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In Search of God Baal in Phoenician and Cypriot Epigraphy (First Millennium BCE)

Abstract: In academic research, much of our effort is devoted to reassessing scholarly assumptions and upgrading our knowledge according to new data and/or innovative methodological frameworks. This paper shares these concerns relating to what scholars often too quickly regard as “the god Baal”. By analysing the whole extant epigraphic documentation attesting the term *bʿl* from Phoenicia and Cyprus, made possible thanks to the MAP database, we will argue that scholars should be more prudent in evoking this divine entity as such, and act accordingly when studying his cult, diffusion and iconography.

1 Introduction

The term *bʿl* is polyvalent and polysemic,¹ as underscored by every dictionary, embracing the semantic spectrum of “lord, chief”, “owner, possessor, proprietor”, “husband”, “citizen, inhabitant”, or even functioning as “indication of membership of a certain group”.² However, although scholars agree that when the term refers to divine beings, it functions as a transparent term,³ they nonetheless tend to render it by a transliteration rather than a translation.⁴ Therefore, instead of dealing with many (divine) “masters”, the multiple attestations of the term *bʿl* risk being conflated and hypostatized into a divine being called “Baal”. Stretching beyond the field of Levantine studies and reaching not only the general public but also specialists from other disciplines less aware of the state of our documentation, such a linguistic (mis)use, unintentionally, on the scholar’s part, bears at least three consequences regarding the documentation from the first millennium BCE: 1) a god called Baal is traditionally re-

1 The Introduction (1) was written by both authors, part 2 (Phoenicia) by Fabio Porzia, part 3 (Cyprus) by Giuseppe Garbati, the conclusions (4) by both authors. Our deepest thanks go to Paolo Xella for having read the manuscript and having shared with us some useful observations, and to Herbert Niehr and Christophe Nihan for the fruitful discussion during the Workshop organised in Toulouse.

2 *DNWSI*, I, s.v. *bʿl*, 182–184; Müller 2005.

3 By transparent, we mean a term that is used in different occasions and contexts, not only in onomastics (for more details and bibliography, see Porzia 2020, 219–230).

4 See, for instance, Guarneri 2021; Herrmann 1999. The same attitude is not exclusive to our field. Specialists of Mesopotamian religion, for instance, systematically transliterate but never translate divine names meaning that, for ancient Mesopotamians, their gods held fully understandable names while for us they bear exotic and mysterious names, only accessible to those of us who have rudiments of Akkadian (Porzia 2020, 221–222).

garded as the Phoenician deity *par excellence*; 2) such a Baal, often considered a storm god with a more or less consistent iconography, spread from the Levantine coast, mainly but not exclusively following the so-called Phoenician colonisation; 3) on a general level, there is the risk of provoking a distorted perception of a kind of “*bʿl* monotheism” in the ancient Mediterranean.

However, taking advantage of the MAP database, this paper challenges these aspects by providing an extensive scrutiny of how the term *bʿl* was applied to divine beings in inscriptions from the Eastern Mediterranean, and in Phoenician inscriptions in particular.⁵ It also aims to produce a comprehensive understanding and typology of the different uses of the terms *bʿl* as a divine name.⁶ Of course, to some extent, our analysis is biased by the nature of the MAP database, that is, by the fact that it exclusively deals with divine names in epigraphy. Focussing on the first millennium BCE epigraphic attestations, we will leave aside the documentation from Ugarit, the Hebrew Bible and the theophoric elements in anthroponomy. These issues, although pivotal, cannot be examined here as extensively as they deserve. Moreover, the present paper only focuses on two geographical areas: Phoenicia and Cyprus. Word limit restrictions preclude the discussion of the other Levantine attestations, included in the preliminary version of this paper discussed in Toulouse during the Workshop; all these data will be the object of a further publication. Nonetheless, we believe that prioritising the documentation discussed here still helps to establish some basic points, which will later prove useful when compared with data of a different nature and/or historical-geographical origin, including those from the so-called “Phoenician Occident”. Moreover, methodologically speaking, our main conclusions seem to be drawn from the direct Phoenician evidence we discuss here, rather than from other or external sources, sometimes polemically biased such as the Hebrew Bible, or intrinsically incomplete such as anthroponomy, where the theophoric element *bʿl* might in many cases relate to – and therefore summarise and hide – more complex divine names (such as Baal Hammon).

2 Baal in Phoenicia

Although the definitions of Phoenicians as a people and Phoenicia as a territory are hotly debated,⁷ they can still be used for practical reasons. At the same time, we strongly refuse to attribute them any identity value and limit their heuristic potential to descriptive and geographical labels, attesting certain cultural traits without any clear-cut boundary, many of them overlapping with neighbour regions. In this framework, another

⁵ The texts quoted here follow the edition chosen and recorded in the *DB MAP*. For more discussion and bibliography see also the *DB MAP*.

⁶ On the distinction between the notions of “divine name”, “title”, and “epithet”, see Bonnet *et al.* 2018.

⁷ See only recently Porzia 2018; Garbati 2021c.

“myth” that should be nuanced is that Phoenicians continued the Canaanite tradition into the first millennium BCE. Accordingly, Phoenician Baal(s) are understood by scholars to be a heritage of second millennium BCE Baal(s) in the region, starting with the Ugaritic one. However, the socio-political systems before and after the reorganisation of the Levant between Late Bronze and Iron Age are not the same. It is true that the Phoenician city-states carried on the second millennium geopolitical configuration, unlike the innovative territorial states characterised by some tribal features (such as the Aramaic kingdoms, Israel and Judah and the Transjordanian polities).⁸ However, some changes even came to affect the Phoenician cities: on the religious level, for instance, in the whole Levant the richness of local pantheons is drastically different, passing from hundreds of deities attested at Ugarit to what can be regarded as the “small polytheisms” of the Iron Age, counting no more than ten deities for the sites with the best preserved documentation.⁹

The divine couple composed of Baal and Astarte is then considered the basic unit of the “Phoenician religion”,¹⁰ another quite abstract category used by scholars in their fragmented and ethnic-oriented description of the ancient Near East. Scholars can be divided between those recognising *bʿl* as a common appellative for any male main deity and those using the term in a broader and absolute way, avoiding systematic translations and capitalising the first letter when transliterating it, so that Baal becomes the matrix of each Phoenician male god. However, besides a few exceptions,¹¹ Baal is too often regarded as the quintessential Phoenician god, a truly pan-Phoenician divinity and, outside Phoenicia, a kind of “Phoenician brand” in the religious realm. Actually, the notion of a “god Baal” is so rooted in our horizon that each of us could very easily repeat it passively, as a matter of habitude, as an automatism or as a shortcut. Consequently, scholarly debate became stuck in a double *impasse*:

- a class of Baal gods, with scholars increasingly referring to Baals in a plural form, although no Phoenician inscription ever uses the term in the plural (*bʿlm*) in a religious context;
- the historical-religious, not to say “theological”, problem of whether all these Baals are local manifestations of the one and the same Baal, or rather an expression of a different autonomous god with each different use.

The question we’re trying to answer here is whether our documentation supports this view or not. In order to answer this, the following table (Tab. 1) collects all the occur-

⁸ Xella 2014. However, on the risk of overstating the emphasis on “tribal”, “ethnic” or even “national” states in the Iron Age, see Porzia 2022b, 309–312.

⁹ Even if our knowledge of deities is limited to those listed in royal and official inscriptions, one cannot ignore that the global amount dramatically decreased in all the Iron Age Levantine polities.

¹⁰ Lipiński 1995, 65.

¹¹ See, for instance, Bonnet 1996, 50; Xella 2019, 275–275, where the name *bʿl* is used with circumspection.

rences of the term *b'l*, included the feminine form *b'lt*, in what is traditionally considered Phoenicia.¹²

Tab. 1: Occurrences of the term *b'l*, included the feminine form *b'lt*, in Phoenicia.

