

The Identification of the Palmyrean Supreme God with Zeus

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Abstract: All the civilization of Palmyra is composite, and it's situated in the period of the Roman Empire. Therefore, it's distinguished evidently from other Syrian cities, hellenized profoundly and participated in the common phenomena in all the Roman orient. A sure mark of its particularity is confirmed by the use of official Aramaic, and in the same time the numerous epigraphic bilingual texts. The tendency for syncretism characterizes the pantheon of the oasis, that amount to about sixty gods named by the dedications or figured on the monuments.

In the witness of the inscriptions, the Palmyrean pantheon appeared very simple but the religion of Palmyra presents a particular trait: the existence of two supreme gods, Bel (Bol) and Ba'alshamin. This duality may appear for us strange, but it can be explained by the origin and the different tradition of the fidels (believers). These dual divinities, which considered as the lord of the universe, are called also Zeus in Greek. Bear in mind that the god Zeus in Greco-Roman period became synonym to god, and for the Greek the principal god of all foreign countries can't be but Zeus.

The identification of the "anonymous god" with Ba'alshamin in the pantheon of Palmyra is based on a solid evidence: The two were addressed by the appellation "lord of the world" and in Greek Διὸς ἰσχυροῦ καὶ ἐπιτακτοῦ "To Zeus the most-high and hearer of prayers", and "good and compassionate", in addition to their agricultural function.

At Palmyra, it is known that they had a great many gods, nearly all of them imported, but there were two main gods, and each of them was a head of a triad, the first one was: The great god Bel with his two companions Iarhibol and Aglibol. The other triad consisted Ba'alshamin as the main god, Aglibol and Malakbel. The two gods, Bel and Ba'alshamin, are named Zeus in the Greek inscriptions of Palmyra. As both of them are designated with the sign, which characterized the supreme god in Hellenistic religion, the two gods had not the same origin, and both of them had from his part, a particular nuance.

The name Bel is not Syrian, it is Akkadian, and design at first the supreme god of Babylon Bel-Marduk (Dalley 1995: 138). This god was probably called at Palmyra Bol, and the name Bel (Bol) is associated with many Palmyrean god names, such as Yarhibol, Aglibol, Malakbel and Bolastar. The monuments depicted him as the absolute cosmic god, and he is clearly distinguished in both Greek and Palmyrean Aramaic transcription from its local

counterpart Bol and its Semitic counterpart Ba'al. With the Aramaeans, the word ba'al has the same meaning of "lord" and "husband", and the name ba'al is a common name for the Cananaeans, Aramaeans and the Arabs (Lagrange, 1905: 90). Bol is, without doubt, the ancient name of the principal god of the oasis and a local form of the word Ba'al "lord" which is an appellation, in the Orient, to design many supreme gods. At the beginning of the Hellenistic period the name Bol was transformed into Bel, the Babylonian form of Ba'al. This Ba'al, the god of storm and fertility, was entered at Palmyra under the appellation of Ba'alshamin "lord of heavens" with an Arab tribe, Bene-Ma'azin, who erected for him a sanctuary (Starcky, 1990: 153).

The name -bol- appeared in the compound names of the tribes at Palmyra: bny mtbwl (Μαθηθαβώλιοι), bny gdybwl (Γαδδειβώλιοι) and bny Zbdbwl (Ζααβδιβώλιοι). And in the names of persons: Bol-barak "Bol blessed" (Βολβαραχος), Bol-hazai "Bol saw" (Βολαζαιος), and Βολαζεος = Bwlhzy, Bol-

yada' "Bol know" Βωλιαδης, Βωλιαδους = *Boliadaeus and Boliadeus*, Bol-'emmeh "Bol is his mother" (Βωλεμμεους), Bol-nur "Bol is light" (Βωλνοθρος). Gaddi-bol "my luck is Bol" (Γαδδειβωλ), 'Ullai-bol "the most-high Bol", Mattenbol "the gift of Bol" (Μαθθαβωλ-, Μανθβωλ-, Μανθββωλ-) etc. (Milik, 1972: 50-53).

In the inscriptions we have some examples of the name of Zeus followed by Semitic divinity such as (Ζεύς Βήλος) at Palmyra, and the Egyptian (Ζεύς Σάραπης), while the inscriptions of Palmyra named Ba'alshamin Ζεύς ύψίστω. In Byblos, the father Melqart has the name of Demarous (ό Δημαροϋς), a local epithet of the god. In the triad which present for us Philon of Byblos, the father god therefore is Zeus Demarous = Ba'alshamin = Elion (Mesnil du Buisson, 1966: 555).

Some Greek and Latin gods invoked, or more exactly, gave their names for oriental divinities from the same nature, the name of Zeus has convened so with Bel and Ba'alshamin. The Palmyrene Bel assimilated with Ζεύς Βήλος, appellation sometime preceded by great and good. At the Greco-Roman period the name of Zeus became synonym of *God* and at Palmyra this syncretistic tendency occurred more frankly in the cult of Ba'alshamin and the unnamed god (Starcky, 1985: 92).

