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# Sanctuaries and villages on Mt Hermon during the Roman period

Julien Aliquot

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The Variety of Local Religious Life  
in the Near East

# Religions in the Graeco-Roman World

*Editors*

H.S. Versnel  
D. Frankfurter  
J. Hahn

VOLUME 164

# The Variety of Local Religious Life in the Near East in the Hellenistic and Roman Periods

*Edited by*

Ted Kaizer



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*This series Religions in the Graeco-Roman World presents a forum for studies in the social and cultural function of religions in the Greek and the Roman world, dealing with pagan religions both in their own right and in their interaction with and influence on Christianity and Judaism during a lengthy period of fundamental change. Special attention will be given to the religious history of regions and cities which illustrate the practical workings of these processes. Enquiries regarding the submission of works for publication in the series may be directed to Professor H.S. Versnel, Herenweg 88, 2361 EV Warmond, The Netherlands, h.s.versnel@hetnet.nl.*

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## CONTENTS

Acknowledgements . . . . .	VII
List of contributors . . . . .	IX
Abbreviations . . . . .	XI
List of plates . . . . .	XV
<i>Ted Kaizer</i>	
Introduction . . . . .	1
<i>Milette Gaifman</i>	
The aniconic image of the Roman Near East . . . . .	37
<i>Julien Aliquot</i>	
Sanctuaries and villages on Mt Hermon during the Roman period . . . . .	73
<i>Arthur Segal</i>	
Religious architecture in the Roman Near East: temples of the basalt lands (Trachon and Hauran) . . . . .	97
<i>Achim Lichtenberger</i>	
Artemis and Zeus Olympios in Roman Gerasa and Seleucid religious policy . . . . .	133
<i>Jonathan Kirkpatrick</i>	
How to be a bad Samaritan: the local cult of Mt Gerizim . . . . .	155
<i>Ted Kaizer</i>	
Man and god at Palmyra: sacrifice, <i>lectisternia</i> and banquets . .	179
<i>Peter W. Haider</i>	
Tradition and change in the beliefs at Assur, Nineveh and Nisibis between 300 BC and AD 300 . . . . .	193

*Lucinda Dirven*

Aspects of Hatrene religion: a note on the statues of kings and nobles from Hatra . . . . .	209
--	-----

*Jürgen Tubach*

Ephraem Syrus and the solar cult . . . . .	247
--	-----

Bibliography . . . . .	263
------------------------	-----

Indices . . . . .	311
-------------------	-----

Index locorum . . . . .	311
-------------------------	-----

Index of geographical and place names . . . . .	319
---	-----

Index of divine and mythological names . . . . .	323
--	-----

Index of personal names . . . . .	326
-----------------------------------	-----

General index . . . . .	328
-------------------------	-----

Plates . . . . .	331
------------------	-----

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## ABBREVIATIONS

<i>AÉ</i>	<i>Année épigraphique</i>
<i>ANRW</i>	H. Temporini and W. Haase (eds.), <i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt</i> (Berlin, 1972-)
<i>BÉ</i>	<i>Bulletin épigraphique</i> (published in <i>Revue des études grecques</i> )
<i>BMC Arabia</i>	G.F. Hill, <i>Catalogue of the Greek Coins of Arabia, Mesopotamia and Persia in the British Museum</i> (London, 1922)
<i>BMC Palestine</i>	G.F. Hill, <i>Catalogue of the Greek Coins of Palestine in the British Museum</i> (London, 1914)
<i>BMC Phoenicia</i>	G.F. Hill, <i>Catalogue of the Greek Coins of Phoenicia in the British Museum</i> (London, 1910)
<i>BMC Roman Empire</i>	H. Mattingly, <i>Coins of the Roman Empire in the British Museum</i> (London, 1910-)
<i>CCSL</i>	<i>Corpus Christianorum</i> , series Latina (Turnhout)
<i>CIG</i>	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Graecarum</i>
<i>CIL</i>	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum</i>
<i>CIS</i>	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Semiticarum</i>
<i>CPJ</i>	V. Tcherikover, A. Fuks and M. Stern (eds.), <i>Corpus Papyrorum Judaicarum I-III</i> (Cambridge, Mass., 1957-64)
<i>CRAI</i>	Académie des Inscriptions & Belles-Lettres, <i>Comptes rendus</i>
<i>CSCO</i>	<i>Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium</i>
<i>CUF</i>	<i>Collection des universités de France</i> (Paris)
<i>DDD</i>	K. van der Toorn, B. Becking and P.W. van der Horst (eds.), <i>Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible</i> (Leiden, 1995; 1999 <sup>2</sup> )
<i>FGrH</i>	F. Jacoby (ed.), <i>Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker</i> (Leiden, 1923-)
H1,2,etc.	Inscriptions from Hatra; same numbering adopted by Vattioni (1981); id. (1994); Aggoula (1991); Beyer (1998)

- I.Ephesos* H. Wankel e.a. (eds.), *Die Inschriften von Ephesos. Inschriften griechischer Städte aus Kleinasien* (Bonn, 1979-)
- IGLS* L. Jalabert, R. Mouterde e.a., *Inscriptions grecques et latines de la Syrie* (Paris: Geuthner, 1929-)
- Inv.* J. Cantineau e.a., *Inventaire des inscriptions de Palmyre I-XII* (Beirut/Damascus, 1930-1975)
- IScM* *Inscriptiones Daciae et Scythiae Minoris antiquae* (Bucarest, 1975-)
- LIMC* *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae* (Zürich, 1981-)
- PAM* *Polish Archaeology in the Mediterranean*, published by the Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology, Warsaw University
- PAT* D.R. Hillers and E. Cussini, *Palmyrene Aramaic Texts* (Baltimore–London, 1996)
- PAAES* *Publications of an American Archaeological Expedition to Syria in 1899-1900* (New York): R. Garrett, I: *Topography and Itinerary* (1914); H.C. Butler, II: *Architecture and Other Arts* (1903); W.K. Prentice, III: *Greek and Latin Inscriptions* (1908); E. Littman, IV: *Semitic Inscriptions* (1904).
- PUAES* *Syria: Publications of Princeton University Archaeological Expedition to Syria in 1904-1905 and 1909* (Leiden): H.C. Butler, F.A. Norris and E.R. Stoeber, I: *Geography and Itinerary* (1930); H.C. Butler, II.A-B: *Architecture* (1907-20); E. Littman e.a. and W.K. Prentice, III.A-B: *Greek and Latin Inscriptions* (1907-22); E. Littman, IV.A-D: *Semitic Inscriptions* (1914-49)
- RE* *Paulys Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaften* (Stuttgart, 1894-)
- Rep. I-IX* M. Rostovtzeff e.a. (eds.), *The Excavations at Dura-Europos, Conducted by Yale University and the French Academy of Inscriptions and Letters. Preliminary Reports* (New Haven, 1929-1952)
- RES* *Répertoire d'épigraphie sémitique I-VII* (Paris, 1900-1950)

- RPC* A. Burnett e.a., *Roman Provincial Coinage* (London–Paris): I. *The Julio Claudian Period* (1992, 1998<sup>2</sup>); II. *The Flavians* (1999); Suppl. I (1998)
- Schürer, *HJP* E. Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ (175 BC-AD 135)*, I-II rev. ed. by G. Vermes and F. Millar, III rev. ed. by G. Vermes, F. Millar and M. Goodman (Edinburgh, 1973-87)
- SEG* *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum* (Amsterdam, 1923-)



## LIST OF PLATES

- I Map of the Hellenistic and Roman Near East. © Michael Sommer.
- II Coin of Medaba from the reign of Geta. From Kindler (1983), Pl.V, n°10.
- III Coin of Adra'a from the reign of Antoninus Pius. From Kindler (1983), Pl.V, n°5.
- IV Coin of Bostra from the reign of Elagabalus. From Kindler (1983), Pl.III, n°33a.
- V Eye stele from Wadi Siyyagh. Photo © Andreas Kropp.
- VI Face stele from Petra of the Goddess of Hayyan son of Nybat. Photo © Andreas Kropp.
- VII Coin of Bostra from the reign of Commodus. From Kindler (1983), Pl.II, n°18.
- VIII Coin of Bostra from the reign of Caracalla. From Kindler (1983), Pl.III, n°29.
- IX Map of the sanctuaries on Mt Hermon during the Roman period. © J. Aliquot.
- X Greek inscription from Qasr Antar in the British Museum. After Clermont-Ganneau (1903b), pl.VIII.
- XI Greek inscription from Qasr Antar, detail of lines 2-8. Photo J. Aliquot, courtesy of the British Museum.
- XII The distribution of the temples in the basalt lands. Drawn by E. Dvorjetski. © A. Segal.
- XIII Slem: general view of the temple from the east as photographed by T. Dumas in 1875. From PEF Photographic Archive, London.
- XIV Slem: temple's plan and suggested reconstruction. From *PUAES* II.A.5 (1915), p.357, ill.320.
- XV Mushennef: schematic plan of the sanctuary and the temple of Zeus and Athena. From *PAAES* II (1903), p.347, fig.122.
- XVI Mushennef: temple of Zeus and Athena, suggested reconstruction. From Ward (1907a), pl.I.
- XVII Hebran: temple's plan and suggested reconstruction. From *PUAES* II.A.5 (1915), p.324, ill.296.



- XVIII Hebran: architectural decorations of the temple. From *PUAES* II.A.5 (1915), pl.XX.
- XIX Atil: general view of the southern temple, drawn by E. Rey in 1857. From Rey (1860), pl. IX.
- XX Atil: suggested reconstruction of the southern temple; view from the east. From *PAAES* II (1903), p.345, fig.121.
- XXI Is-Sanamem: temple of Tyche, plan and suggested reconstruction. From *PUAES* II.A.5 (1915), p.317, ill.289.
- XXII Is-Sanamem: general view of the *naos* and the *adyton*, drawn by Ch. Barry in 1819. From W.J. Bankes Collection, Dorset County Archive, Dorchester.
- XXIII Kanawat: temple of Zeus, plan and suggested reconstruction. From *PUAES* II.A.5 (1915), p.349, ill.315.
- XXIV Kanawat: temple of Zeus, suggested reconstruction of the entrance front. From *PUAES* II.A.5 (1915), pl. XXII.
- XXV Brekeh: east façade and south elevation of the temple, suggested reconstruction. From *PUAES* II.A.7 (1919), pl.XXIX.
- XXVI Mismiyeh: general view of the temple from the east, photographed by T. Dumas in 1875. From PEF Photographic Archive, London.
- XXVII Mismiyeh: general view of the *naos* and the *adyton*, drawn by Ch. Barry in 1819. From W.J. Bankes Collection, Dorset County Archive, Dorchester.
- XXVIII Mismiyeh: east façade and general view of the temple, suggested reconstruction, drawn by Eran Ben-Dov. From A. Segal's collection.
- XXIX Kanawat: temple of Helios, schematic plan. From *PAAES* II (1903), p.354, fig.125.
- XXX Kanawat, temple of Helios, view from the southeast. From *PAAES* II (1903), p.355.
- XXXI Suweida: peripteral temple, schematic plan. From *PAAES* II (1903), p.327, fig.118.
- XXXII Suweida: peripteral temple, general view, photographed in 1900. From Brünnow and von Domaszewski (1909), fig.988.

