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Title: **Palmyrenes in Hatra: evidence for cultural relations in the Fertile Crescent**

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**Abstract:** The article discusses the archaeological evidence for contacts between Palmyra and Hatra. In the past, it has been assumed frequently that these contacts were strong and of a commercial nature. The available evidence does not substantiate this assumption. Only one Palmyrene relief was found in a small shrine in the residential area of Hatra. From this one cannot conclude that there was a strong Palmyrene presence in the city, let alone that these Palmyrenes were merchants. This becomes especially clear when one compares the situation in Hatra with cities, such as Dura-Europos, where Palmyrenes figure prominently in the archaeological record.

**Keywords:** Hatra, Palmyra, Dura-Europos, trade

PALMYRENES IN HATRA:  
EVIDENCE FOR CULTURAL RELATIONS  
IN THE FERTILE CRESCENT

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LUCINDA DIRVEN

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During the first three centuries of the Common Era, people from Palmyra were attested in many places outside their famous caravan city. Archaeological evidence testifying to the presence of Palmyrenes has been found from Roman Britain in the west to Bahrain in the east.<sup>1</sup> Not surprisingly, the evidence that testifies to the presence of Palmyrenes abroad is particularly rich in Dura-Europos, a city located about 220 km east of Palmyra (Dirven 1999). In Hatra, the famous city of the sun god located in the eastern Jazirah in present day Iraq [Fig. 1], Palmyrenes figured far less prominently in the archaeological record. In 1986, a small Palmyrene relief was found in one of the small shrines (al-Salihi 1987: 55–58, Pl. XIII) [Fig. 2]. It is the first find from Hatra that unambiguously testifies to cultural contacts between the two cities.<sup>2</sup> Notwithstanding the scarcity of the material, it was postulated frequently in the past that contacts between both cities were strong

1 For an overview of this material, see Dirven 1998. On recent finds, see Yon 2013a, in this volume.

2 According to al-Salihi 1987: 58–61; 1990: 34–35, Temple XIII yielded another Palmyrene monument; a limestone altar adorned with figures in relief. The Palmyrene origin of this object is, however, far from certain. In addition to material from Temple XIII, two inscriptions, H214 and H293, are sometimes cited to illustrate the connection between the two cities. Both refer to the Bene Taimu. In Palmyra, Bene Taimu refers to a clan or family group. It is by no means certain, however, that the name refers to a clan in Hatra: Dijkstra 1995: 186, has shown convincingly that H214 is more likely to mention sons of the same father. Since the personal name Taimu is extremely common in the region, no conclusions can be drawn from its occurrence here. On the implications of this material for the relationship between Hatra and Palmyra, see Yon 2013b.

and that both belonged to the same cultural orbit. The present article aims to shed light on the nature and strength of these contacts. It is often stated that cities in the Syro-Mesopotamian region belonged to the same cultural orbit due to their location in the frontier zone between the Roman and the Parthian empires. To quote J.B. Ward-Perkins, “a citizen of Palmyra would have felt quite as much at home in Parthian Dura or Hatra as he would, for example, in Antioch or Edessa” (Ward-Perkins 1965: 189).<sup>3</sup> Over the past years, I have published several articles in which I argue that the cities in the Fertile Crescent were less uniform than is frequently assumed (Dirven 2008; 2011). In highlighting the cultural and religious differences between cities in the Syrian Mesopotamian desert, I do not argue that there was an impermeable frontier and utterly distinct cultures. I subscribe to the idea, recently advanced by Benjamin Isaac and others, that the so-called frontier between the Roman and the Parthian Empires was more like a zone than a line (Whittaker 1994; Isaac 1990: 139–140, 418–426; Pollard 2004). To a large extent, it was an open frontier, through which people and goods passed freely from one region to the other.<sup>4</sup> The Palmyrene relief that was found in Hatra irrefutably proves that cultural contacts indeed existed.

In any comparison, however, a study of the differences should be as important as a study of the similarities. It is, after all, the differences that call for an explanation, and not the resemblances. Precisely because there was contact between these cities and because they shared a number of cultural elements, variations testify to local characteristics. Furthermore, we should ask ourselves what may be inferred from the fact that there were contacts between these cities. In fact, the finds that testify to contacts do not prove that the interaction was indeed strong. In order to assess this, we should ask ourselves how many people from one place visited the other, whether or not they stayed, for how long, and for what reasons. This article sets out to investigate the strength and the relationship between Palmyra and Hatra on the basis of the Palmyrene relief from Temple XIII. In order to answer the questions listed above, attention shall be paid to the context of this find, that is, Temple XIII and Hatra in general. A comparison with material pertaining to Palmyrenes found elsewhere outside Palmyra will help to see the Hatrene situation in perspective.

