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Kadmos reloaded. The Shaping of Cultural Memory between Phoenicia, Greece and Rome

Corinne Bonnet

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a cura di Giuseppe Garbati

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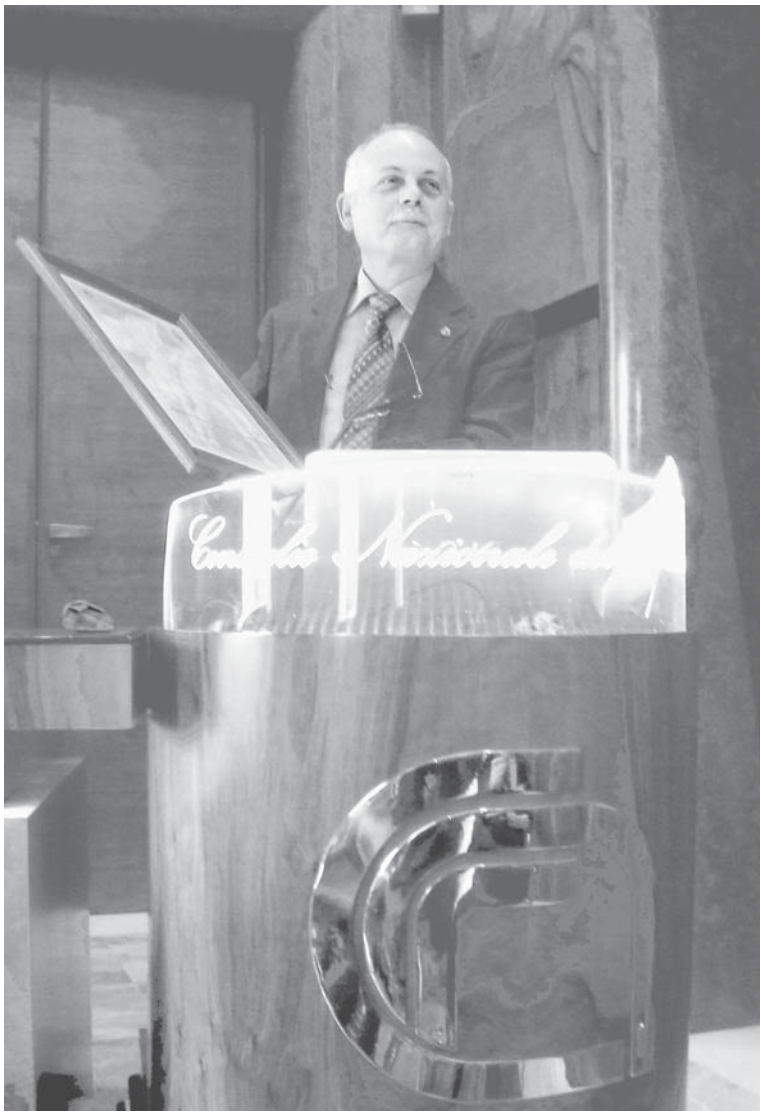

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KADMOS RELOADED.
THE SHAPING OF CULTURAL MEMORY
BETWEEN PHOENICIA, GREECE AND ROME

Corinne Bonnet*

Abstract: This paper provides a long-term analysis of Kadmos' figure, a Greek symbol of Phoenicia, from the Archaic to the Hellenistic and Roman period. The analysis emphasizes his aptitude to build bridges between Phoenicia and Greece and to illustrate the traditional categories of "self" and "other", "Greek" and "Barbarian", which gradually blurred according to new historical agendas. Kadmos, because of his complex kinship bonds, is used by different authors in different contexts and performances to embody a broad set of cross-cultural strategies and transactions. The paper shows how Kadmos was an excellent resource to combine different worlds, in different periods.

Keywords: Kadmos; Multiculturalism; Thebes; Kinship; Cultural Memory.

1. Introduction[1]

In Antiquity, kinship was a powerful tool for social imaginary and cultural memory.[2] It was used extensively to connect different figures in the branched mythological network, to link times, spaces, and cultures. In fact, a large number of Greek mythological figures have Egyptian or Persian ancestors; many of them have traveled from "barbarian" homelands to Greece, where they founded a city or married a Greek wife. The mythological web draws a common *kosmos*, a shared ordered universe, in which Greece is the central *omphalos* while the Barbarians live at the edge. Kadmos is probably one of the best examples of such a cross-cultural discourse. This paper will consider three periods – Classical, Hellenistic and Roman (Imperial) period – in Kadmos' reception as an emblematic figure of a shared cultural memory between Phoenicia, Greece and Rome.

