

The Civilizational History Of Bahrain During The Tylos Period Until The End Of The Second Century AD

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Abstract

This study examines the civilizational history of Bahrain during the period known as Tylos, from the early Hellenistic era until the end of the second century AD. It focuses on the political, economic, and cultural transformations that accompanied Bahrain's integration into the networks of influence and trade within the ancient world. The research discusses the historical context of Greek knowledge of the Arabian Gulf through exploratory expeditions associated with the project of Alexander the Great, emphasizing that Bahrain was not conquered militarily by Alexander, but rather became known to the Greeks through maritime reconnaissance voyages that paved the way for understanding its resources, strategic location, and commercial role.

The study reviews Bahrain during the Seleucid period and beyond, highlighting the continued use of the name Tylos in classical sources until the second century AD. It also addresses the unresolved issue of the transition in nomenclature from Dilmun to Tylos, discussing various scholarly perspectives that associate this shift with linguistic transformations or with political and commercial relations with regional centers such as Palmyra.

The research places particular emphasis on local and regional identity during this period, demonstrating the presence of an Arab identity through archaeological evidence, including distinctive types of "Arab pottery" and the diversity of local products. These findings reflect a society that preserved its cultural distinctiveness despite Hellenistic influences. The study also examines Greek and Roman accounts describing Tylos as a land rich in pearls and agricultural resources, and it highlights evidence of monetary activity and extensive commercial relations linking Bahrain with Mesopotamia, Iran, India, and the Hellenistic world.

Furthermore, the research shows that the Tylos period represented an era of relative prosperity, driven by pearl diving, shipbuilding, trade, and the exchange of goods. It analyzes archaeological discoveries revealing the importation of diverse products and raises questions regarding whether these finds represent simple trade exchange or the presence of resident merchant communities or the transfer of technologies and craftsmen to the island. The study proposes a chronological division of the Tylos period into early, middle, and late phases to better understand developments in settlement patterns, economic activity, and political transformations.

The study concludes by tracing the settlement of Arab tribes in Bahrain and their role in establishing political and social entities, with particular focus on the formation of the Tannukh Confederation as an organized tribal alliance aimed at stability and mutual support. This alliance had political, military, and cultural consequences that extended into neighboring regions. Overall, the study affirms that Bahrain was an active civilizational center that combined local continuity with regional openness, and that examining this

period provides a key to understanding the formation of Bahrain's political and cultural identity prior to Islam.

Keywords: Tylos, Bahrain, Hellenistic Period, Local Identity, Arab Tribes, Trade and Pearls in the Arabian Gulf

INTRODUCTION

The ancient history of Bahrain represents one of the most significant chapters in the history of the Arabian Gulf. Owing to its strategic geographical location, the Bahraini archipelago served as a vital link between Mesopotamia, eastern Arabia, and the Indian Ocean. In classical sources from the Hellenistic period, Bahrain was known as Tylos, a name associated with a historical phase marked by profound political, economic, and cultural transformations. These changes coincided with the expansion of Greek influence following the campaigns of Alexander the Great and the subsequent transfer of power to later regional forces.

The importance of this period lies in its ability to reveal a complex interaction between local continuity in patterns of livelihood, economic practices, and identity and regional and international openness through trade and intercultural contact. Bahrain was not merely a passive recipient of external influences but an active participant within the networks of the ancient world.

This study examines the civilizational history of Bahrain during the Tylos period, from the early Hellenistic era until the end of the second century AD. It traces the political and geographical background that facilitated Greek knowledge of the island through exploratory maritime expeditions, while emphasizing the historical reality that Bahrain was not a direct target of Alexander the Great's military campaigns. Instead, it formed part of a broader project aimed at surveying coastlines, navigation routes, and resource centers in the Arabian Gulf.

The study also highlights Bahrain's continued role within ancient trade networks, particularly in pearl trading, agriculture, and maritime-related industries such as shipbuilding. In addition, it analyzes archaeological evidence that points to extensive commercial exchange between Bahrain and various regions of the ancient world.

