



THE WORLD BETWEEN EMPIRES

ART AND IDENTITY IN THE ANCIENT MIDDLE EAST

ΣΑΤΑΒΕΘΑΝΟΝ ΣΑΤΑΒΑΝΑΝΣΗ ΑΟΥΤΑΤΡΟΟΙΚΟΝ
ΚΝΙΤΟΟΙΠΝΟΝΑΠΥΤΟΝΟΝΥΝΤΑΝΤΙΚΟΖΟΥΩΝΕΙΣ

THE WORLD BETWEEN EMPIRES

ART AND IDENTITY IN THE ANCIENT MIDDLE EAST

by Blair Fowlkes-Childs and Michael Seymour

The World between Empires presents a new perspective on the art and culture of the Middle East in the years 100 B.C.–A.D. 250, a time marked by the struggle for control by the Roman and Parthian Empires. For the first time, this book weaves together the cultural histories of the cities along the great incense and silk routes that connected southwestern Arabia, Nabataea, Judaea, Syria, and Mesopotamia. It captures the intricate web of influence and religious diversity that emerged in the Middle East through the exchange of goods and ideas. And for our current age, when several of the archaeological sites featured here—including Palmyra, Dura-Europos, and Hatra—have been subject to deliberate destruction and looting, it addresses the crucial subject of preserving what has been lost and contextualizes the significance of these works on a local and global scale.

This essential volume features 186 objects of exceptional importance from Europe, the Middle East, and the United States. Readers are taken on a fascinating journey that explores sites of intense political and religious struggles against Roman rule as well as important religious centers and military bulwarks of the Parthian Empire. Reaching across two millennia, *The World between Empires* brings vividly to life how individuals and cities in ancient times defined themselves, and how these factors continue to resonate today.

332 PAGES, 344 ILLUSTRATIONS AND MAPS,
WITH CHRONOLOGY, BIBLIOGRAPHY, AND INDEX

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All dates in the catalogue are A.D. unless specified as B.C. *Ayn* and *hamza*
are marked as letters of the alphabet, but other diacritics are not marked.
Where possible, the common forms of names in English have been used.
For rulers of the Parthian Empire, the Greek versions of names are given
(Artabanus rather than Ardavan, for example); to describe the empire
and its ruling dynasty, the more familiar term “Parthian” has been used
rather than Arsacid.

Catalogue entries provide objects’ geographical origin, with full
provenance details given in the Index of Lenders and Provenance
Information (p. 308). For objects in the collection of The Metropolitan
Museum of Art, provenance information is updated regularly on the
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DIRECTOR'S FOREWORD

The long period of struggle for territories and lucrative trade routes in the Middle East between the Roman and Parthian Empires, which stretched from the first century B.C. to the mid-third century A.D., was a time of tremendous activity for sculptors, architects, painters, and myriad artisans. In exploring art and identity in this period, “The World between Empires: Art and Identity in the Ancient Middle East” shifts the focus away from the two imperial powers and toward cities and communities, focusing on culture and religion, regional and local issues, and even personal matters. Despite the passage of two millennia, we can still discern the intersecting factors that shaped how individuals and cities in ancient times defined themselves.

Located in a region of the world where the incense routes and the early Silk Road converged, the Middle East became the center of global commerce during this period. This volume and the exhibition are structured along these routes, taking readers and visitors on a fascinating journey that begins in the southwestern Arabian kingdoms, which grew rich from trade in frankincense and remained outside the control of either the Parthian or Roman Empire. The route leads north to Nabataea and its spectacular capital city of Petra and travels next to Judaea—the site of intense political and religious struggles against Roman rule—before venturing to the Phoenician coastal cities of Sidon and Tyre, which played key roles as ports and centers of industry and the arts. Further inland, in the Beqaa Valley, the colossal sanctuary at Heliopolis-Baalbek reveals how religious life in the region combined multiple traditions. Across the Syrian Desert to the east, the oasis city of Palmyra controlled the trade routes that connected the Mediterranean world to Mesopotamia and Iran, and ultimately to China. At Dura-Europos on the Euphrates River in eastern Syria, we encounter religious diversity among polytheists, Jews, and Christians in a frontier city before traveling to Hatra in northern Mesopotamia, the site of an important religious

center and a military bulwark of the Parthian Empire. The journey ends in southern Mesopotamia, where clay tablets from the last cuneiform libraries show how ancient temple institutions waned and finally disappeared during this transformative age.

In recent years, several of the archaeological sites featured in the exhibition have been subject to deliberate destruction and looting, including Palmyra and Dura-Europos in Syria and Hatra in Iraq, as well as cities and sites in Yemen. These crises remind us of the importance of The Met’s role in enhancing public understanding and appreciation of the ancient world and in contextualizing contemporary events. The exhibition examines these modern acts of destruction and the practical and ethical challenges confronting archaeologists and museums. By placing this discussion in the context of an exploration of the ancient material, we hope to explain the significance of the monuments and sites affected, showing not only what has happened but also why it matters.

Our close collaboration with museums in Denmark, France, Germany, Israel, Italy, Jordan, Lebanon, the United Kingdom, and the United States was fundamental to the success of “The World between Empires,” and we gratefully acknowledge our lenders whose collegiality, engagement, and generosity made the realization of this project possible. At The Met, I would like to thank the exhibition’s curators, Blair Fowlkes-Childs and Michael Seymour of the Department of Ancient Near Eastern Art, whose efforts have resulted in an exhibition and catalogue that make the ancient world accessible without glossing over its complexity. Many thanks also to Kim Benzel, Curator in Charge of the Department of Ancient Near Eastern Art, whose steadfast support and leadership brought the project to a successful conclusion. Quincy Houghton, Deputy Director for Exhibitions, also deserves enormous thanks and recognition for her exceptional vision for The Met’s exhibition programs

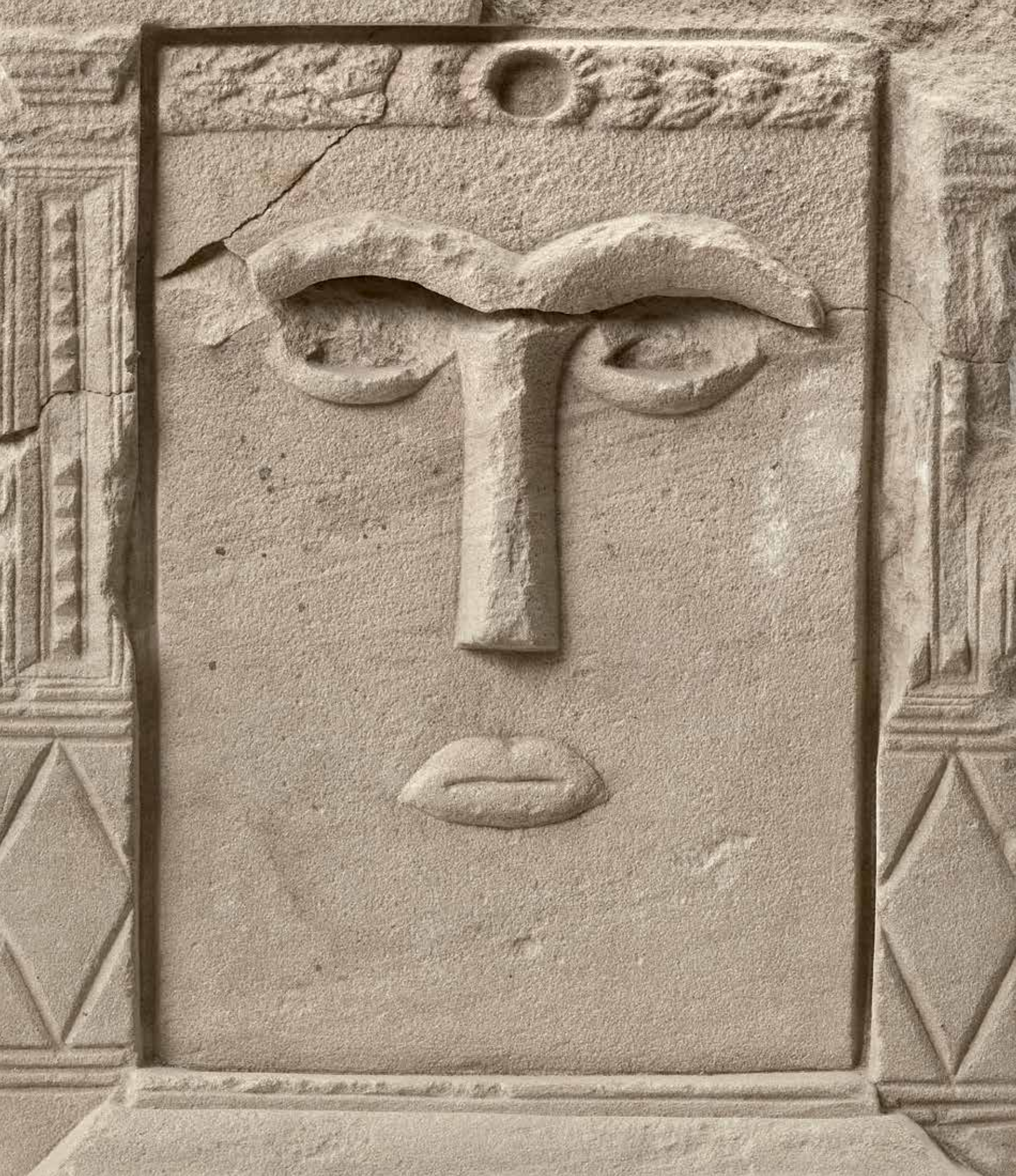
in general, and her role in shaping this project with its ancient stories and modern relevance. Special thanks also to Daniel H. Weiss, President and CEO, for his guidance and advocacy for this exhibition from its inception.

This monumental exhibition would not have been possible without support from Dorothy and Lewis B. Cullman, and additional funding provided by the Gail and Parker Gilbert Fund, the Ruddock Foundation for the Arts, and the Malcolm Hewitt Wiener Foundation. We also thank The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation for making this

catalogue possible. We are grateful to the Macaulay Family Foundation, which provided an important grant to the scholarly symposium held in conjunction with the exhibition.

At a time of real challenge in parts of the Middle East, international museums can make a positive contribution by promoting awareness and understanding of the region's irreplaceable cultural heritage. It is a pleasure to support colleagues working on this important subject and to bring the excitement and vibrancy of the ancient Middle East to our visitors and readers.

Max Hollein
Director
The Metropolitan Museum of Art



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A project on the scale of “The World between Empires: Art and Identity in the Ancient Middle East” requires generosity, support, and cooperation from many quarters. We are extremely grateful to the following individuals and organizations, all of whom helped to bring the exhibition and this catalogue to fruition.

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Blair Fowlkes-Childs
Research Associate

Michael Seymour
Assistant Curator

Department of Ancient Near Eastern Art
The Metropolitan Museum of Art



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Paris, Musée du Louvre

Germany

Berlin, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Antikensammlung

Berlin, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Vorderasiatisches
Museum

Israel

Jerusalem, Israel Antiquities Authority

Jerusalem, The Israel Museum

Italy

Rome, Musei Capitolini

Rome, Museo Nazionale Romano, Il Medagliere

Jordan

Amman, Department of Antiquities

Lebanon

Beirut, Directorate General of Antiquities, National
Museum of Beirut

United Kingdom

London, The Trustees of the British Museum

United States

Cincinnati, Cincinnati Art Museum

New Haven, Yale Peabody Museum of Natural History,
Yale Babylonian Collection

New Haven, Yale University Art Gallery

New York, American Numismatic Society

New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art

Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Museum of
Archaeology and Anthropology

Washington, D.C., Dumbarton Oaks Research Library
and Collection

Washington, D.C., Smithsonian Institution,
Arthur M. Sackler Gallery

CHRONOLOGY

SECOND CENTURY B.C.

- 189 B.C. Victory at the Battle of Magnesia in Anatolia results in the Roman conquest of westernmost part of the Seleucid Empire
- Ca. 167–140 B.C. Mithradates I (r. ca. 171–138 B.C.) seizes control of Iran and Mesopotamia, formerly held by the Seleucid Empire, expanding the Parthian Empire from its core in northeastern Iran to encompass territory stretching from Mesopotamia to the Indus River
- Ca. 115 B.C. First Chinese embassy from the Han emperor Wu (r. 141–87 B.C.) to the Parthian Empire

FIRST CENTURY B.C.

- 92 B.C. Meeting in Cilicia of the Roman proconsul Lucius Cornelius Sulla and Parthian envoy Orobarzes marks the first political encounter between Roman and Parthian representatives
- Ca. 66 B.C. Roman general Pompey the Great campaigns in Anatolia, defeating Mithradates VI, king of Pontus (r. ca. 120–63 B.C.) and Tigrane II (r. ca. 95–55 B.C.), king of Armenia
- 64 B.C. Remainder of the Seleucid Empire is absorbed into the newly created Roman province of Syria under Pompey
- 63 B.C. Roman annexation of the kingdom of Judaea
- 60 B.C. Pompey, Julius Caesar, and Marcus Licinius Crassus form the First Triumvirate
- 53 B.C. Parthian cavalry defeats Roman infantry at Battle of Carrhae
- 41 B.C. Mark Antony leads unsuccessful cavalry raid on Palmyra
- 40 B.C. Parthian campaign in Syria results in the removal of Hyrcanos and installation of Antigonos II Mattathias (r. 40–37 B.C.) as king of Judaea; Herod the Great (r. 37–4 B.C.) flees from Jerusalem
- 37 B.C. Roman reconquest of Jerusalem; Herod installed as king of Judaea

- 37–36 B.C. Mark Antony's campaign against the Parthian Empire
- 31 B.C. Octavian defeats Mark Antony and Cleopatra (r. 51–30 B.C.) at the Battle of Actium and annexes Egypt
- 27 B.C. Date conventionally marking the end of the Roman Republic and beginning of the Roman Empire (Principate); Octavian becomes the first emperor, assuming the honorific title Augustus (r. 27 B.C.–A.D. 14)
- Ca. 26–25 B.C. Aelius Gallus, a Roman prefect of Egypt, leads unsuccessful military expedition to southwestern Arabia
- 20 B.C. Peace treaty signed between Parthian and Roman Empires, including Phraates IV's (r. 38–2 B.C.) return of the Roman legionary standards lost at the Battle of Carrhae to Augustus
- 18 B.C. Rebuilding of the Temple of Jerusalem begins under Herod
- After 15 B.C. First phase of construction of the Temple of Jupiter Heliopolitanus at Heliopolis-Baalbek

FIRST CENTURY A.D.

- 1 Phraates V (r. 2 B.C.–A.D. 4) and Gaius conduct ceremony on an island in the Euphrates River, establishing peace between the Parthian and Roman Empires and the river as the official imperial boundary
- 6 New Roman province of Judaea created, also incorporating the former kingdoms of Idumaea and Samaria
- 32 Dedication of the Temple of Bel, Palmyra
- 66–73/74 First Roman-Jewish War, known as the Great Revolt
- 70 Titus's (r. 79–81) siege of Jerusalem ends in the sack of the city and destruction of the Temple
- 79–80 Cuneiform tablet of latest recorded date is produced
- First century Second phase of construction of the Temple of Jupiter Heliopolitanus at Heliopolis-Baalbek

SECOND CENTURY A.D.

- 106 Trajan (r. 98–117) annexes Nabataea and creates the Roman province of Arabia with Bosra, renamed Bostra, as capital
- 111–14 Construction of the main road Via Nova Traiana from Bostra to the Red Sea
- 116–17 Trajan captures the Parthian capital at Ctesiphon, installing Parthaspates of Parthia (r. ca. 116) as a client king, and creates new Roman provinces in Mesopotamia and Armenia
- 117 Hadrian (r. 117–138) withdraws from Mesopotamia
- Ca. 129–30 Palmyra is renamed Hadriana Palmyra/Tadmor during Hadrian’s visit to the city
- 132–35 Bar Kokhba rebellion in Judaea
- 135 Judaea is merged with province of Syria to create province of Syria-Palaestina
- 161–65 Lucius Verus (r. 161–169) launches war against Parthian Empire, capturing Ctesiphon and sacking Seleucia on the Tigris
- Ca. 165 Dura-Europos becomes a Roman military outpost
- 197 Under Septimius Severus (r. 193–211), the limits of the Roman Empire are established at the Tigris River, creating a new Roman province of Mesopotamia

THIRD CENTURY A.D.

- 198–211 Tyre, Sidon, Heliopolis-Baalbek, Palmyra, and Dura-Europos become Roman colonies under Septimius Severus
- 212 Edict of Caracalla (r. 211–217) grants Roman citizenship to all freeborn men in the Roman Empire and gives freeborn women the same legal rights as Roman women
- 217 Second battle of Carrhae; Macrinus (r. 217–218) offers a truce to Artabanus IV (r. ca. 216–224)
- 218 Macrinus and Artabanus IV sign peace treaty between Roman and Parthian Empires

- 224 Sasanian defeat of Parthian army and death of Artabanus IV; Artabanus’s portion of the Parthian Empire passes to the Sasanian king Ardashir I (r. ca. 224–241)
- 229 Ardashir I kills Vologases V (r. ca. 208–228), bringing the remainder of the Parthian Empire under Sasanian control
- Ca. 232 Adaptation of house at Dura-Europos into Christian building
- 240 Hatra captured by the Sasanians under Shapur I (r. ca. 241–272)
- Ca. 240–245 Final phase of construction of the Dura-Europos synagogue
- Ca. 256 Dura-Europos captured by Shapur I
- 259–60 Valerian taken prisoner by Shapur I at the Battle of Edessa
- 260 Odaenathus (r. 260–267), local ruler of Palmyra, proclaims himself king of the city but remains loyal to the Roman Empire, leading two campaigns to drive the Sasanians out of Syria
- 267–70 Odaenathus’s widow, Zenobia, as regent for their son, Vaballathus (r. 267–272), establishes independence of Palmyra from the Roman Empire, seizing Rome’s Middle Eastern provinces, Anatolia, and Egypt
- 272 Aurelian (r. 270–275) campaigns against Zenobia, reconquering Palmyra and reestablishing Roman control in the Middle East

For lists of Seleucid, Roman, Parthian, and Sasanian rulers, see *Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History*, New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000–, metmuseum.org/toah/ and “List of Rulers of the Ancient Greek World,” “List of Rulers of the Roman Empire,” “List of Rulers of the Parthian Empire,” and “List of Rulers of the Sasanian Empire.”



Anatolia

Armenia

Taurus Mountains

Caspian Sea

Mediterranean Sea

Parthia

Cilicia, Syria, Assyria, Babylonia

Elburz Mountains

Hyrkania

Deserts: Syrian Desert, an-Nafud Desert

Dasht-i Kavir Desert

Western Desert

Egypt

Judea, Phoenicia

Media

Iran

Aswan

Berenike

Arabia

Characene

Persian Gulf

Khartoum

Asmara

Rub al-Khali Desert

Dhofar

Arabian Sea

AKSUM, SABA, QATABAN, HIMYAR, HADRAMAWT

Gulf of Aden

Addis Ababa

Horn of Africa

250 miles
400 kilometers

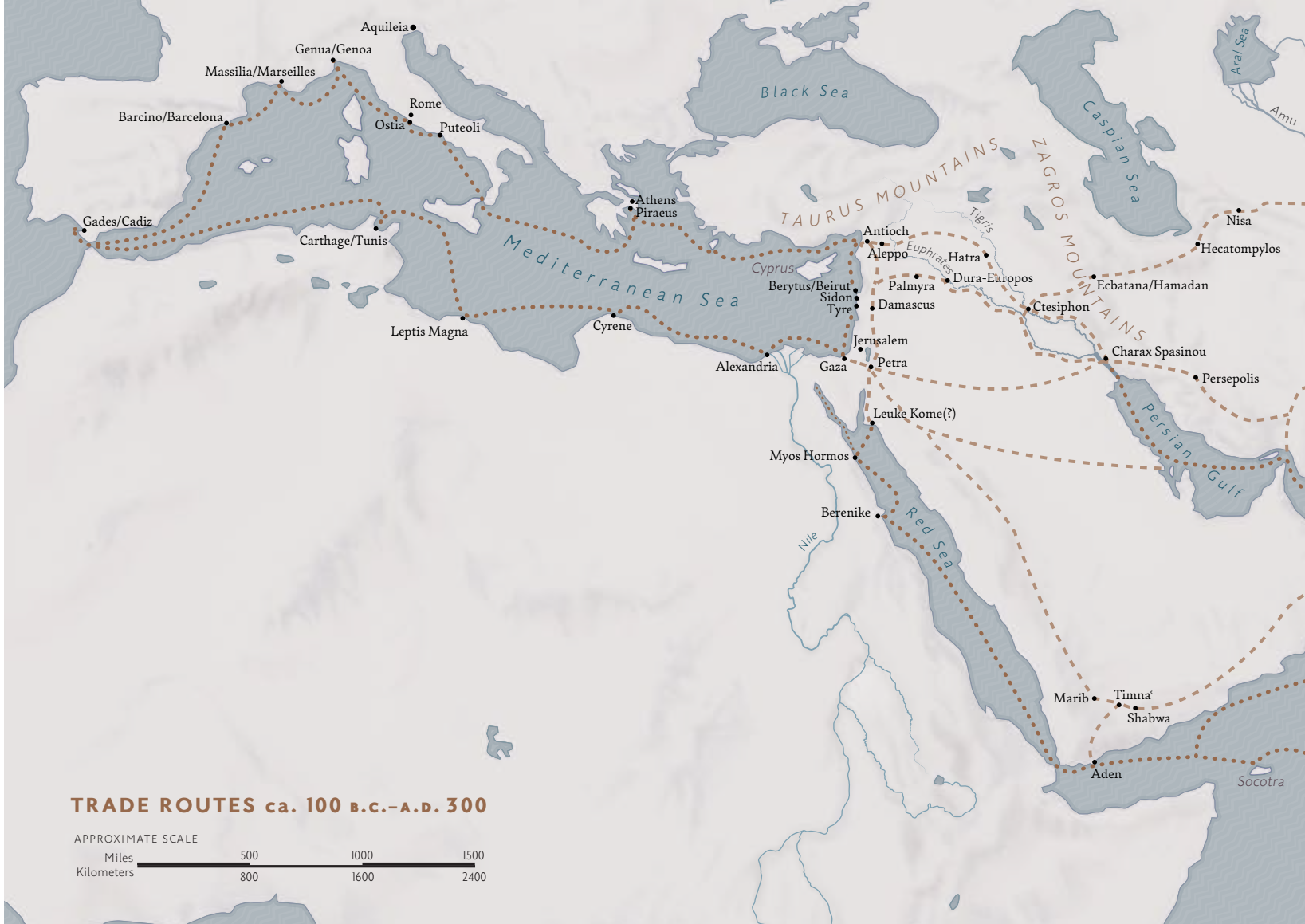




Legend (for both maps)

- Ancient/modern name
- Emesa/Homs
- Marker in red indicates a modern capital or a major modern city
- Damascus
- Serif type in capitals names an ancient kingdom, province, or other political unit O S R H O E N E
- Approximate caravan route ————>

THE MIDDLE EAST IN THE ROMAN AND PARTHIAN PERIOD







THE WORLD BETWEEN EMPIRES

IMP CAES LVCIO SEPTIMO SEVERO OPTIMO PRINCIPI AVG PATR PATR
PARTHICO ADIABENICO PONTIFICI MAXIMO TRIBVNIC POTEST
IMP CAES MAVRELIO FELICIANO AVG OPTIMO FELICITRIBVNIC
POTEST VI COS PRO COS PT
OBREMPUBLICA M RESTITVTAM IMPERIVM QVE POPVLI R G AMI PROPAGATVM
INSIGNIBVS VIRTVTIV SEORVM M DOMIFORISQVE S P Q R



THE MIDDLE EAST BETWEEN ROME AND PARTHIA

FROM THE FIRST CENTURY B.C. THROUGH THE MID-THIRD CENTURY A.D., the political map of the Middle East was defined by two superpowers. The Roman Empire, with its power base in the Mediterranean, and the Parthian Empire, which controlled Iran and much of Central Asia, contested the territories and trade routes of Arabia, Syria, and Mesopotamia. Over several centuries, the empires alternated between states of diplomatic standoff and outright war with one another, and military and political fortunes were won and lost as the border between them moved back and forth. Yet the region in which these conflicts took place was distinct from both Rome and Iran, and its inhabitants had far more in common with one another than with people living elsewhere in either empire. They spoke a variety of related Semitic languages, as well as Greek; they worshipped images of their local and regional gods and dedicated offerings to them in temples that were comparable in form to one another; and they worked along the same trade routes and handled the same commodities, since their commercial networks were interdependent. They traveled to one another's cities and often found in them environments not very different from their own.

Fig. 1 Arch of Septimius Severus (r. 193-211), Forum Romanum, Rome, dedicated in 203 to commemorate victories in Syria and Mesopotamia

These people are the subject of “The World between Empires: Art and Identity in the Ancient Middle East”—a constellation of local communities negotiating their distinctive identities in a world of great imperial powers.

The exhibition and catalogue are structured around a journey through a geographic area that formed the edge of the Parthian and Roman Empires but was central to the political, economic, religious, and cultural life of both. In present-day terms this journey begins in Yemen, continues north across Saudi Arabia to Jordan, through Israel and the Palestinian territories, to Lebanon, east across Syria, and finally south and east through Iraq. The ancient southwestern Arabian kingdoms of Hadramawt, Qataban, Himyar, Saba’, and Ma’in are the starting point: although they lay outside the boundaries of either Roman or Parthian imperial control, these kingdoms formed the linchpin of the spice and incense trade that defined commerce across the region. Nabataea, the destination of many of the Arabian caravans, was a major commercial power that established far-reaching connections from its capital at Petra. In neighboring Judaea, the predominantly Jewish population struggled for political independence and religious freedom against the constraints of Roman rule. Sidon and Tyre, along with other Phoenician coastal cities, connected the great trade routes of the Middle East with those that crossed the Mediterranean Sea. In the Beqaa Valley at Heliopolis-Baalbek, the colossal sanctuary devoted to the cult of Jupiter Heliopolitanus, a god who combined divine features from multiple Roman and Middle Eastern religious traditions, attracted worshippers from the region and beyond. Moving across the Syrian Desert, the prominent oasis city of Palmyra played a critical role at the western end of routes that for the first time connected the region to China, forming what would become the early Silk Road. Farther east, on the banks of the Euphrates River that frequently formed the border between the two empires (fig. 2), the settlement of Dura-Europos underwent a transformation from a Parthian regional capital into a Roman military frontier outpost, characterized by religious and cultural diversity, while in northern Mesopotamia, the city of Hatra was both a Parthian bulwark in the confrontation with Rome and one of the greatest religious centers of its day. In Babylonia cities and temples already thousands of years old were transformed and new cities were founded, reflecting the commercial and political realignments of the period.

One way of accessing this world and its inhabitants is through art and architecture: the sculptures, paintings,

and buildings created in the Middle East during this period are often powerful expressions of intersecting cultural and religious influences, drawing upon Hellenistic, Roman, Arabian, Syrian, Mesopotamian, and Iranian traditions. Their connections and idiosyncrasies illuminate the dynamics that played out between large international networks and local identities, as people chose how to represent themselves, their families, their gods, and their cities. This art is in many ways incredibly eclectic, ranging from Hellenistic-inspired images that emphasize the depiction of movement and action to those that prioritize frontality and strict symmetry, and from elaborate figural sculptures to aniconic baetyls. For all its variety, however, there are important characteristics and themes that reflect strong links between people across the region. Their representations of divinities, their temples and sanctuaries, and their tombs and funerary monuments all have features that correspond with one another even as they vary in their specific designs and details, and which attest to a common underlying religious and cultural background. Thinking in terms of this background is helpful in understanding this particular ancient environment, and for this reason the visual culture of the Middle East during this period is best approached on its own terms, interpreting the influence of the Parthian and Roman Empires in the context of the circumstances of the region itself.

“ROMAN” AND “PARTHIAN” ART

One challenge to address from the outset is that artistic traditions rarely correspond neatly to political entities, least of all when those entities are huge empires. It is not the case that “Roman” art featured one set of characteristics, while “Parthian” art featured another. The reality is inevitably more nuanced. The term “Roman” sometimes skews the frame of reference too much toward the art of Rome and Italy to the detriment of other influences at play, while a historical tendency to use Syrian and Mesopotamian examples to define “Parthian art” has probably done a disservice both to the special characteristics of those examples and to the cultural breadth of the Parthian Empire. Rather than seeking a single identifying set of characteristics against which to define art as more or less “Roman” or “Parthian,” the challenge becomes how to understand diversity and localization within empires.¹ This perspective is valuable when applied to the Middle East, which had its own cultural and artistic koine that clearly was not incompatible with its integration within either empire.



Fig. 2 The Euphrates River in Syria

In the case of the Parthian Empire, the diversity of art produced is striking, and has sometimes been interpreted as indicating that Parthian imperial control was weak when compared with, for example, the earlier Achaemenid Empire of the sixth to fourth centuries B.C., in which a particular court style in art is visible at many locations. However, it is not at all clear that this should be the case. Art does not neatly track with empire, and while the variety of art and architecture produced within the Parthian world perhaps reveals something about the ideological conception of the empire as a confederacy, it does not indicate how tightly that confederacy was controlled politically. By the same token, attempts to identify a core “Parthian” style of art against which all other forms of sculpture and architecture produced in the empire could be compared have never yielded convincing results.

Until the mid-1930s, the vast majority of the known evidence for Parthian art came from within the zone covered in “The World between Empires”: that is, the Syrian and Mesopotamian western frontier of an empire that in fact

encompassed all of Iran, large parts of Central Asia, and extended south to the Indus Valley. Using this material, Mikhail Rostovtzeff, a historian whose research was seminal to the field, attempted to identify a core Parthian style, arguing that its defining characteristics were its incorporation of Iranian, Assyrian, and Babylonian influences, and a consistent use of frontality in depicting human and divine figures.² Rostovtzeff approached the topic in conscious opposition to earlier characterizations that stressed Hellenistic influence and tended to regard Parthian art as simply derivative of that influence. He asserted that a distinct Parthian style existed, that this style drew on multiple Middle Eastern sources but had its own character, and that the Graeco-Roman influence visible in the material available to him had to do with its location in western parts of the empire and with a brief adoption of such elements that was not lasting or pervasive.³

Even as Rostovtzeff was writing to make this case in *Dura and the Problem of Parthian Art* (1935), however, new excavations in what is present-day Turkmenistan revealed

the early Parthian capital at Nisa. The art discovered at Nisa showed that strong Hellenistic influence could be seen both at an early date and in the easternmost parts of the empire, undermining Rostovtzeff's conjectural characterization of Parthian court art.⁴ This discovery did not mean that the art of the Syro-Mesopotamian region was representative of the whole, only that the intertwining of Hellenistic and Middle Eastern traditions was deeper and manifested more widely than was previously supposed. As a Parthian capital city predating the Roman imperial presence in the Middle East, Nisa also demonstrated that this intertwining preceded the Roman and Parthian age. It was the product of centuries of Hellenistic and Iranian interaction that had begun with Alexander's campaigns in the fourth century B.C., and certainly the presence of Hellenistic motifs or stylistic elements was no indicator of Roman contact. Numismatic studies corroborated this conclusion: early Arsacid kings emphasized Hellenism as an explicit part of their royal image on their coins, often wearing diadems (cat. 2), and using the epithet *philhellenos*.⁵

As research on different parts of the Parthian Empire has increased, so too has the impression that in all its regions Iranian and Hellenistic elements were combined with particular local traditions. In this sense the Hellenistic component is as much part of the core of any construct one might call "Parthian art" as the Iranian. At the same time, the idea of a variety of local adaptations and responses to these elements holds true for Syria and Mesopotamia: cities such as Hatra and Ashur are not models for defining the visual culture of the empire, but they do represent examples of the variety that existed at a local level, partaking of Iranian and Hellenistic elements in their own way.

Similar difficulties complicate the broad use of the term "Roman" to describe all of the art produced throughout the Roman Empire. Art from the city of Rome and Italy has traditionally served as the starting point in attempts to define the characteristics of Roman art in general and specifically to interpret the art produced in the multiple diverse regions incorporated into the political and economic framework of the empire and administered as provinces. Approaches to both topics have moved far from the once common dismissal of works of "Roman provincial art" as inferior imitations of the art and monuments of Rome and Italy.⁶ However, the question of to what degree the art and architecture of a particular province or region copied or adapted Roman models continues to frame the discourse

at times, and this limitation relates closely to the much-debated concept of "Romanization." The term is fraught with complications, including its embedded assumption that a unified Roman culture was imposed on the provinces in a one-way center-to-periphery model, its creation and reinforcement of distinct categories such as "Roman" and "provincial," and its overemphasis on the culture of elites and on public buildings and monuments. Furthermore, "Romanization" can be an unclear concept in that it refers to both a process and a result. Today the term is usually rejected entirely or at least treated cautiously and with caveats, including discussion of its link to modern colonial conceptions of empires in general.⁷ In tandem, studies have emerged that recognize and explore how the eastern half of the empire in turn exerted considerable influence on Rome and on Roman art in general.⁸

With respect to the areas of the Middle East that came under Roman imperial control at different times and experienced different political, economic, and cultural relationships with Rome, including Nabataea, Judaea, Phoenicia, Syria, and Mesopotamia, phrases such as the "Roman East" used for convenience sometimes mask or minimize the interactions that created a particularly complex and multilayered environment. "The World between Empires" explores these interactions by interpreting the Roman impact in a way that emphasizes its interplay with the Hellenistic, Arabian, Judaeans, Syrian, Mesopotamian, and Iranian influences that also shaped the region, and by drawing out the local identities of cities and people as expressed in their art and architecture. Models proposed as alternatives to "Romanization" have focused on the concept of identity, and variations on the term "cultural identity" have increasingly been used in the fields of Roman history, art history, and archaeology.⁹ This framework is useful because it acknowledges the reality that ancient people, in exactly the same way as their modern counterparts, were complicated. Political affiliation, ethnicity, religious identification, tribal or family ties, and a host of other factors were always at play.

THE POLITICAL SETTING

From the first century B.C. until the middle of the third century, the Roman and Parthian Empires were engaged in a struggle to maintain control over the Middle East and its lucrative trade routes. For the Romans, strategic dominance in the region was key to amassing immense wealth during the late Republic and the imperial period

(Principate). The rewards were great, but in seeking them Roman generals and emperors regularly underestimated the power of the Parthian kings and their armies.

The Parthians' origin lay in a Central Asian seminomadic confederacy called the Parni. The name Parthian reflects the Parni's successful invasion in the mid-third century B.C. of Parthia and Hyrcania, which were Seleucid-held regions of northeastern Iran near the Caspian Sea.¹⁰ The empire and its ruling dynasty are also known as Arsacid after Arsaces I (r. ca. 247–217 B.C.), the leader who achieved these conquests and whose name became a royal title used by all subsequent kings. Dramatic expansion occurred in the second century B.C. as the Parthian ruler Mithradates I (r. ca. 171–138 B.C.) (cat. 1) seized control of Iran and Mesopotamia from the Seleucids. With the Seleucid Empire greatly weakened, Parthia became the major power to Rome's east. The two empires clashed frequently, with the official political border shifting east and west, though often it was set at the Euphrates River. The ancient literary sources on these conflicts reflect a Roman bias owing to the dominance of accounts written by Roman historians and information gleaned from Greek and Latin inscriptions: ancient Iranian sources for the Parthians were largely obliterated from the historical record by the dynasty that eventually supplanted them, the Sasanians (see pp. 251–57).

The Romans' first major Asian campaigns were in Anatolia. They conquered the westernmost part of the Seleucid Empire in a war culminating in 189 B.C. with the Battle of Magnesia, in which a Roman force of 30,000 routed a Seleucid army reportedly of 75,000.¹¹ By this date the Parthians had already taken over the northeasternmost parts of the Seleucid Empire, but they disrupted the Seleucids far more radically in the middle of the second century B.C. The conquests of Mithradates I had pushed the borders of the Seleucid Empire back by more than 1,000 miles (over 1,600 km) from Central Asia to within Syria, in the process seizing Mesopotamia, with its great cities, rich agricultural land, and important trade connections. Mithradates's death was followed by revolts, but Mithradates II (r. ca. 121–91 B.C.) (cats. 2–3), solidified Parthian power by reestablishing Iranian rule in Babylonia and Seistan. The Arsacids now controlled the trade routes across Iran, from Mesopotamia in the west to Central Asia in the east (fig. 3).

At the eastern end of this enormous territory, Mithradates II established direct relations with the Chinese Empire ruled by the Han dynasty: his envoys returned



Fig. 3 Detail of bronze statue of a Parthian noble, 1st century B.C.–1st century A.D. Shami. National Museum, Tehran (2401)

with expressions of friendship and gifts from the Chinese emperor Wu (r. 141–87 B.C.).¹² Similarly, at the western end of the empire, Mithradates sent an envoy, Orobazes, to meet with the Roman proconsul Lucius Cornelius Sulla to offer an alliance and establish relations with the Romans. The meeting, in the Roman province of Cilicia on the southeastern coast of Asia Minor in 92 B.C., was a historic moment: the first political encounter between Roman and Parthian representatives. In contrast to the successful forging of diplomatic relations with China, however, Sulla treated Orobazes dismissively. He extended to Parthia the insulting offer of vassal status to Rome, an action of great consequence that effectively initiated the following centuries of conflict between the two powers.¹³

After the arrival of the Roman general Pompey the Great (Gnaeus Pompeius Magnus) in Antioch during the summer of 64 B.C., the remaining parts of the Seleucid Empire were absorbed into the Roman province of Syria, and Judaea was added as a client kingdom the following year (cat. 4). In campaigns in Anatolia, Pompey defeated Mithradates VI of Pontus (r. 120–63 B.C.) and then his son-in-law Tigranes II, king of Armenia (r. 95–55 B.C.) in 66 B.C., and he did not acknowledge Antiochos XIII (r. 69–64 B.C.), the last Seleucid ruler, even as a client king.¹⁴ Pompey's successes in the Middle East were recognized

as transformative, and the triumph held to celebrate his achievement was the greatest ever seen in Rome. In 60 B.C., Pompey, Julius Caesar, and Marcus Licinius Crassus formed an informal alliance, known today as the First Triumvirate, which effectively made the three men joint rulers of Rome and its territories.

A mere eleven years after Pompey's arrival in Syria, the Romans suffered a crushing defeat that set back their ambitions in the Middle East. Pompey's fellow triumvir Crassus was fantastically wealthy but had never achieved the military glory that was so highly valued in Roman politics and society. When he was appointed proconsul of Syria in 55 B.C., Crassus saw an opportunity to emulate or better the achievements of Pompey, and breaking a recently signed treaty between Rome and Parthia, he crossed the Euphrates into Mesopotamia. In 53 B.C. a Roman infantry force of 40,000 confronted 10,000 Parthian cavalrymen under the command of Suren, general of King Orodes II (ca. 57–38 B.C.) (cat. 5) on the open plains at Carrhae (modern Harran in southeastern Turkey). The Parthian mounted soldiers were either cataphracts, protected from head to thigh in scaled or mail armor and armed with a heavy lance, or mounted archers, trained to shoot even as they retreated, a technique that became known as the "Parthian shot." Suren used the tactical strengths of this force to their total advantage. Plutarch's account of Roman misery in his *Life of Crassus* is vivid:

Now as long as they had hopes that the enemy would exhaust their missiles and desist from battle or fight at close quarters, the Romans held out; but when they perceived that many camels laden with arrows were at hand, from which the Parthians who first encircled them took a fresh supply, then Crassus, seeing no end to this, began to lose heart. . . . Then the Romans halted, supposing that the enemy would come to close quarters with them, since they were so few in number. But the Parthians stationed their mail-clad horsemen in front of the Romans, and then with the rest of their cavalry in loose array rode round them, tearing up the surface of the ground, and raising from the depths great heaps of sand which fell in limitless showers of dust, so that the Romans could neither see clearly nor speak plainly, but, being crowded into a narrow compass and falling upon one another, were shot, and died no easy nor even speedy death. For, in the agonies of convulsive pain, and writhing about the



Fig. 4 Detail of marble statue of Augustus, known as the Augustus of Prima Porta (r. 27 B.C.-A.D. 14), showing breastplate depicting the return of the Roman legionary standards, ca. 20 B.C.-A.D. 10. Musei Vaticani, Vatican City (2290)

arrows, they would break them off in their wounds, and then in trying to pull out by force the barbed heads which had pierced their veins and sinews, they tore and disfigured themselves the more. Thus many died, and the survivors also were incapacitated for fighting. And when Publius urged them to charge the enemy's mail-clad horsemen, they showed him that their hands were riveted to their shields and their feet nailed through and through to the ground, so that they were helpless either for flight or for self-defence.¹⁵

Carrhae is not mentioned in any surviving Iranian sources, but the victory for Parthia was of the greatest significance. Crassus was killed during the battle, 10,000 Roman captives were sent to the eastern fringes of the Iranian empire, and the Roman legionary standards were captured.

Initial Roman attempts to respond to Carrhae were unsuccessful. In Syria in 47 B.C., Julius Caesar's unrealized plan to invade Iran by way of Armenia demonstrated a thorough lack of knowledge of Parthian capabilities, and although he succeeded in reclaiming lost Syrian territory for the Romans, Mark Antony's campaign into Parthian-aligned Atropatene in 36 B.C. was marked by devastating losses. It fell to Augustus (r. 27 B.C.–A.D. 14) (cat. 6) in 20 B.C. to negotiate the return of the Roman legionary standards lost at Carrhae from Orodes's successor, Phraates IV (r. ca. 38–2 B.C.) (cat. 7), along with prisoners of war from Carrhae and Antony's battles: the event was commemorated in one of his official statue types (fig. 4). At around the same time, Augustus made the Parthian ruler the gift of an Italian concubine. This woman, known as Musa, became Phraates's favorite queen. She and her son, Phraates V, reputedly poisoned Phraates IV, and subsequently ruled the empire as coregents (r. ca. 2 B.C.–A.D. 4) (cats. 8–9). On an island in the Euphrates in the year A.D. 1, peace was established between the two imperial powers. Phraates V and Gaius, Augustus's adopted son and nominated successor, conducted the ceremony as their respective armies watched from either bank. The Euphrates became the official frontier once again.¹⁶

A century of peaceful relations between the two empires followed, and although major conflicts occurred in specific areas, most notably the First Roman-Jewish War, known as the Great Revolt, in 66–73 (see pp. 82–83, 85; cats. 11, 57–59), significant plans for Roman expansion beyond the Euphrates did not occur until the reign of Trajan (r. 98–117) (cat. 12) in the early second century. In addition to control of Nabataea and the trans-Arabian trade routes, territories on the far side of the Euphrates were a goal for Trajan, who in 116 was the first reigning emperor to command the Roman army and marched south along the Euphrates, capturing the Parthian capital at Ctesiphon, installing Parthamaspates of Parthia (r. ca. 116) (cat. 13) as a client king, and creating new Roman provinces in upper Mesopotamia and Armenia. Famously offering a sacrifice at Babylon in memory of Alexander, Trajan reached the Persian Gulf before returning west.¹⁷ This was the farthest east the Roman Empire would ever expand, and the

territorial gains were fleeting: following Trajan's death in 117, his successor Hadrian (r. 117–138) withdrew from Mesopotamia. Whether Hadrian chose to cede the eastern conquests, or whether rebellions and Parthian reinvasion immediately following Trajan's campaign forced the Romans out of Mesopotamia is unclear from the historical sources.¹⁸ In either case, Hadrian's withdrawal can be seen as a response to the military impossibility of holding on to Mesopotamia in the longer term.

Although Trajan's occupation of Mesopotamia was short-lived in its effect on Parthian power, his campaigns did have the long-lasting result of dissolving the eastern boundaries of the Roman Empire, and his years of residency at Antioch established that city as a second Roman capital. Another war against Iran was launched in 161–65 from Antioch by Lucius Verus (r. 161–169 with Marcus Aurelius) (cat. 15), who refused to accept Pacorus, a relative of the Parthian emperor Vologases III (r. ca. 147–191) (cat. 14), as king of Armenia. Roman armies captured Ctesiphon once again, sacked Seleucia on the Tigris, and devastated Parthian territory.¹⁹ A few decades later, under Septimius Severus (r. 193–211), the limits of the Roman Empire were established at the Tigris River, creating a new Roman province of Mesopotamia in 197: Severus's marriage to Julia Domna, a Syrian, established a new dynasty linking Syria and Rome at the imperial level (see pp. 252–53; cat. 16; figs. 1, 5). The last phase of Roman and Parthian conflicts occurred as the Parthian Empire fractured, with the brothers Vologases V (r. ca. 208–228) (cat. 17) and Artabanus IV (r. ca. 216–224) (cat. 18) vying for power. After the assassination of Caracalla (r. 211–217), the lawyer Macrinus (r. 217–218) was quickly proclaimed emperor and offered a truce to Artabanus, and both sides withdrew at the second battle of Carrhae in 217 (see p. 252).

A CONNECTED WORLD: COMMODITIES AND TRADE

Three major international trade networks defined the commercial life of the Middle East during the Roman and Parthian period: spice and incense caravan routes running north through Arabia; a set of maritime connections that brought both Arabia and Mesopotamia into Indian Ocean trade; and land routes running east across Syria and Mesopotamia, on through the Zagros Mountains, and then farther east across Iran and Central Asia until finally connecting with China—the early Silk Road. The three systems collectively linked much of the ancient world, and



1. Drachm of Mithradates I (r. ca. 171-138 B.C.)

Ca. 171-139 B.C.

Silver, Diam. $\frac{3}{4}$ in. (1.9 cm)

Mint unknown

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Bequest of Joseph H. Durkee, 1898 (99.35.2952)



4. Denarius of Pompey

44-43 B.C.

Silver, $\frac{3}{4}$ in. (1.9 cm)

Mint uncertain

American Numismatic Society, New York (1944.100.3642)



2. Drachm of Mithradates II (r. ca. 121-91 B.C.)

Ca. 121-91 B.C.

Silver, Diam. $\frac{7}{8}$ in. (2.3 cm)

Minted in Ecbatana(?)

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Bequest of Joseph H. Durkee, 1898 (99.35.2953)



5. Drachm of Orodes II (r. ca. 57-38 B.C.)

Ca. 57-38 B.C.

Silver, Diam. $\frac{13}{16}$ in. (2 cm)

Court mint or Ecbatana

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Bequest of Joseph H. Durkee, 1898 (99.35.2956)



3. Drachm of Mithradates II (r. ca. 121-91 B.C.)

Ca. 121-91 B.C.

Silver, Diam. $\frac{3}{4}$ in. (1.9 cm)

Mint unknown

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Bequest of Joseph H. Durkee, 1898 (99.35.2954)



6. Aureus of Augustus (r. 27 B.C.-A.D. 14)

20-19 B.C.

Gold, Diam. $\frac{3}{4}$ in. (1.9 cm)

Possibly minted in Colonia Patricia (Córdoba)

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gift of Joseph H. Durkee, 1898 (99.35.6)



7. Drachm of Phraates IV (r. ca. 38-2 B.C.)

38-2 B.C.

Silver, Diam. 13/16 in. (2 cm)

Minted in Ecbatana(?)

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Bequest of Joseph H. Durkee, 1898 (99.35.2957)



10. Drachm of Vardanes I (r. ca. 40-45) or Gotarzes II (r. ca. 40-51)

Ca. 40-51

Silver, Diam. 13/16 in. (2 cm)

Minted in Ecbatana

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Bequest of Joseph H. Durkee, 1898 (99.35.2959)



8. Tetradrachm of Phraates and Musa (r. ca. 2 B.C.-A.D. 4)

A.D. 2-3

Silver, Diam. 1 1/8 in. (2.8 cm)

Minted in Seleucia on the Tigris

American Numismatic Society, New York (1944.100.82963)



11. Sestertius of Vespasian (r. 69-79)

71

Bronze, Diam. 1 5/16 in. (3.3 cm)

Minted in Rome

American Numismatic Society, New York (1944.100.39981)



9. Drachm of Phraates and Musa (r. ca. 2 B.C.-A.D. 4)

2 B.C.-A.D. 4

Silver, Diam. 7/8 in. (2.2 cm)

Minted in Ecbatana

American Numismatic Society, New York (1944.100.82979)



12. Sestertius of Trajan (r. 98-117)

103-11

Bronze, Diam. 1 5/16 in. (3.4 cm)

Minted in Rome

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Rogers Fund, 1908 (08.170.120)



13. Drachm of Parthamaspatēs(?) (r. ca. 116)

Ca. 116

Silver, Diam. $\frac{13}{16}$ in. (2 cm)

Minted in Ecbatana(?)

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Bequest of Joseph H. Durkee, 1898 (99.35.2960)



16. Aureus of Septimius Severus (r. 193-211) with Bust of Julia Domna

193-96

Gold, Diam. $\frac{13}{16}$ in. (2 cm)

Minted in Rome

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Bequest of Joseph H. Durkee, 1898 (99.35.218)



14. Drachm of Vologases III (r. ca. 147-191)

Ca. 147-91

Silver, Diam. $\frac{3}{4}$ in. (1.9 cm)

Minted in Ecbatana(?)

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Bequest of Joseph H. Durkee, 1898 (99.35.2963)



17. Tetradrachm of Vologases V (r. ca. 208-228)

Ca. 212-13

Silver, Diam. 1 in. (2.5 cm)

Minted in Ecbatana

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Bequest of Joseph H. Durkee, 1898 (99.35.2964)



15. Aureus of Lucius Verus (r. 161-169)

166-67

Gold, Diam. $\frac{13}{16}$ in. (2.1 cm)

Minted in Rome

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Bequest of Joseph H. Durkee, 1898 (99.35.201)



18. Drachm of Artabanus IV (r. ca. 216-224)

Ca. 216-24

Silver, Diam. $\frac{13}{16}$ in. (2.1 cm)

Minted in Ecbatana

American Numismatic Society, New York (1944.100.83566)

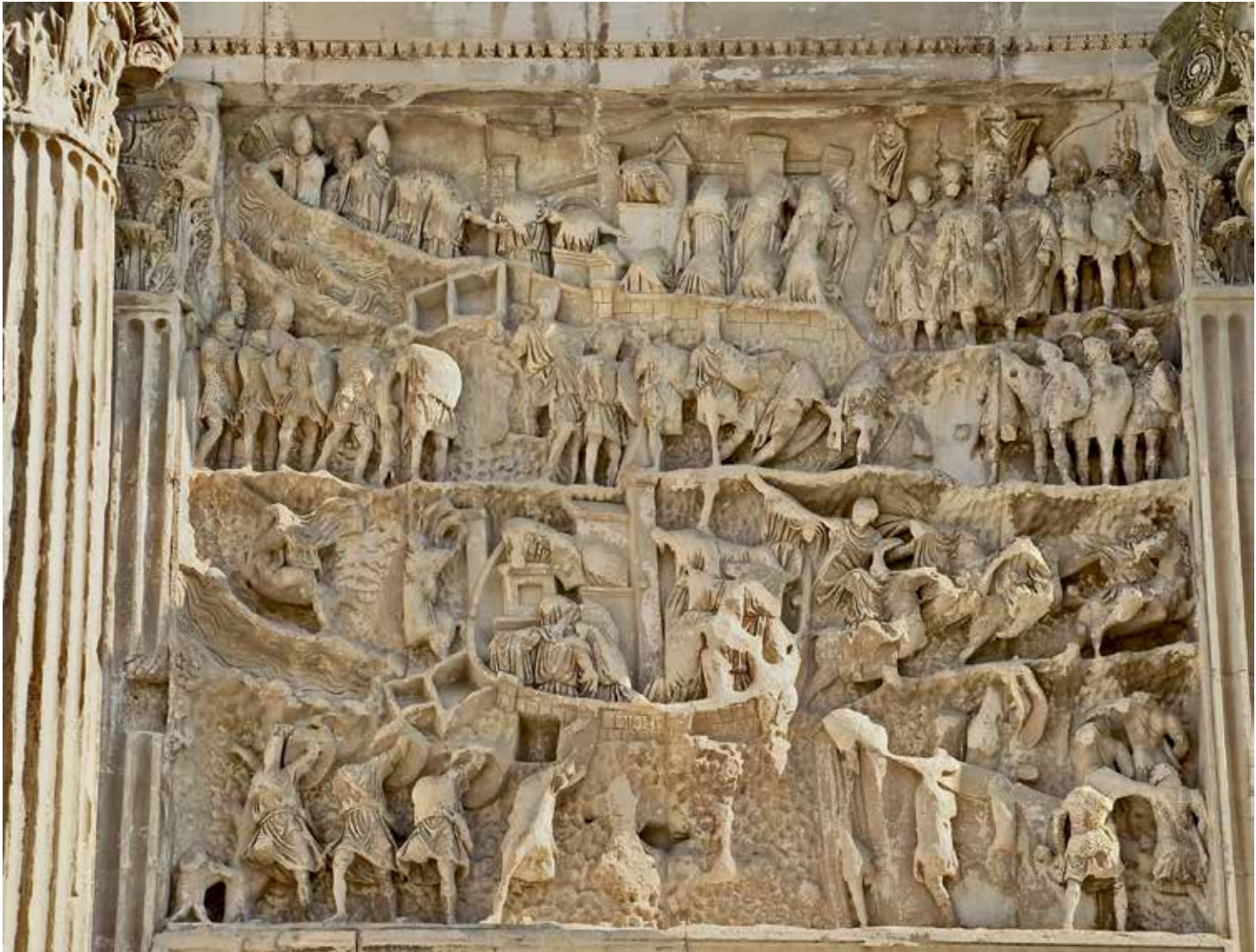


Fig. 5 Detail of the west face of the Arch of Septimius Severus (fig. 1), showing the capture of Seleucia on the Tigris

it was in the Middle East that all three came together. The challenge lies in framing and understanding the great global trade networks as they related to a diverse patchwork of local economic, social, and cultural interests.

The most famous modern characterization of the Middle East in the Parthian and Roman period comes from the title of Mikhail Rostovtzeff's 1932 book, *Caravan Cities*, which is in many ways a foundational text for the modern study of the period and area covered in "The World between Empires," particularly in economic terms.²⁰ His approach ranged across the Roman-Parthian frontier, creating a grouping of cities—principally Petra,

Gerasa (Jerash), Palmyra, and Dura-Europos—whose shared characteristics and interests transcended imperial borders. Palmyra might still be called a true caravan city, one whose existence and economy were entirely based on its control of a key oasis within a vast trading network and its ability to tax caravans as they passed through. However, the overall picture is much more complicated, and most of Rostovtzeff's "caravan cities" existed primarily for other reasons. Beyond this problem of categorization, the framing of "caravan cities" has had some unintended consequences. Most notably, in the scholarly literature it has contributed to an artificial separation of Judaea from

its neighbors in Nabataea and Syria. It would be hard to define Hasmonean, Herodian, or Roman Jerusalem as a caravan city, but Judaea during these periods was nonetheless intimately tied into regional economic networks and part of the same cultural sphere as the rest of the Middle East. In particular, Hasmonean and Herodian rulers had extensive dealings, in cooperation and in conflict, with the Nabataean kings.²¹

Other cities' significance was based on a variety of factors: religious in the case of Heliopolis-Baalbek and perhaps Hatra, militarily strategic for Dura-Europos, and historical in the case of Ashur. The location of Mesopotamian power centers in central Iraq at Seleucia on the Tigris and Ctesiphon (and in later periods Samarra and Baghdad) was strategic and commercial, placing a major Mesopotamian capital at the meeting point of the caravan route by land to the Mediterranean and the incense route south into Arabia; the early Silk Road as its western branches emerged from the Zagros Mountains into the lowlands of Iraq; and Indian Ocean trade, accessed via the Tigris and the port of Charax Spasinou on the Persian Gulf (see pp. 229–30).

The Incense Route

Most people in the Roman and Parthian Empires would have known very little about southwestern Arabia: its kingdoms lay across an almost impassable desert. Yet out of that desert came some of the most important and ubiquitous commodities of the ancient world. Above all, frankincense, the aromatic resin burned in temples, palaces, and private houses, at feasts and funerals, by subjects of Rome, those of Parthia, and everyone between. A second important aromatic resin, myrrh, was also gathered here. Prior to the Roman period classical sources include only occasional mentions of southwestern Arabia. The fact that Pliny the Elder's *Natural History* gives a detailed and accurate description of the harvesting of frankincense and the typical itinerary of a caravan is testament to the increased importance of the region in the Roman mind.²² Strabo also described the route and the region.²³

The frankincense tree requires specific environmental conditions to thrive, and mountainous areas of the southern Arabian Peninsula, watered by mists generated ultimately by the Indian monsoon, provide the ideal environment. The frankincense was harvested in the late spring and summer, then exported using camel caravans organized by the southwestern Arabian kingdoms of Hadramawt, Qataban,

Himyar, Saba', and Ma'in (see p. 25). These caravans moved along carefully agreed routes, paying taxes for safe passage at each station as they traveled north on the western side of the Arabian Peninsula. There were multiple routes, but the principle was simple: the caravans could move safely if the route was profitable for all who lived along it.

The caravans were effectively cooperative ventures, notwithstanding that relations between the southwestern Arabian kingdoms themselves were by no means always peaceful. The kingdom of Hadramawt was largely responsible for harvesting, since it had access to the eastern highlands most suitable for the trees, and all trade destined for the north was required to pass through the kingdom's capital, Shabwa, where it was taxed. At Timna' in the kingdom of Qataban (cats. 20, 22–27) the incense joined imports from the Indian Ocean trade that arrived through the port of Aden in the kingdom of Himyar, while the actual long-distance caravan journey north across the Arabian Desert from Saba' (the biblical Sheba), seems to have been made specifically by traders from the kingdom of Ma'in.²⁴ This journey ended in the Nabataean kingdom in northern Arabia, where further trade routes carried goods onward to Syria or the Mediterranean.

The Sea Route

The economic position of the southwestern Arabian kingdoms and Nabataea depended in part on maintaining a monopoly: while a variety of trading connections with India existed within the Parthian Empire, for a long period the Mediterranean world had no such direct access. Because of the difficulty of navigating Red Sea currents, Roman traders were initially unable to establish a sea route to India from the Red Sea coast of Egypt. Once this was achieved, however, the opening of direct sea trade with India created major port cities at Berenike and Myos Hormos on the Red Sea coast and led to far greater Roman knowledge of India. In his *Geography*, Strabo recounts a story whereby the knowledge required to navigate the route was discovered by the Ptolemies in Egypt from an Indian sailor, who had been found half-drowned following a shipwreck and was taught Greek in order to extract the information.²⁵ A first-century guide to the trade routes, the *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea*,²⁶ credits the discovery of the direct route to a named individual, Hippalus.²⁷ The *Periplus* is a key ancient source about the route and also describes land routes with which this maritime trade connected. The text gives short summary

accounts of significant ports and trade connections around east Africa, the Red Sea, the Persian Gulf, and the western seaboard of the Indian subcontinent. It also mentions inland connections, including a distant source of silk, a great city far to the north of India named “Thina,” or China.²⁸

The Indian Ocean routes brought commodities, including textiles, precious and semiprecious stones, and metals, to the Middle East and Mediterranean: the rubies, sapphires, emeralds, and diamonds that appear in the Roman and Parthian period are the very earliest to be found in western contexts (cats. 126–29). The author of the *Periplus* has a Roman focus—the routes described terminate at Berenike and Myos Hormos—but maritime trade also connected directly with the kingdoms of southwestern Arabia, with the Nabataean port of Leuke Kome, also on the Red Sea, and with the Mesopotamian port of Charax Spasinou at the mouth of the Persian Gulf. Connections between the Red Sea ports, those of southwestern Arabia, and the east African kingdom of Aksum, were further sources of valuable luxury commodities, notably elephant ivory. The strong links between Aksum and the Arabian Peninsula in the late centuries B.C. and early centuries A.D. are highly visible in the art of the two regions. Beyond these links, each port represented connections to further trade networks, as evidenced by rubies found in Mesopotamia that probably originate as far afield as present-day Myanmar (cat. 164).

The Early Silk Road

The third great trading network was the emerging Silk Road. The modern term is one of convenience to encompass a much more plural and diverse phenomenon: “Silk Road/s” (*Seidenstraße/n*) are terms first used by the German geographer Ferdinand von Richthofen in the eighteenth century, and the “road” was an amalgam of many routes that formed a network stretching from the Middle East to China.²⁹ Most of these routes had been used since prehistory, but their integration and viability as a global trade network were far more recent, in part a product of much of the route being controlled by a single empire: first the Achaemenids (6th–4th centuries B.C.), then the Seleucids (4th–2nd centuries B.C.), then the Parthians (2nd century B.C.–3rd century A.D.). However, only during the Parthian period does the term “Silk Road” first become applicable, since it was Parthia that established formal connections with Han dynasty China and created the conditions for the first official Chinese caravan—an embassy bearing, among other

goods, silk (cat. 132)—to travel into the Iranian world in about 115 B.C.³⁰ The “road” that ultimately linked China and Central Asia to Arabia and the Mediterranean had many branches, but all had to pass through multiple territories of the Parthian Empire. Although Parthian rule was not always strongly centralized (the empire is sometimes described in terms of a confederacy), the trade routes across Asia were its economic backbone and core necessity: to some extent the Parthian Empire existed in the form it did in order to control and tax these routes.³¹

It was almost unknown for any individual to travel the length of the route between China and the Mediterranean. Instead, the movement of goods functioned through many stages and discrete transactions, each based on relationships developed between one city and its immediate neighbors, with goods that traveled the entire length of the route passing through many hands. These multiple transactions added to the already high price of silk (cat. 132). The luxury textile’s excessive consumption by the wealthiest families in Rome was commented on by ancient authors and seen as an economic and moral problem, undermining Rome’s balance of trade and enriching the Parthian Empire.³² Sumptuary laws attempted to limit Roman demand, with little success.³³

The specific mechanics of the network were complex, but there is one detailed ancient account: the *Parthian Stations* of Isidore of Charax, written in the late first century B.C. or early first century A.D.³⁴ Isidore probably came from the port of Charax Spasinou in Mesopotamia, and his account focuses on the western part of the Parthian “royal road” running from the Parthian Empire’s western frontier at Zeugma on the Euphrates, through stops including Dura-Europos to Seleucia on the Tigris in central Mesopotamia, up into the Zagros Mountains to the summer capital Ecbatana (modern Hamadan), and east across Iran until eventually reaching Nisa, the former Parthian capital, in present-day Turkmenistan. The route continues to Alexandria in Arachosia, in present-day Kandahar, Afghanistan. The short text consists of practical details: the names of the towns and villages (“stations”) at which caravans would stop, the distances between them, and the frontiers crossed en route.³⁵

Only the beginning of Isidore’s route lies within the zone covered in “The World between Empires,” separated from the Iranian, Central Asian, and steppe regions beyond by the natural barrier of the Zagros Mountains. This mountain range, still loosely marking the border between the modern states of Iraq and Iran, had always represented the major

topographical divide between the Semitic- and Iranian-speaking worlds. The journey from Seleucia on the Tigris in central Iraq to Ecbatana, high in the mountains, is one of the few viable routes across. Ecbatana, capital of the western Iranian kingdom of Media, had been a summer capital since Achaemenid times, when the peripatetic Persian court avoided the intense summer heat of lowland Babylon and

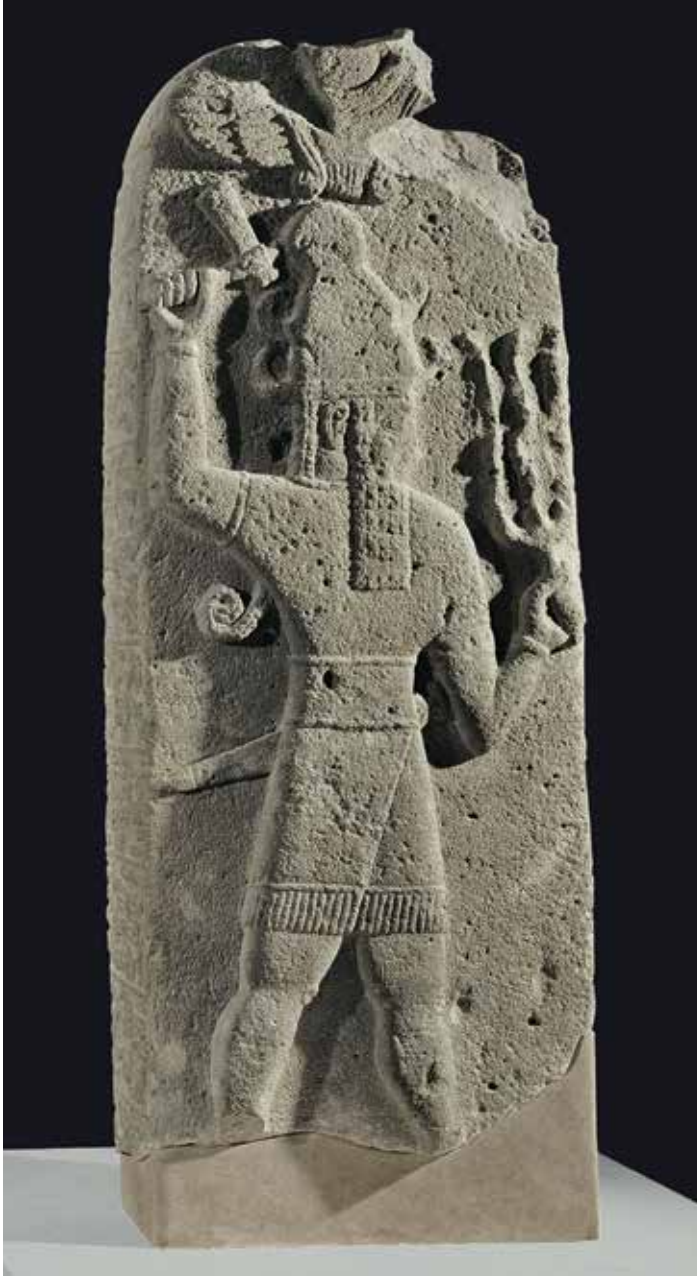


Fig. 6 Basalt stele showing a storm god, Tahunda, in striding pose with axe and thunderbolt. Basalt, ca. 900 B.C. Til Barsip (Tell Ahmar). Musée du Louvre, Paris (AO 11505)

Susa. Isidore describes it as the metropolis and treasury of Media and mentions an important temple to the Iranian goddess Anahita.³⁶ From this point onward, travelers would move east through a world that was culturally, religiously, and linguistically Iranian. The Parthian kings developed their royal residence at Ctesiphon in present-day Iraq, but both they and their empire were primarily Iranian.³⁷ Nonetheless, Ctesiphon was critical because of its commercial centrality: here the roads east across Asia met the Arabian spice and incense routes, and the rivers of Mesopotamia connected them to Indian Ocean maritime trade.

RELIGIOUS LIFE

Representing the Divine

Across the region worshippers were devoted both to deities with supraregional significance and to local gods attached specifically to their villages and cities. Goddesses of fertility, powerful hero-gods, lords of the cosmos, weather and storm gods and their female consorts were venerated in various versions and guises, indicative of the enduring significance of multiple older Middle Eastern religious traditions as well as Hellenistic and Roman influence. These substantial survivals from earlier periods coexisted with dramatic changes that are visible in the creation of new divinities, and piecing together the origins and identities of those linked closely to a given place and those with broader appeal reveals an incredible mixture of hyperlocalized traditions and widespread trends. Cult images of deities in sculpture and wall paintings from shrines and temples across the region, and votive dedications of their images that worshippers presented as gifts to them, together reveal a complicated but in some ways consistent picture. Patterns emerge from the great diversity of local cults, divine names and iconography, in both the types of deities worshipped and the forms their representations took. Contextualizing the art created for Jews and Christians within this wider framework is also key to understanding how the monotheistic faiths of Judaism and Christianity functioned alongside polytheism during this period.

Across the Roman and Parthian Middle East, newly created gods and religious customs were important aspects of distinctively local identities that at the same time often reflected a significant degree of continuity with earlier periods rather than a rupture. The lasting legacy of Marduk, Babylon's patron deity and the former head of the Mesopotamian pantheon, and his son Nabu, the chief god

of Borsippa, can be seen at Hatra and Palmyra. The main cults of Shamash and Bel at these centers were derived from those of their Mesopotamian predecessors and adapted in new settings at Hatra's Great Temple and Palmyra's Temples of Bel and Nabu (see pp. 145, 213–14, 230; fig. 87). Bel shared his role as a lord of the cosmos at Palmyra with the god Baalshamin of West Semitic origin, and together their representations on relief sculptures, altars, and tesserae as well as inscriptions indicate that the two gods were worshipped alongside numerous other deities of varied origins or new creations to form a specifically Palmyrene group. The importance of these gods to Palmyrene identity is underscored by the fact that Palmyrenes continued to venerate them in communities they established elsewhere (cats. 137–38). The gods Aglibol and Malakbel were honored with lavish dedications by Palmyrenes living in Rome that specifically include depictions of a grove sacred to Malakbel (cats. 101–2). The veneration of divine couples, such as Qos and Allat at Khirbet et-Tannur in Nabataea, Atargatis and Hadad at Dura-Europos, and Jupiter Heliopolitanus and Venus Heliopolitana of Heliopolis-Baalbek, represents the legacy of powerful Iron Age storm and weather gods and fertility goddesses, including Hadad, Baal, Atargatis, and Astarte, whose characteristics, cults, and iconography had a lasting impact on religious life across the Middle East (cats. 46–47, 88, 91, 139–40; fig. 6). Irrespective of the geographic distances between their sanctuaries and different names recorded in inscriptions, multiple details of the divine couples' representations, including their clothing, poses, attributes, thrones, and animal acolytes, link the various pairs to one another as well as to the religious traditions of a previous age. In conjunction with this visual evidence, a second-century Greek text, *On the Syrian Goddess*, attributed to the Syrian author Lucian of Samosata, provides a description of "the Syrian goddess," her consort, and their sanctuary at Hierapolis, which resonates across the region, describing details and iconography that could also be seen at prominent religious sites, such as Heliopolis-Baalbek, as well as at minor ones, such as Khirbet et-Tannur, Niha, Fneidiq, Yammoune, and Dura-Europos (cats. 45–51a–b, 88, 91, 92, 139).

Although iconographic and stylistic analyses do not always help to assign names to the various representations of divinities popular throughout the region, they are instrumental in understanding the complex cultural and religious connections between geographically distant places as well as distinctive local contexts. Inscriptions can

sometimes reveal surprising divine identities that contradict conclusions based on iconography. Sculptures in typical Graeco-Roman form may have Middle Eastern names, such as a bronze statue in the form of a "Weary Herakles" from Seleucia on the Tigris, identified as Herakles and as Iranian Verethragna in its Greek and Parthian inscriptions, respectively (fig. 7).³⁸ At Dura-Europos, a lack of inscriptions



Fig. 7 Bronze statue with Greek and Parthian inscriptions naming the god depicted as Herakles and Verethragna, respectively, dedicated in 151. Seleucia on the Tigris. Iraq Museum, Baghdad

on any of the approximately forty figures of muscular males holding clubs and wearing lion skins or fighting with lions leaves their identities as Herakles or Mesopotamian Nergal uncertain in view of the city's diverse inhabitants to whom either or both gods could have appealed (cats. 142–44). The attributes and poses of statuettes of reclining and standing nude goddesses discovered in Mesopotamia reflect links to the Greek Aphrodite as well as traditional Mesopotamian nude goddesses (cats. 164–67). A bejeweled bronze statuette discovered at Heliopolis-Baalbek and dated to the Roman period is identifiable as Aphrodite Anadyomene (emerging from the sea) because of its resemblance to a famous statue type of the Classical and Hellenistic periods, a choice made more significant when considered in conjunction with the contrasting images produced in the immediate local area of the veiled goddess Venus Heliopolitana enthroned between two sphinxes (cat. 88). At Petra, the identities of Greek Aphrodite and the Arabian goddess al-'Uzza were

intertwined closely at a local level, with depictions in the forms of both Hellenistic-inspired relief sculptures and schematically rendered “eye idols” (cats. 34, 37–38).

This diverse religious picture also included monotheists. Whereas the subject of rebellions against Roman imperial dominance relates closely to Jewish religious and cultural identity in Judaea during the first and second centuries (see pp. 82–85; cats. 11, 59–70), because of the remarkable circumstances of its preservation, Dura-Europos provides extraordinary evidence for how Judaism and also Christianity were integrated within a Roman frontier town in the third century. The synagogue and Christian building at Dura were both constructed within private houses in the vicinity of religious buildings devoted to the worship of numerous other gods, including Mithras, Atargatis, Hadad, and Palmyrene gods. The modern discovery of these buildings and their wall paintings revolutionized the understanding of both Jewish and Early Christian art of the third century. Artists were commissioned by polytheists, Jews, and Christians to create wall paintings for their respective religious practices, leading to questions about whether the religious atmosphere at Dura was one of “peaceful pluralism”³⁹ overall or whether paintings that show broken statues of gods were in fact intended to provoke reactions from polytheists and allude to competition between religious traditions (see pp. 183–85; cats. 146–47; figs. 70–71). Similarly, the earliest depictions of Christ's miracles may be viewed as a visual expression of a belief system and rituals that sharply contrasted with scenes of sacrifices prevalent throughout Dura's many polytheist temples (cats. 145a–b).

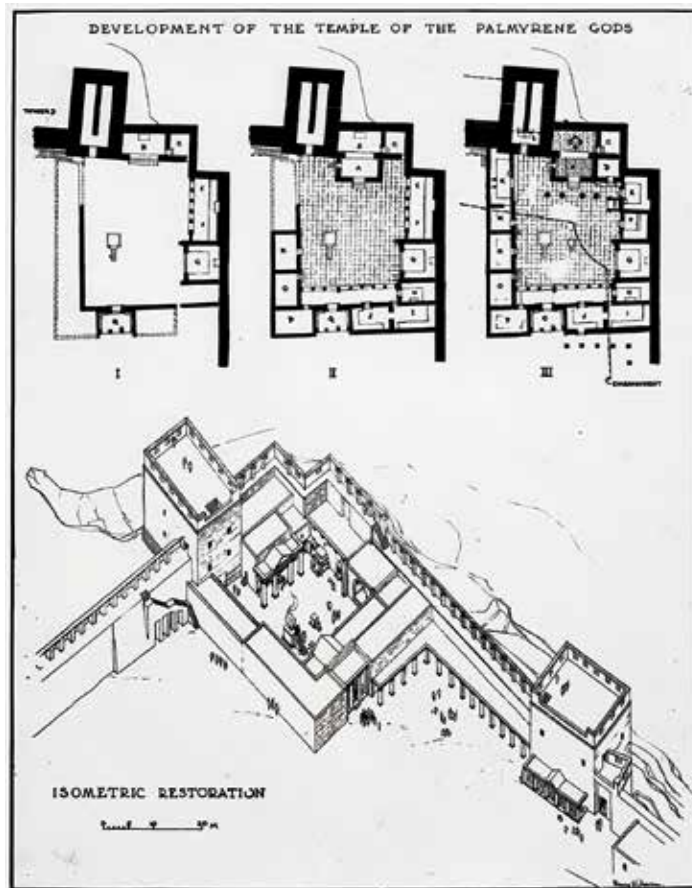


Fig. 8 Plans of three phases and isometric reconstruction of the Temple of Palmyrene gods (also called the Temple of Bel) at Dura-Europos

Temple Architecture

One striking characteristic of religious architecture across the region is the use of enormous temenos enclosures. Whereas typical temples in Rome and the western provinces of the Roman Empire varied in size and were designed primarily for the housing of the cult statue, with ritual activity taking place outside at altars in front, and Iranian temples, at least prior to this period, typically were also relatively small buildings, Arabia, Syria, and Mesopotamia were filled with temple enclosures that took up a significant portion of their cities. Those at Petra, Gerasa, Jerusalem, Heliopolis-Baalbek, Palmyra, and Hatra are some of the more prominent examples.⁴⁰

The architectural origins of this phenomenon are probably Mesopotamian. The basic, ancient form of Mesopotamian temples was based on a large hall or internal

courtyard leading to a cella, the inner chamber housing the statue of the deity. Already in the mid-third millennium B.C. there was an extension of this principle into larger courtyard enclosures at the Oval Temple at Khafajah.⁴¹ By the late-third millennium B.C. very large temple courtyards existed, such as those enclosing and adjoining the ziggurat, temples, and main palace of Ur. The tradition survived in the great temples of Neo-Babylonian Babylon in the sixth century B.C. Esagila, the most important temple, was entered via a large courtyard; to its immediate north, the ziggurat Etemenanki stood within a giant enclosure on the scale of the largest known in the Roman and Parthian period. What function these enclosures played in these earlier periods remains somewhat uncertain, though it is very likely that at times they served as spaces for large numbers of people to participate in rituals and festivals. In the Roman and Parthian period there is abundant archaeological evidence attesting to their use for festivals. At Palmyra, in addition to the banqueting hall located in the enclosure surrounding the Temple of Bel, small tesserae acting as banquet invitations or entrance tokens have been found in great numbers at

multiple sanctuaries (cats. 105–7).⁴² The standing remains at Heliopolis-Baalbek show how elaborate the internal architectural decoration of these spaces could be, and it is easy to imagine their effectiveness as theatrical settings for large religious events. Most of these courtyards also contained large altar platforms—one at Heliopolis-Baalbek was several stories high (fig. 45)—that must have served as focal points for mass religious events and, along with the towers that most temples featured, may have acted as sacred “high places” appropriate for particular ritual activities.⁴³

Within the temple enclosures, architectural complexity and the housing of multiple deities may also reflect Mesopotamian precedent. At Palmyra, the Temple of Bel was the site of worship for Bel and multiple other divinities (see pp. 144–47). At Hatra the vast temenos enclosure contained not only the Great Temple whose primary deity was the sun god Shamash-Maren but multiple additional temples dedicated to the other gods of the city. In this respect these temples resembled Babylon’s Esagila or other large Mesopotamian temples of earlier periods that frequently contained the cult images of multiple deities.



Fig. 9 Mosaic showing a female musician, ca. 260. Bishapur. Musée du Louvre, Paris (AO 26169)



Fig. 10 Head of Constantine I (r. 307–337). Marble, ca. 325–70. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Bequest of Mary Clark Thompson, 1923 (26.229)

In Iran some large temple enclosures also appear in the Parthian period: the most striking example is a Temple of Anahita at Kangavar, which sits at the center of an enclosure as large as any of the Arabian, Syrian, or Mesopotamian examples. However, this temple is located in Kermanshah on the main route from Mesopotamia into Iran across the Zagros Mountains, and it seems likely that the format is adopted from Mesopotamia. Conversely, another notable feature of many Roman and Parthian period Middle Eastern temples, circumambulatory paths around central shrines, may well have been adapted from Iranian temples. This feature, seen in multiple Nabataean temples and at Hatra, has good precedents in Achaemenid Iran and from at least the Sasanian period can be seen as a standard characteristic of Zoroastrian fire temples.⁴⁴

Of course, throughout the region, most temples were not giant sanctuaries. The majority were far smaller shrines, as for example at Nabataean Khirbet et-Tannur (see p. 53). At

Dura-Europos, most of the small Parthian and Roman period temples follow a courtyard plan that is essentially Mesopotamian in origin (figs. 8, 69),⁴⁵ but some, such as the synagogue and Christian building, appear to be simply converted houses.⁴⁶ Smaller temples might also have courtyards, but the most important feature they needed to share with the great temples, indeed their reason for existing, was the presence of a cult image. In this sense, synagogues and churches represented something different: spaces designed for gathering and worship rather than defined by the presence of a divine statue or relief.

ARTISTIC AND ARCHITECTURAL LEGACIES

The artistic and cultural interchange that characterized the Middle East during this period would also contribute enormously to the differences that separate the visual culture of the ancient world and that of Late Antiquity and the medieval period. Artistic conventions, architectural innovations, and religious practices of the Roman and Parthian Middle East had a profound impact on the succeeding Byzantine, Sasanian, and early Islamic empires. Some instances of integration happened in an immediate and dramatic fashion. If the mosaics of Shapur I's (r. ca. 241–272) palace at Bishapur bear a striking similarity to those of Roman Antioch, this may have something to do with Shapur's sacking the city and very probably taking many of its craftspeople with him to Iran to work on the project. For all their similarities, however, the Bishapur mosaics use existing tools to render new, Iranian subjects: a famous mosaic shows a musician playing a distinctive Iranian harp (fig. 9).