The mythological vulgate can easily be summarized.[3] Agenor, king of the Phoenician kingdom of Tyre or Sidon, had several sons, one of which was Kadmos, and a daughter, Europe. Europe was kidnapped by Zeus, metamorphosed into a bull, and brought to Crete, where she gave birth to Minos, Rhadamantus and Sarpedon. Kadmos, whose name may come from a Semitic root meaning "Orient", vainly tried to find his sister and finally consulted Apollo in Delphi in order to know where he had to settle. The god ordered him to create his own city in Greece: Thebes. There, Kadmos married Harmonia and had a long but damned descent, exemplified by Oedipus, who brought both harmony and chaos in Thebes. In fact, while founding Thebes, Kadmos slayed a

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2 See Curty 1995; Jones 1999; Stavrianopoulou 2013, pp. 177-205; Bonnet 2015b, pp. 183-189.

3 See Vian 1963; Edwards 1979; Rocchi 1989; Mackowiak 2001; Kühr 2006; Castiglioni 2010; Bonnet 2015b, pp. 183-189. For a general account of Kadmos' myth, see Apollodorus, *Bibl.* III 1 and 4-5.

dragon, who was Ares' son and the protector of the local spring. Thus, he provoked Ares' everlasting revenge. Kadmos' ambivalent destiny became a source of inspiration for Greek authors, as he was at the same time the Phoenician founder of a prestigious Greek city, Thebes, the cultural hero who introduced the *Phoinikeia grammata*[4] to Greece, and the ancestor of a famous but problematic lineage. The narrative concerning his mixed family provides a good example of the integrative power of the myth, or, to be more precise, it creates an imaginary space where the Greeks could reflect on integration and its effect in terms of order/harmony or subversion/chaos. How and why were Kadmos and his tribe considered as both insiders and outsiders? What does their story tell us about the cultural relationship between Greece and Phoenicia?

So far Kadmos' myth has traditionally been studied in relation to Theban traditions and identity/ethnicity, mainly as a piece of "literature".[5] More recently A. Kühr has offered a valuable contribution to the study of the role of Thebes as an *Erinnerungslandschaft* and has shed a light on the status of Kadmos as a social symbol of exogeny.[6] In this paper however I will adopt a wider point of view through a long-term analysis, including Hellenistic and Roman evidence, when the notions of "Hellenization" and "kinship" evolved due to the promotion of native heritages, "alien wisdoms", and microidentities.[7] Kadmos' reloading power suggests that traditional categories of "self" and "other", "Greek" and "Barbarian" gradually blurred according to new historical agendas. After Alexander's conquest of the Persian Empire, the political and cultural maps of the East Mediterranean were seriously reshaped. A new *kosmos* arose, characterized by different cross-cultural contexts, and a broad set of strategies and transactions. Myth, kinship, memory, multiculturalism were at stake, and Kadmos an excellent resource to combine different worlds.

2. Kadmos on the Athenian stage in the Classical period

Euripides was not the first Greek author to be interested in Kadmos. Homer, Hesiod, Pindar and others previously mention him, his journey from Phoenicia in Europe's footsteps, and his role on Greek soil.[8] Most texts focus on the foundation of Thebes, ordered by the prestigious oracle of Apollo in Delphi. This event was at the same time Kadmos' pride and sin. Herodotus himself, as mentioned before, significantly refers to the introduction of the alphabet in Greece by Kadmos, who was considered as a "cultural hero". The Athenian audience of Euripides' plays, especially of *The Phoenissae* and *The Bacchae,* was thus familiar with Kadmos and his ambivalent destiny of civilized Barbarian and blessed-cursed hero.[9] For sure, Kadmos' lavish wedding with Aphrodite and Ares' daughter, the well-named Harmonia, sounded like a reconciliation, in the presence of all the gods bringing marvelous presents. Although this happy event provides a picture of Kadmos' perfect integration into the Greek family, the "original sin" continues to be part of his DNA and recalls his foreign origin. The harmony is temporary and incomplete. The relationship between Greeks and non Greeks remained deeply ambiguous.

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[4] See Herodotus V 58. Cfr. Baurain *et alii* 1991.
[5] Vian 1963.
[6] Kühr 2006.
[7] On alien wisdoms, see Momigliano 1975; on "microidentities", see Whitmarsh 2010.
[8] For an analysis of the different sources, see Vian 1963.
[9] Cfr. Alaux *et alii* 2007.

