Jupiter, Venus and Mercury of Heliopolis (Baalbek)
The images of the “triad” and its alleged syncretisms

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Résumé – Beaucoup de conceptions sur les fameux dieux d’Héliopolis-Baalbek semblent bien établies aujourd’hui : ils formaient une “triade” ; Jupiter et/ou Mercure étaient vénérés comme dieux solaires ; Jupiter était l’équivalent de Hadad et sa statue une idole de grande antiquité ; Vénus n’était autre que la Déesse Syrienne/Atargatis et Mercure intégrait des aspects dionysiaques d’un dieu mourant et ressuscitant. Mais, à la suite d’une analyse des documents iconographiques de Jupiter, Vénus et Mercure, ces propositions sont remises en question en faveur d’interprétations plus plausibles.

Abstract – Many conceptions about the well-known gods of Heliopolis-Baalbek are so firmly established to be almost treated as received wisdom: that they formed a familial “triad”, that Jupiter and/or Mercury were worshipped as sun gods, that Jupiter was the equivalent of Hadad and his cult image based on an idol of great antiquity, that Venus was in fact Dea Syria/Atargatis and that Mercury incorporated Dionysiac aspects of a dying and reviving god. But, in light of a scrutiny of the visual evidence of Jupiter, Venus and Mercury, the present article contests these propositions in favour of more plausible interpretations of some key monuments.

The gods of Heliopolis

Heliopolis (Baalbek) in the Beqa‘ Valley in modern Lebanon was a mid-sized Roman town that looked back on an eventful history, having changed hands from Ptolemaic to Seleucid kings to Ituraean tetrarchs, and finally being transformed by Augustus’ veterans settling there in 15 BC. The site is world-famous today for its spectacular monuments, but also its peculiar pantheon has attracted much scholarly attention. The well-known “triad” of Heliopolis, consisting of Jupiter, Venus and Mercury, was studied by Y. Hajjar in a monumental three-volume work. This invaluable reference tool of immense learning,
which draws on virtually all the available literary, epigraphic and archaeological sources, elucidates all aspects of the gods and their cult. It has, however, also brought discussion to a virtual halt and helped cementing a number of conceptions about the gods of Heliopolis: that they formed a familial “trias”, that Jupiter was the equivalent of Hadad and his cult image based on an idol of great antiquity, that Venus was in fact Dea Syria/Atargatis and that Mercury incorporated Dionysiac aspects of a dying and reviving god. These views are widely acknowledged today, as is the popular notion, not espoused by Hajjar, that Jupiter and/or Mercury were worshipped as sun gods.

But many questions and problems remain. The present study re-evaluates the most important body of material on which these notions are based, namely the iconographic evidence of Jupiter, Venus and Mercury \(^4\) and argues that, at closer scrutiny, none of the above propositions is plausible or probable, being often the result of speculations, preconceptions and circular arguments.

This survey does not claim to trace the origin or the history of the gods, their cults and their iconographies, but rather works synchronically with the corpus of available material in its historical context, the Roman imperial period. As far as the visual material is concerned, priority is given here to 1) local evidence from Baalbek and surroundings and 2) features that are consistently repeated from one example to the next, such as Jupiter’s cuirass elements. Both principles are self-evident, but have been neglected in recent studies, which favour the remote and the unusual, e.g. details of Venus’ vase-shaped headgear (kalathos) only attested on the Palatine relief (\textbf{fig. 9}), to construct theological conceptions of the gods of Heliopolis. The evidence from unprovenanced gems and cameos is particularly problematic, as will be demonstrated.

The gods of Heliopolis borrow extensively from the large pool of traditional divine features that Roman Syria has to offer. For instance, between Venus and Atargatis one can easily note a set of shared iconographic elements: kalathos, grain ears, raised right hand with palm outwards, two beastly acolytes and so forth. One can argue that they derive from a common substrate; that they developed in parallel, borrowed from each other or converged at various points. But determining that they are “sisters” is very different from collapsing them into one and the same entity, which is all too often followed by ascribing unattested characteristics to one because they are attested for the other \(^5\).

Instead, one must abide by the characterisations provided by the evidence, not for the sake of pedantry, but in order to maintain distinctions which, for all we know, were “real”: In their dedications, worshippers themselves insist on the specifically local character of, say, Jupiter \textit{Heliopolitanus} and Dea Syria \textit{Nihathena}. Likewise, coins, reliefs, figurines and statues in each case represent the original cult images of their specific temples \(^6\). Thus instead of promoting some general “Semitic” cults, these are advertisements for local cults driven by pride, patriotism and local identities.

For Heliopolis in particular, compounds like Jupiter-Hadad or Venus-Atargatis are hazardous, as they are never addressed with Semitic names and rarely if ever depicted with visual contaminations. The similarities to many related deities and, as a result, our difficulties in keeping them apart are thus no licence to conflate them, but must on the contrary inspire particular caution in how to label them. In other words, the principle should be \textit{not} to multiply names and epithets more than absolutely necessary.

This article does not claim to explain who these gods “really” were—if that goal is ever attainable—but seeks to contribute to deconstructing some modern myths around Jupiter, Mercury and Venus and thus to help determine the position of the Heliopolitan gods among the myriads of local gods of the Roman Near East.

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\(^4\) Despite its age and incomplete corpus of material, the most acute iconographic study is still \textsc{Fleischer} 1973, p. 273-75, 326-77.

\(^5\) Cf. the exemplary judicious remarks of \textsc{Lightfoot} 2003, p. 1-85.

\(^6\) Rightly emphasised by \textsc{Butcher} 2003, p. 336-37, 341.
IOMH

The pre-Roman history of Jupiter Heliopolitanus is uncertain and his presumed Semitic name unknown. His Greek name was probably Zeus and his appearance that of a bearded Greek Zeus as depicted on coins of the Ituraean tetrarchs of Chalkis, masters of Heliopolis for much of the first century BC. The well-known cult image of young, unbearded Jupiter, which is analysed here, is not attested before the Roman imperial period.

The only literary source to inform us in some length on the Heliopolitan gods are the Saturnalia dialogues of the fifth-century author Macrobius who probably recounts Porphyry of Tyre’s On the sun. Though valuable in descriptive details, Macrobius’ account is fraught with problems, as shall be illustrated in connection with the alleged solar syncretisms of Jupiter below. Lucian, Zeu s Megistos Heliopolites and sometimes emphasised with epithets such as kyrios or despotes, or in Latin Rex deorum. Some Latin inscriptions also address Jupiter as Conservator, saviour, a common epithet of Roman gods. Other epithets, such as angelus and regulus, still await convincing explanations.

As for iconography, the best detail is provided by 10 documented bronze statuettes (fig. 1), of which seven are extant. The torsos of 6 statues and statuettes (fig. 3) supplement the picture. Hajjar also counts 26 engraved stones showing probable representations of Jupiter, but these miniature images add little information, and their uncertain

7. Based on the only “Hellenistic” inscription from Baalbek, JGLS 6.2990 = HAJJAR 1977, no. 1; MILLAR 1990, p. 20.
10. Dea Syria 5.
11. Praep. Ev. 4.16.22; Vita Const. 3.58; Theophania 2.14.
15. Ibid., no. 16. An inscription from Cilicia also attests hypatos, ibid. no. 267, but the dedication is more likely to be to Zeus Helios rather than Zeus Heliopolites.
16. Ibid., no. 197, following a likely reconstruction by Seyrig.
17. Ibid., nos. 17, 204, 231, 290.
18. Ibid., no. 296.
20. Ibid., nos. 32, 328, 226, 323-35, 796, 302, 313; HAJJAR 1988, nos. 44-52; JIDEJIAN 1975, figs. 122-23, 128-29, 132-38, 183-84. The tenth specimen has appeared on the New York antiquities market, see Myth and Majesty 1992, no. 32. My thanks to K.-U. Mahler for pointing it out to me.
21. Two in Beirut, AUB museum: HAJJAR 1977, nos. 209, 225; id. 1988, nos. 40, 42. Two in Beirut, National Museum: HAJJAR only has one, 1977, no. 237, without picture and not in his LIMC article. The other one is depicted in JIDEJIAN 1975, fig. 146. One in Venice, HAJJAR 1977, no. 321; HAJJAR 1988, no. 43. One was found in Athens at the excavation of the Makrygianni lot, the site of the new Akropolis museum, in 1998, TRIANTI 2008, p. 393-96, figs. 4-7. My thanks to A. Lichtenberger for pointing it out to me.
22. The term cippus is used here for altar-like structures, but larger than altars and without provisions for sacrifices such as a depression on top. SEYRIG 1961a, p. 133-34 convincingly interprets these cippi as central blocks of “monuments à colonnettes” with a baldachin and tight series of small columns on all sides, which are often found in precincts of sanctuaries on the Phoenician coast (Faqra, Sfireh, Beit Mery, Mashnaqa).
23. HAJJAR 1977, p. 585; there is one more in JIDEJIAN 1975, fig. 126.
provenance makes for doubtful testimonies: very similar cult images appear on the coins of many southern Levantine cities, Ptolemais, Neapolis, Eleutheropolis, Diospolis, Nikopolis (all in Palestine), Caesarea ad Libanum, Orthosia (Phoenicia) 24 and Dion of the Decapolis 25; it is unclear whether they are meant to depict Heliopolitan Jupiter or local lookalikes 26. The identification of Jupiter on gems and cameos is therefore in each case conjectural. There are also three examples of an armless figure (fig. 18), “Jupiter de type bétylie” 27, which in my view rather depict Mercury and are discussed below.

In accordance with Porphiry’s description as reported by Macrobius 28, Jupiter Heliopolitanus presents himself as youthful and unbearded. The hair is arranged in layers of voluminous locks, falling down in steps. The kalathos is vase-shaped and tapers towards the bottom. No two examples are decorated in the same manner. A bronze statuette in Beirut (fig. 1.3) 29 has grain ears and an eagle, the statuette formerly in Graz (fig. 1.9) 30 grain ears with sun disc, and the Sursock Bronze (fig. 1.1, 2) 31, the statuette in London (fig. 1.5) and an unpublished altar in the Adıyaman museum 32 grain ears with sun disc and uraeus. Others only have lines or patterns, while three bronzes replace the headdress with an Egyptian pschent (fig. 1.3-4, 7) 33. Only on five engraved stones is the kalathos supplemented or replaced by a radiate crown. Jupiter is bejewelled with up to three colliers with central medallion, and up to 13 bracelets on the right arm 34.

