

LUCIAN ON THE TEMPLE AT HELIOPOLIS

Introduction

This paper focusses on two lines in what counts as our best available literary source for the study of religious life in the Roman Near East.¹ In paragraph 5 of Περὶ τῆς Συρίης Θεοῦ (*On the Syrian Goddess*), a treatise professing to describe the temple and cult at Hierapolis, a place in northern Syria also known by its indigenous names of Manbog or Bambyce, the author writes:

¹The idea behind this paper received its initial inspiration from the discussions I enjoyed as a committee member with Anne-Rose Hošek during the defence of her excellent PhD thesis at the École Pratique des Hautes Études in Paris in December 2012. I am grateful to Eivind Heldaas Seland for inviting me to a workshop held in September 2013 in the picturesque small-town of Voss, where I had the opportunity to try out my argument in front of a small audience of Near Eastern specialists. In Durham, during a Departmental Work-in-Progress seminar two months later, my Classics colleagues provided useful feedback, and I owe thanks in particular to Johannes Haubold, Phil Horky and Edmund Thomas for their constructive comments. Above all I am grateful to Jane Lightfoot for commenting on the final draft, and to the journal's anonymous referee for numerous helpful suggestions. It is superfluous to add that none of the above should be held responsible for my interpretation and its execution. All quotations and translations of the text follow J.L. Lightfoot, *Lucian, On the Syrian Goddess. Edited with Introduction, Translation and Commentary* (Oxford, 2003).

Ἔχουσι δὲ καὶ ἄλλο Φοίνικες ἱερόν, οὐκ Ἀσσύριον ἀλλ’
Αἰγύπτιον, τὸ ἐξ Ἡλίου πόλιος ἐς τὴν Φοινίκην ἀπίκετο. ἐγὼ
μέν μιν οὐκ ὄπωπα, μέγα δὲ καὶ τόδε καὶ ἀρχαῖόν ἐστιν.

The Phoenicians have another temple, not Assyrian, but Egyptian,
which came to Phoenicia from Heliopolis. I have not seen it, but it too
is large and ancient.

The treatment of the temple mentioned in this passage is rather casual and seems to lack much informative value, and the remark has hardly received attention in the scholarly debate beyond the basic recognition that it is one of the few literary references to the temple complex at Baalbek-Heliopolis situated in the Beqa’a valley.²

² Y. Hajjar, *La triade d’Héliopolis-Baalbek. Son culte et sa diffusion à travers les textes littéraires et les documents iconographiques et épigraphiques I-II*, *ÉPRO* 59 (Leiden, 1977), no. 330. Note that J. Elsner, ‘Describing self in the language of the other: pseudo (?) Lucian at the temple of Hierapolis’, in S. Goldhill (ed.), *Being Greek under Rome. Cultural Identity, the Second Sophistic and the Development of Empire* (Cambridge, 2001), 123-53, at 130-1, incorrectly assumes that the mention of this temple in *Syr. D.* 5 concerns a second temple in Sidon, put in contrast by the author of the treatise with the ‘Astarte/Selene/Europa temple’ with its ‘Greek connections’: ‘In Sidon, the competition for the cultural origins of sanctuaries is divided into two temples, one connected with Greece and the other with Egypt (of which our Greek-speaking writer did not see the non-Greek sanctuary, 5).’

The Near Eastern author

It has long been appreciated that *On the Syrian Goddess*, traditionally ascribed to Lucian, was produced as an intentional linguistic play on the style of Herodotus. Previously the authenticity of Lucian's authorship had been questioned, with the debate circling around what was perceived as the problematic absence of clear-cut satire in a work said to be written by one of the most famous satirists of them all.³ But J. Lightfoot, in her major commentary on the text, has now established beyond any reasonable doubt that the attribution to Lucian is correct, based on a painstaking investigation of similarities in syntax, diction, verbs and rhetorical effects as used in both *On the Syrian Goddess* and selected other Lucianic literary output.⁴ It is known from *How to Write History* that Lucian came originally from Samosata, once the proud royal capital of the kingdom of Commagene, a region to the north of Syria west of the upper Euphrates.⁵ *On the Syrian Goddess* therefore presents – despite the perspective of the outsider that is applied throughout⁶ – information about a major

³ E.g. L. Dirven, 'The author of *De Dea Syria* and his cultural heritage', *Numen* 44 (1997), 153-79.

⁴ Lightfoot (n. 1), 184-208. Cf. C.P. Jones, *Culture and Society in Lucian* (Cambridge, MA - London, 1986), 41 with n. 37.

⁵ Lucian, *Hist. Conscr.* 24: ... τὴν ἐμὴν πατρίδα τὰ Σαμόσατα Cf. most recently the commentary by R. Porod, *Lukians Schrift „Wie man Geschichte schreiben soll“*. *Kommentar und Interpretation, Phoibos Humanities Series 1* (Vienna, 2013), 426-32, esp. 431.

⁶ Cf. now N.J. Andrade, *Syrian Identity in the Greco-Roman World* (Cambridge, 2013), 288-313. Cf. *ibid.*, 289 for important considerations on how the treatise 'marks

local cult centre in the Near East that is in fact provided by someone who may be called a relative insider, a point played on by the author himself when he states at the outset that ‘I myself that write am an Assyrian’.⁷ Recently, M. Facella has argued strongly that the satirist had Aramaic as his mother tongue, despite the lack of hard evidence to support the claim and in the face of strong previous scholarly resistance to the idea. She is certainly right to point out that it is unrealistic to expect to find much

the shiftiness of cultural positioning and the incoherence of binary cultural categories’.

⁷ *Syr. D.* 1: γράφω δὲ Ἀσσύριος ἐών. Cf. now M. Facella, ‘Languages, cultural identities and elites in the land of Mara bar Sarapion’, in A. Merz and T. Tieleman (edd.), *The Letter of Mara bar Sarapion in Context. Proceedings of the Symposium held at Utrecht University, 10-12 December 2009, CHANE 58* (Leiden and Boston, 2012), 67-94, at 85-6, who rightly points out that all of Lucian’s references to himself as a barbarian ought to be interpreted in their own individual textual context. See also the very final lines of the treatise, where the author describes the custom that young men offer the shavings of their first beards in the temple at Hierapolis and children locks of their hair that was grown from birth, *Syr. D.* 60: ‘I myself did this when I was young, and still to this day in the temple are the lock and my name’ (τοῦτο καὶ ἐγὼ νέος ἔτι ὧν ἐπετέλεσα, καὶ ἔτι μευ ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ καὶ ὁ πλόκαμος καὶ τὸ οὖνομα). Cf. Lightfoot (n. 1), 531-6, esp. 536. It may be noted, with M.J. Versluys, ‘Cultural responses from kingdom to province: the Romanisation of Commagene, local identities and the Mara bar Sarapion letter’, in Merz and Tieleman (n. 7), 43-66, at 57, that Lucian ‘shows no reminiscences to a *Commagenean* identity’ as such (my italics).

