In this chapter the emphasis moves away from the state-controlled production of official images – so important to the understanding of the ideology of the court – and into a world of regional polities. While the coin evidence may show the religious penchant of a ruler, the everyday beliefs of the population are better expressed through the building of temples and shrines, whether they be erected through public or private expense. The terminology used in the title of the chapter, „popular cult”, is intended to take in all manner of religious activity for which we have evidence, where the activity lay more with the population at large than simply the whim of the king. The nature of archaeological survival has necessitated that this chapter be dominated by sanctuaries and temples, although there are exceptions. Excavations at the great metropolis of Antioch for example have not revealed the remains of any Seleukid period temples but Antioch may still prove informative. Whilst some, or perhaps all, of the Hellenistic temple constructions discussed below may have been initiated by the king and his council, the historic and epigraphic record is unfortunately too sporadic to say for certain. While the evidence discussed in Chapter 2.3 above suggests that all must have been ratified by the satrapal high-priest, the onus of worship appears to have been locally driven.

The geographic division „north Syria” is used here to encompass the Levantine territory which was occupied by Seleukos I Nikator following the victory at Ipsos in 301 BC, that is to say, the part of Syria which came first under the control of the Seleukids. Geographically, this region was primarily composed of Seleukis in the north-west (relatively urbanised from the early third century BC), across to the more rural Kyrrhestis in the east. Starting in Seleukis, the true heartland of Seleukid Syria, this chapter discusses the available evidence from Antiocheia-on-the-Orontes and Seleukeia-Pieria, the principal cities of the tetrapolis, before looking at the remains of the rural sanctuary at Baitokaike in the satrapy of Apameia. From Seleukis, we move eastwards to Kyrrhestis with a more in-depth analysis of the religious remains at Jebel Khalid on the Euphrates and at Hierapolis-Bambyke, the holiest city of them all.

A paper presented by Hannestad and Potts at the conference at Fuglsang Manor in 1990 cast a wider net and conducted a selective survey of religious architecture from across Phoenicia and Koile-Syria are dealt with in Chapter 5 below.
the Seleukid empire. Their findings declared that “there was no such thing as a uniform religious architecture that might be called Seleucid”. The statement has been disputed by Held who sought to identify an overarching Seleukid canon to the temples produced throughout the empire and it is certain that within Syria at least, certain groups of deities are found repeated across many sites. However, the great difficulty with religious architecture, as with all fields of Seleukid studies, is the scarcity of the evidence. Held’s approach was to extrapolate information on Seleukid temples from Parthian and Roman period structures. While many locations exhibit a continuity of the sacred topography which allows for some inferences to be made, the reconstruction of earlier architectural forms from later examples is dangerous. Where possible, such a methodology is avoided below. The following site case studies present the full spectrum of obstacles that one faces in the search for religious activity in the Seleukid period. Antioch has no surviving temples, Seleukeia has one, but the excavation was conducted hastily and is not well published. The sanctuary at Baitokaike has a number of Hellenistic elements, but most were enclosed or otherwise altered during its long post-Seleukid history. Jebel Khalid’s temple has suffered extensive stone robbing and the lack of epigraphy or literary references makes its interpretation challenging. Hierapolis-Bambyke is the best documented sanctuary of the Hellenistic East, but in material terms, next to nothing exists of its glorious past and the principal literary account is of questionable reliability. A comprehensive picture may only be garnered from a holistic approach which makes allowances for the various inconsistencies in evidence and reliability.

4.1 THE ‘CHARONION’ AT ANTIOCH

The great metropolis of Syria, Antiocheia-on-the-Orontes was known to house numerous shrines and sanctuaries constructed during the Hellenistic period. Among the most prominent mentioned in the literary sources were those of Zeus (separately as Zeus Battaios and as Zeus Keraunios) and Athena, both the Tyches of Antioch and of Antigoneia,

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203 Hannestad and Potts 1990: 122.
204 Held 2002; 2005.
205 Cabouret 1997.
206 Libanius Oration 11.76; Malalas Chronicle 8.200, 8.212.
207 Malalas Chronicle 8.201; Pausanias Description of Greece 6.2.7.
and the sanctuary of Apollo and Artemis Daittai at Daphne. The muse Kalliope is also mentioned as one of the deities honoured publicly at Antioch, although references to her particular reverence are restricted to the fourth century AD and so fall outside the focus of this study. Unfortunately Antioch’s combination of a prosperous Roman phase, an active Christian community, earthquakes and the silt-laden Orontes have left very little evidence of the Seleukid city and none regarding its sanctuaries or other sacred spaces.

However, one vibrant memory of the Seleukid phase of Antioch remains intact, if not undamaged. A monumental relief of a veiled bust was carved into the face of Mount Silpios, above the Hellenistic agora and overlooking the entire city (figs. 95-6). The relief has been erroneously referred to as the Charonion – the mask of Charon, ferryman of the dead – since the sixth century AD, although the bust is generally now understood to be female. The Charonion first came under scholarly scrutiny as part of the Princeton excavations at Antioch. The face of the bust had always been exposed but until the early twentieth century, the shoulders and chest had been covered by debris fallen from higher up the slope of Mount Silpios. In 1932, George Elderkin led the Princeton team to clear away the tumble to expose the full 5.4 metre height of the relief.

There are no chronologically defining features on the Charonion itself and dating based upon stylistic grounds is difficult. The carving of the relief is generally dated to the reign of Antiochos IV Epiphanes based on a passage in John Malalas’ Chronicle:

“During his reign [Antiochos IV Epiphanes], when there was a plague and many people in the city perished, Leios, a wonder worker, ordered that a rock from the mountain above the city be carved with an enormous mask, crowned and looking towards the city and valley. He wrote an inscription on it and stopped the deaths from the plague. To the present day the Antiochenes call this mask Charonion.”

208 Libanius Oration 11.56, 11.94-9, 11.233-6; Strabo Geography 16.2.6.
209 Julian Misopogon 357c; Libanius Oration 1.102, 11.276, 15.79, 20.51, 60.13; Cabouret 1997: 1015-7.
210 The ancient remains in some places are said to be ten metres or more below the modern surface. See Campbell’s diary entry of May 4, 1938, for an example of the alluvial deposits and other destruction caused by flooding in Antioch, published in Stillwell 1941: 5-6.
211 Malalas Chronicle 8.22. Elderkin (1934) recognised the bust as representing a goddess during his 1932 season and during a visit to the site in 2008 it was revealed that modern Antiochenes living below her gaze refer to the figure as Miriam or Mary, relating the carving to the nearby cave-church of St Peter.
212 Elderkin 1934.
Figure 95. The Charonion at Antioch (N.L. Wright).

Figure 96. The view from the Charonion overlooking modern Antakya (N.L. Wright).
One need only read a few passages of the *Chronicle* before it becomes clear that Malalas’ account of the Seleukid period is fraught with errors. However, as will be discussed below, the subject matter of the Charonion would suggest that Malalas’ dating is plausible. It is apparent from the extant remains that the carving was never completed: the smooth areas of the throat were not properly finished and the left shoulder was only sculptured in rough outline. A channel was cut into part of the escarpment to the figure’s left as the first stage of its removal. This would have widened the ledge in front of the Charonion but as with the relief itself, work terminated before completion.\(^{214}\) If we can rely on Malalas for the basic information regarding the Charonion’s purpose, it would appear that the plague abated before the relief’s completion and that the apotropaic or votary nature of the work was forgotten and soon abandoned. The inscription which Malalas attributes to Leios may once have been carved into the figure’s chest although this part of the relief is no longer extant. At some stage after its creation, the Charonion suffered intentional defacement with significant damage across the chest and face. The vandalism may even have taken place before the early sixth century AD as the chronicler appears to have no idea of the nature or content of the Hellenistic inscription.\(^{215}\)

The remaining elements of the Charonion depict a beardless face with a stern countenance framed by a long veil which descends on either side of the face and drapes over the figure’s right shoulder. Above that same shoulder stands a badly weathered, full length draped figure wearing a *kalathos* on its head.\(^{216}\) The face of the smaller figure is badly damaged and its sex indeterminable. From what remains, it is clear that the Charonion originally bore a definite likeness to the veiled female head on the pre-Seleukid coinage of Hierapolis-Bambyke (fig. 97) as well as several bronze coin issues from the reigns of Seleukos IV, his son Antiochos, and Antiochos IV Epiphanes (figs. 86-8).\(^{217}\) It has also been compared with the obverse image of a Greco-Roman apotropaic amulet found near Beroia (modern Aleppo).\(^{218}\) Each of these comparable images can be argued to depict the Syrian goddess Atargatis, or in the Seleukid examples, the image of the queen in the guise of Atargatis. Realistically there is no more plausible candidate for the subject of the Charonion within a Seleukid context.

\(^{214}\) Elderkin 1934: 84.
\(^{216}\) Elderkin 1934: 84.
\(^{217}\) Mildenberg 1999: nos. 20-3; SC 2: nos. 1332, 1371, 1407, 1421-2. See also Chapter 3.3.5 above.
\(^{218}\) Mouterde 1930: 65, fig. 3; Elderkin 1934: 84.
The goddess was supreme in Syria and the surrounding territories before the advent of the Macedonians and her prominence continued undiminished under Roman control. As has been demonstrated in preceding chapters, Atargatis assumed a new, increased visibility both on Seleukid coinage and in the literary sources, from the early second century BC (under Seleukos IV, Antiochos IV and Demetrios I) – precisely the period given by Malalas for the construction of the Charonion. The secondary figure is impossible to identify with certainty, although the obvious association between it and the larger bust leads to the suggestion that it probably represented the goddess’ consort Zeus-Hadad in the guise in which he occurs on the bronze coinage of Demetrios I and II and, to a lesser extent, that of Antiochos XII at Damascus. \(^{219}\)

Malalas claims that the creation of the Charonion was instigated by the Antiochene soothsayer Leios and not on royal instruction. If this can be taken at face value, it implies that Atargatis and Hadad were not merely venerated by Semitic Syrians or the royal dynasty trying to draw Semitic support. Rather, as the gods of the region, the divine couple were also honoured by the Hellenic settlers as providers of fertility, good health and theoi epikooi – the gods who listen (and respond) to prayers. \(^{220}\) Indeed theoi epikooi are precisely the type of saviour gods who might be relied upon to protect the civic body from plague.

No other material remains or ashy deposits were reported during the clearance of the terrace in front of the Charonion. If any cultic rituals were undertaken in the vicinity of the monumental carving, they were either brief and have left no record, or else were performed further down the slope, perhaps in the area of the later cave church of St Peter. In light of the use of caves in the Hellenistic cults at the Mount Hermon Panion, Gadara and Gerasa, the use of St Peter’s cave during the Seleukid period seems almost certain. \(^{221}\)

Elderkin saw the shape of the Charonion’s veil as reminiscent of the heads of Persians and Amazons in Greek art. That is to say, the image, although produced by an outwardly Greek city, was intentionally orientalising in thematic expression. The physical act of carving the monumental relief is also seen as evidence of a continued pre-Greek tradition of carving large depictions of important fertility deities out of living rock, a

\(^{219}\) See Chapter 2.1.2.3 and 2.1.4 above.

\(^{220}\) The inscription from Hellenistic Ake-Ptolemaïs dedicated by Diodotos son of Neoptolemos to “Hadad and Atargatis the gods who listen to prayer” supports this supposition, see Avi-Yonah 1959. For evidence of the worship of a syncretised Aphrodite Epikoos during the reign of Demetrios I, see Hoover 2000: 109-10. Sarapis and Isis received the same veneration from Levantine Greeks as they too were theoi epikooi, see Magness 2001: 158-9. On theoi epikooi more generally, see Weinreich 1912.

\(^{221}\) See Chapter 5.3, 5.4.2 and 5.5.1-2 below.
phenomenon best represented by the Hittite reliefs at Yazılıkaya. The Charonion, specifically the act of its creation, could therefore be presented as the Hellenistic *interpretatio graeca* of a well established eastern practice perpetuated by the new population.

### 4.2 THE DORIC TEMPLE AT SELEUKEIA-PIERIA

Of the other cities of the tetrapolis of Seleukis, Laodikeia-by-the-Sea lies buried below the modern sprawl of Lattakia and although Apameia-on-the-Orontes has begun to reveal Hellenistic material through excavation, there is as yet no evidence for religious activity. Only Seleukeia-Peria provides any evidence of a religious structure dating from the Hellenistic period in the form of a well-constructed limestone Doric temple, yet even that edifice has proven enigmatic. The survey and excavation of parts of Seleukeia were conducted as part of the 1937-39 Princeton expeditions to neighbouring Antioch. A preliminary study of the Doric temple together with an Ionic temple in marble had been conducted by Seyrig and Perdrizet in 1924 but unfortunately the resulting drawings and plans were lost before reaching France and thus were never published. The Princeton team procured the lease on the land surrounding both temples in 1937 and amid rising political tensions the remains of the Doric temple were excavated in 1938.

The outbreak of hostilities in Europe in 1939 caused the premature cessation of the Princeton expedition and the exposed remains of the Doric temple now lie among small farm plots, untended and overgrown, above the small resort town of Çevlik.

In accordance with Greek planning principles, the Doric temple was placed conspicuously on the edge of the large terrace on Mount Koryphos which formed Seleukeia’s upper city. The temple was visible from the surrounding colony, particularly from the lower city and harbour directly below. The location afforded dramatic views south along the coast to Mount Kasios, a key feature in the foundation myth of Seleukeia-Peria and sacred to Ba’al-Zeus. Little remains of the temple superstructure,
Figure 98. Seleukeia-Pieria Doric temple (Stillwell 1941 plan 9).

Figure 99. Seleukeia-Pieria Doric temple (N.L. Wright after Stillwell 1941 plan 9).
Figure 100. The Seleukeia-Pieria Doric temple in 2008 (N.L. Wright).

Figure 101. The view from the Seleukeia-Pieria Doric temple south to Mt Kasios (N.L. Wright).
much of which was reused “at one time” to build a bastion on the site. The fortification works presumably date from the medieval or early modern period although the excavators do not discuss the chronology. From the remains of the temple foundations the building can be reconstructed as an east facing peripteral hexastyle Doric temple with a distyle in-antis pronaos and 12 columns along each long side. Stillwell presumes the standard three-stepped krepidoma and there does not appear to be any evidence to suggest otherwise. The overall dimensions of the foundations measure 18.6 by 36.9 metres. The naos of the temple probably led to an adyton although from the layout of the foundations, any internal wall dividing naos and adyton looks to have been located much further east than would be considered normal in a canonical Greek temple. The excavators dismiss the possibility of an epinaos or opisthodomos. The northern half of the adyton was given over to a stairway which led down towards the east to a finely constructed square crypt measuring approximately 4.5 metres across (fig.102). There was apparently a second passageway under the adyton into the crypt from outside, evidenced by alterations at the western end of the southern face of the krepidoma (between the third and fourth columns) and signs of wear on what should otherwise have been covered foundations. The route of the passage is unclear. It is suspected that this secondary access to the crypt was a later improvement although there is no clear indication of date in situ or provided by the excavators for either the initial construction or the alterations.229

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228 Stillwell 1941: 33.
229 Stillwell 1941: 33-4.

Figure 102. The Selenkeia-Pieria Doric temple crypt (Stillwell 1941: fig.42).
Examination of fragments of moulding together with the use of such finely worked ashlar blocks for the crypt and temple foundations led the excavators to posit a probable construction date at the end of the fourth century BC, but allowing a caveat for a first century BC date. There is no evidence for Roman period building works over the remains of the earlier foundations.\textsuperscript{230} It would seem that no pottery, coins or other small finds were recorded during the hurried excavation that might have further assisted with the monument’s dating. Indeed the only small find noted from the context of the Doric temple was a damaged bronze statuette of “Isis-Aphrodite” found in the fill between pavement supports.\textsuperscript{231} One would imagine that the statuette became lodged there during the demolition phase of the monument rather than construction although this too is unclear from the report. Stillwell suggests that the figure may be associated with the deity worshipped at the temple but advanced no further analysis of either the statuette nor the resident divinity.\textsuperscript{232}

The bronze statuette is of a female figure styled in a classical form, measuring 17.5 cm to the top of her head. The face of the statuette is badly worn and the body is crushed. Her right leg has been broken off below the knee, her left arm is raised but her left hand too has been lost. She is naked but for a headdress composed of a sun-disc flanked by cow horns and feathers (or ears of grain) which rises from the crown of her head (\textit{fig.103}). The headdress was a common symbol in the Hellenistic period and is well known as an attribute of the Egyptian goddess Isis. The cult of Isis was endemic across the Hellenistic Mediterranean and despite the political differences between Alexandreia and Antioch, she was a commonly honoured deity in Seleukid Syria.\textsuperscript{233} It might also be remembered that Seleukeia-Pieria was a Ptolemaic possession from c.246 BC until 219 BC. A Ptolemaic phase in the city may have resulted in an increase in prominence of Egyptian gods such as Isis although there is no extant evidence for such a development. As discussed in Chapter 2.1.2.1 the headdress of Isis was even used as a reverse type on Seleukid royal coinage from the mid-second century BC, coming to dominate royal bronzes under

\textsuperscript{230} Stillwell 1941: 33-4.
\textsuperscript{231} Stillwell 1941: 124 no.365.
\textsuperscript{232} Stillwell 1941: 34.
\textsuperscript{233} Turcan 1996: 76-8; Sosin 2005.
Antiochos Sidetes. Stillwell’s identification of the figure as a composite Isis-Aphrodite seems to stem from the Hellenised style and perhaps the figure’s nudity. However, the very syncretic nature of Isis (as with Atargatis) in the Hellenistic period makes such a specific identification unnecessary and Isis was often depicted naked in the Hellenistic period. Like Atargatis, the Hellenised Isis was a multifaceted and flexible goddess, patron of royalty, women, sailors and dispenser of personal salvation. However, as noted above, the depositional history of the Isis statuette is completely unknown. Her relevance to the deity worshipped at the Doric temple may be purely tangential and after all, bronze though it may be, the statuette hardly constitutes the *xoanon* (cult statue) for a major temple but more likely represents an ancillary goddess, a votive offering or perhaps a figure from a domestic shrine, relocated to the site of the temple during or following the structure’s demolition.