The attributes of Jupiter are a whip in the raised right hand and grain ears in the lowered left hand. A thunderbolt in the left hand, as described by Macrobius, is very rare and again only attested in miniature on gems and cameos 35.

Jupiter is always accompanied by two walking bulls facing the same direction as him, except on some two-dimensional depictions like the lead figurines, where the bulls are turned into profile view to prevent drastic foreshortening. One of the main differences with regard to Anatolian deities accompanied by animals is that Jupiter Heliopolitanus is often elevated on a separate base 36. The base itself can be decorated, either with a temple facade 37 or a Tyche figure, as on the base in Rome 38 and the Sursock Bronze 39.

There are several depictions whose identity is in doubt. One much-discussed example is a type of lead figurine from the basins of the ‘Ayn el-Jität spring (fig. 7) —several specimens from the same mould— showing an deity in a tight robe, which has been variously identified as either Jupiter or
Mercury or Venus(!) 40. The figure wears a wide-rimmed kalathos, a collier with a large medallion and a robe with two registers, one with two stars, the other with two rosettes. The positions and attributes of both hands are debated. On the right shoulder is an upright rectangular part, which Hajjar interprets as a raised right hand. But this explanation leaves a peculiar piece of lead below the “hand”, sticking out forward from the right shoulder, unexplained. It seems more plausible to interpret the latter as the hand, with the attribute on top of it. The “fingers” of the “hand” could then be the tip of the attribute, such as corn ears 41.

On the left shoulder one sees another, larger, rectangular part, which has a vertical depression in the centre. The curved bottom leading into the armpit seems to indicate the raised left arm. Hajjar sees the left hand holding a basket in place and compares them to Bacchus figurines in similar pose, but neither hand nor basket are apparent on the objects. Nor is it possible to interpret it as a bouquet and thus link it to a whole range of local deities holding such an object, which shall be discussed in connection with Mercury. Instead, a well-preserved specimen from the collection of the AUB museum in Beirut (fig. 1.8) offers the solution: here the vertical depression is widened and creates a thicker part, the arm, and a thinner one, part of the attribute, closer to the cheek; the two are connected at the top. The gesture thus becomes clear, the raised left hand is holding a whip from which one thin stripe is dangling, just as it does in most relief depictions. The figure can hence be identified as Jupiter Heliopolitanus with reversed attributes 42, as is the case in a number of miniature depictions on engraved stones 43. The artisan may have made a mistake and neglected to reverse Jupiter’s attributes in the mould in order to create lead casts with the right order.

**Ependytes and the question of variability**

The feature for which Jupiter Heliopolitanus is best known is his richly-decorated tight-fitting robe (*ependytes*). Unlike the apron of Ephesian Artemis, Jupiter’s *ependytes* is wrapped around the entire body front and back. It can be divided into four distinct parts: the front side, subdivided into registers of two to three square fields, the back with a similar structure and the sides with vertical fields under the armpits. Only the latter are consistently decorated in the same manner, with elongated thunderbolts.

The front side usually has Helios and Selene in the top register, but a statuette in Paris (fig. 1.6) 44 has Helios alone, that formerly in Graz (fig. 1.9) 45 a male figure (Kronos?), the statuette in Athens (fig. 3.5) 46 has Kronos, and even the best specimen, the Sursock Bronze (fig. 1.1, 2) 47, deviates with a winged sun-disc on the centre of the chest, while smaller bronzes often leave this field empty. The number and appearance of the remaining fields and registers varies greatly. The unpublished Adıyaman altar 48 only has two, the relief in Avignon (fig. 4) 49 and the ‘Ayn el-Jūd lead figurines have three registers overall, while bronze statuettes in Beirut (fig. 1.3) 50 and Berlin (fig. 1.4) 51 and the relief in Nîmes 52 have eight. Deities representing the seven planets of the week are depicted on several replicas, while...
smaller ones resort to rosettes and others opt for different designs altogether, combining busts of gods with discs, rosettes, griffins and sphinxes. A bronze statuette in the Louvre (fig. 1.7) shows full figures of Jupiter, Mars and Mercury, followed by one whole register taken up by a Tyche. A statuette torso in Beirut (fig. 3.2)55, the stele in Avignon (fig. 4)56 and a cippus in Baalbek57 integrate a herm wearing a polos on the front side, a representation of Mercury, stretching across several registers. Most examples have a frontal lion head at the bottom.

The back sides are less varied and rarely carry figural decoration. All of the nine bronze statuettes depict an eagle, eight of them at the top between the shoulder blades, and the Sursock Bronze58 underneath the winged sun-disc repeated from the front. The remaining fields are usually filled with rosettes, with two exceptions: a bronze in Paris59 adds Neptune, Ceres, Minerva, Diana and Hercules to the seven planets on the front and thus completes the zodiac; the Sursock Bronze has two ram’s heads, the acolytes of Hermes, in profile facing each other.

The structure of the ependytes is thus roughly the same on all extant examples, but no two specimens show the same combination of decorative elements. One would assume that replacing busts or figures with discs and rosettes may be a question of space and quality, but they are also found on fine bronzes and on relatively large specimens, such as one of the Beirut statuettes (fig. 3.4)60. Among the examples which do depict more detail, busts of the seven planets are a recurrent theme. But contrary to the claims of Fleischer61 and Haider62 their order does not follow the tenets of late Hellenistic astrology, which sorted the planets by their revolution time63; nor do they seem to follow any other principle. Instead, surprisingly, hardly two examples show the busts in the same order64. This probably means that one cannot take any one of the known representations of Jupiter as a faithful reproduction of the original cult statue.

This variability, which has not raised much comment65, is at odds with the cult images of Artemis of Ephesus66 and Aphrodite of Aphrodisias67, which were canonised in the imperial period. Rather than carelessness of the artists or frequent changes of the cult image’s wardrobe, this peculiar variability might reflect a degree of uncertainty about the details due to severely restricted access to the cult image in its temple adyton68. Most artists and worshippers would only get a glimpse of it when carried around in procession69.

That local authorities had little interest in propagating the god’s divine image is demonstrated by the peculiar absence of Jupiter on coins of Heliopolis70. Indeed, considering that the coin images emphasise...
the god’s presence by depicting the temple from various perspectives, representing corn ears or adding the legend IOMH, it appears to be precisely the cult image whose depiction (and thus defilement?) is deliberately avoided.

Lion head as visual epithet

A lion head or mask is often depicted at the bottom of Jupiter’s ependytes. Other important occurrences of this symbol are on an altar in Copenhagen (fig. 14) 71, on the eight-sided Fîkeh altar (fig. 13) 72 together with a “Venus lugens” 73, on an unpublished altar from the Beqa’ in the National Museum of Beirut, dedicated by a certain Quintus, together with Mercury 74 and on the cornice of the temple of Jupiter together with bull protomes. The lion is often thought to represent either Venus or Mercury. Seyrig first attributed it to Mercury 75, but having recognised that his acolytes are rams 76, he asserted that “Vénus Héliopolitaine a dû avoir simultanément deux symboles, le sphinx et le lion” defending this choice with the circular argument that Venus was also “une Atargatis ou une Allâth” 77. But in all verifiable cases, the iconography of Venus consistently shows her acolytes as two sphinxes.

Mercury’s acolytes are rams. His ependytes on two examples, the Antioch altar (fig. 12) 78 and the Palatine relief (fig. 9) 79, also depicts a griffin. On Jupiter’s ependytes, on the other hand, the lion head appears even on examples where Mercury is depicted as a herm, making it unlikely that the lion too is meant to represent the same god 80.

Hajjar offers an entirely different interpretation of the lion head as a symbol of Athena-Allât 81. This goddess is indeed accompanied by lions, and the idea of tracing this Arabian goddess in Heliopolitan iconography is tempting in light of what has been said about Ituraean influence 82. But Allât is not attested in Baalbek, and Athena only appears once, among the coffers busts of the pteron ceiling of the Temple of “Bacchus” 83. Haider, by contrast, goes out on a limb in interpreting the lion head as the Egyptian sun lion Marmarauoth and the right eye of Atum-Re 84.

The problem of the lion head thus remains intact. One feature that stands out is that in two cases, Fîkeh (fig. 13) and Beirut, the lion head accompanies another deity on the same side of the altar. This is highly unusual, since altar reliefs always follow the rule “one side, one deity”. Standing next to Mercury and on top of “Venus lugens”, the lion head thus appears to represent rather less than a full-fledged deity. It rather looks like an attribute, as on the ependytes of Jupiter, that can be combined with different gods and perhaps underlines their divine quality.

A Heliopolitan lion also appears in Damascius’ account of an epiphany:

He then suddenly saw a ball of fire leaping down from above and a huge lion standing beside it, which instantly vanished. He ran up to the ball as the fire was dying down and understood that this

71. Cf. n. 208.
73. Named “Venus Lugens” after Macrobi. Sat. 1.21.5, cf. Lightfoot 2003, p. 55-56, 329. Such a figure is attested several times in the region: coins of Caesarea ad Libanum-Arca (D colormap 1986, nos. 5-6); oil lamp in Beirut (ibid. no. 3); gold plaques from Tell Nebi Mend-Laodicea ad Libanum (ibid. no. 4); altar from Qaṣṣāba (ibid. no. 1), relief from Yunûh (Nordeguian 2005, 181); lintel from Mrâh Sghîr (Fani 2005); coins of Gabala (BMC Galatia p. 244-45 pl. 28.9, 13). One limestone statuette from ‘Ayn el-Jût does not depict this goddess, but a bearded “Kronos” figure, cf. n. 210.
74. Yon & Alquiot forthc.; Kropp forthc. no. 11.
75. Seyrig 1929, 335-36
76. Seyrig 1954, 82-83.
77. Ibid., 95.
78. Cf. n. 37.
81. Ibid., p. 290-95 and id. 1988, p. 590.
was indeed the baetyl; picking it up, he asked it which god possessed it, and the baetyl answered
that it belonged to Gennaios. (The Heliopolitans honour Gennaios in the temple of Zeus in the
shape of a lion) 85.