evidence for his knowledge of the Aramaic language inside his works: ‘A man who directed all of his efforts to learning classical culture, to become skilled in the art of rhetoric and to be included in the Graeco-Roman intellectual world, would have only hinted at his knowledge of a non-Greek language.’⁸ Since Lucian is of course well-known for the ambiguity his works create concerning his own identity in general, the ambivalent way in which he deals with his own linguistic background might also be considered as one more element in the game he continuously plays with his audience.⁹

⁸ Facella (n. 7), 85. She also draws attention to a passage in *My Native Land* where Lucian gives as one of the main reasons for showing gratitude to one’s *patria* the fact that ‘each of us began to speak there, learning first to talk the language of the country [rather than translating τὰ ἐπιχώρια as ‘native dialect’] and there came to know the gods’ (*Patr. Enc.* 6: καὶ φωνῆς ἐνταῦθα ἤρξατο τὰ ἐπιχώρια πρῶτα λαλεῖν μανθάνων καὶ θεοὺς ἐγνώρισεν), according to Facella (n. 7), 88, ‘an allusion to his personal experience, to his provenance from a land with a native language other than Greek, where Greek could be learnt up to a certain level, but one which was obviously insufficient for a career in rhetoric’. In a different work Lucian uses the verb Συρίζω when referring to the spoken language of a door-man who came to Rome from the Near East: *Merc. cond.* 10.

⁹ I owe this point, and the references that follow, to the journal’s referee. On various issues regarding Lucian’s autobiographical presentation in *On the Syrian Goddess*, cf. S. Goldhill, *Who Needs Greek? Contests in the Cultural History of Hellenism* (Cambridge, 2002), 78-82, and D.S. Richter, *Cosmopolis. Imagining Community in Late Classical Athens and the Early Roman Empire* (Oxford, 2011), 235-42, who both drew attention to the fact that the final word of the treatise (despite its playful

The Phoenician cult centres in *On the Syrian Goddess*

Before beginning, in *Syr. D.* 10, his actual account of the various foundation myths of the temple at Hierapolis, its layout, the divine imagery and the cultic practice, Lucian first mentions a number of other places and religious traditions. In *Syr. D.* 2 he acknowledges the primacy of the Egyptians, who are said to have been the first to found temples and cults and then passed on their religious traditions to the Assyrians, who were the first to set up divine imagery in their sanctuaries. In *Syr. D.* 3 his overview of other Syrian temples then begins, ‘which are almost as old as the Egyptian, most of which I have seen.’¹⁰ He starts with ‘the temple of Heracles at Tyre – not the same Heracles as the one celebrated by the Greeks; the one I mean is much older and a Tyrian hero’,¹¹ an obvious reference to the local cult centre of Melqart,

anonymity) is ‘name’ (ὄνομα). For valuable considerations on how Lucian in some of his other works uses the authorial name as ‘a strategy of authorial self-representation which defines the author’s credentials, and shapes the reader’s attitude to, and expectations of, his work’, cf. K. Ní Mheallaigh, ‘The game of the name: onymity and the contract of reading in Lucian’, in F. Mestre and P. Gómez (edd.), *Lucian of Samosata. Greek Writer and Roman Citizen* (Barcelona, 2010), 83-94, at 93.

¹⁰ οὐ παρὰ πολὺ τοῖς Αἰγυπτίοισιν ἰσοχρονέοντα, τῶν ἐγὼ πλεῖστα ὄπωπα.

¹¹ τό γε τοῦ Ἡρακλέος τὸ ἐν Τύρῳ, οὐ τούτου τοῦ Ἡρακλέος τὸν Ἕλληνας αἰεῖδουσιν, ἀλλὰ τὸν ἐγὼ λέγω πολλὸν ἀρχαιότερος καὶ Τύριος ἦρως ἐστίν.

It should be noted that the Greek does not make it explicit that Lucian saw the Tyrian temple with which he starts his enumeration, although as far as I am concerned the

whose identification with Heracles was already made by Herodotus (2.44).¹² Moving northwards from Tyre, the next to be mentioned (in *Syr. D.* 4) is ‘another large temple in Phoenicia, one belonging to the Sidonians’.¹³ Local tradition, according to our author, makes it a temple of Astarte (whom Lucian explicitly identifies with Selene), but according to one priest ‘it belongs to Europa the sister of Kadmos’.¹⁴ Following the brief passage on Heliopolis (in *Syr. D.* 5), *Syr. D.* 6 is then the start to a relatively long excursus into Byblos, according to epigraphic sources from the old Phoenician period home to the sanctuary of the ‘Mistress of Byblos’ (Ba‘alat Gebal), located on the acropolis and according to archaeological findings uninterrupted in use from the third millennium B.C. to the Roman period.¹⁵ In the words of *On the Syrian Goddess*, however, it concerned ‘a large temple of Byblian Aphrodite, in which they perform

context leaves no doubt. Lightfoot (n. 1), 249, deals with the ambiguity by adding (including) in between brackets in her translation of the passage.

¹² Cf. C. Bonnet, *Melqart. Cultes et mythes de l’Héraclès tyrien en Méditerranée*, *Studia Phoenicia* 8 (Leuven, 1988).

¹³ ἔνι δὲ καὶ ἄλλο ἱερόν ἐν Φοινίκῃ μέγα, τὸ Σιδώνιοι ἔχουσιν.

¹⁴ Εὐρώπης ἐστὶ τῆς Κάδμου ἀδελφεῆς. As F. Millar, *The Roman Near East, 31 BC - AD 337* (Cambridge, MA and London, 1993), 286, has emphasized, ‘while the fact that the legend of Kadmos and Europa formed a distinctive aspect of the public image of both Sidon and Tyre is significant, it is not possible to characterize this as a Phoenician legend rather than as a common Greek one which gave these Phoenician cities a particular mythical role’.

¹⁵ Cf. M. Dunand, *Fouilles de Byblos I-II* (Paris, 1937-58).

the rituals to Adonis'.¹⁶ What follows is an account of the lamentations in the rites commemorating the affair of Adonis and the boar; a reference to sacred prostitution in the cult of 'Aphrodite' (both in *Syr. D.* 6); an explanation of the rituals to Adonis in the context of the Egyptian cult of Osiris (*Syr. D.* 7); and a juxtaposition between the mythical and the rational vindication of the peculiar colour of the Nahr Ibrahim, known in Antiquity as the river Adonis (*Syr. D.* 8).¹⁷ Finally, as will be seen below (n. 61), *Syr. D.* 9 makes mention of a temple of Aphrodite in the hinterland of Byblos, at Aphaca.