Euripides' *Phoenissae* was first performed in 410/409 BCE.[10] At that time, Athens was involved in the Peloponnesian War, and seriously under Spartan pressure.[11] The political tensions between Athens and Thebes run through the text, which addresses the concept of autochthony.[12] According to several authors, in fact, during the creation of Thebes, Athena gave Kadmos the dragon's teeth, advising him to sow them. Armed men sprang up from the furrows and Kadmos, frightened by their power, threw a stone among them. They fought each other until only five of them remained, and they helped Kadmos to found the city of Thebes. The Thebans could therefore claim to be born from the earth and challenge the Athenians' pretention to have a similar origin, although their *oikistes* originated from Phoenicia. Whereas Euripides' tragedy tackles the Thebans' arrogance and their attitude towards the Athenian hegemony, it also shows their long sufferings and provokes empathy. In fact, the fatal conflict between Eteocles and Polynices, Oedipus' sons and Kadmos' descendants, allows Euripides to depict the besieged city of Thebes,[13] full of fear, tears and mourning and to suggest a parallel with Athens, painfully divided into different factions and struggling against a foreign army. Still Euripides' tragedy is not a political manifesto. The circulation of emotions between the mythological figures on the stage and the audience rather stimulates a collective exploration of the complexity and paradoxes of social life. Memory, kinship, identity and integration represent crucial aspects of this process.

Through the collective, young and feminine voice of the chorus, the *Phoenissae*,[14] Euripides emphasizes the fear and hope of those who cannot act in the war, but who are emotionally involved in it. The Phoenician maidens also remind the audience of Kadmos' adventure. Like their ancestor, they travelled from Tyre to Thebes and Delphi, but they are supposed to become living offerings for Apollo in his Delphian sanctuary. Unlike Kadmos, they will scrupulously obey the god's decision and receive a blessed existence. Nevertheless, the chorus repeatedly stresses its close relationship to Kadmos, the foreign ancestor of both the Thebans and the Phoenicians.

> «I have come to the land of Cadmus,
> Sent to the towers of Laius
> Towers that are kin
> To the glorious Agenoridae» (vv. 216-219, Kovacs).

He is responsible for the "shared blood" and the "common children", but also for Ares' fury. The tragedy which is being faced concerns both people in the name of kinship. However, Euripides insists on the chorus' Barbarian origin and behavior: their language sounds incomprehensible, their attitude is inspired by "oriental" standards, like the *proskynesis*, the prostration, which the Greeks do not practice.[15] The message delivered to the Athenian audience is definitely ambivalent: Kadmos and more largely the Phoenician people, are inside and outside the Greek circle. They are together familiar and strange, close and distant. Their presence generates harmony and conflicts, links and disruptions, empathy and estrangement.[16]

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[10] See the edition of translation by Kovacs 2002a. See also Mastronarde 1994; Amiech 2004.
[11] Delebecque 1951.
[12] See Mackowiak 2010, pp. 563-589.
[13] On the claustrophobic atmosphere of the play, see Luschnig 1995, pp. 160-237.
[14] On this choice, see Hartigan 2000, pp. 25-31.
[15] On the famous *proskynesis* polemic during Alexander's campaign, see Bosworth 1995, p. 70, with a brief presentation of all the evidence regarding this Persian use and its reception in the Greek world.
[16] See also Daries-Berdery 2013, pp. 61-72.

Whereas in *The Phoenissae* Apollo appears in the background as the final destination of the Phoenician maidens, Dionysos is strongly present on *The Bacchae*'s stage as the god who willingly or not governs men's attitude and destiny.[17] Yet Dionysos, who is the most "foreign" of the Greek gods, also belongs to Kadmos' *thèlu sperma* ("feminine seed") and interferes with the Thebans' fate. In fact, Zeus seduced both Europe and another Kadmos' daughter, Semele. She died, being pregnant, because of Hera's jealousy, while Zeus concealed the baby in his thigh until his birth. Dionysos grew far from Thebes, in Lydia, but decided to come back to his ancestral city, demanding recognition as a god and an appropriate cult. The play, performed in 406/5 BCE, shortly after Euripides' death in Macedonia, begins with Dionysos' first epiphany in his Theban homeland. He is followed by a chorus of Lydian worshippers, who incite the Thebans to welcome the powerful god. Dionysos immediately pronounces Kadmos' name in the second verse of the tragedy:

> «To this land of Thebes I have come,
> I Dionysus, son of Zeus: Cadmos' daughter
> Semele, midwived by the lightning
> Fire, once gave birth to me»
> (vv. 1-3, Kovacs).

Nonetheless Kadmos' surviving daughters, Semele's sisters, initially deny his divine origin and try to resist to his power. The god consequently drives them and all the Theban women in madness out of the city to Mount Cithaeron where they sing a hymn to Dionysos in order to acknowledge his *time*, "his part of honour". The Theban king, Pentheus, Kadmos' grandson and Dionysos' cousin, whose name already announce sufferings and mourning, refuses to welcome Dionysos' power and denounces the maenads' behavior as a danger for civic order. Pentheus intends to protect the local ancestral traditions against a new and foreign god. He pretends to be the only one who is wise (*sophos*) and rational, but Euripides suggests that the borders between rationality and madness, knowledge and ignorance, appearance and reality, truth and lie, order and disorder, inside and outside, justice and punishment, and finally masculine and feminine are dramatically confused by Dionysos' presence.[18] Kadmos, unlike Pentheus, is ready to follow the god and, together with the prophet Tiresias,[19] he begins to worship him, adopting the typical clothes and attributes of the Dionysiac *thiasos*:

> «Dearest friend, how glad I was, while still in the house, to hear your words, wise words coming from a wise man! And I have come in readiness, wearing the livery of the god: he is the son of my daughter, and as far as in us lies he must be magnified» (vv. 179-181, Kovacs).

