Les religions locales en Afrique du Nord romaine à la veille du Moyen Âge

Local Religions in Roman North Africa on the Eve of the Middle Ages

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Fecha recepción 24/12/2020 | Fecha aceptación 28/07/2021

Abstract

This paper considers how late antique Latin authors (mainly Augustine and Corippus) dealt with ancestral rites and practices of probable autochthonous (i. e. Berber) origin and provided an ideological resemantisation. Although motivated by anti-pagan pleas and also allowing for some exaggeration, they nevertheless provide reliable information, which can be compared against epigraphic evidence, and offer further contributions that enrich the knowl-

Résumé

L'article discute le traitement et la resémantisation idéologique d'une série de pratiques et rites qu'on peut faire remonter aux traditions locales (i.e. berbères) dans l'Afrique du Nord pendant l'antiquité tardive. Bien qu'animés par une indisputable tendance antipaïenne, les sources prises en considération (surtout Augustin et Corippe) nous offrent des informations dignes de foi, qu'on peut mettre en relation avec les témoignages épigraphiques.

edge of the North African local pantheon, otherwise largely documented by epigraphical evidence. It might therefore be surmised that, notwithstanding the deep Christianisation of the region, at the end of the Roman Empire, North Africa still witnessed the survival of residual and isolated pagan fringes.

Keywords

Augustine, Berber religion, Corippus, *Dii Mauri*

On peut donc conclure que, à côté d'une ample et capillaire diffusion du christianisme, la région africaine à la fin de l'époque antique conservait des survivances, encore qu'isolées et sporadiques, de l'ancienne religion.

Mots-clés

Augustin, Coripe, *Dii Mauri*, religion berbère

1. The Persistence of Paganism and its Local Connections

Indigenous traditions and local elements that have always characterised religion in North Africa, bearing witness to a particularism dating back to prehistory[1], survived during the following ages, notwithstanding the multiple influences that contributed to shaping a distinctive *facies* of the region. All this resulted in a sort of continuity, yet accompanied by changes, transformations, and developments. The massive and profound "Romanisation" could not entirely supersede the previous divinities of Phoenician and Punic ascendance, such as Baal and Tanit, which, in turn, were partly rooted in a local background, sometimes not devoid of Egyptian influences[2].

Likewise, the aforementioned religious particularism persisted for a long time after Christianisation, and even during the Islamic Age: various references to pagan practices are to be found in Tertullian[3], Arnobius, and Augustine, whose (not only linguistic, but socio-

1. In addition to the specific chapters in the present work, see the comprehensive studies by G. Camps, *Aux origines de la Berbérie. Monuments et rites funéraires protohistoriques*, Paris, 1961; M. Le Glay, *Saturne africain*, 1-3, Paris, 1961-1966; F. Decret and M. Fantar, *L'Afrique du Nord dans l'Antiquité*, Paris, 1981; A. Cadotte, *La romanisation des dieux. L'interpretatio romana en Afrique du Nord sous le Haut-Empire*, Leiden, 2007. Besides Herod., IV 188, during the imperial period, Apul., *Apol*. 56; *Flor*. I 3-5; Arnob., I 39; August., *Ep*. 47 bear witness to litholatry or astrolatry; they also mention the practice of anointing a sacred stone and of suspending pieces of fabric on sacred trees – a custom that has some parallels in modern folklore. Cf. O. de Cazanove, "Suspension d'ex-voto dans les bois sacrés", in O. de Cazanove and J. Scheid (eds.), *Les bois sacré. Actes du colloque international organisé par le Centre Jean-Bérard et l'Ecole pratique des hautes études (Naples, 23-25 novembre 1989)*, Naples, 1993, 111-126. *CIL* VIII 5673 has been interpreted as a consecration to Ieru (or, according to other, less reliable, readings, Ifru), the moon god; Lilleus, mentioned in *CIL* VIII 4673 (a dedication from Madauros by a *sacerdos Caelestis* dating to the age of Severus Alexander) has been linked to a root meaning "brilliance" or, alternatively, "water": therefore, he might be interpreted as a god of springs and related to Caelestis in her quality of "promiser of rains" (*pluviarum pollicitatrix*: Tert., *Apol*. XXIII): cf. G. Camps, "Qui sont les *dii Mauri*", *Antiquités Africaines*, 26, 1990, 131-153; A. Cadotte, *La romanisation…*, *op. cit.*, n. 1, 104.

2. On the Libyan and Phoenician-Punic religion see M. MacCarty and D'Andrea in this volume, 127-148 and 149-175. On "Romanisation" see A. Gardner, 309-320.

3. The author is well aware of the debate concerning the use of terms such as "pagan"/"paganism", yet thinks that when used in scholarly prose it is devoid of any negative or derogatory connotation, and therefore in the following pages it will be used in a neutral sense, endorsing the considerations put for-

cultural as well) *Africitas* has recently been stressed[4]. Furthermore, a certain distinctive African flavour might also be found in some tendencies that characterise early Christianity in the region, such as the insistence on martyrdom; even the virulence of the Donatist schism, intertwined as it was with political and autonomist instances, has been read under these lenses, and the rich array of Donatist hagiographies deserve particular attention[5]. Similarly, the events that involved the African Church during the Vandal and the Byzantine period, which came after the influential and mighty legacy of Augustine, reaffirmed, once again, its vital and unbroken theological tradition of the autonomy and defence of orthodoxy, both under the Vandal domination[6], and, later, during the Three Chapters affair and the even harsher

ward by A. Cameron, *The Last Pagans of Rome*, Oxford, 2011, and enriched by R. Lizzi Testa, "When the Romans became Pagans", in R. Lizzi Testa (ed.), *The Strange Death of Pagan Rome. Reflexions on a Historiographical Controversy*, Turnhout, 2013, 31-51; C.P. Jones, *Between Pagan and Christian*, Cambridge, MA and London, 2014.

4. K. Pollmann, *St. Augustine the Algerian*, Göttingen, 2003; D.E. Wilhite, *Tertullian the African. An Anthropological Reading of Tertullian's Context and Identities*, Berlin, 2007; D.E. Wilhite, "Augustine in Black and African theology", in K. Pollmann and W. Otten (eds.), *The Oxford Guide to the Historical Reception of Augustine*, Oxford, 2013, 126-134; J. Lagouanère and S. Fialon (eds.), Tertullianus Afer. *Tertullien et la littérature chrétienne d'Afrique*, Turnhout, 2015. In the same line see B.T. Lee, E. Finkelpearl and L. Graverini (eds.), *Apuleius and Africa*, New York and London, 2014. All these studies have the merit of approaching a new scholarly perspective, without, however, resulting entirely persuasive (see, for example, the sound critical remarks about the latter volume put forward by V. Hunink in BMCR.2015.04.04).