In her commentary on *Syr. D.* 5, J. Lightfoot wrote that Heliopolis 'is the only non-coastal city mentioned here'.¹⁸ Recently, A.-R. Hošek has argued that the passage reveals more than it seems to convey at first glance, by drawing attention to the absence of Berytus from the inventory of Phoenician cult centres. As we have seen,

¹⁶ μέγα ἱρὸν Ἀφροδίτης Βυβλίας, ἐν τῷ καὶ τὰ ὄργια ἐς Ἄδωνιν ἐπιτελέουσιν. On the difficulties in identifying the sanctuary Lucian talks about, see Lightfoot (n. 1), 306-8. Cf. Millar (n. 14), 276-7. For later literary reflections, see *Macr. Sat.* 1.21.5; Nonnus, *Dion.* 3.107-9; 4.80-1.

¹⁷ For an interesting parallel in the myth of Andromeda, though less detailed, see the references to the colouring of water by the sea-monster's blood in Pausanias 4.35.6 (Iope) and one of the two Philostrati, *Imag.* 1.29.2 (Red Sea). Cf. T. Kaizer, 'Interpretations of the myth of Andromeda at Iope', *Syria* 88 (2011), 323-39, at 328-9. On the relationship between Byblos and Adonis, cf. B. Soyez, *Byblos et la fête des Adonies*, *ÉPRO* 60 (Leiden, 1977).

¹⁸ Lightfoot (n. 1), 303 (which is of course not counting the sanctuary in the hinterland of Byblos referred to in *Syr. D.* 9).

listing the temples from south to north, Lucian mentions Tyre, Sidon, Heliopolis and Byblos. For Hošek, Berytus is missing precisely because Heliopolis is mentioned instead: ‘In the eyes of the contemporary observer that is Lucian, the Heliopolitan sanctuary is not only a territorial sanctuary of the colony, but it has become the great sanctuary of Berytus likely to represent or to symbolize the city.’¹⁹ In case one should like to object that Berytus must have been absent from Lucian’s list for a different reason, namely because it was founded as a Roman *colonia* and therefore supposedly lacked an ancient past, it ought to be noted that Berytus is one of the many Phoenician cities in the preserved fragments of Philo of Byblos’ *Phoenician History* (a text from the second century A.D. claiming to be a translation of a Phoenician work by a certain Sanchuniathon that had allegedly been produced before the Trojan War),²⁰ and that a

¹⁹ A.-R. Hošek, ‘Territoires et religions en contacts: la colonie romaine de Berytus, de sa fondation au IIIe siècle de notre ère’ (Diss., ÉPHÉ Paris, 2012), 170: ‘Aux yeux de l’observateur contemporain qu’est Lucien, le sanctuaire héliopolitain n’est pas seulement un sanctuaire territorial de la colonie, il est devenu le grand sanctuaire de Berytus susceptible de représenter ou de symboliser la cité.’ Cf. *ibid.*, 169, where she stated that as such the passage ‘confirme, même indirectement, la complète réorientation du paysage religieux bérytain qui fait suite à la fondation coloniale.’ Cf. *ibid.*: ‘malgré sa brièveté le passage ... est plus éloquent qu’il n’y paraît.’ Cf. *ead.*, ‘Contrôler un territoire, contrôler un sanctuaire: aspects religieux de la fondation de Berytus’, *Cahiers «Mondes anciens»* 2 (2011), 1-14.

²⁰ Millar (n. 14), 279. Cf. M.J. Edwards, ‘Philo or Sanchuniathon? A Phoenician cosmogony’, *CQ* 41 (1991), 213-20. For the text and commentary, see A. Kaldellis, and C. López Ruiz, ‘Philon (790)’, in I. Worthington (ed.), *Brill’s New Jacoby* (Brill Online), F1 (Euseb. *Praep. evang.* 1.9.21, mentioning a king of the *Bèrutioi*) and F2

settlement 'Beruta' is mentioned in the Tell al-Amarna tablets and in inscriptions of Ramses II.²¹ Although the evidence is certainly not as clear-cut as some scholars have made it out to be,²² it is commonly assumed that Heliopolis was added to the colonial lands of Berytus at the time of the latter's foundation by Agrippa in c. 15 B.C.²³

The historical value of *On the Syrian Goddess*

The absence of Berytus from Lucian's brief list goes some way to clarify the presence of Heliopolis on it, but it does not explain the peculiar, seemingly unhelpful, way in which the author deals with the temple in *Syr. D.* 5. The treatise is the only contemporary account of traditional, polytheistic worship in the Roman Near East by

(1.10.35, where the city of *Bèrutos* is given by Kronos to Poseidon). Cf. A.I. Baumgarten, *The Phoenician History of Philo of Byblos. A Commentary*, *ÉPRO* 99 (Leiden, 1981), 57, 208-9 and 224.

²¹ L.J. Hall, *Roman Berytus. Beirut in Late Antiquity* (London and New York, 2004), 45-6.

²² Thus Hošek (n. 19), 45-65, with full discussion of the issue.

²³ A.H.M. Jones, *The Cities of the Eastern Roman Provinces* (Oxford, 1971²), 270. Cf. F. Millar, 'The Roman *coloniae* of the Near East: a study of cultural relations', in H. Solin and F.M. Kajava (edd.), *Roman Policy in the East and Other Studies in Roman History* (Helsinki, 1990), 7-58, at 18 = id., in H.M. Cotton and G.M. Rogers (edd.), *The Greek World, the Jews and the East. Rome, the Greek World and the East III* (Chapel Hill, 2006), 164-222, at 177. Even if the precise moment of Baalbek's integration into Berytus' territory remains disputed, the site had certainly come to be part of it by the time of Lucian (before it became a separate *colonia* under Septimius Severus).

someone who claims to be an insider, and as such it provides what is potentially our most accessible entree into indigenous cult patterns in the region. It had long been understood that the text, written in an archaic Ionic dialect, counts as ‘a deliberate linguistic parody of Herodotus as a vehicle for this portrayal of an exotic cult for a wider Greek readership’,²⁴ and J. Lightfoot has shown in her masterful commentary to what degree it is indeed a nearly perfect imitation of the style of the Father of History. Naturally, this fact has a serious effect on the potential usefulness of the text for historical purposes. As N. Andrade has recently formulated it, through adopting this sort of ‘Herodotean ethnography’, ‘Lucian’s narrator ... summons the reader to question his narrative’s reliability’²⁵, especially since in other works by the same author the trustworthiness of Herodotus is seen as ‘dubious’.²⁶ But even if *On the Syrian Goddess* was not meant by its author in the first place to provide accuracy with regard to cultic realities at the main temple of Hierapolis, its value as ‘a priceless source for the religious history of imperial Syria’²⁷ is therewith not automatically diminished.²⁸ If the piece was meant as tongue-in-cheek, the author would still have

²⁴ Thus Millar (n. 14), 245.

²⁵ Andrade (n. 6), 288.

