



Plaque depicting Cybele in chariot, 3rd c. CE



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Aphrodite and Adonis



Atys performing a dance of the Cybele cult. Roman, marble.

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"If you wish to inspect the orgies of the Corybantes," writes Clement, "then know that, having killed their third brother, they covered the head of the dead body with a purple cloth, crowned it, and carrying it on the point of a spear, buried it under the roots of Olympus. These mysteries are, in short, murders and funerals. [This ante-Nicene Father in his efforts to defame the pagan rites apparently ignores the fact that, like the Cabirian martyr, Jesus Christ was foully betrayed, tortured, and finally murdered.] And the priests of these rites, who are called kings of the sacred rites by those whose business it is to name them, give additional strangeness to the tragic occurrence, by forbidding parsley with the roots from being placed on the table, for they think that parsley grew from the Corybantic blood that flowed forth; just as the women, in celebrating the Thesmophoria, abstain from eating the seeds of the pomegranate, which have fallen on the ground, from the idea that pomegranates sprang from the drops of the blood of Dionysus. Those Corybantes also they call Cabiric; and the ceremony itself they announce as the Cabiric mystery."

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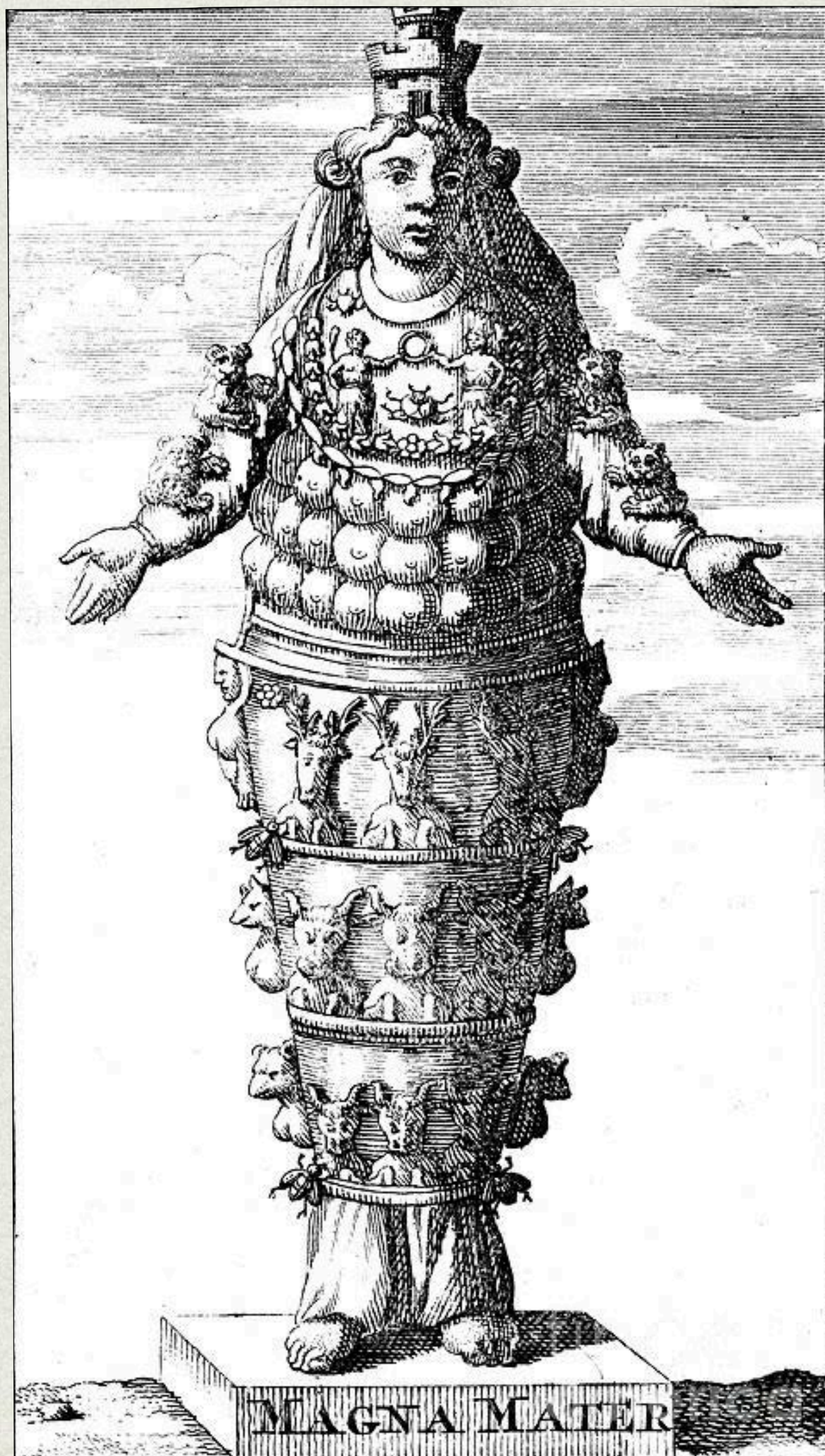
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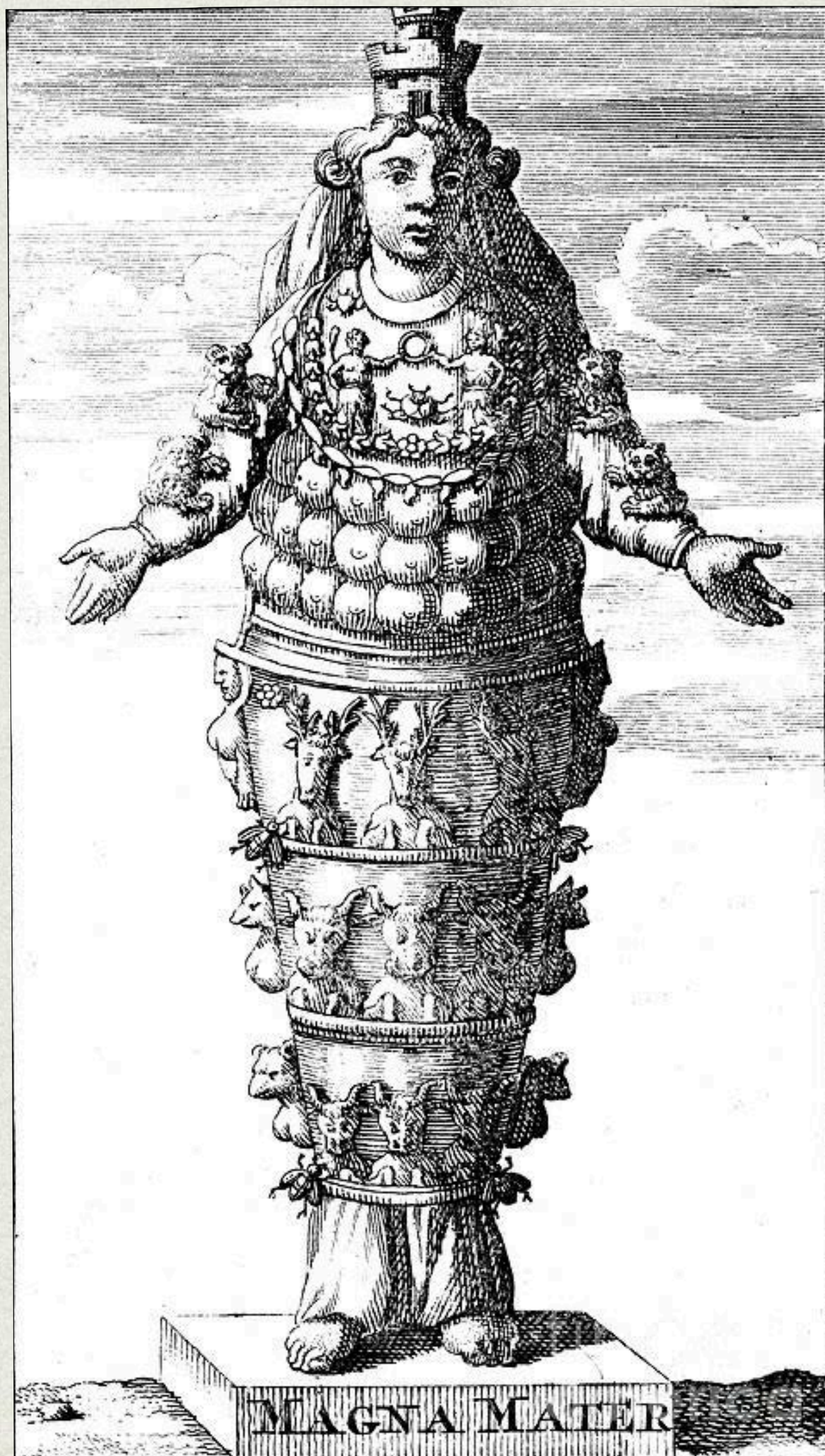


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The mother of the gods then is the vivific goddess, and on this account is called mother: but Attis is the Demiurgus of natures—conversant with generation and corruption; and hence his is said to be found by the river *Gallus*;

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—Sallustius, *On the Gods and the World*, translated by Thomas Taylor, p.3



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Marble relief depicting a *gallus*, or priest of the goddess Cybele/Magna Mater, along with several objects associated with the cult.



Characteristic musical instruments of Cybele- cymbals tympanum, and double Phrygian flute



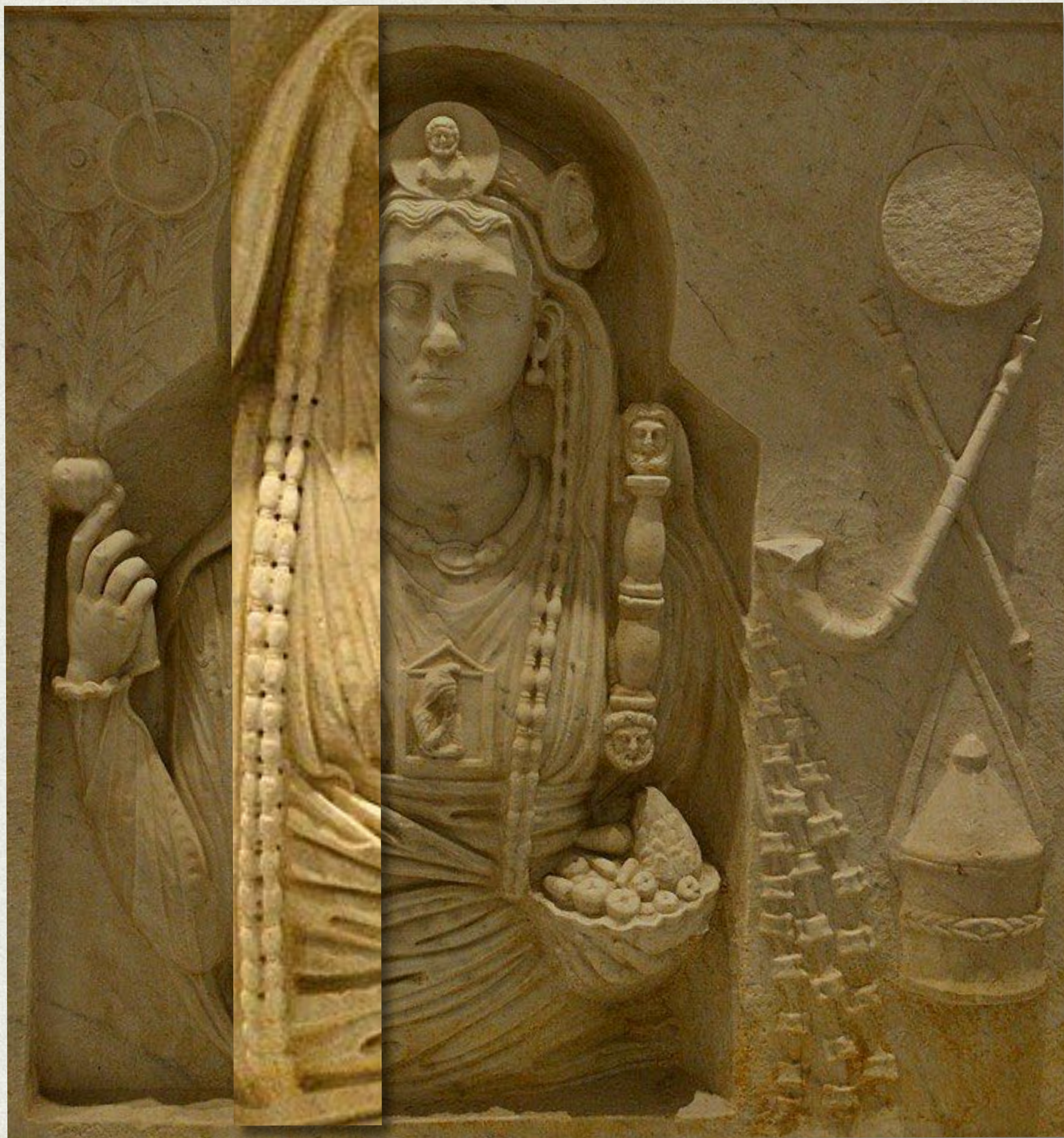
Atys performing a dance of the
Cybele cult. Roman, marble.



