

WD Modeling for People at Dura in Wikidata

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Label: should be the name where known (it might be necessary to create items for relatives, for example, where the name is not known)


Example: Known Person, Label = Julius Terentius; Unknown Person, Label = Son of Zebida


Description: <Any short phrase used to disambiguate this individual from another>

Suggested format: Person attested in <key evidence for this person>, <occupation, if known>, <dates/time period>

Alias: alternative names or ways of rendering name

All WikiData items for people should have these properties:

Free-text label (concept to be expressed)	WikiData Property/Relationship	Notes
What is this item?	Instance of (P31): Human (Q5)	All real people should have human as a value for instance of. This data model is not designed with mythological figures, etc. in mind.
Gender	Sex or gender (P21): Male (Q6581097) Female (Q6581072) If gender is uncertain, enter the assumed gender with qualifier 'sourcing circumstances' (P1480) = uncertainty (Q13649246) If gender unknown, use P21 with value 'unknown value'.  <i>unknown value</i>	Other values include non-binary (Q48270), trans man (Q2449503), trans woman (Q1052281), and intersex person (Q104717073). Other wikidata items that are instances of gender identity (Q48264) can be found here https://w.wiki/8ohF I have not seen any scholarship about an individual associated with Dura that would allow us to give a value other than male or female for this property. It is relevant to

		<p>other historical figures, such as the 18th century preacher, Public Universal Friend (Q10306630). There could also be instances in which there is debate or uncertainty about an individual's gender.¹</p>
<p>What information do we have about this person's name?</p>	<p>Given name (P735) Family name (P734)</p> <p>Name in native language (P1559) Birth name (P1477)</p> <p>Roman praenomen (P2358) Roman nomen gentilicium (P2359) Roman cognomen (P2365) Gens (P5025)</p>	<p>Of course, not all name-related properties will be used for an individual, but using as many as possible will help with querying. The '<i>gens</i>' property could be put with family information. 'Roman agnomen' (P2366) and 'nickname' (P1449) are other properties that might be used.</p>
<p>What do we know about dates for this person?</p>	<p>Date of birth (P569) Date of death (P570) Floruit (P1317)</p> <p>Time period (P2348): Roman empire (Q2277) Roman Period, Dura-Europos (Syria) (Q123437479), etc.</p> <p>If dates, such as date of birth for example, are unknown, use one of the properties above with 'unknown value'.</p> <div>  unknown value </div>	<p>At least one of 'date of birth,' 'date of death,' or 'floruit' should be used. As it currently stands, items with a 'date of death' should also have a 'date of birth,' according to WikiData. The 'time period' property should be used when the '<i>gens</i>' property is used.</p>

¹ I have encountered an example, unrelated to Dura, on a curse tablet in which it is uncertain whether the masculine or feminine version of the name is used.

	If a date range is known, use decade/millennium value + qualifiers 'earliest date' (P1319) and 'latest date' (P1326) and 'sourcing circumstances' (P1480) = uncertainty (Q13649246).	
How to keep track of all individuals associated with a WikiProject project?	On focus list of Wikimedia project (P5008)	This property is especially applicable to the IDEA project. Pointing to the value "Wikiproject IDEA" allows the project to track/query Dura content.

Suggested properties wherever possible:

Free-text label (concept to be expressed)	WikiData Property/Relationship	Notes
What was the person's occupation?	Occupation (P106) Military rank (P410) Position held (P39)	To connect occupation with a military unit, a qualifier (such as 'member of,' P463) should be used. The 'occupation' property currently limits qualifiers .
What do we know about the person's family?	Father (P22) Mother (P25) Sibling (P3373) Spouse (P26) Unmarried partner (P451) Child (P40)	'Series ordinal' (P1545) can be used as a qualifier for birth or spouse order. For other relationships, consider using 'relative' (P1038) with the qualifier 'kinship to subject' (P1039). To express what broader family group or dynasty a person might belong to (e.g. Pericles is an Alcaemonid) use 'family' (P53).

