

D • U • R • A EUROPOS



Crossroads of Antiquity

EDITED BY LISA R. BRODY AND GAIL L. HOFFMAN

DURA-EUROPOS CROSSROADS OF ANTIQUITY

Located in a region contested by the Seleucid, Parthian, and later the Roman Empires—and on the Euphrates River, a major north-south transportation artery—Dura-Europos was home to a multicultural population during its history. Settled by Macedonian veterans around 300 BCE, Parthians captured Dura-Europos late in the second century BCE. The Parthians made the city into a fortress, and it flourished as a trading post on the western border of their huge empire. In the mid-second century CE, the Romans seized the city, eventually turning it into a major garrison on their empire's eastern frontier. Remains of parchment, papyri, and carved inscriptions attest to the numerous languages spoken and written in ancient Dura-Europos, including Greek, Latin, Aramaic (Palmyrene and Syriac), Middle Persian, Parthian, Hebrew, and Safaitic. The religions that coexisted in the city speak to an equally complex cultural environment, with temples to Greek, Roman, and numerous Near Eastern gods, as well as dedicated places of worship for Christians and Jews.

Abandoned after a Sasanian siege and sack in 256 CE, the site remained virtually unexplored until 1928, when full-scale excavations were initiated through a collaboration between Yale University and the French Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres. The discoveries at Dura-Europos during the 1920s and 1930s made a dramatic impact on both scholars and the general public. Buildings uncovered included a synagogue painted with biblical scenes (something thought impossible given the prohibition against figural images in Jewish law); one of the first Christian house churches, with the earliest-known baptistery; and a place of worship for the mystery religion of Mithraism. Such discoveries fundamentally altered the understanding of religious practice in antiquity. In addition, archaeologists uncovered a treasure trove of well-preserved materials, such as papyri, parchments, painted wood and reed shields, rush baskets, wooden catapult bolts, and leather and metal horse armor. This evidence provides a surprisingly complex and full picture of life in an ancient community along the busy Euphrates River.

Accompanying the exhibition *Dura-Europos: Crossroads of Antiquity* at Boston College's McMullen Museum of Art (February 5–June 5, 2011), this publication includes essays by a wide range of specialists (archaeologists, art historians, linguists, historians, and theologians) and spans the Hellenistic to the Islamic period. Like the exhibition, the book aims to reintegrate thinking about the city of Dura-Europos. Articles that normally would appear in divergent and specialized journals appear together here, encouraging consideration of the vast range of significance that these materials have in the scholarly world. Like the ancient city, where there were myriad cultures in contact and in communication, the publication breaks disciplinary boundaries and places scholars of Dura-Europos in dialogue with each other and with the public, exploring interactions among the disparate cultural, religious, and professional groups that inhabited Dura-Europos.

D • U • R • A
E U R O P O S

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This publication is issued in conjunction with the exhibition *Dura-Europos: Crossroads of Antiquity*, organized by the McMullen Museum of Art, Boston College and the Yale University Art Gallery.

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February 5–June 5, 2011

Organized by the McMullen Museum of Art, Boston College and the Yale University Art Gallery, *Dura-Europos: Crossroads of Antiquity* has been curated by Lisa R. Brody (Yale University Art Gallery) and Gail L. Hoffman (Boston College, Classics Department) with support from the National Endowment for the Arts, Boston College, and the Patrons of the McMullen Museum. Additional support was provided by the Newton College class of 1965.



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PREFACE

The story of this exhibition begins in 2007 when Gail Hoffman, a faculty member in the Classics and Fine Arts departments at Boston College, presented the McMullen with the possibility of organizing an exhibition of objects from the Yale University Art Gallery. Hoffman had been contacted by a fellow archaeologist, Lisa Brody, who had recently become Associate Curator of Ancient Art at the Yale University Art Gallery. Brody was hoping to organize a traveling exhibition from her collections while they were in storage during gallery renovations. The McMullen immediately embraced the idea and proposed that Hoffman and Brody, in consultation with scholars at their institutions, conceive a theme for the exhibition and accompanying volume of essays that would attract scholars from various disciplines to engage in new research and rethink a body of material. After deliberation with curators and faculty from Yale University and Boston College, Hoffman and Brody concluded that exploration of the objects excavated at the Syrian city of Dura-Europos by a Yale team of archaeologists between 1928 and 1937 (about 12,000 of which reside in the Yale University Art Gallery) provided a rare opportunity for scholarly exploration about interrelationships of ethnic and religious groups within an ancient city and for a reassessment of how the city may have functioned as a crossroad or meeting point for several ancient civilizations and cultures.

To that end, Brody and Hoffman gathered an outstanding group of art historians, archaeologists, philologists, linguists, classicists, theologians, and historians, from their institutions, others in North America, and Europe, to contribute to the publication and to refine the exhibition's thematic foci. They then selected objects for display that would best reflect these themes. They chose 75 objects from which they could explore the many and varied identities of people who left their mark on Dura-Europos. Many—like women, children, and slaves—excluded from written histories are only known through the archaeological record. They sought to examine the effect the geographic reach of the Roman military had on the city's culture. For the exhibition's installation, they proposed to partially reconstruct the most well-known of the city's spaces dedicated to Christian, Jewish, and Mithraic religious practice, in an effort to make visible the many similarities among them in architecture and decoration.

The curators' expertise, organizational talents, creative intellectual vision, and magnanimity—all conspicuous throughout the project—have made this a most joyous enterprise; thus, it is to them that we owe

our greatest gratitude. We owe thanks to J. A. Baird, Pamela Berger, Sheila Blair, Jonathan Bloom, Lisa Brody, Patricia DeLeeuw, Lucinda Dirven, Richard Grossmann, Maura Heyn, Gail Hoffman, Simon James, Ann Olga Koloski-Ostrow, Paul Kosmin, Charles McClendon, Margaret Olin, Michael Peppard, Tessa Rajak, and Carol Snow, for contributing essays to this volume. We also express appreciation to others who contributed ideas to the project: Charles (Ted) Ahern, Kirsten Ataöguz, Susanne Ebbinghaus, Christine Kondoleon, Susan Matheson, Diana McDonald, PHEME Perkins, and David Vanderhooft—all distinguished scholars of the ancient world.

It is with deep appreciation that we acknowledge the collaboration of our esteemed colleagues at the Yale University Art Gallery: Jock Reynolds, the Henry J. Heinz II Director; Susan Matheson, the Molly and Walter Bareiss Curator of Ancient Art and Chief Curator; Ian McClure, the Susan Morse Hilles Chief Conservator; Patricia Sherwin Garland, Senior Conservator of Paintings; L. Lynne Addison, Registrar; and Amy Dowe, Senior Associate Registrar. The value of their contributions is immeasurable.

Colleagues at the McMullen Museum, across our University, and beyond, have contributed their talents to this complex project. In particular, Diana Larsen designed the exhibition's installation to evoke various architectural spaces in the ancient city. Sheppard Barnett, Giovanni Buonapane, Joseph Figueiredo, and Nicholas Mastropoll constructed architectural elements for the installation with extraordinary skill. In designing this volume, the exhibition's graphics, and the Web site, John McCoy has elevated text to art. Kerry Burke and Michael Swanson provided superb digital reproductions for the installation. Rich House, Anthony De Camillo, and Jessica Smolinski of the Yale University Art Gallery supplied excellent photographs for the catalogue. The extraordinary care taken by Margaret Neeley in editing this volume and the exhibition texts was invaluable. Interns Marie Conger, Francesca Falzone, Kathryn Fox, Elizabeth Lobkowicz, Sudarsana Mohanty, Peter Scher, Kelsea Wigmore, and India Winter aided in the exhibition's overall organization. We are grateful to members of our office of advancement—especially James Husson, Simon Welsby, Catherine Concannon, Mary Lou Crane, Joanne Scibilia, and Susan Comeau—who aided our funding efforts. We would also like to acknowledge the contribution to research for this exhibition by students in the seminar taught by Hoffman and me: Jung Hee Choi, Marie Conger, Catherine Howard, Paul Lindholm, Daniel McCarthy, Elizabeth McLain, Richard Mills, Sudarsana Mohanty, Emily Moloney, Elizabeth Moy, Eric Neumann, Erin Roche, and Lucy Watson.

We could not have attempted such an ambitious project were it not for the continued generosity of the administration of Boston College and the McMullen family. We especially thank President William P. Leahy, S.J.; Provost Cutberto Garza; Chancellor J. Donald Monan, S. J.; Vice Provost Patricia DeLeeuw; and Dean of Arts and Sciences David Quigley. For major support of the exhibition we are indebted to the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency, and the Patrons of the McMullen Museum, chaired by C. Michael Daley. Additional support was provided by the Newton College class of 1965 in memory of Priscilla Durkin. With this volume, the Museum inaugurates support from a new publication fund named in memory of our docent Peggy Simons who died in 2009; the multicultural inquiry embodied within was as close to her heart as she remains to the hearts of all at the McMullen who knew her.

Nancy Netzer
Director and Professor of Art History

INTRODUCTION

During the 1920s and 1930s, Yale University and the French Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres collaborated to excavate the ancient site of Dura-Europos. The project's *partage* agreement (preserved in the Dura-Europos archives at the Yale University Art Gallery) divided the finds at the end of each season between Yale and the National Museum in Damascus. As a result, the collection of the Art Gallery now includes an assemblage of approximately twelve thousand excavated artifacts from Dura-Europos. An extensive archive of field notebooks, drawings, plans, and photographs from the Yale-French expedition is also maintained by the Gallery's Department of Ancient Art. This invaluable resource allows the works of art to be put into their archaeological and historical context so that the objects and structures found at Dura-Europos can be understood not only in isolation but also as interacting parts of a whole.

Upon arriving at Yale in the 1930s, the objects from Dura-Europos were placed on view in the exhibition halls of the Art Gallery, where they attracted international attention. By the 1980s, the amount of public interest in the collection motivated Susan Matheson, the Gallery's Molly and Walter Bareiss Curator of Ancient Art, to organize a special exhibition focusing on the site.¹ Due to their constant popularity, many pieces remained on display after the show closed. Over the years, several other museums have made requests to exhibit objects from Yale's Dura-Europos collection on a long-term or short-term basis. Painted ceiling tiles from the Synagogue, for instance, are exhibited at the Jewish Museum in New York City, and several objects—including sculptures, textiles, and ceiling tiles—can be seen in the ancient Near Eastern galleries of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Other objects have appeared in special exhibitions at museums nationwide.

When the Gallery's Kahn building closed for renovations in 2003, the Dura-Europos objects were placed in storage. By 2007, when Lisa Brody joined the staff, plans were underway for another renovation of the Gallery that would include a permanent thematic installation on Dura-Europos (scheduled to open in 2012). In anticipation of the opening, Brody proposed to organize a special exhibition on the ancient city that would encompass her current research and that of others in the field. With encouragement from Susan Matheson and Director Jock Reynolds, she chose Gail Hoffman as her collaborator and the McMullen Museum as the exhibition's venue.

Because many of the fragile artifacts required conservation, the arrival of Carol Snow at the Gallery in 2008 as the museum's first objects conservator and Yale's acquisition of a new, large conservation facility on its West Campus played crucial roles in the implementation of the project. The works could now be systematically treated and prepared for display. Several major projects were undertaken, including conservation of the wall paintings from the Christian Building, displayed for the first time at the McMullen, and reconstruction of the Mithraeum shrine for installation in the renovated Gallery.

The resulting exhibition, *Dura-Europos: Crossroads of Antiquity*, displays 75 objects (see color plates in this volume) that reflect—and permit exploration of—the many ethnic groups within the ancient city's population and reveal the cultural interactions that were common in the ancient world. By recounting the site's discovery as well as historical and archaeological importance and by examining the extraordinary preservation of its excavated material, the installation encourages viewers to focus on the physical remains as a key to imagining the inhabitants of the city. Visitors first experience architectural spaces through physical and virtual reconstructions, then they explore the interrelationship between the spaces' use and their decorations. A newly designed computer kiosk presents reconstructions and renderings of the site and its major monuments as well as excavation photographs, drawings, and building plans from the Dura-Europos archives. A large, printed site plan links objects from the galleries with the location of their discovery. The objects on view, therefore, emerge both as works of aesthetic value and as artifacts that tell the story of an important city located at a significant cultural crossroads.

Almost thirty years after Susan Matheson's exhibition at Yale, the exhibition at the McMullen strives to consider new directions in scholarship and analysis permitted by the well-preserved and well-documented material record of the city and its multicultural population. From the earliest phases of the city (ca. 300–113 BCE), Greek-influenced elements appeared most notably in the gridded street plan, agora, and fortifications, as well as in religion, art, and language. Some early inhabitants, however, were of local Syro-Mesopotamian origin; their native languages, religions, and cultural elements later merged with imported Greek ones. During a long, prosperous period of Parthian control (ca. 113 BCE–165 CE), local elements came to the fore. The agora filled in with shops and came to resemble an eastern souk. Temples conformed to Mesopotamian courtyard structures rather than to Greek plans. In the second century CE, when the Romans seized Dura-Europos, yet more cultural and ethnic presences arrived (for example, this is when the Christian and Jewish communities first became visible and the followers of Mithras, mainly soldiers, came).

Subgroups found within the city's population included Syrians (especially Palmyrenes), Mesopotamians, Greeks, Roman soldiers, conscripted "barbarians" from Northern Europe, Jews, and Christians. Inscriptions, papyri, and graffiti appeared in Greek, Aramaic (including Palmyrene, Syriac, and Hatraean), Latin, Middle Persian (Iranian), Parthian, and Safaitic. Residents practiced numerous professions besides soldiering; there were shopkeepers, entertainers, painters, glassmakers, scribes, jewelers, metalworkers, farmers, priests, politicians, as well as legal and administrative personnel. All left their mark on the archaeological remains of the city, permitting analysis of the excavation and artifacts to illuminate the many cultural interactions common in the ancient Mediterranean world.

Both the exhibition and this publication highlight recent scholarship as well as areas that still pose questions. Some of the excavated remains from Dura-Europos received detailed study and publication; many others were noted only in preliminary reports. Scholarly interest has centered on the relatively well-

published Synagogue and Christian Building; and, moreover, these studies come disproportionately from scholars of the Greco-Roman, rather than the Near Eastern, world. The Synagogue and Christian Building along with their intriguing paintings are most often studied in isolation; their significance for the early history of Christian or Jewish art and architecture has taken precedence in their study. Little has been said about the relationships of these two religious communities with their many other religious neighbors at Dura-Europos. Juxtaposing spaces and material remains from various religions, the exhibition seeks to pique interest in such questions. Including articles on the Synagogue, Christian Building, and pagan religions, this volume encourages reflection on similar topics.

Never having received a final publication, the Mithraeum at Dura-Europos is less understood, as are many of the other religious groups and their associated materials. In most cases, the deity or deities to whom Dura's many pagan temples were dedicated remain uncertain. And, whereas the papyri and parchments were fully published, other inscriptions from the site were not. Both sources of written evidence could be studied further to illuminate new areas of scholarly focus—land use and tenure, Parthian control of peripheral cities, language use, and, of course, the various groups and individuals present at Dura-Europos.

The preliminary reports and those final reports that were published have tended to dominate scholars' thinking and interpretation of the site. As interest in the Roman Near East has grown, scholars are calling for a reassessment of these published conclusions. Understanding of early Christianity, Judaism, and Greco-Roman religion has developed significantly since the early publications—as have the theory, techniques, and methods for analysis of archaeological materials. Whereas the early excavators focused on great works of art and written documents, today archaeologists are interested in much more humble remains (bones and seeds, everyday ceramics, garbage dumps, and people not mentioned by the texts). And whereas early study of objects tended to remove them from their associated materials and location of discovery, today such information is understood as essential for a full understanding of the object, its use, and the community about which it informs. Fortunately, the archive of field reports and journals stored at Yale permits some of this information to be rediscovered. The last few decades have seen a dramatic increase in studies by scholars from a variety of fields that focus on group and individual identity. Questions about multiculturalism and interreligious dialogue resonate with modern situations and concerns. Especially in recent years, researchers have begun to pursue the potential of the Dura-Europos finds for studying related topics about east-west interactions and intercultural contacts.

This volume includes essays by a wide range of specialists (archaeologists, art historians, linguists, historians, and theologians) and spans the Hellenistic to the Islamic period. Like the exhibition, the book aims to reintegrate thinking about the city of Dura-Europos. Articles that normally would appear in divergent and specialized journals appear together here, encouraging consideration of the vast range of significance that these materials have in the scholarly world. Like the ancient city, where there were myriad cultures in contact and in communication, the publication breaks disciplinary boundaries and places scholars of Dura-Europos in dialogue with each other and with the public.

Even in the most heavily studied areas of the site (the Synagogue and Christian Buildings), scholars writing for this book demonstrate that by asking questions about the context of their materials new insights may appear. Charles McClendon suggests that the baptistery paintings were intended to interact with liturgical practices taking place within this architectural space, whereas Michael Peppard explores how incorporating

Syrian sources on the meaning of baptism may affect assumptions about the painting usually described as the women at the tomb. Examining temple representations in four scenes of the second register of the Synagogue's west wall, Pamela Berger ponders whether the environment of Dura-Europos affected the choice of Greco-Roman architectural elements to render the temples, and Tessa Rajak explores the decoration of the Synagogue in the context of both Jewish and non-Jewish audiences.

Other scholars look at evidence for foreigners and other groups inhabiting the site or affecting materials found within it. So Nancy Netzer explores a small group of bronze ornaments used by soldiers at the site and teases out their stylistic associations to objects made in the northern reaches of the Roman Empire. Lucinda Dirven examines the physical and inscriptional evidence for foreigners from Palmyra, Hatra, and nearby Anath, interacting with locals and affecting religious structures at Dura-Europos. In reconstructing important evidence about the final siege at the site and exploring the possibility that the attacking Sasanians used poisonous gases in one of the mine tunnels, Simon James reveals cultural interactions and influences displayed by such items as the Sasanian iron helmet and horse armor—and even siege tactics themselves. Ann Olga Koloski-Ostrow pours over different cultural attitudes toward water, studying bathing and toileting evidence from the site; in this way she examines how evidence about water use may reveal the presence of people from disparate cultural backgrounds as well as processes of cultural contact and change. Maura Heyn is even able to expand understanding of the function of the well-known Terentius fresco by reconstructing the other painted scenes found near it in the Temple of the Palmyrene Gods. J. A. Baird demonstrates that reconstituting the assemblage of materials found in individual houses at Dura-Europos may reveal residents of the city more humble in status and less fully reflected in the other (especially textual and inscriptional) evidence. Even tiny glass fragments examined by Richard Grossmann, when studied with an eye to what they may say about technology and trade, are shown to yield unexpected insight into the daily lives of inhabitants at Dura-Europos and beyond.

Other essays in the book provide historical perspectives from which to assess all these materials and ideas. Paul Kosmin explores the earliest Seleucid period, while Jonathan Bloom and Sheila Blair study the region in the Byzantine and Islamic eras following the sack and abandonment of Dura-Europos. Margaret Olin focuses on a different sort of history, namely that of the fascinating scholars who worked on Dura-Europos. She reveals how their personal stories and the times in which they worked affected their analyses. Essays by Lisa Brody, Carol Snow, and Gail Hoffman provide background to the excavations themselves, the conservation and treatment of objects, and the recent scholarly interest in individual and group identity and cultural interactions.

This publication is multidisciplinary and international, with essays that explore the past, present, and future of Yale's Dura-Europos project. It re-examines material from the excavations and the archives, and it presents ongoing research and new conclusions. The hope is that this book and exhibition will form a new beginning or spark a resurgence of interest in Dura-Europos within many disciplines. There is much fruitful work to be done.

Lisa R. Brody and Gail L. Hoffman

Acknowledgements

A project such as this involves the collaboration of many people. First, let me thank my co-curator Lisa Brody. It is a pleasure to acknowledge the helpful advice, support, and encouragement I have received. This project could not have been completed without her knowledge of the Yale Dura-Europos collection and her comradeship. Early in the process, members of the Boston College and surrounding academic community expressed interest in the exhibition and its publication. Charles (Ted) Ahern, Kirsten Ataöguz, Pamela Berger, Sheila Blair, Jonathan Bloom (who first suggested the show's title), Pat DeLeeuw, Susanne Ebbinghaus, Kendra Eshleman, Maria Kakavas, Ann Olga Koloski-Ostrow, Ruth Langer, Charles McClendon, Meredith Monaghan, Dia Philippides, John Rosser, and David Vanderhooft, all voiced their support.

Very quickly the McMullen staff became essential to the success of this endeavor. Nancy Netzer must be mentioned first for it was she who trusted in the project that Lisa Brody and I would put together; and she was there every step of the way to help and enable us to move forward. Museum directors surely never gets credit for all the many jobs they do: deciding on shows to develop, fundraising, hiring a first-rate staff to support their projects, calming frazzled nerves, showing how to move forward by example. She did each of these jobs superbly and much more. Her staff at the McMullen proved invaluable. Although I have been around the design and implementation of exhibits and have attended many exhibitions during my academic life, I have never put one together. I would not have considered undertaking such a project without knowing that Nancy Netzer and her staff were there to supply their tremendous knowledge and experience. Diana Larsen, who designed and created the installation in all its details—spaces (including complicated reconstructions of multiple niches and a gateway), colors, cases, and object presentation, to name but a few of the projects—was always eager to discuss how best to present the objects to visitors and seemed infinitely willing to consider any new idea that I might suggest. She showed tremendous patience and good cheer with me. John McCoy quietly, with the utmost competence and nary a complaint to me, created maps, plans, diagrams, designed text, invitations, banners, and more. He answered question after question from me about image production and always tried to help me learn and understand it. I stand in awe of his design capabilities. Margaret Neeley undertook the heroic task of working with the many academics writing essays for this book. The grace she demonstrated under the pressure of deadlines with everyone complaining from all sides is remarkable. She calmly allowed me to infringe on her domain of copy editing, quietly correcting and re-correcting my mistakes. It is thanks to her that the text of this book is so beautifully presented. Like a museum director, many of the things that a copy editor does remain unnoticed by those not familiar with such work. Thanks to Margaret, readers can focus on the ideas contained in the text, think, and look without the distraction of misspellings or confusing language. In an age of quick publishing and reliance on computers, such carefully crafted documents are becoming a rarity.

Beyond the McMullen Museum, I was fortunate to have able and helpful graduate research assistants from the Classics Department. In particular, I thank Brandon Jones, who tirelessly researched the exhibition's objects and their contexts. He put together research folders and pdfs that I have consulted again and again as I worked through this project. Another graduate student, James McGovern, corrected and refined inscription information, double-checked information, and collected useful research articles. Late in the process, Carolyn Twomey, a graduate student in History contributed materials for the Christian Building

display. I also had the support of undergraduate research assistants from the Fine Arts, History, and Classics departments: Amanda Roth assembled bibliography; Sudarsana Mohanty worked on a computer album of visual materials; Allison Tripp researched, collected, and organized materials for secondary school use of the exhibition; Eric Neumann continued work on secondary school materials and collated information for exhibition texts; and Tedd Wimperis read early essay drafts for formatting and style, located research materials, and contributed to wall labels. This semester I have enjoyed an engaging group of students who researched objects in the exhibition for a seminar called the Museum of Art taught jointly with Nancy Netzer. I would also like to thank all the authors who wrote essays for this volume and particularly note the timeliness with which they responded to all our deadlines.

Of course, none of this would have been possible without Lisa Brody and Susan Matheson along with their tremendous team of people at Yale. I thank them wholeheartedly for their willingness to work with me. And my family (Michael Martin, Martin Hoffman, and Arthur Hoffman) receives my special gratitude for their understanding and love. —GLH

I am so grateful to so many people for helping to make this exhibition possible. First, I thank Gail Hoffman for being such a wonderful co-curator, bringing talent and expertise to the project that have enhanced it on every level. The entire team at the McMullen Museum—Diana Larsen, John McCoy, Margaret Neeley, and especially director Nancy Netzer—provided invaluable support and enthusiasm for the exhibition as well as the publication, and I wish to echo all of Gail's articulate comments above about their essential roles in the project. Like Gail as well, I thank the participating authors for their responsiveness and for the quality of their contributions. They are the backbone of this publication. Additionally, I am grateful to Ted Kaizer, Carol Snow, Tiffany Sprague, and Susan Matheson for reading drafts of my own essay and providing constructive and helpful criticism.

The exhibition and book could never have come together without the participation of staff members from numerous departments at the Yale University Art Gallery as well. I would like to thank the Department of Visual Resources, including Anthony DeCamillo, John French, Richard House, Kathleen Mylen-Coulombe, Jessica Smolinski, and David Whaples, for providing the beautiful photographs of the Dura-Europos objects included in this book. I am grateful to Carol Snow for her painstaking work on the objects' conservation, and for being such a wonderful colleague and friend. I thank Patricia Sherwin Garland, Senior Painting Conservator, for her treatment of the Gute copies, as well as Paul Panamarenko and Jeremy Bell for constructing new frames for their protection and display. Conservation intern Victoria Schussler helped with treating numerous pieces in the exhibition, as did Anne Gunnison, Post-graduate Associate in Object Conservation, who also pitched in to help complete condition reports for the objects. I am grateful to Ariana French, Data and Database Specialist, as well as Doug Lloyd and the team at Flat Inc., for designing and implementing the computer kiosk that is an important element of the installation. Registrars Lynne Addison and Amy Dowe did a masterful job of organizing the contract, budget, packing and shipping schedules, and numerous other details, while managing a dozen other exhibition projects. Likewise, the Gallery's Collections Department staff—particularly Jason DeBlock, Burrus Harlow, and their team of art

handlers—worked with their usual skill and efficiency. During the course of the project, Yale graduate student Richard Teverson and undergraduate Sage Snider carried out research on objects and contributed to labels for the exhibition.

I would also like to acknowledge Mary Sue Coates (daughter of Clark Hopkins), David Gute and Ann Tousignant (son and daughter-in-law of Herbert Gute), and Alice Pearson (daughter of Henry Pearson), who generously shared photographs and personal family records for this project, helping to bring alive some of the fascinating personalities who were part of the Yale excavation team at Dura-Europos.

I am particularly indebted to Megan Doyon, Senior Museum Assistant in the Department of Ancient Art, for her assistance at many levels during the project, particularly in providing high-resolution images from the Dura-Europos archives for the publication, as well as for her friendship and daily smiles.

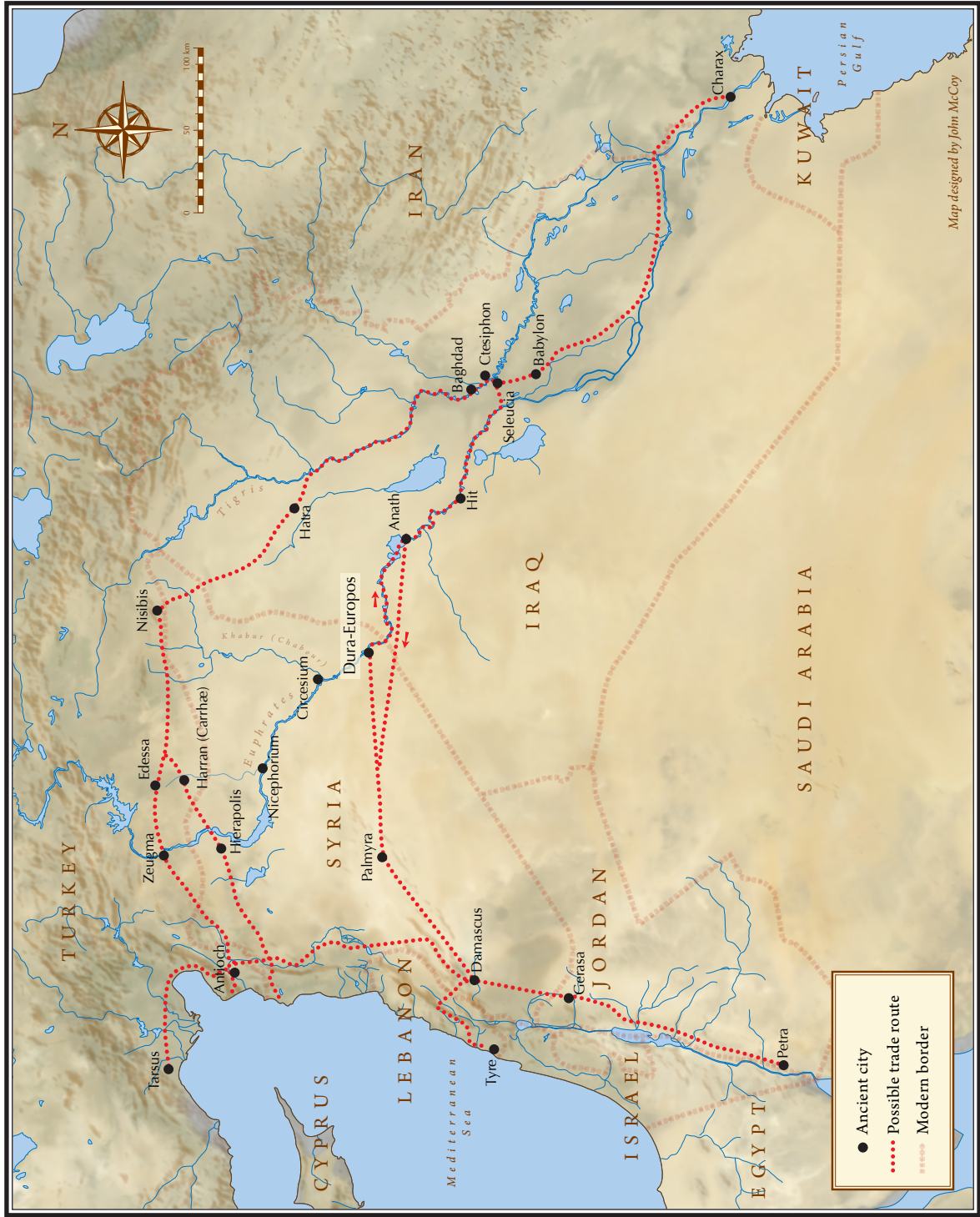
My sincere gratitude and admiration go to Jock Reynolds, the Henry J. Heinz II Director of the Yale University Art Gallery, for his enthusiasm and support of the project, and for his belief in the strength of the Gallery as an institution devoted to educating and sharing.

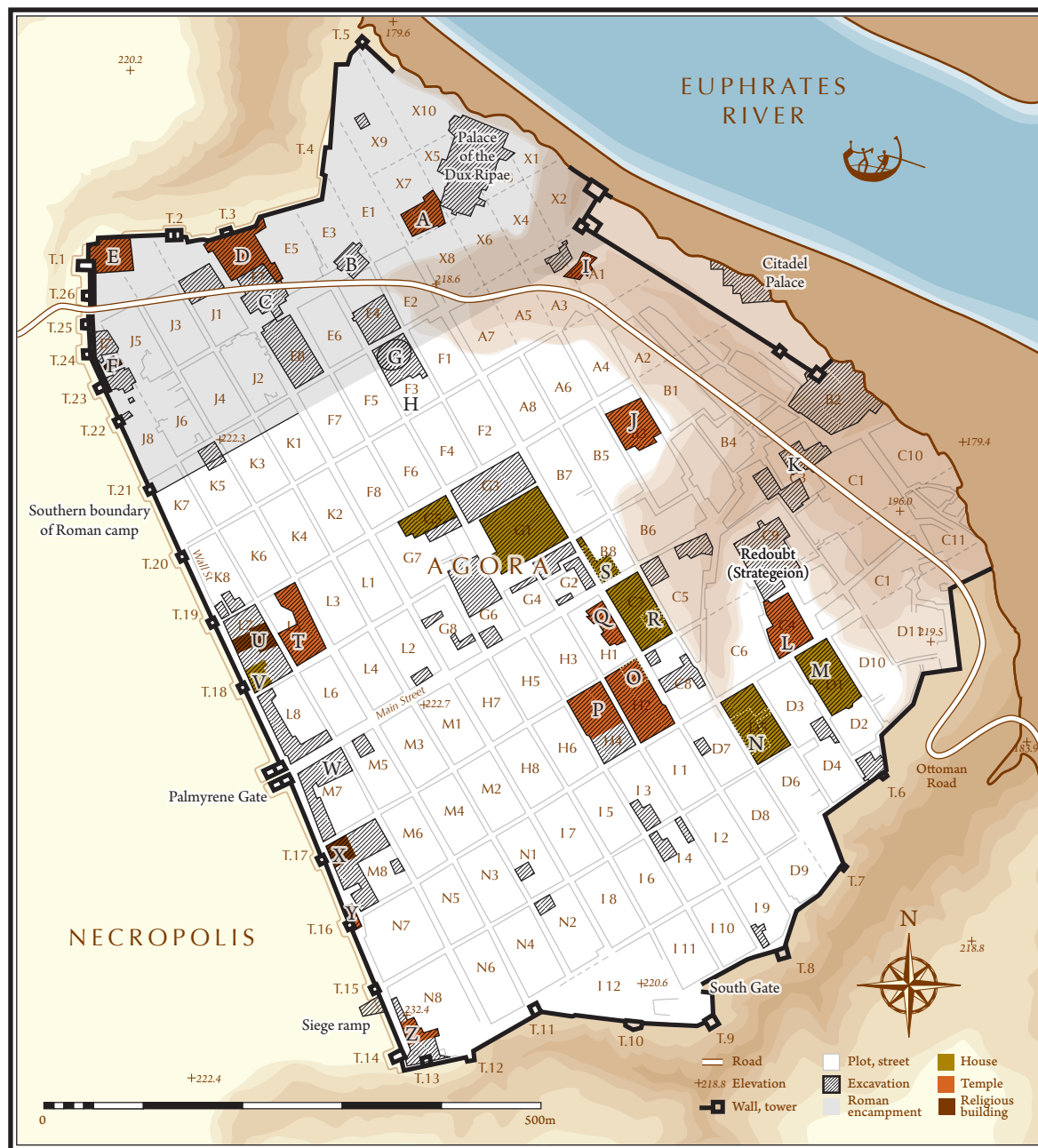
Finally, I owe more than I can say to Susan Matheson, the Molly and Walter Bareiss Curator of Ancient Art, Chief Curator, and someone who has become my friend and mentor. She has devoted much of her career to Dura-Europos, and I am honored that she has entrusted me with the care of this collection and its reinstallation. Her enthusiasm for this project gives me immeasurable pride.

I owe a special debt to my parents, Arthur and Linda Brody, for their constant love, support, and willingness to help whenever I need them, even without me asking. I dedicate my part in this book and exhibition to my children, Connor, Julia, and Megan, who make my life complete. —LRB

Notes

- 1 Katherine M. Kiefer and Susan B. Matheson, *Life in an Eastern Province: the Roman Fortress at Dura-Europos. Checklist of the Exhibition at the Yale University Art Gallery, 24 March–5 September 1982* (New Haven: Yale University Art Gallery, 1982). A general book was published to accompany the exhibition: Susan B. Matheson, *Dura-Europos: the Ancient City and the Yale Collection* (New Haven: Yale University Art Gallery, 1982).





- | | | | |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------|
| A Temple of Jupiter Dolichenus | H Baths | O Temple of Atargatis | V House of the Roman Scribes |
| B Baths | I Military Temple | P Temple of Artemis Nanaia | W Baths |
| C Principia (Praetorium) | J Temple of Zeus Theos | Q Temple of the Gadde | X Christian Building |
| D Temple of Artemis Azzanathkona | K Baths | R House of the Frescoes | Y Temple of Zeus Kyrios |
| E Temple of Palmyrene Gods (Bel) | L Temple of Zeus Megistos | S House of Nebuchelus | Z Temple of Aphlad |
| F Mithraeum | M House of Lysias | T Temple of Adonis | |
| G Ampitheater | N House of the Large Atrium | U Synagogue | |

Site plan designed by John McCoy, after a plan by Simon James, after MFSED

LISA R. BRODY

YALE UNIVERSITY AND DURA-EUPOPOS: FROM EXCAVATION TO EXHIBITION

After a long, multicultural history that shows the influences of Hellenistic, Parthian, and Roman civilizations (among others), the ancient city of Dura-Europos was successfully assaulted by the Sasanians and abandoned. For several centuries thereafter, the site remained virtually unseen and undisturbed in the Syrian desert. Its architecture, art, religion, and people are known to modern scholars largely through the results of a series of excavation campaigns sponsored by Yale University and the French Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres in the 1920s and 1930s (fig. 1.1). The artifacts and archives that came to Yale from these excavations have long been a focus of interest and research and are becoming increasingly accessible to scholars and the general public through Web sites, publications, public lectures, symposia, and through dedicated exhibitions like *Dura-Europos: Crossroads of Antiquity* at the McMullen Museum of Art, February 5 through June 5, 2011.

The modern story of Dura-Europos begins in 1920, when British troops stationed at Salihyah under the command of Captain M. C. Murphy made a surprising and fortuitous discovery by uncovering several well-preserved ancient wall paintings. This event, which occurred on March 30, 1920, initiated the systematic archaeological investigation of the site known originally as “Europos” and later as “Dura” (the fortress). The city, called Dura-Europos by modern scholars, was founded by Macedonian Greeks in approximately 300 BCE and lay completely abandoned between its destruction by the Sasanians around the year 256 CE and its eventual rediscovery in the early twentieth century.



Figure 1.1: Aerial view of Dura-Europos, 1932. Yale University Art Gallery, Dura-Europos Collection

As soon as he saw the revealed wall paintings, Captain Murphy recognized the importance of the find and that a trained archaeologist needed to see the paintings. He wrote to his commanding officer, Lieutenant Colonel Gerard Leachman, describing the discovery and requesting assistance:

While at Salihyah I discovered on the 30th inst. some ancient wall paintings in a wonderful state of preservation. The paintings are in the west corner of the fort and consist of life-size figures of three men, one woman, and three other figures partly obliterated. The colours are mainly reds, yellows and black. There is also some writing which I have tried to reproduce below.

I should be glad if you would forward this to the proper quarter.¹

Leachman forwarded Murphy's report to the Civil Commissioner, Colonel Arnold Talbot Wilson, along with the following note:

As a result of our occupation of the old fort at Salihyah and the digging of trenches, a certain amount of finds have been made. The paintings to which the attached refers are most interesting and should, I think, be seen by an expert. If your American archaeologist is still about, it would well repay him to come and see this. The films enclosed are of the pictures. Could you please have them developed. If anyone comes up, it should be soon for obvious reasons.²



Figure 1.2: James Henry Breasted on his expedition to Syria, 1919–20. The Oriental Institute, University of Chicago (photograph courtesy of the Oriental Institute)

He also sent the information and a sketch of the wall paintings to General Cunningham in Baghdad, the commander of all the British troops in the Upper Euphrates region.

It was a fortunate coincidence that one of the world's preeminent archaeologists, James Henry Breasted of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, was working in Syria at the time of the discovery (fig. 1.2).³ Although primarily an Egyptologist, Breasted temporarily was involved in a survey expedition of the upper Tigris region. When he returned from the field to Baghdad on April 23, Wilson shared with him the news about the wall paintings and offered to provide him with transportation to the site if he were willing to consult on the discovery. Breasted describes this request in his report to

President Harry Pratt Judson of the University of Chicago:

On returning to Baghdad the Civil Commissioner informed me of the discovery of a series of remarkable ancient wall paintings uncovered during the excavation of a rifle-pit in the enormous Roman stronghold of Salihyah occupied by the British as their furthest outpost on the upper Euphrates some 300 miles above Baghdad. He asked me to go there at once and make a record of the paintings and a series of photographs that they might not perish and be lost to modern knowledge ... I seized the opportunity with the greatest pleasure ...⁴

A few days later, Breasted set off from Baghdad with his military escort, describing the trip as follows:

On April 28 in seven automobiles kindly furnished us by the British Army and Civil Government, we left Baghdad for the Upper Euphrates. The accidents and delays of desert travel by automobile were such that the nearly 300-mile trip from Baghdad to the British Frontier on the middle Euphrates occupied an entire week.⁵

Breasted reached the site on May 3 and examined the uncovered wall paintings that afternoon. The first painting that Breasted saw as he entered the site was the Wall of Bithnanaia in the building that became known variously as the Temple of the Palmyrene Gods and the Temple of Bel: "Suddenly there arose before us a high wall covered with an imposing painting in many colors depicting a life-size group of eleven persons engaged in worship" (fig. 1.3).⁶ He returned to the site the following day and recorded all of the exposed wall paintings through detailed notes, sketches, and photographs. Due to the tense military situation in the area, Breasted found himself with only a single day to examine and analyze the wall paintings.⁷ Despite the circumstances, Breasted's documentation of the paintings and recognition of their significance were momentous and set the stage for years of subsequent work at the site (fig. 1.4).

One of the paintings that Breasted viewed on May 4, also from the Temple of the Palmyrene Gods, showed a Roman tribune making a sacrifice to the gods of Palmyra (pl. 37). The tribune is identified by inscription as Julius Terentius; his offering is observed



Figure 1.3: Wall painting seen by James Henry Breasted in 1920, Temple of the Palmyrene Gods. The Oriental Institute, University of Chicago (photograph courtesy of the Oriental Institute)



Figure 1.4: James Henry Breasted and his companions in front of the Palmyrene Gate, May 1920. The Oriental Institute, University of Chicago (photograph courtesy of the Oriental Institute)

by the Tychai (Fortunes) of Dura and Palmyra, who sit in the lower left corner of the painting. These city goddesses are identified by inscriptions, and this is what led to the initial identification of the site as Dura-Europos.⁸ In 1928, this identity was confirmed by the archaeologists of the Yale-French expedition, when they discovered an inscription on the north wall of the Palmyrene Gate that proclaimed: “I thank the Fortune of Dura.”⁹ With the end of World War I, the region surrounding Dura-Europos fell under the control of the French, who recognized the potential importance of the site and invited Breasted to be involved in further investigations there. Although his previous fieldwork obligations in Egypt prevented him from accepting this offer, Breasted did present the wall paintings in a lecture to the French Academy on July 7, 1922. He also published his findings in a significant and influential volume called *The Oriental Forerunners of Byzantine Painting*. In analyzing the images at Dura-Europos, Breasted compared their style and technique to wall paintings from the time of Justinian that he

had seen at the Church of San Vitale in Ravenna, marking similarities in particular with the strong sense of frontality and symmetry in the compositions, the large staring eyes, and the richly ornamented garments.

Motivated by the exciting discoveries that Breasted had described in his lecture and book, the French Academy decided to proceed with sponsoring the first systematic excavations at Dura-Europos in 1922. Since Breasted was unavailable to serve as field director for the excavation, they turned to one of their own members, Belgian archaeologist and historian Franz Cumont, who had been interested in and involved with the project from its inception (fig. 1.5). Cumont had discussed at length with Breasted the significance of the paintings, translated the latter’s lecture into French, and wrote a note on them that accompanied Breasted’s report in the journal *Syria*. He also wrote the introduction to Breasted’s *Oriental Forerunners of Byzantine*



Figure 1.5: Franz Cumont at Dura-Europos. (I thank Ted Kaizer for the identification.) Yale University Art Gallery, Dura-Europos Collection

Painting, which was in turn dedicated to the Belgian scholar.

When Cumont first arrived at the site in November 1922, he found that the uncovered wall paintings seen by Breasted only two years earlier had suffered significant damage in the interim. This damage included not only weathering from exposure to the elements but also intentional iconoclasm of the images, particularly of the faces, done for religious motives. For these paintings, as with many of the other wall paintings excavated at Dura, the photographs and drawings of the excavation that are now at Yale University and the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago are essential sources of information about their original appearance. Although archaeologists and conservators today often will decide to leave wall paintings in their original context when possible, it was standard practice in the 1920s and 1930s to remove them from the site and transport them to museum settings. Even treated with the best of intentions and conservation techniques that were state of the art for their time, many of these important paintings faded, discolored, and flaked over the years since their removal from the site. During his brief time at Dura-Europos, in 1922

and 1923, Cumont worked on clearing areas of the site, such as the Temple of the Palmyrene Gods and the Temple of Artemis-Nanaia, and he discovered several more wall paintings as well as an imported Greek marble statue of Aphrodite that is now in the Louvre (fig. 1.6). The incredible level of preservation at Dura was revealed immediately through the discovery of fragile objects, such as wooden shields and arrows, leather shoes and sandals, textiles, and parchments (pls. 5, 6, 62–64).

Due to the political situation in the Euphrates region, Cumont was able to lead only two short campaigns at Dura-Europos. It was clear that he barely had scratched the surface and that there was still much more work to be done at the site. After relative peace was established with the resolution of the desert revolt in Syria from 1925 to 1926 and the appointment of Henri Ponsot as high commissioner, it became feasible for institutions to consider resuming investigations at archaeological sites in the region. Dura's geographic remoteness was a major obstacle, and neither the French nor the Syrians seemed prepared at first to support further serious excavations at the site.

Yale University's involvement in the exploration of Dura-Europos was motivated by Russian scholar Michael I. Rostovtzeff, who had been appointed the Sterling Professor of Ancient History and Classical Archaeology at Yale in 1925 (fig. 1.7). The wall paintings discovered at Dura fascinated Rostovtzeff, who was interested in their combination of Classical and Near Eastern elements.¹⁰

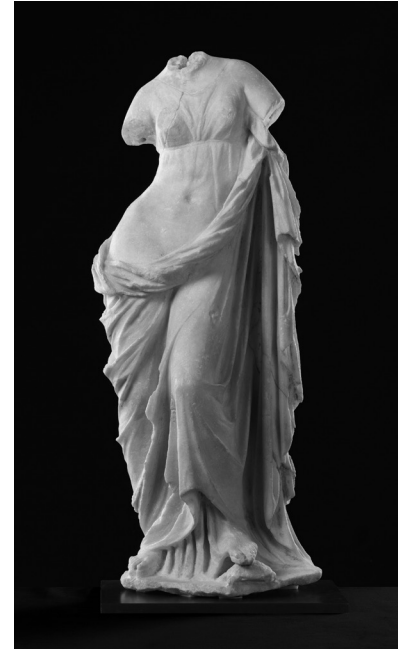


Figure 1.6: Statue of Aphrodite, Dura-Europos, Temple of Artemis, Roman, 2nd–3rd century CE. White marble with traces of paint, 57 × 22 × 14 cm. Musée du Louvre, AO20126 (Réunion des Musées Nationaux/Art Resource, NY)



Figure 1.7: Drawing of Michael I. Rostovtzeff made in Paris, 1933. Photograph of sketch preserved in YUAG archive. Yale University Art Gallery, Dura-Europos Collection



Figure 1.8: James Rowland Angell, president of Yale University 1921–37. Images of Yale individuals, ca. 1750–1976 (inclusive). Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library

Although not himself a field archaeologist, Rostovtzeff was so enthusiastic about the project's potential that he petitioned the Yale Committee on Excavations to collaborate with the French Academy to investigate the site. With the approval of the committee and the University's president, James R. Angell (fig. 1.8), funding was provided for three seasons of excavation at Dura. The Syrian government approved the project in the spring of 1927.



Figure 1.9: Wooden door with painting of Victory, from Palmyrene Gate, sketch by Maurice Pillet, 1929. Yale University Art Gallery, Dura-Europos Collection

The collaboration between the French Academy and Yale began officially on January 15, 1928, with an agreement for a period of three years. The official contract records the terms of the agreement as well as the preliminary budget; Yale's support of the excavation included an initial investment of \$22,930 for the first year and \$21,000 for each the second and third year.¹¹

Ten seasons of systematic archaeological excavation at the site followed. The project initially was overseen by French field director Maurice Pillet (1928–31); then by Clark Hopkins of Yale (1932–35); and finally by Frank E. Brown, also of Yale (1936–37). Hopkins' published account of the entire ten-year expedition, *The Discovery of Dura-Europos*, is an invaluable and personalized record of the campaigns, personalities of the team, and daily life on the excavation.¹² More specialized literature on Dura-Europos includes the Preliminary Reports from the first nine seasons, the Final Reports published on selected monuments and groups of objects, and an extensive bibliography of subsequent articles and books.

Initiating the Yale-French expedition in April 1928, Rostovtzeff journeyed to Syria with his wife, Sophie. At that time, no permanent expedition headquarters existed, so the group camped under the partially excavated Palmyrene Gate.¹³ The archaeologists encountered numerous logistical difficulties that season, including less-than-ideal facilities and poor access to food and water. The season was deemed a success though, and the directors identified areas of particular interest for further excavation, including the Citadel, the temples, and the embankment along the western fortification wall. Yale approved the continuation of the project, and the team made preparations to return in the fall of 1928. It was agreed that all finds from the excavation would be divided between Yale and the Syrian government, but this partage did not begin until the end of the next season.¹⁴

The second campaign ran from October 1928 to March 1929 and concentrated on the west side of the city, including the Citadel wall and the Palmyrene Gate. Facilities for the archaeologists were still extremely rustic, including tents and temporary canvas walls that provided minimal privacy. In addition to the large amount of pottery, coins, lamps, and other common artifacts found, the discoveries include such unique objects as a painted figure of Nike on the wooden door from a small shrine in the Palmyrene Gate (figs. 1.9, 2.4; pl. 2). A limestone relief of Herakles was also found in the gate, as was a wooden slab with a painted inscription (pl. 3) and an inscribed limestone altar.¹⁵ Greco-Roman divinities such as Nike and Herakles were particularly important at Dura because of their significance to the members of the military. Other stone inscriptions were found in areas such as the Temple of the Palmyrene Gods (pl. 38). Pieces of jewelry made of silver and other precious materials gave glimpses of the different social classes that inhabited the city (pls. 59, 60, 61). Objects such as papyri, textiles, wax tablets, reed matting, leather, wood, and arrows with feathers, immediately attested the extraordinary level of preservation at the site and

created great expectations for future seasons of excavation.

The objects recovered in the excavations thus far were quite exciting—though the most spectacular discoveries were yet to come—and Yale was pleased with the return on its investment. Rostovtzeff was the face of Dura-Europos in New Haven and lectured extensively on the results of the fieldwork, despite letting others manage the day-to-day progress of the excavations on site. His notes and talks are preserved in Manuscripts and Archives at Yale's Sterling Memorial Library. An excerpt from one of these lectures conveys the historian's enthusiasm about the ongoing project and its potential:

It's now the third year that Yale, continuing the work of Capt. Murphy and Prof. J. Breasted, of the French Academy and Prof. F. Cumont, is endeavoring to remove the cover of sand from this Pompeii in the Syrian desert and to understand the remains of this city where three great civilizations met in collaboration: the age-old civilizations of Mesopotamia, that of the successors of the great Persian kings Cyrus and Darius, and that of the Greek and Romans who succeeded the Babylonians and Persians as masters of the Near East.¹⁶

The University, its faculty, and its administration apparently were equally impressed with the results and eager to see more from Dura; Yale's financial support of the project continued.¹⁷

The third excavation season (1929–30) was struck with heavy rains, so progress was much slower and more difficult than in previous years. Pillet describes the circumstances as follows:

The winter [January and February] was exceptionally rainy, and the roads, already much impaired by the high floods in spring, were rendered impassable for several months, so that only the desert roads on the plateau could be used. The principal reason for this was the absence of the strong wind which ordinarily follows rains and quickly dries the ground. The excavations of the temple of Artemis and Atargatis, which are on a low level, were more than once inundated and I was forced to construct a strong embankment to the southwest to protect them. This was twice carried away, but finally stood, and the water which it thus held in covered a great stretch of the ruins lying between the temples and the walls along the desert. Work was thus interrupted several times on this site and was transferred to the south and west ramparts, where the slope of the terrain makes it possible always to work in dry ground. The roof and sides of the Excavation House were themselves much injured by the violence of the rain.¹⁸

Although the weather prevented the team from completing the excavation of the temples of Artemis-Nanaia and Hadad-Atargatis in the third season, the effort was continued the following year.

The fourth season (1930–31) enjoyed much more favorable conditions. Not only were the temples able to be investigated fully, but work was conducted on other areas as well, including a triumphal arch outside the city, the Palace of the Redoubt, and the embankment along the western fortification wall. Finds during this season included an altar with a sculpted relief image of Herakles, a graffito of a cataphract (heavily armored cavalryman) (fig. 18.9), and a fresco of a battle scene that became known as the Sasanian fresco.¹⁹

With the continuation of support from Yale and collaboration with the French, the excavation team



Figure 1.10: Excavation team in the fifth season (Clark Hopkins in front row, left, and Henry Pearson standing third from left), 1931–32. Yale University Art Gallery, Dura-Europos Collection



Figure 1.11: Susan Hopkins and her daughter, Mary Sue, at Dura-Europos, 1931–32. Yale University Art Gallery, Dura-Europos Collection (photograph courtesy of the Hopkins family)

returned to Dura-Europos in October 1931 for its fifth campaign and continued work in several areas of the site. With the expiration of Pillet's contract, Clark Hopkins, who had served as assistant director of the excavation for the 1928–29 campaign, was promoted to field director (fig. 1.10). Hopkins' wife, Susan, accompanied him to Dura and handled much of the cataloguing of finds, as well as caring for their young daughter, Mary Sue (fig. 1.11).

Rostovtzeff remained Yale's overall director of the project, but Hopkins was given complete autonomy in deciding how to proceed with the work on a daily basis; he thus was able to respond to unexpected discoveries by changing the excavation plan if necessary. Another important member of the team who joined the group in this season was Henry Pearson, a graduate student of architecture at Yale who ultimately became responsible for the complicated process of lifting all the wall paintings at Dura-Europos (fig. 1.12).²⁰

Several works of sculpture, including a limestone relief of Hadad and a fragmentary bronze foot, were discovered during the fifth season.²¹ One of the most spectacular finds was an inscribed limestone relief of a worshipper honoring the Syrian god Aphlad standing on two griffins.²² Such cult reliefs continually emphasize the multicultural religious traditions that persevered during the city's history. Other important discoveries made during the fifth campaign include several preserved parchments and the fascinating "ROTAS-SATOR" square (pl. 50). Dura was yielding a wealth of other epigraphic evidence as well, including a high-quality text written in ink on plaster that preserves the letters S. P. Q. R. and a dedication to Septimius Severus and Julia Domna.²³ Just before Christmas 1931 excavations in the



Figure 1.12: Henry Pearson removing wall paintings from the Synagogue, 1932. Yale University Art Gallery, Dura-Europos Collection

House of Nebuchelus revealed an earthenware jar containing a hoard of coins and a gold necklace (pl. 61).

The excavation archives provide an invaluable record of the discoveries that occurred during the course of each season, from potsherds and bronze fragments to important sculptures and wall paintings. They reveal, for instance, that on January 16, 1932, a room “in front of the tower just south of the main gate” was investigated and found to contain wall paintings.²⁴ A few days later, these paintings were further uncovered and eventually identified as the decoration of an early Christian House Church (fig. 1.13, pls. 18–20). This find was announced to Yale’s President Angell and Rostovtzeff by a telegram proclaiming “five beautiful Christian frescos and room with steps found.”²⁵ Hopkins’ more detailed description in the excavation daybooks, together with excavation photographs, gives essential information that can be used in analyzing and conserving the paintings:

18 Jan: In the fresco room in front of the tower S of the main gate the dirt came off one section and showed 5 people in a boat—2 standing below, one on a bed on the shore—above a god on a cloud and a final figure coming up with the springs of a bed. The colors were pink, yellow, and red.

19 Jan: In the fresco room the arched section was uncovered by Deigert and myself. It showed a shepherd with a flock of fat-tailed sheep—black painting on light brown background above a deep red. Around arch a narrow black band around dark red and a second black. In the lower left were two people naked except for white loincloths picking apples from a tree, and in front a large serpent. The scene was bordered by two trees...

20 Jan: Pearson and I uncovered frescoes in the morning. The lower right hand side of the room showed two men, one with wand like a small palm tree in right hand and bowl in left, the second with stick or sword in right, bowl at breast in left, both advancing left toward large white bldg pediment style with great star over each gable. The scene at lower left of the room showed the top of a figure with arm raised holding a sword—on the arm was written DAOUID ((in Greek)) above an immense prostrate figure was inscribed Golitha ((in Greek)).²⁶

The wall paintings from the Christian Building are among the most significant works of art found at Dura-Europos.²⁷ Now in the collection of the Yale University Art Gallery, the paintings are undergoing sophisticated conservation treatment and restoration in order to prepare them for permanent display in the museum.

The sixth excavation season (1932–33) was marked by an equally spectacular and significant discovery



Figure 1.13: Excavation photograph of the Good Shepherd wall painting in the apse of the baptistry in the Christian Building, 1931–33. Yale University Art Gallery, Dura-Europos Collection



Figure 1.14: Excavation photograph of the Torah niche in the Synagogue, 1932–33. Yale University Art Gallery, Dura-Europos Collection



Figure 1.15: Robert du Mesnil du Buisson with Yale graduate student Margaret Crosby at the discovery of the Synagogue, 1932–33. Yale University Art Gallery, Dura-Europos Collection

within the earth of the embankment: the Synagogue and the elaborate painted decorations of its walls and ceiling (fig. 1.14).²⁸ Much of the excavation of this structure was overseen by Le Comte Robert du Mesnil du Buisson, appointed by the French Academy as associate director (fig. 1.15). The following year, Yale sent Herbert Gute, a recent graduate from the Yale School of Fine Arts, to Dura-Europos to copy

the Synagogue's wall paintings before Pearson initiated the task of removing them from the walls.²⁹ The original paintings from the Synagogue eventually went to the museum in Damascus, and the set of Gute's copies went to Yale (fig. 1.16, pls. 33–36).

Although the Synagogue was the undisputed highlight of the sixth season, other unparalleled discoveries were also made during that campaign, including two complete sets of scale armor for horses—one of bronze scales, which went to Damascus, and one of iron scales, which went to Yale (fig. 18.6).³⁰ Before the season ended, excavations in the collapsed tunnel under the fortification wall revealed the skeletons, armor, and coins of Roman soldiers involved in the city's final battle (fig. 18.5).³¹ These unusual discoveries provide rare and important information about military technology and warfare in the ancient Roman world.

The discoveries coming out of Dura-Europos made a dramatic impact with the University and general public in the United States. Newspaper articles chronicled the success of the excavation with such headlines as "Treasure of Untold Value Found in Lost City."³² A new agreement between Yale and the Syrian government in 1933 laid the groundwork for another six years of excavations at Dura, and the finds continued to be divided



Figure 1.16: View of the Yale University Art Gallery, Classical Collection, 1941. Yale University Art Gallery, Archives

equally between Yale and Damascus at the end of each season.³³

The rate and scope of significant discoveries at Dura-Europos continued in subsequent excavation seasons. In the seventh season (1933–34), several important limestone reliefs were found, including one of Atargatis flanked by doves (pl. 44) and one of Zeus Kyrios-Baalshamin (pl. 42).³⁴ This season rose to the standard of discovery set by the prior two campaigns with the excavation of the Mithraeum and its spectacular sculptural and painted decoration (fig. 1.17, pl. 17).³⁵ This monument received its fair share of publicity in New Haven, including a banner headline that proclaimed “Yale Finds Temple to Mithras in Pompeii of Euphrates.”³⁶

The discoveries and subsequent international publicity about Dura-Europos had begun to make it a destination among travelers and other archaeologists; Max Mallowan and his wife, Agatha Christie, for example, visited the site in the course of their travels through Iraq and Syria (fig. 1.18).³⁷ As this season progressed, Hopkins made the decision to minimize any new excavation, instead focusing the team’s efforts on the consolidation and study of previously explored areas. It was thought that this, the eighth campaign, might be the final season, as Rostovtzeff was writing letters to the site from Yale saying that he had not yet been successful in obtaining financial support for any additional excavations.³⁸ As many archaeologists can attest, the most tantalizing discoveries often are made in the final days of a season; indeed, this happened in 1935, when Henry Pearson and his team discovered an important new structure, the Temple of the Gadde, in the process of cleaning areas to create a plan of the site. The temple contained fragmentary wall paintings as well as important limestone cult reliefs (pl. 1). Pearson remained at the site beyond the scheduled end of the season in order to supervise the clearing of the temple area, and Rostovtzeff ultimately secured support for two additional seasons of excavation.

In 1935, Clark Hopkins left Yale for a position at the University of Michigan and to be the director of Michigan’s excavations at Seleucia-on-the-Tigris. With the start of the Seleucia project delayed, Rostovtzeff asked that Hopkins remain “director in absentia” for Dura-Europos.³⁹ Yale chose to appoint Frank E. Brown, a graduate student at Yale who had been assisting Hopkins at the site since 1932, as Hopkins’ replacement—first as Acting Field Director for the ninth season (1935–36) and as Field Director outright in the tenth



Figure 1.17: Franz Cumont and Michael Rostovtzeff in front of the Mithraeum, 1933–34. Yale University Art Gallery, Dura-Europos Collection



Figure 1.18: Agatha Christie touring Dura-Europos with Clark Hopkins and, most likely, Max Mallowan. Although Hopkins records the date of this visit as November 8, 1934, this photograph comes from a family album dated to the 1931–32 season. (I thank Ted Kaizer for the identifications.) Yale University Art Gallery, Dura-Europos Collection (photograph courtesy of the Hopkins family)



Figure 1.19: Frank Brown and crew in the Temple of the Gadde, 1934–35. Yale University Art Gallery, Dura-Europos Collection

season (1936–37) (fig. 1.19).

During the ninth season, the team discovered and investigated the Palace of the Dux Ripae (military commander) while continuing to clear and record such previously investigated areas of the site as the Temple of the Gadde, the Dolicheneum, the Temple of Zeus Megistos, and several private houses. In the subsequent season, Brown was aware that there were no more years of funding forthcoming. He therefore wanted to avoid initiating new excavations that might subsequently end up unfinished and unpublished.⁴⁰ He states as much in a report to Angell in which he emphasizes the need to focus on “the completion of the records of the site and, in particular, of important buildings excavated in previous campaigns in preparation for their definite publication.”⁴¹ These areas of interest included the Agora, the Temple of Zeus Megistos, the Temple of Atargatis, the Citadel, and the

Redoubt Palace. During the study, cleaning, and limited additional excavation of these areas in the tenth season, over a thousand small finds were recovered.⁴²

Although Yale did request and receive a renewed concession to excavate at Dura-Europos for another six years beginning October 1, 1939, the necessary support never came through.⁴³ The Yale-French project terminated after its tenth season. For decades thereafter, no new excavations were undertaken at Dura-Europos. In the mid-1980s, a new French-Syrian project was begun under the direction of archaeologist Pierre Leriche.⁴⁴ Under these auspices, current work at Dura has involved an international team of scholars from Syria, Europe, and North America. The British Academy has sponsored a complete magnetometric survey of the entire Roman military base area of the city, which provides critical information about the layout of the city and the relationship between the pre-existing Macedonian/Mesopotamian city and the Roman garrison.⁴⁵

The collaborative research on Dura-Europos being conducted in recent years by these scholars, and many others, has resulted in numerous publications—including books, articles, and doctoral dissertations—as well as public lectures, papers, symposia, and sessions at academic conferences. Public interest in Dura-Europos continues to be as intense as ever. The Yale University Art Gallery fields requests almost daily from students, scholars, and the general public to view the objects from the early excavations that were taken to the United States and placed in the Gallery’s collection. Visits from international scholars are arranged constantly to allow access to the excavation archives. The addition of these archives to the ARTstor digital library in the summer of 2009 was a significant step forward in the Gallery’s long-term plan to make all the Dura-Europos material as widely available as possible.⁴⁶

The artifacts excavated from Dura-Europos and brought to Yale were placed on view in the Art Gallery, where they were seen by countless visitors. In the early 1980s, Susan Matheson, the Molly and Walter Bareiss Curator of Ancient Art, organized a special exhibition focusing on Dura-Europos, *Life in an Eastern Province: the Roman Fortress at Dura-Europos* (March 27, 1982, through August 15, 1984).⁴⁷ Due to the

popularity of the exhibition and the subject matter, many of the pieces remained on display even after the show's closing date. Some objects have been lent by Yale to other institutions for exhibition. A number of painted ceiling tiles from the Synagogue, for instance, are on long-term loan to the Jewish Museum in New York City, and a group of objects—including additional Synagogue tiles, sculptures, and textiles—can be seen in the Ancient Near Eastern galleries of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

The majority of objects from Dura-Europos in the Gallery's collection are currently in an off-site storage facility due to their extremely fragile nature, need for conservation treatment, and sensitivity to variations in climate. The Department of Ancient Art receives constant requests from scholars and students to view and study this material and makes every effort to respond to these requests by accompanying small, prearranged groups to see the objects after having them made accessible by the Installations team. But it is an ongoing goal of the department to make the collection more easily accessible to a wider audience on a permanent basis.

In 2008, Carol Snow joined the staff of the Yale University Art Gallery as the Museum's first objects conservator. This, together with the development of a new conservation facility at Yale's West Campus and a major renovation to the Gallery, made it feasible to treat and display the objects from Dura-Europos in a systematic and comprehensive manner. Many significant artifacts from the collection are featured in the exhibition *Dura-Europos: Crossroads of Antiquity*, showcasing the numerous cultural interactions that can be understood through the well-preserved material remains that Yale received in the early excavations. In 2012, these objects will be among those displayed in the Gallery's newest installation to be devoted to Dura-Europos. The new permanent installation will focus on the discovery of the site, its extraordinary level of preservation, and its historical and archaeological significance. Like *Crossroads of Antiquity*, it will include both physical and virtual reconstructions of major monuments. In both installations, the archives and field records that are also part of the Gallery's collection allow the works of art to be presented in their full thematic context and to be appreciated not only as objects of individual aesthetic value but also as artifacts of an important cultural crossroads.

Notes

- 1 James Henry Breasted, *The Oriental Forerunners of Byzantine Painting: First-century Wall Paintings from the Fortress of Dura on the Middle Euphrates*, Oriental Institute Publications 1 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1924), 53.
- 2 Breasted, 53.
- 3 The archives of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago contain extensive records of Breasted's travels in the eastern Mediterranean. Letters and photographs from these archives were recently showcased in an exhibition at the Oriental Institute Museum, *Pioneers to the Past: American Archaeologists in the Middle East, 1919–1920*, January 12–August 29, 2010, and published in the accompanying exhibition catalogue: Geoff Emberling, ed., *Pioneers to the Past, American Archaeologists in the Middle East, 1919–1920*, Oriental Institute Museum Publications, no. 30 (Chicago: Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 2010).
- 4 Ibid., 132.
- 5 Breasted, 52.
- 6 Ibid., 56. The scene is also known as the “sacrifice of Konon.”
- 7 Emberling, 70.
- 8 Breasted, 98.
- 9 *Prelim. Rep. I*, 41, fig. 19; and Michael I. Rostovtzeff, *Dura-Europos and Its Art* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1938), vi (text figure before the preface).
- 10 Rostovtzeff published extensively on Dura, co-authoring all of the preliminary reports as well as individual chapters on the Greek and Latin inscriptions. See also Rostovtzeff, *Dura Europos and Its Art*.
- 11 The original contract, as well as all of the official paperwork and correspondence from the project, is preserved in the Dura-Europos archives in the Department of Ancient Art at the Yale University Art Gallery.
- 12 Clark Hopkins, *The Discovery of Dura-Europos*, ed. Bernard Goldman (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979).
- 13 Ibid., 27.
- 14 *Prelim. Rep. I*, 3. The finds that are mentioned in the following paragraphs are just a few examples of the thousands of significant and interesting discoveries from the early excavations at Dura-Europos that were sent to Yale.
- 15 Yale University Art Gallery, 1929.373.
- 16 Unpublished papers of Michael I. Rostovtzeff, Series IV, Box 32, folder 213, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University.
- 17 The minutes of the May 20, 1930, meeting held at Yale to discuss future plans for the Dura excavation record Rostovtzeff's proposal to the university that an additional grant of \$25,000 be approved to continue work during the seasons 1931–32 and 1932–33 (suggesting a budget of approximately \$15,000 per season), Dura-Europos Archives, Yale University Art Gallery.
- 18 *Prelim. Rep. III*, 2.
- 19 Yale University Art Gallery: 1930.321 (Herakles), 1931.608 (graffito), 1938.5999.1146 (Sasanian fresco).
- 20 Pearson used techniques and materials in removing

the wall paintings that were consistent with excavation and conservation methods at the time. Hopkins records the process as follows: "Once he had carefully cut away the wall from portions of the painted plaster, he applied plaster of Paris reinforced with fiber strands; long cross pieces of squared wooden rods, one half inch thick, were attached to brace the panels and form a secure backing" (*Dura-Europos*, 204). See Snow's essay in this volume.

- 21 Hadad relief: Damascus Museum 4489; bronze foot: Yale University Art Gallery, 1932.1389.
- 22 This relief is in the National Museum in Damascus. A plaster cast of it is in the Yale University Art Gallery: 1932.1213.
- 23 Yale University Art Gallery, 1932.1207a.
- 24 Clark Hopkins, excavation daybook, 1931/2, p. 8, Dura-Europos Archives, Yale University Art Gallery.
- 25 Hopkins, *Dura-Europos*, 96.
- 26 Hopkins, excavation daybook, 1931/2, pp. 8–9, Dura-Europos Archives, Yale University Art Gallery.
- 27 Hopkins, *Dura-Europos*, 106–17.
- 28 *Ibid.*, 126–77.
- 29 *Ibid.*, 208.
- 30 *Prelim. Rep. VI*, pl. xxii.
- 31 "256 A.D. Strategy Shown by Tunnel," *The New York Times* (April 28, 1935); Simon T. James, "Death Underground: Gas Warfare at Dura-Europos," *Current World Archaeology* 38 (December 2009/January 2010): 20–27.
- 32 Anthony Burnett, "Treasure of Untold Value Found in Lost City," *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, August 27, 1933. Over the next few years, similar articles appeared in papers such as the *New York Times*, the *New York Herald Tribune*, the *Illustrated London News*, the *London Observer*, the *Hartford Daily Courant*, the *New Haven Register*, and the *Yale Daily News* (Dura-Europos Archives, Yale University Art Gallery).
- 33 Agreement between Yale University and the French Republic in Syria, Dura-Europos Archives, Yale University Art Gallery. The relevant passage states, "à la fin de chaque champagne, les antiquités mobilières trouvées dans la fouille seront divisées, en principe, en deux parts égales, don't l'une sera attribuée au fouilleur par le Service des Antiquités. Cependant le Service des Antiquités conservera toujours le droit d'attribuer à l'Etat, hors partage, tells objets qu'il lui semblerait particulièrement important de conserver aux collections de l'Etat." The agreement is dated October 19, 1933, and signed by James R. Angell, President of Yale University, and by Damien de Martel, French High Commissioner.
- 34 The relief of Atargatis or Tyche with doves was found on November 30, 1933; Clark Hopkins, excavation daybook, 1933/34, p. 4, Dura-Europos Archives, Yale University Art Gallery. The relief of Zeus Kyrios-Baalshamin was found on January 5–8, 1934; Hopkins, excavation daybook, 1933/34, p. 9, Dura-Europos Archives, Yale University Art Gallery; and Hopkins, *Dura-Europos*, 191–92.
- 35 The Mithraeum (Yale University Art Gallery, 1935.100) was found in February 1934; Hopkins, excavation daybook, 1933/34, p. 14, Dura-Europos Archives, Yale University Art Gallery; Hopkins, *Dura-Europos*, 195–203.
- 36 *New Haven Sunday Register*, November 25, 1934, Dura-Europos Archives, Yale University Art Gallery.

- 37 Agatha Christie Mallowan, *Come, Tell Me How You Live* (London: Collins and Sons, 1946), 40–41.
- 38 Hopkins, *Dura-Europos*, 219.
- 39 Unpublished letters, Dura-Europos Archives, Yale University Art Gallery.
- 40 Although no preliminary report was published for the tenth season, Rostovtzeff did publish a brief survey: Michael I. Rostovtzeff, “Rapport sur les fouilles de Doura-Europos, campagne de 1936–37,” *Comptes rendus de l’Académie des inscriptions et belles lettres* (1937): 201–4. This article, together with the material in the excavation archives, allowed for an additional summary of the results to be compiled: Susan B. Matheson, “The Tenth Season at Dura-Europos 1936–1937,” *Syria* 49 (1992): 121–40.
- 41 Unpublished report from Brown to President Angell, Dura-Europos Archives, Yale University Art Gallery.
- 42 Object register, Dura-Europos Archives, Yale University Art Gallery.
- 43 Matheson, “The Tenth Season,” 138–39.
- 44 The current project, the Mission Franco-Syrienne de Doura-Europos, has done important further work on the excavation and conservation of the site. Its work is being published in a series of volumes called *Doura-Europos Études*, ed. Pierre Leriche et al. (Beirut: Institut Français d’archéologie du Proche-Orient).
- 45 The survey was overseen by Simon James (University of Leicester) and Jennifer Baird (Birkbeck College, University of London) and conducted by Kris Strutt (University of Southampton).
- 46 ARTstor, <http://www.artstor.org/index.shtml>. To access this data on ARTstor, individuals must be affiliated with a participating non-profit institution (university, college, museum, public library, or K–12 school).
- 47 Katherine M. Kiefer and Susan B. Matheson, *Life in an Eastern Province: the Roman Fortress at Dura-Europos. Checklist of the Exhibition at the Yale University Art Gallery, 24 March–5 September 1982* (New Haven: Yale University Art Gallery, 1982). A general book was published to accompany the exhibition: Susan B. Matheson, *Dura-Europos: the Ancient City and the Yale Collection* (New Haven: Yale University Art Gallery, 1982).

CAROL E. SNOW

PRESERVATION OF ART AND ARTIFACTS FROM DURA-EUPOPOS: A CONSERVATOR'S PERSPECTIVE

Introduction

Soon after excavations at Dura-Europos began, French archaeologist Franz Cumont reported, “the Greco-Semitic civilization is reflected there just as the inhabitants left it, and a climate unusually favorable has assured the preservation of delicate paintings, parchments, and destructible articles which have disappeared almost everywhere else.”¹ Russian scholar Michael Rostovtzeff and others subsequently called Dura-Europos the “Pompeii of the Syrian desert” not only for its diversity of suddenly abandoned art and artifacts, including wall paintings and graffiti, but also for the incredible state of preservation of the finds and architecture.²

The objects in *Dura-Europos: Crossroads of Antiquity* represent a full range of remarkably well-preserved materials: inorganic materials, such as stone, plaster, ceramics, bronze, iron, silver, and gold; and organic materials (i.e., those made from once living organisms with carbon as their structural building block), such as leather, textiles, and wood. Seldom is such a wide range of materials found preserved at one site. An evaluation of causes of preservation and deterioration attributed to burial environment, excavation methodologies, and post-excavation conservation campaigns explains why the materials from Dura-Europos remain as well preserved as they are today. This review enhances our deep appreciation for the opportunity to further study, display, and share the art and artifacts of Dura-Europos unearthed seventy-five years ago.

Preservation during Burial

It has become well established that preservation at Dura-Europos actually began in antiquity.³ After successive rebuilding campaigns during Greek, Parthian, and Roman occupations of the city, the Roman military defenses built in the third century CE against Persian invasions inadvertently saved significant portions of the wall paintings and artifacts by burying them with dirt rampart fortifications. Diagonal slopes demar-



Figure 2.1: Slope of preserved paintings protected by Roman ramparts, Synagogue, north wall. Yale University Art Gallery, Dura-Europos Collection



Figure 2.2: Roman painted shield as found (Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos, 1933.480, see pl. 5). Yale University Art Gallery, Dura-Europos Collection

cating preservation below the dirt ramparts and loss above graphically illustrate this effect and are clearly visible in excavation photographs of the Synagogue (fig. 2.1).

The subsequent violent destruction of Dura-Europos by the Persians around 256 CE forced abandonment of the once vibrant city. Collapse of mud-brick structures swallowed the contents within. The sheer physical weight of rubble and burial dirt, known as overburden, fractured brittle and fragile objects and deformed or compressed malleable and flexible materials. Both destruction and overburden contributed to overall damage and left behind headless, limbless, and torsoless sculptures. The two sculptures of Herakles (pls. 47, 68) and the Aphrodite sculpture (pl. 65) exhibit this type of damage, which is now considered an acceptable aesthetic for excavated antiquities. The beautifully preserved painted

rawhide and wood shield (pl. 5) was found relatively flattened (fig. 2.2), as was a child's leather shoe (pl. 62). The shield could be reconstructed close to its original shape to fully understand its ceremonial use, but the child's shoe still shows deformation as efforts to reverse the effects of burial would risk further damage with relatively little benefit.

Art and artifacts not buried immediately were vulnerable to weathering of their surfaces from exposure to extreme desert conditions of cyclical dust storms, arid summers, and wet winters. Rain and sand stripped away surface details. While it may be impossible to determine how much surface decoration was lost, new and refined analytical techniques allow discoveries to be made about surface decorations on many ancient stone sculptures and architectural elements. Once highly appreciated for their pure white appearance, stone antiquities have been reexamined recently with visible and non-visible light of varying wavelengths and with more sophisticated analytical techniques to find evidence of brightly painted surfaces and allow reconstructions with bright, if not garish, surface decorations that force a reassessment of colors in antiquity.⁴ Tomb interiors at Palmyra, not far from Dura-Europos, exhibit well-preserved, flamboyant polychromy. Traces of pigment are extant on many of the artifacts and works of art found at Dura-Europos. One wonders if many sculptures—such as the limestone reliefs of Atargatis and Hadad (pl. 43), Aphrodite

(pl. 66), Zeus Kyrios-Baalshamin (pl. 42), Atargatis/Tyche (pl. 44), Arsu (pl. 45), Nemesis (pl. 4), and the funerary statue of a Palmyrene girl (pl. 73), as well as the humbler plaster heads (pls. 51–56)—were decorated more elaborately with such polychromy as can be seen in Palmyrene tomb interiors.⁵

In addition to the physical effects of burial and weathering, other factors that promote preservation or cause deterioration include the acidity or alkalinity of the soil, moisture content, freeze and thaw cycles, the presence or absence of oxygen and other corrosive gases, soluble salts, and biological agents of deterioration. An arid environment and geomorphology conducive to preservation were found at Dura-Europos. The Syrian desert receives an average of 13 centimeters of rainfall per year, and winters can see severe rainstorms as well as freezing temperatures. The site's position on a bluff, however, allows rainwater to run off rather than saturate the soil (fig. 1.1). The relatively dry burial environment preserved ancient organic materials such as papyri, parchments, silk, wool, and linen. The textile fragments (pls. 63, 64) are intact enough that chemical analyses can be performed on the dyes used in their manufacture.⁶ The lowland along the Euphrates has slightly alkaline sediment consisting mainly of limestone and marls.⁷ The burial environment at Dura-Europos thus established a chemical equilibrium that preserved objects made from both inorganic and organic materials.

Even in a burial environment conducive to preservation, some deterioration is inevitable. The Christian wall paintings (pls. 18–20) suffered damage from burial salts. Through processes of dissolution and recrystallization, these salts migrated to the surfaces of the paintings causing them to flake with significant loss of pigment. Analysis of the paintings soon after excavation found no extant ancient binder, such as vegetal or animal glues, that would have helped prevent loss of pigment.⁸ In addition to salts, the alkalinity of the soil seems to have caused some damage to the glazed earthenware incense burner, or thymiaterion (pl. 39), resulting in apparent devitrification of the possibly misfired green glaze, which now appears as a somewhat iridescent pale green with only traces of deep green glaze. Deterioration from biological agents contributed to staining on some painted tiles, as can be seen on the tile with an Aramaic inscription (pl. 31).

Entropy and the laws of thermodynamics predict that a physical system will go from a state of order to a state of disorder. In other words, materials for which energy was used in the manufacturing processes to create an ordered, crystalline structure tend to return to their former, disordered, lower-energy states over centuries in the burial environment. Examples of this principle are artifacts made of cast and wrought bronze and iron, which corrode back to a mineral state similar to the ores once used to manufacture them. For example, the iron helmet (pl. 13) has corroded almost entirely to iron oxides and other mineralized iron corrosion products with little, if any, metal preserved.

Fortunately, the geographic isolation of Dura-Europos further enhanced preservation. The site was left unoccupied and was not raided in modern times for its limestone, plaster, or other materials, as was done at the Parthian site Qaleh-i Yazdigird to the east in western Iran, where local villagers dug up ancient gypsum wall plaster for reuse.⁹ When Dura-Europos was rediscovered, it had not suffered from later reoccupation or reuse.

Excavation and Field Treatments

In 1927, Syrian authorities gave permission for Franco-American collaborative excavations, which were conducted from 1928 to 1937 under the auspices of the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres and

Yale University and overseen by Michael Rostovtzeff until Yale's funding ceased. Excavation seasons ran from October to March, a cool and often wet time of year.

The process of archaeological excavation is itself destructive. Digging through layers of stratigraphy removes information preserved in the upper layers of a site in order to expose more information in the underlying layers. The excavation methodologies used by the Yale-French excavations were considered advanced and scientific at the time, but they were large scale; at their height, a team of five or six foreign archaeologists supervised three-hundred sixty local workmen on a twelve-day work schedule. After the Great Depression, the archaeologists were under considerable pressure to uncover striking finds in order to receive continued funding of the project.

Dura-Europos delivered spectacular finds, but not without some cost. The loss of some artifacts, though unavoidable, was unfortunate and irreversible. One example is a trove of papyrus documents that turned to dust upon exposure to air; desperate attempts using molten paraffin to consolidate a block of documents before lifting resulted in a waxy mass that arrived at Yale as "a dark, powdery dust."¹⁰ Also during excavations, a sudden rainstorm washed away some of the pigments on exposed wall paintings; the traces of design were barely retrievable through the innovative use of infrared photography in the field.¹¹

Recognizing the preservation effects of the ancient Roman ramparts, the archaeological team intentionally reburied some of the wall paintings in an effort to protect them until the works of art could be treated and lifted from the site (fig. 2.3). Controlled reburial at archaeological sites remains an acceptable preservation method to protect objects until adequate resources are available for proper excavation and conservation. From Chinese imperial tombs to Mediterranean mosaic floors, sites and artifacts are reburied with local dirt or special mixes of sand and other inert materials intended to recreate or improve upon the pre-excavation equilibrium of the burial environment.



Figure 2.3: Rocks and fill applied against wall paintings to protect them until they were removed, Temple of the Palmyrene Gods, 1930–31. Yale University Art Gallery, Dura-Europos Collection

Current antiquities laws in Syria state, "the institution, associations and missions permitted to excavate should ... do what is necessary for initial preserving and tending to the discovered antiques."¹² Prior to such laws, which in many countries now require an onsite field conservator as part of the archaeological team, and long before archaeological conservation was an actual profession, the team members of the Yale-French excavations shared responsibilities of field conservation. Although no field conservation records exist per se, it is possible to infer from excavation reports, letters, and subsequent publications some particulars of field treatments. Clark Hopkins made several references to field treatments in his publication *The Discovery of Dura-Europos*.

Conservation materials and art supplies were brought to the remote site via Istanbul and Beirut. As the seasons progressed, roads built for heavy trucks carrying oil from Baghdad past Dura-Europos and Aleppo made

transport by car and truck feasible.¹³ Cement, plaster, wood, hemp, wax, shellac, casein, and animal glue were used—as were paraffin, cellulose nitrate, and polyvinyl acetate. The only water at the site came from the Euphrates River and, though boiled to make it potable, probably had a significant salt content.¹⁴

The overall responsibilities of cataloguing, cleaning, and conserving artifacts at Dura-Europos largely fell on Susan Hopkins, wife of field director Clark Hopkins. In addition to managing the excavation house, raising a small child, and registering the finds, she performed the important tasks of cleaning coins and reconstructing pottery, both of which were instrumental to dating occupation levels.¹⁵ There is no record of what chemicals were used to treat these finds at Dura-Europos, but anecdotal evidence from other excavations includes the use of vinegar and tomatoes as a source of acid to clean coins and locally available glues and gums to join together pottery fragments.

Excavation reports indicate that archaeologists reconstructed fragmentary wall plasters, sculptures, pottery, and tiles as an apparent recreational outlet during time off from the trenches. Among the team members cited in reports were Margaret Crosby, a graduate student at Yale and the first female archaeologist at Dura-Europos, and architect Van W. Knox, who was “always eager to help in fitting together the broken pieces of painted walls.”¹⁶ Archaeologist Nicholas Toll supervised work in the trenches and the “care and cleaning of finds in the courtyard.”¹⁷ On a short visit during the seventh campaign (1933–34), Sophie Rostovtzeff, wife of Michael Rostovtzeff, “struggled to put together the broken pieces of painted plaster.”¹⁸ She was credited also with piecing together fragments of wall painting from the Mithraeum and with working on the cataphract armor (fig. 1.18).¹⁹ Any special skills the excavators had were appreciated and put to use. Such was the case for an enthusiastic young volunteer, Dave Clark, who had experience steaming open letters from the American Civil War and devised a similar strategy using steam to relax the fibers of well-preserved papyrus documents. He then placed the papyri between plates of glass to keep them flat while they dried.²⁰ Many of these fragments remain preserved at Yale’s Beinecke Library.²¹

In January and February 1932 archaeologists uncovered the Christian wall paintings. As described by Hopkins, “our camp was awestruck by the extraordinary preservation of the Christian murals dated more than three-quarters of a century before Constantine recognized Christianity in 312.”²² Treatment of the wall paintings began in March 1932 by French restorer Émile Bacquet, who sprayed the paintings with cellulose nitrate (now known to be an unstable material) before backing them with plaster reinforced with wood strips and hemp fibers. Removal of the paintings was completed in November 1932. The delay may have been problematic for the exposed paintings, which eventually would require several post-excavation conservation campaigns as described below. If at all possible, current conservation practices leave wall paintings in situ, but the paintings from Dura-Europos were too water sensitive to leave unprotected at the site.

Architect Henry Pearson worked at first with Émile Bacquet on the Christian paintings then developed a successful system to remove the other spectacular wall paintings at Dura-Europos. The ancient paintings on gypsum plaster were supported on the front with wood. As ancient mud bricks were excavated from behind the ancient wall plaster, modern plaster reinforced with lattices of pine strips and hemp fibers was applied to the back side of the paintings.

Pearson briefly studied conservation techniques with George Stout of Harvard University’s Fogg Art Museum conservation laboratory, the first in the United States, established just a few years earlier in 1928. The late 1920s and early 1930s were a time of transition for the profession of art conservation as more

scientific methods and materials replaced traditional restoration practices.²³ Pearson learned methods of paint consolidation using new synthetic resins considered permanent, stable, and reversible. By the time the beautifully preserved Synagogue paintings were discovered, Pearson employed an effective treatment methodology (fig. 1.13).²⁴ After the Synagogue paintings were removed and consolidated, local authorities determined that the paintings would remain in Syria. Pearson installed them in a room dedicated to their display at the National Museum in Damascus, where they have remained on exhibition since their installation in 1936. An examination in 2010 found them to be relatively well preserved with slight separation of some panels and a few areas of localized damage from moisture and salts.

Prior to their removal, the Synagogue paintings were copied by artist Herbert J. Gute of Yale to record the images of the paintings should the originals be damaged during or after excavation. It was reported that upon the ancient paintings' exposure to air, the colors blue and white faded faster than red, grey, and black.²⁵ According to Hopkins, "to study the combination of color, detail, and design today, one will find the copies better than the originals. Of course, one supplements the other, and both are indispensable."²⁶ Made decades before current high-resolution digital technology, the Gute paintings on display in *Dura-Europos: Crossroads of Antiquity* (pls. 33–36) were made with some artistic license but represent an important part of the archaeological record as documentation of the Synagogue images.

Under the terms of the excavation agreements regarding division of the artifacts and works of art, known as *partage*, movable finds were divided at the end of each season primarily between Syria and Yale and crated for shipment to either Damascus or the United States via Beirut, with a smaller number of finds sent to Paris. In all, over twelve thousand artifacts from Dura-Europos now at the Yale University Art Gallery were recovered during the ten excavation campaigns.



Figure 2.4: Copy of painting of Victory (see pl. 2). Painted by Lois North, December 1929. Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos, 1938.5999.5332 (original door: 1929.288)

Post-excavation Treatments

Aside from the wall paintings, pottery, coins, and papyri, very little treatment of the artifacts beyond mechanical removal of burial dirt seems to have been done in the field. The Dura-Europos archives at the Yale University Art Gallery contain unpublished notes from the field, correspondence, examination and analytical results, and treatment reports that provide valuable information about post-excavation treatments.²⁷

According to excavation reports, Professor R. G. Eberhard of Yale was responsible for cleaning and repairing reliefs and "fixing the colors on terracotta plaques and as well as in repairing them."²⁸ Miss Mary Nettleton, Assistant in Archaeology and Museum Assistant, with advice from chemistry professor Ralph van Name, treated bronze and silver artifacts, including coins, at Yale.²⁹ It is entirely possible that both Susan Hopkins and Mary Nettleton treated the beautifully legible coins on display in this exhibit (pls. 21–29).

The small wooden panel with a painting of Victory, or Nike (pl. 2), still shows much burial dirt, since

the bond between the pigments and soil is stronger than the bond between the pigments and wood substrate. Because of this problem, minimal surface cleaning was done. Instead, a replica was made in 1929 by Lois North, who studied ancient Egyptian and Pompeian paintings at the Metropolitan Museum and made meticulous notes detailing her use of materials in the fabrication of the replica (fig. 2.4). The figure and design were projected on a panel from a lantern slide, measured with calipers, and drawn under the microscope. Traditional pigments were used, with cobalt blue substituted for Egyptian blue and cadmium yellow for arsenic-containing orpiment, in a cherry gum binder. Daniel V. Thompson—who had worked formerly at the Fogg Art Museum, taught at Yale from 1926 to 1933, translated Cennino Cennini's *Il Libro Dell'arte* (1933), and authored *The Materials and Techniques of Medieval Painting* (1936) and *The Practice of Tempera Painting* (1936)—studied the panel and reported that “some of the pigments can be identified under the microscope, and their identification compels us to visualize the painting in its original state as very brilliant, even barbaric, in color.”³⁰

The spectacular painted rawhide and wood shield, which was found associated with the horse armor excavated from Tower 19 in March 1933 (fig. 2.2), shows such remarkable preservation that X-radiographs were taken recently to confirm the presence of ancient fragments in its reconstructed state (fig. 2.5). Simon James has noted that the structure of the laminated, plane wood shield was altered during its reconstruction; it is now missing elements, shows dimensional changes, and has a curvature different from its original one.³¹ Although no specific treatment records exist for this shield, the Dura-Europos archives include reports on three other shields excavated during the 1934–35 season. These were examined in October 1935 by George Stout, who made conservation treatment recommendations to Herbert Gute.³² Layers on the other shields were found to contain gypsum and lime white ground, red and green earth pigments, carbon black, vermillion, and indigo over a substrate of pine, presumed by Professor Samuel Record of Yale to be Aleppo pine. These shields were cleaned mechanically in the field to remove burial dirt, and the paint was consolidated with polyvinyl acetate, the same synthetic resin that Pearson used on the wall paintings. The painted rawhide and wood shield remains stable except for the restoration materials, which had some minor cracks and losses and so were recently filled and inpainted.

The silk textile fragment (pl. 63) was recorded as being mounted by Mrs. Ida P. Yates at Yale in July 1935 before being sent on loan to Rodolphe Pfister, Musée Guimet, Paris, for publication.³³ The silk textile fragment and the wool textile fragment (pl. 64) were both treated in 1982 by textile conservator Nabuko Kajitani of the Metropolitan Museum.³⁴ They remain stable in the archival housing provided by that treatment.

Stone and plaster sculptures from Dura-Europos have received superficial cleanings, localized consolidation of pigments, and desalination as needed. In the 1980s, Barbara Moore, objects conservator in private practice and at Yale's Peabody Museum of Natural History, performed some of these treatments,

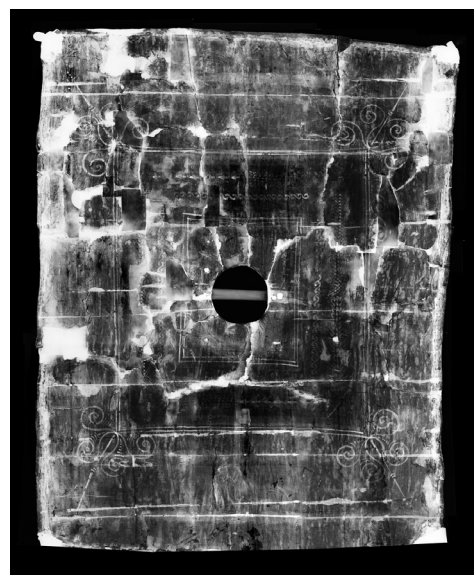


Figure 2.5: Composite of X-radiographs of Roman painted shield (see pl. 5) (photograph courtesy of Eric Stegmaier, Senior Conservation Assistant—Paintings, Yale Center for British Art)

such as desalination of the Herakles and lion (pl. 47), with repeated applications of poultices made from pulped blotting paper wet with deionized water. The relief of Herakles (pl. 48) was desalinated by soaking in changes of deionized water until a conductivity meter showed fewer ions from soluble salts present in the water, and silver nitrate tests showed no chlorides present in the water.³⁵ Reconstructions done with plaster and cement in the field or at Yale remain structurally sound, with the exception of the relief of Gad (Fortune) of Dura (pl. 1). This sculpture was treated at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, between 1977 and 1981 to remove corroding iron pins, desalinate the limestone, and reassemble the sculpture with bronze pins for structural reinforcement.³⁶

Ceramic artifacts from Dura-Europos, in general, also remain stable. The terracotta thymiaterion (pl. 39) was reconstructed with at least three different adhesives and a gray, plaster-like fill material. Some of the joins had become unstable and old restoration materials had discolored. A recent treatment removed excess fill materials and unstable adhesives, replacing them with a composite material of acrylic resin, glass microspheres, and dry pigments. Old and new fills were toned with acrylic paints.

According to Professor Rostovtzeff, the wall painting depicting Julius Terentius performing a sacrifice (pl. 37) was discovered in 1920 and left exposed from 1920 to 1922, when it was protected by the construction of a stone wall approximately 0.25 meters out from the wall with sand filling the space between the stone wall and the wall painting. In spring 1931, the section of the wall painting was removed, the front was coated, and the reverse was reinforced with plaster and a wood lattice. Upon its arrival at Yale, the painting was analyzed by George Stout, who detected chloride salts from burial and cellulose nitrate as the coating applied in the field.³⁷ The Terentius painting has undergone several cleaning and recoating campaigns to remove salts and superficial dirt from the surface, remove excess coatings, and reduce the gloss of previous coatings. Backing materials applied in the field remain structurally sound.

In contrast to the relatively well-preserved artifacts and paintings, the condition of the paintings from the Christian Building was so unstable upon their arrival at Yale in 1932 that George Stout cited three sources of their so-called mutilation: the coating applied in the field, their fractured and dislocated structure, and efflorescence from recrystallization of original calcium sulfate believed to be a result of rewetting by fresh plaster used for their backings. Stout recommended cellosolve acetate and ethyl alcohol to remove the old coating and consolidation with a vinyl ester in ethyl alcohol, diacetone alcohol, and cellosolve acetate.³⁸ Henry Pearson's notes include recommendations for 40 percent vinyl ester solutions in ethyl alcohol to be applied by brush or spray with heat used, if necessary, to accelerate drying.³⁹ In April 1942, the director of the Art Gallery noted that the Christian paintings on display were sprayed with a 25 percent solution of Vinylseal (manufactured by Carbide and Carbon Chemical Corporation, now Union Carbide) in 75 percent grain alcohol, applied three times with five to six days between applications "to build over the paint a strong protective film which would prevent further separation of the paint particles."⁴⁰ Even the nonspecialist can realize the excess of synthetic resins used in these treatments.

By 1975, the paintings remained unstable and a drastic *strappo* detachment was deemed necessary. For this procedure, an initial facing of cotton muslin was applied with a mixture of animal glue, molasses, a wetting agent, and a fungicide to protect the paintings during their removal from the museum's installation. That facing was removed with warm water, and the surfaces were cleaned with the solvent toluene supposedly to remove excess consolidants. The paintings were refaced with cotton muslin and animal glue

alone, which theoretically would shrink upon drying. Next, the faced paint layer was peeled off the original ancient wall plaster and, face down, backed with a doughy mixture of sand, marble flour, fumed silica, and chopped glass bound in acrylic emulsion. After the backing dried, warm water was used again to remove the facings. Extensive inpainting was done with dry pigments in polyvinyl acetate emulsion. A secondary support was then applied to the reverse using polyester resin, woven fiberglass, and aluminum angle strips. Finally, the front surfaces were sprayed with acrylic resin (fig. 2.6).⁴¹ In 1985, the paintings were treated yet again, this time locally with beeswax and heat to set down curling animal glue and flaking paint.⁴² Recent treatment of the paintings made use of new solvent mixtures (N-methyl-2-pyrrolidinone, diacetone alcohol, and distilled water) to set down flaking paint, remove excess glue, and some of the excess coatings. Using enhanced digital image technology, restorations were done with reversible water-based paints and dry pigments containing elements, such as cadmium, as a chemical tag to make them clearly distinguishable from the iron oxide earth pigments used in antiquity (pls. 18–20).

The Gute copies of the Synagogue paintings are believed to have been executed in tempera paints, following a revival of early medieval painting techniques taught at the Yale Art School in the 1930s. They were painted on pieces of heavy paper, presumably rolled up for transport to Yale, where they were backed with fabric and at some point attached to wallboard and framed for display in the art galleries at Yale (fig. 1.17). In the 1970s, they were treated by paper conservator Konstanza Bachman, who used gelatine to consolidate flaking paint.⁴³ The Gute paintings were recently cleaned and stabilized to allow them to travel (pls. 33–36).

The majority of the finds from Dura-Europos remain incredibly well preserved today. The ubiquitous presence of burial dirt suggests minimal intervention over the decades while at Yale. Regular inspections, minimal surface cleaning, and some desalination treatments have been performed in recent years. The objects from Dura-Europos are stored in a stable environment of 45 to 50 percent relative humidity and 68 to 70 degrees Fahrenheit for all materials except metals, which are stored at 30 percent relative humidity with corrosion scavengers. Passive preservation measures to re-house fragile artifacts in archival storage materials and provide optimum environmental conditions for the variety of materials have proven to be the most effective treatments for the long-term preservation of these artifacts and works of art.



Figure 2.6: Painting from the Christian Building (see pl. 18) prior to recent conservation treatment (photograph by Jessica Smolinski, Documentation Photographer, Yale University Art Gallery)

Notes

- 1 Franz Cumont, "Les fouilles de Salihieh sur l'Euphrate," *Syria* 4 (1923): ix–x; and Clark Hopkins *The Discovery of Dura-Europos*, ed. Bernard Goldman (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), 23.
- 2 Michael I. Rostovtzeff, *Dura-Europos and Its Art* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1938), 2.
- 3 Carl H. Kraeling, *The Synagogue. The Excavations at Dura-Europos Conducted by Yale University and the French Academy of Inscriptions and Letters, Final Report 8, Part 1*, ed. Alfred R. Bellinger et al. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1956), 4–5; and Simon T. James, "Dura-Europos: Pompeii of the Syrian Desert," University of Leicester, <http://www.le.ac.uk/ar/stj/dura.htm#curr> (accessed March 28, 2010).
- 4 Vinzenz Brinkmann and Raymond Wünsche, eds., *Gods in Color: Painted Sculpture of Classical Antiquity* (Munich: Stiftung Archäologie Glyptothek, 2007); and Roberta Pazanelli, Eike D. Schmidt, and Kenneth D. S. Lapatin, *The Color of Life: Polychromy in Sculpture from Antiquity to the Present* (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2008).
- 5 The author is grateful to the Yale University Art Gallery for support to research preservation of art and artifacts in Syria, March 2010.
- 6 Zvi C. Koren, "HPLC Analysis Report for the Yale University Art Gallery" (unpublished, 2009).
- 7 Ikuo Suzuki, "Outline of the Topography of Syria," University Museum, the University of Tokyo, http://www.um.u-tokyo.ac.jp/publish_db/Bulletin/no05/no05004.html (accessed August 26, 2009).
- 8 Rutherford J. Gettens, letter to Henry T. Rowell, Esq., January 24, 1930, Dura-Europos Archives, Yale University Art Gallery; and Rutherford J. Gettens, "Report on the Microchemical Examination of Pigments from Fragments of Wall Paintings from Dura-Europos," September 24, 1936, Dura-Europos Archives, Yale University Art Gallery.
- 9 John E. Vollmer, Edward John Keall, and Evelyn Nagai-Berthrong, *Silk Roads, China Ships* (Toronto: Royal Ontario Museum, 1983), 36–37.
- 10 Hopkins, 99.
- 11 *Ibid.*, 136.
- 12 See chapter four, antiquity excavation, article 46 D, in Elias M. Boutros, "Law of Antiquities: the Decree-law No. 222," in *Unimed Cultural Heritage II The Cultural Heritage Legislation in Syria* (UNIMED-AUDIT), <http://audit2.clio.it/legaldocs/siria/Law%20of%20Antiquities.htm> (accessed October 1, 2009).
- 13 Hopkins, 199.
- 14 The chloride salt content of the Euphrates River water was found to be too high for conservation use by this author at Kurban Höyük in southeastern Turkey, 1980–84.
- 15 Hopkins, 61, 120–21.
- 16 *Ibid.*, 120.
- 17 *Ibid.*, 183.
- 18 *Ibid.*, 197.
- 19 *Prelim. Rep. VII/VIII*, 2.
- 20 Hopkins, 101.

- 21 Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, "Papyrus Collection Database," Yale University, <http://beinecke.library.yale.edu/papyrus/SearchExec.asp>.
- 22 Hopkins, 91.
- 23 Francesca G. Bewer, *A Laboratory for Art: Harvard's Fogg Museum and the Emergence of Conservation in America, 1900–1950* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010).
- 24 Carol Snow, "Preservation of the Dura-Europos Synagogue Wall Paintings" (poster presentation for *Conservation and the Eastern Mediterranean*, International Institute for Conservation Istanbul Congress, September 2010).
- 25 Hopkins, 207.
- 26 Ibid., 208.
- 27 Special thanks are due to conservation intern, Victoria Schussler, who was assisted by Yale student Rae Ellen Bichell, for sifting through the Dura-Europos archives at the Yale University Art Gallery for conservation treatment information.
- 28 *Prelim. Rep. IV*, 1–2.
- 29 George L. Stout, unpublished letter, 1936, Dura-Europos Archives, Yale University Art Gallery.
- 30 *Prelim. Rep. II*, 186.
- 31 Simon T. James, *The Arms and Armour, and Other Military Equipment, the Excavations at Dura-Europos Conducted by Yale University and the French Academy of Inscriptions and Letters, Final Report 7* (London: British Museum, 2004), 182–83.
- 32 George L. Stout, "Technical Examination of Three Shields," October 10, 1935, Dura-Europos Archives, Yale University Art Gallery.
- 33 Rodolphe Pfister and Louisa Bellinger, *The Textiles. The Excavations at Dura-Europos. Conducted by Yale University and the French Academy of Inscriptions and Letters. Final Report 4, Part 2*, ed. Michael I. Rostovtzeff et al. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1945), preface.
- 34 Nabuko Kajitani, conservation treatment report, 1982, Dura-Europos Archives, Yale University Art Gallery.
- 35 Barbara Moore, conservation treatment report, 1984–88, Dura-Europos Archives, Yale University Art Gallery.
- 36 Susan B. Matheson, unpublished report, 1977, Dura-Europos Archives, Yale University Art Gallery.
- 37 George L. Stout and Rutherford J. Gettens, "Record of Examination: Roman Officers Making an Offering to Local Deities Wall Painting from Dura-Europos, I. B. C.," January 25, 1932, Dura-Europos Archives, Yale University Art Gallery.
- 38 George L. Stout, "Record of Examination: a Series of Fragments from the Painted Wall of a Christian Church at Dura-Europos," January 10–February 11, 1933, Dura-Europos Archives, Yale University Art Gallery.
- 39 Henry Pearson, "Treatment of Christian Murals from Dura," Dura-Europos Archives, Yale University Art Gallery; and Henry Pearson, "The Method of Transferring a Painting to a New Surface," 1933, 5–8, Dura-Europos Archives, Yale University Art Gallery.
- 40 Theodore Sizer, "Christian Chapel Repairs," 1942, Dura-Europos Archives, Yale University Art Gallery.
- 41 Gayle Weaver, conservation treatment report, 1973,

Dura-Europos Archives, Yale University Art Gallery.

42 Carroll Wales, letter to Susan Matheson, 1984, Dura-Europos Archives, Yale University Art Gallery.

43 Konstanza Bachman, conservation treatment report, Dura-Europos Archives, Yale University Art Gallery.

GAIL L. HOFFMAN

THEORY AND METHODOLOGY: STUDY OF IDENTITIES USING ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE FROM DURA-EUROPOS

“...there is an issue about how best to integrate the new thinking into the conservative (and generally rather under-theorized) mainstream of classical studies.”

—David J. Mattingly, “Cultural Crossovers,” 284

Introduction

As the modern world has grown more and more toward a global community, interest in multiculturalism has peaked as have discussions about ethnic groups within this new global culture.¹ Archaeologists have also renewed their interest in studies exploring whether material remains can reveal the ethnic identities of groups from the past.² Sometimes archaeologists’ studies of past ethnicity have been exploited as though they could be polyvalent, that is, studies looking to the past with implications and potential uses in the present. This is not new: more than a half century ago Nazi German officials made efforts to use archaeological evidence in order to identify material correlates of an Aryan race,³ and this action caused a hiatus in archaeological work on ancient ethnicity. More recently modern populations (e.g., Native Americans, various African groups, and Australian aborigines, to name a few) have made claims to territorial lands based on interpretations of archaeological remains as evidence for their status as an ethnic group in the past and claims of continuous occupation of territory.⁴ These groups have tried to use physical evidence about past ethnicities to make claims in the present—this, in spite of the fact that it is not certain how, or even if, past ethnicities can be recovered from the archaeological remains.

Theoretical and methodological study of ethnicity has demonstrated that ethnic marking occurs both through self-identification—that is, how an individual or community defines their ethnicity (though this self-identification may change over time)⁵—and ascription by others.⁶ Ethnicity, then, is not inherent or an inborn characteristic; it is not what used to be termed race, linguistic group, or culture. Indeed, ethnicity

is one of many identities that individuals and communities may possess over their lifetimes. Some other identities (both group and individual) include gender, religion, profession, language, politics, and social status.⁷

Dura-Europos—because of its location (on the Middle Euphrates), its political and cultural history (founded by Hellenistic Greeks, occupied by Parthians then Romans, and finally conquered by the Sasanians), and the unusually good preservation of material remains (especially objects of organic material) and textual evidence (ancient papyri, parchments, inscriptions, and graffiti)—provides a fascinating opportunity to explore the potential of archaeological materials to provide knowledge about ancient identities and to explore questions of ancient ethnicities.

Ethnicity (Method and Theory)

Archaeologists seek to study and group artifacts into meaningful categories and through this describe elements of past societies. In the nineteenth and twentieth century, racist ideas affected the interpretations of artifact groups and the cultures they were thought to represent.⁸ As a reaction to such misuses, the topic of ethnicity in archaeology went largely unexplored between World War II and the late 1980s. A return to its study led to consideration of whether and how objects might reveal groups (ethnic or otherwise)⁹ as well as suitable definitions for ethnicity.¹⁰ Stephen Shennan proposes that ethnicity is the “self-conscious identification with a particular social group at least partly based on a specific locality or origin.”¹¹ Kathryn Kamp and Norman Yoffee define an ethnic group as “a number of individuals who see themselves ‘as being alike by virtue of common ancestry, real or fictitious, and who are so regarded by others.’”¹² As Geoff Emberling underscores, however, it is difficult to define ethnicity in a manner agreed upon by all archaeologists and anthropologists,¹³ and yet descriptions of its salient characteristics are generally understood. Emberling observes that ethnicity is used to describe both groups and individual members of those groups. As for the characteristics of ethnicity, self-identification may be the most fundamental. According to Emberling, members of ethnic groups usually see themselves as having common ancestry or rather shared descent (real or imagined—i.e., culturally constructed); often there is a memory of past geographical unity. They may share a language, although language does not necessarily differentiate ethnic groups. And they frequently exist in hierarchical relationship to other groups or some larger sociopolitical entity, most often a state.¹⁴

A number of observations may be made based on these definitions. First, since ethnic groups are “socially constructed and subjectively perceived,”¹⁵ they are not “an objective fact about the past”¹⁶ or “static, monolithic categories with impermeable boundaries.”¹⁷ Membership in an ethnic group is likely to be fluid and dependent on agreement between the individual claiming membership and the group, and “the borders and nature of an ethnic group will change according to... [the] needs and social circumstances of the groups concerned.”¹⁸ Since such groups are structured and re-structured by the actions of people, an important question is can they be identified from the preserved ancient evidence?

Because ethnic groups are constructed socially and membership is frequently based on a claim of descent, texts sometimes have been seen as a primary source for ethnic identification.¹⁹ It has been viewed as problematic whether such groups can ever be identified from physical objects alone.²⁰ Attempts to iden-

tify ethnic groups from past material remains have sometimes relied on a trait-list approach emphasizing features such as language, religion, or shared cultural elements.²¹ Although it is tempting to seek an objective set of criteria through which to identify ethnic groups, these attempts have most often proved unsuccessful (as only seems logical if such groups are fluid and self-defined).²² Here, a distinction made between the terms *criteria* and *indicia* may prove beneficial.²³ *Criteria* of ethnicity are the attributes used to actually determine membership in an ethnic group, most often this is a claim (real or fictitious) of shared descent, whereas *indicia* are distinguishing attributes that people tend to associate with an ethnic group once its boundaries already have been established.²⁴ As *indicia*, physical features, language, religion, or cultural traits could be meaningful, and it is these features that are most likely to leave traces in the archaeological record. The meaning of these features in relation to ethnic group identity, however, can change over time making their interpretation complex.²⁵

Searches for archaeological correlates of ethnicity have explored many possibilities including language and names, religion, architecture (materials, building practices, structural forms, etc.), household objects, clothing, food (that is, cuisine and associated objects, for example, pottery), burial forms, and various combinations of these categories.²⁶ Among these categories, artistic style perhaps has most often been considered a useful marker of ethnic identity.²⁷ Intensive study of style in archaeology from the 1970s to 1990s explored its complexity and suggested that style at times might reflect local patterns of manufacture and enculturation (hence largely technological features) rather than ethnicity and at other times might take on an assertive or emblematic quality and so perhaps indicate individual or group (that is, on occasion ethnic) identity. Still, although in practice a stylistic attribute in a specific context and under qualified conditions might serve as an *indiciu*m of ethnicity, that is, as a symbol of an ethnic group, such a circumstance would have to be determined through external evidence. Style thus cannot be used as a direct indicator of an ethnic group.²⁸

Other scholars moved beyond artistic style to focus on boundary definition in ethnic groups, which might also leave physical traces. So, it was observed that “ethnic identity claims involve symbolic construals of sensations of likeness and difference ...” and that these might arise from an awareness of similarities in customs, which was termed *habitus*.²⁹ Emphasis on the cultural elements of ethnic identity creation—the marking of boundaries, for example—and its self-conscious use of specific cultural features as markers suggests that this process might also leave archaeological traces.³⁰ In the context of marking boundaries among groups, situations of competition or struggle might tend to accentuate processes of ethnic identification and marking; thus, competition (at least temporarily) might provoke greater visibility of ethnic groups in the material remains. But, even if (or once) an ethnic group is identified through physical remains, it must be remembered that the processes of defining ethnic boundaries are dynamic and that the physical expressions of ethnic identity may change or even disappear over time, for example, through assimilation or acculturation. Some scholars do propose that ethnicity may remain especially visible in contact zones and on peripheries,³¹ whereas others observe that ethnic groups existing as enclaves may also remain strongly marked.³² Past ethnicities, then, can be ephemeral and difficult to pinpoint from the material remains.

This renewed interest in studying ethnicity in the archaeological record has threatened to overwhelm consideration of other aspects of individual and group identities. In the classical world, caution has been voiced about the prevalence of terms such as Hellenization and Romanization, which invent or assume

ethnic coherence.³³ Not only do these terms attempt to force ethnic coherence by assuming and searching for an ethnic unity, they also subsume within one term both the *process* and *result* of defining ethnic boundaries; thus, they mask the steps taken in an effort to create an ethnic identity while emphasizing a search for homogeneity rather than acknowledging heterogeneity and diversity within the communities that are being studied.³⁴ There is a concern, then, that the study of Hellenization and Romanization (and the identities they assume) may discourage consideration of other group and individual identities. Ethnicity is, after all, just one of many social identities (both group and individual),³⁵ and increasingly these other identities are receiving scholarly attention.³⁶

Beyond Ethnicity

Many scholars cite Edward Saïd's book *Orientalism* as a watershed, marking the beginning of so-called post-colonial studies and heralding the arrival of ideas from postmodern studies into numerous fields including classical archaeology.³⁷ Arguing that the modern understanding of the Orient was based in claims of European superiority, Saïd described this situation with the term *orientalism*. There are similarities between Saïd's portrayal of the modern relationship between East and West and the ancient one. For instance, Saïd noted that whatever the perceived relationship between Europe and the Orient, the Orient, nonetheless, formed an integral part of European material culture and civilization.³⁸ So too in the ancient world cultural interactions with eastern cultures were pervasive, eastern literature and culture was incorporated into the Greek and Roman worlds, and these exchanges sometimes occurred in contexts that might be describe as colonial.³⁹ An equally significant implication of Saïd's work for the study of ancient cultures is that what the Greeks and Romans thought about eastern cultures (and their relationships to it) is important for our fuller understanding of their interactions.⁴⁰

One response to Saïd's work was an effort to explore the viewpoints and experiences of those not part of the broader colonial powers, that is, to consider the impact of colonial experiences on local cultures. Although at first this centered largely on questions of ethnic or national identity, and tended to consider primarily the ruling elite, slowly this focus shifted to considerations of the broader population and the many groups that may have existed within it.⁴¹ Some examples of these other groups and individual identities include non-elite groups (i.e., social status), gender, cultic associations, age, profession practiced, and so on. Like the definition and identification of ethnic groups, the structuring of these other identities is accomplished through the creation of boundaries and definition of "others."⁴² Recognition of these groups from the material record, then, encounters similar difficulties as did recognizing ethnicity through the interpretation of physical objects.⁴³

Along with a search for the numerous identities that may have existed among groups and individuals in the past, scholars also propose that hybrid cultures and identities could be generated in response to the many interactions among these groups and individuals.⁴⁴ At first scholars considered hybrid entities largely through the lens of colonization and so described them as groups or individuals that were neither strictly colonizer nor colonized, but rather something in between the two (a hybrid). More recently scholars have extended this label (hybrid) to describe groups and individuals engaged in other types of intercultural con-

tact and even intracultural groups, that is, “cultures within cultures.”⁴⁵ Thus, hybrid cultures (and hybrid individual identities) may have formed in a variety of past contexts,⁴⁶ and as discussions about colonial interactions moved forward, scholars suggested that at times these interactions and changes might occur within spaces termed a Middle Ground.⁴⁷ The Middle Ground would be a place where each side of a colonial encounter could interact with the other in a common and mutually understandable environment or context. Both sides are encouraged to participate in the Middle Ground because neither has total control and each side typically “plays a role dictated by what it perceives as the other’s perception of it.”⁴⁸ In the Middle Ground, then, participants often project an identity that they believe makes sense to the other group and interactions in this Middle Ground may also eventually affect identities at home (in other words within those local cultures that are participating in the Middle Ground).⁴⁹

In this more complex and developing vision of past interactions, scholars also observe that the creation and public negotiation of identities entails an aspect of performance. This recognition emphasizes that it is the particular uses made of identity markers (objects, symbols, behaviors, etc.) not simply their existence, which is critical to the creation and expression of identity. In other words, it is in the performance of specific actions (often using objects) that the intention of expressing identity becomes revealed.⁵⁰ As a consequence of these observations, Tamar Hodos stresses that a “*knowledge of social and historical contexts is ... essential to identify the performative aspects of the construction of social identities, and to recognize the characteristics that serve as those identity constructs ...*”⁵¹ New ideas about identities and the interactions of groups and individuals in ancient society have caused reconsideration of the ways in which objects (or material culture) communicate through people’s creation and use of it.⁵² Returning to work begun by Arjun Appadurai, Igor Kopytoff, and others, scholars are now considering again how objects function as information exchange and through their consumption operate in complex networks of exchange. In other words, they are working to understand better the social and cultural biography of objects.⁵³

The number and types of social and cultural identities, as envisioned and explored by scholars, has increased, and their precise location within and beyond groups has become more complicated as a result of recent studies. Discussions of these various identities may center on personal or individual identities, collective community identity, cultures within cultures, hybrid identities or cultures, as well as regional cultures.⁵⁴ In addition, some of the topics often associated with discussions of identity include cultural change (especially in imperial contexts), globalization in antiquity, cultural diversity and hybridity, the role of material culture, and the agency of objects in constituting these identities. The increasing detail and nuance used to describe and explore the presence and interaction of groups and identities in the past makes it especially important to remain aware of the many assumptions that scholars make when discussing issues of identity.⁵⁵ And “our analysis needs to be more flexible and to consider the issue of identity on a broad spectrum of factors (profession, social group, language, religion, ethnicity, gender etc.), both from the perspective of individuals/communities in the act of self-defining and from the perspective of the state seeking to control and dominate,”⁵⁶ thus engaging both local and global aspects of identity. It is important to recognize that groups and individuals can participate in more than one identity and that these identities likely intersect as we often map Venn diagrams; that is, they may partially intersect other groups, they may fully overlap with them or overlap not at all. And this pattern of interaction is likely to be distinct from individual to individual and among different groups. As scholars move forward to explore more fully the implications of these new

ideas for our understanding of the classical world, it has been observed that “the linkage between material culture and social identity is increasingly recognized as one of the most critical methodological issues to be negotiated”⁵⁷ and that what is most likely to help move these new examinations of identities forward is a combination of close study of artifacts and assemblages using theoretically informed methodologies.