The small relief was found in the pronaos of Temple XIII, the thirteenth small temple that was unearthed in Hatra [Fig. 3].<sup>5</sup> This shrine is located about 300 m to the east of the great temenos, where the main sanctuaries of the city were situated. In 2002, it was on display in the National Museum in Baghdad where I had the opportunity to study it.<sup>6</sup> Its present whereabouts are not known to me. The small rectangular stele measures 34 cm by 21 cm. Two figures stand facing full front [Fig. 2]. A Palmyrene inscription on the plinth identifies the man on the right as Obaihan, freedman of Addai (H 411: al-Salihi 1985–1986: 103–105; 1987: 55, Pl. XIII; Aggoula 1988; 1990: 414; Vattioni 1994: 85). He wears a long-sleeved tunic, mantle and trousers, and carries an olive branch in his raised right hand. A woman with a staff or spear in her left hand stands on the left hand side. The Palmyrene inscription on the plinth identifies her as Allat, a well-known Arab goddess. She wears a long-sleeved tunic and a mantle that covers her head. In addition to the Palmyrene inscription on the plinth, there are various texts inscribed in the stone between the two figures. These texts are far less well cut than the inscription on the plinth and were undoubtedly added later.

3 Cited approvingly in an even more influential article by my regretted teacher Han Drijvers (1977: 801). For similar statements, see Drijvers 1980: 16–18.

4 A substantial Palmyrene community lived in Dura Europos from at least 33 BC onwards until the fall of the city in AD 256. The evidence that testifies to the presence of Palmyrenes in Dura Europos is assembled in Dirven 1999. A dedication to the city god of Hatra in the Hatrene script that was found in Dura-Europos suggests people from Hatra also visited Dura. In the Temple of Atargatis in Dura, a stele was found with a cultic standard in relief, dedicated to Shamash. In addition to this inscription, three graffiti in the Hatrene script were found scattered in various locations in the city, see Bertolino 1997. The presence of people from Hatra in the middle Euphrates region is substantiated by graffiti inscribed on pottery found in Kifrin: Gawlikowski 1985: 21.

5 The building was excavated for the Iraqi State Organization of Antiquities and Heritage in the 1981–1982 season by Hazim al-Najafy (1983: 175–199); see al-Salihi 1985–1986: 98–100; 1987: 53; 1990 (general overview of the architecture and finds from this shrine); 1996.

6 The relief was published by al-Salihi 1987. The following analysis is part of my current project to compile a catalogue of the sculptures from Hatra.

The Palmyrene origin of this sculpture is beyond doubt and follows from the characteristic yellow limestone, the Palmyrene script and the personal names in the inscription on the plinth. The iconography and style of the figures likewise deviate from the sculptures from Hatra. The dedicant is identified as Obaihan, freedman of Addai (al-Salihi 1987, and the corrected reading of Aggoula 1988: 194). Whereas Addai is common in both cities, Obaihan is well attested in Palmyra and only this once in Hatra.<sup>7</sup> The expression *br ḥryy*, 'freedman', is common in Palmyrene inscriptions, but there are no parallels known from Hatrene texts.<sup>8</sup> The relief has several iconographic peculiarities that are without parallel in Hatra, but were common in Palmyra. Allat was worshipped in Palmyra and Hatra, and in both cities the goddess was simultaneously represented in multiple and in some cases strikingly different ways.<sup>9</sup> The iconography of the goddess in this relief, however, tallies with representations from Palmyra and deviates from the iconography of the goddess in Hatra, where Allat is normally represented wearing a high conical headdress [Fig. 4].<sup>10</sup> The olive branch that Obaihan holds in his right hand is also unaccounted for in representations from Hatra, whereas it is a common motif in Palmyra.<sup>11</sup>

The style of the relief differs from the Hatra carvings and tallies with the style of several early Palmyrene sculptures. Stylistically, the relief is similar to two reliefs from the temple of Nebo in Palmyra: a votive relief that pictures three generations of priests of Nebo [Fig. 5] and the famous relief that pictures the enthroned goddess with dog and Tyche.<sup>12</sup> Of special note is the similar treatment of the drapery and the eyes, as well as the double line on the neck, the awkward pose of the hand holding a branch and the small feet. The thick lock of hair that falls over the goddess' shoulder is also typical of early Palmyrene sculptures.<sup>13</sup> These stylistic parallels suggest that the relief from Temple XIII was fabricated in Palmyra around AD 50–100. If the relief was dedicated in the temple shortly after its fabrication in the second half of the 1st century, it follows that Temple XIII is one of the oldest shrines in the city. So far, Temple VIII, dated to AD 98, and Temple XIV, dated to AD 101, are the oldest datable shrines. Unfortunately, Temple XIII itself yielded nothing in confirmation of such an early date; all the dated inscriptions are from the last years of the city's existence.<sup>14</sup> If the shrine was indeed founded around the end of the 1st or the beginning of the 2nd century, it follows that it was located in the necropolis, outside the old city walls.<sup>15</sup>

7 The personal name *'dy* is rather common in Palmyra and Hatra: Stark 1971: 65, and Abbadi 1983: 74.

8 DNWSI 401. Aggoula prefers to read *br ḥdy'dy* as a personal name (son of Haday'aday), because in the reading *br ḥryy*, the dedicant would fail to have a patronym. Although this was unusual, it may have been due to the fact that he was a freedman. Since *ḥdy'dy* is not attested as a personal name, whereas the expression *br ḥryy* is common, I prefer the latter option, as does Vattioni 1994: 85.