Headdress with plaques showing Atys and Jupiter-Zeus



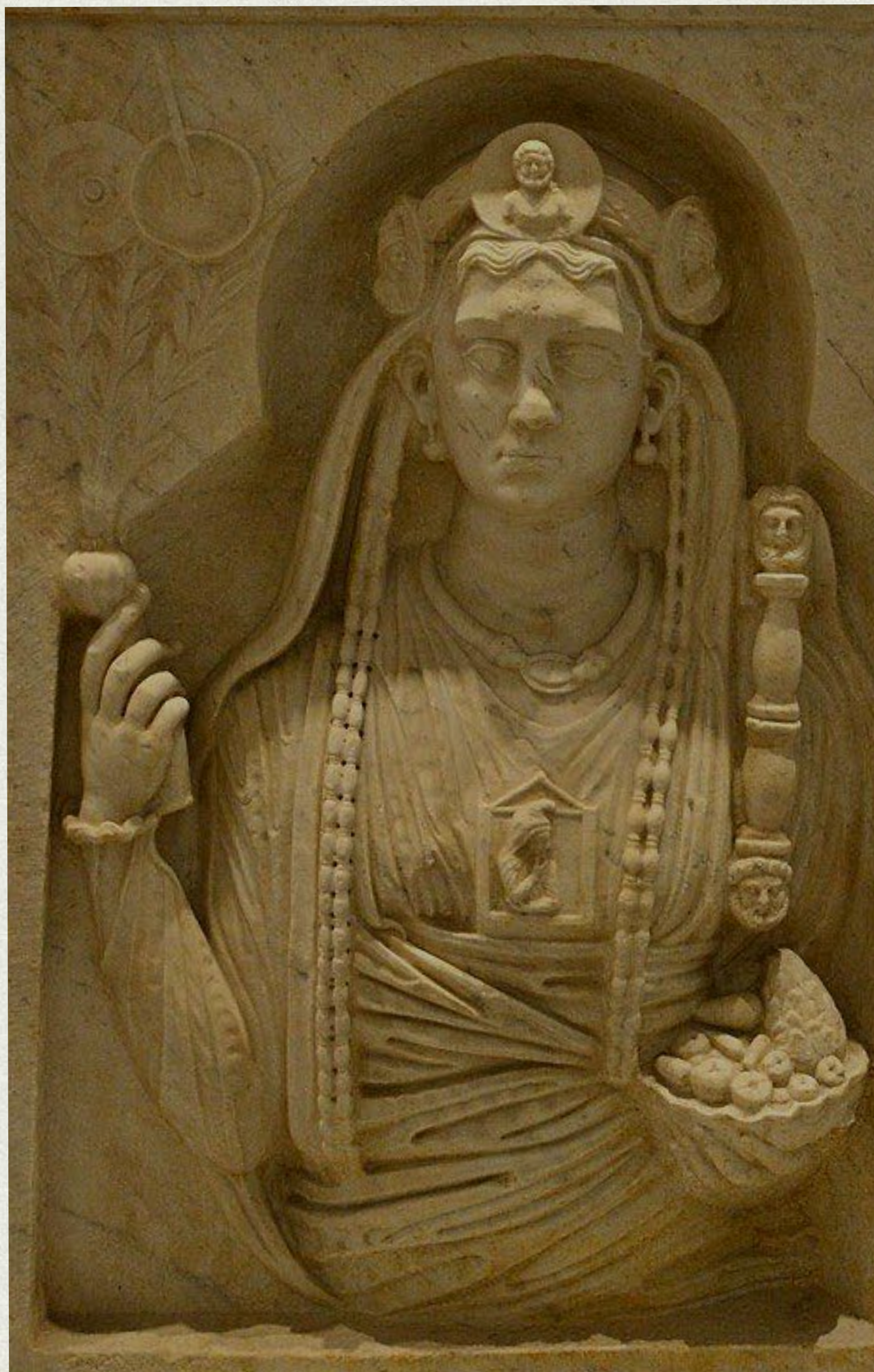
Swathed dress (female rather than male clothing)



Long ribbons bound into the priest's curling hair



Breast plaque showing Attis



Whip of knuckle bones for self-flagellation



Box holding cult objects



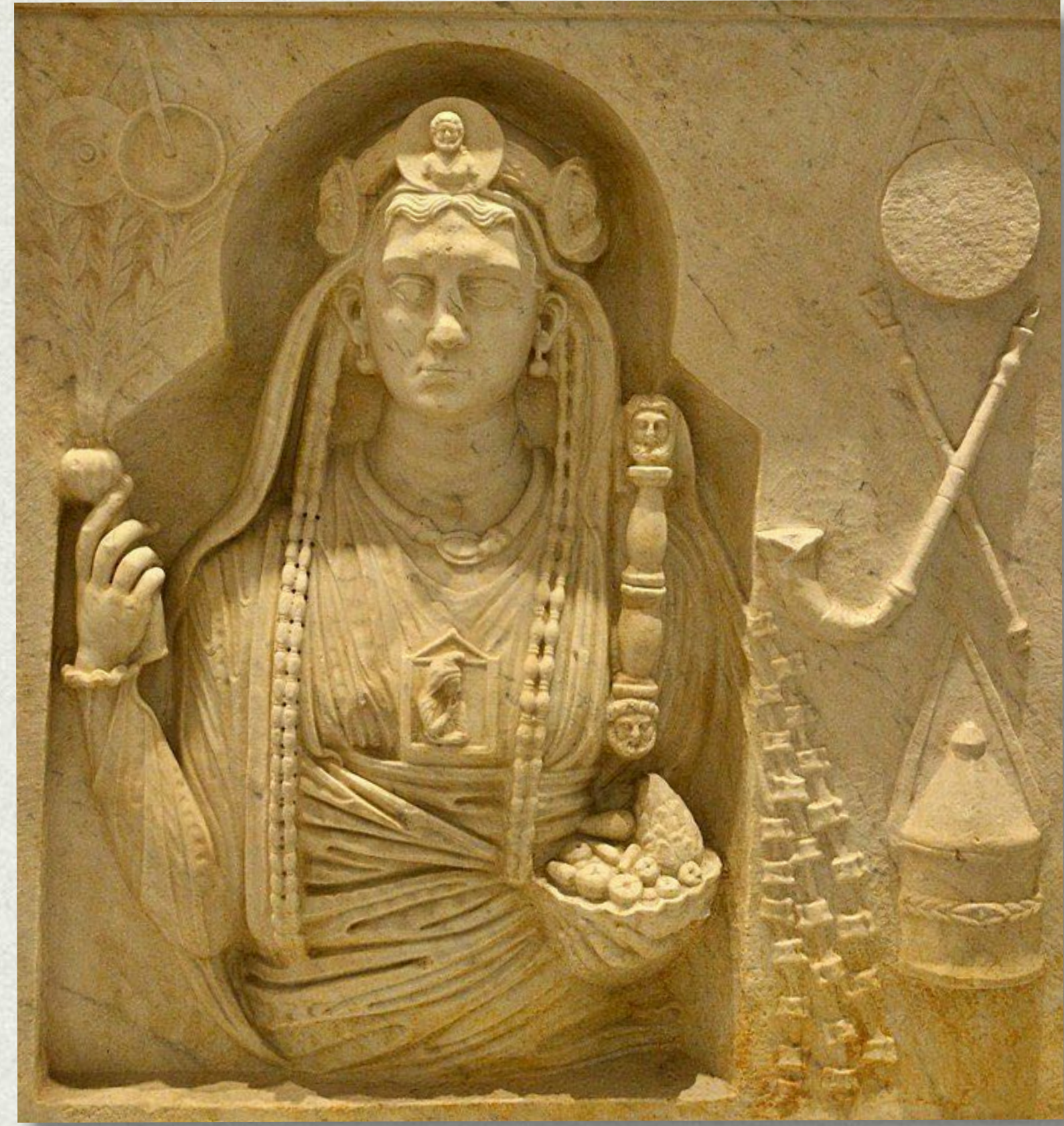
Bowl of fruit (containing almonds)



1. Characteristic musical instruments of Cybele—cymbals, tympanum, and double Phrygian flute
2. Headdress with plaques showing Attis and Jupiter/J Zeus
3. Long ribbons bound into priest's curling hair
4. Sprinkler
5. Breast plaque showing Attis
6. Whip of knuckle bones for self-flagellation
7. Box holding cult objects
8. Bowl of fruit (containing almonds)
9. Swathed dress (female rather than male clothing)



—from the second volume of Beard, North, and Price,
Religions of Rome



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Site of the Temple of Cybele in ancient Dionysopolis



