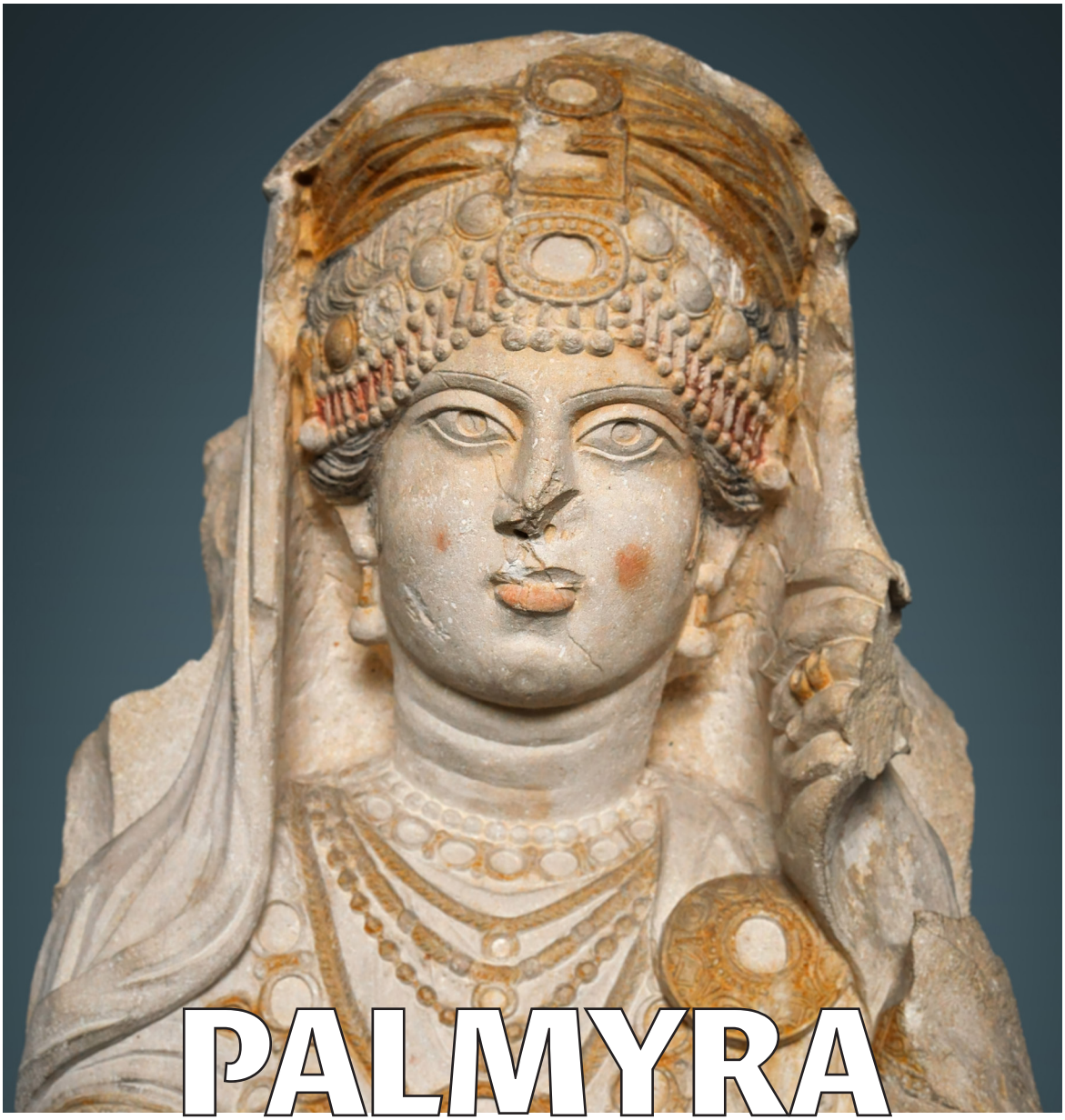

PALMYRA

PEARL OF THE DESERT

Edited by Rubina Raja

Colophon

This book came into being based on the *Palmyra Portrait Project*, a research project directed by Professor Rubina Raja, Aarhus University. The project is funded by the Carlsberg Foundation and Aarhus University. Learn more at www.projects.au.dk/palmyraportrait/.

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Thanks of the highest order are due to the Carlsberg Foundation for its support of the *Palmyra Portrait Project*. Had it not been for the Foundation's generous backing, Danish research on Palmyra would never have been restored to its leading position in 2012. I therefore take this opportunity to express my sincerest gratitude to the Carlsberg Foundation and its chairman, Professor Flemming Besenbacher, for all the commitment, interest and funding that have so greatly benefited the project since 2012.

Front cover
The Beauty of Palmyra, found by Harald Ingholt in November 1928, Qasr Abjad (Copyright: *Palmyra Portrait Project*, reproduced by permission of the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek).

Back cover
View of the Temple of Bel at Palmyra, before its recent destruction. In the foreground, portions of the temple wall (*temenos*) and the colonnade surrounding the sanctuary (Copyright: Rubina Raja 2010).

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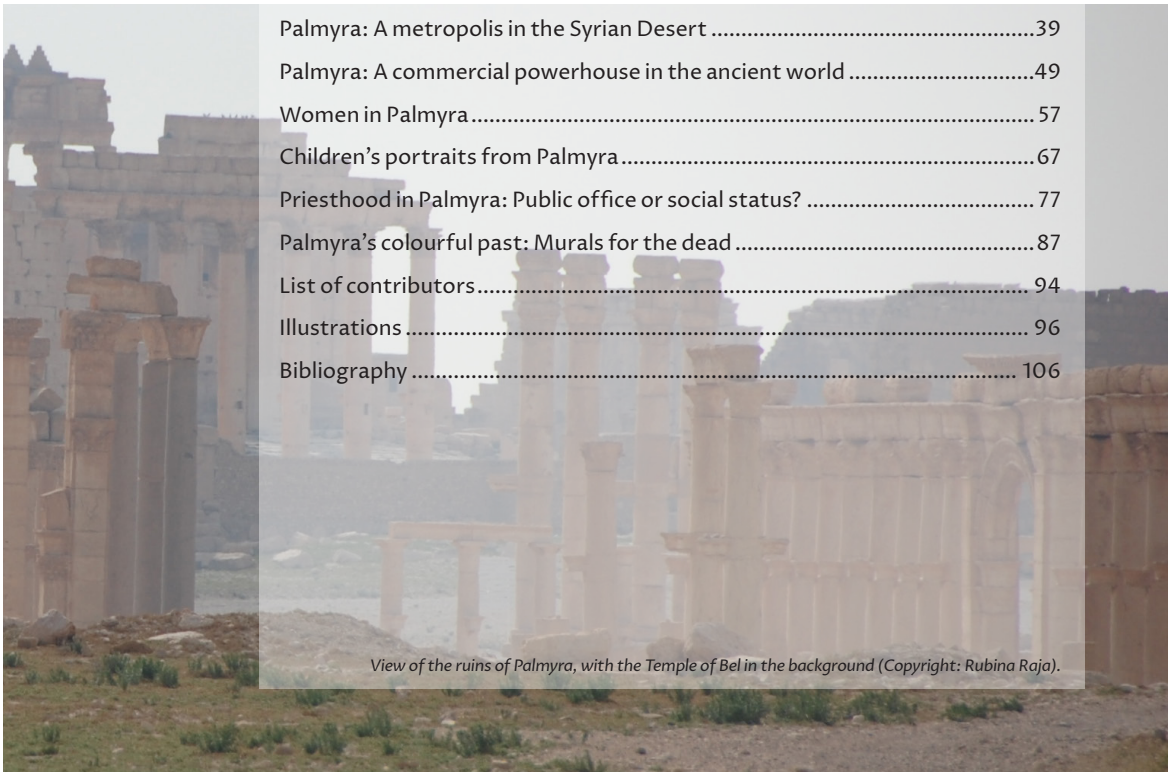

View of the ruins of Palmyra, with the Temple of Bel in the background (Copyright: Rubina Raja).

Palmyra's chronology

1678: *Palmyra is "rediscovered" by a group of English merchants based in Aleppo.*

1693: *Hofsted van Essen paints a panorama of the ruins at Palmyra.*

1750–1751: *Robert Wood and James Dawkins travel to Palmyra, then publish* The Ruins of Palmyra.

1882–1886: *The brewer and patron of the arts Carl Jacobsen buys the first objects for his Palmyra collection.*

1889: *The rabbi David Simonsen publishes the first catalogue of Carl Jacobsen's Palmyra collection.*

1893: *Johannes Elith Østrup visits Palmyra during his journey on horseback from Egypt to Copenhagen, funded by the Carlsberg Foundation.*

1924, 1925, 1928 and 1936: *Harald Ingholt conducts archaeological fieldwork at Palmyra.*

1925–1930: *Harald Ingholt is employed at the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek.*

1927–1930: *Harald Ingholt serves as secretary of the New Carlsberg Foundation.*

1928: *Harald Ingholt successfully defends his doctoral dissertation* Studier over Palmyrensk Skulptur *(Studies of Palmyrene Sculpture).*

1931–1938: *Harald Ingholt leads the Carlsberg Foundation's archaeological campaign at Hama, in Syria.*

1931–1938: *Harald Ingholt is employed at the American University in Beirut and its museum.*

1934: *Harald Ingholt founds the international journal* Berytus.

1939–1941: *Harald Ingholt is employed at Aarhus University as a reader in Semitic philology.*

1942: *Harald Ingholt is employed as an associate professor at Yale University in New Haven, CT.*

1957: *Harald Ingholt and Jørgen Læssøe head the Danish excavation at Shimshara in Iraq.*

1960: *Harald Ingholt is promoted to a professorship at Yale University.*

1983: *The Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek receives Harald Ingholt's Palmyra archive.*

1993: *Finn Ove Hvidberg-Hansen and Gunhild Ploug publish their catalogue of the Palmyra collection at the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek.*

2012: *Rubina Raja initiates the Palmyra Portrait Project with funding from the Carlsberg Foundation.*

NORDIC RESEARCH ON PALMYRA: FROM THE EDITOR

Palmyrene tower tombs – some better preserved than others – and stretches of colonnaded street. This view shows how the towers encircled the city centre and were conspicuous features in the urban landscape (Copyright: Rubina Raja 2010).

Nordic research on Palmyra: From the editor

Rubina Raja, Aarhus University

The idea for this publication took shape as I worked on my contribution to the 2016 Annual Review of the Carlsberg Foundation, celebrating its 140th anniversary. Immersed in the history of Danish scholarship on Palmyra, I realised that the research findings from work currently in progress in Denmark and elsewhere in the Nordic region deserved to be made available to a wider public.

Often called "the Pearl of the Desert", the city of Palmyra has exerted a fascination all its own ever since its rediscovery by European travellers in the eighteenth century. Since the outbreak of civil war in Syria, the country's cultural heritage has been thrown strongly and starkly into focus – and above all by Palmyra, a name that for many conjures the most renowned archaeological heritage site in Syria and the Near East. The war also brought with it a sharper awareness of Palmyra among the general public, along with a heightened interest in the city and its art and culture. I therefore invited colleagues and students working on Palmyra to contribute perspectives from their own recent work to this volume. Although this publication by no means covers all aspects of Palmyra's long and rich archaeological narrative, it offers the reader a selection from the ancient city's history and its material culture as it unfolded through the centuries. The focus here is on Palmyra research conducted over the last ten years in Denmark and elsewhere in the Nordic region.

Readers will find a total of nine short contributions, one originally written in Norwegian

and the rest in Danish, and all subsequently translated into English. They treat a wide range of themes, with Palmyra as their common denominator. My own opening contributions deal first with the history of the Syrian oasis city of Palmyra, ancient Tadmor, and then with the history of Danish scholarship on Palmyra, giving an overview of the work of Danish scholars from first beginnings up to the very recent period, in which Danish scholarship has once again been pre-eminent since 2012 within the framework of the *Palmyra Portrait Project*. Next, Anne Ditte Koustrup Høj outlines the history of the various Palmyra collections and the connections between the antiquities market and the Syrian civil war. She is followed by Jørgen Christian Meyer, who writes about Palmyra in its region and its hinterland, based on the Syrian-Norwegian survey project he headed for several years prior to the outbreak of war. Eivind Heldaas Seland writes on the city's importance in international trade during the Roman period, when it was a vital junction on the trade route between East and West. Signe Krag sheds light on the representations of the women of Palmyra, who make up a large percentage of the valuable body of funerary portraiture from the Roman period. She is followed by Sara Ringsborg, who sketches the representations of children in funerary sculpture and discusses the role of children in Palmyrene society. I then contribute a third chapter on what we know of the priests of Palmyra, who account for about one-fifth of the documented male funerary sculptures. Annette Højen Sørensen ends the book on a colourful note with a chapter on the murals of the Palmyrene tombs, of which unfortunately only a few have been preserved to the present day.

This bouquet of accessible academic prose reflects the very significant research on Palmyra undertaken in the Nordic region since 2010 – work which has placed Nordic and Danish scholarship at the forefront of international research on the subject of Palmyra.

Since 2012 the *Palmyra Portrait Project*, based at Aarhus University in Denmark under my leadership, has worked to compile a corpus of funerary sculpture from Palmyra that is as comprehensive and complete as possible. At the

same time our scholarly efforts have sought a better understanding of these portraits in their contemporary context, and of their implications for the way we see self-representation in antiquity. As I write these lines, the project's corpus has swelled beyond 3,000 portraits, far more than anyone had thought existed. The sheer volume of this portraiture provides a unique opportunity to conduct statistical analysis of the material, which spans the three hundred years in which portraiture was the preferred form for representing the dead in Palmyra. Palmyrene portraiture is the largest body of portrait sculpture from the Roman era outside Rome itself. That makes this group of artefacts crucial to the study of issues like identity and self-representation in the world of antiquity.

I wish you all a pleasurable reading experience.

Rubina Raja
Aarhus, 2017

The Temple of Baal-Shamin at Palmyra, before the outbreak of war. Despite its modest size, this was one of the ancient city's most important sanctuaries. In antiquity most religious events and celebrations were held in front of the temples rather than within them (Copyright: Rubina Raja 2010).

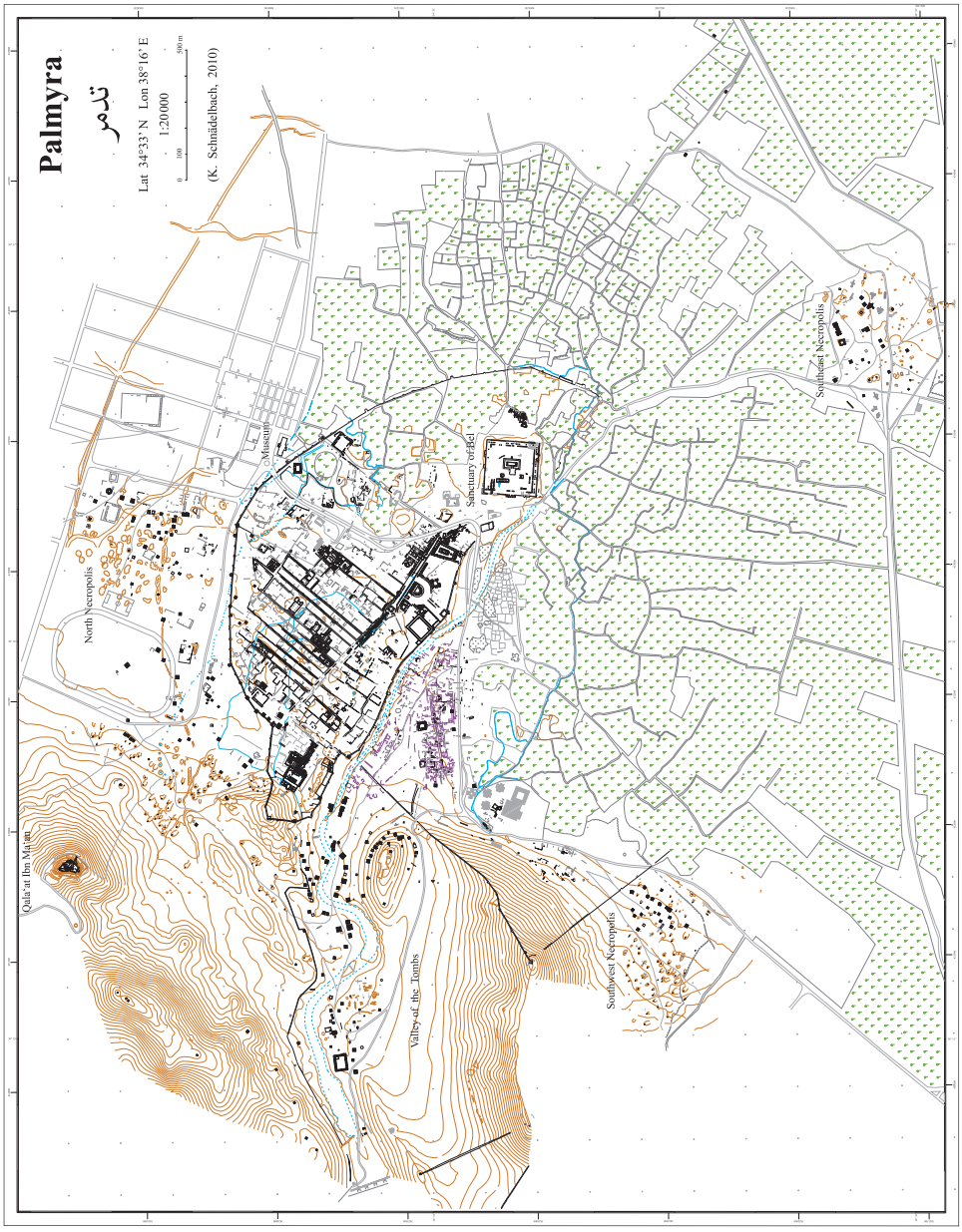

Fig. 1: Plan of ancient Palmyra (After K. Schnädelbach, Topographia Palmyrena, Damascus 2010).

