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MUSIC IN THE MYSTERY RELIGIONS
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Debbie Ann Thornton

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Eleanor H. Huzar
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MUSIC IN THE MYSTERY RELIGIONS OF THE ANCIENT WORLD

By

Debbie Ann Thornton

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ABSTRACT

MUSIC IN THE MYSTERY RELIGIONS OF THE ANCIENT WORLD

By

Debbie Ann Thornton

This paper is a study examining the types of music used in the ancient mystery religions of Babylonia, Phrygia, Crete, Samothrace, Thrace, Eleusis, Egypt, and Rome, in order to better understand the underlying similiarities which exist amongst them.

Both literary, including primary and secondary sources, and archaeological evidence were examined and compared.

The evidence shows that the similarities and parallels which exist between the ancient mystery religions are undeniable, and suggests that there was a sharing and/or borrowing among the cults.

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[illegible] Ann Horton

This paper is a study examining the types of parallels found in the ancient mystery religions of Isis-Osiris, Attis-Cybele, Orpheus-Dionysus, Mithras, Eleusis, Egypt, and Rome, in order to better understand the underlying similarities which exist among [illegible].

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank Crystal Rolfe for her fine drawings of the ancient instruments; Dr. John Eadie for his helpful suggestions; Dr. Eleanor Huzar for her enthusiastic help and guidance; and my husband, David, for his constant encouragement and support.

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INTRODUCTION

The mystery religions of the ancient world, involving the worship of deities from Babylon, Greece, Phrygia, Egypt, and Italy, were diverse in geographical origin but were in many ways homogeneous in theological orientation. The mysteries were conducted by secret religious groups composed of individuals who decided, through personal choice, to be initiated into the profound realities of one deity or another. Unlike the official religions, in which a person was expected to show outward, public allegiance to the local gods of the polis or the state, the mysteries emphasized an inwardness and privacy of worship within closed groups.

The inquiries into the mystery religions or cults have uncovered, among other things, characteristics that the individual mysteries held in common. One of these common characteristics was that most mysteries were made up of both a public and a private side. The public side was comprised of a festival or celebration open to any and all, and the private side was a ceremony open only to past or present initiates. The literary tradition for the public side of the mysteries is rich, as is the archaeological evidence; in contrast is the paucity of

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information on all but the most general parts of the private ceremonies.

Another common characteristic in the mystery religions was the use in one form or another, of music. Wherever mysteries were practiced, Babylon, Greece, Phrygia, Egypt, or Italy, music was present. In almost every reference to the mysteries, literary and archaeological, public and private, there is mention of music. The goal of this dissertation is to use this common element of music to understand to a greater degree the mystery religions, or cults, individually and as a group. I shall seek to discover the nature of the role of music in the mystery religions through a comparison of the Greek mystery cults to foreign cults, and in the process seek to answer the question of whether or not all of the mysteries, regardless of locality, have a common source.

We are relatively well informed about the general structure of the public and private ceremonies of the mystery religions. Processions and such public functions as sacrifices, dances, and music, preceded the celebration of the mystery itself. The actual celebration of the mystery was held in a closed room and was usually comprised of two or three acts: the dramatic action or *dromena*; the sacred objects shown or *deiknymena*; and the words that were spoken or *legomena*. We are still rather ignorant, though, regarding the details of the central ceremony, the initiation proper.

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Any interpretation can be hypothetical only, never certain, since the very essence of the mysteries was that they were rites done in secret, the initiates were strictly forbidden to reveal the nature of those rites. The Christian Fathers, who tell us more about the mysteries than pagan writers, are perverted by strong prejudices, and lay bare only the more repulsive aspects of the rites which they mention. We do have archaeological evidence such as inscriptions and vases, but their helpfulness is limited. Inscriptions mention at most the public and outward rites of the mysteries, not those performed in private, and although vases give us some useful hints they do not reveal any secrets.

Luckily, since music was an integral part of the mystery rites, both public and private, our primary sources freely include references to it in most discussions. This will enable me to compare the types of music used and, perhaps, arrive at some general conclusions regarding the mystery religions as a group.

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CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF ALL MYSTERY RELIGIONS

The Greek word *mysteria* signifies a secret celebration or secret worship that is accessible only to initiates or *mystai*. It is important to note that almost all mystery religious festivals involved public games, whether of a gymnastic or musical type, and public processions. The mysteries were merely an aspect of more general cults and only certain parts of the mystery festivals were solemnized in secret.

Diodorus Siculus tells us that the Cretans believed the mysteries began on their island: "[The Cretans] assert that the honors accorded to the gods and their sacrifices and the initiatory rites observed in connection with the mysteries were handed down from Crete to the rest of men."[1] If the Greek mysteries did begin in Crete, then where did the Cretan rites originate? Were they indigenous or imported?

Although this question has been asked of all the mystery rites, it is particularly important to ask it of the Cretan rites since the answer could connect the Greek mysteries with their true ancestors. The Cretans were not the first to have rites and the

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Greeks were not the first to have mysteries: we can trace the celebration of mystery rites back to Babylonian times in the third millenium B.C. and to the Egyptians in the second millenium B.C.

The question whether a particular mystery cult is related to one or more of the others is a difficult one to answer. The cults all did share certain similarities. Goblet d'Alviella notes that "the formalities of initiation, whether its dominant function is magical or religious, present striking general resemblances."[2] He goes on to mention that the two most common characteristics of mystery religions were the performance of mystic dances and the use of the *rhombos* or bull-roarer, a type of percussion instrument (see Figure 2).

Lucian in his book *On Pantomime* states that dancing was an integral part of the Greek mystery rites, as he says: "there is no mystery without dancing"[3]. An historical analysis of Greek dance leads to an early connection with cult and ritual. Characteristic of the mystery rite was the maze-dance. J.W. Fitton explains that one example of the maze-dance is the wanderings of the torch-bearing initiates at Eleusis who were supposed to represent the wanderings of Demeter in her search for Persephone; "the maze-dance was a dance consisting of intricate maze-like movements. Its original function was probably to produce amazement in the initiates and to prepare

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them for the mystic realities of their new status."[4] We will explore the use of dance in the mysteries later.

The other common element in all of the mystery rites was the use of the *rhombos* or bull-roarer. The sound produced by the bull-roarer is supposed to have been the voice of spirits.

Many of the mystery religions were of great antiquity, and their origins are hidden in the mists of prehistory. Some of the mysteries seem to have developed from agrarian festivals that celebrated the fertility of nature as it manifested itself in the life cycle of crops. At Eleusis in Greece, Demeter and Kore were goddesses of grain, and ancient agricultural ceremonies dramatized the planting, growing, and harvesting of the grain. Early worship of Dionysos also reflected concern for the power of nature. The Anatolian Attis and the Egyptian Osiris were gods who had died and who were linked to the life cycle of vegetation, and the rebirth of fertility. Even though Mithras showed few real connections with agrarian interests, still the artwork commissioned by initiates of Mithras depicts the creation of life from a living sacrifice.

Marvin W. Meyer notes "The development of early agrarian or fertility festivals into the mystery religions involved, first and foremost, the conviction on the part of the worshippers that the cycle of nature related directly to human life."[5] Death came to all the divine forces of nature, Persephone, Dionysos, Attis,

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Marvin W. Meyer notes "The development of early agrarian or fertility festivals into the mystery religions involved, first and foremost, the conversion on the part of the worshippers that the cycle of nature reflected fertility to human life."[5] Death came to all the children of nature. Persephone, Dionysos, Attis,

Osiris, and the Mithraic bull, but life was finally restored. By participating in the mystery rites then, the initiates were hoping to reap the same benefits as their god. Walter Burkert notes "That for the *myster* death will lose its terror, that he gains the guarantee of a blessed life in another world, is not expressly stated in all of the mysteries we know about, but this promise stands very much to the fore in many of them."[6]

The mysteries, then, have many common characteristics, the performance of mystic dances, the use of the *rhombos* or bull-roarer, hope for a happy after-life, and a link with the agricultural cycle. Are these common characteristics simply coincidences, or perhaps were rites and ideas borrowed freely and then adapted to each individual culture, only to be passed on and adapted once again?

My goal is to trace the use of music from one mystery religion to another, and compare its use in each and all. Through this process I believe it can be shown that music, the tie that binds the mystery religions together, can also illuminate the particular character of the intertwined relationship between the various mysteries. In other words, the types of music used in most of the mystery religions will be a blend, representative of the mysteries that that particular culture borrowed from.

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CHAPTER TWO

MUSIC AND THE MYSTERIES OF THE ANCIENT WORLD

Music was everywhere in ancient life. No performance of drama, no formal public religious act, whether orthodox or orgiastic, and no major social occasion went without music. The *mousic* idea encompassed the three forms of tonal art: vocal, instrumental, and dance. In the mystery cults as well as in communal life, music in its three forms had precisely prescribed functions.

It is very difficult to find examples of music anywhere in the ancient world where all three elements of vocal, instrumental, dance are not present. To the Greeks, music was a combination of song and dance performed to the accompaniment of instruments. Purely instrumental music was usually an exception; the Greeks, in fact, did not have a term which would signify instrumental music without song and dance. Everywhere music was looked upon, not as an art to be enjoyed, but "as a powerful means of action in the field of religion, morals, and society."[7]

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The Greeks borrowed heavily from the musical traditions of Babylon, Phrygia, and Egypt. Curt Sachs states that Greek

music was almost entirely imported and that no instrument originated in Greece.[8] In fact, many of the instruments used in the Greek mysteries were imported directly from the mysteries of the other localities.

The question arises whether there is a link between the Greeks' use of foreign mystery instruments in their own mysteries and the mysteries themselves. This is difficult to answer since for any one of the Greek mystery cults, there are scholars who believe it is indigenous to Greece. Before pursuing this argument, though, let us explore the instruments most likely to be used in the mystery religions.

As stated, music was a combination of voice, instruments and dancing, and one common characteristic of all mysteries was the use of dance. Lucian states: "I need hardly observe that among the ancient mysteries not one is to be found that does not include dancing....To illustrate this point would be to make the ceremonial known to the uninitiated: but so much is a matter of common knowledge, that persons who divulge the mysteries are popularly spoken of as 'dancing them out.'"[9]

For the Greek, dance was not an art complete in itself, it was associated inseparably with music. According to Lillian B. Lawler, the Greeks took over and made part of their own culture all sorts of elements which came from other peoples. They traced the art of the dance itself to the island of Crete. Lawler notes that most scholars today "are convinced that in the case

music was adjunct to an already impressive musical accompaniment acquainted in Greece.[8] In fact, many of the instruments used in the Greek mysteries were imported directly from the mysteries of the other localities.

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For the Greeks, dance was not an art complete in itself, it was associated inseparably with music. According to Lillian B. Lawler, the Greeks took over and made part of their own culture all sorts of elements which came from other peoples. They took the art of the Cretans, particularly to the island of Crete. Lawler notes that no Cretan dance is "quite convinced that the case

of certain dance forms...Crete was truly the instructor of Greece."[10] This coincides with Diodorus Siculus' statement that the Cretans believed the mysteries began with them. The armed dance was one mystery dance in particular that was traced to Crete. Other areas, though, also contributed their unique dance styles to the mysteries. Orgiastic dances can be traced directly to Phrygia, and Bacchic dances originated in Thrace.

The instrument that usually accompanied dancing was the *aulos* (Figure 4). The *aulos* was a kind of double oboe. The Greeks had many kinds of double oboes, the one which normally accompanied mystic dancing had come from Phrygia. Curt Sachs describes the Phrygian pipes as two tubes differing in length, the longer one being curved and ending in a wide, trumpet-like bell; the fingerholes were placed at different heights on either tube and the bore was narrow.[11]

The *aulos* was used to accompany both solo dancing and community dancing. The *aulos*-player did not participate in the dance, as we can see from vases where he is usually depicted as seated. J.A. Haldane explains that the *aulos* acquired a general ritual function in which its purpose was to ward off evil spirits.[12] The belief that the *aulos* had the ability to chase away demons was of Oriental origin. In addition, the *aulos* had the attraction of adding emotional excitement to the dance due

to its tone and the type of mode or key it generally played in. The *aulos* was also used to accompany processions with sacrificial gifts.

Percussion instruments were invaluable in the accompaniment of mystic dances. Rhythmic accompaniments for dancing were supplied by such instruments as *krotala* or castanets (Figure 5), *kymbala* or cymbals (Figure 3), *tympana* or drums (the name *tympana* comes from the Sumerian word for the taut membrane of the drum), *timbrel* or tambourine (Figure 6), and *krembala* or rattles. These instruments, as well as the clapping of hands, were used to accompany dancing in all of the mysteries. Alfred Sendrey states that "all these instruments were not Greek in the proper sense and were used only in the orgiastic rites of foreign religions."[13] The Greeks, then, benefited from the creativity of earlier practitioners of mysteries through the development and use of percussion instruments.

J.W. Fitton observes that the *tympanum* or drum was used extensively in the ecstatic dance of Dionysos and Cybele, and was played almost exclusively by women. Curt Sachs notes that the *tympanum* had no place in any form of music outside of the mystery cults.[14] The *kymbala* or cymbals were also used in the rites of Dionysos and Cybele.[15] According to Sachs, the *kymbala* came from western Asia with the orgiastic rites of

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oriental goddesses such as Cybele.[16] It is interesting to note that the *kymbala* were also used in the Greek rites of Demeter at Eleusis. According to Dicaearchus the *krotala* were used extensively by Greek women to accompany dance and song in the worship of both Dionysos and Demeter.[17]

One of the most common types of lyre used extensively in the mystic dances was the *barbitos* (Figure 8). According to J.M. Snyder the *barbitos* was considered the most foreign of the various kinds of lyres in common use.[18] Literary references [19] give us information about the background of the instrument, including the probable origin of its name and its Eastern associations. The evidence we have indicates the *barbitos* was of non-Indo-European origin and was probably borrowed from some Asiatic people such as the Phrygian. By the time the instrument had become common in mainland Greece, during the 5th century B.C., its chief use was in accompanying song and dance and other activities associated with Dionysos.

