

Personal Names in the Aramaic Inscriptions of Hatra

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4 Religious Significance of Hatran Theophoric Names

The discussion of Hatran theophoric names in view of their importance for the reconstruction of the Hatrene religious landscape can contribute to a comprehensive (re-)evaluation of its pantheon and religious system.¹ As already remarked (Marcato 2016), Hatran personal names supply a remarkable wealth of information on the cultural milieu of Hatra and its internal dynamics, such as the re-elaboration of traditional features and the assimilation of foreign elements.

First of all, it may be useful to survey the abundant theonyms displayed by Hatran onomastics:

Table 5. Theonyms in Hatran theophoric names

Theonym	Form	Names
'dn-Lord	'dn	'bd'dn
'lh-god	(')lh (')l(h)	'lhyhbw, yhblh', 'bd'lh', 'bdlh' 'bdly, 'wbd'ly
Adda	'd' 'dy	'd' 'dy
Addu	'dw	'dwkbt, 'dwnr
Allāt	'lt ly lt	grm'lt, zyd'lt, 'wyd'lt 'ydly, tymly grmlt, 'wydlt, tymlt, tmlt
Assor	'sr	'srybrk, 'srpnd'
Aštād	št(')t	'št'ty, štt', štty
'Atte/Atargatis	't 'y	't'qb br'y

1 The literature on specific case-studies in Hatrene religion is steadily increasing, but a complete evaluation remains a desideratum. A major comprehensive study, to be entitled *Les cultes de Hatra*, has been announced by B. Aggoula on several occasions since the 1980s but has never appeared. In the following discussion, reference will be made to seminal studies and the most recent outcomes of research in this field.

Theonym	Form	Names
'gl-Calf	'g'	'g'
	'gylw	'bd'gylw
	'gyly	'bd'gyly, 'bd'gyly'
	'gly'	'gly'
'qb-Eagle	'qb	br'qbw, 'qbw
'Uzzā	'zw	ḥp'zw, rp'zw
	(')zy	ḥp'zy, ḥpyzy
	'z	'z', 'zy
Ba'alšamīn	b'šmyn	brb'šmyn
	bšmyn	'bdb'šmyn
Barmaren	brmryn	yhbrmryn, qšbrmryn
Bēl	bl	blbrk, bl'qb, šwznbl
Dāda	dd	dd', ddy, rḥdd
El	(')l	brzl
	l'?	'drl'?
Farrah	pry	dwšpry
Gad	gd	'bygd, gd', gdw, gdy, gdyhb, 'bdgd'
	gyd	'bygyd
Hadad	hdd	gbrhdd, lhdd
Hubal	hbl	'hbl'
Iššar	šr	ntwn'šr, 'bd'šr, 'wyd'šr, [...]šrly
	šr	'wydšr
klb-Dog	klb	brklb', klbml'
lb-Lion	lb	brlb'
Ma'an	m'n	m'n', m'nw
mr-Lord	mr	šrrmry
Maren	mrn	mrn, mrnyhb
Marten	mrtn	mkmrtn
Mithra	mhr	d/rwšmhr, mhr', mhrbndq, mhrdt
	myhr	myhr'
mlk-King	mlyk	'bdmlyk
	mlk	'bdmlk
mrt-Lady	mrt	mrtbw
Nabû	nbw	brnbw, nbwbn', nbwgr, nbwdyn, nbwyhb, nbwktb, nbwsm'
Nanaya	ny	brny, tmny
	ny'	brny'
	nny	brnny, rp'nny
Nergol	nrgwl	'bdnrgwl
Nešra	nšr(')	brnšr', nšr', nšrhb, nšry, nšryhb, nšrltḥ, nšr'qb, 'bdnšr, 'bdnšr'
	nšry	brnšry
Samya	sy'	'bdsy'
	smy(')	btsmy', smy, 'bdsmy', 'bsmy', 'qbsmy'
Šalmān	šlm'	'bdšlm', 'bšlm', šlm'
	šlmn	'bdšlmn, šlmn