Palmyra: Pearl of the Desert

Rubina Raja, Aarhus University

Ever since its awakening in the public imagination in the eighteenth century, the ancient city of Palmyra in the Syrian Desert has been one of the pinnacles in the archaeological landscape of the Middle East (Fig. 1–2). A pair of British travellers, James Dawkins and Robert Wood, and their party "rediscovered" the forgotten city in 1751. The moment was preserved for posterity in a famous oil painting by the Scottish artist Gavin Hamilton, found today

Fig. 2: Map of Syria (Courtesy of Google Earth).

in the National Gallery in Edinburgh (Fig. 3). The gentlemen are depicted in Roman togas – a costume they would never actually have worn, but which nonetheless shows how at the time the classical style was all the rage in the European visual arts. Taken together, the motif of "Antiquity rediscovered" and the Roman dress are a succinct expression of how the West suddenly became aware of Eastern culture after paying it little heed for several centuries.

The reawakening of Palmyra kindled a new interest in Europe. As a consequence, Palmyrene cultural artefacts became collector's items, and museums and private collectors alike began to acquire objects from Palmyra. The British Museum, the Louvre and, notably, the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek in Copenhagen all have

Fig. 3: Gavin Hamilton's 1758 painting depicting the rediscovery of Palmyra by British travellers James Dawkins and Robert Wood in 1751 (Copyright: National Galleries of Scotland).

Fig. 4: Brewer and patron of the arts Carl Jacobsen with sons Vagn and Helge at the Carlsberg estate in 1888 (Copyright: Carlsberg Archives).

major collections of these objects, each with a long history behind it. The Palmyra collection at the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek is the largest group of Palmyrene funerary portraits beyond Syria's borders. This world-renowned collection was founded by the brewer and patron of the arts Carl Jacobsen (Fig. 4), who in the late nineteenth century acquired many of the funerary portraits through the good offices of the Danish consul in

Fig. 5: Johannes Elith Østrup (After his publication from 1894).

Beirut, Julius Løytved, who acted as his agent. Jacobsen believed that these portraits were of particular interest not only to scholars, but to a wider public. The original collection was subsequently expanded by Johannes Elith Østrup (Fig. 5) and later by Harald Ingholt (Fig. 6) following Østrup's visits to the site and Ingholt's archaeological fieldwork there. The additions Ingholt purchased for the collection were largely from his own excavations at Palmyra, carried out in the 1920s and 1930s. One of these is an elegant carved limestone portrait of a Palmyrene woman, elaborately bejewelled and wearing a lavishly decorated costume. Her clothes, ornaments, hair and face still bear traces of the original colours. This portrait, known as *The Beauty of Palmyra*, is the centrepiece in the Palmyra collection at the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek. Unearthed while Ingholt and his team were excavating the Qasr Abjad family tomb at Palmyra in 1928, this figure was shipped by way of Beirut to Copenhagen, where it was publicly unveiled on 22 December 1929 at the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek (Fig. 7–8).

Fig. 6: Portrait of Harald Ingholt doing photography at Palmyra (Copyright: Palmyra Portrait Project).

Fig. 7: Drawing of The Beauty of Palmyra, published in the Copenhagen newspaper Berlingske Tidende *in December 1929, from the portrait's unveiling at the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek. Artwork by Charles Christensen (Copyright: Berlingske Tidende).*

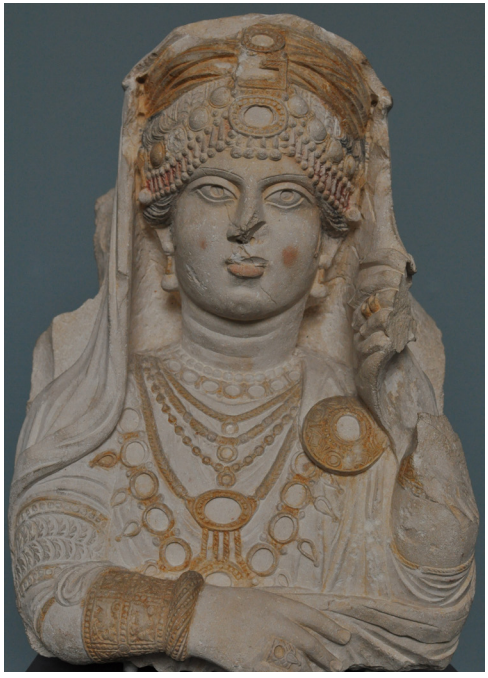

Fig. 8: The Beauty of Palmyra (Copyright: Palmyra Portrait Project, reproduced by permission of Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek).

With this rekindled interest, the ancient city of Palmyra and especially its illustrious Queen Zenobia, who reigned 267–72 CE, found a place within European literature and music. Palmyra and Zenobia took centre stage in major works, including an opera by Gioachino Rossini entitled *Aureliano in Palmira*, which premiered at La Scala in Milan in 1813. Europeans were intrigued by Zenobia, a rarity in the ancient world: the great queen whose only peers were Cleopatra of Egypt and Dido of Carthage. Quite often the plot lines, like that in Rossini's opera, would focus on the legend of how Emperor Aurelian fell in love with Zenobia after arriving with his troops to conquer Palmyra. As far as we know, however, this legend has no basis in fact. The evidence is still unclear on whether Zenobia ended her days in Palmyra or was taken to Rome as a prisoner of war and ultimately died there.

The first three centuries CE were the heyday of ancient Palmyra, when the city grew and rose to prominence. This is the period providing the greatest number of sources – archaeological and historical – that speak of the city and its development. The city also grew wealthier in this period, as reflected in its architecture, and specifically its monumental complexes, as well as in the city's art from this period. One highlight is the unique funerary reliefs that portray the dead and their family members (Fig. 9).

After Palmyra was conquered in 273 CE, the former metropolis descended into obscurity. The conurbation still existed but was strictly controlled by its Roman masters. Among other things, the Roman emperor Diocletian built a wall that encircled just a fraction of the city, which in the preceding centuries had been much larger. That Roman legions were already stationed there at the time suggests that the city fell into ruin, and that Rome held what remained of Palmyra in an iron grip to make sure its inhabitants did not regain power and try to break loose. In short, after Emperor Aurelian marched on the city in 273 CE, the once-mighty empire of Palmyra was vanquished, never to rise again.

Fig. 9: Banqueting relief from Palmyra with a husband and wife motif, dated by the inscription to 146/147 CE. The man is depicted as a Palmyrene priest reclining on a banqueting couch, his wife seated at the foot of the couch in a chair (Copyright: Palmyra Portrait Project, reproduced by permission of Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek).

Palmyra and its archaeology

Palmyra, situated on a plateau in the middle of the Syrian Desert's arid steppes, lies at an important topographical junction between East and West. In ancient times this place was called Tadmor, and we know of its existence as early as the second millennium BCE. The oldest source that mentions "Tadmor" is the Mari Archive, itself dating from the eighteenth century BCE, and the name "Tadmore" also occurs in archives dated around the reign of the Assyrian king Tiglatpileser in the twelfth century BCE. Even so, we have no extensive archaeological finds that tell us about settlements at the Palmyra site that far back, and we do not know how large Tadmor was in the second millennium BCE.

At any rate, the town's location by the Efqa spring in the heart of the Syrian Desert, between the Euphrates and the Mediterranean, made it a natural way station on the trade route running between East and West. In the Roman period, Palmyra was the final stop on the Silk Road. Here camel caravans arriving from the east were assessed and taxed, and the goods were reloaded onto donkey or mule caravans for the westbound leg of the trip on to Damascus, and from there to the Mediterranean coast.

Fig. 10: Columns with statue brackets, lining an ancient street at Palmyra. Brackets often bear inscriptions giving names and other details of the statues they once supported (Copyright: Rubina Raja).

Ever since its rediscovery, Palmyra has fascinated travellers and scholars alike. The city's rich archaeological finds offer food for thought in the present, and opportunities to delve into the past. The Great Colonnade along the main avenue of Palmyra is a magnificent sight, much of it until recent events still standing tall (Fig. 10). Many of the columns are fitted with brackets at about halfway height. In ancient times these supported statues of the city's most prominent personages, often accompanied by parallel inscriptions in Palmyrene Aramaic and Greek (Fig. 11). The inscriptions would inform the reader of whom the statue portrayed and why it had been set there – usually acknowledging a service rendered to the city in the form of funding the construction of public works, expanding commercial activities or financing caravans.

Palmyra was not just famous for its trade networks and caravan drivers. The archers of Palmyra also had a good reputation, and we know that some served in the Roman army. The decorations on Trajan's Column, which still stands in Emperor Trajan's forum in Rome, include a relief of Palmyrene archers taking part in Trajan's military campaigns, and we know

Fig. 11: Inscription dated to 224–225 CE, in which the city council and the people of Palmyra pay tribute to a Roman centurion. Found on a column bracket in the Great Colonnade at Palmyra (Copyright: Jean-Baptiste Yon).

that some were stationed at Dura-Europos near the Euphrates, and in other locations as well. Dura-Europos was a settlement that served, among other things, as a military stronghold on the eastern border of the Roman Empire; several votive reliefs to deities found at Dura-Europos were financed by Palmyrenes who lived or stayed there.

The Palmyra Portrait Project

In 2012 the *Palmyra Portrait Project* was initiated with financing from the Carlsberg Foundation. Since then I have directed the project, whose aim is to compile as comprehensive a corpus database as possible of funerary portraiture from Palmyra (Fig. 12). The project has so far documented more than 3,000 of these portraits, making this the world's largest existing body of ancient portraiture from the Roman period originating outside Rome. These portraits, representing deceased individuals from Palmyra – not infrequently portrayed alongside their still-living family members – give a unique view, spanning more than three centuries, of how self-representation and identity were constructed in the Palmyrene funerary world. What is more, the entire known corpus can now be cross-referred against all the documentation of the public sphere of ancient Palmyra, enabling scholars to shed new light on Palmyrene culture, art and religion based on this comparative work. Danish research on Palmyra is thus once again at the leading edge of international scholarship. Our hope is that this publication will augment the already growing visibility of Danish and Nordic scholarship on Palmyra.

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The main entrance to the Temple of Bel at Palmyra, showing its unusual placement in one of the building's long sides. The temple was a marriage between Graeco-Roman styles and the traditions of the Near East (Copyright: Rubina Raja 2010).

Fig. 1: View in 2010 of Palmyrene tower tombs from the first and second centuries CE, viewed through the Great Colonnade (Copyright: Rubina Raja).

Danish pioneers at Palmyra: Historiographic aspects of Danish scholarship on Palmyra

Rubina Raja, Aarhus University

Ever since the Carlsberg Foundation was established, one of the areas it has supported consisted of scholarship, research and archaeological fieldwork in the Middle East. Danish archaeologists were being supported by the Carlsberg Foundation in their expeditions to the Middle East to study and document ancient and modern locations, monuments and objects even in the nineteenth century. This chapter focuses on the work undertaken over the years by Danish scholars in the Syrian oasis city of Palmyra, known in ancient times as Tadmor. Since 2012, Danish Palmyra scholarship has once again become a topic of keen interest, now under the auspices of the *Palmyra Portrait Project*.

The Pearl of the Desert

Palmyra, located in the Syrian Desert between the Euphrates to the east and the Mediterranean to the west, was a flourishing city in antiquity. It was particularly prosperous during the first three centuries CE, when many of the city's powerful families traded with partners in both East and West. Camel caravans arriving along the Eastern route made their last stop in Palmyra, where goods were transferred to donkey caravans headed for the Mediterranean. Palmyra was, in other words, the end of the line for caravans taking the Silk Road east to west. Palmyra was also known for its skilled archers, as portrayed on Trajan's Column in Rome. Another legendary Palmyrene figure was Queen Zenobia, renowned for her beauty and for precipitating the downfall of her

city by defying Roman rule. As the wealthy city flourished, its golden age was also reflected in local architecture and art. Until quite recently, after the capture of the modern city and its ancient sites by forces belonging to the ISIS militant group, Palmyra was the site of some of the world's best-preserved architecture from the Roman period. It also boasted the largest body of funerary portraits from this period, found in the area's many tower tombs and underground tombs – an absolutely unique body of material that speaks to us about life, and afterlife, in the age of antiquity (Fig. 1–2).

The Carlsberg Foundation and Danish scholarship on Palmyra

The Danish scholar and theologian Johannes E. Østrup visited the oasis town of Palmyra, deep in the Syrian Desert, in 1893 (Fig. 3). This was just one of the stops on his two-year journey on horseback (1892–1894) from Egypt to Denmark – a journey funded by the Carlsberg Foundation. Carl Jacobsen had already purchased numerous Palmyrene funerary busts in 1882–1886. These purchases were mediated in Lebanon through the Danish consul in Beirut, Julius Løytved. They were destined for Jacobsen's collection, then housed on the Carlsberg estate in the Copenhagen suburb of Valby, in the original Glyptotek built to accommodate his collections after his own home became too small. The sculptures from Palmyra, including a rare Palmyrene mummy, were published in 1889 in an illustrated catalogue entitled *Skulpturer og indskrifter fra Palmyra i Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek* (Sculptures and inscriptions from Palmyra at the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek), prepared by the rabbi David Simonsen.

Fig. 2: Funerary reliefs from Palmyra, in the study collection at the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek in Copenhagen, 2016 (Copyright: Rubina Raja).

Østrup organised the shipment of several Palmyrene sculptures to Copenhagen – also with Løytved's assistance. In 1899, Østrup published his article "Historisk–topografiske bidrag til kendskabet til den syriske ørken: med et oversigtskort" ("Historical–topographical contribution to our knowledge of the Syrian Desert: with a chart") as part of the Proceedings of the Royal Danish Academy of Sciences and Letters, 1893–1899. Here he gave a detailed

account of his journey through Syria, including his visit to Palmyra and several other locations inaccessible at the present time because of the Syrian civil war. These include the famous church and mosque complex at Resafa and the city of Homs. Østrup also described visiting a painted tomb at Palmyra. Until recently, scholars assumed he was referring to the famous Tomb of the Three Brothers, but the *Palmyra Portrait Project* has now shown that he must have visited a different tomb. What is more, in his work of 1894 *Skiftende horizonter: Skildringer og iagttagelser fra et ridt gennem ørkenen og Lille-Asien* (Shifting horizons: accounts and observations from a ride through the desert and Asia Minor), Østrup also described the massive destruction of the body of funerary sculpture that was already taking place in the nineteenth century:

Unfortunately the sculptures in these tombs are usually treated with appalling vandalism by the locals. The Turkish müdir has no interest in watching over these ancient relics; Turkish law prohibits foreigners from organising excavations on their own and from exporting artefacts, but this is also the only way in which the Turks' estimation of these objects has found any expression; as concerns their own arrangement of investigations in these fields they lack, for one thing, the scientific qualifications and, for another, the necessary funds. Those excavations so far conducted within the borders of the Ottoman Empire have therefore all been based on foreign initiatives and foreign money, though as a rule under an agreement with the government that the excavation has been done "to halves", meaning that the museum at Constantinople received one half, and the foreign country or private backer the other half. (90).

