

THE PRINCIPLE OF PURITY FOR THE KINGDOM OF HATRA'S RESIDENTS

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ABSTRACT

Purity for the residents of Hatra was considered as one of the essential articles to occur before initiating any practice of religious rite, doctrinal ceremony or social tradition, so we find out that they were very eager to mandate materialistic & spiritual means of Purity such as water, incense, oil and fire, as well as reading prayers and religious exorcisms for achieving Purity which releases them from impurities and sins, and gets them close to the gods. Washing by using water, burning incense and putting off slippers were crucial purity habits the residents of Hatraclung to, especially before saying prayers, pilgrimage, visiting the gods and seclusion with them in temples and houses. Besides, Purity had an important role in social occasions and feasts, as monks and worshippers were eager to wash, burning incense and fires in national and religious feasts. They committed themselves to purify the temple and new house by spraying them with holy water and reading religious exorcisms to release them from evil spirits, and some social traditions like marriage occasions forced the groom and bride to be washed and sprayed by holy water and oil, to have blessing and providence.

Keywords: Beliefs, Habits, Hatra Kingdom, History, Purity

INTRODUCTION

Purity occupied an ample space socially and doctrinally of thinking for the residents of Mesopotamia generally, and the people of Hatra specifically, as without Purity, religious rites and social occasions could not be practised. Sacrifices could not be accepted from impurified ones; on the contrary, the gods' curse befell everyone who underestimated them. Going deep into the principles and concepts of the people of Hatra is considered a spiny and vital subject because it uncovers the intellectual sophistication extents that Hatra doctrine reached and reflexes the whole flourish level the Hatra community reached throughout the first and second centuries A.D. As for the most critical sources been relied on in doing the research, they are the reports of the Iraqi and German archaeology teams mentioned in the indexes of Sumer magazine written by Fouad Safar, Wathiq Al-Salihi and Hikmat Al-Aswad, and Majid Al-Shams' literature in "Hatra the Arabic Capital", And Khaz'a Al-Majidi in "Sumer's Publishing (Mitoon)" and "The gods' incense", and Sami Sa'eed Al-Ahmed in "Religious beliefs in Ancient Iraq", and others. The research has been divided into "Introduction" and "Preface" to get acquainted with the Kindom of Hatra, and an object to clarify the concept of Purity, with three pieces of research and an epilogue with conclusions, the first research is entitled: Purity in religious rites, as the rites of saying prayers, pilgrimage and visiting. While the second research is entitled: Purity in feasts and social occasions, like Akitu, building temple and new house, and marriage. Moreover, finally, the third research is entitled: Purity as practising healing prayers and funeral rites.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The kingdom of Hatra was an essential ancient kingdom that started after conquering the ancient countries of the Near East by Alexander the Great, and his control over Mesopotamia in 331 B.C, and it got famous politically in the period known to historians of the period of Taifas (Almassyaudi, 2009; Altabari, 2010)

Where the rising signs of Hatra city appeared, when a number of Arabic tribes allied with some Greek, Roman and Parthian communities, and stayed away from the centers of political conflicts to settle in a flat land in the Parthian island region, in the center of Hatra city that located in the southwest of Nineva at 110 Km distance, and to the west of Assyria (Al-Shirqat) at 60 Km distance (Alsalihi, 1988; Alshams, 1988) within the area that was known to the Syriac resources by (Arabaya) which means the Arab Land (Alab, 1985; Ali, 1993) as for calling it Hatra, this word comes from the Aramaic word (Hatra) that means (the holy forbidden), and it was mentioned in Aramaic writings (Hatra De Shamash) that means "Hatra the city of sun god" (Safar, 1952) as most of the writings of Hatra was in Aramaic language, because it was the common language in ancient Near East, by which correspondence and commercial and religious transactions were written down, and Arabic language was not existed or developed yet, and it went through the stage of masters, then kings, until its area widened and influence extended from Tikrit to the south, to Sinjarto the north, and from Tigris to the east, to Euphrates to the west (Baqir, 2009; Wolfensohn, n.d.).

