

The future of Palmyrene studies

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PAUL VEYNE (aus dem Französischen von Anna und Wolf Heinrich Leube), *PALMYRA. REQUIEM FÜR EINE STADT* (C. H. Beck, München 2016). S. 127 mit 8-seitigem Tafelteil und 13 Farbbildungen. ISBN 978-3-406-69237-6. EUR 17.95.

Tadmor-Palmyra is not the only site in the Middle East to have suffered irredeemable damage and the occupation of the ruins by IS fighters between May 2015 and March 2016 was not the only cause of destruction.¹ Nevertheless, it is the much-documented demolition of the spectacular remains from the Roman period that took place at the oasis during those 10 months – on top of the many atrocities conducted – that have turned the erstwhile ‘Queen of the Desert’ into the undisputable symbol of the world’s cultural heritage at risk.² The detonations that brought down the magnificent temples of Bel and Baal-Shamin, some of the best preserved of the idiosyncratic tomb-towers, as well as the iconic arch at one end of the central colonnade – not to mention the gruesome murder of the retired director of museum and antiquities, Khaled al-As’ad – have combined to cause Palmyra to spiral to the top of newspaper articles and television news items on the Syrian crisis. They have also given rise to a number of publications on the site that are aimed at a wider audience.³ Concerning the latter, the one that probably has received most media exposure is a little book by the great historian of antiquity, Paul Veyne, *Palmyre. L’irremplaçable trésor* (Éditions Albin Michel; Paris 2015), the German translation of which has triggered the current contribution. Fifteen years ago, Veyne had written the extended preface to a densely illustrated volume on Palmyra, in which he provided a bird’s-eye view of the city’s inimitable civilization.⁴ Now, while drawing attention in his first sentence to the fact that over his long career as an ancient historian he has continually encountered Palmyra,⁵ the same matter is revisited under a different format,⁶ one that “ist viel kürzer, weniger gelehrt

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- 1 For an informative and even-handed discussion of the harm done to cultural heritage in Iraq and Syria by the various parties involved in the conflict, cf. A. Sartre-Fauriat, “Proche-Orient: patrimoines en grand danger,” *Anabases* 23 (2016) 139-56.
 - 2 Cf. A. Schmidt-Colinet, “Palmyra geht uns alle an: die Zerstörung unseres kulturellen Erbes,” *Forum Archaeologiae – Zeitschrift für klassische Archäologie* 77/XII/2015 (<http://farch.net>); id., “Palmyra geht uns alle an. Ein Krieg zerstört unser historisches Gedächtnis,” *Antike Welt* 2016.1, 46-49.
 - 3 To mention a few others: *Ancient Palmyra: the history and legacy of one of antiquity’s greatest cities*, swiftly published in September 2015 by Charles River Editors; M. Hammad, *Bel/Palmyra homage*, bilingual French-Italian, with an Italian preface by P. Fabbri (Paris/Rimini 2016), which in fact consists of slightly revised republications of previous studies by Hammad; and D. Fernandez, with photographs by F. Ferranti, *Adieu, Palmyre* (Paris 2016).
 - 4 P. Veyne, “Préface,” in G. Degeorge, *Palmyre, métropole caravanière* (Paris 2001) 8-57. The main part of this (pp. 8-48) was republished in an annotated and slightly modified version as chapt. 5 in P. Veyne, *L’Empire gréco-romain* (Collection “Des travaux”; Paris 2005 = Collections Points Histoire 459; Paris 2015) 311-412. The final part of Veyne’s “Préface”, on Palmyrene portraits (48-57), was substantially enlarged and appeared in the same volume as chapt. 6, “L’art de Palmyre: ‘mondialisation’, ressemblance, frontalité, yeux hallucinés,” 413-51.
 - 5 Noteworthy is Veyne’s brilliant interpretation of a Latin inscription from Sarmizegetusa recording a dedication by a Palmyrene expatriate: cf. “Une évolution du paganisme gréco-romain: injustice et piété des dieux, leurs ordres ou ‘oracles’,” *Latomus* 45 (1986) 259-83, at 266-76. On the other hand, Palmyra was conspicuously absent (apart from a mention alongside Aquileia) from his *magnum opus* on euergetism: *Le pain et le cirque* (Paris 1976) 124, translated as *Bread and circuses* (Harmondsworth 1990) 51.
 - 6 Citations and page numbers are from the German translation (D) which is the edition sent to *JRA* for review; I will also refer to the French original (F) where appropriate. The German translation throughout wrongly mentions ‘Baal’ instead of ‘Bel’ (it is correct in the French version). The German gives the year 270 of our common era (p. 49), which should be A.D. 75 (correct in the French, at 58). The modern term “multikulturell” (91) is perhaps too anachronistic and hence not a fortunate