Temple of Cybele at Ephesus



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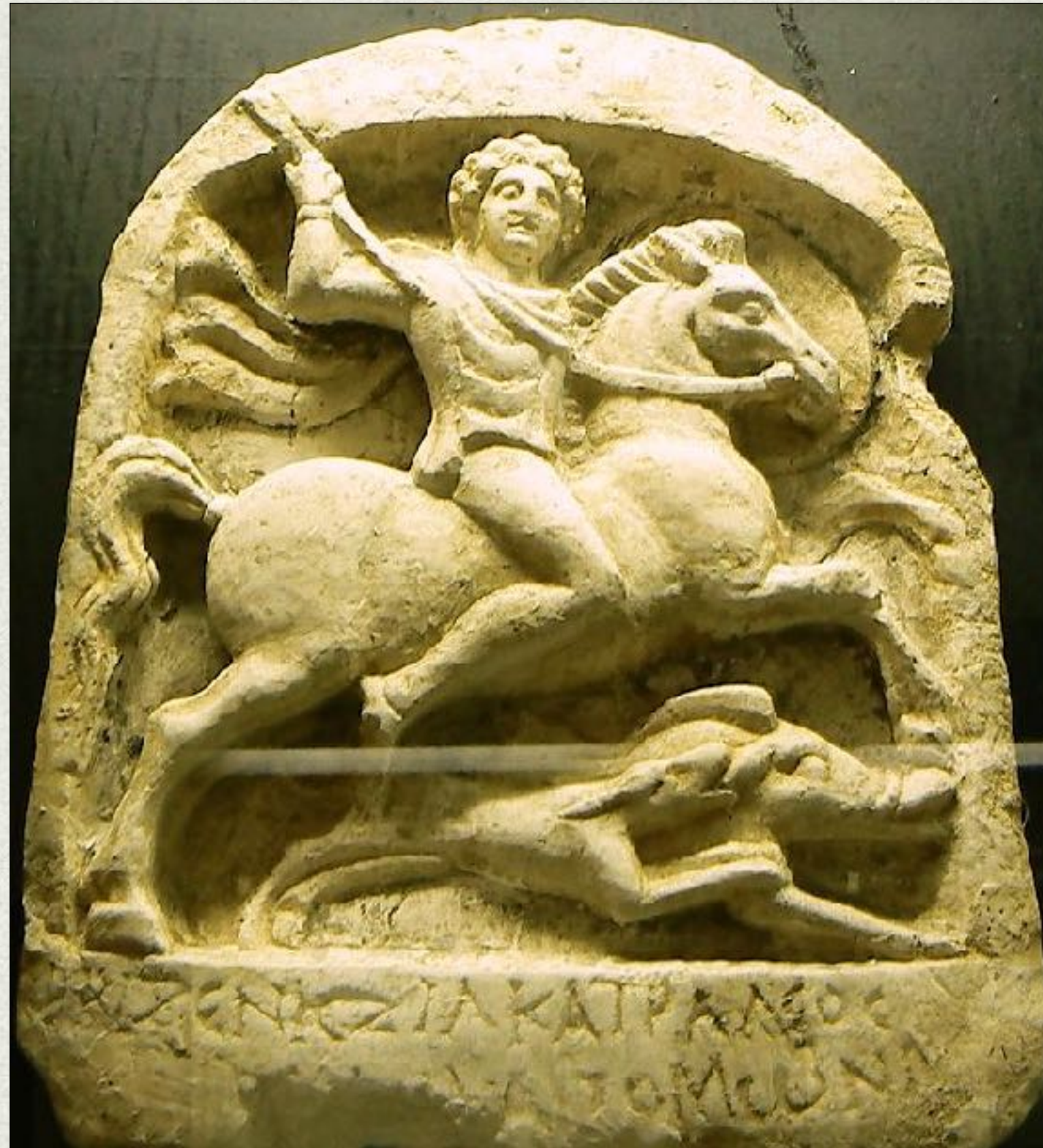
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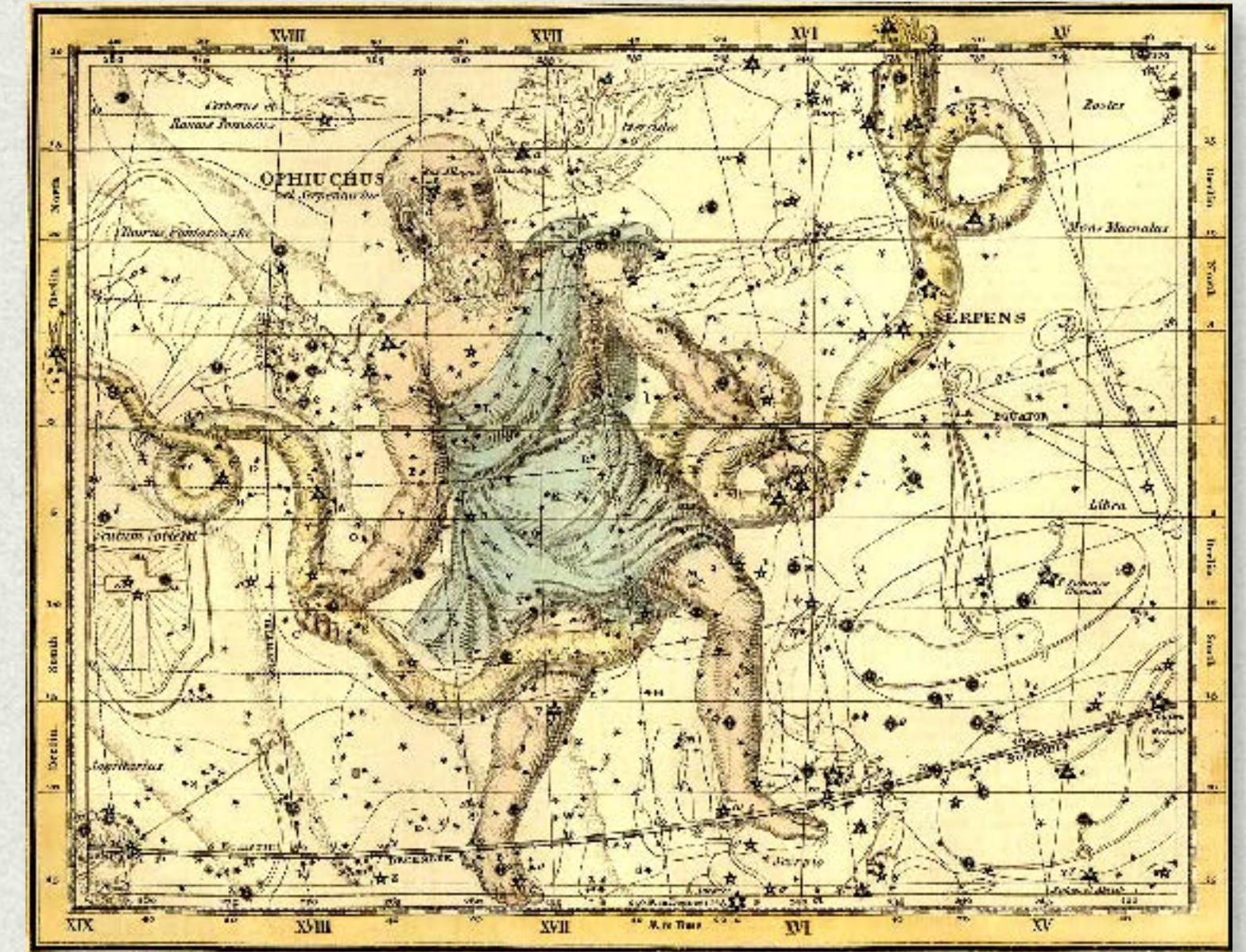
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A typical 'Thracian Horseman' image of Sabazios, here hunting a boar

He [Bacchus/Sabazius] was honored in Greece with public festivals, and in simple or complicated Mysteries, varying in ceremonial in various places, as was natural, because his worship had come thither from different countries and at different periods. The people who celebrated the complicated Mysteries were ignorant of the meaning of many words which they used, and of many emblems which they revered. In the Sabazian Feasts, for example, the words EVOI, SABOT, were used, which are in nowise Greek; and a serpent of gold was thrown into the bosom of the Initiate, in allusion to the fable that Jupiter had, in the form of a serpent, been with Proserpina, and begotten Bakchos, the bull; whence the enigmatical saying, repeated to the Initiates, that a bull engendered a dragon or serpent, and the serpent in turn engendered the bull, who became Bakchos: the meaning of which was, that the bull (Taurus, which then opened the Vernal Equinox, and the Sun in which Sign, figuratively represented by the Sign itself, was Bakchos, Dionusos, Sabazeus, Osiris, etc.), and the Serpent, another constellation, occupied such relative positions



Orphiucus

in the Heavens, that when one rose the other set, and *vice versa*.

The serpent was a familiar symbol in the Mysteries of Bakchos. The Initiates grasped them with their hands, as *Orphiucus* does on the celestial globe, and the Orptheo-telestes, or purifier of candidates did the same, crying, as Demosthenes taunted Æschines with doing in public at the head of the women whom his mother was to imitate, EVOI, SABOI, HYES ATTÊ, ATTÊ, HYES! –Morals and Dogma:442-3

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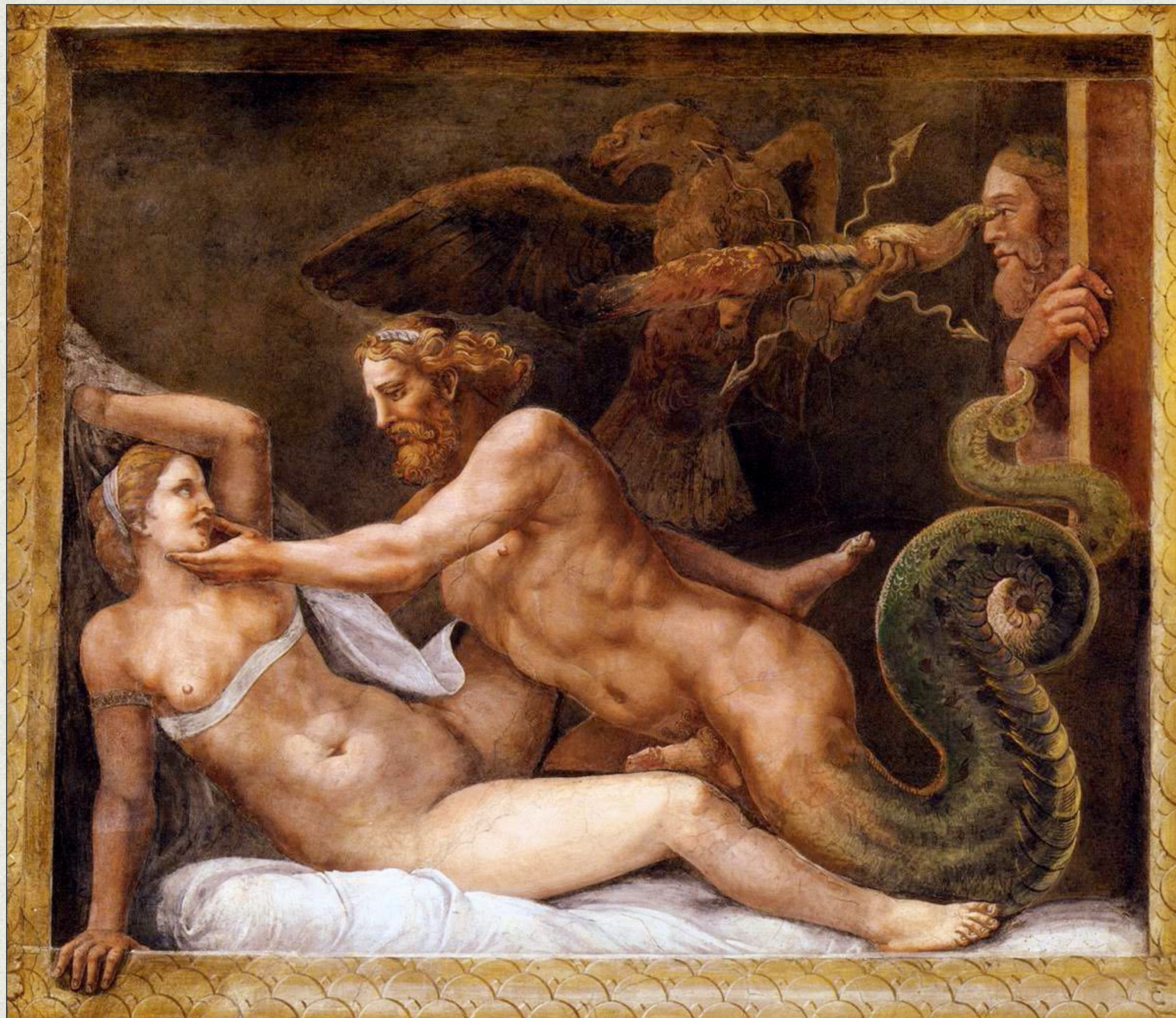
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One of the scenes in the Mysteries of Attis-Sabazius, and perhaps of those of Eleusis also, seems to have shown the seduction by Zeus in serpent-form of his virgin daughter Persephone and the birth therefrom of the Saviour Dionysos, who was but his father re-born. This story of the fecundation of the earth-goddess by a higher power in serpent shape seems to have been present in all the religions of Western Asia, and was therefore extremely likely to be caught hold of by an early form of Gnosticism. -Philosophumena by Hippolytes:161

Seduction of Persephone, Giulio Romano c. 1526-1534

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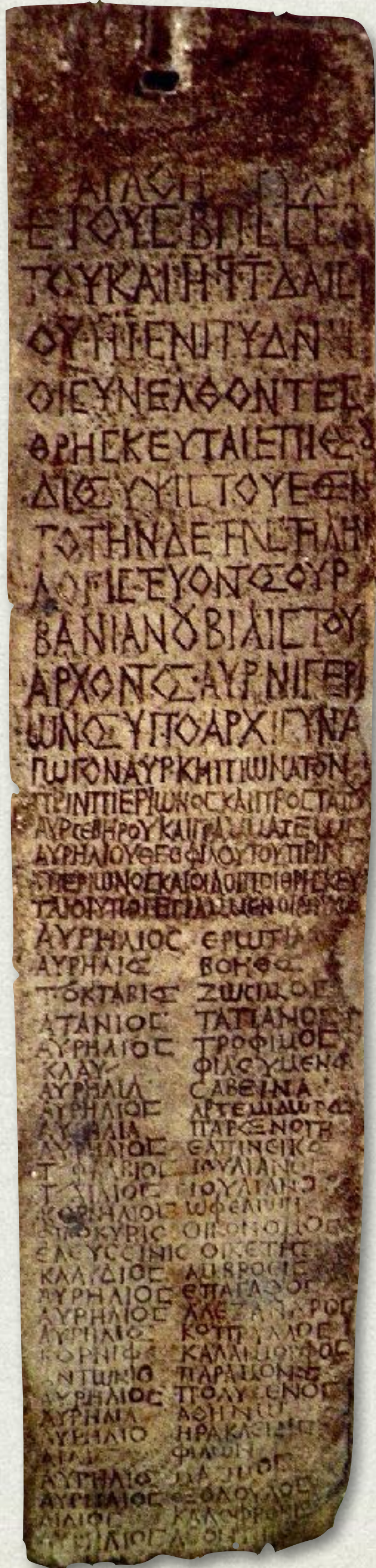
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Stele with name of the worshippers of Zeus Hypsistos