The Syrian civil war is therefore not the only culprit to be blamed for the proliferation of vandalism and the destruction of cultural heritage - in Syria as elsewhere. There is also

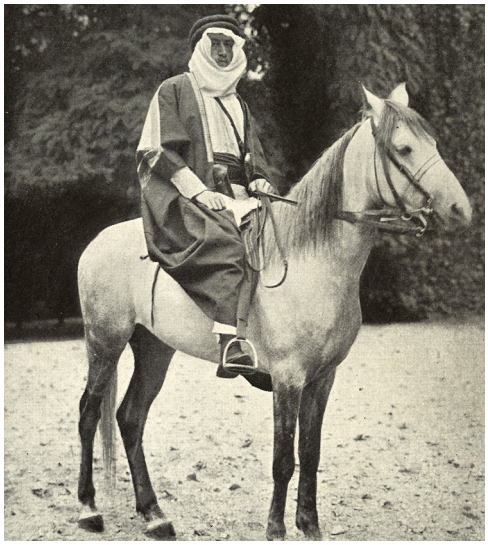

Fig. 3: Portrait of Johannes Elith Østrup, taken during his journey on horseback from Egypt to Denmark, 1892–1894 (Copyright: Palmyra Portrait Project).

a long history of illegal digging, and even of excavations carried out by international expeditions in which the found artefacts were divided between the rulers and the excavators. The passage quoted from Østrup above describes how collections of Palmyrene funerary sculpture, including that in Istanbul, were accumulated: They are, at least in part, acquisitions stemming from excavations carried out by international expeditions at Palmyra in the late nineteenth century.

Harald Ingholt and Palmyra

In the 1920s, based on Jacobsen's collection in Copenhagen – in whose selection the brewer and dedicated patron of the arts had personally been deeply involved – and on Østrup's earlier work and descriptions of the Palmyra area, the Danish archaeologist, Semitic philologist and theologian Harald Ingholt began to pursue his studies on Palmyra. In fact, he wrote a ground-breaking work on Palmyrene funerary sculpture

Fig. 4: Sketch done during Harald Ingholt's doctoral defence (published in the Danish daily Politiken *in 1928).*

Fig. 5: Harald Ingholt at Dura-Europos with other international researchers. Left to right: Count Robert Mesnil du Buisson, Harald Ingholt, Michael Rostovtzeff, Janet Ingholt, Clark Hopkins and Henry Pearson. Year unknown (Copyright: Palmyra Portrait Project).

while simultaneously conducting excavations there. Jacobsen was already convinced that these sculptures would give the world an opportunity to discuss how Palmyrene portraits had developed as compared to the portraiture known from the city of Rome. He felt that they would reveal to the scholars of his day Palmyra's special status in the past – more specifically, in the first three centuries CE, the period of Palmyra's heyday.

Ingholt's *Studier over Palmyrensk Skulptur* (Studies of Palmyrene Sculpture) – which he defended as his doctoral dissertation in 1928

and published in the same year (Fig. 4) – was the first major work on Palmyrene portraiture. Besides the portraits in Copenhagen, Ingholt included portraits from other collections around the world, and quite a few from Palmyra as well. His work remains an essential part of Palmyra scholarship to this day, but it must be read in Danish as it has not been translated into any other languages. He based his work with the portraits on the extensive paper archives in which he had spent many years documenting more than 800 portraits, mounting photographs of them on pieces of yellow and brown card, noting dates and other information, and categorising them in groups of his own devising. He took this archive with him when he took up a position as associate professor – and later full professor – at Yale University, where he continued his work until his death in 1985. By then, however, Ingholt had already transferred the archive from Yale University to the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek in

Fig. 6: Harald Ingholt and locals during his 1936 excavation at the Tomb of Malkû, another original site of portraits he brought to the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek (Copyright: Palmyra Portrait Project).

the early 1980s. He believed that it belonged in Copenhagen, alongside the world's largest collection of Palmyrene funerary sculpture outside Syria.

Ingholt later published numerous articles on Palmyra and the ancient city's art and architecture, and he also co-edited the recognised publication *Recueil des Tessères de Palmyre*. This is a corpus of Palmyrene *tesserae*, clay tokens or "entry tickets" used at religious banquets and celebrations, specimens of which Ingholt also acquired for the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek collection. He also led archaeological missions and fieldwork, financed by the Carlsberg Foundation, to the Syrian city of Hama and later, in the 1950s, to Shimshara in Iraq. He published and travelled with leading scholars of his day, in whose company he can be seen in photographs from visits to various sites in the Middle East (as in Fig. 5).

Ingholt conducted excavations in Palmyra in 1924, 1925 and 1928, and also in 1936 (Fig. 6). While spending time in and around Palmyra he purchased additional objects for the collection, which in the meantime had been moved again, to the spacious new Glyptotek building in central Copenhagen, inaugurated in 1897. One of the pieces he bought, with funding from the Rask-Ørsted Foundation, is the most famous portrait in the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek collection. Called *The Beauty of Palmyra*, this work came from his own excavations at Palmyra of the family tomb known as Qasr Abjad. It arrived in Denmark after Ingholt's mission in 1928. *The Beauty of Palmyra* was unveiled at the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek on 22 December 1929, giving rise to an article about this surprisingly well-preserved piece in the prominent Copenhagen daily *Berlingske Tidende* – accompanied by a drawing by the architect Charles Christensen, who had accompanied Ingholt on several of his missions. The provenance of this work subsequently became obscured and was the subject of much discussion among scholars; but the question was finally laid to rest when the *Palmyra Portrait Project* – through its likewise Carlsberg-funded work with the Ingholt Archive at the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek; with Ingholt's still unpublished excavation diaries; and with archive material from Yale University, where Ingholt held his chair – was able to establish beyond doubt that the sculpture was unearthed at one of Ingholt's own excavations.

The Palmyra Portrait Project

Since 2012 the *Palmyra Portrait Project*, a Danish-based initiative, has been working

to compile a corpus of Palmyrene funerary sculpture data that is as extensive and detailed as possible. It has also undertaken research intended to increase our understanding of these portraits in the context of their own time, as well as what they tell us about self-representation in antiquity.

At present this corpus contains over 3,000 portraits, a resource far greater than previously appreciated. Such a considerable body of portraiture gives scholars an unparalleled opportunity to undertake statistical analysis of material spanning three centuries; more particularly, the three hundred years when portraits were the format of choice for depicting the dead of Palmyra.

The *Palmyra Portrait Project* began by digitising Harald Ingholt's archive of Palmyrene portraiture, which forms the basis of the project corpus. Not only does this corpus give scholars unrivalled access to the study of certain aspects of antique representations of individuals, the development of funerary art in Palmyra and its meaning in the context of its own world. It has also, tragically, gained new urgency and relevance in step with the escalating Syrian civil war, precisely because it has gathered information about all published *in situ* portraits in Palmyra, many of which are currently reported stolen or in circulation on the illegal antiquities market.

And so, by a twist of fate no one could have predicted, the *Palmyra Portrait Project* now holds the world's best documentation of this portraiture and can contribute to preserving it for the future. The underlying research and scholarship has only been possible thanks to the Carlsberg Foundation's continued support for and dedication to upholding Danish engagement in the archaeological study of the Middle East.

This chapter is a modified version of an article published in the 2016 Annual Review of the Carlsberg Foundation. It is reproduced by kind permission of the Carlsberg Foundation.

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Raja, R. & Sørensen, A.H. 2015. The 'Beauty of Palmyra' and Qasr Abjad (Palmyra): New discoveries in the archive of Harald Ingholt. *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 28, 439–450

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The Arch of Triumph at Palmyra was a monumental archway connecting the area around the Temple of Bel with the city's main street. The original construction consisted of three arched passageways: a main central arch and a smaller passageway to each side. The Arch of Triumph can be seen in Gavin Hamilton's 1758 painting depicting the rediscovery of Palmyra by British travellers Dawkins and Wood in 1751 (found on page 12 of this volume). The arch was destroyed in 2015–16 (Copyright: Rubina Raja 2010).

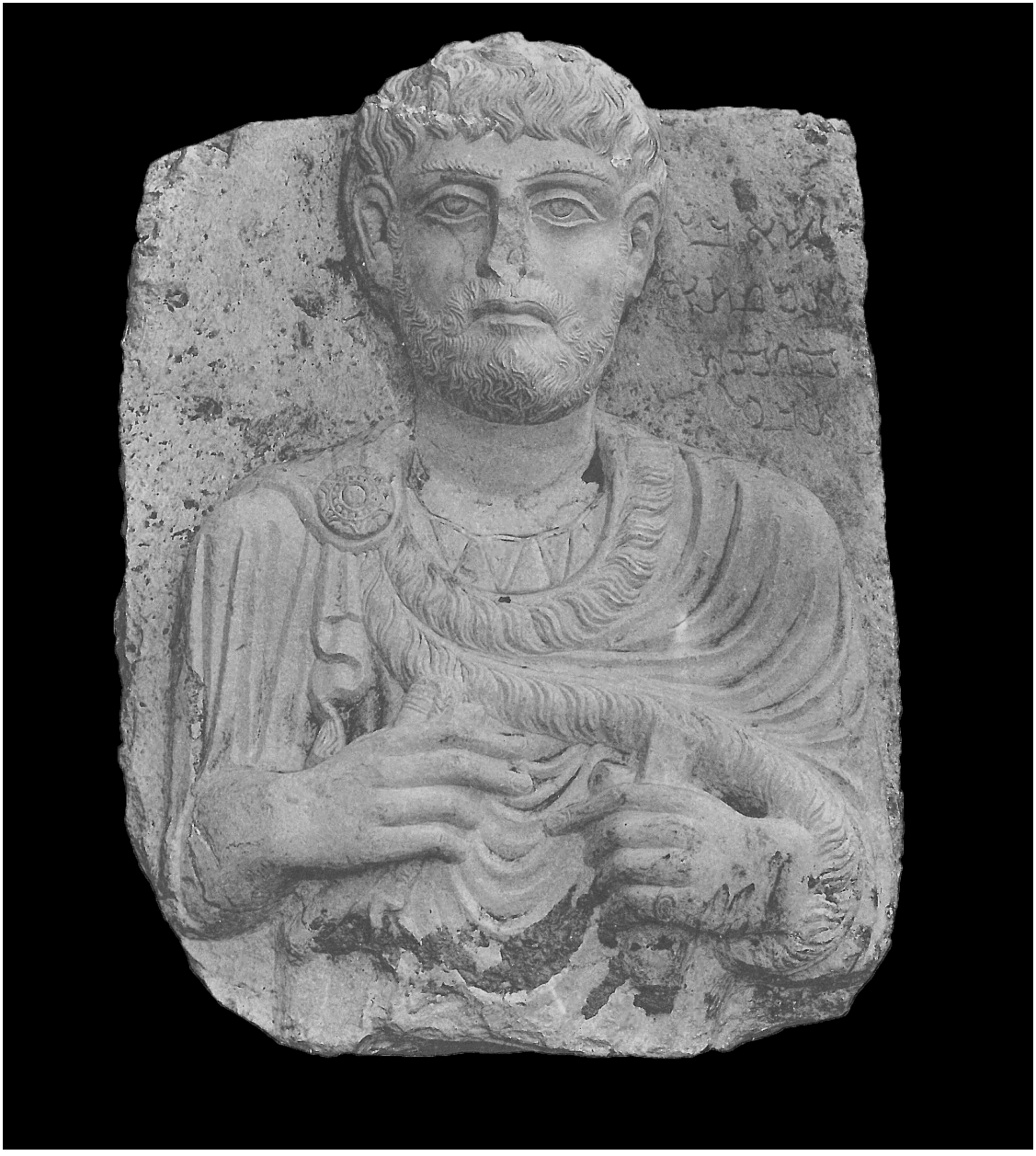


Fig. 1: Palmyrene portrait from the Bertone collection, sold at auction in 1931 (Copyright: Palmyra Portrait Project).

Palmyrene portraiture and illegal trade in art and antiquities

Anne Ditte Koustrup Høj, Aarhus University

Trading in the Palmyrene portraits has been closely linked to Western interest in the cultural history of Syria. Although the Syrian desert city of Palmyra was first rediscovered by the West when English merchants travelled to Aleppo in 1678, it would be several centuries before Palmyrene antiquities entered the art markets.

Establishing the collections, 1880–1910

The nineteenth century saw a surge in the Western world's interest in antiquity, and numerous expeditions set out to document and acquire material relating to cultural and art history. The Renaissance tradition of "the Grand Tour of Italy and Greece" gradually lost ground to a new tradition: "journeys to the Orient", often including a visit to Palmyra. Much as travellers to the Mediterranean might bring back ancient Greek vases or Roman marble statues, travellers in Syria might buy a Palmyrene portrait to take home as a souvenir. What is more, at that time spirituality, more specifically spiritualism – a belief in the existence of a spirit world beyond this one – was a driving force behind protests in artistic circles against the way society was developing industrialised mass culture. Palmyrene portraits were regarded as embodiments of precisely such spirituality, with their large, hypnotic eyes that seemed able to gaze into the world beyond. Questing spirituality and a reawakened interest in the East therefore contributed to making these portraits coveted objects for collectors in the West.

The three decades from 1880 to 1910 witnessed the acquisition of the vast majority of Palmyrene portraits now in Western collections. The largest European collections are found in three museums: the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek in Copenhagen, the British Museum in London, and the Louvre in Paris. These three museums purchased a total of 198 Palmyrene portraits during these thirty years around the turn of the century. This corresponds to 82.5 per cent of their combined collections as of 2016, which number 240 portraits all told. During these three decades many private collections were likewise enlarged through the acquisition of Palmyrene portraits, many of which were later donated to national museums.

Fig. 2: Palmyrene portrait from the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen, acquired in Syria between 1883 and 1887 by Løytved, IN 1060 (Copyright: Palmyra Portrait Project).

Such portraits were often purchased through local antiquities dealers based in Syria who saw an opportunity to profit from the trade in ancient objects. Nor was this financial opportunity overlooked by the emissaries of other states to the region, such as the European consuls. One example was Julius Løytved, who served as the Danish consul in Beirut and with whose assistance the brewer and patron of the arts Carl Jacobsen formed the core of his Palmyra collection. Housed at the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek in Copenhagen, this soon became the largest collection of Palmyrene portraits outside Syria, and remains so to this day. Western auctioneers and galleries also began to sell the occasional Palmyrene portrait. The earliest examples recorded by art dealers are from two auctions held at the Parisian auction house Hotel Drouot in 1903 and 1905.

The change in taste, 1910–60

In the years between 1910 and 1959, only two sales of Palmyrene portraits are recorded:

one sold in 1923, and a batch of twenty-two sold in 1931 following the death of the French architect Émile-Pierre Bertone, which led to the sale of his antiquities collection. Bertone had visited Palmyra in 1893–96 and studied the architecture and inscriptions there, for instance those found on portrait backgrounds. He presumably acquired his collection of Palmyrene artefacts during this visit. After the 1931 auction Bertone's portraits ended up in private and public collections, including the Louvre.

Museums in Europe purchased very few portraits during this time, and those they did buy mainly came from private collections like Bertone's. The limited dealing is probably a result of the two world wars, which would have adversely impacted collectors financially, and of waning interest in Palmyrene portraiture. The interest in all things spiritual had quickly faded after the turn of the century, with the artistic focus shifting to core Roman portraiture, compared to which the Palmyrene portraits were regarded as provincial and unattractive.