Basic form	Whole form	Antarados	Byblos	Sidon	Tyre ¹³	Hammon	Total by form
<i>b'l</i>	<i>b'l</i>	1	1	2	1		5
	<i>b'l gbl</i>		2				2
	<i>b'l šdn</i>			1			1
	<i>b'l šr</i>				1		1
	<i>b'l špn</i>				1		1
	<i>b'l ḥmn</i>				1		1
	<i>b'l 'dr</i>		1				1
	<i>b'l šmm</i>		1			2	3
	<i>b'l kr</i>				1		1
	<i>b'ly mlqrt</i>					1	1
Total masculine form							17
<i>b'lt</i>	<i>b'lt</i>		4				4
	<i>b'lt gbl</i>		16				16
Total feminine form							20
Total by site		1	25	4	5	2	–

These overall considerations can be formulated:

- The term *b'l* is relatively poorly attested in the Phoenician epigraphy;
- The feminine form is only attested in Byblos and each quantitative evaluation of the use of the root *b'l* will be deeply affected by this extraordinary rich documentation;
- The term *b'l* with a specific geographic toponym usually comes from one and the same geographical site. As for the two exceptions, the *b'l gbl* on the egg shell and the Melqart *b'l šr* on the cippi from Malta, they probably come from Byblos and Tyre, respectively;
- *b'l* is normally used with a toponym (*gbl*, *šdn*, *šr*, *špn*). *šmm* is still a generic reference for a topographic domain, although very large. *ḥmn* deserves a special treatment since its interpretation is debated¹⁴ and variously understood as the master of “the (mount) Amanus”, “the chapel” or “Hammon (GN)”.

¹² In what follows, not all the occurrences are discussed; for a complete list of the occurrences and their main edition, see the Annexes 1–2.

¹³ For this site, we do not include the three occurrences of *b'l* in the cuneiform treaty between Esarhaddon and Baal I of Tyr (ca. 675; *ANET* 533–534). Such evidence, however, does not change the general interpretation we provide here.

¹⁴ Xella 1991; Xella 2010; Xella 2021a.

Besides these cases, we are left with one reference of *'dr* and *kr* and some occurrences of *b'l* and *b'lt* alone.

As for the passage containing the syntagma *b'l 'dr*, it will be discussed later in more detail (see p. 372). The syntagma itself is a normal qualification of the term *b'l* that in Semitic can be made, more rarely, through the apposition of an adjective or, more often, using a construct chain. If the *nomen rectum* is a specific entity, then the expression really means “the master of something”, while if it is an abstract notion or a quality, it functions as a sort of hendiadys; thus “the master of holiness” can simply be understood as “the holy master”.

The case of *b'l kr* is more complicated and, because it is also attested outside Phoenicia, deserves more attention. This first occurrence comes from a lithic vase or mortar, supposedly from Sidon, preserved in the Berlin Museum, but now lost.¹⁵ On all four sides it bore images, of uncertain interpretation.

The term *kr* may mean “furnace” but this relies essentially on the iconography of an anthropomorphic (divine?) figure between flames. However, very little attention was paid to the fact that the expression *b'l kr* is attested on side D and not on side A, where this image is found.¹⁶ Some authors saw in *b'l kr* an equivalent of the title ἄναξ πυρός awarded by Nonnos of Pannopolis to Herakles (*Dion.* 40.369).¹⁷ But scholars who analysed the other attestations of the term *kr* quickly abandoned its interpretation as “furnace”, as well as that of “pasture”.¹⁸ In light of the occurrences of the syntagm in Syria and Anatolia, the term seems rather to be related to a toponym or to the god Kurra.¹⁹ This god is attested from the third millennium city of Ebla, but also, during the first millennium BCE, and besides in our inscriptions, in many Phoenician personal names (recently at Tall Šeḥ Ḥamad). Furthermore, cuneiform sources provide more onomastic evidence for the god Kurra but also hint to a temple dedicated to this deity in seventh-century Nineveh. Kurra seems to be a storm-god, especially according to the iconography of the statue from Çineköy (725–700 BCE).²⁰ Unfortunately, the preserved portion of the hieroglyphic Luwian inscription does not contain the passage with the equivalent of *kr* in that language. It is, however, highly probable that *b'l kr* corresponded to Tarhunza, the storm-god of the Luwian tradition.

¹⁵ Barnett 1969.

¹⁶ Side D represents, in the upper register, a figure on a pedestal with two other smaller figures on the sides in a stylised building overlooked by two stars and, in the lower register, a figure holding birds in his hands (or a bird and cereals, according to the authors) standing between four palm branches.

¹⁷ Lipiński 1970; Delcor 1974. According to Delcor, the term *kr* is related to the name of the Phoenician month *krr*, connected to heat, whereas Lipiński explains the name of the month by the root *krr*, “to dance” (Lipiński 1995, 239–240). Both authors locate the month at the beginning of spring, corresponding to the Greek month *Peritios*.

¹⁸ The latter was re-proposed by Barnett 1969, 10–11.

¹⁹ Röllig 2001; Younger 2009; Bordreuil 2010.

²⁰ Tekoglu *et al.* 2000; Lebrun/De Vos 2006.

Although the interpretation of the term in Sidon and Anatolia may not be the same, it seems plausible that *bʿl kr* refers to the “master Kurra” rather than to a “master of the furnace”. The term *bʿl* would then not be in a construct chain and would simply function as a title for an elsewhere well-attested divinity.

The group of isolated occurrences of the term *bʿl* can be now addressed. In the two occurrences from Antarados and Tyre, the reading of the third letter is problematic. In the first case, the letter /l/ is restored by the publisher and may designate either a theonym or a theophoric anthroponym built on *bʿl*. In the seal from Tyre, the shape of the third letter better corresponds to the Phoenician /g/, but since the term *bʿg* does not make sense in Phoenician, P. Bordreuil suggested reading the letter as a Greek *lambda*.²¹ Although the confusion between the two scriptures is attested in other documents, this proposal seems too conjectural to draw conclusions on the use of the term Baal alone as a divine entity.

The attestation on a marble slab from the site of Bostan esh-Sheikh (Sidon) is unfortunately fragmentary. Line 3 contains the syntagma *bʿl ysp*, the interpretation of which is debatable: it could either be the expression “Baal added / will add” or the proper name Baalyasop.²² The editor notes that the rather large space between the two terms points to the first option. However, given that the inscription is votive (l. 1–2), the name of the donor would most probably be required at the beginning. Alternatively, the element *bʿl* could also be the last theophoric element of a name written between l. 2 and 3. However, if one interprets the term *bʿl* as a divine name, it should then be regarded as an anticipation or a parallelism with l. 4 mentioning Eshmun. The isolated mention of *bʿl* would then refer to the sudden explicit mention of Eshmun. Moreover, the equivalence between Eshmun and the *bʿl* of Sidon seems very probable, as suggested in other documents such as the Eshmunazor II sarcophagus.²³

This sarcophagus bears the second occurrence from Sidon of the element *bʿl*. L. 14 displays a feature that in the tophet of Carthage, for instance, would become very typical although reversed in the order of its elements, consisting in a couple of gods, where a specific epithet of the goddess refers to the god with the term *bʿl*: *bt lbʿl šdn wbt lʿštrt šm bʿl*. In this case, just like the thousands of others for the Tophet,²⁴ it is obvious that the *bʿl* mentioned is *bʿl šdn* (and *bʿl ḥmn* in Carthage). For the sake of economy, a key feature in epigraphy, the repetition of the second element (*šdn* or *ḥmn*) was unnecessary.

The fact that Astarte and Tinnit (cf. note 24) were respectively known as *šm bʿl* or *pn bʿl* sheds light on our last occurrence of *bʿl* alone in a rather late document from Byblos.