9 Starcky 1981a; 1981b. Note that the most recent finds from Hatra have not been included. On this, see Invernizzi 1989. On the iconography of the goddess in Palmyra and other places in the Near East (Hatra not included), see now Friedland 2008.

10 In Palmyra as well as Hatra, Allat is represented in the guise of Greek Athena, as well as in everyday women's dress; a long, sleeved tunic and mantle with a veil covering the head. For the iconography of Allat, see Starcky 1981a. The material from Hatra has to be complemented with recent finds, mainly from the temple of Allat: al-Salihi 1985: Figs 39–43.

11 Compare, for example, the branch in the hand of Tyche in the so-called relief of the goddess with dog (Bounni 2004: 88, No. 31).

12 Priests: Bounni 2004: 88–89, No. 32, Fig. 108 (=Tanabe 1986: Pl. 173). Goddess with dog: Bounni 2004: 88, No. 31; Charles-Gaffiot *et alii* (eds) 2001: 274, 347, No. 166 (=Tanabe 1986: Pls 123–126). Another striking parallel is provided by a fragmentary relief found in the temple of Allat in Palmyra: Tanabe 1986: Pl. 144.

13 Sabeh 1953: Pl. I; Bounni 2004: 85, No. 23 (probably beginning of the Common Era, because it was made of yellow limestone); the goddess Allat on a small altar from the Temple of Baalshamin, dated to the end of the 1st century: Colledge 1976: Figs 48–49; a 1st century gravestone of a woman: Colledge 1976: Fig. 68.

14 To date, the architectural history of this shrine has not been published extensively. It seems certain, however, that there were three building phases. The first to be constructed was an oblong ante-cella with a cella at its back wall. In the second stage, an oblong chamber was built in front of the ante-cella. A courtyard in front of the temple appeared in this or a later phase. In the last phase, many small rooms were built along the walls of this court.

15 The city walls that are still standing were built around AD 140. Before that time, the walled city was much smaller; part of the rampart was excavated by a Polish mission in 1990. The east wall probably followed the wadi in the city: Gawlikowski 1994: 162–178, with Fig. 17.

The early date, possible extramural location, and the involvement of Palmyrenes, bring to mind the temple that was founded outside the city walls of Dura-Europos. Members of two Palmyrene tribes dedicated this temple in 33 BC to their gods Bel and Iarhibol (Dirven 1999: 199–211, with references for further reading). From an inscription found in the complex it follows that members of the same Palmyrene family administered the temple for at least two hundred years (Rostovtzeff *et alii* 1939: 320–322 [=Dirven 1999: 203–207, Pl. I]). There is nothing to suggest that the extramural location of this shrine had anything to do with a cult of the dead. It is more probable that it had something to do with the mercantile activities of Palmyrenes in Dura. In view of these similarities, it is tempting to assume that Temple XIII was founded also by people, possibly merchants, from Palmyra. The Iraqi scholar Watiq al-Salihi, who first published the relief, indeed suggested that it testifies to the commercial relationship between Palmyra and Hatra (al-Salihi 1987).

Trade easily comes to mind wherever Palmyra is involved. The city was, after all, widely known for its caravan trade with the East (Gawlikowski 1996; Young 2001: 136–186). The evidence for commercial contacts with Hatra is very scarce, however. Not once was Hatra mentioned in inscriptions from Palmyra related to the caravan trade. Quite logically so, for Palmyrene trade was directed towards cities in the south of Mesopotamia and not those in the north. Furthermore, nothing has been found attesting to the presence of people from Hatra in Palmyra. Last but not least, finds from Hatra itself primarily point to contacts with Parthian cities in the south of Mesopotamia.<sup>16</sup> Neither do the finds from Hatra itself favor the existence of intense commercial ties between Palmyra and Hatra. The graffiti in the background of the relief from Temple XIII suggest it was used by non-Palmyrenes. There is no testimony of other Palmyrenes either in Temple XIII or elsewhere in Hatra. The other material from Temple XIII is predominantly local in character and this suggests that the Palmyrene dedicant was at best a lonesome visitor. Furthermore, evidence from cities that did have a prominent Palmyrene community, such as Dura-Europos, provide us with a completely different picture.

In addition to the Palmyrene inscription on the plinth, there were at least four graffiti inscribed in the background of the relief of Allat and the dedicant.<sup>17</sup> It is highly unusual to have graffiti inscribed in the background of a votive relief. To my knowledge, this is the sole example from Hatra. The reading of these graffiti is far from certain, but most appear to be texts in which an individual asks to be remembered. Contrary to the dedication on the plinth, which is in Palmyrene, these texts are in Hatrene. The personal names attested in these graffiti are also more at home in Hatra than in Palmyra.<sup>18</sup> At least one of the names in these graffiti is attested in other inscriptions from Temple XIII. In all likelihood, therefore, these texts were added later, after the relief had been set up in the Hatrene sanctuary. In view of the script and the names, it is likely that the people who inscribed these texts were of local origin and not from Palmyra. Unfortunately, we have no way of knowing how much time elapsed between the production of the relief and the application of the graffiti. It is equally unclear whether the relief was originally set up by the Palmyrene freedman Obaihan or whether it was brought to Hatra much later. It is probable though that the relief was incorporated in the cult of Temple XIII which was used predominantly by people from Hatra.

