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A CYBELE ALTAR IN LONDON.

(Plate VIII.)

By E. M. W. TILLYARD.

The altar¹ here published is in the possession of Mr. G. A. Warren of Streatham Hill, to whom I am very much indebted for permission to make this publication. It belonged formerly to a Mr. Morgan and passed into Mr. Warren's possession in 1892. Mr. Morgan is no longer alive, and enquiries I have made about the origin of his collection have had no result. I have therefore nothing to say about *provenance*.

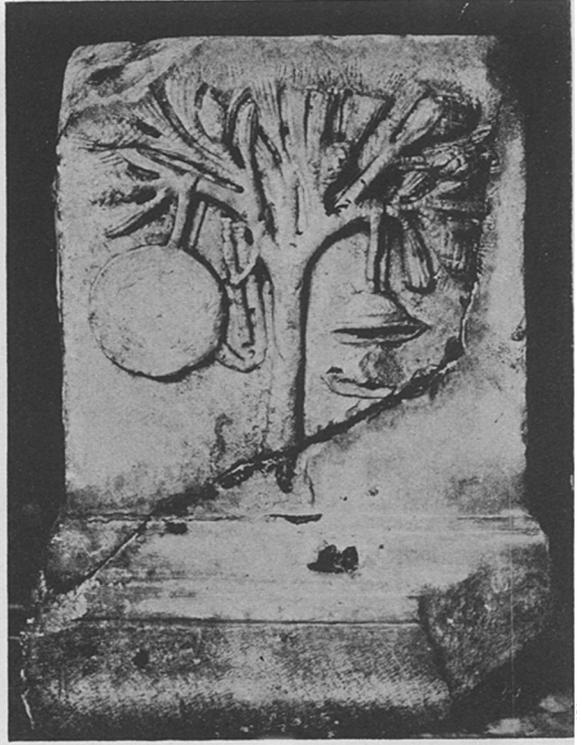
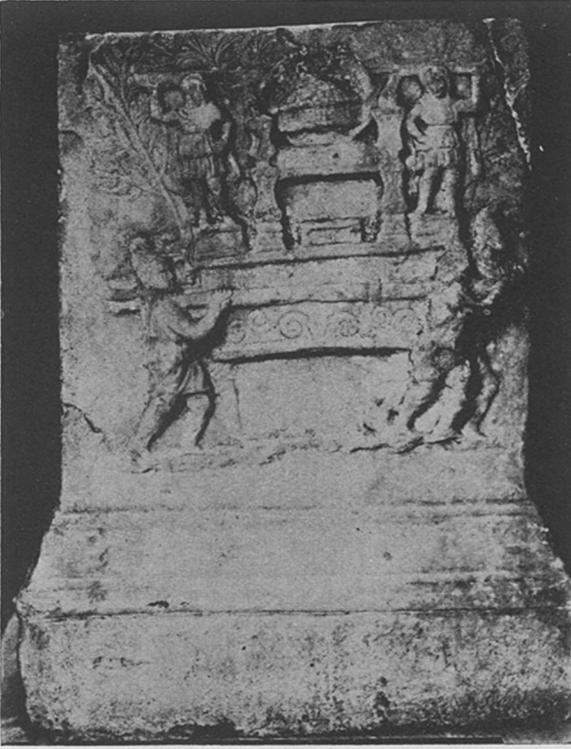
The altar has the shape which is usually given to such monuments of late Republican and Imperial times, except that there is no moulding above, and the reliefs are not sunk in panels. It dates perhaps from the second century A.D. and seems to be Roman.

On one of the long sides is shown Cybele (or her priestess) between two Galli. She stands with her weight thrown rather heavily on the left leg, her right arm nearly outstretched. She wears a long chiton and, above it, a piece of drapery hung over the right shoulder and upper arm, so as to fall in front of and behind the body, then bunched up and passed over the head and finally attached at the left shoulder. In her left hand she carries a dish, containing some kind of seed or fruit and holds a little amphora by one finger. In her right hand she holds a pomegranate branch and a pomegranate. The Galli stand with inner legs bent and crossed in front of outer legs. They rest their chins on inner hands, the inner elbows supported on outer hands, outer arms being held horizontally across their waists. They wear chitons reaching the knee, cloaks fastened at the neck, and Phrygian caps. By their attitude² they seem to be mourning—for the dead Attis.