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ZEUS SABAZIOS WITH THUNDERBOLT.
DEDICATED BY EUTYCHOS AFTER A DREAM.
FROM CONSTANTINOPLE. *Given by W. H. Buckler, Esq. 1920.*









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“Sanctuary of the Great Gods” on Samothrace

The little island of Samothrace was long the depositary of certain august Mysteries, and many went thither from all parts of Greece to be initiated. It was said to have been settled by the ancient Pelasgi, early Asiatic colonists in Greece. The Gods adored in the Mysteries of this island were termed CABIRI, an oriental word, from Cabar, great. Varro calls the Gods of Samothrace, “Potent Gods”. In Arabic, Venus is called *Cabar*. Varro says

that the Great Deities whose Mysteries were practised there, were Heaven and Earth. These were but symbols of the Active and Passive Powers or Principles of universal generation. The two Twins, Castor and Pollux, or the Dioscuri, were also called the Gods of Samothrace. The *Scholiast of Apollonius*, citing *Mnaseas*, gives the names of Ceres, Proserpine, Pluto, and Mercury, as the four Cabiric Divinities worshipped at

Samothrace, as *Axieros*, *Axiocersa*, *Axiocersus*, and *Casmillus*. Mercury was, there, as everywhere, the minister and messenger of the Gods; and the young servitors of the altars and the children employed in the Temples were called Mercuries or Casmilli, as they were in Tuscany, by the Etrusci and Pelasgi, who worshipped the Great Gods. –*Morals and Dogma*:449-50

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Map of Greece, 1791,
 drawn by William Faden

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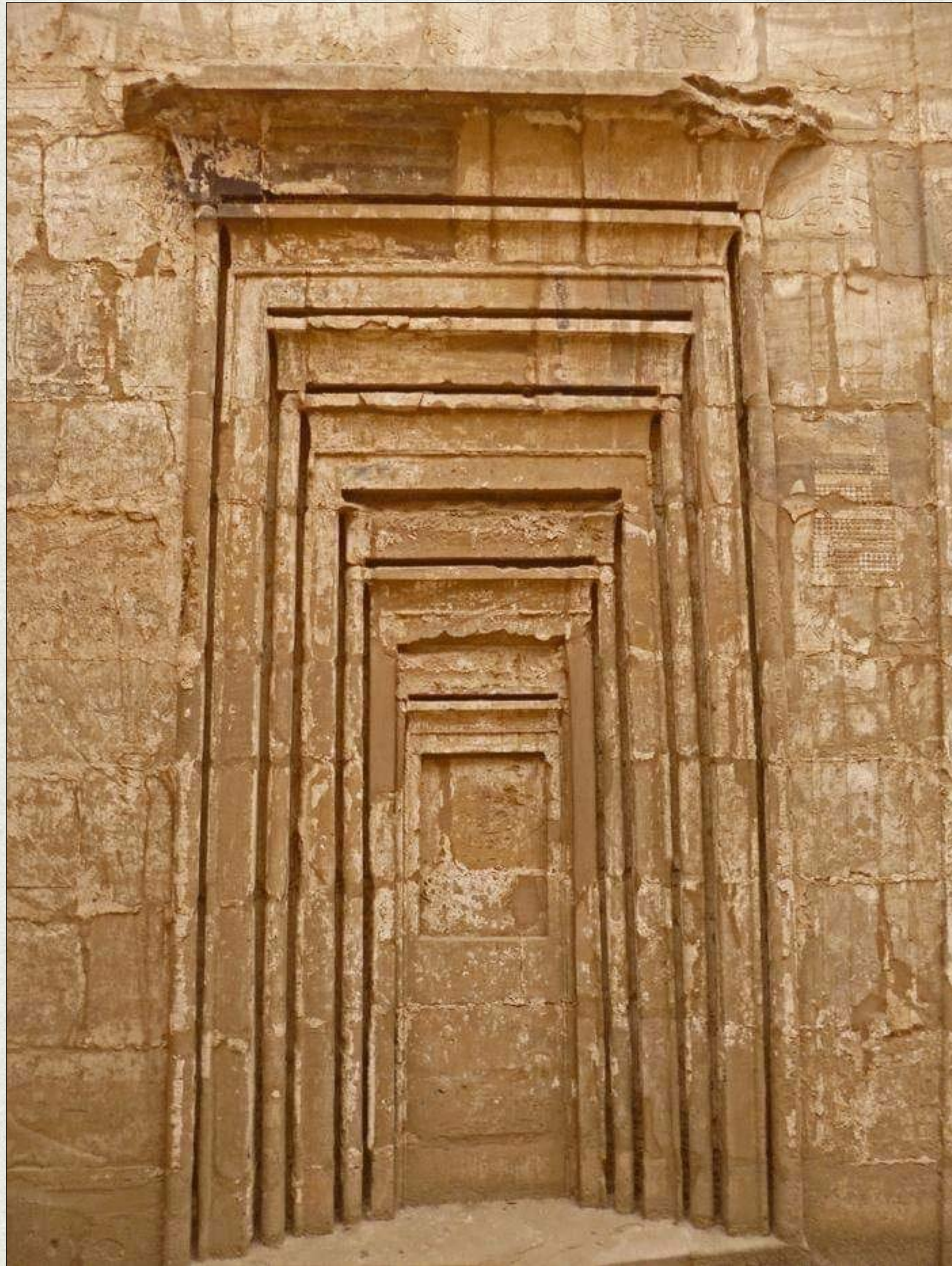
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The seven, then, who are grouped about the North Pole in the Egyptian Ritual have to be conceived as the seven timekeepers of seven constellations that made their revolution once a year, as the *Kabiri*. *Hohgates*, *Rishis*, companions, giants, or others, in the ark of the sphere. These seven had various types in heaven and on earth. -The Natural Genesis, v.2, p.221

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The Seven Doorways in the Temple of Osiris at Karnak in Luxor



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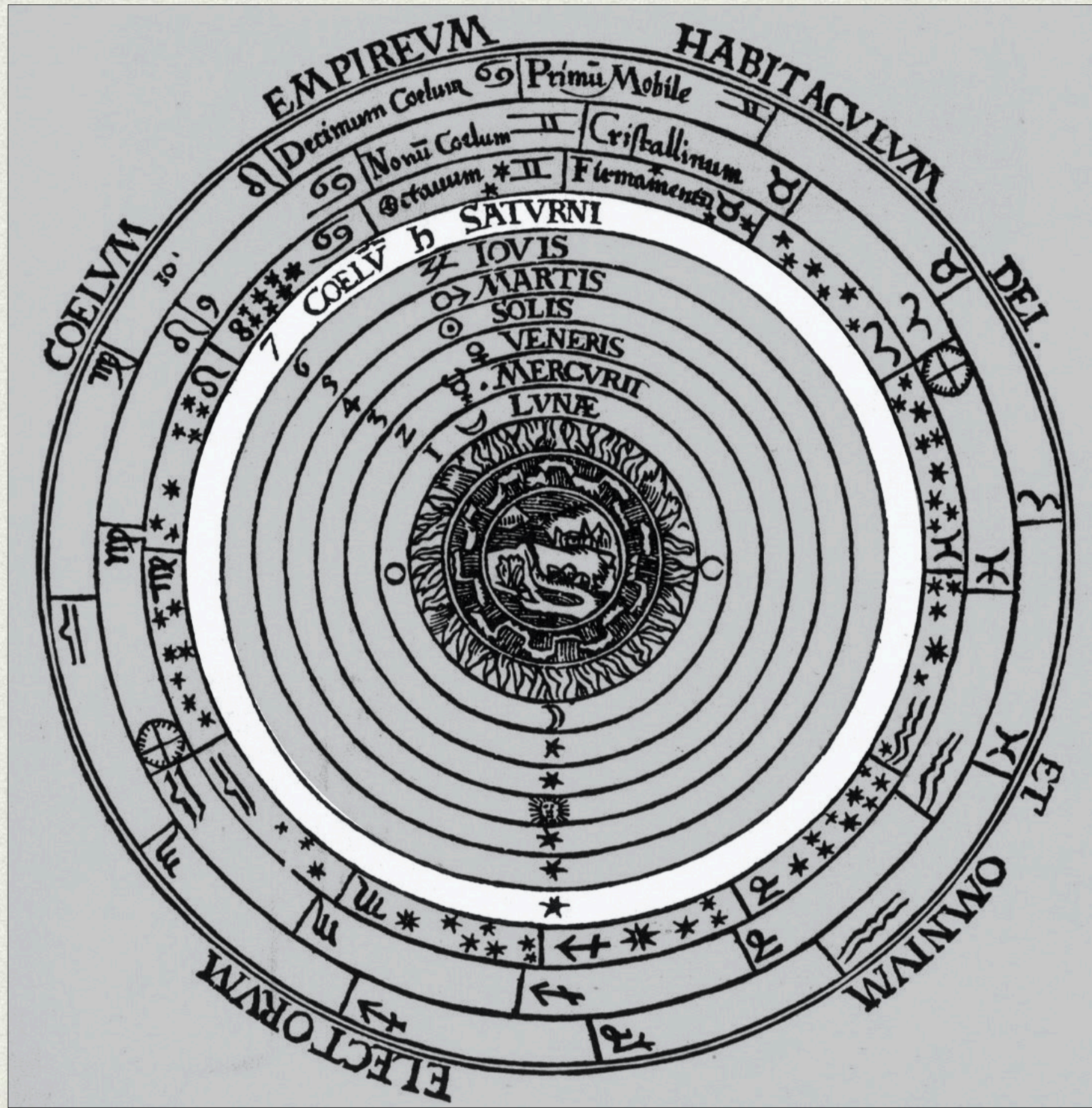
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BY

