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AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT



T H E C U L T O F D I O N Y S O S
I N P H O E N I C I A

by

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TO THE MEMORY OF MY FATHER

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- PA, Les Perses achéménides
- BCH, Bulletin de correspondance hellénique
- BMB, Bulletin du Musée de Beyrouth
- BMC, Catalogue of the Greek Coins in the British Museum
- DA, Darembert et Saglio, Dictionnaire des antiquités grecques et romaines
- JEA, Journal of Egyptian Archaeology
- JHS, Journal of Hellenic Studies
- JIAN, Journal international d'archéologie numismatique
- Mél. USJ, Mélanges de l'Université St. Joseph
- RB, Revue biblique
- REA, Revue des études anciennes
- RN, Revue numismatique
- SEG, Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to show how and to what extent the cult of Dionysos spread in Phoenicia, the amount of popularity it enjoyed and the factors responsible for this.

For the sake of precision, I feel it necessary to state roughly the geographical limits of the subject in order to avoid unnecessary confusions. In fact, the term Syria has been loosely applied to mean both the coastal strip of modern Lebanon, Syria and Northern Palestine as well as the hinterland of these countries, except Palestine. However the term Phoenicia which is more ethnographic than geographic refers to the narrow coastal strip lying between the Mediterranean and the foot of the Lebanon mountain range running from Ugarit (Ras Shamra) in the North to Acco-Ptolemais in the South.

Thus, because it was shut off from the hinterland by the Lebanon range, it was the sea that was to shape its destinies and make of the Phoenicians that hardy race of navigators, explorers, and traders whom the people of Antiquity knew so well. Phoenicia therefore remained within the Syrian framework. That is why the term Syria used at large refers to both the coast and the hinterland as long as there is no striking difference between the two.

The scope of this study, as its title indicates, is li-

mitted to the Graeco-Roman Age. However, reference will be made to parallels existing already in the early Phoenician Pantheon as known to us from the texts of Ras Shamra of the second millenium B.C.

Due to such affinities as may exist between the Greek Dionysos and the local Phoenician deities, it will be interesting to show that the god could have been adopted in Phoenicia and worshipped under a foreign name while retaining the character of the local deity with whom he had been identified. This is the case as we shall see with most of the deities in the Hellenistic and Roman world.

This process of identification, assimilation and syncretism was fostered by the popularity of the mystery cults in the Graeco-Roman Age, which in their diversity retained a common religious aspect. This stage of religious development, led to monotheism, especially under the influence of Stoicism and Neoplatonism.

Literary evidence will supply the main source of information concerning the Phoenician Pantheon and its myths in the Graeco-Roman Age, and the extent to which local deities were identified with Dionysos.

The monuments of the cult of Dionysos in Phoenicia are the coins which will be our most important source of evidence.* Epigraphical evidence is scanty, except for an ins-

* According to W.W. Baudissin, Adonis und Esmun (Leipzig: I.C. Hinrichs, 1911), p.231. Henri Seyrig, our leading authority in numismatics and Syrian cults, is of the same

cription on a lead weight from Byblos which is of paramount importance.

Another bulk of evidence comes from Phoenician funerary art in the Roman Age, especially in the Bacchic decoration of the lead sarcophagi. This is apart from the coins and the inscription from Byblos, the greatest bulk of information showing the popularity which the Dionysiac mysteries enjoyed in Phoenicia during the Roman Age, as these particular lead sarcophagi were made in Phoenicia, probably at Sidon, and were exported as far as Gaul.

Also, an important factor in favor of the worship of Dionysos in Phoenicia, apart from his affinities with local myths and deities, was his association with wine. Phoenicia was famous for the wines it produced and exported from the late second millenium B.C., and maintained the fame of its vintages way into the Roman Period, as deduced from the city coins of the well known wine-producing districts.

As far as sanctuaries are concerned, the only site of interest in Phoenicia is Kharayeb where traces of the cult of Dionysos have been found. Syria did have a temple of Bacchus of the Antonine period where Dionysiac mysteries were probably performed and must have influenced Phoenicia to some extent.

opinion when he says "Les monuments du culte de Dionysos en Phénicie consistent surtout en monnaies dont on doit l'intelligence à la prudente analyse de Baudissin". Antiquités Syriennes, V (extrait de Syria; Paris: Librairie orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1958), 90.

However, it is outside of Phoenicia that we must look for such evidence, namely in Greece and Italy, where two discoveries of interest were made. In Greece the sanctuary of the Phoenician trading colony at Delos has afforded some evidence as regards the worship of the Θεοί Πάτριοι of the Berytians, among whom is a young god identified by some as Herakles-Melqarth of Tyre or Dionysos-Adonis.

In Italy, the Syrian temple of the Janiculum has revealed a beautiful statue of Dionysos, the Roman copy of an Hellenistic model, whose face was gilded at a later period (4th century) in accordance with solar syncretism, a sort of monotheism which spread in the Roman Empire after the Eastern triumph of Aurelian.

The cult of Sol was to remain the official religion of the Empire until Constantine replaced it by the Christian faith.

With this we come virtually to the end of Paganism and of Phoenician culture.

PROLOGUE

The Canaanite-Phoenician culture was, according to
W.F.Albright :

...a relatively homogeneous civilization from the Middle Bronze Age down to the beginning of the Achaemenian period, after which it was swallowed up in large part by more extensive cultures. Chronologically speaking, it is certain that 'Phoenician' is simply the Iron-Age equivalent of Bronze-Age 'Canaanite'. Recent numismatic discoveries proved that the Phoenician script and language were still used on coins as late as the reign of Gordian (A.D. 238-244), a fact which indicates that Phoenician culture did not finally expire until the triumph of Christianity in the fourth century. From the geographical standpoint, there was a homogeneous civilization which extended in the Bronze Age from Mount Casius, north of Ugarit, to the Negeb of Palestine, and in the Iron Age from north of Arvad (at least) to the extreme south of Palestine. This civilization shared a common material culture (including architecture, pottery, etc...) through the entire period, and we know that language, literature, art and religion were substantially the same in the Bronze Age.¹

The stability of Canaanite religion throughout the Late Bronze Age and all the phases of the Iron Age as well as the Hellenistic period, is not difficult to establish.² As we shall see, it was in the latter period that oriental religions underwent the Greek test and proved the stronger : through the identification process, some call it syncretism, the oriental divinities assumed new names but kept much of their oriental character.

¹H.H. Rowley, (ed.), Supplements to Vetus Testamentum, III, (Leiden : 1955), 1-2.

²M.J.Dahood, "Ancient Semitic Deities in Syria and Pa-

lestine," ed., Sabatino Moscati, Studi semitici, vol.I : Le antiche divinità semitiche (Roma : Centro di Studi Semitici, Istituto di Studi Orientali - Università, 1958), p.69.

CHAPTER I

THE EARLIEST ORIGINS OF DIONYSOS

Pylos and Ugarit

It is the general belief that Dionysos was above all the god of the vine and of wine. His earliest appearance on the stage of world religions was in the Mycenaean civilization of the Aegean world. His name along with those of other Olympian deities has been discovered on Linear B tablets¹ but some scholars find it questionable.² It is well known that the Mycenaean thalassocracy had established trade relations with Phoenicia during the Late Bronze Age, especially at Ras Shamra (Ugarit) and all along the coast down to Egypt. These trade relations must have fostered cultural exchanges between the Phoenicians and the Aegeans.³ The fact that Phoenicia was famous for

¹Luigia S. Stella, "La religione greca nei testi Mice-
nei, " Numen, V (1958), 18-57 especially p.35.

²Ch.Picard, Revue de philologie, XXXI (1957), 239-246.
See also Ch.Picard, "La formation du polythéisme hellénique et
les récents problèmes relatifs au linéaire B," Les éléments o-
rientaux dans la religion grecque (N°12 ; Paris : P.U.F. 1960)
pp.170-173 where he quotes Michael Ventris and John Chadwick,
Documents in Mycenaean Greek (Cambridge : University Press,
1956), p.127, who say that "Dionysos is a surprising name to
find, and there is no evidence to prove that it is divine,"
but thinks it is an excessive statement.

³The latest study on the subject was in the form of a
lecture given by Dr. James Pritchard the well known Biblical
Archaeologist on March 10, 1957 at the Archaeological Symposium
(celebrating A.U.B.'scentennial) on The Role of the Phoenicians

its wines and that wine jars found in some quantity at Ras Shamra have turned up in Mycenaean graves,¹ indicates that Phoenician wine was esteemed by the Aegeans who were themselves wine traders too, and it may possibly account for the presence of Dionysos on the Linear B tablets. This is important because according to Nilsson :

Wine was associated in Greece with the cult of Dionysos at a fairly late date only, a little before the Historical Age, the earliest mention being found in the Homeric Hymns and Hesiod where it is said that wine was his gift.²

If Dionysos was worshipped at such an early date by the Aegeans,³ the Phoenician wine traders may have at least known him. In fact, W.F. Albright tells us that a deity Tirsu^V was worshipped by the Canaanites and he adds, "This hitherto unknown divinity may perhaps have been a kind of Bacchus from

Interaction of Mediterranean Civilizations, the subject being : "New Evidence on the Role of the Sea Peoples in Canaan at the Beginning of the Iron Age". Referring to his excavations at Tell Sa'diyah, he mentioned the discovery in tomb 101 of a Canaanite wine jar together with a bronze wine-drinking set which he paralleled to a bronze tripod discovered in Beisan, tomb 90 all of which show Aegean influence, particularly the tripod, and were probably locally made.

¹Virginia Grace, Amphoras and the Ancient Wine Trade, Picture Book N°6 (Princeton, New Jersey : The American School of Classical Studies at Athens, 1961), Figs.13, 15. For Fig.13 cf. Leslie T. Shear, "The Campaign of 1939", Hesperia : Journal of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens, IX (1940), 283, Fig.24. For Fig.15 cf. C.F.A. Schaeffer, Ugaritica, II (Paris : P. Geuthner, 1949), pl.XXXI.

²M.P. Nilsson, Greek Popular Religion (New York : Columbia University Press, 1947), p.35.

³"His possible appearance on the inscribed tablet from Pylos would attest his presence in the Greek world long before the period which has been assigned to him by O. Kern, U.V. Wilamowitz etc." According to G. Pugliese-Carratelli, "Riflessi di culti micenei nelle tabelle di Cnosso a Pilo", Studi in Onore de U.E. Paoli (Firenze, 1956), p.603. He also thinks that the cult was already Creto-Greek.

whose name the Israelites got the poetic word tîrōš^V for "wine".¹ This etymology is highly problematical,² because Dionysos was not the god of wine alone but of vegetation and fertility in general,³ particularly of trees. It is this general aspect of the god which made him the subject of agrarian myths and rituals common to a certain extent both to Greece and the Aegean on one hand and to the Orient on the other.

