

## **The legend of Eshmun**

The Asclepius in Beirut is neither a Greek nor an Egyptian, but some native Phoenician divinity. For to Sadyk were born children who are interpreted as Dioscuri and Cabeiri; and in addition to these was born an eighth son, Esmunus, who is interpreted as Asclepius. He was a youth of such great beauty that Astronoe, queen of Phoenicia, mother of the gods, pined after him if the tale is to be believed. He whose sole pleasure was to ensnare animals in the forest realised that the goddess was doing the same to him. He could not elude her by fleeing so he castrated himself with an axe. The goddess disconsolate at the turn of events gave the youth the name of Paian and returning his life warmth to him, she set him among the gods. It is owing to this life warmth that he is named Esmunus by the Phoenicians. Although others assert that it was on account of this word meaning eighth and that he acquired this name for being Sadyk's eighth son. He it was who brought light into darkness

After Antoine Court de GEBELIN, *Allégories orientales [Eastern Allegories]*, Paris, Boudet, M.DCC. LXXIII (1773), p.67.