The presence of the crypt below the adyton led Hannestad and Potts to suggest that the Doric temple may in fact be the Nikatoreion, the temple and temenos built around the sepulchre of Seleukos I Nikator. Physical evidence for royal burials during the Hellenistic period is practically non-existent. From a multitude of kings and dynasts, only two known Hellenistic tombs are certifiably royal – the „royal tomb II” at Vergina (ancient Aigai), Macedonia, and the Hierothesion at Nemrud Dağ in Kommagene, both of which took the form of tumuli. Vergina royal tomb II belonged to either Philip II or Philip III Arrhidaios, and Nemrud Dağ, was constructed for Antiochos I of Kommagene. We thus have evidence for either end of the Hellenistic period, but very little information on the intervening generations. A passage from Appian provides limited insight into the burial of Seleukos I following his murder by Ptolemy Keraunos:

“Philetairos, the prince of Pergamon, bought the body of Seleukos from Keraunos for a large sum of money, burned it, and sent the ashes to his son Antiochos. The latter deposited them at Seleukeia-by-the-Sea, where he

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237 On Vergina, see Andronikas 1978; id. 1984; Borza 1981; id. 1985; Bartsiokas 2000. On Nemrud Dag, see Sanders 1996; see also Appendix C.
238 Høtje 2009: 124 n.15.
erected a temple to his father, and made a precinct round it. The precinct is called Nikatoreion.”

The cremated remains of Seleukos would have reached Antiochos late in the Spring of 280 BC giving a construction date for the Nikatoreion in the first quarter of the third century BC. This date falls slightly after, but is not altogether inconsistent with the Doric temple’s preferred construction date of c.300 BC. The establishment of a founder cult for Seleukos at Seleukeia is accepted by modern scholars but it has been claimed that the erection of a temenos and temple with all associated rituals and paraphernalia was unprecedented. While it may be true that the Nikatoreion was a prototype, it is not without parallel in the Hellenistic East.

The several heroa which are known combine a naïskos with a crypt which held the remains of a local hero. The founder of Ai Khanoum, Kineas, was buried beneath one such structure and, as Kineas and Seleukos both served with Alexander the Great, the earliest phase of the heroön must be close in date to the construction of the Nikatoreion. The first phase heroön consisted of a south-east facing, mud-brick, distyle in-antis structure on a three-stepped krepidoma. The pronaos was slightly wider than the adyton which resulted in the building assuming an inverted T-shape. Below the adyton, a mud-brick lined crypt contained a limestone sarcophagus with a round hole drilled into the lid. It is presumed that libations were poured directly into the sarcophagus from the adyton above. Although built using local building methods and materials, the structure adhered to a Hellenistic form and even incorporated a number of maxims received directly from Delphi in the early third century BC and inscribed in the surrounding temenos. Similar heroa were built during the second century BC at Kalydon in Aitolia and for Attalos I and Eumenes II at Pergamon.

A second structure from Ai Khanoum – identified as a mausoleum – was even closer in form to the Nikatoreion. The mausoleum took the form of a south-east facing, Ionic order, peripteral mud-brick temple built on a three-stepped krepidoma (fig.104). The

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239 Appian Syrian Wars 63 (translation after the Loeb edition).
240 Grainger 1990a: 199.
244 Kalydon: Dyggve et al. 1934; Pergamon: Boehringer and Krauss 1937: 84. See also chapter 5.5.2 below.
superstructure measured 21.5 by 11.75 metres and was composed of a pronaos (with two columns in-antis), naos and adyton. A set of stairs descended from the centre of the naos to a crypt measuring 4.5 by 2.3 metres, located below the adyton. The crypt contained the remains of two sarcophagi and five individuals. A further burial was interred in a later mud-brick repository built within the northern half of the naos. The temple form was completed with the addition of an altar measuring 1.5 metres square located immediately to the east.\(^{245}\)

The date of the mausoleum is uncertain but probably belongs in the third century BC. Its construction followed an earlier structure on the site which had the same orientation and dimensions. Like the heroön of Kineas, the Aï Khanoum mausoleum seems to be an early feature of the city which, due to the mud-brick construction, required restoration and successive phases of rebuilding.\(^{246}\)

As with the heroön, the excavators conjecture libation pouring at the mausoleum while the presence of the altar suggests that there may have been other forms of offering conducted for, or on behalf of, the dead.\(^{247}\)
The posthumous veneration of Seleukos I Nikator at an impressive temple at Seleukeia is not unusual when it is remembered that the king was assimilated with Zeus, the king of the gods and patron of Seleukeia-Pieria. In an early third century BC inscription listing annual priestships at Seleukeia, priests for the gods Zeus Olympios, Zeus Koryphaios, and Zeus Kasios are followed immediately by the priest of Seleukos Zeus Nikator. While the temple plan and altar of the Aï Khanoum mausoleum might be seen as truly exceptional, Seleukos Nikator was deified posthumously and assimilated with the god Zeus. There was surely nothing strange about the construction of a temple over the resting place of a god’s earthly remains. Indeed the Christian Church of the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem, first built under Constantine I, may be seen to serve the same purpose. The situation of the Doric temple at Seleukeia provides circumstantial support for the attribution of the building as the Nikatoreion. The temple overlooked the main lower city and harbour and in turn the temple complex would have been visible from them. Such a location might be deemed desirable in the temple dedicated to the city’s founder and patron. Furthermore, the temple was intervisible with both the summit of Mount Koryphos above and the summit of Mount Kasios to the south, both of which were considered the abodes of Zeus. Rituals within the temenos would have been within sight of all of the most significant topographical features in the region.

The early modern erection of fortifications using spolia from the superstructure of the Doric temple at Seleukeia, combined with the hastily conducted excavations and cursory publication of the temple remains mean that we may never be able to confirm the nature of the only surviving Seleukid period temple from the tetrapolis of Seleukis. The presence of the finely worked crypt supported by comparative evidence from the Aï Khanoum mausoleum and heroön, the thoughtful placement of the temple at a key location within both the natural and built environment of the city and the structure’s survival through the Roman period with no evidence for a Roman building phase, all lend their weight to Hannestad and Pott’s tentative suggestion. The Doric temple at Seleukeia-Pieria probably does represent the remains of the Nikatoreion. The presence of the statuette of Isis among the temple foundations need not alter this interpretation. As discussed above, the statuette may well be intrusive. Even if it were not, the role of Isis as the patron of kingship

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248 *CIG* 4458.1-10 = Austin 2006: no.207. See also the discussion on the deification of the kings in Chapter 3 above.
249 *Itinerarium Burdigalense* 594.
might see her joining the god-king Seleukos Zeus Nikator in an auxiliary capacity – not the major cult focus of the temple, but a minor *synnaos thea*.

### 4.3 Holy Heavenly (and Fruit Bringing) Zeus of Baitokaike

Located in the Bargylos mountains behind Marathos, 30km from the Mediterranean coast, the sanctuary of Zeus Ouranios at Baitokaike (modern Hosn Soleiman) has yet to be formally excavated. Although there is evidence of a recent sondage having been opened by the Syrian Department of Antiquities between the two Greco-Roman complexes at the site, the work has not been published to date. Impressive standing remains – dating primarily to the second and third centuries AD$^{250}$ – are visible at the site and were first recorded in detail by René Dussaud in 1897. Further scholarly studies were conducted by Krencker and Zschietzschmann in 1938 and more recently by Steinsapir (1999) and Freyberger (2004) (fig.105).

#### 4.3.1 The Main Temenos

The site of Baitokaike represents an isolated sanctuary whose associated settlement grew up around the shrine, rather than a religious complex within a civic or urban landscape. The Greco-Roman sanctuary at Baitokaike was contained within a depression, surrounded by higher peaks (fig.106).$^{251}$ This unusual placement was determined by the location of a seasonal spring and two sacred outcrops of rock, both of which were incorporated within the walls of the larger of the sanctuary’s two complexes. Rather than conforming to a cardinal east-west axis, the successive temples within the larger complex were orientated north-east to south-west due to the irregularity of the terrain. The site’s hilly topography and the sacral nature of construction necessitated that the Roman period structure was built directly above its Hellenistic predecessor.$^{252}$ The north-east to south-west axis was mirrored by the rectangular temenos measuring 134 by 85 metres enclosed by a monumental wall.$^{253}$ Freyberger dates the construction of the temenos wall to the second or first centuries BC which would makes it the earliest of the visible remains.$^{254}$ Certain features of the temenos

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$^{251}$ Steinsapir 1999: 183.
$^{252}$ Krencker and Zschietzschmann 1938: figs.119-20, pl.35
$^{253}$ Niehr 2003: 68.
wall such as the sculpted lintels and Roman inscriptions were later additions and attest to the continued use of the site.

A monumental propylaia with internal and external hexastyle porticos was located midway along the north-western end of the temenos, aligned with the central axis of the temple. An individual entering through the propylaia would have been presented with a frontal view of the temple’s façade, raised above the level of entry by both the lay of the...
land and, in the Roman phase, by the temple’s podium. Two smaller entrances into the temenos were located opposite each other in the middle of the two long walls and thus perpendicular to the main axis. Although the approach through either side gate would present a three-quarter view of the main temple structure conforming to the Hellenic ideal, these side gates were clearly of secondary importance to the north-eastern entrance. Importantly, the lintel of the south-east gate bore the remains of a late dedicatory inscription reconstructed by Dussaud with certainty as θεωασκαλώνχαι or theo Askaloneai, the Goddess of Askalon. The presence of the deity, a goddess known variously as Derketo or Atargatis to the Greeks, is important for the understanding of the nature of the cult during the Greco-Roman period. A fourth and much smaller opening was located opposite the main propylaia to the rear of the temple.

The Roman period temple occupied a natural rise at the centre of the temenos, a height further accentuated by an elevated podium. The remains of an earlier (probably Hellenistic) temple or altar, lacking any raised platform of its own, were entirely encased within the podium of the later Roman structure. Although not a grand feature, the earlier structure was obviously too sacred to be demolished during later renovations and was thus

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255 See the discussion on the possible staged approach to the Jebel Khalid temple below.
256 Dussaud 1897: 323-5.
entombed.\textsuperscript{257} Three flights of stairs alternated with two broad landings to connect the walking surface of the temenos with the top of the Roman podium from the north-east. The lower and larger of the landings included an altar platform which jutted forward over the lower flight of stairs. This landing could also be approached by a second stairway from the north-west. The seasonal spring mentioned above floods the entire area to the north-east of the podium annually from late winter until early summer and presumably did so in antiquity. This flooding prevented the direct approach from the propylaia to the north-east base of the stairs, access being diverted via the north-west.\textsuperscript{258}

Measuring approximately 25 by 14 metres, the second century AD temple was pseudoperipteral with six Ionic half columns along each flank and four across the rear wall (fig.107).\textsuperscript{259} Little remains of the pronaos although it has been confidently reconstructed as quadrastyle prostyle.\textsuperscript{260} A narrow staircase was built into the north-western wall of the

\textsuperscript{257} Krencker and Zschietzschmann 1938: 67; Gawlikowski 1989: 337-9; Steinsapir 1999: 188; Freyberger 2004: 23.
\textsuperscript{258} Steinsapir 1999: 186-7.
\textsuperscript{260} Krencker and Zschietzschmann 1938: pl.35.
naos, accessed internally, which may once have led to a roof terrace for the performance of specific rituals.\textsuperscript{261} Both gabled and flat roofs have been proposed for the structure although without the documented recovery of pediment or ceramic roof tiles (or lack thereof) from the vicinity of the temple, a true reconstruction must remain elusive.\textsuperscript{262}

Within the temenos a monumental altar measuring eight square metres was built around an exposed rocky outcrop.\textsuperscript{263} The outcrop was located between the naos and temenos wall, in the south-east of the temenos, visible from the propylaia and the south-eastern and south-western gateways. The west face of the altar (that closest to the temple) was inscribed with a second century AD dedication to holy, heavenly, fruit-bringing Zeus of Baitokaike.\textsuperscript{264} The monumental altar was squarely aligned with an elaborate window built into a crypt within the temple podium. Steinsapir suggests some form of dawn solar ritual involving “a reenactment of the epiphany of the deity” whose statue may have stood behind the window. However, she concedes that there may be other explanations for the correlation of altar and window and it would seem that her main theory is most unlikely. The window grants access to a small passage through which remains of the Hellenistic structure encased within the Roman podium can be accessed. The Hellenistic wall in turn was provided with a portal beyond which lay a second large outcrop of living rock cracked with a great fissure (\textit{fig.108}). It seems clear that whatever the ancient understanding of the two outcrops at Baitokaike, they were intended to be intervisible, even after the construction of the successive monuments. The windows provided visible access to the living rock from the outside world in general and from the rock-altar specifically.\textsuperscript{265}

The construction of the temple above a natural fissure in the rock recalls the construction of the temple of Atargatis at Hierapolis-Bambyke above the small, natural chasm. At Hierapolis too, access to the chasm was maintained even after the Greco-Roman building works.\textsuperscript{266} While the preserved architectural remains at Baitokaike preclude the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{261} Steinsapir 1999: 185-6; see also Amy 1950; Downey 1976; Held 2005.
\item \textsuperscript{262} Krencker and Zschoitzschmann 1938: pl.37; Steinsapir 1999: 186.
\item \textsuperscript{263} Steinsapir 1999: 187; Freyberger 2004: 26-7. See also the Arabo-Ituraean tendency to hew sacred architecture and altars out of living rock, Krencker and Zschoitzschmann 1938: 40-6; Aliquot 2008: 78.
\item \textsuperscript{264} “höchsten, heiligen und Früchtebringenden Zeus von Baitokaike”, Krencker and Zschoitzschmann 1938: no.8; Freyberger 2004: 26. The portrayal of the god of the sky and heavens as the provider of earthly fertility is well attested in the Semitic world, see for example the reference to Adad (Hadad) in the \textit{Code of Hammurabi} where the deity is called “lord of abundance, the irrigator of heaven and earth,” (Meek 1969: 179).
\item \textsuperscript{265} Steinsapir 1999: 188; Freyberger 2004: 23-4.
\item \textsuperscript{266} For a full discussion of Hierapolis, see Chapter 4.5 below.
\end{itemize}
identification of identical cultic practices at the two sites, they clearly belonged to the same religious milieu. It should be noted that the naos of the Zeus temple at Baitokaike is currently filled with tumble from the collapsed superstructure which may indeed hide a further opening in the naos floor through which the rocky outcrop could be accessed from inside the naos as at Hierapolis. Certainly the two deities honoured through inscriptions at Baitokaike, Zeus and the Goddess of Askalon are directly paralleled by the principal gods honoured at Hierapolis, Zeus-Hadad and Hera-Atargatis. A similar assemblage of living
rock encased by a Hellenistic altar, all below a Roman structure was found at the Lower Zeus temple at Gerasa.  

Two iconographic themes were repeatedly employed for the figurative decoration around the main temenos at Baitokaike. Although the remains of the propylaia do not allow for the reconstruction of its decoration, the secondary entrances along the north-west and south-east flanks of the temenos provide some informative images. An eagle, the avatar of the sun or sky god, flanked by twin youths probably representing the morning and evening stars Azizos and Monimos adorned the soffits of both lintels (fig. 109). The eagle carries a kerykeion in its talons which has prompted some scholars to plausibly suggest a psychopompic role for the Zeus at Baitokaike. However, it may well be that the representation of the kerykeion above such portals was related to the transition from the secular to the sacral spheres rather than the transition between life and death. Similar iconography was employed over the entrances of the Roman period „Bacchus” temple at Heliopolis-Ba’albek and at the contemporary „great” temple at Hosn Niha.

A second and more prominent figurative subject at Baitokaike was the lion which featured on both external corners of the north-western temenos wall (fig. 110), on either side of the propylaia, on the interior of the lintels of the north-west and south-east gateways and incorporated into the north-eastern (front) pediment of the temple itself. The lion is sometimes linked to the worship of “the mountain Baal” and the sun, both of which were incorporated in the worship of Ba’al Šamîn. However, the lion to the western side of the propylaia stands beside a carved relief of a Cyprus tree, the evergreen symbol of fertility and regeneration, which may suggest that the lion here, as at Hierapolis-Bambyke, was intended as the avatar of the pan-Syrian goddess, Atargatis, the ΘΕΩΑΣΚΑΛΩΝΗΔ. Stylistically comparable lions were employed as decoration on the Tobiad palace (Qasr al-Abd) at Iraq al-Amir, constructed in the period 182-175 BC (fig. 111).