²¹ Bordreuil 1986a, 42.

²² Mathys/Stucky 2018, 372.

²³ Garbati 2018, 143–144.

²⁴ The standardised formula, despite some variants, is *lrbt ltnt pn bʿl wʿdn lbʿl ḥmn* (“to the lady Tinnit face of *bʿl* and to the lord *bʿl ḥmn*”; Amadasi Guzzo/Zamora López 2013).

Here, one reads: *l'dnn wlsml / b'l*. The current understanding of this dedication is a divine couple made up of a god called “our lord” and another one defined as “image of *b'l*”.

As for the lord (*'dn*), it is thought to be seen as a Phoenician re-appropriation of the Greek form Adonis.²⁵ That would make the other divinity the former Lady of Byblos, here reinterpreted as Astarte or Tinnit designated as interfaces of the male god and thus called “image of Baal/the Master”, where once again the term *b'l* would refer to the formerly evoked god, our lord or Adonis. Epithets such as “name of *b'l*” “face of *b'l*” or “image of *b'l*” would then be stereotyped or formulaic expressions pointing to the main male deity (the master or lord) of each religious context, and understood as their *b'l*/husband.

Accordingly, the term *b'l* would function as a qualification in the divine hierarchy. Interesting enough, only the female goddesses are qualified as *something* (the name, the face, the image) of the male god, never the other way round.²⁶

The use of *b'l* with its basic meaning of “master”, in its appellative function, is made perfectly clear by a comparison between two inscriptions. The first one comes from the famous cippi from Malta²⁷ and the second is from an inscription published by P. Bordreuil.²⁸ Although the marble plaque comes from the antiquities market, the writing and vocabulary of the inscription show several parallels with documents from the southern outskirts of Tyre.

L. 1 *l'dnn lmlqrt b'l šr*

L. 3–5 *tħt / [p'm b]ly mlqrt b'šr / [b'ly] l'lm*

In the inscription from Malta, the god Melqart, qualified as “Master of Tyre” thanks to the traditional term *b'l*, receives the introductory title *'dnn*, “our lord”. In the second case, where Melqart has no further qualifications, he is designated by the title *b'ly*, “my master”.²⁹ The comparison between these two inscriptions shows to the extent to which the titles of *'dn*, “lord”, and *b'l*, “master”, could be not only cumulated³⁰ but also interchangeable³¹ maintaining, especially when used with a pronominal suffix, their function as a title. The Tyrian inscription mentioning *b'ly mlqrt*, despite the use of the pronominal suffix, provides, therefore, a parallel for the previously studied case of *b'l kr*. Accordingly, if *b'ly* requires a translation in modern languages, “my master”, as does *'dnn*, “our lord”, why then should *b'l šr* remain untranslated as “Baal of Tyre”?

25 Bonnet 2015, 187–188; see also Ribichini 1981; Minunno 2021. Another possibility was that the term *'dn* refers to the Roman emperor, and then the expression “image of *b'l*” could indicate the statue of Jupiter. For a discussion on this, see Dussaud 1925; Xella 1994, 206.

26 Bonnet 2009; Porzia 2022a, 209–210.

27 Amadasi Guzzo/Rossignani 2002.

28 Bordreuil 1995.

29 The second occurrence of the term in l. 5 remains more conjectural.

30 See, for instance, *KAI* 218, l. 1 (in Old Aramaic): *mr'y b'ħrn*, “my lord the master of Harran”.

31 Interestingly, *KAI* translates the two terms in the same way: “Unserem Herrn Melqart, ‘Herrn von Tyros’” (vol. 2, 64).

As for the feminine form, *b'lt*, since it occurs only at Byblos, every occurrence of the term *b'lt* in Gublite epigraphy can refer to nothing else but the main local goddess, beside the biased quest for her “true” name by some scholars.³² However, a close reading of some occurrences³³ shows that, in many cases, the toponym *gbl* did not lie too far from the term *b'lt*.³⁴ In particular, *KAI* 9 B, l. 5 and 6 are similar: after the mention of the *b'lt*, and in l. 5 also of *b'l 'dr*, a collectivity is mentioned through the term *kl*. The presence of *aleph* in the first passage makes it clear that we are dealing with the group of all the gods of Byblos (*kl 'ln gbl*), the combination of the divine collectivity with a toponym being well attested in Western Semitic epigraphy.³⁵ Thus, the fact that the toponym *gbl* is missing here is explained by the fact that it was mentioned at the end of the divine list, since all the evoked divinities shared that toponym: “the mighty master (of Byblos) the lady (of Byblos) and all the gods of Byblos”. Again, the economic principle of epigraphic texts prevails.

In queen Batnoam’s funerary inscription (*KAI* 11), the king Paltibaal is presented as priest of the Lady. Given the centrality of the goddess and her temple in the city of Byblos, and also given her ties with the dynastic family,³⁶ there was no doubt in anybody’s mind that the title explicitly referred to the lady of Byblos. Moreover, also in this case, the toponym that qualified the kingship of Batnoam’s son, Azibaal, is not far away and lies in perfect parallelism: *btn'm 'm mlk 'zb'l mlk gbl bn pltb'l khn b'lt*; “Batnoam mother of the king Azibaal, king of Byblos, son of Paltibaal, priest of the mistress”.

From this thorough overview of Phoenician occurrences of the term *b'l*, the following conclusion can be drawn: there is no clear or sure use of the term *alone*, in its masculine or feminine form, used to designate – once again *alone* – the name or type of a deity. On the contrary, the term is almost always part of a construct chain, the second element of which is a geographic entity (a city, a region or a generic space). As such, the term *b'l* consistently identifies a deity regarded as “the master/mistress of” a particular place, highlighting their position at the top of what one could call the “local pantheon”. Ultimately, sporadic attestations of the Master or the Mistress alone do in every case refer to the complete designation of the deity, which was explicitly formulated closely within the same inscription and/or was perfectly known by the audience as a formula.

Therefore, the following typology can be drawn in a bottom-up perspective from our available data (Tab. 2):

³² Zernecke 2013; Garbati 2021b. For the methodological biases, see Porzia 2020, 225–230.

³³ *KAI* 5, l. 2; 6, l. 2; 9 B, l. 5 and 6; 11, l. 1. The restitution of the entire syntagm *b'lt gbl* for *KAI* 5, l. 2 and *KAI* 6, l. 2 also seem very plausible on epigraphic grounds.

³⁴ *KAI* 5, l. 2; 6, l. 2; 9 B, l. 5 and 6; 11, l. 1.

³⁵ *KAI* 10, l. 16; *KAI* 26 A III, l. 4–5 (see also l. 18–19); *KAI* 50, l. 2–3; *KAI* 215, l. 22; *KAI* 222, l. 12–13.

³⁶ Bonnet 2007.

Type 1: Master of somewhere; *b'l* + geographic entity (construct chain)

Type 2: *b'l* as an abbreviation for Type 1

Type 3: Master of something; *b'l* + noun (construct chain), sometimes also with an adjective (then without construct chain) (also possible hendiadys *b'l* of holiness = the holy *b'l*)

Type 4: *b'l* within a standardised formula (implying some degree of hierarchy, such as in the *šm / pn / sml b'l*)

Type 5: *b'l* as a title before an established theonym (apposition)

Tab. 2: Typology of the uses of *b'l(t)* in Phoenicia.