The solar character which has been ascribed to the “lion god” Gennaios due to the image of the
flaming sphere 86 shall not be discussed here. The term gennaios appears to be attested in an inscription
from Deir el-Qal’a above Beirut, a dedication to the local supreme god Baalmarkod, [Ku]u[w [+y][e[v]
ναω Βαλμαρκοδί]. 87. Gennaios has a probable Aramaic counterpart in the term GNY’, related to
Arabic jinn, which often appears in Palmyrene inscriptions. 88. Etymologists agree that the term is not
the proper name of a deity, as is often thought, but a qualifier or epithet meaning “divine (being)” 89. One
way of visualising the abstract adjective is provided by Damascius’ narration, namely in the shape of a
lion. This is also the explanation which best suits the archaeological evidence: contrary to all previous
interpretations, I would see the lion head not as a symbol of a specific god, but as a complement of other
deities, the visual counterpart of an epithet like gennaios to stress the divine power of Mercury, “Venus
lugens” and Jupiter Heliopolitanus.

Cuirass elements – the god’s new clothes?

The cult image of Jupiter Heliopolitanus has long been recognised as an eclectic construct. Fleischer
aptly describes it as “ein sehr heterogenes Gebilde, das aus einheimisch-syrischen und griechisch-
römischen Elementen zusammengesetzt ist, während sich aus Ägypten kommende Details schwächer
bemerken machen” 90. Most observers today consider it a creation of the Hellenistic or rather Roman
period, and some have pointed out the surprising inconsistency of iconographic details from one specimen
to the next. 91. But despite the great difficulty and controversy in deciding over which elements to retain
as ancient and “authentic” and which ones to discard as late and secondary, the cult image is invariably
thought to derive from an age-old pre-Roman idol. 92.

Thiersch was the first to correctly name and identify the robe of Jupiter as an ependytes. 93. He also
assumed a priori that the cult image and the ependytes have to be ancient. 94. Such an assumption seems
valid, if one judges by analogy to other ependytes-clad deities such as the Artemis of Ephesus, whose
cult-image is attested since the Archaic period and appears on coins starting in the second century BC, 95,
or Artemis Astyrene, whose image is now attested as early as the beginning of the fourth century BC. 96.

But for the unbearded cult image of Jupiter Heliopolitanus there is no pre-Roman image, and the
surviving evidence does not show any development in stages. 97. What it does provide is at least some

86. Winnefeld 1923, 125; Dussaud 1942-43, 43-45; Haider 2002, 92-93.
87. IGRR 1081 = OGIS 589; cf. Hajar 1977, 289-91; Rey-Coquis 1999, 613. Analogously, a Latin inscription from
the same site has long been reconstructed as gen(naeo) do[mini] Balmarc[odi], but is more likely to read gen(io) do[mini]
Balmarc[odis], ibid., 614.
88. Yon 2007, 400-1 argues that genneas is the proper name of a god (contra Schluumberger 1970-71), but agrees that
gennaios is an epithet. Genneas is also attested in a recently discovered inscription from the region of Emesa, Bull. Ép.
and in detail Schluumberger 1970-71.
91. E.g. ibid., 365; Hajar 1990a, 2475.
92. Two praiseworthy exceptions are Winnefeld 1923, 120: “unwahrscheinlich, daß in dieser ganzen Gruppe von Idolen
Nachbildungen echt altertümlicher orientalischer Göterbilder erhalten wären; vielmehr scheint es, daß der Hellenismus sie neu
geschaffen hat”, and Müller 1931, col. 479: “das absichtliche Zurückschrauben auf einen früheren Standpunkt.”
93. Thiersch 1936, 73-98.
94. Ibid. 74-75, 90-91, 94-95.
96. Id. 1999, 607-8 pl. 151.4
97. Id. 1973, 369 concludes his penetrating analysis agnostically, “Zu einer Skizzierung der Entwicklung des Kultbildes
… reicht das vorhandene Material einstweilen leider nicht aus.” Similarly, Hajar 1988, 588.
iconographic details to suggest a *terminus post quem*. Unlike all other *ependytes*-wearing deities, most images of Jupiter show fringed leather flaps to cover the short sleeves of the tunic, and leather thongs (*epomis*) fastened on the chest and shoulder blades to hold together the front and back part 98, thus mimicking the paraphernalia of metal body cuirass typically worn by Hellenistic kings and generals and Roman soldiers and emperors. Even the protective leather flaps that a real cuirass would have at crotch level are present, but pushed further down, covering the lower legs and touching the ground either side of the partly covered feet. The *pteryges*, hinged metal attachments at crotch level on top of the leather flaps, are omitted. The *ependytes* thus maintains the cuirass imitation as far as its format would allow, even to the point of displacing the leather flaps to where they could not serve any practical purpose. Its wearer, who was at any rate immobilised by the tightness of the robe, was not meant to benefit from the armour’s protection 99, but only to display the symbolic meaning of the cuirass elements.

Seyrig 100 and Fleischer 101 follow Thiersch and explain the cuirass-elements away as late additions. But a “Kopienkritik” of the extant evidence shows that the cuirass elements are depicted with remarkable consistency as part of Jupiter’s gear, from the Sursock Bronze to the most cursory miniatures. While divine busts, herms and lion heads are optional, leather thongs and shoulder flaps belong inseparably to the *ependytes* as one package, as part and parcel of the icon of Jupiter Heliopolitanus. One can therefore be confident that the cuirass elements belong to the original cult image at Heliopolis. Though they are insufficient to be placed in existing typologies and hence cannot be dated (the diagnostic *pteryges* are missing), the robe of Jupiter in its entirety must be seen as a creation of Hellenistic times at the earliest, and more probably of Roman times, perhaps in the context of the settlement of Augustus’ veterans at Heliopolis. This does of course not prove that it was a new invention *ex nihilo*. Perhaps there was a pre-Hellenistic local god at the root of Jupiter’s cult image who underwent a “creative revival” similar to that of Jupiter Dolichenus 102, but he remains unattested and his appearance obscure.

It is tempting to suppose a connection between the military cuirass on Jupiter’s cult image and the influx of Roman veterans into the Beqa‘. The organisation of the cult was, after all, firmly in the hands of Roman citizens, presumably the descendents of Augustus’ veterans 103. On the other hand, the cuirass, as discussed elsewhere 104, is an equally vital element of Ituraean divine iconography, namely as an essential feature of their “dieux armés”. To both communities the cuirass could have served as a common point of reference, a visual symbol that both laid claim to and identified with. The unspecific character of Jupiter’s cuirass elements (not clearly either Hellenistic or Roman) could have facilitated a negotiated compromise. This is however only a hypothetical scenario as long as the date of the cult image cannot be determined.

**Alleged solar qualities and Egyptian origin**

Despite the magisterial refutation by Seyrig 105, the interpretation of Jupiter as a sun god is once again fashionable 106. There are two starting points for these theories, the intriguing toponym Heliopolis and the account of Macrobius.

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98. Id. 1985, 85-86; Fleischer 1973, 356-57; id. 1999, 606. Two reliefs also show the scales of Roman scale mail on Jupiter’s chest, one from Sārba (or Jānīeh), Ḥajjar 1977, no. 230; id. 1988, no. 6; Jidejian 1975, fig. 143; Gubei 2002, no. 64, the other from Deir el-Qal’a, Ḥajjar 1977, no. 216; id. 1988, no. 4; Jidejian 1975, fig. 142. Jupiter even wears a full-fledged cuirass on a Syrian intaglio, Ḥajjar 1977, no. 238; id. 1988, no. 15; Jidejian 1975, fig. 12.

99. Will 1955, 265: “La cuirasse … est un véritable défi au bon sens”.

100. Seyrig 1970, 93 n. 1: “un élément secondaire”.


102. Lightfoot 2003, p. 84; Butcher 2003, p. 280, 337; Bunnens 2004.

103. The attested priests all have the *tria nomina*, IGLS 6.2780, p. 2791-92, as do most of the dedicants; cf. Eck 2009, p. 32-33; Isaac 2009, p. 49-53.


The toponym Heliopolis, which is often cited as proof of a resident sun god, has its most likely origin in the Ptolemaic dominion of the region in the third century BC. How and when the “foundation” of Heliopolis was accomplished remains unknown, but there is no compelling evidence that it involved a large-scale movement of population or the implantation of Egyptian cults. The settlement, whose pre-Hellenistic name is unknown, had already been in existence for many centuries before, as shown by the impressive sequence of layers in the deep excavation trench in the courtyard of the temple of Jupiter.

Macrobius insists on the Egyptian origin of Jupiter Heliopolitanus:

The Assyrians too, in a city called Heliopolis, worship the sun with an elaborate ritual under the name of Jupiter, calling him “Zeus of Heliopolis”. The statue of the god was brought from the Egyptian town also called Heliopolis … The statue, a figure of gold in the likeness of a beardless man, presses forward with the right hand raised and holding a whip, after the manner of a charioteer; in the left hand are a thunderbolt and ears of corn; and all these attributes symbolize the conjoined power of Jupiter and the sun.

Macrobius’ description of the cult image is largely accurate, but his interpretation contains serious flaws which greatly diminish its historical value. Driven by the syncretistic tendencies of his own day, he glosses over important distinctions and conflates a host of deities according to an indiscriminate solar theology. Thus it is not only Jupiter Heliopolitanus who is equated to the sun, but also Apollo, Liber Pater, Mars and Mercury, Asklepios, Herkules, Salus and Serapis, Adonis, Attis, Osiris and Horus, Nemesis, Pan and Saturn! Seyrig rightly dismisses “cet ouvrage peu philosophique, [où] les assimilations les plus violentes, et parfois les plus sottes, transforment en propriétés solaires les attributs les plus innocents de tous les dieux.”

Still, the alleged Egyptian origin of Jupiter and his cult image, stated by Macrobius and Lucian, is once again upheld. This proposition takes iconographic features of the cult image such as the kalathos, curly wig, winged sun-disc and even the base, whip and accompanying bulls as...
clear signs of "ein ägyptisches Erbe"\(^{126}\). But it has long been shown that Syro-Phoenician art had been adopting Egyptian elements since the Bronze Age\(^{127}\). The *kalathos*, for instance, has a long pedigree as a standard headgear of Phoenician deities\(^{128}\). They, rather than Egypt itself, are a more likely source of Egyptian-looking imagery re-employed one millennium later\(^{129}\). Some elements, such as the pschent headdress\(^{130}\), are so rare and ephemeral that they are more likely to be Egyptianising traits added at a late stage of the cult when the Egyptian "tradition" gained credence\(^{131}\) and came to be accepted by interested observers like Lucian.