Although his original transgression of Ares' will, at the occasion of the founding of Thebes, is a heavy and eternal burden for all the Kadmeans, Kadmos is depicted as wiser than the Theban king, Pentheus. Dionysos and Kadmos are strangers, who carry a new and threatening reality,

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[17] See the edition and translation by Kovacs 2002b. See also (among an enormous bibliography) Seaford 1996; Goff 2004; Bollack 2005; Fischer-Lichte 2014.
[18] See Buxton 2013, pp. 35-45.
[19] See Loraux 1989.

but they also appear as impressive beings. Kadmos on the stage is, in short, "good to think with". His complex position and destiny, his successful but problematic kinship with the Greeks enables Euripides to explore the social imaginary of the Athenians and the mental maps in which the Phoenicians are involved – without delivering a clearcut "message". Within the *polis*, a foreign presence is possible, desirable, stimulating, but always ambiguous. The prestigious Phoenician lineage, born from Kadmos, which is responsible for literacy and the foundation of Thebes, provides fame and honor to the Greeks. Thus, like Dionysos, Kadmos is worth being praised. His advice concerning Dionysos' cult can be extended to his own memory:

> «My lad, Tiresias has given you good advice: make your home with us, not beyond the bounds of established custom. At the moment you are all in the air: you are clever, but your cleverness amounts to nothing. Even if this god does not exist, as you maintain, you should say that he does and tell a wholesome lie; thus Semele will be thought to have given birth to a god and your whole family will win honor» (vv. 330-342, Kovacs).

Kinship, with its "wholesome lies", provides a pragmatic framework for connecting people and cultures, for building a network of mythical memory through the Mediterranean. The notion of *timè*, "honor", also indicates that this symbolic capital can be invested in different places and times. I shall now focus on the Hellenistic period and the new cultural interactions that took place after Alexander's conquest of the East. While kinship between Greece and Phoenicia acquires new meanings, Kadmos is claimed by both sides as part of their heritage.

3. Disruption and new strategies in the Hellenistic period

Greek and Roman sources describe Alexander's arrival in Phoenicia, in 333/2 BCE, as a delivery from the Persian yoke.[20] Since the Phoenician evidence has completely disappeared, we only have one voice at our disposal: the winners'.[21] The long and brutal siege of Tyre by Alexander's troops suggests that things did not go so smoothly. The Phoenician kingdoms were nonetheless integrated in the Graeco-Macedonian Empire and submitted to a new foreign authority. After Alexander's death, in 323 BCE, Phoenicia became part of the Ptolemaic, and then (after 200 BCE) the Seleucid kingdom.[22] The Hellenistic period is generally described with the concept of "Hellenization".[23] According to this notion, coined by Johannes G. Droysen in the nineteenth century, the Greeks spread their own culture in all the Eastern territories, giving birth to an original "fusion" (in German: *Verschmelzung*) with the native "oriental" cultures.[24] In this perspective, Greek culture was the dominating standard whereas the local cultures were only able to "corrupt" it.

This scenario has been deeply challenged in recent years. Scholars agree that the Hellenistic Near and Middle East did not passively submit to acculturation but actively promoted new cultural

[20] For the context and the narrative of Alexander's conquest of Phoenicia, see Bonnet 2015a, pp. 41-106.
[21] For a reflection on this methodological problem, see Wachtel 1971.
[22] See Bonnet 2015a and previously Grainger 1992.
[23] For the history of the concept of *Hellenismus*, *Hellenism* or *Hellenization*, and the recent debates on them, see Bonnet 2015a, pp. 19-23; see also Kuhrt 2013, pp. 33-59.
[24] See Payen 2005, pp. 5-82.