The return to favour, 1960–2016

It is only after 1960 that we once again find recorded sales of Palmyrene portraits in the material, though still very few. Ten portraits

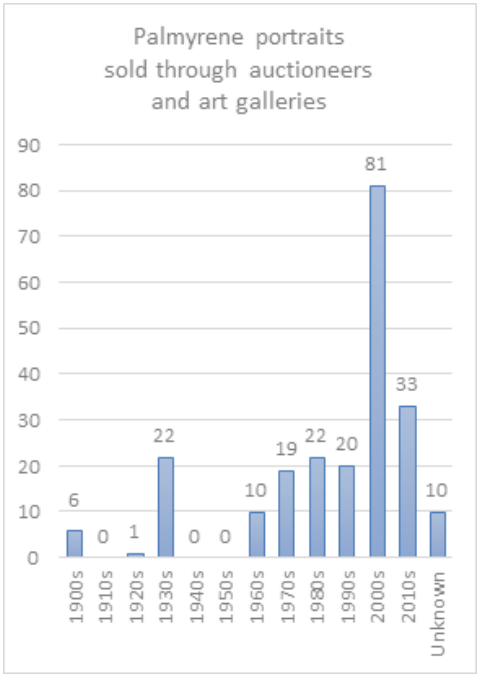
Fig. 3: Torso of a Palmyrene portrait, Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen, IN 1082 (Copyright: Palmyra Portrait Project).

were sold in the 1960s, then about twenty per decade between 1970 and 2000. This can hardly be attributed to a renewed demand for such portraits, so it probably points to a general rise in the buying and selling of antiquities. Syria gained independence from the French mandate in 1946, after which the country took steps to preserve its cultural heritage. After this time very few portraits were acquired from Syria. Instead, Palmyrene portraits traded in the West were pieces offered for sale from early collections.

Between 2000 and 2010, eighty-one sales of Palmyrene portraits are recorded, a significant

increase over previous years. This reflected a growing demand for Palmyrene cultural artefacts, springing from a renewed interest in late antiquity, a period with which these portraits are often associated. From 2010 up to the present day, we see thirty-three recorded sales of portraits. While this is just below half the number of sales seen over the preceding decade, it bears witness to a sustained interest in Palmyrene portraiture.

In the course of the Syrian civil war (2011–), a large number of Palmyrene portraits have been confiscated as attempts were being made to illegally trade or export them from Syria. At least sixty-eight portraits from identified tombs are known or presumed to have been looted from the sites, and fifty-seven portraits from hitherto unidentified tombs have been looted and subsequently confiscated. This points to the very considerable demand for Palmyrene portraiture on the black market, and shows also that the illegal dealing is taking place under cover of wartime atrocities. Most of these activities took place before Daesh – also known as ISIS or ISIL – gained control of Palmyra. Although there were few reports of the looting of tombs or illegal excavation for profit immediately following the takeover, the cultural heritage at Palmyra still suffered severe damage. Declaring the antiquities to be objects of idolatry, Daesh forces destroyed numerous antique monuments such as temples, reduced tower tombs to rubble, and defaced the portraits kept in the museum at Palmyra. Before the civil war, the number of recorded portraits in the museum had been 594, with a further ninety-six portraits recorded *in situ* in tombs in and around ancient Palmyra. All in all, this amounted to about one-third of all Palmyrene portraits documented worldwide. Regrettably, we must assume that the vast majority of these artefacts have been destroyed or have



disappeared and been absorbed into the black market in the wake of the civil war.

The impact of illegal trade

Looting, illegal digging and illicit trade in Palmyrene portraits has not been confined to the civil war. The phenomenon has been well known since the earliest collections were brought together. Such practices have caused portraits to be damaged and important knowledge to be lost, negatively impacting not only the corpus of Palmyrene portraits but also their scholarly study.

As the Danish philologist Johannes Østrup wrote in his travel narrative of 1894: "... as these are prohibited goods, a single head is far easier both to carry and to conceal than a figure in its entirety; hence all these headless torsos which lie strewn about on the sand amongst the pillars of Palmyra...". These heads are now on show in museums across the Western world, where they make up just under 27 per cent of Palmyra collections, as opposed to 8 per cent in corresponding Syrian collections. By comparison, headless portraits make up 1–2.5 per cent of museum collections in the Western world, but made up a full 20 per cent in the

Fig. 4: Head from a Palmyrene portrait, New Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen, IN 1102 (Copyright: Palmyra Portrait Project).

Fig. 5: Palmyrene portrait of two figures with an inscription behind them, Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen, IN 1024 (Copyright: Palmyra Portrait Project).

museum at Palmyra and a good 10 per cent of the portraits *in situ* in the tombs prior to the Daesh occupation. We see the same pattern in the objects offered through auctioneers and galleries: almost 31 per cent are heads, while fewer than 3 per cent are torsos. The head–torso distribution in the various collections shows that faces weighed heavily in the valuation of Palmyrene portraits. From this perspective a large proportion of the corpus is damaged, with around one-fifth of the corpus currently consisting of disembodied heads. The damaged portraits represent a challenge for scholars as they reveal only part of their original appearance, making it hard to determine dates and other details.

The context in which they were found is documented for only a few of the portraits in the early collections, since this information was not considered important at the time. In addition, information about the find location and context may have been lost over the years, or intentionally hidden if it indicated that a portrait had been unlawfully acquired. Only 400 or so portraits – roughly one-fifth of the corpus – are documented with information about their tomb of origin, and these are almost exclusively found at the museums in Damascus and Palmyra, and *in situ* in the tomb sites at Palmyra. When portraits are illegally excavated, priceless knowledge about their provenance is lost: information that could have told us more about ancient Palmyrene families, funerary traditions and other customs.

The potential for financial gain through the tradeing in antiquities has also led to the production of forgeries. If such forged objects go undetected, they can slip into the corpus unnoticed, thereby affecting our understanding of the portraits and of antiquity. Forgeries are

FACTS

The first Western collection to obtain Palmyrene portraits was the Louvre, which received 2 in 1852.

From 1903 to 2016, auctioneer and gallery catalogues record 224 transactions for the sale or resale of 204 portraits.

These 204 portraits make up almost 10% of the corpus of the roughly 2,100 objects bearing Palmyrene portraits.

None of the 204 portraits has a record stating when or where it was found.

produced not only of portraits, but of their inscriptions as well. Because the inscriptions name the portrait and may reveal its genealogy, they give the portrait an identity. At present scholars believe that thirty Palmyrene portraits bear forged inscriptions, indicating that collectors consider such inscriptions a valuable feature.

Preserving the portraiture of Palmyra

In 2012, Professor Rubina Raja initiated the *Palmyra Portrait Project*, a scholarly effort to collate and consolidate images and information about the known corpus of Palmyrene portraits into an online database. I am grateful to Professor Raja for granting me access to this invaluable database, which in the spring of 2016 yielded the statistical information used for the findings presented here. The statistical data were calculated based on the 2,100 or so objects that bear Palmyrene portraits, each of which portrays one or several individuals – such that, for instance, a sarcophagus with eight figures counts as a single portrait. This important documentation work renders the portraits – even those destroyed or lost to the black market during the civil war – accessible not only to scholars, but to everyone interested in the cultural heritage of Palmyra.

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Fig. 1: The arid plateau in the Syrian Desert, green in April (Copyright: Jørgen Christian Meyer).

Palmyra: A metropolis in the Syrian Desert

Jørgen Christian Meyer, University of Bergen

In 1912 the Czech scholar and explorer Alois Musil (1868–1944) visited Tadmor, or Palmyra as the great city of antiquity was called. In Musil's day the settlement, a mere 350 households, was confined within the outer walls of the Temple of Bel. Surprisingly, Musil describes how the inhabitants had to import barley and wheat from the fertile plains of eastern Syria, bartering with salt they harvested from the salt flats south of the oasis. This is remarkably at odds with the description Pliny the Elder gives of ancient Palmyra (*Natural History*, 5, 88):

Palmyra is a city famous for the beauty of its site, the riches of its soil, and the delicious quality and abundance of its water. Its fields are surrounded by sands on every side ... (Translation after John Bostock.)

According to Pliny, the springs and fertile fields of the oasis area could support a large population of perhaps 50,000 to 100,000 people. Nevertheless, we have good reason to trust Musil, who had travelled extensively in the Middle East, acquiring a profound knowledge both of the region's geography and of its peoples. What he saw was an oasis with small plantations and fields unable to produce enough food for even a modest settlement. A metropolis there could not realistically have based its existence on long caravans bringing in grain from eastern Syria. Like other ancient cities without access to the sea and marine transportation, Palmyra would have had to live on what could be grown or obtained locally, or in the hinterlands.

The arid steppe plateau

Palmyra is not actually surrounded by sandy desert, as Pliny claims, even though the landscape can give this impression in the hot summer months. It is, in fact, situated on an enormous plateau of arid steppe rather than in a true desert. In the northern reaches of this area are several mountain ranges which, until the mid-twentieth century, were partially covered by occasional thickets and trees, most of which have now been felled and used for charcoal. In winter seasons with ample rainfall it is possible to grow barley here, even though the crop requires about 200 mm of precipitation. Less rain falls to the south, but in winter and spring the steppe is covered in green grasses (Fig. 1) that attract Bedouin nomads with large flocks of sheep and goats.

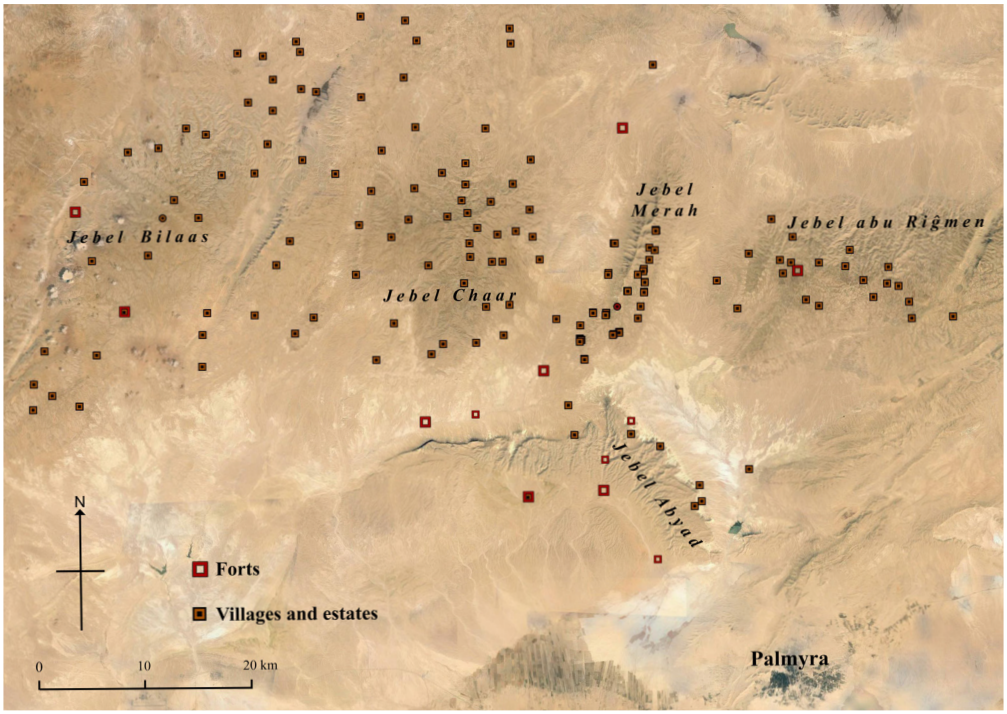

Fig. 2: Villages, farm estates and forts north of Palmyra (Copyright: Jørgen Christian Meyer).

Fig. 3: A small wadi west of Palmyra, shortly after a rain shower (Copyright: Jørgen Christian Meyer).

Villages and farms north of Palmyra

In former times there were villages spread across the northern reaches of the hinterland. These were originally thought to have been centres dependent on sheep-pasturing or horse-breeding, but recent Syrian-Norwegian field studies (2007–2011) have provided evidence of a close-knit pattern of settlements that points to a more intensive land use (Fig. 2). Some areas have actual villages spaced 4–5 km apart, while others show more isolated farms or estates spaced at distances of 500–1,000 m. A Roman imperial tax-tariff regulation from Palmyra stated that food items brought to and from the villages were exempt from tax, but unfortunately without mentioning the specific products. However, pollen analyses from one location show that barley was one of the cultivated crops. There are no indications that the climate was less arid in antiquity, so the question is how farmers managed to prevent their crops from failing, and their livestock from succumbing, in years with inadequate rainfall – which was, presumably, the typical scenario.

The answer is that these farmers had a set of very particular agricultural practices, with techniques and methods little known in Western Europe. When rain falls on the arid steppe, it often comes in brief and intense bursts. These deluges fill the dry river beds, the wadis, with

fast-flowing currents that transport large volumes of sediments (Fig. 3). Using a network of small collection channels (Fig. 4) some of this water can be captured and guided into cisterns – a practice known as rainwater harvesting – or retained behind small dams. From there it can later be directed to gardens and fields to supplement natural precipitation. Another technique – floodwater farming – uses a series of low walls made of large, heavy stones laid out across the wadis to slow the flow of the water (Fig. 5). This leads to the build-up between the walls of wet, nutrient-rich layers of sediment soil that can easily be prepared for sowing. This type of agriculture is less vulnerable to fluctuations in rainfall because the water is concentrated where the farmers need it most. It does, however, require large investments in the construction and maintenance of cisterns, channels and small-scale earthworks.

Fig. 4: Cistern site with a carved channel, curving across the rock to catch rainwater runoff (Copyright: Jørgen Christian Meyer).

Fig. 5: Barrier across a wadi at Jebel Merah (Copyright: Jørgen Christian Meyer).

The farms were found to consist of a large central courtyard giving access to a variety of rooms that opened onto it (Fig. 6), and they had their own small shrines dedicated to Baal-Shamin, god of rain and fertility, and to Arabic and local deities. The inscriptions from the farms are in Aramaic only, and the villages clearly belonged to a very different social sphere than the ceremonial Palmyra, where the inscriptions are bilingual in Aramaic and Greek.

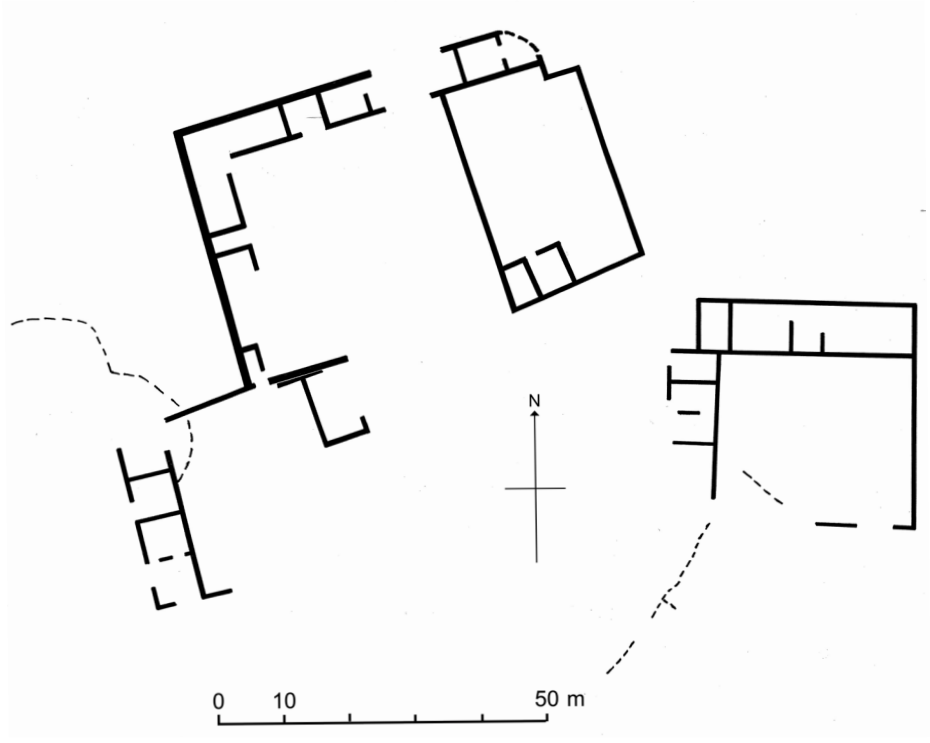

Fig. 6: Buildings from a village northwest of Palmyra (Copyright: Jørgen Christian Meyer).

Fig. 7: Remains of a small fort near a crossroads at Jebel Abyad (Copyright: Jørgen Christian Meyer).

Nomads and settlers: conflict or coexistence?

Numerous examples of graffiti have also been found, some unexpectedly written in Safaitic, a language spoken by nomadic groups in southern Syria and northern Jordan who used the arid steppes of eastern Jordan and western Iraq for winter grazing. During the hot summer most of them returned to their core location, but some moved northwards into the cooler mountain areas north of Palmyra, as mentioned in a few Safaitic graffiti found in Jordan and in southern Syria itself. The local Roman-period tariff regulation also states that animals brought onto Palmyrene territory from outlying areas were subject to a grazing fee, and that tax collectors were allowed to mark or brand the animals – no doubt to verify who had paid their fee, and to distinguish the animals from Palmyra's own flocks.