Iconographically, "solar" qualities of Jupiter in the form of a radiate crown are entirely absent from the main body of evidence, i.e. bronze statuettes and stone reliefs. It is only in the minute depictions on gems and cameos, and even here only on *five* out of 26 examples, that one sees rays emanating from Jupiter’s head\(^{132}\). But as pointed out above, features that are only attested on gems and cameos should be treated with great caution. Statistically speaking, they are more likely to represent the popular figure of Jupiter Heliopolitanus than similar-looking gods, but one must be wary of interpreting features depicted on five unusual examples that one does *not* find in other media.

Jupiter’s customary whip, which he shares with Greek Helios, cannot be taken as evidence of a sun god either. Beside a number of other Greek gods\(^{133}\), Near Eastern storm and weather gods are depicted brandishing a whip to command their beastly acolytes\(^{134}\).

On the other hand, a solar deity with a radiate crown *is* attested in a number of monuments from Heliopolis. They have traditionally been attributed to Mercury\(^{135}\) and more recently to Jupiter\(^{136}\), but neither of these propositions is plausible. Firstly, one important piece in this line of argument, a relief in Berlin depicting a radiate bust, two eagles and lion head\(^{137}\), must be eliminated altogether. Originally thought to come from Baalbek\(^{138}\), it has long been shown to originate from Malka in Galilee\(^{139}\).

The remaining monuments are: – 1) Radiate bust found in the round temple (temple of "Venus") in Baalbek\(^{140}\). – 2) Radiate bust in Baalbek, Palmyra Hotel\(^{141}\). – 3) Radiate bust from ‘Ayn Bordai\(^{142}\). – 4) Lead figurine from ‘Ayn el-Jūf of radiate bust surrounded by crescent\(^{143}\). – 5) Lead figurines from ‘Ayn el-Jūf of disc with net-like pattern with three dots at the position of navel and nipples\(^{144}\).

Crescent below,
head with rays on top of the disc. – 6) A series of bronze medallions (fig. 15), depicting a radiate bust among other deities. They are discussed in more detail in connection with Mercury’s alleged solarisation below. – 7) Coin type of Heliopolis under Gallienus: portable radiate bust on a *ferculum* flanked by two *vexilla* 145.

This impressive list of examples amounts in fact to rather little. To start with the last item on the list, the portable radiate bust on coins, which has been recently interpreted as Jupiter 146: Hajjar originally called it Mercury, but later rightly changed the attribution: The best specimens show a turreted crown, clearly designating the figure as the Tyche of Heliopolis 147.

All the other examples listed here are Helios figures with some degree of variation, and there is no feature of their iconography to suggest they represent Jupiter. On the contrary, Helios busts such as these are often depicted as part of the decoration of Jupiter’s *ependytes*, as mentioned above, namely Helios coupled with Selene or among the seven planets of the week. But just like Mars, Minerva or Saturn is not to be identified with Jupiter, it is inherently implausible that Helios, depicted as subordinate and one among many, be identical with the supreme god. The separate identities of Helios and Jupiter are in fact clearly spelled out on two of the bronze medallions (fig. 15), which depict Jupiter, Venus and Helios 148, viz. Jupiter, Venus, Eros and Helios 149.

Furthermore, it is unlikely that these Helios busts prove a solar cult at all. What has been overlooked is that these are *busts*. There are no *full* figures with radiate crowns from Baalbek. Even from the Beqa’ at large, there are only two examples: the rider on the Ferzol relief 150 discussed below, and a torso of a cuirassed statue from ‘Aytanū 151, now lost. Though one can only guess whether they are Ituraean imports 152, the rarity of full-length radiate figures is undeniable.

Radiate busts are banal recurrent symbols used in all kinds of Graeco-Roman cultic contexts. They form a standard element of temple architecture all across the Near East, sometimes coupled with Selene, to adorn the pediments of temples of various supreme gods 153, such as Zeus Hagios at Tripolis. In religious iconography, they are there to underline the universal character of the god, as they do on the *ependytes* of Jupiter. Just like no-one would suspect that the occurrence of such a bust indicates worship of a sun god at Tripolis, there is no need to assume one for Heliopolis. There is thus no reason to believe either that Mercury or Jupiter were in any way solarised, or, considering the unexceptional nature of such busts and the complete absence of dedications to Helios from the Beqa’ 154, that any sun god was worshipped at Heliopolis.

It is perhaps natural that the name Jupiter Heliopolitanus conjures up a mental image of a sun god with radiate crown. But neither epigraphy nor iconography supports this view. His attributes, whip, *kalathos* and grain ears, coupled with the thunderbolts on his flanks and his bull acolytes, were and remained those of an agrarian god of fertility.

145. Hajjar 1977, nos. 100-2; id. 1988, no. 83-85; Jiederan 1975, figs. 239-40; Fick 1999, fig. 14; Sawaya 2009, 277 séries 76-77. A similar coin type under Philip, not in Hajjar, has the radiate bust without the *ferculum*, and the *vexilla* are held by two nude figures, Jiederan 1975, 223; Haider 1999, fig. 20; Sawaya 2009, série 45 and Butcher 2009, no. 2.
146. Fick 1999, 89
148. Seyrig 1971a, 368 no. 1; Hajjar 1977, no. 158; id. 1988, no. 112, two specimens.
149. Seyrig 1971a, 368, no. 2; Hajjar 1977, no. 159; id. 1988, no. 112.
150. Cf. n. 251.
151. Southern Beqa’ near Lake Qar’ūn, Seyrig 1951, 121 fig. 12; id. 1971a, 349; Gawlikowski 1990, no. 51.
152. Thus Seyrig 1971a, 349; Gawlikowski 1990, 1038; Nordiguian 2005, 49.
153. Some 40 ex.: Seyrig 1971a, 353-55, 362-63. Gawlikowski 1990 is a convenient adaptation of Seyrig’s article to *LIMC* format, both in structure and content.
154. The closest ex. are one altar to Helios from Byblos and a dedication to Kronos Helios from Beirut, Seyrig 1971a, 357-58. A dedication of statues to Sol and Luna comes from Baalbek, *IGLS* 6.2723, but as Rey-Coquais rightly remarks, these statues were merely there to adorn the central figure of this group, an imperial Victoria.
**Venus, Not Atargatis**

Heliopolitan Venus, like Jupiter, is not depicted on the civic coins of Heliopolis. Representations of the Tyche of Heliopolis are often interpreted as representing Venus, but the association is unwarranted. Beside the more or less certain depictions of her in the company of Jupiter and Mercury on seven altars and two reliefs (figs. 8-13), there are only two certain examples of Venus alone, namely the fine marble statue from Baalbek now in Istanbul and a bronze medallion (fig. 16), probably from Baalbek too, now in the Louvre. Other likely images of Venus are one statuette from Baalbek, a statue from Yamuneh and two medallions. Two alleged depictions on gems are more doubtful. Deductions too survive in smaller numbers than those to Jupiter and Mercury. Among the few explicit characterisations of Venus (Aphrodite in Greek inscriptions), the attributes Domina and kyria designate her as supreme goddess.

Venus is depicted according to one consistent type, frontally, seated on a throne and flanked by two sphinxes. Her right hand is raised for benediction. In the left hand she holds ears of grain. She is dressed with a tunic with a high belt and a himation. From her tall kalathos, a large, inflated veil falls to the floor and forms an oval niche surrounding her and her acolytes. While veil and kalathos are a common feature of fertility goddesses in Anatolia and the Near East, this particular kind of “floor-length, swathing, all-enveloping veil” is a specialty of goddesses from the Phoenician coast and its hinterland, notably Astarte and the “Venus lugens” figure. There are also Egyptian(ising) elements: The Palatine relief (fig. 9) shows Heliopolitan Venus with a sun disc flanked by Hathor horns. But on this particular relief the figure of Venus is distorted and disproportioned, facing in a different direction from the kalathos and veil around her. Also, this is the only example of Venus with a collier and, instead of raising her hand in benediction, she is shown here with a unique attribute, a small whip, in her right hand. If this is meant to be Heliopolitan Venus at all, the sculptor must have “fort mal compris la divinité bizarre qu’il était chargé de représenter”, which makes him a doubtful witness for the character of Venus. One feature that distinguishes Venus from other supreme goddesses like Atargatis/Dea Syria

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156. Hajjar 1988, nos. 102-4, 106, 111, plus the unpublished ones in Beirut (n. 74) and Adiyaman (n. 32).
157. Fayyad: Seyrig 1955; Hajjar 1977, no. 221; id. 1988, no. 105; Jidejian 1975, fig. 177; Doumet-Serhal et al. 1998, no. 77. Palatine: cf. n. 79 (fig. 8).
159. Hajjar 1977, no. 81; id. 1988, no. 65; Delcor 1986, no. 16.
162. Cf. n. 149, 220.
164. Only two from Baalbek, IGLS 6.2732-33.
165. Hajjar 1977, no. 212 from Beirut.
166. Ibid., no. 225 from Sfīreh.
167. Both arms are missing from the marble statue (cf. n. 158), but the remains are fully consonant with this reconstruction (omitted in Feix 2008): on the left side, only one small support on the left thigh (none on chest or upper arm, which e.g. a cornucopia would require), on the right side an elongated support along the right upper arm, to support the raised hand.
169. Ibid., 32.
170. See above n. 73
171. Cf. n. 79.
172. Seyrig 1929, 327, in agreement with Hajjar 1985, 144; id. 1988, 591.
is in fact the peculiar absence of jewelry, in contrast to her consort Jupiter who is often depicted with numerous bracelets and colliers.

Porphyry, as reported by Macrobius, identifies the Venus of Heliopolis with the Syrian Atargatis, whom Lucian famously equates to Hera, but combining features of Athena, Aphrodite, Selene, Rhea, Artemis, Nemesis and the Fates. But Macrobius’ late theological manifesto of a solar syncretism is not to be called upon as witness for such an equation. Of course, even a cursory glance at the iconographies of the Syrian goddess and Heliopolitan Venus show a great number of similarities. Both are variants of a large group of local Syrian goddesses drawn up on the same prototypes. Nonetheless, as outlined in the introduction, they were perceived as local deities and each of them was accorded her own distinct identity. In fact, a bilingual Greek and Latin inscription from Beirut clearly spells out the distinct characters of Venus and Atargatis:

“Θεά Αταργάτις [sic] Δ’ Νιῆς Αρτέμιδος Ὀρφευς

Cladus [sic] D(edi) C(laudi) Poll(is) s(ervus) a(vitus) v(otum) s(olvit)

Veneri Heliopolitanae et Deae Syriae Geranensi Deanae Luciferae.”

