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On the Beginning of the Dura Synagogue Inscription

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I VENTURE to suggest that the reading of the second word in the third line of the Aramaic inscription at Dura Europos, which Prof. Obermann¹ reads דא[ב]א, Prof. Torrey² דא כעין, and Prof. Reider³ דאנויא, is to be read דאינון.

The first letter is ד, the second א, the third letter is obliterated, the fourth is נ, the fifth ו (as can be seen in many cases the forms of ו and י are very much alike), and the last letter is a final ן. Its form resembles the final נ in the following word הרתן. The word דאינון (cf. Yer. B. B. 17c, דאינון = דינון) is the plural form of the personal pronoun and stands here in order to equate the date according to the Seleucid era with the date by the regnal year of Philippos. Dating according to the Seleucid era is commonly found in Palmyrene inscriptions, but never has any special indication as to the era used been added. It is unlikely that the Jews of Dura-Europos would think it necessary to indicate the era they meant, but they equated it to the corresponding year of the reigning Roman emperor.

In his note Reider adduced some examples of the use of the expressions דהי הי or די הי, used in inscriptions for comparing dates. In the Elephantine papyri we find the word הו, when the Jewish month is being equated with the Egyptian. It is true, it would be more correct to use the singular form די הי, or contracted דהי, instead of the plural דאינון, but in spite of it this seems to me to be the only possible reading.

This reading already occurred to me on my visit to Dura-Europos in the beginning of 1933, and I communicated it then to Du Mesnil du Buisson. Incidentally I should like to add that I cannot see any traces of the word Julius, after Philippos, as suggested by Obermann and Torrey. Some word was apparently originally erased, perhaps owing to a mistake of the scribe. Besides, it would be more likely to find Julius before Philippos, and not after it.

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¹ *The Excavations at Dura-Europos*. Preliminary Report of Sixth Season, p. 390.

² *JQR*, XXVIII, 295 ff.

³ *Ibid.*, XXIX, 343 f.