Cybele's attributes are interesting. The dish she holds is ribbed and the amphora tapers sharply to the foot and has a single handle over the mouth above—an arrangement not found in Attic, but frequent in Campanian wares. The forms of both vessels suggest

¹ Dimensions: Height, 0.425 m.; length of base, 0.425 m., breadth of base, 0.35 m.; height of faces, 0.279 m., length of long faces, 0.375 m., length of short faces, 0.275 m.; maximum depth of relief, 0.024 m. There is a rectangular hollow within. Italian marble.

² Compare the attitude of several of the women on the Mourners' Sarcophagus from Sidon, and of the mourning Attis in the Naples museum from Pompeii (Grailot, *Le Culte de Cybèle*, pl. xi, no. 3).



CYBELE ALTAR IN LONDON.

a ritual origin. On a fourth-century relief at Berlin¹ a ribbed dish held by Cybele and an amphora held by a youth have an exact similarity. The ritual vessels used in the worship of Cybele seem thus to have had fixed forms. The pomegranate, branch and fruits—an offering to the dead—carried by Cybele can be paralleled on the relief of the Archigallus in the Conservatori in Rome.²

On one of the short sides is the pine of Attis, weighed down by great cones—an obvious emblem of fertility. On a branch to the right hang two cymbals, joined by a rope or thong, of the form usual in Attis worship; on the left hang a *tympanum* engraved with a laurel wreath, and two pipes, one straight, the other curved at the end.

The pine, so prominent in the legend and ritual of Cybele and Attis, is a natural subject of representation here and may be reminiscent of the *Arbor Intrat* ceremony at Rome. The best parallel is given by the Cybele altar in the Villa Albani,³ where a pine-tree is shown, on which are birds, a *tympanum*, a *cista* and cymbals.

The other short side shows a ritual procession. Four Galli are carrying a large oblong bier on two poles. They wear *anaxyrides*, short chitons and Phrygian caps. They walk each at a corner of the bier, supporting an end of a pole on inside shoulders. The poles are attached to the sides of the bier. There is a spiral ornament on the bier below the pole. On the middle of the bier and fronting us is a large throne of the Milesian type, under which is a footstool. A cushion supporting a shell-shaped receptacle rests on the throne, and in the receptacle is a low, round, wickerwork basket, with a low, conical cover. On a pedestal to either side of the throne stands a little Gallus,⁴ dressed like the Galli below, only wearing a chlamys in addition. With upraised outer hands they seem to support a pole which, joined to each of the uprights of the throne, passes behind their heads (unless it actually rests on them) and behind the shell-shaped receptacle. Behind the throne and the Galli rise pine-branches, and to the sides branches of what looks like olive.

There is nothing quite like this procession on any other monument. Perhaps the best parallel is the relief in S. Lorenzo at Rome⁵ showing the *Pompa Circensis*. Here a number of Galli are seen carrying two *fercula*, on the first of which is Cybele seated with her lions, and on the other a Nike on a pedestal. The method of carrying is exactly that shown on the altar.

The throne on the altar is interesting. It is backless and has legs of the so-called Milesian type—a kind commonly used by gods,

Arch. Zeit. 1880, pl. 1.

² Reinach, *Rep. des Rel.* iii, p. 207.

³ Zoega, *Bassi Relievi*, i, pl. xiii and xiv.

⁴ These little Galli seem certainly meant to be

statues and part of the throne. See Cultrera, *Due rilievi della Collezione Buoncompagni Ludovisi* in *Bullettino d'Arte*, 1909, Jan.-Feb., for similar arrangement.