The kingdom of Hatra was formed on a religious, commercial basis, as its economics depended on levying taxes from commercial goods passing within its territories coming from the Arab Gulf ports to the cities and ports of the Levant and vice versa (Alsalihi, 1988; Alshams, 1988) At the same time, Hatra doctrine derived its religious ideology basically from Assyrian and Arabic doctrine. A little bit from Greek, Roman and Parthian religions (Safar & Mustafa, 1974) and the exalted position of the kingdom of Hatra turned out through its religious fame, as the Arabic tribes used to pilgrimage to its big temple, those temples embodied several known gods in ancient Near East with choosing the sun god (Alsalihi, 1991a) as a superior god to the kingdom, and its protector, and enforcing law, order and justice in it (Hasan, 1991; Suleiman, 1993).

Concept of Purity

Purity was considered as an essential social and religious article that both monotheistic and humanity religions and civilized communities enforced to consummate religious rites and social ceremonies, and it was considered as an unbreakable holy rule because breaking it meant disrespecting gods, which led to its anger and curse against who broke it (Almajidi, 1998a; Alaswad, 2011).

Purity concept resembled between what it was known in ancient times, and what was expected in medieval times, as it was possible to determine purity concept generally as Purity of body from impurities, Purity of clothes from defilements, Purity of place where man worship or live from sins, and Purity of soul from guilts, *via* removing defilements and suspicions by usual purifying means (Duzi, 1991; IbnManzur, n.d.).

Purity is divided into two types:

1. Materialistic Purity

Which means Purity of body, clothes and place by one of the following purifying means?

Water: Water was considered as the best means used in purifying operation for the peoples of the ancient world, by which bodies, clothes and places were washed, to remove the defilements happened to them due to committing sins and impurities (Hanoon, 2006), although the kingdom of Hatra was not built on river banks, like what it was common in the states and kingdoms of ancient Mesopotamia, except it covered its need of water, *via* digging a large number of wells, pools and qanats (Karizes) which they benefited from in drinking, irrigation and washing (Samar, 2018).

Oil: The oil used by a monk for purifying, blessing or healing was called holy oil because the monk read religious exorcisms and prayers on it to be sacred.

The ancient Iraqis and the residents of Hatra specifically used many types of oil, including Olive oil, sesame oil, corn oil and castor oil by which the monk used to wipe worshippers' bodies or heads, as well as some of the doors, house fences, temples and palaces for purifying and evicting evil spirits purposes (Almajidi, 1998 b).

Incense: The ancient Iraqis used to burn incense, like the ancient peoples of the world, as it used to be burned daily in temples and semi-daily in palaces, houses and shops (Herodotus, 1936/2001).

The essence used in the kingdom of Hatra is herbals or tree materials like frankincense, myrrhand juniper leaves that burned by metal or stone braziers, to get smokes of good smell, they were thought to bring welfare, evict evil spirits and achieve Purity when they touched bodies, clothes, doors and fences of places they lived or worshipped in, or earn a living by, and that becomes obvious through what the archaeology teams working in the ruins of the kingdom of Hatra found like incense braziers, some of them used to be carried by hand by monks, and others were fixed to the walls of temples. Others were close to the gods' statues and on top of the city's fences (Rasheed, 1979; Ali, 1993).

Fire: Fire used to be a vital sanctity adopted by the ancient peoples of the world, as we can find Indian, Greek and Roman peoples used to burn their dead bodies by the fire thinking that it purified them & released them from sins & guilts, as we also find Zoroastrian Persians used to sanctify fire, and always built statues of it in their temples (Muhammed, 1991), and the ancient Iraqis thought that fire was a necessary means in Purity to prevent magic and sorcery, and bring welfare, as it was mentioned in ancient writings that "By holy water and fire I purify the place"(Altorah, The Book of Psalms, 51) and what confirmed the sanctity of fire in the kingdom of Hatra, is finding prismatic statues of fire by archaeology teams in large numbers called (Makna), which means "Fire Dekka" (Safar, 1968). Adjacent to the walls of the big temple, where they thought that fire was a source of energy and holy light, as well as purifying the place and protecting it from evil spirits.