The idea that the Palmyrene relief was reinstalled long after it was made is substantiated by the famous Palmyrene relief picturing three military deities, found in Bir Wereb in the Wadi Miyah and now in the Louvre. Like the Palmyrene relief found in Hatra, the background around the figures is covered with graffiti, seven of which could be deciphered (Seyrig 1949). On stylistic grounds, the relief can be dated to the middle of the 1st century AD (Colledge 1976: 44–45; Dentzer-Feydy, Teixidor 1993: 144–145, with references to previous publications). The graffiti, however,

16 This follows from the finds of coins, the majority of which were minted in Parthian Seleucia on the Tigris, see Hauser 1998: 506, with references for further reading. Hatra's focus on cities in the south of Mesopotamia is confirmed by pottery studies undertaken by Roberta Venco Ricciardi. In a paper presented in Baghdad in March 2002, she argued that the pottery from Hatra was either of local manufacture or imported from the south. To date, finds of Roman pottery are few and restricted to the Roman camp that was set up in Hatra during the last years of its existence.

17 I follow the reading proposed by Aggoula 1988: 194–196.

18 In the reading of Aggoula, the following personal names are attested: Shamashaqab, Aqyba, Shamashdenah, Shalem. The name Shamashaqab also occurs in H414 from Temple XIII and is otherwise popular at Hatra (H227, H152; H204; H147; H156; H187). So are Aqyba (H163; H162; H184; H185) and Shalem (H162; H182; H185; H242; H243).

were dated to the 2nd and 3rd century AD. Most of these are remembrance texts, as in Hatra, but one of the texts dedicates the relief to the god Baalshamin. This text is dated to AD 228 and strongly suggests that the sculpture was reused and dedicated twice.<sup>19</sup>

The hypothesis that the Palmyrene relief was a chance intrusion is confirmed by the other finds from Temple XIII, which are predominantly Hatrene in character. It follows from the inscriptions that the temple was dedicated to a god named Gad Ramgu (H406, 408, 409, 413). Aramaic Gad is a god of good luck and fortune, widely attested in Syria and Mesopotamia (Kaizer 1997; 1998). Although *gad* can be mentioned independently, it is more common to find *gadde* associated with a particular place, object or group of people. In the case of Gad Ramgu, it is fairly certain that we are dealing with a group of people united by an individual called Ramgu.<sup>20</sup> Hence we may assume that Gad Ramgu was a protective deity of a group of people descendent from a certain individual by the name of Ramgu.

Another feature of *gadde* is that they are often well known deities worshipped under a different name. In case of Gad Ramgu we seem to be dealing with a manifestation of Nergal, who was worshipped at Hatra in the guise of Heracles. In a relief found in one of the small *iwans* around the court of the temple, a figure identified by the accompanying inscription as Gad Ramgu is represented standing in a niche (al-Salihi 1990: 33–34, Fig. 21 with H413). The figure leans on a club and carries a lion's skin over his arm. Both the club and the lion's skin are well-known attributes of the hero. Contrary to his western counterpart, however, this divine figure is clothed, a characteristic for which several parallels can be found in the iconography of Hatra (al-Salihi 1971; 1982; Downey 2013). The fact that the figure in the relief is represented standing in a niche, suggests it represents a cult statue from the sanctuary. That a clothed Heracles-figure was indeed the cult image in this temple, is confirmed by the statue of a clothed Heracles-figure that was found in the cella (al-Salihi 1996: 105–106, Fig. 2). Heracles-Nergal was extremely popular in Hatra, where he was worshipped first and foremost in the small shrines that surrounded the great temenos.<sup>21</sup> Therefore, the cult in Temple XIII, blends in with local religious practices.

In addition to the representations of Heracles-Gad Ramgu, this temple yielded one relief of a young deity with a crescent behind his shoulders. This is probably the god Barmaren, who was one of the most important Hatrene deities.<sup>22</sup> Beside this relief, two stelae were found with figures that are identified by the accompanying inscription as *zaqiqu* or *gennaya* (al-Salihi 1990: 31, Fig. 23, No. 2, with inscription No. 5; 1985–1986, 103, with H410). The word *zaqiqu* is also attested in an inscription in a relief from Temple II (H13). Inscription H410 in the relief from the pronaos suggests that *zaqiqu* and *gennaya* are indications of a class of divine beings. The use of the term *gennaya* in Palmyra's cultural orbit, as well as the connection of both *gennaya* and *zaqiqu* with personal names in H410, suggest that we are in fact dealing with spirits of deceased ancestors.<sup>23</sup> The association of

19 This hypothesis has the advantage that it explains the high quality of this relief found in such a remote spot.

20 A stela representing three figures was found in front of the cella of Temple XIII. A father and his son were shown offering in front of a third figure, possibly Gad himself: al-Salihi 1990: 32, Fig. 29 with H414; Dijkstra 1995: 205–208. The fact that the figure on the right-hand side is the only one accompanied by an inscription opening with *šlm*, 'image of' is remarkable and suggests we are dealing with a honorary statue or the statue of a deity.