und wendet sich an den interessierten Laien" (9). Embedded though Veyne's work may now be in an effort to answer the question of why the recent destructions had taken place (102; 122-24), its emphasis remains on how an initial sense of recognition on the part of the ancient as well as the modern observer swiftly made way for a feeling of unfamiliarity. Veyne still asks whether a Palmyrene notable was just a rich citizen or rather a sheikh (D 92; cf. F 107; Préface 2001, p. 37),⁷ and Palmyra is still said to have been a "patchwork" (D 90 and 122; cf. F 104 and 139; Préface 2001, p. 36).

Though frequently thought-provoking, many of Veyne's interesting reflections are not always shared by others working on Palmyra. But does that matter when scholarly disagreement is supposed to be a common good, and with his book explicitly being aimed at a general public? One may indeed ask whether it is fair or even appropriate to scrutinise such a book, not just because it is written for a general public, but also because it is in part an emotional response to horrific destructions and a horrific murder.

But it certainly does matter as far as A. and M. Sartre, joint authors of *Palmyre: vérités et légendes* (Paris 2016), are concerned. Their own book, similarly aimed at a wider audience, seeks to amend a number of inaccuracies often encountered in publications; or, as they put it, "une erreur manifeste inscrite dans un grand journal devient une vérité pour le plus grand nombre".⁸ Their book consists of 29 chapters each headed by one or more citations of a Palmyra-related 'truth' which they then set about to criticise. In 9 of their chapters the argumentation is aimed directly against one or more of Veyne's statements. Three examples of their debate may serve to give an impression of both books, hence facilitating my own task as reviewer. In chapt. 8, the Sartres take on Veyne's description of Palmyra as a "république marchande", or a "Kaufmannsrepublik" (D 11; cf. F 11; Préface 2001, 16). The notion — going back to a phrase used by F. Cumont in the 1920s and again by E. Will 60 years later⁹ — implies that the Palmyrenes were characterised above all by their actual merchandising activities, but the Sartres insist that commerce was merely "accessoire": "ils n'étaient indispensables que dans un domaine, celui du transport et de l'organisation de la caravane."¹⁰ In chapt. 11, they disagree with Veyne when he asks about the temple of Bel: "Wie dieser monumentale Komplex finanziert wurde?" and answers his own question by stating: "Wir wissen es nicht" (D 19; cf. F 20; Préface 2001, 10). Veyne's own solutions include the imperial family, the piety of the multitude of pilgrims, and financial gain from trade along the Silk Road, but these are all problematic (or even wrong). And further criticism can be added to that given by the Sartres. The suggestion that a Roman emperor bestowed a large financial gift upon Palmyra was made long ago by M. A. R. Colledge, but can be easily dismissed by reference to the inscriptions that neatly record

choice to translate the original "cité mixte" (F 105). But the German at least gives (65) the name of the emperor captured by Shapur King of Kings in A.D. 260 as Valerian, rectifying the wrong mention of "Valentin" (F 76).

7 For Veyne's Préface see n.4. For the recent argument that the ruling class of Palmyra was above all different from the typical civic élites in the Graeco-Roman world at large, and that it formed "a functional elite based on military expertise", cf. M. Sommer, "Les notables de Palmyre — local elites in the Syrian desert in the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD," in P. Briks (ed.), *Elites in the ancient world* (Szczecin 2015) 173-82, at 181-82; id. "The Venice of the sands: Palmyrene trade revisited," in J. C. Meyer, E. H. Seland and N. Anfinset (edd.), *Palmyrena: city, hinterland and caravan trade between Orient and Occident* (Oxford 2016) 11-17. It has also been argued, in contrast, that the leading citizens of Palmyra "practiced and reconstituted Greek *politeia*, even if their version of *politeia* defied many classical Greek standards and the norms of many Greco-Roman cities". Cf. N. Andrade, "Inscribing the citizen: Sodos and the civic context of Palmyra," *Maarav* 19 (2012) 65-90, at 67.