2. Spiritual Purity

The worshipper or monk could not be close to the gods except by his materialistic (physical) and spiritual Purity because physical Purity was considered a compliment to spiritual Purity. They could not be separated (Almousawi, 2002), so after monk or worshipper washed and cleaned his body, clothes and place from defilements and suspicions, he initiated spiritual Purity represented by saying prayers reverently before the gods' statue and reading exorcisms and religious prayers, as well as dedicating sacrifices and vows to the gods (Alduroobi, 1970; Hasan, 1991), and donating money to build new temples, as the tribes of BanuBalaqub and BanuTemo (Tameem) did, besides it is preferred to provide free services in temples like initiating cleaning, maintaining the gods' statues of Hatra (Alaswad, 1992).

As for the conditions that used to repeal Purity, they were: Blood that stained the body, clothes or place, because of a wound or as a result to slay a sacrifice or woman's menstruation, as well as the impurity of physical intercourse, lying, a false oath before the gods and failure in fulfilling vows (Ali, 1945; Almousawi, 2002).

First Research: Purity in Religious Rites

Since Purity was a fundamental article in practising religious rites, and a quality that a worshipper had to have, to get close to the gods and satisfy them, so worshippers had to get

purified *via* washing by water, burning incense and wiping with oil, especially before initiating to practice rites and religious rituals (Aldabbagh, 1967; Almajidi, 1998a).

1. Prayers

Prayers were considered an essential religious rite in the doctrine of the people of Hatra, and it was initially saying a prayer directed to the gods, including physical movements that incarnated the state of worshipping and reverence by bowing, kneeling, raising a hand to plead before the god's statue, whether it was in the temple, house, or public square (Abdulwahid & Suleiman, 1979; Ali, 2007).

The monk or worshipper had to get purified before starting saying prayers *via* washing by using water to clean his body from defilements and suspicions, from what is mentioned above we find out that the temples of Hatra contained pools of different sizes and shapes, including square, rectangular and semicircular pools, built in the temple's square, so that worshippers could purify themselves *via* washing by their water, those pools were supplied with water, from a neighbouring well or *via* a water channel that ensured water flow into them permanently (Alduroobi, 1970) and it seems that Purity then meant washing the face, hands and legs with water, and did not mean washing the whole body or plunging, because it was not possible to do that in the exposed temple square especially in bad weather conditions, as well as the shallowness of those pools, and the same went if prayers were at home or in public square, worshipper had to wash to get purified (Almousawi, 2001; Ali, 2007), although the kingdom of Hatra was not established on river banks, its people benefited from underground water in drinking and washing, so they dug wells in almost every house, and established a water channel network inside neighborhoods and built a relatively large pool in the middle of the town, full of flood water flowing towards their land (Alsalihi, 1991b; Alaswad, 1992), and washing the body by water for purifying was not enough, as the monk's clothes or worshipper must have got purified by water and incense, as well as cleaning the place where the prayers said, by sweeping and spraying water (Aldabbagh, 1947; Almajidi, 1998a), the one who said his prayers without consummating the Purity of his body, clothes and place, got cursed by the gods, and his prayers would not be accepted, till he got purified and offer sacrifices to get forgiveness and satisfaction from the gods (Alshams, 1988).

2. Pilgrimage

The writings and inscriptions of Hatra decoded by archaeological teams showed religious ceremonies for a significant number of ancient Arabic tribes had come from different places of Mesopotamia & the Levant to Hatra for pilgrimage & circumambulation around the square (cube) temple that the archaeology teams called "The temple of the solitude of the sun" (Safar & Mustafa, 1974) lied in the middle of the big temple. It was specified for worshipping the sun gods known in Aramaic language as Shamash (Alsalihi, 1991a).

It seems that the pilgrimage rituals in Hatra religion were a doctrinal extension for what it was known for the tribes of the Arabian Peninsula, that innovated several cubic holy shrines, similar to Holy Kaaba in Mecca, to the pilgrimage to them for blessing and asking for forgiveness, like the temple of Najran in Yemen, Ghatafan and DhulKhalasa in the Arabian Peninsula, the temple of Harran and Dhushara in the Levant, and the temple of Ba'utha in Al-Hirah of Mesopotamia (Alkalbi, 1924; Alhamadani, 1990).

