



Hatra

Politics, Culture and Religion
between Parthia and Rome

Edited by Lucinda Dirven

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HATRA

POLITICS CULTURE AND RELIGION BETWEEN PARTHIA AND ROME

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgments	7
<i>Lucinda Dirven</i> Introduction	9

BETWEEN PARTHIA AND ROME

<i>Benjamin Isaac</i> Against Rome and Persia. From success to destruction	23
<i>Michael Sommer</i> In the twilight. Hatra between Rome and Iran.	33
<i>Leonardo Gregoratti</i> Hatra: on the West of the East	45

THE CITY AND ITS REMAINS

<i>Ted Kaizer</i> Questions and problems concerning the sudden appearance of material culture of Hatra in the first centuries CE	57
<i>Michał Gawlikowski</i> The development of the city of Hatra	73
<i>Roberta Venco Ricciardi & Alessandra Peruzzetto</i> The ancient phases of the great sanctuary at Hatra	81
<i>Krzysztof Jakubiak</i> A note on the inscriptions and architectural decorations from the small temples in Hatra	91
<i>Hikmat Basheer al-Aswad</i> New discoveries in Temple XIV in Hatra	107

<i>Susan Downey</i>	
Clothed statuettes of Heracles from Hatra	115
<i>Stefan R. Hauser</i>	
Where is the man of Hadr, who once built it and taxed the land by the Tigris and Chaboras? On the significance of the final siege of Hatra	119
 CULTURE AND RELIGION ON THE CROSSROADS 	
<i>Albert de Jong</i>	
Hatra and the Parthian Commonwealth	143
<i>Jean-Baptiste Yon</i>	
Hatra and Palmyra: the monumentalization of public space	161
<i>Klaas Dijkstra</i>	
Does Gorgo harm us? About the interpretation of H106	171
<i>Andreas Kropp</i>	
The iconography of Nabu at Hatra in the context of Syrian cult images. A Hierapolitan import in Northern Mesopotamia	185
<i>Jürgen Tubach</i>	
The triad of Hatra	201
<i>Simon James</i>	
Roman Partho-Sasanian marital interactions: testimony of a cheekpiece from Hatra and its parallels	217
<i>Sylvia Winkelmann</i>	
The weapons of Hatra as reflection of interregional contacts	235
 BIBLIOGRAPHY	 251
LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS	301
LIST OF FIGURES	305
PLATES	317

A NOTE ON THE INSCRIPTIONS AND ARCHITECTURAL DECORATION OF THE SMALL TEMPLES IN HATRA

Krzysztof Jakubiak

The architecture of the so-called small temples in Hatra, as well as their location and functioning in the urban landscape, are very attractive topics for archaeological research.¹ Currently we have at our disposal the material from fourteen different small temples. These buildings are found scattered throughout the entire city [figure 2]. Scholars have recently proposed several interpretations of the function of these shrines. A very interesting suggestion was made by Lucinda Dirven, who believes that the transversal chambers of the temples may have been used for ritual banquets in commemoration of the deceased.² Most studies on these small temples and shrines have so far discussed their architecture, sculptures and inscriptions separately. This article attempts to combine all data, although the main focus will be put on inscriptions.

INSCRIPTIONS FROM THE SMALL SHRINES

The analysis of inscriptions discovered during archaeological excavations is crucial to a proper understanding of the functional and ornamental aspects of the shrines. Ninety-five inscriptions were found in the temple ruins. The inscriptions brought to light by fieldwork conducted in Temple XIV are not included in this paper.³

Inscriptions are usually found in several characteristic places, both inside and outside the temple areas. The most typical place for inscription carving is the altar surface. In addition, many texts discovered in the small temples accompany figural sculptures. A third group of texts is inscribed on the walls or cut in the slabs of floors. In short, almost all texts from the small temples were originally placed on altars, figural sculptures and the walls and floors of the shrines.

Among the inscriptions found in the temples two main categories should be distinguished. The first one consists of several variants of the *dkyr ltb* formula ('for good and in commemoration'). This dedication was observed in fifty-three different inscriptions. The second group includes texts in which a number of variants of the formula *'l hyhy-* ('for the life of') were used. This formula was recog-

1 Safar & Mustafa (1974); Downey (1988); Ingholt (1954), Sommer (2003a).

2 Dirven (2005a) and (2009).

3 Ibrahim (2001–2002), p.200–216. See the article on Temple XIV by Hikmat Basheer al-Aswad in the present volume.

nized in thirteen texts discovered in several temples and has been studied thoroughly by Klaas Dijkstra.⁴

The inscriptions with the *dkyr ltb* formula are attested in Temples I, II, III, VIII, X, XI, XII, and XIII. The instances from Temples I and II may be used to demonstrate the conventional use of this formula. In Temple I the phrase *dkyr ltb* was used ten times. Most frequently (five times) the phrase occurs in inscription H10, engraved on an altar that was erected in the naos of the temple. The text describes the altar as an ex-voto for the good and commemoration of *šmš'qb* son of *'lhšmš* son of *'phw* son of *šmšhry*. Additionally a short inscription known as H10b includes a commemorative dedication for *šmš'qb* son of *'d...*⁵ Four other inscriptions were put up for the good and commemoration of *kznyw* (H6, H7, H8, and H9).⁶ The last dedication with the *dkyr ltb* formula appeared in inscription H11 and mentioned a *'b* son of *'lt.*⁷ In Temple II, only one inscription with the *dkyr ltb* formula was found. The phrase was used twice in H13, a dedicatory inscription for *gdyhb* son of *nšry* son of *'g* son of *'bdnrgwl.*⁸

In two cases the two formulas *dkyr ltb* (for good) and *'l hyhy* (for the life of) are used together in one inscription. This combination appears in inscriptions H403 and H408.⁹ The first was unearthed in Temple XII and the second in the ruins of Temple XIII.

