

# ARAM

PERIODICAL

## THE DECAPOLIS

History and archaeology

## HATRA, PALMYRA AND EDESSA

Contacts and Cultural Exchanges between Cities  
in the Fertile crescent before Islam



ARAM 28, 1-2

2016

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VOLUME 28, 1 & 2

2016

Aram is a peer reviewed periodical published by the ARAM Society for Syro-Mesopotamian Studies

ARAM Society for Syro-Mesopotamian Studies  
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All orders at the following link: [www.aramsociety.com](http://www.aramsociety.com)

Back issues can be downloaded from: [www.aramsociety.com](http://www.aramsociety.com)

ISSN: 0959-4213

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ARAM Society for Syro-Mesopotamian Studies:  
Thirty Eighth International Conference



THE DECAPOLIS  
History and Archaeology



The Oriental Institute  
Oxford University  
29-31 July 2013



ARAM Society for Syro-Mesopotamian Studies:  
Fortieth International Conference

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The Oriental Institute  
University of Oxford  
14-16 July 2014

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## SOME ASPECTS OF THE CULT RITUALS AND CEREMONIES IN HATRA

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### Abstract

The paper attempts at tracing how one small city shrine could influence the religious life and rituals performed in Hatra. Shrine XIII, located east from the Great Temenos, seems to have played an extraordinary role among temples and shrines of the city. The sanctuary's location on the edge of the eastern necropolis appears to be crucial for an explanation of its unique character. The only known object of the Palmyrene provenience found in Hatra to date, was discovered in this sanctuary. The significance of the shrine for the people who lived inside the city walls, and for those who still practiced their nomadic way of life, is also analyzed here. There are evidences to suggest that an exceptional nature of cults and rituals practiced in shrine XIII were strongly linked to a special position of Hercules in the Hatrene religious structures. Hercules was most probably the main deity worshipped in the shrine.

Among the secrets and riddles of Hatra, a special position hold those connected with the religious sphere of the ancient city life. The ceremonies and cults performed in the city were subject of numerous discussions, however still remain enigmatic. Despite we do know relatively much about the religious architecture, the cultic building and spaces, the rituals practiced in those places are difficult to be recognized. Fortunately, the epigraphic and archaeological sources can shed some light on this issue and help with better understanding of the Hatrene religion. Yet, the major discussion seems to focus on the Main Temenos and its surroundings, while the other cultic buildings appear to be slightly less explored by scholars. In this article I would like to present my suggestions concerning some of the small city temples of Hatra, especially temple no XIII. (Fig. 1)

The excavations conducted in Hatra so far resulted in discovery of dozen small temples and shrines located in different parts of the city. When analysing the distribution of the temples within the city one can see that some of them were originally constructed outside the walls. It should be mention here, that the old walls structures were excavated by Michał Gawlikowski, to whom we own the basic information about the original city layout<sup>1</sup>. The survived structures were only fragmentary excavated, so the exact range of the "old Hatra" is unknown. However, this discovery not only proves the existence of the older phase of the city's development, but also gives an idea of the buildings located outside the first city walls.

It seems that two of the small shrines once existed outside the old city walls: temple VI and XIII. The crucial question here is when exactly those temples were built up. The precise answer is hard to get, but surely the buildings had been already standing there, when the new city walls were erected. Additional distinguishing marks of those building are their layouts. Unlike the other small city shrines, temples VI and XIII were surrounded by the external temenos walls. The walls separated central parts of the shrines from the outside world; such manner of construction indicated, that the temples were erected in the open space.

Temple VI constructed in the northern part of the city is well preserved, similar to the other small temples, but the temenos wall which originally surrounded that sacral building preserved in its southern part only. The temple is situated nearby a *wadi* banks that was running through the city. The shrine was eventually incorporated into the urban space together with the areas located east from the *wadi*.

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<sup>1</sup> Gawlikowski, M., Fortress Hatra New Evidence on Ramparts and Their History, *Mesopotamia* 29, (1994), 147-184.

