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Jean-Baptiste YON, *Inscriptions grecques et latines de la Syrie XVII. 1 : Palmyre (BAH 195)*

Glen W. Bowersock



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documents qui, malgré leur rareté, soulignent l'ancrage de l'administration séleucide dans les satrapies supérieures et la continuité des pratiques grecques sous les Parthes. La domination grecque fut loin d'être éphémère, même si le recul du temps nous fait juger tels les deux ou trois siècles où elle s'établit. En tout cas, elle fut assez marquante pour que les pierres de l'Iran aient conservé la trace de poèmes, funéraires ou non (32, 33, 81, 91, 136), parfois dus à des colons grecs, mais aussi à l'Indien Sophytès

dont l'extraordinaire épitaphe (84) avait ébloui le monde savant lors de sa première publication. Déjà la gravure de maximes delphiques par les soins de Cléarque de Soloi ou la traduction en grec des édits de l'Indien Açoka avaient montré combien la culture grecque avait pesé dans ces régions aux marges du monde hellénistique. Témoignage indirect que la conquête d'Alexandre bouleversa plus qu'on ne l'a souvent dit les sociétés de l'Iran et de l'Asie centrale.

Maurice SARTRE

Jean-Baptiste YON, *Inscriptions grecques et latines de la Syrie XVII. 1 : Palmyre (BAH 195)*, Ifpo, Beyrouth, 2012, 1 vol. 22 x 28 cm, 520 p., ISBN : 978-2-35159-190-1.

The magnificent site of ancient Palmyra in the Syrian desert has been, until the recent disturbances in Syria, exceptionally productive. In the middle of the previous century the history of Palmyra was in the hands of an exceptionally gifted and energetic group of archaeologists and philologists, of whom the most senior and influential were four incomparable French scholars, Henri Seyrig, Daniel Schlumberger, Jean Starcky, and Ernest Will. They were succeeded by a younger generation that replicated their salubrious blend of archaeology, history, and philology, and these included, down to the present, M. Gawlikowski, J. Teixidor, and A. Schmidt-Colinet. All enjoyed the indispensable support and collaboration of Kh. al-As'ad at the site itself. Now a still younger generation of Palmyrene specialists is taking shape, and among its leaders are T. Kaizer in England and the author of the present volume, J.-B. Yon, who is already widely recognized for his substantial book *Les notables de Palmyre* (Beirut, 2002). He is also the author, with Kh. al-As'ad, of a volume on Palmyrene inscriptions with the engaging title *Promenades épigraphiques dans la ville antique de Palmyre* (Beirut, 2001).

For this major addition to the series *Inscriptions grecques et latines de la Syrie*, which has been completed with the support of the General Directorate of Antiquities in Syria and Kh. al-As'ad's successor at Palmyra, Walid al-As'ad, Yon has reviewed, photographed, and edited the inscriptions at the site as well as those

in museums at other places. Among 560 texts Yon was able to include more than a hundred *inedita*, of which many are admittedly banal but others of great interest, particularly those that Gawlikowski has generously made available in advance of their formal publication in a work to be devoted to the Sanctuary of Allāt. The celebrated bilingual Tariff, now in St. Petersburg, has been reserved for another volume, as have the inscriptions of the Palmyrène. This new corpus of Greek and Latin inscriptions is distinguished by its commendable inclusion of texts, with translation and abbreviated commentary, in Palmyrene Aramaic, which often appears together with Greek in bilingual inscriptions, and sometimes with Latin as well in trilingual inscriptions. There is no doubt that even for the Palmyrene texts this volume is infinitely superior to the corpus, published in 1996, by D. Hillers and E. Cussini as *Palmyrene Aramaic Texts*, with no photographs, translations, or epigraphical index. It incontestably supersedes the fascicles of the *Inventaire des Inscriptions de Palmyre*, with which scholars of my generation grew up.

Naturally I am pleased to see, as no. 351, the integral text of the *pietre errante* of which I published the left half when it was discovered at Qaşr al-Ḥayr al-sharqi by my then Harvard colleague O. Grabar. The other half appeared two decades later in the Umayyad mosque and was hastily published soon afterwards by Chr. Delplace. Gawlikowski, together with Kh. al-As'ad, issued a proper edition in 2010 (*cf.*

Bull. épig. 2011. 607), and this now forms the basis of Yon's text. It is an important document both for the imperial cult at Palmyra and for the reputation of Lucius Verus in the region.

