

Hatra

Hatra (Arabic: الحضر *al-Ḥaḍr*) was an ancient city in the Ninawa Governorate and al-Jazira region of Iraq. It was known as *al-Hadr*, a name which appears once in ancient inscriptions, and it was in the ancient Persian province of Khvarvaran. The city lies 290 km (180 mi) northwest of Baghdad and 110 km (68 mi) southwest of Mosul.

On 7 March 2015, various sources including Iraqi officials reported that the militant group Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) had begun demolishing the ruins of Hatra.^{[1][2]} A video released by ISIL during the next month showed the destruction of the monuments.^[3]



bronze coin struck in Hatra circa 117-138 AD, obverse depicts radiate bust of Shamash

1 History



Statue of the Goddess Shahiro

Some believe Hatra may have been built by the Assyrians or by the Achaemenid Empire, or possibly in the 3rd or 2nd century BC under the influence of the Seleucid Empire, but there is no reliable information on the city

before the Parthian period.^[4] Hatra flourished under the Parthians, during the 1st and 2nd centuries AD, as a religious and trading center.^[5] Later on, the city became the capital of possibly the first Arab Kingdom in the chain of Arab cities running from Hatra, in the northeast, via Palmyra, Baalbek and Petra, in the southwest. The region controlled from Hatra was the Kingdom of Araba, a semi-autonomous buffer kingdom on the western limits of the Parthian Empire, governed by Arabian princes.

Hatra became an important fortified frontier city and withstood repeated attacks by the Roman Empire, and played an important role in the Second Parthian War. It repulsed the sieges of both Trajan (116/117) and Septimius Severus (198/199).^[6] Hatra defeated the Iranians at the battle of Shahrazoor in 238, but fell to the Iranian Sassanid Empire of Shapur I in 241 and was destroyed.^[6] The traditional stories of the fall of Hatra tell of an-Nadira, daughter of the King of Araba, who betrayed the city into the hands of Shapur. The story tells of how Shapur killed the king and married an-Nadira, but later had her killed also.^[5]

Hatra was the best preserved and most informative example of a Parthian city. It was encircled by inner and outer walls nearly 2 kilometres (1.2 mi) in diameter^[7] and supported by more than 160 towers. A temenos (τέμενος) surrounded the principal sacred buildings in the city's centre. The temples covered some 1.2 hectares and were dominated by the Great Temple, an enormous structure with vaults and columns that once rose to 30 metres. The city was famed for its fusion of Greek, Mesopotamian, Canaanite, Aramean and Arabian pantheons, known in Aramaic as *Beit ʿĒlāhā* ("House of God"). The city had temples to Nergal (Assyrian-Babylonian and Akkadian), Hermes (Greek), Atargatis (Syro-Aramaean), Allat, Shamiyyah (Arabian), and Shamash (the Mesopotamian sun god).^[5] Other



Hatra ruins in July 2008

deities mentioned in the Hatran Aramaic inscriptions were the Aramaean Ba'al Shamayn, and the female deity known as Ashurbel, which was perhaps the assimilation of the two deities the Assyrian god Ashur and the Babylonian Bel—despite their being individually masculine.

2 List of rulers

In inscriptions found at Hatra, several rulers are mentioned. Other rulers are sporadically mentioned by classical authors. They appear with two titles. The earlier rulers are called *mrj'* (translation uncertain), the later ones *mlk -king*.

3 Modern Hatra

Hatra was used as the setting for the opening scene in the 1973 film *The Exorcist*,^[8] and since 1985 is a UNESCO World Heritage Site.^[9]

Saddam Hussein saw the site's Mesopotamian history as reflecting glory on himself, and sought to restore the site, and others in Nineveh, Nimrud, Ashur and Babylon, as a symbol of Arab achievement,^[10] spending more than US \$80 million in the first phase of restoration of Babylon. Saddam Hussein demanded that new bricks in the restora-

tion use his name (in imitation of Nebuchadnezzar) and parts of one restored Hatra temple have Saddam's name.^[11]

From 1987 the Italian Archaeological Expedition, directed by R. Ricciardi Venco (University of Torino), is working at Hatra. The excavations were focused on an important house (Building A), located close to the Temenos, and on deep soundings in the Temenos central area. Now the Expedition is active in different projects regarding the preservation and development of the archaeological site.

