

## THE PARTHIAN ROCK RELIEFS AND BAHDINAN GATE IN AMADIYA/AMEDI: A PRELIMINARY REPORT FROM THE COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY MAPPING MESOPOTAMIAN MONUMENTS SURVEY

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This article presents three rock reliefs of the Parthian era in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, documented in Amadiya/Amedi by Columbia University's Mapping Mesopotamian Monuments survey project in 2013. The paper discusses the iconography, style and date of the reliefs and the methods that the Columbia team used to document them, including photogrammetry, perspectival corrected and perspective controlled stills, and 360° immersive, processed panoramas. At the same time as presenting a reading of the relief imagery, the article offers a preliminary self-reflective consideration of the documentation methods we have been utilizing for the study of rock reliefs in the past seven years. These technological advances, enormously useful for digital image capture, are nevertheless a form of imaging and must be understood as such methodologically. The final results of these kinds of technically advanced images of rock reliefs must rely on modes of visual interpretation that remain subjective and dependent on visual analytical skills based in historical knowledge, stylistic and iconographic analyses, as well as on-site, close up material-tactile studies of surfaces, of carving styles and methods. Finally, taking architectural context and landscape into account, the paper makes the case that the location of the reliefs dating to the Parthian era, at the citadel's entry, guided and inspired the Seljuk era monumental portals of Amadiya/Amedi that were subsequently erected and sculpted in dialogue with the ancient remains.

### *Introduction*

Located in the Zagros Mountains of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, close to the border with modern day Turkey and in the governorate of Dohuk, the citadel town of Amadiya/Amedi stands perched on a magnificent rocky height, visible in the landscape from a far distance (Fig. 1). At 1985 m above sea level, it is a naturally fortified location. According to the Arabic language historical accounts of the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries A.D., the citadel of Amadiya was built by the Seljuk emir, Imad al Din Zengi (c. 1085–1146 A.D.).<sup>1</sup> However, contemporaneous Arabic sources and earlier architectural remains within and around the citadel both indicate clearly that it had already been occupied long before. This essay presents an analysis of three rock reliefs that the Columbia University Mapping Mesopotamian Monuments survey (MMM) documented in 2013 and revisited for a second examination on site in 2018. As the nearby city of Mosul fell to the violence and terror of the Islamic State (DAESH) and was occupied by them soon after our work there in the 2013 field season, a joint decision was made, in consultation with Iraqi colleagues, not to publicize any of the work of the MMM project or these reliefs at that time, but instead to wait until a later date so as not to draw attention to the locations of rock reliefs or historical architecture.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, soon after our first field season in Amadiya/Amedi, the Columbia project provided a report of the reliefs and architecture on a password protected website, which gave historical information, detailed photography and processed immersive panoramas, making them

<sup>1</sup> The Arabic source for the naming of the citadel after Imad al Din Zengi is Yakut al-Rumi al-Hamawi 626 A.H.-1228 A.D.: 348. In English, see Streck 1913–1936. The identification of this citadel with Neo-Assyrian references to Amedi, for example on the UNESCO website, are incorrect, as the Assyrian place name Amedi has been identified as modern day Diyarbakir; for an explanation of that historical identification, see Bryce 2009.

<sup>2</sup> None of the work of the Mapping Mesopotamian Monuments project has yet been made entirely public. Our field survey of monuments, begun in 2013 and still in progress, was included in Altaweel 2015 but overlooked in the account of fieldwork in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq compiled by Kopanias, MacGinnis and Ur and posted online in 2015.



Fig. 1 Amadiya/Amedi in the landscape, view from a distance; arrow points to location of Bahdinan Gate and reliefs. ©The Trustees of Columbia University, Mapping Mesopotamian Monuments, photo: Serdar Yalcin.

accessible to registered colleagues and students only.<sup>3</sup> Six years on, we are cautiously beginning to make this work more widely available.

The work of the MMM survey project, directed by Zainab Bahrani and initiated in 2012, has aimed to document historical architecture and rock reliefs throughout the region. We have so far documented eighteen rock relief sites, some of which have multiple reliefs, and compiled a large database of images, processed panoramas, and photogrammetric data. We have also documented numerous monuments and historical architectural structures throughout the Kurdistan Region of Iraq and South-eastern Turkey. Each monument or building on the website is mapped and accompanied by visual descriptions and historical information, as well as basic bibliographic resources. Our field methods rely on photogrammetry, perspectival corrective architectural stills and perspective controlled stills, close details, Gigapan imaging and 360° immersive processed panoramas. The latter method, derived from the techniques of architectural historical study of buildings, is one that the MMM project developed and adapted for use in the contextual analysis of rock reliefs, their spatial setting and significance within the landscape.<sup>4</sup>

The MMM project's documentation of the rock reliefs near the Bahdinan/Mosul Gate began in 2013 (Fig. 2). As this work was part of the larger multi-year survey, still in progress today, the

<sup>3</sup> <https://mcid.mcah.columbia.edu/art-atlas/mapping-mesopotamian-monuments>

The website is still currently password protected. A decision against open access was taken in consultation with our colleagues in Iraq, while Mosul was under Isis control, but the original aim was to make the site open access and multi-lingual. The images, photogrammetry and immersive, processed panoramic views are available on the website, as well as high definition corrective perspectival stills and details, and contextual images.