Theonym	Form	Names
Šamš	š'	<i>brš', ḥwyš', ḥywš', ḥyrš', ḥyš', 'bdš'?, 'bš', rpš'</i>
	šw	<i>hybšw</i>
	šy	<i>dd/ršy, yhbšy, 'bšy</i>
	šw/y	<i>bršw/y</i>
	šm'	<i>'bdšm', 'qbšm'</i>
	šmš	<i>'lhšmš, bršmš, ḥnšmš, yhbšmš, mqymšmš, 'bdšmš, 'qbšmš, 'qybšmš, rḥmšmš, rmšmš, rpšmš, šmš, šmšbryk, šmšbrk, šmšgd, šmšgrm, šmšḥdyt, šmšy, šmšyhb, šmštyb, šmšmkn, šmšdry, šmš'qb</i>
Šangilā	šgl'	<i>lšgl'</i>
Tīr	tyr	<i>tyrdt</i>
Zaqīqā	zqyq'	<i>brzqyq'</i>
	zqq	<i>brzqq</i>

The presence of theonyms originating from different cultural milieus is self-evident: Aramaic or North-Western Semitic ('*dn*-Lord, Adda, Addu, 'Atte/Atargatis, Ba'alšamīn, Dāda, El, Gad), Akkadian (Assor, Bēl, Hadad, Iššar, Nabū, Nanaya, Nergol, Šalmān, Šamš, Zaqīqā), Iranian (Aštād, Farrah, Mithra, Tīr), Arab (Allāt, 'gl-Calf, 'Uzzā, Hubal, *lb*-Lion, Ma'an), in addition to Hatrene specific deities ('*qb*-Eagle, Barmaren, *klb*-Dog, Maren, Marten, Nešra, Samya), and common nouns that in these cases designate divine entities ('*lh*-god, *mlk*-King, *mrt*-Lady). The rather enigmatic Šangilā (Maraqten 1996, 22-6) is attested as well.

One of the most striking features of this corpus of theophoric names is the level of interaction between theonyms and onomastic components (nouns, verbs) from different cultural and linguistic contexts. The case of Arab names is particularly illustrative and has already been discussed (Marcato 2016, 349-50): only a few points will be resumed here. Arab theophoric names may display: an Arab theonym with an ANA or Arabic noun (e.g. '*wyd*'*lt*, *tymlt* and related forms); a generally Semitic theonym with an ANA or Arabic noun (*ḥywš'*, *ḥyrš'*) or verb ('*wyd*'*šr*); more specific cases are the unions of a Mesopotamian theonym with an ANA or Arabic noun (*rp'nyy*, *tmny*) or verb (*nbwsm'*, *šmšgrm*). This fact points unmistakably at the complexity and depth of interplay between the urban community and the Arab component of the population. Personal names show that the Arab presence at Hatra, due to a number of semi-nomadic groups gravitating around the city, was substantial and played a fundamental role in the shaping of Hatrene cultural physiognomy. Conversely, such an interchange between different cultural contexts is not attested for Iranian names: both complete theophoric names and hypocoristica remain purely Iranian; Iranian vocabulary, on the other hand, does not seem to have been a resource for the creation of original onomastic formations.

Several deities are attested not only in personal names but also in inscrip-tional and archaeological finds.

The Triad of Hatra, composed of Maren ‘Our Lord’, Marten ‘Our Lady’, and Barmaren ‘The Son of Our Lords’, is perhaps attested not as much as one would expect. Much more numerous are the occurrences of the chief of the pantheon hiding behind Maren, i.e., the Sun-god Šamš. As can be inferred from the “Semantic Taxonomy”, theophoric names with Šamš belong to different onomastic categories and illustrate an ample range of qualities attributed to the god. Despite its association with both Aramaic and Arab vocabulary, the orthography of the theonym is invariably <šmš>, which demonstrates its Mesopotamian background.² In addition, his epithet Bēl, which points to his prominent role, is attested in onomastics as well. Occupying the peak of the pantheon, Šamš-Maren is accompanied by his two manifestations in the shape of the Eagle god: Nešra and the recently identified ‘*qb*’ (Pennacchietti 2007).