The increasing ubiquity of Dionysiac imagery of vines, leaves, animals, and feasting in the decorative arts across the Middle East and Central Asia is a change that had already begun with the conquests of Alexander in the late fourth century B.C. The Seleucid Empire and Graeco-Bactrian kingdoms that succeeded Alexander established Hellenistic elite centers from Syria to the Indus Valley, and far more than the cult of Dionysos itself, the iconography associated with their luxury goods became widely shared, also becoming prevalent in Rome and the western part of the Roman Empire. By the end of the Roman and Parthian period, this iconography, along with many standard forms of banqueting vessel, had spread across the Mediterranean, Middle East, and Central Asia. Byzantine and Sasanian silver and glass have much in common, and these similarities owe a great deal to the Middle East in its Roman and Parthian phases.



Fig. 11 Courtyard of the Great Mosque, Damascus

While the conventions of Graeco-Roman sculpture and painting became integral parts of the Syro-Mesopotamian, Iranian, and Central Asian repertoire during the Seleucid and Parthian periods, “Parthian” conventions permeated later Roman art. Although Rome already had emperors with roots in Syria, beginning with the Severan dynasty (see pp. 252–54), the major visual change in the depiction of Roman rulers comes after this period. A similar integration of conventions in portraiture and artistic style to that which had led to the creation of distinctive Palmyrene funerary busts (cats. 108–9, 112–25) now produced a similar result in Roman imperial portraiture. More stylized depictions, with relatively schematic features, short beards, and simple incised eyes began to predominate in the portraits of the soldier emperors, and by the late third century, portraits of the tetrarchs did not feature the naturalistic details that

had been standard in portraits of previous generations of Roman emperors. By the early fourth century, portraits of Constantine consciously borrowed iconographic details such as “comma-shaped” locks of hair from images of Augustus and Trajan but in their frontality, over-lifesize, upward-facing eyes, and stylized features also had much in common with the portraiture of the Parthian and Sasanian Middle East (fig. 10).

As Roman art underwent its profound Late Antique transformation, moving away from Hellenistic naturalism and depictions of movement toward an emphasis on symmetry and frontality in the late third and fourth centuries, it did so in large part in response to Middle Eastern conventions, and Byzantine art, directly or indirectly, was significantly shaped by the visual culture of the Roman and Parthian Middle East. This influence is also felt in the art



Fig. 12 Courtyard of the Great Mosque, Isfahan

of medieval western Europe, where the human, animal, and plant imagery incorporated in the architectural decoration of churches recalls the architectural ornament of the region in this period. Much Romanesque sculpture is visibly the descendant of Parthian models, from the busts and “masks” that adorned the Great Iwans of Hatra (see p. 214; fig. 81) to the animal and plant motifs of arches and capitals.

Some further signs of continuity come in the transformation of cult images in particular. Monotheism would progressively end the Mediterranean and Middle Eastern traditions of divine cult statues, reliefs, and paintings, or in the case of Christianity at least radically transform their meaning: most importantly, the deity no longer inhabited a statue, although some aspects of the representation of Christ and the saints have roots in polytheist traditions. Images of Christ in Byzantine and western medieval art typically incorporate the strict frontality that is a legacy of the Roman and Parthian Middle East generally, as are the

halos of Christ and the saints—an evolution of the radiate crown and nimbus seen on solar and lunar deities (cat. 99). Jewish art and architecture would become increasingly aniconic, though preserving aspects of religious iconography established during the Hellenistic and Roman periods, including representations of the menorah⁴⁷ and the Ark of the Covenant.

Other legacies are architectural. One remarkable transformation can be seen in the evolution of the large temenos enclosures and towers (religious “high places”) of the Roman and Parthian Middle East. In Damascus, the former temenos of the Temple of Hadad-Jupiter became, at the beginning of the eighth century, the courtyard of the most important mosque in a newly Islamic Middle East (fig. 11). In the interim, the temple had previously been converted into an important Christian cathedral, linked to John the Baptist. A similar transformation took place in Aleppo, whose iconic great mosque was built above multiple previous

religious structures, including a temple of Jupiter (see p. 263; fig. 98). In the same connection, it is probable that the towers that were included in most Syrian and Mesopotamian temples, and which took the form of sacred “high places” in the landscape of Nabataean Petra, are architectural precursors of the minaret.⁴⁸

Early Christian architecture similarly incorporated towers, as seen in some of the vast number of churches in the “Dead Cities” of Syria; however, their plans and layouts drew on different models. Christian architecture adapted the forms of meeting halls—typically a colonnaded hall with a semicircular apse called a basilica. The basic tripartite colonnaded structure of this building, drawn from Roman secular architecture, along with the facade and single or symmetrical pairs of towers, can be seen not only in ancient churches but also in the grandest medieval cathedrals and many modern churches.

The architectural innovation most commonly associated with the Parthian period in Mesopotamia and Iran is the iwan, a vaulted portico or hall open on one side. The strength of the form allowed the construction of brick arches of enormous height and breadth—exemplified in the still-standing iwan arch of the late Sasanian Taq-i Kisra at Ctesiphon (fig. 85). The Great Iwans of Hatra are the most famous Parthian examples (figs. 76, 78). The Parthian palace at Ashur had four iwans arranged on each side of a square courtyard, and similar arrangements would become hallmarks of Iranian architecture in particular (cats. 155–56). Today these features characterize some of the most spectacular Islamic architecture (fig. 12).

. . .

One of the central motivations in producing “The World between Empires” was a sense that, at a time when the cultural heritage of Iraq, Syria, and Yemen in particular had suffered great damage through looting and deliberate destruction in the context of war (see pp. 259–67), the role of this period in the Middle Eastern and global history of art merited greater exploration for a wider audience. News media covered the destruction of monuments at Palmyra and found a large international public who cared about this destruction, understanding it was not a distraction from a major humanitarian crisis but rather a part of it. However, the format of news media does not allow for extensive contextual information to explain where sites like Palmyra, Dura-Europos, or Hatra fit in historical terms, or the significance of their art and architecture. In addition, structures underlying the way fields of study are organized have worked against the art of the Middle East in this period: it does not correspond to a single empire; its ancient politics are difficult and fragmented; the religious picture is too diverse to attach to a few particular gods; and its artistic traditions, though closely interlinked, produce different results in different parts of the region. Drawing on recent scholarship that has reshaped the understanding of the Roman and Parthian Middle East, “The World between Empires” aims to draw attention to this important material, focusing on the cultural and artistic connections that linked Arabia, Judaea, Syria, and Mesopotamia, and highlighting the art of a distinct region that was shaped by far-reaching trade routes, inheritances from earlier periods, a vast array of local gods, and above all by the interplay of imperial, local, and personal identities.



SOUTHWESTERN ARABIA

FAR FROM THE MAJOR CENTERS OF THE PARTHIAN AND ROMAN Empires and separated by desert from the other trading hubs of the ancient Middle East, southwestern Arabia was a site of imagination for ancient historians. Herodotos, writing in the fifth century B.C., described Arabia as the home of the phoenix. However, he also knew that this distant land was the source of resins, aromatics, and spices that were in everyday use around him.¹ The region already played a significant role in the commercial and economic life of the ancient Mediterranean and Middle East during the Iron Age, and during the Parthian and Roman period it was critical to the largest global trade networks. As the source of several precious commodities—most importantly frankincense and myrrh—and a key conduit for many others by way of Indian Ocean trade, the southwestern Arabian kingdoms of Hadramawt, Qataban, Himyar, Ma‘in, and Saba’ were at once geographically distant from and profoundly connected with the great empires of Parthia and Rome (see map, p. xviii).

Frankincense lay at the heart of the economic success of the southwestern Arabian kingdoms. The fragrant resin from the frankincense tree was the preferred incense for burning in temples and households and for religious and funerary rituals across the Roman and Parthian world.

Fig. 13 Columns of the ‘Awwam Temple, Marib

Rome's ancient sumptuary laws attempted in vain to reduce consumption of this high-value commodity. Its significance is highlighted by stories such as Plutarch's claim that the funeral for the Roman dictator Sulla (d. 78 B.C.) involved the burning of a lifesize effigy made from frankincense and cinnamon.² Frankincense always had to be imported: the trees require particular environmental conditions that are best met in the southern Arabian highlands and in parts of the Horn of Africa (fig. 14). Mist produced as the Indian monsoon system reaches the Arabian coast travels inland, allowing the trees to flourish. Resin is harvested annually by cutting slits in the bark of the trees. Over a period of days or weeks the sap seeps out and dries, and this dry resin is then chipped away and collected. The resin quality varies based on the particular species of frankincense tree and environmental conditions: the resin of the *Boswellia sacra* tree, grown in the Dhofar region of present-day southern Oman, is the highest grade and most expensive.³ The resin of the myrrh tree is harvested in a similar fashion. Used in perfume and medicine, as well as in incense, by weight myrrh was even more costly than frankincense.⁴

In addition to the harvesting and export of frankincense and myrrh, the other major element of the southwestern Arabian mercantile economy was maritime trade. Until the second century, the southwestern Arabian kingdoms had maintained a near monopoly on imports from Indian Ocean trade destined for the Roman Empire, since the difficulty of navigating Red Sea currents prevented Roman merchants from gaining more direct access. India was the source of important spices, particularly pepper, cinnamon, cassia, and cardamom. Other products of this Indian maritime trade included textiles, dyes, precious and semiprecious stones, precious metals, and ivory.

The above commodities, harvested in southwestern Arabia or imported, were sent north by camel caravan. Multiple routes could be taken: there was not, strictly speaking, a single "spice road" or "incense road." In all cases the caravans were required to pass through and pay a levy at each of numerous settlements in exchange for safe passage. In this way the caravan routes profited everyone who lived along them and not solely the kingdoms where incense was first gathered or imports received. In exchange, the caravans' security was guaranteed by the rulers of the territories through which they passed.⁵

In time, Roman sailors did learn to navigate the Red Sea currents and thus gain access to the Indian Ocean routes

from Egypt. Beginning in the first century B.C. this more direct trade route began to have an impact on the southwestern Arabian monopoly, yet it did not lead to the immediate or dramatic decline of Arabian caravan trade, since the Arabian routes remained viable and profitable, and, along with Ethiopia on the other side of the Red Sea, southern Arabia remained the exclusive viable source of frankincense and myrrh. Ceramics from the Roman ports of Myos Hormos and Berenike on the Red Sea coast of Egypt show that there was significant maritime contact between these ports and southwestern Arabia.⁶

The southwestern Arabian kingdoms were never incorporated into the Roman or Parthian Empires, though they would have been a valuable prize. Pliny the Elder believed that:

They are the richest nations in the world, seeing that such vast wealth flows in upon them from both the Roman and the Parthian Empires; for they sell the produce of the sea or of their forests [frankincense and myrrh trees], while they purchase nothing whatever in return.⁷

On a political and military level, the kingdoms' independence from Rome and Parthia was protected simply by the difficulty of launching a campaign through the Arabian Desert. To move across the peninsula at all required specialist knowledge; to do so with an army and keep that army supplied was almost impossible. The nearest approach was a disastrous expedition led by Aelius Gallus, a Roman prefect of Egypt, probably in 26/25 B.C. After months of wrong turns, apparently the result of deception by the Nabataean minister, Syllaeus, who acted as guide to the expedition, Gallus and his force eventually reached Marib, the capital of the kingdom of Saba', but they were only able to besiege the city for a week before turning back owing to lack of water.⁸

The artistic traditions of the southwestern Arabian kingdoms are more similar to one another than to those outside the Arabian Peninsula, but they also have important differences. Shared features include the use of a distinctive pale, translucent, yellow-white calcite alabaster quarried in Arabia but not found locally in all the kingdoms, and commonalities in the representation of the human figure, such as squat, cuboid forms and heads depicted as oversized in relation to the rest of the body. Elaborate metalworking, primarily in bronze, is also found in all the kingdoms,



Fig. 14 Traditional harvesting of frankincense in the Dhofar region of present-day Oman

including large-scale human and animal sculptures.⁹ The use of certain animal imagery, particularly ibexes, bulls, antelope, and snakes, is also shared, although a more difficult question is whether this imagery held comparable meanings across the different kingdoms, each of which had its own discrete religious pantheon. Incorporation of Hellenistic elements is another shared feature, though to greatly varying degrees in each kingdom. Finally, there is the shared South Arabian script, used for inscriptions in the related but distinct languages of each kingdom. All of these similarities reflect the close interdependence that characterized the kingdoms' strategic and economic situations, notwithstanding considerable periodic conflict between them.

Other features are more locally distinct: adoptions from Hellenistic art are more visible in the depiction of human figures, and particularly faces, in Qataban and Saba' than in Ma'in, for example.¹⁰ Qatabanian funerary sculpture (cat. 24) typically shows the head and upper part of the body with an inscription usually below or on a base, whereas funerary sculptures from Saba' more typically consist of a modeled head of the deceased set within a niche, often in a tall limestone stele with a surface that has been carved to form a checkerboard pattern, while typical funerary stelae from Ma'in feature much simpler schematic faces depicted above inscriptions. This mode of depiction seems to be based on an older, more widely shared southwestern Arabian tradition

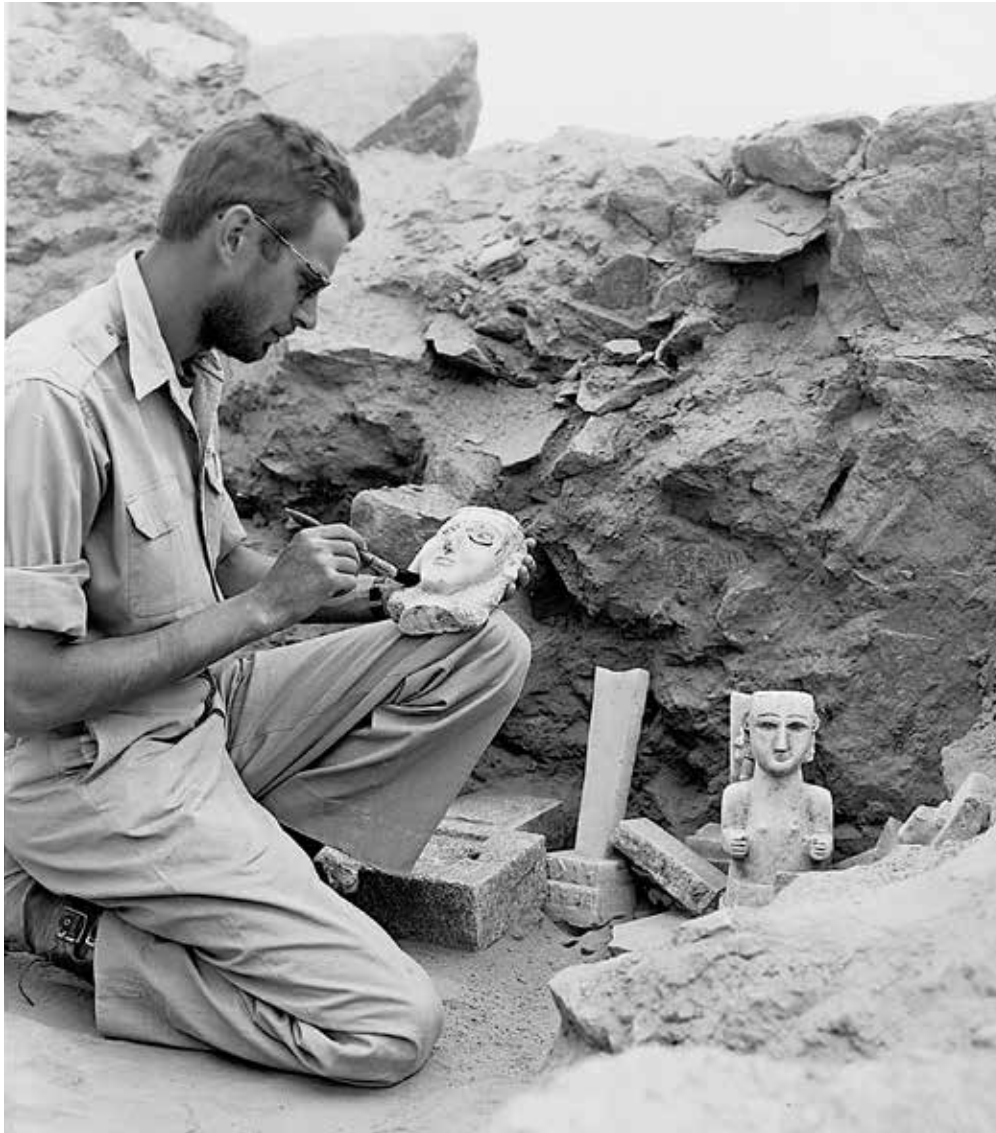


Fig. 15 Group of sculptures found standing in the antechamber to a tomb at Haid ibn 'Aqil cemetery, Timna'

found in the “eye stelae” from other kingdoms (cat. 27) and in the aniconic traditions of unadorned sacred stones that the kingdoms shared. Both of these traditions also had an influence on the art of regions to the north, including Nabataea, where aniconic baetyls (see p. 52; fig. 26) and schematic depictions of faces similar to the “eye stelae” (cats. 37–38) played major religious roles.

Architectural remains of stone temples, palaces, and tombs also survive. At the Sabaean cities of Marib and Sirwah the remains of monumental temples have been excavated.¹¹ In Hadramawt the impressive remains of the

temple of Sayyin dhu Mayfa'an have been studied and reconstructed,¹² while cemeteries in Timna' and Marib were found to contain not only large family tomb buildings but also extensive ritual complexes.¹³ In Shabwa, archaeologists discovered the remains of ancient “tower houses,” which are ancestors of the traditional multistory architecture that still characterizes historic cities in modern Yemen (fig. 99).

Most ancient southwestern Arabian sculpture in museums outside Yemen does not come from formal excavations. An important exception is the collection formerly of the American Foundation for the Study of Man, given to

the Smithsonian Institution in 2013, which comes from American excavations at Timna'. The project was organized in the early 1950s by the explorer Wendell Phillips (1922–1975), who raised funds and obtained permissions for the excavations and hired more experienced scholars, including the renowned archaeologist William Foxwell Albright, to participate. Phillips's own account of the excavations, *Qataban and Sheba* (1955),¹⁴ is more adventure story than archaeological report, but the project as a whole was of immense scholarly value and remains a key source of information on the funerary practices and art of ancient Qataban.¹⁵ The excavations included the nearby cemetery of Haid ibn 'Aqil and areas of housing (cats. 20, 22–27, 30). In the marketplace at Timna', a remarkable inscribed column described the division of space in the market, with areas designated for the shops of Qatabanians and those of foreigners. Phillips's team also excavated a building they identified as a temple to 'Athtar at Timna'.¹⁶ The association with 'Athtar, however, was based on a single inscription, and it now seems more probable that the monumental building was a palace.¹⁷

Although most tombs had been looted in antiquity, some parts of the Haid ibn 'Aqil cemetery were remarkably intact at the time of excavation. In one case funerary stela were found standing in place just as they had been arranged at the time of their burial two thousand years earlier (cats. 25–26; fig. 15).¹⁸ Very large family tombs were arranged along central

corridors, with long fingerlike chambers in which the bodies of the deceased were arranged on shelves—another version of the system of loculi seen in the elite family tombs of Palmyra (see pp. 148–51).

At the time of Phillips's excavations, Timna' lay within the British Protectorate of Aden, but in 1951 the expedition moved north into the independent Kingdom of Yemen to work at the Sabaean capital of Marib, and particularly the 'Awwam temple, which was probably the temple of the moon god Almaqah, the head of the Sabaean pantheon (fig. 13).¹⁹ While the site was spectacular, the expedition met with serious problems as relations with local tribal leaders broke down. The situation deteriorated and Phillips's team had to abandon the project in haste, leaving behind their equipment and finds. Phillips himself never returned to Yemen, although decades later the American Foundation for the Study of Man, the nonprofit organization he founded in 1949 and through which his work at Timna' and Marib had been conducted, was revived by his sister, Marilyn Phillips Hodgson. In 1982 the foundation returned to Yemen, working first in the Wadi al-Jubah area on the route between Marib and Timna', and later at Marib itself, conducting renewed survey and excavations at the 'Awwam Temple from 1998 to 2006.²⁰ Other foreign archaeological teams also worked in the country during this period. More recently, however, the devastating conflict that has engulfed Yemen since 2015 has made all such work impossible (see pp. 259–63).



19. Rearing Horse

Ca. 2nd century

Bronze, H. 40³/₁₆ in. (102 cm), W. 11 in. (28 cm), L. 41³/₄ in. (106 cm)

Southwestern Arabia, possibly near Ghayman

Dumbarton Oaks Library and Museum, Washington, D.C. (DO 1938.12)

This horse, originally part of an equestrian statue, is one of the most important surviving examples of large-scale bronze sculpture from ancient southwestern Arabia. Although sculpted in the round, the horse appears to have been designed to be viewed primarily from one side and in profile.¹ Its mouth probably held a bit and reins, in addition to the decorated harness elements depicted on the body of the horse.² The sculpture features three inscriptions, the earliest of which, on the left shoulder, indicates that it was originally one of a pair with riders that were dedicated at the sanctuary of Madrah by Hawti'athat of the Ghayman tribe.³ The two other inscriptions seem to have been added later, suggesting that the sculpture was visible and in use over a long period in antiquity.⁴ Suggested dates of production have ranged from as early as the fifth century B.C. until as late as the fifth century A.D.; however, both epigraphy and stylistic characteristics of the sculpture and its original inscription support a date in the second century A.D.⁵

The missing rider figure would probably have turned in the saddle to face outward toward the viewer, as in some Hellenistic equestrian sculptures.⁶ The original pair of horses and riders may have been arranged in a manner similar to the lions ridden by the figures of Eros from Timna', although on a larger scale (cat. 20). Two bronze heads of youthful male figures have been found near the modern village of Ghayman south of Sana'a, which takes its name from the tribe mentioned in the horse's inscription. It is not impossible that the heads could belong to the missing riders; however, they are somewhat larger in scale and more likely belonged to another equestrian pair.⁷ The heads' idealized features suggest they may have represented the Dioscourai,

the divine twins Castor and Pollux, though in southwestern Arabia their identities would also have been interpreted through a local religious lens.⁸

The horse was first reported as a group of more than eighty fragments in a Cairo store in 1929. These pieces, which were said to have been found near Sana'a, were purchased by the art dealer Joseph Brummer and brought to New York, where Mildred and Robert Bliss, founders of the Dumbarton Oaks Library and Museum, acquired them in 1938; it was immediately following this purchase that Brummer engaged a restorer to reconstruct the sculpture.⁹ Fragments from the group that seem to have belonged to a second horse are now in the National Museum, Sana'a.¹⁰

1. For a detailed physical description, see Stupperich and Yule 2014, pp. 350–62, figs. 9–11. 2. *Ibid.*, p. 351. 3. On the inscriptions, see J. Ryckmans 1975, pp. 296–303, figs. 3a–6d. 4. The short inscription incised on the rump of the horse probably dates to the fifth century A.D.; see 'Ali 'Aqil and Antonini 2007, p. 172, no. I.B.b.1; Antonini de Maigret 2012, pp. 113–14. 5. Stupperich and Yule 2014, pp. 350–64, with review of previous interpretations and dating. 6. Fiorenza Grasso in Picón and Hemingway 2016, pp. 114–15, no. 15. This much smaller bronze statuette has a spur linking the chest of the horse to the base. A similar spur was created and included in the original restoration of the Dumbarton Oaks horse but not in the present restoration. 7. Stupperich and Yule 2014, pp. 363–64. 8. One of the heads was given in 1936 by the North Yemeni ruler Imam Yahya (r. 1904–1948) as a coronation gift to George VI, king of England (r. 1910–1936) and is in the Royal Collections; the other is in the National Museum, Sana'a. See William D. Glanzman in St J. Simpson 2002, pp. 128–29, no. 151. 9. J. Ryckmans 1975, p. 287; Stupperich and Yule 2014, p. 351. 10. National Museum, Sana'a, YM 208; see Radt 1973, no. 78, pl. 31; Costa 1974, pp. 287–89; Stupperich and Yule 2014, p. 351. The head and neck of the Dumbarton Oaks horse differ somewhat in alloy composition from the rest of the body; one explanation for this difference could be that they come from the other horse (Lyttelton 1991, p. 150). There is also some difference in style, with the head now appearing more angular than the body, although this discrepancy is probably not ancient but rather the consequence of the sculpture's modern restoration; see J. Ryckmans 1975, p. 290.

20. Striding Lion Ridden by Eros or Child Dionysos

Early 1st century B.C.–mid-1st century A.D.

Bronze, H. 25 in. (63.5 cm), W. 29⁵/₈ in. (75.2 cm), D. 7⁵/₈ in. (19.4 cm)

Timna'

Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. Gift of the American Foundation for the Study of Man (Wendell and Merilyn Phillips Collection) (S2013.2.77.2)

Among the most remarkable discoveries at Timna' were two bronze sculptures found in a layer of ash and debris in front of the south wall of a large house. According to the excavators' interpretation of these remains, the bronzes probably fell from a roof terrace when a fire caused the house to collapse.¹ It is possible that they formed part of a shrine on the roof of the building. The two sculptures, cast in very high relief, represent a pair of lions, each ridden by a figure of a boy. Each held in one hand a chain that wrapped around the lion's neck, and in the other a stick that may be a *kentron* (goad) or part of a *thyrsos* (a fennel stalk topped with a pine cone or ivy).² The "Eros" figures, more likely the child Dionysos,³ were cast separately from the lion and in the round, while the hollow backs of the lions have hooks for attachment to a wall, or to a background that was not



found in the debris and may have been made of a perishable or flammable material such as wood. The lions' gender is unclear, since they combine the manes of male lions with the heads of lionesses. The base of each sculpture is inscribed: "Thuwayb and 'Aqrab dhu Muhasni' placed [these figures] at Yafash'. Thuwayb and 'Aqrab of the Muhasni' family decorated the house called Yafash'."⁴ Another inscription found nearby reveals that Thuwayb and 'Aqrab were father and son and that the Muhasni' family belonged to the Suway'um clan.⁵

The relief sculptures were produced from molds by indirect lost-wax casting. Despite their strongly Hellenistic style and Dionysiac imagery, the fact that the bronzes were cast together with their South Arabian inscriptions confirms that they were made specifically for use in Timna'. It is possible that foreign models or craftspeople were involved, and the style of the reliefs may link them to Alexandria, a city connected to the southwestern Arabian kingdoms through trade, but the casting technique shows they were made in southwestern Arabia, and the inscriptions identify both the local dedicators and the sculptures' intended use.⁶

1. Phillips 1955, pp. 89–102; Segall 1955, p. 210; Antonini de Maigret 2012, pp. 108–9. 2. Matthew Canepa in Daehner and Lapatin 2015, pp. 240–41, no. 26. 3. 'Ali 'Aqil and Antonini 2007, p. 233, no. IV.A.3. 4. St J. Simpson 2002, p. 129, nos. 152, 153. 5. Phillips 1955, pp. 100–101. 6. Mille 2012, pp. 228–29, fig. 5; Matthew Canepa in Daehner and Lapatin 2015, p. 240, no. 26.

Fig. 16 The second Striding Lion Ridden by Eros or Child Dionysos, early 1st century B.C.–mid-1st century A.D. Timna'. Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. Gift of the American Foundation for the Study of Man (Wendell and Merilyn Phillips Collection) (S2013.2.77.1)



21. Lion

Late 1st millennium B.C.

Copper alloy and shell, H. 7³/₈ in. (18.7 cm), W. 3³/₈ in. (8.5 cm), L. 10¹/₂ in. (26.7 cm)

Southwestern Arabia

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Purchase, Joseph Pulitzer Bequest, Gift of Dr. Mortimer D. Sackler, Theresa Sackler and Family, and funds from various donors, 2002 (2002.457a-b)

In contrast to the more Hellenistic child rider and lion (cat. 20), the style of this sculpture, particularly the treatment of the mouth and muzzle, places it squarely in an ancient Middle Eastern tradition, although a few elements, such as the ears, do bear similarities to the lion-rider sculpture. This statue may also have once had a rider, suggested by the animal-skin saddlecloth and the projection at the center of the back to which the missing figure would have been attached, though it is also possible that it formed the base for a stand of some kind. The exact significance of the peculiar asymmetrical shape of the saddlecloth is unknown. The eyes were inlaid with shell, a small fragment of which survives.

This statue is not from an excavation, and its origin was unclear, with Anatolia and Syria seeming possible candidates.¹ However, recent analysis has established that the sculpture was made in southwestern Arabia.² Its closest parallel is a lion in the collection of the Baynun Museum, Yemen.

1. The sculpture was acquired for the Guennol Collection in 1949, then displayed on loan for several decades at the Brooklyn Museum, New York, before being purchased by The Metropolitan Museum of Art. 2. Analysis was carried out by Jean-François de Lapérouse and Danijela Jovanovic in the Department of Objects Conservation at The Met.



22. Head of a Woman (“Miriam”)

1st century B.C.–mid-1st century A.D.

Calcite alabaster, stucco, bitumen, H. 11⁷/₈ in. (30.2 cm), W. 7³/₁₆ in. (18.2 cm), D. 6¹³/₁₆ in. (17.3 cm)

Timna', Haid ibn 'Aqil cemetery

Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. Gift of the American Foundation for the Study of Man (Wendell and Marilyn Phillips Collection) (S2013.2.139)

The most celebrated of the sculptures found at Timna', this head was nicknamed “Miriam” by the workers on the excavation.¹ It is important both for the quality of craftsmanship and the survival of plaster and inlaid elements. The plaster hair, which was originally painted black, helps to provide an impression of the original sculpture. The eyes were inlaid with either blue glass or lapis lazuli, and the eyebrows may also have been inlaid.² Vertical incisions behind the eyes on the sides of the head seem to represent a form of deliberate scarring (see also cat. 25).³

Although the fine carving and surviving inlay traces are exceptional, other discoveries in the Haid ibn 'Aqil cemetery include several female heads of this basic format, confirming that it was one of the typical funerary portrait styles in the cemetery.⁴ The piercings in the hair at the base of the neck were for a necklace, now lost. A gold necklace was excavated nearby (cat. 23); however, there is no suggestion that it belonged to the statue.

1. Phillips 1955, pp. 109–13. 2. Antonini 2001, p. 150, no. E59, pl. 95; St John Simpson in St J. Simpson 2002, pp. 195–96, no. 270. 3. Phillips 1955, p. 113. 4. Cleveland 1965, pp. 5–10, pls. 1–23; Antonini 2001, pp. 134–50, nos. E1–E59, pls. 74, 75.





23. Necklace with Amulet of the Goddess al-Lat

1st century B.C.–mid-1st century A.D.

Gold, pendant: H. 1¼ in. (3.1 cm), W. 1⅞ in. (4 cm), D. ⅙ in. (0.1 cm);
chain: L. 4⅞ in. (11.2 cm), Diam. ⅜ in. (0.9 cm)

Timna', Haid ibn 'Aqil cemetery

Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. Gift
of the American Foundation for the Study of Man (Wendell and Marilyn
Phillips Collection) (S2013.2.339)

This amulet necklace consists of short lengths of gold chain interspersed with hollow, spherical gold beads.¹ An outer crescent-shaped pendant carries an inscription that provides the identity of the original owner and seeks protection from the goddess al-Lat: “protection of Lat, be upon Far'iat.” The inscription surrounds an inner lunar crescent shape raised in repoussé, while the edges and tips of the outer crescent are decorated with granulation. Hanging separately from the center of the necklace is a miniature circular inner pendant modeled with a human face in repoussé. This pendant also represents the star in the crescent and star motif seen elsewhere in southwestern Arabian art (cat. 30), generally interpreted as the moon and the planet Venus.² In the kingdom of Qataban these celestial bodies related to the gods 'Amm and 'Athtar, respectively. The moon god 'Amm was the head of the Qatabanian pantheon.³ The name 'Athtar is related to the Syrian Ashtar/Astarte and the Mesopotamian Ishtar, but in contrast to these deities or the Graeco-Roman Aphrodite and Venus, 'Athtar was conceptualized as male in southwestern Arabia. Unlike most gods, who were local to one kingdom, he appears in the pantheons of all the southwestern Arabian kingdoms.⁴

1. Phillips 1955, pp. 113–14. 2. Antonini de Maigret 2012, p. 47.

3. Inscriptions confirm that 'Amm was a lunar deity. He is called “he who waxes and revolves,” “the bright shining one,” and “the little one”; see Seow 1999, p. 25. 4. Sima 2002, p. 163. In Qataban alone, in the Wadi Harib, the female form, a goddess Athirat, is also attested; see Avanzini 2005, p. 24.

24. Stele of Gabi'

2nd century B.C.–mid-1st century A.D.

Calcite alabaster, H. 9¹¹/₁₆ in. (24.6 cm), W. 6⁷/₁₆ in. (16.3 cm), D. 2¹³/₁₆ in. (7.2 cm)

Timna', Haid ibn 'Aqil cemetery

Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

Gift of the American Foundation for the Study of Man (Wendell and Marilyn Phillips Collection) (S2013.2.208)

Many funerary stelae from the kingdom of Qataban feature half-length relief busts of female figures. Once interpreted as representations of a goddess,¹ it is now generally thought that they depict the deceased, who are often named in inscriptions on the bases.² These reliefs could represent priestesses or women of another special status: the inscription on one gives the name of the deceased's mother but not her father, an unusual feature suggesting some kind of matrilineal inheritance.³ In this case the woman represented is named as Gabi' of the family of Hani'mat.⁴

The stelae have a standardized iconography with three basic forms. In one variation the female figure holds an ear of grain in one hand while raising the other hand with the palm facing forward—a gesture often performed by divinities in Syrian and Mesopotamian art, and part of the reason the figures were originally believed to represent a goddess; it is also a gesture of religious significance seen in votive and funerary images across the Middle East during this period (cats. 117, 180; fig. 79). A second form depicts the hands together holding an ear of grain; and a third form, as shown here, presents the hands together.

Unlike most such funerary stelae, the background of this sculpture ends at the shoulders with the head modeled in the round. Horizontal lines across the neck may represent folds of skin or possibly chokers (cat. 165; fig. 89).⁵ The garment worn by Gabi' is plain with an open neck and short sleeves, and her only other items of jewelry are bracelets worn on each wrist. Her head might originally have had hair applied in another material (cat. 22), as well as earrings in the pierced ears and probably glass or lapis-lazuli inlay in the grooves and holes cut for eyebrows and pupils.



1. Pirenne 1960; Pirenne 1962. 2. Avanzini 2004b, p. 145. 3. Phillips 1955, p. 116; Cleveland 1965, pp. 23–24, no. TC 1557, pl. 45; Avanzini 2004a, vol. 1, p. 486, no. 1020; Avanzini 2004b, p. 152. 4. Avanzini 1991–93, p. 161. 5. Cleveland 1965, p. 23.



25. Statue of a Seated Woman

Early 1st century

Calcite alabaster, H. 14 $\frac{1}{8}$ in. (35.8 cm), W. 6 $\frac{1}{4}$ in. (15.8 cm), D. 6 $\frac{1}{4}$ in. (15.9 cm)

Timna', Haid ibn 'Aqil cemetery

Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.
Gift of the American Foundation for the Study of Man (Wendell and Marilyn Phillips Collection) (S2013.2.152)

This sculpture is one of a group found in the antechamber of a tomb and standing in their original positions as they had been placed at the time of their burial (cat. 26; fig. 15).¹ Much ancient southwestern Arabian sculpture is characterized by a deliberate use of cuboid shapes, with many statues taking on square proportions and, as here, arranged with short, simplified limbs placed at right angles to the body. This figure squats or sits: a single raised ridge running around the sculpture above the feet should probably be understood as representing the knees at the front of the figure and the edges of a seat at the sides and back. Originally the head would have taken on a quite different appearance, with inlays in the large, deep eye sockets, earrings attached at the holes drilled in the earlobes, and hair rendered in another medium, perhaps stucco. Vertical incisions behind each eye probably represent deliberate scarring by cautery branding.² Similar marks appear on the sculpture known as "Miriam" (cat. 22).

1. Phillips 1955, pp. 163–67; Cleveland 1965, p. 13, no. TC1518, pls. 28, 29; Antonini 2001, pp. 58–59, no. E42, pl. 22. 2. Cleveland 1965, p. 13, pl. 28.

26. Stele with Head of a Bull

Early 1st century

Calcite alabaster, H. 11⁹/₁₆ in. (29.3 cm), W. 4³/₁₆ in. (10.6 cm), D. 3¹/₈ in. (8 cm)

Timna', Haid ibn 'Aqil cemetery

Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

Gift of the American Foundation for the Study of Man (Wendell and Marilyn Phillips Collection) (S2013.2.214)

In addition to Qatabanian funerary stelae that feature images of the deceased, some take the form of plain, aniconic, cuboid pillars of polished stone, or pillars featuring bull protomes, such as this example.¹ The bull stele is one of eleven calcite alabaster sculptures discovered together, still standing as they had been placed at the time of their burial in the antechamber of a tomb in the Haid ibn 'Aqil cemetery (cat. 25; fig. 15).²

It is likely that the bull's head is apotropaic, and both the bull and the crescent-shaped top edge of the stele, evoking a lunar crescent, probably refer to a moon god. The head of the Qatabanian pantheon was the moon god 'Amm,³ and the imagery may refer to this deity. The bull's horns and the upper-right section of the head are broken off. The stele is polished smooth on all sides except the right edge, which is unfinished with many toolmarks still visible.⁴ The inscription on the base gives the name of the deceased, Thaub'il of the tribe Yan'im.⁵

1. Cleveland 1965, p. 40, no. TC 1519, pl. 64; St John Simpson in St J. Simpson 2002, no. 284, p. 201. In addition to complete stelae, many fragmentary examples and detached bulls' heads were found in the Haid ibn 'Aqil cemetery; see Cleveland 1965, pp. 36–43, pls. 60–69. 2. Phillips 1955, pp. 163–67. 3. Seow 1999, p. 25. 4. Cleveland 1965, p. 40, pl. 64. 5. Jamme 1952, p. 211, no. 369; Avanzini 2004a, vol. 1, p. 407, no. 604.





27. Stele with Schematic Face

Early 1st century

Limestone, pigment, H. 6 in. (15.3 cm), W. $8\frac{7}{16}$ in. (21.4 cm), D. $2\frac{15}{16}$ in. (7.5 cm)

Timna', Haid ibn 'Aqil cemetery

Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

Gift of the American Foundation for the Study of Man (Wendell and Marilyn Phillips Collection) (S2013.2.173)

In addition to distinctive figural sculpture, there is also a strong aniconic tradition in ancient southwestern Arabian art. Cubic stones were sometimes cult objects in much the same way as Nabataean baetyls (see pp. 52–53; fig. 26). Stylized, highly simplified faces, such as the one on this stele, are another shared tradition reflecting the connections

between southwestern Arabian and Nabataean art (cats. 37–38). Multiple stelae of this basic design were found in the Timna' cemetery.¹

The eyes themselves are formed of raised horizontal lens shapes with small pupils at the center and a single eyebrow running above. The nose and mouth are equally schematic, consisting of simple rectilinear shapes. Surviving red pigment can be seen on the raised border, red and black pigment on the eyebrows and around the edges of the eyes, and black adhesive at the edges of the eyes.²

1. Cleveland 1965, pp. 16–20, pls. 36–40. 2. Burkhard Vogt in St J. Simpson 2002, p. 197, no. 276.

28. Stele of 'Iil

2nd–3rd century

Calcite alabaster, H. 21⁵/₈ in. (55 cm), W. 11⁷/₁₆ in. (29 cm), D. 3¹/₈ in. (8 cm)

Southwestern Arabia

Musée du Louvre, Paris (AO 1029)

An inscription at the top of this funerary stele gives the name and lineage of the deceased as “‘Iil, son of Sa‘adillat of the Qaryot tribe,” followed by a curse, invoking the male Venus deity ‘Athtar, on anyone who destroys the stele.¹

The top register of the stele depicts a banquet scene, with ‘Iil seated at right and holding a cup in his right hand. To his left is a table with a vase and bowl, next to which stands a smaller male figure, perhaps a son or an attendant, who carries a cup in each hand. The figure’s single large eye indicates that his head is intended to appear in profile, although his hair is arranged as though he faces frontally. At the left of the scene is a female musician, playing a large stringed instrument with a rounded sound box and two holes. It is not clear from the depiction whether the instrument should be properly classified as a lyre or a lute; both are attested at early dates in the Middle East.² These elements—a seated principal figure, feasting, attendants, and sometimes musicians—are typical of banqueting imagery across the Middle East in many periods. When shown on a funerary stele it is possible that such scenes represent the deceased’s symbolic participation in the funerary banquet itself.

The lower register shows ‘Iil, wearing the same square-shaped headdress and embroidered garment as in the upper register, now riding a horse and driving a camel before him. It is likely that the scene represents a significant aspect of his identity or business in life.

One striking element of the stele is the middle band separating the two registers, which takes the form of a Hellenistic vine motif set between rosettes. The presence of the vine, perhaps appropriate here in relation to banqueting imagery, reflects the inclusion of Hellenistic iconography in art across the Middle East, Iran, and Central Asia from the time of Alexander in the fourth century B.C. onward (see pp. 20–21).

1. Calvet and Robin 1997, pp. 107–8, no. 18. 2. Marielle Pic in Emerit et al. 2017, p. 209, no. 40.





29. Incense Burner with Scene of Man Riding Camel

3rd century

Calcite alabaster, H. 12 ⁵/₈ in. (32 cm), W. 5 ⁷/₈ in. (15 cm), D. 3 ¹/₈ in. (8 cm)
Shabwa

The Trustees of the British Museum, London (ME 125682)

This unique incense burner was acquired at Shabwa, the ancient capital of Hadramawt, by the British explorer St John Philby (1885–1960) when he visited the region in 1936 and subsequently donated to the British Museum.¹ The short inscription reads “Adhlal, son of Wahab’il,” probably identifying the individual who donated the burner to a temple. At the time of Philby’s visit there had been no excavations at Shabwa, but subsequent fieldwork identified multiple temples, including the most important one, dedicated to the state god Sayyin, as well as palaces and residential architecture.² The latter included tower houses, also described in inscriptions as rising four or six stories high.³ These are the ancestors of traditional tower houses still seen in Yemen today (fig. 99).

The city of Shabwa was surrounded by a rich agricultural area, but its wealth came from the harvesting of frankincense. Frankincense trees are difficult to cultivate in any concentration, and therefore the resin had to be collected from wild trees located in the territories where climate was conducive to producing the highest quality resin. Hadramawt, the easternmost of the southwestern Arabian kingdoms, held some of this territory within its traditional borders, but as both demand and the kingdom’s power increased during the first century B.C., it expanded to gather frankincense from two other key areas: the Dhofar region, which was 400 miles (640 km) east of Shabwa in what is present-day Oman, and the island of Socotra in the Arabian Sea.⁴

1. Philby 1939, pp. 84–85; Philby 1981. Shabwa is the Sabota/Sabata of ancient Greek sources, e.g., Strabo, *Geography*, 16.4.2; and Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, 6.32(28). 2. Breton 1998. For the temples, see Sedov 2005 and Sedov and Batayi’ 1994. 3. Breton 1999, pp. 82–83. 4. Seland 2005, pp. 275–76.

30. Incense Burner

1st century B.C.–2nd century A.D.
Limestone, H. 9¹/₁₆ in. (23 cm), W. 5³/₈ in. (14 cm), D. 4³/₄ in. (12 cm)
Timna', Haid ibn 'Aqil cemetery
The Trustees of the British Museum, London (ME 132904)

31. Incense Burner

2nd–1st century B.C.
Limestone, H. 3³/₄ in. (9.5 cm), W. 3¹⁵/₁₆ in. (10 cm), D. 3¹⁵/₁₆ in. (10 cm)
Aden
The Trustees of the British Museum, London (ME 113231)

Many southwestern Arabian incense burners feature architectural elements. The first burner shown here (cat. 30) has a stepped and crenellated top evoking a building's roof, while columns with recessed rectangular designs on the left and right sides of the front face are designed to mimic the "false windows" of contemporary Qatabanian buildings and may refer to temples in particular.¹ Dentil bands at the bottom of the design, inside the "false windows," and above the inscription are another architectural reference, evoking cornices. The focus of the design, however, is the astral motif at the center of the front face: a lunar crescent and (damaged) star, probably representing Venus, common symbols in Qatabanian art probably referring to the Qatabanian chief deity 'Amm and the male Venus god 'Athtar, respectively. Below the band is an inscription giving the personal name "Shariqan," the individual who presumably dedicated the incense burner at a temple.

The second incense burner (cat. 31) is simpler in design but also features evocations of architecture in its triangular incised decorations and schematic representations of "false windows" at the sides of the inscriptions.² It is one of a type that has four faces sometimes inscribed with the names of different varieties of incense. In this example, the types are *rand* (an aromatic wood or plant with perfumed leaves),³ *dhahab* (a golden-colored gum), *na'im* (a gum with a sweet mild aroma), and *qust* (costus root).⁴

1. *Treasures* 2009, p. 32. 2. This burner is one of a pair given to the British Museum by Lieutenant-Colonel W. F. Prideaux between 1871 and 1875. 3. St John Simpson in St J. Simpson 2002, p. 95, no. 101. 4. G. Ryckmans 1927, p. 32; Jamme 1971, pp. 39, 41; Kitchen 2000, pp. 32, 34; François Bron in St J. Simpson 2002, pp. 95–96, no. 101.





NABATAEA

AT ITS HEIGHT DURING THE LAST CENTURY B.C. AND FIRST century A.D., the Nabataean kingdom stretched from Mada'in Saleh (ancient Hegra), located in present-day Saudi Arabia in the south to Damascus in the north, and from the Sinai Peninsula in the west to deep in the Arabian Desert to the east (see map, p. xviii). Caravans traveling north from southwestern Arabia eventually crossed into Nabataean territory, giving the kingdom control of the onward flow of frankincense, myrrh, spices, and other commodities to the Mediterranean coast and to the land routes north and east across Syria.

The earliest Greek references to the Nabataeans describe them as nomads, although even in these sources they are already described as dominating the strategic economic niche of controlling trade routes between northern Arabia and the Mediterranean. The description of the Greek general and historian Hieronymos of Cardia, who was present for a military campaign in the region about 312 B.C., is preserved in excerpts included in the first-century B.C. *Library of History* of Diodoros of Sicily:

Fig. 17 Detail of the Palace Tomb (fig. 23), Petra

While there are many Arabian tribes who use the desert as pasture, the Nabataeans far surpass the others in wealth although they are not much more than ten thousand in number; for not a few of them are accustomed to bring down to the sea frankincense and myrrh and the most valuable kinds of spices, which they procure from those who convey them from what is called Arabia Eudaemon [southwestern Arabia]. They are exceptionally fond of freedom; and, whenever a strong force of enemies comes near, they take refuge in the desert, using this as a fortress; for it lacks water and cannot be crossed by others, but to them alone, since they have prepared subterranean reservoirs lined with stucco, it furnishes safety.¹

These nomadic and seminomadic groups became more sedentary, living alongside the existing settled populations in the regions of Edom and Moab in northern Arabia. All of these groups would become part of the Nabataean kingdom, and aspects of their diverse origins remained visible in Nabataean art and religion.²

By at least the second century B.C. a territorial state existed, governed by rulers who styled themselves “kings of the Nabatu (Nabataeans).”³ Its capital, Petra, was located at the center of the kingdom and at a meeting point of trade routes in what is today southern Jordan. A key Nabataean road leading northwest connected Petra with the port city of Gaza on the Mediterranean coast. Other routes led north, connecting to cities throughout Syria and ultimately to the eastern routes that made up the early Silk Road. Recent research makes clear that a third important connection for the kingdom was a sea route, revealed through shipwrecks and ceramic evidence that identify Nabataean trade links from Aqaba (ancient Aela) and along the Arabian coast connecting maritime and inland trade routes (see pp. 14–15).⁴ Leuke Kome, the most significant Nabataean port, is still known only from texts, and there are several competing theories regarding its exact location on the Arabian Red Sea coast.⁵

The city of Petra was built among steep hills, and its most famous monuments are the hundreds of tombs, many with elaborate facades, carved into the sandstone cliffs (fig. 17). These monuments defy easy interpretation and taken alone, they might misrepresent the enormous and complex site. Equally important were the freestanding structures in the

center of the city, including Petra’s major temples, arranged around a colonnaded main street.⁶ One remarkable quality of the site is the evidence it provides for water engineering on a vast scale. Channels brought water from several miles away for drinking and for agriculture, while the little rain that Petra received was efficiently collected via channels and cisterns carved into the cliffs.⁷ The water was sufficient to support a nymphaeum, pools, and elaborate gardens.⁸ This control over water resources was key not only to Nabataean survival and to the viability of desert cities but also to the management of trade routes that created the kingdom’s prosperity.

The modern approach to the site of Petra is through a narrow ravine between high cliffs, known as the Siq (figs. 19–20, 26), which after a walk of approximately three-quarters of a mile (1.2 km) gives way to reveal the most famous of Petra’s monuments: the tomb known as the Khazneh (“Treasury”) (fig. 21). Its full name, Khazneh al-Faroun (“Treasury of the Pharaoh”), originates in the legend that the Egyptian pharaoh, racing to pursue Moses after his crossing of the Red Sea, ordered the monument built to store his gold in the giant urn at its summit. A similar legend relates that the pharaoh left his daughter behind, so that today Petra’s most important temple is known as the Qasr al-Bint al-Faroun (“Fort of the Pharaoh’s Daughter”) (fig. 22). In reality, this temple, set within a large temenos enclosure, was probably the cult center of the city’s patron deity Dushara (probably “Lord of the Shara Mountains”).

Petra’s landscape is extremely dramatic, characterized by steep rock faces of colorfully banded reddish sandstone. The rock-cut tomb facades at the site take advantage of this geology. Their traditional form is stark and rectilinear, with little elaboration over most of the facade, but always topped by stepped decoration, or “crow-step” patterns.⁹ Comparisons have been made to much earlier Iron Age monuments, where the motif is best known in Assyrian and Achaemenid Persian art but was adopted far more widely. In particular, Nabataean rock-cut tomb forms bear a resemblance to older freestanding Phoenician tombs at Amrit on the Mediterranean coast, cuboid in form and displaying “crow-step” patterns at their peaks. Not all of the intermediate steps are clear, although recently comparable second-century B.C. precedents for this form of Nabataean tomb have been found in Arabian funerary monuments.¹⁰

More elaborate forms of the basic Nabataean tomb design developed by incorporating elements such as doorways and columns drawn from classical architectural

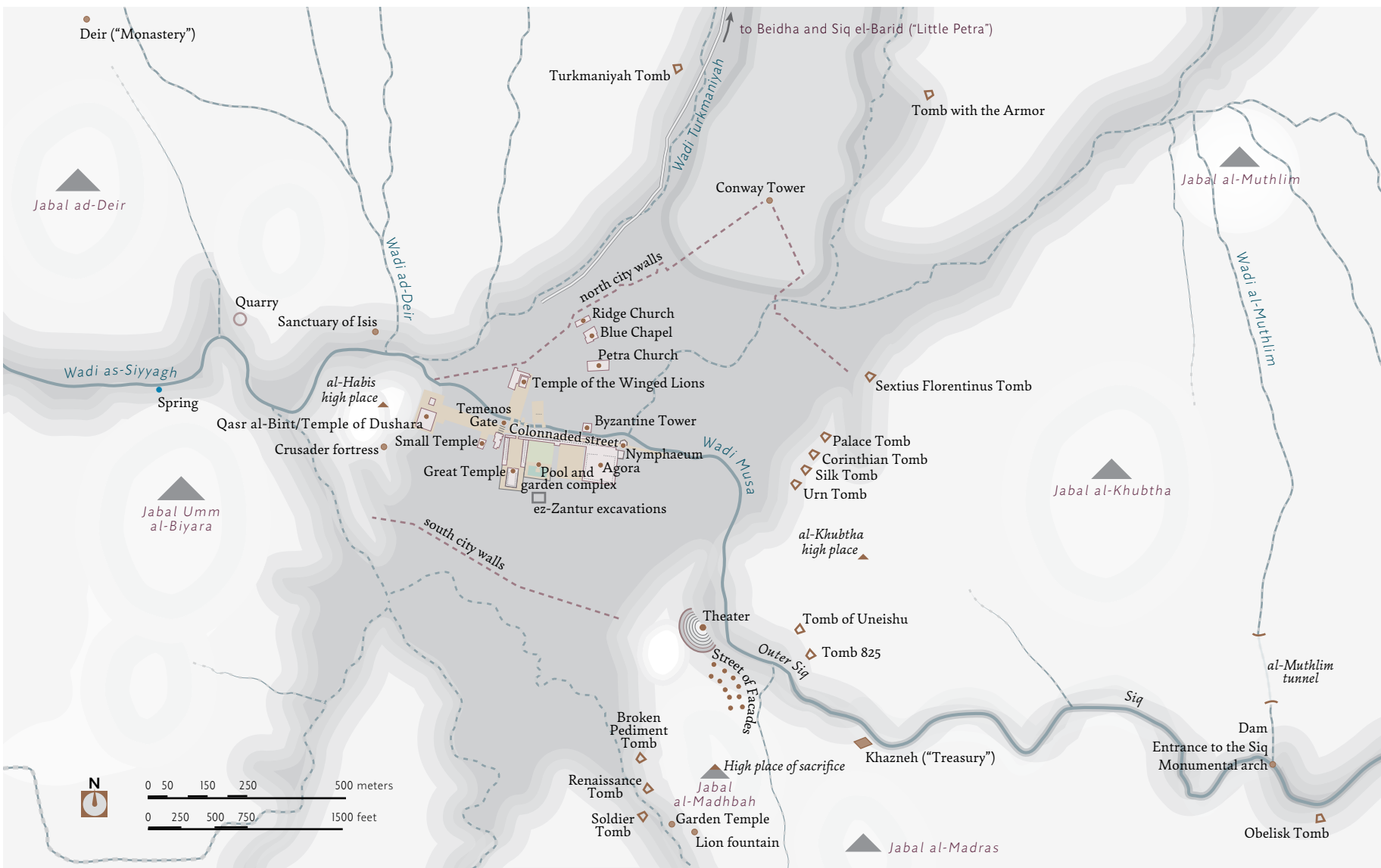


Fig. 18 Plan of the site of Petra

facades. These elements can be seen in varying degrees in different tombs, but the most famous tombs at the site—the Khazneh and the so-called Royal Tombs, known as the Palace Tomb, Corinthian Tomb, Silk Tomb, and Urn Tomb (figs. 17, 23)—are also among the most extreme examples. The architectural features of the tombs exist only in the facades, however; like other Nabataean tombs their interiors are generally cavernous but extremely simple in design. Thus, although some facades are complex, all could be carved using the same process of working down the cliff face, cutting away the rock to create illusionistic architectural features.

The facades cannot be understood only as tomb entrances. A Nabataean text associated with one tomb seems to describe its use as the backdrop for elaborate funerary rituals possibly involving large numbers of people.¹¹ Moreover, it is unclear whether funerary events were the only times the spaces in front of the tombs were used for ritual activity: the extensive furniture and other installations mentioned in the same inscription suggest that the built space was at least semipermanent. Little archaeological evidence has been found to shed light on this question, in part because of the large amount of soil that has accumulated over the



Fig. 19 The Siq, Petra



Fig. 20 One of two pairs of men leading camels carved into the wall of the Siq, Petra

ancient floors below the most prominent tombs, including the Khazneh, which appears today at ground level but in antiquity would have stood far above visitors emerging from the Siq. However, the Khazneh does give one further clue to the purpose of the facades. The dramatic effect of its appearance at the exit to the Siq is deliberate, and to some extent surely intended to awe and impress visitors, as the tombs continue to do today.

Between the cliffs sits the lower town of Petra, where excavations have gradually revealed features that include temples and a colonnaded street (fig. 25). The Qasr al-Bint was probably the most important temple in the city and dedicated to Dushara, the chief deity in the Nabataean pantheon.¹² Through the interaction of Nabataean with Graeco-Roman religion, Dushara came to be identified with both Zeus and Dionysos, so that the images of these deities might also refer to him (cats. 32–33). Although most of the Nabataean pantheon was ultimately Arabian in origin, Dushara is one of several deities who can be traced to the local Edomite religion that predates the Nabataean kingdom. Another such Edomite god, Qos, was the patron deity of the sanctuary at Khirbet et-Tannur (cats. 45–49).

The so-called Great Temple is a more puzzling structure (fig. 25): the monumental building includes unusual features that have led archaeologists to speculate on the variety of possible civic and religious roles it might have performed. The Great Temple is built on an elevated platform rising above what later became the Roman colonnaded street at

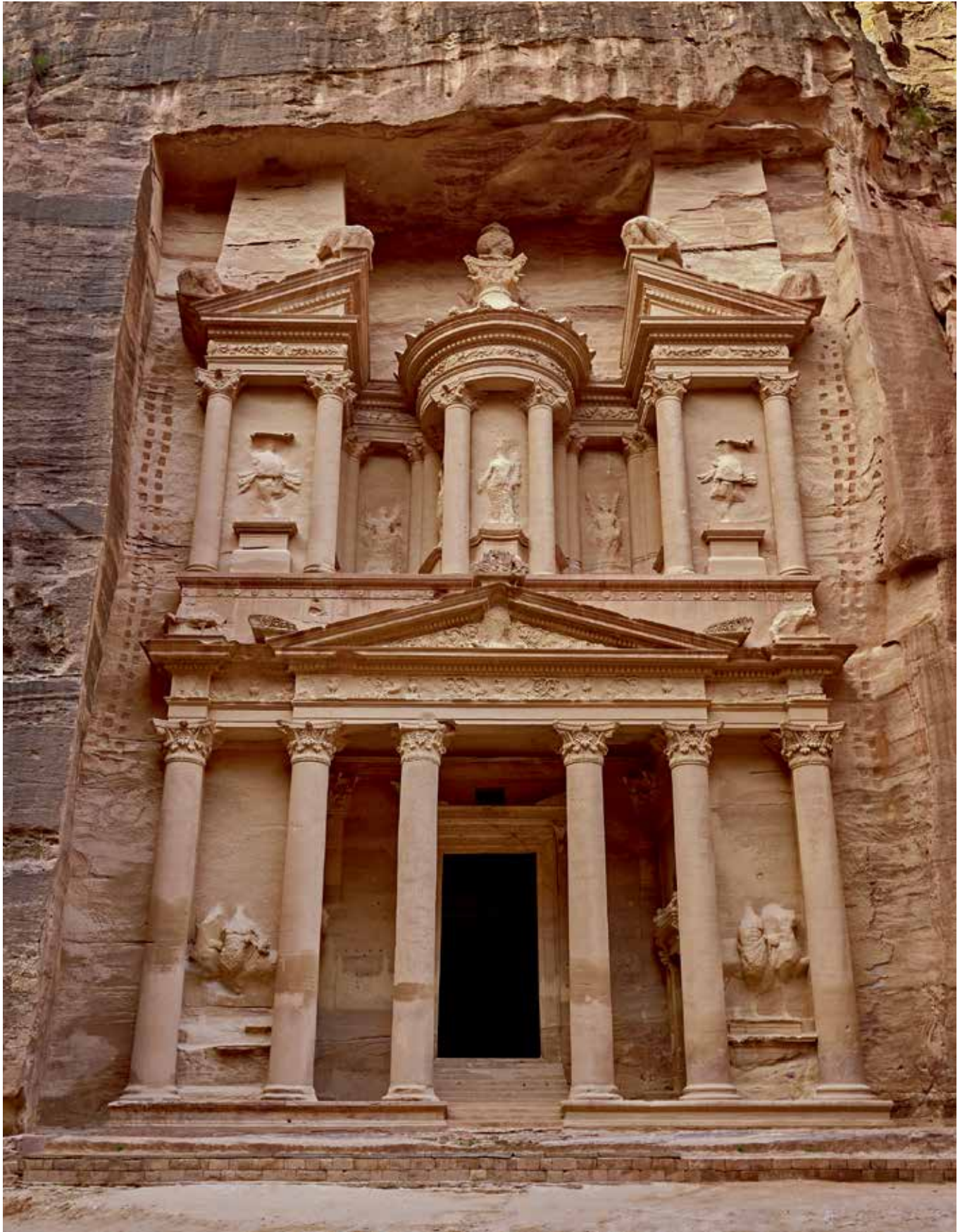


Fig. 21 The Khazneh, Petra



Fig. 22 Qasr al-Bint (Temple of Dushara), Petra

Petra, and which must already have been the city's primary thoroughfare during the Nabataean period. It would have been an imposing structure, and its orientation uses the surrounding rocky landscape to provide a dramatic natural frame for its appearance.¹³ A particularly interesting feature of the temple's later phase is the addition of a *theatron*, an open-roofed theater that could apparently seat more than 600 people.¹⁴ This structure and other unusual characteristics of the architecture have led to debate about the building's function, and whether the term "temple" is an adequate description for it.¹⁵ In 2001, an inscription was discovered in the nearby Byzantine church, where other fragments from the Great Temple have been found, referring to a "*theatron* of Dusares [Dushara]." This is probably

the *theatron* of the Great Temple and strengthens the case for a primarily religious rather than royal function.¹⁶ On the other hand, impressive gardens, including a large pool with an island pavilion, that have been discovered on the eastern side of the temple are reminiscent of the gardens associated with Hellenistic palaces in the Middle East, particularly those of Herod the Great (r. 37–4 B.C.) in neighboring Judaea (fig. 33).¹⁷

The identification of the ancient palaces themselves has proven difficult. In recent years, however, survey work in an area between the colonnaded street and the Royal Tombs has begun to suggest that this part of the site was the city's *basileion*, not one single palace but an area of royal residences. Other probably royal dwellings have been identified at very



Fig. 23 The Royal Tombs, four of the most impressive rock-cut tombs at Petra, overlooking the city. From left to right: Palace Tomb, Corinthian Tomb, Silk Tomb, Urn Tomb

high points on the site, including the mountain peak of Umm al-Biyarah (“mother of cisterns”), which was a key point in both the water supply and the strategic defense of Petra.¹⁸

Above the city, a number of open-air high places were also used as ritual sites, equipped with large water tanks, basins with drains, and altars probably used for sacrifices. These spaces show signs both of arrangement for cultic processions and the creation of spaces for large numbers of people. Specific routes were carved out of the landscape that processions or pilgrimages might follow up from the city to the peaks, and once there some high places show evidence of circumambulatory routes around their altars.¹⁹ One of Petra’s most iconic monuments, the colossal Deir, or “Monastery”

(fig. 24), is usually interpreted as a tomb, but although its facade resembles those of the tombs, it has a different internal structure, and the recent discovery of benches in its interior may suggest it was a space for ritual feasting rather than burial.²⁰ Like the high places, the Deir is situated far above the city, accessible via a Nabataean rock-cut stairway with more than 900 steps. The open space in front of the monumental facade was configured in a manner comparable to the high places, with features including a large circular enclosure and a platform that may have acted as seating for observers of a cultic performance in front of the Deir.²¹ Nevertheless, further high places surround the Deir at an even greater elevation, and it may be that this unique monument played its role in conjunction with these high places.



Fig. 24 The Deir, Petra

The high places of Petra are spectacular and allowed for extended procession routes through the mountains unique to that site, but their religious significance may have had parallels at sites without Petra's dramatic cliffs, and indeed far beyond Nabataea. Temples across the region, particularly in Syria, incorporated high places into their designs, usually in the form of single or paired towers.²²

At first glance the sculptures of Petra present an impression of contradictory traditions: fully Hellenistic-style figural sculptures of classical divinities appear to be contemporary with far more stylized and even aniconic sculptures strongly connected to southwestern Arabian art. Closer examination tends to reveal integration of these two traditions and an ongoing interchange between them and with Syrian sculptural traditions.²³

The most important Nabataean sculptures in terms of religious significance were often aniconic baetyls—typically cuboid or sometimes dome-shaped sacred stones or their forms carved into rock reliefs (fig. 26).²⁴ These aniconic divine images are one of many indications of the links to southwestern Arabia in Nabataean art (see p. 28). The baetyls represent gods and often appear as pairs within a

niche—the many examples at Petra are generally taken to represent Dushara and his consort al-'Uzza. Baetyls have also been found within Nabataean temples. It seems that the Qasr al-Bint was at one time extensively decorated with Hellenized figural imagery on its exterior (cat. 36), while the interior housed aniconic baetyls, which were the actual divine images. The same was probably true of the Great Temple and the Temple of the Winged Lions, suggesting that such juxtapositions may have been more the rule than the exception.²⁵ At the same time, discoveries at Khirbet et-Tannur show clearly that Nabataean cult images could also exist in the form of anthropomorphic statues and reliefs (cats. 46–47). One sculpture at Petra combines a baetyl with the bust of a god within a medallion: both images probably represent the same god, Dionysos-Dushara.²⁶

Some of the imagery discovered at Petra relates to Greek theater. Among the sculptures discovered at the Temenos Gate was the bust of a muse of the theater, normally interpreted as Melpomene, the Muse of Tragedy, though in place of the typical tragic mask she holds that of a satyr or Pan,²⁷ as well as a bust of Dionysos, the god of theater, as well as wine (cat. 33). Other theater masks in sculpture have been discovered at the Great Temple, where they apparently

formed part of the architectural decoration.²⁸ However, no evidence exists for a direct association between these masks and the Great Temple's *theatron*.²⁹ The sculptures with masks found near the Temenos Gate may be earlier than or contemporary with Petra's main theater, a unique structure carved from the cliff face in the first century A.D. (fig. 27).³⁰ The specificity of the theater mask sculptures may reveal their makers' familiarity with Greek theater and its conventions, implying either that the sculptors came from elsewhere, perhaps Alexandria, or more likely that Greek plays were performed at Petra.³¹ There is no direct evidence that Greek plays were performed at Petra's rock-cut theater before the Roman incorporation of Nabataea, but this seems highly probable given the numerous theaters that existed in other parts of the Roman and Parthian Middle East during this period. A famous story from Plutarch reveals that the Parthian kings themselves enjoyed Greek plays. Following Rome's disastrous defeat at Carrhae in 53 B.C. (see pp. 8–9), Plutarch claims that the head of the Roman general Crassus was brought to the Parthian king Orodes II (r. ca. 57–38 B.C.) (cat. 5) and immediately incorporated as a prop in a performance of Euripides's *Bacchae*.³²

Familiarity with Greek theater is relevant to a larger question: how did Nabataean viewers understand images of the Olympian gods? In some cases it is clear from the context that these images were used to represent astral symbols and the zodiac (cats. 48–49), while inscriptions reveal that Nabataean and Greek deities were sometimes equated, as Dushara was with Zeus and Dionysos and al-'Uzza with Aphrodite. If Greek theater was a significant part of Nabataean cultural life, it would follow that the identities and stories of the Greek gods would have been well known. It therefore seems likely that when Nabataean viewers saw the images of Dionysos and Aphrodite (cats. 33–34), they saw both the Greek deities in their own right and the evocation of their Nabataean equivalents, while also distinguishing such representations from the "real," often aniconic, cult images of their gods.

Nabataean sites present a complex and varied religious and cultural landscape, and smaller sanctuary sites in particular have revealed much about Nabataean religious practice, as well as imagery not seen at Petra. One of the most important has been Khirbet et-Tannur, where in 1937 excavations were conducted by a joint team from the Jerusalem School of the American Schools of Oriental Research and the Transjordan

Department of Antiquities. The excavation was led by the archaeologist Nelson Glueck of Cincinnati's Hebrew Union College, and following the division of finds the U.S. portion of the sculptures entered the collections of the Cincinnati Art Museum.³³ Khirbet et-Tannur is one of two small shrines—the other is Khirbet edh-Dharih—situated only a few miles apart on the ancient King's Highway. Khirbet et-Tannur was itself a high place and site of pilgrimage, located at the top of a prominent hill named Jabal et-Tannur.³⁴ Nabataean sanctuary sites seem typically to be located along major routes and to have played the role of caravanserais that elsewhere in the Middle East might have been fulfilled by villages.³⁵

The results of the project were remarkable, including the excavation of the central shrine of the sanctuary and its cult images (cats. 45–51).³⁶ As well as reconstructing the multiple phases of the altar platform at the heart of the sanctuary, careful reexamination of this excavation and its finds in recent years have revealed new information about the use of the site and cultic practice. Remains of food and liquid, including burnt offerings (indicated by bones burned at a high temperature) showed that food was placed before the deities' images, while other food remains in nearby rooms reflect mortal, probably ritual, feasting.³⁷ Unlike most Nabataean temples, the altar platform at Khirbet et-Tannur was set in the center of a room, allowing for processions around it (fig. 30); the same may be true of podia at Khirbet edh-Dharih and the Temple of the Winged Lions at Petra, paralleling the evidence for circumambulation at the open-air high places. There is also evidence that in its earliest form the altar itself was the cult image: an inscription implies that the original image was a stele or baetyl, while the fact that the original altar base was carefully enclosed within the later, larger altar platform that housed the cult statues strongly implies that the altar base itself was sacred.³⁸ If this is the case, Khirbet et-Tannur shows a continuity between aniconic and figural cult images, with the later forms of the altar platform effectively combining the two. Finally, discoveries of large numbers of unusually powerful oil lamps suggest the performance of nighttime rituals, and the form of some of these lamps also suggests that they were carried in (presumably nocturnal) processions.³⁹

Nabataea's shift from independence to incorporation by Rome as the province of Arabia in 106 under the emperor Trajan (r. 98–117) seems to have caused little disruption to its economic model.⁴⁰ However, Nabataea's economic



Fig. 25 View of Petra's lower town, showing the Great Temple, colonnaded street, and Temenos Gate of the Qasr al-Bint



Fig. 26 Baetyls carved in the Siq, Petra



Fig. 27 The rock-cut theater, Petra

position did change as Roman navigation of the Red Sea improved and viable Indian Ocean routes from Egypt were established (see pp. 14–15). Gradually these new routes began to undercut southwestern Arabia's virtual monopoly on Indian Ocean trade, also making it possible to circumvent Nabataea. At the same time, eastern land routes from Syria to Mesopotamia and beyond were becoming more important as a unified Parthian Empire facilitated trade across Iran and Central Asia. The city of Bosra, at the northern edge of the Nabataean kingdom in the Hauran region of Syria, became increasingly important for its position in this trade network as well as its agricultural richness, gradually overtaking even Petra in economic significance (cat. 53). After the

incorporation of Nabataea into the Roman Empire, Bosra, renamed Nova Traiana Bostra after the emperor Trajan, became the provincial capital. Petra continued to be an important city but was no longer the political center it had once been, and there is far less evidence of monumental construction at the site after the first century. A major earthquake devastated Petra in 363, and the city was never rebuilt on the same scale. There is considerable evidence, however, for Late Antique occupation at the site, most visible today in the well-preserved remains of several Byzantine churches near the Temple of the Winged Lions, including in one case elaborate floor mosaics, and in another columns of blue granite imported from Egypt.⁴¹

32. Bust of Zeus-Dushara

1st century B.C.–1st century A.D.

Limestone, H. 31⁷/₈ in. (81 cm), W. 27¹⁵/₁₆ in. (71 cm), D. 21⁵/₈ in. (55 cm)

Petra, area of Temenos Gate

Department of Antiquities, Amman (JP 532)

It is likely that this sculpture represented Dushara, the chief deity of Petra and the head of the Nabataean pantheon, who was also identified with the Greek god Zeus.¹ Dushara's name, probably meaning "Lord of the Shara Mountain," indicates that his origins were local.² He is attested as an older Edomite deity and must have been adopted as Nabataeans settled at Petra and elsewhere in Edom, the region in northwestern Arabia that would become the center of the Nabataean kingdom.

The massive bust illustrates the meeting of Hellenistic conventions with those of Syrian and Arabian art. The style is somewhat similar to the cult statue of a storm god found at the sanctuary of Khirbet et-Tannur (cat. 46),³ but the position of the head, turned instead of frontal, and the treatment of the hair and beard also strongly recall Graeco-Roman depictions of Zeus.⁴ The god wears a laurel wreath with berries, at the front of which is a large rectangular medallion. Images of this kind existed at the same time as aniconic baetyls, and it seems clear that in Nabataean art these multiple modes for representing the gods could

operate simultaneously.⁵ However, both archaeology and the descriptions of classical authors suggest that the actual cult image of Dushara was an aniconic stele or baetyl.⁶

The bust was discovered at Petra's Temenos Gate—the edge of the courtyard enclosure of Dushara's temple, known today as the Qasr al-Bint (see p. 48; fig. 22)—as was the so-called "1967 group" (cats. 33–35).⁷ Similar to these sculptures it is possible that the bust was discarded as buildings in the center of the city, including the gate itself, were renovated in antiquity, possibly during a period of iconoclasm. A large figural sculpture such as this one could have formed part of the decorative program near or around the gate in an earlier phase.

1. The bust was first tentatively identified as Serapis (see Parr 1957, pp. 6–7), but the god wears a laurel wreath rather than Serapis's characteristic *modius* (a cylindrical headdress or crown), and his hair lacks the four corkscrew curls with which that god is normally represented. 2. Parr 2003, p. 28. 3. McKenzie 1990, p. 134. 4. Zayadine 2003, p. 59. 5. Patrich 1990; Basile 2002; Patrich 2007. 6. Patrich 1990, pp. 50–113. 7. Parr 1957, pp. 6–7, pls. 1, 2; McKenzie 1990, p. 134.





33. Relief of Dionysos-Dushara

1st century B.C.–1st century A.D.
Limestone, H. 14³/₁₆ in. (36 cm), W. 21⁵/₈ in. (55 cm), D. [est] 11¹³/₁₆ in. (30 cm)
Petra, area of Temenos Gate
Department of Antiquities, Amman (JP 317)

The group of sculptures found near the Temenos Gate of the Qasr al-Bint in 1967 included panels in rectangular frames representing the deities Dionysos (cat. 33), Aphrodite (cat. 34), Athena, Hermes, and Ares, all in the same style, as well as other figures such as that of a Muse.¹ The group probably formed part of the exterior decoration of a building, perhaps one of the major temples or a larger structure surrounding the Temenos Gate.² Friezes of busts depicting Greek gods, mythological figures, and personifications of signs of the zodiac appeared on the facades of multiple Nabataean temples, including the Qasr al-Bint itself (cat. 36), the sanctuaries of Khirbet et-Tannur (fig. 31) and Khirbet edh-Dharih, and some tombs, notably the Urn Tomb and the Armor Tomb at Petra.³

34. Relief of a Goddess, Probably Aphrodite-al-'Uzza

1st century B.C.–1st century A.D.
Limestone, H. 18¹/₂ in. (47 cm), W. 18¹/₈ in. (46 cm), D. 16¹⁵/₁₆ (41.5 cm)
Petra, area of Temenos Gate
Department of Antiquities, Amman (JP 515)

The sculptures of the so-called 1967 group were damaged in antiquity, possibly as part of an iconoclastic episode (others in the group have had their faces destroyed),⁴ and may have been discarded together as part of a rebuilding program either for this reason or following an earthquake. An alternative possibility is that they were collected at a somewhat later date and were intended to be burned for quicklime.⁵

The deities in these two reliefs are shown in a strongly Hellenistic style with their conventional attributes.⁶ Dionysos wears a wreath of ivy and grape leaves and a cloth diadem, with a *thyrsos* (a fennel stalk topped with a pinecone or ivy), visible to his right in the corner of the frame, while Aphrodite is shown wearing a diadem and veil and a chiton (tunic) of finely crinkled linen. Nonetheless, the sculptures



may primarily have been understood to represent not Greek gods but their Nabataean counterparts. The Nabataean supreme deity Dushara was sometimes identified with Dionysos in addition to Zeus.⁷ Similarly, Dushara's consort al-'Uzza was equated with Aphrodite.⁸ Whether assimilated to Dushara or simply in his own right, Dionysos, god of wine, and Dionysiac imagery did play a role in Nabataean religion and art. The Nabataean kingdom was a significant producer of wine; grapes were a major crop at Beidha, the



agricultural area to the north of Petra,⁹ and many Nabataean wine presses have been discovered there, as has a grand hall filled with Dionysiac imagery

Fig. 28 Detail of ceiling painting from the painted biclinium at Siq el-Barid ("Little Petra")

overlooking the ancient vineyards.¹⁰ A ceiling painting in a small rock-cut banqueting room at the nearby site of Siq el-Barid ("Little Petra") features vines, leaves, flowers, birds, and figures of Eros and Pan, all appropriate to a Dionysiac theme in a space for feasting (fig. 28).¹¹

1. Wright 1967–68; Lyttelton and Blagg 1990; McKenzie 1990, pp. 134–35, pls. 59–62.
2. Most or all of the group are generally accepted to have come from a single building. Contra Lyttelton and Blagg (1990, p. 272), who argue that the sculptures differ sufficiently in style to suspect they come from multiple monuments.
3. McKenzie 2003, pp. 165–67.
4. Patrich (1990, pp. 153–57; 2007, pp. 97–100) argues that datable episodes of iconoclasm at the Temple of the Winged Lions and possibly the Qasr al-Bint occurred during the reign of Maliku II (r. ca. 40–70).
5. On this phenomenon elsewhere, see Laird 2000.
6. The style of the sculptures has been compared to that of sculpture made in Alexandria but with distinct local variations, such as the rounded jaws and pupils rendered in raised relief; see Friedland 2007, p. 346.
7. Patrich (2005) argues that the association of Dionysos with Dushara was restricted specifically to his role in death and rebirth.
8. Patrich 1990, pp. 85–86.
9. On current survey work, see Knodell et al. 2017.
10. Al-Salameen 2005; Bikai, Kanellopoulos, and Saunders 2007; Bikai, Kanellopoulos, and Saunders 2008.
11. Glueck 1956.

35. Relief with Eagle and Thunderbolt

Ca. 1st century B.C.–1st century A.D.

Limestone, H. 21 5/8 in. (55 cm), W. 24 in. (61 cm), D. 23 5/8 in. (60 cm)

Petra, area of Temenos Gate

Department of Antiquities, Amman, (JP 507)

This eagle comes from the so-called 1967 group of sculptures found in that year near the Temenos Gate of the Qasr al-Bint. It is rendered in the same strongly Hellenistic style as others in the group (cats. 33–34), all of which may have belonged originally to the same building.¹ The body and wings of the eagle fill a rectangular framed block, while the head rises from the block and is sculpted in the round.² In its talons the eagle holds a thunderbolt, associated with Zeus and other storm gods (cat. 46). At Petra, the primary association is with Dushara. Eagles appear above some tombs both at Petra and at Mada'in Saleh, where they probably signified Dushara in his role as protector of the dead.³ The forks of the thunderbolt are textured and shaped in such a

way that they seem to represent a sheaf of wheat rather than lightning; the treatment may be a misinterpretation of the highly stylized thunderbolt seen in Roman versions of the image. Such misunderstandings or reinterpretations were possible, particularly since such imagery was disseminated primarily through depictions on coins,⁴ and would increase the likelihood that the sculptors of the 1967 group were Nabataean rather than foreign.

1. Wright 1967–68, pl. 16e, f; Livio 1985, pl. 58 (head); McKenzie 1990, pp. 134–35. 2. A previous reconstruction placed the head of a griffin on the eagle's body. McKenzie (1990, p. 135, pl. 63c, d) shows this reconstruction, noting that it appears incorrect and that the eagle head apparently belongs with the sculpture. 3. Healey 2001, p. 169. 4. Rowan 2016.





36. Bust of Helios

1st century B.C.–1st century A.D.
Limestone, H. 20⁷/₈ in. (53 cm), W. 22¹/₁₆ in. (56 cm), D. 13 in. (33 cm)
Petra, Qasr al-Bint, metope of Doric frieze
Department of Antiquities, Amman (J 592)

The Greek sun god Helios is identified primarily by the solar rays on his crown. In style this Helios figure is comparable to the group of sculptures found near the Temenos Gate of the Qasr al-Bint (cats. 33–35). It, too, is broadly Hellenistic but with particular characteristics not seen elsewhere, such as the full, rounded jawline and enlarged eyes with pupils presented in slightly raised relief.¹ The sculpture was found near and resembles a row of busts of gods appearing in roundels on the metopes of a Doric frieze above the architrave of the temple; the top-right edge of Helios's roundel survives.² As with those of the Temenos Gate group, this bust may have been understood to hold a Nabataean identity in addition to—or even instead of—Helios. Another bust of Helios that formed part of a series on a temple exterior has

been discovered at the sanctuary at Khirbet edh-Dharih, where other surviving sculptures make clear that the group represents personifications of signs of the zodiac.³

The Qasr al-Bint demonstrates some of the ambiguity surrounding figural images in Nabataean art. Figural sculpture survives on the exterior walls of the temple, but it seems clear that the actual cult images inside the Qasr al-Bint were aniconic baetyls representing the chief deity Dushara and his consort al-'Uzza.⁴

1. Friedland 2007, p. 346. 2. McKenzie 1990, pp. 39, 137, pls. 40 (surviving frieze), 68c; Patrich 1990, pp. 153–54. 3. Villeneuve and al-Muheisen 2000, p. 1546; McKenzie, Gibson, and Reyes 2002, p. 63. 4. McKenzie 1990, pl. 67b.

