

Greek Aphrodite by V. Pirenne-Delforge³ and even chapters in *ANRW*.⁴ Aphrodite's oriental connections are conspicuous not only in Ascalon. They are extremely important for the understanding of many other Astarte-Aphrodite-Venus cults, for instance that of Tyche-Fortuna, associated with Aphrodite-Venus, in Aelia Capitolina, as Belayche herself acknowledges (151-3). And yet for 'the oriental Aphrodite' (152, note 339) the author cites the hundred-year-old *Lexicon* of Rocher.

These examples illustrate Belayche's firm decision to limit her research exclusively to Roman Palestine. However, although during the second-fourth centuries Palestine was a Roman province, many of her cults were Greek in nature or in attire. Belayche focuses her attention on Roman religion to such an extent that she even does not use, or cite in the bibliography, the most fundamental works on Greek religion, including those by W. Burkert, the leading authority on the subject. In many cases, such restriction leads to elimination of important aspects of the phenomena discussed.

In terms of style, a discrepancy between the titles of sub-chapters and their contents is not infrequent. For example, a sub-chapter 'Pagan cults in the mirror of rabbinical sources' (31-7) starts with a discussion of Christian sources. The reader is of course not supposed to conclude that all these belong to the same category. So why not introduce a separate sub-chapter? The discussion in the book abounds in deviations from the main line, which somewhat impede its reading, otherwise enjoyable and very rewarding.

Notwithstanding the remarks above, Belayche's study of the pagan cults in Roman Palestine is an important contribution both to the history of Palestine and to the history of ancient religion. It is the first, and a very successful, attempt to synthesize enormous quantities of material. This book was badly needed for decades, and will remain in use among students of antiquity for a long time to come. A book on paganism in Palestine during the Hellenistic period is still awaited.

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Ted Kaizer, *The Religious Life of Palmyra. A Study of the Social Patterns of Worship in the Roman Period*. Oriens et Occidens 4. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner 2002. 305 pp., 7 plates. ISBN 3 515 08027 9.

The last three hundred years of Palmyra's semi-independent existence are documented in the city's bilingual inscriptions, which serve as the basis for Kaizer (henceforward K.)'s study. The history documented by texts, monumental architecture and architectural decorations only forms the tip of an iceberg, diachronically as well as synchronically. Palmyra had to accumulate wealth for an extended period before she could begin spending her fortune ostentatiously.

Geography explains Palmyra's origins. These are not nearly half as old as time: they fall within the Persian period. When Ashurbanipal's troops, ca. 644 BCE, marched from the Euphrates to Damascus, slaughtering Arabs all the way, some of their encounters took place in the region of Palmyra (Tadmur), though the place itself is not mentioned.¹ The oasis may have had a permanent settlement, but it was of little concern for the world beyond its immediate neighbors. Commerce between Phoenicia/Southern and Central Syria and Babylonia hitherto took the detour via Northern Syria and Northern Mesopotamia. Ashurbanipal's campaign might possibly have inaugurated the direct desert route had the Assyrian empire not succumbed at the end of his reign and under

³ *L'Aphrodite grecque*, Athens-Liège, 1994 (Kernos Suppl. 4).

⁴ For instance, M. Hörig, 'Dea Syria-Atargatis', *ANRW* 2.17.3 (1984): 1536-81.

¹ M. Weippert, 'Die Kämpfe des assyrischen Königs Assurbanipal gegen die Araber: Redaktionskritische Untersuchung des Berichts in Prisma A', *Die Welt des Orients* 7 (1973/74) 39-85: E.A. Knauf, *Ismael*² (Wiesbaden 1989) 97-103.

his successors. There is little doubt that the Persians accomplished what Ashurbanipal failed to achieve, especially after the loss of Egypt ca. 400 BCE. Now the oasis became a central staging post between Phoenicia and Babylonia,² i.e. Persian Phoenicia and Persian Babylonia. Its culture may well have been 'syncretistic' from its very beginnings, the local factor not only being largely unknown, but perhaps also negligible. There were, for sure, Arabs around the oasis and, in all probability, also settling in it, providing, in the form of their camels, the second material basis for Palmyra's rise (the other being water at a spot where it was most useful for the economic and political powers of the time).