5. N.A. Stillmann, *Berber Religion*, in L. Jones (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Religion*, Detroit, 2004 (2nd ed.), 833-836. On Donatism and the related movement of the circumcellions, after the classic book by W.H.C. Frend, *The Donatist Church. A Movement of Protest in Roman North Africa*, Oxford, 1971, who first argued for a strong autonomist instance in the controversy, see now the (even more controversial) inquiry by B.D. Shaw, *Sacred Violence. African Christians and Sectarian Hatred in the Age of Augustine*, Cambridge, 2011 (for some critical discussions see the monographic section of *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, 21, 2013, and R. Lizzi Testa, "Il seme della divisione nella chiesa d'Africa: il movimento donatista", in C. Alzati [ed.], *Africa/Ifrīqiya. Il Maghreb nella storia religiosa di Cristianesimo e Islam*, Gazzada [VA], 2016, 153-178). Shaw himself put forward some interesting considerations on African Christianity in his insightful chapter "Cult and Belief in Punic and Roman Africa", in M. R. Salzman and W. Adler (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Religions in the Ancient World*, vol. 2, Cambridge, 2013, 235-263. The recent volume by S.L. Lander, *Ritual Sites and Religious Rivalries in Late Roman North Africa*, New York, 2017 approaches the question from a perspective that correlates both literary sources and archaeological evidence, providing useful discussions about sacred spaces and topography. See already A. Leone, "Christianity and Paganism, IV: North Africa", in A. Casiday and F.W. Norris (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Christianity, II. Constantine to c. 600*, Cambridge, 2007, 231-247. S. Fialon, Mens immobilis. *Recherches sur le corpus latin des actes et des passions d'Afrique romaine (IIe-VIe siècles)*, Paris, 2019, investigates the entire corpus of African martyrial literature, emphasisising the local element.

6. On the different phases of the Arian-Catholic polemic, which was harsher at the beginning and particularly in regions such as Proconsularis and Byzacena, see Y. Modéran, "Une guerre de religion: les deux Eglises d'Afrique à l'époque vandale", *Antiquité Tardive*, 11, 2003, 21-44. See also A. Merrills in this volume, 359-379.

Monothelite controversy[7]. Autonomist tendencies and idiosyncratic local roots were not smoothed out, as is demonstrated not only by the rich array of documents concerning local saints but also by the testimonies of Gregory the Great on the alleged survival of Donatism[8].

Leaving aside Christianity, which alone would require a specific treatment, when coming to the last centuries of the Roman Empire, late antique and early medieval sources dealing with North African religion follow the traditional ethnographic line attested to in classical authors, but they also provide important evidence of local cults. As a matter of fact, late antique writers and inscriptions represent an invaluable source for reconstructing the "pantheon" of the *dii Mauri*[9], that is the peculiar divinities worshipped by Berber native people, who were fragmented in different tribes and settled as autonomous kingdoms in the mountain or desert regions on the limes, or outside it, and, especially from the 3rd cent. onwards, were often responsible for launching raids against the Roman garrisons[10]. Since these indigenous gods were mainly venerated in non-Romanised areas, the persistence of their worship in imperial times has sometimes been read as an element of resistance to Roman domination[11], although this interpretation runs the risk of overlooking that in many

7. C.O. Tommasi, "Between Dissent and Praise, between Sacred and Secular: Corippus against the African background of the Three Chapters Controversy", *Rivista di Storia e Letteratura Religiosa,* 53, 2017, 201-230.

8. R.A. Markus, "The Problem of 'Donatism' in the Sixth Century", in *Gregorio Magno e il suo tempo. XIX Incontro di studiosi dell'antichità cristiana in collaborazione con l'École Française de Rome (Roma, 9-12 maggio 1990)*, Rome, 1991, 159-166; Y. Duval, "Gregoire et l'église d'Afrique. Les 'hommes du pape'", *ibidem*, 129-158.

9. This name, which is already epigraphically attested, has been introduced in modern scholarship by G. Camps, "L'inscription de Beja et le problème des *Dii Mauri*", *Revue Africaine* 98, 1954, 233-260; see also his subsequent studies "Qui sont les *Dii Mauri*", *Bulletin Archéologique du Comité des Travaux Historiques et Scientifiques*, 20-21, 1984-1985, 157-158; G. Camps, "Qui sont…", *op. cit.*, n. 1; G. Camps, "Dieux africains et *Dii Mauri*", *Encyclopedie Berbère*, 15, 1995; see also M. Bénabou, *La résistance africaine à la romanisation*, Paris, 1976, 261-262; E. Fentress, "*Dii Mauri* and *Dii Patri*", *Latomus*, 37, 1978, 507-516. Its wide meaning includes both universal divinities and specific gods who patronise precise areas or cities (*dii patrii*). Further information will be provided *infra*, 60-61.

10. Y. Modéran, *Les Maures et l'Afrique romaine*, Paris, 2002 provides a painstaking reconstruction of these complex events. On the various denominations of these groups, among which Mazax (i.e. the Latin rendering of the emic term Imazighen) see G. Camps, "Massinissa ou les débuts de l'histoire", *Libyca*, 8, 1960, 1-320 (23).

11. According to the well-known thesis formulated by M. Bénabou, *La resistance…*, *op. cit.*, n. 9 (which was criticised mainly by P.A. Février, "Religion et domination dans l'Afrique romaine", *Dialogues d'Histoire Ancienne*, 2, 1976, 305-336; P.A. Février, "Quelques remarques sur troubles et résistances dans le Maghreb romain", *Cahiers de Tunisie*, 29, 1981, 23-40). For a recent reasssesment of the question see J. Conant, *Staying Roman. Conquest and Identity in Africa and the Mediterranean*, 439-700, Cambridge and New York, 2012. See also D. Whittaker, "Ethnic Discourses on the Frontiers of Roman Africa", in T. Derks and N. Roymans (eds.), *Ethnic Constructs in Antiquity. The Role of Power and Tradition*, Amsterdam, 2009, 189-206.

cases there is evidence of dedications to these gods on the part of Roman citizens, mostly from the military and bureaucracy[12].

Yet, it is possible to infer that a local pagan tradition was still being practised, among both Moors and Roman Africans as well[13]. We must distinguish, however, between traditional pagan practices, common to the various regions of the empire, including "mystery religions"[14], and specifically African practices. Whereas the former pertain to cities or urban contexts, the latter are documented in rural areas. Augustine, for example, offers various references to rites and practices that might suggest an ancestral origin, and mentions the existence of strong pagan communities in towns and cities. His sermon 26 Dolbeau is explicitly directed against the worship of traditional gods and was addressed on the Kalends of January, in order to prevent people from attending a pagan festival that was still celebrated in various parts of the empire and attracted many people[15]. Moreover, the bishop of Hippo blames some

12. This case is comparable to other local divinities who were worshipped by soldiers as well: M. Facella, "Note on *CIL* III 1338 (*IDR* III/3, 139)", *Studi Classici e Orientali*, 65, 2019, 341-359, with further bibliography. See also *infra*, 64, n. 42.