Another type of lyre used in Greek mysteries was the *kithara* . Marcelle Duchesne-Guillemin suggests that the *kithara* spread to Greece from Babylonia.[20] A representation of a Syrian *kithara* is found on an Egyptian relief of the nineteenth century B.C. and provides a link between Sumerian instruments of the fourth millennium and the later Hittite, Phoenician and

oriental goddesses such as Cybele.[16] It is [illegible] that the *kwakwa* were also used in the Greek mysteries at Eleusis. According to Dionysiodorus the *kwakwa* were used extensively by Greek women to aid [illegible] in the worship of both Dionysos and Demeter.[17]

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A similar type of [illegible] was the *kwakwa* [illegible] Marcelle Fouilloux [illegible] the [illegible] product of Greek [illegible].[20] A [illegible] system [illegible] and [illegible] of the [illegible] century B.C. and provides a link between [illegible]

Greek *kitharas*. The relief shows the Egyptian version of the Syrian *kithara*, which had movable arms, and it is this version of the *kithara* that is found used in Greece.

Other instruments used in mystery rites but not associated with dancing were the *salpinx* or trumpet (Figure 9), the bells, and the *rhombos* or bull-roarer. The *salpinx* is pictured for the first time in Egypt c. 1415 B.C. as used by soldiers. It was also used though as a sacred instrument in the worship of Osiris and its invention was attributed by the Egyptians to the god himself. The *salpinx* was later also used in the rites of Dionysos. Claire Polin notes that the bells (as well as the *aulos*) were dedicated to the worship of Osiris.[21] The *rhombos* or bull-roarer was a common element in all of the mystery rites. According to Curt Sachs the *rhombos* was made up of a thin board that the player held by a cord tied to one end and whirled over his head. In whirling, the board also spun around its own axis, and by this two-fold movement it produced a roaring or wailing sound.[22] In addition, Jane Harrison notes that in mystery rites thunder was imitated by bull-voiced mimes and drums.[23]

Various types of verse were written by the Greeks for their religious rituals and dances: *prosodia*, hymns, and *hyporchema*. *Prosodia* were songs meant to be accompanied by the *aulos* and sung by worshippers moving in a procession to a shrine, usually at the formal opening of a festival. Hymns

Greek *σάλπιγξ*. It is not unlike the Egyptian version of the Syrian *σάλπιγξ* which had movable arms, and it is this version of the *σάλπιγξ* that is found used in Greece.

Other instruments used in mystery rites but not associated with dancing were the *σείστρον* or trumpet (Figure 9), the bells, and the *λικνοῦν* or bull roarer. The *σείστρον* is pictured for the first time in Egypt c. 1415 B.C. as used by soldiers. It was also used though as a sacred instrument in the worship of Osiris and its invention was attributed by the Egyptians to the god himself. The *σείστρον* was later also used in the rites of Dionysos. Jane Harrison notes that the bells (as well as the *λικνοῦν*) were dedicated to the worship of Osiris.[21] The *λικνοῦν* or bull roarer was a common element in all of the mystery rites. According to Curt Sachs the *λικνοῦν* was made up of a thin board that the player had by a cord tied to one end and twirled over his head. In whirling, the board also spun around its own axis, and by this two fold movement it produced a roaring or wailing sound.[22] In addition, Jane Harrison notes that in mystery rites thunder was imitated by bull roared names and drums.[23]

Various types of verse were written by the Greeks for their religious rituals and dances: *παιάνες*, *ὕμνοι*, and *διθύραμβοι*. *Διθύραμβοι* were songs meant to be accompanied by the *αὐλός* and sung by worshippers moving in a procession to a shrine, usually at the formal opening of a festival. *Ὕμνοι*

were to be accompanied by the lyre and appear to have been sung by a chorus accompanying a solemn processional. *Hyporchema* were native to Crete and were meant to be accompanied by either lyre or *aulos*. The *hyporchema* were used in the mysteries of Crete and in the worship of Dionysos.

Thus, every aspect of mystery rite music, voice, instrumental, and dance, was influenced by practices and traditions from other cultures. To what extent did these cultures influence the Greek mystery religions, and, was their influence limited only to music?

CHAPTER THREE

THE BABYLONIAN MYSTERIES

Since the belief in life after death held no important place in Babylonian religion, and their conception of existence in the nether world was gloomy and foreboding, they necessarily evolved no mystic rituals and doctrines to secure the soul repose when it descended to Aralu, the Babylonian underworld. The precautionary measures for those who died consisted in providing them with bread and water for their journey, simple measures known to all and concealed from none. We must look for the mysteries of the Babylonians in connection with the celebrations of the death and resurrection of the nature god Tammuz. According to S. Langdon, there is no doubt "that the liturgies sung at the midsummer wailings for the young god of vegetation who had died and was sought for by his weeping mother and consort were accompanied by a mystic pantomime."[24] In the celebration of this festival the celebrants probably chose one of the priestesses to play the part of the mother Ishtar or Innini who descends to Aralu.

The liturgies of this festival consisted largely in dialogues and monologues between Tammuz and Ishtar. The doctrine

[illegible]

[illegible] PASSAYI CONDIMENT [illegible]

[illegible] the belief in life after death [illegible] burial place in [illegible] and [illegible] [illegible] Ibadan [illegible] in the [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] they [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

professed by this ceremony explained the mystery of the death and revival of vegetation, and undoubtedly "the priests taught that the mystery consisted in the death of a god, in the consequent disappearance of the mother-goddess, in his resurrection, and in the return of the mother-goddess; finally, the reviving life of the earth depends upon the marriage of these deities."[25]

The liturgies of the Tammuz cult were sung in Sumerian and were most likely accompanied by a pantomime, a drama played in action and gestures to the accompaniment of music. One such pantomime, the 'Descent of Ishtar', describes Ishtar's experiences as a prisoner in Arallu while searching for Tammuz. The text is part of a Sumerian original from a Babylonian source.

> 'If she grant thee not her deliverance as
> to her repeat thy effort.
> Tammuz, the husband of her maidenhood,
> Wash with clean water, anoint
> with good oil.
> Clothe him in a radiant garment and let
> him play the flute of lapis-lazuli...
> On the day when Tammuz plays for me
> the flute of lapis-lazuli,
> and when on that day with him they play
> to me on a flute of porphyry,
> Yea with him the men wailers and the
> women wailers play to me.'[26]

The method Tammuz used to secure the release of Ishtar by playing the flute brings to mind the story of Orpheus and how he

appeased the gods of Hades by playing the lyre to release Eurydice.

Since the pantomime was the hymn in action we can be sure it included the use of the "flute of lapis-lazuli". Flutes were introduced into ritual use about 2600 B.C. in Mesopotamia. Flutes are mentioned on the cylinder seals of the priest-king Gudea, who instructs his director of music "to cultivate diligently flute-playing and fill the forecourt of Eninnu with joy."[27]

Double oboes (Figure 10), close relatives of the flute and ancestors of the Greek *aulos*, were discovered at the cemetery at Ur and have been dated to 2600 B.C. A clay plaque at the University Museum in Philadelphia shows two female musicians playing a double oboe and a drum on a podium in what seems to be a temple scene, suggesting part of a ritual. These wind instruments, the flute and the double oboe, were often ornate and richly decorated with colored stones as described in the hymn above.

Another instrument mentioned as accompaniment to hymns was the *al-gar* or lyre (Figure 7). The lyre was first depicted on Sumerian art works about 3000 B.C. as resting on the ground and standing higher than a seated man. The bodies of the lyres symbolized such royal beasts as the cow, bull, calf, donkey, or stag, and they normally had from five to eleven strings. The lyre frequently accompanied the voice, in a hymn to Ishtar of 2100 B.C., the poet says, "I will speak to thee with the *al-gar*

[illegible]

Since the pre-dynastic Egyptian civilization was [illegible] the use of the "flute of Osiris" flutes were introduced into Egypt about 2000 B.C. in Mesopotamia. Flutes are found in the tombs of the priests of the god Osiris, where they were used as a form of music "to mitigate deeply their pleasing and fill the [illegible] with reverence."[27]

Double oboes (figure 10), close relatives of the flute and ancestors of the Greek aulos, were discovered at the cemetery at Ur and have been dated to 2500 B.C. A clay pipe at the University Museum in Philadelphia shows two female musicians playing a double oboe and a harp on a platform, what seems to be a temple scene, suggestive of a ritual [illegible] the flute. [illegible] oboe, which [illegible] as stated in the pipe above.

Another instrument mentioned as a component of the lyre was the sackbut (figure 7). The lyre was first depicted in Sumerian art work about 3000 B.C. as being in the groups [illegible] the bodies of the lyre [illegible] called the [illegible] and the [illegible] had from one to seven strings. The [illegible] the [illegible] the [illegible] with the [illegible]

(lyre), whose sound is sweet."[28]

The drum was also used in the accompaniment of ritual songs as Curt Sachs notes: "[the] drum was used in the temple of the god Ea, or En-Ki...a special officer had to guard the sacred instrument...Its sound compared with "a bull's voice" in contemporaneous sources, accompanied ritual songs, summoned the sleeping god and was connected with divination."[29]

Claire Polin notes that Sumerian texts of the third millennium B.C. mention that in the temples one officer was responsible for training the choir, and another for training the classes of singers and players. She goes on to say that "the temple schools and liturgical rituals preserved for the people a unity of art."[30] These rituals were preserved not only for the people of Mesopotamia but also for those in future generations in Egypt, Phrygia, and Greece.

[illegible] [illegible]

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CHAPTER FOUR

THE PHRYGIAN MYSTERIES

A Great Mother Goddess, the personification of all the reproductive energies of nature, was worshipped under different names but with a substantial similarity of myth and ritual by many peoples. Associated with the worship of the Mother Goddess was usually the worship of her lover. Phrygia, in central Anatolia, was an area which nurtured the growth and development of the Great Mother and her lover Attis from time immemorial.

In works of art Kybele (Latin, Cybele) the Great Mother of Phrygia was commonly portrayed holding a *tympanon* or drum, as she inspired impassioned singing and dancing. According to M.P. Nilsson, the Phrygians took over the religion of the old inhabitants of their area, the Hittites c.1200 B.C., and "the cults which we are accustomed to call Phrygian are in reality indigenous."[31] The chief cult the Phrygians adopted was the cult of the Great Mother of the Mountains who, Nilsson observes, was also honored in Crete by the Minoans.[32] Other similarities have been noted as well. Walter Burkert for example, sees a resemblance between the Great Mother of

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In works of art Cybele (Latin Cybele) the Great Mother of Phrygia was commonly portrayed holding a tympanum or drum as the inspiration of pounding, ringing and drumming. According to M. P. Nilsson, the Phrygians took over the religion of the old inhabitants of their area, the Hittites c. 1200 B.C., and "the cults which we are accustomed to call Phrygian are in reality indigenous."[31] The chief cult the Phrygians adopted was the cult of the Great Mother of the Mountains who, Nilsson observes, was also honored in Crete by the Minoans.[32] Other similarities have been noted as well. Walter Burkert for example, sees a resemblance between the Great Mother of

Phrygia and Demeter of Eleusis in Greece, in that both were honored as "Great Mothers".[33]

The parallels, however, do not end with Kybele. Kybele's lover Attis appeared as a god of vegetation whose death and resurrection were annually mourned and rejoiced over at a festival in spring. The parallels between Attis and the Babylonian god Tammuz are striking. Both Attis and Tammuz were not only vegetation gods, but were also worshipped alongside their consorts, Kybele and Ishtar respectively. The similarities do not stop at that though. All of the primary sources referring to the Phrygian Mysteries note the use of the *aulos* or double oboe, and the *tympanon* or drum in the celebration of their public and private ceremonies, as with the Babylonian Mysteries.

Was there a direct connection between the two? In the second millennium B.C. the two areas were indeed linked. Even before 2000 B.C. Mesopotamia had already established an international trading system which included countries in the Levant.[34] Later, when the Hittites established themselves in Anatolia at the beginning of the second millennium B.C., they absorbed much of what Babylon could teach.[35] The conquerors of the Hittites c.1200 B.C. were the Phrygians. There was then, undoubtedly, a connection between Babylonia and Phrygia.

The *aulos* and *tympanon*, used in the mysteries of Tammuz and Ishtar, along with such other "orgiastic" instruments as the *kymbala* (cymbals) and the *krotala* (castanets), were used in the nocturnal feasts of Kybele and Attis. In fact, the initiate's affirmation of faith included the words:

> "I have eaten from the *tympanon*,
> I have drunk out of the *kymbala*"[36]

In Diogenes' *Semele*, known only through Athenaeus' *Deipnosophistae*, we find mention again of these same orgiastic instruments:

> "And yet I hear that the turban-wearing
> women of Asian Kybele, the daughters of
> the rich Phrygians, with drums and
> bull-roarers and booming of bronze
> cymbals in their two hands make loud din...
> celebrating her who is the wise minstrel
> of the gods and healer as well."[37]

The Greeks believed that the Phrygian mode, the key of the *aulos*, had the faculty of enhancing the *enthousiasmos* which brought about the discharge of psychic effects, and in turn resulted in *katharsis*, the purification of the soul. This reaction to the Phrygian mode can be explained as an interaction of the physical characteristics of the tone of the instrument, having pitch, duration, loudness, and timbre, to the physiological

organism in sensory experience, as reproduced and elaborated in memory, imagination, thought, and emotional drives.[38]

We know the Greeks were very familiar with the Phrygian mode from records which show that the cult of Kybele, along with the *aulos*, was brought to Greece in the seventh century B.C.[39] It is interesting to note that the only percussive instruments of the Greeks were those used in the mysteries of Kybele. Thereafter, the Phrygian mode, along with the *aulos* and Kybele's percussion instruments, was integrated into many of the Greeks' musical experiences, especially the mysteries.