Type	Whole form	Site(s)	Total by form
Type 1	<i>b'l/t gbl, šdn, šr, špn, šmm, ḥmn (?)</i> ³⁷	Byblos; Sidon; Tyre; Hammon	24 (25?)
Type 2	<i>b'l/t</i>	Byblos	4
Type 3	<i>b'l 'dr, ḥmn (?)</i>	Byblos; Tyre (?)	1 (2?)
Type 4	<i>sm, šm b'l</i>	Byblos; Sidon	2
Type 5	<i>b'l kr, mlqrt</i>	Sidon; Tyre	2
Not clear reading	<i>b'l</i>	Antarados; Sidon	2

3 Baal In Cyprus

3.1 The Cypriot Documentation

Although difficult to interpret, the data which concern the use of *b'l* in Cyprus are very interesting, both due to their variety and their peculiarity.³⁸ Following a chronological order, the testimony from which we can begin is a funerary inscription of unknown origin, made up of seven lines and dating back to the first half of the ninth century BCE, perhaps to its opening years.³⁹ The text, engraved on the upper part of a stele, seems to carry a curse against those who dare to violate the tomb (the tomb is mentioned in l. 2).⁴⁰ Specifically in l. 4, the formula *bn yd b'l w bn yd 'dm . . .* is recorded, understood by O. Masson and M. Sznycer as “in the hands of Baal and in the hands of Edom”; this expression was probably followed by similar constructions (“in

³⁷ See note 14.

³⁸ In general, see, for instance, Yon 1984; Ulbrich 2008; Ioannou 2015; Ulbrich 2016; Fourrier 2021.

³⁹ KAI 30; Masson/Sznycer 1972, 13–20 (with references).

⁴⁰ Masson/Sznycer 1972, 15: “1] . . . Et l’homme qui . . . 2].. vers (ou : en) ce tombeau-ci, car sur cet homme-ci . . . 3] . . . Et que fasse périr . . . -ci l’hom[me] . . . 4]. entre les mains de Ba’al et entre les mains de ‘DM et ent[re] 5 les mains de . . .]-R dieux . . . 6] . . . le [. . . 7]- nom (?) . . .”.

the hands of . . .”) including the names of other divinities.⁴¹ The epigraph in question, if we accept the interpretation of Masson and Szyner, would currently constitute the only testimony in Cyprus of the isolated use of *bʿl* as a divine name, that is, without determinative and specifications.

Quite well known are the two dedications addressed to the *bʿl lbnn*, the “Lord of Lebanon”, reported on two identical bronze bowls (probably written by different hands).⁴² In 1877, the finds reached the *Cabinet des Médailles et Antiquités de la Bibliothèque Nationale* in Paris, through the antiques market. To date, it is not possible to reconstruct with absolute certainty to which Cypriot ancient settlement they belonged.⁴³ In fact, the fragments were purchased by an antiquarian from Limassol – G. N. Lanitis – who identified the place of discovery as a small mountain north-east of his city (*Muthi Shinois*, which can probably be associated to the Mouti Shinoas or Sinoas, north of Amathus). However, while accepting the provenance from the region of Limassol, M. Szyner and O. Masson did not agree with the indication of Lanitis: rather, the idea of the merchant “pourrait provenir d’un souci bien connu de certains antiquaires, désireux de dissimuler la véritable origine d’objets de source clandestine, et désignant une localité fictive, afin de mieux brouiller les pistes”.⁴⁴ Besides, E. Lipiński suggested recognising the place of discovery of the inscriptions as Phassoula, about 10 km north of Limassol, and more precisely in the hill of Kastro. According to the scholar, who is inspired by T.B. Mitford and, prior to him, M. Ohnefalsch-Richter, the cult of Zeus Labranios, attested on the site since at least the second century CE, may have followed the earlier worship of *bʿl lbnn*.⁴⁵

Dated to around the second half of the eighth century BCE, the fragmentary epigraphs should bear texts very similar to each other, the structure and meaning of which have been reconstructed starting from the eight residual fragments (six belonging to one cup and two fragments to the other).⁴⁶ Specifically, the inscriptions represent

⁴¹ Masson/Szyner 1972, 19. Masson and Szyner interpreted the term *ʿdm* as a theonym rather than as “man” (see Xella 2021c); such a proposal was suggested by the symmetry between the expression *bn yd ʿdm* and the one that precedes it (and most likely with those that should follow). The authors remind us of the existence of the theonym Edom in Biblical names and in the anthroponymy of Mari (Abou Samra 2005, 82–85; Steele 2013, 176, Ph 2). For a different reading and interpretation, with numerous additions, see Puech 1979, 20–21 (the names of Baal and Edom would appear twice in the text). Cf. also Lipiński 1995, 316–318; Lipiński 2004, 43–46, who admits the presence of Baal and Edom in the text. *ʿdm* is understood as “man” in TSSI III, 12. In turn, P. Xella has proposed to recognise in *ʿdm* the goddess Adamma, especially common in Anatolia during the 2nd millennium: Xella 1999, 26–27.

⁴² CIS I, 5; KAI 31; TSSI III, 17; Masson/Szyner 1972, 77–78; Szyner 1985; Lipiński 2004, 46–51; Yon 2004, 51–52, n. 34; TSSI III, 67–68, n. 17; Matthäus 2010; Cannavò 2011, 300–301, I C 4 (with previous references); Steele 2013, 231–234 (Ph 6); Steele 2018, 74–75.

⁴³ See specifically Masson 1985.

⁴⁴ Masson/Szyner 1972, 78.

⁴⁵ Lipiński 1983, 209–211 and Lipiński 1995, 306–308, with bibliography.

⁴⁶ In Cannavò 2011, 300–301, I C 4, with bibliography, just to cite one of the most recent studies, the text is translated as follows: “*a + b . . .*] . . . gouverneur de Qarthadasht, serviteur de Hiram, roi des Sidoniens ceci a donné à Baal du Liban, son seigneur, en cuivre de la meilleure qualité . . . [. . .”.

two analogous dedications addressed to the Lord of Lebanon. In the texts, the dedicant qualifies himself as governor (*skn*) – “servant of Hiram, king of the Sidonians”⁴⁷ – of *qrthdšt* (“New City”),⁴⁸ while the objects offered, that is, the cups, are defined as “copper/bronze first fruits” or “in excellent copper/bronze quality”.⁴⁹ This expression has been interpreted as a sort of tax paid to the temple of *bʿl lbnn*: according to C. Grottanelli in particular, “apparently, this metal was the ‘first’, or the ‘best’ part of the yield of one or more copper mines or foundries or the like”.⁵⁰ It is therefore possible that the sacred place was built next to an area of mines and/or was in some way linked to mining and trading activities.⁵¹

Little can be said about the divine recipient of the dedications, mentioned only in these documents.⁵² J.C.L. Gibson suggested reading the sequence *bʿl lbnn* as the title of (a?) Baal, to be understood as the principal deity of the pantheon of Tyre.⁵³ C. Grottanelli, instead, proposed thinking of the god as analogous to figures such as Baal Hammon and Baal Saphon,⁵⁴ the first interpreted by the scholar as the Baal of Mount Amanus.⁵⁵ Attractive but hypothetical, then, is Lipiński’s proposal of a correspondence between the Baal of Lebanon and Hadad of Lebanon, whose name is attested on an altar of the Roman-Imperial age from a temple on the Janiculum (Rome).⁵⁶ Finally, Puech identifies the deity with Baal Shamim, without, however, providing sufficient and solid arguments.⁵⁷

All in all, the identifications of *bʿl lbnn* presented so far remain doubtful and highly hypothetical. At present, following Grottanelli’s opinion, the only thing that can

also Puech 2009, 396, who translates “. . .]s gouverneur/roi de Qarthadašt, serviteur de Ħirom, roi de Sidon. (II) a donné ceci au Baʿal du Liban, son seigneur, en prémices du cuivre des fon[deurs.”