Hellenism came early to Palmyra, in all probability already in the century before Alexander.³ An indirect testimony to the city's hellenized name is provided by 2 Chronicles 8,4, changing the 'Tamar' of 1 Kings 9,18 *ktiv* (a hamlet in the northern 'Arabah — by no means worth the attention of such a paramount ruler as Solomon had become by the 3rd century BCE⁵) into 'Tadmor', thus presupposing the (popular) etymology⁴ of Palmyra's indigenous name expressed by the Greek.

When the Palmyrenes adopted Greek and Aramaic as their two official languages, they simply documented their most esteemed (and lucrative) partners in trade: the Helleno-Syrian cities to the west, and the Perso-Aramaic East. Writing Greek, they expressed their claim to the status of a *polis* within Roman Syria, and writing Aramaic, they indicated that they had at least one foot outside the empire, with at least one of their traders leaving his signature as far away as Soqotra (and in Aramaic, of course).⁶

K. presents a study of inscriptions and, to a lesser degree, images from Palmyra in the Roman period pertaining to various aspects of Palmyrene religion. Of 'life', or 'social patterns', the reviewer found nothing in his book with the exception of one or another truism, and K.'s ability to analyze Palmyrene religion (or any other) might well be doubted in the light of his statement 'But it has to be admitted that — unless one accepts that each form of community amongst [sic!] human beings is in the end based on certain "experiences of totality" which are emotional by nature and hence, by definition, religious — there is no direct evidence for the participation of professional associations as such in the religious life of Palmyra' (215f). In addition to garbled language and convoluted thought, the reviewer encountered a double, not-so-hidden agenda: a desperate fight against theory in history, expressed by frequent polemics against 'hypotheses' and 'generalizations'; and a similarly desperate attempt to deny the presence of any kind of Arab influence on, or adstrate to, the culture and religion of Palmyra. Given that all science and scholarship cannot hope to produce more than pragmatic probabilistic generalizations which stand, for the time being, the test of the empirical evidence,⁷ K.'s choice has the effect of offering nothing at all.

² According to the Arsames correspondence (G.R. Driver, *Aramaic Documents of the Fifth Century B.C.* [Oxford 1957]), letter VI, Babylon-Damascus traffic still went via Arbela at the end of the 5th century.

³ J. Elayi, *Pénétration grecque en Phénicie sous l'empire perse* (Nantes 1998).

⁵ Not all hellenistic literature was written in Greek, Hellenism having been a mutual process of cross-cultural exchange and insemination. Cf. for the Hellenistic character of Chronicles H.-P. Mathys, 'Chronikbücher und hellenistischer Zeitgeist': id., *Vom Anfang und vom Ende* (Beiträge zur Erforschung des Alten Testaments und des Antiken Judentums 47; Frankfurt/M. 2000), 41-155.

⁴ 'Tadmur' is a verbal predicate, the settlement is its subject: 'she destroys' (viz. her enemies; cf. Mehri *damor*). This type of place name can be traced back to the 3rd millennium BCE; from the 1st millennium BCE it was no longer productive outside Arabia. 'Palmyra' presupposes a derivation from *tamar* 'date palm', with a *ta-* infix or prefix and two subsequent dissimilations.

⁶ E. Villeneuve, 'Bénis soient Abgar et les spéléologues', *Le Monde de la Bible* 145 (2002) 58.