Temple XIII, the second originally extramural shrine, was excavated by Hazim Al-Najafy in 1981-82 seasons of the field works conducted by the Directorate of Antiquities in Iraq. The temple was constructed east from the longitudinal depression or *wadi*, in the eastern part of the city. The remains of the temenos wall are still visible on the surface. When the temple and its surrounding areas were incorporated into the city space, two or three streets seemed to be arranged along the temenos walls: traces of them are visible on the air photo only. However, the most distinctive fact about this sacral building was its neighbourhood: temple XIII was erected among nepheshes (tower tombs). Fig. 2

The sacral building was constructed of the regular stone blocks. The excavators distinguished two different phases of the temple existence. Originally it was a small rectangular structure with an adyton protruding of the back wall. Later the second chamber was added to the front. In the same time the entrance to the shrine was rearranged. During rearrangement and enlargement of the temple an inscription (H408) was engraved on a stone block<sup>2</sup>. According this text the second phase of the construction was completed in May/June 546 (234/5 CE). The whole inscription can be read as follows:

- 1 *bḥzwrn d546 kpt'dbn' 'q' br*
- 2 *Brny br 'q' br Nbwktb prsd' tryhwn dylh dy*
- 3 *kpt' w'syṭh kwlhyn lgd' rb' dRmgw 'l hyyhy*
- 4 *d'q' w'lhy' 'bs' wGdyhb bnyhy w'lhy'*
- 5 *'hyhy wmn drhym lh w'lhy' Rmgw kwlh*
- 6 *w'lhy' bny ddh kwlhwn dlhw' gn' bh hw wbnhy*
- 7 *wmštmšyn bh l'lm brm 'šyt' mdnhyt' dkpt'*
- 8 *dbn' Zdwq' br Hbw 'l 'šyt' mdnhyt' dkpt' dbn'*
- 9 *hw 'q' mrms' dkyr 'q' spr'*

Translation:

- 1 *in the month HZWRN was founded a vaulted room by 'Q' son of*
- 2 *BRNY son of 'Q' son of NBWKTB, two columns and*
- 3 *The whole stone wall for the great Fortune (GD') of RMGW for the life of*
- 4 *'Q' and the lives of 'BS' and GDYHB their sons and lives*
- 5 *Of the brothers (descendants?) and those who are beloved and for life of RMGW for all of*
- 6 *them?*
- 6 *And for the lives of their male relatives, for all successors who stretch oneself out, and their*
- 7 *sons*
- 7 *And those on the everyday service. A repair of the western front wall constructed by ZDWQ'*
- 7 *son of HBW in front of the western wall of the vaulted room*
- 7 *Which constructed 'Q'. For be remembered 'Q' the scribe.*

The excavations in the temple brought to light some interesting pieces of art. It should be stressed here however that in this text only some of them will be presented. The special attention is given to the artefacts which refer to the temple's construction process and to those linked with religious activities (or both in one). Besides inscriptions also those objects provided valuable information about the cults performed in the temple and gods worshiped there.

<sup>2</sup> Al-Salihi, W., Inscriptions from Hatra, *Sumer* 44 no. 1-2 (1985-86), 101; Aggoula, B., Remarques sur les inscriptions hatréennes (XVI-XIX), *Syria* 67 (1990), 407; Al-Salihi, W., The Excavations of Shrine XIII at Hatra, *Mesopotamia* 25 (1990), fig 17; Vattioni, F., *Hatra*, Supplemento n. 81 agli ANNALI – vol. 54 (1994), fasc. 4 (Napoli, 1994), 84; Bayer, K., *Die aramäischen Inschriften aus Assur, Hatra und dem übrigen Ostmesopotamien (datiert 44 v.Chr. bis 238 n. Chr.)* (Göttingen, 1998), 103.