<sup>4</sup> Traditional Ancient Near Eastern Studies publications of rock reliefs study the reliefs as isolated images without much attention to their locations in the landscape; see for example

the primary resource for Near Eastern rock reliefs, Börker Klähn 1982. Columbia University's Visual Media Center developed these methods in 2000–2001, and Stephen Murray's major projects at Columbia, *Romanesque Churches of the Bourbonnais* and *Mapping Gothic France*, began in 2002. These projects were accompanied by similar ones in Istanbul: *The Istanbul Documentation Project* spearheaded by Holger Klein, as well as similar work in Yemen, Egypt, India and Japan. Bahrani and the MMM team expanded this form of documentation to rock relief sites as a spatial context. See Columbia University, Art Atlas: <https://mcid.mcah.columbia.edu/art-atlas>



Fig. 2 Amadiya/Amedi, view of approach to Mosul/Bahdinan Gate. ©The Trustees of Columbia University, Mapping Mesopotamian Monuments, photo: Zainab Bahrani.

larger description of this project, its sites and methodologies, will be published separately. A new Columbia University preservation project in Amadiya/Amedi, also directed by Zainab Bahrani, will begin in August 2019 when the focus will be on the restoration of the Bahdinan Gate and the conservation of the Parthian reliefs and ancient stairway path. However, as it is relevant to the present study, it is important to note that the aim of MMM, as envisioned from the start, was to document historical architecture and monuments without restriction of the area of study by any chronological or dynastic parameters, and without limiting it to a particular medium or form of monument.<sup>5</sup> Our work insists on the contextualization of monuments diachronically as well as spatially, crossing traditional disciplinary borders of Islamic and pre-Islamic scholarship on historical monuments and sites. We argue also that the citadel of Amadiya/Amedi can therefore be studied as a comprehensive site of the Mesopotamian region's historical integration of the remains of the pre-Islamic past, rather than their rejection.

Built as an acropolis that utilizes the natural defences of a steep and formidable access, the elliptically shaped citadel is entered by two main monumental portals that remain today. The Zebari gate, first built in the late eleventh or twelfth century A.D., was demolished in the 1930s and has been completely reconstructed in recent years. The second main portal is the Mosul Gate, also called the Bahdinan Gate.<sup>6</sup> Although it was restored in the second half of the twentieth century with an incorrect positioning of the sculpted spandrel blocks, it retains much of its original structure and reliefs from the twelfth century, albeit haphazardly reinserted into the original portal (Fig. 3). The original arrangement can be seen in earlier twentieth century photographs of the gate, before restoration (Fig. 4). According to Yakut al-Rumi al-Baghdadi al-Hamawi, Amadiya was built in 537 Hijra (1142 A.D.) by Imad al-Din Zengi (1085–1146 A.D.), and the current name Amadiya/Amedi is after his name. However, according to Yakut al-Rumi,

<sup>5</sup> See the description of the project's aims on our website: <https://mcid.mcah.columbia.edu/art-atlas/mapping-mesopotamian-monuments>. The website has a link for our survey of rock reliefs, beginning in 2013, describing some of the methods and technologies that we use in the field.

<sup>6</sup> The Bahdinan Gate refers to the region of the autonomous Kurdish principality of Bahdinan that flourished under the Ottoman Sultan Selim at the start of the sixteenth century A.D. See Abdullah 2003: 61 ff.



Fig. 3 Mosul/Bahdinan Gate detail, c. 1142 A.D., current condition. ©The Trustees of Columbia University, Mapping Mesopotamian Monuments, photo: Helen Malko.



Fig. 4 Mosul/Bahdinan Gate, c. 1142 A.D., early twentieth century. Photo: Tariq Jawad al-Janabi, 1983, *Dirasat fi al imarah al-Iraqiya fi al Usur al Wusta*, Baghdad, State Organization of Antiquities and Heritage.