How then were conflicts avoided between settlers and nomads? Usually the nomads would not have arrived until after the harvest, in early May when the sun had already scorched the steppe grasses of the plateau. The harvested fields would have been good grazing areas, and the nomadic livestock would have made their contribution by fertilising the fields in return. Therefore, presumably, the resident farmers and the herders existed in a sort of symbiosis. Years with less rainfall on the southern plateau areas may have shifted this pattern, changing the arrival of the animals into a threat to the ripening grain. In such years the pressure on areas with fresh grass and access to water from cisterns, wells and springs would also have been greater, potentially creating tension among the various nomadic groups. In addition, flocks of sheep and more particularly goats can wreak havoc on garden vegetation if they get out of control.

One condition for coexistence is some sort of conflict resolution and a control mechanism for nomads entering the local area. The northern outlying areas close to Palmyra have a series of military fortifications on various scales, where small units were posted (Fig. 7). None of these were strong enough to resist a military threat from external enemies, but the outlying units could control the territory along with its communication lines and important water resources. The forts may also have served as hubs for the collection of taxes and fees, not only for grazing rights – which must have been a complicated affair in itself – but also for using local water resources, an issue likewise dealt with in general terms in the tariff regulation.

The nomads take over

The villages survived the fall of Queen Zenobia, when Palmyra lost its independent status and became a military fortress on the eastern edge of the Roman Empire. They even survived up to the time of the Umayyad dynasty in the mid-700s, after which they were gradually abandoned. This raises the question of why the Ottoman rulers did not maintain at least some local villages, rather than having to import grain from eastern Syria. A probable explanation is that the coexistence of nomads and villages required a higher-level control regime of some sort in the area, which the Ottoman Empire was never able to put in place. The desert-like expanses of the arid plateau came to be dominated by nomadic tribes who, to this day, maintain many of the ancient cisterns and water-harvesting systems for their own use – not for farming, but for watering their sheep and goats.

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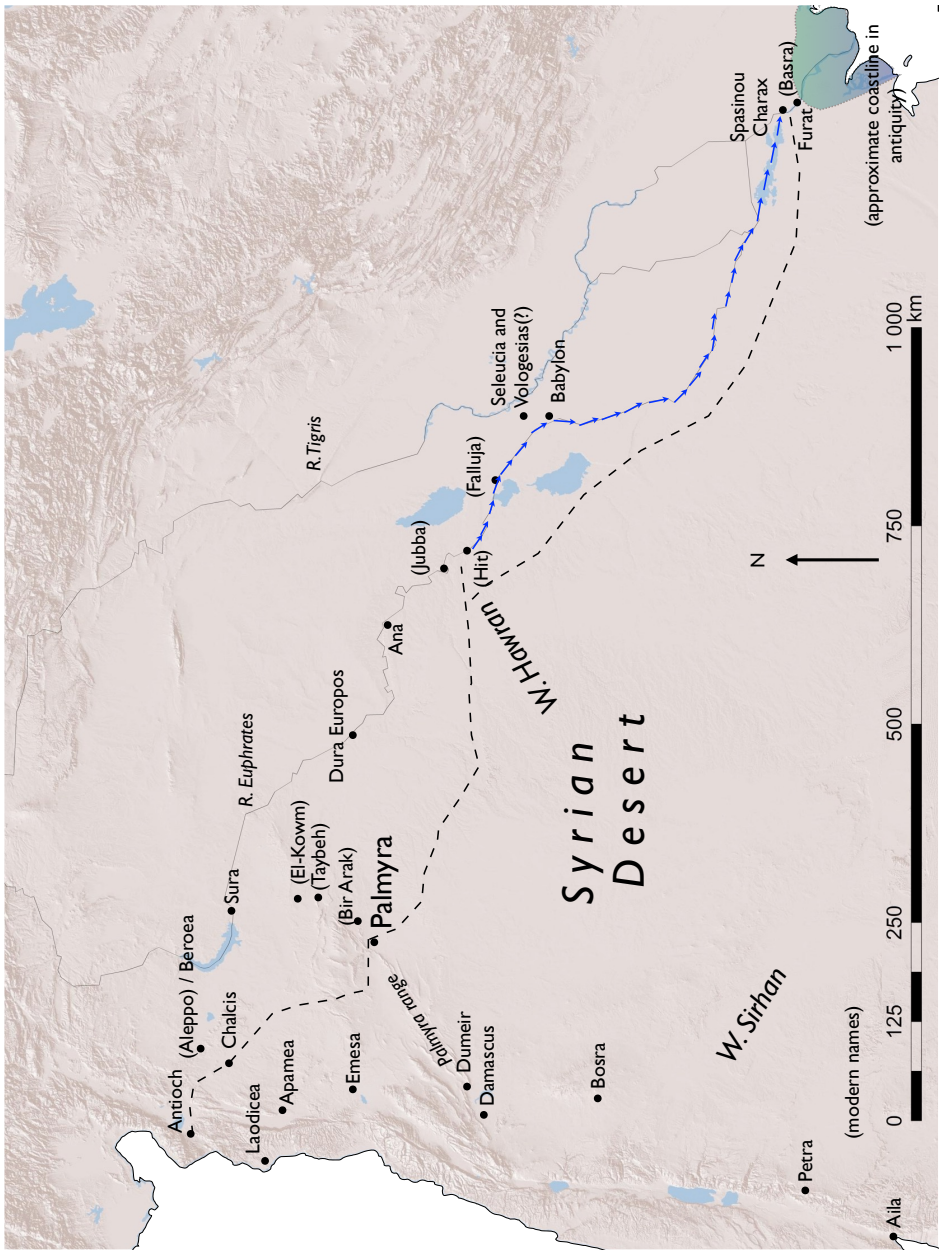

Fig. 2: Palmyrene caravan routes in the Syrian Desert, mapped by E. H. Seland (Base map copyright: ESRI 2014).

Palmyra: A commercial powerhouse in the ancient world

Eivind Heldaas Seland, University of Bergen

In the year 41 BCE, the Roman general Marcus Antonius travelled through the provinces of Asia Minor and Syria. He imposed crushing taxes on all the cities and rulers who had taken the losing side in the many skirmishes of civil war that broke out in the wake of Caesar's assassination three years earlier. Motivated by what the Roman historian Appian (*The Civil Wars*, 5.9) describes as pure greed, the general also sent his cavalry against the Syrian city of Palmyra. His pretext for the attack was not disloyalty to the Romans as such, but the remarkable wealth that Palmyra's policy of neutrality in the wars between Rome and Parthia had allowed the city to amass from its importation of goods from India, by way of Persia, and their sale onwards to the lands of Rome.

Alas, the soldiers Marcus Antonius sent out returned empty-handed, for the Palmyrenes had taken their riches and fled east as soon as they heard the rumours that hostile forces were headed their way. As it turned out, Palmyra later came under Roman rule, growing over the next three centuries into one of the wealthiest and most important cities in the eastern reaches of the Roman Empire. During the third quarter of the third century CE, the leaders of Palmyra had established themselves as *de facto* rulers in the Middle East, and the city would ultimately claim imperial power – albeit without success. It seems that the income from the lucrative trade routes passing through the Syrian Desert and across the Indian Ocean was a cornerstone of Palmyra's remarkable rise to urban greatness.

Scholars have often regarded Appian's description as anachronistic given that it was written some two hundred years after the events it describes, in a period when Palmyrene trade with the Parthian Empire was well documented in many of the thirty or so "caravan inscriptions" from Palmyra, most of which are found in the ancient Agora. However, there is good reason to believe that Appian was well informed on the situation in Palmyra, even back to the mid-first century BCE. The oldest inscription from the city's main temple, the famous Temple of Bel, dates back to 44 BCE, three years before the Roman attack. With the aid of geo-radar technology, archaeologists from Germany, Austria and Syria have revealed the outlines of a network of streets originating around that time in the area northwest of the temple. The ancient geographer Strabo speaks of how, right around then, nomads in the borderlands of Syria and Iraq began to organise caravans through the desert, enabling merchants to avoid the old trade routes through the Euphrates Valley, with its many local rulers who taxed traders traversing their lands (*Geography*, 16.1.27).

Fig. 1: Monument base from Palmyra, c. 236 CE. Man depicted with a ship on the right; on the left a camel, identifiable from the partially preserved legs and harness (Copyright: Jørgen Christian Meyer).

The descriptions by Strabo and Appian presumably point to the window of opportunity that was opening for the people of Palmyra at this moment in time, for certainly there was nothing natural, obvious or easy about Palmyra's rise to commercial supremacy. Many other urban centres lay on the borders of Roman and Parthian territories, and trade between the Mediterranean region and the countries bordering the Indian Ocean could also use ship-based routes across the Red Sea – which might have been expected to be rather more efficient than a traverse of the desert. The presumption that Palmyra's success in world trade during antiquity was also rooted in the enterprising nature of its inhabitants is also supported by the fact that the city never regained its significance, beyond a regional role, after Emperor Aurelian sacked it in 273 CE following Queen Zenobia's ill-fated rebellion.

The caravans

In the course of Palmyra's best-documented period – the second and third centuries CE – the Palmyrenes would organise caravans every autumn along the routes that ran between Palmyra and various towns and cities in central and southern Mesopotamia. These caravans, based on camel freight, would cross the desert to the city of Hit in Iraq, where goods were loaded onto rafts that transported them down the Euphrates. Then, from harbours in the Persian Gulf, the goods were shipped to India and Arabia. The pack camels were put out to pasture for the winter in what is today the border region where Iraq meets Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. Early in the new year the ships would return, and with the camels close at hand, the caravans would soon be ready for the return trip to Palmyra, well before the arid summer months made crossing the desert an intimidating prospect. In this way the caravan trade and camel-rearing were complementary business activities.

Over time, the merchants of Palmyra expanded their operations over an area stretching from modern-day Pakistan in the east to Yemen in the south and Rome in the west. Vessels owned by Palmyrene shipowners plied the waters of the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf. They carried the Palmyrene merchants, who traded silk, cotton, precious stones, pearls, spices, incense and wine. The vital commercial centres in Egypt, Mesopotamia and Italy had resident communities of Palmyrene citizens who acted as trusted contacts between commercial partners in a world where information could travel only as fast as people, with no modern institutions

to transfer money or guarantee a person's life or property. Closer to home, annual trade caravans were organised by the Palmyrenes between their native city and key locations in central and southern Mesopotamia.

Nature and culture

So how did merchants from this desert city climb to the upper echelons of global trade and commerce in antiquity? Part of the answer to this probably lies in Palmyra's location and its origins. Palmyra sits in an oasis in the northern part of the Syrian Desert. Each winter the area receives rainfall, but not enough to viably grow grain. Within the various catchment areas of the dry desert plateaus, all precipitation drains towards the lowest point, either as surface water or through natural channels in the rock. Palmyra is situated at the lowest point in the largest of these catchment areas. This topography not only gave rise to the springs that formed the basis of the settlement itself, but also fed numerous wells and springs in the city's environs. This, in turn, enabled extensive herding of sheep and goats by seasonal herders who either lived at Palmyra or came to nearby villages at certain times of the year, then grazed their flocks elsewhere at others. Access to water is more limited south of Palmyra because the terrain gradually slopes down towards the Euphrates Valley, across areas used by camel nomads as winter pasture for their livestock before moving north to the wells and springs around Palmyra in the dry summer months.

Palmyra has been the seat of human settlements since the Neolithic period, but no traces of actual urbanisation have been found dating back before the last few centuries BCE. Scholars such as Michał Gawlikowski, Jean-Baptiste Yon and Michael Sommer believe that one reason why the oasis site developed into an urban area was that nomads living in the vicinity gradually took up permanent residence there, one incentive being the emerging trade. However, they also continued to keep sheep, goats and camels, and at least to some degree they maintained their original clan identity as well, rooted in the experience of belonging within a society based on the tribe. This means that while some of the population remained in Palmyra, others would herd livestock for much of the year. In this way they gained knowledge of the desert, became experts at logistical planning, and had a stable supply of draught animals serviceable for long-distance trade. Social and cultural links to other desert peoples probably also made the need for lookouts and armed protection less pressing than it would have been for Roman or Parthian

merchants setting out unescorted on the month-long journey through the desert.

The natural characteristics of the area and the potential it offered for making a living therefore had a formative influence on the region's social structures. The other key factor behind Palmyra's success lay in the inhabitants' ability to keep their own identity intact, even while creating connections with social networks in the areas where they did business. The Palmyrene network was based on shared social connections. The inhabitants of Palmyra spoke the same language. Most of them worshipped the same gods, belonged to the group of tribes that constituted the Palmyrene state, and participated in ruling that state through councils and popular assemblies. As far as we know, membership of the Palmyrene community was normally conferred by being born within it. Palmyrenes could readily recognise other members of their community, which was clearly delimited from other groups. In this way they made up a distinct ethnic group, which promoted internal trust. If a Palmyrene travelling to Rome or Mesopotamia on business treated one of his compatriots badly or dishonestly, he would have to fear

Fig. 3: Caravan inscription from the ancient Agora at Palmyra (Copyright: Jørgen Christian Meyer).

repercussions, perhaps fear for his position, back home. At the same time Palmyra was part of the Roman Empire, and the Palmyrene people also had a command of Greek, the language spoken in the Eastern imperial lands. The native Palmyrene language was a variety of Aramaic, a tongue spoken across much of the Middle East and therefore useful for doing business across Mesopotamia. The Palmyrenes seem to have worshipped other gods than their own with few reservations, and they also served in the Roman army and held positions in the Parthian administration. By these means they also forged links with other networks outside their own, promoting the safety, security and efficiency of their own commercial activities. Whether this was a policy consciously pursued by Palmyra or simply a side effect of its cultural flexibility and openness is difficult to say. It is intriguing, however, that the three inscriptions we have that are either written by or mention Palmyrenes in southern Arabia all associate these individuals with participation in religious cultic activities, thereby linking them to local networks.

From the desert to the sea

At first glance it seems something of a paradox that desert people from Palmyra would reinvent themselves as sailors and embark on maritime trade in the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea. Yet on closer inspection, these two spheres of activity were closely related. The Greek word for caravan, used in the inscriptions at Palmyra, is *synodia*, which quite simply means "a journey in company". The caravans were groups of merchants, each individually responsible for his own commerce and property, but travelling jointly under the leadership of a caravan leader, to whom inscriptions refer as the *synodiarch*. Based on ethnographic parallels from caravans in later times, and based on our knowledge of how organisations worked in antiquity, the *synodiarch* would probably have been an experienced merchant of high social standing chosen by the caravan members for the duration of the journey. He would be responsible for choosing the route, for security and for contacts to authorities and nomads, and also for keeping the peace and resolving internal conflicts along the way. The inscriptions in Palmyra, however, seem to have been recorded to honour personages from the city who gave aid to the caravans in various, often unspecified ways. The French scholar Ernest Will has convincingly argued that those honoured in the inscriptions were members of the Palmyrene elite, whose wealth and power enabled them to provide guards and animals, and who most likely

invested in trade along with the merchants. The parallels between this and what we know of merchant fleets in antiquity are striking. It was common for several merchants to rent storage space on a ship from the shipowner, who was not necessarily making the voyage himself. What is more, commercial journeys were often financed through loans from wealthy backers. That was how the Palmyrenes could transfer the organisational model of the caravan to a marine environment, all the while maintaining trust among the participants, whose dealings remained within the Palmyrene network.

The end

The Palmyrene model worked efficiently for three hundred years, but it proved ultimately to be vulnerable. Most probably the very strength of the network – the stable and mutual social interconnections between its members – became its greatest weakness. When Palmyra was sacked and occupied by Roman forces in 273 CE, some Palmyrenes were still active outside their home city, and much of the population must have survived the hostilities. But what the Roman attack did do was to cut out the core of the network. If the people of Palmyra continued their commercial activities, from this point onwards they did so on a par with other local merchants in the areas where they operated, no longer identifying themselves as Palmyrene. The last dated Aramaic inscription we have from Palmyra is from 280 CE, hinting that the fallen city's ties to the nomadic peoples of the plateaus south of Palmyra were also severed. Chronologically, the next source on trade between the Roman Empire and the lands to the east is from 299 CE, when a treaty between the Romans and the Sasanians stipulated that all contact between the two empires was to take place in the city of Nisibis (modern-day Nusaybin), located on what is now the border between Turkey and Syria.

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Fig. 1: Loculus relief with female bust, University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Philadelphia, PA, B8905 (Copyright: Palmyra Portrait Project, Ingholt Archive, PS 419).