47 It is likely Hiram II, who reigned over Tyre between 738 and 730 BCE (Cannavò 2015, 149). According to E. Lipiński, the inscriptions could be dated to ca. 780 BCE; as rightly remarked by P.M. Steele, however, “this would (. . .) suggest that another king with the name Hiram (of whom all other traces have been lost) reigned in Tyre at this time” (Steele 2013, 232). On the other hand, H. Matthäus (2010) showed that the original containers, on which the inscriptions are engraved, belonged to a well-known typology in Cyprus in the Geometric and Archaic age; this would confirm the identity of the aforementioned sovereign with Hiram II (and therefore the dedication of the cups within his reign).

48 The “New City” is perhaps Kition, but the discussion is still open. On this issue, among others, see Lipiński 1983 (who identifies it with Limassol); Yon 2004, 19–22 (who prefers Kition); Cannavò 2015, 149–150 (Kition).

49 M.G. Amadasi translates this as “in qualità di primizie del bronzo” (Amadasi Guzzo 2003, 50).

50 Grottanelli 1988, 246; cf. Grottanelli 1991, 244–248 and Amadasi Guzzo 2003, 50.

51 Cf. the prudent Zamora López 2015, 31–32.

52 Garbati 2021a.

53 TSSI III, 68.

54 Grottanelli 1991, 245.

55 Baal Hammon and Baal Saphon are cited together in an inscription from Tyre: Bordreuil 1986b; Bonnet 1987; on Baal Hammon, see Xella 2010 who interprets *hmn* as “chapel”, “canopy”.

56 Lipiński 1995, 307–308. In this regard, however, Allen has stated that “considering Hadad’s association with Baal in the second and first millennia BCE, the identification of Baal-Lebanon and Hadad-Lebanon is reasonable, but not definitive considering the huge chronological gap” (Allen 2015, 233).

57 Puech 2009, 397.

be accepted with some degree of certainty is that the god should be conceived as a mountain divinity, possibly owning cosmic qualities. After all, cults of gods linked to natural places are well attested in Phoenicia;⁵⁸ this feature is mentioned in Philo of Byblos' Phoenician cosmogony involving four characters of superhuman dimensions, from which the mountains they ruled over took their names (Cassios, Libanos, Antilibanos, and Brathy).⁵⁹

Moving on with the available documents from Cyprus, the short epigraph *CIS* I 41, of unknown provenance but which was seen in 1873 by P. Schröder in Larnaca at D. Pierides, is also difficult to interpret.⁶⁰ The text, dating back to the fourth or third century BCE,⁶¹ is very fragmentary and might mention a god called *b'l mrp'*, commonly interpreted as a figure with therapeutic qualities, a "Lord healer" or a "Lord of healing".⁶² According to some reconstructions (as in the *CIS*), the epigraph should close with the blessing formula *k šm' ql ybrk* ("since he has heard [his] voice, bless him"), of which only the initial *k* is preserved.⁶³ E. Lipiński, however, has cast doubt on this restitution:⁶⁴ *k* would have been part of the epiclesis of *b'l mrp'k*, with *mrp'k* to be understood as a toponym, maybe the name of a mountain.⁶⁵

A much more recent acquisition (1990) is the existence in Cyprus of a cult devoted to *b'l z*, "Baal Oz", "Lord of the strength/might",⁶⁶ whose figure seems to be intertwined with that of other gods of the island. This deity is known only from a 5-line dedicatory and commemorative inscription from Kition, possibly from the Bamboula area.⁶⁷ The text, engraved on a block of local limestone that was the base of a monument (now lost), records the offering to the divinity of a "trophy" by Milkyaton, "king of Kition and Idalion", in his first year of reign (392/391 BCE).⁶⁸ As the inscription explicitly re-

58 In Carthage, the inscription *CIS* I, 3914 = *KAI* 81 records a dedication to Astarte and Tinnit *blbnn*, "in Lebanon".

59 *Apud* Eus. *PE* I.10.9 (E.H. Gifford 1903).

60 The inscription is generally believed to come from Kition: Guzzo Amadasi/Karageorghis 1977 (A 26, 36–38).

61 Guzzo Amadasi/Karageorghis 1977, A 26, 36 (fourth century BCE); Lipiński 1995, 308 (third century BCE).

62 The epiclesis *mrp'* is traced back to *rp'*, "to heal, to cure" (*DNWSI*, II, 1081–1082; s.v. *rp'*). Cf. Vattioni 1959, 1012; Astour 1967, 239; de Moor 1976, 329; Guzzo Amadasi/Karageorghis 1977, A 26, 38; Puech 1986, 337; Spronk 1986, 174; Xella 2021b. J. Yogevev (2021, 114–115), recalling a hypothesis by Vattioni, recently remarked that the term *mrp'* can be referred to the name of a Phoenician month.

63 Guzzo Amadasi/Karageorghis 1977, 38.

64 Lipiński 1995, 308–309.

65 The scholar does not exclude that this Baal is to be compared to Zeus Orompatas, known from a Greek dedication from Amathus addressed by a priestess (of the god) to the Cypriot Goddess (Lipiński 1995, 308–309).

66 *DNWSI*, s.v., *z*, 835. Recently on the god, Bianco 2017, 150–56 and 2021; cf. Amadasi Guzzo 2021a.

67 Yon/Szzyner 1991; *KAI* 288. Cf. Szzyner 2001; Mosca 2006; Mosca 2009; Amadasi Guzzo 2015, 34–36.

68 According to Amadasi 2021b, 156, the text says: "Questo trofeo (è ciò) che ha dato/hanno dato il re Milkyaton re di Kition e di Idalion, figlio di Ba'rom, e tutto il popolo di Kition al loro signore a Ba'l

calls, the donation, made in the name of the sovereign and of all the “people of Kition”, followed the victory of Milkyaton over his enemies – not specifically named – and their allies (the “Paphians”); the victory, according to the text, was guaranteed by the strength, *ʿz*, that the god gave them.⁶⁹ Based on the opinion of Yon and Sznycer, the battle mentioned in the epigraph should be identified with the clash that, in 392 BCE, saw Evagoras of Salamis contrasted with some Cypriot centres (Amathus, Soli and Kition).⁷⁰ Moreover, Milkyaton could have earned the title of king of Kition and Idalion thanks to that victory, thus becoming the founder of a new dynasty (his father does not bear any royal title): in the words of Yon and Sznycer, “il apparaît probable, ou du moins possible, que Milkyatôn, qui n’était pas fils de roi, ait pris le pouvoir à Kition en se portant à la tête de la résistance à Évagoras, en remportant la victoire décisive, que décrit et exalte le texte phénicien ici examiné, en érigeant un imposant trophée, symbole de la victoire. Ainsi, s’expliquerait également le soin constant du roi à associer à sa victoire ‘tout le peuple de Kition’”.⁷¹

With regard to Baal Oz, which Milkyaton, in the text, defines as “his god”, different hypotheses of identification have been suggested. P. Xella, for example, followed by S. Ribichini, proposed to recognise Reshef (*h*)*mkl* worshipped in Idalion and called there, in Greek, Apollo Amyklos.⁷² Such a proposal was founded on the possibility that Milkyaton’s victory over Evagoras was also celebrated in an epigraph from Idalion, engraved on the base of a statue and bearing an offering to Reshef *mkl*.⁷³ Thus, using Xella’s words, “on comprendrait très mal les raisons d’une telle dédicace à Rašap-MKL avec une allusion explicite à cet événement (i.e. *the battle against Evagoras*) (. . .) si le destinataire et le *deus ex machina* de la célèbre victoire n’étaient pas le même personnage”.⁷⁴ After all, Reshef is a good candidate to be defined as “Lord of Strength/Might”: the available data, in fact, “nous montrent qu’il s’agit d’un dieu belliqueux et

della forza, là dove uscirono (lett. nel loro uscire) // i nostri nemici e i loro alleati, i Pafii, per darci battaglia, nel giorno . . . del mese di ZYB dell’anno 1 del suo regno su Kition e Idalion. E uscì // contro di loro l’esercito (?) degli uomini di Kition per dar loro battaglia in questo luogo, proprio in quel giorno. E ha dato a me e a tutto il popolo di Kition // Ba’l della forza forza e vittoria su tutti i nostri nemici e i loro alleati, i Pafii. E ho eretto, io e tutto il popolo di Kition, questo trofeo // per Ba’l della forza mio signore, poiché ha ascoltato la loro voce; li benedica!”. On Milkyaton, see Minunno 2018.