²⁶ *Ibid.*: 294, with references to *True Histories*, where Herodotus is amongst the false historians being parodied, and *How to Write History* and *Lovers of Lies*, where his honesty is being rejected.

²⁷ Lightfoot (n. 1), 221.

²⁸ In fact, one could argue the opposite. Cf. T. Kaizer, ‘Introduction’, in *id.* (ed.), *The Variety of Local Religious Life in the Near East in the Hellenistic and Roman Periods*, *RGRW* 164 (Leiden and Boston, 2008), 1-36, at 28-9. Contra J. North, review of Lightfoot (n. 1), *Scripta Classica Israelica* 23 (2004), 298-301. A

needed to portray a *realistic* representation of religious life in the wider region as a whole to make the joke work, and he would necessarily have been familiar with at least some aspects of Near Eastern patterns of worship. *On the Syrian Goddess*, therefore, might not present an accurate, ‘true’ picture of what went on in the particular sanctuary of Atargatis at Hierapolis, but it can still be considered emblematic of religious life in the Levantine lands in general. At the same time, one ought not to lose sight of the fact that the literary output of Lucian, himself ‘something of an outsider in the Greek world’,²⁹ was multi-dimensional. *On the Syrian Goddess* does not need to be as openly satirical as Lucian’s other literary harvest, nor indeed satirical at all, to make its readership aware that not a single line of it should be taken in a straightforward manner, not even those sections (such as the brief passage in *Syr. D.* 5) that appear indifferent or vague.

Lucian as a Second Sophistic author

In this paper I do not want to detract from the obvious significance of the fact that *On the Syrian Goddess* is imitating the style of Herodotus. I have no intention either to

comparison might be drawn here with one of Lucian’s other works, *Alexander, the False Prophet*. Even if that latter treatise ‘gar kein objektives Bild im modernen Sinn geben will’, there is sufficient non-textual evidence available to allow its information a certain degree of authority. Cf. U. Victor, *Lukian von Samosata, Alexandros oder der Lügenprophet. Eingeleitet, Herausgegeben, Übersetzt und Erklärt, RGRW 132* (Leiden, New York and Cologne, 1997) 1-26, at 3. Lucian can still provide his readers with trustworthy data despite the presence of fictitious tiers in his literary creations.

²⁹ S. Swain, *Hellenism and Empire. Language, Classicism, and Power in the Greek World AD 50-250* (Oxford, 1996), 312.

deny that some sort of tribute is being paid to the religious culture of Lucian's Near Eastern homeland, nor that – as J. Elsner has shown³⁰ – an intricate game is being played with notions of 'self' and 'other'. But I propose to focus on a different, additional layer, a layer that is possibly more difficult to recognize in this particular treatise, and that has certainly never been connected with the lines on Heliopolis in *Syr. D.* 5.

In one of the more provocative studies on the Second Sophistic, the period when Greek literature and culture flourished in the context of Rome's domination that had put an end to the political independence of the Greek *poleis* in the eastern half of the empire, S. Swain has forcefully argued that Lucian, like other authors around this time, kept his distance from Rome where appropriate, despite the fact that he (like others) 'on occasion ... clearly expresses a political identification with the Roman system'.³¹ Accordingly Greek identity took priority over allegiance to the imperial power, and if Lucian's case is perhaps more complicated than that of other Second Sophistic authors it is because of his 'avowedly non-Greek background',³² as someone who was aware (and who was made to feel aware by others) of the fact that he was not born into Greek culture but had to acquire it. Lucian wrote at least partly in response to the world in which he lived, and though that means that – up to a large degree – his literary attitude was regulated by his belonging to Rome's empire, he remained highly sensitive with regard to what Swain called Rome's 'potentiality for barbarism'.³³ For Lucian, with his 'adopted cultural identity as a Hellene',³⁴ as for

³⁰ Elsner (n. 2).

³¹ Swain (n. 29), 329.

³² *Ibid.*, 416.

³³ *Ibid.*, citing Donald Russell.

Second Sophistic authors in general (and for some others too³⁵), this means standing up for Greek culture whenever it appeared to be trampled by the imperial force.³⁶ But on the level of personal religious identity of someone with an ‘Oriental’ background (which of course is the proclaimed heart-beat of *On the Syrian Goddess*), this might mean treating the indigenous religious heritage in a most favourable manner – the indigenous religious heritage for which Hellenism was of course the most common and effective vehicle for expression.³⁷

The temple and cult of Baalbek-Heliopolis

By the time Lucian wrote *On the Syrian Goddess*, the temple complex at Baalbek had of course been there long since, even if the exact dates of most of its separate

³⁴ Ibid., 329.

³⁵ Cf. the discussion by K. Clarke, ‘In search of the author of Strabo’s *Geography*’, *JRS* 87 (1997), 92-110, on the double identity of Strabo, whose habit of ‘oblique self-reference’ (ibid., 102) is most notable when mentioning the intellectuals of his day in the Greek East.

³⁶ I hasten to add that I am not viewing ‘Roman and Greek ... [as] ontological categories, which are distinct and inherently in conflict with each other’, and that I thus yield to the important warning given by C. Ando, review of Goldhill (n. 2), *Phoenix* 57 (2003), 355-60, at 356.

³⁷ Swain (n. 29), 308. Cf. Lightfoot (n. 1), 207: ‘Religion was a major, if not *the* main, area in which patriotic localism could coexist with allegiance to the centre, whether that centre is understood politically (Rome) or in terms of language, education, and literary culture (Greece). And not only coexist with it, but also gain ground against it.’ Cf. G.W. Bowersock, *Hellenism in Late Antiquity* (Ann Arbor, 1990).

buildings and monuments remain unknown and if the version of the complex attested by the current ruins seems to date from the third century A.D. The suggestion by the sixth-century chronicler John Malalas of Antioch that the main temple was built only under Antoninus Pius is completely unsupported by epigraphic evidence and the sanctuary was ‘attributed to him in a different sense from that normally used today’.³⁸ As regards the divine inhabitants, it is well-known how Baalbek’s leading deity was commonly referred to with the epithets of the main god of the Roman state pantheon itself. As Jupiter Optimus Maximus Heliopolitanus, in inscriptions often abbreviated to *IOMH*, this toponymic god was worshipped throughout the Roman period, and not only in his Near Eastern homeland.³⁹ The two divine names that occasionally appear in conjunction with *IOMH*, those of Venus and of Mercury, were certainly less obviously associated with Baalbek, and the idea that together they formed a Semitic ‘triad’ is not so much based on the ancient source material, but rather the result of the modern scholarly phenomenon of what K. Butcher called ‘triadomania’.⁴⁰

³⁸ E. Thomas, *Monumentality and the Roman Empire. Architecture in the Antonine Age* (Oxford, 2007), 37. Cf. *ibid.*, 46: Malalas’ statement ‘can be explained by attributing the undertaking of the great inner court around the temple to his reign with the propylaea with its ‘Syrian’ gable finally completed under Severus and Caracalla’. The passage is *Mal. Chron.* 11.22, ed. L. Dindorf (Bonn, 1831), 280, and now ed. H. Thurn, *CFHB* 35 (Berlin, 2000), 212.

