

The Lady of Assur and her alter-ego

The inscriptions and graffiti in Aramaic script and language from Assur, the capital of ancient Assyria, all belong to the Parthian period; the oldest of the dated inscriptions (A 4) is from 324 in the Seleucid era (or, 13/ 14 A. D.). They enable us to identify several deities of the pantheon of the kingdom.

At the top is 'sr /Assur/ (Akkad. *Aššur*), the tutelary god of Assur, who is called *elāhā* 'god, deity' (≈ Pers. *yazd*). His special title is *malkā* 'king' (≈ Pers. *šāh*). Some texts call the (supreme) god Bēl, *elāhā* 'god', *mārēlāhē* 'lord of gods'. A lord (/ king) of Assur was called Hormezd (A 16: ¹*šalmā d-Hormezd* ²*māryā* [...] 'the statue of Hormezd the lord' ≈ *pehikar ī ohrmazd x'adāy* ...).



The lady of Assur is called sr(w/y) /*srū*/ (Akkad. *Šerūa*). She bears the titles of *mārtan* 'our lady', *mārteh* 'her lady', and *eštrā* 'goddess' (A 17: *Assur elāhā wa-Srū eštrā* 'Assur the god, and Srū the goddess'). In some later inscriptions nny /*Nanay*/ takes the place of Srū as Assur's consort. She is called *Nanay malkā* 'Nanay the king' just like the Bactrian *Νανα βαο* (cf. also an Akkadian theophore ^d*Nani-šar-ra(-at)*), *mārtan* 'our lady', and *ba't Bēl* 'daughter of Bēl' (cf. T 143 in Palmyra: brt bl).

The third is brmryn /*Bar Mārēn*/ 'Son of our two lords (/ lord and lady)' whose title is *elāhā* 'god'. He is the Assyrian Tammuz (Dumuzi). There is a personal name *Yhabbarmārēn* 'given by Son of our two lords'.

These three deities, Assur and Srū and Bar Mārēn, form the divine triad of Assur. We find two other theonyms: nbw /*Nbū*/ (Nabū is the Akkadian god of wisdom and writing, the planet Mercury ≈ Pers. *Tīr*); nrgwl /*Nergul*/ (Nergal is the Akkadian god of Hell, the planet Mars ≈ Pers. *Vahrām*). A 14 speaks of other gods; the names of some of them are attested by theophores: the god *Šmeš* (Akkad. *Šamaš*) in 'qabšmā, 'qaššmā; and the goddess *Semyā* in 'bedsemyā.

Assur 14¹

1 l' b-ywm xiii(i?) b-'[d/y]r (b-)[šnt ...]
bryk w-dkyr l-ṭb w-l-š[ṇpyr ... br]
'srḥnny qdm 's[r ...]
nny nbw nrgl w-mn d-lq[r ...]²
'sr 'r[']³ lh

‘On the 13th (14th?) day in the month Adar (Iyyar?) of the year

Blessed be and remembered be for (the beneficence of a) good and proper (life) ... son of Assurḥanānī before Assur, Nanay, Nḅū, Nerḡul. And whoever carve out [the name ...], may Assur happen unto him.’

A 15⁴



From left to right:

¹ . W. Andrae & P. Jensen, « Aramäische Inschriften aus Assur und Hatra aus der Partherzeit », *Mitteilungen der Deutschen Orient Gesellschaft* (MDOG) 60, 1920, 1–51 (Andrae, 7; Jensen, 20); B. Aggoula, *Inscriptions et graffites araméens d'Assour*, IUO Annali 45, Napoli, 1985, 35-6 ; K. Beyer, *Die aramäischen Inschriften aus Assur, Hatra und dem übrigen Ostmesopotamien*, Göttingen, 1998, 13.

² . Aggoula : dlš[mh dj(?)].

³ . Aggoula : q/hr/d[j].

⁴ . W. Andrae & P. Jensen, 1920 (Andrae, 7-8, Jensen, 21-2, 31); W. Andrae & H. Lenzen, *Die Partherstadt Assur* (1933), Osnabrück, 1967, 109-111, Abb. 45 ; W. Andrae, *Das wiedererstandene Assur*, 1938, Leipzig, 1938, 179-80, Abb. 78; H. Ingholt, *Parthian Sculptures from Hatra. Orient and Hellas in Art and Religion*, New Haven 1954, 12, fig. 78; J. T. Milik, *Dédicaces faites par des dieux (Palmyre, Hatra, Tyr) et des thiasés sémitiques à l'époque romaine*, Paris, 1972, 344-52 ; Aggoula, 1985, 37-41 ; J. Tubach, *Im Schatten des Sonnengottes. Der Sonnenkult in Edessa, Harrān und Hatra am Vorabend der christlichen Mission*, Wiesbaden, 1986, 277-278, 387 ; Beyer, 1998, 14.

a 1 ṣlm' dy 'rdwq⁵
 br 'yny⁶ br r'wts[r]
 br 'bn'⁷ [r]bt⁸ d-nny mlk'
 rby'⁹ d-br'lh' [.....] byt'¹⁰

‘The statue of Ardūg, son of ‘Ēnay, son of R‘ūṭassur, son of ‘Bennā, the major-domo of Nanay the king, the young officer ... of the temple.’

b 1 ṣlm' dy nny mlk' mrtn
 brt bl mrlh'

‘The statue of Nanay the king, our lady, daughter of Bēl, lord of gods.’

c 1 ṣlm['] dy y]hbrmryn br bzy'¹¹ gzbr'
 rby..l ...

‘The statue of Yhabbarmārēn son of Bazziyā, the treasurer¹².’

d 1 ṣlm' dy br mryn 'lh'
 dy ...¹³ ...¹⁴ dy lpsyhy¹⁵ bzy'¹⁶
 l[']lm

‘The statue of Bar Mārēn, the god, who [is ...], so that he may save Bazziyā for eternity.’

e [ṣlm]' dy bzy'

‘The statue of bazziyā.’

f 1 [ṣlm' dy ...] 'yn'l'sr
 [...] 'l'h'

‘[The statue of ...] ‘Ēni-‘al-Assur, ..., the god.’

⁵ . 'drwq /ādarōg ?/. Milik : 'brwq ; Aggoula : 'ddrm ‘Adad est haut, exalté’;
 Beyer: 'rdwq /'Ardūq/.

⁶ . Aggoula : 'jnn /'Ainân/. Le n à la fin est presque sûr.

⁷ . Milik : bn' ; Aggoula : m/r/'bn'.

⁸ . Milik : bt' ; Aggoula : rb(j)t' ‘économiste, majordome’.

⁹ . Milik : br' ; Aggoula : wbr['].

¹⁰ . Milik : [br bn'] byt' ‘[l'un des domestiques] du temple’ ; Aggoula : --- rbjt'
 ‘... l'économiste’.

¹¹ . Milik : Bazzayā ; Aggoula : Bazjâ (/ Bûjâ) ; Beyer : Bāziyā.

¹² . gzbr' /gazzabrā/ from Old Ir. ganza-bara-.

¹³ . Milik : nhyr ; Aggoula : 'hd.

¹⁴ . Milik : hw w ...l ; Aggoula : [bh bz/wy'].

¹⁵ . Milik : wnšwḥn ; Aggoula : dlpsjhj.

¹⁶ . Milik : bnny hw ; Aggoula : wbnjhj.

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