267 See Chapter 5.5.1 below.
269 Dussaud 1903: 142-8; Ronzevalle 1912: 38; Steinsapir 1999: 190; Freyberger 2004: 19. In both Old Babylonian and Ugaritic mythologies the sun-deity was believed to rule over the dead during his nocturnal voyages through the underworld, see van der Toorn 1996: 160.
270 At Hosn Niha the flanking figures are identified as Nike to left and a Nike and Eros to right, see Freyberger 2004: 20.
271 Freyberger 2004: figs. 4-5.
273 Hill 1911: 57.
274 Will and Larché 1991, especially François Queyrel’s contribution in the same volume dealing with the sculptural decoration, 209-51; Zayadine 2004: 273-5.
4.3.1.1 *The Seleukid inscription*

The outside face of the north-east temenos wall was inscribed with a decree issued by the emperor Valerian (AD 253-260). The inscription, set up by the *katochoi* of Holy Heavenly Zeus (Zeus Ouranios), maintains that the ancient rights granted to the sanctuary under the Seleukids and Augustus were to be upheld. This was presumably a response to

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275 Literally translated the „withdrawn“ or „possessed“, it is unclear whether the *katochoi* were *hierodules* (sacred slaves), priests, administrators or something else entirely, see Feissel 1993: 19-20; Dignas 2002: 165-6; Freyberger 2004: 33.

continued antagonism between the sanctuary and the neighbouring city of Arados. The
Roman inscription contained a copy of the original Seleukid grant of privileges bestowed
by an unknown king Antiochos.²⁷⁷

Letter of king Antiochos.

King Antiochos to Euphemos, greetings. I have issued the
memorandum which is appended below. Let action be taken as instructed on
the matters which you are to carry out.

A report having been brought to me about the power of the god Zeus
of Baitokaike, I have decided to concede to him for all time the source of the
god’s power, the village of Baitokaike, formerly held by Demetrios son of
Demetrios, grandson of Mnaseas, at Tourgona in the satrapy of Apameia,
together with everything that appertains and belongs to it according to the
existing surveys, and including the revenues of the present year, so that the
revenue from this village may be spent for the celebration of the monthly
sacrifices and the other things that increase the prestige of the sanctuary by
the priest designated by the god, as is the custom. Fairs exempt from
taxation are also to be held every month on the fifteenth and thirtieth; the
sanctuary is to be inviolate and the village exempt from billeting, as no
objection has been lodged against this. Anyone who opposes any of the
above-mentioned instructions shall be held guilty of impiety. A copy is to be
inscribed on a stone stele and placed in this same sanctuary. It will therefore
be necessary to write to the usual officials so that action is taken in
accordance with these instructions.²⁷⁸

In essence, the Seleukid memorandum removed any profane obligations owed by the
sanctuary to the king.²⁷⁹ The king in question is disputed among modern scholars although
he probably ruled in the late Seleukid period and, in light of his well advertised patronage
of a celestial Zeus/Ba’al Šamīn, Antiochos VIII Grypos is perhaps the most likely

²⁷⁷ Austin 2006: no.172 = Welles 1934: no.70.
²⁷⁸ After Austin 2006: no.172.
²⁷⁹ Aperghis (2004: 111) states that the memorandum does no such thing, suggesting instead that the
sanctuary was still required to pay regular tribute.
The Seleukid grant stipulates that on account of “the power of the god” the king permanently ceded the village of Baitokaike (formerly a private holding) to the sanctuary and its god. The god, referred to simply as Zeus of Baitokaike in the Hellenistic document, was identified specifically as Zeus Ouranios in the second century AD monumental altar inscription. Whether or not the local Zeus already carried the heavenly appellation during the Hellenistic period is impossible to know although presumably the Seleukid memorandum would have employed the epithet if it was in common use. Regardless, the deity who would become known as Zeus Ouranios is identifiable as the interpretatio graeca of Ba”al Šamīn, the vernacular lord of the heavens. His worship at Baitokaike, incorporating celestial and chthonic or fecund elements can be seen as a clear continuation of the Semitic, pre-Greek cult. Interestingly, the toponym Baitokaike was derived from the Semitic Betoceicei or „house of ricin” and referred to a locally cultivated herb that was believed to have had a medicinal value. The local god, it seems, was also famous for his healing powers. One interesting aside that comes out of the Baitokaike inscription is that the priest of Zeus does not seem to be a political appointment but rather was believed to have been an individual “designated by the god”. Following the royal grant of property and taxes to be used as the priest saw fit, he certainly would have assumed worldly, if only regional, importance.

4.3.2 The North Complex

A smaller complex lies 57 metres away from the propylaia to the north. The standing structure was built in the first century AD but was probably based upon an earlier feature of the site. The complex takes the form of an open court with a number of buildings incorporated into the surrounding wall. Almost square in plan and oriented to the cardinal points, the south-eastern corner was composed of a plain Doric distyle in-antis temple, opening to the south and inaccessible from within the complex (fig.112). Although typically Hellenistic, the structure is usually considered to be contemporary with the rest of

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281 See the discussion in Chapters 2 and 3 above.
283 Dussaud 1897: 329; Dignas 2002: 80.
the north complex. The principal structure within the complex was an apsidal, recessed platform built into the northern wall at the highest natural point within the enclosure. The sculptured torso of a life-size male figure was discovered on the raised platform and is thought to have represented an honorary dedication from one of the benefactors of Baitokaike. From the raised location of the apsidal platform, the façade and north-west flank of the Roman period temple within the main temenos is clearly visible above the intervening walls. The purpose of the smaller complex is unclear with suggestions varying from a temenos dedicated to a second deity, a site for preparatory activities before the monthly ceremonies, the location of the bi-monthly market or domestic quarters for the temple administrators and functionaries. However, the main gateway of the southern wall is decorated with a relief showing a male figure with multiple water jars which led Steinsapir to suggest that the complex may have housed a water pouring ceremony in some way related to the seasonal spring in the main temenos.

The cultic assemblage of a seasonal spring with possible water pouring rituals, together with the iconographic prominence of the eagle and lion provide further parallels with Lucian’s description of the cult of Hera-Atargatis and Zeus-Hadad at Hierapolis-Bambyke. The disparity between the two sites proves to be no real obstacle for the

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286 Krencker and Zschietzschmann 1938: 100; Steinsapir 1999: 188.
288 Steinsapir 1999: 189; Freyberger 2004: 34-6; see also Fischer, Ovadiah and Roll 1984: 153-4 for comparative reliefs from Roman Kadesh; see also Chapter 4.5.2.2 below.
identification of a related cult. Where Hierapolis had the perennial sacred pool as a physical manifestation of the goddess’’s fecundity, Baitokaike laid claim to its seasonal spring, a symbol, and indeed the vehicle, of annual renewal and fertility – evidence of the deities’’ continued benefactions to mankind. This spring was also probably the source of Zeus’’s later “fruit-bringing” epithet. This holy, heavenly (syncretic) Zeus was undoubtedly the presiding deity at Baitokaike. The dichotomy of the god’’s role, between the heavens and earth, link him inexorably with the nature of the Semitic Ba’’al Hadad/Šamîn. However, just as Ba’’al was seldom worshipped unaccompanied, it is almost certain that his counterpart in both celestial and chthonic spheres, Atargatis by whatever name, was honoured at Baitokaike. The duality of the two outcrops of living rock suggests the veneration of a divine couple, the water carrier relief is suggestive of Hierapolitan libation rituals and the lion, which may represent Ba’’al, is more often the goddess manifest. As both the naos and the monumental altar were dedicated to Zeus in the Roman period, his consort must have been honoured as a synaos theos (as suggested by the ΘΕΩΑΣΚΑΛΩΝ ΧAI inscription above the south-east gate), or was perhaps worshipped in the small distyle temple attached to the north complex. Of course without a comprehensive program of excavation, assigning any location for the worship of the Goddess of Askalon at Seleukid Baitokaike must necessarily remain purely speculative.

4.4 JEBEL KHALID AREA B

The excavated temple at Jebel Khalid provides the modern scholar with the best evidence of a certifiably Seleukid religious structure anywhere in northern Syria. The chronology

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289 Note however that even though Lucian claimed that the sacred pool at Hierapolis was perennial, it was reportedly a dry bowl when visited by Maundrell (1740) and Pococke (1745), yet full of water when seen by Hogarth (1908) and Bell (1909). While the surrounding water table may have been responsible for changes in water level over centuries, there could have been seasonal variation, even in antiquity.

290 Green 2003: 200-5.

291 Lucian The Syrian Goddess 13, 31, 41; Hogarth 1907-08: 188-9, fig.2; Hill 1911: 57; Drijvers 1982.

292 An early version of this section (4.4) was presented at the Seleukid conference held at University of Exeter July 16 2008, see Wright (forthcoming). For the settlement history, see Appendix D.

293 Much of Jebel Khalid remains unexcavated and the possibility of further temples cannot be ruled out although there is no surface evidence to suggest that the city had more than a single sanctuary. It should be noted that current research suggests that Dura-Europos may not have had any Seleukid period temple structures at all (Downey 2004: 55) even though the colony seems to have been important enough to house a royal mint under Antiochos I (SC I p.136-7) and again under Antiochos IV (SC II p.77) and is known to have had a priesthood of Seleukos Nikator operating c.AD 180 (P.Dura 25.3-4) which may have been a continuation of a Hellenistic cult.
of the settlement”s occupation firmly places the construction of the temple and temenos – known together as Area B – within the first phase of activity on the site and although Area B had a period of use following the abandonment of the settlement, the naos and other central elements remained fundamentally unchanged. Jebel Khalid”s construction upon virgin soil ensures that the establishment of a temple structure with non-Greek elements was not determined by any pre-existing local population. However, as will be made quite clear, the Area B structures exhibit a deliberate fusion of Greek and Mesopotamian aspects to produce an entirely Hellenistic religious complex.

4.4.1 THE TEMPLE

Contrary to the usual practice of both the Greek and Semitic worlds, Jebel Khalid”s temple was sited at one of the lowest points of the occupied city, above a gully leading down to the Euphrates river (fig.113). In this fashion, the topographic situation of Area B resembled the temple of Zeus at Baitokaike discussed above. Furthermore, topographical requirements suggest that the temple of Atargatis at Edessa must also have been sited in the depression below the citadel in order for it to be located near the sacred pools.\(^{294}\) The Jebel Khalid Area B complex is overlooked to the south by the fortified acropolis and to the north by the settlement”s principal domestic quarter. The sanctuary was constructed early in the life of the Seleukid colony, evidenced by fragments of an early third century BC Attic kantharos along with contemporary lamp fragments and coins of Seleukos I and Lysimachos which were found below the stylobate foundations. The early third century material with no later intrusions confirm that the sacred space was part of the initial settlement.\(^{295}\) The marking out of sacred precincts was one of the first tasks for the \textit{oikist}\ of any Hellenic colony, integrally linked with the topographic organisation of the new urban space. An \textit{oikist} did not normally decide which gods and heroes were worshipped, but he was entitled to decide the placement of their sanctuaries. Just as at Baitokaike, Area B”s strange location may have been determined by the knowledge or memory of a pre-existing sacred space on the jebel that was respected by the new population.\(^{296}\)

The temple was built as an east-facing hexastyle amphiprostyle structure. Both the east and west façades were pseudo-Doric, employing faceted columns of relatively squat

\(^{294}\) Edessa is discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.5.1.3 below.
\(^{295}\) Clarke \textit{et al.} 2005: 130-1.
\(^{296}\) Plato \textit{Laws} 704b-705c; Malkin 1987: 138, 145-56. However, see Arrian \textit{Anabasis} 3.1.5 of Alexander”s choice of deities to be honoured at Alexandreia-by-Egypt.
Figure 113. Jebel Khalid (N.L. Wright after JK 2: fig.2).
proportions. However, several standard Doric features were absent: there was no course between the architrave and the triglyphs and metopes and there were no decorative regulae or mutules. The metopes were left without sculptural decoration and there is no evidence to suggest that there was any sculptural adornment on the pediment. The whole would have afforded an unpretentious, if rather stark, appearance (fig. 114).

The naos of the temple was built upon a two-tiered krepidoma after the Greek fashion with the lower step made of worked bedrock, above which a second riser formed the stylobate. Both tiers were 60cm high. However, the layout of the naos provided further distinctions from traditional Greco-Macedonian religious structures. Rather than the elongated dimensions seen in Classical and Hellenistic temples, the naos of the Jebel Khalid temple measured just 10 by 12.8 metres, making it fractionally broader than it was long and conforming to a Mesopotamian style ground plan. In addition, the western half of the naos was divided by internal walls to provide a triple adyton, also common in earlier Mesopotamian structures and mirrored by the later – Parthian and Roman period – temples Artemis (building of c.40-32 BC) and Atargatis at Dura-Europos and by the early-phase

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297 A complete column from the western portico was found where it fell allowing for the ratio of width to height to be calculated at 1:5.2 rather than the contemporary standard of 1:7+.  
298 The sanctuary of Ptolemy III and Berenike II at Hermopolis Magna in Egypt was brightly painted, proving that the Classical tradition of temple decoration continued to flourish during the Hellenistic period, even in provincial areas (McKenzie 2007: 57-8). The Jebel Khalid temple may also have been originally painted which would have compensated for its lack of sculptural decoration.  
299 Clarke et al. 2008: 63.
extramural temple at Aï Khanoum.\textsuperscript{300} The tripartite division allowed for the admission of cult statues of different gods and therefore accommodated for the worship of multiple deities within the one structure.

4.4.2 The temenos
The phase one temenos (c.300-145 BC) narrowly surrounded the temple in contemporary Greek fashion (\textbf{fig.115}). It included a colonnade along the north and at least part of the west walls although the layout of the east and south walls are less clear.\textsuperscript{301} A cordiform (heart-shaped) column base and two drums found \textit{in situ} in the north-west corner of the temenos confirms that the colonnade originally extended south along the west wall. In order to maximise the space between the eastern portico of the temple and the altar area, the temple structure was set well towards the western end of the sanctuary and any western colonnade of the temenos would have passed within a metre of the west façade of the temple.\textsuperscript{302} Due to later building and stone robbing activities, it is difficult to make any further observations of the first phase of construction. Sometime, perhaps around the middle of the second century BC the structures within the temenos were remodelled, adapting the existing temenos wall and constructing new internal buildings (\textbf{fig.116}). This period can be designated phase two and is dated here to c.145-74 BC, corresponding with the increased activity across the site as indicated by an increase in coin numbers and rebuilding elsewhere. New structures were erected in the north-east and south-east corners of the temenos, extending eastwards beyond the temenos wall. The western room of the north-east structure was used as a storage room and the whole structure appears to have served some form of domestic function – perhaps a preparation space for ritual meals, housing for a priest or a hostel for pilgrims. A similar domestic feature was incorporated into the north-east corner of the original temenos of the temple of Artemis (c.40-32 BC) at

\textsuperscript{300} Artemis: Downey 1988: 89-92. Atargatis: Downey 1988: 102-5. Temple hors-les-murs: Bernard 1976a: 303-7; Downey 1988: 73-5; Hannestad and Potts 1990: 94-5. It should be noted that although the temple hors-les-murs conforms to the same general ground plan, it made use of an open court rather than a pronaoi. Only Dura’s Artemis temple of 40-32 BC employed a covered pronaoi as was used at Jebel Khalid. It was initially believed that the first phase of the temple of Zeus Megistos at Dura included a triple adyton (Zeus Megistos: Downey 1988: 79-86; Hannestad and Potts 1990: 104-5), however, this analysis appears to be incorrect, see Downey 1985. On the late date for the Dura temples, see Downey 2004: 54-5.
\textsuperscript{301} Clarke \textit{et al.} 2008: 62.
\textsuperscript{302} Such an arrangement was common in Hellenistic sanctuaries where the visual emphasis was on the eastern façade, altar and forecourt at the expense of the western façade, see Williams Lehman 1954: 15; Winter 2006: 16-7. Downey (1976: 22-3) stresses the Mesopotamian origin of such cultic ground plans.
Dura-Europos and more were added throughout the period of that temple’s use.

In the north-west corner of the temenos, behind the cordiform column of phase one, a small room was constructed which opened off the northern colonnade. A large key was found on the threshold and we can assume that this room was secured with a locked door. The room contained a large assemblage of common-ware jars, jugs, kraters and other vessels used for storing and serving liquids such as wine or oil. The north-western structure was mirrored in the south-west by another small structure of which there is little as yet to indicate its function (fig.117). Successive uneven ashy deposits had accumulated on the floor of the structure to a depth of 42cm which included a scattering of local and imported ceramic fragments and large amounts of unburnt bone. However, immediately to the east of this structure, open to the air but still within the temenos court, similar ashy deposits

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303 Downey 1988: 89-90.
Figure 116. Area B, phase two (N.L. Wright after site plans by Barry Rowney).