The scene which most likely represents a kind of ritual ceremony was engraved on stele (poorly preserved) found in cella of the temple. The bas relief decoration shows people in Hatrene dresses gathered next to an altar, probably during the offering. The stele was inscribed and a text (H414) is partly damaged, but still possible to read. The inscription is divided on three sections. The first section consists of two lines:

- I 1 *Šmš'qb*  
2 *br Rmgw*

Translation:

*ŠMŠ'QB son of RMGW*

The second section informs about a man named TYMLT<sup>3</sup>. This name appears twice among the Hatrene inscriptions; for the first time in the inscription H184.

- II 1 *Tymlt brh*  
*TYMLT son of [...]*

The text from the third section reads:

- III 1 *šlm*  
2 *mṭt*  
3 *gdw*

*the statue (representation) of MTT GDW*

Moreover, in the temple was discovered a bas relief representation of a man of justice shown acting a prayer gesture<sup>4</sup>. Behind the left arm of the man a niche was located hiding a figure of Heracles GND'. Heracles is imagined in the interior of a small sanctuary; a simplified picture of temple XIII? Right from Heracles a short Aramaic inscription was engraved. The text (H413) is divided on three parts and can be read as follows:

- I 1 *'b' glp dkyr*  
*May be remember 'B' the sculptor*

- II 1 *'dn'*  
2 *dGnd'*  
3 *dRmgw*

*a chapel of GND' (the Fortune) of RMGW*

- III 1 *šlm' dy*  
2 *'bd'gylw*  
3 *bby'*

*the statue (representation) of 'BD'GYLW the banker (or also seems to be possible: the door keeper)*

- IV 1 *byrh hzwrn šnt 546 kpt'*  
2 *[...]'[...]g[...] br br Nšryh[b]*  
3 *br[...]lgnd' rb' dRmgw [...]tb*  
4 *[...]'hyhy*  
5 *w'[lh]' r....Šw.....Šmš*

<sup>3</sup> Al-Salihi, W., Inscriptions from Hatra, *Sumer* 44 no. 1-2 (1985-86), inscription 414, 108.

<sup>4</sup> Al-Salihi, W., Inscriptions from Hatra, *Sumer* 44 no. 1-2 (1985-86), inscription 413, 105-107.

*in the month HZWRN of the year 546 (234/235 CE) an arch (or an iwan)..... son of NŠRYH[B] son of ... great Fortune of RMGW .... His Brothers.... And for the lives of ŠW.....ŠMŠ.*

The basic information given by the inscription is that the person named Rmgw (the same who appeared in the previous inscription) offered (erected/founded?) a chapel (?) for GND-Fortune. In these circumstances Heracles imagined in the niche appears to be also representation of Fortune, actually worshiped in temple XIII. That phenomenon is broadly observed in Hatra.

The second important information from inscription H413 is the date: the month HZWRN of the year 546 which is June 234/235 CE. The last fragment of the text is badly weathered what makes the interpretation speculative only.

Moreover, nearby the temple cella an altar was discovered. The object bears an inscription (H409) which is divided on two parts. The longer, lower one reads:

- 1 *prk' d 'bd*
- 2 *Nšryhb*
- 3 *br Hlq wḥ*
- 4 *bryh bn'*
- 5 *plḥt' dy*
- 6 *Gd'*
- 7 *dRmgw*

Translation:

*the altar made by NŠRYHB son of HLQ and his companions, the servants (or worshippers) of Gnd' of Rmgw"*

In the upper part of the altar object a short text read (most probably) as follows

1[...]  
1[...]  
*[d]kyr L br 'bš'*  
*May L son of 'BŠ' be remembered.*

This line of the text preserved in very poor condition, making its lecture uncertain. The second line can be read as:

2 *dkyr lṭ 'qb'*  
*may be remembered 'QB' for good.*

Finally, for the last time one can find the name of Rmgw in a text engraved on a lintel, which originally decorated the main entrance to temple XIII. The inscription is known as H406 and consists a short dedication formula<sup>5</sup>.