8 A. and M. Sartre, *Palmyre: vérités et légendes* (Paris 2016) 14.

9 In the form of "république de marchands", cf. F. Cumont, *Fouilles de Doura-Europos (1922-1923)* (Paris 1926) xxxii; E. Will, "Pline l'ancien et Palmyre: un problème d'histoire ou d'histoire littéraire?," *Syria* 62 (1985) 263-69, at 268 = id., *De l'Euphrate au Rhin. Aspects de l'hellénisation et de la romanisation du Proche-Orient* (Beirut 1995) 525-31.

10 Sartre and Sartre (supra n.8) 63-64.

how contributions by individual Palmyrenes financed the successive stages of the construction of the temple of Bel (as indeed that of other sanctuaries).¹¹ As regards the notion of pilgrimage, its applicability to the Graeco-Roman world has been much debated; further, there is no good evidence to hint at the presence in any Palmyrene temple of worshippers from far and away. And for the third solution? That there is a connection between the building of the monumental temple of Bel and money made by the relevant benefactors in long-distance trade (or at least, as we have just seen, in facilitating that trade) is not disputed; but Palmyrene trade was centred on the Persian Gulf area and not on any overland route commonly designated by the anachronistic term “Silk Road”.¹² Finally, in chapt. 17 of their book the Sartres emphasise that Palmyra around the middle of the 3rd c. did not become (in the words of Veyne) “ein Erbfürstentum und Vasall Roms” (D 64; cf. F 75), and they argue that the *rš tdmr* (literally the “head of Palmyra”) — as indicated by its Greek counterpart ἑξαρχος (τῶν) Παλμυρηνῶν — was nothing more than a military position.¹³ There are more details in Veyne’s book that need refinement. He states, in the chapter on religion (D 112; F 129):

In Palmyra wurde keine griechische oder römische Gottheit eingeführt. Dabei sind griechische Götter in Palmyra present, aber sie sind es nicht als Import, sondern als Übersetzung,

but he ignores the cult of Nemesis whose Greek name is, uniquely, transliterated in Palmyrenean Aramaic (*nms(y)s*).¹⁴ And with regard to Zenobia, “die in gewissem Sinn Königin von Palmyra war” (D 59; F 69, “sorte de reine de Palmyre”), it is again worth taking heed of what the Sartres write: “‘Reine Zénobie’, oui, mais ‘reine de Palmyre’, non”.¹⁵

The destruction and its aftermath

At the outset of his book Veyne sees it as his task “ein Bild zu zeichnen von dem, was einst die Pracht von Palmyra war und was man künftig nur noch in Büchern betrachten kann” (D 10; F 10). His original title evoked Palmyra as an irreplaceable treasure. For some, that treasure is now lost forever and no attempt should be made to regain it: it has been stated in various media that Palmyra “must not be turned into a fake replica of its former glory” and “what remains of this ancient city ... should be tactfully, sensitively and honestly preserved”.¹⁶ For others, Palmyra’s future lies precisely in anastylosis, a reconstruction of the ruined ruins with the use of modern materials where necessary. Three-dimensional digital models have been created of some of the destroyed monuments and robots have been applied to carve reproductions.¹⁷ The monumental statue of the lion of Allat, pushed over last year but seemingly less damaged than some other monuments, for the time being has been re-erected by members of the Polish team at the entrance to the Museum. But Palmyra’s arch has undergone a more contentious *resurrectio*, in the form of a small-scale reconstruction initially on display in London’s Trafalgar Square but meant to travel around before ending up at Tadmor right next to the location of the original one.¹⁸ At the Table ronde at the University of Warsaw in April 2016, Palmyra scholars from all

11 T. Kaizer, “Reflections on the dedication of the temple of Bel at Palmyra in AD 32,” in L. de Blois, P. Funke and J. Hahn (ed.), *The impact of Imperial Rome on religion: ritual and religious life in the Roman Empire* (Leiden 2006) 95-105. *Contra*, M. A. R. Colledge, “Le temple de Bel à Palmyre: qui l’a fait, et pourquoi?,” in E. Frézouls (ed.), *Palmyre. Bilan et perspectives* (Strasbourg 1976) 45-52.

12 Most recently, cf. the important paper by M. Gawlikowski, “Trade across frontiers: foreign relations of a caravan city,” in Meyer, Seland and Anfinset (supra n.7) 19-28.

13 Sartre and Sartre (supra n.8) 142-43. Cf. the discussion of the term in J.-B. Yon, *Inscriptions grecques et latines de la Syrie XVII.1* (Paris 2012) no. 54.

14 T. Kaizer, “Nemesis, Aglibol and Malakbel: a note on a relief from Khirbet Ramadan in the Palmyrène,” *Parthica* 3 (2001) 211-18. Cf. Sartre and Sartre (supra n. 8) 113-14.

