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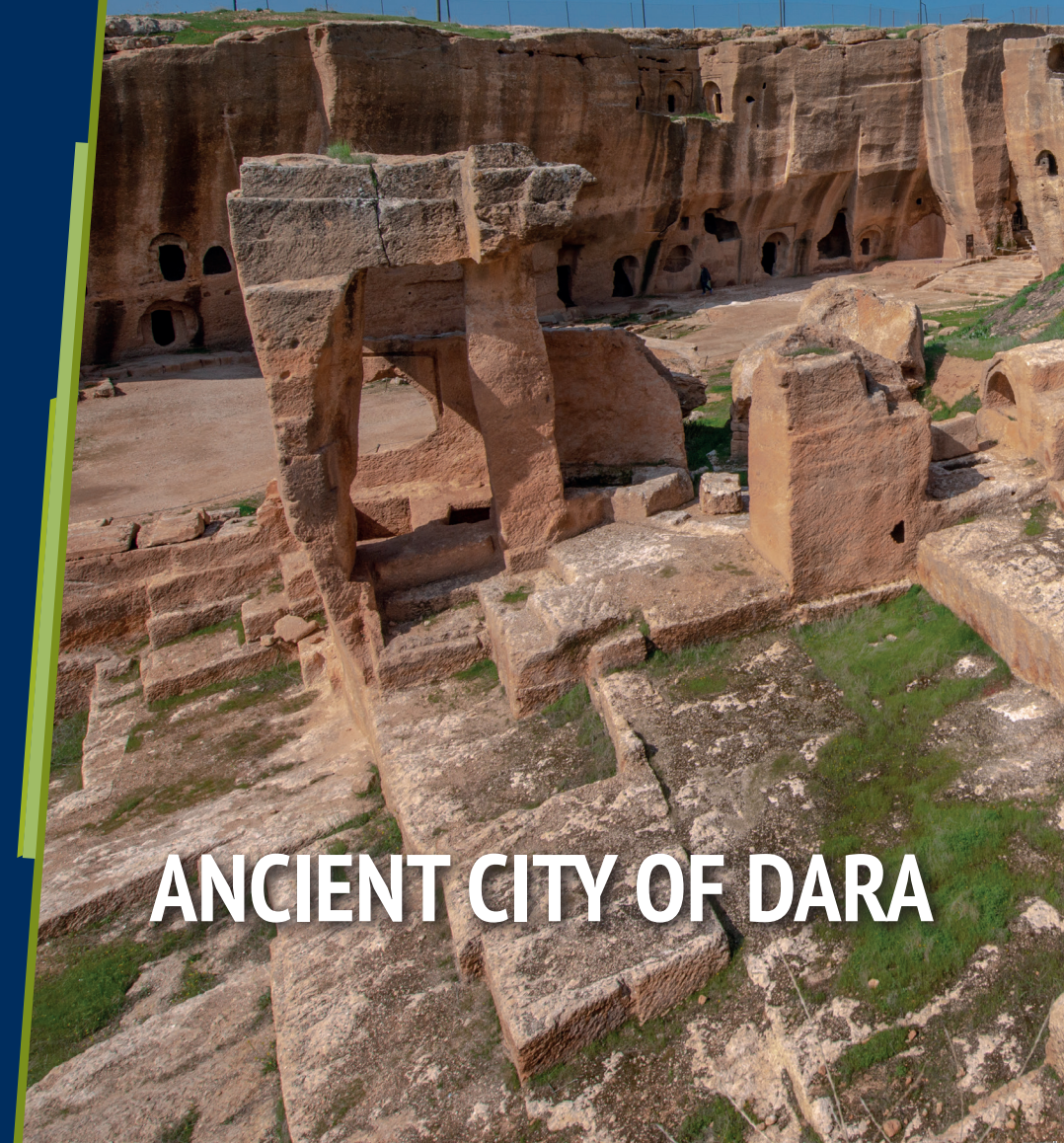
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ANCIENT CITY OF DARA





Location

Dara is located 30 km southeast of the city, 18 km northwest of Nusaybin and 7 km north of the city of Amuda in Syria.

Name of Dara and foundation of the city

It has been suggested that Dara was a military garrison of Persian King, Darius III (336-330 BCE) and the city was named after him. The city of Dara is referred to in ancient sources as "Daras", a Greek term. It was first mentioned by the ancient author Justinus Frontinus, who lived in the 3rd century CE as a city founded by the King of Parth I Arsakes, as described below: "...Arsaces settled the Parthian government, levied soldiers, built fortresses, and strengthened his towns. He founded a city also, called Dara, in Mount Zapaortenon, of which the situation is such, that no place can be more secure or more pleasant; for it is so encircled with steep rocks, that the strength of its position needs no defenders; and such is the fertility of the adjacent soil, that it is stored with its own produce. Such too is the plenty of springs and wood, that it is amply supplied with streams of water, and abounds with all the pleasures of the hunting chase."

