

PALMYRA AND ITS CARAVAN TRADE

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It is certainly not in doubt that the tremendous development of this oasis city during the first centuries A.D. resulted from its importance in the international trade. And yet, in Strabo's detailed description of Syria (*Geogr.* XVI, 2) Palmyra is not even mentioned. Instead, Strabo provides a circumstantial account of a desert caravan route abandoning the Euphrates valley, which became too dangerous, and leading through the nomad territory of inner Mesopotamia to Seleucia and Babylon (XVI, 1,27). This was obviously an extraordinary solution, imposed by the lack of security prevailing on the usual track along the river.

The details on the Arab *phylarchoi* in control of the valley (XVI, 1,28), and in particular datable activities of one of them, Alchaidamnos (XVI, 2,10)¹, king of the tribe of the Rhambaiioi living in Parapotamia, i.e. on the Syrian bank of the river, tend to refer the use of this route to the sixties-forties of the 1st century B.C., even if it was presented by Strabo as contemporary.

On the other hand, the itinerary from Zeugma (otherwise Seleucia-on-the-Euphrates) to Seleucia-on-the-Tigris, as described in detail by Isidore of Charax, leads along the rivers Khabor and Euphrates. These "Parthian stations" describe the old commercial route from Northern Syria to Babylonia², probably in preparation of the mission of C. Caesar in 1 B.C. Again, the short-cut through Palmyra does not seem to be operational yet.

Three quarters of a century later, the famous description of Pliny presents Palmyra as a bone

of contention between Parthian and Roman empires, but not as a trading centre (*NH* V, 88). This passage has been demonstrated to be at best anachronistic³, and adopted by Pliny from a source possibly Hellenistic, or at the latest dating about the time of the incident of 41 B.C. related by Appianus (*Civil wars*, V, 9). Be it as it may, no ancient author has ever noticed the commercial vocation of Palmyra, dependent as they all were on literary *topoi* such as the one found in Pliny.

A new inscription, which I shall publish shortly with Khaled As'ad⁴, is the oldest direct proof of caravan movement in the oasis. It was found in the gardens close to the Sham Hotel, where an ancient mudbrick wall protecting the oasis from the South used to be known in the local lore as *sur el-jamarek*, or "Customs wall". The text, dated 10/11 A.D., is not entirely clear, but it concerns the "tax of the camels" to be paid upon crossing a wall and to go, in excess of what was due to the "assembly of all the Palmyrenes", to a certain 'Atenatan b. Kaffatut b. Bar'a and to his son Yamliku. Apparently, these were collectors to whom this tax was farmed on a permanent basis. A few years later, Germanicus has ordered, "In a letter to Statilius", that all taxes should be paid in Roman denarii and asses⁵; this regulation could have concerned the whole of Syria, but more likely intended to integrate the oasis of Palmyra into the province. Thereafter, local taxes were farmed to imperial freedmen, such as L. Spedius Chrysanthus, who built for himself a tomb in Palmyra, or Kilix, who used to impose a fee of 1 denarius on each

camel entering or leaving the territory of the city⁶. This tax, together with other duties, was later incorporated into the Tariff of 137 A.D.

Another indirect mention of the Palmyrene trade occurs in an inscription dated 19 A.D., relating a contribution to the building of the Bel temple, then in progress, and an interest in this enterprise shown by "Palmyrenes and Greeks *merchants from Seleucia*"⁷.

This is the only mention of Seleucia in the extant epigraphical corpus of Palmyra, and there is even no certainty that the city on the Tigris was meant. About the same time, a Palmyrene called Alexandros served as an envoy of Germanicus to the king of Mesene and to another ruler called Orabzes⁸. It is generally thought that Germanicus, who could have visited Palmyra, effectively annexed the oasis to the province, and perhaps even initiated the foundation of the new Bel temple⁹. The choice of Alexandros would be understandable if admitted that Palmyra had already established relations with the region of the Gulf by 18 A.D.