15 Sartre and Sartre (supra n.8) 147.

16 <http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/jonathanjonesblog/2016/apr/11/palmyra-isis-syria-restored-3d-printers-vandalism>

17 <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/29/world/middleeast/3d-models-robots-rebuild-syrian-sites.html>

18 <http://www.theguardian.com/culture/2016/apr/19/palmyras-triumphal-arch-recreated-in-trafalgar-square>

over the world widely agreed that any form of reconstruction of the destroyed monuments should in any case not be hurried. What is needed now is coordinating all available documentation and updating the existing catalogues of collections — apart from waiting for an end to the actual conflict situation in the region.¹⁹ In the meantime, digital conservation of the site, as conducted (e.g.) by the Arc/k project through photogrammetry, serves as an instrument to preserve humanity's collective memory as a legacy for future generations.²⁰ But findings from illegal excavations, above all in the necropoleis, are simply gone; and even if some of them can be recovered from the black market, their original context will of course remain unknown.

The initial reaction following the site's liberation in March 2016, namely that the damage was not as bad as had previously been dreaded, was certainly misplaced.²¹ Sure, the colonnades and the agora were still standing, and the centre of the ruins had not undergone the same systematic looting as was experienced by Apamea on the Orontes or Dura-Europos on the Euphrates. The whitewashing of the famous murals in the tomb 'of the three brothers', including the paintings of Achilles on Skyros and of Ganymedes, seems such that they can probably be recovered.²² But earlier reports that the régime's Antiquities Service had managed to remove the majority of items kept in the Palmyra Museum to a safe place in Damascus just before Palmyra was occupied in May 2015 have now proven unfounded. Only days after the site's recapture, experts from the Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology of the University of Warsaw arrived at Palmyra to start making an assessment of the damage done to museum objects. B. Markowski and R. Żukowski initially stayed at Palmyra for a week, returning later with their colleagues K. Jurków and T. Waliszewski. Referring to "the scale of the destruction [as] unprecedented",²³ the Polish team members set out to identify, and where possible immediately attach, fragments of individual pieces; they have also stored a multitude of sculptural fragments in labelled cardboard boxes. It is thanks to their heroic efforts that a professional rescue and conservation operation of the many artefacts from the museum could be instigated — a matter of urgency since the building itself was badly damaged in the combat.

At the time of writing (June 2016), the actual ruins of the ancient city had not yet been declared safe enough for damage assessment. What is clear is that a swift rebuilding, either as a prestige project for a political power or with a view towards a future recovery by tourism, would only do further harm to the site. It remains to be seen whether international archaeological missions would first get a free hand in undertaking measures deemed necessary with respect to survey, analysis and conservation, in order properly to preserve the site (or at least what can be rescued from it) for future generations. It seems most unlikely that the authorities will allow a large-scale investigation of the older layers situated below the remains of the Roman-period ruins of the temple of Bel, as much as that could provide a silver lining to a situation of horrendous destruction. For now, students of antiquity can only hope that Palmyra does not become even more of a political play-thing (the bizarre concert given in early May by a Russian orchestra in the same theatre that had previously served as the backdrop to staged mass executions, however, makes one fear for the worst).

The future of the field of Palmyrene studies

The fact that the future of Palmyra as an archaeological site remains in doubt does not mean, of course, that the field of Palmyrene studies has been brought to a standstill. Nonetheless, the destruction of an important part of the ruins is more than a major blow. The discipline,

19 As emphasised (e.g.) by R. A. Stucky in two articles in the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 7 April 2016 and 7 May 2016.

20 <http://arck-project.com/en/>

21 Pictures taken at the beginning of April by *New York Times* photographer Bryan Denton provided a haunting image of the widespread destruction: <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/04/05/world/middleeast/palmyra-syria-isis.html>

22 http://www.lemonde.fr/architecture/article/2016/04/08/des-photos-exclusives-des-saccages-de-l-ai-palmyre_4898879_1809550.html. I am grateful to Lucinda Dirven for drawing my attention to the article in *Le Monde*.