Special attention is given to manifestations of local and regional identity during this period, whether through material culture such as pottery, coinage, and burial practices or through descriptions found in classical sources concerning the environment and resources of Tylos. Furthermore, the study explores demographic and political transformations associated with the settlement of Arab tribes in Bahrain and the formation of tribal alliances, most notably the Tannukh Confederation, which represents an early model of an organized tribal union that contributed to political stability and social structure in the region and laid the groundwork for later historical developments.

Importance of the Study

The significance of this study stems from its focus on a pivotal phase in the ancient history of Bahrain, a period that witnessed both a transformation in nomenclature—from Dilmun to Tylos—and an expansion of Bahrain's role in regional and international trade within the ancient world. The study is also important for its integration of historical data with archaeological evidence and classical sources, thereby shedding light on the role of Arab tribes and political alliances in shaping the civilizational landscape of Bahrain up to the end of the second century AD.

By examining these interconnected factors, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of the roots of Bahrain's political and cultural identity prior to the advent of Islam.

Research Problem

This study seeks to investigate the civilizational history of Bahrain during the Tylos period, from the early Hellenistic era until the end of the second century AD, and to understand the nature of the transformations experienced by the island at the political, economic, and cultural levels. These transformations occurred within a context marked by the interaction between Hellenistic and regional influences on the one hand, and the persistence of local traditions and Arab identity on the other.

Research Questions

This study seeks to address the following research questions:

1. To what extent did Bahrain's geographical location, maritime activity, and commercial networks contribute to its integration into the ancient world without being subjected to direct military conquest?
2. To what degree did Bahraini society during the Tylos period preserve its local and Arab identity in the face of Hellenistic influences and neighboring regional cultures?
3. To what extent does the diversity of archaeological finds and imported products reflect simple commercial exchange, as opposed to the presence of foreign settlements or resident trading communities in Bahrain?
4. How far did economic activities particularly pearl diving, agriculture, and shipbuilding contribute to prosperity and civilizational stability in Bahrain during this period?
5. To what extent did the settlement of Arab tribes and the formation of the Tannukh Confederation contribute to the reconstruction of Bahrain's political and social structure up to the end of the second century AD?

Objectives of the Study

The study aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. To provide an analytical historical overview of Bahrain during the Tylos period within the context of the Hellenistic world and subsequent regional developments.
2. To interpret the transformation in nomenclature from Dilmun to Tylos and discuss its historical and cultural implications.
3. To highlight features of local and regional identity through archaeological evidence such as pottery, coinage, and burial practices and through classical historical sources.
4. To analyze economic and commercial activities and to examine Bahrain's role within maritime networks, pearl trade, and agricultural production.
5. To trace the settlement of Arab tribes in Bahrain and to study the formation of the Tannukh Confederation and its role in establishing a socio-political system prior to Islam within the chronological framework of the study.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a historical-analytical approach through the collection and examination of material from classical historical and geographical sources, particularly Greek and Roman texts, in addition to relevant Arabic historical sources. The study also draws upon the findings of archaeological research and excavated material from various sites in Bahrain.

A comparative method is employed to assess and reconcile differing historical narratives, to interpret variations in terminology and geographical names, and to identify their meanings within their appropriate historical contexts. Furthermore, the study utilizes inductive reasoning to derive general civilizational characteristics based on recurring

historical and archaeological indicators, linking these patterns to political, economic, and demographic transformations during the period under examination.

Chapter 1 (The Political and Geographical Background of the Tylos Period)

1.1. The Historical and Political Context of Greek Expansion into the Arabian Gulf

Alexander the Great launched his eastern military campaign in 334 BC, where he encountered the first Achaemenid army at the Battle of the Granicus River. This victory enabled him to enter Asia Minor, leading to the fall of Lydian, Greek, and other cities. In the city of Issus, he confronted the forces of the Achaemenid king Darius III in 333 BC. This decisive battle resulted in the defeat of the Persian army and the flight of Darius, allowing Alexander to gain control over the Syrian coast and Egypt by 332 BC.

