

## PRE-CHRISTIAN CROSSES AS SYMBOLS OF CHTHONIC DEITIES.

BY THE EDITOR.

THE figure which we would now call an equilateral cross was never, in pre-Christian times, regarded as a martyr instrument, a cross in the original sense of the word, but was commonly used as a symbol of good luck, perhaps of life and resurrection.



THE DURIS VASE, PICTURING TEACHERS AND SCHOLARS.

There are four lessons given: (1) on the lyre, (2) on the abacus in arithmetic, (3) singing to the accompaniment of the flute, and (4) composition, the teacher being just engaged in correcting an exercise. On the walls we see the utensils of the schoolroom hung up, lyres, scrolls, and a kind of bookcase. The whole vase is divided into three parts by three symbols of unknown significance, one cross and two dotted circles placed upon disks with handles.

At any rate, we find it is mainly used in connection with chthonic deities, with gods of the lower world, of Hades.

As an instance, we reproduce two illustrations, one of the god, Tum or Atum, the other of Bes, and it may be no accident that both deities otherwise so different, are connected with the under world; both are chthonic gods.

The god Bes presides over death and decay, and may need the

cross for the preservation of the spirit or the restoration of the body. He was introduced into Egypt from Arabia, and was worshipped at Thebes, Tentyris, and also in Ethiopia. He is frequently in the *Book of the Dead* identified with Seth, and his image was used as a talisman to ward off evil spirits.



A ROMAN DENARIUS.

Bearing figures of intersecting lines on either side, an instance in which the form of the cross is positively known to be accidental.<sup>1</sup>



CYPRIAN COIN.

The obverse shows a bull. Above the animal appears the winged solar disc with some illegible writings. In front of the bull we see a symbol which reminds one of a cross hanging on a rosary. It may be a form of the Egyptian key of life or the solar disc with a cross attached to it underneath. The reverse shows a pigeon and a leaf.



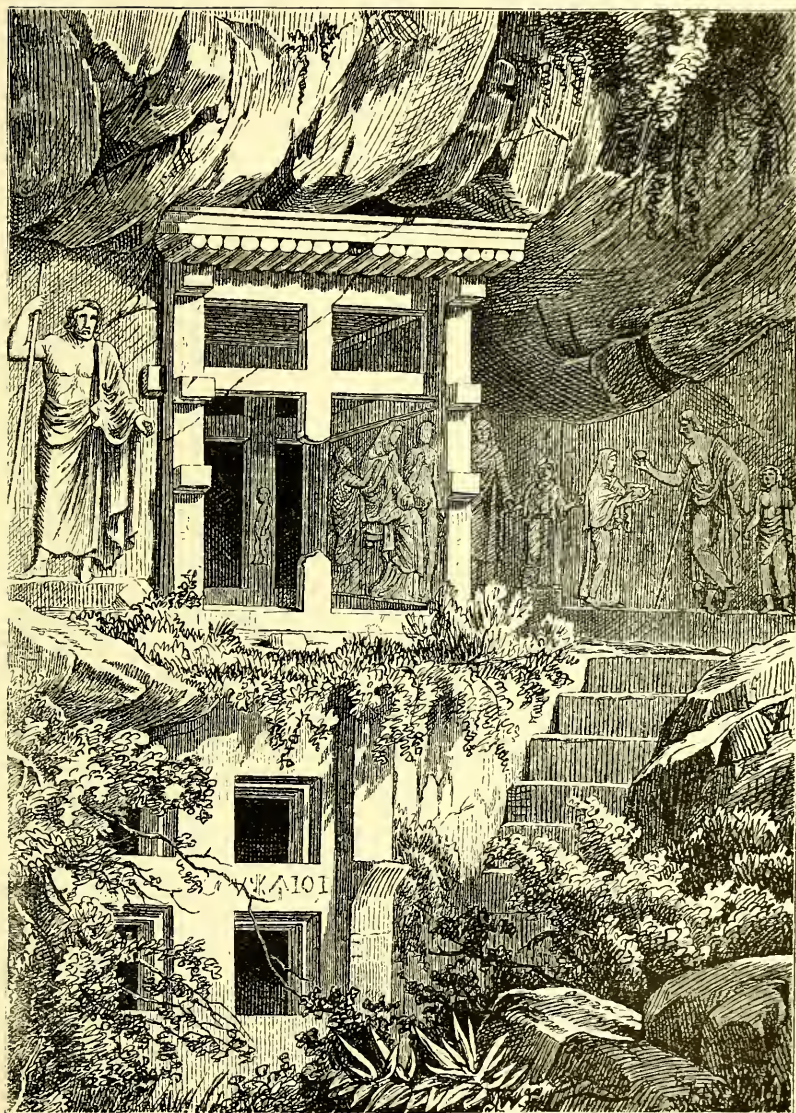
TARAN, THE GALLIC ZEUS.