- XXXIII Suweida: peripteral temple, general view; suggested reconstruction, drawn by Eran Ben-Dov. From A. Segal's collection.
- XXXIV Il-Haiyat: plan and suggested reconstruction of the *Kalybe* temple. From *PAAES* II (1903), p.397, fig.142, and p.398, fig.143.
- XXXV Umm Iz-Zetun: suggested reconstruction of the *Kalybe* temple. From de Vogüé (1867), pl.VI.
- XXXVI Shakka: *Kalybe* temple, suggested reconstruction of the entrance front. From de Vogüé (1867), pl.VI.
- XXXVII Philippopolis: city-plan. Note the location of the *Hexastyle* and the *Kalybe* temples. From *PAAES* II (1903), p.376, fig.130.
- XXXVIII Philippopolis: *Hexastyle temple*, suggested reconstruction, drawn by Eran Ben-Dov. From A. Segal's collection.
- XXXIX Kanawat: general view from the north of the Byzantine religious complex, photographed in 1900. Note the columns of *Temple C* incorporated into the Byzantine church. From PEF Photographic Archive, London.
- XL Kanawat: *Temple C*, schematic plan. From *PAAES* II (1903), p.358, fig.126.
- XLI Kanawat: *Temple C*, suggested reconstruction, drawn by Eran Ben-Dov. From A. Segal's collection.
- XLII Philippopolis: general view of the *Kalybe* from the east, photographed by Hazel Dodge in 1985 before its partial restoration. From A. Segal's collection.
- XLIII Philippopolis: schematic plan of the *Kalybe*. From Amer and Gawlikowski (1985), p.4, fig.2.
- XLIV Philippopolis: suggested reconstruction of the *Kalybe*, drawn by Eran Ben-Dov. From A. Segal's collection.
- XLV Bostra: the *Nymphaeum* and the *Kalybe* as photographed in 1900. From PEF Photographic Archive, London.
- XLVI Bostra: city centre. Note the spatial relationship between the *Nymphaeum* and the *Kalybe*. From *PUAES* II.A.4 (1914), p.253, ill.226.
- XLVII Bostra: suggested reconstruction of the *Kalybe*, drawn by Eran Ben-Dov. From A. Segal's collection.
- XLVIII Plan of Gerasa. After Seigne (2002), p.6, fig.2.

- XLIX Plan of the temple of Zeus Olympios at Gerasa. After Seigne (2002), p.9, fig.7.
- L Tetradrachm of Antiochos IV, mint of Antioch. Obverse: head of Antiochos IV, r.; reverse: Zeus Olympios: ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ / ANTIOXΟΥ (to r.); ΘΕΟΥ / ΕΠΙΦΑΝΟΥΣ (to l.); 31mm. After Newell (1917-8), p.22, n<sup>o</sup>54.
- LI Plan of the Artemision in Gerasa. After Parapetti (2002), p.26, fig.34.
- LII Bronze coin of Gerasa. Obverse: bust of Nero, l.; reverse: Artemis standing, r.: ΛΑΡ (130 = AD 67-8) ΓΕΡΑ; 11gr; 22mm. After Rosenberger (1978), p.50, n<sup>o</sup>4.
- LIII Bronze coin of Gerasa. Obverse: bust of Hadrian, r.: ΔΙ (14 = AD 131-2) ΑΥΤΚΤΡ / ΑΔΡΙΑΝΟΣΕΒ; reverse: bust of Artemis with bow and quiver, r.: ΡΤΕΜΙΣΤΥΧΗ; 12,81gr; 27mm. After Classical Numismatic Group, Inc., *Mail Bid Sale* 61, Closing Wednesday, September 25, 2002, p.93 Lot 1070. For the coin's date, see Stein (1990), p.185-6.
- LIV Bronze coin of Gerasa. Obverse: bust of Commodus, r.: ΑΥΤ Κ Λ ΑΥΡ / ΚΟΜΜΟΔΟΝ; reverse: Artemis as huntress, r.: ΑΡΤΕΜΙΣ ΤΥ / ΧΗ / ΓΕΡΑΣΩΝ; 14,67gr; 26mm. After Spijkerman (1978), p.162-3, n<sup>o</sup>20.
- LV Bronze coin of Gerasa. Obverse: bust of Elagabalus, r.: ΑΥΤ ΚΑΙΣΑΡ; reverse: Artemis standing, r., in distyle temple: ΓΕΡΑΣ; 5,6gr; 16mm. After Lichtenberger (2003), p.453, MZ108.
- LVI Bronze coin of Gerasa. Obverse: bust of Zeus, r.; reverse: cornucopiae: ΛΑΡ (130 = AD 67-8) ΓΕ / ΡΑΣΑ; 3,53gr; 15mm. After Spijkerman (1978), p.158-9, n<sup>o</sup>1.
- LVII Bronze coin of Gerasa. Obverse: bust of Tyche, r.; reverse: laurel-wreath: ΛΑΡ (130 = AD 67/68) ΓΕΡΑ / ΣΑ; 8,53gr; 16/18mm. Cf. Spijkerman (1978), p.158-9, n<sup>o</sup>2.
- LVIII Bronze coin of Gerasa. Obverse: bust of Marcus Aurelius, r.: ΑΥΤ ΚΑΙΣ Μ / ΑΥΡ ΑΝΤΩ; Reverse: Tyche standing, behind her, at r., male figure holding spear: ΑΝΤΩΠΡ / ΧΡΤΩΠΡΓΕ; 7,84gr; 22/24mm. Cf. Spijkerman (1978), p.160-1, n<sup>o</sup>9.

- LIX Bronze coin of Gerasa. Obverse: bust of Lucius Verus, l.: ΑΥΤΟΚ ΚΑΙΣΑΡ / ΛΟΥΚΙ ΟΥΗ; reverse: Tyche standing, behind her, at r., male figure holding spear: ΑΝΤΩΠΡΧ / ΡΤ / Ω / ΠΡ / ΓΕ; 11,09gr; 25/24mm. Cf. Spijkerman (1978), p.160-1, n°16.
- LX Bronze coin of Gerasa. Obverse: bust of Marcus Aurelius, r.: ΑΥΤ Κ Μ / ΑΥΡ ΑΝΤ; reverse: Tyche type Antioch: ΑΝΤΩΠΡΧ / ΡΤΩΠΡΓΕ; 17mm. Cf. Spijkerman (1978), p.160-1, n°11.
- LXI Gad relief from Dura Europos, Yale University Art Gallery. 1938.5314. © T. Kaizer.
- LXII Bronze coin of Caesarea ad Libanum from the time of Elagabalus. Reverse: tetrastyle temple with Tyche being crowned by Alexander the Great: COLCES, in ex: ΑΛ; 6,94gr; 24/27mm. Cf. Hill (1910), p.110, n°8.
- LXIII Bronze coin of Gerasa. Obverse: bust of Elagabalus, r.: ΑΥΤΟ ΚΑΙΣΑΡ ΑΝΤΩΝΙΝΟΣ; reverse: bust of Alexander the Great, r.: ΝΑΡΟΣ ΜΑΚΕΔΩ; 6,48gr; 18mm. Cf. Spijkerman (1978), p.166-7, n°35.
- LXIV Bronze coin of Hippos. Obverse: bust of Elagabalus, r.: ΑΥΤ Κ Μ / ΑΝΤΩΝΕΙ; reverse: Zeus Arotios in tetrastyle temple: ΑΝΤΙΟΧ ΠΡ ΙΠ ΙΕΡ ΑΣΥΛ, in pediment ΖΕΥΣ; 12,45gr; 29/30mm. Cf. Spijkerman (1978), p.176-7, n°29.
- LXV Bronze coin of Hippos. Obverse: bust of Faustina Minor, r.: ΦΑΥΣΤΕΙΝΑ / ΣΕΒΑΣΤΗ; reverse: Zeus Olympios, r.: ΑΝΤΙΠ / ΡΙΠΙΕΡ / ΑΣ; 6,71gr; 20mm. Cf. Martini (1992), p.468, n°1094.
- LXVI Bronze coin of Gadara. Obverse: bust of Lucius Verus, r.: ΑΥΤ ΚΑΙΣΑΡ / Λ ΑΥΡ ΟΥΗΡΟΣ; reverse: laureated bust of Heracles with thunderbolt, r.: ΠΟ[Μ]ΓΑ / ΔΡΑ SKΣ (226 = AD 162/3); 12,60gr.; 27/28mm. Cf. Sternberg (1998), p.54, n°416.
- LXVII Bronze coin of Gadara. Obvers: bust of Elagabalus, r.: ΑΥΤ Κ ΜΑ / ΤΩΝΙΝΟΣ; reverse: Heracles with thunderbolt fighting snake-like monster: ΓΑΔΑΡ / ΕΩΝ / Κ Σ Ι Α ΑΥ; 10,24gr; 24/26mm. Cf. Spijkerman (1978), p.150-1, n°80.

- LXVIII Bronze coin of Gadara. Obverse: bust of Lucius Verus, r.: ΑΥΤΚΑΙΣΑΡΑ / ΑΥΠΟΥΗΡΟΣ; reverse: Zeus Olympios, l. in tetrastyle temple: ΠΟΓΑΔΑΡΕΩΝ / ΚΣΥ // ΙΑΑ, in pediment ΕΚΣ (225 = AD 161/2); 10,50gr; 27mm. Cf. Classical Numismatic Group (2003), p.100, Lot 727.
- LXIX Denar from an eastern mint (Antioch?). Obverse: bust of Elagabalus, r.: *ANTONINVS PIVS FEL AVG*; reverse: Sol rad. walking r., in his r. hand thunderbolt, l. hand with flowing cloak: *SOLIPRO / P / VGNATORI*; 3,65gr; 18mm. Cf. Lanz, *Numismatik Lanz München, Auktion 102. Münzen der Antike*. 28. Mai 2001, p.88, n°804.
- LXX Groundplan of Hatra. After the map drawn by the 'Mission Archeologica Italiana a Hatra'.
- LXXI Life-size statue of a Hatrene king. Drawing © L. Dirven.
- LXXII Life-size statue of a Hatrene prince (Abdsamya?) from the Square Temple in the central temple complex. Drawing © L. Dirven.
- LXXIII Life-size statue of the priest Bara from Temple 5. Drawing © L. Dirven.
- LXXIV Life-size statue of a military from Temple 4. Drawing © L. Dirven.
- LXXV Life-size statue of a Hatrene noble, with scroll or money-bag, from Temple 3. Drawing © Sylvia Winckelmann.
- LXXVI Life-size statue of princess Dushfari from Temple 5. Drawing © L. Dirven.