THE SMALL SHRINES AND THEIR DEITIES

A vexed problem is to whom the small temples in Hatra were dedicated. What deities were worshiped in the shrines? The answer to this question is not as easy as it appears at first glance. Even when all inscriptions and other data are taken into consideration, it is hard to determine the name of the deity or deities worshiped in a particular temple. For example, Temple I was identified as dedicated to Nergal on the basis of iconographic features.¹⁰ The two most spectacular representations of Nergal known from Hatra were found there. Most famous is the bas-relief that represents the god Nergal holding a Cerberus-like creature on a long leash [figure 24].¹¹ In addition to this god there are, however, other interesting elements sculpted on the object. Left of Nergal one finds an image of the goddess Atargatis in the background. The suggestion that Atargatis was also important for

4 Dijkstra (1995).

5 Caquot (1952), p.94–95; Vattioni (1981), p.27–28; Aggoula (1991), p.9–10; Vattioni (1994), p.41; Beyer (1998), p.29–30.

6 Aggoula (1991), p.4–9.

7 Aggoula (1991), p.11.

8 Aggoula (1991), p.11–13.

9 al-Salihi (1985–86), p.101; Aggloula (1990), p.407; al-Salihi (1990), fig. 17; Vattioni (1994), p.84; Beyer (1998), p.101, 103.

10 Ibrahim (1986), p.129.

11 Ingolt (1954), pl VII 2; Fukai (1960), p.156–159; Homès-Fredericq (1963), p.56, pl. VII.4; Safar & Mustafa (1974), p.192–194; Colledge (1977), fig. 35; Sommer (2003a), p.79.

the cult in Temple I is confirmed by H5, in which mention is made of a certain 'b', who is identified as a priest of Atargatis.¹²

The second Nergal representation in Temple I was unearthed on the altar pedestal.¹³ Based on these two images of Nergal, Temple I is commonly interpreted to be a building dedicated to this god of the netherworld. However, this initial explanation seems questionable. First of all, two other objects unrelated to Nergal's iconography were found in the temple. One of them is a bas-relief torso representing a deity with sunrays around his head [figure 25].¹⁴ There are three possible interpretations of this divine image. It could be a representation of Shamash, Maren or Barmaren. The last option is supported by the fact that the relief sculpture shows a beardless man. This deity can be identified as the son of Maren. The second interesting object from Temple I is a stone statuette. This item was identified as an image of the goddess Nanaya following H4, that is inscribed on its back.¹⁵ In my opinion, it was not by chance that the two objects were placed inside the temple.

In Temple II the situation is equally complicated. Here we have only two inscriptions at our disposal. Unfortunately, they offer no help in determining what deity or deities were originally worshiped in the temple. There was a statue of 'bdsm'y' the pšgryb' of Hatra, son of king Sanatruq (H28), discovered nearby the front wall of the building.¹⁶ Therefore, we may suppose that the temple was a special place for members of the Hatrene elite. Both inscription discovered in Temple II hold the most frequently used formulas known from small temples.¹⁷ H13 contains the formula for the commemoration of gdyhb son of nšry son of 'g'... for the commemoration and good. H28 contains, besides the text mentioned above, the formula "for the life of". This sentence can be found on the second, lower, limestone block. "... for the life of king Sanatruq, the father of his children ('l h[y]' sntrq mlk' 'b' dbnyh).

No divine names are mentioned in the two texts from Temple II. However, two interesting objects that were discovered in the shrine help us to determine what deities were worshipped here. One of them is a female bust in high relief placed on a round slate. The bust rests on a crescent moon, so we may presume that the sculpture represents a goddess.¹⁸ The second object is a bas-relief with a representation of three female figures. The two figures on the left-hand side are slightly smaller than the third one, who is shown on the right-hand side of the re-

12 Aggoula (1991), p.4–5.

13 Safar & Mustafa (1974), p.201–202.

14 Fukai (1960), p.159–161; Homès-Fredericq (1963), pl II 5; Safar & Mustafa (1974), p.180; Sommer (2003a), p.76.

15 Fukai (1960), p.164–165; Safar & Mustafa (1974), p.83; Aggoula (1991), p.3–4.

16 Safar (1952), p.184, Safar (1953), p.15; Aggoula (1991), p.22–24. The precise localization of the statue with the inscription is questionable. Some scholars believe that the statue belonged to the house located nearby the temple. However, according to my personal point of view, this object should be connected with the temple since it had an official character and was intended for exposition in sacred space rather than in a private house.

17 Aggoula (1991), p.11–13, 22–24.

18 Safar & Mustafa (1974), p.204.

lief. In addition to her size, the rays that emanate from behind her head indicate that she represents a goddess. The slightly smaller female figures possibly represent Hatrene ladies venerating the goddess. Considering these two pieces of iconographic evidence, we may tentatively assume that the main deity worshiped in Temple II was Atargatis. However, it cannot be excluded that another female deity, such as Marten for instance, was venerated in this building.

The same problem in establishing the name of the deity appears in Temple III. The inscriptions from this sanctuary provide the answer to this question. We may distinguish several names of deities in different texts. The names Baalshamin, Bel, Maren, Marten, Barmaren and Gad are particularly prominent. The names of these deities appear in different contexts; most of them are associated with their servants and priests. The names of gods are also connected with the names of worshippers on ex-votum offerings that have a dedicatory formula engraved on them. Baalshamin appears in inscriptions H16, H17, and H23. Bel comes into view in texts H24, H48, and H51. The triad Maren, Marten, Barmaren is mentioned in inscriptions H25, H26, H50, and H52. The name of Gadde only appears in H27. Again, the inscriptions suggest that the temple was dedicated to more than one deity; several gods or goddesses were worshiped under one roof.

