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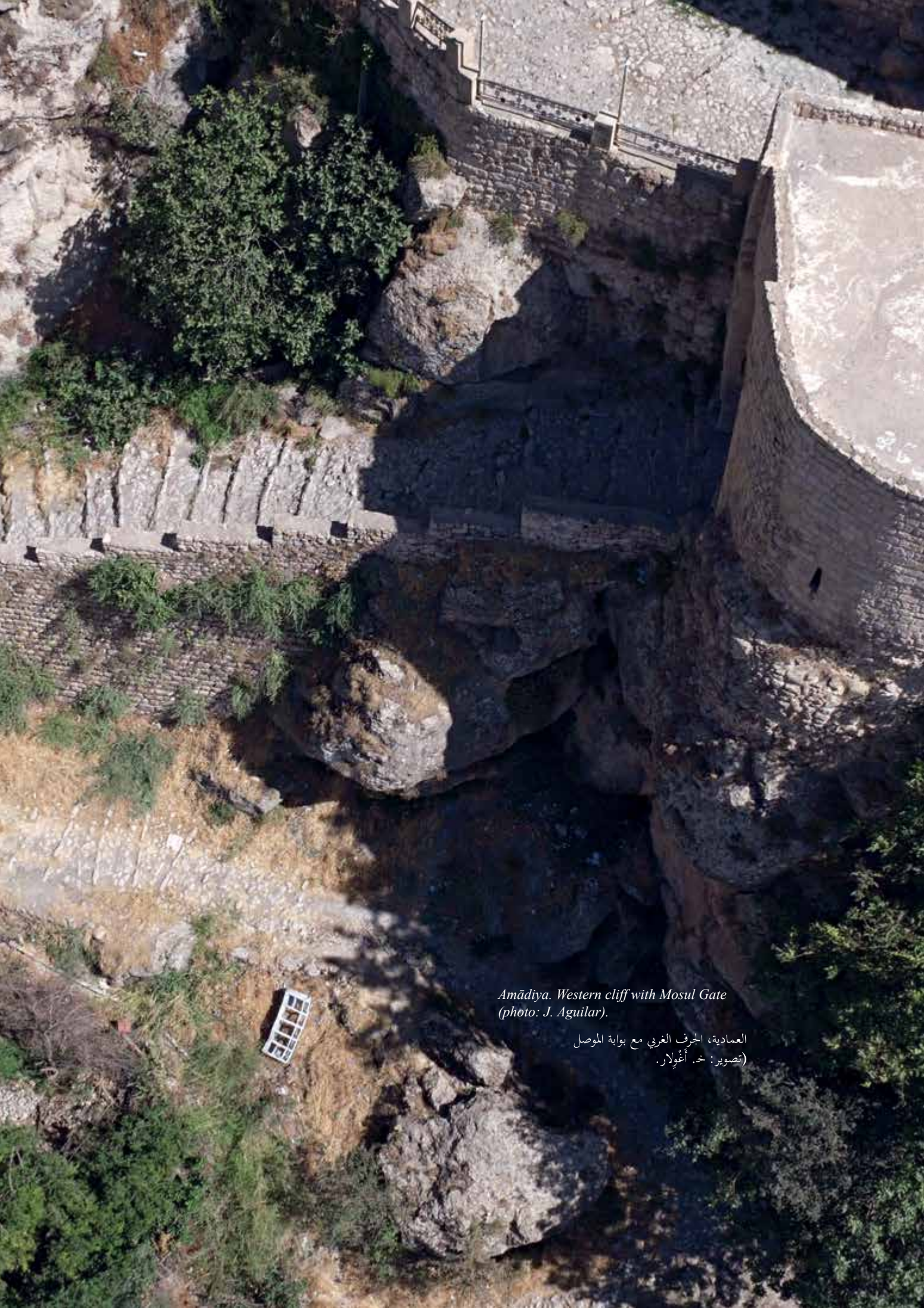
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*Amādiya. Western cliff with Mosul Gate
(photo: J. Aguilar).*

العمادية، الجرف الغربي مع بوابة الموصل
(تصوير: خ. أَعُولَار).

Parthian Rock-Reliefs from Amādiya in Iraqi-Kurdistan

Peter A. Miglus – Michael Brown – Juan Aguilar

Abstract / Kurzfassung / الخلاصة

The ancient fortress of Amādiya is situated atop a mesa at the foot of the Zagros Mountains in Iraqi-Kurdistan. In front of the Mosul Gate there are two rock-reliefs depicting larger than life figures in traditional Parthian dress. This article presents detailed illustrations of these sculptures, using digital photogrammetry to enhance eroded features.

Die antike Festung Amādiya liegt auf einem Tafelberg im Zagros-Vorgebirge im irakischen Kurdistan. Vor dem Mossul-Tor befinden sich dort zwei Felsreliefs mit Darstellungen überlebensgroßer Personen in parthischer Tracht. Der vorliegende Beitrag bietet fotogrammetrische Abbildungen, die erodierte Bilderdetails besser erkennen lassen.

تقع القلعة القديمة في العمادية في أعلى هضبة مستوية السطح منحجرة الجوانب عند أسفل جبال زاغروس (زاغروس) في كردستان العراق. ويوجد أمام بوابة الموصل منحوتتان صخريتان تظهران تمثيلين أكبر من الحجم الطبيعي لشخصين بثياب بارثية تقليدية. يقدم هذا المقال رسوم مفصلة لهاتين المنحوتتين باستخدام تصوير مساحي رقمي بغاية إبراز الملامح المتآكلة.

Parthian · Rock-Reliefs · Amādiya · Kurdistan · Iraq
Parthisch · Felsreliefs · Amādiya · Kurdistan · Irak

For Professor Rainer M. Boehmer on the occasion of his 88th birthday

Introduction

The modern town of Amādiya¹ and its ancient ruins are located on a high plateau

c. 33 hectares in extent overlooking the valley of the Gāra river, a right tributary of the Upper Zāb.² This naturally isolated settlement, further fortified in antiquity, was until recent times only accessible via two portals facing east and west (Fig. 1).³ In front of the west facing Mosul (or Bahdīnān) Gate is a staircase, built into the cliff face, which is flanked by three niches carved into the scarp (Fig. 2). Two of these contain rock-reliefs that each depict a larger

than life male figure. Based upon their attire, and the stylistic attributes of these sculptures, it is proposed that both represent local Parthian rulers.

The place name ‘Amādiya most plausibly derives from al-‘Imādiyya, after ‘Imād ad-Dīn Zangī who, according to Ibn al-Athīr, founded the citadel in AD 1142/43 on the site of an earlier fortification called Āshīb.⁴ The city is also associated in lore with the Magi, being the reputed home of the biblical

Fieldwork at Amādiya in 2017 was conducted as part of the Rock-Reliefs of Iraqi-Kurdistan Project; a collaboration between Heidelberg University and the Iraqi-Kurdistan Directorate of Antiquities, funded by the Gerda Henkel Stiftung. The authors wish to express their gratitude to the staff of the General Directorate of Antiquities and Heritage in Erbil, especially Director Abubaker Othman Zengin, and representatives Rafiq Rasool Sofi and Jamal Jamil As’ad who accompanied the team in April and September 2017. We owe a particular debt of thanks to Kamal Rasheed Raheem (Director, Sulaimaniyah Antiquities Service) for his support. We would also like to extend our appreciation to Rebin

Mohammed Rashid, Feridoon Fajek and Omar Mohammed Ali (Sulaimaniyah Antiquities Service), together with Ulrike Bürger (Heidelberg University) for their valuable assistance.

- 1 Arabic: العمادية; Kurdish: ئامیدی. Amēdi; WGS84 UTM 38N 365311m E, 4106050m N.
- 2 Sissakian – Fouad 2011; Pfälzner – Sconzo 2015, 98.
- 3 Binder (1887, 196) mentions three gates at Amādiya, but the third portal is otherwise unknown.
- 4 Streck – Minorsky 2012. Amādiya is not associated with the Neo-Assyrian town Amedi, which was the capital city of Bīt Zamāni, an Aramean state located in modern Diyarbakir (Unger 1932; Radner 2006–2008, 49–51).