Vegetation and Tree-deities

The early Phoenician Pantheon is known to us from Ugaritic literature inscribed on tablets discovered in 1929 and which belong to the 15th-13th centuries B.C.⁴ ; but there is no doubt that the Canaanite myths and legends, which they contain,

¹BASOR, N°139 (1955), p.18 where he has noted that the proper name 'Abdi-ti-ir-šī found in Palais d'Ugarit, III (ed. Nougayrol), text 16.257, IV, 8, proves that the name of the king of Hazor in Galilee ^mAbdi-TIR-šī is correctly transcribed 'Abdi-tiršī. (As quoted by Dahood, p.79, n.2.).

²As it is also the case for Dagan whom E.Dhorme, "Les avatars du dieu Dagon", Recueil Edouard Dhorme, (Paris : Imprimerie Nationale, 1951), p.746 has said : "c'est le nom commun du blé, du froment, en hébreu. Dagon est le blé divinisé". See also W.F. Albright, Archaeology and the Religion of Israel, (Baltimore : The Johns Hopkins Press, 1946), pp.161-162 and 220, n.115. However M.P.Nilsson, Greek Pop.Rel., p.35, cites Prodicus who took up the metonymical use of the names of the gods which was already common in Homer, and concluded that man considered as a god everything that was useful to him and that hence wine was called Dionysos, fire Hephaistos, bread Demeter. See also Diels, Fragmente der Vorsokratiker, II, 316, Fragment N°5.

³Picard, Les éléments orientaux etc., p.173, says : "Dionysos fut sans doute dès les origines, plus et mieux qu'un 'dieu rural' auquel les cultes Lydo-Phrygiens comme on nous dit auraient donné son importance".

⁴"Ugaritic Myths, Epics and Legends," transl. by H.L. Ginsberg in Ancient Near Eastern Texts (ed.J.B.Pritchard, Princeton, New Jersey : Princeton University Press, 1955), pp.129-155.

have a much earlier origin.¹ The myths are not necessarily peculiar to Ugarit but were more or less common to all the Canaanites.² According to the Ugaritic tablets, the dominant figure of the Canaanite pantheon was the great storm god Baal. He was the god of fertility and embodied the humid element which lies at the source of all life.³ Particularly interesting is Baal's conflict with Mot : they cannot coexist. Mot is the god of the nether world and represents the hot desiccating element which destroys all vegetation. Both Baal and Mot apparently transpose on the mythical level the characteristic bicyclical seasonal change in the countries of the Mediterranean, namely, the rainy season and the dry season. This is in fact the kernel around which developed these early agrarian myths. This Ugaritic myth is somewhat similar to the Semitic Tammuz myth which itself stems from the Sumerian Dumuzi, " the prototype of all the vegetation gods who die and are reborn with the return of vegetation in spring."⁴ This myth is very closely related to the agrarian rites of the harvest where fertility rites include a *ἱερός*

¹S. Hooke, Middle Eastern Mythology (Harmondsworth, Middlesex : Penguin Books, 1963), p.79. See also G. Contenau, La Civilisation phénicienne (Paris : Payot, 1949), pp. 79 f.

²Albright, Arch. and the Rel. of Is., pp.71-72.

³Dahood, pp.75-76 and 78. An interesting parallel, although from a late source, is Dionysos : οὐ μόνον τοῦ οἴνου Διόνυσον, ἀλλὰ καὶ πάσης ὑγρᾶς φύσεως Ἕλληνες ἠγοῦνται καὶ ἄρχηγόν, Plutarch, De Iside et Osiride 35, 365 a.

⁴Hooke, p.20. S.N. Kramer, "Dumuzi's Annual Resurrection : an Important Correction to 'Inanna's Descent'", BASOR N°183 (Oct. 1966), p.31 says : "Dumuzi, according to the Sumerian mythographers, rises from the dead annually and, after staying on earth for half the year, descends to the Nether World for the other half." In n.3 p.31, he adds that one must " note the obvious parallel to the Adonis myth."

γάμος,¹ a well known feature of Dionysiac festivals.

As a whole, Ugaritic mythology and ritual shows Babylonian and Sumerian influence as well as close similitudes with Hittite religious poems and Egyptian religion, particularly in the conflict Osiris-Seth. This is all the more important since Byblos is traditionally linked to the Osiris myth.²

In the course of its development, the Dumuzi myth underwent some noticeable change particularly in the importance given to the descent of Tammuz (the later appellation of Dumuzi) into the Underworld³ as related to the death and rebirth of vegetation. This is also true for the Mystic Dionysos and his relation to the nether world, although in the Hellenistic mysteries his role as a vegetation deity ceased to be of much importance - except at Eleusis -, as he fulfilled man's eschatological preoccupations, i.e., immortality.⁴

¹Ch. Virolleaud, "La légende du sage Danel", Légendes de Babylone et de Canaan (Paris : A. Maisonneuve, 1949), pp.64-65.

²At least in Plutarch's time, as Byblos is only related to the Osiris myth in the myth as told by Plutarch. Yet it is agreed in some quarters that Plutarch's account is drawn from early Egyptian sources such as the Pyramid Texts, cf. Hooke, pp.67-70. Besides, Mr.M.Dunand our well known authority on Byblos kindly informed me that, apart from the djed offerings discovered in the 3rd millenium temple of Byblos and which may perhaps attest an early presence of Osiris there, it is his opinion that one of the aspects of the Osirian myth, namely, "le culte du blé qui meurt et qui renait" is attested at Byblos by the grain jar burials of the Chalcolithic period.

³The Tammuz liturgies which belong to the later form of the myth, describe the descent of Tammuz into the Underworld and the desolation that prevails on earth. Ishtar, then, descends into the Underworld to rescue Tammuz who returns triumphantly back to earth, cf. Hooke, pp.22-23.

⁴According to M.P.Nilsson, Dionysiac Mysteries of the

At Ugarit, it was the death of Baal mourned by El who "pours dust on his head, puts on sackcloth, gashes his cheeks with a stone and utters lamentations over Baal."¹ This aspect of the myth was in its later stage of development emphasized at the expense of its other features and it became in Greek mythology the myth of Aphrodite and Adonis,² the most important local myth of Phoenicia in the Graeco-Roman period whose center of worship was at Afqa, the source of the Adonis river. The search for the body of Tammuz by Ishtar, of Baal by Anat, of Osiris by Isis, and of Adonis by Aphrodite, is quite similar to the search for Core by Demeter, and for Attis by Cybele ; as to the Dionysiac myth it is the descent of Dionysos into the Underworld to bring back Semele.³ All these myths form part of a seasonal ritual.

The Greek Dionysos was a vegetation deity and his early association with the tree⁴ has a striking parallel in the Sumerian Ningizzida, lord of the Sacred Wood or the Bybliote Khay-Tau, changed

Hellenistic and Roman Age (Lund : C.W.K. Gleerup, 1957), pp.116-118, the ever increasing concern with the after life put its stamp on the Bacchic mysteries. New ones were created and old ones were remodelled. See also M.P. Nilsson, Geschichte der Griechischen Religion (Munich : C.H. Beck, 1961), II, 91. He quotes H. Metzger, "Dionysos chthonien d'après les monuments figurés de la période classique" BCH, LXVIII-LXIX (1944-45), 296 ff. and 314 ff., who concludes rightly that Dionysos was not received into the Eleusinian mysteries until the beginning of the fourth century B.C.

¹Hooke, p.85.

²Kramer, p.31, n.3.

³Nilsson, Dionysiac Mysteries etc., p.130.

⁴Hence his epithets ἐνδενδρος i.e., the god in the tree and δενδρίτης i.e., the tree-god, W.K.C. Guthrie, The Greeks and their Gods (London : Methuen, 1950), p.62 and n.1, also pp.61-63.

into a fir,¹ Osiris enclosed in a tamarisk, and Adonis born from a myrrh tree.²

All these gods have the tree as their abode which shows that originally they may have been worshipped in the form of trees³ e.g., Dionysos as a log,⁴ and Adonis at Byblos as a sacred wooden pole, the Asherah.⁵

This point deserves due consideration as the cedar, fir and pine were of great necessity to Egypt. The Phoenician kings of Byblos were treated with great respect and were offered valuable gifts because they supplied "treeless" Egypt with the famous cedar wood it needed for construction purposes as a whole and particularly for the bark of Amen.⁶ The cedars (and other trees) were cut in the mountains and were floated down to the mouth of the Adonis river where Egyptian royal boat crews secured their subsequent shipment to Egypt. Light has been thrown on the subject by the discovery of an inscribed bronze axe-head of the royal boat crew of Cheops (or Sahu-Ra) near the mouth of

¹Infra, p.15 n.4.

²Contenau, pp.95-96.

³Ibid., pp.101-102.

⁴ γεωργοὶ Διόνυσον τιμῶσι πῆξάντες ἐν ὄρχατῳ αὐτοφυῆς πρέμνον, ἀχροικικὸν ἄχλαμα, according to Maximus of Tyre 8, 1, as quoted by Nilsson, Gesch. der Griech. Rel., I, 584.

⁵R.Dussaud, "Byblos et la mention des Giblites dans l'Ancien Testament", Syria, IV, (1923), 308.

⁶It was the purpose of Ounamon's voyage to Byblos.

the Adonis river (Nahr Ibrahim) in 1911,¹ which is a proof of the Egyptian lumber expeditions to Phoenicia.² Palestine also imported cedar wood from Tyre, especially in the reign of Solomon :

(and the king of Tyre said to him)'And we will cut wood out of Lebanon as much as thou shalt need : and we will bring it to thee in floats by sea to Joppa : and thou shalt carry it up to Jerusalem.'³

Relevant to our discussion of the tree-deities, is a sacrifice offered to the "Lady of Byblos" by the Egyptian envoy of Thutmosis III before he started felling the trees.⁴ This goddess, as well as her consort, must have embodied vegetation and fertility as a whole⁵ (we shall later see that it was also the case with the Phoenician triad), and Frankfort tells us that, "a goddess had to be propitiated from whose domains the Egyptians carried away the costly wood."⁶ Specialisation in fertility matters did already exist in Sumerian mythology : Ningi-zida and Dumuzi-Tammuz were originally tree-gods, the latter

¹R.P. A.Mallon, S.J., "Une hache égyptienne trouvée en Syrie", Mélanges de l'Université Saint Joseph (1925), X, fasc.ii, 49-54, pl.I. See also Alan Rowe, A Catalogue of Egyptian Scarabs, Scaraboids, Seals and Amulets in the Palestine Archaeological Museum (Le Caire : imprimerie de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, 1936), pp.283-289.

²Some examples with references are given in Rowe, pp.287-289.