37. Stele of a Goddess

1st century

Limestone, H. 13³/₄ in. (35 cm), W. 7⁷/₈ in. (20 cm), D. 4⁷/₈ in. (12.4 cm)

Petra, Ez-Zantur

Department of Antiquities, Amman (J 6321)

38. Stele of a Goddess (“Goddess of Hayyan”)

1st-2nd century

Limestone, H. 12⁵/₈ in. (32 cm), W. 7⁷/₈ in. (20 cm), D. 4⁷/₈ in. (12.4 cm)

Petra, Temple of the Winged Lions

Department of Antiquities, Amman (JP 13483)

In addition to aniconic baetyls (fig. 26), many examples of stelae with simplified and abstracted faces representing deities have been found at Nabataean sites, particularly at Petra’s Temple of the Winged Lions. Positioned facing the Qasr al-Bint and the Great Temple in the center of the ancient city, the Temple of the Winged Lions is thought to have been dedicated to the consort of Dushara. At Petra this goddess was al-‘Uzza, though elsewhere in Nabataea Dushara’s consort seems to be Allat.¹ At the site of ‘Ain ash-Shellaleh in Wadi Rumm, an inscription identifies a baetyl with eyes as al-‘Uzza and a smaller plain stele as the “Lord of the House,” probably Dushara. This scale relationship is repeated elsewhere and may mean that Dushara is shown as al-‘Uzza’s son.² A second “eye-baetyl” at the site is also identified as al-‘Uzza, but another is named as the goddess al-Kutba, and an inscription at Wadi as-Siyyagh identifies a similar baetyl as Atargatis: it therefore seems clear the image could be used to represent multiple goddesses.³

The stelae were produced in a variety of shapes and sizes, but most were made of local sandstone and limestone, some with cuboid niches carved for eye and nose inlays that are now lost. The first stele (cat. 37) is fairly typical, with a rectangular nose between raised-relief eyes that closely resemble the “eye-baetyls” carved into rock faces.⁴ The second stele (cat. 38) is exceptional, both in its elaborate design and its highly finished appearance. An inscription on the base reads “The goddess of Hayyan, son of Nybat,” identifying the stele’s donor but not specifically naming the goddess depicted. The eyes and eyebrows, nose, and lips of the goddess’s face are indicated with strong, simple shapes in raised relief. This stylized rendering of a face within a flat rectangular frame closely resembles many southwestern Arabian sculptures (cat. 27).⁵ In addition to the schematic face itself, the incorpo-



ration of architectural elements and “false windows” into the design of the frame also finds parallels (cats. 30–31).

In Nabataea such stelae existed alongside far more naturalistic imagery, and in this example the upper band of leaves representing a wreath worn by the goddess is the same as those worn by divinities depicted in a Hellenistic style (cats. 32–34, 36). At the center of the wreath is a circular recess, which, like the eyes, must originally have been inlaid in another material, surrounded by crescent-shaped “horns” that suggest this is a stylized representation of a *basileion*, the horned disk associated with some Egyptian deities.⁶ The motif may indicate a connection with the goddess Isis, who is also attested in a royal inscription at Petra,⁷ but the meaning could also be more general, as the symbol was attached to multiple goddesses. Similarly, terracotta goddess figurines from Petra depicted wearing the *basileion* may or may not be



depictions of Isis,⁸ while other aspects of the temple architecture and altar platform also suggest Isis associations.⁹ One explanation is that the Egyptian Isis and Nabataean al-'Uzza were identified with one another; another is that attributes of Isis such as the *basileion* were simply applied to the Nabataean supreme goddess.¹⁰ A final possibility is that the ambiguity of representations of divinities in Nabataean art reflects a genuine flexibility in the way they were perceived by ancient viewers, whereby the identities and iconography of Nabataean deities were significantly more fluid than their Greek and Roman counterparts.¹¹

1. Hammond (1990) argues that Dushara's consort at Petra should also be Allat and that the Temple of the Winged Lions was dedicated to her. Zayadine (1991, p. 293) observes that dedicatory inscriptions at Petra refer to al-'Uzza, not Allat, and that al-'Uzza, as a goddess of love and fertility, is a better candidate for assimilation of Isis than the warrior Allat (see also cat. 46). 2. Wenning 2001, p. 82. 3. Zayadine 1991, pp. 285–86, figs. 3, 4; Wenning 2001, pp. 83–84, fig. 3. 4. Patrich 1990, p. 82. 5. *Ibid.*, pp. 84–85. 6. Zayadine 1991, p. 289. 7. Milik and Starcky 1975, pp. 120–23, pls. 44.1, 2; Zayadine 1991, p. 290. The Isis *basileion* also appears on a simpler “eye-baetyl” at ez-Zantur; see Lindner 1988, identified as al-'Uzza-Isis; Zayadine 1991, pp. 283–85, figs. 1, 2, as Isis. 8. Alpass 2010, p. 100. On the figurines themselves, see El-Khouri 2002. 9. Hammond 2003, pp. 224–26. 10. *Ibid.*, p. 226, as Allat. 11. Alpass 2010, pp. 110–12.



39. Elephant Capital

1st century B.C.–early 1st century A.D.

Limestone, H. 16⁹/₁₆ in. (42 cm), W. 49⁷/₁₆ in. (125.5 cm), D. 29¹/₂ in. (75 cm)

Petra, Great Temple, forecourt

Department of Antiquities, Amman (JP 7743)

Excavations at the Great Temple of Petra revealed hundreds of column capitals whose corners terminate in elephant heads. Unique to Nabataean architecture, these capitals are derived from Ionic column capitals, which end in volutes at either side so that the spiral of the scrolls' ends is visible from front and back with the sides of the volutes in profile. Some adaptations of the form turned these into radially symmetrical designs with four volutes, one at each corner. This four-volute design may have come to Nabataea via Alexandria as a result of Egyptian trading contacts.¹ At Petra's Great Temple, the four volutes became elephant heads whose trunks evoked the spirals of the original form, with acanthus leaves still visible beneath the trunks. A similar innovation produced the lions at the corners of column capitals that have given the Temple of the Winged Lions its modern name (cats. 37–38). There was no Graeco-Roman model for animal-headed capitals; instead the inspiration may have come from Middle Eastern sources: bull, lion, and griffin capitals were a common feature of Achaemenid art, for example.² Descendants of this Achaemenid tradition can be seen, albeit no longer as capitals, in the lion and bull protomes of Heliopolis-Baalbek (cats. 95, 97).

Although fragments of elephant capitals had been found previously, the Great Temple excavations recovered hundreds of examples in the area of the Lower Temenos courtyard, where the few pieces discovered elsewhere probably also originated.³ They belonged to the columns of colonnades lining the east and west sides of the courtyard

that formed the largest outer, open-air section of the temple complex (fig. 25).⁴ More recently, elephant capitals have also been found at an elaborately decorated building in the ancient vineyards of Beidha whose other decoration is strongly associated with Dionysos.⁵ The iconography of the triumph of Dionysos often included elephants, referring to the god's mythological journey to India. Given the popularity of Dionysos-Dushara at Petra, it seems possible that the same associations were evoked at the Great Temple.

Elephants were once native to Syria but seem to have died out around the eighth century B.C., probably hunted to extinction.⁶ However, beginning in the Seleucid period, elephants reappeared in the Middle East, brought from India to be used as weapons of war. The elephant became a primary Seleucid royal and imperial symbol,⁷ and it would remain important both in royal imagery and in battle through the subsequent Parthian and Roman age and into the Sasanian period.⁸ Here, the elephants are delicately rendered to show their thin, fanlike ears and the wrinkled skin of the heads and trunks. Indeed, they are carved in sufficiently naturalistic detail to make their species clear: the two domes of the head and the shape of the ears identify them as Indian rather than African elephants.⁹

1. McKenzie 2001, p. 102. 2. Ibid. 3. Also at Khirbet Brak; see Parr 1960, p. 135, pl. 16.1; Glueck 1965, p. 60, pl. 4, misidentified as a dolphin; and Blagg 1990. Elephant heads had also been found and misidentified in the area of the Temenos Gate at Petra. Excavations at the Great Temple have since made their identities clear, and it is likely that the earlier discoveries were originally also part of the Great Temple; see Joukowsky 2002, p. 246. 4. Basile 1998. 5. Bikai, Kanellopoulos, and Saunders 2008, pp. 475–76, figs. 9, 10. 6. Graff 2016. 7. Kosmin 2014, p. 3. (Kosmin's book, on the Seleucid Empire, is titled *The Land of the Elephant Kings*.) 8. Daryaei 2016. 9. Basile 1998, p. 198.



40. Roundel

1st century

Stucco, pigment, Diam. 39³/₄ in. (101 cm), D. 2¹⁵/₁₆ in. (75 cm)

Petra, Great Temple, "Baroque Room"

Department of Antiquities, Amman (JP 9304)

One of the most interesting discoveries made during the excavation of the Great Temple at Petra was the so-called Baroque Room, a space adjoining a shrine in the southwest corner of the complex and named for its elaborate stucco decoration, found in a collapsed state but with some surviving paint and gilding.¹ The stucco designs are valuable sources for reconstructing the original interior appearance of Nabataean buildings, and this example—a medallion from the room's ceiling—is particularly notable for its extensive preservation of ancient pigment. A central cluster of acanthus leaves is surrounded by an intricate eight-pointed radial design trimmed with egg-and-dart and leaf-and-dart patterning, with red, blue, and white pigment.

Walls and columns in other rooms in the Great Temple were also plastered and painted with red, white, yellow, and blue pigments.² Across Petra, including in the rock-cut tombs, the stone of interior walls is dressed with diagonal lines that seem intended for plastering; however, little plaster survives from any tomb, and in many cases the walls may never have been plastered, with the diagonal dressing acting as decoration in its own right.³

1. Joukowsky 2002, p. 241. 2. Joukowsky and D'Agostino 1998, p. 273; Joukowsky 2002, p. 244. 3. Hammond 1973, pp. 77–78.



41. Bowl

1st century
Ceramic, paint, Diam. 9¹³/₁₆ in. (25 cm)
Amman
Department of Antiquities, Amman (J 400)



42. Bowl

1st century
Ceramic, paint, Diam. 7⁹/₁₆ in. (19.2 cm)
Petra
Department of Antiquities, Amman (JP 4765)



43. Bowl

Ca. 1st century B.C.-1st century A.D.
Ceramic, paint, Diam. 8⁵/₈ in. (22 cm)
Tawilan
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Purchase, H. Dunscombe Colt Gift (1977.234.12)

In addition to coarser everyday vessels, Nabataean pottery includes a highly distinctive category of very finely made ceramics, particularly bowls. Extremely light and thin-walled, and deep red-orange in color as a result of the high iron content of their clay, they are painted with stylized vegetal and floral designs and, in a very few cases, human and animal imagery.¹ The examples here show some of the variety in their decorative styles, from a delicate field of naturalistic leaves and vines (cat. 41) to radial patterns using bolder, more abstracted shapes (cats. 42–43). Bowls such as catalogues 41 and 43 were probably used for wine, continuing the long and widespread Middle Eastern feasting tradition of using shallow drinking bowls held balanced on the fingertips. Catalogue 42 is a different form, with vertical sides and a small strap handle, but may have served the same function. To some degree the bowls' designs can be assigned to periods and used to establish a chronology.² Fragments and broken bowls have been found in large numbers, but intact examples are extremely rare. It has been suggested that they might have been employed in religious or funerary rituals and deliberately broken after use. However, this may be a misinterpretation resulting from the lack, until relatively recently, of significant excavation of Nabataean houses; increasing research on Nabataean residential settings and domestic practices will help to clarify the bowls' full range of use.³

1. These exceptions appear to date to a particular phase, ca. 50–25 B.C., and to the very beginning of the second century A.D., prior to the Roman annexation; see Schmid 2000, figs. 37–85; Schmid 2003, pp. 77–78, 81, figs. 57, 58, 65; and Patrich 2007, p. 92. 2. Schmid 2000; Schmid 2007. 3. Schmid 2003, p. 76.



44. Group of Musicians

Late 1st century B.C.
Terracotta, H. $3\frac{5}{8}$ in. (9.2 cm), W. $3\frac{7}{16}$ in. (8.7 cm), D. 1 in. (2.5 cm)
Petra
Department of Antiquities, Amman (J 5768)

This terracotta votive shows a trio of musicians playing lyres and a double pipe. The lyre players are women, and each plays a different variety of instrument. The musician on the left plays an “Alexandrian” type, with a rounded resonator at its base and long vertical sidearms, which she plays with her fingers at the top of the instrument. The musician on the right plays a “Seleucid” type, substantially smaller and rectangular in shape; a plectrum hangs from her wrist, and she seems to pluck the strings near the base of the instrument with another plectrum, though this is not entirely clear. The two lyre types together may have acted as bass and treble

instruments, respectively.¹ Between the two lyre players a male musician blows a double pipe, a form of instrument that has been common in the region since antiquity and is still popular in Jordan and Israel.²

There is very little written evidence for the role of music in Nabataean life, though Strabo describes Nabataean banquets as always being accompanied by two female singers.³ The depiction of this particular trio of instruments is unique, but the one ancient reference to such a grouping is contemporary: a text from the Dead Sea Scrolls (cat. 55) describes this combination of two types of lyre and a reed instrument accompanying a hymn of thanksgiving.⁴

1. Braun 2002, p. 214. 2. *Ibid.*, pp. 214–15. 3. Strabo, *Geography*, 16.4.26. 4. 1 QH 11:22–24; Braun 2002, p. 215.





45. Arch from Altar Niche

1st-2nd century
Limestone, H. ca. 100 in. (254 cm), W. 92¹⁵/₁₆ in. (236 cm), D. 21 in. (53.3 cm)
Khirbet et-Tannur
Cincinnati Art Museum, Museum Purchase (1939.223)

46. Cult Statue of Qos-Dushara

1st-2nd century
Sandstone, H. 47⁵/₈ in. (121 cm), W. 24⁷/₁₆ in. (62 cm), D. 14³/₁₆ in. (36 cm)
Khirbet et-Tannur
Cincinnati Art Museum, Museum Purchase (1939.224)

47. Lion Throne Support and Lower Garment of Cult Statue of a Goddess, Probably Allat

1st-2nd century
Sandstone, head: H. 14⁹/₁₆ in. (37 cm), W. 14³/₁₆ in. (36 cm), D. 6¹¹/₁₆ in. (17 cm); chest: H. 7³/₁₆ in. (18.6 cm), W. 7¹¹/₁₆ in. (19.5 cm), D. 4¹/₂ in. (11.4 cm); paws: H. 4¹/₂ in. (11.4 cm), W. 5⁷/₁₆ in. (13.8 cm), D. 4¹/₂ in. (11.4 cm)
Khirbet et-Tannur
Cincinnati Art Museum, Museum Purchase (1939.218a-c)



48. Relief with Bust of Virgo

3rd century
Limestone, H. 9⁵/₁₆ in. (25.3 cm), W. 11¹¹/₁₆ in. (29.7 cm), D. 11 in. (27.9 cm)
Khirbet et-Tannur
Cincinnati Art Museum, Museum Purchase (1939.227)

49. Relief with Bust of Pisces

3rd century
Limestone, H. 10⁵/₈ in. (27 cm), W. 14³/₁₆ in. (36 cm), D. 18¹/₂ in. (47 cm)
Khirbet et-Tannur
Department of Antiquities, Amman (J 3261)

The arch from the Nabataean sanctuary at Khirbet et-Tannur enclosed reliefs of the sanctuary's patron deities (cat. 45).¹ The image of the god is almost complete (cat. 46); of the goddess, only the lion-headed throne support and the lower part of her clothing survive (cat. 47). The storm god is modeled in the full-bearded image of Zeus-Hadad and holds a grain stalk or stylized thunderbolt, apparently balanced in his upturned left hand; his raised right arm is broken, but the hand might originally have held a double ax in the



manner of a traditional Iron Age storm god (fig. 6).² Around his neck he wears a massive twisted torque whose terminals are lion heads; a similar torque is worn by a surviving smaller image of a goddess found at the sanctuary.³

The divine couple have usually been identified as Qos and Atargatis. More recently, an interpretation of the divine couple as Dushara, head of the Nabataean pantheon, and his consort, who was probably al-'Uzza at Petra but here as elsewhere in Nabataea would be Allat, has been favored.⁴ Qos was originally the head of the Edomite pantheon, and his name appears in the only Nabataean inscription at Khirbet et-Tannur to mention a deity by name.⁵ Qos is one of a group of names applied to Semitic storm gods that also includes Dushara, and in this period it is probable that the local Qos of Khirbet et-Tannur was sometimes identified with Dushara as the Nabataean supreme deity. It therefore seems that the local name of the god was Qos and that the statues of the god and goddess were based on images of Dushara and Allat. The variety of names and ambiguity of identities reflect the hyperlocalized mosaic of deities that made up much of the

Middle Eastern religious landscape in the Hellenistic and Roman and Parthian periods. It is easy to imagine a situation in which the older local name Qos attached to a deity who might be recognized more generally as a version of Dushara and in which the two deities were identified with one another at Khirbet et-Tannur.⁶ This possibility is strengthened by the fact that the design of the Nabataean temple complex echoes an Edomite model, suggesting that it had an Edomite predecessor.⁷

Both deities are seated on thrones whose arms take the form of powerful animals. The surviving part of the goddess sculpture is a lion, originally one of a pair, and on Qos's throne the animals are bulls. The thrones and the surviving image of the god correspond closely to Lucian's famous description of Middle Eastern cult images in *On the Syrian Goddess*:

Within, the temple is not all of a piece, but contains another chamber. It too has a low staircase; it has no doors and is entirely open to the onlooker. All may enter the large temple, but only the priests the inner



chamber: not, however, all the priests, but only those closest to the gods and whose every care is the temple. In it are enthroned the cult statues, Hera and the god, Zeus, whom they call by a different name. Both are golden, both seated, though Hera is borne on lions, the other sits on bulls.

Certainly, the image of Zeus looks entirely like Zeus in features and clothes and seated posture; you could not identify it otherwise even if you wished.⁸

Because the images share characteristics with examples found across Syria (Lucian's description is of gods at Hierapolis [modern Membij]) and the fact that they are figural and anthropomorphic at all reflects the internal diversity of the Nabataean kingdom: the contrast with the aniconic baetyls and stelae that formed the cult images at Petra is striking (see also cat. 139).

The shrine at Khirbet et-Tannur went through several stages of architectural development; the reconstruction here (figs. 29–30) represents Phase 3, the final and most elaborate

form dating probably to the third century.⁹ In this phase the structure not only housed the cult images but also acted as the platform for an altar. In earlier phases it seems the entire structure may have acted as the altar.¹⁰ A key addition in this final stage of the altar platform's development was a series of busts representing the signs of the zodiac. Originally a Babylonian astronomical device for demarcating divisions in the heavens, the zodiac had by the first century B.C. become a feature of art across the Middle East. Busts personifying the signs of the zodiac were carved on pilasters on either side of the altar platform, with vertical columns of six signs on each pilaster.¹¹ The faces of ten of the carvings were destroyed in a later incident of iconoclasm; the Virgo and Pisces busts (cats. 48–49) survived because they were the lowest in their groups and were presumably buried or covered at the time the others were destroyed.¹² The two sculptures were originally interpreted as forms of the goddess Atargatis and are sometimes called the "grain goddess" and the "fish goddess"; recently, however, their correct positions in a zodiac sequence seen in other Nabataean sculpture (the grain

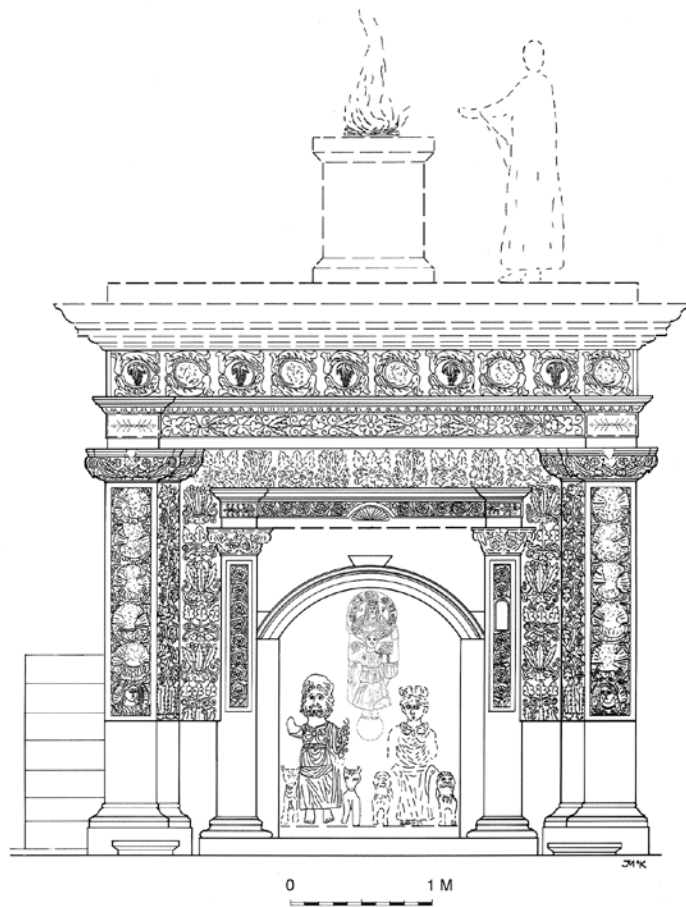


Fig. 29 Reconstruction of Khirbet et-Tannur altar in Phase 3. Drawing by Judith McKenzie

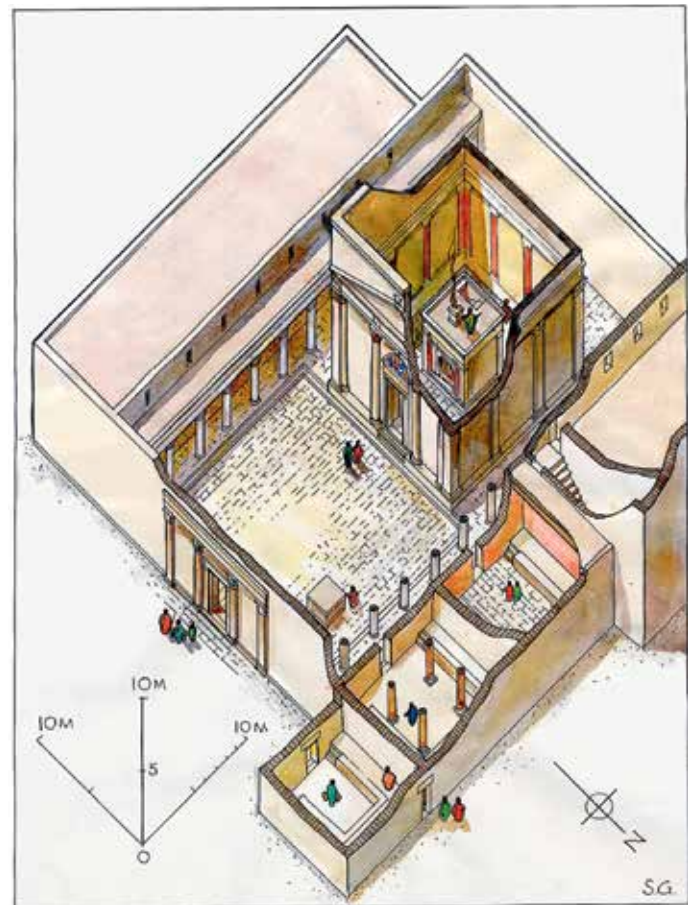


Fig. 30 Reconstruction of the Khirbet et-Tannur complex in Phase 3. Drawing by Judith McKenzie

goddess at the lower left and fish goddess at the lower right) and the use of personifications for many zodiac signs in other Nabataean sculptures have confirmed that they should be interpreted as Virgo and Pisces with their attributes (see also cats. 51a–b).¹³

The division of the zodiac into two sequences, Aries to Virgo and Libra to Pisces, reflects the Nabataean use of a Babylonian calendar, with the new year falling at the vernal equinox and a second major festival at the autumnal equinox. Further evidence for the significance of this calendar at Khirbet et-Tannur comes from the orientation of the shrine itself, which was arranged on an east-west axis that allowed the dawn light to shine on the altar niche and cult statues at the spring and fall equinoxes.¹⁴

1. On the excavation of the sanctuary, altar platform, and sculptures, see Glueck 1965; and McKenzie et al. 2013. 2. Freeman 1941, p. 337. It is also possible the hand might have held a scepter, but typically this would be held in the left hand and the thunderbolt or a weapon in the right. Since the left hand holds the grain stalk or thunderbolt and the right is raised high, it seems likely it held a weapon. 3. Glueck 1962. 4. McKenzie and Reyes 2013a, pp. 195–201; Whiting and Wellman 2016, pp. 28–30. 5. Starcky 1968, p. 209; McKenzie 2003, p. 187, no. 196; Healey 2013, pp. 50–51, 53–54, no. 3. 6. McKenzie and Reyes 2013a, p. 196. Other Nabataean attestations of Qos in inscriptions confirm that a god of this name was still worshipped in this period. 7. McKenzie and Reyes 2013b, pp. 247–48. 8. Lucian of Samosata, *On the Syrian Goddess*, 31.1–32.1; Lucian 2003. 9. McKenzie 2013. 10. McKenzie, Gibson, and Reyes 2002, p. 50. 11. Glueck 1965, pp. 122–24, pls. 25–29. 12. McKenzie 2001, p. 109. 13. Glueck 1965, pp. 119–20; Rosenthal-Heginbottom 2001; McKenzie 2001, pp. 108–9; McKenzie, Gibson, and Reyes 2002, pp. 76–77. 14. Whiting and Wellman 2016, pp. 34–35.

50. Sculpture of Eagle Fighting Serpent

Early 2nd century
Limestone, H. 20⁷/₈ in. (53 cm), W. 13³/₈ in. (34 cm), D. 9⁷/₁₆ in. (24 cm)
Khirbet et-Tannur
Cincinnati Art Museum, Museum Purchase (1939.222)

Eagles play an important role in Nabataean art, where, as in the Graeco-Roman tradition, they seem to be strongly associated with storm gods (cat. 35). The patron deity of Khirbet et-Tannur, probably Qos-Dushara (cat. 46), was a storm god, and the discovery of eagle imagery at the site is consistent with this identity. The position of the eagle when it was discovered in the ruins of the inner temenos enclosure facade suggests that it may have been placed at the apex of the main pediment (fig. 31).¹ The wreath at the base of the sculpture contains plaster, interpreted by the excavators as forming a basin, though plaster was also used to affix the statue to its original architectural setting.² The image of the eagle in combat with a snake also appears at the Nabataean site of Zaharet el-Bedd and in a graffito at Dura-Europos,³ as well as in Arabian art, where it may have originated.⁴ The iconography also spread well beyond the Middle East: a sculpture of the same subject has been found in London, where it was probably originally placed in an elite tomb dating to the Roman period.⁵

In Greek mythology the eagle and serpent evoke Zeus defeating the serpentine monster Typhon in a battle for control over the cosmos.⁶ That myth in turn seems to have



Fig. 31 Reconstruction of Khirbet et-Tannur inner temenos facade in Phase 3, with doors open showing view to altar platform. Drawing by Judith McKenzie

a Middle Eastern origin: it is highly reminiscent of a group of related creation myths, the most famous being the battle between the Babylonian supreme deity Marduk and the chaotic primordial sea, Tiamat, at the creation of the world in Mesopotamian mythology.⁷ The specific Nabataean understanding of the image likely also represented the victory of a storm god, here Qos-Dushara, over chaotic or chthonic forces.

1. Glueck 1965, pp. 306, 479–85, pl. 140; McKenzie et al. 2013, pp. 82, 87, 205, figs. 92, 158, 159, 331, 332, 356; McKenzie and Reyes 2013a, p. 205, fig. 356.
2. Glueck 1965, p. 479.
3. Ibid., pp. 480–81, fig. 141a–c.
4. St John Simpson in St J. Simpson 2002, p. 150, no. 192.
5. Lerz, Henig, and Hayward 2017.
6. Hesiod, *Theogony*, 820–68; Hesiod 2007.
7. West 1997, pp. 300–304; *Babylonian Epic of Creation*, Tablet 4. On the epic and other Mesopotamian cosmogonic myths, see Lambert 2013.



51A-B. Relief with Tyche and Zodiac Roundel Supported by Nike

Early 2nd century

Limestone

Khirbet et-Tannur

51A (Roundel) H. 11 in. (27.9 cm), W. 14 in. (35.6 cm), D. 5 $\frac{1}{4}$ in. (13.3 cm)

Cincinnati Art Museum, Museum Purchase (1939.233)

51B (Nike) H. 28 $\frac{3}{4}$ in. (73 cm), W. 13 in. (33 cm), D. 14 $\frac{13}{16}$ in. (36 cm)

Department of Antiquities, Amman (J 13484)

This relief was originally set into a wall at the sanctuary of Khirbet et-Tannur.¹ The sculpture depicts the figure of a Nike (winged Victory) lifting a roundel showing the signs of the zodiac arranged in a circle around the bust of Tyche (Fortune). The missing base of Nike was reconstructed as though the goddess is striding forward, but it is more likely that

her feet originally rested on a globe, as seen in some other depictions of Nike at the site.² Within the roundel, Tyche is identified by the mural crown representing the walls of a city that she wears beneath a veil. The origins of the mural crown can be traced through the Bronze and Iron Ages in Middle Eastern art, but by this period the symbol was fully integrated into Roman iconography and associated everywhere with Tyche. Many Middle Eastern cities had their own local tutelary Tyche, responsible for the fortune of her city.

Here, Tyche is shown without her traditional attributes of a wheel of fortune, a rudder, or a cornucopia, or the “standard” with which she is sometimes depicted in Middle Eastern contexts.³ Instead, behind her shoulders are

depicted a crescent moon and a second symbol that seems to combine a crescent moon standard with either an ear of wheat or a *thyrsos*, the wand normally associated with Dionysos (cat. 33). The latter might also be appropriate to Tyche, since, like the cornucopia, it represents prosperity, fertility, and abundance. Two other Tyche busts at Khirbet et-Tannur also include this symbol, but no example is known from any other site.⁴

The zodiac on the roundel helps to identify the so-called “grain goddess” and “fish goddess” on the Khirbet et-Tannur altar platform (cats. 48–49) as Virgo and Pisces. Only those two sculptures survived undamaged at the bottom of two columns, each with six sculptures. Since the sculptures were found at the bottom of their respective columns on the altar platform, and Pisces and Virgo are not adjacent signs, it seemed they could not represent a zodiac cycle. On the roundel, however, the signs are arranged not in a cycle but run in two sequences from top to bottom: the signs on the left side of the roundel run counterclockwise and represent the six months beginning with the Nabataean New Year at the spring equinox (Aries, Taurus, Gemini, Cancer, Leo, Virgo); those on the right run clockwise and represent the months following the fall equinox (Libra, Scorpio, Sagittarius, Capricorn, Aquarius, Pisces). In this arrangement the bottom signs represent the sixth and twelfth months—that is, Virgo and Pisces.⁵ The same must have been true of the altar platform sculptures.⁶

The zodiac signs in the roundel are represented by a mixture of personifications and animal symbols, whereas anthropomorphic personifications for all signs seem to have been favored on the Khirbet et-Tannur altar platform, at Khirbet edh-Dharih, and possibly at the Qasr al-Bint at Petra (cat. 36). The specific meaning of the combination of the zodiac with the goddesses embodying Fortune and Victory is not immediately clear, but the association between Nike and the zodiac is seen at Khirbet edh-Dharih, where Nike figures comparable to this one alternated with zodiac-sign busts as part of the temple facade decoration,⁷ and at Khirbet et-Tannur itself, where Nike figures were also interspersed between busts personifying astral deities (cats. 48–49; fig. 31).



1. Reconstruction by Judith McKenzie in Whiting and Wellman 2016, pp. 15, 19, 21, figs. 19, 27, 29. McKenzie tentatively suggests the relief may even have been placed behind the cult statues within the altar niche. 2. See Glueck 1965, pp. 401–2, pls. 179–82. 3. Kropp 2015, p. 202, fig. 1. 4. Whiting and Wellman 2016, p. 33. 5. Glueck 1965, pp. 413–15; Rosenthal-Heginbottom 2001. 6. McKenzie, Gibson, and Reyes 2002, pp. 76–77. 7. Villeneuve and al-Muheisen 1999, p. 46.



52. Rhyton in the Form of a Camel with Four Amphorae

2nd century B.C.

Terracotta. H. 9¹³/₁₆ in. (25 cm), W. 9¹³/₁₆ in. (25 cm), L. 13³/₄ in. (35 cm)

Gerasa (modern Jerash)

Department of Antiquities, Amman (J 1626)

This camel carrying amphorae is one of three discovered in the dromos (entrance passage) of a child's burial at Gerasa (modern Jerash).¹ The deceased was between eight and ten years old, and some of the other objects in the burial, including glass astragals (objects in the form of knuckle bones, used as dice) and counters, were clearly toys included as funerary goods. The camels may have been toys as well, though they also appear to be vessels with a dual function. When standing, the four amphorae at the camel's sides are hollow and could have held liquids. At the same time there is a handle between the rear two amphorae, a large opening at the center

of the camel's back that would allow liquid to be poured into the hollow body, and a small spout on the camel's chest that would be used for pouring. All this suggests that the camel might have been used as a rhyton. Whether such a vessel would be appropriate for adult feasting is unclear, and it is possible that the camels were specifically intended for a child.

Although stylized, the model accurately represents both a specific amphora form and details of the camel's anatomy. The elaborate burial indicates that the child came from a wealthy family, and it has been suggested that the camel models might even allude to a family business in the transport of oil or wine.²

1. Ina Kehrberg and John Manley in Savage, Zamora, and Keller 2002, pp. 443–45, s.v. Jerash; Kehrberg 2004, p. 299, fig. 1; Kehrberg-Ostrasz 2018, figs. 1–3. 2. *Ibid.*, pp. 443–44.

53. Stele of Allat with the Attributes of Athena

1st-2nd century

Basalt, H. 20½ in. (52 cm), W. 10⅛ in. (25.5 cm), D. 5⅞ in. (15 cm)

Hauran, area of Bosra

Musée du Louvre, Paris (AO 11215)

The Nabataean kingdom extended north into the area of southern Syria known as the Hauran, where the distinctive style of basalt sculpture employed in the first centuries A.D. is rooted in a long tradition in Syria and southeastern Anatolia.¹ Basalt stelae depicting figures with squat proportions, rounded faces, and schematic rendering of clothing have strong parallels in the Iron Age art of the Syro-Hittite kingdoms, with famous examples at sites such as Zincirli, Carchemish, and Tell Halaf, and these in turn have clear antecedents in the art of the Bronze Age Hittite Empire.² Here the style is combined with a contemporary preference for frontality and iconography drawn from Graeco-Roman art: the aegis with the head of Medusa (gorgoneion), helmet, shield, and spear of Athena. The goddess shown is probably Allat, worshipped across Arabia and Syria and in Nabataean religion recognized as the consort of the supreme deity Dushara.


The Nabataean Aramaic inscription to the right of the goddess gives a name, probably that of the individual who dedicated the stele: “Haliyu, daughter of Qadam, of Kharaba,” a town near Bosra in the southern Hauran.³ The city of Bosra lay far from Petra, at the northern edge of the Nabataean kingdom, but became increasingly important over time, with major royal building projects in the first century A.D.⁴ After 106 the city, renamed Bostra, became the capital of the Roman province of Arabia.⁵

1. Alpass 2013, pp. 167–99. 2. On Syro-Hittite sculpture, see, e.g., Cholidis and Martin 2010; Gilibert 2011; Cholidis 2014; Nadja Cholidis in Aruz, Graff, and Rakic 2014, pp. 98–103, nos. 37–43; Özyar 2016. 3. Caubet 1990, p. 67, no. 25. 4. Alpass 2013, p. 186. 5. On the Nabataean, Roman, and Byzantine phases of Bosra, see Dentzer, Blanc, and Fournet 2002.





JUDAEA

 F THE KINGDOMS SURROUNDING THE DEAD SEA TO THE NORTH and west of Nabataea, one, Judaea, would come to play a critical role in Roman and world history (see map, p. xix). Jewish communities existed throughout the Middle East during the Roman and Parthian period, and Judaism flourished alongside polytheism across the region.¹ However, whereas in the rest of the Middle East these groups formed part of larger societies in which polytheism dominated, in Judaea the monotheistic faith of Judaism prevailed. This religious difference had profound political implications, causing tensions beyond the kingdom's place in the wider contest between the Seleucid, Roman, and Parthian Empires to project their power in the Middle East. At times, local identity and autonomy could not be reconciled with imperial control, and Judaea would prove to be the center of some of the largest and most serious rebellions against Roman rule.

At the core of Judaeian religious and political life was the Temple of Jerusalem: the Temple's high priest held great political, as well as spiritual, authority, and throughout the Hasmonean period (ca. 140–37 B.C.) the roles of king and high priest were combined in a single individual. The Temple was one of the largest in the ancient world, a site of pilgrimage for worshippers from across the Middle East during the festivals of Pesach (Passover),

Fig. 32 View from the Cave of Letters, overlooking the Nahal Hever

Shavvot (Pentecost), and Sukkot (Tabernacles). At these times the city's resident population of tens of thousands was multiplied by huge numbers of pilgrims, bringing both revenue and an international character to Jerusalem.²

The region, initially the Iron Age kingdoms of Judah and Israel, had historically been part of the Babylonian, Achaemenid Persian, Egyptian Ptolemaic, and finally Seleucid Empires. During the second century B.C. the Seleucid king Antiochos IV Epiphanes (r. 174–163 B.C.) provoked a major uprising, apparently in response to his imposition of Hellenistic cultural practices on a Jewish population that was already divided between “Hellenized” and more traditionally Jewish customs. Antiochos, seemingly for pragmatic political reasons rather than religious ones, aligned himself with the Hellenized faction and took active steps to ban and censor Jewish religious practices, apparently by ordering the worship of Zeus in their place.³ The rebellion against Antiochos, known as the Maccabean Revolt after its leader Judah Maccabee (an adopted surname meaning “the hammer”), became a full-scale war of independence that lasted seven years (ca. 167–160 B.C.).

Following the war Jewish worship was reestablished and the Temple of Jerusalem was rededicated. A new altar was built and new holy vessels were made.⁴ According to the Talmud, when the returning priests were cleansing the Temple, they found only a small jug of consecrated olive oil that was sealed and therefore ritually uncontaminated. The oil should have been enough to fuel the eternal flame of the menorah for no more than a day. Miraculously, the oil burned for eight days, now reflected in the eight days of Hanukkah.⁵ Judah Maccabee's youngest brother Jonathan was installed as high priest. He was succeeded by another brother, Simon Maccabee (later Simon Thassi) (r. 142–135 B.C.), who was also installed as leader of Judaea,⁶ establishing the Hasmonean dynasty under which the kingdom was independent of both the Seleucid Empire and the rising power of Rome.

By the time of the Roman general Pompey's eastern campaigns in the mid-first century B.C., the Hasmonean dynasty was divided as two brothers, the high priest of the Temple Hyrcanos II (r. 67–66 B.C.) and Aristoboulus II (r. 66–63 B.C.), contested the throne. Each brother sought the backing of Rome, but Pompey sided with Hyrcanos and marched on Jerusalem in 63 B.C., besieging Aristoboulus and his supporters in the Temple for three months before their surrender.⁷ Pompey had now seized control of Judaea, and the Hasmonean kingdom was made a client of Rome.⁸

Hyrcanos was restored to his position of high priest but not to the kingship, although in 47 B.C. he was made ethnarch, a title perhaps equivalent to governor or provincial ruler. In 40 B.C., a successful Parthian campaign in Syria allowed the Parthians to depose Hyrcanos and install Aristoboulus's son, Antigonos II Mattathias (r. 40–37 B.C.), as their own puppet king, forcing Rome's new favored leader in Jerusalem, Herod the Great (r. 37–4 B.C.), to flee.

Herod attempted to travel to Petra but was refused asylum by the Nabataean king Maliku (or Malichos) I (r. 59–30 B.C.), who did not wish to attract Parthian aggression or to become entangled in a proxy war between the Parthian and Roman Empires. Herod is recorded as having stayed with his troops in a Nabataean sanctuary located on the road to Petra, a description that fits known Nabataean shrines on the road, such as Khirbet edh-Dharih or Khirbet et-Tannur (see p. 53). He was forced to continue his exile first in Egypt at the court of Cleopatra (r. 51–30 B.C.), and finally in Rome under the protection of Mark Antony, the general to whom he owed his elevation before the Parthian capture of Judaea. In Rome, Antony had the Senate anoint Herod “King of the Jews” and gave Roman military backing to his return to Judaea.⁹ Herod succeeded in reclaiming the kingdom at the end of a two-year campaign that culminated in a four-month siege of Jerusalem in 37 B.C. Antigonos was exiled and reportedly executed in Rome.¹⁰

Herod was a controversial figure from the beginning: he was not only a ruler imposed by Rome but also an outsider who, unlike his Hasmonean predecessors, was not Judaeian and therefore not eligible to become a priest of the Temple of Jerusalem. Herod's mother was Nabataean, and he was born in Idumaea, a region in the south of the greatly enlarged Roman province of Judaea, which was considered foreign by those living in Judaea proper.¹¹ However, he left an indelible stamp on the province: his reign is associated with major building programs that reshaped cities and a flourishing period in luxury arts.¹² His building and cultural programs were markedly Graeco-Roman in form (he titled himself *philoromaïos*, “lover of Rome”).¹³ His palaces at sites including Jerusalem, Herodion, and Masada were impressive complexes, sometimes with elaborate gardens and bathhouses.¹⁴ At the Promontory Palace in the coastal city of Caesarea Maritima, remains survive of an almost Olympic-size freshwater swimming pool (fig. 33). Herod's palaces may have influenced other palaces outside Judaea, including at Nabataean Petra (see pp. 50–51).¹⁵



Fig. 33 Remains of Herod's Promontory Palace, Caesarea Maritima

Around 18 B.C., Herod began rebuilding the Temple of Jerusalem in what was one of the most ambitious construction projects of its time anywhere in the ancient world. The Temple was dedicated in 10 B.C., although some building activity continued over the next seventy years.¹⁶ Contemporary descriptions, together with the archaeological remains at Jerusalem, allow the reconstruction of the basic layout of Herod's Temple, one very notable feature of which is the enormous temenos enclosure in which the building was contained.¹⁷ For all the differences of Judaism as a monotheistic religion from the worship of a vast array of local gods across the still overwhelmingly polytheistic Middle East, this temenos enclosure was a feature shared with important polytheistic temples, such as the Temple of Dushara (Qasr al-Bint) at Petra, the Temple of Aphrodite and Zeus at Gerasa, the Temple of Jupiter Heliopolitanus at Baalbek, the Temple of Bel at Palmyra, and the Temple

of Shamash-Maren at Hatra, to name a few.¹⁸ The enclosure's area was identical to that of today's Temple Mount Sanctuary/Haram al-Sharif, making the complex the largest temple in the Roman world at around 36 acres (144,000 square m);¹⁹ only the Great Temple at Hatra encloses a comparable area. Like the enclosure of Hatra and other major polytheistic temples, the large open space was used to accommodate pilgrimages and religious festivals.

Evidence from several archaeologically identified ancient synagogues has also been found in Judaea. The most famous is the small synagogue identified by excavations at the fortress of Masada, a rectangular building oriented toward Jerusalem with tiered benches around its interior walls (fig. 34).²⁰ The building's identification as a synagogue was confirmed by the discovery there of a genizah for the burial of old or worn-out scriptural documents.²¹ Coins found on the synagogue's floor date from the First Roman-Jewish

War, also called the Great Revolt, in 66–73, when the last rebels were besieged by Roman forces at the fortress.²² Most recently, excavations in 2009–13 have identified a synagogue at Migdal, the site of ancient Magdala, which is associated with Mary Magdalene (fig. 35).²³ Like the synagogue at Masada, this structure, oriented south toward the Temple of Jerusalem, dates to the first century A.D., before the destruction of the Temple.

The Magdala synagogue has special resonance for Christian as well as Jewish history. The Gospels describe Jesus preaching at synagogues throughout Galilee, and given the building's date and location on the western shore of Lake Kinneret (the Sea of Galilee), it is possible that he visited the synagogue at Magdala.²⁴ The interior of the building has stone benches along the walls, a black-and-white mosaic floor, and brightly colored frescoed walls in a Pompeian style.²⁵ Most extraordinary, however, was the discovery of an artifact that has become known as the Magdala Stone

(cat. 54). The limestone block is carved across its top and along its sides with imagery clearly relating to the Temple, including many architectural elements and a seven-branched menorah, and dates to a time when the Temple still stood.²⁶

Herod's dynasty ruled Judaea as clients of Rome until A.D. 6, at which time the kingdom was incorporated into the new Roman province of Judaea, which also contained the former kingdoms of Idumaea to the south and Samaria to the north. At first the new province was administered by Roman prefects. The Roman emperor Claudius (r. 41–54) allowed Herod the Great's grandson, Herod Agrippa I (r. 41–44), to rule as king of Judaea but reimposed direct Roman rule upon his death by appointing a procurator, Cuspius Fadus, to govern the province, while also expanding it to include Galilee to the north and Peraea to the east.

Direct Roman rule in Judaea created friction. The imposition of the imperial cult elsewhere in the region served to reinforce ties to Rome and to emphasize the power



Fig. 34 Synagogue, Masada



Fig. 35 Main room of the synagogue at Migdal with replica of the Magdala Stone

of the imperial capital. The imperial cult normally created few problems locally because the polytheistic religious practices of much of the ancient world were nonexclusive: most subjects of Rome simply recognized the divine emperor in addition to their own gods. In Judaea, however, whose large Jewish population practiced an exclusive monotheistic faith, the attempt to impose such a cult became a recurring flashpoint. This tension also had a visual dimension, in the form of resistance to statues of deified emperors. During the first century, Judaeans petitioning and protest succeeded in preventing the placement of a statue of the emperor Caligula (r. 37–41) in the Temple of Jerusalem (see p. 101).

Eventually, in 66, civil unrest grew into a full rebellion against Rome, including the rejection of the imperial cult.²⁷ The ensuing conflict has become known as the First Roman-Jewish War, or simply the Great Revolt (66–73) (cats. 57–59). The emperor Nero (r. 54–68) dispatched a capable general named Vespasian to lead the Roman response to the uprising in 67. The Roman legions under Vespasian and his son Titus quickly gained the upper hand, but fierce resistance meant the war continued until 70,

when Titus's brutal six-month siege of Jerusalem ended with the sack of the city and, infamously, the destruction of the Temple (cat. 60).²⁸ Titus's approach to the defeated city was harsh: destroying the Temple was intended to remove a rallying point for resistance, and an estimated 100,000 prisoners were sent to Rome,²⁹ where many were set to work as slave labor on the construction of a giant amphitheater. Vespasian, now emperor (r. 69–79), funded this project from his share of the spoils from the war. The new Flavian Amphitheater, built on the former site of Nero's infamous Domus Aurea ("Golden House") pleasure palace, became known as the Colosseum. The building was completed in 80, by which time Titus (r. 79–81) had succeeded his father as emperor, and Titus's successor, his brother Domitian (r. 81–96), would build the Arch of Titus in the nearby Roman Forum in 81–82. The arch commemorated the Flavian victory in Judaea and features a large-scale relief depicting the removal of the Temple treasures to Rome, including the menorah (fig. 36).

A critical ancient source for this period in Judaeans history is Flavius Josephus, a priest from Jerusalem who initially commanded Judaeans forces in the Galilee region



Fig. 36 Relief from the Arch of Titus (r. 79-81), Via Sacra, Rome, showing triumphal procession with the seven-branched menorah, golden table, and silver trumpets of the Temple of Jerusalem

during the Great Revolt but surrendered to Vespasian and subsequently cooperated with the Romans. Josephus became a Roman citizen, moved to Rome, and wrote in Greek. His books seem intended for a Roman audience, although he states that he had first written *The Jewish War* in his native language, which was either Aramaic or Hebrew.³⁰ Having been involved with both sides of the war, Josephus was well positioned to write about its events. In later tradition he has sometimes been vilified as a traitor: while besieged by Roman forces, he avoided death in a suicide pact through a combination of luck and reason, and his survival and subsequent cooperation with the Romans have been contrasted with the actions of defenders at Masada, who chose mass suicide over surrender to Rome (ironically, the main historical source on these events is Josephus himself).³¹ At the same time, Josephus's written works are focused on representing and defending Jewish history, identity, and religion for a Roman audience. His *Jewish Antiquities* was intended as a comprehensive history of the Jewish people from the world's creation, and the author's rabbinic training is reflected in the layers of scholarly interpretation that are added to the retelling of biblical narratives. His final major work, *Against Apion*, was written in response to a now-lost polemic against the Jews by the Hellenized Egyptian scholar Apion and is a staunch defense of Judaism, its history, and its traditions.³² Josephus's life was unusual, but the complex experience of an individual whose sense of identity was at once tied to a city and its religious life, to a broader region and its historical sense of separateness and independence, and to a great empire whose political and cultural center was not Middle Eastern is representative of a world in which an individual's religious, cultural, and political identity might consist of many parts, and where those parts might sometimes conflict.

Another major revolt against Rome arose in the early second century. The exact causes of the uprising in 132 are not entirely clear: traditionally it has been thought that the

emperor Hadrian (r. 117–138) provoked the conflict when he attempted a heavy-handed Hellenization of Jerusalem, refounding the city as Aelia Capitolina, a combination of one of his own names, Aelius, and the name of the god Jupiter Capitolinus, to whom he now dedicated the city, building a Temple of Jupiter on the Temple Mount (cat. 61). The rebellion quickly grew into a war that was larger even than the Great Revolt. The rebel leader, Simon ben Kosiba, better known as Simon bar Kokhba ("Son of the Star") (r. 132–135), established an independent state (cat. 60), and an enormous Roman military force was only able to regain control of the region after adopting a large-scale scorched-earth policy to starve the Judaeans into submission.³³ According to the Roman historian Cassius Dio, 50 fortified towns and 985 villages were razed in the course of the Roman campaign.³⁴ As the war progressed, the Bar Kokhba rebels were pushed into strongholds and hideouts in remote locations. One such location was the site now known as the Cave of Letters, where incredible archaeological discoveries of personal possessions and letters have shed light on the rebellion (cats. 62–70; fig. 32).³⁵

Following the war, Hadrian pressed ahead with his re-founding of the city, with redoubled efforts at forcing its Hellenization. New temples to Roman deities and emperors were built, and the colony of Aelia Capitolina was settled with veterans from the Legio V Macedonica. Jews were prohibited from entering the city except on Tisha B'Av (the ninth day of the month Av), a day of fasting commemorating the anniversary of the Babylonian and Roman destructions of the Temple, and the province of Judaea was merged with that of Syria to create a new combined province named Syria-Palaestina.³⁶ Whatever the original cause of the conflict, its violence and destructiveness came to define Hadrian's reputation in Judaism: in the Talmud and Midrash the emperor's name is consistently followed by the curse "May his bones be crushed."

54. The Magdala Stone

1st century

Limestone, H. 17¹¹/₁₆ in. (45 cm), W. 23⁵/₈ in. (60 cm), L. 29¹/₂ in. (75 cm)

Migdal, Synagogue

Israel Antiquities Authority, Beth Shemesh (2010–2881)

In 2009, salvage excavations in conjunction with the construction of a Catholic retreat center at Migdal (ancient Magdala) on Lake Kinneret (the Sea of Galilee) led to the discovery of a first-century synagogue.¹ The impressive building is about 1,300 square feet (120 square m) in size and features walls painted in fresco with red, yellow, and blue panels in black-and-white frames as well as floor mosaics (fig. 35).² Stone benches line the inner walls of the main room and of a smaller room to its west, with an additional set of benches in the center of the main room, where this unique carved stone was found.³

Dating to a time when Herod's Temple still stood in Jerusalem, the stone includes depictions of symbols and architectural features that seem intended to evoke the Temple. One short side of the stone features the seven-branched menorah—the earliest such image known in a synagogue—flanked by amphorae containing olive oil.⁴ The square object that appears below the menorah may in fact represent the Inner Altar that stood before it in the Temple.⁵ Both long sides of the stone depict a series of four arches or gates, each

containing a palmette-like symbol; at one end of each side is a further circular symbol that probably represents a censer.⁶ The top and the other short side of the stone depict rosettes. The specific meaning of the rosettes is unknown, though they have sometimes been interpreted as referring to phenomena such as the prophet Ezekiel's vision of wheels of fire (cat. 56).⁷ The exact function of the four-footed stone itself is also uncertain, although indented areas in the top could have held legs. The stone may have been the base of a podium for the reading of Torah scrolls⁸ or for a chest that held them.⁹

The town of Migdal has special Christian significance because of its association with Mary Magdalene, whose name suggests that she was from the town. Excitement around the presence of a well-preserved first-century synagogue and the discovery of the Magdala Stone was further heightened by the possibility that, given its location and date, the synagogue may have been visited by Jesus, who the Gospels describe as preaching in synagogues throughout Galilee.¹⁰

1. Schiffman 2017, p. 162. 2. Aviam 2013, p. 207; Avshalom-Gorni and Najjar 2013, fig. 10. 3. Avshalom-Gorni and Najjar 2013. 4. Aviam 2013, p. 212. 5. *Ibid.* 6. *Ibid.*, pp. 212–13. 7. Ezekiel 1:13–21; Daniel 7:9. 8. Meyers and Chancey 2012, p. 213. 9. Schiffman 2017, p. 164. 10. Matthew 4:23; Mark 1:39; Luke 4:14–15.







55. Dead Sea Scroll Jar and Lid

Ca. 2nd century B.C.

Ceramic, H. 24⁷/₁₆ in. (62 cm), Diam. 11 in. (27.9 cm); lid: H. 3¹/₁₆ in. (7.7 cm), Diam. 7³/₁₆ in. (18.2 cm)

Qumran, Cave 1

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gift of Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, 1964 (64.26a-b)

Discovered over a ten-year period between 1946 and 1956, the documents found in the Qumran caves, now known as the Dead Sea Scrolls, represent a critically important group of sources for the copying and collection of biblical texts and for Jewish religious practices in the last centuries B.C. and first century A.D. Apart from one document written on copper, the collection of scrolls and fragments, mainly in Hebrew and Aramaic and occasionally in Greek, were written on parchment or papyrus, organic materials that would not normally survive. The documents were preserved by the very dry conditions of the Judaean Desert and by their storage in caves within ceramic jars; this example is typical of these large, torpedo-shaped vessels. The texts were probably stored in this way not for retrieval and use but as a kind of ritual burial. Jewish tradition forbids the discarding of worn-out scriptural texts, and so older texts were placed in a genizah (repository) and eventually formally buried.¹ The overwhelming majority of the Qumran texts are religious, including copies of biblical and noncanonical scriptures.

This jar comes from Cave 1, the first to be discovered. The cave was found by Bedouin shepherds in 1946 and formally excavated in 1949.² The seven scrolls initially discovered here include the Great Isaiah Scroll, containing the entire Book of Isaiah; a more fragmentary text of Isaiah; the Community Rule, a key source in the scholarly debate about the specific sectional adherence of the Qumran community; the War Scroll, a text describing a war between the Sons of Light and Sons of Darkness; the Genesis Apocryphon, featuring a conversation between Noah and his father, Lamech; the Thanksgiving Scroll, containing hymns of thanksgiving; and the Peshier of Habakkuk, a theological commentary on the biblical Book of Habakkuk.³

1. Talmud: Shabbat 115a. 2. Barthélemy and Milik 1955, p. 8, fig. 2:10; Fidanzio and Humbert 2016, pp. 265, 267 (table 18.1), n. 11; Taylor, Mizzi, and Fidanzio 2017, p. 316, table 1: Q40. 3. Great Isaiah Scroll: 1QIsaa; Isaiah: 1QIsab; Community Rule: 4QSa-j; War Scroll: 1QM; Genesis Apocryphon: 1Q20 / 1QapGen; Thanksgiving Scroll: 1QH; Peshier of Habakkuk: 1QpHab.



56. Ossuary of Philoutarios (or Philoutarion) and Annios

1st century B.C.–1st century A.D.

Limestone, paint, body: H. 16³/₄ in. (42.5 cm), W. 12 in. (30.5 cm), L. 23¹/₂ in. (59.7 cm); lid: H. 12¹/₄ in. (31.1 cm), W. 12 in. (30.5 cm), L. 25 in. (63.5 cm)

Judaea

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Museum Accession (X.248.11a–b)

Ossuaries from Judaea contained secondary burials of bones that were removed from primary burials approximately a year after death, following the body's decomposition. The custom is known as *ossilegium*, which Jewish legal texts give correct and incorrect ways of performing.¹ Rabbinic sources suggest that the ritual marked the end of a twelve-month mourning period for the deceased. The exact purpose of the custom is uncertain, but the most likely possibility is that the decomposition of the flesh represented a process of spiritual purification.² In form, ossuaries resemble household chests and boxes; most are made of local limestone, although a few are made of clay and, rarely, wood.³ They appear to have first been produced in Jerusalem beginning about 20–15 B.C. until the city's sacking in A.D. 70, after which time different types were produced in southern Judaea, and their use continued until the middle of the third century.⁴

This example has a gabled lid, and the decoration on its front side consists of two pilasters, evocative of tomb

architecture, on either side of three rosettes, which are the primary ornamental motifs used on ossuaries and resemble those found on tomb facades. The decoration on most ossuaries is incised or carved into the surface; however, in this case the three rosettes are carved in high relief inside the compass-drawn circles and include significant traces of red paint: the central one has fourteen petals, and the other two each have six. Rosettes appear in many different stylized forms on the ossuaries and elsewhere, but whatever specific symbolic meaning they may have held is unknown: they have previously been interpreted as the eyes of the deceased, wheels indicating reincarnation, and the rosette emblem traditionally associated in Mesopotamia with Ishtar but detached from its original meaning.⁵ The inscription, written in Greek, names two individuals, Philoutarios (or Philoutarion) and Annios. Philoutarios is a male name, Philoutarion is known to have been used by a woman, and the male name Annios may be Latin or Semitic in origin. The meaning of the inscription's last eight letters is difficult to interpret, but the pair may be identifiable as twins.⁶

1. Rahmani 1994, pp. 53–55, Appendix A. 2. Rahmani 1981, pp. 175–76; Rahmani 1982, pp. 109–10. 3. Rahmani 1994, pp. 3–5. 4. Ibid., pp. 20–21. 5. Ibid., pp. 39–41; *ibid.*, p. 25, nn. 1–3; *ibid.*, p. 27. 6. Cotton et al. 2010, pt. 1, pp. 586–87, no. 581.



57. Shekel Coin Minted in the Great Revolt

67-68 (Year 2 of the Great Revolt)
 Silver, 7/8 in. (2.3 cm)
 Minted in Judaea
 American Numismatic Society, New York (1935.117.805)



58. Coin Minted in the Great Revolt

69-70 (Year 4 of the Great Revolt)
 Bronze, Diam. 1 in. (2.3 cm)
 Minted in Judaea
 American Numismatic Society, New York (1944.100.63001)

During the First Roman-Jewish War, or Great Revolt (66-73), Jewish leaders issued their own coinage in silver and bronze. The imagery and inscriptions used on the coins were designed to emphasize Judaea's newfound independence and specifically Jewish identity, including introducing a new system of year dates counting from the beginning of the rebellion.

The obverse of the silver coin (cat. 57) features a chalice, presumably a Temple vessel, and an inscription in archaizing Paleo-Hebrew script reading "Shekel of Israel" and giving the year of the revolt in which it was minted. The reverse shows pomegranates beneath the inscription "Jerusalem the holy." Pomegranates feature in biblical passages, significantly in the description of the Temple of Solomon, which included pomegranate-shaped column capitals.¹

The obverse of the bronze coin (cat. 58) shows a date-palm tree with baskets of dates on either side, while the reverse shows an etrog (a yellow citron) and two lulavs (bundles of date palm, myrtle, and willow fronds). The etrog and lulav are associated with the Jewish harvest festival of Sukkot (Tabernacles).² The coin is inscribed "For the redemption of Zion" and "Half": the latter probably indicates that its ancient value was half a shekel.

1. 1 Kings 7:13-22. 2. Leviticus 23:40.



59. “Iudea Capta” Coin

71
Bronze, Diam. 1¼ in. (3.1 cm)
Italy, minted in Rome
American Numismatic Society, New York (1967.153.218)

The First Roman-Jewish War, also known as the Great Revolt, was a grueling and costly conflict, but it was also one of the key events in the rise of the Flavian dynasty in Rome. Before becoming emperor, Vespasian (r. 69–79) was the general sent by the emperor Nero (r. 54–68) to crush the Judaeen rebellion. With Vespasian’s ascension, the success he and his son and successor Titus (r. 79–81) achieved in defeating the Great Revolt became a significant theme in both emperors’ self-presentation and helped legitimize the new dynasty. Vespasian minted a variety of coins showing his portrait on the obverse and on the reverse the personification of Judaea as a mourning female captive seated at the foot of a date-palm tree, sometimes depicted with pieces of armor or a Roman soldier and bearing the legend “Iudea Capta” — “Judaea is taken.”



60. Sela (Tetradrachm) Minted by the Bar Kokhba Rebels

134-35
Silver, Diam. 1 in. (2.3 cm)
Minted in Judaea
American Numismatic Society, New York (1944.100.63050)

Like the rebels of the earlier Great Revolt, the leaders of the Bar Kokhba rebellion struck coins that differentiated them from the Roman Empire and strongly emphasized Jewish identity. Bar Kokhba coins are typically overstruck Roman coins: the original face would have been filed away and a new coin struck, though in many cases the old design remains visible to some degree. In this example, the obverse of the coin shows the Temple in Jerusalem—the temple that had been destroyed in the year 70 at the end of the Great Revolt. The Ark of the Covenant is depicted between the central columns. Some types show a star rising above the building, perhaps in reference to the rebel leader Simon ben Kosiba’s (r. 132–135) nickname, Bar Kokhba, meaning “Son of the Star.” The Paleo-Hebrew inscription gives the name *Shim’on*, referring to Bar Kokhba. The reverse shows a lulav (a bundle of date palm, myrtle, and willow fronds) and an etrog (a citron), both used in the Jewish harvest festival of Sukkot (Tabernacles),¹ surrounded by the legend “For the freedom of Jerusalem.”

1. Leviticus 23:40.

61. Head and Torso of Cuirassed Statue of Hadrian

Ca. 117–138

Bronze, overall H. 32 11/16 in. (83 cm); head: H. 15 3/16 in. (38.5 cm), W. 10 1/16 in. (25.5 cm), D. 11 7/16 in. (29 cm); cuirass: H. 21 5/8 in. (55 cm), W. at top 32 3/8 in. (82.3 cm), W. at bottom 13 in. (33 cm)

Camp of Legio VI Ferrata, near Tel Shalem

Israel Antiquities Authority, restored and exhibited at the Israel Museum, Jerusalem (1975-763 [head]; 1975-764 [cuirass])

This bronze head and cuirassed torso, discovered near the site of Tel Shalem, approximately 7 1/2 miles (12 km) south of Beth Shean (ancient Scythopolis), form part of a statue of the emperor Hadrian (r. 117–138) that was most likely set up around 135 to commemorate his suppression of the Bar Kokhba rebellion (132–35) or possibly his transformation of Judaea into the new Roman province of Syria-Palaestina following the war (see p. 85). Fragments of an inscription that were also discovered in the vicinity of Tel Shalem have been attributed to a large triumphal arch dedicated in 136 to celebrate the Roman victory over the Bar Kokhba rebels.¹

The head, part of the torso, and other fragments were discovered accidentally with a metal detector in 1975. A series of formal excavations followed, uncovering additional bronze fragments and resulting in the subsequent reconstruction of the head and cuirassed torso. The findspot was identified as a military camp built by a detachment of the Roman legion Legio VI Ferrata in this location in order to control communication routes: the large brick building in which the bronze fragments were found may have been the camp's *principia* (headquarters building).² If in fact originally set up in the *principia*, it is possible that the statue was used for worship as part of Hadrian's imperial cult, which developed in the empire's eastern provinces during his lifetime (although he was not deified in Rome until after his death). However, its original display context is uncertain, and its role was more likely commemorative. The statue was clearly disassembled and might have been placed in the *principia* only when the camp was abandoned in the middle of the second century. Some of the bronze fragments may even have belonged to different statues buried together.³

The statue's design and iconography raise questions about its production and date. Although the metal alloys are extremely similar, it is possible that the torso originally formed part of a cuirassed statue or trophy produced during the Hellenistic period and was reused with the head of Hadrian, an idea supported by the different proportions of the pieces and the unusual scene featured on the cuirass.⁴ The head of Hadrian is an outstanding example of a Roman imperial portrait in bronze, a work of exceptionally fine quality that was possibly imported from Rome, Greece, or Asia Minor. It represents one of the emperor's official portrait types, with his hair arranged in the so-called *Rollockenfrisur* style with large curls framing the forehead.⁵ The cuirass features six nude fighting Greek warriors on its front. Comparisons with breastplates on marble statues of Hadrian and other emperors do not yield any parallels: the scene very likely depicts either a Greek mythological battle or an eastern Hellenistic one. The presence of a scarf rather than a paludamentum (military cloak) and the lack of a protective emblem such as a gorgoneion (head of Medusa) on the breastplate's front are also highly unusual, and the vine scroll on the back is uniquely placed.⁶

The legs of the statue were not recovered during the excavations. The bronze head of young boy that was discovered with the torso may also have formed part of the statue as a crouching or kneeling captive, either next to the emperor or under his right foot. The production date of the boy's head is difficult to determine,⁷ however, and it is possible that it was simply stored along with the other bronze fragments.

1. Eck 1999. 2. Foerster 1980; Foerster 1985. See also *Treasures of the Holy Land* 1986, p. 230, no. 117; Evers 1994, pp. 119–20, no. 51; Lahusen and Formigli 2001, pp. 194–97, no. 116. 3. Opper 2008, p. 238, n. 54; Gergel 1991, pp. 235, 249. 4. Gergel (1991), whose analysis also includes an evaluation of the chemical analysis of the fragments relied upon by Foerster (Paul T. Craddock in Foerster 1985, p. 158). 5. Gergel 1991, pp. 235–36, nn. 11, 12. 6. *Ibid.*, pp. 238–40, 243–45, 247–49. For a photograph of the back of the cuirass, see *ibid.*, p. 233, fig. 2. Evers (1994, p. 120) and Lahusen and Formigli (2001, p. 197) identify the garment as a paludamentum. 7. Gergel 1991, pp. 234–36, figs. 6, 7.



62-70. Finds from the Cave of Letters

During the Bar Kokhba rebellion (132–35) (see p. 85), members of the civilian population and the rebels sought refuge in caves in the Judean Desert south of En-Gedi as they fled from the Roman army. Excavations took place in 1960–61 in the most significant of the caves, Nahal Hever Cave 5-6, known as the Cave of Letters owing to the documents discovered in it, which included letters written by Simon bar Kokhba himself (fig. 32). The cave also yielded numerous luxury objects and personal possessions of the people who sheltered there. The dry desert climate created exceptional circumstances for the preservation of organic materials such as textiles, wood, and baskets made of straw and palm fibers. Metal objects were also found in excellent condition, uncorroded and lacking the patina that normally develops when metals are left to oxidize over a long period of time.

Intact shallow glass bowls were an astonishing find: these two were discovered together with a larger, elaborately decorated bowl, all three wrapped carefully in palm fibers and tied together (cats. 62–63).¹ Other objects, such as keys and knives made of metal and wood, had obvious ancient value for their metal content but are also examples of everyday items that provide a vivid connection to their original owners (cats. 65–66); owing to its size, the elbow key shown here was most likely used for the heavy door of a fortress or courtyard rather than a house.² The mirror, one of two found in the cave, is a disc of tinned copper nailed into a wooden case that is covered with red painted parchment (cat. 67).³ These items, along with jewelry boxes, are among the occupants' personal effects.

The bronze incense shovels, jugs, and bowls were possibly items of booty seized by the rebels from the Roman army (comparable examples have been found at Pompeii; cats. 64, 68–70).⁴ Several of the jugs, including these two examples, are of special interest because some of their decoration has been purposefully defaced, presumably in accordance with Jewish prohibitions on the use of figural imagery. The face of the winged figure on the handle of catalogue 68, likely identifiable as Victory, has been rubbed out so that only the eye sockets are visible.⁵

The motifs on the handle of catalogue 69, identifiable as the head of a woman crowned with a polos beneath a bird and what may be a griffin or a human mask in profile, have also been erased. Other imagery on the vessel is intact: the shoulder is decorated with a frieze featuring a hound chasing another animal, perhaps a rabbit, and plant motifs. The handles of all three bronze vessels terminate in birds' heads, and both jugs also have vertical thumbrests projecting above the rim; the handle of catalogue 68 takes the form of a thumb.

1. Yadin 1963, p. 125, no. 6, pl. 38, fig. 49. 2. For the key (cat. 65), see *ibid.*, pp. 41, 94–100, no. 55, pl. 26, fig. 37; for the knife (cat. 66), see *ibid.*, pp. 84–85, no. 23, pl. 24, fig. 30. 3. *Ibid.*, pp. 41, 106, nos. 10, 11, pl. 30, fig. 39. 4. *Ibid.*, pp. 42–26; for the bowl (cat. 11), see *ibid.*, p. 46, no. 1, pl. 14, fig. 10; for the incense shovel (cat. 64), see *ibid.*, pp. 48–49, pl. 15, figs. 11, 12; for the jugs, (cat. 68), see *ibid.*, p. 74, no. 9, fig. 23, pl. 20 and (cat. 69), *ibid.*, pp. 72–73. For comparable examples of bronze vessels from Pompeii, see Tassinari 1993, p. 134 (6997), pls. 57–69 (bowl handles with animal heads); *ibid.*, p. 372 (handle with winged figure). 5. Yadin 1963, p. 74.



62. Bowl

Before 135

Glass, cast, Diam. 5¹/₁₆ in. (14.5 cm)

Judean Desert, Cave of Letters

Israel Antiquities Authority, exhibited at the Israel Museum, Jerusalem (1961–1307)

63. Bowl

Before 135

Glass, cast, Diam. 5¹/₁₆ in. (12.9 cm)

Judean Desert, Cave of Letters

Israel Antiquities Authority, exhibited at the Israel Museum, Jerusalem (1996–902)



64. Incense Shovel

Before 135
 Bronze, H. 5¼ in. (13.3 cm)
 Judean Desert, Cave of Letters
 Israel Antiquities Authority, exhibited at the Israel Museum, Jerusalem
 (1996-291)



65. Elbow Key

Before 135
 Bronze and wood, H. 7⅞ in.
 (20 cm)
 Judean Desert, Cave of Letters
 Israel Antiquities Authority,
 exhibited at the Israel Museum,
 Jerusalem (1996-306)



66. Knife

Before 135
 Wood, bronze, L. 12⅓/16 in. (31 cm), W. (max.) 3⅛ in. (8 cm)
 Judean Desert, Cave of Letters
 Israel Antiquities Authority, exhibited at the Israel Museum, Jerusalem
 (1996-292)



67. Mirror with Case

Before 135
 Tinned copper, lead, wood, leather, parchment, Case: H. 7⅕/16 in.
 (20.2 cm), W. 4¾/4 in. (12 cm); Mirror: Diam. 3⅛/16 in. (7.7 cm)
 Judean Desert, Cave of Letters
 Israel Antiquities Authority, exhibited at the Israel Museum, Jerusalem
 (1961-1365)



68. Jug

Bronze, H. $6\frac{5}{16}$ in. (17.7 cm), Diam. $3\frac{9}{16}$ in. (9.1 cm)
Before 135
Judaean Desert, Cave of Letters
Israel Antiquities Authority, exhibited at the Israel Museum, Jerusalem
(1961-1305)



69. Jug

Bronze, H. $8\frac{1}{16}$ in. (20.5 cm), Diam. $4\frac{1}{4}$ in. (10.8 cm)
Before 135
Judaean Desert, Cave of Letters
Israel Antiquities Authority, exhibited at the Israel Museum, Jerusalem
(1996-900)





70. Bowl

Before 135

Bronze, H. 5 1/16 in. (12.8 cm), Diam. 14 13/16 in. (37.6 cm)

Judaeen Desert, Cave of Letters

Israel Antiquities Authority, exhibited at the Israel Museum, Jerusalem
(1961-1358)



TYRE AND SIDON

DURING THE LATE HELLENISTIC AND ROMAN PERIODS, PHOENICIAN coastal cities—Tyre, Sidon, Arados (present-day Arwad), Berytus (present-day Beirut), and Byblos—were busy ports and prolific centers of industry and artistic production (see map, p. xix). At the core of their commercial success was the production of purple dye and clothing and the manufacture of cosmetics and perfumes made from both local and imported spices and aromatics, as well as glassmaking and metalworking. In addition, the cities prospered in their roles as exporters of incense, cedar, and agricultural goods across the Mediterranean, including wheat, olive oil, and wine from a wide region that stretched from the Beqaa Valley to the Hauran, and as importers of luxury goods such as linen, jewels, and silk from Judaea, Syria, Central Asia, India, and China. Several Phoenician ports were already well established in the Bronze Age, and by the Iron Age merchants and colonists sailing from them traded and settled across the entire Mediterranean region. During the Roman period, harbors were modified with Roman construction techniques that extensively increased their capacities. The lasting significance of the cities' early histories, including far-reaching trade networks and colonies, is particularly apparent in the cases of Tyre and Sidon.

Fig. 37 Al-Bass necropolis and monumental arch, Tyre

The geographer Strabo, writing in the middle of the first century A.D., was aware of this history and gave the two cities special characterization:

After Sidon one comes to Tyre, the largest and oldest city of the Phoenicians, which rivals Sidon, not only in size, but also in its fame and antiquity, as handed down to us in numerous myths. Now although the poets have referred more repeatedly to Sidon than to Tyre (Homer does not even mention Tyre), yet the colonies sent into Libya and Iberia, as far even as outside the Pillars [of Hercules], hymn rather the praises of Tyre. At any rate, both cities have been famous and illustrious, both in early times and at the present time; and no matter which of the two one might call the metropolis of the Phoenicians, there is a dispute in both cities.¹

In the second century, references to Tyre as a “metropolis” may reflect both the city’s historical role as a “mother-city” of its colonies and a rank possibly given to only one city per Roman province before the Hadrianic period.² Both Tyre and Sidon preserved many aspects of Phoenician identity and maintained significant degrees of autonomy, even as their political status underwent changes throughout the Roman period. A sense of their roles as flourishing and sophisticated centers for the arts is discernible in their funerary art and monuments, which also reveal an important interplay between residents’ specific local traditions and changes in customs sparked by Roman influence.

Tyre was the first city in the region to gain its independence from the Seleucid Empire, in 126 B.C., and Sidon, too, became independent in the late second century B.C.³ The lasting importance of this status is underscored by the first century A.D. historian Flavius Josephus, who remarks on Mark Antony’s denial of Cleopatra’s bid to control both cities around 34 B.C., although he granted her authority over others: “[Antony] gave her the cities that were within the river Eleutherus, as far as Egypt, excepting Tyre and Sidon, which he knew to have been free cities from their ancestors, although she pressed him very often to bestow those on her also.”⁴ Sidon is recorded as having welcomed the Parthian prince Pacorus’s invasion of Phoenicia in 38 B.C. and as having sided with Mark Antony against Octavian;⁵ it appears, however, that Sidon and Tyre largely escaped the punishments Octavian apparently threatened for their



Fig. 38 Silver shekel with head of the god Melqart and eagle, minted at Tyre, 13 B.C. The Trustees of the British Museum, London (1906.0712.111)

rivalry with one another after he rose to power following the Battle of Actium in 31 B.C.⁶ Octavian assumed the honorific title Augustus and became the first Roman emperor (r. 27 B.C.–A.D. 14), and the two cities continued to be economic powerhouses benefiting greatly from the ensuing political stability in the eastern Mediterranean under the Augustan peace, known as the *pax Romana*.

Coins minted in each city emphasized their local identities through language choices and historical and mythological references. Sidon produced coins that did not mention or depict the reigning Roman emperor and instead featured legends written in either Greek or Phoenician, such as “of Sidon the sacred and inviolate,” until the middle of the first century A.D., or “of Sidon (the) goddess, sacred, inviolate and mistress of a fleet” that emphasized its maritime role. Some later Sidonian coins would feature portraits of emperors, although Trajan (r. 98–117) was the first to be named. The frequent motif of Europa seated on a bull was reference to the city’s special role in the famous Greek myth: it was from Sidon that Zeus, in the form of a bull, was said to have carried off Europa.⁷

Tyre’s ability to mint in silver is remarkable: many cities in the eastern half of the Roman Empire were permitted to mint coins in bronze, while minting in silver represented a special privilege. Notably, Tyre’s coins make no reference to Roman rule or emperors, and many coins feature the city’s patron god Melqart, as well as eagles, and a palm frond emblematic of Phoenicia. These shekels were the standard currency for paying dues to the Temple of Jerusalem (fig. 38).⁸ Tyre eventually lost this power, and silver tetradrachms with the head of the emperor were minted at Antioch from the year 59/60 on. Bronze coins continued to be minted, however, and emphasized a distinctively Tyrian identity, with their legends written in Phoenician,

no depictions of Roman emperors, and frequent portrayals of Melqart until the city became a Roman colony. The only other coins produced in Roman imperial territory during the second century that featured a Semitic language and did not depict or name the emperor were those of the Judaeen Bar Kokhba revolt (cat. 60).

Both cities supported the Roman emperor Septimius Severus (r. 193–211) in his struggle for power against Pescennius Niger (r. 193–194) in 194, and during the course of this conflict the latter sacked Tyre. Whether either city subsequently became the capital and seat of the governor of Severus's newly formed province of Syria Phoenice is unclear (Damascus is another possibility), but both Tyre and Sidon became Roman colonies in the early third century.⁹ Writing contemporaneously, the famous jurist Ulpian of Tyre emphasized his city's glorious past and loyal relationship to Rome in remarks on its new status.¹⁰

Tyre and Sidon thrived as industrial centers. The production of royal purple dye from the murex shell had been a key Phoenician industry dating back to the Bronze Age. Since each murex provided only a small quantity of dye, huge numbers were needed: a hill formed largely of murex shells remains visible south of Sidon.¹¹ Pliny the Elder singles out the murex in conjunction with his characterization of Tyre losing much of its previous prestige by the first century A.D.:

Next Tyre, once an island separated from the mainland by a very deep sea-channel 700 yards wide, but now joined to it by works constructed by Alexander when besieging the place, and formerly famous as the mother-city from which sprang the cities of Leptis, Utica and the great rival of Rome's empire in coveting world-sovereignty, Carthage, and also Cadiz, which she founded outside the confines of the world; but the entire renown of Tyre now consists in a shellfish and a purple dye!¹²

Phoenician purple continued to be very much in demand for the Roman imperial court and for those whose rank entitled them to wear it. A major component of the industry in the coastal cities was the reweaving of textiles brought from other areas, notably wool from Judaea, linen from Galilee, and silk from China, as well as dyeing them and producing clothing.¹³ Lucan, a Roman epic poet who wrote during the emperor Nero's reign (r. 54–68), provides a glimpse of

Sidon's role through his comments on Cleopatra's luxurious silk clothing: "[Her] white breasts were revealed by the fabric of Sidon, which, close-woven by the shuttle of the Seres, the Egyptian needle-worker pulls out, and loosens the thread by stretching the stuff."¹⁴ Notably, Alexandria was another prominent port city, and one connected through trade to the Phoenician coastal cities.