History of Dara

Dara changed hands between Parth and Seleucid Kingdoms from the middle of the third century BCE to the 1st century BCE. Dara, a small settlement at the beginning of the 6th century CE, was chosen by Eastern Roman Emperor Anastasius (491-518) as a garrison town, and his building activities were carried out in the city between the years 503-507. Anastasius gave his name (Anastasiopolis) to the city he founded and made Dara the administrative and military epicentre of Mesopotamian Region. During the Anastasius Period (491-518 CE) the city was founded on a small village settlement. The reasons for founding the city were its proximity to Nisibis (Nusaybin), the strategic and protected location of the region, its proximity to water resources, and its dominance over the plains. Dara was ruled by the Sassanid Empire between 577-591 and 606-620 and by the Eastern Roman Empire from 620 to 639 CE.

Necropolis (Burial Ground)

On the hills extending west of the city, deep and widely carved gorges on natural bedrock served as cemeteries. Three different types of tombs are found in this area: Rock-cut tombs (6th century), sarcophagi (6th-8th century), and simple cist-tombs (8th-14th century). During this period, the dead were buried in spaces carved into the rock, believing in rebirth, as a tribute to Mithras (the rock-born), who is said to have been born from the rock in the cult of Pagan and Mithras. Although the people of Dara converted to Christianity, they continued their pagan traditions and the custom of multiple burials in these chamber tombs for some time.

Large gallery tomb

The most conspicuous structure with its floor plan and interior decoration in the area of the rock necropolis is a large three-story chamber hewn entirely out of the rock. The structure was oriented in a north-south direction and was rectangular in shape. The upper floor was planned as a corridor/balcony running through the west, south and east sides. Religious scenes and floral ornaments were carved on the pediment of the monumental entrance gate to the north. The funerary gallery, decorated with religious revival scenes and depicting the prophet Ezekiel (Zulkifl) reviving the deceased, was probably erected after the Sassanid invasion of 573 to commemorate the people who died in the invasion by the people of Eastern Roman who returned from exile after 591.

City walls

The city walls surrounding the three great hills on which the city was founded were about 4 km long, of which 2.8 km can be traced with the naked eye. According to recent measurements, the average width of the walls was 3.70-3.80 m, and the walls were built from the inside and outside with smooth hewn stones. There are two fortification systems in Dara, the inner and outer city walls, and there are 28 towers on these walls. There are also ditches about 20 m east of the eastern wall.



Gates

The city's fortification system has four main gates in four main directions. These gates are called the South, North, East, and West Gate. The North Gate and the South City Gates gate are located in the arched sections where the River Cordis (Kordes) runs south and north of the city.

Agora Street

The road, with large stone blocks from the south gate of the city, extends from the south gate to the north for 45-50 m and is about 5.80 m wide. The fact that there is a portico on the western side of the street along the river in the city, while the eastern side faces the river, and that there are shops/workshops behind it, as well as the location of the street in relation to the Silk Road show that trade caravans from Mesopotamia entered from here and that the area was a public space reserved for the business of the city. On the west side of the street, which runs along the river in the city, is a portico, while the east side faces the river, and behind it are shops. Cisterns The water system and the cisterns, where the water flowing down from the high mountains was stored and distributed throughout the city by canals, were of great importance for the defense of the city. Thanks to these water sources, the city was able to withstand sieges for a long time, especially when external contact was completely cut off by the Sassanid armies.

Castellum Aqua

The Castellum Aqua (covered water tank) was carved into the rock on the southern slopes of the Acropolis. Water was brought over the hills to the north by canals at a distance of 4 km from the Castellum Aqua. The collected water was distributed via canals to the buildings of the city and other cisterns. This building consists of 10 parallel cell rooms, covered with barrel vaults and extending in an east-west direction. Church-Dungeon Cistern This is the large cistern located about 100 m northwest of Agora Street. The original entrance to the cistern, built with regular ashlar, is located on the east façade. Although the associated buildings and auxiliary structures are still underground and a house was later built on top of the cistern, the cistern has retained its grandeur. The two-story structure once housed the city's cathedral. Today, only the western wall remains.

Baptismal Font

In the northeast of the Great Church there is a well-preserved baptismal font. This basin, built for the baptism of adults who converted to Christianity, has steps on two sides. There are steps on both sides of the baptismal font, which was built for the conversion of adults to Christianity.

BUILDINGS WITH MOSAIC

Building with Mosaic 1

This building is located 50 km south of the rock-cut necropolis. It dates from the time of the Roman Emperor Anastasius I. The mosaic composition shows a scene depicting a shepherd, plants and animals, and in the middle an inscription of 11 lines. The inscription states that the city was founded in 507 with the contribution of the churches of Diyarbakir (Amida) as a tribute to Anastasius I.

Building with Mosaic 2

The mosaic discovered about 20 m north of the southern wall is about 8.5x7.5 m (56 m²) in size. It is a floor mosaic of the building with walls on four sides. Fish scales are the most common pattern used throughout the mosaic. Red and white are the only colors used.

Islamic Period Tombs and the Shrine

In the area of the necropolis, on the hill in the middle area, there are the graves of Chechens who emigrated due to the Russian Chechen war (1870) and settled in Dara and died due to an epidemic. It is believed that these graves were designated as cemetery areas during the Islamic conquests. The tombs are dated to the 7th- 14th centuries. Although there is no written document about the owner of the tomb, which is made of smooth cut stone baldachin style, and covered with a dome on 4 legs, it is thought to be the work of the century, it is thought to be a work of the 14th-15th century in terms of its building style.