Figure 117. Area B, ashy deposits in the south-western structure (N.L. Wright).
deposits were uncovered in uniform layers to a depth of 70cm. The external ash deposits also contained small fragments of ceramics and large burnt animal bones (seemingly ovid/caprid and bovine). Floating within the ashy deposits was a large limestone basin with drainage hole.\(^\text{305}\) It is tempting to view the deep ashy deposit with burnt bone as the remains of a sacrificial dump although reconciling this with the shallower ashy deposit with unburnt bone within the south-western structure proves difficult; to date there is no evidence for any form of altar appropriate for such burnt sacrifices. Samples of the ash and bone were taken from both deposits although no results have yet been returned to confirm the species of animals that were represented. The basin may have been used in ritualised ablutions which were known to take place before religious activity in Seleukid Babylonia and contemporary Judaea.\(^\text{306}\)

Area B suffered a short period of disuse and neglect along with the remainder of the settlement from around 75/4 BC. However, at some stage following the systematic abandonment of Jebel Khalid (c.75/4 BC), a tertiary temenos wall was constructed of slightly different dimensions than the wall of the first two phases(fig.118).\(^\text{307}\) The earliest coin from the third phase of Area B was a denarius of M. Aemilius Scaurus dated to 58 BC.\(^\text{308}\) The few Eastern Sigillata A (ESA) ceramic fragments found in this phase were probably Augustan although contact between Jebel Khalid and the wider world was much reduced in this period.\(^\text{309}\) The phase three temenos was constructed of rough field stones built on a deposit of fine soil above the remains of the earlier structures. The secondary nature of the construction is reinforced by the use of upturned column drums as part of the wall face. The column drums appear to have been spolia from the colonnade of the earlier temenos. The phase three temenos wall enclosed the sacred space to the north, west and south but there is no evidence of any form of late wall along the eastern edge of the sanctuary which may have been left open. An individual standing within the sanctuary to the east of the temple itself would have thus had an uninterrupted view of the Euphrates below (fig.119). The space within the temenos was filled with material from the

\(^{305}\) Clarke et al. 2005: 133.

\(^{306}\) Hultgård 1987:88-9. At the New Year festival, the high-priest at Babylon ritually bathed in water drawn from the Euphrates and Tigris, otherwise the source of the water is not specified, see Linssen 2004: 152.


\(^{308}\) Nixon 2008: no.577, Jebel Khalid inv. no.06.391. The third phase of occupation in the domestic quarter has revealed a single bronze of Antiochos I of Kommagene (c.69-34 BC) which probably dates to the earliest part of his reign due to the use of the Armenian style tiara on the obverse portrait, see Nixon 2008: no.573, Jebel Khalid inv. no.05.917.)

\(^{309}\) See Appendix D.
Figure 118. Area B, phase three (N.L. Wright after site plans by Barry Rowney).

Figure 119. The Euphrates from Area B (N.L. Wright).
surrounding area and covered with a walking surface of crushed limestone which brought the entire sacred area up to the same level as the top of the temple stylobate. Due to the angle of the slope of the underlying topography, the eastern extent of this surface was three metres above bedrock and any structures built to the east (down slope) of the sacred area are unlikely to have hindered the view of the river to any extent.

The route up the gully from the Euphrates towards the temple appears to have been the principal approach to the sanctuary although a small doorway is present through the west wall of the phase three temenos suggesting that in the late period access could be gained directly from the west. As stated above, the fortified citadel impacts immediately upon entry to the settlement through the main (west) gate. A view from this approach to the temple would have been obscured by both the saddle of the jebel and any intervening buildings (of which there is evidence visible on the modern ground surface) between the gate and Area B. The proximity of the western façade of the temple with the western temenos colonnade would have also reduced the visual impact of the structure when viewed from outside the sanctuary to the west. However, on the ascent from the river, the view

Note that the staged approach from the main gate around the side of the temenos to the eastern entrance would have provided a “slow but dramatic revelation” of the temple as was common to Classical and Hellenistic constructions ranging from the Parthenon in Athens to the Sarapion of Alexandria, (Graeme Clarke, pers. comm.; Stillwell 1954: 4, 6; McKenzie 2007: 54). However, Doxiadis (1972: 23) states with reference to the siting of Greek style temples that “No building could be obstructed so that it emerged only partially from behind another structure; nor could the continuation of a building be hidden from view. Adherence to this law was universal.” The approach from the west, from the main gate, across the saddle of the Jebel and past intervening buildings would certainly have been the antithesis of Doxiadis” canon but in line with Stillwell and McKenzie.
up into the settlement is focused on, and indeed crowned by, the temple area. It is clear that
the temple was always intended to be viewed from this angle.\textsuperscript{311} An angled view from
below may also have served to superficially lengthen the squat dimensions of the temple”s
colonnade, giving it the appearance of more canonical Hellenic proportions.

The principal altar of Jebel Khalid Area B was erected, following Greek practice, to
the east of the temple in the centre of the temenos forecourt. Remains of the large circular
foot of the altar were uncovered on the temple platform level with the entrance of the
temple. It was situated immediately to the south of a built drainage sump which comprised
a course of worked stone above a fill of fine, loose soil (\textit{fig.120}). Below the platform,
specially designed drainage channels had been carved into the bedrock to carry away run-
off collected in the sump and it is clear that some sort of libation ritual was intended to take
place.\textsuperscript{312} The worked bedrock also suggests that this activity was an original aspect of the
cultic ritual at Jebel Khalid from the first phase of the temple. A similar arrangement of
altar and drain may be present in the second-third century AD tomb of a prominent woman
at Shash Hamdan, located only 2km south of Jebel Khalid. There, an octagonal altar of
living rock was carved in the centre of the main chamber of the rock-cut tomb. The altar,
situated in front of a recess carved in the shape of a facing bull, was equipped with two
drainage channels. Immediately to the west of the altar, a 10cm diameter pipe of
indeterminable length was dug into the tomb floor, presumably to carry away run-off from
ritual activities around the altar. Eighty five percent of the ceramic material recovered from
the tomb came from large jars made for the storage of liquid.\textsuperscript{313} Together, the presence of
the high proportion of jars, the drainage channels of the altar itself and the accompanying
pipe cut all suggest a regional continuation of the ritual activities carried out at Hellenistic
Jebel Khalid.

One striking feature unique to the period of „squatter” occupation at Jebel Khalid
was the erection of 23 small altars in Area B, evenly spaced and set into a pi-shaped row of
limestone ashlar blocks around the north, west and south sides of the naos.\textsuperscript{314} The altars, the

\textsuperscript{311} Winter 2006: 17-8.
\textsuperscript{312} Clarke and Jackson 2002: 120; Clarke \textit{et al.} 2005: 131.
\textsuperscript{313} In general on Shash Hamdan tomb 1, see Clarke \textit{et al.} 1998. The pipe cut into the tomb floor was
discovered during a restoration project carried out by the Aleppo Museum in February 2010, \textit{pers. comm.}
Graeme Clarke.
\textsuperscript{314} The placement of the primary altar between the temple entrance and the propylaia, accompanied by
subsidiary altars placed throughout the temenos court can also be traced back to Mesopotamian proto-types,
see Downey 1976: 22-3. The fourth phase of the comparable temple à redans at Aï Khanoum also had
remains of several of which remain in situ, were formed of low, fluted, columns crowned with four „horns“ and central depression (fig.121). The small central depression would have been suitable for small libations, incense, fruit or cereal offerings, but hardly appropriate for blood sacrifice.\footnote{Clarke et al. 2000: 126; Clarke and Jackson 2002: 118-9. The size of the altar drums makes it possible that they were spolia of the phase one and two temenos colonnade.} Unusually large numbers of basalt grinding stones were found in the immediate vicinity of the phase three altar line and these were perhaps related to the preparation of sacrificial grain-cakes. Several small incense altars were also found in the vicinity of the temenos and these may be viewed as votive offerings or private shrines (figs.122-3).\footnote{Clarke et al. 2005: 134.} The extensive alterations to the Area B temenos in phase three contrast with the seemingly transitory sub-Hellenistic structures found across the rest of the site. Whatever the rationale behind the changes to the temenos, it seems clear that the Jebel Khalid temple retained a local prominence beyond its purpose as the shrine of a Seleukid
colonial outpost. Area B continued to receive pilgrims into the Julio-Claudian and Flavian periods, long after the decline of the city and its founding dynasty.  

4.4.3 Statuary

A number of marble and limestone statue fragments have been uncovered during the excavation of Area B. None of the figures represented by the sculptural fragments are easily interpreted and a thorough investigation is in preparation by Clarke and Jackson for future publication. Most of the marble fragments appear to have been carved from small pieces and show evidence of having dowel and socket joints to enable them to be pieced together in a composite whole. All the marble fragments come from limbs, including an elbow, part of a forearm, a thigh, a knee and parts of three over-life-sized feet, all of a slightly different scale thus suggesting at least three individual sculptures (figs.124-5). As there are no remains of any torso or drapery fragments, the suggestion has been put forward that the Jebel Khalid marbles may have come from a number of acrolithic sculptures; that is, with exposed limbs of marble but a torso of cheaper material such as clay or plaster which was then covered with expensive robes. This form of cult statue was also found in the Hellenistic temple à redans (also known as the temple à niches indentées) at Aï Khanoum in Afghanistan which, like Syria, had no marble sources of its own.  

Samples from two of the marble feet from Jebel Khalid were submitted for Stable Isotope Ratio Analysis to determine their place of origin. The results confirmed that both were sourced from the Lychnites mine on the Aegean island of Paros, a mine which produced marble so fine that its use was restricted under Roman law for portraits of the

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317 See Appendix D.
318 Clarke 2008b: 117; Colledge 1987: 145; Bernard 1976a: 303-7; Downey 1988: 71; Hannestad and Potts 1990: 93-4. While acrolithic statues were a feature of traditional Greek cultic experience (see for example the statue of Athena Areia at Plataia dated to shortly after 490 BC, Pausanias Description of Greece 9.4.1), the clothing of a cult statue in expensive robes also had a Mesopotamian precedent, see Oppenheim 1949.
Imperial family. Obviously the subjects of the Jebel Khalid sculptures were considered to be of such significance to the colonists that they imported marble from the finest and most exclusive source in the Aegean. It is unfortunate that there are not enough fragments to reconstruct the identity of any of the figures although the feet are unsandaled suggesting a divine or heroic figure and the owner of the bare thigh and knee should be considered male. If the sculpture was indeed acrolithic, the figures must be presumed to have been draped. Where divine figures were commonly shown bare-footed when nude, it is less common to find clothed figures with bare feet with the exception of Herakles and Hermes. The foot of the acrolithic sculpture from the temple à redans at Aï Khanoum, perhaps representing a seated Zeus, was depicted wearing a sandal of Greek type. However, according to Semitic traditions, it was customary to enter temples without footwear and it was common to show clothed deities without boots or sandals.

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319 Pliny *Natural History* 36.4.14; Strabo *Geography* 10.5.7; Clarke 2008b: 115.
320 Downey 1988: 71-3.
321 Cumont 1926: 61; Homes-Fredericq 1963: 30. See also the reliefs depicting bare-foot high-priest Alexandros from Hierapolis, see (Fig.147) and Stucky 1976: pl.5).
A single, smaller than life-size, marble head was recovered which showed a stylised, beardless face with straight nose descending from a heavy brow and deep-set eyes (figs.126-7). The hair at the back of the head appears to come together in a bun, although the very back of the head is a worked flat surface and it appears that the sculpture was intended to be set against a wall or in a shallow niche. There is every possibility that the head may have been a secondary reuse of part of an earlier, larger Parian marble sculpture, although without close parallels it is very difficult to date. The style of the head has been compared to the eye-betlys found in the Nabataean south. However, rudimentary as the Jebel Khalid marble head is, it still possesses much more definition than its Nabataean counterparts.322 The squared „shoulder” at the rear of the piece is reminiscent of a Greek Herm and it may be that the marble head was intended to represent some form of vernacular, apotropaic, guardian of entrances.323

Several limestone statue fragments have also come to light including multiple pieces of drapery and two further heads. The first of the heads is a fascinating slightly smaller than life-size bearded head with an elaborate hairstyle (figs.128-31).324 The hair is incised in a manner resembling a tortoise shell and a long thick braid or ringlet is shown descending behind each ear. The whole composition is held in place by a tainia. The sculpture breaks off just below the band at the back of the head but it

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323 The Arsinoeion at Zephyrion and the Sarapion of Alexandria also housed statues of both Greek and indigenous (Egyptian) types, see McKenzie 2007: 52, 55.
324 Clarke and Jackson 2002: 120.
Figure 128. Jebel Khalid limestone head (courtesy Graeme Clarke).

Figure 129. Jebel Khalid limestone head (courtesy Graeme Clarke).

Figure 130. Jebel Khalid limestone head (courtesy Graeme Clarke).

Figure 131. Jebel Khalid limestone head (courtesy Graeme Clarke).
appears that there was no attempt to depict the knot of a diadem. The figure”s right ear is adorned with an earring, a particularly „eastern‟ trait in antiquity and although the left ear is damaged, it is clear that it never held similar decoration.\textsuperscript{325} The close cropped beard is shown coming from in front of the ears and continuing under the chin but without a moustache. The identity of the figure in its present state is ambiguous and it is possible to view it as a depiction of a local notable, a late Seleukid king – several of whom were depicted with similarly trimmed beards, or even a deity although it was clearly of lesser importance than the figures who received Parian marble effigies. The earring and braids are reminiscent of attributes of Dionysos and Herakles, gods known to be incorporated in aspects of the royal cult.\textsuperscript{326} Indeed, the Jebel Khalid limestone head bears quite a close resemblance to two Seleukid period sculptures from the temple of Herakles at Masjid-i Soleiman in Susania. One of these is undoubtedly Herakles himself and the other is almost certainly the same hero.\textsuperscript{327} Both Masjid-i Soleiman heads are bearded and have earrings in their right ears although neither has braids comparable to the Jebel Khalid head. An alternative is to see the braids and \textit{tainia} as attributes of Apollo. Braids or ringlets and the \textit{tainia} are constant fixtures of his iconography on Seleukid coinage and although the beard certainly is not, wherever Apollo appeared in a Semitic context – as at nearby Hierapolis Bambyke and Dura-Europos – he was syncretised with the Mesopotamian god Nabû and depicted as a mature, bearded god.\textsuperscript{328}

The second limestone head was found on a small basalt „table” slab in the fill of the phase three temenos and presents its own curious problems \textit{(fig.132)}.\textsuperscript{329} The figure is crudely carved from a moderate sized piece of stone (the sculpture measures 19cm in height) and shows small inset eyes, an oversized, almost leonine, nose and chin along with

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{Juvenal \textit{Satire} 1.104-5; Petronius \textit{Satyricon} 102.14; Pliny \textit{Natural History} 2.50.136; Xenophon \textit{Anabasis} 3.1.31; Ghirshman 1976: 93; Butcher 2003: 328. See also the earring on the limestone head wearing a polos from the Zeus Megistos temple at Dura-Europos, Downey 2004c: 155-6, fig.6.}

\footnote{In the flourishing Hellenistic tradition of \textit{synnaoi theoi}, the new royal cult was often appended onto existing religious structures or sanctuaries where the king and/or queen would share the divine honours paid to the traditional god. Although there are few confirmed accounts of \textit{synnaoi theoi} within the Seleukid kingdom, such activities were widespread in Ptolemaic Egypt, Attalid Pergamon and Kommagene and it may be not so much a lack of action, as a lack of extant sources that prevent our better understanding of such activities in Syria, see also the discussion in Chapter 3.1 above.}

\footnote{Ghirshman 1976: 93-4, pls. 70-1. This comparison is favoured by Graeme Clarke (\textit{pers. comm.})}

\footnote{Lucian \textit{The Syrian Goddess} 35; Macrobius \textit{Saturnalia} 1.17.66-7; Rostovtzeff \textit{et al.} 1939: 266, 281, pl.36.1; Drijvers 1980: 72; Dirven 1999: 128-56; Lightfoot 2003: 456-69; Haider 2008: 202; Erickson (forthcoming). See also the Parthian period evidence for a temple of Apollo-Nabû at Seleukeia-on-the-Tigris, Al-Salihi 1987: 162-5.}

\footnote{Clarke \textit{et al.} 2005: 134.}
\end{footnotes}
small stub-like protrusions at the shoulder to suggest the appearance of arms. Its discovery perched upon the basalt slab suggests some sort of late votive offering or even the subject of veneration, the slab perhaps acting as a table for some form of bloodless offering. Like the marble head, this figure may represent some sort of betyl or Herm, although the iconography is so crude that it is hard to interpret.