(After Gadoz.)

For unknown reasons his garment is covered with slanting crosses.

Tum or Atum is the god of the sun below the horizon, and the souls that pass into Amenti must pass him. He is called "the Maker of Men" and "the Universal Lord." He wears the double crown, and he is worshipped as "the Good." His place of worship was Heliopolis (An), where his temple, the House of Tum, was famous as one of the richest and finest buildings of Egypt.

<sup>1</sup> The slanting cross on the obverse means X, an abbreviation for denarius, for in the best times of the Republic it was worth 10 asses of silver = 1 lire, or about 20 cents. The cross in the hand of the man driving the quadriga, which appears on the reverse of the coin, is obviously meant for a Roman standard.



ROCK TOMB IN MYRA, LYCIA.

A hymn of the Nineteenth Dynasty, preserved in the *Anastas Papyri*, addresses him in these words:<sup>1</sup>

“Come to me Tum! Hear me, Great God!  
 My soul yearneth for thy temple<sup>2</sup>: Still thou my longing,  
 Fill my heart with joy, yea the core of heart with gladness,  
 Listen to my vows, to my humble prayer at day-break,  
 And to my adoration at nightfall.  
 My anguish [take away, and the sobbing] that is in my mouth,  
 Rising within me, again and again!”



ATUM.<sup>3</sup>



BES.<sup>3</sup>

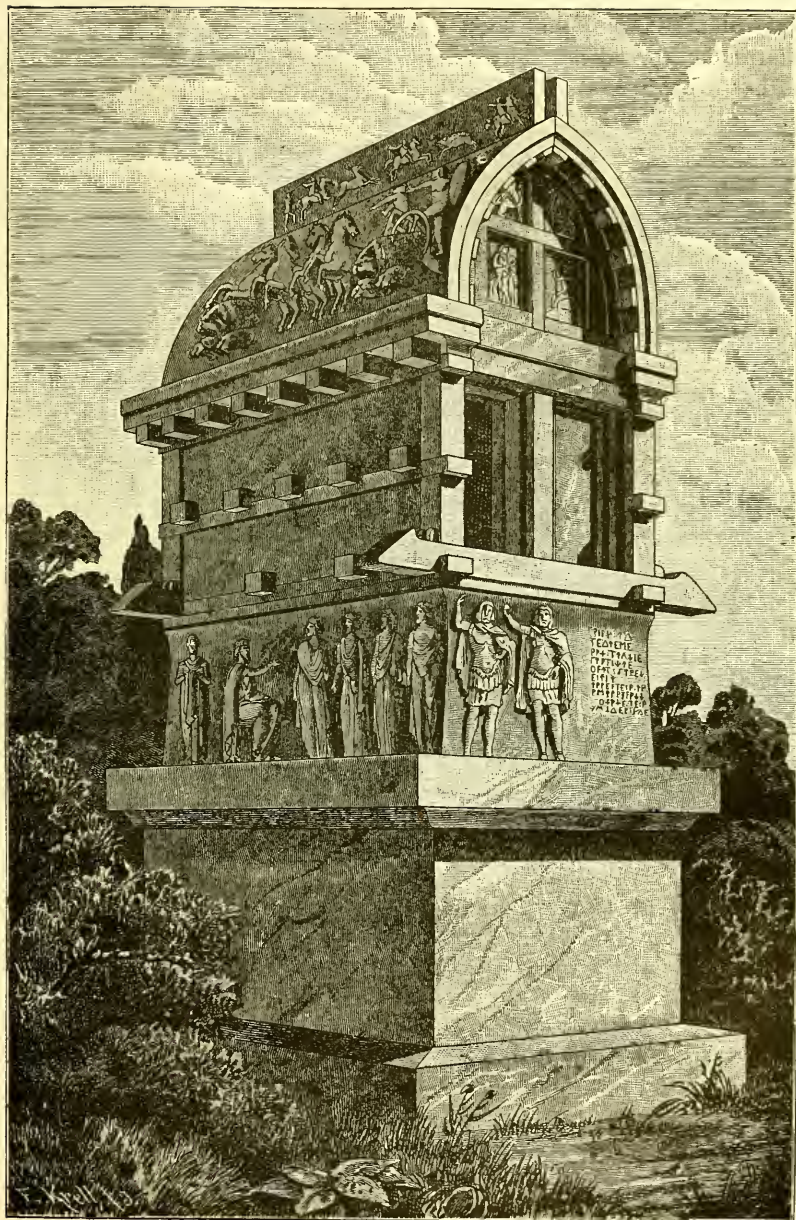
The cross appears frequently on tombs in Asia Minor. Its use may be accidental, being the transverse beam in a window or door, but considering the repetition of the same figure, the probability is that it was introduced on purpose and served a definite symbolism.