Two inscribed statues unearthed during excavations in Temple III are excellent examples of Hatrene architectural decoration. One of them was originally situated on a console fixed to the western internal wall of the temple, immediately to the right of the entrance to the building [figures 26–27]. Due to the fact that the statue was erected high up on the wall, the upper part of the sculpture was lost. We can, however, still read the inscription engraved on the console. The text was catalogued as H20.¹⁹ The inscription is important because the name of *'bdsmy'* plus his filiations are given. In addition, two significant formulas “for the life of” and “may be remembered for good”, can be recognized in this text that reads in the translation of Dijkstra: “The statue of Abdsimia son of Worodnabu son of Shullai. He himself has erected it for the life of himself and that of his brother and that of whomever is dear to him, all of them. May it be remembered for good.”²⁰

The other statue originally stood to the left of the cella of the temple. On its base a short inscription, referred to as H21, was engraved.²¹ According to the text it is a figure of *'tlw*, king of *'ntwn 'šry'*. *'ntwn 'šry'* is most probably a name of a city somewhere in Assyria.²² The life size sculpture shows a man clothed in a

19 Aggoula (1991), p.16–17.

20 Dijkstra (1995), p.226.

21 Aggoula (1991), p.17.

22 Teixidor (1967), p.2, who follows an interpretation first proposed by Milik, identifies this man as a king from Adiabene, arguing that Natunia is the Iranian name of the territory called Adiabene. This hypothesis is rejected by Chaumont (1979), p.224. In my opinion *'ntwn 'šry'* can be translated and interpreted as a city *'ntwn* in *'šry'* in Assyria or Assyrian. The toponym given in this inscription is completely beyond our present knowledge, but the term *'šry'* is formally similar to *tdmry'* – of Palmyrenians (*lbl tdmryy' wyrhbwl w'glbwl* - in PAT 1615). Moreover, Adiabene was flourishing on the terrain of former Assyria, so the whole discussion right now can be limited to the word *'šry'* only and its proper interpretation.

richly embroidered dress that is typical of Parthian nobles from Hatra.²³ An emblematic element is the king's long sword carried on a heavy belt at his hip. On the head the king wears a high and richly decorated royal tiara.

Near Temple III another small sanctuary, Temple IV is situated [figure 26]. This building and Temple III were discovered in the same excavation season. Yet again we face the question of identification of the deity or deities originally worshiped in the building. Two inscriptions discovered in the ruins of Temple IV indicate that the sanctuary was dedicated to more than one god. In H29, carved on a lintel of the temple, one can find the names Maren, Barmaren, Shahru, Baalshamin and Atargatis.²⁴ Inscription H30, in turn, was engraved on a base of a statue which originally stood against the temple wall and was dedicated to 'bw daughter of *gblw*.²⁵ Mentioned in the text are the gods Maren, Marten, Barmaren, Baalshamin and Atargatis. The excavators of Temple IV assumed that Temple IV was dedicated to Atargatis alone. However, considering the content of inscriptions H29 and H30, we may now presume that the shrine was consecrated to the gods mentioned in these texts as well.

From the Temple IV we have several additional finds. Two male heads sculpted in the round are probably the best work of art discovered among the ruins. One head is commonly known as the head of a Hatrene general.²⁶ Another symbolic element discovered in the ruins was a limestone figure of a sitting lion.²⁷ Last but not least, a small bronze artefact that was once a part of bronze vessel decoration should be mentioned. We are able to determine its original function thanks to the presence of small holes that were used to fix the element to the vessel's body. The element represents a protome usually interpreted as a head of Medusa.²⁸ There is a short, poorly preserved and partly destroyed inscription engraved in the lowest part of the protome. In the work of Safar and Mustafa we can find the only published picture of this inscription. Because of its poor state of preservation it is very difficult to decipher the text.

Inscriptions plus other artefacts led scholars to assume that Temple V was dedicated to Ashurbel. The name 'šrbl appeared in two inscriptions unearthed in the so-called north-west building, which seems to be more important than the second smaller shrine situated in the southern part of the sacral complex. In the catalogue of Hatra inscriptions these texts are marked as H34 and H35. The first text was engraved on a base of a statue of *mrzbw*, a priestess of Ashurbel. The second time the name of the deity appeared on a base of a sculpture representing *qymy*, daughter of 'bdsm^y and wife of *nšr'qb* who was a scribe of Barmaren.

Of the eleven different inscriptions found in Temple V, a few texts containing variations of the formula 'l *hyhy* (for the life of) deserve our special attention. In

23 Fukai (1960), p.142–143; Safar & Mustafa (1974), p.208.

24 Safar (1952), p.185–186; Safar (1953), p.15; Aggoula (1991), p.24.

25 Aggoula (1991), p.25–26.

26 Fukai (1960), p.145; Safar & Mustafa (1974), p.224–225.

27 Safar Mustafa (1974), p.231.

28 Fukai(1960), p.171–172; Homès-Fredericq (1963), p.57, pl. II, 4; Safar & Mustafa (1974), p.227.

two inscriptions from the southern shrine (H31 and H32) this formula is found on life-size statues representing *mrtbw* and *š'l* respectively. In these cases the formula can be read as *'l hyh w'l ...* Two more inscriptions from the southern shrine (H34 and H35) have already been mentioned. Dijkstra carefully analyzed both texts.²⁹