# SANCTUARIES AND VILLAGES ON MT HERMON DURING THE ROMAN PERIOD

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## INTRODUCTION

The area called ‘Lebanon’ in Antiquity did not only include Mt Lebanon, that is the range in the hinterland of the Phoenician coastal cities, but also the parallel range of the Antilebanon with its southern extension, Jabal esh-Sheikh or Mt Hermon.<sup>1</sup> Since archaeological work began in this region of the Near East, great progress has been reported. Of the ca one hundred cult sites, five have been studied (Har Senaim) or are still under investigation (‘Ayn Qaniya, Chhîm, Mnin, Yanouh).<sup>2</sup> Excavations and intensive surveys have already changed previous perceptions of settlement patterns on the mountain, while revealing various forms of cultic continuity from the Hellenistic up to the Roman period.

As early as 1939, in his review article on D. Krencker and W. Zschietzschmann’s invaluable *Römische Tempel in Syrien*, H. Seyrig stressed the need for a historical study of Lebanon’s religious life. As he rightly pointed out, the many temples which the German architects had meticulously described might well be “the clue to an important social and economic change that [would] deserve to be one day the focus of a study.”<sup>3</sup> So far his advice has gone unheeded. Up to now, scholars have dealt either with the architecture of the temples

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<sup>1</sup> I wish to thank T. Kaizer for inviting me to present this paper at the Corpus Christi Classical Seminar on 11 February 2004. Many thanks are also due to P.-L. Gatier, B. Guyard, C. Rabier, M. Sartre and J.-B. Yon for commenting on earlier drafts of my work. Of course, none of them is responsible for any of the views expressed here.

<sup>2</sup> Waliszewski (1999), Ortali-Tarazi and Waliszewski (2002a) and (2002b), with the reports in *PAM* 8-14 (1997-2003), for Chhîm on Mt Lebanon; Gatier e.a. (2001) and (2002), for Yanouh and the Nahr Ibrahim valley; Omeri (forthcoming), for ‘Ayn Qaniya (Mt Hermon) and Mnin (Qalamoun); Dar (1988) and (1993), for Har Senaim and the southern part of Mt Hermon. See also the copiously illustrated book by Nordiguian (2005).

<sup>3</sup> Seyrig (1939), p.441.

for which Lebanon is universally renowned, or with the epigraphic and literary sources. Some of them have further admitted that the creation of the sacred landscape was influenced not only by the natural conditions of the mountain, but also, and above all, by its historical and social context: that is certainly what G. Taylor and M. Tallon meant, when the former saw “the hand of a single master builder” behind the religious architecture,<sup>4</sup> or when the latter put forward the “Roman peace” to account for the high concentration of cult sites in Lebanon.<sup>5</sup> Generally speaking, previous interpretations rightly contextualized the religious building, but they failed to explain why Lebanon was the home of so many sanctuaries during the Roman period. In order to answer this question, I will outline the social dimensions of religious life on a local scale, by dealing with the sanctuaries and villages on Mt Hermon during the Roman period. The wealth of antiquities on Mt Hermon (mainly Roman rural shrines, tombs, and ancient settlements) has been acknowledged for a long time, and Greek epigraphy provides a great deal of information about the local cults.<sup>6</sup> In addition, I will also account for the results of two epigraphic survey campaigns which have been carried out on the Lebanese and Syrian sides of the mountain since September 2002.<sup>7</sup> This study will emphasize on three aspects of the local religious life, first by reassessing the documentation available on the pagan sanctuaries that formed the sacred landscape, then by addressing the issue of the cults and the myths of Mt Hermon, and finally by making assumptions about the relationships of the mountain dwellers’ communities with their temples.

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<sup>4</sup> Taylor (1971), p.17.

<sup>5</sup> Tallon (1967), p.249.

<sup>6</sup> The celebrated Hellenistic dedication of Tel Dan was written in Greek and Aramaic. See *BE* (1977), n°542 (Robert), and Millar (1987), p.132-3. In the city of Paneas, a few texts were written in Latin during the Roman period. See Dar (1993), p.248, for a photograph of a Safaitic inscription that was discovered on the southern slopes of Mt Hermon. However, these are the exceptions that prove the rule: nearly all inscriptions are in Greek and date back to the Roman period.

<sup>7</sup> These campaigns aim at collecting the Hermonian inscriptions as part of the program of the *Inscriptions grecques et latines de la Syrie (IGLS)*, under the supervision of J.-C. Decourt (MOM-HISOMA, Lyon), with the agreement of the General Directorate of Antiquities of Lebanon, and the General Directorate of Antiquities and Museums of Syria. As regards the epigraphic evidence, I have included in the footnotes references to the main publications only, and the reader is referred to the forthcoming corpus for an exhaustive bibliography.

## THE SACRED LANDSCAPE OF MT HERMON

Mt Hermon extends over an area of 50 km from north to south by 30 km from east to west, and reaches its highest point at 2814 m. Tracing the original features of the mountain in the Near East, the French geographers R. Thoumin and É. de Vaumas described it as a real 'pays', that is a natural country of about 1000 sq km, which can be crossed in one day, and whose dwellers share the same life-style.<sup>8</sup> In the Old Testament, Mt Hermon was sometimes considered as a natural border of the Land of the Hebrews to the north. At the southern foot of the mountain, Antiochos III gained a decisive victory over the Lagid general Scopas in 200 BC, after which the Seleucids recovered the area for a while. They were soon replaced by the Ituraeans, whose principality at first developed over all Lebanon in the mid-second century BC. After the fall of the Ituraean rulers of Chalcis ad Libanum (Mejdel Aanjar), the southern side of Mt Hermon belonged from time to time to the principalities of the Herodian kings Agrippa I and Agrippa II, until the end of the first century AD, whereas the northwestern and northeastern sides were divided between Sidon and Damascus under the reign of Tiberius, most likely after the Roman empire had annexed the Ituraean tetrarchy of Abilene.<sup>9</sup> Afterwards, three cities shared Mt Hermon among themselves from the end of the first century AD, as the use of the civic eras of Sidon to the west, Damascus to the east, and Paneas to the south implies. The Acts of the Christian councils and the epigraphic evidence show that, in the Early Byzantine period, the border between the two provinces of Phoenicia ran between

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<sup>8</sup> On Mt Hermon as a geographical 'pays' in the beginning of the twentieth century, see the thesis of Thoumin (1936), esp. p.261-71. Vaumas (1954), p.316-7, only touched on the natural features of the Hermonian environment in his *Étude de géographie physique*, his approach being that of P. Vidal de la Blache (1845-1918), founder of the French school of geography, who principally considered the 'régions' and the 'pays' as natural divisions of space. Brunet (1993), p.371-3, discussed the antiquated notion of 'pays', which could probably account for the set-up of the peasant communities who lived in the Near Eastern villages during the Roman period. See Tate (1997) for an attempt at a regionalization of the Syrian countryside in the Roman empire, and Gatier (2005) for an assessment of recent research on the Early Byzantine villages.

<sup>9</sup> I have offered a detailed account of Lebanon's history under the client kings in Aliquot (1999-2003).



Rakhle and Burqush northwards, and east of Paneas' territory southwards.

The presence of many rural temples on both sides of the mountain has been acknowledged for a long time. In the nineteenth century, European travellers either followed the eastern road, leading from Baniyas to Damascus, or took the western road, from Wadi et-Taim to Hasbaya, Rachaiya, and the Lebanese Beqâ' valley. Along the way, they were able to tour the Hermonian temples. A similar approach to the sacred landscape was still that by G. Taylor in the sixties and in the beginning of the seventies: even though this Professor at the American University of Beirut published pictures of some previously unknown Roman temples, he acknowledged that his *Pictorial Guide* entitled *The Roman Temples of Lebanon* was "a book by an amateur, for the amateur."<sup>10</sup> The evidence gleaned by the travellers remains precious today, especially with regard to religious buildings which disappeared long ago.<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, even though D. Krencker and W. Zschietzschmann dealt in detail with ten cult sites,<sup>12</sup> the lack of a comprehensive architectural and historical study is still to be deplored.

The epigraphic survey campaigns of 2002 and 2003 allowed to update the corpus of the Hermonian sanctuaries [PLATE IX]. The southern part of the mountain, north of Baniyas, was not included in the surveyed area. However, recent publications, such as Sh. Dar's book *Settlements and Cult Sites on Mount Hermon* (1993), partly filled this want. The campaigns led to the identification of four new or neglected cult sites: 'Ayn Aata in Lebanon,<sup>13</sup> 'Ayn Qaniya near the Syrian checkpoint of Jdeidet Yabous, Korsei el-Debb near Kafr

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<sup>10</sup> Taylor (1971), for the temples of Bakka, Haloua, Mdoukha, Qalaat al-Amoud and Yanta, all of them located in present-day Lebanon. See also the article by Tallon (1967), especially for the information on the paths on the mountain.

<sup>11</sup> E.g. Saulcy (1853), II, p.564-8, with the sketches of his pl.50, for the temple of Kafr Hawar, which has been merged into modern houses. Saulcy wrongly took the white limestone of Kafr Hawar's temple for marble. In October 2003, I noticed that there was no trace of marble among the last remnants of the temple, the ashlar of which probably came from an ancient open cast quarry south of the modern village.

<sup>12</sup> Krencker and Zschietzschmann (1938), p.205-69 and pl.83-116: el-Aaqbe (Akraba), 'Ayn Horche, Bakka, Deir el-Aachaiyer, el-Habbariye, Libbaya and Nebi Safa within the Lebanese territory; Burqush, Hine and Rakhle within the Syrian territory.

<sup>13</sup> Mouterde (1951-2), p.26-7, for the lintel of the unpublished temple.

Hawar, and Qasr Chbib above Arne.<sup>14</sup> The corpus includes at least twenty-five cult sites spread over 1500 sq km, including the four places already cited and the two sanctuaries of Har Senaim and Qalaat Bustra, which have been studied by Israeli archaeologists.<sup>15</sup> I will not discuss here the nature of all antiquities discovered on the mountain, nor forget the results of a recent reassessment of the sacred landscape of northern Syria: in 1999, O. Callot and P.-L. Gatier showed that many identifications were dubious, as scholars have sometimes mistaken funerary buildings for temples. Since Roman monumental tombs can also be found on Mt Hermon, as in Saidnaya (Antilebanon), the identification of temples on the five sites of Haouch Hafoufa, Mazraat el-Faqaa, Qalaat al-Amoud, Qatana and Kafr Dura remains questionable, or at least requires further investigation.<sup>16</sup>

Such a number of Roman sanctuaries at high altitude, most of them surrounded by tombs and often connected with ancient settlements, shows that Mt Hermon was continuously inhabited during the first three centuries AD. The cult sites are seemingly concentrated in the northern part of the mountain. Yet their geographical distribution is quite homogeneous, and contrasts with that of sanctuaries on Mt Lebanon and northern Antilebanon, which was less regular. The difference with the territory of Antioch in northern Syria is also noteworthy: while at present the archaeological remains are much more numerous there, the number of Roman cult sites (twelve against twenty-five) is smaller in the Antiochene than on Mt Hermon.