³II Chronicles, 2:16.

⁴Ancient Near Eastern Texts, p.243.

⁵Nell Perrot, Les représentations de l'arbre sacré (Paris : P.Geuthner, 1937), pp.14 f, pl.XV, Fig.69, describes a bas-relief of the great fertility god (probably Assur) buried to the waist in the mountain with branches sprouting from his body, and says that he is at the same time a tree-god and a mountain-god.

⁶H.Frankfort, "Egypt and Syria in the First Intermediate

becoming Adonis in Phoenicia,¹ as we have already mentioned.

But the confusion arises, says Contenau, from the fact that :

Le dédoublement du Grand dieu demeure la règle chez les autres Asianiques; à côté de lui le dieu-fils, dont les attributions se confondent avec celles du grand dieu et dont les théologiens ont été assez embarrassés; tantôt il est le fils du couple Grand dieu, Grande déesse, tantôt l'époux de la déesse, tantôt à la fois son fils et son amant.²

This characteristic trait, he concludes, shows that the Phoenician Pantheon had "des divinités asianiques" prior to the arrival of the Semites. He also says that one ought not underestimate the relations between the Aegeans and the "Asianiques", whose cult practices and art show striking similarities, because the former have sometimes had great influence on Northern Phoenicia.³

The Phoenicians may have had a tree-god Khay Tau worshipped as a fir at Byblos,⁴ the prototype of Osiris in Egypt and of Adonis in Phoenicia. Adonis, like Osiris, was worshipped later on as the god of cereals and of the harvest. In Greece

Period", Journal of Egyptian Archaeology (1926), XII, 85.

¹Perrot, pp.12 f. adds that Tammuz was also the god and protector of herds being also called ušumgal i.e., great serpent and may be assimilated with Adonis. This Asiatic trait can also be observed in the case of Sabazios whose myth and cult is very closely connected with the snake. The cult of Sabazios did influence the cult of Dionysos. The snake became consequently the attribute of the gods of regeneration particularly Asklepios and Eshmun in Phoenicia. Baudissin, p.233, does not think that the standing figure between two snakes on a coin of Berytos is Dionysos but possibly Eshmun because of the snakes.

²Contenau, p.80.

³Contenau, p.83. See also Ch.Picard, Les religions pré-helléniques : Crète et Mycènes (Paris : P.U.F., 1948), passim.

⁴P.Montet, Byblos et l'Egypte (Paris : P.Geuthner, 1928)

however, Dionysos was not a god of cereals ; Demeter assumed this role. When the mystery cults spread throughout the Graeco-Roman world, the mysteries of Demeter were united to those of Dionysos due to the chthonian aspect of the latter.¹

Legends

The Golden Age of Phoenicia was attained in the Middle Iron Age and it was as a thalassocracy that its fame and might spread throughout the known world of that time, so much so that it led to the birth of the Cadmus myth. The Tyrian founder of Thebes was the maternal grandfather of Dionysos. Herodotus² tells us that Melamos introduced the cult of Dionysos in Boeotia, and that he had learned it from the descendents of Cadmos and those that had come with him from Phoenicia. This lies namely in the fact that the Greeks had associated Dionysos with wine at an early period and were well aware of the fame enjoyed by Phoenician wines, particularly the Bybliote; that is probably why they gave Dionysos a Phoenician origin.³ However the Phoenician connections of Dionysos in the Cadmos myth are extremely tenuous, almost non-existent. After Cadmos himself no one in the Theban cycle can be shown to have Phoenician connections.⁴

pp.287-290 and pp.62-68 where he discusses a stone cylinder which is the only evidence we have of Khay Tau at Byblos.

¹Nilsson, Dionysiac Mysteries etc., p.120.

²Herodotus ii, 49.

³For the wine of Byblos, see Athenaeus i, 29 b-c, on Phoenician wine trade, see Herodotus iii, 6.

⁴Prof.Hathorn kindly informed me that the only evidence we have of Phoenician religious influence at Thebes (as well as at Samothrace) is the cult of the Kabiroi.

Besides, nothing is known of this legacy either from literary or archeological evidence in Phoenicia¹ at this period, and must therefore remain limited to the legendary sphere. And yet the fact that the Theban myth of the birth of Dionysos is the best known one, lends perhaps more strength to the argument that Dionysos may have had at least some roots in Phoenicia. It also shows the extent to which Phoenician influence penetrated Greece,² the best example being the cult of Adonis³ but this is of course much later than the Cadmos myth.

¹There is a coin of Gallienus from Tyre depicting Cadmos giving a Papyrus roll to the Greeks which contained the alphabet. But this is of course a legend only. For the coin, see G.F. Hill, BMC : Phoenicia (London : Printed by order of the trustees, 1910), pl.XXXV, 1.

²The Cadmos myth also had extensions in Phoenicia itself where it spread from Tyre as far as Gabala in the North ; see Strabo xvi, 2-12. Pausanias ii, 1, 8 tells us that there exists at Gabala a venerable sanctuary of Dôtô, where was still kept the dress which Eriphyle, according to the Greeks, had received (as a bribe) in exchange for her son Alcmeon. The dress had belonged first to Harmonia thus linking us with the Cadmos myth. All this has been already said by Henri Seyrig, Questions aradiennes (Extrait de la RN ; Paris : "Les belles lettres", 1964), VI, 6 série, p.21, nn.3 and 4.

³Nilsson, Gr.Pop.Rel., pp;96. Aristophanes Lysistrata vss. 641 ff. See also Plutarch's Nicias and Alcibiades, 18.

CHAPTER II

DIFFUSION OF THE GREEK DIONYSOS

Orientalizing Influences

It was Boeotia that gave Attica the cult of Dionysos whence it spread in its Attic form to all the centers of Greek and Roman culture until late Antiquity, undergoing decisive changes in its diffusion.

The Aegean archipelago had been famous for its wines from Antiquity, and it worshipped Dionysos who was constantly associated with the introduction of the vine.¹ Attica did not have Dionysos among its primitive deities. It was from Boeotia that the cult came to Attica. At the outset, the cult was exclusively agrarian and celebrated only in the demes. Later only it integrated the city ΔΙΟΝΥΣΙΑ Τῶν Ἐν Ἄστει when Pisistratus reformed the cult by giving it city worship.² Attica subsequently became one of the principal centers of propagation of Dionysianism

¹Ch. Daremberg et Edmond Saglio DA, s.v. Bacchus (Paris: Hachette, 1877-1919), p.594.

²DA, p. 595. See also H. Jeanmaire, Dionysos, histoire du culte de Bacchus (Paris: Payot, 1951), p.8, who says that "Dionysos est le moins 'politique' des dieux grecs", in the eighth to seventh centuries B.C. at least.

and remained so, although as it spread, the cult underwent various changes. The most decisive one was the union of the cults of Demeter and Dionysos,¹ which, as has already been mentioned, were different at their outset. This brought about at Eleusis the identification of Dionysos with the Eleusinian Iacchus² and consequently the creation of the mystic Dionysos, somewhat different from the Theban.³

The Thracian Sabazios was also identified with him, as well as the Cretan Zagreus, the latter identification being due to Orphism, through which Dionysos attained his final stage of development.

It was due to the Greek relations with Thrace that the orgiastic rites of Sabazios permeated Dionysianism and constituted an integral part of it.⁴ In his mysteries Sabazios was regarded as the god of death and regeneration⁵ and the Greeks found in him relations with Zeus, Hades, Helios and Dionysos.⁶

¹It was perhaps due to the religious reform of Epimenides ; Plutarch Sol. 12, as quoted in DA, p.595.

²Nilsson, Gr.Pop.Rel., p.47.

³DA, p.595.

⁴Ibid., pp.597 f.

⁵Ibid., pp.597 f. See also Euripides, Rhes., 970-973.

⁶Macrobius Sat.i, 18 : εἰς Ζεῦς, εἰς Ἄϊδης, εἰς Ἥλιος εἰς Διόνυκος. See also Nilsson, Gesch. der Griech. Rel., II, 477 f. Nilsson here discusses Macrobius "rapprochement" between this well known verse of the Orphics and a saying of the Clarian Oracle in which Iao is called the highest god of all : in winter

God of prophetic inspiration as well as of ecstasy, which fermented drinks communicate, he became the god of wine - after the introduction of viticulture by the Greeks in Thrace - and was considered by the Greeks e.g., Herodotus,¹ none other than Dionysos himself.

The snake appearing as a Dionysiac symbol belongs to the myth of the birth of Sabazios - where it plays a very important part - in Thrace and Macedonia,² as well as in Phrygia.³ Thus, as the cult of Dionysos moved eastwards it recovered partly those Asiatic features which it had possessed originally and penetrated it more and more deeply. This was also the case with the Phoenician Pantheon, as we had mentioned previously.

The more the cult god orientalized, the closer became its affinities with Phoenician religion, and this may well account for its adoption there. Just as the cults of Adonis and Sabazios were adopted in Greece and appealed to women because

he is Hades, in spring Zeus, in summer Helios and in Autumn Dionysos. Nilsson in n.1, p.478 prefers "Ἰακχῶν to Ἰαῶ and cites Nock, "Oracles théologiques", REA, XXX, (1928), 280 f., who emphasizes the philosophical monotheistically inclined influences. Nilsson goes on to say that this saying is not surprising as it might seem, since, the Jews being numerous in Asia Minor, their god Iao was identified with Dionysos. Nilsson finally concludes that this god in his various forms did represent the seasons as this is in accordance with the Phrygian idea that Dionysos slept in winter and waked in summer, as well as with the Lydian Bacchic festivals at the beginning of spring.

¹Herodotus v, 7

²DA, p.598, n.235.

³Ibid., p.598, n.236. See also supra, p.10, n.3.

both cults were deeply emotional,¹ so was it probably with the cult of Dionysos in Phoenicia : as it came more in touch with the East it became more emotional as a whole and merged with local cults which possessed similar traits, e.g., Adonis in Phoenicia, who is, according to Plutarch,² none other than Dionysos.

The influence of Lydia on Dionysianism brought about a great change in the features of the Hellenic Dionysos, who assumed feminine traits in spite of a long beard.³ This androgynous nature he assumed is entirely oriental in conception as he is both the Lydian Bassareus, a conqueror, and the effeminate Dionysos Bassareus wearing the feminine attire of the Lydian and Thracian Maenads, namely the bassaris and the mitra. As the cult appealed to women, by wearing their clothes⁴ he

¹Nilsson, Gr.Pop.Rel., p.96, quotes Aristophanes, Lysistrata vss. 641 f.

²Symp.iv, 5, 2 ; Plato, com.ap.Athen. X, 83.