23 <http://www.pcma.uw.edu.pl/en/>

which until now has understandably been fronted by the ongoing discoveries made by the various archaeological missions at work at Tadmor, will have to undergo at least temporary re-orientation towards approaches that are less dependent on new excavations. Fortunately, a number of recent activities and publications point to a vibrant field.²⁴ First mention should go to the Palmyra Portrait Project, set up by R. Raja with A. J. M. Kropp and based at Aarhus University.²⁵ Its compilation of a corpus of all known Palmyrene funerary portraits, still in progress, opens up prospects for further investigation into a variety of research questions. Its research into the Harald Ingholt archives (held by the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen) has provided important new insights into the chronology and the original context of the portraits.²⁶ The proceedings of the project's opening conference, organised at the Royal Danish Academy in Copenhagen in December 2013, have just been published as the first volume of *Palmyrenske Studier*.²⁷ The last year has seen two more conferences dedicated to Palmyra, both organised in memory of Khaled al-As'ad. The above-mentioned conference in Warsaw, “εἰς τὸ παντελὲς αἰώνιον τιμῆν:²⁸ Life in Palmyra, Life for Palmyra”, will be published by the Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology of the University of Warsaw in what was until recently the only series dedicated to the site: *Studia Palmyreńskie*.²⁹ And in May 2016 the Department of Ancient Near Eastern Art of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, organised a symposium on “Palmyra: Mirage in the Desert”, which was aimed not only at the scholarly community but also at the wider public.³⁰

While the publications by the recent missions still wait to be fully digested, archaeological findings in the final years before the site became unsafe to visit have already had a major impact on our understanding of Palmyrene topography. The joint Syrian-German-Austrian campaign of A. Schmidt-Colinet, which had been in search of the ‘Hellenistic city’ south of the wadi since 1997, finished just in time in 2010.³¹ Unfortunately, however, M. T. Grassi's

24 In addition to what follows below, mention should be made of: A. M. Smith II, *Roman Palmyra: identity, community, & state formation* (Oxford 2013), the first major English monograph on Palmyrene society in general; Yon, *IGLS XVII.1*, with XVII.2 on the tax law now in preparation; id., “L'épigraphie palmyrénienne depuis PAT, 1996-2011,” *Studia Palmyreńskie* 12 (2013) 333-79, an update to the corpus by D. R. Hillers and E. Cussini, *Palmyrene Aramaic texts* (Baltimore, MD 1996); K. Schnädelbach, *Topographia Palmyrena* (Documents d'archéologie syrienne 18; Damascus 2010), providing a new general plan of the city with commentary that for the first time includes structures in georeferenced form.

25 <http://projects.au.dk/palmyraportrait/>. Cf. A. J. M. Kropp and R. Raja, “The Palmyra Portrait Project,” *Syria* 91 (2014) 393-408.

26 Ingholt's field diaries, covering his campaigns at Palmyra in 1924, 1925, 1928 and 1937, have been jointly edited by R. Raja and J.-B. Yon and will be published in the new series *Palmyrenske Studier*. Cf. R. Raja and A. H. Sørensen, “The ‘Beauty of Palmyra’ and Qasr Abjad (Palmyra): new discoveries in the archive of Harald Ingholt,” *JRA* 28 (2015) 439-50. The same authors' booklet, *Harald Ingholt & Palmyra* (Aarhus 2015) has been published in Danish and in English to accompany an exhibition at the Museum of Ancient Art of Aarhus University.

27 A. Kropp and R. Raja (edd.), *The world of Palmyra* (Copenhagen 2016). A volume on *Positions and professions in Palmyra* (edd. T. Reeves and A. H. Sørensen) will appear in the same series. Upcoming events include workshops organised in Aarhus by S. Krag and S. Ringsborg on family structures (Oct. 2016) and on the religious life of women and children (Feb. 2017), and a conference on the religious life of Palmyra organised in Copenhagen (Sept. 2017) by Raja.

28 A phrase from a tomb lintel re-used in an Arab bastion: cf. Hillers and Cussini (supra n.24) no. 0558; Yon, *IGLS XVII.1*, no. 545.

29 M. Gawlikowski, D. Wielgosz-Rondolino and M. Żuchowska (edd.), *Life in Palmyra, life for Palmyra. Conference dedicated to the memory of Khaled al As'ad* (Warsaw forthcoming).