The almost “life size” full-scale representation of Bel-Ashur or Nabu,³⁰ one of the best-known works of art ever found in Hatra, was discovered in Temple V [figures 51–52]. Other artefacts found in Temple V were not so clearly associated with the iconography of Ashurbel.³¹ There was a representation of a winged deity with a male-goat, a snake and a dagger.³² Additionally at least two images of Heracles were found in the temple.³³ Both artefacts imply that besides Ashurbel and Nabu other deities may have been originally worshiped there. The winged deity can be interpreted as Nergal, or his acolyte. The presence of the male goat and other details illustrate the possible chthonic character of this deity. We may presume that Nergal was worshiped in this temple as well. This hypothesis is additionally supported by the images of Heracles. According to many historians of religion, Nergal and Heracles were closely associated in Hatra. If correct, representations of the Greek god found in this temple confirm that Nergal was important here.³⁴

Two lintels and an archivolt are particularly important elements of the decoration of Temple V. The first of the lintels bears a representation of a deer.³⁵ The second – that once adorned the main entrance of the temple – shows a banquet flanked by two images of Nike or Victory [figure 28].³⁶ Some of the figures in the banquet scene are labelled with short inscriptions (H33). The central part of the scene is occupied by the representation of Nasru, lord of Hatra, shown in typical Hatrene dress. Nasru rests on a *klinè* (bed), his left arm on a pedestal or pillow. He holds a bowl in his left hand. On both sides of Nasru are two smaller male figures. One of the men is described as *wlgš* (Vologaeses) known from the history of Hatra as the elder son of Nasru.

Temple VI and the small Temple VII are the most enigmatic in this category of cultic buildings in Hatra. Only two inscriptions were discovered in the ruins of

29 Dijkstra (1995).

30 As Andreas Kropp accurately pointed out. See his article in the present volume.

31 I do not agree with Milik's interpretation, who recognizes Ashurbel as a goddess. This interpretation is based on his reading of the word *btlh* as *virgin*. From the grammatical point of view, however, the name of goddess (feminine) should be written Ashurbalat. In the inscription under discussion, the name is written evidently as a masculine. Moreover, the *btlh* translation is very doubtful since it is based on the Canaïneic word *'tr-* instead of eastern Aramaic. But see Milik (1972), p.228. In two other inscriptions with the word Ashurbel (H34 and H38) the name is evidently masculine.

32 Safar & Mustafa (1974), p.243; Fukai (1960), p.154–156.

33 Safar & Mustafa (1974), p.242.

34 On the association of Nergal and Heracles in Hatra and references to previous publications on this subject, see Dirven (2009), p.57–63.

35 Safar & Mustafa (1974), p.248–249.

36 Safar, Mustafa (1974), p.245; Dirven (2005a), p.62–63.

Temple VI. The first inscription (H53) was engraved on one of two life-size male figures found in the temple. It is a statue of a man with his right hand raised in a gesture of blessing or prayer.³⁷ Engraved on the breast of the figure, besides the already mentioned inscription, was a very slight graffito representing ŠMŠ. The iconography of this solar deity is very unusual; the god is shown on a cloud or maybe in a mountain landscape [figure 29]. On the left side of the bust a text (H53) with the *dkyr ltb* formula was engraved: for commemoration of 'šy son of...; unfortunately the name of his father is completely illegible. The Hatrene triad of Maren, Marten and Barmaren was also mentioned in this inscription. A statue of a seated couple was another object found in the temple. The temple is generally thought to be dedicated to Tyche/ Gadde, since a seated statue of this goddess was discovered in the building.³⁸ The goddess is represented wearing a characteristic *corona muralis* and with a rope on her lap. No inscriptions were found in Temple VII. The shrine was originally situated south of the main temenos (*bait allaha*).³⁹ It is usually connected with the cult of Heracles/Nergal, since two statues of this deity were found in the building.⁴⁰

Temple VIII is not a single building, but a small sacral complex.⁴¹ In its relatively large temenos two separate structures were erected. In the southern part of the complex the so-called “smaller shrine”, or shrine VIIIa, was situated. Two inscriptions (H57 and H59) with the *dkyr* formula were discovered in this structure. H57 is a dedicatory text offered by 'dy son of *qwp*' to Marten. The deity's name is only fragmentarily preserved, so it cannot be certain. The other text, H59, is very short and can be read as *dkyr hp*'. The only interpretation was proposed by Aggoula, who read the latter name as *hp'zy/w*.⁴²

The larger shrine VIIIb was located in the western part of the temenos court. Three inscriptions were discovered in the building. In the first one the formula *dkyr ltb* was used. Inscription H58 can be read as follows:

dkyr 'd' br kšy' br

'bs' qdm gnd' dy

kšry' ltb wlšnp[yr]

Translation: To commemorate 'd' son of *kšy*' son of 'bs' in front of *gnd*' (Tyche/ Fortune) of *kšry*' for good and beatitude

The uncertain word *kšry*' is the most problematic here. Safar and Aggoula translate this word as “a camp” or “a furrier”, respectively.⁴³ In both cases the translation seems doubtful, since it makes no good sense in this context. *kšry*' is rather

37 Safar & Mustafa (1974), p.258; Aggoula (1991), p.42–43; Caquot (1955a), p.56–57; Vattioni (1981), p.42–43.

38 Safar & Mustafa (1974), p.261.

39 Downey (1988), p.159–173.

40 Safar & Mustafa (1974), p.263.

41 Downey (1988), p.159–173.

42 Aggoula (1991), p.46.

43 Safar (1953), p.4–5; Aggoula (1991), p.44–46.

associated with the word *gnd'* and could be understood as an additional epithet of the Tyche of Hatra.

