The cults of Ituraean Heliopolis (Baalbek)
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An article about the gods of Heliopolis requires some justification. The "triad" of Jupiter, Venus and Mercury has been studied extensively, with an emphasis on its alleged Egyptian or Semitic roots and character, but the available evidence (literary traditions, inscriptions, iconography) dates well into Roman imperial times and originates in local antiquarianism of the Second Sophistic. In the case of Heliopolis, inferences to pre-Roman times are particularly hazardous since it suffered a major disruption with the settlement of Augustus' veterans and the creation of the colony of Berythus in 15 B.C., a disruption which seems to have affected all aspects of religious life. Thus the early days of the city and its cults are largely unknown. I argue that the "Hellenistic" period of Heliopolis is not quite as murky as usually assumed, since some light can be shed on the religious outlook of the Ituraean tetrarchs of Chalkis, masters of the Beqa' and high priests of Heliopolis for much of the 1st c. B.C. New findings on the coinage of the tetrarchs, combined with evidence from sculpture, architecture, epigraphy and literary sources, can show that the gods of the Ituraeans were more intimately linked to the famous gods of Baalbek than previously thought, and that the religious ambitions of the tetrarchs of Chalkis played a vital role in the development of the city and its cults.

Tetrarchs and high priests

The tetrarchs of Chalkis were among the most powerful of the many local dynasties to seize their share of the disintegrating Seleucid kingdom, at a time when the Nabataeans and Hasmoneans, and later Herod the Great, divided the southern Levant between themselves (fig. 1). Pompey elevated them to the status of "friend and ally of the Roman people" and left them to administer what were considered cultural backwaters, namely Mt. Lebanon, Hermon, Anti-Lebanon and the Beqa' valley in between, as well as the Haurán (fig. 2). Judging from their personal names, the Ituraeans may have originated in an Arabic-speaking milieu and (as the term "Arab" among ancient authors often implies) they are described as nomads and brigands posing a threat to civilian life. Their renown as archers (a skill which would suggest a nomadic origin) was recognized by Marc Antony, who enrolled them as bodyguards — much to the dismay of Cicero ("Why do you bring Ituraeans [sic], of all tribes the most barbarous, down into the forum: with their arrows?").

The tetrarch Ptolemy, son of Mennaios, ruled from his stronghold Chalkis sub Libano, unlo-

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1 See, e.g., Hajjar 1985 (infra n.33) 177-85; id. 1993 (infra n.29) 2459-61.  
5 Cic., Dei. 2.4.41.112; see also 2.8.18.  
6 Founded by "Monnikhe den Arab": Stephen of Byzantium s.a. "Chalkis (4)." The name Monnikos is otherwise unattested and most scholars (following A. H. M. Jones, The cities of the eastern Roman provinces [2nd edn. Oxford 1971] 254) amend it to Mennoios, the father of Ptolemy. However, Dillow, "Lamblichos de Chalkis," Dictionnaire des philosophes antiques III (2005) 383, P. L. Cailler, "La principauté d'Abila de Lysanias dans l'Antilibán,” Dossiers de l'Archéologie 179 (2002-3) 121, and Aliquot (supra n.2) 227, would all read Monnimos, ancestor of the philosopher lamblichus of Chalkis; see Photius, Bk. codex 151, § 1. The suggestion is plausible if instead of Chalkis and Bethnum one relocates