Any images in Wikimedia Commons of or related to this person?	<p>Image (P18)</p> <p>Depicted by (P1299)</p> <p>Plaque image (P1801)</p> <p>Grave image (P1442)</p> <p>Related image (P6802)</p>	<p>The 'image' property adds the picture to the WikiData item, while 'depicted by' connects the two items.</p> <p>'Related image' to be used for a "less fitting image, used only because a better alternative is not available. If an appropriate image of the item is available, use P18"</p>
What is this person's citizenship status?	<p>country of citizenship (P27):</p> <p>Ancient Rome (Q1747689)</p>	<p>This property needs to be discussed further because it does not seem to fit the circumstances of the ancient world very well.</p> <p>A possible alternative would be to use the 'social classification' property (see below) with a the value of e.g. 'Roman citizen'.</p>
Where did this person live?	Residence (P551)	<p>In addition to examples where specific houses can be safely linked with individuals (for example, Lysias), this property can be used to connect people to Dura-Europos (for example, Julius Terentius). This property can have multiple values, so it can be used for individuals who did not only live at Dura.</p>
Where did this person work?	Work location (P937)	<p>This property can also link individuals to Dura or even to specific buildings. 'Start time' and 'end time' should be used as qualifiers when known, especially in the case of modern excavators.</p>

How did this person die?	Manner of death (P1196) Cause of death (P509)	'Cause of death' is more specific than 'manner of death,' so for Julius Caesar, 'manner of death' is given as 'homicide' and 'cause of death' as 'bleeding' with qualifier for 'has immediate cause' with value 'stabbing.'
What ancient documentation do we have about this person?		<p>This aspect of representing ancient people on Wikidata needs further discussion. There are a number of options available, such as 'depicted by' or 'described by source', but issues exist with using them as they are currently described on Wikidata. For a full discussion, see our Connecting People and Sources document.</p> <p>To link an object to the person, from the perspective of the object, see table below.</p>
Where did this person die, or where were they buried?	Place of death (P20) Place of burial (P118)	
What languages can we associate this person with?	Native language (P103) Name in native language (P1559) Languages spoken, written, or signed (P1412)	Potentially, we should have very clear evidence that an individual used this language.
Is there an event that this person can be associated with?	Conflict (P607) Participant in (P1344) Significant event (P793)	We could use conflict for the various military engagements at Dura.

		'Participant in' could be used for non-military events. It seems less general than 'significant event,' which might make it preferable where either could be used.
What was this person's social class?	Social classification (P3716) Enslaved person (Q12773225)	This property is only for categories "recognized in traditional or state law." It is frequently used for enslaved individuals and for enslavers (Q10076267), as well as royalty and nobility. One's social class would be useful demographic information to have, but could be hard to prove/define.
What groups did this person belong to?	Member of (P463)	This property can be used to connect individuals to religious groups (like the Mithraic Community at Dura-Europos, Q124971351) or military units.

Other properties to consider:

Free-text label (concept to be expressed)	WikiData Property/Relationship	Notes
Is there another location that can be associated with this person?	Significant place (P7153)	Requires the qualifier 'object has role' (P3831) There is currently no property used to say where an individual worshiped. It seems like this could be a

		generally useful property and might be worthwhile suggesting.
What can we say about this person's religious activity?	Religion or worldview (P140)	It is important to be able to model information we have about an individual's religious activity, but more work needs to be done in modeling ancient religious activity in Wikidata. This is a property that allows for multiple values. See below for some further thoughts on this issue.

Linking a Person to an object (statements on the object page):

Free Text Label (concept to be expressed)	WikiData Property/Relationship	Notes
Name in consular dating formula	Significant person (P3342) = [name] + qualifier 'object has role' (P3831) = 'Roman consul' (Q40779)	I wonder if it would be better to create a new item for this, like 'consul in dating protocol' - or perhaps this should be a property? Something to bring up with wider LOD community.
Name in regnal dating formula	Significant person (P3342) = [name] + qualifier 'object has role' (P3831) = ruler (Q1097498) monarch (Q116)	See above, same question Maybe it would be worth proposing a 'name in dating protocol' property to cover all the different eponymous approaches.
Individual mentioned in text	Significant person (P3342) = [name] + qualifier 'object has role' (P3831) = 'subject of depiction' (Q53001749)	Alternatively, a property 'mentions' could be proposed! Again, something to discuss with wider LOD community. 'subject of depiction' (Q53001749) will work in

		many circumstances, but not all. For further discussion on the properties and values which might be used for this information, see our Connecting People a... document
Sender of letter/order etc	Significant person (P3342) = [name] + qualifier 'object has role' (P3831) = 'Sender' (Q12300659)	
Recipient of letter/order etc	Significant person (P3342) = [name] + qualifier 'object has role' (P3831) = 'addressee' (Q28008314)	
Someone signing off on an order or similar	Significant person (P3342) = [name] + qualifier 'object has role' (P3831) = signatory (Q28008347)	
Witness of contract or similar	Significant person (P3342) = [name] + qualifier 'object has role' (P3831) = witness (Q196939)	Probably also needs to be coupled with signatory, since witnessing and signing that you have witnessed can be parsed as two separate actions.