30 <http://metmuseum.org/events/programs/met-speaks/symposia/Palmyra>

31 A. Schmidt-Colinet and W. al-As'ad (edd.), *Palmyras Reichtum durch weltweiten Handel. Archäologische Untersuchungen im Bereich der hellenistischen Stadt*. Bd. I: *Architektur und ihre Ausstattung*; Bd. II: *Kleinfunde* (Vienna 2013), with my review article “On the origins of Palmyra and its trade,” in *JRA* 28 (2015) 881-88.

excavations of a peristyle building in the previously-unexplored residential area in the SW quarter of the city, organised by the Università degli Studi di Milano (2007-10), were interrupted too soon after they commenced.³² The “Efqa Spring–Bel Temple Corridor Exploration” of the Syro-American Archaeological Expedition of Brigham Young University (Provo, UT) led by C. Finlayson (2008-10), has ambitiously gone in search of the missing temples of Atargatis, of Yarhibol, and of the Sacred Garden of Aglibol and Malakbel — the latter, according to its name in Greek and Palmyrenean inscriptions, an actual grove (ἄλλος / *gnh*) and therefore unlikely ever to be located as such³³ — but publications of the finds are still awaited. One missing site of worship that *has* appeared concerns the small sanctuary of Rabaseire, previously known only through its rather peculiar mention in the Palmyrene Tariff.³⁴ As the Tax Law itself puts it, the new regulations (updated under Hadrian) ‘will be described with the first law on the stone stele that is opposite the temple which is called Rabaseire’ (ἐνγραφῆναι μετὰ τοῦ πρώτου νόμου στήλη λιθίνη τῆ οὔση ἀντικρὺς ἱερ[οῦ] λεγομένου Ῥαβασείρη), while the Aramaic version instead refers to the temple ‘of’ Rabaseire (*wktb ‘m nmws ‘ qdmy’ bgl’ dy lqbl hykl’ dy rb ‘syr’*). Since the precise location of the Tariff remained unknown, the temple could, of course, not be found either; but thanks to unpublished Russian reports and geometrical study of photographs kept in the archives of the Hermitage (where the Tariff has been since its transport to St Petersburg some 20 years after its discovery in 1882), M. Gawlikowski was able to locate its original placement. From there he could also find the missing little shrine, the remains of which were excavated in 2011 to reveal that it preceded the construction of the second agora.³⁵ Gawlikowski had previously revealed the existence of another ‘new’ temple through an improved reading of a long-known Aramaic inscription from A.D. 182 recording the dedication of a sacred enclosure (*hgb’*) with an accompanying religious image (*msb’*) to the goddess Allat, which would imply that alongside the excavated classical temple of Allat in the west of the ruins there was another shrine to the goddess somewhere in Palmyra that, according to the terminology, was more indigenous in appearance.³⁶ And now K. Jakubiak has argued that the shrine of Shadrafa and Du’anat, similarly known from an inscription, can be located near the temple of Arsu.³⁷ Proper excavations would be needed to substantiate another claim, by M. Hammad, that an amphitheatre can be recognised on aerial photographs dating from the period of the French Mandate.³⁸ The final publication of the temple of Allat, excavated by the Polish mission under Gawlikowski, is still awaited. Outside the oasis itself, the Syrian-Norwegian mission in the Palmyrena led by C. Meier has confirmed how relevant the hinterland was to Palmyra’s economy and civilization,³⁹ while the final publication of Palmyra’s quarries, located c.15 km northeast of the city, is in preparation by Schmidt-Colinet.

The final publication by A. Krzyżanowska of the coins found at Palmyra by the Polish mission has been published posthumously, with Gawlikowski’s presentation of a silver Sasanian

32 For a full list of publications by members of the mission, cf. <http://users.unimi.it/progettopalmyra/pages/publicazioni.html>

33 Cf. T. Kaizer, *The religious life of Palmyra* (Stuttgart 2002) 124-43.

34 Cf. Kaizer *ibid.* 152-53. The Tax Law is Hillers and Cussini (*supra* n.24) no. 0259.

35 M. Gawlikowski, “Le Tarif de Palmyre et le temple de Rab’asirê,” *CRAI* 2012, 765-80. Gawlikowski furthermore connected his discovery, quite brilliantly, with an inscribed fragment found in the 1930s in the context of the agora excavations. A photograph of the small piece was published in C. Delplace and J. Dentzer-Feydy, *L’agora de Palmyre* (Bordeaux 2005) 306, fig. 400, but the three remaining characters (*lrb*) had not previously been recognised for what they were: the beginning of a dedication for (*l*) Rabaseire: *lrb[‘syr’]* — incidentally showing that it was the Aramaic version of the Tariff, rather than the Greek counterpart, that best reflected the shrine.

36 M. Gawlikowski, “Un nouveau temple d’Allat dans une inscription revisitée,” *Semitica* 51 (2001) 57-64, on Hillers and Cussini (*supra* n.24) no. 2632.

37 K. Jakubiak, “Via sacra or sacral space in Palmyra,” *Z. f. Orient-Archäologie* 6 (2013) 144-55. For the inscription, cf. Hillers and Cussini (*supra* n.24) no. 1429.

