7. THE DOLICHENIAN PANTHEON III: THE UNITY OF THE CULT

The cult of Iuppiter Dolichenus among the imperial cavalry guard in Rome parallels the civilian worship of that god in Rome in a remarkable number of aspects: beginning at about the same time in the mid-second century A.D. the *equites singulares Augusti* worshipped the god from Doliche in their own temple under their own priests, emphasizing in their cult the same complex ‘un-military’ aspects such as those represented by Diana Lucifera and Apollo Citharoedus or by planetary sun and moon gods. This suggests that soldiers had the same degree of complexity in their religious experience as civilians, the same need for an elaborate, rich theology reconciling and absorbing the traditional gods while yet emphasizing exotic, oriental features. Considering that these are only iconographical observations, one may imagine the age-old rituals as well as the cosmological and eschatological doctrines to be equally, or even more elaborate and therein find the true reason for the cult’s spread rather than in the soldiers’ simple desire for protection on the battle field.

It would not be difficult to study other gods of the Dolichenian pantheon from the same point of view and the result would be the same: Iuno Dolichena, the Castores Conservatores, Deus Commanus, and Victoria are as much worshipped by soldiers as they are by civilians, testifying to the army’s adoption of the entire wealth of the Dolichenian religion. Additional proof that our conclusions are valid not only for the cult of Iuppiter Dolichenus among the garrison of Rome but also for the god’s cult in the frontier armies, comes from the legionary supply-base of Corstopitum (Corbridge) in Britain just south of Hadrian’s Wall.

There, a relief frieze was found $55 \times 152$ cm (Fig. 4) displaying an even wider tableau than the reliefs of Marcus Ulpius Chresimus,

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108 There exist dedications naming these four gods together e.g. CIL XIII, 31032; Dessau, 3090; 3094, but it is not clear whether there exist specific relations between the four.
showing in its extant parts the sun god on a winged horse, one of the characteristically Dolichenian Castores in his heavenly abode, a large deciduous tree, and a young nude male figure, probably Apollo. I. A. Richmond convincingly concluded that for balance one has to supply on the missing parts the moon goddess and the other Castor and that therefore the relief will be Dolichenian, with Iuppiter Dolichenus as the central figure. On the other hand, J. M. C. Toynbee seems right to expect the central group to be on the right of the preserved piece, for that is where both the sun-god and the Castor turn to. That central group, then, will have consisted of Apollo, Iuppiter Dolichenus and Iuno Dolichenae, and, we may now say, probably also Artemis, while yet further to the right the other Castor and the moon goddess will have provided the balance of the cosmic layout, comparable, in some way, to the relief of P. Egnatius Fructus from Rome (Fig. 3). As J. M. C. Toynbee rightly saw, the tree in this reconstruction can hardly be a simple dividing line between two scenes, but it is not just a landscape feature either, for the Aalen tablet, (Fig. 22) the Obernburg altar, (Fig. 21) and the new Vetus Salina sun bust, all show trees at so prominent places that one must assume a tree had an important place in the myth of Iuppiter Dolichenus.

Whether or not the sun god on this relief should be called Sol invictus cannot be said with certainty, but Marcus Ulpius Chresimus' Sol Invictus relief (Fig. 2) suggests so, and it is perhaps no coincidence that the earliest dedication to Sol Invictus by a provincial army unit comes from Corstopitum in the form of a dedication slab dating to the years A.D. 162-168. It bears the following text:  

109 Richmond (1943) passim. Toynbee (1963) no. 92, fig. 95. For Deus Commagenus worshipped among both, civilians and soldiers, see Angyal-Balla (1972).

110 RIB 1137 = CIMRM 870. Richmond 184 is right to deny the Mithraic connection in view not only of the early date, but because army units did not make dedications to Mithras (except the late legio II Herculea, CIMRM 149), for Mithras is a god of a mystery religion to which private initiation is the only access, quite different from the Iuppiter Dolichenus cult. Richmond l.c. prefers not to call the sun god of Dolichenian reliefs Sol invictus, because he plays there a somewhat subordinate role, but his role on M. Ulpius Chresimus' plaque speaks for such an identification.