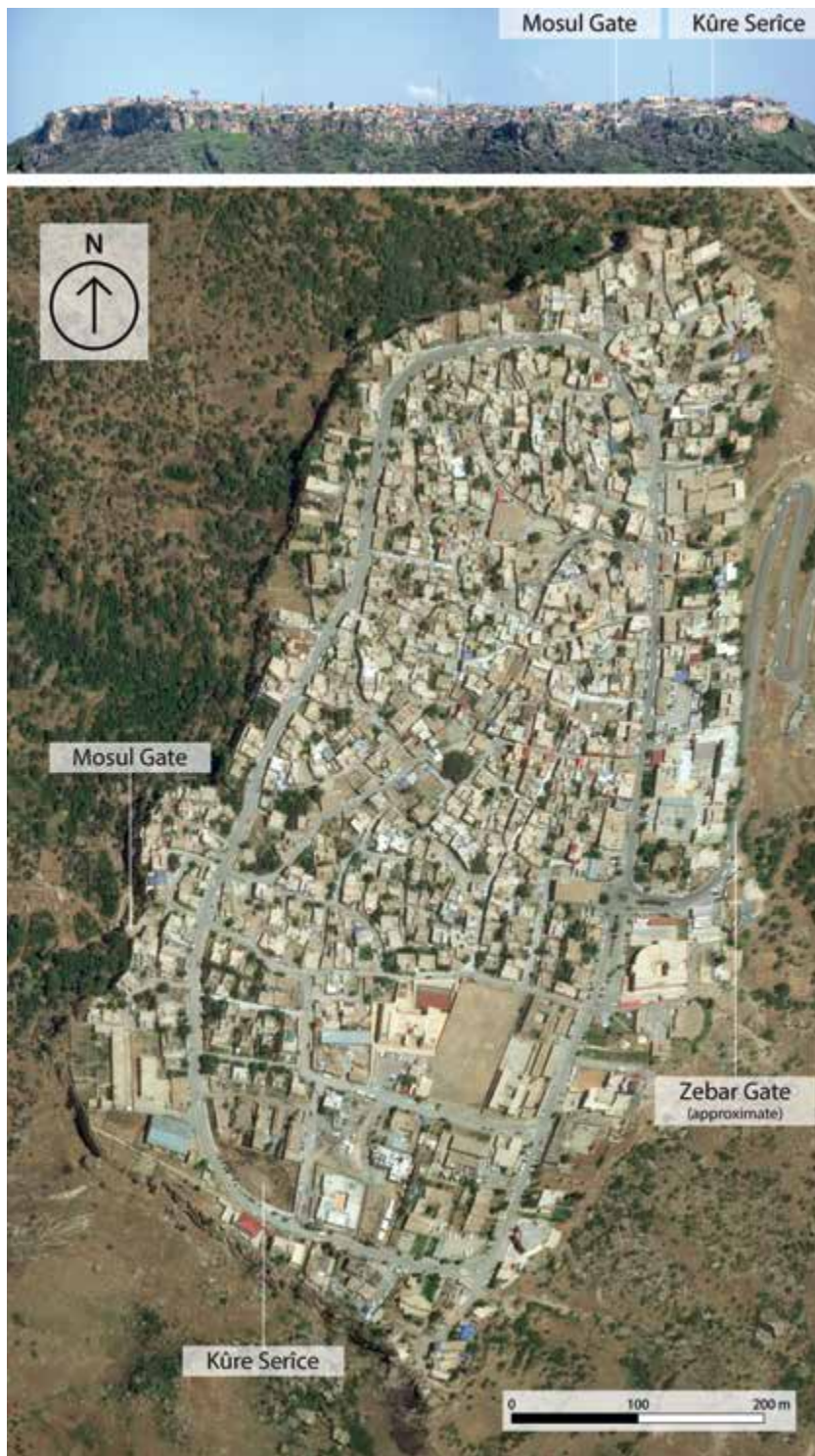


Fig. 1 Amādiya plateau. Panorama (west side) and satellite photo (photo: J. Aguilar / satellite image: Bing / ©2018 Microsoft Corporation / ©2018 DigitalGlobe / ©CNES 2018 Distribution Airbus DS).

الشكل ١: منظر شامل (الطرف الغربي) وصورة قمر صناعي لمضبة العمادية (تصوير: خ. أغولار / صورة القمر الصناعي: بِنغ / حقوق النشر محفوظة لـ Microsoft Corporation / ٢٠١٨ / حقوق النشر محفوظة لـ DigitalGlobe / ٢٠١٨ / حقوق النشر محفوظة لـ CNES ٢٠١٨ (Distribution Airbus DS).

‘Three Wise Men’.⁵ Standing remains at Amādiya date back to the Islamic Middle Ages. A detailed analysis of 13th century carvings adorning the Mosul Gate and the later gate of the governor’s palace (so-called *Drachenportal*) inside the town are provided by Joachim Gierlichs.⁶ Scientific excavations have thus far been restricted to a medrese founded in the 12th century AD on the lower north-west slope

of the mesa. In addition to Atabeg-period Islamic architecture, this excavation recovered a small quantity of Middle Assyrian (Late Bronze Age) ceramics,

5 For Zoroastrianism during the Roman/Parthian period see Boyce – Grenet 1991.

6 Gierlichs 1995, 199–206; Gierlichs 1996, 225–227; Gierlichs 1998. For the ‘*Drachenportal*’ in its original palatial location see Binder 1887, 198.

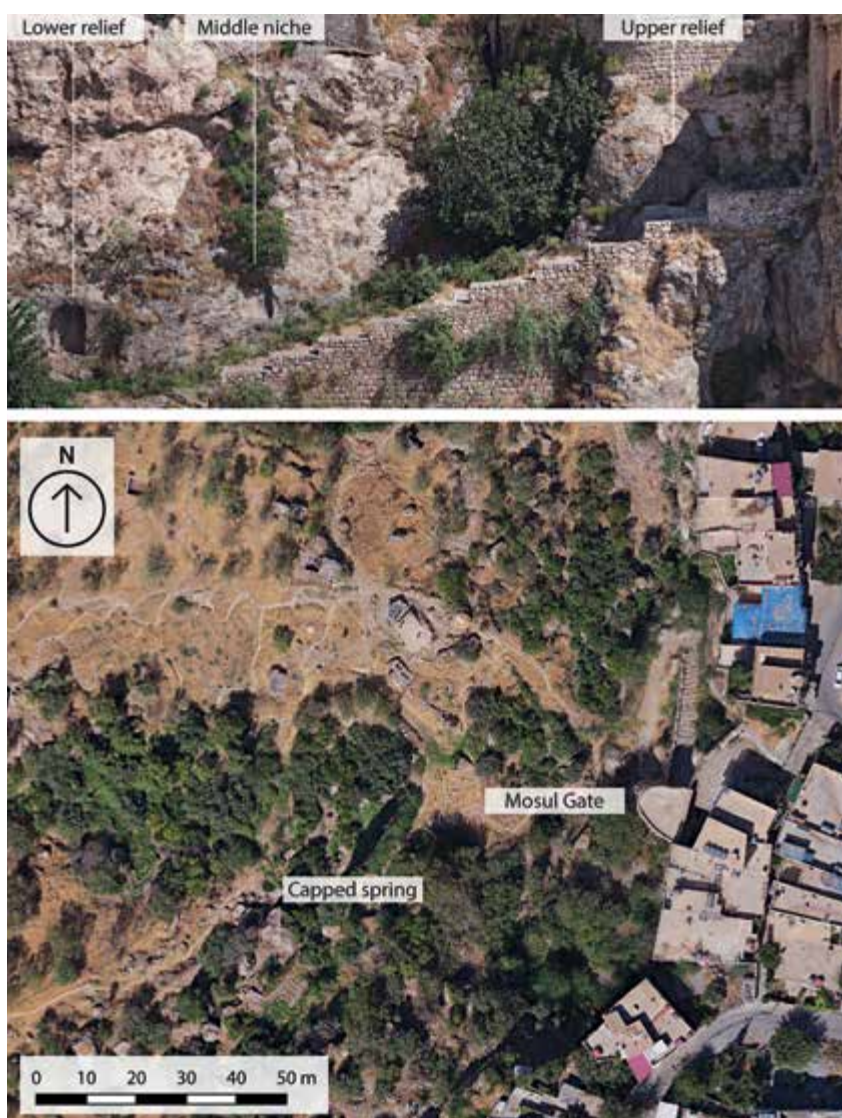


Fig. 2 Panorama and aerial orthophoto showing the location of the rock-reliefs and associated features adjacent to the Mosul Gate steps (digital orthophoto: J. Aguilar / GIS processing: M. Brown).

الشكل ٢: منظر شامل وصورة جوية عمودية مصحح تحريفها يظهران مواضع المنحوتات الصخرية والمعالم المرتبطة المجاورة لدرجات بوابة الموصل (الصورة العمودية المصححة التحريف: خ. أغولار / المعالجة بنظم المعلومات الجغرافية: م. براون).

providing the earliest evidence for occupation.⁷ In 2016/17 the authors carried out a photogrammetric survey of rock-reliefs in Iraqi-Kurdistan. The aim of this project was to comprehensively document these important monuments, which are under threat from natural erosion and vandalism. Amongst those sites visited was Amādiya in northern Kurdistan.