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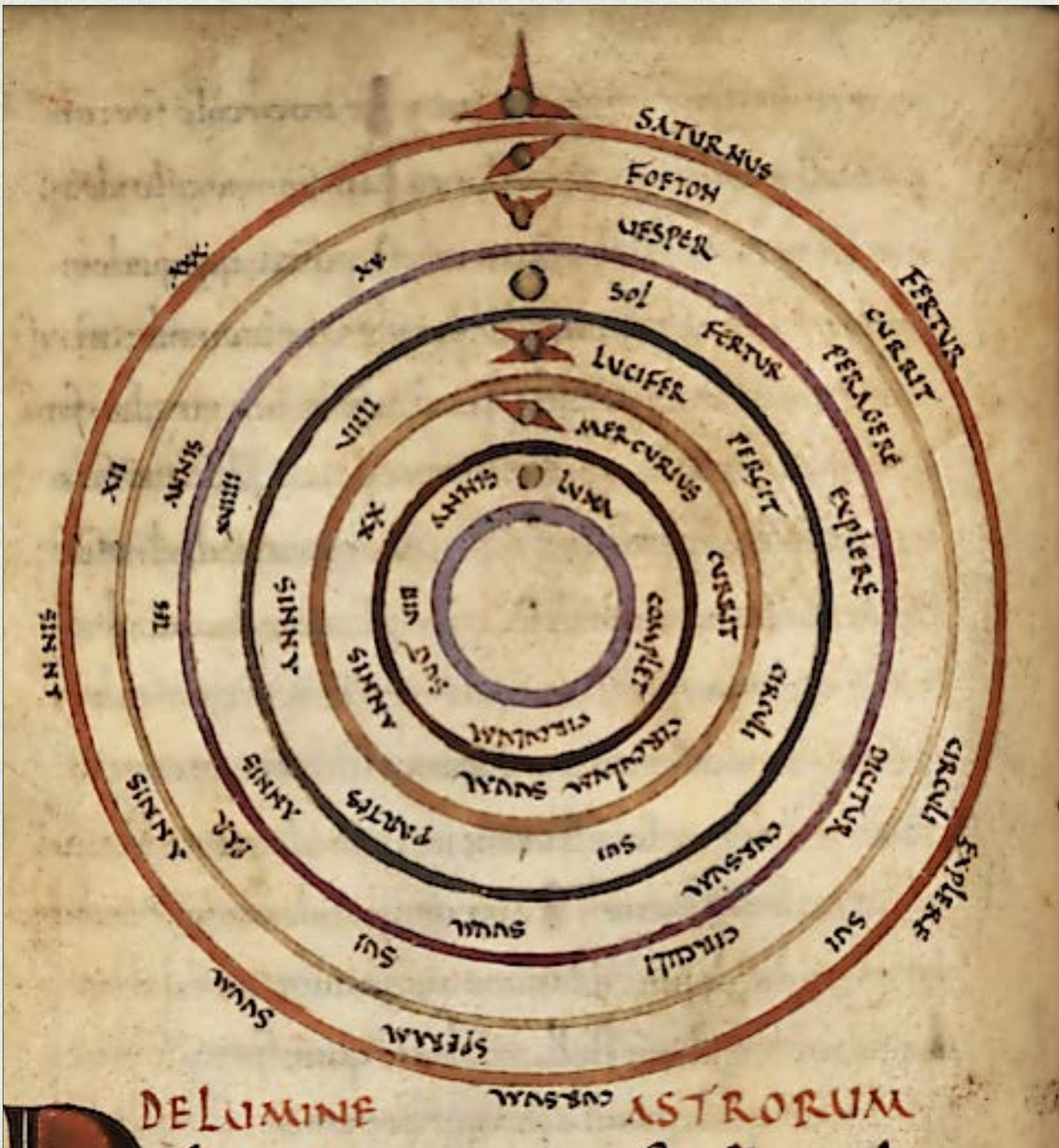
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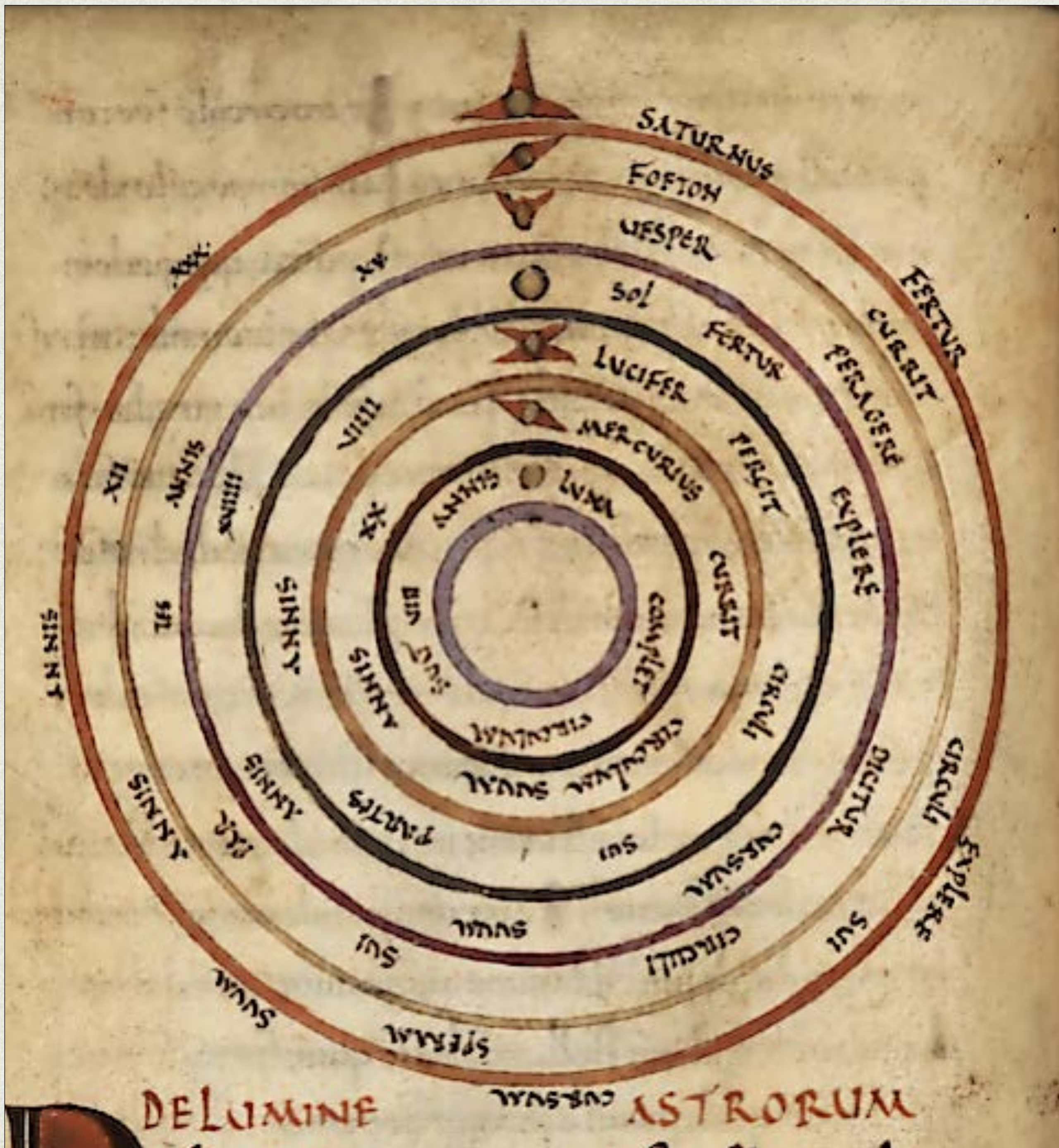
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A curious aspect of the *dying-god* myth is that of the Hanged Man. The most important example of this peculiar conception is found in the Odinic rituals where Odin hangs himself for nine nights from the branches of the World Tree and upon the same occasion also pierces his own side with the sacred spear. As the result of this great sacrifice, Odin, while suspended over the depths of Nifl-heim, discovered by meditation the runes or alphabets by which later the records of his people were preserved. Because of this remarkable experience, Odin is sometimes shown seated on a gallows tree and he became the patron deity of all who died by the noose. Esoterically, the Hanged Man is the human spirit which is suspended from heaven by a single thread. Wisdom, not death, is the reward for this voluntary sacrifice during which the human soul, suspended above the world of illusion, and meditating upon its unreality, is rewarded by the achievement of self-realization.

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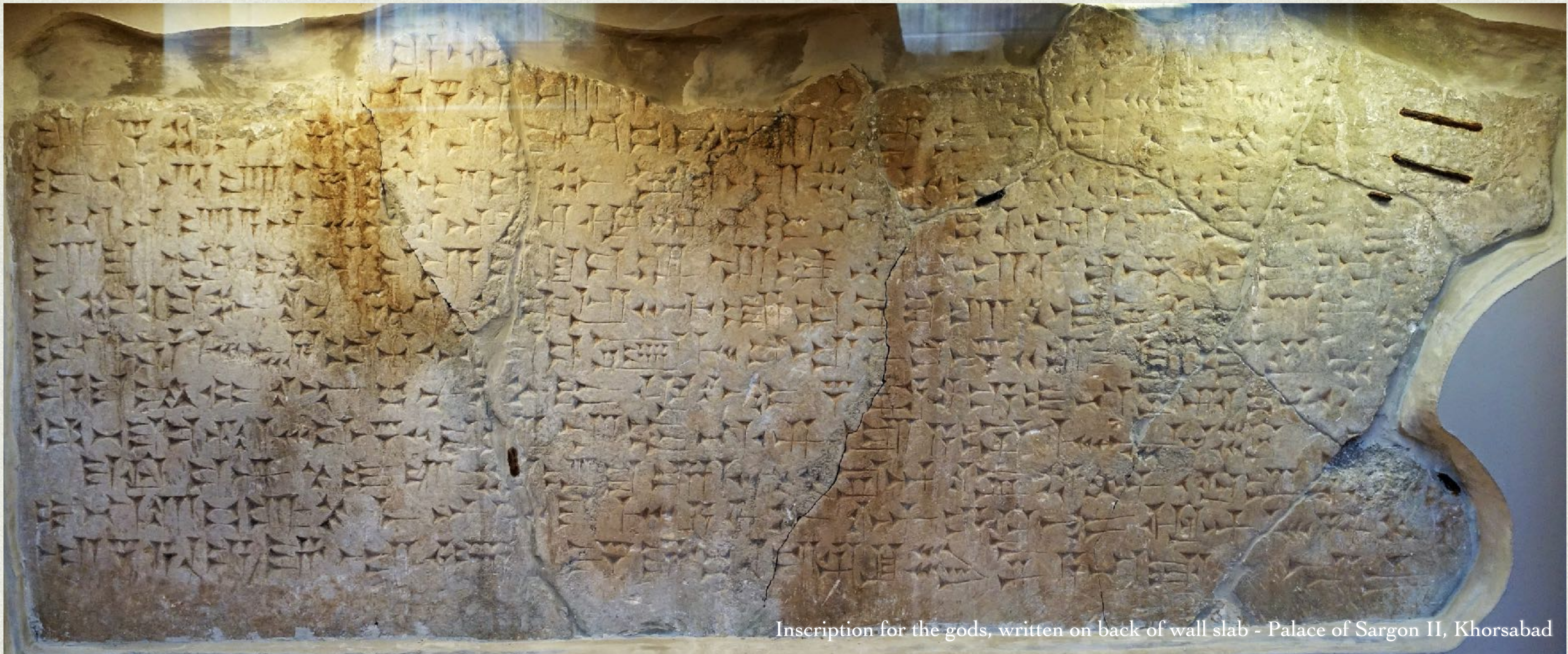
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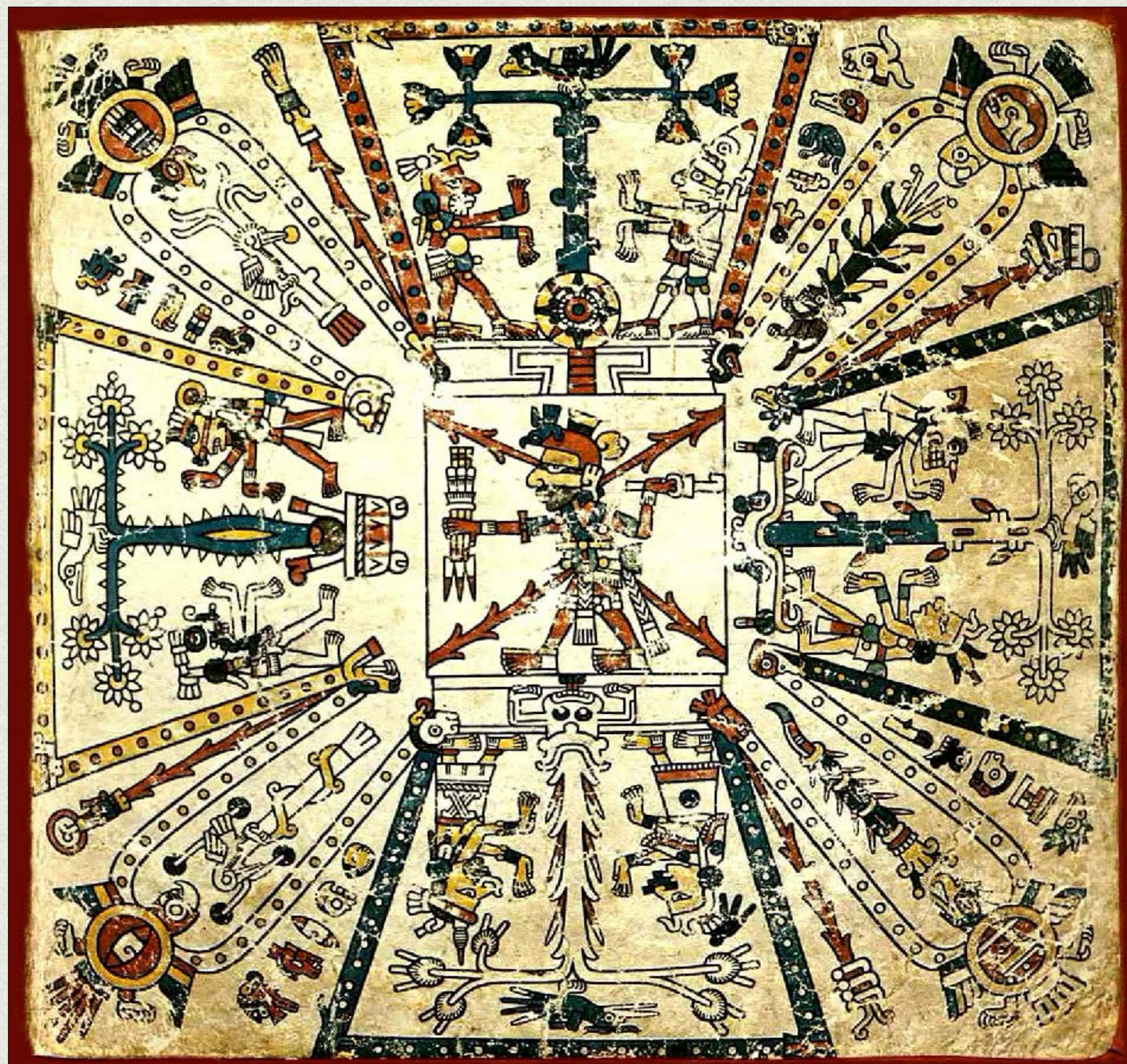


Inscription for the gods, written on back of wall slab - Palace of Sargon II, Khorsabad

...in Egyptian Khi or Khu is a spirit, a Ruler. Moreover, the Khi or Khiu are the four supports of the Heaven at the four corners, who are therefore, identical with the four Xiu of the

Mayas. But the Khu is an earlier Keb (Kabiri) as a lord of the Angle or Corner, and the Four Keb are the four representative Genii of the four quarters and of the sarcophagus of the

Great Bear, the coffin of Osiris. These are the Four Assyrian *Kubur* which were stationed facing the "Four Celestial Regions," as mentioned in the inscription of Khorsabad.



