

The Lady of Dura Europos and her alter ego

Dūrā, an ancient city¹ 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 'tr't' /Atar-'ateh/ (Atargatis)⁵ (Ἄταργάτις). 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

¹ . Cf. ŠKZ 10 dūrā šahrestān az parvār hāmis : dūrā xšahrestān aḏ pariβār hamgōs : Δοῦραν πόλιν τῆ 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, ὁ schoeni : ἔνθεν Δοῦρα Νικάνορος πόλις, κτίσμα Μακεδόνων, ὑπὸ δὲ Ἑλλήνων Εὐρωπὸς καλεῖται, σχοῖνοι ζ'.

³ . Armen. Դուրա-Եվրոպոս, Arab. الصالحية.

⁴ . Cf. my "The Dates in the Pahlavīg and Pārsīg Inscriptions of Durā (Europos)".

⁵ . Ἄταργάτις.

⁶ . See M. Pillet, "General report on the campaign of 1929-30", *The Excavations at Dura-Europos*, New Haven, 1932, 1-17; M. Rostovtzeff, *Dura-Europos and its Art*, Oxford, 1938, Ch. II: Dura-Europos, its topography and Buildings.

with the Maiden (btl) of Ugarit, the Cow of Ba'al (arḥ 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. »⁷ 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.⁸ 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.⁹



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

⁷ . Cf. Philo of Byblos, FGH 811 (A.I. Baumgarten, *The Phoenician History of Philo of Byblos*, Leiden, 1981).

⁸ . See H. T. Rowell & A. R. Bellinger, "Greek Inscriptions" (in: Baur, Rostovtzeff, & Bellinger, *The Excavations at Dura-Europos*, New Haven, 1932, (40-65), 46-9, D. 146; M. I. Rostovtzeff, F. E. Brown & C. B. Wells, *The Excavations at Dura-Europos*, New Haven, 1939, "The Temple of Adonis", 154.

1 ἔτους ζλ[φ'] (or ζμφ')
 Ὑπερβερε[ταίου]
 Ζωγρά[φημα]
 τ[οῦ] Δαν[ύμου] Ἀδών[ιδι] (Rowell : ΑΔΩΝΑΙΩ) και]
 Ἀτραγάτη (*Ἀτάργατι)
 Ἐζωγράφησε
 ...σος κ...

⁹ . R. du Mesnil, *Les tessères et les monnaies de Palmyre*, Paris, 1962, p. 369, fig. 202.

and Tammuzā in Palmyra, Anat and Baal in Ugarit, etc.¹⁰ 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 Artemis¹¹

1 ἔτους διτ'
ἀνήγιρεν
Ἀβιδνήριγλ[ος]
Ζαβιδιλαίου
Ἀρτέμιδι καὶ
Ἀπόλλωνι ἀρ-
χηγοῖς ὑπὲρ
τῆς αἰαντοῦ ὑγ<ε>-
ίας καὶ τέκνων

‘[In] the year 314 [of the Seleucid era (3/ 4 A.D.)].
‘Ebednērgol¹² son of Zabdallāh¹³ erected [this] to Artemis and
Apollo, the founder [deities of the dynasty], for the health¹⁴ of
himself (ἑαυτοῦ) and [his] children.’

A Greek graffiti found in the temple of Artemis¹⁵

[Μ]αθθάναθ Ναναία Ἀδάδ(ω)
Γαββούτης

Μαθθάναθ: Matta- ‘Anat a personal and gentilitial name ‘the
relative is ‘Anat’?
Ναναία: Nanay.
Ἀδάδω: Hadad
Γαββούτης: cf. the Gabbā family (of the Ma‘ ziyān tribe) in
Palmyra.

A Greek inscription found in the temple of Artemis¹⁶

¹⁰ . Firmicus Maternus states, in plurimis orientis civitatibus licet (hoc malum etiam ad nos transitum fecerit), Adonis quasi maritus plangitur Veneris, et percussor eius circumstantibus vulnusque monstratur. *De Errore Profanarum Religionum*, K. Ziegler, Lipsiae, 1907, 25, IX.

¹¹ . H. T. Rowell & A. R. Bellinger, “Greek Inscriptions”, 63-4, D. 161.

¹² . Aram. ‘bdnrgwl (H 13).

¹³ . Aram. zbdllh. See A. Caquot, « Sur l’onomastique religieuse de Palmyre », *Syria*, 39/ 3-4, 1962, (231-256), 244.

¹⁴ . ≈ Aram. ‘l hy’ / ‘al ḥayyè/ (H 34).

¹⁵ . F. Cumont, *Fouilles de Doura-Europos (1922-1923)*, Paris, 1926, 411-12, n° 55. « Ce graffiti nous fournit la preuve que la déesse qui était appelée Artémis par les Grecs de Doura était en réalité Nanaia. » 411

1 ἔτους ρπ-
τ' Ὑπερβε-
ριταίου¹⁷
ἀνέγ<ει>ρεν¹⁸
Ἀβούλιμ
<ε>ἰς τὸ¹⁹ Νινν-
αία θυγατρ-
ός αὐτοῦ.

‘[In] the year 386 [of the Seleucid era (75 A.D.)], of [the Macedonian month of] Hyperberetaios. Abūilim erected [this] in the [building] to Ninnay his daughter.’

The name Νινναία could not be the same as Ναναία. It is possible that Νινναία derived from the Sumerian goddess ^dNin-ni – the lady Innin, accepted in the Akkadian pantheon and identified with the Semitic goddess Ištar, or a distinct lady.²⁰

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¹⁶ . H. T. Rowell & A. R. Bellinger, “Greek Inscriptions”, 56-7, D. 153.

¹⁷ . *Ὑπερβερεταίου

¹⁸ . *ἀνήγειρεν

¹⁹ . Cf. D 4.

²⁰ . See I. J. Gelb, “The Name of the Goddess Innin”, *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, 19/ 2, 1960, 72-9.