Another contribution to the building of the Bel temple is dated 24 A.D. by an honorific decree issued by "all the merchants in the city of Babylon", styled in Greek as "Παλμυρηγῶν ὁ δῆμος"¹⁰. An established trade colony of Palmyrenes seems thus to have existed there, but again this is the only mention of the ancient capital in the preserved inscriptions.

Later on, the merchants of Palmyra go and come back mostly to and from the Mesenian capital Charax. Never again after 19 A.D. are they known to head for the Seleucia-Ctesiphon area, and there is not the slightest hint of their interest in the overland route through Iran starting there. Their destination might at times extend on sea lanes as far as the Indus estuary, country they used to call Scythia¹¹, but most of the time they were content with taking delivery of Far Oriental goods in Charax, or in a city called Vologesias, first mentioned in 108 A.D.¹².

As it has been observed long ago, the Palmyrene interests in Charax and Vologesias were protected by permanent institutions, as well as by less formal ties. In several of the inscriptions quoted hereafter, resident notables offer constantly protection and help to their merchant countrymen on a caravan expedition; these good services should have been often of a financial nature, along with using such local influence as they could muster¹³. The best known of these personalities, Sho'adu b. Bolyada', enjoyed the

honour to have at least 17 statues of himself set up in the years 132-147 A.D. by his city and its merchants in Palmyra, Vologesias, Charax, and a desert station of Umm el- 'Amed¹⁴. Of particular interest is the mention (restored in the text, but reasonably certain) of a temple of Emperors in Vologesias which Sho'adu has consecrated. The question how such foundation was at all possible within the limits of the Parthian monarchy would be solved if the city of Vologesias were not at the time under the direct control of the Parthian administration¹⁵.

I have exposed elsewhere why it seems to me that the caravans of Palmyra used the waterway of the Euphrates, at least downstream¹⁶. The tremendous advantages of shipping over land transport could not have been overlooked, especially as the last leg of the journey to Charax through Lower Mesopotamia and the marshes simply could not be negotiated otherwise. The Palmyrene military presence at 'Ana on the Euphrates¹⁷ could have protected a river port. While the wares and the men were embarked on board *kelek* rafts, brilliantly suggested by Henri Seyrig to be supplied with goatskin floaters by the *askonautopoiioi* of Palmyra¹⁸, the camels waited for the return of the merchant party, grazing somewhere within the confines of Palmyrene territory. There was no need at all for the armed escorts to penetrate the Parthian estates, eventuality that had troubled already Franz Cumont and M. Rostovtzeff¹⁹. These militias were rather staying with the animals, protecting them against the nomad menace. The travel back to Palmyra could have used the track from Hit, identified from the air by Poidebard²⁰.

One inscription refers to a caravan "of all the Palmyrenes", and the city Council was active rewarding benefactors of some caravans exactly as if these were public enterprises. Indeed, it is likely that many were so important as to engage means beyond the reach of even the richest particulars. To involve others, loans were available, possibly combined with a kind of insurance known as "gross venture loans"²¹.

True, this institution is attested only in the Mediterranean maritime trade, but the conditions of Palmyrene business travel seem appropriate to adapt this system, even more so if I am right to suppose that a notable part of the journey happened afloat. Substantial risks and great profits in case of a successful homecoming could induce the merchants to borrow at a very

high interest rate provided the losses were shared by the lender. A curious document I have published a few years ago seems to represent a sketchy account of such a banker, having just realized a nice profit of some 30% on the capital engaged²².

The golden era of the caravan trade is readily determined from the relevant texts. For 34 caravan inscriptions listed in the annex, 19 are dated between 131 and 161 A.D., 6 are from the 1st century, and only 7 are later than 193 A.D. Quite obviously, this disproportion is too important to be explained away by hazards of discovery, especially as the flourishing period corresponds to the reigns of Hadrian and Antoninus, in other words to the timespan between the Parthian wars of Trajan and of Lucius Verus.

