

PHOENICIAN CULT STONES

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In pursuing the study of cult stones among Semitic peoples, I have become convinced that religious institutions should be first understood within their own cultural context before facile comparisons are made between apparent similarities in different contexts. The present study covers a people and its culture spread throughout the Mediterranean basin and spanning roughly the first millenium B.C. and up to the fourth century A.D. It includes what would strictly be termed Punic. The reason for the wide coverage is not only that a certain homogeneity is evident in the Semitic culture within these temporal and spatial bounds, but also that a study of its religious institutions has to contend with a special set of circumstances limiting the use of archaeological data. In the course of its widespread diffusion the religion of this mercantile people became enmeshed with a variety of non-Semitic influences, so that, like other aspects of its culture, there is difficulty in isolating what is specifically Phoenician from what is indigenous or alien.¹

Wherever a Phoenician colony was established there must have been some interchange of influences with the local inhabitants. At the same time Phoenician was not the only cosmopolitan culture ranging the Mediterranean: it was competing and interacting with Egyptian, Greek and other Asian cultures. Under such circumstances a "pure" religion could not be expected anywhere, but rather an amalgam of ingredients, varying in their respective proportions from place to place. Such syncretism is most obvious to the archaeologist in material remains, such as architecture and iconography. Doubtless, at the popular level, syncretist tendencies resulted in incongruous combinations and unorthodox practices. But at the heart of the religion, in its doctrine and official practice, a more aggressive conservatism generally asserted itself, resisting what is alien, assimilating with what is tolerably alike. Hence a Semitic religion of sky deities, originally brought out of the desert by nomadic tribesmen and later carried over the seas by merchants and sailors, had little in common with local chthonic cults, which were often tied to particular localities and centred on the promotion of fertility. In the previous millenium, there had been some assimilation between Egyptian and Canaanite pantheons in their respective homelands, but for Phoenician religion, despite the heavy Egyptian influence on religious art and architecture and despite popular devotion to certain Egyptian deities, the main thrust of Egyptian religion, with

its animal worship and preoccupation with death, would have seemed a bizarre mixture to the more theological, abstract religious thought of the Semite. There was more in common with the Greek and Roman cult of high gods, and assimilation readily took place to the extent that Phoenician deities could be identified by name with their Greek and Roman counterparts, but Phoenician cult resisted the strong anthropomorphism of the European religions, preserving, more or less, the aniconic tendency which, despite lapses, contrasts Semitic religions so markedly to those of neighbouring peoples. The problem of contending with alien religions was not a new one. In the previous millenium and even earlier, the struggle between the Desert and the Sown on the religious level continued long after each wave of Semites settled in the Fertile Crescent and integrated with an agricultural society. Such a struggle and eventual victory for the desert religion is well documented for us in the case of Yahwism and Islam, and can plausibly be suspected for the Canaanites.² There is still little known of Canaanite and Phoenician cult, but the evidence for fertility rites and for the use of images, for example, while abundant even in the homeland, points to their peripheral place in popular devotion rather than in official worship. By the time these people began to cross the sea, it was a religion closer to their desert origins which had won the day and was carried to new shores, only to begin the struggle anew.

The picture painted above is of course, highly simplified and is only presented as a framework in which to consider the position of Phoenician religious institutions among other religions of the Mediterranean world and to foreshadow the problems, but at the same time the possibility, of isolating specifically Semitic elements from the religious amalgam of the time. The exercise is not merely academic, for the wealth of archaeological data and literary documentation can well serve to throw light not only on the religion of the Phoenicians but on that of their ancestors as well.

NON-PHOENICIAN CULT STONES

Because in the past it has been the fashion to attribute to the Phoenicians most of the sacred stones in the Mediterranean region, it is appropriate here to indicate instances of litholatry which had nothing to do with Phoenician religion. One category of such stones is now known to be considerably older than the Phoenician expansion, and to belong to the prehistoric megalithic culture which left menhirs, dolmens, stone circles and the like throughout Europe in the preceding millenia. Some fifty standing stones are known in Sardinia, occurring singly or in groups, and some at least can be assumed to be connected with fertility

cults in their suggestion of male and female pudenda.³ A cone-shaped stone in a cultic context at Giganteja, Gozo (Malta), once thought to be Phoenician,⁴ is now placed earlier than the mid 2nd millennium B.C. and assimilated to the more recently studied cult objects of Tarxien.⁵ The complex, including cones, phallic symbols, "Venus" figurines, representation of various fertility-associated animals (bulls, sows, doves, snakes) is duplicated in Cyprus and Crete.⁶ This category of sacred stones, megalithic in dimensions (or associated with megalithic structures) and probably connected with fertility cults, may even include some of the great standing stones in Semitic heartlands, such as Transjordan,⁷ where they belong to a much earlier religious stratum than those under study here. The Semitic sacred stones have nothing to suggest phallic symbolism in their form or attribution (standing as they do for both male and female deities, v. *infra*), and even the association of Ashtart figurines can be taken as indicative only of popular (and possibly deviant) devotion rather than of official cult. The inspiration behind the sacred stones of the Semites, whatever syncretist deviations may be present at the popular level, appears to be quite different from those of the autochthonous religions of the Mediterranean region, and to hark back to the high places and astral deities of desert nomads.

The worship of aniconic stones was not unknown to the Greeks. Plutarch and Pausanias give a number of instances, but also imply that the practice was in their time rather unusual and was more primitive than the use of images.⁸ Whether these stones were inherited by the Greeks from earlier races or borrowed from the East (by medium of Semitic traders?)⁹ is not a helpful question here. Of some interest are the remarks of Porphyry (a native of Tyre) on the appropriateness of certain forms in the representation of divine entities:

"The globular, and all spherical forms, were thought peculiarly to belong, as types, to the world, the sun, and moon. The globe also was something assigned to hope and fortune. The circle and rotund figures were appropriated partly to eternity, and also to the motion of the heavens in its zones and circles. Sections also of circles were assigned to the various conditions of the moon. Pyramids and obelisks were appropriated to the elements of fire, and consequently to the Olympian gods. The cone was proper to the sun, a cylindrical figure to the earth, the phallus also to the generative, and the trigonon to the parturient power."¹⁰

But again, how much these ideas influenced or reflected Phoenician thinking is an unanswerable question.

PHOENICIAN PILLAR WORSHIP

Attention is here restricted to stones which were clearly at the focus of cult in centres certainly known to be Phoenician. Information about Phoenician pillar-worship is derived almost entirely from literary references and from representations on coins and votive objects. It is understandable that venerated stones would be rarely found in excavation since their very sacredness would mark them out for destructive attention by conquerors or for careful disposal by threatened worshippers.

Mt. Sirai

The one possible exception to the above caution is a stone found in a small room described as a chapel off the southern courtyard of the Punic acropolis.¹¹ This room contained votive objects, probably dating to the 2nd century B.C., lying in a semi-circle before a stone figure of a woman, together with a quadrangular, slightly tapering pillar provided with a socketed base. The relation of the pillar to the other objects in the room is not clear, but it is possible that it made a pair with the female figure, representing the Carthaginian divine pair, Tanit and Baal Hammon. Moscatti suggests comparison with the *tophet* stones of early Carthage, but it is unlikely that this was a *tophet* stone, since Mt. Sirai had a proper *tophet* area to the north of the acropolis and the 50 stelae found there were of 5 varieties, none of which approximate to the pillar found in the chapel.¹² It is interesting to note that, although there was a small temple associated with the *tophet*, the pillar and statue were deposited in the more defensible part of the acropolis, as if for safekeeping under siege.

Emesa

Herodian in his history of the Roman Empire (5, 3, 4-5)¹³ describes the magnificence of the temple established at Emesa at the beginning of the 3rd Century A.D. for the local cult of the "sun god whom they called in the Phoenician language Elagabalus" (lit. god-mountain). The solar affinity of this local mountain deity is further confirmed by the fact that the chief priest, Bassianus, later as emperor (218-222) was known as Heliogabalus. After describing the wealth of votive offerings accruing to the temple, Herodian relates that the focus of this cult was "no statue made by man in the likeness of the god, as with the Greeks and Romans . . . but a huge black stone with a pointed end and round base in the shape of a cone" and that the cult object was held to be "of heavenly origin" (*diopetes*, lit. fallen from Zeus) . . . "an unwrought image of the sun". Subsequently the cult object was taken to Rome and Herodian (5, 6, 6-9) describes in some detail the ritual procession by which it was

borne in a chariot and installed in the temple. Coins are extant depicting the sacred stone set in the temple with the image of an eagle or conveyed on a quadriga.¹⁴

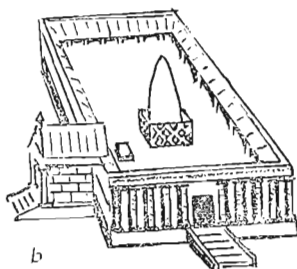
Byblos

A coin of Byblos dating from the reign of Macrinus (c. 218 A.D.) celebrates the *hieras Biblou*, which is represented as a colonnaded open-air precinct with a tall, cone-like object standing on a base in the centre, and to one side a gabled shrine housing an object variously described as a statue or incense altar (fig. 1, a).¹⁵ Harden presumes the shrine to have actually stood within the precinct itself, but even given the difficulty of portraying the salient features of the Byblos temple, it seems a major distortion on the part of the artist to have shown the centre-piece of the temple to one side. Undoubtedly his impression depicted the dimensions of the principal elements according to their relative importance rather than to their actual size—for example, the conical object may have been much smaller in fact. Given the limitations of the medium, the centrality of the cult object is further emphasised by the absence of cluttered background. There is some discussion as to whether this temple is to be identified with that described by the 12th century Jewish traveller, Benjamin of Tudela,¹⁶ the remains excavated by Montet and Dunand,¹⁷ and the temple of Baalat Gebal whose 5th or 4th century restoration is memorialised in the Yehawmilk stele.¹⁸ It could, of course, have been an entirely different structure,¹⁹ yet in each of the four cases the reference appears to be to the pre-eminent or unique sanctuary of Byblos and hardly allows the venerable site being eclipsed, even temporarily, by another.