According to the Quiché Myth the four genii were in existence before the creation of the sun. The Circle of the Seven Stars was thus succeeded by the chart of the four quarters, four gods, or four constellations. Following this earlier world came the creation of four perfect men, the three *Balams* and *Mahucutan*. A god was assigned to each of the four. *Tohil*, the god of fire, *Avilix* and *Hacavitz*, together with the fourth deity, given to *Iqi-Balam*. It was on Mount *Hacavitz*,

named after the divinity, that the sun was first seen to rise, whereupon the four men were turned into four corner stones. The transformation and the appointment of the four gods, or men, changed into stones by the sun, for watch and worship, simply denote the making of the four cardinal points of the solstices and equinoxes by means of the four great stars or constellations that first served as indicators in the earliest zodiac of four signs. -The Natural Genesis, v.1, p.408

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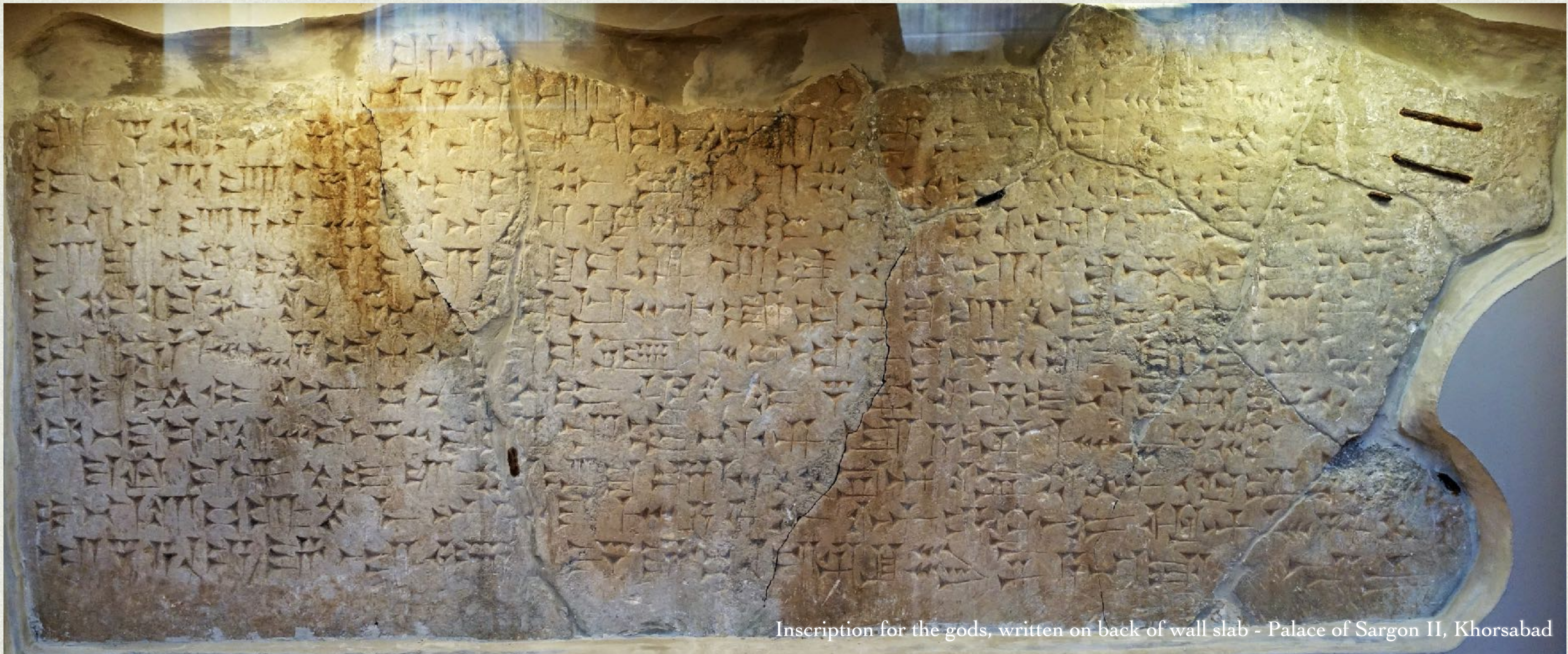
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IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. I

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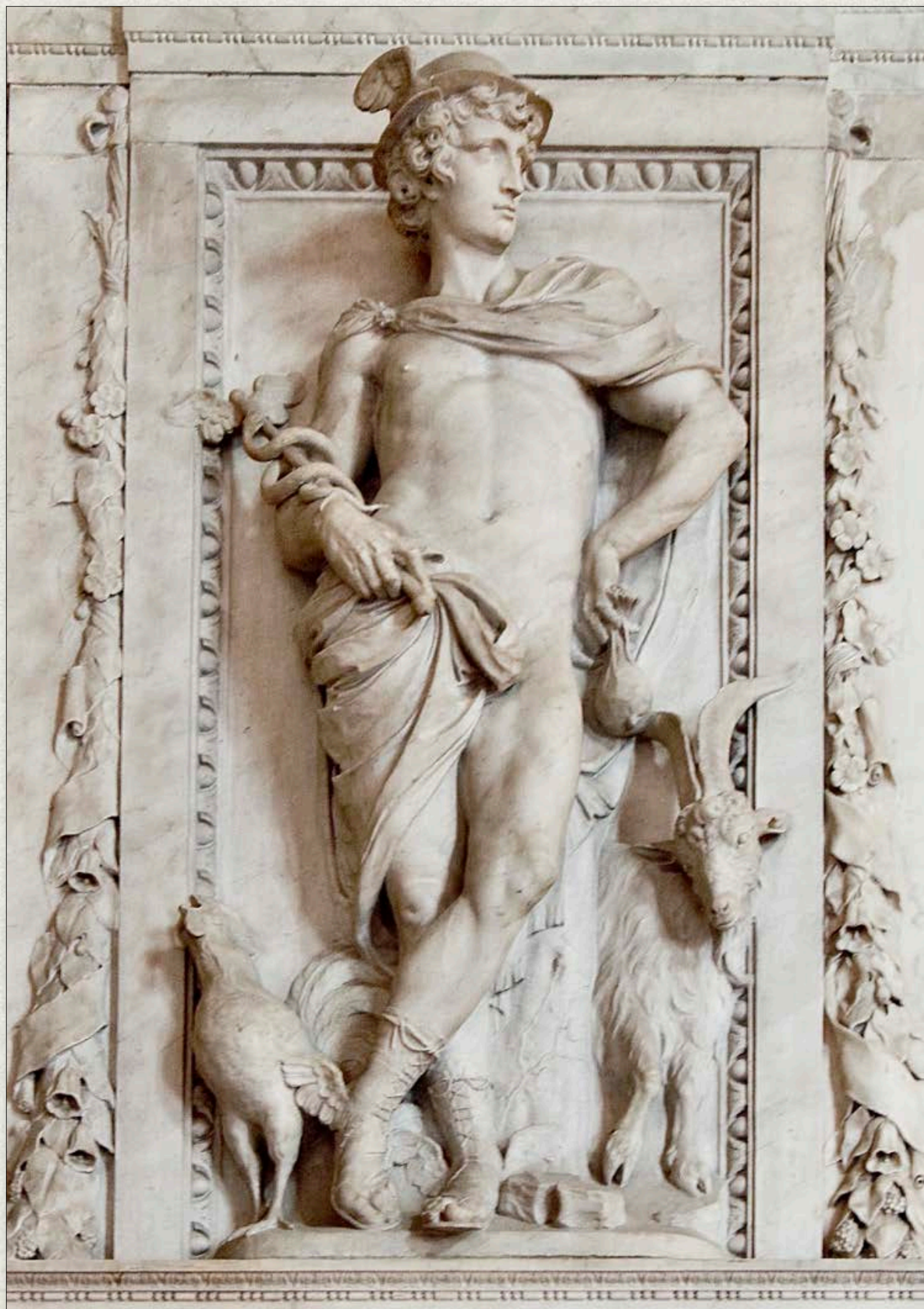
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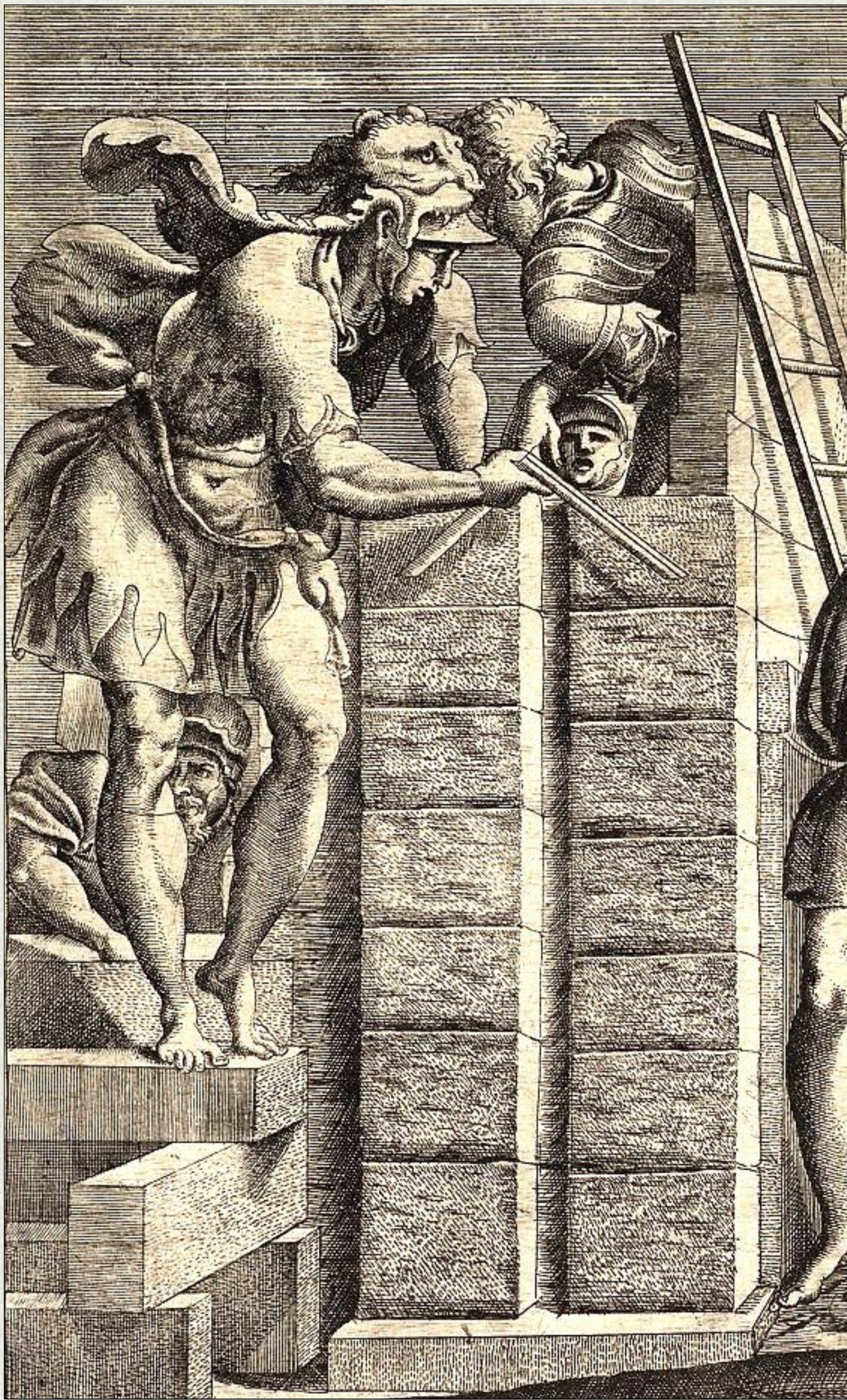
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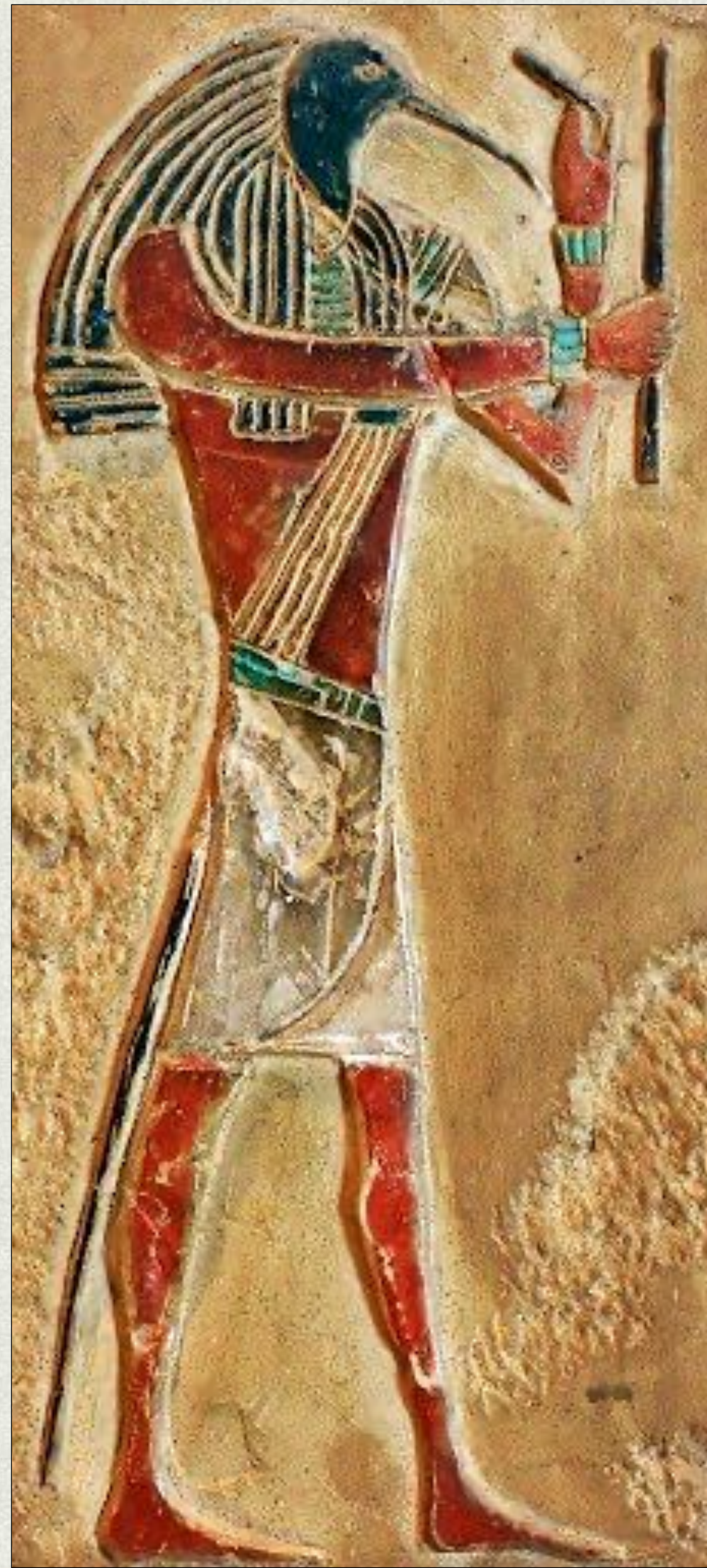
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Thoth