The Cretans were familiar with the specific type of dancing used in the mysteries of Phrygia. Strabo in his *Geography* explains the connection: "The Kouretes, like the Satyri, Sileni, Bacchae, and Tityri, are called genii or ministers of the gods by those who have handed down to us the Cretan and the Phrygian traditions, which are interwoven with certain sacred rites, some mystical, the others connected in part with the rearing of the child Zeus in Crete and in part with the orgies in honor of the Mother of the Gods which are celebrated in Phrygia."[40] The Phrygian equivalents of the Cretan Kouretes were known as the Korybantes.

While Kybele and Attis were known to the Greek world, an occurrence in Rome at the very end of the third century B.C. proved to be an important event for the development of her cult

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While Kybele and Attis were known to the Greek world, an occurrence in Rome at the very end of the third century B.C. proved to be an important event in the development of Roman cult

in the Greco-Roman world. In 204 B.C. the goddess was formally welcomed into Rome and accepted into the Roman pantheon. Her arrival as well as later activities in Rome were not wholly acceptable to all Romans, and thus her devotees occasionally were restrained or expelled.[41] Some emperors favored her worship, however, and in the first century A.D. Claudius incorporated the Phrygian worship of the sacred tree and the orgiastic rites of Attis with the established religion of Rome. On from the second century A.D., the Roman world became more and more familiar with the exotic festivals of the Phrygian god and goddess.[42]

The best-known Roman festival in honor of Kybele and Attis was held in the spring. Sir James Frazer notes that since the Roman ceremonies were Phrygian "we may assume that they differed hardly, if at all, from their Asiatic original."[43] At the Spring Festival the Galli, the priests of Kybele and Attis who were a familiar sight in the streets of Rome, carried the image of the goddess in procession while chanting their hymns to the music of *kymbala* and *tympana* and *aulai*.

On the second day of the festival the clergy whirled about in dance to the accompaniment of clashing *kymbala*, rumbling of *tympana*, and the droning of *aulai*. Another ceremony on that day was inaugurated by the blowing of trumpets. On the closing day of the Roman festival there was a procession to the brook

Almo. The worshippers moved slowly to the loud music of *aulos* and *tympana*.[44]

Apuleius in *The Golden Ass* gives us a close look at the celebrations of the priests of Kybele and Attis. As an ass, Lucius, the hero in Apuleius' tale, participates in many a procession of the priests:

> "I was loaded again with the Goddess's baggage and we marched off to the sound of *kymbala* and *krotala*, on our usual begging rounds....When we reached the next large town...the citizens...heard the tinkle of our *kymbala*, the banging of our *tympana*, and the melancholy Phrygian music of the *aulos*."[45]

In addition to the public rites in Rome, the worship of Kybele and Attis is known to have comprised certain secret or mystic ceremonies which were aimed at bringing the worshipper into closer communication with the deities. In the sacrament, the initiate into the mysteries, as already noted, ate out of a *tympana* and drank out of a *kymbala*, two instruments of music which figured prominently in the orchestra of Kybele and Attis.

The *tympana* and *kymbala*, as well as the *aulos*, were not only used in the mysteries of the Babylonians and the Phrygians, but of the Greeks and Romans as well. Each culture was unique, though, in the way it used these instruments to serve its own particular mysteries. Some, like the Phrygians,

used these instruments to accompany orgiastic dances. Others, like the Babylonians, used them to accompany more composed and sedate dances, pantomimes, and processions. The Romans, in their worship of Kybele and Attis, represent an amalgamation of the Babylonian and Phrygian practices, in that the *tympana*, *kymbala*, and *aulos* were used in both processions and orgiastic dances. The musical tie that binds the mysteries together does not end here though; it is very much in evidence in the mysteries of Crete and the Greek mysteries.

CHAPTER FIVE
THE MYSTERIES OF CRETE

According to Cretan traditions quoted by Diodorus Siculus (V.76.3-4), the religious rituals of Crete were handed down as mysteries to the rest of Greece. Much of what we know about the Cretan rituals comes to us in a fragment of the *Cretans* of Euripides, preserved for us by Porphyry in his treatise on 'Abstinence from Animal Food'.[46] This fragment, Porphyry tells us, was spoken by the chorus of Cretan mystics who have come to the palace of Minos. In it, the leader of the mystics acknowledges the ritual acts in which the initiate vows himself to Idaean Zeus, holds the Great Mother's mountain flame, and becomes a 'Bacchos'.

According to J.E. Harrison, the Idaean Zeus referred to in the fragment "is clearly the same as Zagreus, the mystery form of Dionysos."[47] Zeus was a late comer, who in a sense, supplanted Zagreus by taking on his characteristics. The myth of Zagreus is rather complex; as told by Clement of Alexandria,[48] it centered on the infant god who variously called Zeus, Dionysos, or Zagreus was protected by the Kouretes who

danced around him their armed dance. The Titans, desiring to destroy him, lured the child away by offering him toys, a cone, a *rhombos* (bull-roarer), and the golden apples of the Hesperides, a mirror, a knuckle bone, and a tuft of wool. Having lured him away they set on him, slew him and tore him limb from limb, to be born again amid the flames of his mother's death.

The Kouretes, the armed Cretan priests, have been linked with the Korybantes of Phrygia. Strabo explains that the Cretan and Phrygian traditions are "connected in part with the rearing of the child Zeus in Crete and in part with the orgies in honor of the Mother of the Gods which are celebrated in Phrygia."[49] According to Lillian Lawler, the armed dance of the Kouretes and the Korybantes is found from very ancient times.[50] It began as a leaping and noise-making ritual and then developed into a rhythmic series of movements and postures useful in war. Phrygian strains of the *aulos* were used to accompany it, and on occasion a song was sung to it either by the dancers or by a separate chorus. Strabo says that the Kouretes/Korybantes were youths specially chosen to execute movements in armor.[51] It was especially as inspired dancers that they fulfilled their function as ministers in sacred rites. They inspired terror by the armed dances accompanied by the noise of clashing arms, shouting, the use of *tympana* (drums) and the sound of the accompanying *aulos*. A ritual hymn found at Palaikastro on

Crete, commemorating the birth of the infant Zeus, is thought to illustrate the dance of the Kouretes:

> "To Dikte [Mount Ida] for the Yeer,
> oh, march, and rejoice in the dance
> and song, that we make to thee with
> harps and pipes [*auloi*] mingled
> together, and sing as we come to a
> stand at thy well-fenced altar."[52]

According to J.E. Harrison, the *tympana* and the shield of the Kouretes/Korybantes were one and the same.[53] A skin was stretched over the circular or oval frame of the shield and was played upon with a drumstick. Although M.P. Nilsson agrees that the shield had both military and musical significance, he views it not as a *tympanon* but as a *kymbala* or cymbal. He points out that several small bronze shields were found in an Idaean cave, so small in fact, (the largest being only 55 cm.) that although they would not be useful in war, they would make fine *kymbala* for use by the Kouretes.[54] Whether the shields were used as *tympana*, *kymbala*, or both, it is evident that the gear of the Kouretes/Korybantes was musical as well as military.

Strabo describes a slightly different version of the role of the Kouretes in the story of the infant Zeus than does Clement. According to Strabo the Kouretes were to help Rhea in hiding the infant Zeus from Cronos, for protection, by surrounding the

goddess with *timbrels* (tambourines) and similar noisy instruments and by the performance of war-dances. The uproar was supposed to strike terror into Cronos and enable the Kouretes to steal the child away.[55]

The inclusion of Rhea is yet another link with the Phrygian rites, since Rhea is identified with the Mother Goddess, Kybele. The Kouretes, then, danced their war-dance over the new-born child and were, at the same time, attendants of the Mother Goddess. J.E. Harrison suggests that the Kouretes were the male counterparts to the female nurses of Dionysos, known as maenads. She says Strabo knew that the mysteries of Crete, Phrygia, and Thrace were substantially the same, that Kouretes, Korybantes, and Maenads, attendants on the Son, were also satellites of the Mother.[56] Strabo uses the *Bacchae* of Euripides to illustrate:

> "O secret chamber the Curetes knew!
> O holy cavern in the Cretan glade
> where Zeus was cradled, where for our
> delight the triple-crested Korybantes
> drew tight the round drum-skin, till
> its wild beat made rapturous rhythm
> to the breathing sweetness of Phrygian
> flutes [*aulos*]! Then divine Rhea
> found the drum could give her Bacchic
> airs completeness; from her, the
> Mother of all, the crazy Satyrs soon,
> in their dancing festival when the
> second year comes round, seized on the
> *timbrel's* tune to play the leading
> part in feasts that delight the heart
> of Dionysos."[57]

We are constantly brought back to the same Great Mother with her Child or Consort whose worship under various names and titles extended over Greece and Asia Minor. For Crete, the ritual was of the Mother and the Son[58], in other mysteries variations occurred, such as the worship of the Mother and Daughter at Eleusis, and the worship of Dionysos with a faded mother in the background in Thrace.

Crete, then, represents a consolidation of various religious rites, many closely related to those of Phrygia, especially those rites involving music and dance. These in turn were diffused to the rest of Greece. L.R. Farnell notes: "This island diffused in very early times many of its special cults and religious names through the Cyclades to the Greek mainland."[59]

CHAPTER SIX

THE MYSTERIES OF THE KABEIROI

The cult of the Kabeiroi was one of the oldest mystery religions of Greece. Its great center was the island of Samothrace, but this was by no means the only one. Rites of the Kabeiroi were also celebrated in the country around Pergamum, on the island of Lemnos, and a Kabeirion has been excavated at Thebes on the mainland, where Greek vases have been found painted with scenes connected with the cult.[60]

According to C. Kerenyi, these mysteries are even more archaic than the Eleusinian Mysteries. He notes that, actually, the Mysteries of the Kabeiroi "represent an earlier phase than the Eleusinian Mysteries."[61] Herodotus, the first writer to speak of the Mysteries of Samothrace, ascribes them to the Pelasgians, the aboriginal population of Greece.[62] The Pelasgians are reputed to have inhabited not only Samothrace, but Attica, the Peloponnesus, and Thessaly as well. Their habitation has also been fixed to Crete.[63] Greek tradition pictures the Pelasgians coming down from Thrace and Thessaly into Attica and the Peloponnesus. The lions of

Mycenae in the Peloponnesus have a Mesopotamian countenance, and it is thought this ancient motif probably came from Mesopotamia and Phrygia to Greece, brought at least part of the way by the Pelasgians.[64] The Pelasgians were connected with Crete, and it is known that Crete was influenced by the Phrygians. According to J.M. Roberts, the Cretans "may well have been the most important single conduit through which the products and ideas of the first civilizations"[65] were disseminated. The Pelasgians, then, could have been the tie that united the mystery religions of the Greek world, the bees that, perhaps, lived in Crete and from there pollinated the rest of Greece.

According to Kurt Rudolph, the "great gods" of the Kabeiroi of Samothrace were "probably a pair of Phrygian divinities."[66] The name "Kabeiroe" is associated with a mountain or a mountain region in Phrygia known to have been sacred to the Great Mother. According to Kerenyi, "the most noteworthy feature of the general tradition regarding the Kabeiroi is that it places them among the wider group of distinctly male deities (Kouretes, Korybantes, Idaioi, Daktyloi), who made up the retinue of the Great Mother."[67] As evidence of the link between Samothrace and Phrygia rock altars have been unearthed on Samothrace that very closely resemble those dedicated to the Great Mother in Phrygia.

The Kabeiroi have been connected with other areas such as Lemnos, Thebes, Eleusis, and Andania. Kerenyi mentions that one element the Mysteries of Eleusis and those of Samothrace have in common is the Dionysian character of the mystery god.[68] Kurt Rudolph also sees a connection between the "great gods" of the Kabeiroi and Demeter and Orpheus.[69]

The ceremonies of the Kabeiroi had a pronounced orgiastic character. Although almost nothing is known of the initiation rites themselves, according to John Ferguson, "at least we know...that there was music and dancing."[70] From the description of Nonnus on the mysteries of the Kabeiroi we see that indeed there was music and dancing:

> "Already the helmeted bands of desert-haunting Corybants were beating on their shields in the Cnossian dance, and leaping with rhythmic steps, and the oxhides thudded under the blows of iron as they whirled them about in rivalry, while double pipe made music, and quickened the dancers with its rollicking tune in time to the bounding steps."[71]

According to Strabo the rites of the Kabeiroi included "the *aulos*, the sounds of *krotala*, and *tympanon*", as well as "acclamations and shouts and stampings of the feet."[72] Nonnus describes the dance of the Kabeiroi as "Cnossian", thus directly linking the Samothracian dance to Crete. He, like

Strabo, mentions both the double pipe or *aulos*, the Phrygian instrument so prominent in mystery rites, and the *tympanon*. Strabo notes two types *tympanon* used by the Samothracians, the one being their shields, and the other oxhides which "thudded under the blows of iron."