13. S. Conti, "Scambi culturali e persistenze: il paganesimo nell'Africa Proconsolare cristiana", in A. Akerraz, P. Ruggeri, A. Siraj and C. Vismara (eds.), *L'Africa romana. Mobilità delle persone e dei popoli, dinamiche migratorie, emigrazioni ed immigrazioni nelle province occidentali dell'Impero romano. Atti del XVI convegno di studio (Rabat, 15-19 dicembre 2004)*, Rome, 2006, 883-897, notes that the African proconsuls came from pagan ranks up to the beginning of the 5th cent. See also D. Riggs, "The Continuity of Paganism between the Cities and Countryside of Late Roman Africa", in T.S. Burns and J.W. Eadie (eds.), *Urban Centers and Rural Contexts in Late Antiquity*, East Lansing, 2001, 285-300; D. Riggs, "Christianizing the Rural Communities of Late Roman Africa. A Process of Coercion or Persuasion?", in H.A. Drake (ed.), *Violence in Late Antiquity. Perceptions and Practices*, Aldershot, 2006, 297-308.

14. An interesting example is that of the sarcophagus of Aelia Arisuth found near *Oea* (Tripolis) and dated between the 3rd and the 4th cent. (*CIL* VIII 22688 = *CIMRM* 113-115): see M. De Marre, "Aelia Arisuth. Mithraic Matron or Popular Patron", in W. Henderson and E. Effrosyni Zacharopoulou (eds.), *Greece, Rome, Byzantium and Africa. Studies Presented to Benjamin Hendrickx on his Seventy-Fifth Birthday*, Athens, 2016, 215-239, who challenges the current Mithraic interpretation and suggests instead a reference to Attis and the Magna Mater.

15. See F. Dolbeau (ed.), *Augustin d'Hippone, Vingt-six sermons au peuple d'Afrique, retrouvés à Mayence, édités et commentés*, Paris, 1996, and the commentaries in G. Madec (ed.), *Augustin prédicateur. Actes du colloque international de Chantilly, septembre 1996, sur les sermons inédits découverts par François Dolbeau*, Paris, 1998. C. Tornau, "Die Heiden des Augustinus: das Porträt des paganen Gebildeten in *De civitate dei* und in den *Saturnalien* des Macrobius", in T. Fuhrer (ed.), *Die christlich-philosophischen Diskurse der Spätantike: Texte, Personen und Institutionen*, Stuttgart, 2008, 229-325 provides an insightful analysis, which, however, touches on philosophical paganism rather than the survival of ancestral cultic practices. The same applies to the recent contribution by M.R. Salzman, "Christian Sermons against Pagans. The Evidence from Augustine's Sermons on the New Year and on the Sack of Rome in 410", in M. Maas (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Attila*, Cambridge, 2014, 344-357. É. Rebillard, "Late Antique Limits of Christianness. North Africa in the Age of Augustine", in É. Rebillard and J. Rüpke (eds.), *Group Identity and Religious Individuality in Late Antiquity*, Washington, 2015, 293-317 also discusses Sermon 26, but also takes into account other texts, among which Sermon 62 and some letters.

practices that, notwithstanding their pagan origin, had been adopted by Christians as well and, in some respects were tolerated by his predecessors. Among these, consuming meals with pagans (a long debated question, since the very beginnings of Christianity), and, much more, holding banquets and celebrations on tombs on the anniversary of the death, as was customary in the *Parentalia*[16]. Conversely, the ritual of the *caterva* (*De Doctrina Christiana* IV 53), a sort of stone battle fought by two different factions and similar to other ball-games attested to in numerous folklore traditions, is to be read as an original African custom: Augustine states that he put an end to this barbarous practice, which used to cause death and injury, while visiting the city of Caesarea in Mauretania[17]. Moreover, in some letters or sermons, Augustine recalls the cult of the local *genius*[18], that of Saturn or of the patroness of Carthage, *Dea Caelestis*, who is also mentioned some decades later in the *Liber de promissionibus et praedictionibus Dei* (III 38, 44), attributed to Quodvultdeus: in which it is recorded that there a group of pagans rioted against the destruction of the temple of Caelestis and the decision to build a church on its ruins[19].

Even more significantly, in the famous epistle exchange with the rhetorician (probably his former master) Maximus of Madauros concerning the worship of a unique God and the alleged veneration of the martyrs[20], Augustine ironically mentions a god Abadir and (probably) a priestly collegium named Eucaddires: the first name, also attested to in *CIL* VIII 21481, has the sense of "powerful father", and might therefore suggest an epiclesis of Saturn, as is

16. Although forbidden in most parts of the empire, this custom was still practised in North Africa: a council in 397 was held to prohibit it, and, according to some passages in Augustine, while it had been eradicated among Catholics, it survived only among Donatists: A. Leone, "Christianity and Paganism…", *op. cit.*, n. 5, 232, with reference to V. Saxer, *Morts, martyrs, reliques en Afrique chrétienne. Le témoignage de Tertullien, Cyprien et Augustin à la lumière de l'archéologie africaine*, Paris, 1980.

17. G.A. Cecconi, "Come finisce un rituale pagano: la *Caterva* di Cesarea di Mauretania", in E. Lo Cascio and G. Merola (eds.), *Forme di aggregazione nel mondo romano*, Bari, 2007, 345-361; G.A. Cecconi, "La *caterva* di Cesarea di Mauretania (altre riflessioni)", in C. Freu, S. Janniard and A. Ripoll (eds.), Libera curiositas. *Mélanges d'histoire romaine et antiquité tardive offerts à J.-M. Carrié*, Turnhout, 2016, 399-405.

18. Aug., *Serm*. 62, 6. In earlier epochs, dedications to the *genius* are quite common, as shown by A. Cadotte, *La romanisation…*, *op. cit*., n. 1, *index*, s.v.

19. Saturn and Caelestis are recorded in Aug., *En. in Ps*. 98, 2-3. See also *Civ*. 2, 4 and 26; *Ep*. 91; *De Haeres*. 46, 9. The problematic *Caelicolae* mentioned in *Ep*. 44, 13 are probably to be understood as worshippers of a henotheistic uranian god, like Theos Hypsistos: B.D. Shaw, *Sacred Violence…*, *op. cit.*, n. 5, 277. The event recorded by Quodvultedus is to be placed immediately after the anti-pagan laws promulgated by Theodosius and their application in Africa in 399. That some Carthaginians were still devotees of the goddess is attested to by Salvian, *Gub*. VIII 2, 9-12 as well. On the figure and role of Caelestis see M.G. Lancellotti, *Dea Caelestis: studi e materiali per la storia di una divinità dell'Africa romana*, Pisa and Rome, 2010.

20. Aug., *Epist*. 16 and 17. J.H. Baxter, "The Martyrs of Madaura, AD 180", *Journal of Theological Studies*, 26, 1924, 21-37, had the merit of identifying such martyrs, who bear Punic names (Miggo or Miggin, Sname, Namphamo, and Lucitas) as circumcellions; this would also explain Augustine's rather dismissive attitude towards their alleged "martyrdom". The same hypothesis is endorsed by B.D. Shaw, *Sacred Violence…*, *op. cit.*, n. 5, 236.