4.4.4 Temple Staff

As discussed in Chapter 1.3.3, a number of locally produced stamped amphora handles discovered during the excavation of Area B bear one of two Semitic theophoric names, Abidsalma (アジアサラマ) and Bargates (バーガーテ). While other stamped amphorae, predominantly Rhodian imports but all bearing Greek names, have been found scattered across the site, in civic, commercial and domestic contexts, those stamped with Semitic names have only been found in the context of the acropolis palace and Area B. All

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330 The schematic manner in which the nose, lips and chin are portrayed is reminiscent of an alabaster head of similar size in the Louvre from southern Arabia, believed to date from the third to the first centuries BC, see Bartz and König 2005: 91.
332 JK 1 273-89; Clarke 2005; 2008a.
333 In the name ofアジアサラマ & JK SH.39 (Inv. 89.774), JK SH.41 (Inv. 89.899).
examples derive from strata which can be dated to phase two of the site (c.145 – c.75/4 BC). This concentration within the civic, specifically religious, spheres of the settlement may not be accidental. It is here posited that the Semitic individuals named on the stamped amphorae were members of the religious administration of Jebel Khalid. Indigenous temple administration is documented at other sites in the Levant such as Hierapolis-Bambyke,335 Umm el-Amed,336 Dura-Europos,337 and Jerusalem,338 in Babylonia339 and in Kilikia Tracheia340 from the Achaemenid through to the Roman periods. It should therefore come as no surprise if a structure as non-Greek in ground plan as the Jebel Khalid temple should be staffed by non-Greeks, at least by the late second century BC. The vessels in which these names were stamped may have contained the produce of the temple’s estates outside of the walls of the settlement and/or taxes-in-kind to be paid by the sanctuary to the royal bureaucracy.341

The architecture, altars and statuary of the Jebel Khalid temple and temenos are intimately linked to the nature of its cults and the identity of the worshippers. The apparent fusion of Greek and Mesopotamian influences can therefore be seen as wholly deliberate. The pseudo-Doric façade and Greek style temenos with peristyle colonnade was joined with a Mesopotamian broad room naos with triple adyton.342 Although there may be evidence for the preparation and sacrifice of animals within the temenos,343 a sacrificial altar suitable for such actions is distinctly lacking. The main altar on the eastern forecourt was equipped with an elaborate drainage system which may have been intended to deal

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334 In the name of: JK SH.40 (Inv. 87.029), JK SH.63 (Inv. 02.499), JK SH.64 (Inv. 93.771), JK SH.65 (Inv. 05.980). In the name of: JK SH.42 (Inv. 87.169), JK SH.66 (Inv. 02.248) JK SH.67 (Inv. 05.572).
335 See for example Lucian The Syrian Goddess 19; Mildenberg 1999: 281-3.
336 See for example Dunand and Duru 1962: 181-96 nos.5-6, 16.
337 See for example the relief from the temple of the Gaddé showing the priest Hairan, son of Maliku, Rostovtzeff et al. 1939: 259-60.
341 Judaea provides good comparative cases from the Achaemenid and Ptolemaic periods, see Lapp 1963; Avigad 1976.
342 A similar synthesis of cultural traditions visible through the religious architecture can be seen at contemporary Aī Khanoum (“Āy Kānom”s religious architecture indicates that no purely Greek or Macedonian temple existed in the city or its environs and that many of the colonists settled there were familiar with Mesopotamian religious architecture” see Lerner 2003-2004: 386) and its neighbouring temple site on the Oxus at Takht-i Sangin which fused Hellenistic elements (column bases, cult statue) within a wider Iranian architectural program (ayvan and twinned ātashgāhs), Lerner 2002.
343 As indicated by the deep ashy deposits with high bone content.
with “copious libations”, perhaps for something as seemingly mundane as water.\footnote{Clarke and Jackson 2002: 120, n.4.} Hierapolis-Bambyke, the major sanctuary to the Syrian gods Atargatis and Hadad, lay only a day’s journey away from Jebel Khalid to the west and the second century AD description of the temple and its rituals provided by Lucian of Samosata provide a number of parallels with Seleukid Jebel Khalid. It is to Hierapolis that we must now turn.

4.5 THE SANCTUARY OF THE SYRIAN GODS AT HIERAPOLIS-BAMBYKE

“These are the ancient and great sanctuaries of Syria. But many of them as there are, none seems to me to be greater than those in the Holy City [Hierapolis], nor any other temple holier, nor any country more sacred.”\footnote{Lucian \textit{The Syrian Goddess} 10. This and all subsequent quotes have been taken from the translation in Lightfoot 2003.}

Little of note remains today of the holiest city of Hellenistic and Roman Syria, the great sanctuary of Atargatis and Hadad at Hierapolis-Bambyke (modern Membij). The journalist and travel writer Charles Glass was moved enough to say “If every town on earth were vying for the name „Nowhere,‟ a mere two or three could hope to compete with Membij.”\footnote{Glass 1990: 146.} While Glass’ opinion is perhaps a little critical, it is true that the glorious past of Membij is well disguised. A number of European travellers and archaeologists passed through the site between the seventeenth and twentieth centuries documenting the gradual disappearance of the city’s Greco-Roman past. No archaeological program of excavations has been conducted at the site and continued occupation over the old city has ensured that most of what lies buried will remain so for the foreseeable future.

The first recorded visit by a European to the site of ancient Hierapolis was the English reverend, Henry Maundrell (1699), followed by Pococke and Drummond in the mid-eighteenth century. E.G. Rey visited Membij as part of his 1864-1865 expedition to north Syria and David Hogarth and Gertrude Bell both passed through the site in the first decade of the twentieth century (1908 and 1909 respectively). While each noted several things absent from the other’s visit, their accounts are mostly complementary. They were followed shortly after by the esteemed Franz Cumont who published his account of the site.
in 1917. Unfortunately, with each passing scholar, less and less remained of the ancient site to be seen and little was ever documented in any thorough manner. Thus for any quantity of evidence regarding the ancient city we must turn to the historical sources, flawed though they undoubtedly are, to gain an understanding of the structures and rituals at this most sacred site in Syria. The most comprehensive account is The Syrian Goddess, perhaps written by Lucian of Samosata, which can be supplemented by a number of other Greek, Roman and Syriac authors from the period of Roman political control,\textsuperscript{347} the modern travellers” accounts and comparative archaeological material.

A vast number of scholars over the years have pondered, commented on and discussed the various qualities of The Syrian Goddess as an historic source, debating its purpose, reliability and even its authorship.\textsuperscript{348} The treatise has traditionally been held as a work of the well known satirist Lucian of Samosata who, as discussed in Chapter 1.3, was a Hellenised Syrian writing in the mid-second century AD. This current study is not so much concerned with the authorship of The Syrian Goddess as it is with its worth as an historic and ethnographic account of Hierapolis-Bambyke under Roman political control. Nevertheless, the very nature of Lucian”s other writings – religiously sceptical and critical of the gullible\textsuperscript{349} – makes the authorship debate of some importance.\textsuperscript{350} The most important contributions to the debate in recent years continue to illustrate the schism that has split scholarly opinion over the last century and beyond. Oden considered the author’s naïve manner and use of the Ionic dialect as a parody of Herodotean ethnography apt for a satirist during the Second Sophistic. The several references to “costly works” are considered a subtle barb, ridiculing an eastern obsession with the accumulation of wealth and numerous puns as suitable evidence of Lucian”s style.\textsuperscript{351} The treatise then is one of mockery based loosely on fact. Indeed, a farce can only be effective if it is grounded in reality. Taking up the opposite argument, Dirven and Polański, in two rather different articles, deny Lucian”s involvement in the text and thereby promote its value as a legitimate piece of religious writing, devoid of sarcasm and satire. For Dirven in particular, the information divulged in

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{347} Such as Aelian On Animals 12.2; Macrobius Saturnalia 23.10-20; Pliny Natural History 5.81; Plutarch Crassus 17; Ptolemy Geography 5.14.10; Strabo Geography 16.1.27; Teaching of Addai Howard edition p.49.
\item \textsuperscript{348} See for example Stocks 1937: 16; Goossens 1943: 17-8; Oden 1977: 4-24; Bilde 1990: 162-6; Dirven 1997; Polański 1998; Lightfoot 2003: 184-208.
\item \textsuperscript{349} See for examples: Lucian Alexander the False Prophet; id. Assembly of the Gods; id. Dionysus; id. Heracles; id. Peregrinus; id. On Sacrifice; id. Saturnalia; id. Zeus Cross Examined; id. Zeus Tragoedus.
\item \textsuperscript{350} Millar 1993: 245-6.
\item \textsuperscript{351} Oden 1977: 17-22.
\end{itemize}
The Syrian Goddess, where it is able to be tested against comparative material, is largely accurate and may therefore be relied upon in those cases where comparative material is unavailable.\(^{352}\)

In her monumental commentary on The Syrian Goddess, Lightfoot approaches the topic of authorship rather cautiously. However, in favourably comparing the work with the Astrologia, a contemporary text written in a similar pseudo-Ionic dialect and also attributed to Lucian, Lightfoot ultimately comes down on the side of those who would make The Syrian Goddess Lucian’s.\(^{353}\) The work is the product of a “master imitator” of Herodotus, from the journalistic approach to the application of the overriding interpretatio graeca which so hinders our own understanding of the text’s theology.\(^{354}\) The prevailing satire then is anti-Herodotean rather than anti-Hierapolitan – but what impact has this had on the text’s reliability? Lucian himself described Herodotus as sensible enough except for his vice for romanticising his subject matter.\(^{355}\) As Dirven had demonstrated, much of Lucian’s description is verifiable\(^ {356}\) but the same text contains a number of sure falsities. To take a case in point; the phalloi said to have been erected either side of the Hierapolis propylaia have indeed found parallels in similar features at the Atargatis temples at Dura-Europos and Delos – even if Lucian’s stated height for these enormous uprights (300 fathoms or 549 metres) strains credulity.\(^{357}\) At the end of the day, one is inclined to follow Lightfoot and accept Lucian’s account with liberal caution; “the accuracy of his descriptions of material objects counterbalances his occasional inaccuracies”.\(^{358}\)

4.5.1 THE SANCTUARY

According to Lucian, the temple that stood in his lifetime was the work of Stratonike, wife of Seleukos I, who was commanded to do the work by the goddess Hera in a dream. The actual construction project was carried out by Kombabos, evidently a notable of non-Greek background in the court of the king.\(^ {359}\) The identity of the goddess responsible for Stratonike’s dream shall be dealt with below but it is sufficient to note here that she was the

\(^{352}\)Dirven 1997; Polański 1998.
\(^{353}\)Lightfoot 2003: 191-5.
\(^{354}\)Lightfoot 2003: 197.
\(^{355}\)Lucian The Liar 2.
\(^{356}\)Dirven 1997: 159-63.
\(^{358}\)Lightfoot 2003: 216.
\(^{359}\)Lucian The Syrian Goddess 19-26.
Hellenised face of Atargatis, the Syrian Goddess. The sanctuary was built on a rise in the centre of the settlement, with the temple constructed over the mouth of a small chasm that was said to have drained the waters after the great flood. Lucian describes two walls around the sanctuary of which one was considered old, the other new. It might be possible to view the older wall as the boundary of the temenos, while the later wall may have enclosed the wider settlement. The temenos was provided with a north facing propylaia which suggests that one of Lucian’s walls must have enclosed the sanctuary grounds. The two unbelievably tall phalloi stood on either side of the propylaia which were said to bear Greek dedicatory inscriptions from the god Dionysos.

The first appearance of the Greek name of the city occurs on the metropolitan bronze coin issues of Antiochos IV Epiphanes which gives it as ἹΕΡΟΠΟΛΙΣ ΤΩΝ, Hierapolis or „the city of the sanctuary” as opposed to the later use of Hierapolis or „sacred city”. There is no firm evidence to suggest that the city was of any great size during the Seleukid period and it is clear that the focus of settlement was the temple and its temenos. It is even uncertain whether the „old” wall dates to a Seleukid phase at Hierapolis, a concept dismissed by Lightfoot. It is probably safe to suggest that the settlement proper did not receive fortifications until well into the Roman period.

4.5.1.1 The temple

The temple was oriented so that its entrance faced east. It was constructed upon a raised podium approached by a stairway which led up to gilded doors. The structure was described as built along the lines of the temples found in Ionia which may allude to an outwardly Greek design constructed in the Ionic order. Inside, the naos was built over two levels although it is unclear which part was higher than the other. The biannual water pouring ceremony discussed below may suggest that the inner space or adyton was at the lower level and provided access to the sacred chasm. Although the two areas were not physically divided by any form of internal wall, the adyton – reached by a second stairway

360 Lucian The Syrian Goddess 13, 28.
361 Lucian The Syrian Goddess 16, 28. Phalloi were also employed either side of the propylaia of the temple of Atargatis at Dura Europos, (Frye et al. 1955: 129 no.1; Dirven 1977: 163; Downey 1988: 104) and Delos (Bruneau 1970: 473).
363 Lightfoot 2003: 421.
– was only accessible to a select number of priests. A number of deities were represented by statues in the west of the naos but only Atargatis, Hadad and the curious semeion were housed in the adyton. There are no extant remains of the temple in the modern town. The vestiges of many buildings, either mostly concealed below ground, heaped in piles or else reused in modern walls were noted by Maundrell, Pococke, Hogarth and Cumont while Gertrude Bell commented on the stone robbing activities of the Circassian colonists established on the site in 1879.

Lieutenant Colonel Chesney identified two temples at Hierapolis of which a substantial amount of the smaller were still standing in the 1830s. However, he provided no clue as to their locations and neither were visible to later travellers. Cumont identified a walled enclosure around a well to the south-east of the lake which he considered to be the forecourt of the temple of Atargatis. Pococke located the remains of the temple on a rise “two hundred paces within the east gate” of the settlement. Unfortunately the east gate can no longer be located with any confidence. Both Hogarth and Bell, following Rey, observed the likelihood that an antique temple lay below the mediaeval mosque of Melek ez Zaher, located between the lake and the cemetery on a slight rise, perhaps coinciding with Pococke’s location. The remains of the Melek ez Zaher mosque were covered by a “new” mosque constructed in the 1880s. I am inclined to follow Rey, Hogarth and Bell in locating the temple in the vicinity of the Ottoman mosque, if only because of the natural tenacity of holy sites to remain sacred despite the cultural evolution of the environment and populations around them, a cultural memory of the sacred topography (figs.133-4).

Both Millar and Lightfoot have expressed doubts that the temple of Lucian’s day was the same one constructed by Stratonike and Kombabos but, while caution must be employed with Lucian’s narrative, there does not appear to be any overriding reason why the temple of his time could not have been a Hellenistic structure.

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366 Lucian *The Syrian Goddess* 32-8, see below.
367 Maundrell 1740: 154; Pococke 1745: 166; Rey 1866: 348; Hogarth 1907-08: 189; Gertrude Bell diaries: 16 February 1909. For a brief, near contemporary, account of the Circassian exodus see Walker 1894.
368 Chesney 1850: 420-1.
369 Pococke 1745: 166; Rey 1866: 348; Hogarth 1907-08: 189; Gertrude Bell diaries: 16 February 1909, “Below its pavement they found another which they say belonged to a Xian [i.e. Christian] church. There were a good many columns about and one cap. but it was antique not Xian.” Cumont 1917: 36-8, fig.9.
370 Seton Williams 1949: 78, n.1; Oppenheim 1965: 131; Barghouti 1984: 213; Coogan 1987: 3; Mare 1997: 277.
Lightfoot is right, however, in stating that Lucian’s account of the Hierapolis temple bears little in common with the classically Mesopotamian open-court architecture which marked the temples of Atargatis on Delos (second century BC) and at Dura Europos (late first century BC). Regardless, Hierapolis does provide a striking similarity with another monumental temple constructed by the early Seleukids, Didyma in Ionia. The relationship between Didyma and the Seleukid dynasty went back to 334 BC when the previously
defunct oracle was believed to have uttered a prophesy to the effect that Seleukos I would become king of Asia.\textsuperscript{372} The sanctuary at Didyma subsequently received royal patronage on a large scale with funding for the reconstruction of Apollo’s temple by Seleukos I, followed by the return of the cult statue of Apollo (taken by the Persians in either 494 or 479 BC) and an impressive array of gifts in 300/299 BC and again in 288/7 BC.\textsuperscript{373} The temple of Apollo at Didyma, the Didymeion, measured a substantial 7,080 square metres, making it the third largest temple in the Hellenistic world after the Artemision at Ephesos and the Heraion on Samos. It was built upon a stepped krepidoma crowned by an Ionic order decastyle dipteral temple with two rows of 21 columns along the north and south sides.\textsuperscript{374} The Didymeion was provided with a pronoas to the east which contained a further 12 columns in-antis. Further progress westwards into the temple was obstructed by a 1.5 metre high threshold over which the inner chamber could be viewed but not accessed, although the threshold looks to have been a later addition.\textsuperscript{375} The inner chamber gave access to a flight of stairs which led down to a lowered adyton which accommodated a freestanding naiskos which in-turn housed the cult statue of Apollo. The adyton at Didyma was open to the sky and contained sacred laurel trees (fig.135).\textsuperscript{376}

\textsuperscript{372} Appian Syrian Wars 56; Diodorus Siculus Library of History 19.90.
\textsuperscript{373} Pausanias Description of Greece 1.16.3, 8.46.3; Welles 1934: no.5; Rehm 1958: nos.480, 493 = OGIS 227; Parke 1986: 125; Fontenrose 1988: 12-3, 16-8, 34; Grainger 1997: 711 (dating the second dedication to 286/5 BC); Dignas 2002: 39-43; Austin 2006: nos.51, 175. The principal construction program may not have been completed until the mid-second century BC and some decorative features were never finished.
\textsuperscript{374} Fontenrose 1988: 34-7.
\textsuperscript{375} Voigtländer 1976: 33; Parke 1986: 126.
\textsuperscript{376} Parke 1986: 121; Fontenrose 1988: 37-41.
The krepidoma was a typically Greek architectural feature and its absence from Lucian’s temple, along with the author’s description of a tall podium is used by Lightfoot as evidence to suggest that his temple was not a Hellenistic construction.\(^{377}\) Temples built on podiums are generally considered to be of Roman date. However, the two temples at Umm el-Améd and the temple at Gadara\(^{378}\) were all built on podiums rather than a krepidoma and the second phase of the heroön of Kineas at Aï Khanoum saw the conversion of the original krepidoma into a podium.\(^{379}\) All three sites can be securely dated to the Hellenistic period and while Gadara flourished under Roman control, neither Umm el-Améd nor Aï Khanoum underwent Roman period building works. Indeed Hoffmann goes so far as to suggest that the podium in greater Syria may have been connected with indigenous cults long before the Roman period.\(^{380}\) The krepidoma may not be as crucial in dismissing Lucian as Lightfoot suggests.