Working example:

Julius Terentius (<https://www.wikidata.org/wiki/Q20379106>)

The IDEA team takes the position that there is utility in creating basic Wikidata items for all people attested at the site of Dura-Europos, even in instances where biographical information about the individual is extremely limited. In adopting this stance, we follow the lead established by Trismegistos in the “[TM People](#)” facet of their project and the [Prosopography of the Byzantine Empire](#). It is our contention that individuals with fewer clear biographical details tend also to belong to historically marginalized groups not

robustly represented in the material record (enslaved peoples; women; children) and thus that it is critical to preserve and make visible the scant traces of their lives wherever possible. The records for ancient historical persons created and maintained by the IDEA team serve a functional role for the project within the Wikidata ecosystem, but it is our intention in building this open dataset that our work can be absorbed into developing LOD efforts aimed at the documentation of ancient people transregionally (including by Trismegistos and other members of the international [Pelagios People Activity](#)). We would also argue that documenting people attested at Dura-Europos in Wikidata specifically offers something different to other prosopographic databases. Where some only operate in particular European languages (English for Trismegistos, and German for the [Prosopographia Imperii Romani](#)), Wikidata incorporates multilingual searches. Most other offerings in digital prosopography are also restricted in scope (such as the [Lexicon of Greek Personal Names](#), the [Digital Prosopography of the Roman Republic](#) or the [Athenian Onomasticon](#)) and so do not integrate people data into a broader knowledge landscape as Wikidata does. The one database which does take a wider perspective, Trismegistos, uses a subscription model. Expanding the digital prosopography of the ancient world into the open access environment of Wikidata, therefore, will represent a useful contribution to this field by the IDEA project.

Complications in modeling religious practices in the ancient world, in particular at Dura-Europos during the Roman period:

The most obvious property to use would be [religion or worldview](#) (P140). I am not sure how closely the logic behind this property mirrors how people at Dura would have thought about their religious activity, but I think that this would be the property that people would use to query for information about religion. One alternative or supplement would be to create Wikidata items for religious communities at Dura, like the [Mithraic community at Dura](#), and use the [member of](#) property (P463) to connect them. There is a property for [worshipped by](#) (P1049), but that is meant to connect deities to religions or groups of people not individuals.

The wikidata item [ancient Roman religion](#) has the description "form of Indo-European polytheism practiced in the Roman civilization," which seems too narrow to reflect religious life as experienced at Dura. The religion or worldview property does allow for multiple values. If we created an item for something like lived religion in ancient Rome, we could have it as a value for religion or worldview for all individuals at Dura during the Roman period. This value could then help to document religious diversity in ancient Rome. Then if we had extra information about an individual's religious activities we could add other values.

While 'ancient Roman religion' is used for many Romans (for example, [Julius Caesar](#)), occasionally [polytheism](#) is used (for example, [Ammianus Marcellinus](#)). The property 'religion or worldview' is not used for either [Elagabalus](#) and [Julian](#). A priesthood is listed for each using the property position held. I am not sure that ancient Roman religion captures the syncretic nature of polytheism at Dura. On the other hand, maybe individuals from Rome who went to Dura would not feel that their religious activities in both locations were different, even if there were some different or syncretized gods? For example, does the identity of the deities (whether they are Palmyrene deities or deified Roman emperors) on the fresco of [Julius Terentius performing a sacrifice](#) change the information we would want to model about his religious activity?

This data model is not designed to account for the human remains uncovered at the site. Although there could be advantages to using WikiData to catalog information about the individuals whose remains were found at an archaeological site, this was not the focus of the Yale-French team at Dura.

Nevertheless, some archival documents depict and at least one artifact contains human remains, which we must take into account. Ethical considerations with such documents and artifacts remain, but for the present, we can at least make the WikiData items easy to query in this way:

<https://www.wikidata.org/wiki/Q122812171> artifact, chain mail with human bone attached; I have added the statement: made from material → human remains (Q105525662)

<https://www.wikidata.org/wiki/Q122812171> and <https://www.wikidata.org/wiki/Q122677103> two examples of archival photographs of, among other things, human remains; I have added the statement: depicts → human remains