³This trait is an ancient one and it characterises the Dionysos διμορφός "tantôt jeune adolescent, tantôt barbu à la manière d'un Zeus". See also Picard, Les éléments orientaux etc., p.173. We may also point out that the merging of the two deities in one, each having the characteristic features of the other can also be observed in the case of Baal.

⁴Nonnos gives us a picture of Dionysos wearing effeminate clothes arriving at the palace of Lycurgus whose anger he excites. He promises his father Ares that he will give to Aphrodite the spoils, i.e., the garments of his enemy Bacchus, which he says are presents suitable for a woman, Dionysiaca xx, 228.

ταῦτα μὲν εἰς θεὸν φέρω μετὰ φύλοτιν. ἄπολέμου δὲ
 Βακχου, ξανθὰ πέδιλα γυναικείου τε χιτῶνα
 πυρφυρέου καὶ θῦλην ἔπ' ἰξυὶ κυκλάδα μίτρην
 γυνῶτῃ βεῖο δάμασι φυλάξομεν ἀφρογενεῖν
 ἄρμένα θηλεῖα δῶρα.

became one of them and participated in the orgia, as no man was allowed to take part in them.¹

A curious mosaic pavement discovered in 1930 at Delos seems to illustrate the religious relations between Phoenicia and the Aegean in the second century B.C., and the extent to which Phoenician religion was influenced by the Greeks. The emblem of "La maison des masques", which belongs to a complex of buildings set up by a colony of Phoenician traders from Berytus² at Delos in the middle of the second century B.C.,³ depicts a Maenad, or perhaps Dionysos himself, seated on a panther.⁴ This is probably the work of an atelier of Phoenician mosaicists, one of whom left his name on a panel in a nearby

Nonnos, xlviiii, 551, 644, describes Bacchus as being γυναιμάνης i.e., who has a craze for women and who inspires them with an orgiastic fury. See also DA, p.606, n.512.

¹In Euripides' Bacchae Pentheus is put to death because he spied on the orgia of the Maenads.

²Κοινῶν Βηρυτιῶν Ποσειδωνιαστῶν ναυκληρῶν
καὶ ἐγδοχέων P.Roussel et M. Launey, Inscriptions de Délos, (Paris : Librairie ancienne Honoré Champion, 1937), N°1520.

³For the date see R. Mouterde, "Regards sur Beyrouth phénicienne, hellénistique et romaine" (Extrait des Mél. USJ. Fasc.2, Vol. XL ; Beyrouth : Imprimerie catholique, 1966), p.17 and n.3.

⁴For the discussion of the figure see J.Chamonard, "La maison des masques, (Exploration archéologique de Délos Fasc.14 Paris : E. de Boccard, 1933), pp.12-15 and pl. II for the illustration.

building called "La maison des dauphins".¹ Besides, the treatment of the subject is imperfect. The figure is androgynous and wears a bassaris and a mitra but is not bearded, thus bringing it closer to the Greek Dionysos, the unbearded ephebe with the delicate features which may well have characterised Attis or Adonis, with whom our mosaicist must have been familiar.² However ambiguous the figure may be, it is Greek as a whole with some Oriental influence. That it was adopted as an emblem for "La maison des masques"³ therefore shows that Greek religion had penetrated Phoenician religion to quite an extent. Yet one should not fail to notice also that this holds true for the Phoenicians living under the more direct influence of Greek culture, although to a lesser extent in Phoenicia itself. This Dionysiac emblem remains the best example we have of Greek religion as seen by a Phoenician in the Hellenistic period.

The conquering exploits of the Lydian Bassareus gave more impetus to Dionysiac religion, especially with the conquests of Alexander the Great.

Universality of the Cult in the Hellenistic Age

After the conquest of India, Alexander assumed the traits of a new Dionysos and he himself gave credit to the fable which

¹M. Bulard, Monuments Piot (Paris : E. Leroux, 1908), pp.193 f., 197 f. See also Chamonard, pp.13, 19, 41. For the inscription see Roussel et Launey, N°2497.

²Ibid.

³As the house may have been used in connection with Dionysiac mystery worship.

made of him the Indian Dionysos¹ who sets off conquering the world, initiating as he went along the conquered nations to his cult. In fact, the most widespread cult of the Hellenistic Age was that of Dionysos, and due to several factors of the utmost importance, it underwent a great change.

It is a well known fact that the establishment of Alexander's new world had outgrown the Greek city state. The new philosophies that arose, namely those of Epicurus and Zeno, created in man the feeling that he was no longer a part of the city but an individual who needed new guidance.²

Greeks and Barbarians alike were engulfed into one vast political economic and social system, which the Hellenistic monarchs instituted each in his own vast domain. Alexander's policy had been at its outset to spread Greek culture to the East, namely to the Barbarians, in accordance with the teachings of his master Aristotle. However, as his conquests grew, he realized that the civilizations of the Orient possessed a rich legacy, which was equal to the Greek one, Having realized this, he thought of blending the two cultures, the Greek and the Oriental, which in his view would produce a greater civilization.

His successors failed in this respect, as they only succeeded in spreading a thin veneer of Greek culture on their subjects, which was not enough to entice them to hasten to the rallying call of Antiochus III who stood as the champion

¹DA, p.600, n.302 and p.303.

²W. Tarn and G.T. Griffith, Hellenistic Civilization (London : E. Arnold, 1959), p.327.

of Hellenism against the Romans. His attempt to unify his realm on a basis of Greek religion and culture failed. And we know why. The Hellenistic empire was conquered by the sword alone, not by the spirit.

In fact, in the religious sphere, "the only vital things in Hellenism were philosophy and the Oriental religions".¹ Philosophy was for the educated elite, not for the common man. As for Greek religion, it gave oriental deities Greek names and forms - a greek "cachet" - but nothing else. The religious substratum of the Orient remained what it was ; and to quote Tarn, "The conquest of the East in the religious sphere was bound to fail as soon as it gauged its own strength and Greek weakness".² The fact that the Hellenistic monarchs became Orientalized themselves did not mean toleration on their part but weakness.

With the establishment of Alexander's new world, man found himself lost in the vastness of the Hellenistic domains, and individualism arose, whereby a more personal contact with the divinity was sought. Also times were insecure and that was to lead to man's need for *σωτηρία* i.e., a worldly salvation through communion with the divinity. The need was general but the diversity of gods great. It was due to the Stoics who preached "Synggeneia" a community of birth and race among all men and "Sympatheia" a community of feelings to all, that all the gods were fused into one another, being alike forms of the one divinity behind them ;³ the Greeks coming across an Eastern

¹Tarn, p.336

²Tarn, p.337

³Tarn, p.339 and n.2.

deity believed that it was Greek but under another name e.g., Isis, Atargatis, Cybele were different names of one and the same goddess, Demeter.

This is due to syncretism or rather to identification. The two ideas mentioned above, namely "Synggeneia" and "Sympatheia", justified the belief that relations were possible between gods and men through the mysteries. They were to influence Dionysiac religion to a great extent with the final development of the Mystic Dionysos. As we have already mentioned, Dionysos was the most important Greek god outside Greece, due to the triumphal progress achieved in the person of Alexander.¹ The universality of his cult is well expressed by Diodorus Siculus when he says :

As for the people of the other cities, they in some cases point out a plot of land which is sacred to Dionysos, in other cases shrines and sacred precincts which have been consecrated to him from ancient times. But speaking generally since the god has left behind him in many places over the inhabited world evidences of his personal favor and presence, it is not surprising that in each case the people should think that Dionysos had had a peculiar relationship to both their city and country.²

He also was particularly worshipped by the Orphics who identified him with many gods. The Jews of the Diaspora equated him (as Sabazios) with Sabaoth.³ He was claimed as ancestor of the Ptolemies as well as of the Attalids, and his most enthusiastic devotee, Ptolemy IV, dreamt of making him the chief god of his composite kingdom.⁴ In Phoenicia he was equated with Adonis and

¹Especially in Asia, cf. A.D.Nock, "Notes on Ruler-Cult", JHS, XL VIII (1928), 21.

²Diodorus Siculus, iii, 66

³Tarn, p.225 and p.339.

⁴Tarn, pp.212, 339. P. Perdrizet, REA (1910), 234. Nilsson Gesch. der Griech.Rel., II, 153, N.2.

Eshmun the son-god of the Phoenician triad, as can be deduced from the coins.¹

As we have already mentioned, the Mysteries as a whole gave a new impetus to religion in the Hellenistic age, in as much as they afforded personal communion with the gods. They were open to all those who paid due reverence to the god of the mysteries, considered as the most powerful of all gods. As Dionysos was the most important deity of the Hellenistic world for reasons already mentioned, he was given a universal character of worship through the mysteries, becoming known as the mystic Dionysos, who triumphed over fate and saved those who were initiated into his mysteries. This "Salvation", was therefore the ultimate goal of the worshipper who reenacted the passion of the savior-god who had died and risen again, thus cleansing himself symbolically of his guilt and receiving at the terms of his initiation a new life with the god. This new character of Dionysiac religion was well expressed by the Orphics, "One ceased to be a worshipper, a rod bearer and became a Bacchus".² In this respect, Dionysos was considered as a protector of the dead, he who restored life and happiness to those who became Βάκχοι μύσται. Fertility rites have always been in some ways linked to the cult of the dead.³ As their protector, Dionysos, according to the late Neoplatonists, e.g.

¹Baudissin, pp.199 f., pp.231-241.

²"Chained to matter while as Titans, we wake up as Bacchoi" : Olympiodorus in Plato Phaedo. 68 C.

³Jeanmaire, p.54.

Plutarch,¹ presided over the vast "Métabolisme Biocosmique".² This point was emphasized by the Orphics, who spread a doctrine of expiation by which Zagreus - the original name of Dionysos - son of Zeus and Semele was eaten up by the Titans. However his heart had been secretly stolen away by Athena and it became the hub of another life for Zagreus, whose destroyed substance took shape again as Dionysos. As to the Titans, they were consumed in the lightning Zeus struck them with and out of the smoke rising from their ashes man was born ; and thus to keep alive the divine spark which would render him immortal, man would have to follow the rites which commemorated the sufferings endured by the god to free the divine spark from his passions ; in so doing he would strengthen it and return it to the source whence it came. This digression can lead us to argue for the worship of the Mystic Dionysos in the Orient at large, and particularly in Phoenicia, where as we have said he was equated with Adonis. As S. Hooke pertinently remarks :

One of the most important elements in the ancient myth and ritual pattern was the myth of the dying and rising god, seen in its earliest form in the Tammuz myth, perpetuated through the Ages and appearing in the various mystery cults so widely current in the Graeco-Roman world It may be said that on a long view, the existence of these ancient myths of a suffering, dying and rising god, is evidence of a deep rooted element in religious experience, a sense that something is wrong with the moral order of the Universe, and that only the expiatory death of a divine being can meet the situation.³

¹R.Turcan, Les sarcophages romains à représentations dionysiaques (Bibliothèque des Ecoles Françaises d'Athènes et de Rome, Fasc.210, Paris : E. de Boccard, 1966), p.403 nn.4 and 5.