The sanctuary of Bel is the most important monument at Palmyra, it was erected in 32 A.D., and the cult of Bel was planted at the oasis during all the Hellenistic period. The cult of Bol, later Bel, in Greek Βήλος or Ζεϋς Βήλος is certainly the principal cult at Palmyra since a very long time, (CIS II 3970): ἡ ἀρχιερεὺς καὶ συμποσίαρχος ἱερέων μεγίστου θεοῦ Διὸς Βήλου]ἔξ ἰδίων ἀνέστησεν ἔτοθς [δ]ιφ' μηνὸς Ξανδικοῦ. (Seyrig 1937:372): ἡ τὸ κτίσμα τοῦ ἱεροῦ μεγίστου θεοῦ Βήλου ἀργύριον ἔτι παλαι, καὶ μετὰ ταῦτα εἰς διανομὴν ἀειδίων τοῖς ἱερεῦσι τοῦ Βήλου . . . (Starcky 1949, Inventaire X: 20; no. 24, Seyrig 1941:267): ἡ Βήλω θεῶ ἐξιδίων Ἀδδουδανηγ[υ]ιὸν αὐτοῦ, μηνὸς Ξανδικοῦ τοῦ εοῦ' ἔτ[ο]υς. The Palmyrene text in this inscription has the same meaning of the Greek, except that Bel is replaced by another word, without doubt ilah ('lh), this means *the god* (Starcky, 1949:20), and finally, (Seyrig, 1939: 320 and 321), had published two dedicatory Greek inscriptions, from the sanctuary of Bel / Palmyra, written on consoles of columns, The first which has been dated to 140 A.D and runs as

follow: -[λ]εγέωνος τετά[ρ]της Σκυ]θικ[ῆς] ἱερεῖς θεοῦ βήλου ἐπὶ καὶ συμποσίαρχου Κασπεριανοῦ Ζηνοβίου ,ἔτους βνυ', The second one goes back to the second century and reads as follow: - [τὸν δ- - - ἱερεῖς μεγίσ[τ]ου θεοῦ βήλου[υ ἐπὶ] [Ποπ]λίου Αἰλίου [Ποπ]ίου υἱοῦ Σεργία [.....] ἀρχιερέως [καὶ συ]μποσίαρχου [ιερέων] βήλου [ἔτους ...] [... μηνὸς Α]υδυναίο[υ].

The name of the god Bel = Βήλος appeared also in the bilingual inscriptions, (CIS II 3914, RES 2127): ἡ 'bdw tr'y' 'lf dttyhn dy flz' dy bbslq' rbt', dy bt bl mn kyshwn byrh' 'dr dnt 486 "they made these six golden doors of bronze which are in the grand portico in the temple of Bel, at their own expense, in the month of 'dr, year 486". ... τὰς ἐν τῇ μεγάλῃ βασιλικῇ τοῦ βήλου, ἔτους σπύ, Δύστρου. (Cantineau 1933, inventaire IX: 38, no. 26): bmrzhwth dy km[ry' dy bl] byrh' 'b dnt 504 "h. in the symposiarch of the priests of Bel ἡ.. In the month of 'Ab, year 504". ... κ[αὶ] [σ]υμποσίαρχ[ῆς] ἱερέων μεγίστου θεοῦ Διὸς βήλουἔτ]οις δφ'λώου. (CIS II 3924, RES 811): ... [bdyl dy] qs wdmḍ bmg' r[b' lbt' dy bl], because he was on their head and helped to build the temple of Bel". ... [κτίσιν τ]οῦ ναοῦ βήλου. (Cantineau 1933, Inventaire IX: 30, no.20): ... 'qym[w] [lh k]mry' dy bl, ἡ "to whom erected the priest of Bel". ἡ ἱερεῖς θεοῦ μεγίστου Διὸς] [Βήλου], τεμῆς καὶ εὐνοίας ἐνεχεν, ἔτους ξξ', μηνὸς Ξανδικοῦ η'. (Gawlikowski, 1973: 26, Cantineau 1936, inventaire IX: no. 26): ... [m]d[ynt'] šlm mrkb sws wšlm bt bl ... "h And the [city] made to him an equestrian statue and a statue in the temple of Bel ἡ" . ἐνδ[έ]τῳ τοῦ Βήλου ἱερῶ ἀνδριάντα ὀνόμα[τι] βου[λ]ῆς καὶ δήμου. (CIS II 3942, RES 818, CIG 4485): ἡ αὐτῇ βουλή καὶ τῷ δήμῳ καὶ νυνεὶ λαμπρῶς συμποσίαρχον τῶν τοῦ θεοῦ] Διὸς Βήλου ἱερέων ἀ[γνείας καὶ] τεμῆς ἐνεκεν, ἔτ[ο]υς ξοφ' μηνὸς Ξανδικῶ. The Palmyrene part is nearly totally damaged.

The inscriptions proved that the principal sanctuary of Palmyra was voted to Bel, Yarhibol and Aglibol, in (CIS II 3904), which is a bilingual inscription (Greek and Palmyrene), found at Palmyra, discovered in 1860, and runs as follow: Θεοῖς πατράοις Βήλω Ἰαριβώλ[ω] Αἰλιώλω ἡ, [bl wryhbw] w'glbw] w'. . ., "To Bel and yrhbw] and

‘glbwł w’ h’’. The superiority of Bel appears in his presidency over his two companions and in the name of Zeus, which was given to him in the Greek inscriptions (Seyrig, 1933: 239). There are some questions such as: Who built the temple of Bel, and why? Was it a Roman work, why it was dedicated to the local Bel? Without doubt to not injure the sentiments of the Palmyreans. If the liaison between the sanctuary of Bel and the Roman government is really established, the aim of the new temple becomes evident: It was a work of propaganda, erected to gain the sentiments of the population of the city.