⁷ Cf. most recently St. Davies, *Empiricism and History* (Basingstoke 2003); J.L. Gaddis, *The Landscape of History. How Historians Map the Past* (Oxford 2002); previously A. Green & K. Troup, *The Houses of History: A Critical Reader in Twentieth-Century History and Theory* (Manchester 1999, minus the

The 'indigeneous — Hellenistic/Roman' dichotomy, K.'s point of departure, is much too simple, when applied to Palmyra. From what was presented in the introductory paragraph of this review, nothing might have been indigenous at Palmyra except for the occasional Bedouin extorting a handful of dates from the miserable fellah working the oasis. Before the first inscriptions, Palmyra had already been the playground of at least the following matrix of cultural influences, most of which show up — generally unrecognized and undiscussed — in the material presented by K.:

Pre-Hellenistic Phoenician-Syrian	Pre-Arab local?	Pre-Hellenistic / Pre-Parthian Mesopotamian
Hellenistic Phoenician-Syrian	Arab local	Parthian Mesopotamian

That there was an Arab adstrate in and around the oasis of Palmyra since, at least, the 7th century BCE is evident from Ashurbanipal's records. Within the material discussed by K., this adstrate is evidenced (contrary to p. 30, n. 87, and p. 57⁸) by the spelling *phzy* ('z transcribing the Arabic *ḏ*) instead of Standard Aramaic *phdy*' (44; 47); personal names⁹ ending in the Arabic nominative *-u* (*'gylw* – *'Ugailu*; 47f.) instead of the Aramaic *-ā*' (like *'gīlā*'), and Arabic *'Abdallāt* (63) instead of Aramaic *'bed'ellāhtā*;¹⁰ and the fact that many Palmyreneans had a double Semitic name, Aramaic and Arabic (which, living in an Arab environment — they did not grow the camels necessary for the trade operations in their cucumber fields — they could not have failed to recognize as such), like Zabdibol As'ad (109); the reception of the Arab deities Allāt, Manāt/Manōt (sic!)¹⁰ and Arsu/Ruḏā¹¹ in Palmyra; Arabic **ḏū-* instead of Aramaic *d(ī)-* in the divine name *Dūraḥlun* (81f); and finally, Arabic loan words in Palmyrene: *mwly*' (Arabic *muwallā* or *maulā*?); *wnt*' (Arabic *'auna*) 'voluntary corvée'.¹²

'postmodernism'); and most notably, F. Millar, 'The Mediterranean and the Roman Revolution', id., 236f. *Rome, the Greek World, and the East* (ed. H.M. Cotton & G.M. Rogers), vol. I (Chapel Hill, NC and London 2002) 215-237 (it is true that Millar finally despairs of finding a model for the complex situation he finds himself confronted with; he could have turned to electronic engineers and communications technicians, who are well acquainted with the problem of 'noise').

⁸ The term 'Arab', etymologically designating the 'bedouin', was used by Assyrians, Aramaeans and Jews as an ethnonym since the 9th century BCE, and by the Arabs themselves since 323 CE (for occasional earlier attestations, cf. R.G. Hoyland, *Arabia and the Arabs* (London and New York 2001) 230-6, and 255 n. 8. It goes without saying, at least among semiticists, that Ancient South Arabians and ancient Arabs were distinct cultures (*pace* p. 57 and n. 101).

⁹ The etymology of a personal name can be quite irrelevant to the ethnicity of an individual; on a statistical basis, however, significant religious and/or ethnic preferences are evident (*pace* p. 133 with n. 343). Ireland still has a higher percentage of Kevins than Germany, and there are more Ahmads, Muhammads, Alis and Fatimas among Muslims than among Christians. Palmyrene genealogies show no clear trend from Aramaic to Arabic or vice versa: Wahballāt (80): [Ara]b[ic] – [Ara]m[aic] – b – m – b – m – m; Muqīmu (92): b – m – m – m; Gaddarṣū (103): b – m – b – m; on the other hand, Bar'a (116): m – b – m – m – m; Zabdibol (m) and Muqīmu (b), 141, are brothers and sons of an m-father with an m+b grandfather (Muqīmu Rafa'el).

¹⁰ Cf. for the improbability of the vocalization *Manawāt J. F. Healey, *The Religion of the Nabataeans* (Religions in the Graeco-Roman World 136; Leiden 2001) 132-5.