It appears then, that the Samothracian rites of the Kabeiroi were influenced by both the mysteries of Crete and the mysteries of Phrygia. It is difficult to say whether the Phrygian influence was passed to the Samothracians through the Cretans, or if it was given (or taken) directly from Phrygia. I am inclined to see a direct link due to the rock altars found on Samothrace which closely resemble those in Phrygia, and the fact that "Kabeiros" was not only the name given to the Samothracian gods, but a mountain region in Phrygia as well.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE MYSTERIES OF DIONYSOS

The mysteries of Dionysos differ from the other mystery religions in that the performances of the mysteries were not confined to a specific location, as were those of Crete, Andania, or Samothrace. Where Dionysos came from is a much debated question, one in which the answers range from Walter F. Otto's, that the worship of Dionysos was indigenous to Greece[73], to W.K.C. Guthrie's, that Dionysos was of Asiatic origin[74]. In this chapter we will look into this question, using music as a yardstick to help illuminate the answer.

A fairly recent discovery of the name 'Dionysos' on a Mycenaean tablet from Pylos has led to speculation that his cult may have first reached Greece through the Minoans and Mycenaeans.[75] If this is true, then the mysteries of Dionysos must have reached Greece later than the inception of the Cretan mysteries. W.K.C. Guthrie believes this to be true[76], as does J.E. Harrison[77]. Both point to the uncanny similarities between the two mystery religions. Harrison goes so far as to

say, "The Cretan cult of the Kouretes and the Thracian religion of Dionysos are substantially one."[78] The Kouretes, the armed priests of Crete, have been directly linked to the Korybantes of Phrygia. It was especially as inspired dancers that the Kouretes/Korybantes fulfilled their function as ministers in the sacred rites. Indeed, the most important element of the mysteries of Dionysos was the ecstatic or inspired dance.

Alfred Sendrey explains that the Phrygian origin of Dionysos is indicated by the usual accompanying instruments, the Phrygian *auloi* and *tympana*. "The *aulos* was the instrument most generally employed for the rites of Dionysos. The sileni, sirens and maenads, who comprised the retinue of the god Dionysos, all played the *aulos*"[79] He also notes the use of the *barbiton*, a Phrygian form of the lyre, in the rites of Dionysos.[80] In Euripides' *Bacchae* the chorus connects the two even more closely:

> "The *timbrel*, the *timbrel* was
> another's, and back to mother Rhea
> must it wend. And to our holy
> singing from the Mother's. The
> mad satyrs carried it to blend in
> the dancing and the cheer of our
> third and perfect year, and it
> serves Dionysos in the end."[81]

Of this passage, J.E. Harrison suggests: "the Bacchants are not indicating the analogy between two cults as though they

say, the Greeks cult of the Kouretes and the Thracian religion of Dionysos are substantially one."[78] The Kouretes, mythical priests of Crete, have been directly linked to the Korybantes of Phrygia. It was especially armed dancers that the Kouretes/Korybantes fulfilled their function as ministers in the cacodutes. Indeed, the most important element of the mysteries of Dionysos was the ecstatic or frenzied dance.

Alfred Seeberg explains that the Phrygian origin of Dionysos is indicated by the usual correspondence between the Phrygian language and Dionysos. "The dance was the returning moment of the deity, the epitos of Dionysos. Dance in silence and music also complicated a revenue of the god Dionysos all played the dance."[79] He also notes the use of the *Kalathos*, a Phrygian element of the rite, in the rite of Dionysos.[80] In Euripides' *Alcestis* the chorus connects the two even more closely:

> "The *Kalathos* of the Mysteries
> mother's and I ask to mention Phoebus
> and the wand. And to call to help
> singing from the Mother's line
> mad Salvation and to bring him
> the dancing and the cheer of our
> thiasos, a year, as it
> serves Dionysos in the end."[81]

Otto Rank says that E. Harrison suggests "the Kouretes and Korybantes are the same, the twin two cult a Dionysiac"

were a parcel of commentators making marginal notes. Half mad with excitement they shout aloud the dogmas of their most holy religion - the religion of the Mother and Child."[82]

The *Bacchae* is a treasury of information regarding the music of Dionysos. At the beginning of the play Dionysos himself gives us a glimpse into his ecstatic rites:

> "Raise the music of your own country,
> the Phrygian drums invented by Rhea
> the Great Mother and by me."[83]

Later, the chorus, like Dionysos above, connects the rites of Dionysos with those of Phrygia:

> "Sing to the rattle of thunderous
> drums, sing for joy, praise Dionysos,
> god of joy! Shout like Phrygians,
> sing out the tunes you know, while
> the sacred pure-toned *aulos*
> vibrates the air with holy
> merriment..."[84]

Even one of Dionysos' nicknames gives us some enlightenment into the music of his rites: 'Bromius', meaning noisy or thunderous, and probably refers to the drums used in his worship.

Strabo in his account of the Kouretes of Crete mentions that Aeshcylus in his lost *Edoni* says that the instruments of Kotys were used by the Thracians in their orgies of Dionysos. Kotys is the Thracian-Phrygian form of the Great Mother. Aeschylus

describes the noise made by the 'mountain gear' of Kotys, the maddening hum of the *bombykes*, a type of *aulos*, the clash of the bronze cymbals, and the twang of strings. He continues: "and bull-voices roar thereto from somewhere out of the unseen, fearful semblances, and from a drum an image as it were of thunder underground is borne on the air heavy with dread."[85]

As already noted, the most characteristic part of the Dionysiac rite was the frenzied dance, as Lucian explains: "As to the rites of Dionysos, you know, without my telling you, that they consisted in dancing from beginning to end."[86] Music and dancing led to the excitement of group emotion, which, according to Philip Vellacott, were the greatest attraction of the mysteries of Dionysos. Vellacott goes on to say: "the excitement...of worshiping in a company distinguished by dress, secret rites, and a consciousness of power residing in mass-surrender to the super-natural...not only attracted the more excitable Oriental, but the Greek who for one reason or another found the demands and restrictions of civilized life profitless and irksome."[87]

In connection with the Dionysiac cult we read of many types of dances, one of which is the *oreibasia*. The *oreibasia* was a frenzied dance over the mountains and through the woods at night, in the dead of winter: "screaming women tossed their

flowing hair wildly and brandished torches or *thyrsi* [wands tipped with ivy or pine cones]....Some of them played on *aulos* or *tympana*."[88] There were also dances of men in honor of Dionysos as a god of fertility and wine. The most common of these was the *dithyramb* - a song and dance performance to the music of the *aulos* in the Phrygian mode. Another type of Dionysiac dance is the *pyrrhic* dance. According to Athenaeus in *Deipnosophistae* this dance consisted of postures and movements for attacking an enemy. The dancers, instead of carrying bows and arrows, carried *thyrsi* and torches, and danced out stories of Dionysos.[89] One last type of dance is called the 'dance with hands joined'. In it the dancer held his or her hands over his head and bent gracefully to the right or left as the dance progressed. Dancers of this type were usually clothed in Asiatic costumes, as this *schema* seems to have been native to the East.[90]

According to S.G. Cole, the ritual activity in which the madness of the god manifested itself in the dancing and inspired behavior of the worshippers is described by the verb *bakcheuein*[91] Both the worshipper and the god, then, are described by the activity of the ritual.

More evidence for the rites of Dionysos appears in the festivals presented in his honor. Since we have a good deal of information on the festivals of Dionysos in Attica, those serve

as a standard; and although the festivals of other areas may have been slightly different, at least the Attic festivals will throw some light on those other celebrations.

All of the Attic festivals of Dionysos occurred in winter and early spring. The festival of the Oschophoria took place in November, the Greek month of Pyanopsion. This festival fell at the time of the vintage and wine-pressing and was therefore a thanksgiving to Dionysos, the giver of grapes. Singing was not only characteristic of the whole celebration, but was also part of the vintage itself. An amphora in Wurzburg by the Amasis Painter shows this as well as a piping satyr standing among his busy comrades.

The procession of the Oschophoria was led by two oschophoroi, youths with vine-branches full of grapes. The two oschophoroi started from one of the Athenian sanctuaries of Dionysos, we do not know from which, and walked singing toward Phaleron to the sanctuary of Athena Skiras.[92] The offerings were made within the sanctuary. Of the songs and dances performed there, some were cheerful and some sad. Such a ritual was typical of festivals of vegetation deities who were not immortal but died. Tammuz, Attis, and Osiris are but a few examples.

Another Attic festival of Dionysos was the Anthesteria, celebrated in the month of February, the Greek month of Anthesterion. According to Erika Simon, the Anthesteria was

originally the last of the winter Dionysiac celebrations and thus emerges as the end of the Dionysiac cycle which began with the Oschophoria. The two festivals may be regarded in some ways as two sides of the same coin: the Oschophoria for the vintage, and the Anthesteria for the first drinking of the new wine. During the festival the priest of Dionysos summoned distinguished persons to an official drinking contest in which speaking was forbidden. To begin the contest a trumpet sounded, and drinking began in silence.[93]

During the festival of the City Dionysia in Athens there were dances of choruses at various altars, and especially at that of the Twelve Gods in the Agora.[94] We can assume that the procession was enlivened by the performance of satirical songs. Also, each competitive event of the City Dionysia was announced by the sound of a trumpet.

The festival for Dionysos Lenaios was celebrated at the end of January, in the Greek month of Gamelion. According to Aristotle the archon basileus "superintends the Lenaean Dionysia, which consists of a procession and a musical contest. This procession he orders jointly with the superintendents of the festival, but has sole charge of the contest."[95] On some vases known to represent the festivities of the Lenaia we see a group of maenads dancing.

In the Peloponnesian city of Elis a dancing chorus of sixteen

women invoked Dionysos with the words: "Come, Lord Dionysos"[96]. On an inscription from Rhodes there is mention of a musician who awakens Dionysos with a water organ[97]. According to Curt Sachs, the Greek word for organ was *hydraulis*. The wind pressure of the *hydraulis* was not supplied by bellows, but by a water compressor and pistons, hence the name *hydraulis* or water organ.[98] In Sicyon, another Peloponnesian town, one was not permitted to see the images of Dionysos Bakcheios and Lysios the whole year through. Only on one holy night were they brought into the temple to the accompaniment of hymns and surrounded by torch light[99]. At the festival of the epiphany of Dionysos in Argos, the Argives called Dionysos out of the lake of Lerna with trumpet blasts[100].

As we have seen, the instruments and dances used in the rituals and festivals of Dionysos link him with the East. The similarities of Dionysos and other cults do not end with the East though, but reach to the mysteries of Eleusis. How can this be explained? J.E. Harrison brilliantly explains: "Dionysos bears to the end, as no other god does, the stamp of his matriarchal origin. He can never rid himself of the throng of worshiping women, he is always the nursling of his Maenads. Moreover, the instruments of his cult are always not his but his mother's."[101] Dionysos brought his mother with him and wherever he was we find his mother, and likewise wherever she

was we find him.

CHAPTER EIGHT
THE MYSTERIES OF ELEUSIS

The most influential and popular of the Greek mysteries were those of Demeter and Kore at Eleusis in Attica. From ancient times it was believed that at Eleusis the gods had favored humanity by giving grain for food, so that an early agricultural cult there commemorated the yearly sowing of grain around the time of the Greek month Boedromion, that is September/ October. Before Athens took control of Eleusis, shortly before 600 B.C., the mysteries of Demeter and Kore were conducted by an independent Eleusis. After Athens assumed jurisdiction of the mysteries, however, Athenian interests naturally predominated in the celebration of the Eleusinian mysteries.

The mysteries at Eleusis focused upon the goddesses Demeter and Kore. Marvin W. Meyer claims that Demeter was probably a Cretan goddess by origin[102], as she was in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*. She was equated with the "mountain mother" of Crete and with the Great Mother. Kore was the maiden, and because of her sojourn in the realm of Hades, Kore is identified with Persephone, the queen of the underworld.

Most of our information concerning the features of the Eleusinian mysteries derives from the period of the Athenian domination of Eleusis. In the month of Anthesterion, our February, the lesser mysteries were conducted near Athens, as something of a preparation for the greater mysteries celebrated in Boedromion.

The story was first told in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*[103]. Neither the author of this hymn nor the time of composition is known, but scholars have come to consider it the official story of the Eleusinian traditions[104]. The hymn narrates events in the traditional tales which occurred long before its composition. The political system of the hymn mirrors that of the Mycenaean age, and it was in that time, according to popular tradition, the cult of Demeter and Kore was introduced to Eleusis. According to George E. Mylonas, the leading scholar on Eleusis, the mysteries of Demeter and Kore were not indigenous but definitely imported.[105] W.K.C. Guthrie agrees with both Mylonas and Meyer, that the mysteries were indeed imported, but he goes even further to say that the cult took its origin from Crete.[106]

Neither the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* nor any other source, literary or artistic, before the Christian authors touches themes which were forbidden. Silence regarding all secret religious rites was maintained throughout antiquity. The the

Christians were the first to betray the sacral mysteries, but their accounts are so mixed with polemics that little can be gathered from them[107]. As Mylonas says: "It is amazing indeed that the basic and important substance of the secret rites was never disclosed, when these Mysteries were held at Eleusis annually for some two thousand years."[108] We do know that the first part of the celebration was held in public. It occurred in the open air and initiated and uninitiated alike could witness it. This was especially true for the parts of the celebration held in Athens: the proclamation declaring that the initiates were to bathe in the sea, the initiates sacrificing a young pig to Demeter and Kore, the Iacchos procession in which the initiates marched along the Sacred Way from Athens to Eleusis, singing, dancing, and carrying the *hiera* (the sacred things) of the goddesses back to the Telesterion (the great hall of initiation) in Eleusis.