Krencker and Zschietzschmann were the first to emphasize the peculiarities of religious architecture on Mt Hermon. The recent survey confirmed the broad outlines of their conclusions. On the one hand, the general characteristics of the Hermonian temples may be described negatively: their plan was not prostyle and their outside order was not Corinthian.<sup>17</sup> On the other hand, a single opening, instead of a triple door, gave access to the cella, contrary to what can

<sup>14</sup> Omeri (forthcoming), for 'Ayn Qaniya, Korsei el-Debb and Qasr Chbib.

<sup>15</sup> Dar (1993), p.28-92 (Har Senaim), and p.93-103 (Qalaat Bustra).

<sup>16</sup> Taylor (1971), p.150, pl.157-8 (Haouch Hafoufa), and p.155, pl.163-4 (Qalaat al-Amoud); Dar (1993), p.107-9 (Kafr Dura). The archaeological remains of Mazraat el-Faqaa are not published. The temple of Qatana was only acknowledged by Kremer (1853), p.173-4, without any sketch.

<sup>17</sup> With the exception of the front door in the small apsidal temple of Burqush, see Krencker and Zschietzschmann (1938), pl.101. In Bakka, I have seen an isolated

be found in several temples of the Beqâ' valley and Mt Lebanon (from Hosn Sfire to Kadesh). This characteristic left space on the front wall for ornamentation, especially niches or simple recesses.<sup>18</sup> The inner system of stairs leading onto the adyton was quite remarkable in a few temples,<sup>19</sup> whereas the structure of the adyton and the size of the crypts underneath show similarities with the architecture of the Hauran.

The results of the survey stressed an underestimated aspect of the sanctuaries: following the examples of the small apsidal temple of Rakhle and the shrine of Har Senaim, they were very often hollowed out of the rock. A monumental rock-cut altar has been spotted in Korsei el-Debb, and the two sanctuaries of Qasr Chbib had their northern wall completely carved out of the rock scarp; in the western sanctuary, the temple was also hewn in its back part, in the place of the adyton. This kind of architecture compares well with that of mountainous sanctuaries on Mt Lebanon and Antilebanon,<sup>20</sup> and that of the Panion, in front of the natural grotto and the rock scarp of Banias.<sup>21</sup> Moreover, all this echoes Strabo's assertions (*Geogr.* 16.2.18-20 (755-756)) about the lifestyle of the 'Arab and Ituraean' mountain dwellers who are said to have settled there since the middle of the second century BC. But that is not to say that all sanctuaries necessarily went back to the Hellenistic period.

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Corinthian capital, which could be related to the temple which was briefly studied by Krencker and Zschietzschmann (1938), p.175, and Taylor (1971), p.79.

<sup>18</sup> Krencker and Zschietzschmann (1938), p.208 (Nebi Safa), p.216-8 fig.324-5 and 327 (el-Habbariye), p.252 fig.107 and 109 ('Ayn Horche), p.261 fig.403 (Deir el-Aachaiyer); Omeri (forthcoming) for 'Ayn Qaniya and Qasr Chbib. An inscription of Rakhle reminds of the building of two niches in the temple of Leucothea 'at the own expense of the goddess, and under the supervision of the priest Theudas'. See Clermont-Ganneau (1898), p.100-1.

<sup>19</sup> Krencker and Zschietzschmann (1938), pl.86 (Nebi Safa), pl.89-90 (el-Habbariye) and maybe pl.100 (Burqush).

<sup>20</sup> Krencker and Zschietzschmann (1938), p.40-6, for the great sanctuary of Qalaat Faqra on Mt Lebanon; Omeri (forthcoming) for Mnin in Qalamoun.

<sup>21</sup> Ma'oz (1994-9), p.90-5 and p.100 (archaeological remains and coins). See also Wilson (2004). According to a dedicatory inscription of Paneas, engraved above the arch of a niche hollowed out in the rock scarp, 'Valerius -panos priest of the god Pan (consecrated a statue of) the Lady Nemesis and her temple which was completed by cutting away the rock underneath'. Waddington (1870), n°1893; Brünnow (1898), p.87 n°7; Brünnow and Domaszewski (1905), p.249 b, ll.3-5: Οὐαλέριος [-] ΠΑΝΟΣ, ἱερεὺς θεοῦ Πανός, τὴν / Κυρίαν Νέμεσιν καὶ τὸν σὺν τῇ ὑπ' αὐτοῦ κοίλαν/θείσῃ πέτρα τελεσιουργη[θή]ντα ναὸν αὐτῆς.

Precise dating of the Hermonian sanctuaries is, at present, impossible. In 1938, Krencker and Zschietzschmann argued that all temples dated back to the Roman period. More specifically, the German architects were inclined to think that most of them had been built between the second half of the second century and the end of the third century AD, with very few exceptions.<sup>22</sup> It is indeed worth observing that the techniques which were used in their construction differ from those most recently encountered by archaeologists in some Phoenician shrines and buildings from the Achaemenid and Hellenistic periods (Tyre, Kharayeb, Tel Anafa). They also differ from the Hellenistic architecture of the Hauran and the Jawlan, according to recent reports on the sites of Khirbet Massakeb and Khirbet Zemel.<sup>23</sup> Nevertheless, Krencker and Zschietzschmann further recognized that the religious architecture of Mt Hermon and Antilebanon differed much more from Graeco-Roman standards than that of Mt Lebanon and Beqâ' valley, which makes the use of their dating criteria quite problematic. On this point, the epigraphic evidence provides complementary information about various stages of religious construction and cultic activity from the late first century AD up to the early fourth: the temple of Aaiha was completed in AD 92;<sup>24</sup> at Segeira, building activities in Leucothea's sanctuary occurred between AD 103 and 116;<sup>25</sup> at Hine, the enclosure wall of the sanctuary was built during the governorship of Pertinax in Syria, between AD 179 and 182;<sup>26</sup> at Qasr Hammara, the village community of Ainkania bore the costs of a religious building after AD 212;<sup>27</sup> in Arne, the temple of Zeus was refurbished in AD 329 or 330.<sup>28</sup> With regard to Deir el-Aachaiyer and Kfar Qouq, cultic activities were performed there in AD 132 and 206 respectively.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Namely the two temples of Khirbet el-Knise, the temple of Bakka and the small apsidal temple of Burqush, which were presumably built during the first century AD, according to Krencker and Zschietzschmann (1938), p.296.

<sup>23</sup> See Kalos (1999) for the Hellenistic sanctuary of Khirbet Massakeb; Hartal (2002) on Khirbet Zemel.

<sup>24</sup> Mouterde (1951-2), p.33-5 n°4.

<sup>25</sup> Aliquot (2002).

<sup>26</sup> Fossey (1897), p.62 n°70; Mouterde (1959), pl.XI (copy of O. Puchstein).

<sup>27</sup> Ghadban (1985 [1988]), p.304-9.

<sup>28</sup> Fossey (1897), p.63-4 n°73; Mouterde (1959), p.83-4 n°20.

<sup>29</sup> Jalabert (1907), p.278-80 (Deir el-Aachaiyer); Ghadban (1985 [1988]), p.300 n.47 (Kfar Qouq): I read 'year 306' (i.e. AD 206) instead of 'year 390' (Ghadban).

A sanctuary of Leucothea operated in Rakhla from at least AD 60 up to 294, and continued to be improved and restored until the end of the third century.<sup>30</sup> Thus, all dated inscriptions tend to confirm that the known Hermonian sanctuaries were built and refurbished between the end of the first century AD and the beginning of the fourth century AD.

Consequently, it is not unlikely that permanent religious buildings stood on the mountain during the Hellenistic period, as at Chhîm and Yanouh on Mt Lebanon, but it still has to be proved as regards Mt Hermon. Even in Banias, the Panion was built during the Roman period, although Pan was already worshipped in the holy grotto during the Hellenistic period.<sup>31</sup> The only rural sanctuary which was certainly built before the Roman period in the area was that of Tel Dan, an heir to an Iron Age and Hellenistic cult place crowning a mound in the Lake Hule depression. There, excavations have shown that important building activities took place in the sacred precinct during the Roman period, going so far as to change the enclosure orientation from south-north to west-east.<sup>32</sup> The fact that, in Late Antiquity, Dan was mistakenly believed to be Paneas, suggests that the venerable sanctuary of Tel Dan had lost its fame for a long time,<sup>33</sup> whereas a new town had been founded and had grown below the formerly modest Panion. Assuming that Tel Dan's precinct was still used as a cult place until the abandonment of the site in the fourth century AD, its refurbishment serves as a reminder that cultic continuity could go along with major ruptures in the ritual.<sup>34</sup> In any case, on Mt Hermon the currently visible sanctuaries are

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<sup>30</sup> E.g. Sartre (1993a), p.55-7 n°4, and Jalabert (1907), p.273 n°67. Contrary to Di Segni (1997), I think that the era in use at Rakhle during the Roman period has always been that of Sidon. For the starting point of the Sidonian era during the Roman period (first January 110 BC), see now Kiourtzian (2002), and Gatier, *AE* (2002), 1528.

<sup>31</sup> Berlin (1999).

<sup>32</sup> Biran (1994), p.159-232, esp. p.228-31.

<sup>33</sup> See, among various references, Jer., *Hebr. quaest. in libro Gen.*, glossing *Gen.* 14:4, ed. P. de Lagarde, *CCSL* 72 (1959), p.19. A similar confusion appeared in the Talmudic tradition. Cf. Abel (1933-8), I, p.490, and Wilson (2004), p.77-8.

<sup>34</sup> Although dealing with Greece from the Bronze Age up to the Archaic period, Polignac (1994) and (1995), and Schnapp-Gourbeillon (2002), brought up the problem of cultic continuity in terms which have proved to be relevant for other areas and periods of the ancient world, as far as the emergence of the city is concerned. See for instance Van Andringa (2002) on Roman Gaul.

Roman, as they were in all Lebanon, until excavations revealed a Hellenistic stage of religious building.

A new set of sanctuaries thus covered Mt Hermon during the Roman period. Some of them may have had forerunners, but it is of the utmost importance to stress that all were seemingly built under Roman rule, and that they shared then features which reflected the originality of local religious architecture and its belonging to broader areas. The study of the Hermonian cults and myths will also lead to contrast local particularism with regional traditions.

### HERMONIAN CULTS AND MYTHS

The cults worshipped in the Hermonian sanctuaries are imperfectly known: first, in most cases there is insufficient evidence to come to any proper conclusion; second, the gods remained anonymous as frequently on Mt Hermon as in all Syria. Therefore, only a few temples can be attributed to a particular divinity (Atargatis at Kafr Hawar, Leucothea at Rakhle, Zeus at 'Ayn Horche, Arne, and 'Ayn Qaniya, but only a great anonymous god at Har Senaim). Written sources do not merely point out the sanctuaries' divine owners, however. They also provide additional information for the study of local pantheons and myths.

'Hermon' was one of the Jabal esh-Sheikh's names in the Old Testament. Its etymology suggests that the mountain was regarded as holy: indeed, the semantic field to which 'Hermon' belonged covered the notions of 'forbidden' and 'sacred'.<sup>35</sup> Mythological traditions further confirmed the holiness of Mt Hermon, which therefore ranked among the Near Eastern sacred mountains, such as the Kasios, Lebanon or Antilebanon, that Philo of Byblos' *Phoenician History* still held holy.<sup>36</sup> Later on, Eusebius of Caesarea stated in his

<sup>35</sup> Richardson (1994-2000), 1, p.354-5.