*dkyr Nšryhb br Tyilmw wbry br Šmšgrm qdm Gd' dy Rmgw*  
translation:

*May be remembered NŠRYHB son of TYLMW and BRY son of ŠMŠGRM in front (before) GD' (Fortune) of RMGW.*

As it could be seen the name of Rmgw appears in all above inscriptions. Those examples justify the supposition that Rmgw was someone very important for the temple XIII's history. It is hard to

<sup>5</sup> Al-Salihi, W., *Inscriptions from Hatra*, *Sumer* 44 no. 1-2 (1985-86), 100; Al-Salihi, W., *The Excavations of Shrine XIII at Hatra*, *Mesopotamia* 25 (1990), fig 16; Aggoula, B., *Remarques sur les inscriptions hatréennes (XVI-XIX)*, *Syria* 67 (1990), 405-406; Vattioni, F., *Hatra*, Supplemento n. 81 agli ANNALI – vol. 54 (1994), fasc. 4 (Napoli, 1994), 83; Bayer, K., *Die aramäischen Inschriften aus Assur, Hatra und dem übrigen Ostmesopotamien (datiert 44 v.Chr. bis 238 n. Chr.)* (Göttingen, 1998), 102.



agree on his possible role precisely, but in my opinion, not only the frequency but the places his name appeared may indicate, the Rmgw could had been a main architect of temple XIII.

A relief representing a man with a cup in his left hand is another interesting piece of art discovered in the temple. The man, most probably a merchant, rests on his right elbow. In the right palm the man holds a bag, probably full of coins. Although the relief is badly damaged the inscription (H412) is still legible. Despite its poor condition the text and the image give an idea of potential *ex voto* objects in the temple.

- 1 *šlm' dy*
- 2 *Hywš'*
- 3 *br*
- 4 *'šlmw*
- 5 *plh*
- 6 *'lṭ' w[...]*

Translation:

*the image (the statue) of HYWŠ' son of 'ŠLMW a servant of Allat and [...]*

The upper which was shorter can be transcribed:

- 1 *dkyr*
- 2 *Ryt*
- 3 *brh [...]*

Translation:

*may be remembered RYT his sons [...]*

The other examples of artefacts representing the deities venerated in the temple are two statues of Heracles. Although both of them are badly damaged, the characteristic attributes of Heracles (lion skin and club) allow to identified the statues

Another statue discovered in the temple represents a young man<sup>6</sup>. On a base a short inscription was engraved: *šm'ny Zqyq'* what can be translated as “hear me Zqyqu” The name of ZQYQ' and his position in the Hatrene religion is very enigmatic. The formula of this short text clearly shows that the name was used in religious context. The mysterious name appears in this single temple only. ZQYQ' was a kind of ghost or genius known in Assyrian beliefs. As Maoul pointed out, there were eleven tablets found in the Ashurbanipal's library which mentioned name Zaqiqu or Ziqiqu as a dream god who was responsible for dream omina<sup>7</sup>. Considering that Zaqiqu was also worshiped in Hatra a question arises if his functions and position was the same or similar to those of Assyrian cults. If the answer is positive, it could also indicate (indirectly) on a potential presence of an oracle: not necessarily in the temple itself but somewhere in the city<sup>8</sup>. Temple XIII could be a scene of rituals connected with dream omina (oracles) as well.

A bas relief stele representing two men and a woman, clad in typical Hatrene dresses, is a next object that should be mention here. The stele was found in the temple adyton. On the stele's base a short inscription was engraved. The text known as H410 reads:

- 1 *hdyrt Gnyt' 'prṭn Zqyq'*
- 2 *'dry Zqyq' 'kyn rḥmny br Slwq*

<sup>6</sup> Al-Salihi, W., The Excavations of Shrine XIII at Hatra, *Mesopotamia* 25 (1990) 31-32, fig. 19.; Al-Salihi, W., Two Cult-Statues from Hatra, *Iraq* 58 (1996), 105-108.

