

11. An, Enlil, Enki, Ninhursaga hastened [there],
 12. the seed of humankind was [preserved],
 with a more straightforward translation (after A. Cavigneaux):
1. In those distant days, when heaven and earth [had not yet been separated]
 2. In those far-off nights . . .
 4. After the Flood had swept over,
 5. and the destruction of the land had been brought about;
 6. When humanity had been reduced to dust
 7. And all the land from north to south had been flattened
 8. None of the high gods had
 9. Food or an eating place (= temple)
 10. Their (the gods') dwellings had not been set up, nobody worked to provide their meals
 11. Anu, Enlil, Enki and Ninhursag
 12. Preserved the seed of humanity.

If we assume, with Annus, there was no antediluvian period, and the flood was the origin of the world and not its destruction, what is line 12 doing there? It seems to imply that there were already humans to be "preserved."

The book's concluding sentence, that "[w]hereas the Adapa myth created the exorcistic identity within national boundaries, the Christian message promoted a new universalistic narrative for salvation with the promise of a new identity" (p. 103) seems to echo the arguments of S. Parpola that Christianity as well as Kabbalah are continuations of Mesopotamian tradition, and before that of such older works of Assyriology as P. Jensen's *Moses, Jesus, Paulus: Drei Varianten des babylonischen Gottmenschen Gilgamesch* (1909). Oddly, although Jesus appears several times in this book, he does not appear in the index. But as Jerrold Cooper pointed out in this *Journal* ("Assyrian Prophecies, the Assyrian Tree, and the Mesopotamian Origins of Jewish Monotheism, Greek Philosophy, Christian Theology, Gnosticism, and Much More," *JAOS* 120 [2000]: 430–44), Assyriology is not a province of Christian theology, and there is a reason why Jensen's arguments are treated with such caution.

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Isriye-Seriana (Iṣriyā): Heiligtum, Siedlung und Militärstation in Zentralsyrien von der frühen Kaiserzeit bis in die mamlukische Epoche. By RÜDIGER GOGRÄFE. *Damaszener Forschungen*, vol. 17. Mainz: VERLAG PHILIPP VON ZABERN, 2017. Pp. xiv + 371, 49 pls., map in pocket. €92.50.

For many years, the civil war in Syria has rendered any kind of archaeological activity in the area impossible, while military campaigns contributed to unprecedented destruction of the country's cultural heritage. This damage affected both the best-known archaeological sites and dozens of small ones. Among the most dramatic consequences were those observed in Palmyra and Dura Europos. The current political situation in Syria also offers scant likelihood that researchers will be able to return to the abandoned sites, or begin excavations in new ones, in the near future. It is therefore all the more pleasing to note those publications containing documentation of the research conducted in the years preceding the outbreak of war in Syria. Their value lies in the fact that in many cases they are perhaps the only remaining trace of irrecoverably destroyed relics and archaeological sites. On the other hand, the descriptions, plans, and photographs they contain may in future provide essential data for the conservation or reconstruction of these sites, but also for recommencing research.

Rüdiger Gogräfe's book certainly fits into this category, documenting and describing the archaeological digs of his research in the 1990s in Isriye, a town in central Syria identified, on the basis of modest sources, with ancient Seriana. Although the ruins preserved in Isriye were mentioned in the accounts of travelers visiting this region of Syria as early as the seventeenth century, it was not until

the last decade of the twentieth century that full-scale archaeological investigations of the site were conducted. The author of this book was responsible for this work (cf. pp. 1–2, 18).

Sources show that Seriana's geographical location made it a settlement of strategic significance. It was situated on routes leading from Syria toward Palmyra, with access to underground water supplies and favorable climatic conditions making farming possible. The development of Seriana probably began during the reign of Caracalla, culminating much later. But the city's history is not limited to Roman times. The results of the digs prove that it retained its strategic significance at least until the fourteenth century CE (ch. II, "Antike Geografie," pp. 5–17).

The book contains the results of the author's research conducted in Isriye on the Seriana settlement area (ch. III, "Siedlung," pp. 18–40), the temple that at the time of the research was one of the best preserved ancient buildings in the town (ch. IV, "Tempel," pp. 41–89), and the adjoining territory (ch. V, "Grabung Tempelumfeld," pp. 90–113), as well as the remains of a building whose shape resembled a military camp (the author refers to it as "Kastell") (ch. VIII, "Kastell," pp. 263–71). The description of each of these sites is accompanied by a catalogue of the artefacts found there.

The lengthiest and most detailed description in the book is that of the temple (pp. 41–89, 214–62), because only it and the adjoining area have been the subject of systematic excavations (pp. 90–113). The temple was the main focus of the author's research conducted in Isriye (p. 18). The excavations made it possible to determine the chronology and reconstruct the transformations that the architectural block of the building underwent over time. The author identifies five phases in its development. Only a few fragments survived from the first building. Their decorative style leads him to conclude that it may have been built in conjunction with the visit of Germanicus to Syria in 18 CE (p. 81). The second and grandest building probably came about in the time of Caracalla (p. 81). The next phases, as well as the change in the function of the previous temple, came in the Early Byzantine period, the times of the Abbasids and the Mamluks (pp. 81–89). None of the evidence mentions which deity was worshiped in the temple.