In these parallel texts thea Atargatis is equated with Dea Syria and Artemis Phosphoros with Deana Lucifera, while Venus Heliopolitana is mentioned separately and only in the Latin version. Rather than conflating Atargatis with Venus, this text clearly tells them apart as separate deities.

Also iconographically there are no grounds for confusion. Heliopolitan Venus differs from Atargatis in at least one important aspect: her acolytes are not lions, but sphinxes in the manner of Phoenician Astarte. Some goddesses from the Beqa’ who are accompanied by lions are often taken as evidence for the variability of the acolytes and the identification of Venus with Atargatis. Thus two well-preserved, high-quality altars from Nīha depict a standing Tyche-like figure with a kalathos, holding a cornucopia and a ship’s rudder and flanked by enormous lions. Other gods of Nīha’s pantheon are also attested, including one god in the shape of Jupiter Heliopolitanus and perhaps in a minor god similar to Mercury.

But apart from the iconographical differences from the gods of Heliopolis, Nīha’s gods also bear different names: the local goddess is indeed Atargatis (“Dea Syria Nihathena/Thea Atargatis”), while her male counterpart was called Hadaranes and is never identified as Jupiter Heliopolitanus. This does not leave room for considering this goddess another representation of Heliopolitan Venus.

Another altar with relief depictions has lent itself more easily to demonstrate the Atargatis qualities of Venus because it comes without inscriptions: the Hermel altar shows Jupiter on the front, Hermes as a herm on the right side and “Venus” (fig. 17) on the left. The goddess is not accompanied by sphinxes, but has swapped her acolytes for tritons holding trumpets. This relief has thus been taken as important piece of evidence (in fact, the only one) to show the qualities of Venus as “déesse des eaux courantes”.

175. In Macrobius, Sat. 1.23.18.
179. Delcor 1986; Bonnet 1996, 50; extensive list of ex. in HAJJAR 1977, 189 n. 2 and id. 1985, 141 n. 2. Id. 1990a, 2465 claims that sphinxes too were acolytes of Atargatis of Hierapolis, with reference to certain coin issues of the fourth century BC, but the coins from this eclectic workshop imitate types from Byblos and Cilicia, as Seyrig has shown, 1971b, nos. 7, 12; LIGHTFOOT 2003, 17-18.
182. IGLS 2928-29, 2936; plus an unpublished round marble table dedicated to Atargatis, REY-COQUAIS 1987, 206; HAJJAR 1990b, 2522. Rey-Coquais’ important study, 1987, 198-207, also notes that in contrast to Heliopolis, where the three attested priests have the tria nomina (cf. n. 103), at Nīha not only the gods, but also the citizens, priests and the prophetess bore local Semitic names and formed a local community alongside the Roman colonists of Berytus.
183. HAJJAR is at pains to, on the one hand, insist on the distinctness of the Nīha pantheon, 1990b, 2514-29, but on the other hand demonstrate the identity of Venus Heliopolitana as Atargatis through the ex. of Nīha 1990a, 2465.
184. HAJJAR 1977, no. 143; id. 1988, no. 118; id. 1990b, 2529-30; JIBEIJAN 1975, figs. 149-51.
like Atargatis. Following this alleged affiliation, the tritons depicted on the basins in the courtyard of the temple of Jupiter at Heliopolis have been likewise ascribed to Venus.

But there are weighty iconographical obstacles, beside the otherwise unattested tritons. The goddess, seated on a large throne whose high back creates a frame around her, is as usual surrounded by a large veil, but the customary kalathos is missing. She appears to be wearing some smaller cylindrical object, presumably a mural crown. Her right hand is not raised in benediction. Instead, she is holding an unusual additional attribute, a sceptre. Thus, with the absence of sphinxes, kalathos and raised hand, all the main features of Heliopolitan Venus are missing! The identification as Venus, no doubt based on the expectation that the three depicted figures form the well-known “triad”, is therefore implausible. The pantheon of Hermel is more likely to mirror that of Niha, with two gods mimicking Heliopolitan Jupiter and Mercury and a goddess whose appearance, acolytes and attributes are modelled after Atargatis. As for the tritons in the courtyard of the temple of Jupiter, they are banal items of decoration for these large water basins. At any rate, there is no suggestion that they should be linked to Venus. Neither lions nor tritons can thus be regarded as Venus’ acolytes.

Finally, there is no evidence to think of Venus as goddess of water and patron of the sources. On the contrary, of the more than 130 (!) lead figurines of Heliopolitan gods recovered from the ‘Ayn el-Jūj spring, not a single one depicts Venus. Therefore, even though labels like “Venus-Atargatis” continue to be used as self-obvious, there is no reason to identify the goddess of Baalbek with Atargatis or to call her any other than Venus Heliopolitana.

**Mercury**

Mercury is the only member of the “triad” to be depicted on the coinage of Heliopolis. Beside these and other depictions in the guise of Hermes with caduceus and money bag, Mercury is attested in the shape of a herm, for which the safest starting point is a lead figurine from the ‘Ayn el-Jūj spring inscribed EPMH. It shows him armless, with an ependytes with two registers of two fields each and wearing a large collier. The herm corresponds to the ones depicted on the ependytes of Jupiter in three examples, the statuette torso in Beirut (fig. 3.2), the relief in Avignon (fig. 4) and a cippus in Baalbek. It appears on its own on the Fnaydiq (fig. 8) and Palatine (fig. 9) reliefs and on the Adıyaman altar, where Mercury shows further similarities to Jupiter, namely the kalathos and

187. Rightly observed by Hajjar, cf. n. 184.
188. Correctly assessed by Schulz & Winnefeld 1921, 94-95.
189. Badre 1999, 181, 188. Sevrig 1929, 333 was already aware of the problem when only the 21 ex. in Berlin (now lost) were known.
193. Sevrig 1929, 326-27 pl. 85.5; Hajjar 1977, no. 117; id. 1988, no. 70; Jidejian 1975, fig. 174; Van Ess & Weber 1999, fig. 91.
194. Cf. n. 55.
195. Cf. n. 56.
196. Cf. n. 57.
197. Cf. n. 157.
198. Cf. n. 79.
199. Cf. n. 32.
corkscrew locks. Less well preserved are the depictions on the altars from Antioch (fig. 12) 200, Baalbek (fig. 10) 201, Beshwât (fig. 11) 202, Hermel 203 and Beirut 204, where the god is sometimes accompanied by his acolyte rams. The main features are also found on the votive bronze hand from Niha, though this may depict a local god different from Heliopolitan Mercury 205.

Considering all these attestations of Mercury as armless herm, it is likely that all depictions of a Heliopolitan god according to this type represent Mercury, including three examples usually identified as Jupiter. The first example can be dealt with quickly. Of this small altar from Baalbek 206, which has not been seen since its discovery in the round temple (temple of “Venus”) at the beginning of the 20th century, only a rough sketch exists, which is just clear enough to recognise a herm-shaped deity with a kalathos.

Secondly, a bronze statuette in Paris, the “Donato Bronze” (fig. 18), depicts the armless herm with a small kalathos and an almost cylindrical body 207. The arm stumps are covered by leather flaps, and the ependytes is held by straps across the shoulders. The field on the chest shows busts of Helios and Selene. Below, the entire field is taken up by a peculiar bearded divinity whose body is wrapped in a tent-shaped cloak with a pointed hood rising above the head; from the thick collier, the central seam runs down to the flat base. The same bearded figure is attested three more times, on the altars in Copenhagen (fig. 14) 208 and Beirut 209, and as a limestone statuette from the ‘Ayn el-Jūj spring 210. It is generally identified as Kronos/Saturn, but this is uncertain.

The same crudely-sculpted altar in Copenhagen also has the third example of the armless herm. One can barely recognise the small kalathos, leather flaps on the arm stumps and rosettes in the fields of the ependytes.

**Mercury-Helios?**

There are two kinds of “syncretisms” of Mercury that are generally recognised, but should in my view be abandoned, Mercury as Helios and Mercury as Dionysos/Bacchus. It will be argued that the easiest way to resolve these supposed syncretisms is to think of Helios and Dionysos as separate deities.

Two griffins stacked on top of each other are depicted on the ependytes of Mercury on the Antioch altar (fig. 12) 211, while on the Palatine relief (fig. 9) 212, the central field of the ependytes shows a griffin pulling the chariot of Helios. Griffins being often, as in this case, associated with sun gods 213, Seyrig took this as crucial evidence for the solar aspect of Mercury 214. He later “relegated” these solar features

200. Cf. n. 37.
201. HAJJAR 1977, no. 5; id. 1988, no. 102; JIDEJIAN 1975, fig. 154-57; ALIQUOT 2004, 205 n. 12.
202. HAJJAR 1977, no. 130; id. 1988, no. 103; JIDEJIAN 1975, fig. 162-65.
203. Cf. n. 184.
204. Cf. n. 74.
206. HAJJAR 1977, no. 33; id. 1988, no. 56.
207. HAJJAR 1977, no. 153; id. 1988, no. 58 identifies it as Jupiter, FLEISCHER 1973, HH 3, 374-75 as Hermes.
208. Allegedly from Palmyra, HAJJAR 1977, no. 235; id. 1988, no. 57; PLOUG 1995, no. 130; BARatte 1997, no. 7.
209. Cf. n. 74.
210. SCHULZ & WINNEFELD 1921, 32. The piece is lost and there is no picture. Until now it has been taken as a “Venus lugens” figure due to Ronzevalle’s erroneous reconstruction, 1930, 154-55 fig. 1, from a misreading of the description provided by SCHULZ & WINNEFELD; thus HAJJAR 1977, no. 115; id. 1988, no. 67. The face of the figure was already destroyed, but the preserved details are clear: smooth cloak with central seam, torques, “Zipfel” of the cloak (i.e. conical, not a kalathos) rising above the head – none of these fits “Venus lugens”, but they all fit the “Kronos” figure.
211. Cf. n. 37.
212. Cf. n. 79.
213. They also accompany Apollo and Dionysos and, especially in Roman art, appear in funerary contexts; cf. DELPLACE 1980 passim; LEVENTOPOULOU 1997.
214. SEYRIG 1929, 335.
to a late and marginal syncretism. But in fact these griffins are the only potential links between Mercury and the sun and thus insufficient evidence to make a case for solarisation.