Fig. 5 Stairway path next to Relief 1. ©The Trustees of Columbia University, Mapping Mesopotamian Monuments, photo: Zainab Bahrani.

the Zengid citadel was not a new construction but was built upon an earlier Kurdish fortification called *Ashib*.<sup>7</sup> Inside the city of Amadiya, we documented the remains of a fairly well preserved small early Christian church and other historical architecture that is better known within the citadel, but little archaeological work or architectural surveys have been conducted here in recent years, despite the fact that these remains and the rock reliefs were already noted by European travellers in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. However, it is architecturally clear that the city of Amadiya/Amedi had centuries of existence before the Zengid dynasty made it a centre of its power.<sup>8</sup>

### *The Reliefs*

The three reliefs are visible on the cliff face, as one walks out of the Mosul or Bahdinan Gate and looks to the right (Fig. 5), each one set within a large niche cut into the living rock of the cliff face. Each niche has an arched curve at the upper part, typical of the Mesopotamian stele shape. The largest of the reliefs is 2.81 m in height and 1.54 m wide, making it over life size and imposing in scale. The stele outline of the reliefs was already known in earlier Mesopotamian sculpture and is visible, for example, at nearby sites such as Khennis. It was used as a form of framing in rock reliefs of the Neo-Assyrian era, directly quoting the contours of a stele (*narû*), as I have pointed out elsewhere.<sup>9</sup> Dating sometime between the first century B.C. and the late second century A.D.

<sup>7</sup> See al-Hamawi 626AH/1228 D: 348. It is interesting to note that the earlier name, *Ashib*, is related to the root of the Akkadian term for dwelling or settlement and possibly indicates a much earlier occupation of this natural acropolis.

<sup>8</sup> The rock reliefs and citadel of Amadiya/Amedi were published by Marf Zamua in 2008. Earlier publications that mention them include Ainsworth 1841: 29; Layard 1849: 161; Bachmann 1913: 1–3; and Mathiesen 1992: catalogue numbers 183, 184. Most recently, P. Miglus et al. 2018

appeared in May 2019, after we had already completed our work and after we had submitted this article for publication to *Iraq* in March 2018. Unfortunately, the review process delayed our publication by one year. As will be clear, our results, photogrammetric readings and iconographic-stylistic interpretations differ substantially from those of Miglus et al.

<sup>9</sup> Bahrani 2017: 264–265.

in our assessment, the Amadiya reliefs thus relied upon an existing *narû* form for monumental sculpture that had been transferred to rock reliefs in earlier centuries, and which could still be seen in the region. The Assyrian stele shape was also used in the Parthian relief stelae erected in Assur, now in the Istanbul Archaeological Museum.<sup>10</sup> The shape of the relief niches is a good indication that here are a series of Parthian, rather than Sasanian reliefs.

Starting with the first relief, the one that is closest to the Zengid portal, we numbered the reliefs from 1–3, although the numbering is not meant to indicate dating or the order in which they were carved in antiquity. The reliefs follow the slope of the stairway, outside the citadel. Here, a description is provided of each relief, followed by a section with comparisons. As the reliefs are very worn, we produced a series of images for each one, including photogrammetry, perspectival corrected and perspective controlled stills, and detailed shots that were studied together with on-site observation both at the time of the documentation in 2013 and in a follow up 2018 field trip in which we checked our data and interpretations on site. Each relief description is thus based on an analysis of a range of images and multiple angles. The line drawings indicate the remaining visible traces of carved lines, where we were able to see them. For the contextual recording in space, we used Gigapan imaging and immersive processed panoramas. These interactive panoramas are high resolution and can be zoomed in for closer details in context. Nevertheless, the presentations of the reliefs here must be understood as interpretations of the visual data. Although digital image capture is at times described by archaeologists as a scientifically objective and unmediated form of image making that directly reflects the original, scholars in the fields of critical Visual Studies and in the History of Science and Technology have at the same time cautioned against an unproblematic idea of mechanical objectivity. As much as we aim for accuracy in our work, we remain well aware that readings and reconstructions based on new technologies are not a panacea for the study of ancient remains, but are also mediated and interpretive forms of representation. As such, they are also subject to visual theories of representation and critical historical analyses.

#### *Relief 1:*

A full scale frontal male figure in a stele-shaped niche  
2.81m x 1.54 m (at widest point).

#### Description (Figs. 6a, b, 7):

An upright, full-scale figure of a man stands in a frontal position. His upper body leans somewhat to his left, giving the figure a slightly curving torso and a jutting out right hip, while his left arm is bent and his hand rests on his left hip. The right arm is stretched out to hold a long spear or staff at his right side, with the hand grasping the spear or staff just above the outstretched elbow level, visible in the tilted photogrammetry image (Fig. 7). It is surmounted by a bell-shaped curving element. This spear/staff fills the entire length of the relief space, creating a framing element at the figure's right. The figure appears to be wearing long trousers that narrow at the ankles. The face and head are worn, but traces of the hairstyle and headdress are visible. He has a thick hairstyle with rounded tufts that reach to a level above the shoulders on either side and are especially clear at the figure's left side. The evidence for a beard is unclear, but an area at the upper chest, in higher relief, can be identified as the trace of one. Emanating from the area at the back of his head, a pair of long flowing ribbons or fillets billow to the left side of the figure, curving along the shoulder and flowing down to just above the left elbow. Another semi-circular element, which does not appear to be part of the fillets, seems to frame the head in a semi-circular form and is visible to the figure's upper left.