³⁹ The evidence is conveniently collected by Hajjar (n. 2).

⁴⁰ K. Butcher, *Roman Syria and the Near East* (London, 2003), 342. Cf. Hošek (n. 19, 2011), 7 with n. 70. The most outspoken proponent of the triad of Heliopolis is of course Hajjar (n. 2) and *id.*, *La triade d’Héliopolis-Baalbek. Iconographie, théologie, culte et sanctuaires* (Montreal, 1985). However, as has been pointed out by J.C.

It is natural, however, to ask to what degree the cults of Roman Heliopolis related to indigenous patterns of worship. A. Kropp put forward the attractive hypothesis, based on a study of the relevant coinage, that the deities worshipped at Baalbek are closely connected with the gods promoted by the Ituraean dynasts,⁴¹ though that is of course not to say that the latter were responsible for the monumental sanctuary to which the current ruins attest:⁴² the temple complex at Baalbek-

Greenfield, review of Hajjar (n. 40), *Numen* 37.2 (1990), 280-3.; Millar (n. 14), 281-2; and more recently and in more detail A.J.M. Kropp, 'Jupiter, Venus and Mercury of Heliopolis (Baalbek). The images of the 'triad' and its alleged syncretisms', *Syria* 87 (2010), 229-64, not only is there no evidence to support the identification of the Roman deities with the alleged Semitic counterparts, there is also nothing that really backs up the idea that they formed an actual 'triad' together. Cf. J. Aliquot, *La vie religieuse au Liban sous l'empire romain*, BAH 189 (Beirut, 2009), 212-6.

⁴¹ A.J.M. Kropp, 'The cults of Ituraean Heliopolis (Baalbek)', *JRA* 22 (2009), 365-80, and id., 'Tetrarches kai archiereus. Gods and cults of the tetrarchs of Chalkis and their role in Ituraean Heliopolis (Baalbek)', in R. Raja (ed.), *Contextualising the Sacred in the Hellenistic and Roman Near East: Religious Identities in Local, Regional and Imperial Settings* (Berlin and New York, in press).

⁴² As was argued by K.S. Freyberger, *Die frühkaiserzeitlichen Heiligtümer der Karawanenstationen im hellenisierten Osten. Zeugnisse eines kulturellen Konflikts im Spannungsfeld zweier politischer Formationen, Damaszener Forschungen* 6 (Mainz, 1998), 66, and met with approval by T. Kaizer, 'Reflections on the dedication of the temple of Bel at Palmyra in AD 32', in L. de Blois, P. Funke and J. Hahn (edd.), *The Impact of Imperial Rome on Religion: Ritual and Religious Life in the Roman Empire*.

Heliopolis as witnessed by the present remains dates from the Roman period. But the tetrarchs of Chalkis may have been behind an *earlier* building, whose apparent indigenous design was rapidly altered and monumentalized by the new Roman overlord following the foundation of *colonia* Berytus.⁴³ The perceived antiquity of Baalbek-Heliopolis, as is stated in *Syr. D.* 5, may be ‘a common assumption in modern writers’,⁴⁴ but the archaeology seems to suggest that *as a cult site* the place did not go back for many centuries, but originated at the earliest only shortly before the creation of the *colonia* Berytus.⁴⁵ The postulation of an Ituraean phase that briefly preceded the Roman temple is also compatible with an alternative recent interpretation of the origins of the temple complex at Baalbek: rather than assuming that the sanctuary had gained its significance because of its association with the new

Proceedings of the Fifth Workshop of the International Network Impact of Empire (Leiden and Boston, 2006), 95-105, at 99.

⁴³ As is suggested by S. Paturel, ‘Landscapes of conversion: Baalbek-Heliopolis from 100 BC to 400 AD’ (Diss., Newcastle University, 2014), 154, on the building history of the temple complex: ‘at its origin the temple of Jupiter Heliopolitanus was Near Eastern in character. It seems unlikely the first ever temple ever reached completion and the temple was swiftly re-designed, perhaps in a manner more suitable for the centrepiece of the new Roman *colonia*.’ In this context it is worth taking into account the suggestion by M. Beard, J. North and S. Price, *Religions of Rome I, A History* (Cambridge, 1998), 334, that the red granite that was imported from Egypt and used in the portico indicates that the major building project had to be financed by the imperial treasury. Cf. Thomas (n. 38), 46.

⁴⁴ Lightfoot (n. 1), 303-4.

⁴⁵ As is now argued by Paturel (n. 43).

colonia, A.-R. Hošek has now argued that it was precisely the location in the Beqa'a valley of what was an already existing major cult centre that was one of the main reasons for the Roman authorities to establish the first Near Eastern *colonia* at Berytus and not somewhere else.⁴⁶ The precise nature, and 'quality', of the local cult of Baalbek remains unclear, but it could be illuminating to approach the evidence along the lines of the argument about the Mithras cult that R. Gordon provocatively put forward forty years ago:⁴⁷ according to such a scheme, Rome did not just appropriate part of an indigenous principality's religious culture,⁴⁸ but went a step further by using certain Ituraean elements in the imperial construction of a new cult that was presented precisely in such a way as to give the impression of being a truly Oriental cult, albeit one in a Romanized version.⁴⁹

Lucian on the temple at Heliopolis

⁴⁶ Hošek (n. 19), 109-14.

⁴⁷ R. Gordon, 'Franz Cumont and the doctrines of Mithraism', in J.R. Hinnells (ed.), *Mithraic Studies. Proceedings of the First International Congress of Mithraic Studies* I (Manchester, 1975), 215-48.

⁴⁸ On which cf. Hošek (n. 19), 111, who formulates it as Rome's choice 'de récupérer l'héritage religieux ituréen'. Cf. *ibid.*, 110: 'un lieu de culte dont le prestige ou les qualités religieuses était susceptible d'attirer l'attention des autorités romaines'.

⁴⁹ Kropp (n. 40) has shown that the actual cult image of *IOMH* is a relatively late creation.