The reconstruction suggested by Dussaud,²⁰ reconciling the four sets of evidence, appears the most feasible (fig. 1, b). The coin views the sanctuary from the north-east. The sanctuary, with its principal entrance on the northern side, consisted of an open-air *enceinte* in Phoenician style, enclosing the central cult object, an altar to the east of it and a circular basin. The sanctuary had been in use from 2000 B.C., but the colonnade surrounding the open space, as evidenced in the coin and in the excavations, was a Roman rebuild. On the eastern side of the sacred enclosure were the colossi described by Benjamin of Tudela and found in fragmentary state by the excavators. Behind them was a shrine on an Egyptian plan dating back to the restoration by Yehawmilk and shown on the coin as a gabled structure to the east of the sacred enclosure—this would be the three-chambered building revealed in the French excavations. Dussaud suggests that this structure served both as the royal entrance to the court (“my gate” of the Yehawmilk inscription)



a.



b



c



d



e



f

Fig. 1. Baetyls depicted on coins

- (a) Coin of Byblos; (b) Dussaud's reconstruction of Byblos shrine;
 (c) Coin of Paphos; (d) Coin of Sidon; (e), (f) Coins of Tyre.

and as the shrine for the sacred post of Adonis, spoken of by Plutarch as being situated "in the temple of Isis" and being still in his day "the object of veneration by the Gibletes".²¹ The

objection to this reconstruction from the four sets of data is that the coin does not show the colossi which impressed the Jewish traveller and the recent excavators. Yet this can be countered by the following observations, a) the angle from which the artist viewed the temple, would have obscured the statues, at least partially; b) the statues would have been for purposes of schematic representation unnecessary clutter; c) they may have been less important to the "faithful" than they would appear, by sheer size, to "outsiders" of the cult.²³ It is not surprising that the cult object, the central baetyl, was not extant to either the 12th century Jew or the 20th century excavators. Whatever is made of the abundant but apparently conflicting evidence, there is no doubt that Byblos possessed as its central object of worship a cone-shaped pillar, standing for the Lady of Byblos (Baalat Gebal), the local Ashtart, also assimilated to the Egyptian Isis-Hathor, to the Greek Aphrodite and to the Roman Venus.

Paphos

Another well-known coin type depicting the cult of Aphrodite in baetyl-like form derives from Cyprus. Dating from the reign of Septimius Severus (193-211) and inscribed *koinon kypriion* (Cyprian Confederation), the reverse has a stylised representation of the renowned sanctuary of Paphos (fig. 1, c).²³ Apparently it is a facade view showing a central tall shrine flanked by side chapels and facing a semicircular courtyard. The three shrines are represented as framing columnar objects, the central and largest being in the shape of a cone surmounted by a cap-like device, the flanking objects being interpreted as lesser baetyls or candelabra. Within the details of the central and side roofs, according to different versions of the scene, are depicted rosettes, doves, garlands, star and crescent, disc and crescent. The most important feature is obviously the central cone, and this is borne out by the witness of Tacitus relating the visit of Titus to the "templum Paphiae Veneris, inclutum per indigenas aduenasque" (Hist. II, 2). Digressing on the origins of the cult, its priesthood, its rituals of divination and of votive sacrifices, he describes the cult objects: "simulacrum deae non effigie humana, continuus orbis latiore initio tenuem in ambitum metae modo exurgens (a rounded mass broader at the base and tapering upwards like a turning post on a race-course, i.e. a cone-shaped pillar), sed ratio in obscuro" (Hist. II, 3). A large black polished stone of conical form, now in the Nicosia Museum, was found at Kouklia, near the likely location of the temple, and is considered by Hill and Westholm as possibly the actual cult object. The problem is whether the cult was really Phoenician. In the face of earlier assumptions to the affirmative,²⁴ Hill details three or more

strands of tradition, some contradictory, of which only one attributes to the cult a Phoenician origin, and he concludes: "We must, in fact, rule out of court all claims on behalf of a specifically Oriental (Babylonian, Syrian or Phoenician) origin for the Aphrodite cult, although parallel developments and later influence from such quarters may be freely admitted".²⁵ There is evidence of a still more ancient and pre-Phoenician Aphrodite cult at Amathus and also of the use of aniconic stones as cult objects in Cyprus from early times.²⁶ One must assume that at the time of Phoenician settlement a marked degree of assimilation took place, in which undoubted Phoenician elements (e.g. the priestly line named from the Semitic-sounding Cinyras, the astral symbolism, Phoenician votive objects) mingled with autochthonous elements (e.g. mother goddess, aniconic representation, fertility cult, theriomorphic symbols such as the dove), some of which were not alien to Semitic religious feeling.²⁷ This syncretist form of religion probably had an influence on Sidonian colonies along the coast of Palestine, such as Marissa, where the association of conical pillars and *columbaria* has been attributed to a Hellenised version of Aphrodite cult, related to that in Cyprus.²⁸

Sidon

Coins from Sidon proper depict, with many variations of accessories, a spherical object within a wheeled shrine (fig. 1, d).²⁹ There are several parallels for the custom of conveying a cult object in a special vehicle, presumably on the occasion of processions—the coin of Emesa showing the sacred stone in a quadriga has been mentioned already; Philo Biblius refers to the god Agruerus or Agrotos whose *xoanon* was borne in a *naos zyghophoroumenos*;³⁰ Cook recalls the sacred chariot of Heracles at Philadelphia.³¹ That the context of the Sidonian object is Phoenician and religious need not be doubted, but other questions arise: is it a baetyl and is it to be ascribed to Ashtart, as is generally assumed? *Ex-votos* are known from different parts of the Phoenician world depicting spherical objects resting on a throne³² or on an altar.³³ However, because of the votive character of the representations, it cannot be excluded that in each case the *symbol* of the deity is being portrayed, rather than the actual *cult object*—the Emesa cult can be cited as a parallel, where the cult object is a cone but the natural symbol of the solar deity (actually so depicted on some coins) is the disc.³⁴ To my knowledge, the one spherical object (as distinct from a representation, which could be symbolic) which is claimed to be a baetyl³⁵ is neither aniconic nor anepigraphic, and ignorance of its provenance must leave uncertainty as to its religious context. Uncertain, too, is the identity of the deity signified by the cult object on the Sidon-

ian coins. Seyrig, following Ronzevalle,³⁶ dismisses the general opinion of numismatologists that the sphere recalls the "heavenly body" venerated at Tyre under the name of Astarte according to the testimony of Philo Biblius,³⁷ because of the difference of location, but his substitute argument, that one variation of the coin type shows the sphere flanked by sphinxes and that all sphinx-flanked thrones in the region are proper to Ashtart, is weakened by the fact that a number of representations showing a male deity enthroned between sphinxes have since come to light.³⁸ The discussion must also take account of the prominence of the Eshmun cult at Sidon.³⁹

Appendix: Sacred Emptiness

Mention of sacred thrones must raise the question whether in Phoenician centres deities could be venerated not only in aniconic forms but also in "sacred emptiness". Not only is it common for a deity to be represented seated on a throne, or for a votive object in the form of a throne to support a baetyl or some other cult object, but there are examples of thrones which are empty and so sloped or shaped as to be unable to contain anything.⁴⁰ An empty throne itself, like a baetyl, could be the object of veneration. Lucian (*De Dea Syria*, 34) describes such a throne at Hierapolis:

"In the body of the temple, as you enter, there stands on the left hand side, a throne for the Sun god; but there is no image upon it, for the effigies of the Sun and Moon are not exhibited . . . (not from any prohibition, but because) the Sun and Moon are plain for all to see."