Alexander then advanced into Mesopotamia, where a decisive confrontation took place on the plains of Arbela (the Battle of Gaugamela). This battle marked the collapse of Persian military power and the effective surrender of the Achaemenid Empire, while Darius once again chose retreat and was later assassinated by his own followers. Consequently, the entire Persian realm, including its capital Persepolis, fell under Alexander's control. He also captured Ecbatana, the capital of Media, in 330 BC, and by 329 BC reached the Caspian Sea, Parthia, and Bactria, thereby securing control over Mesopotamia and Persia.

By the age of twenty-two, Alexander harbored ambitions of unifying the Middle East within a lasting empire. To achieve this goal, he dispatched military commanders to the Punjab and the Indus Valley. Following their successful return, his next plan involved sending three ships on exploratory voyages into the Arabian Gulf. One of these vessels reached the region known today as the Kingdom of Bahrain, which was then referred to as Tylos.

1.2. Bahrain during the Hellenistic Period

Alexander's strategic thinking around 325–324 BC focused on exploring the western shores of the Arabian Gulf. He believed that establishing commercial routes between India and the eastern Mediterranean could generate prosperity throughout the region, particularly in the Phoenician cities.

According to historical sources, Tylos was renowned for its abundance of high-quality pearls. During their presence on the island, the Greeks discovered that it was ruled by an independent king, and available records suggest that commercial relations with Greece were active at the time. Strabo, citing Aristobulus—one of the commanders who accompanied Alexander during his eastern campaign reported that Alexander intended to occupy the Arabian Peninsula and rule over it. This intention was demonstrated by his decision to dispatch three ships on exploratory missions along the eastern coast of Arabia and nearby regions to study the area.

The reference to an independent ruler reflects the existence of a distinct political structure in Tylos. Although the limited nature of the sources prevents definitive conclusions, it is plausible that a local system of governance existed, possibly associated with a royal family or ruling dynasty. Such authority may have played a role in securing commercial interests and organizing alliances with the Greeks or other external powers.

1.3. Bahrain under Seleucid Rule

Alexander's premature death in June 323 BC, at the age of thirty-two, led to the rapid disintegration of his empire. His generals entered into prolonged conflicts over the division of power that lasted more than two decades. During this period, Ptolemy ruled Egypt, Antipater and Cassander governed Macedonia and Greece, and Antigonus temporarily controlled western Asia. Meanwhile, Seleucus and his dynasty established control over Syria, Babylonia, and much of Asia, including Bahrain.

The Seleucid dynasty exercised its influence across its territories and surrounding regions, ushering in a period of cultural and commercial prosperity in many areas, including Bahrain. Archaeological evidence, such as burial mounds along both sides of the Budaiya road in modern Bahrain, dates to this period and reflects the artistic peak of the era.

These developments confirm that Alexander did not conquer Bahrain militarily. Rather, prior to his death in 323 BC, he had planned to reach the Arabian Gulf and the Arabian Peninsula, of which Bahrain formed a part. Recognizing the impracticality of penetrating the Arabian desert with his large forces, he opted instead to send maritime exploratory expeditions across the Gulf to survey its islands and coastlines, laying the groundwork for access to eastern Arabia.

Alexander dispatched several naval officers to explore the coasts from Mesopotamia to the Indus, some of whom visited Bahrain. Among these officers were Nearchus, Androsthenes, and Archias, who returned with information about an island located approximately a day and a night's sail from the mouth of the Euphrates. This island, known as Tylos, was described as large, fertile, and well-suited for human habitation, containing orchards and seasonal resources.

Arrian records that Alexander's objective in charting the regions traversed by the fleet on its return from India based on the report of Nearchus was not to discover the Indian Ocean itself, but rather to survey the coastlines, gather information about their inhabitants, lifestyles, and customs, and identify areas suitable for agriculture, navigation, and settlement, including sources of fresh water necessary for maritime activity.