The open court of the Didymeion also varies from Lucian’s account of Hierapolis even though it was a common feature of Mesopotamian temple design. However, the Ionic order and spatial separation through differing floor levels was a feature at both Hierapolis and Didyma, as was the use of water for ceremonies inside the naos.\(^{381}\) Lucian’s description of Hierapolis as resembling “the temples they build in Ionia”\(^{382}\) may allude to Didyma as a source of inspiration behind the Hellenistic construction at Hierapolis Bambyke. Both were funded by Seleukos I although the involvement of Stratonike at Hierapolis can date that building program later in the king’s reign than his first benefactions to Didyma.

4.5.1.2 Cult statues and honorary dedications

The eastern half of the naos of Lucian’s temple at Hierapolis was home to an empty throne for the sun along with multiple xoana – a clothed and bearded statute of Apollo along with

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\(^{377}\) Lightfoot 2003: 428.

\(^{378}\) For Umm el-Améd and Gadara, see Chapter 5.1 and 5.4 below.

\(^{379}\) Bernard 1973: 85-111.


\(^{382}\) Lucian The Syrian Goddess 30.
Atlas, Hermes and Eileithyia. Lightfoot appears to despair at this stage in her commentary at ever being able to disentangle Lucian’s descriptions from the web created by his tendency towards vague observations, combined with what may or may not be his own interpretation of the most adequate Hellenised rendering of the various gods. While Lucian’s interpretations do present an awkward assemblage of gods, it may be possible to scratch away at the interpretatio graeca to reveal the Semitic deities below. Stocks attempted to place these synnaoi theoi, the gods who share the temple, within some sort of cosmological program which saw the sun represented by his throne, Apollo (detached from Nabû) as equated with Ares-Mars, Atlas as Kronos-Saturn, Hermes as Nabû-Mercury and Eileithyia as Aphrodite-Venus.

Lucian states that the empty throne belonged to the sun, a deity worshipped as the solar disc or manifested as an eagle across much of the Arab frontier (from Auranitis to Mygdonia). In a Hierapolitan context, Apollo is almost universally accepted as the interpretatio graeca of Nabû, “upholder of the world”, the Mesopotamian god of wisdom, writing and power who was worshipped across the Semitic world by the Hellenistic period. The priests were thought to consult the god”s oracular statue on all matters and would take no action without its consent. Such mantic beliefs probably helped cement the understanding of the fundamentally Semitic deity as Apollo, the Greek god of oracles. The identification of Atlas proves more difficult but not disheartening; one significant clue may lie in the identification of his companion. Hermes had a long standing identity in the East as the Hellenised Monimos (known as Arṣu at Palmyra). Monimos-Arṣu was elsewhere depicted as a rider on horseback or dromedary and was one of the principal gods of the Syrian steppe, riding before his devotees as a protective presence in the manner of a caravan guard. The identification of Monimos with Hermes was related to the latter’s

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383 Lucian The Syrian Goddess 34-5, 38.
385 Stocks 1937: 5, 36-7, 39-40. A similar astral interpretation was provided by Glueck (1965: 453-93) for the Nabataean temple at Khirbet et-Tannûr.
386 Lightfoot 2003: 449-55, questions Lucian’s source but provides a number of examples of empty, carved thrones bearing celestial decoration found in Phoenicia, perhaps linked with the cult of Astarte; see for example the thrones from Umm el-Amed discussed in Chapter 5.1.2 below.
388 Lucian The Syrian Goddess 36.
multiple roles as divine guide, god of travellers and patron of herdsmen. Hermes-Monimos-Arṣu was usually (but not always) paired with a second desert god (often depicted as a horseman), Azizos, who was rendered as Ares when viewed through Hellenised eyes. The assimilation of Azizos with Ares perhaps stressed the positive, defensive aspects of Ares’ character rather than his aggressive, violent nature. When paired with Hermes-Monimos-Arṣu, the two were seen as saviour gods manifested as the morning and the evening stars. Julian’s Antiochene oration on Helios in AD 362 explicitly linked the sun with Hermes-Monimos and Ares-Azizos who preceded and followed Helios respectively and were declared his assessors and the channel of his blessing. Although Atlas is generally thought of purely in the guise of the supporter of the heavens, this role seems to have been understood in antiquity as encompassing the understanding of astronomy and the dispensation of the knowledge of navigation. It is the celestial association of Azizos, as the evening star and therefore the connection with night-navigation, together with his theological connection with both the Sun and Hermes-Monimos which may have provided a point of comparison with Atlas. The Semitic goddess identified by Lucian as Eileithyia is less clear. However, Eileithyia’s assimilation with Selene, queen of the heavens, and her direct role as goddess of labour pains, child birth and motherhood implies some form of duel celestial-chthonic, fertility figure, suggestive of a specific aspect of Atargatis rather than a distinct deity. In mainland Greece, Eileithyia could be identified as Artemis who in turn could also be equated with both the moon and the Syrian Goddess.

The adyton contained the principal cult statues of Hierapolis: Hera seated on a lion throne, Zeus enthroned on bulls and between them the curious golden semeion. The god identified as Zeus, “whom they call by a different name” looked to Lucian entirely Greek in features, clothes and even posture. However, the female deity, known as the Syrian Goddess...

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392 Segal 1953: 107-8; Drijvers 1980: 147. At Palmyra the two were called the “good and rewarding gods” or, Azizos alone, the “good and merciful god”, see Drijvers 1980: 159.
393 Julian Oration 150 C-D, derived from the works of Iamblichos of Chalkis, see Drijvers 1980: 146-7. For the relationship between the sun and the morning and evening stars see Glueck 1965: 464-5.
394 Diodorus Siculus Library of History 4.26.2; Homer Odyssey 1.52; Pausanias Description of Greece 9.20.3; Suda „Prometheus“.
395 Nonnus Dionysiaca 38.149; Lightfoot 2003: 471.
Goddess and identified by Lucian with Hera, was the cultic focus of the sanctuary. Where to Lucian the Hierapolitan Zeus could be no other god, he admits that the goddess encompasses aspects of many named Greek deities of whom Hera takes pre-eminence. The other aspects of the goddess which receive interpretatio graeca include Athena with whom there is no explicit literary connection; Aphrodite Ourania whose kestos (girdle) adorns the cult statue; Selene, perhaps on account of Atargatis’ celestial attributes or the presence of the illuminating lychnis stone; Rhea, surely connected to the goddess’ mural crown, lion companions and tympanon; Artemis – although identified with Atargatis by Granius Licinianus, iconographically there are few similarities and the association may be of the goddesses’ respective natures; and Nemesis and the Moirai, possibly implied through the statue’s spindle and Atargatis’ cultic role as the supreme tyche and controller of mankind’s destiny. Likewise, in Semitic terms, Atargatis was viewed as the supreme goddess, a composite of the older deities Ašerah, Astarte and Anat. Interestingly, Derketo, a goddess tantamount to Atargatis, is distinctly absent from Lucian’s list of deities. In the archaeologia of The Syrian Goddess, Lucian explicitly states that despite stories he had heard, Derketo – as worshipped in Phoenicia – was distinct from the goddess at Hierapolis and unrelated to the holy city.

Lucian’s description of Hera-Atargatis, bizarre though it is, finds a number of parallels in the iconography of the goddess from Hellenistic Damascus. The Damascene cult statue of Atargatis was used as a reverse type on the silver coinage of the Seleukid king, Demetrios III Eukairos (97/6-88/7 BC). Alone among Hellenistic depictions of the goddess, the Damascene iconography depicts her stripped bare of Hellenised features. Standing frontally, the goddess’ head emanates celestial rays while the tails of the kestos

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397 Lucian The Syrian Goddess 31-3.
398 See also Lucian The Syrian Goddess 15. On the mural crown and its long standing association with pre- and post-Hellenistic goddesses, see Metzler 1994. Atargatis is sometimes shown with the mural crown on the late fourth century BC coinage from Bambyke (fig.97), see Mildenberg 1999: nos. 12-24.
403 Lucian The Syrian Goddess 14. Lightfoot 2003: 354-5 questions whether there were any historical claims that Dekerto was associated with Atargatis at Hierapolis. However, the half-human, half-fish iconography associated with Dekerto was well represented at Hierapolis (Maundrell 1740: 154; Pocoke 1745: 166-7; Drummond 1754: 211), Edessa and perhaps on the silver coinage of Demetrios I (see Chapter 2.1.2.3 above).
404 SC 2: 2450-1.
are normally shown hanging down either side of the torso. Her lions are not depicted but ears of grain, evidence of her role as a fertility goddess, sprout from behind either shoulder. The iconographic connection with Athena, so ambiguous in Lucian, becomes apparent on the cult statue. The centre of the goddess’ chest is decorated with a facing head from which small circular or semi-circular objects radiate to cover the statue’s entire body and legs. The overall effect of the decoration recalls Hellenistic depictions of Athena’s aegis which had long since replaced the original goat’s skin with Medusa’s scaly hide. The dual nature of the Damascene Atargatis – the celestial crown combined with the ears of grain – was also reflected in her cult at Edessa where both her celestial and chthonic aspects were honoured, manifested through both the worship of her physical presence as the planet Venus, and the veneration of her sacred fish.  

The third focus of reverence housed in the adyton at Hierapolis was the semeion or „sign“, a golden statue with “no shape of its own, but bears the forms of the other gods,” the apex of which was surmounted by a gold dove. Located between the cult statues of Zeus-Hadad and Hera-Atargatis, Lucian states that the semeion was linked to either Deukalion, Dionysos or Semiramis which has led some scholars to view the object as the third aspect of a divine triad either as one of the figures mentioned by Lucian or else the representation of a distinct, aniconic, deity Simios/Simia. However, Seyrig unequivocally illustrated that the hypothetical divine triad was established upon various modern assumptions which are groundless in the Levant before the second century AD and noted merely that the semeion was probably in some way related to Hadad. Alternatively, Oden associated the semeion with Atargatis as the focus of her worship. Although the concept of the „sign“ of the god/goddess is demonstratably both early (Persian period) and autochthonous, the only clear illustrations of the semeion located between Hadad and Atargatis postdate the Hellenistic period (fig.136) – a relief from Edessa once believed to be a second century BC representation of the divine couple flanking a betyl-like semeion is now known to depict two male figures dating from the third millennium BC.

A large assortment of xoana, in this case statues of bronze, also adorned the altar.

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406 Lucian The Syrian Goddess 33; Ronzevalle 1903: 44; von Baudissin 1911: 16 n.1; Stocks 1937: 15; Tubach 1986: 208.
408 Oden 1977: 139-40, 149.
area outside the temple (presumably to the east of the naos) and elsewhere around the temenos. Among them were various founders and benefactors of the sanctuary of whom Semiramis (represented at least twice); Sardanaparlos (the last Assyrian king, Aššurbanipal); Stratonike and Alexander the Great were named. Curiously absent from the named list was Seleukos I, the individual responsible for funding the Hellenistic edifice. The latter may have been one of the “countless other bronze statues of priests and kings” but it is strange that Alexander, who was otherwise unrelated to the sanctuary, takes precedence in Lucian’s list. As the project manager for the Seleukid temple construction, the castrated Kombabos was included among the named figures who received statues although he seems to have been rather ironically juxtaposed with the phalloi of Dionysos (by the propylaia) and a further ithyphallic bronze figure. The multitude of “priests and kings” depicted at Hierapolis recalls the assemblage of more than 120 quasi-secular statues discovered in sacred contexts at Hatra.

The character of Sardanaparlos as described by Diodorus Siculus bears a number of parallels with Lucian’s Kombabos and the galloi; Sardanaparlos lived the life of a woman, assumed female attire and cosmetics and spent his time conducting feminine tasks such as spinning and working wool. The contrast that Lucian makes between the life-like Alexander figure (surely in military garb) and the xoanon identified as Sardanaparlos in “other shape and raiment” suggests that like Kombabos, Sardanaparlos was displayed in sculptured transvestism. Like Alexander, the antihero Sardanaparlos was not otherwise

411 Lucian The Syrian Goddess 16, 26, 39-40. Although few of Lucian’s temenos statues represent deities in any strict sense, the term xoana used sixty six times by Pausanias in his Description of Greece, is reserved for wooden cult statues, see Bennett 1917: 12-4 (table A), 16.
412 Dirven 2008.
413 Diodorus Siculus Library of History 2.23.1.
associated with Hierapolis and it is possible that the identification of both figures was Lucian’s own interpretation rather than information garnered from local knowledge. Perhaps the answer lies in the association of the statues of „Alexander” and „Sardanaparlos” with the “very beautiful” statue of Stratonike. One would expect Stratonike to be grouped with her militarily successful husband Seleukos I (Lucian’s Alexander?) and the cross-dressing Kombabos (Sardanaparlos?), her associate in the construction of the Hellenistic temple at Hierapolis. The already confusing collection of semi-mythical figures is exacerbated by the list of heroes and heroines from the Trojan cycle who are also listed as depicted within the Hierapolis temenos: Helen, Hekuba, Andromache, Paris, Hektor, Achilles and Nireus along with, Philomela, Prokne and Tereus.  

As with the other statues, it is unclear how many if any of the heroic figures described by Lucian are *interpretatio graeca* and how many are genuine identifications. However, the Philomela and Prokne myth may once again return to the castration *topos* that underlies so much of Lucian’s description of Hierapolis.

### 4.5.1.3 Sacred pools and holy fish

One of the ritual accoutrements of Atargatis” worship was the veneration of holy fish, kept in pampered state in sacred pools. Lucian describes the presence of a lake located “not far from the temple” which was filled with fish of various kinds that were so tame that some of them came when called. All of the fish were considered sacred but one of them was especially revered and was adorned with gold jewellery. A large stone altar stood (or floated as tradition would have it) in the centre of the pool which was the focus of a daily swimming ritual. Maundrell commented on the abundance of “pillars and ruins” which surrounded and partially filled the “deep pit of about one hundred yards diameter” to the west of the seventeenth century settlement. Both Maundrell and Pococke found this area, presumed to be Lucian’s sacred lake, to be dry although they were undoubtedly correct in their identification. In 1908, Hogarth noted the “quay-wall or revetment, with water-stairs at intervals” along the western and southern sides of the same area which in his time

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414 Lucian *The Syrian Goddess* 40.  
417 Lucian *The Syrian Goddess* 14, 45; Pliny *Natural History* 32.8; Stocks 1937: 6; Goossens 1943: 62; Lightfoot 2003: 65-72.  
418 Lucian *The Syrian Goddess* 46.  
419 Maundrell 1740: 154; Pococke 1745: 166.
Figure 137. Hierapolis sacred pool in 1909 (Gertrude Bell 16th Feb. 1909).

Figure 138. Hierapolis sacred pool in 2008 (N.L. Wright).
appears to have reverted to a perennial spring. The following year, Gertrude Bell watered her pack animals at the same pool (fig.137). Today the area of the lake remains free of modern structures but has been filled in to serve as the town’s soccer field. Of the revetments noted by Hogarth, only a small part of the southern wall, constructed out of large ashlar blocks of limestone, is still visible (fig.138). The large stone altar in the centre of the pool had seemingly disappeared before the end of the seventeenth century. The tradition of a centrally located water feature has been retained at modern Membij, as elsewhere across the Middle East, in the form of a pool and fountain in the park which abuts the soccer ground (fig.139).

Other sites across Syria and Mesopotamia had similar pools with sacred fish and it is clear that the phenomenon was not confined to Hierapolis, nor were the rituals restricted in time to the Roman period. The implication is that the veneration of fish sacred to the Syrian Goddess was a widespread phenomenon in the Hellenistic Levant. The sixth century BC sanctuary at Marathos was composed of a raised naos surrounded by a sacred artificial lake which may have contained fish (fig.140). A chapel in the territory of Sidon contained a divine throne surrounded by a similar built pool. Both show evidence of sacred fish.