In the procession from Athens to Eleusis both the extensive use of music as well as a connection with Dionysos are evident. The procession towards Eleusis was pervaded by a mood of dancing and singing. Satirical songs were sung along the sacred way, and at a short distance outside of the town was a bridge at which satirical exchanges between choirs took place, as a prescribed part of the ritual itself. The Greek term for bridge was *gephira* and a song performed on this bridge was called *gephirismos*, meaning "song at the bridge". Halts were made on the way to Eleusis and sacred dances were

performed. The *mystai*, as they moved, sang hymns in honor of Iacchus. The rhythmic shout 'Iakch' O Iakche', resounded over and over again articulating the movement of the crowd, and bundles of branches called *baitchoi* were swung to the rhythm. We know from the *Frogs* of Aristophanes that the procession following the image of Iacchus became a *lampadephoria*, a torchlight dance[109]. Iacchus himself was said to wave the torch and inaugurate the dance. It is in Iacchus that Erika Simon notes a connection with Dionysos: "Ancient sources and new archaeological material show that Iacchus in Eleusinian representations is no one other than Dionysos."[110] Aristophanes says the same:

> "Sing the adorable god who leads us
> all in our dancing, sing Dionysos
> the fair, draw him to us in song...
> Iacchos, festal Musician, come
> down to us now..."[111]

A.N. Athanaseakis explains that 'Iacchus' was a cult name by which Dionysos was invoked both at Athens and Eleusis, a personification of the cry of the *mystai*."[112] Dancing of course was one of the main attributes of the Dionysian rites, and here we see it taking an important part in the Eleusinian rites. Later in the *Frogs* we see more of the dances:

> "Let us dance. Dance to Demeter

with flowers....Jewel her meadow
with song."[113]

The return to Athens, like the setting out, was public. The people of the city came out to meet the returning procession, and with dance and song the *mystai* returned to their homes.

What occurred between the going to Eleusis and the returning from Eleusis is the real mystery. The procession from Athens to Eleusis occurred on the fifth day of the festival. Once the initiates reached Eleusis they probably spent the night in singing and dancing in honor of Demeter. The dances were traditionally held around the Kallichoron well, the Well of the Fair Dances. According to Pausanias this was where the women first danced and came to the goddess.[114] That dances in honor of the goddess and as a part of the mysteries were performed here is proven by the Niinnion tablet. The Niinnion tablet is the only document that can be definitely associated with the mysteries of Eleusis[115]. It was painted in the red-figure technique and dated in the first half of the fourth century B.C. The inscription on the base tells us it was dedicated to Demeter and Kore by Niinnion. The scene represented on the tablet shows a woman extending her right hand in a gesture of greeting while holding a spray of myrtle. She is moving forward in a light step, on her toes, in a stance which indicates dancing.

Though we are not privy to the private rites, we may be certain, explains Mylonas, that the rites included three different elements[116]: the *dromena*, that which was enacted; the *deiknymena*, the sacred objects that were shown; and the *legomena*, the words that were spoken. According to the available evidence, the *dromena* must have included a sacred pageant which dealt with the story of the abduction of Kore, and the reunion of Demeter and Kore at Eleusis. The pageant included dancing in measured steps to instrumental and vocal accompaniment. From what Lucian says we can assume that some of the secrets were revealed at this time in some form of dance. Mylonas speculates that "the pageant, acted in the midst of the night with alteration of light and darkness, with music, and even sung invocations, could have been made into a memorable experience."[117] The hierophant would sound a gong whenever Kore's name was used. C. Kerenyi calls this gong a *echeion*.[118] The gong, of course, originated in the East and was imported to Greece. Kerenyi speculates that it was the hierophant who intoned the call for Kore while he beat the *echeion*, the instrument with the voice of thunder.[119] Mylonas imagines that when the gong was struck the initiate was "struck with a marvelous light, [and] received into pure regions and meadows, with voices and dances and the majesty of holy sounds and shapes."[120] Walter F. Otto notes that the striking

of a gong brings to mind Oriental funeral rites.[121]

The *deiknymena*, the objects shown, are very much a mystery. The most important of the *deiknymena* were known as the *hiera*. The title of the high priest, hierophant, means "he who shows the *hiera* ". The *hiera* were kept in the Anaktoron, the holy of holies, in the center of the Telesterion. We know even less about the *legomena* since there is a total lack of evidence. On the last day at Eleusis the initiates devoted themselves mainly to libations and rites for the dead. A good deal of the day was spent in festivities, in singing and dancing[122].

The importance of the role of music and musical instruments in the Eleusinian mysteries is shown not only by their constant use in the processions and solemn dances, but also in the name of Eumolpos, the ancestor of the clan of the Eumolpidai from which the highest Eleusinian priest, the hierophant, was chosen. Eumolpos meant "the good singer".

As noted earlier, Demeter was equated with both the "mountain mother" of Crete and the Great Mother of Phrygia. On this subject J.E. Harrison notes: "Wherever she was worshipped she had mysteries, the *timbrel* and the cymbal came to be characteristic of the wilder Asiatic Mother, but the Mother at Eleusis also clashed the brazen cymbals."[123] That Dionysos was also present in the mysteries of Eleusis is

somewhat baffling until Strabo illuminates: "Now most of the Greeks assigned to Dionysos...and above all to Demeter, everything of an orgiastic or Bacchic or choral nature, as well as the mystic element in initiations; and they give the name 'Iacchus' not only to Dionysos but also to the leader-in-chief of the mysteries; who is the genius of Demeter. And branch-bearing, choral dancing, and initiations are common in the worship of these gods."[124]

The connections among Kybele, the Phrygian Mother Goddess, the "mountain mother" of Crete, Dionysos, and Demeter are possibly explained by their individual relationships to another god, Orpheus. Is it possible that Orpheus was the one who introduced the mystic rites to the Greeks, after he had made a careful study of foreign mystery rites?

CHAPTER NINE

THE MYSTERIES OF ORPHEUS: THE MAN AND THE RELIGION

We enter now into the complicated subject of Orpheus and Orphism. Was Orpheus a real person or was he just a figment of the Greek imagination? Was he responsible for instituting all of the mysteries or just his own? These questions have been asked numerous times and answered many different ways. In this chapter I shall confront these questions one at a time.

The question of whether Orpheus, like Homer, really existed, can be answered only hypothetically. But Orpheus, real or imaginary, represents the solution to a long-standing problem. The problem is how to explain the numerous similarities between the various mystery religions, especially between the foreign and the Greek religions. Since the similarities are undeniable there must have been contact among the various geographical areas, and who better to serve as the link than Orpheus?

Kurt Rudolph notes that although it is not certain there were actually mysteries of Orpheus, it is certain that at an early date Orpheus was turned into the founder of the Eleusinian,

Dionysian, and Samothracian mysteries. He also states that Orphism seems to have been more of a missionary religion, that, unlike the official cults, it had no central sanctuary.[125] Aristophanes in the *Frogs* says:

> "Orpheus: he taught us to understand the Mysteries."[126]

Immediately following one of the most quoted passages in Lucian's *Of Pantomime*, is an explanation of the 'Orphic connection':

> "I need hardly observe that among the ancient mysteries not one is to be found that does not include dancing. Orpheus and Musaeus [the son of Orpheus], the best dancers of their time, were the founders of these rites; and their ordinances show the value they attached to rhythm and dance as elements in religion."[127]

Diodorus of Sicily claims Orpheus brought the mysteries from Egypt:

> "Orpheus brought from Egypt most of his mystic ceremonies, the orgiastic rites that accompanied his wanderings, and his fabulous account of his experiences in Hades."[128]

A description of a painting by Polygnotos in Pausanias' *Guide to Greece* includes the 'Orphic connection' in relation to the

Great Mother of Phrygia:

> "In this part of the painting is...
> Pelias...looking at Orpheus...
> on a rock sits Marsyas"[129]

Marsyas was the celebrated piper [player of the *aulos*] of Phrygia. He was so skillful in playing the *aulos* that the Phrygians deemed him the inventor of it. He and his *aulos* were closely tied to the worship of the Great Mother of Phrygia, Kybele.

Many recent scholars have accepted the ancients' belief in the 'Orphic connection'. A.N. Athanassakis explains the relationship of Orpheus to Eleusis in this way: "There is a long-standing tradition that Orpheus brought all sacred mystic rites from Egypt, taught them to the Greeks and even introduced them into the worship of Demeter and Dionysos. It is therefore unwise to deny the existence of Orphic elements in Eleusinian worship."[130] Kurt Rudolph notes that although practically nothing is known of the mysteries of the Kabeiroi "there are hints of links with ... Orpheus."[131] Walter Wili explains the 'Orphic connection' in this way: "The Orphic mysteries are a cult of Dionysos. From Thrace they were brought to Thessaly and Boeotia, and in the middle of the sixth century spread rapidly in Attica under the Pisistratids. In their first appearance, they exerted an influence on the Eleusinian

Mysteries" and before the middle of the sixth century their influence spread even further.[132] Although G.R.S. Mead does not address the 'Orphic connection' directly, he does accept the concept that there was a connection of one kind or another among the mystery religions: "The Eleusinian, Orphic, Bacchic, Samothracian, Phrygian, Egyptian, Chaldean and other Mysteries all came from a common source,"[133] M.P. Nilsson believes that the Dionysos represented in the Cretan mysteries owed his presence there to the 'Orphic connection'.[134] I.M. Linforth says: "There can be little doubt that Dionysiac *teletae* [mysteries], like the *teletae* of other gods, were understood to have been instituted by Orpheus and to have found authority in his poems."[135]

These poems, said to have been written by Orpheus, refer to mystery cults, as Walter Burkert notes: "Eleusis in particular is claimed to be a foundation of Orpheus, but relations are also established with Phlya, Samothrace, and with Dionysiac festivals in general."[136] Some of the 'Orphic influence' was attributed to wandering mystery priests, as described in Plato's *Republic*:

> "Begger priests and seers come to the doors of the rich and convince them that in their hands, given by the gods, there lies the power to heal with sacrifices and incantations, if a misdeed has been committed by

> themselves or their ancestors, with pleasurable festivals...and they offer a bundle of books of Musaios and Orpheus...according to which they perform their sacrifices... they call these *teletai* [mysteries]"[137]

Of the poems of Orpheus, Pausanias notes:

> "Orpheus wrote poetry...so that the Lykomidai could sing them at their mysteries."[138]

The Lykomidai celebrated their private mysteries north of Athens at Phyla, mentioned above by Burkert. W.K.C. Guthrie elaborates upon the above passage of Pausanias: "The Lykomidai of Phyla in Attica chanted hymns of Orpheus over their sacred performances....Hymns then, metrical prayers recalling the nature and myths of a god and asking for his favour, and sung at scenes of sacrifice or possibly religious drama, were some of the *teletai* revealed by Orpheus."[139] Guthrie notes later that Orphic hymns were also sung in the mysteries of Dionysos.[140] Inscriptions at Pergamum reveal that the singing of hymns was an important part of the worship of Dionysos there.[141] Of that, Burkert says: "The cumulative effect of the evidence is overwhelming, and we may take it that the cult-hymns of Orpheus which we possess were used in Pergamum..."[142]

In about a third of the extant Orphic hymns[143], blessings were invoked on the *mystai* in the closing petition, and the language of the three hymns, Uranus, Horae, and Hestia, suggest that they were to be sung at the initiation of new members. Excavations in western Asia Minor have unearthed inscriptions, like the one referring to Pergamum above, that contain names and epithets of gods also found in the Orphic hymns. Many inscriptions contain some of the same technical terms of the mysteries also used in the hymns.[144]

According to Apollonius of Rhodes, Orpheus was supposed to have had some part in the institution of the mysteries of the Great Mother Kybele in Phrygia. He says that among the ceremonies performed was a dance recommended by Orpheus. One feature of this dance was the use of the *rhombos* (bull-roarer) and the *tympanum* (drum). Apollonius also states that this dance was continued ever after in the rites of the Phrygians.[145]

The connections between Orpheus and the other mystery religions are endless, it seems. Diodorus claims that Orpheus must have brought the mysteries to Greece from Egypt because:

> "the rite of Osiris is the same as that of Dionysos, and that of Isis is very similar to that of Demeter, the names alone having been interchanged."[146]

Linforth notes that "Things of religious import - rites and mysteries, the setting up of images, hymns, chants, and incantation - all these things were instituted on Egyptian or other models by the Thracian Orpheus".[147] Orpheus, then, real or mythological, was an expert in the mysteries who employed this skill by establishing mysteries all over the ancient world.

Orpheus, the progenitor of mysteries, does not get the credit, though, for personally instituting his own mysteries. Orphism came about after the institution of the other mysteries, and was a combination of the good, non-savage, elements from those mysteries. It was not until the middle of the sixth century B.C., long after the establishment of the other mysteries, that an Orphic doctrine as such emerged.[148] P. Gardner states that Orphism represented a religion in which "the savage elements were...eliminated and religious and philosophic elements implanted".[149]

Orphism represented idealistic trends. The reckless looseness of the Olympians was replaced by a strict code of conduct. In it developed a conception of sin and conscience, and a dualistic view of the body as evil and of the soul as divine. The subjugation of the flesh became a main purpose of religion, as a condition of the release for the soul. The brotherhood of

Orphic initiates was distinguished by the wearing of white garments, the avoidance of flesh food, and a high degree of asceticism.