At his left side, two weapons can be seen clearly: a long broad sword follows the line of his leg and ends at the foot, while at right angles, from the man's hand out to the edge of the relief space, a long thin sword can be seen. Another clear detail here is the knob of the blade handle or pommel that can be seen in the space between the bent elbow and the curve of his waist. On the right side, along the

<sup>10</sup> Andrae 1933.

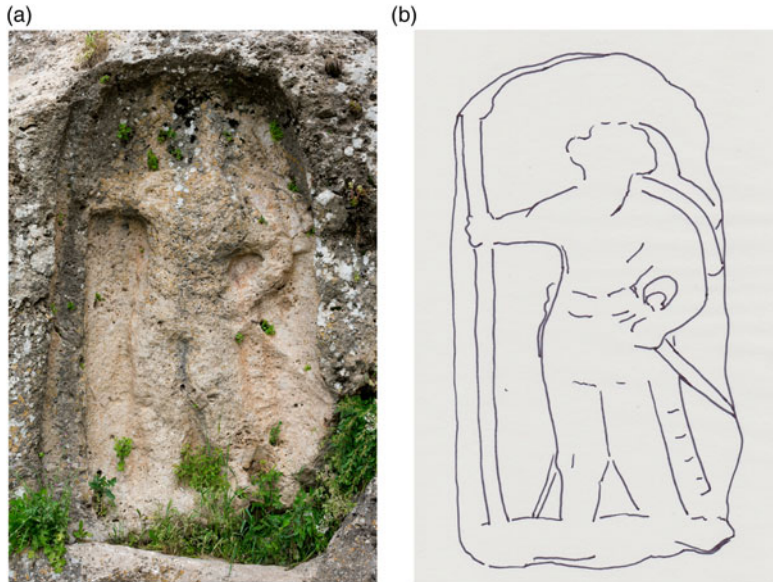


Fig. 6 Relief 1, Standing male figure in frontal position. ©The Trustees of Columbia University, Mapping Mesopotamian Monuments, 6a photo: Gabriel Rodriguez; 6b: line drawing.

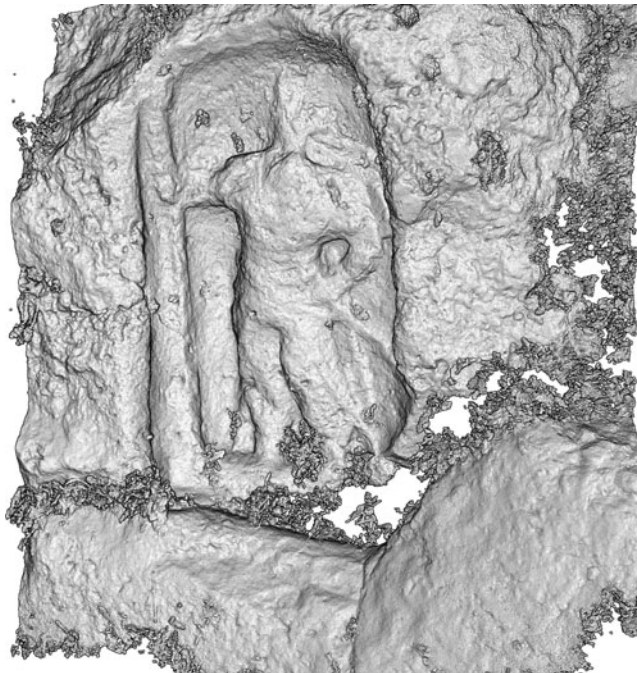


Fig. 7 Relief 1, photogrammetry, tilted from the side. ©The Trustees of Columbia University, Mapping Mesopotamian Monuments. Photogrammetry: Gabriel Rodriguez.

upper thigh and the waist, is a curving, serpentine line. Below this line are the traces of what may be yet another weapon, discernable just to the side of the lower right leg. Thus both at his left and right, the weapons that he grasps reach the boundaries of the relief space, while the male figure himself takes up most of the pictorial space of the relief. The relief is worn with time and exposure to the elements. However, a close study of the surface does not give any indication that it has been deliberately effaced. The sway in the body that results from the curve of the torso indicates a shift in balance that points to