The cult of Baʿalshamin is a common practice in the pantheons of the ancient Near East. The god, who is the weather god, the patron of farmers and shepherds, was worshiped along the Canaanite coast in the second millennium B.C, and his cult became the religious patrimony of the Phoenician in the beginning of the first millennium B.C, when he was mentioned in the first part of the fourteenth century B.C. in the treaties included between Shuppiluliuma, king of the Hittites, and Niqmadu II, king of Ugarite. The name appeared four centuries later in the Phoenician inscription of Yehimilk, king of Byblos. His cult spread toward the arable lands of Syria, and his preeminence as a supreme weather god was acknowledged in the Hauran and the Anti-Lebanon by Arab tribes. And from these two buffer zones between the coast and the Syrian Desert the cult of Baʿalshamin reached Palmyra.

In the Hellenistic period, it was very evident that the god Baʿalshamin was worshiped in the Syrian, Phoenicia and Palestine as a supreme god, the thing that explains the facility of his diffusion, under the realm of Antiochus IV Epiphane, the cult of Zeus Olympios, the Greek god. The equivalence was established since that time between the lord of Olympe and the Semitic god of Heavens, but this assimilation consecrate the universal character of Baʿalshamin, and he conserve the aspect of tutelary god, and we know him in reality in the multiples local Zeus over the Roman Syria. At Palmyra, where he appeared in a late period, his cult was secondary, but it knows hence a notable success and transformed for the anonymous god.

The god (Baʿalshamin) Zeus had several epithets in the Syrian inscriptions, i. e., the epithet Μεγίστος, i.e.: -Διὺ Μεγίστῳ Κανατηνῶν ὁ [δημος] or Διὺ Μεγίστῳ Κανατηνῶ “To Zeus very high of Kanata”, (Waddington 2412), Διὺ Μεγίστῳ Ἀραβιανὸς κατ’ εὐχὴν ἀνήγειρεν (Waddington 2116), Πούπλιος Αἰλιος Γ[ε]ρμανὸς βουλευτής,

Πουλίῳ Αἰλίῳ Φιλίππου υἱὸς, τῶν Βενναθῆς, φιλοτειμησάμενος Διὺ Μεγίστῳ ἐκ τῶν ἰδίων εὐσεβῶν ἀωέστησεν (Waddington: 23-39).

This epithet appeared also in Palmyra in the following bilingual inscription (Greek and Palmyrean), that was found at Taybeh, on a stone, now in the British museum, (CIS II 3912, Waddington no. 26-31, CIG 1450), the Greek is:- Διὺ μεγίστῳ κεραυνίῳ ὑπέρ σωτρίας τρα(ιανου) Ἀδριανου Σεβ(αστου) τοῦ κυρίου Ἀγαθάνγελος ... The Palmyrean reads as follow:- lbʿlḏmn mrʿ ʿlmʿ qrb ftʿ wʿrdʿ ʿgtglm ...

Baʿalshamin in the above inscription, in Palmyra and elsewhere is called mrʿ ʿlmʿ = Ζεὺς μέγιστος κεραύνιος, in name and attributes lord of Heavens. This title was not given for the other divinities (Starcky 1990: 153). Another possible meaning of the title, mrʿ ʿlmʿ (CIS II 3986) = lord of the world, is probably implied at the same time, and influenced by the Jewish: rbwn ḏl ʿwlm rbwn hʿwlmyn. The latter formula has made its way into Islam as "رب العالمين."

The epithet Μεγίστος Ὑψίστος appeared in two bilingual inscriptions (Greek and Palmyrean), the first found in the Efqa source near Palmyra, on an altar, dated to 162 A.D, 150× 74 cm, (Al-Hassani and Starcky, 1957: 102), the Greek: Διὺ ὑψίστῳ μεγίστῳ καὶ ἐπηκόῳ, “To Zeus most-high and hearer of prayers ...”. The Palmyrean: dkrn ḏb lmrʿ ʿlmʿ qrb bwly br zbydʿ br ḥyrn..., “In good remembrance, for the lord of world, offered bwly son of zbdyʿ son of ḥyrn hʿ”. The second inscription found at Palmyra in the Diocletian camp, on a big altar, discovered in 1930, now in Damascus, (Gawlikowski, 1973: 92-93), the Greek: [Διὺ ὑψίστῳ μεγίστῳ καὶ ἐπηκόῳ Μανναῖος Αμμάθου ἡ, the Palmyrean: lbʿlḏmn rbʿ w[r]ḥmnʿ [t]ʿ dh wsmkʿ ʿbd[mʿny br] ʿmt ..., “To Baʿashamin the great and compassionate, these altar and banquet were made by mʿny son of ʿmt ...”.