It has already been shown that the Helios busts do not suggest links to either Jupiter or Mercury. Among these, a series of bronze medallions from the Beqa’ (fig. 15) has yielded the only examples where “Mercury-Helios” is apparently shown in the midst of the “triad”.

1. Medallion with radiate bust plus Jupiter
2. Medallion with radiate bust plus Jupiter, Venus, Eros
3. Medallion with Venus alone
4. Medallion with radiate bust alone
5. Medallion with radiate bust plus Venus

Both previous commentators have not hesitated to pick the first of these examples, put it at the top of their list and make it a representation of the “triad” of Heliopolis. But an impartial look does not suggest such a prioritisation. The number of gods is 3-4-1-1-2, with no obvious hint that the “triad” should have higher priority than other constellations. On the contrary, the gods depicted on nos. 1-4 are made from the same dies, which means that the workshop had a toolbox at its disposal with dies to combine at will, creating medallions of Venus alone, a “dyad” of Venus with radiate bust, a “triad” of Venus with Jupiter and radiate bust and so forth. The “triad” paradigm is thus invalidated in this important example.

This has important ramifications, since with the supposition that the triad is depicted falls the main reason for identifying the radiate bust with Heliopolitan Mercury. Rather than a forcible syncretism, the simplest solution is the most plausible, namely to identify the figure as Helios. As discussed in connection with Jupiter’s alleged solarisation, the occurrence of such busts is unexceptional and does not suggest the worship of a sun god.

One final piece of iconographic evidence contradicts the solarisation of Mercury. An altar found at Bted’ai 15 km northwest of Baalbek depicts three busts, Heliopolitan Mercury with a caduceus on the front and radiate Helios and Selene with a crescent behind her shoulders on the sides. Mercury and the sun are thus clearly set aside with no hint at any conflation. Much like the busts of celestial gods on the ependytes of Jupiter, the sun and moon are depicted here as expressions of the absolute power of Mercury and offer the visual counterpart to the epithet Dominus.

216. See p. 240. FICK 1999, 90 rightly dismisses Hajjar’s identification of Helios as Mercury based on the star pattern on the nipples of the ‘Ayn Bordai bust, cf. n. 142. Though this pattern does also appear on the socle of the herm on the Fīkeh altar as well as border stones inscribed “Deo Mercyr(i)o” and “EPMOY”, HAJJAR 1977, nos. 87-88; id. 1985, 163-64, 173; LIMC 93-94, the motif is too common to be a decisive criterion.
217. Making one of his rare appearances in Greek guise as mature bearded god.
218. Cf. n. 148.
219. Cf. n. 149.
220. SEYRIG 1971a, 368, no. 3; HAJJAR 1977, no. 160 (not in LIMC).
221. SEYRIG 1971a, 368, no. 4; HAJJAR 1977, no. 161; id. 1988, no. 81. Variant of the same, HAJJAR 1977, no. 163; id. 1988, no. 82).
222. SEYRIG 1971a, 368, no. 5 (wrong for 6); HAJJAR 1977, no. 162; id. 1988, no. 101.
223. Seyrig 1971a, 368; HAJJAR 1977, 177. Seyrig suggests that the mould, into which the dies were pushed, may have been mere sandy soil.
224. IGLS 6.2910; HAJJAR 1977, no. 131; id. 1988, no. 72; FICK 1999, fig. 7.
225. The dedication is explicitly addressed to a Heliopolitan god, the name is missing. Given the image on the front side, it must be Mercury.
226. Cf. n. 261.
Mercury-Bacchus?

The identification of Mercury with Bacchus is often suggested, but far from proven. It is based on only two pieces of evidence, both of very uncertain value. One is the type of lead figurine from ‘Ayn el-Jūj discussed above (fig. 7), which Hajjar sees as carrying a basket or vessel on the left shoulder to construct Mercury-Bacchus. But, as demonstrated above, the figure depicts Jupiter.

The second one is a small altar, which has not been seen since its discovery in 1901 and of which no images exist. Puchstein describes the front side with Mercury as a Greek Hermes with caduceus and moneybag. To the left and right, he saw “etwas, das wie eine Spitzamphora aussieht, die in einem hohen, sie überragenden Gestell steht.” The amphore would thus determine the association between Mercury and Bacchus. Winnefeld however describes the same relief as Hermes flanked by “Nebenfiguren, … fast ganz abgeschlagen und nur im Umriß kenntlich … die wohl nur als Sphingen in strenger Vorderansicht gedeutet werden können.” There is hence no evidence at all for Mercury’s Bacchic aspects.

This leaves a number of Bacchic depictions free from the obligation to be linked to Mercury. Even though it must be stressed that there is no inscription from the Beqa’ mentioning either Bacchus or Dionysos, the frequency with which this god is depicted makes a separate cult likely. A series of lead figurines from the spring at ‘Ayn el-Jūj depict a standing nude figure frontally wearing a crown of leaves and holding a bunch of grapes in his right hand and a basket on his left shoulder. Dionysos is also depicted on the fourth side of the altar from Beshwāt (fig. 11), which has Jupiter, Venus and Mercury on the other sides. Further afield, a statue of Dionysos was found in Nīha in the cella of temple A, and a bronze medallion from the Beqa’ depicts the bust of the god wearing a nebris and a crown of ivy leaves.

Most importantly, the god of wine is omnipresent in the relief decoration in and around the temple of “Bacchus”: The outside cella walls have a frieze above the base profile, which is left in bosse except two scenes to the right of the entrance. They depict two parts of a procession of cultic personnel with sacrificial animals led by a Nike, and two Nikes crowning a deity too mutilated to be identified. Inside the temple, the central stairway leading to the adyton is flanked by balustrades with end pilasters depicting dancing maenads. The socle of the adyton either side of the stairway depicts lively scenes from myths of Dionysos in badly mutilated reliefs. The scene to the left has been interpreted as Ambrosia being transformed into a vine through the curse of Lycurgus. She is flanked by Silenus and a nude Dionysos holding a rhyton and surrounded by dancing satyrs and maenads. The right socle depicts Lycurgus falling to the ground, being punished with blindness by Zeus according to the myth. Dionysos (?) in a tunic and tiara is in the background, Pan and a maenad to the right and dancing maenads to the left. Also the architectural decoration is filled with miniatures of Dionysiac themes, such as Pan, Satyrs, Maenads, erotes and baby Dionysos among exuberant vine scrolls on the door jambs and lintel.

228. Cf. n. 40.
229. Puchstein et al. 1902, 91; Hajjar 1985, no. 357; not in LIMC.
230. Winnefeld 1923, 124, unknown to Hajjar.
234. IGLS 6.2933.
236. Seyrig 1929, 319-21; Hajjar 1977, no. 103; id. 1988, no. 89; id. 1990, 2496; Jidejian 1975, figs. 269-70; Augé & Linant de Bellefonds 1986, no. 102; Haider 1999, fig. 23.
238. Seyrig 1929, 319 would rather see Dionysos and Ariane.
239. Augé & Linant de Bellefonds 1986, no. 98.
Scholars have variously ascribed this temple to Jupiter, Venus or Mercury. But that this temple is not dedicated to any of the three other gods is supported by the fact that their temples have all been located elsewhere. Beside the colossal temple of Jupiter, in which of course other gods could be venerated, the temple of Venus was most probably in the city centre, at Ĥaret beit Şolh, since it is in this neighbourhood that the fine Venus statue, now in Istanbul 240, was found, as well as fragments of column drums, capitals and an entablature 241. Mercury’s temple is firmly located on Sheikh ‘Abdallah hill overlooking the city from the southwest, as epigraphic and numismatic evidence attests 242.

The remaining temple of “Bacchus” has been recently identified as a second temple to Jupiter 243, based on a note of the sixth-century author Malalas that Antoninus Pius founded such a temple at Heliopolis 244. But as already Honigmann points out 245, Malalas attributes a temple to Ἡλιος Antoninus Pius because of the phonetic similarity to Ἡλιον πόλις, just like Byblos is ascribed to Bibulus 246 and Caria to the emperor Carus 247. This testimony is thus of no value and should not have been resuscitated from well-deserved oblivion. In sum, the popular designation of the temple of “Bacchus”, which was first suggested in 1902 248, seems entirely justified.

God of abundance, protector of the flocks

In Greek guise, Heliopolitan Mercury appears to be perceived in the same manner as Greek Hermes and Roman Mercury as a god of commerce and abundance, being depicted nude except a chlamys, with wings from his head or hat and holding a caduceus and a moneybag. Like his classical counterparts, Mercury is also a protector of the flocks accompanied by rams.

Such divine protectors of the flocks are widely attested in the Beqa‘. Though their relationship to Heliopolitan Mercury is unclear, they shall be briefly listed here as important iconographic evidence of local rural cults awaiting further study 249. – 1) A cippus from Kafr Dān, 15 km west of Baalbek, depicts a Hermes figure with two lambs by his side 250. The other sides depict Eros, Heliopolitan Venus (?), and a god with a herm-like lower body holding two attributes with hand drawn to the chest. The larger attribute, leaning against the left shoulder, is described as a club, but more likely to be a bouquet of foliage – 2) A rock relief in the ancient quarry of Ferzol, 30 km southwest of Baalbek 251, depicts two figures, on the left a radiate horseman holding a globe 252, and a young beardless god to the right, nude except a chlamys tied on the right shoulder and a nebris dangling from the left lower arm. In the lowered right hand he holds a large bunch of very large grapes (?) or rather dates, since in the background one sees a palm tree (a plant that is alien to the Beqa‘). In the left hand is a large bouquet of foliage leaning against the shoulder. On the chest, apparently sitting on the folds of the chlamys, a small lamb. – 3) One