Another characteristically Hatrene deity, Samya, the divinized standard (Dirven 2005), appears in theophoric names. Self-confessional names such as ‘*bdsmy*’ and related forms testify to the fact that the divine standard was conceived as a god on his own, as well as being a representative of certain other gods of the pantheon. Another god who is well represented in onomastics, and to whom Small Shrine 13 was dedicated, is Gad; usually considered ‘good fortune’ or the tutelary deity of an individual or a family. Small Shrine 13 displays a significant amount of attestations of ‘the Gad of *dmgw*’.

Ancient Mesopotamian deities are well represented and display an admixture of traditional and innovative traits. As to Nabû, for example, the name *nbwktb* gives evidence of his connection with the art of writing, as witnessed also by his qualification ‘Nabû the scribe of Maren’ in H 389. The association with the verb *ktb* is attested also for Addu in ‘*dwktb*, an unprecedented name (Marcato 2016, 351-2).

The lord of the netherworld, Nergol (in the Hatran spelling with a *mater lectionis* <w>), is known in onomastics only through ‘*bdnrgwl*, which is not, however, informative as to his characterization. His sacred animal and manifestation, *klb*-Dog (Dirven 2009; 2013a, 150-2), is attested in onomastics as ‘*brklb*’ and ‘*klbml*’. The first name is a clear hint at the perception of deities and divine attributes by the inhabitants of Hatra: as already shown (Marcato 2016, 352-3), Bar-Kalbā’s father was a priest of Nergol and chose to give his son a name that clearly evoked the worship of this god.

Personal names composed with the theonym Nanaya may display an ANA or Arabic nominal component, as seen above (*rp’nny*, *tmny*). The name *tmny*, moreover, is an eloquent declaration of devotion to this god-

2 For the Arab Sun-god one would expect <šms>. It must be acknowledged that some hypocoristica may hide the Arab theonym. Cf. for example *hybšw*, which displays also an ANA or Arabic adjective or active participle.

ness by the tribal group who bore it. The Bani Taym-Nay built the goddess' sanctuary (Small Shrine 14) in AD 100 or 101 (H 463 and 464), thus providing the city with a large religious building and fostering the integration of the Arab community into the urban population.

The case of the theonym Zaḳīqā, a spirit of the netherworld and of dreams (Zgoll 2006, 299-307 for the Mesopotamian Zaḳīqu), is even more peculiar. Whereas onomastic attestations of Zaḳīqā at Hatra are not very informative and present a phenomenon of generic devotion, much more important is the attribution of the theonym Zaḳīqā to two personal names, 'prtn and 'dry, in H 410. These anthroponyms, an Iranian and an Aramaic name respectively, were most probably borne by members of a single family, or tribal group, who were deified after their death by their descendants and worshipped in Small Shrine 13, where the inscription was found. They prove how common anthroponyms could be turned into proper theonyms through the cult of ancestors who bore them.

The Arab goddess *par excellence* Allāt, who had her temple in the Temenos, was also a favourite in onomastics. She is accompanied exclusively by ANA or Arabic roots; see also the discussion of *brlb'* for the possibility that this name refers to the cult of the goddess by means of her animal, the lion, employing an ANA or ASA loanword into Aramaic. Her popularity in Hatra may have been enhanced by her being the goddess Marten, the female member of the Triad, according to Dirven's (2013a, 152-3) hypothesis. It should be stated, however, that the scarce attestations of Marten and our incomplete conception of her call for fresh data and further research.

