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# IVY

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## IVY

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### of the Ancients

In the April issue of the British Ivy Society's journal (Vol.14 pt.1 ppl6-17) we published Professor W T Stearn's introduction to a chapter on Ivy (Kissos) taken from an hitherto unpublished work on the plants of Homer and other poets of Antiquity by the Greek classical scholar and conchologist Georgi Palychronis Moazzo (1893 - 1975). His daughter Tatiana presented his manuscript in French to the Goulandris Natural History Museum at Kifissia near Athens after his death in Malawi; abstracts from this manuscript are being published in the Museum's scientific journal *Annales Musei Goulandris*. The chapter on Ivy was published in the original French as left by Moazzo in *Annales* Vol.8 pp 97-113 (1990). The following translation has been specially made for the British Ivy Society and is reproduced here by courtesy of Professor Stearn, Hon. Editor of *Annales*. A note on the numerals which occur throughout this article is given at the end.

#### The Ivy

*Hedera helix* L.

O Kissos

**Indeed Dionysus glories in ivy as Zeus his shield**

Homer, Epigrammata

Determining the ivy of Homer presents no difficulty; it is the plant known throughout the world as *Hedera helix*; our difficulties start when we seek to distinguish the kinds described by the writers of Antiquity.

Theophrastus (H. Pl., III: 18, 6-8) remarks that ivy is a polymorphous plant; he distinguishes first of all two species - the bushy and the clinging. He subdivides this latter into three principal categories, the white, the black, and the *helix*. The white colour is found on the fruits or also on the leaves; this ivy was called *Corymbias*; the Athenians gave it the name *Acharnicos*. The black, says the same author, has less growth and is of variable form. The *helix* also varies a lot in the shape of the leaves and in colour; three are distinguished: the green variety which is the commonest, the white, and the variegated, called ivy of Thrace.

Discorides (II, 210) distinguishes also 3 main types: white-fruited ivy, that with black or saffron coloured fruits, one commonly called *dionysian*, and the *helix* with white shoots an fine, regular, angular leaves, and which is sterile.

Pliny (XVI, 62, T.I., p.590) provides us with more information but without shedding any further light. "There are", he says, "the white ivy, black ivy, and *helix* ivy." These species are subdivided into others: there is an ivy whose fruit is white, another whose leaf is white. Among the ivies which bear a white fruit there are some which have compact, large berries and spherical clusters; they are called corymbs. Selenitium has a smaller berry and more widely-spaced clusters: - the same is true for the black ivy, of which one variety has a black seed, and another a saffron seed; it is from this latter that poets make their crowns; its leaves are less dark. Some call this type "ivy of Nysa", others "Bacchus's" - this is one of those ivies which have the largest corymbs.

Some Greek authors divide even this last type into two, according to the colour of their seeds - the *Erythranum* and and the *Chrysocarpum*. The *helix* differs most from the others because of the leaves...and because of the length of the internodes but especially because of its sterility...Some people think that it is a difference of age and not of species, and that what was first of all *helix* becomes ivy as it gets older. This is a mistake, because one can find three types of *helix*: herbaceous *helix*, white-leaved *helix*, which is called ivy of Thrace. White ivy kills trees - it drains their sap. Its characteristics are: very big and very wide leaves; raised buds, whereas in other ivies they are bent over; straight and upright clusters; and whereas all ivies have branches in the form of roots, this type has real, and very strong, branches."

Let us hear now a scientist of modern times, Joseph Pitton de Tournefort: who visited the Orient in 1700-1702:

'Passing through the herb market, we bought two or three bunches of yellow-fruited ivy; it is found here as commonly as ordinary ivy is in Paris, and the Turks use it for cauterising. In past times a more noble use was made of it; for Pliny assures that the golden-fruited type of ivy was consecrated to Bacchus, and destined to crown the poets. Its leaves, as this author has noticed, are of a brighter green than common ivy and the golden coloured bouquets give it a particular brightness... Its leaves are so like those of common ivy that one would have difficulty in distinguishing between them if one didn't see the fruit... Time will tell if the ivy we are speaking about is a variety of common ivy; this latter is not rare around Constantinople, and the plants raised from seed of the yellow one sown in the Royal garden are up to now angular,

and one cannot find any difference. It seems that Dioscorides called these two types a variety. Here is my description of the fruit of the yellow ivy made on the spot. They are big rounded bouquets about 2 or 3 inches in diameter, composed of several spherical berries although a little angular, about 4 lines thick: a bit flattened in front where they are marked with a circle, from which a point rises half a line thick. The skin which is dead leaf colour, or ochre and fleshy, encloses three or four seeds separated by very thin partitions; each seed is about 2, 1/2 lines long, white and marked with little lumps on the outside; they have no taste, and their shape is quite close to that of a small kidney; the flesh which covers these seeds is softish at first, then it appears mucilaginous. Pliny who named this plant golden-fruited ivy, took everything he said from Theophrastus and Dioscorides, who gave a confused history of ivy; one never sees them describing white-leaved and white-fruited - whereas it must have been found in Greece. As for what they called ivy with variegated leaves, or ivy of Thrace, we have seen some beds on the coasts of the Black Sea. It is not surprising that the Bacchantes used ivy in the past to adorn their thyrses and hair-styles - all Thrace is covered with these kinds of plants."<sup>2</sup> (2 Tournefort, Relation d'un voyage du Levant, vol II, letter XIII, P.246- 248, Lyons, 1717).

These long quotations were necessary to shed light on the question of the species in the works of the ancients. Modern botanists who dealt with Greek and Eastern flora - Sibthorp, Fraas, Tohichatcheff, Halcsy, only found the single variety currently known by its black fruits and more rarely light-coloured. These are the 2 varieties which the poets sing of, and it is especially the light ivy, the "chrysocarpum", with golden fruits, which was in vogue. For the Mediterraneans the light colour, being the exception, had more appeal, more charm, as Achilles is blond and Helen too. Dionysus had the same tastes:

"Cratinus laden with crowns had his forehead, as thee, O Dionysus, yellow with ivy."<sup>3</sup>

"Ivy stands out because of the pale green of its leaves and its golden corymbs".

"The shining ivy with pale corymbs."<sup>4</sup>

We find pale ivy in the English poets:

"The pallid Ivie building his own bowre." Chaucer.

For the different shades/nuances of black ivy, the "*hedera nigra*" of Virgil<sup>5</sup>, Greek vocabulary was quite rich:

melas<sup>6</sup>

aethops<sup>7</sup>

cyaneos<sup>8</sup>  
oenopos<sup>9</sup>

It is the polymorphism (=many forms) of the plant - Pliny<sup>10</sup> enumerates as many as 20 species - which gave rise among the ancients to the creation of so many species. The ivy which does not find a support, creeps on the ground, spreads out and forms a green carpet. When it manages to reach substantial dimensions, it can hold itself on its own stem and form a bush. As for the white variety, it has not been found again by modern botanists and it must be accepted that it has been eliminated. In fact the ancients made the comment that this variety was sterile; however, this fact has no great value for plants which easily reproduce by natural layering. But this comment suggests an abnormal case: would it be a fortuitous case of plant albinism? For Virgil this ivy was the most beautiful: 'Nerine Galatea, more beautiful than white ivy.' Ecl., VII 38

The *helix* doesn't constitute a species either: its flower-bearing stems, not carrying any clasping roots, can elongate and sometimes wind themselves around a support, which made people believe in a separate different species.

We know currently more than 80 varieties of ivy whose area of dispersion extends from Europe to Japan. In America ivy was introduced by white settlers.

The appearing of ivy on earth is linked with the dramatic events of the birth of Dionysus. Gaea, the grandmother, to save the new-born from Hera's pursuit covers him with a carpet of ivy which she caused to grow for that purpose.<sup>11, 12</sup> "And the noble son of Zeus and glorious Semele was received into the lap of the Nymphs who had beautiful hair who fed him and brought him up with care at the caves of Nysa. He grew up in an odourous grotto, according to his father's desire: but was counted among the immortals. When the goddesses had brought up him who was to be so much celebrated in song, from then on he did not cease from going all over the wooded valleys, his head covered with a crown of ivy and laurel."