Identities at Dura-Europos

The ancient site of Dura-Europos has the potential for many studies about ethnicity as well as other social and cultural identities because of its location, mixture of populations, as well as the nature and quality of the objects found. Excavation revealed microenvironments along the western wall of the site that preserved buildings (whose walls were decorated with painted narrative scenes) as well as perishable organic materials such as papyrus, parchment, leather, textiles, wood, and reeds. This evidence was in addition to the more usual excavation finds of architectural foundations, portable objects, and inscriptions. Also, because excavation took place in the early twentieth century, fieldwork uncovered a relatively large portion of the site (by some estimates 40 percent) (see plan, p. 15).⁵⁸ The excavation produced evidence that during its period of occupation (roughly 300 BCE to 256/257 CE) the site housed a mixture of populations deriving from Syro-Mesopotamian (especially Palmyrene) cultures as well as the Greek (Macedonian), Parthian, and Roman worlds. Scholars have also interpreted the regional context of this site in a variety of ways: some suggest that Dura-Europos participated in important trade routes west to east; others propose that the city served as a capital or regional center within an empire; whereas yet others see the town functioning as a peripheral border site near the contact zone of contested and changing empires.⁵⁹ The nature and quality of the physical evidence, the presence of remains from many different cultures, and the site’s place within its regional and historical setting, all suggest that much evidence should exist for the study of social and cultural identities, including ethnicity.⁶⁰

History of Studies About Identities at Dura-Europos

From the first, scholars were aware that Dura-Europos could provide evidence about the mixing and interactions of various cultural, artistic, linguistic, and religious groups. The earliest work aimed at identifying different groups present at the site focused on the textual evidence,⁶¹ which included numerous parchment and papyri found in the microenvironments along the western wall,⁶² as well as duty rosters of the *cohors XX Palmyrenorum* (a Roman military unit stationed at the site).⁶³ Although people inhabited Dura-Europos for nearly five hundred seventy-five years,⁶⁴ the papyri and parchments cluster heavily toward the last sixty years of the site’s existence, in other words, to the late-Roman phase (as indeed do many of the other archaeological remains). Although the textual evidence is most voluminous for the latest Roman phase of the city, there is a preserved deed of sale dating to as early as the second century BCE and substantial inscriptional evidence from the later first century BCE forward.⁶⁵ In addition, although the parchments and papyri received a final publication,⁶⁶ no one has ever fully published the inscriptional evidence (which covers a somewhat

broader range of time and includes stone-cut texts as well as *dipinti* on frescoes, walls, and potsherds).⁶⁷ No doubt in part because of the incomplete publication of the textual evidence, scholars also never have made a full study of the social and cultural groups as represented in these documents.

An important early article by C. Bradford Welles examined the evidence of names from the site describing a city founded by Macedonian soldiers (the original citizens),⁶⁸ who were known as *Europaioi*. These founders and their families used Greek, even particularly Macedonian, names throughout much of the city's history and apparently formed its social aristocracy.⁶⁹ It is uncertain whether these original Greek-Macedonian settlers brought Greek wives with them or married local women. While the papyri do not shed any definitive light on this question, inscriptions from benches dedicated in the temples of Artemis and Azzanathkona during the first and second centuries CE include names of leading women at Dura-Europos along with their family relationships.⁷⁰ A majority of these women carried Greek names,⁷¹ and they were married to men with Greek-Macedonian names.⁷² Although Greek names predominate (and only Greek names appear among those with the status *Europaioi*), in the names inscribed on temple benches some Semitic names (written in Greek) do appear. This suggests that a local population of social and economic standing existed and worshipped alongside the Greek-named community. These local women carry names like Dadaia, wife of Baphaladados, and Imaboua, daughter of Salamanes and wife of Beloobassaros. Although it may be tempting to assume that those with Greek names were ethnically or culturally Greek, this is not an established fact. It may rather have been the custom among the aristocratic families of Dura-Europos, regardless of their actual cultural background, to have used Greek names.⁷³

The pre-Roman textual material provides some additional evidence about social groups living at Dura-Europos. For example, *P. Dura* 25, 13, and 20 mention slaves (both male and female), all of whom carry Aramaic names.⁷⁴ These must have been of the lowest social status and little is known about their roles in this community (i.e., were there household and agricultural slaves? What other jobs might they have performed?).⁷⁵ Free men would be of a higher status than slaves and *P. Dura* 31 details a free man (Athenaios) from the city of Ossa mortgaging a vineyard to a resident of Dura-Europos,⁷⁶ who carries a Greek name but whose patronymic is Aramaic (Lysias son of Abbouthis). Elsewhere within Dura-Europos and the surrounding region, there must have been other social distinctions as well, though these are more difficult to glean.⁷⁷

Additional written evidence from the site exists for groups and individuals along with their activities. Jobs linked to the Roman military presence included *beneficarii tribuni* and *statores*,⁷⁸ who acted as military police and were headquartered in the main city gate. Other military personnel in the city included clerical officials: "Heliodorus, the *actuarius* (pl. 49), Ulpus Silvanus, the *tessarius*, Masimus, the *oikodemos*,"⁷⁹ who were perhaps billeted in or took over a large private home.⁸⁰ Also, the house of an important merchant, Nebuchelus, preserves records of his business transactions, many of which involved provisioning or servicing the needs of the Roman military.⁸¹ And, near the agora a building was inhabited by a troupe of entertainers from the city of Zeugma, some 300 kilometers to the north (see map, p. 14). This mixed gender group offered services including dice playing, theatrical performances, singing, acrobatics, and prostitution.⁸² We find glimmers then of the private and professional lives of individuals beyond the social elite and important religious, military, and political officials.

Besides those described above and identified largely through texts, the archaeological evidence extends

the list of professions practiced at Dura-Europos to include glass-making,⁸³ jewelry-making, metallurgy, pottery, and textile production (pls. 40, 59–61, 63, 64). The material record also yields evidence of individual households and shops where craft production may have occurred.⁸⁴ One should observe that some of the individuals and groups revealed in this evidence belong to a category now often described by archaeologists as excluded,⁸⁵ that is, those not normally found in the textual record of ancient societies. This would include, among others, women, children, the elderly,⁸⁶ and artisans. At Dura-Europos, papyri of marriage and divorce contracts provide a small window into women's lives (at least from a legal perspective);⁸⁷ while households and other material evidence promise more information about their lives in general.⁸⁸

J. A. Baird has worked extensively on the households at Dura-Europos, regrouping from the archival records and excavation reports the objects found within houses and re-examining the evidence for their architectural phases and changes in their configurations over time.⁸⁹ She has also brought new theoretical and methodological approaches to the study of identities at Dura-Europos. As Baird observes, “anthropological studies have shown that households can manifest a variety of identities, including ethnic identity.”⁹⁰ And whereas work on the textual evidence has a tendency to privilege external designations of identity (so-called etic identity) or the designations of identity drawn from the ruling classes and the military, the household groups have the potential to reveal self-ascribed (or emic) aspects of identity.⁹¹ There are many dimensions of identity that might be revealed from analysis of the household information—gender, religion, profession, social status, politics, civics, ethnicity, and linguistics—as well as their possible interaction.

Close analysis of the architectural plans, materials used, and building practices, suggests that the houses

at Dura-Europos were a synthesis of eastern, especially Mesopotamian, and western features.⁹² The houses, for instance, lack peristyle courtyards (a feature frequently associated with Hellenistic houses), and their plans seem largely of a local Mesopotamian type (fig. 3.1). Details of decoration, however, the treatment of doors, the occasional use of columns, features such as benches, and plaster relief moldings, perhaps demonstrate other cultural influences; thus, Baird concludes, “the architecture of the houses at Dura were not simply traditional Mesopotamian houses influenced by Hellenistic practices but rather an amalgam of local, Parthian, and Hellenistic elements.”⁹³

It is not merely the architecture or the plan, form, materials, and structures of the houses but rather the materials found within the individual rooms that promise a more nuanced view of the many identities within the city and their interaction. Here, one might expect to find evidence about dress styles (clothing, jewelry, and other adornments), grooming and toileting practices, as well as culinary habits, food products, and food preparation.⁹⁴ There might also appear information about religious and business activities, gender, age groups, and other

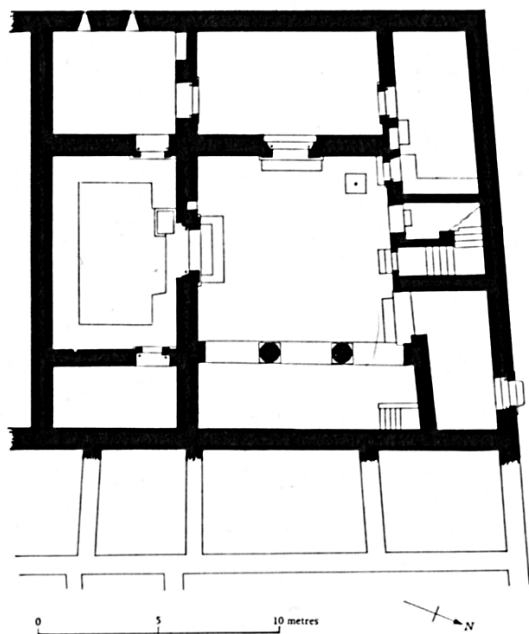


Figure 3.1: Typical house plan. Dura-Europos, M8. This particular house was later converted into the Christian Building. After Matheson, *Dura-Europos*, fig. 13

social entities. Through study of their homes, archaeologists have revealed evidence about how the residents of Dura-Europos saw themselves; Baird describes the identity presented here as Durene, suggesting a mix of a variety of differing cultural and social entities in order to create a distinctly local household form and identity.

But the city not only provided a permanent home for the Durenes. It also served as a regional center where people who were not permanent residents of Dura-Europos could register legal documents; and it sat along important trade routes, ensuring visitors from many places. A cross section of these people may appear in the many names scratched as graffiti on the walls of the main city gate and in the legal documents.⁹⁵ Throughout the majority of the city's history, Greek was the primary language of writing, whether for official or personal purposes, though the excavations uncovered writing in Latin, Aramaic (including Palmyrene and Syriac), Parthian, and Middle Persian—and even one Hebrew papyrus fragment.⁹⁶ There is also graffiti in what is sometimes termed “Safaitic,”⁹⁷ meaning the language spoken by the nomads in the region around Dura-Europos. Occasionally, because Greek predominates in inscriptions and texts throughout Dura-Europos' occupation, scholars have claimed that the primary cultural element in the city was Greek, but recent work on identity has revealed that language does not necessarily correlate directly to cultural background and so this assertion must be treated skeptically.⁹⁸

Some sense of the major historical and cultural eras and their effect on the city also exists in both the physical and textual material.⁹⁹ Here the question of the two hundred seventy-five years of Parthian control looms large. Some have described the Parthian Empire as the silent empire, because few primary sources exist and little in the way of material culture has been excavated. Its characterization, thus, is drawn largely from Greco-Roman sources. At Dura-Europos, the Parthian presence would be uncertain from most of the physical material; there are a few Parthian coins but otherwise little material culture exists that with certainty can be attributed to the Parthians.¹⁰⁰ Still, the city prospered during the Parthian period. Numerous buildings, especially temples, were built and rebuilt, though none of these religious buildings seem to be dedicated to Iranian deities.¹⁰¹ Fergus Millar has identified ten Greek papyri dating from between 80 and 159/60 CE that provide information about the Parthian kings and their Parthian administrative activities at Dura-Europos.¹⁰² These papyri mention royal judges of the king and their body guards, a garrison commander, an *arkapates* (an Iranian word, one of the few found among the Dura-Europos materials), a tax collector, and a *strategos* of the nearby regions. Millar proposes that these texts “could be re-studied and re-edited as a group, and would provide uniquely coherent evidence of a legal system functioning in Greek within the Parthian empire.”¹⁰³

Millar also proposes a thorough reconsideration of the inscriptional evidence for the temples, arguing that it might help resolve the deity or deities to which these buildings were actually dedicated.¹⁰⁴ Indeed, further work on the pagan religious groups at Dura-Europos remains one of the most important future research projects. Some of this work has already begun; Welles early on described the numerous religious groups and the deities that he could identify at the site.¹⁰⁵ Susan Downey has now studied and published many of the architectural and sculptural materials,¹⁰⁶ Lucinda Dirven has looked closely at the Palmyrene evidence,¹⁰⁷ and Ted Kaizer is at work on patterns of worship as well as the interrelationships between language and religion at Dura-Europos.¹⁰⁸ Because numerous names of deities and sculptural images of multiple deities were found in religious spaces, early scholars imagined syncretism as a way to describe and understand what they

perceived as an easy blending and melding of deities from Greek, Syrian, Mesopotamian, Babylonian, and Roman sources. Newer scholarship on the development of religions, however, prefers to use terms such as assimilation, acculturation, and differentiation to describe religious interaction, stressing that religion often serves as an identity marker.¹⁰⁹

The plans of the religious buildings at Dura-Europos reflect Mesopotamian temples and religious spaces, not Greco-Roman structures.¹¹⁰ The decorations of these pagan temples, which included painted wall scenes (a form of decoration found also in the Christian Building and Synagogue),¹¹¹ seem linked to eastern and perhaps particularly Durene practices, while some of the sculpted reliefs may have served as objects for worship in subsidiary rooms used primarily by small restricted groups of worshippers.¹¹² Much work remains to be done, particularly in terms of reassessing the inscriptional materials for what they may reveal about the actual deities worshipped in the various spaces and the ways in which multiple deities may have been accommodated within one religious complex. It also would be interesting to consider household religious spaces alongside the more public sites of worship and to look for different groups worshipping in these various locations.¹¹³ Some scholars have assumed that one reason for the great variety of cults found at Dura-Europos is the variety of peoples from different cities and regions who came to Dura-Europos. It certainly seems that the cult of Mithras came with the Roman military, and the Christian and Jewish communities are also first visible during the Roman phase though they may have been present in the city earlier. The temples of Azzanathkona (a deity known only from Dura-Europos) and worship of Aphlad are likely linked to residents who came from the nearby village of Anath,¹¹⁴ while the Palmyrenes living at Dura-Europos also seem to have introduced worship of various deities familiar to them.¹¹⁵

With the arrival of the Romans permanently in 165 CE, many scholars see the population of Dura-Europos changing significantly.¹¹⁶ Although writing in Greek continued to be a primary characteristic, there appeared many Latin names construed in Greek and changes in the title of office holders within the city. Perhaps most telling, the Greek-Macedonian names of the *Europaioi* all but disappeared. New and different Semitic names were introduced and for the first time in the city's history *Europaioi* had local names (e.g., in *P. Dura* 13 a list of *Europaioi* includes two with Iranian names and three with Semitic names). Residents of the city also begin to write its name as Dura instead of Europos;¹¹⁷ and then, shortly after 200 CE the citizens called themselves *Dourenoi/Dourenai* in Greek or *Dourani* in Latin.¹¹⁸ It seems, then, that in this later Roman phase of the city, a conscious effort to alter the cultural identity of the city and its inhabitants may have occurred.

All of this took place as the city became an important military garrison. Builders constructed a low wall perhaps to separate the northern section of the city, which officials converted for military purposes. The military used the Temple of Azzanathkona for record keeping and built housing and a headquarters for the commander (*principia*, called *praetorium* in reports), barracks, baths, an amphitheater, and military exercise grounds for the soldiers. They also built a temple dedicated to Jupiter Dolichenus and a large palace-like structure termed the residence of the *dux ripae* (leader of the river). Scholars may pose fascinating questions, then, about the identity of the city and its residents during the Roman period. Much work has been done and continues to be done concerning the military presence at Dura-Europos.¹¹⁹

Where to Next?

Scholars remain interested in the potential of Dura-Europos to provide evidence about individuals and groups and the ways in which they express a variety of distinctive identities. Scholars are also intrigued by the possibility of exploring whether interactions among these many identities may have triggered acculturation, assimilation, or even hybridization. Much fascinating work, then, remains to be done. One way to move forward the study of different identities at Dura-Europos is to re-contextualize objects into the buildings from which they were excavated. This tiny step aids in the recognition of communities, groups, and individual identities, as well as provides evidence for their possible interactions. Another avenue is to re-examine groups such as the Christian or the Jewish community not only through the paintings and the buildings (the primary evidence by which these groups were identified) but also by considering the textual evidence and the participation of these groups within the complex community of the city itself. This process may begin by recalling that Jews, Christians, and worshippers of Mithras were near neighbors building their religious structures along “Wall Street,” just inside the western fortification. Their adherents (as far as we can tell) were living integrated among each other and the other residents in the city (in other words no Jewish or Christian neighborhoods have been identified), and presumably these people were also buried together in the single cemetery located outside the western wall.¹²⁰ But scholars also need to study the Jewish, Christian, and Mithras worshippers in relation to other groups who were worshipping local pagan deities. What is the nature of these other religious communities and their interactions? Recently Jaś Elsner has proposed that there was cultural resistance to some religious groups at Dura-Europos;¹²¹ another scholar Lucinda Dirven disagrees.¹²² What does the fact that the Synagogue paintings were defaced, probably as they were buried in preparation for the final siege, suggest about this situation, and what other evidence about interactions may exist?¹²³

More detailed studies need to re-examine the paintings at Dura-Europos as a group and from a unified perspective on the artists, the mixture of artistic sources apparent in them, as well as their function and placements as decoration within the city as a whole. Other work might explore whether the shift in names in the later Roman period with a consequent disappearance of old elite, high-status Greek names may be an effort to align more with Roman culture and thus present an instance of acculturation or active efforts at assimilation.¹²⁴ All of these approaches to the preserved evidence and its analysis will advance consideration of the *groups* living at Dura-Europos. This less segregated thinking about elements of the city and its many constituent groups may lead to new and important revelations about identities and the interactions of people and groups at Dura-Europos.

For the study of individuals and their identities, further work with the objects and texts may help uncover evidence for the people in the community termed “excluded” by archaeologists, hence allowing explorations of women, children, and other age groups, social status (elite versus non-elite, slave versus free, and citizen versus non-citizen), and professions (including public entertainer, merchant, scribe, priest(ess), jeweler, glass-maker, farmer, and soldier). Here, too, however it is important that these studies consider the broader context of the city. As Hodos observes, “no identity can be studied independently of other social forms.”¹²⁵ It is also important that these studies of individuals work within a framework of newer theories and methodologies for the study of identity. David Mattingly aptly notes that there is a need to combine

grand syntheses of theoretical and methodological work with artifact-based particular case studies.¹²⁶ These detailed case studies focused on particular artifact types or on the composition of major assemblages from specific sites, when placed in an appropriate methodological or theoretical framework, can lead to greater sophistication of argument.

Future work would also benefit from a widened perspective with fuller participation by scholars from different areas of expertise. Early scholars of Dura-Europos came from various backgrounds. James Henry Breasted was a Near Eastern archaeologist (founder of the University of Chicago's Oriental Institute); he was deeply versed in the ancient cultures of Mesopotamia and Egypt. Michael Rostovtzeff, a classical historian, was best known for his economic and social histories of the Hellenistic and Roman worlds, while Franz Cumont was a specialist in ancient religions. Although these early scholars of Dura-Europos encompassed a broad range of expertise (classical and Near Eastern languages, religion, history, and culture), more recently scholarly interest in Dura-Europos has narrowed and focused on expertise drawn from fewer disciplines. It has been observed by some that Near Eastern scholars looking at Dura-Europos see local Mesopotamian forms, while Greco-Roman scholars tend to notice possible elements of Greco-Roman origin. In other words, scholars see what they have been conditioned to observe and what they know most about. It is hoped that future work will help to break down the silos into which the study of some aspects of Dura-Europos have gathered. As broad a perspective as possible would help provide a more nuanced picture of this complicated site. The difficulty of such a "crossing the divide," however, is well observed by Canepa in the introduction to his book, *The Two Eyes of the Earth: Art and Ritual of Kingship between Rome and Sasanian Iran*.¹²⁷

Notes

- 1 Tamar Hodos, "Local and Global Perspectives in the Study of Social and Cultural Identities," in *Material Culture and Social Identities in the Ancient World*, ed. Shelley Hales and Tamar Hodos (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 10, 23; Geoff Emberling, "Ethnicity in Complex Societies: Archaeological Perspectives," *Journal of Archaeological Research* 5, no. 4 (1997): 302; and Siân Jones, *The Archaeology of Ethnicity* (London: Routledge, 1997), 5–8. It has been observed that although culture today is more global, in many instances, this had not led to an overall homogeneity but rather to more emphasis (or discussion of) heterogeneity.
- 2 Hales and Hodos; Jones, *Archaeology of Ethnicity*; Emberling; and Stephen Shennan, ed., *Archaeological Approaches to Cultural Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1994).
- 3 Emberling, 296, for other bibliography. Also, Stephen Shennan, "Introduction: Archaeological Approaches to Cultural Identity," in *Archaeological Approaches to Cultural Identity*, ed. Stephen Shennan (New York: Routledge, 1994), 5, 7–9; and Ulrich Veit, "Ethnic Concepts in German Prehistory: a Case Study of the Relationship between Cultural Identity and Archaeological Objectivity," in *Archaeological Approaches to Cultural Identity*, ed. Stephen Shennan (New York: Routledge, 1994), 38. On race in antiquity see David Mattingly, "Cultural Crossovers: Global and Local Identities in the Classical World," in *Material Culture and Social Identities in the Ancient World*, ed. Shelley Hales and Tamar Hodos (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 290–92.
- 4 Michael Rowlands, "The Politics of Identity in Archaeology," in *Social Construction of the Past: Representation as Power*, ed. George C. Bond and Angela Gilliam (London: Routledge, 1994), 129–43.
- 5 Fredrik Barth, ed., *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: the Social Organization of Cultural Difference* (Boston: Little Brown, 1969); and Emberling, 299, among others.
- 6 The distinction between "self-identification" and "ascription by others" discussed by Emberling, 315, is labeled emic versus etic by Jonathan Hall, *Ethnic Identity in Greek Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).
- 7 Carol Dougherty and Leslie Kurke, "Introduction: the Cultures within Greek Culture," in *The Cultures within Ancient Greek Culture: Contact, Conflict, Collaboration*, ed. Carol Dougherty and Leslie Kurke (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 13; Hodos, 16; and Mattingly, 285. For the archaeological exploration of some of these, Margarita Díaz-Andreu, Sam Lucy, Staša Babić, and David N. Edwards, eds., *The Archaeology of Identity: Approaches to Gender, Age, Status, Ethnicity, and Religion* (London: Routledge, 2005).
- 8 On racism in archaeology, supra n3. Issues of race and racism remain sensitive; see Hodos, 12–13. The existence of pre-racism in antiquity is argued by Benjamin Isaac, *The Invention of Racism in Classical Antiquity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 2004); and Isaac, "Proto-racism in Graeco-Roman Antiquity," *World Archaeology* 38, no. 1 (2006): 32–47. See also, comments in Mattingly, 290–92. The term race is now most often applied to biological aspects of a group, while ethnicity describes part of a group's social aspect. Hall, *Ethnic Identity*, 20, 22; and Carla Antonaccio, "(Re)defining Ethnicity: Culture, Material Culture and Identity," in *Material Culture and Social Identities in the Ancient World*, ed. Shelley Hales and Tamar Hodos (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 33.
- 9 Shennan, 5–6, 11, 13.

- 10 Originally the term ethnic group might be used as a more acceptable alternative to race. Similarly, linguistic group or archaeological culture sometimes also substituted for ideas of race. Jones, *Archaeology of Ethnicity*, 3; Hall, *Ethnic Identity*, 2; and Veit, 42.
- 11 Shennan, 14, 16.
- 12 Kathryn A. Kamp and Norman Yoffee, "Ethnicity in Western Asia during the Early Second Millennium B.C.: Archaeological Assessments and Ethnoarchaeological Prospectives," *Bulletin of the American Society of Oriental Research* 237 (1980): 88. Jones, *Archaeology of Ethnicity*, 84, says, "ethnic groups are culturally ascribed identity groups which are based on expressions of a real or assumed shared culture and common descent..." Usually this is defined through objectification of cultural, linguistic, religious, historical or physical characteristics or both; and Dougherty and Kurke, 8, citing Hall, *Ethnic Identity*, for a similar definition within Greek society.
- 13 Emberling, 300–1.
- 14 Ibid., 302–4; on the development of ethnicity at the contact zone of empires and peripheries, see Mattingly, 291.
- 15 Hall, *Ethnic Identity*, 19.
- 16 Shennan, 12.
- 17 Hall, *Ethnic Identity*, 2.
- 18 Peter J. Ucko, "Foreword," in *Archaeological Approaches to Cultural Identity*, ed. Stephen Shennan (New York: Routledge, 1994), xviii.
- 19 A note of caution, however, texts most often provide evidence of ascription by others of ethnic groups and the relationship of textual evidence to self-identification with an ethnic group may be problematic. Mattingly; Emberling, 309, 313–15; Shennan, 14, 11–12; Colin Renfrew, *The Roots of Ethnicity. Archaeology, Genetics and the Origins of Europe* (Rome: Unione internazionale degli istituti di archeologia, storia e storia dell'arte in Roma, 1993), 22–23; and Antonaccio, "(Re)defining Ethnicity," 34, arguing against the primacy of texts for their identification.
- 20 On the question whether objects equal people: Shennan, 14; and Kamp and Yoffee, 89, 96. Jones, *Archaeology of Ethnicity*, 13, says "little explicit analysis of the nature of ethnicity and the relationship between material culture and ethnic identity" has occurred. See the bibliography in Jones, *Archaeology of Ethnicity*, for other references.
- 21 Sometimes termed an index fossil. For a more nuanced view of how elements of material culture may mark ethnicity, Emberling, 315.
- 22 Kamp and Yoffee, 88, 95; Carol Kramer, "Pots and People," in *Mountains and Lowlands: Essays in the Archaeology of Greater Mesopotamia*, ed. Louis D. Levine and T. Cuyler Young, Jr., *Bibliotheca Mesopotamica* 7 (Malibu, Calif.: Undena Publications, 1977), 99–112; and Jones, *Archaeology of Ethnicity*, 13.
- 23 Donald Horowitz, "Ethnic Identity," in *Ethnicity: Theory and Experience*, ed. Nathan Glazer and Daniel P. Moynihan (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1975), 119–20.
- 24 Hall, *Ethnic Identity*, 20–21.
- 25 See Hodos, 16, on the issue of recognizing changing identities and the expression in the material record over time.
- 26 Hodos, 11–12; and J. A. Baird, "Housing and House-

- holds at Dura-Europos: a Study in Identity on Rome's Eastern Frontier" (Ph.D. diss., University of Leicester 2006), 43.
- 27 Emberling, 310, 318, 323, 325. As early as the 1970s archaeologists had come to view style in terms of information exchange, believing that stylistic variation functioned to transmit messages that could facilitate social interaction. Martin Wobst, "Stylistic Behavior and Information Exchange," in *For the Director: Essays in Honor of James B. Griffin*, ed. Charles E. Cleland, University of Michigan Anthropological Papers 61 (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, Museum of Anthropology, 1977), 61:317–42; and Shennan, 18. Wiessner and Sackett have considered whether style is essentially active or passive and whether it could be related to ethnicity. James R. Sackett, "Approaches to Style in Lithic Archaeology," *Journal of Anthropological Archaeology* 1 (1982): 59–112; Sackett, "Style and Ethnicity in the Kalahari: a Reply to Wiessner," *American Antiquity* 50 (1985): 151–59; Polly Wiessner, "Style and Social Information in Kalhari San Projectile Points," *American Antiquity* 48 (1983): 253–76; Wiessner, "Reconsidering the Behavioural Basis of Style," *Journal of Anthropological Archaeology* 3 (1984): 190–234; Wiessner, "Style or Isochrestic Variation? A Reply to Sackett," *American Antiquity* 50 (1985): 221–24; and Wiessner, "Style and Changing Relations between the Individual and Society," in *The Meanings of Things: Material Culture and Symbolic Expression*, ed. Ian Hodder (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), chap. 2. On the many other uses of style: Margaret Conkey and Christine Hastorf, eds., *The Uses of Style in Archaeology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); and Baird, "Housing and Households," 179 n813, on the social functions of style, see p. 28.
- 28 Ucko, xv.
- 29 Shennan, 15; G. Carter Bentley, "Ethnicity and Practice," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* (1987): 27. Hodos, 12, who cites Siân Jones, "Discourses of Identity in the Interpretation of the Past," in *Cultural Identity and Archaeology: the Construction of European Communities*, ed. Paul Graves-Brown, Siân Jones, and Clive Gamble (London: Routledge, 1996), 70; and Jones, *Archaeology of Ethnicity*. *Habitus* is also used in discussion of identities beyond ethnic identity where Bourdieu's idea that habitus might entail "a series of strategies for ordering experience and informing action" helps explain how habitual practices can become part of creating social identities of many sorts; Hodos, 15–16.
- 30 Kamp and Yoffee also believe that certain ethnic behaviors might leave archaeological traces, especially if focus is directed at the ways that boundaries between groups are established and maintained. On the efficacy of this, see also Hall, *Ethnic Identity*, 24 and Emberling, 318ff.; hence, Kamp and Yoffee, 96–97, by examining ethnographic evidence that suggest material items like special clothing, jewelry, and ceremonial objects, special behavior learned as part of socialization within an ethnic group (perhaps manufacturing techniques and stylistic preferences), and even economic and political behaviors (such as occupational choices and buying patterns)—all could reflect ethnicity. For recent artifact-based studies of ethnicity, see for example, Lloyd Llewellyn-Jones, "The Big and Beautiful Women of Asia: Ethnic Conceptions of Ideal Beauty in Achaemenid-period Seals and Gemstones," in *Material Culture and Social Identities in the Ancient World*, ed. Shelley Hales and Tamar Hodos (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 171–200, and Corinna Riva, "Ingenious Inventions: Welding Ethnicities East and West," in *Material Culture and Social Identities in the Ancient World*, ed. Shelley Hales and Tamar Hodos (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 79–113.
- 31 Mattingly, 292.

- 32 Emberling, 316.
- 33 Mattingly, 285n8.
- 34 Ibid., 285, 287.
- 35 Hodos, 4; Shennan, 5–6; and Lynn Meskell, “Archaeology of Identities,” in *Archaeological Theory Today*, ed. Ian Hodder (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 189.
- 36 Mattingly, 284–85; Hodos, 3–4, 9; and Jones, *Archaeology of Ethnicity*, 85 (lists other differentiated groups in society beyond ethnicity). Also, Dougherty and Kurke.
- 37 Hodos, 10.
- 38 Edward Saïd, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), 2.
- 39 Colonial interactions, especially in the ancient Greek world, operated very differently from modern colonialism. Irad Malkin, “Postcolonial Concepts and Ancient Greek Colonization,” *Modern Language Quarterly* 65, no. 3 (2004): 341–64. One of the most significant differences is that the Greeks did not view themselves as culturally superior to the many older and more highly developed cultures of the Near East and Egypt. Another distinction is that the cultures interacting in colonial circumstances were largely polytheistic until perhaps the 2nd century BCE.
- 40 Hodos, 24, observes that the Greeks distinguished themselves from the *barbaros*, those not speaking Greek. This dichotomy has come to be interpreted as civilized versus uncivilized, a distinction Hodos says is more akin to Roman views of the “other.” (She references Hingley, 61). For further distinctions between Greek and barbarian, see Malkin, “Postcolonial Concepts,” 344–45. On the Roman view of others, Richard Hingley, “Cultural Diversity and Unity: Empire and Rome,” in *Material Culture and Social Identities in the Ancient World*, ed. Shelley Hales and Tamar Hodos (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 56–57.
- 41 For this shift in the study of ancient Greek culture see the essays in Dougherty and Kurke. Mattingly, 289, talks of an exploration of “discrepant identities” within the Roman world in response to Saïd. Also, Hingley.
- 42 Hodos, 24, on the importance of boundaries.
- 43 Indeed it has been suggested that sometimes physical indicators interpreted as signs of ethnicity might instead be markers used to signal elite status. Emberling, 317; Hodos, 16, where she says, “... what may be regarded as ethnic indicators may equally reflect other socially constructed identities beyond ethnicity, depending upon the contexts of the viewer...”; Antonaccio, “(Re)defining Ethnicity,” 39, commenting on Hall, “Hall has proposed that foreign luxuries that were sought after... were prized not because of their ethnic associations, but because of the elite relationships of *xenia*...”; Hodos, 14, where she cites Greg Woolf, “Power and the Spread of Writing in the West,” in *Literacy and Power in the Ancient World*, ed. Alan K. Bowman and Greg Woolf (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 84–89; and Woolf, *Becoming Roman: the Origins of Provincial Civilization in Gaul* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).
- 44 Antonaccio, “(Re)defining Ethnicity,” 36.
- 45 The use of the term culture may not be the most appropriate here as it stretches that term to the point of becoming meaningless. Perhaps calling these entities “groups” or “differing identities” would be more efficacious, though with these terms also a concern exists that they may become too diffuse and ill-defined. The idea

of a culture within a culture might better be restricted to enclave situations, that is, instances when a foreign community lives (and seeks to maintain its distinctive identity) within another culture. On enclaves, see Emberling, 316ff. Antonaccio, “(Re)defining Ethnicity,” 33, observes, that there has been “a consideration of the status of the concept of ‘culture’ itself, and an inoffensive and usefully broad notion of ‘identity’ sometimes substitutes for the contentious ‘ethnicity’ or ‘culture.’”

- 46 For work on hybridity in ancient culture, Carla Antonaccio, “Hybridity and the Cultures with Greek Culture,” in *The Cultures within Ancient Greek Culture: Contact, Conflict, Collaboration*, ed. Carol Dougherty and Leslie Kurke (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 57–74; Antonaccio, “Ethnicity and Colonization,” in *Ancient Perceptions of Greek Ethnicity*, ed. Irad Malkin (Washington, D.C.: Center for Hellenic Studies, 2001), 113–57; Irad Malkin, *The Return of Odysseus: Colonization and Ethnicity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998); and Peter van Dommelen, “Colonial Constructs: Colonialism and Archaeology in the Mediterranean,” *World Archaeology* 28, no. 3 (1997): 305–23. Related to hybridity is the notion of creolization.
- 47 Malkin, “Postcolonial Concepts,” 357–58. Some scholars favored the introduction of the idea of a Middle Ground due to perceived limitations in the ideas of hybridity, creolization, and contact zones. “Concepts such as ‘creolization,’ ‘hybridity,’ and ‘contact zones,’ while helpful for pointing out ‘mutualities and negotiations across the colonial divide’... are often too broad and too detached from historical processes, causes, and conscious agendas.” Also commenting on the Middle Ground as places for contesting ethnicity, Mattingly, 291, who cites Gosden, 82–113; Webster, and Lewellyn-Jones; and Antonaccio, “(Re)defining Ethnicity,” 36, sees the Middle Ground as a “crucible in which mixed cultures or hybrid societies are formed.” See also Antonaccio, pp. 44–45 citing Malkin, “Postcolonial Concepts”; and Michael Sommer, “Shaping Mediterranean Economy and Trade: Phoenician Cultural Identities in the Iron Age,” in *Material Culture and Social Identities in the Ancient World*, ed. Shelley Hales and Tamar Hodos (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 114–37. Sometimes the Middle Ground may generate a new entity termed a Third Culture, on the characteristics of the Third Culture, Hodos, 22.
- 48 Malkin, “Postcolonial Concepts,” 357. Malkin also prefers to consider Mediterranean interactions in the Greek world through “networks of exchange,” which would provide “a context for the colonial Middle Grounds.”
- 49 On the operation of the Middle Ground see Hodos, 21–22.
- 50 Hodos, 13, 17–19. She cites Butler for a “theory of performativity.” Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 178–80. Mattingly, 283; and Antonaccio, “(Re)defining Ethnicity,” 37.
- 51 Hodos, 17.
- 52 Antonaccio, “(Re)defining Ethnicity,” 34–35 (where she argues that material culture forms an alternative to literary discourse and considers the ways in which material culture may inform about past ethnicities) and 37–50 (where she notes that objects provide evidence about all strata of society, not just elites, and yet the interpretation of material culture as regards individual and group identity, especially ethnicity, is extraordinarily complex. She also explores specifically how the material record in Sicily may be understood in relation to identity.)
- 53 Hodos, 19–23; Arjun Appadurai, ed., *The Social Life of Things. Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (Cambridge:

- Cambridge University Press, 1986); Igor Kopytoff, "The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as Process," in *The Social Life of Things. Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, ed. Arjun Appadurai (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 64–94; Nicholas Thomas, *Entangled Objects: Exchange, Material Culture, and Colonialism in the Pacific* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991); and Chris Gosden and Yvonne Marshall, "The Cultural Biography of Objects," *World Archaeology* 31 (1999): 169–78.
- 54 Hodos, 4, 21.
- 55 Ibid., 10.
- 56 Mattingly, 284–85.
- 57 Ibid., 287.
- 58 C. Bradford Welles, "The Population of Roman Dura," in *Studies in Roman Economic and Social History in Honor of A. C. Johnson*, ed. Paul R. Coleman-Norton (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1951), 252 says one quarter to one-fifth (thus, between 25 and 20 percent) of the area within the wall. Baird, "Housing and Households," 60, says 40 percent.
- 59 The different views often depend on scholarly perspective as well as the shifting political borders through antiquity. Welles, "Population of Roman Dura," 252–54; Susan B. Matheson, *Dura-Europos. The Ancient City and the Yale Collection* (New Haven: Yale University Art Gallery, 1982); Michael I. Rostovtzeff, *Caravan Cities*, trans. D. and T. Talbot Rice (Oxford: Clarendon, 1932); Fergus Millar, *The Roman Near East 31 BC–AD 337* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993), 446; Lucinda Dirven, *The Palmyrenes of Dura-Europos: a Study in the Religious Interaction in Roman Syria* (Leiden: Brill, 1999); Simon T. James, *The Arms and Armour, and Other Military Equipment, The Excavations at Dura-Europos Conducted by Yale University and the French Academy of Inscriptions and Letters, Final Report 7* (London: British Museum, 2004); and Peter M. Edwell, *Between Rome and Persia: the Middle Euphrates, Mesopotamia, and Palmyra under Roman Control* (London: Routledge, 2008).
- 60 Baird, "Housing and Households," 9–14, 182; and Michael Sommer, "A Map of Meaning. Approaching Cultural Identities at the Middle Euphrates (1st to 3rd Centuries AD)," *Egitto e Vicino Oriente* 27 (2004): 153–59, on the potential of Dura-Europos for studies of ethnicity.
- 61 For example, Welles, "Population of Roman Dura." Some efforts were also made to understand the mixed character of the artistic evidence. Michael I. Rostovtzeff, *Dura Europos and Its Art* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1938); and Ann Perkins, *The Art of Dura Europos* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1973). More recently, however, work has moved forward on the archaeological front: there was a session on Dura-Europos at the 2010 TRAC (Theoretical Roman Archaeology Conference) in Ann Arbor, Michigan, and a recent Durham conference, "Religion, Society and Culture at Dura-Europos" (December 19–20, 2009). There has also been much recent study of military issues, which combines texts and architecture, and houses.
- 62 For the papyri and parchments: C. Bradford Welles, Robert O. Fink, and J. Frank Gilliam, *The Parchments and Papyri. The Excavations at Dura-Europos Conducted by Yale University and the French Academy of Inscriptions and Letters. Final Report Volume 5, Part 1* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959); George D. Kilpatrick, "Dura-Europos: the Parchments and the Papyri," *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 5, no. 3 (1964): 215–25; Hannah M. Cotton, Walter E. H. Cockle, and Fergus Millar, "The Papyrology of the Roman Near East. A Survey," *Journal of Roman Studies* 85 (1995): 214–35; and Fergus Millar, "Dura-Europos under Parthian Rule," in *Das Parther-*

- reich und seine Zeugnisse/The Arsacid Empire: Sources and Documentation, Historia Einzelschriften*, ed. Josef Wiesehöfer (Stuttgart; Steiner, 1998), 473–92.
- 63 On the Palmyrene cohort: *P. Dura* 75 and 76 are long lists of the recruits. Welles, “Population of Roman Dura,” 255–56; and Robert O. Fink, “The Cohors XX Palmyrenorum, a Cohors Equitata Miliaria,” *American Philological Association: Transactions and Proceedings* 78 (1947): 159–70. For the early publications, *Prelim. Rep. V*, 152–65; *Prelim. Rep. VI*, 482–99. The records of the XX Palmyrene cohort were apparently kept and ultimately buried in Room 14 of the Temple of Azzanathakona. See also David L. Kennedy, “The Cohors XX Palmyrenorum at Dura Europos,” in *The Roman and Byzantine Army in the East*, ed. Edward Dabrowa (Krakow: Uniwersite Jagellane, 1994), 89–98; and Martha B. Reeves, “The ‘Feriale Duranum,’ Roman Military Religion, and Dura-Europos: a Reassessment” (Ph.D. diss., SUNY Buffalo, 2004). Of the documents found at Dura-Europos some two hundred pertain to military matters of the Roman period.
- 64 The city belonged to the Hellenistic Seleucid Empire for roughly the first 190 years (ca. 300–113 BCE); it was Parthian for the longest stretch, a bit more than 275 years (113 BCE–165 CE), and was Roman for only about the last 90 years (165–256 CE).
- 65 *P. Dura* 12, dating ca. 190 BCE; Welles, “Population of Roman Dura,” 262, where he cites Franz Cumont, *Fouilles de Doura-Europos*, 2 vols. (Paris: Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geunther, 1926), 286–96, Parchment 1; and Millar, *Roman Near East*, 446.
- 66 See Welles, Fink, and Gilliam. The papyri from the excavations which came to Yale are currently stored in the Beinecke Rare Book Collection of the library system. They are available through images provided on the library’s Web site—Beinecke Library, “Papyrus Collection Database,” Yale University, <http://beinecke.library.yale.edu/papyrus/> (search Dura-Europos under the category Place/Origin)—and are a part of the Duke Papyrological database.
- 67 Although a daunting undertaking, there are about 1,200 inscriptions from the site. It is certainly hoped that a final publication of inscriptional evidence will eventually appear. A chart of the distribution count by language appears in Kilpatrick, 217. For the work so far, Richard N. Frye et al., *Inscriptions from Dura-Europos*, Yale Classical Studies, vol. 14 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1955), 127–213; and Richard N. Frye, ed., *The Parthian and Middle Iranian Inscriptions of Dura-Europos, Corpus Inscriptionum Iranicarum, Part III: Pahlavi Inscriptions*, vol. 3, Dura-Europos, Portfolio I (London: Lund, Humphries, 1968). For the Palmyrene material, Delbert Hillers and Eleonora Cussini, *Palmyrene Aramaic Texts* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996); and Dirven, *Palmyrenes*. Baird, “Housing and Households,” includes the graffiti found on the walls in individual houses. For the texts painted on the synagogue walls, David Noy and Hanswolf Bloedhorn, *Inscriptiones Judaicae Orientis*, vol. 3, *Syria and Cyprus*, Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism 102 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 133–209. Frantz Grenet, “Les Sassanides à Doura-Europos (253 après J. C.): réexamen du matériel épigraphique iranien du site,” in *Géographie Historique au Proche-Orient*, ed. Pierre-Louis Gatier, Bruno Helly, and Jean-Paul Rey-Coquais (Paris: Éditions du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1988), 133–58; and Eric D. Francis, “Mithraic Graffiti from Dura Europos,” in *Mithraic Studies*, ed. John R. Hinnells (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1975), 2:424–45. The pictorial graffiti were published by Bernard Goldman, “Pictorial Graffiti of Dura-Europos,” *Parthica* 1 (1999): 19–106; and J. A. Baird, “The Graffiti of Dura-Europos: a Contextual Approach,” in *Ancient Graffiti in Context*, ed. J. A. Baird and Claire Taylor (New York: Routledge, 2010): 49–68.

- 68 Welles, "Population of Roman Dura," 251–74; more recently, Sommer, "Map of Meaning."
- 69 Some of the more popular names among this group were Philip son of Amynder *Europaios*, Aristonax son of Ariston *Europaios*, Antigonos, and Heliodoros. Welles, "Population of Roman Dura," 265, *P. Dura* 12 of 190 BCE; and Cumont, 286–96.
- 70 Welles, "Population of Roman Dura," 263 n83 cites Cumont, chap. 3 and 404–47; *Prelim. Rep. III*, 18–35, 51–57; and *Prelim. Rep. V*, chap. 5.
- 71 Such as Adeia, Athenodora, Athenophila, Antiochis, Artemidora, and Demitria. On the female names in this temple, see also Susan B. Downey, *Mesopotamian Religious Architecture. Alexander through the Parthians* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 92; and Edwell, n55.
- 72 Welles, "Population of Roman Dura," 263–64; such as Antiochos, Seleukos, Olympos, and Lysias.
- 73 It is rare at Dura-Europos to find individuals using both Greek and Semitic names: Welles, "Population of Roman Dura," 265, for a few examples. On the question of whether the aristocracy at Dura-Europos remained Macedonian, Baird, "Housing and Households," 12–13. "It is doubtful whether this hereditary ruling elite would have been able to maintain any kind of purely Macedonian lineage. That any Semitic intermarrying or other affiliations were purposely de-emphasized says much on the nature of this group." On the problem of using names as an indicator of ethnicity, see Baird, "Housing and Households," 202; Graeme Clarke, "Cultural Interaction in North Syria in the Roman and Byzantine Periods. The Evidence of Personal Names," in *Cultural Interaction in the Ancient Near East. Papers Read at a Symposium Held at the University of Melbourne, Department of Classics and Archaeology* (29–30 September 1994), ed. Guy Bun-nens (Louvain: Peeters, 1995), 129, discussing *P. Dura* 47, which lists a mixture of Greek, Roman, Semitic, and Iranian names. They do, however, likely reveal something about the ethnic history of a region. A study on the lineage of Lysias provides evidence about his family and community identities. Jotham Johnson, "Dura Studies" (Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1932).
- 74 Welles, "Population of Roman Dura," 264; and Baird, "Housing and Households," 185n854, lists *P. Dura* 17b, 18, 23, 25, 28, and 31 mentioning slaves.
- 75 Baird, "Housing and Households," 22, mentions the potential to study slaves from household evidence and provides additional references along with a discussion of the difficulties encountered.
- 76 The papyrus dates to 134 CE. The region surrounding Dura-Europos along the Euphrates was very fertile and Dura-Europos preserves records of land contracts up to the confluence of the Khabur River to the north as well as business records from the city indicating wealthy vineyards and other agricultural produce. For a recent assessment of the region, see Bernard Geyer, "Le Site de Doura-Europos et son Environnement Géographique," *Doura-Europos Études* 1988, Syria 65 (1988): 285–95; and Edwell, 98, see n21 for some of the papyri and types of transactions.
- 77 There may also have been indentured individuals. Baird, "Housing and Households," 186 and n855, calls them "peons" and suggests it was a Mesopotamian form but administered in the Greek legal structure. The textual evidence from the Temple of Adonis preserves only Semitic names, and a Palmyrene community of merchants may have lived within the city dedicating (and perhaps using exclusively) the Temple of the Gadde and a temple in the Necropolis. For the Palmyrenes at Dura-Europos, see Dirven, *Palmyrenes*; Dirven, "The Palmyrene Diaspora in

- East and West: a Syrian Community in the Diaspora in the Roman Period,” in *Strangers and Sojourners. Religious Communities in the Diaspora*, ed. Gerrie ter Haar (Leuven: Peeters, 1998), 77–94; and Dirven’s essay in this volume. Baird, “Housing and Households,” 192–93, sees no evidence in the households for the presence of a Palmyrene enclave, i.e., a spatially discrete community.
- 78 On the military at Dura-Europos, see esp. James; Kennedy; Nigel Pollard, *Soldiers, Cities, and Civilians* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000); and Nigel Pollard, “The Roman Army as ‘Total Institution’ in the Near East? Dura-Europos as a Case Study,” in *The Roman Army in the East*, ed. David Kennedy (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), 211–27.
- 79 These individuals were billeting in the largest house in its neighborhood, owned by Barginnaeas and his wife Thaamare. Welles, “Population of Roman Dura,” 259; David J. Breeze, “The Organisation of the Career Structure of the Immunes and Principales of the Roman Army,” *Bonner Jahrbücher* 174 (1974): 245–92, esp. 280–86. The *oikodemos* may not have been attached to the military but rather may have managed or built the house, Baird, “Housing and Households,” 197. The house is L7–A in Baird’s catalogue.
- 80 Baird, “Housing and Households,” 196–97, discusses the conversion of this house for military use.
- 81 Welles, “Population of Roman Dura,” 259; and Baird, “Housing and Households,” 43–68 (House B8–H), provides full information on the house and its graffiti. The records are quite detailed and give a sense of the cost of various garments and textiles as well as the kinds of transactions. The owner of the house, Nebuchelus, also reveals a common interest among residents of Dura-Europos, astrology; he has the horoscope of his son-in-law scratched on one of his walls.
- In addition to astrological charts, the houses often contained Seleucid calendars on their walls.
- 82 J. A. Baird, “Shopping, Eating and Drinking at Dura-Europos: Reconstructing Contexts,” in *Objects in Context, Objects in Use: Material Spatiality in Late Antiquity*, ed. Luke Lavan, Ellen Swift, and Toon Putzeys (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 413–37; Baird, “Housing and Households,” 168–70; and Welles, “Population of Roman Dura,” 260.
- 83 Grossmann’s essay in this volume.
- 84 For a complete work on the houses, Baird, “Housing and Households,” and for other references on the shops, see Baird, “Shopping.”
- 85 For a brief discussion of this, see J. A. Baird, “An Archaeology of the Excluded at Dura-Europos,” abstracts for TRAC (Theoretical Roman Archaeology Conference) 2010, Ann Arbor, Mich.
- 86 On the problems of identifying and studying age groups at Dura-Europos, see Baird, “Housing and Households,” 186–88.
- 87 *P. Dura* 30 (232 CE), a marriage contract; *P. Dura* 32 (254 CE), a divorce contract. Other papyri on the legal status of women include *P. Dura* 17b, 18, 28–32. As expressed in these documents women seem to have more freedom than is characteristically found in Greek or Roman sources. Baird, “Housing and Households,” 188, and n870.
- 88 Baird, “Housing and Households,” 188–90.
- 89 Baird, “Housing and Households,” is her dissertation now under revision for publication as a book. See also her essay in this volume.
- 90 Baird, “Housing and Households,” 14, 43, where she

observes, “how the archaeological record might manifest ethnicity, essentially a social and psychological phenomenon which has been shown to be flexible, and nested, has been a topic of hot debate.”

- 91 Baird, “Housing and Households,” 12. Indeed, depending which lens an interpreter uses to view Dura-Europos, the interpretation of its cultural ethnicity varies dramatically—Millar stresses the duration and prominence of Greek elements, whereas Baird and others observe prominent elements of Mesopotamian and Syrian identity. For Baird’s analysis of identities at Dura-Europos, see Baird, “Housing and Households,” 177–216.
- 92 Although classical scholars tend to observe Greco-Roman features in the houses and label rooms using those cultural terms (e.g., applying the Greek word *andron* to a room off the courtyard with benches on its perimeter), scholars of Near Eastern culture are more likely to use a term such as *diwan* or *iwan* to describe the same space and hence see the structures as reflecting local Mesopotamian or Syrian culture. On this tendency to interpret according to training, see Baird, “Housing and Households,” 90: “Romanists saw the houses of Dura as Roman, while scholars who studied the East and Iran saw them as ‘undoubtedly Eastern.’” For the large room off the courtyard, Baird calls this space the “principal room” rather than an *andron* or *iwan*. See *ibid.*, 98ff., for a description of the basic features of Dura-Europos houses. Although scholars assign particular terms to specific spaces in houses at Dura, there are also preserved texts revealing the ancient designations. *P. Dura* 19 describes the distribution of property among heirs (Baird, “Housing and Households,” 93, with further references). Although the house plan seems Mesopotamian, Greek names (in keeping with the practice at Dura of writing official documents in Greek) are applied to the various spaces: *andron*, *mesotoikion*, *tameion*, *stoa*, *ikria*. And

oikos apparently describes the conceptual household/family unit.

- 93 See Baird, “Housing and Households,” 58, 90, for the quotation.
- 94 The possibility of recognizing ethnic or other social groups on the basis of culinary habits has been explored by Michael Dietler, “Culinary Encounters: Food, Identity, and Colonialism,” in *The Archaeology of Food and Identity*, ed. Kathryn C. Twiss (Carbondale, Ill.: Center for Archaeological Investigations, Occasional Paper no. 34, 2007), 218–42, and others. The possibility that different toileting and water use habits are linked to ethnic or other social groups is considered by Ann Olga Koloski-Ostrow in this volume. There are limitations in the preserved evidence from Dura-Europos for the exploration of some of these topics. Textiles were found preserved only in microenvironments along the west wall which were all secondary fill contexts and excavation practice in the late 1920s and 1930s did not keep faunal and floral remains or common ware ceramics, Baird, “Housing and Households,” 178–81.
- 95 Welles, “Population of Roman Dura,” 265–66; J. Johnson in *Prelim. Rep. II*, 153 ff. Welles describes the function of city gates in Middle Eastern communities as somewhat analogous to train stations in early twentieth-century America; that is, they were important stopping and meeting points for people.
- 96 Kilpatrick; and Millar, “Parthian Rule,” 475, lists Greek, Latin, Semitic (including Aramaic, Palmyrene, Hebrew, and Syriac), and Iranian.
- 97 Most scholars suggest that Greek and Aramaic would have been the primary spoken languages of the community throughout its history. The linguistic evidence from the site is both complex and fascinating. The Syriac document of a sale written in 243 CE is one of the old-

- est preserved Syriac texts. Jonathan A. Goldstein, "The Syriac Bill of Sale from Dura-Europos," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 25, no. 1 (1966): 1–16. There is also some graffiti using Syriac letters suggesting that Dura-Europos could have been a meeting point for Greek and Syriac. Millar, "Parthian Rule," 471. Rare instances of Parthian provide some of the best evidence for its scripts. There are also fascinating cases where Greek transliterates Palmyrene and vice versa or Latin is transliterated into Greek. Occasionally it seems possible to suggest that a non-native speaker writes in a foreign language with expected misspellings and grammatical shifts, Kilpatrick. The term "Safaitic" is problematic, referring here to the language spoken (and in a few cases written at Dura-Europos) by the nomadic peoples living in the nearby steppe. Michael C. A. Macdonald, "Some Reflections on Epigraphy and Ethnicity in the Roman Near East," in *Identities in the Eastern Mediterranean in Antiquity, Proceedings of a Conference Held at the Humanities Research Centre in Canberra 10–12 November, 1997*, ed. Graeme Clark, *Mediterranean Archaeology* 11 (Sydney: Department of Archaeology, University of Sydney, 1998), 183–84, suggests that the so-called Safaitic people are a phantom created from graffiti in a distinctive script preserved at Dura-Europos.
- 98 Baird, "Housing and Households," 201.
- 99 The evidence for the Seleucid period is minimal. See Kosmin's essay in this volume for references and discussion of it. Millar, "Parthian Rule," 475, mentions two parchments from this period. Susan B. Downey, "The Transformation of Seleucid Dura-Europos," in *Romanization and the City: Creation, Transformations, and Failures. Proceedings of a Conference Held at the American Academy in Rome to Celebrate the 50th Anniversary of Excavations at Cosa, 14–16 May, 1998*, *Journal of Roman Archaeology Supplement* 38, ed. Elizabeth Fentress (Porstmouth, R.I.: *Journal of Roman Archaeology*, 2000), 155–72, discusses architectural developments.
- 100 Millar, "Parthian Rule," 476–77; and Edwell, 241n103, says over 14,000 coins were found at Dura-Europos. Of these, 1,024 are Seleucid and only 103 are Parthian. On the Parthian period at Dura-Europos, see Millar, "Parthian Rule"; Millar, *Roman Near East*, 445–52; Edwell, 101–14; and Frye for the inscriptions. The relationship of the paintings from Dura-Europos and Parthian art remains unclear. For the temples built during the Parthian and Roman periods, see Downey, *Mesopotamian Religious Architecture*, 88–130. It is uncertain what if any material culture should be linked specifically to the Parthians and their long control of Dura-Europos.
- 101 As many have already noted (Dirven, Downey), there is no necessary association with the assigned name of the religious buildings and the deity or deities that are actually worshipped in that structure. A thorough reconsideration of the epigraphic evidence might help resolve this situation.
- 102 Millar, "Parthian Rule," 477, and appendix section (c).
- 103 Ibid., "Parthian Rule," 477.
- 104 Ibid., 479–84, suggests that the complete inscriptional corpus for these temples needs re-examination. Dating primarily from the 30s BCE to 160 CE, this covers most of the Parthian period.
- 105 C. Bradford Welles, "The Gods of Dura-Europos," in *Beiträge zur alten Geschichte und deren Nachleben: Festschrift für Franz Altheim zum 6.10.1968*, ed. Ruth Altheim-Stiehl and Hans E. Stier (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1969), 2:50–65; and Baird, "Housing and Households," 183–84, religious identities.
- 106 Downey, *Mesopotamian Religious Architecture*, 76–85,

- 88–130; Downey, “Cult Reliefs at Dura-Europos: Problems of Interpretation and Placement,” *Damaszener Mitteilungen* 10 (1998): 201–10; Downey, “The Role of Sculpture in Worship at the Temples of Dura-Europos,” in *The Sculptural Environment of the Roman Near East: Reflections on Culture, Ideology, and Power*, ed. Yaron Z. Eliav, Elise A. Friedland, and Sharon Herbert (Leuven: Peeters, 2008), 413–35; Downey, “Sculptures of Divinities from the Temple of Zeus at Dura-Europos,” in *Dura-Europos Études V, 1994–1997*, ed. Pierre Leriche et al. (Beirut: Institut Français d’archéologie du Proche-Orient, 2004), 153–61; and Downey, *Terracotta Figurines and Plaques from Dura-Europos* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003).
- 107 Dirven, *Palmyrenes*.
- 108 Ted Kaizer, “Patterns of Worship in Dura-Europos. A Case-study of Religious Life in the Classical Levant Outside the Main Centres,” in *Les religions orientales dans le monde Grec et Romain: Cent ans après Cumont (1906–2006)*, ed. Corinne Bonnet, Vinciane Pirenne-Delforge, and Danny Praet (Brussels: Belgisch Historisch Instituut te Rome, 2009), 153–72; and Kaizer, “Religion and Language in Dura-Europos,” in *From Hellenism to Islam. Cultural and Linguistic Change in the Roman Near East*, ed. Hannah M. Cotton, Robert G. Hoyland, and Jonathan J. Price (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 235–53.
- 109 Dirven, *Palmyrenes*, xx–xxi.
- 110 Downey, *Mesopotamian Religious Architecture*; Kaizer, “Patterns of Worship,” 163; and Marie-Henriette Gates, “Dura-Europos: a Fortress of Syro-Mesopotamian Art,” *Biblical Archaeologist* 47, no. 3 (1984): 166–81.
- 111 On the paintings of the Temple of the Palmyrene gods, see Heyn in this volume. On the use and significance of paintings within the temples, Downey, “Cult Reliefs,” 201–2, “the naoi of most temples were decorated with paintings, and in many cases these may have been the principal representation of the chief deity.”
- 112 Downey, “Cult Reliefs,” 209.
- 113 Baird, “Housing and Households,” 156–60, on household shrines.
- 114 Downey, “Cult Reliefs,” 204–8.
- 115 Baird, “Housing and Households,” 200; and Lucinda Dirven, “Religious Competition and the Decoration of Sanctuaries. The Case of Dura-Europos,” *Early Christian Art* 1 (2004): 12.
- 116 Welles, “Population of Roman Dura,” 254–62, 267–74; and Reeves comes to a similar conclusion.
- 117 Ibid., 261–62.
- 118 Ibid., 262; Matheson, 3, commenting on the name change; Reeves; and Baird, “Housing and Households,” 203–4.
- 119 Welles, “Roman Population,” 257–59; Edwell, 119–46; James has drawn together the important archaeological evidence from the site and has begun the process of analyzing the details of the military at Dura-Europos. Other important contributions to the study of the military at Dura-Europos include Fink; Kennedy; Pollard, “Roman Army”; and Pollard, *Soldiers, Cities, and Civilians*; and Reeves.
- 120 Somewhat surprisingly, neither Jews nor Christians are recognizably distinct in the burial or household evidence. Matheson, 32; and Baird, “Housing and Households,” 184. For a consideration of these monotheistic religions

together, see DeLeeuw and Rajak in this volume.

- 121 Jaś Elsner, "Cultural Resistance and the Visual Image: the Case of Dura Europos," *Classical Philology* 96, no. 3 (2001): 269–304.
- 122 Dirven, "Religious Competition," 1–20.
- 123 Christopher Kelley, "Who Did the Iconoclasm in the Dura Synagogue?" *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 295 (1994): 57–72. Is it possible that this intentional damage to the frescoes was part of a process of de-sacralization? Two recent articles on the Synagogue add further thoughts about the interpretation of the building and its religious community: Ben Zion Rosenfeld and Riva Potchebutky, "The Civilian-military Community in the Two Phases of the Synagogue at Dura Europos: a New Approach," *Levant* 41, no. 2 (2009): 195–222; and Karen B. Stern, "Mapping Devotion in Roman Dura Europos: a Reconsideration of the Synagogue Ceiling," *American Journal of Archaeology* 114, no. 3 (2010): 473–504.
- 124 Reeves; and Baird, "Housing and Households," 190–91, on the study of Roman identity at Dura-Europos.
- 125 Hodos, 27.
- 126 Mattingly, 284, 288.
- 127 Matthew Canepa, *The Two Eyes of the Earth: Art and Ritual of Kingship between Rome and Sasanian Iran* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009).

MARGARET OLIN

THE ÉMIGRÉ SCHOLARS OF DURA-EUROPOS

Thus there poured through the gate of Asia, along with armies and peaceful caravans, along with the pilgrimage of the living and the dead, a continuous stream of thoughts, uniting distant lands, fertilizing the farthest lands.

—Ernst Herzfeld, *Am Tor von Asien*, 2

Introduction: the Road to Dura-Europos

I never did make it to Miskolc. So I never found out whether it is anything like Chicago. But driving through the flat cornfields of Hungary, it occurred to me that the abundant corn in my family's cuisine, like the paprika, may have come from Hungary rather than from the cornfields of Illinois surrounding the industrial city to which my great-grandparents emigrated. Do émigrés choose to live in places like those they left behind? Or is it more accurate to say that they live lives of comparison? Frankfurt on the Hudson.¹ Moscow on the Hudson.² Vilna on the Seine.³ And Miskolc on Lake Michigan.

I drove to Hungary from Vienna, that gray city in Mitteleuropa where I lived for two years. It seemed similar to my gray city in the Midwest; although its museums were even better, and it had more symphonies, chamber music, operas, and mountains.⁴ It was also cheaper and seemed safer—if I ignored history. I had two Viennas; I would periodically flee Vienna on the Danube for a kindly, elderly Vienna on the Thames, where I was parented by a little group of art historical émigrés. In the 1930s, most of them had fled the seat of one former empire and taken refuge in that of another. There was no *Hofrat* among them but one knight of the realm.⁵ Some of them lived in the Vienna Woods, an area known to most of their neighbors as Hampstead Heath. There, they prepared Viennese meals, listened to increasingly scratchy recordings of Karl Kraus berating the Habsburg Empire, and pointed out to me the homes of such former Hampstead residents as Sigmund Freud.⁶ I would return rested to Wien an der Donau or Vienna on Lake Michigan.

This life of comparison is led also by those who emigrate to the past instead of, or in addition to, other geographic locations. Most art historians have emigrated in time if not in space; at the dawn of the twentieth century, shortly before the birth of the Viennese émigrés I met in Vienna on the Thames, some of the more important émigrés in time lived in Vienna on the Danube. When the art historian Alois Riegl, contemporary of Freud, lived there, Vienna was still the center of an empire: the Hapsburg Empire of the *fin de siècle*.⁷ The late Roman Empire that he studied celebrated the multinational empire in which he lived. In retrospect, the celebration was to last only a short time, and Riegl appeared to grasp the possibility that the Hapsburg Empire was also “late.” Perhaps he did not realize how close to extinction it was, but he did recognize the threats approaching from pan-Germans such as the art historian Josef Strzygowski.⁸

The two of them turned battles between greater Germany and the multinational empire into clashes over such issues as the dissemination of ornamental motifs in late antiquity, the origin of Fraktur and church architecture, and the sources and contributions of Rembrandt van Rijn and Albrecht Dürer. Their historical communities admonished and advised the communities in which they lived. Riegl wished that the empire would welcome influences from all its component nationalities, like ancient Rome. Strzygowski’s historical past was a less friendly place, where he had to stand by helplessly and watch Semitic infiltration strangle the promise of Hellenic art. He often explicitly equated these destructive Semites with contemporary Jews and found a caveat for his greater Germany in this history. Strzygowski, unlike Riegl, lived long enough to observe the exodus of the art historians I knew in London as émigrés; some, like Suzi Lang, were his former students. He urged the Nazis to take seriously the concept of the Aryans (Iranians), to recognize their positive influence throughout the “northern” world, and to accept them as the soul of the people in contrast to powerful, but empty, “Persia.”⁹ With renewed vigor, he took up ideas in his earlier scholarship. He argued ever more plaintively, for example, against the now, as then, generally accepted Islamic origin of the Mshatta façade, a famous monument from Jordan in the Pergamon Museum in Berlin that Strzygowski thought

exemplary not of the Arab but of the “northern” spirit (fig. 4.1).¹⁰ His major opponent in the controversy was Ernst Herzfeld, a Jewish scholar of Persian and Near Eastern art. As time went on, Strzygowski’s discussions of the Mshatta façade took on an increasingly anti-Semitic tone. He ultimately accompanied his critiques of Herzfeld, then living as an émigré in New York, with expressions like “mit aller nur denkbaren jüdischen Frechheit” and lamented the “jüdische Schlaueit” with which Herzfeld had persuaded other scholars to turn away from Strzygowski.¹¹

Strzygowski’s work fed a complicated anti-Semitic strain in art history. The widely held assumption was that Jews had no art at all. Those whose lack of talent or originality or whose overactive fantasy did not hold them back were stopped



Figure 4.1: Mshatta Façade, Jordan, ca. 740. Pergamon Museum, Berlin (photograph courtesy of the Museum of Islamic Art/State Museums of Berlin, Kramer 2010)

in their tracks by a crippling commandment that forbade graven images. Even Jews subscribed to this characterization, whose derivation primarily from modern anti-Semitic sources only recently has become a subject for research.¹² Because Strzygowski argued for the corrupting influence of Jews on art, he had to impute some art to Jews and speculated that Christians had influenced them to poorly illustrate their own sacred texts. In a seventh-century manuscript, the Ashburnham Pentateuch, he found evidence of the existence of a “Hebrew or Greek Pentateuch” made by what he called “Jewish Christians” (fig. 4.2).¹³ The conclusion later earned him a misguided reputation as a champion of Jewish art.¹⁴

Strzygowski also lived long enough to experience the discovery of the important archaeological site on the banks of the Euphrates River in Syria that is the subject of the present exhibition. In 1920, British soldiers came upon wall paintings at the ancient site of Dura-Europos, destroyed in the year 256. A French team intermittently excavated there and eventually was joined then superseded by a team of archaeologists from Yale University. In late 1932, a perhaps even more momentous discovery was made there: a third-century synagogue with figural paintings on its walls.¹⁵ The elderly Strzygowski dismissed it as mere corroboration of the theory he had developed in his discussion of the Ashburnham Pentateuch; for younger scholars, it caused a sensation.¹⁶ The Synagogue at Dura-Europos, with its colorful figural program, offered proof that the commandment against graven images did not prevent Jews from having representational art even in synagogues. This evidence could not have come at a more timely moment, just months before Hitler came to power in Germany. This timing ensured that the paintings would become the flag of dissident German scholars during the Nazi era. In 1933, the church historian Hans Lietzmann offered in Berlin a seminar on the Jewish paintings. He later visited the site and lectured and published on the topic. Especially in an article in the Swiss publication *Atlantis*, he commended the exciting discovery of the Synagogue paintings as well as their restoration and exhibition in Syria, and he expressed the hope that new studies would reveal the relations between the newly discovered Jewish art and later Christian developments.¹⁷ Although he was not an émigré, not even a member of the so-called inner emigration (those who sought, or later claimed to have sought, to avoid all contact with the Nazi regime), Lietzmann’s efforts on behalf of the Synagogue corresponded to his efforts on behalf of Jewish scholars and against the application of the Aryan Paragraphs to the employment of pastors within the church.¹⁸ Outside Germany, Dura became a touchstone for attitudes toward Jewish art and the place of Jews in society. While its actual monuments eventually were distributed between Damascus, where the Synagogue was reconstructed in the museum, and New Haven, Connecticut, where Yale University houses the paintings from the baptistery that once stood on the other side of the city



Figure 4.2: Childhood of Moses, Ashburnham Pentateuch. From Strzygowski, *Orient oder Rom*, 1901. Reprinted from Springer

gate, Dura-Europos inspired Jewish and non-Jewish scholars alike to emigrate in thought or in deed from the quiet of their libraries to the sandy shores of the Euphrates.¹⁹

Sailing with Byzantium

Art historian Kurt Weitzmann, an émigré in both time and space, wrote that the discovery of Dura “change[d] my life.”²⁰ Weitzmann came to Princeton in 1935 from Berlin, at the time the center of a powerful empire, where he studied after completing gymnasium in the “big coal-mining city” Gelsenkirchen.²¹ He first learned of the paintings in Dura’s synagogue through Lietzmann’s seminar, which he attended as a postdoctoral student on the recommendation of his Doktor Vater, Adolph Goldschmidt. Weitzmann always said that he was not Jewish, although it is not certain what the word “Jewish” meant to him, and he refused the term “refugee.” He emigrated only because he failed to get an academic job in Germany and, therefore, accepted one offered to him in the United States. The reason for the failure of this outstanding student to obtain a job varied from position to position, as such things tend to do. He lost one job because of his loyal association with his Jewish professor. He lost another because he refused to replace a scholar fired for having a Jewish grandmother. He lost yet another because he refused to take a position for which the prerequisite was a year of Nazi indoctrination.²² Refugee or not, he tried to construct around himself the sort of society that would have made his job search in Germany more congenial. His memoirs, *Sailing with Byzantium from Europe to America*, tell of him sailing from America to Europe every summer on the Queen Mary, as soon as this became possible, and traveling constantly within the United States to surround himself with German scholars.²³

Like Riegl, Weitzmann looked to the late Roman Empire for a model. As a Byzantinist, his center was not on the Tiber but rather, at least initially, on the Bosphorus, seat of the Byzantine Empire. In his studies of Byzantine manuscripts, his search for the origins of Christian art took him to the provinces, where he studied icons of Sinai and the fresco cycle of Santa Maria del Castelsepreio, in Italy.²⁴ The first place where his search led was Dura-Europos. His work in Lietzmann’s seminar on Dura’s paintings in relation to Christian iconography helped win him his ticket to Princeton, New Jersey, where he collaborated with Charles Rufus Morey on an edition of the Byzantine Octateuchs and eventually found lifelong employment. Based on the paintings at Dura, Weitzmann originated a theory that he was to espouse throughout his long career and develop in detail; he argued that vast numbers of Hebrew illustrated manuscripts, now lost, had served in antiquity as a rich pictorial source for Christian imagery.²⁵ The theory went far beyond Strzygowski’s notions about the Ashburnham Pentateuch. It acquired adherents in the United States and Europe who speculated unreservedly on the iconography and style of these lost illustrations. Many of them never forgot the theory’s origins in German dissent. Scholars of World War II vintage continued into the 1990s to equate an attack on Weitzmann’s theory of lost Hebrew illustrated manuscripts with a pogrom.²⁶

The theory always has attracted criticism, and in the 1990s Annabel Wharton called it Orientalist. She pointed out that Weitzmann’s interest in Dura always seemed to subordinate Dura to something else of greater importance. On the one hand, Dura’s significance to him lay in its proof of the existence of early Greek manuscripts, from which he thought Dura derived in part in a corrupted fashion. On the other hand,

he believed that Dura went on to contribute to Christian art. Even within a rich tradition of illustrations, Jewish art remained unoriginal and significant only in relation to Christian and pagan art.²⁷

Wharton's displeasure with the theories associated with the scholarship of Dura-Europos went far beyond Weitzmann. It extended to the vast majority of work on Dura, on not only the paintings but also the town. She argued that scholars concerned with the paintings uniformly devalued the municipality of Dura, where the art resided: Andre Grabar called Dura "humble"; Irmgard Hutter calls it a "Roman border town"; Janson called it a "Roman frontier station."²⁸ Wharton might have added that Gabriel Millet called it a "modest frontier village" in his essay of 1939 and that Joseph Gutmann called it a "provincial Roman military outpost" in his "re-evaluation" of 1992.²⁹ Wharton, who had previously written favorably of the arts of the periphery, asks why do discussions of Dura represent the site as a remote outpost, located not only on the periphery of the Roman Empire but also at the boundary of civilization itself?³⁰ Dura is on a principal trade route. She points out that it was not Roman but polyglot, with Parthian and Macedonian roots and traditions. It was not a station or a town, but a mid-size Greek polis, with a population estimated at six thousand. Was not "Dura's diminution in scholarly literature" Orientalist?³¹ To demonstrate the stranglehold of the barbaric Orient over Hellenism, Dura had to shrink.

While the vast majority of scholars indeed characterized Dura as small, not all of them did so. The publication by Clark Hopkins, who excavated the Synagogue for Yale University, is abundantly illustrated with photographs of hooded Bedouins and camels and provides ample evidence of an Orientalist perspective. Nevertheless, Hopkins called Dura a "flourishing city" and wondered why the Sasanians chose to destroy it.³² Even among those who called Dura small, there were many reasons for shrinking Dura, and some may have merely accepted without question the ruling characterization.

But Weitzmann, who called Dura a "small garrison city" rather than a town, had his own reason for shrinking Dura.³³ He indeed viewed Jewish art only in relation to pagan and Christian art. Relations, however, were precisely his focus. While the "origin" of Christian art remained central to his inquiry, he wished to neither prove nor disprove the "originality" of Jewish, or any other, art. He envisioned Jews as taking an integral part in the give and take of the artistic communities in which they lived. If Jews operated in harmony with Christians and pagans in the past, it stood to reason that they contributed to culture in the present.³⁴ The émigré of time mentioned above, Alois Riegl, felt similarly concerning the multinational character of the Roman Empire.³⁵ Both scholars represented the past they studied as an ideal, harmonious social group.

The diminutive size of the city was central to Weitzmann's vision of a gentle refuge. It forced Dura into a relationship with its surroundings that for Weitzmann meant the city of Antioch. In order for painters at Dura to copy Greek or Hebrew illustrated manuscripts, they must have been able to see such manuscripts somewhere. The argument, an important step in any iconographical analysis, can be particularly challenging when the sources are lost and, perhaps, nonexistent. Weitzmann must have understood the problem, since he asks:

How did not only an illustrated Pentateuch and books of Samuel and Kings, but also all the other manuscripts copied by the Dura fresco painters become known to provincial artists in such remote places? It is highly unlikely that a small garrison city had a sizeable library with richly illustrated books of the kind we have postulated. Such a library could have existed only

in a large metropolitan center where manuscripts with illustrations could either be consulted or sketched and collected in a kind of model book. Another possibility would be to lend out the original manuscripts for a certain time. Instances are known from the Western Middle Ages where monasteries lent out even the most precious manuscripts to be copied in other monasteries and then returned.³⁶

Because Dura was too small to house a library, it must have had a connection to a city that did. Needing to locate the library in a larger city, Weitzmann chose Antioch, an important religious and cultural center in antiquity. He pointed to stylistic similarities between surviving works of art in both places and to a “desert road [that] leads straight east from Antioch to Dura, thus establishing easy geographical communication.”³⁷ Weitzmann postulated trips from Dura to Antioch to consult the library it must have had or bring back books and share them among various congregations. Weitzmann did not say how easy the communication would have been, but it is presumed that Antioch must have been located on the same “principal trade route” on which Wharton locates Dura.³⁸ A current atlas shows the distance from Antioch to Dura to be 320 kilometers, a trip of perhaps four hours in the twenty-first century (depending on the state of the “desert road”) or two weeks in the third century.

Because Weitzmann does not gloss the term “easy geographical communication,” the trip was, perhaps, less important to him than that the Durene congregations shared their sources. He places little emphasis on the priority of one religious group over another in Dura: “The only evidence Dura provides is that [illustrated biblical books] not only existed among the Jews and the Christians, but also that both religious communities had access to and could exchange them.”³⁹ The climate of exchange indeed mattered most. The Christians and Jews in Dura, he wrote, would have been able to share manuscripts borrowed from Antioch because “the availability of the same model with David scenes in the synagogue and the Christian chapel speaks for the existence of a climate in which Jews and Christians were on good terms with each other.”⁴⁰ Rather than an outpost where invaders from the East infiltrated Christianity and Greek culture, sullyng their purity, Dura was an Eastern center that offered refuge to all religious outlooks. Had Dura been large enough to house a library itself, it would have been more difficult to envision this harmonious lifestyle.

Whatever its interlibrary loan policy may have been, third-century Antioch was much talked about in the 1930s. An essay by Carl Kraeling from 1932 describes Antioch as a cosmopolitan city that in antiquity served almost as a provincial rival to Rome, offering cultural and religious alternatives to the seat of empire. It was also a destination for Jews fleeing Palestine after the fall of the Second Temple. In Antioch, Jews found life precarious. Kraeling uses the word “pogrom” to describe their plight under Caligula.⁴¹ Charles Morey, the scholar who had invited Weitzmann to Princeton, wrote grimly of the propensity of pagans in Antioch to make martyrs among the Christians, who, in turn, proselytized the Jews, while the locals and the emperor fought over whether or not to expel the Jews.⁴² Kraeling, less bleak, portrayed some Durene Christians as theologically engaged in “a serious attempt to find a common ground between what was conceivable to a Jew and what was essential to a Christian.”⁴³ Kraeling, a theologian at Yale, praised the knowledge of Hebrew displayed by these ancient fellow scholars. Another comment about interrelations between Christians and Jews in Kraeling’s study appealed even more to Weitzmann. He cited Kraeling’s assertion that some Christians were attracted to synagogue worship and that they admired the Jewish legal system for its impartiality

and justice.⁴⁴ In other words, Kraeling's study (Weitzmann's main source), showed Jews contributing to Christian culture just as Weitzmann thought they did to Christian art.

Weitzmann needed his conjectures about the existence of putative libraries replete with putative manuscripts in order to establish sources and provenances for philological analysis. His academic theories, which could be summarized as a kind of speculative empiricism, or empiricism seemingly free of facts, also may have derived from the necessity of the place and time of his studies of Dura. Although Weitzmann used Dura's images for decades as the basis for his theory, his primary statement on Dura came late in life in his book *The Frescoes of the Dura Synagogue and Christian Art*, published in 1990, nearly sixty years after he first learned of Dura. At the time he also was engaged in writing his memoir. Both the memoirs and the book on Dura repeatedly refer to the arguments and times of the 1930s. Both enterprises map the relation between Jews and Christians not only philologically and geographically but also socially.

Weitzmann did not need to postulate that Durene Jews and Christians shared manuscripts procured at Antioch, since he also maintained that they shared artists. "The various religious groups commissioned the painters without asking about their religious affiliations," he wrote.⁴⁵ This policy of equal opportunity meant that one artist traveling to Antioch would suffice for the entire small city of Dura. But if it was that easy to travel to Antioch, and Antioch was really an important center, then to call Dura an isolated provincial city would be inaccurate. The proper term for Dura as an urban entity, in that view, is "suburb." Dura was the suburb of a scholarly and artistic center, Antioch an insecure, raucous place full of refugees.

The term "refugee," as applied to Weitzmann, is problematic. A scholar who cannot find employment because of his own political scruples or the ethnicity of his professor surely is not an ordinary job seeker, whatever his own ethnic background, or that of his wife, might have been.⁴⁶ But what of the term "town" as applied to Dura? I thought Miskolc was an industrial city, because that is how my relatives, and other Hungarians I have talked to, described it. A tourist Web site describes Miskolc as a "black hole of a city way the hell out in eastern Slovakia," notable (like a modern Dura), primarily as a railway junction.⁴⁷ The returning daughter of a refugee (who seemed to know that Miskolc is in Hungary) described it in an op-ed piece in *The New York Times* as a "town."⁴⁸ Perhaps to a New Yorker Miskolc is a town. The question is important, because in spite of all the discussion of Dura-Europos, its multicultural population, and its demise, the various terms used to describe it remain undefined. Princeton, New Jersey, for example, is officially a town, but is it an isolated, provincial outpost or a suburb of New York, a raucous city full of refugees (fig. 4.3)? For some émigrés, it must have been a provincial outpost, and its Rome was not New York but Berlin. But with an interlibrary loan system even more efficient than that of Dura and a harmonious community abounding in mutual respect, it may have seemed more than a provincial refugee's retreat. And if Princeton is not a refugee's retreat, then Weitzmann was not a refugee. When he moved from Berlin, he had taken the center with him.

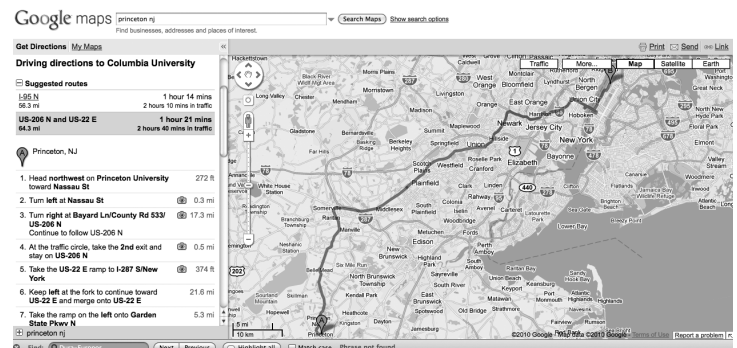


Figure 4.3: Driving Directions from Princeton, N.J., to Columbia University in New York City (Google Maps © 2010 Google)

Few scholars simply traded the capital of one erstwhile empire for another. Many scholars lived in provincial outposts, or thought they did. When they looked to the past, many of them did so not to look for new or improved versions of European urban centers but for the towns of their refuge—for Princeton or New Haven. They portrayed the provinces as tolerant centers that fostered mutual exchange. Antioch posed a challenge to Rome; Dura nurtured cultural togetherness.

Thus was born the little town of Dura-Europos, New Jersey. Its only citizen was Kurt Weitzmann. While the paradigm of the lost Jewish manuscripts influenced countless scholars, none of them constituted Dura as Princeton. Perhaps they simply did not construe Princeton as an ideal refuge: at best they knew Princeton not as honored professors but as graduate students. Their Dura was a site of cutthroat competition among competing religious symbols, where Jews iconographically defended the idea of God's Covenant, for example, against Christian challenges.⁴⁹ In recent decades, Antioch has come under discussion again. In 2000, an exhibition catalogue described it as a place that offers "challenging parallels to our own urban 'melting pots' and the aesthetics of cultural difference that arise from them."⁵⁰ To point out that Dura was a sizable city has taken a scholar from Durham, North Carolina (pop. 149,799).⁵¹ For her, Durham was a large city compared to her former abode in Oberlin, Ohio (pop. 8,000).⁵²

Taking the Caravan

Few art historical texts provide maps of the route from Dura-Europos to Antioch or discuss the accounts of ancient travelers who made such journeys. Clark Hopkins included only a rudimentary map of Dura's surroundings in his book on the excavations there. Weitzmann and Kessler's book on the Durene paintings contains no maps of the area. One émigré who traveled the roads from one defunct city in Syria to another did seek to establish such routes. Michael I. Rostovtzeff, the scholar responsible for Yale's archaeological excavations in the 1920s and 1930s, first discussed those excavations in his book *Caravan Cities* from 1932. Rostovtzeff was among the first scholars to analyze the art of Dura-Europos, and his description of pagan Durene art provides Wharton with a prime example of Orientalism: a feminized, abstracted art from Dura seems to come up short against a more virile Greek art.⁵³ *Caravan Cities* supplies more vivid examples of an orientalized Syria, its desert populated by Bedouins who are "weak, underfed, and lazy," their "innate lawlessness" restrained only with difficulty by colonial powers—and most of them useless for the purpose of excavation.⁵⁴

The book concerns not modern crime control but rather a branch of ancient economic history: the caravan trade and its dissemination of power. Rostovtzeff, a scholar of Hellenistic and Roman culture and economics, laconically defined the term "caravan city" as a city "brought into existence solely by caravan trade."⁵⁵ He saw the caravan trade as performing important economic functions; it made businessmen out of "shepherds or highwaymen."⁵⁶ It promoted law through regulation and, by way of the "ship of the desert" (those "shaggy two-humped beasts, the northern brethren of the elegant single-humped dromedaries of Arabia"), brought goods from the mountains of Iran and from India, thus linking far-flung lands and promoting civilization.⁵⁷ Although it promoted civilization, the caravan trade that Rostovtzeff described was every bit the exotic spectacle that many associate with the word "caravan." It traded in luxuries associ-

ated with the Orient, “notably the various kinds of incense essential for religious observances, a number of luxuries such as perfumes, cosmetics, ornaments of ivory, precious woods, or stuffs dyed in purple and embroidered with gold.”⁵⁸ Like what is now more frequently called the “silk road”—along which scholars, tourists, artists, and musicians travel in their imagination—the caravan routes blended the charm of exoticism with the more sober concept of interdependent, global societies.⁵⁹

Rostovtzeff’s relation to exile, unlike that of Weitzmann, was self-proclaimed. He belonged to a different diaspora—that of liberal White Russians who had fled the Bolshevik revolution in 1917. He was already in his late forties when he fled, and well established as a scholar. Exile was not his formative moment. Once exiled, he became an outspoken member of the Russian diaspora intelligentsia and a committed participant in its activities. In London in 1919, he created the short-lived Russian Liberation Committee for the dissemination of anti-Bolshevik propaganda. His longtime friend Vladimir D. Nabokov, an exiled Russian liberal politician and father of the novelist Vladimir V. Nabokov, briefly edited its weekly journal.⁶⁰ In its achievements and widespread dissemination, the intellectual diaspora inaugurated by the Russian Revolution resembled the later one due to the rise of Nazism in Germany.⁶¹ Rostovtzeff’s heated pamphlet about the poverty of proletarian culture, published in 1919, mentions by name several prominent professors and scholars forced into exile or into an inner emigration in the Soviet Union.⁶² Rostovtzeff obtained help from earlier Russian émigrés in escaping from Russia and, eventually, in finding employment in the United States—first at the University of Wisconsin and finally at Yale University. In turn, others (including, years after the death of his father, Vladimir V. Nabokov) applied to him to obtain jobs at Yale and elsewhere.⁶³ German émigrés in America are credited often with reinventing American art historical scholarship.⁶⁴ The efforts of Rostovtzeff and others like him similarly ensured that White Russian émigrés introduced Russian literature and history to many American college students and, presumably, left their mark on the scholarship of this subject.⁶⁵

Rostovtzeff welcomed in Dura-Europos the opportunity to study a little-known and under-valued art, generally regarded as an art of imitation with no character of its own—an art that had been called “merely a barbarized and degenerate version of the Graeco-Mesopotamian art of the Hellenistic period.” This art was not Jewish but rather the art of the Parthian Empire (247 BCE–224 CE).⁶⁶ Rostovtzeff wanted to show that Parthians—who were, after all, “true Iranians”—had maintained the continuity of, and even developed, Iranian traditions.⁶⁷ While still in Russia, he had sought to prove the influence of Persian art in the sixth and fifth centuries BCE on the Greco-eastern art of southern Russia.⁶⁸ He brought this interest in Persia with him to the United States, where the Syrian excavations gave him the opportunity to turn his attention to the relation between Persia and the West. The influence of Parthian art on Dura-Europos became an object of sustained examination because it fed into Rostovtzeff’s larger aim of establishing the continuity of Iranian motifs throughout the ancient history of Persia and its wider influence throughout the East.⁶⁹ His discussion of Durene art therefore also considers the art of India.⁷⁰ The paintings of the Synagogue captured his attention only briefly. He dismissed them as disorganized and revealing of no particular program or style, primarily because he saw them as evidence that the artists were struggling with something new and untried: the portrayal of stories from the Hebrew Bible.

Caravan Cities provides a convenient map of all the principal trade routes in an area that extends from Egypt well into Persia (fig. 4.4). Using it, one can follow the route to Dura proposed by Rostovtzeff. It is the

same route by which Josef Strzygowski understood that “Indo-Germanic” spiritual beliefs had been disseminated to South Russia and, through the Parthians, to the Middle East.⁷¹ Rostovtzeff did not intervene in the debate over the date of the Mshatta façade; but he traced relationships between Durene and Iranian art with reference to it, thus tacitly accepting Strzygowski’s proposed date.⁷² Both scholars wished to see it as evidence of an unbroken tradition. While Rostovtzeff called Strzygowski a “visionar[y] of genius” for

his beliefs about Jewish art, however, and accepted many of his pronouncements on the relation between Palmyrene and Iranian art, he did not cite his work on Persian art.⁷³ Like Strzygowski, he was less interested in establishing the culture that differing groups held in common than in identifying pure cultural—and even moral—species at their source.

These scholarly concerns left their mark on Rostovtzeff’s map of the region of Dura. If one of Weitzmann’s Durene painters of religious art had consulted this map looking for a source of manuscripts, he (or she?) might have found too cumbersome the route to Antioch pictured in Rostovtzeff’s map and might have given up the attempt in favor of a

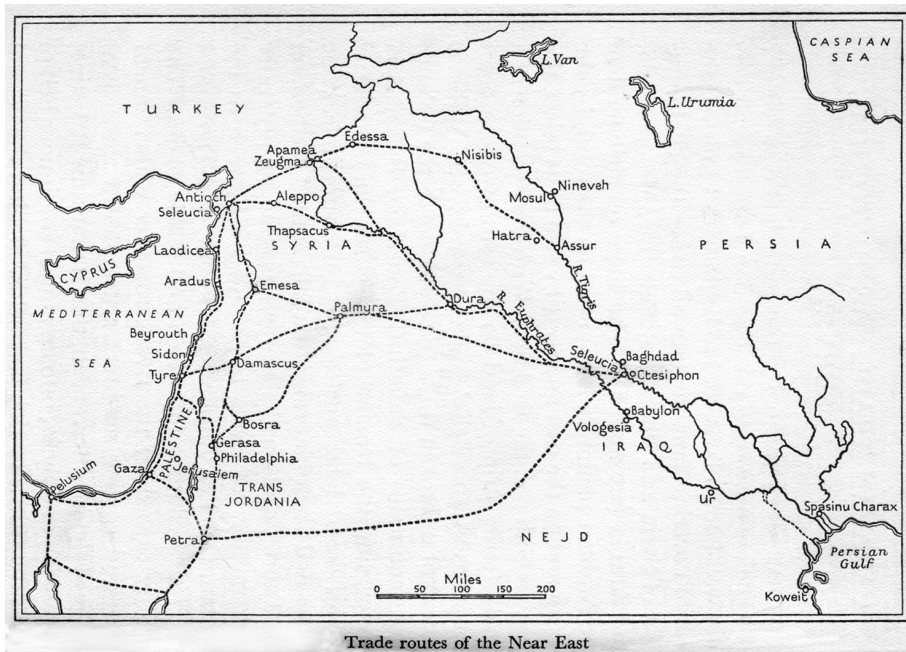


Figure 4.4: Trade Routes of the Near East. After Rostovtzeff, *Caravan Cities*

trip to Palmyra. The distance from Antioch to Dura on Rostovtzeff’s caravan-crossed map was no cartographical accident; the Roman character of Antioch, which Rostovtzeff recognized, made it an unlikely source for Persian influence. Rostovtzeff instead traced the relation to Persia and the source of Dura’s art through Palmyra—itself a site of romantic speculations about the relation between East and West and lively stories of Queen Zenobia battling the Romans. Zenobia’s colorful life had been embellished by dramatists beginning at least as early as the eighteenth-century Spanish dramatist Pedro Calderon de la Barca.⁷⁴ Rostovtzeff argued that the road from Dura to Palmyra was still traceable and suggested that much of Dura’s bourgeoisie during the Parthian period may have emigrated from there.⁷⁵ To Rostovtzeff, Palmyra was “the large and wealthy neighbor of Dura, the almost undisputed mistress of the transit caravan trade of the second and third centuries A.D.”⁷⁶ Travel went through Palmyra with its mixed heritage to Parthia rather than through Antioch to Rome. Rostovtzeff’s Dura is indeed “Macedonian-Iranian in character, though Semitic in origin, and therefore completely foreign to Rome.”⁷⁸

Persia was not the land he had most in mind as he traversed ancient and modern Syria far from the com-

forts of his home in New Haven. Russia continually trespassed the boundaries of his narrative. Dura did not become merely Iranian; it became “as Iranian, in fact, as was the population of Panticapeum (Kertch) in southern Russia [now Ukraine] at this time.”⁷⁸ The secular art of Dura has “the right to be called a branch of the Iranian art of the Parthian period, just as another contemporary branch of the same art is known to us in South Russia and Siberia.”⁷⁹ As he describes the road to Dura through Syria on an old caravan route, he cannot help but remark when referring to a monastery that “the whole construction is absurdly reminiscent of the Troitzka-Sergeevskaia Lavra in Russia.” In the Aleppo valley, the “clay villages reminded [him] of the Russian apiaries, groups of hundreds of cone-shaped primitive beehives typical of the outskirts of the Russian villages.”⁸⁰

While Rostovtzeff ignored Antioch, Weitzmann ignored Palmyra. Dura and Antioch both appear on the map in Weitzmann’s *Age of Spirituality*, even though it depicts the Roman Empire from 300 to 700 CE (beginning forty-four years after the demise of Dura). Palmyra, still an ongoing concern throughout the period, is not there (fig. 4.5). Palmyra is also absent from the index of Kessler and Weitzmann’s book on the paintings of Dura-Europos. Neither their bibliography nor their index contains an entry for Michael I. Rostovtzeff. Wharton’s book also has a map, on which the trip from Dura to Antioch looks slightly longer than the one to Palmyra but not far enough to sway the savvy Durene traveler from a visit to either city.

Next Year in Dura-Europos

In March, 1933, during the year after the discovery of the Synagogue, a representative of another group of émigré scholars paid Dura a visit on the invitation of Clark Hopkins.⁸¹ In their studies of Dura’s sources, neither Weitzmann nor Rostovtzeff took notice of the Durene community he identified. Eleazar Lipa Sukenik (1889–1953), a founder of the field of “Jewish archaeology,” had, like them, emigrated from Europe, but he viewed exile from a different perspective than the others; his country of origin—Bialystok, Poland—was his place of exile and Palestine, to which he immigrated, his destination. A former yeshiva student turned com-



Figure 4.5: Map of the Late Roman Empire, 300–700 CE. After Weitzmann, ed., *Age of Spirituality*

mitted Zionist socialist in 1912 represented a return from exile to the homeland. His archaeology supported the mission of Zionism. The discovery of Jewish antiquities in Palestine, the most prominent the discovery in 1928 of the synagogue Beit Alpha, could sustain young immigrants in the belief that, as he told them, they had arrived at “the place where their fathers and grandfathers had lived and died fifteen hundred or two thousand years before.”⁸² This connection with his roots in Eretz Yisrael enabled him to make his way—against odds, and in the midst of an archaeological community in Palestine dominated by Protestant English and American scholars from major universities—into the field to found a “Jewish archaeology.” The name was adapted from Catholic archaeology, and the practices were modeled after the biblical archaeology of American Protestant archaeologist William Foxwell Albright, with whom Sukenik worked in Palestine early in his career.⁸³ The new discoveries seemed to Zionist scholars and their supporters to place the peoplehood of the Jews on, and in, firm national ground.

For Sukenik and other scholars of Judaica and Jewish archaeology, whatever their views of Zionism, the Jews at Dura must have looked more like emigrants than they did, in spite of some speculations that Jews

may have lived in Dura-Europos for centuries, perhaps even longer than the scholars’ own ancestors had lived in the specific European lands from which they came.⁸⁴ Whereas to Weitzmann and Rostovtzeff Dura was a mixed community that included a Jewish community among others, and Jews were merely one of the polyglot cultures that lived there, to Jewish archaeologists in Palestine and most students of synagogue architecture, Jewish Durenes belonged above all to a community known as the Diaspora or sometimes the *Galut* (Hebrew for “exile”).

Notions of the Diaspora were complex and differed among Zionist groups and other students of Jewish cultural history. In the early mandatory period, cultural Zionists, inspired by Ahad Ha-am

and historic Jewish proclivities, saw a strong bond of reciprocity between Diaspora and center; hence, it rarely had the negative connotations that some scholars would give it in the early years of the state of Israel.⁸⁵ Although Jewish archaeology seemed necessary to establish the existence of Jews as a national people, the

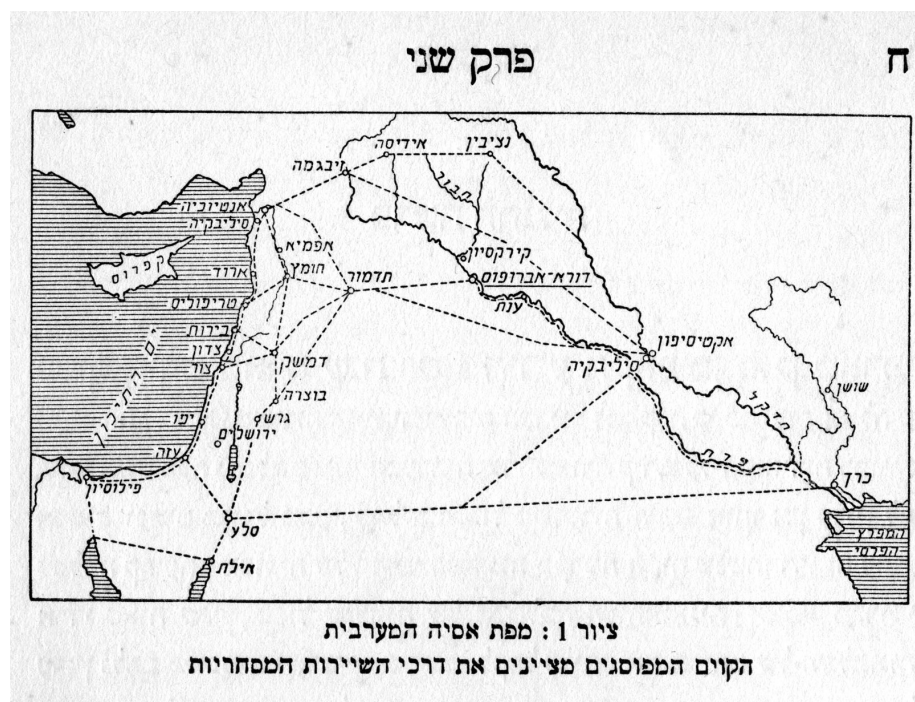


Figure 4.6: Map of Western Asia. After Sukenik, *Synagogue of Dura-Europos and Its Frescoes*

early scholars felt no need to promote the notion of Jewish or Israelite art as autochthonous or autonomous. In the continuity of Jewish history studied by Sukenik and others, the ancient Jewish Diaspora indeed played a major role.⁸⁶ Synagogues like that of Dura, for example, caught the interest of archaeologists in part because the institution of the synagogue, one of Judaism's major religious innovations, is often thought to be a function of a Diaspora pressed into finding an alternative to the Temple in Jerusalem as a place of worship.⁸⁷ Once in the Middle East, an archaeologist such as Sukenik also would be primed to look for signs of this community as the fountainhead of the Yeshiva-, and synagogue-, centered community in which he had been raised. For the serious scholar at the time of Sukenik's writings about Dura, the wider network of interconnected synagogues complemented or replaced the centrality of the temple and made up the community of Diaspora Jews in antiquity.

Dura's size mattered to these scholars. Certainly by the time that the structures of inquiry in Judaic studies were established, followers explicitly used the by-then-assumed diminutive size and provinciality of Dura to indicate the strength of the larger community from which the tiny Jewish community of Dura must have borrowed its art. Decades later, the provinciality of Dura would lead Bezalel Narkiss, following the program and the logic inaugurated by Weitzmann, to speculate that since "the Dura synagogue is provincial, [it] may have been inspired by another unknown painted synagogue, executed by better artists and with a clearer theological plan."⁸⁸ The connection between Dura's provinciality and the widespread character of its art was tenacious; Leonard Victor Rutgers, writing in 1996, called Dura "a fairly small garrison town."⁸⁹ The significance of its size emerges later, when, having cited inscriptions suggesting the existence of decorations on other synagogues, he concludes that "[t]he painted walls of Dura Europos synagogue... indicate how many ancient wall paintings are now irrevocably lost."⁹⁰ Had

Dura been larger, it could have served as the pinnacle of the genre itself or even the representative of an isolated phenomenon or a renegade strain of Judaism.

But in the 1930s and 1940s, the period of our inquiry, the primary focus on the Diaspora community had an impact on the actual and internalized maps of scholars in Judaic studies. The international commu-

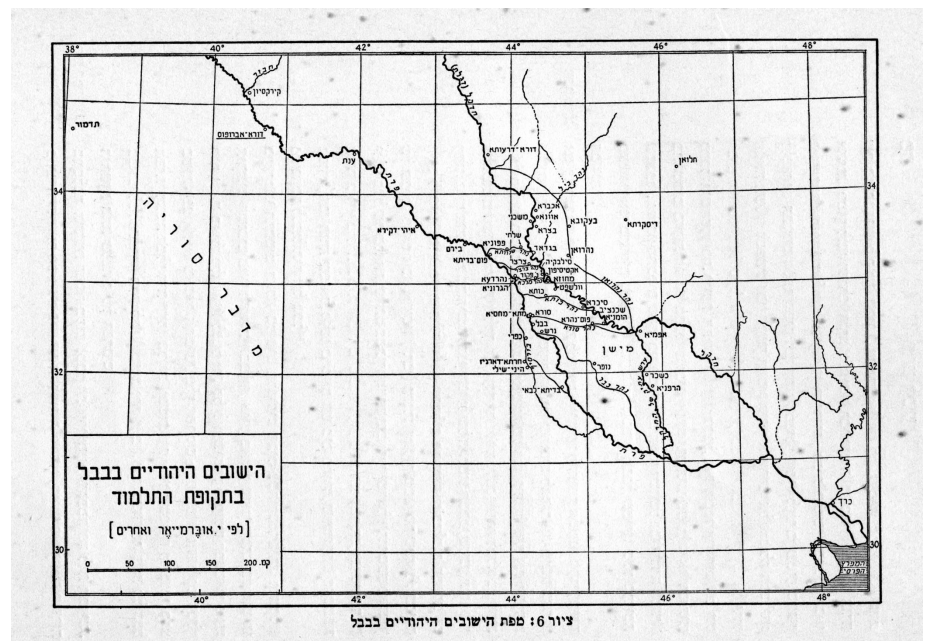


Figure 4.7: Map of the Jewish Settlements (Yishuvim) in Babylonia. After J[acob] Obermeyer and others in Sukenik, *Synagogue of Dura-Europos and Its Frescoes*

nity they envisioned connected the Synagogue at Dura not to its neighbor on the other side of the city gate, the Christian Church, but to synagogues across Europe, Asia, and Palestine. Rachel Bernstein Wischnitzer, a cultural nationalist who had immigrated to the United States from Russia via Berlin, where she published voluminously on Jewish art and culture, produced in 1948 her book *The Messianic Theme in the Paintings of the Dura Synagogue*.⁹¹ In it, Antioch and Palmyra make only passing appearances. Instead, Dura forms part of a network with several nodes. “Neighboring” Nisibis, one of these nodes, belonged to a district “ceded by [the Armenian] king Artaban (d. 60 CE) to Izates of Adiabene, who is known to have adopted the Jewish faith with his mother Helena, the queen of Adiabene.” Another was “Sura on the Sura Canal, near the Euphrates, with its famous Jewish Theological Academy, founded under Parthian rule about A.D. 219.” The Academy was “known to have been in permanent contact with the now lost Nehardea, located on the canal which connected the Euphrates and the Tigris.” Nehardea was also a Talmudic center, “the seat of a celebrated academy second only, and in some periods superior, to that of Sura.” All of these “theological schools carried on a lively intercourse with Palestine.”⁹² These connections give Wischnitzer the ability to use evidence about Jewish tolerance of images from wide-ranging Hellenized Jews and the writings of the rabbis—most of it well known, and some of it irrelevant (such as the adventures of Rabban Gamaliel, the patriarch of Palestine, with the bath of Aphrodite)—to suggest that “the wall paintings of the synagogue of Dura cannot, therefore, be regarded as an isolated phenomenon.”⁹³

Thus while Rostovtzeff connected Dura, through intermediaries, with South Russia, Wischnitzer provided intermediaries that connect Dura with Palestine. None of these cities appear on Weitzmann’s map. Rostovtzeff includes Nisibis on his map, where it does not look like Dura’s “neighbor.” Wischnitzer’s book contains no maps. All of the cities appear on the maps in Sukenik’s book on Dura-Europos—a book whose composition predates Wischnitzer’s book but was published only a year earlier, having been delayed by the war (figs. 4.6, 4.7). Sukenik’s analysis of the Synagogue paintings begins with a history of the Babylonian exile and its relation to the Talmudic centers of Nehardea and Sura. He places Dura in the context of several that may have been scattered nearby along the river; hence, his interpretations of the paintings would use *Aggadic* and *Midrashic* literature, which, as he counseled the archaeologists in Dura during his first visit there, he saw as the only basis for any later efforts to connect the Synagogue to later Byzantine art.⁹⁴ His concentration on the Jewish community had made him sensitive to the competing calls of other communities and made him the only scholar to make “full use of the inscriptions and the Dura Jewish liturgical parchment.”⁹⁵

Even when the archaeologists disagreed, they continued to adhere to their maps. Archaeologists who concentrated their excavations in Palestine emphasized that synagogues in Palestine are much more numerous than previously supposed and demonstrate the existence of a Jewish community in Palestine over a long and unbroken period. They urged an autochthonous understanding of Jewish visual practices. Another group of scholars sought local differences among Diaspora synagogues, attributing these differences to different strains (in two senses) of Judaism. Other Jewish scholarship on the Diaspora communities lately has concentrated on showing their communality in spite of the differences among them.⁹⁶ Yet even when examining the differences among Jewish synagogue practices in the Diaspora and contrasting or comparing these with Palestine, the community into which they are placed is most often an almost exclusively Jewish one. Scholars argued about their internal relationships: whether Jewish communities along the routes between

Talmudic centers disputed among themselves, agreed substantially, or failed to find out about one another.⁹⁷ This scholarship, which seems to pose Jewish communities either against one another or in resolute unity, mirrors the struggles of Zionism in its relation to its Diaspora. The controversy therefore had practical implications to which excavations in Palestine and their interpretation were crucial. To excavate synagogues in the Yishuv might justify one's presence on the land; but satisfaction of the international aspirations of the Yishuv to lead the entire Jewish world, with the Hebrew University as its intellectual center, demanded an archaeological net cast more widely than one's own backyard.⁹⁸

Whether or not Diaspora congregations resembled one another, differed, or even reported to the same central authority as the occasional scholar might argue, the notion that their network constituted the primary community of the Jews who populated them illuminates the way in which Zionist historical scholarship responded to Zionist history. Like the European history that undermined Jewish life in Europe, Zionist history tended to view Jewish communities as made up exclusively of other Jews. It may have been this single-minded perspective on Jewish history that led both Wischnitzer and Sukenik to appreciate the findings of Josef Strzygowski without comprehending the signs of his underlying anti-Semitism.⁹⁹ As opposed to Weitzmann's Jews, whose neighbors lived in harmony with them next door, Sukenik's Jews lived far away from their closest neighbors and their relations were not necessarily harmonious.

A Continuous Stream of Thoughts

I have concentrated only on émigré scholars, most of whom deserve more specialized attention than I have been able to give to them. Not all scholars of Dura-Europos were émigrés, at least not in any standard sense. They each did have dreams, and their dreams of Dura-Europos were dizzyingly wide-ranging.¹⁰⁰ It would be useful to explore the dreams of French scholars like Count Robert du Mesnil du Buisson, Franz Cumont, Gabriel Millet; or Americans like Clark Hopkins or Carl Kraeling; or later scholars like Erwin R. Goodenough, Morton Smith, and Joseph Gutmann. Goodenough's motives already have begun to be explored by, for example, Steven Fine, who finds several sources for Goodenough's interest in a Dura-Europos whose Jewry seems to be closer to Hellenic peoples than to other Jews, and who, exulting in mysticism that would blossom into Kabbalism, lived in glorious ignorance of strict rabbinical codes.¹⁰¹ Scholars continue to pursue their dreams about Dura with varying degrees of detachment. I hope that my brief survey of territorial exiles, all involved at the same critical moment in making their way in new homes and excavating their own fantasies about these homes in Dura-Europos, can transcend the ideological or idiosyncratic origin of any of them. My aim has been to suggest ways in which the intellectual "parallel play" of scholars converges upon and occupies the same site imaginatively from different angles and starting points. This imaginative play mirrors the intersecting and sometimes oppositional stories that comprise the histories of lands occupied not imaginatively by scholars but physically by armies.

It is not within the present author's competence to decide which of these alternative maps, if any, best explains the origin and significance of Dura-Europos or its art. Even within established routes, relative distances can depend on one's motivation for traversing them ("one" meaning either an early or a modern traveler). Modern-day airline companies know this and often charge more for a ticket to a nearby city than

for a coast-to-coast flight. It is most likely that more than one of the competing accounts may turn out to be at least partially right if Dura, along with its Jewry, should turn out to have been part of multiple communities to which it looked for models and through which it understood its art.¹⁰² Perhaps early Durenes looked both east and west for inspiration, just as early Zionists in Israel looked not to synagogues for models for natively Jewish religious art but to Jugendstil and Sessionist art of Central Europe, Assyrian models such as the Black Obelisk in the British Museum, and probably the Mshatta façade in Berlin.¹⁰³ The lives of many of them must have crossed boundaries, traveled in space and time, and intersected with neighbors at home and in their imagination.

The multiple communities of scholars, not Dura, are the concern of the present essay. It comes on waves of upheaval and globalization that spawn more émigrés and exiles. This is especially true for the postcolonial wave in the 1970s and 1980s that brought thinkers from former colonies to the West to reorient scholarship as did their predecessors exiled from Central Europe and Russia. These scholars are themselves the result of culturally divided educations, local traditions, and colonial masters. They not only provide an increased awareness that scholars form their ideas as part of communities and groups that include or exclude diverse groups of people over large areas, they also seek to account for these split and conflicting points of view. Often the scholarship fostered by these migrant scholars values the fusion of viewpoints to which these hybrid migratory communities give rise.¹⁰⁴ Such perspectives have increasingly characterized writing on art historical scholarship.¹⁰⁵ One of its contributions has been to focus attention on maps and mapping.¹⁰⁶ This attention to mapping connects the present inquiry into the geographical speaking positions of the scholars of Dura-Europos—to my reverie about reclaiming a lost Hungarian heritage by establishing a resemblance between Miskolc and Chicago.

As Ernst Herzfeld well knew, scholars not only reflect upon communities of the past but also create communities in the so-called real world. The community of Dura-Europos, which once gathered Macedonians, Parthians, Jews, Christians, and Romans, later drew a community of Russians, Germans, French, Americans, and Israelis. Research institutes nowadays bring scholars to work and live together over a period of time: intellectual communities spring up on the Internet, conferences are convened, exhibitions are mounted, and catalogues and books published. All these places—literary, geographical, architectural—are provincial outposts. But for the multihued communities that gather there from all corners, occasionally to collaborate and learn, they are, for the moment, the center of the earth.