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Cadmus fighting the dragon. Black-figured amphora from Euboea

The name of the Cabiri was derived originally from Phoenicia; the word signifies "powerful." There were four gods *Aschieros*, *Achiochersus*, *Achiochersa*, and *Cashmala*, answering to the Ceres, Pluto, Proserpina, and Camillus of the Greeks. The last was slain by his three brothers, who carried away with them the reproductive organs; and this allegorical murder was

celebrated in the secret rites. Camillus is the same as Osiris, Adonis, and others, all subject to the same mutilation, all symbolising the sun's loss of generative power during winter. The chief places for the celebration of these mysteries were the islands of Samothrace and Lemnos. The priests were called *Corybantes*. There is much perplexity connected with this subject; since, besides what is mentioned above, the mysteries are also said to have been instituted in honour of Atys, the son of Cybele. -*Secret Societies of All Ages*, v.1, p.58-9

The Cabiric priests in Samothrace were four. The scholiast [who has made a study of] Apollonius Rhodius, has named them *Axieros*, *Axiocersos*, *Axiocersa* and *Casmilus*. The scholiast also terms them Ceres, Proserpine, Hades, and Mercury; doubtless he meant to mark their correspondence with these deities at Eleusis. [But] the Pelasgian founders of the mysteries in Samothrace had no names for the gods, according to Herodotus, who expressed himself as a polytheist; and where no distinction of names obtained, the unity of the Deity was perhaps acknowledged. These Samothracian cabirs therefore, (as the word cabir implies) were rather powers or attributes than deities. -*Essay on the Mysteries of Eleusis* by M. Ouvaroff:159-60

A
DISSERTATION
ON
THE MYSTERIES
OF
THE CABIRI;
OR THE
GREAT GODS OF PHENICIA, SAMOTHRACE, EGYPT,
TROAS, GREECE, ITALY, AND CRETE;

BEING

An Attempt to deduce the several Orgies of
ISIS, CERES, MITHRAS, BACCHUS, RHEA, ADONIS,
AND HECATE,

FROM AN

Union of the Rites commemorative of the DELUGE with the
Adoration of the Host of HEAVEN.

BY GEORGE STANLEY FABER, A. M.
FELLOW OF LINCOLN COLLEGE.

*Η γὰρ τὸν ἄρα τὸν προσαραξείν, ἢ τὰ κρυπτά τῆς Ἰσιδος ἐκφανεῖν, ἢ
τὸ ἐν ἀβύσσῳ ἀπορρήτων δείξειν, ἢ γῆσειν τὴν Βαριν, ἢ τὰ μέλη τῆ Ὀσι-
ριδος διασκιδάσειν τῷ Τυφῶνι, ἢ ἄλλο τι τοιοῦτον ἀπειλεῖ ποιήσειν.
Jamb. de Myst. sect. vi. cap. 51.*

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W. HANWELL and J. PARKER, Oxford.

1803.

The rites of these highly venerated personages were carefully concealed from the vulgar eye; the authors, who occasionally mention them, seem to shudder with superstitious dread at the thought of revealing their secrets to the profane; the scattered fragments of their history are full of apparent contradictions; and, in addition to these difficulties, their officiating priests were not infrequently confounded with the gods whom they worshipped, since both were called by the common name of Cabiri. -A Dissertation of the Mysteries of the Cabiri v.1, p.3-4



Samothracian *Korybantes* or Choral Dancers

These [Samothracian] gods resist easy identification. Despite their patronage of one of the most prestigious cults in the ancient world, their character remains obscure. The literary evidence is fragmentary; Kabeiroi are daimones rather than Olympians, and their distinction from other divine groups, the *Kouretes*,

Korybantes, *Daktyloi* and *Telchines* was not clear even for ancient authors. Indeed it is in connection with Samothrace that Strabo claims these groups are essentially identical, as he attempted to resolve why it was that some said the gods were *Kouretes*, others *Korybantes*, even *Daktyloi* or *Telchines*. None of the daimones,

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“Sanctuary of the Great Gods” on Samothrace