Such a practice appears to be another variant of the generally aniconic tendency of Semitic religions, otherwise exemplified by the use of the baetyl.⁴¹

The question is especially relevant in the case of Phoenician shrines. It is worth noting the frequent occurrence of the square or cube plan (or approximation to it) in temple architecture among Phoenician and other Semitic peoples. Harden cites Am-rith (Marathus) as a typical example of a Phoenician shrine: "a little edifice on a high podium about 5 m square, crowned by an Egyptian cornice, standing in a walled enclosure about 50 m square".⁴² Apparently similar was the *maabed* at Nora,⁴³ Motya with its 4 m square chapel within a walled enclosure⁴⁴ and the tiny chapel in the Tanit sanctuary at Carthage.⁴⁵ Many Phoenician cippi roughly represent a cube-shaped *naos*, as do terracotta models (which may or may not be of Phoenician origin),⁴⁶ and such votive objects can be suspected of mirroring sacred struc-

tures at the focus of cult. In comparative studies of temple architecture G. R. H. Wright has noted "the sacred significance of a square (and, *a fortiori*, a cube) . . . for the Semites as the perfect repository of a Divine immanence", and Stockton has drawn attention in this regard to the temple at Petra and its Semitic parallels.⁴⁷ In two of the best-known examples, the Holy of Holies at Jerusalem (1 Kg. 6:20; 2 Cron. 4:8; Ezek. 41:4) and the Meccan *Ka'bah* (lit. Cube, also known as *Bait Ullah*, House of Allah), it is a fact that, at least in later usage, they were empty. Note, too, the apocalyptic Jerusalem in perfect cube form (Rev. 21:16), containing no temple since God and the Lamb "were themselves the temple" (Rev. 21:22). It is, of course, true that the Phoenician examples often reproduce Egyptian and Greek architecture, but in sacred building, it is not uncommon for foreign architectural motifs to be accommodated to native theology. The point of comparison between the Phoenician and other Semitic shrines is the frequency of the square or cube plan, and while extant Phoenician examples may now contain no cult object because of the ravages of time or conquest or because of the reverent removal by the cultists themselves, the possibility remains that the cubical *naos* itself, vacant of any other object, may be the architectural equivalent of the baetyl or empty throne.

PAIRS OF PILLARS

Tyre, and beyond

Tyrian coins of the 3rd and 4th century A.D. consistently depict two objects, which might be described either as omphaloi or round-topped stelae, with the accompanying inscription *ambrosie petre* or *paitre*. Several variants exist, notably a) an olive tree stands between two stones; b) two stones are in the centre flanked by a fire-altar and an olive tree, together with star and crescent; c) elements of the above occurring with a male figure and an incense altar or with a female figure and a bull.⁴⁸ There are several ancient testimonies to the cult at Tyre. According to the contemporary Nonnus of Panopolis (*Dionys.* 40, 422ff.), Heracles (= Melqart, lit. "ruler of the city") ordered the first men on earth to build a ship and land on floating rocks expressly called "ambrosial rocks", on which grew an olive tree harbouring an eagle and a serpent and enveloped by a non-consuming fire; they were to catch and sacrifice the eagle, after which the floating rocks became fixed and Tyre was founded. It is not said that the ambrosial rocks were two in number, in fact the singular seems interchangeable with the plural. Achilles Tatius (*Leucip. et Clitoph.* 2, 14) speaks of the cult of Heracles at Tyre, and also of the olive tree and the fire burning at its base. The fire would seem to be appropriate to Heracles who is called *anax*

pyros (*Dionys.* 40, 36q). A different kind of tradition is represented by Philo Biblius' story of the founding of Tyre (Euseb.: *Praep. Evang.* 1, 10, 10-11), according to Sanchuniathon (allegedly an attempt to demythologise and dehellenise Phoenician history): the Phoenician deities were originally mortals, benefactor-heroes, deified in popular worship and having stumps and pillars dedicated to their names; one of these, the brother of the founder of Tyre, was the hunter Usous, who, after a bushfire at Tyre had been started by the friction of trees in the wind, made a vessel from a burnt log and was the first to embark on the sea, afterwards consecrating two pillars to fire and wind (back at Tyre?), worshipping them with bloody libations and likewise consecrating the remaining stumps. This very different version preserves the elements of the city's founders, the first sea voyage, the subsequent sacrifice, the stone pillars (now expressly two) and trees afire.⁴⁹ Elsewhere (1, 10, 31), Philo speaks of Astarte (bull-headed!) consecrating her *aeropetes aster* at Tyre. Herodotus (2, 44) alludes to a discrepancy between the Greek and Phoenician foundation stories (and to two Heracles, one an Olympian god, the other a mortal hero) and speaks of his visit to the temple of Heracles at Tyre with its two pillars, one of gold and the other of emerald. The emerald pillar is described a century later by Theophrastus (*Lap.* 24) as the largest emerald known, while Pliny (*H.N.* 37, 74) refers to this testimony with a shadow of scepticism, "nisi potius pseudo-smaragdus sit".⁵⁰ Josephus (*Contra Apion.* 1, 117-119) on the other hand speaks of a golden pillar, dedicated in the Temple of Zeus by Hiram, who also "demolished the ancient temples and built new ones dedicated to Heracles and Astarte". Evidently the confusion of myths, resulting from the assimilation of Greek and Phoenician deities, is paralleled by the confusion of testimonies about the cult places and objects at Tyre. Possibly it is a question in each case of a different deity, place and object, but the impression created by these representations and accounts is that it is a single place of worship and a single set of cult objects for which Tyre was famous. The solution may be that at Tyre there existed a double sanctuary with two cult objects, one for the worship of Heracles/Melqart with his sacred fire, the other for Ashtart.⁵¹ The pillars are hardly a strict pair, composed as they are of different materials (and surely of different size), and it would be feasible to attribute the gold one to the Lord of Fire and the "emerald" one (a glossy aerolith?) to Ashtart, and to assimilate them to the ambrosial rocks on which Tyre was founded. The Heracles cult was dominant at Tyre and the natural result would be for the whole complex to take its name from him. By the time the pillars came to be represented on Tyrian coins, in the 3rd and 4th century, they had lost

their respective distinctness and were associated as a pair, and as such were appropriated to the cult of Melqart/Heracles.

Worship of Melqart/Heracles was in evidence at Carthage, and on both sides of, and beyond, the Straits of Gibraltar⁵² (which the ancient Greeks called the Pillars of Heracles). Gades was famous for its Heracleium, which had striking similarities with the one at Tyre.⁵³ Philostratus (*Vita Apollon.* 1.5) describes it as having no image but two altars of bronze consecrated to the Egyptian⁵⁴ Heracles and a stone one consecrated to the Theban Heracles, together with a golden olive tree with emerald fruits, and a number of stelae in precious metals. Silius Italicus, of the 1st century A.D., also notes the lack of an image and adds mention of an ever-burning fire.⁵⁵ Strabo (*Geog.* 3, 5, 6) expatiates on the identification and location of the Pillars of Heracles: candidates include the mountains guarding the Straits (according to the Greeks) and the bronze pillars in the Heracleium of Gades (according to the local people). The solution is of no concern here, except in so far as it emphasises certain details about the pillars: a) the pair seems to be associated with the cult of Heracles, b) there is a natural assimilation between prominent landmarks and cult pillars, c) the pillars at Gades are bronze "reproductions" (of which original pillars?)—these may be the bronze altars mentioned by Philostratus, d) the pillars were inscribed with "a summary of expense" (expenses of construction or of sacrifices?), e) the inscription might be expected to commemorate the dedication of the pillars or the Labours of Heracles, f) there is no mention of them being the object of worship.

An example of a dedicatory inscription of Pillars of Heracles is found in Malta.⁵⁶ Identical inscriptions on two pedestals supporting small pillars read "To our Lord Melqart, Baal of Tyre, which your servant °Abd-osir and his brother Osir-shamar . . . vowed, because he heard their voice. May he bless them." The appended Greek version hellenises the names of the votaries and calls the god Heracles. This recalls the 9th century Aramaic inscription on a stele from Aleppo: "stele (*nsb'*) set up by Bar Haddad . . . king of Aram, for his lord Melqart, which he vowed to him and he heard his voice".⁵⁷ This stele may or may not have been one of a pair, but it appears to have been round-topped, like those of the Tyrian coins. Examples of the more profane type of inscription, which Strabo evidently deplors in the case of Gades, may be seen in the Tariffs of Carthage and Marseilles (the latter possibly deriving also from Carthage) detailing the payments due for sacrifices.⁵⁸

Following through the hypothesis suggested above, the Pillars of Heracles may have originated as distinct cult objects in a double sanctuary of Melqart and Ashtart at Tyre. Due to the dominance of the Melqart cult at Tyre and to his assimilation with the Greek Heracles (associated in the Greek mind with the Pillars of Heracles at Gibraltar), the two objects were later drawn together as a pair and appropriated to that god. As distinctive appurtenances of the Melqart/Heracles cult, they followed that cult abroad, but their religious significance was downgraded to the extent that they could carry inscriptions of a dedicatory or commemorative character.