History of investigation

While the Amādiya rock-reliefs have not previously been subject to detailed analysis, they are recorded to a lesser extent in several publications. The earliest antiquarian account is by William Ainsworth who visited Amādiya in 1840 and reports on the town and one sculpture:

“There are two gates to the town, one to the N.W., the other to the E. The town stands on the eastern

portion of the terrace, the remainder being occupied by graves and a square open castle, with circular towers at the angles, built by the late Beg of Rowandiz, when he sacked this place ... The only antiquities which we found at ‘Amādiyah were the foundations of a temple hewn out of the solid rock on the surface of the terrace [see ‘Kûre Serîce’ below]. It is 20 yards wide and 30 long, and about 8 to 10 feet deep. At the E. end is a cut in the rock for an altar, and to the S. a sepulchral cave, divided into three compartments. In the interior there are three rows of pillars, shaped like obelisks, only truncated at the summits: this has all the appearance of being an ancient Persian fire-temple, and as such was known to the inhabitants. There is also a bas-relief of a human figure, rather larger than the natural size, cut

7 Nováček – Šůvová 2011, 191.

in the face of the rock below the N.W. gate. The figure is much mutilated, but what remains of it resembles in its details the statue in the cave of Shapur, which is generally supposed to represent the conqueror of Valerian".⁸

In a subsequent publication, Ainsworth gives additional information to support his proposed Sasanian date:

*"Although much mutilated, I was not long in recognising the large globe ornament, the bag-wig, and streamers, which characterize the sculptures of Shapur (Sapor I.) at Persepolis, and Shapur in Farsistan, and which left no doubt in my mind that this statue was meant to represent the same Asiatic conqueror".*⁹

The next report of the Amādiya rock-reliefs is by Carl Ritter a few years later:

*"Ehe man in das Stadthor eintritt, sieht man links eine colossale in Fels gehauene Figur, eine Basrelief-tafel, die sehr zerstört ist, bei der man aber an der Kugel, dem Bau der Haarlocken, den flatternden Gewändern u.s.w. die Sculpturen aus Shahpurs I. Zeit in Persepolis und Shahpur wieder erkennt".*¹⁰

Ritter, who never visited Amādiya in person, also mentions a second sculpture purportedly located at the entrance to the so-called fire-temple inside the town, but this is obviously an erroneous reference to Ainsworth's earlier description:

*"Die einzige Antiquität, welche Ainsworth außer jener Reliefsculptur noch in Amadia auffand, befand sich in den Grundmauern eines größtentheils aus solidem Fels gehauenen Gebäus [sic!], das die Eingebornen für einen einstigen Ateschgha oder Feuertempel der Sassaniden, deren einstiger Besitz dieser Feste auch aus den dortigen Fels-sculpturen vor dem Thore hervorgeht, halten. Es steht auf einem der ausgezeichnetesten Vorsprünge der Oberfläche der Terrasse, ist 20 Schritt breit, 30 lang, 8 bis 10 Fuß tief, und zeigt an der Ostseite eine Sepulcralstätte in 3 Abteilungen. Im Innern stehen drei Reihen Pfeiler, die wie Obeliskten gestaltet, aber an den Spitzen abgestumpft sind. In der Felswand bemerkt man, an der N.W.-Seite der Pforte, eine als Basrelief colossal ausgehauene menschliche Figur, die den schon oben genannten Sculpturen aus der Zeit Shahpurs entsprechen soll".*¹¹

When Austen Henry Layard visited Amādiya in 1846 he found the town in an impoverished condition and in the midst of an epidemic. His short mention of the reliefs is notable for being the first to suggest an Arsacid attribution:

"The only remains that I could discover about the town were a defaced bas-relief on the rock

*near the northern gate, of which sufficient alone was distinguishable to enable me to assign to it an approximate date – the time of the Arsacid kings; and some excavations in the rock within the walls, which appear to have been used at an early period as a Christian church".*¹²

The most detailed characterisation to date of the Amādiya reliefs and other ancient remains on the plateau is provided by Walter Bachmann, who visited the town in the summer of 1911 during his travels from Ashur where he was a member of the German excavation team. In his book about the churches and mosques in Armenia and Kurdistan, he includes a plan showing the location of the reliefs along with photographs and a short description:

*"Von hier aus gebrauchte die Karawane zwei Tage bis zu dem inmitten hoher Bergketten gelegenen Kurdenstädtchen 'Amādīa. Am Nachmittag des 26. Juli kamen wir in der auf steilem, isoliertem Felsplateau gelegenen, nur an zwei Stellen zugänglichen Bergfeste an. Den letzten Teil des Aufstiegs vor dem mit arabischem Figurenfries geschmückten, halbzerfallenen Stadttor bilden aus Felsblöcken roh zusammengefügte Stufen. In die Felswand, an der diese Stufen anliegen, sind drei Nischen eingearbeitet, von denen zwei die rohen, stark verwitterten Flachreliefs einer lebensgroßen Gestalt zeigen. Die beiden Figuren, deren Köpfe abgeschlagen sind, tragen, soweit sich erkennen läßt, die aus parthischen Reliefs bekannte Hosentracht, würden also in diesem Falle ein recht beträchtliches Alter haben".*¹³

Albert Olmstead also refers to the sculptures as Arsacid but does not provide an accompanying description.¹⁴ Neilson Debevoise again proposed a Late Parthian or Sasanian date.¹⁵ Modern treatments of the Amādiya rock-reliefs have similarly been restricted to brief mentions; Rainer Boehmer highlights comparisons with reliefs at Gali Zerdak in support of a 2nd century AD date,¹⁶ while Dietrich Huff proposes a Hellenistic attribution.¹⁷ A Parthian to early Sasanian

8 Ainsworth 1841, 29–30.

9 Ainsworth 1842, 196.

10 Ritter 1844, 591–592; a similar account is provided by Sandreczki 1857, 278.

11 Ritter 1844, 593–594. His report was based upon Ainsworth's 1841–42 publications as well as personal correspondence (Ritter 1844, 583).

12 Layard 1849, 161.

13 Bachmann 1913, 1–3 Taf. 1.

14 Olmsted 1918, 219 note 28.

15 Debevoise 1942, 104.

16 Boehmer 1981, 157; see also Mathiesen 1992, 183–184; Colledge 1977, 91.

17 Huff 1984, 240.

date (2nd century BC to 3rd century AD) is suggested by Dlshad Zamua.¹⁸

The purpose of this study is to provide detailed illustrations and descriptions of the Amādiya rock-reliefs. Both sculptures are in a poor state of preservation due to heavy erosion and damage. Digital photogrammetry has accordingly been used to enhance features that are not easily discernible to the naked eye. The drawn reconstructions provide an overview of composition and stylistic characteristics, but are by necessity tentative in some details. An attempt has also been made in the following discussion to situate the reliefs within their wider geographical and historical context.

Description of the Amādiya rock-reliefs

The Amādiya rock-reliefs are carved into the west face of the mesa, at either end of the top flight of steps outside the Mosul Gate (Figs. 2–3). In between the two sculptures is an empty middle niche.

Upper relief (no. I)

At 2.15 metres in height, the subject is depicted larger than life-size (Figs. 4–6, 7 a). This effect is enhanced by the imposing physique and frontal stance of the figure, who faces those entering the Mosul Gate. The sculpture is framed by a sub-rectangular niche with an arched roof measuring c. 2.35 (H) × 1.37 (W) × 0.30 (D) metres at its fullest extent. Outside the frame on the upper right-hand side is a small carved nodule which could have functioned as a hook.

The figure in the upper Amādiya relief is depicted contrapposto; the free leg being bent at the knee and rendered in front of the engaged leg that is higher at the hip and protrudes slightly to the right. His right arm is bent upwards at a 90°-angle. In the right hand he holds the top of a staff (or spear?) which touches his elbow and continues down to ground level. The rendering of this feature is at first sight somewhat confusing, in that the pole and figure both stand on a ledge that is above the bottom left hand corner of the exterior frame. This rather clumsy arrangement on the part of the artist was likely necessitated by a fissure in the rock below and to the right of the relief.

The left arm of the figure is akimbo. His left hand seemingly rests on the hilt of a sword, below which can be seen the cross-guard and blade that comes to a point at the edge of the frame. A scabbard appears to hang aside the left leg. On the right thigh is the



Fig. 3 Plan showing the Mosul Gate, steps, and location of rock-reliefs (Bachmann 1913, Abb. 1).