21 On the evidence of the surviving religious representations, Nergal-Heracles may rightfully be called the most popular deity worshipped in the small shrines. Firstly, about a quarter of all divine images from the small shrines represent Heracles and the cult of Nergal-Heracles was attested in nine of the fourteen sanctuaries. No representations of Heracles were found in Temples II and VI. Of the 107 statues of divinities that were unearthed in the small shrines, 29 were representations of the Greek god. The prominence of Nergal in Hatra accords well with a much discussed graffito, in which Nergal takes the place of Barmaren, one of the members of Hatra's divine triad and thus one of the most important gods of the city (H81). Although it would be going too far to assume with Hoftijzer (1968: 52, with note 2) that Barmaren and Nergal were the same god, the evidence strongly suggests that the two were closely associated. On the cult of Barmaren in Hatra and its relationship with the cult of Nergal, see Theuer 2000: 390–399. Of particular interest are the crescent-shaped snakes behind the head of Nergal in the so-called Kerberos relief from Temple I, that are reminiscent of Barmaren's crescent.

22 Already al-Salihi 1989: 177–180. The figure's clothing, jewellery and attributes, such as crescent, rays, horseshoe-shaped pendant, diadem with eagle, and scepter, indeed tally best with the conventional iconography of Barmaren at Hatra.

23 This explains the association of one of the *zaqiqu* with snakes, an animal that is chthonic in character.

these supernatural beings with Heracles-Gad Ramgu, who was associated with Nergal, the Babylonian deity of the netherworld, is in all probability no coincidence. The suggestion that the dead were worshipped in this shrine is confirmed by a relief representing a certain Hyusha son of Asalmy reclining on his left side, holding a drinking cup in his left hand (Dirven 2005). It follows from H407 that during his lifetime Hyusha served as a priest in this temple. The eagle on his right arm, his reclining pose and the inscription, in which his son asks to be remembered, suggest that this monument was set up in his memory, after his death. H408, inscribed on the lintel that was once placed above the door of the room in the southwestern corner of the court, suggests families celebrated meals in memory of their ancestors.<sup>24</sup>

The architecture of Temple XIII is also in line with local traditions [Fig. 3].<sup>25</sup> The shrine consisted of a sanctuary unit situated at the back of a court surrounded by small rooms. The oblong sanctuary unit with cult niche springing from the back wall is standard in the small shrines of Hatra. The extra chamber that preceded the pronaos was common as well. Although not all the small temples had rooms around a courtyard, a parallel can be observed in Temple VIII and in Walter Andrae's so-called 'kleiner Palast', now known as Temple XIV.<sup>26</sup>

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When the situation in Hatra is compared to material pertaining to Palmyrene expatriates elsewhere, it is clear that this situation differs from places where many Palmyrenes are attested, such as Dura-Europos (Dirven 1999). It follows from the material found at Dura and elsewhere, that we have to distinguish between Palmyrene merchants and Palmyrene military. From about AD 130 onwards, Palmyrenes served in the Roman army. It is interesting to see that the social differences between merchants and military, eventually led to religious differences as well.

Palmyrene merchants are attested in Dura-Europos from 33 BC onwards. We know of two temples of Palmyrene merchants in Dura. Material from these sanctuaries suggests that both were visited exclusively by Palmyrenes. It is likely, therefore, that at least some of the merchants from Palmyra had settled permanently in Dura-Europos. The deities the Palmyrenes worshipped in these two temples were typical of Palmyra. Noteworthy is the preference for the gods Bel, Iarhibol, and Aglibol, the three deities that functioned as the city gods of Palmyra. The so-called family or tribal deities, gods that played such a prominent role in the religious life of Palmyra itself, were far less important outside Palmyra. Instead, Palmyrene merchants living abroad chose to worship communal deities, the gods of the city where they had settled. This preference can be explained by the social position of merchants: being small groups residing outside their city of origin, with which they nevertheless remained in close contact, they preferred city gods above family gods, in order to construct a communal social and religious identity.

