress

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10   Roach-Higgins – Eicher 1992, p. 1. See also Lee 2015, p. 21; 2000, p. 11.

11   Gilligan 2023, pp. 1-2.

12   Toups *et al.* 2011; Tuniz – Tiberi Vipraio 2018, pp. 43-45.

13   Gilligan 2023. The debate concerns whether or not clothing and substances applied to the skin originally emerged out of a need for protection, or for reasons that have to do with social expression. In the case of shells, there can be no doubt that this is a practice tied to self-expression rather than survival.

14   Cifarelli 2019, p. 2.

15   Turner 1980, p. 112.

serves as connector between self and society, deeply embedded in a variety of actions, rituals, and behaviour from the mundane to the most sacred.

In practice, dress functions as a form of non-verbal communication made up of signs, the meaning of which are culturally determined and embedded. Language is a frequently used metaphor for how dress works, but unlike language, dress is a "closed code" in that items of dress do not possess inherent meaning by themselves; rather, the meaning is assigned and specific to certain social and cultural contexts.[16] As a semiotic system, dress can signal a variety of information about environmental and social circumstances, including (but not limited to): gender, class, occupation, wealth, team, school, religion, ethnicity, nationality, politics, rank, season, occasion, marital status, divinity, and relationship to others.[17] Dress thus presents a wide range of messages and meanings to a wide range of viewers and wearers; the significance of these messages are learned through social engagement and interaction from a young age. A recent study demonstrated that children as young as three years old make social inferences based on shared clothing style.[18] But the meaning of dress – the messages communicated and received – is highly context dependent. The "code" is not uniform; it can vary from individual to individual within a group.[19] Inasmuch as there may be tension between a person's individual and group identity, dress allows people to simultaneously express individuality and collective belonging.[20]

How do we go about collating the data about dress in the ancient world and "decoding" its potential messages? Anthropologists studying dress in contemporary societies are able to go into the field and talk to people and observe dress in use, in order to understand its social meaning. Not only do historians and archaeologists not have that luxury, we are far removed in both space and time. It is easy for biases stemming from modern dress codes to influence or lead astray our interpretations.[21] And as always, we are handicapped by a fragmentary and inconsistent body of evidence.

3. Sources for the Study of Dress in the Phoenician World

There are essentially three sources of information about dress and dress practices in antiquity: physical, written, and iconographic. It is generally agreed that only by combining the three sources can we accurately recover ancient dress practices. In the case of the Phoenicians, however, we are unfortunately lacking substantially in the first two categories, and the third presents considerable challenges.

3.1. *Physical Evidence*

The first source is the surviving physical evidence related to dress. For the Phoenician world, we have little in the way of surviving textiles and thus are limited to accessories, such as jewellery (including amulets), fibulae, metal attachments.[22] To this we may add evidence of aromatic oils or makeup, which survives primarily in the form of vessels (clay and glass) and production facilities.[23] Physical evidence of dress also includes mate-

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16   Lee 2000, p. 115; 2015, p. 21, relying on the work of Grant McCracken.

17   Hume 2021, p. 34; Lee 2000, p. 114; 2015, p. 27.

18   Weatherhead – Nancekivell – Baron 2022.

19   McCracken – Roth 1989; Davis 2020.

20   McCracken 1987.

21   For example, modern assumptions about gender and appearance can lead to erroneous identifications of gender in ancient artistic representation; for examples in Phoenician studies, see Lopez-Bertran – Garcia-Ventura 2023 and Martin 2021.

22   Rare examples of textiles include fragments recovered from coffins (Sader 2019, p. 222). For jewellery, a synthesis of Phoenician/Punic jewellery has yet to be written, but see Pisano 1988; Culican 1986, *passim*; Quillard 1979; 1987; 2013 for Carthage specifically. The bibliography on amulets is vast, although this tends towards typology, distribution, and interpretation of iconography, rather than on the role of amulets as dress or adornment.

23   Frangié-Joly 2016, pp. 43, 46; Sader 2019, pp. 172, 270; Culican 1970.

rial related to production or manufacture of clothing and accessories, such as spindle whorls, loom weights, dye facilities, and so on.[24] It also includes artefacts connected to the act of dressing, such as toilet articles (mirrors, combs, razors).

3.2. *Written Testimony*

The second source of evidence is testimony from written sources, both inscriptional and literary; this corpus is frustratingly small. Phoenician inscriptions provide limited information, mostly in the form of terms relating to fabric, garments, and related occupations; the translation of such terms is at times uncertain. We lack descriptions of garments or details regarding the manner or circumstances in which they are worn. A notable exception is the inscription on the sarcophagus of Batnoam:

> «In this coffin I lie, Batnoam, mother of King Azbaal, king of Byblos, son of Paltibaal, priest of the [divine] Lady, in a garment [*swt*], and with a tiara [*mr'š*] on my head and a gold bridle [*mḥsm ḥrs*] on my mouth, as was the custom [*km'š*] with the royal women [*mlkyt*] who came before me».[25]

The inscription suggests it is the "tiara" [*mr'š*] and the gold bridle which signal her royal identity; as for *swt*, this is usually translated as "garment", but one wonders if there is not a more specific meaning intended here. Unfortunately, this inscription is unique.

There are a few passages in Classical authors that describe Phoenician dress.[26] Herodotus (5th century BCE) describes the armament of the Phoenician navy as wearing helmets similar to that of the Greeks together with linen breastplates, rimless shields, and javelins.[27] Elsewhere, Phoenician dress is mentioned for the purpose of signalling difference. For example, in Plautus' play *Poenulus* (early 2nd century BCE), dress is key to Hanno's identification as a Carthaginian in a foreign land (Aitolia), but little detail is given. He is simply referred to by other characters as "that guy in a tunic".[28] In Polybius' *Histories* (mid-late 2nd century BCE), the Corinthian Timoleon is quoted mocking Carthaginians for wearing a loincloth (*perizoma*) under their short tunics (*chitoniskos*).[29] In Silius Italicus' epic poem *Punica* (1st century CE), the priests at the temple of Hercules (i.e. Melqart) at Gades are described as fully covered in linen, wearing a headband, and offering incense in unbelted robes with bare feet and shaved head.[30]

The longest description comes from *De Pallio*, an odd, somewhat humorous speech attributed to Tertullian, himself a Carthaginian living under Roman Imperial rule (late 2nd century CE). The purpose of the speech appears to be to explain why the author has given up the toga in favour of the pallium (mantle). The description of Phoenician dress comes in the context of the author lamenting that Carthaginians gave up their traditional dress for that of Roman fashion:

> «In the past you too wore your clothing, tunics, differently: they were even famous for their skilful weave, harmonious colouring, and proper size. For they did not fall extravagantly over the legs or shamelessly above the knees, they did not fit shortly at the arms nor tightly at the hands. No, in a fourfold suitable form it fitted men (it was not considered easy to divide its folds with a belt). The outer garment,

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24   For a brief summary of research in Phoenician textile manufacturing, see Ferrante 2022b.

25   Beirut National Museum 2087. Translation from Dixon 2022, p. 119.

26   I exclude from this list sources that simply mention cloth or clothing as a Phoenician commodity.

27   Hdt. 7.89.

28   Pl. *Poen*. 975, 1120, 1298.

29   Plb. 12.26a.3-4; Polybius is quoting Timaeus, who was hostile to the Carthaginians; in this section, Polybius argues that Timaeus made up or embellished the contents of such speeches, which was directed at encouraging the Greeks in fighting the Carthaginians.