Notes

The first version of part of this essay was given at the conference Contested Legacies, at Bard College in 2002. Later versions have migrated almost as much as the scholars it studies. They were given as lectures at Pennsylvania State University in University Park, Pa., the Deutsches Forum für Kunstgeschichte in Paris and Bilgi University in Istanbul, and to a seminar at the University of Chicago. I am grateful to Jaś Elsner for his advice on the essay at various stages of writing, to Lisa Brody for access to the Dura archives of the Yale University Art Gallery, and to Suzanne Estelle Holmer for her assistance with translations from Hebrew. Special thanks go to Steven Fine who shared freely his enormous knowledge and insight into the scholars of Dura, both Jewish and Christian, and worked at rapid speed and enormous tenacity to prevent me from committing at least some of the most embarrassing errors that one can make when straying into foreign territory. A portion of this essay has appeared previously as “The Road to Dura Europos,” *Budapest Review of Books* 12 (2002): 2–5.

- 1 Steven M. Lowenstein, *Frankfurt on the Hudson: the German-Jewish Community of Washington Heights, 1933–1983, Its Structure and Culture* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1989).
- 2 *Moscow on the Hudson*, directed by Paul Mazursky (Burbank, Calif.: Columbia Pictures, 115 min., 1984).
- 3 Judith Friedlander, *Vilna on the Seine: Jewish Intellectuals in France since 1968* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990).
- 4 “Mitteleuropa,” which translates simply as “Central Europe,” often had the connotation of a cosmopolitan culture that welcomed difference. See Malachi Haim

Hacohen, “Dilemmas of Cosmopolitanism: Karl Popper, Jewish Identity, and ‘Central European Culture,’” *Journal of Modern History* 71 (1999): 105–49; Jacques Le Rider, “Allemagne, Autriche et Europe central,” *Le Debat* 67 (1991): esp. 109–11, 116–18; and Claudio Magris, *Der habsburgische Mythos in der österreichischen Literatur*, trans. Madeleine von Pásztor (Salzburg: Müller, 1966), esp. 239–308.

- 5 The knight was Ernst H. Gombrich, formerly of Vienna, along with his wife, Ilse. The others were Hugo Buchthal (of Berlin); his wife, Malchi, of Vienna; and Susi Lang, also from Vienna, who was once a student of Josef Strzygowski, discussed below.
- 6 Karl Kraus, an acerbic critic of Vienna in the early twentieth century, is best known for the satirical periodical *Die Fackel*, which he edited from 1899 until his death in 1936.
- 7 On Riegl, see Margaret Olin, *Forms of Representation in Alois Riegl's Theory of Art* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992).
- 8 Margaret Olin, “Alois Riegl: the Late Roman Empire in the Late Habsburg Empire,” in *The Habsburg Legacy: National Identity in Historical Perspective*, ed. Ritchie Robertson and Edward Timms, Austrian Studies (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1994), 5:107–20; Margaret Olin, “Art History and Ideology: Alois Riegl and Josef Strzygowski,” in *Cultural Visions: Essays in the History of Culture*, ed. Penny Schine Gold and Benjamin C. Sax (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000), 151–70; and Jaś Elsner, “The Birth of Late Antiquity: Riegl and Strzygowski in 1901,” *Art History* 25, no. 3 (2002): 358–79.
- 9 See, for example, Josef Strzygowski, *Nordischer Heilbringer und bildende Kunst: Eine durch Christentum und Kirche entstellte Heilerscheinung* (Vienna: A. Luser, 1939), 246–63.

- 10 Josef Strzygowski, "Mschatta. II: Kunstwissenschaftliche Untersuchung," *Jahrbuch der königlich Preussischen Kunstsammlungen* 25 (1904): 225–373. See also E. Baldwin Smith, review of "L'Ancien art chretien de Syrie," *Speculum* 14 (1939): 122–26; Christina Maranci, "Art History and the True North: Race and Geography in the Work of Josef Strzygowski," paper presented at the Thirtieth International Congress of the History of Art, London, September 3–8, 2000. On the dispute between Strzygowski and Herzfeld over Mshatta, see Suzanne Marchand, "The Rhetoric of Artifacts and the Decline of Classical Humanism: the Case of Josef Strzygowski," *History and Theory*, theme issue 33 (1994): 123–26.
- 11 For example, see Josef Strzygowski, *Europas Machtkunst im Rahmen des Erdkreises; Eine grundlegende Auseinandersetzung über Wesen und Entwicklung des zehntausendjährigen Wahne* (Vienna: Wiener, 1941), 740.
- 12 See Richard I. Cohen, *Jewish Icons: Art and Society in Modern Europe* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998); Kalman Bland, *The Artless Jew* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000); Margaret Olin, *The Nation without Art: Examining Modern Discourses in Jewish Art* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001); Steven Fine, *Art and Judaism in the Greco-Roman World: Toward a New Jewish Archaeology* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005); and L. Michael White, *Building God's House in the Roman World: Architectural Adaptation among Pagans, Jews, and Christians* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), 60–101.
- 13 Josef Strzygowski, *Orient Oder Rom: Beiträge zur Geschichte der spätantiken und frühchristlichen Kunst* (Leipzig: Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1901), 32–39. For "Jewish Christians," see page 37.
- 14 Olin, *Nation without Art*, 151–53.
- 15 On the discovery, see Clark Hopkins, *The Discovery of Dura-Europos*, ed. Bernard Goldman (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), 126–39.
- 16 Strzygowski, *Nordische Heilbringer und bildende Kunst*, 78. On the excitement surrounding the discovery of the synagogue at Dura-Europos, see Olin, *Nation without Art*, 131–33.
- 17 Hans Lietzmann, "Dura-Europos: Die neue ausgegrabene makedonisch-römische Garnisonstadt am Euphrat," *Atlantis* 9 (1937): 244–49, esp. 248–49, on the Synagogue paintings. See also Lietzmann, "Dura-Europos und seine Malereien," *Theologische Literaturzeitung* 45 (1940): 113–17, a review of Rostovtzeff's book on Dura-Europos.
- 18 On Lietzmann, see Olin, *Nation without Art*, 139–41, and sources mentioned there. See also Wolfram Kinzig, "Evangelische Patristiker und christliche Archaeologen im 'Dritten Reich,'" in *Antike und Altertumswissenschaft in der Zeit von Faschismus und Nationalsozialismus*, ed. Beat Näf (Cambridge: Edition Cicero, 2001), 536–601, esp. 544–58. On "inner emigration," see Ralf Schnell, *Literarische Innere Emigration 1933–1945* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1976); James MacPherson Ritchie, *German Literature under National Socialism* (London: Croom Helm, 1983), 111–32; and Neil H. Donahue and Doris Kirchner, eds., *Flight of Fantasy: New Perspectives on Inner Emigration in German Literature, 1933–1945* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2003).
- 19 Yale University attempted unsuccessfully to negotiate the acquisition of the Synagogue paintings. See several letters between Clark Hopkins and James R. Angell, president of Yale University, beginning on December 4, 1933. Dura-Europos Archives, Yale University Art Gallery.

- 20 Kurt Weitzmann, *Sailing with Byzantium from Europe to America: the Memoirs of an Art Historian* (Munich: Editio Maris, 1994), 76.
- 21 Ibid., 31.
- 22 Ibid., 77, 81, 223.
- 23 After Weitzmann's account of his European education, each chapter of his *Sailing with Byzantium from Europe to America* has at least one section titled "Travels in the United States," and another titled "Travels in Europe."
- 24 Kurt Weitzmann, *The Fresco Cycle of S. Maria di Castelseprio* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1951); and Kurt Weitzmann, *Studies in the Arts at Sinai: Essays* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982).
- 25 Most notably in Kurt Weitzmann, *Illustrations in Roll and Codex, a Study of the Origin and Method of Text Illustration* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1947).
- 26 Olin, *Nation without Art*, 148.
- 27 Annabel Jane Wharton, *Refiguring the Post Classical City: Dura-Europos, Jerash, Jerusalem, and Ravenna* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 15–23.
- 28 Ibid., 18–19.
- 29 Gabriel Millet, "Introduction," in *Les Peintures de la synagogue de doura-europos, 245–256 après J.-C.*, by Robert du Mesnil du Buisson (Rome: Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1939), vii; Joseph Gutmann, "Introduction to the Second Printing of the Dura-Europos Synagogue," in *The Dura-Europos Synagogue: a Re-evaluation (1932–1992)*, ed. Joseph Gutmann (Atlanta: Scholars, 1992), ix.
- 30 Annabel Jane Wharton, *Art of Empire: Painting and Architecture of the Byzantine Periphery: a Comparative Study of Four Provinces* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1988).
- 31 Wharton, *Refiguring the Post Classical City*, 19–20, and note 20.
- 32 Hopkins, *The Discovery of Dura-Europos*, 264.
- 33 Kurt Weitzmann and Herbert L. Kessler, *The Frescoes of the Dura Synagogue and Christian Art*, *Dumbarton Oaks Studies* 28 (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1990), 146.
- 34 On Weitzmann, see Olin, *Nation without Art*, 139–54.
- 35 Olin, "Alois Riegl."
- 36 Weitzmann and Kessler, 146.
- 37 Ibid.
- 38 Wharton, *Refiguring the Post Classical City*, 19.
- 39 Weitzmann and Kessler, 146.
- 40 Ibid.
- 41 Carl H. Kraeling, "The Jewish Community at Antioch," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 51 (1932): 148.
- 42 Charles Rufus Morey, *The Mosaics of Antioch* (London: Longmans, Green, 1938), esp. 6–10.
- 43 Kraeling, "The Jewish Community at Antioch," 155. For a recent discussion, see Bernadette J. Brooten, "The Jews of Ancient Antioch," in *Antioch: the Lost Ancient City*, ed.

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- Christine Kondoleon (Princeton: Princeton University Press and Worcester Art Museum, 2000), 29–37.
- 44 Kraeling, 156; and Weitzmann and Kessler, 146.
- 45 Weitzmann, ed., *Age of Spirituality: Late Antique and Early Christian Art, Third to Seventh Century* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1979), xxv.
- 46 See Ulrike Wendland, *Verfolgung und Vertreibung deutschsprachiger Kunsthistoriker im Nationalsozialismus: Ein biographisches Handbuch* (Munich: Saur, 1998), s. v. Fiedler, Josefa; Weitzmann, Kurt.
- 47 “Billus” (Bill Collett), “Escape from Miskolc,” Virtual Tourist: the People Behind the Places, <http://www.virtualtourist.com/m/13a02/697cd/> (first accessed, 2003; latest access April 2010).
- 48 Kati Marton, “A Town’s Hidden Memory,” *New York Times*, July 21, 2002.
- 49 Herbert Kessler, in Weitzmann and Kessler, 157. For more examples, see Olin, *Nation without Art*, 246nn78–79.
- 50 Michael Maas, “People and Identity in Roman Antioch,” in *Antioch*, ed. Kondoleon, 14.
- 51 Wharton attributes her sensitivity to “East-West” issues in part to her residence on and studies of a divided campus. Wharton, *Refiguring the Post Classical City*, 160–62.
- 52 E-mail exchange with the author, July 20, 2004.
- 53 Wharton, *Refiguring the Post Classical City*, 20.
- 54 Michael I. Rostovtzeff, *Caravan Cities*, trans. D. and T. Talbot Rice (Oxford: Clarendon, 1932), 160–61, 165.
- 55 *Ibid.*, 21.
- 56 *Ibid.*, 12.
- 57 *Ibid.*, 6.
- 58 *Ibid.*, 20.
- 59 Countless recent books have titles containing the term “silk road,” whereas titles with “caravan,” never as numerous, dwindle after the 1950s. The periodical *Silk Road: Journal of the Institute of Silk Road Studies* began publication in 1990. Numerous academically or artistically oriented Web sites have sprung up, such as www.silk-road.com and www.silkroadproject.org, along with many tourism-oriented Web sites, such as www.silkroadhotels.com. The tourist sites are appropriate since, according to a remark attributed to the cellist Yo-Yo Ma, the “Internet is in some ways a contemporary equivalent to the communication channels of the ancient Silk Road.” Milo Cleveland Beach, “Foreword,” in *Along the Silk Road*, ed. Elizabeth Ten Grotenhuis (Washington, D.C.: Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, 2002), 8–9.
- 60 Marinus A. Wes, *Michael Rostovtzeff: Historian in Exile; Russian Roots in an American Context* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1990), 25.
- 61 On the White Russian Diaspora, see Karl Schlögel, ed. *Der grosse Exodus: die Russische Emigration und ihre Zentren 1917 bis 1941* (Munich: Beck, 1994).
- 62 Michael I. Rostovtsev [Rostovtzeff], *Proletarian Culture* (London: Russian Liberation Committee, 1919), 12–14.
- 63 Wes, 84–87.
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- 64 See Colin Eisler, "Kunstgeschichte American Style: a Study in Migration," in *The Intellectual Migration: Europe and America, 1930–1960*, ed. Donald Fleming and Bernard Bailyn (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1969), 544–629. But see also Kathryn Brush, "German Kunstwissenschaft and the Practice of Art History in America after World War I. Interrelationships, Exchanges, Contexts," *Marburger Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte* 26 (1999): 7–26.
- 65 Wes, 75–78, 84–87; and Thomas R. Beyer, Jr., "New York: Russen in der Neuen Welt," in *Die Grosse Exodus: die Russische Emigration und ihre Zentren, 1917 bis 1941*, ed. Karl Schlögel (Munich: Beck, 1994), 346–72, 421–24. Soviet authors attacked émigré scholars stridently, for example, Albert Belyaev, *The Ideological Struggle and Literature: a Critical Analysis of the Writings of US Sovietologists*, trans. Doris Bradbury and Natalie Ward (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1975).
- 66 Michael I. Rostovtzeff, *Dura and the Problem of Parthian Art*, Yale Classical Studies, vol. 5 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1935), 160. See also Hopkins, 6; Rostovtzeff, *Caravan Cities*, 212; and Michael I. Rostovtzeff, *Dura-Europos and Its Art* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1938), 9–10.
- 67 Rostovtzeff, *Dura and the Problem of Parthian Art*, 159.
- 68 Rostovtzeff, *Ancient Decorative Painting in South Russia* [Russian] (1914), which he cites when discussing the Iranian element in Russia. A heavily abridged, English version, "Ancient Decorative Wall-painting," *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 39 (1919): 144–63, has little to say about Iran; however, see also Rostovtzeff, *Iranians and Greeks in South Russia* (1922; repr. New York: Russell and Russell, 1969).
- 69 Rostovtzeff, *Dura and the Problem of Parthian Art*, 157–94. The Synagogue paintings are analyzed in Rostovtzeff, *Dura-Europos and Its Art*, 100–30.
- 70 Rostovtzeff, *Dura-Europos and Its Art*, 90–92.
- 71 Strzygowski, *Nordische Heilbringer und bildende Kunst*, 132; and Rostovtzeff, *Dura-Europos and Its Art*, 134, where Rostovtzeff cites Strzygowski's remarks on the Ashburnham Pentateuch, mentioned above.
- 72 He terms Mshatta part of a widespread revival of the "Greek spirit." Rostovtzeff, *Dura-Europos and Its Art*, 9.
- 73 Rostovtzeff, *Dura-Europos and Its Art*, 134. See also Rostovtzeff, *Dura and the Problem of Parthian Art*, 235 n105, in which he relates the Ashburnham Pentateuch to Palmyrene art.
- 74 Pedro Calderon de la Barca, "La Gran Cenobia," in *Comedias del Célebre Poeto Español* (Madrid: 1760), 2:276–321. In the eighteenth century, works about Zenobia include plays by Arthur Murphy, operas by Tomasso Albinoni and Pasquale Anfossi, and a romance by William Ware.
- 75 Rostovtzeff, *Dura-Europos and Its Art*, 18–21.
- 76 Michael I. Rostovtzeff, "The Near East in Hellenistic and Roman Times," in *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* [*Dumbarton Oaks Inaugural Lectures, November 2nd and 3rd, 1940*] (1941), 1:36.
- 77 Rostovtzeff, *Caravan Cities*, 157.
- 78 *Ibid.*, 104.
- 79 *Ibid.*, 215.
- 80 *Ibid.*, 162.

- 81 Eleazar Lipa Sukenik, *Ancient Synagogues in Palestine and Greece* (London: Oxford University Press, 1934), 83; and Sukenik, *Synagogue of Dura-Europos and Its Frescoes* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Bialik Foundation, 1947), v.
- 82 Sukenik, quoted in Neil Asher Silberman, *A Prophet from amongst You: the Life of Yigael Yadin; Soldier, Scholar, and Mythmaker of Modern Israel* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1993), 26. For a sympathetic treatment of Sukenik's career, see especially Fine, *Art and Judaism in the Greco-Roman World*, 27–31.
- 83 Fine, *Art and Judaism in the Greco-Roman World*, 27–31; and Silberman, 13–23.
- 84 It is not known when the first Jews settled in Dura-Europos. Sukenik speculates that they may have settled there as early as the Parthian period, which began in 113 BCE (Sukenik, *Synagogue of Dura-Europos and Its Frescoes*, 29). Similarly, it is not known exactly when Jewish settlement began in Sukenik's home town of Bialystok, Poland, but perhaps in the eighteenth century, which could make the Jewish community in Dura a bit longer lasting than that in Bialystok. See *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, s.v. Byelostok, and *The Encyclopedia Judaica*, s.v. Bialystok.
- 85 Nadia Abu El-Haj, *Facts on the Ground: Archaeological Practice and Territorial Self-fashioning in Israeli Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 75–76. On Zionist denigration of "Exile," see Yael Zerubavel, *Recovered Roots: Collective Memory and the Making of Israeli National Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 17–22. Zerubavel traces such denigration to the roots of Zionism, but her account focuses primarily on the period of statehood and does not take into account more positive notions of the Diaspora.
- 86 Zerubavel also notes the necessity to Zionism of continuity between antiquity and exile as a factor that restrained Zionists from outright rejection of the exilic period: *Recovered Roots*, 21.
- 87 Sukenik, *Ancient Synagogues in Palestine and Greece*, 1. For a variety of theories, see Joseph Gutmann, ed., *The Synagogue: Studies in Origins, Archaeology and Architecture* (New York: KTAV, 1975), 3–76; Fine, *This Holy Place: On the Sanctity of the Synagogue during the Greco-Roman Period* (South Bend: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997), 25–33; and White.
- 88 Bezalel Narkiss, "Synagogue Wall Painting with Biblical Representations," in *Age of Spirituality*, ed. Weitzmann, 374.
- 89 Leonard Victor Rutgers, "Diaspora Synagogues: Synagogue Archaeology in the Greco-Roman World," in *Sacred Realm: the Emergence of the Synagogue in the Ancient World*, ed. Steven Fine (New York: Oxford University Press, Yeshiva University Museum, 1996), 73.
- 90 *Ibid.*, 79.
- 91 Rachel Wischnitzer, *The Messianic Theme in the Paintings of the Dura Synagogue* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), see mentions on pp. 1, 8, 19, 44, 103n3. On Wischnitzer, see Claire Richter Sherman, "Rachel Wischnitzer: Pioneer Scholar of Jewish Art," *Woman's Art Journal* 1 (1980–81): 42–46; Katherina S. Feil, "Art under Siege: the Art Scholarship of Rachel Wischnitzer in Berlin, 1921–1938," *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 44 (1999): 167–90; and Feil, "Art under Siege: the Scholarship Produced by Rachel Wischnitzer during Her Berlin Years 1921–1938," *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 45, no. 1 (2000): 121–33.
- 92 Wischnitzer, 4–5.

- 93 Ibid., 8–11.
- 94 Sukenik, *Synagogue of Dura-Europos and Its Frescoes*, v–vi.
- 95 Fine, *Art and Judaism in the Greco-Roman World*, 31.
- 96 See, for example, Eric M. Meyers, “Ancient Synagogues: an Archaeological Introduction,” in Fine, ed., *Sacred Realm*, 12–13; Abu El-Haj; and Fine, *Art and Judaism in the Greco-Roman World*, 75–76.
- 97 Again, Steven Fine’s book distinguishes among these various positions. See especially his discussions of non-rabbinical and Hellenistic theories.
- 98 See Fine, *Art and Judaism in the Greco-Roman World*, 29.
- 99 Sukenik cites Strzygowski in *Ancient Synagogues in Palestine and Greece*, 67. On Wischnitzer’s enthusiasm for Strzygowski, see Feil, “Art under Siege: the Scholarship Produced by Rachel Wischnitzer,” 122–23.
- 100 For a succinct description of this range, see Fine, “Jewish Identity at the *Limes*: the Jews of Dura Europos between Rome and Persia,” J. Paul Getty Trust, http://www.getty.edu/research/scholarly_activities/events/ancient_mediterranean_schedule.html (accessed May 6, 2010).
- 101 Fine, *Art and Judaism in the Greco-Roman World*, 35–46.
- 102 The hybrid nature of Dura’s Jewish community and its interchanges is explicated through the inscriptions on the Synagogue paintings in Fine, “Jewish Identity at the *Limes*: the Earliest Reception of the Dura Europos Synagogue Paintings,” in *Cultural Identity in the Ancient Mediterranean*, ed. Erich S. Gruen (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute for the History of Art and the Humanities, forthcoming), 303–20.
- 103 See Olin, Review of *Art in Zion: the Genesis of Modern National Art in Jewish Palestine*, by Dalia Manor, *Images: a Journal of Jewish Art and Visual Culture* 2 (2009): 227–30.
- 104 For an example, see Homi K. Bhabha, “DissemiNation: Time, Narrative, and the Margins of the Modern Nation,” in *Nation and Narration*, ed. Homi K. Bhabha (London: Routledge, 1990), 291–322.
- 105 See, for example, Christopher Wood, ed., *The Vienna School Reader: Politics and Art Historical Method in the 1930s* (New York: Zone Books, 2000); and Wharton, *Refiguring the Post-Classical City*.
- 106 For example, see Robert Nelson, “The Map of Art History,” *Art Bulletin* 79 (1997): 28–40; Steve Pile and Nigel Thrift, ed., *Mapping the Subject: Geographies of Cultural Transformation* (London: Routledge, 1995); and Laurence J. Silberstein, ed., *Mapping Jewish Identities* (New York: New York University Press, 2000). A search in my local library turned up some one hundred books on cultural subjects written in the last ten years whose title begins with the word “mapping,” covering such issues as racism, religion, and “the ethical turn.”

PAUL J. KOSMIN

THE FOUNDATION AND EARLY LIFE OF DURA-EUROPOS

The Birth of Europos

The sole explicit testimony for the foundation of the Macedonian colony of Europos is a short entry in the *Parthian Stations* of Isidore of Charax.¹ At some point during the reign of Augustus, Isidore, a geographer from Charax Spasinou (another Macedonian colony) on the Persian Gulf, described a journey across the Parthian Empire from Zeugma on the northern Euphrates to Arachosia in the Hindu Kush.² Like many itineraries, Isidore's text is austere: it is organized as a list of urban settlements that punctuate a landscape. The settlements are located in relation to each other by abstract measurements of distance (in *schoeni*). In a smooth, regular rhythm, the reader is guided untroubled along a line mapped from point to point across the Parthian kingdom. At the same time as the reader's caravan moves east, Isidore's passing comments bring into view the striated, contested history of this much-conquered, much-colonized world. The sites of transit bear witness to a historical stratigraphy of imperial succession: the Assyrians, the Achaemenids, Alexander the Great, the Seleucids, and now the Parthians. Along the Euphrates, en route to Dura-Europos, the reader passes Nicephorium, a city founded by Alexander; a temple of Artemis built by Darius; Semiramis' canal; and the village of Nabagath, "where the Roman legions cross the river." Leaving Dura for Seleucia-on-the-Tigris, the reader encounters an island where King Phraates, "the one who cut the throats of his concubines," hid his treasure during the revolt of Tiridates in 26 BCE. The itinerary repeatedly provides both a current Near Eastern and an earlier Greek name for a settlement, for example, "Charax Sidae, called by the Greeks the city of Anthemusia" and "a Greek city, Artemita, through the midst of which flows the river Silla. But now the city is called Chalasar." Behind this nomenclature lies the intensive colonization of the Near East by the kings of the long-disappeared Seleucid dynasty. And so, much like at Dura-Europos itself, Isidore's *Stations* traces the complexity of cultural interaction, the precariousness of imperial power, and the whimsy of history.

Within this narrative structure, Isidore's lemma for Dura-Europos is typical. Dura-Europos lies 7 *schoeni* (280 stades or about 50 km) after the village of Asich:

ἐνθεν Δοῦρα, Νικάνορος πόλις, κτίσμα Μακεδόνων, ὑπὸ δὲ Ἑλλήνων Εὐρωπος καλεῖται.

(Then comes Dura, the city of Nicanor, a foundation of the Macedonians, called Europos by the Greeks.)

Who is this Nicanor, founder of Dura-Europos? Nicanor is, unfortunately, a common name in the already confusing period of the Diadoch Wars. There are three main candidates: Antigonus Monophthalmus' satrap of Media, Seleucus I's nephew, and Seleucus Nicator himself.

A certain Nicanor served Antigonus Monophthalmus as satrap of Cappadocia and later as general of Media. Seleucus I defeated him in battle in 311 BCE. If he survived the battle,³ he may have served Antigonus' son Demetrius Poliorcetes after the Battle of Ipsus.⁴ If this Nicanor founded Europos, then the colony would have been established on behalf of Antigonus Monophthalmus long before the Battle of Ipsus as a bastion against Seleucid expansion up the Euphrates valley.⁵ Nothing, however, suggests that this Nicanor was active in Syria, and there was no occasion for hostility between Antigonus and Babylonia before Nicanor's appointment to Media, since Seleucus was either a loyal subordinate of Antigonus or an exile in Alexandria.

According to passages in Pliny and Malalas, a nephew of Seleucus I, also called Nicanor, served as governor of Mesopotamia and established an Antioch-in-Arabia.⁶ Michael Rostovtzeff identified this Nicanor as the founder of Dura-Europos. In this scenario, the Macedonian colony of Europos would have been established by Seleucus I through his representative in the region.⁷ A later parallel to such a practice exists: Antiochus III commissioned Zeuxis, his viceroy in Asia Minor, to found military colonies in Phrygia and Lydia.⁸

Finally, King Seleucus I Nicator has been identified as the colony's founder, on the basis that Isidore's text should be emended from *Nicanor* to *Nicator*.⁹ Confusion between the two names is found even in Appian, one of the best informed ancient sources about Seleucid history.¹⁰

Dura-Europos' own local historical tradition was certain of its origins. The city traced its origins back to the Seleucid, not the Antigonid, Empire and to the king, not the general. Of course, the successful king gave to the settlement a more impressive pedigree than either his defeated opponent or his subordinate. A sculpted relief from the Temple of the Gadde, dated to year 470 of the Seleucid Era (159 CE), depicts Seleucus I Nicator as the city's founder (pl. 1).¹¹ The relief portrays three figures, each identified by a label in Palmyrene Aramaic. On the left stands the dedicant Hairan bar Malikou bar Nasor wearing a priestly tiara and holding a large palm branch. In the center, wearing a diadem and holding a scepter on a throne flanked by eagles, sits a bearded Olympian Zeus-like deity identified as the Gad of Dura. The Gad (Palmyrene *gd*) was the tutelary deity of communities or individuals; in this relief, the Gad of Dura functions as a sort of male Tyche, or Fortune, of the city.¹² The change of gender is paralleled.¹³ Standing on the right, a clean-shaven man dressed in Hellenistic military costume, holding a scepter, and wearing a diadem, extends a laurel crown over the Gad of Dura. The label identifies him as Seleucus Nicator. It seems fair to interpret this relief as a figuration of the founding of Dura-Europos by King Seleucus I.¹⁴ Although Tyche crowning king or emperor is more common, the Temple of the Gadde gesture (city-founder crowning the city's Tyche) appears in the group erected in 115 CE by the emperor Trajan in Antioch-on-the-Orontes.¹⁵ That

a Palmyrene priest of the mid-second century CE should recognize in this way the role of the first king of a long defunct empire underscores Seleucus I's prominence within the city's official memory.

Clearer evidence comes from a fragmentary papyrus document of 254 CE (*P. Dura* 32) in which the city is expressly called, in the terminology of Roman imperialism, the *κὼλωνεία Εὐρωπ[αίων Σελεύκου] Νεικάτορος* (the colony of the Europaeans of Seleucus Nicator).¹⁶ Another papyrus from Dura (*P. Dura* 25), a deed of sale from 180 CE, is dated by the Roman consuls, the regnal years of the emperors, the Seleucid Era, and four eponymous priesthoods.¹⁷ Separate priesthoods exist for Zeus, Apollo, the cults of the *progonoi* (the official dynastic cult of the Seleucid dynasty), and Seleucus I Nicator alone. That is to say, Nicator appears twice: once with his dynasty and once by himself. His separate cult only can be for the king in his capacity as founder of Dura-Europos (*ktistēs*). Founder cults for the Seleucid kings continued long after the empire's collapse.¹⁸

An inscription (one of the oldest found in the city) on a fragmentary statue base reused in the court of the Artemis temple reads

Σέλε[υκος]
Νικάτ[ωρ]

(Seleucus Nicator)¹⁹

We naturally would expect Seleucus I to be honored within his kingdom, and the statue in itself is not evidence of his role as the city's founder. Even so, the statue may have served at one time as the focal point for the public veneration of the *ktistēs*. The removal of the statue and reuse of its base may be connected to either the dynastic strife that agonized the later Seleucid kingdom or the Parthian or Roman conquests of the settlement.

If the identity of the colony's *ktistēs* cannot be established firmly, at least the approximate date of its foundation can be determined. Having conquered, absorbed, and re-elaborated the Persian Achaemenid Empire, Alexander the Great died in Babylon in 323 BCE. Over the next two decades, his Macedonian Empire fragmented into independent kingdoms, which eventually stabilized around the more successful warlords. By 303 BCE, twenty years after Alexander's death, Seleucus I had firmly established himself king in Babylonia, Iran, and Central Asia. Although he had ceded the Macedonian provinces in India and the Hindu Kush to the king of Maghāda, Chandragupta Maurya, in exchange for five hundred war elephants, Seleucus I's rule by this point was successfully territorialized in the Upper Satrapies and Babylonia. Around 302 BCE, Seleucus I joined a coalition of kings—Lysimachus, Cassander, and Ptolemy—against the dominant power, King Antigonus I Monophthalmus. At the Battle of Ipsus in 301 BCE, Seleucus I's Indian elephant force proved decisive: Antigonus was defeated and killed. In the consequent division of Antigonus' kingdom, Seleucus I absorbed Syria as "spear-won land," thereby expanding his kingdom from the Euphrates to the Mediterranean.

The colony of Europos is located on what was the primary artery between the newly incorporated Syrian lands and Seleucus I's established kingdom in Babylonia and the Upper Satrapies. Rostovtzeff argues that Europos was founded *before* the Battle of Ipsus to defend Babylonia should Antigonus emerge as victor.²⁰ It

is more probable that the colony was founded shortly *after* the battle to integrate Syria into the kingdom in order to both secure communications between the royal heartland and the new province and settle some of the military forces, since the fighting ended. Located on the hinge between the Mesopotamian and vast Iranian provinces of the kingdom, the Seleucid colonies in the Zagros mountains seem to have performed a similar function. Immediately after his victory at Ipsus, Seleucus I embarked on an extraordinarily ambitious, and successful, program of city foundation. The most important new settlements were in northern Syria: the Tetrapolis of Seleucia-in-Pieria, Laodicea-by-the-Sea, Antioch-near-Daphne, and Apamea-on-the-Orontes. He named the last after his Sogdian wife, Apame; the foundation presumably predates 299 BCE, when Seleucus I married Stratonice. The preserved narratives emphasize Seleucus I's personal direction of the city planning, the close involvement of his son Antiochus (I), divine approval for the colonial process, and predictions of the city's future prosperity. No *ktisis* tale survives for Dura, but, if one did exist, it may have been constructed from similar tropes. Although the colony of Europos would have been established formally at a precise, fixed, and ritualized moment of foundation (the ordained moment plays a central role in the *ktisis* narrative of Seleucia-on-the-Tigris),²¹ it should be acknowledged that the development, growth, and transformation of the settlement would have been a lengthy and continual process, requiring immense labor for quarrying, construction, land measurement and division, and other various organizational needs.

Seleucus I Nicator chose to name the new colony *Europos* after either the city in Macedonia, which may have been his birthplace,²² or a town on the Epirote-Thessalian frontier.²³ He gave the same name to other military colonies—Europos-Carchemish, on the Upper Euphrates near Hierapolis-Bambyce, and Europos-Rhagae, south of the Elburz mountains in northern Iran.²⁴ Seleucus I's application of Macedonian and Northern Greek nomenclature to military colonies, cities, and landscapes in Syria and the broader Near East was recognized already in antiquity as a distinctive phenomenon. Appian, discussing Seleucus I's colonizing activities, observed that whereas he used "dynastic" appellations (himself, father, mother, wives) for some cities (Seleucia, Antiochia, Laodicea, Apamea, Stratonicea) "to others he gave names from Greece or Macedonia ... Accordingly, in Syria and in the barbarous regions beyond many of the towns bear Greek and Macedonian names, such as Berrhoea, Edessa, Perinthus, Maronea, Callipolis, Achaea, Pella, Oropus, Amphipolis, Arethusa, Astacus, Tegea, Chalcis, Larisa, Heraea, Apollonia ..."²⁵ The coastline of northern Syria was named *Pieria* after the Macedonian littoral; where the Orontes flowed through Apamea, it was renamed *Axios* after the Macedonian river that debouched into the Thermaic Gulf. Although some of these Greco-Macedonian names were merely Hellenized versions of original Semitic names (e.g. *Megara* from *Ma'ara* or *Pella* from *Pahil*),²⁶ Seleucus I's distinctive naming practice should be regarded as a well-paralleled epiphenomenon of diaspora and colonialism, much as Boston on the Charles River recalls both geographic and dynastic identities. By a semiotics of place, the absent homeland was recreated in Syria. Getzel Cohen observes that Greco-Macedonian place-names were not used in Seleucid Asia Minor;²⁷ only across the Taurus mountains was the world sufficiently foreign to be named after home.

Isidore's lemma on the town underlined the correlation between settlement name and settlement population: the Parthians and local population called *Dura* what the Greeks called *Europos*. It seems that Seleucus I's colony was established on or close to an earlier Mesopotamian settlement called *Dura*. Neo-Assyrian sherds, found in the area of the *strategeion*, testify to some pre-Seleucid presence on the site.²⁸ A fragmentary cuneiform tablet (scooped up with nearby river mud being collected to manufacture bricks for the Atargatis

temple) discusses a field in the district of ^{uru}*Da-[m]a-ra*^{ki} (city of Dawara);²⁹ in time, the weak consonantal *Dawara* would resolve into *Dūra*. The name is generic, meaning “wall” or “fortress.” If *Dawara*, or *Dūra*, was indeed a pre-Macedonian town in the region, the re-emergence of this appellation in the Parthian period implies its continued use among the local population throughout the nearly two centuries of Seleucid domination. It even may indicate a deliberate—possibly subversive—retention of Semitic nomenclature beneath the formal, official renaming of the land by Seleucus I. Such “indigenous” hostility to imperial Seleucid names is known from Judea, Asia Minor, and Persis.

Of all the possible scenarios fitting the scanty, ambiguous evidence, the most likely one is that Seleucus I or his general Nicanor established the colony of Europos in the early 290s on or near an older settlement called *Dawara*, or *Dūra*.

The Early Settlement (Early 290s to Mid-second Century BCE)

Whereas the Yale–French archaeological team believed that the plan and structure of Europos was established at its foundation, new excavation and review of earlier work shows that there were two distinct phases of settlement at Dura. First, from its foundation (early 290s BCE) until at least the mid-second century BCE Europos was a small garrison settlement (called a *phourion* or *katoikia*). The essay will focus on this first period. Second, at some point around the mid-second century BCE, Europos was expanded massively and, perhaps, promoted in status. The regular “Hippodamian” street plan, the fortifications and gateways, the agora, the temples of Zeus Megistos and Artemis, and the civic archives were put in place only at this stage, about one hundred and fifty years after Europos’ foundation.

Very little is known about the first, early Seleucid settlement. A coherent—if tentative—characterization of third-century Europos may be reconstructed only with later evidence from Dura or contemporary evidence from elsewhere in the Hellenistic world. A particularly important comparandum is the Seleucid colony of Jebel Khalid (its ancient name is unknown) on the Euphrates about 150 kilometers north of Dura.³⁰ Jebel Khalid is, in many ways, the inverse of Dura-Europos; it proffers an abundant archaeological record of the Seleucid period but no literary, epigraphical, or papyrological evidence. The two sites provide complementary and reinforcing material on the nature of fortified Seleucid *phouria* on the Middle Euphrates.

It appears that the early settlement at Dura-Europos was clustered around the citadel in the area next to the river. According to Pierre Leriche’s reconstruction, the main Euphrates transit road entered the settlement from the direction of the later Gate 24, passed through the wadi at the base of the citadel, and then continued southeast along the river. Reoriented to the western Palmyrene gate in the Hippodamian replanning of the settlement, this route reappeared at some point after the city’s collapse, certainly by the Ottoman period.³¹

Even if nothing substantial survives of the early settlement in the wadi area (with the possible exception of cut-stone blocks reused in the construction of the Hippodamian city), the importance should be noted of the topographical separation between the citadel, seat of the garrison leader, and the houses of the Greco-Macedonian *klērouchoi* gathered at its base. On the citadel, an administrative building or “pal-

ace” dating to the second century BCE arranged around a central peristyle courtyard testifies to the use of this acropolis area as the official residence of the governor of the expanded settlement. Traces of an older, underlying building survive, but the remains are too fragmentary to permit reconstruction. Susan Downey has interpreted these fragments as the remnants of the palace used by the early settlement’s garrison commander in the third century.³² A similar spatial organization is found at Jebel Khalid, where the governor’s palace dating to the third century BCE occupied the fortified acropolis, whereas the garrison and associated residents inhabited the lower city at its base.³³ The administrative and storage functions of the Jebel Khalid palace, together with the prominence of sympotic and reception spaces, may suggest similar roles for the early citadel palace at Dura.

At the foundation of Europos, allotments of agricultural land in the settlement’s environs, called *klēroi*, were distributed to the individual members of the garrison. This division and assignment of territory was a standard practice in the establishment of Seleucid military colonies (elsewhere known from Palaemagnesia, Lydia and Phrygia, Avroman, and Susa). The size and quality of the allotted *klēros* corresponded to military rank.³⁴ The specific obligations incumbent on the occupation of a *klēros* are unknown, but it seems fair to assume that, as in Ptolemaic Egypt, participation in the king’s major military campaigns was added to the regular rhythm of garrison service. Bezalel Bar-Kochva has persuasively argued that the military *klērouchoi* planted throughout the kingdom formed the hard-core “Macedonian” phalanx of Seleucid armies.³⁵

The legal documents found during the excavations at Dura-Europos shed some light on the patterns of land ownership and distribution. A well-preserved parchment found by Franz Cumont in 1922 (*P. Dura* 12) records a law of inheritance, which generally is considered to derive from the foundation of the settlement. The law establishes the order of rightful claim to a deceased’s property if no natural or adopted son existed. Moving progressively outward along the line of kin, the land passed to father, then to mother (if she was not remarried), brother, sister, paternal grandfather, paternal grandmother, paternal cousin, or “if there should be none of these [relatives], let the property belong to the king” (ἐάν δὲ μηδὲς τούτων ὑπάρχη, βασιλικὴ ἢ οὐσία ἔστω). The law of inheritance demonstrates that just like the Jewish colonists Antiochus III settled in Asia Minor, Europos’ garrison was established on “royal land” (i.e., Seleucus I’s own spear-won domain over which he could exercise his direct sovereignty).³⁶ The royal land disposed of through military colonization was inalienable, at least initially: when the *klēros* could no longer support a settler, it simply reverted to the crown. Documents from Parthian and Roman Dura-Europos indicate that at some later point the *klēroi* became *de facto* transferable or alienable; a similar trend is attested for Ptolemaic Egypt.

This later practice of buying or leasing *klēroi* provides additional information on the early settlement’s distribution of land. A rather complicated and fragmentary loan agreement from the late-second century BCE (*P. Dura* 15), mentioning a *logeutos* (see below), records the sale by a certain Philip, son of Amynder, of a farmstead, orchards, and gardens “in the *ekas* of Arybbas in the *klēros* of Conon, son of [] according to the existing records of the survey.”³⁷ This document shows that the settlement’s agricultural territory was organized on two scales: the *ekas* and the *klēroi*. Unknown elsewhere, the *ekas* seems to have been a large unit of land made up of a certain number of *klēroi*. It is likely that the names attached to the lands in question—Arybbas is distinctively North Greek/Macedonian—are those of the original settlers to whom these properties were first allotted. The identification of land by the names of its first *klērouchoi* no doubt reflects its originally inalienable status. Parthian-era parchment sale-contracts from Avroman (a Seleucid military

colony on the western edge of the Zagros mountains) similarly use the nomenclature of the original land grants.³⁸ The Dura parchment demonstrates that a single *klēros* consisted of a variety of plots with different domestic, agricultural, and horticultural functions.³⁹ Antiochus III's Jewish colonists in Lydia likewise were each given separate parcels of land for a house, cultivation, and viticulture.⁴⁰

The papyri and parchments attest the personal names in circulation among the element of the population using bureaucratic record. The early settlement's onomastics are a combination of typical Greek "mainland" names (e.g., Conon), North Greek or Macedonian names (e.g., Adaeus, Amyndrus, Antigonus, Arybbas), and Seleucid dynastic names (e.g., Seleucus, Antiochus, Demetrius).⁴¹ In the narrowest interpretation, the absence of attested Semitic or Iranian names from the pre-Parthian settlement indicates the dominance of Hellenic naming patterns among the settlement's elite and, in the broadest interpretation, the exclusive Hellenic origins and self-ascription of the garrison community, which had a substantial North Greek or Macedonian element. Nevertheless, given the lack of a theater, gymnasium, or Greek temple in the early settlement, the particular arenas in which the salient performances of colonial Hellenic identity could be acted out remain a mystery. The Macedonian shield obverse-type on the royal bronzes briefly minted at Europos (see below) perhaps was an assertion of the garrison's combined ethnic and military identity.

It is possible to reconstruct only a little of the early settlement's administrative and official procedures. The basic topography suggests that the garrison community was focused on the commander's citadel-top residence, which probably served both as the point of distribution for the settlement's coinage, food, and weaponry, as well as the setting for sympotic entertainments and various rituals of communal solidarity. Inscribed dedications or honorific decrees from comparable Seleucid military settlements imply that the bifocal topography of palace and settlement was accompanied by a two-tier administration of the garrison, consisting of commanders (*hēgemones*) and soldiers (*stratiōtai*).⁴² The epigraphic evidence suggests that this militaristic organization similarly structured the broader, civic life of the settlement. It appears that the garrison's commander would have served both as, on the scale of the kingdom, the mediating point of communication between monarch and settlement, and, on the scale of the settlement, head of the Europos community.

For most of its life as a Seleucid colony, Europos lacked its own mint. Like Jebel Khalid, the early settlement received the majority of its coinage from Antioch-on-the-Orontes (although issues from Seleucia-on-the-Tigris in Babylonia, Apamea in Syria, and Tyre in Phoenicia demonstrate a wider commercial network). At an exceptional moment, during the reign of Antiochus I, Europos struck its own bronzes; the two countermarks, a lyre and a horse's head, may indicate the presence of two royal officials (pls. 21, 22). Bellinger suggests that this belongs in the context of Antiochus I's so-called "War of Succession" in 280 BCE, when northern Syria, the main source of Europos' coinage, was briefly in revolt from the Seleucid house.⁴³ The mint and the treasury (to house the unstruck metal) no doubt would have been situated within the well-protected citadel.

In addition to the numismatic evidence, some light is shed on the early settlement's broader economic life by a broken ostrakon ("Pottery A"), loosely dated by script to the early third century BCE. The text (the earliest discovered at Dura) is a two-line oath in which the seller or purchaser swears not to challenge the valuation of the object for sale.⁴⁴ The ostrakon demonstrates the existence in the early settlement of legally recognized and documented economic activity among Greek-speaking individuals (presumably members

of the garrison colony). But its informalized, unstandardized character suggests the absence of authorized or notarized “double” recordkeeping (*scriptura interiora* and *scriptura exteriora*) on papyrus or parchment at this stage in Europolis’ life. The dates given on the pigeon holes of “Hippodamian” Europolis’ public archive (*chreophylakeion*) indicate that the building and, presumably, its set of municipal or royal officials, were not established until the last third of the second century BCE.⁴⁵ More sophisticated systems of record keeping certainly were known and available to the inhabitants of early third-century Europolis, as the bullae from Seleucia-on-the-Tigris and elsewhere show. Their absence at Dura implies, once again, the limited importance and complexity of Europolis in its first period of settlement.

Although little is known about the administrative personnel of the early settlement, documents from late-Seleucid and Parthian Dura-Europolis identify other officials and magistrates. Three documents are particularly noteworthy: One, the loan agreement for the sale of land from the last decades of Seleucid rule discussed above (*P. Dura* 15) mentions a *logeutos* (tax collector). Neither the title nor the context determines whether this *logeutos* was an agent of the settlement or the kingdom. Two, Parthian-era contracts (*P. Dura* 18, 24) attest the existence of royal judges (βασιλικοὶ δικασταί) and a royal court (βασιλικὸν δικαστήριον), demonstrating the dependence of local economic transactions on the imperial administration during this period. Three, several documents and inscriptions ranging from about 40 BCE to about 200 CE title the leader of the settlement the *stratēgos kai epistatēs* (general and overseer). The transformations wrought by the Parthian conquest should not be underplayed or undervalued. But it is likely that the offices in question (tax collector, royal judge, and *stratēgos kai epistatēs*) survive from the earlier Seleucid administration of the settlement despite their attestation only from the end of the second century BCE. All the titles are in Greek and much paralleled elsewhere in the Seleucid kingdom in Greek and Akkadian sources; other, new Parthian-named offices, *batēsa* and *arcapat*,⁴⁶ were introduced by the Arsacid administration. In the Parthian period, the offices in question were occupied exclusively by individuals with Greco-Macedonian—and even Seleucid “dynastic”—names. Evidence from Susa, Seleucia-on-the-Tigris, Babylon, and elsewhere, shows a willingness by the Arsacid conquerors to leave in place large elements of the existing Seleucid administrative apparatus.⁴⁷ It unfortunately is impossible to determine whether these magistracies and offices date to the early settlement or to Europolis’ later “Hippodamian” expansion.

Out of this meager evidence, the early settlement of Europolis emerges as an entity ambiguously situated between a simple fortress and a full *polis*. The absences are striking. As far as can be perceived, in terms of civic architecture and urbanism, third-century Europolis lacked a temple, gymnasium, theater, and a “Hippodamian” street plan. In terms of sociopolitical phenomena, it lacked a developed epigraphic habit, representative civic government, sophisticated bureaucracy, and its own mint (bar one short episode). The administrative center (palace), patterns of land ownership, royal cult, and state officials show, however, it was more than a fortified army community, isolated from its local and imperial environments. Its location and dependent territory gave Europolis a dynamic and self-generating potential to expand and develop into the important, wealthier, and more complex settlement it would become (see below).

Europos in Context

Seleucus I Nicator established Europos as part of the policy of colonial settlement by which he embedded and territorialized his nascent kingdom. The type of urbanism pursued by the early Seleucid kings belongs to a royal Macedonian tradition and owes much to Philip II and Alexander the Great. This treated the foundation of cities not as the generating act of independent political communities but as a way of structuring power around dependent, defensible nodes in the creation of an expansive, territorial, monarchic state. It is clear that Europos was established primarily to serve a militaristic function; seated directly upon the main Euphrates transit route, its garrison community protected, channeled, and controlled movement along the river. Seleucus I founded his military colony at a particular felicitous location on the Middle Euphrates. Local geological features supported the early settlement's surveillance and garrison responsibilities. The Euphrates is unusually stable by Dura-Europos, owing to rather resistant natural stone moles in the river; accordingly, it passes immediately beneath the citadel. As a further result of this fluvial stability, the floodplain is extremely narrow, meaning that the land route along the Euphrates' right bank is forced through the settlement.⁴⁸ The town's location downstream of the Khabur-Euphrates confluence allowed it to control these fluvial axes of communication as well as the land connection to Palmyra. It is possible, but entirely unattested, that Dura-Europos during the third-century BCE guarded a pontoon bridge.⁴⁹

As early as the reign of Antiochus III, Europos was located in the administrative district called Parapotamia (Along the River). The settlement's official name in Polybius and documents from Parthian-period Dura (*P. Dura* 18–20) was Εὐρωπὸς ἡ ἐν τῇ Παραποταμίᾳ (Europos in Parapotamia).⁵⁰ For some reason, this was changed to Εὐρωπὸς ἡ πρὸς Ἀραβίᾳ (Europos by Arabia), in the second century CE (*P. Dura* 22, 25).⁵¹ Polybius, Posidonius, and Strabo treat Parapotamia as an official geographical unit of the Seleucid kingdom, distinct from Mesopotamia to its east.⁵² It seems to have occupied the same approximate area as the Bronze Age kingdom Khana.⁵³ At the time of Molon's revolt (222–220 BCE, see below), it was under the command of its own *stratēgos*, Diocles. By combining a preposition with the unnamed Euphrates, the province's name seems to be patterned upon the still-used Neo-Babylonian and Achaemenid nomenclature for northern Syria and the Levant, *Ebir-nāri* (Across the River).⁵⁴ The precise boundaries of the administrative zones of the Seleucid kingdom are irrecoverable; it is unlikely that bematists drew a line on the ground. Parapotamia should be thought of not as a smoothly outlined, evenly colored space of the cartographic mentality but rather as the approximate territory of certain primary population nodes and their dependent settlement dendra. In its later life, Dura-Europos functioned as a capital for this district; it is possible that it played this role from its foundation. The region's geomorphological physiognomy—the Euphrates flows through a valley too deep and narrow to allow the development of widespread steppe irrigation, and there is insufficient rainfall for dry farming—certainly has tended to support only a single major urban center: a niche filled in the second millennium by Mari and Terqa, in the later Hellenistic and imperial periods by Dura-Europos, and today by Deir ez-Zor.⁵⁵

In addition to the dominance it exerted over its immediate district and the routes that traversed it, Europos was situated on an internal periphery between the two most important units of the Seleucid kingdom: Syria and Babylonia. These regions' ideologically, politically, and economically dominant role is well known; Appian succinctly expresses this, when he calls Antiochus III “king of the Syrians, the Babylonians,

and other nations.”⁵⁶ The Euphrates was the major artery of movement between the kingdom’s two spatial centers and their core cities of Seleucia-on-the-Tigris and the Tetrapolis. Dura-Europos, like Jebel Khalid, was an important link in a chain of colonial settlements that followed, garrisoned, and secured this imperial lifeline, whose route can be followed in Isidore of Charax’s *Parthian Stations*.

It would be tempting to contrast Dura-Europos’ function under its Seleucid and later Parthian and Roman masters as that between a node articulating a route of communication within a single imperial unit and a border town defending the fault line between two hostile and competitive states; but, one of the noteworthy characteristics of the Seleucid Empire is that its administrative structures and turbulent political history anticipated the future boundaries and frontiers of the independent kingdoms that succeeded it. When Europos darts out of obscurity for a single, fleeting moment in Polybius before withdrawing once again from the narrow, king-focused limelight of the Great Historian’s narrative, it is as the northwestern extremity of the territorial reach of the pretender Molon opposed to the Syrian Seleucid center. At the beginning of Antiochus III’s reign, the satraps of Media and Persis (brothers Molon and Alexander) rose in revolt. By early 221 BCE, Molon had taken the royal title and gained complete control of Babylonia and the Upper Satrapies: his ambitions by this point lay toward Syria and the west. Polybius states that, having rested his troops, Molon “occupied Parapotamia as far as the town of Europos” (τὴν μὲν Παραποταμίαν μέχρι πόλεως Εὐρώπου κατέσχε).⁵⁷ It is unknown whether or not Europos attempted to resist Molon. Although no coins of “King Molon” have been found at Dura-Europos, this is no reason to doubt Polybius’ account. Molon’s revolt illustrates the ease with which the latent frontier qualities of the Middle Euphrates region could be transformed into an incipient political boundary.

Europos’ historical function did not remain static. We have seen that at some point around the mid-second century BCE the colony was expanded, redesigned, and promoted. This was not an expression of the settlement’s autonomous, organic growth even if Europos had flourished in its first century and a half; rather, the restructuring of the settlement can have been only a top-down political decision of the central power. Although the foundation of new settlements declined after the reign of Seleucus I, the dynasty’s urbanizing energies continued but were directed toward the upgrading and development of pre-existing colonies and cities. The earliest known instance is the Seleucid colony of Antioch-in-Persis on the Arab-Persian Gulf; a decree dating to the reign of Antiochus III reports that King Antiochus I Soter, “eager to increase our city, as it was called after him,” had added to the city’s population settlers from Magnesia-on-the-Maeander.⁵⁸ Seleucus II, Antiochus III, and Antiochus IV joined new districts and inhabitants to Seleucus I’s foundation Antioch-near-Daphne.⁵⁹ Antiochus IV renamed several indigenous cities in Syria and Babylonia “Antioch” or “Epiphania” and promoted several to *polis*-status.⁶⁰ The enlargement of Europos belongs in this well-established dynastic tradition of what can be called secondary urbanism.

The later, “Hippodamian” Seleucid settlement of Europos is not the focus of this essay, but it is fair to ask why the original colony was transformed or, rather, what new conditions the *phrourion* settlement proved inadequate to meet. The expansion of Europos—the new grid plan, fortifications, temples, and archive—should be considered a response to two important geopolitical developments.

One, Antiochus III’s conquest and incorporation of Coele Syria at the end of the third century BCE united the Middle Euphrates and the Phoenician littoral under the same overarching authority for the first time since the kingdom’s inception. The removal of the Ptolemaic political boundary amplified Europos’

mercantile relations with Damascus and Palmyra. The importance of this Euphrates-Phoenician trade route would have increased further as a result of Rome's defeat of Antiochus III, when his kingdom was stripped of its Aegean harbor-cities in Asia Minor and concentrated as never before on its Syrian-Babylonian core. Europos was developing into a major center of inter-regional trade.

Two, the death of Antiochus IV in 164 BCE inaugurated an uninterrupted series of succession crises and provincial revolts that permitted the emancipated Parthian kingdom to expand westward almost unchallenged. After the fall of Babylonia to Mithridates I, around 141 BCE, Parthian forces directly threatened the Seleucid Empire's base of power in northern Syria. It seems that Europos was developed into an operational base for military expeditions against the Parthians then into a defensive bulwark. Antiochus III had compelled the Parthians into an unsustainable submission at the end of the third century; his successors Demetrius II and Antiochus VII led initially brilliant—but ultimately futile—campaigns against the Parthian kingdom: the former was captured and the latter was killed. The discovery at Dura of several early bronze coins of the Jewish king Hyrcanus (r. 134–104 BCE), who contributed forces to Antiochus VII's eastern campaign (131–129 BCE), may indicate that the colony was involved in the enterprise.⁶¹ According to Pierre Leriche, the visibly hasty construction of the city's walls (to the point that mud-brick replaces stone in the northern part) implies a panicked reaction to the imminent danger of Parthian attack from Babylonia.⁶²

Despite its fortifications, Europos fell to the Parthians around 113 BCE. Plagued by the twin demons of internecine dynastic strife and multiplying insurrection, the now shriveled Seleucid kingdom lost control of its colony after almost two centuries. Europos managed to avoid the fate of its cousin Jebel Khalid, which perished with the dynasty that created it. Even if the brilliance of Parthian Dura-Europos eclipses the early Hellenistic colony, behind the modalities of the town's later blossoming may be detected in the dynamic potential of the original Seleucid settlement.

Notes

- 1 Isidore of Charax, *Parthian Stations*, 1.
- 2 For text, translation, and commentary, see Isidore of Charax, *Parthian Stations*, trans. with commentary by Wilfred H. Schoff (Philadelphia: Commerical Museum, 1914); for topographical identifications, see Marie-Louise Chaumont, “Études d’histoire parthe: V. La route royale des Parthes de Zeugma à Séleucie du Tigre d’après l’itinéraire d’Isidore de Charax,” *Syria* 61 (1984): 63–107.
- 3 App., *Syr.*, 55, states that Nicanor was killed by Seleucus I in battle. Diod. Sic., 19.92.5, 100.3, states that he fled.
- 4 Polyæn., *Strat.*, 4.7.4. This, of course, could be a different Nicanor.
- 5 William W. Tarn, *The Greeks in Bactria and India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1951), 7n3.
- 6 Michael I. Rostovtzeff, “The Foundation of Dura-Europos on the Euphrates,” *Annales de l’Institut Kondakov* 10 (1938): 99–107, using Plin. *HN*, 6:117, and Malalas, 8:198.
- 7 John D. Grainger, *The Cities of Seleukid Syria* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1990), 96–98, unites the first and second identifications, suggesting that Antigonos’ satrap Nicanor subsequently entered the service of Seleucus. This is unlikely: Appian (*Syr.*, 55) says that Seleucus killed Antigonos’ satrap Nicanor in 311 BCE and the Nicanor who served as governor of Mesopotamia was apparently Seleucus’ nephew.
- 8 Joseph., *AJ*, 12:147. For discussion see Getzel M. Cohen, *The Seleucid Colonies: Studies in Founding, Administration, and Organization* (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1978), 7–12.
- 9 Chaumont, 90.
- 10 App., *Syr.*, 57, calls Nicanor, strategos of Media and ally of Antigonos, “Nicator.”
- 11 Michael I. Rostovtzeff, “Le Gad de Doura et Seleucus Nicator,” in *Mélanges Syriens offerts à M. René Dussaud, secrétaire perpétuel de l’Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres, par ses amis et ses élèves*, ed. René Dussaud (Paris: Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geunther, 1939), 281–95.
- 12 Javier Teixidor, *The Pantheon of Palmyra* (Leiden: Brill, 1979), 97.
- 13 The Tyche of Cyrene was conflated with the male mythical founder Aristaeus, see Pieter Broucke, “Tyche and the Fortune of Cities in the Greek and Roman Worlds,” in *An Obsession with Fortune: Tyche in Greek and Roman Art*, ed. Susan B. Matheson (New Haven: Yale University Art Gallery, 1994), 42.
- 14 On the main types of Tyche compositions, see Cornelius C. Vermeule, *Numismatic Studies: Numismatic Art of the Greek Imperial World; Interactions between Rome, Greece, Asia Minor, Syria, the Holy Land, and Egypt*, *Art of Antiquity* (Cambridge, Mass.: Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; printed by CopyQuik Corporation, 1986), 5, pt 2:21–24. The Tyche of Dura-Europos is also represented in the Terentius painting in the Temple of the Palmyrene Gods according to the more familiarly Hellenic type established by Eutychides for the Tyche of Antioch: a female Tyche sits on rocks above a male personification of the Euphrates River. See Lucinda Dirven, *The Palmyrenes of Dura-Europos: a Study of Religious Interaction in Roman Syria* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 304–7.
- 15 Malalas 11.276. Trajan erected a statue of the Tyche of

- Antioch crowned by Seleucus Nicator and Antiochus I.
- 16 *P. Dura* 32:4–5.
- 17 *P. Dura* 25:1–4.
- 18 Rostovtzeff, “Gad de Doura,” 286–90.
- 19 The fifth letter of the second word is unclear, but it appears more like a τ than a ν: the latter reading would raise the possibility that the statue was dedicated by the possible founder, general Nicanor, to his king; see inscription catalogue number D151 in H. T. Rowell and Alfred R. Bellinger, “The Greek Inscriptions,” in *Prelim. Rep. III*, 54.
- 20 Rostovtzeff, “Foundation of Dura-Europos,” 104.
- 21 App., *Syr.*, 58.
- 22 Steph. Byz. s.v. *Oropos* claims that Seleucus Nicator was born at “Oropos” in Macedonia. As Grainger observes, there was no Oropos in Macedonia; the Macedonian town Europos is meant, see John D. Grainger, *Seleukos Nicator: Constructing a Hellenistic Kingdom* (London: Routledge, 1990), 4–5.
- 23 Strabo 7.7.9.
- 24 See Getzel M. Cohen, *The Hellenistic Settlements in Syria, the Red Sea Basin, and North Africa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 169–70.
- 25 App., *Syr.*, 57.
- 26 Cohen, *Hellenistic Settlements in Syria*, 25.
- 27 Ibid., 26.
- 28 Pierre Leriche et al., eds. *Doura-Europos Études* 1988 (Paris: Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geunther, 1988), 278–79.
- 29 From Kassite times the vocalic *wa* was represented by the syllabic sign *ma*, see Ferris J. Stephens, “A Cuneiform Tablet from Dura-Europos,” *Revue d’Assyriologie* 34 (1937): 183.
- 30 Jebel Khalid is being excavated by a team from the University of Sydney. See Graeme Wilber Clarke and Peter James Connor, eds., *Jebel Khalid on the Euphrates: Report on Excavations 1986–1996*, vol. 1, *Mediterranean Archaeology* 5 (Sydney: Meditarch, University of Sydney, 2002).
- 31 Pierre Leriche, “Pourquoi et comment Europos a été fondée à Doura?,” in *Esclavage, guerre, économie en Grèce ancienne: Hommages à Yvon Garlan*, ed. Pierre Brulé and Jacques Oulhen (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 1997), 198–203.
- 32 Susan B. Downey, “The Citadel Palace at Dura-Europos,” *Syria* 63 (1986): 27–37.
- 33 Graeme Wilber Clarke, “The Governor’s Palace, Acropolis,” in *Jebel Khalid on the Euphrates: Report on Excavations 1986–1996*, ed. Graeme Wilber Clarke and Peter James Connor, vol. 1, *Mediterranean Archaeology* 5 (Sydney: Meditarch, University of Sydney, 2002), 25–48.
- 34 See Cohen, *Seleucid Colonies*, 55–57.
- 35 Bezalel Bar-Kochva, *The Seleucid Army: Organization and Tactics in the Great Campaigns* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 20–46.
- 36 For discussion of *chōra basilikē*, see Laurent Capdetrey, *Le pouvoir séleucide: Territoire, administration, finances d’un royaume hellénistique* (Rennes: Presses Universi-

- taires de Rennes, 2009), 135–66.
- 37 *P. Dura* 15.
- 38 Ellis H. Minns, “Parchments of the Parthian Period from Avroman in Kurdistan,” *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 35 (1915): 22–65.
- 39 See Cohen, *Seleucid Colonies*, 45ff.
- 40 Joseph., *AJ*, 12.147–53.
- 41 *P. Dura* commentary, 57–58.
- 42 E.g., Thyateira (*OGI* 211); Susa/Seleucia-on-the-Eulaeus (*SEG* 7.4).
- 43 Alfred R. Bellinger, “Seleucid Dura,” *Berytus* 9 (1948): 51–67.
- 44 Richard N. Frye et al., *Inscriptions from Dura-Europos*, Yale Classical Studies, vol. 14 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1955), 169–70.
- 45 Pierre Leriche, “Le *chreophylakeion* de Doura-Europos et la mise en place du plan hippodamien de la ville,” in *Archives et Sceaux du Monde Hellénistique: Archivi e Sigilli nel Mondo Ellenistico*, Torino, Villa Gualino 13–16 Gennaio 1993, ed. Marie-Françoise Boussac and Antonio Invernizzi (Athens: École Française d’Athènes, 1996), 157–69.
- 46 Franz Altheim and Ruth Stiehl, *Geschichte Mittelasiens in Altertum* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1970), 528, suggests the etymology **peti-xšā* (representative of the king).
- 47 Pascal Arnaud, “Doura-Europos, microcosme grec our rouage de l’administration arsacide?: Modes de maîtrise du territoire et integration des notables locaux dans la pratique administrative des rois arsacides,” *Syria* 63 (1986): 135–55; Fergus Millar, “Dura-Europos under Parthian Rule,” in *Das Partherreich und seine Zeugnisse*, ed. Josef Wiesehöfer (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1998), 473–92; and Vladimir G. Lukonin, “Political, Social, and Administrative Institutions: Taxes and Trade,” in *The Seleucid, Parthian, and Sasanid Periods*, Cambridge History of Iran (London: Cambridge University Press), 3, pt. 2:714–17.
- 48 Bernard Geyer, “Le Site de Doura-Europos et son environnement géographique,” *Syria* 65 (1988): 289–90.
- 49 The main bridging point of the Euphrates in the Hellenistic period were all far to the north of Dura-Europos. The most important by far were Seleucus I’s twin foundations of Seleucia-on-the-Euphrates, generally known as Zeugma, and Apamea facing one another on the west and east banks respectively. It is possible that there were additional pontoon bridges at Samosata to Zeugma’s north and at Dipsa, near Hierapolis-Bambyce, to Zeugma’s south. For a general discussion, see Anthony Comfort, Catherine Abadie-Reynal, and Rifat Ergeç, “Crossing the Euphrates in Antiquity: Zeugma Seen from Space,” *Anatolian Studies* 50 (2000): 99–126.
- 50 Polyb. 5.48.16; and *P. Dura* 18.14, 19.2, 20.5. For Parapotamia, see Ulrich Kahrstedt, *Syrische Territorien in hellenistischer Zeit* (Berlin: Weidmannsche buchhandlung, 1926), 49.
- 51 *P. Dura* 22, 25.
- 52 Polyb. 5.48.16, 5.69.5; Strabo 16.2.11; and Posidonius F54 (Strabo 16.2.4).
- 53 See Amanda H. Podany, *The Land of Hana: Kings, Chronology, and Scribal Tradition* (Bethesda, Md.: CDL, 2002); and Mark Chavalas, “Terqa and the Kingdom of Khana,” *The Biblical Archaeologist* 59, no. 2 (1996): 90–103.

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- 54 Babylonian scribes of the Hellenistic period still used the term *Ebir-nāri* (Beyond the River); for example, a Babylonian Chronicle (*Babylonian Chronicles of the Hellenistic Period* 7 obv. 13') from the joint reign of Seleucus I and Antiochus I refers to elephants from Bactria and India being sent to the province of *e-bir* 𐎶𐎠𐎼𐎶 (*Ebir-nāri*). It is unclear how far "Beyond the River" this territory was considered to extend.
- 55 See Giorgio Buccellati, "The Kingdom and Period of Khana," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*, no. 270 (1988): 43–61. Buccellati has attributed to the region's distinctive geography the development of politically autonomous pastoral nomadism on a systematic scale.
- 56 App., *Syr.*, 1.
- 57 Polyb. 5.48.16.
- 58 OGI 233 (quotation from ll.15–16).
- 59 Glanville Downey, *A History of Antioch in Syria: from Seleucus to the Arab Conquest* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961), 87–105.
- 60 See Otto Mørkholm, *Antiochus IV of Syria* (Copenhagen: Gyldendalske Boghandel, Nordisk Forlag, 1966), 115–32.
- 61 Bellinger, *Seleucid Dura*, 63–64.
- 62 Leriche, "Pourquoi et comment Europos," 195–96.
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SYRIA AND THE MIDDLE EUPHRATES AFTER DURA

The city of Dura-Europos, dramatically perched on a cliff on the right (west) bank overlooking the Middle Euphrates River and a cosmopolitan center whose rich cultural and religious life in the centuries around the beginning of the Common Era is so well displayed in the present exhibition and catalogue, withered after the Sasanian siege in 256/257 CE.¹ The population was deported, and the fourth-century Roman historian Ammianus Marcellinus (23.5.8) described the site as deserted.² It was probably the site's destruction and protection under layers of debris that led to its preservation, as its full glory has been revealed only by excavations carried out from the beginning of the twentieth century. In modern coordinates, the site is located in southeastern Syria (34°44.82' N, 40°43.85' E) near the village of Salihiya (also Salahiyé), about 100 kilometers southeast of the town of Deir ez-Zor (also Deir ez-Zour, Dayr az-Zawr, Deir al-Zur, etc.; Arabic Dayr al-Zur). A recent guidebook describes the hour and a half drive along the main highway southeast from Deir ez-Zor past "endless squalid villages, scruffy markets with mud, squawking chickens, sheep carcasses and fruit."³ This essay describes the changes in the material culture of the Middle Euphrates region around Dura-Europos in the two millennia between the abandonment of this thriving regional outpost and the discovery of the archeological remains today.

In the centuries following the destruction of Dura, the Euphrates River (fig. 6.1) often served as the border between Byzantine and Sasanian spheres of influence. The Roman forts along its banks sometimes changed hands. One example is the military post located just to the north of



Figure 6.1: View of Euphrates from Dura (photograph courtesy of Peter Nahum)

Dura (slightly above 35° north) on the left (east) bank of the Euphrates close to its confluence with the Khabur.⁴ Probably founded during the reign of Diocletian (284–305) on the site of an older city called *Sirhi* in Assyrian texts, the Roman fort was called *Circesium* (*Kerkusion* in Syriac), a name deriving from the Latin *castrum circense* (the castle with the circus). Following the treaty with Jovian in 363, it passed to the Persians; and in 590 the Sasanian emperor Khusraw II (Parviz, “the victorious”) fled there in hope of securing Roman aid to regain his throne from the Persian general Bahram Chupin.⁵

Conflict between the Byzantines and Sasanians culminated in a final campaign between 602 and 628, the longest single war in the series that had gone on for centuries. Persian successes in the first two decades were countered by Heraclius’ campaigns into Persia, which ended with the Persians suing for peace in 627 and the emperor’s forces returning in triumph to Syria in 630. The restoration of imperial rule was short-lived, however, as Muslim forces soon occupied the area. In August 636, they trounced the Byzantines at the battle of the Yarmuk southeast of the Sea of Galilee on the modern border between Jordan and Syria. Antioch capitulated the following year, and Syria became the seat, first of the Umayyad governorate and from 661 of a vast empire that stretched from Spain to Central Asia.

The traditional view holds that the long series of wars between the Byzantines and the Sasanians had exhausted the human and material resources of both sides, leaving them vulnerable in the face of the Muslims, who therefore were able to rapidly overrun the area in the early seventh century.⁶ Recent evidence from archeology and material culture has countered this view, which often is based on written documents, suggesting instead that despite the centuries of war, the province of Syria thrived from late antiquity into early Islamic times. Clive Foss’ recent study of the material record shows, for example, that two widely distinct regions—the Orontes valley in northern Syria and the Hauran region around Bostra (now Bosra) in the south—prospered from the age of Justinian, ruler of the eastern Roman Empire from 527 to 565, to the rule of the first Islamic dynasty, the Umayyads (r. 661–750).⁷ Despite earthquakes, plagues, and invasions, all featured extensively in the chronicles, both city and countryside flourished in the sixth century, apart from occasional standout cases such as Antioch, whose precipitous decline seems to have been the exception not the rule. During the Persian period in the early seventh century, construction in the north ceased, but the archeological record of the south (modern Jordan) shows that “notions of widespread destruction by the Persians are extremely exaggerated and that life went on much as it had before.”⁸ One major effect of the Persian occupation was the flight of the rich to Rome, but the underlying population remained the same: Greek-speaking urbanites embedded in a countryside whose native language was Aramaic or Arabic, virtually all Christian, mostly Monophysite. Church activity continued apace in the south without a visible break, perhaps underwritten in part by new mercantile trade with Arabia.

The situation at the coming of Islam, therefore, was that the Syrian countryside was intact still and enjoyed the same social and economic conditions it had throughout late antiquity, with a large population that used money, stored treasure, and traded widely. Syria peacefully capitulated to the Muslims, leaving no trace in the archeological record. The process is so completely indiscernible in the physical evidence that it has been dubbed an “invisible conquest.”⁹ In many ways, material culture remained basically the same despite the transfer of power to a new religious elite. For example, the same style of pottery—from containers, cooking vessels, serving wares, and domestic utilitarian objects to building materials, especially tiles—continued after the arrival of the Muslims. Church reconstruction also continued, as shown by

the mosaic floors, including two specifically dated 637 and 639 installed at Khirbat al-Samra in the South Hauran.¹⁰

As Syria was incorporated into a world system governed by the Umayyads, prosperity in the province increased, especially in the early eighth century. Regional centers benefited from targeted programs of urban renewal, some administratively sponsored, some locally funded. Excavations at Jerash since 2002, for example, have uncovered a large congregational mosque in the center of the city.¹¹ New regional centers were founded also at such sites as Ramla (northwest of Jerusalem, 715–17), Anjar (northwest of Damascus, early eighth century), and perhaps Ayla (near Aqaba, late seventh or early eighth century?).¹²

One of the major changes to cities was the transformation of the gridded plan typical of Roman and Hellenized cities such as Dura-Europos. Already in the 1930s and 1940s, the French scholar Jean Sauvaget demonstrated how the broad colonnaded streets of such classical cities as Latakia, Aleppo, and Damascus evolved into the narrow, often irregular streets with covered markets and buildings clustered around open spaces typical of the Islamic middle ages.¹³ The British historian Hugh Kennedy showed that this evolution from *polis* to *madina*, his felicitous turn of phrase for this change, was already well underway before the arrival of the Muslims.¹⁴ New archeological work shows that the urban transformation was not chaotic or random but rather part of a conscious expansion of commercial activity that reflected social changes.¹⁵ With the emigration of the local aristocracy in the late Byzantine period, for example, some of their bigger houses were converted into dwellings for larger groups and increasingly occupied by extended families or newly immigrant peasants or artisans, who established small-scale production in the houses. Whereas such architectural changes originally were considered to represent deurbanization and degradation, they can be understood better as creative adaption and reuse.

In addition to these transformed urban centers, the Umayyad period also saw the creation of smaller rural settlements known as “castles” (Arabic *qusur*, sing. *qasr*), probably the best-known and best-studied buildings from the period.¹⁶ Located in the *badiya* (steppe lands east of Amman), they range in size and complexity, from the classic type of a 70-meter square surrounded by a towered wall pierced with a single gateway to large houses or residences with one row of rooms around the outer wall and central courtyard. Denis Genequand recently has traced a clear line of continuity for their plans and exteriors, from Roman military forts of the second to fourth century through sixth-century villas and palaces to the late seventh- and early eighth-century Umayyad “castles,” whose “fortified” exteriors preserved the same look but were something of a sham. Apart from their external appearance, most of the “castles” have few defensive features, with thin walls, solid (and therefore unusable) towers the same height as the exterior walls, and no arrow slits or defensive crenellations.

One of the best published of these “castles” is Qasr al-Hayr East, located 100 kilometers northeast of Palmyra in the Syrian steppe.¹⁷ Like the others, it was part of a wider settlement, including an outer (7 × 4 km) walled enclosure with sluice gates, probably for animals and agriculture, and two enclosures in addition to a bath and a settlement built of mud-brick. The Lesser Enclosure (66 m sq; fig. 6.2), with two stories of rooms around a central courtyard, was used probably as a *caravansary* (medieval motel), a function befitting the setting of this new foundation at the intersection of the main roads from Aleppo to Iraq and from the Upper Euphrates to Damascus. The Greater Enclosure (160 m sq, fig. 6.3) has an arcaded court with seven attached houses or apartments, an industrial unit, and a mosque. An inscription mentions the foundation



Figure 6.2: Lesser Enclosure from southwest, Syria, Qasr al-Hayr al-Sharqi, early 20th century. Photograph by K. A. C. Creswell. Creswell Archive, Ashmolean Museum, neg. EA.CA.549 (photograph © Creswell Archive, courtesy of the Fine Arts Library, Harvard College)

140 m), it had a richly carved south façade that was removed during the construction of Hijaz railway begun in 1900 to connect Europe and Constantinople with the Holy Cities of Mecca and Medina. German engineers wanted to crush the carved stones for the rail bed, but the façade was saved when the Ottoman sultan Abdülhamid II (r. 1876–1909) offered it to his friend Kaiser Wilhelm II. It was installed in the new Pergamon Museum in Berlin as a work of late antiquity to complement the series of structures from antiquity, including the Ishtar Gate from Babylon and the Pergamon altar, reerected there. Various attributed to the Byzantines (or to their local proxies, the Ghassanid tribes of the region) or to the Sasanians (or to their local proxies, the Lakhmids) the *qasr* at Mshatta (and its façade) can be dated definitively after the arrival of the Muslims by the presence of a mosque and bricks with Arabic graffiti. It probably dates to the 740s, and its complex internal organization foreshadows the shift toward eastern styles and tastes that took place with the rise of the Abbasids, the second Muslim dynasty that ousted the Umayyads in 750.

The Abbasids, who drew much of their support from disaffected minorities in Iran and the eastern Islamic lands, transferred the capital of their vast empire from Syria to Iraq. In 762, the caliph al-Mansur founded the new city of Madinat al-Salam, commonly known as Baghdad, near the former Sasanian capital of Ctesiphon. Located on the

of this city (*madina*) in 110 of the hegira, corresponding to 728/729 of the Common Era.

As Genequand pointed out, such a study of the filiation of the Umayyad *qasr* is based only on plans and the external form of an enclosure wall or rampart. Internally, the buildings became more complex, and the typical Umayyad “castle,” as with the Greater Enclosure at Qasr al-Hayr, is subdivided into several houses with suites of rooms (Arabic *buyut*, sing. *bayt*). The introduction of subdivisions, one of the key features distinguishing the Umayyad *qasr* from its prototypes, was probably adopted from the domestic architecture of late-Roman Syria. The palace of the Dux Ripae at Dura-Europos, for example, has an apartment along its eastern aisle and is organized around a courtyard with a portico.

One of the latest of these “castles” is found at Mshatta, a ruined site 25 kilometers south-southeast of Amman (fig. 6.4). Four times the size of the typical *qasr* (140 ×

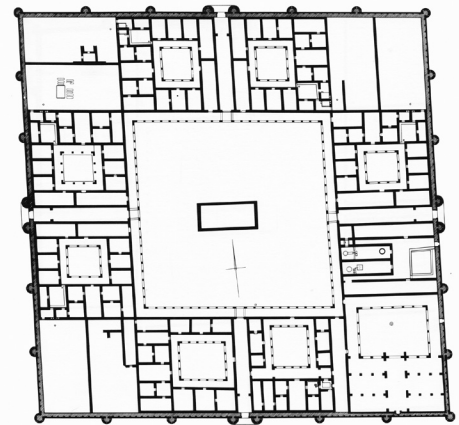


Figure 6.3: Plan of Greater Enclosure, Qasr al-Hayr East. After Grabar et al., *City in the Desert*, 2:101

Tigris at the point where it is closest to the Euphrates, the site had obvious commercial advantages in connecting the Persian Gulf and the Mediterranean. Linked to Baghdad by canals, the Euphrates took on new life as an artery connecting Syria and Anatolia to the heartlands of Islam. The cities along its banks flourished. The caliph al-Mansur, founder of Baghdad, also established a new settlement of Rafiqa to the west of Raqqa near the classical site of Nikephorion on the Upper Euphrates. His successor Harun al-Rashid (r. 786–809), who disliked Baghdad, made it his capital.

The material record points to a major shift in Syrian prosperity circa 800, as modest developments accelerated to create what archeologists dub “a cultural punctuation point,” when decisive new innovations occurred. These included the adoption of exotic new types of pottery, notably brightly glazed and fine white wares, and a technological innovation in glass, with the gradual abandonment of natron and the adoption of plant ash as a flux substitute.¹⁸

The florescence of urban life along the Middle Euphrates is captured in the accounts of Arab geographers of the tenth century. The most famous is the treatise entitled *Ahsan al-taqasim fi ma‘rifat al-aqalim* (Best Divisions for Knowledge of the Regions), written by Shams al-Din Abu ‘Abdallah Muhammad ibn Ahmad Abi Bakr, usually known as al-Muqaddasi (that is, “the man from Jerusalem”) and probably completed around 985.¹⁹ His account is systematic, and his training as an engineer (*al-banna’*) means that he accorded special place to the buildings and urban fabric of the places and regions he visited. His chapter on the “empire of Islam” opens with a section on the Arabian Peninsula, homeland of Islam, and then moves to one on the capital province of Iraq. The third section deals with the *Jazira* (literally, “the island”), referring to the triangular plateau in Upper Mesopotamia bordered by the Tigris and the Euphrates and often including the strip of land along the right bank of the Euphrates.²⁰ Al-Muqaddasi enumerates several towns in the Euphrates district corresponding to the stretch of the Middle Euphrates. The largest, he says, is Rahbat ibn Tawq, followed by Qarqisiya, ‘Ana, al-Daliya, and al-Haditha. Several pages later, he gives more detail about al-Rahba (“town square” or “flat plain”), describing it as a large town on the desert side. It is in the shape of a *taylasan* (the tall hat adopted by the Abbasid court, and variously interpreted as semicircular or rectangular) and has a fortress and a suburb.²¹ The remaining towns, he says, all lie toward the desert and are flourishing.

In his summary of the conditions in the region, al-Muqaddasi adds that the climate and customs of the *Jazira* are like those of Syria. Details about the region include that hot areas, including the Euphrates, have date palms. The people belong to different sects of Islam and different schools of law. He also notes that the region is supplied by plentiful waters from the Tigris, Euphrates, and Khabur rivers, adding that there is a saying that the Euphrates is blessed and the Tigris accursed.²² Articles of trade produced in the *Jazira* include walnuts, almonds, clarified butter, and the very finest horses, with Rahba noted for quinces of most



Figure 6.4: Mshatta Façade, in situ before being moved to Berlin, Jordan, ca 740. Fine Arts Library, Harvard College, 158 M878 3P 1 SF (photograph courtesy of Special Collections, Fine Arts Library, Harvard College)

surpassing excellence. In short, al-Muqaddasi gives us a good picture of a flourishing market and agricultural area—somewhat like Mark Twain’s description of nineteenth-century life along the Mississippi—and al-Muqaddasi’s account of the prosperity of the Middle Euphrates region in the tenth century is borne out by several briefer notes by his contemporaries.²³

Many of the towns mentioned by the tenth-century geographers are readily identifiable. Qarqisiya is the old Roman Circesium, set on the left (east) bank of the Euphrates just below its confluence with the Khabur; it remained one of the main crossing points over the Euphrates.²⁴ Just south of it on the opposite bank is the largest of the towns mentioned by al-Muqaddasi—Rahba, also known as Qal’at Rahba (the fortress of Rahba), 40 kilometers south of Deir el-Zor en route to Dura.²⁵ Archeological work has been carried out in the area since the 1970s, but little has been published to date. The major remains belong to a castle built in the twelfth century by the Zangid prince Nur al-Din that was later sacked by the Mongols.²⁶ The area around it was particularly fertile, for a canal provided water for extensive cultivation.

Texts tell us that many of these cities were multidenominational. Rahba was the seat of a Jacobite bishopric and for a time also a Nestorian bishopric. Nearby was a convent monastery, Dayr Nusm.²⁷ According to Rabbi Benjamin of Tudela, who left his hometown in Navarre in northeast Spain around 1165 and made a circuit around the Arabian peninsula, Qarqisiya had a high proportion of Jews (five hundred families).²⁸

The Middle Euphrates continued to be an important artery in later medieval times, despite the political fragmentation in the region and the disruptions caused by the Crusades. Ibn Jubayr (1145–1217), the Andalusian traveler and geographer, did not visit the region, traveling instead from Mecca to Baghdad, up the Tigris to Mosul, then west across northern Mesopotamia to Aleppo, thereby making a loop that bypassed the towns on the Middle Euphrates.²⁹ But Ibn Batutta (1304–69), the Moroccan globetrotter, passed through the region on his return from China in the 1350s.³⁰ He traveled up the Euphrates from Anbar to Hit, Haditha, and Ana, describing these towns as among the most beautiful and most fertile in the world. The road between them, he said, was populated thickly, and traveling through it was like traveling through a bazaar. He next reached the city of al-Rahba, which he designated as the most beautiful place in Iraq and also the beginning of Syria. Ibn Battuta’s description of a thriving Rahba is confirmed by the Persian geographer Hamd-Allah Mustawfi, who included the city as part of Syria and noted its fine gardens that extended over an area of 1 by 4 leagues (5×20 km?) and produced quinces, apples, pears, and grapes of good quality.³¹

The material history of the towns along the Middle Euphrates in later centuries is less clear. Disasters to the sites are often mentioned in chronicles (Rahba, for example, was besieged by the Mongols in 1313 and flooded in 1331), but much of the information has yet to be culled and put together into a coherent picture of the urban and material culture in the region, especially during the long period of Ottoman control (the sixteenth to the twentieth century).

We are on firmer ground at the turn of the twentieth century, when regional studies became an important focus of scholarship in Near Eastern archeology.³² Germans dominated the field, in part because of their connections with the Ottomans. The Deutsche Orient-Gesellschaft, for example, was founded with state support in Berlin in 1898. Two of the earliest pioneers to the region were Friedrich Sarre and Ernst Herzfeld, who visited the Middle Euphrates as part of their explorations to Mesopotamia that were conducted between October 1907 and March 1908 and published in four volumes between 1911 and 1920.³³

They made extensive investigations at Salihya (fig. 6.5), publishing a rough ground plan and uncovering walls, shards of both unglazed and glazed ceramics, stucco friezes, Greek inscriptions, and even a wall painting with an architectural scene.³⁴ Their findings were of interest as part of the search for Western “influence,” particularly that of Rome, in the East. And excavations at Dura, the easternmost city of the Roman Empire thus far explored in the region, were especially important.

Herzfeld’s interest in the region had begun earlier, when he had excavated (1903–5) with Walter Andrae at Assur, the ancient Assyrian capital on the west bank of the Tigris near its confluence with the Zab in Iraq. On his return to Germany from his archaeological expedition with Sarre, Herzfeld wrote his masterful delineation establishing the precise date for the Mshatta façade in the Umayyad period.³⁵

Sarre and Herzfeld’s contemporary was the Austrian-Czech orientalist Alois Musil (1868–1944).³⁶ His exploration of Arabia Deserta in 1908 and 1912 had brought him to the right bank of the Middle Euphrates, which he set out to explore in March and April of 1912, accompanied by Prince Sixtus of Bourbon, an official from the Military Geographical Institute in Vienna, and a caravan of nine camels. After completing extended appendices with material culled from the sources on topography, canals, highways, military campaigns, and the like, Musil published the results in English in 1927 with the help of the American industrialist Charles Richard Crane, son of a Chicago manufacturing mogul and Arabist who helped finance the first explorations for oil in Arabia and the Yemen.³⁷ In the preface (xiii), Musil states that the purpose of his journey was historical, not cartographic, and much of the material details the course of the river and the names of the sites rather than the ruins on the ground.

Musil’s volume opens with a lengthy description of Deir el-Zor, which he describes as a prosperous trading town. Its chief exports were wool carpets and blankets, butter, and wheat—products traded up and down the Euphrates. The inhabitants were multid denominational: in addition to four thousand Muslims, there were many Christians (eight hundred Syrian and six hundred Armenian Catholics, with two chapels) and two hundred Jews. From Deir ez-Zor, Musil set off down the west bank of the Euphrates, passing the ruined castle at Rahba to Salihya, where he explored the ancient ruins of Dura (fig. 6.6), before moving on to Ana and eventually Baghdad. Just how new was the information obtained by both teams (Sarre-Herzfeld and Musil) is clear, since the site



Figure 6.5: View of the ruins, Salihya (ancient Dura-Europos). After Sarre and Herzfeld, vol. 3, pl. LXXXI



Figure 6.6: View of the ruins, Salihya (ancient Dura-Europos). After Musil, fig. 5.

of Dura-Europos was left unmentioned in the eleventh edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, the twenty-nine-volume reference work published in 1910–11 with articles written by the best-known scholars of the day.³⁸

Deir ez-Zor continued to be the main town in the region in modern times, replacing the antique and medieval centers at Circesium/Qarqisiya and Rahba. As the Ottoman Empire lost control of the region in the early twentieth century, Deir ez-Zor became a major destination point for Armenians fleeing the Ottomans in 1915 and 1916, and in 1990 a memorial monument was completed in the city center as a tribute to the many who died in camps outside the town.³⁹ The town's commercial importance was cemented in 1931 with the completion of a 450-meter suspension bridge over the Euphrates that made it the main crossing point over the river. In the 1950s, most of its twenty-two thousand inhabitants were said to be Muslims, belonging to the Sunni sect, with a small Christian minority, comprising mainly Armenian refugees from former Turkish territories. These groups were served by three mosques and several Orthodox and Roman Catholic churches. No Jews are mentioned. The town served both as a military center and entrepôt on the routes northeast from Damascus and southeast from Aleppo. It was probably the site of the ancient town of Auzara, from which, via the transposition Azuara, the name Deir ez-Zor is derived, despite the modern explanation that the name means “convent set in a grove” referring to the clusters of tamarisks alongside the river and perhaps to Dayr al-Rumman, the monastery between Rahba and Khabur mentioned by the geographer Yaqut.⁴⁰

By the beginning of the twenty-first century, the population of Deir ez-Zor has soared tenfold.⁴¹ As a century ago, the city and surrounding area are a fertile and prosperous farming area for livestock breeding, cereals, and cotton. It is, therefore, the site of many agribusinesses, but much of the growth is due to the town's location as center for the petroleum industry, which extracts light crude from the nearby Syrian desert.⁴² The city now rates an airport, several luxury hotels, French-style riverbank restaurants, and a regional museum opened in 1996 under the auspices of the Ministry of Culture in Damascus with support from two oil companies—Shell and Denimex, a German oil company that found large reserves of crude in northeast Syria in 1984⁴³—as well as Daimler-Benz, the German manufacturer of cars, trucks, and internal combustion engines. The museum, with texts supplied by the Free University (Freie Universität) of Berlin, documents the vast chronological sweep of settlement in the area, from the Bronze Age (third millennium BCE) material from Mari and Uruk in southern Mesopotamia through the products from the medieval Jazira, such as cotton, sugarcane, rice, olive oil, fruits, honey, cheese, butter, and charcoal, as enumerated by the tenth-century geographers. A final room addresses the shifting ecological balance of the region, disrupted over the last century through increased agriculture, automobiles, and the overgrazing and desiccation of the steppe (*badiya*).⁴⁴ It is precisely this changing ecological landscape that was evoked at the beginning of this essay by the description of the depressing car ride southeast from Deir ez-Zor; yet, it belies the continuing prosperity of the region, at least to some, which continues to flourish, but based on a different economy, nearly two millennia after the demise of Dura-Europos.

Notes

- 1 *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, VII, s.v. “Dura Europos,” by Pierre Leriche, the French excavator of the site since 1986.
- 2 *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, VII, s.v. “Deportations, ii. In the Parthian and Sasanian Periods,” citing Ammianus Marcellinus (23.5.8).
- 3 Diana Darke, *Syria*, Bradt Travel Guide (Guilford, Conn.: Globe Pequot, 2006), 258.
- 4 The Middle Euphrates region sits on the al-Hamad plateau and is subject to continental extremes of temperatures. No crop will grow without irrigation, but there is a substantial difference between the soils of the two banks: sites on the east bank sit on the upper valley terrace above the flood plain, whereas those on the west bank are built on alluvial soil. See Delwen Samuel, “Medieval Irrigation Agriculture in the Syrian Middle Euphrates Valley: an Archaeobotanical Case Study,” in *Peuplement rural et aménagements hydroagriques dans la moyenne vallée de l’Euphrate, fin VIIe–XIXe siècle: Région de Deir ez Zor–Abu Kemal, Syrie: Mission Mésopotamie syrienne, archéologie islamique*, 1986–1989, ed. Sophie Berthie (Damascus: Institut français d’études arabes de Damas, 2001), 347–81.
- 5 *Encyclopaedia Iranica*. IX, s.v. “Euphrates.”
- 6 This is the view, for example, on *Wikipedia*, s.v. “Byzantine-Sassanid War of 602–628.” Many of the traditional views are summarized in Alan Walmsley, “After Justinian, 565–635 CE,” in *Early Islamic Syria: An Archeological Assessment* (London: Duckworth, 2007), 31–57.
- 7 Clive Foss, “Syria in Transition, A.D. 550–750: an Archaeological Approach,” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 51 (1997): 189–269. See also Warmlesley.
- 8 Foss, 261.
- 9 Walmsley, 47, citing the title of the study by Peter Pentz, *The Invisible Conquest. The Ontogenesis of Sixth and Seventh Century Syria* (Copenhagen: National Museum of Denmark, 1992).
- 10 Foss, 253–54; the mosaics are discussed and illustrated in Michele Piccarillo, *The Mosaics of Jordan*, ed. Patricia M. Bikai and Thomas A. Dailey (Amman: American Center of Oriental Research, 1993), 302–9.
- 11 Kristoffer Damgaard and Louise Blanke, “The Islamic Jarash Project: a Preliminary Report on the First Two Seasons of Fieldwork,” *Assemblage* (Sheffield Graduate Journal of Archaeology) 8 (2004), available on-line at <http://www.assemblage.group.shef.ac.uk/issue8/damgaardandblanke.html>.
- 12 All discussed in Walmsley, “Sites and Settlement Practices,” in *Early Islamic Syria*, 71–112, with references.
- 13 Eugene Wirth, “Die orientalische Stadt,” *Saeculum* 26 (1975): 43–94, with full bibliography.
- 14 Hugh Kennedy, “From Polis to Madina: Urban Change in Late Antique and Early Islamic Syria,” *Past and Present* 106 (1985): 3–27.
- 15 The key article here is Foss, but see also the other works cited in Walmsley, “Sites and Settlement Practices,” as in note 12 above.
- 16 One of the latest studies is Denis Genequand, “Umayyad Castles: the Shift from Late Antique Military Architecture to Early Islamic Palatial Building,” in *Muslim Military Architecture in Greater Syria*, ed. Hugh Kennedy (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 3–25, which summarizes much of the ear-

- lier work.
- 17 Oleg Grabar, Renata Holod, James Knutstad, and William Trousdale, *City in the Desert: Qasr al-Hayr East* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993).
 - 18 Warmesley, "Material Culture and Society," in *Early Islamic Syria*, 48–70.
 - 19 Al-Muqaddasi, *Ahsan al-taqasim*, English translation by Basil Collins as *The Best Divisions for Knowledge of the Regions* (Reading, Eng.: Garnet, 2001).
 - 20 For the area and its definition, see *Encyclopedia of Islam*, II: 523, s.v. "al-DJazīra, DJazīrat Aḳūr or Iḳlim AKūr," by Maurice Canard.
 - 21 Al-Muqaddasi, 120.
 - 22 Ibid., 120–25. The source of this anecdote lies in the fact that the Tigris is subject to unpredictable and extreme variations, whereas the Euphrates, fed by snow melt in the Anatolian highlands, was relatively predictable in the era before the construction of large damming projects in Turkey and Syria. See Samuel, 354.
 - 23 The anonymous Persian geography entitled *Hudūd al-‘ālam* [*Hudūd al-‘ālam*, "The Regions of the World," *A Persian Geography* 372 A.D.–982 A.D., trans. Vladimir Minorsky (London: Luzac, 1970), 140–41, for example, says that the Jazira is a pleasant province, prosperous, populous, with an equitable climate and running waters. The countryside was flourishing.
 - 24 *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, IV, s.v. Karkīsiyā (also Karkisiya)," and II, s.v. "al- Furāt."
 - 25 *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, VIII, s.v. "al- Rahba, Rahbat Mālik b. Tawk or Rahbat al-Sha'm."
 - 26 Illustrated in Alois Musil, *The Middle Euphrates: a Topographical Itinerary* (New York: American Geographical Society, 1927), 7, fig. 2, and still mentioned in guide-books such as Darke, 257–58, as a "delightfully ruined fairy-tale castle."
 - 27 Cited in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, VIII s.v. "al- Rahba."
 - 28 Cited in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, IV, s.v. "Karkīsiyā." One of Benjamin's aims may have been to catalogue the Jewish communities en route, so it is no surprise that he mentions the Jews of Qarqisiya.
 - 29 Ibn Jubayr, *The Travels of Ibn Jubayr*, trans. Ronald J. C. Broadhurst (London: Jonathan Cape, 1952).
 - 30 Ibn Battuta, *The Travels of Ibn Battūta*, A.D. 1325–1354, trans. H. A. R. Gibb (London: Hakluyt Society, 1958–2000), 4:915–16.
 - 31 Hamd-Allah Mustawfi, *Nuzhat al-qulūb*, trans. Guy Le Strange as *The Geographical Part of the Nuzhat-al-qulūb Composed by Hamd-allāh Mustawfī of Qazwīn in 740* (1340) (London: Luzac, 1919), 242.
 - 32 See Stephen Vernoit, "The Rise of Islamic Archaeology," *Muqarnas* 14 (1997): 1–10, on the development of the field; and Ann C. Gunter and Stefan R. Hauser, "Ernst Herzfeld and Near Eastern Studies," in *Ernst Herzfeld and Near Eastern Studies 1900–1950*, ed. Ann Gunter and Stefan Hausen (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 3–44, on the interest in regional studies.
 - 33 Friedrich Sarre and Ernst Herzfeld, *Archäologische Reise im Euphrat- und Tigris-Gebiet*, 4 vols. (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer, 1911–20; repr. Saarbrücken: Fines Mundi, 2010).
 - 34 Ibid., 2:386–95. The text was written by Herzfeld, and the ground plan and description were taken from the

work of Bruno Schulz, who had worked with Sarre at the site in 1898.

- 35 Ernst Herzfeld, "Die Genesis der islamischen Kunst und das Mshatta-Problem," *Der Islam* 1 (1910): 27–63; English translation by Fritz Hillenbrand as "The Genesis of Islamic Art and the Problem of Mshattā," in *Early Islamic Art and Architecture*, ed. Jonathan M. Bloom, Formation of the Classical Islamic World 23 (Aldershot, Eng.: Ashgate, 2002), 7–86.
- 36 For a short, popular biography, see Peter Harrigan, "From Moravia to Arabia," *Saudi Aramco World* 60, no. 6 (Nov.–Dec. 2009): 8–16, <http://www.saudiaramco-world.com/issue/200906/from.moravia.to.arabia.htm>.
- 37 Musil, *The Middle Euphrates*.
- 38 *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 11th ed. (New York: Encyclopaedia Britannica Corporation, 1910–11).
- 39 *Wikipedia*, "Deir ez-Zor camps."
- 40 *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, II, s.v. "Dayr al-Zōr," by Dominique Sourdel.
- 41 Darke's 2006 travel guide (255) gives 185,000; the *Wikipedia* entry "Deir ez-Zor" says that as of 2004, there were 239,000 inhabitants in the metropolitan area of the city.
- 42 *Wikipedia*, "Deir ez-Zor."
- 43 Syrian-European Business Centre, *Emerging Syria: Annual Business Economic and Political Review*, vol. 1, Emerging Markets Series (London: Oxford Business Group in association with SEBC, 2003), 81–90.
- 44 Darke, 256–57.

PAMELA BERGER

THE TEMPLES/TABERNACLES IN THE DURA-EUROPOS SYNAGOGUE PAINTINGS

“Aladen’s lamp had been rubbed and suddenly from the dry, brown, bare desert had appeared paintings, not just one nor a panel nor a wall but a whole building of scene after scene, all drawn from the Old Testament in ways never dreamed of before.”¹ Such was the awe and astonishment expressed by Clark Hopkins when, in 1932, he gazed at the newly uncovered wall paintings in the Synagogue of Dura-Europos, the trading town on the Euphrates under Roman rule and destroyed by a Parthian king, Shapur I, in 256/257 CE (fig. 7.1). A whole community of scholars was amazed by the discovery. For some, like Kurt Weitzmann, the imagery appeared to prove the hypothesis that illustrations of the Hebrew Bible had existed during Hellenistic times.² For others, such as Herbert Kessler, the paintings seemed to validate the theory that many early Christian pictorial formulae had roots in Jewish manuscript illustration.³ Those who sought the meaning of the iconography proposed a variety of interpretations. Erwin Goodenough argued that since the images incorporated a number of pagan elements they demonstrated a rejection of rabbinic authority and contained hidden symbolism, connecting them to a “Jewish mystery religion” parallel to the mystery religions of Mithras and Cybele practiced in the Roman Empire.⁴ Carl Kraeling, on the other hand, interpreted the paintings as expressing the beliefs of traditional rabbinic Judaism, beginning with the patriarch Abraham and continuing until the messianic era.⁵ In the end, these various interpretations all can contribute in some way to an understanding of the wall paintings. As Annabel Wharton has pointed out, in traditional Jewish commentary (*Midrash*), one interpretation alone rarely suffices. What is offered is rather a juxtaposition of responses suggesting a variety of meanings; in that way, something new is created.⁶ Thus, just as *midrashic* response and counter-response reveal rich and complex

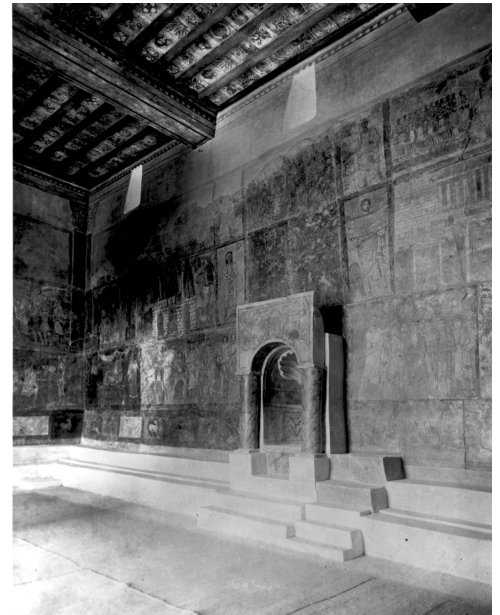


Figure 7.1: Paintings on the south and west walls, Synagogue, ca. 245–256 CE. National Museum of Damascus (photograph courtesy of the Yale University Art Gallery, Dura-Europos Collection)

meanings, scholars continue to bring to bear varied and complex Jewish, and indeed pagan, textual, liturgical, and ritual evidence in an attempt to shed light on this magnificent panoply of images.

It is difficult to imagine the discussions that must have taken place among those who determined the iconography for this painting, but one thing seems apparent: The Jews who planned the program were not separated out from or in competition with other cultic groups in the community.⁷ Although some Jews may have lived close together, others were scattered among the various inhabitants of the city. The Jews would have operated in an eclectic environment, where several languages were spoken, including Greek, Latin, Aramaic, and Persian. They lived among people who venerated Jesus or Mithras or Bel, and they walked the streets with those who worshipped in sanctuaries dedicated to Zeus, Gad, or Artemis.⁸ All of the Jews would have dressed similarly to other Durene people, with the possible exception of having fringes attached to their garments. The painters in the workshops charged with the execution of the murals no doubt had decorated the walls in the other places of worship as well, just as in Rome, where the same painters decorated catacombs from different traditions.⁹ It is clear from the art-historical evidence that an “ecumenical” style, or rather slightly differing styles, had developed in Dura—styles shared by pagans, Christians, and Jews. Figurative painting was not anathema to Jews, in spite of the seeming prohibitions of the Second Commandment. A Genizah fragment of the Jerusalem Talmud, which was being codified just around this time, recounts that “in the days of Rabbi Johanan (around 250 CE) they permitted (or, began to make) images on the walls, and he did not stop them.”¹⁰ Furthermore, the archaeological evidence suggests that there was

a mutual tolerance of a variety of religious establishments.¹¹ As shown below, the wall paintings of the Synagogue in both iconography and style reflect a rather fluid set of relationships between Jews, Christians, and pagans.

Three walls of the Synagogue have retained their paintings. The most important of these is the west wall, the side facing Jerusalem (fig. 7.1). On the west wall, three structures have been identified as symbolically representing the Tabernacle in the Desert or the Temple of Solomon. The identification of the fourth temple remains a mystery. This essay explores the various interpretations of those buildings, how they relate to the Hebrew Bible, the Talmud, the *Midrash*, and Jewish folklore, as well as to the art-historical evidence of the site. Although these sources will illuminate many aspects of the paintings, no definitive explanation of a specific program has as yet satisfactorily elucidated all iconographic aspects of the murals; nevertheless, there are identifiable stories and parts of stories, as well as emblematic images that relate to the liturgy and festival cycle of the year. This kind of “free” organization accords with the way the Hebrew Bible served the community in late antiquity.

The painting above the Torah niche is the oldest among the murals, having been executed in the 240s (fig. 7.2). Directly in the center of that painting is a symbolic representation of the façade of the Temple



Figure 7.2: Torah niche, Synagogue, ca. 245 CE. National Museum of Damascus (photograph courtesy of the Yale University Art Gallery, Dura-Europos Collection)

of Solomon with the Ark of the Covenant inside (fig. 7.3). There was no attempt to represent the actual Solomonic Temple as described in 1 Kings 7–8; rather, the façade is depicted as a typical Roman structure, with four columns resting on plinths and bases. In a general way, it suggests Herod's Roman Temple as represented on coins made during the Bar Kochba revolt (132–35 CE) (fig. 7.4). In the façade depicted in the mural, the lower part of the temple columns appears to be fluted. The capitals are Corinthian and support an architrave surmounted by decorative semi-spheres. The stone is painted yellow. At the center is the image of the Ark of the Covenant which would not have been present in the Herodian temple, since it is no longer mentioned after the Babylonian destruction of the site. The Ark of the Covenant in this representation likewise has Roman architectural traits: columns sustaining a lintel, which supports a fan-shaped motif under an arch. This is more or less the way the Ark of the Covenant is depicted in other wall paintings in the Synagogue (figs. 7.8 and 7.12) as well as in representations outside of Dura.

The Temple is surrounded by evocative emblems on the left and by the scene of the Sacrifice of Isaac on the right. The crucial moment in the story of the sacrifice is represented (fig. 7.5).¹² Abraham, holding a knife upright in his hand, stands with his back to the viewer. To his left is a tall altar upon which lies the body of his son over the wood for the burnt offering. Isaac likewise has his back to us. His legs are unbound in contradiction to the biblical story. In the lower portion of the image, beside a small tree is the ram to be sacrificed in place of Isaac. In the top right-hand corner at the entrance to a tent is the back of a figure that is possibly Abraham's servant. Just above the altar and beside the tent appears the right hand of God. Although the Sacrifice of Isaac would be represented hundreds of times in later Jewish and Christian art, this remains the first known instance of its depiction.

Several curious elements present themselves in this representation of the sacrifice. First of all, unlike the other scenes in the murals, here all three human figures are presented from the back so that their faces are hidden. Since this panel was executed five or ten years earlier than the others in the Synagogue, does this reluctance to show the human face reflect a lingering adherence to the injunctions of the second commandment? Could it be that the reluctance stems from the panel's location closest to the Torah niche? Does this placement mean, perhaps, that the panel is more "holy"? We do not know the answers to those questions, but since the absence of the face is connected to a specific Jewish religious proclivity, it must have been done at the request of the



Figure 7.3: Wall painting above Torah niche (detail), Synagogue, ca. 245 CE. National Museum of Damascus (photograph courtesy of the Yale University Art Gallery, Dura-Europos Collection)



Figure 7.4: Coin made during the Bar Kochba rebellion, featuring the Temple façade, Ark of the Covenant inside, Judea, 132–135 CE (Erich Lessing/Art Resource, N.Y. Israel Museum (IDAM), Jerusalem, Israel)



Figure 7.5: Wall painting above Torah niche (detail, upper right), Synagogue, ca. 245 CE. National Museum of Damascus (photograph courtesy of the Yale University Art Gallery, Dura-Europos Collection)



Figure 7.6: Wall painting above Torah niche (detail, upper left), Synagogue, ca. 245 CE. National Museum of Damascus (photograph courtesy of the Yale University Art Gallery, Dura-Europos Collection)

congregation. That the Sacrifice of Isaac finds its place here is unsurprising. The event represents the defining moment in the Jewish narrative when Judaism rejected human sacrifice and instituted the practice of sacrificing animals.

This momentous change in human practices was, according to the Bible, divinely ordered by God, who is represented by a human hand in the upper right. The anthropomorphic rendering of *YHWH* in a Jewish pictorial context was startling. After the discovery of these paintings, the numerous examples of the hand of God found in Christian art were understood as having been derived from Jewish models. Although for the most part the image of God is without form in the text of the Bible and is merely defined as being within a cloud, on occasion an anthropomorphic God is suggested metaphorically. For instance, God's "face" is alluded to, as being visible to Moses, in Exodus 33:11: "And the Lord would speak to Moses face to face, as a man would speak unto his companion." Further on, in Exodus is an injunction against Moses' seeing God's face, but the anthropomorphic body parts are still alluded to in Exodus 33:20–23: "And He said: 'You will not be able to see My face, for man shall not see Me and live.' And the Lord said: 'Behold, there is a place with Me, and you shall stand on the rock. And it shall be that when My glory passes by, I will place you into the cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with My hand until I have passed by. Then I will remove My hand, and you will see My back but My face shall not be seen.'" Other examples are found in the Psalms, where the "right hand of the Lord" is repeatedly referenced.¹³ But these rather vague textual references are far from the graphic depiction found in Dura of a right hand and a wrist emerging from a sleeve.

To the left of the Temple in the panel above the niche are the lighted menorah; an *ethrog*, citrus; and a *lulab*, a combination of palm, myrtle, and willow (fig. 7.6). The *ethrog* and *lulab* evoke the Feast of Tabernacles. This festival is associated with the Jewish hope for the coming of the Messiah and the restoration of the Temple. Before the destruction of the Second Temple, it was celebrated at the end of the grape harvest; in post-exilic times, it became a major festival lasting seven—or later eight—days, and it acquired a mytho-historical resonance.¹⁴ According to one interpretation from the *Book of Jubilees* (18:18–19), it was first celebrated by Abraham, just after the time of the aborted sacrifice of his son. As such, the evocation of the festival in the mural would form a fit-

ting pendant to the scene of Isaac. It was also the first festival celebrated by Solomon at the dedication of the Temple.¹⁵ The most important association linked with the festival in post-exilic times was its foreshadowing

of the messianic era, when the Temple would be rebuilt. The text of Zechariah 14, which is read at the time of the Feast of Tabernacles, suggests this eschatological interpretation. The prophet predicts that on the final “Lord’s Day,” night and day will cease, for light will continuously cover the earth. At that time, “the Lord shall be King over all the earth.”¹⁶ Then will all the inhabitants of the world come to Jerusalem to keep the Festival of Tabernacles; those nations who do not go up to celebrate the Feast will suffer the plague.¹⁷ The *midrashic* and *targumic* texts repeat this messianic theme;¹⁸ thus, the Feast of Tabernacles was connected to the messianic expectations of the Jewish people. Although most pilgrimages to Jerusalem more or less ended with the destruction of the Herodian Temple, the Feast of Tabernacles continued to be celebrated in synagogues. And in that yearly celebration, the rituals with the *ethrog* and *lulab* continued to endure, though in a reduced form.¹⁹ Thus, perhaps their inclusion here next to the Temple façade signals a continuous hope within the Jewish community for the arrival of the End of Days and the hoped-for construction of the messianic Temple.

One of the ritual objects in the Second Temple was the seven-branched menorah. According to the Bible, the instructions for making the first menorah were given to Moses by God.²⁰ A menorah is displayed in other places on the Durene murals, but above the Torah niche is the only location where the six arms are depicted as straight rather than as the quadrants of a circle. The rendition of the menorah in this painting is not strictly compatible with the instructions in Exodus, which indicate that each of the three side branches should have three “cups made like almond blossoms,” a knob, and a flower. The central stem should have four cups made like almond blossoms, a knob, and a flower. The artist has taken some liberties here with the number of “cups” he has painted. The “lamps” at the top have flames rising from them. The actual menorah of the Second Temple was carried off by the Romans and is purported to be represented on the Arch of Titus as part of the booty taken from the Temple during the sack of Jerusalem in 70 CE (fig. 7.7). As we will see, the profile of the menorah in the Arch of Titus relief resembles two other depictions of the Temple menorah in the Durene paintings.

The Temple here could have evoked simultaneously several meanings for the Jewish community of Dura. Given the depiction of the Sacrifice of Isaac and God’s instructions to henceforth sacrifice animals, the Temple was the site where those animal sacrifices were to be made. Given the *ethrog* and *lulab* displayed on the left, the Temple façade also evokes that heavenly Temple to which all nations would come in the messianic age. The menorah created upon the instructions of God would be part of that messianic setting. Thus, on one side of the Temple is the evocation of the very origin of the religion, when God proclaimed the rite of animal sacrifice in place of human sacrifice, and on the other side is the allusion to the messianic End of Time. Between those two symbolic evocations is the Temple façade with the Ark of the Covenant inside.

To the sides and above the niche on the west wall are at least two depictions of the Jewish Temple/



Figure 7.7: Relief with menorah (detail), Rome, Arch of Titus, after 81 CE (Erich Lessing/Art Resource, N.Y.)

Tabernacle in addition to one Temple with a disputed identity. The most renowned scene in the Durene paintings has been given the name the “Temple of Aaron,” or the “Consecration of the Tabernacle” (WB2, fig. 7.8). Different sections of Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers provide the textual sources for this painting. The Exodus text, chapter 40:2, recounts the preparation and consecration of the “tabernacle of the tent of meeting.” It is obvious that a tent is not what is represented in the Durene painting. Here, the tabernacle is depicted as a Roman temple with a cella, engaged Corinthian columns, a decorated pediment, and a tiled

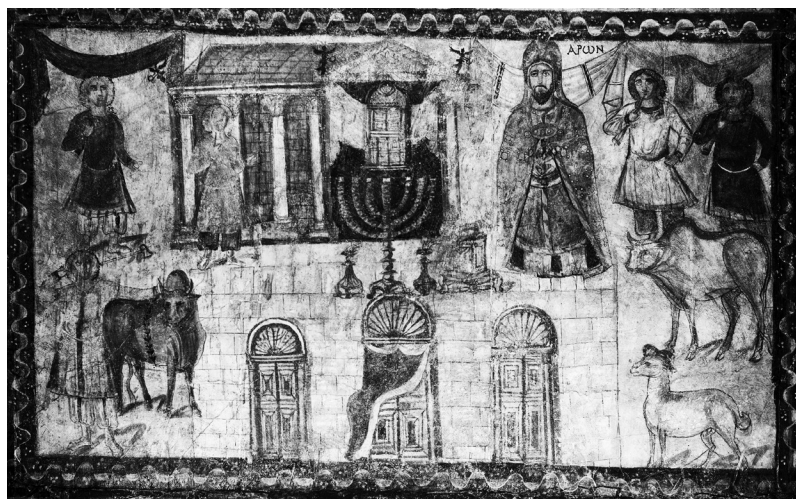


Figure 7.8: Wall painting of Aaron, Synagogue, WB2, 245–256 CE. National Museum of Damascus (photograph courtesy of the Yale University Art Gallery, Dura-Europos Collection)

gable roof. Acroteria adorn the three visible corners. These winged female figures are inspired by the figures of Nike atop Greek and Roman temples. They personify Victory and, as such, hold leafy crowns to place above the heads of heroes or the winners of battle.²¹ No such figures could possibly have adorned either the Solomonic or the Herodian Temple. Apparently, however, the community was satisfied with a tabernacle that looked like a thoroughly Roman building with Roman civil adornments. Such buildings were represented on many of the coins found at Dura-Europos, and thus they could have been used as models.²²

Ironically, the depiction of a stone structure rather than a tent here reflects the challenges faced by those who first set down the story of the desert tabernacle. Those

who wrote down or compiled (from older materials) these sections of the Bible probably were living in the 600s BCE, centuries after the story of the wandering Hebrews could have taken place; thus, they were faced with the question of how to describe a desert tabernacle. It is recorded in the Book of Kings and in Chronicles that after Solomon had finished constructing the Temple, that very Tent of Meeting was brought up to be placed inside it, along with the Ark of the Covenant and the implements: “The priests brought in the Ark of the Lord’s Covenant to its place underneath the wings of the cherubim, in the Sanctuary of the House, in the Holy of Holies; for the cherubim had their wings spread over the place of the Ark, so that the cherubim shielded the Ark and its poles from above.”²³ Friedman has made a convincing argument that, based on the measurements given for the tabernacle in the Bible, those who set down these words must have envisioned its size and shape as being akin to the space under the wings of the cherubs inside the Holy of Holies and that the tabernacle was imagined as once again being set there.²⁴ Much later, Josephus takes up the biblical story that the tabernacle was brought into the Temple, and he says that the way the cherubs had their wings spread gave the impression that the tabernacle could fit right beneath them, for the wings gave the appearance of a tent.²⁵ Whoever determined the iconography for this wall painting was satisfied with a conventional Greco-Roman temple instead of a tent of any kind. Perhaps this Roman building could

be envisioned as the tabernacle, since the congregants adhered to the tradition that the tabernacle was, symbolically at least, inside the Holy of Holies before the destruction of the Temple; thus, perhaps when looking at this temple, they could imagine a tent within.