As a consequence of these events ivy was no longer in favour with Hera who banished it from her temples. For the goddess, protectress of marriage and conjugal life, could not tolerate in her place the presence of the symbol of drunkenness, of dissipation, of the disordered and orgiastic way of life of the Maenads, the Bacchantes, the Silens and the Satyrs, who wore it [=ivy] on their heads; it would be a scandal, an affront to matrimonial life. Following the tradition, Dionysus, having come into the world prematurely, was received by Zeus and sewn into

his thigh until his development was complete.

The mountain of Nysa is identified by Strabo<sup>15</sup> and Arrian<sup>16</sup> with the one named Meros in India, from the Greek *μηρος* thigh. "You come from the ivy-covered escarpments of the mountains of Nysa and from the shore all verdant with vineyards", sings the poet.<sup>17</sup>

The etymology of Dionysus seems to issue from Zeus (gen. Dios) and Nysa. It was Dionysus himself who had planted ivy on the Nysa mountains at the time of his conquest of India<sup>18</sup>. The town of Zeugma, on the Euphrates, marked the point where the god had crossed the river and for a long period of time they used to show the bridge of Dionysus, built of stems of vine and ivy intertwined.<sup>19</sup>

In truth ivy was abundant in this region of India; the soldiers of Alexander, in transports of joy at the sight of a plant which reminded them of their homeland, cut stems and crowned themselves in honour of Dionysus<sup>20</sup>. In contrast in Media and in Babylon ivy was unknown. Alexander had given orders to Harpalus, one of his lieutenants, to have [ivy] brought from Greece and to plant it in these regions, but for reasons of climate the plant did not prosper.

The mountains of Nysa, according to others, were situated in Phrygia. Semele was in fact a Chthonian goddess whose origins were in that country, and her name in Phrygian means earth. The valleys of mount Ida, in Phrygia, are sung as being covered with ivy: *Ἰδαία κισσοφορά νάπη* Eurip. Troy 1066.

Legend agrees with the facts: ivy does not originate in Greece but from further Asia; Dioscorides informs us that it was also called Dionysian and Persis.

The Egyptians called it the plant of Osiris<sup>22</sup> and they attributed its introduction in their land to this god.

The Achaeans, however, who were the first to worship Dionysus under the names Melpomenos and Kissos, claimed that ivy was indigenous to their region<sup>23</sup>. But the Achaeans were solid and stubborn types, who didn't easily accept others' opinions - they were the Auvergne-dwellers of Attica.

Ivy is an ornamental plant. Already in mythical times "euretal"<sup>24</sup> its golden tendrill "helichryse", cheered up the gardens of the Hesperides.<sup>25</sup>

By its climbing organs it rises very high and spreads out on the surface forming a gay and bushy coating capable of covering a whole dwelling-place:

'And high thereto a little chapel stode  
which being all with Yvy overspread

deckt all the rooffe, and shadowing the rode  
see'd like a grove faire branched over hed"

Spencer, G.Q.VI,5, 25.

This artistic and romantic custom, of covering a wall with ivy, is not however without danger, because the rootlets penetrating the intersices, can in time dislocate the stones and seriously damage the construction. Pausanias<sup>26</sup> cites the case of a temple of Athena in Alalcomenae in Beotia, demolished by the grip of a very old ivy.

It can also cover the trunk of a tree<sup>27</sup>, spontaneously or as an artistic aim. This, without being inconvenient for a big tree, can become harmful to a young bush by hindering its growth. Ivy uses its rootlets only for support - they do not suck the tree at all, as the ancients supposed,<sup>28</sup> a belief which has persisted until modern times:

"...that now he was  
the Ivy which had hid my princely trunk  
and suck'd my verdure out on't. "

Shakespeare. Temp. I, 2, 85.