The expression dkrn ḏb (In good remembrance), that appeared in the above first inscription and in (CIS II 3987): dkrn ḏb lbʿlḏmn [ʿ]bd ʿgylw br mlkw ..., “In pious (good) remembrance, for Baʿalshamin made ʿgylw son of mlkw...”, at Palmyra designed Baʿalshamin and the anonymous god. The fact that the title Lord of the world is intended to Baʿalshamin, does not mean that this title is exclusively his. And this title “Lord of the World” refers sometimes probably to Bel and not to Baʿalshamin (Teixidor 1977: 137).

In the second bilingual inscription the god Ba'alshamin was invoked with the epithet rb' wrhmn' "the great and compassionate", and this epithets appeared also in: (CIS II 3988) [ʿ]p dh lb'ldmn rb' wrhmn' ..., "This altar is for Ba'alshamin, great and compassionate ...". In other inscriptions we have the epithet tb' wdkr' "the good and bountiful ": (CIS II 3983) and (Cantineau 1930, Inventaire I: 15; no. 5) ... mn bny m'zyn lb'ldmn lh' tb' wdkr' ..., "...from the tribe bny m'zyn for Ba'alshamin, the good and bountiful god". This formula appeared also in the following inscription, (Schlumberger, 1951: 167, no. 61): ry' dnh 'bd bwn' br 'mdbw lb'ldmn tb' wdkr' "This lion was made by bwn' son of 'mdbw for Ba'alshamin the good and bountiful (rewarding)".

It should be noticed that the title "the god who aids the people", and gives them the life and peace corresponded particularly to Ba'alshamin in the Hellenistic and the Roman periods, and he became in Tyre the father of Melqart. At Palmyra he became "the anonymous god", he is essentially the good and rewarding god, and he gives for his believers the peace that called him Zeus (Mensil du Buisson, 1966: 559).

At Palmyra, many altars and inscriptions were dedicated to a god with the formula: "for whose name is blessed forever". This god is just another aspect of the god Ba'alshamin, a new aspect, which reflected a new orientation of the piety. The cult of the god with no name appeared in Palmyra at the beginning of the 2nd century, and the dedications of the anonymous god between 103 and 268 A.D started at the moment where the dedications of Ba'alshamin became very rare, and occurred from 67 until A.D 134 (Collart 1969: 204). This is a very paradoxical to see the god Ba'alshamin disappeared in such a period where the inscriptions of Palmyra were the most numerous.

Scholars have identified this anonymous god with the god Ba'alshamin "the lord of Heavens" and "Lord of world". The analogy between the two gods, the unnamed and Ba'alshamin, is certainly evident: The two gods are gods of storms, the harvest functions that are relatives to the origin of the cult of Ba'alshamin are attested formally in the cult of the anonymous god. The two gods are also designed in the Greek inscriptions by the name of Zeus very-high. And finally all the other gods of Palmyra received frequently from their believers the epithet *good* and *remunerator*, meanwhile Ba'alshamin and the unnamed god distinguished by the epithet *compassionate*.

In the inscriptions, the anonymous god qualified "Lord of the Universe" or "of the eternity" (according to the meaning of the Aramaic word 'alma),

compassionate, one, alone, merciful god, god, remunerator. In Greek, he is Zeus the very high and who hears prayers, (Διὶ ὑψίστῳ μεγίστῳ καὶ ἐπηκόῳ), and for one time god, one, alone, compassionate (ένί μόνῳ ἐλεήμον θεῶ).

The inscriptions of the anonymous god are very numerous, there are more than 300 inscriptions dedicated for this god, ex. Al-Hassani and Starcky had published two articles; the first was in 1953 (AAS 3: 145-64) which included 15 inscriptions for the nameless god. The second was in 1957 (AAS: 95-122) that have seven inscriptions for the same god. However, the formula "for whose name is blessed forever" may have helped the faithful to address themselves to other gods, especially the supreme gods Bel and Ba'alshamin, and this would explain the presence of so many altars dedicated to the anonymous god in the city. In a bilingual inscription, found at Palmyra in front of the temple of the Diocletian camp, (RES 2143), we read in Greek: Διὶ ὑψίστῳ καὶ ἐπηκίῳ τὸν βῶμόν ἀνέθηκεν Ζαβδίβω[λος τοῦ Ἰαριβῶλέου τοῦ Λισαμσαίου τοῦ Αἰζράνου ὑπὲρ τῆς ὑγείας αὐτοῦ καὶ τέχῳ[ν καὶ ἀδελφῶ, ἔτους δμυ' Υἱπερβερεταίου. The Palmyrean: ... d[krn qdm bryk šmh l'lm zbdbwl] br yrhbw'l, "...To be remembered in front of whose name is blessed forever, zbdbwl son of yrhbw'l..."

The formula "whose name is blessed forever", carries certain marks of the Jewish influence, and in the old testament we have the invocation which opened certain dedications "blessed his name for the eternity" that appeared in the (Psalm, 72: 19): -Be blessed for ever his glorious name, and in (Daniel 2: 20): -be blessed the name of god, from eternity in eternity.