In some way, most of the objects and people mentioned in Exodus are included in the painting.²⁶ The Ark of the Covenant is prominently displayed “floating” at the façade. Although the Ark is not “screened with the veil” as the text requires, the veil is draped behind it. The biblical “candlestick” of pure gold (colored yellow in the painting) with its seven lamps on top (painted in white) has the now-familiar form of the menorah. This menorah exhibits the typical curved branches, with knobs representing the flowers and seven lamps at the top. Although here two golden altars for incense are on either side of the menorah, only one is mentioned in the biblical text.²⁷ The incense altars/altar in both the biblical text and this image are set before the Ark of the Covenant as described in the Bible.²⁸ In the biblical text, another altar, one for the burnt offering of the sacrificial animal, is set before the door of the Tabernacle. Indeed, in the mural an altar before the Tabernacle supports an animal’s prone body. The monumental façade at the bottom of the picture may be interpreted as the “gate of the court.” In Exodus 27:16 and 38:18, the “gate of the court” has a curtain woven of fine twined linen of several colors. Thus, the curtain of the central door likewise has a biblical basis.

As mentioned above, the biblical text relating to the Tabernacle and its implements was probably compiled around the late-seventh century BCE, before the destruction of the Solomonic Temple in 587, though the redaction did not take place until the return from exile in the late-sixth century BCE.²⁹ The ceremony described is thus influenced by those rituals performed in the First Temple. The customs and rituals of that Temple are reflected in the text of Exodus and in the painting, though the cast of characters is much earlier.

In the mural, as in Exodus, Aaron and his sons are brought to the “door of the tent of meeting,” where they are washed in preparation for their priestly duties.³⁰ Aaron, whose name is written in Greek at the side of his head, is dressed in the “holy garments” of the priest so that he may minister to the Lord. Although the specific attire worn by Aaron is described in Exodus 28:4–43, the Durene artist did not follow the biblical descriptions but rather was inspired by contemporary Persian or Sasanian garb. Neither a breastplate, an ephod, nor the prescribed checkered pattern on the tunic is apparent in the Durene rendering. The colors of Aaron’s garment, however, are consonant with those mentioned in Exodus: gold, blue, and purple.³¹ The crown is replaced by the elevated “Persian-type” or indigenous Mesopotamian-type hood.³² The garments of the four attendants, possibly meant to be the four sons of Aaron, are also based on Persian models. The slits at the sides of the tunics are visible, as are the roomy trousers.³³ Their hairstyles are similar to those found on terracotta plaques.³⁴ They all hold horns, but they are not the twisted rams’ horns used as shofars; rather, they are meant to represent the “trumpets of silver... for the calling of the congregation.”³⁵

The types of animal offerings illustrated here are those required for investing Aaron and his sons with full authority as described in Exodus 29. There we learn that “one young bullock and two rams” shall be prepared as sacrifices by those assuming the priestly office. The same sacrificial animals are named in the first chapter of Leviticus. A male bullock without blemish, such as the white one on the right of the painting, is to be brought to the door of the tent of meeting to be killed, and Aaron’s sons shall accept it and lay the pieces on the altar according to the Lord’s instruction.³⁶ The Leviticus text specifies that another burnt offering is to

be a sheep rather than a ram.³⁷ In the painting, what looks like a flayed sheep or ram or a part of that animal, has been laid upon the altar in front of the tabernacle. A second awaits its fate below.

Another section of the biblical text is also referenced here. On the left side of the painting stands what looks like a red heifer with a dorsal band decorating its body. An executioner holding a mallet grabs the animal's neck. As Weitzmann has pointed out, this pictorial formula is known in Roman art, and the three-quarter positioning of the animal suggests that a Roman model was used.³⁸ The red heifer in the biblical text is one of the sacrificial animals to be burned, and its ashes are to be used ritually for the purification of those who have been in contact with dead bodies.³⁹

The artists, and apparently the rabbi or community representatives who commissioned them, were interested in conveying all of this information through clearly articulated, easily read figures, architectural structures, and symbols. They were not overly interested in naturalism or suggesting illusionistic space, neither were they trying to depict a realistic relationship between the figures. For instance, they represented the side and the front of the Temple on the same plane rather than at a ninety-degree angle, thus enabling the representation of the full length of the temple and at the same time giving prominence to the façade with its all-important Ark of the Covenant. The human figures are presented more or less frontally, and the animals (with the exception of the red heifer) are viewed from the side. Aaron is made significantly larger than the others. He is placed at the very top of the image and hovers unrealistically above the crenellations of the wall. His garment, as well as the tunics of the others, is barely modeled. And the bodies of the animals exhibit only the briefest indication of three-dimensionality. Most of the figures are outlined in black; where folds are indicated, the artist usually defines them by a simple line. Formulaic triangular shadows are drawn behind the feet. The "gate" to the precinct is depicted as a classical "propylea," though the crenellations give it a more militaristic allure. The menorah, incense altars, and the altar for the sacrifice of burnt offerings are seen as "floating" in front of the crenellations, though they are meant to be within the courtyard itself. And the crenellations on the right of the entrance wall are somewhat ambiguously placed, colliding with Aaron's feet, which are meant to be behind it.

The objects and the figures in this panel reveal that the iconography has to do with the priesthood, the attendants, and their ritual animal sacrifice, all in front of or within the Temple/Tabernacle. It is clear that the artist was unconcerned that the material culture within which this ritualistic event was purported to

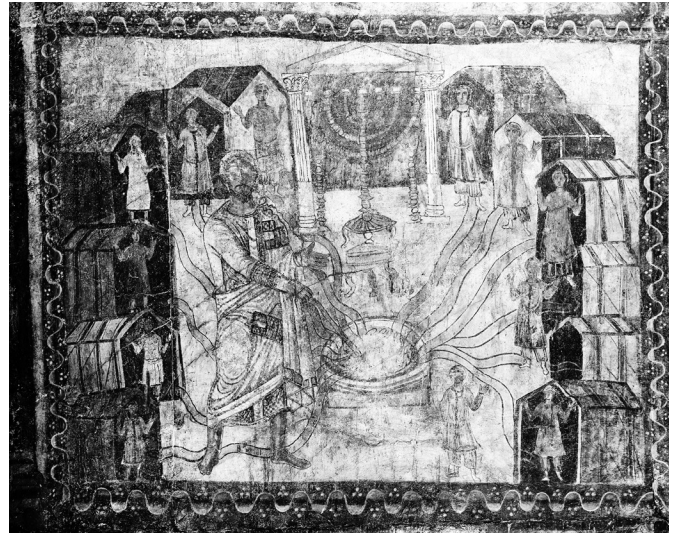


Figure 7.9: Wall painting of Moses at the well, Synagogue, WB1, 245–256 CE. National Museum of Damascus (photograph courtesy of the Yale University Art Gallery, Dura-Europos Collection)

have taken place was not the setting he portrayed. The community evidently assumed a certain continuity between biblical times and its own contemporary surroundings, even though in so many instances the Bible contradicted that assumption.

Another representation that is meant to stand for the Tabernacle is found to the left of the “Consecration” scene and has been entitled the “Well of the Wilderness: Moses Gives Water to the Tribes” (WB1, fig. 7.9). The image is partially based on Numbers 21:16–20: “The well of which the Lord said to Moses, ‘Gather the people, and I will give them water.’ Then the children of Israel sang this song: ‘Ascend, O well, sing to it. A well dug by princes, carved out by nobles’...” In the image, Moses, dressed in an ornately decorated tunic, holds his miracle-inducing staff. This rod is not mentioned in these verses but it figures elsewhere in the Bible: Moses uses this staff to part the waters of the Red Sea (Ex 14:16–21), to sweeten the waters of the Mara where it is called the tree of life (Ex 15: 23–25), and to strike the rock at Horeb so that it will yield its water (Ex 17:5–6). The rod is a frequent attribute of Moses in visual imagery from late antiquity on. Its magico-religious powers have a deep resonance in Western culture. In early Christian art, the attribute is transferred to Jesus in the miracle and healing scenes, and it is found in European folklore as the “magic wand.”⁴⁰ Generally assumed to have been made of wood, perhaps it was believed to incorporate the healing power of certain medicinal leaves.

During the wanderings in the wilderness, the Lord told Moses to bring the people together at Be’er (“well” in Hebrew) so that He could give them water at a well that, according to the song cited above, the princes and nobles had dug. In this image Moses dips his staff into that well and streams of water flow from it to the figures representing the chiefs of the tribes of Israel who are at the entrances to their symbolic abodes, configured as Roman military tents.⁴¹ Unlike Moses who is wearing Greco-Roman garb, the nobles or chieftains are wearing loose trousers and knee-length belted tunics, similar to the Iranian garb of some of the figures in the wall paintings. Their gestures may be interpreted in two ways. Either these figures are in the position of the *orans*, with their hands outstretched and palms open to the sky (a praying position commonly represented in early Christian art), or they are stretching out their arms and opening their hands in a gesture of praise, consonant with the words of the song they are supposed to be singing.⁴²

Though the scene is mostly faithful to the biblical text, it is also influenced by the Legend of Miriam’s Well. Allusions to this well are found in both the Midrash and in the Tosefta.⁴³ The Well of Miriam supposedly followed the Hebrews on their journey through the desert, and when they stopped, according to the legend, it positioned itself in the midst of the encampment. In the wall painting, the well is in the midst of the encircling tents and in front of the Tabernacle, as the legend further dictates, although ritual implements do separate it from the façade. Another detail of the painting that is dependent on the legend but is not in the Bible is the representation of twelve streams emanating from the well. Since neither of these details is biblical, they can only be accounted for by our assuming that the iconographer was familiar with the Legend of the Well.

The main stylistic elements convincingly communicate the content of the scene: The figures are represented in hierarchical scale, and thus Moses is larger than all the others. The chiefs are drawn in inverse proportion to their distance from the spectator, with the tallest chiefs farthest away and the smallest closest to the viewer, clearly enhancing the impact of the figure of Moses. The all-important well is depicted on the central axis along with the tabernacle. As in the “Consecration” scene discussed above, the tent is configured

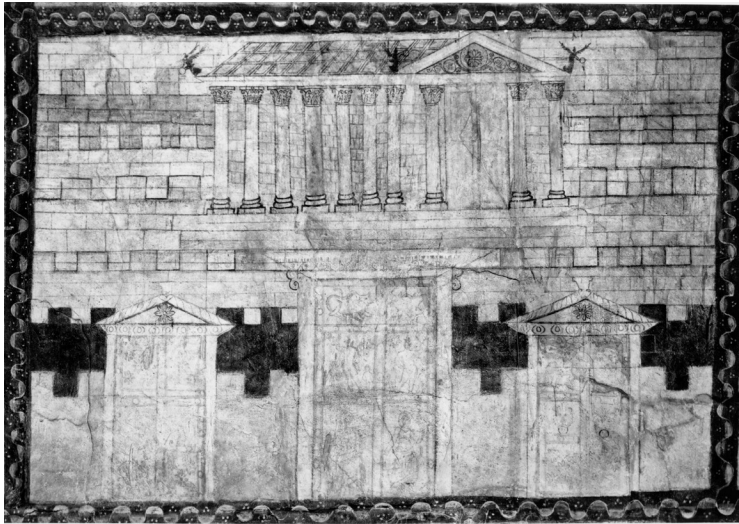


Figure 7.10: Wall painting of closed temple, Synagogue, WB3, 245–256 CE. National Museum of Damascus (photograph courtesy of the Yale University Art Gallery, Dura-Europos Collection)

To the right of the Torah niche another Temple is depicted, the most complex of these images to interpret (WB3, fig. 7.10). Roman in style, with Corinthian columns on the side and the façade, this closed temple likewise is shown in a bifocal view; that is to say, the side and the front are depicted as being on the same plane. It has a pediment with a sixteen-pointed design in the center and *rincaux* filling the angles. The acroteria are winged victories holding out wreaths. The other figures in the scene are found on three portals portrayed at the bottom. The two portals on the sides are adorned with lions' heads and stars. The central portal displays bulls at the top, a large nude male with two nude boys flanking him in the center, and two goddesses of good fortune (Tychai), at the bottom (fig. 7.11). What look like seven crenellated walls in different colors appear between and above the portals and continue on either side of the closed temple. The eclectic figurative iconography on the portals along with the temple's surrounding walls has given rise to various interpretations of this painting.

In 1936, Robert du Mesnil du Buisson suggested that this is a temple of the sun similar to those found in the Near

to look like a Roman temple: the low pediment is supported by two Corinthian columns with fluting on the upper two-thirds of their shafts. The columns frame a menorah similar to the one near Aaron. The alternating disks and balls represent the required flowers and knobs arranged on curving arms terminating in seven lamps. Flanking the menorah are two candlesticks, and just above the well is a three-footed altar. All these ceremonial objects are painted yellow to indicate that they are gold. As with other images in the Durene synagogue, this is a depiction of divine intervention, when God, through Moses and his staff, accomplished a miracle with the waters of the Well of Be'er—a well that, according to the commentaries, always found its place near the entrance to the Tabernacle.



Figure 7.11 Wall painting of closed temple (detail), Synagogue, 245–256 CE. National Museum of Damascus (photograph courtesy of the Yale University Art Gallery, Dura-Europos Collection)

East before and during the third century CE.⁴⁴ He argues that the nude figures on the middle parts of the central portal are sun deities venerated in the larger region and in Dura (fig. 7.11).⁴⁵ He sees the lions' heads on the lateral portals as solar attributes, and he views the stars and the sixteen-pointed design in the pediment of the temple as other solar elements.⁴⁶ He interprets the seven differently colored crenellated walls as referring to the seven planets because, he maintains, each of the colors represented on the crenellated walls corresponds to a different planet in ancient Mesopotamian lore.⁴⁷ For Du Mesnil du Buisson, in other words, this closed temple with differently colored crenellated walls "surrounding" it and nude solar deities on its portals could be none other than a temple of the sun.

Why would a solar temple be depicted here? Du Mesnil du Buisson responds that this temple must be seen in the context of the other images portrayed on the Synagogue walls. For instance, one must look to the image just to the right of the closed temple (WB4, fig. 7.12). There we find a painting of a story told in 1 Samuel 5 and 6:1–21. After a battle the Israelites lost, the Philistines captured the Ark of the Covenant and stationed it in their pagan temple next to the idol of their god Dagon, whose statue appears indistinctly on the pedestal to the left. The following morning, they saw that the idol had "fallen upon his face to the ground before the Ark of the Lord."⁴⁸ The falling and broken pieces of two statues of Dagon are on the right side of the panel. The second statue represents the next temporal sequence, when the Philistines try to set Dagon up again only to see him fall once more. The second time, the "head of Dagon and both the palms of his hands lay cut off upon the threshold." The two separate temporal sequences are conflated in this image.

The third and subsequent scene follows on the left side of the panel. The Lord caused a plague to afflict the Philistines. They decided that their possession of the Ark of the Covenant must have been the cause of this disaster, so they sent the Ark back to the Israelites on a cart drawn by two nursing cows that, guided by God, went in the direction of the Israelites rather than in the direction of their own calves. When the cows had reached the Hebrews at Beth-Shemesh, they stopped. As Du Mesnil du Buisson points out, the meaning of the Hebrew words *Beth-Shemesh* is Temple of the Sun. The biblical narrative does not mention a temple on the site. When the people of Beth-Shemesh saw the Ark, they "rejoiced to see it ... And the cart came into the field of Joshua the Beth-shemite, and stood there, where there was a huge stone; and they split the wood, and the cows they offered up as a burnt offering to the Lord."⁴⁹ This is an account of a sacred practice engaged in before the purported time of Solomon's temple. The people brought the cart into a field where "there was a huge stone"; using the cart for wood, they built a fire, slaughtered the cows, and made an offering of them. The biblical text twice specifically mentions the "huge stone," which was present at the site. Could such a "huge stone" have been connected to solar worship as in other prehistoric cultures? Could the

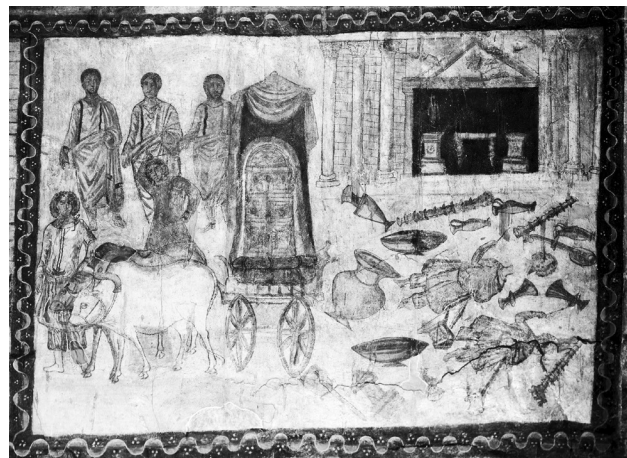


Figure 7.12 Wall painting of the Temple of Dagon and the return of the Ark of the Covenant, Synagogue, WB4, 245–256 CE. National Museum of Damascus (photograph courtesy of the Yale University Art Gallery, Dura-Europos Collection)

name given to the place, “Temple of the Sun,” also allude to the kind of worship undertaken there? As we learn from the following chapter in Samuel, this was one of the times when the Israelites were worshipping the *Ashtarothe* (female goddesses) and *Baalim* (often construed as sun gods). Du Mesnil du Buisson suggests that the programmers could have wanted to designate the site of the large rock as a temple, just as they represented the tabernacle as a temple. And since the name of the site clearly meant “temple of the sun,” they placed pagan figures associated with solar deities upon the door panels. If one accepts this interpretation, the Temple in figure 7.10 would be the destination of the cart carrying the Ark of the Covenant in figure 7.12.⁵⁰

Du Mesnil du Buisson finds it odd, to say the least, that such a prominent placement should be given to a temple of the sun in this Synagogue. He explains this oddity by reminding us that the name of the founder of the Synagogue was Samuel and that this man wanted his namesake, the prophet Samuel, to be placed just above the honorary chair he would have occupied next to the ark. Du Mesnil du Buisson’s hypothesis is that this placement of the painting of the prophet Samuel left an empty spot in the series of images to be painted, and in that spot the rabbi or rabbis who served as iconographers decided to represent a temple rather than a rock at Beth-Shemesh.

Kraeling builds on part of Du Mesnil du Buisson’s argument and agrees that the seven crenellated, differently colored walls are linked to the seven planets. Kraeling further suggests that the artist’s intent was to represent these walls as placed in concentric circles around the temple. He likewise understands this arrangement as related to the astrological lore of the ancient Middle East but sees it as representing “cosmic reality.” He cites a Jewish *midrash*, where the heavenly Jerusalem is described as being surrounded by seven walls of different colors.⁵¹ The Talmud explains that there are seven levels of hell, seven levels of earth, and seven levels of heaven. Based on his reading of Jewish lore, Kraeling proposes that this temple surrounded by seven walls has a celestial or cosmic meaning and, specifically, that it signifies a place of rest for the blessed in the future. He concludes that the artist has used an astrological convention and solar color symbolism to signify that this Temple is the celestial abode of the End of Time.

How does Kraeling explain the nude male pagan figures on the central portal of a supposedly Jewish heavenly Temple of the End of Days? (fig. 7.11) He links them to solar imagery and alludes to the deep penetration of pagan religious iconography relating to the sun in Durene art at that time.⁵² Like Du Mesnil du Buisson, Kraeling suggests the artist thought that by using pagan solar imagery he could create the finest possible temple and gates. He believes that this is how the artist or artists operated in other areas of the Synagogue as well. They did not follow biblical prescriptions for the temple or tabernacle, but rather used the best model of a temple available at the time. Kraeling therefore sees no problem in proposing a dual symbolism for this panel. On the one hand, these walls represent the terrestrial city of Jerusalem built by David, and the closed temple depicts the structure built by his son Solomon. On the other hand, Kraeling does not rule out the idea that this building could also allude to the sun, and thus to a celestial, cosmic temple awaiting the blessed at the End of Time.

Du Mesnil du Buisson and Kraeling’s hypothesis that the differently colored crenellated walls may relate this temple to Middle Eastern solar temples is a convincing one, especially since these kinds of differently colored walls are alluded to in *midrash*. But Warren Moon takes exception to their interpretation. For him the nude figures on the door remain problematic. How can there have been nude, pagan, god-like figures on

the entrance portal to David's Jerusalem or on the precinct doors of Solomon's temple, not to mention on the entranceway of the celestial temple awaiting the blessed at the End of Time? Because of what Moon sees as this improbability, he argues for an alternative suggestion. Like Du Mesnil du Buisson, Moon believes this to be a pagan structure but not a solar temple, and thus not a Jewish Temple at Beth-Shemesh. He suggests that it is the temple of the Philistine god, Dagon, whose statue and temple are depicted in the scene to the right—the story of the Ark of the Covenant set up in the temple of Dagon and its subsequent return to the Israelites. What Kraeling and Du Mesnil du Buisson interpret as seven walls and thus linked to solar imagery, Moon interprets as one “tiled, multi-colored precinct wall of an eastern temple,” specifically, a temple of Dagon.⁵³ He contends that the statue of Dagon should be thought of as standing behind its closed doors in figure 7.10. Moon asserts that the nude figures depicted on the panels of the central portal at the bottom never could be those found on the walls of Jerusalem or on the entrance to the precinct of the Temple of Solomon. The nude males are wearing a fertility cap (*modius*), and their heads are crowned by wreaths of vines (fig. 7.11). Each of the flanking nude boys has a star above his head. For Moon, the three figures with these attributes suggest the oriental Jupiter, Liber, or Serapis accompanied by the young Dioskouri.⁵⁴ Their models can be found on coins and gems from the time of the emperor Septimius Severus (193–211 CE).⁵⁵ Indeed, one of the coins found at Dura shows Septimius Severus as the nude Jupiter holding a scepter in one hand and flanked by his sons, Geta and Caracalla, represented as the nude Dioskouri.⁵⁶ Moon further notes that, except for the depiction of children or souls as represented in an Ezekiel panel elsewhere in the Synagogue, “all other instances of nudity in the frescoes imply that the subject is *not Jewish*.”⁵⁷ In addition, the swaying torsos of these nude figures suggest the pose of the “idoltrous ruler cult.”⁵⁸ This same pose is struck by the falling statues of Dagon in the panel to the right of the closed temple. Moon views the rest of the iconography on the doors as further proof that the closed temple is pagan: a figure of the Roman goddess Fortuna wearing the *modius* and carrying a cornucopia and rudder is in the lowest panels; and humped bulls, animals connected with the god Mithras, are pictured in the panels above. Once again, these figures commonly are represented on Severan coins and are well documented in the Durene coin hoards.⁵⁹ Moon contends that the painters must have used those pagan numismatic models as they executed the figures on these door panels. As such, for Moon, this temple—along with the depiction above it on the synagogue wall of the Egyptian city from which the Israelites fled—shows the “defeated” peoples over whom the Israelites triumphed.

Moon's evidence does demonstrate that the nude images on the portals, connected as they are to Roman imperial divinity or Roman cultic practices, are hard to reconcile with the notion that this panel is meant to represent the Jerusalem Temple, the precinct walls of Solomon's temple, entrance portal to the city of Jerusalem, or indeed the celestial city of the End of Days. But his explanation as to why this pagan temple is here is not convincing. Why would the painter, as Moon suggests, purposely want to give such a prominent place to a beautifully depicted temple of the Philistine god Dagon? It is unclear why the rabbi who dictated the iconography would have issued an order to balance the “Aaron and the Tabernacle” and the “Moses at the Well” with a representation of the negative image of Dagon's Temple, even though the Israelites eventually triumphed over that pagan god. It is hard to believe that if the rabbi/iconographer wanted to have the Jewish triumph represented, he would have asked for an image of Dagon's temple with the implication being that the idol stood behind those closed doors in that elaborate setting.

Nevertheless, Moon uses his argument as the basis for a further hypothesis. He believes that the portals of the pagan temple, with the nude figures in the same pose as the falling Dagon statues, hint at a political statement against the pagan Roman rulers. He suggests the iconography implies that, like the Dagon statues, the pagan Roman temples with idols inside soon would be destroyed.⁶⁰ It is difficult to go along with his idea that the painting was meant to be seen as a confrontation against Roman rulers and as a denigration of other religions and that it foreshadows their ultimate downfall. This hypothesis, however, also is taken up by Jaś Elsner, who sees the Synagogue paintings as actively promulgating Judaism and striking at the practices of other contemporary Durenes.⁶¹ I believe that the idea championed by both Moon and Elsner—an idea that assumes a potent political hostility harbored by Jews against the other religious groups of Dura, or indeed against the Romans—is untenable. Even within the terms of their own argument, if this hostility were felt, would it have been expressed by placing a Dagon temple in such a prominent spot near the center of this most important wall? And would the structure and setting have been made so attractive that some have interpreted them as the city of David and the Temple of Solomon, or indeed as the heavenly city of the End of Days? The whole allure of the panel simply does not appear negative.

Recent research has brought into question the very idea of a strong hostility among the different peoples of Dura. Both Lucinda Dirven and Annabel Wharton have suggested it is more likely that a kind of mutual respect existed among them, and the rule of Rome was more or less accepted.⁶² During the mid-third century, when these paintings were executed, Jews were neither persecuted in the Roman Empire nor were they isolated.⁶³ They constructed major synagogues in several of the big cities of the realm, and some of those synagogues were near churches or pagan sanctuaries. And, in Dura, Jews made no effort to keep a low profile; they interacted with the various religious and cultural groups of the town.⁶⁴ The idea that Jews were seen as the so-called “Other” or felt threatened by pagan rulers during this period is a construct superimposed on Roman Jewry from a different time, precisely from the late Middle Ages, when Jews in places like Italy and France were relegated to specific neighborhoods. In addition, it is evident that Jews felt comfortable calling upon the artists in non-Jewish workshops to execute the representations of these biblical scenes and even the Holy Ark of the Covenant.

Perhaps a better explanation can be offered in the light of recent discoveries in the Holy Land. The excavation of numerous synagogue floor mosaics during the last fifty years suggests that solar imagery played a large role in Jewish iconography.⁶⁵ The mosaics, dating from the fourth to the sixth centuries, display a haloed sun god in a chariot drawn by horses, much as Apollo was depicted in Greco-Roman iconography. The sun god was placed in the center of a circle surrounded by the twelve zodiacal signs. It should be remembered that in Early Christian art, images of the sun god, the moon goddess, the earth mother, the ocean god, etc., were frequently used to designate certain places where they “dwelt” or the passage or stopping of time. Likewise, the numerous instances of sun iconography on these synagogue floors suggest that Jews were not adverse to portraying pagan gods within a synagogue as long as the figure was not represented as “godly” or powerful but was merely a motif to suggest a place or a personification of time. The plethora of recently discovered synagogue mosaics with their sun god imagery seems to support the idea that the unidentified Temple here on the Dura wall could also have incorporated sun imagery and still been seen as a Jewish Temple. Nevertheless, it is unlikely that this structure was meant to represent the Temple of the End of Days or the Temple of Solomon. It very well could have depicted a Jewish Temple all the same, perhaps

one that was thought to have been built at Beth-Shemesh (which in Hebrew means Temple of the Sun), at the rock where the Philistines had deposited the Ark of the Covenant, as Du Mesnil du Buisson suggested. No Temple is recorded at the site in the biblical text,⁶⁶ but a “huge stone” is mentioned twice, the first time to indicate that the stone existed there in the field near where a burnt offering was made to the Lord. The second time we learn:

The Levites took down the Ark of the Lord, and the box which was with it, wherein were the golden objects, and they placed them on the huge stone, and the men of Beth-Shemesh offered up burnt offerings and slaughtered sacrifices on that day, to the Lord.⁶⁷

That the Durene rabbis could have directed that a Temple at Beth-Shemesh be depicted here is, to my mind, a strong possibility. Pagan iconography relating to the sun penetrated deeply into general Durene imagery at the time.⁶⁸ So incorporating solar elements on what would have been regarded at the time as an “ancient” Jewish structure should not be seen as impossible. Also, the moment chosen to be pictured—the return of the Ark to the Jews—represents quite a triumphant moment in Jewish history. Furthermore, Jewish texts record the belief that in the Temple of Solomon, the Ark of the Covenant had rested on a rock, and when the Ark was no longer there, after the Jews were exiled to Babylonia in 587 BCE, the rock remained. Describing what had occurred in the Holy of Holies before the destruction of the Temple, the Mishnah recounts:

After the Ark was taken away a stone remained there from the time of the early Prophets, [David and Solomon] and it was called ‘Shetiyah’ [literally, ‘Foundation’]. It was higher than the ground by three fingerbreadths. On this he [the priest] used to put [the fire-pan].⁶⁹

The suggestion here is that in the days of David and Solomon, the Ark of the Covenant had been placed upon this stone, bedrock that had been beneath the threshing floor of the Jebusite Arauna. The Talmud goes on to elaborate on the above statement: “‘A stone, *Shethia*.’ We have learned ... [that] the word *Shethia* means, that the universe has been created from it, as *Shethia* means foundation.”⁷⁰ Thus it is possible that the “huge stone” at Beth-Shemesh upon which the Ark was placed was envisioned as being covered by a Temple at some point, just as the rock beneath the Holy of Holies housing the Ark of the Covenant had been. And, in the mid-third century CE, an “ancient” temple at Beth-Shemesh incorporating solar elements could have been imagined as having the aspect of one of the Near Eastern solar temples in the region at that time.⁷¹ I thus believe it is most likely that a Beth-Shemesh Temple, representing as it does a triumphant moment in Jewish history, is portrayed in this important place next to the Torah niche in the Durene synagogue.

Notes

- 1 Quoted by Warren G. Moon, "Nudity and Narrative: Observations on the Frescoes from the Dura Synagogue," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 60, no. 4 (1992): 587.
- 2 Kurt Weitzmann, "The Question of the Influence of Jewish Pictorial Sources on Old Testament Illustrations," in *Studies in Classical and Byzantine Manuscript Illustration*, ed. Herbert L. Kessler (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), 75–95.
- 3 Kurt Weitzmann and Herbert L. Kessler, *The Frescoes of the Dura Synagogue and Christian Art*, *Dumbarton Oaks Studies* 28 (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1990).
- 4 Erwin Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period, Symbolism in the Dura Synagogue*, vols. 9–11 (New York: Pantheon Books, 1964).
- 5 Carl H. Kraeling, *The Synagogue. The Excavations at Dura-Europos Conducted by Yale University and the French Academy of Inscriptions and Letters, Final Report 8, Part 1*, ed. Alfred R. Bellinger et al. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1956).
- 6 Annabel Jane Wharton, *Refiguring the Post Classical City: Dura Europos, Jerash, Jerusalem and Ravenna* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 47–48.
- 7 Lucinda Dirven, "Religious Competition and the Decoration of Sanctuaries: the Case of Dura-Europos," in *Eastern Christian Art in Its Late Antique and Islamic Contexts* (Leuven: Peeters, 2004), 1:7–8.
- 8 Annabel Jane Wharton, "Erasure: Eliminating the Space of Late Ancient Judaism," in *From Dura to Sephoris, Studies in Jewish Art and Society in Late Antiquity*, ed. Lee I. Levine and Ze'ev Weiss, *Journal of Roman Archaeology Supplement* 40 (Portsmouth, R.I.: Journal of Roman Archaeology, 2000), 201; and Moon, 589.
- 9 Jaś Elsner, "Cultural Resistance and the Visual Image," *Classical Philology* 96, no. 3 (2001): 118–19.
- 10 Quoted by Steven Fine, *Art and Judaism in the Greco-Roman World: Toward a New Jewish Archaeology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 98. See also Solomon Schechter and S. Mendelsohn, "Johanan B. Nappaha," *Jewish Encyclopedia.com*, <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/view.jsp?artid=357&letter=J&search=Johanan%20B.%20Nappaha> (accessed December 5, 2010).
- 11 Margaret Olin, "'Early Christian Synagogues' and 'Jewish Art Historians': the Discovery of the Synagogue of Dura-Europos," *Marburger Jahrbuch für Kunstwissenschaft* 27 (2000): 16.
- 12 Gn 22:9–13.
- 13 Ps 118:15–16.
- 14 Archer St. Clair, "God's House of Peace in Paradise: the Feast of Tabernacles on a Jewish Gold Glass," *Journal of Jewish Art* 11 (1984): 9–11.
- 15 1 Kgs 8:65.
- 16 Zec 14:7–9.
- 17 Zec 14:12–18.
- 18 St. Clair, 12.
- 19 Ibid., 13.

- 20 Ex 25:31–40.
- 21 An example of such a winged victory is in the exhibition (pl. 2).
- 22 Alfred R. Bellinger, *The Coins. The Excavations at Dura-Europos Conducted by Yale University and the French Academy of Inscriptions and Letters. Final Report 6*, ed. Michael I. Rostovtzeff et al. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1949), pl. XXIV, 1233; pl. XXV, 1264; 1300, 1305, 1314; pl. XXXVI, 1748, 1751.
- 23 1 Kgs 8:4; see also 2 Chr 5:5.
- 24 Richard Elliot Friedman, *Who Wrote the Bible?* (New York: Summit Books, 1987), 181–83.
- 25 The Reluctant Messenger, “Antiquities of the Jews—Book VIII, chap. 4, pgh. 1,” Internet Innovations, <http://reluctant-messenger.com/josephusA08.htm> (accessed November 12, 2010): “So they carried the ark and the tabernacle which Moses had pitched, and all the vessels that were for ministration, to the sacrifices of God, and removed them to the temple... And in this manner did they carry the ark. But when they should transfer it into the most secret place, the rest of the multitude went away, and only those priests that carried it set it between the two cherubim, which embracing it with their wings, (for so were they framed by the artificer), they covered it, as under a tent, or a cupola.”
- 26 Ex 40.
- 27 A slightly different form of incense burner is represented in the exhibition (pl. 40).
- 28 Ex 40:5.
- 29 Friedman, 174–87, 218–19, 232.
- 30 Ex 40:12–15.
- 31 Ex 28:5.
- 32 Ex 29:6; see headdress on Parthian sculpted relief in exhibition (pl. 1).
- 33 Short belted tunics with leggings are shown in the figurine of a mounted Parthian horseman and the Palmyrene funerary banquet relief in this exhibition (pls. 15, 75).
- 34 An example is included in the exhibition (pl. 16).
- 35 Nm 10:1–3.
- 36 Lv 1:5–9.
- 37 Lv 1:10–13.
- 38 Weitzmann and Kessler, 59.
- 39 Nm 19:9.
- 40 Thomas R. Mathews, *The Clash of Gods* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 72–77.
- 41 Kraeling, 119–20.
- 42 Kraeling, 124.
- 43 Albert W. Greenup, trans., *Sukkah, Mishna and Tosefta* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1925), 76–77. See also Louis Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 3:53–54.
- 44 Robert du Mesnil du Buisson, “Un Temple du Soleil dans la Synagogue de Doura-Europos,” *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* 16 (1936): 83.

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- 45 Ibid., 84–87.
- 46 Ibid., 87–90.
- 47 Ibid., 89–90.
- 48 1 Sm 5:3.
- 49 Ibid., 6:13–14.
- 50 Du Mesnil du Buisson, 93.
- 51 Kraeling, 107.
- 52 Ibid., 110.
- 53 Moon, 600.
- 54 Ibid., 601.
- 55 Ibid., 602.
- 56 Ibid., 635, fig. 19.
- 57 Ibid., 602 (italics are original).
- 58 Ibid., 603.
- 59 Ibid., 602.
- 60 Ibid., 603.
- 61 Elsner, 299.
- 62 Wharton, “Erasure”; and Dirven.
- 63 Wharton, “Erasure,” 201.
- 64 Ibid.
- 65 Fine, *Art and Judaism*, 196–205; and Steven Fine, “Liturgy and the Art of the Dura Europos Synagogue,” in *Liturgy in the Life of the Synagogue*, ed. Ruth Langer and Steven Fine (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2005), 82–93.
- 66 1 Sm 6:12–14.
- 67 1 Sm 6:15.
- 68 Kraeling, 110.
- 69 *Yoma* 5:2, in *The Mishnah*, trans. Herbert Danby (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985).
- 70 Michael Levi Rodkinson, *New Edition of the Babylonian Talmud* (New York: New Talmud, 1899), 6:78.
- 71 That other cultic centers besides Jerusalem could have been imagined at this time is logical, for the Bible mentions cultic sites dedicated to the worship of Yahweh at Shiloh, Dan, Bethel, Gilgal, Bethlehem, Nob, Ephraim, Ophrah, and Gibeath. William J. Hamblin and David Rolph Seely, *Solomon’s Temple: Myth and History* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2007), 33–34.
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TESSA RAJAK

THE DURA-EUROPOS SYNAGOGUE: IMAGES OF A COMPETITIVE COMMUNITY

How would worshippers of one of the gods or goddesses of Dura-Europos—Baal Shamin' or Hadad, Gad or Mithras, Zeus Kyrios, Adonis, Tyche or Nemesis—have reacted, should they have penetrated, perhaps after attending a nearby temple, into the interior of the Synagogue, through its doorway that opened onto a narrow street adjacent to the east-facing town wall, a couple of blocks away from the main gate? Perhaps overwhelmed at first by the highly colored (as they were in those days) paintings that covered every inch of the walls, they would have quickly taken in the somewhat unfamiliar Torah shrine construction, centrally positioned on the west wall facing them, and then their eyes would have been drawn to a particularly disturbing panel, two to the right of the shrine, where two male cult statues of familiar local type (looking rather like the painted Adonis familiar from a local temple)¹ are shown flat on their faces outside a cultic building whose door is standing wide open. The two statues evidently represent the same image at different moments. The second statue has his head and some extremities detached from the torso, and both obviously have tumbled out of the temple along with assorted cultic utensils, all in total disarray. This unusual scene appears within a sequence representing the dramatic story of the capture of the Ark of the Covenant and its fate among the Philistines. It is the longest surviving sequence in the middle register (B) of the west wall, which is the widest of the three registers that carry the narrative panels around the Synagogue.

The picture of the toppling of the Philistine God Dagon is a highpoint of the Dura synagogue's art, described by Carl H. Kraeling as "the most spirited and provocative" of those still visible.² In fact, two scenes are combined into one in this panel (WB4, fig. 7.12), based on dramatic events recounted in 1 Samuel 4–6. The Israelites were twice disastrously defeated by the Philistines at Eben-Ezer. Their most sacred object, the Ark of the Covenant—which had been with them through their wilderness travels and housed, by divine commandment, the tablets of the Ten Commandments given at Sinai—not only failed to rescue them when they brought it to the battlefield but also was itself traumatically captured and placed beside the statue of Dagon in his temple at Ashdod. Two nights in succession, the Ark caused the cult statue to fall flat on its face; the second time the head and extremities were found lying separately on the threshold. Following this, the Ashdodites, who had in addition been afflicted with tumors and their land stricken, decided to move the Ark elsewhere. But it wreaked havoc wherever it went. After seven months, the decision was made to send

the Ark back to its owners in a cart drawn by two cows, heading for Beth Shemesh and accompanied to the border by drivers. The Philistines would also indemnify and honor the God of Israel, whose protection of his people had indeed been overwhelmingly demonstrated. The same panel also covers this sequel, while the scene of the battle itself, though a Jewish defeat, is portrayed with relish at the west end of the much more damaged north wall in a panel (NB1) that leads straight on to the more prominent west wall scene. The Ark is garlanded and decorated for its return, the cows are goaded along by carters in Iranian dress, and other figures similarly garbed may represent the priests and diviners of the Philistines.

Would those local visitors have been offended by the depiction in the Synagogue of a prone and broken cult statue, one whose appearance was readily identifiable in appearance with a member of the local pantheon? Did the story of Dagon's destruction (albeit temporary) speak of polytheism mocked by monotheism? In modern terms, this image would be profoundly insulting, a visual blasphemy on what was most sacred to the faith of others. On the other hand, ancient visitors might well have been awed and impressed by such a display of overwhelming divine might. Would the visitors have gone on to look around at the wealth of pictorial evidence in the prayer hall attesting to this Deity's other triumphs and great deeds, a veritable pictorial aretalogy? Might they then have set themselves to wondering

whether it would not be prudent to show respect to this Lord of Lords, just as the Philistines had had to do in the end (though our viewers could hardly have known that without being told); or like Heliodorus in 2 Maccabees (3:21–28), when he proclaimed the greatness of Israel's god after experiencing to his cost the holy angels' protection of the Temple against its enemies? While Heliodorus' story was enshrined in a Greek-Jewish text—again not within the scope of pagans at Dura—such happenings spoke to anyone who lived in a world of many gods. And what would they have to do—the visitors, might, finally, have asked—to annex this deity to their pantheon? The answer to this last question was to be found, no doubt, in the very place in which they were standing.

In this pictorial sequence, it is the Ark itself rather than the curtained Tabernacle (or Tent of Meeting) that is portrayed. The Tabernacle of Exodus 26—which was the precursor of the Jerusalem Temple and, as Pamela Berger writes in this volume, so often merged with it in imagination and literature—is indeed notably depicted in the investiture ceremony of Aaron the High Priest in another of the Synagogue's celebrated scenes (WB2, fig. 7.8), where Aaron's name is written in Greek lettering over his ceremonially (though incorrectly) clad figure. By contrast, in the Ark sequence, it is the box that makes repeat appearances, represented not quite as the elaborate object with the gold overlay, carrying poles, and cherubim that are set forth in great detail in the orders given in Exodus (25:10–22) but rather in its own quite distinctive manner—as a tall, oblong chest with a curved top and a surface patterned as though studded with decorations and sometimes partly covered by a yellowish cloth. There are minor variations in the depic-



Figure 8.1: Wall painting of the Battle of Eben-Ezer, Synagogue, NB1, ca. 245–256 CE. National Museum of Damascus. After Goodenough, pl. XIX

tions. On the battlefield of Eben-Ezer, where it also occupies a dominant position, the Ark stands uncovered (NB1, fig. 8.1). Some scholars have suggested that Ark and Tabernacle/Temple together would have constituted the subject matter of the entirety of register B, going all the way around the Synagogue, but of course we cannot be sure.

With talismanic and almost magical powers, to add to its profound religious content, the Ark, at least until it was lost after the first Temple's destruction, continued to be treasured—the key symbol of Israelite national identity, embodying equally the Israelites' commitment to the Covenant and God's commitment to them. The memory of its potency remains in the Torah service of the modern synagogue. Yet this highly distinctive sacred object, an artifact that served unique purposes for a people that saw itself as unique, was at the same time not unintelligible; as it is visualized, it is reminiscent of the aniconic cult images of the Near East, and, indeed, it is precisely at Dura that the unique dedication of a small altar to Zeus Betylos was found.³ Functionally, the way in which the traveling holy chest served Israel would be recognizable in its essentials, if not in its refinements, to the devotees of many ancient religions. That so modest an object could have been so efficacious made excellent sense. The narrative sequence at Dura ensured that viewers could understand the thing in action even without knowing the full story: the decapitated Dagon statue and the tumbling cult objects spoke for themselves. These pictures had the capacity effectively to engage outsiders and to elicit the admiration of strangers.

Amid the entire surviving repertoire in the painted Synagogue, the picture of Dagon in pieces would undoubtedly have been the most arresting for worshippers of any other god. For one thing, it is the most immediately expressive in its meaning, even if not in the full scope of its allusion. Other embodiments of the triumph of the God of Israel could not have leapt out in quite so immediate a way at a viewer not familiar with scripture. Nonetheless, a similar message of victory snatched out of the teeth of disaster by divine intervention is encapsulated in other scenes. Thus in two panels on the south wall (SC 3 and 4), one might see the priests of Baal, in purple-edged togas, discomfited by Elijah's ability to raise fire on the altar on Mount Carmel. On the top band of the focal west wall, Israel's foundational salvific event was represented—the miracle that enabled the Israelite army to cross the Red Sea and the Egyptian troops to be all too graphically drowned (WA3, fig. 8.2). Inside Moses' legs are the explanatory words "Moses when he split the Red Sea" in Aramaic (the earliest words read, according to Clark Hopkins' account, when the Synagogue was uncovered).⁴

Jaś Elsner was the first to react fully to the impact of Dura's "actively anti-pagan imagery."⁵ He noted an engagement not only with the "explicit rebuttal of non-Jewish gods" but also with explicitly showing their failure, and, as he saw it, "denigrating their



Figure 8.2: Wall painting of the parting of the Red Sea, Synagogue, WA3, ca. 245–256 CE. National Museum of Damascus (photograph courtesy of the Yale University Art Gallery, Dura-Europos Collection)

religions.” This last may be a step too far. “Denigration” is a loaded word, which already hints at a more modern reaction. But whether the implications be understood in Elsner’s terms or in a more nuanced way, a fundamental question has to be addressed. Moving from the hypothetical to the real, we must ask whether non-Jews are likely actually to have seen these images. Were adherents of Dura’s other gods and goddesses even aware of how the Jews were depicting a revered cult statue? Would they have entered the Synagogue? Then again, from the other side, was it expected by the congregation, its leaders, and the painters, that adherents of pagan cults be present in their midst, at least on some occasions? Behind that, there lies the large, general question: how should we relate the range of surviving pictures in the Synagogue program to its Dura setting?

Extracting meaning from an image is hazardous at every turn—that hardly needs saying. In our case, the community for whom the Synagogue was built, and for whom the images were painted, is truly an unknown quantity. Only some 60 percent of the pictorial program of the Dura synagogue has survived, according to estimates. No literature attests to Jewish life in Dura; the synagogue stands alone. That is not altogether surprising, for the Jewish diaspora of the Greco-Roman East after 70 CE in its totality is lamentably served by our surviving evidence.⁶ As for Dura, we lack literary sources also for its non-Jewish world. We are very far from accessing minds and hearts. If any of the scenes on the Synagogue walls might seem to be making their statements loud and clear, the disintegration of Dagon would be among them; even here interpretation will depend on the iconographic code that is applied, the context of artists and viewers that is imagined, our estimation of how this one image might be connected or not connected to the rest of the program, and to an extent even the viewer’s subjective reaction. Recent commentators, notably Annabel Wharton, have emphasized the multivalency of the Dura images and have gone on to match up their many-faced iconography not only to the polysemic character of Jewish midrashic discourse but thence to the multi-ethnic, multireligious society from which the images sprang.⁷ That ascription of open-endedness, too, is no more than an interpretation—one which sees fit to give credit to the gamut of possible readings rather than to prioritize a single message out of many.

For all that, the inadequacy of the evidence has not greatly curtailed attempts at figuring out what the pictures are intended to convey, whether individually or as a program. It is, I think, for a rather different reason that the specific question with which I opened, how worshippers of local deities might have reacted to a shocking and seemingly provocative picture of the wreckage of a familiar-looking sacred image, has not arisen. Since its discovery, the Dura synagogue has been understood, one way or another, as an exclusively Jewish space. Although that is perhaps understandable, it is not without consequences. Whether the Jews in question be Joseph Gutmann’s exponents of a developed and formalized liturgy, not too far from that which we know today;⁸ or, in a newer reading, Steven Fine’s pupils and followers of the rabbinic sages;⁹ or even Erwin Goodenough’s distinctive brand of Hellenistic, Philonic mystics with their own elaborate allegorical language,¹⁰ their Judaism, in its local manifestation, has been envisaged as a world sufficient unto itself for its adherents, as they huddled around their Synagogue. It may seem odd to include in this list the highly syncretistic form of the Judaism that Goodenough reconstructed. In fact, however, he devoted the three final volumes of his *opus magnum* on Jewish symbols to the Dura synagogue, as a manifest instance of that syncretism, so that for him the merger between systems had taken place centuries earlier and in the setting of the Hellenistic culture of Alexandria, then to be transmitted among Jews and for Jews. It was seemingly

not an ongoing phenomenon in the wider world. Thus, one way or another, the Dura Jews were marked out as “a people apart,” as “doing their own thing” so to speak.

Several historical factors have conspired to build up the image of the Dura synagogue as an exclusive Jewish space. First, there was the amazement that greeted the Synagogue’s discovery in the early winter of 1932, in the advanced stages of the work of the Yale-French expedition. It was, of course, astonishing, especially at that stage, to find a hitherto unsuspected edifice of this scale and significance and in so good a state of preservation that its west wall had retained a large part of its dense design. But it was so much more of a surprise that this edifice, with its Torah shrine and its exclusive thematic immersion in Hebrew Bible and post-biblical interpretation, was manifestly a synagogue. There was absolutely no parallel to a pictorial program of this kind on the walls (and ceiling) of any ancient Jewish structure anywhere. Astonishment was greatly increased by the entirely free and profuse depiction of living beings and animals; moreover, although these artists had stopped short of depicting the Deity, they had allowed themselves to represent divine deliverance by means of entirely physical hands descending from above. The more un-Jewish, as it were, some of this seemed to be in its contravention of the prohibition of images in the second commandment, the more it demanded explanation in Jewish terms; thus, investigation and hypothesis settled within the sphere of Judaism, however conceived and however elastic (as it was in Goodenough’s picture). And the assumption was that Jews, of whatever hue, had comfortably (or less comfortably) ensconced themselves within their strict boundaries by the time Christianity began its onward march. Now that the explosion in study of the Jewish diaspora in the Greco-Roman world in the last thirty years has corrected this picture, we can think afresh about the Jews of Dura.

Quite rapidly, at least one of the discoverers’ problems was dissolved—that of the flouting of the second commandment. The first discoveries of mosaic synagogue floors in the Galilee predated the excavation of the Dura synagogue. There were quite enough human and animal images at Beth Alpha (1928) and Na’aran (1918) to remove any shadow of doubt about their complete acceptability, at least in two dimensions, within post-70 communities located in the heartland of Jewish life.¹¹ Beth Alpha had revealed a vivid representation of Abraham’s binding of Isaac, matched by the one above the Torah shrine painted already for a program prior to the final one in the Synagogue at Dura. Perhaps the most unexpected Galilean motif was the zodiac wheel, with human and animal signs sometimes surrounding a personified sun driving his four-horse chariot. It was thus already clear that the second commandment was taken in radically different ways in different circles of Jews at different times and that there was a very marked liberalization during late antiquity as compared with the strictness prevalent in many circles of the late Second Temple period (between roughly the beginning of the third century BCE and 70 CE).¹² Again, in the necropolis of Beth She’arim, burials associated with known rabbinic families were found in juxtaposition not just with sculpted animals but also with scenes indisputably drawn from Greek mythology.¹³ The question of the second commandment thus slipped easily out of the discussion. But the terms had been set of enquiries that looked into the rich world of late-antique Judaism—as was indeed quite proper—but that forgot to look from there out into the context of Dura and to seek methods of comparison and contextualization.

Whereas some problems fell away, the perception of the Dura synagogue as an exclusively Jewish space retained its hold. The textuality of the images, with their dependence on a good knowledge of scripture for full comprehension and their need for decoding in many matters of detail, suggested an in-group mentality.

It was an irresistible challenge to find an explanation of the program as a whole in terms of Jewish doctrine or theology, as Rachel Wischnitzer sought to do with her carefully worked-out ascription of an overarching Messianism to the artists' vision.¹⁴ The location and ordering of the scenes—partially intelligible, and often recalcitrant and seemingly random—was intriguingly explained by Joseph Gutmann in terms of the sequence of liturgical elements in traditional Jewish worship. The search for a large theory thus also in due course lost its appeal but left its mark: with the complete program unknown, it was perhaps not surprising that speculation about choices made by the synagogue's leaders, patrons, or artists, in relation to subject matter, ordering, emphasis and iconographical detail, could not be made to stick.

In the 1960s, a second great sensation in synagogue archaeology occurred, when a very substantial synagogue was discovered in the great city of Sardis in Lydia (inland Asia Minor). The last phase of this synagogue belonged firmly in the world of late antiquity, dating to some three hundred years after the end of that of Dura, which is securely dated by the fall of the town to the Sasanians in 256 CE. Nonetheless, the Sardis synagogue, better-preserved than most (and speedily restored), had much in common with others in the region that were becoming known through excavation, and it rapidly became emblematic of the outward-looking spirit now ascribed to Greek-speaking diaspora Jews as a whole.¹⁵ Comparisons and contrasts were naturally drawn with the Dura find, notably by Andrew Seager, who was employed as an architect on the Sardis project.¹⁶ The Sardis synagogue was not only very much larger—accommodating perhaps one thousand worshippers rather than the one hundred twenty-five odd that could, according to estimates, be seated on benches at Dura—it also appeared to its discoverers to be offering an invitation to the city at large. Its entrance opened onto the same street as the entrance to the imposing and very important gymnasium of the city, and the two were almost adjacent. The sizeable forecourt contained a water fountain listed in a civic inventory. Its eighty or so donor inscriptions included the names of councillors of the city and of sympathizers with Judaism. The small size and peripheral location of the Dura synagogue were perhaps accentuated in the consideration of this contrast, just as rather too much was probably made of the openness and cosmopolitan character of the synagogue of Sardis.¹⁷

Regional geography has also contributed to narrowing the lens through which the Dura synagogue is viewed. The great rabbinic centers of late antiquity of Babylon and the southern part of Mesopotamia have been pulled into the picture,¹⁸ even though the hinterland of the synagogue is more likely to lie in Palmyra, 230 kilometers to the west, whence many influences and personnel came to Dura, as well as in conurbations of the north Euphrates zone, such as Edessa and Nisibis, where Jews are known to have lived in number. If the Dura synagogue paintings hailed from any tradition—and indeed it is unlikely that they came, as it were, out of nowhere and stood entirely on their own—then it is in those northern cities that the lost precursors must be sought.

Also taken as an indicator of separateness is the predominance of the square (“Assyrian”) Hebrew script as the vehicle for Aramaic writing in the epigraphy of the Synagogue (pl. 31). That choice does seem indicative—marking out the language pattern here as different from that of the rest of Dura and suggesting that the Jewish texts would not be, and were not intended to be, read by outsiders coming with a different linguistic formation.¹⁹ The Hebrew language itself figures rather little, but a papyrus fragment of a Hebrew prayer found outside the Synagogue has been given renewed attention by Steven Fine.²⁰ This is a text closely related to the *birkat ha-mazon* (the grace after meals) in the form in which it later became established. The

text presumably belonged to the Synagogue community—perhaps serving as a guide or as an educational tool—or else to an individual worshipper. Fine understands the fragment’s liturgical affinities as rabbinic, and it is indeed a small and easy step—even if not an inevitable one—to hook up both this prayer and the Synagogue with the rabbis of Babylonia, where academies for many centuries produced the learning and lore that went into the Babylonian Talmud (the foundation stone of nearly all subsequent Judaism). The prayer fragment, whoever it belonged to, has seemed a tangible confirmation of some participation by the Synagogue in that same rabbinic Judaism. Even if this association be granted, however, support is lacking for the big claim that Jewish religious life in Dura fitted the rabbinic mold in its manifestations or that it responded to and obeyed the writ of the rabbis.

Such reservations imply no lack of appreciation of the striking individual references to aspects of Jewish tradition that have been discovered in and around the Dura synagogue, including the case of that remarkable prayer fragment. Fascinating parallels with Midrashic texts, both earlier and later, and with the Aramaic Targum (especially with the so-called Targum Pseudo-Jonathan) have been revealed, as well as with Greek-Jewish writing in the shape of the remains of the (probably) Alexandrian Jewish dramatist, Ezekiel the Tragedian.²¹ There is a vivid example in the second of the two scenes of Elijah and the priests of Baal, where a little figure inside the altar on which the priests are trying to raise fire is being attacked by a huge serpent. The figure is indisputably a man called Hiel, who, according to Midrash Rabbah to Exodus 15:15, concealed himself in the altar with a view to fraudulently igniting the fire; divine intervention, however, led to his being consumed by a snake. Pamela Berger discusses another clearcut case, the representation of the non-biblical legend of Miriam’s well in the wilderness from which Moses makes water flow to the twelve tribal leaders in panel WB1.²² And when the Dura artist shows a topless Pharaoh’s daughter in person, rather than her handmaid, lifting out of the Nile the baby Moses (WC 4, fig. 8.3), he echoes a tradition that has come into the Greek-Jewish sphere in the *Exagoge* of Ezekiel the Tragedian. The list of such allusions amounts to a dozen at least, and it may well still grow. What these parallels signify, in terms of access to oral or written tradition, to popular story telling or to teaching and preaching is another matter. It is also worth noting that at least one prominent scholar, Philip Alexander, proposes now to remove even the Targumists from the sphere of the rabbinic movement.²³ And as for the Hellenistic works whose interpretations figure at Dura, they are quite obviously as far from the rabbis as could be.

New studies of other aspects of the Dura synagogue have scarcely shifted the entrenched picture of a very insular Jewish community. Elsner, as we have seen, spotted the startling triumphalist vein in the Synagogue, but supposed, if only by default, that this engagement was intended for internal consumption (a



Figure 8.3: Wall painting of Pharaoh’s daughter finding the baby Moses, Synagogue, WC4, ca. 245–256 CE. National Museum of Damascus (photograph courtesy of the Yale University Art Gallery, Dura-Europos Collection)

private revenge, as it were). Others speak explicitly of the reassurance generated by the recurrent theology of Jewish victory and of the discomfiture of enemies, serving it is supposed, to boost morale and confidence within the group.

The lines of interpretation, past and present, that have been sketched here are diverse. My purpose has been not to critique theories for their own sake but simply to show how it came about that Jewish connections were pursued to the exclusion of others. This is more or less how matters have stood. As Pamela Berger writes in the conclusion to her essay in this volume, it is high time for a change: there is ample room for reassessment of the competitive dimension of the Dura synagogue.

The border town of Dura-Europos stands out as a meeting place of ethnicities, cultures, cults and languages,²⁴ a small place whose houses of worship were in close proximity to one another.²⁵ It was a town whose paintings show their subjects in a remarkable array of costumes: Parthian trousers, Persian gowns, Greek *himatia* and Roman togas are juxtaposed, mingling comfortably (and quite likely without special significance),²⁶ and where some nine languages or sub-languages were in use.²⁷ It is paradoxical indeed that in Dura, of all places, the Synagogue community has been judged so very exclusive and closed-off, not only in relation to the majority, polytheistic society but even vis-a-vis the tiny Christian community whose limited surviving art, so far as we can tell, suggests a similar interest to that of the Jews in rejoicing over victory against the odds, as in its scenes of David and Goliath or of the healing of the paralytic (pl. 19).²⁸ Lucinda Dirven explores, but largely rejects, the possibility that competition might have been a motivating force in the interaction between religious groups at Dura. Cults, she asserts, were family-based affairs here—as attested by the small scale, domestic character of their sites of worship—and the Synagogue, she suggests, fits more than comfortably into this pattern. She finds the popular marketplace model of religious diversity inappropriate to the interrelationship of cults in a small and relatively remote frontier town, so different, in her view, from the bigger cities of the Roman East.²⁹ But this inference from archaeology is less persuasive when set against the tangible evidence of Christianity's successful spread through the Roman Empire and the Near East during the first three centuries CE, for monumental church building started in earnest only at the very end of this period and took root slowly. Before that, the Christian message was announced precisely in house churches, homes, and philosophical schools, and displayed in preaching, healing, and miracles done in the open, or even in meeting places and places of worship frequented by others, like the synagogues of Greece and Asia Minor and the Athenian altar to the “unknown God” in the Book of Acts. Nevertheless, the news spread. Although gatherings of Christians could be denounced as secret conclaves by their enemies, as reported in the famous letter (*Letters* 10:96) on the Christians written by Pliny the Younger as governor of Bithynia to the Emperor Trajan, in reality their very nature and *raison d'être* was to be open. If house churches were accessible, so could the Dura synagogue have been. Whatever limitations this small town had, still, habits, attitudes, and relationships formed in the mixed societies of, say, Corinth, Ephesus, Antioch, or Palmyra, would have come with members of those Jewish communities who had reason to move thence to the Euphrates frontier. In a smaller world, groups are in fact more interdependent: it is harder for people to avoid their neighbors, and there is no reason why religious practices must exist in a zone exempt from these normal rules.³⁰

So much for context—both as regards the nature of Dura itself and in the wider world of the Jewish diaspora of the time. The lessons about integration into civic life that we have learned from the synagogue

excavation at Sardis and elsewhere, and successfully applied to Jewish communities elsewhere over several centuries, should also extend to Dura.³¹ Beyond that, there is the macroclimate of the first half of the third century CE, in some respects perhaps the most fluid and open periods in the religious life of the Greco-Roman world, offering new-found scope for individual choice. Pagan philosophy and monotheism were closely intertwined. In practice, objects and systems of veneration and worship from diverse and seemingly opposed traditions might comfortably mingle, as statues of Abraham did with those of Christ and Orpheus just a few years before the final redecoration of the Dura synagogue, in the *lararium* of Alexander Severus. From this emperor's biographer, we also learn that Alexander was sometimes dubbed "the Archisynagogus," that is to say, "head of the synagogue" (*Historia Augusta, Life of Severus*, 28–29).³²

The art of the Dura-Europos synagogue shares in the common artistic idiom with an ease that bespeaks more than the mechanical fact of common workshops and artisans or of pattern books.³³ Such visual familiarity would make those new to the Synagogue feel quite at home; furthermore, we find images that are unexpected in a Synagogue but comfortable for those accustomed to Greek art. They would be happy to spot Pharaoh's daughter standing in the water, nymph-like, naked to the waist (WC4, fig. 8.3); nude figures with nude children on the doors of a building with its doors closed that looks to be the Jerusalem Temple (fig. 7.11); and victory statues attached to the corners of the Temple's pediment (WB3, fig. 7.10). More Roman than Greek, in the scene of Aaron's investiture, the inaugural sacrifice of the Tabernacle is shown. Here, a priest is raising his knife to kill an animal, possibly the ritual red heifer, in the usual style in which Roman sacrificers are depicted. Again, the masks and baskets of the dado that ran round the Synagogue above the three narrative registers are a standard part of a classicizing repertoire, but in this case it is perhaps less surprising to find them in a synagogue. We should not forget that Greek remained the dominant language of Dura-Europos from its Hellenistic foundation to its end.³⁴ It is also, along with Aramaic, well-represented among the dedicatory inscriptions of the Synagogue's ceiling tiles (pls. 31, 32).

While narrative sequences may be to a degree opaque to the uninstructed, individual images can speak very clearly, as we have already seen. Moses, the great leader, teacher and prophet, was better known to Greek, Roman, and oriental non-Jewish (and non-Christian) writers than any other figure in Jewish scripture and tradition. So we would expect him to be highly visible in a pictorial program that targeted outsiders as well as insiders, and that is exactly what we find. Here, the baby Moses lies in the arms of Pharaoh's daughter; there, the miracle-working Moses with his rod parts the Red Sea; and again with that same magic wand, we see him drawing water for the tribes from the wilderness well. And here is Moses alone, standing at a schematic burning bush, his boots off his feet and placed neatly beside him (wing panel 1, fig. 8.4). This image is one of the four elongated standing figures that surround the Torah niche and date back to the preceding synagogue, painted some decades before the final edifice was built and decorated in the 240s.



Figure 8.4: Wall painting of Moses and the burning bush, Synagogue, wing panel 1, ca. 245–256 CE. National Museum of Damascus (photograph courtesy of the Yale University Art Gallery, Dura-Europos Collection)

There is a good case to be made for the three other figures in the set representing Moses as well, in three different situations, and especially so in the case of the most famous of them, a solemn man reading from an unfurled scroll (the prototype of many later Christian representations). The identification for all four images as Moses in different guises was strongly supported by Goodenough, Avi-Yonah, and others. Different identifications have also been offered, notably, for the man with the scroll, Samuel the prophet (taking account of the name of the Synagogue's main donor, the archon, elder and priest Samuel son of Yeda'ya), or even the prophet of the destruction, Jeremiah; but all with very little supporting argument.

The Dura synagogue paintings are inclined to militarization. A number of panels show more armed men and weapons than would be required by scripture, an obvious route to popular appeal in any ancient society

and especially in a garrison town. The scene of the parting of the Red Sea evokes, among other things, a confrontation between armies. The Eben-Ezer defeat was far from an obvious moment to pick from the saga of the Ark in 1 Samuel. Jerusalem bristles with ramparts in the closed Temple panel.

Yet deeds of valor alone are manifestly insufficient. Equally unmistakable, and even more impressive, are the Synagogue's representations of mighty deeds of the supernatural kind and of divine intervention, concentrating particularly in register C. The Israelites may be armed, Moses may wave his wand, but we are awed by the overhanging hand of God and understand what force is truly behind the miracle of the parting of the Red Sea. This is a God who, visibly, again and again, saves and redeems.

He also resurrects, and the Dura resurrection scenes are among the most vivid, graphic, and self-explanatory in the repertoire. Thus, Elijah revives the widow of Zarephat (WC1, fig. 8.5) in a panel illustrating 1 Kings 17:17–24, and we see, successively from left to right in the panel, the dead baby handed over by his mother in dark robes to the prophet who reclines on a fancy couch; the baby revived in the prophet's arms; and an upright, living baby in the hands of a tranquil mother in light robes. Over their head, hangs the divine hand. The sequence speaks a universal language.

Again, in the Valley of the Dry Bones panel, to see the massed dead laid out as naked corpses, then to observe their detached limbs strewn over the ground, and lastly to find three clothed men standing tall and whole, having been revived by a solemnly gesturing prophet (as in Ezekiel 37) with the aid of fluttering winged angels and a separate divine hand over each section of the scene, and a hill (presumably the Mount of Olives) standing at its center, is to remain in no doubt whatsoever as to what superhuman wonders have been wrought and of what this might mean for each and every one of the God of Israel's followers.³⁵



Figure 8.5: Wall painting of Elijah reviving the widow of Zarephat, Synagogue, WC1, ca. 245–256 CE. National Museum of Damascus. After Goodenough, pl. VIII

Furthermore, it is hard to overlook the obvious fact that the scenes of bodily resurrection, graphically shown as such, were particularly significant to Christians. We should not exclude the possibility of the Synagogue receiving also members of the small Christian community in this period of the “parting of the ways” between Jews and Christians. The Dura church had room for not much more than some sixty participants seated on benches, so the Synagogue was by comparison spacious. The resurrection images appealed to Christians on their central theological territory, re-appropriating key biblical moments and even outdoing their own narratives. Herbert Kessler traced the appearance at Dura of passages important to Jewish-Christian literary controversy; but, once again, he did not concern himself with how this might have been expected to play itself out on the ground; and he brushed aside any thought of actual engagement between the two groups.³⁶

To add to what we see, it is wonderful that we have unique written evidence of the ability of the resurrection images to arouse emotion. This comes in the shape of two graffiti in Middle Persian expressing, precisely, reactions to the Elijah miracle. One has been deciphered and translated to say “when Hormuzd the scribe came and he looked at the pictures... living... the dead.” And the second, above Elijah’s right thigh, reads, “praise, praise to the gods (?), for life, life eternally.” Unlikely, as was once mooted, to be pre-invasion Sasanian inspectors, the authors of these graffiti, along with a dozen or so others, are evidently simple visitors from the East somewhere during that small window of time between the completion of the final stage of the decorations and the fall of Dura-Europos. A third pious exclamation (among a number of graffiti written on the Esther panel) gives us the two Persian names of the writer, who describes himself as a scribe, and seems to say that he came “to the house” and records that “he liked the picture.”³⁷ Whether these visitors were Jews, as Steven Fine prefers to think, or non-Jews, is unclear.³⁸ A re-reading of the texts might well yield better information, but for the moment we can comfortably say that we have here the concrete attestation of those very pagan visitors that we have been conjuring up—in this case not Greeks or Romans or Palmyrenes but Iranians. If proof were available, these few sentences would truly constitute a historian’s dream. Either way, the pull of the Synagogue as well as the religious power of its images and, especially, the overwhelming impressiveness of its miracles, are vividly attested in these invaluable little texts.

Needless to say, the powers and prowess of the God of Israel are a central concern already of the Hebrew Bible. This inescapable theme is expanded upon in countless ways and poeticized in prayer, and it looms large in the Synagogue ritual down to this day. It did not take the artists of Dura-Europos to dig it out. But its graphic representation in Dura’s Synagogue readily generated pride and hope in the people whose God could and did do so much for them. Undeniably, then, the imagined battle between divinities with which I opened this essay has meaning in itself; no competition with, or for, the current worshippers of other gods need follow in its wake, and I would not claim that what we have seen can only make sense in terms of putative outside observers. Yet the cumulative impression of form, content, and local environment, together with the wider context of the marketplace of religions that defined the second and third centuries CE in the Roman Empire, and the suggestion of the graffiti, do together make up a strong case for a reading that goes beyond the immediate constituency of Dura’s Jewish worshippers. Such a reading has the merit, too, of bringing the Dura synagogue into line with the wider synagogue world of the Greek-speaking Jewish diaspora, where non-Jewish patrons and donors are well attested and Christian interest documented. The interpretation offered here will no doubt be further tested in the light of our changing picture of the worshippers in Dura’s other cults.

Notes

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- 2 Carl H. Kraeling, *The Synagogue. The Excavations at Dura-Europos Conducted by Yale University and the French Academy of Inscriptions and Letters, Final Report 8, Part 1*, ed. Alfred R. Bellinger et al. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1956).
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- 4 Clark Hopkins, *The Discovery of Dura-Europos*, ed. Bernard Goldman (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), 131–39; and M. K. Hopkins, "Introduction: the Excavation of the Dura Synagogue Paintings," in *The Dura-Europos Synagogue: a Re-evaluation (1932–1992)*, ed. Joseph Gutmann (Atlanta: Scholars, 1992), 11–21.
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- 9 Steven Fine, *Art and Judaism in the Greco-Roman World: Toward a New Jewish Archaeology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 174–85; and Fine, "Jewish Identity at the Limes: the Earliest Reception of the Dura-Europos Synagogue Paintings," in *Cultural Identity in the Ancient Mediterranean*, ed. Erich S. Gruen (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute for the History of Art and the Humanities, 2011, in press). I thank Steven Fine for kindly providing me with an advance version of this paper, as well as other material.
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- 11 Joseph Gutmann, "Early Synagogue and Jewish Catacomb Art and Its Relation to Christian Art," in *Aufstieg Und Niedergang Der Römischen Welt*, ed. Wolfgang Haase (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1984), 1328–30.
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- 13 On these burials, Steven Fine, *Art and Judaism*, 86–87; and Tessa Rajak, *The Jewish Dialogue with Greece and Rome: Studies in Cultural and Social Interaction*, *Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums* 48 (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 479–99.
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 - 17 As suggested in Rajak, *The Jewish Dialogue with Greece and Rome*, 447–62.
 - 18 Fine, *Art and Judaism, in the Greco-Roman World: Toward a New Jewish Archaeology*, 155–59; Fine, "Jewish Identity at the Limes: the Earliest Reception of the Dura-Europos Synagogue Paintings"; and Jacob Neusner, "Judaism at Dura-Europos," in *The Dura-Europos Synagogue: a Re-evaluation (1932–1992)*, ed. Joseph Gutmann (Atlanta: Scholars, 1992), 155–92.
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 - 22 See Berger in this volume.
 - 23 Recently argued in Philip S. Alexander, "What Happened to the Jewish Priesthood after 70?," in *A Wandering Galilean: Essays in Honour of Sean Freyne*, ed. Zuleika Rodgers (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 5–33.
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 - 26 Bernard Goldman, "The Dura Synagogue Costumes and Parthian Art," in *The Dura-Europos Synagogue: a Re-evaluation (1932–1992)*, ed. Joseph Gutmann (Atlanta: Scholars, 1992), 53–77; and Rachel Hachlili, *Ancient Jewish Art and Archaeology in the Diaspora* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 132–42.

- 27 Kaizer, "Religion and Language in Dura-Europos." *God of Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006).
- 28 Fully documented in Carl H. Kraeling, *The Christian Building. The Excavations at Dura-Europos Conducted by Yale University and the French Academy of Inscriptions and Letters, Final Report 8, Part 2*, ed. C. Bradford Welles (New Haven, Conn.: Dura-Europos Publications, 1967).
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- 35 For a broad discussion, see Jon Levenson, *Resurrection and the Restoration of Israel: the Ultimate Victory of the*
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CHARLES B. MCCLENDON

THE ARTICULATION OF SACRED SPACE IN THE SYNAGOGUE AND CHRISTIAN BUILDING AT DURA-EUPOPOS

The importance of the Synagogue and Christian Building at Dura-Europos cannot be overstated. Their discovery in the early 1930s revolutionized the study of religious art and architecture in late antiquity, and they remain fundamental to our understanding of the subject today. The two structures often are presented separately from one another in order to relate each to the development of either Jewish or Christian architecture respectively.¹ Although understandable, this approach tends to overlook how much they have in common and how these shared qualities may have contributed to their individual character. It seems appropriate, therefore, given the nature of this exhibition, to begin with the recognition that both buildings were products of the same time and place and that they should be analyzed together, pointing out both similarities and differences, before the attempt is made to evaluate the significance of each for later developments.

Both the Synagogue and Christian Building resulted from the adaptation of domestic structures for religious purposes—a common practice at Dura-Europos, as seen in the Mithraeum and the pagan temples to Adonis, Zeus Theos, and Bel (a local deity).² The construction and design of the two houses followed the same Durene tradition, characterized by the use of mud brick and the arrangement of rooms about an open courtyard. They also were located within a short distance of one another along the same street (referred to by the excavators as Wall Street, because it was positioned just inside the western, desert-facing fortification wall of the city) (see plan, p. 15). After the arrival of the Romans in 165 CE, the western part of town had developed rapidly into a thriving middle-class neighborhood of houses and small shops of great cultural and

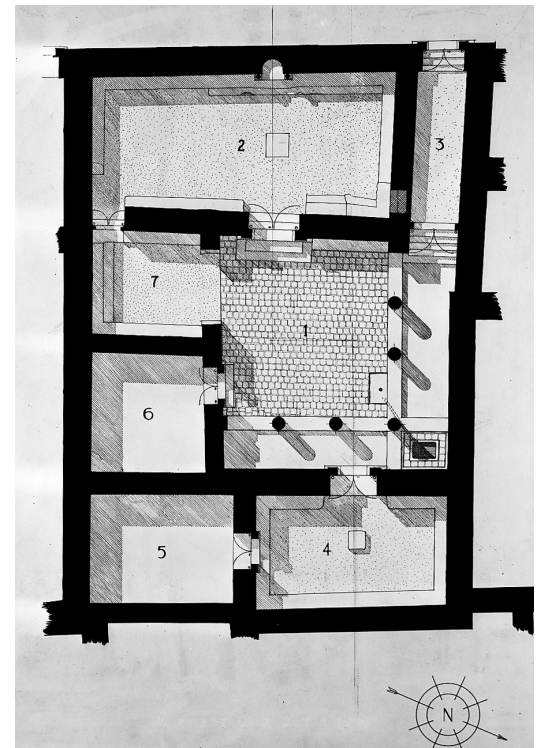


Fig. 9.1: Reconstructed plan, earlier Synagogue.
Yale University Art Gallery, Dura-Europos
Collection

ethnic diversity. It is by sheer happenstance that Dura-Europos provides a unique juxtaposition of contemporary, early stages in the development of Jewish and Christian art and architecture.³ Both buildings were remodeled for religious purposes at approximately the same time and both were confiscated and absorbed by an expansion of the defense walls shortly before the siege and fall of the city in 256 CE.⁴ This process of partial demolition and burial preserved their layouts and large portions of their westernmost walls, allowing them to be uncovered within a year of one another in 1932 and 1933 respectively.

The Synagogue underwent two phases of modifications. The original structure was built as part of a block of adjoining houses sometime during the later Parthian occupation of the city between 50 and 150 CE. Renovation of this particular house for use as a synagogue occurred early in the Roman period before the year 200 CE and involved relatively modest alterations, such as paving the courtyard and perhaps eliminating a partition wall to create an assembly hall of slightly irregular rectangular shape (10.7–10.9 × 4.6–5.3 m) (fig. 9.1). Around the base of the interior of the walls were benches of plastered mud brick, except for a section along the western wall, where they were made of stone. Two gypsum colonnettes were found among the debris in this area,

which, together with the switch in construction of the benches from mud brick to stone, suggests that an aedicula of some kind once stood at this point on the west wall. Paired colonnettes, after all, were a common framing device, and stone would have been able to support the additional weight of such an aedicula better than mud brick.⁵ A generation later, far more dramatic changes were carried out. Inscriptions in Aramaic and Greek from ceiling tiles accompanying this phase of construction provide a date of 244 or 245 CE (pls. 31, 32). At this time, the Synagogue was enlarged greatly by the annexation of an adjoining house (fig. 9.2). The assembly hall also was increased in size to encompass the full breadth of the earlier Synagogue (13.7 × 7.7 m), and the open courtyard was rebuilt on a much larger scale on axis with the central entrance to the assembly hall. The position of the earlier aedicula was maintained, albeit in a grander mode, involving a prominent niche now in the precise center of the broadened western wall and further emphasized by two stout masonry columns supporting an arch (fig. 7.2). The columns were plastered and painted to imitate marble veining, while a plaster conch shell was set in the apex of the

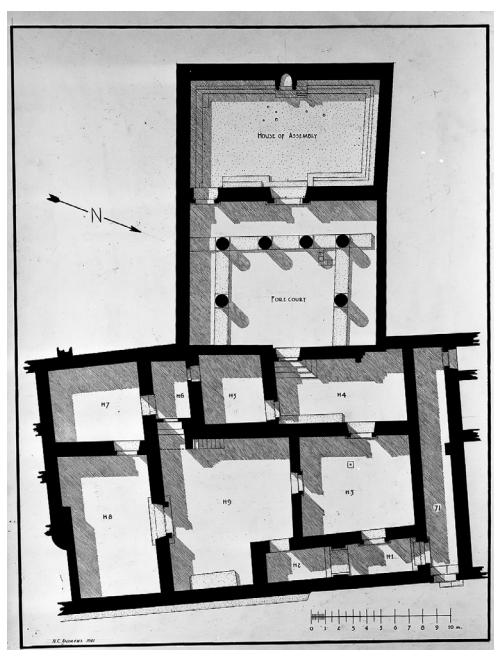


Fig. 9.2: Reconstructed plan, later Synagogue.
Yale University Art Gallery, Dura-Europos
Collection

niche. The area immediately above the arch was painted with images of a menorah; a building façade (presumably meant to represent the Temple in Jerusalem); and a figural scene of the Binding (or Sacrifice) of Isaac on Mount Moriah, identified in 2 Chronicles 3:1 as the Temple Mount (figs. 7.3, 7.5, and 7.6). The western placement of this feature took advantage of the building's location backing onto Wall Street. Its unaltered position over two phases of the Synagogue suggests that its directional reference toward the holy city of Jerusalem was intentional. This assumption is reinforced not only by the imagery just above the arch of the aedicula but also by the framing monumental panels in the middle register of wall paintings on

the western wall, representing the Temple in Jerusalem (WB3, fig. 7.10) and the Tabernacle in the Desert (WB2, fig. 7.8), with the latter in the guise of a monumental columnar temple instead of the tent-like structure described in the Hebrew Bible. The function of the aedicula as a Torah shrine seems clear. An Aramaic graffito found below the image of the menorah on the area above the arch refers to the feature as *beit arona* (the house of the ark). This phrase, in turn, drew a connection between the Durene “ark” and the Ark of the Covenant, which held the books of Moses and was once housed in both the Tabernacle in the Desert and the Temple in Jerusalem. The “ark” in the case of the Durene synagogue was most likely a wooden chest for containing Torah scrolls.⁶ The dimensions of the niche (only 41 × 84 cm) seem too small for it to have served as a permanent repository for all the Synagogue’s Torah scrolls.⁷ It may have provided instead an honorific setting at certain times of the year for one or two scrolls contained within a portable chest. The niche and its contents also may have been hidden from view on occasion by a curtain or veil suspended from a rod mounted by brackets that left holes in the opposite upper corners of the area above the niche arch. A wooden platform (*bema*), from which prayers could be led and the Torah read, presumably stood nearby. Four holes to the south of the Torah shrine may indicate its position. If true, the *bema* was placed so as not to stand directly in front of the Torah shrine.⁸

As in the previous phase, the inner walls of the assembly hall were lined with benches with no clear indication of segregation of the sexes. It has been suggested that the smaller doorway to the left of the central entrance to the assembly hall may have been designated for women and that they may have used the benches with footrests found inside nearby. Neither hypothesis can be proven.⁹ What is most striking is how the configuration of the Durene synagogue hall reflected its primary functions, which were for assembly, prayer, reading, and the celebration of the Torah. Prayer in the direction of Jerusalem is well attested in Biblical literature and rabbinic sources.¹⁰ The position of the Torah shrine in the center of the western wall, facing in the direction of Jerusalem, together with the subject and arrangement of the wall paintings, were meant “to embody historical memories, a religious-communal attachment to the present, and perhaps (messianic and other) hopes for the future.”¹¹ The Synagogue did not replace the Temple in Jerusalem; instead, through its evocation of the holy site, the assembly hall acquired what one scholar has termed a “vicarious sacrality.”¹² In this way, the space was so arranged to promote an affirmation of faith and community identification among worshippers through the contemplation of sacred history in both word and image.

In comparison to the Synagogue, the Christian Building was a far more modest affair. Almost the entire building could have fit into the Synagogue’s assembly hall. This discrepancy in scale presumably reflected the larger size and greater resources of the Jewish community in comparison to the Christians at Dura-Europos. The modifications of the domestic structure certainly were far more limited. While the extensive rebuilding of the Synagogue in terms of size, height, and relocation of the entryway must have been quite noticeable from the outside to any passersby, at least during construction, the changes in the Christian Building would have gone largely unnoticed; all the alterations were internal. The original house was built around the year 232 or 233 CE, according to an inscription scratched into its then-wet plaster. It was, like the Synagogue, of the peristyle type (typical) of the region, with an open courtyard, surrounded by rooms of varying sizes (in this case on three sides and a portico on the fourth). Some ten years later, the western wall of the dining room was removed in order to create one long, narrow rectangular space (5 × 13 m) with a dais against the center of the eastern wall (fig. 9.3). Whereas the Synagogue’s assembly hall was broad,

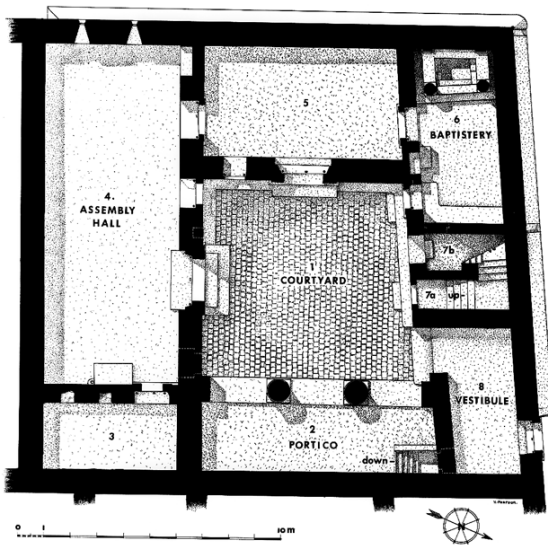


Fig. 9.3: Reconstructed plan, Christian Building. Yale University Art Gallery, Dura-Europos Collection

calia Apostolorum (*Teaching of the Apostles*), a church order and pastoral admonition written in Syria in the first half of the third century, explicitly states that “it is required that you pray toward the east, knowing that it is written: ‘Give glory to God, who rides upon the heaven of heavens toward the east’ (Ps 68:33).” It further explains that “it is required that the presbyters shall sit in the eastern part of the house with the bishops, and afterwards the laymen, and then the women.” It also makes clear that “you stand up to pray.”¹⁴ The assembly hall of the Durene Christian Building seems to have been in full compliance with these requirements. It is also noteworthy that in comparison to the Synagogue’s assembly hall, there were no signs of painted decoration, figural or otherwise.¹⁵ But this was untrue elsewhere.

A room in the northwest corner of the building, across the courtyard from the assembly hall, was turned into a baptistery. The great importance of baptism for the Christian faith is indicated by a separate space having been singled out for that purpose, even though the rite would have taken place only occasionally during the year. Easter eve and Pentecost

the Christian Building’s assembly room was relatively narrow with a strong east-west axis. There were no built-in benches. Low benches that had once lined the walls of the original dining room were subsumed, when the floor was raised to create the new assembly hall. The congregation presumably stood to pray and, when listening to readings and sermons, may have sat on portable wooden benches. The more informal communal meal of the earliest Christians had in the course of the second and third centuries developed into a more ritualized process, involving readings from scripture and a sermon followed by the Eucharist or Communion (the sharing of consecrated bread and wine following the model of the Last Supper).¹³ In other words, the liturgy of the Mass was beginning to emerge, and the arrangement of the Christian Building’s assembly room at Dura-Europos seems to reflect this development with a clear hierarchy (indicated by the raised dais at one end, which was created no doubt to make the celebrant visible and audible to all the assembled faithful). It is also worth noting that the orientation of the room was toward the east (the direction of the rising sun) as opposed to the west and Jerusalem. The *Didas-*



Fig. 9.4: Excavation photograph of vault, Christian Building, baptistery. Yale University Art Gallery, Dura-Europos Collection

were particularly favored and in some regions, like Syria, Epiphany also was celebrated as marking the day of Jesus' baptism.¹⁶ Although infant baptism was permitted if a newborn's health was in jeopardy, adult baptism was the norm and often the result of conversion. In order to become a full member in the Christian community, one had to undergo ritualistic cleansing by water, following the precedent of Jesus at the hand of John the Baptist in the Jordan River. Only those who were baptized were allowed to partake in Communion; those who were not, known as catechumens, were required to leave the service after the readings, sermon, and common prayer, and before the Eucharist. At Dura-Europos, the catechumens may have heard, without actually viewing, the second part of the service while standing in the courtyard or in another good-size room (4 × 7 m) situated between the assembly hall and the baptistery. The Christian apologist Justin Martyr writing in the second century, states simply that baptism took place "where there is water";¹⁷ but a

more formal environment

was deemed appropriate. Although the baptistery was only one fourth the size of the assembly hall, its creation required a far more radical physical transformation of the preexisting space. The height of the ceiling, in comparison to the other rooms, was lowered by almost 2 meters to 3.5 meters from the floor. At the narrow west end was installed a font basin (about 2.5 × 1.0 m) surmounted by a canopy with stout masonry columns bearing an arch and barrel vault (fig. 9.4). The design and masonry construction of the font canopy, along with the painted imitation marble veining of the column shafts, closely resembled that of the Torah shrine in the neighboring Synagogue and strongly suggests that a related, if not the same, team of artisans constructed and decorated both. The same could be said for the strikingly similar canopies in the Temple of Bel and the Mithraeum a few blocks away (fig. 9.5).¹⁸

The baptistery, like the Synagogue's assembly hall, and unlike the Christian Building's assembly hall, was elaborately decorated with wall paintings, albeit on a

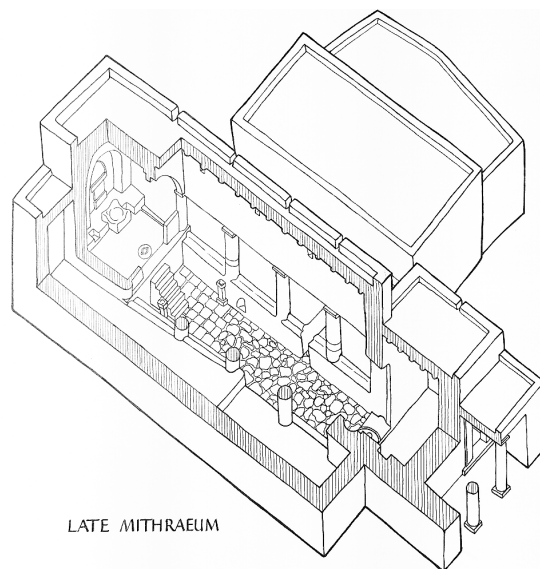


Fig. 9.5: Isometric reconstruction, Mithraeum. Drawing by Henry Pearson. Yale University Art Gallery, Dura-Europos Collection

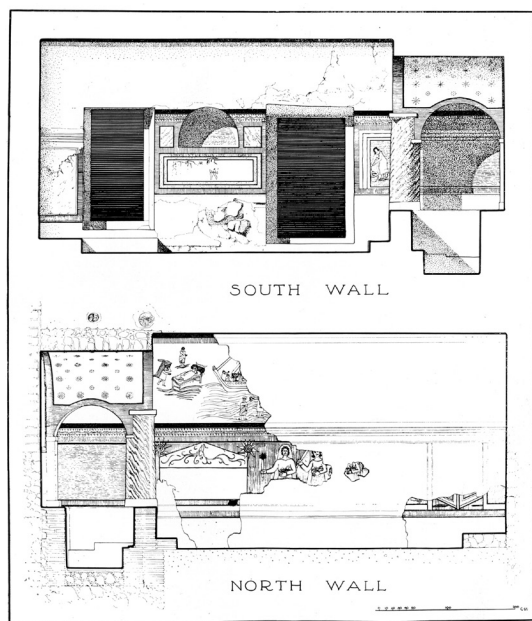


Fig. 9.6: Elevations of north and south walls, Christian Building, baptistery. Drawings by Henry Pearson. Yale University Art Gallery, Dura-Europos Collection

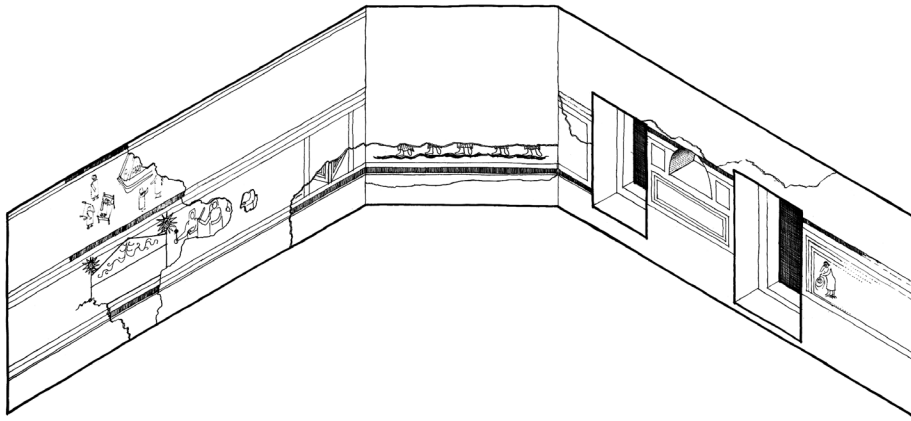


Fig. 9.7: Reconstruction of sequence of painted scenes, Christian Building, baptistery. Yale University Art Gallery, Dura-Europos Collection

line, clearly indicating their movement from right to left (fig. 9.7). Along the northern long wall, near the northeastern corner, was the representation of a double valve doorway, marking the entrance to the tomb. Further to the west, the women appeared again, now meant to be understood as inside the sepulcher, where excavators found preserved portions of three torsos, two with veiled heads and all carrying tapers as they approached a white gabled block, symbolizing a stone sarcophagus, which in turn was positioned next to the baptismal font (fig. 9.8).

Although the scheme seems deceptively simple, it was nuanced. Most remarkable is the way in which the interior space and decoration of the baptistery worked together to express the room's function. The painted door, for example, was positioned directly opposite the real door that connected the baptistery with the courtyard, and the feet of the women on the lower register of the eastern wall were represented as moving in the same direction as anyone entering from the courtyard into the baptistery. In other words, an initiate entering the baptistery at this point would have mimicked the Biblical narrative on the walls by walking parallel to the women represented as approaching the entrance to the tomb of Christ. The procession of the women toward the sarcophagus on the north wall emphasized the main axis of the room from the east toward the focus of the baptismal font placed against the

smaller scale. Again, some scholars even have suggested that because of various stylistic affinities, the same painters worked in both structures. Although only partly preserved, it is clear that the main painted program was composed of two registers of figural scenes (fig. 9.6). The lower register involved a continuous frieze of figures representing the women approaching and entering the tomb of Christ on Easter morning. On the wall at the eastern end were found five pairs of feet in a row on a wavy ground-

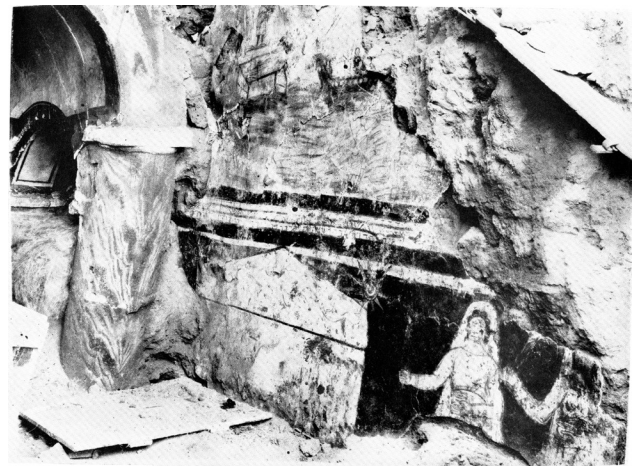


Fig. 9.8: Excavation photograph of baptistery interior toward the northwest, Christian Building. Yale University Art Gallery, Dura-Europos Collection

western end wall with its canopy framing a lunette bearing the image of the Good Shepherd. The initiate presumably followed the same directional path of the women while approaching and entering the font, a symbolic sarcophagus, in order to emerge reborn. Before doing so, however, the initiate would have been partially or fully undressed and anointed, according to the sequence of early Syrian testimonies of the ritual,¹⁹ which in the Durene baptistery most likely took place near the niche in the middle of the southern wall. The use of the niche as a receptacle for the holy oil was further suggested by the image depicted directly below it of David and Goliath. As David was anointed by Samuel before his miraculous victory over the evil giant (1 Sm 16:1–13), so the initiate received holy unction to overcome the power of Satan.²⁰ Once in the font, the initiate would have looked upon the image of the Good Shepherd, the symbol of Christ as savior “who lays down his life for his flock” (Jn 10:11–12) along with Adam and Eve, for whose sins Christ died (Rom 5:15–17), then up to the canopy vault with blue sky and stars of Heaven, then presumably toward the east to pray, with the same celestial decorative pattern repeated in the lowered ceiling of baptismal hall. In the process, the initiate would have been cleansed with water three times through immersion or aspersion to emerge reborn; the font, although not large, could have accommodated either process.²¹ The initiate then may have exited the baptistery through the second door nearest the font into the intermediary room to be clothed in white raiments and proceed to the assembly hall in order to receive Communion. The interior of the Durene baptistery, therefore, represented what one scholar has called “a private initiate world.”²² This environment did not call for a static reading or contemplation of images but a realization of meaning through movement, which, in turn, involved reenactment. This seemingly modest room with its wall paintings, often characterized as crude in modern literature, was for its contemporaries a charged and sacred space that enhanced what was considered to be both a life-changing and an once-in-a-lifetime event. In keeping with the words of St. Paul, the initiate was “buried with Christ in baptism unto his death” and like Christ was now able to “walk in the newness of life” (Rom 6:3–4).

The commonalities shared by the Durene synagogue and the Christian Building reveal important differences. In both buildings, the primary religious space was an assembly hall with a raised platform for leading prayer and reading scripture. In the Christian Building, this podium was the prime focus of the room whereas in the Synagogue, the bema was set to one side so as to give prominence to the Torah shrine. The Synagogue, therefore, privileged the physicality of the sacred text, in the form of the Torah scroll, and celebrated its association with the Ark of the Covenant. Early Christians, on the other hand, embraced the new textual technology of the codex or book, which was, instead of the traditional rotulus or scroll, a flat volume of bound leaves of parchment.²³ The Gospels, in the form of a book, could be carried honorifically, elevated and even given decorative covers, but they were not enshrined in the monumental manner of the Torah. In a similar way, the sacred directionality of the two assembly halls differed with the Synagogue’s Torah shrine against the western wall, toward Jerusalem, and the dais of the Christian Building against the eastern wall in the direction of the rising sun.

An aedicula, with stout columns much like the Torah shrine, was in the Christian Building reserved for the baptistery instead of in the assembly hall in order to accentuate the symbolic significance of the font as the site of initiation into the faith. In similar fashion, elaborate figural wall paintings were absent in the Christian Building’s assembly hall and were used in the baptistery to enhance the meaning of the monumentalized font and its accompanying rite, not unlike the use of Biblical scenes in the Synagogue’s

assembly hall in relation to the Torah shrine. Whereas the paintings in the Synagogue could be viewed and contemplated over time on a regular basis, the images in the baptistery were seen by the initiate only once in the midst of an elaborate ritual. This concentration of artistic energy on the baptistery not only reflected the importance of the rite itself but also the Christian emphasis on the process of conversion, as mandated by Jesus at the close of the Gospel according to St. Matthew 16:19: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." Although conversion was not foreign to Judaism, it did not receive the priority it was given in Christianity, and the converts at Dura-Europos, as elsewhere in the late-antique world, would have been predominantly pagan. In other words, similar artistic and architectural means were used at both buildings to achieve somewhat different ends: in the baptistery of the Christian Building the goal was to enhance the one-time process of initiation, whereas in the assembly hall of the Synagogue the purpose was to reinforce, on a continuous basis, identification with the history and traditions of a religious group. Although the two buildings were located within the same neighborhood, it is highly unlikely that there was much, if any, interaction between their two religious communities. To be sure, Jews and Christians must have intermingled on the streets and in shops, but participation in religious services would have been restricted to members of the respective groups. At the same time, both would have avoided participating in public civic rituals with their pagan religious overtones. The commonalities in architectural design, construction, and decoration resulted from shared masons and artists, or, at the very least, artisans trained in the same local traditions. The iconographic programs, on the other hand, presumably would have been devised mainly by religious leaders in each community, perhaps with the assistance of pattern books and other sources. In late-antique Rome, for example, where Jewish archaeological remains are almost exclusively funerary, recent studies have shown how Jews and non-Jews patronized the same workshops for grave goods, including carved sarcophagi, and tomb wall paintings.²⁴ A similar process of shared patronage must have taken place for the remodeling and decoration of the Synagogue and Christian Building at Dura-Europos.

The relationship of the two buildings at Dura-Europos to later developments in Jewish and Christian architecture can be considered only briefly within the confines of this short essay. It must suffice to point out a few ways in which each structure was both unique and paradigmatic. No other synagogue from the ancient world has been discovered with the array of figural wall paintings found at Dura-Europos, although inscriptions at other Diaspora sites suggest the possibility of painted programs that have since been lost.²⁵ Various subsequent synagogues in Palestine dating to the fourth through the sixth century are famous for their elaborate mosaic floors with a variety of figural scenes, but the subject matter is far more limited than at Dura-Europos. The most important feature is that they served as pavements that could be walked on, thereby seeming to deny any possible accusations of idolatry.²⁶ As to why the Jewish community at Dura allowed the assembly hall of its synagogue to be so extensively adorned with figural scenes remains a much-debated question. The decision was no doubt greatly influenced by the city's potent multicultural environment in which different religious groups, most likely using shared artists, affirmed their particular identities and concepts of the divine through visual means. Indeed, some scholars have interpreted the Synagogue's paintings as a form of resistance against local pagan religion.²⁷

Not long ago, it was thought that the architectural design of ancient synagogues followed clear stages of development in a chronological sequence of specific types. Recent comprehensive studies by Lee Levine,

Rachel Hachlili, and others have shown that this history was far more complex and diverse.²⁸ To be sure, the Durene synagogue remains a prime example of the so-called broadhouse type, which, as its name implies, was characterized by its greater breadth relative to its depth. At Dura-Europos, this was the result not of the importation of a preordained model but rather of the already-established nature of the original design of the house that was remodeled to serve as a synagogue. A similar example is the roughly contemporary Sardis synagogue in present-day Turkey, which was adapted from an earlier gymnasium and bath complex and shows a very different, basilican, design with a large apse on one narrow end of the hall. Until its discovery, this type of synagogue plan was thought to have emerged only a century or so later in the land of Israel.²⁹ The Synagogue at Dura does share with most other ancient synagogues, whether as part of the Diaspora or in the Holy Lands, the placement of the Torah shrine in the direction of Jerusalem, be it in the form of a niche, apse, or some other device.³⁰ Even so, particular aspects of the design of the Torah shrine at Dura-Europos, such as the monumental paired columns, the painted images over the arch, as well as the array of figural scenes on the surrounding walls of the assembly hall, remain unique.

The use of private residences by early Christians is well documented in the New Testament and other written sources. The Christian building at Dura-Europos is the earliest and best preserved example of a so-called *domus ecclesiae* (house of the church), which, like the Durene synagogue, was not simply a house used for religious purposes but rather a domestic dwelling structurally modified for specific rites. No doubt many other examples of such structures once existed throughout the Roman world, but they remain undiscovered. And, like the structure at Dura-Europos, their particular features probably depended much on local artistic and building practices leading to considerable diversity, as has been noted with ancient synagogues. In the dense urban fabric of Rome, there is clear evidence for the adaptation of sizeable apartment buildings (*tituli*) for Christian use. Since they were subsequently replaced by large churches, their precise chronology and physical makeup remain uncertain, which underscores the unique value of the information provided by Dura-Europos.³¹

The Christian Building displayed characteristics that would persist over time; these include the eastern orientation of the assembly hall and the spatial separation between that room and the baptistery. With the conversion of the Roman emperor Constantine to Christianity in 312 CE, the architectural settings for such assembly and baptism entered a new and monumental phase.³² Every major city soon saw the construction, often on a grand scale, of a cathedral, the residential church for a bishop, for the gathering of the faithful. These large assembly halls usually took the form of a basilica (a building type adapted from Roman civic architecture, with colonnaded corridors leading to an apse, usually at the east end). The local bishop oversaw the baptismal rite, which took place in a nearby, separate building, as the propriety of adult baptism required. These new baptisteries displayed many forms, with a notable preference for an octagonal plan, most likely due to a variety of symbolic associations, including a resemblance to imperial mausolea, as seen in Rome, Milan, Ravenna, and Constantinople (fig. 9.9).³³ The original ornament of the so-called Orthodox Baptistry in Ravenna dating to around the year 450 CE is especially well preserved. It is instructive to observe how the figural composition has been adapted to the now centralized, domed design. The font stands in the center of the space. Directly above it hovers the resplendent mosaic decoration on the dome, where one finds, instead of the row of the women at the tomb, a procession of the Apostles, led by Peter and Paul. All hold crowns of martyrdom and encircle a central medallion representing the Baptism of Christ.³⁴ For some

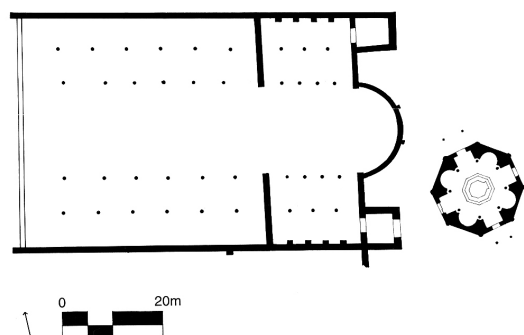


Fig. 9.9: Plan of the cathedral and baptistery, Milan, late-4th century (photograph by the author)

time after paganism was banned and Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire in the late-fourth century, smaller baptismal rooms of varying designs were built adjoining several other churches in Rome in order to accommodate the new flood of converts.³⁵ By the seventh century—for a variety of reasons, including the doctrine of original sin as formulated by St. Augustine—infant baptism became the norm and the need for separate structures for baptism disappeared.³⁶ Baptism now could be administered by parish, and other, priests and a separate rite of confirmation at a later age reserved for the bishop. The font, therefore, began to be placed within the basilican hall of churches, often in the western half of

the nave or aisles. This shift is

recorded, for example, on the famous Plan of St. Gall, drawn up around 830 CE (fig. 9.10). In the nave of the abbey church, a double-lined circle is simply labeled in Latin, *fons*, with an accompanying inscription stating: “Here Christ receives his reborn disciples.”³⁷ It is interesting that the tradition of monumental, freestanding, and centrally planned baptisteries reappeared in Italy around the year one thousand due not to any change in practice but rather to be a symbol of prominent patronage and episcopal power. Such architectural gestures were adopted by the emerging civic communes in the eleventh and twelfth centuries and often resulted in monuments far larger than any of their early Christian predecessors in cities like Parma, Pisa, and Florence. Such monuments became objects of civic pride. The baptistery of Florence, which like many others was dedicated to John the Baptist, was extolled by Dante as “my beautiful San Giovanni.” Here, infants were not only initiated into the Christian faith but were also officially registered as citizens of the communal state.³⁸ In this case, as elsewhere in Italy, the baptistery had by the end of the Middle Ages become a symbol and celebration of urban life.

The Synagogue and Christian Building at Dura-Europos first and foremost should be appreciated as expressions of a specific time and place. They also should be recognized as participants in a grand tradition of experimentation in the articulation of sacred space over many centuries. Their significance for an understanding of these processes remains undiminished, which makes them all the more deserving of continued close examination.

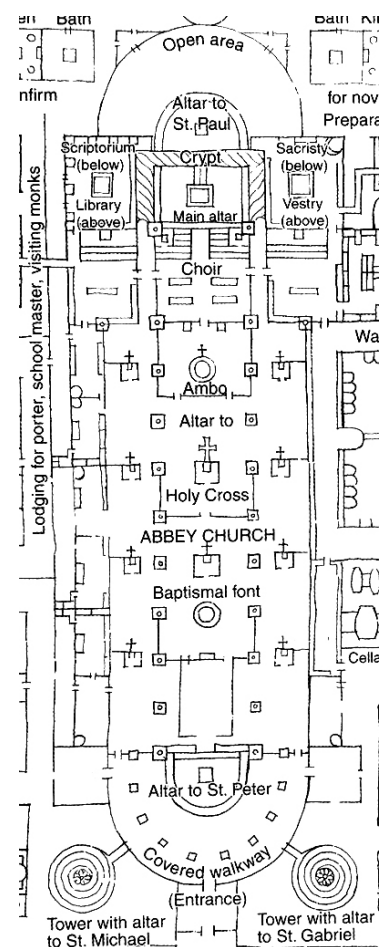


Fig. 9.10: Transcription of the plan of St. Gall (detail, abbey church), ca. 830 (photograph by the author)

Notes

- 1 Recent exceptions include Annabel Jane Wharton, *Refiguring the Post Classical City: Dura Europos, Jerash, Jerusalem and Ravenna* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 15–63; and Robin M. Jensen, “The Dura Europos Synagogue, Early Christian Art, and Religious Life in Dura Europos,” in *Jews, Christians, and Polytheists in the Ancient Synagogue: Cultural Interaction during the Greco-Roman Period*, ed. Steven Fine (London: Routledge, 1999), 174–200.
- 2 L. Michael White, *The Social Origins of Christian Architecture* (Valley Forge, Pa.: Trinity, 1996–97), 2:261–68; and Jensen, 180.
- 3 See Berger, Rajak, Peppard, and DeLeeuw in this volume.
- 4 On the siege, see James in this volume.
- 5 Carl H. Kraeling, *The Synagogue. The Excavations at Dura-Europos Conducted by Yale University and the French Academy of Inscriptions and Letters, Final Report 8, Part 1*, ed. Alfred R. Bellinger et al. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1956), 26–32; and White, 2:277–81.
- 6 Steven Fine, *Art and Judaism in the Greco-Roman World: Toward a New Jewish Archaeology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 177; and White, 2:292–93.
- 7 Eric M. Meyers, “The Torah Shrine in the Ancient Synagogue: Another Look at the Evidence,” in *Jews, Christians, and Polytheists in the Ancient Synagogue: Cultural Interaction during the Greco-Roman Period*, ed. Steven Fine (London: Routledge, 1999), 204; and White, 2:279n12.
- 8 Kraeling, *The Synagogue*, 256–58.
- 9 Lee I. Levine, *The Ancient Synagogue: the First Thousand Years* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 475–77; contra Kraeling, *The Synagogue*, 16–17, 31.
- 10 1 Kgs 8:44; 2 Chr 6:34, 38; Dn 6:11; and M. Berakhot, 4:5. See Levine, *Ancient Synagogue*, 179–82, nn68, 73.
- 11 Levine, *Ancient Synagogue*, 180–81.
- 12 Joan R. Branham, “Vicarious Sacrality: Temple Space in Ancient Synagogues,” in *Ancient Synagogues: Historical Analysis and Archaeological Discovery*, ed. Dan Urman and Paul V. M. Flesher (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 2:319–45.
- 13 White, 1:119–20.
- 14 Martin Wallraff, *Christus versus Sol: Sonnenverehrung und Christentum in der Spätantike* (Münster: Aschendorffsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 2001), 69; and Arthur Vööbus, trans., *The Didascalia Apostolorum in Syriac* (Louvain: Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium, 1979), 2:131.
- 15 The only ornaments, left over from the original use of the room as a dining room, were fragments on the north-east wall of a cast plaster molding with Bacchic symbols (satyr masks, cymbals, and pipes), dolphins, and shells. Carl H. Kraeling, *The Christian Building. The Excavations at Dura-Europos Conducted by Yale University and the French Academy of Inscriptions and Letters, Final Report 8, Part 2*, ed. C. Bradford Welles (New Haven: Dura-Europos Publications, 1967), 14–15, pl. VI.
- 16 Maxwell E. Johnson, *The Rites of Christian Initiation: Their Evolution and Interpretation* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical, 1999), 47–48.
- 17 *First Apology*, 61; and Johnson, 38.

- 18 Kraeling, *Christian Building*, 148; Jensen, 186; Wharton, 60–61; and White, 2:130, 270–71.
- 19 Everett Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church: History, Theology, and Liturgy in the First Five Centuries* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2009), 438. *The Didascalia Apostolorum*, 2:156–57, is careful to call for the assistance of a deaconess for female initiates whenever possible during anointing and baptism.
- 20 Kraeling, *Christian Building*, 151, 190.
- 21 Ferguson, 441. Kraeling, *Christian Building*, points out that the baptismal font was similar in size to basins in contemporary baths elsewhere in Dura, 147–48.
- 22 Jaś Elsner, “Cultural Resistance and the Visual Image: the Case of Dura Europos,” *Classical Philology* 96, no. 3 (2001): 300.
- 23 Herbert Kessler, “The Word Made Flesh in Early Decorated Bibles,” in *Picturing the Bible: the Earliest Christian Art*, ed. Jeffrey Spier (New Haven: Yale University Press in Association with the Kimball Art Museum, Fort Worth, Tex., 2007), 141; and Harry Y. Gamble, *Books and Readers in the Early Church: a History of Early Christian Texts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 42–81.
- 24 Leonard V. Rutgers, *The Jews in Late Ancient Rome: Evidence of Cultural Interaction in the Roman Diaspora* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 50–99; and Leonard V. Rutgers, *The Hidden Heritage of Diaspora Judaism* (Leuven: Peeters, 1998), 73–95. For general discussions of the complexities of Jews and Christians living in the Greco-Roman world in the first three centuries of the Common Era, see Paul Corby Finney, *The Invisible God: the Earliest Christians on Art* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 15–98; and Lee I. Levine, *Judaism and Hellenism in Antiquity: Conflict or Confluence?* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1999), 96–138. For Christians in Antioch being attracted to religious services in synagogues in the first and fourth centuries CE respectively, see Josephus, *Bellum Judaicum* (*The Jewish War*) 7.45, and the sermons of John Chrysostom, *Adversus Judaeos* (*Against the Jews*).
- 25 Leonard Victor Rutgers, “Diaspora Synagogues: Synagogue Archaeology in the Greco-Roman World,” in *Sacred Realm: the Emergence of the Synagogue in the Ancient World*, ed. Steven Fine (Oxford: Oxford University Press, Yeshiva University Museum, 1996), 78–79.
- 26 Rachel Hachlili, *Jewish Art and Archaeology in the Land of Israel* (Leiden: Brill, 1988), 379. See also Rachel Hachlili, “Synagogues in the Land of Israel: the Art and Architecture,” in Fine, ed., *Sacred Realm*, 96–129, esp. 111ff.
- 27 Elsner, “Cultural Resistance and the Visual Image,” 301; Jaś Elsner, *Imperial Rome and Christian Triumph: the Art of the Roman Empire AD 100–450* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 216; and Wharton, 62–63. For a recent and richly illustrated general discussion of the Jewish attitude toward the visual arts in late antiquity see: Steven Fine, “Jewish Art and Biblical Exegesis in the Greco-Roman World,” in *Picturing the Bible*, 25–49.
- 28 Rachel Hachlili, *Jewish Art and Archaeology in the Diaspora* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 23–95; Hachlili, *Land of Israel*, 141–99; Hachlili, “Synagogues in the Land of Israel,” 99–107; Levine, *Ancient Synagogue*, esp. 296–302; and David Milson, *Art and Architecture of the Synagogue in Late Antique Palestine: in the Shadow of the Church* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 18–32.
- 29 The final phase of the Sardis synagogue dates to the fourth century, but there was an earlier phase with the same basic plan that has been assigned to the later part of the previous century. Hachlili, *Diaspora*, 58–63, and Andrew Seager, “The Architecture of the Dura and

- Sardis Synagogues,” in *The Dura-Europos Synagogue: a Re-evaluation (1932–1972)*, ed. Joseph Gutmann (Missoula, Mont.: American Academy of Religion/Society of Biblical Literature, 1973), 79–117, repr. *The Synagogue: Studies in Origins, Archaeology and Architecture*, ed. Joseph Gutmann (New York: KTAV, 1975), 149–93.
- 30 Hachlili, *Diaspora*, 67–95; Hachlili, *Synagogues in the Land of Israel*, 166–87; and Levine, *Ancient Synagogue*, esp. 282, 302–1.
- 31 Richard Krautheimer, *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture*, 4th rev. ed. with Slobodan Curcic (Harmondsworth, Eng.: Penguin, 1986), 26–29; and White, 1:102–23.
- 32 Krautheimer, 39–67, and more recently Charles B. McClendon, *The Origins of Medieval Architecture: Building in Europe A.D. 600–900* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 3–22; and Sible de Blaauw, “Konstantin als Kirchenstifter,” in *Konstantin der Grosse: Geschichte-Archäologie-Rezeption; Internationales Kolloquium vom 10.–15. Oktober 2005 an der Universität Trier*, ed. Alexander Demandt and Josef Engemann (Trier: Rheinisches Landesmuseum, 2006), 163–71.
- 33 McClendon, *The Origins of Medieval Architecture*, 13–15, 212nn33–38, with additional bibliography. For early Christian baptisteries in general, see Sebastian Ristow, *Frühchristliche Baptisterien* (Münster, Westfalen: Aschendorffsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1998).
- 34 Charles B. McClendon, “Introductory Remarks: the Legacy of Dura-Europos,” in *Rome and the Provinces: Studies in the Transformation of Art and Architecture in the Mediterranean World*, ed. Charles B. McClendon (New Haven: New Haven Society of the Archaeological Institute of America, 1986), 4, 54, fig. 4. For a description and analysis of the baptismal rite in this building see Wharton, 114–31.
- 35 Augusto Cosentino, “Il battesimo a Rome: Edifici e liturgia,” in *Ecclesiae Urbis: Atti del congresso internazionale di studi sulle chiese di Roma (IV–X secolo)*, ed. Federico Guidobaldi and Alessandra Guiglia Guidobaldi (Vatican City: Pontificio istituto di archeologia cristiana, 2002), 1:109–42.
- 36 Ferguson, 803–15; and John Douglas Close Fischer, *Christian Initiation: Baptism in the Medieval West* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1965), 3–4.
- 37 Walter Horn, Ernest Born, and Saint Adalard, *The Plan of St. Gall: a Study of the Architecture and Economy of, and Life in a Paradigmatic Carolingian Monastery* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), 3:22. For a general discussion of the Plan of St. Gall, see McClendon, *The Origins of Medieval Architecture*, 164–72.
- 38 *Inferno* 19.17. Charles B. McClendon, “Church Building in Northern Italy Around the Year 1000: a Reappraisal,” in *The White Mantle of Churches: Architecture, Liturgy, and Art around the Millennium*, ed. Nigel Hiscock (Turnhout: Brepols, 2003), 226–32; Wharton, 136–39; and most recently Carlo Tosco, “Dal battistero alla cappella battesimale: Trasformazione liturgiche e sociali tra Medioevo e Rinascimento,” and Andrea Longhi, “Battisteri e scena urbana nell’Italia comunale,” in *L’architettura del battistero: Storia e progetto*, ed. Andrea Longhi (Milan: Skira editore, 2003), 63–83, 105–27.