الشكل ٣: مخطط يظهر بوابة الموصل والدرجات ومواقع المنحوتات الصخرية (الشكل 1. Abb. 1. Bachmann 1913).

contour of a dagger hilt. Due to the eroded condition of the sculpture interpretation of this paraphernalia is not certain. Arrangement of both the scabbard and dagger recalls statues at Hatra, but the drawn sword if correctly interpreted is without clear parallel.¹⁹

Below the neck is a protrusion in the rock-face that could represent a torc. Several lines are visible around the waist, showing a belt in the style of a traditional Parthian trouser suit, which is again suggested by the baggy trouser legs. Shoes meet the tapered

¹⁸ Zamua 2008, 118.

¹⁹ A comparable depiction of a deity in Parthian dress with a sword in his left hand was proposed by Frank Brown (in Rostovtzeff *et al.* 1939, 158–163 fig. 44 pls. 19–20) based upon fragments of a wall painting from the ‘Temple of Adonis’ at Dura-Europos which dates to the 2nd century AD; cf. Downey 2016, 204 for critique of this reconstruction.



Fig. 4 Amādiya. Upper rock-relief no. I, ortho-photo (photogrammetry: J. Aguilar).

الشكل ٤: العمادية، النحت الصخري العلوي رقم I. صورة عمودية مصحح تحريفها (التصوير المساحي: خ. أغولار).



Fig. 5 Amādiya. Upper rock-relief no. I (photogrammetry: J. Aguilar / drawing: M. Brown).



الشكل ٥: العمادية، النحت الصخري العلوي رقم I (التصوير المساحي: خ. أغولار / رسم: م. براون).



Fig. 6 Amādiya. Upper rock-relief no. I, detail of the figure facing left, rotated 3D model (photogrammetry: J. Aguilar).

الشكل ٦: العمادية، النحت الصخري العلوي رقم I، تفصيل للشخص الملتفت إلى اليسار، نموذج متناوب ثلاثي الأبعاد (التصوير المساحي: خ. أغولار).

trousers above the ankle. The feet are carved into the ledge below the figure and face forward. Draped cloth representing a cloak or long-sleeved coat is visible from the midleg down to ground level where it comes to a point on both sides.

The face is heavily eroded and the right-hand side is missing, presumably removed in a deliberate act of disfigurement. Right of the head, diadem strips hang down to the mid upper-arm. Faint traces of what appear to be a beard, the nose, right eye and cheek bone can vaguely be imagined. Portions of sculpture either side of the head represent bunched hair, the near-Sasanian style of which suggests a later date within the Parthian period. If the identification of these features is correct, their position relative to that section of sculpture above the face and beneath the frame implies that the figure either wore a tall hat or high coiffure. This distinction is significant as the combination of diadem and tall hat is exclusively seen in depictions of Arsacid kings (as opposed to vassals) on Parthian coinage.²⁰ It should also be noted that a

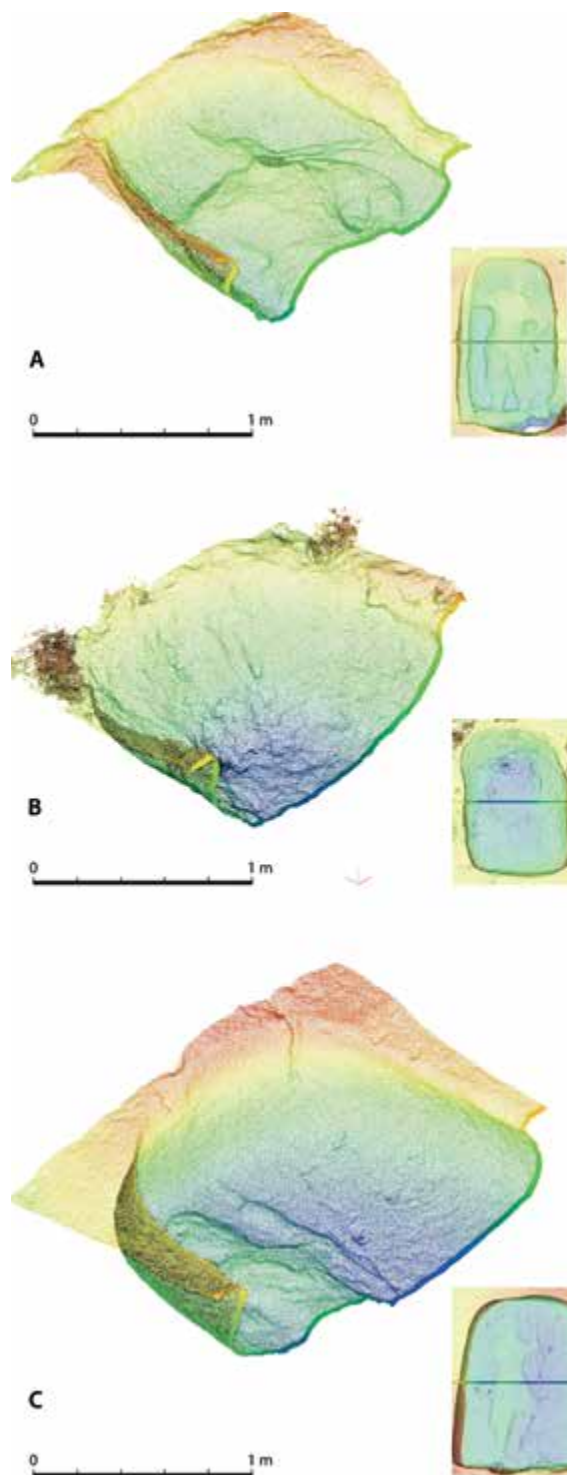


Fig. 7 a–c Cross sections. a. Upper relief no. I. – b. Middle niche no. II. – c. Lower relief no. III (3D postprocessing: J. Aguilar).

الشكل ٧ a–c: مقاطع عرضية. a. النحت العلوي رقم I. – b. التجويف الأوسط رقم II. – c. النحت السفلي رقم III (المعالجة اللاحقة الثلاثية الأبعاد: خ. أغولار).

tall hat is not associated with rulers of Adiabene who are only shown wearing the satrapial style of tiara.²¹

²⁰ Keller 2010, 624.

²¹ Marciak – Wójcikowski 2016.



Fig. 8 'Orodes' relief from Tang-i Sarvak, block II (photogrammetry: J. Aguilar).

الشكل ٨: نحت بارز للملك «أورود» من تنگ سروک، الكتلة II (التصوير المساحي: خ. أغولار).

Particular comparison can be made between the upper Amādiya relief and the 'Orodes' relief from Tang-i Sarvak, block II (Fig. 8) which is usually dated to Late Parthian II (c. AD 200–225).²² Clear similarities are apparent in attire and general morphology. A significant difference is the relatively shallow carving of the Tang-i Sarvak sculpture. Mention should also be made of lesser known rock-relief complexes in the vicinity of Amādiya at Gali Zerdak and Finik, both of which have been dated to the Late Parthian period (c. AD 150–225). Boehmer has highlighted the common stance of the figure in Gali Zerdak relief no. 2 and the upper relief at Amādiya:

„Rundbilder parthischer Fürsten, die in ähnlicher Weise die Hand an ihre Waffe legen, sind hinreichend bekannt; hier wäre als räumlich nicht allzuweit entfernte Parallele eines Felsreliefs das besterhaltene aus Amādiya zu nennen, das dort am Aufgang zum an der Westseite gelegenen Mosul-Tor angebracht ist; es gibt ebenfalls

*einen Krieger in ungefähr der gleichen Haltung wieder“.*²³

Relief no. 7 at Gali Zerdak also shows a man with his right arm raised, left hand on a sword, and dagger at the right hip.²⁴ Similarities between recessed niche housings at Gali Zerdak and Amādiya with their arched roofs and concave backs also invites comparison. A common local inspiration in this regard may be the Assyrian reliefs at nearby Bavian (Khannis).²⁵ Mathiesen proposes commonalities between the upper Amādiya relief and sculpture from Finik, which he also dates to the Late Parthian period.²⁶ The better preserved of these panels is believed to show two Parthian princes.²⁷ While similarities can be seen in terms of posture, the style of dress, which is depicted in more detail at Finik, varies significantly.

Middle niche (no. II)

The empty middle niche is nearer to the lower relief, but with dimensions of c. 2.15 (H) × 1.41 (W) × 0.35 (D) metres at its fullest extent is closer in size and shape to the upper relief (Fig. 9 a). With the exception of the bottom ledge, the depth and exterior orientation of the central niche are also more irregular, and the interior does not appear to have been carved smooth (Fig. 9 b). It is particularly ill-defined at the top and appreciably deeper two thirds of the way up (Fig. 7 b). No traces of sculpture have been found. It is proposed that the central niche represents either a rock-relief that was never completed, or a sculpture that was intentionally and thoroughly destroyed.