1.4. The Transformation in Nomenclature and the Emergence of Tylos

The Tylos period, the Greek designation for Bahrain during the Hellenistic era, represents a pivotal stage in the island's political and cultural history. This period embodied linguistic and administrative transformations that reflected the profound influence of Greek culture on systems of governance and local traditions. One of the most notable manifestations of this influence was the blending of Hellenistic royal titles with indigenous political customs. During the period of Seleucid influence, Greek royal titles such as Basileus—a term traditionally used by Greek kings came into use alongside titles of eastern origin. The study of these designations provides an important key to understanding the nature of political authority in Bahrain at the time and the extent to which it was influenced by Hellenistic political models. This is particularly significant given the historical ambiguity surrounding the term Tylos and the role such nomenclature played in shaping the political and cultural identity of the region during this era.

Modern studies generally agree that Tylos and Tyrus (Tiros) referred to the island of Bahrain, while a second island of lesser size was known as Aradus, identified with present-day Muharraq Island. Despite this consensus, information provided by ancient authors regarding the role of Bahrain during the Seleucid (Hellenistic) period remains limited and unclear. Consequently, classical geographers, historians, and travelers devoted relatively little attention to the political history of Bahrain during this era.

It remains uncertain whether the name Tylos, which is of Greek origin, was applied to Bahrain prior to the arrival of Alexander the Great's expeditions (330–323 BC) or only thereafter. What is historically established, however, is that the name Dilmun persisted for more than three millennia. The precise moment at which the transition from Dilmun to Tylos occurred has yet to be definitively determined.

From the third millennium BC until shortly before the advent of Islam, Bahrain remained a flourishing center along the northern trade routes. Throughout this long history, it retained strong ties with various regions of the Arabian Peninsula while continuously adapting to successive civilizational phases.

Some scholars suggest that during this specific period the name Dilmun may have undergone a linguistic transformation into Tilūn, which later evolved in Greek usage into Tylos. This hypothesis is partially supported by a Greek inscription discovered in Palmyra, indicating close relations between Tylos, Palmyra, and Charax Spasina (al-Ābila), a politically powerful regional center at the time.

The relationship between Tylos and Palmyra may further imply that Bahrain operated under a form of local political authority connected to regional kingdoms or urban governments. This suggests the existence of a structured local monarchy responsible for managing foreign relations and coordinating with other political entities, such as Charax, thereby reinforcing the hypothesis that Bahrain possessed an organized political entity during the Tylos period.

Chapter 2 (Local and Regional Identity of Bahrain during the Tylos Period)

2.1. Arab Identity

Between approximately 300 BC and 100 BC, clear features of what may be described as an Arab identity began to emerge in the Arabian Gulf region. This identity is most clearly represented by what is known as “Arab pottery,” a distinctive type of polished ceramic characterized by its smooth, flowing forms. This pottery was widely distributed among communities of eastern Arabia, Failaka Island, and neighboring regions.

Arab pottery was not merely an imported commodity; rather, it carried specific cultural characteristics and reflected a unique identity shared by the peoples of the region during this period. Archaeological evidence indicates that these communities produced their own pottery, thereby maintaining an independent cultural character. Excavations have revealed three principal categories of pottery dating to this era:

- Common local pottery
- Arab flowing-style pottery
- Polished Arab pottery

Together, these ceramic types demonstrate the existence of a clear local identity that prevailed across the ancient islands of Bahrain. They reflect a society that interacted with regional and international influences while preserving its cultural distinctiveness.

2.2. Tylos in Classical Geography and Sources

Roman and Greek historians, including Strabo and Pliny, referred to the pearls of Tylos, as well as its palm groves, vineyards, fig trees, fruit orchards, and cotton plants. They noted that Bahrain's climate was particularly suitable for cotton cultivation at the time. Classical sources also mention mangrove vegetation, which once flourished but has since largely disappeared, with remnants formerly found in areas such as Tubli Bay.