MICHAEL PEPPARD

NEW TESTAMENT IMAGERY IN THE EARLIEST CHRISTIAN BAPTISTERY

What the Neophyte Saw

The baptistery of the Christian building at Dura-Europos was almost certainly used for two of the rituals of Christian initiation: anointing and baptism.¹ During that experience, a neophyte would have seen a room full of wall paintings.² The extant ones are among the earliest Christian art objects and contain some of the earliest surviving Christian narrative imagery. They portray many biblical scenes, including some containing depictions of Jesus Christ. The compositions have been reproduced and anthologized in many surveys of early Christianity, and rightly so: they are early, compelling, and relatively well-preserved.³

Perhaps we misspeak, though, if only slightly, when we call these scenes biblical. A stable canon of the New Testament did not yet exist. Narratives of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection circulated in diverse oral, liturgical, and written forms. For example, consider the relationship between text and image for these compositions from the baptistery: the healing of a paralytic occurs in all four canonical Gospel traditions, the Diatessaron, and several extant homilies; the so-called myrophores (the women at the empty tomb) are variously described in the canonical texts and are difficult to identify in the painting; and the baptistery's central image of shepherd and sheep is hardly a clear representation of the text of the Good Shepherd from the Gospel of John. Any analysis of the relationship between biblical texts and images in the baptistery should account for the general instability of Christian textual forms that circulated in the third century and the importance of the Diatessaron among Syrian Christians.⁴

The instability of how these images might relate to corresponding texts should give us pause about even the seemingly stable relationships. My approach therefore avoids, for the most part, proposals of one-to-one correspondences between images and biblical texts, as if the images were allegorical treasures that the right biblical text could unlock.⁵ This is not to say that the texts are irrelevant; the importance of Christian texts for understanding the compositions in the baptistery easily can be proven by contrasting them with those in the Mithraeum from Dura-Europos. Both artistic programs present initiate mythologies, but the lack of an extant Mithraic textual tradition prevents us from understanding most Mithraic art.⁶ We use our texts to

interpret the baptistery, then, but we do so with this caveat in mind: the primary context of the baptistery's artistic program is ritual; the secondary is textual.

My research emphasizes texts that early Christian authors related to the ritual of baptism and texts that may be shown to employ common baptismal language.⁷ I attend especially to those from either category that have Eastern provenance. In addition to the expected texts from the canonical Gospels, this essay will consider some apocryphal texts, the Syriac writings of Aphrahat and Ephrem, and the Greek baptismal catecheses from the East. It will focus on the wall paintings exhibited in *Dura-Europos: Crossroads of Antiquity*: the three extant scenes that decorated the eastern and northern walls, especially the procession of women (pls. 18–20). My conclusions about these proposed “New Testament” scenes will emphasize Jesus' role as Lord of the water and the motif of Christian initiation as spiritual marriage.

Before dealing with the works in the exhibition, let us take a brief inventory of the room (see reconstruction, fig. 9.7). Recalling that the room was a ritual space for initiation, we may consider what textual memories might have been conjured by the candidate's encounter with an image. A neophyte would have been catechized with certain narratives for this occasion—words to mark the anticipated anointing, baptism, victory, marriage, and joining the one flock.

The right side of the southern wall shows a woman bending over a well, holding the rope handle of her water vessel, and looking at the viewer. She is alone. Is she the Samaritan woman about to meet Jesus? Is she Rebecca or Rachel or Zipporah—or all of these at once—waiting to meet the right husband?⁸ Is she Mary at the Annunciation, an event which occurs at a well in the Eastern tradition?⁹ Each of these texts could have influenced the meaning of the painting in its ritual context. The main panel on this wall depicts David slaying Goliath. It is situated underneath a niche that probably contained oil for prebaptismal anointing. Among the many meanings given to anointing in early Christian Syria, three are supported by the baptistery's artistic program: preparation for battle, a seal or stamp on property, and adornment for marriage. In his baptismal catecheses, for example, John Chrysostom explains how anointing enacts the dual metaphor of marriage and battle: “The chrism is a mixture of olive oil and perfume: perfume as for a bride, oil as for an athlete.”¹⁰

Anointing as seal or stamp (σφραγίς) connects well with the image above the font, which depicts a shepherd and sheep at the edge of a river or lake. Johannes Quasten has compiled dozens of ancient sources that link the baptismal seal to the idea of owners branding their livestock, especially sheep.¹¹ The wall painting conjures textual memories of David as shepherd; Christ as the Good Shepherd; the parables of the lost sheep; and the foundational Psalm 23, which was a central text of the ancient catechumenate in both East and West. Here in the context of Christian initiation, it is baptism that “leads beside still waters” and “restores the soul.” The neophyte's head is “anointed with oil”; the Eucharistic “table is prepared.” As the neophyte experienced the room, then, the blend of image and ritual would have called to mind many texts. What might the northern wall have invited him or her to see?

Walking on Water and Healing a Paralytic

The two extant scenes on the upper panel of the northern wall are probably part of a series that portrayed the mighty deeds of Christ.¹² The painting on the right side is akin to Matthew's version of the walking on the water, in which Jesus and Peter walk on the Sea of Galilee (pl. 20).¹³ In the versions by Mark and John, only Jesus walks, which portrays his unique power over nature. Jesus reigns over the chaos of open waters.¹⁴ In Matthew's version, Peter leaves the boat to walk toward Jesus.¹⁵ When Peter becomes frightened, he begins to sink and cries out, "Lord, save me!" Jesus saves him, of course. This episode is emblematic of Christian salvation and discipleship:¹⁶ Peter is the model of a bold yet floundering disciple; his frailty and fear necessitate his need for Christ and subsequent faith in Christ's power to save. Before the Gospel of Matthew was written, Paul had already expressed this type of baptism (of drowning and rising up from the water) as death and resurrection: "we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life."¹⁷ There is a key difference, however: in Paul's baptismal metaphor, the believer descends with Christ into the watery grave, but, according to the Gospels, Christ does not sink. That is precisely the point. Paul's portrayal of baptism as death and resurrection with Christ has been influential throughout Christian history. In this baptistry, however, the only explicit death is that of Goliath.

This disconnection should cause us to look again at the wall painting. Most viewers probably identify the figure on the left as Peter, drowning in his lack of faith and reaching up to Jesus for salvation. Based on a study of the two figures' clothing, Carl Kraeling has argued persuasively that the figure on the left is Jesus. Peter is walking toward him from the boat on the right. The wall painting thus does not depict "the 'sinking Peter' familiar from the religious art of the nineteenth century."¹⁸ The figure on the left is painted lower on the picture plane so that he appears to be in the foreground, not so that he appears to be sinking in the water. The scene presented here precedes Peter's fear and drowning; he is not yet frail or floundering. Peter is imitating Christ's power not his death. Empowered by faith to walk on the water, the disciple is victorious over the chaos of nature.¹⁹

As the action continues to the left, the water flows out from the Sea of Galilee and comes to rest in a Judean pool called Bethesda.²⁰ It was here, according to the Gospel of John, that Christ healed a paralytic (pl. 19).²¹ The story narrates the paralytic's years of suffering and desire to be healed by the water. He ultimately is healed not by the water but by Jesus, who tells him to lift up his mat and walk away. The healing is thus read on the wall painting from right to left, along with the rest of the artistic program. Jesus' closing command to the man is to "sin no more" (5:14), and he leaves spreading the good news that Jesus made him well.

The healing of a paralytic is also recorded in the Synoptic Gospels, but John's version is the only one narrated with a connection to water.²² Although the presence of the Diatessaron in Syria and the precanonical date of the painting should eliminate any concern for picking the "right" version to connect with it, several ancient authors do privilege what we know as the Johannine version.²³ For early Christian authors, the resonance with baptism primarily lies not in the mention of the pool but rather in the closing command to refrain from sin. The presence of water in this story was actually a stumbling block to faith. Ephrem and Cyril of Jerusalem contrast faith in the healing power of the pool with faith in the power of Jesus;²⁴ therefore,

while the composition at Dura-Europos likely was chosen for its image of water, as was that of the painting to its right, the power of water is overridden in both cases by the power of Jesus. The words of Cyril's sermon on the paralytic offer a fitting conclusion:



Figure 10.1: Wall painting showing five pairs of feet, Christian Building, baptistery, eastern wall. Yale University Art Gallery, Dura-Europos Collection

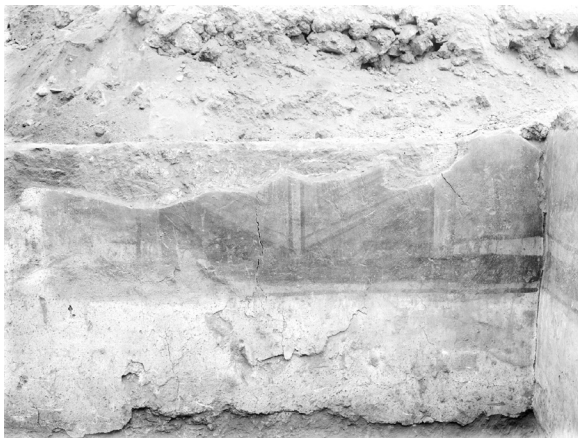


Figure 10.2: Wall painting showing a door, Christian Building, baptistery, northern wall. Yale University Art Gallery, Dura-Europos Collection

Why fix your hope on a pool? You have him who walks upon the waters, who rebukes the winds, who holds sovereign sway over the ocean; who not only himself walked on the sea as on a firm pavement but vouchsafed the like power to Peter... There stood by the waters of the pool the ruler and maker of the waters.²⁵

The paralytic and Peter serve as models for the baptized: despite the power of the water, they should have faith in Jesus, Lord of the water.

The Procession of Women

The primary image on the main panels of the eastern and northern walls is a procession. It begins on the eastern wall, where all that remain are five pairs of feet (fig. 10.1). On the southern wall is what seems to be a door (fig. 10.2) followed by a lacuna, until the procession resumes with portions of three women (pl. 18) approaching a large structure (fig. 10.3). The women are dressed in white, veiled, and each carries two items: a torch in the right hand and an unidentified vessel in the left. Processions were common across cultures in antiquity. Art historian Thomas F. Mathews aptly summarized this practice:

In the Greco-Roman world, figures in peaceful procession were generally understood to be engaged in a religious ritual. It is one of the oldest and commonest forms of worship, and in representations from the Parthenon to the Ara Pacis, the most august expressions of worship assumed a processional mode... In Christian art, moreover, they stood as paradigmatic for the faithful in the endless processions of their cult.²⁶

Processions were a “principal organizing device” in the artistic programs of early Christians, but that fact did not distinguish them from other cultic communities.²⁷ For instance, the “Aventine Mithraeum” in Rome,

dating to the third century, contains the image of a procession, and processions are a hallmark of extant representations of Dionysiac cults.²⁸ A private house at Gerasa featured a floor mosaic with a Dionysiac procession (pl. 69). At Dura-Europos, we find a procession in the “Purim panel” from the Synagogue. We are dealing with an established genre, but what were these women doing in this particular procession?

The majority of viewers have regarded the procession on the northern wall as a representation of the myrophores.²⁹ The torches guide their way in the dark morning hours or in the tomb, the vessel in the left hand carries the anointing unguents, and the structure on the left is a sarcophagus. There are a number of problems with this interpretation of the painting: How many women were represented originally? (There would have been room for one or two more on the northern wall.) What might the door represent, and how did they get inside? Should there not be guards or angels or any other typical iconographic patterns of the empty tomb accounts? Why is the supposed sarcophagus so big? The predominance of the empty tomb interpretation is due to two main factors.

One, Kraeling defends it with vehemence and dismisses all other interpretations in his magisterial excavation report.³⁰ He had studied the available evidence with such breadth and care that it seems rash to go against him, but he himself records the disputes among interpreters in 1933, when all the material was assembled for the first time in the Yale University Art Gallery. The “combined elements” of the whole sequence “caused doubts to arise,” because the details did not cohere with any biblical accounts of the empty tomb narrative.³¹ At that time, some argued that the scene represents the parable of the wise and foolish virgins (a text which will be discussed below).³² In his concluding remarks about the scene, Kraeling further admits that comparative study of this supposed empty tomb sequence is fruitless, because it is “fundamentally so different from all later treatments of the subject and in [its] own period stand[s] so thoroughly alone, that there is no basis for comparison.”³³ If the original team of experts was sharply divided, and if the empty tomb interpretation does not relate to a particular biblical text or to any other Christian iconographic tradition, Kraeling’s certitude is unwarranted.

Two, for much of Christian history, the Pauline interpretation of baptism as death and resurrection has been dominant.³⁴ In the Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodox, and Protestant Revised Common lectionaries, the Pauline interpretation of baptism remains central to the initiation mysteries. Romans 6:3–11 is the Epistle selection at the Easter Vigil liturgy, read immediately before the Gospel proclamation of the Resurrection and the rites of Christian initiation. Historians living in this Christian cultural context will have been, to some extent, programmed to interpret the procession of women in a baptistry as a portrayal of the myrophores. At a minimum, one would be inclined to find that interpretation agreeable.

There is, nevertheless, significant textual evidence that Kraeling left unconsidered. In many early textual traditions about anointing and baptism, especially those of Eastern provenance, images of death and resur-

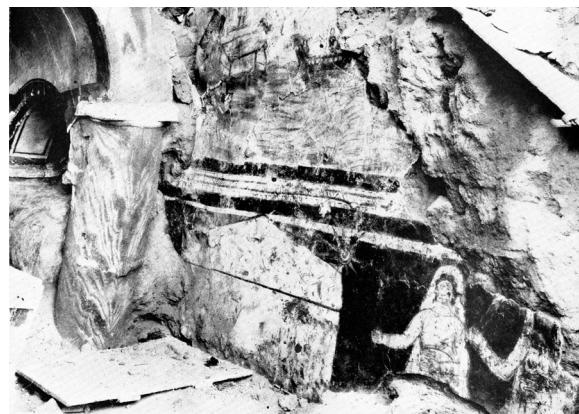


Figure 10.3: Excavation photograph, Christian Building, baptistry, northern wall. After Kraeling, *Christian Building*, pl. XLIV

rection are either absent or subordinated to other imagery, especially that of a birth or a wedding. Among the first to study the meanings distinctive to Eastern baptismal traditions were Sebastian Brock and Gabriele Winkler. The latter argued that the “death mysticism” of baptism rarely was present prior to the fourth century.³⁵ During the earliest rituals of Christian initiation in Syria, anointing and baptism were imitations of the anointing of Christ by the Spirit and of his baptism in the Jordan. The initiation ritual was a participation in Christ’s own baptism and the “birth mysticism” of the Gospel of John.³⁶ It was primarily from the fourth century on that the font transformed into a sepulcher.

Metaphors of a wedding—bride, bridegroom, bridal chamber, wedding feast, bridesmaids, and even “best man”—were widespread in early Christianity, and scholars have begun to interpret the baptistery at Dura-Europos with that imagery in mind.³⁷ Diverse texts in the New Testament describe the relationship between Christ and the Christian as a spiritual marriage. Joining the Christian community was akin to attending the grandest wedding party imaginable, and Jesus was the anointed bridegroom.³⁸ While the bridegroom was present, there was to be no fasting, and if the party ran out of wine, the new wine would be better.³⁹ The banquet was to be as big as possible, with all manner of guests invited.⁴⁰ The groom would be marrying as many brides as possible too—so many that he needed two best men to help him handle the attention. Both John the Baptist and Paul discuss the honor in brief best-man speeches.⁴¹ Finally, it was crucial not to fall asleep while waiting for the wedding party to begin: those who want to marry Christ must be vigilant and wise.⁴²

Texts from early Christian Syria were especially fond of the marriage metaphor.⁴³ The first episode in the *Acts of Thomas*, for example, recounts how the apostle intervenes and interrupts a princess’ wedding. The preparations are reminiscent of Jesus’ parable of the wedding banquet: the king throws his doors wide open to everyone.⁴⁴ Before the wedding, the guests anoint their bodies and enjoy music and festivities. But Thomas, with the aid of an apparition of Jesus, prevents the consummation of “this marriage which passes away” and convinces the bride to be “bound in another marriage” (a spiritual one in which she is “yoked with the true man,” Jesus).⁴⁵ Near the end of the adventure, Thomas again disrupts a marriage—this time one already begun. He persuades Mygdonia to exchange her earthly marriage for a spiritual one with Jesus. In these words, she expresses her choice to her former husband:

You have seen that marriage, which passed away and remains here on earth, but this marriage abides forever. That fellowship was one of corruption, but this of life eternal. Those attendants are short-lived men and women, but these now remain to the end ... That bridal chamber is taken down, but this remains forever ... You are a bridegroom who passes away and is destroyed, but Jesus is a true bridegroom, abiding immortal forever.⁴⁶

The *Gospel of Philip*, a text discovered at Nag Hammadi and tentatively given a Syrian provenance, is also famous for its imagery of the “bridal chamber” (νυμφών) and the “unpolluted” (spiritual) marriage that occurs there.⁴⁷ It occurs so often (in about 20 percent of the extant text) that some scholars have thought it describes a ritual previously unknown: “The Lord did all things by means of a mystery: baptism, chrism, eucharist, ransom, bridal chamber.”⁴⁸ What is certain is that the bridal event was seen to reverse the cosmic separation of Adam from Eve.⁴⁹ The arrival of Christ as bridegroom is celebrated in his birth and baptism

(two events celebrated in the East by the feast of Epiphany before the separate Nativity celebration took root in the fourth century).⁵⁰ Anointing is a necessary condition of the baptism and the marriage so that “whoever has been anointed has everything: resurrection, light, cross, holy spirit; the father has given it to that person in the bridal chamber.”⁵¹ The text also explicitly rejects the Pauline interpretation of baptism as death with Christ: “Just as Jesus perfected the water of baptism, so too he poured out death. For this reason we go down into the water, but not into death, so that we are not poured out into the spirit of the world.”⁵² The baptismal font is not a grave but rather a bridal chamber that survives the water: it is an “ark [of] salvation when the watery flood rages.”⁵³

Lest we assume that the marriage metaphor was consigned to the fringes of the early Christian tapestry—an apocryphal legend and a buried codex—we also can show examples from the center of what became the established tradition. In his baptismal catecheses, Cyril of Jerusalem implores the candidates to prepare their souls for spiritual marriage: “For worldly marriages and contracts are not always made with judgment, and the bridegroom is quickly swayed wherever there is wealth or beauty. But here there is concern not for beauty of body, but for the blameless conscience of soul.”⁵⁴ Cyril teaches in a lecture what the *Acts of Thomas* emplots in an adventure tale. The first baptismal instruction of John Chrysostom also prepares for the “days of spiritual marriage”: “Come,” he says, “let me talk to you as I would speak to a bride about to be led into the holy bridal chamber.”⁵⁵ Chrysostom expands the metaphor into a full-blown allegory, interpreting the “beauty” (virtue) or “ugliness” (vice) of the bride, the amount of the “dowry” (obedience), and that she might never have seen the bridegroom until the “wedding night” (baptism at Easter Vigil).⁵⁶ In Chrysostom’s final instructions, the bridal allegory will appear again; it comprises his first and last word on baptism.

Considering the connections made between baptism and marriage in these texts, it seems prudent to reconsider the parable of the wise and foolish virgins as an aid for interpreting the painting of the procession of women.⁵⁷ Some early interpreters of the baptistry’s paintings referred to the parable, and it has several features to commend it.⁵⁸

First is the number of female figures likely to have been part of the painting (two sets of five, as in the parable). Although the northern wall only shows three women, there is room for two more in the unpreserved portion. Kraeling argues for this number, but he tries to fit the five women into the empty tomb interpretation: the five women on the eastern wall are the same as those on the northern. They are depicted before and after entering the tomb.⁵⁹ He then proposes that the text to explain the number five is the Diatessaron or some other Gospel harmonization, but no version of the Diatessaron attests five women. Regarding Kraeling’s reconstruction of the hypothetical text, art historian Annabel Jane Wharton has quipped, “the image authors the text that explains it.”⁶⁰ By committing to his interpretation, Kraeling could not escape a circular argument.

Second is the structure to which the women are processing. The initial field reports call it not a sarcophagus but rather a white building, which is indeed how it appears.⁶¹ It is either the same size or larger than the women and gives no perspectival indication that it is closer to the viewer than the women are. The pointed roof of the structure is normal for a building or tent. Kraeling’s interpretation would require us to call this an awkward profile view of a sarcophagus, with no indication of depth. This is not even to discuss that the “sarcophagus” appears closed, and there are no other indications of the events normally depicted at

the empty tomb. Despite these difficulties, Kraeling insists it “must under all circumstances be a sarcophagus” and “can not be the house of the bridegroom.”⁶² It is true that the white structure does not seem to be a house, but perhaps it could represent a tent or a bridal chamber (a temporary structure housing the wedding festivities).⁶³ The Greek text of the parable does not specify what kind of place the wedding is in, calling it just “the wedding.”⁶⁴ Nevertheless, several Eastern authors, such as Aphrahat and Ephrem, use the word “bridal chamber” when they discuss the parable.⁶⁵ At the least, we should conclude that the white structure is polyvalent. I contend that the “bridal chamber” is preferable to the “sarcophagus” interpretation.

Third is the appearance of the women, which suggests they are virgins (either bridesmaids or brides). Diane Apostolos-Cappadona, an expert on women in Classical and Christian art, describes the “iconographic elements” that allow her to identify them as virgins: “heroic androgynous bodies; flowing hair covered with a veil; loose, unrestrained, and predominately white garments; and a clear (glass?) container.”⁶⁶ Their torches and containers could evoke the two items carried by the women in the parable: “torches” to give light and “oil” to keep their torches burning.⁶⁷ The parable takes place in the dead of night, with the bridegroom arriving at “midnight,” unlike the empty tomb accounts, which occur early in the morning.⁶⁸

The iconography of the procession of women may be fruitfully compared with wall paintings in the medieval monastery of Mar Musa al-Habashi (St. Moses the Ethiopian), located about 80 kilometers north-east of Damascus. The eleventh- and twelfth-century frescoes comprise “the only full program of medieval church decoration to have survived in greater Syria.”⁶⁹ The chapel’s artistic program contains a large portrayal of the Last Judgment, which covers the western wall. Each of five horizontal registers depicts the saved saints on the left and the damned sinners on the right. On the eastern wall is a triumphal arch representing the Annunciation, which occurs at a well (as it often does in the East). The semidome over the apse

shows Christ enthroned and flanked by John the Baptist and the Virgin Mary: baptism and virginity are together in the chief location. Below this scene, the wall behind the bema features the Virgin and Child surrounded by a gallery of Eastern saints.

The relevance of this artistic program becomes clear when we see that to enter the sanctuary of the saints, one must pass through the door of the iconostasis, as in most Eastern Christian architecture. The frescoes of this iconostasis represent a procession of wise and foolish virgins: the five wise are on the left of the door to the sanctuary and the five foolish are on its right (fig. 10.4). Only a few of the figures have been preserved; the wise virgins are clearly carrying torches as they approach the door to the bema, where the wedding feast-*cum*-Eucharist is celebrated. Since the iconography of the wise and foolish virgins appears little in the West before the twelfth century, Dodd suggests that this motif survived in ancient Syria and Palestine to be passed to Europe during the Crusades.⁷⁰

Kraeling argues against the parable interpretation of the procession by claiming that “early Christian baptismal literature of the eastern Church assigns no special importance” to it.⁷¹ However, Sebastian Brock



Figure 10.4: Iconostasis, Mar Musa al-Habashi, northwest face (photograph courtesy of Erica Cruikshank Dodd)

called the parable very popular in Syrian Christianity, and several texts do use the parable to draw connections between Christian initiation and spiritual marriage.⁷² The oldest allusion to the parable occurs in the *Didache* (the earliest liturgical manual), which is likely of Syrian provenance.⁷³ The closing section encourages its listeners to “keep watch over your life! Do not let your lamps be extinguished nor your loins be relaxed, for you do not know the hour at which our Lord is coming.”⁷⁴ In his exhortation on virginity, Aphrahat makes use of the parable several times.⁷⁵ During a teaching about how the Virgin Mary overturned the curse of Eve, he writes of the glorious eschatological kingdom:

All the pure virgins who are betrothed to Christ shall light their lamps and with the Bridegroom shall they go into the marriage chamber. All those that are betrothed to Christ are far removed from the curse of the Law, and are redeemed from the condemnation of the daughters of Eve; for they are not wedded to men so as to receive the curses and come into the pains. They take no thought of death, because they do not deliver children to him... And instead of the groans of the daughters of Eve, they utter the songs of the Bridegroom.⁷⁶

Adam and Eve’s mistakes were embodied in sex, marriage, and labor pains, so the triumph of the Virgin Mary inaugurates an era of celibacy and spiritual marriage. As in the *Acts of Thomas*, virgins are instructed to reject the advances of men in favor of betrothal to Christ; Aphrahat uses the parable of the wise and foolish virgins as a means of exhortation.⁷⁷ These instructions were meant not only for virginal women; as Brock and others point out, the Greek and Syriac words for “virgin” often were applied to Christian men.⁷⁸ Apostolos-Cappadona argues that in Classical antiquity, “the category of virgin/virginity was neither sex specific nor a permanent ‘state-of-being-in-the-world.’ It was a transitional stage in that the virgin was neither male nor female but rather an intermediary between the human and the sacred.”⁷⁹ Some Eastern Christian communities may have held that actual celibacy was a requirement of men and women for baptism.⁸⁰ For Aphrahat and other Eastern authors, the “no male and female” vision of Paul for the idealized Christian community was in some sense realized.⁸¹ Both men and women—or should we say, neither men nor women—were baptized as celibate brides of Christ.⁸²

Interpreting the painting as a wedding procession may also better explain the torches held by the female figures. With the empty tomb interpretation of the procession, it is difficult to explain why the women would have them. the Synoptics recount multiple women, but they come at dawn; John and the Diatessaron narrate Mary Magdalene’s visit in the dark, but she is alone and not coming to anoint the body.⁸³ Reading the parable along with the painting suggests that in the darkness of midnight, the oil of anointing leads to the illumination of baptismal marriage. In fact, many early Christian sources also describe baptism as an event of illumination.⁸⁴ In the fourth century, the baptismal catecheses of Cyril, John Chrysostom, and Gregory of Nazianzus bring together the strands of the image into a midnight wedding procession. The opening section of Cyril’s *Procatechesis*, addressed to the candidates for illumination (φωτιζόμενοι), describes how they “have carried the torches of a wedding procession” and the “door” has been “left open” for them to enter the wedding.⁸⁵ John Chrysostom’s final baptismal instruction expands on the image:

I have come as the last to tell you that after two days the Bridegroom is coming. Arise, kindle your torches, and by their shining light receive the King of heaven. Arise and keep watch. For not during the day but in the middle of the night the Bridegroom comes to you. This is the custom for the bridal procession [νυμφαγωγία]—to give over the brides to their bridegrooms in the depth of nightfall.⁸⁶

Kraeling's assertion that the Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins was unimportant in baptismal literature is incorrect. It is a master metaphor for several Christian authors, and its application extends beyond virginal women.⁸⁷ The event of baptism in early Eastern Christianity meant anointing, illumination, and marriage of both male and female virgin brides. Matthew's parable was a crucial part of the textual images bolstering the ritual.

A final example comes from Gregory of Nazianzus, who concludes his oration on Holy Baptism (delivered to candidates in Constantinople at Epiphany of 381 CE) with his elaboration of the same parable.

The place where you will soon stand, in front of the bema, after your baptism, is a pattern of the glory hereafter. The psalmody with which you will be received is a prelude to the hymnody hereafter. The torches that you kindle are a sacrament of the procession of light hereafter, with which our beaming and virginal souls will greet the bridegroom—beaming with the torches of faith, neither sleeping due to laziness, lest the anticipated one escape our notice when he arrives unexpectedly, nor unnourished and unoiled and lacking good works, lest we be thrown out of the bridal chamber.⁸⁸

The ideas are similar to those of Chrysostom, but Gregory offers us more insight into the relationship between text and ritual. The bema is the pattern of the bridal chamber, and a virginal soul is required for entry. The torches of the procession are brilliant with faith, but bodily comportment is not to be ignored: the brides must have good works and proper bodies (nourished and well-oiled) for the wedding night. Gregory uses the oil of the parable as a dual allegorical signifier: the virgins need the oil of perseverance in good works but also the oil of adornment for baptismal marriage.⁸⁹ We unfortunately do not know if the wise and foolish virgins were physically depicted in any churches of fourth-century Constantinople, but the text of Gregory's sermon calls to mind the paintings from Dura-Europos and Mar Musa al-Habashi: anointed women in a torch-lit procession to the bridal chamber of baptism.

What the Neophyte Was

Despite the evidence, I am not going to conclude that the procession at Dura-Europos is a one-to-one representation of the parable in question. This parable is a good textual fit, but textuality is only the secondary context of these images: the primary context is ritual, and the procession occurring within the room must be prioritized. In 1938, well before Kraeling's interpretation was solidified, the Byzantinist Henri Grégoire argued along similar lines. The painting was intended not as a "literal illustration" of the parable: "above all

the procession symbolizes the illumination of baptism.”⁹⁰ Annabel Jane Wharton has extended the idea. The differences in artistic form and quality between the procession and the other paintings suggest that the image of procession performed a different function than the upper panel:

Simply stated, an image like the healing of the paralytic, as a statically placed ideograph, is an easily recognized reference to a biblical salvational narrative; it functions *optically* as a visual sign for a text. In contrast, the procession is *haptic* in quality; its meaning is not located elsewhere, in a text, but rather embedded in the physicality of the action of which it was a part... These figures may be read as self-reflective embodiments of the initiates.⁹¹

In other words, what the neophyte saw on the northern wall of the baptistry—whether a tomb or, more likely, a wedding—is less important than what he or she was. The neophyte was processing, a parallel line to a parallel destination, an iteration of initiation.

After the fourth century, especially in the Western tradition, the interpretation of baptism as death (the font as a grave) became ossified. The imagery of birth and marriage gave way to the death mysticism of the Pauline tradition, and one already may see the change beginning in the catecheses of Cyril and Chrysostom.⁹² Here in the baptistry of Dura-Europos, however, the death mysticism of baptism is missing; the burden of proof is on those that argue it is present. The Eastern traditions of baptism as illumination and spiritual marriage are well-attested by texts from multiple genres. The artistic program of the baptistry corroborates the proximate textual traditions. Candidates for baptism imitate not Christ on the cross but the Lord on the sea, who did not sink into the water as if it were a grave but rather traversed it as if it were pavement. Whether male or female, the virginal candidates processed to meet their Lord as brides, approaching a long-awaited Bridegroom with their bodies anointed and fires burning.

Notes

For their assistance in the preparation of this essay, I would like to thank the editors of the volume; graduate student Jeffrey Coleman; colleagues Robin Margaret Jensen, Diane Apostolos-Cappadona, and Maureen Tilley; and the members of the Columbia New Testament Faculty Seminar.

- 1 The main report on the Christian Building is Carl H. Kraeling, *The Christian Building. The Excavations at Dura-Europos Conducted by Yale University and the French Academy of Inscriptions and Letters, Final Report 8, Part 2*, ed. C. Bradford Welles (New Haven: Dura Europos Publications, 1967). On the type of early Christian *domus ecclesiae*, or “house church,” see L. Michael White, *The Social Origins of Christian Architecture*, 2 vols., Harvard Theological Studies 42 (Valley Forge, Pa.: Trinity, 1996–97), esp. 2:123–31 on this particular building. A sweeping survey of baptism in early Christianity is Everett Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2009). Primary sources for the liturgy of baptism in Syria are anthologized and introduced in Thomas M. Finn, *Early Christian Baptism and the Catechumenate: West and East Syria*, Message of the Fathers of the Church 5 (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical, 1992). A solid bibliography of historical analyses has recently emerged: Gabriele Winkler, “The Original Meaning of the Prebaptismal Anointing and Its Implications,” *Worship* 52 (1978): 24–45; Maxwell E. Johnson, *The Rites of Christian Initiation: Their Evolution and Interpretation* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical, 1999), 89–124; Bryan D. Spinks, *Early and Medieval Rituals and Theologies of Baptism: from the New Testament to the Council of Trent* (Hampshire, Eng.: Ashgate, 2006), 38–67; Juliette Day, *The Baptismal Liturgy of Jerusalem: Fourth- and Fifth-century Evidence from Palestine, Syria and Egypt* (Hampshire, Eng.: Ashgate, 2007). None of these yet had access to the letter of Macarius of Jerusalem recently re-dated in Abraham Terian, *Macarius of Jerusalem, Letter to the Armenians (A.D. 335): Introduction, Text, Translation, and Commentary* (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2008). For theological analysis of the early evidence about baptism, see Kilian McDonnell, *The Baptism of Jesus in the Jordan: the Trinitarian and Cosmic Order of Salvation* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical, 1996).
- 2 The word νεόφυτος (neophyte, or “newly planted”) is already attested as a term for baptized Christians in 1 Tim 3:6. Among the graffiti and inscriptions discovered at Dura-Europos was this marking on a clay vessel: Ἰσσε(ὸς) νεοφίτος, or “Isseos the neophyte.” The variant spelling in this inscription is a common iotacism. Despite some modern scholarly descriptions of new members of the cult of Mithras as neophytes, I do not know of an ancient source that uses that term in the context of Mithraism. Robert du Mesnil du Buisson, “Inscriptions sur jarres de Doura-Europos,” *Mélanges de l’Université Saint Joseph* 36 (1959): 1–50. This item is no. 42 on p. 18. The other inscription that might be Christian by subject matter is no. 123 on p. 36: Φιλητὸς πρ(εσβύτερος), or “Philetos the presbyter,” with πρ being a common abbreviation in papyri and inscriptions. Cf. Kraeling, 111–14. Kraeling, however, does not advance any arguments based on this sparse evidence.
- 3 The baptistery is discussed, for example, in Robin Margaret Jensen, *Understanding Early Christian Art* (London: Routledge, 2000), and Jensen, *Living Water: the Art and Architecture of Ancient Christian Baptism* (Leiden: Brill, 2010); Graydon F. Snyder, *Ante Pacem: Archaeological Evidence of Church Life before Constantine* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2003), 128–34; and even the popular undergraduate textbook, Bart D. Ehrman, *The New Testament: a Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings*, 4th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 183–84, 364.

- 4 The Diatessaron of Tatian, the most famous “harmonization” of what became the four canonical Gospels, has long been associated with Syria. A Greek parchment fragment of it or another Gospel harmonization—the only extant Greek fragment of a Gospel harmony—was discovered at Dura-Europos. P.CtYBR inv. DPg 24 (= *P. Dura* 10 = NT uncial 0212) was published in C. Bradford Welles, Robert O. Fink, and J. Frank Gilliam, *The Parchments and Papyri. The Excavations at Dura-Europos Conducted by Yale University and the French Academy of Inscriptions and Letters. Final Report Volume 5, Part 1* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959), no. 10. The image is available from the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, “Papyrus Collection Database,” Yale University, <http://beinecke.library.yale.edu/papyrus/oneSET.asp?pid=DPg%2024> (accessed 4 November 2010). The identification of the papyrus with Tatian’s Diatessaron has been questioned by David C. Parker, David G. K. Taylor, and Mark S. Goodacre, “The Dura-Europos Gospel Harmony,” in *Studies of the Early Text of the Gospels and Acts*, ed. David G. K. Taylor, Society for Biblical Literature Text-critical Studies 1 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 1999), 192–228. The arguments therein have been rebutted by Jan Joosten, “The Dura Parchment and the Diatessaron,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 57 (2003): 159–75, such that most scholars still accept the identification. Resolution of the dispute is not germane to this essay.
- 5 The one-to-one correspondence method has also been warned against in the excellent treatment of these images by Annabel Jane Wharton, *Refiguring the Post Classical City: Dura Europos, Jerash, Jerusalem, and Ravenna* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 51–63.
- 6 This observation is borrowed from Jaś Elsner, “Cultural Resistance and the Visual Image: the Case of Dura Europos,” *Classical Philology* 96, no. 3 (2001): 278.
- 7 For my understanding of the concept of intertextuality, stated most simply as “every text means in relation to other texts,” I am indebted to Graham Allen, *Intertextuality* (London: Routledge, 2000). What I intend to evoke is the idea that, in the words of Roland Barthes, the word “text” denotes “a woven fabric,” and all texts are woven/written from the “already written” and “already read” [Roland Barthes, *Image-Music-Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), 159; quoted by Allen, 6]. For most readers, the Good Shepherd of John 10 only *means* in relation to the Shepherd of Psalm 23; the meeting of the Samaritan woman at the well only means in relation to the generic expectations of tales of biblical men and women meeting at wells, and so on.
- 8 Betrothal at a well is a type-scene in the Hebrew Bible (Rebecca and Isaac; Rachel and Jacob; Zipporah and Moses), an intertextual play already enacted by the Gospel of John itself. Furthermore, the absence of Jesus from the image distinguishes it from the other well-known representations of that text in the Roman Catacombs of Via Latina and Callixtus. On the story’s resonance with Jacob’s well, see Jerome Neyrey, S. J., “Jacob Traditions and the Interpretation of John 4:10–26,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 41 (1979): 419–37; and Harold W. Attridge, “Genre Bending in the Fourth Gospel,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 121 (2002): 9.
- 9 E.g., *Protoevangelium of James* 11.1, an image continued in other texts and Eastern iconography. This idea is suggested but not developed by Dominic E. Serra, “The Baptistry at Dura-Europos: the Wall Paintings in the Context of Syrian Baptismal Theology,” *Ephemerides Liturgicae* 120 (2006): 77–78.
- 10 My translation is from the Greek text of Auguste Piédagnel, *Jean Chrysostome: Trois Catéchèses Baptismales*, Sources Chrésiennes 366 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf,

- 1990), 236. Cf. a different numbering of these catecheses, which I will use in these notes, in St. John Chrysostom, *Baptismal Instructions*, trans. Paul W. Harkins, Ancient Christian Writers 31 (Westminster, Md.: Newman, 1963), this text coming at 11.27, p. 169.
- 11 Johannes Quasten, "The Painting of the Good Shepherd at Dura-Europos," *Medieval Studies* 9 (1947): 1–18; cf. Quasten, "Das Bild des Guten Hirten in den altchristlichen Baptisterien und in den TaufLiturgien des Ostens und Westens," in *Pisciculi: Studien zur Religion und Kultur des Altertums*, ed. Theodore Klauser and Adolf Rucker (Münster: Aschendorff, 1939), 220–44.
 - 12 Kraeling, 65.
 - 13 In addition to this example, one of the mosaics at San Giovanni in Fonte (Naples) is usually called the Walking on the Water, but in fact only part of the boat and the sea are present in the extant portion. There is no one walking on the water in what remains of the mosaic.
 - 14 On the ancient Near Eastern motif of watery chaos and its adaptation in biblical traditions, see Bernard F. Batto, *Slaying the Dragon: Mythmaking in the Biblical Tradition* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 1992), esp. 174–85.
 - 15 Mt 14:22–36 // Mk 6:45–52 // Jn 6:15–21. Only in Matthew's version does the story have the second scene involving Peter. It is a classic text of redaction criticism, in which Matthew edits Mark's account of a nature miracle to become a tale of faith, discipleship, and salvation.
 - 16 Tertullian, *De baptismo*, 12, deals with this text in order to address the question of whether Peter's dip in the sea was sufficient to count as his baptism (*Petrus satis mersus?*), since the baptism of the apostles is not narrated in the Gospels. He then quips, "to make guesses about the apostles' salvation is rash... if the apostles lacked that, I don't know whose faith is secure!"
 - 17 Rom 6:4.
 - 18 Kraeling, 63.
 - 19 It is also possible that Peter is represented after he has sunk and has been pulled out of the water. According to Cyril of Jerusalem, after Jesus restored his faith, Peter walked upon the waters as before and they returned to the boat together (*Bapt. Cat.* 5.7).
 - 20 The manuscripts of John (5:2) differ on the name of the place: Bethesda, Bethsaida, Bedsaida, Bethzatha, and Belzetha.
 - 21 Jn 5:2–15. That account takes place in Jerusalem near "the Sheep (Gate)" or "the Sheep (Pool)," and the unexpected reference to sheep thus offers an intertextual connection with David the shepherd (southern wall) and the painting of shepherding above the font. On the interpretation of his verse, see Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John I–XII*, Anchor Bible 29 (New York: Doubleday, 1966), 206. The clause needs a noun supplied to make sense of the Greek, e.g., the "sheep gate," as in Nehemiah 3:1.
 - 22 The Synoptic pericope is Mt 9:1–8 // Mk 2:1–12 // Lk 5:17–26.
 - 23 Tertullian (*De Baptismo*, 6) uses the version at the pool of Bethesda (he calls it Bethsaida), and Chrysostom also connects the Johannine version to baptism (*In Paralyticum* 3, PG 51:53). That the Diatessaron included what we consider the Johannine details is corroborated by Carmel McCarthy, *Saint Ephrem's Commentary on*

- Tatian's Diatessaron*, supplement 2, *Journal of Semitic Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 205.
- 24 Ephrem, *Commentary on the Diatessaron*, 13.1 (acc. to McCarthy, ed.); and Cyril of Jerusalem, *In Paralyticum* (PG 33:1131–54).
- 25 Cyril of Jerusalem, *In Paralyticum*, 8–9, trans. from *The Works of Saint Cyril of Jerusalem*, trans. Leo P. McCauley, S. J., 2 vols., *Fathers of the Church* 64 (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1969), 2:214.
- 26 Thomas F. Mathews, *The Clash of the Gods: a Reinterpretation of Early Christian Art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 151–52.
- 27 Mathews, 150.
- 28 For the Aventine Mithraeum, see Mathews, 158; and Maarten J. Vermaseren and Carel Claudius van Essen, “The Aventine Mithraeum Adjoining the Church of St. Prisca,” *Antiquity and Survival* 1 (1955–56): 3–36.
- 29 The biblical accounts are found in Mt 28:1–8 // Mk 16:1–8 // Lk 24:1–12 // Jn 20:1–13 with several differences of detail. Before Kraeling’s report, the main defenders of this interpretation were William Seston, “L’Église et le Baptistère de Doura-Europos,” *Annales de l’École des Hautes Études de Gand* 1 (1937): 161–77; and André Grabar, “La Fresque des saintes femmes au tombeau à Doura,” *Cahiers Archéologiques* 8 (1956): 9–26. Seston, however, does not defend a one-to-one correspondence with a gospel narrative, but rather a presentation of an initiatory liturgical procession similar to that described by Egeria. After Kraeling’s report, the empty tomb interpretation became settled, for the most part, and reproduced in surveys such as Ann Perkins, *The Art of Dura-Europos*, ed. Bernard Goldman (Oxford: Clarendon, 1973); Clark Hopkins, *The Discovery of Dura-Europos*, ed. Bernard Goldman (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979); White, *The Social Origins*; Jensen, *Understanding Early Christian Art*; Snyder, *Ante Pacem*; and Ferguson, *Baptism*.
- 30 Kraeling, 80–88.
- 31 Ibid., 81.
- 32 The parable is found in Mt 25:1–13. Kraeling, 81, cites Otto Casel, Gabriel Millet, and Joseph Pijoan as defenders of this interpretation, but he does not say who proposed it first. Kraeling rejects it for two reasons. First, he argues that the door is not shut, as it should be if the other five women on the eastern wall are the “foolish virgins.” However, the women could be the five “wise virgins” treated twice, in two snapshots of one procession—which is in fact how Kraeling interprets the five women in his empty tomb interpretation. Also see below for Cyril’s baptismal catechesis, in which the “door” to the bridal chamber has been “left open” for the candidates. Second, Kraeling insists that the white structure must be a sarcophagus, but his certitude is not warranted, as I explain below.
- 33 Kraeling, 213.
- 34 Rom 6:3–4; Col 2:11–12.
- 35 Winkler, 24–45.
- 36 Jn 3:3–5.
- 37 In addition to the modest argument of Serra, “The Baptistry at Dura Europos,” there is now a substantial treatment in Gerasimos P. Pagoulatos, *Tracing the Bridegroom in Dura* (Piscataway, N.J.: Gorgias, 2008). Pagoulatos covers some of the same primary material as my essay does, especially the *Acts of Thomas* and the

Gospel of Philip, but he does not engage Aphrahat, Ephrem, or the baptismal catecheses of Cyril and John Chrysostom. He limits his textual corpus to the *Acts of Thomas*, the *Gospel of Philip*, and the *Symposium* of Methodius because of the likely second- and third-century dates of these works. His use of Methodius relies in part on Demetrios I. Pallas, *Synagoge Meleton Byzantines Archaiologia (Techne—Latreia—Koinonia)* (Athens: Syllogos Hellenon Archaiologon, 1987–88), 1:91–93. Although our primary material overlaps somewhat, the thesis of Pagoulatos’ book is much broader than that of my essay. He argues that the Dura-Europos baptistery “hosted an initiation bridal service” that united the participants with the image of Christ in anticipation of the second coming; as such, it was “the earliest known Iconophile service” (30). He connects the proposed third-century ritual to the still-celebrated “Christ the Bridegroom” service of the Orthodox Holy Week, which is not extant in the manuscript tradition before the eleventh century. It remains to be seen how Pagoulatos’ bold vision of a millennium-spanning liturgical connection will be incorporated into scholarly assessments of Dura-Europos in its ancient context.

- 38 Mt 22:1–14; Rv 19:7–9. The God of Israel was imagined as a bridegroom in the Hebrew Bible (e.g., Is 54:1–6; Jer 2:2; Ezek 16:8), as was the Israelite King (e.g., Ps 45 [LXX 44]).
- 39 Mt 9:15; Mk 2:19; Lk 5:34; and Jn 2:10.
- 40 Mt 22:10.
- 41 Jn 3:29; and 2 Cor 11:2.
- 42 Mt 25:1–13.
- 43 A helpful survey, especially of Aphrahat and Ephrem, can be found in Robert Murray, *Symbols of Church and*

Kingdom: a Study in Early Syriac Tradition, 2nd ed. (London: Clark, 2006), 131–58.

- 44 Mt 22:1–14; *Acts of Thomas* 4.
- 45 *Acts of Thomas* 14. Translations in this paragraph are adapted from Wilhelm Schneemelcher, ed., *New Testament Apocrypha*, trans. ed. Robert McL. Wilson (London: Clarke, 1991), 2:322–411.
- 46 *Acts of Thomas* 124.
- 47 The Coptic text uses Greek nouns for the wedding imagery, also including *παστός*, “bridal bed” or “bridal chamber.” For a survey of options for interpreting the imagery, see Pagoulatos, 40–44; Elaine H. Pagels, “The ‘Mystery of Marriage’ in the *Gospel of Philip* Revisited,” in *The Future of Early Christianity*, ed. Birger A. Pearson (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress, 1991), 442–54; and April D. DeConick, “The True Mysteries: Sacramentalism in the *Gospel of Philip*,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 55 (2001): 225–61, esp. 245–58.
- 48 *Gospel of Philip* 67.27. Translations in this paragraph adapted from Bentley Layton, *The Gnostic Scriptures* (New York: Doubleday, 1987), 325–53, in consultation with the Coptic text, in Bentley Layton, ed., *Nag Hammadi Codex II*, 2–7 (Leiden: Brill, 1989), 1:140–215.
- 49 *Gospel of Philip* 68, 70.
- 50 *Gospel of Philip* 70–71. The feast of Epiphany, the celebration of Jesus’ Baptism, is second only to Easter in antiquity. Though the extent of its celebration is uncertain, it predated the feast of the Nativity (or “Christmas”). For evidence and analysis, cf. Hermann Usener, *Religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen. Erster Theil: das Weihnachtsfest* (Bonn: Cohen, 1889).
- 51 *Gospel of Philip* 74.18–21.

- 52 *Gospel of Philip* 77.7–11.
- 53 *Gospel of Philip* 84.34.
- 54 Cyril of Jerusalem, *Bapt. Cat.* 3.1, trans. McCauley, *Works of Saint Cyril*, 1:108. Cf. *Bapt. Cat.* 3.2, 16.
- 55 Chrysostom, 1.3, 23. Greek text found in Johannes Chrysostomus, *Taufkatechesen*, ed. Reiner Kaczynski, *Fontes Christiani* 6 (Freiburg: Herder, 1992), 2:292–94.
- 56 Chrysostom, 1.4–16.
- 57 Mt 25:1–13.
- 58 Before Kraeling's report, the list included: Otto Casel, in a note appended to Johannes Kollwitz, "Beziehungen zur christlichen Archäologie," *Jahrbuch für Liturgiewissenschaft* 13 (1933): 311; Gabriel Millet, "La parabole des vierges à Doura et el-Bagawat," *Cahiers Archéologiques* 8 (1956): 1–8, a posthumous publication written in 1934–35; Joseph Pijoan, "The Parable of the Virgins from Dura-Europos," *Art Bulletin* 19 (1937): 592–95; and Johannes Quasten, "The Painting of the Good Shepherd at Dura-Europos," *Mediaeval Studies* 9 (1947): 1. In recent years the proposal has been revived by Mathews, 153; and Serra, "Baptistry at Dura-Europos," with which my essay shares a few similarities. Pagoulatos, *Tracing the Bridegroom*, does not support the proposal (p. 47), despite its connections with his overall theory of the "Christ the Bridegroom" service.
- 59 Kraeling, 85–87.
- 60 Wharton, 54.
- 61 Letter of Clark Hopkins to Michael Rostovtzeff, dated April 18, 1932, cited in Kraeling, 231.
- 62 Ibid., 81.
- 63 The *chuppah*, or marriage canopy, is attested already in Ps 19:6 and Jl 2:16. A "bridal chamber" (νυμφών) has strong manuscript attestation in Matthew's other parable of a wedding (Mt 22:10). Cf. the above quotation from *Acts of Thomas* 124.
- 64 The Greek is τοὺς γάμους (Mt 25:10), but the plural is normal (e.g., Diogenes Laertius, *Lives* 3.2), like the English "nuptials" or "festivities."
- 65 See below for Aphrahat, *Dem.* 6.1. For other references, I am indebted to W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: Clark, 1997), 3:399–400. Ephrem, *Serm.* 2.4. Cf. *Gospel of Thomas* 75; Gregory of Nyssa, *De inst. christ.* 83.12; Simeon of Mesopotamia, *Hom.* 4.6.
- 66 Diane Apostolos-Cappadona, "On the Visual and the Vision: the Magdalene in Early Christian and Byzantine Art and Culture," in *Miriam, the Magdalen, and the Mother*, ed. Deirdre Good (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), 132.
- 67 On the translation of λαμπάς as "torch" instead of "lamp," see Davies and Allison, 3:395–96, and texts cited there, especially Joachim Jeremias, "ΛΑΜΠΑΔΕΣ Mt 25.1, 3f., 7f.," *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 56 (1965): 196–201. For further evidence and analysis of wedding rituals in Hellenistic and Jewish antiquity, see Ruben Zimmermann, "Das Hochzeitsritual im Jungfrauengleichnis. Sozialgeschichtliche Hintergründe zu Mt 25.1–13," *New Testament Studies* 48 (2002): 48–70.
- 68 Mt 25:6.
- 69 Erica Dodd, *The Frescoes of Mar Musa al-Habashi: a Study in Medieval Painting in Syria* (Toronto: Pontifical

- Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2001), xvii.
- 70 Dodd, 70. Millet, “La parabole des vierges,” argues that the painting of a procession of seven women at the monastery of el-Bagawat in Egypt is also a representation of this parable, but others offer different interpretations. E.g., Henri Stern, “Les peintures du Mausolée de ‘l’exode’ à el-Bagawat,” *Cahiers Archéologiques* 11 (1960): 105–6, argues that the women are a procession before the tomb of St. Thecla. The best treatment of the procession in relation to Thecla is Stephen J. Davis, *The Cult of St. Thecla* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 159–72.
- 71 Kraeling, 190.
- 72 Sebastian P. Brock, “Early Syrian Asceticism,” *Numen* 20 (1973): 6.
- 73 Another early interpretation, though of uncertain date and provenance, is the *Epistula Apostolorum* 42–43; Schneemelcher, 1:273–75.
- 74 *Didache* 16.1. This apocalyptic imagery is not rooted in only one textual tradition, but resonates with Mt 25:8 (failure of extinguished lamps), Mt 25:13, Mk 13:35, Lk 12:40 (keep watch, you don’t know the day or hour), and Lk 12:35 (connection of loins and lamps). The Matthean parable is the only of these to warn specifically against letting lamps become extinguished (σβέννυνται, Mt 25:8).
- 75 It is the opening image of *Dem.* 6.1, *NPNF II* 13:362.
- 76 Aphrahat, *Dem.* 6.6, *NPNF II* 13:367–68.
- 77 Aphrahat, *Dem.* 6.7, *NPNF II* 13:368.
- 78 Brock, “Early Syrian Asceticism,” 6; and Sebastian P. Brock and Susan Ashbrook Harvey, *Holy Women of the Syrian Orient*, Transformation of the Classical Heritage 13 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 8–9.
- 79 Diane Apostolos-Cappadona, “I Understand the Mystery, and I Recognize the Sacrament: on the Iconology of Ablution, Baptism, and Initiation,” in *Ablution, Baptism, and Initiation: Late Antiquity, Early Judaism, and Early Christianity*, ed. David Hellholm et al., 2 vols. (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010). Manuscript provided by the author.
- 80 Cf. Arthur Vööbus, *Celibacy: a Requirement for Admission to Baptism in the Early Syrian Church* (Stockholm: Estonian Theological Society in Exile, 1951). Ferguson, 493–94, summarizes the subsequent refinements in the debate about Eastern celibacy.
- 81 Gal 3:28.
- 82 Gal 3:28 is quoted immediately preceding the passage quoted above from Aphrahat, *Dem.* 6.6. On how this image relates to ascetic ideals, see Elizabeth A. Clark, “The Celibate Bridegroom and His Virginal Brides: Metaphor and the Marriage of Jesus in Early Christian Ascetic Exegesis,” *Church History* 77 (2008): 1–25.
- 83 In John the body had been anointed already by Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus (Jn 19:38–42). On the problems of lining up the Gospel accounts with the painting, see Kraeling, 85–87.
- 84 Many examples are found in Joseph Ysebaert, *Greek Baptismal Terminology: Its Origins and Early Development* (Nijmegen: Dekker and Van de Vegt, 1962), 158–78. Cf. the connection of Incarnation, Baptism, and Illumination in Ephrem, *Hymni de Ecclesia* 36, trans. in Sebastian Brock, “St. Ephrem on Christ as Light in Mary and in the Jordan: *Hymni de Ecclesia* 36,” *Eastern Churches Review* 7 (1975): 137–44. In Gregory of Nazianzus, *Or.* 40, *In sanctum baptismum* (Epiphany, 381 CE), “baptism”

is interchangeable with φωτισμός, “illumination” or “enlightenment,” to the extent that Rufinus’ Latin translation of this oration usually renders φωτισμός as *baptismus*.

- 85 Cyril of Jerusalem, *Procat.* 1, 3–4 (PG 33:332–40).
- 86 John Chrysostom, 11.1, p. 161. This is the beginning of the final instruction according to one of the manuscripts (Papadopoulos-Kerameus). Greek text from Piédagnel, 212.
- 87 Chrysostom even gets choked up when he recalls the day of his own baptismal marriage, as he contrasts the virginal purity of that day with his current sinful state. He admits jealousy toward the bridal procession before him, comparing himself to women that grieve and lament when they see “others as brides being married and given to wealthy bridegrooms, enjoying great honor, and being led away with a retinue and procession.” John Chrysostom, *Baptismal Instructions* 11.23, pp. 167–68. Greek text in Piédagnel, ed., *Jean Chrysostome: Trois Catéchèses Baptismales*, 230.
- 88 Gregory of Nazianzus, *Or.* 40.46, *In sanctum baptisma* (Epiphany, 381 CE), PG 36:425. Trans. my own.
- 89 The connection of oil with good works is also made by *Midrash Rabbah* on Numbers 7:19, cited already by Karl P. Donfried, “The Allegory of the Ten Virgins (Mt 25:1–13) as a Summary of Matthean Theology,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 93 (1974): 427. For Matthew’s part, he connects “light” with good works in other parts of his Gospel (5:14–16, 13:43). As seen above, Chrysostom discusses baptismal anointing as perfume adorning a bride (*Baptismal Instructions* 11.27).
- 90 Henri Grégoire, “Les Baptistères de Cuicul et de Doura,” *Byzantion* 13 (1938): 593. He connects this illumination to other inscriptions referring to the “illuminated” in early Christianity.
- 91 Wharton, 54, 60. Italics are original. For explanation of her distinction between optic (visual) and haptic (bodily), which is slightly different than their original art-historical usage, see pp. 68–69 and literature cited there.
- 92 Cyril of Jerusalem, *Bapt. Cat.* 1.1; and John Chrysostom, 11.4.

PATRICIA DELEEUW

A PEACEFUL PLURALISM: THE DURENE MITHRAEUM, SYNAGOGUE, AND CHRISTIAN BUILDING

On a bluff overlooking the Euphrates River, the town of Dura-Europos was founded in the fourth century BCE by Macedonian Greeks to defend the caravan route between Antioch and Seleucia. Although the site is now barren and forbidding, there is some evidence that at the time of the town's flourishing, from the late-second century BCE to its defeat and destruction by Sasanians in 256/257 CE, the area surrounding the town was a fertile agricultural center. It was at the same time a military garrison and a center for trade and politics in the Parthian Empire.¹ Macedonian, Seleucid, Parthian, Roman, Sasanian; Greek, Latin, Persian—Dura-Europos was a place where people of various ethnicities, languages, cultures, and religions, lived, worked, and worshipped, as far as we know, peacefully.

The excavations of Dura conducted in the 1920s and 1930s revealed a town dotted with religious sites, as would have been true, most likely, of all Greco-Roman settlements of its size and complexity. The first inhabitants of Dura worshipped at the temples of Artemis-Nanaia and of Atargatis and Hadad built near the town's Agora (see plan, p. 15).² Thus, our earliest evidence of Durene religion demonstrates the tendency of local Semitic gods to adopt the names and attributes of deities of the dominant Greek culture. Other temples would follow as people with different ethnicities and cultures came to Dura and built homes and places where they might speak to their own gods; temples dedicated to the Palmyrene Gods, to the local god Aphlad, to Zeus Kyrios, to Artemis Azzanathkona, to Zeus-Theos, and to the Semitic Gad, a guardian god, were erected in Dura in the first and second centuries CE.³

In the mid-second century CE, the armies of Rome came to Dura, and it was a Roman colony and military garrison from the late-second century until the town's destruction by the armies of the Sasanian Persians in 256. The Roman army built its camp and governor's palace in Dura northwest of the original Greek and Parthian settlements, separated from them by a low wall. During the time of Roman occupation, three houses in Dura were adapted by their owners to become centers of worship for Judaism, Christianity, and the mystery cult of Mithras. The architecture and decoration of the ensuing Synagogue, House Church, and Mithraeum are some of our most important witnesses to those religions.⁴

The history of Christianity in its first centuries often is written using the metaphor of birth; from its Jewish origins and Greco-Roman intellectual and political milieu, Christianity emerges and grows to inde-

pendence. Adopting the metaphor invites the historian to view the early Jesus movement's development as one formed by birth struggles to break free of its mother(s).⁵ Even without the language of birth, the history of the relationship between Christianity, Judaism, and the various pagan religions of the first centuries CE is written usually as one of antagonism and rivalry.⁶ It is true, of course, that Christianity was not viewed always with favor by the Roman authorities or the peoples they ruled, and followers of Jesus were sometimes victims of persecution. One of the earliest authentic descriptions of the martyrdom of a Christian bishop in the mid-second century in Smyrna (a city on the Aegean coast in what is now Turkey) describes the arrest and death of the bishop Polycarp as instigated by a mob: when Polycarp acknowledges that he is a Christian, "the whole mass of gentiles and Jews living in Smyrna cried out in unrestrained rage and with a great shout, 'This is the teacher of Asia, the father of the Christians, the destroyer of our gods.'"⁷

A picture of the religious life of the Greco-Roman world of the first three centuries CE painted using only the evidence of literary sources indeed would highlight antagonism among the various religious groups. Stories of the persecution of Christians by Roman governmental authorities from the mid-first through the early fourth century captivated subsequent generations of Christians and shaped their writing of the early Church's history. Although we now know that such persecutions were most often local and sporadic, the accounts of the heroism of the martyrs they produced were sources of pride, identity, and entertainment for all Christians. In these accounts, Christians are captured, tortured, and put to death for the crime of atheism, as they refused to sacrifice to the gods of the Greco-Roman state, or of cannibalism, a misunderstanding that their secret religious ritual invited.⁸

One of the most prevalent literary genres adopted by those who wrote about religion during the time of Rome's empire is that of the apology (texts written to defend the religion of the author while criticizing the religions of others).⁹ Apologetic texts were written by Christians, Jews, and adherents of various other religions and cults. In them, one sees the development of religious identity through conflict. Indeed, it is through their competition with Judaism and Greco-Roman paganism that Christians were compelled to define themselves and their beliefs.

There are several apologetic texts written by Christians against Jews during the time of the flourishing of Dura-Europos and the building of its places of worship. Following the example of Paul in his first letter to the Christian community at Thessalonica preserved in Christian scripture, in which he claims that "the Jews" killed Jesus and the prophets (1 Thes 2, 14:15), the authors of these texts clearly know well Judaism and its interpretation of Scripture and use its own Scriptures against it. In the mid-second-century *Epistle of Barnabas*, the author, who adopts the identity of the apostle of that name, rehearses the history of God's purported covenant with Israel and claims that the Jews did not actually receive it because of their sin. Jews misguidedly put their faith in circumcision and in their temple in Jerusalem, when God had intended both to be understood spiritually not physically.¹⁰ A fragment of a hymn attributed to Melito of Sardis written in the latter part of the second century claims that Jesus had to be put to death to free Christians from Jewish rule then accuses the Jews of deicide.¹¹ One of the best-known apologies written by a Christian against the Jews is the *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew*, was written by Justin (usually called Justin Martyr, a mid-second-century Syrian convert to Christianity). The text purports to be a debate between Justin and a learned Jew named Trypho. In this less polemical work, Justin allows Trypho reasoned arguments against apparent inconsistencies in Christian teaching, although Trypho and the Jews are bested at the end for the failing to

recognize the Messiah in their midst.¹²

Other early Christian writers justified Christianity against paganism. In his *Apology*, Aristides mocks the “Greeks” and the “Egyptians” for having created many gods, male and female, who suffer from the worst deficits of character, murder, incest, adultery, as do humans.¹³ The best-known Christian apologist against the pagans is the theologian Origen, who wrote in Alexandria in the early third century. In his work *Against Celsus*, Origen takes on the pagan Celsus, the author of a treatise attacking both Judaism and Christianity. Among Origen’s many complaints about Celsus’ treatment of Christianity is Celsus’ claim that Christianity is “unreasonable”—like the belief in a number of superstitions he lists, among them that of Mithras. According to Celsus, superstitions like Mithraism and Christianity are led by wicked men who convince simple people to believe in their false teachings without explanation; Origen responds by arguing that Christianity offers complex and sophisticated ideas to its learned adherents while providing a sound moral code for the betterment of life to those unable to devote themselves to the study of Christian philosophy.¹⁴ Justin Martyr, in another apologetic work, his *First Apology*, claims that the “wicked devils” who adhere to the cult of Mithras have imitated the actions commanded by Jesus of his followers; like Christians, followers of Mithras eat and drink with prescribed prayers during their ritual, though it is bread and water rather than wine in which they partake.¹⁵

Although the apologetic literature of the first centuries CE is often polemical, replete with derisive and mocking language and tone, what is revealed clearly in these texts is the familiarity of the authors with the beliefs and rituals of their opponents. Justin the Christian, Trypho the Jew, Celsus the pagan, and Origen the Christian were well-educated, sophisticated inhabitants of cities of the Greco-Roman world, whose educational institutions and libraries were very similar.¹⁶ Although the failures and weaknesses of Rome’s empire are obvious, the advantages of common languages—predominantly Greek and to a lesser extent Latin—and the relative ease of travel among the cities that ringed the Mediterranean and dotted the trade routes allowed for a bustling commerce and the free interchange of ideas. Documentary evidence of the religious milieu of the Roman Empire illustrates a well-informed hostility of one religious group to another and an insistence by their adherents on the demarcation and differences among belief systems. The authors of these texts are nonetheless members of the same Greco-Roman elite who could speak and write to one another across the boundaries of religious difference.

The town of Dura-Europos was not, as far as we know, a center of education and intellectual life but rather a place where merchants and soldiers mingled.¹⁷ This was especially true during the century of Roman control of Dura, from the mid-second century to the town’s destruction in the mid-third century CE. As the base of a Roman garrison, Dura gained new prosperity and a great deal of new construction in governmental and commercial buildings, private houses, baths, and temples.¹⁸ In addition, many existing buildings were improved or modified to fit new styles of architecture and decoration or to meet new needs. Of the religious sites, two new temples dedicated to unknown or multiple orientalized deities were built within the camp of the Roman soldiers (many or most of whom, of course, would have come from the eastern regions of the empire), a temple of Artemis near the town’s center was enlarged, an existing Mithraeum was rebuilt twice, a Jewish synagogue was built and subsequently enlarged, and a Christian church was built and enlarged.

Although the archaeologist Michael Rostovtzeff’s description of Dura as “the Pompeii of the Syrian desert”¹⁹ has been recognized as hyperbolic, it remains true that the wealth of data we possess from the

site—especially from the years just before the town’s destruction in the mid-third century CE—enables us to picture daily life there in ways unimaginable for most of the Roman Empire. We know that in the decade of the 240s CE, a Roman soldier stationed in the garrison headquartered in the northern sector of the city, who perhaps worshipped at the Mithraeum located within the camp near the western wall of the city, could leave the camp and, remaining close to the wall, stroll a few hundred meters along what the archaeolo-

gists dubbed “Wall Street” to the Jewish synagogue, then, 100 meters further, to the Christian church. Although, as we have seen, there were many other temples and places of worship scattered throughout the city, these three were the centers of religions that shared particular characteristics in belief, ritual, and the use of sacred space.²⁰ Whereas contemporary literary sources of apology and persecution demonstrate rivalry and scorn among the adherents of Mithraism, Judaism, and Christianity, the archaeological evidence for these religions at Dura underscores the familiarity those adherents had with the other belief systems and, indeed, their willingness to share certain common elements in their ritual space. This sharing was not the syncretism of the pagan temples but rather the pluralism of religions existing side by side.

The Mithraeum (site for the worship of the god Mithras) was originally a house remodeled in the mid-second century near the time of the Roman conquest of Dura by the commander of the Palmyrene archers stationed there; a bas-relief of Mithras killing the bull found in the early Mithraeum bears a dedication noting his name, Ethpeni, and the date.²¹ This simple rectangular building contains only benches and an altar table at its western end below the bas-relief commissioned by Ethpeni and another commissioned two years later by a subsequent Palmyrene commander Zenobius. In 210 CE the building was much enlarged and refurbished by another commander, the Roman legionary Antonius Valentinus, whose name comes down to us in another inscription, this one above the lintel of the entrance door. Now in Latin, this inscription dedicates “the temple of the god *Sol Invictus Mithras*” to the Roman emperors Septimius Severus, Caracalla, and Geta. Valentinus more than

doubled the size of the Mithraeum, remodeled it as a basilica, and added an arched niche behind the altar. In about 240 CE, the Mithraeum was enlarged again, the altar was raised, and seven steps were built leading to it (figs. 11.1 and 11.2). The temple of 210 CE, the Middle Mithraeum, and the Late Mithraeum of 240 CE all were highly decorated and contained a number of graffiti.

Whether the mystery cult of Mithras derives from Persia and spread west,²² or began in Rome and

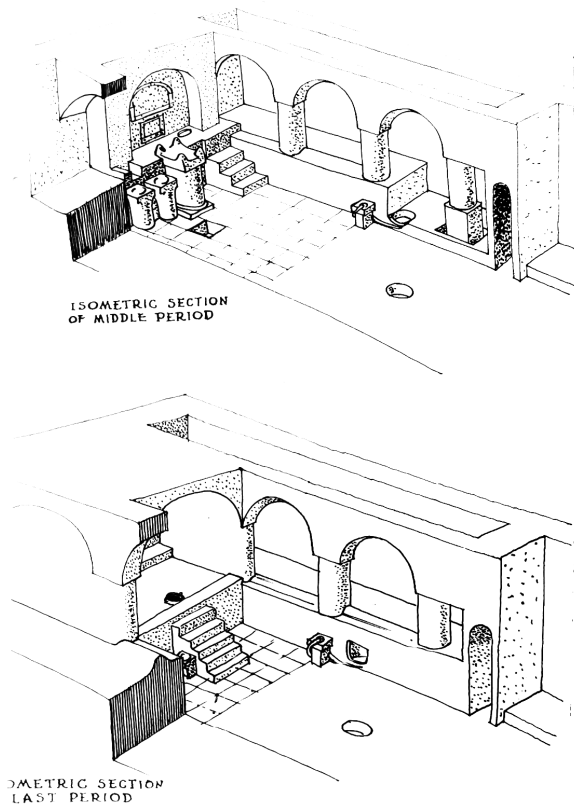


Figure 11.1: Isometric sections of the Mithraeum showing the middle and late phases of the shrine, drawn by a member of the Yale University excavation team, probably Henry Pearson or Herbert Gute. Dura-Europos Collection, Yale University Art Gallery.

spread east,²³ it was most popular among the soldiers of the empire, who, at least in principle, could not belong to the two eastern religions that forbade sacrifice to the state gods, Judaism and Christianity.²⁴ Much of our evidence for the cult derives from numerous monuments and Mithraea, which survive from across the expanse of the Roman Empire. The Mithraeum at Dura is among the best preserved, and its architecture, decoration, and graffiti tell us much about the ways in which this international cult was understood in Syria during the first half of the third century. As in all Mithraea, whether the traditional cave or a building as at Dura, the worshipper entered the sanctuary at a narrow end, here on the eastern side of the building, and his sight was immediately drawn to the cult niche across the room on the west, some 10 meters away (fig. 11.2).²⁵ In this niche, at the top of seven stairs and behind a door in the Late Mithraeum at Dura, were the two bas-reliefs that illustrated the story that lies at the heart of the cult, the tauroctony (killing of the bull). The walls within, above, and surrounding the niche were covered with paintings that further taught the worshipper the stories and world view of the cult. In front of the bas-reliefs was an altar for sacrifice, and along the north and south walls of the basilica were long benches used in the shared ritual meal.

In Mithraic myth, the god Mithras is born from a rock in a moment outside time, and as an adult he conquers the primeval bull and drags the carcass into a cave. Following this struggle, Mithras and the sun god Sol enjoy a banquet together, and Mithras consecrates Sol with a laying-on of hands and the bestowal of his radiant nimbus. These stories and many others are portrayed in the decoration of the Dura Mithraeum. In addition, the Mithraic legends are associated with classical notions of the spheres of the universe, the systems of stars and planets, and the signs of the zodiac; in the Dura Mithraeum, the signs of the zodiac were painted on the back wall of the niche around the bas reliefs in the Middle Mithraeum and repainted on the soffit of the arch at the front of the niche in the Late Mithraeum (fig. 11.3). The vault of the niche was covered with blue paint and decorated with large and small eight-pointed stars;²⁶ thus, the Mithraeum itself is a model of the universe in which the adherents, as they sacrifice to Mithras at the altar and enjoy a ritual meal of bread and water at the benches under the heavens, replicate the actions of Mithras and Sol.²⁷ Like the universe, the Mithraeum—at Dura a building, in many other sites across the empire a cave—is “an inside without an outside”; unlike other Greco-Roman temples, the outside does not matter. Although our understanding of the cult of Mithras during its popularity in the world of the Roman Empire from the first to the fourth century CE is limited by our sources—many material objects and sites of worship and few documents—the sacred space of the Dura Mithraeum bespeaks the understanding among the soldiers who



Figure 11.2: Excavation photograph of the Mithraeum showing steps leading to altar. Dura-Europos Collection, Yale University Art Gallery.

worshipped there that they had a connection to events outside time, which they could bring to the present in their rituals.



Figure 11.3: Paintings on the arch of the Late Mithraeum, including zodiac signs. Dura-Europos Collection, Yale University Art Gallery.

The Synagogue located among the houses on Wall Street was, like the Mithraeum and other religious sites at Dura, comprised of domestic dwellings remodeled for cultic purposes first in the late-second century then again, perhaps as the Jewish community in Dura grew larger and more prosperous, in 244/245 CE.²⁸ Both the earlier and later phases of the Synagogue building contain an assembly hall (14.0 m long and 7.5 m wide) highly decorated in the later phase with paintings covering all four walls, a niche on the western wall supported by columns (which functioned as a Torah shrine), and benches along the walls. The columns are painted to look like marble and decorated with painted fruit garlands. The space above the arch of the shrine is covered with blue paint as a background to three illustrations: the sacrifice of Isaac, a rectangular architectural object, and a menorah (figs. 7.2, 7.3, 7.5, and 7.6).²⁹

Since the excavation of the Synagogue in 1932, scholars have debated the wall paintings of the Synagogue, sometimes the identification of some of the scenes and always their meaning. Is there a “metanarrative” in which the individual paintings participate or, as one historian has aptly suggested, is the collection of painted panels merely “copious chaos”?³⁰ In either case it is clear that the paintings, illustrations of historical scenes from Hebrew scripture and portraits perhaps of prophets, have a didactic purpose. The Jewish congregants who gathered to pray and to hear readings from the Torah were reminded by the images that surrounded them on all sides of the stories of their heroes, their covenant with God, and perhaps the promise of a Messiah. The pictures might have even functioned as “advertisements” to educate and persuade converts to Judaism.³¹ Like the paintings in the Mithraeum, the Synagogue paintings lift the viewer out of the present, not here to events outside time

but rather to events of other times and times-to-come. At the same time, the illustrations of the Mithraic and scriptural stories in these places of worship paradoxically bring those events to the present and unite the viewer with the figures in them.

A scant 100 meters south of the Synagogue along Wall Street is the Christian Building—another renovated house, though much smaller and simpler. Like the Mithraeum and the Synagogue, the Christian Building saw several phases: its construction as a private house most likely in the early third century CE (somewhat later than the houses that preceded the Mithraeum and Synagogue) and its adaptation for use

as a church shortly after its erection most likely in the fifth decade of the third century.³² This dating makes all three sites of worship remarkably contemporary in their last stage of construction and decoration. The Christian Building's assembly hall (a rectangular space some 3 m wide and 13 m long) was unadorned; its only installation is a raised dais (approximately 1.0 m deep, 1.5 m wide, and 0.2 m high) at its short eastern end (fig. 9.3). This dais, or bema, is an indication that the liturgy conducted in the hall was not the agape (communal meal of the earliest Christian communities) but rather a ceremony led by a presider.³³ It is not the assembly hall but rather another room across an adjoining room from it that identified this as a *domus ecclesiae* (a transitional building in Christian history between the use of private homes by the earliest Jesus followers for worship and the construction of churches in the fourth century). In the northwestern corner of the building (a room approximately 3 m wide and 7 m long) is a baptistery, identified by its wall paintings and especially by the font at its western end under a canopy with a barrel-vaulted ceiling supported by columns.

The scriptural stories depicted in the wall paintings in the baptistery are discussed at length elsewhere in this volume (Peppard). They are largely scenes from the life of Jesus or metaphors from the Gospels (the woman at the well, Jesus healing the paralytic, Jesus and Peter walking on the water, and the Good Shepherd), though there are some references to Hebrew scripture (David and Goliath, Adam and Eve). The most dominant figures in the paintings of the room are a procession of women carrying bowls and torches moving from right to left toward a large rectangular structure with a gabled roof and stars shining at its corners (pl. 18). Scholarly interpretation of this scene has focused on the scriptural story of the women coming to anoint Jesus' body on the morning of his resurrection.³⁴ More recent scholarship that widens the lens to include literary and baptismal liturgical evidence from the third century argues convincingly that indeed the women are rather the wise and foolish virgins of Matthew 25, on their way to a wedding feast; the white building is either a tent for the marriage feast or a bridal chamber, and the stars are not of the early morning but of the evening.³⁵

The focus of worship and liturgical action in the baptistery was at the font at its western end. Again, it is a niche whose vaulted ceiling is supported by columns (fig. 9.4). The columns are, remarkably, painted to look like marble in the same design as that used for the Torah shrine in the Synagogue; the vault of the canopy is a blue field, the same blue as that used on the Torah shrine; and the blue field is covered with stars, as we saw in the vault of the Mithraeum.³⁶ Art historians have noted a "Durene" style in the painting and sculptures found throughout Dura-Europos³⁷ and have speculated about its sources in the Greco-Roman, Semitic, and Parthian cultures of western Asia in the early years of our era. It has been suggested that the commonalities of the Mithraeum, the Synagogue, and the Christian Building in style and decoration are somehow unique to Dura as well; the underlying assumption here is that if we could find three cult buildings as well preserved as those of Dura at another site of the Roman Empire, we would not see such notably common features.

We began this discussion of the religious milieu of the Greco-Roman world as the archaeological evidence of Dura-Europos reveals it with an examination of contemporary written sources; and saw there the strong antagonism between culturally elite members of one religion and another, though we noted the clear familiarity that the writers of apologies had with one another's beliefs. The apologetic literature of the first centuries CE had as a major impulse the establishment of clear and discernable religious identity, indeed,

superiority of the religious beliefs of the authors. The possibility of the influence of one cult on another's rituals was voiced by Justin Martyr, who noted the similarities between the ritual meals of Mithraists and Christians, though his partisan view is that this was the former's crass and indeed diabolical imitation of the latter.

The notion of the resistance of one religious group in the generally tolerant Roman Empire to another, or to the "dominant" official state pantheism, has shaped the understanding of some modern scholars of Durene religious art.³⁸ This is especially true for the art of the Synagogue; in a search for a "metanarrative," scholars have argued that the scenes depicted in its paintings were chosen either as an "active and aggressive commentary" on local pagan religion or in reaction to the Christian attack, made as we have seen by the apologist author of the *Epistle of Barnabas*, on the Abrahamic covenant.³⁹ Others have asserted the competition, perhaps even for adherents, among the various religious groups that worshipped in Dura-Europos in arguments based on both architectural and artistic evidence.⁴⁰ All of these scholars must acknowledge that the similarities in style, detail, and color (columns painted to look like marble, eight-pointed stars, a particular shade of blue) that we have seen in the Mithraeum, the Synagogue, and the Christian Building must indicate that the artists themselves borrowed one another's ideas or might have come from the same workshop.

The inhabitants of the town of Dura-Europos—not members of an educated cultural elite but rather soldiers and merchants—who contemporaneously worshiped in these sacred spaces saw and felt much else that was the same. They were transported by the pictures before and around them to places and events that bore cultic significance and personal connection. In each religious building, their eyes were drawn to the focus of the ritual in a niche decorated with representations of the key elements of the cult—the tau-roctony, the sacrifice of Isaac, the Good Shepherd—and with colors and images that invited in the world beyond. The remarkable similarities in the three buildings' design, decoration, and purpose must challenge an understanding from literary sources alone of the religious milieu of the Roman Empire. The rivalry, derision, and distrust among educated adherents of the religions of the third century appear to give way in the holy places of Dura-Europos.

Notes

- 1 On the history of Dura-Europos, see Clark Hopkins, *The Discovery of Dura-Europos*, ed. Bernard Goldman (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 251–71; and Annabel Jane Wharton, “Good and Bad Images from the Synagogue of Dura Europos: Contexts, Subtexts, Intertexts,” in *The Image in the Ancient and Early Christian Worlds. Art History* 17 (1994), 1–4.
- 2 Hopkins, 62–73; *Prelim. Rep. III*, 3–11; and *Prelim. Rep. IV*, 14–20.
- 3 Hopkins, 83–88, 219–20; *Prelim. Rep. V*, 98–200; and *Prelim. Rep. VII/VIII*, 244.
- 4 On the adaptation of private buildings to sites of worship, see especially L. Michael White, *Building God’s House in the Roman World: Architectural Adaptation among Pagans, Jews, and Christians* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990).
- 5 After generations of ecumenism and dialogue, even “new” histories of the early Church describe Judaism as a “seedbed” for Christianity; see, for example, Charles Freeman, *A New History of Early Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 8.
- 6 See the articles in the recent collection Leif E. Vaage, ed., *Religious Rivalries in the Early Roman Empire and the Rise of Christianity* (Montreal: Wilfred Laurier, 2006).
- 7 Quoted by Judith Lieu, “Jews, Christians, and ‘Pagans’ in Conflict,” in *Critique and Apologetics: Jews, Christians, and Pagans in Antiquity*, ed. Anders-Christian Jacobsen, Jörg Ulrich, and David Brakke, *Early Christianity in the Context of Antiquity* 4 (Frankfurt: Lang, 2009), 43.
- 8 William H. C. Frend, *Martyrdom and Persecution in the Early Church: a Study of a Conflict from the Maccabees to Donatus* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books, 1967), 14–21; and Luke Timothy Johnson, *Among the Gentiles: Greco-Roman Religion and Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 187–93.
- 9 Although there is general agreement about the characteristics of apologetic texts, there is debate among recent scholars on whether they are a literary genre; Anders-Christian Jacobsen, “Apologetics and Apologies—Some Definitions,” in *Continuity and Discontinuity in Early Christian Apologetics*, ed. Jörg Ulrich, Anders-Christian Jacobsen, and Maijastina Kahlos, *Early Christianity in the Context of Antiquity* 5 (Frankfurt: Lang, 2009), 17–21.
- 10 James A. Kleist, trans., *The Epistle of Barnabas*, *Ancient Christian Writers* 6 (Westminster, Md.: Newman, 1948), 60.
- 11 Melito of Sardis, *Hymn. Fathers of the Third and Fourth Centuries*, trans. E. Cleveland Coxe, *Ante-Nicene Fathers* 8 (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1978), 757.
- 12 Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew: the Apostolic Fathers*, trans. E. Cleveland Coxe, *Ante-Nicene Fathers* 1 (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1979), 194–270; on Melito and Justin, see Freeman, 137–41.
- 13 J. Rendel Harris, ed., *The Apology of Aristides* (Piscataway, N.J.: Gorgias, 2004), 40, 45.
- 14 Origen, *Against Celsus: Fathers of the Third Century*, trans. E. Cleveland Coxe, *Ante-Nicene Fathers* 4 (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1979), 433.
- 15 Justin Martyr, *First Apology*, ed. Leslie William Barnard, *Ancient Christian Writers* 56 (New York: Paulist, 1997), 70–71.

- 16 Teresa Morgan, *Literate Education in the Hellenistic and Roman Worlds* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 2–7; and Edward J. Watts, *City and School: Late Antique Athens and Alexandria* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 30–31.
- 17 Few of the many documents that have been preserved from Dura are literary works: Ann Perkins, *The Art of Dura-Europos*, ed. Bernard Goldman (Oxford: Clarendon, 1973), 9.
- 18 *Ibid.*, 23–32.
- 19 Michael I. Rostovtzeff, *Dura-Europos and Its Art* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1938), 2; see also Eric D. Francis, “Mithraic Graffiti from Dura Europos,” in *Mithraic Studies. Proceedings of the First International Congress of Mithraic Studies*, ed. John R. Hinnells (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1975), 2:425.
- 20 Richard Kieckhefer, *Theology in Stone: Church Architecture from Byzantium to Berkeley* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 70–74.
- 21 *Prelim. Rep. VII/VII*, 64–89; and Francis, 425–28.
- 22 The traditional view; see for example, Franz Cumont, “The Dura Mithraeum,” trans. and ed. Eric D. Francis, *Mithraic Studies: Proceedings of the First International Congress of Mithraic Studies*, ed. John R. Hinnells (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1975), 1:155–60.
- 23 Roger Beck, *The Religion of the Mithras Cult in the Roman Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), quoting Reinhold Merkelbach in a view with which he concurs, 51.
- 24 Although by the third century, the very ethnically diverse Roman armies most likely had more than a few Christian soldiers; Lucinda Dirven, “Religious Competition and the Decoration of Sanctuaries: the Case of Dura Europos,” *Early Christian Art* 1 (2004): 5.
- 25 The masculine pronoun here is not only convenient, but true; in the Dura Mithraeum among the hundred or so names scrawled in the plaster as graffiti, none is feminine; Cumont, 199; and Francis, 432.
- 26 *Prelim. Rep. VII/VIII*, 102, 110.
- 27 Beck, 102–18.
- 28 Carl H. Kraeling, *The Synagogue. The Excavations at Dura-Europos Conducted by Yale University and the French Academy of Inscriptions and Letters, Final Report 8, Part 1*, ed. Alfred R. Bellinger et al. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1956), 7–33.
- 29 *Ibid.*, 56.
- 30 Wharton, 15. Kurt Weitzmann in Kurt Weitzmann and Herbert L. Kessler, *The Frescoes of the Dura Synagogue and Christian Art*, *Dumbarton Oaks Studies* 28 (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1990), 17–141, describes and identifies each panel.
- 31 Joseph Gutmann in *The Dura Europos Synagogue: a Re-evaluation (1932–1992)*, ed. Joseph Gutmann (Atlanta: Scholars, 1992).
- 32 Carl H. Kraeling, *The Christian Building. The Excavations at Dura-Europos Conducted by Yale University and the French Academy of Inscriptions and Letters, Final Report 8, Part 2*, ed. C. Bradford Welles (New Haven: Dura-Europos Publications, 1967), 38.
- 33 Jeanne Halgren Kilde, *Sacred Power, Sacred Space: an Introduction to Christian Architecture and Worship* (New York:

Oxford University Press, 2008), 24–25; White, 119–20; and Graydon F. Snyder, *Ante Pacem: Archaeological Evidence of Church Life before Constantine* (Mercer: Mercer University Press, 1985), 68–71.

34 Kraeling, *Christian Building*, 80–88.

35 Peppard, this volume.

36 Kraeling, *Christian Building*, 44.

37 Perkins, 114–26; and Rostovtzeff, 69.

38 See especially Jaś Elsner, “Cultural Resistance and the Visual Image: the Case of Dura Europos,” *Classical Philology* 96, no. 3 (2001): 269–304.

39 Ibid., 283; and Weitzmann and Kessler, 157.

40 Summarized in Dirven, 4–9.

LUCINDA DIRVEN

STRANGERS AND SOJOURNERS: THE RELIGIOUS BEHAVIOR OF PALMYRENES AND OTHER FOREIGNERS IN DURA-EUPOPOS

Introduction

In the middle of the third century, shortly before the Sasanians succeeded in conquering Dura-Europos, a great variety of deities were worshipped in this small city overlooking the Euphrates. Excavators have found fifteen sanctuaries so far, and it is plausible that the remains of more religious buildings still are hidden below the desert sand.¹ Best known are the Synagogue and the small House Church that were discovered just inside the city wall. In addition to the monotheistic faiths associated with these buildings, cults honouring a whole range of deities of varying origins were established in the city. Historians of religion can discern gods of Greek, Babylonian, Aramaic, Phoenician, Arab, Iranian, and Roman origin. This religious variety mirrors the social diversity in the city, that in turn results from Dura-Europos' political history and geographical location.² After all, gods do not simply fall from heaven; they arrive together with their worshippers. The majority of the population of Dura-Europos was made up of descendants of the Greek (Macedonian) settlers; but the town also was inhabited by a mix of Syrians (especially people from the Middle Euphrates region and Palmyra), Mesopotamians, and Steppe pastoralists, as well as Roman provincial soldiers who originated from Syria and beyond.³

Dura-Europos was a small city, and the sanctuaries that have been excavated so far are located quite close to one another. Due to this proximity, the question arises as to whether, and if so in what way, cults of different origin influenced each other: did foreign deities retain their original character, or did they change because they were assimilated to the gods worshipped in the immigrants' new surroundings? Information about the religious life in Dura-Europos consists almost entirely of material remains, such as temples, paintings, reliefs, graffiti, and inscriptions. No theological treatises or liturgical texts have come down to us. Since it is impossible to decipher a deity's character from his or her name and outward appearance, the quest for the process of religious interaction is bound to start with a study of the religious behavior of the worshippers. The present article deals with the religion of three groups of people, originating from Palmyra, Anath, and Hatra, respectively (see plan, p. 15). Palmyra (or Tadmor) is located in the Syrian Desert about 220

kilometers west of Dura-Europos. During the first three centuries of the Common Era, the oasis flourished thanks to its role in international caravan trade.⁴ The village of Anath is situated on the left bank of the Euphrates about 120 kilometers south of Dura-Europos; and Hatra is situated in the steppe of the eastern Jazirah, in North Mesopotamia, about 80 kilometers southwest of present-day Mosul. Like Palmyra, this desert city flourished in the first centuries of the Common Era. My study focuses on migrants from these three cities because of the rich sources that are available for the study of these groups: architectural remains, sculptures in the round and reliefs, paintings, inscriptions and graffiti, and papyri.

Anthropologists know from studies into modern diaspora communities that the religious behavior of migrant groups depends on many factors. First, one has to take into account the religious situation in the group's place of origin. This, in turn, varies according to the social, economic, and intellectual background of the people. Second, the social and economic position of the immigrants in their new environment is important. Their religious behavior may be influenced by the duration and purpose of their stay; their social position, number, age and profession; the remoteness of their native country; the degree of contact they maintain with their place of origin; and so forth. Last but not least, the behavior of these groups may be said to depend on the religious situation they encounter in their new place of residence. It follows from this research that extensive information on social factors is needed in order to study and explain the process of religious interaction.

Studying the process of religious interaction is a complex matter then, even with relation to modern groups; this holds true even more for communities during antiquity. This is largely due to the deficiencies of the sources at our disposal. Even in Dura-Europos, where the material is relatively abundant, there is a lack of information on most of the social factors that are crucial in explaining the religious behavior of migrant groups. With many strangers, modern historians do not even know exactly from where they came, let alone what the religious situation was at their place of origin. It consequently is impossible to establish whether anything changed in their new environment.

This even holds true for the two most famous religious groups in Dura-Europos: the Jews and the Christians. The Pahlavi dipinti in the paintings from the Synagogue probably were fashioned by visitors from Mesopotamia, which suggests that the Jewish community had strong links with Babylonia.⁵ It unfortunately is impossible to say whether this also was where the roots of this thriving community lay, so art historians cannot tell whether the stunning illustrations to the Jewish scriptures were inspired by synagogues in Mesopotamia or resulted from local influences. Personal names suggest that at least some of the Christians in Dura-Europos were Roman soldiers. Since the army was made of men of various origins—locals, people from the west of Syria, and, perhaps, some even from northern Europe—it is impossible to say to what kind of Christianity they adhered;⁶ consequently, the reading of the biblical scenes that decorate their baptistery is bound to remain hypothetical.

Identifying foreign groups on the basis of archaeological material—especially inscriptions—is equally problematic. People plausibly can be identified as foreigners on the basis of the use of foreign script or language, characteristic personal names, or deities typical of a certain city or region,⁷ but people who assimilate to their new environment disappear from our sight. Once this assimilation is complete, and their origin is no longer of any importance to them, they stop being foreigners. As a consequence, they are no longer of interest to the present research. It is important to realize, however, that strangers who retain markers of their

foreignness dominate the picture, whereas they may not be representative necessarily of all the people of a particular origin.

Of great importance to the study of religious interaction, but exceedingly difficult to read, are instances in which elements of various origin intermingle. It frequently is impossible to tell on the basis of epigraphic evidence alone whether we are dealing with foreigners who have assimilated themselves to their new environment or with locals who have adopted foreign elements. A good example of an inscription that is open to several interpretations is located on a small limestone altar, dated to the third century CE (pl. 38), found in the building known as the Temple of the Palmyrene Gods, situated in the northeast corner of the city.⁸ The altar is dedicated to the Palmyrene god Iarhibol; but the inscription is in Greek rather than Palmyrene, and the tribune who dedicated it bears a Latin name not a Palmyrene one. Since Iarhibol, who was popular among Palmyrene auxiliaries serving in the Roman army, is a typical Palmyrene god, it is likely that this was the background of the present dedicant as well.⁹ It would, however, be equally plausible to suppose that the tribune was a foreigner, who adopted the cult because he was in command of a Palmyrene unit.

People from Palmyra, Anath, and Hatra stand out in Dura-Europos because they can be identified comparatively easily. First, they often identify themselves in inscriptions as originating from one of these places. In addition, people from Palmyra and Hatra frequently use their own script. Finally, typical local deities and personal names help us to establish their origin. Neither of these features suffices in itself, but in combination they provide a fairly good indication as to someone's origin. Last but not least, the religious situation in Palmyra, Anath and Hatra is relatively well known. This enables us to compare the religion of the people in Dura-Europos with the religion in their city of origin.

Of the three groups, people from Palmyra by far are the most significant. The material pertaining to the Palmyrenes vastly outnumbers that relating to the other two places and provides an excellent opportunity for a study of religion along social lines.¹⁰ The history of the Palmyrene community in Dura-Europos covers almost three centuries, from 33 BCE to the fall of the city in 256 CE. Palmyrene migrants can be divided in two distinct groups: soldiers who served in the Roman army and merchants. By comparing these two groups, modern scholars of Dura-Europos can establish whether or not this difference in social position influenced their religious preferences. Last but not least, information on Palmyrene merchants and soldiers who lived in the Parthian east as well as those in the Roman west is relatively abundant.¹¹ This enables the historian to establish whether their behavior in Dura-Europos was influenced by their new environment.

In the following, I start with a short sketch of the social and economic history of the inhabitants of Dura-Europos who originated from Palmyra, Hatra, and Anath. I subsequently shall discuss their religious behavior on the basis of archaeological remains found in Dura-Europos.

The Social and Economic History of the Inhabitants from Palmyra, Anath, and Hatra

Information on the social and economic position of the three foreign groups residing in Dura-Europos is scarce and seldom explicit. For the Parthian period, historians have to rely on a limited number of archaeological remains such as temples, inscriptions, and figural representations. The dated inscriptions inform us about the history of these communities, whereas the location of the buildings reflects the social and

economic position of their clientele. The construction history of these sanctuaries mirrors the economic development and growth over time of the migrant community in question. Finds from the Roman period are more abundant but are confined to the Palmyrene community. In addition to the archaeological remains, military parchments and papyri provide information on Palmyrene soldiers serving in the Roman army. There can be no doubt that many foreigners lived in Roman Dura-Europos, but it is frequently impossible to tell where they were coming from.



Figure 12.1: Relief of the god Aphlad of the village of Anath on the Euphrates, Dura-Europos, ca. mid-first century CE. National Museum of Damascus (photograph courtesy of the Yale University Art Gallery, Dura-Europos Collection)

The presence of Palmyrenes in Dura-Europos is first recorded in 33 BCE, when two Palmyrenes jointly founded a temple on the plateau outside the city walls. Shortly before the middle of the first century CE, Palmyrene inhabitants are attested within the city proper. In all likelihood they participated in the cult of Zeus Kyrios-Baalshamin, whose temple against the city walls was founded in about 20 to 30 CE. Close by, the excavators found an *andron* (assembly room) dedicated to the worship of the god Aphlad, who was from the village of Anath. Like the god, most of Aphlad's worshippers originated from this village on the Euphrates south of Dura-Europos. It is possible that Palmyrenes joined this group.¹² Around the same time, Palmyrenes established a religious meeting place in Block H1, on the spot where the structure known as the Temple of the Gadde was built around the middle of the second century CE. An inhabitant from Hatra erected a dedication to the Hatrene god Shamash in the Temple of Atargatis.¹³ The text is undated but probably was erected during the first century CE. In addition to this inscription, three graffiti in the Hatrene script were found scattered in various locations at Dura-Europos. The evidence at our disposal suggests that the temples in the necropolis and Block H1 were used exclusively by Palmyrenes, whereas the sanctuaries of Zeus Kyrios-Baalshamin and Aphlad were probably used by a mixed clientele of strangers and local inhabitants. People from Hatra apparently lodged in a local sanctuary.

The exclusive Palmyrene character of the temples in the necropolis and Block H1 is apparent from the inscriptions that are predominantly Palmyrene. Most inscriptions from Dura-Europos are in Greek; furthermore, the inscriptions from these temples mention typical Palmyrene deities, as well as personal names that are common in Palmyra but rare, if they occur at all, in other Durene inscriptions. It may be inferred from the dimensions of these sanctuaries, and their limited growth over the years, that the Palmyrene community was fairly small in the Parthian period. In contrast to most Durene temples, these sanctuaries have only one assembly room. Inscriptions from Dura-Europos, Palmyra and elsewhere, show that these assembly rooms were used for ritual dining by social groups that were organized on a familial, religious, or ethnic basis; hence, the number of assembly rooms reflects the social and perhaps religious diversity among the visitors of a particular temple. Palmyrene temples have only one such room

and this suggests they were frequented by a homogenous group of worshippers.

It is not obligatory that a religious association was comprised of people from the same family or the same locality, and there may have been exceptions to this rule. The religious association that used the assembly room that is called the temple of Aphlad, is a case in point. The dedicatory inscription of this room mentions the names of eleven people that belonged to the religious association of the god Aphlad from the village of Anath.¹⁴ Several of the names in this list are also attested in inscriptions from Palmyra; hence, it is possible that people from Palmyra joined the people from Anath who introduced their god in Dura-Europos.¹⁵ Be that as it may, it follows from the outfit of the priest on the relief that was found in this room that the servants of the god did come from Anath (fig. 12.1). The priest wears the conical headdress typical of priests from the Middle Euphrates region, whereas Palmyrene priests are invariably depicted wearing a modius. The two Palmyrene reliefs that were found in the Temple of the Gadde in Dura-Europos show that Palmyrenes adhered to their priestly modius outside Palmyra (fig. 12.2, pl. 1).

The so-called temple of Zeus Kyrios may have had a mixed Palmyrene and Durene clientele.¹⁶ The small relief dedicated to the god Zeus Kyrios-Baalshamin was found in situ encased in the back wall of a small open-air sanctuary. The relief bears the only bilingual inscription in Palmyrene and Greek from Parthian Dura-Europos and is dated to 31 CE (pl. 42).¹⁷ Both the inscription and the iconography of the god are strongly influenced by Palmyra, but at the same time the relief and inscription display local Durene elements. This may reflect the mixed origin of the people who visited this shrine. In Dura-Europos, Palmyrene inscriptions are normally associated with people from Palmyra. In Palmyra, however, bilingual religious texts are very rare. Palmyrene is dominant in religious texts from the oasis.¹⁸ This suggests that the dedicatory inscription of the Zeus Kyrios-Baalshamin relief was adapted to the situation in Dura-Europos, where Greek was the main language.

The god Baalshamin is not native to the Euphrates region but arrived in Dura-Europos from the west of Syria, in all likelihood via Palmyra.¹⁹ The iconography of the god on the relief is not typical of deities from the Euphrates region and tallies with the iconography of Baalshamin in Palmyra, which in turn derives from the west.²⁰ The bearded god is shown enthroned on the right-hand side of the relief. The “Lord of the Heaven” is dressed in a mantle and a long-sleeved tunic—an outfit that mirrors the Phoenician origin of this storm god. He holds a scepter in his left hand and a bouquet of grain and various sorts of fruit in his right. On the left-hand side of the relief stands Seleukos, the dedicant of the relief. He holds a ram—his offering



Figure 12.2: Palmyrene relief representing Hairan offering to Gad Tadmor, Temple of the Gadde, naos, 159 CE. Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos, 1938.5313

to the deity in his arms. Like the god, Seleukos is dressed in a long-sleeved tunic and a mantle. He is bare-headed and is represented wearing shoes, which implies that he is not a priest. The style of the relief suggests a Palmyrene sculptor or someone strongly influenced by a Palmyrene workshop made the relief. The stone is different from the material that is normally used in Palmyra and Dura-Europos; it was perhaps imported from the area of Anath.

Someone originating from Hatra erected a dedication to the Hatrene god Shamash-Helios in the so-called temple of Atargatis, an otherwise local Durene temple. In addition to this inscription, only three Hatrean graffiti were found in Dura-Europos.²¹ This possibly means that the group of Hatrenes in Dura-Europos was small, which in turn explains why someone from Hatra chose to worship his ancestral god in a sanctuary that was predominantly used by local people. In this temple, the goddess Atargatis was worshipped together with a number of other deities. One of the reliefs found in this temple tallies with Lucian's description of the cult statues in the main sanctuary of the goddess in Hierapolis in northern Syria. It represents the enthroned goddess and her consort Hadad, with the sacred standard erect between them (pl. 43).²² Hierapolitan deities were also popular in Hatra, and this perhaps explains the dedicant's choice of this temple.²³ It is significant that this stranger from Hatra decided for a bilingual inscription that combines a Hatraean and Greek text.²⁴ In Hatra itself, none of the five hundred or so inscriptions found thus far is bilingual; hence, the choice for a Hatrean-Greek text was probably due to the presence of local people, who were in the majority in this temple.

Although none of the inscriptions mentions the profession of people from Palmyra, Anath, and Hatra, it is likely that many of them were involved in mercantile activities during the Parthian period.²⁵ The appearance of these strangers around the beginning of the Common Era coincides with a boom in the local economy manifested by the arrival of new inhabitants and a surge of building activity. During the first two centuries of the Common Era, Dura-Europos functioned as the political, administrative, and economic center of a large agricultural and cattle-breeding area on the Middle Euphrates, which extended from the mouth of the Chabur in the north to Anath or Hit in the south.²⁶ The assumption that the three groups were involved in trade is substantiated by the location of their sanctuaries. The oldest Palmyrene temple was founded outside the city walls. It probably was intended as a resting place for animals and their attendants. The location of the two Palmyrene sanctuaries within the city confirms the hypothesis that Palmyrenes had their business here. The Palmyrene temple in Block H1 is located in the proximity of the bazaar. When founded in 28 CE, the temple of Zeus Kyrios-Baalshamin was located in a vacant area. This suggests that the adherents of this god were outsiders who had arrived recently in the town. The same holds true for the sanctuary of another group of newcomers, the people from Anath; Anath was an agricultural center, and it is plausible that people from this village came to Dura-Europos to trade their products.

The history and growth of the Palmyrene community in Dura-Europos accords well with what is known of the development of the Palmyrene caravan trade and the ensuing flourishing of Palmyra.²⁷ The foundation of a temple in 33 BCE substantiates the assumption that Palmyra already had at this time commercial relationships with the east. Around the middle of the second century, the Palmyrene temple in Block H1 was rebuilt and enlarged substantially. This coincides with the zenith of Palmyra's caravan trade. It is unlikely that Dura-Europos was located on the route of the Palmyrene caravans to the east; the caravan trade made extensive use of the Euphrates River. On their way back from southern Mesopotamia, the merchants disem-

barked at Hit, about 300 kilometers south of Dura-Europos, and from there followed their way back home to Palmyra through the desert.²⁸ In all probability, therefore, the Palmyrenes of Dura-Europos were involved in local trade with people from the city and from its agricultural hinterland, such as Anath.

People from Hatra and Anath are unattested in Dura-Europos after 165 CE, during the period in which the Romans ruled the city. The number of Palmyrenes increased dramatically during the last one hundred years of the city's existence. Little is known about the first forty years of Roman occupation. The number of Roman soldiers stationed at Dura-Europos appears to have been small, and life in the city by and large remained the same as in the preceding period. During the second half of the second century, a contingent of Palmyrene archers was stationed at Dura-Europos. Although they belonged to the Roman garrison, they probably were an unofficial unit of the Roman army.²⁹ After 208 CE, large numbers of soldiers were stationed at Dura-Europos. One of the regiments at this time was the *cohors XX Palmyrenorum*. As is clear from its name, this cohort mainly consisted of Palmyrenes, who were famous for their equestrian skills and their expertise with bow and quiver.³⁰

The growth of the Palmyrene community during the Roman period is apparent from the rebuilding and enlargement of existing temples and the foundation of new sanctuaries. In 173 CE, the Palmyrene temple in the necropolis doubled in size, and in the same year an assembly room on Main Street was rebuilt in order to accommodate larger groups.³¹ During the same period, a southern complex was added to the Temple of the Gadde in Block H1, doubling the building in size. In 194 CE, a Palmyrene adorned with paintings the *iwan* (dining room) of his house in Block M7.³² Palmyrenes are first attested in the so-called Temple of the Palmyrene Gods, in the northwest corner of the city, during the Roman period. Durene inhabitants, who had themselves represented in paintings that were found in great quantity in the naos of this temple, had founded the sanctuary around the beginning of the Common Era. When the northern part of the city was converted into a military camp, Palmyrene soldiers joined the civic population that used the temple.³³ Part of another temple in the north part of the town, the so-called temple of Artemis-Azzanathkona, was converted into a military clerical office in which Palmyrene soldiers figured prominently. In 167/168 CE, Palmyrene archers founded a Mithraeum in this part of town.

The growth of the Palmyrene community clearly was connected with the large numbers of Palmyrenes serving in the Roman army. Several finds suggest that not all Palmyrenes who resided in Dura-Europos at this time were soldiers. The extension of the Palmyrene temple in the necropolis as well as of the Temple of the Gadde suggests that soldiers joined the pre-existing Palmyrene community. It is unlikely that the Palmyrene who had his dining room adorned with paintings in 194 CE was a soldier. The location of this house in the domestic area of the town, as well as the civilian character of the paintings, suggest he was a city-dweller.

Migrant Religion in the Parthian Period

Now that we have discussed the social and economic position of the people from Palmyra, Anath, and Hatra, we turn to their religious behavior in their new environment. Since by far the majority of the material pertains to Palmyrenes, their religion will figure prominently in this account. The discussion of the religion

of Palmyrene merchants roughly covers the period from around the beginning of the Common Era until 165 CE, when the city fell into Roman hands. Their religious preferences will be discussed by means of two temples: the temple in the necropolis and the temple in Block H1, in which two reliefs that represent Gadde were recovered.

According to the Palmyrene inscription that commemorates its foundation in 33 BCE, two individuals who identify themselves as members of two different Palmyrene tribes dedicated the temple in the necropolis to the gods Bel and Iarhibol. A second inscription from the temple is in Greek and is dedicated to the god Bel. The third inscription is very long and commemorates the dedication of a second naos apparently by a descendant of one of the original founders of the sanctuary nearly two centuries earlier.³⁴ The material admittedly is scarce; however, when compared to the religious situation in Palmyra and the material that testifies to other Palmyrene expatriates, it turns out to be a rich source of information.

The dedicatory inscription of 33 BCE is one of the oldest Palmyrene inscriptions yet discovered. It reads:

...in the month Sivan of the year 279 [June 33 BCE], Zabdibol. The son of Baýasa, of the Bene Gaddibol and Maliku, the son of Ramu of the Bene Komare made the shrine for Bel and Iarhibol.³⁵

Compared to inscriptions from Palmyra, the text is unique in two respects:³⁶ First, it is the only extant inscription that mentions Bel and Iarhibol together. Second, it is the only inscription in which two members of different tribes jointly dedicate a temple. In Palmyra, religious dedications invariably are made by members of the same tribe. It is even possible to go one step further: in Palmyra a number of temples were built and attended by members of one particular tribe. One of the dedicants of the Durene inscriptions identifies himself as a member of the Komare tribe. This tribe administered a sanctuary dedicated to the gods Aglibol and Malakbel in Palmyra. Outside Palmyra, however, this individual did not dedicate a temple to his ancestral deities but opted instead for Bel and Iarhibol. This is best explained by his dedication of the temple in Dura-Europos with a member of another Palmyrene clan. This must have led them to look beyond their ancestral religion and search for religious common ground; hence, this inscription suggests that the gods Bel and Iarhibol were venerated by the entire Palmyrene community.

Information on Palmyrene religion before the Common Era is very limited but confirms this hypothesis.³⁷ Most of the material was found underneath the present temple of Bel in Palmyra, which was dedicated to Bel, Iarhibol, and Aglibol in 32 CE.³⁸ It follows from the older material that before the present structure was built, a congregation of Palmyrene clans used the place for the worship of their family gods, headed by the god Bel. So Bel was the supreme god of this temple but by no means the only god worshipped here. This explains why Palmyrene inscriptions refer to the place as the “house of their gods.”³⁹ Later inscriptions show that the cult of particular deities was confined to certain families, and it seems reasonable to suppose the same holds true for the early period.

One of the gods associated with Bel in his sanctuary was Iarhibol. Inscriptions suggest this god was connected closely with Bel and his priests. In all likelihood, Iarhibol’s eminent position results from his function as the protective deity of the Efca, the spring and source of life for Palmyra.⁴⁰ As a deity of the spring, the

entire Palmyrene community worshipped Iarhibol. The administration of his temple likely was unconfined to one particular tribe. So both Bel and Iarhibol were the tutelary deities of two important sanctuaries at Palmyra. Their cult transcended the social divisions of the oasis and touched upon the community as a whole. The religious organization in Palmyra therefore explains the choice of the two Palmyrenes in Dura-Europos. They preferred Bel and Iarhibol to their family gods, because their sanctuary was unrestricted to one particular tribe or group: it was open to all Palmyrenes who happened to visit Dura-Europos.

The best explanation for such communal undertakings is the Palmyrenes' position as merchants: Inscriptions from Palmyra show that the caravan trade cut across the genealogical boundaries in the city and was a major incentive for the political unification of the clans. Merchants maintain close contacts with their city of origin; hence, it is to be expected that their religious preferences will follow the religious developments in their hometown. The other inscriptions from the temple in the necropolis do indeed show this to be the case. In these texts from a later date, Bel is mentioned alone or with Iarhibol and Aglibol. This mirrors the religious development in Palmyra.

In 32 CE, the main temple in Palmyra was re-dedicated to Bel, Iarhibol, and Aglibol. In this constellation, known as the Triad of Bel, Bel is the main deity with Iarhibol and Aglibol as his attendants or acolytes. On representations, Bel is depicted in the center, flanked by Iarhibol in the most prominent position on his right and Aglibol on his left. As the sun and the moon, they symbolize Bel's cosmic supremacy. That Aglibol is yet unmentioned in the inscription from Dura-Europos dating from 33 BCE, suggests the triad did not exist at this time and that the constellation was formed when the new temple of Bel was built. This innovation testifies to religious centralization in Palmyra. The new temple of Bel centred on the cult of the communal deities Bel, Iarhibol, and Aglibol, whereas tribal deities were now excluded from the city temple and confined to their own sanctuaries in the city. The organization of the temple in the necropolis of Dura-Europos followed this development, for Bel became its only beneficiary in the Common Era.

The city gods of Palmyra were popular particularly among Palmyrene merchants abroad. The triad of Bel was well-liked in remote places, such as Rome and the island of Cos.⁴¹ The religious behavior of Palmyrene merchants in Dura-Europos therefore tallies with their preferences elsewhere. It is exactly the kind of behavior one would expect among small groups of merchants who live in close contact with their city of origin. Parallels are to be found among Assyrian traders travelling between their homeland and their trading colony in Karum Kanish during the second millennium BCE and among the merchants from Tyre in Carthage during the sixth century BCE.⁴²

Opting for a communal religious identity does not exclude the possibility that homage was likewise paid to the gods of the new environment. The two can exist side by side, as is shown by two reliefs found in another Palmyrene temple, the Temple of the Gadde. This temple takes its name from the two reliefs representing the Gad of Dura and the Gad of Tadmor that were placed originally in the naos or cult niche of this temple.⁴³ Gad is the Aramaic name for a protective deity (Greek Tyche or Roman Fortuna).⁴⁴ It follows from the Palmyrene stone and typical Palmyrene style that both were fabricated in Palmyra. According to the Aramaic inscription on the plinth, the same individual dedicated both reliefs in 159 CE.

The first relief depicts the dedicant, Hairan the son of Maliku the son of Nasor, offering incense before the Gad of Palmyra, the tutelary deity of the oasis (fig. 12.2). The dedicant wears a *modius* headdress surrounded by a wreath that is typical of Palmyrene priests.⁴⁵ Inscriptional evidence from Palmyra suggests that

the Gad of Tadmor was actually the goddess Astarte, who functioned as Bel's companion in the temple of Bel, the city temple of Palmyra.⁴⁶ It is obvious, therefore, that this relief has a municipal significance.