Not all the deities who appear in theophoric names are attested as members of the pantheon of Hatra in inscriptions and iconographic evidence. The West-Semitic El, for example, is never attested as a theonym in Hatran inscriptions, nor do we know of any depictions of him. The same applies to Iranian Aštād, Farrah, Mithra, and Tīr: a cult of Mithra at Hatra had been posited due to the alleged Mithraic character of some samples of Hatrene religious architecture and iconography before this idea was convincingly rejected by Drijvers (1978) in a seminal article.

As to other deities, Akkadian and Arab, the situation is different. On the one hand, for some of them, no evidence regarding their cult at Hatra has emerged so far, but it can be shown that they belonged to a shared and multifaceted Northern Mesopotamian religious horizon.

For example, the god Assor, formerly Aššur, is attested at Hatra only in personal names, but it is well known that his cult, together with that of his spouse Serua (formerly Šerū'a) thrived at Assur, just 50 km away. Here, in the Parthian period, the divine couple was worshipped in a large Temenos. New sanctuaries were built, among which was the iwan temple of Assor and Serua just above the Neo-Assyrian house of the god; even the ziggurat was restored (Haider 2008, 193-201; Livingstone 2009 on the access to the sanctuary). Of course, this is not enough to state that individuals bearing

theophoric names with Assor at Hatra came from the city of Assur, but it is highly likely that they originated from within Northern Mesopotamia. In the case of the previously unattested *'srpnd'* 'Oh Assor, ransom!' we observe a name that makes use of a verb commonly employed in onomastics (*pdy*) and which fits very well into traditional Akkadian petition names (see above) with an imperative verb.³ It is a fresh onomastic formation, but one with a solid background.

Iššar (Ištar) is another Mesopotamian deity of immense popularity, who has, however, not been traced as of yet in the epigraphic evidence from Hatra. The combination of this theonym with a NWS (*ntwn šr*) and Arab root (*'wyd šr*, *'wydšr*) attests to her popularity in various areas. As seen above (3.2.1.), the orthography <šr> points to this goddess; the cult of *'šrb* 'Iššarbēl' is witnessed by H 34, 35, and 38, all from Small Shrine 5, which may have been dedicated to her. Iššarbēl may be the ancient Ištar of Arbela, but this identification is highly problematic (Lipiński 1982; Greisiger 2008).

The Storm-god, Mesopotamian Hadad and North-Western Semitic Adda or Addu, provides a different type of example. No epigraphic attestations of his theonym are presently known, but two depictions may exist. Two *marmar* statuettes from Small Shrine 8 depict an enthroned Storm-god flanked by two bulls (Safar, Mustafa 1974, 286 Figg. 280-1); in the first one, which is headless, the god holds lightning bolts. Safar and Mustafa suggest that both statuettes may portray Ba'alšamīn but remark also that bulls are animals characteristic of Mesopotamian Hadad, and thus perhaps these images should be identified with this god.

Yet another situation is that presented by the theonym Šalmān. The persona of this god is quite enigmatic, and even in Middle- and Neo-Assyrian texts he seems to appear only seldomly outside of theophoric names. It is known that his cult was particularly popular in Dūr Katlimmu (PNA 3/I, 1071-80; Radner 2006-8). The paucity of his attestations notwithstanding, his presence several centuries after the fall of the Neo-Assyrian empire is an indicator of how deeply-rooted these names and their religious values were in this geographical area.

Similar remarks can be applied to Arab deities in Arab names, generally well known in the Nabataean (Healey 2001, Alpass 2013) and pre-Islamic Arabian pantheon, and by consequence in ANA onomastics (e.g. Farès-Drappeau 2005, 79-88). These attestations give further evidence of the wide circulation of Arab theonyms: their presence across the entire Roman and Parthian Near East was deeply rooted, as testified, in particular, by the onomastics of the royal house of Edessa (Tubach 2014).

3 Cf. Livingstone (2009, 154-5) for a possible "aura of familiarity between worshipper and deity" attested in Aramaic personal names from Assur, which may imply a weakening of the former unapproachability of Aššur in imperial times.