<sup>7</sup> Maul, S. M., Divination Culture and the Handling of the Future, [in:] G. Leic (ed.), *The Babylonian World*, (New York, London, 2007), 368

<sup>8</sup> Jakubiak, K., *Sacral Landscape in Hatra*, (Warsaw, 2014), 61-62



Translation:

*for magnificent? Fortune (GNYT'), most worthy ZQYQ', ZQYQ' the helper; erected RHMNY son of Seleucus.*

Again, the name of Zaqiqu appears in the inscription, this time in company of Fortune, the powerful deity widely venerated in Hatra. It may suggest that the rank of Zaqiqu was relatively high among the other Hatrene gods or that in this particular temple he occupied a special place.

The name of Seleucus from the above inscription can be also found in text H415. The inscription was engraved underneath a badly damaged male torso sculptured in limestone; the torso was originally a part of an archivolt decorated the temple façade. The text is as follows:

1        *Slkw br 'bd'*  
2        *br Mlw*

Translation:

*Seleucus son of 'BD' son of MLW*

For the archivolt construction other sculptured segments were used, all of them are badly damaged. On another segment a short inscription was recognized. Because the archivolt was a sole construction, the inscription has the same number as the above text H415:

1        *'bdgwlw br*  
2        *Gdyhb rbyt'*  
3        *br 'by*  
4

Translation:

*'BDGWLW son of GDYHB the steward, son of 'BY*

All the objects mentioned so far were rather typical examples of the Hatrene art. In the shrine XIII however, two special objects of foreign provenance were discovered too. These artifacts are an altar and a stele both decorated with relief<sup>9</sup>. They came from Palmyra. As Al-Salihi suggests, both objects were religious and cultic in their character, and were probably sacrificed in the temple as *ex votae* offered for Hatrene deities by Palmyrenian merchants.

The stele seems to be particularly interesting. On its face was curved a scene of adoration. A female deity imagined at this scene has clear a military attributes. The goddess represented here was shown in typical Palmyrene long dress, holding a long spear in her left hand. In front of her was sculptured a man, also wearing characteristic, Palmyrene dress. According the inscriptions engraved on the stele it is clear that the object was dedicated to 'Allat by 'Abdšlm son of Šmšyhb. The inscription was published by Al-Salihi in his article titled: *Palmyrene Sculptures found at Hatra*<sup>10</sup>. Lastly the objects discovered in the shrine were analysed by Lucinda Dirven<sup>11</sup>.

Let us turn back to the question of the original localization of temple XIII. Why was this sacral building erected outside the city walls? To understand both the possible function of the temple as well as the reason it was located extramural one should put an attention on its neighborhood. Temple XIII

<sup>9</sup> Al-Salihi, W., *Palmyrene Sculptures found at Hatra, Iraq* 49 (1987), 53-61.

<sup>10</sup> Al-Salihi, W., *Inscriptions from Hatra, Sumer* 44 no. 1-2 (1985-86), 104; Al-Salihi, W., *Palmyrene Sculptures found at Hatra, Iraq* 49 (1987), 53-61; Aggoula, B., *Remarques sur les inscriptions hatréennes (XVI-XIX), Syria* 67 (1990), 414; Vattioni, F., *Hatra, Supplemento n. 81 agli ANNALI – vol. 54 (1994), fasc. 4 (Napoli 1994), 84, 85-86; Bayer, K., Die aramäischen Inschriften aus Assur, Hatra und dem übrigen Ostmesopotamien (datiert 44 v. Chr. bis 238 n. Chr.) (Göttingen, 1998), 104.*

<sup>11</sup> Dirven, L., *Palmyrenes in Hatra: Evidence for Cultural Relations in the Fertile Crescent, Studia Palmyreńskie* 12 (2-13), 49-60.