The same holds true for its counterpart on which the same dedicant is represented sacrificing before the Gad of Dura (pl. 1). The deity in this case is not a Palmyrene god but rather the Greek god Zeus, who is shown enthroned between two eagles. Zeus was the principal god of Dura-Europos and was worshipped here as Zeus Megistos, the greatest Zeus.⁴⁷ The figure standing to his left may be identified as Seleucos Nicator, the founder of the Seleucid dynasty and, allegedly, Dura-Europos. This act clearly testifies to Palmyrene immigrants' respect for the major cult in their new residence. A significant piece of information is that the dedicant wears the headdress typical of Palmyrene priests. It is clear, therefore, that he honored the main cult in his new residence, but as Palmyrene. Simultaneously, he remained loyal to the city goddess of Palmyra; hence, the Palmyrenes in Dura-Europos committed themselves to the religion of their new surroundings while preserving their indigenous religious identity.

From a cultural point of view, Palmyrenes turn out to be surprisingly chauvinistic. The two reliefs that represent the Gadde (fig. 12.2, pl. 1) and the relief of Nemesis (pl. 4) show that it was common for Palmyrenes to import votive reliefs from their native city. This may be due to the quality of Palmyrene sculpture, which far surpasses sculpture from local Durene workshops.⁴⁸ The available evidence suggests that during the first century CE, several Durene workshops worked in the Palmyrene tradition. The reliefs representing Zeus Kyrios-Baalshamin (pl. 42), Tyche with doves (pl. 44), and the god Aphlad (fig. 12.1), represent this local style under Palmyrene influence. In the later period, however, local sculptures invariably were made in a crude style influenced little by Palmyra. The reliefs of Atargatis and Hadad (pl. 43), Arsua riding a camel (pl. 46), the three Herakles sculptures (pls. 47, 48, 68), and the giant male head of a former cult statue (pl. 41), all display this crude local style.

In contrast to the sculpture that was influenced by Palmyra, the religious architecture of Palmyrene sanctuaries in Dura-Europos by and large accords with the temples of other religious groups in Dura-Europos and differs from the monumental Greco-Roman architecture of the most important temples in Palmyra. This is not due necessarily to Durene influences. It is possible that in addition to the monumental Romanized temples, Palmyra once possessed small sanctuaries similar to the Durene temples. The simple sanctuaries found in the Palmyrène (Palmyra's hinterland) suggest there was more to Palmyrene architecture than has come down to us.

Like the Palmyrenes, immigrants from Anath remained faithful to their own religious traditions and paid respect to their new environment. In addition to the dedication of the *andron* to the god Aphlad, the cult relief of the religious association was found in this room. It depicts a god clad in Hellenistic cuirass standing on two griffins (fig. 12.1). The dedicatory inscription on the relief refers to the image as the ἀφείδρυσς of Aphlad (the god of the village of Anath).⁴⁹ The latter specification characterizes Aphlad as the tutelary deity of this village. Louis Robert points out that the word ἀφείδρυσς implies that they copied the original cult image of their god in the relief.⁵⁰ The dedicatory inscription of the *andron*, dated to 54 CE, mentions eleven individuals belonging to six different families.⁵¹ The social and religious identity of this group hence was based on their common origin rather than family ties. It is clear that their religious differentiation by no means undermined their loyalty to the political authorities of their new residence; on the contrary, the *andron* was dedicated to the well-being of the *strategos* of Dura-Europos. Religious differentiation apparently

caused no problems as long as one paid homage to the local authorities.

The dedicant from Hatra, too, remains faithful to the god of his city. Throughout the first three centuries of the Common Era, Hatra was sacred to the god Shamash (the sun god).⁵² In addition to the sun god, several other deities were worshipped in Hatra, but again, it is the god of the city that is chosen as the divine recipient abroad.

The Religion of Palmyrene Soldiers

Palmyrene soldiers were stationed not only in Dura-Europos but also all over the Roman Empire: in Africa, Asia Minor, Rome, and Britain. The religious preferences of Palmyrene soldiers stationed in Dura-Europos by and large correspond to their behavior elsewhere.⁵³ Compared to other military camps, the situation in Dura-Europos was slightly more complex. This is partly due to Dura-Europos yielding the greatest number of military records found to date. It also results from the long history of Palmyrenes in the city and the interaction between the long established mercantile community and the new military. Evidence from the Temple of the Gadde and the temple in the necropolis suggests that Palmyrene soldiers joined the existing Palmyrene groups; unfortunately, it sometimes is impossible to distinguish the two. As elsewhere, the Palmyrene soldiers adopted facets of the religion of the army and simultaneously held on to their individual religious preferences and indigenous traditions. Material from Dura-Europos amply illustrates that these two aspects of religious practice coexisted peacefully.

The *Feriale Duranum* (the religious calendar of the *cohors XX Palmyrenorum*) provides one of the best examples of the adoption of official religious practices by a foreign regiment. This document, which dates from the reign of Severus Alexander around 223/227 CE, allows us to reconstruct the soldiers' entire religious year.⁵⁴ Although it is a festival calendar of a foreign unit, the *Feriale* mentions no gods from the locality of Dura-Europos or Palmyra; it lists only army festivals, Roman gods of public festivals, the cults of the reigning emperor (*divi*), and imperial women. These religious observances are mostly the same as those in Rome itself. Most scholars consequently assume that copies identical to the *Feriale* from Dura-Europos were used all over the Roman Empire. As such, this calendar contributed to the Romanization and unification of the army.

In addition to participating in the official religion of the Roman army, Palmyrene soldiers worshipped gods who were never adopted officially by Rome but enjoyed great popularity among soldiers. The cult of Mithras is proverbial here. In 168/169 CE, Palmyrene archers founded a Mithraeum in the northern part of the city.⁵⁵ They probably first encountered the cult when they were stationed elsewhere on the Roman frontier, probably in Dacia or Moesia. At the beginning of the third century CE, the Palmyrene archers were joined by members of other Roman troops. The cult clearly had a supraethnic, panimperial basis. In Dura-Europos, as elsewhere in the Roman Empire, the devotees of Mithras were a brotherhood of men who mainly shared the same profession.

Both the ground plan of the shrine and the iconography of the two cult reliefs resemble monuments of the cult attested elsewhere in the Roman Empire. At the back wall of the sanctuary, two stelae representing Mithras killing the bull were found inserted. The small relief bears a Palmyrene dedicatory inscription dated

to 168/169 CE. Only two years later, a certain Zenobios, commander of the Palmyrene archers, dedicated a second tauroctony relief (fig. 12.3). In the two reliefs, the god is represented in his habitual pose. With one knee, he leans on the bull's back, pulls back the head of the animal with his left hand, and plunges a dagger into its throat with his right hand. We also see the usual attendants: the raven, dog, snake, sun, and moon. The latter relief does have one unusual feature: on the right-hand side, the dedicant of the relief and several other figures are represented. It seems likely that they are members of the cult association. The custom of depicting the dedicant alongside a deity in a relief or painting is widespread in Palmyra and Dura-Europos. Depicted here with fellow members of the association rather than his family, the dedicant deviates from local custom and is typical of the organization of the Roman cult, in which family ties were unimportant;

hence, a local iconographic motif is being adapted and reinterpreted in the light of a foreign cult.

Palmyrene soldiers thus embraced religious practices widespread in the Roman army, but this did not preclude the continuation of local religious traditions. All over the Roman Empire, Palmyrene soldiers showed a preference for two typical Palmyrene deities: the gods Iarhibol and Malakbel.⁵⁶ This also holds true for Palmyrene soldiers stationed in Dura-Europos, amongst whom Iarhibol was particularly popular. Whereas Palmyrene merchants in Dura-Europos favored the city god Bel and his associates, soldiers opt for Iarhibol. In order to explain this shift, the role of Iarhibol in Palmyra will be first discussed.

Iarhibol's role in Palmyra was twofold.⁵⁷ First, he was worshipped as the tutelary deity of the Efca, the city's spring. As far as one can tell from the available evidence, this cult was not confined to a particular tribe, and touched upon the community as a whole. Second, Iarhibol was associated with Bel in the city temple. Whenever associated with Bel, he is depicted

as a sun-god. He owes his prominent position next to Bel to his role as tutelary deity of the Efca. Whether the god of the Efca was a sun-god as well is not known. There are no representations of this god from Palmyra: the only representation discovered thus far was dedicated by Palmyrene archers in Dura-Europos (fig. 12.4). It is unusual that this deity not only has a nimbus but also a crescent behind his shoulders. Be that as it may, the relief from Dura-Europos shows that the god, who was popular among the military, was first and foremost the god of the Efca and not the god worshipped as an acolyte of Bel.

The popularity of Iarhibol amongst soldiers is explained only partially by the situation in Palmyra. The emphasis on his solar aspect when worshipped in a military context has no counterpart in Palmyrene religion. On the other hand, there is evidence of the growing importance of a variety of solar deities within the Roman army from the second century CE onward. In all likelihood, this general tendency contributed to



Figure 12.3: Cult relief of Mithras slaying the bull (tauroctony), Mithraeum, ca. 170–171 CE. Limestone, 76 × 106 cm. Dura-Europos, Mithraeum, ca. 170–171 CE. Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos, 1935.98



Figure 12.4: Relief of Iarhibol, Temple of the Gadde, naos, ca. early 3rd century CE. Limestone, 54.5 × 25.0 cm. Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos, 1938.5301

clerical office yielded a third-century ink drawing of a military god identified by the accompanying inscription as the Palmyrene god Iarhibol (fig. 12.5).⁶¹ The sacrificant on the left-hand side wears the usual uniform of a Roman officer: a long-sleeved tunic with fringes, a *chlamys*, and boots. He is strikingly similar to the figure of Julius Terentius in the painting. A second sacrificant, on the right-hand side of the drawing, is identified by the accompanying inscription as a standard bearer. The second example is a small altar that a tribune dedicated to Iarhibol in the temple of the Palmyrene gods in the third century CE (pl. 38).⁶²

the solarization of Iarhibol abroad. Initially, however, the choice was due to other motives. In the case of Iarhibol, the choice is at least partly explained by his function as a municipal deity at the Efca.⁵⁸ It is clear, however, that the later stress on his solar aspect is to be understood in light of the Roman army.

The prominent position of Iarhibol among Palmyrene soldiers in Dura-Europos is exemplified most clearly in a painting from the pronaos of the so-called Temple of the Palmyrene Gods, which depicts the tribune Julius Terentius and his men performing a sacrifice to three statues of Palmyrene deities (pl. 37).⁵⁹ A Greek funeral inscription found in one of the domestic buildings states that Julius Terentius was tribune of the *cohors XX Palmyrenorum* and fell in battle in 239 CE.⁶⁰ It seems likely that the painting was made before the tribune's death in the fourth decade of the third century. In the painting, Iarhibol is represented in the center, with Aglibol to his right and Arsu to his left; hence, Iarhibol has taken the prominent position previously taken by Bel.

Scholars have been puzzled that the sacrifice in the painting of Julius Terentius is performed by a high-ranking Roman officer and attended by a Roman cohort and its standard bearer. The *Feriale* of the *cohors XX Palmyrenorum* suggests that local gods were worshipped only privately in the army. The painting of Julius Terentius shows that the calendar recognized only some of the religions practiced by the enlisted soldiers. The theory that local deities were officially worshipped in the Roman army is substantiated by two more instances of high-officers and standard bearers paying homage to Palmyrene deities inside the camp. One of the rooms

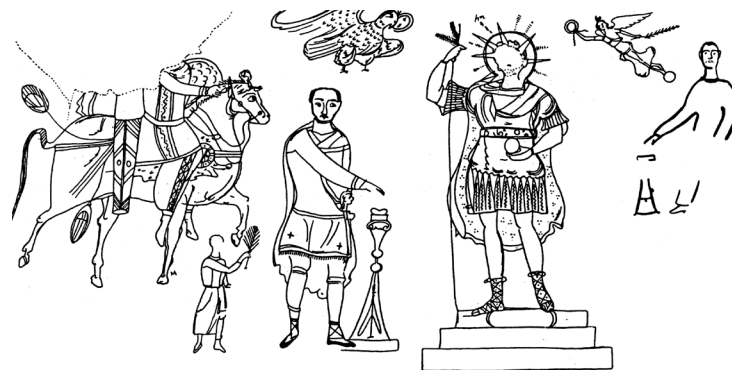


Figure 12.5: Tracing of drawing of Iarhibol, Temple of the Gadde, naos, ca. 256 CE. Ink on limestone, 54.5 × 25.0 cm. Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos, 1932.1208. After *Prelim. Rep.* V, pl. XXXVI.3

It does not follow from Iarhibol's popularity among soldiers that his cult replaced that of Bel in Dura-Europos. Contemporary with the sacrifice of Julius Terentius is the so-called Otes fresco that was found in one of the assembly rooms in the same temple.⁶³ It pictures a certain Otes, the founder of the room, with the *bouleutès* (councilor) Iabsumsos, sacrificing before five Palmyrene gods. Iabsumsos was a member of the city council, which was only installed in Dura-Europos in the third century CE. Clearly, both Otes and Iabsumsos were civilians. This accords well with the painting, where Bel occupies his traditional central position. In the religion of non-soldiers, therefore, Bel preserved his eminent position. Iarhibol's precedence over Bel is characteristic of the religion of Palmyrene soldiers.

The importance of solar deities in the army probably explains the presence of the bust of the sun god in the relief bearing a Greek-Palmyrene dedicatory inscription that represents a certain Julius Aurelius Malochas, the son of Soudaios the Palmyrene, performing a sacrifice for the goddess Nemesis (pl. 4). The relief was made in Palmyra and is dated to 244 CE.⁶⁴ Although the dedicant does not wear military clothing, it is probable that he was somehow connected to the Roman army. His name is common among Palmyrene soldiers stationed in Dura-Europos and the relief was found at the main gate, an area where the majority of the monuments can be ascribed to soldiers. The iconography of Nemesis follows her usual Greco-Roman iconography. The goddess is clad in a long chiton and an himation, which covers her head and upper body. With the now missing right hand, she pulled away her garment such as to expose her breast in order to spit on it; an apotropaic gesture frequently found in representations of Nemesis. Above her shoulder are traces of a narrow rectangular object; probably a rod or rudder which the goddess originally held in her left hand. On the ground to her left, a small griffin is depicted standing in profile. Its forepaws rest on a wheel. Contrary to her usual representation in the Greco-Roman world, however, the goddess is associated in this relief with a sun god. This novelty is probably the effect of the cult of Nemesis in Palmyra. In Palmyra, Nemesis was most likely identified with the Arab goddess Allat. Allat was worshipped in her sanctuary with the Arab sun-god Shamash. The popularity of solar deities among the military probably enforced this Palmyrene association of Nemesis-Allat with the sun god and resulted in the presence of the sun god in the Durene relief.

Summary and Conclusion

We conclude from the above that Palmyra did not exercise a profound influence on the religion of Dura-Europos. It is true that Palmyrene deities figure prominently in the written records from the city; but as far as we can tell, their cult largely is confined to people from Palmyra and was seldom adopted by Dura's local population. A comparison between the religion of Palmyrene merchants and Palmyrene soldiers shows that the religious preferences of these two groups differed. It is apparent, therefore, that social circumstances to a large extent determined the religion of Palmyrene expatriates. Neither the religion of the tradesmen nor that of the soldiers simply copies the religion in Palmyra.

In the case of merchants, tribal religion becomes far less important outside Palmyra. Their choice of Bel testifies to their search for a communal religious identity. Immigrants from Anath and Hatra also opted for their communal deities outside their native city. At the same time, we should bear in mind the possibility that foreign visitors paid homage to the gods of their new environment. It is clear from the respect that the

Palmyrenes paid to the Gad of Dura that this was indeed the case. It is likely that this close co-operation drew individual Palmyrene merchants and other strangers to join local cult groups as well. Precisely because they became integrated into their new surroundings, such instances are bound to escape our notice. Palmyrenes may well have participated in the cults of Zeus Kyrios-Baalshamin and Aphlad, but this must remain hypothetical. One should be wary of overemphasizing the religious conservatism of Palmyrene merchants, since the nature of the sources may distort our reconstruction.

The religion of Palmyrene soldiers is more noticeably influenced by their new setting. The reason for this is twofold: First, soldiers maintained much less contact with their native cities. Second, the Roman army actively promoted solidarity and a communal identity. As a consequence, Palmyrene soldiers tended to assimilate to their new surroundings. They either accepted the religion of the army or modified local religious traditions according to the fashions of their new environment.

Notes

The present article is largely based on my doctoral thesis that was completed in 1999 and was published in the same year by Brill in Leiden as *The Palmyrenes of Dura-Europos: a Study of Religious Interaction in Roman Syria*. In preparing this thesis, I had the immense pleasure to work in the Dura archive of the Yale University Art Gallery for over a month in 1993. I have fond memories of these days, and I am particularly grateful to Dr. Susan Matheson for all her assistance and patience during my stay and in the years that followed. It is with great pleasure that I now present YUAG with the results of my research from those days.

- 1 For an indispensable discussion of the architecture of these shrines, with references to previous publications, see Susan B. Downey, *Mesopotamian Religious Architecture. Alexander through the Parthians* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 76–124. It should be stressed that the names conventionally given to these buildings do not necessarily refer to the tutelary deity of the sanctuary. For this reason, I refer to these names as “so-called.”
- 2 The study of religious life in Dura is still in its infancy. A fifteen-page article by C. Bradford Welles, published in 1969, is still the most complete overview of the religious history of Dura: C. Bradford Welles, “The Gods of Dura-Europos,” in *Beiträge zur alten Geschichte und deren Nachleben: Festschrift für Franz Altheim zum 6.10.1968*, ed. Ruth Altheim-Stiehl and Hans Erich Stier (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1969), 50–65. The present author has published a book on the religion of the Palmyrene community of Dura-Europos and an article on the presumed competition between the various cults in the city: Dirven, *Palmyrenes*; Lucinda Dirven, “Religious Competition and the Decoration of Sanctuaries: the Case of Dura Europos,” *Eastern Christian Art* 1 (2004): 1–20. At present, Ted Kaizer is working on a monograph on religious life in Dura. He has published several articles on the subject: Ted Kaizer, “Patterns of Worship in Dura-Europos: a Case-study of Religious Life in the Classical Levant Outside the Main Centres,” in *Les religions orientales dans le monde Grec et Romain: Cent ans après Cumont (1906–2006)*, ed. Christine Bonnet, Vivienne Pirenne-Delforge, and Danny Praet (Brussels: Belgisch Historisch Instituut te Rome, 2009), 153–71; Ted Kaizer, “Religion and Language in Dura-Europos,” in *From Hellenism to Islam: Cultural and Linguistic Change in the Roman Near East*, ed. Hannah M. Cotton, Robert G. Hoyland, and Jonathan J. Price (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 235–53.
- 3 On the population of Dura, see C. Bradford Welles, “The Population of Roman Dura,” in *Studies in Roman Economic and Social History in Honor of Allan Chester Johnson*, ed. Paul R. Coleman-Norton (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1951), 251–74.
- 4 On Palmyra and the caravan trade, see Gary K. Young, *Rome’s Eastern Trade. International Commerce and Imperial Policy 31 BC–AD 305* (London: Routledge, 2001), 136–86.
- 5 Carl H. Kraeling, *The Synagogue. The Excavations at Dura-Europos Conducted by Yale University and the French Academy of Inscriptions and Letters, Final Report 8, Part 1*, ed. Alfred R. Bellinger et al. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1956); George D. Kilpatrick, “Dura-Europos: the Parchments and Papyri,” *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* 5 (1964): 215–25, esp. 219–20; and Richard N. Frye, ed., *The Parthian and Middle Persian Inscriptions of Dura-Europos* (London: Lund, Humphries, 1968).
- 6 Carl H. Kraeling, *The Christian Building. The Excavations at Dura-Europos Conducted by Yale University and the French Academy of Inscriptions and Letters, Final Report 8, Part 2*, ed. C. Bradford Welles (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967). On the importance of the kind

- of Christianity in Dura for the interpretation of the paintings, see Lucinda Dirven, "Paradise Lost, Paradise Regained: the Meaning of Adam and Eve in the Baptistry of Dura-Europos," *Eastern Christian Art* 5 (2008): 43–57.
- 7 Admittedly, these factors do not guarantee the origin of a particular individual or group; however, the more of the above mentioned elements concur, the more likely the postulated origin becomes.
- 8 *Prelim. Rep. II*, 90–91, fig. 3.
- 9 On the cult of Iarhibol, compare below, note 57.
- 10 Dirven, *Palmyrenes*, for an extensive discussion of the Palmyrene material found in Dura-Europos.
- 11 Lucinda Dirven, "The Palmyrene Diaspora in East and West: a Syrian Community in the Diaspora in the Roman Period," in *Strangers and Sojourners. Religious Communities in the Diaspora*, ed. Gerrie ter Haar (Leuven: Peeters, 1998), 77–94.
- 12 Below, note 16.
- 13 Roberto Bertolino, "Les inscriptions Hatréennes de Doura-Europos: Étude épigraphique," in *Doura-Europos Études IV, 1991–1993*, ed. Pierre Leriche and Mathilde Gelin (Beirut: Institut Français d'archéologie du Proche-Orient, 1997), 199–206.
- 14 *Prelim. Rep. V*, 112, no. 416.
- 15 In a previous publication, Dirven, *Palmyrenes*, 5, n17, I have argued that the community consisted exclusively of people from Anath, cf. also Klaas Dijkstra, *Life and Loyalty: a Study in the Socio-religious Culture of Syria and Mesopotamia in the Graeco-Roman Period Based on Epigraphic Evidence* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 265–66. In his review of my book in *Topoi* 10, no. 2 (2000): 517–26, Jean-Baptiste Yon rightly questions this assumption, arguing that several of the names are also attested in Palmyra. Ted Kaizer, "Religion and Language," 162–63, argues that the description of the origin of the god proves he was not worshipped only by people from Anath, since they knew where the god came from. In my view, the stress on the god's origin functions as an identity marker for the group from Anath. This formulation is well known in the Roman Near East and it does not follow from this that people from other places worshipped the god as well.
- 16 On the clientele of the temple of Zeus Kyrios-Baalshamin, see Dirven, *Palmyrenes*, 115–17.
- 17 *Prelim. Rep. VII–VIII*, 307–9, no. 915 b–c (Dirven, *Palmyrenes*, 212–18). For a bilingual Greek-Palmyrene inscription dated to the Roman period, see below, note 64. In this case, the dedicant's role in the army probably explains his use of Greek: Dirven, *Palmyrenes*, 327–31, pl. XVI.
- 18 On the relationship between Greek and Palmyrene in inscriptions from Palmyra, see Jean Cantineau, *Grammaire du Palmyrénien épigraphique* (Cairo: Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, 1935), 5.
- 19 For a historical outline of the cult of Baalshamin, see Wolfgang Röllig, "Baal-Shamem," in *Dictionary and Deities and Demons in the Bible*, ed. Karel Van der Toorn, Bob Becking, and Pieter W. van der Horst, 2nd ed. (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 149–51.
- 20 Susan B. Downey, *The Stone and Plaster Sculpture: the Excavations of Dura-Europos. Final Report 3, Part 1, Fascicle 2* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1977), 239–42. Dirven, *Palmyrenes*, 211–12, pl. II.
- 21 Bertolino, "Étude épigraphique," 199–206.

- 22 Lucian describes the statues in *De Dea Syria* pars. 30–33. Cf. Lucian of Samosata, *Lucian: on the Syrian Goddess*, ed. and trans., Jane L. Lightfoot (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 269–71.
- 23 From the so-called fifth shrine in Hatra comes a statue that tallies with Macrobius' description of the cult statue of the god Apollo-Nabu in Hierapolis: Lucian, 460–61.
- 24 Above, note 15. In addition to this text, three Hatraean graffiti were found in Dura. It follows that the group of people from Hatra who settled in Dura or visited the city was probably small. The bilingual inscription was found buried in a cistern in the court of the temple: Pierre Leriche and Roberto Bertolino, "Les inscriptions hatréennes de Doura-Europos: le Context archéologique et historique," in *Doura-Europos Études IV*, 1991–1993, ed. Pierre Leriche and Mathilde Gelin (Beirut: Institut Français d'archéologie du Proche-Orient, 1997), 210–12. It may be inferred from the remains of the temple façade found together with the inscription in the temple, that it predates the earthquake of 160 CE.
- 25 Jean-Baptiste Yon, in his review of my book on the Palmyrenes of Dura-Europos in *Topoi* 10, no. 2 (2000): 524–25, rejects the mercantile activities of the Palmyrenes, arguing that there is no firm proof. In my view, the circumstantial evidence listed above does suggest this was the case for at least a significant part of this community.
- 26 Fergus Millar, *The Roman Near East, 31 B.C.–A.D. 337* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 447–48. See now also Jean-Baptiste Yon, "Commerçants et petits commerçants sur les bords de l'Euphrate," in *Productions et échanges dans la Syrie grecque et romaine: Actes du colloque de Tours, Juin 2003*, ed. Maurice Sartre (Paris: De Boccard, 2007), 413–28.
- 27 On the Palmyrene caravan trade, see Dirven, *Palmyrenes*, 19–22, with references for further reading.
- 28 On Palmyra's economic relations with Dura, see Dirven, *Palmyrenes*, 34–40. On the route of the Palmyrene caravans and the role of the Euphrates River, see Michael Gawlikowski, "La commerce de Palmyre sur terre et sur eau," in *L'Arabie et ses mers bordières, I: Iténaires et voisinages. Séminaire de recherche 1985–1986*, ed. Jean-François Salles, Travaux de la Maison de l'Orient 16 (Paris: De Boccard, 1988): 163–72. On the marginal role of the caravan trade in Dura-Europos, see now Kai Rufing, "Dura-Europos und seine Rolle im Fernhandel der Römischen Kaiserzeit," in *Interkulturalität in der Alten Welt. Vorderasien, Hellas, Ägypten und die vielfältigen Ebenen des Kontakts*, ed. Robert Rollinger, Birgot Gugler, Martin Lang, and Irene Madreiter (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2010), 151–60.
- 29 In the past, it was frequently suggested that Palmyrenes had already been stationed in Dura-Europos during the Parthian period, charged with the protection of the caravans. This is unlikely. First, because Dura-Europos never was an important post on the route of the Palmyrene caravans (cf. the previous note) and second, because Palmyra was a Roman city at this time; it is extremely unlikely that the Parthians would have allowed a militia from a hostile city to settle in Dura-Europos. For further references, see Dirven, *Palmyrenes*, 34n133.
- 30 On the *cohors XX Palmyrenorum* in general, see David L. Kennedy, "The *cohors XX Palmyrenorum* at Dura Europos," in *The Roman and Byzantine Army in the East*, ed. Edward Dabrowa (Krakow: Universite Jagellane, 1994), 89–98.
- 31 *Prelim. Rep. VII/VIII*, 320, no. 917 (= Dirven, *Palmyrenes*, 210).

- 32 *Prelim. Rep. VI*, 167–69 (= Dirven, *Palmyrenes*, 281–93).
- 33 For a summary of the history of this temple and references for further reading, see Dirven, *Palmyrenes*, 293–95.
- 34 *Prelim. Rep. VII/VIII*, 319–22, nos. 916–18. Dirven, *Palmyrenes*, 199–207.
- 35 Delbert R. Hillers and Eleonara Cussini, *Palmyrene Aramaic Texts* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), no. 1067.
- 36 See the extensive discussion of this inscription and its implications for the reconstruction of religion in Palmyra in Dirven, *Palmyrenes*, 41–66.
- 37 On religion in Palmyra, see recently Ted Kaizer, *The Religious Life of Palmyra* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2002).
- 38 Hillers and Cussini, no. 1347 (45 CE).
- 39 *Ibid.*, nos. 1353 and 0269.
- 40 Dirven, *Palmyrenes*, 47–51.
- 41 Dirven, “The Palmyrene Diaspora,” 88. On the Palmyrene community in Rome, see Eugenia Equini-Schneider, “Il santuario di Bel e delle divinità di Palmira: comunità e tradizioni religiose dei palmireni a Roma,” *Dialoghi di Archeologia* 5, no. 1 (1987): 69–85.
- 42 Karel van der Toorn, *Family Religion in Babylonia, Syria and Israel: Continuity and Change in the Forms of Religious Life* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 72–74.
- 43 The two Gadde were not the main deities worshipped in this temple. In the naos, the remains of another, larger cult relief were found that probably represented the tutelary deity of the temple.
- 44 Ted Kaizer, “De Dea Syria et aliis diis deabusque: a Study of the Variety of Appearances of Gad in Aramaic Inscriptions and on Sculptures from the Near East in the First Three Centuries CE (Part 1),” *Orientalia lovaniensia Periodica* 28 (1997): 147–66; and Kaizer, “De Dea Syria et aliis diis deabusque. A Study of the Variety of Appearances of Gad in Aramaic Inscriptions and on Sculptures from the Near East in the First Three Centuries AD (Part 2),” *Orientalia lovaniensia Periodica* 29 (1998): 33–62.
- 45 Rolf Stucky, “Prêtres syrien I. Palmyre,” *Syria* 50 (1973): 163–80, esp. 176.
- 46 Dirven, *Palmyrenes*, 70–71, 109–10.
- 47 Dirven, *Palmyrenes*, 111–13.
- 48 For a stylistic analysis of Durene sculpture, see Downey, *The Stone and Plaster Sculpture*, 227–76.
- 49 *Prelim. Rep. V*, 112–13, no. 416.
- 50 *Prelim. Rep. V*, 106f and pl. XIII; and Louis Robert, *Hellenica: Recueil d'épigraphie de numismatique et d'antiquités grecques, d'Aphrodisias à la Lycaonie, compte rendu du volume VIII des Monuments Asiae Minoris Antiqua* (Paris: Adrien-Maisonneuve, 1965), 13:120 with note 4.
- 51 Above, note 14.
- 52 On Hatra as a city sacred to Shamash, see Lucinda Dirven, “Hatra: a ‘Pre-Islamic Mecca’ in the Eastern Jazirah,” *ARAM* 18–19 (2006–7): 363–80. On the religious organisation of Hatra, see Ted Kaizer, “Some Remarks on the Religious Life of Hatra,” *Topoi* 10 (2000): 229–52.

- 53 A comprehensive study dealing with the religious behavior of Palmyrene troops has not been published to date. For an overview and references for further reading, see Dirven, *Palmyrenes*, 181–83.
- 54 On the *Feriale*, see C. Bradford Welles, Robert O. Fink, and J. Frank Gilliam, eds., *The Parchments and Papyri. The Excavations at Dura-Europos Conducted by Yale University and the French Academy of Inscriptions and Letters. Final Report Volume 5, Part 1* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959), no. 54; Robert O. Fink, *Roman Military Records on Papyrus* (Cleveland: Press of Case Western Reserve for The American Philological Association, 1971), no. 117; and, most recently, M. Barbara Reeves, “The ‘Feriale Duranum,’ Roman Military Religion and Dura-Europos: a Reassessment” (Ph.D. diss., State University of New York at Buffalo, University Microfilms International, 2005). The latter study argues that the calendar was a local document that was not used by the entire Roman army. The arguments failed to convince the present author.
- 55 *Prelim. Rep. VII/VIII*, 112ff.; Franz Cumont, “The Dura Mithraeum,” in *Mithraic Studies. Proceedings of the First International Congress of Mithraic Studies*, ed. John R. Hinnells (Manchester: Edinburgh University Press, 1975), 1:151–214; and Dirven, *Palmyrenes*, 260–72, for a description of the monuments from the early Mithraeum and references for further reading.
- 56 Dirven, *Palmyrenes*, 157–89.
- 57 On the cult of Iarhibol in Palmyra, see Dirven, *Palmyrenes*, 47–57, with references for further reading.
- 58 The popularity of Malakbel, the second Palmyrene god who was much worshipped by the military, is far more difficult to explain. Whereas Iarhibol was an important god at the Efca and functioned as the attendant of Bel in the city temple, Malakbel seems to have been relatively unimportant. In Palmyra, Malakbel seldom figures alone and is frequently inferior to his associates. For the military, Malakbel is first and foremost a solar deity; in Palmyra, however, his solar aspect is of secondary importance. Thus compared to the Palmyrene evidence, we also note a shift in Malakbel’s personality abroad.
- 59 The identity of the three figures on the pedestal has been the subject of a lively debate. For an overview of this discussion and the arguments in favor of their identification as gods, see Lucinda Dirven, “The Julius Terentius Fresco and the Roman Imperial Cult,” *Mediterraneo Antico* 10, nos. 1–2 (2007) [2010]: 1–13.
- 60 *Prelim. Rep. IX*, 1, 176–85.
- 61 *Prelim. Rep. V*, 153–56. Dirven, *Palmyrenes*, 316–18, with references for further reading.
- 62 *Prelim. Rep. II*, 90–91, fig. 3 (Dirven, *Palmyrenes*, 314n58).
- 63 Franz Cumont, *Fouilles de Doura-Europos* (Paris: Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geunther, 1926), 122–34, fig. 26, pls. LV–LVIII (Dirven, *Palmyrenes*, 295–302, pl. XII, with references for further reading). Unfortunately, this painting is no longer extant.
- 64 Following the collated reading proposed by Hillers and Cussini, no. 1078. Cf. Dirven, *Palmyrenes*, 327–31, pl. XVI.

MAURA K. HEYN

THE TERENTIUS FRIEZE IN CONTEXT

As the sun set on James Henry Breasted's single day of field work at Dura-Europos in 1920, he and his team stood in front of the north wall of the pronaos of the Temple of the Palmyrene Gods. Although paintings covered the entire extant wall, they had only one film plate left and chose to photograph the painting of Julius Terentius with his troops, on the right hand side of the wall (pl. 37).¹ When Franz Cumont returned in the season of 1922 through 1923, he re-exposed the decoration on the north wall, took pictures, made illustrations, and noted graffiti.² Cumont also had a protective wall built in front of the paintings.³ This wall was dismantled eight years later, when most of the paintings adorning the temple were removed and transported to the National Museum in Damascus and the Yale University Art Gallery.⁴ Although scholars who work at Dura-Europos know when the paintings were removed and, generally, where they went, the current location of the remainder of the north wall of the pronaos is a mystery. In his description of the removal process, field director Maurice Pillet mentions only three in particular: the painting of Terentius; the painting of Lysias, Apollodorus, and Zenodotus on the south wall of the pronaos; and the painting of Conon and his family on the south wall of the naos.⁵ It is certain, however, that other paintings were removed and transported that day, for the mythological scene on the east wall of the pronaos went to Yale along with the Terentius painting.⁶ The remainder of the north wall has not resurfaced and its disappearance has contributed to the trend that began on that fateful day in 1920, with the painting of Terentius and his troops being studied as an independent tableau.⁷ The purpose of this essay is to place the painting back into its artistic context in order to understand better the function of mural adornment in the temple.

The Temple of the Palmyrene Gods, also known as the Temple of Bel,

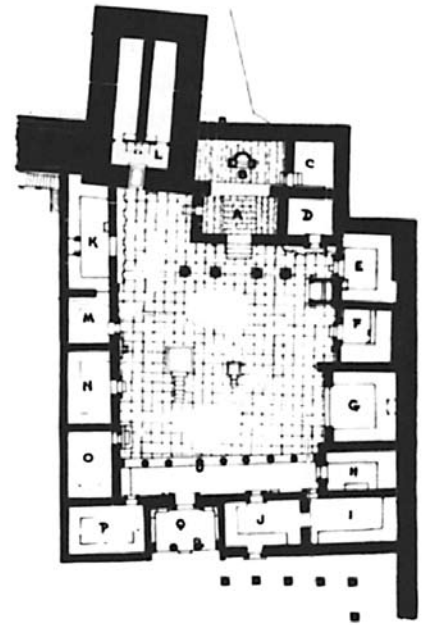


Figure 13.1: Plan showing location of naos (A), pronaos (B), and Room K, Temple of the Palmyrene Gods. After Downey, *Mesopotamian Religious Architecture*, fig. 47

was built in the northwest corner of the city in the first half of the first century CE, when the Parthians controlled Dura-Europos.⁸ Its plan, which was modified several times during the second and third centuries CE, is typical of temples in the region, with rooms built around a courtyard (fig. 13.1).⁹ The main rooms of the complex, the naos and pronaos, were built against the western wall (top of plan), and the paintings in these rooms are the focus of this essay. The other rooms around the courtyard were used for worship, as banqueting halls, or to house the priests of the temple. Judging from a graffito on the east wall of the pronaos, these priests came from local families.¹⁰ These same local families worshipped in the temple and paid for much of its adornment with wall paintings through the second century CE.¹¹

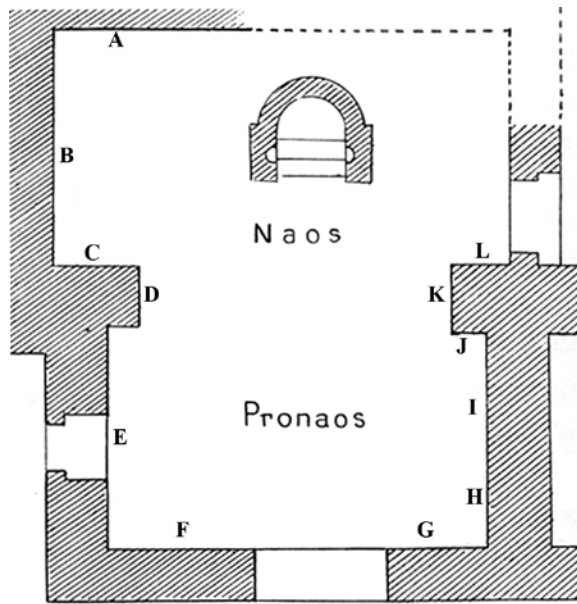


Figure 13.2: Plan showing location of decoration, Temple of the Palmyrene Gods, naos and pronaos. After Cumont, *Fouilles de Doura-Europos*, fig. 10. Key: A. Fragmentary painting of larger than life figure, assumed to be main deity of temple; B. Painting of Conon, priests, and Conon's family; C. No painting; D. Painting of priest; E. Painting of Lysias, Apollodorus, and Zenodotus; F. No painting; G. Unidentified mythological scenes; H. Painting of Terentius and his troops; I. Series of unrelated scenes in two registers; J. Paintings of quivers full of arrows, bows and spears; painting of man reclining against large rock; K. No painting; L. No painting

When the Romans took control of Dura-Europos in 165 or 166 CE, they appropriated the northern part of the city for their headquarters. The Temple of the Palmyrene Gods was thereafter located in the Roman camp, and it is unclear whether the local population still had access to the temple.¹² The scene painted on the right side of the north wall of the pronaos does provide evidence that the temple was used by the army, the Twentieth Palmyrene cohort in particular (fig. 13.2H).¹³ Julius Terentius, the tribune of the Twentieth Palmyrene cohort, is depicted burning incense on a thymiaterion to his right (pl. 37). The men standing behind him, presumably from his cohort, raise their right hands toward the three Palmyrene deities and to the Tyches of Dura and Palmyra, for whom the sacrifice is being offered. In addition to this painting in the pronaos, a painting in Room K of the sanctuary and several of the graffiti on the walls of the pronaos demonstrate further devotion to the Palmyrene gods during this period.¹⁴

Since its discovery, much attention has been focused on the Terentius painting for what it can tell us about the gods who were worshipped in the temple, the nature of the imperial cult, and the patterns of worship of auxiliary troops in the Roman army.¹⁵ Although it represents soldiers of the Twentieth Palmyrene cohort, the depiction of an individual (in this case, the Roman tribune) offering incense over a thymiaterion fits well with what generally is considered to be the predominant pattern of temple decoration: images of the ritual activities that took place in the temple. Four other paintings from the temple portray similar scenes. On the south wall of the naos, Conon, son of Nicostratos, and his family are shown with two priests who make offerings on their behalf (figs. 13.2B and 13.3).¹⁶ The first priest to Conon's left is plunging a branch into a vase filled with water; the second is putting incense on the flames of a thymiaterion. On the other side of these men stand the family members of Conon, identified in the inscriptions as his children and grandchil-

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dren, raising their right hands, palm outward, in a gesture of worship. The image of a priest performing a ritual similar to those in the painting of Conon and his family is repeated on the north face of the southern pillar that separates the naos and pronaos (fig. 13.2D).¹⁷ In the pronaos, four men are depicted on the south wall standing between spiral columns and sacrificing incense on altars (fig. 13.2E).¹⁸ Finally, in Room K in the courtyard of the temple, a sacrificial scene depicts Otes and a friend, both assisted by a young boy, standing on either side of a thymiaterion and offering incense to five deities (fig. 13.4).¹⁹

The prominence of scenes of sacrifice in this temple offers an interesting contrast with the decoration in other cult buildings in the city, such as the Synagogue, the Christian House Church, and the Mithraeum.²⁰ Focusing on these scenes in isolation, however, gives the false impression of a unilateral style of temple decoration, characterized primarily by one type of scene. In actuality, the types of images painted on the walls of the Temple of the Palmyrene Gods were far more diverse. A very different scene was painted on the west wall of the naos (fig. 13.2A). It is poorly preserved, but the remains of the bottom left corner indicate that it depicted a figure larger than life-size, perhaps the image of the deity to whom the temple was first dedicated.²¹ Looking to the north wall of the pronaos, the painting of Terentius with his troops filled only one third of the wall, and the painted decoration that covered the remainder of the wall comprised an eclectic array of images in two registers (figs. 13.2I and 13.5).²²

In the upper register, closest to the painting of Terentius and his troops, a nimbate woman, presumably a goddess, reclines on her left elbow on a couch or pile of cushions, with her right hand placed on her right knee. A young man carrying a platter of food approaches from her left. He wears a short, belted tunic and a wreath in his hair. In the next register to the left, four partially preserved figures stand adjacent to altars and thymiateria, where they make offerings. Below these men, the far left scene of the bottom register depicts a man and woman. The identity of these two figures is unclear, since they lack specific identifying attributes. Cumont

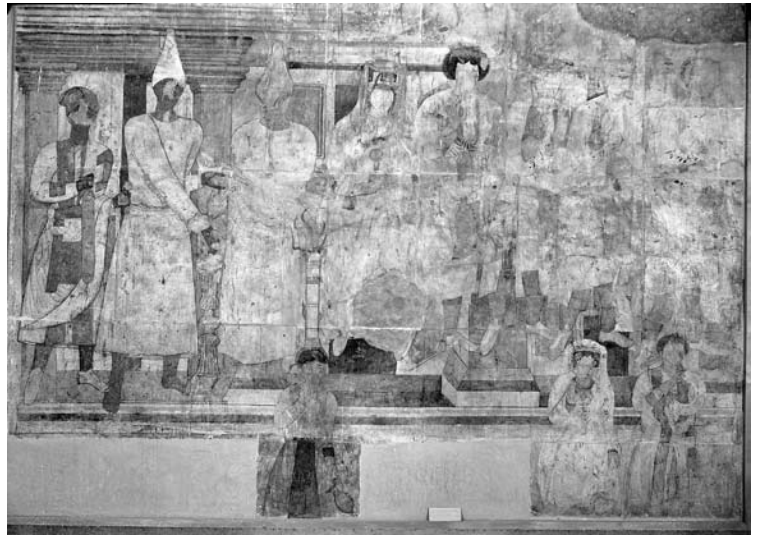


Figure 13.3: Conon painting, Temple of the Palmyrene Gods, naos. Yale University Art Gallery, Dura-Europos Collection



Figure 13.4: Otes painting, Temple of the Palmyrene Gods, Room K. After Cumont, *Fouilles de Doura-Europos*, pls. LV–LVIII



Figure 13.5: Franz Cumont's drawing of scenes on north wall, Temple of the Palmyrene Gods, pronaos. After Cumont, *Fouilles de Doura-Europos*, pl. XLIX

she represents the Syrian goddess Atargatis.²³ To the right of this couple, another man and woman stand in separate frames. The man is bearded and wears a long cloak wrapped around his body and, perhaps, a diadem on his head. The woman to his left wears a long tunic and cloak. The nimbus on her head identifies her as a goddess. The next two scenes depict animals: a sheep or goat and a gazelle. On the other side of two panels that are no longer legible appear two more figures. One is the god Herakles with his club and lion skin. The other figure, who turns his or her back to Herakles, cannot be identified.²⁴ It is likely that most of these images represent gods and goddesses who were also worshipped in the temple, otherwise known as *synnaoi theoi*.²⁵



Figure 13.6: Mythological scene, Temple of the Palmyrene Gods, pronaos, east wall. Yale University Art Gallery, Dura-Europos Collection, 1932.1206

speculated that the man on the left with this left hand placed on the handle of a sword was a soldier. His cloak is very similar to that worn by Terentius. The woman to his left wears a long gown and some type of headdress on her head. Her right hand is brought to chest level, possibly holding something, and her left is extended. If the headdress is a calathus, Cumont suggested that

Underneath these diverse scenes were painted the letters of the Greek alphabet. This seemingly random addition probably had religious connotations and may have been apotropaic.²⁶ *Abecedaria*, or alphabet inscriptions, are surprisingly numerous in Dura-Europos. Both Greek and Latin *abecedaria* have been found in houses, public structures, and in other sanctuaries in the city, most notably the Christian House Church and the Temple of Azzanathkona. The findspot in the Temple of Azzanathkona was a military clerical office, but the religious significance of two Latin *abecedaria* is substantiated by the inclusion of *mnēsthē* (remember), a common

religious formula.²⁷

On the other side of the Terentius painting—at the northern end of the east wall of the pronaos and, therefore, sharing a corner with the Terentius tableau—are two more painted scenes, one above the other (figs. 13.2G and 13.6).²⁸ As with the paintings that flank the Terentius scene to the west, these scenes stand out for their difference in subject matter. Four figures appear in two superimposed registers. The same four figures may appear in both registers, but the difference in their positions as well as the poor state of preservation of the upper register makes this identification difficult. In the lower register, a person wearing a short-sleeved tunic adorned with two parallel bands sits on a rock with his or her left hand brought to the face and is approached from the left by three men. The appearance of these men is distinctive: two of them are nude and the third wears an animal skin. Both the gesture of the seated figure, thought to connote sadness or pensiveness, and the extended arms of the approaching men imply that the seated person is being rescued or welcomed.²⁹ Cumont, who thought the three men were shepherds, suggested that the scene represents the birth of the god Mithras. Cumont was unhappy, however, about the lack of a nimbus for the seated figure, which made his identification as a deity problematic, and he could not account for the apparent sadness expressed in the hand gesture of the newly born god.³⁰ The meaning of the scene has remained a mystery.³¹

Equally obscure is the significance of the weapons painted on the east face of the pillar that separates the pronaos from the naos (fig. 13.2J). Quivers full of arrows, bows, and spears are depicted in three separate frames. Breasted speculated that they might allude to the Palmyrene archers who served as *sagittarii* in the Roman army.³² The mystery deepens with the inclusion of a scene on the same pillar depicting a man reclining against a large rock; Cumont identifies this figure as the god of the Euphrates River.³³

In addition to the striking eclecticism of the subjects of the scenes on these walls (an eclecticism that is overlooked because of the focus on scenes of sacrifice), the sheer quantity of scenes is impressive. The overwhelming impression is of a temple covered with decoration. Even the altars that stood in the naos and in the courtyard were adorned with paintings.³⁴ The chronology of these works is even more interesting; they were created in piecemeal fashion over the two hundred years of the temple's existence.³⁵ The paintings in the naos were the earliest, painted in the late-first century CE. Conon, who is featured on the south wall of the naos, is mentioned in an inscription dated to 61 CE from elsewhere in the city, providing an approximate date for his portrayal in the temple.³⁶ It was not long after that the paintings on the south wall of the pronaos, as well as the diverse scenes on the north wall of the pronaos, were added.³⁷ Rostovtzeff dates their addition to the late-first or early second century CE.³⁸ This date is confirmed by several graffiti scratched on the western painting of the north wall of the pronaos (fig. 13.2I) giving the dates 158 CE and 165/66 CE and providing a *terminus ante quem* for the paintings on the wall.³⁹ The painting of Terentius on the eastern part of the north wall and the mythological scene on the east wall of the pronaos are both dated to the third century CE (figs. 13.2H and 13.2G).⁴⁰

When the artist of the Terentius frieze painted the scene on the north wall of the pronaos, he was participating in, and contributing to, the dynamic nature of the adornment of the temple walls. It is likely that the walls were adorned also with ex-voto figures on shelves, further diversifying the decoration.⁴¹ In addition to these more formal, or professional, types of images, the walls also were “literally covered with a multitude of scratched inscriptions and drawings.”⁴² Although the graffiti are particularly thick on the western portion

of the north wall of the pronaos, there are also many graffiti on the other walls of the naos and pronaos.⁴³

Most of these graffiti are written in Greek, but a few are in Aramaic.⁴⁴ Those that pertain to temple

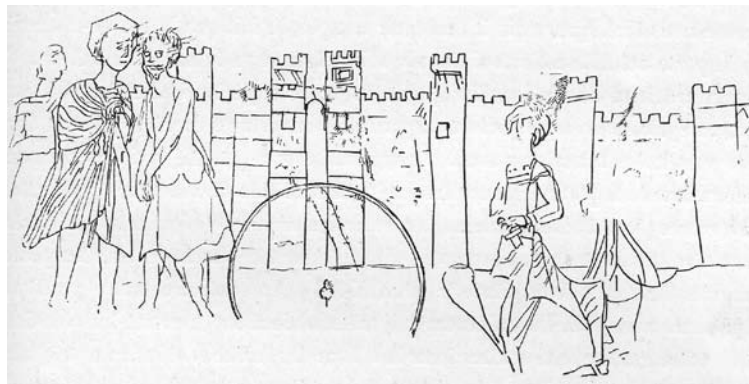


Figure 13.7: Graffito depicting city walls, Temple of the Palmyrene Gods, pronaos, south wall. After Cumont, *Fouilles de Doura-Europos*, fig. 7



Figure 13.8: Dipinto of battle scene, Temple of the Palmyrene Gods, pronaos, south wall. After Cumont, *Fouilles de Doura-Europos*, fig. 30

business provide insight into the daily activities in the temple. For example, several graffiti list the jewelry adorning the cult statues in the temple.⁴⁵ Others provide an inventory of objects received or disbursed by the temple.⁴⁶ A graffito on the southern portion of the east wall of the pronaos lists the months in which certain priests are expected to work; another, on the north wall of the pronaos, displays a liturgical calendar. Other graffiti give information about those who worshipped in the temple. On the eastern face of the southern pillar that separates the naos from the pronaos, a graffito lists the visitors to the temple.⁴⁷ Single names appear periodically as well. For example, “Taimaršu, engraver, the son of Taimé” is scratched in Aramaic on the north wall of the pronaos, where the men are depicted sacrificing on thymiateria.⁴⁸ On the same wall, “Konon Nikostratou” is repeated twice adjacent to the head of the soldier in the lower left-hand corner.⁴⁹ These graffiti that give only a name may record the visit of this person to the temple, but they may also be votive, identifying the person who is making the prayer.

Other graffiti are more clearly votive in nature. Such is the case for a graffito on the north wall of the pronaos, to the left of the painting of Terentius, which reads “May Malikou, the son of

Wahballat, be remembered before Iarhibol and [Aglibol] and Resou.⁵⁰ Another person wrote, “Wahballat, before Iarhibol.”⁵¹ A third offered thanks for an answer to his prayers for more animals.⁵² The names of gods are also given: “Zeus Kallinikou” is written on the eastern face of the southern pillar between the pronaos and the naos, and both Zeus (Megistos) and Athena are mentioned in a graffito on the north wall of the pronaos.⁵³ These gods were presumably the recipients of prayers offered in the temple.

In addition to the scratched inscriptions described above, figural graffiti and dipinti also adorn the walls of the temple.⁵⁴ The most well known of these depicts the walls of the city and appears on the south wall of the pronaos, underneath the painting of the four men burning incense (figs. 13.2E and 13.7).⁵⁵ Also on the south wall of the pronaos, not far from the drawing of the walls of the city, is a dipinto (painted drawing) of a battle scene (fig. 13.8).⁵⁶ Two mounted men, one of whom presumably carries a bow and the other a spear

and shield, advance toward each other on horses. To the right, a third man carries away a lifeless figure. On the north wall of the pronaos, a graffito depicting a young woman shows clearly on top of the lower register of paintings. The Terentius scene was also painted over a schematic human figure scratched on the plaster in the left-hand corner, underlying the Tyche of Dura (fig. 13.9). The significance of the scratched drawing is not obvious, but it may represent another fighter.

Graffiti are abundant in Dura-Europos; they are found in the houses, in the public structures, on the walls and gates of the city, and in other sanctuaries.⁵⁷ Those in the Temple of the Palmyrene Gods are a useful source of information about the temple. The graffiti inform us about the gods who were worshipped there,⁵⁸ as well as the people who worshipped them.⁵⁹ They provide a time frame for the use of the temple,⁶⁰ and they give insight into the rituals that took place during these periods.⁶¹ Most important for the purposes of this essay, the presence of graffiti informs us about the attitude toward its decoration of those worshipping in the temple. When the scene of Terentius and his troops performing a sacrifice was painted on the north wall of the pronaos in the third century CE, the adjacent scenes were *already* covered with graffiti. It is notoriously difficult to date graffiti,⁶² but as discussed above, two graffiti containing the dates 158 CE and 165/166 CE were fortuitously placed on the north wall of the pronaos. These graffiti not only offer a *terminus ante quem* for the paintings on the western part of the north wall but also indicate that the wall bore graffiti when the decision was made about the placement of the Terentius frieze. The fact that the Terentius painting is not marked by any graffiti would suggest furthermore that it post-dates all of the graffiti on the wall to its left.⁶³

If the full decoration of the north wall of the pronaos in the early third century CE has become clear, the motivations of the artist or patron in placing the Terentius painting in this location are less so: why place the scene of a very important official in Dura-Europos in the corner of a wall covered in graffiti? It was not for lack of empty spaces. There were several undecorated walls in the temple. The east wall of the pronaos to the south of the door was available (fig. 13.2F),⁶⁴ as were the western faces of both pillars between the naos and the pronaos (figs. 13.2C and 13.2L).⁶⁵ Was Terentius showing respect for the previous decoration in the temple by not painting over a scene in the more desirable spots in the naos?⁶⁶ Was he adorning a temple that already had begun to fall into disrepair? Rostovtzeff postulates largely because of the graffiti or dipinti that the temple had fallen into disrepair when the Terentius painting was added.⁶⁷ This assessment of neglect relies upon a misinterpretation of the function of the paintings in the temple and their relation to the graffiti.

It has been argued that the paintings in the temple boosted the reputation of those who commissioned



Figure 13.9: Graffito underlying the wall painting of Julius Terentius performing a sacrifice (detail, pl. 37) (photograph by Jessica Smolinski, Documentation Photographer, Yale University Art Gallery)

them.⁶⁸ This may be true, but they should not be seen as strictly ornamental. These paintings were also active votive offerings.⁶⁹ As Wharton says, “the frescoes of the naos are not *ornamental*, as in the triclinium of a Roman house, but *active*.”⁷⁰ (Emphases are in original.) The ways in which these paintings perpetuated the ritual activity is best illustrated by focusing on the right hands of those who raise them, palm out, in the sacrificial scenes. In 1924, Breasted pointed out that the right hands of the family members of Conon (depicted in the naos) faced straight out. This is different from the hands of the soldiers in the Terentius painting, which were raised on a diagonal. Breasted concluded that the location of the cult image was the determining factor. In the naos, the cult image was on the altar in the center of the room, whereas the images of the gods were on the left-hand side in the Terentius painting.⁷¹ The depiction of the burning of incense could have the same significance: “the formal poses of the worshippers, right hands raised in an attitude of prayer, or sprinkling incense on a burner, established these individuals, like the funerary reliefs at Palmyra, as a continual and active presence within the sacred space.”⁷² In this way, the paintings of the Temple of the Palmyrene Gods functioned in a different manner from those in the Christian Building, which served as reminders of God’s power,⁷³ or those in the Synagogue, which were primarily didactic.⁷⁴

The significance of the graffiti must be considered in light of this votive function for the paintings in the Temple of the Palmyrene Gods. It is more than likely that the graffiti functioned in the same way as the paintings, particularly those graffiti that recorded the name of the worshipper or the name of a god or both. The graffiti scratched throughout the painted decoration were not disfiguring and did not detract from the desirability of location, because they were *also* votive. The decision by the artist or patron of the Terentius frieze to place it in the right-hand corner of a graffiti-laden wall was not despite its disrepair or due to any lack of influence but rather because of a local sensibility toward the meaning and function of mural adornment. The adornment of the walls does not conform to the conventional idea of what is aesthetically pleasing; it results from a system in which all types of mural markings could function as votive offerings.

The purpose of placing the Terentius painting back into its artistic context was not to find an overarching decorative program or scheme. Placing the painting back into its context actually reveals a striking lack of a coherent decorative program for the temple. The decoration of the walls was dynamic and changing, at times formal and at other times informal. Professionally painted scenes, such as that of Terentius and his troops, were placed next to scenes covered with graffiti, which were scratched on top of and underneath painted tableaux. It is clear that this was not a cause for concern, as those who commissioned the Terentius painting must have been well aware of the nature of decoration to the left. Focusing on the Terentius scene as an individual tableau that is exemplary of the types of scenes found in indigenous cult centers provides a very one-dimensional view of the patterns of worship in the temple. It is only by placing the painting back into the context in which it was painted and viewed in antiquity that one is able to appreciate the dynamism and function of the wall décor.

Notes

I would like to thank the editors for the invitation to contribute a paper to this volume as well as their endless patience and diligence during the revising stages. Lisa Brody deserves special recognition for enabling me to study the Terentius frieze on the snowiest day of the year in New Haven and for procuring a raking image of the graffito in the left hand corner. I thank the University of North Carolina at Greensboro for funding my travel to New Haven and my colleagues for vetting my argument. Susan Downey also kindly read a draft and made comments, and Jennifer Baird made her article on the graffito at Dura-Europos available to me, without which my explanation of the context would have been woefully incomplete.

- 1 James Henry Breasted, *The Oriental Forerunners of Byzantine Painting, Syria* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1924), 94.
- 2 Breasted, *Oriental Forerunners*, 4.
- 3 Franz Cumont, *Fouilles de Doura-Europos* (Paris: Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1926), 41n3.
- 4 *Prelim. Rep. IV*, 18. For the most recent discussion of these paintings, see Pierre Leriche, “Les peintures d’Europos-Doura au Musée National de Damas,” *Europos-Doura Études VI*, ed. Pierre Leriche, Ségolène de Pontbriand, and Gaëlle Coqueugniot (Beirut: Institut Français d’archéologie du Proche-Orient, forthcoming): 2–17.
- 5 Lucinda Dirven, “The Julius Terentius Fresco and the Roman Imperial Cult,” *Mediterraneo Antico* 10, no. 1–2 (2007): 2, does say that “only the panel figuring Julius Terentius was removed from the north wall and thereby saved from destruction.” But Pillet, *Prelim. Rep. IV*, 18, does not mention leaving the rest of the paintings of the north wall *in situ*.
- 6 Michael I. Rostovtzeff, *Dura and the Problem of Parthian Art*, Yale Classical Studies (1935): 243; Rostovtzeff, *Dura-Europos and Its Art* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1938), 5:69.
- 7 Cf. the description of Ann Perkins, *The Art of Dura-Europos*, ed. Bernard Goldman (Oxford: Clarendon, 1973), 43, whose entire description of the paintings from the western half of the north wall consists of the following: “The north wall of the pronaos and the adjoining part of the east wall also had paintings, most of which are badly preserved and somewhat enigmatic. The north wall was divided into registers of which only the lower two are preserved. The registers were marked off by heavy, dark-red dividing lines into panels of irregular sizes, a composition which will be seen again in the Synagogue.”
- 8 Susan B. Downey, *Mesopotamian Religious Architecture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 105; on the Parthian aspects of the religion, see Clark Hopkins, “The Palmyrene Gods at Dura-Europos,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 51, no. 2 (1931): 119–37; and for a recent discussion of Dura-Europos during this period, see Fergus Millar, “Dura-Europos Under Parthian Rule,” in *Das Partherreich und seine Zeugnisse*, ed. Josef Wiesehöfer (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1998), 473–92.
- 9 Downey, *Mesopotamian Religious Architecture*, 89, 105–10.
- 10 Cumont, *Fouilles*, 381, inscr. no. 20.
- 11 Breasted, *Oriental Forerunners*, 88; see also Lucinda Dirven, “Religious Competition and the Decoration of Sanctuaries: the Case of Dura-Europos,” *Eastern*

- Christian Art* 1 (2004): 1–20. Though other inhabitants of Dura-Europos also worshipped at the temple (Downey, *Mesopotamian Religious Architecture*, 108; Ted Kaizer, “Patterns of Worship in Dura-Europos: a Case Study of Religious Life in the Classical Levant Outside the Main Cult Centres,” in *Les religions orientales dans le monde grec et romain: Cent ans après Cumont (1906–2006)*, ed. Corinne Bonnet, Vinciane Pirenne-Delforge, and Danny Praet (Brussels: Belgisch Historisch Instituut te Rome, 2009), 157.
- 12 Thomas Pékary, “Das Opfer vor dem Kaiserbild,” *Bonner Jahrbucher* 186 (1986): 91–103; Susan B. Downey, “The Transformation of Seleucid Dura-Europos,” in *Romanization and the City: Creation, Transformation, and Failures*, *Journal of Roman Archaeology Supplement* 38, ed. Elizabeth Fentress (Portsmouth, R.I.: *Journal of Roman Archaeology*, 2000), 165; Dirven, “The Julius Terentius Fresco,” 5; and Kaizer, “Patterns of Worship,” 157.
 - 13 Dirven, “The Julius Terentius Fresco,” 2.
 - 14 E.g., Cumont, *Fouilles*, 366, inscr. no. 10 (= Delbert R. Hillers and Eleonora Cussini, *Palmyrene Aramaic Texts* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), PAT 1081; Robert Du Mesnil du Buisson, *Inventaire des inscriptions palmyréniennes de Doura Europos* (Paris: Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1939), 32–33; and Lucinda Dirven, *The Palmyrenes of Dura Europos: a Study of Religious Interaction in Roman Syria* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1999), 308 (= PAT 115).
 - 15 More recent discussions include those of Dirven, “The Julius Terentius Fresco”; Ted Kaizer, “A Note on the Fresco of Iulius Terentius from Dura-Europos,” in *Altertum und Mittelmeerraum: die Antike Welt diesseits und jenseits der Levante*, ed. Robert Rollinger and Brigitte Truschnegg (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2006), 151–59; Oliver Stoll, *Zwischen Integration und Abgrenzung: die Religion des Römischen Heeres im Nahen Osten* (St. Katharinen: Scripta Mercaturae, 2001); and Pékary, “Das Opfer,” where he argues that the three deities in the corner of the frieze represent Roman emperors.
 - 16 Breasted, *Oriental Forerunners*, 76–90; and Cumont, *Fouilles*, 41–72, pls. XXXI–XLI.
 - 17 Cumont, *Fouilles*, 72–73, pls. XXXI, XLI, XLII. Cumont (73) postulates that the priest is painted by the same artist who painted the south wall of naos, and at same time.
 - 18 *Ibid.*, 76–84, pls. XLIV–XLVII.
 - 19 *Ibid.*, 122–34, fig. 26, pls. LV–LVIII; Rostovtzeff, *Dura and the Problem of Parthian Art*, 247; and Dirven, *Palmyrenes of Dura Europos*, 300–302, pl. XII.
 - 20 For a discussion of the visual discourse that was unique to each cult center, see Annabel Jane Wharton, *Refiguring the Post Classical City: Dura Europos, Jerash, Jerusalem, and Ravenna* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 60–63; for what can be extrapolated about cult identity from this difference in decorative styles, see Jaś Elsner, “Viewing and Resistance: Art and Religion in Dura Europos,” in *Roman Eyes: Visuality and Subjectivity in Art and Text* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 253–87; for a nuanced view of competition between the cults, see Dirven, “Religious Competition.”
 - 21 Cumont, *Fouilles*, 74–76.
 - 22 We are forced to rely on the description and pictures of Cumont, *Fouilles*, 114–20, pl. XLIX, LII, LIII, for our knowledge of this portion of the north wall of the pronaos. Breasted (*Oriental Forerunners*, 102) and Rostovtzeff (*Dura-Europos and Its Art*, 71) both base their descriptions on Cumont. In addition, Rostovtzeff includes a picture (*Dura and the Problem of Parthian Art*,

fig. 53), presumably taken by Cumont, of the north wall before the paintings were removed. There was originally an additional register that extended above these scenes to the left as well as the Terentius scene. No decoration is visible in this register.

- 23 Cumont, *Fouilles*, 117.
- 24 Ibid., 118–19.
- 25 Rostovtzeff, *Dura-Europos and Its Art*, 71.
- 26 Cumont, *Fouilles*, 119; and Breasted, *Oriental Forerunners*, 102.
- 27 For a general description and further bibliography on *abecedaria*, see J. A. Baird, “The Graffiti of Dura-Europos: a Contextual Approach,” in *Ancient Graffiti in Context*, ed. J. A. Baird and Claire Taylor (New York: Routledge, 2010), 64; for the Christian House Church, see Carl H. Kraeling, *The Christian Building. The Excavations at Dura-Europos Conducted by Yale University and the French Academy of Inscriptions and Letters, Final Report 8, Part 2*, ed. C. Bradford Welles (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1967), 89–90; for the Temple of Azzanathkona, see *Prelim. Rep. VI*, 485.
- 28 Yale University Art Gallery, 1932.1205.
- 29 Breasted, *Oriental Forerunners*, 102; and Cumont, *Fouilles*, 85–86.
- 30 Cumont, *Fouilles*, 89.
- 31 Given that the gesture of the seated figure, with the hand brought to the face, is usually associated with women, it seems more likely that she is a woman. If indeed this is the case, she may well be Ariadne, rescued by Dionysus. The figures in the scene are not unlike the retinue of Dionysus as they appear in mosaics from the region. See my article, “Gesture at Dura-Europos, a New Interpretation of the So-called ‘scène énigmatique,’” in *Religion, Society, and Culture at Dura-Europos*, ed. Ted Kaizer (forthcoming).
- 32 Breasted, *Oriental Forerunners*, 102.
- 33 Cumont, *Fouilles*, 120.
- 34 Ibid., 32–33, 35.
- 35 Rostovtzeff, *Dura and the Problem of Parthian Art*, 254; Rostovtzeff (*Dura-Europos and Its Art*, 76) compares the decoration of this temple with that of the Temple of Bel in Palmyra. The low relief carvings on the peristyle beams of the temple in Palmyra featured similar types of scenes, in a somewhat random order, added at the behest of individual donors.
- 36 Breasted, *Oriental Forerunners*, 88.
- 37 Ibid., 88; and Rostovtzeff, *Dura-Europos and Its Art*, 73–74.
- 38 Rostovtzeff, *Dura and the Problem of Parthian Art*, 245–46.
- 39 See *ibid.*, 245–46, for a description of these graffiti. The graffito giving the date 165/166 was published by Cumont, *Fouilles*, 386–87, inscr. no. 24. The graffito with the date 158 CE is unpublished.
- 40 Rostovtzeff, *Dura-Europos and Its Art*, 74.
- 41 Downey, “The Transformation,” 108, refers to Pearson’s unpublished manuscript: “Other minor installations—a niche, a reed shelf, and irregularly placed peg holes in the walls of the pronaos; and a small shelf in the wall in front of Room E—might have supported ex-votos.”

- 42 Rostovtzeff, *Dura-Europos and Its Art*, 71.
- 43 There were also graffiti scratched on the altars: "Eunuch priests are also apparently named in a graffiti scratched on an altar from the pronaos," Downey, *Mesopotamian Religious Architecture*, 109 (n285: Hopkins, *Dura Report II*, 94 f., H.5).
- 44 Cumont, *Fouilles*, 340; for Semitic inscriptions, see also Du Mesnil du Buisson, *Inventaire des inscriptions*, 7–11.
- 45 Cumont, *Fouilles*, 367–68, inscr. no. 11 (Semitic), 369–72, inscr. no. 12 (Greek).
- 46 Ibid., 372–79, inscr. nos. 13–15 (Greek), and inscr. no. 21; 383–84 also gives a list of those who had donated drinking cups to the temple.
- 47 Ibid., 380–81, inscr. no. 18 (Greek).
- 48 Du Mesnil du Buisson, *Inventaire des inscriptions*, 9–10, inscr. no. 17 (=PAT 1083); and Dirven, *Palmyrenes of Dura Europos*, 308.
- 49 Cumont, *Fouilles*, 390, inscr. no. 29.
- 50 Ibid., 366, inscr. no. 10 (=PAT 1081); and Du Mesnil Du Buisson, *Inventaire des inscriptions*, 7–8, pl. I. As was pointed out by Dirven, *Palmyrenes of Dura Europos*, 307–8, Cumont and Du Mesnil du Buisson give different locations for this graffito.
- 51 Du Mesnil du Buisson, *Inventaire des inscriptions*, 32–33, inscr. no. 49, PAT 115; and Dirven, *Palmyrenes of Dura Europos*, 308.
- 52 Cumont, *Fouilles*, 379, inscr. no. 16.
- 53 Ibid., 379–80, inscr. 17; 387–88, inscr. no. 25.
- 54 Despite their placement on the temple walls, it is unlikely that every figure had religious significance. This should not detract from the votive nature of other graffiti. In addition, votive graffiti appeared in buildings that were not overtly religious in function. See Rostovtzeff, *Dura and the Problem of Parthian Art*, 248–49, for two religious scenes: one sketched on the wall of the naos of Aphlad and the other in the office of the *actuarius* (bookkeeper) of the Roman garrison (his office was located in one of the rooms of the temple of Artemis Azzanathkona, a temple which in the third century CE was an annex of the praetorium of Dura).
- 55 Cumont, *Fouilles*, 13, fig. 7.
- 56 Ibid., 137, fig. 30. Greek letters painted in red (Cumont, *Fouilles*, inscr. no. 7) underneath the scene may have given the name of the artist or the fighters, but these letters are no longer completely legible.
- 57 *Prelim. Rep. IV*, 207; for a critical approach to the study of graffiti, as well as a useful summary of their findspots, see Baird, "The Graffiti of Dura-Europos."
- 58 Cumont, *Fouilles*, inscr. nos. 12, 17, 25; see also C. Bradford Welles, "The Gods of Dura-Europos," in *Beiträge zur alten Geschichte und deren Nachleben: Festschrift für Franz Altheim zum 6.10.1968*, ed. Ruth Altheim-Stiehl and Hans Erich Stier (Berlin: Gruyter, 1969), 2:50–65; for graffiti as a source of information about gods worshipped elsewhere in Dura-Europos, see Howard N. Porter, "A Bacchic Graffito from the Dolicheneum at Dura," *The American Journal of Philology* 69 (1948): 27–41.
- 59 Downey, *Mesopotamian Religious Architecture*, 108
- 60 See Jitse Dijkstra, "Structuring Graffiti: the Case of the Temple of Isis at Aswan," in 7. *Ägyptologische Tempeltagung: Structuring Religion. Leuven, 28. September–1. Oktober 2005*, ed. René Preys (Wiesbaden: Harrassow-

itz, 2009), about using graffiti to establish the phases of occupation of the Temple of Isis in Aswan, Egypt, in late antiquity.

61 Cumont, *Fouilles*, 340; Downey, *Mesopotamian Religious Architecture*, 109

62 “It is very difficult to date the graffiti. In a few cases a scratched date gives some help, as in the case of the inscriptions and some of the drawings of Nebuchelus. They all apparently belong to the third century CE. It is natural to suggest that most of the extant graffiti belong to the same period, i.e. to the last period of the city’s life. However, it is certain that many are earlier.” (Rostovtzeff, “Graffiti,” 207).

63 Rostovtzeff, *Dura-Europos and Its Art*, 74.

64 Where, according to Cumont (*Fouilles*, 84), only a few graffiti were scratched into the plaster.

65 Breasted, *Oriental Forerunners*, 89.

66 “That he treated with respect the painted memorials of the noble families of Dura elsewhere preserved on the walls of the temple, like the great painting of Konon’s family executed by Ilasamsos a century and a half earlier, is worthy of note. Julius Terentius as Roman commandant of the stronghold of Dura, might easily have chosen for himself more extensive and more prominent space on the walls of the temple halls. The scene in which he appears is less than 2 meters long, while the family of Konon occupy the entire wall in the sanctuary itself with eleven life-size figures,” *ibid.*, 101.

67 Rostovtzeff, *Dura-Europos and Its Art*, 74.

68 See also Jaś Elsner, “Viewing and Resistance: Art and Religion in Dura Europos,” in *Roman Eyes: Visuality*

and Subjectivity in Art and Text (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 207).

69 “The chief concern of the donor was to perpetuate his own piety and devotion to the gods, not to tell the story of the god or to emphasize his power” (Rostovtzeff, *Dura and the Problem of Parthian Art*, 254).

70 Wharton, *Refiguring the Post Classical City*, 61.

71 Breasted, *Oriental Forerunners*, 100.

72 Butcher, *Roman Syria*, 325.

73 See *ibid.*, 325, for the Christian chapel. See Elsner, “Viewing and Resistance”; Wharton, *Refiguring the Post Classical City*; and Dirven, “Religious Competition” for a comparison of the decorative styles in the Temple of the Palmyrene Gods, the Christian House Church, and the Synagogue.

74 Warren G. Moon, “Nudity and Narrative: Observations on the Frescoes from the Dura Synagogue,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 60 (1992): 590.

J. A. BAIRD

THE HOUSES OF DURA-EUROPOS: ARCHAEOLOGY, ARCHIVE, AND ASSEMBLAGE

During its joint expedition between 1928 and 1937 to Dura-Europos, Yale University and the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres excavated over a third of the urban environment at the site during ten seasons of fieldwork. Of the excavated structures, the vast majority were houses; and more than one hundred thirty of these were uncovered. The ancient site of Dura had been abandoned rapidly as a consequence of a Sasanian incursion in the mid-third century, and the lack of substantial occupation later means that Dura's houses offer a fascinating glimpse of daily life on the third-century Roman frontier.¹ This essay explores how disparate forms of archival data about the excavations of the houses might be combined to explore the identities of Dura-Europos' inhabitants. In so doing, the particular circumstances of Dura, as a town made up of diverse linguistic and religious communities,² and one that was transformed by a third-century Roman military presence, become clear.

The expedition team prioritized certain aspects of the site for admission in the Final Reports, including the Synagogue and House Church and certain classes of artifacts, such as bronzes, ceramics, glass, and textiles.³ The houses were never treated as a group, and although the artifacts from them were sometimes published, they were never studied as an assemblage.⁴ The largely material-based classifications of the artifacts for the publications were common, of course, at the time and remain so.⁵ It has been increasingly recognized that looking at the artifacts as an assemblage—that is, considering those found in context together—may be a valuable tool in understanding ancient sites, and houses in particular.⁶ This interest in household assemblages may be coupled with the surge of interest in the so-called legacy data (information published from early excavations), which provides a wealth of information on a scale much greater than most modern excavations.⁷

Dura-Europos is an ideal place at which to conduct studies of houses using such legacy data for a number of reasons. First, the archive survives and is available for researchers to consult, as are many of the objects, in the Yale University Art Gallery. Second, the archive holds numerous records that allow researchers to reconstruct the original assemblages excavated by the team working there in the 1920s and 1930s. This includes a number of document types, including the field object registers (discussed below), the field diaries of the field directors and other personnel, extensive correspondence between the field and Yale-

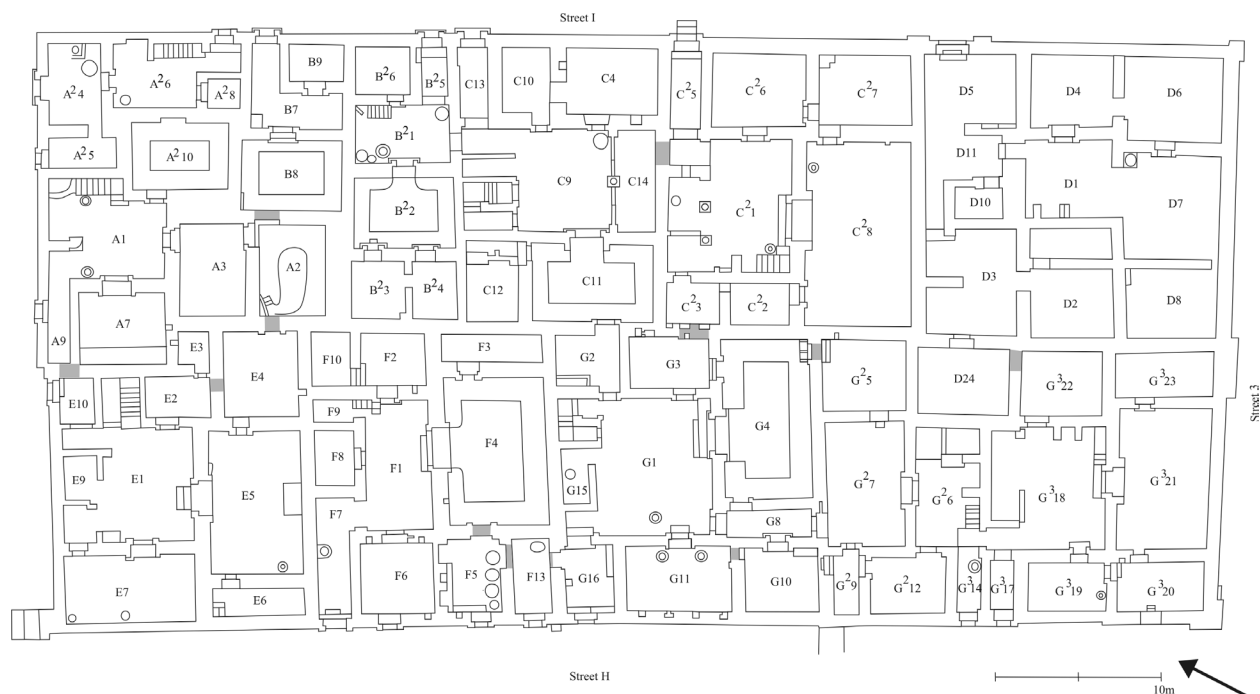


Figure 14.1: Plan of C7, blocked doorways marked in grey. After Henry Pearson's original in the Dura-Europos archives at the Yale University Art Gallery (plan by the author)

based staff, the photographic records kept during the excavations, as well as the architectural plans made of the excavated remains. Using this information, it is possible to restore the objects to the contexts in which they were found: the room in a house from which they came, the other objects with which they were found, and how the objects relate to their architectural setting.

From the fifth season of work (when Clark Hopkins succeeded Maurice Pillet as field director), records that recorded the find spot of the individual artifacts were kept in the field.⁸ It is these records that are crucial to reconstructing the assemblages and contexts of many of the objects from Dura. In the fifth season, this was done by D. Clark,⁹ and later it appears that Hopkins' wife, Susan Hopkins, often was responsible for keeping these field object registers.¹⁰ Susan had travelled with her husband to the site of Olynthus in northern Greece, where they had gone to participate in the excavations as a means of preparing for the expedition at Dura-Europos and had witnessed detailed record-keeping under David Robinson.¹¹ This awareness of the importance of cataloguing the small finds would prove to be fundamental to the methods that were implemented at Dura. Although Susan Hopkins was never recognized formally as a member of the expedition; while she was at the site she was not only registrar of finds but also an epigrapher, responsible for recording and transcribing many inscriptions, and a conservator, cleaning some of the finds. These duties were in addition to those she had supervising the kitchen and caring for her young daughter, Mary Sue, who travelled with Clark and Susan to Syria.¹²

The surviving field object registers made at Dura record a range of information about each object cata-

logged. This information includes the field number of the object; the excavation date; a short description of the object; and the place of finding, usually with the room. These find spots may be correlated with numbers of the plans made of each of the blocks of houses. Later, other information was added to these registers, for instance a Yale University Art Gallery accession number if one was assigned. By correlating the original find spot of each artifact given in the registers with the numbered architectural plans made at the site, it is possible to reconstruct what objects were found together at the time the houses were excavated. From this information, it is possible to study the houses and their contents, as far as they survive archaeologically. All the recorded information is useful; for example, even though the excavations were not undertaken stratigraphically, the sequence in which objects were excavated sometimes may reveal a limited amount of stratigraphic information. Although those studying particular classes of artifacts have consulted these registers over the years, the registers were not used to reconstruct the assemblages or the contexts excavated by the expeditionary team.¹³

The block labeled C7, following the site's nomenclature, consisted of twelve houses and five adjoining shops, and can be assessed as an example of a city block that was completely excavated.¹⁴ Block C7 sits near the center of the site (see plan, p. 15); it is bounded on its north side by the main road from the Palmyrene gate that runs through the middle of the site and at its northwest corner by an arch that spanned this road. On its eastern side, it sits on the edge of the plateau, so it overlooks the lower part of the site and the citadel beyond. The excavators named and numbered the houses reasonably consistently throughout the site: within each block, they numbered the houses alphabetically and the rooms numerically; thus, the registers denote Room 1 of House A in Block C7 as C7-A1. To make matters confusing, if the excavators thought houses began as single units and were later amalgamated, they shared letters; so there are Houses G, G², and G³ (fig. 14.1).

As with other blocks of houses at Dura, although C7 was not published fully in the Preliminary Reports, a wealth of data exists in Yale's archive that allows researchers to understand the remains. The block was excavated over a series of years. In 1922 and 1924, the French military stationed at the site partially excavated the block.¹⁵ From 1930 to 1931, during Yale's fourth season of work, Maurice Pillet, then field director, partially cleared the houses by means of large teams of local workers. Excavations of the block were completed during Yale's fifth season at the site. In this fifth season, under the field direction of Clark Hopkins, D. Clark supervised a team of workmen in C7, although it was Hopkins who penned the preliminary reports on the C7 houses.¹⁶ As elsewhere on the site, the excavators were particularly interested in the paintings.¹⁷ It was, after all, the chance discovery of paintings by British troops sheltering in the ruins that had led to the excavation of the site, initially by James Henry Breasted of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, who spent a single day recording the paintings in the Temple of the Palmyrene Gods (also known as the Temple of Bel) in what was then a volatile environment.¹⁸ These finds spurred the work of Cumont as well as the Yale-French team, and the houses of C7 themselves were a particular target of excavation for this very reason, as is documented in archival correspondence.¹⁹

The extant evidence for the C7 houses, aside from the field object registers, includes the excavators' field diaries, the correspondence between the excavators in the field and the scientific directors at Yale, as well as original drawings, notes, and, perhaps most important, the original numbered plan of the block made by Henry Pearson (one of the architects who worked at Dura).²⁰ It is the numbering on this plan that allows



Figure 14.2: Southern part of C7 viewed from the west, with houses C7-G2 and C7-G3 in foreground and the Strategeion and Euphrates beyond, 1936–37. Yale University Art Gallery, Dura-Europos Collection

researchers to correlate to its find spot each artifact from C7 listed in the field object registers.

This block was still in use at the time the city was abandoned in the mid-third century, but the houses likely were first built long before this. Indeed, much evidence exists that demonstrates the adaptation of the houses' spaces over time.²¹ The system of orthogonal city blocks (fairly regular in size at approximately 35×70 m)²² seems to have been instituted during the Hellenistic period some time after the original founding of the colony.²³ On the plan of this block, some evidence of the reorganization of the houses is visible, for instance, in the doors that were sealed (e.g., between C7-F5 and C7-F6 or C7-C²3 and C7-G3) and in the openings that were made to allow intercommunication between houses (e.g., the door between C7-G²11 and C7-G³18 or C7-G1 and C7-C11). So, although it seems this block had at one time twelve separate house units, each based around its own courtyard, by the last period during

which they were occupied, the third century, there were only seven separate units (if those houses that intercommunicated are taken as single entities).²⁴ The C7 block was preserved differentially though, and while walls on the northern side often are preserved to several meters in height, some of the interior walls on the southern side of the block survive only 20 to 30 centimeters in height in places; House C7-D is particularly poorly preserved (fig. 14.2).

Features common to the houses throughout the site are visible in the houses of C7: Each house at Dura was centered around a courtyard (even the smallest houses had one), and they allowed light and air to penetrate the structures and provided an area for many activities, as the artifacts attest. The houses present a blank façade to passersby on the street and were entered via an *L*-shaped vestibule, which shielded the courtyard from view. A staircase to an upper floor (or flat roof) was generally placed in the courtyard, as was a cistern or well for the collection of water. A series of rooms was arranged around the courtyard. Of these rooms, one type, the so-called principal room (termed the *diwan* or the *andron* by the excavators), is present in the same, central location in most houses (usually to the south of the court) and entered via double doors. It often had benches around its perimeter and was likely used for receiving guests and dining, although there is also evidence of other activities, including household production.²⁵ The function of the space within the houses was relatively flexible; it likely depended on the season, the time of day, and, perhaps, who of the household were present at any given time. Attached to some houses in C7 were a number of shops. Most comprise single rooms and were entered directly from the street. They often have installations for the storage or production of goods (see for example the sunken *pithoi* and counters in C7-F5).

The houses of C7 can contribute much to understandings of third-century life under Roman rule in Syria. Indeed, a combination of the textual, artifactual, visual, and architectural evidence from Dura

gives a wealth of evidence from which different aspects of the identities of the houses' inhabitants can be assessed.²⁶

The houses were built with local materials. The base of the walls were made of gypsum and stone rubble, and the walls were made of mudbrick. The internal and external walls were plastered with white, gypsum plaster, which sometimes was painted or decorated and sometimes scratched with graffiti.²⁷ Roofs were usually flat and constructed with wooden beams spanning the rooms over which was laid reed matting, which was plastered. Courtyard houses are found throughout the Mediterranean, but the houses of Dura are unlike the Roman period houses found elsewhere: They have some elements of Hellenic houses, such as molded cornices and columns in the courtyard (used occasionally).²⁸ They were in use during the Roman period; but, in their plan and construction, they seem to have more in common, overall, with Mesopotamian houses (although there is a problem of lack of contemporary comparanda for the Durene houses).²⁹ So, Dura's houses were constructed from local materials in a local style. And, they do not, for example, make use of fired brick, which is used at the site but in structures connected to the Roman military; it seems that the Roman military introduced the use of fired brick to the site.³⁰ Roman military building practice seems also to have differed in the system of measurement: the structures the Roman military built used a different system of measurement (a Roman foot of 0.296 m) than the houses and the city's orthogonal grid.³¹

The houses in Block C7 range greatly in size; House C7–A² consists of only two rooms adjoining two single-room shops and some roof space or a second floor, as evidenced by the stairway in its courtyard. House C7–B, adjacent to this, likewise has only three ground-floor rooms. House C7–C², a more average-size house, has seven rooms on its ground floor. By the third century, several houses on this block become intercommunicating; so while Houses C7–B², C7–C, C7–G, C7–G², and C7–G³ apparently were once separate houses—each with its own courtyard—by the time of Dura's demise, five of these houses had been connected internally (fig. 14.3). This house thus had thirty-six rooms, including two shops, C7–G16 and C7–G³20.

We might ask why so many houses connected during the final period of the settlement, and the answer may relate to the presence of the Roman military. Even though there had been a brief Roman presence at Dura early in the second century, the Roman occupation of the city started in earnest around 165 CE, and a Roman military garrison was established inside the city.³² A large portion of the northern side of the city was



Figure 14.3: Plan of C7 showing courtyard-based units (above) and intercommunicating units (below). After Henry Pearson's original in the Dura-Europos archives at the Yale University Art Gallery (plan by the author)

taken over by the army. By the early third century, many purpose-built structures were erected, including baths, an amphitheater, the principia, and other structures for military use. Some blocks of housing, for instance those in E4 and E8, were converted for military use. This part of the site was separated partially from the civilian (non-military) part of the town by a mudbrick wall.³³ This, however, did not mean that the Roman military personnel were confined to one part of the site. In addition to the military being present throughout the site, including on the fortifications, there is evidence for military presence within houses outside the military quarter on the northern side of the site.³⁴

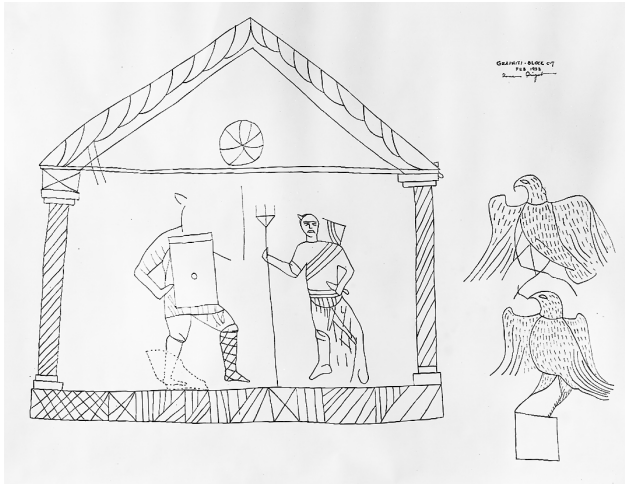


Figure 14.4: Tracing of graffito of gladiators from C7–C4. Yale University Art Gallery, Dura-Europos Collection

with a pediment, in which stand two gladiators—one with a trident and net (a *retiarius*), the other with a sword and shield (probably a *secutor*).³⁵ Two eagles were scratched in the plaster beside the temple (fig. 14.4). Another, Greek, graffito from this house asks for the remembrance of two *contubernales* (military “tent-mates”);³⁶ together, these graffiti attest to a Roman military presence in these houses.³⁷ This house, C7–C, was made to interconnect with several others, including C7–G. A number of artifacts, including possible Roman military equipment, from these houses also might allude to a military presence here.³⁸

Another way of looking at the inhabitants of the houses is the evidence for what they wore. Items of personal use, including *fibulae*, were recovered in this block in addition to military equipment. Of these, several were the crossbow type thought to be associated with the Roman military.³⁹ Crossbow *fibulae* were found in C7–A10 and C7–A26.⁴⁰ Aucissa-type *fibulae* also were recovered from Houses C7–C² and C7–G.⁴¹ This type generally is dated to a period much earlier than the third century, so it is unclear how we should interpret these items: were they artifacts that had a long use-life and associated with the Roman military? Our lack of stratigraphic

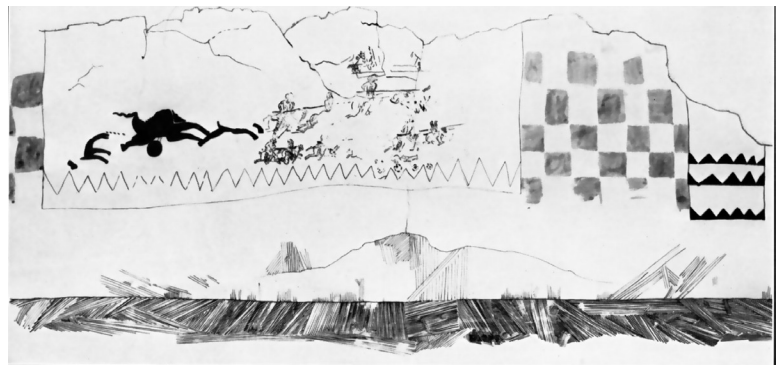


Figure 14.5: Sketch of mural from C7–F. Yale University Art Gallery, Dura-Europos Collection

information leaves this question open; perhaps they could be associated with Palmyrene mercenaries at the site during an earlier period, as has been suggested,⁴² although they might then be difficult to understand in domestic contexts. Were these items obtained and worn by civilians at Dura? It is unfortunate that this question must remain unanswered.

Wall paintings were found in House C7–F, on the western side of the block; and these give the house the other name by which it is known, the House of the Frescoes.⁴³ The house is fairly ordinary in size. Three shops share its plot, but doors allowing direct access between two of these shops and the house had been blocked at some stage, perhaps indicating the shops were run by proprietors who lived elsewhere. In the principal room of this house, Room C7–F4, which lies to the south of the courtyard, were found a series of paintings and graffiti made on the walls above the benches that lined the perimeter of the room (fig. 14.5). The central painting, on the south wall of the room and hence visible immediately upon entering the room, depicts eight horsemen in a battle below a scene in which figures recline on couches. A running zigzag and a checkerboard pattern frame these scenes. These paintings were interpreted as being of Parthian origin; indeed, five painted texts in Pehlevi or Parsik were recovered in this room.⁴⁴ It was argued later that the mural is a unique example of early Sasanian painting. Goldman and Little argue that it was discernable as Sasanian because of the items of dress shown: a round form beneath a horse is a tassel from Sasanian horse trappings and the trousers worn are baggier than those typically worn by Parthians.⁴⁵ Because the mural is identified as Sasanian, it has been dated to the very last years of the city, the 250s CE; and it was assumed this was indicative of a Sasanian occupation of part of the site. No other evidence exists for a substantive Sasanian occupation;⁴⁶ however, it is much more likely that this mural, which would have taken time to create, belongs in its “Eastern” styling to the hybrid culture of Dura-Europos. The Iranian texts need not be connected necessarily with the conquering Sasanians and the final destruction of the site, but instead with people living in or visiting the site, as is indicated by the careful Iranian dipinti in the Synagogue murals.⁴⁷ We see similarly attired figures in graffiti throughout the site on the walls of houses and other structures, where riders on horseback and hunting scenes are common.⁴⁸ Greek and Latin graffiti also were found in this house; one from Room C7–F4 reads LEG(IO) III CYR(ENAICA) and might well be taken as additional evidence of Roman military presence on this block, probably giving the name of the legion to which the men stationed here belonged.⁴⁹

Along with the presence of the Roman military on this block—evident from the artifacts, some of the graffiti, and the Roman dress items found there—it is interesting that the ceramics are not typically Roman in style but follow a local pattern. The expedition members did not collect and catalogue every ceramic fragment recovered, as would now be considered ideal; instead, they only noted complete examples or those decorated or marked in some way to make them exceptional. Nonetheless, we may draw some inferences from what was recorded. Of the forty-two ceramic vessels recorded from this

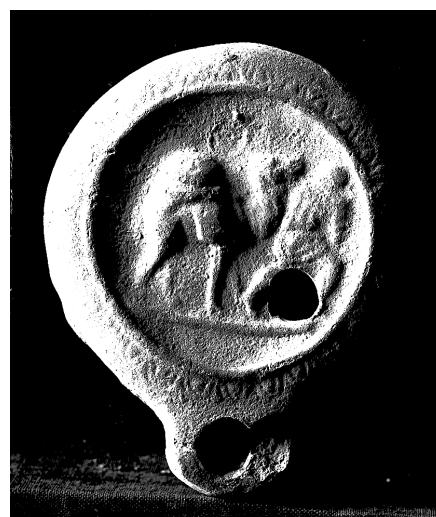


Figure 14.6: Field photograph of terracotta lamp E289 with man and camel decoration, found in C7–A4 (lamp: 1932.1374). Yale University Art Gallery, Dura-Europos Collection

block (doubtless only a tiny fraction of the ceramics removed), only one was included in the final reports.⁵⁰ Twenty-five vessels, almost 60 percent of the total, are local commonware and seven were green-glazed (recorded as *faience*),⁵¹ approximately 17 percent; the remaining examples were mostly of unrecorded fabric and shape.⁵² It is evident from the commonwares and green-glazed ceramics that make up the bulk of the assemblage that the ceramics used within this block were the locally produced wares similar to those in use before the Roman occupation of the site, even in spaces taken over for the Roman military's use. The lamps from C7 are represented better in the final reports, with 70 percent of the lamps from this block included in the published lamp catalogue from the site. A number of types are represented; like the ceramics, these seem to be manufactured locally, even in this small sample of fourteen lamps from this block (fig. 14.6).⁵³ This indicates that different aspects of identity were expressed using material culture and that the choices available might be constrained by the availability of materials or goods. While dressing like a member of Roman military personnel may have been important, eating and drinking from ceramic vessels did not necessarily broadcast this same message.

The artifacts from the houses of C7 also give evidence of a range of other activities. For instance, bone styli were found in two houses⁵⁴ and, together with the textual graffiti from several places in the block, give some indication of literacy among the inhabitants. Productive activities also are evidenced, for instance, by a handmill found in C7-G7⁵⁵ and a whetstone found in C7-A²⁶.⁵⁶ Fishhooks uncovered from the same room also allude to activities carried out outside the house but associated with the household.⁵⁷ The shops attached to and adjacent to the houses in C7 are evidence of commercial activity.⁵⁸ No artifacts from these shops, unfortunately, were recorded that may tell us precisely for what the shops were used, but shop C7-F5, on the western side of the block, might. Its features included a series of counters and niches as well as ceramic vessels sunken into the floor with wide, open mouths; these might have held foodstuffs for sale, but the wide, uncovered openings might also indicate that these were used in production, for instance in dyeing textiles or tanning.⁵⁹

There is some evidence for religious activities in the houses of C7.⁶⁰ A problem in the study of "domestic" religion is that of the recognition of religious objects, as many objects of religious significance may have had other uses, and seemingly utilitarian objects may have taken on religious significance. Some artifacts, however, are useful in approaching the study of religious lives of the inhabitants of these houses at Dura. For instance, there are several sculptures that depict divinities. There are four possible depictions of Herakles from houses in C7: a statuette depicting a man with a ram in C7-G²14;⁶¹ a relief from C7-E of Herakles standing with a club and lion skin;⁶² and two statues from C7-F, one of Herakles leaning on a club and one of a male figure holding a cup and club (pl. 68).⁶³ (The latter three are more securely identified as Herakles than the first one.) Herakles is the most often represented divinity in sculpture from the houses, at more than 40 percent of the total throughout the site, and Aphrodite is the second most depicted.⁶⁴ Susan Downey has shown that the high number of sculptures of Herakles and Aphrodite is due to these forms continuing earlier Near Eastern types (the nude hero and the nude goddess) and hence being popular among the local population.⁶⁵ In the courtyard of C7-G1, a relief of the god Hadad was found. The thunder god was identified by his attributes of a thunderbolt and double axe.⁶⁶ Thetis is also known from this block of houses, as a depiction of the nymph was found on a fragment of glass, where she is identified by an inscription (fig. 16.2).⁶⁷ The burning of incense is associated with religious activities, and incense burners were found in C7:

A green-glazed burner in the shape of a quadruped, perhaps a camel,⁶⁸ was found in C7–A². Another, metal example in the shape of a bust was found in C7–F.⁶⁹ Another type of object from the houses related to religious activities were plaster shrines found in the houses, examples of which were found in C7–F1.⁷⁰ Some terracottas found at Dura depict religious subjects, but those from this block are animals (horses, cows, and a horse-and-rider figurine).⁷¹ Many of the terracotta figurines from Dura might have had a religious significance, but it is equally possible that some are children's toys or decorative objects.⁷² What may be said is that the majority of these locally handmade objects are well within a Mesopotamian, rather than Greco-Roman, milieu.⁷³ It is likely that these objects were used in the houses before they were occupied by the Roman military, and the objects need not have been associated with the military's occupation of the area.⁷⁴

Looking at just one block of houses at Dura shows the wealth of information that may still be gleaned from the site. We are able to see the complex chronology evidenced by the intercommunicating houses and the probable military occupation of houses well outside the military "zone" on the north side of the site. From Block C7, we may understand why it is important to study all the classes of evidence we have; it is only by bringing together the textual, pictorial, architectural, and artifactual evidence that we may gain the clearest reconstruction of the inhabitants of Dura. As demonstrated above for Block C7, we need to consider the graffiti in context, together with the artifacts and architectural remains in order to reconstruct, as much as is possible, a semblance of urban life in mid-third-century Dura.

These houses and their contents reveal some of the complexities of understanding life under Roman rule during the third century. No single type of material culture is completely revealing; we see "Roman" dress equipment, local ceramics and terracottas, and a variety of languages (Greek, Latin, and Persian in this block alone). Even seemingly mundane evidence—what people wore, how they built their houses, the languages they wrote, the gods they worshipped, the vessels from which they ate—may help us build a profile of local identities. Identities were complex and multivariate even among such groups as the Roman military. For instance, whereas the military used Latin in formal settings, as the parchments and papyri of Dura demonstrate; from the graffiti of Block C7 and elsewhere, it is clear that the everyday language among the Roman military in Dura was in fact Greek. Block C7 shows that by the last decades of Dura's occupation, the Roman military had transformed the city not only within the Roman military garrison on the northern side of the site or the fortifications and public structures but also within domestic contexts.

Notes

- 1 On dating the end of the site, see Simon T. James, "Dura-Europos and the Chronology of Syria in the 250s AD," *Chiron* 15 (1985): 111–24; and David MacDonald, "Dating the Fall of Dura-Europos," *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte* 35, no. 1 (1986): 45–68. On the Sasanian siege, see James, this volume.
- 2 Ted Kaizer, "Religion and Language in Dura-Europos," in *From Hellenism to Islam: Cultural and Linguistic Change in the Roman Near East*, ed. Hannah M. Cotton, Robert G. Hoyland, and Jonathan J. Price (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 235–53.
- 3 Christoph W. Clairmont, *The Glass Vessels. The Excavations at Dura-Europos Conducted by Yale University and the French Academy of Inscriptions and Letters. Final Report 4, Part 5*, ed. Ann Perkins (New Haven: Dura-Europos Publications, 1963); Carl H. Kraeling, *The Christian Building. The Excavations at Dura-Europos Conducted by Yale University and the French Academy of Inscriptions and Letters, Final Report 8, Part 2*, ed. C. Bradford Welles (New Haven: Dura-Europos Publications, 1967); Kraeling, *The Synagogue. The Excavations at Dura-Europos Conducted by Yale University and the French Academy of Inscriptions and Letters, Final Report 8, Part 1*, ed. Alfred R. Bellinger et al. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1956); Teresa G. Frisch and Nicholas P. Toll, *The Bronze Objects: Pierced Bronzes, Enameled Bronzes, and Fibulae. The Excavations at Dura-Europos Conducted by Yale University and the French Academy of Inscriptions and Letters, Final Report Volume 4, Part 4, Fascicle 1* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1949); Stephen L. Dyson, *The Commonware Pottery, the Brittle Ware. The Excavations at Dura-Europos Conducted by Yale University and the French Academy of Inscriptions and Letters. Final Report 4, Part 1, Fascicle 3*, ed. C. Bradford Welles (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968); and Rodolphe Pfister and Louisa Bellinger, *The Textiles. The Excavations at Dura-Europos. Conducted by Yale University and the French Academy of Inscriptions and Letters. Final Report 4, Part 2*, ed. Michael I. Rostovtzeff et al. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1945).
- 4 The houses no doubt would have formed an element of the planned final report on the architecture and town-planning of Dura, but this volume never appeared.
- 5 As Susan B. Downey, *Terracotta Figurines and Plaques from Dura-Europos* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003) demonstrates.
- 6 Penelope Allison's work has been seminal in this regard: Penelope Mary Allison, *Pompeian Households: an Analysis of the Material Culture* (Los Angeles: Cotsen Institute of Archaeology, 2004).
- 7 Penelope Allison, "Dealing with Legacy Data—An Introduction," *Internet Archaeology*, no. 24–25 (2008); and Steven J. R. Ellis et al., "Integrating Legacy Data into a New Method for Studying Architecture: a Case Study from Isthmia, Greece," *Internet Archaeology*, no. 24 (2008).
- 8 According to his successors, Pillet had forbidden the collecting of this information; Clark Hopkins, *The Discovery of Dura-Europos*, ed. Bernard Goldman (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), 50–53.
- 9 *Prelim. Rep. V*, xvii.
- 10 Susan also apparently had kept object records for the earlier seasons at Dura, but these do not survive in Yale's archive. Hopkins, *The Discovery of Dura-Europos*, 50–53.
- 11 *Ibid.*, 36. On the houses at Olynthus, David M. Robinson and J. Walter Graham, "The Hellenic House: a Study of the Houses Found at Olynthus with a Detailed

- Account of Those Excavated in 1931 and 1934,” part 8 in *Excavations at Olynthus* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1938); and Nicholas Cahill, *Household and City Organization at Olynthus* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002).
- 12 Hopkins, *The Discovery of Dura-Europos*, 120–21.
 - 13 This contribution is part of a larger project in which the field object registers have been digitised by the author to form a database. This database includes all objects of known provenance from the fifth to tenth seasons of work at Dura. For an overview of this project, see J. A. Baird, “L’habitat d’époque romaine à Europos-Doura: Remplacer les artefacts en contexte,” in *Europos-Doura Études VI*, ed. Pierre Leriche, Ségolène de Pontbriand, and Gaëlle Coqueugniot (Beirut: Institut Français d’archéologie du Proche-Orient, forthcoming).
 - 14 The architectural remains of this house have also been reinvestigated: J. A. Baird, “Housing and Households at Dura-Europos: a Study in Identity on Rome’s Eastern Frontier” (Ph.D. diss., University of Leicester, 2006); and Catherine Saliou, “La forme d’un îlot de Doura-Europos...; l’îlot C7 revisité,” in *Doura-Europos Études V, 1994–1997*, ed. Pierre Leriche, Alain Dandrau, and Mathilde Gelin (Paris: Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geunther, 2004). The houses were given a cursory report in the preliminary publications: *Prelim. Rep. IV*, 35–38, 153–57, 82–206; and *Prelim. Rep. V*, xvii, 34–46.
 - 15 The 1922 excavations are not well documented, but the 1924 investigations are. See Franz Cumont, *Fouilles de Doura-Europos (1922–1923)* (Paris: Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geunther, 1926), 240; *Prelim. Rep. VI*, 33; and Mathilde Gelin, “Les fouilles anciennes de Doura-Europos et leur contexte: Documents d’archives conservés dans les institutions françaises et témoignages,” in *Doura-Europos Études IV, 1991–1993*, ed. Pierre Leriche and Mathilde Gelin (Beirut: Institut Français d’archéologie du Proche-Orient, 1997), 238.
 - 16 *Prelim. Rep. IV*, 34; *Prelim. Rep. V*, xvii, 31; and Hopkins, *The Discovery of Dura-Europos*, 81, 83.
 - 17 On the initial discovery and study of the Dura paintings, see James Henry Breasted, *The Oriental Forerunners of Byzantine Painting: First-century Wall Paintings from the Fortress of Dura on the Middle Euphrates*, Oriental Institute Publications 1 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1924).
 - 18 Breasted, *Oriental Forerunners*, 2, 52–53.
 - 19 In a letter from Hopkins to Rostovtzeff dated November 11, 1931, and preserved in Yale’s archives, Hopkins states that the reason for excavating the houses at C7 was the paintings and sculpture discovered in the block, which led Hopkins to believe additional works of art might be recovered there.
 - 20 This plan was reproduced in *Prelim. Rep. IV*, pl. 5, where the numbers are unfortunately illegible.
 - 21 While the discussion here focuses on third century, Roman-period Dura, there is some evidence that the houses in this block had evolved over centuries; a graffito from House C7–F (no. 299) gives a first century BCE date. (Although this was on a stone doorframe, which could have been reused, some of the plaster architectural moldings were dated to this period as well, and these dates are problematic.) On the architectural moldings, see Lucy T. Shoe, “Architectural Mouldings of Dura-Europos,” *Berytus* 8 (1943–44): 1–40.
 - 22 35 by 70 meters or 100 by 200 feet in a local “Greek” foot of 0.35 meters.
 - 23 It is now argued that the orthogonal plan dates to the sec-

- ond century BCE and was not a feature laid out from the moment of the colony's foundation: Pierre Leriche, "Le *chreophylakeion* de Doura-Europos et la mise en place du plan hippodamien de la ville," in *Archives et Sceaux du Monde Hellénistique: Archivi e Sigilli nel Mondo Ellenistico*; Torino, Villa Gualino, 13–16 Gennaio 1993, ed. Marie-Françoise Boussac and Antonio Invernizzi, supplement 29, *Bulletin de correspondance hellénique* (Paris: École Française d'Athènes, 1996); Leriche, "Europos-Doura Hellénistique," in *La Syrie Hellénistique*, supplement 4, *Topoi Orient-Occident* (Lyon: Société des amis de la bibliothèque Salomon Reinach, 2003), 1:180–81; and Leriche, "Le phénomène urbain dans la Syrie hellénistique," *Bulletin d'Études Orientales* 52 (2000): 141–54.
- 24 From the papyri, we know that some houses were divided and reorganised because of partible inheritance; in the case of *P. Dura* 19, a house is divided among the heirs of Polemocrates. Catherine Saliou, "Les quatre fils de Polémocrates (*P. Dura* 19)," *Doura-Europos Études* 1990, *Syria* 69 (1992): 65–78. This gradual amalgamation and reorganisation of houses is also evidenced, e.g., Block D5; by the final period there are only four separate house units in this block, although there is evidence that there had been at least seven.
- 25 The terms *andron* and *diwan* are problematic in that they are not certainly applicable to this room type (*andron* occurs in texts at the site but not definitely pertaining to a particular space, and *diwan* is an anachronism), so they are not used here. See further J. A. Baird, "The Bizarre Bazaar: Early Excavations in the Roman East and Problems of Nomenclature," in *TRAC 2006: Proceedings of the Sixteenth Annual Theoretical Roman Archaeology Conference which Took Place at the University of Cambridge, 24–25 March 2006*, ed. Ben Croxford et al. (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2007), 34–42.
- 26 On the study of identity in Roman archaeology, David J. Mattingly, "Being Roman: Expressing Identity in a Provincial Setting," *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 17 (2004): 5–25; Martin Pitts, "The Emperor's New Clothes? The Utility of Identity in Roman Archaeology," *American Journal of Archaeology* 111 (2007): 693–713. On identities on the Middle Euphrates in this period from onomastic evidence, see Michael Sommer, "A Map of Meaning. Approaching Cultural Identities at the Middle Euphrates (1st to 3rd Centuries AD)," *Egitto e Vicino Oriente* 27 (2004): 153–83.
- 27 Alain Dandrau, "Gypse, plâtre et djousse," in *Doura-Europos Études IV, 1991–1993*, ed. Pierre Leriche and Mathilde Gelin (Beirut: Institut Français d'archéologie du Proche-Orient, 1997), 155–57.
- 28 For Hellenistic houses in Syria, those at Jebel Khalid make an interesting comparison: Heather Jackson, "A Hellenistic Housing Insula in North Syria" (Ph.D. diss., University of Melbourne, 2001); and Jackson, "Erotes on the Euphrates: a Figured Frieze in a Private House at Hellenistic Jebel Khalid on the Euphrates," *American Journal of Archaeology* 113, no. 2 (2009): 231–53.
- 29 Elizabeth C. Stone, "Houses, Households and Neighborhoods in the Old Babylonian Period: the Role of Extended Families," in *Houses and Households in Ancient Mesopotamia. Papers Read at the 40e Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale Leiden, July 5–8, 1993*, ed. Klass R. Veenhof (Istanbul: Nederlands Historisch-archaeologisch Instituut, 1996), 231.
- 30 The use of fired brick and vaults in the F3 baths at Dura, originally dated to the Parthian period by Frank Brown and now shown to be Roman in date, is discussed in Nigel Pollard, "Roman Material Culture Across Imperial Frontiers? Three Case Studies from Parthian Dura-Europos," in *The Greco-Roman East: Politics, Culture, Society*, Yale Classical Studies, vol. 31 (Cambridge: Cambridge

- University Press, 2004), 132–43.
- 31 For an inscription at Dura referring to this measurement, see Richard N. Frye et al., *Inscriptions from Dura-Europos*, Yale Classical Studies, vol. 14 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1955), no. 59, line 3.
 - 32 For a recent account of this, see Simon T. James, *The Arms and Armour and Other Military Equipment, Final Report 7. Excavations at Dura Europos Conducted by Yale University and the French Academy of Inscriptions and Letters, 1928–1937* (London: British Museum, 2004).
 - 33 Simon T. James, “New Light on the Roman Military Base at Dura-Europos: Interim Report on a Pilot Season of Fieldwork in 2005,” in *The Late Roman Army in the Near East from Diocletian to the Arab Conquest: Proceedings of a Colloquium Held at Potenza, Acerenza and Matera, Italy, May 2005*, ed. Ariel S. Lewin and Pietrina Pellegrini, British Archaeological Reports International Series 1717 (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2007), 29–47.
 - 34 This evidence sometimes is interpreted as the “billeting” of soldiers, e.g., Nigel Pollard, *Soldiers, Cities, and Civilians in Roman Syria* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000), 55–56, 104–9.
 - 35 *Prelim. Rep. V*, 38–40; and Bernard Goldman, “Pictorial Graffiti of Dura-Europos,” *Parthica* 1 (1999): no. F.5 (although there ascribed to the wrong block of houses).
 - 36 *Prelim. Rep. V*, 39–40, no. 401.
 - 37 *Prelim. Rep. VI*, 68–77. On the graffiti of Dura, see J. A. Baird, “The Graffiti of Dura-Europos: a Contextual Approach,” in *Ancient Graffiti in Context*, ed. J. A. Baird and Claire Taylor (New York: Routledge, 2010).
 - 38 A “bronze rosette” (field number E429), was recorded from this house; other artifacts, from military dress and horse equipment, with this description are interpreted as copper alloy phalera. This field number is no longer associated with an artifact, so it is impossible to confirm this identification. An iron dagger, E174, from this house is not of a Roman military pattern (Simon T. James, pers. comm.). Other pieces of military dress were found in this block: a copper alloy buckle, E321c (1932.1621a), was found in House C7–A2 and a pierced bronze (1938.2095), identified by James as a copper alloy strap junction (a Roman military equestrian fitting), was found in an unknown place in C7. James, *Arms and Armour*, no. 339; and Frisch and Toll, *The Bronze Objects*, no. 3.
 - 39 The crossbow brooch is the most common type found at Dura, accounting for almost half of the known examples. J. A. Baird, “Everyday Life in Roman Dura-Europos: the Evidence of Dress Practices,” in *Religion, Society and Culture at Dura-Europos*, ed. Ted Kaizer (forthcoming). From C7 are known fibulae E436, E320b, E3202, E390, E99e, E168a, and E200. On the crossbow type and the (perhaps problematic) link with the Roman military, see Ellen Swift, *Regionality in Dress Accessories in the Late Roman West*, Monographies Instrumentum (Montagnac: Éditions Monique Mergoil, 2000), 11:73.
 - 40 Brooches E436 (1932.1427/1938.2042) and E320b (1938.2039) respectively. Frisch and Toll, *The Bronze Objects*, nos. 80, 87.
 - 41 E390 (1932.1424) and E168a (1932.1580) respectively. The latter is *ibid.*, no. 19.
 - 42 James, *Arms and Armour*, 55, 240.
 - 43 Michael. I. Rostovtzeff and Alan Little, “La maison des fresques de Doura-Europos,” *Mémoires de l’Institut National de France Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-*

- Lettres* 33 (1933): 167–90. The paintings at Dura are not, however, true frescoes in the sense of being made onto wet plaster. This house was cleared partially by soldiers stationed at the site in 1924 and by Pillet in 1930–31, so there are no object records that record the artifacts from this house. The paintings from this house were discussed also in Michael I. Rostovtzeff, *Dura and the Problem of Parthian Art*, Yale Classical Studies, vol. 5 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1935).
- 44 The readings of these inscriptions are problematic, and the different scholars asked by the Yale team to make translations each gave a different answer: *Prelim. Rep. IV*, 199–206.
- 45 Bernard Goldman and Alan M. G. Little, “The Beginning of Sasanian Painting and Dura-Europos,” *Iranica Antiqua* 15 (1980): 289–90. The “typical” Parthian trouser is exemplified in other costumes in art at Dura, however (see Goldman and Little’s no. 12), so the argument is flawed; as Goldman and Little note, these riders are also missing many items of Sasanian dress that we might expect to find. The same argument has been used recently by An De Waele, “The Figurative Wall Painting of the Sasanian Period from Iran, Iraq, and Syria,” *Iranica Antiqua* 39 (2004). Note that the room numbers given in both the study of Goldman and Little and De Waele are not those assigned by the Yale team, so they do not correlate with the plan here. This mural was returned to Yale University, and new study of it would be instructive particularly given the lack of comparanda.
- 46 J. A. Baird, “Dura Deserta: the Death and Afterlife of Dura-Europos,” in *Vrbes Extinctae: Approaches to and Archaeologies of Abandoned Classical Towns*, ed. Neil Christie and Andrea Augenti (Aldershot, Eng.: Ashgate, forthcoming).
- 47 Frantz Grenet, “Les Sassanides a Doura-Europos (253 Ap. J.-C.). Réexamen du Matériel Épigraphique Iranien du Site,” in *Géographie historique au Proche-Orient: Syrie, Phénicie, Arabie, grecques, romaines, byzantines: Actes de la table ronde de Valbonne, 16–18 septembre 1985*, ed. Pierre-Louis Gatier, Bruno Helly, and Jean-Paul Rey-Coquais (Paris: Éditions du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1988).
- 48 Goldman’s own later study of the pictorial graffiti lists eighteen equestrians from throughout the site, most of them mounted archers, as well as seven different hunting scenes. Many of these have the same tripartite hairstyles of the mural under discussion. See Goldman, “Pictorial Graffiti of Dura-Europos.”
- 49 *Prelim. Rep. IV*, no. 294.
- 50 Indicating that the final reports on the ceramics are not necessarily representative of the proportions of different ceramic types recovered at the site.
- 51 On the commonware, see Dyson, *The Commonware Pottery*.
- 52 On the green glazed ceramics, Nicholas Toll, *The Green Glazed Pottery. The Excavations at Dura-Europos Conducted by Yale University and the French Academy of Inscriptions and Letters. Final Report 4, Part 1, Fascicle 1* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1943).
- 53 Types 5, 6, and 8 following the typology of Paul Victor Christopher Baur, *The Lamps. The Excavations at Dura-Europos Conducted by Yale University and the French Academy of Inscriptions and Letters. Final Report 4, Part 3*, ed. Michael I. Rostovtzeff et al. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1947). On the problems of the typologies in these reports, J. A. Baird, “Constructing Dura-Europos, Ancient and Modern,” in *Roman Spaces, Heritage Traces: Past and Present Roman Place-making*, ed. Cori-

- sande Fenwick, Kathryn Lafrenz Samuels, and Darian Totten (Portsmouth, R.I.: *Journal of Roman Archaeology*, forthcoming).
- 54 Bone styli were recorded in C7–G1 and C7–G319, numbers E121 and E157 (1932.1696), respectively.
- 55 E41. No further information on this mill was recorded so it is impossible to say what size it was or for what it was used.
- 56 E298.
- 57 E319a and E319b (1932.1506).
- 58 On the shops at Dura, see J. A. Baird, “Shopping, Eating and Drinking at Dura-Europos: Reconstructing Contexts,” in *Objects in Context, Objects in Use: Material Spatiality in Late Antiquity*, ed. Luke Lavan, Ellen Swift, and Toon Putzeys (Leiden: Brill, 2007).
- 59 *Prelim. Rep. V*, 41. Sunken features in this shop appear in photographs in the Dura-Europos archives at the Yale University Art Gallery (negatives d158 and fxi8). Interpretation of such features without further evidence is difficult; see, for instance, the problems surrounding the *dolia* in shop counters at Pompeii and Herculaneum in Ardle MacMahon, “The *Taberna* Counters of Pompeii and Herculaneum,” in *Roman Working Lives and Urban Living*, ed. Ardle MacMahon and Jennifer Price (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2005).
- 60 For a recent assessment of the religions of Dura, see Kaizer, “Religion and Language in Dura-Europos.” Downey included the Durene sanctuaries in her study of Mesopotamian religious architecture: Susan B. Downey, *Mesopotamian Religious Architecture: Alexander through the Parthians* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988). A short overview of the buildings has since been published by Klaus Stefan Freyberger, “The Sacral Buildings of Dura-Europos,” in *The Syrian Jezira: Cultural Heritage and Interrelations. Proceedings of the International Conference Held in Deir ez-Zor, April 22–25, 1996*, ed. Michel al-Maqdissi et al. (Damascus: République arabe syrienne, Ministère de la Culture, Direction Générale des Antiquités et des Musées, 2002), 277–81. The best overview of Dura’s cults perhaps remains C. Bradford Welles, “The Gods of Dura-Europos,” in *Beiträge zur alten Geschichte und deren Nachleben: Festschrift für Franz Altheim zum 6.10.1968*, ed. Ruth Altheim-Stiehl and Hans Erich Stier (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1969), 50–65.
- 61 E95, which was allocated to the Damascus museum and appears in a photograph in the Dura-Europos archives at the Yale University Art Gallery (negative Dam–113), Downey notes might be a Hermes: Susan B. Downey, *The Heracles Sculpture. The Excavations at Dura-Europos Conducted by Yale University and the French Academy of Arts and Letters. Final Report 3, Part 1, Fascicle 1*, ed. C. Bradford Welles (New Haven: Dura-Europos Publications, 1969), no. 42. On Herakles in the Near East, see also Downey, “Heracles in the Djezireh: Dura-Europos, Tell Sheikh Hamad and Hatra,” in *Documents d’archéologie Syrienne I. The Syrian Jezira: Cultural Heritage and Interrelations. Proceedings of the International Conference Held in Deir ez-Zor April 22–25, 1996*, ed. Michel al-Maqdissi et al. (Damascus: République arabe syrienne, Ministère de la Culture, Direction Générale des Antiquités et des Musées, 2002); and Ted Kaizer, “The ‘Heracles Figure’ at Hatra and Palmyra: Problems of Interpretation,” *Iraq* 62 (2000): 219–32.
- 62 *Prelim. Rep. IV*, 242; Downey, *Heracles Sculpture*, no. 3.
- 63 *Prelim. Rep. IV*, 38; Downey, *Heracles Sculpture*, no. 17; 1931.416; *Prelim. Rep. IV*, 240; Downey, *Heracles Sculpture*, no. 38.
- 64 On the lack of an organised domestic cult at the site,

- Henri Seyrig, "Antiquités Syriennes," *Syria* 24 (1944): 78–79.
- 65 Susan B. Downey, *The Stone and Plaster Sculpture. The Excavations at Dura-Europos, Final Report Volume 3, Part 1, Fascicle 2* (Los Angeles: Institute of Archaeology, University of California, 1977), 3, 153–57.
- 66 E2/E60, Damascus museum no. 4489. *ibid.*, no. 46, 211–12.
- 67 1931.588a; 1934.588a. *Prelim. Rep. IV*, 252–54; Richard A. Grossmann, *Ancient Glass: a Guide to the Yale Collection* (New Haven: Yale University Art Gallery, 2002), 18; and Clairmont, *The Glass Vessels*, no. 126. Only a fragment of this vessel survives, but the gilding on this opaque glass testifies to what was once an opulent glass artifact.
- 68 E295, 1932.1266.
- 69 No field number (recovered in season 4) but appears in the Yale University Art Gallery's negative d370 (1931.603/1938.2214). *Prelim. Rep. IV*, pl. 11.4.
- 70 Unfortunately these were not well recorded, *ibid.*, 35. A plaster shrine was recorded elsewhere in the site (e.g., House G3–J: *Prelim. Rep. IX*, 1, fig. 87). Painted plaster disks from the houses also were assumed to have a religious significance. Examples were found in C7–E2, C7–A22, and C7–A23, *Prelim. Rep. V*, 36, 41.
- 71 Two horse and rider groups: E583 (1932.1258), a horse and rider, Downey, *Terracotta Figurines and Plaques*, no. 92; and E252, from C7–D7, *ibid.*, no. 95; as well as a cow figurine from C7–A26, E297 (1932.125), no. 139; a cow or horse figurine from C7–G2, E100, no. 145; and a saddled horse from C7–D2, E250 (1932.1259), no. 111.
- 72 *Ibid.*, 15. Susan B. Downey, "Hellenistic, Local, and Near Eastern Elements in the Terracotta Production of Dura-Europos," in *Arabia Antiqua: Hellenistic Centres Around Arabia*, ed. Antonio Invernizzi and Jean-François Salles, Serie Orientale Roma (Rome: Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1993), 145.
- 73 Downey, *Terracotta Figurines and Plaques*, 8–11.
- 74 Roman military religion is evidenced by (although not limited to) the Mithraeum in Block J7 and altars to Jupiter Dolichenus (if not a Dolicheneum in X7 as was previously identified) and probably the small temple in A1; *Prelim. Rep. IX*, 3.

