The Lady of Dura Europos and her alter ego

Dūrā, an ancient city\(^1\) located on the cliffs above the Euphrates, was captured by a certain Seleucid general, Nicanor, who made it a military settlement and gave it the Macedonian name Europos (Εὐρωπός).\(^2\) It is also known as Dura-Europos.\(^3\) The city and its surroundings enjoyed prosperity during the Aškānian period – the Perso-Aryan control at the city was towards the end of the second century B.C. until the late first century A.D. Then it was occupied by Romans who made it a Roman garrison until the rise of the Sasanians and the second campaign of Šābuhr.\(^4\)

The Aškānian period is characterised by the construction of a number of temples, the temples of Artemis, Zeus Megistos, Azzanathkona, Zeus Kyrios, Atargatis, Bēl, Zeus Theos, Mithras, etc.

The Lady of Dūrā was ʾtrʿtʾ /Atar-ʾateh/ (Atargatis)\(^5\) (᾽αταργάτις). Soon after the beginning of the reconstruction of the temple of Artemis in the late first century B.C. the temple of Atargatis rose to the northeast. These two temples were separated by a street.\(^6\) Artemis in the Parthian period was identified by her Semitic worshippers of Dura with the Dea Syria, and since the temple of Atargatis was in its close vicinity, she was called after her alter ego Nanay. In the temple of Artemis we find a graffiti on which is engraved the name of Nanay linked with Hadad. In Babylon Adad, Lord of presage, hero of heaven and earth, and Ištar, Great Lady, foremost of heaven and earth are associates. In Ugarit, Adad is associated

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1. Cf. ŠKZ 10 dūrā šahrestān az parvār hāmīs : dūrā xšahrestān aš pārištār hamgōs : Δοῦραν πόλιν τῇ περιχώρῳ ‘the town of Dūrā with surroundings’.
2. See Isidore of Charax, Parthian Stations, W.H. Schoff, Philadelphia, 1914, 4 who states, beyond the village of Ἄσιχα is Dura, the city of Nicanor, a Macedonian foundation, which is also called by the Greeks Europos, 6 schoeni : Ἐλλήνων Εὐρωπος καλεῖται, σχοῖνοι ςʹ.
3. Armen. Շաբուր Շահր Սուրբ Աստվածաշնչ։
4. Cf. my “The Dates in the Pahlavīg and Pārsīg Inscriptions of Durā (Europos)”.
5. ἄταργάτις.
with the Maiden (btlt) of Ugarit, the Cow of Ba’al (arḫ b’l), ‘Anat (‘nt) who grieves over the death of her brother, Ba’al. The divine triad of Durene pantheon consists of the sky and thunder god, Hadad, Atargatis and her son (and or, brother) and husband Adonis; and that of the Phoenician pantheon Kronos, Astarte and Adad, the highest rulers of the world – « Astarte placed upon her own head, as a mark of royalty, the head of the bull. » The name of Adonis figures, with that of his mother and consort, on an inscription upon plaster among the debris resting on the top of the altar of Gemellus in the temple of Atargatis. A large shrine for Atargatis is found in the temple of Adonis at Dura. A fragmentary bas-relief found in the same temple of Adonis shows Atargatis’ head, with a tower-like crown, surrounded by her two doves.

Tyche with doves

It is clear that Atargatis (Venus) and Adonis at Dura form a couple like that of Ba’alat (Gubal) and Ādōnī in Phoenicia, Bēltī

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and Tammuzā in Palmyra, Anat and Baal in Ugarit, etc. This shows the tendency of the Semitic world towards harmonization of its religion in the Parthian period: Atargatis plays the role of the *dea lugens* who mourns for the death of her husband.

**A Greek inscription found in the temple of Artemis**

1. ἔτους διτ’
   ἀνήγιρεν
   Ἀβιδνήριγλ[ος]
   Ζαβδιλαίου
   Αρτέμιδι καὶ
   Ἀπόλλωνι ἄρ-
   χιηοῖς ὑπὲρ
   τῆς αἰαυτοῦ ὑγ<ε>-
   ιάς καὶ τέκνων

‘[In] the year 314 [of the Seleucid era (3/4 A.D.)].
ʿEbednērgol\(^{12}\) son of Zabdallāh\(^{13}\) erected [this] to Artemis and Apollo, the founder [deities of the dynasty], for the health\(^{14}\) of himself (ἐαυτοῦ) and [his] children.’

**A Greek graffiti found in the temple of Artemis**

[M]αθθάναθ Ναναίᾳ Ὄδη(ῳ)
Γαββούτης
Μαθθάναθ: Matta-ʿAnat a personal and gentilitial name ‘the relative is ʿAnat’?
Ναναίᾳ: Nanay.
ʿΟδή(ω): Hadad
Γαββούτης: cf. the Gabbā family (of the Maʿziyān tribe) in Palmyra.

**A Greek inscription found in the temple of Artemis**

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\(^{10}\) Firmicus Maternus states, in plurimis orientis civitatibus licet (hoc malum etiam ad nos transistum fecerit), Adonis quasi maritus plangitur Veneris, et percussor eius circumstantibus vulnusque monstratur. *De Errorre Profanarum Rerligionum*, K. Ziegler, Lipziae, 1907, 25, IX.


\(^{12}\) Aram. ḫndgw₁ (H 13).


\(^{14}\) ≈ Aram. ḫ hy’ / ḫ hayyē (H 34).

\(^{15}\) F. Cumont, *Fouilles de Doura-Europos (1922-1923)*, Paris, 1926, 411-12, n° 55. « Ce graffite nous fournit la preuve que la déesse qui était appelée Artémis par les Grecs de Doura était en réalité Nanaïa. » 411
The name Νινναία could not be the same as Ναναία. It is possible that Νινναία derived from the Sumerian goddess 𒈨宁宁 – the lady Innin, accepted in the Akkadian pantheon and identified with the Semitic goddess Ištar, or a distinct lady.20

Raham Asha

17. Ὕπερβεταίου
18. ἀνήγειρεν
19. Ἰς τὸ ἑαυτοῦ