30   Sil. 3.23-27.

the *pallium* [mantle], itself also quadrangular, was thrown back from both sides and knit around the neck in the bit of a buckle and so rested on the shoulders. Its equivalent today is <what is worn by> the priests of Aesculapius, who has also become yours. This is the way the twin town close by used to dress, and wherever else in Africa there is a Tyrus».[31]

Tertullian's description provides useful detail and speaks directly to the question of Phoenician identity expressed materially through dress. But its late date and rhetorical purpose means we must use it with caution. As for the other classical references, their value varies, but at best they have limited use for understanding actual Phoenician dress practices or Phoenician social attitudes towards dress.

3.3. *Iconographic Evidence*

The third source of information about Phoenician dress consists of artistic representations of dress in the surviving visual record. Although this corpus may be smaller compared to societies who left behind a strong legacy of monumental figural art (e.g., Mesopotamians, Greeks, Egyptians, Romans), there is nonetheless a number of artistic representations of dressed bodies in Phoenician art. This includes sculpted representations in a variety of materials and genres, both large and small. The obvious and better studied examples include stelai such as found at Umm el-'Amed and Carthage.[32] But artefacts that feature less detailed representations, such as anthropoid sarcophagi, figurines, seals, and coins, should not be overlooked. All of these images have the potential to inform us about Phoenician dress practices and attitudes towards dress. That said, the artistic record presents particular complexities of interpretation, which are worth taking a moment to consider more deeply.

3.4. *Artistic Representations of Dress: Potential and Limits*

Artistic representations of dress have the potential to provide crucial information about the appearance of dress items, how they were worn on the body, personal preferences about dress, and social identity. Visualisation of dressed bodies can give us critical information about the social context of dress that is missing from the physical remains of dress. However, interpreting this material presents numerous challenges. It is tempting to simply read such images literally as a more or less accurate representation of what people wore; but, as pointed out by many, images of dress must be approached with caution.[33]

Dress itself is a form of visual art; the reproduction of dress in another art form fundamentally alters its appearance and meaning. Artistic depictions of dress and dressed bodies are constructed images that have their own purpose, governed by certain rules and limitations (of genre or material), with their own contexts that differ from the lived contexts of everyday dress. No matter how realistic sculpted or painted depictions of dress might look, such representations do not constitute documentary information; they cannot be assumed to be reliable guides for contemporary fashion or daily dress.[34] As we know from art of more recent history and contemporary media (whether painting, photography, or generative AI), dress commemorated in portraiture may not reflect typical everyday practices or reality. Such images may reflect embodied practices, but they can also be the product of artistic embellishment or invention.[35] There can be a tendency towards archaism or conservatism in official representations, or a departure from realism in order to emphasize key elements of the dressing code.[36]

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31   Tert. *De Pallio* 1.1.3-1.2.1 (translation by Hunink 2005, p. 31).

32   Maes 1989; 1991; Oggiano 2013; Michelau 2014; 2016.

33   Colburn – Heyn 2008, p. 4; Davies 2021, p. 53; Thomason 2019, p. 99; Lee 2015, pp. 5, 89; Thomas 2014, pp. 76-77.

34   Davies 2021, p. 60; Larsson Lovén 2017, p. 141.

35   For example, in some Greek art, specific forms of dress (including accessories, like weapons) were used loosely in iconography to indicate foreigners and "others"; hence Persians, Scythians, and even Amazons are depicted wearing similar garments that are not necessarily connected to their actual dress traditions (Gleba 2008, pp. 14-16).

36   Thomas 2014, pp. 76-77.

There are other, inherent limitations to the study of dress through iconographic representation which are equally important to keep in mind. Most experiential and sensory aspects of dress cannot be fully or accurately captured by pictorial representation: movement, sound, smell, weight, texture, temperature, even taste. All of these would have shaped the perception and experience of dress by both the wearer and observer.[37] In a similar vein, the fragmentary nature of the artistic record and its state of preservation impacts not only our ability to extract information but also our own aesthetic response. The disappearance of colour, for example, means that key information may be missing, since on sculpted images, colour was often used to add further details to the dress and body. A comparison of the monochrome processional reliefs at Persepolis with the brightly coloured counterparts at Susa gives an indication of how different the resulting impression – and thus interpretation – of dress can be.[38]

Because dress is a closed code and we often lack the verbal narratives to explain it, the meaning of dress in art is often ambiguous to us, the distant viewer. As a result, there are numerous traps one can fall into when interpreting artistic depictions of dressed persons. The biggest one is perhaps identity (ethnic, gender, status, social role, and so on). Because identity and clothing are interconnected, and because figures in art often lack inscriptions clarifying their social role or identity, there is an understandable temptation to use the dress to draw conclusions about the identity of the figure depicted. But without written confirmation of the identity of the person or of the meaning of the dress items, identities are ambiguous, at least to us. This problem has been highlighted by Maes in her study of Carthaginian male dress: «we must also ask what criteria are used to qualify a garment as profane, religious or cultic… Problems frequently arise in identifying the figures depicted: are they the dedicator, the deceased or the god invoked?».[39] In figurative art, there is sometimes considerable overlap between the representation of humans and the anthropomorphic representations of deities, making it challenging at times to determine who is god and who is mortal.

The study of dress in art has much to inform us about ancient dress practices, but we must acknowledge that dress as reproduced in art has its own semiotic meaning that may or may not overlap with dress in real life. Therefore, in analysing the appearance of dress in Phoenician art, my approach is not (simply) to determine what Phoenicians actually wore, but rather to ask, what are the representations of dress in the visual record trying to communicate? Are Phoenician social identities purposefully indicated through dress in either minor or monumental art? If so, which ones? Can we decode these identities, given the limited information available to us?

4. Dress and Identity in The Chariot Scene on Sidonian Coins in the Persian Period

To explore some of the complexities in interpreting dress in the visual record of Phoenician cities, particularly with respect to the relationship between dress and identity in Phoenician society and art, I want to look closer at the representation of dress in a particular composition: the chariot scene found on reverse of double shekels minted at Sidon from the late 5th through 4th centuries BCE. While this scene is typologically static over its ~90-year lifespan, stylistic details – including items of dress worn by the figures – do vary within and across different reigns.

Although coins present their own challenges of interpretations, they are in some ways an ideal gateway for thinking about the study of dress in art in Phoenician society. Coins are simultaneously historical docu-

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37   Olson 2021, p. 17.