Additionally, Sidon was renowned for its workshops that produced statues and other objects in bronze and the highest quality glass, which were exported both throughout the region and across the Mediterranean. A glimpse of the roots of the bronze-working industry comes from the *Odyssey*: Odysseus's swineherd Eumaios comments that his mother came from "Sidon, rich in bronze."¹⁵ Philo of Alexandria provides the most detailed literary evidence for Sidonian bronze workers during the Roman period: he mentions that they created a colossal gilded bronze statue of the emperor Caligula (r. 37–41) in the guise of the god Zeus upon his order, which he intended to place in the Temple at Jerusalem (see p. 83).¹⁶ A bronze ship model dedicated to the god Zeus Baithmares in a village in Sidon's hinterland is a likely example of one of their smaller-scale creations that also most likely reflects its commissioner's role in maritime commerce (cat. 71). Bronze statuettes of deities and other objects offered as votives at sanctuaries throughout Phoenicia or venerated in household shrines were also very possibly produced in Sidon (cats. 85–86, 89–91).

The transition in technique from core-formed and cast to blown glass that began in the middle of the first century B.C. was revolutionary, resulting in a much wider variety of glass goods affordable to a far greater number of consumers and a tremendous increase in distribution (cats. 72–78). Although glass was produced at various locations along the Phoenician coast, including Tyre and Berytus, Strabo, writing during the first century A.D., refers to Alexandria and Sidon as the most important glassmaking centers and comments that Sidon's sand was the best in quality; Pliny describes Sidon as *artifex vitri*, the "producer of glass."¹⁷ Recent discoveries at Sidon include large raw glass chunks and ingots and a primary glass kiln dating to the early Roman period.¹⁸ The luxury items produced during the first century A.D. by the master glassworker Ennion, as well as by Jason and Neikias, and by the half dozen other glassmakers who identified themselves specifically as "Sidonians" in their signatures, attest to the quality of Sidonian glass and suggest the cachet the city's name carried for consumers (cats. 79–81).¹⁹ Writing during

the second century and after the city's glassworking heyday, the philosopher Lucian of Samosata still referred to Sidon's glass as a standard of transparency.²⁰

The substantial improvements made to the harbors of Tyre and Sidon during the Roman period, revealed by recent archaeological research, undoubtedly played a critical role in their economic success and the great expansion in Mediterranean trade.²¹ Roman engineering works, made possible because of the invention of hydraulic concrete, changed the coastal landscape with the result that both cities were able to accommodate an increased number of ships, including larger vessels, and therefore distribute their cargoes more effectively and increase the overall volume of goods. Originally built on both an island and the mainland, by the Roman period Tyre was located on a peninsula that had formed as a result of centuries of accumulated sediment along the mole built by Alexander the Great to connect the island and mainland during his siege in 332/331 B.C. Strabo mentions

that Tyre "has two harbors, one that can be closed, and the other, called 'Egyptian' harbor, open."²² The northern ("closed") harbor was artificially protected by construction that occurred during the Roman period, as indicated by the discovery of pozzolana, a type of volcanic ash used for mortar or for cement that sets under water.²³ Sidon's harbors are described by Achilles Tatius in the beginning of his novel *Leucippe and Clitophon*, which was most likely written in the second century:

Sidon is a city on the sea. . . . In the folds of a bay lies a twin harbour, broad and gently enclosing the sea: where the bay bellies out down the flank of the coast on the right, another mouth has been carved out, an alternative channel for the influx of the tide. Thus a second harbour is born from the first, so that trading vessels can winter there in the calm, while they can pass the summer in the outer part of the bay.²⁴



Fig. 39 Wall painting depicting the abduction of Proserpina, from the Tomb of Tyre, second century. National Museum, Beirut



Fig. 40 Sarcophagus with a reclining couple and scenes from the life of Achilles, discovered in the Al-Bass necropolis, Tyre. ca. 230-240. National Museum, Beirut (607)

Similar to Tyre, the construction of an inner artificial mole, or breakwater, perpendicular to the sandstone ridge created an extremely sheltered basin in the northern harbor.²⁵ The southern harbor appears to have served as a natural hauling area for small boats, and larger ships were anchored in the bay.²⁶

Expressions of both local identity and wider trends in funerary art and architecture are evident in the two cities' various grave markers, sarcophagi, and tombs dated to the Roman period. Some traditions are highly locally specific, such as the special type of cippi that Sidonians used as grave markers for simple burials: these are entirely distinctive to Sidon and their inscriptions reveal a great deal about the city's population (cats. 82-83). Designs on lead coffins produced in large numbers in both cities and elsewhere in the region also have significant local resonance, since they can be attributed

to a given city's workshops based on the combination and arrangement of motifs. More broadly, the sphinxes, Medusa (Gorgon) heads, vessels, vines, and flowers typically featured are protective motifs and Dionysiac imagery that were also popular on Roman funerary monuments produced elsewhere and indicate an important reciprocity of meanings and customs (cat. 84).

Many of the tombs and sarcophagi of the most elite residents of Tyre and Sidon reveal a desire for public display and commemoration that attests to Roman influence, although links to past traditions and many continuous burial practices and rituals are evident,²⁷ as are local adaptations of typically Roman models. Frescoes with scenes from Homer and other Greek myths from a second-century hypogaeum discovered in 1937 near the village of Burj el-Shemali approximately 2 miles (3 km) south of Tyre and now in the



Fig. 41 Ship sarcophagus discovered in the Magharet Abloun necropolis, Sidon, 2nd century. National Museum, Beirut (2340)

National Museum of Beirut display continuity with the traditions of painted tombs from the Hellenistic period and also bear a stylistic resemblance to wall paintings from Pompeii, providing a glimpse of shared visual culture and intellectual life (fig. 39).²⁸ The Al-Bass cemetery in Tyre, in use from the first through the sixth century, lines a wide main road paved in the second century leading into the city from the east, past the hippodrome and through a monumental arch, and the visibility and prominence of its tombs and sarcophagi is typical of cemeteries in other locations in the Roman world (fig. 37). Buildings that contained multiple burials and stone sarcophagi placed in prominent outdoor funerary enclosures and gardens include several dozen imported examples carved in marble and other stones, such as a sarcophagus

with a reclining couple on the lid and scenes from the life of Achilles on the sides from Attica (fig. 40).²⁹ They indicate affluent Tyrians' roles as consumers in connection with the booming industry of sarcophagus production and distribution across the Mediterranean. Locally produced sarcophagi sometimes emulate the imported Attic and Proconnesian examples closely, but some also feature significant variations in design. The ship sarcophagus carved from local limestone discovered in Sidon's Magharet Abloun necropolis is remarkable for its combination of garlands and lions' heads that are standard in Roman sarcophagus iconography with a depiction of a Sidonian merchant ship that may well reflect the source of its commissioner's wealth and is powerfully emblematic of the city (fig. 41).³⁰



71. Votive Ship Model for Zeus Baithmares

121-22

Bronze, gilding, H. 9¼ in. (23,5 cm), W. 20⅙ in. (51 cm), D. 5½ in. (14 cm)

Bab Mareaa

National Museum, Beirut (16500)

A Greek inscription on its side records the dedication of this bronze ship model to Zeus Baithmares by Kerdon, son of Diodoros.¹ This god is an example of the numerous highly localized versions of Zeus-Jupiter venerated throughout Phoenicia in the Roman period, and his toponym, Baithmares, provides the ancient name for the model's findspot, the village of Bab Mareaa in the southern part of the Beqaa Valley.² The particular form of this votive probably had significance, and it may be that Kerdon was involved in maritime trading ventures.³ The model was very likely produced in a bronze workshop in Sidon, located approximately 30 miles (50 km) from Bab Mareaa (see p. 101). Detailed knowledge of ship design would have been prevalent in the port city, and it is also interesting to note that the names Kerdon and Diodoros are frequently found in inscriptions from Sidon.⁴

The ship has been identified as a swift vessel with external passageways known as an *actuaria*; the spur protruding

from the keel could be either a permanent fixture on a merchant ship or an addition when requisitioned for war.⁵ A hole in the interior of the hull and one in the half-bridge were made to hold masts. The model was originally designed to be suspended from a chain, which would have been hooked on to the loop formed by the curling sea monster on the prow and on to the hole at the top of the stern, which shows traces of rust, probably from the iron of the chain. Nozzles at either end and the shell-shaped base were added later when the ship was converted to a lamp, but previously flames may have been lit on the bridge of the vessel.⁶

1. Yon and Aliquot 2016, pp. 195-96, no. 367. 2. Seyrig 1951, p. 102; for localized forms of Zeus-Jupiter, see Aliquot 2009, pp. 140-42. 3. For other ship votives, see Yon and Aliquot 2016, p. 195. 4. Seyrig 1951, p. 105; Yon and Aliquot 2016, p. 195, no. 367. 5. Basch 1987, pp. 455-57. See also Seyrig 1951, pp. 112-13. 6. Seyrig 1951, pp. 102, 106, nn. 3, 4.



72

72. Alabastron (Perfume Bottle)

2nd-1st century B.C.

Glass, core-formed, H. 5¹/₁₆ in. (12.9 cm), Diam. 1⁷/₁₆ in. (3.6 cm)

Eastern Mediterranean

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1917 (17.194.599)

73. Perfume Bottle with Opaque White Trail

1st century

Glass, blown, H. 5⁷/₈ in. (15 cm), Diam. 7/₈ in. (2.2 cm)

Eastern Mediterranean

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1917 (17.194.307)

74. Perfume Bottle with Trail Decoration

Early 1st century

Glass, blown, H. 3 in. (7.6 cm), Diam. 2¹/₂ in. (6.4 cm)

Said to be from Syria

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gift of Henry G. Marquand, 1881 (81.10.186)



73

75. Spouted Bottle

2nd-4th century

Glass, blown, H. 4⁵/₈ in. (11.7 cm), Diam. 3¹/₄ in. (8.3 cm), L. with spout

4⁵/₁₆ in. (10.9 cm)

Said to be from Syria

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gift of Henry G. Marquand, 1881 (81.10.62)

76. Amphoriskos (Hexagonal Flask) with Horizontal Ribbs

2nd half of 1st century

Glass, blown in a two-part mold, H. 3¹/₈ in. (7.9 cm), W. 1¹/₂ in. (3.8 cm)

Eastern Mediterranean

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gift of Henry G. Marquand, 1881 (81.10.215)

As a group, these bottles illustrate the variety of containers for perfumes and oils that were traded widely throughout the Middle East and Mediterranean during the Roman period. Core forming, in which molten glass was trailed around a core of clay, sand, and organic material, was the standard practice for producing glass bottles from the mid-sixth century B.C. until the late Hellenistic period (cat. 72).¹ The invention of glassblowing was transformative, being much



74



75

less laborious than core forming or casting glass (cats. 77–78) and allowing new shapes to be produced. The earliest archaeological evidence for the process comes from excavations in Jerusalem and dates to the mid-first century B.C., although quantities of blown glass at archaeological sites appear only in the early first century A.D.² Glassblowing resulted in a dramatic increase in fine tableware and luxury vessels (cats. 79–81) as well as in the mass production of inexpensive containers including small bottles for perfume (cats. 73–74) and oils (cat. 75).³ In blown glass, trailed-on decoration, possibly inspired by the attractive trail decoration on almost all core-formed bottles, could be created by winding rods of colored glass around the vessel after blowing (cats. 73–74). Following the invention of free blowing, mold blowing adapted techniques from casting and pottery molding that enabled glass to be produced more quickly and efficiently and made it a cost-effective alternative to ceramics (cat. 76).⁴

1. Froehner 1903, pp. 16–17, no. 67. 2. Israeli 1991; Henderson 2013, pp. 227–32. 3. Froehner 1879, pp. 72, 74, 76 (n. 3) (cats. 74, 76), 80, 138, 139, no. 22 (cat. 75); Froehner 1903, p. 63, no. 430 (cat. 73). 4. C. Lightfoot 2015, p. 104.



76



77. Mosaic Bowl

Late 1st century B.C.–early 1st century A.D.
 Glass, cast, H. 1 5/8 in. (4.1 cm), Diam. 3 9/16 in. (9 cm)
 Said to be from Beroea (Aleppo)
 The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Rogers Fund, 1923 (23.45)

78. Ribbed Bowl

First half of 1st century
 Glass, cast, H. 2 3/16 in. (5.6 cm), Diam. 5 3/16 in. (13.2 cm)
 Said to be from Syria
 The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gift of Henry G. Marquand, 1881 (81.10.38)

These two bowls, most likely used as drinking cups, are examples of different types of glass tableware produced by slumping molten glass over a former mold, followed by additional working, cutting, and polishing. Bowls in mosaic

glass (cat. 77) had been in use since the Hellenistic period and some have been found in Syria, although the exact location of the workshops that produced them is unknown and could have been anywhere in the eastern Mediterranean region. They were made by drawing out various colors of molten glass into long “canes,” grouping them together, slicing them, placing the pieces in a mold, and heating them until fused.¹ The vessel here emulates the shape of Roman carinated bowls produced in silver or red-slipped ceramic. The ribbed bowl (cat. 78) belongs to a type produced since the middle of the second century B.C. in both monochrome and mosaic versions.² Its shape and design echo metal phialae produced in the Middle East in earlier periods.

1. C. Lightfoot 2017, p. 45, n. 44; C. Lightfoot in Milleker 2000, p. 64. 2. C. Lightfoot in Milleker 2000, pp. 63–64, 206, no. 50, fig. 50.

79. Amphoriskos (Hexagonal Flask) Signed by Ennion

Early 1st century

Glass, blown in a four-part mold, H. 5⁵/₈ in. (14.2 cm), W. 3¹/₈ in. (8 cm), D. 2¹³/₁₆ in. (7.2 cm), Diam. rim 1¹/₂ in. (3.8 cm)

Said to be from Potamia, near Golgoi, Cyprus

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gift of Henry G. Marquand, 1881 (81.10.224)

The glassworker Ennion is renowned for the exceptional quality of his vessels and their refined and innovative designs. He appears to have set up his workshop in Sidon during the first decades of the first century and was quite possibly the first major maker of mold-blown glass, contributing significantly to the industry's major expansion during the first century. Approximately fifty to fifty-five surviving vessels have been attributed to him, primarily drinking cups but also amphorae, jugs, bowls, and flasks, all apparently produced from a limited number of molds that were used numerous times.¹ Ennion's products were traded regionally and exported across the Mediterranean and to the northern shores of the Black Sea. Their findspots include a house in Jerusalem whose destruction is dated to the Roman sack in 70, Petra, Apamea, Zeugma, Byzantium (Istanbul), Athens, Corinth, sites in Dalmatia and northern Italy, and even as far as Gades (Cadiz) beyond the Pillars of Hercules (Straits of Gibraltar).² The possibility that Ennion moved his workshop to Aquileia in northern Italy has been raised, owing to the number of his vessels discovered in the region; however, another explanation is that molds made by Ennion or copied by competitors may have been used in Italy. An additional detail suggests he was in fact based entirely in Sidon: he did not include the toponym "Sidonian" in his signatures, whereas six other glassmakers are known to have included a version of it, a likely indicator that they were working elsewhere and their association with Sidon was prestigious. However, these glassmakers made free-blown cups with stamped handles. Much more closely connected to Ennion is Aristreas, who used the epithet "from Cyprus" but is believed to have worked in Sidon, and produced fine mold-blown vessels influenced by those of Ennion.³

This large hexagonal two-handled flask of glass colored with cobalt and containing a small amount of copper features a design very possibly derived from architectural models and incorporating Dionysiac motifs.⁴ Below a series of palmettes and semicircular pediments, the six vertical panels contain an



inscription with Ennion's signature prominently integrated into the design, a palmette above tendrils supporting a bunch of grapes, ivy tendrils supporting a drinking cup (kantharos) by one of its handles, a palmette above tendrils supporting double flutes, ivy tendrils supporting a fluted jug (oinochoe) by its handle, and a palmette with tendrils supporting a set of pipes. The Greek inscription "Ennion made [me/it]" is notable for an error in the verb form that suggests Ennion was not a native Greek speaker, and his name is most likely Semitic in origin.⁵ Other examples of hexagonal glass jugs with Dionysiac symbols are known,⁶ and in general such motifs are frequent on tableware produced throughout the Roman imperial period (cat. 130).

1. C. Lightfoot 2014, pp. 19, 21, 33, 39–40. 2. *Ibid.*, pp. 23–24; Yael Israeli in *ibid.*, pp. 57–59; Zrinka Buljević in *ibid.*, pp. 61–67. 3. *Ibid.*, pp. 19–21, 32; for signatures, see Stern 1995, pp. 69–74. 4. C. Lightfoot 2014, pp. 16, 27, 84–85, no. 9, figs. 1, 15. For discussion of the molds, see Karol B. Wight in *ibid.*, pp. 54–55, figs. 44–46. For scientific analysis, see Mark T. Wypyski in *ibid.*, p. 143. See also C. Lightfoot 2017, pp. 13, 52, figs. 2, 3. 5. C. Lightfoot 2014, pp. 28, 30. 6. For examples, see Stern 1995, pp. 160–66, nos. 71–74.



80. Beaker Signed by Jason

Mid-1st century

Glass, blown in a three-part mold, H. $3\frac{9}{16}$ in. (9.1 cm), Diam. $2\frac{9}{16}$ in. (6.5 cm)

Said to be from Scythopolis (Beit She'an)

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, H. O. Havemeyer Collection, Bequest of Mrs. H. O. Havemeyer, 1929 (29.100.82)

The glassworkers Neikais and Jason, as well as a third, Meges, were very possibly near contemporaries of Ennion (cat. 79) and most likely had their workshops in Sidon as well, although, similar to Ennion, they did not sign their vessels with a toponym and may have worked in Tyre or another coastal Phoenician city.¹ Only beakers are attributed to them, all of a standard shape, size, and design: their findspots indicate they were distributed across a local or regional market, and none are recorded as discovered in the western half of the Roman Empire.² Likely production dates in the mid-first century are confirmed by a fragment of one of Neikais's cups that was excavated at Masada in Judaea in a context dated not later than the Great Revolt in 66–73/74.³

Blown in three-part molds, these barrel-shaped beakers of translucent blue-green (cat. 80) and light green (cat. 81) glass have relief decoration and a two-line Greek inscription on each side.⁴ The signatures “Jason made (me/it)” and “Neikais made (me/it)” are straightforward; the phrase



81. Beaker Signed by Neikais

Mid-1st century

Glass, blown in a three-part mold, H. $3\frac{3}{8}$ in. (8.6 cm), Diam. $2\frac{11}{16}$ in. (6.8 cm)

Eastern Mediterranean

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Museum Accession (X.21.186)

“may the buyer be remembered” on the other side may be an abridged form of a Semitic blessing formula used by Judaeans, Phoenicians, Nabataeans, and Syrians, and it could also be interpreted more broadly as a motto or toast complimenting the vessel's user.⁵ The stylized palm fronds that serve as vertical dividers between the inscriptions are emblematic of Phoenicia: the Greek terms for “Phoenician” and “date-palm” are closely related, and palm fronds appear on Tyre's coins (fig. 38). The spelling of the name Neikais is an unusual variant used by both men and women, raising the possibility that this individual was one of the few female glassworkers identifiable in the ancient world.⁶

1. C. Lightfoot 2014, pp. 44–45. 2. Stern 1995, pp. 73–74; C. Lightfoot 2014, pp. 45, 121, n. 7, for a similar but unsigned beaker discovered in Aquae Sextiae (Aix-en-Provence). 3. Barag 1991, p. 139. 4. C. Lightfoot 2014, pp. 118, 120–21, nos. 30, 32. For a complete version of the same beaker by Neikais, see Stern 1995, pp. 100–102, no. 5. 5. Stern 1995, p. 102; C. Lightfoot 2014, p. 29. 6. Stern 1995, pp. 73, 101.

82. Cippus of Bremousa

2nd-3rd century

Limestone, H. 19¹¹/₁₆ in. (50 cm), W. 7⁷/₈ in. (20 cm), D. 7⁷/₈ in. (20 cm)

Beirut

National Museum, Beirut (4662)

83. Cippus of Titus Flavius Appianus

2nd-3rd century

Marble, H. 15³/₄ in. (40 cm), W. 6¹/₈ in. (15.5 cm), D. 6¹/₈ in. (15.5 cm)

Sidon

National Museum, Beirut (12539)

Produced primarily during the second century but also into the third, the numerous inscribed cippi (small pillars) with cubic bases from Sidon's ancient cemeteries are a local type of funerary monument distinctive to the city and also used by Sidonians living elsewhere.¹ In contrast to sarcophagi and other elaborate funerary monuments, cippi marked simple burials in outdoor graves or were placed within tomb chambers in front of loculi (burial niches) to play the role of the *nefesh*, the spirit of the deceased, and commemorate them for the living. Made of a type of local limestone (*ramleh*) or marble, they are carved with decorative wreaths of flowers and leaves or sometimes ribbons or geometric patterns. Their inscriptions, virtually all written in Greek, typically provide the deceased's name and age and standard funerary epitaphs; most of the names are Greek rather than Semitic, and they are a major source of information about Sidon's population. Occasionally, a date calculated according to the Sidonian calendar is given.

Bremousa's cippus (cat. 82) is decorated with flowers and leaves and a simple three-line Greek inscription: "Bremousa, excellent and who did not cause trouble, farewell!" Her name is unusual for its mythological significance, mentioned as belonging to an Amazon and known to have been used for a person only in one other instance.² The cippus of Titus Flavius Appianus (cat. 83) features a wreath of stylized leaves and a four-line Greek inscription: "Titus Flavius Appianus, having lived well." His name is remarkable for the fact that it is Latin and he uses the combination of three names indicative of Roman citizenship (*tria nomina*); his cognomen (family name) is particularly noteworthy as it suggests he may have been descended from a man named Appius, great-grandfather of the emperor Lucius Verus (r. 161-169) and aide-de-camp of the emperor Titus (r. 79-81) during the Judaeen Great Revolt.³



1. Bel 2012c, p. 355. 2. Yon and Aliquot 2016, p. 119, no. 186. Although attributable to a cemetery in Sidon, the cippus is known to have been in the garden of Ali Bey Joumblat in Beirut before 1914: see du Mesnil du Buisson and Mouterde 1914-21, pp. 386-87, no. 2. 3. Rey-Coquais 2000; Yon and Aliquot 2016, p. 117, no. 182. See also Renan 1864, p. 388.



84. Lead Coffin

Late 2nd-mid-3rd century

Lead, sides: H. 17³/₈ in. (44.1 cm), W. 69 in. (175.3 cm), D. 1/4 in. (0.6 cm); H. 18 in. (45.7 cm), W. 67¹/₂ in. (171.5 cm), D. 1/4 in. (0.6 cm); ends: H. 19¹/₈ in. (48.6 cm), W. 15 in. (38.1 cm), D. 1/4 in. (0.6 cm); H. 20¹/₂ in. (52.1 cm), W. 14³/₄ in. (37.5 cm), D. 1/4 in. (0.6 cm); lid, left half: H. 4⁵/₈ in. (11.7 cm), W. 17 in. (43.2 cm), L. 40³/₄ in. (103.5 cm); lid, right half: H. 4³/₄ in. (12.1 cm), W. 17¹/₂ in. (44.5 cm), L. 31¹/₂ in. (80 cm)

Said to be from Syria

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gift of George D. Pratt (31.116a-f)

Lead coffins form a major category of distinctive regional funerary art produced between the second and fourth centuries, primarily in Tyre, as well as in Sidon and Beirut and also very likely in smaller workshops at Akko, Caesarea, Ashkelon, Gaza, and Jerusalem.¹ Typically, the coffins were placed inside larger stone or wooden sarcophagi or in the floors of rock-cut tombs and were therefore not in fact intended to be displayed visibly as many stone sarcophagi were.² Their production was relatively straightforward, making them much more affordable than costly stone sarcophagi yet more elaborate than clay or wooden ones. Lead imported from mines in Iberia and Sardinia under Roman imperial control was smelted in a simple furnace and cast in a single open mold of clay or possibly sand. Decorative patterns that include standard Graeco-Roman Dionysiac and apotropaic motifs were created by pressing relief-carved stamps into the mold before casting; the stamps were probably made of wood, which would have withstood the pressure involved in the process.³ Edges or outlines of stamps are sometimes discernible, including in a few locations on this example.

This coffin is attributed to a workshop in Tyre, owing to the specific decorative patterns featured on its long sides and the use of two different designs on its two short sides.⁴ Both long sides are decorated with Corinthian columns, spirally fluted in their upper sections, with sphinxes, dolphins, Medusa (Gorgon) heads, and kantharoi appearing between them, laurel leaves with berries above, and grapevines below. One short side features a temple facade with four Corinthian columns and a broken pediment with a Medusa head below, laurel leaves on the entablature and cornice, and five vine sprigs above the pediment, which is of a type characteristic of Syrian architecture during the second century. A kantharos



with intertwined vines appears between columns on both the left and right. The other short side features a Medusa head at the center of a rosette formed of twisted spokes and vine sprigs. The center of the lid is decorated with curving vine tendrils, rosettes, and flowers with bands of kraters, birds, vine tendrils, and rosettes above and below.

The coffin, which lacks its bottom side, weighs 215 pounds (97.5 kg); lead coffins appear to have been rarely transported significant distances from their place of manufacture. A few possible examples of imported coffins are known, including one discovered in Akhziv and a fragment from Gesher Haziv, both attributed to a Tyrian workshop. However, an alternative possibility is that itinerant artisans traveled with various stamps and set up workshops in urban areas where demand was sufficient.⁵

1. For difficulties in dating lead sarcophagi and reconstructing a chronology, see Rahmani (1999, pp. 4–5), who revises the date proposed by Avi-Yonah 1935. For the identification of workshops and their associated specific patterns and motifs, see Rahmani 1999, pp. 72–80. 2. McCann 1978, p. 142. 3. Rahmani 1999, pp. 14–15. 4. Alexander 1932; Chéhab 1934, p. 338, n. 2; McCann 1978, pp. 143–46, no. 25. 5. Rahmani 1999, pp. 73–75, 87–88, no. 8, pl. 4; Aviam and Shalem 2014.



HELIOPOLIS-BAALBEK

THE ANCIENT CITY OF HELIOPOLIS IS STRATEGICALLY LOCATED between two foothills of the Anti-Lebanon Mountains in the northern part of the Beqaa Valley, where the Orontes and Leontes Rivers and plentiful springs create a highly fertile area (see map, p. xix). Its name, “city of the sun,” may reflect historical ties between Phoenicia and Egypt: the name “Baalbek” appears only in the fifth century, though it is probably Canaanite for “Baal of the spring” in reference to Baal, the storm god revered throughout the region in the Bronze and Iron Ages.¹ The city, now known as Heliopolis-Baalbek, is famous for its exceptionally well-preserved colossal sanctuary built during the Roman period and for its three main gods: Jupiter Heliopolitanus, Venus Heliopolitana, and Mercury Heliopolitanus. The combination of Middle Eastern and Graeco-Roman features evident in the representations of the gods and in the architecture of the sanctuary illuminates the complexity of religious life in the region, including the creation of new deities that incorporated elements of earlier ones, and cult rituals and settings that borrowed from different traditions. Religious practices with a highly localized element and a strong connection to his particular sanctuary site existed alongside Jupiter Heliopolitanus’s

Fig. 42 Aerial view of the sanctuary at Heliopolis-Baalbek

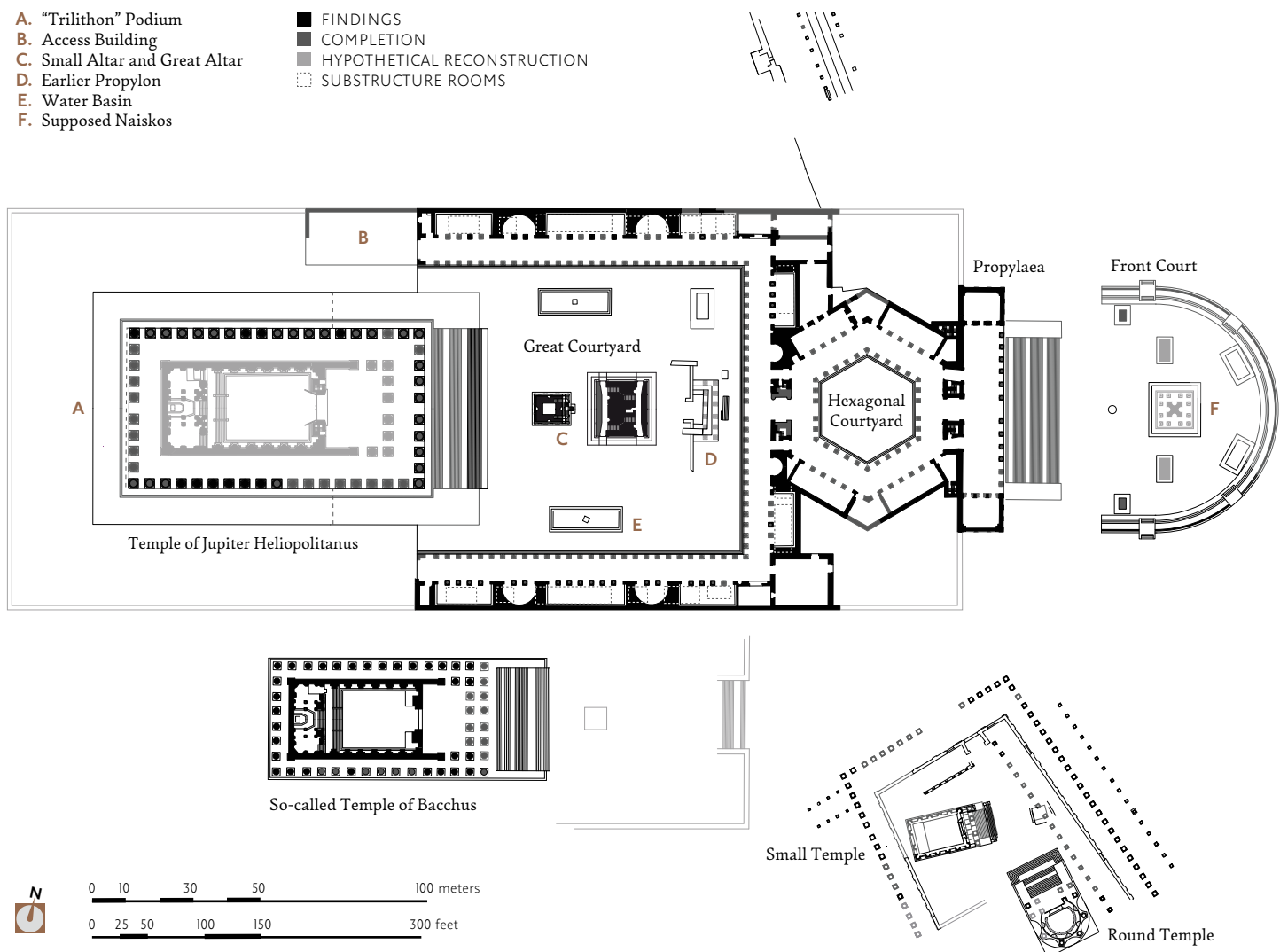


Fig. 43 Plan of the sanctuary at Heliopolis-Baalbek. Drawing by Daniel Lohmann

powerful wider appeal, reflected in the spread of his cult across the Roman Empire. The emperor Trajan (r. 98–117) reportedly consulted the oracle at Heliopolis before embarking on his Parthian campaign;² the prediction of his imminent death was accurate and may have inspired subsequent imperially funded expansion projects at the sanctuary and Jupiter Heliopolitanus's apparent rise in popularity. Given its size, the scarcity of mentions of the sanctuary at Heliopolis-Baalbek in ancient literary sources is surprising. The complex's initial identification as the cult site of Jupiter Heliopolitanus was based on the discovery of dedicatory inscriptions and on the city's coins, which feature a temple and propylaea along with legends that

include the abbreviation of the god's name.³ The main large-scale excavations at the site took place between 1900 and 1904, followed by a series of subsequent projects.⁴

Jupiter Heliopolitanus was a supreme god of agrarian fertility, water sources, weather, and the cosmos, and the divinities Venus Heliopolitana and Mercury Heliopolitanus were also significant, although they most likely did not form a "triad" with discernible relationships to one another. All three are mentioned in inscriptions and represented in sculptures that date exclusively to the Roman period, mainly to the second and third centuries: Jupiter Heliopolitanus and Venus Heliopolitana are linked iconographically to the Phoenician gods Baal-Hadad and Astarte, their divine predecessors

in the region. The main sources for understanding Jupiter Heliopolitanus's divine identity and cult are sculptures that are probably small-scale copies or imitations of his original cult statue that was placed in his temple at Heliopolis-Baalbek, as well as dedicatory inscriptions that provide glimpses of his worshippers and priests attached to the sanctuary. Some information is also gleaned from literary sources of later date, particularly from the fifth-century Roman author Macrobius, although he conflates various deities and therefore his comments must be treated cautiously. Taking into account these sources along with the architectural evidence from the sanctuary at Heliopolis-Baalbek, it is possible to gain some understanding of the religious rituals that were part of Jupiter Heliopolitanus's cult and a sense of its overall significance. The sanctuary is renowned not only for its monumental size—the temple of Jupiter Heliopolitanus was one of the largest ever built in the Graeco-Roman world—but also for its innovative design, exceptionally lavish architectural details, and the prominent role of water within the complex. The sanctuary's architecture evolved over time, with construction phases from the late first century B.C. to the early third century A.D. Throughout this period benefactors and worshippers traveled from across the region and farther afield to consult its oracle and to participate in rituals, festivals, and processions within its expansive spaces.

Sculptures in bronze and stone indicate that the god's remarkable image is a creation of the Roman period that drew upon multiple Middle Eastern elements and includes Egyptianizing features as well (cats. 85–87). In contrast to the Graeco-Roman Zeus-Jupiter, typically portrayed as a bearded male figure wearing the Greek himation and seated on a throne holding a scepter, Jupiter Heliopolitanus is beardless and youthful with long curly hair and stands between a pair of bulls, the typical animal acolytes of the Syrian storm god Hadad (cats. 46, 139). His attributes further link him to Bronze and Iron Age gods of weather, storms, and agrarian fertility, including a whip brandished in his right hand and stalks of grain held in his left, as well as elaborate necklaces and bracelets also typical of Middle Eastern traditions of divine adornment. He wears a *kalathos* (a basket-shaped crown) or the crown of Upper and Lower Egypt (*pschent*). His clothing is a remarkable combination of an *ependytes* (a tight-fitting tunic) over a military cuirass reminiscent of the statues of Hellenistic rulers or Roman emperors: the *ependytes* is a garment worn typically by Anatolian divinities, most famously the goddesses Artemis

of Ephesos and Aphrodite of Aphrodisias.⁵ The busts of planetary deities that usually decorate his *ependytes* reveal his role as a god of the cosmos, or lord of the universe, along with thunderbolts and eagles that refer to Jupiter but are also appropriate for a Middle Eastern storm god. The variations in designs among the different sculptures may indicate significantly restricted access to the cult statue: curiously, Jupiter Heliopolitanus's image does not appear on coins (although Mercury Heliopolitanus is represented, see p. 118), possibly an indication that such a representation would have somehow been considered as a defilement.⁶ Other Middle Eastern cities regularly minted coins featuring local deities (see pp. 100–101; fig. 38).

Inscriptions are key to understanding Jupiter Heliopolitanus's name, the epithets that reflect his powers, and the identities of his worshippers and priests. The consistent use of the toponym "Heliopolitanus" reflects the importance of linking the deity to his primary cult site and creates a strongly localized element. His full name, however, is typically given as "Jupiter Optimus Maximus Heliopolitanus," and the choice of the phrase *optimus maximus* (best and greatest) closely connects him to the chief Roman god Jupiter Capitolinus.⁷ Priests of the cult of Jupiter Heliopolitanus have the three Latin names (*tria nomina*) indicative of Roman citizenship, as do most of the dedicators,⁸ suggesting the cult was propagated and administered mainly by people tied to the Roman military, specifically the descendants of veterans who settled at Heliopolis during the Augustan period when the city became part of the new Roman colony of Berytus (Beirut) in 15 B.C. Members of rural communities outside of Heliopolis are also known from the epigraphic evidence that records their reservations of places for accommodation inside the sanctuary when they came to participate in festivals.⁹

No inscriptions mention a pre-Roman Semitic name for Jupiter Heliopolitanus or for a female consort, which is an important detail calling into question Macrobius's later comment, influenced by Porphyry of Tyre, that Jupiter Heliopolitanus and Venus Heliopolitana were equated with Hadad and Atargatis.¹⁰ Although in general Macrobius's description of Jupiter Heliopolitanus's image is accurate, he characterizes him incorrectly, along with a whole range of other deities, as a sun god:

The Assyrians too, in a city called Heliopolis, worship the sun with an elaborate ritual under the name of Jupiter, calling him "Zeus of Heliopolis." . . . The

statue, a figure of gold in the likeness of a beardless man, presses forward with his right hand raised and holding a whip, after the manner of a charioteer; in the left hand are a thunderbolt and ears of corn; and all these attributes symbolize the conjoined power of Jupiter and the sun. The temple is held in remarkable awe too as the seat of an oracle, such divination pointing to a faculty of Apollo, who is identified with the sun. For the statue of the god of Heliopolis is borne in a litter, . . . and the bearers are generally the leading men of the province. These men, with their heads shaved, and purified by a long period of abstinence, go as the spirit of the god moves them and carry the statue not of their own will but whithersoever the god directs them.¹¹

In addition to the description of the statue, Macrobius's testimony about the Heliopolitan oracle and cult processions are the most useful of his snippets of information, particularly when considered in conjunction with the architectural evidence from the sanctuary.

Dedications made to Jupiter Heliopolitanus alone are most common; however, a longstanding debate centers on whether he was worshipped as part of a "triad" along with a female consort, Venus Heliopolitana, and a sonlike figure, Mercury Heliopolitanus. Neither inscriptions nor their representations in sculpture firmly corroborate this idea, and both of the other gods most likely had their own temples elsewhere in Heliopolis.¹² Only one inscription from the Heliopolitan sanctuary mentions them together,¹³ and sculptures featuring all three together, such as the one discovered in Fneidiq (cat. 88), are in fact rare or include a fourth deity. Venus Heliopolitana is depicted wearing a long veil and seated on a throne with sphinxes on either side, and her image is therefore strongly linked to the Phoenician goddess Astarte, whose animal acolytes are sphinxes, rather than to the Syrian goddess Atargatis, who is traditionally accompanied by lions: the statue of Venus Heliopolitana may even have functioned as her cult image at a temple dedicated to her elsewhere in Heliopolis (cat. 91; fig. 50).¹⁴ The choice to link Venus Heliopolitana to Astarte iconographically is juxtaposed with her Latin name and purposefully sets her identity and cult apart from those of the Graeco-Roman goddess Aphrodite-Venus, who was also venerated during the same period and whose depictions in statuettes show her in multiple traditionally Classical and Hellenistic

poses (cat. 93). Representations of Mercury Heliopolitanus generally show the god as an armless herm, accompanied by rams in the role of a protector of flocks. Interestingly, he is the only one of the three Heliopolitan deities to appear on coins;¹⁵ this fact, together with epithets, such as *dominus* (lord), associated with him and the existence of his own temple elsewhere in the city of Heliopolis, on Sheikh Abdallah Hill,¹⁶ are further evidence against characterizing him as the junior member of a "triad" dependent on the cult of Jupiter Heliopolitanus.

The connections between the Heliopolitan gods and other divinities who were worshipped at smaller sanctuaries located elsewhere in the Beqaa Valley, as well as the spread of the cult of Jupiter Heliopolitanus across the Roman Empire provide a sense of how religious life could be both deeply rooted in local traditions and simultaneously play a role in a much broader context. Religious traditions in Phoenicia during the Roman period were definitely locally specific in that small sanctuaries were devoted to various gods tied closely to particular villages and communities and named very precisely, and yet the discoveries of representations of the Heliopolitan gods at those sites, or divinities closely resembling them, raises the question of whether their cults in fact spread there, or they simply had a strong impact on the depiction of these other deities. Sculptures from Yam-moune in particular and others attributed to the sanctuaries at Niha and Fneidiq underscore this point (cats. 88, 90, 92). Jupiter Heliopolitanus's wide-reaching power and popularity are also evident from the extensive spread of his cult via soldiers and merchants who settled across the Roman Empire: they made dedications to him in sanctuaries they constructed in various locations, including Rome, the port cities of Puteoli (Pozzuoli), Massilia (Marseilles), and at forts in the northern provinces of Pannonia and Germania Superior (see map, p. xx [Provinces of Roman Empire]).¹⁷

The construction phases of the sanctuary over more than two centuries are intertwined closely with historical and political events that alongside cultic requirements shaped the site's use, and recent research projects have clarified these different stages in the sanctuary's development.¹⁸ In its final form, the sanctuary of Jupiter Heliopolitanus included the temple building and a courtyard with two monumental altars and two water basins within a porticoed enclosure, all accessed through the propylaea and an unusual hexagonal court (figs. 42–45). The sanctuary was oriented on an



Fig. 44 Six standing columns of the south peristyle of the Temple of Jupiter Heliopolitanus, Heliopolis-Baalbek

east-west axis and situated on a massive elevated platform, and a vast system of artificial terracing and a cryptoporticus (semisubterranean covered passageway) supported the buildings. The extremely well-preserved temple located to the south of and parallel to the Temple of Jupiter has been tentatively attributed to Dionysos/Bacchus, and two small temples located within an enclosure to the southeast are dedicated possibly to the Muses as nature goddesses and the Tyche (Fortune) of the city (previously the round temple was erroneously attributed to Venus) (figs. 43, 48). Quarries located approximately half a mile (1 km) to the south and west provided local limestone for the sanctuary's construction, and granite was imported from both Egypt and the Troad in northwestern Anatolia for hundreds of massive columns.¹⁹

The sanctuary was located on a prehistoric settlement mound that had been inhabited more or less continuously

since the eighth millennium B.C. It had been transformed into a fortification during the Seleucid Empire's struggle for regional power against the Ptolemies of Egypt in approximately 200 B.C., and part of the same structure was possibly used by the Roman army under Pompey in 64 B.C.²⁰ New research establishes that construction of the sanctuary complex began almost definitely after 15 B.C., later than previously thought, and probably represents a donation to a Roman city by the Judaeen king Herod I (r. 37-4 B.C.) as mentioned by Flavius Josephus.²¹ At this time, Heliopolis became part of the first Roman colony in Syria, which was created at Berytus (Beirut), and the Augustan legions V Macedonica and VII Augusta Gallica were established there.²² The first identifiable phase of the sanctuary's construction centers on a T-shaped terrace approximately 40 feet (12 m) high, traces of a propylon, and the remains of



Fig. 45 Courtyard of Temple of Jupiter Heliopolitanus, Heliopolis-Baalbek

the Small Altar in the central courtyard (fig. 43).²³ The ashlar blocks of the terrace are visible under the later Jupiter temple (fig. 44): they are comparable in size to those used by Herod's builders for the terrace of the Temple of Jerusalem (see p. 81) (now incorporated as part of the Western, or Wailing, Wall) and workers may have come from Jerusalem to Heliopolis.²⁴ The choice of site during this early phase also reflected the importance of Roman control over regional water sources, since the complex was oriented toward a Roman aqueduct to the east that supplied water to it through a pressure pipe.²⁵

The colossal temple of Jupiter Heliopolitanus was built in the first century A.D. during a second phase of construction. The temple combined Greek and Roman architectural features, along with water basins in its courtyard that are highly unusual for a sanctuary of the Roman period, further indicating water's cultic importance; it has been

suggested that they symbolize the Orontes and Leontes Rivers (fig. 45).²⁶ The temple followed a peripteral Greek design of 10 by 19 columns in the Corinthian order, accessed by a staircase as typical of Roman temples, and rested on a podium formed of megaliths 67 feet (20 m) in length that were intended to be visible. Enormous in size, covering an area on the older terrace of approximately 157 by 288 feet (48 by 88 m), this was one of the largest temples dated to the Roman period, though smaller than several Greek and Hellenistic temples (cats. 95–97; fig. 52).²⁷ The only secure date is provided by a Greek graffito dated to the year 60 on one of the columns by an association of workers.²⁸ However, construction presumably began significantly earlier and continued beyond that date into the next decade or two. The temple's position as forming one side of a courtyard and the design of its column capitals are inspired by the Temple of



Mars Ultor in the Forum of Augustus in Rome: the influence of this complex continued long after its early first-century construction date.²⁹

The term “megalomania” is often applied to the third phase of construction at the sanctuary, owing to its sheer scale and monumentality. This phase appears to represent an imperial building project undertaken initially by the emperor Hadrian (r. 117–138) and continuing through the Antonine period. Although it is not known Hadrian ever visited Heliopolis, he spent considerable time in the region, and the oracle of Jupiter Heliopolitanus correctly predicted the death of his predecessor, Trajan, causing a discernible increase in the popularity of the cult. It is also noteworthy that the red granite used for 128 columns in the colonnades surrounding the courtyard was sourced from the quarries at Aswan in Egypt, to which only the emperor had access.³⁰ During this phase,

the courtyard was expanded and embellished with additional rooms and semicircular exedrae, which give a sense of the need to accommodate immense numbers of worshippers who participated in cult activities. These additions also reflect the continuing influence of Roman prototypes, as they emulate the imperial fora of Augustus and Trajan in Rome in size and design.³¹ The monumental altar, or tower, in the courtyard known as the Great Altar, however, reflects the influence of Syrian and Mesopotamian temples and provides a glimpse of the rituals performed in the spaces: the four flights of stairs within the Great Altar suggest cultic processions, and the top of the altar platform would have afforded views of the cult image inside the temple and sacrifices on the Small Altar, as well as a view of the landscape behind the sanctuary in a manner similar to the dramatic settings of Hellenistic temples (figs. 42, 45).³²



Fig. 46 So-called Temple of Bacchus, Heliopolis-Baalbek



Fig. 47 Interior of the so-called Temple of Bacchus, Heliopolis-Baalbek

The grandiose structures of the third phase remained unfinished. The final phase of construction at the sanctuary in the early third century reflects changes in the city's political status and religious activities under the Severan emperors. Heliopolis remained dependent on Berytus until the emperor Septimius Severus (r. 193–211) made it a separate colony and also awarded the honor known as the *ius italicum*, meaning that the city was governed under Roman law, which sparked a construction boom visible in numerous structures including baths and the banquet hall southwest of the city.³³ At the sanctuary, the visit of the emperor Caracalla (r. 211–217), Severus's son, and his mother, Julia Domna, in 215, may partially explain the signs of hurried construction of the hexagonal courtyard and the propylaea, which includes three column capitals in gilded bronze honoring them and an inscription commemorating the event.³⁴

The last phase of construction of the so-called Temple of Bacchus, attributed to this god on the basis of Dionysiac motifs in its sculptural program, has also been convincingly redated to the third century (figs. 46–47).³⁵ In addition to its remarkable state of preservation overall, the architectural decoration of this temple's interior spaces is exceptional, including Corinthian half columns and niches that originally contained statues, and in contrast to the focus on the exterior typical of Greek and Roman temples, the size and prominence of the interior space and the inclusion of an adyton (a restricted space inside the temple) reflect Middle Eastern traditions. However, an interior frieze with a *suovetaurilia* (scene of the traditional Roman sacrifice of a pig, sheep, and bull) very likely commemorated the *ius italicum* and Heliopolis's new foundation under the Severan dynasty. The temple may have been used for the imperial cult, attested in inscriptions, in addition to the veneration of other gods such as Bacchus and possibly Venus; the hexagonal courtyard at the sanctuary of Jupiter may have served as a place for assemblies of priests of the cult and the display of statuary.³⁶

The last building constructed at the complex in the third century is a small round temple located within its own enclosure, which at first glance from the front resembles others in southern Syria built on a tall podium, although the design of its circular naos (shrine) combined with a rectangular pronaos (the vestibule leading to the shrine) is unparalleled (fig. 48).³⁷ Possibly funded by a private donation, the temple may have been a replacement for the pseudoperipteral temple near it that dates to the early

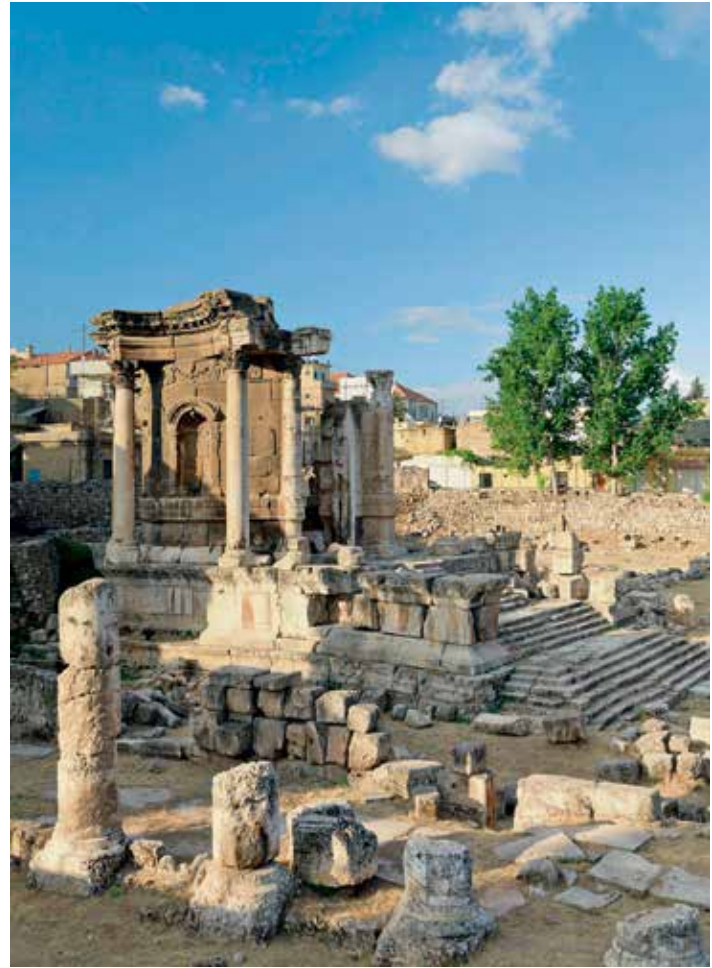


Fig. 48 Round Temple, Heliopolis-Baalbek

Roman imperial period: both may have been dedicated to the Muses, nature goddesses, and perhaps also to the city's Tyche (Fortune).³⁸

The rise of Christianity radically changed the religious landscape of the region. At the end of the fourth century, much of the sanctuary was destroyed by the emperor Theodosius I (r. 379–395), who constructed a church at the altars in the courtyard of the Temple of Jupiter, which was then expanded during the fifth century. The round temple was converted into a church dedicated to the city's patron saint, Saint Barbara. Final destruction seems to have occurred in the middle of the sixth century owing to fire, possibly during an earthquake. The Umayyads conquered Heliopolis-Baalbek in 635, and the city's political role was diminished until the sanctuary complex was eventually incorporated into a citadel at the end of the eleventh century.³⁹



85. Statuette of Jupiter Heliopolitanus ("Sursock" Statuette)

2nd century
Bronze, with gilding, H. 15 $\frac{1}{8}$ in. (38.4 cm), W. 5 $\frac{13}{16}$ in. (14.7 cm), D. 5 in. (12.7 cm)
Beqaa Valley
Musée du Louvre, Paris (AO 19534)

86. Statuette of Jupiter Heliopolitanus

2nd-3rd century
Bronze, H. 6 $\frac{7}{16}$ in. (16.4 cm), W. 3 in. (7.6 cm), D. 1 $\frac{15}{16}$ in. (5 cm)
Area of Tartus
Musée du Louvre, Paris (AO 22267)

The main god of Heliopolis-Baalbek was Jupiter Heliopolitanus, a deity combining the name of the Roman Jupiter with aspects of Middle Eastern storm gods and local traditions. His cult, dedications to him, and representations of him date to the Roman period, mainly to the second and early third centuries (see pp. 116–18). His image as seen in these two statuettes most likely reflects the appearance of his actual cult statue in the Temple of Jupiter Heliopolitanus at Heliopolis-Baalbek. Seven of the ten documented bronze statuettes of the god survive, of which the "Sursock" statuette (named for its former owner, the Lebanese art collector Nicolas Sursock) and the statuette said to be from the area of Tartus, Syria, are two of the most detailed in their designs; representations in stone are also known (cats. 87–88).¹ Among all of these objects, the consistency of the god's arm position and attributes indicate that he grasped a whip in his raised right hand and a sheaf of grain in his left.

In both statuettes, Jupiter Heliopolitanus appears youthful, beardless, and with thick curly hair. His outfit consists of a cuirass and an *ependytes* (a tight-fitting tunic) wrapped around his entire body. Thunderbolts appear along the sides of both statuettes, but the designs and motifs on the fronts and backs vary; the busts representing deities or the planets are organized in different sequences on almost all the statuettes of the god. This variability may indicate that the statuettes' creators lacked access to the cult image within the temple's *adyton* (inner sanctum) entirely or had very limited opportunities to see it, perhaps viewing it only during processions.²

The "Sursock" statuette depicts the god crowned with a *kalathos* (a basket-shaped crown) decorated with wheat ears



and a solar disc framed by uraei. The front of the *ependytes* features a winged disc above images of the sun, moon, and planets arranged in an order that corresponds to the days of the week as still used today: the sun god Sol, identified by a nimbus of solar rays (Sunday); the moon goddess Luna with a crescent (Monday); Mars in armor (Tuesday); Mercury with a caduceus and winged helmet (Wednesday); a bearded and draped Jupiter (Thursday); Juno with a diadem (Friday); Saturn, bearded and veiled (Saturday); and a lion head. The back features a winged solar disc, an eagle with outstretched wings, two masks of rams, two stars, and four rosettes. The base is decorated with a representation of Tyche (Fortune) (cat. 92) and two bulls, the god's usual animal acolytes. The central hole in the top has been interpreted as a receptacle for questions for the god's oracle, while the smaller holes in its sides were probably intended for poles when carried in processions.³

In the Tartus statuette, the god wears the crown of Upper and Lower Egypt (pschent), of which only the base survives. The *ependytes* here differs from the one on the "Sursock" statuette, with Sol, Luna, Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Venus, Mercury, two rosettes, and two lions' heads on the front; arrayed on the back are an eagle, a winged solar disc, Neptune, Ceres, Minerva, Diana, and Hercules.

1. For the "Sursock" and Tartus statuettes, see Hajjar 1977, pp. 274–86, nos. 232, 233; for the other bronze statuettes, see *ibid.*, pp. 50–52, 236–39, 264–66, 286–87, 384–86, 398–99, 409–11, nos. 32, 208, 226, 234, 295, 302, 313, and also Kropp 2010, p. 250, fig. 1. Six torsos of statues and statuettes, eight relief sculptures, a dozen cippi (small pillars) and altars in stone are also known; see *ibid.*, p. 231, nn. 20–22. For lead votive plaques, see Hajjar 1977, pp. 121–25, nos. 109–13. Engraved miniature images on gems and cameos are not securely identifiable as Jupiter Heliopolitanus; see Kropp 2010, pp. 231–32. 2. Kropp 2010, p. 234, nn. 61–63; Macrobius, *Saturnalia*, 1.23.13. 3. Bel 2012a, pp. 21–22.



87. Right Forearm from Statue of Jupiter Heliopolitanus

2nd century

Marble, H. 18 $\frac{1}{8}$ in. (46 cm), W. 10 $\frac{1}{4}$ in. (26 cm), D. 7 $\frac{1}{16}$ in. (18 cm)

Beirut

National Museum, Beirut (011)

Discovered in 1891 in the garden of a villa in the Rue de Syrie, Beirut, this marble fragment belongs to the only life-size statue of Jupiter Heliopolitanus known.¹ Its findspot is a likely indicator that the Heliopolitan god was worshipped in Berytus (Beirut); an altar with an inscribed dedication to him was also excavated in the city.² The arm is preserved from above the elbow to the knuckles, and the closed hand holds a cylindrical object in its fist, most likely the handle of a whip. Thirteen bracelets are stacked along the arm: two are undecorated, two are in the form of snakes, one has two lions' heads, one resembles a knotted branch of wood, and the others are ornamented with patterns and motifs including coils, spirals, circles, and lozenges.³ Round or square bezels in the clasps would have been inlaid with cabochon gems or glass, while other low-relief designs were enhanced with painted details.⁴

Together with the Fneidiq relief and bronze statuettes (cats. 85–86, 88), this forearm permits a reconstruction of the cult image of Jupiter Heliopolitanus. The god's right arm is typically bent at the elbow, and his forearm is raised to brandish a whip: a stack of bracelets and part of a whip are also visible on the Fneidiq relief. The sculpture reflects the often extensive adornment and bejeweling of images of divinities in the ancient Middle East.

1. Seyrig 1937, pp. 85–87; Seyrig 1955, p. 25; Hajjar 1977, pp. 241–43, no. 210, pl. 80; Doumet-Serhal et al. 1998, p. 177, no. 54; Kropp 2009, p. 233, fig. 3 (with view of back). 2. Hajjar 1977, p. 227, no. 199. 3. Kropp (2010, p. 233) observes the thirteenth bracelet, half-hidden by two others at the elbow. 4. A silver bracelet with a stone intaglio in its clasp discovered at Dura-Europos provides a close comparison: Yale University Art Gallery, 1929.405a, b; see Seyrig 1937, p. 86; and Brody and Hoffman 2011, p. 362, pl. 59.



88. Relief of Jupiter Heliopolitanus, Venus Heliopolitana, and Mercury Heliopolitanus

2nd–3rd century

Marble, H. 19⁵/₁₆ in. (49 cm), W. 27³/₄ in. (70.5 cm), D. 7⁷/₈ in. (20 cm)

Fneidiq

National Museum, Beirut (33038)

Noteworthy for its detailed representations of all three Heliopolitan gods, this relief sculpture, along with other representations in stone and in bronze, helps to reconstruct the main cult images of the deities at Heliopolis-Baalbek (cats. 85–87, 89–91; fig. 49).¹ It should not, however, be interpreted as evidence for a cohesive divine “triad,” a concept not supported securely by other representations of the gods or by inscriptions (see p. 116). Depictions of all three Heliopolitan deities together are rare, and typically Jupiter Heliopolitanus appears in the center, with Venus on the left and Mercury on the right, in accordance with traditional Roman hierarchy; in contrast, this scene bears a similarity to depictions of the divine couple Hadad and Atargatis on either side of the *semeion* (cult standard) (cat. 139), with Mercury occupying the place of the *semeion*.²

At left, Venus Heliopolitana is enthroned between two sphinxes and wears a long veil; she grasps an object, possibly a stalk of grain, in her left hand. In the center, Mercury appears in the form of an armless herm (cats. 89–90). At right, Jupiter Heliopolitanus is flanked by bulls and wears an *ependytes* (a tight-fitting tunic) with a lion mask at the bottom center. He holds a whip in his right hand, which is adorned with bracelets (cat. 87) and a stalk of grain in his left hand.

Both gods also wear necklaces, although interestingly the goddess does not wear any jewelry.

The depth of the relief suggests that it was most likely designed to be inserted into a wall within a sanctuary (it was discovered during the construction of a road).³ Its place of discovery in Fneidiq, a cult site located at springs in the mountains of northern Lebanon, reflects either the spread of the Heliopolitan cult throughout the region or the borrowing of its iconography to depict localized deities (see p. 118).

1. Seyrig 1955; Seyrig 1959, p. 42; Seyrig 1961, p. 135; Hajjar 1977, pp. 258–60, no. 221; Doumet-Serhal et al. 1998, p. 183, no. 77. 2. Seyrig 1955, p. 26; Aliquot 2009, p. 225. 3. Hajjar 1977, p. 258, no. 221.

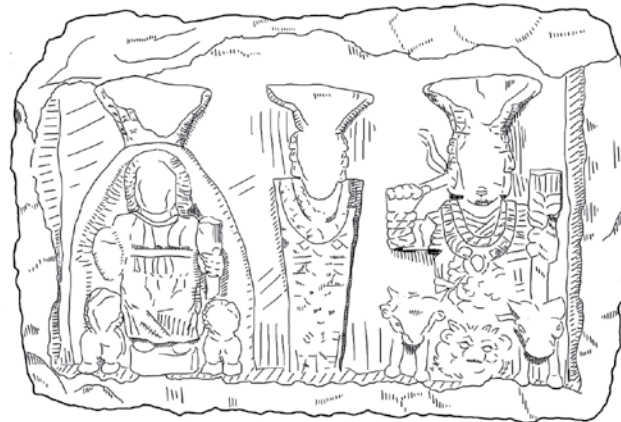


Fig. 49 Drawing of relief of three Heliopolitan gods from Fneidiq. Drawing by Andreas Kropp



89. Bust of Mercury Heliopolitanus ("Bronze Donato")

2nd-3rd century
Gilded bronze, H. 11 1/8 in. (28.3 cm), W. 5 1/4 in. (13.4 cm), D. 3 1/16 in. (7.7 cm)
Area of Baalbek
Musée du Louvre, Paris (AO 11446)

This gilded bronze figure in the form of a youthful, beardless, and armless herm wears a cuirass whose sleeves are visible, an *ependytes* (a tight-fitting tunic), and the crown of Upper and Lower Egypt (pschent), of which only the base survives. His eyes and eyebrows would originally have been inlaid, either with shell, bone, or perhaps lapis lazuli. The figure has been identified variously as either Jupiter or Mercury Heliopolitanus,¹ and the headdress reflects the popularity of Egyptianizing attributes in the iconography of the Heliopolitan gods. The designs on the garment relate to those on statuettes of Jupiter Heliopolitanus (cats. 85, 86): busts of Helios and Luna (the sun and moon) appear on the front above a bearded male head wearing a torque and enveloped in a pointed hood and a star-sprinkled cloak with a prominent central seam, possibly the god Kronos-Saturn (cats. 85, 101).² An eagle with outstretched wings and a thunderbolt with shields decorate the back, and a thunderbolt adorns each side. These emblems are suggestive of Jupiter; however, an attribution to Mercury is likely in view of several other representations of the god depicting him as an armless herm (cats. 88-90).

1. Hajjar (1977, pp. 172-75, no. 153) identifies the figure as Jupiter, followed by Bel (2012b, p. 46, no. 4, fig. 6). Kropp identifies him as Mercury; see Kropp 2009a, p. 247, n. 28; and Kropp 2010, p. 244. 2. Kropp notes that the same bearded and hooded figure appears on two altars and a statuette; see Kropp 2010, pp. 244, 256, nn. 208-10, fig. 14.

90. Votive Hand with Mercury Heliopolitanus

2nd-early 3rd century

Bronze, gilding, H. 8³/₁₆ in. (20.8 cm), W. 4¹/₄ in. (10.8 cm), D. 2³/₈ in. (6 cm)

Beqaa Valley, said to be from the area of Niha

Musée du Louvre, Paris (AO 4409)

Seventeen bronze votive hands from southern Phoenicia are known, all in the form of an open right hand with raised fingers.¹ They were dedicated in various rural sanctuaries throughout the Beqaa Valley and were perhaps placed on wooden bases, organized on shelves, or fixed on the ends of poles. This example, the largest of the group, is remarkable for its gilding, indicative of the dedicator's wealth, which is also expressed in the Greek inscription on the wrist recording that the hand was an offering made by "Meniskos, for himself, his daughter, his wife, and the slaves raised in his household, following a vow."² The hand itself likely represents the divinity offering protection to the worshipper and holds an armless herm flanked by rams and wearing an *epandytes* (a tight-fitting tunic) decorated with rosettes and dotted crosses and a high *kalathos* (a basket-shaped crown). The herm is most likely identifiable as Mercury Heliopolitanus owing to its resemblance to other depictions of this god (cats. 88–89), although it is also possible that the figure represents a local shepherd god from Niha, worshipped at the sanctuary there along with the gods Hadaranes and Atargatis and whose representation follows Heliopolitan iconography (cat. 92);³ the object's attribution to Niha, however, is itself uncertain.⁴

1. These hands are distinguishable from those dedicated to Syro-Anatolian gods, which feature the fingers in different positions and were widespread in their distribution; see Bel and Gatier 2008; and Bel 2012b, pp. 218–21. 2. Bel and Gatier 2008, pp. 90–91, no. 1, figs. 5–8; Bel 2012b, pp. 218–19, fig. 202. 3. Hajjar 1977, pp. 474–76, no. 342; Aliquot 2009, p. 229. On divine protectors of flocks in the Beqaa Valley, see Kropp 2010, pp. 247–48. 4. Bel and Gatier 2008, p. 72.



91. Head of a Sphinx from a Statue of Venus Heliopolitana

Early 3rd century

Marble, H. 11 in. (28 cm), W. 7⁷/₈ in. (20 cm), D. 8¹/₄ in. (21 cm)

Baalbek

Musée du Louvre, Paris (Ma 2660)

Crowned with a double diadem, this sphinx head features wavy hair, eyes and eyebrows carved for inlays, and earlobes perforated for attaching earrings.¹ Two small holes at the central parting of the hair and the diadem were most likely for a metal attachment. The head belonged to one of two sphinxes that flanked a statue of Venus Heliopolitana from Heliopolis-Baalbek and affirm her iconographic links to the Phoenician goddess Astarte rather than to Atargatis-Dea Syria, whose acolytes are lions (cats. 88, 92, 139; fig. 50). Thrones with sphinxes on both sides can be traced to the second half of the second millennium B.C. and have been



Fig. 50 Statue of Venus Heliopolitana from Baalbek, early third century. Archaeological Museum, Istanbul (1181)

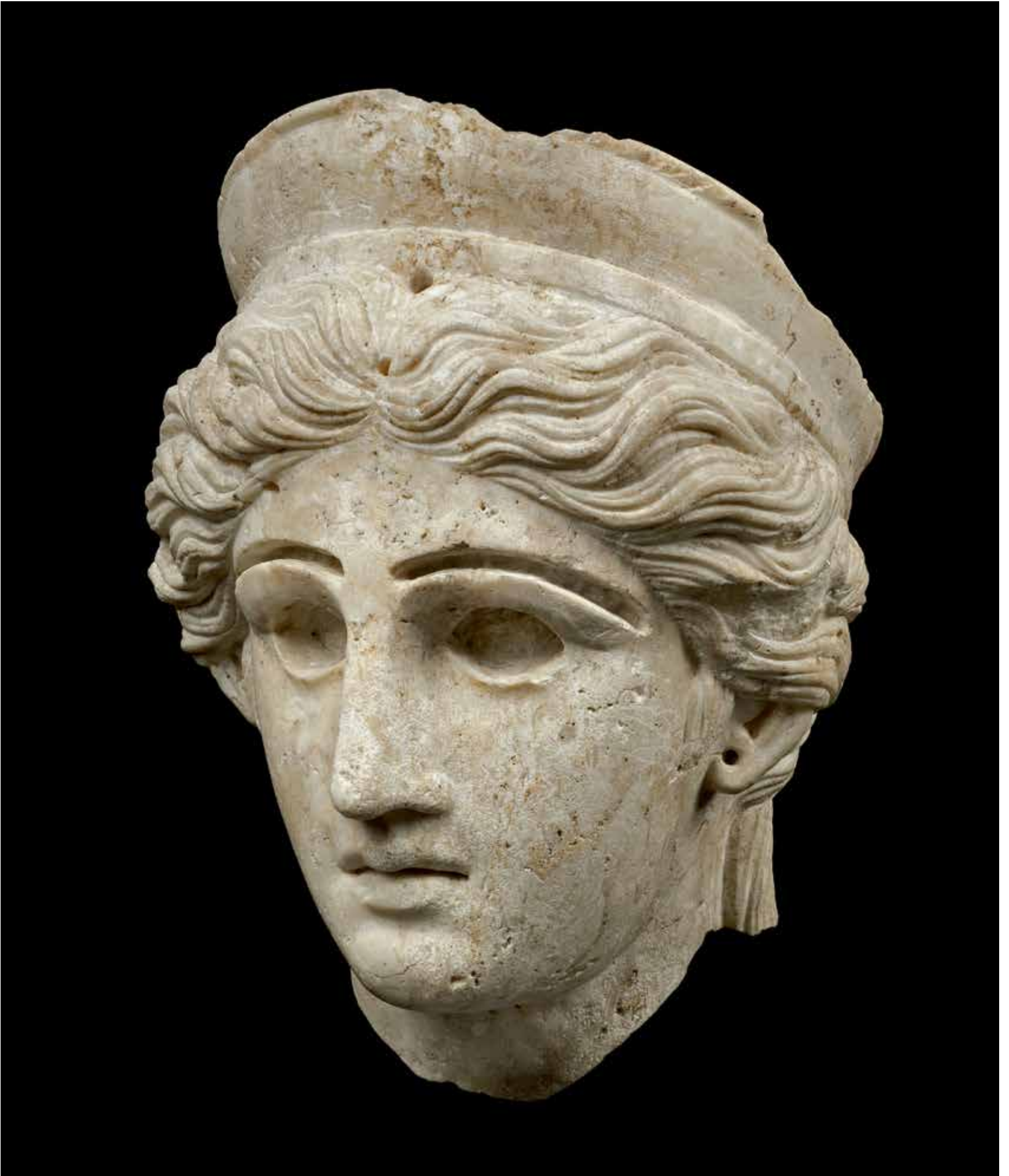
discovered at Phoenician sites including Byblos and Sidon, where they were probably intended as symbols or aniconic cult images of Astarte.² In *On the Syrian Goddess*, written in the second century, Lucian of Samosata mentions Astarte's sanctuaries at Sidon and Byblos and at Arca in Mount Lebanon.³

The statue of Venus Heliopolitana was recorded in 1865 by the French architect Achille Joyau as located in the courtyard of a house in the Haret Beit Solh section of Baalbek's city center. Whether a temple dedicated to the goddess was in the immediate vicinity is unclear. Joyau brought the head of the sphinx to Paris, and it has been in the Musée du Louvre since 1888; the statue was taken to Beirut in 1884 and then to Istanbul in 1901 by the Ottoman scholar-administrator Osman Hamdi Bey.⁴ In the statue, two strands of hair are visible on the sphinx's shoulder. The two sphinxes stood beside and below the throne and can therefore be interpreted as the goddess's attendants rather than functioning as armrests.⁵ In 1995, another statue of a seated goddess flanked by sphinxes, in this case built into a throne as armrests, was discovered in Yammoune, about 17 miles (27 km) north of Baalbek, apparently in a niche at the back of the cella of a small temple dated to the Roman period.⁶ The close similarities between the two works indicates that the Yammoune statue represents either Venus Heliopolitana herself or another localized version of Venus.

1. Hajjar 1977, pp. 94–97, no. 80; Gubel 2002, p. 150, no. 167; Feix 2008, pp. 255–56. 2. Doumet-Serhal et al. 1998, pp. 167–68, nos. 11–15.

3. Lucian of Samosata, *On the Syrian Goddess*, 4, 6, 9. 4. Wiegand 1921–25, vol. 1, pp. 26, 46; Feix 2008, pp. 255–56; Gubel 2002, p. 150, no. 167.

5. Feix 2008, pp. 260, 265. 6. Archaeological Museum, Baalbek (26729); see *ibid.*, especially pp. 255–59, figs. 2–6.





92. Altar with Tyche Flanked by Lions

3rd century
 Limestone, H. 47¹/₄ in. (120 cm), W. 35¹³/₁₆ in. (91 cm), D. 35⁷/₁₆ in. (90 cm)
 Niha, Temple A
 National Museum, Beirut (2057)

This altar from the adyton (inner sanctum) of a temple at Niha in the Beqaa Valley is one of three recently discovered at the site that depict Tyche (Fortune) flanked by lions.¹ These animal acolytes have led to interpretations of the figure as the local goddess Dea Syria Nihathena/Thea Atargatis, the consort of the god Hadaranes, mentioned in several inscriptions.² However, her standing pose (atypical for Atargatis), raised left foot, chiton, and mural crown, as well as the cornucopia in her left arm and the ship's rudder or aplustre (ornament for a ship's stern) in her right, all match the iconography of the Tyche of Berytus (Beirut).³

This altar may have served as the base for a large statue, possibly of Jupiter Heliopolitanus, comparable to the base

with an image of Tyche that forms part of the "Sursock" statuette of the god (cat. 85).⁴ Although bulls are his typical acolytes, lions also appear in depictions of Jupiter Heliopolitanus and are prominent at the Heliopolis-Baalbek sanctuary (cats. 85–86, 88, 95). Niha formed part of Berytus, the first Roman colony in Syria. Yet the citizens, priests, and prophetess at Niha had local Semitic names, confirming that the community was distinct from the Roman colonists of Berytus.⁵ If Baalbek's Jupiter Heliopolitanus was indeed represented prominently at Niha, it would indicate an important connection between the otherwise distinctive cults of the two locales.

1. Fani Alpi 2016, pp. 190–96, nos. 183, 185, 186, figs. 322–26, 329, 330. See also see also Doumet-Serhal et al. 1998, p. 168, no. 16. 2. Rey-Coquais 1967, pp. 2928–29, 2936. 3. Kropp 2011, pp. 390, 400–401, fig. 2. 4. Nordiguian 2005, p. 58; Kropp 2011, p. 401. 5. Rey-Coquais 1987, pp. 198–207; Kropp 2010, p. 242, n. 182.

93. Statuette of Aphrodite Anadyomene

Ca. 1st–2nd century

Bronze, gold, and semiprecious gems, H. 5¹³/₁₆ in. (14.8 cm), W. 2⁹/₁₆ in. (6.5 cm), D. 1⁵/₁₆ in. (2.4 cm)

Baalbek

National Museum, Beirut (17277)

Discovered during salvage excavations in Baalbek in the 1960s, this statuette of Aphrodite Anadyomene (emerging from the sea) is striking for her jewelry. The goddess stands with her weight balanced on her left leg, raising her arms to twist two thick, long locks of hair held by a barrette or clasp at the nape of her neck. The rest of her hair is arranged in two locks in front of her diadem, parted in the center, and combed smoothly across her head. She wears a necklace of twisted gold with three cylindrical beads of semiprecious blue-green stone as well as twisted gold earrings; her left earring includes a surviving pendant. Bronze and terracotta statuettes produced in the Roman period that depict Aphrodite in the poses of famous Classical or Hellenistic statue types were popular throughout Phoenicia and Syria, but the addition of the necklace and earrings reflects Middle Eastern traditions of the bejeweling and adornment of divine images (cats. 87–88, 164).¹ A bronze statuette of Aphrodite from Khisfine, Syria, with a gold necklace, bracelets, and anklets is comparable.² In the context of Baalbek, such a statuette affirms the continuity of the goddess's veneration from the Hellenistic to the Roman period in conjunction—and evidently not in conflict—with the worship of Venus Heliopolitana, whose very different iconography is connected to that of Astarte (cats. 88, 91).

1. Marie-Odile Jentel in *LIMC* 1984, vol. 2, pt. 1, s.v. Aphrodite (in peripheria orientali), pp. 154–66, especially Aphrodite Anadyomene, pp. 156–57, nos. 59–66. See also examples in Cécile Giroire in Bel et al. 2012, p. 198, fig. 181. 2. National Museum of Damascus 4309 (10118); S. Abdul-Hak and A. Abdul-Hak 1951, p. 138, pl. 54, 16; Marie-Odile Jentel in *LIMC* 1984, p. 160, no. 131.





94

94. Fragments of Architectural Frieze and Architrave

2nd century

Limestone, H. $40\frac{3}{16}$ in. (102 cm), W. $98\frac{13}{16}$ in. (251 cm), D. 26 in. (66 cm)
 Baalbek, Temple of Jupiter Heliopolitanus, courtyard
 Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Antikensammlung, Berlin (Ba 2-4 and Ba 2-5)

95. Lion Protome

1st century

Limestone, H. $18\frac{7}{8}$ in. (48 cm), W. $15\frac{3}{4}$ in. (40 cm), D. $21\frac{1}{4}$ in. (54 cm)
 Baalbek, Temple of Jupiter Heliopolitanus
 Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Antikensammlung, Berlin (Ba 1-5) (SL 2.2-7)

96. Fragment of Doorjamb

1st-early 2nd century

Limestone, H. $24\frac{7}{16}$ in. (62 cm), W. $23\frac{5}{8}$ in. (60 cm), D. $5\frac{1}{8}$ in. (13 cm)
 Baalbek, Temple of Jupiter Heliopolitanus
 Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Antikensammlung, Berlin (Ba 7-41)

97. Bull Protome

1st century

Limestone, H. $16\frac{15}{16}$ in. (43 cm), W. 13 in. (33 cm), D. $23\frac{5}{8}$ in. (60 cm)
 Baalbek, Temple of Jupiter Heliopolitanus
 Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Antikensammlung, Berlin (Ba 1-6) (SL 2.2-8)

The architectural decoration of the sanctuary at Heliopolis-Baalbek includes details that represent both Graeco-Roman and Middle Eastern traditions as well as motifs specific to the cult of Jupiter Heliopolitanus. Conventional classical motifs include a deeply drilled frieze of swirling acanthus

leaves and large blossoms and an architrave with egg-and-dart moldings that decorate the entablature of the portico of the courtyard of the temple (cat. 94; fig. 51).¹ The temple's eclectic entablature corresponds in its proportions and scale of ornament to mid-first-century Roman monuments. The foliate ornament and maeander of the cyma are Hellenistic in inspiration, while the distinctive corkscrewlike horizontal molding also appears at Hatra and on a few

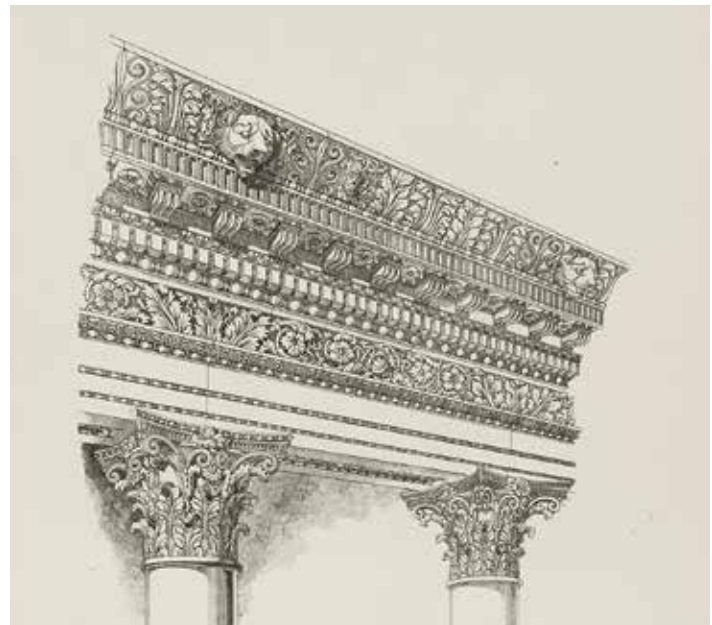


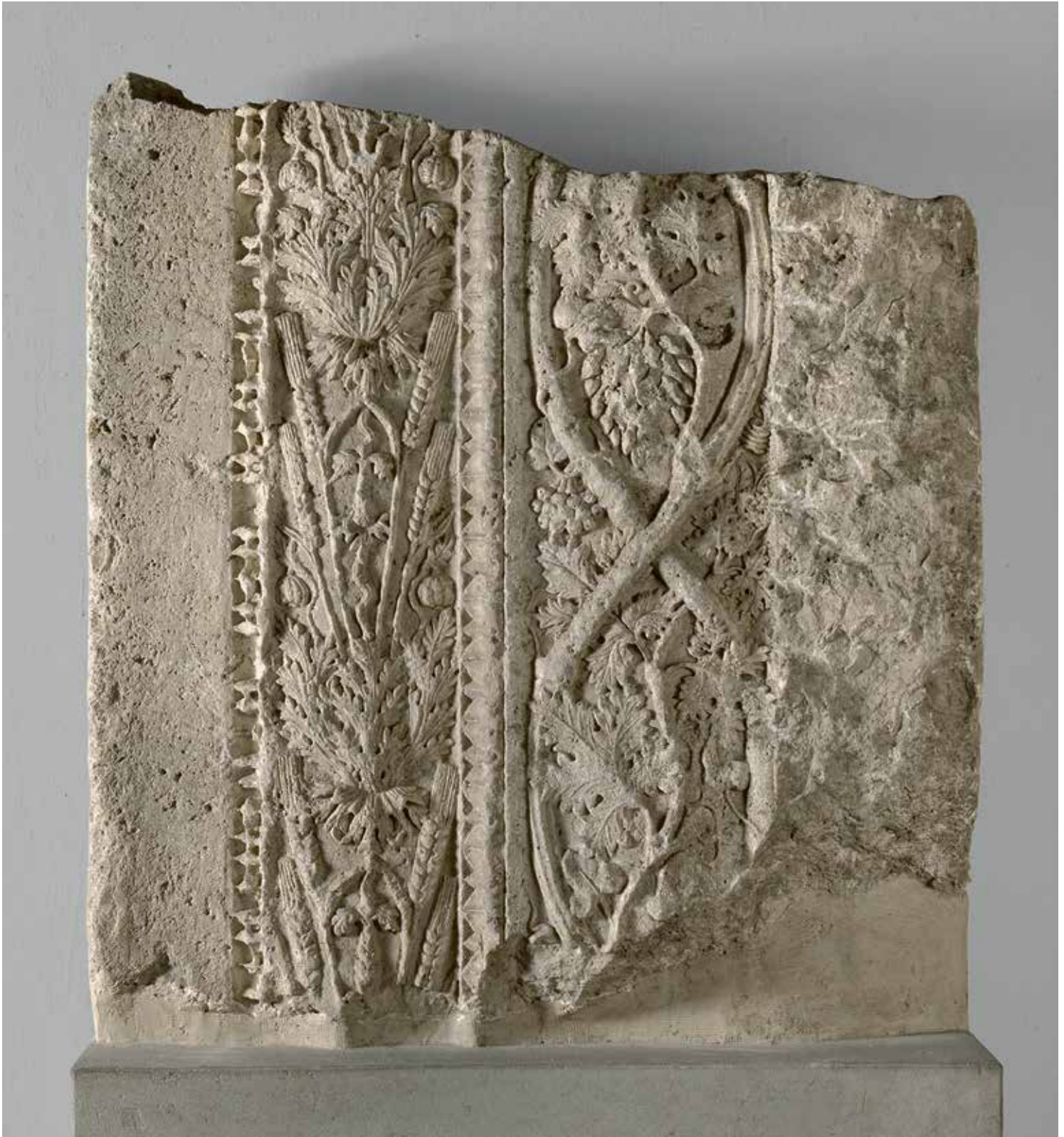
Fig. 51 Reconstruction drawing of entablature, courtyard of Temple of Jupiter Heliopolitanus



95 (side view)



95



96



97



97 (side view)

Judaean monuments (fig. 52).² The frieze's alternating protomes of lions and bulls (cats. 95, 97) are descendants of Achaemenid-period bull column capitals; they also appear on the so-called Temple of Bacchus (fig. 46) and can be seen at Hatra. Lions' heads are also part of the cyma: their open mouths served as drains to allow water to run off the roof. Bulls are significant as Jupiter Heliopolitanus's acolytes, and lions appear to be attributes symbolic of divine power: lions' heads are often featured on the bottom of the god's *ependytes* (a tight-fitting tunic) (cats. 86–88).³ The fragment of an ornately decorated doorjamb (cat. 96) is attributed to the entrance to the cella of the Temple of Jupiter Heliopolitanus, the inner part of the temple in which the cult statue of the deity stood.⁴ One fascia of the jamb is smooth, one features the god's attribute of sheaves of wheat along with poppy blossoms and acanthus leaves, and the third has a pattern of intertwined grapevines; astragals and a Lesbian leaf typical of the Corinthian order separate them.