Strabo also provides information regarding the names Tylos and Aradus, noting the presence of sanctuaries similar to those found on the Phoenician islands. During this period, Bahrain witnessed notable prosperity in the minting of silver coinage, particularly tetradrachms bearing the image of Alexander the Great. These coins, common throughout the eastern Hellenistic world, were likely used either by mercenary soldiers stationed in Bahrain or by Bahrainis serving within Seleucid military forces.

Javad Ali proposed a connection between the names Tylos and Tilmun or Dilmun, as referenced in Assyrian texts, suggesting a linguistic transformation from Dilmun to Tylos. Dilmun was described in ancient sources as a land rich in groundwater and agricultural production, particularly palm cultivation, cotton farming, and pearl trading. In contrast, Aradus was identified as another island within the Bahraini archipelago, corresponding to present-day Muharraq, with its name later preserved in the locality of Arad.

Classical sources provide two principal types of information about Bahrain, both ultimately derived from reports dating back to the era of Alexander the Great and later supplemented

with additional details up to the time of Ptolemy. One notable exception is the description of Parthia by the Greek geographer Isidore of Charax in the late first century BC. This rare text refers to pearl diving near an unnamed island in the Arabian Gulf, which is widely believed to correspond to Bahrain. Both Strabo and Pliny explicitly mention pearls from Tylos.

2.3. Economic Activities and Commercial Exchange

Archaeological discoveries indicate that the Tylos period in Bahrain was characterized by relative economic prosperity. The local economy benefited significantly from crafts and occupations such as shipbuilding, fishing, pearl diving, and long-distance trade. Commercial relations extended as far as Greece, reflecting Bahrain's integration into broader Mediterranean and Near Eastern trade networks.

Material evidence reveals strong cultural and commercial influences from Mesopotamia, particularly in pottery and glassware, although similarities with eastern Arabia and other Gulf sites are also evident. During the Parthian period, Tylos continued to play an active role in regional exchange networks. Its renowned agricultural products and pearls are believed to have generated substantial commercial activity.

2.4. Political Transformations and Ruling Entities

By the late third century BC, Antiochus III emerged as a prominent historical figure and led a campaign toward India around 206–205 BC. During this campaign, he formed alliances with Arab tribes in Bahrain and eastern Arabia. These alliances indicate that such tribes or entities were governed by organized leadership structures that effectively functioned as ruling authorities, some of which likely assumed a traditional monarchical form.

These developments suggest that Tylos operated within a political framework that was royal or quasi-royal in nature and possessed a degree of regional sovereignty. Records from Antiochus III's reign indicate his passage through Tylos. Following the collapse of the Seleucid state in the mid-second century BC, the Kingdom of Characene (Maysān) emerged near the mouth of the Euphrates. Known to the Greeks as Mesene and to Aramaic sources as Mishan, this kingdom was founded by Hyspaosines around 140 BC, who assumed the title "King of the Erythraean Sea and its Dependencies."

Characene rapidly expanded its influence to encompass the Arabian Gulf and Bahrain. Archaeological evidence, including pottery and coinage, confirms strong ties between Bahrain, Characene, and India, which regarded Bahrain as a major port of call for maritime trade. Although direct trade routes between Egypt and India through the Red Sea reduced the volume of overland commerce across Arabia, the Arabian Gulf itself remained an active maritime corridor linking Mesopotamia with the Far East.

2.5. Archaeological Evidence and Cultural Features of the Tylos Period

Bahrain is mentioned in the Babylonian Talmud and in Syriac texts that discuss the bishoprics of the Eastern Syriac Church, particularly those of Samahij and Muharraq. These texts date to 410 AD and identify Bahrain as home to a number of important archaeological sites associated with the Tylos period in its ancient history. This period extends from approximately 330 BC to the early third century AD and represents a dynamic historical era that began with the arrival of the Greeks and continued until the emergence of Arab tribes in the historical region of Bahrain prior to Islam.