Although Yon has commendably included in his corpus a brief section devoted to mosaics in the area south and east of the ancient city, namely the famous Achilles and Cassiopeia mosaics, it is odd that he found no room to mention the impressive mosaic that Gawlikowski published from sondages in 2003 behind the middle part of the Great Colonnade (*CRAI* 2005, 1293-1304). One panel depicts Bellerophon, Pegasus, and the Chimaera, and another depicts a tiger hunt in a manner reminiscent of Sassanian silver. The latter contains a text in defective Palmyrene Aramaic cursive script, providing the name of the maker and an apparent reference to "our lord" (*mr[n]*). Gawlikowski has interpreted these images as allusions to Odainat's supposed victory over the Persians ca. 260. Under no. 61 (Odainat's son Herodian as king of kings, from the monumental arch), Yon offers a detailed discussion of the debate about the date of the campaign as well as the consequent honors proposed in Gawlikowski's publication of that inscription in *MUSJ* 2007. But he says nothing about the related argument in *CRAI* with reference to the mosaic panels. The matter is complex and deserves treatment in the context of the new images that appear to imply a Persian background.

The documentation for Palmyrene commerce with traders using both caravans and merchant ships is exceptionally rich, and much of it has been thoroughly discussed in the past. But occasionally in this excellent volume a little more detail would help. So far as I can see, the editor has nowhere adduced the testimony of the elder Pliny *NH* VI. 145 with reference to the two Palmyrene inscriptions that mention Phorat: These are no. 25 (showing merchants ἀπὸ Φοράθου) and 246 (showing an administrator, an archon perhaps, [Φορ]αθων / τῆς περὶ Σπασίνου/Χά]ρακα). Yon knows that the Cologne Mani-codex reports that Mani met an influential merchant there, but as the Greek form of the name in that text is uninflected (Φαρατ) the two forms of the name at Palmyra suggest that local Greek supported both a nominative singular and neuter plural, as well as an uninflected form, to represent the name

of the place. It happens that Pliny mentions it explicitly as Forat in Latin in the passage cited above. This begins by describing routes that led out of Petra, to Gaza in the west and to Palmyra in the north. Pliny then goes on to observe that the Omani dwelt in the territory to the east between Petra and Characene: *a Petra incoluere Omani ad Characem usque oppidis quondam claris ab Samiramide conditis Abaesamide et Soractia; nunc sunt solitudines*. (The two ruined and unknown cities lay presumably in the vicinity of Babylon.) And it is precisely at this point that Pliny declares: *est oppidum quod Characenorum regi paret in Pasitigris ripa, Forat nomine, in quod a Petra conveniunt*. He was therefore aware of a town called Forat under the rule of the king of Characene on the bank of the Pasitigris (the lower reaches of the Karun River as it joins the Tigris, cf. Strabo p. 729 C), and he knew that people from Petra went there. This passage was known to John Hansman, when he published his note in *Iran* 22 (1984), 161-6 on archaeological evidence in support of the location of Forat (Arabic al-Furāt) at Maghlūb (where it is now located in the *Barrington Atlas*, map 93). But for reasons I cannot imagine Hansman wrote that Pliny called the town Pratta, which he certainly did not.

In the mid-second century, at the time of the Palmyrene inscriptions that concern trade through Characene, the king Meredat called himself on his coins ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ ΟΜΑΝΑΙΩΝ, and it seems likely that he had transferred his residence from Spasinou Charax to Forat. Monika Schuol has lucidly examined this issue and argued for a move to Forat in her book *Die Charakene* (Stuttgart, 2000), p. 352-3. Pliny's precious information that persons from Petra, who can only have been traders, were there already in the first century tells us something about Palmyra's competitors. Since Pliny believed that the Omani dwelt in the whole territory from Petra to Characene, we have to ask what it meant to be a king of the Omani in the second century. The much discussed inscription (no. 245) that refers to a Palmyrene satrap [*sic*] of Meredat at Bahrain has encouraged speculation that the kingdom of Characene might have extended, at least for a time, into Qatar and even Oman.