⁶⁹ See also Mosca 2006, 192 (“And Baal ‘Oz gave to me and to all the people of Kition po[w]er and victory over all our enemies and over their allies the Paphians”).

⁷⁰ Diod. 14.98.1–4. On Evagoras, see Yon 2018. P.G. Mosca (2009, 347) remains cautious on the identification of the enemies of Milkyaton mentioned in the text.

⁷¹ Yon/Sznycer 1991, 821.

⁷² Xella 1993; Ribichini 2018.

⁷³ *CIS* I 90. The affinities with *CIS* I 91, also in the phraseology, were first noted by M. Sznycer (Yon/Sznycer 1991, 817–818).

⁷⁴ Xella 1993, 66.

redoutable, terriblement efficace dans sa capacité d’exterminer avec les armes qui lui sont propres (surtout l’arc et la flèche).⁷⁵

Diversely, as suggested by E. Lipiński and, with more detailed arguments, by M.G. Amadasi, Baal Oz should be recognised in the *bʿl kty*, the “Lord of Kition”, another topical Baal in Cyprus, which can be added to the previous ones.⁷⁶ This theonym appears on the shoulder of a jug of the fifth-fourth century BCE from Temple 1 of Kition-Kathari⁷⁷ and on an unpublished *ostrakon* from Idalion.⁷⁸ Lipiński has also assumed its presence in a very fragmentary text from Kition (Batsalos?).⁷⁹ According to this second interpretation, *bʿl ʿz* should be understood as a specific warrior manifestation of a divinity with poliadic features.⁸⁰

Two other testimonies have been ascribed to the cult of the Lord of Kition. Albeit very hypothetically, J.S. Smith⁸¹ suggested recognising him under the enigmatic Baal Hor (*Ba-il-har-ri*), known thanks to the famous stele of Sargon II (707 BCE) found in Kition, and in the substantive *mqnbʿl*, contained in the epigraph D32 (from the early fifth century BCE) edited by M.G. Amadasi and V. Karageorghis.⁸² As far as the stele is concerned, the god in question would be associated with a mountain as “Lord of Mount Hor”.⁸³ Both references, however, are questionable. First of all, the expression *Ba-il-har-ri* is commonly understood to be an indication of the mountain in which, or in front of which, the stele itself would have been erected.⁸⁴ Secondly, the epigraph D32 rather records the simple presence of the substantive *bʿl* in the theophoric name *mqnbʿl* (which means “property of *bʿl*”).

The last testimony that we can associate with the cult of some *bʿl* in Cyprus is constituted by a short epigraph, now lost, hypothetically coming from Kition and originally reported (painted?) on an amphora. The document, of unspecified date and origin, according to A. Palma di Cesnola, was found in a tomb southwest of Larnaca.⁸⁵ It bears the sequence *blḥmn*, which could be read as the name of the god Baal Ham-

75 Xella 1993, 68. On Reshef, see Lipiński 2009; Münnich 2013; Niehr 2021.

76 Lipiński 1995, 315–316; Amadasi Guzzo 2015; cf. also Amadasi Guzzo 2007, 198–199 and Amadasi Guzzo/Zamora López 2016, 191.

77 From bothros 6A: Guzzo Amadasi/Karageorghis 1977, D37, 170–171. M.G. Amadasi does not exclude that the Baal of Kition could be Melqart (Guzzo Amadasi/Karageorghis 1977, 171, no. 1).

78 Amadasi Guzzo 2015, 35.

79 Lipiński 1995, 315. The text is in Guzzo Amadasi/Karageorghis 1977, A 4, 18–19.

80 Following the proposal of M.G. Amadasi, the reference to Reshef *mkʿl* suggested by Xella would not be persuasive, given, in particular, the distinctly local character of that god: the link with Idalion would limit the possibility of seeing him as the protector of Kition (cf. *infra*).

81 Smith 2009, 69.

82 Guzzo Amadasi/Karageorghis 1977, 166.

83 Lipiński 2004, 51–55.

84 Tadmor 1996; Radner 2010, in particular 432–433; cf. also Merrillees 2016.

85 Palma di Cesnola 1882, 245, fig. 231; Masson/Szyncer 1972, 115–116; Guzzo Amadasi/Karageorghis 1977, F 5, 187–188.

mon (*bʿl ḥmn*, with the fall of *ayin*), known in the Levant and widespread above all in the Phoenician West, especially in those contexts conventionally called tophets.⁸⁶ However, the reading of the text depends strictly on the drawing published by Palma di Cesnola, which seems rather problematic.⁸⁷ It cannot be excluded that an anthroponym may be recognised in the sequence (also considering the type of support).⁸⁸

3.2 The *Baalim* of Cyprus: Aspects and Problems

At this point, it is possible to summarise the information collected and to highlight the most evident issues, especially with reference to some specific texts. The documentation, first of all, which is mostly concentrated in Kition (with some doubts and with the exception of the dedication to the *bʿl lbnn*) covers a rather wide period, which starts from the ninth and stretches to the fourth-third century BCE. Within this period, the data shows an extensive use of the term *bʿl* on the island, since it appears in at least six epigraphs in different forms:

- *bʿl* (used alone; unknown provenance; first half of the ninth century BCE);
- *bʿl lbnn* [Type 1] (unknown provenance; second half of the eighth century BCE);
- *bʿl kty* [Type 1] (Kition; fifth-fourth century BCE);
- *bʿl ʿz* [Type 3] (Kition; 392/391 BCE);
- *bʿl mrpʿ(k?)* [Type 3] (Kition? fourth-third century BCE);
- *bl ḥmn (?)* [Type 3 (?)] (Kition? undated).

Considered together, the materials raise several problems. In general, they show a rather complex picture within which the reconstruction of the various Baals' physiognomy and functions remains difficult. However, three aspects emerge quite clearly. First, the use of the substantive *bʿl* as a divine onomastic element occurs mostly in composed formulas (for instance *bʿl ʿz* or *bʿl kty*). The data, therefore, seem to point to the absence of the cult addressed to an unqualified god "Baal" on the island. Secondly, it remains hard to understand whether, and possibly in which texts, *bʿl*, in the common formula used in Cyprus, that is *bʿl* + determinative, constituted the qualification of a god with a diverse name or if it can be considered a theonym (but, as we are

⁸⁶ Xella 1991; Garbati 2013; Xella 2021a. About the tophet, see Xella 2013. Cf. also D'Andrea 2018; Ribichini 2020; Garbati 2022, 85–116; Garnand 2022. The possible mention of Baal Hammon in the inscription could find a confirmation in the presence, recorded by Palma di Cesnola, of the remains of a cremated infant inside the amphora, which would bring us back to the tophets, in which the cult of the god found its privileged expression in the West.

⁸⁷ Masson/Szyncer 1972, 115–116; Guzzo Amadasi/Karageorghis 1977, 187–188 (188: "il faut remarquer [. . .] que la fidélité de la copie est assez incertaine").

⁸⁸ M.G. Amadasi, however, underlined that *bʿl ḥmn* "n'apparaît jamais, en effet, à ce qu'il semble, dans sa forme entière comme élément de noms propres théophores" (Guzzo Amadasi/Karageorghis 1977, 188).

going to see, it must be admitted that the borders between the two can remain very fluid and the function of an onomastic sequence, such as *b'l* + . . ., strictly depended on the context of use). Last, but certainly not least, the texts show the spread of various “Baalim” on the island; however, as emerged with the case of Baal Oz, it cannot be taken for granted that these were always different figures: some of the onomastic formulas may have originally referred to the same entity (cf. *infra*).