Needless to say, none of this is what Lucian tells us. According to *Syr. D.* 5, the temple was ‘not Assyrian, but Egyptian, which came to Phoenicia from Heliopolis’.⁵⁰ Actual Egyptian origins of the cult, similarly propagated by Macrobius (*Sat.* 1.23.10-13), have been elaborately argued for by P. Haider,⁵¹ but his arguments have been exposed by A. Kropp as far-fetched or, in some cases, simply misleading: ‘some [so-called Egyptian] elements ... are more likely to be Egyptianising traits added at a late stage of the cult when the Egyptian “tradition” gained credence and came to be accepted by interested observers like Lucian.’⁵²

Whether Lucian truly accepted this Egyptian ‘tradition’ remains doubtful as far as I am concerned. Since there are multiple levels on which a parody can be

⁵⁰ Lucian does not actually make an identification with Heliopolis-Baalbek explicit in the passage. But as Lightfoot (n. 1), 303 has pointed out, ‘the name has to be inferred from its alleged origin in Egyptian Heliopolis’. To what degree there is an additional play on the apparent ‘solarization’ of local cults throughout the Near East is a different matter. On this issue, cf. H. Seyrig, ‘Le culte du soleil en Syrie à l’époque romaine’, *Syria* 48 (1971), 337-73 = id., *Antiquités syriennes VII, Syria Supplément 1* (Beirut, 2013), 102-38, at 345-8, and 347 on the place-name: ‘sur les raisons de ce choix, nous sommes réduits aux conjectures’.

⁵¹ P.W. Haider, ‘Götter und Glaubensvorstellungen in Heliopolis-Baalbek’, in E.M. Ruprechtsberger (ed.), *Vom Steinbruch zum Jupitertempel von Heliopolis/Baalbek (Libanon)* (Linz, 1999), 101-37, and id., ‘Glaubensvorstellungen in Heliopolis/Baalbek in neuer Sicht’, in M. Schuol, U. Hartmann and A. Luther (edd.), *Grenzüberschreitungen. Formen des Kontakts zwischen Orient und Okzident im Altertum, Oriens et Occidens 3* (Stuttgart, 2002), 83-122.

⁵² Kropp (n. 40), 239.

working, Egypt may have played multifarious roles simultaneously in Lucian's critique of Rome, while an intricate game of ethnicity was being set up: referring to the temple and its cult as Egyptian may be an example of the author 'playing safe' when withdrawing behind his Herodotean persona (this is after all what 'interested observers', using Kropp's words from the citation above, were supposed to accept); more neutrally, the mention of Egypt may have served as a means to take the reader along on a tour of both a religious and an architectural experience; and finally it may have been not so much cautious as ironic (calling this most Roman of Near Eastern cult centres 'Egyptian').

If one takes Lucian at face value, there is no apparent awareness in *Syr. D. 5* that by the middle of the second century A.D. Baalbek-Heliopolis had been for quite a while by far the most 'Roman' monumental cult centre in the Roman Near East. There is no apparent awareness either that this happened to be home to a local deity whose Latin epithets reflected those of the main god of the Roman state pantheon, nor of the fact that *IOMH* was worshipped elsewhere in the empire too, especially in military contexts. For J. Lightfoot, 'Lucian's silence about [the site's] divinities' stems from the fact that, amongst the Phoenician cities listed, Heliopolis was 'the only one not written into Greek mythology'⁵³: after all, Tyre had Heracles, Sidon had Selene-Europa, and Byblos had Aphrodite.⁵⁴

⁵³ Lightfoot (n. 1), 303.

⁵⁴ Lucian's failure to recognize anything Roman in Heliopolis may be contrasted with the fact that he explicitly refers to coins from Sidon minted by the city in his own time, i.e. the Roman period: 'the coinage the Sidonians use shows Europa astride Zeus in the form of a bull' (*Syr. D. 4*). Cf. Millar (n. 14), 286, and for examples of such

All of this can be explained away if we simply accept that Lucian had just not been to the temple complex at Heliopolis, as he tells us himself in *Syr. D.* 5: ‘I have not seen it, but it too is large and ancient.’ However, it will be clear by now that I do not advocate taking anything that Lucian says for granted, and referring, again, to the author’s imitation of the style of Herodotus would certainly go some way in explaining his choice of words in the passage. For J. Lightfoot, ‘Lucian’s statement that he has not been there is, however, unsurprising, for there are few signs that Baalbek in antiquity did actually receive visitors from further afield than the Bekaa’.⁵⁵ This may be true, but it is similarly true for other cult centres in the Near East, and surely there would have been at least some well-travelled people for members of the cultural elite (to which Lucian belonged) to have been aware of the peculiarities of the site. After all, the sanctuary was part of a major Roman *colonia* that was home to many veterans and became over time *the* place to study Roman law. More convincing therefore is Lightfoot’s further statement that ‘the literary effect of the admission is to enhance our faith in his visits to Tyre, Sidon, and Byblos’.⁵⁶ But even more is going on: not only is Lucian’s disclosure of his failure to visit Heliopolis put in the context of descriptions of three other sanctuaries on the Phoenician coast (and indeed one in the hinterland of Byblos) which he *had* visited (or at least, claims to have visited⁵⁷),

coins cf. *RPC* 4609 (Augustus); *BMC* 224 & *AUB* 232-233 (Hadrian); *AUB* 281 (Julia Maesa).

⁵⁵ Lightfoot (n. 1), 303.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ S. Saïd, ‘Lucien ethnographe’, in A. Billault (ed.), *Lucien de Samosate. Actes du colloque international de Lyon, Centre d’Études Romaines et Galloromaines* n.s. 13 (Lyon and Paris, 1994), 149-70, at 154, stated how ‘dans la *Déesse syrienne*, le “j” ai

but also – more importantly I feel – it is put in the wider context of a treatise focussing on the temple at Hierapolis that is being described by our very author as a centre of pilgrimage attracting visitors from the whole region and beyond (though Greeks and Romans are significantly absent).⁵⁸ The Holy City of Manbog may therefore be viewed ‘as a sort of Syrian answer to Greece’s pan-Hellenic centres’,⁵⁹ a notion that seems to find reflection even in a Jewish source that lists the temple of Atargatis amongst the five most notable pagan places of worship.⁶⁰

vu” revient aussi comme un refrain’, adding multiple references to three various ways to express this (though without noting that the opposite is going on in *Syr. D.* 5). Cf. *ibid.*, 155: ‘Ces “j’ai vu” entraînent d’autant plus la conviction qu’ils sont mis dans la bouche d’un narrateur “honnête” qui n’hésite pas à afficher ses doutes et à reconnaître les limites de son avoir.’

⁵⁸ Thus J.L. Lightfoot ‘Pilgrims and ethnographers: in search of the Syrian goddess’, in J. Elsner and I. Rutherford (edd.), *Pilgrimage in Graeco-Roman & Early Christian Antiquity. Seeing the Gods* (Oxford, 2005), 333-52, at 338, showing how the treatise ‘itself is riddled with notions of pilgrimage to Atargatis’ Holy City. It describes it; it enacts it; it even offers its readers a vicarious experience of it.’ She refers to attendance of ritual activities and to contributions to the sanctuary from far away in *Syr. D.* 10, 13, 32, 49.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 346.