In 2004, *The Daily Telegraph* stated "Hatra's finely preserved columns and statues make it one of the most impressive of Iraq's archaeological sites"^[12]

3.1 Demolition by ISIL

Actions by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, which occupied the area in mid-2014, have been a major threat to Hatra. In early 2015 they announced their intention to destroy many artifacts, claiming that such "graven images" were un-Islamic, encouraged shirk (or polytheism), and could not be permitted to exist, despite the preservation of the site for 1,400 years by various Islamic regimes. ISIL militants pledged to destroy the remaining artifacts. Shortly thereafter, they released a video showing the destruction of some artifacts from Hatra.^{[13][14]} After the bulldozing of Nimrud on March 5, 2015, "Hatra of course will be next" said Abdulamir Hamdani, an Iraqi archaeologist from Stony Brook University.^[15] On March 7, Kurdish sources reported ISIS had begun the bulldozing of Hatra.^{[16][17][18]}

UNESCO and ISESCO issued a joint statement saying "With this latest act of barbarism against Hatra, (the IS group) shows the contempt in which it holds the history and heritage of Arab people."^[19]

The pro-Iraqi government Popular Mobilization Forces captured the city on 26 April 2017.^[20] A spokeswoman for the militias stated that ISIL had destroyed the sculptures and engraved images of the site, but its walls and towers were still standing though contained holes and scratches received from ISIL bullets. PMF units also stated that the group had mined the site's eastern gates, thus temporarily preventing any assessment of damage by archaeologists.^[21] It was reported on 1 May that the site had suffered less damage than feared earlier. A journalist of EFE had earlier reported finding many destroyed statues, burnt buildings as well as signs of looting. Layla Salih, head of antiquities for Nineveh Governorate, stated that most of the buildings were intact and the destruction didn't compare with that of other archaeological sites of Iraq. A PMF commander also stated that the damage was relatively minor.^[22]

4 Gallery



• Remains of several temples and ancient walls (2004)



• 2008 November



• Overview of the site in 2007



• 2008 November



• May 2006



• 2010 September



• 2006 May



• 2010 September



September 2014



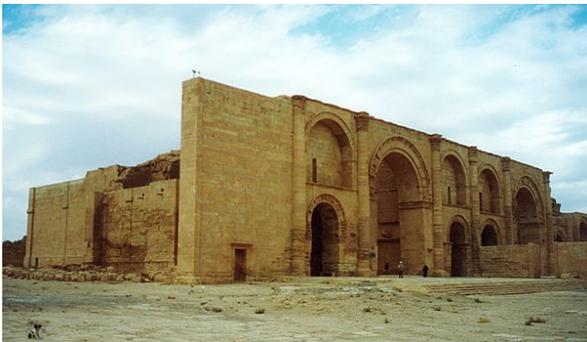
Closer view of one of the iwans



Detail of a temple, showing Hellenistic, Mesopotamian, Iranian, and Roman architecture.



Decorated arc with faces



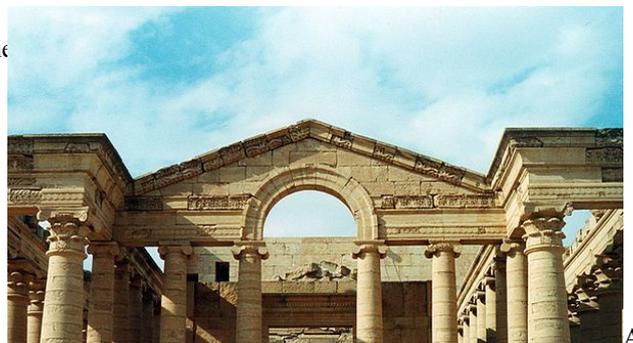
View of iwans



Protruded head of a person on one of the walls



5 Facade of Temple



Arc of the temple

See also

- Aramaic of Hatra

- Destruction of cultural heritage by ISIL
- Islamic Iconoclasm

6 References

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7 External links

- **Between Rome and Parthia: The Desert City of Hatra**
- <http://lexicorient.com/e.o/hathra.htm>
- <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-9039509>
- <http://shezaf.net/english/Video/Video/Hatra.html>
- <http://www.bbc.co.uk/archive/chronicle/8612.shtml> BBC *Chronicle* "Lost Kings of the Desert"
- <https://hatrasite.com/> Italian Archaeological Expedition at Hatra

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