The social position of the military deviated from that of the merchants and their religious preferences changed accordingly. It is clear from the evidence from Dura-Europos that military men of Palmyrene origin mingled with soldiers from different localities. Jointly they paid homage to the official gods of Rome. When they worshipped typical Palmyrene gods, they preferred the solar

24 H408 commemorates the dedication of an *ivan* (*kpt'*) that was built by a certain Oqe son of Barnai son of Oqe son of Nabuketab, to the Great Gad of Ramgu in AD 235. Oqe expressed the wish that he and his sons may recline (*gn'*) and be administered in the *ivan* for ever. The word *kpt'*, is hardly ever used for a banqueting room; in addition to this Hatrene inscription, there is one bilingual inscription from Palmyra, CIS 3912, which uses the word in this sense. In contemporary inscriptions from Palmyra and Nabatea, *smk'* is frequently encountered, the Greek equivalent being *σμπόσιον*, Rostovtzeff *et alii* 1939: 156, note 20 (Frank Brown). For an enumeration of the Greek words used in the Semitic world, see Seyrig 1949: 64–65. On *smk'*, see Milik 1972: 149. The term means couch, banquet and banqueting hall. In an inscription from the temple of Artemis in Dura-Europos, *smk'* is transcribed in Greek *sommako*: Cumont 1926: 192–193, No. 50. Greek inscriptions from Dura-Europos and Delos speak of *ἀνδρῶν ναός*, οἶκος, or *ἐξέδρα*. However, the word *gn'*, 'to recline, to lie down', leaves no doubt as to the function of this *kpt'* in Temple XIII.

25 For a description of the small shrines, see Downey 1988: 162–173. Most recently, Jakubiak 2013.

26 Inscriptions and finds from this temple have been published by Basheer al-Aswad (2013).

gods Iarhibol and Malakbel above the traditional gods of the city. This preference was due to the popularity of sun gods among the Roman military in general.

May we conclude that the Palmyrene stele found in Hatra testifies to the commercial relations between the two cities? On the basis of available evidence, I think the answer should be negative. Finds from Dura-Europos suggest that a substantial mercantile community would have had its own sanctuary. The stele in Hatra, however, was found in a predominantly local temple. Furthermore, the material from Dura-Europos suggests that a group of Palmyrene merchants would have been likely to worship the city gods Bel and his associates. However, the individual who dedicated the present relief chose Allat instead, possibly because she was the goddess of his clan or family.<sup>27</sup> The fact that this goddess was worshipped in Palmyra and Hatra, may also have determined his choice. At best, the stele from Temple XIII testifies to contacts on a small-scale between people from Palmyra and Hatra. It cannot be cited as evidence for important commercial relations between the two cities.

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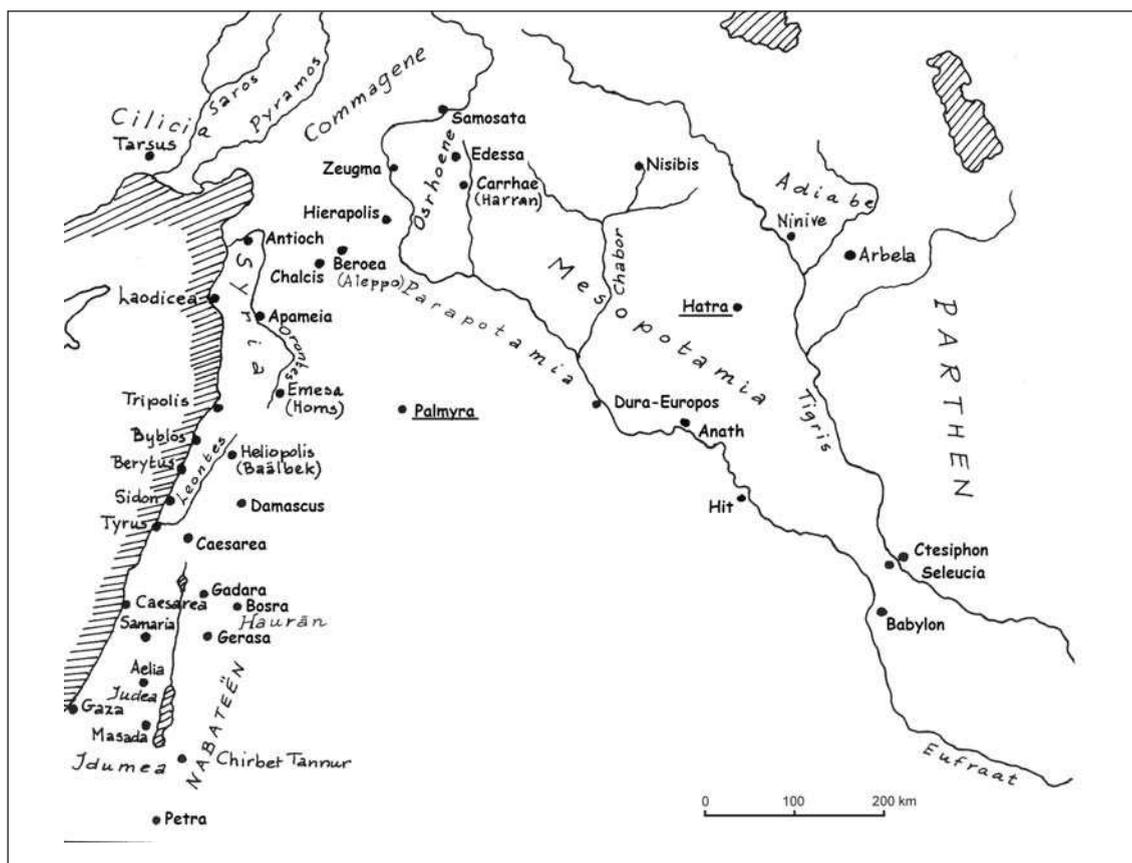