According to the recent reassessment of evidence old and new, by G. Bowersock²³, the kingdom of Mesene would be then placed, presumably by Hadrian's diplomacy, in the Roman sphere of influence. Indeed, the king Meherdat of Mesene found it appropriate to appoint a native of Palmyra as his satrap of the island of Thilouan in the Gulf (inscr.7)²⁴, while others served as archons of his cities (inscr.10-11). These surprising facts, and the extraordinary intensity of caravan movement between Palmyra and the petty kingdom, would be best explained if its Arsacid ruler were simply a client of Rome.

Meherdat's demise in 150/151, as revealed in the bilingual inscription from Seleucia, did not stop the Palmyrene trade. As Bowersock remarked, however, a remarkable series of caravan inscriptions relative to M. Ulpius Yarhai, between 156 and 159 A.D. (inscr. 17-24), could reflect the difficulties and dangers of the new situation this caravan leader was able to overcome. At any rate, the merchants he used to help appear bolder than ever, going even to India in their own ships.

The invasion of Lucius Verus apparently stopped all traffic, but as soon as his adversary Valagash IV died in 192 A.D. the caravans resumed their travels between Charax and Palmyra (inscr. 28, 193 AD). Serious problems of security appear to have been caused by the nomads, constantly kept in check by the *stratēgoi* of Palmyra in the desert between the oasis and the Euphrates²⁵. The trade however, though reduced, continued until the 260's: the last caravan inscription honours the famous *argapet* Septimius Worod.

It appears therefore that the caravan trade of Palmyra depended entirely on the sea branch of the Silk Road, from India to Charax. The desert city has provided a link through the desert to Emesa and the Mediterranean, short-circuiting the traditional route through Zeugma and Antioch. While much has been said on the necessary conditions of this development, it is not stressed enough that the prosperity of Palmyra meant the abandonment or decline of the continental branch of the Silk Road, leading through Iran to Seleucia.

This conclusion was not accepted by A. Maricq²⁶ who believed that Vologesocerta, the "emporium of Ctesiphon" founded according to Pliny (*NH*, VI, 26) by king Vologesus in order to replace the neighbouring Seleucia as a commercial centre, was identical with Vologesias, a frequent goal of caravans from Palmyra. However, this trading station was located by Ptolemy (V, 19) between Babylon and "Barsita", i.e. Borsippa, while Stephanus Byzantius insist on its position on the Euphrates (Βολογείας, πόλις πρὸς τῷ Εὐφράτῃ, ἐκ Βολογέσσου βασιλέως ᾠκισμένη). This traditional location, somewhere on the modern Nahr Hindiyeh not far from Kufa, has been recently maintained by M.-L. Chaumont²⁷.

Accordingly, there were two emporia named after Vologesus, one to attract the overland Iranian route, the other to accommodate the route from Charax to Palmyra. In both cases, the Parthian king concerned should be Valagash I (51-80 A.D.), the only one Pliny could have heard about and also the only one who stood a chance to build a city existing in 108 A.D., unlike his ephemeral rival and successor Valagash II (77/78 and 89/90 A.D.) or Valagash III, who from 105 until 128 A.D. ruled in Media, while Osroes remained in possession of Ctesiphon.

Both branches of the Silk Road appear thus to have been paid close attention by this Parthian king between 51 and 80 A.D.²⁸. Whatever the fortunes of the continental route, the sea route only interested Palmyra and its caravans. The long distance trade of Palmyra used ships as well as camels. Going down the Euphrates to Charax, the merchants stopped at Vologesias, in the Antonine period perhaps a dependence of Mesene, where their powerful protector Sho'adu exercised some kind of authority (*dynasteia*). They were after the goods brought by others on the Silk Road through

Central Asia and Punjab to the Indus estuary, and then to the head of the Gulf by sea, if not all the way around India. They do not appear to have been interested in the land route through Iran at all.

LIST OF CARAVAN INSCRIPTIONS

1. *Inv. IX,6 (CIS II 3924)*. 19 A.D.