strategies. Beyond the "Hellenization" model, new theories seem more efficient for analyzing the cross-cultural dynamics of the Hellenistic period. For example, the concept of middle ground, used by Richard White in his book *The Middle Ground*: *Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815*, usefully puts an emphasis on the emergence of common spaces (concrete and symbolic) and procedures, which encourage the transactions and give birth to compromises.[25] The siege of Tyre provides suggestive evidence on this point. Alexander decided to besiege Tyre because the Tyrian citizens did not allow him to enter in Melqart's sanctuary and to offer a sacrifice to the local Baal, the founder of the city and of its dynasty.[26] Claiming to be the god's descendent, because his family was linked with Herakles, who is the most frequent Greek *interpretatio* for Melqart, Alexander wanted to receive a divine legitimacy, but also to control the strategic territory of Tyre, which was absolutely necessary for gaining ground in Egypt. After seven months of an unequalled violence, Alexander broke the Tyrian walls and his troops began the final slaughter. At that point, the memory of Agenor, Kadmos' father, irrupts into the narrative. Agenor, the city's prestigious founder,[27] was in fact venerated in a sanctuary, called *Agenorion.* In order to escape to the Greeks' fierceness, several Tyrians tried to take refuge in this place, as well as in Melqart's sanctuary, hoping that the enemies would respect the sacred places. The *Agenorion* was probably either a funerary sanctuary or an old palace tied to the memory of the first Tyrian king. In the fifth century CE, Nonnos of Panopolis mentions it again in his *Dionysiaka*. When Dionysos arrives in Tyre, he immediately mentions Agenor's house and adds that Agenor is his ancestor.[28] Next to this building, Dionysos visits Kadmos' apartments and even the bedroom where Zeus kidnapped Europe. Although the fictional dimension of this story is obvious, the existence in Tyre of a holy place devoted to the memory of Agenor and his family is highly probable. This memorial site was particularly indicated in case of a strong threat and a desperate resistance, because it preserved the original identity of the group. This first evidence suggests that Kadmos and his father Agenor were considered as effective symbols of the Tyrian identity. Was thus Kadmos a figure of resistance more than a symbol of resilience? Did the conquest disrupt the kinship network, leading to an opposition between two ethnic and cultural groups? The picture provided by Greek and Roman authors must be supplemented by other accounts, possibly produced by the Phoenicians themselves, namely the inscriptions which offer another insight on the Phoenician middle ground.

The epigraphic evidence reveals that the Greek alphabet and language became increasingly used in the Hellenistic and Roman period in Phoenicia. Even though the corpus is rather limited, it attests to a real appeal of the Greek epigraphic *habitus*. Still, the Phoenician writing and language does not disappear and some inscriptions use it until the first century BCE, even later on coins.[29] A small amount of bilingual documents indicate that some people had a double linguistic competence and could probably switch from one language to the other.[30] Does the choice of a Greek framework for an inscription definitely mean that we are dealing with "Hellenized" Phoenicians? Diotimos' inscription is a remarkable example of a cunning use of Kadmos' memory.

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[25] See above note 7.

[26] Arrian II 15,7. See also Curtius Rufus IV 2,2; Iustinus XI 10. For an analysis, see Bonnet 2015a, pp. 41-106.

[27] See for example, Curtius Rufus IV 4,19-21, in the epilogue of the Tyrian siege. See Bonnet 2015a, pp. 92-106. According to Malalas, *Chronographia* II 7, Agenor was married to an eponymous nympha called Tyro.

[28] Nonnos, *Dionysiaka* XL 356-359.

[29] Briquel-Chatonnet 1991, pp. 3-21.

[30] Briquel-Chatonnet 2012, pp. 619-638.

The inscription, now lost, was discovered in 1862 by Ernest Renan in a Sidonian garden and published by Elias Bickerman in 1939.[31] It was engraved on the basis of a lost statue representing Diotimos as a winner in the chariot race. He probably was depicted as the famous Auriga preserved in the Archaeological Museum in Delphi. Palaeographic analysis, together with the mention of the Cretan sculptor Timocharis, dates the monument to around 200 BCE. It celebrates Diotimos' victory in the chariot race, in the Nemean Games. This competition took place in Greece, near Argos, at the very core of the most ancient and prestigious "lieux de mémoire" of the Mycenaean past. Kadmos' previous achievement on the Greek soil is evoked in the elegant epigram that emphasizes Diotimos' glory and Sidon's pride.

> «The City of the Sidonians honor Diotimos, son of Dionysios, a judge (*dikastès*), who won the chariot race at the Nemean Games.
> Timocharis from Eleutherna made the statue.
> The day, on which, in the Argolic valley, from their starting posts, all the competitors launched their quick horses for the race, the people of Phoronis gave you a splendid honour and you received the ever-memorable crown.
> For the first among the citizens, you brought from Hellas in the noble house of the Agenorids the glory won in an equestrian victory. The holy city of Cadmos, Thebes, also exults, seeing its metropolis distinguished by victories.
> The prayer of your father, Dionysios, made in occasion of the contest was fulfilled when Greece made this proclamation: "Oh proud Sidon, you excel not only with your ships but also with your yoked chariots which are victorious"».[32]