⁶⁰ Andrade (n. 6), 289, drew attention to a passage in the Babylonian Talmud (*Avod. Zar.* 11b) which names the sanctuary of Atargatis at Hierapolis (‘Tar’ata which is in Mapug’) as one of ‘five appointed temples of idol-worship’, alongside ‘the temple of Bel in Babel, the temple of Nebo in Kursi, ..., Zerifa which is in Askelon, and Nishtra which is in Arabia’. Inclusion in this list meant that the temples were considered to

What about other possible explanations? The idea that Lucian could not visit Heliopolis, in contrast to Tyre, Sidon and Byblos, because it was located too far from the civilized coastal region is easily deflated by his own reference in *Syr. D.* 9 to a visit to the mountain sanctuary of Aphaca, a site that is as difficult to reach as Heliopolis: ‘I also went up from Byblos into Lebanon, a day’s journey, having learnt that there was an ancient temple of Aphrodite there, which Cinyras had founded. I saw the temple, and it was ancient’.⁶¹ In fact, the confirmation that he had seen this site (εἶδον τὸ ἱερόν) stands in contrast with what is said in *Syr. D.* 5 (ἐγὼ μὲν μιν οὐκ ὄπωπα). I therefore propose that Lucian’s slightly dismissive way of talking about Baalbek-Heliopolis in *Syr. D.* 5 can simultaneously be understood as an – admittedly cautious – attempt to downplay the prominence of this most Roman of Near Eastern sanctuaries that was situated in the territory of the first *colonia* in the Near East;⁶² as a conscious snub of Heliopolis’ Romanness in the context of a

have been ‘appointed permanently; regularly all the year round worship is taking place in them’.

⁶¹ Ἀνέβην δὲ καὶ ἐς τὸν Λίβανον ἐκ Βύβλου, ὁδὸν ἡμέρης, πυθόμενος αὐτόθι ἀρχαῖον ἱερόν Ἀφροδίτης ἔμμεναι, τὸ Κινύρης εἶσατο, καὶ εἶδον τὸ ἱερόν, καὶ ἀρχαῖον ἦν.

⁶² So cautious, in fact, as to emphasize the temple’s antiquity, which certainly gives the impression simultaneously of raising its status, and in this manner also serves to defend the author against potential criticism of the (intended) brush-off. These two rhetorical stances (slighting the sanctuary by stressing that he has not been there, although he knows very well that it is housing a Roman cult, while ostensibly conceding the prestige of its origin in an ancient and venerable religious culture) may

discussion of what is presented as *the* Near Eastern temple *pur sang*, namely that of Hierapolis; and as such as a way in which this Second Sophistic author wittily demonstrates his dissent from the imperial ascendancy without making it too obvious.⁶³

Vying for ‘federal’ status

A.-R. Hošek has recently put forward the attractive idea that the Roman authorities might have intended the temple complex at Baalbek-Heliopolis to play the role of some sort of ‘federal’ sanctuary with a view towards the Near East as a whole.⁶⁴ If

appear contradictory to modern observers but are not incompatible. If anything, they add to our appreciation of Lucian’s literary skills.

⁶³ A comparison could perhaps be made with Pausanias’ decision to ignore some important contemporary monuments in the context of his guide to the Greek world, especially the nymphaeum that Herodes Atticus built at Olympia (though he does acknowledge the same man’s stadium in Athens, 1.19.6). Cf. C. Habicht, *Pausanias’ Guide to Ancient Greece* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1985), 135 n. 74: ‘The omission can hardly be anything but deliberate’ (though he opts for a different explanation than I propose for the passage in Lucian). The starting point for all considerations of the Greek view of their past in this period is, of course, E. Bowie, ‘The Greeks and their past in the Second Sophistic’, *Past & Present* 46 (1970), 3-41, with a revised version in M. Finley (ed.), *Studies in Ancient Society* (London, 1974), 166-209.

⁶⁴ Hošek (n. 19), 108 on the sanctuary as ‘potentiellement fédérateur’. Cf. *ibid.*, 114. She also suggested, *ibid.*, 119, that this new ‘federal’ dimension of the temple at Baalbek, through the foundation of the *colonia* Berytus, was inspired by Marcus Agrippa’s visit to the Temple at Jerusalem when touring the Herodian kingdom in 15

this is indeed correct, it would be even more telling that Lucian deliberately distanced himself from the Roman religious project at Heliopolis and instead chose a very ‘Oriental’ and as such exotic temple as the object of his description of a place of worship that *similarly* had the potential to unify the religious life of the Roman Near East. One could think, then, of this process as a re-appropriation of the religious topography of the Roman Near East through an alternative narrative, recapturing as it were the region’s sacred landscape from the Romans. After all, as is well known, the author’s focus on the temple of Atargatis at Hierapolis concerned a sanctuary whose cultic life centred on a deity labelled (throughout the Roman empire) as *Dea Syria*, ‘the Syrian goddess’.⁶⁵ The contrast that is created in *Syr. D.* 10 between the actual object of the treatise (whose account is only now to commence) and the sanctuaries on the Phoenician coast and its hinterland (which he has just finished discussing) is

B.C. (Joseph. *AJ* 16.2.1 [14]; Philo, *Leg.* 294-297), and that the project was therefore ‘un echo plus direct aux réalisations religieuses d’Hérode’. On the similarities in building methods between Herod’s sanctuary and the remains of an earlier building phase of the temple of Jupiter Heliopolitanus, cf. A.J.M. Kropp and D. Lohmann, “‘Master, look at the size of those stones! Look at the size of those buildings!’ Analogies in construction techniques between the temples at Heliopolis (Baalbek) and Jerusalem’, *Levant* 43 (2011), 38-50. For the argument that the sanctuary at Baalbek fits in with a traditional canon of colossal construction in this part of the world, cf. E. Will, ‘Du trilithon de Baalbek et d’autres appareils colossaux’, in M.-L. Bernhard (ed.), *Mélanges offerts à Kazimierz Michalowski* (Warsaw, 1966), 725-9, a reference I owe to Michał Gawlikowski.

⁶⁵ The evidence is collected by M. Hörig, ‘Dea Syria-Atargatis’, *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* II.17.3 (Berlin and New York, 1984), 1536-81.

highly revealing in this regard: ‘these are the ancient and great sanctuaries of Syria. But as many of them as there are, none seems to me to be greater than those in the Holy City, nor any other temple holier, nor any country more sacred.’⁶⁶

On the Syrian Goddess thus ostensibly acclaims the indigenous cult conducted at Hierapolis, but the slight of the temple complex at Heliopolis in *Syr. D.* 5 might, in this context, appear not solely because of Heliopolis’ imperial connections as such. The cult of Jupiter Optimus Maximus Heliopolitanus was itself a complex merger of both Roman and Near Eastern (including Ituraean) elements, and this unique religious amalgam was strongly endorsed by the authorities that were behind the safeguarding of *colonia* Berytus. Lucian could have affronted the cult centre at Heliopolis as much