Women in Palmyra

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In 1996 the Danish archaeologist Gunhild Ploug's article "Kvinder i Palmyra" ("Women in Palmyra") appeared in *SFINX*, a Danish journal on art and culture in the Mediterranean. Here she gave an account of how women and their lives were represented in Palmyra. Although there have been many developments in the study of Palmyra in the last twenty years, little attention has been devoted to the theme of Palmyrene women. The following pages, which are based on my dissertation on this topic, completed under the auspices of the *Palmyra Portrait Project*, will present some of the most notable features in what we know about women in Palmyra.

Most of the sources from Palmyra are based on inscriptions, both architectural and sculptural, and the vast majority of this material originated in the city's necropolises or "cities of the dead". These contain a large number of funerary structures, of which more than three hundred have been identified over the years. These were either constructed as tower tombs or large temple tombs, or dug out as underground tomb complexes known as *hypogaea*. The tombs were family-owned, and inscriptions on their facades would name the founder or builder and also describe the structure's purpose. These were locations where families could remain united for eternity – generation after generation. From the late second and the third century CE, however, inscriptions more commonly show that sections of such tombs could be subcontracted to other families.

Within the tombs, the dead were placed primarily in elongated recesses or niches known as *loculi*, but also occasionally in large sarcophagi. Once the deceased was placed in the niche, the opening was sealed with a stone slab carved with a portrait of the deceased. The custom of portraying dead family members can be traced back to the late first century CE, which roughly coincides with the appearance and widespread use of funerary buildings. The funerary portraits from Palmyra's tombs, which show considerable variation, are found as busts carved into stone slabs, *loculus* (niche) reliefs, full-length figures carved on *stelae* (upright funerary slabs of stone), reliefs of banqueting scenes (used to seal individual graves in the same fashion as *loculus* reliefs), sarcophagi, free-standing sculptures, murals, and more. In short, a wide range of representational forms were used, but the most popular were *loculus* reliefs, *stelae*, banqueting reliefs and sarcophagi. The free-standing sculptures, murals and a few small decorative reliefs were secondary representations not directly associated with a specific niche or burial. These tombs bear witness to a high degree of self-staging and self-representation, in which Palmyrene women found an important role.

Portraits of Palmyrene women

Women are found in some 40 per cent of the funerary portrait reliefs depicting adult

Fig. 2: Stela with woman, Musée de Grenoble, MG 1583 (Copyright: Palmyra Portrait Project, Ingholt Archive, PS 1074).

Palmyrenes (Fig. 1), showing that women held a significant role paralleled in few other areas within the Roman sphere. Women are more often a part of group constellations than men are, although both sexes are most frequently portrayed individually in the tombs. The archaeological material, showing that individual portraits were the preferred representation in Palmyra, places greater focus on the individual.

The way in which women are portrayed varies little across the different forms of portraiture. Generally, even the earliest female depictions contain features that are seen throughout portraiture production, up until the practice ended in the third century CE. The women wear a tunic, cloak and veil (Fig. 2). Drapes and folds in the cloth show considerable variation, particularly in the treatment of the veil, which changes several times over the three hundred years that these portraits span. The veil seems to have been an indispensable element in the representation of Palmyrene women.

The early portraits – dating up to the latter half of the second century CE – often show women holding a spindle and distaff in the left hand. This attribute then disappears from the portraiture, and instead the women hold a fold of the veil. The spindle and distaff have often been taken to symbolise female domestic life. However, bearing in mind the extensive textile production in the Middle East and specifically in Palmyra during this period, it can also to some extent be interpreted as female participation in the textile industry rather than simply as a symbol of one practical female function in the home. The replacement of the spindle and distaff with the fold of the veil should be understood in light of the veil's emphasis on one important aspect of female identity: that these women were free Palmyrene women. This is underscored by the fact that slaves and young children are never depicted wearing the veil.

Most women are portrayed wearing a headband, a thin strip of which can be seen running across the forehead, with the rest covered by the veil and turban. Along with the brooch frequently seen on the cloaks of female portraits, numerous variations on the decorated headband also occur throughout the portrait-production period, making these key elements in the portraiture. We know of no similar use of headbands or brooches outside Palmyra, further strengthening their role as markers of Palmyrene identity – as expressed here in the body of female portraits.

Generally speaking, the women in the portraits wear significant amounts of jewellery, which in the third century CE develops into a dominant element. This is attributable partly to the growing wealth in Palmyrene society, and partly to a change in the wishes determining how women were represented. Likewise, the women often hold their right (later their left) hand up to shoulder or neck height – a gesture reserved in Palmyra for female portraits, making this a special marker for the female sex. Overall, then, there are many elements in the portraiture that are exclusively associated with Palmyrene women and therefore gender-based.

Women in group constellations

Women appear in group portraits either in banqueting scenes portrayed on sarcophagus lids and small reliefs, or on *stelae*, *loculus* reliefs and murals (Fig. 3). Here they are portrayed with between one and three other individuals who may be their husband, siblings, children (young or adult), parents and other family members. Portraits of this sort most often show women with younger children, emphasising the woman's role as a mother. Frequently the female figure is touching or holding her children, young and adult, or they are touching her. This is one of the more emotional features observable in

Fig. 3: Banqueting relief with woman and man, Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen, IN 1159–1160 (Copyright: Palmyra Portrait Project, reproduced by permission of Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek).

Fig. 4: Woman with two children, Arthur M. Sackler Museum, Harvard University, 1908.3 (Copyright: Palmyra Portrait Project, Ingholt Archive, PS 374).

the portrait reliefs (Fig. 4). Sometimes women are also seen in a mourning pose alongside their adult children, whereas this constellation is not seen with younger children. In these portraits the woman wears only a cloak that is pulled back, fully or partially revealing her chest. Some also show self-inflicted scratches to the chest and arms. These women are grieving mothers, a pose shown only rarely among these portraits. This indicates the importance of the female role in conducting funerary rituals for deceased family members, children in particular (Fig. 5). In these portraits, the mother clearly held a central role.

This is further underscored in the large banqueting scenes that show a woman seated on a chair or on cushions next to a reclining male figure. This composition often represents a man and wife – a married couple – whose children are often depicted in the background or on the sides of the sarcophagus. It is worth noting, however, that lids of early sarcophagi often portray women as smaller than the reclining man, and that throughout the entire period when sarcophagi were used, women are primarily shown sitting at the feet of the reclining man, albeit in full size. Only in the third century CE do we occasionally see women either reclining alone in small decorative reliefs or on sarcophagus lids – in one instance alongside a man. In other words, it actually became possible for some women to be depicted in a posture that was previously the exclusive preserve of male figures.

We also see numerous inscriptions and one or two religious altars or honorary statues testifying to a female presence in the public sphere – although far less frequently than seen in the tombs. Women were able to erect honorary statues, and such statues could be dedicated to women as well. Women could also contribute financially to the construction of city buildings, and offer and receive religious dedications. One activity in which women were particularly influential was the purchase, sale and inheritance of tomb structures or portions of tombs. Women are even depicted in religious reliefs taking part in religious sacrifices. This shows us that Palmyrene women were active participants in such activities – although we never see them carrying out the ritual sacrifice itself. This is rare proof of women taking part in religious acts in Palmyra, as no evidence has been found there to substantiate the existence of female priests.

Queen Zenobia

One Palmyrene woman who rose to astounding prominence was Queen Zenobia. She acceded to power as regent alongside her young son Wahballath following the death of her husband, Odainath, in 267/268 CE – a death that is sometimes attributed to her agency. Thereafter

Fig. 5: Grieving mother, with son represented as a priest (Copyright: Palmyra Portrait Project, Ingholt Archive, PS 252).

she embarked upon the expansion of Palmyrene territory into Asia Minor and Egypt. Zenobia is depicted on coins under the names of Septimia Zenobia Augusta and Septimia Zenobia Sebaste (queen). Her portrait in some instances bears a resemblance to that of Salonina, the wife of Emperor Gallienus (r. 259–268 CE). In this way and through the appellation "Augusta", Zenobia sought to appropriate aspects of the Roman imperial family and thus to bolster her personal legitimacy as ruler of the empire she had created. Despite her efforts, Zenobia's daring ventures resulted in a backlash from Emperor Aurelian (r. 270–275 CE), who destroyed Palmyra in 273 CE after the queen's grand plans for expansion went too far. From that point on, the volume of physical artefacts from the city begins to decline, thwarting our attempts to learn more about life in Palmyra, and about its women, after this cataclysmic event.

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The Arch of Triumph at Palmyra was a monumental archway connecting the area around the Temple of Bel with the city's main street. The original construction consisted of three arched passageways: a main central arch and a smaller passageway to each side. The Arch of Triumph can be seen in Gavin Hamilton's 1758 painting depicting the rediscovery of Palmyra by British travellers Dawkins and Wood in 1751 (found on page 12 of this volume). Reverse view of the arch on p. 29. The arch was destroyed in 2015–16 (Copyright: Rubina Raja 2010).

Fig. 1: Altar with child and woman, Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen, IN 1080 (Photo: Ana Cecilia Gonzales; Copyright: Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek).

Children's portraits from Palmyra

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The tombs of Palmyra have yielded many treasures – both in terms of artefacts and knowledge. Among other things, they hold a unique body of funerary portraits carved from limestone quarried locally at Palmyra. The more than 3,000 portraits we know of today allow us to observe and study the Palmyrene framework of conventions that governed the funerary sphere from the first century BCE up until the third century CE.

These carvings chiefly portray women and men, but children were also immortalised in portraits that depicted them alone or in the company of family members. The family was the most important social unit in ancient Palmyrene society, so children must also have played a vital role. Even so, until now this group of portraits has only received occasional mention in the literature. Approximately 7 per cent of Palmyrene funerary portraits depict a child – clearly indicating that this group should be neither overlooked nor neglected.

Children in Palmyra

Our primary source of knowledge about children in Palmyra during antiquity consists in tomb portraits and their inscriptions. The inscriptions typically name those depicted, but they may also provide information spanning up to five generations. The primary focus is on male genealogy; children are mentioned in fewer than half the inscriptions accompanying the portraits in which they appear.

We lack any written sources that tell us how children were raised in Palmyra, how they lived, or what roles they played. We do, however, have several religious dedications with inscriptions that mention children, although only two religious dedications actually depict a child. One of these, kept at the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek in Copenhagen, portrays a woman standing in the background with her lower arms and hands stretched upwards and a child standing in front of her in the same position (Fig. 1). The inscription tells us that the woman dedicated the altar in gratitude for her son's life. A votive relief from the museum at Palmyra also shows a boy standing with outstretched arms and hands while his father makes an offering to the gods at an altar. These examples may indicate that children could be involved in religious acts in Palmyra. Unfortunately, as noted, written sources that might support this are lacking, as is sufficient evidence in the iconography. At any rate the family – and therefore also children – were a cornerstone in Palmyrene society.

Distinctive features

The main characteristic of children's figures in the portraits is that they are depicted as smaller than any of the accompanying adults. They wear a tunic, either long or short and with long or short sleeves, often belted at the waist to create a fold. Some of the boys wear Parthian-style costumes consisting of a richly decorated tunic, trousers and sometimes "over-trousers", which look rather like leg warmers. The boys may also wear a snugly fitting hat. Unlike adult men and women, children are rarely depicted wearing the cape-like garment called a *himation*.

Children are consistently portrayed with short hair; in a few cases, no hair is visible. This might suggest that the hair was originally painted, but we cannot say for certain. Distinguishing boys from girls is a difficult task if the inscription does not mention any name or gender. Both sexes wear the same type of garments and the same short hair style, and both girls and boys can wear jewellery, mainly ear rings, bracelets and necklaces. One difference in the children's figures is that, unlike adults, they are not portrayed wearing brooches, which are otherwise an important element, especially in women's portraits.

Additionally, children are frequently depicted with particular attributes, most often a bird and a bunch of grapes. The children hold the attributes in front of them at chest height, or down by their sides. These attributes are very rarely found in adult portraits, and we are still

Fig. 2: Loculus relief with child and woman, Archaeological Museum, Istanbul, IN 3741/192 (Copyright: Palmyra Portrait Project, Ingholt Archive).

Fig. 3: Loculus relief with two children and one man, Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen, IN 2763 (Copyright: Palmyra Portrait Project).

unable to say for sure why in the vast majority of cases they are associated with figures of children.

Constellations

Children are represented in most of the portrait types occurring in the Palmyrene tombs: *loculus* (niche) reliefs, sarcophagi, and a small number of painted murals and banqueting reliefs. Most of the children's portraits are seen on the *loculus* reliefs, the rectangular slabs used to seal off the recesses in which the bodies of the deceased were laid to rest. Children are also portrayed on the great sarcophagi, appearing on their lids and their sides. Few murals from the Palmyrene tombs have survived, and only two of these depict children alongside a parent.

In the funerary sphere, children were usually portrayed in the company of family members. Almost 85 per cent of children's portraits occur in group constellations – typically alongside a mother or siblings. Fig. 2 shows the most common composition involving children, here on a *loculus* relief: the bust of a woman with a girl standing behind one shoulder. The girl has short hair, and she wears small bead earrings and has a bracelet round her right wrist. She is dressed in a tunic, short-sleeved and belted. She also holds a bird in front of her body with her left hand and a bunch of grapes in her right.

The inscription does not always reveal the relationship between the individuals portrayed. In such constellations the adult is often assumed to be a parent unless otherwise specified. Male portraits also show such constellations with what is probably an adult father, in two cases represented as a priest. Other portraits feature a child standing behind each of the adult's shoulders (Fig. 3). On the other hand, very few examples depict two siblings together, one of whom is fully grown and the other a child.

Children were most often portrayed along with women, emphasising the close ties between mother and child. Several *loculus* reliefs show a woman carrying a child on her left arm, as in Fig. 4, which shows a boy sitting. He has short hair and wears a Parthian costume decorated with rows of beads running along the neckline and lower hem of his tunic, and down the mid-line on his trousers. The lower portion of his left sleeve is decorated with diagonal depressions. Four reliefs show a variation of this constellation where the mother bares her left breast, on which the child's hands rest. While this could be a reference to breast-feeding, the children are not depicted as suckling, as their faces are not

Fig. 4: Woman with a child on her left arm, Musée du Louvre, Paris, IN AO 4147 (Copyright: Palmyra Portrait Project, Ingholt Archive).

turned towards the breast. Such compositions emphasise the woman's performance and fulfilment of the crucial duties of motherhood. Often a sarcophagus will contain and portray a number of people – the entire family including mother, father and children. The same is not true of the *loculus* reliefs, on which the constellation "father, mother and children" only occurs one

single time. The sarcophagus lid will have the figures placed with the mother sitting at one end, flanked by the children, young or adult. At the other end reclines the family's patriarch – clearly the largest and most dominant figure in the composition. Some sarcophagus lids have a child at the father's feet.

About 16 per cent of the children's portraits from Palmyra depict a lone child. Typically, the child will be standing alone, seen on a *stela* holding the usual children's attributes. The inscriptions on such representations refer only to the father and his family, making no mention of the mother.

The gender distribution for funerary portraits of children is slightly uneven. Girls are represented on about 35 per cent of these portraits, boys on more than 65 per cent. This is almost the same ratio as for adult funerary portraits, where 40 per cent represent women and 60 per cent men.

The children's portraits give no explicit indication of age, and generally the inscriptions rarely reveal the age of the person depicted. In fact, we find only eleven portraits where inscriptions state the age of the deceased, and in all cases these are adults. There is one *loculus* relief that depicts two brothers, Belsur and Moqimu, side by side. The inscription tells us that they died at the ages of sixteen and nineteen respectively, but despite being quite young they are portrayed as men, in tunic and himation. Additionally, both figures are holding scrolls, an attribute found only in portraits of adult men. What is more, their fingers bear rings – yet another feature not found in children's portraits. This relief indicates that boys were regarded as men as early as the age of sixteen, if not younger. Indicating an individual's age was evidently not seen to hold primary importance in Palmyrene funerary portraiture; neither in the inscriptions nor portrayed as signs of ageing in the portraits themselves.

Some scholars have suggested that the portraits of women carrying a child on their arm reflect the mother dying in childbirth. However, there is no proof of this. Nor are the children in compositions of this type infants: Neither woman nor child is depicted any differently than in other Palmyrene funerary portraiture. Research done on skeletal remains from *loculus* graves has established that no children below the age of four were buried in the niches. Those found were most often entombed alongside an adult, correlating with the iconography that most often portrays children with adult companions. Children under

the age of four – typically infants less than one year old – were interred beneath the floors of the monumental graves, and they are found to have accompanying gifts more often than older children laid in the funerary niches.