Fig. 1. Map of Syria and Mesopotamia  
(After Dirven 1999: Fig. 1)

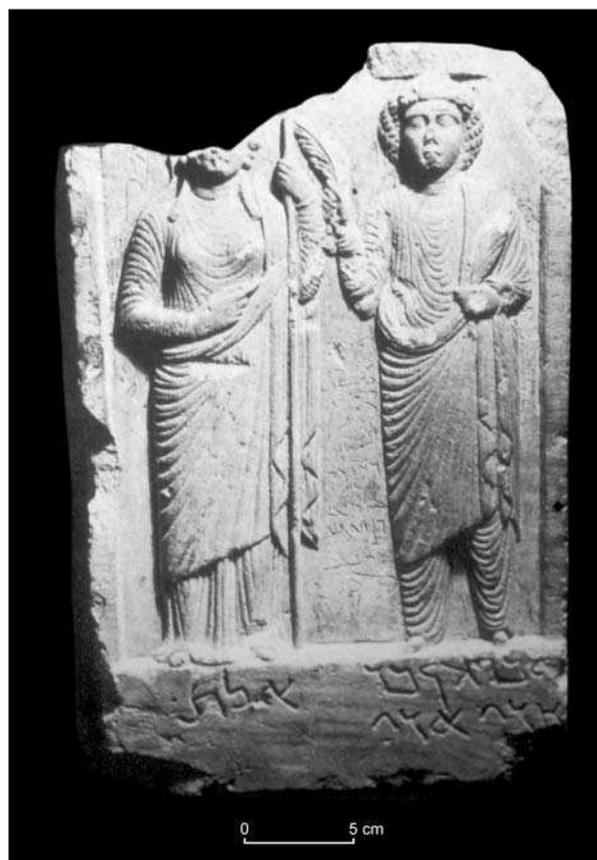


Fig. 2. Relief representing Allat and a dedicant,  
found in Temple XIII  
(After al-Salihi 1987: Pl. XIII)

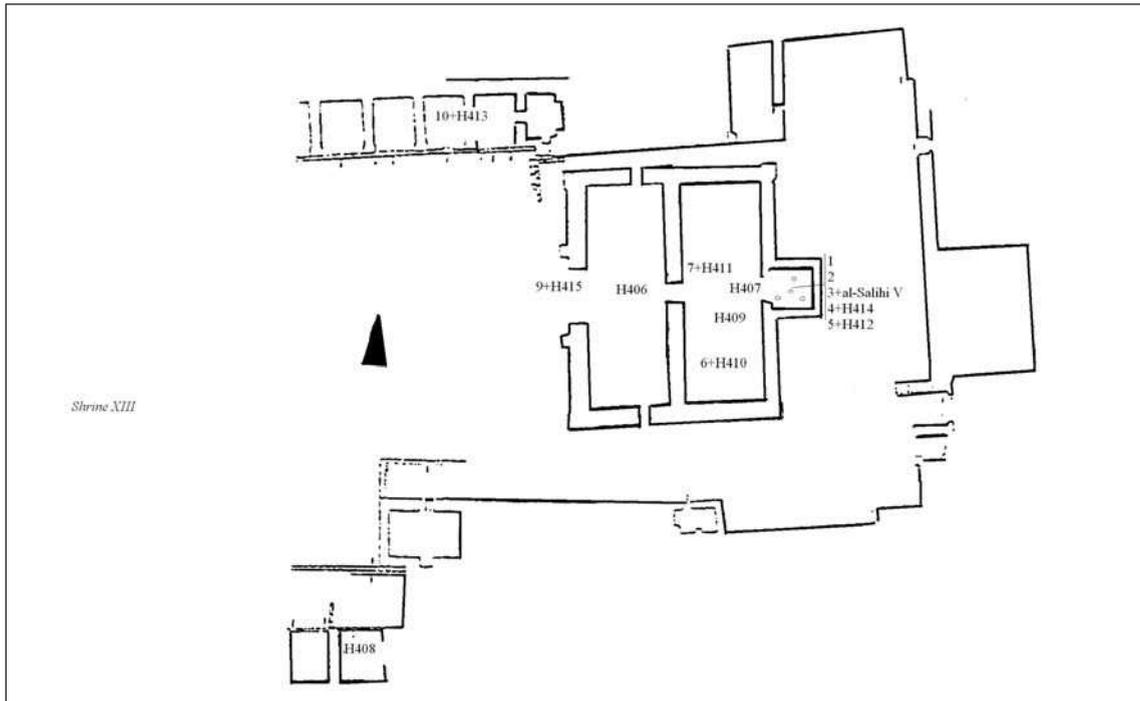


Fig. 3. Temple XIII. Ground plan of cella and northern court rooms  
(After C. Leopardi, *Archivo Centro Scavi di Torino*)