<sup>36</sup> Philo of Byblos in *FGrH* 790, fr.2 (Euseb. *Praep. evang.* 1.10.9). The mountain was invoked beside other holy ranges in several treaties since the second millennium BC. According to Lipiński (1971), p.15-41, the most ancient textual evidence for its holiness is the Old Babylonian version of the *Gilgamesh Epic*, if one accepts to identify Mt Hermon with the cedar forest that was under the protection of the giant Humbaba. Yet Mt Hermon had (and still has) no cedar, and other identifications have been proposed.

*Onomasticon* that the pagans still considered Mt Hermon as a holy place at the turning point of the fourth century AD.

In Antiquity, Jerome (*Onom.*, *s.v.* Aërmon) already hinted at the major sanctuary that crowned the summit of the mountain, at the place today called in Arabic ‘Qasr Antar’. From this high place, a supreme divinity seemingly ruled over Mt Hermon. Against the enclosure wall of the temple, Ch. Warren discovered in 1869 a Greek inscription, today kept in the British Museum.<sup>37</sup> The text was engraved on a stele of grey limestone (107 x 51 x 14 cm) that was broken into two pieces and cut in the back during its removal. On the stone, the eight lines of rough letters (4.5-10 cm) have been painted in red according to F.H. Marshall’s erroneous facsimile, which distorts the reading of the inscription, if one confines to the current photograph [PLATE X-XI]. I reproduce here the transcription of Ch. Clermont-Ganneau, who was the first and last editor to publish the text correctly:

Κατὰ κέ/λευσιν / θεοῦ με/γίστου κὲ / ἁγίου ὃ ὀμνύον/τες ἐντεῦ/θεν.

L.4-5: κ(αὶ) / ἁγίου or κ[αὶ] / ἁγίου (Clermont-Ganneau); B[o/β]ατίου (Marshall).

L.6: Y for οἱ (Clermont-Ganneau); [o]ῦ (Marshall).

The text recalls the divine order given by ‘the greatest and holy god’, whom Clermont-Ganneau recognized as the biblical Baal-Hermon (*Jg.* 3:3; *1 Ch.* 5:23) under a Hellenized name. Although laconic, the end of the inscription mentions a religious community of ‘those on oath’ (οἱ ὀμνύοντες); eventually, the adverb ἐντεῦθεν, ‘from here’, seems to forbid the faithful who had not taken the ritual oath trespassing the sacred area beyond the place where the stone was on display. The oath echoes Iamblichus’ hint (*VP* 15) at the restricted access to another holy mountain, Mt Carmel. Above all, the ritual order fits very well with the ancient traditions that characterized Mt Hermon as the mountain of oath. The Jewish pseudepigraphic *Book of Enoch* seems to be of great significance on this point. Of particular

<sup>37</sup> Warren (1870b), p.328, facsimile of an uncompleted copy; Clermont-Ganneau (1903a), with photograph, fig.4 = id. (1903b), p.350, pl.VIII; Marshall (1916), p.185 n°1051. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Dr. P. Higgs (Department of Greek and Roman Antiquities, British Museum) for allowing me to see the inscription and photograph the stone (reg. no.1903. 4-22. 1) on 13 February 2004.

relevance is its first section, the *Book of Watchers*, whose main topic is the angels' fall and punishment. According to the Aramaic Enochic fragments from Qumran, the angels had sworn on the cursed mountain, and one of them was called '(the one) of Hermon' (*Hermoni*):<sup>38</sup>

[And they answered], all of them, and said to him: "Let us [all] swear [an oath and all bind one another that we shall not] any of us turn aside from this counsel [until we do this deed." Then] they all [swore] together and bound [one another] by imprecations. [And they were all of these two hundred who came down] in the days of Jared on [the summit of Mt] Hermon; [and they called the mount Hermon] because they swore and bound [one another] by imprecations upon it. And these are [the names of their leaders]: [... *Hermoni*], eleventh to him [...]. These are the chiefs of the chiefs of tens. Those (two hundred) and their leaders [all took for themselves] wives from all that they chose; and [they began to go in to them, and to defile themselves with them] and (they began) to teach them sorcery and [spell-binding, and the cutting of the roots; and they showed them herbs]. And they became pregnant by them and bare [giants three cubits high who] were born (and multiplied) on the earth [according to the kind of their childhood, and growing up according to the kind of their adolescence, and they were devouring] the labour of all the sons of men and [men] were unable [to supply them. But the giants] conspired to slay men, and [to devour them. And they began to sin and to...] against all birds and beasts of the earth, [and reptiles which creep upon the earth and (creatures) in the waters], and in the heaven, and the fish of the sea, and to devour the flesh [of one another, and they were drinking blood. Then the earth made the accusation against] the wicked, [concerning everything which was done upon it].

In the Christian tradition as in later Enochic literature, Mt Hermon still was cursed because of the angels' fall.<sup>39</sup> Even if there is a long

<sup>38</sup> *Enoch* 6:4-7:6 (cf. 69:2), ed. Milik (1976), p.150-1, Aramaic text and English translation.

<sup>39</sup> Hilary of Poitiers (ca AD 315-366), in his commentary on *Ps.* 132:3 (*PL* 9 [1844], col.748-9): *Hermon autem mons est in Phoenice cuius interpretatio anathema est: quod enim nobiscum anathema nuncupatur, id hebraice Hermon dicitur. Fertur autem id, de quo etiam nescio cuius liber exstat, quod angeli concupiscentes filias hominum, cum de caelo descenderent, in hunc montem maxime excelsum conuenerint. [...] Certe hodie gentes montem hunc profana religione uenerantur: et interpretationem nominis sui, quod est anathema, ipsa illa impiae superstitionis sede testantur.* In the words of Jerome, also dealing with *Ps.* 132:3, ed. G. Morin, *CCSL* 78 (1958), p.280-1: *Legimus quendam librum apocryphum, eo tempore quo descendebant filii Dei ad filias hominum, descendisse illos in montem Ermon, et ibi inisse pactum quomodo uentrent ad*



chronological gap between the *Book of Watchers* and its latest adaptations and translations, J. T. Milik, who edited the Aramaic fragments of scrolls from Cave four at Qumran, considered that “from the first half of the second century BC onwards the *Book of Watchers* had essentially the same form as that in which it is known through the Greek and Ethiopic versions.”<sup>40</sup> However, the tradition does not prove that a ritual was performed on the summit of Mt Hermon in early times. It only kept memory of its holiness alive. As for the remains of the high place, they date from the Roman period, like the other Hermonian temples. Moreover, the inscription and other small findings, such as the coins today kept in the Museum of Quneitra, make it unlikely that the building of the high place and the setup of its cult went back to the Hellenistic period.<sup>41</sup> If so, the cult did not leave any textual and material evidence at all.

The major cult of Qasr Antar raises another issue: that of the identity of the many Hellenized lords who were worshipped under the names of ‘Zeus’ or ‘the great god’ or ‘the holy god’ on both sides of the mountain. According to many scholars, from Ch. Clermont-Ganneau to Y. Hajjar, they are likely to be undifferentiated expressions of the unchanging biblical Baal-Hermon.<sup>42</sup> Several denominations, however, also show the faithful’s wish to individualize locally each expression of the great god: after the ‘god who is in Dan’ during the Hellenistic period, Zeus of Ainkania, Zeus of Ornea, and (maybe) Durahlun of Rakhla were separately worshipped in the villages.<sup>43</sup> Thus, the devotion for local divinities interpreted as aspects

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*filiis hominum, et sibi eas sociarent. [...] Ermon in lingua nostra interpretatur ἀνάθημα, hoc est condemnatio. Cf. id. Commentarioli in Psalmos, ed. G. Morin, CCSL 72 (1959), p.240. The same interpretation appears again in later lexica. About the seventh century AD, the Jewish communities of Mesopotamia were aware of the Enochic themes, and especially that of Mt Hermon’s curse. See Milik (1976), p.215 and p.335-6.*

<sup>40</sup> Milik (1976), p.25.

<sup>41</sup> Ehrl (1990), p.125-32. An Austrian archaeological team has undertaken to complete the study of Qasr Antar in the nineties. See Ruprechtsberger (1992a), (1992b), (1994) and (1996).

<sup>42</sup> Clermont-Ganneau (1903b); Hajjar (1990), p.2537-41.

<sup>43</sup> Ghadban (1985 [1988]), p.304-9 (Zeus of Ainkania). Fossey (1897), p.63-4 n°73; Mouterde (1959), p.83-4 n°20 (Zeus of Ornea). Durahlun, whose name would mean ‘the one from Rakhla’, is mentioned in Palmyrenean Aramaic epigraphy. His identity is still the subject of controversy between scholars who consider Durahlun as an aspect of Baalshamin and those who are inclined to tell them apart. See Kaizer (2002a), p.84, with bibliography. Local documentation currently shows that Rakhla’s great deity was Leucothea.

of Zeus was as important, if not even more so, as the invocation of the supreme lord on the holy mountain.

From now on, the study of local religious life has to be complemented by information which corrects the idea that Mt Hermon was an isolated area within the Roman Near East. The Hermonian traditions fully fit into the Hellenized mythological geography of Roman Syria. Up to the latest quotations of the Enochic writings, the mountain was described as a country of giants. Jewish and Christian legends touched on it as the place where the fallen angels had given birth to giants, whereas the Euhemerist Philo of Byblos told of four mortal giants who united with women, and who ruled over the mountains to which they had given their names. A.I. Baumgarten has rightly reminded that “the two versions must be cristallizations of the same cycle of stories, with each version modifying that cycle to suit its own assumptions and beliefs.”<sup>44</sup> The Hermonian environment was further celebrated for its legendary wildness. At the headwaters of the Jordan, the Greek god Pan has sometimes been considered as the *interpretatio Graeca* of a native god of the springs, but the lack of evidence prompts me to be cautious.<sup>45</sup> Conversely, it is well known that the Greeks recognized the southern slopes of the mountain as the favourite country of Pan and the Nymphs in Syria. In the second century AD, Pausanias drew a parallel between the Arcadian river Alpheus on the one hand, and the Nile and Jordan on the other hand: their course, he wrote, proved similar, as all three of them now dive into the depths of earth, now suddenly resurface farther on; Pausanias also addressed the issue of their springs, which

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<sup>44</sup> Baumgarten (1981), p.157.