Baliddir (*CIL* VIII 5279; 19121; 19122), whose name is composed of a Berber root *edder*, *-idir* ("to live") and the name Baal, probably pointing to Saturn Frugifer[21]. Another god, named Aulisua (attested to in inscriptions from Mauretania Caesariensis and Tingitana), is linked to the root *AWL*, which means "to protect, to watch over", and is probably a deity of fertility or a sort of African Hercules[22]. More interesting is the record of Draco, the snake god, mentioned in *CIL* VIII 9326; 15247; 15378; 17722, *IA* II 736, who is also to be recognized in the golden idol thrown into the sea by Salsa in the homonymous passion[23].

In addition to these names, and to the collective, indefinite, dedications[24] to the *dii Mauri* or to a *numen Maurorum*, other fifty names are also variously attested in late antique inscriptions, the most famous of which is a 3rd cent. CE relief from Vaga (Beja). This stela depicts seven divine figures with their names and some attributes, which have been used to infer their probable functions. The horse riders Maurtam and Iunam, on the two extremes, are perhaps to be compared to the Dioscuri; the coiling snake that accompanies Macurgum suggests a very close analogy with Eshmun/Aesculapius[25] and his name has been related to

21. On Baaladdir see A. Cadotte, *La romanisation…*, *op. cit*., n. 1, 113-129, who postulates his being equated with an agrarian god, probably Silvanus. Quite interestingly the same scholar, "Frugifer en Afrique du Nord: épithète divine ou dieu à part entire", *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik*, 143, 2003, 187-200, suggests that Frugifer might be an original Berber god that had later assumed this Latin name and had been assimilated with other gods, mostly Saturn or Pluto. This hypothesis might shed light on a much debated and textually vexed passage in Arnobius (VI 10), which mentions a god called Frugiferius, whose name recalls the epithet traditionally given to Saturn, *Frugifer*, but whose iconography (lion headed and biting an apple, or clenching his jaw, according to the different emendations of the manuscript tradition) shares some features with the Mithraic leontocephaline god: see A. Blomart, "Frugifer: une divinité mithriaque léontocéphale décrite par Arnobe", *Revue de l'Histoire des Religions*, 210, 1993, 5-25; M.G. Lancellotti, "La statuetta leontocefala di Tharros. Contributo allo studio delle rappresentazioni del Kosmokrator mitriaco e gnostico", *Rivista di Studi Fenici*, 30, 2002, 19-39.

22. *CIL* VIII 9906; 9907; 21704; M. Lenoir, "Inscriptions nouvelles de Volubilis", *Bulletin Archéologique Marocaine*, 16, 1985-1986, 191-233 (nn. 1 and 2). See also Lenoir's analysis in "Aulisua, dieu maure de la fecondité", in A. Mastino (ed.). *L'Africa romana. Atti del III Convegno di studio (Sassari, 13-15 dicembre 1985)*, Sassari, 1986, 295-302; V. Brouquier Reddé, "De Saturne à Aulisua", in *L'Afrique, la Gaule, la religion à l'époque romaine. Mélanges à la mémoire de M. Leglay*, Bruxelles, 1994, 154-164.

23. S. Fialon and J. Meyers (eds.), *La* Passio sanctae Salsae *(BHL 7467). Recherches sur une passion tardive d'Afrique du Nord avec une nouvelle édition critique de A. M. Piredda et une traduction annotée du GRAA*, Bordeaux, 2015.

24. A. Cadotte, "*Pantheus et Dii deaeque omnes*: les formules de synthèses divines en Afrique du Nord", *Antiquités Africaines*, 38-39, 2002, 55-72. In this regard, mention should be made of the strange and unattested to dii Ingirozoglezim (*CIL* VIII 20627), who are invoked together with Jupiter, Juba and the local *genius*: cf. H. Pavis d'Escurac, "*Nundinae* et vie rurale dans l'Afrique du Nord romaine", *Bulletin Archéologique du Comité des Travaux Historiques et Scientifiques*, 17b, 1981, 251-260. On the *nundinae* as typically linked to pagan practices, see L. Dossey, *Peasant and Empire in Christian North Africa*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 2010, 177.

25. E. Lipinski, "Apollon / Eshmun en Afrique proconsulaire", in *L'Afrique, la Gaule, la religion à l'epoque romaine. Mélanges à la mémoire de M. Leglay*, Bruxelles, 1994, 19-26; N. Benseddik, "Esculape et Hygie. Les

terms like *IMQQOR*, *AMQRAN*, "the greatest"; conversely, Viham might be a fertility or prophylactic goddess, as the forceps indicate; finally, there are Varsissima, a goddess whose name probably means "anonymous" (*WAR ISM*), and is probably to be linked with the Varsutina, mentioned by Tertullian and compared to Atargatis and Caelestis (*Nat*. II 8); Bonchor, who occupies the central position, and who has been either traced back to a Punic name Bodmelqart, "servant of Melqart", or to the Bocchores mentioned by Arnobius (see *infra*, 64); the otherwise unknown Matilam, represented in the act of presiding over a ram sacrifice. It is also possible that groups of deities could vary according to local consuetudes: for example, a relief from Henchir Ramdan (*CIL* VIII 14444) shows three gods, namely, Fudina, Vacurtum (according to Gabriel Camps, to be corrected to Macurtum) and Varsis: the two goddesess Fudina and Varsis can be compared to Viham and Varsissima attested at Vaga. Likewise, the five *dii Magifae*, near Theveste (*CIL* VIII 16749; *ILAlg* 2977), Iesdan, Masiden, Masiddice, Suggan, Thillilua, to whom an aedicule was dedicated by a certain Q. T. Politicus, suggest a local "pantheon": Suggan is probably a "black" god, while Thillilua has been paralleled to Illuelo, a god of sunlight[26]. Finally, other appellations demonstrate the large diffusion of theophoric names, or derive from toponyms and may be linked to them, suggesting that these gods protected a particular place: such is the case of Auzius (*CIL* VIII 9014); Haos (*CIL* VIII 16750). An eponymous patriotic goddess Africa is also variously documented[27].

2. Flavius Cresconius Corippus (*ca*. 500-568 CE)

After these introductory considerations about the persistence of paganism and its local connections, the second part of this paper will mainly deal with a less known writer, who, nevertheless, constitutes a significant testimony to this attitude, namely Flavius Cresconius Corippus, the most important representative of Latin poetry in North Africa during the Byzantine Age, who takes his place at the end of a noteworthy literary line, after which there was no more secular poetry in Africa or, at least, none has survived[28]. Later Medieval sources, in Greek or Latin, no longer seem interested in dealing with the survivals of pa-

cultes guérisseurs en Afrique", *Pallas*, 68, 2005, 271-288, who also has some references to Aulisua.

26. In this summary we have mainly followed the interpretation by G. Camps, "Qui sont…", *op. cit.*, n. 1 and by K. Jongeling, *North African Names from Latin Sources*, Leiden, 1994.