²Turcan, p.403.

³Hooke, pp.173-174.

CHAPTER III

DIONYSOS IN PHOENICIA

Dionysos - Adonis

The most widespread cult in Phoenicia in the Graeco-Roman Age was the cult of Adonis, which shows striking similarities with that of Dionysos. Although no literary or epigraphical document of Phoenician provenance except for the lead weight of Byblos has ever equated him with Dionysos, it seems probable that as a whole Adonis is the closest we can get to Dionysos and this may probably account for Plutarch's statement that Dionysos is none other than Adonis :

τὸν Ἄδωνιν οὐχ ἕτερον ἀλλὰ Διόνυσον εἶναι νομίζουσι*

The well' known myth of Adonis is of Greek provenance. Panyasis of the first half of the 5th century B.C., tells us that Adonis was born from a tree in which his mother had been changed. Venus found him and gave him to Proserpine who refused to give him back and Jupiter had to intervene. Other legends were grafted on it, the best known being the love of Venus for Adonis and her attempts to save him from death in the hunt where he is killed by a boar. The myth as a whole has three important features : the death of the god in the hunt, the quarrel of Venus and Proserpine, the return of the god to earth. This made of him^a a dying and rising god who reflects the

*Plutarch, symp. iv, 5 et 3.

annual ebb and flow of plant life, the most striking manifestation of the forces of rebirth and growth immanent in the earth. This concept of Adonis as a vegetation god harks back to the dawn of history, where we have seen his prototype as Dumuzi in Mesopotamia, Khay Tau at Byblos, Osiris in Egypt and Baal at Ugarit, who symbolized the humid element. We find this concept well established in the Lebanon at Afqa where the sacred sources of the Adonis river revere the sanctuary of the god. The reddish color given to the waters of the river through the accumulation of ferruginous earth brought by the rains from the mountain sides, Lucian¹ tells us, meant for the faithful the blood of Adonis and the beginning of the mourning period for the people of Byblos. They flocked in processions from all over Phoenicia to Afqa, stopping along the "Stations" of the hunt to commemorate the various episodes of his life, agony, and death, accompanied by the wailing of the women. These ceremonies were mainly funerary. As evidence concerning these ceremonies is lacking from Phoenician sources, a close parallel is found in Egypt, where Theocritus² tells us how the funeral of Adonis was held in the second century B.C. The cult was very popular there and found in Ptolemy II Philadelphus and his wife Arsinoe, enthusiastic devotees.³ For three days ceremonies were held in honor of Adonis. The first day was a feast day with offerings consisting of nuts, figs, flowers and

¹De Dea Syria, § 8.

²Theocritus, "The Sycracusans", Idyll 15.

³G.Glotz, "Les fêtes d'Adonis sous Ptolémée II, " REG (1920), 186-188.

poultry and a banquet ; the second day was a day of mourning, the third the god resurrected and there was a sacred representation of it. To conclude, we can say that Dionysos was worshipped at Byblos as Adonis in Roman Imperial times. Epigraphical evidence indeed points out to the existence of a high priest of Dionysos at Byblos, the worship center of the cult of Adonis in Phoenicia, which shows that the Phoenician cult of Adonis had been Hellenized. This can be deduced from a lead weight from Byblos which bears the following inscription :

Ἀσπασίου | τοῦ Ἀπολλοδ[ώ]ρου τοῦ Ἀσπασίου,
 ἄρχιερ[ε]ως Διονύσου, ἀγορα[ν]ομ[οῦ]τος ¹
 During the agoranomy of Aspasio, son of Apollodoros son
 of Aspasio high priest of Dionysos.

What is particularly interesting to note here, is that the presence of a high priest seems to indicate the existence of a Dionysiac priestly hierarchy² at Byblos, the only evidence we have of it in Phoenicia. Furthermore as it is a title official enough to appear on an object of public utility as the weight in question, it lends more weight to the existence of such a cult. Mr.H.Seyrig concludes :

Ce que l'on sait par ailleurs des cultes phéniciens et de leur interprétation grecque, permet de supposer qu'il ne s'agit là, en vérité, de nul autre que du grand prêtre d'Adonis.³

¹H.Seyrig, "Le grand prêtre de Dionysos à Byblos," (Ant.syr., étude N°55 ; 1958), V, 87, pl.XI, 1-2, and for the discussion of its provenance date and interpretation see pp.86-91.

²and hence of mysteries.

³Seyrig "Le grand prêtre de Dionysos à Byblos," (Ant.syr.), V, 90.

The period of our lead weight is the middle of the 2nd Century A.D.¹ It was in that period that the Dionysiac mysteries enjoyed their greatest popularity - which was to last until the end of paganism - due to man's eschatological preoccupations, a wave of mystic religious fervor which swept throughout paganism.

Dionysos and the Young God of the Phoenician Triad

The Romans exploited this religious fervor for their own ends and fostered the establishment of these ceremonies which were very common to many sanctuaries of Phoenicia.² The most striking example is Baalbek where a temple of Bacchus was built in the second century A.D., to satisfy the needs of a great number of worshippers.³ The sanctuary was built mainly for the celebration of the Dionysiac mysteries which had assumed eschatological traits.⁴ The mysteries celebrated there were grafted onto agrarian rites in honor of the Heliopolitan Mercury,⁵ a rising god, (like Tammuz, Attis, and probably Malakbêl in Palmyra)⁶ who gave his faithful devotees the hope of an afterlife, either because this trait belonged previously to him,

¹Ibid, V, 89 where he discusses the date.

²Ibid, V, 91

³Ibid; also p.104

⁴Ibid, V, 116

⁵H. Seyrig, "La triade héliopolitaine", Syria, X, (1929) 318 and 348 - 353.

⁶H. Seyrig, "Iconographie de Malakbêl", Ant. Syr., II, (Extrait de Syria 1934 - 1936 - 1937 ; Paris : P. Geuthner 1938), 101.

and had brought about his assimilation with Dionysos or because he acquired this trait from Dionysos himself.¹ As the cult of Bacchus was addressed to a child-god whose birth was periodically celebrated, and perhaps because of the role played by wine in the local ritual, it seemed plausible for the Heliopolitans to see in this god an equivalent of Bacchus.²

Although Baalbeck lies outside Phoenicia, its main cult, the Heliopolitan triad was essentially Phoenician,³ which can be accounted for by the close connections of the great city with Berytos.⁴ The Heliopolitan triad comprises three ^{who} gods, belong to an agrarian cult : a storm god, a goddess of fertility and a young god "le dieu-fils"⁵ a deity of regeneration.⁶ According to Mr.H.Seyrig, "Cette organisation se rattache aux cultes phéniciens du moins à ceux de l'époque hellénistique",⁷ where we find El+Baalat Gebal + Adonis at Byblos, Poseidon + "As-

¹H.Seyrig, "Questions héliopolitaines", N°57, Ant.syr., V, (extrait de Syria 1952-1957 ; Paris : P.Geuthner, 1958) 104, where he also says that it is hard to tell when the Dionysiac aspect of the cult developed as the young god of the triad had at first been identified with Hermes by the Macedonians : on p.105 he says that it was probably in the Roman period.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., V, 91.

⁴A.H. M.Jones, Cities of the Eastern Roman Provinces (Oxford : Clarendon Press, 1937), p.272. See also Seyrig, Ant.syr., V, 112, n.1 where he discusses lengthily the connection between the two cities and concludes, "La question paraît incertaine".

⁵S.Ronzevalle, "Jupiter héliopolitain", Mél.USJ, XXI (1937), 104.

⁶Seyrig, "Questions héliopolitaines", Ant.syr., V, 105-106.

⁷Ibid., V, 106. See also Baudissin, pp.15-17.

tarté Poliade" + Eshmun at Berytos, Great god + Astarte + Eshmun at Sidon and Zeus + Asteria + Heracles - Melqart at Tyre. The importance of the cult of the Heliopolitan triad lies in the fact that precisely because it belongs to this system, it is today the best Phoenician triad known.¹

The Coins

As Dionysos was identified with the young god of the Heliopolitan cult, we shall see that it was to a certain extent the same for the Phoenician city cults, as the city coin types show.

The selection of Dionysos as a coin-type is on the one hand strong enough evidence in support of this argument, even though archaeological evidence is not available as no sanctuary related to the cult of Dionysos like the temple of Bacchus at Heliopolis, has been discovered as yet in Phoenicia itself.

On the other hand, the assimilation of the Greek god by the Phoenicians was further brought about by viticulture which had made Phoenician vintages famous in the Ancient world particularly in the Greek world as we have already mentioned, and we shall see that this tradition was maintained in the Roman period as well.

The very frequent appearance of Dionysos on the coins of Sidon indicates that he must have been one of the most important gods of the city "en dépit du silence des textes".² How-

¹Ibid.

²H.Seyrig, "Questions héliopolitaines", Ant.syr., V, 90 Baudissin, p.237 says the same, meaning Philo, who does not mention Dionysos for Phoenicia.

ever, as the cities of Phoenicia portrayed their own gods with Greek traits, Dionysos was identified with Eshmun, a deity of regeneration with whom he shared some common traits.¹ Eshmun was the most important god of the Sidonians, due to the presence of his sanctuary there. However his appearance as Asklepios on the coins is rare. It is with Dionysos that he was identified first.²

This assimilation began in 114 B.C.³ Dionysos bearded with thyrsos and kantharos appears on the reverse of a coin of Antiochus VIII ; on a dated coin of 111 B.C. with a cista mystica and thyrsos ; on four dated coins from 106-102 with thyrsos and kantharos ; 87 B.C., with kantharos ; 67 B.C. with thyrsos ; and from 67-116 A.D. on many coins with a cista Dionysiaca. On a coin of Elagabalus he appears with Apollo ;⁴ on a coin of Annia Faustina he appears with kantharos thyrsos and a panther - as well as on a coin of Alexander Severus.⁵ Asklepios also appears on a coin of Severus which may

¹Ibid.

²Baudissin, pp.231-232.

³Seyrig, "Questions héliopolitaines", Ant.syr., V, 104 For the coin see E.Babelon, Catalogue des monnaies grecques de la Bibliothèque Nationale : Rois de Syrie, d'Arménie et de Commagène (Paris : Rollin et Feuwardent, 1890) N°1339 f. Also see Rouvier, "Numismatique des villes de la Phénicie : Sidon," Journal international d'archéologie numismatique, V (1902), N°1279.