Lower relief (no. III)

The lower relief greets those ascending the top flight of stairs leading to the Mosul Gate (Figs. 10–12 and 7 c). Its heavily eroded subject is depicted in profile, with both legs facing right, and the forward left(?) leg bent at the knee. In this pose the figure is 2.25 metres high. The sculpture is rendered within an arched sub-rectangular niche measuring c. 2.35 (H) × 1.89 (W) × 0.56 (D) metres at its fullest extent.

22 Van den Berge – Schippmann 1985; Mathiesen 1992, 135–136; cf. Vardanian 1997.

23 Boehmer 1981, 157.

24 Boehmer 1981, 163–164. J. Aguilar and P. A. Miglus visited Gali Zerdak on 20th April 2018 and took new pictures of these heavily damaged reliefs.

25 Bachmann 1927.

26 Mathiesen 1992, 68.

27 Nogaret 1984.

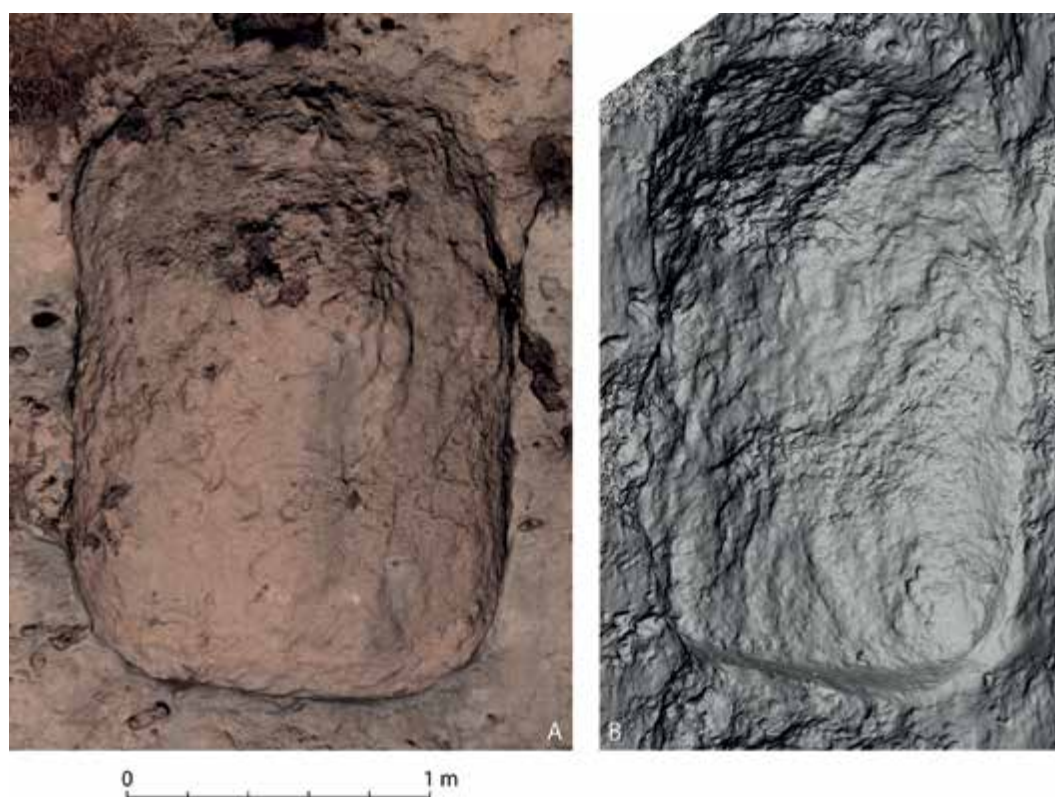


Fig. 9 a–b Amādiya. Middle niche no. II. a. Orthophoto. – b. Radiance scaling of interior facing right, rotated 3D model (photogrammetry: J. Aguilar).

الشكل 9a-b: العمادية، التجويف الأوسط رقم II. a. صورة عمودية مصحح تحريفها. b. تدريج إشعاعي للداخل باتجاه اليمين، نموذج متناوب ثلاثي الأبعاد (التصوير المساحي: خ. أغولار).

In the foreground, the right arm is shown coming across the body. The left arm is raised at a 90°-angle to face height. In his left hand the figure holds a spear. The upper and middle sections of the shaft are visible, but it is otherwise obscured by the left forearm and left(?) leg. At the top is what appears to be the ball of a spear-point rendered in shallow relief, in the manner of Persian and Median soldiers at Persepolis.

A diadem is tied around the head with the two ends hanging down below the shoulders. The form of diadem that appears to be shown in the lower Amādiya relief, with a loop at the back of the head and without an accompanying tiara, is first seen on Arsacid coins of the late 1st century BC–early 1st century AD.²⁸ It should be noted, however, that due to poor preservation of the sculpture this interpretation is not certain. Some kings are also depicted on different coin issues both with and without a tiara.²⁹ The rounded shape and shallow depth of the head as shown above the diadem suggests the figure is not wearing a hat. Only a very faint outline of the face remains.

Around the waist, it is possible to discern the top and bottom of a tied fabric belt. Immediately right of the waist is an indistinct feature, suspended from and

above the belt, which could be a scabbard slide.³⁰ On the left-hand side is either the other end of a scabbard continuing behind the figure, or alternatively a tapered end of the belt. The drape of a garment can be seen hanging down behind the figure, the line of which continues above both knees.

As regards the internal arrangement of the lower Amādiya relief, its subject is positioned off-centre to the left of the frame. In the top right quarter of the panel in front of the figure are traces of what appear to be shallow indentations in the rock. These could potentially represent the heavily eroded and/or intentionally damaged remains of an inscription. If this was the case, then it would have served to balance the composition, and is therefore likely to have been contemporary.

By far the closest source of comparison for the lower Amādiya relief in terms of style, composition and geography is the rock-relief from Batas-Herir

28 Sellwood 1971, type 58 onwards.

29 For images of Adiabenean kings on coinage, which all feature a combination of satrapial style tiara and diadem, see Marciak – Wójcikowski 2016.

30 For comparison with military figures from Hatra see Winkelmann 2013, 246–247 fig. 77.



Fig. 10 Amādiya. Lower rock-relief no. III, orthophoto (photogrammetry: J. Aguilar).

الشكل ١٠: العمادية، النحت الصخري السفلي رقم III، صورة عمودية مصحح تحريفها (التصوير المساحي: خ. أغولار).



Fig. 11 Amādiya. Lower rock-relief no. III (photogrammetry: J. Aguilar / drawing: M. Brown).



الشكل ١١: العمادية، النحت الصخري السفلي رقم III (التصوير المساحي: خ. أغولار / الرسم: م. براون).



Fig. 12 Amādiya. Lower rock-relief no. III, detail of the figure facing left, rotated 3D model (photogrammetry: J. Aguilar).

الشكل ١٢: العمادية، النحت الصخري السفلي رقم III. تفصيل للشخص الملتفت إلى اليسار، نموذج متناوب ثلاثي الأبعاد (التصوير المساحي: خ. أغولار).

(Fig. 13).³¹ This depicts a male figure in profile, who wears a looped diadem (but with satrapial style tiara) and holds a spear or staff. As far as the authors are aware, this latter element is unique to the lower Amādiya and Batas-Herir reliefs. In addition to the tiara, a significant difference between the lower Amādiya and Batas-Herir sculptures is the position of the arms.

Debevoise proposed that the Batas relief dates to the end of the second or beginning of the 1st century BC.³² Boehmer and von Gall suggest that the Batas sculpture depicts the Adiabenean king Izates II (r. AD 30–55).³³ Most recently, the subject of the Batas relief has been equated with King Abdissar, who ruled the Kingdom of Adiabene during the first half of the 2nd century BC prior to the Parthian takeover.³⁴ Based upon their clear similarities in composition and geographical proximity, it seems reasonable to infer a derivative relationship between the lower relief at Amādiya and Batas-Herir. The poor preservation of both sculptures, combined with the general lack of comparanda, unfortunately does not allow for a reliable determination of precedence between the two.



Fig. 13 Batas-Herir rock-relief (photogrammetry: J. Aguilar / drawing after Grabowski 2011, fig. 3).

الشكل ١٣: نحت باطاس-حرير الصخري (التصوير المساحي: خ. أغولار / الرسم حسب الشكل 3. Grabowski 2011, Fig. 3).