<sup>45</sup> In any case, the hypothetical identification of such a god with Baal's son in the Ugaritic poem *Baal and the heifer* must be rejected, against Dussaud (1936), followed by Lipiński (1971), p.16. The text relates to a hunting of Baal on the shore of Shamak ‘that abounds with buffalos’. There, the goddess Anat brings a heifer to her brother Baal, who impregnates it before getting back to his throne on the Sapon. After the heifer has given birth to a veal, Anat finally conveys the good news to her brother. Dussaud speculated that the Shamak should be the Lake Semachonitis in Joseph. *AJ* 5.199 and *BJ* 4.2-3, and the Samkô in the Talmud of Jerusalem, *Kilayim* 9.6 (32c). According to Caquot and Sznycer (1974), p.283 n./, it is very likely that the Shamak would be closer to Ras Shamra-Ugarit, in “the area of the Lake al-‘Amq northeast of Antioch, or the marshland of the Ghab south of Jisr esh-Shoghur.” I am very grateful to M. P. Bordreuil (Collège de France, Paris) for warning me against Dussaud's interpretation, which testifies to the tendency of the early Ugaritology to locate wrongly some of the Ugaritic myths and legends in the same environment as that of the Bible.

the Greeks and the Jews used to discuss seriously.<sup>46</sup> From all this, it may be deduced that the cult of Pan was grafted on the site during the Hellenistic period, when the Greeks interpreted the landscape of the southern slopes of Mt Hermon and the upper Jordan valley as a new Arcadia. The Damascene may be associated with this Syrian Arcadia, according to a recent study about the Greek traditions about Damascus and the river Barada.<sup>47</sup> The cultural and religious references to Arcadia in inland Syria strikingly contrast with the cults of coastal Phoenicia, which were modified by the encounter with Greece and Rome as much as they borrowed from Egypt during the Roman period. Yet, connections between the Hermonian cults and the Phoenician civic pantheons are also to be acknowledged.

The local cult of Qasr Antar might have had influence as far as Sidon, the territory of which included the western side of Mt Hermon. Indeed, a Greek text, that was identically reproduced on two stones formerly reused in the church of Helaliye (near Sidon), mentions the offering of two stone lions to Zeus by Threption, son of Neikon, in AD 147/6. The fact that the dedication was done after a dream (κατ' ὄναρ) reminds of the divine order given by the greatest and holy god from his high place of Qasr Antar. Zeus' divine epithet might be ὄριος, 'of boundaries', rather than ὄρειος, 'of the mountain'.<sup>48</sup> Whatever the solution actually is, both titles may well suit

<sup>46</sup> Paus. 5.7.4-5; Joseph. *AJ* 15.363-4; *BJ* 1.404-6 and 3.509-15. See Abel (1933-8), I, p.474-83. The Rabbinic sources referring to the course of the river parallel the tradition relative to the Orontes, which was identified as a water snake under various names, as Abel (1933) has shown. This compares well with the Jordan, which was told to issue 'from the cavern of Paneas [...] and [to pass] through the Lake of Sibkay and the Lake of Tiberias and [to roll] down into the great sea from whence it rolls on until it rushes into the mouth of Leviathan', according to the Babylonian Talmud, *Baba Bathra* 74b, quoted by Meshorer (1984-5), p.37.

<sup>47</sup> P.-L. Gatier, 'Oronte et Barada: fleuves syriens', paper read at the seminar on 'Les fleuves: géographie historique, archéologie et littérature' (Maison de l'Orient et de la Méditerranée, Lyon, 2004). There was also another Syrian Arcadia in the Orontes valley, following the interpretative framework to which Gatier gave prominence then.

<sup>48</sup> The first editor, Renan (1864-74), p.397, followed by Cook (1914-40), II/2, p.868-9 n.8, read Διὸ ὄρειω 'to Zeus of the mountain' in the second line, instead of ὄρειω (for ὄριω, as the patronymic name Νεϊκῶνος is for Νεϊκῶνος in the first line). Yet the use of ὄρειος ('of/from the mountain' or 'mountain-haunting') would remain quite vague in comparison with the Near Eastern habit of calling the mountainous divinities according to the precise name of the summit over which they ruled. Besides, as regards Zeus, the epithet ὄρειος does not seem to be known in the Hellenized East, although Zeus might be 'any other of the gods of the mountains' (ἄσοι ἄλλοι

the highlander god, who was the guardian of boundaries and landmarks par excellence on the mountainous fringes of the Sidonian territory.

Two other Hermonian deities were worshipped from Phoenicia to the Decapolis and Arabia, Leucothea and Theandrios, whose Greek names supposedly substituted for those of native Syrian gods. The cult of the latter is only evidenced by a unique dedication from Rîme to the ‘male god’ (θεῶ ἀνδρίῳ) in AD 198/9.<sup>49</sup> This denomination is closer to the literal meaning of the divine name than ‘Theandrites’ and ‘Theandrios’, especially testified in the Hauran and on the Jawlan.<sup>50</sup> Many scholars see Theandrios as a typical Arab god.<sup>51</sup> Yet, such a statement comes up against the problems generally associated with using religion as a marker of ethnicity in tracing the Arabs before the sixth century AD.<sup>52</sup> Besides, Theandrios’ native denomination is not known. Were it the case, and were the etymology of this name exclusively Arabic, it would be a hazardous criterion for distinguishing the ethnicity of the god or that of his worshippers. At least it is worth noting that the Hermonian cult fitted into a regional religious set including the Hauran and the Jawlan.

The evidence for the worship of Leucothea allows more conclusive assumptions. The Greek sea goddess, whose name reminded of the foam whiteness, was venerated from AD 60 at Rakhle, where she had a temple, and at Segeira under Trajanus, according to an inscription found in ‘Ayn al-Burj. Leucothea was also worshipped at Tyre (where she was associated with Heracles), at Kfar Zabad in the Beqâ‘ valley (together with Jupiter Heliopolitanus), at Inkhil in the Hauran (together with her son Melicertes), at Tel Jezreel near Scythopolis and at Gerasa in the Decapolis. From Phoenicia to Arabia, great native deities like Astarte or Atargatis were probably

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ἄρειοι θεοί) that Arr. *Cyn.* 35.3 placed at Artemis, Apollo, Pan, the Nymphs and Hermes’ side. On Zeus ὄριος, see Cook (1914-40), III/2, p.1183, to which should be added the decree honoring the dadouchos Themistokles in Eleusis, dated from 20/19 BC, *SEG* 30 (1980), n°93 l.16 (ιερεὺς Διὸς ὀρίου καὶ Ἀθηνᾶς ὀρίας).

<sup>49</sup> Mouterde (1959), p.82-3 n°19.

<sup>50</sup> See for example Donceel and Sartre (1997), for the cult of Theandrios in Canatha.

<sup>51</sup> Thus Sourdel (1952) p.78-81, Donceel and Sartre (1997), p.31, and Retsö (2003), p.610.

<sup>52</sup> See the methodological comments by Macdonald (2003), esp. p.307-8.

venerated under the aspect of Leucothea.<sup>53</sup> Though likely, this hypothesis is not enough to explain why such a peculiar divinity was an object of worship on and around Mt Hermon. According to the best-known story that the Greeks used to tell on Leucothea, the goddess originally was Ino, daughter of king Cadmus of Thebes, and second wife of king Athamas, with whom she had two sons, Melicertes and Learchus. Ino concocted a bogus oracle that demanded the death of Phrixus and Helle, but the children by Athamas' first marriage fled on a golden ram, this event announcing the quest of the Argonauts. Later, Athamas killed Learchus, and Ino ran from him carrying Melicertes; they jumped into the sea, where mother and son were transformed into deities under the names of Leucothea and Palaemon. It may be assumed that not only the myth of Ino-Leucothea, but also the whole Boeotian cycle to which it was related, circulated locally and above all in the surrounding cities, as Severan coins of Sidon and Paneas featuring sailors in the ship *Argo* testify.<sup>54</sup> For Sidon, it may be a means to reaffirm the Greekness of the city, which already considered itself as the metropolis of Thebes during the Hellenistic period; it was also a way to contest the Tyrians' right to monopolize the myths about Cadmus and his family.

The Hermonian cults and myths thus referred to a local tradition that was partly distinct from that of Lebanon as a whole, which strengthens the conclusions based on the architecture and the archaeology of the sanctuaries in the area. Yet, the mountain was not isolated in the religious map of Roman Syria.

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<sup>53</sup> So already Clermont-Ganneau (1898), p.68-9. See Sartre (1993a) for the Syrian dossier on Leucothea, to which should be added the dedication of uncertain provenance *SEG* 44 (1994), n°1326 (maybe from Rakhle) and the inscription of Tel Jezreel, *BE* (1998), n°515. Atargatis had a temple on Mt Hermon at Kafr Hawar. Cf. Aliquot (2002), p.244-6.

<sup>54</sup> This issue would deserve a study which I have only outlined here. For the numismatic evidence, see Blatter (1984), n°8 (Sidon), with n°14 (Sidonian glass bottle featuring Jason and the Golden Fleece on a face, and the ship *Argo* on the other), and Meshorer (1984-5), p.46-7 and pl.15 (Paneas), with further references to the Talmudic literature.

## RURAL COMMUNITIES AND THEIR TEMPLES

As in many regions of the Roman Near East, the documentation provides two series of settlements, some revealed by archaeology, others known by the written sources. The former remain anonymous, such as the villages, hamlets, and farmsteads that Sh. Dar has explored on the southern slopes of the mountain.<sup>55</sup> As regards the latter, caution is advised, because the reference to an ancient place name does not in itself mean that the place in question was inhabited in Antiquity. Besides, the uncertainties as to the political status of some well-known agglomerations are likely to hide the changes connected with the development of grouped settlement during the Roman and Early Byzantine periods. For instance, nothing whatsoever is known about Paneas before the time it was established as a city in 2 BC.

Crosschecking of the two series of Hermonian settlements is mostly impossible at present. For example, the quotation of the 'gods of Kiboreia' in an inscription from Deir el-Aachaiyer does not prove per se that 'Kiboreia' was the name of the place nowadays called Deir el-Aachaiyer, even if it was the location of a Roman sanctuary and settlement.<sup>56</sup> Three Roman villages, however, can be identified by their remains and their name, which lived on in modern toponymy: Ainkania ('Ayn Qaniya'<sup>57</sup>), Ornea (Arne'<sup>58</sup>) and Ina

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<sup>55</sup> Dar (1988) and (1993): e.g. Har Senaim (village with sanctuary), Qalaat Bustra (farmstead with sanctuary), Kafr Dura (settlement), Mazraat Beit el-Ratzif (settlement), Bir an-Sobah (village with an oil press), Khirbet el-Hawarit (village with a ceramic workshop), Joubbatta ez-Zeit (isolated farmstead), Majdel Chams (village). Yet, I do not share Dar's opinion about the high dating of the settlements he studied, especially since the majority of the pottery, the coins and the inscriptions collected in this area is Roman and Early Byzantine. Besides, it should be noted that the so-called 'Ituraean pottery' from Mt Hermon mentioned by Dar does not go back before the Roman period, and does not compare with the Hellenistic Golan Ware pithoi, according to Hartal (2002), p.93\*. Cf. Aliquot (1999-2003), p.201-5, for the so-called 'Ituraean pottery'. More generally, there is no evidence that Mt Hermon was continuously inhabited during the Hellenistic period.

<sup>56</sup> Jalabert (1907), p.278-80 (inscription); Krencker and Zschietzschmann (1938), p.256-64 (sanctuary and other remains), Taylor (1971), p.86-9 pl.72-5, and Dentzer-Feydy (1999), p.531-2, p.551 fig.6, with the drawings of the temple by the English traveller W.J. Bankes.