was located on the old necropolis ground. In its direct vicinity the remains of two monumental tower tombs were recognized. Those structures were carefully analyzed by Francesca Dorna Metzger<sup>12</sup>. The other structures belonging to the old necropolis were distinguished by Walter Andrae<sup>13</sup>. Basing on his observation in the field Andrae was able to recognize at least five cemeteries in the area surrounding temple XIII. The characteristic features for all of them were tower tombs (nephes). The cemeteries were called by Andrae as follows: P, J, H, Q, Y plus most probably also the burial place marked as necropolis G should be distinguished. As Dorna Metzger pointed out the tombs were arranged in parallel lines<sup>14</sup>. The terrains on eastern banks of *wadi* seem to be destined for burials since the very beginnings of Hatra. The terrain lowering and the natural barrier created by *wadi* distinguished this place from the other city space. When the Great Temenos was completed the burial place remained behind its eastern wall of the Temenos. Eventually, temple XIII with its own temenos wall was almost in opposition to the Main Gate leading to the Great Temenos. What is important, on the way between both sacral enclosures there are no traces of funeral constructions. It can be postulated, that temple XIII was opening the necropolis area, the “city of the dead”.

Following the epigraphic sources, the first information about the necropolis refers to the end of the first century CE. The data came from two inscriptions discovered in the necropolis J in the tomb 3. The inscription H293, unfortunately poorly preserved<sup>15</sup>, was found nearby the entrance to the tomb. The text can be read as follows:

- 1 *byrh hzwrn šnt 400[...]*
- 2 *bnw npš' bnw Tymw wbnw*
- 3 *Bl'qb w'nšl' bšrp*
- 4 *[t?]mhwyn*

Translation:

*In the month HZWRN (June/July) of the year 400 (ca. 88 CE)<sup>16</sup>  
the tomb has been constructed by tribe Tymu and  
tribe Balaqub, nobody's body  
befoul it?*

Inside the same tomb another inscription was engraved on a stone block, giving even more precise date. The text H294 survived in better condition than H293<sup>17</sup>. The inscription reads:

- 1 *[b]yrh tšry šnt*
- 2 *400+20+..(5?) brny'*
- 3 *d Šm?[.....] Brnr [g]l[...]*

Translation:

*In month TŠRY (November) of the year  
425 (=114 CE?) Barnya (son?)<sup>18</sup>  
of ŠM (possible Shamshiaqub) son of Nergal [...]<sup>19</sup>*

<sup>12</sup> Dorna Metzger, F., Funerary Buildings at Hatra, *Electrum* 2 (1998), 45-53.; Dorna Metzger, F., Hatra: Gli edifici funerari, *Topoi* 10 (2000), 197-215.

<sup>13</sup> Andrae, W., *Hatra* (Leipzig 1912/ Osnabrück, 1975), 75-106.

<sup>14</sup> Dorna Metzger, F., Funerary Buildings at Hatra, *Electrum* 2 (1998), 47.

<sup>15</sup> Aggoula, B., *Inventaire des inscriptions hatréennes* (Paris, 1991), 143-144.

<sup>16</sup> According to Bayer translation the date can be reconstructed as the time between May/June 98 to 188 CE see: Bayer, K., *Die aramäischen Inschriften aus Assur, Hatra und dem übrigen Mesopotamien (datiert 44 v. Chr. bis 238 n. Chr.)* (Göttingen, 1998), 85.

<sup>17</sup> Aggoula, B., *Inventaire des inscriptions hatréennes* (Paris, 1991), 143-144.

<sup>18</sup> Bayer suggests the date reconstruction on September/October 108 A.D. see: Bayer, K., *Die aramäischen Inschriften aus Assur, Hatra und dem übrigen Mesopotamien (datiert 44 v. Chr. bis 238 n. Chr.)* (Göttingen, 1998), 85.

<sup>19</sup> Or: Barnergal is also possible to read.

Most probably the date from the second inscription concerns the time from just before the Hadrian's siege of Hatra, which seems rather significant. It means that before 114 CE at least one of the tower tombs was in use.

Temple XIII, as it was already mentioned, appears to be an integral part of the Hatrene necropolis complex. When looking at the epigraphic evidences (H408) one can see that the sacral structure was finally completed around 234/5 CE. It should be underline, however, that the inscription informs us about the finalization of the second phase of the shrine's rearrangement and we still know nothing about the beginnings of the sanctuary. A fact the temple was closed behind temenos wall seems to be a kind of a hint. The wall was necessary to separate the *sacrum* from *profanum*, as the temple was erected outside the city walls. The general rearrangement of the city walls was undertaken on the beginning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE. Most probably, the shrine was built up at the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE. This process was parallel to the necropolis development, and what is even more important, with the Main Sanctuary enlargement and rearrangement.