A variant of the *'l hyhy*-formula can be found in inscription H214. The text is dated to the year 409, which corresponds to 97/98 CE. It was the year in which a chamber dedicated to Nergal was originally constructed in the sacral complex. The chamber designed for religious gatherings was constructed with funds provided by two families: the family or tribe *tymw*, and the family *bl'qb*. The identification of the cult of Nergal is supported by several figures of Heracles/Nergal discovered in shrine VIIIa.⁴⁴

Among the architectural decorations of shrine VIIIb a richly carved archivolt deserves our special attention.⁴⁵ On the stones of the archivolt were eight busts of members of the Hatrene elite with palm leaves in their hands, making religious gestures. In the central part of the band a representation of an eagle with a standard was placed.

A bas-relief stele representing Hatrene citizens and deities was found in shrine VIIIb.⁴⁶ The figures are shown in two registers.⁴⁷ The lower register depicts worshippers and whereas Hatrene deities occupy the upper row. In the central part a male deity with a radiant nimbus is visible. On his right side one can see a figure of a goddess. The two figures are holding hands above which an eagle with widely outspread wings is depicted. The male deity is interpreted as Shamash or Maren and the goddess is probably Atargatis. Near the left edge of the stele there is possibly a figure of Heracles. Between the centrally located solar god and Heracles two other figures are visible. One of them also wears a solar tiara and holds a long spear – a rare thing in Hatrene art.

The scene portrayed on the stele indicates that the worship of more than one deity in a single temple may have been common practice among Hatrene citizens. Even though the inscription mentions Nergal as the “lord” of the temple, we can see that he was not alone. Moreover, the Heracles/Nergal figure was placed merely on the edge of the scene, whereas the central position was reserved for the solar deity. The latter’s prominence is further emphasized by the representation of the eagle.

Several marble statues discovered in Temple VIII are also worth mentioning. Two of them represent sitting male figures; only one is preserved in a state permitting the recognition of a male bearded and enthroned deity flanked by two bulls.⁴⁸ The other seven figurines portray seven different deities. They perhaps symbolize days of the week or sibitti (*simyja*), the Holy Seven associated with the Pleiades in the Assyro-Babylonian religion.⁴⁹

44 Ibrahim (1986), p.130.

45 Safar & Mustafa (1974), p.267.

46 Downey (1968), p.103–109.

47 Safar & Mustafa (1974), p.283.

48 Safar & Mustafa (1974), p.286.

49 Safar & Mustafa (1974), p.274–283.

Temple IX is also situated to the south of the *Bait Allaha* temenos. It is generally thought to be a sanctuary dedicated to Nergal.⁵⁰ This attribution is based on inscription H60, which mentions that *mgyšmš* son of *wrwd* founded a cultic hall (for assemblies?) and dedicated it to Nergal. However, of the seven Aramaic texts discovered in the temple this inscription is the only one to mention the name of this god. Moreover, the text is seriously damaged, which makes the reconstruction uncertain. Aggoula translates only the first line of the inscription; the second was reconstructed based on his earlier studies on the text.⁵¹ Beyer has recently analyzed inscription H60 and added several letters to the second line of the text.⁵²

Another important inscription from Temple IX is text H62. This inscription also contains an exact date: the month of Marheshwan (November/October), year 476 of the Seleucid era (164/165 CE). Most significant in the present context is the '*l hhyhy why*' formula in this text. The whole inscription consists of three lines that can be read according to Dijkstra: "In the month Marheshwan of the year 476 have built Abdmalik son of Yahiba and Aqibshamash, his son, the altar and the platform for the life of themselves and the life of their sons".⁵³

Besides the Aramaic texts, three Latin inscriptions were found in the ruins of Temple IX.⁵⁴ One of them is dedicated to Hercules, which supports the idea that Nergal/Heraclēs was the main protagonist of the temple. Roman soldiers from the *Legio I Parthica* (Cohors IX, which was on auxiliary service in Hatra) erected the inscription here. In addition, several figures of Heraclēs were found in Temple IX. It seems that they were elements of the temple's cultic furniture, which also included a bas-relief depicting an eagle.⁵⁵ The eagle wears heavy and richly ornamented torques and stands beside two standards. Behind the eagle is a short inscription (H65) that is dated to November/December 186 CE. From the text we learn that '*bdsmy*' son of '*yhyb*' was the donator of the relief.

Another bas-relief from Temple IX shows two figures. On this partly preserved sculpture we can see a man (the head is missing) in typical richly embroidered Hatrene dress. The man is accompanied by a young woman. Inscription H63 from the relief informs us that the female figure represents a Hatrene lady, *grwt* wife of '*bdmlk*'.⁵⁶ The man on the relief is probably '*bdmlk*' himself; unfortunately not only his head but also the part of the inscription confirming the above suggestion is largely struck off.

