

4. The sacred topography of the city of Nîmes

Finally, there is this bas-relief which may be representing the god APOLLO:

[335] Stone slab with moulding, bas-relief

Height: 45.5 cm.

Nîmes (Gard), uncertain origin.

Bas-relief of leg. Moulding decorated with bay leaves.

Musée de Nîmes,

CAG 30/1, 686, p. 514 (10), fig. 382.

Photo: CCJ.



In addition, several other sculptural fragments have been discovered at 'La Fontaine' depicting a wide range of deities and mythical figures. For example, there is also a two-faced HERMES and a SILENUS – a satyr, Dionyos' companion – in white marble (14.5cm)¹²²³ and the head of satyre in red marble.¹²²⁴ Male statuettes found at 'La Fontaine' include a statuette of BACCHUS (7cm) and of a small AMOR (11cm).¹²²⁵ There are also many other statuettes, which might be votive objects: like the statuette of a bearded philosopher, an athlete and the statuette of a cupbearer (no.8).¹²²⁶

4.2.7 Egyptian deities at 'La Fontaine': ISIS, SERAPIS and ANUBIS

So far, we have mainly dealt with Roman and Celtic theonyms representing primarily local deities. But it seems that the sanctuary complex at 'La Fontaine' and 'Tour Magne' was also a centre for the cult of Graeco-Egyptian deities. Already Ménard concluded¹²²⁷ in 1758 that there must have been a cult place for ISIS¹²²⁸ and SERAPIS near the Tour Magne on the basis of the evidence. The highest concentration of finds comes from the Tour Magne, but we also find testimonies in a wider area, notably also in the spring sanctuary. We also need to re-think our interpretation of the Graeco-Egyptian deities: they are not separate from the other cults at Nîmes; the choice of ISIS and SERAPIS may reflect people's choices who may have intended to combine the divine forces of the spring sanctuary with the all-powerful Egyptian gods, i.e. ISIS could have been seen as a variant of the local mother goddess, TERRA MATER. Similarly, SERAPIS takes up the common theme of death and re-birth, similar to ATTIS in Glanum (v. *supra*).

There are numerous finds, inscriptions and sculptures,¹²²⁹ relating to the worship of ISIS, such as a dedication to HISIS(!)¹²³⁰ and an inscription mentioning the temple to ISIS and SERAPIS, together with

¹²²³ Esp. XV 8786; CAG 30/1, p. 268, statue no 13

¹²²⁴ CAG 30/1, p. 267, statue no 10.

¹²²⁵ CAG 30/1, p. 267, statue nos 1 and 3.

¹²²⁶ CAG 30/1, p. 267, statue nos 6-8.

¹²²⁷ Ménard 1758, 133ff.

¹²²⁸ Cf. ANRW 1.18, 2.18, p. 465 for the importance of 'isiasme' at Nîmes.

¹²²⁹ CAG 30/1, n° 107, p. 225; Ménard 1758, 133ff.

¹²³⁰ CIL XII 3061 et *add.*; IAN 46; HGL 97=482; CAG 30/1, n° 107, p. 224f, inscription n° 1.

4. The sacred topography of the city of Nîmes

the deities VESTA and DIANA.¹²³¹ Considering that this inscription was found near the Tour Magne, it could be a public testimony of the person's euergetism or testament, made public at the site of the Iseion where the decurions of Nîmes had the right to dine, as stipulated in this inscription:

[336] Marble slab

Nîmes (Gard), discovered at the top of the stairs leading to the hill of the 'Tour Magne' before 1560; nearby numerous finds, perhaps from the alleged Isis-Serapis sanctuary, were discovered in a well.

[--- Isis] ex [---]
 Serapis Vestae Dianae Somni [ex]
 HS n(umero) VI (milibus) et phialas II chrysen[g]l[yp]tas? et si[g]na
 deorum argentea castrensia [--- quae in]
 domo habebat item [---]
 5 dedicatione templi Isis et Serapis dec[uri]-
 onibus Nemausensium
 et ornamentar[iis]
 singulis (denarios) V ita ut
 in publico uescerentur
 10 distribui iussit inque eius domus [tu-]
 telam HS n(umum) X (milia) reliquit
 item [--- im-]
 aginem Martis argenteam ex [---]
 [S]amnagensibus dedit. [Hui]-
 15 c ordo Bitur[igum ---]
 [---].

.....
 ISIS signa-isis
 SERAPIS-VESTAE-DIANAE-SOMNI-HS-N-VI
 ET-PHIALAS-II-CHRYSENDETAS-CLIPNUM-SIGNA
 DEORVM-ARGENTEA-CASTRENSIA-quae-in-DO
 MO-HABEBAT-temple-isis-et-serapis-dedit-ITEM
 DEDICATIONE-TEMPLI-ISIS-ET-SERAPIS
 DEORVM-que-vestae-dianae-somni-in-festis
 decurionibus-NEMAUSENSIVM-ET-ORNA
 MENTARIIS-omnibus-SINGVLIS-N-V-ITA-VT
 N-PUBLICO-UESCERENTVR-DISTRIBVI
 TVSSIT-INQVE-EIVS-DOMVS-aeternalis
 perpetuam-tutelam-HS-N-X-RELIQVIT
 ITEM-pulcherrimam-IMAGINEM-MARTIS-AR
 GENTEAM-EX-pondo.....
 AMNAGENSIBVS-DEDIT-quam-ipsi-olim
 C-ORDO-BITVRIGNUS..... honoris
 causa-dederat.....