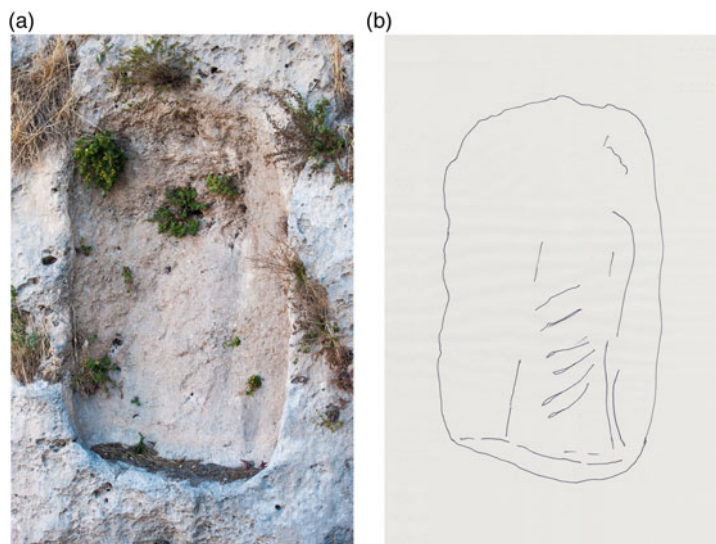


Fig. 8 Relief 2, Standing female figure. ©The Trustees of Columbia University, Mapping Mesopotamian Monuments, 8a: photo: Serdar Yalcin; 8b: line drawing.

the sculptor's familiarity with the *contrapposto* stance that is particularly known from the sculptures of Hatra. The modelling of the figure and its proportions and frontal composition, the hairstyle, the clothing and headdress with long ribbons all have parallels in Parthian era art.

#### Relief 2

A full scale standing female figure in a relief niche  
2.35 m x 1.61 m

#### Description (Figs. 8a, b, 9)

This second relief is placed along the downward slope of the external stairway of the citadel. It is the most worn of the three reliefs at Amadiya and appears in the middle between the other two. The contours of the relief space are slightly more rounded at the lower part, and the niche is slightly smaller than those of the other two reliefs. Here, although the relief niche is heavily worn and has been described as empty by earlier European travellers and commentators, the traces of a standing robed figure can be discerned (Figs. 8, 9). Despite earlier descriptions of this niche as empty, Dlshad Marf Zamua recognised a clothed figure here in his 2008 publication of the reliefs.<sup>11</sup> The relief is in a location that is more exposed than Relief 1, and the surface is extremely weathered. In addition, the rock has a great deal of foliage emerging from behind, as does the third relief. The foliage outgrowth can be removed in a corrected photogrammetry image (ortho-photo), but the area where the foliage has already damaged the rock does not reveal the original surface in that case, only a lacuna or dark spot where it has been damaged. The corrected image would therefore require a certain amount of reconstruction of areas that might be mistakenly read as accurate or intact rock surface on the rectified model or image.

The top area where a head might have been is very worn and damaged by the growth of foliage in the stone, but the slope of the figure's left shoulder can be seen and traces of the body, or rather the garment, are visible. The figure, which may be a female figure, seems to be wearing a Greek style *chiton* and *himation* dress. The folds of the overlying *himation* are diagonally pleated across the body and seem to be pulled to the side and held with her left hand in a typical stance associated with art of the Seleucid and Parthian eras (see comparisons below). As the head area leaves a great deal of space in the niche, proportionately for the composition, we can conjecture that a

<sup>11</sup> Marf Zamua 2008: 116.





Fig. 9 Relief 2, tilted photogrammetry image to reveal elevation of carved surface. ©The Trustees of Columbia University, Mapping Mesopotamian Monuments, photogrammetry: Gabriel Rodriguez.

headdress appeared at the top, and a few traces of short vertical lines may indicate such a headdress. Near the figure's left foot seems to be an object that resembles an oval shield, although this is by no means certain. To the opposite side, at the figure's right, the space of the relief and the expected balance of the composition indicates that the figure held something before her or to her side. There is no visible evidence there, but based on the space and on comparative material we might speculate that something such as a spear or standard, or a palm frond, was depicted there, in a similar way to the representations of goddesses on Parthian coins.

### *Relief 3*

A full scale male figure in profile in a stele shaped niche  
2.21 m x 1.79 m (width at base)

Description (Figs. 10a, b, 11, 12):

This stele shaped niche with an arched top has the deepest set relief space of the three, and is placed some way farther down the external stairway of the citadel. The niche narrows towards the top and is wider at the base. The figure set within this space is carved in a different style and with different proportions than those of the first relief. It is a depiction of a male figure in profile view rather than a frontal image, and his upper body is slightly leaning back, conveying upward movement. In terms of modelling and carving, it is a different form of sculpture, with more rounded modelling of the body and elongated proportions. We thus see here a different style from Relief 1. The figure is in a striding position, moving upwards towards the right side of the relief, as if in a climbing