1. Wiegand 1921–25, vol. 1, pp. 119–20, pls. 77 (bottom), 78 (bottom).
2. Ward-Perkins 1981, pp. 317, 484, n. 22.
3. See Kropp 2010, pp. 235–36, who refutes the ideas that the lion protomes refer to Venus, Mercury, or Athena-Allat and views them as the “visual counterpart of an epithet like *gennaïos* [divine (being)] to stress the divine power” of the Heliopolitan gods.
4. Wiegand 1921–25, vol. 1, pp. 56–57, pl. 55.

Fig. 52 Reconstruction drawing of cornice, Temple of Jupiter Heliopolitanus



98. Funerary Column of Abidallathos, Mele, Cassia, and Germanos (“Qartaba Column”)

Ca. 120–60

Limestone, H. 77⁹/₁₆ in. (197 cm), W. 22¹/₁₆ in. (56 cm), D. 21⁵/₈ in. (55 cm.)

Qartaba

Beirut, National Museum (3977)

The “Qartaba column,” a funerary monument dedicated to two couples, expresses the complex cultural identity of an elite family living in the Mount Lebanon region during the middle of the second century. The column was discovered in the 1940s on the grounds of the Mar Sarkis monastery southwest of the town of Qartaba, in the Nahr Ibrahim Valley approximately 2 miles (3 km) from the sanctuary at Yanouh, whose two temples date to the first half of the second century and where Germanos, one of the people represented, was very possibly a priest (see map, p. xix).¹ In the 1970s a column capital and a stone eagle that were both presumably placed on top of the column were found, but subsequently disappeared from the monastery; no other tombs or evidence for a necropolis were found in the vicinity.²

The combination of local and regional traditions with specifically Roman ones in the monument’s overall conception and details of its design is remarkable, and the names of the two men and two women commemorated further indicate the intricacy of their social, cultural, and religious affiliations. The column’s front side features a tall rectangular stele decorated with representations of two aediculae with Corinthian columns: these emulate the facades of Syrian temples, with eagles in the center of each pediment that may reflect a link between the family and the veneration of a local version of Zeus-Jupiter.³ The top eagle turns its head to the left and the bottom one to the right seemingly in accordance with the positions of the men below them. Each aedicula contains bases supporting portrait busts of a man and a woman whose names are inscribed in Greek on the lower plinths in a manner similar to Greek honorific inscriptions: “(one honors) Abidallathos and Mele” (top) and “(one honors) Cassia and Germanos” (bottom).⁴ The name Abidallathos (“servant of Allat”) is of Arabian and possibly Ituraean origin and reflects the regional importance of the goddess Allat (cats. 47, 53; fig. 59). However, given the difficulty of determining ethnicity based on nomenclature, the religious and cultural significance of this type of name

should not be overemphasized. The likely link between the family group and the Yanouh sanctuary might connect Abidallathos to the worship of the veiled goddess flanked by animals, probably lions, portrayed on a relief discovered there and whose male consort is not known.⁵ The name Mele has both Greek and Semitic (perhaps Nabataean) roots; the name Cassia may likewise have a Nabataean origin but also reflects the Latin name Cassius known at Byblos; and the name Germanos was widely used across the region but is particularly complicated as it could both represent the Greek transcription of the Latin cognomen Germanus and relate to the Semitic name *grm* (“[the god] has decided”).⁶

Abidallathos’s hair, beard, and facial features strongly resemble those of portraits of the Roman emperors Hadrian (r. 117–138) and Antoninus Pius (r. 138–161), providing a likely production date for the column during one of their reigns.⁷ He and Germanos both wear Greek dress: a tunic and himation. Germanos’s *modius* (flat-topped hat) identifies him securely as a priest; it is not as high as those worn by priests at Palmyra (cats. 105–6, 108), although this detail may be a result of adaptation to the space available. The implement positioned on the left side of his chest is most likely a bunch of leafy branches, possibly palms, comparable to others found on representations of priests, worshippers, and other figures throughout the Roman and Parthian Middle East (cats. 112, 116, 180; fig. 79); a sprinkler for lustral water (or for oil) made of metal is another possibility.⁸ Both women wear wigs and elaborate high headdresses draped with luxurious veils; the trim of Mele’s veil and clothing is lavishly embroidered. Although they differ

substantially in details, their appearance is related to the portraits of women at Palmyra, who also wear headdresses and veils (cats. 117–18, 123–25).

The choice of a column as a funerary monument is noteworthy: it broadly reflects the regional use of columns as honorific monuments, and some roughly contemporaneous funerary columns are known, particularly from the region around Antioch and in Commagene in Asia Minor.⁹ The addition of portrait busts within aediculae is an innovation. The busts themselves, placed on pedestals, are particularly Roman in conception and contrast with the regional use of funerary portraits on stelae or on reliefs that sealed loculi (burial niches) as at Palmyra. The influence of funerary traditions at Berytus (Beirut), the nearest Roman colony, has been suggested.¹⁰

1. Gatier 2005, pp. 78, 87. The column entered the collection of the National Museum of Beirut shortly after its discovery; see Parlasca 1982, pp. 19–20, pls. 22,3, 23,1,2; Doumet-Serhal et al. 1998, p. 188, no. 94; Skupińska-Løvset 1999, pp. 193–95, pl. 26; Gatier 2005. For the inscriptions, see also Rey-Coquais 1998; Yon and Aliquot 2016, pp. 26–28, no. 20. For an overview of the Yanouh sanctuary, see Aliquot 2009, pp. 253–58, no. 24, figs. 135–39, with bibliography. 2. Gatier (2005, pp. 78–79) notes also that an inscription was discovered as well, although it is not clear whether it was on the capital itself or on a separate stone. 3. *Ibid.*, p. 84. 4. This translation is due to the use of the accusative case in Greek; see *ibid.*, p. 82; and Yon and Aliquot 2016, p. 28. 5. Gatier et al. 2004; Gatier 2005, pp. 81–82, 87. The name also appears at Heliopolis-Baalbek and on two inscriptions from Niha; see Doumet-Serhal et al. 1998, p. 188. 6. Gatier 2005, p. 82, nn. 17–20. 7. *Ibid.*, p. 86. Parlasca (1982, p. 19) and Skupińska-Løvset (1999, pp. 193–95) suggest dates in the Antonine period specifically. 8. See Krumreich 1998; Gatier 2005, p. 86. 9. Gatier 2005, p. 79. 10. *Ibid.*, p. 84.



PALMYRA

LOCATED AT A SPRING THAT CREATED AN OASIS IN THE SYRIAN steppe, Palmyra was a cosmopolitan and wealthy trading center (see map, p. xix). The city had already begun to establish its key role in trade between the Persian Gulf and the Mediterranean Sea by the first century B.C. and in time profited enormously from levying tariffs on products in return for the protection of caravans by units of mounted Palmyrene archers. Immense prosperity spurred the urban development of a city that became renowned for its grandeur, and specifically for its lavish temples, tombs, and sculptures. Pliny the Elder’s description of Palmyra as “having a destiny of its own between the two empires of Rome and Parthia” can be applied not only to the city’s political and economic position but also to its cultural, religious, and artistic identity between the first century A.D. and the Roman emperor Aurelian’s (r. 270–275) final sack of the city in 273.¹ Palmyra’s relationship with the Roman Empire and connections to Mesopotamia and the Parthian and early Sasanian Empires underwent multiple phases, and the balance between Roman control and Palmyrene independence in particular is often difficult to pinpoint and resists simple classification. Remarkably, Palmyra was the only publicly bilingual city in the Roman Middle East, with its civic inscriptions written in both Greek and

Fig. 53 Temple of Bel, Palmyra, prior to its destruction in 2015. The gateway pictured in the foreground has survived and is now the largest standing remnant of the building.



Fig. 54 The Great Colonnade, tetrapylon, theater, Arch of Triumph, and Temple of Bel within its enclosure, Palmyra, prior to the destruction of many monuments in 2015 and 2017

the local dialect, Palmyrene Aramaic; its own coinage was also bilingual, and Palmyrene countermarks were stamped on Roman coins.² At the core of civic and religious life were temples of hybrid design funded by local benefactors. Within these temples Palmyrenes' dedications to their distinctive gods of various origins reflected the city's diversity, and dedications to the same gods made by Palmyrenes in communities established elsewhere, including in Dura-Europos and Rome (cats. 101–2, 137–38), also strongly express the fundamental link between their religious and civic identities. From the beginning of the city's urban expansion, a group of powerful tribes and families dominated commercial, social, and religious life,³ and their continued relevance throughout Palmyra's history is revealed by their remarkable

commemorative funerary portraits displayed in monumental tombs located on the city's edges (cats. 108–109, 112–125).

The evidence for Palmyra's relationship with Rome is complex. The initial impact of the creation in 64 B.C. of the Roman province of Syria on Palmyra's status is unclear, although the city was most likely not subject to tribute to Rome at this early date.⁴ Mark Antony's unsuccessful cavalry raid in 41 B.C., recorded by the second-century historian Appian, is the earliest evidence for contact between Palmyra and Rome:

When Cleopatra returned home Antony sent a cavalry force to Palmyra, situated not far from the Euphrates, to plunder it, bringing the trifling accusations against its inhabitants, that, being on the frontier between

the Romans and the Parthians, they had avoided taking sides between them; for, being merchants, they bring the products of India and Arabia [from Persia] and dispose of them in the Roman territory. In fact, Antony's intention was to enrich his horsemen, but the Palmyreans [Palmyrenes] were forewarned and they transported their property across the river, and, stationing themselves on the bank, prepared to shoot anybody who should attack them, for they were expert bowmen. The cavalry found nothing in the city. They turned around and came back, having met no foe, and empty-handed.⁵

Appian's words also offer a vivid image of Palmyrene merchants and their wide network, which is reinforced by epigraphic evidence. By 33 B.C., a Palmyrene community was already established at Dura-Europos, a town under Parthian control since the late second century B.C. (see p. 181). A community of Palmyrene and Greek merchants in Seleucia (assumed to be Seleucia on the Tigris) was established by the early first century A.D.⁶ Honorific inscriptions on the bases of statues of Palmyrene notables, which were set up on brackets halfway up columns overlooking streets, temples, and the agora in a manner specific to the city, record their contacts

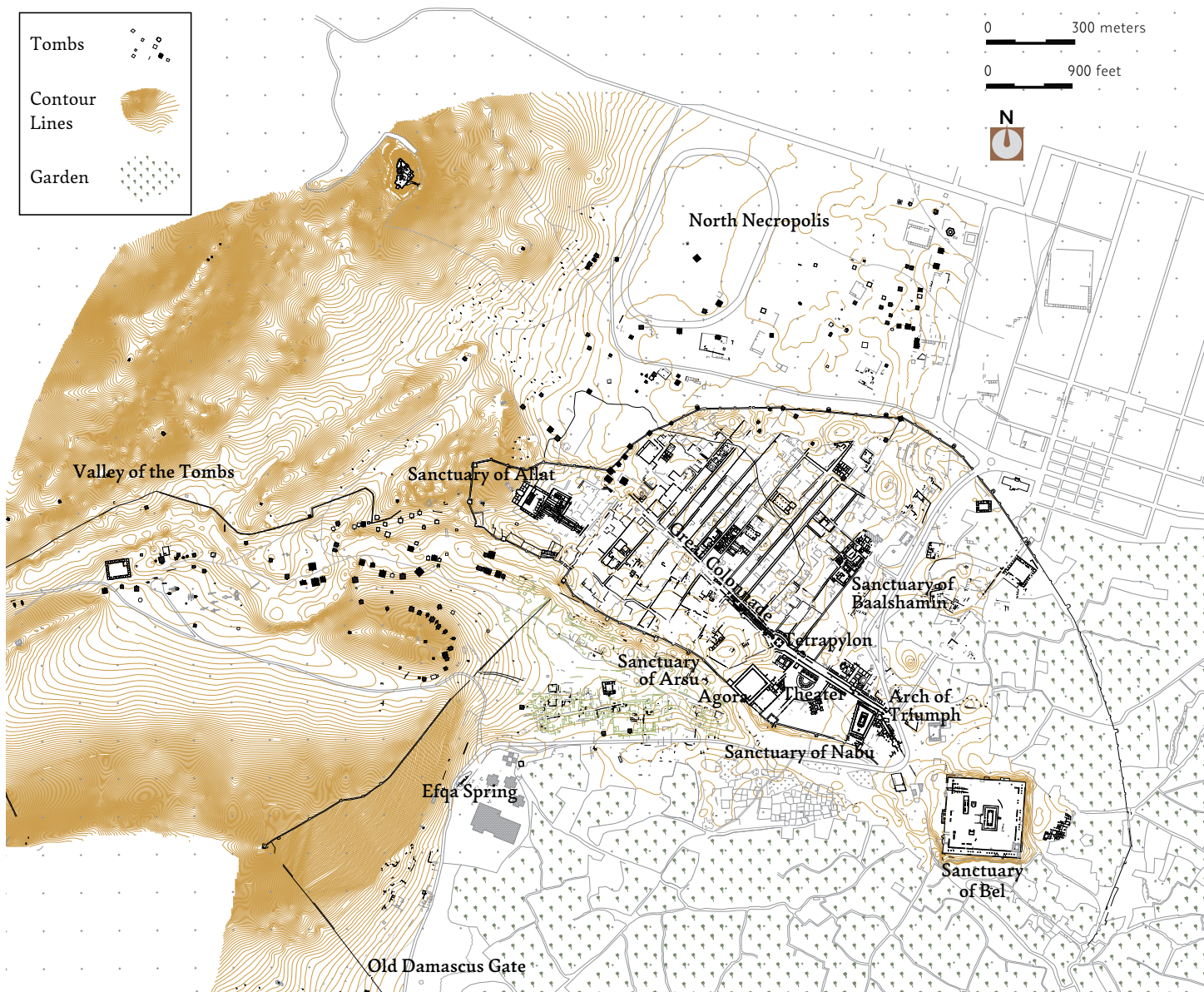


Fig. 55 Plan of Palmyra. Drawing by K. Schnädelbach

with trading outposts in the Parthian Empire in the early first century, including the port of Charax Spasinou in the kingdom of Characene on the Persian Gulf and Babylon (see p. 229). These inscriptions are the earliest in a long series documenting Palmyrene trade with areas under the control of the Parthian and subsequently the Sasanian Empire.⁷

Further uncertainty surrounds Palmyra's incorporation into the Roman Empire. Palmyra is usually considered to have been formally annexed to the province of Syria and to have begun paying tribute to Rome at some point during the first century A.D., though it is also possible that the city was merely under Roman influence during this period and maintained a greater level of independence. If annexation did occur during this period, likely dates include either during the reign of the emperor Tiberius (r. 14–37), or possibly during the reign of Vespasian (r. 69–79) when Palmyra was linked to the Roman road system, or even later; however, there is no evidence that the Roman military was established at Palmyra during the early first century.⁸ Auxiliary units commanded by Palmyrenes were the first permanent military force at Palmyra, and their famous archers also eventually played a unique role among the cities of the Roman provinces, as they were stationed in frontier regions along the Euphrates and elsewhere (cats. 136–37).⁹ A Roman garrison at Palmyra was probably established in the 160s during the emperor Lucius Verus's (r. 161–168) Parthian War.¹⁰

The argument in favor of Palmyra's annexation under Tiberius centers on a dedication by the commanding officer of the Legio X Fretensis, Minucius Rufus, of statues depicting Tiberius, Tiberius's brother Drusus, and Tiberius's nephew and adopted son Germanicus. This event must have taken place during the five-year period between Tiberius's accession in 14 and Germanicus's death in 19. The dedicatory inscription was found in the Temple of Bel, Palmyra's most important religious center, and it has been suggested that the statues were originally displayed in the courtyard.¹¹ During his stay in Syria, Germanicus received ambassadors from the Parthian king Artabanus II (r. 10–38), and he may have visited Palmyra in person.¹² He is recorded in an inscription as having sent one Alexandros, identified as a Palmyrene, to Characene: the episode provides important information regarding relations between Rome and some small Parthian states, although it should be emphasized that it is not certain that Alexandros served in a diplomatic capacity.¹³

In the early second century, as the main overland trade routes shifted north to Syria, the city became the hub of

regional and global trade, and its merchants and traders attained even greater wealth.¹⁴ By the second half of the first century Palmyra's government was already organized similarly to those of Greek cities, with a *demos* (assembly) and a *boule* (council),¹⁵ overlaid on or operating in conjunction with the existing structures of the Palmyrene tribes. The visit of the emperor Hadrian (r. 117–138) in 129 or 130 resulted in a new stage of civic identity and a new name, Hadriana Palmyra/Tadmor, which incorporated the city's indigenous Aramaic name along with the emperor's. Interestingly, details in the inscription, known as the Tariff of Palmyra, dated to 137, may imply that the *boule* held far more decision-making power than would normally be expected of a city under formal Roman control: the tariff was posted prominently at the agora and recorded municipal taxes on goods, including oil, myrrh, animal skins, and bronzes consumed or transformed in the city, rather than long-distance imports.¹⁶

Palmyra became a Roman colony in the early third century, probably under the emperor Septimius Severus (r. 193–211). His son Caracalla's (r. 211–217) *Constitutio Antoniniana* (Edict of Caracalla) of 212 granted Roman citizenship to all freeborn men in the Roman Empire and gave freeborn women the same rights as Roman women. Notably, however, the use of Palmyrene Aramaic and Greek, rather than Latin, continued in Palmyra's civic institutions.¹⁷ Palmyrene control over trade routes across the Syrian Desert was lost to the Sasanian Empire by the second quarter of the third century: Odaenathus, the powerful Palmyrene leader who proclaimed himself king, led two campaigns to drive the Sasanians out of Syria in the 260s. After his assassination in 267, Odaenathus's wife Zenobia declared herself regent for her son Vaballathus and established Palmyra as the seat of an independent empire, until Aurelian's conquest of the city in 272 resulted in her capture (see p. 255; cats. 181–82). Following a further revolt in 273, Aurelian ordered the destruction of the city, ending its role as an ancient center and leaving its monuments in a ruined state, much as they would stand for the next 1,700 years.

Religious life at Palmyra was centered on a distinctive group of deities worshipped in prominent sanctuaries and in smaller temples that combined Graeco-Roman and Middle Eastern architectural traditions. The construction of these structures was funded by local benefactors from Palmyra's elite families, many of whom played important religious roles



Fig. 56 Temple of Bel, Palmyra, prior to its destruction in 2015

as priests in rituals and banquets (cats. 105–6, 108). The names and characteristics of many Palmyrene gods can be traced to Babylonian, Syrian, and Phoenician predecessors, and indigenous and Arab deities were also worshipped.¹⁸ Dedicatory inscriptions and images of the gods, including relief sculptures from temples, and sculptures and altars offered as votives, are crucial for an understanding of their identities (cats. 99–103), particularly given the very limited textual evidence for Palmyrene mythology and religious rituals.

The conventional names for Palmyra’s sanctuaries, including the two devoted to the city’s two main deities, the Temple of Bel and the Temple of Baalshamin, belie the complexity of actual religious practices because multiple gods were venerated in them (figs. 53, 56–57, 60). In inscriptions the Temple of Bel is, in fact, referred to as “the house of

the gods of the Palmyrenes.”¹⁹ Banqueting halls were located at both sanctuaries and also at the Temples of Nabu and Arsu: the architectural remains and archaeological evidence for sacrifices and feasts are enhanced by the information from images and inscriptions found on large numbers of tesserae (banquet tokens) (cats. 105–7). The Temples of Bel and Baalshamin were both destroyed in 2015 during the ISIS occupation of Palmyra (see p. 260; fig. 96).²⁰

There was apparently no conflict in having two supreme gods at Palmyra, since both Bel and Baalshamin were worshipped as lords of the cosmos. Bel’s name derives from the Babylonian epithet *bel* (lord) and reflects a connection to the god Marduk of Babylon, who became known simply as Bel.²¹ Palmyrene merchants in Babylonia may have been responsible for the spread of the cult of a Babylonian god to their home city. Depictions of Bel and Baalshamin in the



Fig. 57 Interior of north adyton of the Temple of Bel, Palmyra, prior to its destruction in 2015

company of other gods have led to theories that two main triads existed, headed by Bel and Baalshamin. The evidence does not support this concept, however, in particular because most of the representations feature more than three gods together.²² A whole series of armed and cuirassed gods are attested and were venerated at the main temples and at other cult sites in the region surrounding Palmyra (cat. 99). Prominent examples include Shadrafa (cat. 100); the solar god Iarhibol, known to have been worshipped at a spring (cat. 103); the lunar god Aglibol; and Malakbel, whose main cult site was a sacred grove (cats. 101–2; figs. 58, 64).

The Temple of Bel with its immense enclosure was the city's most important structure. Its construction was financed by local families (cat. 119), and its inauguration date was recorded, according to the Babylonian calendar, as the 6th of Nisan (April) in the year 32, during the Babylonian *akitu* (New Year) festival, and building continued into the early

second century.²³ An inscription from 44 B.C. indicates that the priesthood of Bel already existed at that date, and the temple building erected in the first century A.D. was preceded by earlier buildings.²⁴ The temple was based on the model of the Temple of Artemis in Magnesia on the Maeander but was adapted radically for local cult customs, with an entrance on the long wall in the traditional manner of Mesopotamian temples to access its unusual double adyta (inner sanctuaries) (figs. 56–57).²⁵ Whether the main cult image in the north adyton was a statue or relief remains uncertain: a statue of Bel enthroned is a strong possibility (statues of Bel standing with two accompanying gods would have been much too small in the space).²⁶ It has been suggested that the south adyton was dedicated to the goddess Astarte as Bel's female consort.²⁷ Staircases gave access to the towers above and to a crenellated flat roof that may have been used for ceremonies.²⁸



Fig. 58 Relief with the gods Malakbel and Aglibol in a sacred grove, from the portico of the Temple of Bel, Palmyra, prior to its destruction in 2015



Fig. 59 Relief with procession of women and image of the goddess Allat, from the portico of the Temple of Bel, Palmyra, prior to its destruction in 2015

A series of remarkable relief sculptures (twenty-nine were known before the temple's destruction) originally decorated the beams of the surrounding portico. They were most likely produced in the late first century²⁹ and featured scenes of divinities, religious rituals, and mythology, with some drawn from Babylonian sources, such as the story of the divine battle against Tiamat, the primordial sea (see p. 230; fig. 87). The god Malakbel appears in his sacred grove indicated by a cypress tree together with Aglibol (fig. 58). A particularly striking scene is a procession of veiled women following a wheeled cart interpreted as holding the cult image of the goddess Allat being transported to her own temple (fig. 59).³⁰

The small sanctuary of Baalshamin was financed by a local Palmyrene tribe, known as the Bene Ma'azin ("goat herders"), and the benefactor Male Agrippa paid for the construction of a new temple for Baalshamin and the god

Durahlun in 129–30 on the occasion of Hadrian's visit to Palmyra (fig. 60).³¹ The temple at first glance was a Roman one that followed Vitruvian architectural principles with a porch in the Corinthian order; however, specific Palmyrene adaptations are discernible, such as a flat roof that could act as a sacred high place, and an ornate interior structure to house the cult relief, which was most likely a bronze plaque.³²

Palmyra's tombs provide significant insight into their commissioners' desires for commemoration, and their architectural designs reflect a complex interweaving of local and regional traditions, as well as some specific borrowings from both Rome and Parthian Mesopotamia. More than 150 tombs are known, located along some of the main roads leading in and out of the city and in surrounding cemeteries: one-third of them are securely dated by inscriptions



Fig. 60 Temple of Baalshamin, Palmyra, prior to its destruction in 2015



Fig. 61 Tower tombs in the Valley of the Tombs in the Western Necropolis of Palmyra. Seven tombs were destroyed in 2015.

between 9 B.C. and A.D. 253.³³ They functioned as active and dynamic spaces where visitors went regularly for funerals and commemorative rituals, although access was restricted. Locks on the doors at the entrances of the underground tombs indicate that the funerary chambers were accessible only by relatives and other people connected to the deceased; water basins and lamps found inside attest to the visitors' presence.³⁴

The principal tomb types are tower tombs, hypogea, and "temple" tombs (also called "house" or "palace" tombs). A significant shift in funerary customs at Palmyra occurred in the early first century when the first multistory tower tombs were constructed, in lieu of smaller, single-cist graves; the larger tombs could hold more than 400 burials (fig. 61).³⁵ Seven were destroyed in 2015. Their basic design reflects a popular regional type of Hellenistic-Seleucid origin; however, the architectural decoration of early second-century examples, including pedimental sculpture with portraits of the tombs' founders, indicates some level of inspiration

from tombs in Rome, such as the Tomb of the Haterii.³⁶ Tower tombs were phased out by the time of Hadrian's visit in 129/130, and hypogea were the most typical tomb type from the late first until the middle of the third century. Chambers were carved underground out of rock and could be expanded as needed, as indicated by legal texts recording alterations over time. The burials (inhumations) were located in loculi in the walls.³⁷ Temple tombs were smaller structures that appear to have been used by the upper elite class in the later part of Palmyra's history, between 143 and 253, and feature facades that draw inspiration from Nabataean rock-cut tombs, Hellenistic and Roman temples and theaters, and Parthian palaces.³⁸ Tomb no. 36, the largest and most elaborate of its type, features a facade with wall niches, columns and pediments that evoke Roman theater buildings and Parthian palaces, such as at Ashur, as well as a ground plan that combines the local loculus burials with a central peristyle courtyard drawing from Hellenistic-Roman domestic architecture.³⁹



Fig. 62 Interior of the Tomb of Iarhai at Palmyra, reconstructed in the National Museum, Damascus

Carved from local limestone, the Palmyrene funerary reliefs that were displayed prominently throughout the tombs formed virtual galleries of family portraits, such as the group in the Tomb of Iarhai reconstructed in the National Museum of Damascus (fig. 62). The need for half-figure reliefs appears to have emerged in the middle of the first century, in conjunction with the construction of the first tower tombs; carved at a size specifically designed to seal the loculi shut, half-figure reliefs largely replaced the full-figure stelae prevalent in earlier funerary sculpture. Easily distinguishable as a corpus, they provide invaluable evidence for understanding Palmyrene identity through their inscriptions and details, such as dress, gestures, hairstyles, and jewelry (cats. 108–9, 112–25). Above all, their fundamental purpose may have been to serve as repositories for the *nefesh*, or the spirit of the deceased.⁴⁰ Their production continued through the first half of the third century, and attempts at establishing a chronology have identified three basic groups.⁴¹ Dates, however, must be used cautiously, since the overwhelming majority are not from formal excavations: many entered private and museum collections during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries when their supposedly “spiritual” quality was in vogue.⁴²

The approximately 3,000 Palmyrene funerary reliefs, or portraits, known today are in the process of being studied and catalogued as part of the Palmyra Portrait Project.⁴³

The applicability of the term “portraits” has been raised in conjunction with questions as to whether the sculptures were specific commissions, actual likenesses of individuals, or generic images adapted to suit specific buyers, and whether some were produced during a person’s lifetime and later used in a tomb. A high percentage of the reliefs include inscriptions in Palmyrene Aramaic (interestingly, not in Greek) that personalize them and provide the deceased’s name, and the frequent mention of several generations of ancestors emphasizes the importance of family ties and lineage in Palmyrene society. By contrast, references to individuals’ professions are rare (cats. 113, 115).⁴⁴

Under ISIS occupation during part of the Syrian civil war, executions were carried out at Palmyra. The site has suffered irreparable damage: in addition to the destruction of the Temples of Bel and Baalshamin, several tower tombs, and the Arch of Triumph, sculptures in the Palmyra Museum were damaged or destroyed in 2015. In 2017, the tetrapylon was destroyed and part of Palmyra’s theater was damaged. Illicit digging and looting of objects has also occurred at Palmyra and in the surrounding area (see p. 260; fig. 96). The destruction of monuments was filmed and used in propaganda videos designed to stoke international outrage. The ISIS occupation of Palmyra ended in 2017, and projects to conserve damaged sculptures are currently in progress.⁴⁵

99. Relief with Three Palmyrene Gods

1st century

Limestone, H. 23⁵/₈ in. (60 cm), W. 28³/₈ in. (72 cm), D. 2³/₄ in. (7 cm)

Bir Wereb, in the Wadi al-Miyah near Palmyra

Musée du Louvre, Paris (AO 19801)

The three gods depicted on this relief, discovered in the desert east of Palmyra, reflect the significance of armed and cuirassed local deities in the religious life of the city and the surrounding region, and may also reveal important distinctions between the veneration of cult reliefs and statues. All three gods, whose identities are uncertain but who most likely represent the local gods of a settlement outside Palmyra, wear a lamellar cuirass of local type, indicating that the armor worn by Palmyra's own troops inspired that of their images of divine protectors produced during the first century (cat. 100). The bearded god in the center wears a cylindrical headdress decorated with a row of large beads, or possibly pearls. The headband with fringed streamers that extend stiffly on either side of his head may represent an ornament of gold, silver, or another metal sheet used to adorn cult statues.¹ The god Aphlad wears a comparable headband on a relief from Dura-Europos known from its inscription to be a copy of a cult statue (fig. 63).² Both figures also wear similar tight-fitting trousers. In contrast, the other two gods on the relief are bare legged and have "Parthian" hairstyles with snail-shaped curls (cats. 109, 111, 116, 119); each wears a torque with a central stone and has a radiate nimbus. A lunar crescent appears behind the head of the god on the left. All three deities wear short military cloaks, hold identical swords with trilobed pommels in their left hands, and most likely originally held metal spears or scepters in their right hands, which are now lost. The graffiti written by worshippers are later additions.³

The god in the center has previously been identified as Baalshamin and the group as a "triad of Baalshamin" featuring the sun and moon gods Malakbel and Aglibol; however, this is unlikely since Baalshamin is never depicted wearing a cuirass, and while the other two figures are clearly sun and moon gods, they are not necessarily Malakbel and Aglibol.⁴ Another candidate for the central god is Bel, who, although typically beardless, is occasionally shown with a beard and is consistently depicted wearing a lamellar cuirass of local type. Nonetheless, his cult image in the Temple of Bel may have been a statue of the god enthroned rather than in a standing pose, and in other depictions of Bel flanked by the moon and sun gods the positions of the two are reversed.⁵

The relief's size and reported findspot suggest that it functioned as a cult image in a sanctuary or shrine in the area outside Palmyra: the dowel holes on its sides indicate that it was affixed to a wall. The three figures are very likely copies of cult statues, and both cult statues and reliefs are known at Palmyra's main temples. The Temple of Baalshamin featured a cult relief of the god in its small interior space, whereas a cult statue of Bel is proposed for the Temple of Bel, and one of Allat is known from her temple.⁶ The three Palmyrene gods in military dress in the wall painting from Dura-Europos of the sacrifice of Julius Terentius stand on pedestals, clearly indicating that they represent statues (cat. 137). A distinction between religious practices at Palmyra's main sanctuaries and smaller ones, perhaps especially those in the surrounding countryside, is possible. A greater degree of accessibility to the cult images themselves in smaller temples may have contributed to the use of fixed reliefs in those settings, since worshippers could offer sacrifices and perhaps even participate in ritual meals in front of the cult images (cat. 139). By contrast, portable statues may have been more prevalent in the larger temples, where access to the inner sanctuaries might have been more restricted and where the actual cult statues would have been brought out only in procession at festivals.⁷

This relief has been dated to the first half of the first century,⁸ but a general first-century date is preferable: Shadrafa's stele dates to the year 55, and the beam reliefs of the Temple of Bel that include numerous gods wearing Roman muscled breastplates have been dated convincingly to the end of the first century (see pp. 146–48; figs. 58–59). Furthermore, the god Bel is always depicted wearing a lamellar cuirass of local type, even on reliefs of much later date,⁹ so the local cuirass may not have disappeared from depictions of Palmyra's gods as early as previously thought.

1. Seyrig 1932, pp. 263–64; Seyrig 1949, p. 29. 2. Dirven 2015, p. 263. 3. Starcky 1949; see also Dentzer-Feydy and Teixidor 1993, pp. 144–45, no. 153. 4. Seyrig 1949, especially p. 32; Gawlikowski 2015, p. 251. 5. Gawlikowski 2015, pp. 249, 253. 6. *Ibid.*, pp. 250, 253; Dirven 2015, p. 261, nn. 38, 39. 7. Dirven 2015, especially pp. 262–63, on Hatra's temples, and p. 267, n. 69, on cult reliefs in Mithraea. 8. Seyrig 1949, pp. 31–32. 9. Gawlikowski 2015, p. 253.





100. Stele for Shadrafa

May 55

Limestone, H. 18⁵/₈ in. (47.3 cm), W. 13 in. (33 cm), D. 5⁵/₁₆ in. (13.5 cm)

Palmyra

The Trustees of the British Museum, London (125206)

This stele, dedicated to Shadrafa by a worshipper in the month of May in the year 55, is the oldest securely dated representation of a god in armor from Palmyra (cat. 99).¹ His cuirass, formed of small strips of leather or metal sewn on to a garment, is a local type that contrasts with the standard Hellenistic-style cuirass, such as the one worn by the god Aphlad on a stele from Dura-Europos (fig. 63). These two types of cuirass indicate that the muscled breastplates worn by Roman legionary soldiers and featured on statues of emperors were not the initial source of inspiration for these early depictions of Palmyra's numerous armed gods, although the breastplates did become popular in a later period (see p. 146; cats. 102, 137). Rather, the armor of local troops entrusted with the safekeeping of caravans is the likely prototype.²

Shadrafa had Phoenician origins, and his name and attributes reflect his role as a healer. On this stele, the scorpion above his left shoulder and the snake entwined around his lance refer to his powers as a protector: snake and scorpion imagery had a long history of protective associations in Mesopotamian and Syrian art (fig. 80), while the motif of the snake wound about the lance may be iconography derived from the Greek healing god Asklepios.³ Two other stelae from Palmyra as well as tesserae (banquet tokens) feature similar depictions of the god or snakes or scorpions alone, and Shadrafa is known to have shared a sanctuary and priests at Palmyra with Aphlad.⁴

1. Seyrig 1936, pp. 137–39; Hillers and Cussini 1996, pp. 74–75, no. 318; Gawlikowski 2015, pp. 252–53. 2. Seyrig 1970; Gawlikowski 1990, pp. 2646–47, nn. 152, 153; Gawlikowski 2015, pp. 252–53. 3. Downey 1978–79, p. 117. 4. Ingholt, Seyrig, and Starcky 1955, pp. 44–46, nos. 317–30; Colledge 1976, p. 42, n. 101 (Damascus Museum, 7453; Palmyra Museum, B1909). Gawlikowski 1990, pp. 2646–47.



Fig. 63 Relief with Aphlad, Dura-Europos. National Museum, Damascus



101. Altar for Sol, Malakbel, and Palmyrene Gods

Late 1st-2nd century
 Marble, H. 33¹/₄ in. (84.5 cm), W. 20⁷/₈ in. (53 cm), D. 20⁷/₈ in. (53 cm)
 Rome
 Musei Capitolini, Rome (MC 107; NCE 2412)

102. Aedicula for Aglibol and Malakbel

February 236
 Marble, H. 38⁹/₁₆ in. (98 cm), W. 26³/₈ in. (67 cm), D. 4³/₄ in. (12 cm)
 Rome
 Musei Capitolini, Rome (MC 1206; NCE 2406)

Dedications to their gods made by members of Palmyrene communities outside Palmyra, most notably in Rome and in Dura-Europos (cats. 137–38), provide important evidence for their religious practices and strong sense of Palmyrene identity.¹ The altar for Sol, Malakbel, and Palmyrene gods and the representation of Aglibol and Malakbel within an aedicula are the two most significant and elaborate of the dedications discovered in Rome. Both reveal aspects of Palmyrenes' traditionalism and adherence to the customs of their home city.

Fig. 64 Altar with Malakbel in chariot with griffins, from the sanctuary of Baalshamin, Palmyra. Palmyra Museum

The altar's complex iconography, its combination of Palmyrene Aramaic and Latin inscriptions that are not simply translations of one another, and the fact that Latin is rare in any Palmyrene context suggest that it commemorates two dedications rather than assimilating the Roman solar deity Sol and the Palmyrene deity Malakbel, despite Malakbel's own solar aspects. The altar offers a glimpse of the integration of Palmyrenes within the Roman neighborhood of Transiberim, where their sanctuary was located, since a



porticus (portico or covered gallery) and possibly a sanctuary dedicated to Sol also appear to have been located in its vicinity, and there may have been a connection between worshippers at both sites.² On one face, the image of a radiate and youthful Sol is typical of his standard Roman depictions; the accompanying Latin inscription records a



dedication made by one Tiberius Claudius Felix, his wife, and their son.³ On another face, the image of Victory crowning Malakbel in a chariot pulled by griffins has a close parallel in the representation of the god on an altar from Palmyra, both of which very likely copy an actual cult relief of Malakbel (fig. 64).⁴ The accompanying Palmyrene Aramaic inscription mentions the same dedicator, Tiberius Claudius Felix, who, along with a group of Palmyrenes, offered a dedication to Malakbel and to Palmyrene gods whose names are not given.⁵ The dedicator's name does not give any indication that he was from Palmyra or descended from a Palmyrene family, though this is a possibility. The altar's remaining two sides feature a bearded male figure with his head covered with a fold of his toga (*capite velato*) and holding a scythe, very likely the god Saturn (cats. 85–86, 89), and a boy with a goat upon his shoulders emerging from a tall cypress tree, probably an evocation of the sacred grove where Malakbel and Aglibol were worshipped; they may serve as complementary images to the “Roman” and “Palmyrene” faces, respectively.

The aedicula dedicated to Aglibol and Malakbel reflects standard Palmyrene customs with respect to both divine iconography and language. Malakbel, on the left, wears Parthian clothing (trousers, short tunic, and open overcoat) (cats. 109–11) and a diadem. Aglibol is dressed in a Roman-style cuirass with a muscled breastplate and a cloak and



holds a lance in his left hand (cats. 99–100, 106, 137); a lunar crescent is visible behind his head. The pair shake hands in front of a cypress tree that represents the sacred grove, also depicted on one of the peristyle beams from the Temple of Bel (fig. 58).⁶ The Greek and Palmyrene Aramaic versions of the same inscription emphasize the dedicator's family lineage according to Palmyrene convention and also record the dedication of a silver statuette, an exceptionally lavish offering.⁷

1. For Dura-Europos, see Dirven 1999 and Dirven 2011; for Rome, see Fowlkes-Childs 2016. 2. Hijmans 2009, p. 501; Fowlkes-Childs 2016, pp. 209–11. 3. Henzen et al. 1871, no. 710; see also Houston 1990. 4. Dirven 1999, pp. 161–62. 5. Hillers and Cussini 1996, p. 55, no. 248. 6. For the sacred grove, see Kaizer 2002, pp. 124–43. 7. Moretti 1968, no. 119; Hillers and Cussini 1996, p. 54, no. 247.

103. Altar for the Anonymous God

July 232

Limestone, H. 20⁷/₁₆ in. (52 cm), W. 8¹/₄ in. (21 cm), D. 5¹/₄ in. (13.3 cm)

Palmyra

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Purchase, 1895 (95.28)

**(For) blessed be his name forever,
the good and merciful, made
in thanksgiving Hagigu, son of
Yahiba, son of Yarhay,
(son of) Daka, for his life
and the life of his father
and his brothers. In the month of
Qinyan, the year 543.¹**

Dedicatory inscriptions to a deity characterized with the phrase “blessed be his name forever”—also called the “anonymous” or “nameless” god—contain expressions of praise and gratitude and appear on hundreds of altars from Palmyra. Many lack figural decoration, such as this example, whose bowl-shaped top suggests the burning of incense (although there are no physical traces of this). The dedicator records the month and year of his dedication and mentions several generations of his paternal lineage, a typical feature of Palmyrene inscriptions. Other altars feature a pair of hands with outward-facing palms raised in a gesture of adoration or human figures with their hands raised in such a gesture.² Tentative identifications for the “anonymous” god include Iarhibol, ancestral god of the oasis, because so many altars were discovered near the Efqa spring, where the god’s sanctuary was located, and Baalshamin, dedications to whom include many of the same praise formulas.³

1. Hillers and Cussini 1996, pp. 82–83, no. 376. 2. Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, I.N. 1081, I.N. 1161, I.N. 1080: see Hvidberg-Hansen 1998, pp. 35, 80–81, nos. 9, 128, 129. 3. Hvidberg-Hansen 1998, p. 16; Teixidor 2005, pp. 210–11.





104. Relief Plaque with Cheetah

Ca. first half of 3rd century
Limestone, pigment. H. 13³/₄ in. (35 cm), W. 15³/₄ in. (40 cm),
D. 6⁵/₁₆ in. (16 cm)
Palmyra

University of Pennsylvania Museum of Anthropology and Archaeology,
Philadelphia, Babylonian Expedition to Nippur II, 1890 (B 8907)

A small group of relief plaques from Palmyra feature crouching felines and seated humped bulls (zebu) inside frames of beading and leaf-and-dart ornament. Their significance and original contexts were probably religious, although none have secure findspots.¹ The spotted feline on this relief is most likely a cheetah, since its claws appear to be nonretractable;² a hunting leopard is another possibility. Alert and snarling, with sharp teeth visible in its open mouth, the animal is in profile facing left with straps looping around its neck, through a ring, and under its belly. Some traces of black pigment appear in the incised circles that form the

spots. Red pigment remains on one of the straps as well as on part of the frame. The ring and straps could indicate simply that the cheetah, popular as hunting game, is in captivity.³ Alternatively, the straps could suggest that the animal represents the harnessed mount for a Palmyrene divinity: a relief dedicated to the god Malku shows a deity in a chariot drawn by spotted felines, and the god Malakbel is depicted in a chariot drawn by griffins (cat. 101; fig. 64).⁴

1. Palmyra Museum B 2742/9202, B 2743/9203; see Klaus Parlasca in Charles-Gaffiot, Lavagne, and Hofman 2001, p. 322, nos. 33, 34. Musée du Louvre, Paris, AO 3983; see Dentzer-Feydy and Teixidor 1993, p. 137, no. 147. See also Colledge (1976, p. 54, n. 147, pl. 52), who also lists a plaque with a frontal lion's head inside a wreath within this group. 2. Romano 2006, pp. 302–3, no. 147. The inscription is a false one, probably added to the relief at a later date. 3. *Ibid.*, p. 303, no. 147. 4. National Museum of Damascus, C.3841; see Schlumberger 1951, pp. 82–83, no. 9, pl. XXXVIII, 2; Colledge 1976, p. 50, pl. 42; Romano 2006, p. 303.



105. Tessera

Ca. late 1st-2nd century
Ceramic, pigment, H. 1³/₁₆ in. (3 cm),
W. 1¹/₂ in. (3.8 cm)
Palmyra
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York,
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Harry G. Friedman
(55.109)



106. Tessera

Ca. late 2nd-3rd century
Ceramic, H. 7/₈ in. (2.3 cm), W. 7/₈ in. (2.3 cm)
Palmyra
American Numismatic Society, New York
(1937.79.22)



107. Tessera

Ca. late 2nd-3rd century
Ceramic, Diam. 1 in. (2.5 cm)
Palmyra
American Numismatic Society, New York
(1937.79.23)

More than 1,500 tesserae, or tokens, are known from Palmyra. They are classified into more than 1,000 different series based on their designs and are thought to have been used as invitations or tickets to banquets (see p. 145; cats. 109–11).¹ A major source of evidence for these cultic gatherings and rituals, most tesserae were discovered in sanctuaries, particularly in and around the banqueting hall at the Temple of Bel and in the drainage areas leading from it, as well as at the Temples of Baalshamin and Arsu. The banqueting hall at the Temple of Bel was a rectangular building in the courtyard northwest of the temple itself: podia for one hundred dining guests lined the walls of its interior, which measured 110 by 35 feet (33.5 by 10.7 m) (fig. 55). Wastewater flowed from small channels in the floor into an underground reservoir, where a large number of tesserae were found, apparently discarded after use.² Interestingly, the tesserae from the Temple of Baalshamin do not mention or represent Baalshamin, indicating that the banquets may not always have been held in honor of a sanctuary's main god.³ A pot containing 125 tesserae of a single series was discovered in the Temple of Arsu, possibly either not yet distributed to invited guests or collected from them upon admission to the banquet.⁴

Although a few lead, bronze, and iron examples exist, the overwhelmingly majority of tesserae are made from finely levigated clay. Each one was produced individually, formed between two molds, dried, and fired.⁵ Their shapes vary, and their imagery typically includes representations of various gods and priests, often identified as hosting the banquets, as well as impressions of stamp seals or signets belonging to individuals. Their dates range between the first and third centuries, and production appears to have peaked primarily during the late second and third centuries. The small number of tesserae with inscriptions, which are almost all in Palmyrene Aramaic and very rarely in Greek, contain information concerning the names of the priests issuing invitations, banquet dates, meeting place, the name(s) of the god(s) honored, and food and drink offered.⁶

The image of a priest reclining on a *kline* (couch) under a grape arbor seen in catalogue 105 is a particularly common motif: the figure wears a tunic, himation, and a *modius* (a flat-topped cylindrical headdress) and holds a cup in his left

hand (cats. 108, 138). Although the tessera's bottom edge is broken, part of an inscription is discernible under the *kline*'s bottom left edge and can be restored as "Bonna, son of Hairan" through comparison with another tessera produced from the same mold.⁷ Traces of red paint are visible on several of the grape leaves. On the reverse, two figures wearing trousers, sleeved tunics, and possibly Phrygian caps face one another. The bearded figure on the left lowers an object, probably a torch, to the ground. On the right, the beardless one lifts a torch. A raised oval stamped with a winged figure (possibly Victory, perhaps painting a shield, as her right arm is raised) appears between them. A large krater is above, with two rosettes and two small circles in the background on either side.

In catalogue 106, an aedicula with two Corinthian columns and a steep gabled roof frames a roughly stamped oval and a five-line inscription that provides information about a priest's role and mentions several Palmyrene gods: "while the *marzeah* (confraternity) was presided over by Shalman Iarhibola Malkou Aabai."⁸ The other side shows a cuirassed god, his head framed by a radiate nimbus, leaning on a lance or scepter next to a priest making an offering, presumably of incense, on a tall narrow burner between them (cats. 108, 138). "Shalman," the priest's name, appears in the background below a star.

The sun god Shamash is depicted in catalogue 107 in the form of a radiate and draped bust above his inscribed name. Three globules appear in the background. The other side features a reclining camel facing left above the inscribed names "Ogeilou and Mashakou" and a palm frond along the upper border.⁹ A temple of Shamash existed at Palmyra, but its location remains unknown.¹⁰

1. Ingholt, Seyrig, and Starcky 1955 is the primary corpus. For statistics, see Raja 2015, pp. 166, 169. For a detailed recent bibliography, see *ibid.*; and Raja 2016. 2. Will 1997, fig. 2; Nielsen 2015, p. 51. 3. Dunant 1959; Raja 2015, p. 168. 4. K. Al-As'ad, Briquel-Chatonnet, and Yon 2005, especially p. 6. 5. Hvidberg-Hansen and Ploug 1993, p. 23; Raja 2015, p. 173. 6. Raja 2015, pp. 169, 172, 177. 7. National Museum of Damascus (a gift from the Andurian collection, 46); see Ingholt, Seyrig, and Starcky 1955, p. 63, no. 463, pl. XXIV. 8. *Ibid.*, p. 7, no. 34, pl. III. See also Kaizer 2002, pp. 220–34, s.v. The Terminology and Archaeology of Dining and Drinking Societies. 9. Ingholt, Seyrig, and Starcky 1955, p. 46, no. 335, pl. XVIII. 10. Gawlikowski 1990, p. 2648.

108. Portrait of the Priest Tibol

Ca. late 2nd century
Limestone, H. 24 in. (61 cm), W. 20½ in. (52 cm), D. 8¼ in. (21 cm)
Palmyra
The Trustees of the British Museum, London (ME 125201)

Monument of Tibol
son of Lishmesh
Tibol the elder:
Renewed by 'Aziz of Tibol'

Tibol is portrayed as beardless, with his head shaven, and wearing a *modius* (a flat-topped cylindrical headdress named for its resemblance to a grain measure), as is typical of all representations of Palmyrene priests. The wreath of olive or laurel leaves around the *modius* features at its center a small bust of a bearded man dressed in a himation. Tibol wears a tunic and a chlamys (short cloak) with a floral pattern embroidered on its edge and a large fibula (brooch) pinned at his right shoulder. A large square ornament with a central rosette and leaves belongs to a belt worn high above the waist. He holds a jug in his right hand and a bowl containing fruits or other foods in his left; the bowl is decorated with garlands of leaves, possibly laurel, and winged heads. The inscription mentions only Tibol's family genealogy; interestingly, none of the inscriptions on the funerary portraits of Palmyra's priests explicitly identify them as such.²

While literary references to priests and priesthoods are scant, objects such as the jug and bowl clearly refer to religious rituals, and other scenes featuring priests making offerings to gods indicate that beardless men with shaved heads wearing *modii* are priests (cats. 98, 106, 138), as do inscriptions on tesserae (banquet tokens) and sculptures from public monuments in Palmyra.³ Priesthoods were apparently hereditary: an inscribed relief from the Temple of Nabu features three generations of priests, with the grandson in the process of removing or placing a wreath on his seated grandfather's *modius*.⁴

The *modius*, thought to have been made of felt or leather and placed atop a skullcap whose edge is just visible on the priests' foreheads in their portraits, has origins in the

Hellenistic period and differs distinctly from the conical hats typically worn by priests in other areas of the Middle East (fig. 63).⁵ Since some Palmyrene priests appear with unadorned *modii*, a wreath most likely indicates an elevated rank within the priesthood. Other portraits that include side views reveal that the wreaths did not encircle the heads fully but were tied with strips of cloth; a portrait that has retained traces of paint and gilding confirms that the wreaths appear to have been made of thin sheets of metal, possibly gold, rather than of actual olive, laurel, or oak leaves.⁶ Many wreaths, such as Tibol's, feature small busts of men, or priests with *modii*, that may depict the priest's ancestor or predecessor.⁷ Other ornaments include rosettes with round or oval stones. They may have been brooches made of gold or another metal or cameos inlaid with precious or semiprecious stones that hooked onto the caps (cat. 127; fig. 65 [top]).⁸

Statistical analysis of Palmyrene funerary reliefs reveals that portraits of priests comprise approximately 18 percent of all representations of men and about 10 percent of the entire corpus.⁹ It is interesting that priests very rarely appear on reliefs with multiple figures of family members together (though they would, of course, have been surrounded by representations of relatives within the tombs). However, they do appear frequently in pairs or groups alongside other relatives on sarcophagi; this underscores their high social status, since that type of funerary monument belonged to Palmyra's most elite families. Presumably it was this same group of families that held the highest numbers of priesthoods (fig. 62).¹⁰

1. Hillers and Cussini 1996, p. 118, no. 645. 2. Raja 2016, p. 129, n. 21, refers to the inscriptions in the Palmyra Portrait Project database. 3. Stucky 1973, p. 175; Kaizer 2002, pp. 235–42; Raja 2016, p. 129. 4. Stucky 1973, p. 167, fig. 4. 5. *Ibid.*, p. 172; Michał Gawlikowski in Padgett 2001, p. 356, no. 153. 6. Stucky 1973, pp. 172–73. 7. Rumscheid 2000, pp. 103–5, 243–49, nos. 332–52. 8. Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond, 55.12; see Raja 2017b, fig. 4. 9. Raja 2016, pp. 130–31, table 1. 10. Raja (2017b, p. 127, n. 41) notes that out of a total of 193 sarcophagi, 84 carry representations of priests.





109. Banquet Relief of Malku with Two Attendants

Ca. early 3rd century
Limestone, H. 18¹/₈ in. (46 cm), W. 22¹³/₁₆ in. (58 cm), D. 5¹/₈ in. (13 cm)
Palmyra
University of Pennsylvania Museum of Anthropology and Archaeology, Philadelphia, Babylonian Expedition to Nippur II, 1890 (B 8902)

Malku / Moqimu. Alas!

110. Relief with Banquet Attendant Carrying Fruits and Vegetables

Ca. early 3rd century
Limestone, H. 28³/₈ in. (72 cm), W. 13³/₈ in. (34 cm), D. 4³/₄ in. (12 cm)
Palmyra
Musée du Louvre, Paris (AO 22249)

111. Relief with Banquet Attendant Holding Roasted Lamb

Ca. early 3rd century
Limestone, H. 20¹/₁₆ in. (51 cm), W. 14¹⁵/₁₆ in. (38 cm), D. 10⁵/₈ in. (27 cm)
Palmyra
University of Pennsylvania Museum of Anthropology and Archaeology, Philadelphia, Babylonian Expedition to Nippur II, 1890 (B 8903)

Representations of reclining male banqueters and attendants provide glimpses of lavish feasts at Palmyra. Other examples of small-scale banquet reliefs similar to catalogue 109 have been reconstructed as displayed in pairs within tombs.² Such scenes most likely refer to the deceased's role during his lifetime as a participant in religious banquets held at sanctuaries rather than depicting his own funerary feast (cats. 105–7).³ The attendants' luxurious embroidered costumes suggest that they were also members of prominent families rather than servants or slaves,⁴ and they probably played roles in banquet rituals. Freestanding stelae and reliefs that were most likely also displayed within tombs include representations of groups of similarly dressed banquet attendants (cats. 110–11).⁵ Given that inscriptions suggest that offerings of “first fruits” were one of the rituals performed at Palmyra, some of the attendants depicted as bringing fruits could even be performing this sacred act rather than serving a banqueter.⁶

Catalogue 109 depicts Malku reclining on a mattress and holding a bowl in his left hand and a fruit in his right. His long-sleeved, belted tunic is embellished with a pattern

of double palm fronds on its central vertical band and additional patterns at the cuffs and lower edge. A chlamys (cloak) is pinned at his right shoulder, a dagger hangs from his belt, and his boots are square toed with a central flap. A *dorsalium* (curtain) is pinned with rosettes to palm fronds behind him (cats. 115, 119–20, 122–23). Two young male attendants stand behind Malku, one holding an amphora, and the other a ladle and a cup. Their matching tunics have simpler embroidery than Malku's. Trousers, pointed boots, and a dagger hanging from the waist are visible on the figure on the left. The figure in catalogue 110 carrying a basket overflowing with apples, grapes, and possibly pomegranates or pinecones clutches a large bunch of radishes or turnips in his right hand.⁷ Geometric decorative bands appear at the neck, cuffs, and hem of his belted tunic, and a vine-and-leaf pattern is embroidered on his right trouser leg. A fragment of the shoulder and upper arm of another figure are visible to the left. The attendant in catalogue 111 holds a roasted lamb on a platter: both he and Malku's attendants have curls typical of "Parthian" hairstyles (cats. 109, 116, 119).⁸

Such figures, as well as silk fragments with intricate designs discovered in tombs, show that the standard Parthian costume of trousers and an embroidered tunic that was fashionable in Iran and Mesopotamia also enjoyed significant popularity at Palmyra.⁹ Reliefs such as Malku's (cat. 109) contrast distinctly with portraits of individual Palmyrene men that typically depict them wearing the Greek-style tunic and himation (cats. 119–22). Examples of banquet reliefs that feature a reclining man dressed in a himation do exist, although they are typically surrounded by family members rather than attendants (cat. 112); it is also possible that the popularity of Parthian costumes in small-scale reliefs is a specifically third-century trend. The Parthian costume has been interpreted variously as the practical clothing of travelers and riders connected to the caravan trade, as a symbol of high status, as a sign of a strong connection to Parthian



Mesopotamia, and as a possible indicator that Parthian merchants themselves settled in the city, and perhaps even imported clothing to Palmyra.¹⁰ More certainly, it is a vivid expression of the extent to which Parthian conventions and customs were incorporated into the distinctive local culture of Palmyra along with Graeco-Roman ones.

1. Hillers and Cussini 1996, p. 250, no. 1772; Romano 2006, pp. 295–97, no. 141.
2. Sadurska and Bounni 1994, pp. 19–20, 145–46, nos. 13, 14, 193.
3. Will 1951, pp. 96–98; Heyn 2008, pp. 181–82; Heyn 2016, pp. 203–4.
4. Will 1951, p. 98, n. 2; Sadurska and Bounni 1994, p. 146; Heyn 2008, p. 180.
5. Colledge (1976, p. 79, n. 262, pl. 108) compiles the small corpus of "serving-youth stelae" for which no findspots are recorded, notes that they "stand on a projecting platform," and suggests an early third-century date based on style and costume. Cats. 110 and 111 most likely belong to this group, but in view of their fragmentary condition, the attribution is tentative. See also Charles-Gaffiot, Lavagne, and Hofman 2001, p. 345, nos. 156, 157.
6. This possibility is suggested particularly by a sacrifice scene found on a sarcophagus. On first-fruit offerings at Palmyra, see Kaizer 2002, pp. 179–81, pl. 6, for the sarcophagus.
7. Dentzer-Feydy and Teixidor 1993, p. 233, no. 226.
8. Romano 2006, p. 298, no. 142. A false inscription appears on either side of the figure's head.
9. Schmidt-Colinet and Stauffer 2000; Stauffer 2000, pp. 34–36; Stauffer 2005; Stauffer 2010; V. Curtis 2017, pp. 55–66.
10. V. Curtis 2017, pp. 65–66, also notes the presence of Iranian names at Palmyra; Long 2017, pp. 75–76.



112

112. Banquet Relief of Zabdibol and Family

Second half of 2nd century (after 148)
Limestone, H. 20¹/₄ in. (51.4 cm), W. 25⁷/₁₆ in. (64.6 cm), D. 6⁷/₈ in. (17.5 cm)
Palmyra
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Purchase, 1902 (02.29.1)

(Inscriptions, from right to left):

**Zabdibol, / son of Moqimu, / son of Nurbel, / son of Zabda, / son of
'Abday, / (son of) [Zabdi]bol.**

Tadmor, / his daughter.

Moqimu, / his son.

'Alayyat, / his daughter.'

113. Portrait of Tadmor (Mother of Zabdibol)

Ca. 148
Limestone, paint, H. 20³/₈ in. (51.8 cm), W. 17³/₈ in. (44.1 cm), D. 9 in.
(22.9 cm)
Palmyra
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Purchase, 1902 (02.29.3)

(At right): **Alas! Tadmor, / wife of / Moqimu, son of / Nurbel, / the
craftsman. / Died the / 29th day**

(At left): **of Siwan, / in the year / 459.²**

114. Portrait of 'Alayyat (Daughter of Zabdibol)

Ca. 150-200
Limestone, H. 17¹¹/₁₆ in. (44.9 cm), W. 16⁷/₁₆ in. (41.8 cm), D. 7¹⁵/₁₆ in.
(20.2 cm)
Palmyra
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Purchase, 1902 (02.29.5)

'Alayyat, / daughter of / Zabdibol.³

115. Portrait of Shu'adel (Son of Zabdibol)

Ca. 172
Limestone, H. 20⁵/₈ in. (52.4 cm), W. 15⁵/₈ in. (39.7 cm), D. 4³/₈ in. (11.1 cm)
Palmyra
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Purchase, 1902 (02.29.6)

**Alas! / Shu'adel, / son of Zabdibol, / son of Moqimu, / the craftsman. /
Died the 3rd day / of Kanun, the year / 484.⁴**

116. Portrait of Nurbel (Brother of Zabdibol)

Ca. 181
Limestone, H. 20³/₈ in. (51.8 cm), W. 17⁵/₈ in. (44.8 cm), D. 8¹/₂ in. (21.6 cm)
Palmyra
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Purchase, 1902 (02.29.4)

**Alas! / Nurbel, son of / Moqimu, (son of) Nurbel. / In (the month of)
Qinyan, the year / 492.⁵**



113



114



115



116

The inscriptions on Palmyrene funerary reliefs consistently emphasize lineage and family relationships; however, since few were removed from tombs during formal excavations, it is usually impossible to reconstruct their original groupings or to identify the tombs in which they belonged. Epigraphic studies sometimes succeed in securely linking together portraits that belonged to members of a particular family, as is the case with Zabdibol's clan (an underground tomb founded in the year 133 by the brothers Yarhay, 'Atenuri, and Zabdibol, sons of Moqimu, has also been tentatively attributed to his family).⁶

Zabdibol is depicted with his two daughters and a son on a banquet relief (cat. 112), and the inscriptions on four other portraits in The Metropolitan Museum of Art's collection enable the reconstruction of several of his family relationships (cats. 113–16). In addition, the banquet relief was most likely originally placed on top of a relief (now in the National Museum of Damascus) depicting a *kline* (couch) and portraits of Tadmor and Moqimu, identifiable as Zabdibol's parents.⁷ The inscription on Tadmor's individual portrait (cat. 113) provides the date of her death as June 29 in the year 148, and the same date is given on the *kline* relief, indicating that she was already deceased at the time the banquet relief was produced; her facial features resemble those on the *kline* relief, and the inscription notes that her husband was a "master craftsman"—a rare mention of a profession in a funerary epitaph.⁸

In the banquet relief, Zabdibol, dressed in a tunic and himation, reclines upon an elaborately embroidered mattress and cushion, holding a leafy branch and a drinking cup.

Zabdibol's daughter Tadmor, son Moqimu, and daughter 'Alayyat stand behind him. Tadmor and Moqimu both clasp birds, and Moqimu also has grapes—typical attributes held by children. All wear necklaces with pendants. The relief's left edge was apparently removed: Zabdibol's wife was probably originally included in the scene and would have been seated on cushions or a high-backed chair. The omission from the inscription of the exclamation of grief "alas" appears to indicate that the scene represents the family during life rather than a funerary feast.⁹

'Alayyat's portrait (cat. 114) depicts her as an adult wearing a veil, headdress, diadem, and jewelry; in addition to the inscriptions, facial features similar to those of her youthful representation in the banquet relief confirm a connection between the two portrayals. Zabdibol's son Shu'adel (cat. 115) does not appear in the banquet scene but is depicted in a portrait as a full-length figure, which may indicate that he was a child at the time of his death, in front of a *dorsalium* (curtain) (cats. 119–20, 122, 123). Presumably, Shu'adel had either already died or was not yet born when the banquet relief was commissioned. While the epitaph of Nurbel (cat. 116) records only that he was Moqimu's son and his date of death, his relationship to Zabdibol is likely.¹⁰

1. Hillers and Cussini 1996, p. 114, no. 615. 2. *Ibid.*, pp. 113–14, no. 614. 3. *Ibid.*, p. 114, no. 616. 4. *Ibid.*, p. 114, no. 618. 5. *Ibid.*, p. 115, no. 620. 6. Cussini 2017a, p. 96, n. 26. 7. National Museum of Damascus, 15028; see Sabeih 1953, p. 21, n. 2; and Cussini 2017a, p. 93, n. 16, fig. 3. 8. Cussini 2017a, p. 94. For professions, see Cussini 2017b. 9. Cussini 2017a, pp. 92–93. 10. *Ibid.*, pp. 93–96.



117. Portrait of a Woman Holding a Spindle and Distaff

Ca. 50–150
Limestone, H. 20 in. (50.8 cm), W. 15 in. (38 cm), D. 9³/₄ in. (24.8 cm)
Palmyra
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Purchase, 1901 (01.25.1)

118. Portrait of a Woman Holding a Spindle and Distaff and Flanked by Lion Handles

Ca. 120
Limestone, H. 16³/₄ in. (42.5 cm), W. 24¹³/₁₆ in. (63 cm), D. 7¹¹/₁₆ in. (19.5 cm)
Palmyra
Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen (I.N. 1156)

These portraits feature women wearing similar clothing and jewelry and holding a spindle and distaff in their left hands, typical features and attributes of portraits of Palmyrene women dating approximately between the mid-first and mid-second centuries.¹ Comparing variants of this basic type makes it possible to address the question of individuality within the corpus of Palmyrene portraits and the market for “off-the-shelf” products (see p. 151). Both examples here lack the personalized detail that would be provided in an inscription.² The lion-headed handles on either side of the woman in catalogue 118 are an unusual and noteworthy feature: they recall handles on sarcophagi or possibly represent those on tomb doors and may have had protective significance (fig. 41).

In both portraits veils are draped over headdresses formed of twisted cloth and wrap around the shoulders and



arms of the figures. Each wears a headband with vertical grooves (cat. 113) much simpler in design than those with geometric, floral, or vegetal motifs that are characteristic of women’s portraits produced in later periods (cats. 114, 125); parallels for both types of design exist in textiles discovered in Palmyrene tombs.³ Multiple hoops adorn the helixes of their ears, and the woman in catalogue 118 also wears earrings. Their cloaks are pinned to their tunics with trap-ezoidal fibulae (brooches); these accessories were extremely popular and have round (cat. 117), rosette-shaped (cat. 118), or lion-headed (cat. 114) finials, and contrast with the types represented on later portraits (cat. 125).

Women’s involvement in property transactions and other activities indicates that they played wider roles in Palmyrene society than the spindle and distaff, sometimes interpreted as symbols of traditional feminine virtues, might suggest.⁴ The implements have also been linked to women’s work spinning wool but should be interpreted symbolically, given the elite social status of the subjects,⁵ and could also refer broadly to their families’ roles in Palmyra’s textile trade. The gestures of the women’s right hands differ substantially in type and meaning. The “palm-out” gesture in catalogue 117 is used almost exclusively by women in Palmyrene portraits and most likely refers to a role in religious rituals, as comparison with an image of a woman in a sacrificial scene strongly suggests.⁶ By contrast, the pointing gesture in catalogue 118 appears simply to draw attention to objects held in the other hand and is also used by men (cat. 120).⁷

1. For cat. 118, see Hvidberg-Hansen and Ploug 1993, p. 66, no. 22; Ploug 1995, pp. 88–89, no. 22. 2. The inscription on cat. 117 is not written in Aramaic and appears to be a later addition. 3. Krag 2017, p. 48. 4. Sadurska and Bounni 1994, p. 189; Cussini 2005b. 5. Heyn 2016, pp. 200–201. 6. Morehart 1956–57, pp. 55–56, figs. 1, 2; Heyn 2010, pp. 636–37; Heyn 2016, pp. 198–99. 7. Heyn 2010, p. 641.



119

119. Portrait of Nesha

Ca. 125-50
Limestone, H. 25½ in. (64.8 cm), W. 20⅛ in. (51.1 cm), D. 12 in. (30.5 cm)
Palmyra
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Bequest of Armida B. Colt, 2011 (2012.454)

**Nesha, / son of / [. . .]
Belha, / (son of) Hashash / Alas!**

120. Portrait of Zabda'ateh

Ca. 150-200
Limestone, pigment, H. 20⅝ in. (52.4 cm), W. 15⅛ in. (38.4 cm), D. 7⅝ in. (19.4 cm)
Palmyra
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Purchase, 1898 (98.19.2)

This image / (is of) Zabda'ateh, / son of Zabda'ateh, / which made for him / Wahba, / his brother. / Alas!

121. Portrait of a Man

Ca. 150-200
Limestone, H. 20½ in. (52.1 cm), W. 17 in. (43.2 cm), D. 8½ in. (21.6 cm)
Palmyra
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Purchase, 1902 (02.29.2)



120

122. Portrait of Zubaida

Ca. 150-200
Limestone, pigment, H. 21¾ in. (55.2 cm), W. 17 in. (43.2 cm), D. 10⅞ in. (26.8 cm)
Palmyra
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Purchase, 1901 (01.25.2)

Zubaida, son of / Dayyanay, son of / Male. / Alas!

These four funerary reliefs are typical of portraits of individual Palmyrene men in that all four wear Greek-style dress, consisting of a chiton and himation, and hold a book-scroll (folded parchment) in their left hands, the most prevalent attribute for men (branches are also fairly common) (cat. 116). The book-scroll may be a general indicator of literacy or perhaps represents a document pertinent to the tomb.⁴ Zubaida (cat. 122) is the only one of the four whose right arm is not draped in the fold of his mantle in the typical “arm-sling” pose. All except Nesha (cat. 119) wear rings inset with central stones on their left little fingers; Zabda'ateh (cat. 120) wears an additional ring on the third finger of his left hand. A *dorsalium* (curtain) affixed to palm branches with either rosettes or circular pins appears behind Nesha, Zabda'ateh, and Zubaida. The frequent appearance of this type of cloth in Palmyrene funerary reliefs has sparked various interpretations, including the idea that it characterizes the tomb space as the “house” of the deceased, since curtains behind figures in Hellenistic art normally



121



122

signify a domestic interior (cats. 109, 115, 123).⁵ Several of the Dura-Europos synagogue paintings include similar curtains (fig. 71).⁶

Details of the appearance of these figures and their accompanying inscriptions reveal indicators of age, fashion, and markers of individuality in Palmyrene representations of men. The names of relatives included in the dedicatory inscription identify Nesha as a member of a particularly prominent Palmyrene family known to have contributed to the financing of the Temple of Bel.⁷ Nesha appears youthful in part owing to his beardlessness, although the other beardless man (cat. 121) comes across as middle-aged, with a furrowed brow and lines next to his nose and mouth and across his full cheeks and jaw. The background behind the man in catalogue 121 is rough, and traces of an inscription that was erased are visible next to his right ear, suggesting that the portrait was reused at some point. The use of snail-like curls for the hair of Nesha and Zabda'ateh and in Zubaida's beard reflect a "Parthian" hairstyle seen in Mesopotamia and Iran; by contrast, the man in catalogue 21 has short locks that are Roman in style (cats. 109, 111, 116, 180). The mustaches and beards of Zabda'ateh and Zubaida illustrate variations in the treatment of facial hair, which is widespread in portraits dated approximately to the second half of the second century. The traces of black paint in the carved irises of Zabda'ateh's eyes are an important reminder that the figures' gazes and expressions would appear

radically different if more of their ancient pigment was preserved (cat. 125).

The preference for the chiton and himation in individual portraits of Palmyrene men contrasts sharply with the favored choice of Parthian dress for men depicted on reliefs reclining at banquets (cat. 109), although the himation occasionally does appear (cats. 105, 112). The selection of the himation and the arm-sling pose for men's portraits has been attributed to a wish to represent the subjects in a manner comparable to citizens of the cities of Greece and Asia Minor, although a notable difference is that their left hands are visible and hold attributes (in Rome, the pose was no longer in use in statues of men wearing the imperial-style toga after the early Augustan period).⁸ Honorific bronze and stone statues of prominent Palmyrenes included freestanding over-lifesize examples as well as smaller ones placed on brackets that were displayed publicly in sanctuaries, the agora (marketplace), and on the so-called Great Colonnade, the city's main street (figs. 54–55). Most are known only from inscriptions, but the surviving examples indicate that Greek and also Roman rather than Parthian-style dress was prevalent in Palmyra's public statuary.⁹

1. Hillers and Cussini 1996, p. 150, no. 921. 2. *Ibid.*, p. 123, no. 686. 3. *Ibid.*, p. 145, no. 880. 4. Cussini 2017a, p. 96. 5. Colledge 1976, p. 157. 6. Kraeling 1956, p. 129, n. 463. 7. Cussini 2017a, pp. 96–98, nn. 28, 30. 8. Davies 2017, pp. 23–25, n. 17; see also R. Smith 1998. 9. Yon 2002; Dirven 2017, pp. 123–24.

123. Portrait of Ra'ta

Ca. 135-50

Limestone, H. 16⁹/₁₆ in. (42 cm), W. 11¹/₄ in. (28.5 cm), D. 5¹¹/₁₆ in. (14.5 cm)

Palmyra

Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen (I.N. 1030)

Alas! / Ra'ta, / daughter of / Moqimu, (son of) / A'wid.¹

The rectangular shape of this stele, as opposed to those with rounded tops previously popular at Palmyra, most likely reflects the stele's change in function from a gravestone inserted in the ground to a slab used to seal burial niches.² Although relief plaques featuring half-figure portraits were already predominant after the middle of the first century, some full-figure stelae that depict adults continued to be produced during the second century (the type was usually used for children) (cat. 115).³ The *dorsalium* (curtain) pinned in the background is a typical feature (cats. 109, 115, 119–20, 122).

The full figure provides a complete image of dress and adornment not possible with half-figure portraits. Ra'ta's veil extends to the ground, and she wears ankle boots and anklets formed of double hoops with a cabochon. Her patterned cap and tunic embellished with vertical beading and ornamental floral borders stand out from the headdresses and plain tunics typical of Palmyrene women's portraits (cats. 113–14, 117–18, 124–25).⁴ Ra'ta's large quantity of jewelry—including earrings, a brooch, five necklaces, armlets, bracelets, and possibly three rings—as well as the jewelry box shown on the bottom left of the stele, and perhaps the basket on the right as well, all underscore her elite status (cat. 125). Her elaborate pectoral formed of two rows of beads has been variously identified as either a local product or an Egyptian import or imitation.⁵



1. Hvidberg-Hansen and Ploug 1993, p. 86, no. 44; Hillers and Cussini 1996, p. 122, no. 677; Hvidberg-Hansen 1998, p. 51, no. 44, also includes the reading of her name as "Da'ta." See also Ploug 1995, pp. 120–22, no. 44. 2. See Colledge 1976, p. 64, pl. 67, for an example of a stele used as a gravestone in the collection of the Palmyra Museum. 3. Colledge 1976, pp. 66–67. 4. Ploug 1995, p. 121. 5. MacKay 1949, p. 176; Colledge 1976, p. 151.



124. Portrait of Kaspā

Ca. 150–70

Limestone, H. 20⁷/₈ in. (53 cm), W. 16³/₄ in. (42.5 cm), D. 10¹/₄ in. (26 cm)

Palmyra

Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen (I.N. 1074)

Kaspā, daughter of / Timaios(?) (or Tamias?) / Alas!

The majority of Palmyrene women are depicted in portraits with their heads covered with headdresses (cats. 113–14, 117–18, 125) or occasionally caps (cat. 123). Kaspā's portrait is noteworthy for her hairstyle, representative of a type appearing in only a few portraits of Palmyrene women. Her hair is arranged in vertical locks pulled up from her forehead into a round coil and bound with a ribbon at the top of her head in a manner similar to the hairstyle of the Roman empress Faustina the Elder, the wife of Antoninus Pius (r. 138–161), and also to a Hellenistic hairstyle known as a “melon” coiffure.² It is unclear whether the appearance of this hairstyle at Palmyra represents a passing trend or reflects more substantial cultural, social, and/or political changes after the visit of the emperor Hadrian (r. 117–138) in 129/130 (see pp. 144, 148).³ In addition to the dates of Faustina's portraits in sculpture and on coins (she died in 140 or 141), several comparable Palmyrene portraits dated securely by their inscriptions suggest an approximate date for Kaspā's portrait of 150–70.⁴ Her dumbbell-shaped earrings are also a type popular at Palmyra and elsewhere after the middle of the second century (cat. 114).

In keeping with Palmyrene traditions, Kaspā wears a veil, which she holds in her left hand and touches with her right hand below her collarbone. The pose of the arm raised to the face or veil is found on 70 percent of the half-figure portraits of women from Palmyra (cats. 113–14, 125).⁵ This raised-arm gesture has been compared to that of the well-known *Pudicitia* statue type used in the Hellenistic Greek world that also spread to Rome; it is traditionally interpreted as a specific sign of female modesty and fidelity but more likely generally signifies women's conventional self-representation, a counterpart to the “arm-sling” pose typical of men's portraits (cats. 119–21).⁶

1. Hillers and Cussini 1996, pp. 132–33, no. 768; Hvidberg-Hansen 1998, p. 60, no. 54. 2. Parlasca 1987; Hvidberg-Hansen and Ploug 1993, pp. 97–98, no. 54; Ploug 1995, pp. 140–41, no. 54; see also *ibid.*, pp. 48–52, no. 6. 3. Parlasca 1987, especially p. 112; Kropp and Raja 2014, p. 398. 4. Ploug 1995, pp. 140–41, no. 54. 5. Heyn 2010, pp. 634–35; Heyn 2016, p. 197, n. 25. 6. Davies 2017, pp. 25–34.

125. Portrait of Bat'a

Late 2nd-early 3rd century

Limestone, pigment, H. 21 1/4 in. (54 cm), W. 14 15/16 in. (38 cm),

D. 7 7/8 in. (20 cm)

Palmyra

Musée de Grenoble, Grenoble (MG 1578)

Bat'a / daughter of Moqim / (granddaughter of) Malku / Alas! / Malku / during (her) life / made it.¹

Depictions of elaborate jewelry worn in large quantities are a very prominent feature of portraits of Palmyrene women dated to the late second and third centuries. The overall trend is attributed largely to Palmyra's immense prosperity during this period; interestingly, a simultaneous discernible increase in women's roles as tomb owners is a notable indicator of changes in their status, possibly mirrored by choices in self-representation and display in funerary contexts.² The portraits indicate that wearing multiple necklaces of different lengths was fashionable, as were chains looped over headdresses, and that many pieces of jewelry at Palmyra included inlays of glass, faience, or precious or semiprecious stones. A variety of gems would have been available for jewelry making at Palmyra through the city's extensive trade network. A large number of glass discs in a variety of colors that would have been used as inlays have been noted in museum collections in Syria and Lebanon, and epigraphic evidence for silversmiths and goldsmiths at Palmyra dates to the third century.³

Bat'a's portrait is especially noteworthy for its extensive surviving pigment and helps to reconstruct the original appearance of many others that also must have included painted details. Dark pigment delineates her almond-shaped eyes and the rims of her eyelids and provides the portrait with an expression that contrasts starkly with the vast majority of Palmyrene portraits with unpainted eyes (cat. 120). Her jewelry stands out vividly owing to the significant traces of ocher and red pigments on the chain looped over her hair,

two of her three necklaces, her brooch, and her bracelets. She also wears earrings and a ring set with a central stone on her left little finger. The lunar crescent pendant, called a lunula, suspended from her middle necklace is a very popular type depicted in numerous contemporaneous portraits and can be compared with an emerald necklace with a gold lunula discovered in the tomb of a young woman outside Rome (cat. 126). Bat'a's large round brooch is also representative of a type particularly common at the time (it replaced the trapezoidal ones prevalent in funerary reliefs of an earlier date) (cats. 117–18), as is the oval brooch attached to her longest necklace with beads hanging from it (cat. 114).⁴ The leafy pattern on her headband may represent an embroidered fabric comparable to textiles discovered in burials at Palmyra, although some headbands were also very likely made of metal.⁵

The inscription is remarkable for its unusual terminology and the detail that Bat'a's grandfather commissioned the portrait during her lifetime. This has been interpreted as a strong piece of evidence that the sculpture does represent an actual likeness of Bat'a.⁶ The portrait therefore suggests that the corpus of Palmyrene portraiture includes representations of individuals as well as generic "off-the-shelf" reliefs personalized with inscriptions (see p. 151; cats. 117–18).