⁶⁶ Τάδε μὲν ἐστὶ τὰ ἐν τῇ Συρίῃ ἀρχαῖα καὶ μεγάλα ἱερά· τοσοῦτων δὲ ἑόντων ἐμοὶ δοκέει οὐδὲν τῶν ἐν τῇ ἱερῇ πόλει μέζον ἔμμεναι οὐδὲ νηὸς ἄλλος ἀγιώτερος οὐδὲ χώρα ἄλλη ἱερωτέρη. Cf. Lightfoot (n. 1), 207: ‘No city is holier than the Holy City, claims Lucian; and although, or perhaps because, that same claim was probably being repeated by devotees at a hundred other local sanctuaries, it is unanswerable.’ It may be noted here that the temple at Emesa of Elagabal (later solarized into Heliogabal) is, perhaps surprisingly, nowhere mentioned in the treatise. The suggestion by W. Ball, *Rome in the East. The Transformation of an Empire* (London and New York, 2000), 37-47, that the temple complex at Baalbek should be identified with the temple of the Sun at Emesa, briefly mentioned by Herodian (5.3.4), has been proven wrong by G. Young, ‘Emesa and Baalbek: Where is the Temple of Elahagabal?’, *Levant* 35 (2003), 159-62. The attempt by A. González García, ‘¿Fue Baalbek el templo de Heliogábalo?: nuevas evidencias’, *El Futuro del Pasado* 4 (2013), 315-38, to reinstate Ball’s suggestion is futile.

for its being a Roman configuration of an alleged ‘native’ form of worship as for its actual Romanness. In other words, he might simultaneously be seen as making a judgement about what should be considered as genuinely Oriental (i.e. the cult of Atargatis at Manbog-Hierapolis) – the role of Greek culture in its expression notwithstanding – and what in his view only purported to be so but ought to count as an artificial construct of a so-called Oriental cult (i.e. the cult of IOMH at Baalbek-Heliopolis).

Indigenous traditions and Hellenism

References in Strabo (*Geogr.* 16.1.27) and Pliny (*HN* 5.19.81) leave no doubt that it was well known in Antiquity that the chief deity worshipped at Hierapolis was called Atargatis. Lucian, however, refers to the goddess at the outset (in *Syr. D.* 1) as the ‘Assyrian Hera’ and links her with a variety of divine names when describing the cult image in *Syr. D.* 32 (Hera, Athena, Aphrodite, Selene, Rhea, Artemis, Nemesis, the Fates, and Ourania), but he does not actually use her own indigenous name. *Dea Syria*, the Latin label by which Atargatis was worshipped throughout the Roman empire, is not applied either in the treatise, apart from its Greek translation in the title of course. The absence of the divine name Atargatis can be explained in multiple ways. For J. Elsner, who effectively argued that the text of *On the Syrian Goddess* was expressing ‘self’ in the language of ‘the other’, the goddess’ ‘native name is carefully suppressed’.⁶⁷ For C. Pisano, the case of the divine nomenclature is what

⁶⁷ Cf. Elsner (n. 2), 137. Cf. *ibid.*, 128: ‘an act of cultural translation in which the confrontations of its three worlds - Syria (its religious core), Greece (its linguistic discourse) and Rome (its political frame) combine in creative conflict to produce cultural identity’.

exemplifies most clearly her approach which sees the treatise as a satiric counter-history not only of Herodotean interpretation but also of Platonic eponymy.⁶⁸ Lucian's description of the cult statue can also be seen as matching the uncertainty about a deity's actual identity that its worshippers could give expression to in dedications.⁶⁹

⁶⁸ C. Pisano, 'Satira e contro-storia nel *De Syria Dea* di Luciano', *Mythos* n.s. 5 (2011), 117-30, at 122: 'Laddove Platone pensa che la molteplicità eponimica non comprometta l'identità del personaggio nominato, esprimendone tutt'al più la complessità del carattere, Luciano dimostra come la pluralità delle possibili *interpretationes* finisca per privare le divinità 'indigene' della loro identità.'

⁶⁹ Cf. K. Ehling, D. Pohl and M.H. Sayar, *Kulturbegegnung in einem Brückenland. Gottheiten und Kulte als Indikatoren von Akkulturationsprozessen im Ebenen Kilikien, Asia Minor Studien 53* (Bonn, 2004), 225, no.5, for a bilingual dedication of A.D. 151 from the other Hierapolis (Castabala in Cilicia) of which the Greek part, in verse, conveys a feeling of doubt on behalf of the dedicant, a physician who asks the goddess to give the governor a safe journey home, as to the identity of the local goddess. The context points to Perasia, to be linked with the Hittite goddess Kubaba, but here she is called upon whether she is worshipped as Selene, Artemis, Hecate who bears the torch at the meeting of three roads, Cypris (i.e. Aphrodite), or Deo the mother of the maiden Persephone (i.e. Demeter): [Εἴτε Σ]εληναίην εἴτ' Ἄρτεμι[ν εἴτε σ]έ, δαῖμον, | πυρφόρον [ἐν τ]ριόδοις ἦν σεβόμεσθ' Ἐκ[άτην], | εἴτε Κύπριν Θήβης λα[ός] θυέεσσι γεραίρει, | ἢ Δηῶ Κούρης μητέρα Φερσεφόνης, | κλύθι On the cult of Perasia, who was especially popular in the Hellenistic period, cf. *ibid.*, 107-19, and now also N. Andrade, 'Local authority and civic Hellenism: Tarcondimotus, Hierapolis-Castabala and the cult of Perasia',

But the peculiarity of a portrayal of the temple and cult of a goddess whose real name remains concealed throughout also fits well with the point made above, that an indigenous cult chosen by a Second Sophistic author for a literary exercise seemingly (and perhaps more than seemingly) in praise of native religious traditions, would quite naturally have found expression in the Roman period through the channel of Hellenism.⁷⁰

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Anatolian Studies 61 (2011), 123-32. On the Lucian passage, cf. T. Kaizer, 'Creating local religious identities in the Roman Near East', in M.R. Salzman and W. Adler (edd.), *The Cambridge History of Religions in the Ancient World*, vol.2: *From the Hellenistic Era to Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, 2013), 54-86, at 59: 'this explicit syncretism (if the word may be used) - the invocation of other divine names in order to make a deity understandable - is a way to approach the uniquely local, indigenous deities of the Near East *not only* on the part of modern scholars, but also in Antiquity'. Cf. id., 'Identifying the divine in the Roman Near East', in L. Bricault and C. Bonnet (edd.), *Pantheé. Religious Transformations in the Graeco-Roman Empire*, *RGRW* 177 (Leiden and Boston, 2013), 113-28.

⁷⁰ A Hellenism that simultaneously served to exhibit the cult's indigenous disposition: the very fact that Atargatis lacks one single and uncontroversial classical counterpart, and is furthermore characterized as the *Assyrian* Hera (*Syr. D.* 1), shows the limits of integration into the prevailing Graeco-Roman religious current to which genuinely Oriental deities were subject.