It climbs everywhere and that is how it got up onto the mast of the boat in which Dionysus was. This god, under the guise of a handsome young man, was captured while sleeping on the shore of an island, by Tyrrhenian pirates, to be sold as a slave.<sup>29</sup> When he woke up he made his shackles fall and ordered the sailors to take him to Naxos. On their refusing he showed his power:

"a dark ivy laden with flowers came and wound itself round the mast; some charming fruits grew there, and the thole-pins of the oars all had crowns."

This scene is immortalised on the frieze of the monument of Lysicrates in Athens. If it is a surprise to see ivy growing right out at sea, it is no less of a surprise to see it taking root on stags' antlers<sup>30</sup>.

Because of its late flowering ivy provides nectar for bees at a period when there is a lack of flowers. Aristotle<sup>31</sup> makes this comment about the bees of Pontus. The honey is, it seems, of mediocre quality<sup>32</sup>. Ivy leaves although bitter are grazed by livestock. They used to be used in the past for dressing wounds and in the preparation of certain ointments for burns<sup>33</sup>.

In Babylon the faithful of Bacchus chewed them [ivy leaves] during the ceremonies with the aim of [reaching a state of] ecstasy<sup>34</sup>. They are in fact slightly toxic - Pliny remarks that "they disturb the spirit."

The berries are toxic but thrushes and blackbirds as well as other birds eat them with impunity.

One can extract by making incisions an aromatic gum, called hédéré, which goes into the making-up of certain varnishes.

The wood is of no use except to cobblers who use it to sharpen their paring knives.

The Romans obtained the first spark of sacred fire by rubbing a branch of bay-tree against a piece of ivy.

The kissubion, κισσῦβιον of Homer will receive more of our attention.

"So, on approaching the Cyclops, I speak to him holding in my hands a kissubion full of red wine." Od., IX, 346. So Ulysses speaks in the cave of Polyphemus. Denis of Samos<sup>37</sup> calls this container a cumbion, κυμβιον, and Timothy<sup>38</sup> a depas, δεπας. Denis adds that this vase couldn't have been of small dimensions seeing how drunk the giant became on its contents.<sup>39</sup> The dimensions are given by Euripides in his Cyclops<sup>40</sup> where he calls it a scuphos, σκυφος. It was, he says, three cubits wide and 4 deep. We are dealing with a pot of exceptional dimensions and related to the colossal stature of Polyphemus. The ordinary kissubia were no bigger than a drinking glass, as the one in which Eumeus offers sweet wine to Ulysses.

Kissubia were common in antiquity: Hercules enters Admetus' place and "taking in his hands a kissubion drinks the tasty liquor of the dark grape."<sup>41</sup>

In the Banquet of Pollis of Callimachus the kissubion is called aleison, ἀλεισον<sup>42</sup> which caused Athenaeus to protest.<sup>43</sup>

The ancients were already discussing the nature of the kissubion, proving that they had not got a precise idea about it.

Philemon<sup>44</sup> calls it a "glass with a handle." Theocritus<sup>45</sup> sings of it with 2 handles. These are easy to reconcile - there were some with one and some with 2 handles. In any case it was made of wood. The Aeolians, it seems, called kissubion what the other Greeks called scuphos.<sup>46</sup> Likewise Marsyas<sup>46</sup>, Neoptolemy<sup>46</sup> and Eumolpus<sup>46</sup> considered it a cup of ivy-wood used in the countryside by peasants and shepherds.

At first sight its etymology seems clear, composed of kissos [=ivy in Greek] and oinos [=wine in Greek].<sup>48</sup>

[Note 48 One could also take this as a compound of kissos and ουσ pig/pork, does indeed mean swineherd and ουβηνη was a pig-leather case in which flutes or arrows were kept, a quiver.]

[Text continued] This etymology however already didn't satisfy the ancients and certain of them derived the word rather from the verb

χεισθαι, to contain<sup>49</sup>.

Bérard<sup>50</sup> remarks that ivy is a creeper with a slender stem which has never been able to lend itself to any use; the kissubion has only a coincidental phonetic link with the plant.