Hierapolis

Another famous pair of pillars were those standing in the vestibule of the entrance to the temple of Hera/Atargatis at Hierapolis, according to the 3rd century A.D. testimony of Lucian (*De Dea Syria*, 16:28-29). These were regarded as phalli and bore the inscription: "I, Dionysus, dedicated these phalli to Hera my stepmother".⁵⁹ A 1st century A.D. temple of Atargatis at Dura Europos also had its entrance flanked by phalli.⁶⁰ However, there is no question here of a specifically Phoenician cult, since it was in an area receptive of Anatolian and Mesopotamian influences as well, and Lucian emphasises the Greek origin of the account about the pillars and of the associated practices. It would be a mistake to argue from the symbolism of these pillars to that of sacred pillars in general, or of paired pillars in particular.⁶¹

Appendix: Temple Entrance Pillars

Pairs of pillars were a common feature at the entrance of temples. The Egyptian temple at Byblos (or its eastern royal entrance, *v. supra*) had a pair of columns at both entrances, the one opening east to the outside and the other leading west into the sacred enclosure.⁶² Likewise the temple of Paphos appears to have had a pair of prominent pillars on the facade. This is more clearly shown in a terracotta model of the temple of Aphrodite from Idalion, dated 8/7th century B.C.⁶³ The entrance is flanked by lotus-capped columns, which stand free of the main structure and hardly support the projecting lintel above—in this instance they are obviously a decorative, rather than a truly functional, feature. Votive stelae affecting temple architecture generally show columns flanking the entrance, often with volute capitals recalling the lotus-capped columns on the Idalion model.⁶⁴ The 8th century temple of Tainat, with its three chambers and a pair of pillars in the vestibule, has been compared to that of Jerusalem.⁶⁵ The comparison with the Jerusalem temple is not an idle one in the context of Phoenician religion, since it was built by Phoenician workmen (1 Kings 5). The great bronze pillars

with their "lily-work" capitals (1 Kings 7:15-22) standing at the entrance belong to the Phoenician tradition of temple architecture. There has been much speculation on the religious significance of these pillars,⁶⁶ but the text gives no information apart from their enigmatic names.

Probably what the Jerusalem examples can contribute to a discussion about their Phoenician counterparts is to demonstrate that their religious significance was minimal, since pagan workers would hardly have been permitted to introduce elements alien to Yahwism. Perhaps such pillars were simply considered distinctive features of temple architecture. Secondly their sheer impressiveness may have suggested to the worshipper the power and majesty of the deity. In individual cases mythology may have assigned them a more particular role in cult, as with the Pillars of Heracles or the phalli at Hierapolis, but this may have been no more than a local matter.

VOTIVE STONES

Great numbers of votive stelae at Phoenician sanctuaries illustrate, perhaps more profusely and more vividly than all other evidence, the sacred objects at the focus of cult, the associated rites, and (by implication) the nature of the cult stones themselves. The *ex-votos* which have been unearthed and published can now be counted in the thousands. The typology, iconography and significance of these stones have been extensively studied elsewhere⁶⁷—here only a cursory treatment is intended for the light they might cast on the sacred stones towards which they were directed.

The principal find-spots of the votive stones are the open-air sanctuaries of Carthage, Sousse, Constantine, Kenissia and other Punic centres of North Africa, Nora, Tharros and Mt. Sirai in Sardinia, and Motya and Lilybaeum in Sicily.⁶⁸ By archaeological convention these *temenoi* are termed *tophets*, recalling the places of child sacrifice mentioned in the Bible. The *molk*,⁶⁹ the practice of sacrificing children or substituted animals, is amply evidenced from ancient literature, from the association of *tophet* stelae with urns containing the cremated remains of victims, from inscriptions and representations on stelae, and from sacrificial arrangements noted in the recently excavated sanctuary at Mt. Sirai.⁷⁰ The sacred enclosure served as the place for the sacrifices, for the deposition of the cremation urns and for the erection of the *tophet* stones, either around a central shrine as at Carthage or adjacent to the temple as at Mt. Sirai. Other find-spots of stones, apparently similar in form, iconography and inscription to the votive stones, appear to be cemeteries, e.g. Sulcis, Oumm el-^cAmed, Kition, but what relationship exists between votive and funerary stelae is a puzzle.

The votive stones are clearly distinct from true cult stones in being concentrated together in large numbers, in their general

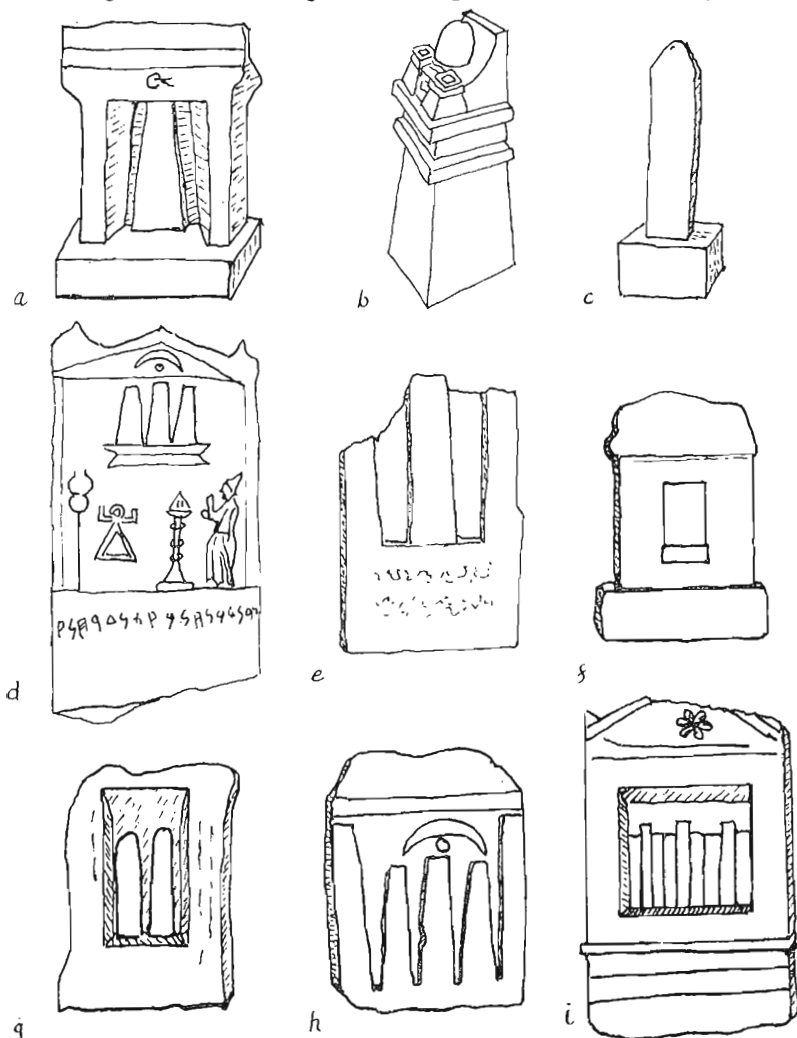


Fig. 2. Baetyls depicted on votive cippi and stelae
 (a) Temple cippus enclosing baetyl (Carthage); (b) Throne cippus and baetyl (Carthage); (c) Baetyl-on-base cippus (Carthage); (d) Stele with triad, symbols, priest (Lilybaeum); (e) Baetyl in relief (Carthage); (f) Baetyl in outline (Motya); (g) Baetyl pair (Motya); (h) Baetyl triad (Nora); (i) Multiple baetyls (3 triads) (Sousse).

form, and in bearing inscriptions and representations. In form, two basic types can be distinguished: a) the squat coarse block or cippus, shaped like a temple, throne or altar (fig. 2, a-c); b) the tall fine slab, or stele proper, with pointed or rounded top (fig. 2, d-i). In each case one can speak of a front, the other three sides being left rough or with minimal sculpting, so that the object is clearly meant to face in a certain direction. On the other hand, a cult stone, whether cylindrical or quadrangular in cross-section, seems to have been as deep as it was wide and to have lacked any feature to direct attention to one side rather than the other—in other words, it is able to present the same aspect when viewed from any direction, as befits an object central to ritual acts. This difference in form between a votive stone and a cult stone would suggest that in the same religious context the one could be *focused*, the other *be in focus*, to worship, or simply that they appear to be respectively subject and object of the one religious act or stance.

Apart from secondary ornamentation, five types of representation can be distinguished for our purposes: a) anthropomorphic portrayal of deities; b) divine symbols such as the “sign of Tanit”, caduceus, bottle-idol, disk and crescent, upraised hand (fig. 2, d); c) figures from nature, such as animals and trees, probably also symbolic; d) depiction of cultic paraphernalia, e.g. sacrificial scenes, figures of priests, votaries or cult assistants, incense altars, sacrificial instruments (fig. 2, d); e) tall block-like “baetyls” (fig. 2, a-i). Most of these categories can be seen to reflect and express what the believers saw in the object of their worship: deity imagined in human form, symbols encapsulating faith, scenes evoking the service of the deity. Of all the figures shown on the *ex-votos*, only the baetyls seem to lack natural meaning, unless it is proposed that they reflect something else, namely the actual form of the cult object. In any case this line of argument merely corroborates the foregoing evidence for pillar worship.