Orpheus, the legendary man, and Orphism, the religion, then, are two separate entities. One common element though, in all of what Orpheus did, was music. Orpheus attached a great value to the basic elements in religion: rhythm, music, and dance, and these elements are common to all mystery religions, just as Orpheus ordained.

CHAPTER TEN

THE EGYPTIAN MYSTERIES

Of the hundreds of gods and goddesses worshipped in ancient Egypt, Isis and Osiris, and the members of their divine family were among the most influential. Isis was a mother goddess and Osiris was the brother and husband of Isis. Osiris possessed generative powers that enabled the Egyptian land watered by the Nile to be fertile and productive of crops. In Egyptian mythology the brother and rival of Osiris, Set, killed him; but Horus, the son of Isis and Osiris, defeated Set. Horus, thus, succeeded his dead father and ensured the triumph of continuity and order in Egyptian life. Isis, meanwhile, employed her magical powers to mummify Osiris and thereby to restore him from death to life.

Herodotus speaks of the mysteries of Isis and Osiris and their connection to Greece:

> "It is on this lake [before the temple of Athene, at Sais, in the Delta] that the Egyptians act by night in what they call their Mysteries the Passion of that being whose name I will not speak. All the details of these performances are known to me, but - I will say no more. Similarly I propose to hold my tongue

> about the mysterious rites of Demeter, which the Greeks call Thesmophoria, though in this case there are one or two points which may be mentioned without impiety. I may say, for instance, that it was the daughters of Daiaus who brought this ceremony from Egypt and instructed the Pelasgian women in it."[150]

Herodotus was not the only one who connects the mysteries of Isis and Osiris with Greece, Diodorus also sees a connection:

> "the rite of Osiris is the same as that of Dionysos, and that of Isis is very similar to that of Demeter, the names alone having been interchanged."[151]

And Plutarch in his treatise *Isis and Osiris* simply states that "Osiris is identical with Dionysos."[152] The main reason Plutarch gives for this belief is that the trumpet was used for both Osiris and Dionysos in exactly the same way. An Argive tradition holds that Dionysos descended into Hades to bring up his mother Semele from the dead through the Alcyonian lake. His return from the lower world was annually celebrated on the spot by the Argives, who summoned Dionysos from the water by trumpet blasts.[153] The trumpet was used this way in rites held in honor of Osiris. The trumpet is pictured for the first time in Egypt about 1415 B.C., and was used as a sacred instrument for Osiris, in fact its invention was attributed to the god

himself.[154] In Plutarch's explanation of Osiris' relationship with his people, he gives us another reason for the connection between Osiris and Dionysos:

> "but most of the peoples he won over to his way by the charm of his persuasive discourse combined with song and all manner of music. Hence the Greeks came to identify him with Dionysos."[155]

At the festival of Osiris the women would go about from village to village singing songs in his praise, much like the women of Dionysos singing songs for their god. Claire Polin notes that "instruments often were dedicated to the worship of particular gods - bells and flutes related to Osiris, the *sistrum* to Isis."[156] The *sistrum* was an instrument common to both Egypt and Mesopotamia (Figure 1), and as Curt Sachs notes: "A relationship between the Mesopotamian and the Egyptian *sistra* cannot be doubted; we know that in prehistoric times the countries were connected by commercial trade."[157] Since we do not find mention of the use of the *sistrum* in the worship of Kybele, we can be relatively sure it was not imported from Kybele for use by Isis in Egypt. As the worship of Isis spread, though, we find that the use of the *sistrum* followed.

By the Hellenistic period the worship of Isis and Osiris had become established in one form or another among the Greeks, and later it was also common among the Romans. It was not

until this time (c. 2nd C. B.C.) that the worship of Isis and Osiris was a full-fledged mystery cult. *The Golden Ass* of Apuleius gives a precious account of the Isis mysteries as they were practiced in the Roman East at the end of the 2nd C. A.D. The hero of Apuleius' tale, Lucius, participated in a procession in honor of Isis:

> "Next came musicians with pipes and flutes, followed by a party of carefully chosen choir-boys singing a hymn in which an inspired poet had explained the origin of the procession. The temple pipers of the great god Osiris were there, too, playing their religious anthem on pipes with slanting mouth-pieces and tubes curving around their right ears....
> The Goddess's bright earthly stars, they carried rattles of brass, silver, and even gold, which kept up a shrill and ceaseless tinkling.[158]

The instruments mentioned above, the pipes, flutes, and rattles, were all familiar instruments to the mysteries, used in almost all of the mysteries so far examined. We know the pipes referred to above are the *aulos* because Apuleius mentions "slanting mouthpieces" and "tubes curving around their right ears". The *aulos* was played vertically so that the mouthpiece would naturally slant and, as the power required to blow the *aulos* was so great, the player normally wore a leather band which passed over the mouth and around the ears to tie at the

back of the head (Figure 4). The flute referred to could be either the Egyptian flute, which was cut from cane and generally a yard long with from two to six fingerholes (Figure 11), or the cross-flute of the Greco-Roman period. We have just one depiction of a cross-flute from this period, on a coin of the Syrian town of Caesarea from as late as 169 A.D.[159] On an urn from an Etruscan tomb of the second century B.C. we have the earliest example of a cross-flute. On the urn is the head of a musician playing the instrument. The instrument shown is rather short and would probably have measured less than two feet in length.[160] The rattles mentioned above by Apuleius are the *sistra*, unique to the worship of Isis. The *sistra* had a U-shape, and looked much like a spur with crossbars, which jingled when shaken.

The Roman rites of Isis and Osiris, then, kept some of the flavor of the original rites of Egypt and added to them some from Greece. As Kurt Rudolph explains: "Greek influence is especially clear here: it was only through the identification of Isis with Demeter and the hellenization of the cult of Isis that the latter came to include mysteries."[161]

CHAPTER ELEVEN
THE ROMAN MYSTERIES OF MITHRAS

As we know them, the Mithraic mysteries are a Roman phenomenon that flourished in the Roman Empire from the second century A.D. on. The mysteries of Mithras were mysteries for men, in particular, soldiers, sailors, and imperial officers. This attraction helps to account for the number of sanctuaries of Mithras, called Mithraea, located in the frontier provinces where Roman legions were stationed, as well as in cities and ports of the empire.

Although the mysteries of Mithras were unique to the Roman Empire, Mithras himself was an import from the East. Among the Indo-Iranian peoples Mithras was known as a god of light, truth, and integrity. In the Zoroastrian literature of Persia, the *Avesta*, Mithras was associated with Ahura Mazda, the wise lord. The priests of Mithras were known as the Magi. Some of the Persian motifs, such as the affinity to the number seven: seven gates of heaven, seven stages in the initiation process, and the seven stages of ascent to the highest god, of the eastern Mithras were carried to the West and to Rome.[162]

In *Menippus* or *The Descent Into Hades*, the

second-century writer Lucian of Samosata gives us a glimpse into a magical rite performed by one of the priests of Mithras, a Magus. Menippus, the hero of Lucian's tale, wishes to descend into Hades in order to find out about the best life and the best philosophy. He accomplishes his task with the help of one of the Magi. Although Lucian's description of the rite is a parody, it also contains elements that he might have derived from the practices of the Magi: the place of ritual, sacrifice, libation, and foreign-sounding chants. As Lucian says:

> "I resolved to go to Babylon and address myself to one of the Magi, the disciples and successors of Zoroaster, as I had heard that with certain charms and ceremonials they could open the gates of Hades....On my arrival I conversed with one of the Chaldeans...his name was Mithrobarzanes."[163]

Before the descent into Hades the priest "becharmed" Menippus, a common Eastern rite usually accompanied by the *aulos*, because the sound of the *aulos* was thought to frighten away demons. Once in Hades, Mithrobarzanes began invoking the names of the spirits intermingled with a "number of foreign-sounding, meaningless words of many syllables."[164] This rite then, definitely had a foreign, even Persian, character.

In his *Life of Pompey*, Plutarch narrates the story of the grand and violent career of Pompey (b. 106 - d. 48 B.C.). One of Pompey's impressive military victories was his quick strike

against the Cilician pirates in 67 B.C. Plutarch discusses the life of these pirates, including the fact that they were devotees of Mithras and were probably responsible for introducing the celebration of the Mithraic mysteries into the Roman world. According to Plutarch, the pirates constantly involved themselves in music and dancing:

> "Roman supremacy was brought into contempt by their *aulos*-playing, their stringed instruments, their drunken revels along every coast..."[165]

Cilicia was part of the Hittite Empire in the last half of the second millennium B.C. Since the Hittites absorbed much of what the Babylonians could teach, and were conquered later by the Phrygians, it is likely the music of the Cilician pirates, and in turn their rites of Mithras, had a Babylonian/Phrygian flavor.

According to Franz Cumont, during the actual initiation ceremony, "lamps ranged about the choir threw their bright rays on the images of the gods and the celebrants..."[166] He also notes that long psalmodies and chants accompanied with music were interspersed among the ritual acts. The moment when the image of Mithras was unveiled was probably marked by the sounding of a bell.[167] Although we have some inscriptions that may be lines from Mithraic hymns[168], they do not tell us much. The inscriptions found in a Mithraeum beneath the Church of

Santa Prisca in Rome were written in Latin and are poetic in nature, and thus may be lines from Mithraic hymns or other ritual material that praises or invokes the Mithraic powers. One inscription in particular shows a definite connection with the rituals of the East:

> "Accept, O holy Father, accept the incense-burning Lions, through whom we offer the incense, through whom we ourselves are consumed."[169]

The use of incense was of eastern origin, and probably came to the Roman rites of Mithras through the influence of the Cilician pirates. As Cumont once said: "All the original rites that characterized the Mithraic cult of the Romans unquestionably go back to Asiatic origins."[170]

Near the end of the second century A.D. the pagan author Celsus wrote an attack upon Christianity entitled *Alethes Logos (True Discourse)*. Thanks to the great Christian theologian Origen, who published his *Contra Celsum* in the mid-third century as a reply to the charges of Celsus, much of the *Alethes Logos* has survived as quotations in Origen. In the following passage Origen is discussing Celsus' description of the Mithraic mysteries:

> "And he connects musical theories with the theology of the Persians which he describes. He waxes enthusiastic about these and gives a second explanation which again contains musical

ideas."[171]

Music, then, was an integral part of the Roman mysteries of Mithras. The *aulos* and song play a role in the celebrations of Mithras, as they have in all of the mysteries surveyed. Although we know little about the specific types of music and instruments used, we do know enough to admit to a definite link with the East, and Phrygia in particular.

CHAPTER TWELVE

SUMMARY

The purpose of this investigation into the role of music in the mystery religions of the ancient world is to compare the types of music used among these religions in order to uncover the character of the relationship which undeniably exists between them. I believe the similarities found will be valuable in defining the close relationship which existed among the mysteries, and the differences found will aid in uncovering where and from whom the mysteries received additional input and ideas.

The music of the earliest of the mysteries, the Babylonian mysteries of Tammuz, clearly utilized two wind instruments, the flute and the double oboe *aulos*, one string instrument, the *al-gar* or lyre, and one percussion instrument, the drum. These instruments were generally used to accompany ritual songs performed by a choir. Also, sources describe a pantomime, which included gestures coordinated to the rhythm of the music. It is safe to say that this pantomime was a form of dance.

Next in line, chronologically, were the Phrygian mysteries of Kybele and Attis. Musically there are numerous parallels between the Babylonian and Phrygian mystery rites. The

Phrygian rites included the *tympanon* or drum (in fact, in works of art, Kybele was frequently portrayed holding one), the *aulos*, singing, and dancing. Since the two areas were linked through trade, it is probable the Phrygians adopted the use of these instruments from the Babylonians for use in their own rites.

In addition, though, the Phrygians had instruments of their own such as the *krotala* ,the *kymbala*, and *timbrel*, and dances unlike the pantomimic dance of the Babylonians, such as the armed dance and various orgiastic dances. The mysteries of Kybele in Rome were known to have used the trumpet in much the same way as it was used by both the Egyptians in the mysteries of Osiris, and the Greeks in the mysteries of Dionysos. Since there is no mention of the trumpet in the original Phrygian rites, I think we can conclude that it was borrowed from either the Greeks or the Egyptians. It is possible some or all of these instruments and dances used originally by the Phrygians and not the Babylonians were inherited from the peoples who inhabited the region of Phrygia previous to the Phrygian occupation. Likewise, they could have been Phrygian from the start. What we do know, though, is the Phrygians influenced other mystery rites in much the same way the Babylonians influenced theirs.

The mysteries of Crete exhibit a close resemblance to many aspects of the rites of Phrygia. The armed dance played an integral role in the rites of both mysteries, as did the playing of

the *aulos*, *timbrel*, *tympanon*, and the *kymbala*. It is in the armed dance of the Cretan Kouretes, though, that we see almost a mirror image of the Phrygian dance of the Korybantes. As in the mysteries of the Babylonians and Phrygians before them, the Cretans sang hymns to the accompaniment of the *aulos*. One instrument used in the Cretan mysteries but not in the Phrygian, was the harp. It is possible the Cretans picked up the use of the harp from the Egyptians, as it was used there, though not in the mysteries. The Babylonians though, did use a close relative of the harp, the *al-gar* or lyre, in their mysteries, and possibly the Cretans borrowed it from them.