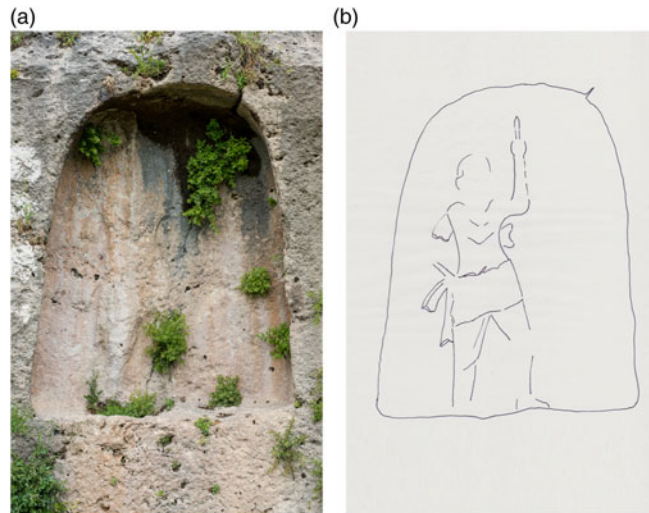


Fig. 10 Relief 3, Male figure in profile. ©The Trustees of Columbia University, Mapping Mesopotamian Monuments, 10a: photo: Gabriel Rodriguez; 10b: line drawing.



Fig. 11 Relief 3, Profile view of male figure striding upwards, tilted photogrammetry. ©The Trustees of Columbia University, Mapping Mesopotamian Monuments. Photogrammetry: Gabriel Rodriguez.

posture. We see the right side of his body and traces of his head, his right arm slightly raised, bent at the elbow across his chest. His movement is aligned with the slope of the stairway, climbing up, approaching the citadel entrance, and thus echoes the movement of the visitor on the upward climb. He is larger than life size and fills much of the height of the relief space. Behind the figure, at the left side of the relief, and behind his right leg and hip, we see what appear to be ribbons of cloth, perhaps parts of a cloth belt or a cloak and what may be the traces of a weapon. The figure is wearing a short tunic that ends at the knees with a tight fitting bodice or cuirass. Behind the figure's right shoulder are the traces of the ends of a cloth that may be understood as a part of a fillet streaming down from the head. However, given its location and curve at the figure's back, another possible reading is that it emerges from another article of clothing such as a short cloak or



Fig. 12 Relief 3, photogrammetry model, desaturated and with increased outlining of surface. ©The Trustees of Columbia University, Mapping Mesopotamian Monuments. Photogrammetry: Gabriel Rodriguez.

*chlamys* (Fig. 11). The lower part of this cloth is not straight or pleated, but appears to have a thick, curving pattern at the lower edge. The figure seems to have held a spear raised by the left arm, as traces of something pointed can be seen on the corrected photogrammetry image (Fig. 12). A curving object appears at the right side of the waist.

#### *Identification and date*

*Relief 1.* Although there are no exact parallels for any of the Amadiya reliefs, a frontal male figure appearing on a rock relief can be compared in a very general way to the Parthian reliefs in Iran at Tang-i-Sarwak and the Parthian stones at Bisotun.<sup>12</sup> The frontality of the figure, the rounded sloping outlines of the body, the tufted hairstyle and the positioning and grasp of the weapons all have similarities with Parthian images. The sway of the torso, however, indicates a familiarity with, and interest in, *contrapposto* in the representation of the body. This movement of the body is found in many sculptures from Hatra, making this relief more similar to Hatrene sculpture than to the more emphatically linear Parthian reliefs in Iran. There we see the use of *contrapposto* in Sasanian art, but the depiction of emphatically billowing drapery in Sasanian art differs from the Amadiya reliefs, and as we have stated above, the stele shaped niches are another indication of Parthian date. Compared to the Bisotun frontal figures, the Parthian figure in the Amadiya Relief 1 has slimmer proportions and far more movement in his stance, more similar to the sculptures of

<sup>12</sup> For a survey and illustrations of Parthian rock reliefs in general see Kawami 2013; Van den Berghe 1983; Van den Berghe and Schippmann 1983. See also Kawami, 1987 and

Ghirshman 1962. None of these works include the Amadiya reliefs, however, nor do any of the standard surveys of rock reliefs in the Near East.

Hatra. The figure also bears some other similarities with representations of some sculpted figures from Hatra, where male gods are sometimes shown bearing a large staff or standard and wrapping the right hand around the staff, while placing the left hand on a dagger or sword.<sup>13</sup>