Baetylic representations are most commonly carved in relief within the recessed entrances of throne-cippi (fig. 2, a), or in niches suggestive of temple facades or against the backs of throne-cippi, or they may be rudely rendered by incised outline (fig. 2, f). Frequently they are shown standing on a base, and a few examples have a stumpy pillar freestanding on a stepped base, altar or throne (fig. 2, b). The outline figures are in the form of a simple rectangle, while the relief pillars are generally flat-topped with parallel or tapering sides and quadrangular cross-section, although rounded tops and semi-circular cross-sections

are not unknown. Most commonly depicted is the single baetyl, but there are also pairs (i.e. two pillars of equal height) and triads (i.e. three pillars, of which the central one is higher and the other two equal) and even several triads in the one group.⁷¹

The technical terms for these votive stones are shown by inscription to be cognate to the corresponding Hebrew, Aramaic and Arabic terms, which are derived from the root *nsb*—

“*Msbt* of X . . . ; Y son of X . . . completed it (*slmh*, or paid for it?) . . . for setting it up.”⁷²

“*Nsb* of *mlkb^{el}* which X placed to Ba^{al} Hammon because he heard the voice of his words.”⁷³

A Neo-Punic inscription differentiates three stelae types:

“*Skr* to the women . . . ; X set up the *mnsbt* for her mother Y, after her husband Z had made a *sioⁿ lhym* (monument for the living?) . . .”⁷⁴

A stele may be described as a gift (*mnt^t*⁷⁵) or an offering (*mnht*⁷⁶) or it might record the giving of some gift or victim.⁷⁷ A startling personification, as if the stone speaks for an absent one, occurs in some inscriptions:

“I (am) X . . . which Y set up for me.”⁷⁸

The stones are said to have been “set up” (*nsb*,⁷⁹ *tn*,⁸⁰ *sm*⁸¹) “offered” (*ns*⁸²) or, in the majority of cases, “vowed” (*ndr*⁸³). Of the latter, the more cryptic formula records the vow, simply naming the divine addressees and the votary,⁸⁴ but more typically there is added the reason for fulfilling the vow:

“To the lady Tanit, Face of Ba^{al}, and to the lord Ba^{al} Hammon; which X vowed, because he heard his voice; may he bless him (*ybrk*)”.⁸⁵

The function of Phoenician votive stones can be understood more clearly by noting how they stand in relation to the deity, to the votary and to the cultic act of the latter:

a) The deity. The location of these objects in the sacred enclosure, the evidence of inscriptions and the various means of evoking the deity by representing his human image, symbol or actual cult object, all combine to show that the votive stones have been set up to and for the god of the *temenos*. The object of devotion, as shown on these stones, may vary with place and time; Ba^{al} Hammon at Carthage, later joined by his “Face” (Pene Ba^{al}) Tanit, a divine pair at Sulcis, Motya and Tyre, a triad or several triads at Sousse, Lilybaeum, Nora, Tharros and also Carthage—but in the matter of popular devotion it is not advisable to push consistency too strictly, and further allow for theological factors of which we may not be aware, such as vary-

ing identifications and hypostases of the one god.⁸⁶ Whoever may be the object of local cult, the important thing here is that the votive stones are brought into such close relationship with that god that they appear to have been made over, and to belong, to him.

b) The votary. Inscriptions take pains to designate the person for whom and by whom the votive object has been set up, while the votary's part is sometimes strengthened by representative allusion to him. Some votive formulae suggest even a form of identification between the object and the votary, as if providing him with a kind of presence in the sacred place before the god. This is true of the living as of the dead, for some *ex-votos* are clearly not funerary. The permanent character of the memorial, and even the wish expressed in some inscriptions, reflect a desire to be provided with a permanent presence in the sacred place by means of the votive object. The personal character of Phoenician religion may not appear so striking to a modern sense of religion, but it is very distinctive by comparison with non-Semitic religions of the time, in which votive formulae are more likely to designate the people of a city or state or a high official. It is quite surprising to read that "(the god) has heard his voice . . . may he bless him", and to realise that such divine intercourse has taken place with a humble citizen. Another aspect of this personal cult is the very large number of private *ex-votos* in Phoenician sacred enclosures.

c) The cultic act. Many inscriptions record that the setting up of the stone is the fulfilment of a vow, a gift or an offering. Others allude, in words or in pictures, to a sacrifice offered or caused to be offered by the votary, while the same intention is clear in the cases where the votive stone is set up over the urn containing the ashes of the *molk* sacrifice. The stone appears to be the permanent record, counterpart even, of an act which though momentous is transitory, by the very fact of being an action. A sacrifice, a prayer, a vow, an invocation is seemingly fixed in place for all time, the stone standing before the god as a lasting presence of the votary in an act of homage. But the stone also records the divine response to the cultic act, a *quid pro quo* between the god and his suppliant, so that one might coin the expression "personal covenant stone", seeing in the inscriptional and pictorial allusions, and even more in the juxtaposition of the *ex-voto* to the central cult object, the coming together of god and suppliant, and that for all time.

Admittedly this discussion on the nature of the votive stones is highly speculative but it makes possible speculation on the

nature of the cult stones which stand for gods. The juxtaposition of votive stones and cult stones in the sacred enclosure, the former surrounding and focused on the latter in a sort of religious tension, suggests (and probably did suggest in the minds of the simple faithful) an analogy of function between the two. If one could stand for the cultist and his act of homage, the other would surely be seen as standing for the god and his activity. This line of reasoning justifies seeing in the cult stone a divine presence. Such a presence need not make the stone an idol in the classic sense,⁸⁷ as if that object were fully identified with the god or exhausted his presence possibilities, just as a votive stone might give to the votary a cultic stance in the sacred place yet allow him to be present elsewhere or even dead. Yet it was far from an unreal presence, because it was an active presence, whereby both divine and mortal actions persisted within the sacred enclosure. And it was a presence that allowed for a divine omnipresence, if such a concept had a place in Phoenician theology, and also for as many temple presences as that god possessed temples to his name.

Just as the presence of the mortal, fixed by the stone, might begin with an act of cult, so it is conceivable that the divine presence might begin with a special divine act, or in other words, that the cult object might perpetuate the memory of a theophany. Such a commemorative function is clearly evidenced for biblical *masseboth*,⁸⁸ and Phoenician mythology attributes divine origins for the sacred stones at Tyre and Emesa. If more were known about local cults, it would not be surprising if each shrine were found to possess its own myths of theophany legitimating religious practice in that place, assuring the faithful a divine presence to which they could have recourse and in which they could provide permanently for their own worshipping presence.⁸⁹

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1. D. B. Harden, *The Phoenicians* (Ancient Peoples and Places, ed. Glyn Daniel, Vol. 26) London, 1962, p. 85f.
 2. It is easy to assimilate these three religions by the astral symbolism and aniconic tendency revealed in their natural remains. The stereotype formula on countless votive objects leads one to suspect in Phoenician religion (and that of other contemporary Semites) a sort of personal covenant character, which parallels the distinctive ethical nature of Yahwism and Islam. Yahwism and Islam are also remarkable in their capacity for self-reformation, possibly the result of theological strength, and something similar is thought to have occasioned the notable change in iconography in 4th century Carthage, characterised by increased abstraction and by persistence of archaic forms (A. M. Bisi, *Le Stele Puniche*, Rome, 1967, pp. 57-8, 220). The radical conservatism of Phoenician religion is noted by most specialists