27. C. Hamdoune, "La *dea Africa* et le culte impérial", in *Lieux de cultes: aires votives, temples, églises, mosquées. IXe Colloque international sur l'histoire et l'archéologie de l'Afrique du Nord antique et médiévale (Tripoli, 19-25 février 2005)*, Paris, 2008, 151-161, and previously M. Le Glay, "La déesse Afrique à Timgad", in *Hommages à J. Bayet*, Bruxelles, 1964, 374-382 ; M. Le Glay, "Encore la Dea Africa", in R. Chevallier (ed.), *Melanges d'archéologie et d'histoire offerts à André Piganiol*, Paris, 1966, 1233-1239.

28. On Corippus' recent scholarly revival see B. Goldlust (ed.), *Corippe, un poète entre deux mondes*, Lyon, 2015, with further references. A comprehensive survey of the historical events between the 5th and the 7th cent. is provided by the collective volume edited by J.P. Conant and S. Stevens (eds.), *North Africa under Byzantium and Early Islam*, Washington DC, 2016.

ganism in Africa, in all likelihood almost extinguished; these writers were instead rather concerned with more contemporary issues, such as the theological controversies or the emergence of Islam. An interesting case is provided by an anonymous dialogue entitled *Doctrina Jacobi nuper baptizati*, set in Carthage under Heraclius' reign, which considers the relationships between Christians and converted Jews[29]. Consequently, these sources will not be discussed in the following pages.

Probably a grammarian or a schoolmaster operating in Carthage, Corippus penned two hexametric poems, the *Iohannis* (a celebration of John Troglite, the Byzantine general, who fought the rebellious Berber tribes in Africa ten years after the defeat of the Vandals in 533-534 CE), and the *Laus Iustini Augusti Minoris* (a panegyric for the Emperor Justin II), the first of which was probably commissioned by the Byzantine generals and delivered in Carthage, in the very years after John's victory in 546-548. It is also fair to assume that Corippus had access to information from inside sources in the Byzantine command and even drew some narrative details from the triumphal pomp itself[30], although it is nothing more than a mere surmise that the delivering of the *Iohannis* granted Corippus success and glory. To a greater extent, the Byzantine reconquest of Africa, in the wake of a century of Vandal oppression, was regarded as a blessing, attained thanks to divine providence, as Justinian himself states in two texts dated to 535 that depict the regaining of Africa as the result of a crusade: the famous – and rhetorically elaborate – Novella 37 as well as *Cod. Iust.* I 27. On a more practical level, these events were accompanied by a construction programme that was meant to bring back to their pristine splendour many buildings, mainly churches or monasteries, in order to emphasise orthodoxy, as is documented in Procopius' celebrative text *De aedificiis*[31].

Though deeply permeated by a strong Christian ideology, it is difficult to count Corippus' poetry among "patristic" literature. Religion, however, unquestionably plays a main role, and the entire framework of his first poem, where the African ambiance is palpable, is always inspired by a radical dualism between good and evil that does not admit shades or exceptions: the final victory of the Byzantines is intended to be the triumph of Christianity over the fallacy of pagan gods and the Berber tribes revolting against the Byzantines are depicted as a demoniac collective, impersonal entity. The choice of similes derived from pagan imagery helps to reinforce this powerful ideology and constitutes a significant part of Corippus' poetical message, and to consider him a proto-medieval author.

29. Av. Cameron, "The Byzantine Reconquest of North Africa and the Impact of Greek Culture", *Graeco-Arabica,* 5, 1993, 153-165; G. Dagron and V. Déroche, "Juifs et chrétiens dans l'Orient du VIIe siècle", *Travaux et Mémoires,* 11, 1991, 17-273.

30. A. Merrills, "Corippus' Triumphal Ethnography. Another look at Iohannis II 28-161", *Libyan Studies*, 50, 2019, 153-163.

31. G. Downey, "Justinian as Builder", *The Art Bulletin*, 32, 1950, 262-266; J. Elsner, "The Rhetoric of Buildings in the *De Aedificiis* of Procopius", in E. James (ed.), *Art and Text in Byzantium*, Cambridge, 2007, 33-57.

At the same time, as an African himself, the poet is actually well informed about the Berber tribes and is particularly clever in depicting their strange customs. Historians or anthropologists of North Africa have long since recognized the *Iohannis* as a primary and reliable source for Berber customs, warfare, and African topography.[32] These details can be placed into an actual system of beliefs and practices, such as the worship of water springs[33], or of caves or mountains, places that are often intrinsically linked to the concept of their own *genius*[34]. More significant is the custom of divinising some local kings, charismatic rulers or leaders after their death, a practice that in all likelihood should be linked to a familiar or dynastic social organisation and that has been paralleled to the marabout cults[35]. Mentioned by Tertullian, Minucius Felix or Arnobius, this custom finds a distant and probably purely literary echo in Corippus as well (III 154)[36]. Moreover, thanks to the *Iohannis* we can get further evidence of local pagan practices and indigenous gods of an otherwise composite and fragmented pantheon, which are attested to in contemporary and later sources as well, although in more general terms[37]: variously addressed as inane gods, they are listed in book five (lines 33-39) and eight (lines 300-309), when the weird rites and bloody sacrifices performed by the Moors are contrastively compared to the Christian liturgy officiated by the Byzantines. Moreover, the choice of explicitly mentioning pagan divinities by name responds to the precise purpose of surprising or even shocking a Latin-speaking audience by inserting strange

32. Such a topic has already been discussed by C.O. Tommasi, "Persistenze pagane nell'Africa del VI secolo: la *Iohannis* corippea e la questione dei *dii mauri*", in M. Marin and C. Moreschini (eds.), *Africa Cristiana. Storia, religione, letteratura*, Brescia, 2002, 269-301, whose conclusions are here summarised and updated.

33. Cf. F. Decret and M. Fantar, *L'Afrique…*, *op. cit.*, n. 1, 246. Some authors mention Ammon in connection with waters and as such he is sometimes portrayed in the act of urinating: cf. Nig. Fig., *Sphaer. Gr.* fr. 89 Swoboda; Hyg., *Astr*. II 20; *Fab*. 133; Ampel., II 1; Serv., *Ad Aen*. IV 196; Mart. Cap., II 157.

34. M. Bénabou, *La resistance…*, *op. cit.*, n. 9, 271 mentions for example a god Bacax (*CIL* VIII 5504-5520, 18828-18857), linked to a cave in Jebel Taya (Algeria).