38   McFerrin 2017, pp. 149-150.

39   Maes 1989, p. 16: «On doit aussi se demander quells sont les critères permettant de qualifier un habit de profane, religieux ou cultuel… On a fréquemment des problems touchant l'identification des personnages figurés: est-ce le dédicant, le défunt ou le dieu invoqué?». See also Oggiano 2013, p. 355.

ments and archaeological objects. Both ubiquitous and portable, people at different levels of society (not just the elites) engaged with them.[40] They have a reasonably secure date and place of production, and there is a large sample size, involving multiple different artists/hands over time for reproducing the same scene. And while Phoenician coinage takes inspiration from the Greek and Achaemenid spheres in their iconography, as Martin observes: «coinage of the Phoenician city-states from its inception operated with a visual logic all its own».[41]

    Before diving in further, we should acknowledge certain particularities of coins as an artistic genre, which can influence the image and thus the representation of dress. First, the miniature nature of the canvas means simplification and stylization of motifs. Second, for coins to fulfil their economic function, they must engender a sense of trust among their users.[42] This will impact design choice, especially decisions whether to modify the imagery over time. Given the longevity of the scene under consideration, we might wonder if the style and fashion became archaic at any point in the image's history, and if coin engravers had any stylistic freedom. Third is the aforementioned nature of coins as state-sponsored art. The close relationship between coins and civic identity has been studied extensively in numismatics.[43] Imagery found on Phoenician coins is particular to each city-state, each of which combines foreign motifs with local style and iconography in a careful and considered way.[44] We can assume that the images on Sidonian coins were ideologically charged and served as both a reflection and assertion of Sidon's civic identity as envisioned by the king and his advisors. At the same time, as Sidon was subject to the Achaemenid Persian empire in this period, we must wonder if there were any conditions placed by the Achaemenid court that impacted the iconography. Fourth is the question of audience. Sidonian coinage was used for interregional trade and may have circulated throughout the Levant, perhaps even reaching Anatolia, Persia, and Egypt.[45] In determining the iconography, what audience(s) were Sidonian rulers speaking to – primarily Sidonians, or others as well?

4.1. *The Chariot Scene on the Sidonian Double-Shekel*

From the beginning of Sidonian civic coinage in ca. 440-430 the obverse of Sidonian coins featured the same motif (Fig. 1): a galley, with some variations in details (such as city fortifications in the background).[46] On the reverse, multiple motifs were used, all of which are connected to Achaemenid iconography. We are concerned with the chariot scene, which was first employed on the reverse of the double-shekel ca. 430 and continued until the Macedonian conquest (333 BCE).[47] The scene under consideration depicts a horse-drawn chariot (the number of horses visible varies), inside which is a driver and passenger; from the end of the 5th century, on the double shekels, an additional figure is depicted following on foot behind the chariot

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40   Kemmers – Myrberg 2011, p. 89.

41   Martin 2017, p. 123. See also Johananoff – Tal 2021, p. 106.

42   As observed by Kemmers and Myrberg, trust is «evoked through visual recognition of the coin (image, colour, text), and by tactile recognition (weight, size, relief, imprints). These physical qualities of coins are thus more than basic; they are vital to the function of coin» (Kemmers – Myrberg 2011, p. 94).

43   Kemmers – Myrberg 2011; Price – Trell 1977.

44   Johananoff – Tal 2021; Betlyon 2019.

45   Jigoulov 2010, pp. 74, 85.

46   Motivations for the minting of the first coins is unknown but generally thought to be economic in nature. Presumably, the authority to mint autonomous coins was granted by the Achaemenid imperial administration, but the structure of such permission is unknown (Johananoff – Tal 2021, p. 105). Notably, Phoenician cities did not adopt the siglos, the Persian silver denomination, instead opting initially for a weight corresponding to a local standard, which was later changed to the slightly heavier common Phoenician standard (Johananoff – Tal 2021, p. 112).

47   It also appeared on silver half-shekels and bronze half-shekels (Elayi – Elayi 2004a, p. 89).

(Figs. 1-4).[48] It is difficult to calculate how many surviving coins with this image there are, but Elayi and Elayi publish ~900 in their study of Sidonian coinage.[49] Details are not distinct in all of these; there is also a considerable variety in the quality of die cutting and striking.

There is not a scholarly consensus on the identification of the figures, in particular the passenger and the follower on foot. Notably, the most prominent readings in the scholarship depend on an interpretation of the dress of the figures for their identifications. The three main interpretations found in the scholarship are as follows:

Fig. 1. Silver double-shekel from Sidon, reign of Baalshillim II. Obverse: war galley. Reverse: crowned figure being driven in a horse-drawn chariot, with another figure following on foot behind the chariot, wearing a kilt, headdress resembling the Egyptian *hedjet,* and holding a sceptre. British Museum 1918,0204.156. © The Trustees of the British Museum. Shared under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) licence.

1. The principal figure in the chariot is the Achaemenid King; the follower is the Sidonian king.

2. The principal figure in the chariot is the King of Sidon; the follower is an attendant.

3. The principal figure in the chariot is a deity (which one is unclear); the follower behind the chariot is the King of Sidon.

The first interpretation is the oldest, appearing in various coin handbooks and continuing today among many scholars; it is generally interpreted as a visual representation of Sidon's fealty to the Achaemenid Empire.[50] This identification is based on two main arguments. First is the perceived resemblance of the chariot passenger to representations of the Achaemenid king in certain Achaemenid monumental and minor art, particularly with regards to the dress of the figure, which has been identified as the Achaemenid "court robe".[51] Second is the scene's compositional affinity to certain Achaemenid royal iconography, namely scenes of a royal figure hunting from chariot on cylinder seals (Fig. 5).[52]

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48   Only on the double-shekels. On the smaller fractional issues that employ the chariot scene, there is no third figure. See Elayi – Elayi 2004b, pp. 493-505 for a detailed description of the chariot scene motif and all the typological and stylistic variations.

49   Elayi – Elayi 2004b.

50   Babelon 1910, cols. 567-569; Hill 1910, pp. c-ci. This interpretation is widely accepted by scholars working in Achaemenid studies; see Briant 2002, pp. 607-608, and references in Elayi – Elayi 2004a, pp. 91-93. Among Phoenicianists, Jigoulov prefers this interpretation, seeing it as an illustration of «the penetration of Persian imperial ideology in Sidon and Sidon's response to it» (Jigoulov 2010, p. 87). Betlyon also accepts it, while acknowledging other interpretations (Betlyon 2019, p. 388). The identification of the chariot passenger as Achaemenid King is also common in the catalogue entries of various online collections. For example, the Bibliothèque nationale de France (e.g. https://catalogue.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cb41743178k) names the principal as the "Le Grand Roi", i.e. the Achaemenid king; American Numismatics Society identifies the principal as "Persian king" and the follower as "Sidonian king" (e.g. https://numismatics.org/collection/1944.100.71290).

51   The figure is described by Babelon (1910, n. 889) thusly: «The king of Persia standing in his chariot…he is capped with the five-pointed kidaris and dressed in *candys*»; Babelon is quoted by Jigoulov 2010, p. 87 and Briant 2002, p. 607 in support of their reading of the figure as the Persian king. Since Babelon's time, the *kidaris* and *candys* have been associated with different garments and headgear in Achaemenid culture; what Babelon refers to by *candys* is now typically referred to as the "court robe" or "court dress". For Achaemenid court dress, see Stronach 2011; Llewellyn-Jones 2013, pp. 63-64; Shahbazi 1992. The court robe is thought to have been influenced by or derived from Elamite (royal) garments, hence Elayi – Elyai (2004a, p. 94) refer to it as «élamito-perse». *Kidaris* (a term found in Greek historical accounts) is now thought to refer to the bonnet or cap of soft material (felt or leather) that tied under the chin, like that shown in the Alexander mosaic (Berndt 2020). *Candys* (also from Greek historical accounts) is thought now to refer to the Old Persian *gaunaka*, which is an overcoat with long, false sleeves that drape over the shoulder (Llewellyn-Jones 2021a).