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- in this culture, e.g. A. M. Bisi, D. B. Harden, R. Dussaud, G. Contenau, G. Picard, M. Hours-Miédan.
3. Margaret Guido, *Sardinia* (Ancient Peoples and Places, Vol. 35), London, 1963, pp. 95-6, 104-5. On Sardinia there is the possibility of interreaction between the indigenous Nuragic culture and that of the early Phoenician settlers (*ibid.* p. 99; A. M. Bisi, *Le Stele Puniche*, pp. 201, 157-8).
 4. G. Perrot and C. Chipiez, *Histoire de l'Art dans l'Antiquité*, Tome III, Paris, 1885, pp. 298-300.
 5. John Evans, *Malta* (Ancient Peoples and Places, Vol. II), London, 1959, pp. 42-3; Elizabeth de Manneville, "Le Bétyle de Malte", *Mélanges Syriens offerts à Monsieur René Dussaud*, II, Paris, 1939, pp. 895-902.
 6. Sir George Hill, *A History of Cyprus*, Vol. I, Cambridge, 1949, pp. 55-63 (especially for Vounous and Ayia Irini); Arthur J. Evans, "Mycenaean Tree and Pillar Cult and its Mediterranean Relations", *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, XXI, 1901, pp. 99-204.
 7. N. Glueck, "Explorations in Eastern Palestine", *Annual of the American School of Oriental Research*, I, 1933-4, pp. 45-7, III, 1937-9, pp. 128-31; "Further Explorations in Eastern Palestine", *Bulletin of the American School of Oriental Research*, 86, 1942, pp. 14-24. Two of these stones, one at Ader and the other at El Megheirat, have transverse grooves, possibly suggestive of phallic symbolism (*AASOR*, 1933-4, pp. 46-7). W. F. Albright, "The Archaeological Results of an Expedition to Moab and the Dead Sea", *BASOR*, 14, 1924, pp. 5-10; "Soundings at Ader, a Bronze Age City of Moab", *BASOR*, 53, 1934, pp. 13-18; *The Archaeology of Palestine*, Penguin, 1949, pp. 77-8 (where these structures are dated to EB IV, i.e. to the end of the 3rd millennium). See also M. Tallon, "Monuments mégalithiques de Syrie et du Liban", *Mélanges de l'Université Saint-Joseph de Beyrouth*, XXXV, 1958, pp. 213-234.
 8. Plutarch, *Greek Questions*, qu. 13; Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, I, 44, 2; 2, 9, 6; 2, 29, 9; 2, 31, 4; 3, 22, 1; 7, 22, 4; 9, 24, 3; 9, 27, 1.
 9. P. Gardiner, *Archaeology and the Types of Greek Coins*, Chicago, 1965, p. 77.
 10. Trans. Rev. Henry Street, *Leaves from Eusebius, Selected from his Celebrated Work The Evangelical Preparation*, London, 1842, pp. 58-9.
 11. S. Moscati, "The First Inland Carthaginian City to be found in Sardinia", *The Illustrated London News*, 3/4/65, pp. 18-21.
 12. A. M. Bisi, *Le Stele Puniche*, p. 182 (where she refers to a report which was unavailable to this study: F. Barreca & G. Garbini, *Monte Sirai-I, Rapporto preliminare della Missione Archeologica dell'Università di Roma e della Soprintendenza alle Antichità Di Cagliari*, *Studii Semitici* XI, Roma, 1964, pp. 68-9).
 13. Trans. E. C. Echols, *Herodian of Antioch's History of the Roman Empire*, California, 1961, p. 139.
 14. S. A. Cook, *The Religion of Ancient Palestine in the Light of Archaeology* (Schweich Lectures 1925), London, 1930, p. 159, pl. XXXIII, 2;

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- P. Gardner, *Archaeology and the Types of Greek Coins*, Chicago, 1965, p. 77, pl. XV, 1; W. Culican, "The Iconography of some Phoenician Seals and Seal Impressions", *Australian Journal of Biblical Archaeology*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1968, p. 83; J. W. McKay, "Further Light on the Horses and Chariots of the Sun in the Jerusalem Temple (2 Kings 23:11)", *Palestine Exploration Quarterly*, 1973, pp. 167-9.
15. D. B. Harden, *The Phoenicians*, p. 93; S. A. Cook, *The Religion of Ancient Palestine in the Light of Archaeology*, p. 161, pl. XXXIII, 5 (*qv.* for further references). An illustration of the coin and a suggested reconstruction is given by R. Dussaud, "Note additionelle aux rapports de MM. Dunand et Pillet", *Syria*, 8, 1927, p. 116.
 16. R. Dussaud, "Le Sanctuaire Phénicien de Byblos d'après Benjamin de Tudèle", *Syria* 7, 1926, pp. 247-56 (see footnote 1 for further references).
 17. M. Pillet, "Le Temple de Byblos", *Syria* 8, 1927, pp. 105-112.
 18. C.I.S., I, 1; ANET 502, G. A. Cooke, *A Text Book of North-Semitic Inscriptions*, Oxford, 1903, pp. 18-26; R. Dussaud, "Note Additionelle aux rapports de MM. Dunand et Pillet", *Syria*, 8, 1927, pp. 113-125. The various translations differ on details of the temple restoration mentioned in the inscription. The inscription names the king and the goddess (Baalat Gebal), lists the objects he has caused to be made for the temple, terminating with a votive formula ("I have invoked my mistress . . . and she has heard my voice and done kindness to me"), a prayer for specified blessings and a curse on whoever should violate his work.
 19. S. A. Cook, *The Religion of Ancient Palestine in the Light of Archaeology*, p. 161.
 20. R. Dussaud, "Note additionelle aux rapports de MM. Dunand et Pillet", *Syria*, 8, 1927, pp. 113-125.
 21. *De Iside et Osiride* 16. Plutarch names the chief deities of the temple Isis (who journeyed to Byblos and was known there as *Astarte*) and Adonis, while Lucian (*De Dea Syr.*) calls them Byblian Aphrodite and Adonis. For the various assimilations of Ashtart, see G. A. Cooke, *A Text Book of North-Semitic Inscriptions*, pp. 20-1; cf. W. Robertson Smith, *The Religion of the Semites*, Meridian Library edition (third printing, 1959), pp. 469ff. (additional note G); W. Culican, "The Iconography of some Phoenician Seals and Seal Impressions", *Australian Journal of Biblical Archaeology*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1968, p. 69.
 22. It is an open question whether they were in fact statues of deities, notwithstanding the hearsay evidence of Benjamin. But granted that the three statues on the right of the entrance were the Gible triad (Ashtart, El-Kronos, Adonis-Eshmun) while the single standing statue on the left was that of a king (according to R. Dussaud, "Note additionelle . . .", p. 120), as representations they may have been secondary to the cult object itself, perhaps only *ex-votos*. It may be significant that both Yehawmilk and the coin designer, followers of the cult, make no mention of them.
 23. D. B. Harden, *The Phoenicians*, pp. 93, 315, pl. 100; G. Hill, *A History of Cyprus*, Vol. I, Cambridge, 1949, p. 74f. The representation is repeated in a gold plaque of unknown, but presumed Cypriot, provenance of the Hellenistic or Roman period. (Harden, *loc. cit.*)

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Despite attempts to identify the sanctuary with excavated structures (G. Perrot & C. Chipiez, *Histoire de l'Art dans l'Antiquité*, III, p. 264-271), the actual temple has not been found, but its lay-out compares with the Aphrodite temple at Soli, dating from 200 B.C. (Hill, *op. cit.*, pp. 66, 75; A. Westholm, *The Temples of Soli*, Stockholm, 1936, pp. 158-164).

24. G. Perrot & C. Chipiez, *loc. cit.*
25. G. Hill, *A History of Cyprus*, Vol. 1, p. 69.
26. G. Hill, *op. cit.*, pp. 59-63, 71-73, 77-80. The best-documented illustration of indigenous litholatry comes from the sanctuary of Ayia Irini, where a black oval stone was surrounded by votive objects, including some 2000 terracotta figures of worshippers. The sanctuary was in use from the 12th to the 1st century B.C. (*ibid.*, pp. 59-63; P. Dikaios, *A Guide to the Cyprus Museum*, 3rd edition, Nicosia, 1961, pp. 85-90, pl. XVIII).
27. For a discussion on the various elements of the cult, both Phoenician and indigenous, see G. Hill, *op. cit.*, pp. 66-77. The Cyprus Museum has a Phoenician inscription recording a woman's offering of a lock of hair (thought to be a substitute for a sacrifice of virginity) in the sanctuary of Paphos "to Ashtart of Paphos" (P. Dikaios, *op. cit.*, p. 216).
28. E. D. Oren, "The 'Herodian Doves' in the Light of Recent Archaeological Discoveries", *Palestine Exploration Quarterly*, 1968, pp. 56-61. Arthur J. Evans ("Mycenaean Tree and Pillar Cult and its Mediterranean Relations", *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, 1901), claims that the dove cult is Greek in origin and, in its early stages, not connected with Aphrodite (p. 104), and he further emphasises the influence of Aegean religion in Palestine and Cyprus (p. 131).
29. P. Gardner, *Archaeology and the Types of Greek Coins*, Chicago, 1965, pp. 77-8, pl. XV; S. A. Cook, *The Religion of Ancient Palestine in the Light of Archaeology* (Schweich Lectures, 1925), London, 1930, p. 165, pl. XXXIII, 10; H. Seyrig, "Antiquités Syriennes 70. Divinités de Sidon", *Syria*, 36, 1959, pp. 48-52.
30. In Eusebius, *Praep. Evang.*, 1, 10, 12.
31. S. A. Cook, *op. cit.*, p. 165.
32. H. Seyrig (*op. cit.*, *Syria*, 1959) singles out two such thrones bearing a spheroid object. His catalogue of ten thrones with flanking sphinxes includes three supporting baetyls, and of those which are empty, one is so inclined as to be unable to hold anything (but is inscribed with a globe and crescent), three have a device for installing another object and one has its seat hollowed to "une cavité en U . . . exactement comme pour contenir un globe".
33. P. Cintas, "The 'Sign of Tanit', Interpretations of a Symbol", *Archaeologia Viva*, English Edition, Vol. I, No. 2, Dec. 1968-Feb. 1969, p. 10, fig. 9 & 10.
34. W. Culican, "The Iconography of Some Phoenician Seals and Seal Impressions", *Australian Journal of Biblical Archaeology*, 1968, p. 83.
35. G. Picard, *Carthage* (trans. M. and L. Kochan), London, 1964, fig. 15; P. Cintas, *op. cit.*, pp. 9-10, 82.