There is no solution at hand for any of the three problems; we can however try to propose some reflections. Starting from the first question, the possibility of theorising the actual presence of a cult dedicated to a god called “Baal” in Cyprus strictly depends on the way in which one chooses to interpret and consider the “isolated” *b'l* contained in the ninth century fragmentary, funerary, inscription. Apparently, the noun would seem to constitute a nominal unit in the text. However, it could also be understood as an abbreviation of an original form of *b'l* + determinative. In this second case, the mention of *b'l* alone may have been useful to maintain the structural symmetry of the text, particularly in the curse formula (“in the hands of Baal and in the hands of Edom . . . [?]”).

As for the second and third questions – which can be addressed together – the nature and extent of the problems are well exemplified by the case of Baal Oz, the “Lord of Strength/Might”, and, together with this, of the Baal *kty*, the “Lord of Kition”. As mentioned above, the expression *b'l 'z* has alternatively been ascribed to Reshef (*h*) *mkl*, worshipped in Idalion, or to Baal *kty*, probably poliadic at Kition (as the name would seem to indicate). Indeed, the reading of the formula *b'l 'z* as the qualification of a deity is very likely: in the inscription from Kition, the term *'z* directly recalls what the god granted to Milkyaton and his people to obtain the victory (“and Baal Oz has given me and to all the people of Kition strength”). Following the noun *b'l*, therefore, the term *'z* appears to have been forged *ad hoc* for a specific cult circumstance (the celebration of the victory):⁸⁹ a certain aspect/function of the divinity – the “strength” and the fact of granting it – would have been exalted and formalised in the specific occasion of worship.

Now, between the two possibilities suggested – Baal Oz to be identified with Reshef (*h*) *mkl* or with the Baal of Kition – the second is perhaps to be privileged. In the first place, in Kition, the victory would have been commemorated by Milkyaton by giving the right honours to the god who was actually in charge of defending the city from its enemies: the *b'l kty*.⁹⁰ In the second place, following the indications of M.G. Amadasi, the possible reference to the battle against Evagoras in the text from Idalion, dedicated to Reshef *mkl*, can be explained with Milkyaton’s desire to commemorate the victory outside Kition; the sovereign, after all, was defined as “King of

⁸⁹ See Amadasi Guzzo 2021a, 51.

⁹⁰ It is useful to remind that Alexander of Ephesus, referring through Stephen of Byzantium to the mythical origins of Kition, speaks of a certain Belos, a Greek transcription of *b'l*, to which Kition (and Lapethos) belonged (Lloyd-Jones/Parsons 1983, Steph. Byz. Fr. 34 (14–15); in Virgil, instead, Belos is the father of Dido (Verg. *Aen.* 1.621–622).

Kition and Idalion”. In this case, however, the king preferred to address the celebration to the greater local divinity, that is, Reshef (*h*)*mkl*, who was entrusted with the role of protecting Idalion.⁹¹ In synthesis, then, a particular military event was possibly commemorated in two different contexts (Kition and Idalion), involving the two deities – Baal of Kition and Reshef (*h*)*mkl* – who were conceived as protectors of those contexts. In the specific case of Kition, the local god was qualified in the dedication as Baal Oz, “Baal of the strength”, in order to emphasise the role he played.

But apart from the possible identification of the god in question, the case of the *bʿl ʿz* clearly shows how the distance between qualifications and theonyms was not unbridgeable at all. As a matter of fact, in the context of the trophy inscription the expression *bʿl ʿz* was not only transparent – it emphasises a specific divine quality (the strength, *ʿz*, given to Milkyaton and to his people by the deity) – but in some ways it also plays the role of a theonym: no other divine name, in fact, was recorded in the text; consequently, *bʿl ʿz* was sufficient – and relevant enough – for the devotees to delineate the identity of the god involved. This sort of oscillation of an onomastic sequence between qualification and divine name directly recalls the case of the *bʿl šdn*, mentioned above, cited in the inscription of Eshmunazor II and to be probably identified with Eshmun: in the inscription of the Phoenician king there was no need to further specify who the god was exactly.

4 General Conclusions

To conclude, it is difficult, on textual or epigraphic grounds, to maintain that a god simply called “Baal” existed in the Phoenician world. On the contrary, many gods had their names built using the element *bʿl* together with a determinative (most of the time a toponym). In other words, according to its meaning “master”, the term designates the owner of something, the sovereign god of a particular city and/or territory and, also, a divine entity who presides over specific elements or experiences of human societies (as in the case of *bʿl ʿz* and possibly *bʿl mrp*).

The use of the term *bʿl* therefore is somehow always elliptical and relative; it refers to something else, the object of the property or the benefit granted. From our survey, therefore, we can clearly see how this substantive acquires its full and recognisable

⁹¹ In this respect, the strong link between the god and the city is to be emphasised: in another inscription which sees Milkyaton once again as the protagonist (*CIS* I 90 = *KAI* 38), the sovereign offers *lʿly lršp mkl bʿdyʿl*, “to his god to Reshef *mkl* who is in Idalion”. Also Milkyaton’s father, Baalrom, and perhaps also his son Pumayyaton (with some doubts) are shown to be related to Reshef *mkl* (respectively in *KAI* 39 and in *CIS* I 92, both from Idalion). In this regard, according to P. Xella, the fact that all the inscriptions of these three characters (with the exception of the text that mentions the Baal Oz) come from Idalion “s’explique par le fait que c’était effectivement dans cette localité qu’était centré le culte de Rašap-MKL” (Xella 1993, 66, no. 25).

value as a component of theonymic formulas of the *bʿl* + determinative type. This type, perhaps the most significant in divine morphology, expresses not only the functional and relational character of the divine, but also its analogy with the human social hierarchy. More than the term *bʿl*, it is what follows that is essential, what qualifies him (city names, natural places, or even attributes): these determinatives distinguish one “master” from another. In this way, it is worth repeating, *bʿl* finds its clearest meaning, at least in the data examined (with very few exceptions), not as a divine name *per se*, but as a constant and shared member of composite onomastic sequences.

Furthermore, what is at stake here is the systematic transparency of our term since *bʿl* was always intelligible, disregarding the fact that modern scholars would label one expression “theonym” and another “epithet”. The question is: why not translate this perfectly transparent word in our translations? The risk would be missing the gods’ spatial and qualitative definition: geographical elements, especially toponyms, and attributes are pivotal information not only in mapping the divine, which would be quite normal, but, as mentioned above, also in conceiving it and therefore in naming it.⁹² According to this view, the divine, rather than fragmented or splintered, seems to be constructed on a local basis, while sharing the same terminology and ideology.⁹³ The question of the multiple manifestations of one and the same deity seems to be important only to scholars interested in a supra-regional view and more used to theological – and biblical – speculations than to historical-religious considerations. Finally, if our analysis is correct, or if it at least has some methodological impact, we should feel embarrassed and doubtful each time that we spell the name Baal “alone”, without pondering whether a translation as “master” would better match the context or not.

Therefore, the use of the term Baal in our academic jargon definitely seems to require a reassessment. We suggest shifting from a general proliferation of the term in its splendid isolated and untranslated form (Baal) to the recognition that the most common use of the term is in the form *bʿl* +. In the first millennium BCE, therefore, the attestation of an abstract *bʿl* has to be regarded as an exception, a literary device or a legacy from previous mythological traditions, such as those attested at Ugarit, and not a general trend or a constant.