The doctrine of the kingdom of Hatra enforced Purity on anyone who went for pilgrimage and circumambulation around the square temple (the sun god temple), as pilgrims had to wash, wear perfume, kindle incense braziers, and some of the religious people might wipe with holy oil, kindle fireplaces adjacent to the temple's walls to consummate the rituals of pilgrimage (Sadaqa, 2007). Besides, the Hatra & Arabic doctrine enforced generally preventing menstruating and puerperal woman, impure man or stained with blood because of a wound or

slaying a sacrifice, so he and the woman had to wash and get purified, to remove the reasons of defilements, in order to consummate their pilgrimage and worship, and get satisfaction from the gods (Alaswad, 1992).

As for the date of pilgrimage in the kingdom of Hatra, it seems that it was connected with solar time. (Alshams, 1988) sees that the date of pilgrimage suited the period of the solstice at the end of December and in April, and we agree with him about suggesting April as a date for practising pilgrimage rituals due to the holiness of this month for the ancient people of Mesopotamia, and the beginning of the Babylonian year that was known as Akitu (Alahmed, 2013).

3. Visiting Temples

The people of the Kingdom of Hatra inherited some religious rites and traditions from the ancient doctrine of the people of Mesopotamia and the doctrine of the Arabic Bedouin tribes that settled in it. Despite the multiplicity of gods and variety of their origins and qualities, the religious rites and ceremonies did not differ for the people of Hatra, as we find them sanctified all the gods in their temples and practise the same worshipping rites, although they were the only people to choose the sun god as an official god for their kingdom (Hasan, 1991).

The Hatra doctrine committed the visitors to temples like monks and worshippers to get purified from defilements by washing with water from the pools in the squares of temples and wearing clean and short clothes so as not to touch any dirt (Baqir & Safar, 1962), and taking their slippers off before entering the temple's structure (*i.e.*, the room specified for the god's statue), as the people of Hatra built the door's threshold that led to the gods' room, a little bit raised from the ground, studded with different kinds of precious stones and coloured glass, to prevent visitors from entering with their slippers, which made them obliged to cross the threshold bare-foot (Safar, 1968), Anyone who refused to take his slippers off got cursed by the gods, as the drawings and monks' statues showed us that they were always bare-foot while walking in the temple, wearing short and straightforward clothes, as long as they were serving the gods and visitors (Safar, 1961).

The archaeological teams discovered relatively semi-circular small pools built of gypsum stone from Mosul that does not absorb water. They were put on the right side of the door leading to the gods' room – the water of those pools were known as holy water, in other words, the water on which religious prayers read – specified for quenching visitors and blessing, as well as it was sprayed onto anyone entered the gods' room to purify them from sins and guilt's. Visitors also had to get perfumed with oils and carrying censers of good smell that created an atmosphere of holiness and awe in the hearts of attendants (Alaswad, 1992), and the visitors of the temples of Hatra used not to eat foods of unwanted smells, like fish, garlic, leek and onions, because they thought that their smells annoyed the gods and forbade their presence (Maul, 1999).

Second Research: Purity in Social Feasts and Occasions

As the people of Hatra committed to Purity before practising the rites of prayers, pilgrimage and visiting, they committed to that too as practising the feast ceremonies and religious and social occasions.

1. Akitu

Akitu was known as the Assyrian Babylonian New Year, and it was an ancient religious feast of an economic and political character. The residents of ancient Iraqi states and cities used to celebrate on it for twelve days, starting from the first of April according to the ancient Babylonian calendar, which was on the twenty-first of March according to the recent calendar (Alaswad, 2011).

During Akitu, many religious ceremonies and rites were held, the most important one of them was what used to happen during the fifth day of the feast as the rite of physical, spiritual and place Purity used to be held on it, and the high monk and the other monks of exorcist rank, getting up before sunrise for washing and perfuming, and wearing pure clothes, with carrying incense braziers to emit good smells to perfume the temple and purify it, with wiping the temple doors and walls with holy oil and water, and initiating sweeping its room and lobbies with palm leaves, and spraying water in four directions, as well as setting fire and reading scripts of religious prayers and exorcisms, to evict evil spirits and enable the gods to attend in order to bring welfare and blessing to their city (Delaporte,1997), and this rite was followed by another rite represented by slaying a ram in the temple's alter then getting it out, believing that their guilts and the evil spirits replaced the ram's body, so they threw it into the river or threw it out of the city's fences, to get rid of their guilts and purify the temple (Abdulhalim, 1983), and anyone slayed the ram didn't have the right to enter the temple, unless he washed with water, because they thought he became defiled when he slayed the ram, and as inviting the king, monk and temple's custodians to have a meal during Akitu celebrations, they practice the rite of washing hands to be blessed to satisfy the gods before eating (Alahmed, 2013).