How did the traders from Petra go to Forat? The inscriptions show that the Palmyrenes arrived there by way of Vologesias and Spasinou Charax and returned by the same route, before leading their camels and caravans back home across the Syrian desert. Their maritime commerce, operating from the head of the Arabo-Persian Gulf, not only embraced Bahrein in the Gulf itself but, as two important texts reveal (nos. 26 and 250), had even brought Palmyrene traders with their boats as far as the alluvial plain of the Indus in the region of Sindh. This is the part of India they called Scythia, exactly as it is named in the *Periplus Maris Erythraei* 27. Cf. no. 250: [ἔ]μποροι οἱ ἀν[α]χθέντες ἀπὸ Σκυθ[ίας / ἐν] πλύω (i.e. πλοίω) Ονα[ιν]ου Αἰδοῦδανου. It hardly seems credible that Nabataean traders had a merchant fleet that was comparable to the Palmyrenes' or so large a network as theirs, but the only alternative route to Forat would have been overland from Petra through the desert of the western Omani. Yet that might have been negotiable by camels and caravans, much as the Palmyrenes reached Mesopotamia from their oasis in the Syrian desert. In contemplating these possibilities, we need to remind ourselves that without the unambiguous testimony from the site of Palmyra itself we would never have been able to reconstruct their far-flung commerce by camel and by ship. Diod. Sic. 3. 43. 4-5 shows that in the days of his source, which was presumably Agatharchides of Cnidus, the Nabataeans had once taken to the water in the Gulf of Aqaba

and engaged in piracy. Possibly, from their settlements in the Hijaz they were later able to send traders from Petra into the Red Sea and around the Arabian peninsula into the Arabo-Persian Gulf. After all, the Palmyrenes, sailing in the other direction, astonishingly found their way to Socotra, as a Palmyrene text, incised on a wooden tablet that turned up on the island not long ago, has now proven: C. J. Robin & M. Gorea, *CRAI* 2002, 432-45.

Military service also took Palmyrene citizens far from home, and the new corpus has a useful index of legionary units to which they belonged. Three inscriptions (nos. 11, 204, 211) mention the Ala Heracliana, and the first two of these name a prefect. It would be useful to note in this connection that a new bilingual Palmyrene inscription from Berenike on the Red Sea Coast now gives another Palmyrene prefect of the Ala Heracliana: *Report of the 1997 Excavations at Berenike*, ed. S. E. Sidebotham and W. Z. Wendrich (Leiden, 1999), p. 208-9 (*Bulletin épigraphique* 2001. 554; *SEG* 49. 2117). The unit appears to have been stationed in Egypt from the last decades of the second century. The riches of this important new corpus, and the ample bibliographic and photographic material it contains, guarantee that this will be a primary work of reference for the history and epigraphy of Palmyra in the years to come. The few reflections offered here only hint at its enormous value.

Glen W. BOWERSOCK

Pierre-Louis GATIER, Bernard GEYER & Marie-Odile ROUSSET (dir.), *Entre nomades et sédentaires. Prospections en Syrie du Nord et en Jordanie du Sud (TMO 55, Conquête de la steppe 3)*, Lyon, Maison de l'Orient et de la Méditerranée, 2010.

Der vorliegende Sammelband mit Beiträgen von 13 Autoren widmet sich zwei Siedlungsräumen im Vorderen Orient, die beide außerhalb der Regenfeldbauzone liegen und damit den von Aridität gekennzeichneten Wüstensteppen- und Wüstenzonen Syriens und Jordaniens angehören. Die ariden Zonen

waren in jüngster Zeit mehrfach Gegenstand archäologischer und historischer Forschung, weil sie als paradigmatische Untersuchungsräume für die Frage nach naturdeterministischen Faktoren bei der regionalspezifischen Ausbildung sozialer, wirtschaftlicher und kultureller Strukturen angesehen werden können¹. Speziell ist damit die

1. Zu ergänzen etwa für die hellenistisch-römische Zeit M. SOMMER, *Roms orientalische Steppengrenze*, Stuttgart, 2005; auch G. FISHER, *Between Empires*.

Arabs, Romans, and Sasanians in Late Antiquity, Oxford 2011; bes. auch S. HAUSER (Hrsg.), *Die Sichtbarkeit von Nomaden und saisonaler Besiedlung in der Archäologie*.