⁵ Reinach, *Rep. des Rel.* iii, p. 321.

rarely by men. Probably it is a particular throne of special sanctity. On a relief in the Capitoline Museum,¹ showing Claudia pulling to land the ship which brought the statue of Cybele from Asia Minor, the goddess is shown seated on a similar throne, the only difference being that the legs are not produced above the seat. The Capitoline relief is on so small a scale that a slight difference of detail like this does not amount to much; and it is likely that on both the altar and the relief there is represented the actual throne which was brought with the statue of Cybele from Pessinus. This likelihood is increased by the evidence of a relief, high up on the walls of the Villa Medici,² formerly considered part of the Ara Pacis. It shows the temple of the Magna Mater, and in the middle of the pediment a throne in every way identical with the throne on our altar (fig. 1). On the

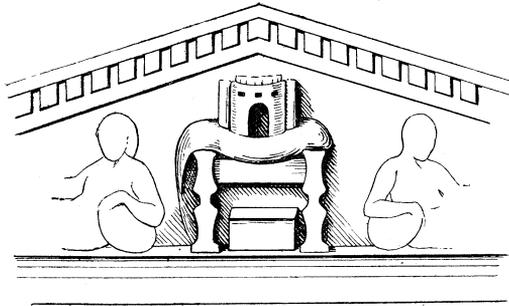


FIG. 1.

seat of the throne is spread a heavy piece of stuff³ and on this reposes a turreted crown. To either side lies a Gallus. A throne placed so prominently could hardly be other than the goddess' own. It must be remembered that the temple of the Magna Mater Idaea on the Palatine, which the Villa Medici relief represents and where the throne from Pessinus would in all probability have been housed, was twice destroyed by fire, in 111 B.C. and A.D. 3, after which it was restored by Augustus. So treasured an object, however, as this throne, would almost certainly have been among the first things to be rescued from a conflagration. I incline, therefore, to think that on both the altar and Villa Medici relief there is represented the actual throne which accompanied the goddess' statue from Pessinus.

¹ *Catalogue*, p. 181, no. 109 b, pl. 43.

² Brunn, *Kleine Schriften*, i, p. 109; Petersen, *Ara Pacis*, p. 65; Graillot, op. cit. pl. vii, no. 1.

³ Graillot, op. cit. p. 327, thinks this piece of stuff is Cybele's veil.

The next object of interest shown on our altar is the basket, which is obviously the centre of the whole procession and must contain sacred objects. Now the use of the *Kalathos* or of the *cista mystica* in the cult of Cybele and Attis has seemed comparatively unimportant; but our altar proves that the *Kalathos* (and its contents) was an object of sufficient importance to occasion a complete *pompē*. There must have been mysteries connected with Cybele, which, in part at least, were transferred to Rome. That such mysteries existed in Phrygia is proved by the passage in Clement of Alexandria,¹ so often quoted in relation to the Eleusinian Mysteries; our altar, if Roman, indicates their introduction into Rome.

Other monuments confirm the use of the basket in Cybele worship, though none show it 'in action'. On the relief showing the Archigallus,² mentioned above, amongst the various attributes represented is a tallish wickerwork basket with a conical top. Again, on the relief in the Villa Albani,³ also mentioned above, the tree is decked with a similar but taller basket. In the Vatican⁴ there is a marble representation of a wickerwork basket, probably a votive offering, in shape exactly similar to the one on our altar. Hitherto connected with the worship of Dionysus, it may now be plausibly referred to that of Cybele.

Further confirmation of the use of a box or basket in the worship of Cybele may perhaps be had from the coins of Cibyra in Phrygia. Here a basket or box appears so frequently that one must assume one of two things, either that a box was the town-arms or that it was an important object of ritual. It has been suggested⁵ tentatively that the box, *κιβωτός*, is merely the canting badge of the town Cibyra. It is, however, more likely to be a ritual object, as it is sometimes represented as the attribute of a goddess. Two instances may be cited. A bronze coin of Maximinus and Maximus⁶ shows on the reverse a goddess holding a torch in one hand and balancing a basket on her head with the other. Another coin, this time of Gallienus,⁷ shows a goddess with similar attributes, but drawn in a chariot by lions. That she is the city-goddess seems plain, but one hesitates to give her a name. The torches suggest Hecate, the lions Cybele. At Thyatira an exactly similar goddess is found. A bronze coin of the time of Alexander Severus⁸ shows a goddess holding two torches drawn in a chariot by a lion. Again she cannot be named. Originally, each town in Phrygia would have had its local goddess,