420 Hogarth 1907-8: 187.
421 Gertrude Bell diaries: 16 February 1909.
422 Porphyry On Abstinence 2.61; Athenaeus Banquet of the Learned 8.346c-e; Burkert 1983: 204-8. For comparative veneration of sacred fish in East Asia, see Anderson 1969.
423 The naos at the centre of the lake is reminiscent of Lucian’s stone altar (The Syrian Goddess 46) although Atargatis does not appear to have been connected with the worship at Marathos. Melkart emerges as the principal divinity, perhaps accompanied by Eschmun, see Stocks 1937: 6-7; Goossens 1943: 119; Will 1957-58: 140; Dunand and Saliby 1985: 11-20; Lightfoot 2003: 491.
continued use into the Hellenistic period. Xenophon encountered sacred fish – and pigeons – in 401 BC, apparently swimming freely, rather than in enclosed sacred pools, in the river Chalos (modern Afrin), four days march inland from Myriandros.\textsuperscript{425} The veneration of holy fish was also known at the sanctuary of the Syrian Gods on the island of Delos, at Askalon and at the Nabataean temple at Khirbet et-Tannūr.\textsuperscript{426} In 1937, Glueck knew of a dervish monastery at Qubbet el-Beddâwī near Phoenician Tripolis where a walled pool still contained untouchable sacred fish.\textsuperscript{427} Hogarth had earlier noted two further walled springs filled with “enormous fish”, probably carp, in his travels at the small villages of Sam and Chaiwan between the modern centre of Gaziantep and ancient Doliche.\textsuperscript{428} Aelian described the presence of tame fish at the confluence of the Khabur and Euphrates rivers where Hera was said to have bathed following her union with Zeus.\textsuperscript{429} A further Mesopotamian example of fish veneration that is particularly useful from an ethnographical standpoint continues to the present day at Edessa (modern Şanliurfa) in Osrhoene.\textsuperscript{430}

Gölbaşi, a lush, natural depression overlooked from the south by the fortifications of the Edessa citadel, contains two sacred pools, the Balıklı Göl and Ayn-i Zeliha, connected by a series of canals (\textbf{fig.141-2}). Any vestige of pre-Muslim mythology related to the area has disappeared and the site is considered the birthplace of the prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) who is said to have been born in a cave below the citadel. When still a youth, Ibrahim confronted Nimrod, king of Urfa, condemning the latter’s idolatry and gaining the affections of Zeliha, the king’s daughter in the process. Nimrod, evidently displeased with the course of events had a pyre constructed on the citadel and there attempted to burn Ibrahim to death. However, Allah turned the fire into water (the future Balıklı Göl) and the burning logs were transformed into fish.\textsuperscript{431} The Ayn-i Zeliha is said to have been formed from the tears shed by Nimrod’s daughter at Ibrahim’s immolation. Today pilgrims come from across the Islamic world to visit the birth cave and venerate the holy fish. Small dishes of puffed rice are available for purchase which are fed by the devotees to the sacred carp (\textbf{fig.143-4}). The ancient taboo of physically contacting the fish is still current, the modern belief holds that to touch a fish will cause the pilgrim to go blind.

\textsuperscript{425} Xenophon \textit{Anabasis} 1.4; Farrell 1961: 153.
\textsuperscript{426} Diodorus Siculus \textit{Library of History} 2.4; Glueck 1937: 373; id. 1965: 391-2; Bruneau 1970: 467-73.
\textsuperscript{427} Glueck 1937: 374 n.4.
\textsuperscript{428} Hogarth 1907-08: 188-9.
\textsuperscript{429} Aelian \textit{On Animals} 12.40.
\textsuperscript{430} Drijvers 1977: 79-84.
\textsuperscript{431} The official version of the tale is contained in \textit{The Koran} 21.50-69.
Figure 141.
Edessa, Balıklı Göl
(N.L. Wright).

Figure 142.
Edessa, Ayn-i Zeliha (N.L. Wright).
Figure 143. Edessa, Balıklı Göl sacred fish (N.L. Wright).

Figure 144. Edessa, Balıklı Göl sacred fish (N.L. Wright).
That the modern Edessene custom is a continuation of the same ancient rituals that were practiced at Hierapolis is suggested by the site”s Seleukid period name, and confirmed by Roman period authors. Under Antiochos IV Epiphanes, Edessa minted quasi-municipal coinage bearing the dynastic name Antioch-on-the-Kallirhoe – Antioch on the beautiful water. The river Skirtos („Jeaping“ river) by which Edessa was located is scarce more than a trickle for much of the year, running in spate in Spring, sporadically flooding the city. Undoubtedly the origin of the site”s alternate Hellenistic name, Edessa, derived from the Archaic Macedonian capital which was prone to similar flooding: the Skirtos is an unlikely candidate of the title „beautiful“. An alternate source of water at the site was provided by the springs which fed, and indeed still feed, the pools of Gölbaşı and it is to these waters that the Kallirhoe must refer.\textsuperscript{432} There is also some evidence to suggest that the Ayn-i Zeliha may even have borne the name Ayn Seloq – the pool/fountain of Seleukos – in the period before the Arab conquest.\textsuperscript{433}

Lucian of Samosata states that pilgrims came to Hierapolis from beyond the Euphrates which, though a fairly broad statement, must include the area of Osrhoene, occupying the nearest portion of Mesopotamia to Hierapolis, but may include regions much further afield.\textsuperscript{434} Strabo conflates his accounts of Hierapolis-Bambyke and Edessa into a single passage: “above the river [Euphrates], at a distance of four schoeni, lies Bambycê, which is also called Edessa and Hierapolis, where the Syrian goddess Atargatis is worshipped”.\textsuperscript{435} The location specified by Strabo, “above” the river, is more suggestive of Edessa in Osrhoene than Hierapolis in Kyrresthis although the statement about Atargatis has tempted some scholars to disregard Strabo”s Edessene reference.\textsuperscript{436} However, in the \textit{Teaching of Addai}, the apocryphal correspondence between King Abgar V of Edessa, Jesus and Addai (the apostle Thaddeus), we find that the Edessenes were known to worship “Taratha, like the inhabitants of Mabug”.\textsuperscript{437} Although the treatise in its current form is a fourth century AD (or later) compilation, the episode takes place in the period of AD 31-32 and the reference to Taratha of Mabug, the Aramaic names for Atargatis and Hierapolis-Bambyke respectively, suggests that there was certainly a perceived religious link between

\textsuperscript{432} Pliny \textit{Natural History} 5.86; Segal 1970: 6.\textsuperscript{433} Segal 1970: 8; 54-5.\textsuperscript{434} Lucian \textit{The Syrian Goddess} 13.\textsuperscript{435} Strabo \textit{Geography} 16.1.27, Loeb translation (2000 edition).\textsuperscript{436} von Baudissin 1878: 159, 166; Stocks 1937: 6 n.15; Ross 2001: 16.\textsuperscript{437} \textit{Teaching of Addai} Howard edition p.49.
the two centres in the past if not the fourth century present. Further evidence for the Edessene cult of Atargatis is provided by the second century AD *Book of the Laws of Countries* which records a decree forbidding the self-emasculcation of followers of the Syrian Goddess at Edessa.\(^ {438}\) Therefore there can be no denying that an Atargatis cult existed at Edessa which bore many of the trappings of the goddess’’s worship at her native Hierapolis-Bambyke. It is equally certain that her Hieropolitan companions, Zeus-Hadad (in the form of Bēl) and Apollo-Nabû joined her as the principal deities in the capital of Osrhoene.\(^ {439}\)

The final physical description of Hierapolis-Bambyke provided by Lucian pertains to the many sacred animals which roamed freely around the sanctuary. As already noted, fish were particularly sacred to Atargatis-Derketo but so too were doves, especially where her character fused with Semiramis and Aphrodite. While both animals were fed at Hierapolis, neither were allowed to be touched by any human and thus both flourished despite the impracticality of the belief.\(^ {440}\) Further complicating human-animal interactions, large tame cattle, lions, bears, horses and even eagles were said to wander about the temenos in harmony with man and with each other.\(^ {441}\)

The description of the sacred animals seems to draw Hierapolis within a religious tradition encompassing much of the Mediterranean and Middle East, especially the Arabian steppe, that saw sanctuaries dedicated to a goddess (usually Artemis or Allât) in which bloodshed of any sort was forbidden.\(^ {442}\) An early first century AD orthostat from the temple of Allât at Palmyra provides an interesting parallel. The orthostat, taking the form of a monumental lion sheltering an antelope between its forelegs, bears

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\(^ {438}\) *Book of the laws of countries* Drijvers edition p.58.

\(^ {439}\) Drijvers 1970: 41-121; Ross 2001: 89-90.

\(^ {440}\) Lucian *The Syrian Goddess* 14, 45, 54; see also Diodorus Siculus *Library of History* 2.4. One need look no further than a cow on the streets of modern Delhi to see the chaos that can ensue around animal inviolability.

\(^ {441}\) Lucian *The Syrian Goddess* 41.

\(^ {442}\) Aelian *On Animals* 11.7, 11.9, 12.23; Strabo *Geography* 5.1.9, 14.1.29; Drijvers 1982; Lightfoot 2003: 476-9.
an inscription granting Allât’s blessing upon all who refrain from shedding blood within the temenos (fig.145). The sculpture and inscription together echo Lucian’s description of the concord that existed between the animals at Hierapolis, the lion stands protectively above a creature that outside of the sanctuary would constitute a regular meal. Drijvers emphasises the location of the temenos, outside of the Palmyrene city walls on the boundary between settled, Hellenised oasis and nomadic, Arabian steppe. He suggests the taboo on bloodletting, a sort of pseudo-asylia, is appropriate for such a nodal location. However, his suggestion that the entirety of the Hierapolis sanctuary bore a similar prohibition is contrary to the rest of Lucian’s account and disputed by Lightfoot. Despite the peace reigning between her sacred animals, there could still be blood sacrifice in the Holy City. Although there is obviously little archaeological evidence for the presence of harmonious fauna at Hierapolis, three of the animals reported as present by Lucian, the lion, eagle and bull, were associated directly with the divine couple and eagles are particularly visible in the few extant Roman period stele known from the site. A recumbent limestone lion was noted by Hogarth in the vicinity of the lake and while a limestone lion is no longer visible, the remains of a large basalt lion still dominates the sculpture garden in Membij park (fig.146).

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444 Lucian The Syrian Goddess 49, 58; Drijvers 1982: 67; Lightfoot 2003: 477-8. There is no guarantee that animal sacrifice at Hierapolis was not a later, Roman-period, innovation, but nor is there any indication that it was.
445 Hogarth 1907-08: 188-9, fig.2.
4.5.2 CEREMONIES

Lucian provides an equally detailed summary of the various religious personnel and the rituals they carried out at Hierapolis-Bambyke. Although Lucian’s behavioural study belongs to a period long after the collapse of the Seleukid state, some of the activities may have been a continuation, or an adaptation of earlier procedures. Distinguishing which features showed continuity from the pre-Roman past and which were Roman period adoptions is hazardous guesswork and it is for this reason that they are all included below – even if the account is not to be taken as a wholly accurate portrayal of Hellenistic cult practice. Lightfoot is rightly somewhat Rumsfeld-esque on the matter, stating “there is an unknowable amount that Lucian is not saying about the Hierapolitan festival in his own day, and an infinite amount that remains unknown about its prehistory.”

In the mid-second century AD, more than three hundred priests attended the daily sacrifice at Hierapolis-Bambyke. The religious hierarchy was well stratified and included “those who sacrifice”, libation bearers, fire bearers and altar attendants although all wore the same simple white gowns to the ankle and a pointed felt cap. Priestesses are not mentioned by Lucian but are known to have been present at other sanctuaries of Atargatis such as Delos, the Piraeus and at Philadelphia in the Fayum. A high-priest was appointed yearly and was distinguished by a purple gown and a gold tiara. Vestments matching Lucian’s description are worn by the priestly figure performing sacrifice on the late fourth century BC coinage produced in the name of the high-priest Abdhadad at Hierapolis-Bambyke (fig.97) and we can presume that

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446 Lightfoot 2003: 501.
447 Lucian The Syrian Goddess 31, 42.
448 Lightfoot 2003: 480.
449 Lucian The Syrian Goddess 42. Whether he was elected from among a certain class of priest or was politically appointed is unclear. Evidence for other high-priesthoods under the Seleukids appear to have been primarily political and administrative positions distributed directly by the king, see Chapter 2.3 above; see also Lightfoot 2003: 485.
they continued to be worn throughout the Seleukid period. The high-priest Alexandros is shown in almost identical attire on a mid-first century BC basalt relief found at the city (fig.147). Similar caps are worn by Bronze Age Syro-Hittite deities, a Syrian delegation shown on a relief at Achaemenid Persepolis and the rider god on the fourth century BC coinage of Hierapolis, the late Hellenistic depictions of the god Sandan at Tarsos, Narkissos, the second century AD high-priest of Hadaranes at Hosn Niha, the relief of a sacrificing priest from Hammam and importantly, a relief showing a priest from Seleukid Umm el-Amed (figs.148-50). Butcher suggests that the cap may have been part of the pre-Hellenistic formal dress of Syria and its continued use under the Seleukids and Romans represents a conscious, conservative, „Syrianising” of religious costumes despite political Hellenisation. Separate groups of non-priestly “sacred persons” completed the population of the sanctuary; sacred flutists and syrinx-players, maddened women and the infamous galloi, eunuchs dedicated to the goddess. The legal status of the various sacred persons is unclear. Whereas the galloi and maddened women would presumably be free persons attached to the sanctuary, the various musicians may have been hierodules – serfs belonging to the goddess.

450 Mildenberg 1999: nos.20-5.
451 Seyrig 1939b; Stucky 1976; Millar 1993: 245.
452 Butcher 2003: 331. See also Cassius Dio Roman History 80.11.2 for the continued “Assyria” dress of the indigenous priesthood.
453 Lucian The Syrian Goddess 43.
454 Lightfoot 2003: 486.
4.5.2.1 Daily rituals

The priests performed sacrifice twice-daily to both Zeus-Hadad and Hera-Atargatis.\(^{455}\) The rites were performed in silence before Hadad, but with much singing and music for Atargatis. The usual victims were bulls, goats or sheep. Lucian could not decide if pigs were considered unclean or sacred but either way they were not considered appropriate for sacrifice, nor of course were Atargatis’ sacred fish or doves. As in Hellenistic Babylonia, all offerings to the divine couple at Hierapolis were accompanied by fumigation rituals involving a great deal of Arabian incense so that “even when you depart: your garments long retain a whiff of it”.\(^{456}\) Large numbers of priests organised in a caste system, the twice-daily ritual and the prohibition of swine all find comparative aspects in biblical accounts of the temple at Jerusalem.\(^{457}\) Another daily practice at Hierapolis was a ritual swim across the sacred lake. Many individuals took part in the act in which they swam, wearing garlands, to the built stone altar at the pool”s centre in accordance with certain unspecified vows. The altar is described as wreathed (perhaps by the swimmers” garlands?) and containing burning spices, presumably lit on incense altars by the swimmers.\(^{458}\) How multiple individuals were to swim the lake without touching any of the tame fish is left unexplained.

A separate process was followed by those making a pilgrimage to Hierapolis-Bambyke. Before first setting out from their place of origin, the pilgrim shaved off their hair, including the eyebrows, and donned garlands. A sheep was sacrificed and the pilgrim retained the fleece as a journey-specific prayer rug. They were not permitted to sleep in a bed nor wash with warm water until the journey to Hierapolis was completed.\(^{459}\) On arrival

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\(^{455}\) Lucian *The Syrian Goddess* 44. Lucian here directly contradicts Drijvers” assertion (1982) that no blood was spilt within the temenos. Brown suggests that the twice-daily ritual involved a prototypical „call to prayer“, still practiced by Islamic muezzins (Rostovtzeff *et al.* 1939: 143-4).


\(^{457}\) *Exodus* 29.38-41; *Numbers* 4.48; II *Kings* 16.15; I *Chronicles* 23.3-5; *Nehemiah* 11.10-9.

\(^{458}\) Lucian *The Syrian Goddess* 46.

\(^{459}\) Lucian *The Syrian Goddess* 55.
each traveller was met by a local “teacher”, some sort of hereditary position in which certain Hierapolitan families maintained ritualised friendly relations with specific cities – a Syrian equivalent to the Greek *xenia*. The teacher played host to all pilgrims from their specified city and instructed the visitors in all religious procedures. It seems that young men kept part of their first beard, or a sacred side-lock (Lucian says both) when they shaved their head and dedicated it in the temple upon their arrival. The usual culmination of a pilgrimage saw the devotee bring a sacrificial victim to the altar in the temenos, perform the preliminary sacrificial rituals and pour a libation but not slay the animal. Rather, the victim is brought back to the pilgrim’s home where it is sacrificed and eaten in celebration. A curious alternative sacrificial ritual saw the victims let go free from the propylaia and “when they fall down they die”. A mock version was also conducted using children rather than animals, covering their eyes and leading them by hand rather than letting them loose. Lucian may be suggesting that the animal victims are thrown to their deaths from the height of the propylaia although this is not explicitly stated.

4.5.2.2 Water festivals

Twice a year a curious festival was held which saw the *semeion* brought down to the Mediterranean sea. Open squares at the base of the *semeion* on the coinage of Hierapolis in the reign of Alexander Severus (AD 222-235) are perhaps intended to represent sockets with which to receive poles for transportation. Once at the coast, the Hierapolitan priests collected sea water and carried it back with them to the Holy City in ceramic jars. Lucian states that the whole population of Syria, Arabia and “beyond the Euphrates” took part in this ritual, with each person bringing their jar of water back to Hierapolis. There the jars were inspected by a sacred cock which removed the sealing and the water was then poured out inside the naos of the temple where it drained into the small chasm above which the temple had been constructed.