2. Building the Temple or House

One of the religious doctrines that were common for the people of Hatra was purifying the place they chose to build the temple, or to make it as a residence, as they were eager to purify the temple of house's piece of land before starting building, as well as when they finished building it (Alduroobi, 1970).

Temple

The ancient Iraqis chose the temple's land, to be near estuaries, or where underground water existed owing to their need for water to practice the purifying rites that consummated their religious rites, as before the people of Hatra initiated the rites of purifying the temple's land, first they worked on purifying the city's land, *via* spraying their border with holy water and saying the purifying's prayers, to be blessed and godly protected (Samar, 2018) and once that was done, the king of high monk purified the land where the temple was meant to be built, *via* spraying the holy water and reading exorcism "by holy water I purify the place" (Almajidi,1998a), and that was known as (holy wiping) to release the temple's land from defilements and sins, then the works of building started, and once the temple is finished, the purifying monks started cleaning it from the remains of the building and sweeping dusts with palm leaves and spraying water especially on walls and corners, and burning incense to perfume it, with reciting religious anthems, as they used to think that the smoke of incense and anthems worked on evicting evil spirits through ventilation holes and windows (Delaporte, 1997).

House

As the people of Hatra thought that the new temple was to be purified, they also thought the new house was to be purified to get rid of defilements and sins because defilements and sins threatened the gods in their temples as they threatened people in their houses (Almajidi, 1998a). The rite of purifying house is very similar to the rite of purifying the temple, where the owner of the house got help from purifying and exorcist monks who sprayed holy water on the house's walls, room doors and four corners, with carrying incense braziers of good smell smoke to get evil spirits out of the house (Almousawi, 2002). Fire torches were used as a source of energy and power, to burn demons with drumming to purify the house entirely from evils and sins, with reading the exorcism "for the evil matters existed which brought miseries to so and so the house, I have made you die out of the house" (Alahmed, 2013).

As for the gods' statues wanted to be put in the house, the purifying rites practised on them, by taking them to a riverbed or well at sunrise to be washed by water then dried, and religious exorcisms read upon them, and at the end of those rites, sacrifices presented to the gods worshipped by the owners of the house were slain, and once those rites finished, the gods' statues were put in the house (Almajidi, 1998b).

3. Woman's Purity and Marriage Rites

The woman of Hatra had a unique position in society religiously and socially, owing to her need for caring of her Purity more than man, because of menstruation and postpartum, so the principles of Purity obliged that menstruating woman remained defiled not to be touched by man for seven days, till she finished her period and washed, as well as at giving birth and intercourse, she had to get purified to practice her religious rites after the disappearance of impurity reasons, and it seems that because of the religious position the kingdom of Hatra had, it was made as a direction for pilgrimages and holy place to which vows and sacrifices were given, and a holy tradition was practiced on its menstruating women, (Aljarim,1923) they had to leave the neighborhoods where temples were, to spend their menstruating period out of them, and not being able to get back home unless that period finished, and it seems that this tradition was practiced on nuns, monks' daughters, leaders and kings' women, of all the ordinary people's daughters, as Al-Nadirah, the king Santaruq II's daughter did when she finished her menstruation period, from her father's palace to stay temporarily near the city's fences (Alzarkali, 1986; Alnuwayri, 2004).

As for the purity rites upon marriage, the social doctrine and traditions stated that the groom and bride had to wash with pure water and going to the temple, to the qasheesh monk, *i.e.*, the prominent sheikh, to finish the marriage contract and get blessed by the gods by saying the marriage's prayer, as the qasheesh spilt liquids (holy water and oil) on the groom and bride and perfumed them with incense and good perfumes, to purify them and release them from sins and guilts (Safar & Mustafa, 1974).