38 M. Hammad, “Un amphithéâtre à Tadmor-Palmyre?,” *Syria* 85 (2008) 339-46.

39 *Palmyrena. City, hinterland and caravan trade between the Occident and the Orient*, based at Bergen University. Cf. www.org.uib.no/palmyrena.

hoard.⁴⁰ A new catalogue of the glass collection in the Palmyra Museum, by K. al-As'ad and K. Gawlikowska, has also been announced.⁴¹ Seminal work has been done in recent years on various aspects of Palmyrene long-distance trade by E. H. Seland, who has published a series of articles and has a book forthcoming on the subject.⁴² The Wisconsin Palmyrene Aramaic Inscription Project, directed by J. Hutton, performs "Reflectance Transformation Imaging" on Palmyrene inscriptions and studies stylistic variations of the Palmyrenean script, onomastics and prosopography.⁴³ The fascinating (but surprisingly under-studied) *tesserae* remain potentially our richest source for the study of Palmyrene religion, a French research project having been set up to prepare a supplement to the classic corpus published by H. Ingholt, H. Seyrig and J. Starcky.⁴⁴

The current crisis in Syria and the inaccessibility of the Palmyrene ruins (whether temporary or more permanent) has also led to a resurgence in the consideration of records of Palmyra from times long gone, now being rediscovered as important sources on the preservation of the site in the early modern period. In late 2015, the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery in Washington, D.C., organised a small exhibition of 18th-c. engravings and 19th-c. photographs which had

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- 40 A. Krzyżanowska and M. Gawlikowski, *Monnaies des fouilles polonaises à Palmyre* (Studia Palmyreńskie 13; Warsaw 2014).
- 41 K. al-As'ad and K. Gawlikowska, *Ancient glass from Palmyra Museum* (Warsaw forthcoming), an update to the same authors' "The collection of glass vessels in the Museum of Palmyra," *Studia Palmyreńskie* 9 (1994) 5-36.
- 42 E. H. Seland, "The Persian Gulf or the Red Sea? Two axes in ancient Indian Ocean trade, where to go and why," *World Arch.* 43.3 (2011) 398-409; id., "The organisation of the Palmyrene caravan trade," *Ancient West and East* 13 (2014) 197-211; id., "Caravans, smugglers and trading fairs: organizing textile trade on the Syrian frontier," in K. Droß-Krüpe (ed.), *Textile trade and distribution in antiquity / Textilhandel und -distribution in der Antike* (Wiesbaden 2014) 83-90; id., "Palmyrene long-distance trade: land, river, and maritime routes in the first three centuries CE," in M. N. Walter and J. P. Ito-Adler, *The Silk Road: interwoven history*, vol. 1. *Long-distance trade, culture, and society* (Cambridge 2015) 101-31; id., "Camels, camel nomadism and the practicalities of Palmyrene caravan trade," *Aram* 27 (2016) 45-53; id., "Ancient trading networks and New Institutional Economics: the case of Palmyra," in S. Föllinger, K. Droß-Krüpe and K. Ruffing (edd.), *Antike Wirtschaft und ihre kulturelle Prägung* (forthcoming); J. C. Meyer and E. H. Seland, "Palmyra and the trade route to the Euphrates," *Aram* forthcoming. The monograph will be published by Harrassowitz: E. H. Seland, *Ships of the desert and ships of the sea: Palmyra in the world trade of the first-third centuries CE*. Cf. the extremely helpful research tool made available by G. Fox and S. N. Lieu, *Inscriptiones Palmyrenae selectae ad commercium pertinentes*, available at https://www.mq.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0018/24525/106178.pdf
- 43 Cf. <https://uwdc.library.wisc.edu/collections/classicalstudies/wpaip/> J. M. Hutton is also co-authoring a monograph on translation and bilingualism at Palmyra, a section of which has been published as an article: id. and C. E. Bonesho, "Interpreting translation techniques and material presentation in bilingual texts: initial methodological reflections," in id. and A. D. Rubin (edd.), *Epigraphy, philology, and the Hebrew Bible. Methodological perspectives on philological and comparative study of the Hebrew Bible in honor of Jo Ann Hackett* (Atlanta, GA 2015) 253-92.
- 44 Cf. K. al-As'ad, F. Briquel-Chatonnet and J.-B. Yon, "The sacred banquets at Palmyra and the function of the *tesserae*: reflections on the tokens found in the Arṣu temple," in E. Cussini, *A journey to Palmyra. Collected essays to remember Delbert R. Hillers* (Leiden 2005) 1-10. The corpus is H. Ingholt, H. Seyrig and J. Starcky, with A. Caquot, *Recueil des tessères de Palmyre* (Paris 1955). Cf. R. du Mesnil du Buisson, *Les tessères et les monnaies de Palmyre: planches* (Paris 1944), with an accompanying volume of interpretation (Paris 1962). Recently, the *tesserae* have been studied by R. Raja, "Staging 'private' religion in Roman 'public' Palmyra. The role of the religious dining tickets (banqueting *tesserae*)," in C. Ando and J. Rüpke (edd.), *Public and private in ancient Mediterranean law and religion* (Berlin 2015) 165-86; ead., "Cultic dining and religious patterns in Palmyra. The case of the Palmyrene banqueting *tesserae*," in S. Faust, M. Seifert and L. Ziemer (edd.), *Antike. Architektur. Geschichte. Festschrift für Inge Nielsen zum 65. Geburtstag* (Aachen 2015) 181-99. Joint work on the symbolism on the Palmyrene *tesserae* is being undertaken by Raja and myself.