Fig. 4. The goddess Allat. Detail of the lintel from the temple of Allat in Hatra, approx. 180 CE  
(Photo S. Krone)

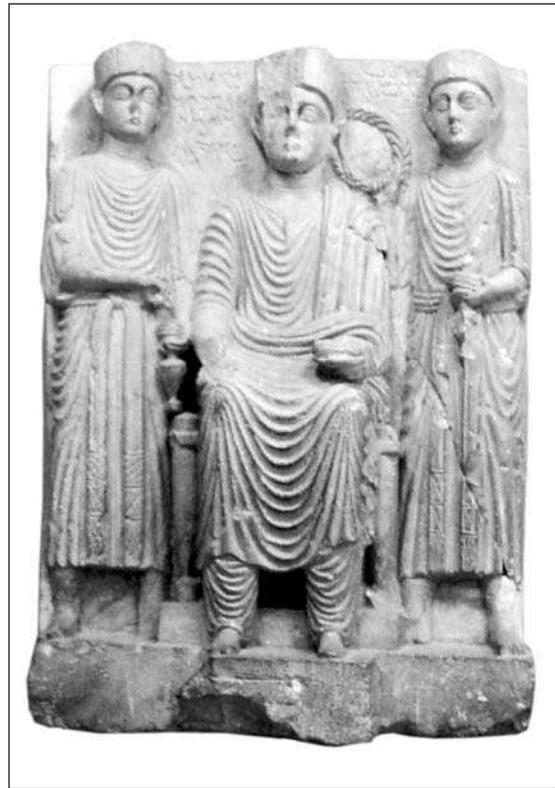


Fig. 5. Relief representing three generations of priests from the temple of Nebo in Palmyra  
(Photo L. Dirven)

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OF POLISH EXCAVATIONS IN PALMYRA  
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## CONTENTS

Contributors	9
Abbreviations and standard references	11
<i>Michał Gawlikowski</i> Preface	13
<i>Waleed al-As'ad</i> Some tombs recently excavated in Palmyra	15
<i>Olivier Aurenche, Stefan Karol Kozłowski</i> Deux polonais à Palmyre (avril 1926)	25
<i>Marek Barański</i> The first archaeologist of Palmyra	31
<i>Christiane Delplace</i> Les recherches de la Mission archéologique française à Palmyre	37
<i>Lucinda Dirven</i> Palmyrenes in Hatra: evidence for cultural relations in the Fertile Crescent	49
<i>Cynthia Finlayson</i> New perspectives on the ritual and cultic importance of women at Palmyra and Dura Europos: processions and temples	61
<i>Michał Gawlikowski</i> In the footsteps of Prince Abamelek in Palmyra	87
<i>Denis Genequand</i> De Rome à l'islam : recherches récentes sur le dit <i>Caesareum</i> de Palmyre	97
<i>Maria Teresa Grassi, Waleed al-As'ad</i> Pal.M.A.I.S. recherches et fouilles d'une nouvelle Mission conjointe syro-italienne dans le quartier sud-ouest de Palmyre	115
<i>Manar Hammad</i> Morphologie des environs de Palmyre : relief, enceintes, pistes	129
<i>Khalil al-Hariri</i> The tomb of 'Aqraban	149
<i>Agnes Henning</i> The tower tombs of Palmyra: chronology, architecture and decoration	159

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<i>Elżbieta Jastrzębowska</i> La christianisation de Palmyre : l'exemple du temple de Bel	177
<i>Karol Juchniewicz</i> Late Roman fortifications in Palmyra	193
<i>Michaela Konrad</i> Gräberarchäologie und ihre Evidenz für die Bevölkerungsgeschichte der Steppengebiete in den Spätromischen Provinzen Syria und Arabia	203
<i>Aleksandra Kubiak</i> Des « Dieux bons » à Palmyre	227
<i>Amélie Le Bihan</i> La question des rites processionels à Palmyre	235
<i>Grzegorz Majcherek</i> Excavating the basilicas	251
<i>Jørgen Christian Meyer</i> City and hinterland. Villages and estates north of Palmyra. New perspectives	269
<i>Kiyohide Saito</i> Female burial practices in Palmyra: some observations from the underground tombs	287
<i>Andreas Schmidt-Colinet, Khaled al-As'ad, Waleed al-As'ad</i> Thirty years of Syro-German /Austrian archaeological research in Palmyra	299
<i>Dagmara Wielgosz</i> <i>Coepimus et lapide pingere</i> : marble decoration from the so-called Baths of Diocletian at Palmyra	319
<i>Jean-Baptiste Yon</i> L'épigraphie palmyrénienne depuis <i>PAT</i> , 1996–2011	333
<i>Marta Żuchowska</i> Palmyra and the Far Eastern trade	381
Abstracts	389