To understand the position of temple XIII among the other Hatrene shrines it is necessary to recognize the role of the god or gods which were (most likely) worshiped in the temple. It is hard to answer if the temple was dedicated to one deity only. The presence of the statue bearing the inscription which refers to Zaiqu and the stele with the representation of (probably) goddess Allat may indicate that the temple was "a house" for more than one deity. However, according to both the epigraphic sources and numerous pieces of art discovered in the temple, one can presume that the main god venerated in this shrine was Heracles. If the assumption is correct, it would mean that temple XIII differed from the other small temples of Hatra<sup>20</sup>. In other shrines usually several different deities were worshipped under one roof. In temple XIII the most important deity was Heracles GD' (Fortune) and the whole sacral structure was devoted to him since the very beginning. The role that Heracles played in the Hatrene religion is also unique, complex and complicated.

In Hatra, what was already mentioned, Heracles was often linked with GD' - Fortune. On the other hand, however, the most significant was his association with netherworld. In Hatra Heracles is most frequently associated with Nergal, the god of netherworld. This "fusion" reflects the way people of Hatra transgress the borders of traditional conception of Mesopotamian religion. Under new influences which came from the West, a "syncretism" appeared. Heracles was one of the heroes who were able to enter the netherworld and come back; in other words, he did have power to force the death. In my opinion Heracles was a kind of *psychopompos* who lead the souls to the Underground. He was a guardant that this journey will be finished with a success. Since the cult of ancestors was very strong among Aramaic people living in Hatra, a significant position of Heracles does not surprise.

The other aspect of Heracles of temple XIII - his association with Fortune - cannot be omitted. In my opinion there is no dichotomy between both aspects of Heracles' nature. The Gd' or Fortune can be an idea of faith, luck or destiny of both the living and the dead people. Both, apparently diametrically different features of Heracles, in this case are complement one another. Heracles in Hatra is equally strong as a chthonic god and as a protective deity of a tribe or a family, of its living and dead members.

Taking to consideration all above arguments it seems to be justified to say that temple XIII had played in Hatra a very unique role. The sanctuary was a place of rituals dedicated to Heracles GD' but also the cultic practices associated with adoration of deceased whose earthly remains were most probably buried in the necropolis located on the temple's back. Apparently this burial ground was still in use after incorporation the necropolis and the temple into the urban space. The tower tombs were still standing free among dwelling architecture. The very significant is that no dwellings were attached to the burial structures. Consequently, it can be assumed that tower tombs were still in use since the area around each of nephes was left free (what could be explained by sanitary reasons). If necropolis

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<sup>20</sup> Jakubiak, K., A note on the inscriptions and architectural decoration of the small temples in Hatra, [in:] Dirven, L. (ed.), *Hatra. Politics, Culture and Religion between Parthia and Rome*, Oriens et Occidens 21 (Stuttgart, 2013), 91-105.

was not in use anymore the tombs would be left as topographic markers similar to those in Palmyra<sup>21</sup>. In Palmyra the tower tombs were sealed and were used no longer as funeral places. After such desecration process it was possible to construct ordinary dwellings close or even attached to the funeral buildings. It seems that in Hatra no situation like this occurred. The tower tombs were constantly in use as well as the temple devoted to Heracles. All together were forming a ritual complex dedicated to the veneration of the ancestors of Hatra citizens. Most probably the burial ceremonies were practiced there until the final collapse of Hatra: the inscription H408 brings the year 234/5 CE as a date of the temple enlargement. All above prove that temple was of extraordinary meaning for the citizens of Hatra. The reason for this is a special position of the ancestors' cult in beliefs of Semitic tribes. There was the only one sanctuary in Hatra which can be considered as a funeral temple. The temple which was functioning on a border between the city of the living and the city of the dead.