Archaeological excavations in Bahrain have uncovered a wide range of material remains indicating the importation of diverse products. These include black-glazed pottery from Greece, eggshells and ceramics from Susa in Iran, painted pottery from Baluchistan, and glassware from Mesopotamia, in addition to coins and inscriptions. Such findings raise an important question: do these materials merely reflect limited commercial exchange, or do

they indicate the presence of resident foreign merchant communities who brought these goods to satisfy their own needs?

Excavations have also revealed artifacts believed to be locally produced, yet displaying distinctly non-local stylistic features. Greek influence from the eastern Mediterranean and southern Babylonia is particularly evident in pottery styles, while sculptural works reveal influences associated with the Parthian city of Hatra. This raises further questions: were these objects simply imitations of foreign products made by Bahraini craftsmen, or do they point to a direct transfer of techniques through the settlement of foreign artisans in Bahrain or through the training of local craftsmen abroad?

Given the diverse nature of the island's population and the limited excavation of permanent settlements, it remains difficult to determine the precise extent of external cultural influences during the Tylos period. Nevertheless, continuity in deeply rooted local traditions such as burial customs and traditional craft forms suggests that foreign influences did not replace indigenous practices. The material culture of Tylos manifested in several domains, including utilitarian industries, terracotta figurines, gold and silver jewelry production, and distinctive burial forms.

As for domestic architecture, it is likely that traditional dwellings were constructed using perishable materials that have not survived to the present day, except in cases where remains were buried beneath northern areas of the island.

2.6. Chronological Division of the Tylos Period

Archaeologists divide the Tylos period into three main phases:

• Early Tylos

This phase corresponds to the period of Alexander the Great and early Greek presence in the region. It represents the initial stage of Tylos settlement established at the site of Qal'at al-Bahrain (the Fort of Bahrain). This settlement remained inhabited from approximately 300 BC to 200 BC. Archaeologists identify this settlement as the fifth city in the sequence of superimposed cities discovered during excavations conducted in the 1950s.

• Middle Tylos

This phase represents the period following Alexander's death, generally dated from approximately 200 or 100 BC to around 200 AD. It was characterized by continued settlement, economic activity, and regional interaction.

• Late Tylos

The Late Tylos phase refers to the period marked by the settlement of Arab tribes migrating from central Arabia into Bahrain and the island of Awal. This phase concluded with the incorporation of the region into the Islamic world and is generally dated from approximately 200 AD (or 226 AD) onward.

Chapter 3 (Arab Tribes: Their Settlement, Alliances, and Civilizational Role in Bahrain until the End of the Second Century AD)

3.1. The Settlement of Arab Tribes in Bahrain

3.1.1. The Azd Tribe in Bahrain

The Azd tribe is considered one of the greatest and most widely dispersed Arab tribes. Linguistically, the term Azd is believed to derive from Asad (lion). Genealogists agree that the Azd trace their lineage to Kahlan ibn Saba', making them a Qahtani tribe.

Political instability and economic crises in Yemen—particularly in the second half of the second century BC following the collapse of the Ma'rib Dam—forced many tribes, including the Azd, to migrate. Initially, they settled in Tihama, but internal disputes led to their dispersal across various regions. Some settled in Mecca and its surroundings (Khuzā'a), others in Medina (Aws and Khazraj), some moved to the Levant (Ghassanids), while others settled in the Sarāt Mountains of Yemen, al-Yamama, and Oman.

By the end of the first century BC, branches of the Azd reached Bahrain, likely arriving from Oman and possibly directly from Tihama. They settled in Bahrain prior to the arrival of Adnanite tribes. Al-Hamdani recorded poetic references to Arab tribal settlements, including the presence of the Azd in Bahrain, emphasizing their territorial control.