¹¹ The 'identification' of Arṣū with Ruḏā, Ruldayu and Orotalt (117) is the (linguistically correct) identification of various renderings of the same name. I note that the Aramaic equivalent of Arabic *rdw* would be *r'w*, not *rs'* (117). Mastering 1, 2 or n Semitic languages does not yet constitute competence in comparative Semitics — otherwise, K. would know the answer to his question 190 n. 92, and would have seen the fallacy of S. Dalley's explanation of the divine name Yarhibol (referred to, but not discussed, on p. 145 with n. 407: if to be derived from Assyrian *yarhu* 'water hole, pond', the god were to suffer the improbable epithet of 'Pond of the Lord', instead of 'Lord of the Pond').

¹² Cf. further M. Maraqtan, 'The Arabic Words in Palmyrene Inscriptions', *ARAM* 7 (1995) 89-108.

The mere number of divine names attested at Palmyra leaves no doubt in K.'s mind that the Palmyreneans were polytheists, it seems. This assumption squares badly with the attestations of second to third century CE Greek philosophy and schooling at Palmyra (15), and the observation that these 'gods' were hardly differentiated beyond three or four types (160). The high number of divine names as opposed to a low number of divine iconographic types is most probably an attestation of the ethnic complexity of Palmyra: various groups paid allegiance to basically the same god(s) under various traditional names. The more than 200 dedications to the 'anonymous god'¹³ indicate in all likelihood that 'implicit monotheism' was not completely absent from Palmyra, i.e. the assumption that all traditional deities are manifestations of a 'basic divinity' behind them all.

Occasionally, K. takes archaeological features (iconography and architecture) into consideration. That he ignores archeology is explained by the fact that no archeological record for Palmyra — as opposed to the vast archaeological record of, however, limited utility — yet exists. 'Archeology' refers to the (no longer) 'New Archeology' (minus its nomothetic illusions, i.e. to the study of past human behavior and its economic and social presuppositions and consequences on the basis of material culture remains, 'archaeology' to the art-historical study of ancient objects.¹⁴ Settlement patterns, food processing and consumption habits, and the distribution of wealth as evidenced by household inventories would be the *conditio sine qua non* for any meaningful discussion of Palmyra's social structure, and the task will be worth its while, one distant day, to correlate the archeological with the epigraphical record.

In order to contextualize K.'s book in yet another respect: this review is also meant to form another skirmish in the 'New Trojan War', fought by the Neo-Trojans (archeologists and historical anthropologists) on the one side against the last Trohanicans (philologists who still think that history can still be construed as some sort of text) on the other.¹⁵ With a horse like K. in their stable, the Trohanicans have no need of an Odysseus in the ranks of their opponents.

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Frösén, Jaakko, Antti Arjava, and Marjo Lehtinen, eds., *The Petra Papyri* I. American Center of Oriental Research Publications 4. Amman 2002. xix + 142 pp.

The present volume will, without doubt, receive reviews by papyrologists, philologists and paleographers in due course. It is, however, also of interest for the historian of the eastern Mediterranean from the Late Bronze Age to the coming of Islam, and it is in such a perspective that it is reviewed here.

Petra was partially destroyed in the earthquake of 363, which only contributed to its declining ability to administer itself ... the accumulated evidence of Christian activity at Petra in the fifth century is quite small, confirming the period as one of decline. Negligence and damage to the city's water supply system probably was a main cause of the abandonment of the city ... No remains from the Early

¹³ The most recent is J. Naveh, *IEJ* 52 (2002) 243-5.

¹⁴ In the Near East, archeology has only reluctantly and selectively been received, with the danger that one or another practitioner now continues his/her old fashioned archaeology under the label of 'poststructuralist' archeology, cf. J. Müller-Clemm, 'Archäologische Genderforschung: (K)ein Thema für die Palästina-Archäologie?', *lectio difficilior* 2/2001 (www.lectio.unibe.ch).

¹⁵ Cf. M. Korfmann, 'Hisarlik und das Troja Homers — Ein Beispiel zur kontroversen Einschätzung der Möglichkeiten der Archäologie', B. Pongratz-Leisten & al. ed., *Ana sadi Labnāni lū allik* (Festschrift für Wolfgang Röllig; AOAT 247; 1997) 171-84.