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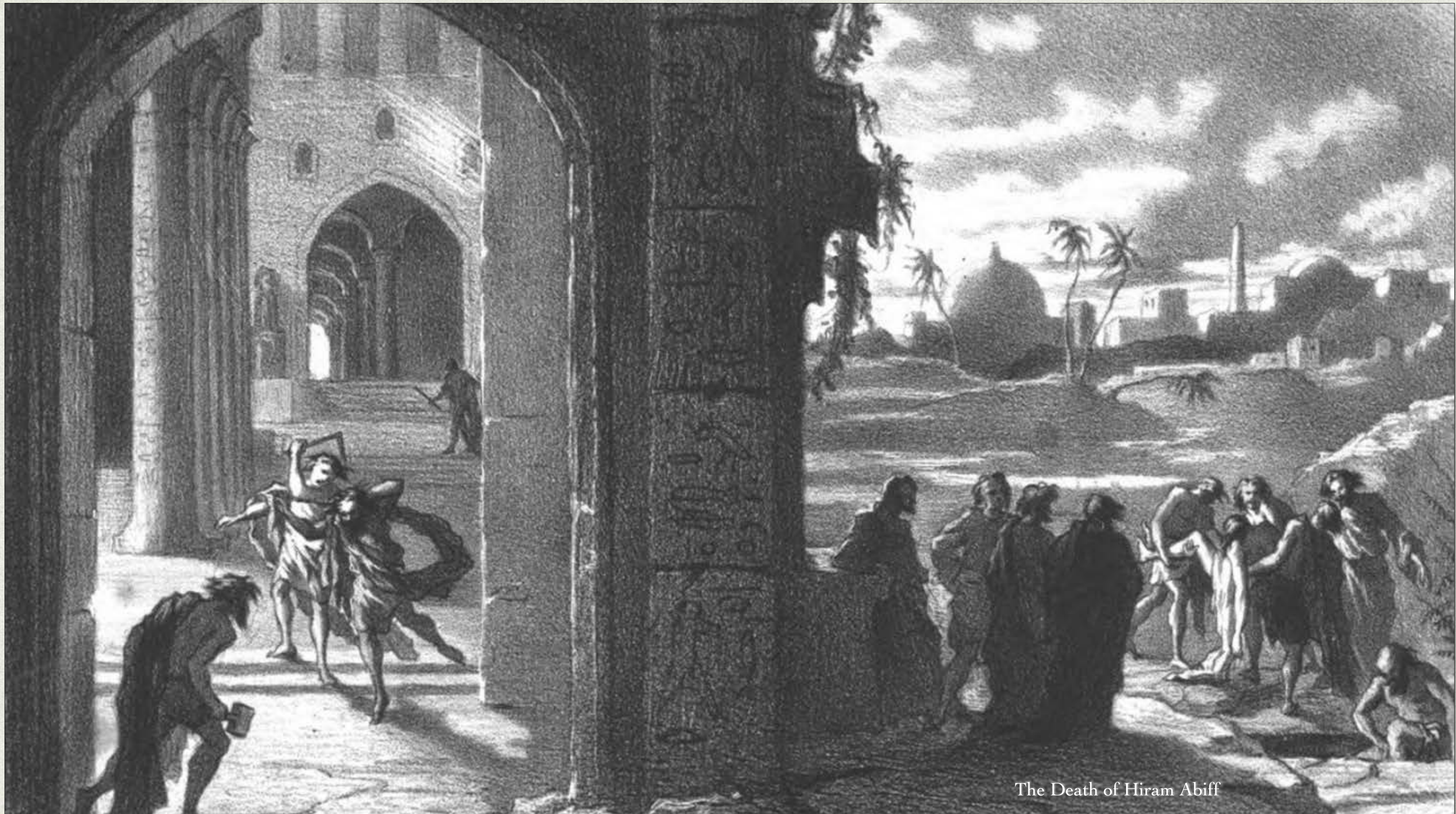
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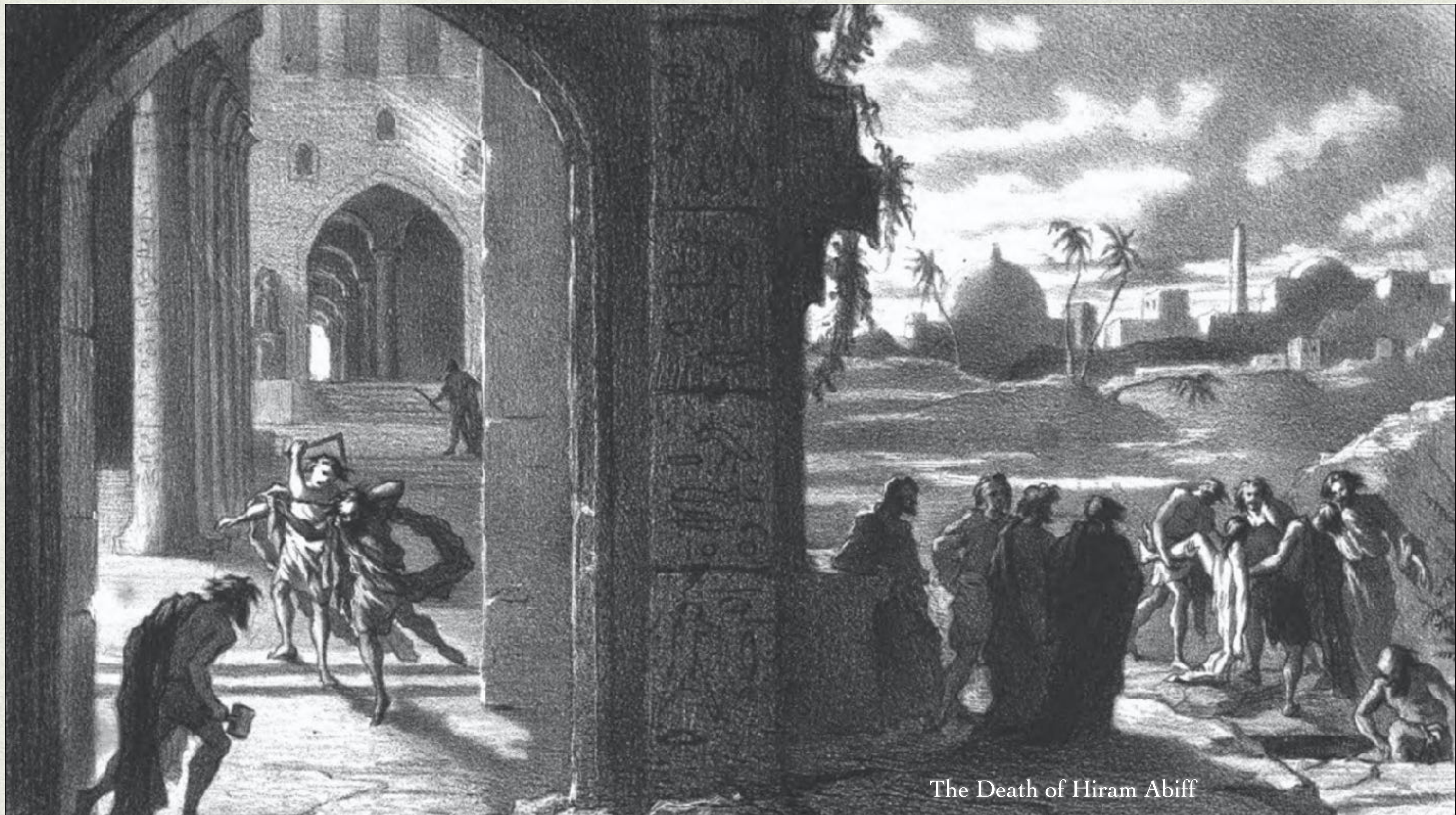
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The Death of Hiram Abiff



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Masons who form an elect family in the social order, who study and seek the true and the good, also have their traditions and allegories. They have the history of the death and resurrection of H.' A.' [Hiram Abiff], the perfect

workman, assassinated by three wicked fellows, notwithstanding the efforts of the nine good F.' C's.' [Fellow Craftsmen] to save him. This legend, it is true, has been mutilated, and made insignificant and often ridiculous by ignorant

expounders of the Masonic mysteries; but all enlightened Masters know that this Perfect Master is the genius of beneficence and truth both in the physical and moral order. -General History of Freemasonry:385

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In Plato's *Timæus* the prototypes of our race are spoken of as being inclosed in and developed from the Great Tree, which is not to be understood, except by knowing the history of the Tree as a type of the genitrix.

...The Mother of Adonis was said to have been metamorphosed into a tree, and in that shape to have brought forth the divine child. On the coins of ancient Crete the genitrix is portrayed, like *Hathor* or *Nupe*, in the tree. In the Phrygian Mysteries, a pine tree— [a metaphor for] the Mother of the gods— was cut down every year, and the image of a youth was bound on the inside. This was on the first day of the feast of *Kubele*. “What means that pine,” asks *Arnobius*, “which on certain days you bring into the sanctuary of the Mother of the gods?” This he identifies with the tree of the genitrix, beneath which the youth *Attis* laid hands upon himself, and which the Mother consecrated in solace of her own wound.

The “dark pine” that grew in *Eridu* was the seat, shrine, and couch, of the Akkadian

genitrix, *Zikum*. She who was the tree that bore the child as *Tammuz* or *Duzi*. “In *Eridu* a dark pine grew. It was planted in a holy place. Its crown was crystal white, which spread towards the deep vault above. The Abyss of *Hea* was its pasturage in *Eridu*, a canal full of waters. Its station (seat) was the centre of this earth. Its shrine was the couch of Mother *Zikum*. The (roof) of its holy house like a forest spread its shade; there (were) none who entered not within it. It was the seat of the mighty Mother.”

In Egypt the sycamore-fig is the chief type of the tree of life from which the Great Mother, as *Hathor*, pours out the divine drink. *Hathor* was the *Sekhem*, or Shrine of the child, in the shape of the sycamore tree, also this type of the tree, genitrix, womb, shrine, and tomb may be traced back by name to Inner Africa.

...But primarily the tree typified renewal, and this was a symbolical mode of rebirth from the mother imaged as the tree. -The Natural Genesis v.1, p.373, 375, 377-8



In Plato's *Timæus* the prototypes of our race are spoken of as being inclosed in and developed from the Great Tree, which is not to be understood, except by knowing the history of the Tree as a type of the genitrix.

...The Mother of Adonis was said to have been metamorphosed into a tree, and in that shape to have brought forth the divine child. On the coins of ancient Crete the genitrix is portrayed, like *Hathor* or *Nupe*, in the tree. In the Phrygian Mysteries, a pine tree— [a metaphor for] the Mother of the gods— was cut down every year, and the image of a youth was bound on the inside. This was on the first day of the feast of *Kubele* [*Cybele*]. “What means that pine,” asks *Arnobius*, “which on certain days you bring into the sanctuary of the Mother of the gods?” This he identifies with the tree of the genitrix, beneath which the youth *Attis* laid hands upon himself, and which the Mother consecrated in solace of her own wound.

The “dark pine” that grew in *Eridu* was the seat, shrine, and couch, of the Akkadian

genitrix, *Zikum*. She who was the tree that bore the child as *Tammuz* or *Duzi*. “In *Eridu* a dark pine grew. It was planted in a holy place. Its crown was crystal white, which spread towards the deep vault above. The Abyss of *Hea* was its pasturage in *Eridu*, a canal full of waters. Its station (seat) was the centre of this earth. Its shrine was the couch of Mother *Zikum*. The (roof) of its holy house like a forest spread its shade; there (were) none who entered not within it. It was the seat of the mighty Mother.”

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A curious aspect of the dying-god myth is that of the Hanged Man. The most important example of this peculiar conception is found in the Odinic rituals where *Odin* hangs himself for nine nights from the branches of the World Tree and upon the same occasion also pierces his own side with the sacred spear. As the result of this great sacrifice, *Odin*, while suspended over the depths of *Niflheim*, discovered by meditation the runes or alphabets by which later the records of his people were preserved. Because of this remarkable experience, *Odin* is sometimes shown seated on a gallows tree and he became the patron deity of all who died by the noose. Esoterically, the Hanged Man is the human spirit which is suspended from heaven by a single thread. Wisdom, not death, is the reward for this voluntary sacrifice during which the human soul, suspended above the world of illusion, and meditating upon its unreality, is rewarded by the achievement of self-realization.

From a consideration of all these ancient and secret rituals it becomes evident that the mystery of the dying god was universal among the illumined and venerated colleges of the sacred teaching. This mystery has been perpetuated in Christianity in the crucifixion and death of the God-man—Jesus the Christ. The secret import of this world tragedy and the Universal Martyr must be rediscovered if Christianity is to reach the heights attained by the pagans in the days of their philosophic supremacy. The myth of the dying god is the key to both universal and individual redemption and regeneration, and those who do not comprehend the true nature of this supreme allegory are not privileged to consider themselves either wise or truly religious.

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and fruits. In support of this viewpoint they describe the "gardens of Adonis," which were small baskets of earth in which seeds were planted and nurtured for a period of eight days. When those plants prematurely died for lack of sufficient earth, they were considered emblematic of the murdered Adonis and were usually cast into the sea with images of the god.

In Phrygia there existed a remarkable school of religious philosophy which centered around the life and untimely fate of another Savior-God known as *Atys*, or *Attis*, by many considered synonymous with Adonis. This deity was born at midnight on the 24th day of December. Of his death there are two accounts. In one he was gored to death like Adonis; in the other he emasculated himself under a pine tree and there died. His body was taken to a cave by the Great Mother (Cybele), where it remained through the ages without decaying. To the rites of *Atys* the modern world is indebted for the symbolism of the Christmas tree. *Atys* imparted his immortality to the tree beneath which he died, and Cybele took the tree with her when she removed the body. *Atys* remained three days in the tomb, rose upon a date corresponding with Easter morn, and by this resurrection overcame death for all who were initiated into his Mysteries.

"In the Mysteries of the Phrygians," says Julius Firmicus, "which are called those of the MOTHER OF THE GODS, every year a PINE TREE is cut down and in the inside of the tree the image of a YOUTH is tied in! In the Mysteries of Isis the trunk of a PINE TREE is cut: the middle of the trunk is nicely hollowed out; the idol of Osiris made from those hollowed pieces is BURIED. In the Mysteries of Proserpine a tree cut is put together into the effigy and form of the VIRGIN, and when it has been carried within the city it is MOURNED 40 nights, but the fortieth night it is BURNED!" (See *Sod, the Mysteries of Adoni.*)

The Mysteries of *Atys* included a sacramental meal during which the neophyte ate out of a drum and drank from a cymbal. After being baptized by the blood of a bull, the new initiate was fed entirely on milk to symbolize that he was still a philosophical infant, having but recently been born out of the sphere of materiality. (See Frazer's *The Golden Bough.*) Is there a possible connection between this lacteal diet prescribed by the Attic rite and St. Paul's allusion to the food for spiritual babes? Sallust gives a key to the esoteric interpretation of the Attic rituals. Cybele, the Great Mother, signifies the vivifying powers of the universe, and *Atys* that aspect of the spiritual intellect which is suspended between the divine and animal spheres. The Mother of the gods, loving *Atys*, gave him a starry hat, signifying celestial powers, but *Atys* (mankind), falling in love with a nymph (symbolic of the lower animal propensities), forfeited his divinity and lost his creative powers. It is thus evident that *Atys* represents the human consciousness and that his Mysteries are concerned with the attainment of the starry hat. (See *Sallust on the Gods and the World.*)

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Thesmophoria by Francis David Millet