Third Research: Purity in Recovery Exorcisms and Funeral Rites

Purity became the main article in practising recovery exorcisms and in consummating funeral rites, as the people of Hatra believed that defilement and guilts were the foundation of every sickness and magic, as they believed that the dead body had to be purified to evict him from the demons of the underworld (Aljarim, 1923; Delaporte, 1997).

1. Recovery Exorcisms

The ancient Iraqis and the people of Hatra specifically thought that sickness and magic were two symptoms for one case affected man because of defilement and the large number of guilts that because of them the evil spirits controlled the sick person's soul and body and settled in the place where he lived, so the recovery exorcisms practiced by the doctor monk before everything required purifying patient and his house (Almajidi,1998 a), by the usual purifying methods like water, incense, fire and oil with reading religious prayers and exorcisms, and the god (Shamash)- The kingdom of Hatra's god - was specialized in the Namburbi rites (Suleiman, 2020), *i.e.*, the rites of evicting evil spirits, that began with sweeping the sick person's house by the purifying monks (Ramko) and exorcists - Ashibu and Mishmashu - (Abdulwahid, 1991) and spraying the house's corners and walls with holy water, and burning incense with reading the exorcist "with clean purified water, and bright pure water, spray, purify and clean seven times" (Alahmed, 2013) because they believed that the Purity of the sick person's place was necessary to release him from evil and sins, then the sick person was purified *via* spraying his head, body and clothes with holy water, and his body might be wiped with water and oil mixed with some

aromatic herbs, and using fire and oil by burning foodstuffs like date and onions or burning specific toys or statues accompanied some of the recovery from sicknesses and magic rites, so that magic get incarnated in them to be burned, with reading the exorcism "pure oil, bright oil, shiny oil,, I will remove your sickness from you" (Almajidi, 1998b).

2. Funeral Rites

The ancient Arabic tribes that settled in the kingdom of Hatra used to practice funeral rites for their dead people, like what was known for the other Arabic tribes, and the most important of them was purifying the body of deceased with water and mummifying it with perfumes, and wiping them with oils, and shrouding them with fabric or fronds (Alshahriastani, 2006), the archeology teams in the first temple of Hatra- known as (Temple of Nargul) – uncovered the existence of a room that contained a concave pool, it turned out to be specified for washing dead bodies (Hasan, 1991), and in the exposed temple, they found a room with a rectangular pool inside next to stone terraces, it seems that dead bodies used to covered on them to be washed and wiped with oil, then shrouded (Alaswad,1992), and since the washing rites finished, dead bodies were buried in the grave's hole, or it might have been put in pottery, stone or wooden coffins, according to the traditions as well as religions and economic position of the deceased's family, although the archeology teams found burning remnants on a number of the dead bodies in the big cemetery east of Hatra city (Safar, 1952), but the evidence and written inscriptions show that they belonged to Greek and Romanian communities, as the Arabs did not have the habit of burning the dead, as they used to bury them in the sand, because they thought that soul would not rest and might turn into an evil spirit, unless it was buried in a purified place like sand (Delaporte,1997).

CONCLUSION

Through what was studied in our humble research, we mentioned several items and contents from which we concluded many vital centres, the most featured ones are as follows:

- Despite the rareness of continuous water sources in the kingdom of Hatra, their residents were creative in establishing a network of channels and pools that depended on underground water in delivering water into houses, temples and public squares, where it was benefited in drinking, washing and purifying rites, by using gypsum stone of Mosul (pore-free) for water rationing and not wasting it.
- The people of Hatra did not use one means of physical and spiritual purification, but their means were varied, used according to the case wanted to be purified, *via* washing with water, wiping with oil or perfuming with incense, as well as reciting anthems and reading religious exorcisms.
- Polytheism in the kingdom of Hatra and the variety in ethnic origins of their residents was not an obstacle to the harmony of doctrinal ideology and the worshipping rites associated with it, and it was not an obstacle to unifying habits and traditions adopted by the society of Hatra through its long history.
- The residents of Hatra used to have a developed and social doctrinal ideology, unlike the civilized prosperity level that they reached, for the upscale concepts of the spiritual and physical Purity they adopted, by putting slippers off before entering the gods' room, wearing short clothes that did not touch the land dirt and washing with water before practising worshipping rites and social celebrations, as well as purifying the deceased's body before burying it.

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