It can be inferred from the many bilingual inscriptions that Palmyreans would have accepted Celsus statement that a deity could be worshiped under different names by different people. And any Semitic god whose name could be rendered in Greek by Zeus was a true Lord of the world. This title and the frequently used epithets "good" (tb'), "compassionate" (rhmn'), "merciful" (tyr'), "bountiful" (dkr'), to all of which the paraphrastic ἐπηκόος "the one who listens to prayers", corresponds in the Greek inscriptions of Palmyra, usually accompany a supreme god: thus Bel and Ba'alshamin are fully entitled to them.

In the reliefs Ba'alshamin was invoked under two aspects: the cosmic aspect; that was symbolized by a regnant winged eagle over the course of stars,

and as a god of weather and storm who carry in his hand the thunderbolt, and he holds a bouquet of vegetables and fruits, a vine charged with raisin accompany him under his agricultural aspect. This double nature expressed also in the inscriptions: Ba'alshamin "lord of heavens", the supreme god is "Zeus Hypsistos" the Greek equivalent to his name. He was "lord of the world" and governs the sun and the moon, which accompany him.

The epithet ὑψίστω μεγίστω appeared also in a dedication Greek inscription found at Palmyra, on an altar, discovered in 1925 (Ingholt 1936: 105) and reads as follow: Δὺ ὑψίστω μεγίστω καὶ ἐπηκόω τὸν [βω]μόν καὶ τὸ σ[υμ]πόσιον ἀν[έθη]κεν ... The word συμπόσιον has in Greek, both the meaning "Banquet" and "house of the Banquet".

It is known that the priests of Bel were organized in thiasse, under the annual presidency of the Symposiarche, and the entrance in this corporation of this genre must be a high honored, or the new priest pays a sum of money, as they do the senators and the magistrates to their entrance in charge by doing an official sacrifice on their own expensive, followed by an inseparable banquet of the Palmyrean ceremonies. In Greek ἱερεῖς θεοῦ μεγίστου Διὸς Βήλου = kmry' dy bl, and in another inscription published in Syria XX (1939): 320-21, it appeared also [ἱερέων] Βήλου, we remember here that the term design the priests colleges mrzh' "thiasse". In Palmyrean, only the great priest carries the title rb' mrzh' "head of thiasse", and the name of his office is rbnwt mrzhwth dy kmry bl "symposiarche of the priests of Bel". In Greek ἀρχιερεὺς καὶ συμποσιάρχης or συμποσιάρχος. The function of the great priest in the sanctuary of Bel is: 1) dy dmd 'lhy' "who served the gods" 2) wytb 'l qsm' "and who preside on the divination".

The title Zeus Hypsistos is found at numerous points in the Greek world. A cult conducted by worshippers of the lower classes at shrine south of the Pnyx at Athens has left its mark in numerous votive inscriptions of the late first to the third century of our era, accompanied by reliefs representing parts of the body headed by the god. In this we find Δὺ ὑψίστω, θεῶ ὑψίστω and ὑψίστω. Accordingly, we have to consider θεῶ ὑψίστω (theos Hypsistos) as well as Zeus Hypsistos. In Syria Zeus Hypsistos (Δὺ ὑψίστω) and Theos Hypsistos (θεῶ ὑψίστω) were both used to describe the local Ba'al of a given region, many of them mountain gods.

The epithet "Zeus Hypsistos" was found in many Greek inscriptions that were found at the region of Palmyra, (Ingholt 1936: 104): Δὺ ὑψίστω Α[θη]νοδωρο[ος] τοῦ Μοκίμου τοῦ θαμμη[τοῦ Αμ] Μαθα τοῦ,"To Zeus most-high, Athenodoros, son of Mokimou, son of taimou, son of matha son of hh"; (Seyrig 1933: 270): Δὺ ὑψί[στω] ... τοῖς δύο..., (Gawlikowski 1973: 97): I.O.M VOTVM AMATHALLAT F. SABBITI [hh] OPTIEQ η ΔΠ ΥΨICTΩ [AMAΘA]ΛΛAΘ CABBITOY]INOC. "I(uppiter o(ptimus) M(aximus) – Zeus hypsistos". This inscription is an ex-voto offered to Zeus Hypsistos, whose name translates to Latin Iuppiter Optimus Maximus. At the beginning of the inscription, the Latin abbreviation corresponds with the Greek Δὺ ὑψίστω and designs the Palmyrean Ba'alshamin and also the anonymous god. The dedicator of the inscription is a Palmyrean name, Amatallat, and his father Sabbitus may be an Optio equitum (Gawlikowski, 1984: 125). The epithet "Most High" (hypsistos) was translated into Latin as *summus exsuperantissimus* (Teixidor, 1977: 27).