35. Cf. E. Gellner, *Saints of the Atlas*, London, 1969.

36. Tert., *Apol*. XXIV 8; Min. Fel., XXIV 1; XXXI 9; Lact., *Inst*. I 15, 6. *CIL* VIII 8834 and 20627 provide evidence for a divinisation of rulers like Hiempsal and Iuba. On Berber kingdoms see J. Carcopino, "Un 'empereur' Maure inconnu, d'après une iscription latine récemment découverte dans l'Aurès", *Revue des Études Anciennes*, 46, 1944, 94-120; G. Camps, "*Rex gentium Maurorum et Romanorum*. Recherches sur les royaumes de Maurétaine au VI^{e} et VII^{e} siècles", *Antiquités Africaines*, 20, 1984, 183-218. This question is intertwined with the probable survival of the imperial cult even during the Vandal period: see A. Chastagnol and N. Duval, "Les survivances du culte impérial dans l'Afrique du Nord à l'epoque vandale", in *Mélanges d'Histoire Ancienne offerts a W. Seston*, Paris, 1974, 87-118; F.M. Clover, "Le culte des empereurs dans l'Afrique Vandale", *Bulletin Archéologique du Comité des Travaux Historiques et Scientifiques*, 15-16, 1979-1980, 121-128. Although not directly concerned with the problem of a divine status of the Berber kings, interesting considerations are put forward by A. Merrills, "The Men Who Would Be King. Moorish Political Hierarchies and Imperial Policy in Byzantine Africa", *Al-Masā*, 21, 2020, 1-16. More in general, it seems that the Berbers of antiquity had a well-developed funerary cult.

37. See Proc., *De Aedif.* VI 2, 21. The same practices are also documented by Medieval Islamic authors: see M. Benabbès and A. Mkacher in this volume, 69-85 and 87-106 respectively.

and unusual names, whose unarticulated sounds are semiferine. Together with Gurzil and Ammon, who had been the object of more detailed accounts in the previous books, Corippus also mentions Sinifer and Mastiman, providing at the same time the *interpretatio Romana* of their names – namely Mars and Iuppiter Taenarius (i. e. Dis or Pluto) respectively.

The (otherwise unattested to) mention of Mastiman is probably the most problematic, nor does the unlikely association with a god Motmanius from Lambaesis[38] provide any clue to explain the name, which might be the vocalisation of a Neo-Punic root *m's-*, probably to be linked either to an Egyptian form *ms* (*meist*, pl.), "child", or to a Touareg word *mess*, meaning "master"; besides, the same root *Mas-* is attested in names such as Masierkar, Masavchan, Masinthan, or Masthalul[39]. If we credit the "translation" provided by Corippus, this god could be equated to the African Pluto, who has a preeminent role in the pantheon and has somehow been considered as being the chthonian aspect of Saturn: when not a purely literary fiction, the custom of human sacrifices also seems to contribute to this identification[40]. A recent suggestion put forward by Jacqueline Champeaux proposes to emend an otherwise *locus desperatus* in Arnobius (I 36) by correcting Mastimanes et Bocchores, instead of the transmitted nonsensical reading Tisianes et Bocchores, thus improving Salmasius' correction Titanes et Bocchores, which was inspired by the custom of divinising dead Moorish kings[41].

More light might be shed on Sinifere, for archaeological and epigraphic evidence confirm the veneration of a warrior god called Mars Canapphar, whose small shrine, so different from the traditional templar buildings and architecturally comparable to a *mithraeum*, was found and excavated in the 1970s in *Gholaia* (Bu Njem), on the *limes Tripolitanus*, about 300

38. See *CIL* VIII 2650: the two names have been compared by E. Lefebure, *La politique religieuse des Grecs en Libye*, Algiers, 1902, 311: according to V. Brouquier-Reddé, *Temples et cultes de la Tripolitaine*, Paris, 1992, 220, this identification has to be rejected. Conversely the Motmanius, who appears in the aforementioned inscription together with Mercurius, is probably the same name recorded in the form Metymannus (Plin., *N.H.* VII 61) or Methymnus (Val. Max., VIII 13), as the youngest of Massinissa's sons (G. Camps, "Qui sont…", *op. cit.*, n. 1, 143). A semitic root seems implied in the radical *Mot-*.

39. Robert Kerr (private communication); see also K. Jongeling, *North African Names from Latin Sources*, Leiden, 1994, s.v.; the final desinence *-an* is frequent in Libyan and Punic texts: see O. Masson, "Grecs et Libyens en Cyrenaïque d'après les témoignages de l'épigraphie", *Antiquités Africaines*, 10, 1976, 49-62 (esp. 55). *Tim* might be related to *timminus* (ILAlg 2195).

40. Cf. E. Lipinski, *Dieux et déesses de l'univers phénicien et punique*, Leuven, 1986, 381-384. An interesting witness is the mention of Iuppiter Plutonius in chapter 27 of the Hermetic *Asclepius*, a text that has probably been written in an African milieu (although the attribution to Apuleius is to be discarded): J.-P. Mahé, *Hermès en Haute*-Égypte*, II*, Quèbec, 1982, 250-251 considers this reference as an allusion to the chthonian aspect of Saturn. The passage, which emphasises the aspect of Saturn as nourisher, also mentions another typical African deity, namely Ceres. See also A. Cadotte, *La romanisation…*, *op. cit.*, n. 1, 325-341, who, after a detailed analysis of the surviving evidence, endorses Lipinski's suggestion, namely that Pluto is the "chthonian hypostasis" of Saturn.

41. J. Champeaux, *Arnobe: le combat Contre les paiens. Religion, mythologie et polemique au IIIe siecle ap. J.-C.*, Turnhout, 2018, 145. Bocchores is also to be paralleled with Bonchor, one of the gods that appear in the "pantheon" of Vaga (*supra*, 61).

kilometers from Lepcis Magna[42]. It seems likely that this was the Romanisation of a local god, also worshipped by Roman legionaries, as the dedicatory inscription of this temple, written by Titus Flavius Apronianus, allows us to infer[43].

Archaeology has offered further confirmation as far as another deity mentioned at greater length in the *Iohannis* is concerned, namely Gurzil, whose priest Ierna is also one of the chiefs of the Luwatas (II 109). The name Gurzil, as a matter of fact, can be related to the city of Ghirza[44]; and probably also to the temple of Vanammon itself in Bu Njem, if the radical *van-* is to be understood as a patronymic, this corresponds with Corippus' statement that Gurzil is the son of Ammon and a heifer (II 112)[45].

Corippus does not provide any information on the cultic worship of Gurzil, yet the god is the object of a skilled Ringkomposition in book five (lines V 22-31 [70-79], and 541-569 [493-521]). In the initial lines, the poet describes how a bull, the supposed "avatar" of the god[46], hurls itself through the battlefield, as if were animated by magic arts, and disarranges the soldiers, until it is killed by a Roman knight, while in the final part, Ierna, after the defeat,

42. See R. Rebuffat, "Nouvelles Recherches dans le Sud de la Tripolitaine", *Comptes Rendus des Séances de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres*, 1972, 319-339, who published the inscription DEO MARTI CANAPPHARI AVGUSTO dedicated in 225 from the third legion based in Gholaia (*AE* 1979, 645); in a following article ("Bu Njem 1971", *Libya Antiqua*, 11-12, 1974-1975, 189-241: 217) the same French scholar suggested the plausibility of the equation between Canapphar and Sinifere, due to the switch between /k/ and /s/.

43. Similarly, the temple of Vanammon in the same city was erected thanks to Aurelius Varixen and the altar of Iuppiter Hammon was dedicated by Tullius Romulus.