'[Images of Isis] worth [... sesterces ---], of Serapis, Vesta, Diana and Somnus worth 6,000 sesterces and two gilded, engraved bowls and silver images of the gods *castrensia*,¹²³² which he had at home(?). He(?) also ordered at the dedication of the temple of Isis and Serapis that the decurions of Nemausus and those with *ornamentarii*,¹²³³ each being attributed five *denarii* so that they can dine in public. For the maintenance of his house he left 10,000 sesterces and he gave a silver bust of Mars worth [...] to the Samnagenses. This the *ordo* of the Biturgii [...].

1.1 [Signa. --- Isis] ex [HS -] (SIRIS).

1.3 HS n(umum) (SIRIS).

1.6 no line break in SIRIS and Wierschowski.

11.15-16 HGL reconstructs [--- honoris causa dederat...].

(for translation, also cf. Wierschowski, p. 174).

Today lost.

Ménard 1758, 133-135, 257, 260, 287; CIL XII 3058; HGL XV 94 = 447; SIRIS 728; Wierschowski 2001, p. 174, n° 213a; CAG 30/1, n° 107 (7), p. 224; Blétry-Sébé and Veyrac 1991, 123.

This text shows the euergetism of a philanthropist whose name remains anonymous. The euergetism of a MARS statue to the Samnagenses – an *ethnos* that can be today located west of Nîmes (around Murviel-lès-Montpellier) and perhaps an independent *ciuitas* – may indicate that he had a special attachment to this place, perhaps his home place. This inscription seems to attest a temple for ISIS and SERAPIS, probably a civic cult, as the decurions were directly involved. So far, this temple has not been located. There is a figure capital from Nîmes depicting a *sistrum*, a sacred musical instrument in Egypt and an attribute for many Egyptian deities, notably ISIS,¹²³⁴ which might be part of a cult place, but since the capital's reconstructed size was no more than 25 cm, it probably belonged only to a small shrine or even a *lararium*.

¹²³¹ For this inscription, also cf. Wierschowski 2001, 174, n° 213a.

¹²³² Like those that one finds in military forts.

¹²³³ Honorary emblems of the decurions.

¹²³⁴ Lassalle 1968; after CAG 30/1, the precise origin is unknown.

4. The sacred topography of the city of Nîmes

Here, we should also mention the called ‘temple of DIANA’ which resembles the Egyptian temple at Rome with semi-lunar or semi-circular tympanum,¹²³⁵ but most of our finds come from the Mont Cavalier. There are many small finds from around the Tour Magne, like a terracotta statuette of ISIS and HORUS,¹²³⁶ but there are also a number of important finds from ‘La Fontaine’. Several indications suggest the popularity of the ISIS cult in Nîmes, notably this epitaph that records a public priesthood for ISIS:¹²³⁷

[337] Rectangular stone, funerary inscription, surrounded by moulding

Height: 44 cm; width: 45 cm; panel: length: 31 cm; width: 31 cm. 2nd century A.D.

Nîmes (Gard), found re-cycled in the wall of n° 42, *Cours-Neuf* (today *avenue Jean-Jaurès*, porte de Cadereau), not far from ‘La Fontaine’ in 1880.

*Marcus Gessius
augur et Tettia
Cresce(n)s uxor
Isidis sacerdos in
suo sibi posuerunt
monimentum ni
heredem sequatur.*

‘Marcus Gessius, augur, and his wife Tettia Crescens, priestess of Isis, have erected for themselves this monument on their property.’

l.6 *mon<u>mentum n<e>*.

Musée archéologique de Nîmes.

IAN 216; *CIL* XII 3224 (add. p. 836); *HGL* 816; *SIRIS* 732; Turcan 1986, p. 464; n° 52-52; *RICIS*-2, 605/0104 (plate CXV); *CAG* 30/1, n° 221, p. 311, inscription n° 1.

IAN has interpreted *augur* as *cognomen*, but it is more likely that the dedicant did not have a cognomen and that this was his title. The marriage between a municipal augur and a priestess of ISIS may indicate that the cult of the Egyptian goddess was not only socially accepted, but also had, as already suggested on the basis of the previous inscription, a public character in Nîmes.

¹²³⁵ Cf. Turcan 1986, 465; Linckenheld 1935; Roux 1962, 15-16. Also cf. Moore 1907.

¹²³⁶ Terracotta statuette of ISIS and HORUS, height 8.5cm (*CAG* 30/1, n° 107, p. 225 discovered at the *colline de la Tour Magne*). Other finds from Nîmes include for example a head of JUPITER SERAPIS (Esp. III 2671, *CAG* 30/1, n° 685 (4), p. 511: from Nîmes, Musée archéologique de Nîmes, today lost) and the head of the bull APIS in marble (Ménard 1758, 157; *CAG* 30/1, n° 685, p. 513: Nîmes: lost); capital, decorated with a sister of the ISIS cult (Lassalle 1968, 257-259; *CAG* 30/1, n° 685, p. 511: Nîmes); Bronze statuette of OSIRIS (Leclant 1974, 269; *CAG* 30/1, n° 688, p. 516 (9): non localised. Musée de Louvre); and there is also an additional dedication to ISIS (*HGL* 1335; *CAG* 13/1, n° 336 (12), discovered at the *place Bellecroix*, today lost).

¹²³⁷ There is also the tomb of a priestess of ISIS, as suggested by the grave goods, cf. *CAG* 30/1, n° 508, p. 443-4 : 534 *avenue Maréchal-Juin*. For priests of ISIS in Gaul, also cf. Guimet 1900, 86 (fig. 11).