Temple X was constructed west of the main *Bait Allaha* sanctuary.⁵⁷ Again, this temple is commonly interpreted as a shrine dedicated to Nergal. The interpretation is based on a few inscriptions mentioning his name. Among the eight texts discovered in Temple X, four (H70, H71, H73 and H292) refer to this deity. It is

50 Ibrahim (1986), p.130–131; Downey (1988), p.159–173.

51 Safar (1955), p.5; Caquot (1955b), p.263–264; Vattioni (1981), p.44.; Aggoula (1991), p.46.

52 Beyer (1998), p.44.

53 Dijkstra (1995), p.214.

54 Oates (1955), p.40–41.

55 Safar & Mustafa (1974), p.294.

56 Safar & Mustafa (1974), p.291; Aggoula (1991), p.47.

57 Ibrahim (1986), p.131; Downey (1988), p.159–173.

the only divine name attested in the temple. Additionally, the *dkyr ltb* formula can be found in inscriptions H71 and H69. Inscription H71 reads as follows:⁵⁸

nrgwl klb' dkyr grb' ltb-

Translation: dog of Nergal. May *grb'* be remembered for good

The second characteristic dedication formula, “for the life of” appears in inscription H67 engraved on a lintel decorating the cella of Temple X. The text was partly reconstructed and analysed by Dijkstra:⁵⁹

bnhš' t[b']l hy' nšrw mry' 'pk[l]' rb' d'lh-

Translation: with good prospects for the life of lord Nasru the high priest of the god

The interior decoration of Temple X consisted of several altars covered with bas-relief ornaments. A figure of Heracles standing beside a standard can be found on one of them. In addition, several different-sized figurines representing Heracles were unearthed during the excavations. Another altar bears a depiction of a figure of a male deity holding an axe and serpents in his hands. Above the deity's head is an eagle with broadly spread wings.⁶⁰ On both sides of the altar two figures of dogs were sculptured. We may conclude that the altar was dedicated to Nergal represented with dogs, which were his common personal attributes.

Another decorated altar from Temple X represents an armed goddess riding a lion.⁶¹ The goddess is interpreted as Allat since the helmet on the goddess' head and the spear in her right hand are typical for the iconography of this goddess. It is therefore possible that Allat was another deity worshiped in Temple X.

Temple XI is situated west of the main Hatrene sanctuary, more or less half way between Temple X and the western wall of the great temenos.⁶² The only representative fragment of the original temple decoration is a statue of Heracles, which might indicate a possible Nergal/Heracles cult in the building.⁶³ The figure is severely damaged and the head of Heracles is struck off.

Four inscriptions were discovered in Temple XI. Inscription H79 mentions the name of Gadde written in the form *dgdh*. On the basis of this text the excavators

58 On Nergal's association with dogs in Hatra as well as elsewhere in the Roman-Parthian world, see Dirven (2009), p.47–68.

59 Dijkstra (1995), p.235. The same dedication formula was used in H68. The greater part of this inscription is missing and further reconstruction is necessary. In general the text tells us that “PN son of *hny'n'* founded an altar in the shrine for the life of his cousins and the lives of his sons.”

60 Safar & Mustafa (1974), fig. 312.

61 Safar & Mustafa (1974), fig. 304; Downey (1974), p.175–178.

62 Ibrahim (1986), p.131. Downey (1988), p.159–173.

63 Safar & Mustafa (1974), p.319. I have chosen several objects just for the general presentation of the material. Here in this shrine more objects of art were brought to light. For details see: Safar & Mustafa (1974), p.316–319.

suggested that the temple was dedicated to *gd'* – the Fortune/Tyche of Hatra.⁶⁴ However, another inscription found in this temple (H81) mentions other divine names: Maren, Marten and Nergal. The names appear together with the name '*bdsmy*'. In this text the god Nergal was called *dHšpt'* what means “a commander of the guard” (if the word is translated correctly). In all four inscriptions discovered in Temple XI, the *dkyr ltb* formula can be found, whereas the formula '*l hyhy* (*why' bnyhy w hyhy ...*) is observed only in inscription H80. This inscription was recently analyzed and translated anew by Dijkstra.⁶⁵

Temple XII is situated to the south of Bait Allaha.⁶⁶ On the basis of the content of inscriptions discovered in the building, the excavators interpret the temple as a cult place of the god Nabu. Of the eighteen different inscriptions unearthed in Temple XII, four texts mention the name of this deity. Was Nabu the only god worshiped in the temple? We cannot exclude this possibility, but some texts found in the remaining inscriptions suggest that other deities could have been venerated in this temple as well.

It is quite interesting that the *dkyr ltb* formula is used in ten different inscriptions from this temple, whereas the '*l hyhy' w' lhy'...* formula appeared in only two texts (we have a similar disproportion among inscriptions from other temples, e.g. Temple XI). In H403 both formulae are used in one text. The inscription is partly reconstructed. According to Dijkstra it can be read as follows:⁶⁷

[l]]b dkyr šmš'qb br hnn' 'rdkl' dbn'
['r]z' hdyn lnbw 'lh' 'l hy' bn[yhy] klhn

Translation: May Shamashaqab son of Hanina, the architect, be remembered for good, for he has built this temple for the god Nabu for the life of his sons [] all of them

The second inscription from this temple that contains the formula “for the life of...” is text H405, which was perfectly translated and commented upon by Dijkstra.⁶⁸

The formula *dkyr ltb* is used in no less than ten inscriptions from Temple XII: H388, H389, H390, H391, H392, H393, H396, H397, H401, and H403. They mention the following names of Hatrene noblemen: '*g*' son of *kmr'*, *dd'*, *tb'*, '*q*', '*qy son of 'q*', '*qbšm*' son *šmš'qb*, *gdyhb* son of '*dktb*', '*d*', *nbwyhb* son of *nbwgb*, *šmš'qb* son of *hnyn'* and a lady named *mšlh'*, an acolyte of *nbw*.

The vestiges of internal architectural decoration of Temple XII consist mostly of relics of stone altars. At least two of them bear traces of bas-relief decoration sculptured on their pedestals. Two other bas-reliefs were discovered in the ruins of Temple XII.⁶⁹ On one a male figure is visible. The image is badly damaged, the

64 Aggoula (1991), p.54–57.

65 Dijkstra (1995), p.222–223.

66 al-Salihi (1983).