Among the most prominent Azd clans that settled in Bahrain and later joined the Tannukh Confederation around 86 AD were Banu Judhayma al-Abrash ibn Malik, Banu Tha‘laba ibn Malik, and Banu ‘Imran ibn ‘Amr ibn ‘Amir ibn Mā’ al-Samā’. These clans played a significant role in the formation of the Tannukh Kingdom, which had major political, social, and economic dimensions.

In the early third century AD, the ‘Abd al-Qays tribe migrated to Bahrain and settled there, exerting pressure on the Azd that forced many of them to migrate to Oman and Iraq. Nevertheless, some Azd clans remained in Bahrain, including Banu Salima ibn Malik in Bahrain proper and Banu Ma‘n ibn Malik on the island of Awal (modern Bahrain).

Historical sources also indicate that Tha‘laba ibn Bakr ibn Aslam ibn Hana‘a ibn Malik al-Azdi was a powerful king of the Azd in Bahrain, whose authority extended to al-Yamama. His victories over Banu Hanifa and Banu ‘Amir clearly demonstrate the strength and influence of the Azd in Bahrain prior to Islam.

With the spread of Islam in the early first century AH (seventh century AD), the Azd in Bahrain embraced Islam wholeheartedly. New Azd groups arriving from Oman also settled in Bahrain, and their descendants later played leading roles in Islamic conquests and in the administration of Bahrain during the early Islamic period.

3.1.2. The Quda‘a Tribe in Bahrain

The Quda‘a tribe was one of the major Arab tribes, though genealogists differed regarding its origins. Some considered Quda‘a an independent Arab lineage, while others traced it to the Adnanites, and a third opinion linked it to the Himyarite Qahtanis of Yemen—a view supported by most Arab genealogists.

Quda‘a migrated from Yemen toward the end of the second century BC due to political and economic crises, shortly after the migration of the Azd. Initially settling in Tihama near the Adnanite tribe of Nizar, conflicts erupted between the two groups near the end of the first century BC. Quda‘a was defeated and subsequently migrated to new territories: some branches moved to the Levant, others to Najd, while certain clans reached Bahrain in the early first century AD. The most prominent of these were Banu Taym Allah.

In approximately 86 AD, Quda‘a invited Azd clans and Adnanite tribes settled in Bahrain to form the Tannukh Confederation, which became the nucleus of the Kingdom of Tannukh. Quda‘a held the kingship of this confederation for several decades, particularly under Malik ibn Fahm ibn Taym Allah and his nephew Malik ibn Zuhayr, highlighting Quda‘a’s major political and social role in Bahrain and across Arabia during the early Common Era.

By the early third century AD, with the arrival of additional Adnanite tribes in Bahrain and broader political and economic changes in Iraq and Persia, Quda‘a led a large segment of Tannukh in migrating from Bahrain to central and southern Iraq. Despite this migration, ties between Quda‘a and Bahrain persisted through continuous interaction and political influence.

3.1.3. The Lakhm Tribe (Banu Numara) in Bahrain

The lineage of Numara ibn Lakhm traces back to Kahlan ibn Saba‘, and Lakhm was among the major Qahtani tribes. Following the Sayl al-‘Arim (the Great Flood) in Yemen in the mid-sixth century BC, Lakhm migrated northward. While some branches settled in the Levant, Banu Numara ibn Lakhm migrated to Bahrain and joined the Tannukh Confederation in 86 AD, alongside Quda‘a, Iyad, Qanas, and the Azd.

In the early third century AD, Banu Numara migrated to Iraq with other Tannukh groups and settled near al-Hira. One of their descendants, 'Amr ibn 'Adi ibn Nasr al-Lakhmi, later assumed kingship after the death of his maternal uncle Jadhima al-Abrash al-Azdi, marking the beginning of the Lakhmid (Manadhira) dynasty in Iraq, which lasted until the Islamic conquests.

The influence of the Lakhmids extended across large parts of Iraq and the Arabian Peninsula between 268–638 AD, with their authority clearly reflected in Bahrain through appointed governors and political measures demonstrating their continued dominance.