In Syria, especially in Palmyra, in Arabia (Gerasa) and Hauran the epithet ἐπήκοος is used in dedications to "Zeus the highest" (Δὺ ὑψίστω) or "Zeus the altar" (Δὺ βωμῶ). We even could presume that this deity is in fact Hadad- Ba'alshamin. In Palmyra we read in the following dedicatory Greek inscription, (Seyrig, 1939: 317), the epithet Ἐπηκόω: Ι(ούλιος) Αὐρηλιος) Σαμε(σ)ιαβο(ς) ΔΙΔ εὐξάμενος καὶ ἐπακουσθεῖς Δι[ὶ] ἐπηκόω[ω] ὑπερ ὑγείας αὐτοῦ κα[ὶ] [συν]βίου καὶ τέκνης[ν], ἔτους ζμφ'. In some inscriptions the god Zeus carried the epithet Ἅγιος Ἐπηκόος (Δὺ ἄγιω ἐπηκόω ...). The new epithet Ἅγιος is equally a character of the oriental cults. In the sanctuary of Bel there is a dedication on a small pyre of calcareous stone with the following text: -εὐχαριστεῖ Μάλχος Βαρέα τοῦ Μαλίχου ἐνὶ μόνω ἐλεήμονι θεῶ. "Thanks of Malichos son of Bareas son of Malichos to the god one, alone and compassionate". This notion is visual in many numerous Christian texts. The god of Malichos is unnamed in the inscription; therefore we can conclude an idea of Christian dedication.

A series of bilingual inscriptions from Palmyra dating from A.D 111 to 268 are dedicated in Greek Δὺ ὑψίστω καὶ ἐπηκόω and in Palmyrean : lb'ldm

rb' wrhm' (the good and rewarding). In Latin "propitious".

The formula Διὶ ὑψίστῳ καὶ ἐπηκόῳ appeared in many dedicatory inscriptions, i. e. (Al-As'ad and Gawlikowski, 1986: 166): [Διὶ ὑψίστῳ καὶ ἐπηκόῳ Μάλλχ[ος]..., "To Zeus most-high and who listen malichos..., (Gawlikowski and As'ad, 1997: 27, no. 7): [Δι]ὶ ὑψίστ[ῳ] [κ]αὶ ἐπηκό[ῳ] Ἡρώδη[ς] Μαλί[χ]ου ἡ, "To Zeus most-high and who listen, Herodes son of malichos ἡ". (Waddington 2572, Prentice, 1908: 279, no.353): Διὶ ὑψίστῳ καὶ ἐπηκόῳ τὸν βωμὸν ἀνέθηκεν Ἰούλιος Ἐρώς. ἀπελευθέρου Γαίου'σ' Ἰουλίου Βάσσου ἡ, "To Zeus Most High, the answer of prayer, Iulios Eros, freedman of Gaios Iulios Bassos ἡ, (Seyrig, 1933: 263): Διὶ ὑψίστῳ καὶ ἐπηκόῳ Ἀναγνισ Νεσα εὐξά[μ]ενος καὶ πακουσ[θεῖς] ἀνέθη[κεν]. (Seyrig, 1933:264): [Διὶ ὑ]ψίστῳ καὶ ἐ[π]ηκόῳ Σαλαμά[νης] Ἰουλιανοῦ εὐχῆν. (Seyrig 1939: 318, Waddington 2574), Διὶ ὑψίστῳ καὶ ἐπηκόῳ εὐξάμενος ἀν[έ]θηκεν [...] ὙΡΟΚΚ[...] ΜΑΥΙΕΘΗΚ[.]Ι Σώπατρος θεῶ μέγαλῳ ΕΛΛΑΚΥΑ Τῶ ἐν Ἐουαρεῖ. (Cantineau 1931, Inventaire VI: 13,no.8): Διὶ ὑψίστῳ καὶ ἐ[π]ηκόῳ..., "To Zeus the most-high and hearer of prayers ...".

In September A.D 302, an officer, probably of *leg. I Illyricorum*, offered an altar to Ba'alshamin (65×108×63 cm) and was discovered in 1955, (Gawlikowski and As'ad, 1997: 45): Διὶ ὑψίστῳ καὶ [ε]πηκόῳ Ἀουεῖτο[ς] ὀπτιῶν πρίνκιψ εὐχῆ[ν] [ἀ]νέθηκεν ἔτους γιχ' Γο[ρ-] {π}ιαίου εκ', "To Zeus the Highest listening to prayers Avitus, *optio princeps*, offered to fulfill the promise given in the prayer in the year 613, the 25th of Gorpiaios". The *optio* in this inscription is of a Palmyrean origin, or at least a Syrian one. The expression *ὀπτιῶν πρίνκιψ*, translated from Latin *centurio princeps*, equivalent to the habitual form *ὀπτιῶν τοῦ πρίνκιπος*, which was found in, for example, a dedicatory altar from Dura-Europos. The grade of *optio* which carries the author of the inscription was in origin characterized of legions. It designed the officer placed directly under the centurion, and replaced by "lieutenant". There is, however, a bilingual funerary inscription from Dacie that mentioned in Latin and Palmyrean, a Palmyrean soldier after his name was *optio ex numero Palmurenorum*, or in Palmyrean *hftyn*, and he was therefore a party of the Palmyrean auxiliary unity

attached to a legion. The legion might have been at Palmyra, the *Legio Ia Illyricorum*. We know it was under the realm of Arcadius, about the year 400.