In my opinion the French author [Bérard] sees things correctly. The word must have passed through the hands of the Phoenicians to the Greeks, as is the case with a host of other words which have been kept in the Greek language until our day. What was the Phoenician word which in the mouths of the Greeks became kissubion we do not know. But the semitic root. k.s. is met in several word which all have the meaning of container, such as

kas = drinking-glass

kas-el-zakhra = chalice

kouz = water-pot

kis = bag

kis-filous = purse

and it is very possible that the word "sac" [= French for bag, cf. English sack - Eng. translators note], in Greek whose etymology is much in dispute, it merely the anagram of the semitic kas, which is considered linked with the Greek in Latin capsa, from where we get the French cais [=English 'case' Eng. translators note]. Kissubion is, then, a loan-word from Phoenician. But having entered the language of the Achaeans from very early antiquity and being in common use with them, it became naturalised Greek and took as adoptive father the word kissos. We will thus consider it a Greek word and we will try to justify its spelling. It is beyond dispute that it [=the kissubion] was of wood but not of ivy-wood. The ivy plant nonetheless played a role and Pollux provides us with the explanations "the kissubion is surrounded by a garland of kissos (=ivy), hence its appellation." Ivy was engraved on the cup as an ornamental motif, and the word led people to believe that it was made of the wood of this plant. Cato<sup>51</sup> who was not illiterate, made a mistake however when he advised that one should pour wine in an ivy-wood cup to uncover a fraud: if your wine contains water, he said, the wine will pass through the pores of the wood and only water will remain in the kissubion. Pliny<sup>52</sup> repeats the same process of verification.

It remains to examine the presence of ivy on the kissubion.

The explanation is given by Nicander<sup>53</sup>: "During the ceremonies to Zeus Didymus one offered as libations ivy-leaves, hence the name of kissubia for the cups made use of." It was then a religious ritual. Ivy was particularly consecrated to Bacchus and it was quite natural that one

decorated the wine-cups with the emblem of this god.

A second reason for the presence of ivy on the kissubion is suggested to us by the belief of the ancients that this plant protects from inebriation.<sup>54</sup> Whoever drank from a cup decorated with ivy motifs was sheltered from the often disagreeable consequences of drink. The priests of Zeus avoided touching vine-shoots and held in their hands a sprig of ivy.<sup>55</sup> This superstition, widespread wherever wine was honoured, has been kept until modern times. The usual signboard of taverns in olden days in England was an ivy branch with the motto "Good wine needs no bush", a phrase of Shakespeare [translated into French as "a good wine requires no ivy"]

In the Middle Ages, the wine challenges that were provisionally set up at fairs were recognisable from far away by their garlands of ivy.

Chérueil considered ivy as a symbol of love; it attaches itself to the objects it touches and never leaves them.<sup>56</sup> This symbolism recalls the legend of Tristan and Iseult - buried separately, the two lovers joined themselves by two ivies which came out from their tombs and entwined themselves in an eternal embrace. King Mark, moved by this divine sign, had the two bodies buried in the same tomb in his own chapel.

Ivy, creeping in the half-light of damp woods, became famous when it climbed on the heads of Dionysus and his suite.<sup>57</sup>

"Dionysus is proud of the ivy as Zeus is of his shield". Anth. Pal., III Ep. No. 535, T.III, p.100. Dionysus is a divinity with diverse aspects and it is especially with his form as Bacchus and as Bromios that ivy is connected.<sup>58</sup>

Eurip. The Trach. 220 "Behold how the crowns of ivy rouse me to the dance."