52   Jigoulov 2010, pp. 87-88. Most famous is a seal inscribed with the name of Darius I in the British Museum, pictured here; a

Fig. 2. Reverse of silver double-shekels from Sidon showing the chariot scene, reign of Baalshillim II. 2a) British Museum 1995,0607.7. © The Trustees of the British Museum. Shared under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) licence. 2b) Bibliothèque nationale de France 3248. Source: gallica.bnf.fr / BnF. 2c) British Museum 1894,0506.2438. © The Trustees of the British Museum. Shared under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) licence.

Fig. 3. Reverse of silver double-shekels from Sidon showing the chariot scene, reign of Abdashtart I. 3a) Bibliothèque nationale de France 3180. Source: gallica.bnf.fr / BnF. 3b) Bibliothèque nationale de France 3179. Source: gallica.bnf.fr / BnF. 3c) Bibliothèque nationale de France 1973.1.277. Source: gallica.bnf. fr / BnF.

Fig. 4. Reverse of silver double-shekels from Sidon showing the chariot scene, various reigns. 4a) Reign of Tennes. Bibliothèque nationale de France 689. Source: gallica.bnf.fr / BnF. 4b) Reign of Evagoras. Bibliothèque nationale de France 3188. Source: gallica.bnf.fr / BnF. 4c) Reign of Abdashtart II. Bibliothèque nationale de France 1600. Source: gallica.bnf.fr / BnF. 4d) Reign of Abdashtart II. British Museum 1925,0105.114. © The Trustees of the British Museum. Shared under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) licence.

The second interpretation, initially argued by Studniczka, pushed back against the first interpretation.[53] Studniczka argued that because the Sidonian king's name is engraved on the coin, not the Achaemenid king's, the principal figure should be read as the Sidonian king. Studniczka also justifies his reading

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similar scene (but condensed and without inscription) can be found on a seal in the Museum of Fine Arts Boston (21.1193).

53   Studniczka 1907, p. 190; see also Sole 1998, pp. 97-98.

Fig. 5. "The Darius Seal", cylinder seal with carved scene showing chariot with a royal figure (Darius I) hunting a lion; the seal impression is modern. British Museum 89132. © The Trustees of the British Museum. Shared under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) licence.

by arguing that Phoenician kings dressed like Persians, and that this explains the similarity in iconography: «there can be little doubt that the Persian court costume was worn by a Phoenician king».[54]

The third view was put forward by Seyrig in 1959 and more recently argued at length by Elayi and Elayi.[55] This view interprets the scene as a cultic procession rather than a royal procession, on the basis of multiple visual cues, such as the gesture of "blessing" by the principal figure and the items carried by the follower on foot (more on these items below). Elayi and Elayi also point to examples elsewhere in Near Eastern media of divinities being transported on chariots.[56] With regards to the role of dress in their identification, Elayi and Elayi concede that the garment worn by the principal in the chariot is similar to the "Elamite-Persian" garment worn by the king in Achaemenid royal art. However, they argue that both the garment and headgear find parallels among non-royal iconography of Achaemenid art and in Phoenician visual media, and therefore cannot be used as an indicator of the Persian king; rather it is to be seen as a borrowing of the dress by the Phoenicians.[57] They reason that the pose and fixed representation of the chariot passenger is appropriate for a deity, as it contrasts with the variations in dress found in the follower on foot.[58]

These varying identifications by scholars and the arguments supporting them point to the ambiguities of dress in the visual record and difficulty of using it for the purpose of identification in iconography, whether it be ethnic identity or mortal vs immortal. Does this ambiguity exist because we lack the necessary cultural information to make the correct identification? Or is it possible that this ambiguity intended? Before considering this question further, we should take a closer look at the dress of each figure.

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54   Studniczka 1907, p. 190: «Daß die persische Hoftracht (vgl. Abb. S. 188) einem phönikischen Könige zukam, ist kaum zu bezweifeln» (translation is my own).

55   Elayi – Elayi 2004a, pp. 94-103. This interpretation is generally favoured by those working in Phoenician studies, see Elayi – Elayi 2004a, pp. 98-99, n. 60.

56   Elayi – Elayi 2004a, p. 102. They also rightly observe that it seems politically implausible for Abdashtart I and Tennes to continue minting coins with the Achaemenid king on them, given the rebellion (Elayi – Elyai 2004a, p. 98).

57   Elayi – Elayi 2004a, p. 96.

58   Elayi – Elayi 2004a, p. 102.

4.2. *Dress of the Different Figures in the Chariot Scene*

4.2.1. The Chariot Driver

The driver holds a similar position and pose in the composition in all issues: he faces left, leaning outside the chariot with both hands holding the reigns. He is frequently portrayed as slightly smaller in scale than the passenger, but sometimes they are both the same size. Throughout all issues he wears a tunic, sometimes belted, sometimes pleated (in some cases the engraved pleats may have been worn away), with wide sleeves typically reaching no further than the elbow; the lower half of his ensemble is obscured by the chariot. The fullness of the garment varies according to the style of the engraver. He is beardless throughout all issues, but his hair and headgear vary.[59] He can be depicted bare headed, with a bun (Fig. 1) or hair covering the nape of his neck, with headband (Figs. 2.a, 3.c). In terms of head coverings, we find: a small cylindrical hat, with or without brim; a flat hat with wide brim (Fig. 2.b); a hat resembling a biretta (Figs. 2.c, 3.a, maybe also Figs. 4.c-d); something resembling the so-called "Phrygian" cap (Fig. 4.a); a hat resembling a beret (Fig. 3.b); or a kind of cap with visor (Figs. 3.b, 4.b).

4.2.2. The Chariot Passenger

The passenger of the chariot is depicted in the same position and pose in all issues. He is standing, facing left, usually shown from waist up, sometimes from hip up. He is shown mostly in profile, except for the chest which is sometimes oriented more towards the front. His right (back) arm is raised, hand open with palm facing forward, and left (front) arm folded up at the side at 90 degrees so that the upper part is tight against his side and the forearm is parallel to the ground.

As for clothing, he wears a long overgarment (mantle or cape), usually pleated, either wrapped double-breasted (right to left) or hanging straight, with arms coming out the sides through gaps that are created by the wrapping of the garment, which comes to the elbow; the forearm appears bare. The clothing type is more-or-less consistent across all series, save for minor stylistic differences, such as a bulkier garment or lack of pleating in the lower quality dies. The passenger has thick hair which ends at the nape, sometimes a bit longer, and a long beard, which is usually rendered somewhat schematically, coming to a rounded point. In the coins of Baalshallim II, the hair flares out into a swollen shape in a manner that echoes male elite hairstyles found in Assyrian and Achaemenid royal art, although the texture of the hair is not generally articulated. From the coins of Abdashtart I onwards, the passenger's hair tends to be shorter and less flared; there is variety in the length and fullness depending on the engraver. With regard to headgear, in earlier issues (up to and including the reign of Baalshillim II, Figs. 1, 2.a-b) the passenger typically wears a serrated crown with 4, 5, or 6 points, usually of medium height, but sometimes lower or higher; he is also shown sometimes with a cylindrical headdress (often referred to as a "polos" after a similar hat named as such in Greek) (Fig. 2.c). In the reign of Abdashtart I, the serrated crown disappears completely; the cylindrical headdress becomes common (Fig. 3.b) but varies in height (see Fig. 4.a for a tall, flared version), sometimes with a small brim at the top and/or bottom (Fig. 4.a).[60] Different headdresses also appear, including a flat hat with a brim (Fig. 4.b-c), sometimes almost resembling a bonnet (Fig. 3.c).[61]

As mentioned earlier, the dress of the chariot passenger has been identified by numismatists as the court robe as worn by the Achaemenid king. This has not been disputed by those arguing that the passenger is a Sidonian king or god. For example, Elayi and Elayi, who read the figure as a Sidonian deity, concede the dress is that of the Achaemenid king, rationalising such a dress choice as «but a simple borrowing of clothing

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59   See Elayi – Elayi 2004b, pp. 500-504, for a complete breakdown of the variations.