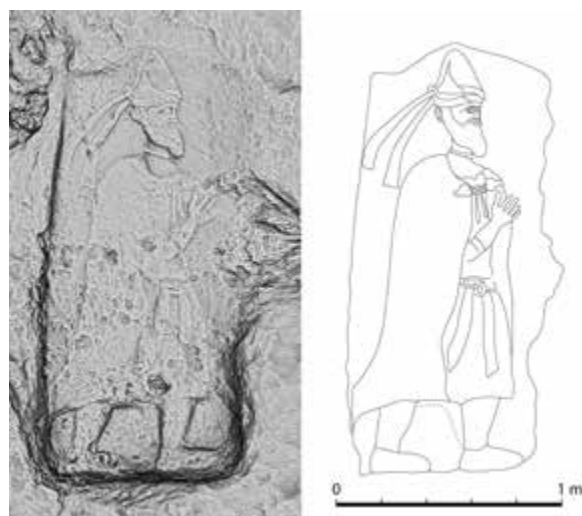


Fig. 14 Rabana rock-relief (photogrammetry: J. Aguilar / drawing: M. Brown / U. Bürger).

الشكل ١٤: النحت الصخري في ربه (التصوير المساحي: خ. أغولار / رسم: م. براون / أ. بـُـرْـجـر).

The lower Amādiya relief should also be compared with the twin rock-reliefs from Rabana-Merquly near Sulaymaniyah in Iraqi-Kurdistan (Fig. 14). These have been dated on the basis of stylistic traits and numismatic parallels, supported by contextual archaeological evidence, to between c. AD 50–150.³⁵

31 The Batas-Herir relief is in poor condition, being heavily eroded and pitted with bullet marks. Details of the carving which are no longer extant can be seen on photographs taken by Boehmer – von Gall 1973. These images have been examined in detail by Grabowski 2011, whose tentative reconstruction of the Batas-Herir sculpture provides the basis for the drawing in Fig. 13.

32 Debevoise 1942, 88–89.

33 Boehmer – von Gall 1973, 75.

34 Grabowski 2011; Marciak – Wójcikowski 2016.

35 Brown *et al.* 2018; cf. Amedie – Zamua 2011.

An important difference in the Rabana-Merquly reliefs is their use of near profile, as opposed to true profile employed in the lower relief at Amādiya and Batas-Herir. The Rabana-Merquly reliefs also depict a combination of tall hat and diadem indicating an Arsacid attribution.

The figure in the lower Amādiya panel is rendered in profile and low-relief, with realistic bodily dimensions. This is in contrast to the upper Amādiya relief, where the artist conversely employs frontalism, greater plasticity and exaggerated stature. A tendency towards the use of frontality in official contexts during the later Parthian period is indicated by Elymean rock-reliefs.³⁶ While some Late Parthian II sculpture again makes use of profile, such elements are blended with frontality to create a perspective-like effect.³⁷ As these characteristics do not apply to the lower Amādiya relief, this implies that it is earlier than the upper relief. Numerous exceptions to this trend, however, within what is a small corpus of sculpture spread across a vast area, means that frontalism cannot in isolation provide a clear guide to relative chronology.³⁸ Significant in this regard is the more lifelike depiction of the lower Amādiya figure when compared to the upper relief, which potentially corresponds to a wider shift in arts of the Parthian Empire away from realism to more stylistic representation.³⁹

The Amādiya rock-reliefs within their settlement context

In its current form the Mosul Gate represents a late medieval construction, which constituted part of an Ottoman era citadel that was headquarters to the Emirate of Bahdīnān (Fig. 15).⁴⁰ It seems certain, however, that this was a rebuild of a pre-existing fortress, or more likely a series of such structures. The present staircase leading up past the reliefs is cobbled. Based on the corresponding inclination of the Parthian rock-reliefs in relation to the staircase, it can be inferred that the underlying steps cut directly into the bedrock, which are still exposed in several places, are contemporary with or predate carving of the sculptures. Two small steps are also cut into the scarp immediately left of the upper relief. On the interior side of the gate, a secondary flight of rock-cut steps continues into an adjoining building. Masonry directly above bedrock adjacent to and between the upper relief and the gate is also distinctly larger than the medieval walls, implying an earlier construction (Fig. 16). While these older architectural components cannot be dated with certainty, their interpretation as part of a pre-Islamic fortress does receive circumstan-



Fig. 15 Mosul Gate (photogrammetry: J. Aguilar).

الشكل ١٥: بوابة الموصل (التصوير المساحي: خ. أغولار).

tial support from textual sources which record earlier occupation. No information is available regarding the foundation date of the eastern Zabar Gate, which based on a surviving photograph appears to have been constructed in a similar manner.⁴¹

A key consideration in the design of any fortification is secure access to water. At the south-western end of the Amādiya plateau c. 250 metres from the rock-reliefs is an ancient rock-cut cistern known as Kûre Serîce (lit. water reservoir) (Figs. 17–18). The main rectangular basin was originally punctuated by three parallel rows of five stone pillars (fifteen total of

36 Hauser 2014, 153.

37 Mathiesen 1992, 36–37.

38 For the significance of frontality in art of the Parthian Empire see Dirven 2016, 71–73 fns. 27. 74–75; Hauser 2014, 147–151.

39 The timing of this transition can be inferred through the depiction of kings on Arsacid coinage that represent a parallel example of official art (Sinisi 2014, 14–15).

40 Gierlichs 1995; Ammann 2005, 186–187; MacKenzie 2012.

41 For image see Ammann 2005, 183 Abb. 6 (reprinted from Warkworth 1898). The Zabar Gate was demolished in the 1930s when a paved road was constructed on the eastern side of Amādiya to provide vehicular access (Ismael 2015, 173).



Fig. 16 Masonry between the upper relief and Mosul Gate (photo: P. A. Miglus).

الشكل ١٦: بنية جدار بين النحت الصخري العلوي وبوابة الموصل (تصوير: ب. أ. مغلّس).



Fig. 17 Kûre Serice with water in the cistern following recent rain. Facing south-east with Mr. Omar Mohammed Ali and tomb in foreground (photo: P. A. Miglus).

الشكل ١٧: كوري سريج، الصهرج وفيه مياه أمطار هطلت حديثاً. صورة باتجاه الجنوب الشرقي يظهر فيها السيد عمر محمد علي بجانب قبر في المقدمة (تصوير: ب. أ. مغلّس).

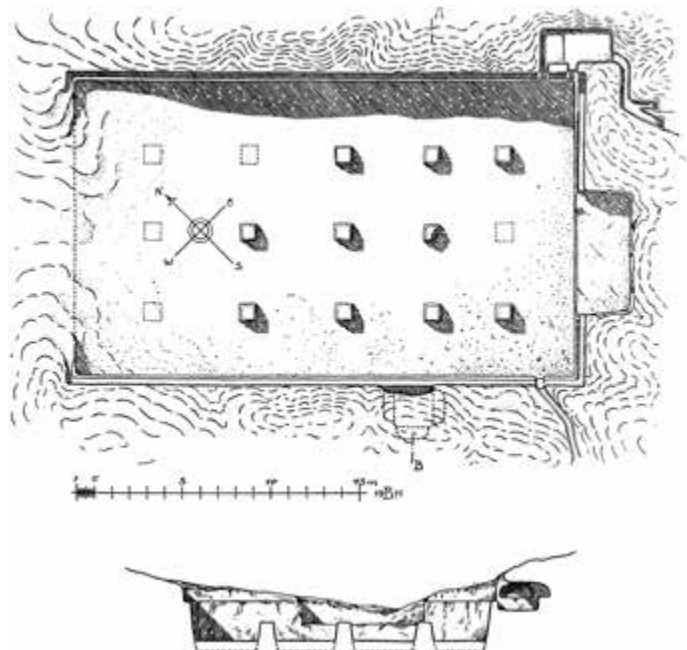


Fig. 18 Kûre Serice cistern. Plan (above) and section (below) (Bachmann 1913, Abb. 3–4).

الشكل ١٨: مخطط (فوق) ومقطع (تحت) لصهرج كوري سريج (الشكلان 3-4 Abb. 1913, Bachmann).