"I sing of the noisy Dionysus with his hair girdled with ivy;" thus begins the second homeric hymn to Dionysus who "carries ivy married to laurel [bay]"

The adjectives: κισσοκομης<sup>59</sup> = with hair girdled with ivy  
κισσοφορος<sup>60</sup> = ivy-bearer  
κισσοδοτης<sup>61</sup> = ivy-giver  
κισσοβρυος = ivy-covered  
κισσοχατης = ivy-haired

are met in the poets addressed to the god of drink. The predilection of Dionysus for ivy is justified in a practical manner by Plutarch as follows: this god, like all drinkers, crowned himself originally with vine leaves. But in winter the vine loses its foliage whereas the benefits of using wine are not lost. It was then necessary to replace this [the vine] by a plant with persistent foliage and whose form recalled more or less

the vine - conditions fulfilled by ivy.<sup>62</sup> A plant associated with human procreation, ivy is worn also by Priapus.<sup>63</sup> At feasts the guests underwent kitosis, κίττωσις, the wearing of an ivy crown. The wine amphoras were decorated with garlands of ivy. At his entry to Ephesus, Anthony was received by noisy and ceremonious demonstrations: he appeared dressed as Dionysus, the women dressed as Bacchantes, the men and children as Satyrs, Silens and Pans. all crowned with ivy and carrying thyrses<sup>64</sup> - the thyrsus itself was crowned with ivy. It was a staff of giant fennel or reed whose upper extremity ended with a pine-cone. Branches of pine, vine-shoots, and ivy-stems which the Bacchantes held at the ceremonies of Dionysus were called "thysla"; it was the primitive form of the thyrsus. Thysla and thyrsus were phallic symbols and divinatory - the thyrsus of the Maenads of Euripides<sup>65</sup> possessed the power of making water and wine spring from the earth.

Ivy had no place on the head of a warrior - nonetheless the Latin verse "in castris ter aureatus"<sup>66</sup> is often rendered as 'crowned three times in the camp with a golden, coloured ivy.' The meaning of the lines is ambiguous because aureatus indicates the material as well as the colour. To reward a valiant warrior with a crown of fresh ivy would be a unique case, whereas the crown of gold made to resemble a plant was a frequent thing among the ancients and Pindar gives examples of it.<sup>67</sup>

Poets were often crowned with ivy:

"The ivy which adorns the forehead of poets makes me a partaker of the happiness the gods." Horace, Od. ,I,29.

By preference the poets crowned themselves with yellow-gold ivy<sup>68</sup> as on occasion Priapus<sup>69</sup> and Dionysus himself.<sup>70</sup>

Jewish priests were also crowned with ivy during the services - the meaning of this escapes us.<sup>71</sup> [NB. *The stems of Ferula and Arundo, though long and firm, were not woody enough for the drunken followers of Dionysus to do each other serious harm during their revels.*] This ritual was probably of Phoenician influence, ivy being the sacred plant of Atya, whose eunuch priests, Gauls, tattooed themselves, reproducing on their skin the leaves of this plant. Ptolemy Philopator was nicknamed the Gaul because he had himself tattooed like these priests.<sup>72</sup> On the leather bucklers of the Paphlagonians<sup>73</sup> were seen designs of ivy leaves whose significance was magic and protective.

As a funeral plant ivy is rarely cited.<sup>74</sup>

Ivy gave rise to a special feast at Phliontes in the Peloponnese in honour of the goddess Ganymede or Hebe. This ceremony lasted some days which were given the characteristic name of kissotomes [=ivy-cutting], because the worshippers cut sacred ivy. Then the slaves put

themselves under the protection of the goddess and freed prisoners hooked their shackles onto the trees of the sacred wood<sup>75</sup>. We are here in the presence of an ancient totemic cult. Ivy because of its perennial nature, κισσοσ αει ζωων (=ever-living ivy), the perennial ivy of Theocritus,<sup>76</sup> was the obvious choice to symbolise the eternal youth personified in Hebe.

Coins of Phliontes bear the letter Φ surrounded by a crown of ivy. Similar coins, called kissophores, [=ivy-bearing] are also known on the island of Naxos and in Asia Minor, of early date (150 B.C.).

Loans in Onomastic [name-giving] and Toponymy [place-naming] from ivy are rather few.