The frontal figure in Relief 1 may represent a prince of the region, but an identification of the figure as a divinity cannot be ruled out and indeed is equally plausible, if we consider that the stylistic parallels at Hatra are with divine warrior images. When Parthian princes are represented on rock reliefs, such as those at Merquly and Rabbana (although they are in profile), or in the numerous statues in the round of royal men from Hatra, they tend to favour a pose with upraised right arm and with an upheld palm of the right hand which is not the case with the figure in Relief 1.<sup>14</sup> The royal figures on rock reliefs also wear longer clothing with looser cloaks covering the forms of the body, the outlines of which are not visible, as they are here. Relief 1 is different in proportions and has a more rounded carving style than the more linear carving of the reliefs at Merquly and Rabbana. Nor is it similar to the stillness and linearity of the contemporaneous Parthian reliefs in Iran mentioned above. Although the parallels with Hatra sculpture are not exact, Relief 1 most closely resembles works from Hatra, in terms of composition and in terms of the *contrapposto* S curve of the frontal depiction of the body and its disposition, as well as in the positioning of the body and the grasp of the weapons. At Hatra, these features are to be found particularly in representations of male divinities rather than royal figures. This relief is thus better understood as a divine warrior figure who guards the entrance into the citadel. Divine warrior figures that are guardians of the gate are also known from inscriptions of this period.<sup>15</sup>

*Relief 2.* In this relief, the standing figure, if our reading is correct, wears similar clothing to Parthian period female figures known both from the south of Mesopotamia and from Hatra. The figure may represent a type of city Tyche, or Fortune, perhaps comparable to images that can be seen on coins of the Parthian period, with parallels among those minted at Seleucia-on-the-Tigris.<sup>16</sup> This iconography is also well known at Hatra. The figure in Relief 2 may best be identified as an Allat-Athena type, however, because of the diagonal drapery and the possible oval shield at her side.<sup>17</sup> Such iconography is known in the mid second century. Whatever her identity, the pleats of the clothing drawn to the side in a diagonal are commonly found in Parthian era statues in the round that represent women, and also in images of goddesses on coins.

*Relief 3.* The figure in this relief may conceivably have represented a living ruler given the profile view, but it is difficult to reach a conclusion with any certainty. There are some significant differences with ruler images of the Parthian era that must be pointed out. The figure appears to wear a Hatrene type dress with tight bodice and perhaps a cloak or *chlamys*. Ruler images on rock reliefs, such as those at Merquly and Rabbana or the image at the Batas Herir rock relief, wear a different, looser dress and a headdress with thin strips of ribbon, usually streaming outward as two fillets. Those reliefs, all of which have also been studied on site and documented by the MMM team, are carved in a blockier and more linear style than this lighter, modelled figure who leans back slightly and climbs upwards.<sup>18</sup> They reveal little of the outlines of the physical form. The ruler figures depicted in rock reliefs and in sculpture in the round are generally depicted with their hand up, and palm open. This is not the case with Relief 3, where the right arm is not raised up, even though the position of the right hand against the body is not entirely clear.

<sup>13</sup> See for example, the marble relief of the god in Mustafa and Safar 1974: fig. 75, and several other examples in this publication. In fig. 75 we see the same S curve of the body and the same composition, grasp and placement of weapons.

<sup>14</sup> For Merquly and Rabbana see Rashid 2001; Marf Zamua and Amedi 2011; Saber, Rejeb and Altaweel, 2014. See also the MMM project's documentation of these sites on: <https://mcid.mcah.columbia.edu/art-atlas/mapping-mesopotamian-monuments>.

<sup>15</sup> Kaizer 2000.

<sup>16</sup> See Sellwood 1983, for example, pl. 6.1, (Phraates IV Tetradrachm from Seleucia, 26 B.C.) and British Museum no. 1891,0603.114 (Phraates IV, 24–23 B.C. minted in Seleucia on the Tigris).

<sup>17</sup> I am grateful to Vito Messina and Stefan Hauser for the comments they offered on this image during a symposium at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, March 2019.

<sup>18</sup> For the MMM documentation of the Batas Harir, Rabbana and Merquly reliefs see <https://mcid.mcah.columbia.edu/art-atlas/mapping-mesopotamian-monuments>

The relief has a distinctively different carving style from Relief 1 as we have already stated above, and this may indicate a different, earlier date. The naturalistic modelling of the leg that is still visible, as well as the dynamic movement of the body, suggest an early date in the Parthian period, when Greek Hellenistic influences were stronger in Parthian art, and possibly as early as the first century B.C. The female figure of Relief 2 may well be of the same early date. However, such styles continued to be used in Mesopotamia during the entirety of the Parthian era. Whether or not the frontal male was carved at the same time as the other two reliefs or at a later date is open to question. As Stefan Hauser has rightly pointed out in his work on the Parthians, there is no need to assume that different styles did not co-exist.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, it is possible to suggest a date sometime between the first century B.C. and the late second century A.D. Although such a major carving project must have been the result of a royal command, and Amedi was surely an important fortress in the Parthian era and probably earlier, it is not possible to identify the name of a particular ruler or historical event in association with these reliefs, as we can for the Seljuk era Zengid citadel that incorporated the reliefs in its reutilisation of the site.