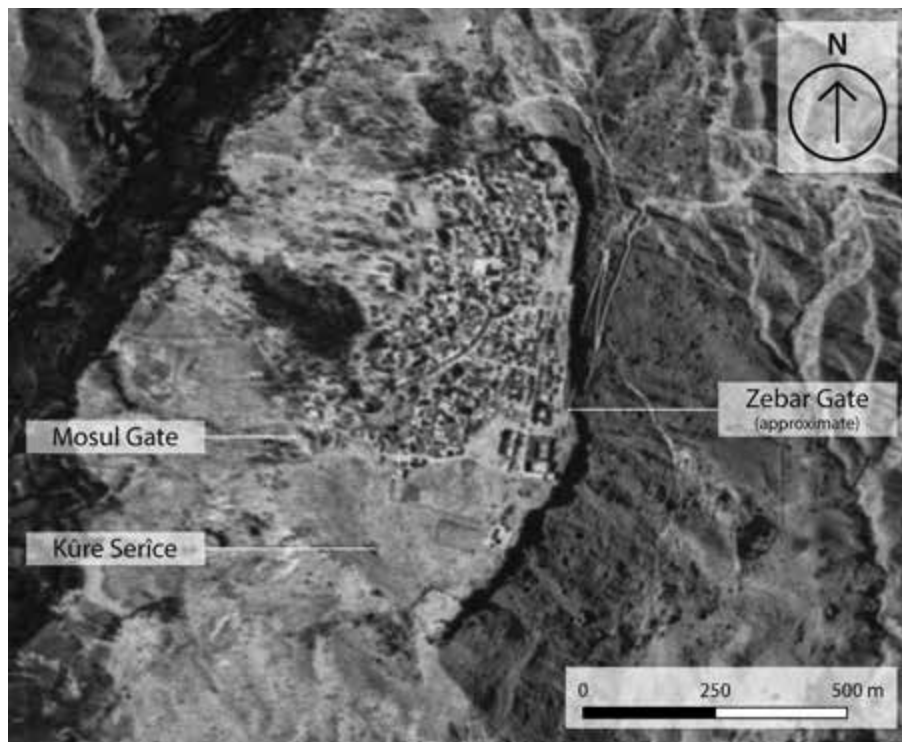


Fig. 19 Amādiya plateau.
Corona satellite photo (1969)
(Corona image courtesy of U.S.
Geological Survey).

الشكل ١٩: العمادية، صورة من نظام
الأقمار الصناعية كورونا (١٩٦٩) لفضية
العمادية (نشرت صورة كورونا بموافقة من
المسح الجيولوجي الأمريكي).

which seven now remain) that presumably supported a superstructure. A rock-cut staircase leads down into the basin on the south-east corner. With a capacity of approximately 1155 m³ [28 (L) × 16.5 (W) × 2.5 (D) metres], this facility would have allowed Amādiya's residents to harvest rainwater, thereby enhancing their ability to withstand a siege. Its position downslope from the higher eastern side of the plateau would also have facilitated capture of rainwater runoff. The reservoir would presumably have been as close as possible to its associated settlement.⁴² Boehmer dates a burial chamber carved into the south side of the cistern to the Early Byzantine period (5th–6th centuries AD) based on parallels with tombs at Maltai.⁴³ This demonstrates the greater antiquity of the reservoir, which although of uncertain provenance, definitely predates the 12th century AD Bahdīnān castle. Ainsworth incorrectly interpreted Kûre Serîce as a Sasanian fire-temple, but shortly afterwards Badger who visited Amādiya 1843 and 1850 recognised it as a cistern, and published a short description with schematic drawing.⁴⁴ Later, Bachmann proposed the same function and provided more details (see 'History of investigation' above).⁴⁵ Kûre Serîce is surrounded by an Islamic cemetery, and prior to the 1970s for this reason the modern town did not extend over the south-west quarter of the plateau (Fig. 19).⁴⁶ Based on the location of the rock-reliefs, associated architecture, and possibly also the cistern, this is the most plausible area for a Parthian era settlement.

Amādiya and the Kingdom of Adiabene

Stylistic analysis and dating of the Amādiya rock-reliefs, combined with their probable association to a fortified settlement, makes it possible to examine them within a wider geopolitical context. Adiabene was an important vassal kingdom of the Parthian Empire, which by the 1st century AD had expanded from its core territory around Arbela (modern Erbil) to encompass what is now northern Iraqi-Kurdistan including Amādiya.⁴⁷ As part of the Arsacid dominion, during the early 1st millennium AD Adiabene increasingly came into conflict with Rome, whose

42 Due to its elevated limestone geology no wells exist on the Amādiya plateau. Directly below the Mosul Gate at the base of the escarpment is a capped natural spring (Fig. 2). While the current housing is likely to be medieval or later, proximity of this water source to the settlement may provide a partial explanation for the construction of the staircase at this precise location. An account of collecting water in leather bags from outside the city is given by Jean-Baptiste Tavernier, a 17th century French traveller: Tavernier 1682, 179; see Galletti 2001, 118.

43 Boehmer 1976, 417.

44 Badger 1852, vol. I, 204. Badger does not mention the rock-reliefs at the Mosul Gate.

45 Ainsworth 1842, 200; Bachmann 1913, 2.

46 For the urban morphology of Amādiya see Ismael 2015, 172–173.

47 Marciak 2017, 257–418.

reach now extended to the kingdom's western frontier along the Tigris River.

The upper Amādiya relief can plausibly be dated to the Late Parthian period (c. AD 150–225). Amādiya lies on the most direct route between the disputed city of Nisibis (modern Nusaybin) and the Parthian Kingdom of Media Atropatene on the opposite side of the Zagros. This path runs along the foothills of the Gordyenean Mountains above the Jazira and Navkur plains, through Amādiya, before going east via the Keli-Shin pass towards Lake Urmia. The intermediate Gāra valley is only c. 9 kilometres wide at Amādiya, allowing its occupants to observe and control approaching traffic from the safety of their fortified plateau. This function is reflected in the orientation of the Mosul (west) and Zebur (east) gates, which facilitate interception and retreat in either direction. Layard also noted the strategic location of Amādiya: “The castle is considered of great importance as a key to Kurdistan, and is defended by 300 Albanians and a small party of artillerymen with three guns”.⁴⁸

For the Late Parthian period (c. AD 150–225) two Roman military campaigns against Media Atropatene, and indirectly Adiabene, potentially involved a fortress at Amādiya. The first took place in AD 166 and is attested by the cognomen *Medicus* on coins of Lucius Verus and Marcus Aurelius.⁴⁹ This presumably involved Roman forces crossing the Tigris east of Nisibis.⁵⁰ The second attack was led by Marcus Aurelius Antoninus (or Caracalla) in AD 216 and again focused on northern Mesopotamia.⁵¹ According to Dio Cassius, Caracalla “sacked many fortresses”, plausibly including Amādiya, in addition to capturing the Adiabenean capital Arbela.⁵² For Roman troops coming from north Mesopotamia towards the Keli-Shin pass, the Gāra valley would have offered significant time savings over the alternative of proceeding south towards Arbela and then north along the Upper Zāb river, after which both routes converge near the modern city of Soran. Against this are the risks inherent in campaigning through mountainous terrain versus the open Navkur plain.

Due to its relatively insecure dating, the geopolitical context of the lower relief at Amādiya is less well defined. As noted above, the closest source for comparison is its counterpart from Batas-Herir. If the lower Amādiya relief is later than the Batas-Herir sculpture, but no earlier than the late 1st century BC as the style of diadem suggests, then it can plausibly be associated with the expansion of Adiabenean hegemony north of the Upper Zāb river.⁵³ Alternatively, if the lower Amādiya relief is contemporary with or older than Batas-Herir, it could depict a vassal of the Gordyenean Kingdom that previously controlled this area.

Conclusions

In summary, the upper relief at Amādiya can be assigned on stylistic grounds to the Late Parthian period, with a date during the later 2nd century–early 3rd century AD being most likely. For the lower Amādiya relief the relative paucity of sources for comparison, which is essentially limited to Batas-Herir, means that it is only possible to offer a more general interpretation. Based on numismatic parallels, the type of headgear tentatively suggests a late 1st century BC date onwards, despite the sculpture's otherwise archaic appearance.

When considering the relationship between the two reliefs and the empty middle niche, it should be noted that only the bottom figure faces the central panel, which is also nearer to the lower than the upper relief. While it is conceivable that this once contained another corresponding sculpture that was destroyed in antiquity, the balance of evidence arguably does not favour their collective interpretation as a single composition. An alternative possibility is that the empty middle niche represents the beginnings of a relief sculpture commissioned for a third ruler but never completed. If this is the case, then its closer similarity in form and dimensions to the upper relief, which is most likely later, suggests that the middle niche was probably carved last.

The practice of erecting rock-reliefs in proximity to existing monuments is known from several other sites with Parthian era activity, including Bisutun, Sar-i Pol-i Zohab and Bavian, as a means to legitimacy through visual association. The subjects of both Amādiya reliefs were likely local rulers of a fortified Parthian settlement on the plateau. A further circumstantial link can be made between erection of the Amādiya rock-reliefs, and expansion-consolidation of the Kingdom of Adiabene.