92 Hendel 2020.

93 Porzia 2020, 230–233.

Annexes

Baal in Phoenicia

Site	Phoenician	Date	Bibliography	Ref. DB MAP
Antarados/ Constantia	<i>b' < l ></i> ⁹⁴	-550/-500	Bordreuil 1986a, 37–38 (no. 28)	S#3056
Byblos	<i>lb'l gbl</i> ⁹⁵	-700/-400	Bordreuil 2000, 205–206	S#1517
	<i>]l'dnwl[</i> <i>]b't gbl[</i>	-950/-925	Bordreuil 1977	S#518
	<i>lb't</i>	-500/-400	Garbini 1982, 164–165	S#526
	<i>b't gbl</i>	-500/-400	Gubel/Bordreuil 1985	S#529
	<i>lb't gbl</i> ΑΣΤΑΡΤΗ ΘΕΑΙ ΜΕΓΙΣΤΗ	-400/100 ⁹⁶	Bordreuil/Gubel 1985, no. IV.3	S#530
	<i>b'l . šmm . wb'l</i> <i>gbl</i> ⁹⁷ <i>wmpḥrt . 'l gbl</i> <i>qdšm</i>	-950/-940	<i>KAI</i> 4, l. 3–5	S#851
	<i>lb']t . gbl . 'dtw]</i> ⁹⁸	-940/-920	<i>KAI</i> 5, l. 2	S#853
	<i>[[b]']t . gbl . 'dtw</i> <i>b't [. gbl]</i>	-925/-875	<i>KAI</i> 6, l. 2 <i>KAI</i> 6, l. 2	S#1100
	<i>lb't</i> <i>gbl . 'dtw</i>	-900/-875	<i>KAI</i> 7, l. 3–4	S#1107
	<i>b't gbl</i>		<i>KAI</i> 7, l. 4	
	<i>wb'l 'dr wb't wkl '[l]</i>	-500/-450	<i>KAI</i> 9 B, l. 5	S#1108

⁹⁴ The third letter is restored by the publisher and could, moreover, designate the name of the deity or a theophoric anthroponym built on Baal.

⁹⁵ The inscription is found on an ostrich egg shell, pierced with a hole at the top. The inscription and decoration are in red. Although the inscription mentions the *b'l gbl*, the type of object and its decoration suggest a western origin. Because of the size of the egg (16 cm), Savio (2004, 101) suggests an African origin.

⁹⁶ The dating of the object and inscriptions remains debated, for an update, see Bonnet (2015, 165–167). In particular, the Greek inscription could be later and the result of a different hand to that of the Phoenician inscription. In any case, the Greek inscription, according to Yon (2004), is certainly not earlier than the end of the Hellenistic period.

⁹⁷ For this reading, see Bonnet (1993).

⁹⁸ The expression [*b't . gbl*] is also usually restituted later on the same line.

(continued)

Site	Phoenician	Date	Bibliography	Ref. DB MAP
	[<i>b</i> ' <i>lt wkl</i> [⁹⁹]]	–500/–450	<i>KAI</i> 9 B, l. 6	
	<i>hrbt b'lt gbl</i>	–450/–400	<i>KAI</i> 10, l. 2	S#1109
	ʾ <i>rbty b'lt gbl</i>	–450/–400	<i>KAI</i> 10, l. 3	
	<i>lrby b'lt gbl</i>	–450/–400	<i>KAI</i> 10, l. 3–4	
	<i>lrby b'lt gbl</i>	–450/–400	<i>KAI</i> 10, l. 7	
	ʾ <i>rbty b'lt gbl</i>	–450/–400	<i>KAI</i> 10, l. 7–8	
	<i>b'lt gbl</i>	–450/–400	<i>KAI</i> 10, l. 8	
	[<i>hrbt b</i>]ʾ <i>lt gbl</i>	–450/–400	<i>KAI</i> 10, l. 10	
	<i>hrbt b'lt gbl</i>	–450/–400	<i>KAI</i> 10, l. 15	
	<i>khn b'lt</i>	–375/–325	<i>KAI</i> 11, l. 1	S#1125
	<i>l'dnn wlsml b'lt</i>	–100/–1	<i>KAI</i> 12, l. 3–4	S#1141
Sidon	<i>lb'lt šdn wbt l'štrt šm b'lt</i>	–539/–525	<i>KAI</i> 14, l. 18	S#1197
	<i>b'lt kr</i>	–400/–300	Barnett 1969	S#1535
	<i>b'lt</i> [. . .] ⁹⁹	–525/–350	Mathys/Stucky 2018, 369–374	S#3614
Tyre	<i>l'dnn lmlqrt b'lt šr</i> Ἡρακλεῖ ἀρχηγέτει	–200/–100	<i>KAI</i> 47	S#1513
	<i>tḥt</i> [<i>p'm b</i>]ʾ <i>ly mlqrt b'šr</i> [<i>b'ly</i>] <i>l'im</i> ¹⁰⁰	–125/–75	Bordreuil 1995, 187–190, l. 3–5	S#1522

⁹⁹ The inscription continues: *šmn* [. . .] / *štrt* [. . .] / [. . .] / *štrt h'drt / šm(?)š* [. . .] .

¹⁰⁰ Although the object comes from the antiquities market, the writing and vocabulary of the inscription show several parallels with documents from the southern outskirts of Tyre.

(continued)

Site	Phoenician	Date	Bibliography	Ref. DB MAP
	<i>lb'lh</i> <i>mn wl</i> <i>b'l sp</i> <i>n</i> ¹⁰¹	–600/–500	Bordreuil 1986b, 82–86	S#2078
	<i>bλ</i> ¹⁰²	III	Bordreuil 1986a, 42 (no. 37)	S#3057
Hammon	<i>[l'dn l]b'l šmm</i>	–132/–131	<i>KAI</i> 18, l. 1	S#1372
	<i>ṭṭt p'm 'dny b'l šmm</i>	–132/–131	<i>KAI</i> 18, l. 7	

Baal in Cyprus

Site	Phoenician	Date	Bibliography (main references)	Ref. DB MAP
Unknown	<i>bn yd b'l</i>	First half of the 9th century	Masson/Szyncer 1972, 13–20; <i>KAI</i> 30	S#646
Unknown (region of Limassol?)	<i>b'l lbnn</i>	Second half of the 8th century	<i>CIS</i> I 5; <i>KAI</i> 31; <i>TSSI</i> III, 17	S#129
Unknown (Kition?)	<i>b'l mrp'(k)</i>	4th–3rd century	<i>CIS</i> I 41; Guzzo Amadasi/Karageorghis 1977 (A 26, 36–38)	S#26
Kition	<i>b'l 'z</i>	–392/–391	Yon/Szyncer 1991; <i>KAI</i> 288	S#269
Kition	<i>b'l kty</i> ¹⁰³	5th–4th century	Guzzo Amadasi/Karageorghis 1977, D37, 170–171	S#535

101 The object is a tiny plaque inscribed on the front and back and surmounted by a suspension sleeve which is pierced with a hole allowing a cord to be threaded through it. It is the smallest Phoenician document inscribed and was probably worn as a necklace around its owner's neck. The object was found in the Tyre region.

102 This scarabeoid forming a ring stone represents a young character, wearing the petasos and the chlamys, provided with the caduceus and accompanied by a ram (similar to the well-known type of the Hermes shepherd). It would seem reasonable to date this intaglio, probably Phoenician, to the second half of the 6th century or the beginning of the 5th century. The inscription, on the other hand, suggests a later date.

103 This Baal is also mentioned in an unpublished ostrakon from Kition (Amadasi Guzzo 2015, 35, note 32).

(continued)

Site	Phoenician	Date	Bibliography (main references)	Ref. DB MAP
Kition	<i>blḥmn</i> ¹⁰⁴	/	Guzzo Amadasi/Karageorghis 1977, F 5, 187–188	S#536

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¹⁰⁴ The connection of this sequence with the name of Baal Hammon is only conjectural.

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