1. Starcky 1984, p. 41. 2. Cussini 2005b; Krag 2017, pp. 37, 41, n. 9. 3. Mackay 1949, pp. 177, 178, n. 2; Higgins 1980, p. 176, n. 7. 4. For examples from Palmyra, see El-Chehadeh 1972, pls. 5d, 6e. 5. MacKay 1949, p. 165; Schmidt-Colinet and Stauffer 2000; Krag 2017, p. 48. 6. Starcky 1984, pp. 42–43.





126. Necklace with Lunar Crescent Pendant

Early-mid-2nd century (before 150–80)
 Gold, emeralds, L. 14³/₈ in. (36.5 cm)
 Rome, Vallerano necropolis, Tomb 2
 Museo Nazionale Romano, Il Medagliere, Rome (414060 and 414065)

127. Brooch

Early-mid 2nd century (before 150–80)
 Gold, amethyst, H. 1¹⁵/₁₆ in. (5 cm), W. 1³/₈ in. (3.5 cm)
 Rome, Vallerano necropolis, Tomb 2
 Museo Nazionale Romano, Il Medagliere, Rome (414061)

128. Ring

Early-mid 2nd century (before 150–80)
 Gold, diamond, H. 5/8 in. (1.6 cm), W. 9/16 in. (1.5 cm)
 Rome, Vallerano necropolis, Tomb 2
 Museo Nazionale Romano, Il Medagliere, Rome (394563)

129. Ring

Early-mid 2nd century (before 150–80)
 Gold, sapphires, garnet, H. 11/16 in. (1.7 cm), W. 5/8 in. (1.6 cm)
 Rome, Vallerano necropolis, Tomb 2
 Museo Nazionale Romano, Il Medagliere, Rome (414056)



128



129

The exceptional jewelry discovered in Vallerano attests to the trade of precious and semiprecious gemstones from Asia, Africa, and Arabia across the Middle East and the Mediterranean during the middle and late second century (see pp. 14–15). Located on the southern outskirts of Rome, the Vallerano necropolis contained more than one hundred burials, all inhumations, most dated to the time of Marcus Aurelius (r. 161–180). Tomb 2 belonged to a young woman about sixteen to eighteen years of age, and a lamp provides a secure date between 150 and 180.¹ Similarities with other comparable burials of young women around Rome suggest she was very likely from a family with Syrian origins;² the existence of a community in Rome with ties to Palmyra specifically is known from dedications to Palmyrene gods and inscriptions that attest to a sanctuary in the Transtiberim neighborhood (cats. 101–2).

Along with other grave goods that included an ivory “doll” sculpture and a silver mirror, the jewelry buried with the young woman in a marble sarcophagus consisted of two necklaces, three brooches, two armlets, and four rings, all made

of gold and set with a variety of precious and semiprecious stones, and one gold medallion sheet pendant.³ These objects contribute to a clearer understanding of the designs of similar pieces depicted on many Palmyrene portraits, particularly valuable in view of the limited amount of jewelry discovered at Palmyra.⁴ The six emeralds in one of the young woman's necklaces (cat. 126) were most likely from Egypt, and the gold lunar crescent pendant, called a lunula, probably had protective significance. Similar pendants are prevalent in the funerary portraits of many Palmyrene women as well as Egyptian Fayum portraits, and examples have been found across the Roman Empire (cat. 125).⁵ Pendants with knobbed ends like this example have been linked to the Syrian charioteer-god Baal Rekub.⁶ Palmyrene portraits often feature multiple necklaces of different lengths, some with beads similar to those in the young woman's sapphire necklace, with stones most likely from Sri Lanka (cat. 125; fig. 65 [bottom]). The brooches have hooks indicating that they could either be suspended from a chain or worn to fasten garments: amethysts were mined in India, Arabia, Armenia, Egypt, and Galatia, and sardonyx in India (cat. 127; fig. 65 [top]).⁷ The flower-shaped sapphire and garnet ring (cat. 129) is a typical example of the multiple types of colored stones popular in rings of this period; similar designs appear on armlets.⁸ Catalogue 128 is an extraordinary object: it is the only diamond ring known from ancient Rome, and one of the earliest surviving examples of jewelry set with a diamond in the world. The stone comes from a mine or river gravels in the Deccan altiplano in central India mentioned by Pliny the Elder and Sanskrit literary sources.⁹

1. Bedini, Testa, and Catalano 1995, pp. 319, 325. 2. Bedini 1995, see especially p. 17. 3. *Ibid.*, pp. 42–53, nos. 9–23. 4. Mackay 1949; El-Chehadeh 1972 (for a lunar crescent pendant in the National Museum of Damascus, see pp. 60–61, no. 42); for jewelry from the tomb of Atenatan, see Witecka 1994. 5. For examples, see S. Walker and Bierbrier 1997, pp. 43–46, 87–88, 163–65, nos. 17–19, 77 (Fayum portraits), 187–90. 6. Higgins 1980, p. 175, n. 3. 7. *Ibid.*, pp. 36, 38, nn. 2, 3. 8. Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, 37; Bedini 1995, pp. 15–16; Bedini et al. 2012, p. 39. 9. Bedini 1995, p. 15; Mackay 1949, p. 177, fig. 6a.



Fig. 65 (top) Gold and sardonyx brooch with female figure and (bottom) gold and sapphire necklace. From Tomb 2 of the Vallerano necropolis. Museo Nazionale Romano, Il Medagliere, Rome (414062 and 414059)



DURA-EUROPOS

LOCATED ON A PROMONTORY HIGH ABOVE THE EUPHRATES RIVER in a fertile agricultural area in eastern Syria, Dura-Europos is a key site for understanding cultural and religious diversity and the interaction between soldiers and civilians in the Parthian-Roman frontier zone (fig. 66). A regional capital under Parthian control by the late second or early first century B.C., which eventually became a Roman military outpost about A.D. 165, the city fell to the Sasanians almost a century later during a violent invasion under Shapur I (r. 241–272) and was not rebuilt. Excavations at Dura have been extensive, and discoveries include a military camp, at least nineteen religious buildings, more than one hundred houses, shops, baths, an amphitheater, a necropolis, wall paintings, sculptures, and texts on parchment and papyri (fig. 67).¹ Dura illustrates exceptionally well how religious life functioned within a cosmopolitan community in the ancient Middle East, and above all it provides a remarkable glimpse of how polytheism and monotheism coexisted during the middle of the third century. The Christian building, a house repurposed as a space for Christian worship, is dated about 232 and is considered to be the world's oldest surviving church. The synagogue, also dated to the third century, is famous for its figural wall

Fig. 66 Aerial view of Dura-Europos, showing remains of excavations prior to the site's looting after 2011 (see p. 263; fig. 100)





Fig. 68 View of the western wall of Dura-Europos during excavation, looking south, 1936-37

paintings, and both were located in the vicinity of multiple buildings where various deities of different origins were venerated. Together, all of these sacred spaces and the wall paintings, sculptures, and inscriptions discovered within them illuminate aspects of the religious practices and cultural identities of Dura's inhabitants.

During the Seleucid period, most likely under Seleucos I Nicator (r. 305–281 B.C.), in the late fourth or early third century B.C., Macedonian military settlers founded the colony Europos and divided the land into *kleroi* (plots) (fig. 67).² “Dura” is Semitic and probably older: a cuneiform tablet of about 1600 B.C. found buried in the wall of a first-century A.D. temple is a receipt for the sale of a field in a town called Damara. This may have developed into Dawara (Dura), meaning “fortress,” and if so, it would

Fig. 67 Plan of Dura-Europos annotated with names of structures. Drawing by A. H. Detweiler

indicate there was an earlier phase at the site.³ The name Dura is inscribed in Greek next to an image of the goddess Tyche (Fortune), who personifies the city on a wall painting (cat. 137).

By the late second or early first century B.C., control of the city had passed to the Parthian Empire, although there is no evidence for direct rule: Dura appears to have been the regional capital of an area along the Euphrates River that was administered by a local elite on behalf of the Arsacid dynasty.⁴ Its economy depended primarily on the surrounding fertile agricultural plains, and while not a “caravan city,” Dura certainly played a role in both regional and long-distance trade (cats. 131–32).⁵ Close commercial ties were established between Dura and Palmyra, and the earliest evidence for a Palmyrene community at Dura dates to 33 B.C.⁶

The Roman military occupation of Dura began in 165 after a successful campaign against the Parthian Empire under the emperor Lucius Verus (r. 161–169), and the city

became a critical stronghold. However, a triumphal arch located a little over a mile (2 km) northwest of Dura honored the emperor Trajan (r. 98–117); it was built around 115 by a detachment of the Legio III Cyrenaica of the Roman army, commemorating a victory over the Parthians and a brief period of Roman control.⁷ The city eventually became a Roman colony in the early third century under the emperor Septimius Severus (r. 193–211).

Most of the evidence for the Roman occupation dates securely to the first half of the third century when a military garrison, including a *principia* (headquarters building) was installed within the city walls (fig. 67). The influx of soldiers, as well as an extended military community, changed Dura's population significantly; however, there was a continuity of civic institutions, and a level of civilian access was maintained to the religious buildings that were absorbed into the garrison. Texts on parchment and papyri, inscriptions, and graffiti indicate that while Greek was the predominant written language among Dura's inhabitants, others were also used, including Latin, Hebrew, and different Aramaic dialects, such as Palmyrene, Hatrene, and Judeo-Aramaic, northern Arabic (Safaitic), as well as Parthian (Arsacid Pahlavi) and Middle Persian forms of Iranian, attesting to the diverse backgrounds of both the civilian and military populations.⁸

By the middle of the third century, with the Parthian Empire destroyed but its Sasanian successor ascendant, Dura was facing the growing threat of a Sasanian attack. As a defensive measure a rampart was built against the western side of the city wall by filling and burying multiple structures with sand, including most famously the mithraeum (a religious building dedicated to the cult of the god Mithras), the Christian building, and the synagogue (discussed below), all located along the so-called Wall Street (fig. 68). The embankment would ultimately create the exceptional circumstances for the preservation of buried structures and objects, in particular, for wall paintings and organic materials that would usually decay (cats. 131–33, 136–37, 145, 148–52; figs. 71, 73–74).⁹ Despite this radical defensive effort, however, the Sasanian invasion that eventually occurred about 256 was violent, the destruction of Dura was thorough and devastating, and the city was never rebuilt. Recent research based on evidence from a Sasanian siege mine and a Roman countermine discovered around Tower 19 in the western fortification wall, where skeletons of approximately twenty soldiers with their weapons were

discovered, may indicate the use of poisonous gas, and therefore mark the world's gruesome first use of chemical weapons in warfare.¹⁰

From among all the noteworthy discoveries in Dura's extraordinary archaeological record, the buildings, wall paintings, sculptures, and inscriptions connected to religious life are particularly remarkable. The mixture of people from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds who characterized Dura, as well as the coexistence of civilians and soldiers living within a frontier settlement, is reflected clearly. Debates about the possible relationships and levels of interaction between the disparate religious groups continue. Dura reveals how the distinctive needs of monotheist Jews and Christians were met along with those of the worshippers of deities as disparate as Atargatis, Hadad, Bel and other Palmyrene gods, Herakles/Nergal, and Mithras (cats. 136–40, 142–44). Given the close proximity of their religious buildings, questions arise about whether the various polytheists, Jews, and Christians competed for adherents, and whether they disparaged or exercised tolerance of divergent beliefs.¹¹ The degree of access given to religious buildings to outsiders of a given group, if any at all, is unclear.¹² The roles of the artists who worked for the various religious groups to create wall paintings and relief sculptures that depict gods, religious scenes, and narrative stories typical of each group is another key consideration.¹³ The archaeological and visual evidence for Mithraism, Christianity, and Judaism existing together at Dura contrasts with the apologetic texts by authors writing between the first and third centuries that highlight religious antagonism, prompting one interpretation of Dura's inhabitants as practitioners of a "peaceful pluralism" distinguishable from the educated cultural elite living elsewhere in the Roman Empire.¹⁴

Approximately nineteen religious buildings are known at Dura. The mithraeum, the Christian building, and the synagogue stand out from the others, since they were built inside houses adapted for reuse. The other sixteen were devoted to the veneration of various gods and feature elements of Mesopotamian and Syrian traditions in their layouts. Hellenistic building phases are known for only a couple of the buildings: inscriptions indicate that the majority were constructed between the mid-first century B.C. and the mid-first century A.D., when Dura was under Parthian control, and in the mid-second century after an earthquake in 160.¹⁵

Similar to the houses in Dura, the temples were constructed largely of mud brick, plaster made of local gypsum, and local limestone. Temple entrances were from the street and sometimes included gateways or small porches, such as the columned porch in the Temple of Bel (fig. 8). The buildings' ground plans largely follow those of Mesopotamian, specifically Babylonian temples, with rooms organized around central courtyards that featured built or portable altars. Towers and staircases leading to the roof or a raised area that could act as a sacred high place are common. The main sanctuary unit, sometimes elevated above other areas, consisted of a naos (shrine), pronaos (vestibule leading to the shrine), and in some cases additional rooms that were most probably storerooms for temple equipment (some had locking mechanisms).¹⁶ Small theatral areas, known today by the French phrase *salles aux gradins* (rooms with stepped areas), have parallels in Syrian rather than Mesopotamian temples and may have been used as performance spaces for certain rituals for small groups of worshippers (cat. 139). One *salle aux gradins* in the Temple of Atargatis doubled as the pronaos and provides an example of the gendered division of space sometimes distinguishable at Dura, since inscriptions on the steps indicate the room was used by a group of women (see room 6 in fig. 69).¹⁷ Additional rooms around the courtyards of temples were evidently used for banquets and other gatherings; most do not appear to have been restricted to the use of priests only.¹⁸

Most of Dura's temples contained wall paintings, and the ones placed in the naos usually depicted the temple's main god, although most survive only in fragmentary states. Additional paintings on the sidewalls often featured scenes of sacrifice with incense or wine (cat. 137). Relief sculptures appear more frequently than sculptures in the round (cat. 140): they include both images of deities alone (cat. 139) and scenes that feature a deity receiving a sacrificial offering, often with a priest or dedicator (cats. 135, 138, 142–44). Owing in particular to the general convention of frontality that prevails among the figures, both paintings and sculptures from Dura have been central to discussions and definitions of what constitutes "Parthian art" (see pp. 4–6).¹⁹

In contrast to the designs of Dura's other temples, the mithraeum reflects a particular architectural prototype common across the Roman Empire. A central corridor runs between two podia for reclining worshippers and the space is oriented on the images of the god Mithras slaying a bull (*tauroctony*) and related scenes from Mithras's life and

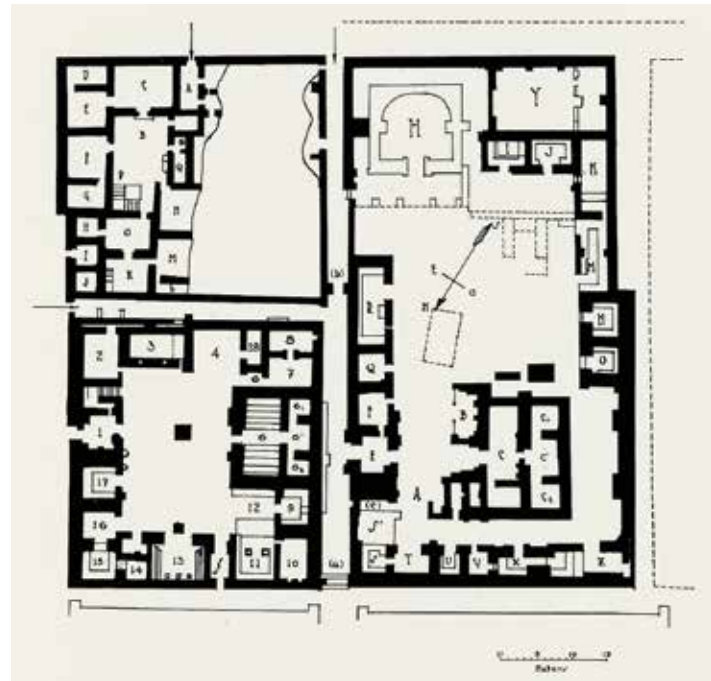


Fig. 69 Floor plans of Temples of Atargatis (bottom, left), Artemis Nanaya (right), and so-called priest's house (top, left), Dura-Europos

mythology. The cult was exclusive to men, and members underwent a specific series of initiation ceremonies.²⁰ Mithraism was immensely popular among soldiers in the Roman army: Palmyrene archers appear to have brought the cult to Dura in the 160s and remodeled a house to create the appropriate space, whereas most mithraea were constructed underground in spaces designed to emulate caves. Little is known about the first phase of this building, known as the Early Mithraeum, whereas the Middle and Late Mithraea, dated around 210 and 240, respectively, featured elaborate wall paintings (cat. 136).²¹

The Christian building and the synagogue were also built within preexisting houses that were renovated for reuse according to the needs of their respective congregations.²² Located in a fairly typical Durene house remodeled around 232, the Christian building featured a central courtyard with a large assembly hall thought to be where the Eucharist was celebrated, and a baptistery, the only area from which wall paintings survive (cats. 145A–B). Members of the military may have been among the congregation as indicated by an inscription that records the dedication of Proclus, who is recognized from another inscription in the garrison; a painting of David and Goliath in the baptistery, notable for



Fig. 70 Assembly hall of the Dura-Europos synagogue reconstructed in National Museum of Damascus, view of south and west walls

its military theme; and drawings on the walls of the assembly room depicting mounted cavalymen (although these may not have been visible in the building's final phase) (cat. 134).²³

During the mid-240s, shortly before the space was filled in order to create the rampart needed for military defense, Dura's synagogue underwent substantial renovations. In its final form, an entrance courtyard preceded the large assembly

hall, where a painted Torah niche was located in the center of the main (west) wall, and benches were placed around three sides of the room. A painted dado above imitated marble and inlaid stone (fig. 70). The ceiling was constructed with wooden beams and plaster and decorated with painted fired-clay tiles: a few are inscribed with the names of the building's benefactors, and most are decorated with animals, hybrid



Fig. 71 Wall painting of the Temple of Aaron and the consecration of the tabernacle, synagogue at Dura-Europos, panel WB2, ca. 240-45. National Museum of Damascus

creatures, flowers, and fruits (cats. 148–52). A series of painted narrative panels with figural biblical scenes replaced previous wall paintings—the modern discovery of these scenes in 1932 overturned previous ideas about aniconism as a central requirement of early Jewish art (figs. 71, 73–74). The paintings comprise approximately fifty-eight different narrative episodes in twenty-eight separate panels (roughly 60 percent of the original survives, located on three of the four walls).²⁴ Following their excavation, the paintings were removed to the National Museum of Damascus, where a reconstruction of the building was created. Limited access to the paintings themselves, or even to high-quality photographs, has been a problem faced by recent generations of scholars who typically have had to rely on old photographs and the commissioned series of facsimile paintings by Herbert J. Gute (cats. 146–47).

The primary interpretations of the featured biblical scenes range from their possible roles as images that

represent Midrash or other biblical exegesis to potential links to liturgical activities that took place in the assembly hall. Signs of connections between Babylonian and Durene Jewish populations have also been proposed.²⁵ The paintings reflect the local Durene custom of including wall paintings in religious buildings in general, specifically conceived for the needs of, in this case, a Jewish congregation, and possibly also for visitors.²⁶ Their potential influence on Christian art, both contemporaneous and later, has also been widely debated.²⁷

In recent years during the conflict in Syria, the site of Dura-Europos has been subject to extensive destruction caused by illicit digging and looting in areas both inside and outside the ancient city wall. Satellite images document the extent of the damage, showing looters' pits covering virtually the entire surface of the site (see p. 264; fig. 100).



130. Wine Jar with Dionysiac Motifs

Ca. 200–256

Silver, with gilding in the decorative bands, H. 8⁷/₈ in. (22.5 cm),

Diam. 4¹/₂ in. (11.5 cm)

Dura-Europos, House of the Large Atrium

Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos (1931.585)

This luxury wine vessel was presumably used during dinner parties at the house where it was discovered (a fragmentary silver bowl was also found). The Syriac inscription around the bottom gives the weight as 80 *litrae* of the royal standard, which may match the jar's actual approximate weight of two pounds (900 g), and it originally had a small ring handle.¹ The upper gilded decorative band just below the rim consists of acanthus plants and flowers; the lower band features a grapevine and seven actors' masks, four female and three male (a satyr, an old silenus, and apparently a figure of Pan, with his ass's ear facing downward). Such Dionysiac imagery

appears on silver vessels discovered in different parts of the Roman Empire as well as on luxury glass tableware (cat. 79). Little is known about workshops in the ancient Middle East specializing in silver, although Antioch is a possible site of production.² Jars of the same shape, resembling a Greek *pelike*, continued to be used after the Roman and Parthian period and occur frequently in Sasanian silver.³

1. Baur, Rostovtzeff, and Bellinger 1933, pp. 179–80, 229–31 (including the bowl), pl. XI, 3; Oliver 1977, p. 161, no. 106. 2. Susan Matheson in Kondoleon 2000, p. 190, no. 74. 3. Harper 1978, pp. 51–52, no. 13.



131. Textile with Bands of Color

Ca. 200-256

Wool, H. 9¹¹/₁₆ in. (24.6 cm), W. 4¹¹/₁₆ in. (11.9 cm)

Dura-Europos

Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos (1933.488)

132. Textile with Geometric Pattern

Ca. 200-256

Silk, H. 3¹/₈ in. (8 cm), W. 6⁷/₈ in. (17.5 cm)

Dura-Europos

Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos (1933.486)

More than 300 textile fragments were discovered at Dura-Europos in secondary archaeological contexts within the rampart built along the western city wall and towers as well as in a few tombs.¹ Evidence for animal husbandry and the processing and trading of textiles includes dyeing installations in the agora (marketplace) and graffiti regarding transactions.² While most of the textiles found at Dura were local products, mainly plain and tapestry weaves of wool made with ordinary dyestuffs, these two examples of luxury textiles are valuable sources for ancient clothing fashions and patterns as well as for an understanding of the silk trade.

The fragment of tapestry-woven wool (cat. 131) features intricate weft bands of shaded colors that range from red to blue and ornamental bands with composite floral and wave motifs.³ This variation in design resembles textile patterns depicted in early Sasanian art and also attests to the change in taste toward more elaborate clothing that took place during the third century across the Roman Empire, confirmed by depictions of textiles in contemporaneous wall paintings from Dura (cat. 136).⁴ The red, tan, and undyed piece of silk (cat. 132) is the earliest known example of a silk taquete (a particular type of textile woven in weft-faced compound weave): other examples have been found in north-western China, and the geometric pattern is a Han-style design.⁵ This valuable import indicates the availability of such luxury products at Dura in connection with the increase in the silk trade from China to the Roman Empire in the early third century.

1. Pfister and Bellinger 1945. 2. Baird 2014, pp. 183-84; Baird 2018, p. 128, n. 31. 3. Pfister and Bellinger 1945, pp. 36-37, no. 128, pl. III. 4. Harper 1978, p. 127, no. 52; Thomas 2011, p. 54, n. 34. 5. Pfister and Bellinger 1945, p. 53, no. 263, pls. I, XXVI; Feng 2004, pp. 70-72.



133. Shield (*Scutum*)

Mid-3rd century
 Painted wood and rawhide, H. 41⁹/₁₆ in. (105.5 cm), W. 16¹/₈ in. (41 cm),
 D. 11¹³/₁₆ in. (30 cm)
 Dura-Europos, Tower 19
 Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Yale-French Excavations at
 Dura-Europos (1933.715)

One of the most remarkable finds from Dura-Europos, this painted rectangular shield (*scutum*) was discovered in thirteen pieces and without its *umbo* (central boss) in a tower that collapsed during the Sasanian attack in around 256.¹ Such shields were used by Roman legionaries, but no other examples of this type are known archaeologically. Several other painted round shields were also found at Dura, but the state of preservation and survival of original pigment of this example are exceptional.

Elaborate decorative bands of flowers and leaves as well as geometric ornaments surround the space for the *umbo*. Above, two winged Victories carrying laurel wreaths with ribbons fly toward an eagle, which has a wreath above its head and clasps an orb in its talons—all important symbols of Roman military success. Below is a lion, its head turned frontally, striding to the left between two stars. These motifs and emblems may identify the military unit of the shield's owner: it is unclear whether an entire legion used the same shield device or whether individual cohorts were specified in the designs.² Although the shield was originally curved, the curvature of the reconstructed shield is more pronounced than its original form.

1. James 2004, pp. 182–83, no. 629, fig. 629, with the shield partly assembled. 2. Goldsworthy 2003, p. 130.



134. Graffito of a Mounted Lancer (*Clibanarius*)

Ca. 232

Plaster, H. 17 in. (43.2 cm), W. 16 in. (40.6 cm)

Dura-Europos, Christian building, assembly hall

Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Yale-French Excavations at
Dura-Europos (1931.608)

Dura-Europos has proven a valuable source of evidence pertaining to cavalry warfare. This graffito of a mounted lancer, a *clibanarius* (a soldier belonging to a type of heavy cavalry unit), depicts a figure astride a galloping horse. He is dressed in full armor, with a knee-length mail vest (*lorica hamata*), a plate (lamellar) corselet, ring armor on his arms and lower



Fig. 72 Drawing of graffito with *clibanarius*
(from the Dura-Europos Collection, Yale
University Art Gallery, New Haven)

legs, and a tall conical helmet with neck guard and a ribbon.¹ The figure's identification is uncertain. He may represent a Parthian or Sasanian soldier, a Palmyrene or another Syro-Mesopotamian fighting in a unit of the Roman army, or possibly even a soldier from another Roman legion drawn from recruits elsewhere:² both horse archers and heavily armed lancers were involved in regional warfare before the Roman occupation of Dura in 165, when cavalry units were stationed in the city. The graffito was drawn on a wall in the assembly hall of the Christian building on an undercoat of plaster and dates approximately to 232,³ prompting questions as to whether it was in fact visible when the space was used for the Eucharist and relevant to the subject of soldiers among Dura's Christians (see p. 183).⁴

The horse in the graffito is protected with armor of *lorica squamata*, called a scale trapper, that covers its body and

almost half of its legs. Dura is the only site that has yielded horse armor used by the heavy cavalry of the Parthian, Sasanian, and later Roman Empires.⁵ Two sets of horse armor preserved in Tower 19 after its collapse during the Sasanian invasion around 256 show how Romans adopted Parthian armor designs for their own cavalry units.⁶ Overlapping rows of iron scales are attached to one other with bronze wire on each side and sewn with rawhide laces to a single piece of coarse cloth with a central leather strip. These horse trappers, discovered in a storage area along with the remains of a third, would have been complemented by a piece covering the horse's head and neck.⁷

1. Goldman 1999, pp. 32–34. 2. Speidel 1986, p. 155; Goldman 1999, pp. 83–84; James 2004, p. 113. 3. Goldman 1999, p. 33. 4. Peppard 2016, pp. 21–22, 78–79. 5. James 2004, p. 113. 6. James 2011, p. 308. 7. James 2004, pp. 131–32, no. 450.



135. Relief of Arsu Riding a Camel

Ca. 2nd century
 Gypsum, H. 13 in. (33 cm), W. 17½ in. (44.5 cm), D. 2¾ in. (7 cm)
 Dura-Europos, Temple of Adonis
 Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Yale-French Excavations at
 Dura-Europos (1935-44)

At Dura-Europos, the veneration of gods who were depicted carrying local weapons, notably a spear and a small round shield, was probably due to the influx of nomadic populations beginning during the Parthian period: many are shown riding horses or camels, and some are identifiable by name through inscriptions. The figure on this relief is most likely the Arabian god Arsu, who was a protector of caravans and ruler of the evening star.¹ The relief was discovered in the portico of the Temple of Adonis; in this temple, the names of worshippers recorded in inscriptions and graffiti were almost all Semitic.² Dressed in a tunic with a mantle wrapped around his middle and a scarf extending behind him, the

god rides a camel and has his spear and shield attached to the saddle. The altar in front of him appears to be horned (cats. 141-42) and holds burning incense topped with a high flame; flaming incense altars appear frequently on reliefs of rider gods in the region surrounding Palmyra.³

1. Downey 1977, pp. 55-56, no. 43, pl. XI; Arsu is identified securely on only one relief (Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, 1938.5311); see Downey 1977, pp. 53-55, no. 42, pl. XI; see also *ibid.*, pp. 195-99. On Arsu at Dura, see also Duchâteau 2013, pp. 476-504. 2. Downey 1988, pp. 120-21. 3. Downey 1977, pp. 195, 197.



136. Wall Painting of Mithras and Sol

Ca. 210

Paint on plaster, H. 18¹¹/₁₆ in. (47.5 cm), W. 23⁵/₈ in. (60 cm)

Dura-Europos, Mithraeum

Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Yale-French Excavations at

Dura-Europos (1935,99)

The cult of Mithras was extremely popular among soldiers in the Roman army across the empire in the second and third centuries. Palmyrene archers apparently brought Mithraism to Dura-Europos and rebuilt part of a house there into a small structure known as the Early Mithraeum, which can be dated to 168–69 by the inscription on one of two *tauroctony* (bull-slaying) reliefs central to the cult. The building was subsequently enlarged twice: the Middle Mithraeum dates to about 210 and the Late Mithraeum to about 240.¹ The reliefs were reused in the two later structures, which were also decorated with a series of wall paintings (see p. 183).

This painting of Mithras and Sol was discovered on the wall of a recess in the Middle Mithraeum along with fragments of paintings that depict vine shoots and other figures.² Both gods are dressed in lavishly patterned Parthian-style long-sleeved tunics with cloaks fastened over their shoulders; surviving textile fragments from Dura provide an idea of the actual fabrics and patterns depicted in such paintings (cats. 131–32). The deities recline together at a banquet; Mithras holds a small rhyton, or another drinking vessel, in his left hand. This scene undoubtedly formed part of a standard series—Sol’s submission to Mithras, their banquet together, and their ascension in a chariot—frequently featured in mithraea across the Roman Empire.³ The Late

Mithraeum includes a submission scene as well as zodiac imagery, scenes of Mithras’s life, two figures in Iranian dress, and scenes of Mithras hunting.⁴

Although Mithras’s name is derived from that of the Iranian god Mithra, and his Parthian clothing is intended to indicate his Eastern origin, Mithraism in the Roman period is thought to have originated in Italy—or possibly in Commagene in Asia Minor—in the late first century A.D. and spread from there throughout the Roman Empire. The evidence for mithraea from Syria and Asia Minor is, in fact, very limited, and Mithraic wall paintings are rare in general. The recently discovered mithraeum at Hawarte, approximately 7 miles (11 km) north of Apamea in western Syria, is decorated with wall paintings comparable to Dura’s in that they include the submission of Sol and hunting scenes. They also feature previously unattested imagery that includes demons, the presence of which raises the question of whether there was, in fact, a Syrian variation of Mithraism that drew substantially on Iranian religious ideas.⁵

1. Rostovtzeff, Brown, and Welles 1939, pp. 62–134; see also Dirven 1999, pp. 260–61. 2. Henry F. Pearson and Mikhail I. Rostovtzeff in Rostovtzeff, Brown, and Welles 1939, pp. 101–4. 3. See Claus 2000, pp. 110–11. 4. Franz Cumont and Mikhail I. Rostovtzeff in Rostovtzeff, Brown, and Welles 1939, pp. 104–15, pls. XIV–XVIII. 5. Gawlikowski 2007, especially pp. 338, 361, nn. 1, 2.

137. Wall Painting of Julius Terentius Performing a Sacrifice

Early 3rd century (before 239)
Paint on plaster, H. 42¹/₈ in. (107 cm), W. 64¹⁵/₁₆ in. (165 cm)
Dura-Europos, Temple of Bel
Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos (1931.386)

The religious traditions of the cohort of Palmyrene soldiers stationed at Dura-Europos (cohors XX Palmyrenorum) attest to strong links to their home city as well as to their integration within the Roman army and at Dura. The Temple of Bel (also called the Temple of Palmyrene Gods) was situated inside the Roman military camp within the walls at the northwest corner of the city (figs. 53–54, 56–57, 67).¹ Gods and Palmyrene worshippers are prominent in the paintings, altars, and inscriptions discovered there, but deities of other origins were also venerated.

The painting of Julius Terentius, one of Dura's most famous, was discovered on the north wall of the temple's pronaos (vestibule leading to the main shrine) along with other paintings and graffiti that have since disappeared.² The approximate date for the painting's production is established by an epitaph discovered in a house that gives the date of Terentius's death during a Sasanian attack on the city in 239.³ The scene depicts Terentius performing the ritual of sprinkling incense onto a burning thymiaterion (cat. 141) accompanied by members of his unit. The object in his left hand is most likely a scroll with liturgical texts.⁴ His name and tribunal rank are inscribed in Latin, and the figure behind him is identified in Greek as Themes, the son of Mokimos the priest. A standard-bearer holding the *vexillum* (military banner) typical of the Roman cavalry appears at the scene's center facing Terentius and the other soldiers.

At the top left, the three figures in military dress placed on pedestals represent statues, almost certainly of Palmyrene gods, possibly Aglibol (left), Iarhibol (center), and Arsu (right), especially since the latter figure carries a round shield (cat. 135).⁵ Their identification remains tentative, however, given the absence of inscriptions and the fact that multiple divinities from Palmyra are depicted as armed and cuirassed. The head of each god is framed with a nimbus, and each holds a spear in his left hand. The god on the

right wears a helmet. All wear breastplates and *paludamenta* (military cloaks) over short tunics. The choice of this type of a specifically Roman cuirass rather than the local type previously common in representations of Palmyrene gods (cats. 99–100) suggests that the statues may reflect a desire to link Palmyra's gods closely to representations of Roman emperors; this visual link would inevitably remind soldiers viewing the painting of the cult of the emperor.⁶

The Tyche (Fortune) of Palmyra, accompanied by a lion, and the Tyche of Dura flank a large rosette at the painting's bottom left corner. Both are identified by Greek inscriptions and modeled on a famous statue of the Tyche of Antioch by Eutychemes from the third century B.C. Personifications of the Efqa spring in Palmyra and the Euphrates River appear below them in the form of a nude female and a bearded male swimmer respectively. Interestingly, the Tyche of Dura is depicted as female in contrast to the male Gad (Fortune) of Dura on a relief from the Temple of the Gadde.⁷ The Tychai appear to represent actual deities receiving the sacrifice along with the Palmyrene gods but in fact might only represent place personifications.⁸

The scene's significance is underscored when considered together with information from the *Feriale Duranum*, the cohort's religious calendar written on a papyrus dated to about 223–27.⁹ The calendar permits a reconstruction of the soldiers' religious year but lists only official festivals and rituals pertinent to Roman gods and the imperial cult, thus giving the impression that other gods were venerated only privately within a military context. By contrast, this painting clearly indicates that high-ranking officers, standard-bearers, and other soldiers participated in various cults, including those of Palmyra.

1. Downey 1988, pp. 105–10. 2. See Heyn 2011 for a full study of the north wall. For the painting's discovery and transcriptions of the inscriptions, see Cumont 1926, pp. 89–114, pls. 49–51. 3. Rostovtzeff et al. 1944, pp. 176–85, no. 939, pl. XXI. 4. Dirven 1999, pp. 304–5. 5. Dirven (ibid., p. 187) also argues that "Iarhibol's precedence over Bel is characteristic of the religion of Palmyrene soldiers." 6. Dirven 2007. 7. Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, 1938.5314. 8. Dirven 1999, p. 157, n. 2; James 2004, p. 263; Downey 2008, p. 429. 9. Welles, Fink, and Gilliam 1959, no. 54.



138. Relief of the Gad (Fortune) of Palmyra

March/April 159

Limestone, H. 18½ in. (47 cm), W. 22⅞ in. (57 cm), D. 4½ in. (11.4 cm)

Dura-Europos, Temple of the Gadde

Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Yale-French Excavations at

Dura-Europos (1938.5313)

A community of civilians from Palmyra is known to have lived in the center of Dura-Europos only from the middle of the first century A.D., although their presence at the city dates to 33 B.C., when two Palmyrenes dedicated a temple on the plateau outside the walls (the so-called necropolis temple). They participated in cult practices in several temples dedicated to various gods, indicating their close integration within Dura's religious life. In addition to the so-called necropolis temple, they established a second religious building, apparently also used exclusively by them, known as the Temple of the Gadde (the plural form of *Gad*, the Aramaic term for "Fortune" or tutelary deity).¹

This relief dedicated to the Gad of Palmyra features an inscription in Palmyrene Aramaic that records the priest Hairan's role in a substantial rebuilding of the temple in the year 159.² A Greek inscription painted on the top border mentions the dedicator as well as several generations of his family, in accordance with a typically Palmyrene emphasis on lineage.³ Hairan was apparently a member of a prominent Palmyrene family and perhaps the great-grandfather of Septimius Odaenathus (see pp. 144, 254–55).⁴ He appears on the left of the scene, offering incense and wearing the *modius* (cylindrical headdress) that was standard for Palmyrene priests (cat. 108). The Gad of Palmyra is depicted as a goddess similar to a third-century B.C. statue of the Tyche of Antioch by Eutychedes: seated on a rock, wearing a mural

crown, and resting her foot upon a nude female figure, presumably the personification of the Efqa spring at Palmyra (cat. 137). Beside her sits a lion with a crescent on its head, and a figure of Victory offers her a wreath and holds a palm branch in her left hand. The lion is interpreted as closely linking the Gad to a goddess, Atargatis or Astarte—most probably the latter, since inscriptions from Palmyra identify the Gad with Astarte and her worship in the Temple of Bel.⁵

Hairan dedicated a second, very similar relief to the Gad of Dura.⁶ The use of Palmyrene limestone for both reliefs indicates that they were either sculpted in a workshop at Palmyra or produced by a Palmyrene sculptor living in Dura who imported the stone. As a pair, the reliefs reveal both a close adherence to Palmyrene religious traditions and also a degree of assimilation within Durene society; together with a third, they almost certainly functioned as cult reliefs placed in niches in the rear wall of the naos (main shrine).⁷

1. Dirven 2011, pp. 203–5. 2. Hillers and Cussini 1996, p. 172, nos. 1097–98; see also Dirven 1999, pp. 99–100, 232. For different stages of the temple's construction and floor plans, see Downey 1988, pp. 115–22, figs. 50–52; and Leriche 2011, p. 30, who mentions a new excavation project and revised floor plan. 3. Rostovtzeff, Brown, and Welles 1939, p. 275, no. 902; see also Dirven 1999, p. 232. 4. Dirven 1999, pp. 100, 232–33. 5. Dirven 2011, p. 210; Dirven 1999, pp. 70–71, 109–10. 6. Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, 1938.5314. 7. Downey 1977, pp. 14–22, nos. 4–6; Downey 1998, p. 202.



139. Relief of Atargatis and Hadad

Ca. 100–256

Limestone, H. 16 1/8 in. (41 cm), W. 11 in. (28 cm), D. 4 1/2 in. (11.5 cm)

Dura-Europos, Temple of Atargatis

Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos (1930, 319)

This relief from the Temple of Atargatis is a possible copy of the cult statues at the important sanctuary of the Syrian goddess Atargatis and her consort, the storm god Hadad, at Hierapolis (Membij) in northeastern Syria, making it exceptionally significant for an understanding of religious life across the ancient Middle East.¹ Versions of rituals celebrated at the temple in Hierapolis may well have taken place at Dura-Europos, such as bringing images of the gods to the Euphrates as a substitute for the sacred lake at Hierapolis, which the basin in the courtyard of the Temple of Atargatis might also have represented.² The Hierapolis statues are described vividly by Lucian of Samosata in his treatise *On the Syrian Goddess*, written in the second century:

In it [the shrine] are enthroned the cult statues, Hera and the god, Zeus, whom they call by a different name. Both are golden, both seated, though Hera is borne on lions, the other sits on bulls.

Certainly, the image of Zeus looks entirely like Zeus in features and clothes and seated posture; you could not identify it otherwise even if you wished. But when you examine Hera, her image appears to be of many forms. While the overall effect is certainly that of Hera, she also has something of Athena and Aphrodite and Selene and Rhea and Artemis and Nemesis and the Fates. In one hand she has a sceptre, in the other a spindle, and on her head she wears rays, a tower, and the *kestos* with which they adorn Ourania alone. Outside she is coated with more gold and extremely precious stones, some white and others limpid, many wine-coloured, many fiery, and on top of that there are many sardonyxes and hyacinths and emeralds, which are sent by Egyptians, Indians, Aethiopians, Medes, Armenians, and Babylonians. What is even more noteworthy I shall now declare: she wears a stone on her head called a *lychnis*, whose name coincides with its properties. By night a bright light shines from it, under whose rays the whole shrine is illumined as if by lamps. By day its light is

weak, its appearance rather fiery. There is yet another marvel connected with the statue: if you stand opposite and look at it, it stares back at you and follows your gaze as you move. If someone else regards it from the other side, then it does the same with him too.³

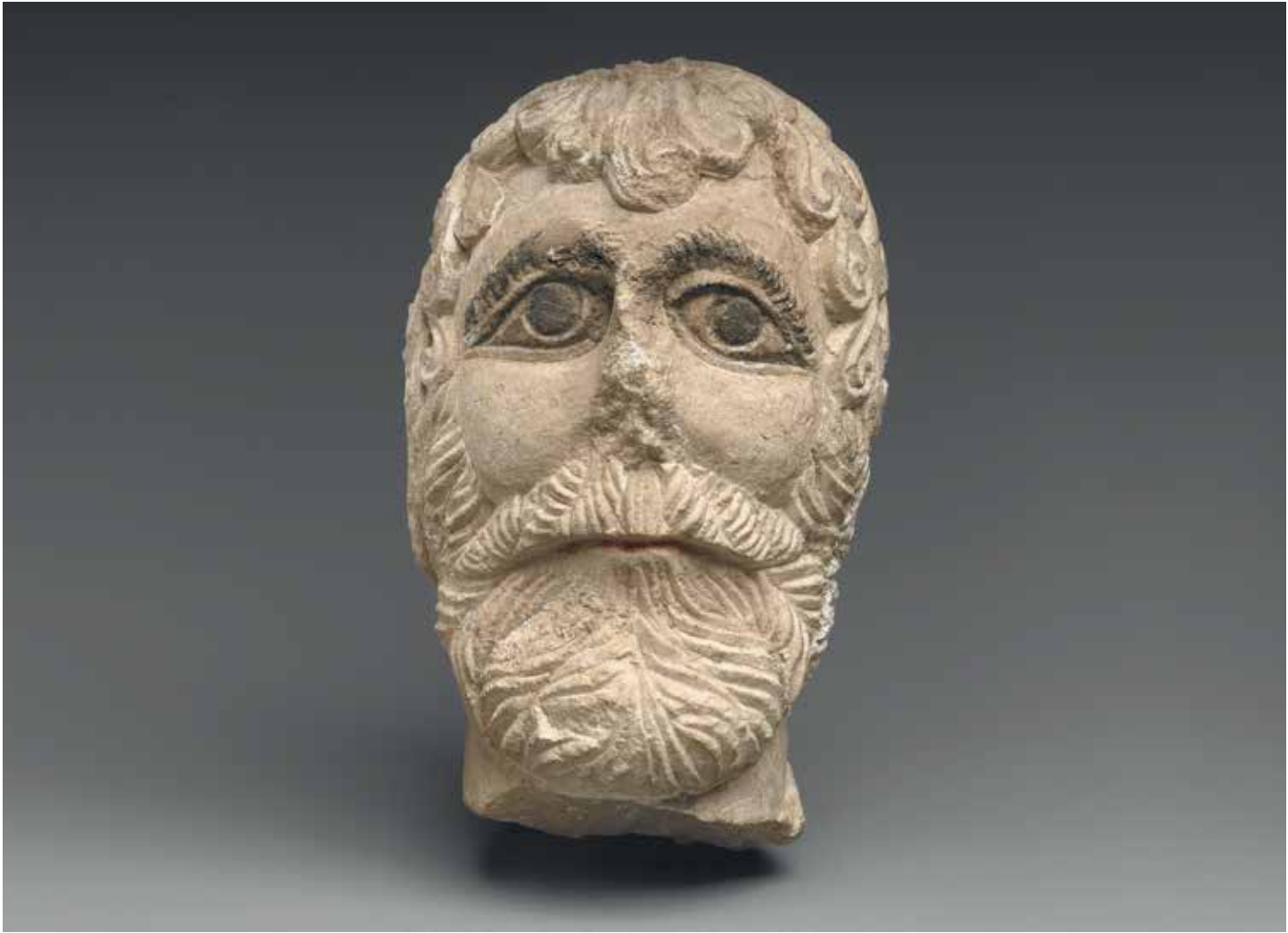
On this relief, the divine pair are enthroned within an aedicula. Resting her feet on a stool between two large lions, Atargatis wears a polos (cylindrical crown) incised with a triangular motif and is dressed in a long-sleeved garment with a tasseled belt tied under her breasts. Her jewelry includes earrings, a pendant, and bracelets. She gestures with her right hand and may clench a spindle in her left fist. Hadad appears significantly smaller than Atargatis. He, too, is crowned with a polos and rests his feet on a stool, holding wheat stalks in his right hand. A hole in his left hand probably held a scepter made from another material, perhaps metal. The interlocking spirals on his long-sleeved tunic have been interpreted as either lacing or embroidery with gems.⁴ A bull, Hadad's usual animal acolyte, appears on his right; the forepart of a second bull is visible at the column to the left of Atargatis at her shoulder. An eagle originally appeared at the bottom of the left column, above Hadad's right shoulder.⁵ Between the two deities stands a staff with three circles, a horizontal bar with two hanging banners (one bends at Atargatis's shoulder), and a crescent with globules at each end that most likely represents the *semeion* (cult standard), also mentioned by Lucian.⁶ A base discovered in the Temple of Adonis at Dura, where a relief of Atargatis-Tyche was also found, may have functioned as a support for a cult standard that was carried in processions.⁷

The excavators recorded the findspot of the relief of Atargatis and Hadad as the north part of the courtyard of the Temple of Atargatis (fig. 69),⁸ and its original function is not fully clear due to the uncertainty about its display context. Ideas include its placement in a large exedra (recess) in a prominent location on the southern exterior wall of room 6, or in room 13, a *salle aux gradins* (small theatral area with stepped benches).⁹ The naos (main shrine) in room 6



contained a niche that included traces of a wall painting—possibly of Hadad and Atargatis—that was presumably the main cult image, as was standard in Dura’s temples.¹⁰ If the relief was displayed in room 13, which would have accommodated only a small and restricted number of worshippers, its function would have been comparable to other reliefs from Dura that were apparently venerated by exclusive groups.¹¹

1. Downey 1977, pp. 9–11, 173–77; see also J. Lightfoot 2003, p. 52.
2. Lucian of Samosata, *On the Syrian Goddess*, 47; Lucian 2003; Downey 1988, p. 104.
3. Lucian of Samosata, *On the Syrian Goddess*, 31–32; J. Lightfoot 2003, pp. 269, 271.
4. Downey 1977, pp. 10, 174.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 9.
6. Lucian, *On the Syrian Goddess*, 33.
7. Downey 1977, pp. 47–48, 172–73, 175, nn. 50, 51, no. 33.
8. Baur 1932, pp. 9–11.
9. Downey 1998, pp. 208–9.
10. Downey (1998, p. 209) notes that the walls of room 6 do not contain a cutting for the relief.
11. For examples from the Temples of Zeus Kyrios/Baalshamin, Aphlad, and Azzanathkona, see Downey 1998, pp. 202–8; for Azzanathkona see also Yon 2016, pp. 102–3.



140. Head of a Bearded God

Ca. 1st century

Soft white limestone, plaster and paint, H. 6⁵/₁₆ in. (16 cm), W. 4¹/₈ in. (10.5 cm), D. 4³/₁₆ in. (10.7 cm)

Dura-Europos, street outside the Temple of Atargatis
Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Yale-French Excavations at
Dura-Europos (1930,318)

This head of a bearded god is a rare example of sculpture in the round from Dura-Europos, in contrast to the large number of reliefs discovered there.¹ The face is flat and oval shaped, with curly hair, beard, and mustache carved in detailed patterns. Black paint is well preserved on the large almond-shaped eyes and eyebrows, as is the red paint on the lips. The unfinished surfaces of the back and sides and

the surviving part of a pillar or stele from which the head extends indicate that it was designed to be viewed from the front. Its resemblance to a lifesize male head crowned with a polos (cylindrical hat) from the Temple of Zeus Megistos, most likely identified as Zeus Kyrios/Baalshamin, strongly suggests that this head also represents a Semitic divinity. The storm god Hadad is a possibility in part owing to the sculpture's findspot outside of the Temple of Atargatis, although any interpretation must be tentative because of the lack of specific attributes (cat. 139).²

1. Baur, Rostovtzeff, and Bellinger 1932, pp. 102–4, pls. XV, 1, XVI, 1; Downey 1977, pp. 79–80, no. 63, pl. XVII. 2. Baur, Rostovtzeff, and Bellinger 1932, p. 104; Downey 1977, p. 80; for the head of Zeus Kyrios/Baalshamin, see pp. 66–67, no. 50, pl. XIII; and Downey 2008, pp. 418–19, fig. 3.



141. Thymiaterion

Ca. first half of 3rd century

Green-glazed ceramic, H. 11 5/8 in. (29.5 cm), W. 4 3/4 in. (11 cm)

Dura-Europos, behind Temple of Aphlad

Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos (1935.63)

This green-glazed ceramic thymiaterion (incense burner) was discovered in fragments in debris behind the Temple of Aphlad.¹ Four twisted columns on a square base support the four-horned altar and a bowl for incense; eight mold-made heads appear on the altar and at the foot of the columns. Green-glazed pottery, including vessels with twisted handles similar to the columns, was common at Dura-Europos and produced regionally across Syria and Mesopotamia (cats. 154, 180).² Horned altars in stone, typical in the Middle East since the Iron Age and mentioned in biblical texts,³ were the likely prototypes for this incense burner; a representation of one at Dura can be seen on a relief of Herakles and a lion (cat. 142). Burning incense on an altar or a thymiaterion appears to have been the ritual most prevalent at Dura, sometimes performed along with an offering of wine;⁴ depictions in sculpture and painting are plentiful (cats. 135, 137). Fifty-three altars made of stone, plaster, or ceramic have been recorded from the site and were discovered in houses, streets, gates, and religious buildings; metal examples were also found.⁵

1. Rostovtzeff, Brown, and Welles 1939, pp. 381–82, pl. XL, 3. 2. Toll and Matson 1943. 3. For an example from Megiddo, see Jack D. M. Green in Aruz, Graff, and Rakic 2014, p. 182, no. 72; Exodus 27:1–8; Leviticus 1–7. 4. Downey 1988, p. 129. 5. Baird 2018, pp. 131, 192, n. 58.



142. Relief of Herakles and Lion

1st century

Gypsum pieced with plaster, H. 13¹/₈ in. (33.3 cm), W. 9⁵/₁₆ in. (23.7 cm), D. 3³/₈ in. (8.5 cm)

Dura-Europos, House G3-M2

Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos (1938.5305)

143. Relief of Herakles

1st century

Limestone, H. 10¹⁵/₁₆ in. (27.8 cm), W. 5¹/₈ in. (13 cm), D. 2¹/₁₆ in. (5.2 cm)

Dura-Europos, House G3-M4

Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos (1938.5321)

144. Relief of Herakles

2nd century

Gypsum, H. 8³/₄ in. (22.3 cm), W. 5¹/₈ in. (13 cm), D. 2¹/₁₆ in. (5.2 cm)

Dura-Europos, cistern of the Temple of Atargatis

Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos (1938.5309)

Dura-Europos's religious and cultural complexity is well illustrated by the more than forty sculptures attesting to the popularity of a deity conventionally known as Herakles, although none have inscriptions and some, or all, may well represent the Mesopotamian god Nergal or an ancient Middle Eastern hero or protective figure.¹ More than a quarter (including cats. 142–43) were discovered within



houses in different locations, indicative perhaps of the hero-god's role as a protector or as the central figure in family cults.² The others were found in public spaces and (cat. 144) in multiple sanctuaries,³ where Herakles was never the main divinity worshipped.

The notable variations in design, style, and execution among the plaques and statuettes attest to the multiple artistic influences present at Dura. The figure fighting the lion (cat. 142) has a "Parthian" hairstyle, and its modeling is schematic in contrast to the powerfully muscular form of the god with a lion skin tied around his neck (cat. 143), which is distinctly classical in style and pose with the lion head and skin naturalistically detailed. The details on the lion skin of

the third Herakles (cat. 144) in contrast are rendered with incised triangular marks. Comparable Herakles figures from Palmyra, Hatra, and Seleucia on the Tigris provide evidence for the popularity of the Herakles image, however named, across the Middle East.⁴

1. Downey 1969. 2. Downey 1969, p. 28, no. 29; pp. 51–53, no. 39; see also p. 57; Baird 2014, pp. 177–78. 3. Downey 1969, p. 23, no. 14, and p. 59. 4. Downey 1969, pp. 57 and n. 7, 77–80, and 85–96.



145A



145B

145A. Wall Painting of Christ Walking on Water

145B. Wall Painting of Christ Healing the Paralytic

Ca. 232

Paint on plaster, 145A: H. 57¹/₁₆ in. (145 cm), W. 34⁵/₈ in. (88 cm);

145B: H. 54³/₄ in. (139 cm), W. 39³/₈ in. (100 cm)

Dura-Europos, Christian building, Baptistry

Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Yale-French Excavations at

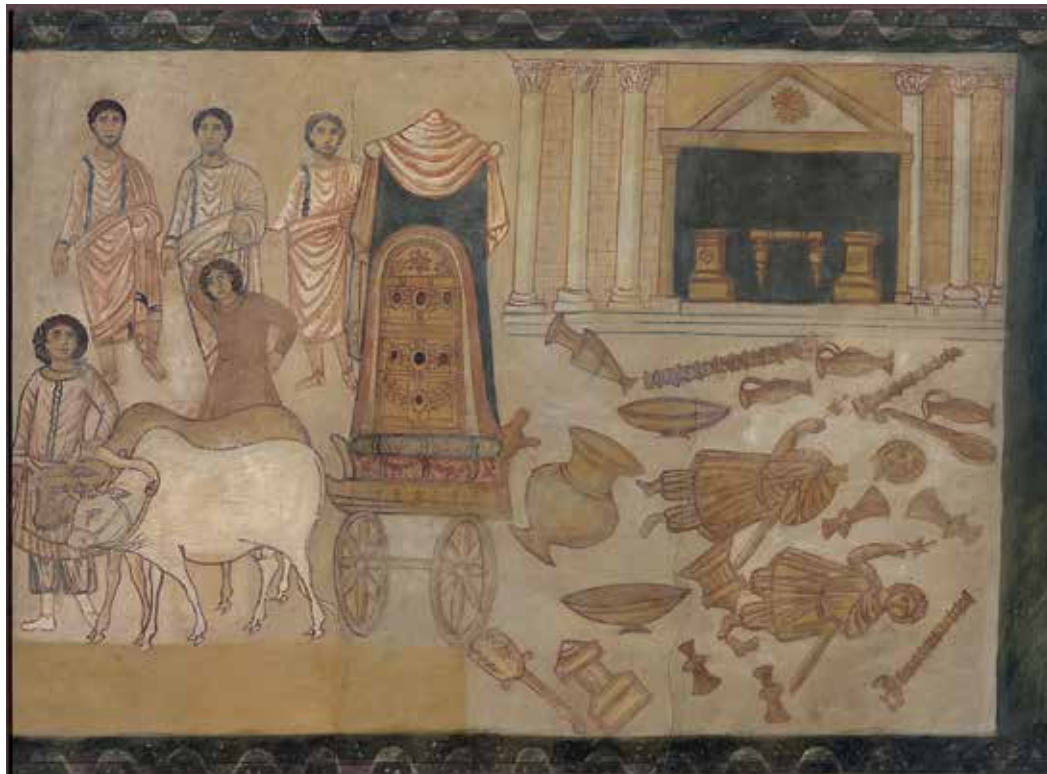
Dura-Europos (145A: 1932.1202; 145B: 1932.1203)

As Dura-Europos's initiates to Christianity participated in the rituals of anointing and baptism, they used a large font installed under a pillared canopy in the baptistry of the Christian building (see p. 183). There they were surrounded by a series of wall paintings depicting biblical scenes: David and Goliath, Adam and Eve, the Good Shepherd and his sheep, the woman at a well, and, on the north wall, images of Jesus Christ walking on water and healing the paralytic above a procession of women, recently reinterpreted as representing the parable of the wise and foolish virgins rather than the women at Jesus's tomb.¹ Other wall paintings on the remainder of the upper register may well have depicted additional stories of Christ's miracles, and as a group they are most likely the earliest securely dated representations of Jesus.²

Originally one wall painting, these fragments depicting Christ walking on water and healing the paralytic read from right to left. The walking on water scene (cat. 145A) depicts a large boat holding four disciples who raise their arms and look

to Jesus (left) and Peter (right) in the foreground. Peter walks on the water along with Jesus, meaning the scene follows Matthew 14:22–36 rather than Mark 6:45–52 or John 6:15–21, which have only Jesus walking on water. As Peter is shown walking rather than sinking, the scene illustrates the moment before he panics and nearly drowns, a sharp contrast to later representations of the same story that show him sinking.³ The water from this scene flows into the next, the healing of the paralytic (cat. 145B), a story recorded in John 5:2–15 as well as the Synoptic Gospels (John's version is the only one that includes water). Here, Jesus gestures toward a sick man lying on his pallet at the right; the same man appears again with his pallet on his back on the left of the scene. Peter and the paralytic man are figures that might have inspired the newly baptized Christians to have faith in Jesus's power. Although the setting of the story was a lake (the Sea of Galilee), the wavy lines that represent the water may have evoked a river that continued around the baptistry, perhaps beginning in a scene of paradise, and more significant than a lake for Dura's inhabitants, who were closely tied to the Euphrates River.⁴

1. For the baptistry's final excavation report, see Kraeling 1967. For the procession of women, Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven 1932.1201 a–c, see Peppard 2016, pp. 111–52, pls. 1, 7. 2. Peppard 2016, p. 87. 3. *Ibid.*, pp. 88–90. 4. *Ibid.*, pp. 93–95.



146. Herbert J. Gute (American, 1908-1977),
*The Destruction of Dagon before the Ark of
the Lord*

1933-35
Gouache on paper on board, H. 68½ in. (174 cm), W. 93 in. (236.2 cm)
Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven (1936.127.12)

147. Herbert J. Gute (American, 1908-1977),
*The Wilderness Encampment and the
Miraculous Well of Be'er*

1933-35
Gouache on paper on board, H. 73¾ in. (187.3 cm), W. 106 in. (269.2 cm)
Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven (1936.127.7)

At the time of their discovery in 1932, the wall paintings from the Dura-Europos synagogue were removed to the National Museum of Damascus, where a reconstruction of the building was created (fig. 70). Herbert J. Gute, the artist working with the Yale-French excavation team, produced a series of facsimile paintings, now in the collection of the Yale University Art Gallery, including catalogues 146 and 147.

Fig. 73 Wall painting of the Temple of Dagon and the return of the Ark of the Covenant from the synagogue at Dura-Europos, panel WB4, ca. 240-45. National Museum, Damascus

The figural biblical scenes featured in the wall paintings were exceptional discoveries because they clearly demonstrated that early Jewish art was not always aniconic. The scenes that include religious buildings, cult implements, and above all images of statues of gods are particularly significant when considered within the broader context of Dura's religious landscape. The synagogue's congregation may have intended





for such imagery to distinguish their beliefs and traditions from those of Dura's polytheists and Christians, to promote their own faith, or to actively resist, and perhaps even to deride, polytheistic practices that included the veneration of divine images and sacrificial acts.¹ The painting featuring a temple with empty statue bases and broken statues lying in a pile among cult utensils and vessels on the right of the image



and the Ark of the Covenant on a cart pulled by oxen on the left has been interpreted as the recovery of the Ark from the Temple of Dagon in the land of the Philistines (cat. 146; fig. 73).² Another painting showing the Ark of the Covenant depicts the priest Aaron (identified by an inscription in Greek) and the consecration of the tabernacle (fig. 71).³ Other paintings also prominently feature some of Judaism's most important symbols, such as the menorah, candelabra, and shewbread table that appear together in front of an aedicula in the scene of Moses and the twelve tribes of Israel at a well in the wilderness (the scene has been interpreted variously as the Feast of Tabernacles, the Wells of Elim, Waters of Marah, and Miriam's Well) (cat. 147; fig. 74).⁴

1. See in particular the discussions in Elsner 2001 and Rajak 2011.
2. 1 Samuel 5-6; Kraeling 1956, pp. 99-105; Hachlili 1998, p. 119.
3. Exodus 40; Numbers 7; Kraeling 1956, pp. 125-31; Hachlili 1998, pp. 117-18.
4. Elsner 2001, p. 282; Hachlili 1998, p. 116.

Fig. 74 Wall painting of the well in the wilderness from the synagogue at Dura-Europos, panel WB1, ca. 240-45. National Museum, Damascus



148



149



150

148. Tile with Running Gazelle(?)

Ca. 244-45

Clay with layer of painted plaster, H. 15³/₄ in. (40 cm), W. 15³/₄ in. (40 cm),
D. 1¹⁵/₁₆ in. (5 cm)

Dura-Europos, Synagogue

Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Yale-French Excavations at
Dura-Europos (1933.269)

149. Tile with Goat-Fish (Capricorn?)

Ca. 244-45

Clay with layer of painted plaster, H. 15³/₄ in. (40 cm), W. 15³/₄ in. (40 cm),
D. 1¹⁵/₁₆ in. (5 cm)

Dura-Europos, Synagogue

Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Yale-French Excavations at
Dura-Europos (1933.271)

150. Tile with Sea Monster

Ca. 244-45

Clay with layer of painted plaster, H. 15³/₈ in. (39 cm), W. 15³/₈ in. (39 cm),
D. 1³/₄ in. (4.5 cm)

Dura-Europos, Synagogue

Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Yale-French Excavations at
Dura-Europos (1933.275)

151. Tile with Flower inside a Wreath

Ca. 244-45

Clay with layer of painted plaster, H. 15³/₈ in. (39 cm), W. 15³/₈ in. (39 cm),
D. 1¹⁵/₁₆ in. (5 cm)

Dura-Europos, Synagogue

Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Yale-French Excavations at
Dura-Europos (1933.258)

152. Tile with Three Pomegranates

Ca. 244-45

Clay with layer of painted plaster, H. 15³/₈ in. (39 cm), W. 15³/₈ in. (39 cm),
D. 1¹⁵/₁₆ in. (5 cm)

Dura-Europos, Synagogue

Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Yale-French Excavations at
Dura-Europos (1933.278)

The 234 square inscribed and pictorial painted tiles recovered from the assembly hall ceiling of Dura-Europos's synagogue are often overshadowed by the building's famous wall paintings (figs. 70-71, 73-74).¹ Remarkable as the only examples extant from an ancient synagogue, the ceiling tiles formed an elaborate composition, although their original arrangement cannot be reconstructed accurately, as their find contexts were not published. Their imagery collectively suggests that they offered protection to the synagogue space; whether they also referred to biblical creation stories or others is indeterminable but possible.²

A few tiles have Greek or Aramaic inscriptions rather than images and record the involvement of several of the synagogue's benefactors in the building's renovation; one provides an approximate date of 244-45 for the entire corpus.³ The tiles were placed 23 feet (7 m) above the floor, and the lighting from the clerestory windows would have been limited, meaning that the benefactors' names would have been very difficult to read from ground level—in contrast to the prominent positions of other dedicatory inscriptions at Dura and elsewhere in the Roman world on walls and architectural elements. This could reflect a type



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of euergetism particular to Dura's Jewish population and indicate that divine, rather than human, acknowledgment of their contributions was prioritized.⁴ In traditional Mesopotamian architecture inscriptions were frequently placed in inaccessible locations or buried in walls for the gods' approval, and the inscribed ceiling tiles could be an echo of this practice.

The approximately twenty types of images on the pictorial tiles include animals (gazelles or antelopes [cat. 148], deer, birds, dolphins and fish); hybrid creatures (goat-fish [cat. 149], centaurs with fish, and sea monsters [cat. 150]); flowers with and without encircling wreaths (cat. 151), pomegranates (cat. 152), grapes, oranges, pinecones, and grains; and two representations of the Evil Eye.⁵ Some of these motifs, including flowers and fruits, are comparable to those found on ceiling tiles from several houses at Dura; however, the synagogue corpus may reflect particular and significant iconographic choices. The goat-fish (cat. 149) and a double fish (also found in the House of the Atrium) may



Fig. 75 Ceiling tile with female face (probably the personification of spring) from the synagogue at Dura-Europos. ca. 244-45. Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos (1933.267)

represent Capricorn and Pisces and correspond to images on zodiac wheels from the Late Mithraeum and elsewhere in the region, including the floor mosaics of synagogues. Other zodiac signs are absent, however, and the other hybrids featured in the tiles lack obvious astrological significance: the centaur holds a fish rather than the bow typical of Sagittarius, and the sea monster (cat. 150) is otherwise unattested. Twenty-three synagogue tiles feature three types of female faces, one of which is identifiable by the flowers surrounding her head as the personification of spring or summer, and it is likely that the other two also represent seasons (see fig. 75).⁶ In distinct contrast to tiles from houses, no tiles from the synagogue feature men. This choice could reflect a decision not to depict any figures that might be identified as living people, such as the benefactors named in the inscribed tiles, drawing a distinction between them and the biblical characters represented in the wall paintings.⁷

1. For a recent comprehensive publication with extensive bibliography, see Stern 2010. See also Kraeling 1956, pp. 41-54. Approximately forty tiles are in the collection of the Yale University Art Gallery, two are in the Musée du Louvre, Paris, and the rest are in the National Museum of Damascus (Stern 2010, p. 483, n. 52). 2. Stern 2010, p. 501. 3. The larger ceiling tiles of the previous assembly hall were discovered in the later building's walls and floors; see Kraeling 1956, pp. 15, 41, 54, n. 111, pl. L; and Stern 2010, pp. 473, 482-83, 487-89, nn. 41, 42. 4. Stern 2010, pp. 482, 500-502, n. 43. 5. Kraeling 1956, p. 51; Stern 2010, p. 485, table 1. 6. Kraeling (1956, pp. 41-42) suggests a personification of vegetation or Demeter-Persephone rather than the "goddess" Flora. 7. See Stern 2010, pp. 492, 501.



HATRA, ASHUR, AND NORTHERN MESOPOTAMIA

NORTHERN MESOPOTAMIA WAS CRITICAL TO THE PARTHIAN Empire's regional security and its control of long-distance trade routes. The city of Hatra, in particular, not only acted as an important political and religious center but also effectively controlled trade along a major land route at the western end of the Silk Road and when necessary formed a military bulwark against Rome (see map, p. xix). The date of Hatra's foundation is unknown, but there is little evidence that it was a significant site before the first century A.D.¹ Other cities in northern Iraq were former capitals of a much earlier empire: east of Hatra near the Tigris River, Ashur and Nineveh had been capitals of Assyria. The former was the Assyrian state's ancient and traditional center, while the latter was its last and greatest capital at the height of the Neo-Assyrian Empire in the seventh century B.C. During the Parthian period Ashur in particular became an important regional center once again. Further to the east another already ancient city, Erbil (ancient Arbela), became capital of the Parthian province or client state of Adiabene.

Fig. 76 The Great Temple, Hatra

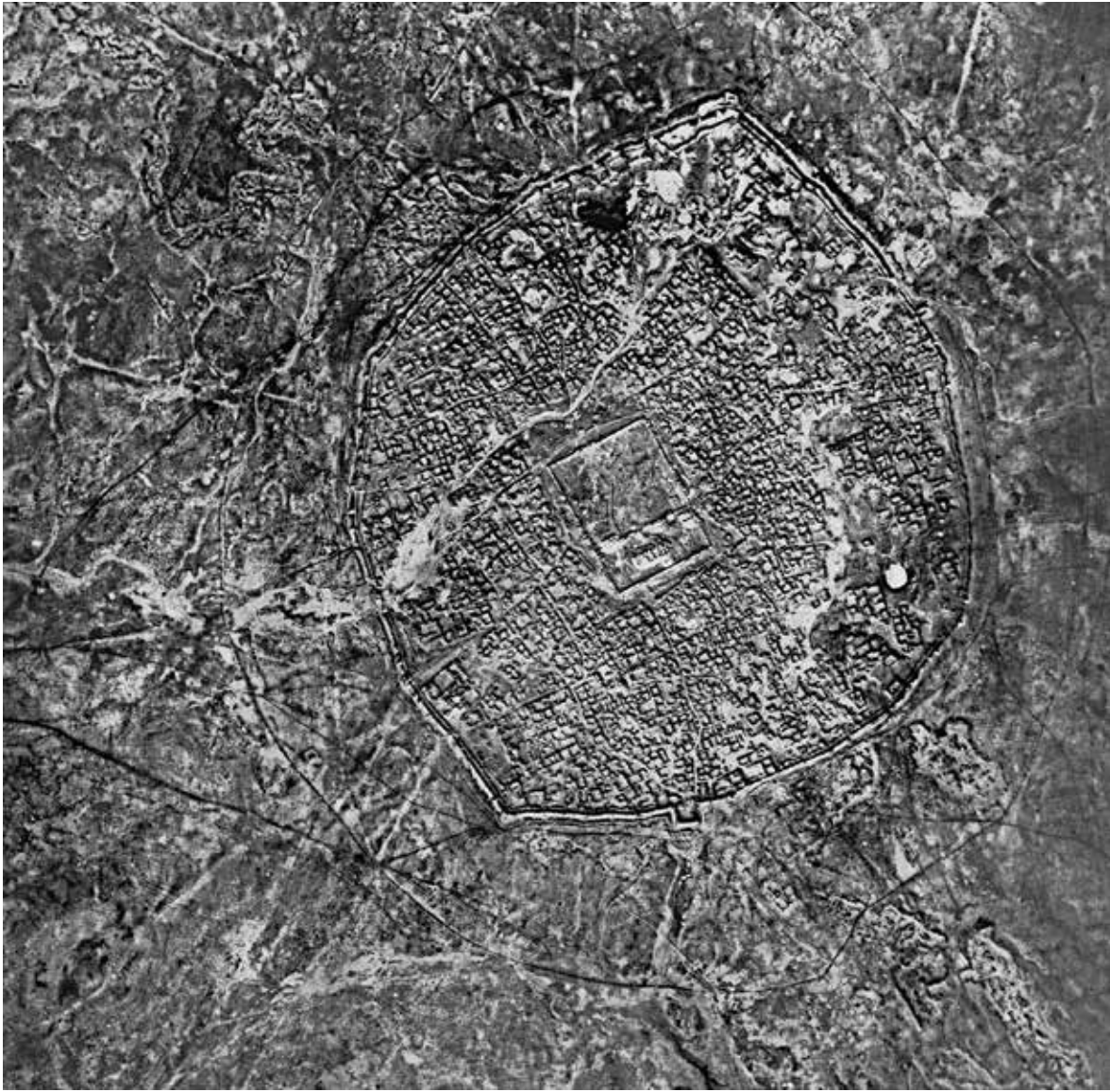


Fig. 77 Early twentieth-century aerial photograph showing the Parthian walled city of Hatra. Much of the detail is still clearly visible in modern satellite photographs. The large rectangle at the center is the Great Temple enclosure, which took up a significant proportion of the city.

Hatra is located in the Jezira, the desert steppe region between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers in northern Mesopotamia (fig. 77). The area has limited water supplies, but within its walls Hatra had abundant water from wells and natural springs, as well as its own lake.² This control over water resources underpinned the city's military security and power over trade. Like Dura-Europos, Hatra was once characterized as a caravan city, which probably overstates its similarity to Palmyra and dependence on long-distance trade routes.³ Hatra was not a caravan city in the sense that long-distance trade was the main reason for its existence, although it was certainly important and was probably the main source of its

wealth, even if little direct evidence has so far been found.⁴ Hatra simultaneously played important military, religious, and commercial roles, all of which were factors in its establishment and growth.⁵ The city and its surrounding territory were ruled by a local dynasty, ultimately subordinate to the Arsacid king. After 165 these rulers began to title themselves "kings" rather than "lords." This change might reflect a shift in Hatra's status toward greater autonomy from the central imperial power of the Arsacid dynasty, but more likely reflects a promotion in rank given by the Parthians to the local rulers as the Roman frontier moved closer and Hatra played a larger role in securing the borders of the Parthian Empire.⁶



Fig. 78 The Great Iwans and (foreground) “Hellenistic” Temple, Great Temple, Hatra

From the perspective of international conflict and power relations, Hatra acted as a formidable fortress-city.⁷ It resisted a Roman siege during the emperor Trajan’s (r. 98–117) short-lived conquest of the rest of Mesopotamia in 117, and again during the campaign of the emperor Septimius Severus (r. 193–211) in 198 and 199. The city was finally conquered during the early Sasanian period (see pp. 250–55), when it was captured by Shapur I (r. ca. 241–272) after his second siege of the city in 240.⁸ In the new political conditions of the Sasanian Empire, Hatra seems to have lost its strategic significance: a Roman account describes the city as abandoned in the mid-fourth century when the army of the emperor Jovian (r. 363–364) passed through the area during a chaotic military withdrawal from Mesopotamia.⁹

Dominating Hatra was an enormous temple complex focused on the city’s patron deity, the sun god Shamash, called Maren (“Our Lord”).¹⁰ Structures originally interpreted as remains of a palace with high, open-fronted vaulted halls, known as iwans, were, in fact, monumental temple buildings within a giant temenos enclosure (figs. 76–78). The great temple courtyard enclosures that appear throughout the Roman and Parthian Middle East probably have their ultimate origin in Mesopotamia, where similar spaces had been common for millennia. Iwans, by

contrast, represented an architectural innovation of the Parthian period that would become a prominent feature of Islamic and particularly Iranian religious architecture, in particular, during the following centuries. The Great Iwans were the largest of multiple temples within the temenos enclosure. They contrast with the so-called “Hellenistic” temple built directly in front of them (fig. 78), although interestingly both the Great Iwans and the colonnades of this much smaller structure feature distinctive corkscrew decoration similar to that found at Heliopolis-Baalbek (see pp. 134–37; fig. 52) and which may have deep-rooted origins in early Mesopotamian architecture.¹¹

The Hatra temple enclosure was known as Saggil, from Esagila (“House Whose Top Is High”), the name of Marduk’s great temple at Babylon. Unlike in the cases of Heliopolis-Baalbek or Palmyra, recent scholarship has not overturned the idea that religion at Hatra centered on a divine triad, in this case Maren, his consort Marten (“lady”), and Barmaren (“son of our lords,” that is, Maren and Marten). Marten may have been identified with Nanaya, and Barmaren with Dionysos.¹² While Maren was the sun god Shamash, there are also strong arguments that beneath the identities of Maren and Barmaren lie aspects of Marduk, the patron deity of Babylon and former head of the Mesopotamian pantheon,



Fig. 79 Statue of Sanatruq I, mid-2nd century. Mesopotamia, Hatra. Iraq Museum, Baghdad (IM57819)

and his son Nabu, historically the chief god of the city of Borsippa (see pp. 230, 237).¹³ Despite these connections, however, the temple architecture at Hatra was highly innovative, nowhere more so than in the Great Iwans themselves. Behind the South Iwan, the likely cella of Maren was formed by a distinctive square building, with a corridor around its inner shrine that may have been used for circumambulatory processions, highly unusual for a Mesopotamian temple but common in Iran and in Nabataea (see p. 20).¹⁴

Some of the most spectacular and distinctive sculpture of the Parthian period has survived from Hatra (figs. 79–81). Statues of kings and nobles from the site were once considered almost type specimens for defining the core characteristics of Parthian art.¹⁵ However, this identification reflects a modern desire to form neat equations between artistic style and empire, as well as a historical dearth of information about sculptural styles in much of the empire relative to its western, Mesopotamian, edges. The style of sculpture at Hatra relates strongly to its local position in a web of trade routes and political affiliations, combining Hellenistic, Iranian, Mesopotamian, and Syrian elements in a particular way that can be related to other Mesopotamian and western Iranian sites, but also to Palmyra. On the other hand, neither is it correct to treat the art and culture of Hatra as purely local, as though it were not part of the empire at all.¹⁶ Hatrene art is certainly Parthian art; it is also specifically Hatrene, and its particular regional connections help clarify Hatra’s role in the cultural and political map of the Middle East. It may be that the best characterization of “Parthian art” overall, given the diversity of the empire, is as a koine, a shared vocabulary of elements open to substantial local interpretation, rather than as a single, centrally imposed imperial style with derivations (see pp. 4–6).¹⁷ The sculptures of Hatra fit well within this model.

A notably Mesopotamian aspect of the sculptures at Hatra is the use of protective figures at doorways, traditionally considered vulnerable points through which malign spirits might enter a building. Many entrances at Hatra had protective griffins or other creatures carved above them (cat. 153), echoing the pairs of guardian animal sculptures that had been placed at important doorways in Mesopotamia for millennia.¹⁸ Other such protective imagery included stone “masks” on walls. One such sculpture showed a male face with a beard formed of leaves. He was called a Gorgon (*grgn*) in an accompanying Aramaic inscription and, like the Medusa of Greek mythology, had snakes in his hair (fig. 81). The earliest Greek images of the Gorgon were adaptations of Mesopotamian imagery for the male monster Humbaba. By the Roman period the image had long since been transformed into a beautiful woman in Graeco-Roman tradition, but this Mesopotamian origin may help to explain the presence of the male Gorgon at Hatra. This sculpture, one of Hatra’s most iconic images, was deliberately damaged in 2015 during the ISIS occupation of the site.



Fig. 8o Relief showing the god Nergal, ca. 2nd century. Hatra. Mosul Museum. Reportedly missing, presumed stolen between 2014 and 2017

Around 30 miles (50 km) east of Hatra lay the ancient city of Ashur, which underwent a profound revival during the Parthian period. It is not known if the city was still called Ashur at this date, but inscriptions confirm the god Ashur was still worshipped there, as were other ancient deities such as Nabu and Nanaya, and it seems likely that the traditional *akitu* (New Year) festival also took place.¹⁹

Excavations at Ashur in the early twentieth century revealed temples and an impressive palace, probably built in the early second century. The palace featured vaulted iwans as at Hatra's Great Temple, this time on the four sides of a central courtyard, the plan of which is a precursor to the

paired iwans arranged facing one another across a square courtyard that would become common in later Iranian architecture (see p. 23; fig. 12). A reconstruction of the palace's facade can be seen today at the Vorderasiatisches Museum, Berlin (cats. 155–56; figs. 82–83). The facade features elaborate decoration in the form of evocations of columns and windows, even though these features are not structurally present. This form is comparable to the effect of some Nabataean tomb facades, particularly the facade of the Palace Tomb at Petra (fig. 17). Both Mesopotamian and Arabian architecture had long traditions of decorating mud-brick walls with designs in relief to break up building



Fig. 81 “Mask” relief sculpture. 2nd-3rd century. Hatra, Great Temple, Iwan 4, prior to deliberate damage in 2015

facades with light and shadow, often incorporating “false windows” and other references to architectural features. The version of this convention developed in the Parthian period is in some ways a template for much later architecture, including the spectacular late Sasanian palace facade at Ctesiphon (see p. 229; fig. 85) and the Abbasid al-Ashiq Palace at Samarra. Ashur also shows interesting continuity in burial practice: sunken vaulted brick tombs from the Parthian period at the site echo the distinctive tombs of the much earlier Neo-Assyrian period.²⁰ Similar tombs were also found at Hatra.²¹

To the north of Hatra and Ashur lay the kingdom of Adiabene, which at different times was a Parthian province and vassal state, and in the late second and early third centuries was contested with Rome. The kingdom is best known today because its rulers converted to Judaism in the first century A.D., and the story of their conversion was recorded by the historian Josephus.²² The ancient sources suggest Adiabene’s capital was at Erbil, but also active in this period was the former Assyrian capital of Nineveh. Despite a persistent legend that Nineveh was completely and permanently abandoned following its sack in 612 B.C., which marked the end of the Neo-Assyrian Empire, there is significant evidence of later occupation, including during the Parthian period. Burials excavated in the 1840s yielded

jewelry, metal dress ornaments, and sheet gold masks and eye and mouth covers (cats. 157–61). If the masks relate more to Roman traditions in the Middle East, the eye and mouth covers have their best parallels at Parthian sites to the east in Iran. It is interesting that at least one of the Nineveh burials seems to have had both.