To conclude, children are well represented in the tombs of Palmyra. They appear in many and varied constellations, some more frequent than others. Gender and age are not the most significant characteristics indicated in these portraits, as the inscriptions never mention age. Nor do the portraits themselves give an indication of a figure's age – except in the constellation of a woman carrying a child. This indicates that although the depicted children were small, they were not infants. It can be difficult to distinguish gender if the inscription does not mention the child, as portraits of both sexes have virtually identical clothing, hairstyles and jewellery. Portraits of children, as opposed to adults, are signified by certain attributes – a bird and grapes – which are almost exclusively associated with children's portraits.

No portraits of children have been found in the public sphere, and in the religious sphere children are represented on only two altars. Even so, children are mentioned on several inscriptions of religious dedications. The absence of written sources makes it all but impossible to say what childhood in ancient Palmyra may have been like, and the children are not always mentioned in the inscriptions that accompany the portraits depicting them. Still, this does not make them any less important, for they were one of the factors underscoring the family's key role in Palmyrene society.

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This colonnade formed part of a network of streets in ancient Palmyra. The brackets on the columns originally supported statues that are now lost, but the inscriptions below the brackets frequently tell us details of the notable personages these statues portrayed. Ancient Palmyra was a distinctly bilingual community, and the inscriptions are often rendered in both Palmyrene Aramaic and Greek (Copyright: Rubina Raja 2010).

Fig. 1: The Temple of Bel, main temple of Palmyra, where religious celebrations and rituals took place. Its central sanctuary was surrounded by a high wall (Copyright: Rubina Raja).

Priesthood in Palmyra: Public office or social status?

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The religious landscape of Palmyra, in all its diversity, remains a mystery. The sources handed down to us include a large body of inscriptions, sculptures and reliefs that tell of Palmyra's deities and their positions within the Palmyrene pantheon. But when it comes to actual religious practices in Palmyra – the nature and frequency of the rituals carried out during religious functions – we have very little to go on. Relatively few sources on these events have survived to the present day. That is why the Palmyrene inscriptions and visual culture play such an important role for scholars studying religion and its role in Palmyra.

Palmyrene priests are a recurring motif in the funerary art of the ancient city, and this means that such representations are our best and most direct sources as we seek to understand the city's religious sphere during the first three centuries CE.

As in all other ancient societies, religion had a pervasive influence on how life was lived in Palmyra. The city was dominated by large temple complexes, including the monumental Temple of Bel and the somewhat smaller but finely built and exquisitely decorated Temple of Baal-Shamin (Fig. 1–2). These two sanctuaries, dedicated to Allat and Nebo, were also two of the city's most important religious gathering places.

The Temple of Bel was the principal place of worship for the people of Palmyra, where all of the city's clans would meet for religious

Fig. 2: The Temple of Baal-Shamin was one of Palmyra's major sanctuaries. Although relatively small, it was exquisitely decorated (Copyright: Rubina Raja).

ceremonies, celebrations and processions. The temple, which sustained massive damage while ISIS held Palmyra under siege in 2015 and 2016, contained a large banqueting hall that could accommodate up to a hundred dining guests. This room was used in connection with religious celebrations to entertain guests by special invitation. We know this because in the banqueting hall archaeologists have found thousands of "banquet tickets", in the form of the entry tokens known as *tesserae*. Most often taking the form of small, mould-made clay objects, these *tesserae* depict a variety of Palmyrene deities and priests. Some even tell us what food and drink the guests could expect to be served, and how much – specified on the particular *tessera* as volumes of meat and wine (Fig. 3–4).

These entry tokens also indicate what a pivotal role the priests of Palmyra played in such celebrations. Priests are a favourite tessera motif, and often their name even appears as an inscription under their portrait. The priests, either individually or in groups, would fund the city's banquets and religious celebrations. Therefore it was also their prerogative to decide who was to be invited, and very probably also how often such banquets were to be held. Religious banquets were important in antiquity because they were one type of event at which animals were sacrificed. The fat of the animals

Fig. 3.1 and 3.2: A tessera, or banqueting token, was typically made of clay and granted entry to one of the city's religious events. One side of this tessera shows a wine-mixing scene; the other, a Palmyrene priest reclining for dinner at a banquet (Copyright: Rubina Raja, by permission of Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek).

Fig. 4.1 and 4.2: Banqueting token (tessera) depicting Palmyrene deities and priests (Copyright: Rubina Raja, by permission of Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek).

Fig. 5: Loculus relief of a figure sporting the distinctive headwear of a Palmyrene priest (Copyright: Palmyra Portrait Project).

Fig. 6: Loculus relief of a Palmyrene priest whose headwear has an ornamental bust (Copyright: Palmyra Portrait Project).

was given to the gods, whereas the meat was distributed among those attending the sacrificial rites and the subsequent celebration. It is fair to suppose that religious celebrations provided both a mechanism for redistributing the community's wealth and a means to network with other groups in Palmyrene society.

Depictions of priests

Priests in Palmyra are recognisable as such by their special costume. Their ceremonial dress is best known from numerous limestone reliefs on grave niches and sarcophagi found in the tombs of Palmyra, which bear an abundance of portraits, including some that depict priests. The priestly costume consisted of a cape (known as a *himation*), often held in place by a large brooch fastened at the shoulder. Underneath this cape the priest would often wear a decorated cloth tunic. Priests would also wear a highly characteristic headdress referred to as a *modius* in the scholarly literature, though we do not actually know what it was called in antiquity. Because of its cylindrical shape and flat top, some have suggested that such hats could

have been made of a thick felt-like material. Many portraits show the hats decorated with a wreath, made either of leaves or of jewellery. Sometimes the hat is decorated in front with a precious stone or a tiny ornamental bust, the latter often depicting a young male figure or a priest (Fig. 5–6). The potential meaning of this bust still has scholars speculating, but there are indications that it emphasised the importance of the priesthood; or priestly portraits that also featured the bust of a priest on the hat might emphasise that the depicted priest came from a family of holy men. The portraits of the Palmyrene priests show no beard and no hair, and the figures often hold a libation bowl, used for wine offerings, and an incense cup. All these features and attributes make depictions of priests easily recognisable.

Priests in funerary sculpture

In the extensive body of funerary sculpture from Palmyra, produced over a three-hundred-year period and numbering more than 3,000 individual portraits from the Palmyrene world, priests are an important group. Almost one-fifth of the known male portraits are priests. This is a very large proportion of the deceased male population, corresponding to one in five males buried in the tombs holding a position in a priesthood at some point in his life. This has given scholars some food for thought in considering how the priesthoods in Palmyra may have been organised. It seems improbable that such a large number of full-time priests would have been needed in Palmyrene society. This leads us to conceive of priesthood in Palmyra as going beyond the strictly religious concerns and being more akin to a symbol of status or social standing conveyed from father to son, or

Fig. 7: Relief of three Palmyrene priests who are related and represent three generations. This indicates that priesthoods in Palmyra were hereditary and could be handed down to family members (after Stucky 1973).

Fig. 8: View of tower tombs at Palmyra (Copyright: Rubina Raja).

Fig. 9: Entrance to a hypogaeum, an underground tomb, at Palmyra (Copyright: Rubina Raja).

from uncle to nephew – handed down through generations and thus causing the number of priests to rise as the centuries passed (Fig. 7). Priesthood was not a public office involving the continued exercise of certain functions, but rather a sort of priestly task or duty that the person would take upon himself on special occasions, such as religious festivals and events.

This sort of interpretation is borne out precisely by the large number of priestly portraits. On the one hand, priests are found on the *loculus* reliefs used to close the funerary niches in the monumental tower tombs and underground tombs in Palmyra's cities of the dead (Fig. 8–9) – where they are often portrayed alone. This could be construed as a sign that their priestly status was, in itself, sufficient to underscore the prominence of their family's standing, leaving no need to show them alongside family members on their funerary memorials. On the other hand, numerous sarcophagi with lids portray large family scenes that include up to five priests. This could indicate that behind these elaborate and expensive burials lay a desire to demonstrate, by virtue of the many priests, that the family was even grander still, and more prominent in terms of social status (Fig. 10).

Priests in the public sphere

The public spaces of Palmyra were also adorned with depictions of priests. An altar frieze in the Sanctuary of Nebo, a central location in the city, shows a number of priests conducting a sacrifice. Unfortunately this altar lacks an inscription, so the names of the priests are not known. It is still possible, though, to see that they are wearing priestly garments and the distinctive hat. Another relief showing three generations of Palmyrene priests together also specifies their names and familial relations in inscriptions written in Palmyrene Aramaic. The relief emphasises that priesthoods were often passed on within the family, and that priesthood may have been a privilege reserved to certain families in the Palmyrene elite.

The temples and the priesthoods

As far as we know, the most important temples in Palmyra were attended by several different priesthoods along with their staff. The sources tell us that each of the city's principal clans had their own main sanctuary in the city, but also that the Temple of Bel was the principal sanctuary of the Palmyrene community as a whole. This was where people gathered for large religious celebrations in honour of the

Fig. 10: Sarcophagus lid depicting a family scene. The motif: two reclining priests and one standing priest, one standing male figure and one seated female figure (Copyright: Palmyra Portrait Project, Ingholt Archive).

city's chief deities: Bel, Yarhibol and Aglibol. Despite the separate temples designated to the principal clans of Palmyra, nothing in the priestly iconography shows any difference in their clothing or other features. Interestingly, the three hundred or so depictions of priests in the city's funerary art leave the impression of an extremely homogeneous, archetypal clothing design, the only feature distinguishing one priest from another being the richness or simplicity of the embellishments on his costume.

To conclude: The Palmyrene priests played a decisive role in the city's religious life over a period of centuries. The surviving visual artefacts allow us to deduce that the priesthood consisted of men from elite Palmyrene families within which priestly status was handed down through male progeny for several centuries. During this time the representation of priests changed very little and the visual idiom was conservative, adhering to tradition and convention. Whether such conservatism was also reflected in Palmyra's religious life and practices remains an unanswered question.

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Palmyrene tower tombs – some better preserved than others – and stretches of colonnaded street. This view shows how the towers encircled the city centre and were conspicuous features in the urban landscape (Copyright: Rubina Raja 2010).

Fig. 4.1: Hairan, from the Tomb of Hairan (after Ingholt 1932, by permission of Acta Archaeologica).

Palmyra's colourful past: Murals for the dead

Annette Højen Sørensen, Aarhus University

The city of Palmyra is perhaps best known for Zenobia, its illustrious queen (240–c. 275), whose ambitious exploits and destiny precipitated the city's demise.

Palmyra's imposing architecture still graces the harsh landscape of the Syrian Desert, and life in the city unfolded around the local springs and an oasis where, in antiquity, caravans from Mesopotamia and the Mediterranean coast crossed ways, enabling the building of Zenobia's magnificent metropolis where the temples, the streets and even the tombs were richly decorated. The abundant ornamentation bears witness to a veritable overabundance of resources – a level of prosperity that is visible in the city's portraiture, particularly in the third century CE. Along with its temples, Palmyra's tombs are the most thoroughly explored structures in the area. Some tombs are underground crypts (*hypogaea*), while others are free-standing towers or temple-like structures with multiple stories and room for a large number of burials.

These tombs represent the realm of the dead, but they also reflect the world of the living. Besides commemorating and honouring the dead, the tombs were a showcase for wealth and power. The remains of the dead who were depicted on the limestone reliefs were placed behind these portraits in a bank of shelf-like recesses (*loculi*) ranged vertically above one another, to abide as an eternal memorial. A relief was rarely reused, and the recesses were seldom used for more than one burial.

The overwhelming majority of Palmyrene tombs were decorated with limestone reliefs of the dead, but a few graves reveal that another medium was also used: mural paintings – some in combination with stucco work, others in combination with carved portraits. Murals are also found in domestic interiors in the ancient city, so they do not necessarily indicate the use of grave decorations to be less expensive than limestone reliefs. They do indicate, however, that conscious choices were made about how to stage oneself even after death. Modern homes all over the world display framed pictures of forefathers and descendants, mainly as photographs. But in public places, famous persons are sometimes represented in portraits by a painter, or busts by a sculptor. Some scholars believe it is also fair to regard the tombs of antiquity as public spaces, given that large tombs would have several families buying funerary spaces in the same tomb – potentially bringing quite a few people as visitors to the galleries of their deceased ancestors. Seen among the many limestone reliefs in the tombs, murals may well have been an effective way of standing out from the pack.

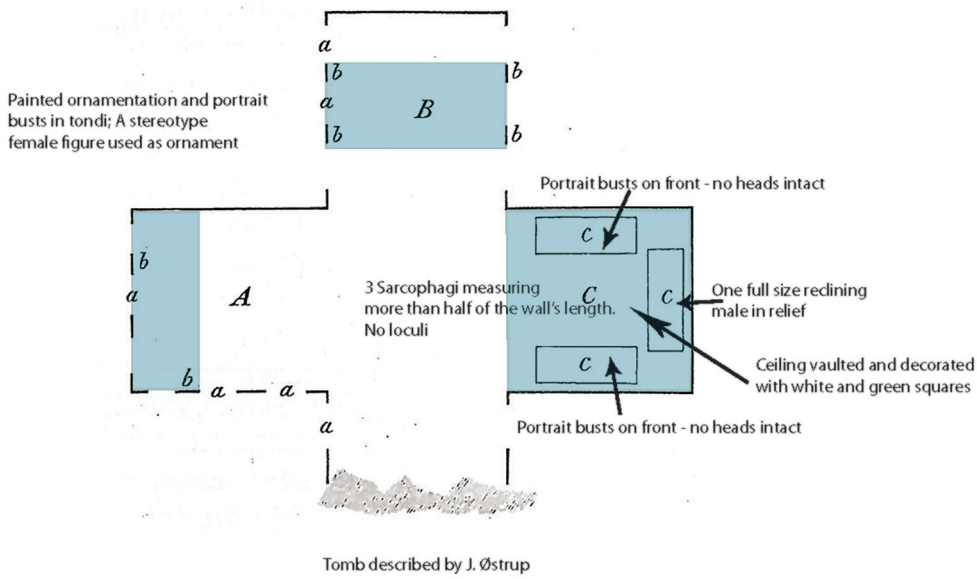

Fig. 1: The Østrup Tomb (after Sørensen 2014, Revisiting a painted tomb in Palmyra, Proceedings of the XVIIIth International Congress of Classical Archaeology II, 1227–1230).

Discovering colour underground

The earliest wall-paintings found in Palmyrene tombs are from the first century CE, and murals are seen in the tombs until the third century CE. As a rule such murals have an iconographic repertoire slightly different from that of the reliefs. The painted motifs include ivy and grapevines, mythological characters and figures, portraits of deceased individuals within round frames, standing or reclining life-sized figures, and architectural structures. The conventions for these representations seem less canonised than those of the sculptures, allowing greater freedom for the artist and for those commissioning the work. The tomb paintings show the colours black, red, brown, yellow, green and blue – the same palette used in the murals found in private homes.

In the nineteenth century, as archaeological and scientific exploration gained momentum and scholars began to journey round the world to see and explore things for themselves, excavations and research began at Palmyra, the site of Zenobia's ancient metropolis. One Danish traveller, the polyhistor Johannes Østrup, stayed at Palmyra in 1893, if only briefly. On his walks in and around the town he did, however, have time to observe and describe sights including an unusual subterranean tomb with walls full of lifelike murals, depicting the ancient inhabitants of Palmyra (Fig. 1).

In a report written in Danish, Østrup later described this tomb and published a sketch based on his notes. Because the tomb was not photographed at the time and because no drawings had been made of the paintings, and also because the report was in Danish, over time Østrup's reported tomb came to be associated with what was probably the best-known underground tomb at Palmyra: the Tomb of the Three Brothers. Had it been technically and financially possible, Østrup writes, he would have brought some of the paintings back to Denmark – but his research purpose was slightly different. And so the explorer rode on into the Syrian Desert, but not before having the tomb covered up and taking note of its location. As far as we know, the Tomb of the Three Brothers (Fig. 2) was first surveyed and photographed in 1899 (six years later) by the German scholar Moritz Sobernheim; Russian scholars subsequently studied the tomb in 1903. Features common to both the Østrup tomb and the Tomb of the Three Brothers are wall depictions of deceased persons and a ceiling painted green and white, but several details in the descriptions are mismatched. Today, after a new reading of Østrup's travelogues, we are convinced that

Fig. 2: Section of the decorations in the Tomb of the Three Brothers (after Farmakowski 1903, Russkij Archaeologiceskij Institut (Konstantiniye)/Bulletin de l'institut Archéologique Russe a Constantinople 8, 172–198, taf. XXIV).

what we are dealing with here is two different tombs, decorated in the same style.