3.2. The Formation of the Tannukh Confederation in Bahrain

Bahrain developed political systems at an early stage, ruled successively by Arab kings and leaders prior to Islam. Governance often took the form of tribal alliances, among which Tannukh emerged as the most prominent.

Linguistically, Tannukh derives from *tanakh* (to settle), signifying tribes that agreed to settle permanently. Around 86 AD, tribes of Qahtani and Adnanite origin formed a confederation in Bahrain based on mutual agreements of settlement, unity, and collective defense.

The confederation included clans from Quda'a, Qanas ibn Ma'add, Iyad, Numara ibn Lakhm, and later the Azd, led by Jadhima al-Abrash. Marriage ties and kinship reinforced cohesion, transforming Tannukh into a quasi-monarchical political system that governed Bahrain for several centuries.

3.3. The Impact of the Tannukh Confederation on Bahrain and Neighboring Regions

The Kingdom of Tannukh was among the earliest and most influential tribal alliances in Arabia. It successfully filled the political vacuum in Bahrain by establishing governance structures, social systems, economic organization, and military strength that ensured stability and prosperity for centuries.

Tannukh's influence extended beyond Bahrain into Iraq and the Levant, leading to the establishment of major Arab kingdoms, most notably the Lakhmid Kingdom of al-Hira. The confederation also had significant military, political, and cultural impacts, including resistance to Persian campaigns and contributions to the spread of Christianity prior to Islam.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that Bahrain was known in classical sources during the Hellenistic era as Tylos, a designation that remained in use until the end of the second century AD before gradually fading from historical records. The findings confirm that Alexander the Great did not conquer Bahrain militarily; rather, Greek knowledge of the island emerged through maritime exploratory expeditions aimed at surveying coastlines, navigation routes, and resources in the Arabian Gulf.

The study reveals that Bahrain became integrated into the sphere of Hellenistic and later Seleucid influence, as reflected in certain cultural and administrative features. However, these influences did not result in the dissolution of local identity. Instead, Bahrain maintained a strong sense of cultural continuity alongside selective external interaction.

The transition in nomenclature from Dilmun to Tylos remains chronologically unresolved. The research suggests that this transformation was likely shaped by a combination of linguistic, political, and commercial factors, with regional connections playing a role in consolidating the name within classical geographical and historical writings.

Archaeological evidence points to the persistence of a distinct Arab local identity in Bahrain during the Tylos period. This is evident in the production of Arab pottery, the diversity of

local industries, and the continuity of cultural practices, all of which reflect societal resilience in the face of external influences.

The economy of Tylos was characterized by relative prosperity, driven primarily by pearl diving, agriculture, shipbuilding, and maritime trade. These activities positioned Bahrain as an active hub within commercial networks linking Mesopotamia, Iran, India, and parts of the Hellenistic world. The wide range of archaeological finds including pottery, glassware, coins, and inscriptions attests to the breadth of Bahrain's trade relations. At the same time, these materials raise important questions regarding whether they reflect temporary exchange networks or the presence of resident foreign merchants and craftsmen.

Politically, Bahrain experienced gradual transformations shaped by the influence of major regional powers, such as the Seleucids and subsequent entities, while continuing to sustain local leadership structures capable of managing alliances and external relations. The study's proposed chronological division of the Tylos period into early, middle, and late phases offers a framework for understanding changes in settlement patterns, economic activity, and political organization over time.

The settlement of Arab tribes emerged as a decisive factor in reshaping Bahrain's social and political landscape. The formation of the Tannukh Confederation represented an early and organized tribal alliance aimed at stability, mutual support, and governance. This confederation functioned as a quasi-political entity whose influence extended beyond Bahrain into neighboring regions, leaving lasting political, military, and cultural legacies.

In conclusion, the study affirms that Bahrain during the Tylos period was a dynamic civilizational center that successfully balanced local continuity with regional openness. Examining this historical phase provides essential insights into the formation of Bahrain's political and cultural identity in the centuries preceding the advent of Islam.

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