36. H. Seyrig, *op. cit.*, p. 49. S. Ronzevalle denies any ascription to Ash-tart, claiming the object is a solar globe ("Le Prétendu Char d'As-tarté", *Mélanges de l'Université S. Joseph*, 16, 1932, p. 51f.; cf. 15, 1930, p. 163f., 18, 1934, p. 107f.).
37. In Eusebius, *Praep. Evang.*, 1, 10, 31.
38. Five examples from North Africa showing Baal Hammon enthroned between sphinxes are described and illustrated by L. Foucher, "Representations of Baal Hammon", *Archaeologia Viva*, English Edition, Vol. I, No. 1, 1968-9, pp. 131-9, pl. XLIV, XLV, 131, 133, 134. A similar portrayal is found on a seal from Cyprus (P. Dikaios, *A Guide to the Cyprus Museum*, 3rd edition, Nicosia, 1961, p. 114) and on a set of seal impressions from Lebanon (W. Culican, "The Iconography of Some Phoenician Seals and Seal Impressions", *Australian Journal of Biblical Archaeology*, 1968, p. 58).
39. Cf. D. B. Harden, *The Phoenicians*, p. 86. M. Dunand, in "La Piscine du Trône d'Ashtarté dans le Temple d'Echmoun à Sidon", *Bulletin du Musée de Beyrouth*, 24, 1971, pp. 19-25, draws attention to an empty sphinx throne standing on a socle in a chapel in the environs of the 6th century Eshmun temple. The chapel appears to have been built at a much later date than the temple and in no architectural relation to it. The ascription of the chapel to Ashtarté seems gratuitous and the suggestion that the spherical object shown in the coins is a vase, an emblem of fecundity, while interesting, is supported by very tenuous evidence.
40. H. Danthine, "Imagerie des trônes vides et des trônes porteurs de symboles dans le Proche-Orient Ancien", *Mélanges Syriens offerts à Monsieur René Dussaud*, II, Paris, 1939, pp. 857-866; C. Picard, "Le trône vide d'Alexandre et le culte de trône vide", *Cahiers Archéologiques*, 7, 1954, pp. 1-17; S. A. Cook, *The Religion of Ancient Palestine in the Light of Archaeology*, London, 1930, pp. 21-24; G. Contenau, *La Civilisation Phénicienne*, Paris, 1949, p. 152; H. Seyrig, "Antiquités Syriennes", *Syria*, 36, 1959, pp. 50-2 (see our footnote 32); W. Culican, *op. cit.*, pp. 81-2; A. M. Bisi, *Le Stele Puniche*, Rome, 1967, *passim* (abundant illustrations). M. Dunand and R. Duru, in *Oumm el-cAmed, une ville de l'époque hellénistique aux Echelles de Tyr*, Paris, 1962, 1 (Texte) pp. 168-169, 2 (Atlas), pl. LXXVII, LXXXVII, report two stone sphinx thrones, the first of which was on a socle in a chapel to the right of the cella of the *Temple Est*, but whether it was always empty cannot be proved.
41. W. Culican, *op. cit.*, p. 82.
42. D. B. Harden, *The Phoenicians*, pp. 91-3, fig. 20.
43. A. M. Bisi, *Le Stele Puniche*, p. 160, pl. LVII. (Unavailable to this study, but indicated by Bisi are: G. Pesce, *Nova Guida agli scavi*, Bologna, 1957, p. 86, fig. 63-4; *Un "Ma'cabed" a Nora*, Studi Sardi, XII-XIII, 152-4, pp. 475-82, tavv. I-111, V.)
44. J. N. Coldstream, "The North Gate, 1961-62", *Motya, A Phoenician-Punic Site (The Annual of Leeds University Oriental Society)*, Vol. IV, 1962-63, Leiden, 1964, pp. 105-12, pl. VI-IX, fig. 3; B. S. J. Isserlin, "The Phoenician Island City of Motya—First Discoveries in a New Series of Excavations", *The Illustrated London News*, 3/3/62, p. 42.

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45. D. B. Harden, *The Phoenicians*, p. 101, fig. 26; M. Hours-Miédan, *Carthage* (Que Je Sais 340), Paris, 1959, pp. 52-3; G. Picard, *Carthage* (trans. M. & L. Kochan), London, 1964, p. 37.
46. A. M. Bisi, *Le Stele Puniche*, pp. 32-44 *et passim*. It is interesting to note that two examples have empty sphinx-thrones within (pp. 33-35).
47. G. R. H. Wright, "The Bronze Age Temple at Amman", *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*, 78, 1966, p. 355; "Temples at Shechem", *Z.A.W.*, 80, 1968, pp. 15-16; cf. E. D. Stockton, "Petra Revisited; A Review of a Semitic Cult Complex", *Australian Journal of Biblical Archaeology*, 1971, pp. 57-60.
48. S. A. Cook, *The Religion of Ancient Palestine in the Light of Archaeology*, London, 1930, pp. 161-3, pl. XXXIII, 6, 7; E. Will, "Au Sanctuaire d'Héraclès à Tyr; l'olivier enflammé, les stèles et les roches ambrosiennes", *Berytus*, X, 1, 1950-1, pp. 1-12 (collection of the ancient literary references; fig. 1 shows 7 examples of the coin type). W. Culican (pers. comm. 2/8/74) underlines the difficulty of using late Roman/Tyrian iconography to demonstrate classical Phoenician religious concepts, suspecting a "false antiquarianism" on the part of the Roman colony at Tyre. He also questions the meaning of *ambrosie*, for which neither am I aware of any explanation, apart from the dictionary meaning "divine, immortal".
49. S. A. Cook (*loc. cit.*), following Lagrange (*Etudes sur les Religions Sémitiques*, 2nd ed., Paris, 1905, p. 417), sees in this story elements of the Deluge story as we have it in the biblical and Babylonian versions. He compares the Tyrian stones with covenant tablets, e.g. the Noachic covenants in Jewish tradition (Book of Jubilees 3, 10-14; 4, 17; Josephus, *Ant.* I, ii, 3), the Carthaginian tariff stones, the Tables of the Law (Exod. 25:16, 21; I Kings 8:9). Will (*op. cit.*, pp. 4-5) compares the Nonnus account with the tree and serpent of the Gilgamesh epic, and one can readily think of the biblical Garden of Eden. Philo's description of the cult heroes, divinised for inventing the necessities of civilised life, reads like the Genesis account of the immediate ancestors of Adam (Gen. 4:17-23) and of the Nephilim (Gen. 6:4). It is tempting to assimilate Usous with Esau (Cook, *op. cit.*, p. 162). Without revelling in the luxuries of Comparative Religions, it is instructive to see how common elements are combined in varying ways in legendary material.
50. A Tyrian coin depicts in a portable shrine a single omphalos-like stone, which has been identified with the emerald pillar (A. B. Cook, *Zeus: A Study in Ancient Religion*, Cambridge, i, 1914, p. 356, fig. 373; ii, 1925, p. 424), or with the stone of Astarte (E. Will, *loc. cit.*, p. 6; G. F. Hill, *Catalogue of the Greek Coins of Phoenicia*, British Museum, 1910, p. CXLi, No. 3; pl. XXXIV, 14, Nos. 435, 471).
51. A divine pair was venerated at Carthage, and possibly at Mt. Sirai (*v. supra*). Double sanctuaries are not uncommon in the ancient Near East, perhaps the most notable being the succession of double sanctuaries at Bethshan. The dual cult at Tyre may be reflected in a stele found nearby depicting two baetyls (M. Chehab, "Trois Stèles trouvées en Phénicie", *Berytus*, I, 1934, pp. 44-47, pl. XI, 1).
52. D. B. Harden, *The Phoenicians*, pp. 85-6; W. Culican, "Phoenician Remains from Gibraltar", *Australian Journal of Biblical Archaeology*, 1972, pp. 110-133.