<sup>57</sup> Ghadban (1985 [1988]), p.304-9 (name of the village); Omeri (forthcoming) on the site of 'Ayn Qaniya.

<sup>58</sup> Fossey (1897), p.63-4 n°73; Mouterde (1959), p.83-4 no.20.

(Hine<sup>59</sup>). The name of Rakhla should certainly appear in the list, because the inscriptions of Rakhle provide the names of several kinds of officials who supervised the building of at least two well-known temples.<sup>60</sup> The Acts of the Tyrian synode also attest that it became a bishopric and ranked among the cities of the province of Phoenice Paralia in AD 518; the village was promoted at the end of the fifth century AD, according to the name given to the city, 'Zenopolis' or 'Zeno(no)polis'.<sup>61</sup>

With regard to Burqush, the problem is much more complicated. This archaeological site was the home of two pagan sanctuaries, one of which was transformed into a Christian basilica.<sup>62</sup> Southeast of this architectural complex, which crowns the hill on a large terrace surrounded by several groups of tombs, the rocky spur has been completely cut and divided over two levels into several rooms with small basins. The remains of an ancient village are to be found around the hill, especially on its eastern slope. On the western slope, there are also greater buildings. In my opinion, Burqush is likely to be the site of Barkousa, which became the city of Justinianopolis.<sup>63</sup> In Late Antiquity, a handful of agglomerations experienced a real urban

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<sup>59</sup> Ptol. *Geogr.* 5.15.22; Joseph. *Bj* 2.95 (ed. A. Pelletier, *CUF* (1980), p.27). The ancient place name appears also in a Syriac document dated from ca AD 570 (ed. J.-B. Chabot, *CSCO* 103 [1933], p.145-56), which is notably related to Monophysite monasteries around Hine. See Lamy (1898), n<sup>os</sup>19,72,75,76,78-81,83. According to a Greek inscription that was engraved on the podium of the temple at Hine, the managers of the local community were involved into the construction of the sacred precinct between AD 179 and 182: Fossey (1897), p.62 n<sup>o</sup>70; Mouterde (1959), pl.XI (copy of O. Puchstein).

<sup>60</sup> Krencker and Zschietzschmann (1938), p.222-30. Cf. below for the temple officials of Rakhla.

<sup>61</sup> Honigmann (1951), p.44.

<sup>62</sup> Krencker and Zschietzschmann (1938), p.231-44; Freyberger (1990b); Ruprechtsberger (1992b), (1994) and (1996).

<sup>63</sup> I will give a detailed study of Burqush elsewhere. Contra Alt (1947), p.1-7, I think that the place name 'Barkousa' refers to the Hermonian site and not to Burqesha, near Qara. No ruin is known at Burqesha, which only appears to be a spot on the modern maps of Antilebanon. From this point of view, J. Nasrallah's study of Qalamounian antiquities and ancient topography would have disappointed Alt's expectations. See Nasrallah (1952), (1956) and (1958-9). Alt had only one reason to turn down the identification of Burqush with Barkousa: the fact that, under the reign of Justinian, the bishopric of Barkousa would have been only seven kilometres distant from that of Rakhla seemed impossible. Yet this argument is not very convincing, because other cities and bishoprics very close to ancient towns are known to have been founded in the Near East at the same period: in the Roman province of Arabia for instance, according to Gatier (1999), after Beelmeon (Ma'in, Jordan) was

development in Lebanon, such as Rakhla-Zenopolis and (maybe) Abila of Lysanias.<sup>64</sup> Of course, it does not mean per se that a village surrounded the pagan sanctuary of Burqush-Barkousa during the first three centuries AD. It is nonetheless very likely that the Early Byzantine agglomeration sprang at least from an embryonic Roman settlement.<sup>65</sup>

The above-mentioned case studies raise the issue of the connections between the villages and their sanctuaries. Although it is uncertain whether the former preceded the latter, it is useful to distinguish high places from the village sanctuaries in order to appraise their respective importance. Eusebius gave a concise description of the high place while dealing with the demolition of the famous shrine at Afqa on Mt Lebanon: 'This was a grove and precinct, not at a city centre nor among squares and streets, such as frequently adorn the cities for decoration, but it was off the beaten track away from main roads and junctions, founded for the hateful demon Aphrodite in a mountainous part of Lebanon at Aphaca.'<sup>66</sup> Isolated on the mountain, the two Hermonian sanctuaries of Mdoukha and Qasr Antar are likely to be high places. It is obvious from their location that each of them could attract the faithful from the surrounding villages. Nevertheless, the only cult site which would have drawn a large audience in the region was that of Qasr Antar. It may be inferred from its reputation and (maybe) from the above-mentioned Helaliye inscription that this sanctuary played the same role as the major high places of the Roman Near East.

At least four village sanctuaries are identified for certain, namely 'Ayn Qaniya, Arne, Hine and Rakhle, for which inscriptions support the location of a rural community. Five other sites, namely 'Ayn Horche, Deir el-Aachaiyer, Burqush, Har Senaim and Qalaat Bustra, may also belong to this category. Thus, Mt Hermon seemingly was a country of village sanctuaries. Besides, it is doubtful whether

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founded as a city during the sixth century, the two cities and bishoprics of Madaba and Beelmeon were only 8 km apart.

<sup>64</sup> For Abila of Lysanias in the Barada valley, see Aliquot (1999-2003), p.241-7, with bibliography.

<sup>65</sup> See Gatier (2005), who pointed out that in the Roman Near East the Early Byzantine agglomerations never grew up out of nothing on the sites of the pagan rural sanctuaries.

<sup>66</sup> Euseb. *Vit. Const.* 3.55.2, quoted from A. Cameron and S.G. Hall's translation (Oxford, 1999), p.144.



it was an exceptional case in the Roman Near East. I will not discuss here in detail the contrast between the two models introduced by P.-L. Gatier to describe the relationship of the rural sanctuaries with the villages of southern Syria (i.e., actually, the Hauran) and northern Syria (i.e., in fact, the ‘Limestone Massif’ within the territory of Antioch), but a remark may be made.<sup>67</sup> In the Roman Near East, the village sanctuaries seem to have outnumbered a few high places (e.g. Afqa, Carmel, Qasr Antar and Sheikh Barakat).<sup>68</sup> In comparison with Roman Syria, the study of the Hermonian sacred landscape leads to highlight the originality of the Antiochene, where sanctuaries were mostly high places.<sup>69</sup>

The epigraphic evidence mentions the officials involved in the religious life of the Hermonian communities. It provides information on the institutional framework in which village life and temple-building had their place. The officials’ denomination was very close to the one in use in Lebanon and southern Syria. Two texts from Rîme and Rakhle actually show that some of them exercised an unspecified authority (ἀρχή) that was also known in the Abilene.<sup>70</sup> The Greek names of the ‘managers’ or ‘commissioners’ (ἐπιμεληταί), the ‘administrators’ (διοικηταί), the ‘overseers’ or ‘supervisors’ (ἐπίσκοποι), the ‘temple-treasurers’ (ιεροταμίαι), and the ‘priests’ (ιερείς) are more likely to be attributable to a Hellenized native organization than to a Roman institutional model.<sup>71</sup> The same conclusion could be drawn from the inscriptions which provide a set of evidence for the invocation of the goddess Tyche. Two texts from Rakhle and Rîme merely start with the ordinary invocation ‘to the Good Fortune’, while an inscription from Qasr Hammara dealing with the village of Ainkania carries on with the acclamation ‘prosper, Fortune of Ain-

<sup>67</sup> Gatier (1997), p.769, followed by Sartre (2001), p.777.

<sup>68</sup> Callot and Gatier (1999), p.671 and p.682, about the sanctuary of the Jebel Sheikh Barakat.

<sup>69</sup> Nevertheless, as Callot and Gatier (1999) themselves admitted, there was at least one village sanctuary on the Limestone Massif, namely Mogiza (Me’ez), while Kaprobarada (Brad) could have been another exception to the above-stated rule.

<sup>70</sup> Mouterde (1959), p.82-3 n°19 (Rîme); Fossey (1897), p.64-5 n°75 (Rakhle); Sartre (1993a), p.53-4 n°2 (Rakhle); *SEG* 39 (1989), n°1565 (Brahlia, Abilene).

<sup>71</sup> E.g. Ghadban (1985 [1988]), p.304-9, for Ainkania’s commissioners; Fossey (1897), p.62 n°70 and Mouterde (1959), pl.XI, for commissioners in Hine; Sartre (1993a), p.53-4 n°2 and p.55-7 n°4, for Rakhla’s administrators; Aliquot (2002), for an overseer in Segeira; Fossey (1897), p.64-5 n°75, for a temple-treasurer and a priest in Rakhle.

kania!<sup>72</sup> On the nominal level, those rustic Fortunes seemed to be equivalent to the civic divinities already depicted on the Hellenistic coins of the Phoenician cities, and contrasted with the Roman Fortune of Berytus. However, on Mt Hermon as in the southern Beqâ' valley or the Abilene, the name of Tyche would rather be the translation of that of a native *gad*, that is a male genius invested with the same office as the Greek Fortune, and becoming a tutelary divinity of the village.

The offices finally call into question the issue of village autonomy. As in the neighbouring Hauran, the village treasure did not inevitably merge with that of an adjoining sanctuary. For instance in Aaiha, the construction of the temple was completed with money 'from the sacred funds'.<sup>73</sup> The same held true for the enclosure wall of Hine's sanctuary.<sup>74</sup> In Arne, the temple of Zeus was decorated 'at the expense of the god himself', while the village looked after the management of sacred estates.<sup>75</sup> In Rakhle, the restoration of a religious building was funded from the treasure surplus.<sup>76</sup> In the same village, the temple-treasurers of Leucothea used the cash balance to build a door in the year 379, i.e. AD 269 (τὰ λειφθέντα παρ' αὐτοῖς ἀργύρια ἀνάλωσαν τὰ / ὑπὲρ τῆς θύρας ἔ/τους θοτ').<sup>77</sup> Finally, an unpublished inscription of Rakhle suggests that Leucothea's sanctuary owned liquid assets and/or sacred estates which were lent at interest, because a building is said to have been erected in AD 253 'at the expense of the goddess taken from the interest'.

By and large, the social organization of the Hermonian communities proved similar to the one M. Sartre has studied in southern Syria.<sup>78</sup> Yet, outside the territory of Bostra, which was empty of village officials, the rural communities in the Hauran had two peculiarities: they substituted for the cities, and village officials only appeared outside the civic territories. Conversely, all the communities of Mt Hermon settled on the territory of Sidon, Damascus and Paneas, at

<sup>72</sup> Ghadban (1985 [1988]), p.304-9. Chéhab (1949-50), p.111, briefly mentioned the discovery of a turreted Tyche head at Deir el-Aachaiyer east of the temple.

<sup>73</sup> Mouterde (1951-2), p.33-5 n°4, cf. *BE* (1953), n°214 (Robert).

<sup>74</sup> Fossey (1897), p.62 n°70; Mouterde (1959), pl.XI.