⁴Baudissin, p.233 says that the Baal of Sidon may possibly be seen in Apollo, but no deity of Sidon resembles him.

⁵For all these coins see Rouvier : Sidon, G.F.Hill, BMC : Phoenicia and Seleucid Kings of Syria, in index of coin types. This list is given by Baudissin, p.232.

possibly mean that both Eshmun and Asklepios were identified with Dionysos,¹ as they shared some common features. As a whole, the cult of Eshmun is more noticeable in Sidon than in any other city of Phoenicia, and due to the frequent appearance of Dionysos on the coins, it is clear enough that Dionysos is Eshmun in Sidon.²

At Tyre Dionysos appears on the reverse of a coin of Seleucus IV with thyrsos and panther as well as on a coin of Elagabalus, standing on prow with thyrsos kantharos and panther.³ According to Baudissin,⁴ the origin of the Dionysos of Tyre is doubtful as the cult of Eshmun at Tyre is not well known. It is possible that Dionysos represented a god other than Eshmun, or that he was totally imported from Greece and did not represent any Phoenician god at all.⁵ The presence of the cult of Dionysos at Tyre may also have been due to the popularity of the Tyrian wines,⁶ but this is a very tentative statement, because Tripolis, a Phoenician city known for its

¹Baudissin, p.232

²Baudissin, p.235.

³Hill, BMC : Phoenicia, p.276.

⁴Baudissin, "p.234 and n.7.

⁵H.Seyrig, "Le grand prêtre de Dionysos à Byblos", Ant. syr., V, 91, also remarks that he could have been imported.

⁶For reference to classical authors see F.M.Heichelheim, "Roman Syria," An Economic Survey of Ancient Rome (Baltimore : the Johns Hopkins Press, 1938), IV, Pt.II, 139, n.131.

vintages,¹ does not have Dionysos on its coins. Grapes are held by the Dioscuri on the coins,² which does refer to the Tyrian viticulture. Botrys (Batroun) has a coin with a bunch of grapes³ which is a type parlant of the city ; but in the deity standing in a car drawn by two panthers, a reverse type also common to Orthosia, one must not see according to H.Seyrig, Dionysos Pogon as mentioned by Babelon and Hill, but the male city-god of Orthosia.⁴ As for Berytos, Nonnos tells us that there was an important cult of Dionysos there due to the fertility of surroundings and the production of wine and raisins.⁵ This according to Hill⁶ may account for the presence of Dionysos on the coins.

Berytos (as Tyre), affords less evidence than Sidon for the worship of Dionysos but there are some clear traces of the worship of the god. Dionysos bearded, with thyrsos, kantharos and panther, appears on a coin of Hadrian⁷ as well as

¹The famous "Tripoliticum vinum," Pliny, Hist.Nat., XIV, 7, 74.

²Four coins. See Hill, BMC : Phoenicia, pp.213, 220, pl. XXVIII, 2 and pl. XXVII, 16.

³J.Rouvier, "Numismatique des villes de la Phénicie", JIAN, (1901), IV, N°620, where it was wrongly identified as a diota ; see H.Seyrig "Éres de Botrys", Ant.syr. V, 96.

⁴H.Seyrig, "Sur certains tétradrachmes provinciaux de Syrie", Ant.syr.I, 65-66 and m.1-2.

⁵Nonnos Dionysiaca 41, 147.

⁶Hill, BMC : Phoenicia, Introduction, sv. Berytus.

⁷E.Babelon, Catalogue des monnaies grecques de la Bi-

on a coin of Gordian. As to the figure standing between two snakes on a coin of Elagabalus, it may be Dionysos but none of his attributes appears on the coin.¹

The Inscriptions

Two inscriptions attest further the cult of Dionysos at Berytos :

S VESPASIAN•
VM ET COL•TABER
•IGNUM LIBERI•PATRIS²

This dedication to Liber Pater for the prosperity of Emperor Vespasian (or his son Titus), mentions the tabernae i.e., the wine shops, "evidemment construits en bordure d'une place où s'élevait la statue du dieu,"³ Liber Pater was at this period considered as the guardian of the freedom of the cities which had been granted the jus italicum. These cities erected statues to Marsyas the servant of Bacchus, who was identified with Liber "Par l'intermédiaire du satyre musicien, on s'adressait à Liber Pater, garant de la liberté accordée par Rome."⁴ The statue

bibliothèque Nationale : Les Perses achéménides (Paris : Rollin et Feuardent, 1893), pl.XXV, 14.

¹Baudissin, p.233 thinks that the standing figure may be Eshmun because of the snakes. For the coin, Hill, BMC : Phoenicia, pl.X, 14.

²Cagnat, Syria, V (1924), 111, N°7.

³Mouterde, Regards sur Beyrouth etc., p.29.

⁴Adrien Bruhl, Liber Pater (Bibliothèque des Écoles Françaises d'Athènes et de Rome, fasc.175 ; Paris : E. de Boccard, 1953), pp.44-45, especially p.44, N°69, as quoted by Mouterde, Regards sur Beyrouth etc., pp.29-30.

of Marsyas has but little to do with the cult of Dionysos, as in that period he stood for the symbol of perfect freedom,¹ i.e., the jus italicum and a statue was erected to him in the forum of all the colonies.² However one must note that Dionysos has also been considered a healing god, ἄλεξιπικκος and also a bringer of joy and liberty, λυβίος, λυαῖος Baudissin says that, due to the healing qualities given to Dionysos liber, it was not impossible to find an identification Asklepios - Dionysos ; but he adds that such an identification was never popular in Phoenicia,³ as Asklepios appears on very few coins only. As for the identification of the indigenous Eshmun with Asklepios, it is not certain, except for Arados or Marathos where it originated,⁴ in the North of Phoenicia ; on this ground, Baudissin concludes that the identification Eshmun-Asklepios could not cope with the prevailing Eshmun = Dionysos of central and Southern Phoenicia.⁵ The Pater Lyaeus

¹Servius Ad Aenida iii, 20 ; iv, 58, as quoted by Mouterde, Regards sur Beyrouth etc., p.24.

²Mouterde, Regards sur Beyrouth etc., p.24.

³Baudissin, p.238; on p.237 he says that Philo's silence over Dionysos can be explained by the fact that for him he is Asklepios. Damascius Vita Isidori : 310, tells us that Adonis is the Asklepios of Berytos who is called Eshmun son of Sadik.

⁴Baudissin, pp.239-240, especially p.240.

⁵Although, he says, the identification of Eshmun with Dionysos is as justified as that of Eshmun with Asklepios; his best argument seems to be the coins. Baudissin, p.240.

of Virgil, he adds, appears to correspond to the Carthaginian Eshmun. In this then one could recognise a transposition of the identification of Eshmun with Dionysos.¹

Mr.H.Seyrig² thinks, on the other hand, that if Berytos shared the Heliopolitan cults in the Roman period, the Liber on the inscription mentioned above, would be an aspect of the Solar god of this city ; of the Heliopolitan Mercury, of Genaios whose symbolic lion, Hill³ recognised on a coin of Berytos.

The second inscription we have concerning the Bacchic cult in Berytos, is the following :

[T.] Statilius Maximus [L.f.] Brum[i]acus sacrum restituit⁴

The surname Brumiacus or Bromiacus is "une trace de plus du culte bachique" in Roman Berytos.⁵

To conclude this section let us mention the presence of Phoenicians with the theophoric name - ΔΙΟΝΥΣΙΟΣ⁶ several of which have been recorded at the Phoenician trading colony of Delos.

¹Ibid., 241.

²H.Seyrig, "Notes Epigraphiques," Ant.syr., I, N°22, 6 n.6.

³Church Quarterly Review, LXVI (1908), as quoted by Seyrig, Ant.syr., I, N°22, 6 n.6. R.Dussaud, "Temples et cultes de la triade héliopolitaine à Baalbeck," Syria, XXIII (1943), 59 n.3, quotes Nonnos (Dionysiaca ix, 11 f.) who says that Rhea mounted the young god (Dionysos) in her car drawn by lions; and Dussaud concludes, "On voit par ce (dernier) trait comment les lions de la déesse ont pu être attribués au dieu-fils".

⁴H.Seyrig, "Notes épigraphiques," Ant.syr., I, 6.

⁵Ibid.

⁶See Baudissin, p.234, n.7 for a bilingual inscription.

There is an inscription¹ from the sanctuary of Baal Marquod at Deir el Qual'a which was dedicated to the god by a Berytian probably born at Delos or belonging to a family of traders from Berytos,² by the name of Διονύσιος Γοργίου which shows the popularity of the cult.

A Hellenistic Sanctuary - Kharayeb

The only evidence we have in Phoenicia of a sanctuary where traces of Dionysos and his thiasus have been found is at Kharayeb and belongs to the Hellenistic period. We shall see that it illustrates the influence of Hellenism in the East.

The interesting data the sanctuary has provided us with are the terra-cotta statuettes.³ They belong to the early Hellenistic age,⁴ and represent fertility deities as a whole, worshipped in Phoenicia under Greek traits. This characterises further the Hellenisation process of Phoenician cults, an exam-

with Διονύσιος.

¹Clermont-Ganneau, Recueil d'archéologie orientale, (Paris : E. Leroux, 1888), I, 103, n°2.

²See R.Mouterde, Regards sur Beyrouth etc., p.21 and n.2 for his references to similar family names found on several inscriptions from Delos. See also Seyrig, "Le grand prêtre de Dionysos à Byblos," Ant.syr., V, 90, n.7.

³M.Chéhab, Les terres cuites de Kharayeb, BMB, X-XI (1951-1954). Reference to the statuettes and their description in the text is with Kh. followed by a serial number.

⁴Ibid., p.130.

ple of which has already been given, namely the emblema of the mosaic floor pavement at Delos. The terra cottas show a heaviness of technique,¹ as they were made in Phoenicia by Phoenician coroplasts who revealed the personality of their culture in spite of their Hellenisation.²

The popularity of the local Phoenician triad facilitated the adoption of Dionysos, Hermes and Herakles, who, as young gods, corresponded to the "dieu-fils" of the Phoenician triad,³ a fact which has already been discussed. The cults most in favor at Kharayeb were those of Demeter and Core, Dionysos, Aphrodite and Eros. Four different types of Dionysos have been recorded. Dionysos as a child, carrying a thyrsos and led by Silenus ;⁴ a similar statuette, but with a philosopher instead of Silenus ;⁵ Dionysos as a child, standing before his seated pedagogue ;⁶ and Dionysos as a drunken adolescent, carrying a thyrsos and leaning heavily on a brawny satyre.⁷

¹ Simone Mollard-Becques, Les terres cuites grecques (Paris : P.U.F., 1963), p.97.

² So much so that one can hardly recognize Dionysos in the figure with the satyre (Kh. 174 and Kh. 179-183); Chéhab, Les terres cuites de Kharayeb, p.86.