In the bilingual inscription (Greek and Palmyrean), (Dunant 1971: no. 25A), that was found on an altar made of dry calcareous in front of the temple of Ba'alshamin at Palmyra, discovered in 1935, 114,5×137×114,5 cm and we read as follow: Διὶ ὑψίστῳ καὶ ἐπηκόῳ Μαλιχος κ[αὶ] Αουειδος ..., The Palmyrean text not mentions the name of the god, it occurs the epithet *mr' 'lm'*, this epithet designs Ba'alshamin. The cult of Ba'alshamin, under its Greek form "Διὶ ὑψίστῳ καὶ ἐπηκόῳ", subsisted also in the beginning of IV century, preserved, perhaps, in a ruined city, by the presence of a Roman garrison.

In the Hellenistic times Zeus was almost a descriptive term meaning "chief god" rather than the personal name of a traditional Greek divine character – It would appear that in the main the process went the other way and that where Zeus Hypsistos and Theos Hypsistos existed side by side. The Zeus Hypsistos form is the earlier and Theos Hypsistos may be an unofficial synonym for him.

The Palmyreans are the only Semitics who very often invoked a deity without addressing him by extremely vague epithets. It must be admitted that, either under the influence of Greek philosophy or under Jewish influence, the Palmyreans reached a conception of the deity that was compatible, in the ideas of antiquity, with polytheism. The supreme god was Bel, in Greek Βήλος, and because of his supreme rank, they called him Zeus. Then this title was expressly given to a god who had a wide diffusion Ba'al or Ba'alshamin. He is called "Lord of the world" (*mr' 'lm'*), "good and rewarding god" (*tb' wdkr'*), "great and compassionate" (*tb' wrhmn'*). The Greek inscriptions read: Διὶ μεγίστῳ κεραυνίῳ.

Ba'alshamin "The lord of Heavens" who had venerated in south Syria and on the coast, was naturally Zeus and similar in his imagery to Zeus Olympios whom the Seleucids popularized everywhere in their domains. In the bilingual inscription (Greek and Palmyrean), that was found on the console of the column D that was made of calcareous, at Palmyra in the temple of Ba'alshamin, the Greek text 50×38 cm and the Palmyrean 50×65 cm (CIS II 3959, CIG 4482, Waddington 2585). A remarkable difference between the two texts (Greek and Palmyrean) is that the Palmyrean Ba'alshamin is render in Greek as Zeus, an equivalent which clearly tells that the two were not conceived as two separate personalities. This inscription which was mentioned above makes a

brief reference to the visit of the emperor Hadrian to Palmyra around 129. After this visit the city received the title *Hadriana Palmyra*. It is known that Hadrian after his visit gave Palmyra a new status *civitas libera*. A decree of 137 included the fiscal law shows that the senate of Palmyra was independent by then and Rome no longer controlled the payment of Taxes. A round 215 Caracalla gave Palmyra the status of *coloni*.

In another bilingual inscription (Greek and Palmyrean), that was found on a big console of column made of calcareous in the sanctuary of Ba'alshamin / Palmyra, discovered in 1954, 54×51,5×82 cm, (Dunant, 1971: 57, no. 45A), it's evident the identification of Ba'alshamin as Zeus, we read in Greek: ἐν[α] μὲ[ν] ἐν ταῦθ[α] ἐν ἱερῶ Διός, ἕνα δὲ ἐν ἱερῶ ἄρσει, ἕνα δὲ ἐν ἱερῶ Ἀργάτιος ἡ, "... one here in the temple of Zeus, one in the holy garden, another in the temple of Ares, and fourth in the temple of Atargatis,..."", the Palmyrean text: ... ἡδ tnn bt [b'ldmn w'hd bt r]sw w'hd bgnt' ylm [w'rb't' bt 'tr'th h, "... one here; in the temple of Ba'alshamin, one in the temple of Arsou, one in the divine garden, and the fourth in the temple of Atargatis,..."". Here we have a new example of the great honorary dedications as a witness of the grateful of the caravans for the gods who work to confirm their security in the long steps of the desert, which separate Palmyra from other commercial centers.

In this inscription from Palmyra we find the name of the sanctuary of Ares or Atargatis. And we know now that, they were worshipped in a particular saint place. It is evident also that Ares is the Greek equivalent god of the Arab Arsou. It is well known that Azizo is the twin brother of Ares. And these two gods were worshipped in particularly as protectors of the caravans, and they were symbolized by the divine star, which gives light in the night. For this the caravans choose the sanctuary of Arsou to erect their statue.

In Syria, the god Zeus was described with the epithets Κυρίω and Πατρῶω i.e.: -Διὶ [κ]υρίω καὶ Ἡρᾷ θεοῖς πατρῶοις Γ'. Ἰούλιος Μάξιμος στρατ(ιῶτης) λεγ(εῶνος) γ' κυ(ρηναϊκῆς) (Waddington, 1922). These two epithets appeared in Palmyra: 1- the epithet Κυρίω in the dedicatory bilingual inscription (Greek and Palmyrean), that was found at Dura-Europos/ temple of Zeus-ba'alshamin, on a bas-relief, discovered in 1922-23, (Mesnil du Buisson, 1939: 13, no.23), the Greek runs as follow: Σέλευκος Λευκίου ἐδώρησα τό(υ) ἀνδριάντα