For the first time, the poem stresses, a member of Agenor's family wins a competition in Greece. About a century after Alexander's victory in Phoenicia, the roles were switched. Not only do the Phoenicians rightfully take part in the so-called "Panhellenic" Games, since they are now part of the Greek *koinè*, but they also display remarkable expertise. The old cliché describing the Phoenicians as excellent seafarers is outdated. They now challenge the Greeks on their own field: the *agôn*, and even the most famous and prestigious one, the chariot race. Thebes, the holy city founded by Kadmos, shares its metropolis' exultation and pride. In the name of kinship, a Sidonian victory is also a Theban one. Besides, the name of Diotimos' father, Dionysios, refers to Semele's son and to the mythological context mentioned above.[33]

This inscription, designed by the Sidonian authorities, delivers more than one message. Certainly, the first objective was to celebrate Diotimos' athletic performance. As a "judge", a Greek word that probably translates the Phoenician office of "governor" (*špṭ*),[34] Diotimos is a member of the Sidonian elite. Some external evidence suggests that he is probably a descendant of the royal Sidonian family. In 300 BCE, however, in all the Phoenician kingdoms, kingship was abolished and replaced by a new institutional framework inspired by the Greek model.[35] Diotimos' appointment

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[31] *Editio princeps* by Bikerman 1939, pp. 91-99. See also Couvenhes – Heller 2006, pp. 35-38; Gruen 2006, p. 306; Stavrianopoulou 2013, pp. 177-178; Bonnet 2015a, pp. 205, 206, 210, 251-256, 260-264.
[32] The Author's translation.
[33] See above, pp. 53-55.
[34] On this question, see Bonnet 2015a, pp. 260-261.
[35] Apicella – Briquel-Chatonnet 2015.

indicates that the aristocratic families agreed to collaborate with the new power and continued to participate with the political system. So, the second message delivered by the inscription concerns the local elite, always present, rich and influential. Their members brilliantly represent Sidon on the international stage and bring back fame and prestige to the entire community. This is a typically Greek model of social interaction, well attested in the *poleis* since the Archaic period.[36] A third message more directly concerns the relationship to the new cultural standards of Hellenism. Diotimos and his father have a Greek name, at least in the inscription. No one knows whether, at home, they preferred to use a Phoenician equivalent, based on Baal for Diotimos, on Osiris for Dionysios.[37] On the other hand, the statue, committed by the Sidonian authorities, was made by a Cretan artist, whereas the epigram was written in a sophisticated and elegant Greek, inspired by the Pindaric Epinicians. Its author remains anonymous, but he may be a Phoenician "hellenized" poet, similar to Meleager of Gadara,[38] who grew up in Tyre and attended literary circles promoting Greek literature mixed with local or regional patterns. In brief, the inscription demonstrates a perfect expertise in Greek matters: the pupil may have even surpassed the master. The fourth message (which is not necessarily the last one) pertains to kinship and to the derivative mental network. Kadmos' myth of the foundation of Thebes is part of a common heritage. The inscription, which contains only a superficial but sufficient allusion, cunningly inverts the cultural paradigm. Whereas the majority of Greeks consider that, through Alexander's conquest, they offered the Phoenicians an access to *the* "culture" (*paideia*), the Sidonians recall two occasions on which the Phoenician superiority overwhelmed the Greeks. Kadmos, first, by introducing the *phoinikeia grammata* in Greece, brought literacy to Greece and founded one of the most renowned cities of the mainland, creating a productive and lasting link between the two shores of the Mediterranean. Many centuries later, Diotimos travelled again to Hellas and gave to all the Greeks gathered in Nemea new proof of the Phoenicians' superiority. Back home, moreover, he was celebrated like a hero according to the Greek uses. To sum up the fourth message, Alexander's achievement in Phoenicia can be challenged by the Phoenicians' exploits in Greece. Alexander's presumed kinship with Melqart, the Tyrian Herakles, is counterbalanced by the Sidonian kinship with Thebes. In the new cross-cultural landscape of the Hellenistic kingdoms, the borders between Greeks and Barbarians had been reloaded. Far from experiencing passively "Hellenization", the Oriental "cousins" employed a large set of strategies inspired both by their native culture and by Greek models. In a very creative way, they adopted the Greek language, institutions, gods, and literature, but they did not get rid of their own. In this context, Kadmos is a very useful figure, able to interconnect Greece and Phoenicia, but also to regain prestige and to promote a cultural revival that would mainly flourish during the Roman period.