240. Cf. n. 158.
245. HONIGMANN 1924, col. 717.
246. 211, 21.
247. 302, 20.
248. PUCHSTEIN et al. 1902, 99. It used to be known as “Temple of Jupiter”, while the large temple was thought to belong to the sun god.
251. RUNZIELVALE 1937, 29-36 fig. 7 pl. 6-8; SEYRIG 1938, 364-65; id. 1971a, 348-49 fig. 4; AUGÉ & LINANT DE BELLEFONDS 1986, no. 15; GAWLIKOWSKI 1990, no. 50; KRUIMECH 1998, 185 n. 56; NORDIGUIAN 2005, back cover and 48-49.
252. Of the many cavalier gods of Roman Syria (Seyrig discusses 19 ex.), this is the only one of unequivocally solar character, SEYRIG & STARICKY 1949, 246 and passim = iid. 1953 (reprint with corrections).
statue of a young beardless god from Yammūneh, 20 km northwest of Baalbek, looks like a copy of the Ferzol figure. He is standing, left foot forward, dressed in a chlamys tied on right shoulder and falling across chest and over the left arm. In the lowered right hand, a bunch of grapes. In the left hand, a large bouquet of foliage leaning against the shoulder. On the chest, sitting on the folds of the chlamys, a small lamb. – 4) A herm statuette from Yammūneh is similar to the previous one, but the lower body is pillar-like. This, time, in addition to the lamb sitting on the chest, there is also a small animal feeding from the bunch of grapes in the lowered right hand. – 5) The same attributes can be seen in the bronze statuette of a boy and – 6) a mirror handle in the shape of an adult god holding a kantharos in the right hand and feeding a lamb from grapes in the lowered left hand. – 7) At Habata, 30 km north of Baalbek, the ritual deposit of a local sanctuary has yielded a dozen sculptures depicting children or child gods holding birds, grain ears and bouquets of foliage. The same lot also contained inscribed Palmyrene sculpture of high quality and three statues of Hermes/Mercury as a child holding a caduceus. – 8) Civic coins of Heliopolis under Septimius Severus depict similar gods to those of Ferzol and Yammūneh, nude adults standing upright, with bouquets leaning against their left shoulder and feeding animals from the right hand. On the coins they appear as twins, one bearded and the other one not.

Mercury Heliopolitanus in his second type, as a herm with curly wig, kalathos and ependytes, can appear either on his own or integrated into the ependytes of Jupiter, perhaps to symbolise the superiority of Jupiter. However, in apparent contradiction to this subordinate role, six inscriptions, which address Mercury alone, characterise him as Dominus and one as kyrios. These documents and the altar from Bted’ai depicting Mercury on the front and Helios and Selene on the sides, show that worshippers could also perceive him as a supreme deity on its own. This apparent disregard of Mercury’s position in relation to Jupiter further weakens the case for a “triad” constellation.

A triad?

The examples of the Hermel altar (fig. 17) and the bronze medallions from the Beqa’(fig. 15) have shown that their identification as depicting the “triad” of Heliopolis have been hasty and, at closer inspection, unfounded. The same negative conclusion can be drawn from almost all of the 18 depictions listed by Hajjar. Only the Fnaydiq (fig. 8) and Palatine (fig. 9) reliefs depict the “triad” on its own. The Antioch altar (fig. 12) has a kalathos on its fourth side (to symbolise Astarte?). The altars

255. RONZEVALLE 1937, 37-38 pl. 11.1; AUGÉ & LINANT DE BELLEFONDS 1986, no. 19.
256. RONZEVALLE 1937, 43-46 pl. 13.3a-b; AUGÉ & LINANT DE BELLEFONDS 1986, no. 20.
259. RONZEVALLE 1937, nos. 4, 12-13; HAJJAR 1977, nos. 140-42; not in LIMC.
262. SALAMÉ-SARKIS 1987, 130 no. 6.
263. IGLS 6.2910; HAJJAR 1977, no. 131; id. 1988, no. 72.
264. 1977, 584.
266. Cf. n. 79.
267. Cf. n. 37.
of Baalbek (fig. 10, 19)\textsuperscript{268}, Beshwāt (fig. 11)\textsuperscript{269}, and the unpublished ones in Beirut\textsuperscript{270} and Adiyaman\textsuperscript{271} depict four gods\textsuperscript{272}, the altar in Marseille\textsuperscript{273} five, that from Fikeh (fig. 13)\textsuperscript{274} eight\textsuperscript{275}. The Khaldeh altar\textsuperscript{276} simply has three bucrania. The Qabb Elias rock relief\textsuperscript{277} appears to depict local deities with different iconographies. An intaglio in a private collection in Beirut\textsuperscript{278} depicts Jupiter, Mercury and Tyche, not Venus. Civic coins of Heliopolis under Valerian depict a prize crown and what appear to be grain ears, a caduceus and poppies, which Hajjar takes as the symbols of the “triad”\textsuperscript{279}. But beside the fact that Venus is not attested holding poppies, the object is more likely to be a bouquet\textsuperscript{280}. Three more alleged examples of the triad are lost and only known from brief descriptions\textsuperscript{281}.

The visual evidence hence gives little prominence to a triad constellation of Jupiter, Venus and Mercury. This confirms Millar’s refutation of the triad idea based on epigraphic evidence\textsuperscript{282}: there is no ancient document to suggest a triad constellation, or indeed to explain the relationship between these three gods. In Baalbek, Jupiter, Venus and Mercury alone are addressed in only two fragmentary and restored dedications\textsuperscript{283}. The same is the case of four inscriptions from Beirut and surroundings\textsuperscript{284}. By contrast, some 30 inscriptions from Baalbek and 11 from Beirut and surroundings refer to Jupiter alone.

**Baalbek relief**

There is one final example, a relief stele from Baalbek (fig. 20), which needs to be discussed in some detail since it figures as one of the few examples of “Jupiter, Vénus et Mercure de type hellénique”\textsuperscript{285}. If it had been found anywhere outside the Beqa’, no-one would have suspected it depicts the “triad”. This stele in the form of a pedimented aedicula depicts three figures lined up frontally side by side. Two of the figures’ heads are missing, and there are several further damages all around the edges of the stele, in particular at the lower left corner, where the left figure’s feet and lower legs have gone missing. The figure on the right is the tallest and largest despite being depicted as a child with puffy cheeks. His left hand is drawn to the chest and holds a caduceus leaning against the left shoulder; the interpretation as Mercury is uncontroversial. The lost attribute in the lowered right hand may have been a moneybag.

The other two figures are less easy to identify. The female figure to the left is enveloped in a thick cloak covering the head. Her right hand is raised to her chest and slightly pulling down the cloak. The lowered left hand seems to be entirely concealed by the cloak, which falls in thick folds from the bulge where her hand is.

\textsuperscript{268} Cf. n. 201.
\textsuperscript{269} Cf. n. 202.
\textsuperscript{270} Cf. n. 74.
\textsuperscript{271} Cf. n. 32.
\textsuperscript{272} Not counting the lion head.
\textsuperscript{273} From Palmyra(?), Hajjar 1977, no. 185; id. 1988, no. 111.
\textsuperscript{274} Cf. n. 72.
\textsuperscript{275} Not counting the lion head.
\textsuperscript{276} Hajjar 1977, no. 223. Not in LIMC.
\textsuperscript{277} Hajjar 1977, no. 106; id. 1988, no. 119.
\textsuperscript{278} Hajjar 1977, no. 198; id. 1988, no. 109.
\textsuperscript{279} Hajjar 1977, no. 10; not in LIMC. id. 1985, 156. Sawaya 2009, série 65.
\textsuperscript{280} Butcher 2009 no. 5.
\textsuperscript{283} IGLS 6.2711-12 = Hajjar 1977, nos. 2-3.
\textsuperscript{284} Hajjar 1977, nos. 196-197 (Beirut), 215 (Deir el-Qal’a), 231 (Shwayfāt). Furthermore, 268 (Athens) and 281 (Stockstadt). Nos. 4 and 7 on Hajjar’s list 1977, 579 must be excluded.
\textsuperscript{285} In Berlin, not lost in WW II, as Hajjar claims: Winnfeld 1923, 121-22; Hajjar 1977, no. 6; id. 1988, no. 110; Delcor 1986, no. 21; Van Ess & Weber 1999, fig. 92. On the “triad” in Greek guise, see Hajjar 1985, 121-24; 1990a, 2478.
Figure 2. “Sursock Bronze” (Louvre) © 2002 Musée du Louvre/Chr. Larrieu.

Figure 3. Statues and statuettes of Jupiter Heliopolitanus: – 1) Byblos (Beirut AUB) – 2) Beirut (Beirut AUB) – 3) unknown provenance (Beirut NM), busts heavily reworked prob. in Late Antiquity – 4) unknown provenance (Beirut NM) – 5) Athens (Akropolis Museum) (© A. K. 2010).

Figure 4. Marseille stele (Avignon, Musée Calvet) © Musée Calvet, Avignon, A. Rudelin.
Figure 5. Stele of unknown provenance (Beirut, National Museum). © A. K. and K.-U. Mahler, with kind permission of the DGA, Beirut.

Figure 6. Column postament from Beirut? (Beirut, National Museum). © A. K. and K.-U. M., with kind permission of the DGA, Beirut.

Figure 7. Lead figurine from ‘Ayn el-Jūj depicting Jupiter Heliopolitanus (Beirut, AUB Museum). © A. K., with kind permission of Dr. L. Badre.
Figure 8. Fnaydiq relief (Beirut NM) © A. K. 2010.

Figure 9. Palatine relief (Rome, Museo Nazionale) © Soprintendenza per i beni archeologici di Roma.

Figure 10. Baalbek altar (Beirut NM). After SYRIG 1937. Cf. fig. 19.
Figure 11. Beshwāt altar (Beirut NM) © A. K. and K.-U. M., with kind permission of the DGA, Beirut.
Figure 12. Antioch altar (Louvre) © A. K. 2010.

Figure 13. Fīkeh altar (Harīsa) © T. Weber.
Figure 14. Copenhagen altar (Glyptotek) © Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek.

Figure 15. Bronze medallions with various deities (formerly Beirut NM, now lost; second specimen of no. 1 in the Louvre) © A. K. 2010.
Figure 16. Bronze medallion depicting Venus Heliopolitana (Louvre) © A. K. 2010.

Figure 17. Hermel altar, Atargatis figure (Beirut, National Museum). © A. K. and K.-U. M., with kind permission of the DGA, Beirut.
Figure 18. Donato Bronze (Louvre) © Musée du Louvre/P. et M. Chuzeville.

Figure 19. Baalbek altar, “Baal” figure (Beirut, National Museum) © by A. K. and K.-U. M., with kind permission of the DGA, Beirut. Cf. fig. 10.