<sup>75</sup> Fossey (1897), p.63-4 n°73; Mouterde (1959), p.83-4 n°20.

<sup>76</sup> Fossey (1897), p.64-5 n°75; Jalabert (1907), p.272 n°66.

<sup>77</sup> Jalabert (1907), p.274 n°68, l.5-8, with a slightly different text (ἀναλώσαντ[εσ]); O. Puchstein read ANTA in the end of l.6, cf. Mouterde (1959), pl.XII.

<sup>78</sup> Sartre (1993b), (1999) and (2001), p.773-9.

least from the beginning of the first century AD onwards; and the Hermonian offices only referred either to the construction and improvement of religious buildings, or to the financial management of sacred property. Consequently, it is tempting to consider the temple officials, not as fully-qualified magistrates, but only as individuals who were recruited in the most powerful families of the mountain. J.-P. Rey-Coquais has recently drawn the same conclusion from the Qalamounian history and onomastics, although he did not consider the role of the Herodian rulers for the granting of Roman citizenship during the first century AD.<sup>79</sup> With regard to Mt Hermon, I should also emphasize the role possibly assigned by Rome to the cities which had definitely taken over from the Ituraean and Herodian rulers afterwards.

The lack of information prevents from reconstituting any expanded social group. The fact remains that, in the two villages where the epigraphic evidence provides enough information on this matter, namely Rakhle and 'Ayn Qaniya, the officials' onomastics show the endogamic feature of their recruiting, in so far as such characteristic names as Beeliabos, Beryllos, Diodoros or Okbeos alternated within the ruling families.<sup>80</sup> Moreover, it is obvious that the families holding a prominent position were especially bound to the temples, which they had funded, and the priesthoods, which they seem to have seized in some cases. It is certainly not by mere chance that the earliest inscription of Rakhle, dating from 60, mentioned 'the goddess of Moithos/u, son of Raios(?)', as is customary in the Near East to give the divinity the cult founder's name.<sup>81</sup> Similarly in Segeira's sanctuary, Menneas, son of Beeliabos and grandson of Beeliabos, flaunted himself as the 'supervisor of all the work done there'; his family was involved in the local cult, because Menneas' brother or nephew Neteiros was said to have been responsible for the celebration of festivals.<sup>82</sup> This kind of ostentatious display testifies to the

<sup>79</sup> Rey-Coquais (1994 [1997]).

<sup>80</sup> See Feissel (1983), p.605, about the onomastics of Rakhle, and Aliquot in Omeri (forthcoming) for the onomastics of Ainkania.

<sup>81</sup> For the text, see Sartre (1993a), p.55-7 n°4, l.1, cf. *BE* (1994), n°636 (Gatier): θεῶς Μοιθου τοῦ Ραίο[υ – –]. The name of Moithos/u necessarily refers to the goddess (probably Leucothea), because it is in the genitive whereas the following names of the administrators are in the nominative.

<sup>82</sup> Aliquot (2002).

ritualized social competition that was at the origin of the rural temples.

Thus, the pre-eminence of village sanctuaries makes Mt Hermon (and, actually, all Lebanon) closer to the whole Roman Near East as a whole than to the Limestone Massif within the territory of Antioch. Local autonomy exclusively occurred in the management of a temple or a village treasure on Mt Hermon, so that it is tempting to consider that the supervision of financial and religious matters were seized by (rather than granted to) the families whose power was acknowledged by the imperial authorities and the three cities which shared the mountain among themselves.

#### CONCLUSION

The creation of a brand new set of rural sanctuaries during the Roman period represents in retrospect a major event of Lebanon's ancient history, which broke the rhythm of religious life in the area. When the Early Byzantine sources referred to the destruction of the pagan altars in Lebanon, despite their polemical and anachronistic contents, they taught that the mountainous shrines' closure in the fourth century AD actually was the end of an era. Going back to the earliest times, a few Lebanese sanctuaries appeared during the Hellenistic era, a period of uncertainties and transition in the area. Their genesis admittedly remains an insoluble problem. Moreover, drastic changes altered the holy places where cultic continuity between Hellenistic and Roman times can be argued. This testifies against a conception of gradual and linear evolution, and reminds us that beyond the issue of cultic continuity, if there was one, changes in religious practices must be analyzed. Besides, as current evidence shows, religious construction only reached its peak after the era of the client kings, which requires an explanation.

The study of the Hermonian sanctuaries and villages during the Roman period provides enough information to grasp the importance and social dimension of this long-term change on a local scale. The principles which underlied the location of sanctuaries, and the connections of the rural communities with their temples on Mt Hermon, prove similar to those already recognized as decisive in other areas of the Roman Near East, but various forms of particularism bestowed an identity on this ancient 'pays'. From the end of the first

century AD, the civic territories of Sidon, Paneas, and Damascus experienced a frenzy of religious building on their mountainous confines. Considering its unity in time and space, and the links and hierarchy between its basic elements (high places, village sanctuaries, villages, hamlets, and farmsteads), the country showed a coherent organization that must be appreciated in the broader context of the regional civic network. After the fall of the client kings, who had been involved in the religious matters of their own principalities, Hellenized cliques rose in the villages. The area went through a regional restoration of order and a local scattering of power altogether. Under Roman rule and within the civic territories, local potentates managed to assert their authority over the ordinary man while giving him the benefit of their protection and generosity. In return, the sanctuaries and their cults offered the indigenous strongmen a theatre in which they could compete for prestige. There were hints of collective action, but they always concerned the communities' holy places. Consequently, the rural sanctuary may well represent the public place around which the social relations had formed in the countryside. The development of the Hermonian village institutions unfortunately remains in the dark until the Early Byzantine period, contrary to what is known for instance in the neighbouring Hauran. The evolution from the rural settlement up to the classical city was anything but unavoidable: while Paneas had been founded as a town as early as 2 BC, Rakhla-Zenopolis and Barkousa-Justinianopolis became cities only in the fifth and sixth centuries. In Late Antiquity, even if the weight of the wealthy landowners over the mountainous communities was as important as before, the competition in which the villages were involved to achieve a civic status added to personal rivalries. At that time, the whole Lebanon had been christianized long ago, and the pagan rural sanctuary had definitely lost its role of territory marker and place of mediation.

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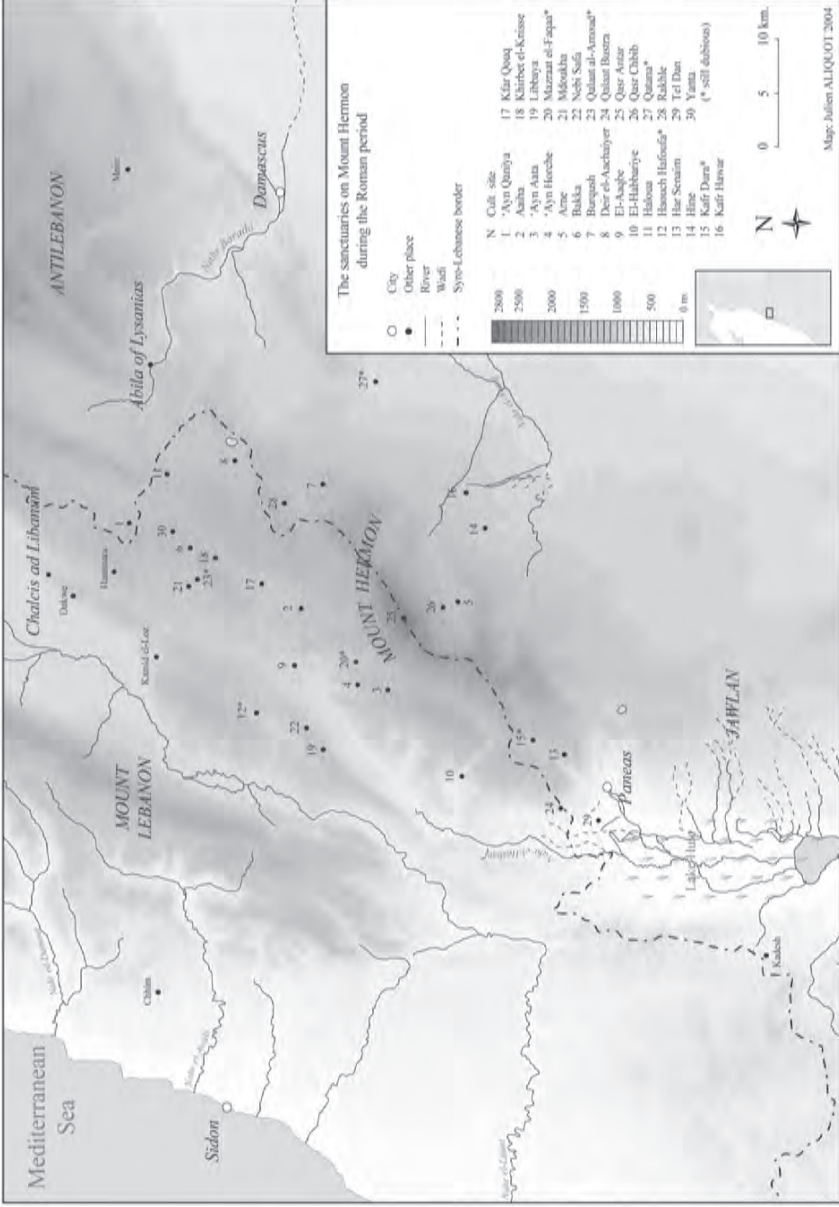


Plate IX Map of the sanctuaries on Mt Hermon during the Roman period. © J. Aliquot.



Plate X Greek inscription from Qasr Antar in the British Museum. After Clermont-Ganneau (1903b), pl.VIII.

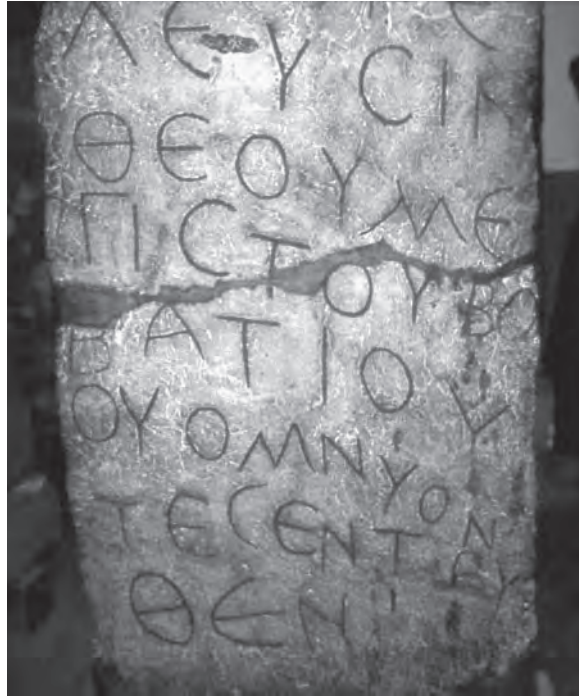


Plate XI Greek inscription from Qasr Antar, detail of lines 2-8. Photo J. Aliquot, courtesy of the British Museum.