4. The Imperial revival of the Phoenician culture

After the destruction of Carthage in 146 BCE, the Romans became increasingly involved on the Eastern stage.[39] The weakening of the Seleucid power progressively facilitated Roman intrusions in Syria and the creation of the Roman province of Syria (64 BCE), which included Phoenician territory. Although Latin was used for some official documents, Greek still remained the dominant

[36] See Chaniotis 1995, pp. 147-169; van Bremen 2007, pp. 345-375.
[37] See Benz 1972.
[38] On him, see Gutzwiller 2013, pp. 47-69.
[39] Millar 2006.

language and the Greek *paideia*, the dominant cultural pattern. Since local traditions, referring to the Phoenician past and heritage, never disappeared but were, as we have seen above with Diotimos' inscription, recycled into a new cultural framework with original meanings and uses, the cultural framework of Roman Phoenicia can also be considered as multi-faceted. Moreover, whereas the Roman Empire was a global political entity operating on a "universal" level, its administration was carried out by regional and local representatives. Far from being undervalued by the Romans, the variety of cultures within the Empire contributed to its power and prestige. In such a context, a new emphasis was put upon local identities.[40] Localism became a focal element in the relationship between the "indigenous" elite and the central power. Complementary with imperial objectives, so-called "microidentities" fostered the dialogue between a region's self-identification as a distinct space and its self-awareness as a component of the centrally-governed empire.

As far as the Phoenician area is concerned, the Roman coinage of the third century CE testifies to a strong local revival.[41] The elevation of Tyre to colonial rank in AD 198, following Tyre's early support for Septimius Severus against Pescennius Niger in AD 194, had a significant impact on the civic self-image represented in the coinage. During the reign of Elagabalus (218-222) new motifs were introduced, for example the image of Dido as founder of Carthage. The veiled woman standing before a gate under construction is clearly identified by the Greek caption *Deidôn*. Further coins show a naked hero bearing a *chlamys* hurling a stone with his right hand towards a snake. This is obviously Kadmos founding Thebes and slaying Ares' holy servant with a stone. In another scene, a hero, tentatively identified as Kadmos, is shown rushing aboard a ship while looking back. This image probably refers to his departure from Tyre after Europe's rape. As an answer to its new political status, the Tyrian community emphasized both its mythical prestigious past as a colonial metropolis and its kinship with the Greek world on an abundant bronze coinage which shows an imagery relating to mythical foundation narratives involving Kadmos. After Severus Alexander was made emperor in AD 222, Tyre placed the full title, *Sep(timia) Tvro(s) Metrop(olis) Col(onia) P(ho)enic(es)* on its reverses together with Roman legionary emblems. Allegiance to Roman power is perfectly compatible with the exaltation of the great figures of the Phoenician past. Dido and Kadmos continued to be represented. Some decades later, on the reverse of a coin struck under Gallienus (AD 253-268), a naked Kadmos stands with a *phialè* in his right hand, next to a lying heifer. In the background, a turreted city gate is shown. The caption ΘΗΒΕ explicitly identifies the scene. Another type depicts Kadmos handing a papyrus roll and passing the *phoinikeia grammata* to three Greek figures identified as ΕΛΛΗΝΕϹ (*Greeks*).

Tyre's role as "mother-city" has to be understood in the context of the recurrent rivalry with Sidon for the title of *metropolis*. Evidently, Agenor, Europe and Kadmos, founder of Boeotian Thebes, were claimed by both cities to be their own heroes. Tyre and Sidon employed mythical founders of overseas settlements, such as Dido or Kadmos, to support their respective claims of being the true "mother-city" and the oldest member of the Greek family. With the display of Kadmos and Europa, Tyre may have promoted the message a Phoenician city was closely linked with the mythical past of Greece, and even that heroic figures from Tyre stood at the origin of Greek mythical genealogies and cultural development. The Tyrian community seems quite comfortable playing simultaneously with a plurality of foundation themes highlighting "diverging" civic self-perceptions either as a Phoenician city founded by Melqart, as ancestors to Greek lineages, and finally as a Roman colony.

[40] See Whitmarsh 2010; Woolf 2011.
[41] Hirt in the press.

Tyrians skillfully employed the full range of Greco-Roman literary traditions in their favor, without renouncing their own mythical heritage.

Kadmos, the hero who introduced literacy in Greece, is thus a leading figure of "alien wisdom". He symbolizes Phoenician identity and pride on a new global stage. An interesting confirmation is provided by Philostratus' *Lives of the Sophists*.[42] Said by the *Suda* to have been living during the reign of Philip the Arab (244-249), Lucius Flavius Philostratus probably grew up in Lemnos, studied in Athens and settled in Rome, where he became a member of Iulia Domna's learned circle, before he died probably in Tyre. Written between 231 and 237 AD, the collection of the *Lives of the Sophists,* dedicated to the consul Antonius Gordianus, is divided into two parts: the first dealing with the ancient Sophists, e.g. Gorgias, the second with the later school, e.g. Herodes Atticus. They provide a rather picturesque impression of the leading representatives of the intellectual life of the Roman Empire and reflect on its cross-cultural composition.