60   Elayi – Elayi 2004b, p. 498.

61   Elayi – Elayi 2004b, pp. 500-502.

Fig. 6. Doorway Relief depicting the king followed by attendants in monumental relief; from the "Council Hall", Persepolis. Photograph from the Schmidt Expedition of 1935, P-496B; © Institute for the Study of Ancient Cultures.

Fig. 7. Two archers wearing Achaemenid court dress with long, wide sleeves in a relief from the palace of Darius at Susa. The glazed relief shows elaborate colours and patterns on the garment. Louvre AOD 487 (Photo by J. Nitschke).

that is part of a fashion phenomenon».[62] This merits further reflection, because there is nothing simple about dressing up the city's principal deity in such a way as to resemble its foreign imperial overlord and publishing this in state-sponsored art. But first we should ask, does this figure's dress actually imitate or borrow Achaemenid court robe, either in real life or as depicted in art? Does it signal "Achaemenid king"?

As described by Llewellyn-Jones, the Achaemenid court robe was «constructed from a huge double square of linen or wool (or perhaps cotton or even silk), and worn over baggy trousers, the tunic was tightly belted at the waist to form a robe with deep folds which created an overhang resembling sleeves…the court robe (Greek, *sarapis, serapeis, kalasireis* or *aktaiai*) was richly decorated with woven designs and ornamented appliqué decorations made from gold and semiprecious stones in daily life, kings and courtiers could wear either the court robe or the riding habit as situation required».[63] Illustrative examples in art include the royal archers at Susa and reliefs at Persepolis (Figs. 6, 7); it is also found in some smaller media, such as in the Persepolis Fortification seals and gold "daric" coins.[64]

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62   Elayi – Elayi 2004a, p. 96: «mais d'un simple emprunt vestimentaire qui s'inscrit dans les phénomènes de mode».

63   Llewellyn-Jones 2013, p. 63.

64   For seals, see, for example, Garrison 2010, fig. 32.3.a (PSF11*); the robe is also depicted in Type I darics; see Stronach 1989, esp. fig. 1.1.

Fig. 8. Gold coin, "Daric". Achaemenid Period. Obverse: king or royal hero facing right, running, carrying bow and spear. He wears a pleated tunic or robe; a smooth overgarment with border and high neck comes down to just above the elbows and to a point at the waist. Bibliothèque nationale de France 532. Source: gallica.bnf.fr / BnF.

Fig. 9. Reverse of a Sidonian silver half-shekel, depicting a royal figure fighting a lion; the royal figure wears the "vest" tunic similar to the figure in the Darius Seal (Figure 5). Date: c. 425-402 BCE. Bibliothèque nationale de France 3176. Source: gallica. bnf.fr / BnF.

If we compare the image of the chariot-passenger in the Sidonian coins, especially the earlier coins of Baalshillim II, with these representations of the "court robe" we notice several differences. First, the double-breasted style and heavy pleating of the Sidonian image is not found in Achaemenid representations of the court robe. In Sidonian coins across various reigns, the side edges of the garment (which form the "sleeves") end at or just above the elbow; the flare does not reach below the waist. This contrasts with representations of the Achaemenid court robe, which show long "sleeves" with a much wider and deeper flare such that the fabric reaches down to the knees.

There is another form of overgarment found in some examples small-scale Achaemenid royal media, worn by the "royal archer" on seals and "daric" coins (e.g. Figs. 5, 8). This is what Shahbazi refers to as a "vest": a high-necked, sleeveless garment with vertical pleats on the borders.[65] This garment is also distinctly different from that of the passenger in the Sidonian coin. However, it seems to be replicated on the reverse of other Sidonian coin types (fractional issues), which feature not only the Achaemenid "royal archer" but also the "hero fighting the lion" (Fig. 9).[66] In these images, the Sidonian coins hew much more closely to the Achaemenid model. The deviation, then, in the Sidonian chariot scenes points to a deliberate decision on the part of the designer to choose a different garment, one that is not so visually linked to Achaemenid media.

As numerous commentators have pointed out, long tunics and mantles with and without sleeves, and with or without belts, appear in earlier, contemporary, and later Phoenician media.[67] An obvious old-

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65   Shahbazi 1992. It appears on Types II-IV of the "daric" coins (Stronach 1989, fig. 1). Types II – IVa look like it may be two garments: a pleated tunic with a smooth V-shaped or oblong vest on top; Type IVb (from ~380 BCE onwards) shows more pleating in the upper garment.

66   Elayi – Elayi 2004b, pp. 524-534. The "archer" appears on the reverse of fractional silver shekels from the initiation of Sidonian coinage until the arrival of Alexander; the "hero fighting the lion" appears on the half-shekel and 1/16 shekel from the late 5th century until the arrival of Alexander.

67   Elayi – Elayi 2004a, pp. 94-95; *DCPP*, s.v. "vêtements"; Ferron 1975, p. 83; Maes 1989; 1991; Oggiano 2013; Michelau 2016.

er example is the king figure on the Ahirom sarcophagus, where the enthroned king wears a tunic or mantle with short, wide sleeves (Fig. 10). An example more contemporary with the coins can be found in the parapet relief on the so-called Mourning-Women Sarcophagus from the 'Ayaa necropolis at Sidon (Fig. 11). Here the figure is depicted wearing an unbelt-ed, long, lightly pleated mantle with long tight sleeves and ei-ther a hood or excess fabric hanging down the back. Another contemporary image is that of the Byblian king Yehawmelk (Fig. 12). While there may be some stylistic similarity in the depiction of tunic (visible here in its lower part) to Achae-menid depictions of the court robe (mostly in the lines used to render the drapery), Yehawmelk also wears an overgarment that is different from the Achaemenid robe, consisting of a sleeveless cape which is draped over his shoulders and reaches only as far his elbows.

Fig. 10. Detail from the sarcophagus of King Ahi-ram of Byblos, showing the king wearing a long robe with wide sleeves. Beirut National Museum 2086 (Photo by J. Nitschke).

None of the above comparisons are exact, but they do demonstrate that long tunics or mantles seem to be a common form of dress in Phoenician visual tradition. This, combined with the discrepancies between our coins and Achaemenid representations of the court dress, suggests that the garment worn by the chariot passenger on the Sidonian coins was not intended to signal "Achaemenid King". It seems more logical to view the garment of the passenger as a vari-ation on a form of dress with a long tradition in the visual culture of the Levant.