67 Dijkstra (1995), p.196.

68 Dijkstra (1995), p.220.

69 al-Salihi (1983), p.140–145.

head is missing – it is hard to say if the relief represents a deity or a mortal. However, to the right of the figure the already mentioned inscription H401 was engraved.⁷⁰ Thanks to the text we can identify the man as *nbwyhb* son of *nbwgbr*. Next to him is a standard with seven disc-like elements. The second bas-relief represents a figure of a beardless man holding a bunch of rods in one hand and probably an axe in the other. The excavators interpreted the figure as an image of the god Nabu.⁷¹

A stele bearing a representation of Baalshamin accompanied by the sun god and the moon god is another important object discovered in Temple XII.⁷² The representation of Baalshamin (especially in such company) placed in a sacral building confirms that *nbw* was rather not the only deity worshiped in the temple.

Inscriptions discovered during excavations at Temple XIII induced excavators to recognize the building as a shrine dedicated to Gadde (Fortune).⁷³ There were ten inscriptions found in the ruins of this temple, but the name of *gd'* appears in six different texts only.⁷⁴ It is worth noticing that the *dkyr ltb* formula appears eight times in the inscriptions from Temple XIII. The formula *'l hyhy'* - was used only two times in two different texts (H408, H413).

It cannot be refuted (as Ted Kaizer pointed out) that the name of *rmgw*, which appeared several times together with the name *gd'*, is associated with a certain family or tribe.⁷⁵ If this is the case, we can consider Temple XIII a kind of family/tribal shrine, where members of the Ramgu clan could worship their Gad, the personification of the family's "Luck" or "Fortune". The Heracles representation in Hatrene dress seems to be the figure that represents the Fortune of Ramgu [figure 49].⁷⁶

Special attention should be paid to a bas-relief stele covered with decoration typical for Palmyrene rather than Hatrene art [figure 30].⁷⁷ Objects of this kind are very rare in Hatra; this find from Temple XIII may be evidence that the Ramgu family maintained some business contacts or maybe even had relatives in Palmyra.

Another interesting issue about Temple XIII is its location. The temple was erected among tower tombs (*nephesh*).⁷⁸ Considering its location, we may assume that the temple was a place for funeral banquets and veneration of the ancestors of Hatrene noble families. The cult of Gad (Fortune) of Hatra, or the Fortune of a

70 al-Salihi (1983), Pl. XVIIIa; M.S. Abdallah (1984), p.117–118.

71 al-Salihi (1983), p.144, Pl.XVII.

72 al-Salihi (1996b), p.189–196.

73 al-Salihi (1990), p.27–35.

74 These inscriptions are H406, H407, H408, H409, H411, and H413.

75 Kaizer (2000), p.244.

76 al-Salihi (1990), p.27–35.

77 al-Salihi (1987), p.53–61.

78 al-Salihi (1972), p.17–20; Hauser (1998), p.500; Dorna Metzger (2000), p.197–215. The oldest tower tomb known from Hatra, which is localized in the neighboring area of the Temple XIII, is dated back to the 111/112 CE, according to inscription H294 that was discovered here. Most probably the funerary tower tombs were still in use when the dwellings of the city surrounded the old funeral structures.

particular tribe or family, could be associated here with a cult of Heracles-Nergal.⁷⁹ Nergal as a god of the underworld was strongly associated with funerary practices and ceremonies dedicated to forefathers. Hence it was not incidental that the cult of Heracles-Nergal and *gd'*/Tyche appeared in Temple XIII.

The last of the small temples found in Hatra was dedicated to the goddess Nanaya. The attribution of Temple XIV was made by excavators on the account of an inscription discovered in the steps at the entrance to the cella of this sanctuary.⁸⁰ The results of these excavations are published in the present volume by Hikmat Basher al-Aswad.

MESOPOTAMIAN DEITIES AND TRADITIONS IN THE SMALL SHRINES

Eight of the small temples in Hatra have been identified as places of the cult of Nergal. According to iconographic evidence, figures of Heracles-Nergal were found in Temples I, V, VII, VIIIb, IX, X, XI, and XIII. In addition, several inscriptions found in Temples VIIIb – text no. 214, IX – text no. 60, X texts nos 70, 71, 73, and 292, XI – text 81, mention Nergal in an evidently cultic context.

The location of the temples in which Nergal was worshipped is particularly interesting. Three of them were originally constructed in the area of the so-called old town. The other five temples were built between the old and the new defensive walls. We can presume that the shrines were originally extramural, and their location reflects the city development. The extramural Temple XIII was constructed near the necropolis; possibly another necropolis, originally located in the vicinity of the other temples, is yet to be uncovered.

The cult of Nergal, an old Mesopotamian deity strongly associated with the netherworld, seems to be deeply intertwined with the veneration of ancestors. That is why his cult was so widespread in Hatra's small temples. This form of worship was popular not only among the stationary citizens of Hatra. Nomadic peoples living outside the city walls for most of the time also practiced it. Every Hatrene tribe or family living in or outside the city could visit the temple whenever they wanted to revere their ancestors. There, besides making an offering to the forefathers, they could also worship Nergal – a mighty deity guiding souls to the underworld.

Another deity linked to the old Mesopotamian tradition that appeared in Hatra was the goddess Nanaya. Her cult already existed in Mesopotamia during the 3rd millennium BCE, which makes her a purely Sumerian goddess. Like Nergal, Nanaya disappeared from the official Mesopotamian religion for many centuries, and came back successfully in the Hellenistic and then in the Parthian period.⁸¹

79 This topic is the subject of further research, which is in progress.

80 al-Salihi (1996b), p.189–196; Kaizer (2000), p.244.