48 Layard 1849, 161.

49 Marciak 2017, 380–381.

50 Birley 2000, 164.

51 Marciak 2017, 396–398.

52 Dio Cassius 79.1.1; Cary 1927.

53 Marciak 2017, 417.

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Inhaltsverzeichnis

IN MEMORIAM ‘ALĪ ABŪ ‘ASSĀF Alexander Ahrens – Karin Bartl – Claudia Bührig – Ricardo Eichmann – Margarete van Ess	10
---	----

IN MEMORIAM MUḤAMMAD ‘ALĪ AL-SALĀMĪ Norbert Nebes	12
--	----

Mesopotamien und regional übergreifende Themen

EVA A. BRAUN-HOLZINGER, Gudea Statue M. Eine echte Inschrift auf einer gefälschten Statue	16
--	----

PETER PFÄLZNER – HASAN A. QASIM with contributions by IVANA PULJIZ, PAOLA SCONZO and BETINA FAIST, Urban Developments in Northeastern Mesopotamia from the Ninevite V to the Neo-Assyrian Periods. Excavations at Bassetki in 2017	42
--	----

IVANA PULJIZ – HASAN A. QASIM, Exploring the Middle Assyrian Countryside in the Middle Tigris Region. The 2017 Season of Excavations at Muqable III	88
--	----

PETER A. MIGLUS – MICHAEL BROWN – JUAN AGUILAR, Parthian Rock-Reliefs from Amādiya in Iraqi-Kurdistan	110
--	-----

ANMAR ABDULILLAH FADHIL – ENRIQUE JIMÉNEZ, Literarische Bruchstücke aus Uruk. Teil 2: Zwei Tafeln für die Berechnung des <i>adannu</i>	130
---	-----

OLOF PEDERSÉN, The Ishtar Gate Area in Babylon. From Old Documents to New Interpretations in a Digital Model	160
---	-----

CAROLIN JAUSS, Cooking Techniques and the Role of Cooks in an Early Urban Society. Vessel Analysis, Experiment, Archaeological Context and Text	180
--	-----

SAJJAD ALIBAIGI – JOHN MACGINNIS, Bit Ištar and Niššaya/Irnisa: In Search of the Location of Assyrian Zagros Toponyms of the 8 th Century BC	198
--	-----

STUART CAMPBELL – STEFAN R. HAUSER – ROBERT KILLICK – JANE MOON – MARY SHEPPERSON – VĚRA DOLEŽÁLKOVÁ, Charax Spasinou: New Investigations at the Capital of Mesene	212
--	-----

Levante

SIGNE KRAG – RUBINA RAJA, Unveiling Female Hairstyles: Markers of Age, Social Roles, and Status in the Funerary Sculpture from Palmyra	242
---	-----

TAREK AHMAD, The Roman Sacred Landscape. The Case of the Sanctuaries at Qaṣr Nāwūs (ʿĪn ʿkrīn) in Lebanon	278
CAROLINE HUGUENOT, Étude d’une Tombe Monumentale de Resafa	302
MATTHIAS STOCKINGER, Archäometrische Untersuchungen spätrömischer bis frühislamischer <i>Brittle Ware</i> und Gebrauchskeramik aus Resafa/ar-Ruṣāfa	354
JOHANNES MOSER – CLAUDIA BÜHRIG, Gadara/Umm Qays Hinterland Survey. Die Steingeräte aus den Geländebegehungen der Jahre 2010–2016	386

Arabische Halbinsel und der Region verwandte Themen

SAID F. AL-SAID, The Kingdoms of Ḍākir, ʿAmīr, and Muhaʿmir in the Light of a New Inscription from Al-Fāw, Saudi Arabia	404
ARNULF HAUSLEITER – MARTA D’ANDREA – ALINA ZUR, in collaboration with MAHMOOD Y. AL-HAJRI, The Transition from Early to Middle Bronze Age in Northwest Arabia: Bronze Weapons from Burial Contexts at Tayma, Arabia and Comparative Evidence from the Levant	412
PAUL A. YULE, Toward an Identity of the Samad Period Population (Sultanate of Oman)	438
NORBERT NEBES, Corrigenda to Norbert Nebes, “The Inscriptions of the Aksumite King Ḥafil and their Reference to Ethio-Sabaeen Sources”, ZOrA 10 (2017) 356–369	487
HINWEISE FÜR AUTOREN	489
GUIDELINES FOR AUTHORS	491

المحتوى

إحياء للذكرى علي أبو عساف

10 ألكسندر آرنس - كارن بارتل - كلاوديا بورغ - ريكاردو آيثنمن - مارغريته فن إس

إحياء للذكرى محمد علي السلامي

12 نوربرت نيس

بلاد الرافدين ومواضيع إقليمية شاملة

إيفا براون-هولتسنغر

16 تمثال غوديا M: نص مسماري حقيقي على تمثال مزيف

ب. بفلتنسر - حسن أ. قاسم بمساهمات من إيفانا بولتزر - باولا سكسو - بيتينا فايس
تطورات مدنية في الشمال الشرقي لبلاد الرافدين من فترة نينوى V إلى العصر الآشوري الحديث.

42 التنقيبات في باسطكي عام ٢٠١٧

إيفانا بولتزر - حسن أ. قاسم

استكشاف المنطقة الريفية خلال العصر الآشوري الوسيط في إقليم دجلة الأوسط.

88 موسم التنقيبات عام ٢٠١٧ في مُقْبِلِه (موقوبلى) III

بيتر أ. مغل - مايكل براون - خوان أغولار

110 منحوتات صخرية بارثية من العمادية في كردستان العراق

أنار عبد الإله فاضل - إنريك خمينز

130 كسر ألواح طينية أدبية من أوروك (الوركاء). الجزء الثاني: لوحان لحساب الـ'أدنو'

أولف بدرسون

160 منطقة بوابة عشتار في بابل. من النصوص القديمة إلى التفسيرات الجديدة في مجسم رقمي

كارولين ياوس

180 تقنيات الطبخ ودور الطباخين في المجتمع المتمدن المبكر. تحليلات الآنية والتجارب والسياق الأثري والنصوص

سجاد علي بيغي - جون ماك غنس

198 بيت عشتار ونشأيا/إرنسا: البحث في تحديد موضع اسم موقع جغرافي في جبال زاغروس الآشورية من القرن الثامن قبل الميلاد

ستورت كامبل - شتفن ر. هاويز - روبرت كيلك - جين مون - مري شيرسن - فيرا دليشالكوفا

212 خاراكس سباسينو: أبحاث جديدة في عاصمة ميسان

شرقي البحر الأبيض المتوسط

سنه كراغ - روبينا رابا

تصنيفات شعر نسوية بدون حجاب: مؤشرات على الأعمار والأدوار الاجتماعية والمنزلة ضمن المنحوتات الدفنية في تدمر (بالميرا) 242

طارق أحمد

الحيط الطبيعي الروماني المقدس: مسألة الأحرار في قصر النواوس (عين عكرين) في لبنان 278

كارلن أوغنو

دراسة لصريح الرصافة 302

ماتيس شتكنغر

أبحاث علم الآثار القياسي على «نط برتل» (النمط الهش) الذي يرجع إلى الفترة
من العصر الروماني المتأخر إلى الإسلامي المبكر وفخار الاستخدام العادي من الرصافة 354

يُهنس موسر - كلاوديا بورغ

المسح الآثاري للمناطق المحيطة بمجدارا (أم قيس).
الأدوات الحجرية المكتشفة في إطار معاينات السطح خلال الأعوام ٢٠١٠-٢٠١٦ 386

شبه الجزيرة العربية ومواضيع مرتبطة بالإقليم

سعيد ف. السعيد

مالك ذاكر، أمير ومهامر في ضوء نقش كتابي جديد من الفاو (المملكة العربية السعودية) 404

آرنلف هاوسلايتر - مارتا ذندريا - ألينا تسور بمساهمة من محمود ي. الحجري

الانتقال من العصر البرونزي المبكر إلى البرونزي الوسيط في شمال غربي شبه الجزيرة العربية: الأسلحة البرونزية
من سياقات أثرية دفنية في تيماء وشبه الجزيرة العربية ودلائل مقارنة من منطقة شرقي البحر الأبيض المتوسط 412

باول أ. بول

في سبيل تحديد هوية السكان خلال فترة سمد (سلطنة عمان) 438

نوربرت نيبس

تصويب لمقال نوربرت نيبس «النقوش الكتابية للملك الأكسومي حفل وإشاراتها إلى المصادر الأثوية-السبئية»،
الصادر في ZOrA 10 (عام ٢٠١٧) ص. 369-356 487

إرشادات للمؤلفين 489

إرشادات للمؤلفين باللغة الإنكليزية 491