But what about the hair and headgear? As observed by Llewellyn-Jones, hair is a key visual marker of power in Near Eastern tradition, and «from the earliest times, the physical trait most conspicuously stressed in Near Eastern images of kingship», as evidenced by the detailed and elaborate representations we see in Babylonian, Assyrian, Egyptian, and Achaemenid art.[68] Thick, full hair signals not only health and vitality, but culturally-specific characteristics regarding age, wisdom, status, strength, and so on. In the chariot scene on Sidonian coins, detail may be lacking or erased (either in the carving or due to wear), but thick hair and beard are clearly indicated through outline and modelling, especially in the coins of Baalshillim II (Figs. 1-2). The way in which the hair emerges at the back from the headgear, almost like a large bun, recalls the thick, curly, coiffed hairstyles of Assyrian and Achaemenid kings, courtiers, and deities. Notably, a similar bun can be found on the driver and the follower on foot – perhaps a signal of their high status as well. What distinguishes the passenger from the other two figures, however, is his beard.

As for the passenger's headgear, it is this in combination with his hairstyle and beard that ties the fig-ure most visually to that of Achaemenid royal art – not the garment. Both the serrated crown and the smooth cylindrical headgear fond on the passenger are worn by royal and non-royals in Achaemenid art (the flared cylindrical headgear in Fig. 4.a is especially similar to that in Achaemenid royal art). In the Sidonian chariot scene, the serrated crown is worn by the passenger alone, and only in the coins of Baalshillim II and earlier; after that, the passenger wears a greater variety of headgear types and styles which are also found on the driver as well as the figure following the chariot.[69] This range goes beyond what we see in Achaemenid royal

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68   Llewellyn-Jones 2021b, p. 181.

69   As described above; see Elayi – Elayi 2004b, pp. 498-504. But while the headdress of the passenger may appear also on the other figures, headdress such as the "Phrygian cap" or "Egyptianizing headdress" appears on the follower alone.

Fig. 11. Detail of the Mourning Women Sarcophagus funerary procession on the parapet. Istanbul Archaeological Museum 368 (Photo by J. Nitschke).
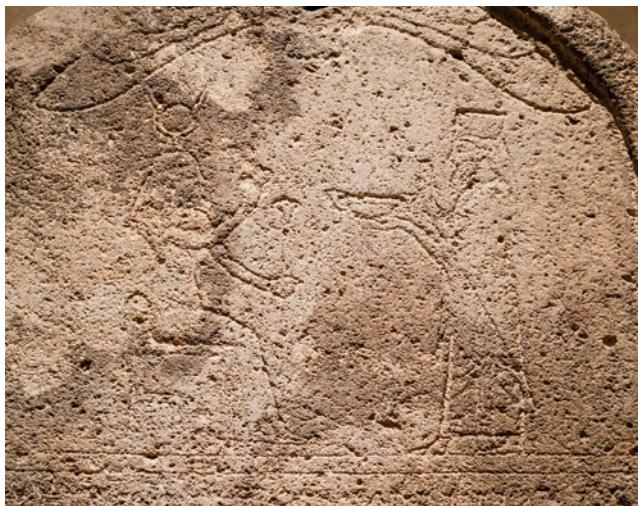

Fig. 12. Detail of the stele of King Yehawmelk of Byblos (fifth century BC), who stands before the goddess Baalat. He wears a long robe with wide sleeves and conical truncated head covering. Louvre AO 22368 (Photo by J. Nitschke).

iconography. The headgear types depicted in Sidonian coinage are known in Phoenician iconography, from terracotta figurines from Beirut and stelai from Umm el-'Amed.[70] And as observed above, after Baalshillim II, the hair of the passenger as depicted on the coins is less like that in Achaemenid royal art: shorter and less flared (but still full).

So, while the garment does not seem to signal "Achaemenid King", the hair and headdress could perhaps signal "Achaemenid" at least in the earlier issues; this would depend on the reference of the viewer and their knowledge of Achaemenid and Assyrian iconography. It is also possible that the artists were simply borrowing vocabulary of power and status common by this time in Near Eastern imperial art without necessarily intending to signal political affiliation with the Achaemenid king. In other words, the hair and headgear may simply signal "royal".

4.2.3. The Follower on Foot

The figure following behind the chariot on foot first appears on double-shekels Group III (last quarter of the 5th century BCE). From the reign of Baalshillim II onwards (Group IV), the figure is present in the scene on all double shekels; however, he is omitted in the fractional denominations, probably because they are so small.[71] The figure faces left, one leg forward, carrying a sceptre in his left hand that ends in a curved element. Compositionally, his presence in the scene echoes Achaemenid royal art, such as the doorway reliefs from Persepolis (Fig. 6), in which attendants holding a similarly curved implement follow the king. But our figure is distinguished in the details, both in the curved implement and in his dress.

In the earlier series (Elayi and Elayi's Groups III and IV.1, late 5th century – ca. 366 BCE; Figs. 1-2), the dress is consistent: the figure wears a short loincloth that is sometimes pleated, with belt. For headgear, he wears a tall, conical headdress with swollen lower part that resembles the Egyptian *hedjet* crown, especially in the earlier versions, in which the headdress narrows at the top terminating in a ball; no hair is visible.[72] He sometimes wears a necklace similar to the Egyptian *ousekh*. The sceptre consists of an animal head (usually

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70   Elayi – Elayi 2004a, pp. 95-96; 2004b; Maes 1991; Michelau 2014; 2016.

71   Elayi – Elayi 2004a, p. 89; 2004b.

72   Elayi – Elayi 2004b, pp. 495-497; Naster 1957, pp. 6-7.

ram), crowned with a disk and one or two horns, often referred to as the "Khnum" sceptre.[73] The combination of garment, headgear, staff, and manner of the figure's representation (whereby the chest faces front but head and legs in profile) has led scholars to describe this figure as "Egyptian" or "Egyptianizing" (and in early scholarship to erroneously identify him as the Egyptian king).[74] Figures with similar dress and pose, with or without sceptre are well-known from Phoenician and other Levantine media (Fig. 13).[75]

From the reign of Abdashtart I onwards (366 BCE ca.) the follower figure is depicted in full profile and the manner of dress changes completely. This change happens at the same time as the replacement of the serrated crown on the passenger figure with the smooth cylindrical one. Both dress changes coincide with a change in the weight of the Sidonian coinage (devaluation) from the Phoenician standard to the Attic.[76] This presents a possible economic explanation for the decision to change the iconography, however, subtly. The "Egyptianizing" costume disappears and is replaced with a belted tunic, often pleated, either short or ankle-length, often with a diagonal hemline from knee to ankle, such that the forward leg is bare and exposed. Flared sleeves are usually elbow-length; sometimes they are longer.[77] In general, the garment is not distinguishable from that worn by the driver. There is variety in headgear: the conical style continues (with or without bulge), resembling more the Lebanese *lebbadé* (Fig. 4.c); a hat resembling a biretta (Fig. 3.a); a flat hat with brim (Fig. 4.a); a beret-like hat (Fig. 3.b); Phrygian cap (Fig. 3.c). Where the hair is shown (and not hidden by headgear), it is full and reaches to the nape. Although the forms of headgear are in general similar to that found on the driver, the two figures do not necessarily wear the same head covering in the same coin. The sceptre is much the same as

Fig. 13. Side wall (proper right) of a limestone naiskos from Sidon, with relief of a figure wearing so-called Egyptian dress and holding a sceptre in a manner similar to follower figure on the coins of Baalshillim; a tassle hangs off of his headdress, which is not found in the coin images. Height 60 cm. Louvre AO 2060. © Musée du Louvre, Dist. GrandPalaisRmn / Maurice et Pierre Chuzeville.