When the Danish archaeologist Harald Ingholt began to take an interest in Palmyra in the 1920s and carried out extensive excavations of some thirty to fifty tombs at Palmyra, he found that some of these too were painted. In the Tomb of Hairan, for instance, Ingholt found an alcove on the right-hand side of the central passage (Fig. 3) that was decorated with life-sized paintings of Hairan and an unnamed woman – undoubtedly his wife (Fig. 4). Above this alcove was a painted eagle, wings spread wide, and the alcove ceiling had a portrait of a man within a round frame. Essentially this entire recess was decorated, and it therefore constituted an independent unit in the tomb. Elsewhere, in the Tomb of the Three Brothers, the entire rear chamber is decorated with an ancestors' gallery, mythological motifs, and architectural representations of illusory columns and cornices, a combination that also gives the impression that this room is a unit. By virtue of their alternative decorations, the Tomb of Hairan (Fig. 3–4) and the Tomb of the Three Brothers (Fig. 2) are examples of funerary locations that stand out from the crowd.

Scholars have named most of the tombs to reflect their original founder or builder, but some have other types of names. One of these is a tomb excavated by Ingholt and known as the Tomb of Dionysus. Dionysus was the Greek god of wine, and the most remarkable feature in this particular tomb is a large painting of the deity on one wall of the underground chamber (Fig. 5). A watercolour of the painting, done in

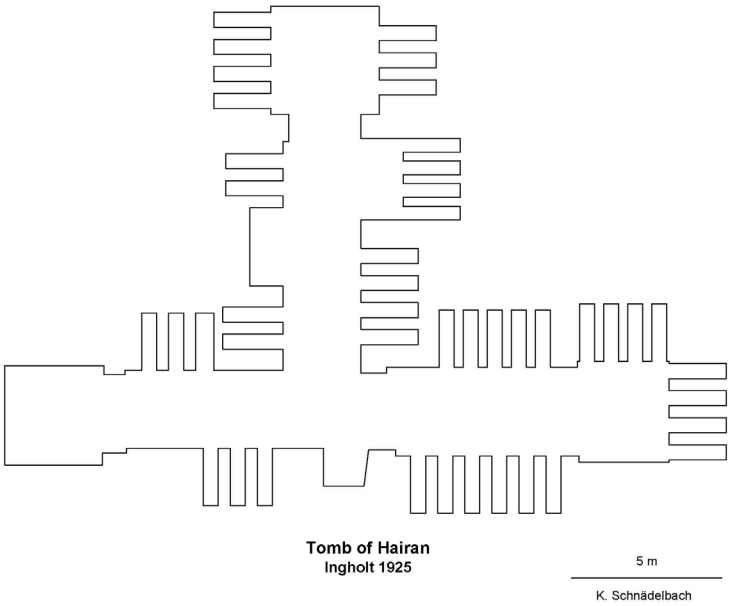

Fig. 3: Fair copy of the Tomb of Hairan by Klaus Schnädelbach in 2016 (After Sørensen, 2016, Fig. 8).

1928, shows a reclining, bare-chested god, above him a grapevine and, on the right, a wine-mixing vessel. In his hand Dionysus holds an object – perhaps a flattish drinking bowl – and behind his head is a halo. Painted references to the mythological world are also found in the Tomb of the Three Brothers. Here, victory goddesses with black wings hold portraits of the deceased above their heads (Fig. 2); the myth of Achilles is recounted, as he hides on the island of Skyros among the ladies of the court; and Zeus is shown abducting Ganymede. One important thing that sets the Tomb of Dionysus apart is that it portrays only a deity, but no deceased Palmyrenes.

A few other graves also show that the artists of Palmyra had an able hand at painting murals. Based on the total numbers, however, the tomb murals make up only a tiny fraction of the art found there compared to the abundance of carved limestone portraits found in the funeral grounds at Palmyra. Still, as far as painting goes it is also worth mentioning that we know

Fig. 4.1: Hairan, from the Tomb of Hairan (After Ingholt 1932); 4.2: Female figure from the Tomb of Hairan (after Ingholt 1932, by permission of Acta Archaeologica).

many of the limestone portraits had painted pupils, and some even had painted hair, cheeks and jewellery, making the portraits look more lifelike and bringing colour to an otherwise drab limestone surface.

Apparently the realm of the dead in Palmyra was full of colour after all, just like the world of the living. What is more, the artistic freedom expressed in the varied motifs of the funerary murals bears witness to religious and spiritual contemplation on life beyond this world.

Such murals were certainly an effective and colourful way – even in death – to make a highly personal statement.

Further reading

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Fig. 5: Dionysus, from the Tomb of Dionysus (after Ingholt 1932, by permission of Acta Archaeologica).

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SARA RINGSBORG wrote her MA within the framework of the Palmyra Portrait Project and is currently working on her PhD, likewise in the Palmyra Portrait Project. Her thesis deals with representations of children in the funerary portraiture.

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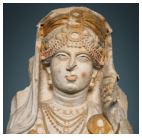
Illustrations

Front cover



The Beauty of Palmyra, found by Harald Ingholt in November 1928, Qasr Abjad (Copyright: Palmyra Portrait Project, reproduced by permission of the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek).

Frontispiece

View of the ruins of Palmyra, with the Temple of Bel in the background (Copyright: Rubina Raja).

Back cover

View of the Temple of Bel at Palmyra, before its recent destruction. In the foreground, portions of the temple wall (temenos) and the colonnade surrounding the sanctuary (Copyright: Rubina Raja 2010).

Palmyra: Pearl of the Desert (p. 11)

Fig. 1: Plan of ancient Palmyra (After K. Schnädelbach, Topographia Palmyrena, Damascus 2010).

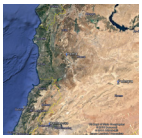


Fig. 2: Map of Syria (Map courtesy of Google Earth).

Fig. 3: Gavin Hamilton's 1758 painting depicting the rediscovery of Palmyra by British travellers James Dawkins and Robert Wood in 1751 (Copyright: National Galleries of Scotland).

Fig. 4: Brewer and patron of the arts Carl Jacobsen with sons Vagn and Helge at the Carlsberg estate in 1888 (Copyright: Carlsberg Archives).

Fig. 5: Johannes Elith Østrup (After his publication from 1894).

Fig. 6: Portrait of Harald Ingholt doing photography at Palmyra (Copyright: Palmyra Portrait Project).

Fig. 7: Drawing of The Beauty of Palmyra, published in the Copenhagen newspaper Berlingske Tidende in December 1929, from the portrait's unveiling at the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek. Artwork by Charles Christensen (Copyright: Berlingske Tidende).

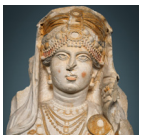


Fig. 8: The Beauty of Palmyra (Copyright: Palmyra Portrait Project, reproduced by permission of Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek).

Fig. 9: Banqueting relief from Palmyra with a husband and wife motif, dated by the inscription to 146/147 CE. The man is depicted as a Palmyrene priest reclining on a banqueting couch, his wife seated at the foot of the couch in a chair (Copyright: Palmyra Portrait Project, reproduced by permission of Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek).

Fig. 10: Columns with statue brackets, lining an ancient street at Palmyra. Brackets often bear inscriptions giving names and other details of the statues they once supported (Copyright: Rubina Raja).

Fig. 11: Inscription dated to 224–225 CE, in which the city council and the people of Palmyra pay tribute to a Roman centurion. Found on a column bracket in the Great Colonnade at Palmyra (Copyright: Jean-Baptiste Yon).

Danish pioneers at Palmyra: Historiographic aspects of Danish scholarship on Palmyra (p. 21)

Fig. 1: View in 2010 of Palmyrene tower tombs from the first and second centuries CE, viewed through the Great Colonnade (Copyright: Rubina Raja).

Fig. 2: Funerary reliefs from Palmyra, from the study collection at the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek in Copenhagen, 2016 (Copyright: Rubina Raja).

Fig. 3: Portrait of Johannes Elith Østrup, taken during his journey on horseback from Egypt to Denmark, 1892–1894 (Copyright: Palmyra Portrait Project).

Fig. 4: Sketch done during Harald Ingholt's doctoral defence (published in the Danish daily Politiken in 1928).

Fig. 5: Harald Ingholt at Dura-Europos with other international researchers. Left to right: Count Robert Mesnil du Buisson, Harald Ingholt, Michael Rostovtzeff, Janet Ingholt, Clark Hopkins and Henry Pearson. Year unknown (Copyright: Palmyra Portrait Project).

Fig. 6: Harald Ingholt and locals during his 1936 excavation at the Tomb of Malkû, another original site of portraits he brought to the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek (Copyright: Palmyra Portrait Project).

Palmyrene portraiture and illegal trade in art and antiquities (p. 31)

Fig. 1: Palmyrene portrait from the Bertone collection, sold at auction in 1931 (Copyright: Palmyra Portrait Project).

Fig. 2: Palmyrene portrait from the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen, acquired in Syria between 1883 and 1887 by Løytved, IN 1060 (Copyright: Palmyra Portrait Project).

Fig. 3: Torso of a Palmyrene portrait, Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen, IN 1082 (Copyright: Palmyra Portrait Project).

Fig. 4: Head from a Palmyrene portrait, New Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen, IN 1102 (Copyright: Palmyra Portrait Project).

Fig. 5: Palmyrene portrait of two figures with an inscription behind them, Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen, IN 1024 (Copyright: Palmyra Portrait Project).

Palmyra: A metropolis in the Syrian Desert (p. 39)

Fig. 1: The arid plateau in the Syrian Desert, green in April (Copyright: Jørgen Christian Meyer).

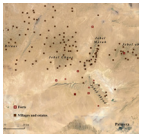


Fig. 2: Villages, farm estates and forts north of Palmyra (Copyright: Jørgen Christian Meyer).

Fig. 3: A small wadi west of Palmyra, shortly after a rain shower (Copyright: Jørgen Christian Meyer).

Fig. 4: Cistern site with a carved channel, curving across the rock to catch rainwater runoff (Copyright: Jørgen Christian Meyer).

Fig. 5: Barrier across a wadi at Jebel Merah (Copyright: Jørgen Christian Meyer).

Fig. 6: Buildings from a village northwest of Palmyra (Copyright: Jørgen Christian Meyer).

Fig. 7: Remains of a small fort near a crossroads at Jebel Abyad (Copyright: Jørgen Christian Meyer).

Palmyra: A commercial powerhouse in the ancient world (p. 49)

Fig. 1: Monument base from Palmyra, c. 236 CE. Man depicted with a ship on the right; on the left a camel, identifiable from the partially preserved legs and harness (Copyright: Jørgen Christian Meyer).

Fig. 2: Palmyrene caravan routes in the Syrian Desert, mapped by E. H. Seland (Base map copyright: ESRI 2014).

Fig. 3: Caravan inscription from the ancient Agora at Palmyra (Copyright: Jørgen Christian Meyer).

Women in Palmyra (p. 57)

Fig. 1: Loculus relief with female bust, University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Philadelphia, PA, B8905 (Copyright: Palmyra Portrait Project, Ingholt Archive, PS 419).

Fig. 2: Stela with woman, Musée de Grenoble, MG 1583 (Copyright: Palmyra Portrait Project, Ingholt Archive, PS 1074).

Fig. 3: Banqueting relief with woman and man, Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen, IN 1159–1160 (Copyright: Palmyra Portrait Project, reproduced by permission of Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek).

Fig. 4: Woman with two children, Arthur M. Sackler Museum, Harvard University, 1908.3 (Copyright: Palmyra Portrait Project, Ingholt Archive, PS 374).

Fig. 5: Grieving mother, with son represented as a priest (Copyright: Palmyra Portrait Project, Ingholt Archive, PS 252).

Children's portraits from Palmyra (p. 67)

Fig. 1: Altar with child and woman, Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen, IN 1080 (Photo: Ana Cecilia Gonzales; Copyright: Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek).

Fig. 2: Loculus relief with child and woman, Archaeological Museum, Istanbul, IN 3741/192 (Copyright: Palmyra Portrait Project, Ingholt Archive).

Fig. 3: Loculus relief with two children and one man, Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen, IN 2763 (Copyright: Palmyra Portrait Project).

Fig. 4: Woman with a child on her left arm, Musée du Louvre, Paris, IN AO 4147 (Copyright: Palmyra Portrait Project, Ingholt Archive).

Priesthood in Palmyra: Public office or social status? (p. 77)

Fig. 1: The Temple of Bel, main temple of Palmyra, where religious celebrations and rituals took place. Its central sanctuary was surrounded by a high wall (Copyright: Rubina Raja).

Fig. 2: The Temple of Baal-Shamin was one of Palmyra's major sanctuaries. Although relatively small, it was exquisitely decorated (Copyright: Rubina Raja).

Fig. 3.1: A tessera, or banqueting token, was typically made of clay and granted entry to one of the city's religious events. One side of this tessera shows a wine-mixing scene; the other, a Palmyrene priest reclining for dinner at a banquet (Copyright: Rubina Raja, by permission of Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek).

Fig. 3.2: A tessera, or banqueting token, was typically made of clay and granted entry to one of the city's religious events. One side of this tessera shows a wine-mixing scene; the other, a Palmyrene priest reclining for dinner at a banquet (Copyright: Rubina Raja, by permission of Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek).

Fig. 4.1 : Banqueting token (tessera) depicting Palmyrene deities and priests (Copyright: Rubina Raja, by permission of Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek).

Fig. 4.2 : Banqueting token (tessera) depicting Palmyrene deities and priests (Copyright: Rubina Raja, by permission of Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek).

Fig. 5: Loculus relief of a figure sporting the distinctive headwear of a Palmyrene priest (Copyright: Palmyra Portrait Project).

Fig. 6: Loculus relief of a Palmyrene priest whose headwear has an ornamental bust (Copyright: Palmyra Portrait Project).

Fig. 7: Relief of three Palmyrene priests who are related and represent three generations. This indicates that priesthoods in Palmyra were hereditary and could be handed down to family members (after Stucky 1973).

Fig. 8: View of tower tombs at Palmyra (Copyright: Rubina Raja).

Fig. 9: Entrance to a hypogaeum, an underground tomb, at Palmyra (Copyright: Rubina Raja).

Fig. 10: Sarcophagus lid depicting a family scene. The motif: two reclining priests and one standing priest, one standing male figure and one seated female figure (Copyright: Palmyra Portrait Project, Ingholt Archive).

Palmyra's colourful past: Murals for the dead (p. 87)

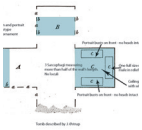


Fig. 1: The Østrup Tomb (after Sørensen 2014, Revisiting a painted tomb in Palmyra, Proceedings of the XVIIIth International Congress of Classical Archaeology II, 1227–1230).

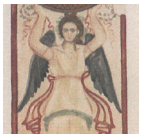


Fig. 2: Section of the decorations in the Tomb of the Three Brothers (after Farmakowski 1903, Russkij Archaeologiceskij Institut (Konstantiniye)/Bulletin de l'institut Archéologique Russe a Constantinople 8, 172–198, taf. XXIV).

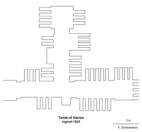


Fig. 3: Fair copy of the Tomb of Hairan by Klaus Schnädelbach in 2016 (After Sørensen, 2016, Fig. 8).

Fig. 4.1: Hairan, from the Tomb of Hairan (after Ingholt 1932, by permission of Acta Archaeologica).

4.2: Female figure from the Tomb of Hairan (after Ingholt 1932, by permission of Acta Archaeologica).

Fig. 5: Dionysus, from the Tomb of Dionysus (after Ingholt 1932, by permission of Acta Archaeologica).

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The Temple of Baal-Shamin at Palmyra, before the outbreak of war. Despite its modest size, this was one of the ancient city's most important sanctuaries. In antiquity most religious events and celebrations were held in front of the temples rather than within them (Copyright: Rubina Raja 2010).

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This publication makes recent research from the Nordic region available to a wide audience, as it presents findings from a variety of scholars on the art, people and practices of ancient Palmyra.