With the exception of Erbil, all of the sites mentioned in this essay suffered some deliberate damage during the ISIS occupation of northern Iraq in 2015–17. Figural sculptures on the walls of Hatra were damaged or destroyed on video for propaganda purposes; the Neo-Assyrian palaces of Nimrud and Nineveh suffered demolition with heavy earth-moving equipment, power tools, and explosives; the ziggurat at Nimrud was bulldozed; and explosives were reportedly used to demolish monuments at Ashur. At the Mosul Museum, which is the most important in Iraq after the Iraq Museum in Baghdad, statues from Hatra were smashed for propaganda footage, and the museum was ransacked and very badly damaged (see p. 260). At the same time, ISIS coordinated the looting of archaeological sites for salable finds (see pp. 260, 263–64).²³ The Iraq State Board of Antiquities and Heritage is now in the early stages of evaluating and documenting damage to sites and museums across the territory recovered from the group.



153. Door Lintel

Ca. 2nd-early 3rd century
Limestone, H. 29 $\frac{1}{8}$ in. (71.4 cm), W. 66 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. (168.9 cm), D. 4 in. (10.2 cm)
Hatra, Great Iwans
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Purchase, Joseph Pulitzer Bequest, 1932 (32.145a, b)

This lintel comes from the Great Iwans, the main temple building at the heart of the Great Temple enclosure at Hatra, where it was positioned in a portal leading out of the North Iwan, not as a scene above the door but inside the doorway itself, with the decorated panel facing downward.¹ It shows two fantastic creatures facing a vase from which rise a stylized lotus leaf and two tendrils. The animals resemble winged lions or panthers, but their feathered crests and long, upward-pointing ears show that other elements are present. Such composite creatures had a long history in Middle Eastern art, and the upward-pointing ears may have their ultimate origins in the Iron Age iconography of Mesopotamian lion-demons.² They became a common part of Greek imagery of griffins during the Orientalizing period (ca. 750–600 B.C.)³ and remained part of a cross-cultural visual repertoire of hybrid supernatural creatures.

Several other examples of griffins have been found at Hatra, often in the imagery of lintels above doorways.⁴ The presence of powerful supernatural creatures and the relief's position in a doorway strongly suggest that the imagery's basic function was the magical defense of a threshold—a new iteration of a practice of flanking important entrances with

protective composite creatures that had existed for millennia in Mesopotamia, perhaps the most famous examples of which are the winged bulls and lions of Neo-Assyrian palaces in the early first millennium B.C. However, the basic motif of two griffins facing a central vase can be seen not only in other Parthian examples but also in Roman art, and it is likely that the device as used at Hatra was borrowed from Roman Syria.⁵

Although the lintel's composition is symmetrical, the lion-griffins themselves are not identical. The wings in particular are treated quite differently, with the griffin on the right having a far more detailed depiction of feathers and a scroll where the tops of the wings curl inward; the shape is not common in Parthian sculpture but would become characteristic of Sasanian art.⁶ The tall and solid proportions of the griffins are somewhat unusual at Hatra but are more common at Palmyra and in Roman art.⁷ Other griffins at Hatra have long, sinuous bodies that are unlike earlier Mesopotamian, Syrian, or Roman representations and may have been inspired by Chinese and Central Asian dragon imagery seen on imported textiles and other goods.

1. Andrae 1912, p. 149, pl. 12, fig. 251. 2. Goldman 1960. 3. E.g., Vassiliki Patsiada in Aruz, Graff, and Rakic 2014, p. 274, no. 144; Maria Viglaki-Sophianou in *ibid.*, p. 275, no. 145; Katerina Athanasaki in *ibid.*, p. 275, no. 146. 4. Safar and Mustafa 1974, pp. 367, 381–82, 388; Metzger and Girardi 2013, p. 173. 5. Metzger and Girardi 2013, p. 169. 6. Dimand 1933, pp. 79–80. 7. Metzger and Girardi 2013, p. 169, fig. 1.



154. Pilgrim Flask

1st century B.C.–2nd century A.D.

Glazed ceramic, H. 5⁷/₁₆ in. (13.8 cm), W. 4¹/₂ in. (11.5 cm),

D. 2⁵/₁₆ in. (5.9 cm)

Ashur

Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Vorderasiatisches Museum (VA Ass 04163a)

The most characteristic pottery of the Parthian period in Mesopotamia has raised decoration in a variety of geometric patterns and frequently a vivid blue-green glaze.¹ Vessels of all shapes and sizes were glazed in this way, and the same glaze was also used on the region's distinctive slipper coffins (cat. 179) and a variety of other objects (cat. 141). This flask has two small loop handles for attaching a cord or strap and

a lentoid (flat and circular) body.² Vessels of this shape are commonly known as pilgrim flasks for their use in the Late Antique and medieval periods to hold water and oil from sanctuaries visited by pilgrims.³ There is no clear evidence that they were used in this way as early as the Parthian period, however, and the basic shape of the flasks extends back much further still, to the Bronze Age and what were surely very different cultural contexts. The longevity and widespread use of the shape primarily reflect what was simply a practical design for a small flask, particularly for travel.

1. For Seleucia on the Tigris, see Debevoise 1934. For Dura-Europos, see Baur 1939. 2. Andrae and Lenzen 1933, pl. 47E. 3. W. Anderson 2004.

155. Relief Panel

1st century B.C.

Stucco, H. 15³/₈ in. (39 cm), W. 20¹/₁₆ in. (51 cm), D. 3⁹/₁₆ in. (9 cm)

Ashur, Parthian palace

Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Vorderasiatisches Museum, Berlin

(VA Ass 01325)

156. Relief panel

1st century B.C.

Stucco, H. 16⁹/₁₆ in. (42 cm), W. 29¹⁵/₁₆ in. (76 cm), D. 3⁹/₁₆ in. (9 cm)

Ashur, Parthian palace

Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Vorderasiatisches Museum, Berlin

(VA Ass 01336)

Mold-made and carved stucco (fine plaster) allowed the relatively inexpensive elaboration of huge surface areas. At Ashur, the central courtyard of a large Parthian palace was decorated extensively with “false windows” and half-columns (see pp. 215–17) and with numerous stucco panels (fig. 83).¹ These were originally painted in bright colors that can be reconstructed from surviving traces on the stuccos’ surfaces (fig. 82).² Each wall of the courtyard centered on an iwan, a large vaulted portico leading into a wing of the palace.

A variety of plastering techniques had long been used in Mesopotamia: typically lime plaster acted as a finish on flat surfaces to produce a white face on mud-brick walls or

to provide a ground for wall paintings. Beginning in the Parthian period, stucco moldings and panels began to be produced with elaborate three-dimensional designs.³ These were usually geometric patterns, such as the examples here of interlocking six-petalled flowers (cat. 155) and concentric diamond forms arranged against a grid of square “tiles” (cat. 156). Multiple patterns were used together to decorate the four faces of the central courtyard in the palace at Ashur. The designs may replicate patterns used in the carving of wood, a more expensive medium in Mesopotamia. On the other hand, similar motifs, including an exact match for catalogue 155, were also carved in stone at Hatra.⁴ In the succeeding centuries geometric, floral, and sometimes figural designs in stucco would become a standard feature of Sasanian and Islamic architectural programs (see p. 229; cat. 170). The use of the iwan also began in the Parthian period, and the courtyard at Ashur is among the earliest known examples of a pattern—four iwans arranged around a central courtyard—that would later become a staple of Islamic architecture (see p. 23; fig. 12).

1. Andrae and Lenzen 1933, pp. 25–54, pls. 9–23; Andrae 1938, pp. 181–88. 2. R. Sommer 2015. 3. Debevoise 1941, p. 45. 4. Andrae 1912, fig. 249, pl. 47.



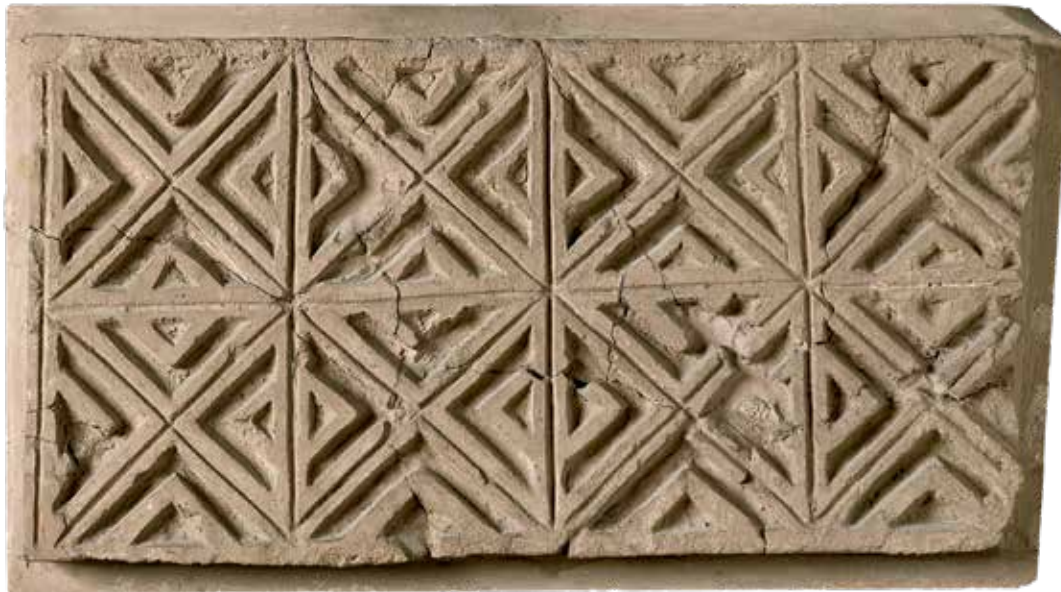
Fig. 82 Recently exposed original coloring of reconstructed decoration of Ashur palace courtyard facade (fig. 83), based on surviving pigment traces on original stuccos. Vorderasiatisches Museum, Berlin



Fig. 83 Reconstruction of Ashur palace courtyard facade with iwan arch. Vorderasiatisches Museum, Berlin



155



156



157

157. Funerary Mask

Ca. 2nd century
 Gold, H. 6¹¹/₁₆ in. (17 cm), W. 6⁵/₁₆ in. (16 cm)
 Nineveh, Kuyunjik
 The Trustees of the British Museum, London (ME 1856.0909.66 / 123895)



158

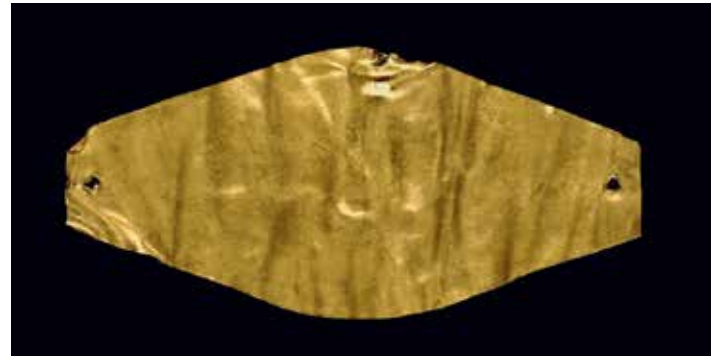
159. Mouth Cover

Ca. 2nd century
 Gold, H. 1⁹/₁₆ in. (4 cm), W. 3¹/₄ in. (8.3 cm)
 Nineveh, Kuyunjik
 The Trustees of the British Museum, London (ME 1856.0909.76)

158. Eye Cover

Ca. 2nd century
 Gold, H. 1⁷/₈ in. (4.8 cm), W. 7¹/₁₆ in. (18 cm)
 Nineveh, Kuyunjik
 The Trustees of the British Museum, London (ME 1856.0909.69 / 123896)

The excavations of the English traveler Austen Henry Layard (1817–1894) at the former Assyrian capitals of Nimrud (ancient Kalhu) and Nineveh in the 1840s focused on the Neo-Assyrian palaces and their stone reliefs; however, remains from other periods were also found.¹ After Layard returned to London in 1851, excavations continued at Kuyunjik (one of the mounds of Nineveh), overseen by Christian Rassam (1808–1872), British Consul at Mosul (and the elder brother of Layard’s assistant and fellow excavator Hormuzd Rassam [1826–1910], who had also traveled to London), under the general supervision of Henry Rawlinson (1810–1895), then British Consul-General in Baghdad.



159

In April 1852 a group of Parthian-period burials in stone sarcophagi were found at the site.² The recording was very limited, consisting mainly of letters written by Rawlinson and Matilda Rassam (d. 1867), Christian’s wife. These sources agree that the largest assemblage of jewelry was found with what was believed to be a woman’s burial and included a gold mask, mouth and eye covers, two sets of earrings, two rings, a number of gold studs, a Neo-Assyrian cylinder seal, and a gold aureus of the Roman emperor Tiberius (r. 14–37) along with its impression on a small piece of gold sheet. The coin of Tiberius, along with another impression on sheet gold of a coin of Trajan (r. 98–117),



160. Necklace

Ca. 2nd century
 Gold, L. 14 in. (35.5 cm), Diam. [of thickest beads] 1/4 in. (0.7 cm)
 Nineveh, Kuyunjik
 The Trustees of the British Museum, London (ME 1856.0909.105)



161A-B. Earrings

Ca. 2nd century
 Gold, garnet, turquoise, each L. 2 1/4 in. (5.8 cm), W. 13/16 in. (2 cm)
 Nineveh, Kuyunjik
 The Trustees of the British Museum, London (ME 1856.0909.72;
 ME 1856.0909.73)

helped to date the assemblage.³ Unfortunately, this specific grouping cannot be reconstructed with certainty, as multiple examples of the same types of objects were found, such as the mask, which is one of two.

The tradition of gold funerary masks has deep origins in the Middle Eastern and Eastern Mediterranean Bronze Age, although it is not clear that there is any continuity between these earlier examples and those found in Roman and Parthian period burials.⁴ Gold, a metal that would not corrode, was used to cover the eyes and mouth of the deceased with the likely intent of protecting and preserving the eyes and mouth—and thus the ability to see and speak in the

afterlife.⁵ The mask and eye and mouth covers have holes for cords that were used to attach them to the head of the deceased before the body was wrapped in a funerary shroud.

The earrings are inlaid with garnet and turquoise. The former probably came from India, while the latter was likely from northeastern Iran. Prior to the Parthian period few examples of turquoise are known from Mesopotamia; from this time on, however, the distinctive blue-green stone would become increasingly popular in jewelry.

1. On the mid-nineteenth-century excavation of the Assyrian palaces, see Larsen 1996. 2. J. Curtis 1976. 3. *Ibid.*, p. 48. 4. J. Curtis 1995; Despini 2009. 5. J. Curtis 1976, p. 58.



162. Earring in the Form of a Three-Lobed Wineskin

Ca. 2nd-1st century B.C.

Gold, L. 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ in. (4.5 cm), Diam. $\frac{3}{8}$ in. (1 cm)

Said to be from Nineveh

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Purchase, Mrs. Vladimir S. Littauer Gift, 1995 (1995.366)

The top part of this delicately constructed earring takes the form of an Eros-like winged male figure. Below, attached by loops of gold wire, the earring's pendant represents a two-handled vase in the shape of a three-lobed wineskin, its surface covered in minute and regular granulation.

An annotated calling card accompanying the object gives a summary of its modern history. According to the card it was found about 1845 in a tomb at Nineveh by Austen Henry Layard (1817–1894), the English excavator of the Neo-Assyrian palaces there and at Nimrud (ancient Kalhu).¹ It was given by Layard to Robert Innesby, a captain in the Indian Navy, and remained in his family until its acquisition by The Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1995. The 1845 date may be inaccurate by a couple of years, or it may suggest that, if the earring was found in the course of excavation (as discovery in a tomb suggests), “Nineveh” here is in fact Nimrud, ancient Kalhu. Layard worked there in 1845, at the time identifying the site as part of Nineveh itself, and did not excavate on the mounds that covered the actual ancient city of Nineveh until 1847.

The card fancifully calls the object “Earring of one of the wives of Sennacherib, King of Assyria.” In fact, the earring dates many centuries after the famous Neo-Assyrian ruler (r. ca. 704–681 B.C.), but the confusion is understandable: the vast majority of Layard's finds were from Neo-Assyrian palaces, and objects from other periods received little attention.

1. Harper 1996. On Layard's excavations, see Layard 1849. For a history of this formative period in Mesopotamian archaeology, see Larsen 1996.

163. Earring

Ca. 1st-2nd century

Gold, L. 2 1/4 in. (5.7 cm), Diam. 7/8 in. (2.2 cm)

Mesopotamia or Iran

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Museum Accession (X.94)

The main pendant body of this gold earring takes the form of a teardrop-shaped amphora with two scroll-shaped handles, granulated at their outside edges. Three rows of windowlike holes framed with filigree and granulation pierce the body of the amphora; the lowest row employs further granulation to depict flowers. Below a horizontal filigree band at the widest point of the vase body are seven attachments for pendant pomegranates, five of which survive. A small ring at the vase's base originally held a further pendant that does not survive. The earring bears a close resemblance to a pair found at Seleucia on the Tigris.¹

The pomegranate as a symbol in art has a long history across the ancient Middle East (see also cats. 57, 152). Its primary associations with fertility, rebirth, and life probably stem from the large number of seeds the fruit contains and the blood-red color of its juice. The fruit had similar connotations in the Graeco-Roman world, including a particular association with Persephone's annual journeys to and from the Underworld. Here, in combination with the vase form and the elaborate decoration, they should probably be taken to represent fertility and abundance, much like the wineskin of catalogue 162.

1. Cleveland Museum of Art, 1933.190; see Porada 1967, p. 99, pl. 24.5.





FROM BABYLON TO CTESIPHON

THE ANCIENT CITIES OF BABYLONIA, SOUTHERN MESOPOTAMIA, underwent fundamental changes during the Seleucid and Parthian periods. Temples that had functioned for thousands of years entered their final phases as older urban landscapes were reconfigured, while new cities, above all Seleucia on the Tigris and later Ctesiphon, took political primacy. As in earlier periods, the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers were critical to the commercial life of the Middle East, connecting Mesopotamia and regions to the north and west with both the land routes eastward into Iran and Indian Ocean sea routes via the Persian Gulf.

From the reign of Hammurabi (r. 1792–1750 B.C.) in the eighteenth century B.C. to that of Alexander (r. 336–323 B.C.) in the fourth, Babylon had been the most important city and power center in southern Mesopotamia. Like the Achaemenid Persian kings before him, Alexander had envisaged making Babylon his imperial capital, famously beginning work on the restoration of its most prominent monument, the ziggurat Etemenanki, before his death in the city in 323 B.C.¹ From the power struggles that followed Alexander's death, the Macedonian general Seleucos I Nicator (r. 305–281 B.C.) emerged to control the eastern empire, including Mesopotamia, and founded

Fig. 84 Date-palm trees on the Euphrates River, near Najaf



Fig. 85 The Taq-i Kisra, Ctesiphon, in the 19th century, before flooding destroyed the right side of the facade and the front part of the arch.

a new city, Seleucia on the Tigris, as the capital of what now became the Seleucid Empire. The initial plan for Seleucia was in stark contrast to the historic cities of Babylonia, built more on Greek than Mesopotamian models, with an orthogonal grid of large housing blocks and a Greek theater (a Greek theater was also built at Babylon) (cat. 169). Seleucia on the Tigris was explicitly intended to succeed Babylon as the capital, and a large part of Babylon's population was transplanted there, apparently by royal fiat.² By the Parthian period Babylon's importance had greatly diminished, and Seleucia was well established as the Mesopotamian capital.³

The Parthian Empire began as a kingdom on the northeastern fringe of the Seleucid Empire, with its capital at Nisa in present-day Turkmenistan (see p. 7). In the mid-second century B.C., however, the Parthian king Mithridates I (r. ca. 171–138 B.C.) embarked on a remarkable

series of conquests and territorial acquisitions at the expense of the Seleucids. By the end of his reign he had captured most of the Seleucid Empire, culminating in the Parthian conquest of Babylonia and the establishment of a Parthian military camp at Ctesiphon, across the Tigris River from Seleucia. The Seleucid territory was reduced to a rump state in Syria ruled from Antioch; continuing consolidation of Parthian and Roman power in the Middle East would erase it entirely by 63 B.C. The city of Seleucia continued to flourish, however, as nearby Ctesiphon became the main Parthian capital.

The status of Parthian Ctesiphon, despite its position on the far western edge of the Parthian Empire, is a reflection of the strategic and economic importance of its location. Mesopotamia was at the center of the global economy. The richest agricultural region in the ancient Middle East was also located at the meeting point between land routes that led

across the Zagros Mountains and the rivers that connected Syria and the eastern Mediterranean to the Persian Gulf. For most of Mesopotamian history the Euphrates, on which Babylon was located, had been the more economically important of the region's two great rivers. Shallower and slower flowing, the Euphrates was both more manageable than the Tigris as a source of irrigation and more navigable. However, Seleucia and Ctesiphon's location on the Tigris in central Mesopotamia meant that they could meet the main caravan route leading out of the Zagros Mountains along the Diyala River, in addition to which the Tigris and Euphrates came closest to one another at this point, with a connection via an artificial canal.

Ctesiphon continued as the main royal residence throughout the Parthian and Sasanian periods. Substantial excavations focused on the Sasanian period took place at Ctesiphon in 1928–29 and 1931–32,⁴ but the precise location of Ctesiphon during the Parthian period remains unclear. The limited evidence suggests that it lay directly across the ancient river course from Seleucia (cats. 171–72). The tight cluster of settlements around Seleucia and Ctesiphon meant that the area later became known simply as al-Mada'in, or "the Cities."

While very little is known of Parthian Ctesiphon, the late Sasanian period has yielded some of the most spectacular architectural remains from pre-Islamic Iraq. The Metropolitan Museum of Art participated in the 1931–32 excavations at the site, and in the division of finds the Museum received objects that include an exceptional collection of Sasanian stucco panels (cat. 170).⁵ This form of decoration is the direct continuation of practices begun in the Parthian period (cats. 155–56, 169). Equally striking is Ctesiphon's most famous monument, the Taq-i Kisra (fig. 85).⁶ This structure is the surviving section of a Sasanian palace, and its famous Great Arch was originally a gigantic iwan, an open-fronted vaulted hall or portico, measuring more than eighty feet (24 m) in width, while the facade was decorated with false archways, columns, and windows across its surface. Both iwans and facades decorated in this way have their origins in the Parthian period, and both would continue to play important roles in Islamic architecture (see pp. 23, 213, 215; cats. 155–56; figs. 12, 78).

To the south, at the mouth of the Persian Gulf, lay the city of Charax Spasinou, capital of the kingdom of Characene.⁷ Although at times subject to the Seleucid and then Parthian Empires,⁸ Characene seems to have

maintained considerable autonomy, minting its own coins, and the collapse of Seleucid power and the Parthian invasion of Mesopotamia allowed a satrap, Hyspaosines, to declare independence around 140 B.C. Recent discoveries suggest that the kingdom of Characene was not entirely confined to southern Mesopotamia but also controlled other key points on the sea route to the Indian Ocean, notably the island of Bahrain.⁹ The port of Charax Spasinou was able to connect Indian Ocean trade routes with the Tigris River, and thus with Seleucia, Ctesiphon, and Silk Road trade. In addition, the Persian Gulf itself was a key source of a luxury commodity: pearls. The Parthian Empire struggled to exert direct control over Characene, and the extensive Parthian building activity seen farther north in the cities of southern Mesopotamia in the first century A.D., including a large fortress at Nippur, might partly reflect a strategy to at least contain the kingdom.¹⁰ Characene came briefly under Roman control with Trajan's (r. 98–117) invasion of Mesopotamia in 116, but it was only permanently incorporated into an empire by the Sasanian king Ardashir I (r. 224–241) as part of the Sasanian conquest of Mesopotamia (see p. 252). Today Charax is being archaeologically investigated

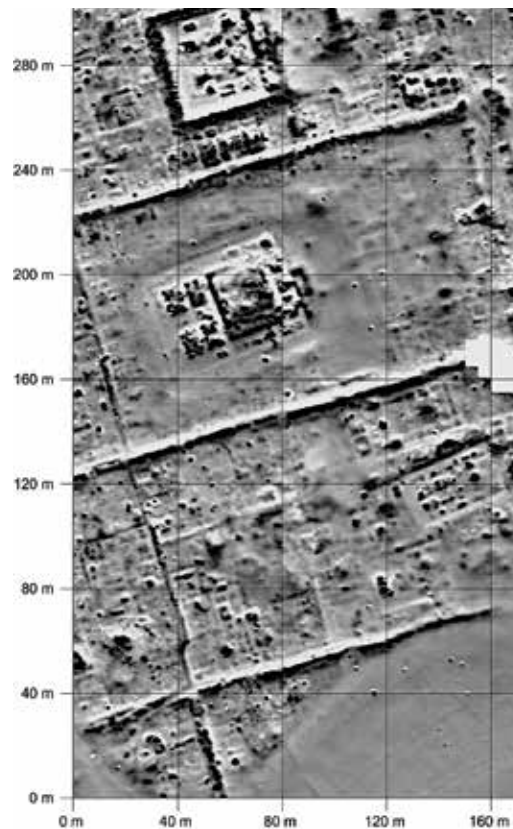


Fig. 86 Initial magnetometry survey results from Charax Spasinou show a substantial city with a Hellenistic regular grid street plan and monumental architecture

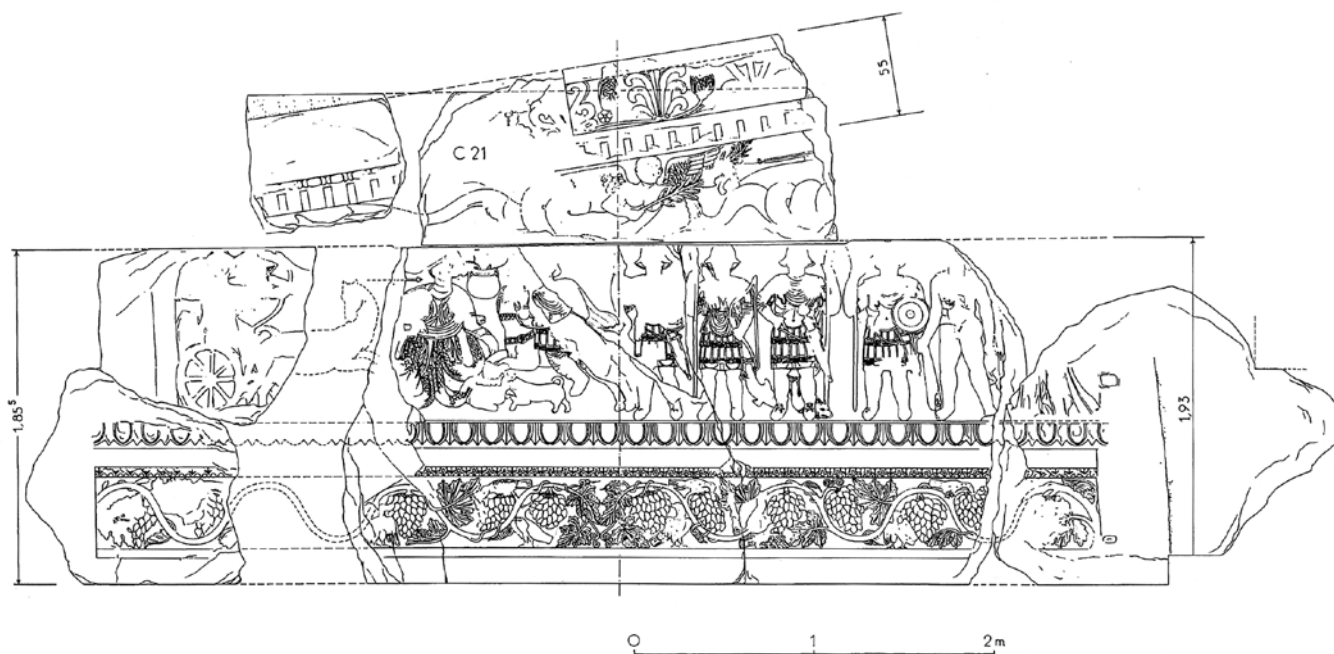


Fig. 87 Drawing of relief with scenes showing the battle of Nabu and Tiamat. Palmyra, Temple of Bel, Beam A, side B

for the first time, and the site has the potential to reveal much about both maritime trade and urban life during the Parthian period (fig. 86).¹¹

The Seleucid and Parthian periods in southern Mesopotamia saw a complex mixture of change and continuity, nowhere more so than in ancient cities such as Babylon and Uruk. At Babylon, Esagila, the temple of Marduk, survived: Pliny the Elder, writing during the late first century A.D., describes the temple of “Jupiter-Belus” (Marduk) as still in existence, and the deity as the father of astronomy, reflecting the (accurate) Roman perception that the Babylonian priests were expert astronomers (cats. 173, 177).¹² However, Esagila’s status had eroded over centuries of Achaemenid and Seleucid rule. Despite some examples of foreign rulers participating in the *akitu* (New Year) festival, the most important in the Babylonian cultic calendar, or sponsoring temple restorations, ultimately these kings did not draw their legitimacy from Marduk to the same degree as their Babylonian predecessors, and as the political power of the temples receded so, too, did the generosity of royal patronage.¹³ In the Neo-Babylonian period during the sixth century B.C. Esagila was one of the most politically powerful institutions in the Middle East, perhaps second only to the kingship of Babylon itself. By the Parthian period it is probably more accurate to imagine a somewhat archaic religious community

working to preserve slowly vanishing traditions. Nonetheless, the importance of Babylon as a long-established cultic center continued to be felt. Ultimately, the name Esagila—shortened to “Saggil”—would be attached to Hatra’s Great Temple, which was founded only in the first century A.D., and at the Temples of Bel and Nabu in Palmyra the central cults seem to have been derived from those of Marduk and his son Nabu at Babylon and Borsippa (see pp. 17, 20, 213–14).¹⁴ A famous relief from Palmyra’s Temple of Bel shows what is thought to be a version of the Babylonian Epic of Creation, although with Nabu (rather than the traditional Marduk) battling Tiamat, the chaotic primordial sea, at the beginning of the world (fig. 87).¹⁵

The case of Uruk is similar. Uruk was even older than Babylon, one of the world’s first cities and perhaps the very first real metropolis. Its major temples were in continuous use, remodeled and rebuilt on the same sites and dedicated to the same gods, from sometime before 3000 B.C. until the last centuries B.C. Eanna, the temple dedicated to the goddess Inanna-Ishtar, is a striking example. Uruk’s great temples were extensively renovated during the Seleucid period, suggesting they were still important at that time, but at some point in the early Parthian period all apparently fell out of use. The Bit-resh and Irigal temples were destroyed by fire sometime in the early first century B.C., and they and Eanna were built over with fortresses and

private houses, a change that is more striking given the length of the temple traditions known at Uruk.¹⁶

Every Mesopotamian temple was home to one or more divine statues. Temples were called the deities' houses—and no separate word for “temple” was used—and the god or goddess was considered on some level to inhabit the cult statue. The statues were therefore the center and focus of ancient Mesopotamian religion. Small fragments of stone and precious metal that may come from cult statues survive from earlier periods, such as lapis-lazuli beard curls and in one case a golden ear, but the overwhelming majority of these statues have left no surviving traces. Many statues would have had wooden cores, which under most circumstances would have decayed in the Mesopotamian soil, and their outer coverings probably consisted of materials that would also decay, such as textiles, or were valuable and could be reused, including metals and semiprecious stones. The survival of a second-century B.C. wooden torso from the Irigal temple (fig. 88) is therefore wholly exceptional. The torso was found near its large limestone base centrally positioned in the main cella (shrine) of the temple, in the building's final phase before it fell out of use.¹⁷ By this time, the cult of Inanna-Ishtar had been moved from Eanna to Irigal, making this goddess the likely occupant of the central shrine.¹⁸ The findspot therefore strongly suggests that the wooden torso is the only known cult statue to have survived from an ancient Mesopotamian temple, and furthermore that it is the very last form of one of the most important deities: the goddess Inanna-Ishtar, whose cult had been maintained continuously at Uruk for more than 3,000 years. It is generally presumed that the bodies of statues were richly adorned, perhaps given outer surfaces of precious metal, and/or clothed in fine fabrics. This may have been the case for the Uruk statue, but it is interesting to note that the wooden torso itself is modeled in detail with representations of clothing. Wavy vertical ridges suggest a diaphanous garment of Graeco-Roman type, as sometimes seen on images of Aphrodite wearing a chiton of fine crinkled linen (cat. 34), yet the way in which these ridges join as tongue-shaped “scales” is more reminiscent of the layered fleeces seen in representations of deities in much earlier Mesopotamian art.

The survival of the ancient temples and of cuneiform as a writing system was closely linked, and the end of the temples also coincides with the end of the 3,000-year cuneiform tradition. Even at the height of the Neo-Assyrian Empire in the eighth and seventh centuries B.C. there are signs



Fig. 88 Torso of a cult statue, ca. 200 B.C. Wood. Uruk, Irigal (Ishtar Temple). Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Vorderasiatisches Museum (VA 11689)

that Aramaic was increasingly not only the lingua franca of empire and commerce but also the main spoken language of Assyrians themselves. Neo-Babylonian bricks with stamps in cuneiform giving the name of Nebuchadnezzar II (r. 604–562 B.C.) sometimes also carry Aramaic graffiti added by their makers.¹⁹ By the Achaemenid period Aramaic had largely supplanted the Assyrian and Babylonian dialects of Akkadian. Surviving ink on a small number of examples reveals that Aramaic colophons were sometimes written on Babylonian cuneiform tablets, summarizing their contents for ease of retrieval.²⁰ As spoken language changed and the temples became less important politically, cuneiform became increasingly restricted to temple contexts until eventually ancient temples, particularly Babylon's Esagila, became the last major custodians of Akkadian and Sumerian scholarship. Late Babylonian texts reveal the continuing efforts by scribes to copy and sustain traditional canons of

Mesopotamian literature, including Sumerian texts with copyists' errors that suggest this language was no longer well understood even by many scribes. Sumerian had not been a native spoken language since around 2000 B.C. but survived as a literary language and in religious ritual to the very end of the cuneiform tradition. It is also from this period that almost all direct evidence for efforts to copy cuneiform texts into other scripts and languages survives. Of particular interest are the "Graeco-Babyloniaca," a small group of tablets featuring Greek and cuneiform inscriptions (cat. 176).²¹ In addition, the period is a rich one for scientific texts. Mathematics, astronomy, astrology, and medicine are all well represented among late tablets, and much of their content survived the end of cuneiform because it was copied into Greek and Aramaic. The proof of this survival is found in Greek and Arabic mathematical, astronomical, and medical texts.²² This is not to say that elements of Mesopotamian literary texts did not survive into other scripts, languages, and traditions—they did so in profound ways—but this process was more organic and had begun much earlier, in the Late Bronze and Iron Ages (cat. 175). Indeed, ancient Middle Eastern and Graeco-Roman mythology are increasingly seen as deeply interconnected from an early stage.²³

The very latest dated cuneiform texts are astronomical almanacs (cat. 177). Practical administrative texts disappear earlier, with the last examples in the early first century B.C.,²⁴ and even these are outliers: the use of cuneiform for everyday purposes outside the temple institutions had long since ceased. The latest securely datable cuneiform tablet currently known was written in the year 79–80.²⁵ Interestingly, this text

comes from Uruk, and if the dating is correct, it shows that even in the late first-century cuneiform was not confined only to the city of Babylon, though it also presents a puzzle since by this date Uruk's major temples were no longer in use.²⁶ One possibility is that at Uruk the preservation of cuneiform was an important part of the cultural identity of an old urban elite whose families had traditionally staffed and controlled the temples—the groups at Uruk and Babylon who sometimes seem to be identified as "Chaldaeans" in the Greek sources.²⁷

Consciousness of antiquity also played a role outside the temples. There are many indications in the Seleucid and Parthian periods that connections with the ancient past remained important even as fundamental institutions and religious practices changed. A striking example comes from the site of Telloh (ancient Girsu), best known for the discovery of multiple statues of the late third-millennium B.C. ruler Gudea of Lagash (r. ca. 2144–2124 B.C.). A group of seven of these statues was in fact found in the courtyard of a second-century B.C. palace, where they had been placed some 2,000 years after their manufacture (and another 2,000 years before their discovery by archaeologists). Not only did the courtyard contain these sculptures and fragments of other ancient statues, but its walls had been laid out to match those of Gudea located beneath—a pious practice often seen (or at least claimed in building inscriptions) in ancient Mesopotamian temple restorations. The builder, Adad-nadin-ahi, also continued the ancient tradition of having his name impressed on the surfaces of bricks, though rather than Sumerian or Akkadian cuneiform, his inscriptions were in Aramaic and Greek.²⁸

164. Statuette of Standing Nude Goddess

1st century B.C.-1st century A.D.

Alabaster, gold, stucco, rubies, bitumen, H. 10¹/₄ in. (26 cm), W. 1¹⁵/₁₆ in. (5 cm), D. 1¹⁵/₁₆ in. (5 cm)

Babylon

Musée du Louvre, Paris (AO 20127)

165. Statuette of Standing Nude Goddess

Ca. 2nd century B.C.-2nd century A.D.

Gypsum alabaster, H. 10⁵/₈ in. (27 cm), W. 4 in. (10.1 cm), D. 1⁷/₈ in. (4.7 cm)

Said to be from Ctesiphon

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Wolfe Expedition, Purchase, Catharine Lorillard Wolfe Gift (1886, 86.16.1)

166. Statuette of Reclining Nude Goddess

1st century B.C.-1st century A.D.

Alabaster, glass, H. 4³/₁₆ in. (10.8 cm), W. 7¹/₁₆ in. (18 cm)

Babylon

Musée du Louvre, Paris (AO 20131)

167. Statuette of Reclining Nude Goddess

Ca. 2nd century B.C.-2nd century A.D.

Gypsum alabaster, H. 2⁷/₈ in. (73 cm), W. 6⁷/₈ in. (175 cm), D. 2¹/₄ in. (5.7 cm)

Said to be from Ctesiphon

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Wolfe Expedition, Purchase, Catharine Lorillard Wolfe Gift (1886, 86.16.3)

Nude goddess imagery had a long history in Mesopotamia, carrying connotations of fertility and sexuality but the forms that emerged in the Seleucid and Parthian periods were different from any produced before.¹ Body shapes derived from Graeco-Roman sculpture were adapted to the needs of Mesopotamian religious imagery, resulting in distinctive categories of standing and reclining nude goddess figures. The composite nature of the statues and their use of inlaid materials such as eyes were normal for Mesopotamia, but the combination of these elements with the rounded shapes of Classical and Hellenistic statuary is striking. Similarly, an otherwise classically Graeco-Roman head of a sphinx from Heliopolis-Baalbek (cat. 91) features large holes for over-lifesize inlaid eyes and pierced ears.

The standing figure (cat. 164) discovered in a Parthian-period grave at Babylon is an outstanding example that preserves inlays, a gold necklace, pendant earrings, stucco hair topped with a lunar crescent, and the lower parts of the arms that were originally connected by gold wire. The inlaid eyes and navel are particularly striking: fixed





in place with bitumen, they are the earliest known rubies in the Middle East.² The rubies probably came from Myanmar, attesting to the sea trade that linked India, the Persian Gulf, Arabia, and the Mediterranean (see also cats. 126–29).³

The second standing goddess (cat. 165) shares the pierced attachments by which the arms are joined and the same gesture, left hand held out palm up, perhaps originally to hold an object.⁴ This gesture also recurs in other statuettes with surviving forearms.⁵ The stone's surface is abraded, but traces of hatched, incised lines are visible as white marks around the waist, in a vertical line running down her abdomen, and in vertical lines on her thighs. What look like folds in the flesh of her neck were more likely ornate collars, and yellow marks at her shoulders may be traces of an attached pectoral collar (cat. 164; fig. 89).

The complete reclining goddess (cat. 166) also has red eyes, but in this case the inlaid material is red glass. The other reclining goddess (cat. 167) is identically posed but with more rounded features and is carved in a golden alabaster.⁶ This type of sculpture seems to combine the pose of reclining male figures in banquet scenes (cat. 112) with the iconography of nude goddesses, who had always been presented frontally and standing in earlier Mesopotamian art. Further examples preserve traces of pigment that show that the nipples and pubic areas of such nude goddess statuettes were added in paint: how frequently these features were added in Graeco-Roman sculpture is unclear, but certainly there was an essential need to include them in the representation of Mesopotamian nude goddesses.⁷

Both of the complete statuettes wear lunar crescents on their heads, leading to the suggestion that they may be associated with the goddess Nanaya, daughter of the moon god Sin.⁸ Nanaya was a very popular deity in this period, but the lunar crescent is not a reliable indicator, as it appears to have been associated with many goddesses, and other images of Nanaya, both earlier and in the Parthian period, are clothed (cat. 168).⁹ At Babylon, Ishtar was the most prominent goddess in the late period alongside Marduk's consort, Zarpanitu, and texts show Ishtar being identified with Nanaya and even Zarpanitu.¹⁰ Given that both nudity and an identification with the Greek nude goddess Aphrodite were longstanding characteristics of Ishtar, it seems more likely that the two figures from Babylon (cats. 164, 166) represent that goddess. The horns of the lunar crescents might also echo the earlier Mesopotamian practice of giving bulls' horns



to images of divinities,¹¹ but this interpretation is uncertain. While all nude female statuettes of this type almost certainly represented goddesses, only a few have lunar crescents, and none have the more traditional horns typical of representations of deities produced in earlier periods.

1. Bahrani 1993; Bahrani 1996. 2. Calligaro et al. 1999; Tallon 1999; Antonio Invernizzi in André-Salvini 2008, p. 282, no. 250. 3. Scientific analysis matched the rubies most strongly to Myanmar but did not rule

out Sri Lanka as a possibility; see Calligaro et al. 1999, p. 220. 4. Osten 1926, pp. 170, 173, figs. 1, 2. 5. Bahrani 2017, p. 329. 6. Osten 1926, p. 173, figs. 4, 5. 7. Bahrani 1996, p. 14, fig. 10. 8. Antonio Invernizzi in André-Salvini 2008, p. 282, no. 250. 9. Ambos 2003, figs. 3–6 (Hatra), 9–11 (Palmyra), 12–15, 17 (Parthian coins), 18 (Tang-e Sarvak). Ambos sees the nude female statuettes found in tombs, including cat. 164, as representations of the deceased; see *ibid.*, pp. 243–44, fig. 7. 10. Asher-Greve and Westenholz 2013, pp. 105, 121–31. 11. Bahrani 2017, p. 328.



168. Statuette of Standing Female Figure

1st-2nd century

Calcite alabaster(?), stucco, pigment. H. 18 1/8 in. (46 cm), W. 6 5/16 in. (16 cm), D. 3 1/8 in. (8 cm)

Birs Nimrud (ancient Borsippa)

The Trustees of the British Museum, London (ME 91593)

This large statuette is augmented with elements in plaster, and some traces of paint survive: black in the fringe and eyebrows; red horizontal bands across the neck, probably representing necklace collars (see also cats. 164–65); and traces of red and pink on parts of the clothing.¹ The figure wears Greek costume, a long himation wrapped around her head and body and over her shoulder above a floor-length chiton. Her left hand holds a fold of the garment, and her right palm is pressed to her chest. Parts of her himation and hair as well as the large oval pendant terminating in a lunar crescent worn on her chest are modeled in stucco. The figure could represent a goddess or a worshipper or priestess, but the former seems most likely: drill holes at the nipples and navel suggest the maker was representing a clothed body based on a Graeco-Roman model while preserving essential features of a Mesopotamian nude female goddess.

The most likely identification for the figure is the goddess Nanaya, with aspects of her appearance drawing on the iconography of Artemis. The statuette was found at the site of Birš Nimrud, the ancient city of Borsippa, near Babylon. Where Babylon was the seat of the god Marduk, Borsippa's patron deity was Marduk's son Nabu, a god of writing and invention. Nabu's temple, Ezida, was still in use in the Seleucid period: a foundation cylinder of Antiochos I Soter (r. 281–261 B.C.) attests to that king's building work at the site in 268 B.C., and other texts confirm that cuneiform scribal activity continued there.² Nabu seems to have been identified by Greek writers with Apollo,³ and his consort by this period was Nanaya. Although the lunar crescent is too common to be definitive (cats. 164, 166), it was strongly associated with Nanaya as a moon goddess, who was also identified with Artemis, another lunar goddess who was depicted veiled.

Excavated in the late nineteenth century, the statuette's findspot within Borsippa is unknown. The best comparator is a sculpture from Seleucia on the Tigris that was found in a house, where it may have been the cult image in a small domestic shrine (fig. 89).⁴ The two statuettes are similar in costume and pose, and the surviving pink and red pigment



Fig. 89 Statuette of a woman, 1st-2nd century. Limestone, marble, stucco. Seleucia on the Tigris. Iraq Museum, Baghdad

on their clothing is also comparable, as are the inlaid eyes. The Seleucia example, however, does not wear a veil or the crescent pendant and does not have the piercings at nipples and navel of the Borsippa statuette, and the two may well represent different deities.

1. Reade 1986, pp. 112, 115–16, pl. 18; Menegazzi 2005, pp. 87–88, fig. 14; Ariela Bollati in Messina and Invernizzi 2007, pp. 164–65, no. 68; Bahrani 2017, pp. 338–40, fig. 14.18. 2. Wetzel, Schmidt, and Mallwitz 1957, p. 72, no. 25 (dated 269 B.C.); Downey 1988, p. 15. 3. Strabo, *Geography*, 16.1.6, gives Apollo and Artemis as the deities of Borsippa. 4. Invernizzi 1973–74, pp. 200–210; Grajetzki 2011, p. 39. See also another headless example in the British Museum, London, 1889,0426.212, which is similar in form (Reade 1986, p. 115), and in terracotta votives from Seleucia (Elarth 1939, pp. 99–100, pl. 15; Menegazzi 2005).



169 (original)



169 (reconstruction)

169. Babylon Theater Frieze Fragments with Modern Reconstruction

2nd century

Stucco, H. 11 in. (28 cm), W. 60⁵/₈ in. (154 cm), D. 4³/₄ in. (12 cm)

Babylon

Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Vorderasiatisches Museum (VA Bab 7559 [original]; VAG 1380 [reconstruction])

170. Sasanian Wall Decoration with Geometric and Vegetal Design

6th century

Stucco, H. 8¹/₂ in. (21.6 cm), W. 15 in. (38.1 cm)

Ctesiphon

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Rogers Fund, 1932 (32.150.12)

After the Macedonian conquests and the fall of the Achaemenid Persian Empire in 331 B.C., Babylon was initially envisaged as Alexander's (r. 336–323 B.C.) capital in Asia. A massive project was begun to clear rubble and rebuild the ziggurat Etemenanki, but Alexander died in the city in 323 B.C., with the work still in its preliminary stages.¹ Alexander's successors, the Seleucid kings, established their capitals at Seleucia on the Tigris and Antioch, but Babylon continued as an important city, with new features and new social practices appearing alongside the ancient institutions.

One of the first Greek-style theaters in the Middle East was built in Babylon, perhaps even begun during Alexander's lifetime,² as were other structures, including a Greek agora (marketplace). The theater, constructed in part with bricks recycled from the great Neo-Babylonian building projects of Nebuchadnezzar II (r. 604–562 B.C.), had a long life.



170



Fig. 90 Gypsum plaster capital with green and white pigment. Late 1st-early 2nd century. Uruk, Parthian house, room 14. The Trustees of the British Museum, London (ME 92236)

First constructed in the fourth century B.C., it underwent multiple renovations in the Seleucid and Parthian periods.³ The theater seems to have been known in Babylonian as the *bit tamartu*, “house of observation.” Its presence implies more than just the performance of Greek plays: the theater was a key civic and political institution in the Greek world, and cuneiform texts suggest it was used on at least some occasions as a meeting place for the *politai* (Greek citizens of Babylon) and the *pahatu* (governor) of the city.⁴

Stucco panels, cast in molds or hand carved with geometric and vegetal designs, formed a major category in Parthian architectural decoration. They can be seen in the Parthian palace at Ashur (cats. 155–56) as well as in the iwans and reception rooms of Parthian houses at Uruk (fig. 90). This stucco (fine plaster) frieze from the theater (cat. 169) dates to quite late in the Parthian period.⁵ Its design shows the same kind of decorative stuccowork that is better known from later, Sasanian architecture in Mesopotamia; parallels can be seen in sixth-century stuccos from Ctesiphon (cat. 170). Smaller fragments from the theater stuccos retain pigment: traces of red and yellow ochre that help to provide a sense of the original appearance of this decoration. Recent analysis of stuccos from Uruk has revealed additional traces of what was originally very bright color: red and yellow ochre, carbon black, white gypsum, green earth, a madder-based pink, and Egyptian blue.⁶

1. Sachs and Hunger 1988, pp. 204–7, pl. 34; C. Walker 1997. 2. Van der Spek 2001, p. 446. 3. Mallwitz 1957, pp. 19–22; Invernizzi 2008, pp. 252–53; Potts 2011. 4. Potts 2011, pp. 246–48. 5. Schmidt 1941, pp. 835–36; Mallwitz 1957, pp. 15–16, pl. 22a. 6. On the Uruk stuccos, St J. Simpson et al. 2012.



171. Glazed Brick

Ca. 1st-2nd century
 Ceramic, glaze, H. 5½ in. (14 cm), W. 12½ in. (31.8 cm), D. 3⅙ in. (7.8 cm)
 Ctesiphon
 The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Rogers Fund, 1932 (32.150.17)

172. Glazed Brick

Ca. 1st-2nd century
 Ceramic, glaze, H. 5⅞ in. (13.6 cm), W. 12½ in. (31.8 cm), D. 3 in. (7.6 cm)
 Ctesiphon
 The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Rogers Fund, 1932 (32.150.18)

The Metropolitan Museum of Art participated in excavations at Ctesiphon together with the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin in 1931–32. Houses of the Sasanian elite were discovered there, and the Museum received objects in the division of finds, including an important group of late Sasanian stuccos (cat. 170). Almost no remains dating to the



Parthian period were found, and today the exact location of the Parthian imperial capital of Ctesiphon within the larger area called al-Mada'in ("the Cities") remains uncertain. The few Parthian-period fragments recovered, such as these glazed bricks, were occasional finds or purchases from workmen without any identified architectural context, although they have close parallels across the river at Seleucia on the Tigris.¹ The bricks are decorated with grapevines with leaves, tendrils, and grapes. These motifs are drawn originally from Greek Dionysiac imagery (cats. 84, 130) but here are more stylized, with the tendrils forming neat roundels around the grapes and leaves (cat. 169). The same motif would continue in Sasanian art, where it was probably associated not with Dionysos but with Zoroastrian concepts of abundance, balance in nature, and seasonal regeneration.

1. Kröger 1982, p. 286, nos. 297, 298, pls. 104.1–3.



173. Astronomical Calendar with Drawings Showing Signs of the Zodiac

Early 2nd century B.C.

Clay, H. 3¹³/₁₆ in. (9.7 cm), W. 6¹³/₁₆ in. (17.3 cm), D. 1 in. (2.6 cm)

Uruk

Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Vorderasiatisches Museum, Berlin (VAT 7847)

This is one of very few surviving cuneiform tablets to feature drawings, and one of the earliest images in any context of signs of the zodiac. The register of drawings, each labeled, shows Jupiter (an eight-pointed star), the constellation Hydra (the forepart of a dragon with the body and tail of a snake), and Leo (a lion). A second fragment of the same tablet (fig. 91) shows the constellation Corvus (a crow catching a snake), Mercury (a second eight-pointed star), and Virgo (a female figure carrying barley). The text is known as Zodiac Tablet 2 and contains omens, predictions, and a table associating cities with particular forms of wood, plants, and stones as well as the zodiac.¹ The drawing shows a specific celestial moment, with Jupiter in its “hidden place” (*bit nisirti*) at the high point of its ecliptic, shown by its position relative to Leo, a point at which the planet had particular astrological significance; the concept survived in Greek astrology as *hyp-soma*.² The tablet’s own dating formula places it in the reign of a Seleucid emperor named Antiochos, but from this alone it would not be clear which Antiochos is meant. Fortunately the tablet was owned by a scribe whose name Anu-abi-uterri also appears in other texts dating between 194 and 181 B.C., placing it in the reign of Antiochos III (r. 223–187 B.C.).

The underlying theory of Mesopotamian omens was that the natural world was produced by the gods and contained within it all the signs needed to read the destiny of humanity, if only humanity had enough knowledge to interpret them.³ To this end, scholars gathered huge collections of observations: discolorations of livers from animal sacrifices, patterns in the flight of birds, and, crucially, the movement of astral bodies. It was for this reason that Babylonia had by far the most extensive and detailed collections of astronomical observations in the ancient world, centuries of accurate data that even now help to assign absolute dates to ancient events.

While both the zodiac and horoscopes originated in Babylonia, their use in combination may be a product of the spread of both ideas through the noncuneiform world in the final centuries B.C. and first centuries A.D. The zodiac was originally developed as a means of dividing the night sky into twelve consistent units for astronomical observation. Predictions based on astral omens were an idea very deeply rooted in Mesopotamian culture, but such auguries traditionally concerned only the king and the state: there is no known example of a horoscope produced for a private individual prior to the Achaemenid period.⁴ During the Parthian and

Roman period, the imagery of the zodiac became widespread, as can be seen in examples such as the Nabataean sanctuary at Khirbet et-Tannur (cats. 48–49) and possibly at the Dura-Europos synagogue (cat. 136). Even more importantly, though evidence for the process is indirect, Babylonian astronomical texts were copied into Greek and probably Aramaic, with the result that much Babylonian astronomical knowledge survived, underpinning Greek and, later, early Islamic astronomy.⁵

1. Weidner 1967, pp. 12–34; Béatrice André-Salvini in André-Salvini 2008, pp. 344–45, no. 315; Finkel and Seymour 2008, p. 196, fig. 183. 2. Steele 2016a, pp. 54–55, fig. II-7. 3. Van De Mierop 2016a, pp. 87–142. 4. Rochberg 2004, p. 204. 5. *Ibid.*, pp. 237–44; Finkel and Seymour 2008, p. 193, fig. 180.



Fig. 91 Another fragment of the tablet, with images of Corvus, Mercury, and Virgo. Musée du Louvre, Paris (AO 6448)



174. Late Babylonian Grammatical Text

Late 1st millennium B.C.

Clay, H. $3\frac{3}{16}$ in. (8.1 cm), W. $2\frac{9}{16}$ in. (6.5 cm), D. $\frac{7}{8}$ in. (2.2 cm)

Mesopotamia, probably Babylon

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Purchase, 1886 (86.11.61)

Throughout ancient Mesopotamian history, two languages, Sumerian and Akkadian, were used by scribes and studied together. Sumerian probably became extinct as a spoken language by around 2000 B.C. but survived in literary and ritual contexts, and even at the end of the cuneiform tradition Sumerian was still learned and copied by scribes. By the time this document was written, Akkadian, too, was no longer spoken, but temple scribes still needed to learn both languages. Each side of this text, which formed part of a grammatical series, has Sumerian entries in the left column with their Akkadian translations in the right, giving examples of imperative clauses; particles such as pronouns, adverbs, and conjunctions; and numbers. A colophon names the scribe who wrote the tablet: Bel-upaqa, son of Bibbua.¹

1. Langdon 1917; Landsberger 1956, pp. 163–65; Miguel Civil in Spar and Lambert 2005, pp. 244–47, no. 61, pls. 78, 79.

175. Cuneiform Tablet: A Balag to Inanna-Ishtar

Ca. 2nd-1st century B.C.
Clay, H. 3⁷/₈ in. (10 cm), W. 3¹/₄ in. (8.3 cm), D. 1 in. (2.4 cm)
Mesopotamia, probably Babylon
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Purchase, 1886 (86.11.286a)

By the Parthian period, Sumerian had been dead as a spoken language for almost 2,000 years, but Sumerian texts were kept alive in temple ritual and scribal culture, copied and recited aloud, until the very end of the cuneiform tradition. This tablet contains part of an ancient lamentation song of a type known as a *balag* after the stringed instrument that accompanied it.¹ It is written in the voice of the goddess Inanna-Ishtar as she laments the destruction and ruin of her cities and shrines. Like many *balags*, this one seems to lack a specific historical context for the destruction, though the goddess names several of the most important temples at Babylon and Uruk. She mourns her reduced condition:

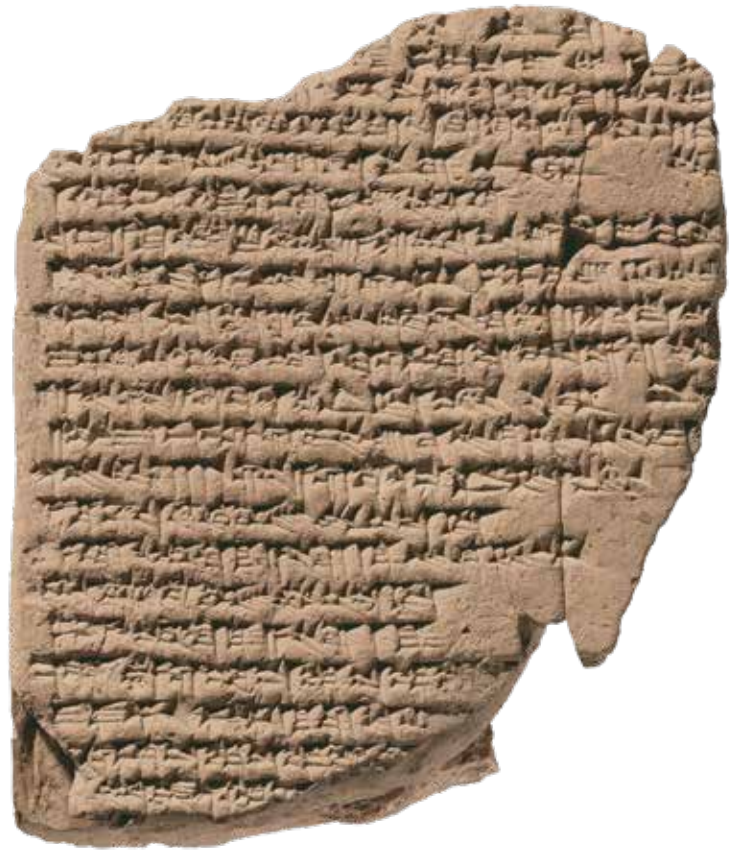
He (i.e., the enemy) has humbled my [sp]ouse; he has [humbled] my child.

[My property] (and) my jewelry have been brought to an end.

M[y plundered goods] have been brought to an end like a dead man.

[He has destro]yed [the cattle pen]; he has up[rooted] the sheepfold.

This tablet is one of a group that comes from the archive of a family that produced several temple singers.² The song is written in a specialized dialect of Sumerian, called Emesal, which is strongly associated in literature with female voices.³ The lamentations may once have been sung by women but over time seem to have become the province of male cultic professionals, specialized lamentation singers called *gala* in Sumerian or *kalu* in Akkadian. Literary sources suggest that these singers had ambiguous gender and sexual identities as part of a professional role that explicitly crossed gender boundaries.⁴



Lamentations were sung at different times in the cultic calendar and seem to have served a protective, apotropaic function. Notably, they were sung as part of the ritual around temple restoration activities, where their theme of temples falling into ruin would have resonated. In this context they might have worked to assuage divine anger when elements of the temple were demolished at the beginning of rebuilding.⁵ Tablets such as this were intended for performance (some are labeled “copied for recitation” in their colophons) and included interpolated lines with Akkadian translations of some of the ancient Sumerian lyrics.

1. Black 1985; Cohen 1988, pp. 11–87; Stefan M. Maul in Spar and Lambert 2005, pp. 57–63, no. 7, pls. 12, 13. 2. Whittaker 2002. 3. Black 1991; Cooper 2006, pp. 44–45. 4. Maul 2005, p. 11. 5. *Ibid.*, p. 12.



176. TINTIR = Babylon Tablet I in Babylonian and Greek

Ca. 1st century B.C.

Clay, H. $4\frac{13}{16}$ in. (12.2 cm), W. $3\frac{3}{8}$ in. (8.6 cm), D. $1\frac{1}{16}$ in. (2.7 cm)

Babylon

The Trustees of the British Museum, London (ME Sp-II.291 / 34798)

In the final centuries of the great Mesopotamian temples, scribes habitually worked in scripts and languages that were no longer used outside the sanctuaries themselves. Even at the height of the Neo-Assyrian Empire in the eighth century B.C., Aramaic written in alphabetic script was displacing Akkadian cuneiform in many contexts; by the Parthian period the historic temple institutions of Mesopotamia were the last bastions of cuneiform script. During this period information from Babylonian texts was transferred from cuneiform into other scripts and media, as is evidenced by the survival of astronomical, mathematical, and medical information into Greek and Aramaic traditions. This tablet

is one of the few that may show this process in action, with Greek text appearing alongside Babylonian.¹ These texts are collectively referred to as “Graeco-Babyloniaca.”

One face of the tablet bears part of an important Babylonian religious and topographical text known as *TINTIR* = *Babylon*, which gives the many names of the city of Babylon and its temples.² Such lists and the etymology of names were at the heart of Mesopotamian theology. Their meanings depended on a knowledge of Akkadian, Sumerian, and the scope for multiple readings of a sign or group of signs facilitated by the cuneiform script—that is, they relied on the use of cuneiform script rather than any other writing system for a significant part of their meaning.³ The reverse of the tablet, however, shows part of the same text written in alphabetic Greek.

TINTIR = *Babylon* was part of the standard Babylonian scribal teaching curriculum; here, it seems to have been used by a scribe trained in Greek learning to read Babylonian texts. The ultimate result of such efforts was the transmission of Babylonian scientific knowledge—from huge collections of astronomical observations to compendia of medical omens—into Greek. Whether such efforts were individual endeavors or larger, coordinated projects is unclear.

In order to read the Greek on the reverse, the tablet is turned on its vertical axis, as one might turn the page of a book, rather than being flipped end to end on its horizontal axis as was normal for Mesopotamian tablets.⁴ This hints at the writer’s usual habit and thus suggests that the tablet was written not by a Babylonian experimenting with Greek but by someone not accustomed to working in cuneiform, though perhaps not a native Greek speaker. Aspects of the Greek texts of the Graeco-Babyloniaca suggest that the writers were native speakers of Semitic languages.⁵ All known Graeco-Babyloniaca come from Babylon itself. This may be an accident of survival, but it is also reasonable to think that scholars attempting to gather knowledge of cuneiform texts might come primarily to the city that had for so long been a great center of cuneiform scholarship.

1. Westenholz 2007, p. 262, n. 2, counts sixteen clear examples and a few questionable possibilities. 2. George 1992, MS C, pl. 6; Geller 1997, pp. 82–83, no. 16; Westenholz 2007, p. 273, no. 16; George 2008, p. 60, fig. 42 3. Van De Mieroop 2016a; Van De Mieroop 2016b. 4. Westenholz 2007, p. 273. 5. Clancier 2011, p. 769.

177. Cuneiform Tablet: Astronomical Almanac

Ca. 31–32

Clay, H. 3 1/8 in. (8 cm), W. 2 7/8 in. (7.2 cm), D. 7/8 in. (2.2 cm)

Probably Babylon

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Purchase, 1886 (86.11.354)

The latest cuneiform texts that can be securely dated are astronomical documents written in the first century A.D.¹ Almost all examples come from Babylon, where Esagila, the temple of Babylon's patron deity Marduk, continued to function until at least this period. The almanacs give predictions for a variety of phenomena including key points in the moon's visibility over each lunar month; positions of the five planets (Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn); and information on solar and lunar eclipses. This tablet contains an astronomical almanac for the year 31–32 and contains all these elements, though it lacks the predictions for solstices and equinoxes found in other almanacs.² The epigraph to this text invokes Bel and Beltiya—"lord" and "lady," Marduk and his consort, Zarpanitu—emphasizing the cultic setting.

1. Sachs 1976; Geller 1997; Hunger and T. Jong 2014. Surprisingly, the very latest known text, dating to 79–80, comes not from Babylon but from Uruk; see *ibid.* 2. Sachs 1976; Christopher B. F. Walker in Spar and Lambert 2005, pp. 338–42, no. 83, pls. 109, 110.

178. Figurine of Horse and Rider

Ca. 150 B.C.

Nippur, Temple of Inanna

Ceramic, pigment, H. 6 3/4 in. (17.1 cm), W. 2 1/16 in. (5.3 cm), D. 4 9/16 in. (11.5 cm)

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Rogers Fund, 1959 (59.41.23)

The temple of the goddess Inanna at Nippur dates back to at least the early third millennium B.C. and was in use, rebuilt in successive periods, for 3,000 years, into the Parthian period.¹ This figurine was found in the Parthian-period temple.² Simple handmade clay figurines and mold-made plaques had been a common form of votive dedication throughout Mesopotamian history, and this example was probably dedicated to the goddess by a worshipper as an offering at the temple. The bearded rider wears a cloak and a high headdress or crested helmet whose shape resembles the miters seen in the coin portraits of Parthian kings. The very schematically rendered horse is only identifiable as such through comparison with similar figurines at Nippur and elsewhere.³ The figurine was originally painted, and traces of red and black pigment are still visible on both horse and rider.



1. Downey 1988, pp. 144–47. 2. Evans 2010, pp. 26–27, fig. 38. 3. E.g., Olsen and Culbertson 2012, p. 121, fig. 87.



179. Slipper Coffin

1st-2nd century

Glazed ceramic, H. 14⁹/₁₆ in. (37 cm), W. 23⁵/₈ in. (60 cm), L. 78³/₈ in. (199 cm)

Nippur

Yale Babylonian Collection, Yale Peabody Museum of Natural History, New Haven (YBC 2259)

This coffin is one of a group found during the University of Pennsylvania's late nineteenth-century excavations at the site of Nippur in southern Iraq—the first American excavations in Mesopotamia.¹ Slipper coffins are a common feature of Parthian-period burials in Mesopotamia. They were made and fired in kilns in ways similar to ceramic vessels and covered with the same distinctive blue-green glaze (cats. 141, 154), though their larger size made their assembly, glazing, movement, and firing far more challenging. Gaps and drip patterns in the glaze show that the coffins were glazed and fired while standing upright on their “feet.” Even once fired, the coffins would have been fragile, and for this reason it is likely that they were always made for local use.² The wide opening at the top of the coffin was probably originally covered with a lid, made and decorated in the same manner.³ The coffins share a fairly small set of motifs in their relief decoration, a combination of bands of geometric patterning and mold-made human imagery. In this case, the figures depicted are nude females, representations of a goddess who at Nippur might be Inanna (cats. 164–67). Other coffins show schematic figures of male warriors or figures reclining on banqueting couches.

Nippur was an important city throughout ancient Mesopotamian history: the city's Ekur temple was the home of the god Enlil, head of the early Mesopotamian pantheon during



the third and second millennia B.C. Long before southern Mesopotamia became unified under any single ruler, the other Mesopotamian city-states made regular donations to Ekur, giving Nippur a unique importance, and as at Uruk and Babylon some of Nippur's temples were incredibly long-lived. The city had significant occupation in the Parthian period, though there may have been a gap in occupation in the last centuries B.C., and the evidence for continuity is mixed:⁴ a Parthian fortress was built over Ekur in the late first century A.D., suggesting it had ceased functioning as a sacred site some time earlier.⁵ On the other hand, the city's Inanna temple seems to have been rebuilt, as a temple and on a traditional plan, during the same period.⁶

1. Lawson 2006a; Lawson 2006b. 2. Middleton, St J. Simpson, and A. Simpson 2008, p. 35. 3. Loftus 1857, p. 205; J. Curtis 1979, p. 310, pl. 1. 4. Downey 1988, p. 144. 5. The building of a large fortress at Nippur probably reflects a Parthian attempt to contain and control the kingdom of Characene and the key port of Charax; see Keall 1975. 6. Downey 1988, pp. 145-46.



180. Standing Man

Ca. 2nd century

Calcareous sandstone, H. 30¹/₄ in. (76.8 cm), W. 15³/₄ in. (40.1 cm),

D. 4¹/₂ in. (11.4 cm)

Southwestern Iran

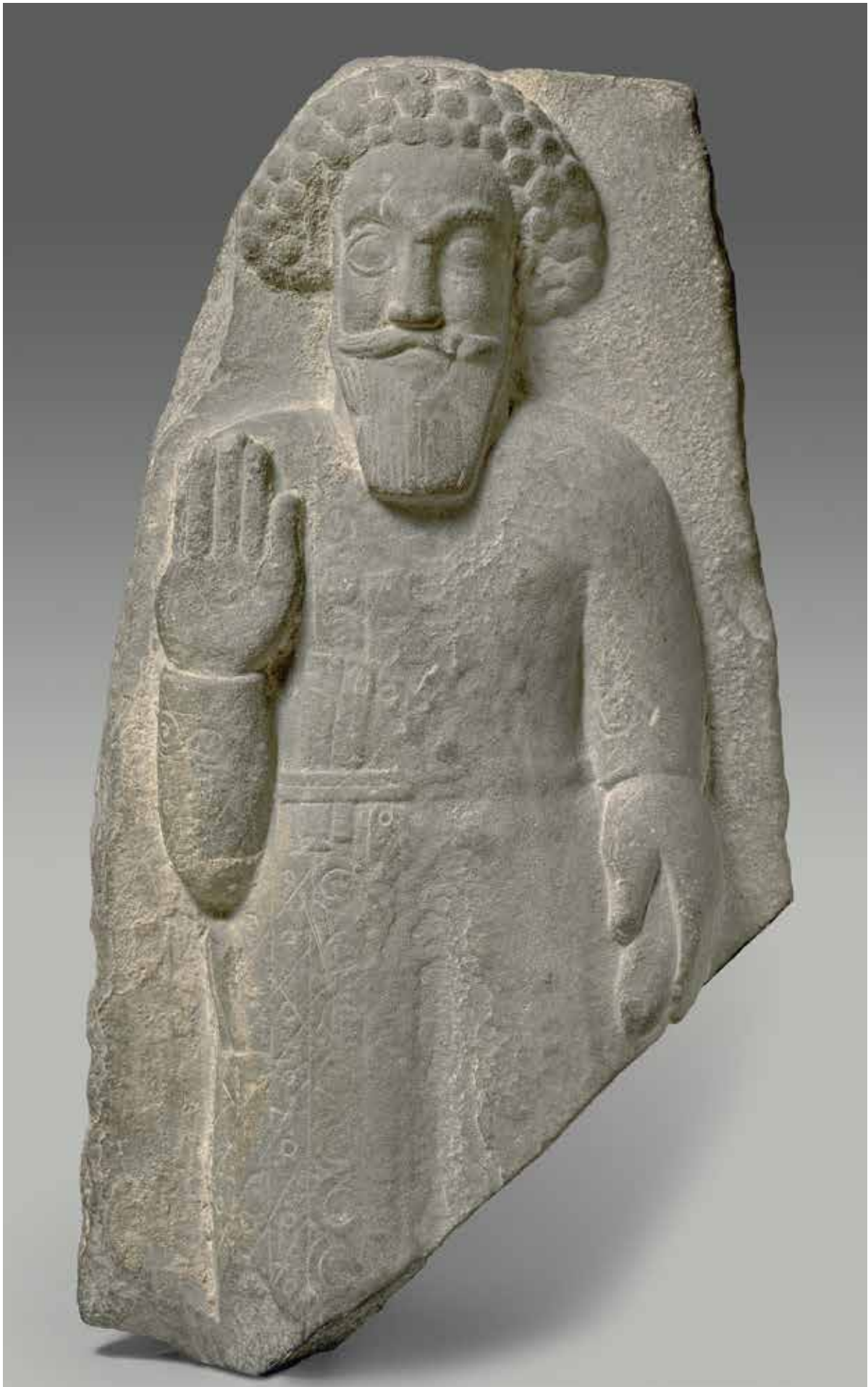
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Rogers Fund, 1951 (51.72.1)

While the Zagros Mountains formed a strong natural border between most of Mesopotamia and Iran, the lowland Khuzestan Plain in southwestern Iran connected directly to the Mesopotamian alluvial plain, and the two regions had considerable direct contact and interchange throughout antiquity. During the Parthian period, the area was the kingdom of Elymais, a semiautonomous state within the Parthian Empire.¹ Elymais's ties to the Syro-Mesopotamian world are reflected both in the Elymaean Aramaic used in inscriptions and the style of sculpture that emerged in the area in this period. Characteristics that are sometimes considered typically "Parthian," such as the strict frontality seen in this sculpture, are probably better understood as developing specifically as part of a shared visual language in Syria, Mesopotamia, and western Iran in the Parthian period (see pp. 4–6).

The figure raises his right hand in what is probably a gesture of prayer or reverence: the same gesture is seen in statues of kings at Hatra (fig. 79) as well as in rock reliefs from Elymais itself at sites such as Tang-e Sarvak. It also appears on some southwestern Arabian and Palmyrene funerary portraits of women (cat. 117). In style and iconography, the

image has similarities to sculptures from the Temple of Herakles-Verethragna at Masjid-e Suleiman and, like them, was probably made for dedication in a religious setting.² The large head and hands, full beard and mustache, and enlarged eyes, as well as the "Parthian" hairstyle rendered in rows of spiral curls, are typical. The figure is carved in low relief, with incised details showing lozenge, circle, and spiral patterns visible on the body and cuff of a long belted tunic with fitted sleeves; this garment would have been knee-length and worn over trousers (cats. 109–10).³ Tucked into his belt are two book-rolls (cats. 119–22). The object in his left hand is badly eroded and unclear, but comparison with sculpture from Masjid-e Suleiman suggests it was originally a leaf.⁴ A leaf or branch seems to have been an appropriate attribute for religious contexts not only in this region but more widely, with examples at Palmyra (cats. 112, 116) and Hatra (fig. 79) among others.

1. Hansman 2011; Callieri and Chaverdi 2013, pp. 695–98. 2. Antonio Invernizzi in Seipel 2000, pp. 249–52, no. 139; Vito Messina in Messina and Invernizzi 2007, pp. 177–78, no. 91. 3. V. Curtis 1998; V. Curtis 2000; V. Curtis 2017. 4. Vito Messina in Messina and Invernizzi 2007, p. 177, no. 91.





CHANGING TIMES: THE RISE OF THE SASANIANS

FOR MORE THAN 250 YEARS THE BALANCE OF POWER BETWEEN the Parthian and Roman Empires defined the political map of the Middle East. During the early third century, however, the pattern began to change, as both empires weakened and new actors came to play important roles. By the middle of the century the Parthian Empire had ceased to exist and the Roman Empire had fractured, producing a dizzying succession of short-lived soldier-emperors in a period of turmoil known today as the crisis of the third century. A new power now controlled much of the Middle East: the Sasanian Empire, established by Ardashir I (r. ca. 224–241) and Shapur I (r. ca. 241–272).

In the early third century the Parthian kings' control of their immense empire was breaking down. The title of King of Kings was apparently contested for several years between the sons of Vologases IV (r. 191–208): Vologases V (r. ca. 208–228) and Artabanus IV (r. ca. 216–224) (cat. 18). The progress of this conflict can only be seen indirectly. Looking for a pretext to war, the Roman emperor Caracalla (r. 211–217) made demands to Vologase in 214 or 215, but then to Artabanus in 216, and it was against

Fig. 92 Rock-cut relief showing the investiture of Ardashir I (r. ca. 224–241). Ardashir (left) receives the kingship from the god Ahura Mazda (right). Ardashir's horse tramples the last Parthian king, Artabanus IV (r. ca. 216–224), while Ahura Mazda's horse tramples Ahriman, the negative power in Zoroastrian religion. After 224, Naqsh-e Rostam



Fig. 93 Gold dinar of Ardashir I, (r. 224–241). Iran, minted in Ecbatana (Hamadan). The Trustees of the British Museum, London (1862.1004.1)

Artabanus that Caracalla ultimately declared war. Caracalla's demands to Vologases related to the extradition of fugitives, which Vologases granted.¹ From Artabanus, Caracalla asked for the hand in marriage of the Parthian king's daughter, a symbolic unification of the two empires intended to evoke the memory of Alexander's (r. 336–323 B.C.) marriage to the Bactrian princess Stateira, daughter of the last Achaemenid king Darius III (r. 336–330 B.C.). Perhaps the most credible ancient account is that Artabanus simply refused this proposal,² although another version holds that he accepted it, only to be betrayed when the wedding party held at Ctesiphon turned out to be an ambush, with Caracalla's entourage massacring the unarmed Parthian nobles and Artabanus barely escaping with his life.³

Whatever the initial progress of the Roman invasion, it was halted when Caracalla was assassinated on the order of his chief bodyguard Macrinus (r. 217–218), who then declared himself emperor and attempted to end the war as quickly as possible. The Parthian position must have been strong, since Artabanus was in a position to reject an initial offer and to demand humiliating terms. Macrinus refused this offer, but following further fighting and a major battle at Nisibis in northern Mesopotamia, he agreed to a treaty in 218 that included Roman gifts to Artabanus and the Parthian lords worth 200 million sesterces.⁴

At the same time, another crisis had been developing in Pars (Fars) in southern Iran, the region that had been the homeland of the Achaemenid Persian kings in the sixth through fourth century B.C. and where Achaemenid monuments could still be seen in the form of royal tombs at Naqsh-e Rostam and Pasargadae and the ruins of Persepolis. A ruler in Pars named Ardashir had begun to expand his territory, annexing neighboring regions and gaining military strength.⁵ The Parthian Empire was effectively divided between Artabanus and Vologases,⁶ and while battling against each other and the Romans, both brothers may have recognized the new threat too late. In 224 a Parthian army was defeated and Artabanus killed in the Battle of

Hormozdgan, and his portion of the empire passed into Ardashir's hands (fig. 92). By 229 Ardashir had killed Vologases and assumed control of the remainder of the empire.⁷

Who was Ardashir? Around 205/6 a Parthian governor in Pars was overthrown by Pabag (r. 205/6–?), apparently a priest of the Temple of Anahita in the city of Istakhr⁸ whose sons had their own battle over succession. Pabag and his intended heir Shapur⁹ died in mysterious (and suspicious) circumstances¹⁰ before another son, Ardashir, ascended to the throne. The prevailing interpretation has been that Pabag's father was the Sasan for whom the Sasanian dynasty is named. However, an alternative tradition found in Roman sources, the *Shahnameh* (the Iranian epic of kings, written by Firdausi in the eleventh century but containing older material), and Armenian histories have made Ardashir the son of Sasan, and Pabag Ardashir's adoptive father.¹¹ In this version, Sasan was probably an Indo-Parthian prince, and therefore a member of one branch of the Arsacid royal family—meaning that Ardashir, too, was of Arsacid descent. If this interpretation is correct, it might explain the existence of both traditions, since the Arsacid connection would give the early Sasanian kings a clear incentive to develop a “cover story” to obscure it. Ardashir I and his son and successor Shapur I (r. 240–270/72) might have emphasized their connection to Pabag both to strengthen their local, Persian power base and to distance themselves from the Arsacid Parthian rulers who they overthrew.¹² This would certainly fit with a broader pattern of early Sasanian propaganda, in which rulers were at pains to differentiate themselves from their Parthian predecessors and to erase their memory, taking every opportunity to stress their Persian identity and building links to the monuments of earlier Achaemenid Persian kings.¹³ The need for such behavior would be greater if there were, in fact, strong connections to downplay.¹⁴

The rise of the Roman emperor Septimius Severus (r. 193–211), originally from Leptis Magna, and his wife Julia Domna, daughter of the high priest of Emesa in Syria, meant that from the late second-century Rome's imperial family was of North African and Syrian origin (see p. 9). Julia Domna played a major role in Severan political life, and it was her sister, Julia Maesa, who achieved the dynasty's return to power following the murder of Caracalla (son of Septimius Severus and Julia Domna). In order to secure his rule in Rome, Macrinus had exiled the Severan imperial family from the capital to their estates at Emesa (present-day



Fig. 94 Rock-cut relief showing the triumph of Shapur I (ca. 241-272) over the Roman emperors Philip the Arab (r. 244-249), who is kneeling, and Valerian (r. 253-260), 3rd century. Naqsh-i Rostam

Homs) in Syria. Here Julia Maesa immediately began planning the restoration of the dynasty, winning over eastern legions to form an army. Ultimately she was able to claim the throne for her fourteen-year-old grandson Sextus Varius Avitus Bassianus, known as Elagabalus (or Heliogabalus) (r. 218-222). The nickname comes from Elagabal (“god of the mountain”), whose cult at Emesa the young Elagabalus was the high priest.