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73   Due to the ram's head and assumed Egyptian iconographic influence. Such sceptres are found in Ugaritic media in the 2nd millennium and are found widely in Phoenician/Punic media. See Culican 1968, pp. 62-68; Naster 1957, pp. 9-11.

74   See Naster 1957 for the earlier identification of this figure as the Egyptian king. The label "Egyptianizing" is used liberally in Phoenician studies, but should be used more judiciously; in this case, it is difficult to see anything especially foreign or "Egyptian" about the loincloth; loincloths have a very long history in the iconography of the Levant (Oggiano 2013; Maes 1989, p. 19). Likewise, if the "Khnum" sceptre type goes back to Ugarit, there is little analytical usefulness in calling it "Egyptian" in the context of the Persian period.

75   The nearest geographic comparison with provenance is a miniature *naiskos* from Sidon, pictured here (Fig. 13); for this see Aimé-Giron 1934. Similar figures are found on an ivory plaque from Nimrud in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, dated to the 9th-8th centuries BCE (62.269.3), but with a more elaborate kilt and slightly different Egyptianizing headdress; both figures hold the same sceptre as here. On a door lintel at Umm el-'Amed, there remains a very worn figure with similar crown and sceptre as here, but wearing a robe; see Dunand – Duru 1962, p. 71, nn. E1 and E5. For other examples, see Naster 1957.

76   Johananoff – Tal 2021, pp. 113-114; Elayi – Elayi 2004b, pp. 498-499.

77   This form of dress has been referred to generically as "Asian" in the literature. See, for example, Naster 1957, p. 9; also in the catalogue entries of the American Numismatics society, e.g. http://numismatics.org/collection/1944.100.71371?lang=en. While we might dismiss such a label as simply a legacy of the orientalist tendencies of earlier numismatics studies, it still bears repeating that such broad, sweeping ethnic associations with specific forms of dress are methodologically unhelpful.

in Groups III and IV.1, but it is now held in his right hand; in his left he holds a single-handed vase with branches coming out of it.[78] According to Elayi and Elayi, some examples show the figure dressed more in the style of a "Greek ephebe" with articulated musculature and garment that resembles a himation over the shoulder.[79] Sidonian coin issues bearing the name of the Persian satrap Mazday use the same imagery as the civic coinage (even making use of the same engravers), but show additional variation in the garments for the follower on foot: a tight tunic with pants, either a short trouser that is puffed up around the hips and upper legs or long pants that are tight at the ankles.[80]

4.3. *Persian, Sidonian, King, God, Priest?*

Having looked closely at the depiction of dress on the chariot scene of the Sidonian double-shekels, what can we then conclude or surmise about the identities of these figures, especially the passenger and follower, which have been the subject of ongoing debate? Can we make any deductions about Phoenician dress practices from these images?

The figure of the passenger deliberately evokes certain dress characteristics of wider Near Eastern royal media, in particular the hairstyle, crown, and cylindrical headgear, particularly in the coins of Baalshillim II. After Baalshillim II, we find stylistic variations in the headgear that do not appear in Achaemenid coins. And while there are clear iconographic connections between the Sidonian chariot scene as a whole and Achaemenid royal iconography, the chariot passenger's garment is not one of them. This is not a mistake or misinterpretation of the Achaemenid court dress by the designer of the image – this was a choice. We have only to look to other reverse images found on Sidonian fractional coinage, such as the "archer" and "hero fighting a lion" (Fig. 9), to find evidence that the designers of Sidonian coinage had more than a passing familiarity with the appearance of Achaemenid royal dress on glyptic and coinage.

That said, I must concede that even if the garment of the passenger is a local one rather than an Achaemenid one, this in and of itself does not exclude the possibility that it could still be the Achaemenid king. There is no directive that states that the imperial king cannot be shown in a local form of dress in local coins. The point I have tried to argue above, rather, is that if one *wishes* to see the passenger of the chariot as a Sidonian (king or god), one does not need to resort to the simplistic argument that Phoenicians adopted Persian dress. Long tunics or robes styled in various ways have precedent elsewhere in Phoenician media, suggesting such garments are a typical form of male dress. But in the absence of corroborating information, any ethnic associations based on the coin image alone are speculative on our part.

Assuming for the moment that the engraver meant to signal a Sidonian as opposed to an Achaemenid, there is still the question of whether it is a Sidonian king or divinity. As mentioned earlier, distinguishing between divine and mortal in ancient artistic representations in the absence of inscriptions can be challenging; even in the "daric" coins mentioned above, scholars have debated whether the figure is meant to represent the king or a god.[81] In Phoenician visual culture, it is easiest when the deity is paired with another figure, as then the composition clearly indicates that one is worshipper (standing, with offering) and the other worshipped (seated in a throne; e.g. Fig. 12). But because both figures use the same hand gesture in such scenes (raised right hand, palm out), we must seek other clues when such a figure is shown isolated, as is the case in

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78   Often identified as an *oinochoe* (a Greek type of vase) based on its shape.

79   Elayi – Elayi 2004b, pp. 501, 503.

80   See Elayi – Elayi 2004b, pp. 504-505 for the imagery. The Mazday coins were issued in parallel to the coinage of the last four kings of Sidon, from 353 to 333. For the so-called "satrapal" coinage in the Persian Empire generally, see Mildenberg 2000. As observed by Mildenberg in the case of Mazday's Tarsus coins, the Sidonian Mazday coins should be regarded as local currency, likely issued in order to strengthen Mazday's authority in the region (Mildenberg 2000, p. 10).

81   Stronach 1989, pp. 266-269.

the Sidonian double-shekels. There is an instinct to search for these clues in the dress. The passenger wears a mantle that crosses over in the front; as mentioned above, we have other examples of long robes in Phoenician media, but no depictions showing a garment that crosses over exactly like this – is it possible that we are looking at a garment specific to male deities (images of which we are also lacking from Sidon)?[82] Maybe, but without more evidence this is purely speculative; we cannot know for sure.

There is one aspect of the passenger's dress ensemble that might signal his divinity: he holds no offering. This distinguishes him from the likes of Yehawmelk as well as other (presumably mortal) figures in ceremonial dress with their right hand raised, such as the stelai from Umm el-'Amed and the statues from the favissa from 'Amrit.[83] But, given our limited corpus of both anthropomorphic figures (divine or mortal) in Phoenician art, it is difficult to base identification solely on the basis of a missing offering, especially if the scene is not intended to be religious. In other words, if this is a scene of the king in procession, it perhaps also makes sense that he holds no object in his left hand.

As for the follower on foot, compositionally his presence again evokes Achaemenid imagery, namely reliefs from Persepolis where the king is followed by an attendant carrying a similarly curved accessory (Fig. 6). But while in the Persepolis reliefs the attendants wear a similar garment as the king, here the follower's garb is distinguished from the passenger, particularly in the coins of Baalshillim II and earlier, where the follower wears the "Egyptianizing" ensemble of kilt, bare chest, Egyptianizing crown. Overall, the figure of the follower experiences the greatest variety of dress; the most significant is the decisive change starting in the reign of Abdashtart I, from which point the follower is most frequently shown in a mantle or tunic that is visually like that of the driver. Does this reflect that the "Egyptianizing" form of ritual dress has fallen out of fashion?[84] Or is it simply a change in iconography in order to put more focus on the passenger? And what does the representation of the follower's dress signal about his identity?