The only possible clues in this respect are a metal figurine of Apollo found within its walls during excavations (pp. 122–34), and a stone opening found in the cellar of the temple podium (p. 214), above which was a crypt (p. 232) and a connected well (cf. pp. 91–96). According to the author, the figurine of Apollo as well as the presence of these elements in the architecture of temples of the Greek world, as well as the Middle East, famous for oracles, might suggest that Apollo was worshiped in Isriye (pp. 259–62).

The digs carried out in the immediate vicinity of the temple led to the unearthing of the foundations of twenty homesteads. However, the scant remains and discoveries found here make it impossible to date them precisely; we can only say that they come from somewhere between the third century CE and Arabic times. Even the coins found are of little use in solving the chronological problems regarding their origins (pp. 210–14). Other discoveries worth noting include elements of Roman military equipment found near some houses (pp. 203–4) and a section of an Arabic building inscription from the eighth century (pp. 205–9).

From the point of view of what we know about ancient Seriana, one of the most interesting chapters is that describing the inventorized remnants of its buildings. Owing to the large area it encompassed, the author was unable to investigate them thoroughly during the brief duration of his research in Isriye. None the less, the inventorization, description, and accompanying map of Isriye make it clear that this site deserves further systematic study. Such an investigation could throw new light not only on the history of Seriana itself, but also on a region of Syria in which previous archaeological research has been scarce. Apart from the aforementioned temple, the surviving features of the ancient constructions of Seriana are the foundations of the surrounding walls, water installations and numerous wells, quarries, cemeteries, Christian sacred buildings, and the remnants of Arabic buildings.

Possible evidence of the strategic importance of ancient Seriana are the walls and remnants of two buildings whose shape and architecture seem to indicate their military function. The dimensions of the smaller are 50 × 50 m (the author calls this "Fundpunkt (FP) 9" [pp. 27–28]), and the other is the aforementioned Kastell, measuring 185 × 145 m. Although both have the dimensions and certain characteristics of Roman military architecture, without precise archaeological research (which could

provide data permitting more accurate dating), at present it is impossible to say whether they are in fact buildings erected by the Romans as constituent parts of the Eastern *limes*, were only constructed in Arabic times, or were Roman buildings rebuilt by Arabs, as certain characteristics of their architecture would suggest. As a result, there is no indisputable proof that one of these buildings served as the camp of *equites scutari Illyriciani* serving in Seriana (Not. Dig., or. 33.16).

Although research on the remnants of Seriana's city walls were a secondary concern in the author's work, the results are extremely interesting. As a result of these studies, it was possible to determine the course of these walls, the construction techniques used in raising them, and the approximate time of their origin. The walls were reinforced by forty-nine structures resembling towers, few of which survive today. However, the remnants of the structures allow us to reconstruct their shape and dimensions. The walls themselves were built of local stone on foundations of an average width of 1.80 m; this was even narrower in certain sections (cf. pp. 22–23). Although the foundations of many parts of the walls have survived, the author was unable to identify any of the gates. Based on the data contained in the text (the author himself never gives this information), we can estimate that these walls must have been at least several kilometers long. It is notable that the construction of the walls of Seriana and the technology used in the building do not betray either characteristics of Roman fortifications or the participation of the army in the construction process.

According to the author, the walls were probably built in the third century CE by the residents of Seriana themselves, as a defense against increasing incursions from nomads (pp. 25–26). If this interpretation is deemed correct, it can be treated as an important argument in the long-lasting debate on the threat presented by nomads to Rome's Middle Eastern provinces, supporting the position of scholars who regard it to have been a major concern. It can also be regarded as valuable evidence of the unstable situation in this part of Syria. It is difficult to evaluate the strength of this argument, however, because the date the author gives for the building of the walls is purely hypothetical. This is based on circumstances known from the third century, which made it necessary to build fortifications around other cities in Syria (pp. 26–27).

A reading of Gogräfe's book leaves no doubt that it represents an important contribution to our understanding of the history of this region of Syria, which to date has not attracted much interest from researchers, especially archaeologists. The data and results from the author's digs in Isriye cast a great deal of light on its past not only under the rule of Rome, but also that of Byzantium and the Arabs. They also convincingly demonstrate Seriana's major significance, which is far greater than the number and nature of sources on the subject might suggest.

While appreciating the impressive results of Gogräfe's research, however, it is also important to note that the book leaves readers wanting much more. It raises questions that the author is unable to answer, such as the sources of Seriana's economic potential that enabled the building of the walls, or the size of its population, which was instrumental in the amount of manpower used in their construction, and also the amount of time needed for this work to be completed. This is by no means a criticism of the author. Bearing in mind the short time of the research and its limited scope, one can hardly complain that many of his claims, especially regarding chronological concerns, are hypothetical, or that many of his conclusions are ambiguous. Any potential verification of these assertions would require a much larger amount of data than he was able to gather during his brief mission in Isriye. This will only be possible, however, if Gogräfe's research is continued. When such an opportunity arises, there is no doubt that further studies and excavations in Isriye should be a priority.

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