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53. E. Will, "Au Sanctuaire d'Héraclès à Tyr . . .", *Berytus*, X, 1, 1950-1, pp. 8-9.
54. E. Wills, *ibid.*, suggests he means the Tyrian Heracles, i.e. the god as distinct from the mortal.
55. 3, 17-31, as given in D. B. Harden, *The Phoenicians*, p. 224, note 60.
56. G. A. Cooke, *A Text Book of North-Semitic Inscriptions*, Oxford, 1903, pp. 102-3; C.I.S., i, 122. The pedestals, now housed in the museums of Valetta and the Louvre, must originally have been set together as a balancing pair. Dated 2nd century B.C.
57. J. B. Pritchard (ed.), *Ancient Near East Texts relating to the Old Testament*, Princeton, 1955, p. 501 (ANEP, 499).
58. J. B. Pritchard, ANET, pp. 502-3.
59. G. Goosens, *Hierapolis de Syrie*, Louvain, 1943; G. R. H. Wright, "Simeon's Ancestors", *Australian Journal of Biblical Archaeology*, 1, 1968, pp. 41-8; "The Heritage of the Stylites"; *AJBA*, 3, 1970, pp. 82-107.
60. M. R. Rostovtzeff, *Dura Europos and its Art*, Oxford, 1958, p. 148.
61. W. Robertson Smith, *The Religion of the Semites* (3rd printing, Meridian Library), New York, 1959, pp. 456-7.
62. M. Pillet, "Le Temple de Byblos", *Syria*, 8, 1927, pp. 107, 110, pl. XXVIII. W. Culican has drawn my attention to the pair of pillar emplacements at the entrance to the adyton of the Phoenician temple of Kiton. (V. Karageorghis, "Fouilles de Kiton", *Bulletin de Correspondence Hellénique*, XCIV, 1970-1, p. 252), and to evidence for free-standing pillars on either side of the Amrith shrine. For further examples from other Semitic peoples, see Stockton, "Sacred Pillars in the Bible", *Australian Biblical Review*, 20, 1972, pp. 28-9.
63. D. B. Harden, *The Phoenicians*, pl. 23, note p. 304.
64. *Ibid.*, pl. 34, 44, fig. 25, t; A. M. Bisi, *Le Stele Puniche*, Rome, 1967, pp. 32-44 *et passim*.
65. G. E. Wright, "Solomon's Temple Resurrected", *Biblical Archaeologist*, IV, 2, 1941, pp. 20-1; J. L. Myres, "King Solomon's Temple and other Buildings and Works of Art", *Palestine Exploration Quarterly*, 1948, pp. 14-41.
66. Cf. E. Stockton, "Sacred Pillars in the Bible", *Australian Biblical Review*, 20, 1972, pp. 28-9.
67. Among several excellent studies might be noted M. Hours-Miédan, "Les représentations figurées sur les stèles de Carthage", *Cahiers de Byrsa*, I, 1951, pp. 15-60; A. M. Bisi, *Le Stele Puniche*, Rome, 1967; "La religione punica nelle rappresentazioni figurate delle stele votive", *Studi e Materiali di Storia delle Religioni*, XXXVI, 1965, pp. 99-157; "Religious Symbolism—Punic Stelae", *Archaeologia Viva*, I, 2, 1968-9 (English Edition), pp. 119-22. The following summary on the physical characteristics of votive stones is based on material accessible to the author in Bisi's works and in the following site reports: *Mozia. Rapporto preliminare della Missione Archeologica della Soprintendenza alla Antichità della Sicilia Occidentale e dell' Università di Roma*, I

(*Studi Semitici*, XII), Rome, 1964; II (S.S. XIX), 1966; III (S.S. XXIV), 1967; IV (S.S. XXIX), 1968; G. Lilliu, "Le Stele Puniche di Sulcis (Cagliari)", *Monumenti Antichi*, XL, 1945, pp. 295-418, tav. I-X; M. Dunand and R. Duru, *Oumm el-cAmed, une ville de l'époque hellénistique aux Echelles de Tyr*, Paris, 1962.

68. While the Eastern Phoenician world has not yielded like concentrations of stelae, isolated finds of comparable stelae raise the possibility that the religious thinking behind such *ex-votos* flourished also in Cyprus, Syria-Palestine and Egypt.
69. For a description of the sacrifice see J. Fevrier, "Religion—the Child Sacrifices", *Archaeologia Viva*, I, 2, 1968-9 (English Edition), pp. 115-8.
70. S. Moscati, "The first Inland Carthaginian City to be found in Sardinia", *The Illustrated London News*, 3/4/65, p. 18.
71. It might be noted that this range of variations offers striking similarities with the baetyl niches carved in rock faces at Petra and other Nabataean centres; cf. E. Stockton, "Petra Revisited; A Review of a Semitic Cult Complex", *Australian Journal of Biblical Archaeology*, 1971, pp. 52-62.
72. *Corpus Inscriptionum Semiticarum*, i, Paris, 1885, No. 144; G. A. Cooke, *A Text Book of North-Semitic Inscriptions*, Oxford, 1903, No. 41. A number of pillars from the necropolis of Kition are described as *msbt*; Cooke, No. 15 (C.I.S. 44), 16 (C.I.S. 46), 21; and also from Oumm el-cAmed, Nos. 5, 9, 10, 11 (Dunand, pp. 187-191)—No. 9 reads, "This stele is that of X and Y his wife, which their son Z set up for them for eternity (1c1m)". *Msbt* may be specific of a funerary stone.
73. Cooke, No. 37 (C.I.S. 123a). The phrase *nsb mlkb^el* occurs also in C.I.S. 123b, 147, 194 (the indistinct representation may be of a woman and child, perhaps alluding to the child sacrifice, as an example from Mt. Sirai; cf. Bisi, *Le Stele Puniche*, p. 184), 380; also two recently discovered cippi from 6th century Carthage (Bisi, *op. cit.*, p. 57, tav. IX; our fig. 2, e). The second word can hardly be the name of the votary, nor an alternative title for Ba'al Hammon—most likely it defines the *usb* as one for the *molk* sacrifice.
74. Cooke, No. 56. *Skr* recalls the Nabataean *zkyr*, memorial (E. Stockton, *op. cit.*, pp. 62-3) and *sio^en* recalls the Hebrew *sion*, funerary monument (2 Kg. 23:17; Ezek. 39:15; *et al*). For the form *msbt* see also C.I.S. 159. *Skr* also occurs on the Oumm el-cAmed stelae, either in opposition to *msbt* (Nos. 5, 10, 11) or alone (No. 16).
75. C.I.S. 409, 410.
76. Cooke, No. 7, C.I.S. 14, 29, 42, 43.
77. C.I.S. 7, 118, 139, 143: see also the stelae noted in our footnotes 18 and 27. Stelae depicting sacrifice would probably fit this category.
78. Cooke, No. 35 (C.I.S. 119). Cooke, No. 32 (C.I.S. 115) has "I am X; which I Y set up". A number of Phoenician inscriptions from Abydos simply state "I am X" (C.I.S. 99-108). The Yehawmilk stele begins "I am Yehawmilk . . ." (cf. our footnote 18).
79. C.I.S. 144.

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80. C.I.S. 46, 115, 119, Cooke, No. 21, 56, Dunand, No. 9, 16.
81. C.I.S. 123a. Dunand, No. 10.
82. C.I.S. 401, 408, 411-6.
83. More than half of 300 inscriptions sampled in C.I.S. Also Dunand, No. 3, 7, 8, 14.
84. C.I.S. 402-7, 417.
85. Cooke, No. 48: he states that of the more than 2000 votive tablets found at Carthage (up to 1903) "the formula of dedication is in nearly all cases the same" (similarly A. M. Bisi, "La religione punica . . ." p. 101). 13% of the sample mentioned in footnote 83 have the full votive formula. The perfect "blessed", rather than the imperfect, occurs in Cooke, No. 51, 55.
86. Is Tanit an African female hypostasis of Ba'al Hammon, and are they both a Punic version of the Tyrian pair, Melqart and Ashtart? Reflection on contemporary Christian devotion, especially at places of pilgrimage, serves to suggest many possibilities to which the religious nature of man is prone.
87. Which may be only the satirical creation of Israelite prophets; cf. E. Stockton, "Sacred Pillars in the Bible", *Australian Biblical Review*, XX, 1972, p. 30.
88. E. Stockton, *ibid.*, p. 30 *et passim*.
89. It may appear a serious omission not to advert to Philo Biblius' description of *baitylia* as *lithous empsychous* (lit. animated stones) (*Praep. Evang.*, 1, 10, 37). However Lagrange (*Études sur les Religions Sémitiques*, Paris, 1905, pp. 194-5) throws doubt on the derivation of the Greek *baitylos* or *baitylion* from the Semitic *baitil* or *bethel* (lit. house of god), despite modern usage of *baetyl* as a sacred stone enshrining divine presence. Quoting Photius (*Vita Isidori*), Lagrange claims that "les bétyles étaient pour les anciens non des pierres sacrées, objet d'un culte public, mais des pierres qui étaient censées se mouvoir sous des influences magiques". These capricious little objects, which featured on the superstitious fringes of Greek religion, have little in common with the august standing stones at the centre of Phoenician cult, apart from accidental similarity of name (resulting perhaps in "confusions possibles"), and are of dubious usefulness in the present study.