¹ Protr. i, 2, 13. *Δηοὺς μυστήρια καὶ Διὸς πρὸς μητέρα ἀφροδίσει συμπλοκαὶ καὶ μῆνις τῆς Δηοῦς καὶ Διὸς ἱκετηρία. ταῦτα τελίσκουσιν οἱ Φρύγες Ἀπτιδί καὶ Κυβέλη καὶ Κορύβασι — τὰ σύμβολα τῆς μνήσεως ταύτης Ἐκ τυμπάνου ἔφαγον, ἐκ κυμβάλου ἔπιον, ἐκερνοφόρησα, ὑπὸ τὸν παστὸν ὑπέδυν*

² Reinach. loc. cit.

³ Zoega, loc. cit.

⁴ Amelung, *Var. Cat.* i, p. 218, pl. 26.

⁵ Head, *Historia Numorum*, p. 670.

⁶ *B.M. Cat. Coins: Phrygia*, p. 144, no. 72.

⁷ *B.M. Cat. Coins: Phrygia*, p. 148, no. 93, pl. xviii, 9.

⁸ Imhoof-Blumer, *Monnaies Grecques*, p. 390, no. 37.

one differing little from another. One of these local goddesses, Cybele, growing in importance, imposed herself on some of the lesser goddesses of the neighbourhood, while Hecate, herself perhaps an importation from Thrace, but sufficiently like Cybele to be sometimes confused with her,¹ imposed herself on others. Whatever name, therefore, is given to the goddess of Cibyra, it may be taken that her cult differed little from that of Cybele, and that the use of the box or basket in her worship is an indication of its use in the worship of Cybele likewise.

What were the contents of the basket? Probably it contained the genitals either of Attis himself or of an Archigallus or of certain Galli. There is evidence in Attis cult for the worship of a *cista* containing the genitals of the god.² Though we are not told as much, it is very possible that certain relics of Attis may have been sent to Rome with other sacred objects of Cybele worship. A parallel is to be found in the story that the Cabiri brought Dionysus' genitals to Etruria in a basket.³

Mr. A. B. Cook considers that the *cista* placed by the side of the Archigallus in the Conservatori relief, mentioned above, is supposed to contain the Archigallus' genitals; likewise the basket shaped like a modius inscribed with the name of M. Modius Maximus, Archigallus of Ostia.⁴ It is known that after the Galli castrated themselves in their initiation, their genitals were put in a *cista* and dedicated to Cybele.⁵ The altar may very well represent the receptacle and its contents being carried in procession before the dedication. If this view is correct, the procession probably took place on the *Dies Sanguinis*, 24th March, the day on which the aspirants to the priesthood of Attis committed the qualifying act of castration. The presence of pine branches on the bier, suggesting that the *Arbor Intrat* ceremony was over, and the mourning attitude of the Galli, indicating that the resurrection of Attis had not yet taken place, both favour this date.

To sum up, the altar here published is one of the most interesting Cybele monuments, indicating the use of vessels of fixed shapes in Cybele worship and establishing the existence of a hitherto unknown ritual act, in which a sacred throne—perhaps the identical throne which accompanied the goddess from Pessinus to Rome—and a sacred basket, whose use in Cybele worship has hitherto been considered comparatively unimportant, were carried in solemn procession.

¹ See the inscription relating to the Metroön at the Piræus (*Annali*, 1862, p. 38) in which Artemis-Hecate is called Nana, a title usually confined to Cybele. See also the confusion of cults as shown by the excavation of the sanctuary of Mên near Pisidian Antioch (J. G. C. Anderson in *J.R.S.* iii, 1913, p. 280).

² See Graillet, *op. cit.* p. 179.

³ Roschers *Lexikon*, ii, p. 1621, s.v. *Korybanten*. A. B. Cook, *Zeus* i, p. 107.

⁴ *Mon. dell' Inst.* ix, pl. 8a, figs 1 (a), 1 (b); A. B. Cook, *Zeus*, ii (awaiting publication), chap. ii, sec. 3 (a) iv, para. ε.

⁵ Graillet, *op. cit.* p. 297. Hepding, *Attis*, p. 163.