Figure 20. Baalbek stele (courtesy of Staatliche Museen zu Berlin - Preußischer Kulturbesitz).
The figure in the middle is holding a sceptre in his right hand. He wears a himation that falls from the left shoulder diagonally towards the right hip and exposes the right part of the chest with a chiton underneath. The left hand is raised to the chest, holding the himation. The badly damaged face was probably bearded.

The female figure does not show any element that would identify her as Heliopolitan Venus: throne, sphinxes, kalathos, grain ears and raised right hand are missing. One can resort to considering her a Hellenised version of Venus, as Hajjar does, and consequently create a new type of “Venus” consisting of this one example: apart from all the missing features, she is the only “Venus Heliopolitana” shown standing, the only one wearing such a cloak drawn over her head, the only with her right hand on her chest. This procedure would be justified if the stele had an explicit identification in the form of an inscription. But with the iconography as the only guideline, it is hard to maintain the “Venus” label. In fact, a visual analysis shows that the iconography is not that of an abnormal Venus, but rather suits another goddess remarkably well.

Since she appears to be lacking attributes, the figure must be identified by her dress, pose and gestures. Her right hand is not merely resting on the chest, but, as the gathering of folds show, she seizes the hem of her cloak and seems to be pulling it down. This is a well-known apotropaic gesture and part of the standard iconography of only one goddess, Nemesis. The ritual, depicted in profile on countless Roman imperial coins, consists of pulling the neckline forward to spit on the chest as a rite of aversion.

The popularity of this goddess particularly in Syria is attested by inscriptions and a large number of images that show a remarkably uniform iconography. Rather than a goddess of vengeance, her attributes such as scales, cubit and wheel of fortune show her to be a goddess of fortune and just measure. Especially in Palmyra and Dura-Europos, where her importance is underlined by appearing in the company of Bel, Baalshamin and ‘Aglibol, one sees Nemesis performing this very gesture, either with the left or the right hand. While she is sometimes depicted with her attributes or accompanied by a griffin, one relief shows her, like our example, devoid of attributes and holding the neckline of her cloak with the right hand. The remaining elements of the goddess on the Baalbek stele all fit this interpretation. It is Nemesis, not Venus or Atargatis, who is always depicted standing upright and wearing the heavy cloak pulled over the head like a veil.

It may be of interest in this context that the cult of Nemesis was closely linked to Athena-Allâ: One relief of Nemesis comes from a temple of Allâ at Khirbet es-Saneh in the Palmyrine, and, more importantly, in Ituraean territory, at Bayt Jallûk or Maqâm er-Rabb on the remote northern slopes of Mt. Lebanon, two identical statue bases were found, both dedicated by the priest Drusus, one to Nemesis (and Kalos Kairos), the other to Athena. The importance of Athena-Allâ for the Ituraean tetrarchs of Chalkis, who depicted her on coins, is discussed elsewhere; through her associate Nemesis, the Baalbek stele might provide another link to Allâ whom the Ituraeans probably imported to the Beqa'.

286. See index Hajjar 1977, 596.
287. Seyrig 1932, 52; Linant de Bellefonds 1992, 772. Seyrig in fact takes this gesture to identify Nemesis and her cubit on one such relief in the first place.
288. Seyrig 1932; Hajjar 1990b, 2593-94; Linant de Bellefonds 1992. On the role of Nemesis in the imperial cult, see now Bru 2008. From Baalbek itself comes a crude pointillated sketch on a block of stone, ibid. no. 12, showing a winged Nemesis with a nimbus holding scales flanked by a Tyche figure labelled Kalliope. It probably dates to the fourth century or later.
290. Druvers 1976, pl. 10.2; LIMC I “Aglibol” no. 15; II “Arsu” no. 16; III “Baalshamin” no. 24; III “Bel” no. 6; VI “Nemesis in per. or.” no. 15; VIII “Malakbel” no. 13. The inscription identifies her as NMSYS.
293. Kropp in press.
The male deity on the Baalbek stele remains to be identified. The closest parallel is on the fourth side of an altar depicting Jupiter, Venus and Mercury, also from Baalbek \textit{(fig. 10, 19)}\textsuperscript{294}, but the relief is badly damaged and the depicted god likewise unidentified. The complex scene has the god in the centre, frontal with sceptre in the right hand, raised on a base decorated with two animals in relief. This in turn stands on a platform supported by two pillars and three animals, on which two figures with conical hats (priests?) are standing either side of the god. The priest (?) on the right is holding a sickle-like object curving back towards him. The one on the left has a short sceptre in his right hand, which can probably be identified as the boar-headed sceptre depicted in the hands of priests across the centuries from Bronze Age Ugarit to Roman Sidon\textsuperscript{295}. On the Baalbek stele, the bearded central figure is described as bareheaded, but a close look reveals the remains of a (cylindrical?) headdress rising above the head to the left side. If this is a \textit{kalathos}, this, alongside the sceptre, the frontal standing pose and especially the \textit{chiton} worn underneath the \textit{himation}, would point towards an identification as Serapis. In fact, one of the main iconographic types of the Egyptian supreme god, “\textit{classe II}” in Tran’s scheme, shows him with the sceptre in the raised right hand, as the figure on the relief\textsuperscript{296}. The appearance of Serapis in Baalbek would not be surprising, since his cult is widely attested across the Near East, in Syria\textsuperscript{297}, Phoenicia\textsuperscript{298} and Palestine\textsuperscript{299}. It has long been suspected that the \textit{theos egyptios} mentioned alongside Heliopolitan Jupiter in an inscription from Baalbek be Serapis\textsuperscript{300}, but this remains uncertain. Serapis, Nemesis and ‘Jupiter Heliopolitanus’ are depicted together on a gem in the British Museum\textsuperscript{301}. Another gem depicts Serapis and ‘Jupiter’\textsuperscript{302}. It is thus possible to identify Nemesis and Serapis alongside Mercury on the Baalbek stele.

**Conclusions**

The sobering conclusions of what has been said above are:

1. There is no iconographic evidence of a Heliopolitan triad. This confirms Millar’s refutation of the triad idea based on epigraphic evidence. The case of the bronze medallions in particular has revealed the ease with which one can construct a modern triad, a fallacy that is facilitated by the flexibility and eclecticism with which ancient artists combined divine images. The removal of the triad paradigm allows for more plausible identifications on examples like the Baalbek stele and the Hermel altar with no need to make room for awkward exceptions to standard iconography. It will also facilitate the reading of a series of altars and \textit{cippi} whose \textit{fourth} sides, depicting Dionysos, Eros, a \textit{kalathos}, a “Baal” figure, have caused problems of interpretation in the past.

2. The cult image of Heliopolitan Jupiter is a late creation of the Hellenistic or rather Roman period. The cuirass elements being part and parcel of the \textit{epednytes}, it seems doubtful whether one can extract any elements of the god’s appearance as ancient and “authentic” beyond mere guesswork. This negative conclusion matches the utter absence of evidence for this god’s pre-Roman existence, except one “Hellenistic” inscription mentioning Zeus and a Zeus image on coins of Chalkis.

\textsuperscript{294} Cf. n. 201.

\textsuperscript{295} \textsc{Alquicot} 2004, 205 n. 12 with reference to \textsc{Naster} 1957 (\textit{non vidi}).

\textsuperscript{296} 27 ex.: \textsc{Tran} 1983, 52-54, 135-49 pl. 34-41; \textsc{Clerc & Leclant} 1994, nos. 53, 126, 132, 139, 162, 179, 164, 184, 200.

\textsuperscript{297} Antioch: \textsc{Norris} 1990, 2361-64; Laodicea: \textsc{IGLS} 1261.

\textsuperscript{298} Tyre: \textsc{Alquicot} 2004, 217-20; \textsc{Rey-Coquais} 2006, no. 5. Both Serapis and Jupiter Heliopolitanus feature prominently on the coinage of Ptolemais-Akko, \textsc{Seyrig} 1962, 197, 200-2; 205 pl. 13.5, 12-14. That the Jupiter figure is not a local lookalike but the Heliopolitan god seems assured by a dedication to him from Mt. Carmel, \textsc{Hajjar} 1977, no. 227.

\textsuperscript{299} Aelia Capitolina, Caesarea, Diospolis, Eleutheropolis, Neapolis, Sepphoris: \textsc{BMC Palestine}, s.v. Sarapis.

\textsuperscript{300} \textsc{IGLS} 6.2731; \textsc{Hajjar} 1977, no. 15; id. 1990b, 2577-78; \textsc{Rey-Coquais} 1989, 610; \textsc{Alquicot} 2004, 210-11 \textit{contra} \textsc{Haider} 1999, 122; id. 2002, 106-7 who suggests Hermes-Thot.

\textsuperscript{301} \textsc{Hajjar} 1977, no. 312; id. 1988, no. 20; id. 1985, 247-48.

\textsuperscript{302} \textsc{Hajjar} 1977, no. 317; no. 21 (\textsc{Hajjar} 1988); id. 1985, 247-48; \textsc{Jieder} 1975, fig. 6.
3. Venus Heliopolitana is not Atargatis. In the past, this identification has been taken for granted as a corollary of equating the whip-brandishing Jupiter with Hadad. As for positive evidence, the Hermel altar has been taken as Venus represented as Atargatis with tritons. But, as Hajjar has already pointed out, while the relief may depict Atargatis, the iconography does not at all conform to Venus, and there is no reason to uphold the identification.

4. There is no evidence for a solar syncretism of Jupiter Heliopolitanus, as Seyrig has long shown; but neither does Mercury take on solar traits. In lack of clear evidence, in the form of dedications to Helios Mercurius or explicit depictions of Mercury radiate, it is more plausible to treat the Heliopolitan images of radiate divinities as separate Helios figures. Furthermore, the fact that there are no dedications to Helios at all and that these figures only ever appear as busts supports the idea that one is not dealing with full-blown solar cults, but with Helios busts that are part of standard temple decoration across the Near East.

5. There is no reason for blending Bacchus with Mercury. A closer look at the evidence has revealed how surprisingly thin the evidence for this argument is. Hermes-Dionysos or Mercury-Bacchus is nowhere attested. In light of the strong presence of Dionysiac imagery in and around Baalbek, it seems sensible to attribute a full-fledged cult to Dionysos and ascribe to him the rightly-named Temple of “Bacchus”. The relationship of Heliopolitan Mercury and “Dionysos” to shepherd and vegetation gods from Ferzol, Harbata and Yammūneh remains to be explored.

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