The little we know of the Mysteries of the Kabeiroi of Samothrace indicates an influence from both Crete and Phrygia. The Kabeiroi, like the Cretans and Phrygians, gave the armed dance an integral role in their mystery rites, and the *aulos*, *tympanon*, and *krotala* are known to have been used to accompany this dance. The dance of the Kabeiroi was called Cnossian by Nonnus[172] and thus may be a direct link with Crete, and through them, Phrygia. The name "Kabeiroi", indicating both the gods of Samothrace and a mountain or mountain region in Phrygia, and Phrygian rock altars found on Samothrace, I believe indicate that the Samothracians were in contact directly at one time or another, with Phrygia.

The mysteries of Dionysos seem to be a combination of the Phrygian, Cretan, and Egyptian mysteries. Dance of many

types, including an armed dance, played a very prominent part in the mystery rites of Dionysos. Most of the dances were orgiastic in character and used the usual Phrygian instruments as accompaniment: the *aulos*, *tympanon*, *timbrel*, *krotala*, and *kymbala*. The *pyrrhic* dance most closely resembled the armed dances of Phrygia, Crete, and Samothrace. This dance was made up of movements for attacking an enemy, but the dancer, instead of carrying a bow and arrow as in the other mysteries, carried *thyrsi* and torches.

Hymns, as usual, were included in many of the Dionysiac rites, such as Attic festivals of the Oschophoria and the Anthesteria. During the Anthesteria the trumpet was used to announce the beginning of the official drinking contest, and it was used again at the City Dionysia in Athens to announce the beginning of each event. At a Dionysian festival in Argos a trumpet was used to call Dionysos out of the lake of Lerna. Since the trumpet was first used by the Egyptians in c.1415 B.C. in the rites of Osiris, and since Dionysos has been linked to Osiris[173], it seems probable that the trumpet used by Dionysos belonged first to Osiris.

The *barbiton*, the Phrygian lyre, was also used by Dionysos, but not, as far as we can tell, by any of the other mystery rites. This hints to a direct connection to Phrygia, since if the Phrygian influence came to Dionysos through the Cretans, then the *barbiton* would not have made the transfer because the

Cretans did not use the *barbiton* in their rites. Thus, the mysteries of Dionysos were influenced by many of the foreign cults, the Phrygian, the Cretan, and the Egyptian in particular.

Although there were indeed singing and dancing in the mysteries of Eleusis, it is difficult to connect them with any other mystery cults, particularly since we have almost no information on the specific types utilized. We know however, that *kymbala* were used in the rites of Demeter, as they were in the rites of another "Great Mother", Kybele. The *echeion* or gong, was also used in the Eleusinian rites. The *echeion* was from the East, but there is no mention of its use in any of the other mystery religions. Musically, then, it is difficult to determine what mysteries (if any), other than the Phrygian, influenced the mysteries of Eleusis.

Orpheus has been linked to almost all of the mysteries discussed.[174] Orpheus seems to be the only link we have between the Phrygian, Cretan, Samothracian, Dionysian, Eleusinian, and Egyptian mysteries. There are only two things each of the above rites have in common: singing and dancing. Yes, there are other similarities, but they are not shared by all of the mysteries. Singing and dancing, though, are the very two things Orpheus specialized in[175].

The Egyptian mysteries of Isis and Osiris seem to have used just a few foreign instruments along with those unique to Egypt. The trumpet was used by the Egyptians in the worship of Osiris

as early as the middle of the second millennium B.C., and as we have seen, it was passed on for the Greeks to use in the mysteries of Dionysos, and for the Romans to use in the mysteries of Kybele. The Egyptians also used the *sistrum*, an instrument indigenous to Egypt, and used only in the worship of Isis. In addition there is mention of hymns, flutes, and bells. Hymns, of course, were found in all of the mysteries. The flute was used in the mysteries of Babylon also, but it is doubtful the Egyptians borrowed it from them, it is more likely the Egyptians had their own flute. The vertical flute of the Egyptians was recorded, for the first time anywhere, on a prehistoric slate from Hieraconpolis in the fourth millennium B.C.[176]

It is in Rome we see the *aulos* used for the first time in the mysteries of Isis and Osiris. Since Isis and Osiris did not arrive in Rome until the second century B.C., they could have picked up the *aulos* from almost anywhere, for by that time it was being used in the Phrygian, Cretan, Samothracian, and Dionysian rites.

Since the Roman Mysteries of Mithras were linked with the East, and since the Romans acquired these rites from the Cilician pirates from the area near Phrygia, it is not surprising to find mention of the *aulos*. As with all the other mysteries we also find singing and dancing, in addition, though, we find the use of a bell to announce the unveiling of Mithras. The only other time a bell had been mentioned in regard to mysteries was

in the Egyptian mysteries of Isis. But this alone does not prove a direct link between the two.

All of the mysteries, then, were dependent upon each other for some of the musical ideas used in their rites. None of them copied from another so completely that we would feel compelled to call them identical, they each gave something of themselves to the music of their mysteries. The similarities and parallels though, are undeniable, and I believe prove that there was a sharing or borrowing among the cults. Yet there are differences, and these prove that the later mysteries were not simply mirror images of the earlier, but benefactors.