Palmyrene and Greek merchants from Seleucia honour Yedi'bel b. 'Azizu, a benefactor of the temple of Bel.

2. *Inv. IX,11 (CIS II 3915)*. 24 A.D.

Merchants from the city of Babylon ("people of the Palmyrenes") honour Maliku b. Nesha Bolḥa, called Ḥashash, a benefactor of the Bel temple. Cf. *Inv. IX,12-13*.

3. Cantineau, *RAss.* 27, 1930, no 34. 50/51 or 70/71 A.D.

Palmyrene merchants from Ispasinqert (=Spasinou Charax) honour Zabdibol b. Obayhan.

4. *Inv. X,7*.

Between 28-88 A.D.

Palmyrene merchants on return from Karka of Maishan (= Charax) honour NN.

5. *Inv. X,40*. 81 A.D.

Palmyrene merchants upon return from Charax honour Zabdibol b. 'Ogeilu b. 'Aqamat A'aki.

6. *Inv. X,127*. 86 A.D.

The Council honours Yarḥai b. Zabdilāh, for protecting and favouring the merchants.

7. *Inv. X,38*. Cf. above, note 24. 131 A.D.

Merchants from Charax honour Yarḥai b. Nebozabad b. Shalamallat, satrap of Thilouan (= Tylos, Bahrein) for the king Meherdat of Mesene.

8. *Inv. X,81*. 135 A.D.

M. Ulpius Abgar b. Ḥairan and his caravan, upon return from Charax, honour a centurion, Julius Maximus.

9. *Inv. X,114*. 138 A.D.

The Council honours Yarḥibola b. Lishamsh A'abi for having helped the merchants in Charax, and assumed an embassy to Worod, king of Ailymene.

10. *Inv. X,112*. 140 A.D.

A caravan under Malku b. 'Azizu, on return from Charax and Vologesias, honours NN, [archon of Phor]ath near Charax.

11. M. Rostovtzeff, *Berytus* 2, 1935, p.143; D. Schlumberger, *Syria* 38, 1961, p.256. 89-188 A.D.

NN...b. A'abi, archon of [Maish]an, honoured for having favoured his native city and its merchants.

12. *Inv. IX,14 (CIS II 3916)*. 142 A.D.

A caravan returning from Phorat and Vologesias honours its leader, Nesa b. Ḥala b. Nesa b. Ḥala Raphael Abisai.

13. *Inv. X,124*. 150 A.D.

A caravan having gone to Vologresias, for the same, its leader.

14. Chr. Dunant, *Sanctuaire de Baalshamîn III*, no 45. 132 A.D.

A caravan under Ḥagegu b.

Yarḥibola and Taimarṣu b. Taimarṣu; having been saved by Sho'adu b. Bolyada' b. Sho'adu Taimishamsh, honours him with 4 statues in 4 sanctuaries, also for assisting citizens settled in Vologesias, caravans and merchants.

15. Unpublished, from Allat temple. 144 A.D.

A caravan of all the Palmyrenes back from Vologesias, having been attacked by robbers, honours the same with 4 statues in 4 sanctuaries.

16. Milik, *Dédicaces*, p.12-14. Umm el 'Amed. 145-146 A.D.

The Council (and perhaps a caravan) honour the same with statues in Palmyra, Charax Vologesias and the station of Gennaê (= Umm el 'Amed). Mention of building by him of a [temple] of imperial cult in Vologesias, and of his special powers there. Rescripts of Hadrian and Antoninus in his favour mentioned.

17. *Inv. X,111*. 156 A.D.

A caravan having gone to Charax honours its leader, M. Ulpius Yarḥai b., Ḥairan Abgar.

18. *Inv. X,87-88 (CIS II 3960)*. 157 A.D.

Merchants back from an expedition honour the same.

19. *Inv. X,90*. 157 A.D.

A caravan under Yarḥai Zabdilāh, back from Charax, honours the same.