τῶ Δεῖ κυρίω καὶ Αβαβουίς υἱὸς αὐτοῦ ἔτους γμτ' μηνος Ἀπελλαίου. μνησθῆ Ἰαριαίος Γ[ι]λλίτες(?) or γ[ρ]ααφτες(?). The Palmyrean: ... lbl[']dmyn 'lh', "... for ba'alshamin, the god". 2- The epithet Πατρῶω in a Greek inscription, found at Dura-Europos/ temple of the Palmyrean gods, on an altar, made of calcareous, now in the museum of Damascus/ the Dura-Europos hall no. 3476, 72,5×27 cm, (Abdul-Hak, S.; and Abdul-Hak, R. 1951: 13): Θεῶ Πατρῶω Διὶ βετύλω τῶν πρὸς τῷ Ὀρόντη Αυρ(ήλιος) Διφιλιανὸς στρα(τιῶτης) Λεν(εῶνος) δ' Σκυ(θηκῆς) Ἀντ(ωνεινιανῆς) εὐξάμενος ἀνέθηκεν, "To the national god Zeus Betylos, god of the habitants of the border of Orontes, Aurelius Diphilinus, the soldier in the 4th legion Scythe of Antonius, dedicated this altar".

In the inscriptions of Dura-Europos, it was found the two following Greek inscriptions, both of them carrying the name of Zeus, the first dated to the month Dystros 426 of the Seleucids (February-march 115 A.D), 48×42×5 cm, published by (Cumont 1926: 355) and runs as follow: Ἔτους κ' Δύστρου, Λυσίας Κόνωνος τοῦ Πατρολέους ἀνήγειρεν ἰδίῳ ἀνηλώμασιν τόνδε τὸν οἶκον καὶ τὸ ὑπερώιον εὐσεβίας τῆς εἰς τὸν Δία ἔνεκεν καὶ εἰς τὴν ἑαυτοῦ καὶ ἐγγόνων εὐωχίαν. The second published by (Cumont 1926: 379) and reads as follow: Διὸς Καλλινίκου λξ'.

Καλλινίκος in the Greek mythology is an epithet attached properly with Herakles. But some theological speculations associate this surname with the supreme, universal and eternal god. From this supreme source go down the Glory, which illuminate the legal princes and assure to them the victory on the enemies. This doctrine was widespread in all the Orient, and it gave the epithet καλλίνικος for Zeus. Therefore, the epithet καλλίνικος here is nearly a synonym of Πνεύκτης, *invictus*, a title that is carried sometimes by the imperators and the celestial gods, especially the sun, but also Zeus (Cumont 1926: 380). Also in an inscription from Sweida Zeus was called Διὶ Σωτηρι καὶ Φωσφόρω..., and in a Syrian inscription Ba'alshamin is directly equated with Ζεὺς Οὐρανίος.

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مماثلة إله تدمر الأعلى مع زيوس

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الكلمات المفتاحية: تدمر، اليونانية، نقوش، بل (بعل)، بعل سمين، زيوس، إله.

الملخص: تعتبر الحضارة التدمرية حضارة مركبة مجملها خلال فترة ظهورها في الإمبراطورية الرومانية، وقد تميزت هذه الحضارة عن باقي المدن السورية الأخرى بتأثيرها العميق بالحضارة الهلنستية، واشتراكها بالظواهر الشائعة في كل أرجاء الشرق الروماني. ولعل العلامة الفارقة والمؤكدة على هذه الخصوصية تتجلى لنا باستخدامها اللغة الآرامية الرسمية، بالإضافة إلى النصوص الكتابية العديدة التي كانت ثنائية اللغة في الوقت ذاته. وهكذا فإن النزعة إلى التوفيق بين المعتقدات (Syncretism) تميز بها بشكل خاص مجمع آلهة تدمر التي يمكننا أن نجد فيها ما يقارب ستين إلهاً ذكرت أسمائهم في التقدّمات أو جسدوا على النصب التذكارية.

ويبدو لنا، من خلال شواهد النقوش، أن مجمع الآلهة في تدمر بسيطاً جداً. كما يقدم لنا دينها سمّة خاصة تتمثل في وجود إلهين رئيسيين يعتبران بمثابة الإله الأعلى فيها وهما: بل (بول) وبعل سمين. هذه الازدواجية قد تبدو غريبة بالنسبة لنا، إلا أنه يمكن تفسيرها من خلال أصول المؤمنين بعبادة هذين الإلهين وتقاليدهم المختلفة، كما يعتبران هذين الإلهين المتوازيين بمثابة رب العالمين في تدمر، ويدعوان باللغة اليونانية الإله زيوس. ولا بد أن نضع بعين الاعتبار أن الإله زيوس في الفترة الإغريقية - الرومانية أصبح مرادفاً لكلمة إله، وأنه بالنسبة لليونانيين الإله الرئيس في كل البلدان الأجنبية ليس إلا زيوس.

تستند مماثلة الإله المجهول (غير المسمى) مع الإله زيوس على قاعدة وحجة صلبة: فقد وجه إلى كليهما التسمية "سيد العالم"، ووصفوا باللغة اليونانية بالصيغة: Διὸ ἐψίτω καὶ ἐπηκόω بمعنى "إلى زيوس الأعلى والسامع للصلوات"، كذلك نعتوا بالصفتين "الطيب والرحيم"، بالإضافة إلى وظيفتهم كإلهين للزراعة.