³ Ibid., p.131.

⁴ Ibid., Kh. 179-183, pl.XXI, 2.

⁵ Ibid., Kh. 184-199, pl.XXI, 3.

⁶ Ibid., Kh. 200, pl.XXXI, 1.

⁷ Ibid., Kh. 174, pl.XXII.

These types do not merely point to fertility cults, but possibly to mystery cults as well as the cycles of Demeter are also prominent.¹ This constitutes further evidence for the Dionysiac mysteries in Phoenicia, and lends more weight to the argument that Dionysos was worshipped in Phoenicia and probably at Tyre as Eshmun, since Kharayeb is in the vicinity of Tyre too.

Funerary Art - The Lead Sarcophagi

The Adonis festivals were as a whole funerary ceremonies that were traditionally linked with vegetation. The "Adonis Gardens" planted with quick sprouting and dying plants symbolize, it is true, the short life of the god, but also stand for "the most striking manifestation of the forces of rebirth and growth immanent in the earth."² The sprouting of the grain, says H. Frankfort, signified the resurrection of the god.³ Greater emphasis was laid on this aspect of the ritual in later times only, and it was by then firmly established in popular beliefs.

This aspect of the ritual was over-all important in the mystery cults of the Graeco-Roman Age, as it afforded

¹Ibid., p.43

²H. Frankfort, Kingship and the Gods (Chicago : Chicago University Press, 1948), p.185.

³Ibid. ; he says this with respect to Osiris for whom the temple ritual of the Ptolemaic period included the preparations of "Osiris gardens" (similar to the Adonis gardens) and he adds, quoting Plutarch (De Iside et Osiride, 70) that this view was firmly established in popular beliefs in later times, ibid., p.186.

communion with the divinity, by the worshipper's reenactment of his passion and consequently freedom from the grave. This was a common feature of most of mystery cults of the Age, due to the rise of eschatological preoccupations; man wished his after life to be a continuation of the present felicity which he had received from the god.

The Romans had got acquainted with the cult of Dionysos through the Greek colonies of southern Italy, where Bacchic initiations were connected with a strong belief in the Underworld.¹ Dionysos had been combined with Demeter and Kore as chthonian deities.² This trinity was introduced in Rome in 496 B.C. and renamed : Ceres, Liber, Libera.³

However Dionysos was not originally a god of the dead, and there is no such belief in Attica in the classical Age,⁴ and Nilsson explicitly says that the belief in immortality did not have its origin in the cult of Dionysos,⁵ but developed in the regions where the chthonian aspect of Dionysos was prominent, especially in central Greece, south Italy and Sicily.

¹M.P.Nilsson, Gesch. der Griech. Rel., I, 824 ff.; see also his Dionysiac Mysteries etc., p.12.

²Ibid. However Dionysos was not received into the Eleusinian mysteries until the fourth century B.C. according to H.Metzger and cited by Nilsson, Dionysiac Mysteries etc., p.118.

³Nilsson, Dionysiac Mysteries etc., p.12.

⁴Ibid., p.118. See also H.Metzger, "Dionysos chthonien d'après les monuments figurés de la période classique", BCH, LXVIII -LXIX (1944-1945) 226 ff. especially 314 ff.

⁵Nilsson, Dionysiac Mysteries etc., p.120.

We might add Phoenicia, where the young god of the triad, together with the great god and goddess, promoted fertility¹ as we have already mentioned. Thus, Dionysos became a spirit of vegetation and regeneration, and evidence from late sources may allow us to say that he acquired a myth of death and re-birth.² A.J. Festugière is also inclined to believe that this is apparently a late trait,³ common to other mystery religions, and is a product of "ce syncrétisme qui a tendu en effet à multiplier les contacts et les échanges entre les systèmes religieux."⁴ This is why, in the Dionysiac mysteries of the Roman Age, belief in after life was greatly stressed upon, as the great bulk of Phoenician lead sarcophagi with Bacchic emblems relevantly show. These emblems as a mode of funerary ornamentation prove that people believed in the happy after life promised by the Bacchic mysteries.⁵

The lead sarcophagi⁶ are as a whole further evidence

¹H.Seyrig, "Questions héliopolitaines", Ant.syr., V, 103.

²G.Fraser, Adonis, Attis, Osiris, Vol.II : The Golden Bough (New York : Macmillan and Co., 1927), Pt.IV, 160-168. See also Seyrig's interpretation of the ex-voto from Damascus.

³Seyrig is of the same opinion in the case of Adonis in "Un ex-voto damascain," Ant.syr., V, N°44, 124-131 ; especially 128 n.1, pl.IX and fig.12 p.125.

⁴A.J.Festugière "Les mystères de Dionysos," RB, XLIV (1935), 192, 366.

⁵Nilsson, Dionysiac Mysteries etc., p.132.

⁶For the description and commentary, see R.Mouterde,

for the cult of Bacchus in Phoenicia - especially initiation in the mysteries -¹ as they were produced by Phoenician founders especially at Tyre, Sidon and Berytos and exported as far as the Rhine Valley, France, Spain, Syria and Palestine as well as to the rest of Phoenicia.² The characteristic feature of these sarcophagi lies in their decoration, which shows a large variety of symbols pertaining to the afterlife of the deceased they were meant to protect. The motifs used by the founders are Bacchic and pertain to the initiation of the deceased into the mysteries, or belong to the myth of Psyche. We notice that the Tyrian and Sidonian founders used almost invariably Bacchic motifs to decorate the side panels as well as the cover of the sarcophagus whereas the Berytian founders had a special liking for the myth of Psyche. We may tentatively say that this division in the types corresponds roughly to what we have said about the coins with respect to the very frequent appearance of Dionysos at Sidon though it was less common at Tyre and Berytos. Does this fact lay more stress upon the argument that Dionysos had an established mystery cult at Tyre

"Divinités et symboles sur les sarcophages de plomb," Mél.USJ, XXI (1937), 203 - 212 and his bibliography p.203. See also e.g., M.Chéhab, "Les sarcophages en plomb du Musée Libanais," Syria, XV (1934), 337 - 350 and Syria, XVI (1935), 51 - 72.

¹R.Dussaud, "Temples et cultes de la triade héliopolitaine à Baalbeck," Syria, XXIII (1943), 59.

²M.Chéhab, "Les sarcophages en plomb du Musée Libanais," Syria, XVI (1935), 66 - 67.

although other sources do not seem to favor it ? The recent discovery of a hypogeum in the vicinity of Tyre,¹ containing no less than 29 lead sarcophagi (from a total of 36) which show a characteristic uniformity in their Bacchic decorative treatment, has led the archaeologist to ascribe this type to Tyrian foundries, and henceforth ascertain the attribution of such types to Tyre. The sarcophagus is given the appearance of a peristylar temple. The small side (corresponding to the head) is decorated with a temple frontal with pediment, acroteria and entablature ; the long sides where the columns are more widely spaced, led the founder to include symbols that were appropriate to the "temple" he wished to represent. The symbols he used were vegetal, consisting of linear borders of ivy, laurel, rosettes and scroll patterns which enclosed square or rectangular panels containing mostly medallioned gorgon heads, sphinxes, dolphins, kantharoi, and bunches of grapes which also appear alternately in the intercolumniations of the frontal and decorate the pediment and the acroteria as well.

These symbols are more than decorative motifs.² Some are apotropaic, such as the gorgons and sphinxes, and are supposed to ward off the evil spirits from the deceased. The others remind us of the mystery cults and the promise of immor-

¹J.Hajjar, "Un hypogée romain à Deb'aal dans la région de Tyr", Bulletin du Musée de Beyrouth, XVIII, 1965, 61 - 104.

²Chéhab, "Les sarcophages en plomb du Musée Libanais," Syria, XVI, 67.

tality they gave the initiates.¹ Thus it is possible that these "temple" sarcophagi stood for the temple of initiation itself.² As to the vegetal motifs, which are quite common in funerary art in Phoenicia during the Roman period, they suggested revival and counterbalanced the gloomy aspect of the sarcophagus.

The other motifs are those that pertain to the myth of Psyche and are more common at Berytos. The myth of Psyche is not Bacchic, but it was combined with the eschatological expectations of the Bacchic Mystai and stood for the purified soul who is admitted to the divine realm of the blessed, through the intercession of Eros, the child-god. This can be explained, says Cumont,³ by the fact that the soul does not always need Bacchic initiation to attain immortality, as philosophy stressed the fact that he who was above materialism would become after his death a pure intelligence and would ascend the divine sphere, where all truth would be revealed to him. This engendered a mystic enthusiasm quite different from the original mirth and gaiety of the thiasoi. The Bacchic vine branch, which had the longest lease of life in sacred art and which is always shown carrying a bunch of grapes, came

¹R. Mouterde, "Divinités et symboles sur les sarcophages de plomb," Mél.USJ, XXI (1937), 207. See also Chéhab, "Lessarcophages en plomb du Musée Libanais," Syria, XIV, 67 - 70.

²Dussaud, 59.

³Franz Cumont, "Un sarcophage d'enfant trouvé à Beyrouth," Syria, X (1929), 232.

to assume the source of everlasting life, the blood of the Lord. This great mystic fervor, says H. Seyrig,¹ which swept throughout paganism may have found its echo in Jesus, "I am the true vine."² Must we deduce that the lead sarcophagi with Bacchic symbols do not really attest the presence of Dionysiac mysteries whose original significance had faded? It is difficult to tell, as this type of sarcophagus appeared in Phoenicia as early as the second half of the first century A.D.³ and in the second century, which as we have said was the greatest period of popularity the Dionysiac mysteries ever knew. This period, as we said, saw the building of the temple of Bacchus and its influence on Phoenicia. This again seems well attested by a lead sarcophagus,⁴ on which we have "Mercure psychopompe, qui guide les ombres vers leur dernière demeure en leur montrant le chemin avec son caducée."⁵

The lead sarcophagi as a whole seem to point to one fact: that "Salvation" is to be sought in Dionysiac symbolism.⁶ As to the evidence concerning the mysteries themselves, it is

¹Ant.syr., V, 116

²John 15 : 1.

³Hajjar, 102 gives this date due to coins of Nero and Vespasian which were found in them. See his discussion on the dating of the lead sarcophagi as a whole, pp.101 - 104.

⁴M. Chéhab, "Les sarcophages en plomb du Musée Libanais," Syria, XIV, N°21.

⁵H. Seyrig, "La triade héliopolitaine", Syria, X (1929), 236.

⁶Dussaud, 61, writes "chez les Syriens le 'salut'".

probable but not certain.