Hadrian, the Phoenician pupil of Herodes Atticus, is one of the most prominent figures of the book. According to Philostratus, Hadrian was born in Tyre, but he was trained in rhetoric in Athens (Phil. *Lives* 10).[43] There he displayed exceptional talent for sophistic. Philostratus mentions the fact that when his master Herodes died, he delivered such a wonderful funeral oration that the Athenians were moved to tears while listening to his speech. Later, Hadrian ascended to the chair of rhetoric at Athens. In the prooemium of his address to the Athenians, he began by announcing "Once again letters have come from Phoenicia" (*palin ek Phoinikès grammata*). This sentence obviously refers to Kadmos as a paradigmatic figure of Phoenician wisdom and international prestige. On the other hand, however, Hadrian embodies all the typical clichés about Oriental behaviour, according to Philostratus:

> «He performed the duties of the chair at Athens with the greatest ostentation, wore very expensive clothes, bedecked himself with precious gems, and used to go down to his lectures in a carriage with silver-mounted bridle; and always after the lecture he would go home envied of all, escorted by those who loved Hellenic culture, from all parts of the world. (...) Then, too, he won them over by giving games and wine-parties and hunts, and by sharing with them the Hellenic festivals».

Compared to a "sweet-voiced nightingale", Hadrian has even been considered, at the end of his life, as a "magician" (*goes*). Described as an Oriental satrap, living in luxury, dedicated to aristocratic activities, Hadrian illustrates the paradoxical texture of the Roman globalized society. In such a context the Greek *paideia* represents a shared cultural framework while the different local or regional traditions are magnified as part of the multicultural caldron. Through Hadrian, Kadmos appears once again on the Athenian stage, more than six centuries after Euripides' tragedy. Though the cultural memory associated to his figure has been deeply reshaped, he continues to build a bridge between Greece and Phoenicia, the past and the present. Brave but almost arrogant, creative but clumsy, glorious but also damned, Kadmos' traditions adequately convey the Greeks and the Romans', as well as the Phoenicians' complex relationship to their less foreign neighbours.

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[42] See the edition and translation by Wright 1921; Swain 1991, pp. 148-163; Civiletti 2002; Whitmarsh 2004, pp. 423-439; Bowie – Elsner 2009; Brodersen 2014.

[43] See Rothe 1988, pp. 87-126. On Hadrian's origin, see Suda *s.v.* Ἀδριανός.

5. Conclusion

By assuming the role of the Phoenician founder of Thebes in the Greek sources, Kadmos is praised as a cultural hero who introduced the alphabet to Greece, as the *oikistès* of one of the most prestigious Greek cities, and as Harmonia's husband, thanks to a wedding blessed by all of the gods. On the other hand, however, Kadmos is also a threatening outsider who committed a sacrilege, generated a cursed lineage and, according to some sources, finished his life in exile, turned into a snake. In this paper, I have not focused on the literary approach to Kadmos' myth, which has been largely treated, and I have instead addressed new questions concerning the use of Kadmos as a shared memorial figure, as a cross-cultural emblematic hero involved in the shaping of political and cultural networks. By adopting a *longue durée* perspective I have highlighted three significant moments in Kadmos' reception as a bridge character in the Greek and Phoenician social imaginaries. On the Classical Athenian stage, Kadmos is represented as an ambiguous figure, between past and present, respect and *hybris*, "Greekness" and "Otherness". In both the *Phoenissae* and the *Bacchae*, he embodies a Barbarian presence, whose integration remains problematic. Although he initiated a productive exchange involving Phoenicia and Greece, his behaviour recalls the foreign origins of his family. After his death, the Theban lineage cannot avoid perpetuating the original sin. In the Greek tragedy, Kadmos is depicted as an outsider, potentially dangerous, who brought literacy and culture to Thebes, as well as conflict and tensions. With Alexander's conquest, a new cultural framework emerged, in which Greeks and Phoenicians were necessarily considered as part of the same family. The new political agenda and the cultural map gave birth to a "global" or "globalized" kinship network, in which Kadmos' connections with Greece assumed original values and meanings. On the one hand, the Greeks imposed their dominion onto the Phoenician people and encouraged the spread of the Greek language, but on the other hand, the Phoenician elites grasped the opportunity offered by the great Mediterranean middle ground to display their own traditions more broadly. In such a context, Kadmos' links with Greece provide an excellent argument for exhibiting the self-praise of Phoenician agency and prestige in the past and in the present as well. Kadmos' memory was evoked to counterbalance Greek imperialism. Finally, in the Roman Imperial context, the "universal" spread of the Greek *paideia*, adopted all over the Empire as a common cultural platform, was combined with the promotion of local or regional "microidentities". Kadmos was used as a symbol of the Phoenician legacy to Greece and as a model of "entrepreneurship" in the Mediterranean. All in all, mythical kinship and cultural memory appear to be effective and creative tools for the shaping, combining and empowering of cultural networks. It weaves distance and connectivity, space and time.

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