44. John's campaign arrived as far as Ghirza: see D. Mattingly, "The Art of the Unexpected: Ghirza in the Libyan Pre-Desert", in S. Lancel (ed.), *Numismatique, langues,* écritures *et arts du livre, spécificité des arts figurés. Actes du VIIe Colloque International d'Histoire et Archéologie de l'Afrique du Nord (Nice 21-31 octobre 1996)*, Paris, 1999, 383-405, with references to the temple of Gurzil. Linguistic relations between Ghirza and Gurzil are outlined by F. Vattioni, "Le iscrizioni di Ghirza (Tripolitania)", *AION*, 53, 1993, 451-458, who also mentions Gurzensis (*CIL* VIII 68) and Gurza (*CIL* VI 32757; 36277). A further element of this connection is to be recognised in the name of Guarizila, the brother of the leader of the Frexes Antalas (Coripp., *Ioh.* IV 366 and Procop., *Bell.* IV 21, 17). A.F. Elmayer, "The Libyan God Gurzil in a Neo-Punic Inscription from Tripolitania", *Libyan Studies*, 13, 1982, pp. 49-50, proposes to read *IPT* 11 (from Lepcis Magna) as an *ex voto* dedicated to Gurzil, which is however criticised by V. Brouquier-Reddé, *Temples et cultes…*, *op. cit.*, n. 38, 223. Elmayer has recently published another inscription to Gurzil from Gars Doga: see "Two Punic inscriptions from Roman Tripolitania", *Libyan Studies*, 50, 2019, 147-152.

45. R. Rebuffat, "Divinités de l'oued Kebir", in A. Mastino (ed.), *L'Africa Romana. Atti del VII convegno di studio – Sassari, 15-17 dicembre 1989*, Sassari, 1990, 119-159, 139. Attempts at interpreting the figure of Gurzil and equating him to a Greco-Roman god have been made since the *editio princeps* of the *Iohannis*: if Mazzucchelli suggested a comparison with Jupiter, other scholars take into account Clement's witness (*Protr.* II 28, 3) and propose an equation with Apollo: S. Gsell, *Histoire ancienne de l'Afrique du Nord*, vol. 4, Paris, 1920, 155.

46. On the bull and its symbolism see M. Le Glay, *Saturne…*, *op. cit.*, n. 1, 134. The traditional interpretation has been discussed and challenged by P. Riedlberger, *Philologischer, historischer und liturgischer Kommentar zum 8. Buch der Johannis des Goripp nebst kritischer Edition und Übersetzung*, Groningen, 2010, 300, who notes that Gurzil is nowhere considered a bull-headed god (although the episode in *Iohannis* V

escapes on a horse, carrying with him the heavy metal idol of the god, whose weight, however, throws the horse down and provokes Ierna's death. Once again, the two passages display many Scriptural references, which echo the episode of the golden calf, and probably trivialise the idea of animating statues, otherwise attested in a Hermetic context, not to mention the usual condemnation of magic[47]. The importance of this god finds a confirmation in his persistent worship, which is documented by the Arab Andalusian historian Al Bekri, when he attests how local people worshipped a stone idol called Kurzah or Gurzah[48].

The relationship between Gurzil and Ammon in the poem can shed further light on the latter, who appears as the main god in the Libyan-Berber "pantheon". An ancestral divinity, not devoid of monolathric traits, Ammon is probably the result of a conflation between a local supreme god and the Egyptian solar divinity Amon[49], on whom the archetypal, uranian and universlistic features of the supreme Phoenician god Baal Hmn were later partly superimposed[50], and was eventually absorbed into the Roman pantheon under the name of African Saturn, a god whose functions clearly fulfil the needs of the African people. Therefore, Saturn incorporated Punic and Roman elements, preserving at the same time the original Libyan aspect, and his features persisted, with few differences, from the prehistoric to the late medieval period[51]. Late Antiquity, in particular, witnesses to the veneration of Saturn in different regions[52].

22-29 might suggest that the bull actually represented Guzil's embodiment); the same scholar also observes that there is not enough evidence to equate the Kurza idol of the Arab sources (*infra*, 66, n. 48), and Gurzil.

47. See G. Caramico, "Corippo, *Iohannis* V 22-31 [V 70-79] tra tradizione epica e civilizzazione rituale", in C. Talamo (ed.), *Saggi di commento a testi greci e latini*, 2, Pisa, 2010, 179-195, with reference to Aug., *Civ*. VIII 23, 1.

48. See W. MacGuckin, Baron de Slane (ed.), *Description de l'Afrique septentrionale par Abou-Obeïd El-Bekri*, Tangier, 1913, 31.

49. Cf. M. Le Glay, *Saturne…*, *op. cit.*, n. 1, 423 and 427 (with interesting considerations about the veneration of the ram and the probable Egyptian influences); V. Brouquier-Reddé, *Temples et cultes…*, *op. cit.*, n. 38, 262. See also A.M. Bisi, "Diffusione del culto cirenaico di Zeus Ammon", in G. Barker, J. Lloyd and J. Reynolds (eds.), *Cyrenaica in Antiquity*, Oxford, 1995, 307-317.

50. One of the most comprehensive inquiries on this god is that by P. Xella, *Baal Hammon*, Roma, 1991 (although the suggested etymology is questioned by E. Lipinski, *Dieux…*, *op. cit.*, n. 40, 251).

51. According to N.A. Stillmann, "Berber Religion…", *op. cit.*, n. 5, 834, the iconography of a seated Saturn, surrounded by animals, finds a continuity in the figure of the Moroccan Jewish "saint" Rabbi Ephraim Enqawa of Tlemcen.

52. L. Gamberale, "Il voto del sacerdote C. Manius Felix Fortunatianus. Una dedica poetica a Saturno Africano", in *Filologia e forme letterarie. Studi offerti a F. della Corte*, vol. 4, Urbino, 1987, 397-417 discusses a metrical inscription from Chul, near Carthage, which he dates in 284 CE; A. Beschaousch, "Une stele consacrée à Saturne le 8 novembre 323", *Bulletin Archéologique du Comité des Travaux Historiques et Scientifiques*, 4, 1968, 253-268 publishes an inscription dated in the first decades of the 4th century, where a priestly collegium is also mentioned. M. Le Glay, *Saturne…*, *op. cit.*, n. 1, 102 records some temples in Thuburbo Maius and Theveste, which after the Byzantine conquest were transformed into churches. References to Saturn also appear in a late 5th cent. writer, Dracontius (*Rom.* V 148; *Laud.* III 118), and hint to the infant sacrifices attributed to him; Mart. Cap., I 58. Finally, M. Le Glay, *Saturne…*, *op. cit.*, n. 1, 425 and

Without denying rhetorical mannerism, which is lavishly employed to establish the major theme of Berber paganism, when comparing pagan divinities to demons or evil spirits and the frantic prophetess to a possessed woman[53], nevertheless Corippus presents some striking references to this multifaceted god: while the epithet *corniger* is surely an allusion to Ammon, the exaggerated descriptions of his frantic priestess and prophetess, culminating in a self-mutilation and even in an allusion to human sacrifices[54], might point to the worship of Saturn, where blood was a key element and represented a vivifying force[55].