81 Drewnowska-Rymarz (2008), p.159-167. Some information concerning Nanaya's functioning in Hellenistic and Parthian periods can be found in Linszen (2004), who argues that cult practices and rituals from Hellenistic and Parthian times are deeply rooted in old Mesopota-

CONCLUDING REMARKS

When all the data from the small temples are taken into consideration, it seems hardly possible that one of these temples was dedicated to one deity only. Most temples yielded representations and dedications of various deities. A similar situation can be observed in the old Mesopotamian tradition. In many Mesopotamian temples, especially the ones that played an important role in the religious life of the cities, there were several additional chapels or shrines dedicated to other deities besides the main sanctuary. The old Mesopotamian religious centres of Girsu, Nippur, Ur, Uruk and Borsippa should be listed as examples.⁸² The most significant example, however, of a city with a temple dedicated to more than one deity, is Babylon. In the *é.saġ.īl* sanctuary consecrated to Marduk, the main Babylonian god, additional shrines dedicated to other deities were in use. We can list *é.a.ra.zu.giš.*(^d*asal.lu.hi*) – “House of Asalluhi which hears Prayers”,⁸³ *é.a.sikil.la* – “House of Pure Water”, seat of Nadin-me-qati and Mukil-me-balati;⁸⁴ *é.á.zág* – “House of Taboo”, seat of the demon Asakku;⁸⁵ *é.dàra.an.na* – “House of the Ibex of Heaven” – the cella of Zarpanitum;⁸⁶ *é.du₆.ku* – seat of Ea,⁸⁷ *du₆.šuba* – seat of Dumuzi,⁸⁸ *é.gal.mah* – “Exalted Place” - Temple of Gula in the *é.sag.il* complex;⁸⁹ *é.igi.du* – “House of the Leader”, seat of Lillu;⁹⁰ and other shrines mentioned in temple lists of Mesopotamia.⁹¹ What is more, a similar situation can be observed in several temples in Assur.

Iconographic and epigraphic sources both suggest that the temples were local, urban and tribal cult places that were strongly connected with city life. It is possible that the small temples of Hatra were used in various ways by a range of local communities living in their vicinity. Possibly, the temples played the role of city district sanctuaries, as was the case in Palmyra.⁹² Dirven’s concept of the use of the temple by people from different parts of the city for banquet ceremonies also

mian tradition. The Nanaya cult, however, reappeared in 1st millennium BCE, after a long period of silence in written sources.

82 George (1993).

83 George (1993), p.64.

84 George (1993), p.64.

85 George (1993), p.64.

86 George (1993), p.74.

87 George (1993), p.77.

88 George (1993), p.78.

89 George (1993), p.88.

90 George (1993), p.104.

91 George (1993).

92 In Palmyra we do not have very clear evidence supporting this supposition. However, it follows from a comparison between the functioning of the temples and the development of the city that the temples that were originally associated with four Palmyrene tribes gradually changed into “city district” sanctuaries. This development runs parallel with the flourishing of Palmyra as a city. Gawlikowski (1973), p.121–122 pointed out that although the temples were founded by the tribal elite, they were eventually accessible for the whole local community. These observations are followed by Kaizer (2002), p.160–161.

seems probable.⁹³ In this respect it is telling that traces of the Heracles-Nergal cult were recognized in eleven out of fourteen small temples. As Dirven pointed out, the temples could have originally been used for cultic ceremonies and ceremonial banquets. Temple rooms probably hosted funeral banquets associated with the commemorative cult of ancestors.

Finally, the location of the temples in the urban planning involves the question of their role in the city's architectural network. In several cases (Temples I, II, XI and possibly VIII and X), a residential area engulfed the temples, which is atypical for sacral structures.⁹⁴ Normally, temples are either isolated from profane structures by a temenos wall or erected in open areas of the city. The location of the small temples amid residential quarters was probably the result of the natural development of the city and the lack of free space inside the old town. Yet, it cannot be excluded that these structures originally functioned as simple house-shrines in opposition to slightly larger buildings that do have a temenos wall around them. Those temples were built up as free-standing sacral buildings (Temples III, IV), or separated from the surrounding buildings by walls or other dividing structures (Temples V, VI, VII, IX, X?, XII, XIII, XIV). In other words, the character of the small temples in Hatra was dependent on their specific location in the urban landscape as well on the communities of worshipers living nearby. That is why, in my opinion, we should consider differentiating between simple shrines and temples *sensu stricto*. Nevertheless, the citizens of Hatra used them in their everyday religious practices while the great festivals were organized in the main sanctuary.

93 Dirven (2005a), p.61–82.

94 Generally, in Mesopotamian tradition, shrines and temples were isolated from the dwelling quarters. If the sacral constructions were agglutinated to the ordinary dwellings it was usually associated with their function of local, home shrine, the district temples. A very good monograph focusing on the history and the temple development was published by Heinrich (1982).



fig. 2



fig. 24



fig. 25



fig. 26



fig. 27



fig. 28



fig. 29



fig. 30

Hatra is the richest archaeological site in the Parthian Empire known to date and has great potential for a better understanding of this enigmatic empire and its relationship with Rome. After an introduction to this little known site, seventeen contributions written by leading experts in the field provide the reader with the latest insights into this important late-Parthian settlement. They touch upon three themes. The first section, "Between Parthia and Rome" contains three articles that discuss the relationship between Parthia and Rome on

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