Famously, Julia Maesa sent a portrait of Elagabalus to Rome, so that the new emperor might be recognized upon arrival. With its depiction of Elagabalus in eastern dress, sacrificing to the god Elagabal, the portrait had the effect of scandalizing the Senate.¹⁵ When he arrived in Rome, the emperor did nothing to dispel the Senate’s concerns, and ancient accounts instead suggest he used his position as a uniquely powerful platform for the cult of Emesene Elagabal. Combining this god with the cult of the sun that had been growing in popularity throughout the empire, Elagabal

became Sol Invictus (“the unconquered sun”), worshipped above even Jupiter as the official focus of imperial religion.¹⁶ The cult image of Elagabal, in fact a large black conical stone, was brought to Rome from Emesa and installed on the Palatine Hill in a grand new temple.¹⁷ The Roman descriptions and depictions on coins make clear that this stone was an aniconic baetyl, like those of southwestern Arabian and Nabataean religion (see pp. 28, 52-53; fig. 26).¹⁸

Elagabalus suffers from one of the most negative posthumous reputations of all Roman emperors. Some of this censure is probably deserved, but it is also likely that stories of his fluid gender and sexual identity and his taste for extreme luxury¹⁹ were exaggerated or willfully misunderstood to match with disapproval of his radical overturning of Roman religious customs. Some of the stories intended to emphasize his eccentricities sound similar to descriptions of normal features of ancient Middle Eastern religious practice, such as processions involving placing the stone of Elagabal

in a chariot.²⁰ Nonetheless, the ancient sources do strongly suggest that Elagabalus was supremely undiplomatic in his efforts: his own marriage to a vestal virgin, Julia Aquilia Severa, seems to have been part of his effort to integrate his own cult with those of Rome but also broke a longstanding sacred Roman taboo.²¹

Elagabalus's brief reign ended in assassination by the Praetorian Guard in 222, and his brother Alexander Severus (r. 222–235) became emperor. Though a more successful ruler than Elagabalus, Alexander Severus was himself assassinated by his own soldiers in 235. His death marks both the end of the Severan dynasty and the beginning of the fifty-year period in Roman history commonly known as the crisis of the third century. The leader of Alexander's killers, Maximinius Thrax (r. 235–238), became the first of Rome's so-called soldier-emperors, men whose rise was propelled by their loyal power bases in the army. His own downfall came in 238, a year in which a succession of five others succeeded Maximinius Thrax as emperor, including finally Gordian III (r. 238–244). This tumultuous year set the tone for the next several decades, as external threats and internal conflict threatened and even divided the empire.

No external threat to the Romans was greater than the new and expanding Sasanian Empire. Ardashir was succeeded by his son Shapur, who defeated successive Roman armies and emperors and cemented Sasanian rule over an empire that stretched from the Middle East to Central Asia and northern India as he sought to re-create the achievements of the great Achaemenid kings. Gordian III was the first Roman emperor to lead a campaign against Shapur, when he attempted to recapture lost territory in Syria and capture Hatra. The circumstances of Gordian's death are unclear: according to Shapur's own account in an inscription at Naqsh-i Rostam, the Roman army suffered a major defeat in a battle somewhere near Fallujah in central Iraq, during which the emperor himself was killed; a relief at Bishapur shows Gordian's body trampled beneath Shapur's horse. Roman sources do not mention this battle at all and claim that Gordian died elsewhere, and there has been much speculation that he was assassinated on the orders of his successor, a member of his Praetorian Guard, Marcus Julius Philippus, better known as Philip the Arab (r. 244–249). (Philip was in fact Syrian, born in the Jabal Druze Mountains in the village of Shahba, which he rebuilt as emperor as a Roman colony and which was later renamed Philippopolis in his honor).²² Philip withdrew from the Sasanian conflict,

either because the war was going against the Romans or simply to travel to Rome and consolidate his new position as emperor as quickly as possible. Whatever the case, the settlement represented a great victory for Shapur: Rome conceded Sasanian control of Armenia, and according to Shapur's inscription at Naqsh-i Rostam, it paid the Sasanian emperor an indemnity of half a million *aurei*.²³

The next Roman emperor to confront Shapur was Valerian (r. 253–260). Valerian succeeded in recovering Antioch and the province of Syria, but in 259 he suffered huge losses to disease and a Sasanian siege, and finally a major defeat to a Sasanian army at the Battle of Edessa. Following the battle, apparently while trying to negotiate terms, Valerian was captured by Shapur. He was the first and only Roman emperor to be captured alive by a foreign power. For Shapur, Valerian's capture was a crowning achievement.²⁴ A giant rock-cut relief shows the Sasanian emperor triumphant over Philip and Valerian (fig. 94), while a unique cameo vividly depicts his capture (cat. 183). To commemorate such victories might seem an obvious step, but in fact it is one of the significant departures that define early Sasanian imperial art, with few Parthian precedents. Ardashir had already made his defeat of Artabanus the theme of monumental art; Shapur extended this principle to the defeat of Roman emperors. Such memorializations would be key to the creation of a Sasanian imperial identity.²⁵ From this point on, the identities and self-image of the Roman and Sasanian Empires would be closely intertwined.²⁶ Where Ardashir had styled himself "Shahan shah-i Eran" ("King of Kings of Iran"), Shapur appears in his later inscriptions as "Shahan shah-i Eran ud Aneran" ("King of Kings of Iran and non-Iran") to reflect these new conquests to the west and east, seemingly adopting the grander title after his capture of Valerian.²⁷

Valerian's capture was a catastrophe for Rome, and Shapur's victories threw Rome's ability to hold territory in the Middle East into genuine doubt. In this crisis Odaenathus (r. 260–267), the local ruler of Palmyra, proclaimed himself king of the city but remained loyal to Rome. He inflicted defeats upon the Sasanians where successive Roman armies had failed, halting Shapur's advance at the Euphrates River; Palmyra now became the guarantor of Rome's security in Syria. Odaenathus went on to quell a serious rebellion against Valerian's successor Gallienus (r. 253–268), and later reconquered territory that Rome had lost to Shapur in Mesopotamia, even briefly besieging Ctesiphon. By the time

of his assassination in 267, Odaenathus ruled a kingdom that encompassed the former eastern Roman Empire in eastern Anatolia, Syria, and Mesopotamia.

Odaenathus was succeeded by his young son, Vaballathus (r. 267–272), with his widow Zenobia (her Palmyrene name is Bat Zabbai) acting as regent (cat. 181). The Palmyrene kingdom was already autonomous for practical purposes, but Odaenathus had observed the forms of fealty to Rome. Zenobia took a bolder course, further expanding the sphere of Palmyra's independent power, and in 270 launched a campaign that brought central Anatolia and Egypt under Palmyrene control. This was a remarkable step: as the key to Italy's grain supply, Egypt had been under the Roman emperor's direct control since the reign of Augustus in the first century B.C., in contrast to the normal structure in which a province was governed by a politician of senatorial rank. Zenobia now controlled her own empire stretching from Egypt to Mesopotamia and Anatolia. A few years earlier this bold gambit might have succeeded; unfortunately for Zenobia, it coincided instead with a dramatic return of Roman military strength under the emperor Aurelian (r. 270–275).

Aurelian was one of the soldier-emperors, a successful general who was acclaimed emperor by his troops. Unlike his predecessors, however, Aurelian succeeded in reunifying the empire, eventually earning the title *Restitutor Orbis* ("Restorer of the World") (cat. 182). In 272 Aurelian was ready to challenge Zenobia, who now formally titled her son emperor and herself empress. Aurelian campaigned across Anatolia and into Syria, quickly seizing cities by adopting a policy of clemency toward those that surrendered and earned him allies.²⁸ This pattern brought him to Palmyra, and when Zenobia was forced to flee, he captured the city, effectively restoring Rome's eastern empire (see p. 144). Zenobia and Vaballathus were eventually captured and sent to Emesa for trial, and the circumstances of their subsequent fate are uncertain. In most accounts they were taken to Rome and paraded in Aurelian's triumph, though in one version Zenobia dies before reaching the city. One account has her executed, while another claims that Aurelian gave Zenobia and her children a villa in Italy; in others, she marries a Roman noble. Her story has inspired a vast range of legends, a celebrated opera, and representations in art and culture from antiquity to the present.²⁹



181. Tetradrachm of Zenobia

272

Billon, Diam. 1³/₁₆ in. (2 cm)

Minted in Alexandria

American Numismatic Society, New York (1944.100.67791)

Though ultimately short-lived, Palmyra's rapid rise to the status of an imperial power in the mid-third century posed an existential threat to Rome in the Middle East. One of the strongest symbols of the changed political situation was coinage. Despite holding great independent power, Odaenathus (r. 260–267) had remained loyal to Rome and issued coins in the name of the emperor Gallienus (r. 253–268). Under Odaenathus's young son, Vaballathus (r. 267–272), with his mother Zenobia acting as regent, the Palmyrene-controlled mint at Antioch initially continued this practice, issuing coins featuring the Roman emperor Claudius II (r. 268–270), though notably it did not issue coins recognizing Claudius's successor Quintillus (r. 270).¹ With the accession of Aurelian (r. 270–275), coins showing the Roman emperor on one face and Vaballathus on the other were introduced, placing high honors on the Palmyrene ruler but still recognizing Aurelian's seniority. On the ground, however, Zenobia broke with Rome, using military force to take control of the Roman provinces of Syria, Judaea, and Arabia Petraea (Nabataea). In late 270 Palmyrene forces seized the critical province of Egypt, a decisive move that made conflict with Aurelian inevitable, and in 271 it took control of most of Anatolia.²

Coins minted in Antioch and Alexandria, now under Palmyrene control, continued to recognize Aurelian as emperor until 272, when he began his campaign against Zenobia and



182. Antoninianus of Aurelian

272–75

Silver, Diam. 7/8 in. (2.2 cm)

Minted in Siscia, Pannonia

American Numismatic Society, New York (1957.159.61)

Vaballathus. At this point, with the pretense of continued loyalty to Rome no longer possible, Zenobia began to issue new coins: some depict Vaballathus without Aurelian, while others feature Zenobia as empress of Palmyra. The tetradrachm of Zenobia (cat. 181) shows her bust on the obverse, with the legend "Septimia Zenobia Seb[aste]" ("Sebaste" is the Greek term for "Augusta," meaning empress). The reverse shows Elpis, the personification of hope, holding a flower, and Greek letters indicating that the coin was issued in the fifth year of Vaballathus's reign.³ Coins featuring Zenobia's portrait were only struck in the year 272: by June of that year Aurelian had defeated the Palmyrenes and captured Zenobia and Vaballathus. The Roman emperor now assumed for the first time the title *Restitutor Orbis* ("Restorer of the World").⁴ The obverse of the antoninianus of Aurelian (cat. 182) depicts the emperor wearing a radiate crown, while the reverse commemorates his eastern victories by showing the sun god Sol striding between two seated captives, accompanied by the legend "Oriens Aug[usti]" (the rising sun of the emperor).

1. Bland (2011, p. 140) argues that this was a deliberate choice, not simply a result of Quintillus's very short reign of around one month, since the emperor's coins were struck at all other imperial mints then operating. 2. Watson 1999, pp. 61–64. 3. For the issue, including this example, Bland 2011, pp. 175, 178, no. 56, pl. 25. 4. Watson 1999, p. 42.



183. Cameo with Valerian and Shapur I

Ca. late 3rd century (after 260)

Sardonyx, H. 2 11/16 in. (6.8 cm), W. 4 1/16 in. (10.3 cm), D. 3/8 in. (0.9 cm)

Iran

Bibliothèque nationale de France, Cabinet des médailles, Paris (Camée 360)

This cameo is an exceptional representation of Sasanian triumph over Rome, depicting an equestrian combat in which a Sasanian king grasps by the wrist a figure dressed in Roman armor and a *paludamentum* (military cloak) and crowned with a laurel wreath.¹ The scene has been interpreted as a representation of the capture of the Roman emperor Valerian (r. 253–260) by the Sasanian ruler Shapur I (r. 241–272) at the Battle of Edessa in 260, an event of critical symbolic importance to both empires.² Beyond a simple expression of power, the use of Rome in Sasanian imperial propaganda is one reflection of how entangled the Roman and Iranian empires had become by the third century and how the images of rulers in the two empires had an impact on one another.³ Depictions of Ardashir I (r. ca. 224–241) and Shapur victorious over Parthian and Roman emperors were a key part of the early Sasanian royal image, including Shapur grasping the wrist of Valerian (figs. 92, 94). Ardashir is sometimes shown wearing a miter similar to those of Parthian kings (cats. 3, 10, 13, 18), while elsewhere he is depicted wearing a *korymbos*, a stylized wrapped topknot—above a skullcap (fig. 92).⁴ Shapur is consistently seen wearing the *korymbos*, which would become a standard feature of Sasanian crowns and one of the most recognizable symbols of Sasanian kingship (fig. 94).

In the cameo, the Sasanian king wears headgear with the high striated globe. In this case, however, the “crown” is actually a helmet with cheekpieces and chin strap. Shapur, like the Roman emperor he faces, is dressed for battle. Other globes appear at his shoulders, and he wears a chest halter with fluttering ribbons streaming behind, another royal attribute. The Roman emperor’s sword is drawn, while the Sasanian king’s remains in its scabbard, possibly signifying his prowess and control of the combat.

The cameo is carved from a piece of banded sardonyx and uses the natural layers of the stone in the design. The background is a black layer; above this, a stratum of vivid pale blue is used to pick out the figures in low relief. Selected raised elements are highlighted in the topmost layer, caramel brown in color. In its shape and frame the cameo evokes the designs of Roman cameos, and details of the Sasanian king’s dress differ from those on the rock reliefs. Following Shapur’s capture of Antioch, many Syrian craftspeople worked at Bishapur, as seen in mosaics (see p. 20; fig. 9), and it is possible that the cameo represents a similar example of a luxury object created by non-Iranians working in the Sasanian Empire.

1. Gold double dinars of Shapur I also appear to show him with a submissive Roman emperor. In this case, however, the coin’s legend refers to the emperor Philip the Arab (Marcus Julius Philippus, r. 244–49). See Alram et al. 2007, p. 28; and Potter 2004, p. 237. 2. Babelon 1894; Babelon 1897, pp. 193–94, no. 360; Gyselen 1993, p. 198; Vollenweider and Avisseau-Broustet 2003, p. 202, no. 257. 3. Canepa 2009. 4. In addition to numismatic depictions, Ardashir and Shapur are depicted with similar headgear in a rock relief at Salmas, and one of the two kings (the identity is uncertain) is featured on a rock relief at Darab; see Levit-Tawil 1992, fig. 2.



DESTRUCTION AND PRESERVATION

SOME OF THE MOST IMPORTANT ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES OF THE Roman and Parthian Middle East are now also scenes of modern destruction. The rise of the terrorist organization known as ISIS or Da‘esh (the so-called “Islamic State” of Iraq and Syria) during the years 2014–17 led to the destruction with explosives and heavy machinery of buildings and monuments at sites in Syria and northern Iraq, including at Palmyra and Hatra, much of it filmed for propaganda purposes and distributed through both social and traditional news media. However, these prominent incidents represent only one of a wide array of threats to heritage and cultural life associated with modern armed conflict. The succession of conflicts following the U.S. and coalition invasion of Iraq in 2003, and the civil war in Syria, which began in 2011, have been devastating to the social, cultural, and material fabric of both countries. The looting of sites and museums has been extensive, and forms part of a much broader problem that includes the destruction of living religious and cultural centers and the large-scale displacement of people. In Yemen, a civil war that began in 2015 has also resulted in great damage to heritage. In all three countries, the destruction

Fig. 95 Interior of the restored Beirut National Museum



Fig. 96 Satellite images were used to confirm the destruction of the Temple of Bel at Palmyra. The photographs are dated August 27, 2015 (left) and August 31, 2015 (right).



Fig. 97 Interior of the Mosul Museum in March 2017, following Mosul's recapture by Iraqi government forces

of sites and monuments can only be understood as one facet of far larger humanitarian and civic crises. This essay summarizes some of the damage that has occurred, including at sites discussed in this volume, and current efforts to better preserve and protect the archaeological heritage.

The most widely known example of deliberate destruction is the demolition of monuments by ISIS at Palmyra in Syria. Multiple buildings were destroyed with explosives and their demolition filmed for propaganda purposes, most notably the Temple of Bel, founded in the first century (see pp. 145–48; figs. 53–54, 56–59, 96).¹ This temple, the most important in ancient Palmyra, had been reused first as a church and then as a mosque during its long history, and until the present-day village of Tadmor was moved away

from the ancient ruins in 1930–32, the temple remained the village center and mosque.² In addition to being a venue for destruction, the site of Palmyra also provided the backdrop for human atrocities, in particular executions. Among these killings was the murder of Khaled al-Asa'ad, the retired Director of Antiquities and Museum at Palmyra, on August 18, 2015; he had refused to give information as the militants searched for salable objects.³

At Hatra in northern Iraq the destruction was less extensive although still considerable. Sculptures from the site were defaced or destroyed by members of ISIS with tools and guns. Many other sites in this region suffered enormous damage, specifically the ancient Assyrian capitals of Ashur, Nimrud, Khorsabad, and Nineveh, where standing monuments were destroyed and large tunnels dug into the ancient tells by looters.⁴ In addition, propaganda video footage filmed in the Mosul Museum showed statues from Hatra being destroyed. Some of these statues were replicas; others were ancient but incorporated modern supports and restorations, which caused confusion when the footage first appeared by providing false hope that very few were original.⁵ In fact, most of the statues were ancient. In addition, the Mosul Museum, which had already suffered from looting in the wake of the 2003 invasion of Iraq, was looted and badly damaged by fire. Since Mosul's recapture from ISIS in 2017, reports of the museum's condition have revealed the distressing extent of the damage (fig. 97).⁶

The deliberate destruction of monuments frequently occurs as part of the persecution of the ethnic or religious groups that are associated with them. This “destruction of memory” through attacks on monuments and symbols is a potent tool of oppression.⁷ In 2016, stressing this connection, Zainab Bahrani, Edith Porada Professor of Ancient Near Eastern Art and Archaeology at Columbia University,



Fig. 98 Courtyard of the Great Mosque, Aleppo, prior to the Syrian civil war. The mosque has suffered enormous damage, and local efforts are now underway to restore it, including rebuilding its destroyed minaret.

New York, referred to the destruction of monuments by ISIS as “cultural cleansing”; the term was subsequently adopted by Irina Bokova, Director-General (2009–17) of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), to describe this type of attack.⁸ The description is particularly applicable to the destruction of shrines and tombs from the Islamic period, as in Mosul where the demolition of many of the city’s most important historic buildings was closely and explicitly linked with the persecution of religious minorities in the city.⁹ The destruction of monuments from pre-Islamic periods served an additional purpose: to demoralize local communities and specifically to draw outrage and attention from international audiences.¹⁰

It has been pointed out that iconoclastic destruction of pre-Islamic figural imagery stands in a long historical

tradition; while it is certainly true that examples of iconoclasm can be seen in a variety of religious contexts throughout history, emphasizing such connections can also play into the propagandistic purpose of these acts because their perpetrators aim to present what is in reality an extremely radical and unorthodox view of Islam as traditional and therefore legitimate.¹¹ Scholars, heritage professionals, and the media have thus been left with a difficult choice between drawing additional attention to ISIS propaganda and not publicly condemning major acts of destruction and desecration. For similar reasons, reproducing images of the destruction is a problematic issue. Here we have chosen to include satellite images that show the remains of the Temple of Bel before and after its destruction with explosives and a photograph that shows the condition of the



Fig. 99 View of the Old City of Sana'a prior to the war in Yemen

Mosul Museum following the city's recapture from ISIS, aiming neither to deny nor to sensationalize the extent of the destruction.

Much of the damage to ancient sites and historic architecture in Syria, Iraq, and Yemen has resulted from the ways in which these monuments are deeply embedded in the modern lives of all three countries.¹² Perhaps no one monument symbolizes the tragedy of the Syrian civil war more powerfully than the Great Mosque of Aleppo (fig. 98). The Great Mosque was first built in the eighth century; the current buildings date to the eleventh through fourteenth century and form part of a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Heavy fighting in 2012 and 2013 inflicted much damage upon the mosque, including the destruction of its eleventh-century minaret. The mosque itself was built on a succession of sacred sites dating to earlier periods.¹³ In the context of "The World between Empires," it is worth noting that one of those previous structures was a Temple of Jupiter from the Roman period. The vast courtyards of many early mosques were not only descendants of the great temple enclosures of the Roman and Parthian period in form, but in some cases the structures were even built on the same sites.

In Yemen, the devastating war that began in 2015 has created a grave humanitarian crisis. Here the looting and smuggling of antiquities is a significant factor, but even more destructive has been the intense bombing by a Saudi Arabian-led coalition against Houthi rebels. The bombing has resulted in widespread destruction of historic buildings and archaeological sites.¹⁴ The Great Marib Dam, a colossal achievement of Sabaean engineering first built in the eighth century B.C., was badly damaged by Saudi Arabian bombing in May 2015. Prior to the war, cities in Yemen, including the capital Sana'a, contained some of the best-preserved historic architecture in the Middle East: the Old City of Sana'a, the Old Walled City of Shibam in Hadramawt, and the Historic Town of Zabid are all UNESCO World Heritage Sites (fig. 99). Much of this historic fabric has now been destroyed and, alongside the displacement of people and the interruption of traditional activities and festivals, represents an enormous challenge for postconflict reconstruction work that combines socioeconomic and cultural considerations.¹⁵ At the time of writing, however, the situation in the country is extremely grave, and the focus of international aid is rightly on basic humanitarian relief.



Fig. 100 Dura-Europos on August 4, 2011 (top) and April 2, 2014 (bottom). In the 2011 image, traces of the formal excavations and the basic grid plan of the city are visible. The 2014 image shows intensive looting of every city block within the walled city and many more looter pits outside the wall.

One common consequence of armed conflict and the breakdown of the rule of law is looting, including of archaeological sites and museums. Political instability, economic collapse, and breakdowns of security led quickly and predictably to the looting of sites for salable antiquities.¹⁶ Even the most extensive site-guard system requires individual guards to be widely dispersed, and guards are often required to be posted in remote locations. Their ability to deter looting relies entirely on the promise of police and military support, meaning they fail in tandem with state security more broadly, while the factors leading to such failures—the breakdown of order and the infrastructure of a functioning state—also tend to be associated with the large-scale unemployment and growing financial desperation that drives

ordinary people to engage in looting. Collapses of this kind occurred in Iraq after 2003 and in Syria after 2011. In 2004, aerial photographs taken over southern Iraq began to show archaeological sites covered with hundreds of looter pits. The cratered views became known among archaeologists as “lunar surfaces” and have become a familiar sight in Iraq and, more recently, Syria.¹⁷ Dura-Europos, a city highlighted in this volume (see pp. 179–209), has suffered this fate (fig. 100). A site of unique importance for its numerous well-preserved ancient religious buildings and houses, Dura-Europos has been damaged irreparably.¹⁸ In all cases, the overall destruction of a site’s architecture and stratigraphy by the process of uncontrolled digging is far more destructive than the removal of any particular object.

In much the same way as drugs or arms, looted objects are passed along a chain before being sold. The process often begins with ordinary people with few options for income digging at sites in order to survive; these looters will be paid very small sums for their finds, which will then be smuggled internationally and perhaps pass through other intermediaries before reaching their eventual vendors.¹⁹ As with the smuggling of drugs and arms, the smuggling of illicit antiquities funds organized crime; in addition, the looting and sale of antiquities can act as a direct funding stream for an array of militant and terrorist organizations.²⁰ In these situations the damage is twofold: destruction of sites and fueling further violence in the region.

Notwithstanding these very serious problems, the greatest damage to heritage and cultural life may not lie in the destruction of sites or the looting of antiquities. War has displaced enormous numbers of people and created profound humanitarian crises in Iraq, Syria, and Yemen, while also placing pressure on the neighboring countries who host the vast majority of refugees. At the time of writing, an estimated 6 million of Syria’s 22 million nationals are internally displaced within Syria, and 5.5 million are refugees outside the country.²¹ Giant refugee camps in Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey have provided temporary housing for the greatest numbers of Syrian refugees, while some have traveled to other Middle Eastern countries and Europe, and a smaller number to the United States. The disruption that this humanitarian crisis has caused to education and cultural life is enormous. It is very likely that millions of people will remain displaced for years to come, and therefore, in addition to basic humanitarian assistance, educational and cultural resources that attempt to address the needs

of refugees are essential.²² Heritage does not exist only or primarily in the physical fabric of monuments and sites but in people, their shared memory, and their living cultural practices. The damage is particularly acute with regard to religious minorities. In addition to the prospect of losing many religious sites permanently through deliberate destruction, the displacement of multiple religious minorities and other communities from their homes in Syria and Iraq has created ruptures and dislocations whose cultural impact will continue to be felt over generations.

The world’s ability to respond effectively to the deliberate destruction and looting of sites, monuments, and museums, or to their incidental damage during fighting, is very limited, especially at the moment of destruction in the midst of armed conflict. International law exists to prevent damage to monuments in war, and international bodies such as UNESCO use their platforms to call on all combatants to avoid this type of destruction, but these steps have limited effectiveness. In 2016 the International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague for the first time brought a successful prosecution for cultural destruction as a war crime. Ahmad al-Faqi al-Mahdi, a member of Ansar ed-Dine, a Tuareg Islamist group linked with al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), pleaded guilty to directing the destruction of historic mausolea and the ancient door of an important mosque in Timbuktu, Mali, during the city’s occupation by Ansar ed-Dine in 2012.²³ The destruction was motivated by ideas similar to those that led to the destruction of many shrines and tombs by ISIS: a prohibition on the veneration of saints. The prosecution is a positive step, but whether such cases can act as a deterrent to behavior in the extreme environment of armed conflict seems very uncertain.

While meaningful intervention during conflict is extraordinarily difficult, there is much constructive work that can be done in terms of preparatory work both to mitigate the damage of a future crisis and to contribute to the work of reconstruction in a postconflict environment. The bulk of the latter efforts will come at the state level, but international institutions can take some proactive steps to address the needs of countries where heritage is or has been under threat. Although foreign archaeologists can do little to assist colleagues in an active war zone, the aftermath of war allows more constructive assistance. These projects have taken many forms and have usually been organized by universities,

museums, and other relatively small organizations, though sometimes with governmental funding and support. Projects have focused on different areas, including site management, emergency conservation training, archaeological fieldwork training, and the provision of equipment.

The Metropolitan Museum of Art's own efforts, undertaken as a joint project with Columbia University, have tried to follow a process of responding to priorities set by colleagues working in museums in Iraq and Syria and concentrating on specific areas where The Met has the professional expertise and resources to provide meaningful assistance. This dialogue has led to an approach directed thus far at the documentation of collections, vital work at any time but particularly when there is a threat of disorder and looting. Photographic documentation training and kits have allowed multiple museums to document large parts of their collections rapidly and to a high standard. Emerging priorities for this ongoing project include publication initiatives, with future educational and conservation-focused work likely. Other recent projects have included training in cultural property protection for U.S. Army Civil Affairs personnel, undertaken in collaboration with the Smithsonian Institution and the U.S. Committee of the Blue Shield.

The Met is also currently working with several contemporary artists whose work considers the destruction of cultural heritage or addresses the modern history of ancient Middle Eastern objects and collections. These artistic responses fit with the institution's wider mission as an art museum but also form an important part of the overall response to destruction. Examining the meaning and significance of the ancient heritage, they are complementary to archaeological and conservation efforts to preserve physical artifacts and sites and to attempts to re-create lost monuments digitally based on photographic records and 3D scans. The latter projects are important and valuable in producing records, although we must be clear in defining their purpose: ultimately no reconstruction, digital or physical, can bring back the lost ancient buildings and sculptures themselves. By the same token, what reconstruction of heritage should mean in a postconflict development environment is a complex question, and the impulse to move as quickly as possible toward physical reconstruction of monuments can lead to loss of information and further damage to sites. The most meaningful solutions will be those that consider the physical structures in their present-day social context and, as in other aspects of development that seek to involve the voices of

multiple stakeholders, particularly people living near and around the sites themselves.

Despite many challenges, the example of post-civil war reconstruction in Lebanon should be a source of hope. Extraordinary and often courageous efforts by museum staff and archaeologists in Lebanon to protect antiquities during the civil war (1975–90), some of which have been emulated in Iraq and Syria, were followed by a period of restoration and recovery. Postconflict reconstruction following the war included the largest urban excavations in the world in downtown Beirut, the painstaking restoration of the magnificent Beirut National Museum and extensive conservation work on its collections, hidden throughout the war, and efforts across the country to manage, protect, and present archaeological sites (fig. 95).²⁴ Accompanying these developments has been a flourishing artistic and cultural landscape in Beirut. The reconstruction of historic architecture in Downtown Beirut was controlled by a single holding company, Solidere, following to a great extent the single vision of then-prime minister Rafik Hariri. The project was controversial, both politically and in conservation choices, such as restoring historic facades but not historic interiors in many buildings, but the project did make marked efforts to connect past and present, building archaeological parks around some of the most important areas of urban excavation.²⁵ Although the damage of armed conflict can never fully be undone, the results have been dramatic and show the importance and potential of postconflict work, as well as the significance of heritage as part of any development program.

In Iraq, amid continuing problems, there are also positive stories. Considerable work has been done in the Iraq Museum in Baghdad and regional museums despite extremely difficult circumstances. Successful training projects have been undertaken, and new archaeological research conducted by Iraq's State Board of Antiquities and Heritage and by foreign teams is underway.²⁶ *Sumer: A Journal of Archaeology in Iraq*, the important journal of the State Board of Antiquities and Heritage, has also been revived in recent years, publishing contributions from Iraqi and international scholars in Arabic and English. The goal of a return to normal academic life and work includes the restoration of international scholarly collaboration following not only the post-2003 years but the preceding period of international sanctions on Iraq, from 1990 to 2003, during which time Iraqi universities and museums were effectively isolated from colleagues around the world.

Other problems must be addressed internationally. Ultimately looting is driven by demand. If there were no market for illicit antiquities, there would be no incentive to dig for them.²⁷ The looting of sites across the world is a response to the existence of a market, and for this reason it is important that all institutions dealing with ancient material pay attention to its provenance. The currently accepted baseline for U.S. institutions was set in 2008 by the American Association of Museum Directors' (AAMD) recognition of the UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property (1970), which applies to the movement of ancient objects across international borders after 1970. AAMD member institutions continue to follow this guidance, notwithstanding the decision of the United States in 2017 to withdraw from UNESCO. The Met's own current acquisition guidelines for ancient works state: "The Museum normally shall not acquire a work unless provenance research substantiates that the work was outside its country of probable modern discovery before 1970 or was legally exported from its probable country of modern discovery after 1970."²⁸ The guidelines still allow for exceptions under certain circumstances,²⁹ although in the case of the ancient Middle East few scenarios exist today where exceptions would be justified.

Museums that were once keen to purchase ancient Middle Eastern objects are now far more cautious. At The Met, much of whose Ancient Near Eastern Art collection was acquired by gift or purchase through the twentieth century (as well as one-third of the collection from the system of partage through which, in the early and mid-twentieth century, Middle Eastern countries typically granted divisions of finds to foreign excavators), acquisitions by the Department of Ancient Near Eastern Art had slowed almost to zero by the early 2000s as attitudes toward collecting changed, and purchases on the art market are unlikely in the foreseeable future.

In the context of a major exhibition on ancient Middle Eastern art in the United States, it is worth reflecting on the broader aims and civic role of international cultural institutions. The role of museums in society ought to be an ongoing open question, the answers to which should evolve and change with society itself. The Metropolitan Museum of Art was founded in 1870 "to be located in the City of New York, for the purpose of establishing and maintaining in said city a Museum and library of art, of encouraging and

developing the study of the fine arts, and the application of arts to manufacture and practical life, of advancing the general knowledge of kindred subjects, and, to that end, of furnishing popular instruction." In 2015, the Trustees of The Metropolitan Museum of Art supplemented this statement of purpose with a statement of mission: "The Metropolitan Museum of Art collects, studies, conserves, and presents significant works of art across all times and cultures in order to connect people to creativity, knowledge, and ideas." The statement does not list the specific benefits of connecting people with creativity, knowledge, and ideas, but we suggest that these could be grouped into two broad categories of inspiration and understanding. The second of these is critical and for ancient Middle Eastern art sometimes difficult to achieve. The representation of different genres and periods in art varies enormously in culture, and in the case of the ancient Middle East museums represent one of the few likely channels of exposure for most American audiences. At the same time, media coverage of the Middle East has for a long time been dominated by a succession of military conflicts and terrorism, accompanied by sometimes misleading characterizations of the religious and cultural life of the region.³⁰ Such coverage is perhaps inevitable in a time of real unrest and conflict; unfortunately, it leaves little room for representing normal, everyday lives, or for forming human connections beyond sympathy for victims of the most awful circumstances. Even here, the coverage of refugees fleeing conflict zones is often negative in tone, and can sometimes lead to a lack of empathy with these victims.³¹

With their focus on history and the long term, and the space for in-depth exploration that is rarely afforded to journalists, museums are well placed to make such human connections, to speak to the common humanity of people across time and space, and to address the deep historical connections that often exist between disparate societies and traditions. Art and creativity play a special role in making these connections, because creative products such as works of art, literature, and music so powerfully reveal their makers' thought processes, feelings, and sensitivities. They open up the inner life of another person to the viewer, reader, or listener. This can be true even when art is formal in character and not intended as "personal" in any modern sense. The sculptors who carved the reliefs and statues featured in this volume were thinking and feeling experts in their crafts and in the visual arts, and a viewer today can see that expertise and their thoughtful choices in what they have

made. Sometimes, as in the case of funerary portraits, the reliefs and statues depict ancient individuals, thus providing a vivid connection to the real people of antiquity. A museum can create the space for people to find these connections, and to feel the presence of people like themselves in societies from which they are separated by huge distances in time and space. These empathetic goals, though they might be achieved as profoundly with a young child as with an academic specialist, are in no way divorced from the intellectual work of art history. In fact, attempting to understand the perspectives of people living in times, environments, and circumstances different from our own is core to our academic work. At the largest scale, human self-knowledge is arguably the ultimate goal of the humanities, and reflection on ourselves and one another is the process by which that self-knowledge is approached: this broad purpose lies at the heart of humanistic scholarship's enduring relevance in the contemporary world.³² If a museum can foster this search for understanding, it fulfills its scholarly and public purpose in the most meaningful way.

Ultimately, the fate of archaeological heritage is closely tied to that of people. A stable, prosperous society will

almost invariably invest in and uphold laws protecting archaeological sites, historic monuments, artifacts, and museums. Sometimes this attention is driven by present-day political concerns, for example nationalism or ethnic differentiation, but to the extent that societies are tolerant of diversity the ancient heritage also benefits. Projects such as those currently being undertaken to try to ameliorate the damage of war to monuments, sites, and museums in Iraq and Syria can only ever be minor interventions, hopefully helping at the margins. The most effective solutions to the problems surrounding the protection of heritage may not be undertaken with heritage in mind at all. Human rights, democracy, freedom of expression, and widening access to education are critical benefits to society as a whole, and powerful forces of which cultural heritage is only one among many beneficiaries. People are more important than things, and insofar as heritage deserves protection in times of crisis, it is as a human phenomenon. Our pasts are parts of our selves, and while individual monuments and sites are fragile and vulnerable, the human desire to connect with, understand, and care for the past is incredibly resilient.



A large, reddish-brown rock formation, possibly a natural rock shelter or cave entrance. The rock surface is textured and shows signs of weathering. A prominent vertical crack runs down the right side of the formation. In the foreground, a smaller, rounded rock fragment is visible. The overall scene is illuminated by natural light, highlighting the warm tones of the rock.

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46. McClendon 2011.
47. Fine 2016.
48. Hillenbrand 1994, pp. 136–37; Ball 2016, pp. 406–7.

SOUTHWESTERN ARABIA

1. Herodotos, *The Histories*, 2.73, 3.107.
2. Plutarch, *Life of Sulla*, 38.2.
3. Singer 2007, pp. 7–8.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 21.
5. Strabo, *Geography*, 16.4.19; Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, 12.32. For Pliny’s account of frankincense and myrrh in general, see *ibid.*, 12.30–35.
6. Tomber 2004.
7. Pliny 1938–62, vol. 2, 6.32.
8. Strabo, *Geography*, 16.4.22–24; Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, 53.29; Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, 6.32. On the date, see Jameson 1968, pp. 76–79. On the campaign, see Sidebotham 1986 and Simon 2002.
9. ‘Ali ‘Aqil and Antonini 2007.
10. Antonini de Maigret 2012, pp. 94, 99.
11. For Marib, see Phillips 1955, pp. 218–30; Glanzmann 1999; Glanzmann 2002; and Ibrahim 2006. For Sirwah, see Gerlach 2003–4, Gerlach and Hitgen 2004; Gerlach 2005; and Gerlach, Schnelle, and Weiss 2011.
12. Sedov and Batayi’ 1994.
13. Antonini de Maigret 2012, p. 96.
14. Phillips 1955.
15. Particularly important is the full stratigraphic sequence established, from the eleventh century B.C. to the fourth or fifth century A.D. at Hajar bin Humeid and the associated detailed study of ceramics; see Van Beek 1969.
16. Phillips 1955, pp. 186–93.
17. For the initial exploration, see *ibid.* For the reattribution, see Breton et al. 1997.
18. Phillips 1955, pp. 165–67.
19. Albright 1952; Phillips 1955, pp. 218–30.
20. On the revival of the American Foundation for the Study of Man, see Hodgson 2005. On Wadi al-Jubah, see Glanzman and Ghaleb 1984; Toplyn 1984; Blakely, Sauer, and Toplyn 1985; Overstreet, Grolier, and Toplyn 1988; and Grolier et al. 1996.

NABATAEA

1. Diodoros of Sicily, *The Library of History*, 19.94.4–6; Diodoros 1954.
2. Patrich 2007, p. 81; Kropp 2013, p. 40.
3. Parr 2003, p. 27.
4. Pedersen 2015; Pedersen 2018.
5. Key textual sources include Strabo, *Geography*, 16.4.27; and *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea*, 19 (see Young 1997). For location, see Millar 1998, p. 124; Nappo 2010; and Pedersen 2015, p. 126. One plausible candidate, the site of 'Aynunah and its nearby harbor of Khuraybah near the mouth of the Gulf of 'Aqaba, is currently being excavated by a team from the University of Warsaw; see Pedersen 2018. Another is farther south at al-Wedjh; see Nappo 2010.
6. Kanellopoulos 2002.
7. Al-Muheisen and Tarrier 2002; Oleson 2007; Miithen 2012, pp. 104–24.
8. Bedal 2001; Bedal 2002.
9. Rababeh and Al Rabady 2014.
10. At Qaryat al-Fau, Saudi Arabia, and Mleiha, Sharjah, see Tholbecq 2007, p. 106.
11. For the Turkmaniyah Tomb/Tomb 633, see McKenzie 1990, pp. 167–68; and Wadeson 2011, p. 5. For the inscription, see Healey 1993, pp. 238–42.
12. Zayadine, Larché, and Dentzer-Feydy 2003.
13. Joukowsky 1998a, p. 136.
14. Joukowsky 2002, p. 242.
15. On the suggestion of a primarily civic role, see Schluntz 1998a, pp. 220–22; and Schluntz 1999.
16. R. Jones 2001 proposes the inscription refers to the Qasr el-Bint, with an editorial note from Patricia Bikai suggesting the Great Temple on the basis of the recently discovered *theatron*; see Joukowsky and Basile 2001, pp. 54–57.
17. Bedal 2001; Bedal 2002.
18. Schmid et al. 2012.
19. Healey 2001, pp. 48–49; El-Khoury 2007, pp. 331–32.
20. Zayadine and Farajat 1991, pp. 282–84.
21. Healey 2001, p. 49; Ball 2016, pp. 351–54.
22. Ball 2016, pp. 399–407.
23. Dentzer 2003; Alpass 2013, p. 171.
24. Patrich 1990, pp. 50–104; Wenning 2001; Basile 2002.
25. Basile 2002, p. 257.
26. Hammond 1968.
27. Green 1998, p. 45.
28. Schluntz 1998b, p. 232; Barrett 1998, pp. 293–95.
29. Schluntz 1998b, p. 232.
30. McKenzie 1990, p. 35.
31. Green 1998; McKenzie 2001, p. 105.
32. Plutarch, *Life of Crassus*, 33.1–4.
33. Freeman 1941, p. 337.
34. McKenzie and Reyes 2013b, p. 233.
35. Villeneuve and al-Muheisen 2003, p. 83.
36. Glueck 1965; McKenzie et al. 2013; Whiting and Wellman 2016.
37. McKenzie and Reyes 2013, p. 235.
38. Glueck 1965, p. 87; Patrich 1990, p. 63; McKenzie and Reyes 2013b, p. 264.
39. McKenzie and Reyes 2013b.
40. Whether the takeover was peaceful or not is unclear; see Millar 1993, pp. 92–94; and Kropp 2013, p. 43.
41. On Byzantine Petra, see Fiema 2001; Bikai 2002; and Politis 2007.

JUDAEA

1. Foerster 1982; Gafni 1995; Kraabel 1995; Oppenheimer 1995; Feldman 1996; Rutgers 1996; Fine 2005, pp. 124–34.
2. Goodman 2007.
3. The main ancient sources are 1 and 2 Maccabees and Flavius Josephus, *The Jewish War*.
4. 1 Maccabees 4:42–59.
5. Talmud: Shabbat 21b.
6. 1 Maccabees 14:41.
7. Flavius Josephus, *The Jewish War*, 1.6.3–7.6.
8. Sartre 2005, pp. 40–42; Goodman 2007, p. 52.
9. Flavius Josephus, *The Jewish War*, 1.14.4.
10. Flavius Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities*, 15.1.2; Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, 49.22; Plutarch, *Life of Antony*, 36.2.
11. Sartre 2005, p. 89.
12. Rozenberg 2013; Berlin 2014; Kahn 2014; Rozenberg 2014.
13. Sicker 2001, pp. 91–92.
14. Netzer 2013.
15. Bedal 2001, p. 37; Schmid et al. 2012, pp. 84–85.
16. Ball 2016, p. 55.
17. On reconstructing the Temple's plan and appearance, see L. Ritmeyer and K. Ritmeyer 1998; L. Ritmeyer 2012; and Segal 2013, pp. 266–78. For ancient descriptions, see Flavius Josephus, *The Jewish War*, 5.5; and Flavius Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities*, 15.11. On excavations at the Temple Mount, see Mazar 1989–2007; and Mazar 2002.
18. Ball 2016, pp. 373–80.
19. Segal 2013, pp. 271–72.
20. Yadin 1966; Netzer 1991; Foerster 1995. The identification of the structure as a synagogue has sometimes been challenged; see Grabbe 1995, p. 21; and Matassa 2018, pp. 118–21.

TYRE AND SIDON

1. Strabo, *Geography*, 16.2.22; Strabo 1930, with one correction in Millar 1993, pp. 266–67. They are also named together in ten different New Testament passages; see Jidejian 1971, p. 84.
2. Millar 1993, pp. 288–89.
3. Sartre 2005, p. 199.
4. Flavius Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities*, 15.95; Josephus 1860.
5. *Ibid.*, 14.333.
6. Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, 54.7.6; see also Millar 1993, p. 288.
7. Millar 1993, pp. 285–86.
8. *Ibid.*, pp. 288–89.
9. Sartre (2005, p. 199) designates Tyre as the capital, whereas Millar (1993, p. 123) suggests Tyre, Sidon, or Damascus as possibilities, but comments that the search is inconclusive. See also *ibid.*, p. 285.
10. Ulpian, *Digest*, 50.15.1 (preface); Millar 1993, p. 291.
11. Jidejian 1971, pl. 227.
12. Pliny 1938–62, vol. 2, 5.12.76.
13. Sartre 2005, pp. 242, 258.
14. Lucan, *The Civil War*, 10.141; Lucan 2006; see also Sartre 2005, p. 242.

15. Homer, *The Odyssey*, 15.425.
16. Philo of Alexandria, *The Embassy to Gaius*, 221–26, 337.
17. Strabo, *Geography*, 16.2–25; Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, 5.76. See also *ibid.*, 36.193; and Stern 1995, pp. 66–67.
18. Zaven 2011–12.
19. Henderson 2013, p. 204; C. Lightfoot 2014, p. 31.
20. Lucian of Samosata, *Affairs of the Heart (Amores)*, 26.
21. The sediment records from the harbors “are particularly rare and precious because they clearly demonstrate that human intervention in the coastal environment, through harbour infrastructure, gradually evolved in a number of technological steps”; see Marriner et al. 2014, p. 4.
22. Strabo, *Geography*, 16.2.23; Strabo 1930. Identification by Poidebard (1939) of the Egyptian harbor, although questioned subsequently by Frost (1971), had still been generally accepted until recent research using coastal stratigraphy and data from underwater archaeology identified it as a drowned quarter of the ancient city; see Marriner, Morhange, and Carayon 2008, p. 1296.
23. Marriner 2008, p. 86; Marriner, Morhange, and Carayon 2008, p. 1307.
24. Achilles Tattius, *Leucippe and Clitophon*, 1.1; Achilles Tattius 2001.
25. Marriner and Morhange 2005, pp. 185–87, includes a photograph of the ancient breakwater, subsequently destroyed, reproduced from Poidebard and Lauffray 1951, pl. XI; Marriner, Morhange, and Doumet-Serhal 2006, p. 1527.
26. Marriner and Morhange 2006, p. 140.
27. L. De Jong 2010; L. De Jong 2014–15.
28. Dunand and Rey-Coquais 1965; Maïla-Afeiche 2012.
29. Chéhab 1968, pp. 10–20; Ward-Perkins 1969; Linant de Bellefonds 1985, pp. 20–22, no. 3; L. De Jong 2010.
30. Contenau 1920, pp. 35–46; Jidejian 1971, p. 10; Basch 1987; Doumet-Serhal et al. 1998, pp. 5, 163, no. 5.

HELIOPOLIS-BAALBEK

1. Van Ess 1998, p. 10.
2. Macrobius, *The Saturnalia*, 1.23.14–16.
3. For coins, see Wienholz 2014, p. 150, fig. 182.
4. Wiegand 1921–25. For an overview of the excavations, many of which were not published, see Lohmann 2017, pp. 5–48.

5. Kropp 2010, pp. 236–37; for Artemis of Ephesos, see Fleischer 1973; for Aphrodite of Aphrodisias, see Brody 2007.
6. Kropp 2010, pp. 234–35.
7. Calzini Gysens 1997, p. 546; Kropp 2010, p. 231.
8. Kropp 2010, p. 237, n. 103.
9. Calzini Gysens 1997, pp. 545–46.
10. Macrobius, *The Saturnalia*, 1.23.18. See also Kropp 2010, p. 230.
11. Macrobius, *The Saturnalia*, 1.23.10–13; Macrobius 1969.
12. The entire corpus of dedications to the Heliopolitan gods is compiled in Hajjar 1977; see also Hajjar 1985 and Kropp 2010 for a few additional examples. For a detailed discussion of problems with the concept of a “triad” see Kropp 2010, pp. 248–49; and Millar 1993, pp. 281–85. The “triad” was promoted by the comprehensive works of Youssef Hajjar (1977, 1985, and in *LIMC* 1988), and recent supporters include Aliquot 2009, pp. 212–16, who does not think, however, that a Phoenician triad is referenced.
13. Kropp 2010, p. 249.
14. See the discussion in Rheidt 2008, pp. 226–27, 231, n. 38, fig. 10.
15. Kropp 2010, p. 243, n. 191.
16. Rheidt 2008, pp. 203–32, fig. 10; Wienholz 2008, pp. 282–83; Rheidt 2014.
17. Hajjar 1977; Hajjar 1985, with references.
18. Wienholz 2008; Wienholz 2014; Lohmann 2017; Lohmann in preparation; for an overview of previous excavations, see, in particular, Lohmann 2017, pp. 20–48.
19. Ruprechtsberger 1999, pp. 9–20.
20. Van Ess 2014, pp. 25–31; Wienholz 2014, p. 147.
21. Flavius Josephus, *The Jewish War*, 1.21.11, 422–28; Flavius Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities*, 16.146–49; Wienholz 2014, pp. 149–51.
22. Strabo, *Geography*, 16.2.19.
23. Lohmann 2017, pp. 145–56; Lohmann in preparation. See also Collart and Coupel 1977.
24. Kropp and Lohmann 2011; Lohmann in preparation.
25. Rheidt 2004, p. 253; Lohmann in preparation.
26. Wienholz 2014, p. 151.
27. Ward-Perkins (1981, p. 317) mentions the temples of Artemis at Ephesus and Zeus Olympios at Akragas and the Hellenistic Didymaion near Miletus, and also notes that Rome did not have any temples comparable in size until the construction of Hadrian’s Temple of Venus and Rome.

28. Rey-Coquais 1967, no. 2733.
29. Wienholz 2008, pp. 274–75; Wienholz 2014, p. 151; Lohmann in preparation.
30. Wienholz 2014, pp. 152–53; Lohmann in preparation.
31. Ward-Perkins 1981, p. 86; Lohmann in preparation.
32. Lohmann 2017, pp. 122–25; Lohmann in preparation. See also Collart and Coupel 1951.
33. Ulpian, *Digest*, 50.15.1–2; Wienholz 2014, p. 154.
34. Wienholz 2014, p. 154.
35. *Ibid.*, pp. 154–55.
36. *Ibid.*, pp. 155–56.
37. Hoebel 2008; Wienholz 2008, pp. 281–82; Wienholz 2014, p. 157.
38. Hoebel 2008, especially pp. 89, 91.
39. Rheidt 2008, p. 235.

PALMYRA

1. Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, 5.21; Pliny 1938–62, vol. 2; Edwell (2008, p. 44) discusses the sources used by Pliny, who was writing during the reign of the emperor Vespasian (r. 69–79).
2. Millar 1993, p. 470; Kaizer 2017, pp. 76–77.
3. For an overview of the tribes, see A. Smith 2013, pp. 33–54.
4. Kaizer 2002, p. 36; see also Edwell 2008, p. 34, n. 7.
5. Appian, *Roman History*, 5.1.9; Appian 1899. See also Kaizer 2002, p. 36; and Edwell 2008, p. 35, with discussion of earlier theories.
6. Hillers and Cussini 1996, pp. 64–65, no. 270; see also Millar 1993, p. 330; and Gawlikowski 2015, p. 249, nn. 23, 24.
7. Millar 1993, pp. 322, 330; Yon 2002, pp. 263–64.
8. Kaizer 2002, p. 37, n. 14; Edwell 2008, pp. 34–35, and notes.
9. Kaizer 2002, p. 328; Edwell 2008, p. 32.
10. Kaizer 2002, p. 37, n. 14.
11. Colledge 1976, p. 16; Millar 1993, pp. 34–35, 84; Kaizer 2002, p. 37, nn. 11, 12.
12. Tacitus, *The Annals*, 2.56–8.
13. Hillers and Cussini 1996, p. 320, no. 2754; Kaizer 2002, pp. 36–37.
14. On Palmyrene trade, see Young 2001, pp. 136–86.
15. Millar 1993, p. 324.
16. Gawlikowski 1973, p. 47; Millar 1993, pp. 324–25; Hillers and Cussini 1996, pp. 57–63, no. 259; Edwell 2008, pp. 46–48.
17. Millar 1993, p. 327.
18. For a comprehensive overview, see Gawlikowski 1990.
19. See Kaizer 2002, p. 70; and Kaizer 2006.

20. For a recent overview, bibliography, and discussion of their destruction, see Gawlikowski 2017.
21. Teixidor 1979, p. 1; Dalley 1995; Gawlikowski 2017.
22. On Palmyrene divine triads, see Seyrig 1971, especially pp. 94–97; for refutations of triads, see Gawlikowski 1990, pp. 2610, 2620, 2629; Kaizer 2006, pp. 102–4; Gawlikowski 2015, pp. 249–51.
23. Hillers and Cussini 1996, p. 198, no. 1347; Gawlikowski 2015, pp. 248–49. Kaizer 2006 presents a careful study of the epigraphic evidence that contradicts the prevailing previous opinion that the temple was constructed with imperial funds. Pietryzkowski 1997 is a comprehensive study of the architecture that demonstrates construction continued into the early second century. See also Gawlikowski 2015, p. 249.
24. For the inscription, see Hillers and Cussini 1996, p. 221, no. 1524. For the previous building phases at the sanctuary site, see Al-Maqdissi and Ishaq 2017.
25. Will 1971. For the excavation report, see Seyrig, Amy, and Will 1975. See also Pietryzkowski 1997.
26. Gawlikowski 2015, pp. 250, 253, fig. 18.6. For the reconstruction of statues of Bel and two other gods in the northern adyton, see Seyrig, Amy, and Will 1975, pl. 138; also illustrated in Gawlikowski 2015, p. 251, fig. 18.2.
27. Dirven 1999, p. 71; Pietryzkowski 1997.
28. Gawlikowski 2017, p. 60.
29. Gawlikowski 2015, p. 252. See also Seyrig, Amy, and Will 1975, pp. 184–89, pls. 42–46.
30. Dirven 1998.
31. Gawlikowski (2017, p. 64) comments that nothing is known about Durahlun, whose name means “One of Rahle” in reference to a place on Mount Hermon.
32. Gawlikowski 2018, p. 64.
33. Schmidt-Colinet 1997, pp. 159–60, table 1.
34. Saito 2005, p. 158.
35. Gawlikowski 1970; for tower tombs, see Henning 2013.
36. Schmidt-Colinet 1997, pp. 161–63, figs. 2, 3.
37. Cussini 2017b.
38. Schmidt-Colinet 1997, p. 160 (table 1), 167; see also Raja and Sørensen 2015.
39. Schmidt-Colinet 1992; Schmidt-Colinet 1997, pp. 166–70.
40. Kropp and Raja 2014.
41. Ingholt (1928) based his initial chronology on reliefs discovered during his

excavations and created three chronological groupings: Group I, ca. 50–150; Group II, ca. 150–200; Group III, ca. 200–250. For discussion and modifications, see also Colledge 1976, pp. 243–64; Sadurska and Bounni 1994; Ploug 1995; and Kropp and Raja 2014.

42. For an overview of early collections of Palmyrene portraits and the impact of illegal trade, see Høj 2017.
43. Raja 2012–. See also Kropp and Raja 2014; Kropp and Raja 2016; Long and Sørensen 2017; Raja 2017a.
44. Cussini 2017b.
45. See “Restoration Completed on Lion of Al-lat.”

DURA-EUPOPOS

1. In the 1920s and 1930s, excavations sponsored by Yale University and the Académie Française des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres were conducted for ten seasons, sparked initially by the discovery of a wall painting by a member of the British military. Under the system of *partage*, objects from the excavations were divided between the National Museum in Damascus and Yale (now divided between the collections of the Yale University Art Gallery and the Beinecke Library). From 1986 until 2011, the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Syrian Directorate of Antiquities conducted additional excavations together (Mission Franco-Syrienne de Doura-Europos); see Leriche, Coqueugniot, and de Pontbriand 2011. Numerous excavation reports are cited in the bibliography of this volume. See also Hopkins 1979 for an account of the Yale-French excavations. Recent scholarship includes the essays on various topics in Brody and Hoffman 2011; Chi and Heath 2011; and Kaizer 2016. Baird 2014 focuses on Dura’s houses; Kaizer 2015 discusses political and social history; Baird 2018 is a comprehensive general book on Dura with an extensive bibliography.
2. Isidore of Charax, *Parthian Stations*, 1.3–4. See also Zosimus, *New History*, 3.14; and Polybius, *The Histories*, 5.4816.
3. See Kaizer 2015, pp. 100–101, n. 47. The hyphenated name Dura-Europos was created to combine the names the city used during different periods, so it is often referred to simply as Dura. See Leriche, Coqueugniot, and de Pontbriand 2011, p. 38, for the argument for reversing the names to “Europos-Dura.”

4. Baird 2018, p. 23, n. 28, points out that the traditional date of 113 B.C. given as the start of the Parthian period at Dura was based on a coin whose context was not secure.
5. Heath 2011.
6. Charles Torrey in Rostovtzeff, Brown, and Welles 1939, pp. 318–20, no. 916, pl. lv, 1.
7. Kaizer 2015, p. 92, notes that the Parthians may have regained control over Dura already during the Trajanic period, or after Hadrian’s accession in August 117, when he ceded control over Trajan’s recently acquired territories.
8. On languages at Dura, see Gascou 2011, with references in the notes.
9. See Snow 2011 for discussion of preservation circumstances.
10. James 2011, especially pp. 301–4.
11. Elsner 2001; Dirven 2004; DeLeeuw 2011; Rajak 2011; M. Sommer 2016, p. 63.
12. See Rajak 2011, especially p. 151, for discussion of non-Jewish patrons and donors in synagogues and Christian interest.
13. Jensen 1999, pp. 184–86. See also Elsner 2001, p. 299; and DeLeeuw 2011, p. 196.
14. DeLeeuw 2011.
15. Baird 2018, p. 96, n. 56.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 27.
17. Yon 2016, pp. 103–4, n. 25; see also Baird 2018, p. 29.
18. Buchmann 2016, pp. 117–19, in contrast to Freyberger 1998, pp. 114–15, which emphasizes priests’ roles.
19. Dirven 2016.
20. For a general introduction to Mithraism, see Claus 2000.
21. For the preliminary excavation report of the Mithraeum, see Rostovtzeff, Brown, and Welles 1939.
22. Kraeling 1956 and Kraeling 1967 are the final excavation reports for the synagogue and Christian building, respectively.
23. Peppard 2016, pp. 21–22, 78–80.
24. Hachlili 1998, pp. 96–197.
25. See the discussion and references to earlier scholarship in Fine 2005, pp. 173–83; and Fine 2011, pp. 289–306.
26. See Rajak 2011, especially p. 151.
27. See the discussion of previous scholarship in Hachlili 1998, pp. 428–32.

HATRA, ASHUR, AND NORTHERN MESOPOTAMIA

1. Some Achaemenid and Seleucid period remains have been identified at the site, but this evidence suggests abandonment in the first century B.C. rather than continuity

- with the first- to third-century city; see Ricciardi and Peruzzetto 2013.
2. Ahmed 1972, p. 103. The nearby Wadi Tharthar was and is nonperennial.
 3. Downey 2004, p. 591.
 4. In a recent survey, Michael Sommer (2003) argues that Hatra was indeed a major trading center and speculates that the Great Temple temenos may also have served as a commercial center. It has long been assumed that Hatra could not feed itself based on local resources alone, and therefore it was dependent on trade even for basic subsistence, but this assumption may well be incorrect, as research on Hatra's hinterland has been too limited to establish the degree to which it was used for cultivation or grazing; see Tucker and Hauser 2006, p. 183.
 5. On reasons for foundation and growth, and the possibility that the city's primary *raison d'être* changed over time, see Kaizer 2013.
 6. Hauser 1998, pp. 501–3; M. Sommer 2004, p. 164; B. Anderson 2017, pp. 141–42.
 7. Two concentric city walls have been identified archaeologically, the heavily fortified inner wall enclosing an area about 1.2 miles (2 km) in diameter.
 8. B. Anderson (2017, p. 141) places the dates of Shapur's two sieges of Hatra at 229 and 240/41.
 9. Ammianus Marcellinus, *Roman Antiquities*, 25.8.5.
 10. Safar and Mustafa 1974.
 11. Moorey 1994, pp. 310–12.
 12. H. Drijvers 1978, pp. 828–35; Schmitt 2003.
 13. Dirven 1997; Tubach 2013; Dirven 2014, pp. 217–22.
 14. Dirven 1997; Ball 2016, pp. 384–85, 394–402.
 15. Rostovtzeff 1935; on this text and the historiography of modern studies of Parthian art, see Dirven 2016.
 16. A. De Jong 2013; B. Anderson 2017, pp. 142–44.
 17. Mathiesen 1992.
 18. Colledge 1967, p. 160.
 19. Dirven 2014, p. 215.
 20. Wright 2011.
 21. Andrae 1912, pp. 75–106.
 22. Flavius Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities*, 20.17–95.
 23. On antiquities as an ISIS funding stream, see “Cash to Chaos” 2016, pp. 8–10.

FROM BABYLON TO CTESIPHON: CONTINUITY AND CHANGE IN MESOPOTAMIA

1. Arrian, *Anabasis of Alexander*, 7.17.1–3; Strabo, *Geography*, 16.1.5. It is likely Greek accounts of the prior destruction of Babylon's temples by Xerxes (r. 486–465 B.C.) are exaggerated (Kuhrt and Sherwin-White 1987), and the temples had simply fallen into disrepair. Maintaining and restoring the temples, however, was a core duty of Babylonian kingship and would be a natural way for a new ruler to assert legitimacy in the city.
2. Grajetzki 2011, p. 31, n. 5.
3. On Babylon's political history in this period see Boiy 2004, pp. 165–92.
4. Reuther 1930; Upton 1932; *Zweiten Ktesiphon Expedition* 1933; Valtz Fino 2010; Chaves Yates 2018.
5. Upton 1932; Dimand 1933; Valtz Fino 2010. On the stuccos overall, see Kröger 1982.
6. More properly the Taq-i Kisra is not technically part of Sasanian Ctesiphon proper but slightly to the south at the city of Asbanbar. The association with Ctesiphon, however, is hardly misleading as the whole area was part of al-Mada'in (“the Cities”), and the Taq-i Kisra was clearly the royal residence; see Keall 1987.
7. Schuol 1998; Schuol 2000.
8. According to Pliny the Elder the city had originally been founded by Alexander as an Alexandria and settled in part by Macedonian veterans; see Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, 6.31.
9. Kosmin 2013.
10. Keall 1975.
11. Killick 2016; Moon et al. 2016.
12. Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, 6.30. On the archaeological remains of Babylon in the Parthian period, see Wetzel, Schmidt, and Mallwitz 1957; and Hauser 1999.
13. Dirven 2014, pp. 206–14.
14. Tubach 2013.
15. Dirven 1997.
16. Downey 1988, p. 28.
17. On evidence for the date of the temples' last use, see *ibid.*, p. 17; Kose 1998, p. 133; Kose 2013, pp. 328–29; Krul 2018, pp. 76–77.
18. The same exceptional circumstances of preservation meant that substantial remains of collapsed wooden roof beams were also found by the excavators in this room; see Arndt von Haller in Nöldeke et al. 1936, p. 37; Ernst Heinrich in Nöldeke et al. 1937, p. 28; Heinrich 1982, p. 332; Downey 1988, p. 30.
19. Finkel and Seymour 2008, p. 46, fig. 27.
20. Vattioni 1970; Finkel and Seymour 2008, p. 88, fig. 67.
21. Geller 1997; Westenholz 2007.
22. Pingree 1998; Finkel 2008; Steele 2016a; Steele 2016b.
23. See especially West 1997. On transmission and lost Phoenician sources, see López-Ruiz 2016. For a recent anthology integrating Near Eastern and Graeco-Roman mythological texts by genre, see López-Ruiz 2017.
24. Van de Mieroop 1997, p. 230.
25. Hunger and T. de Jong 2014.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 193.
27. Clancier 2011, pp. 756–58.
28. André-Salvini 2003.

CHANGING TIMES: THE RISE OF THE SASANIANS

1. Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, 77.19.1–2, 77.21.1.
2. *Ibid.*, 79.1.
3. Herodian, *History of the Roman Empire*, 4.11.
4. Schippmann 1986.
5. Daryae 2009, pp. 3–4; Canepa 2010, pp. 570–71.
6. The details of this internal struggle between the brothers are unclear. Olbrycht (2016, p. 28) suggests that at this time “Vologases ruled in Babylonia and Maishan [Characene], while his brother Artabanus IV controlled western Iran, Kirman, Parthia proper, Media, Susiana/Khuzestan, Mesopotamia (Asuristan), and Atropatene/Ashurbaigan.”
7. Daryae 2009, p. 4.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 3.
9. This Shapur appears in inscriptions of Pabag, including graffiti at the ruins of Achaemenid Persepolis; see Canepa 2010, p. 571.
10. In al-Tabari's account, Ardashir disputed Shapur's succession to the throne, but the latter died in an accident at Persepolis before the two could confront one another; see al-Tabari, *History*, 816; and al-Tabari 1999, pp. 8–9.
11. Agathias of Myrina, *Chronicle*, 2.27; Firdausi, *Shahnama*, cited in Olbrycht 2016, p. 26; Moses of Khoren, *The History of Armenia*, 2.67; Agathangelos, *History of Saint Gregory and the Conversion of Armenia*, 18–20.
12. Olbrycht 2016, pp. 31–32; Rezakhani 2017, pp. 44–45.
13. Canepa 2010.
14. The main argument for this revised version of Sasanian origins is Olbrycht 2016.

15. Herodian, *History of the Roman Empire*, 5.5.6–7.
16. The combination of Elagabal with Sol Invictus is the source of the misconception that the etymology of Elagabalus involved the Greek sun god Helios, with the result that the emperor is sometimes known as “Heliogabalus.”
17. Ball 2016, p. 47.
18. Stewart 2008, pp. 298–99.
19. Herodian, *History of the Roman Empire*, 5.8.1; *Augustan History: The Life of Elagabalus*, 10.
20. Herodian, *History of the Roman Empire*, 5.6.6. Images of the stone in its chariot exist on the reverse of some coins of Severus Alexander, who like his brother was a hereditary priest of Elagabal.
21. Herodian, *History of the Roman Empire*, 5.6.2.
22. Segal 1981, p. 111.
23. Alram et al. 2007, p. 13.
24. Canepa 2009, p. 53.
25. Canepa 2010, p. 579.
26. Canepa 2009, pp. 4–5.
27. Meyer 1990, p. 286; Huyse 1998, p. 112; Alram et al. 2007, p. 26; Canepa 2009, p. 54.
28. Sartre 2005, p. 357.
29. Sartre 2016; Weingarten 2017.

DESTRUCTION AND PRESERVATION

1. On the destruction of the Temple of Bel and its significance, see Gawlikowski 2017.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 56.
3. Hubbard 2015; W. al-Asa’ad 2017.
4. Following the recapture of Mosul from ISIS, looter tunnels were discovered that had reached reliefs in a previously unexcavated palace of the Assyrian king Esarhaddon (r. 680–669 B.C.). See, e.g., Majeed 2017.
5. An early report aiming to clarify the situation came from Christopher Jones on his blog, “Gates of Nineveh,” <https://gatesofnineveh.wordpress.com/2015/03/03/assessing-the-damage-at-the-mosul-museum-part-2-the-sculptures-from-hatra>. See also O’Connell 2017, a brief report with images from the American Schools of Oriental Research (ASOR) Cultural Heritage Initiative.
6. Bianchi et al. 2017.
7. Bevan 2007. On Iraq particularly, see Baker, S. Ismael, and T. Ismael 2010.
8. For Bahrani, see an interview with *Democracy Now*, February 27, 2015, https://www.democracynow.org/2015/2/27/antiquities_scholar_islamic_states_destruction_of. For Bokova, see Bokova 2015.
9. Al-Aswad 2017, p. 264; Lafleur 2017. For a breakdown of heritage sites targeted by ISIS by religious and ethnic association as of 2015, see Danti 2015, p. 138.
10. Harmanşah 2015. On an additional purpose, the repudiation of secular nationalist symbols, see C. Jones 2018.
11. On modern destruction of monuments within traditions of iconoclastic destruction, see Flood 2002. As Flood observes with regard to the Taliban’s destruction of the Bamiyan Buddhas in 2001, “to memorialize these events as just one more example of ‘Islamic iconoclasm’ would be to valorize the monument to their own brand of cultural homogeneity that the Taliban created at Bamiyan”; see *ibid.*, p. 655.
12. For an overview of issues facing cultural heritage in conflict zones, see J. Curtis 2011.
13. Bahrani 2017, p. 353.
14. Deknatel 2017.
15. Al-Makaleh and al-Quraishi 2017.
16. Prior to the 2003 invasion of Iraq, archaeologists attempted through multiple channels to warn of this danger, to little effect; see P. Stone 2005; and Gibson 2009.
17. On the scale of this problem in Iraq, see E. Stone 2008; Rothfield 2009, pp. 124–51; Hanson 2011; and E. Stone 2015. In Syria, see Casana and Panahipour 2014; and Casana 2015.
18. “Ancient History, Modern Destruction” 2014. The site was extensively looted in the early years of the Syrian civil war. Looting also continued under ISIS occupation; see Danti et al. 2016, pp. 15–16.
19. Chonaill, Reding, and Valeri 2011; Campbell 2013; Hardy 2016, pp. 5–6. An estimated ninety-five to ninety-nine percent of the final sale price of looted artifacts goes to intermediaries and dealers; see “Saving Antiquities for Everyone (SAFE) Facts and Figures,” <http://savingantiquities.org/safe-resources/facts-figures>.
20. “ISIL and Antiquities Trafficking” 2015; Pineda 2018.
21. United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, <http://www.unocha.org/syria>.
22. On the current crisis in the provision of education for refugees, see *ibid.* The report estimates that globally, of 6.4 million refugee children between the ages of five and seventeen, over half, 3.5 million, received no school education in the 2016–17 academic year; see *ibid.*, p. 8.
23. “Al Mahdi Case” 2015; “Prosecutor v. Ahmad Al Faqui Al Mahdi” 2017.
24. Maïla-Afeiche 2017. A short film, *National Museum of Beirut: Revival* by Bahij Hojeij, was produced in 1999 and updated and extended in 2016. The film details damage to the museum during the civil war and the process of restoration, and it is now shown in a special gallery near the entrance of the Beirut National Museum. The film is also available on the National Museum of Beirut app, <http://www.ourjouwan.com/nmb.aspx>.
25. Seeden 2000; Seeden 2001–2.
26. Recent volumes of the journal *Iraq* include summary details of current active field projects across the country. On the case of the Kurdistan region, where activity has been particularly concentrated; see Ur 2017.
27. See, e.g., Kersel 2008; and Hanson 2011. Elizabeth Stone (2008; 2015) has investigated satellite imagery of looting in Iraq to identify types of site targeted by looters. Her conclusions have emphasized Isin-Larsa period sites, which she suggests are probably targeted as likely sources for cuneiform tablets, and Achaemenid through Parthian period sites, probably targeted for coins. For an overview of the major ethical issues around illicit antiquities facing academics and cultural institutions, see Harding 2011.
28. <https://www.metmuseum.org/about-the-met/policies-and-documents/collections-management-policy#acquisitions-section-3b>.
29. <https://www.metmuseum.org/about-the-met/policies-and-documents/collections-management-policy#acquisitions-section-3c>.
30. Said 1981. On news media coverage of ancient Near Eastern heritage see, e.g., Seymour 2004; and Pollock 2005.
31. On the role of the humanities in addressing social issues around refugee settlement in the United States and Europe, see Westermann forthcoming.
32. Said 2004, pp. 1–30.

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INDEX OF LENDERS AND PROVENANCE INFORMATION

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Copenhagen, Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek

Cat. 118: Purchased in 1893 in Syria through E. Puttmann. **Cats. 123–24:** Purchased before 1888 in Syria through Julius Löytved, Danish consul in Beirut.

France

Grenoble, Musée de Grenoble

Cat. 125: Gift of General Léon de Beylié in 1907, who acquired it in Syria the same year.

Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France

Cat. 183: Purchased in 1893 from Vagini.

Paris, Musée du Louvre

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Aimé Péretié for Louis De Clercq. **Cat. 164:**

Gift of Pacifique Delaporte, French consul in Baghdad, who excavated it in 1862 in tomb 4 at Babylon. **Cat. 166:** Acquired between 1849–1863, possibly as a gift of Pacifique Delaporte.

Germany

Berlin, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin,

Antikensammlung

Cats. 94–97: Excavated between 1898–1905 by German expedition at Baalbek.

Berlin, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Vorderasiatisches Museum

Cat. 154: Excavated in 1912 by German expedition at Ashur. **Cats. 155–56:** Excavated in 1909 by German expedition at Ashur. **Cat. 169:** Excavated in 1904 by German expedition at Babylon. **Cat. 173:** Purchased in 1913 from Chajjat, Baghdad.

Israel

Jerusalem, Israel Antiquities Authority

Cat. 54: Excavated in 2009 at the Migdal Synagogue. **Cat. 61:** Chance find in 1975 and from subsequent excavations at Tell Shalem, Beth Shean valley. **Cats. 62–70:** Excavated in 1960–1961 at Nahal Hever Cave 5–6 (Cave of Letters).

Italy

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Rome, Museo Nazionale Romano, Il Medagliere

Cats. 126–29: Excavated in 1993 in Tomb 2 at Vallerano.

Jordan

Amman, Department of Antiquities

Cats. 32–35: Excavated in 1967 at Petra, in the Area of the Temenos Gate. **Cat. 36:** Excavated in 1998 at Petra, in the Qasr al-Bint. **Cat. 37:** Excavated in 2000 at Petra, Ez-Zantur. **Cat. 38:** Excavated in 1975 at Petra, in the Temple of the Winged Lions. **Cat. 39:** Excavated in 2003 at Petra, in the Great Temple. **Cat. 40:** Excavated in 2011 at Petra, in the Great Temple. **Cat. 41:** Excavated in 1943 in a tomb, Prince Talal Street, Amman. **Cat. 42:** Excavated in 1996 at Petra, in the area of Wadi Musa. **Cat. 44:** Excavated in 1955–1956 in a tomb at Petra. **Cat. 49:** Found in 1935–1936 at Khirbet et-Tannur. **Cat. 51B:** Excavated in 1937 at Khirbet et-Tannur. **Cat. 52:** Excavated in 2001 in a tomb at Jerash.

Lebanon

Beirut, National Museum

Cat. 71: Acquired by 1951; late 1940s–early 1950s, found in Bab Maréaa. **Cat. 82:** Acquired in the 1960s; found before 1914 in the garden of Ali Bey Joumblat in Beirut. **Cat. 83:** Acquired in the 1960s; found at Sidon; known by 1864 from an inscription copied by Father de Prunières. **Cat. 87:** Purchased in 1930; found in 1891 in the garden of a villa occupied by the Viscount de Tarrazi in the Rue de Syrie in Beirut (until 1914); after 1914, known on the art market in Beirut. **Cat. 88:** Purchased in 1954. **Cat. 92:** Found between 1946–1948, in the inner sanctuary of Temple A at Niha in the Beqaa Valley. **Cat. 93:** Acquired in the 1960s; found during salvage excavations in Baalbek. **Cat. 98:** Found in the 1940s in Qartaba, on the grounds of the Mar Sarkis monastery.

United Kingdom

The British Museum

Cat. 29: Gift of Harry St John Bridger Philby in 1937 who acquired it at Shabwa in 1936. **Cat. 30:** Purchased in 1960 from Spink and Son Ltd., London. **Cat. 31:** Gift of Henry Oppenheimer and Sir Maurice Rosenheim in 1915 who purchased it from the Prideaux family; acquired by Col. Prideaux (1840–1914) of Aden, Yemen. **Cat. 100:** Purchased in 1889 from Habra Bros. **Cat. 108:** Purchased in 1885 from Levi Bros. **Cats. 157–61:** Excavated in 1852 at Nineveh on behalf of the British Museum. **Cat. 168:** Excavated in 1880 at Borsippa on behalf of the British Museum. **Cat. 176:** Purchased in 1879–1880 from Spartali and Co.

United States

Cincinnati, Cincinnati Art Museum

Cats. 45–51A: Excavated in 1937–1938 at Khirbet et-Tannur by the Joint Expedition of the Jerusalem School of the American Schools of Oriental Research and the Transjordan Department of Antiquities.

New Haven, Yale Peabody Museum of Natural History, Yale Babylonian Collection

Cat. 179: Purchased in 1921 from the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology; excavated in the late 19th century at Nippur by the University of Pennsylvania's Babylonian Expeditions.

New Haven, Yale University Art Gallery

Cats. 130–45, 148–52: Excavated between 1928–1937 at Dura-Europos by the Joint Expedition of Yale University and the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres. **Cats. 146–47:** Commissioned by Yale University.

New York, American Numismatic Society

Cats. 4, 9, 11, 18, 58, 60, 181: Bequest of E. T. Newell, 1944. **Cat. 8:** Bequest of E. T. Newell, 1944; ex-collection Petrowicz.

Cat. 57: Gift of Mrs. George Endicott DeWitt Endicott, in 1935. **Cat. 59:** Bequest of Adra M. Newell, 1967. **Cats. 106–07:** Gift of Albert Gallatin in 1937. **Cat. 182:** Gift of M. P. Hunt in 1957.

New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art

Cats. 1–3, 5–7, 10, 13–17: Bequest of Joseph H. Durkee, 1898. **Cat. 12:** Purchased in 1908 from J. Grafton Milne. **Cat. 21:** Purchased in 2002 from The Merrin Gallery, New York; ex-collection of Alastair Bradley Martin, The Guennol Collection (since 1949). **Cat. 43:** Excavated in 1969 by the British School of Archaeology in Jerusalem, The Metropolitan Museum of Art and the University College of London, Institute of Archaeology. **Cat. 55:** Gift of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan in 1964; excavated at Qumran in 1949 by the Department of Antiquities of Jordan. **Cat. 56:** Acquired before 1910. **Cats. 72–73:** Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan in 1917; ex-collection of Julien Gréau. **Cats. 74–76, 78–79:** Gift of Henry G. Marquand in 1881; ex-collection of Jules Charvet. **Cat. 77:** Purchased in 1923 from F. Vester and Co., New York; said to be found in Aleppo in 1913. **Cat. 80:** Bequest of Mrs. H. O. Havemeyer, 1929. **Cat. 81:** Acquired by 1881. **Cat. 84:** Gift of George D. Pratt in 1931. **Cat. 103:** Purchased in 1895 from Ira Harris, Tripoli; ex-collection of Julius Löytved. **Cat. 105:** Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Harry G. Friedman in 1955; ex-collection Sobernheim. **Cats. 112–17, 121–22:** Purchased in 1901–1902 from Azeez Khayat, New York. **Cat. 119:** Bequest of Armida B. Colt, 2011; 1910s, ex-collection of Dimitri Qandelaft/Andalaft, Cairo; sold at Parke-Bernet, New York, on November 26, 1948; ex-collection of H. Dunscombe Colt (until d. 1973); since 1966, on loan to The Metropolitan Museum of Art by

H. Dunscombe Colt and then Armida B. Colt, Washington, D.C. **Cat. 120:** Purchased in 1898 from Emile Abela, Tripoli. **Cat. 153:** Purchased in 1932 from Sydney Burney, London; known since 1911 on the art market, Baghdad. **Cat. 162:** Purchased from Christie's, London, on July 5, 1995, lot 130; 1845–1847, said to be found in Nineveh by Sir Austen Henry Layard who gave it to Captain Robert Innesby; ex-collection of Innesby family (until 1995). **Cat. 163:** Acquired before 1936. **Cats. 165, 167, 174–75, 177:** Purchased in 1886 from the Reverend William Hayes Ward. **Cats. 170–72:** Excavated in 1931–1932 at Ctesiphon by the Joint Expedition of the Staatliche Museen of Berlin and The Metropolitan Museum of Art. **Cat. 178:** Excavated in 1957–1958 at Nippur by the Joint Expedition to Nippur (Baghdad School of the American Schools of Oriental Research and The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago). **Cat. 180:** Ex-collection of Dikran G. Kelekian.

Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology

Cats. 104, 109, 111: Acquired in 1890 during the Second Babylonian Expedition to Nippur.

Washington, D.C., Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection

Cat. 19: Purchased in 1938 by Mildred and Robert Bliss from Joseph Brummer, New York; said to be found near Sana'a in 1929; purchased in 1930 by Joseph Brummer from Maurice Nahman, Cairo.

Washington, D.C., Smithsonian Institution, Arthur M. Sackler Gallery

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Jacket illustrations: (front) Aedicula for Aglibol and Malakbel (cat. 102, detail); (back) The Royal Tombs, Petra (fig. 23, detail)

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