ANN OLGA KOLOSKI-OSTROW

DURA-EUROPPOS: WATER, BATHS, LATRINES, AND THE GODDESS FORTUNA IN A DESERT CITY

Brief Political History of Dura-Europos

At certain times of the year, Dura-Europos was surrounded almost completely by water, both a life source and a protection for the city. The Euphrates River served as a boundary to the east; and two *wadis*, which filled with a torrent of water in the rainy season, provided barriers to the north and south. As a result of the high plateau on which the city was strategically located, the inhabitants of Dura-Europos could see the Euphrates, control it, and keep it safe for trade for all five and a half centuries of the city's existence. Only the western flank of the city that faced the desert truly was vulnerable, and this potentially dangerous open access was well fortified in the Roman period by massive walls, the most prominent feature of the current archaeological site (see plan, p. 15).

Dura means "fortress" in Aramaic,¹ so it is not surprising that the name was especially relevant during the last years of the city's life, when it functioned primarily as a Roman military fort. Its Greek name, *Europos*, probably honored the Macedonian birthplace of Seleucus Nicator, the first Seleucid king, who founded the city according to tradition. The combined name Dura-Europos, a modern invention, was not used in antiquity as far as we know.² While the history of the city is long and complex, it was determined to a large extent by the political and economic role of the Euphrates River, the connector between Syria and Mesopotamia and the creator of commercial and military contacts between these two regions.

Dura-Europos, or more correctly, *Europos*, was founded by the Greeks around 300 BCE and conquered by the Parthians in 113 BCE (pl. 6).³ With the brief exception of a Roman takeover in 115 CE, the Parthian Empire occupied the city and used it as an outpost for almost three centuries. The armies of Lucius Verus and Avidius Crassus marched against the Parthians in 165 CE and were finally able to conquer the city, now called *Dura*, which remained Roman for slightly less than a century. In the 250s CE, the Sasanians (Shapur I's second invasion of Syria) conquered Dura-Europos but only occupied it for a short time before abandoning it.⁴ Recent excavations in the city have confirmed the hypothesis of such a short-term hold by the Sasanians.⁵ According to the Roman historian Ammianus Marcellinus,⁶ Dura-Europos was a deserted

town when Julian's army passed by in 363 CE. It soon was washed over by desert sands and more or less lost to memory, until the British army rediscovered it in 1920.⁷ This chapter focuses on the Roman period and, specifically, on Roman infrastructure at Dura-Europos—such as systems for the collection and disposal of water, bath buildings, and toilet facilities.

The Concept of Hygiene Then and Now

Understanding the archaeological remains of water technology and sanitary systems at Dura-Europos, so often tied to rituals and religious observances, can perhaps clarify certain aspects of the city's multicultural population and explain why the city looked the way it did during the Roman period. To get started, it is useful to review some terminology. In modern western cultures the word "hygiene" means the maintenance of healthful practices that are usually related to cleanliness. Outward signs of good hygiene, therefore, involve the absence of visible dirt (including dust and stains on clothing) or bad smells. Since the development of the germ theory of disease in the nineteenth century, hygiene has come to mean any practice leading to the absence of harmful levels of germs. People today believe that good hygiene aids us in achieving health, beauty, comfort, and social intercourse and directly contributes to prevention or to the isolation of diseases or both. (That is, if we are healthy, good hygiene will help us avoid illness. If we are sick, good hygiene reduces our contagiousness to others.)

Washing is the most common example of hygienic behavior in modern, western culture. We wash with soap or detergent to remove oils and to break up particles of dirt so they may be washed away from our skin. Hygienic practices, such as frequent hand-washing (especially after using a toilet) or the use of boiled (and thus sterilized) water in medical operations, have had a profound impact on reducing the spread of diseases, like *E. coli* and hepatitis A, both of which are spread from food contaminated by feces. Everything I have described here is more or less second nature to those of us today in educated, relatively wealthy societies.

But did the Romans of the first and second centuries CE have any concept of "hygiene" specific to them? Finding an answer to this question is not so easy, but it has great relevance for understanding life in a city like Dura-Europos with its great mix of cultures and cultural practices. To begin, even the Greek word, *hygieia*, from which our English word "hygiene" derives, complicates the situation more than clarifies it. Greek *hygieia* does not mean "hygiene," those practices related to cleanliness; but rather it means "health," in the general sense of the "well-being" for both mind and body. Furthermore, the Greek goddess Hygieia—who was daughter, sister, or wife of the god Asklepios—represents "health" in general not our notion of "hygiene" with all the cleansing behaviors related to it.⁸ Together with Asklepios, Hygieia, the protectress of sound health, has been found frequently in Roman baths across the empire,⁹ but to date no statues of the goddess have been found in Roman toilets. (Another goddess, Fortuna, did watch over clients in Roman toilets in the West, as discussed below.)

Because of the proliferation of aqueducts, toilets, bath buildings, and sewers in the Roman cities across Europe, North Africa, and the Near East, many scholars naturally assumed, until quite recently, that the Romans definitely had an interest in and awareness of hygiene construed in association with cleanliness. For what do water, toilets, baths, and sewers do if not clean the people who use them or the cities in which they

are laid out? Because scholars have not been able to free themselves from our modern notions of hygiene, I believe that they have been severely hampered in their efforts to understand the situation from the Roman point of view—or the point of view of non-Roman peoples living alongside the Romans, such as we find at Dura-Europos.

For many years anthropologists have been trying to understand hygiene across cultures and across time. I mention here two theories that seek the root meaning of hygiene, which may relate to the Roman perspective on it. Mary Douglas argued that our human (and she meant all humans at all times in our history) desire for a hygienic environment represents a longing for order, and so is a social construction embedded within local social structures. She explained this view as follows: “Dirt then, is never a unique, isolated event. Where there is dirt there is a system. Dirt is the by-product of a systematic ordering and classification of matter, insofar as ordering involves rejecting inappropriate elements.”¹⁰

A more recent study of hygiene calls it a set of behaviors that animals, including humans, use to avoid infection.¹¹ This argument states that our urge to be and stay clean has an ancient evolutionary history and is primarily motivated by the emotion of disgust. According to this theory, most animals, human and non-human, exhibit hygienic behaviors as a way of surviving, as a part of the evolutionary process. It is not my aim to sort out the best way to understand how concepts of hygiene first developed in humans or in other animals, but these two anthropological approaches reveal that identifying the motives behind hygienic behaviors can be just as troublesome as understanding the hygienic behaviors themselves.

A consideration of Roman behaviors requires some basic assumptions. First, all individuals and groups, ancient and modern, Romans and non-Romans, would apparently find defecation impure and a cause of pollution. Individual groups in antiquity (and this is true in modern societies as well) handled the problem of dealing with filth and pollution differently. We can never understand, in fact, the urban infrastructure at Dura-Europos if we do not accept the fact that different groups there would have sought different ways to manage or control pollution and filth at various times in the city’s history.

Generally speaking, we can say that some groups centralize protective activities against pollution and disease. Other groups engage in communal washing and defecating for the same reasons. Still others maintain the necessity for private toilet practices. In other words, different groups do whatever it takes in a specific cultural milieu to get the job done of protecting against pollution and disease in the most effective way they can accept within their cultural norms. With these assumptions with regard to sanitation in mind, it may be possible to identify the patterns and behaviors of various ethnic groups at Dura-Europos from what was either left in or absent from the archaeological record.

I want to return for a moment to the question of whether the Romans had any concept of “hygiene” specific to them. Alex Scobie was one of the first scholars to attack the old view of the Roman Empire as a more or less pristine (and therefore “hygienic”) place, and to reveal, as had never been done before, a variety of dismal realities from the Roman archaeological and literary evidence.¹² He argued that Roman towns were over-crowded and their streets were full of rubbish and filth, that disposal of human and animal wastes was generally abominable, that legal shortcomings virtually ensured that large numbers of destitute inhabitants (in the city of Rome in particular) continued to live in squalid conditions for generations, that life expectancy at birth (in the first and second centuries CE) was around twenty-five years, that infant mortality was appalling, that diseases spread rapidly in slums from rats, flies, and lack of proper sanitation, and that most

buildings were subject to structural collapse—a far cry from the modern view of good public hygiene.

Inspired by this shocking, although more realistic, picture of Roman antiquity, at least for the city of Rome, archaeological research, first into baths, and now into water supply, toilets, and sewers, has been slowly increasing; and dirt and waste are now seen as valuable avenues of study for pursuing the truth about Roman daily life.¹³ The classicist Günther Thüry in 2001 published a German update of Scobie's article that added new information from the field of archaeo-biology, including evidence on hygiene from insect remains, rat and mouse skeletons, and food particles in excrement.¹⁴ This is the new discipline that finally elevated ancient waste to a level worthy of scientific inquiry. Thüry surmised that the notion of hygiene in the Roman world was not at all highly developed;¹⁵ and that means that any modern images of clean, "dirt-free" Roman towns and villas must be inaccurate. Archaeologists in recent years have been uncovering waste and rubbish at sites everywhere—and they are also beginning to understand the Roman facilities created to improve hygiene (water supply systems, baths, toilets, sewers), to find out how effective these facilities were, and to learn what happened when they failed.¹⁶

An Overview of Baths and Bathing in the Roman World

In order to place the baths of Dura-Europos in a larger context, a brief overview of baths and bathing customs in the Roman world is indicated.¹⁷ The Romans themselves loved the physical, social, and mental pleasures of their bathing habits, and they were also very aware that building baths, big and small, in various cities across the empire could potentially enhance their political power within native populations. They must have reasoned that providing the luxury amenities of baths (ample water heated to a variety of temperatures, lots of hot steam, and other more subtle bathing delights) for both rich and poor citizens, and even for slaves, would win them widespread favor.

By the first and second centuries CE (when Roman rule was secure in Dura-Europos), bathing culture had spread all across Europe from the Near East to North Africa and to Britain. No Roman town (military outposts or native towns captured by the Romans) did not have at least one bath, so it is surprising how much we do not know about them and how they functioned, although scholars are making significant progress.

Many basic issues about baths, however, still need more attention: time of day for Roman bathing (or even if one time was standard everywhere); the route clients would have taken through the bathing rooms [the most standard rooms were the *apodyterium* (changing room), *frigidarium* (cold room), *tepidarium* (warm room), *caldarium* (hot room), *sudatorium* (steam room)—the choice of bathing rooms varied in different baths]; what kind of exercise, bath games, food or drink or both, or other entertainments were common in baths;¹⁸ and whether mixed bathing was practiced.

The most famous Republican era baths (from Pompeii and Herculaneum, for example) display separate sets of bathing rooms for men and women.¹⁹ Fikret Yegül, however, cautions that among the one hundred or so excavated Republican era baths from across the empire, the great majority display a *single* set of bath rooms.²⁰ We may conclude from this that different sexes likely used baths at different hours of the day or that women bathed at home most of the time. We have no proof of separation or segregation of pagans,

Christians, and Jews in baths, as happens in the Middle Ages. No distinct parts of baths seem to have been reserved for higher-paying clientele either, such as the better seats for the well-to-do in Roman theaters or amphitheaters.

This is not the place for discussion of the origin of Roman baths and bathing practices, which would lead us into topics like the Greek bath and gymnasium, distinctions between *balneae* (small city baths) and *thermae* (massive urban bath complexes), the nature of thermal baths and spas, and various specific bath types, such as baths in Campania, Rome, Ostia, or Tivoli. I turn instead directly to Roman bathing and baths in the East.

Yegül's recent work has revealed new paradigms of social (and religious) use for eastern baths, in particular, in the late-antique and Byzantine periods. He includes the Baths of Constantinople, the *Thermae* of Zeuxippos, the baths of Antioch, small baths in Syria (such as Bath E-3 in Dura-Europos and the baths at Serdjilla), and some large baths in Syria (for example, Bosra, Shehba, Jerash—all valuable additions to the discussion of bathing developments).²¹ Yegül explains what he calls "the neighborhood trilogy" (the mansion, the church, and the bath), a combination that reflects "the symbolic conflation of the realms of local authority and popular religion" in the Byzantine city,²² which continued to be echoed in the urban structures of Islamic-Turkish Istanbul [mosque, *konak* (mansion), and *hamam* (so-called Turkish bath)]. The continuity of Roman bathing culture is well documented in Yegül's examples stretching from the Roman period into the Byzantine city and even beyond.

When Yegül grapples with the ideology of Christianity and how it changed bathing culture, he investigates the scriptural notion "He who has bathed in Christ has no need of a second bath," the actual objections within Christianity especially to public bathing, and the concept of *alousia*, or the state of being unwashed.²³ He then includes the more seamless bathing traditions from the Islamic world by way of a review of early Islamic baths in Syria and the Islamic Palace Bath of Khirbat al-Mafjar. In Islamic society, the bath had clearly become a pleasurable gathering place for friends, music, poetry readings, and storytelling, not unlike the sophisticated society portrayed in the early Islamic epic *The Thousand and One Nights*.²⁴ The archaeological and literary evidence for baths, beyond a doubt, speaks both to Roman and non-Roman responses to pollution, dirt, and impurity.

Urban Layout and Water Systems of Dura

A Hippodamian-like city plan of Dura (see plan, p. 15)—consisting of a series of broad, straight streets, intersecting one another but retaining a wide area (for a marketplace, *agora*, and later forum) centrally positioned in the city—was at first dated to the early days of the Greek colony (ca. early 300s BCE).²⁵ Historians now know, however, that it belongs to the late-Hellenistic period (the second quarter of the second century BCE).²⁶ Although it is not possible at this point to know if we can attribute the final layout of the city to a pre-existing Babylonian grid plan or to Greek city planning, it is worth pointing out that one of the greatest contributions of the fifth-century urban planner Hippodamus was his desire to create an environment that expressed and nurtured the ideals of a city's inhabitants. In effect, the Hippodamian urban layout actually expressed such ideals as order, sanitation, beauty, political unity, and power, among other notions. As one

walked around a city designed with these special rectangular grids, one could experience these ideals, and access to clean, fresh water was always a factor in accomplishing these goals.

A desert city, such as Dura, naturally posed special challenges to any urban designer. Water was far more scarce; and, as I indicated, water was an essential ingredient for achieving the desired urban experience. The first colonizers of Europos (300s BCE) utilized the slopping hillside facing the Euphrates to the east for their houses and for providing ample drainage and a system for runoff. Archaeologists know that drain pipes (and sometimes open channels) from houses removed dirty water and urban waste into the streets then washed everything down in the direction of the river. This practice continued throughout the city's history. The threat of the Parthian siege might have inspired the development of the city (with its Babylonian or Hippodamian grid plan) to the north, south, and west with the creation of fortification walls,²⁷ but ultimately the walls themselves were the true mark of greatness that this city would leave on a largely barren desert landscape. The fortification walls, begun in the Hellenistic period and heavily strengthened in the Roman period, enclosed an area of land that far surpassed the dimensions of the original settlement. I should note that not all of the new, ambitious, Babylonian or Hippodamian city plots were built on—habitation was confined to the central area of the town around the *decumanus maximus* (main east-west street running through the city) and near the *agora*, or forum. The Macedonian colonists probably possessed property holdings all around the region, and they were regularly in contact with indigenous populations.²⁸ This and later contact between Romans and native peoples (wealthy, local farmers and nomadic herders who passed through the desert here) naturally would contribute to the complex cultural mix of religious practices and customs within Dura's walls. As Dura continued to prosper and grow, some of these local peoples chose to settle within its walls. Although it is impossible to determine the exact extent and precise results of any interactions between Greek or Roman settlers or both and the indigenous folks who came to live in Dura during either the Hellenistic or Roman period, the task is not completely hopeless, as my focus on sanitary practices below reveals.

No elaborate underground sewer system has yet been excavated under the streets of Dura; and it is very likely that there was none, especially given the eastern slope of the city's plateau for runoff. By the middle of the second century CE,²⁹ there were three Roman baths at Dura: the larger Bath E-3 and two others, designated in the 1930s as M-7 and C-3, by the then young excavator Frank Brown.³⁰ No large public latrines have been identified beyond a fairly small arrangement in the bath E-3 and a latrine in the palace of the redoubt noted in Baird.³¹ Brown detected strong Western origins in the planning of all the baths—five or six vaulted bathing rooms, several timber-roofed peripheral elements, and courtyards all comparable to the typical Pompeian row-type baths. Brown also observed that the Dura baths were “exclusively military baths, but a step in the intense Romanization of municipal life.”³²

At the time when Cumont and Rostovtzeff first were exploring Dura, no one was properly identifying latrines at any excavation sites across Europe, no one was studying the social implications of toilets or the stratified fecal matter within them, and no one was using sanitary facilities to try to understand Roman social customs and sanitary practices. Scarcely one toilet is mentioned in the excavation reports for the private houses of Dura, although it is very likely that most private houses had at least one cesspit latrine.³³

Archaeological publications of sites across Europe, especially from the nineteenth century, were filled instead with an amusing array of interpretations for toilet and latrine features, laughable in their variety and

somewhat embarrassing today for their evasiveness: toilets were described as seats in steam baths, prison chairs, and chairs for various medical therapies, to name a few of the bogus suggestions.³⁴ As it was thought that the aim of archaeology was to uncover the high culture of ancient Greece and Rome, not the disgusting habits of personal evacuation, we can see that powerful taboos about toilet habits were in place and these seemed to merge with notions about the “high goals” for the role of archaeology. One could not discuss these topics openly, let alone consider them worthy of scholarship. Research about Roman toilets and sewers was not an option until the late-twentieth century, but such sanitary features are strikingly fruitful indicators about Roman life and society and the interaction of Romans with others.³⁵

Evidence of Sanitary Practices and Latrines in Palestine

Stefanie Hoss has done some valuable analysis of cultural ideas about defecation, urination, and what was considered ritually impure in ancient Palestine and Syria.³⁶ We can learn from her research, for example, that Jews in Palestine considered defecation an impure act; so naturally Roman toilet habits, their facilities for evacuation, along with public nakedness, would have been considered not only ritually impure but also dangerous and something to be avoided. Other ethnic groups of the Near East may also have been repulsed by Roman customs and facilities for one reason or another, but the most vivid proof of such revulsion comes from the Jews and is expressed in their religious texts. Jewish scripture gives us directions concerning sanitation, cleansing, and religious rituals, which served as guideposts to hygiene.³⁷

Hoss found that only five public toilets are known in all of Palestine—all of them located in the vicinity of public baths.³⁸ According to the various excavators’ preliminary reports, the latrines date to the third or fourth century CE. With the exception of one latrine situated near a Roman fort in the Negev, they are all located in fairly big cities with large non-Jewish, especially Roman, populations. The number of latrine seats we can estimate from the plans seems to be about four to five in two cases, at least twenty-five in another, and for most of the others it is impossible to determine. The latrine in the Eastern Bath of Beth-She’an was, with fifty-seven seats, the largest and most luxurious facility in Palestine. This toilet was accessible from both inside the bath and directly from the street.

The style of the Beth-She’an toilet seat is quite different from the seats in toilets elsewhere in the Roman Empire, at Ostia or Ephesus, for example. Ostia and Ephesus have bench-style seating with holes located every few feet, whereas Beth-She’an toilet was constructed with stone slabs sticking out of the wall about a foot or so apart. The users of the public latrine at Beth-She’an would sit on two adjacent slabs with a gap between their legs instead of a hole built into the bench. Beth-She’an is a good example of possible local architectural forms influencing the Roman norm. This design required less carving of stone than the bench-style seating.

The positioning of public latrines inside or near bathhouses seems to indicate that they were perceived as part of the architecture of a “proper” Roman bath; thus, they often may be considered an appendage to them rather than a separate structure. Like other Roman customs and forms of amusement (amphitheater games, for example), Roman baths were not accepted widely among the native populations of Palestine. It

took at least until the mid-second century CE for the Roman bathing habit to become established among Jewish inhabitants, and even then it was accepted only with certain adjustments that allowed religious Jews to use the facilities.³⁹ Although passages on washing in Roman baths are numerous in the Palestinian Talmud, public latrines are mentioned only twice.⁴⁰ This rare referencing of latrines may suggest that religious Jews did not frequent them.⁴¹

Private toilets with single seats can be found in many wealthy houses of ancient Palestine from Hellenistic times onward.⁴² They are usually cesspit toilets enclosed by small buildings in the inner courtyard. Granted the evidence is modest, some toilets probably were placed on upper stories as well, such as in a house in Kurnub. As it would be unnecessary to expose oneself to others when using a single-seat toilet covered by a simple wooden structure, these single-seat cesspits may have been the favored toilet installations in Palestine by Jews and other non-Romans as well. Certainly by Roman times, and as early as the second century BCE, we know that human excrement was used as fertilizer in agriculture. Collecting it in the self-contained cesspits of private houses and emptying it when the cesspits were nearly full would have been profitable for the handlers of excrement (*stercorarii*) and convenient for the house owners.⁴³

Evidence of Latrines in Syria

Until the last twenty years or so, very little research had been done on latrines in Syria. Richard Neudecker mentioned only two public toilets in his book on Roman public latrines: the latrine in Apamea, dating to the second-century, and the latrine in Bath E-3 at Dura-Europos, dating to around 165 CE when the Romans arrived.⁴⁴ At least fourteen other latrines now have been found and recorded in Syria.⁴⁵ Ten of these latrines were built in or in close proximity to public baths, three were independent structures, and another three have unknown urban contexts. In general, public latrines across the Roman Empire so far reveal a pattern that engineers tended to construct them in areas with easy access to a water supply. The number of seats in the Syrian latrines has been estimated for five of these installations, and seating capacity varies from four to eighteen patrons. The notable exception is the latrine at Apamea that could have seated between eighty and ninety people.⁴⁶

The chronological patterning of latrines in Syria allows some insights into the attitudes toward latrines in the region. In other parts of the empire, rather lavishly decorated, large latrines were introduced and common in the second and third century.⁴⁷ Whereas five of the public latrines in Syria very likely belong to this time period (evidence for firm dating is often hard to come by), the majority of the latrines in Syria (the remaining eleven confirmed examples) date to the fourth century or later. This late introduction of an identifiable latrine culture can be paralleled with the late introduction of latrines in Palestine that I discussed above. In the former case, the low numbers of public latrines and their late date has been attributed firmly to Jewish religious taboos that would have made it problematic for latrine use to be incorporated into Jewish society. Evidence for similar explicitly religious concerns among other non-Roman people in Syria is lacking, but the similarities in date and the scarce distribution of latrines in both areas are striking. The implication is that the inhabitants of Syria over a long time also may have found Roman-style latrines and Roman toileting habits culturally problematic. A comparison with the spread of public bathing in these

eastern provinces further enhances this picture.

For the Jewish population, public, communal bathing also presented problems similar to those of public latrine use. Although baths were slow to develop in eastern cities, they did become frequent features in the urban landscapes of Palestine and Syria from a significantly earlier date than latrines.⁴⁸ This easier acceptance of baths, as shown by their faster dissemination across the region, suggests that there were broader, more deeply embedded concerns specific to latrine use, and these need further exploration. I shall consider what some of those concerns might have been, then attempt to tie them to the situation on the ground at Dura.

Social, Moral, and Religious Issues Connected to Roman Latrine Culture

Compared to the number of latrines found in Syria and Palestine starting in the second century CE onward, relatively high numbers of latrines have been found in Italy and North Africa.⁴⁹ We might think that the widespread construction of latrines in these regions suggests a lack of socio-cultural or moral concern about latrine use. On the contrary, the majority of the known apotropaic imagery, epigraphy, and graffiti (warnings about the dangers of latrine use in particular) comes from these same areas of Italy and North Africa. The rich artistic and inscribed evidence showing Roman concern about their own latrine use clearly demonstrates that they themselves were not dismissive about the dangers they perceived lurking in their toilets. The Romans used a variety of protective devices in their toilets: images or statues of the goddess Fortuna, paintings and graffiti of defecating or urinating pygmies,⁵⁰ and drawings of *phalli* and alphabets on toilet walls. All of these are similar to the apotropaic indicators found in Roman baths across the empire.⁵¹ In both the case of latrines and of baths, these indicators seem to have been used in response to a non-specific threat from disease or pollution, functioning, as it were, as a kind of hazard-precaution system. Recent research in clinical and evolutionary psychology and anthropology has shown that humans have a built-in hazard-precaution system that responds to potential (as distinct from actual) contaminants.⁵² This system produces ritualistic responses to potential hazards that may or may not threaten a person's health and well-being.⁵³ These responses have cross-cultural similarities and include relying on lucky or unlucky numbers, taking ritualistic measures to prevent harm (salt over the shoulder, for example) or saying special prayers and incantations to ward off evils ("God Bless You," for sneezes, to give a modern example). They do not necessarily require a scientific understanding of disease, but are commonly identified with broad categories of danger from our evolutionary past.⁵⁴

The epigraphic evidence from Italy and North Africa also strongly indicates that there were social rules governing where it was appropriate to defecate or urinate. This preoccupation seems to be mirrored by the placement and design of latrines themselves. The distinction here seems not so much to be between what is considered a public or private space (public latrines are public by nature) but rather where one is considered to be under the social gaze or not.⁵⁵ The threat of the social gaze seems to be what sets up the boundaries between what is in place and what is out of place. William James' definition of dirt as "matter out of place" (made famous by Mary Douglas) is a helpful concept here.⁵⁶

In the case of defecating or urinating under the social gaze, the Romans considered not only the mat-

ter (excrement and urine) pollution but also the behaviors to produce them (defecating and urinating). As shown by Roman paintings of defecating and urinating pygmies,⁵⁷ the Romans saw acts of defecating or urinating in public as animalistic and outside human, socially acceptable activities. These acts, therefore, needed to be controlled and protected against—hence the creation of religious curses associated with them and the construction of latrines to confine them. The need to control the potential pollution, both actual and behavioral, is represented clearly by the construction of latrines; that is, the Romans created a particular place for these animal-like activities to be performed where the social gaze could be diverted temporarily.⁵⁸

We have already seen how the spread of latrine culture in Palestine and Syria came quite late and seems to have been less entrenched in terms of the numbers of latrines found than elsewhere in the empire. In Britain, for example, multiseat latrines have been found predominantly at military forts, and the evidence for a hierarchy of toilets for various users at the camps, depending on quality of construction and amount of privacy afforded, is strong.⁵⁹ Officers used one-seater toilets, for example; and the lower ranks of soldiers used the dirtier, multiseat latrines.

I can partly explain the low number of latrines in Palestine and Syria based on the religious taboos related to impurity and nudity that undoubtedly presented severe problems for non-Roman populations, especially Jews. To get at a more complete explanation requires a look beyond such cultural and religious taboos to find out what motivated them. I can identify at least two main areas where the motivations against latrine culture become fairly clear. Jews, for whom we have the textual evidence, and others in the Near East, had difficulty accepting the use of water (something used in religious rites for achieving ritual purity) for the disposal of excrement in sewer channels with running water. The Romans, who also depended on clean water for their religious rituals as did non-Roman peoples, seemed to be able to separate water for ritual purposes from water for latrine technology. The good dose of superstitious warnings in latrines, however, certainly shows that they were not completely free of worries for their own practices.

The communal nature of public latrines would also have run contrary to cultural practices of both Jews and other non-Romans. The issue of mixing water and excrement was explicitly treated in Jewish religious texts and perhaps can be implied from negative evidence too for other non-Roman populations. In Roman Britain, for example, latrines were extremely prolific in Roman military camps but virtually absent from the constructions of the native populations. In Syria, there is a distinct paucity of latrines in the early period (pre-Roman) settlements.

The associations of water with life and death (today and in antiquity) are intricate and multifaceted. Attitudes toward water in both the past and present seem to be caught up in a complex network of negotiations between its life-giving forces and its potential death-producing qualities.⁶⁰ The deposit of excrement in water for the ancient Jews of Dura possibly was a step too far in this negotiation,⁶¹ especially if the person who was polluting the water could be seen to be a pollutant himself. In other words, an evolutionary concern about the purity of water could become a moral problem and be framed in terms of ritual purity and impurity. Putting excrement into water creates a potential source of disease; and ancient Jews, other non-Romans, and even the Romans themselves, were definitely aware of this, and each handled the situation differently.

Multiple issues surface when we try to evaluate Roman toilets and toileting behaviors. Here are just a

few: What was the meaning of “public” and “private” to Romans and non-Romans? How did nudity in a toilet relate to concerns (held by the Romans and others) of the social gaze? What was considered proper treatment of polluting material (excrement and urine) for Romans and others? How did Romans and non-Romans deal with concerns about contacting pollution by the very act of defecating or urinating? And, as we have seen above, how did Romans and non-Romans deal with the grave anxieties about mixing excrement and urine with water?

Who used latrines, both men and women or just men? The literary evidence suggests that men were the primary users, and this fits with the notion that women would have been at home more and not in need of public facilities. As with Roman baths, there is nothing to suggest that latrines were reserved for any particular social class. Slaves, freedmen, poor citizens, and the elite all seemed to have access; although we now can imagine that anyone who could avoid them, especially from the elite classes, would no doubt have done so.

The communal nature of Roman latrines posed many additional problems for toilet-users—for the Jews of Palestine and Syria, other non-Romans, and for the Romans themselves. Communal toilets presented the potential to come into contact with the bodily products, especially feces, of other people. The experience of a latrine—rife with powerfully unpleasant smells; the sounds of passing air or belching or both; the touch of dank and dirty surfaces; and the continuous fear of demons jumping up from dark, open latrine holes—would have made all users very aware of their own animal-like behavior in the company of others. All of these aspects of latrine use have been noted to produce disgust cross-culturally.

Shame, at least for the Romans, also must have been an important factor relevant in latrine use, as it governs what is deemed appropriate behavior. In other words, to the Romans, to do something that was deemed shameful was to behave like an animal and to show no awareness of human social rules. For Romans, to have a sense of honor also was to have a sense of shame—of *pudor* or *verecundia* or shyness. A Roman was expected to withdraw his gaze from a person engaging in inappropriate behaviors.⁶² Using a communal latrine must be understood through a specific cultural filter of what it meant to be under the social gaze. Many non-Romans would have rejected these Roman cultural norms.

Roman latrines clearly provoked a variety of socio-cultural, moral, and religious concerns, for both Romans and other ethnic groups across the empire who might have been tempted (or forced) to use them: fear of unknown threats of disease; fear of demons; and a desire not to behave like animals, particularly in the presence of others. The differences in their acceptance across the empire vary because of the different cultural forces that were applied to these concerns. In such areas as Italy and North Africa, protection from these concerns manifested in two different, but connected, ways. First, systems of hazard-precaution against unknown and unexplained threats of disease were set in place via protective imagery and exhortations. Second, specific boundaries were drawn designating where it was appropriate to defecate and urinate or what activities were deemed appropriate and which ones were out of place. In both cases, part or all of the protection was expressed in religious terms.

In other parts of the Roman world, such as Palestine and Syria, it was not enough to call on divine protection in a latrine to create a supposedly safe environment for the user. Public latrines posed truly serious problems, especially for Jews, so they were constructed rarely, if at all, in places like Dura. The issues concerning the location where something was deemed to be a pollutant, social rules governing the social gaze,

and notions of shame, clearly were perceived differently in the East. The scarce evidence that exists for these rules and concerns seems to show that they resulted in a clear set of virtues that focused on cleanliness and purity closely interrelated with moral and religious taboos on impurity. To break these taboos would have meant to render oneself impure and potentially disgusting. As this fear was too hard to overcome, it probably led to severely restricted public latrine use in these regions, which would include Dura.

Tyche and Fortuna at Dura and Their Importance in the East

A cult to the goddess Tyche (later identified with Roman Fortuna, a dispenser of good and ill fortune) probably first emerged in mainland Greece and on the islands in the sixth or fifth century BCE.⁶³ By the fourth century BCE, the cult of personified fortune had spread throughout greater Greece, including Sicily and the Greek cities of Asia Minor. Tyche apparently personified the fate of the city she protected and simultaneously protected the city against an evil fate. The goddess was an autonomous deity who could be associated with any city. Her iconography was fairly uniform: mural headpiece or grain-measure crown on her head, ship's rudder in one hand (which connects her to water and all its uses, commercial and religious), and cornucopia in the other.⁶⁴ This protective goddess had well-established cults in most Hellenized cities in Syria by the Hellenistic and Roman periods. Local coinage from Dura often displayed the goddess with her mural crown, perhaps her most popular motif (pl. 28).⁶⁵

She is known from the finds of Dura in relief sculpture, temple art (pl. 44), funerary contexts, and coinage. As Lucinda Dirven has shown, the variety of attributes added to the original Greek iconography of Tyche over time, especially by the time the Romans were worshipping her as Fortuna, is clear evidence that local religious traditions constantly integrated with the original Greek concept of the goddess. By the time the Romans had adapted her as Fortuna, Roman traditions were a part of her persona as well. This is an important point to bear in mind, because this goddess will find herself worshipped in a very different context by Romans outside of Dura and Syria, where she held her place as protector of cities. As I shall discuss below, her protective powers served a much more restricted area, namely the confined spaces of Roman toilets when her cult was transmitted from the East to the Roman West in the first and second centuries CE.

Fortuna in Roman Toilets in the West—To Keep the Evils Away

I have already alluded to the “protective devices” (section on Social, Moral, and Religious Issues Connected to Roman Latrine Culture above) that the Romans used to ward off the evil eye and the dangers they implicitly understood to be lurking in their latrines. Such devices have turned up especially in the toilets of North Africa and Italy. Fortuna, the goddess of good or ill luck, has been found represented in seven Roman toilets. These few examples, almost all of them dating to the first or second centuries CE (earlier than when the Romans arrived in Dura), are worth considering, as they can help us understand the significance of Tyche/Fortuna in Roman Dura as well. The Christian philosopher Titus Flavius Clemens, who lived at the end of the second and beginning of the third century CE in Alexandria in Egypt, left us a comment that does two

things: confirms that most Romans were probably familiar with the presence of Fortuna in their toilets and demonstrates that Christian Clemens considered the placement of the goddess in toilets as the height of ridiculous pagan superstition. His philosophical exhortation (*protrepticus*) focuses on the strangeness of the “religion” of pagan Romans as he comments: “The Romans, although they ascribe their greatest successes to Fortuna, and believe her to be the greatest deity, carry her statue to the privy and erect it there, thus assigning her a fit temple.”⁶⁶

In ancient Pompeii, we have several paintings of Fortuna found either in or near toilets. Perhaps the most famous one, now in the Naples Museum, came from a narrow corridor that led to a single-seat toilet in *taberna* IX.7.22.⁶⁷ The painting shows the goddess Fortuna and two snakes surrounding a naked man (fig. 15.1). Underneath the painting, the excavator discovered a small terracotta altar. The only logical explanation for the shrine is for the worship of Fortuna and all that she represents. Fortuna in the painting wears a red *chiton*, her shoulders are covered with a red shawl, she holds a yellow horn of plenty in her left hand, and she leans on a yellow rudder with her right hand. The rudder in the painting may remind users of Fortuna’s old connection to water (commercial and religious), but it would also suggest the water necessary in the nearby toilet for carrying away polluting materials. A dark green globe rests at her feet. On her head she has a corn-measure, and two ribbons hang down from her ears. The corn-measure identifies her possibly as Fortuna-Isis, a common figure at Pompeii.⁶⁸ She looks down slightly at the nude, squatting man who is on a small platform. The man is smaller than the goddess, and most researchers agree that he must be defecating. A painted flower garland hovers above the scene with more ribbons hanging down. Above the man are the words *cacator cave malu* (crapper, beware of the evil)⁶⁹ written in black paint. The dipinto is clearly of later date than the painting.⁷⁰ The serious situation in which the defecator finds himself—completely exposed to the social gaze but protected by a goddess and chthonic snakes—must have been a situation dreaded and hoped for by many who used public latrines. What Roman would not cherish the protection of Fortuna? But who would want to be so exposed? In any case, we are not meant to understand the man as “other” and, therefore, a suitable target at which to laugh, but to take the image seriously and to heed the warning.

Four other paintings of Fortuna from inside toilets are known from Pompeii. Two of them, which are very poorly preserved, come



Figure 15.1: Pompeii, Cacator Cave Malu dipinto, with painting of Fortuna and crapper. From Pompeii, tavern IX.7.22, now in Naples Museum (photograph by the author)



Figure 15.2: Pompeii, Suburban Baths, small toilet with painting of Fortuna. Note the holes for nails that held a *real* garland (photograph by the author)

from the toilets of private houses.⁷¹ Two others were painted in multiseat latrines located in two of Pompeii's most luxurious baths: the toilet in the bath of the *Praedia* of Julia Felix (II.4), where the Fortuna painting has not survived, and the toilet in the Suburban Baths (VII.16, a), where Fortuna can still be seen.⁷² Fortuna (fig. 15.2) in the latter bath is positioned just in front of the toilet users and above the spot where there once stood a *labrum* filled with water. The painter has drawn a small altar with flame burning on it next to Fortuna and, above her head, another painted flower garland. I have seen the parts of nails remaining in nail holes at the top of the painted garland. This strongly suggests that fresh garlands once hung here to help counter the smells.⁷³

The discovery of a painting of Fortuna (complete with painted garland, offering of a *patera*, and burning altar) dating to the second century CE in a one-person toilet in the so-called house of Domitia Lucilla in Rome illustrates that the custom of placing Fortuna in toilets was not specific to Pompeii, was a serious business, and had definite religious connotations.⁷⁴

In the twenty-seat toilet of the Barracks of the Firemen (II v, 1) at Ostia (fig. 15.3) a statuette of For-



Figure 15.3: Ostia, Latrine in the Barracks of the Firemen, small aedicula for the statue of Fortuna, who was worshipped in this latrine. After Neudecker, fig. 29

tuna is furnished with an *aedicula* (small, temple-like niche). Since this toilet had no entrance from the street side, the people inside the building, the men of the fire brigade or the night watchmen, were the only ones who could use it. The *tympanon* bears the inscription *Fortunae sanct(um)* (sacred to Fortuna). The *aedicula* was placed rather high above the floor level, and from this position Fortuna could watch over all the users of the toilet, wherever they chose to sit. In the middle of the room was an altar dedicated to Fortuna with the following inscription:

C(aius) Valerius
Myron b(ene)f(iciarius) pr(aefecti)
coh(ortis) IIII vig(illum)
Fortunae
sanctae
v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) a(nimo)⁷⁵

To summarize, we can say that Fortuna has been found in both private and public toilets, with a seating capacity varying from one to twenty. In three of the toilets discussed here, the interaction between Fortuna and the toilet users can still be clearly reconstructed. Fortuna was in a central position in the room and all people on the toilet seats could see her, except in the toilet of the Barracks of the Firemen in Ostia, where the view from some seats was not ideal. Fortuna herself could keep an eye on all toilet users from her high position, and this might have been the intention wherever she appears in Roman toilets. It is remarkable that all these toilets were well lit, thus assuring a clear view from different directions of the painting or statuette of Fortuna.⁷⁶ Also, Fortuna was an active participant. She was involved in the activities of the

toilet—worshipped by toilet users and asked for favors by them, as I discussed above. The presence of altars and the nails for fresh garlands clearly indicate this mutual participation. The Ostian inscription does not explain what favors Fortuna granted to Gaius Valerius Myron, but it is easy to guess, perhaps good health, a painless bowel movement,⁷⁷ protection from some odious sewer demon, or simple freedom from an imagined disease or illness that could so easily be caught in a toilet. These are all possibilities given the good luck Fortuna brought to her followers.⁷⁸

Fortuna may also have protected toilet users against the evil eye—that basic apotropaic function so implicit in various protective devices from the ancient world, such as defecating pygmies or urinating men and gods (*mingentes* or Hercules *mingens*), designed to make one laugh and therefore ward off evil.⁷⁹

Conclusion: Dura as a Great Proving Ground for Changing Cultural Ideas

When Michael Rostovtzeff was concluding his compact and useful book *Caravan Cities* (a short guidebook of the archaeological sites of Petra, Jerash, Palmyra, and Dura first published in 1932), he fell into a journalistic diatribe that revealed his true feelings about intercultural relationships at the remote desert site of Dura. He could barely tolerate, let alone understand, the habits of the native peoples in the area—people with whom he and his archaeological team had to deal regularly at this place where he had come to study and excavate.

He expressed his frustrations, which verged on unfettered racism, about the Bedouins and others inhabiting the area around Dura as follows:

The Bedouin is unused to work; he is weak, underfed, and lazy. Money does not tempt him; he works, but to pay his tax, and as soon as he has saved enough for this, he disappears. He is, moreover, suspicious and insists on being paid in heavy Turkish *mejidi*; the slightest thing annoys him, and when annoyed, off he goes, and there's an end of him. Added to this, he is a thorough barbarian: he smashes most of the finds and will try to steal as many of the others as he can. There is, in fact, no one who can be depended upon in this district, for even the Europeans in Syria are untrustworthy and of the worst type—they are mostly thieves and drunkards. On our first journey [to Dura] we were obliged to dismiss our European cook and chauffeur and to have recourse to armed force to get rid of them, so great were the difficulties they caused.⁸⁰

Both the Romans and the native population of Dura must have felt some of these same feelings and confusions when clashes of cultural ideas occurred between and among them.

When the Romans arrived at Dura-Europos, put forward their ideas, built new architecture (such as bath buildings with multiseat latrines), introduced new entertainments, and attempted to impose new customs on the native population, certainly there was as much resistance, anger, fear, and disgust, as there was welcome acceptance. It is no easy task to attempt to make the subtle distinctions clear about which Roman customs or religious practices the native citizens of Dura-Europos accepted or rejected, which ones of the locals of Dura-Europos the Romans adapted or rejected, and which ones the later Jews and Christians

despised from their pagan Roman past.⁸¹

These explorations of Roman hydraulic infrastructure and latrine culture highlight the complex challenges inherent in cultural identities in this one ancient community at Dura-Europos. They also exemplify how various cultural beliefs (for example, insisting on keeping water pure or rejecting communal bathing) could resist change that might have manifested in new urban amenities (more baths or latrines, for example). They also show how different cultural identities at Dura-Europos might have adapted their religious and/or social practices or not.

Tyche/Fortuna maintained her role in Dura-Europos as the urban protectress to the end of the Roman city. Her role seems to have been so entrenched that local, non-Roman inhabitants could never accept the new duties given to her by the Romans of the West, such as protecting toilet users from demons lurking in the depths of latrine trenches or warding off the evil eye. The conservative religions of the East connected with Tyche/Fortuna, Gad of Palmyra, or the Hebrew Yahweh may, in fact, have been substantially responsible for preventing new cultural practices (like more intense use of Roman baths and latrines) from becoming broadly accepted in these far reaches of the Syrian desert.

Notes

- 1 C. Bradford Welles, "The Population of Roman Dura," in *Studies in Roman Economic and Social History in Honor of Allan Chester Johnson*, ed. Paul R. Coleman-Norton (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1951), 261, cited by Lucinda Dirven, *The Palmyrenes of Dura-Europos: a Study of Religious Interaction in Roman Syria* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 2n2.
- 2 Dirven, 2.
- 3 Michael I. Rostovtzeff, "The Foundation of Dura-Europos on the Euphrates," *Annales de l'institut Kondakov* 10 (1938): 102–6.
- 4 Michael I. Rostovtzeff, *Dura-Europos and Its Art* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1938), 30.
- 5 Pierre Leriche and As'ad Al Mahmoud, "Doura-Europos: Bilan des recherches recentes," *Comptes-Rendus de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres* (1994): 417–19.
- 6 Ammianus Marcellinus, XXIII, 5, 7–8. See also Michael H. Dodgeon and Samuel N. C. Lieu, eds., *The Roman Eastern Frontier and the Persian Wars AD 226–363. A Documentary History* (London: Routledge, 1991), 37.
- 7 Franz Cumont, *Fouilles de Doura-Europos 1922–1923* (Paris: Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geunther, 1926), 1:63.
- 8 Gemma Jansen, "Toilets and Health," in *Roman Toilets: Their Archaeology and Cultural History*, BABESCH Supplementary Series, 19 *Annual Papers in Archaeology*, ed. Gemma Jansen, Ann Olga Koloski-Ostrow, and Eric M. Moormann (Leiden: Bulletin Antieke Beschaving, forthcoming), 157–62; and Thomas Schnalke, "Hygieia," in *Antike Medizin, Ein Lexikon*, ed. Karl-Heinz Leven (Munich: Beck, 2005), 443. I am grateful to Gemma Jansen for this reference.
- 9 Hubertus Manderscheid, "Römische Thermen: Aspekte von Architektur, Technik und Ausstattung," in *Die Wasserversorgung antiker Städte, Geschichte der Wasserversorgung*, vol. 3, *Mensch und Wasser, Mitteleuropa, Thermen, Bau, Materialien, Hygiene* (Mainz am Rhein: Zabern, 1988), 120–21. For a detailed discussion of the physical environment in Roman baths, see Garrett G. Fagan, *Bathing in Public in the Roman World* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), 179–88.
- 10 Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: an Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge, 1966), 165.
- 11 Valerie A. Curtis, "Dirt, Disgust, and Disease: a Natural History of Hygiene," *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health* 61, no. 8 (2007): 660–64, for more about these arguments.
- 12 Alex Scobie, "Slums, Sanitation, and Mortality in the Roman World," *Klio* 68, no. 2 (1986): 399–433.
- 13 Xavier Dupré i Raventos and Joseph Anton Remolà Vallverdú, eds., *Sordes Urbis. La eliminación de residuos en la ciudad romana* (Rome: L'Erma di Bretschneider, 2000).
- 14 Günter E. Thüry, *Müll und Marmorsäulen. Siedlungshygiene in der römischen Antike* (Mainz am Rhein: Zabern, 2001).
- 15 Ibid., 59–61.
- 16 Jeroen Van Vaerenbergh, "The Latrines in and near the Roman Baths of Italy. A Nice Compromise with a Bad Smell," in *Cura Aquarum in Ephesos, Proceedings of the 12th International Conference on the History of Water*

- Management and Hydraulic Engineering*, ed. Gilbert Wiplinger (Leuven: Peeters, 2006), 453–59. See also Van Vaerenbergh, “Flush water for toilets in and near the baths,” in Jansen, Koloski-Ostrow, and Moormann, 78–84, on toilets in Ostia and Hadrian’s Villa near Tivoli that did not flush well; and Domenico Camardo, “Ercolano: La ricostruzione dei sistemi fognari di un’ antica città,” in Jansen, Koloski-Ostrow, and Moormann, 90–91, on problems with the sewers of Herculaneum.
- 17 I note here some of the most recent and influential bath studies: Janet DeLaine, “Recent Research on Roman Baths,” *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 1 (1988): 11–31; DeLaine, “Roman Baths and Bathing,” *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 6 (1993): 348–58; DeLaine, *The Baths of Caracalla: a Study in the Design, Construction, and Economics of Large-scale Building Projects in Imperial Rome*, *Journal of Roman Archaeology Supplement* 25 (Portsmouth, R.I.: *Journal of Roman Archaeology*, 1997); Fagan; Fikret Yegül, *Baths and Bathing in Classical Antiquity* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1992 and 1995); and Yegül, *Bathing in the Roman World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), reviewed by Ann Olga Koloski-Ostrow in *Phoenix*, forthcoming. For more specialized topics related to baths, see Janet DeLaine’s opening discussion, “Historiography: Origins, Evolution, and Convergence,” in *Bains curatifs et bains hygiéniques en Italie de l’Antiquité au Moyen Âge. Collection de l’École française*, ed. Marie Guérin-Beauvois and Jean-Marie Martin (Rome: École française de Rome, 2007), 21–35, which places into perspective the entire modern tradition of scholarship on baths in ancient and medieval Italy. For some recent work by the French, see *Les thermes romains. Actes de la table ronde organisée par l’École française de Rome (Rome 11–12 novembre 1988)*, *Collection de l’École française de Rome* (Rome: École française de Rome, 1991), 142, or the papers from a conference organized by the École française d’Athènes around the subject of water and health in the Greek world, which explore many topics relating to baths and bathing practices: René Ginouvès et al., eds., *L’Eau, la Santé et la Maladie dans le Monde Grec. Actes du colloque organisé à Paris (CNRS et Fondation Singer-Polignac) du 25 au 27 novembre 1992*, supplement 28, *Bulletin de correspondance hellénique* (Athens: École française d’Athènes, 1994).
 - 18 Seneca, *Ep.* 56.1–2, gives us a vivid picture of life in an anonymous Roman bath of the first century CE complete with noises (shouts, groans, grunting, hissing, hoarse gasps, cries, splashes, and singing), exercises (swinging lead weights, straining at feats of physical exercise, ball playing, and swimming), and nonathletic activities (low-class rub-downs, pummeling of shoulders, keeping score for the ballplayers, drunken carousing, thievery, hair-plucking, and the selling of sausages, drinks, or pastries).
 - 19 Ann Olga Koloski-Ostrow, “The City Baths in Pompeii and Herculaneum,” in *The World of Pompeii*, ed. Pedar W. Foss and John J. Dobbins (London: Routledge, 2007), 224–56.
 - 20 Yegül, *Bathing in the Roman World*, 32–33.
 - 21 *Ibid.*, 190.
 - 22 *Ibid.*, 188.
 - 23 *Ibid.*, 199–212.
 - 24 *Ibid.*, 212.
 - 25 Richard Allen Tomlinson and Antony Spawforth, “Hippodamus of Miletus,” in *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, ed. Simon Hornblower and Antony Spawforth (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 211; Cumont, 1–5; and Michael I. Rostovtzeff, “Rapport sur les fouilles de Doura-Europos, campagne de fouille 1936–37,” *Comptes*

- rendus de l'Académie des inscriptions et belles lettres* (1937): 197. I am grateful to Gail Hoffman for the reference to J. A. Baird, "Housing and Households at Dura-Europos: a Study in Identity on Rome's Eastern Frontier" (Ph.D. diss., University of Leicester, 2006). Baird notes that Babylonian grid plans were common in Near Eastern cities, and it may be overstating the case to give full credit to Hippodamus and Greek planning for the patterning of the city.
- 26 Leriche and Al Mahmoud, 397–407. See also Arnold H. M. Jones, *The Cities of the Eastern Roman Provinces*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1971), 217–19, for Seleucid-era Europos and discussion of two or three documents from the Hellenistic period of the city's history.
 - 27 Dirven, 4.
 - 28 See Kosmin in this volume, which explores some of the papyri referring to land contracts and sales as well as the inheritance of land through wills. Dirven, xv–xxiv, 1–40, discusses in detail the history of Dura-Europos and Palmyra and Palmyrenes at Dura-Europos.
 - 29 Richard Neudecker, *Die Pracht der Latrine: zum Wandel der öffentlichen Bedürfnisanstalten in der kaiserzeitlichen Stadt*, Studien zur antiken Stadt 1 (Munich: Pfeil, 1994), 158, gives Bath E-3 a date of ca. 165 CE.
 - 30 Yegül, *Bathing in the Roman World*, 194–95.
 - 31 Baird, 26n582.
 - 32 Yegül, *Bathing in the Roman World*, 196.
 - 33 Private conversation in summer 2009 with Eleanor J. Mulder of Maastricht, Holland, who worked as a volunteer archaeologist at Dura for many years and who still leads desert tours there. The work of Gemma Jansen has been critical for private house toilets in Pompeii, Herculaneum, and Ostia: Gemma Jansen, "Water Systems and Sanitation in the Houses of Herculaneum," *Mededelingen van het Nederlands Instituut te Rome* 50 (1991): 149–66; Jansen, "Private Toilets at Pompeii: Appearance and Operation," in *Sequence and Space in Pompeii*, ed. Sarah E. Bon and Rick Jones (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 1997), 121–34; and Jansen, "Systems for the Disposal of Waste and Excreta in Roman Cities. The Situation in Pompeii, Herculaneum and Ostia," in *Sordes Urbis. La eliminación de residuos en la ciudad romana*, ed. Xavier Dupré i Raventos and Josep Anton Remolà (Rome: L'Erma di Bretschneider, 2000), 37–49. Now see Baird, 25–29, where she discusses domestic water supply, latrine features in the city, but especially in private houses, cesspools and cisterns, and wells in domestic settings.
 - 34 Neudecker, 8–9. See also Jansen, Koloski-Ostrow, and Moormann, 1–5, introduction to the volume.
 - 35 Neudecker still remains the trailblazer of this new field of research, but see also Barry Hobson, *Latrinae et Foricae. Toilets in the Roman World* (London: Duckworth, 2009), a curiously uneven treatment of toilets; Ann Olga Koloski-Ostrow, *The Archaeology of Sanitation in Roman Italy* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, forthcoming); and Jansen, Koloski-Ostrow, and Moormann.
 - 36 Stefanie Hoss, *Baths and Bathing: the Culture of Bathing and the Baths and Thermae in Palestine from the Hasmoneans to the Moslem Conquest. With an Appendix on Jewish Ritual Baths (miqva'ot)*, *British Archaeological Reports International Series* 1346 (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2005).
 - 37 David P. Wright, "The Restriction of Human Impurities and the Communicability of Impurity," in *Disposal of Impurity: Elimination Rites in the Bible and in Hittite*

- and *Mesopotamian Literature* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 1987), 163–228, analyzes the priestly legislation as it relates the prohibitions against impure persons and things coming in contact with two different spheres: that of the holy and that of the profane, or common.
- 38 Hoss, *Baths and Bathing*, Beth-Guvrin, cat. no. 18, 129; Beth-She'an, Eastern and Western Bathhouse, cat. no. 18, 129 and cat. no. 21, 131; Caesarea Maritima, cat. no. 29, 134; and En Hazeva, cat. no. 59, 146.
- 39 Hoss, *Baths and Bathing*, 92–99.
- 40 Cf. Hoss in Jansen, Koloski-Ostrow, and Moormann, 47–50.
- 41 Of course, the topic might have been too embarrassing to discuss altogether.
- 42 Yizhar Hirschfeld, *The Palestinian Dwelling in the Roman-Byzantine Period*, *Collectio Maior* (Studium Biblicum Franciscanum) 34 (Jerusalem: Franciscan, 1995), Beth-Yerah (third to second century BCE), 66–67, fig. 42; Umm el-Jimal (second to third century CE), 45, fig. 22; Mampsis (second to third century CE), 76–77, fig. 51; and Sepphoris (third to fourth century CE), 92–94, fig. 67.
- 43 Varro, *RR* I. 38.2–3 rates human excrement the second best after pigeon dung for purposes of manuring, even a better quality than the dung of goats, sheep, and asses. Columella, *de Re Rustica*, 10.80–85, also discusses human excrement from latrines as fertilizer for the fields and the types of soil (sandy or gravelly) where it works best.
- 44 Neudecker, 157–59.
- 45 Zena Kamash, “The Management and Control of Water in the Roman Near East, 63 B.C.–A.D. 636” (Ph.D. diss., University of Oxford, 2006), 179; Kevin Butcher, *Roman Syria and the Near East* (Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2003), 263; Doro Levi, *Antioch Mosaic Pavements* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1947), 260; William A. Campbell, “The Third Season of Excavation at Antioch on the Orontes,” *American Journal of Archaeology* 40 (1936): 1; Richard Stillwell, ed., *Antioch-on-the-Orontes III: the Excavations 1937–1939* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1941), 8, 19, 25; Richard P. Harper and Tony Wilkinson, “Excavations at Dibsī Faraj, Northern Syria 1972–1974: a Preliminary Note on the Site and Its Monuments,” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 29 (1975): 328–29; Frank E. Brown in *Prelim. Rep.* VI, 71, 95; Clarence S. Fisher, “The Baths of Placrus,” in *Gerasa of the Decapolis*, ed. Carl H. Kraeling (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1938), 266; ‘Adnān Bunni and As’ad, Khālid, *Palmyre: Histoire, Monuments et Musée* (Damascus: Dar-El-Fikr, 1989), 71; Howard Crosby Butler and Enno Littmann, *Syria: Publications of the Princeton University Archaeological Expeditions to Syria in 1904–1905 and 1909* (Leiden: Brill, 1907), 2:B.3, 118, 121; and Robert Early, *Zeugma: Interim Reports, Rescue Excavations* (Packard Humanities Institute), *Inscription of Antiochus I, Bronze Statue of Mars, House and Mosaic of the Synaristōsai, and Recent Work of the Roman Army at Zeugma*, *Journal of Roman Archaeology Supplement* 51 (Portsmouth, R.I.: Journal of Roman Archaeology, 2003), 55–56. I am extremely grateful to Zena Kamash for sharing many of these sources with me. See also her discussion of latrine culture in Syria in Jansen, Koloski-Ostrow, and Moormann, 185.
- 46 Jeanine Balty, *Guide d’Apamée* (Brussels: Centre belge de recherches archéologiques à Apamée de Syrie, 1981), 76; and Andreas Schmidt-Colinet, “Die sogenannte Maison à Atrium,” in *Apamée de Syrie: Bilan des Recherches Archéologiques, 1973–1979: Aspects de l’Architecture Domestique d’Apamée*, ed. Jeanine Balty (Brussels: Centre belge de recherches archéologiques à Apamée de

- Syrie, 1984), 142.
- 47 Neudecker, *passim*; and Ann Olga Koloski-Ostrow, "Finding Social Meaning in the Public Latrines of Pompeii," in *Cura Aquarum in Campania: Proceedings of the Ninth International Congress on the History of Water Management and Hydraulic Engineering in the Mediterranean Region, Pompeii, 1–8 October 1994*, ed. Nathalie De Haan and Gemma C. M. Jansen (Leiden: Stichting BABESCH, 1996), 84 and n9.
- 48 Kamash, "The Management and Control of Water," 184–214. And see Kamash in Jansen, Koloski-Ostrow, and Moormann, 181–83.
- 49 For latrines in Roman France, Germany, and Switzerland, now see Alain Bouet, *Les Latrines dans les provinces Gauloises, Germaniques et Alpines*, supplement 59, *Gallia* (Paris: CNRS Éditions, 2009), with 428 drawings, plans, and photos of these new discoveries. See also review article by Ann Olga Koloski-Ostrow, "Facilities in France, Germany, and Switzerland for Roman *Merde*," *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 23 (2010): 693–700.
- 50 John R. Clarke, "Sex, Death, and Status: Nilotic Tomb Imagery, Apotropaic Magic, and Freedman Acculturation," in *La peinture funéraire antique, Actes du VIIe colloque de L'AIPMA, 6–10 octobre 1998, Saint-Romain-en-Gal—Vienne*, ed. Alix Barbet (Paris: Éditions Errances, 2001), 85–91.
- 51 Katherine Dunbabin, "*Baiarum grata voluptas*: Pleasures and Dangers of the Baths," *Papers of the British School at Rome* 57 (1989): 1–46; Kamash, "The Management and Control of Water," 202–6; and Kamash, "What Lies Beneath? Perceptions of the Ontological Paradox of Water," *World Archaeology* 40, no. 2 (2008): 224–37.
- 52 See Pascal Boyer and Pierre Lienard, "Why Ritualized Behaviour? Precaution Systems and Action Parsing in Developmental, Pathological and Cultural Rituals," *Behavioural and Brain Sciences* 29 (2006): 1–19.
- 53 Obsessive-compulsive behavior would represent a malfunction of this protective human system. See Siri Dulaney and Alan Page Fiske, "Cultural Rituals and Obsessive-compulsive Disorder: Is There a Common Psychological Mechanism?," *Ethos* 22, no. 3 (1994): 243–83; and Alan Page Fiske and Nick Haslam, "Is Obsessive-compulsive Disorder a Pathology of the Human Disposition to Perform Socially Meaningful Rituals? Evidence of Similar Content," *Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease* 185, no. 4 (1997): 211–22. I am grateful to Zena Kamash for both of these references.
- 54 Boyer and Lienard, 8.
- 55 Carlin Barton, "Being in the Eyes: Shame and Sight in Ancient Rome," in *The Roman Gaze: Vision, Power and the Body*, ed. David Fredrick (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 216–35. For more on the concept of the social gaze in our modern culture, see also Pauline Garvey, "Domestic Boundaries: Privacy, Visibility and the Norwegian Window," *Journal of Material Culture* 10 (2005): 157–76.
- 56 William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience: a Study in Human Nature: Being the Gifford Lectures on Natural Religion Delivered at Edinburgh in 1901–1902* (London: Longmans, Green, 1902), 129; and Douglas, 165.
- 57 Ann Olga Koloski-Ostrow, "Pygmies in the Cold Plunge: the Sarno Bath Paintings at Pompeii," abstract, *American Journal of Archaeology* 89 (1985): 337.
- 58 Koloski-Ostrow, *The Archaeology of Sanitation*; and Koloski-Ostrow, "Finding Social Meaning," 79–86.

- 59 See Adam Goldwater, "The Roman Military in Britain," in Jansen, Koloski-Ostrow, and Moormann, 135–39. See also Hobson, 33–43, with figs. 44–56 that show toilet hierarchy on-the-ground.
- 60 Kamash, "What Lies Beneath?," passim.
- 61 Veronica Strang, *The Meaning of Water* (Oxford: Berg, 2004), 74.
- 62 Barton, 217. Kamash, in Jansen, Koloski-Ostrow, and Moormann, 181–83, makes a case that cultural differences between Romans and Jews related to the social gaze can be detected in the design of domestic architecture as well. She argues that houses in the East were introverted and the entrance was positioned so as to avoid the public gaze in clear contrast to Italian housing. The differences are also reflected in the use of water features for display, which are relatively common in Roman Italy but not part of the domestic habit outside of Antioch in the Near East. I am not so sure I agree with her on all these points, especially that Jewish houses in the East were less open to the street than Roman houses in Italy. See also Kamash, "The Management and Control of Water," 224–29.
- 63 Dirven, 103.
- 64 See Gertrud Herzog-Hauser, "Tyche," *Pauly-Wissowa. Realencyclopädie der Classischen Altertumswissenschaft* 7, no. 2 (1943): cols. 1643–89; Susan B. Matheson, "The Goddess Tyche," in *An Obsession with Fortune. Tyche in Greek and Roman Art*, ed. Susan B. Matheson (New Haven: Yale University Art Gallery, 1994), 18–33; and Pieter B. F. J. Broucke, "Tyche and the Fortune of Cities in the Greek and Roman World," *ibid.*, 34–49.
- 65 Dirven, 104.
- 66 *Protrepticus* 4.51, trans. from Greek by G. W. Butterworth in the Loeb series.
- 67 Inv. no. 112285. For a description of the property at IX.7.22 and the first mention of this particular Fortuna painting, see August Mau, "Scavi di Pompei 1880–1881," *Bullettino dell' Istituto di Corrispondenza Archeologica* (1882–83): 196.
- 68 Gemma Jansen in Jansen, Koloski-Ostrow, and Moormann, 165–76.
- 69 *CIL* IV.3832.
- 70 John R. Clarke, "Forica Security: the Apotropaic Pygmye-other in an Imperial Latrine at Ostia," in *Kalathos, Studies in Honour of Asher Ovadia, Assaph, Studies in Art History* 10–11, ed. Sonia Mucznik (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University, Department of Art History, 2005–6), 299.
- 71 Fortuna was present in the two-person toilet of the rather large and wealthy house of the Greek Epigrams (V.1.18) and in a single-seat toilet in the much more humble house at V.4.9. I am grateful to Gemma Jansen for showing me these examples. See also Thomas Fröhlich, *Lararien und Fassadenbilder in den Vesuvstädten* (Mainz am Rhein: Zabern, 1991), 40 and n194.
- 72 The toilet in the bath complex of the Praedia of Julia Felix was a ten-seater. While the Fortuna painting has fallen off the wall, we know from old photos exactly where she was located: right above the water basin where the sponges were kept that were used for cleaning bottoms and toilets. In this position, all the toilet users could have seen Fortuna very well and benefitted from her watchful gaze. The toilet in the Suburban Baths was a six-seater, and it contains the only surviving Fortuna painting still in situ.
- 73 For fresh flower garlands in toilets see Günter E. Thüry

- in Jansen, Koloski-Ostrow, and Moormann, 43–47.
- 74 Valnea Santa Maria Scrinari, “Il Laterano Imperiale II. Dagli ‘horti Domitiae’ alla Cappella Cristiana,” *Monumenti di Antichità Christiana* (per cura del pontificio istituto di archaeologia christiana), series 2, no. 9 (1995): 86, 95, fig. 79.
- 75 I have copied this inscription myself from the stone and translated it: Gaius Valerius Myron, beneficiary of the prefect of the fourth cohort of the night watch as gladly paid his vow to holy (or sacred) Fortuna.
- 76 The fact is that most of the two hundred fifty or so Roman toilets that have survived from across the Roman Empire were very dark, probably badly lit, and had only very small windows very high on the walls. In the toilets where Fortuna was an invited guest, large windows provided a lot of light.
- 77 Neudecker, 56; See also Ann Olga Koloski-Ostrow, “*Cacator cave malum*: the Subject and Object of Roman Public Latrines in Italy during the First Centuries BC and AD,” in *Cura Aquarum in Sicilia: Proceedings of the Tenth International Congress on the History of Water Management and Hydraulic Engineering in the Mediterranean Region*, ed. Gemma C. M. Jansen (Leiden: Stichting BABESCH, 2000), 292, for a slightly more complex reading.
- 78 There has been much speculation about how Fortuna helped toilet users. Though the evidence in itself is slim—seven depictions of Fortuna inside a toilet and one reference in the text of Clemens—from it we can conclude that Fortuna helping in a toilet was a well-established phenomenon, both across time and in different regions. We find her in first century in Pompeii and in the second century in Rome, Ostia, and Alexandria. We can also conclude that all social classes called upon her from the rich elite (house of the Greek Epigrams and the two elegant baths in Pompeii for more selective clientele), to workmen (in the tavern, the more humble house in Pompeii, and in the Barracks of the Firemen at Ostia).
- 79 Fröhlich, 40. For a very extensive catalogue of such figures and their meaning, see Gemma Jansen in Jansen, Koloski-Ostrow, and Moormann, 165–76.
- 80 Michael I. Rostovtzeff, *Caravan Cities*, trans. D. and T. Talbot Rice (Oxford: Clarendon, 1932; repr. New York: AMS, 1971), 165–66.
- 81 See again, *Protrepticus* 4.51, note 66 above.

RICHARD A. GROSSMANN

ANCIENT GLASS FROM DURA-EUPOPOS IN PERSPECTIVE

The heavily weathered glass fragments that emerged from the earth at Dura-Europos could hardly compete for the excavators' attention with the astounding architectural monuments they were reclaiming from the Syrian desert—above all, the religious buildings with their elaborate programs of pictorial decoration. Nevertheless, glass, along with various other categories of “small finds” from the site, constitutes an integral part of the ancient city's material culture. In its own unassuming way, glass contributes to the compelling story of Dura-Europos, providing a perspective complementary to those furnished by the duly celebrated major monuments.

Dura-Europos yielded an excitingly varied and highly significant assemblage of archaeological glass. The relatively few and generally cursory comments about finds of glass sprinkled throughout the preliminary reports on the Yale-French Excavations offer only a limited impression of what was actually being dug up.¹ Not until 1963, with Christoph Clairmont's publication of nearly eight hundred pieces of vessel glass (a few nearly complete, but mainly diagnostic fragments), did glass from Dura receive the sustained and thorough treatment it was due.² Clairmont's publication was influential not only on account of the quality of its scholarship but also because publications devoted to glass from archaeological sites in the Middle East were much less prevalent than for sites in western Europe. The Dura excavations furnished one of the most comprehensive surveys of glass in circulation in the eastern reaches of the Classical world between the Hellenistic and middle Roman imperial period.³

Subsequent scholarship in the field reveals the critical importance of Dura-Europos as a source of evidence for the history of glass.⁴ The glass finds from Dura provide close parallels for pieces of glass found at other archaeological sites and preserved in museum collections around the world. Beyond simply providing points of comparison, glass found at Dura in many cases informs on issues ranging from the dating of certain glassmaking techniques to the popularity and production of different types of decorated glassware.

The cataclysmic end met by Dura-Europos, which fell to a Sasanian siege in the middle of the third century, provides a *terminus ante quem* for glass found there. In other words, it is fairly safe to assume that any piece of glass excavated at Dura was made before 256 CE.⁵ Such firm dates are unusual in the history of glass, and discoveries at Dura help to establish that certain types of glass vessels were in use earlier than scholars



Figure 16.1: Fragment of a glass bowl with "cut" design, Dura-Europos. Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos, 1933.574.a

had thought. For instance, the excavators at Dura turned up numerous glass fragments decorated with "warts," pointed protuberances on the body of the vessel created by pinching the surface of the glass.⁶ Although glass vessels with pinched "warts" are more characteristic of the later third and fourth centuries CE, those found at Dura, which can have been made no later than the mid-third century, represent the earliest securely datable examples of this type of glassware.⁷

Perhaps the most striking aspect of the Dura glass assemblage is the profusion of glass tableware (mainly bowls and cups) with "cut" decoration, a technique in which specialist glass cutters used a rotating wheel covered with a fine abrasive material to etch designs into the surface of the glass (fig. 16.1). Estimating that "cut" glass encompassed some 20 percent of the glass vessel fragments from Dura, Clairmont divided the pieces decorated in this manner into thirteen distinct groups: twelve defined by geometric patterns and one figural group (the latter represented by a single set of related fragments).⁸ The extraordinarily large and diverse corpus of "cut" glass from Dura-Europos is an incomparable source of evidence for this decorative technique and is consequently a standard point of reference for archaeologists, curators, and others seeking to understand its development between the first and third century CE. The unusually large share of the overall glass assemblage comprised by "cut" pieces indicates a strong preference at Dura-Europos for glassware decorated in this manner, especially from the second century CE onward, and raises questions, to be revisited shortly, about how the demand for it was supplied.

Alongside the types of glassware turned up in large quantities at Dura, the excavators unearthed several singularly significant pieces of glass. The most spectacular is a set of painted and gilded fragments (fig. 16.2), representing the height of luxury glass in the ancient world. Likely the remains of a small pitcher-shaped vessel (by analogy with the closest known parallel, the "Daphne Ewer" preserved today in the Corning Museum of Glass), the fragments feature a female head, facing front and inclined slightly left, against an opaque white ground.⁹ Her face, crown, and veil are gilded; her hair, eyes, and other details are rendered in black paint, with additional ornamentation (possibly leaves and flowers) in red and green projecting from behind the crown. An inscription in black paint

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identifies the head as Thetis, the sea-nymph mother of the Greek hero Achilles. Although the complete scene to which



Figure 16.2: Fragment of a vessel with painted and gilded decoration (the "Thetis vase"), Dura-Europos, C7–F. Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos, 1931.588.a

the figure of Thetis once belonged is uncertain, it undoubtedly would have depicted a familiar mythological tale. By the standards of its time, the Thetis vase from Dura would have epitomized sophistication in several regards; it coupled extraordinary skill with extravagant materials, while manifesting the cultured erudition that elite members of Greek and Roman society sought to project. The presence of such a rare and distinguished work of art in a city at the very edge of the Classical world is remarkable and adds a further intriguing dimension to this staggering archaeological discovery.

Although Clairmont's final report provided a broad and detailed appraisal of the glass vessels found at Dura-Europos, from the everyday to the exceptional, it excluded other categories of glass excavated at the site, which have remained largely unpublished and effectively unknown.¹⁰ Beyond eating, drinking, serving, and storage, glass also served a variety of other decorative and utilitarian functions. Two examples are offered here.

Inexpensive, lightweight, and readily workable into a range of colors and ornamental effects, glass was in many ways an ideal material for costume accessories and personal adornment. Glass had long been used for beads, intaglios, and other sorts of jewelry, when glass bracelets came into fashion in the third century CE.¹¹ One popular type, of which a number of examples were found at Dura (fig. 16.3), was made of darkly



Figure 16.3: Bracelet of darkly colored glass decorated with diagonal ribbing, Dura-Europos. Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos, 1938.5999.1804

colored glass and decorated with diagonal ribbing. They were likely intended to imitate more expensive bracelets made of stone and metal (pl. 59).¹² Because they have not been published, the glass bracelets from Dura remain unfamiliar even to scholars with expertise in ancient jewelry.

Window glass (fig. 16.4) is another class of material for which Dura-Europos has yielded woefully under-appreciated evidence.¹³ The glazing of windows allowed light to enter a building and helped at the same time to regulate atmospheric conditions by shutting out the elements. The Romans used several methods to produce flat panes of glass, which they utilized in both public and domestic architecture. In contrast with the ample documentation available for window glass in the western provinces of the Roman Empire, archaeological evidence for glazed windows in the eastern provinces is meager. Recent excavations at Zeugma—like Dura, a fortress city along the Euphrates frontier sacked by the Sasanians in the mid-third century CE—have uncovered critical evidence indicating how glass windows were incorporated into some large,



Figure 16.4: Fragment of window glass, Dura-Europos. Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos, 1929.387.g

opulent homes by the mid-third century CE. The discovery of most of the window glass fragments at Zeugma in layers of burned debris within the central courtyards of these houses strongly suggests that windows facing into the courtyard, certainly on the second level and perhaps on the ground floor as well, were glazed.¹⁴ Although the excavators at Dura, when they chose to record finding fragments of window glass at all, were rarely precise about the location, the Zeugma evidence may prove a helpful parallel for considering how window glass was employed in certain houses at Dura, especially grander residences built or modified during the Roman military buildup of the late-second and third century.¹⁵ It would also be worthwhile to investigate the use of window glass in other types of buildings, especially the city's baths, where maintaining chambers at specific temperatures was essential to the buildings' function.¹⁶

Without doubt, the assemblage of glass excavated at Dura-Europos is a varied and fascinating lot, but the question remains: What, if anything, do these disparate pieces of archaeological evidence tell us about life in the ancient city? Or, in other words, can the information encoded in these "small finds" be synthesized to provide a meaningful perspective on larger themes? The answer, of course, is "yes."

From the time of its discovery, scholars have tended to characterize Dura-Europos as a "caravan city," albeit a heavily fortified one, overlooking a crucial crossing of the Euphrates along a major east-west trade route connecting the Mediterranean with central Asia.¹⁷ The glass finds furnish considerable evidence for the caravan trade as a means of supplying Dura with goods throughout its history. The only pieces of glass datable to the earliest phase of settlement, between the city's founding by the Seleucids at the end of the fourth century BCE and its takeover by the Parthians in the late-second century BCE, are a few fragmentary core-formed containers for perfumed oil or cosmetics, likely manufactured in workshops located on the Syro-Palestinian (i.e., eastern) coast of the Mediterranean. The small number of core-formed vessel fragments found at Dura speaks, on the one hand, to the uncommon luxury that glass still represented at this time. On the other hand, their presence is itself an indication that Hellenistic Dura-Europos was not merely a stopover for valuable items in transport across the Syrian desert. The city was, at least in some instances, a final destination, signaling that some of its inhabitants were already quite prosperous. Over the next four centuries, even as technological advances—primarily the invention of glassblowing—made glassware more widely available and affordable, pieces of luxury glass continued to find their way to Dura from afar.¹⁸ This enduring trend is epitomized by the extraordinarily lavish painted and gilded Thetis vase discussed above (see fig. 16.2). Likely produced several hundred kilometers to the northwest by a distinguished workshop at Antioch (one of the preeminent cities of the Classical world), this vessel can only have belonged to a member of Dura's elite intent on maintaining physical and cultural ties to the cosmopolitan centers of the Mediterranean, despite residing at the very eastern edge of the Roman Empire.

By the Roman period, however, luxury imports accounted for only a small fraction of the glass in use at Dura. The vast majority would have been produced locally. The excavators found evidence suggestive of the existence of glass workshops (waste products, as well as malformed and unfinished vessels).¹⁹ Given the strong demand for glass with "cut" decoration, it seems likely that at least some of Dura's glassmaking workshops would have incorporated specialist glass cutters capable of executing perhaps all but the most exacting designs. The considerable overlap between the decorative patterns on "cut" glass from Dura (see fig. 16.1) and pieces found at Zeugma, including some of the more intricate designs, raises the tantalizing prospect that Dura-Europos may, in fact, have served as a regional center for the production of "cut" glass vessels.²⁰

This “caravan city” could also have been a producer and exporter of manufactured goods in its own right. Merchants were not Dura’s only entrepreneurs; its glassmakers may have keenly leveraged their technical expertise and their strategic location to reach underserved markets in other Roman cities along the eastern frontier and perhaps even inside Parthian-Sasanian territory.

As much as glass reveals about Dura-Europos as a hub of trade and industry, the glass found during the excavations is above all evidence for the everyday activities carried on by those living within the city’s walls. The methods used by the excavators at Dura to record “small finds” were less rigorous than those archaeologists typically employ today, placing limits on scholars’ ability to reconstruct in detail what kinds of provisions were kept in houses, shops, and other types of buildings around the city.²¹ Nevertheless, it is clear that glass was integral to the normal routines of many of Dura’s residents. A rare luxury in the early stage of the city’s history, by the time the Romans arrived in the second century CE, glass was one of the commonest materials, affordable and available to a large portion of the populace. Increasingly, Dura’s inhabitants used glass bowls, cups, jars, and jugs at mealtimes; glass, after all, unlike pottery, did not impart a mineral taste to foods and beverages. The Durenes enhanced their appearance with cosmetics and anointed themselves with scented oils dispensed from glass containers, some of which, known today as “sprinkler flasks,” had a special feature ensuring that just a drop at a time of the precious liquid would pour out. Women, especially, festooned themselves with glass jewelry and personal adornments, elated at the attractiveness of such reasonably priced baubles. And if glass windows were something of a novelty, to be found in just a few of the city’s finest homes, perhaps those installed in the city’s baths were a marvel that a much broader slice of society could enjoy.

The glass finds from Dura-Europos provide a rich alternative perspective on life in the ancient city. Like the major monuments, “small finds” have no less valuable contributions to make to the big picture.

Notes

For this author, who enjoyed the privilege of working with the Dura-Europos Collection and Archive as both an undergraduate and a graduate curatorial assistant at the Yale University Art Gallery, it is a true pleasure to return to Dura material once again. I would like to extend my gratitude to Susan B. Matheson, for sparking my interest in both Dura-Europos and ancient glass, as well as to Lisa R. Brody and Gail L. Hoffman, organizers of the exhibition and its accompanying publication, for the invitation to contribute this essay. My gratitude is owed to Jennifer Baird, who kindly shared with me her dissertation and various articles, some not yet in print; and William Aylward, under whose supervision I prepared for a forthcoming publication the glass finds from the Zeugma 2000 rescue excavations. Last but certainly not least, I am grateful to my wife, Jennifer, and my daughter, Clara, for allowing me the time to work on this wonderful project at a very hectic point in our lives together.

- 1 Remarkable finds of glass occasionally generated more extensive remarks in the *Preliminary Reports*; see, e.g., note 9 below.
- 2 Christoph W. Clairmont, *The Glass Vessels. The Excavations at Dura-Europos Conducted by Yale University and the French Academy of Inscriptions and Letters. Final Report 4, Part 5*, ed. Ann Perkins (New Haven: Dura-Europos Publications, 1963).
- 3 Christopher S. Lightfoot, "From East to West: the Early Roman Glass Industry," in *Échanges et commerce du verre dans le monde antique*, ed. Danièle Foy and Marie-Dominique Nenna (Montagnac: Éditions Monique Mergoil, 2003), 341, points out that this situation persists to a considerable degree and has tended to skew scholarly understanding of glass production and use in the East.
- 4 A general impression of Dura's significance in this regard is given by the frequency with which the city is cited in Axel von Saldern, *Antikes Glas* (Munich: Beck, 2004). Few other sites are referenced with comparable frequency.
- 5 Because an urban settlement was not reestablished at Dura after the Sasanian siege, there is little risk of contamination of the archaeological strata with later material. Nevertheless, there is some evidence for later activities at the site; see J. A. Baird, "Dura Deserta: the Death and Afterlife of Dura-Europos," in *Vrbes Extinctae: Approaches to and Archaeologies of Abandoned Classical Towns*, ed. Neil Christie and Andrea Augenti (Aldershot, Eng.: Ashgate, forthcoming); and Blair/Bloom, this volume.
- 6 Clairmont, 50–51, 53.
- 7 Saldern, 326.
- 8 Clairmont, 56–86.
- 9 Paul Victor Christopher Baur in *Prelim. Rep. IV*, 252–54; Clairmont, 34–35, cat. 126. For the relationship between the Thetis vase found at Dura and the Daphne Ewer, see Donald B. Harden, *Glass of the Caesars* (Milan: Olivetti, 1987), 273; and David Whitehouse, *Roman Glass in the Corning Museum of Glass* (New York: Hudson Hills, 1997), 1:266–270, cat. 864.
- 10 The incomplete publication of the glass finds from Dura has been noted by J. A. Baird, "Housing and Households at Dura-Europos: a Study in Identity on Rome's Eastern Frontier" (Ph.D. diss., University of Leicester, 2006), 140.
- 11 Maud Spaer, "The Pre-Islamic Glass Bracelets of Palestine," *Journal of Glass Studies* 30 (1988): 51–61.
- 12 For metal bracelets of similar form found at Dura, see

- J. A. Baird, "Everyday Life in Roman Dura-Europos: the Evidence of Dress Practices," in *Religion, Society, and Culture at Dura-Europos*, ed. Ted Kaizer (forthcoming).
- 13 For an introduction to window glass in the Roman world, see David Whitehouse, "Window Glass between the First and Eighth Centuries," in *Il colore nel medioevo: Arte, simbolo, tecnica: la Vetrata in occidente dal IV all'XI secolo*, ed. Francesca Dell'Acqua and Romano Silva (Lucca: Istituto storico lucchese, 2001), 31–43.
 - 14 Richard A. Grossmann, "Glass," in *The 2000 Rescue Excavations at Zeugma*, ed. William Aylward (Los Altos, Calif.: Packard Humanities Institute, forthcoming), cat. G101.
 - 15 For domestic architecture at Dura generally, see Anny Allara, "Domestic Architecture at Dura-Europos," *Mesopotamia* 22 (1987): 67–76; and Anny Allara and Catherine Saliou, "Constitution d'un répertoire de l'architecture domestique à Dura-Europos," in *Dura-Europos Études IV, 1991–1993*, ed. Pierre Leriche and Mathilde Gelin (Beirut: Institut Français d'archéologie du Proche-Orient, 1997), 145–54. At least two locations at Dura where the excavators' reported finding fragments of window glass were occupied by houses associated with the Roman military: the house adjoining the Military Temple in Block A1 (see *Prelim. Rep. II*, 58 and 77; the courtyard of the house is specifically noted as the locus for the finds) and the House of the Roman Scribes (see *Prelim. Rep. VI*, 265 and 273).
 - 16 Fragments of window glass were reportedly found during excavation of baths in Block A1, nearby the house adjoining the Military Temple.
 - 17 Michael I. Rostovtzeff, *Caravan Cities*, trans. D. and T. Talbot Rice (Oxford: Clarendon, 1932), 93–119.
 - 18 On the socio-cultural impact of the invention of glassblowing technology, which resulted in a dramatic increase in the affordability and availability of glassware beginning in the late-first century BCE, see E. Marianne Stern, "Roman Glassblowing in a Cultural Context," *American Journal of Archaeology* 103 (1999): 441–84. E. Marianne Stern, *Roman, Byzantine, and Early Medieval Glass, 10 BCE–700 CE: Ernesto Wolf Collection* (Ostfildern: Hatje, 2001), 103–4, argues that long-distance trade in luxury glass actually increased alongside the proliferation of inexpensive, utilitarian glassware throughout the Roman Empire.
 - 19 On glass production at Dura-Europos, see Clairmont, 148–50.
 - 20 For "cut" glass of the Middle Imperial period from Zeugma, see Grossmann; cats. G34, G38, and G41–42 find close parallels at Dura. Even prior to the Zeugma discoveries, Stern, *Roman, Byzantine, and Early Medieval Glass*, 137, proposed Dura-Europos as a regional center for the production of "cut" glass vessels.
 - 21 On the methods used to record "small finds" at Dura and their implications for reconstructing domestic assemblages, see Baird, "Housing and Households"; and Baird, this volume.

NANCY NETZER

THE “CELTIC” BRONZES FROM DURA-EUROPOS: CONNECTIONS TO BRITAIN

Among the objects excavated at Dura-Europos were large numbers of arms, armor, and other military trappings. Most appear to have been deposited in 255/256 CE, when the Sasanians seized and destroyed the city. Some were brought by the Sasanian invaders; others belonged to earlier residents of the city. The majority was martial equipment, military dress, and horse trappings of the Roman imperial garrison trapped in the city when it fell. Simon James has recently published a catalogue of the 851 military artifacts found at Dura-Europos.¹ Within that large assemblage is a handful of stylistic outliers that do not reflect local tradition; rather, the objects in this small group may be instructively compared to contemporaneous works found in the British Isles. The objects in question, all cast in copper alloy, comprise small openwork fittings either from equestrian equipment or from soldiers' leather belts or baldrics (leather cross-straps worn over the right shoulder to the left hip for carrying a sword).² An s-shaped fibula or strap mount for personal adornment (no. 6 below, fig. 17.4), possibly civilian rather than military, should also be considered with the group.

The following are brief descriptions of the works:

1. Openwork disc (pl. 8)³ with an attachment loop on the back measuring 53 millimeters in diameter. The disc probably was used as a fastener on a baldric. Interlocking trumpets form a rotational design suggesting movement like a pinwheel. The outer ring comprises six confronted trumpets each sprouting a trumpet that curves to abut a triangular center and confront another trumpet.
2. Openwork disc (fig. 17.1)⁴ with an attachment loop on the back measuring 53 millimeters in diameter. The disc probably was used as a fastener on a baldric. Interlocking trumpets form a rotational design similar to no. 1 with the exception that the outer ring comprises only four confronted trumpets, each sprouting a single curved trumpet that confronts another in the center.



Figure 17.1: Baldric Fastener, Dura-Europos. Copper alloy. Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos, 1935.41. After Frisch and Toll.

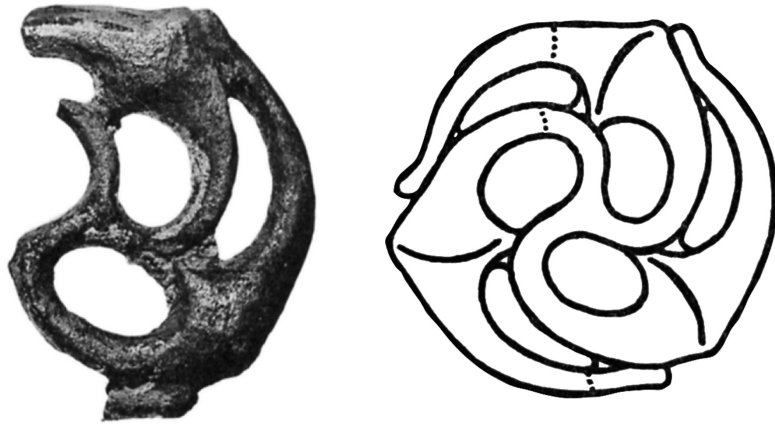


Figure 17.2: Fragment of a strap junction from a horse trapping, Dura-Europos. Copper alloy. Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos, 1938.2096. After Frisch and Toll (right, showing possible reconstruction).



Figure 17.3: Fragment of a snaffle bit cheek piece, Dura-Europos. Copper alloy. Damascus National Museum, H121. After Frisch and Toll.

3. Openwork rectangular belt plate (pl. 7)⁵ measuring 54 by 26.5 millimeters. The narrow outer frame has a rivet hole in each corner; each of the long sides sprouts two parallel trumpets, which confront a *u*-shaped double trumpet resting on the opposite frame.
4. Fragment of an openwork strap junction from a horse trapping (fig. 17.2).⁶ The original measured about 50 millimeters in diameter. The design probably comprised six interlocking trumpets in a rotational design. Three curved trumpets forming a triskele emanated from the center; each trumpet confronted another that curved to form the outer circle.
5. Fragment of an openwork snaffle bit cheek piece from a horse harness (fig. 17.3)⁷ measuring 50 by 50 millimeters. The fragment comprises a loop and seven confronted trumpets forming an asymmetrical, yet balanced, curved design.
6. Openwork *s*-shaped fibula or strap mount (fig. 17.4)⁸ measuring 51 millimeters. Two large confronted trumpets, which form the body, confront two smaller trumpets with spiral terminals.
7. Openwork belt plate with blue and white checkerboard millefiori and red enamel inlay (fig. 17.5)⁹ measuring 86 by 40.5 millimeters. The plate has peltae at each long end, which were probably connected by a missing axle. Two cast studs on the reverse were used for attachment to a leather belt. The millefiori is applied in two fields on the peltae; two millefiori rectangular fields on the sides are divided by a narrow band of red enamel.

Nearly twenty-five years ago in his introduction to the collection of essays *Rome and the Provinces*, Charles McClendon referred to several of these bronzes from Dura-Europos.¹⁰ He distinguished them as with “curvilinear spirals that expand and contract in distinct trumpet-shaped patterns” and saw the style as without roots in Roman or eastern art. He cited its origin, instead, in the “Celtic art” of Western Europe that flourished during the Iron Age.

Celtic art is a classification conceived in the nineteenth century by scholars concerned primarily with issues of ethnicity rather than the historical development of artistic styles. Nonetheless, these early investigators sought to connect objects and to categorize and associate the ornamental designs borne on them with the Celtic barbarian peoples described in Classical texts. By the mid-twentieth century, the Classical archaeologist Paul Jacobsthal, who had emigrated from Germany to Oxford, where he became interested in Celtic art, had codified study of these objects and their style in a seminal publication.¹¹ Since that time, archaeologists and art historians (Vincent and Ruth Megaw foremost among them) have continued to refine understanding of the development of a Celtic style.¹² The classification, however, continues to be used imprecisely, and often indiscriminately, to describe works as varied in date as the Iron Age to nineteenth-century revival productions in Ireland. Moreover, in recent years archaeologists, most notably Simon James, have questioned the notion of Celtic invasions of the British Isles that would have produced “Celtic art” in that area.¹³ For this reason this essay will refer to the style in question using the accepted alternative nomenclature, *La Tène*, after the site in Switzerland where objects bearing this form of ornament were discovered.

Most scholars agree that the *La Tène* style first appeared among the Celtic peoples in the mid-fifth century BCE in southwestern Germany, eastern France, and Switzerland. Among the characteristics of its earliest examples are preferences for curvilinear decoration, three-armed whirligig (called *triskele*) forms, and the use of enameled glass inserted into metal—all features found on the Dura objects described above. During subsequent centuries, the Celts expanded into Italy, Austria, Eastern Europe, and, according to traditional scholarship, the British Isles. But in the late second and first half of the first century BCE, Dacian and Illyrian forces from the east, Cimbri and Teutones from the north, and Romans from the south pressed into the Celtic territories in Continental Europe and Southern Britain. Roman and other foreign styles left their imprint on *La Tène* art during the period between 125 and 50 BCE with the result that *La Tène* art from this period begins to display considerable uniformity across Europe.¹⁴

For most of the twentieth century, scholars believed that *La Tène* art died out in the territories of the Roman Empire and was kept alive only beyond the Empire’s borders, primarily in the Gaelic areas of Ireland and Wales.¹⁵ As Lloyd Laing, who has recently revisited the assumption, has pointed out, however, almost no works in the *La Tène* style survived outside the Roman territories. Laing explains that study of Roman provincial art was eschewed by Celticists, who deemed it insignificant to their interest in proving the endurance of Celtic culture, as well as by Romanists, who viewed it as of inferior quality. Thus, it is not surprising that scholars of early Christian art in Ireland and Britain tradi-



Figure 17.4: S-shaped fibula or strap mount, Dura-Europos. Copper alloy. Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos, 1938.1984



Figure 17.5: Belt plate, Dura-Europos. Copper alloy, millefiori glass inlay, and enamel. Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos, 1932.1412

tionally have explained the prevalence of La Tène-style ornament in Christian metalwork, manuscripts, and sculpture of Ireland and Britain, produced from the fifth through the ninth centuries, as a revival of earlier “pure Celtic” art rather than as an influence filtered through Roman intermediaries.¹⁶ In light of more recent excavations at Romano-British sites, archaeologists and art historians, like Laing, are beginning to think that the conventional view may need to be rethought to allow for a more complex understanding of the components of Roman provincial art and for the role it played within the continuity of artistic styles practiced in the British Isles.¹⁷ A closer look at the bronzes from Dura-Europos described above could make a small contribution to such a revisionist view. I shall return to this briefly below.

McClendon rightly realized that Dura’s La Tène-style bronzes were not unique. He noted that related bronzes had been excavated at disparate military stations marking the borders of the Roman Empire from Dura-Europos to North Africa, the Rhine, Danube, and Hadrian’s Wall in northern Britain. This pattern of deposits suggests that La Tène motifs were adopted and adapted by those who produced wares for Roman soldiers. McClendon focused on the possibility of reciprocal contacts between the Roman troops stationed around Hadrian’s Wall in northern Britain and Palmyra. Not far from Dura-Europos in Syria, Palmyra is the city from which the Roman cohort at Dura-Europos came when the Romans took over the city in 165 or 166 CE. Specifically, McClendon drew attention to the stone funerary relief of a thirty-year-old woman called Regina (fig. 17.6) found at the Roman military fort of South Shields near Hadrian’s Wall.¹⁸ Usually dated to the second half of the second or the third century, the relief bears a Latin inscription connecting Regina to the British tribe of Catuvellauni from Kent;¹⁹ she was first the slave and then the

freed wife of a man called Barates from Palmyra. Beneath the Latin inscription is another in a form of Aramaic (called Palmyrene) connected with the city of Palmyra. The Palmyrene inscription restates that Regina was the freedwoman of Barates.²⁰ The carving of the frontal female figure on the gravestone suggests the work of a Palmyrene sculptor, who has, however, incorporated features typically found in Roman sculpture in the west of the empire.²¹ Both the Palmyrene script and the linear style of the seated figure may be compared to two Palmyrene limestone reliefs with Palmyrene inscriptions from Dura-Europos: the enthroned Fortune (Gad) of Dura from the Temple of Gadde (pl. 1) dated 159 CE and Nemesis (pl. 4) dated 228/229 CE.²² The evidence of the Regina tombstone from South Shields, therefore, points to a transplanted Palmyrene, called Barates, patronizing a relocated Palmyrene sculptor in northern Britain.

A gravestone found at Corbridge, another Roman garrison town just south of Hadrian’s Wall to the west of South Shields also signals contact between northern Britain and Syria. This stone bears only a Latin inscription commemorating a Barathes *vexillarius* from Palmyra, who died at age sixty-eight.²³ Although spelling of the name varies slightly, the Corbridge Barathes could be Regina’s husband, but given the popularity of this name in Palmyra, several transplanted inhabitants of that city bearing this name may have been residing in northern Britain. That the Corbridge Barathes is



Figure 17.6: Tombstone of Regina, South Shields. Arbeia Roman Fort and Museum, Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums

identified as a *vexillarius* most likely means he was a military standard bearer, which would signal the presence of a Palmyrene unit in northern Britain in the second or third century (the period to which his funerary stone dates).²⁴ The presence of such a unit would not be so surprising given that there was in northern Britain from about 120 CE a cohort of Syrian archers (*Cohors Prima Hamiorum Sagittaria*) recruited from the city of Hama in the Orontes Valley in Syria. The regiment was stationed from about 120 to 142 CE at Carvoran, one of the Stanegate forts in Northumberland, before it moved to Bar Hill on the Antonine Wall (142–57 CE); when the frontier was pushed back to Hadrian’s Wall, the Hamian cohort returned to Carvoran (163–67 CE).²⁵

Several bronzes excavated at South Shields and Corbridge may be used to reinforce the links indicated by the gravestones between northern Britain and Syria. To begin, openwork rectangular belt plates with pelta-shaped terminals and blue and white millefiori enamel on the side panels found at South Shields provide close,²⁶ but not identical, parallels to the Dura belt plate (no. 7, fig. 17.5). A similar belt plate with millefiori in what appears to be a rosette pattern was found at Carnuntum in Austria.²⁷ Related enameled rectangular openwork belt plates, albeit with a single pelta terminal and a flat end with a projecting attachment hinge, have been excavated at Roman military fortifications at Saalburg and Osterburken (both forts along the Roman linear border of the German provinces, known as the *Limes Germanicus*).²⁸ Another variant, a solid enameled plate with pelta-shaped terminals, was found at Stockstadt in Germany.²⁹ The combination of millefiori and enamel only seems to have been practiced in the western provinces of the empire.³⁰ That the form of belt plate with two pelta terminals decorated with checkerboard millefiori originated in north Britain seems plausible given that millefiori was widely applied to Romano-British metalwork and that so many belt plates of this design were found at South Shields. Moreover, the type of checkered millefiori shared by the South Shields and Dura-Europos examples goes on to play a prominent role in later Anglo-Saxon metalwork from the north and midlands of Britain; increasing evidence suggests that this is the result of a continuing tradition in which Romano-British technology survived.³¹

South Shields also yielded a pair of exceptionally fine, openwork trumpet pattern (*trompetenmuster*) harness mounts.³² Like the baldric fasteners, belt plate, cheek piece, and fibula from Dura-Europos (nos. 1–6; figs. 17.1–17.4; pls. 7, 8) described above, the South Shields pair is comprised of confronted trumpets. Unique in design, the mounts form a La Tène inspired triskele, each arm of which comprises three elements: an innermost *u*-shaped double trumpet confronts an *s*-shaped double trumpet, which, in turn, confronts an outer attenuated trumpet, approximating a snout, with a curved protrusion at the end. The latter feature appears to be without precise parallel from either British or Continental sites.

Invention of the trumpet pattern bronzes bearing a more intricate, flatter, and delicate design than those under discussion here has been traced to a craftsman (or, more likely, craftsmen) called “Gemellianus” who had a factory at Baden-Argau (Roman Aquae Helveticae) in Switzerland in the late first century CE. From there, the style is thought to have been copied locally and widely dispersed along frontier posts of the Roman army. Some speculate that the Romano-British examples were inspired by counterparts produced along the Rhine.³³ Such influence would not be surprising, especially as there was ongoing trade between Britain and the Rhineland during the late Roman period,³⁴ but it is hard to envision how the pierced flattened forms of the Gemellianus style would give birth to the more rounded trumpets of the *trompetenmuster* mounts without at least an intermediary. The trumpet pattern has significant indig-

enous precedents in Britain. With roots in the pre-Roman La Tène single trumpet, examples of which may be found on objects ranging from jewelry to shield mounts,³⁵ the confronted trumpet pattern appears in nascent form in repoussé on a limited number of objects of the first century BCE scattered throughout the British Isles. These include a shield mount from South Cadbury in Somerset,³⁶ a gold bracelet found at Snettisham in Norfolk,³⁷ and the splendid gold torc found at Broighter in Ireland, probably worked by an Irish craftsman.³⁸ These repoussé forms are thought to represent the precursors of the earliest three dimensional cast versions of simplified confronted trumpets with enlarged lentoid terminals (sometimes referred to as twinned-lipped moldings) that appear on a group of cast copper alloy harness mounts found in a mid-first century CE hoard at Stanwick St. John (Melsonby) in northern Yorkshire.³⁹ The Stanwick St. John mounts were probably produced locally. From this northern British tradition, the adaptation of the slender confronted trumpet as a motif for creating a multitude of openwork designs is thought to have emerged in the same area in the Roman period.⁴⁰ Indeed, several examples comparable to those from Dura-Europos have surfaced in this northwestern outpost of the Roman world.

Also in this area is Corbridge, resting place of Barathes mentioned above. Founded as a Roman fort in 85 CE, by the mid-second century, Corbridge developed into the most northerly town in the Roman Empire housing two walled military compounds until the end of the occupation. Excavations have yielded a little-studied group of openwork trumpet pattern mounts that closely approximate those from Dura-Europos in quality of execution and design.⁴¹ Specifically, an openwork ornament of interlocking trumpets in a rotational pattern bears an identical design to Dura fragment number 4 (fig. 17.2).⁴² The two are so alike that the opportunity to study them side by side may reveal their origin from the same die pattern and even from the same reusable two-piece mould. Other openwork ornaments from Corbridge show various designs (some *s*-shaped)⁴³ of slender interlocking trumpets (some with curled, flared terminals), as on Dura fibula number 6 (fig. 17.4). Corbridge's two openwork discs with interlocking trumpets in a rotational design and outer rings comprising confronted trumpets are akin in design and closer in quality than the trumpet harness mounts from South Shields to Dura-Europos discs numbers 1 and 2 (pl. 8, fig. 17.1).⁴⁴ Two other variants of a rotational design inscribed within interlocking trumpets were found at the Roman forts of Zugmantel and Böhming in Germany.⁴⁵ The outlines of the Böhming mount suggest it to be a less fine derivative of the Dura-Europos design (no. 1, pl. 8). A splendid group of high-quality trumpet pattern harness mounts from two horse burials in the Gerhát cemetery at Brigetio in Hungary reveal a variety of designs, none of which closely matches the Dura examples and all of which have more slender elegant proportions.⁴⁶

A final significant comparison with the Dura rectangular belt plate (no. 3, pl. 7) comes from further south in Britain, Richborough in Kent. An important harbor and defensive fort in Antiquity, Richborough was the landing site of the Claudian invasion of Britain in 43 CE.⁴⁷ The belt plate found there is a virtual clone of the one from Dura,⁴⁸ as are an Austrian example of unknown provenance in the Linz Museum and another excavated at Zugmantel in Germany.⁴⁹ Manufacture of all these plates in the same workshop seems possible and close comparison could reveal more about the casting process, including use of the same die or mould. Although the Richborough belt plate was found in an unstratified context, other openwork trumpet mounts of asymmetric design from the same site came from a pit deposit datable between 125 and 170 CE, suggesting the style's presence at Richborough in the second century.⁵⁰ Established in 83 CE,

Zugmantel ceased to function as a frontier fort in 260 CE, when the threat from the Alammi was so great that the border was moved back to the western shore of the Rhine; thus, 260 CE may be taken as a *terminus ante quem* for the rectangular trumpet belt plate from Zugmantel.

The considerable variety of confronted trumpet openwork designs found on objects throughout the empire suggests manufacture from many different dies and in several workshops. Continental examples from dated contexts range primarily from the mid-second to the early third century.⁵¹ None of the Dura trumpet ornaments has the characteristic swelling lentoid mouth associated with Continental examples. Only the fibula (no. 6, fig. 17.4) exhibits a slender version of a Continental feature: the scrolled trumpet ending in a lobe.⁵² The plethora of comparanda for the Dura bronzes among those found near Hadrian's Wall, specifically at South Shields and Corbridge, suggests at least most of the Dura examples may be products of a workshop in the north of Britain. Several decades ago, Mournie MacGregor argued for British manufacture of trumpet ornaments based on the sheer number of finds spanning from the Lothians in the north to Kent in the south.⁵³ There may have been several such workshops that produced metalwork in this style, but the existence of at least one near Hadrian's Wall (possibly at Corbridge which became a major military supply center for lead, iron, and coal) would not be surprising, especially given the probable existence of a mid-first century production site somewhere near Stanwick in Northern Yorkshire. One might even consider the possibility of continuity of what was originally a pre-Roman workshop. A recent find at Staffordshire Moorlands of a mid-second-century drinking pan with enameled pelta, trumpet and triskele patterns, and inscribed names of forts on Hadrian's Wall, clearly indicates that high-quality metalwork with La Tène-style ornament was being produced in the north.⁵⁴ A fragment of a mould for casting an openwork mount was discovered in one of the turrets along Hadrian's Wall suggesting metalwork production took place there from about 160 to 180 CE.⁵⁵ That the trumpet style thrives and develops to new heights in the art of the early Christian period in this same area of Britain, namely Northumbria, should not be forgotten in any revisionist view of the possible contribution of Romano-British art to the development of the La Tène Christian style. Indeed, the Roman openwork trumpet mount excavated at the sixth-century metalworking center at the hillfort of Clatchard Craig, Fife, may have found its place in proximity to the later metalworks, because it had been preserved as a venerated model.⁵⁶

If some or all of the seven Dura-Europos bronzes discussed here were made in Britain, they would have had to make their way to their final resting place before 256 CE. Upon completion of contracted service, could a retiring Hamian bowman have returned to Syria, unlike Barathes from Corbridge, with foreign-acquired military gear? Possibly. But it was a long journey to undertake; and one would expect him to go to Hama, a good distance from Dura-Europos.

That there was another Syrian unit in northern Britain and that it was stationed at South Shields seems probable. Overlooking the River Tyne, South Shields was the site of the easternmost Roman garrison fort of Hadrian's Wall. Thought to have been founded during the reign of Hadrian between about 124 and 128 CE and occupied until the Roman retreat from Britain in the fifth century, the fort underwent changes in usage and became the maritime supply fort for the Wall.⁵⁷ South Shields is likely the fort identified as Arbeia mentioned under the *Dux Britanniarum* in the fourth-fifth century *Notitia Dignitatum*. The entry, "Praefectus numeri barcariorum Tigrisiensium, Arbeia," refers to a company of bargemen from the Tigris at a place called Arbeia in Britain. David L. Kennedy has proposed Arbeia as a Latinized form for the Ara-

maic (which Regina's tomb stone testifies was spoken at South Shields) "Place of the Arabs."⁵⁸ The Tigris bargemen may well have renamed the fort at South Shields when they arrived. The question is when that might have been. Kennedy points out that the territory of the Tigris from which the bargemen would have been recruited fell under Roman rule only between the victory of Septimius Severus in 198 CE and its surrender in 363 CE. Within these dates, the late third or early fourth-century, when excavations have revealed that the South Shields fort was rebuilt with barracks, has been favored for the arrival of the boatmen transferred from Syria.