Another aspect of the Dionysiac mysteries in the Roman Age is child initiation.¹ This arose, says Nilsson, from "the sentimental love of children which begins in the Hellenistic Age and persists in the following centuries",² and it was also conditioned by the myth of the childhood of Dionysos reared by the Nysaeon nymphs,³ and Nonnus goes on to tell us that the Phoenician nymph Mystis, while caring for the child, instituted the mysteries,⁴ hence her name. However, Nonnus is a late author and, as Nilsson points out, "there is no proof that such an idea was current three centuries earlier".⁵ The children were thus initiated in the Bacchic mysteries, so that their untimely death would not deprive them from the joys of a happy after life in company of the god.

était spécialement recherché dans le symbolisme dionysiaque."

¹Nilsson, Dionysiac Mysteries etc., pp.106-105.

²Ibid., p.111 and N.1.

³Ibid., p.115 ; Nilsson notes on p.110, that the myth of the childhood of Zeus was adapted to that of Dionysos, as the former seemed apparently a prototype of the latter. This is I think what is depicted on a coin of Sidon (see Hill BMC : Phoenicia, pl.XXIV, 11), where a female figure holds an infant in her left arm and places her right hand on the back of a small goat. The child may be either Zeus or Dionysos (Babelon, PA, N°1818).

⁴Nonnos Dionysiaca ix, 11 f.

⁵M.P.Nilsson, Dionysiac Mysteries etc., p.110.

This is seemingly what is depicted on a marble sarcophagus found in Beirut.¹ Unlike the lead sarcophagi which were of Phoenician make, this one is of Asiatic provenance and belongs to the period of the Antonines,² when such a type was very popular.³

The front panel depicts, according to Cumont,⁴ an initiation ceremony rather than a lesson given by a teacher : the child is presented by his parents to a mystagogue, a priest, who is teaching the child the sacred formulae. Cumont supposes that it is an initiation because the child has long curls, a hair style common to the boys who were consecrated to Dionysos ; upon attaining manhood, they would offer their curls to the god.⁵ This sarcophagus, as a lone example of child initiation into the mysteries, makes it doubtful as to what extent such initiations were practised at Berytos, or in Phoenicia.⁶ The sarcophagus possibly belonged to a wealthy Roman who had it imported to suit his own tastes.

¹Cumont, 217 - 237.

²Cumont, 219.

³Turcan, p.404.

⁴Cumont, 236.

⁵Himerius Or. xxiii. 7, as well as other references given by Cumont in n.3 p.236.

⁶Unless the lead sarcophagi with Bacchic symbols that contained the remains of children meant that the children were also initiated. I don't think this is evident, for these sarco-

Popularity of the Cult

The popularity of the cult in Phoenicia can be detected in profane art, especially in the 2nd century A.D. We have already said that this period was characteristic of the expansion of Dionysiac mysteries in Syria and Phoenicia. This is well shown by the mosaic pavement of the theater of Byblos depicting an effeminate Bacchus,¹ which must be placed in the middle of the second century A.D. the latest.² To the same period belongs "Bacchus and Ariadne", a pavement discovered in Beirut.³ A drunken Bacchus leaning on a satyre, "un motif apprécié des mosaïstes",⁴ is also probably contemporary with the other two. It came from a villa at Byblos along with "Eros and Psyche", and "the Rape of Europa", all three common features of Phoenician lore in that period.

The great mass of Dionysiac motifs, such as Satyres, Eroï, centaurs, masks, torches, thyrsos, altars, kantharoi, and a variety of musical instruments, that were used by potters, mosaicists, sculptors and painters in all artistic fields, strongly attest the fame which the cult enjoyed everywhere in the Empire. Yet Nilsson pertinently notes that the

phagi, see e.g. Chéhab, "Les sarcophages en plomb du Musée Libanais", Syria, XV, N°11 and 22.

¹M. Chéhab, Mosaïques du Liban (BMB, XIV-XV), N°1, pp. 9 f. pl. 1.

²Klaus Parlasca, Review of Mosaïques du Liban, by Maurice Chéhab, Syria, XXXVIII (1961), 324-327 ; especially p. 325 for the dating of the mosaics.

³M. Chéhab, Mosaïques du Liban, N°2, pp. 11-14, pls. II f.

⁴Parlasca, 325 and n. 7. See also Chéhab, Mosaïques du

popularity of the mysteries was not due to a deep-rooted religious feeling, but they appealed to well-to-do people who loved a pleasant and luxurious life. It was the other side of the Dionysiac mysteries, which gave a large place to revelry, that appealed to people "who were fond of the pleasures of life and did not take religion too seriously..., who wanted a little thrill of religion as a spice to the daily routine."* That is why Dionysos had become above all the god of wine and intoxication. If this was the case for the well-to-do people of the cities, a "pastime of the rich," it was not the case for the country-folk and the poor as a whole, who were deprived of the material pleasures and luxury which wealth and city-life afford. They were given to immaterial pursuits and were prone to become adepts of these more exacting philosophico-religious systems, which emphasized purity of the soul and eternal bliss through hardship and toil. As for the rustics, the cult had probably a more primitive significance.

This sociological factor is important, as it shows the importance given to the significance of religious symbolism which was a common aspect of all mystery religions particularly the Dionysiac : - to some the sacred symbol stood for a deep-rooted religious experience ; whereas to others it was merely a decorative element.

du Liban, N°2, pp.15-20, pls IV - VII, 1.

* Nilsson, Dionysiac Mysteries etc., pp.146 - 147.

However the deep-rooted sense of religious experience common to oriental religions may have given more emphasis to the Dionysiac religious symbols. As E. Will¹ pertinently notes that the practice of ornamenting e.g., reliefs with cult objects² "provient d'une tradition bien enracinée" due to "un trait bien marqué de l'esprit romain," because of the abstract nature of their religious conception.³ He goes on to say that, if it were true that the common usage of symbols is linked with the abstract oriental concepts of the East, one would notice that this practice became very widespread in the ancient world after Alexander's conquest, as the political social and religious conditions required new formulae, particularly in Dionysiac symbolism,⁴ which found favorable ground in the Roman spirit.

To conclude, we may say with E. Will that the religious fervor which ran through the initiate found undoubtedly in the representation of symbols in sacred as well as popular art, those objects or instruments which he had used for the accomplishment of the rites, "Le signe de l'acte salutaire qu'il sert à accomplir".⁵ However, it is also true that reli-

¹E. Will, *Le relief cultuel gréco-romain* (Bibliothèque des Ecoles Françaises d'Athènes et de Rome, fasc. 183 ; Paris: E. de Boccard, 1955), pp. 305 - 311.

²A frieze decorated with kantharoi of the second century A.D. from Berytos is quite a good example : It must have decorated some public building or perhaps a sacred precinct as it is Dionysiac. In that case it could have belonged to the entablature of a Berytian temple of Bacchus ; but I dare not say so. For the illustration see Mouterde, Regards sur Beyrouth etc., (plate in text without number).

³Will, pp. 306-307

⁴Will, p. 310

⁵Will, p. 309.

gious symbolism may not always denote a religious sense, far less any religious fervor. The mass of Dionysiac symbols we have, show undoubtedly, the popularity the cult enjoyed.

CHAPTER IV

THE FADING AWAY OF THE CULT

A statue of Dionysos with gilded features was discovered in a fourth century Syrian sanctuary on the Janiculum in the first decade of the twentieth century.* Although it is not a document of Phoenician provenance it nonetheless illustrates the fate Dionysos witnessed at the close of paganism in the fourth century.

Dionysos, originally a vegetation deity, had assumed in the mysteries an eschatological role in providing his worshippers the hope of life after death, a cycle of regeneration which was primitively linked with the seasonal change. The sun was also a mighty god that died and resurrected. The similarity between these deities of regeneration and the invincible sun brought about solar syncretism, a monotheistic religious phenomenon which could only emphasize religious unity, a prologue to the political unity of the empire. Solar syncretism did already exist as early as the first century B.C.

* P. Gauckler, Le sanctuaire syrien du Janicule, (Paris : A. Picard, 1912); for the discussion of the statue see pp. 284-288. See S.M. Savage, "The Cults of Ancient Trastevere," Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome, XVII (1940), p. 48. See also E. Will, "Le ou Les sanctuaires syriens du Janicule," Syria, XXVI (1949), 165-166.

whereby Dionysos was assimilated to the sun¹ and the sun as a dying and rising god became henceforth mixed with the Bacchic mysteries² at a time when solar syncretism tended in an effort of unity to encompass the whole empire in the third century A.D.³ The commonest epithet the god received was ἄνικητος, invictus, which might have described any god in the empire,⁴ as in fact most of these gods belonged to mystery cults that emphasized eschatological expectations.

It was with the capture of Palmyra in 271 A.D. by Aurelian that the cult of Sol was inaugurated in Rome. The emperor after his eastern triumph erected a temple to Sol inaugurating thus one of the most important cults of the empire. A good example here is Malakbêl, the Palmyrene vegetation deity who was identified with the sun,⁵ but still retained his original nature being depicted on the four faces of the altar of the Capitol as the rising sun, his glory in the heavens, his decline and his rebirth from the sacred cypress.⁶ The Dio-

¹A metrical inscription of the first century B.C. from Susa seems to prove this, see F. Cumont, "Inscriptions grecques de Suse," Mémoires de la mission archéologique de Perse, XX (1928), 91. See also SEG, VII (1924), 14, lines 21-25, as quoted by H. Seyrig, "Questions héliopolitaines," Ant.syr., V, 105 n.2.

²H. Seyrig, "Questions héliopolitaines," Ant.syr., V, 105 and n.2.

³H. Seyrig, "Iconographie de Malakbêl," Ant.syr., N°22, II (1938), 100. See also Nilsson, "Sonnenkalender und Sonnenreligion," Archiv für Religionwissenschaft, XXX (1933) 141 ff.

⁴Savage, 52.

⁵H. Seyrig, "Iconographie de Malakbêl," Ant.syr., II, 27.

⁶F. Cumont, "L'autel palmyrénien du Musée du Capitole,"

nysos of the Syrian sanctuary had his face washed with gold to give him the features of the ever shining sun.

The sun thus outshone Dionysos as well as most of the other gods and assumed this unique seat of power and majesty in the heavens which remained in men's minds the summum of energy and life giving power unrivalled and invincible until the ever growing influence which the Nazarene Carpenter had had in preaching of a Greater One defeated Sol under the walls of Rome at the battle of the Milvian Bridge in 312 A.D.

The brilliance of Sol faded gradually - in man's mind - and with it the deities it had assimilated.

x x x x x

Dionysos had lived for over a millenium from his birth in the Aegean to his peak with Alexander, and his Phoenician adventure - I dare say slightly nostalgic, ? - and his double "Phaetonic" end... never to rise again !

H•A• SCVLPSIT BERYTVS A•D• MCMLXVII

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