Relief 3 is in a strategic spot on the cliff face, just where the stairs give access to the citadel turn (Fig. 13). One encounters it first when climbing the steep height from the valley to the citadel entranceway. Upon approaching the relief, one makes a 90-degree turn to approach the portal. The position of this relief in particular indicates that the original approach to the citadel utilised by the Zengid dynasty builders followed the earlier path to the entrance, and that the citadel of Amadiya was already an acropolis in the Parthian era. The figure's upward climb and position indicate clearly that it was carved in relation to an incline that was in use. A close analysis of the steps that lead up from the valley revealed original post-holes in several locations, and the relation of the blocks to the cliff face and to the citadel entry, as well as the way that they are hewn, indicates that the stepped path is to be dated to the Parthian era, continuing to be utilised and repaired during the Zengid dynasty. The position of Relief 1, the frontal figure, was also therefore at the entrance of the Parthian era citadel. Relief 3 was placed at a pivotal position, a turning point in the path that leads upwards. It was the first relief that one saw from the original ancient approach, and it faced the direction of the ancient entrance. The image was certainly carved in relation to the original upward climb. Thus, in a similar way to the position of the Merquly and Rabbana reliefs, the reliefs are placed at significant approaches to a settlement or fortress.

A study of the rock surfaces indicates that the reliefs are not fully effaced, although the surfaces are in poor condition. The relief closest to the portal is best preserved because of its physical location, less exposed to the elements than the other two that lie farther down the stepped path. The twelfth century Mosul or Bahdinan Gate, and the Zengid fortifications and settlement, were constructed without an attempt to remove these pre-Islamic reliefs, which remained so highly visible on the main approach up from the valley to the acropolis. These reliefs are the first things one encounters upon the approach from the valley below.<sup>20</sup> In fact not only did the twelfth century architects leave the reliefs in place, they also seem to have followed the original entrance approach, and the Zengid prince commissioned relief sculptures above the arch of his own great portal to complement the existing ones. The Zengid reliefs on the great portal show bearded heroes on the spandrels with entwined serpents and decorative foliage in between them, while a sunburst with a rounded human face emerges at the centre above the keystone, where the entwined necks of the serpents meet. The frame of this remarkable scene, which is rich with ancient imagery, seems to emerge from a tree, positioned right next to the serpents, sprouts and forks off into two directions, to form the outer frame of the composition (Figs. 2, 3).<sup>21</sup> We can

<sup>19</sup> Hauser 2013.

<sup>20</sup> These reliefs are seen every day by the people of Amedi, as they continuously use the Parthian era path in their daily lives.

<sup>21</sup> The closest parallel for the Bahdinan gate relief is the portal sculpture of a contemporaneous Khan between Mosul and Sinjar dating to Badr al Din Lu'lu'. Serpentine and dragon imagery combined with human figures are also known from the Talisman Gate of Baghdad (1221 A.D.),

and the use of pre-Islamic imagery in city gates is also known from other Seljuk sites in Turkey such as Konya, c. 1221 A.D. See Berlekamp 2016: 59–109; although Berlekamp does not discuss Amadiya, the parallels for the reuse of antiquity and iconographies of the past for talismanic purposes in the Seljuk era are clear and will be addressed further in our forthcoming publication on the gate and the citadel in later periods.



Fig. 13 Approach to Relief 3 with ancient stepped path. ©The Trustees of Columbia University, Mapping Mesopotamian Monuments, photo: Zainab Bahrani

then conclude that the Parthian reliefs were not simply disregarded in later centuries, but were retained in place at the citadel entry, and also became a source of inspiration for the Zengid Mosul Gate, which played off the imagery and created its own images in dialogue with the past.

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ثلاث منقوشات صخرية بارثية حديثة في كردستان العراق: تقرير أولي من مشروع جامعة كولومبيا لمسح خرائط نصب وادي الرافدين.  
قلم: زينب البحراني

تعرض هذه المقالة ثلاثة منقوشات صخرية في كردستان العراق لم تنشر سابقا تم توثيقها موقعيا في العمادية من قبل مشروع جامعة كولومبيا لمسح خرائط نصب وادي الرافدين لعام 2013. هذه المنقوشات هي غير معروفة لحد الآن من قبل الباحثين في المنحوتات الصخرية في الشرق الأدنى القديم وهي الآن تعرض لأول مرة. استنادا الى ما تبقى مرئيا من طرق النقش والصور المبينة في هذه المنقوشات الثلاثة يعود تاريخ هذه المنقوشات الى العصر الفرثي - الأرساسيدي من النواحي الاسلوبية وتقدم مواصفات رسمية وقراءات إيقونية للمنحوتات البالية. اخيرا، تطرح المقالة نظريتها بأن موقع المنقوشات في مدخل القلعة التي يعود تاريخها الى العصر الفرثي أرشدت وألهمت بوابات العصر الإسلامي الأثرية في العمادية التي تم انشاؤها ونقشها فيما بعد لتحكي الآثار القديمة.