undergone sepia toning.⁴⁵ In 2016, an exhibition at the Wallraf-Richartz-Museum in Cologne focussed on representations of Palmyra by the French artist Louis-François Cassas, whose exquisite drawings were made during a one-month visit in 1785 and published in the first of three volumes recording his Levantine illustrations.⁴⁶ Finally, the Getty Research Institute of Los Angeles has digitised a collection of 29 well-preserved early photographs of Palmyra, taken in 1864 by L. Vignes, a French naval officer who was a pupil of the photographer Charles Nègre, the latter having printed the sepia albumen images himself between 1865 and 1867. The photographs (including shots of the colonnade, the tower tombs, and the temples of Bel and of Baal-Shamin) have been made available for download from the Getty website.⁴⁷

The main challenge with regard to the future of Palmyrene studies will be to train the next generation of Palmyrene scholars in such a way that the fact that they will be the first who are unable to see Palmyra as we ourselves could still see it will not be detrimental to their own contributions. Digitization of available resources, shared documentation, research into antiquarian images and the creation of databases of artefacts will all be of great benefit. Evocative presentations of Palmyra such as the one by Veyne — and indeed the questioning of certain Palmyrene ‘truths’ by the Sartres — all play their rôle in breathing life into the field and hopefully in attracting enthusiastic newcomers.⁴⁸ There may, after all, be *lux aeterna* for Palmyrene studies.

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45 Cf. M. Kociejowski, “Palmyra: city of the palms,” *Minerva* 26.6 (2015) 14-19.

46 Cf. L.-F. Cassas, *Voyage pittoresque de la Syrie, de la Phénicie, de la Palestine, et de la Basse Égypte* I-III (Paris 1799). The Cologne exhibition was accompanied by an excellent catalogue: T. Ketelsen (ed.), *Palmyra. Was bleibt? Louis-François Cassas und seine Reise in den Orient* (Cologne 2016). I draw attention in particular to A. Hennings’s piece on the manner in which Cassas depicted the Palmyrene tomb-towers: “Zwischen Realität und Phantasie. Louis-François Cassas und die Turmgräber von Palmyra,” *ibid.* 22-34. For her own study of these monuments, cf. ead., *Die Turmgräber von Palmyra. Eine lokale Bauform im kaiserzeitlichen Syrien als Ausdruck kultureller Identität* (Rahden/Westf. 2013).

47 Vignes’ collection also includes 14 prints of photographs of Beirut: *Views and panoramas of Beirut and the ruins of Palmyra*. For the Getty library’s record for the digitized images, see <http://hdl.handle.net/10020/2015r15>. Cf. L. Fulcher, “Earliest photographs of Palmyra,” *Minerva* 26.6 (2015) 6. The Getty Research Institute is mounting an online exhibition in 2017 highlighting and contextualising not only its collection of Vignes’ photographs but also that of Cassas’ drawings. I am grateful to Frances Terpak (Curator and Head of Photographs and Optical Device Collections) for providing the link and other helpful information.

48 There is more to look forward to: N. Andrade is commissioned to write *Zenobia: shooting star of Roman Syria* for Oxford University Press, and M. Sommer is working on *Palmyra: a history* for Routledge. The proceedings of an ARAM 2014 conference on Hatra, Palmyra and Edessa is announced as forthcoming in 2016.