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460 Lucian *The Syrian Goddess* 56.
461 Lucian *The Syrian Goddess* 60. The practice of dedicating shaved hair to the Great Goddess is attested much earlier; see for example the ninth century BC inscribed red-slip bowl from the Phoenician temple of Astarte at Kiton. The inscription dedicates the bowl and its contents, the hair of Moula of Tamassos, to Astarte, the goddess who listened to his prayers; see Markoe 2000: 120-1.
462 Lucian *The Syrian Goddess* 57-8.
463 Lightfoot 2003: 543.
As mentioned above, this chasm was said to have been the point through which the deluge subsided in the days of Deukalion and it seems that in Lucian’s time, it still drained away substantial amounts of water. By deduction, the chasm which predated the construction of the temple must have been situated at ground level. The chasm must have remained accessible for the water pouring ceremony even though the naos of the temple was constructed around it. Therefore, following Lucian’s enigmatic description of the central chamber of the temple being built over two different levels, we return to the hypothesis that the Hierapolis temple – like that at Didyma – was constructed in such a way that the approach took the devotee up the external eastern stairway to a raised eastern chamber from which a second set of stairs descended to the adyton which was built immediately above ground level.\(^{465}\) In this way, the chasm might still be accessed, and all water poured out inside the temple would drain into the chasm from the adyton without the risk of running out the door and down the stairs. Oden, following Lucian’s own explanation believes that the most natural explanation for the water-pouring rite was as “an apotropaic gesture to prevent the recurrence of the deluge.”\(^{466}\) However, surely in an environment as precariously arid as the north Syrian steppe, the sacrifice of something as essential and life giving as water might be seen as a way of ensuring the continued fertility and abundance for which the immediate environs of the temple were well known, even in modern times – *do ut des*.\(^{467}\)

The water ceremonies of Hierapolis-Bambyke were paralleled elsewhere in the Levant. In 135 BC Antiochos VII Sidetes suspended his siege of Jerusalem to provide the city’s inhabitants with sacrificial victims for *Sukkot*, a festival known more commonly in English as the Feast of the Tabernacles.\(^{468}\) Beyond his perceived obligations – to support Jewish cult as the ruler of Judaea – Sidetes may have been particularly keen to be seen to patronise *Sukkot* in particular on account of its obvious parallels with the water pouring ceremonies at Hierapolis, rituals devoted to a goddess at the very heart of Seleukid-indigenous relations. The annual *Sukkot* festival celebrated the end of the harvest season

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\(^{465}\) The second century AD temple of Allât at Palmyra shared the phenomenon of a raised pronaos from which one descended 70 cm down to the walking surface of the naos proper. In the case of Palmyra, the naos seems to have been part of the original first century BC sanctuary while the raised pronaos was a later addition; see Kaizer 2002: 102-4.

\(^{466}\) Lucian *The Syrian Goddess* 13; Oden 1977: 110 n.5.

\(^{467}\) Hogarth 1907-08: 186-7.

\(^{468}\) Josephus *Jewish Antiquities* 13.243; see Chapter 2.1.2.3 above. For *Sukkot* itself see *Leviticus* 23:42-3; *Nehemiah* 8.13-7.
and drew pilgrims from across Judaea. In AD 66, a Roman force advancing on the market-town of Lydda found the settlement empty, the population having gone *en masse* to Jerusalem to celebrate Sukkot. The festival was such an important part of the Jewish year that it dominated the iconography of the autonomous Jewish coins during the Bar Kokhba revolt (AD 132-136).

The highlight of Sukkot was the nisuch hamayim, the ritual pouring of water, which occurred daily except for the first day. During the nisuch hamayim, priests recited Isaiah 12.3 “with joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation” while the spectators were compelled to sing and dance. It was said that whoever did not see the joy of the nisuch hamayim would never see joy in their life. Water for the libation ceremony was drawn from the sacred Siloam pool south of Jerusalem’s city walls and brought in state through the Water Gate to the Temple where it was poured over the altar in order that God might provide appropriate rain for the agricultural cycle. The specific accoutrements of the water pouring ceremony, the water jug and palm branch, feature as a prominent type on the Bar Kokhba coinage, while other types represented various musical instruments used during the ceremony as described in the *Mishnah Sukkah*. As at Hierapolis-Bambyke, the ritualised sacrifice of life giving water at Jerusalem during Sukkot ensured the continued fertility and abundance of surrounding lands. The perceived rewards of the nisuch hamayim were made clear in the prophecies of Ezekiel which saw a river of life flowing from the Temple out into its hinterland.

Mentioned separately, though almost certainly related to the water-pouring festival at Hierapolis-Bambyke was a biannual ritual which saw a man known as a phallobatos, undoubtedly a priest, climb one of the monumental phalloi by the propylaia. The individual climbed to the top of the phallus and stayed there for a period of seven days. During this time the phallobatai were believed to converse with the gods and pray for the blessing of all of Syria. Pilgrims who left votives of gold, silver or bronze at the base of the pillar received additional blessings, the priest making vows on their behalf. Throughout the

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469 Josephus *Jewish War* 2.515.
470 Fine 2009.
471 *NIV* translation.
472 *Mishnah Sukkah* 5.1.
474 Ezekiel 47.1-12.
period, the *phallobatai* were not permitted to sleep but continuously struck a bronze instrument of some type that emitted a shrill noise.  

In a review of hagiographic research relating to stylitism, Frankfurter observed a “rudimentary asceticism” in the sleepless activities of the *phallobatai*. He posits that the *phalloi* were probably in reality simple pillars – only Lucian’s obsession regarding Dionysiac connections at Hierapolis brings the author to designate the objects as *phalloi*. For Frankfurter, Lucian is both ignorant and dismissive of the local knowledge which might have informed him otherwise. The phallus-pillar cult, practiced outside the propylaia, was perhaps older than the Hellenised cult within the temenos and had evolved out of the same complex of abstract religious ambiguities that ultimately gave form to the *semeion*. The similarities between the *phallobatai* and the stylistic ascetics of early Christian Syria do lend credence to the possibility that pillar-cults were a deeply ingrained part of a general religious environment in the area. In a less satisfactory analysis, Polański considers the Hieropolitan *phallobasia* phenomenon was not a longstanding traditional activity, but a thinly veiled attack against Christian stylitism. However, the fourth century AD authorship date for the *Syrian Goddess* necessitated by such a suggestion is rightly treated with caution by Lightfoot.  

A series of festivals which may also have been connected to the water pouring ceremony in some way involved a ritual called the “descents to the lake”. During this time, the cult statues of all the deities housed in the temple were brought down to the lake side. We are told that Hera took precedence over Zeus at this festival and stood between him and the pool – if Zeus was to catch sight of the sacred fish we are told, they would all perish. Lucian is more concerned about the welfare of the fish than the purpose behind the descents and no explanation is provided. However, a number of similar cult festivals were celebrated throughout the Mediterranean, predominantly involving goddesses associated with Atargatis, Derketo, Hera and Kybele. Aelian and Pliny provide a variant of Lucian’s

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476 Frankfurter 1990: 171.
478 The first of the stylistic aesthetics was St Simeon the Elder, born in Sisan near the Kilikian border in the last decade of the fourth century AD; he lived from AD 422-459 atop an ever heightening pillar 30 km north west of Beroia-Aleppo at the site now known as Qal’al Sim’an; see Theodoret *Life of St Simeon*; id. *Religious history* 26.
480 Lucian *The Syrian Goddess* 47.
example where the cult statue of Hera/Juno was ritually bathed in the Aborrhas river (the modern Khabour) – in the company of tame sacred fish – following her marriage (*hierōs gāmos*) with Zeus. At Askalon, the statues of Derketo and her partner Dagon were brought down to the beach and ritually bathed in the sea before their marriage, thus ensuring the continuance of the Spring rains. For Pausanias, the bath of the Argive Hera in the river Kanathos restored her to a virgin state. The rituals all appear concerned with the act of marriage or at least with a guarantee of fertility and productivity. It is entirely possible that at Hierapolis too, the festival involved the *hierōs gāmos*, or holy marriage, where the repetition of the marriage rites between two gods of fertility perpetuated their continued benefactions. Lightfoot urges caution regarding the acceptance of all such stories, seeing them as Hellenised literary *topoi* rather than indigenous traditions. However, as the descent to the lake/river theme runs in parallel with the water-pouring ceremonies and ultimately strived to achieve the same result – continued fertility and agricultural prosperity – there are good reasons to accept a kernel of truth behind the tales. Dirven has pointed out that the root of the Semitic name for Hierapolis-Bambyke, Membij or Manbog, was derived from the meaning “to bring forth” and was surely associated with the prominence of the chasm, the lake and the agricultural abundance of the region.

### 4.5.2.3 The fire-festival

A wholly distinct festival known as the “fire-festival” or “torch” was held each Spring and as indicated by its name, concerned fire rather than water. Lucian describes it as the greatest of the Hierapolis festivities but spends less time in total discussing it than the other activities, which may leave his assertion in doubt. Tall wooden pillar-altars were made from tree-trunks and erected within the temenos. These were adorned with all manner of silver and gold objects, clothes, live sheep, goats and even birds. Other offerings (or perhaps sacred objects or images) were paraded around the pillars and the whole set alight.

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482 Aelian *On Animals* 12.30; Pliny *Natural History* 31.37, 32.16.  
483 Albright 1922: 16. See also the story of Diodorus Siculus (*Library of History* 2.4.2-4) which saw the divine Derketo plunge herself into the sacred lake in an attempted suicide after copulating with her mortal devotee.  
484 Pausanias *Description of Greece* 2.38.2; Avagianou 2008: 162.  
487 Lucian *The Syrian Goddess* 49-51.
As with the water-pouring ceremony, the fire-festival drew pilgrims from across Syria and “the surrounding countries”, all of whom brought their own offerings and standards. On set days during the fire-festival, the non-priestly sacred groups of the sanctuary gathered outside the temple (but within the temenos?) for their own rites. Existing *galloi* danced wildly, accompanied by singing, *aulos* playing and drums, while flagellating and beating each other’s backs. These rites were believed to spontaneously compel “many who have come as spectators” to castrate themselves before the assembled crowd and join the ranks of the *galloi*, donning feminine attire as an outward expression of their new status. Lucian states that such self emasculation was done to console Kombabos or to show their favour to Hera-Atargatis. The whole feel of the fire-festival is totally removed from the rituals regarding the collection and pouring of water. The entire process is conducted outside of the temple and indeed Lucian states that those who “perform the rites” are not permitted inside the naos. Lightfoot cites a number of other festivals from around the Roman empire which parallel various aspects to the fire-festival although the evidence for all of them is as late or later than Lucian and just as vague. The Hierapolitan erection of the wooden pillars, covered in valuable goods and their destruction, may have metaphorical allusions to the ritual act of castration and thus the whole ritual appears more concerned with the re-enactment of the Kombabos or Attis myths than with the Syrian Goddess herself. However, if this was the case, why would pilgrims be drawn to the festival from across Syria and the neighbouring lands?

4.5.3 Parallels between Hierapolis and Jebel Khalid

A number of significant parallels link Lucian’s description of Hierapolis-Bambyke with the remains excavated at Jebel Khalid Area B. Both Hierapolis and Jebel Khalid were situated close to life-giving sources of water in an otherwise dry environment. The temple at Hierapolis was (in the second century AD) believed to have been built by Stratonike, the wife of Seleukos I – royal favour was therefore being shown to Hierapolis during the period.

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488 Lucian *The Syrian Goddess* 49.
489 Lucian *The Syrian Goddess* 50.
490 Lucian *The Syrian Goddess* 27, 51. The *galloi* are portrayed in all manner of derogatory ways in the literature of Imperial Rome, ranging from charlatans to catamites but one constant reference is to their frenzied manner and habitual flagellation; see for example Apuleius *Metamorphosis* 8.27.3-5, 8.28.2-3; Lucian *Nigrinus* 37; Plutarch *Moralia* 1127c; Propertius *Elegies* 2.22.15.
491 Lucian *The Syrian Goddess* 50.
of the foundation of Jebel Khalid. Both temples were home to a number of deities which at Hierapolis included Hera-Atargatis and Zeus-Ba”al Hadad, a bearded image of Apollo-Nabû, as well as numerous statues of priests and kings. At Hierapolis, a very small chasm was said to have drained the waters away after the Great Flood and was hence venerated and provided with an altar over which ritual libations of water were made at regular festivals, perhaps paralleling the main altar-drainage sump feature at Jebel Khalid. These festivals at Hierapolis were linked to the veneration of open bodies of water, the sacred lake and even the Mediterranean sea. The Jebel Khalid temple located within a settlement far from a lake or sea, was nevertheless situated directly above the gully that led to the Euphrates, with unhindered views of the great river. In the Spring fire-festival at Hierapolis, animals were sacrificed on temporary wooden pillar-altars that were burnt along with the victims, something which may account for the presence of so much burnt bone and ash, despite the lack of any permanent blood altar at Jebel Khalid.

However, the comparisons may only be taken so far. The settlement at Hierapolis was secondary to the temple and may not even have been walled during the Hellenistic period. Jebel Khalid on the other hand was a strategically placed, garrisoned fortress which also happened to contain a temple and sacred area. The emphasis at Jebel Khalid was on a show of imperial strength, rather than a show of beneficence to a local (if regionally important) cult centre. While the Hierapolis temple was built to conform to Ionic traditions, contained only a single adyton and was perhaps inspired by the Seleukid restoration of Didyma, the Jebel Khalid structure was based on a Mesopotamian design and where Greek features were used, they were in the Doric order. The chasm of Hierapolis was inside the naos, whereas the drainage sump of Jebel Khalid was outside, to the east of the temple entrance. Although there was a large limestone basin found within the Jebel Khalid temenos, it was certainly too small to have housed anything larger than a few goldfish. Its final location, above the ashy deposits and below the line of the phase three altars makes it impossible to ascertain its original purpose with certainty although as mentioned above, it was probably related to ritual ablutions. Likewise, there is as yet no evidence for in situ burning within the temenos to link the ash deposits with a fire-festival-like ceremony and there is always the possibility, however unlikely given the sanctity of the place, that the ash deposit may have been a secondary dump of domestic refuse.
While we cannot consider the Seleukid temple at Jebel Khalid to be a miniature version of Lucian’s Hierapolis-Bambyke, there are clearly a number of aspects that suggest a shared heritage between the two sites. Therefore, we might appropriately consider that the Jebel Khalid temple and temenos provide an insight into Hellenistic processes of acculturation – an early Seleukid attempt to accommodate some aspects of an indigenous cultic complex within the context of a Greco-Macedonian, colonial, settlement. Externally the appearance provided the audience with familiar, Hellenised forms, whilst functionally, many of the basic components of the Syrian cult were preserved. It is apparent that the Jebel Khalid sanctuary became such a fundamental component of the settlement’s life that it was the only public space to be restored to its original purpose following the abandonment of the site. All other public areas show evidence of domestic squatter occupation in phase three of the settlement’s life.

4.6 REFLECTIONS ON POPULAR CULT IN NORTH SYRIA

The assembled evidence from northern Syria can be used to establish a composite image of popular religion in the region during the Seleukid period. The statement of Hannestad and Potts quoted above, that the Seleukids imposed no uniformity upon the religious architecture in their empire, is entirely supported by the archaeological and documentary remains for northern Syria.\(^\text{494}\) Neither the layout, nor the architectural orders of temples and their sanctuaries were forced to conform to a royally ordained template. The cultic assemblages in northern Syria were greatly Hellenised as one would expect in the heart of the Seleukid Levant, and yet even there the underlying memory of the vernacular, Semitic, beliefs and practices was not wholly blanketed. In some instances it was barely veiled. The Charonion was a stubborn reminder of the tenacity of the Syrian Goddess, even within a centre of Hellenism such as Antioch. The Doric temple at Seleukeia, presumed to be the sepulchre of Seleukos I Nikator, was founded within the conceptual framework of royal apotheosis, a direct result of the interaction of Greek and non-Greek in the east. Given that Seleukos I repeatedly emphasised his personal relationship with Zeus-Ba’al-Bel on his coinage, it was fitting that he was posthumously incorporated into the cult of the supreme god.

\(^{494}\) Hannestad and Potts 1990: 122.
Evidence from Baitokaike further emphasises the continuity of topographic sanctity despite an evolving population and reinforces the royal favour shown to Zeus-Ba”al. The clearly Semitic Ba”al Šamîn was acknowledged by the king under the guise of Zeus and the sanctuary prospered. Jebel Khalid Area B fused Hellenic and Mesopotamian aspects to create a truly dynamic „Hellenistic” sanctuary. The two influences were integrally combined from the earliest phases of colonial occupation. Despite the apparent Greco-Macedonian cultural dominance in the settlement, a deliberate orientalising program was undertaken for its religious needs. The pantheon venerated at Jebel Khalid is unclear. There are certain parallels with Hierapolis, but there is no sense of an exact replication. One thing that can be assured is that the pedigree of the deities at Jebel Khalid were no less diluted than the environment in which they were worshipped. The holy city of Hierapolis-Bambyke fell within the Seleukid empire after Ipsos and within seven years had received significant royal funding for the construction of a new temple dedicated to the great Syrian gods Atargatis and Hadad. By the second century BC these deities had assumed a Hellenised form, but if anything, this fusion only heightened their acceptability among a Greek audience, while doing little to diminish their Semitic characteristics.

At each site discussed above, the same familiar divine figures have emerged as the focus of worship: the supreme sky-god in the form of Zeus-Ba”al, and the great mother Atargatis. One must ask how much of this is the lottery of survival, and how much it represents the actual state of affairs in Seleukid North Syria. The literary record makes it clear that Apollo, Artemis and Athena received honours at Antioch, Herakles may have been represented at Jebel Khalid, and a number of ambiguous secondary gods were honoured at Hierapolis. However, the dominant figures across the region continued to be the divine couple. It is little wonder that by the second century BC the Seleukidai began to transfer their allegiance to the divine couple away from Apollo, and it was the cults of Zeus-Ba”al and Atargatis with whom the royal cult was assimilated.