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<sup>21</sup> In the northern necropolis of Palmyra the tower tombs create very characteristic part of the city landscape.



Figure 1. General plan of Hatra based on Aggoula, B., *Inventaire des inscriptions hatrènes*, (Paris, 1991), XXVII.

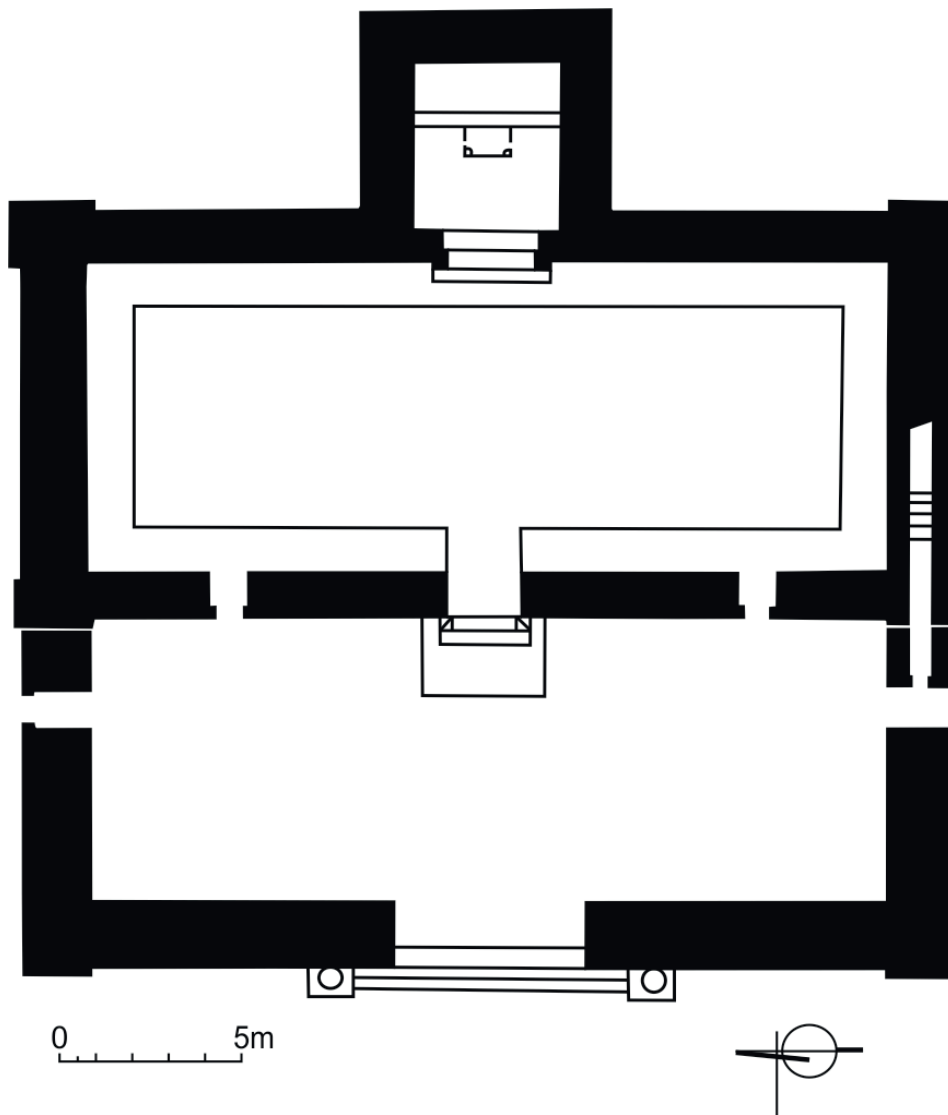


Figure 2. Plan of the temple XIII, according to Al-Salihi, W.,  
The Excavations of Shrine XIII at Hatra, *Mesopotamia* 25 (1990) 31-32



# مجلتہ قرآن