As mentioned above, the follower on foot has typically been identified as an anonymous attendant or the Sidonian king. Elayi and Elayi prefer the latter, arguing that the sceptre can be a either a royal or ritual symbol, that the king's role as priest is established in the inscriptions, and there are iconographic examples of kings taking part in cultic processions in other Near Eastern media.[85] While the clothing items as depicted do not refute such an identification, the general variation in the dress of this figure (including garment and headgear) from the reign of Abdashtart I onwards might. Some of this variation can be specifically linked to observable stylistic differences between the engravers.[86] So, for example, in coins attributed to the reign of Evagoras, engraver 17 (following Elayi and Elayi's designation) depicts the follower like a "Greek ephebe"

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82   Comparison could be made to seals found at various Phoenician sites (or are attributed to Phoenician craftsmanship on the basis of style but lack provenance) which represent a seated deity; this figure typically is depicted where a pleated overgarment, but with long sleeves; in these images, it is typically the outside arm that is lifted, obscuring the front of the garment. Many of these are illustrated in the online repository of the Beazley Archive: https://www.carc.ox.ac.uk/carc/gems/Styles-and-Periods/Classical-Phoenician-Scarabs/Royalty-deities-or-others-unidentified (accessed September 15, 2024).

83   See Michelau 2016 for Umm el-'Amed and Lembke 2004 for 'Amrit. The figures from 'Amrit wearing a lion-skin *and* holding an offering are often identified as Herakles-Melqart or more generally as "master of lion" because the lion skin is an attribute of Herakles; this is in spite of the rest of the figures in the favissa identified as mortals. We should perhaps then question that assumption of divine identity, since there are many examples of mortals (often priests) in Mesopotamian and Egyptian art who wear animal skins in a similar manner; there are also statues of mortals (e.g. Alexander the Great) wearing a lion-skin. The motivation is the same in all – to evoke a sense of being closer to divinity.

84   The "Egyptianizing" ensemble persists in Phoenician visual culture, as indicated by the votive statue found *in situ* at Umm el-'Amed, dedicated by Abdosir, son of Arish and dated to the 3rd or 2nd centuries BCE (Beirut, National Museum 2004). This may, of course, represent a revival of an "archaic" style, stimulated by Ptolemaic Egyptian control of the region.

85   E.g., Ashurbanipal in the procession of Bêlit of Niniveh (Elayi – Elayi 2004a, pp. 102-103). Betlyon (2019, pp. 387-388) and Jigoulov (2010, p. 87) also accept the identification of the follower as the Sidonian king.

86   Elayi – Elayi 2004b, pp. 498-502.

with himation over a bare shoulder, whereas engraver 14 puts the follower in a conical cap and short tunic.[87] This suggests that the engravers had some artistic license in the sartorial choices for this figure. Such choices may or may not reflect current fashions, but regardless, for state-sponsored art on an object with such economic consequence, we would expect consistency and conservatism in the royal dress, particularly within the same reign, given the symbolic importance of the king as the embodiment and representative of the city and guarantor of the city's coinage. But perhaps the dress characteristic that most points to the follower's non-royal identity is his beardlessness. Both the follower and the chariot driver are consistently depicted beardless throughout the entire history of the coinage, in contrast to the passenger. If the Sidonian king were depicted beardless, this would be at odds with both Phoenician visual tradition as well as royal iconography in the Near East more widely in this period.

There are other, non-dress related reasons to be sceptical of interpreting the follower as the king. The first is the scale of all three figures in the composition. There are numerous examples where the follower on foot is smaller than not only the passenger, but also the driver (e.g., Figs. 3.b, 4.a-c). If this follower was intended to be read as the king, one would expect that he would be consistently represented at least as large as the driver. Also, because of the figure's placement on the edge of the coin, he is sometimes cut off; in the earliest examples, when the follower was first introduced (Group III, late 5th century), the figure is squeezed in almost as an afterthought; this hardly seems like the appropriate iconographic treatment for the city's ruler.[88] Therefore, it seems most plausible that the follower behind the chariot is – like the driver – anonymous.

5. Conclusions

In considering the original design of the chariot scene on reverse of the Sidonian double-shekel as a whole – both the composition and the manner of dress of the figures – the engraver intends to signal a connection to Achaemenid royal imagery. The chariot scene along with the other reverse images in the fractional Sidonian coinage exist in dialogue with Achaemenid imagery, and the continued use of the chariot scene even in periods of political tension between Sidon and the Achaemenid court points to the cultural power of the imagery.

At the same time, through slight compositional changes and especially differences in dress of both the passenger and the follower, the engraver is signalling differentiation from Achaemenid visual tradition. The chariot scene is thus potentially an image that can be read in more than one way, depending on the perspective of the viewer: as one of Sidon belonging to the Achaemenid sphere, but also of Sidonian distinctiveness and autonomy.

In the discussion above, I have drawn attention to the problems with the traditional identifications of the chariot scene based on the figures' dress. I have also deliberately avoided committing to a particular identity for the passenger – the clear protagonist and focal point of the image – as the visual cues remain ambiguous. To return a question I posed at the start, is this ambiguity a result of us not knowing the "code" of Sidonian dress and representation, or is the depiction of the passenger intentionally multivalent? It may be the former, but I also wish to leave open the possibility of the latter and suggest perhaps that the image purposefully occupies a liminal space between divine and royal authority. Such multivalency could allow the viewer (whether Sidonian, Persian, or other Levantine resident) to see the authoritative power he or she wished to see. It also acknowledges the interconnectedness of divine and royal power, together with its eternal nature, which is reflected in the relative consistency of the passenger figure across multiple reigns.

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87   Elayi – Elayi 2004b, p. 502.
88   Elayi – Elayi 2004b, p. 495, Group III.1.a-c.

This may be hard to imagine in a historical and art historical tradition that expects coin depictions of individuals to signal one ruler and one ruler alone. But there is little in Sidonian or Phoenician visual culture that signals to us that they were especially concerned about representing the self as a unique individual in their figural art. There are exceptions, of course. Phoenician anthropoid sarcophagi, which feature distinct representations of heads in various styles, where no two are exactly alike, seem to flirt with individuality. If individuality is intended in the sarcophagi, it is interestingly presented primarily through the head and not through the body, which is usually abstract and unclothed.[89]

While there are many challenges to the study of Phoenician dress through visual culture, there is also a wealth of cultural information to be gained, which the description and analysis in this paper only begin to explore. For the Sidonian double-shekels, clear sartorial choices were made both at the initiation of the chariot scene and at various points in its history. And while these choices were constrained in the medium and intended to communicate messages of power, authority, and Sidonian distinctiveness, these images also offer some clues to Phoenician clothing, such as the ubiquity of long tunics and mantles and a rich variety in headgear. Hopefully, future work in Phoenician dress can provide more context for further interrogating both the coin images and other Phoenician figural art.

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89   For anthropoid sarcophagi, see Lembke 2001; Rossi 2023. A handful depict clothing on the body, but most do not. As the anthropoid sarcophagi allude to the body but usually reject the most common form of dress – clothing – they are relevant to any questions about the relationship between dress and identity in Phoenician art.

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