Among the tombs of Phrygia, the so-called Tomb of Midas is especially noteworthy as exhibiting an elaborate cross-design. This

<sup>1</sup> From the *Anastasi Papyri* of the British Museum (II., leaf 10, lines 6-13). First translated by M. F. Chabas into French in the *Mélanges Egyptologiques*, 1870, p. 117. For an English translation by C. W. Goodwin see *Translations of Biblical Archaeology*, 1873, and *Records of the Past* First Series, Vol. VI., p. 100.

<sup>2</sup> Lit. "An," which is Heliopolis, the City of Tum, where his temple stood.

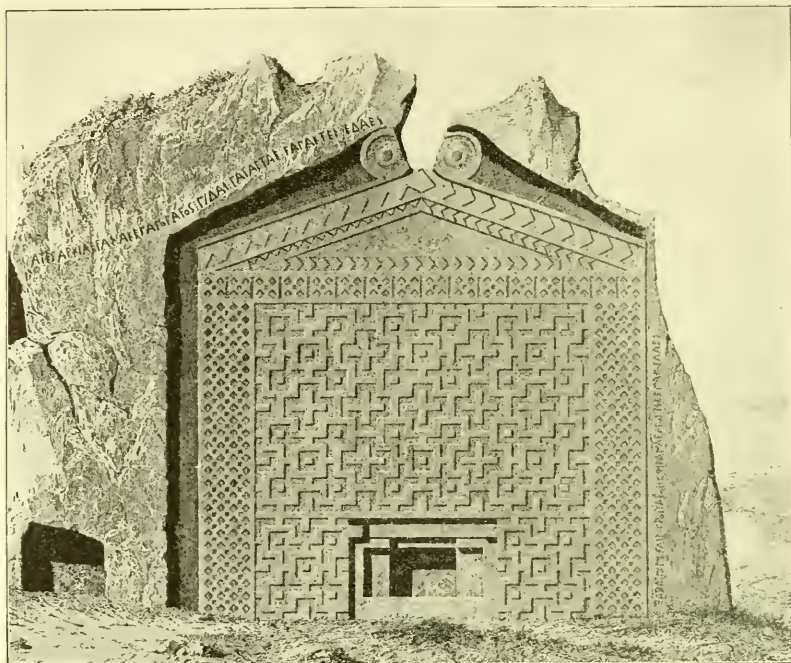
<sup>3</sup> After a colored reproduction in Budge's *The Gods of the Egyptians*. Chicago: The Open Court Publishing Co.



MONUMENTAL TOMB OF ASIA MINOR.

Restored as it must have appeared in its place of erection.  
 (Compare Frontispiece which represents the same tomb in its present condition.)

pattern may appear purely ornamental to us, but in ancient days, no ornament was used, least of all on tombs, except it had some significance, and we may fairly assume that the artist intended either to protect the tomb by a good omen or to comfort the sur-



ROCK TOMB OF PHRYGIA.  
(The so-called Tomb of Midas.)

vivors by reminding them of their religious faith and the hope of immortality. It is not unlikely that the figure of intersecting lines served both purposes at once.