Septimius Severus' campaign in Britain, however, suggests another possibility for the arrival of the Tigris bargemen. After defeating the Parthians at Ctesiphon in 197 CE, Severus annexed Mesopotamia as a province of the empire and assisted in the refortification of Dura-Europos. In 208 CE, Severus made his way to northern Britain with troops to defend the Antonine Wall. An unsuccessful military campaign against the Caledonians led him to pull back the frontier to Hadrian's Wall—which he had reconstructed in stone, a herculean task no doubt requiring new recruits, perhaps Regina and Barates, to labor and move supplies—before he died in 211 at Eboracum on the site of modern York.

In any case, given the probable date of the Regina sculpture with the Palmyrene inscription and the correspondence of the bronzes from Dura-Europos (which must date before 256) with several from South Shields, one might propose a date in the late second or first half of the third century for the transfer from Syria to South Shields of the Roman troop of boatmen. If so, at least one of these soldiers may have returned to his home territory and made his way, or transferred his trappings to someone who made his way, to Dura-Europos before the city was overrun by the Sasanians. An alternative explanation is that the British trappings made their way with British recruits, of which there may have been considerable numbers,⁵⁹ to forts along the *Limes Germanicus*—like Saalburg, Zugmantel, and Böhming—where, as mentioned above, works related to those from Dura-Europos were found. At one of those sites, the objects might have been "recycled" to soldiers who later were sent to Dura-Europos.⁶⁰ Another possibility that must be explored is that once such British trumpet trappings arrived on the Continent at forts along the *Limes*, the style appealed; metalworkers may have used the British originals as dies from which replicas were cast. Such a process could account for differences in quality among some of the trumpet pattern examples, like the openwork baldric fastener from Böhming mentioned above. Only precise comparison of the similar pieces could yield an answer, and in the process, could reveal details of the British connection of the "Celtic" bronzes from Dura-Europos.

Notes

- 1 Simon T. James, *The Arms and Armour, and Other Military Equipment, The Excavations at Dura-Europos Conducted by Yale University and the French Academy of Inscriptions and Letters, Final Report 7* (London: British Museum, 2004).
- 2 For descriptions and drawings of various fittings *in situ* see Michael C. Bishop and J. C. N. Coulston, *Roman Military Equipment: from the Punic Wars to the Fall of Rome* (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2006), 160; and James, *Arms and Armour*, 52, 60–71, pls. 11–13.
- 3 Yale University Art Gallery, 1938.2179; James, *Arms and Armour*, 74–75, no. 24; and Teresa G. Frisch and Nicholas P. Toll, *The Bronze Objects: Pierced Bronzes, Enameled Bronzes, and Fibulae. The Excavations at Dura-Europos Conducted by Yale University and the French Academy of Inscriptions and Letters, Final Report Volume 4, Part 4, Fascicle 1* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1949), 8, no. 2; pl. I.2.
- 4 Yale University Art Gallery, 1935.41; James, *Arms and Armour*, 74–75, no. 25; and Frisch and Toll, 8, no. 1; pl. I.1.
- 5 Yale University Art Gallery, 1938.2163; James, *Arms and Armour*, 80–81, no. 86; and Frisch and Toll, 27, no. 69; pl. V.69.
- 6 Yale University Art Gallery, 1938.2096; James, *Arms and Armour*, 97–98, no. 339; and Frisch and Toll, 8, no. 3, fig. 6; pl. I.3.
- 7 Damascus, National Museum H121; James, *Arms and Armour*, 96–97, no. 335; and Frisch and Toll, 12, no. 17, fig. 6; pl. II.17.
- 8 Yale University Art Gallery, 1938.1984; Frisch and Toll, 64, no. 136; pl. XVI.136.
- 9 Yale University Art Gallery, 1932.1412; James, *Arms and Armour*, 80–81, no. 90; and Frisch and Toll, 42, no. 31; pl. IX.31, describes the millefiori as “units of five white cubes, imbedded in the cobalt blue enamel.”
- 10 Charles B. McClendon, *Rome and the Provinces: Studies in the Transformation of Art and Architecture in the Mediterranean World* (New Haven, Conn.: New Haven Society of the Archaeological Institute of America, 1986), 5–7; McClendon cites the bronzes in Frisch and Toll, 3–5, 8–12, 64; pl. I.1–3; pl. II.9, 17; pl. XVI.136. The author is grateful to McClendon for suggesting that she pursue the topic of this essay.
- 11 Paul Jacobsthal, *Early Celtic Art* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1944).
- 12 Vincent and Ruth Megaw, *Celtic Art: from Its Beginnings to the Book of Kells* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 2001).
- 13 Simon T. James, *The Atlantic Celts: Ancient People or Modern Invention?* (London: British Museum, 1999) argues that the theory that modern inhabitants of Ireland and Britain are Celts is an invention of eighteenth and nineteenth-century historiography. For discussion see also: Nick Merriman, “Value and Motivation in Prehistory; the Evidence for ‘Celtic Spirit,’” in *The Archaeology of Contextual Meanings*, ed. Ian Hodder (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 111–16; J. D. Hill, “Can We Recognize a Different European Past? A Contrastive Archaeology of Later Prehistoric Settlements in Southern England,” *Journal of European Archaeology* 1 (1993): 57–75; Vincent and Ruth Megaw, “Ancient Celts and Modern Ethnicity,” *Antiquity* 70, no. 267 (1996): 175–81; Simon T. James, “Celts, Politics and Motivation in Archaeology,” *Antiquity* 72, no. 275 (1998): 200–9; and Vincent and Ruth Megaw, “The Mechanism of (Celtic)

- Dreams?: a Partial Response to Our Critics,” *Antiquity* 72, no. 276 (1998): 432–35.
- 14 Megaw, *Celtic Art*, esp. 6–23.
 - 15 For example, see discussions by E. Thurlow Leeds, *Early Celtic Ornament in the British Isles* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1933), 138; and Adolf Mahr and Joseph Raftery, *Christian Art in Ancient Ireland* (Dublin: Stationery Office of Ireland, 1932), xxi–xxii. For discussion of the historiography see Lloyd Laing, *European Influence on Celtic Art: Patrons and Artists* (Dublin: Four Courts, 2010), 15–18.
 - 16 Laing, *European Influence on Celtic Art*, 17.
 - 17 For a more complex possibility see Fraser Hunter, “Celtic Art in Roman Britain,” in *Rethinking Celtic Art*, ed. Duncan Garrow, Chris Gosden, and J. D. Hill (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2008), 129–45.
 - 18 South Shields Roman Fort Museum. The sculpture was found at South Shields south of the fort in 1878. McClendon, 13; and Edward John Phillips, *Corbridge: Hadrian’s Wall East of the North Tyne* (Oxford: Published for the British Academy by the Oxford University Press, 1977), no. 247, pl. 68.
 - 19 D(is) M(anibus) Regina Liberata et conigue / Barates Palmyrenus natione / Catvallana an(or)um xxx.
 - 20 RGYN’ BT HRY BR ‘T’ HBL (Regina the freedwoman of Barates, Alas!). Phillips, 90.
 - 21 For discussion of these details, see *ibid.*, 90–91.
 - 22 Another gravestone found at South Shields thought to be by the same Palmyrene sculptor as Regina’s shows the deceased, a man called Victor, reclining on a couch at a funeral banquet (South Shields Roman Fort Museum, *ibid.*, 91–92, no. 248) and may be compared to the relief of a funeral banquet from Palmyra (pl. 75, this volume) usually dated between 200 and 225 CE.
 - 23 Corbridge Museum. The beginning of several lines of the inscription are missing: [Dis] M[anibus] / [Ba]rathes PAL / MORENUS VEXIL[L]A[RIUS] / VIXIT AN[n] OS LXVIII. For description, see *ibid.*, no. 67.
 - 24 For discussion *ibid.*, nos. 67, 247.
 - 25 The author is grateful to Simon James for bringing this regiment to her attention. See <http://www.romanarmy.net/hamians.htm>.
 - 26 South Shields Roman Fort Museum, no. 1875/6.3, comprises a series of four belt plates linked by chains; the pelta terminals have brown and yellow millefiori with inset crescents; two have their original central bars. The single belt plate South Shields Roman Fort Museum, no. 1900.170, with openwork pelta terminals and missing its central bar, is identical in shape to the Dura example; it has green and turquoise enamel in the pelta fields and lacks the red enamel bands on the Dura example. See Lindsay Allason-Jones and Roger Miket, *Catalogue of Small Finds from South Shields Roman Fort* (Newcastle upon Tyne, Eng.: Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle upon Tyne, 1984), 96–97, nos. 3.10–3.11; pl. VI.
 - 27 See Françoise Henry, “Emailleurs d’Occident,” *Préhistoire* 2 (1933): 139, fig. 40.2; and Bishop and Coulston, fig. 118.1.
 - 28 See Jürgen Oldenstein, “Zur Ausrüstung römischer Auxiliareinheiten,” *Bericht der Römisch-Germanischen Kommission* 57 (1976): nos. 809, 811; pp. 195–96, 268. The forts at Saalburg and Osterburken were abandoned by 259–60 CE. Saalburg may have been manned in the first century CE by a *numerus* recruited from Britain.

- 29 Ibid., no. 812.
- 30 Lloyd Laing, "The Bradwell Mount and the Uses of Millefiori in Post-Roman Britain," *Studia Celtica* 33 (1999): 138.
- 31 For discussion of millefiori on early Christian objects from Britain and Ireland see *ibid.*, 137–53; and Judith Carroll, "Millefiori in the Development of Early Irish Enamelling," in *From the Isles of the North: Early Medieval Art in Ireland and Britain: Proceedings of the Third International Conference on Insular Art Held in the Ulster Museum, Belfast, 7–11 April, 1994*, ed. Cormac Bourke (Belfast: HMSO, 1995), 49–57, fig. 1e, shows an enamelled openwork plate with millefiori found at Lagore, County Meath, in Ireland (probably of eighth-century date), which could reflect the influence of an earlier Roman prototype like the South Shields and Dura-Europos belt plates discussed here.
- 32 Museum of Antiquities of the University and Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle upon Tyne, nos. 1956.128.103.A (1–2); and Allason-Jones and Milet, 222–24, nos. 3.766–67.
- 33 Olwen Brogan, *Roman Gaul* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1953), 152–53; Ludwig Berger, "Die Thekenbeschläge des Gemellianus von Baden-Aquae Helveticae," *Jahrbuch der Schweizerischen Gesellschaft für Urgeschichte* (1956): 24–39; and Morna MacGregor, *Early Celtic Art in Northern Britain: a Study of Decorative Metalwork from the Third Century B.C. to the Third Century A.D.* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1976), 188.
- 34 For discussion see Gustav Milne, "Maritime Traffic between the Rhine and Roman Britain: A Preliminary Note," in *Maritime Celts, Frisians and Saxons*, ed. Sean McGrail, Council for British Archaeology Research Report 71 (London: Council for British Archaeology, 1990).
- 35 See Lloyd Laing, "Roman Origins of Celtic Christian Art," *Archaeological Journal* 162 (2005): 155.
- 36 Taunton Somerset County Museum; See E. Martyn Jope, *Early Celtic Art in the British Isles* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2000), 249, pl. 91 and II, 555.
- 37 London, British Museum; see Jope, 252, pls. 111 and IX, 806.
- 38 Dublin, National Museum, acc. no. 1903.232; see Jope, 256–57, pls. 128–29 and II.572.
- 39 London, British Museum; see Jope, 305–6, pls. 284–86.
- 40 Laing, "The Roman Origins of Celtic Christian Art," 155–56.
- 41 See Jope, 274–76, pl. 199 a–b, q; and MacGregor, 186–89, fig. 9:2–3, 6, 9–10.
- 42 Corbridge Museum; see Jope, 275, pl. 199q.
- 43 Corbridge Museum; see MacGregor, 187, nos. 2, 3, 6; Jope, 275, pl. 199 a–b; and Laing, *European Influence on Celtic Art*, 34, fig. 2.7c, h, o.
- 44 Corbridge Museum; see MacGregor, 187, nos. 9–10; Laing, *European Influence on Celtic Art*, 34, fig. 2.7 k–l.
- 45 Oldenstein, nos. 902–3, pp. 203–7, 272; and Frisch and Toll, 27, no. 69.
- 46 Laszlo Barkóczi, "Deux tombes de cheval á Brigetio," *Archaeológiai Értesítő* 3, nos. 7–9 (1946–1948): 176–82.
- 47 St. Augustine landed near Richborough at Ebbsfleet

- in 597. After the Roman withdrawal, the site became a Saxon settlement.
- 48 Comparisons made by James, *Arms and Armour*, no. 86. Richborough Site Museum, see Joscelyn P. Bushe-Fox, *Fourth Report on the Excavations of the Roman Fort at Richborough, Kent* (London: Society of Antiquaries, 1949), 148, no. 228, pl. LIV.
 - 49 Oldenstein, no. 929, pp. 203–7, 273; and Frisch and Toll, 27, no. 69.
 - 50 Richborough Site Museum; see Bushe-Fox, no. 151, p. 133, pl. XL.
 - 51 Oldenstein, 203–7.
 - 52 For the most recent thinking on features of Continental manufacture see Laing, “Roman Origins of Celtic Christian Art,” 156.
 - 53 MacGregor, 188, says “local manufacture is assured... The similarity of the better mounts to more purely native work in Britain is confusing, until one realizes that a common ancestry must be responsible. After all, the anonymous craftsmen working under the pseudonym of ‘Gemellianus’ were merely converting their La Tène traditions to new markets, a conversion quickly emulated by their British brothers.”
 - 54 British Museum, P and E 2005, 12–4.1; Mike Pitts and Sally Worrell, “Dish Fit for the Gods,” *British Archaeology* 73 (2003): 22–27; and “Hadrian’s Wall Names on Staffordshire Pan,” *Current Archaeology* 188 (2003): 324–25.
 - 55 The author thanks Simon James for bringing this to her attention. The turret is no. 26a at High Brunton. For discussion see Lindsey Allason-Jones, “Small Finds from Turrets on Hadrian’s Wall,” in *Military Equipment and the Identity of Roman Soldiers; Proceedings of the Fourth Military Equipment Conference*, ed. J. C. N. Coulston, *British Archaeological Reports International Series*, no. 394 (Oxford: British Archaeological Reports, 1988), 204, no. 17, fig. 2, no. 26a.17; 220. For discussion of the workshops, see Jürgen Oldenstein, “Manufacture and Supply of the Roman Army with Bronze Fittings,” in *The Production and Distribution of Roman Military Equipment: Proceedings from the Second Roman Military Equipment Research Seminar*, ed. M. C. Bishop (Oxford: B.A.R., 1985), 82–94.
 - 56 Joanna Close-Brooks, “Excavations at Clatchard Craig, Fife,” in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* 116 (1986): 169–70, fig. 123.
 - 57 Paul Bidwell and Stephen Speak, *Excavations at South Shields Roman Fort* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Eng.: Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle upon Tyne with Tyne and Wear Museums, 1994), 1:14.
 - 58 There has been much discussion of the etymology of the name Arbeia; see David L. Kennedy, “The Place-name Arbeia,” *Britannia* 17 (1986): 332–33; Nick Hodgson, “The Roman Place Names Arbeia and Corstopitum: Recently Suggested Meanings,” *Archaeologia Aeliana* 30 (2002): 173–74; Andrew Breeze, “The Roman Place Names Arbeia and Corstopitum: a Reply,” *Archaeologia Aeliana* 33 (2004): 61–64; and Nick Hodgson, “The Roman Place Names Arbeia and Corstopitum: a Response,” *Archaeologia Aeliana* 34 (2005): 151–52.
 - 59 Simon James brought to the author’s attention the discussion of British recruits in Germania by Pat Southern, “The Numeri of the Roman Imperial Army,” *Britannia* 20 (1989): 81–140, esp. 97, 120–22, 132–34.
 - 60 Suggestion of Simon James in correspondence. The author extends thanks to James for comments on a draft of this essay.

SIMON JAMES

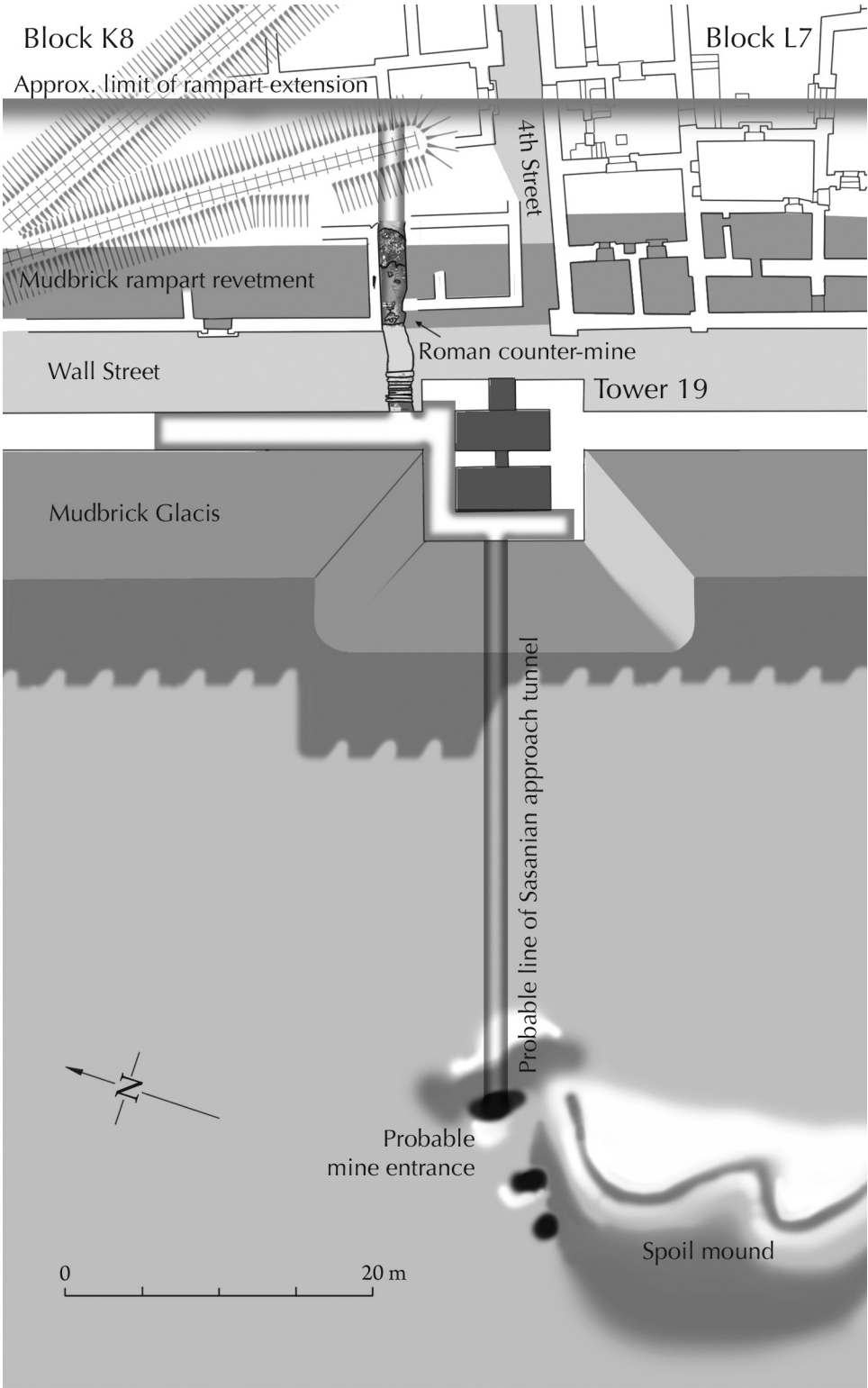
DARK SECRETS OF THE ARCHIVE: EVIDENCE FOR “CHEMICAL WARFARE” AND MARTIAL CONVERGENCES IN THE SIEGE-MINES OF DURA-EUROPOS

Between the World Wars, the Yale-French excavations at Dura-Europos revealed an astonishing picture of the military capability of the armies of Rome and the early Sasanian Empire (known as Persia to the Romans and Iran to the Sasanians themselves). In or around 256 CE, a major Sasanian force attacked Dura, intent on eliminating this forward Roman stronghold blocking the Euphrates valley route from Iran’s rich core territory of Babylonia to the great cities of Syria, which were correspondingly important to Rome. The bitter contest that ensued left many remarkable archaeological remains, explored during the Yale-French excavations and now investigated further by the current Franco-Syrian expedition.¹

Perhaps the most dramatic evidence lay in a complex of siege mines beneath Tower 19 on the western defenses (fig. 18.1).² Here, the bodies of about twenty soldiers found entombed in a tunnel offer gruesome testimony to the ferocity of the fighting and constitute some of the most vivid evidence ever discovered for the archaeology of battle.³ The full significance of what had been revealed was not realized at the time of excavation. Recent work in the archive of the expedition at the Yale University Art Gallery suggests that the excavation records have been holding further secrets, doubly buried, so to speak—first for almost seventeen centuries in the earth, then for another lifetime in original notes and drawings as well as the artifacts recovered from among the bones of the dead. One of these hitherto hidden secrets is dark indeed, a further macabre twist to what is already evidently a tale of horror; it seems that as they strove to take the city, the Sasanians waged chemical warfare in these gloomy galleries.⁴

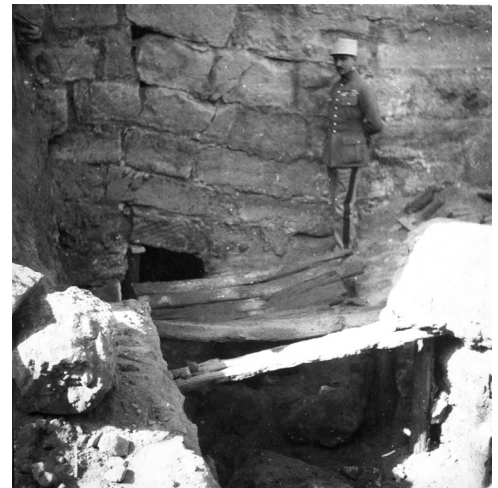
Other clues, encoded in the arms and equipment of the victims, have almost paradoxical implications. Dura ultimately fell to the Sasanian onslaught to be devastated and depopulated probably by massacre and biblical-style deportation.⁵ Caught between colliding empires, the city was crushed like a grape. The remains recovered from the mines at Tower 19 attest not only conflict and destruction but also something more subtle and perhaps equally important; even as they waged ferocious wars for mastery of the Middle East, Romans and Sasanians exerted profound mutual influences. In martial affairs, as in other fields of cultural expression from art and court ceremonial to religion, the two empires imitated and reshaped each other in an encounter that was something more than just a prolonged titanic duel.

Figure 18.1: Plan of the mines at Tower 19, based on plans and aerial photographs in the Dura-Europos archives at the Yale University Art Gallery (graphic by the author)



The colony of Europos (Dura to local Aramaic-speakers) was founded by Macedonian Greek soldiers after the death of Alexander. Five centuries later it was officially a Roman provincial city. Its walls enclosed a multiethnic civil community in the south and center of the town and a substantial garrison of imperial legionaries and auxiliaries dwelling mostly in the northern quarter, which was turned into a formal military cantonment.⁶ In the early years of the third century CE, Dura, perched above the river, was military headquarters for much of the Middle Euphrates district and a forward base for operations against the ailing Parthian Empire, which repeated Roman aggressions failed to conquer but caused to collapse. In a catastrophic example of “imperial blowback,” Rome inadvertently helped precipitate replacement of a relatively benign neighbor by a far more dangerous foe. The Sasanids, a ruling family of Fars (Persis) in Iran, overthrew their Parthian overlords, the Arsacid dynasty, and established a new empire centered in what is now Iraq and Iran.⁷

From the 220s CE onward, Durene civilians and soldiers found themselves caught in the middle of the first clashes between Rome and the new Sasanian Empire. Instead of a base for further conquests, Dura was now an exposed forward stronghold in an era when Sasanian armies sought to invade Roman Syria and even took Antioch. Dura seems to have been held briefly by the Sasanians in the early 250s but was back in Roman hands in 254; the garrison then commenced major operations to turn a walled town into a fortress, anticipating Sasanian attempts to eliminate the Roman presence once and for all.⁸ Steep slopes and cliffs protected the city on three sides. On the west, the part-stone, part-mudbrick city walls faced a flat dry-steppe plain and were vulnerable to attack (see plan, p. 15). The Romans greatly strengthened their 0.8-kilometer course with a steeply sloped mudbrick *glacis* to the front and a huge mudbrick and earthen rampart behind (fig. 18.10: ii, iii). Designed to absorb battering rams and shore the walls against undermining, these were drastic expedients involving destruction of a great swathe of the interior (while paradoxically also ensuring preservation of many of the city’s greatest treasures for modern archaeology to reveal). The rampart entombed large portions of houses, temples, a synagogue, and a Christian building; its slope protected wall paintings and many fragile artifacts from the winter rains for almost seventeen centuries. It also preserved the grim secrets of the siege mines of Tower 19.



Around 256, the expected Sasanian onslaught began. Recent work has identified the vast Sasanian siege-camp to the west of Dura, bigger than the city itself.⁹ From here, the invaders launched a series of attacks against the western defenses and doubtless against the eastern River Gate, which was subsequently lost to the Euphrates. The surviv-

Figure 18.2: Robert du Mesnil du Buisson at the junction of the Roman countermine with the Sasanian sap into which the city wall has slumped. The Roman tunnel is still partly filled with the stones dumped in it by the Persians. Yale University Art Gallery, Dura-Europos Collection

ing siegeworks were explored in the 1930s by the soldier and aristocrat Robert du Mesnil du Buisson, a major figure in the Yale-French mission (fig. 18.2). Du Mesnil's explorations have been renewed by another Frenchman, Pierre Leriche, co-director of the current Franco-Syrian mission. Having previously excavated remains of another assault on the great Palmyrene Gate, at the time of writing he is making important new discoveries at the site of the great Sasanian siege ramp toward the southern end of the western wall that go far beyond the pioneering work of Du Mesnil.¹⁰ It seems the Romans managed to thwart both these attacks, but they faced others, probably simultaneously, in an onslaught that evidently lasted weeks and probably several terror-filled months.



Figure 18.3: Damage to the city wall and Tower 19, as seen in 2008. The undermined stretch of wall came “unzipped” at each end and sank into the ground, as did two walls of Tower 19. These were kept upright by the earth rampart that then enshrouded them, which was removed by Du Mesnil during the excavations (photograph by the author)

Another major operation, roughly 150 meters north of the Palmyrene Gate, was the effort to undermine Tower 19 and a stretch of city wall on its north side. Du Mesnil excavated the remains during the sixth and seventh seasons, from December 1932 through 1933.¹¹ Today, the effects of the Sasanian assault are plainly visible in the slumped city wall and shattered tower (fig. 18.3), but little is now to be seen of the mines themselves. To understand these, we rely on Du Mesnil's records and publications and surviving artifacts from the tunnels. Sadly, the skeletons were

neither studied nor preserved.¹² While by modern standards Du Mesnil's techniques leave much to be desired, they rate better than many others of his time, his observations and recording proving good enough to permit the reinterpretations offered here.

The Sasanian tactics at Tower 19 can be discerned clearly. They intended to “sap” (undermine) a substantial stretch of city wall and topple it to create a breach wide enough for a column of troops to charge into the city from the Sasanian lines across the plain. To minimize casualties as they rushed toward the breach, they would bring down the adjacent tower to their right, which would otherwise be used to enfilade them by pouring onto their unshielded right sides iron-tipped arrows, catapult bolts (pl. 6), artillery stones, javelins, and hand-thrown rocks.

Ideally, mining should have been undetected, aiding attack with the element of surprise. Its violent outcome would have been a paralyzing shock to the defenders. But the flatness of the plain before the walls of Dura made concealment impossible. The entrance to the mine has not been identified certainly, although the excavators noted a substantial pile of debris probably from the Sasanian approach tunnel, which likely

commenced in one of the many chamber-tombs of the extramural cemetery to the west of the city. The Sasanian miners approached the walls through the soft gypsum strata beneath the very hard, meter-thick limestone surface-layer of the plain. In an impressive feat of surveying and engineering skill, they then punched up through the limestone to begin removing the lower courses of wall and tower, replacing these with wooden props to be set alight later (fig. 18.11: iv, right).

To the detriment of the Sasanians’ plan, the Romans could see the piles of earth being thrown up. Expert engineers soon located the approaching tunnel, probably by listening for the sound of digging. They mounted the standard response recommended by Greco-Roman military engineers: a countermine to intercept the enemy gallery and disrupt the attack. They realized that the Sasanians were removing the lower part of the stone wall encased in their rampart, so they drove through this a horizontal tunnel shored with timber to hold the loose earthen overburden toward the growing Persian gallery (fig. 18.11: iv, left). When on the point of breaking through, the Romans assembled an assault party in their tunnel (fig. 18.11: v). Within minutes, many of these men were dead.

Much of what ensued in the struggle for the mines at Tower 19 is clear enough. The Romans were worsted: about twenty of them ended up within their own tunnel a tangled mass of bones, shields, armor, and other identifiably Roman equipment and coins in a space barely 2 meters long and 1.5 meters wide (fig. 18.4). A few meters away, on the attackers’ side, lay a solitary body, still wearing his mail shirt (fig. 18.5), with a plainly non-Roman helmet (pl. 13; discussed below) and a shattered sword with a Central Asiatic jade pommel near where his feet had been; this is surely one of the Sasanian attackers.¹³ The area between this Sasanian and the Roman corpses had been burned heavily. The Sasanians had evidently captured the Roman tunnel and burned its middle

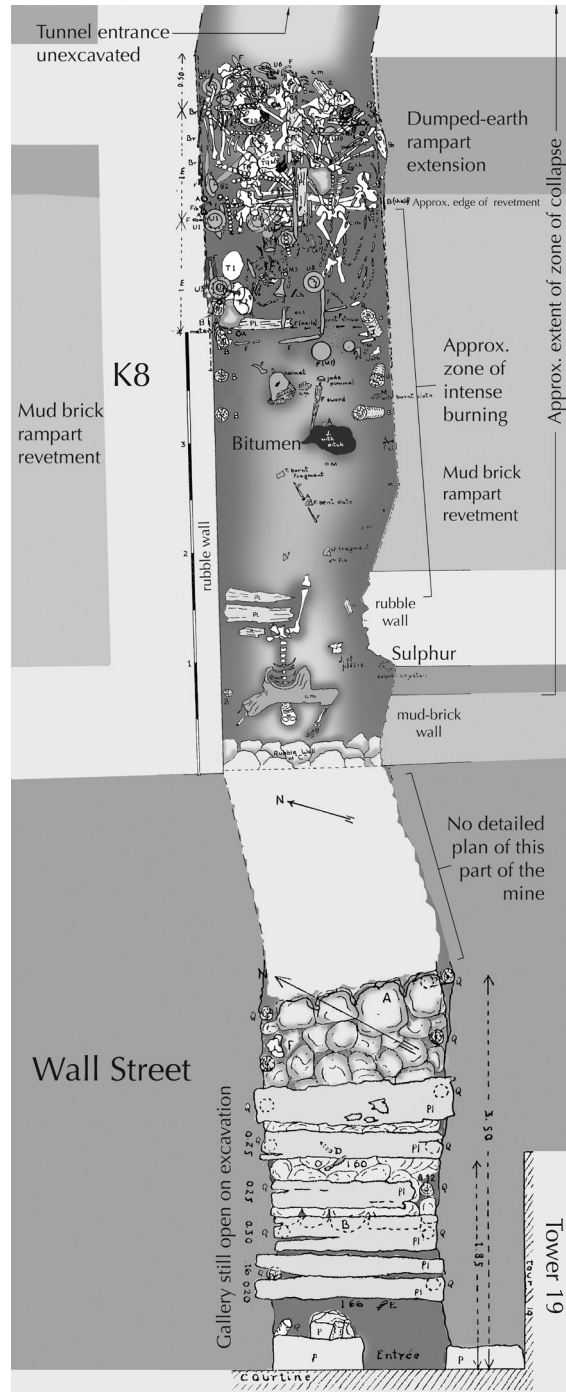


Figure 18.4: Plan of the Roman countermine and its discoveries. Based on Du Mesnil’s published drawings and manuscript (composite plan by the author)



Figure 18.5: The skeleton of a Sasanian soldier on the floor of the Roman countermine. Yale University Art Gallery, Dura-Europos Collection

walls at Tower 19 ended then in a costly tactical victory for the battered defenders. This local success did not prevent the eventual fall of the city, for it is evident that the defenses were subsequently penetrated elsewhere. In 2005, a row of artillery bolt heads was found on the perimeter of the Roman military base, indicating the position of a catapult set up by the defenders preparing for a last stand in the streets and buildings they called home.¹⁵ Unpublished records in the Dura-Europos archive at Yale show that in Block E8 (civil houses turned into barracks), the excavators found a couple of victims of house-to-house fighting still lying on the floors of the rooms in which they were killed.¹⁶ A number of buildings showed traces of the fires that broke out, or were set, during a chaotic sack.

The remarkable story of the final siege of Dura, which can be told in such vivid detail, is reconstructed entirely from archaeological evidence; no written historical account

portion, collapsing the roof to stop further Roman interference. They then resumed their undermining, making good use of the still-open stretch of Roman tunnel adjacent to their own works as a convenient dump for the stones from the city wall, even mortaring them together to hinder any renewed Roman countermining (figs. 18.2, 18.4, 18.12: viii). But the Romans did not try again.

Without further interruption, the Sasanians were able to finish undermining Tower 19 and the adjacent stretch of curtain wall. They then piled inflammables around the posts holding up tower and curtain wall and set their fire. But their mine failed (fig. 18.12: ix). The curtain did not, as intended, pitch outward to create a gap for the assault party waiting out on the plain; rather, it sank vertically in the ground but remained upright (fig. 18.3). There was no practicable breach; the mudbrick glacis and rampart had done their job, and the attackers were thwarted. Tower 19 was effectively knocked out as a fighting platform, but this achieved little. The slumping of two of its outer walls precipitated the collapse of its interior floors, preserving between them several of Dura's most important military treasures: a painted rectangular wooden shield (pl. 5) as well as two intact sets of scale horse-armor (fig. 18.6) and the disintegrated remains of another.¹⁴

The murderous struggle for the

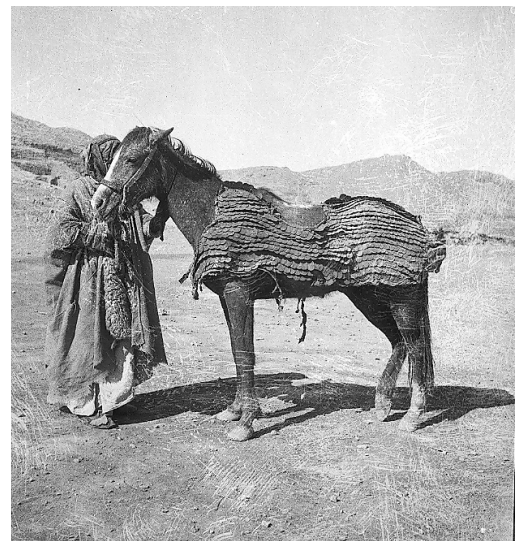


Figure 18.6: One of the perfectly preserved sets of Roman horse-armor found in Tower 19, photographed on the back of a horse at the time of discovery (armor: 1933.680) Yale University Art Gallery, Dura-Europos Collection

survives. It nevertheless is incomplete in a number of respects, most notably that we remain unsure how the Sasanians eventually broke into the city. There is also something of a mystery about exactly what happened in the Roman countermine.

Du Mesnil’s vivid description of his excavation around Tower 19 has been of double interest to me as a Roman military archaeologist specializing in the study of weapons and of warfare (Dura-Europos offers much of the best evidence ever found for both).¹⁷ One question has always nagged me, ever since I first read about the discoveries: how did some twenty Roman soldiers, complete with their equipment, become entombed in such a tiny space within their own mine?

As we saw, Du Mesnil believed that when the tunnels met the Romans were defeated by the Sasanians, who captured their countermine. This clearly is correct, but his explanation for how so many Romans were killed and how they ended up where they were found has never sounded very convincing to me. He argued that in hand-to-hand fighting the Romans were driven back, causing officers outside the countermine to panic that the Persians would follow the retreating defenders into the city through the Roman tunnel. So they ordered its entrance collapsed. This desperate measure stopped the Sasanians and trapped many Romans still inside. They huddled together by the fallen entrance, seated, crouching, or standing, while the Sasanians set the adjacent stretch of tunnel alight using sulphur and bitumen as accelerants: crystals of the first and a broken jar of the second were found on the floor (fig. 18.4). Overcome by fumes and flames, the Romans collapsed where they stood. The resulting tangle of corpses was partly incinerated.¹⁸

This is a dramatic and horrifying reconstruction. Yet it does not ring true. The tunnel was narrow, and armed attackers could have issued from it only one at a time. How dangerous was that to forewarned, assembled defenders? And would twenty desperate Romans really have stood passively watching their foes set light to the mine, when their only chance for life was to stop them? Du Mesnil’s account makes no sense. Careful study of his drawings of the tangle of bodies (no photographs survive) suggests a wholly different, but equally horrific, sequence of events.

Du Mesnil offered no detailed overall plan of the countermine, and the various drawings of parts of the complex he did publish are hard to relate together.¹⁹ Close study of elements appearing in more than one image allows their original relationships to be re-established and many details of the three-dimensional conformation of the body-pile to be teased out (fig. 18.7).²⁰ Examination of the disposition of the lowest layer of bodies shows that several individuals were seated against the sides of the tunnel, as Du Mesnil noted, but their legs were stretched across it, not contracted—hardly plausible if others were standing over them when the smoke and flame reached them (fig. 18.7: bodies 6, 7, 10). The upper bodies had not collapsed from a standing position at all: some lay stretched right across the tunnel over the lowermost corpses (fig. 18.7: bodies 4, 8, 13, 14); they clearly had been lain there deliberately by others. We can reconstruct in detail the sequence of stacking. First, individuals were placed sitting up against the walls. Then, others were laid over them across the tunnel. Finally, more were placed leaning against the face of the growing pile, from the Sasanian side. Subsequently some of these last positioned bodies were almost entirely burned away. When excavated, they were attested only by remains of the iron mail shirts that had encased their torsos (fig. 18.7:

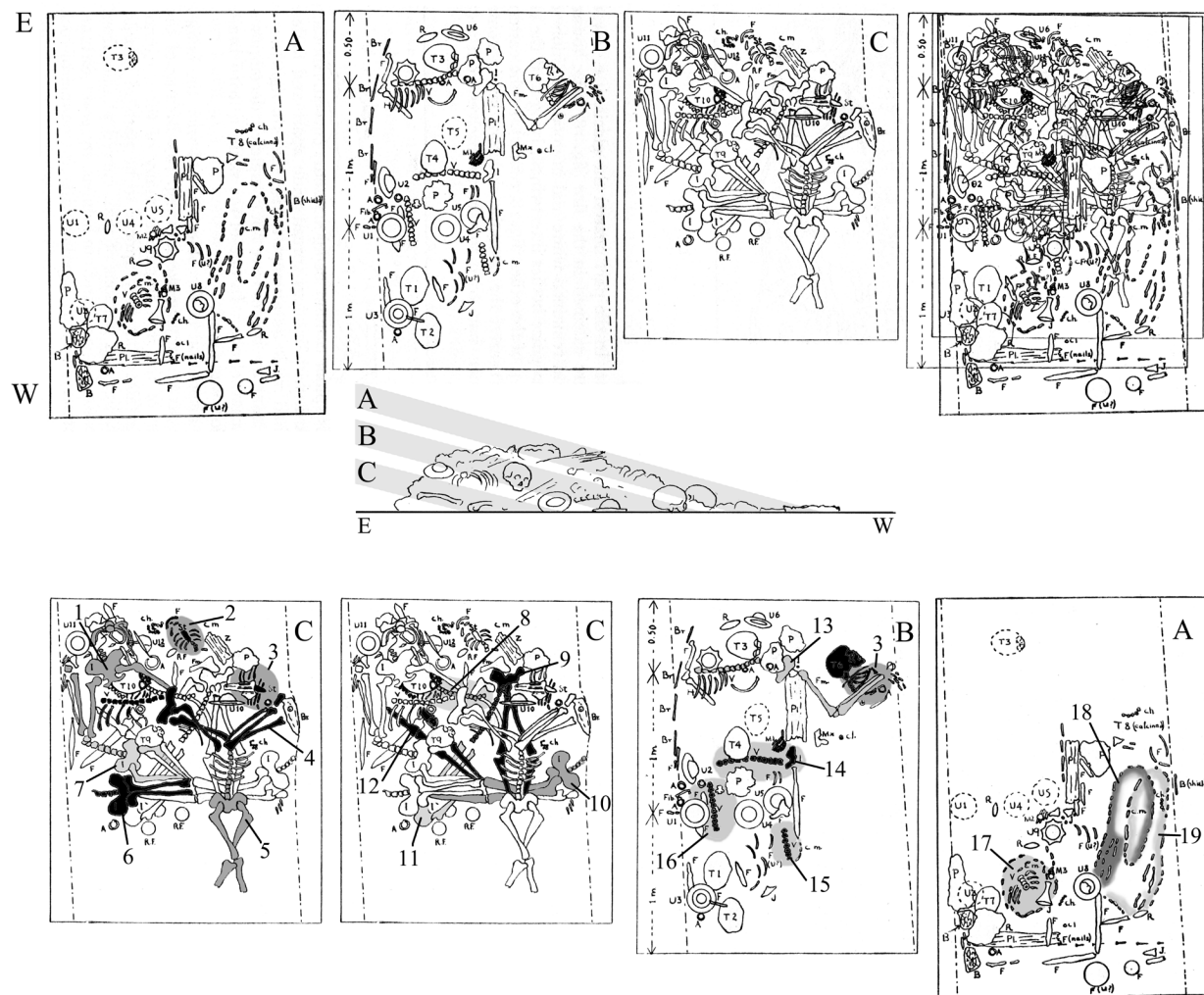


Figure 18.7: Du Mesnil's drawings of the body stack (top, A–C) reflect how he excavated it (center). They permit us to identify the number and disposition of bodies (bottom row) and to reconstruct the compressed mass (top right) (graphic by the author)

bodies 18, 19). This is then not a pile of dead who had expired where they were found; it is a deliberately constructed stack of bodies created by the attackers.

The deliberate stacking of Roman dead by the Sasanians implies a sequence of events quite different from that postulated by Du Mesnil. When the Romans were defeated underground, their officers did not collapse the mouth of their own tunnel and probably had no means of doing so at such short notice; rather, it remained open, exposing the Sasanians to immediate danger of Roman counterattack before the former could destroy the countermine. They now controlled a tunnel littered with dead or incapacitated Romans. With brutal practicality matching that of the Romans, the Sasanians turned these obstacles into a resource.

They dragged the bodies closer to the tunnel entrance and piled them into a wall (fig. 18.11: vi) to hinder any further Roman attack and thwart another known siege tactic: shooting catapult bolts along mine galleries.²¹ The Sasanians employed the Roman casualties as “organic sandbags,”²² while they set fire to the middle section of the countermine (figs. 18.11: vi; 18.12: vii).

This new explanation raises a further question with an even more macabre probable answer: if the Roman soldiers perished not as a result of the fire but had already been killed, or at least incapacitated, before their bodies were stacked and the fire set, how did they meet their fate?

Du Mesnil thought the Romans had been defeated by the Sasanians in desperate hand-to-hand combat in the dark tunnels and were forced to retreat to the point where they were found. If these Roman soldiers perished not as a result of the mine entrance being collapsed before they could escape, how did the Sasanians manage to kill twenty of them in a space barely tall enough to stand in upright, narrow enough to touch both walls at the same time, and only about 10 meters long? This suggests superhuman close-combat abilities—or some quite different agency.

In seeking an alternative explanation for this massacre, my first hypothesis was that it was a terrible accident. In the hot, dark tunnel, lit only by oil lamps, once the mines met and fighting broke out, men at the back pushed forward, while those at the front, meeting ferocious resistance, tried to recoil. In the confined space, crowd crush could soon incapacitate or kill many by asphyxiation or trampling (as modern accidents at football stadia and religious gatherings have shown). At a presentation of this provisional asphyxiation-through-crowd-crush hypothesis, the ancient historian Kate Gilliver suggested that smoke, rather than crushing, could have been the cause. Surviving historical texts reveal that centuries earlier the Greeks developed simple fume generators to literally smoke out enemy siege-miners using pungent materials like burning feathers.²³ This historical information provided, in my view, the final piece of the archaeological puzzle. The Romans caught in the tunnel by Tower 19 had been gassed. We can even identify the chemical agents used.

Here is what I believe happened: Just as the Romans detected the approaching mine, the Sasanian sappers heard the approaching Roman tunnellers with enough time to plan a riposte. They prepared a very nasty surprise for the Romans, and it worked perfectly. Probably in their own approach tunnel, at a level lower than the Roman countermine, they set up a brazier of hot charcoal. As the Romans broke through into the prop-filled void under the city wall, the Sasanians retreated behind their brazier and threw onto it some of the bitumen and sulphur crystals we know they had because, probably only minutes later, they used them to set fire to the Roman tunnel. These materials would have produced dense clouds of hot fumes—a deadly cocktail of oily hydrocarbon smoke, carbon monoxide, and the even nastier sulphur dioxide gas. The last, when inhaled, combines with water in the mucus of nose and lungs to create sulphurous acid.²⁴

The Sasanian engineers probably actively pumped these fumes into the Roman tunnel with bellows, the documented technique, but may not have needed to do so. Once the low-level Sasanian tunnel was connected to the higher Roman gallery, a natural chimney effect would have drawn the hot gasses into the latter. Perhaps the air-current was magnified by the prevailing westerly winds which often buffet the city (fig. 18.11: v). Either way, the foremost members of the Roman assault party would have found themselves engulfed in total oily blackness and, seconds later, choking their lives out as sulphurous acid burned their eyes, throats, and lungs. Men were probably already collapsing into unconsciousness at the front of the party

before the smoke reached those further back; only the hindmost were able to turn and stagger choking out of the tunnel, pursued, it must have seemed, by the sulphurous clouds of Hell billowing from the entrance (fig. 18.11: vi). Whether or not they understood what was happening, it is no wonder the Romans outside hesitated to re-enter their tunnel.

Down in their approach mine, the Sasanians simply had to keep the smoke going until the noises in the gallery above stopped. Capping or dousing their brazier, they waited briefly for the worst of the fumes to blow on through the mines and out into the city, then entered the Roman gallery, now littered with dead and incapacitated men. They began systematically dragging the bodies toward the entrance and piling them, some perhaps still alive, into a blocking wall. As the floor was cleared, they prepared and started the fire, using more bitumen and sulphur this time as accelerants to make it flare rapidly into an unquenchable inferno and collapse the middle section of the Roman gallery.²⁵ It seems that at this point the Sasanians suffered a loss.

The isolated body found on the Sasanian side of the seat of the fire in the countermine was one of the attackers, probably someone of some importance given the fineness of his arms, perhaps leader of the Sasanian mine-fighting detail. Whoever he was, I believe he was the man who started the fire after his comrades had cleared the area. Perhaps he was injured already or just lingered too long to ensure the fire was alight and was overcome accidentally by the same fumes that had recently killed the Romans. He was destined to share a tomb with them, since the falling roof evidently prevented his comrades from recovering his body, when they resumed their undermining of the wall.

If correct—and it seems the best explanation of all the available evidence—this new reconstruction of the dramatic struggle in the dark beneath Tower 19 constitutes the earliest-known archaeological testimony for deliberate use of agents in the form of gas or vapor to incapacitate or kill enemy personnel: what we today call chemical warfare.²⁶

In itself, encountering such siege tactics in the third century CE is actually no surprise to ancient military historians, since, as was mentioned above, written accounts record the use of noxious smoke in the Classical world several centuries earlier. The Romans, masters of military engineering, maintained and further developed the sophisticated Hellenistic tradition of *poliorcetics* (siege warfare). Especially interesting is that at Dura it seems poisonous smoke was being used—and with devastating expertise—not by Romans but by Sasanians.

The Parthians apparently had no significant siege capability, focusing instead on mobile equestrian warfare (horse archers and armored lancers) largely developed on the central Asiatic grass steppe, a military tradition suited to the arid plains of the Middle East. The Sasanians continued to place great ideological emphasis on mounted combat, and the Roman sources through which we first came to see them likewise focused on this continuity from Parthian times. Greco-Roman ideological attitudes tended to represent Iranians as timeless barbarians. They were just more Parthians or throwbacks to the Achaemenid Persians whom Alexander had conquered. These factors made it hard for Romans to think of the Sasanians as anything fundamentally different in kind from what had gone before—especially when Sasanian discourse,

imagery, and propaganda emphasised traditional themes. For example, the first Sasanid king, Ardashir I, was represented on coins in the Parthian royal crown, while early Sasanid art foregrounded Parthian-style heavy cavalry warfare. Most crucially, Romans believed, or at least claimed, that the Sasanid regime was bent on reconquest of the old Achaemenid Empire in the west; true or not, it allowed Romans to see Sasanians as a revival of ancient Persia rather than as something new.²⁷ Modern scholarship long contemplated Roman-Sasanian interactions far more through Classical than Iranian eyes, in part simply because much more evidence exists for the Roman side. Perceptions of these interactions were filtered further by modern scholarship’s own colonialist and Orientalist cultural context. It is unsurprising, therefore, that we too have long tended to see the Sasanians in military terms just as more aggressive and effective Parthians, not really as anything potentially new or different.

The archaeological testimony of Dura-Europos gives us a major direct insight into the capabilities of an early Sasanian army at war undistorted by either Sasanid royal propaganda or that of Greco-Roman historians. Even leaving aside for a moment the question of gas warfare, my colleague Pierre Leriche, an expert on ancient city defenses, has long argued that the multiple, complex, sophisticated, and well-executed siege-works documented at Dura, and the ultimate success of the Sasanians, show that already in the 250s they had mastered the full spectrum of state-of-the-art Greco-Roman poliorcetics.²⁸ Against this background, it becomes almost expected that they would have known how to use fume generators as a tool of mine fighting. There are other clues that they had mastered siege warfare even earlier than this: about fifteen years before they attacked Dura, the Sasanians had taken the powerful Arab city of Hatra in northern Mesopotamia, which, remarkably, had several times defied sieges waged by Roman armies led by emperors themselves.²⁹

What was the source of this apparently rapidly established new siege capability for Iranian armies? This is fairly easy to understand. Written accounts and living expertise were available. For example, the Sasanian Empire incorporated Greek communities, notably the great city of Seleucia on the Tigris, which lay close to its capital, Ctesiphon, while early Sasanian kings remained, like the Arsacids, fairly philhellenic. These enclaves, if not active centers of Classical military expertise, could have provided channels for transmission of Greek military writings: histories of wars and military handbooks that describe in detail such techniques as the use of smoke generators in mines.

Perhaps of more immediate relevance may have been the composition of Sasanian armies. Like those of many imperial systems, including the Roman and recent British Empires, Sasanian field armies included contingents levied from subject peoples and even usefully warlike foreigners and enemies. Multiethnic recruitment turned the peculiar expertise of the varied national contingents to imperial benefit.³⁰ It is also clear that from the outset the Sasanians captured large numbers of Roman provincial troops and doubtless recruited some through coercion or incentive. Others are recorded to have defected as exiles or willing renegades; the distinctions are often a matter of perspective. The history of Roman and Partho-Sasanian relations records numerous instances of soldiers, including officers, crossing from one empire to serve in the other.³¹ In these ways, contemporary Roman engineering expertise could pass directly into Sasanian service, just as Roman-style architecture and art was created in Mesopotamia by deported provincial civilians during the same period.³²

We can, then, glimpse the “how”; the “why” may also be discerned clearly. The Sasanians were acutely aware that the Romans repeatedly had invaded Parthian Mesopotamia and several times besieged and taken

the royal capital, Ctesiphon, and the nearby Greek metropolis of Seleucia on the Tigris. To take on the Romans, acquiring siege capabilities of their own would have greatly enhanced Sasanian military potential, as events demonstrated. The military system they rapidly developed in the third century was so formidable, both in open-field battle and set-piece sieges, that it nearly broke Rome's grip on the East, forcing profound restructuring of the entire imperial system and its armies.³³ Instead of asking how and why the Sasanians developed siege expertise so rapidly, the more pertinent question is why did the Parthians, who repeatedly suffered the effects of Roman sieges in the heart of their empire, apparently fail to do so? Were they somehow incapable of the change or did they even actively avoid it perhaps for ideological reasons? Or is this another illusion, fostered by huge gaps and distortions in our evidence?

If early Sasanian skill at Greco-Roman-style siege warfare is evident in the engineering works they created at Dura-Europos, then other equally significant testimony for martial exchanges across the Euphrates may be found among the remains of the carnage around Tower 19. Of particular interest is the isolated body in the middle of the Roman mine, plausibly believed to have been the owner of the remarkable iron helmet and jade-pommeled sword found nearby (fig. 18.4). It was argued above that this was the Sasanian who started the fire; he had set down his encumbering helmet and sword while he did it. Features of his panoply indicate the far-reaching contacts of the Iranian Empire, not least with Central Asia. His sword was too shattered to recover the form of its blade, but its discoid pommel was of jade, thought to have come from Chinese Turkestan.³⁴ His armor and helmet encode part of another remarkable story—of two-way exchanges in military equipment technology, fashion, and style between the Roman and Partho-Sasanian worlds, which began long before the siege of Dura and continued long after.

The body was clad in iron mail (so-called chain mail, made of interlocking iron rings) in the form of a long-sleeve T-shirt (fig. 18.5).³⁵ Down to incorporation of decorative rows of brass rings, it is virtually identical to the mail shirts worn by the Roman defenders of Dura.³⁶ Its identification as Sasanian rather than Roman depends on the precise context of its discovery (above) and one non-Roman detail of its manufacture: the brassy rings pick out a trident-shaped device on the chest. It resembles the quasi-heraldic badges used in the Sasanian world seen on the helmets and horse-trappers of Sasanid royalty and grandees on the great rock-relief at Firuzabad commemorating the overthrow of the Arsacids.³⁷ These same reliefs also show Sasanid kings in mail shirts of just the kind found on the "Persian" in the Tower 19 mine, suggesting such armor was in widespread use in early Sasanian armies. It seems to be though another recent innovation in the East; the Parthians do not appear to have used mail. Developed some five centuries earlier by the

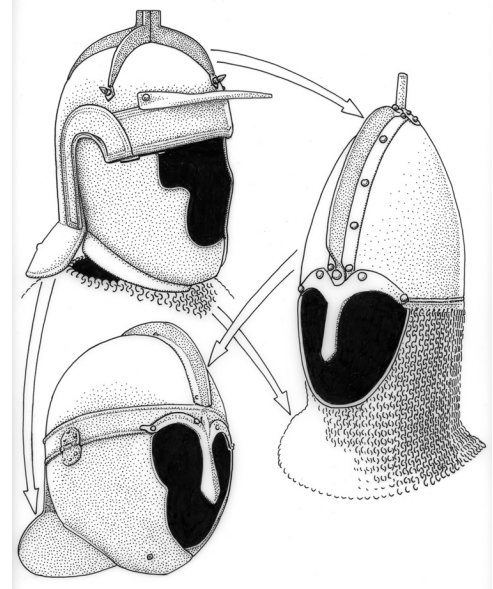


Figure 18.8: Roman helmets and mail (top left) influenced Partho-Sasanian helmets like that from the Dura mines (right), which in turn inspired new fourth-century Roman designs (bottom left) (drawing by the author)

European Gauls,³⁸ the use of mail later spread to the Sarmatian horse-peoples of the Black Sea Steppe.³⁹ The most likely route for it to have entered Sasanian use is, again, via Roman troops, who used mail extensively beginning in the third century BCE. Here are more indications of Roman influences on Sasanian military culture.

The Sasanian's helmet tells a further story (pl. 13; fig. 18.8, right).⁴⁰ If it is compared with contemporary Roman helmets from Dura and elsewhere, it could hardly look more different.⁴¹ Still often made of brass instead of iron, Roman helmets comprised a rounded bowl that followed the shape of the skull. They were made in a single piece with a large projecting neck guard and big plate cheekpieces attached by hinges. This contrasts strongly with the overall appearance and basic structure of the Sasanian helmet from the mine: its iron skull was notably taller than Roman forms, and it was made in two parts joined by a separate strip of iron to which each half was riveted individually. Across the forehead was riveted a T-shape plate and a pair of iron eyebrows anchoring a projecting noseguard (a feature unknown on contemporary Roman examples). It lacked plate protection for the neck or face, having instead a pendant curtain of mail.

The Sasanian helmet from Dura clearly represents a basic approach to helmet-making comprising a tradition quite separate from that of the contemporary Roman world; nevertheless, it has its own remarkable implications for Roman-Sasanian martial interactions. The helmet sports a curved, upstanding metal plate stretching from above the eyes to the apex and fixed to the helmet skull by a large rivet at each end. This, which looks like a supplement to the basic design, closely resembles plates riveted across brow and crown on contemporary Roman helmets, which were intended to absorb the force of blows from sword or axe before they reached the helmet bowl (fig. 18.8, top left). As with the choice of mail for the hanging neck defense, it seems we are dealing with Sasanian adaptation of a Roman idea.

However, it is the principle of this helmet's construction which is of greatest interest to ancient armor specialists, because it provides the answer to a technological puzzle. During the half-century following the fall of Dura—as the Roman Empire battled for survival against Sasanian power in the East and Germanic, especially Gothic, onslaughts in the North—Roman helmet design underwent a total revolution unmatched in other aspects of arms and equipment, which saw incremental change or none. By the early 300s, the established helmet-making tradition—the evolution of which can be traced without a break from the Republic to the fall of Dura—had simply vanished. It had been replaced by a radically different conception of helmet design, now always in iron, in which the helmet skull was made in two halves, each riveted to a separate fore-and-aft strip or ridge-piece.⁴² To the front of this, a T-shape noseguard-with-eyebrows component was often riveted. No third-century source of inspiration was known for this sudden, radically new Roman helmet tradition, which lasted at least into the fifth century; however, an excellent prototype for it had been deposited in the Tower 19 countermines at Dura around 256. This proves that late-Roman helmet design was essentially copied from that encountered in war against the Sasanians at places like Dura.⁴³ Just as the Sasanians adapted Roman mail to their own needs and preferences (e.g., using it on their helmets), the Romans around 300 adapted Sasanian helmet design to their taste, making the overall profile lower and adding plate cheek and neck guards (fig. 18.8, bottom left). The iron helmet that lay in the Tower 19 countermines, at first sight simply an alien intrusion in a Roman environment, in reality exemplifies a continuing interplay of martial culture between two worlds learning and copying from each other even as they fought.

These exchanges are also attested by other treasures deposited as a result of the mining operations, this

time within Tower 19 itself. Between its collapsed floors, along with that iconic imperial Roman military artifact, a curved rectangular shield (pl. 5), lay two complete armored horse trappers and the disintegrated remains of a third.⁴⁴ These trappers, part of the equipment of fully armored lancers or cataphracts (fig.

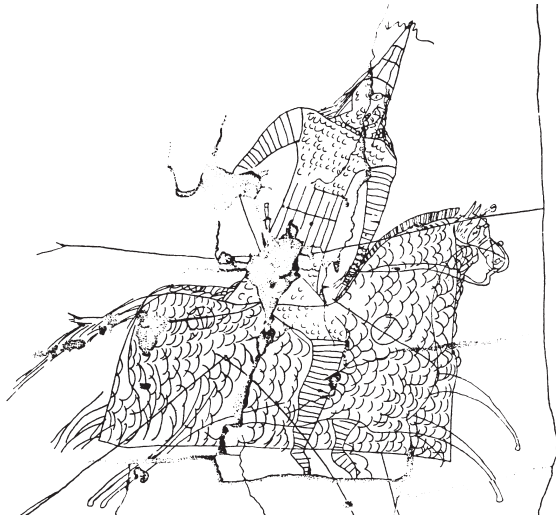


Figure 18.9: Drawing of a graffito of a clibanarius (a fully armored man on an armored horse), Christian Building, ca 200–250 CE (graffito: 1931.608). Yale University Art Gallery, Dura-Europos Collection

18.9), certainly belonged to the defenders. While the Romans encountered armored horses in fighting the Sarmatians on the Danube and around the Black Sea, they first encountered cataphracts in Asia as part of Seleucid and then Parthian forces. The Parthians used them to devastating effect against the Romans in combination with large numbers of horse archers, famously annihilating Crassus' army at Carrhae in 53 BCE.⁴⁵ Cataphracts and other super-heavy cavalry called *clibanarii* were components of later Roman armies,⁴⁶ but the horse armor found in Dura demonstrates that the Romans were introducing and experimenting with such units on the Euphrates frontier during the Principate. The Dura trappers may imitate Parthian designs, although the iron and bronze scales of which they are composed represent another standard armor technique long since adopted and naturalized by the Romans for soldiers' cuirasses.

The Romans were even quicker to adopt horse archers, this time demonstrably from southwest Asia in the first instance. Already in the mid-first century CE a mixed unit of Arab and Parthian horse archers was stationed on the Rhine.⁴⁷ Rome did not use horse archers in large numbers in Europe, but they may

have been very widespread in the less well-documented cavalry units on the eastern frontier throughout the early centuries CE.

The evidence of the early horse archers at Mainz, then, shows that Rome already was directly adopting for its own uses aspects of martial culture from the Parthian world within a century at most of contact between the two empires. The Parthians may have been more resistant to adopting Roman ways, as their apparent failure or reluctance to develop siege capability seems to suggest, although we should make the important caveat that this general impression may be in part an illusion fostered by the ideological bias of Greco-Roman accounts, aggravated by lack of detailed archaeological evidence for Parthian weapons and warfare. For as we have seen, it is the archaeological finds made at Dura, siegeworks and artifacts (and not least the exact disposition and interrelations of artifacts in the earth) preserved by the accidents of war and the peculiarities of the site and its environment,⁴⁸ which allow us to say that the Sasanians—whatever their ideology and rhetoric led them to say in public—were in practice strikingly open to adapting ideas from their Roman antagonists. Perhaps one day finds elsewhere may throw equivalent light on the still-shadowy realities of Parthian warfare.

As we saw, we have a fairly good grasp of the routes whereby these cross-frontier exchanges of weapons, techniques, and tactics were affected: observing the enemy in combat, examining battlefield booty, coercing

prisoners of war to serve, or recruiting exiles and so-called exotic troops from frontier zones and beyond.⁴⁹ Through these channels, foreign ways could become part of the general martial culture of a society more or less inadvertently, as contingents serving together bought, borrowed, or stole each others’ equipment or ideas. This still happens in modern allied armies.⁵⁰

The motivation to copy allies or enemies, whether on the personal initiative of soldiers or on the orders of commanders, may be intensely practical: *their* weapons or armor or tactics clearly work much better than ours. Hannibal was a better general, and his soldiers made a better army than the Romans he faced in Italy, but Republican legionaries had better individual equipment; the Carthaginian general was quick to re-equip his soldiers with the fine kit he captured from his defeated enemies.⁵¹ But simple utility is rarely the only motivation. As Hannibal looted Roman armor, the ultimately victorious Romans adopted the famous Spanish sword used by his Iberian auxiliaries. This was primarily for the legendary strength and lethality of its blade, but they also carefully maintained the Spanish appearance of its scabbard; it was no functional necessity but evidently was considered an indispensable part of its mystique, advertising the *gladius Hispaniensis* even when sheathed.⁵² Just as important as practicalities in driving copying, then, can be moral impact, associations conjured in the minds of observers of competence and courage, ferocity and fearfulness, of past victories and anticipated glory: military cool.⁵³ More recent well-known examples are the pan-European craze for units of Hussars in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and the fashion for units equipped like contemporary, elite French colonial Zouaves during the American Civil War. These trends were driven as much by a taste for distinctive, showy uniforms and the associations they evoked as they were for concrete practical reasons. Martial exchanges across the Euphrates in the early centuries CE and a thousand other lines of confrontation have likewise been driven by the burning desire to capture something of the enemy’s *élan* as well as to match his weapons and tactics.

While the astonishing and gruesome archaeological testimony of the siege of Dura vividly attests the war-torn history of the Euphrates zone in the Roman and early Sasanian era, it equally provides an excellent illustration of how, far from being peripheries, frontiers can be foci not only of violence but also of intensive technological and cultural interactions, especially in matters highly valued by many ancient societies such as soldiering or warriordom.⁵⁴ In the third century CE, even as the Roman and Sasanian Empires violently contested the frontier between them, each studied, imitated, and learned from the other, influencing their antagonists’ martial culture and identity even as they recreated themselves and each other through war hot and cold. Further, the martial exchanges attested at Dura were just part of a far broader pattern of interaction and convergence between the Partho-Sasanian and Roman-early Byzantine worlds, which unfolded at many levels. It was exhibited not least in the parallel cultures of the imperial courts of neighboring powers, which—when they were not actively fighting each other—in late antiquity came to see themselves as the “two eyes of the world.”⁵⁵ The desolate remains of Dura serve as one of the first monuments to a deadly embrace that would last for centuries.

Notes

I would like to thank Lisa R. Brody, Gail L. Hoffman, and Margaret Neeley for the invitation to contribute to the present volume. At Yale University Art Gallery I am as ever grateful to Susan Matheson and Lisa Brody for their sustained assistance in the research on the Dura archive on which the foregoing is based. I also wish to record my thanks to Pierre Leriche and other members of the modern Franco-Syrian mission for discussions of the siegeworks at Dura, and their generous support of my work at the site. It should be noted, however, that Pierre Leriche does not accept the “gassing” hypothesis presented here.

- 1 For discussion of the meaning of terms like “Iran” (which Sasanians applied to, roughly, modern Iran and Iraq plus some neighboring regions), see Touraj Daryaee, *Sasanian Persia: the Rise and Fall of an Empire* (London: Tauris, 2009). For a modern overview of the siege see Pierre Leriche, “Techniques de guerre sassanides et romains à Doura-Europos,” in *L’Armée Romaine et les Barbares du IIIe au VIIe siècle*, ed. Françoise Vallet and Michel Kazanski (Rouen: Association Française d’Archéologie Mérovingienne and Musée des Antiquités Nationales, 1993), 83–100, superseding Clark Hopkins, “The Siege of Dura,” *Classical Journal* 42, no. 5 (1947): 251–59.
- 2 Only part of the countermines dug through the Romans’ own anti-siege rampart was revealed directly. Fig. 18.1, top left, shows the 1930s railway embankments for the mining trucks used to remove excavated earth to dumps outside the city; one of these lay (and still lies) over the entrance area of the Roman tunnel, preventing its excavation. The extent of the Sasanian undermining was evident from the extent of the slumping of the city curtain and two walls of Tower 19. The Sasanian approach tunnel has never been located, but its line is fairly certain; a substantial mound of earth adjacent to pre-existing tomb entrances directly in front of the tower is almost certainly spoil from its excavation.
- 3 The key publications for the Tower 19 mines are Robert du Mesnil du Buisson, “The Persian Mines,” *Prelim. Rep.* VI, 188–205; and Du Mesnil du Buisson, “Les ouvrages du siège à Doura-Europos,” *Mémoires de la Société Nationale des Antiquaires de France*, 9th Series 1 (1944): 5–60.
- 4 The account offered here briefly summarises a detailed treatment to be published elsewhere: Simon T. James, “Stratagems, Combat and ‘Chemical Warfare’ in the Siege-mines of Dura-Europos,” *American Journal of Archaeology* (forthcoming, 2011).
- 5 On Sasanian mass deportation of Roman city populations, and their “resettlement” in the Sasanian Empire, see Beate Dignas and Engelbert Winter, *Rome and Persia in Late Antiquity: Neighbours and Rivals* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 254–63.
- 6 The extensive excavations of the military base were never formally published, although many elements were described in the *Preliminary Reports*, e.g., the *praetorium* and a composite plan of the central area of the base in *Prelim. Rep.* V, 201–37, pl. III. On recent renewed work: Simon T. James, “New Light on the Roman Military Base at Dura-Europos: Interim Report on a Pilot Season of Fieldwork in 2005,” in *The Late Roman Army in the Near East from Diocletian to the Arab Conquest*, ed. Ariel S. Lewin and Pietrina Pellegrini, *British Archaeological Reports International Series*, 1717 (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2007), 29–47.
- 7 For an introduction to the Sasanian Empire, see Daryaee, *Sasanian Persia*. For some recent scholarship on the Sasanians and their relations with Rome, see e.g., Dignas and Winter; Vesta Sarkhosh Curtis and Sarah Stewart, eds. *The Sasanian Era* (London: Tauris, 2008); and Matthew

- P. Canepa, *The Two Eyes of the Earth: Art and Ritual of Kingship between Rome and Sasanian Iran* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009).
- 8 Dura taken twice by the Sasanians: Frantz Grenet, “Les Sassanides a Doura-Europos (253 ap. J. C.): réexamen du matériel épigraphique iranien du site,” in *Géographie Historique au Proche-Orient*, ed. Pierre-Louis Gatier, Bruno Helly, and Jean-Paul Rey-Coquais (Paris: Éditions du Centre National Recherche Scientifique, 1988): 133–58; Simon T. James, “Dura-Europos and the Chronology of Syria in the 250s AD,” *Chiron* 15 (1985): 111–24; and Simon T. James, *The Arms and Armour, and Other Military Equipment, The Excavations at Dura-Europos Conducted by Yale University and the French Academy of Inscriptions and Letters, Final Report 7* (London: British Museum, 2004), 22–24. Dura back in Roman hands in 254: *P. Dura* 32: C. Bradford Welles, Robert O. Fink and J. Frank Gilliam, eds., *The Parchments and Papyri. The Excavations at Dura-Europos Conducted by Yale University and the French Academy of Inscriptions and Letters. Final Report Volume 5, Part 1* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959).
- 9 Mathilde Gelin and Pierre Leriche, pers. comm.; Mathilde Gelin, “Histoire et urbanisme d’une ville à travers son architecture de brique crue: l’Exemple de Doura-Europos” (Ph.D. diss., Université de Paris, 2000).
- 10 Work on the siege ramp is ongoing. Palmyrene Gate attack: Mathilde Gelin, Pierre Leriche, and Jeanine ‘Abdul Massih, “La porte de Palmyre à Doura-Europos,” in *Doura-Europos Études IV, 1991–1993*, ed. Pierre Leriche and Mathilde Gelin (Beirut: Insitut Français d’archéologie du Proche-Orient, 1997), 41–42, figs. 31–32.
- 11 A fact glossed over in Du Mesnil’s consolidated account of the excavations: Du Mesnil du Buisson, “The Persian Mines”; see also Du Mesnil du Buisson, “Les ouvrages.” For a detailed review, see: James, “Stratagems.”
- 12 Unfortunately, documented associations between the artifacts recovered and objects now at Yale were lost at an early stage; however, the group can be substantially reconstructed, with certainty (e.g., the “Persian’s” mail shirt and helmet) or high probability: James, *Arms and Armour*, 276.
- 13 Du Mesnil du Buisson, “The Persian Mines,” 192–94.
- 14 James, *Arms and Armour*, nos. 449–51.
- 15 James, “New Light.”
- 16 Two bodies, one still in armor, found in the barrack-housing of Block E8, were briefly recorded by Frank Brown in a field notebook (Dura-Europos Archives, Yale University Art Gallery).
- 17 For the weapons and armor from Dura, see James, *Arms and Armour*.
- 18 Du Mesnil du Buisson, “The Persian Mines,” 198.
- 19 Du Mesnil du Buisson, “The Persian Mines,” figs. 14–18; see James, “Stratagems” for detailed analysis.
- 20 For detailed analysis of the drawings and their relations, see James, “Stratagems.” The drawings of the body-tangle published by Du Mesnil in *Prelim. Rep. VI* (fig. 18.8) are hard to interrelate, but close study in combination with other sources permits their correct spatial juxtaposition to be determined. They seem to represent three phases of excavation along the tunnel from west to east (here A, westernmost and uppermost, to C, deepest and furthest east), rather than horizontal layers (see schematic profile). They are superimposed top right to show the

overall conformation of the deposit. The lower row of drawings presents the three images in reverse order, approximating to the original sequence of deposition of the bodies. C, the deepest layer, is shown twice to help pick out the individuals identifiable in the drawing. Most skulls had either been burned, smashed or had rolled out of position; the individuals are discernable from articulated legs, pelvises and spines, sometimes only the latter, or in the case of bodies 18 and 19, just from the outlines of their armored shirts; the bodies had been entirely burned away in the conflagration which brought the roof down on the corpses.

- 21 Du Mesnil du Buisson, "Les ouvrages," 34, and n1.
- 22 To adapt modern British Army gallows-humor slang for close-protection bodyguards.
- 23 E.g., at Ambracia in 189 BCE: Livy 38.7; Polybius 21.28. Use of smoke generators in mine warfare was a technique listed as a stratagem in imperial-era Greco-Roman military treatises (e.g., Polyaeus, *Excerpts of the Stratagems of War*, 56.7).
- 24 H_2SO_3 .
- 25 On petrochemicals (*naphtha*) and sulphur used together as incendiary materials, see Josephus, *Jewish War*, 3.228 (thanks to Guy Stiebel for this reference). For an overview of the use of Near Eastern petrochemical materials for military incendiary purposes in Classical times, see Adrienne Mayor, *Greek Fire, Poison Arrows, and Scorpion Bombs: Biological and Chemical Warfare in the Ancient World* (London: Overlook Duckworth 2003), 228–35.
- 26 Poison-smoke generators of the type hypothesised here would be classified as chemical weapons under Article II of the modern international Chemical Weapons Convention. For fuller discussion, see James, "Stratagems."
- 27 Daryaee, *Sasanian Persia*; Dignas and Winter. On Sasanian art, see Georgina Herrmann, *The Iranian Revival* (Oxford: Elsevier-Phaidon, 1977); and Janine Balty, *Hofkunst van de Sassaniden* (Brussels: Koninklijke Musea voor Kunst en Geschiedenis, 1993).
- 28 Leriche, "Techniques de guerre sassanides."
- 29 Fall of Hatra: Dignas and Winter, 209–11. Hatra had defied siege by Trajan and later by Septimius Severus, apparently twice: Cassius Dio 18.31, 76.10–12. The Hatrenes used powerful artillery and burning *naphtha* against Severus' troops: Mayor, 234.
- 30 Thomas S. Abler, *Hinterland Warriors and Military Dress: European Empires and Exotic Uniforms* (Oxford: Berg, 1999).
- 31 Flights and defections across the Partho-Sasanian border are recorded from the case of the "rogue" Roman general Q. Labienus onwards: Cassius Dio 48.24.
- 32 On mass deportations and "resettlement" in Sasanian territory and Roman-style art and architecture in the Sasanian Empire, see Dignas and Winter, 254–63.
- 33 Peter J. Heather, *The Fall of the Roman Empire: a New History* (Oxford: Macmillan, 2005).
- 34 James, *Arms and Armour*, no. 532.
- 35 Ibid., no. 379.
- 36 Roman mail shirts at Dura: Ibid., nos. 380–85.
- 37 Herrmann, 87–89.

- 38 For one of the earliest known examples see Mircea Rusu, “Das keltische Fürstengrab von Çiumesti in Rumänien,” *Bericht der Römisch-Germanischen Kommission* 50 (1969): 267–300.
- 39 Vladimir A. Goroncharovski, “Some Notes on Defensive Armament of the Bosporan Cavalry,” in *Arms and Armour as Indicators of Cultural Transfer: the Steppes and the Ancient World from Hellenistic Times to the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Markus Mode and Jürgen Tubach (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2006), 445–52.
- 40 Fig. 18.9 shows a reconstruction of the third-century Sasanian helmet from the Tower 19 countermine (right), compared with the fundamentally different design of contemporary Roman helmets (top left). However, the Sasanian example shows Roman influence, in its mail neck-defense, and upstanding frontal reinforcement. It also provides a clear prototype for the entirely new Roman helmet designs which appeared about fifty years after Dura fell (bottom left, based on an unprovenanced example); Simon T. James, “Evidence from Dura-Europos for the Origins of Late Roman Helmets,” *Syria* 63 (1986): 107–34.
- 41 For development of Roman helmets in general, and third-century types in particular, see H. Russell Robinson, *The Armour of Imperial Rome* (London: Arms and Armour, 1975); Michael C. Bishop and J. C. N. Coulston, *Roman Military Equipment* (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2006). For the evidence from Dura itself, see James, *Arms and Armour*, nos. 372–76.
- 42 Hans Klumbach, *Spatrömische Gardehelme* (Munich: Beck, 1973). More examples have been identified since this publication, e.g., Malcolm Lyne, “Late Roman Helmet Fragments from Richborough,” *Journal of Roman Military Equipment Studies* 5 (1994): 97–105.
- 43 James, “Evidence from Dura-Europos.”
- 44 For a reconstruction of the group of artifacts found in Tower 19 see James, *Arms and Armour*, table 3.
- 45 Plutarch, *Crassus*, 23–32.
- 46 E.g., *Clibanarii* accompanied Constantius II to Rome in 357: Ammianus 16.10.1–10.
- 47 The *ala Parthorum et Araborum* is attested at Mainz by the first-century tombstone of Maris, who is depicted shooting from horseback: Wolfgang Selzer, *Römische Steindenkmäler: Mainz in Römischer Zeit* (Mainz: Zabern, 1988), no. 91. A second horse-archer tombstone has also been found at Mainz, that of Flavius Proclus, born in Amman: Selzer, no. 90).
- 48 “Archaeological context” is often the most precious information of all, e.g., knowing the Persian helmet comes from a mine, which also contained coins proving it was deposited in the mid-250s CE. Illegal excavation—looting for the antiquities market which plagues the Middle East—destroys such vital information.
- 49 James, *Arms and Armour*, 14–16.
- 50 Minor examples: British soldiers serving in Afghanistan covet American ration-packs, while some sport beards like their Afghan National Army allies and mentees.
- 51 Polybius 18.28.
- 52 Peter Connolly, “Pilum, Gladius and Pugio in the Late Republic,” *Journal of Roman Military Equipment Studies* 8 (1997): 41–57; Fernando Quesada Sanz, “*Gladius Hispaniensis*: an Archaeological View from Iberia,” *Journal of Roman Military Equipment Studies* 8 (1997): 251–70; and Bishop and Coulston, 54–56.

- 53 This is the quality modern British soldiers call “allyness,” the acme of which comprises weapons and equipment agreed to be “nails” (presumably from “hard as nails”).
- 54 Charles R. Whittaker, *The Frontiers of The Roman Empire. a Social and Archaeological Study* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994).
- 55 Canepa, *The Two Eyes of the Earth*.
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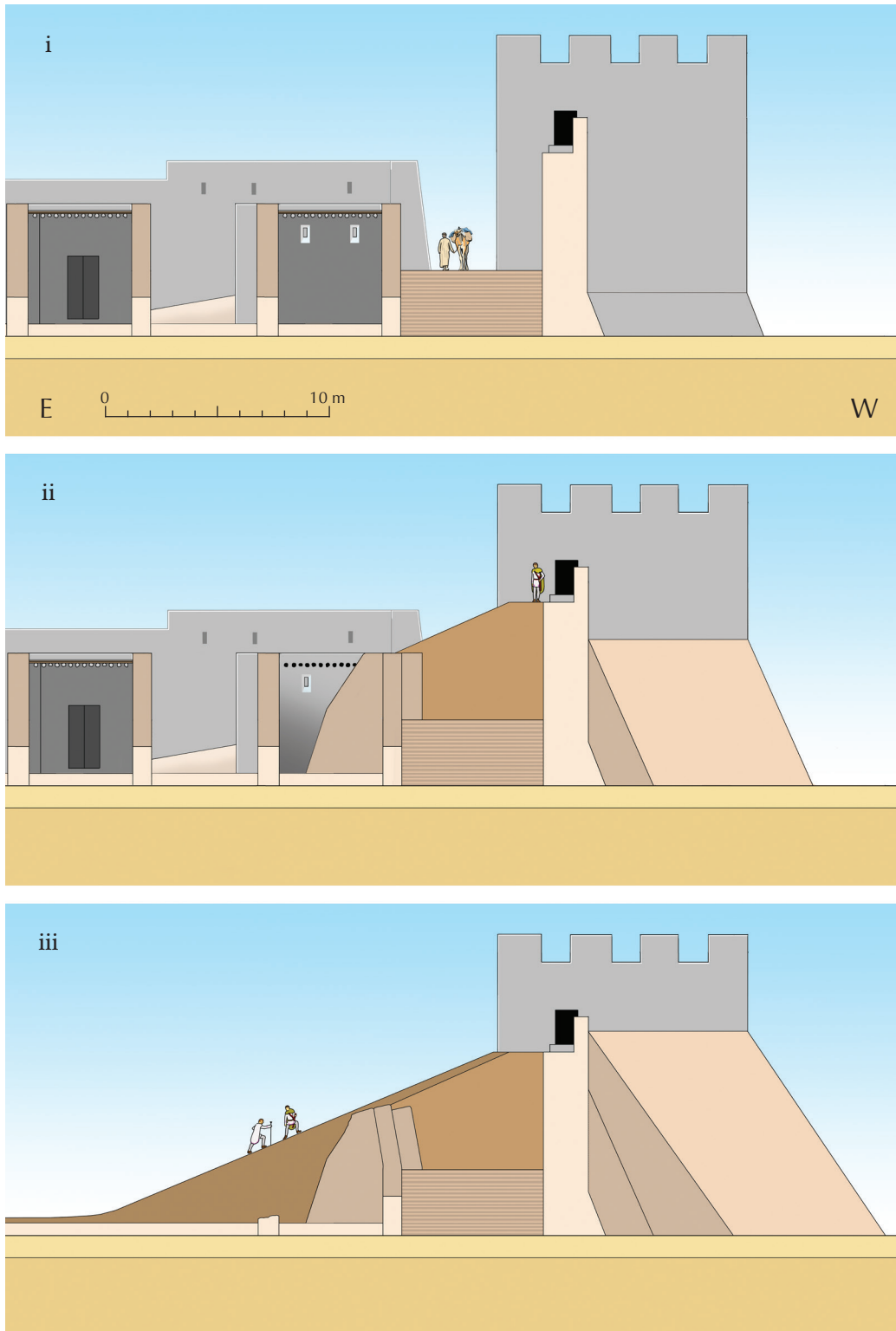


Figure 18.10: The sequence of events in the mine, as newly reconstructed. Horizontal dimensions are accurate, but vertical ones approximate, as precise data were not recorded at the time.

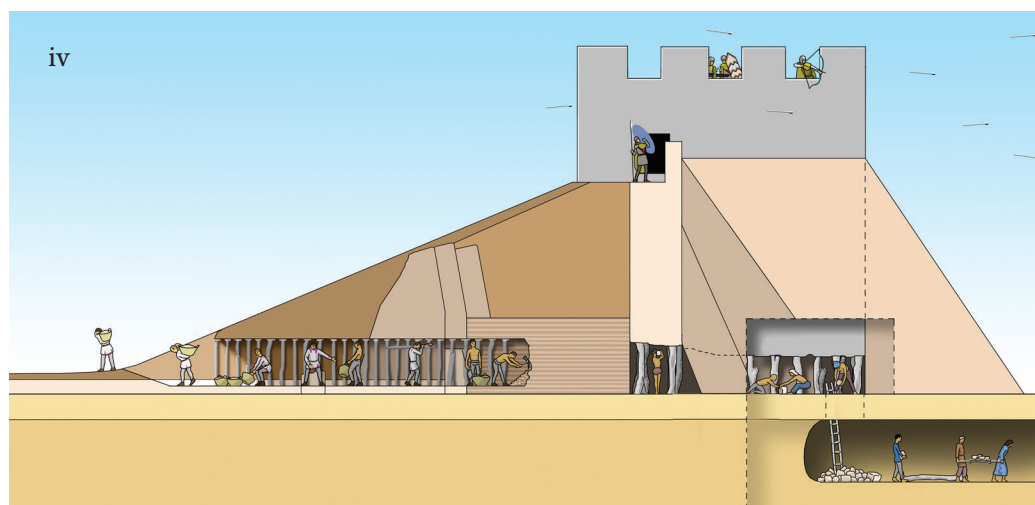
i. The defenses at Tower 19 before the siege, with adjacent buildings and deep rubbish/road-surface accumulation in Wall Street

ii. The initial rampart, with Wall Street filled in and revetted by the curtain wall and glacis, and reinforced house walls.

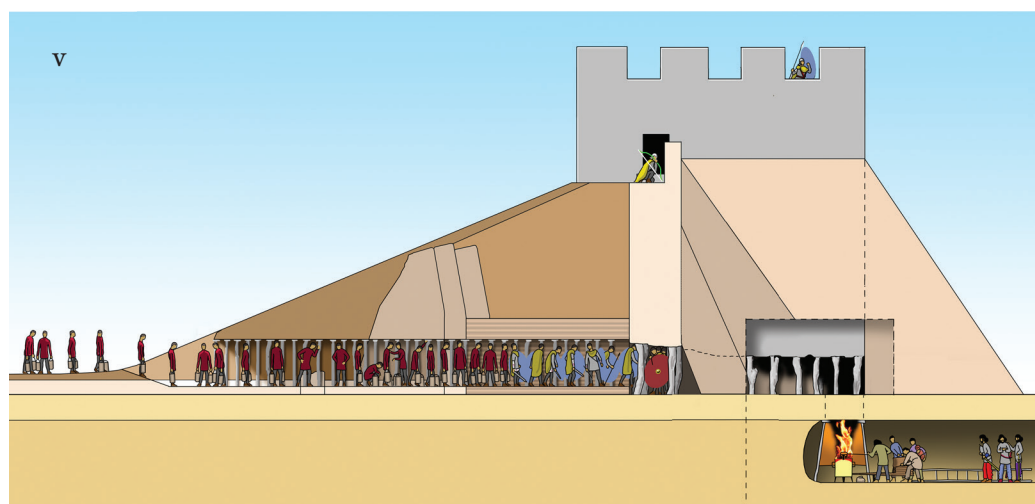
iii Final, extended anti-siege rampart, with projecting house walls demolished.

Figure 18.11:

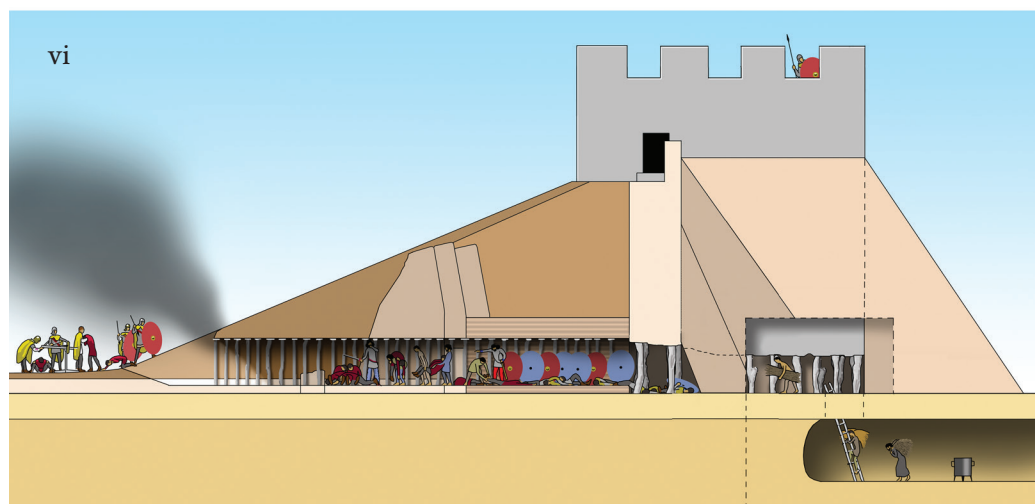
iv. Sasanian approach mine and undermining of Tower 19 are completed, and the Sasanian sappers are now tunnelling along the curtain wall toward the viewer; the Romans are digging a countermine to intercept this.



v. The Romans break through and pour into the attackers' tunnel. The forewarned Sasanians feed naphtha and sulphur onto their smoke-generator (brazier and bellows), rapidly engulfing the Romans in dense, lethal fumes.



vi. Most of the Romans were overcome before they could escape. As the smoke clears, the Sasanians enter the tunnel and pile the Roman casualties into a wall protecting them from Roman countermeasures (left) while they assemble incendiary materials and inflammables (right) to destroy the countermine.



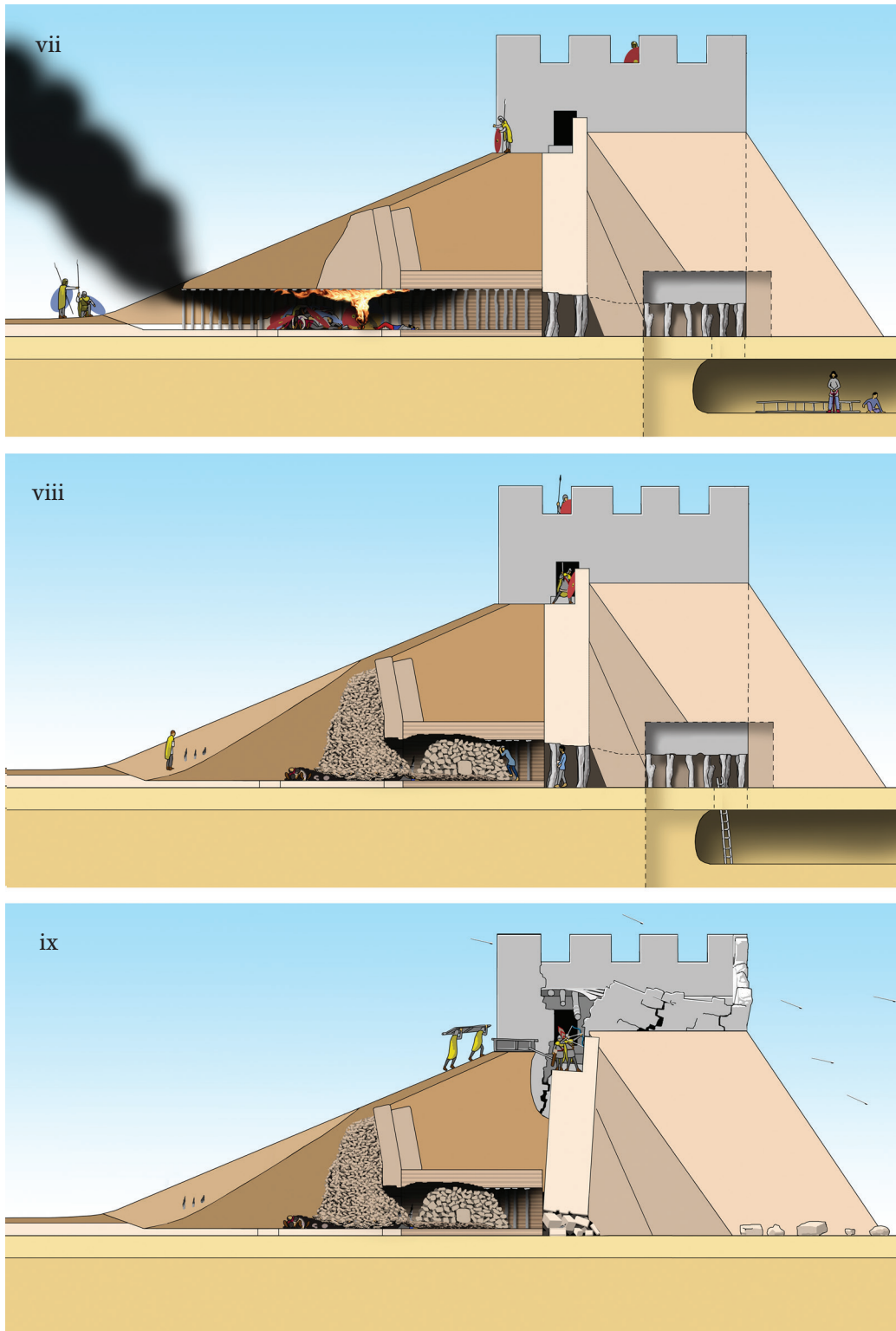


Figure 18.12:

vii. The Sasanian who set the fire succumbs to the ensuing inferno himself.

viii. The western half of the countermine entirely collapses. The Sasanians resume undermining the curtain, using the still-intact portion of the Roman mine as a convenient stone-dump.

ix. The Sasanians complete and fire their sap, but the enshrouding rampart successfully prevents tower and wall from toppling as intended. No practicable breach results, and the Romans are able to reoccupy their ramparts.

OBJECTS IN THE EXHIBITION



1 *The Gad (Fortune) of Dura*

Dura-Europos, Temple of the Gadde, ca. 159 CE

Palmyrene limestone, 46.0 × 61.6 × 16.5 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos, 1938.5314



2 *Winged goddess of Victory, or Nike*

Dura-Europos, Palmyrene Gate, ca. 165–256 CE

Paint on wood, 38.0 × 11.5 × 0.8 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos, 1929.288



3 *Inscription*

Dura-Europos, Palmyrene Gate, ca. 165–256 CE

Paint on wood, 21.0 × 58.7 × 0.8 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos, 1929.370



4 *Nemesis*

Dura-Europos, Palmyrene Gate, ca. 228–229 CE

Limestone, 45.0 × 40.5 × 12.0 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos, 1938.5312



5 *Shield (scutum)*

Dura-Europos, Tower 19, mid-3rd century CE

Paint on wood and rawhide, 105.5 × 41.0 × 30.0 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos, 1933.480



6 (top) *Two catapult bolt shafts*

Dura-Europos, Tower 19, ca. 256 CE

Wood, 4.7 × 3.5 × 31.4 cm, 2.6 × 2.8 × 45.9 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos, 1933.446a–b

7 (bottom left) *Decorative military belt plate*

Dura-Europos, J8, Mithraeum, 3rd century CE

Bronze, 2.7 × 5.3 × 0.4 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos, 1938.2163

8 (bottom middle) *Phalaron (openwork baldric fastener)*

Dura-Europos, J8, Mithraeum, ca. 200–256 CE

Bronze, 5.2 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos, 1938.2179

9 (bottom right) *Harness-terret*

Dura-Europos, J8, Mithraeum, ca. 200–256 CE

Bronze, 8.4 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos, 1938.2460



10 (top) *Armor scales*

Dura-Europos, Tower 19, ca. 200–256 CE

Bronze, 3.8 × 11.5 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos, 1938.3935

11 (middle) *Armor scales*

Dura-Europos, Tower 19, ca. 200–256 CE

Bronze, 3.8 × 18.7 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos, 1938.3941

12 (bottom) *Armor scales*

Dura-Europos, Tower 19, ca. 200–256 CE

Bronze, 4.0 × 53.4 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos, 1938.5999.342

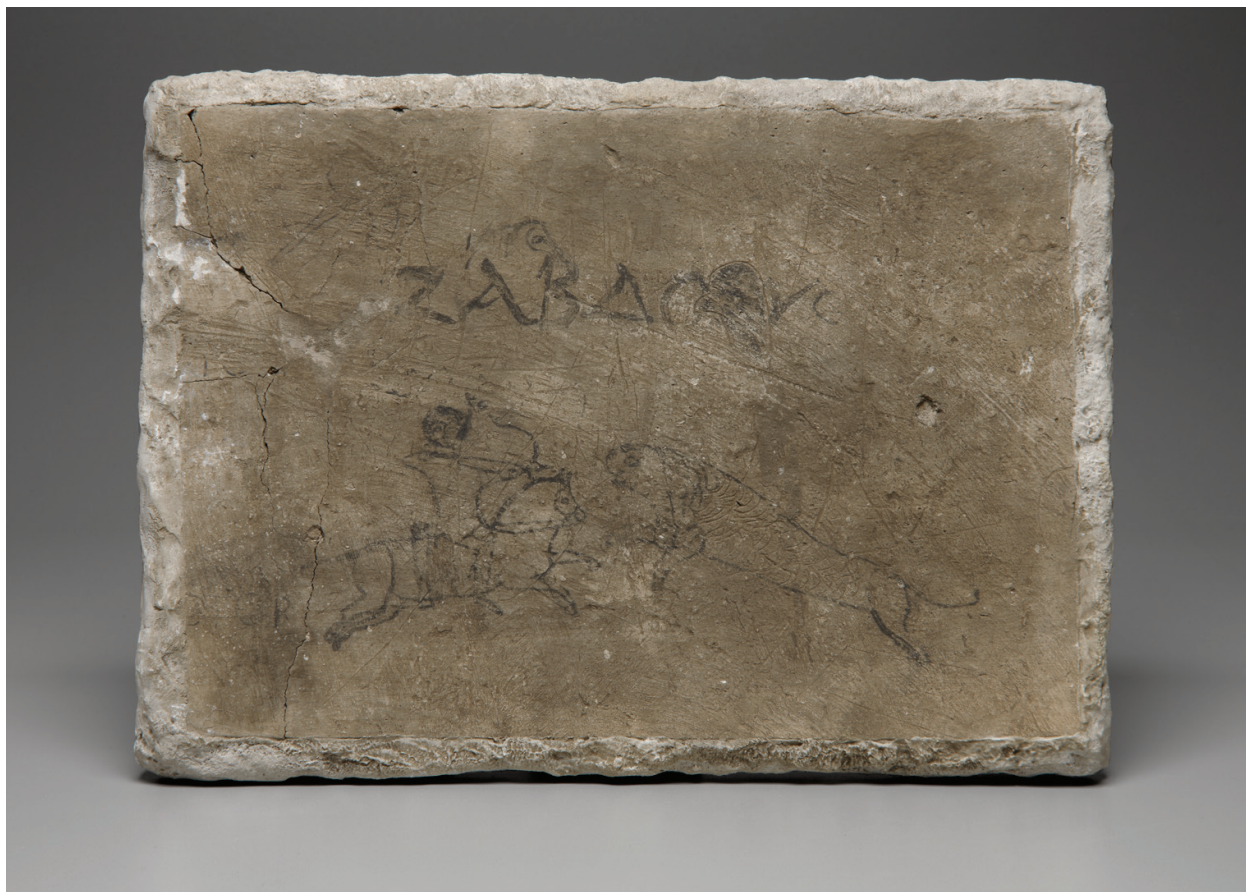


13 *Sasanian helmet*

Dura-Europos, Tower 19, ca. 3rd century CE

Iron, 31.0 × 25.0 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos, 1938.5999.1000



14 *Lion hunt with inscription*

Dura-Europos, Temple of Azzanathkona, Room W14, ca. 153–256 CE

Paint on plaster, 20.3 × 28.6 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos, 1933.299



15 *Mounted Parthian horseman*

Dura-Europos, M8, ca. 1st–3rd century CE

Terracotta, 15.2 × 8.4 × 3.4 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos, 1935.58

**16** *Warrior*

Dura-Europos, G5, ca. 100–256 CE

Terracotta, 13.2 × 7.7 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos, 1935.59



17 *Mithras and Sol*

Dura-Europos, J7, Middle Mithraeum, ca. 210 CE

Paint on plaster, 47.5 × 60.0 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos, 1935.99a



18 *Procession of women*

Dura-Europos, M8, Christian Building, ca. 232 CE

Paint on plaster, 95.0 × 140.0 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos, 1932.1201c



19 *Christ healing the paralytic*

Dura-Europos, M8, Christian Building, ca. 232 CE

Paint on plaster, 145.0 × 88.0 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos, 1932.1202



20 *Christ walking on water*

Dura-Europos, M8, Christian Building, ca. 232 CE

Paint on plaster, 139.0 × 100.0 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos, 1932.1203



21 (top) *Coin of Antiochos I*

Dura-Europos, ca. 280–276 BCE

Bronze, 03:00, 17.5 mm (2.8 gm). Mint: Dura-Europos

Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos, 1938.6000.42

22 (middle) *Coin of Antiochos I*

Dura-Europos, ca. 272–268 BCE

Bronze, 09:00, 20.5 mm (6.1 gm). Mint: Dura-Europos

Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos, 1938.6000.43

23 (bottom) *Tetradrachm of Orodes II*

Dura-Europos, ca. 41–40 BCE

Silver, 12:00, 28 mm (12.5 gm). Mint: Seleucia ad Tigrim

Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos, 1938.6000.45



24 (top) *Tetradrachm of Octavian*

Dura-Europos, near Palmyrene Gate (Hoard 1), ca. 31–30 BCE

Silver, 12:00, 26.5 mm (11.4 gm). Mint: Antioch

Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos, 1938.6000.673

25 (middle) *Tetradrachm of Vologases I*

Dura-Europos, ca. 66–67 CE

Silver, 12:00, 28 mm (9.6 gm). Mint: Seleucia ad Tigrim

Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos, 1938.6000.46

26 (bottom) *Sestertius of Trajan*

Dura-Europos, ca. 114–115 CE

Orichalcum, 6:00, 33 mm (24.6 gm). Mint: Rome

Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos, 1938.6000.49



27 (top) *Tetradrachm of Caracalla*

Dura-Europos, J7 W, fill along Wall Street (Hoard 19), ca. 215–217 CE

Silver, 12:00, 25.5 mm (12.9 gm). Mint: Cyrrhus

Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos, 1938.6000.56

28 (middle) *Dupondius of Severus Alexander*

Dura-Europos, ca. 222–235 CE

Orichalcum, 12:00, 30 mm (15.3 gm). Mint: Edessa (Mesopotamia)

Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos, 1938.6000.57

29 (bottom) *Drachm of Shapur I*

Dura-Europos, ca. 241–256 CE

Silver, 03:00, 24.5 mm (3.5 gm). Mint: Seleucia ad Tigrim

Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos, 1938.6000.47



30 (top) *Ceiling tile with a female face*

Dura-Europos, L7, Synagogue, ca. 245 CE

Clay with layer of painted plaster, 37.7 × 51.5 × 10.2 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos, 1933.267

31 (bottom left) *Ceiling tile with an Aramaic inscription*

Dura-Europos, L7, Synagogue, ca. 245 CE

Clay with layer of painted plaster, 37.8 × 39.6 × 6.0 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos, 1933.255

32 (bottom right) *Ceiling tile with a Greek inscription in a wreath*

Dura-Europos, L7, Synagogue, ca. 245 CE

Clay with layer of painted plaster, 39.0 × 39.5 × 4.5 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos, 1933.257



33 Herbert J. Gute

Well in the Wilderness

Copy of wall painting from the Synagogue, WB1, ca. 1933–35 CE

Paint on paper on wallboard, 187.3 × 269.2 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Commissioned by the University, 1936.127.7



34 Herbert J. Gute

The Priesthood of Aaron

Copy of wall painting from the Synagogue, WB2, ca. 1933–35 CE

Paint on paper on wallboard, 187.3 × 292.1 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Commissioned by the University, 1936.127.8



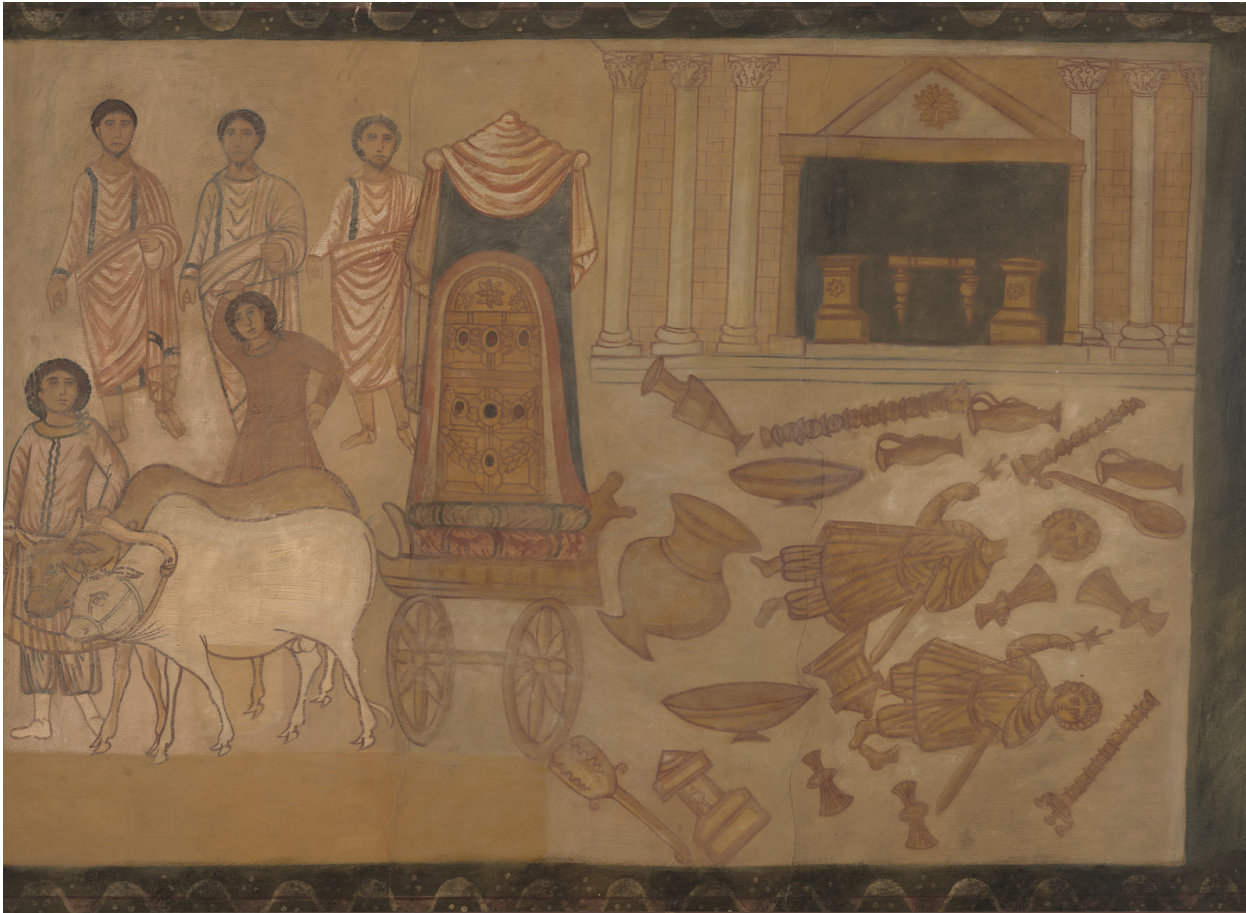
35 Herbert J. Gute

Closed Temple

Copy of wall painting from the Synagogue, WB3, ca. 1933–35 CE

Paint on paper on wallboard, 161.9 × 227.3 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Commissioned by the University, 1936.127.13

**36 Herbert J. Gute***Ark vs. Paganism*

Copy of wall painting from the Synagogue, WB4, ca. 1933–35 CE

Paint on paper on wallboard, 174.0 × 236.2 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Commissioned by the University, 1936.127.12



37 *Julius Terentius performing a sacrifice*

Dura-Europos, J3, Temple of the Palmyrene Gods (Bel), Pronaos N. Wall, ca. 239 CE

Paint on plaster, 107.0 × 165.0 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos, 1931.386



38 *Altar to gods of Palmyra*

Dura-Europos, J3, Temple of the Palmyrene Gods (Bel), ca. 165–256 CE

Limestone, 73.7 × 36.8 × 27.9 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos, 1929.385

**39** *Thymiaterion*

Dura-Europos, H2, Temple of Atargatis (cistern), ca. mid-2nd–mid-3rd century CE

Terracotta, 31.8 × 23.3 × 13.9 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos, 1938.4966



40 *Thymiaterion*

Dura-Europos, House G1–A, ca. 200–256 CE

Bronze, 7.0 × 6.7 × 5.5 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos, 1932.1396



41 *Male head in polos (Zeus Megistos?)*

Dura-Europos, C4, Temple of Zeus Megistos, ca. 160–169 CE

Limestone, 39.7 × 26.0 × 21.0 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos, 1938.5316



42 *Zeus Kyrios-Baalshamin*

Dura-Europos, M8/N7, Temple of Zeus Kyrios, ca. 31 CE

Limestone, 52.0 × 35.0 × 9.0 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos, 1935.45



43 *Atargatis and Hadad*

Dura-Europos, H2, Temple of Atargatis, ca. 100–256 CE

Limestone, 41.0 × 28.0 × 11.5 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos, 1930.319



44 *Atargatis or Tyche with doves*

Dura-Europos, L5, Temple of Adonis, ca. 1st century CE

Limestone, 13.0 × 25.5 × 5.0 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos, 1935.46

**45 Arsu**

Dura-Europos, C4, Temple of Zeus Megistos, ca. 3rd century CE

Limestone, 35.0 × 20.5 × 7.5 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos, 1938.5311



46 *Arsu riding a camel*

Dura-Europos, L5, Temple of Adonis, ca. 100–200 CE

Limestone, 33.0 × 44.5 × 7.0 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos, 1935.44



47 *Herakles and lion*

Dura-Europos, C4, Temple of Zeus Megistos, ca. 160–256 CE

Limestone, 51.8 × 41.0 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos, 1938.5302

**48** *Herakles*

Dura-Europos, L8 W (fill along Wall Street), ca. 100–256 CE

Limestone, 31.5 × 16.0 × 7.0 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos, 1935.51



49 *Ceiling tile with a portrait of Heliodoros, an actuary*

Dura-Europos, L7, House of the Scribes, ca. 200–256 CE

Clay with layer of painted plaster, 30.5 × 44.0 × 6.7 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos, 1933.292



50 *Acrostic ROTAS-SATOR square*

Dura-Europos, E7, Temple of Azzanathkona, ca. 165–256 CE

Paint on plaster, 23.5 × 21.0 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos, 1933.298



51 (left) *Block with relief bust of Athena*

Dura-Europos, ca. 1st century BCE–3rd century CE

Plaster, 31.5 × 23.0 × 10.0 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos, 1938.5367

52 (right) *Block with relief bust*

Dura-Europos, ca. 1st century BCE–3rd century CE

Plaster, 25.3 × 22.5 × 4.5 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos, 1938.5369



53 (left) *Block with relief bust*

Dura-Europos, H1 Room 8, Temple of the Gadde, ca. 1st century BCE–3rd century CE
Plaster, 30.7 × 19.5 × 12.0 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos, 1938.5362

54 (right) *Block with relief bust*

Dura-Europos, ca. 1st century BCE–3rd century CE
Plaster, 28.0 × 21.0 × 7.0 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos, 1938.5370



55 (left) *Block with relief bust*

Dura-Europos, ca. 1st century BCE–3rd century CE

Plaster, 30.0 × 21.6 × 4.2 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos, 1938.5365

56 (right) *Block with relief bust*

Dura-Europos, E7 W (fill along Wall Street), ca. 1st century BCE–3rd century CE

Plaster, 26.0 × 20.1 × 9.4 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos, 1938.5366



57 (top) *Incense shovel*

Dura-Europos, F3, ca. 200–256 CE

Bronze, 6.5 × 8.6 × 28.3 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos, 1933.634a–b

58 (bottom) *Lamp with Hermes*

Dura-Europos, L7 W1 (fill along Wall Street), 165–256 CE

Terracotta, 2.8 × 7.6 × 9.2 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos, 1933.350



59 (top) Bracelet

Dura-Europos, L8, Palmyrene Gate, ca. 200–256 CE

Silver with stone intaglio, 5.5 × 6.6 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos, 1929.405a–b

60 (bottom) Engagement ring

Dura-Europos, M8, Christian Building or private house, ca. 200–256 CE

Gold, 1.4 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos, 1933.606



61 *Necklace*

Dura-Europos, House B8 Room 2 (House of the Archives), ca. 213–256 CE

Gold and bronze, L: 39.2 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos, 1932.1732

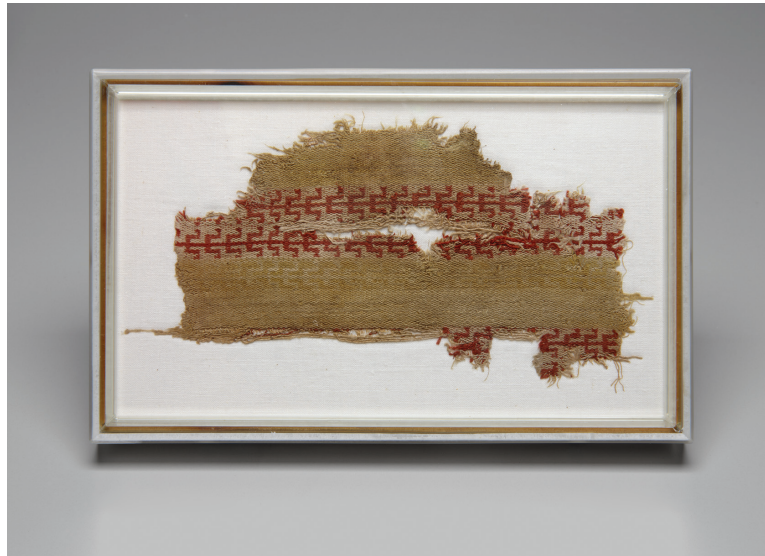


62 *Child's shoe*

Dura-Europos, ca. 200–256 CE

Leather, 17.0 × 6.0 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos, 1981.62.34



63 (top) *Textile fragment*

Dura-Europos, ca. 200–256 CE

Silk, warp (24): 8.0, 4.5 cm, weft (32): 15.5, 17.5 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos, 1933.486

64 (bottom) *Textile fragment*

Dura-Europos, ca. 200–256 CE

Wool, warp (10–12): 9.5, 17.5 cm, weft (9): 11.5, 11.7 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos, 1933.542a

**65** *Aphrodite*

Dura-Europos, D5, House of the Large Atrium, ca. 200–256 CE

Alabaster, 11.0 × 4.8 × 2.3 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos, 1931.417



66 *Aphrodite in a niche*

Dura-Europos, House G5-C2, ca. 200–256 CE

Plaster, 52.0 × 27.0 × 7.0 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos, 1935.43



67 *Hermes as a child*

Dura-Europos, Necropolis, Tomb 24, ca. 2nd century CE

Terracotta, 30.1 × 12.4 × 6.2 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos, 1938.4965

**68** *Herakles*

Dura-Europos, C7, House of the Frescoes (vestibule A), early 3rd century CE

Limestone, 35.0 × 19.0 × 14.0 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos, 1931.416



69 *Three fragments of a floor mosaic with a Dionysiac procession*

Gerasa, private house, ca. late 2nd–early 3rd century CE

Stone and glass tesserae, 67.3 × 210.8 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Ruth Elizabeth White Fund, 2004.2.1–3



70 *Detail of 69*

2004.2.1

65.4 × 88.3 cm



71 *Detail of 69*

2004.2.2

67.3 × 67.9 cm



72 *Detail of 69*

2004.2.3

62.2 × 54.6 cm



73 *Funerary statue of a Palmyrene girl*

Dura-Europos, House G1–C (upper and lower fragments) and G6, court in Agora (middle fragment), ca. 100–150 CE

Limestone, 68.0 × 32.0 × 17.0 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Yale-French Excavations at Dura-Europos, 1932.1214



74 *Palmyrene funerary relief of a woman*

ca. 170–230 CE

Limestone, 32.5 × 26.0 × 25.0 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Gift of Vicomtesse d'Andurain, 1931.135



75 *Palmyrene funerary relief of a banquet*

ca. 200–250 CE

Limestone, 52.7 × 56.2 × 8.9 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, Purchased for the University by Professor Rostovtzeff, 1931.138

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