A Kisseus, Κισσοευς is mentioned by Pausanias<sup>77</sup> and a Kissos as founder of the town of Argos.<sup>78</sup> In Homer Kisses, Κισσης<sup>79</sup> later called Kisseus, was a king of Thrace and father of Hecuba, wife of Priam, and of Kisseis, Κισσηις<sup>80</sup> was also called Theano.<sup>81</sup> This Homeric Kisseis is put forward as founder of the town of Kissos, north of Salonica, in Chalkidiki, a city destroyed by Cassander in 315 B.C.<sup>82</sup>

The mountain at whose foot the town of this name was built bore the same name. This mountain was then very wooded and was a place frequented by wild deer. In the Byzantine era it was called Hortaites, Χορταίτης the name which it has kept since and which alludes to the rich vegetation which covered it.

There were in ancient times still more localities with the name of Kissos in Macedonia and in Thessaly whose location is uncertain. At present there is a village of this name on Mt. Pelion.

The Kissousa spring, Κισσοουσα, near Haliartus, a town in Thebes, was consecrated to the cult of Dionysus, and engaged couples, on the day of their wedding, went there to offer sacrifices to him.

The etymology of the word kissos is uncertain. Some consider it derived from kis, a small woodworm, by allusion to the porous quality of ivy wood, as also the word kisseris, κισσηρις, pumice stone, whose appearance gives the impression that it has been pierced by a number of larvae. This etymology does not justify at all the presence of the double s and is only acceptable if there is no better one. One could also put forward the word kirsos, varix, by allusion to the spherical fruits of the ivy plant.

I propose another etymology based on the fact that the letters k and t were often interchanged by the Greeks as in κυμβος and τυμβος, κυμβαλον and τυμπανον. The word Tiberias comes from Kinnereth - which in Hebrew means a harp, the shape of this lake. Now it is not

impossible that kissos is derived from the verb *πταίνω*, to spread/stretch/extend, a property which particularly characterises this plant.

Indeed in Cyprus, where the local language has kept a quantity of archaic words, ivy is called Tetsos, which supports my thesis. The Latin *hedera* derives from *haerere*, to attach oneself, or again from the root *hendere* which appears in the words *prehensibile*, *prehensile*, *apprehension*. The Latin *hedera* has given the Norman "hierre" which by agglutination with the article formed the French "lierre" (ivy).

In Scripture ivy only appears in the story of the Maccabees where it is said that the Jewish priests were obliged to follow the procession of Bacchus crowned with ivy (Macc. 2: 6,7)

The word "K'sous" of the Hebrew text for ivy denotes a Greek origin. These events took place around 168 B.C. and already for a long time Greek culture under the Seleucids had been dominant in the East. The use of ivy was common among the Jews and we have seen that it formed part of their ritual. So the obligation decreed for the priests to wear a crown of ivy was in no way a humiliation; what bothered them was to see themselves compelled to worship Bacchus. This foolish policy of Antiochus sparked off the revolt of the Maccabees which ended in bloodshed: the price of independence.

With the coming of Christianity ivy loses its prerogatives - it no longer covers the heads of the gods and of joyful guests and companions but instead old walls of ruined castles. Beauty has conquered.

**Numerals in the Text.** The reader may be puzzled at finding, throughout the article, numerals attached to statements. These refer to footnotes provided in the original French version in *Annales Musei Goulandris* 8 pp97 - 113 (1990) as references to source information for these statements. They have not been reproduced here; for most people they would be irrelevant and also so drastically abbreviated as to be cryptic, except to scholars who can consult the original *Annales*. For example 'S. Georg. II 258' refers to Virgil's *Georgica*, '19 Pausan. X 29.4 p533' to an edition of Pausanius's *Guide to Greece*; The 'Anth. Pal.' frequently cited by Moazzo refers to the *Anthologia Palatina* also known as 'Palatine Anthology' or 'The Greek Anthology' which is a mediaeval collection of some 3700 Greek epigrams, the only surviving manuscript of which was found in the Court Palatine at Heidelberg. The most accessible printed version, with Greek text and English parallel translation is in the Loed Classical Library 5 volume edition (1916-1926).

## IVY

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