APPENDIX

FIGURES

Figure 3:
Kymbala or
Cymbals

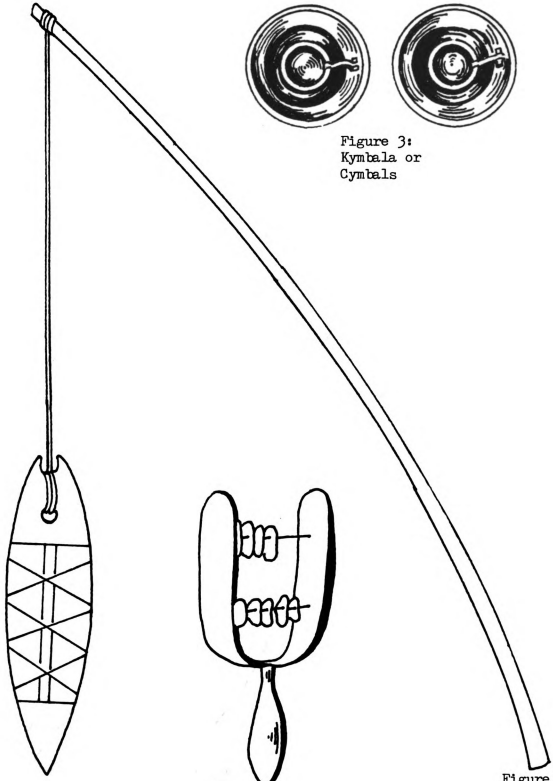

Figure 1:
Egyptian Sistrum

Figure 2:
Rhombos or
Bull-roarer

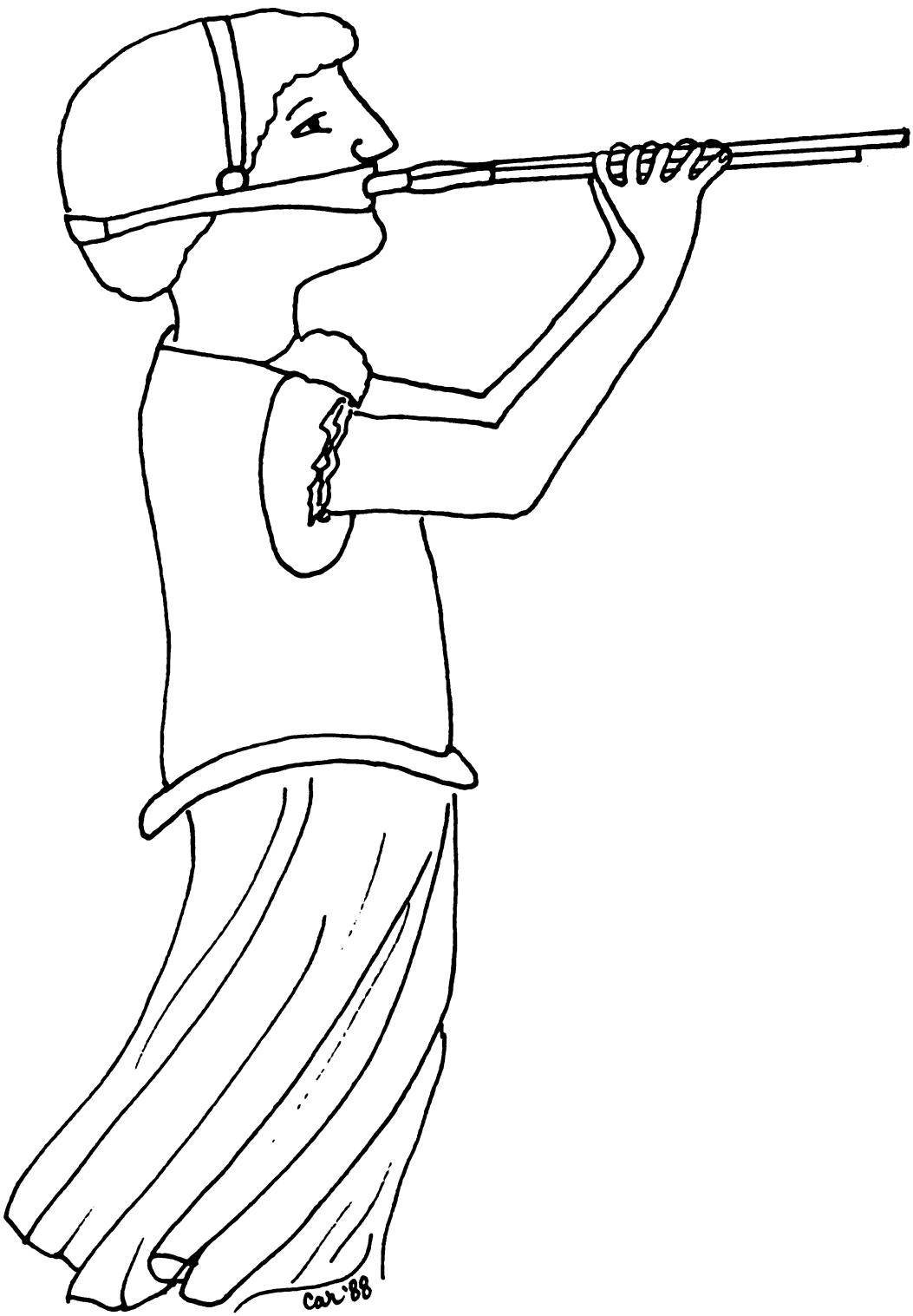

Figure 4:
Aulos or Double Oboe

Figure 5: Krotala or Castanets

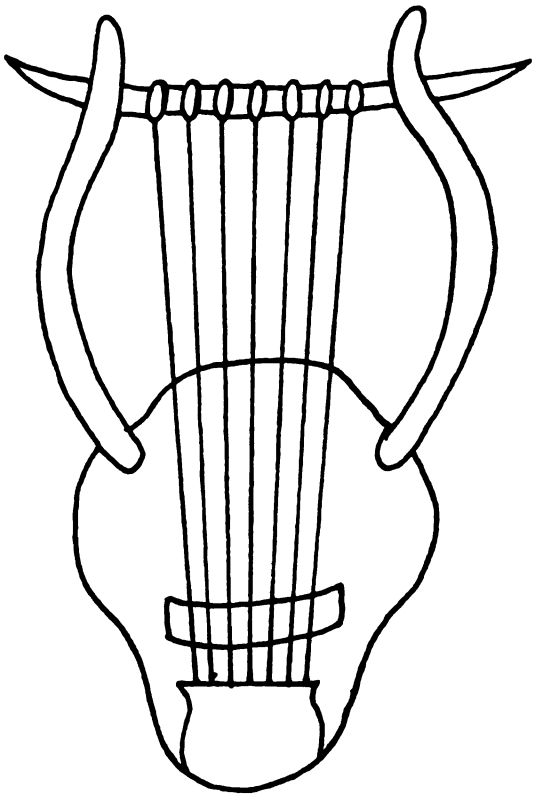

Figure 7:
Lyre

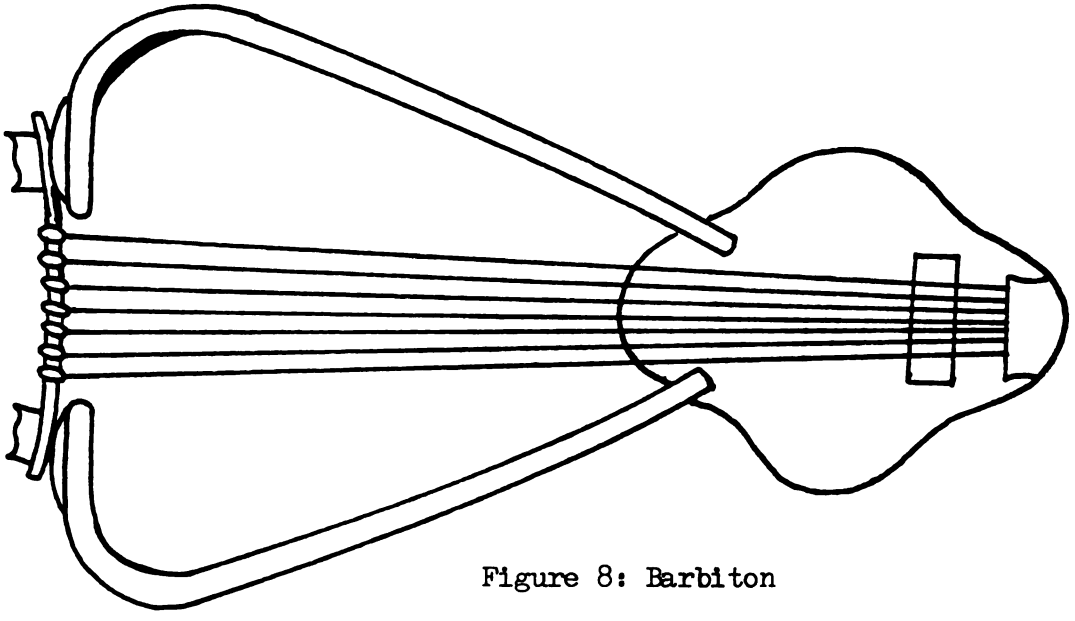

Figure 8: Barbiton

Figure 9:
Salpinx or Trumpet

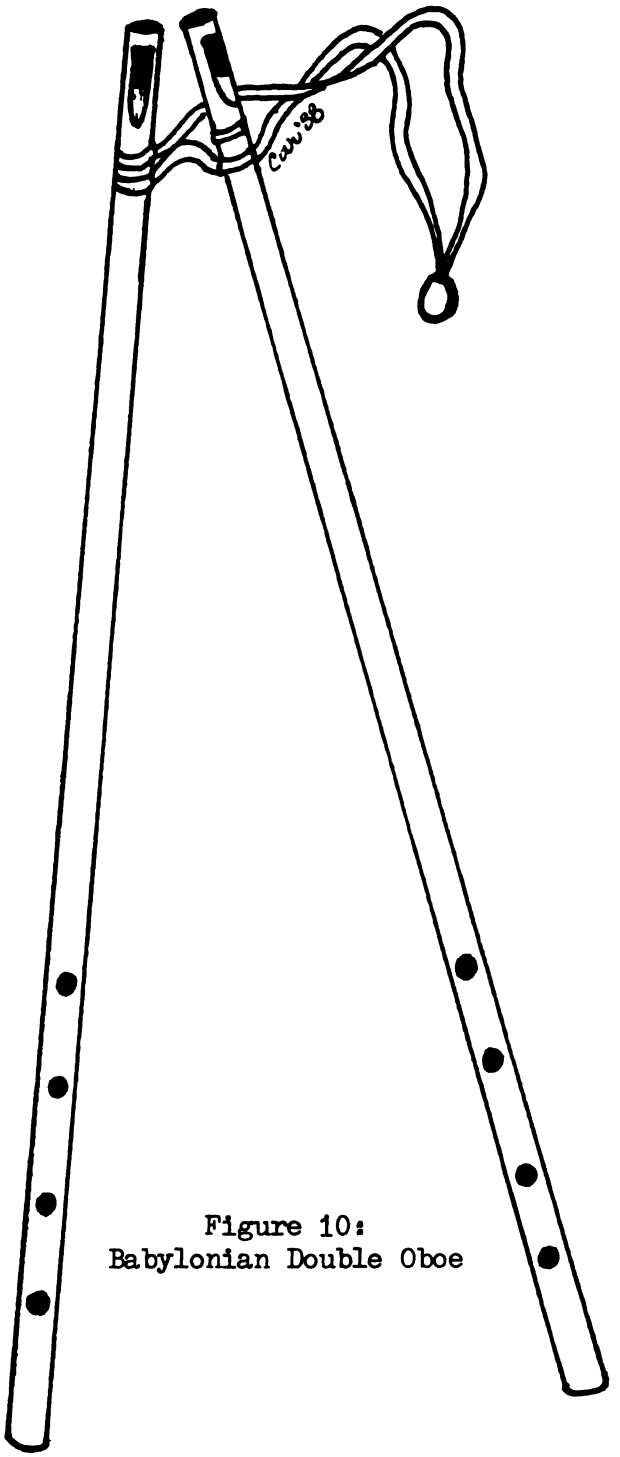

Figure 10:
Babylonian Double Oboe

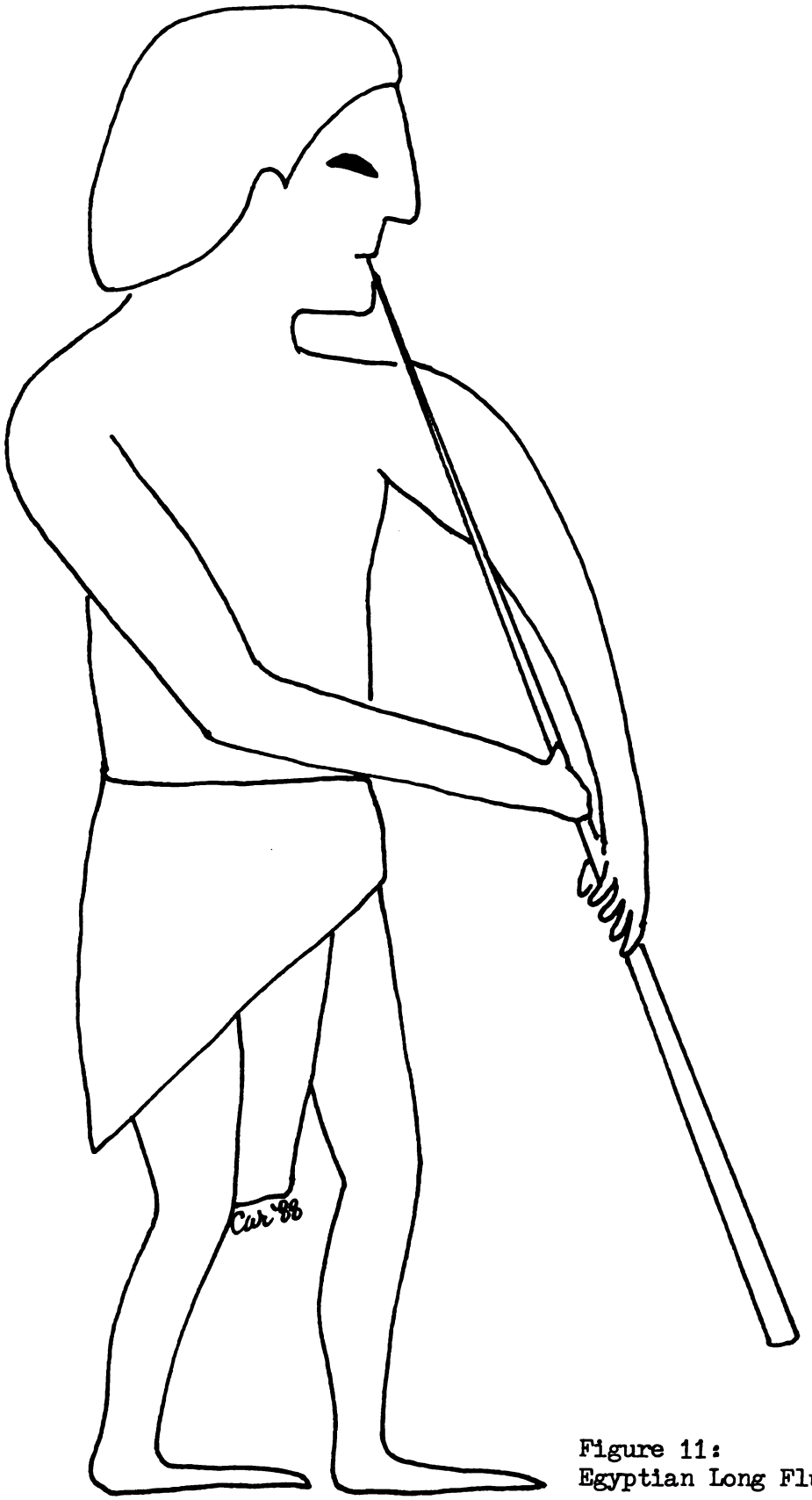

Figure 11:
Egyptian Long Flute

NOTES

NOTES

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[91]Susan Geuttel Cole, "New Evidence for the Mysteries of Dionysos," *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* XXI (1980), 229.

[92]Erika Simon, *Festivals of Attica: An Archaeological Commentary* (Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1983), 91.

[93]Ibid, 92.

[94]Sir Arthur Pickard-Cambridge, *The Dramatic Festivals of Athens* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), 62.

[95]Aristotle, *The Athenian Constitution*, trans. P.J. Rhodes

(New York: Penguin Books, 1984), 57.1.

[96]Plutarch, *Moralia IX*, trans. Edwin L. Minar, Jr. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1961), 299B.

[97]Otto, *Dionysus*, 82.

[98]Sachs, 143.

[99]Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, trans. W.H.S. Jones and H.A. Ormerod (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1926), II.75.

[100]Otto, *Dionysus*, 162.

[101]Harrison, *Prolegomena*, 562.

[102]Meyer, 17.

[103]H.G. Evelyn White, trans., *Hesiod: The Homeric Hymns and Homerica* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1959), 171-83.

[104]George E. Mylonas, *Eleusis and the Eleusinian Mysteries* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961), 3.

[105]Ibid, 20.

[106]Guthrie, 282.

[107]Clement of Alexandria *Exhortation to the Greeks*, Origen *Contra Celsum*, Arnobius of Sicca *Case Against the Pagans*.

[108]Mylonas, 226.

[109]Aristophanes, *The Frogs*, trans. Dudley Fitts (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1962), 324ff.

[110]Simon, 32.

[111]Aristophanes, 395-400.

[112]Apostolos N. Athanassakis, "Music and Ritual in Primitive Eleusis," *Platon* XXVII (1976), 93.

[113]Aristophanes, 441-2.

[114]Pausanias, *Guide to Greece*, trans. Peter Levi (New York: Penguin Books, 1984), I.38.6.

[115]The original is on exhibit in the National Museum in Athens. George E. Mylonas in *Eleusis and the Eleusinian Mysteries* has a good discussion and picture of the tablet, p. 213ff.

[116]Mylonas, 261.

[117]Ibid, 263.

[118]Kerenyi, *Eleusis*, 84.

[119]Ibid, 94.

[120]Mylonas, 264.

[121]Walter F. Otto, "The Meaning of the Eleusinian Mysteries," in *The Mysteries: Papers from the Eranos Yearbooks*, ed. Joseph Campbell (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1978), 27.

[122]Mylonas, 261ff.

[123]Harrison, 158.

[124]Strabo, X.3.10.

[125]Mircea Eliade, ed. *The Encyclopedia of Religion* (New York: Macmillian Publishing Company, 1987), s.v. "Mystery Religions,' by Kurt Rudolph.

[126]Aristophanes, 1032.

[127]Lucian, 15.

[128]Diororus Siculus, I.96.

[129]Pausanias, X.30.2.

[130]A.N. Athanassakis, 102.

[131]Mircea Elide, ed. *The Encyclopaedia of Religion* (New York: Macmillian Publishing Company, 1987), s.v. "Mystery Religions," by Kurt Rudolph.

[132]Walter Wili, "The Orphic Mysteries and the Greek Spirit," in *The Mysteries: Papers from the Eranos Yearbooks*, ed. Joseph Campbell (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1978), 70.

[133]G.R.S. Mead, *Orpheus* (New York: Barnes & Noble, Inc., 1965), 153.

[134]M.P. Nilsson, 580.

[135]Ivan M. Linforth, *The Arts of Orpheus* (New York: Arno Press, 1973), 171.

[136]Burkert, 296.

[137]Plato, *The Republic*, trans. B. Jowett (New York: Vintage Books), 364b - 365a.

[138]Pausanias, X.27.1.

[139]Guthrie, 203.

[140]Ibid, 258.

[141]Ibid, 261.

[142]Ibid.

[143]Apostos N. Athanassakis, *The Orphic Hymns: Text, Translation and Notes* (Missoula, Montana: Scholars, 1977).

[144]Linforth, 184.

[145]Apollonius Rhodius, *The Argonautica*, trans. R.C.

Seaton (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1961), I.1134ff.

[146]Diodorus Siculus, I.96.

[147]Linforth, 244.

[148]Wili, 70.

[149]James Hastings, ed. *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1917), s.v. "Greek, Phrygian Mysteries," by P. Gardner.

[150]Herodotus, *The Histories*, trans. Aubrey de Selincourt (Baltimore: Penguin, 1954), II.17.

[151]Diodorus Siculus, I.96, cf. Ch. IX above.

[152]Plutarch, *On Isis and Osiris*, trans. Edwin L. Minar, Jr. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1961), 364e-f.

[153]Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, trans. W.H.S. Jones and H.A. Ormerod (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1926), II.37.5.

[154]Sachs, 100.

[155]Plutarch, *On Isis and Osiris*, 355e.

[156]Polin, 32.

[157]Sachs, 70.

[158]Apuleius, XI.10.

[159]Sachs, 142.

[160]Ibid.

[161]Mircea Eliade, ed. *The Encyclopedia of Religion* (New York: Macmillian Publishing Company, 1987), s.v. "Mystery Religions," by Kurt Rudloph.

[162]Meyer, 199.

[163]Lucian, *Menippus*, trans. H.W. Fowler & F.G. Fowler (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1949), 6 - 9.

[164]Ibid, 9.

[165]Plutarch, *Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans*, trans. John Dryden (New York: Modern Library, n.d.), 24.4.

[166]Franz Cumont, *The Mysteries of Mithra*, trans. Thomas J. McCormack (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1956), 162.

[167]Ibid, 166.

[168]Meyer, 206.

[169]Ibid, 207.

[170]Cumont, 30.

[171]Origen, *Contra Celsum*, trans. Henry Chadwick (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1980), VI.22.

[172]Nonnus, III.61-7.

[173]Plutarch in *On Isis and Osiris* says: "Osiris is identical with Dionysos...They call him up out of the water by the sound of trumpets." 364 E & F.

[174]The Mysteries of Mithra were chronologically later and thus not included in the stories circulated about Orpheus.

[175]Lucian says that Orpheus was the best dancer of his time (*Of Pantomime*, 15), and Orpheus was known far and wide as a singer.

[176]Sachs, 90.

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