In all probability, Corippus had in mind the cult of Saturn, choosing to address him with the ancient name Hammon, probably deriving it from an erudite source, a name that a Latin writer could easily confuse with the more common Ammon[56]. The poet deals with this god in two almost identical scenes (III 79-155; VI 145-187), which, however, are set in different locations: in book three the rite is placed in Byzacena, the homeland of the Frexes, a tribe to which Guenfan and Antalas belong, whereas in book six, the person of Carcasan, king of the Luwatas, might suggest a Tripolitanian location, probably near Augila. There, the existence of a temple

318 cites a passage from the Spanish 16th cent. historian Luis del Marmol Carvajal, according to whom the inhabitants of the Canary Islands worshipped a god called Aman and sacrificed human beings to him.

53. V. Zarini, "Goétique, poétique, politique. Réflexions sur un passage de la Johannide de Corippe (3,79-155)", in J. Dion (ed.), *Culture antique et fanatisme*, Nancy and Paris, 1996, 113-140; C.O. Tommasi, "Un testimonium sul Saturno Africano nella Iohannis di Corippo?", *Studi Classici e Orientali*, 47.2, 2000, 329-349; M. De Marre, "One Oracle Too Many? Corippus (and Procopius) on Female Prophecy in North Africa", in R.J. Evans (ed.), *Prophets and Profits: Ancient Divination and Its Reception*, London, 2018, 162-182. Even though the role of women is documented in the worship of Saturn (M. Le Glay, *Saturne…*, *op. cit.*, n. 1, 375), and prophetesses are attested among the Berbers (as in the case of the famous Kahina, on whom see Y. Moderan, "Kahena", *Encyclopédie Berbère*, 27, 2005, 4102-4111), Corippus is surely relying on literary models, such as the Sibyl in Vergil, or Phemonoe in Lucan.

54. The question of human sacrifices (and in particular those of infants) is probably the most controversial and debated one as far as the cult of Baal and Saturn is concerned: see also B. D'Andrea in this volume, 149-175.

55. M. Le Glay, *Saturne…*, *op. cit.*, n. 1, 297.

56. According to G.-Ch. Picard, *Les religions de l'Afrique romaine*, Paris 1954, 226, the confusion between the Berber god and Baal was increased because of the similarity of their names (Ammon and Hammon), particularly in later periods (P. Xella, *Baal Hammon*, *op. cit.*, n. 50, 145; A.M. Bisi, "Diffusione…", *op. cit.*, n. 49, 310 and 313). E. Fentress, "*Dii Mauri*…", *op. cit.*, n. 9, 511, with explicit reference to Corippus: she suggests that Corippus has in mind Ammon, whose veneration had been introduced among the Berbers by the Tripolitanian Luwatas, although "some assimilation between Jupiter Ammon and Baal Hammon is not impossible"; conversely, W.H.C. Frend, "The Christian Period in Mediterranean Africa", in J.D. Fage (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Africa*, II, Cambridge, 1978, 410-489, esp. 485, "they were worshippers of Baal-Hammon, as their ancestors had been centuries before". G. Levi della Vida, "Frustuli neopunici tripolitani", *Rendiconti dell'Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei*, 18, 1963, 463-482, esp. 468 notes how in Tripolitania a kind of *interpretatio* Baal-Zeus is attested, rather than the usual Baal-Saturn. It might be added that the Egyptian god Amun is sometimes written Hamun (*CIL* III 75, 3463).

for Ammon is attested until the age of Justinian[57]. In both cases, however, the poet seems to refer to the indigenous Berber god, who had been confused with Saturn, rather than to the Hellenised figure of Zeus Ammon. One might surmise that the two figures of Jupiter-Amon and Baal-Saturn were conflated and confused at a later stage and in the innermost regions. Moreover, the Theban god Ammon is not attested outside Tripolitania and Cyrenaica, whereas Numidia and Tunisia witness to a different iconography of Saturn, with long hair, beard and with horns, which might be the result of a Berberisation of the originally Punico-Roman divinity[58].

Although isolated and little known, except among specialists, Corippus' testimony is therefore quite remarkable. It might be interesting to note in conclusion that it was fated to enjoy a certain renown among Decadent authors. Indeed, Gustave Flaubert inserted these names to increase the exotic atmosphere in his African novel, in a passage where, together with Tanit, the Punic patroness of Carthage, the fatal princess Salammbo threatens her young, desperate lover Matho just by mentioning his Berber gods[59]:

> "*Malédiction sur toi qui as dérobé Tanit! Haine, vengeance, massacre et doleur! Que Gurzil, dieu des batailles, te déchire! Que Matisman (sic!), dieu des morts t'étouffle! Et que l'Autre – celui qu'il ne faut pas nommer – te brûle!*".

Plagiarising Flaubert, in turn, Gabriele D'Annunzio would have employed the same names in his Carthaginian film, Cabiria, mentioning, among others, the more traditional, Baal, Tanit and Moloch, as well as Gurzil and Matisman[60]. When Massinissa meets Sofonisba, he exclaims:

> "*Non io prendo la regina, ma la regina prende me. Per Gurzil, dio delle battaglie, per i nostri iddii, io ti consacro il mio ferro!*".

And Sofonisba, at the point of death, speaking her last words says:

> "*In me sola mi compio. Non preghiere né libazioni mutano l'ultimo evento. Matisman, dio dei morti, non offro ma sì bevo*".

57. This place is mentioned by Proc., *Bell. Vand.* II 8, 13; *Aed.* VI 2, 14 records the building of a Church dedicated to the Theotokos, after the destruction of the pagan sanctuary: A. Cameron, *Procopius and the sixth Century*, London, 1985, 88 and 123, suggests that Berber paganism is a deliberate exaggeration on the part of Corippus, whereas according to Y. Modéran, *Les Maures…*, *op. cit.*, n. 10, 647-648, this event should be placed after John's victory over the Moors at *Campi Catonis* in 548 CE.

58. M. Le Glay, *Saturne…*, *op. cit.*, n. 1, 430 and 444.

59. In a letter addressed to his critics (*Correspondance*, ed. J. Bruneau, vol. 3, Paris, 1991, 275-276), Flaubert openly mentions Corippus, of whom he had come to know through a translation of F. Creuzer's *Symbolik*: A. Terracher, "Une Source possible de Salammbô", *The Modern Language Review*, 3, 1914, 379-380; L. Foscolo Benedetto, *Le Origini di Salammbô. Studio sul realismo storico di G. Flaubert*, Firenze, 1920, 234.

60. C. Catenacci, "D'Annunzio, il cinema e le fonti classiche di 'Cabiria'", *Quaderni Urbinati di Cultura Classica*, 1, 2008, 163-185, esp. 179. The author wishes to thank Dr. Giovanni Noor Mazhar for kindly revising the English text.