20. *Inv. X*,96; Seyrig, *JRS* 40, 1950, p.6.
157 A.D.

Merchants back from Scythia on the ship of Ḥonainu b. Ḥaddudan, honour the same for having helped them.

21. *Inv. X*,107. 159 A.D.

A caravan back from Charax under his son Abgar, honours the same.

22. Cantineau, *Syria* 19, 1938, p.75. 159 A.D.

Ḥaddudan b. Ḥaddudan Firmon honours the same, for helping him in Charax.

23. *Inv. X*,89. No date.

Merchants ... honour the same.

24. Milik, *Dédicaces*, p. 32 (Cantineau, *Syria* 14, 1933, p.187; *Inv. X*,95 and 91).

Merchants back from Scythia on the ship of Beelaios Kyrou honour NN [Milik: the same, in 157 A.D.].

25. *Inv. X*,29. 161 A.D.

Merchants back from Charax under Nesha b. Bolyada' (brother of Sho'adu, *supra* 14-16) honour M. Aemilius Marcianus Asclepiades, counselor of Antioch and customs contractor.

26. *Inv. X*,19. No date.

Merchants back from Charax...

27. *Inv. X*, 47. 89-188 A.D.

A caravan honours its leader Taimarṣu b. Lishamsh Malku A'abi. Cf. *supra* 9 and 11.

28. *Inv. III*, 28 (*CIS II* 3948). 193 A.D.

A caravan back from Charax honours its

leader Taimarṣu b. Taime b. Moqimu Garba and his sons Yaddai and Zabdibol, for having spared it an expense of 300 gold denarii.

29. *Inv. X*,44, cf. Milik, *Dédicaces*, p.23 and 258. 199 A.D.

The Council orders the four tribes to honour with 4 statues 'Ogeilu b. Maqqai b. 'Ogeilu Shewira, several times *strategos* against the nomads, having assured security of merchants and of many caravans under his leadership.

30. *Inv. III*, 29 (*CIS II* 3949). 211 A.D.

Honouring Yaddai b. Taimarṣu b. Taime Moqimu Garba (cf. *supra* 28), having helped the merchants in Vologesias.

31. *Inv. III*,21 (*CIS II* 3933). 247 A.D.

Merchants having gone to Vologesias, for their leader Jullus Aurelius Zebida b. Moqimu Zebida 'Ashtor Baida.

32. *Inv. III*, 13 (*CIS II* 393). 257/258 A.D.

The Council honours Julius Aurelius Shalamallat b. Male 'Abdai, caravan leader (*archemporos*), having brought back a caravan at his own expense.

33. *Inv. IX*,30. 3rd century.

The Council honours Julius Aurelius Nebomai b. Taimishamsh b. Bonne Shabi, caravan leader, having brought a caravan back.

34. *Inv. III*,7 (*CIS II* 3942). After 260 A.D.

The Council honours Septimius Worod, procurator and argapet, having brought back caravans at his own expense and being given testimony by caravan leaders.

1- Also Dio, XXVI, 2,5; XL, 20,1; XLVII, 27,3; cf. M.Astour, "The Rabbeans: a Tribal Society on the Euphrates from Yahdun-Lim to Julius Caesar", *Syro-Mesopotamian Studies* 2/1, 1978, 1-12.

2- Cf. most recently: M.-L. Chaumont, *Syria* 61, 1984, p.63-107, and M. Gawlikowski, in: *Géographie historique au Proche-Orient (Syrie, Phénicie, Arabie, grecques, romaines, byzantines)*, éd. P.-L. Gatier - B. Helly - J.-P. Rey-Coquais, Paris 1988, p.76-98.

3- *Semitica* 41-42, 1993, p. 163-172.

4- Cf. E. Will, "Pline l'Ancien et Palmyre: un problème d'histoire ou d'histoire littéraire?", *Syria* 62, 1985, p.263-269.

5- *CIS II*, 3913, II, 102-105, III, 181-183.

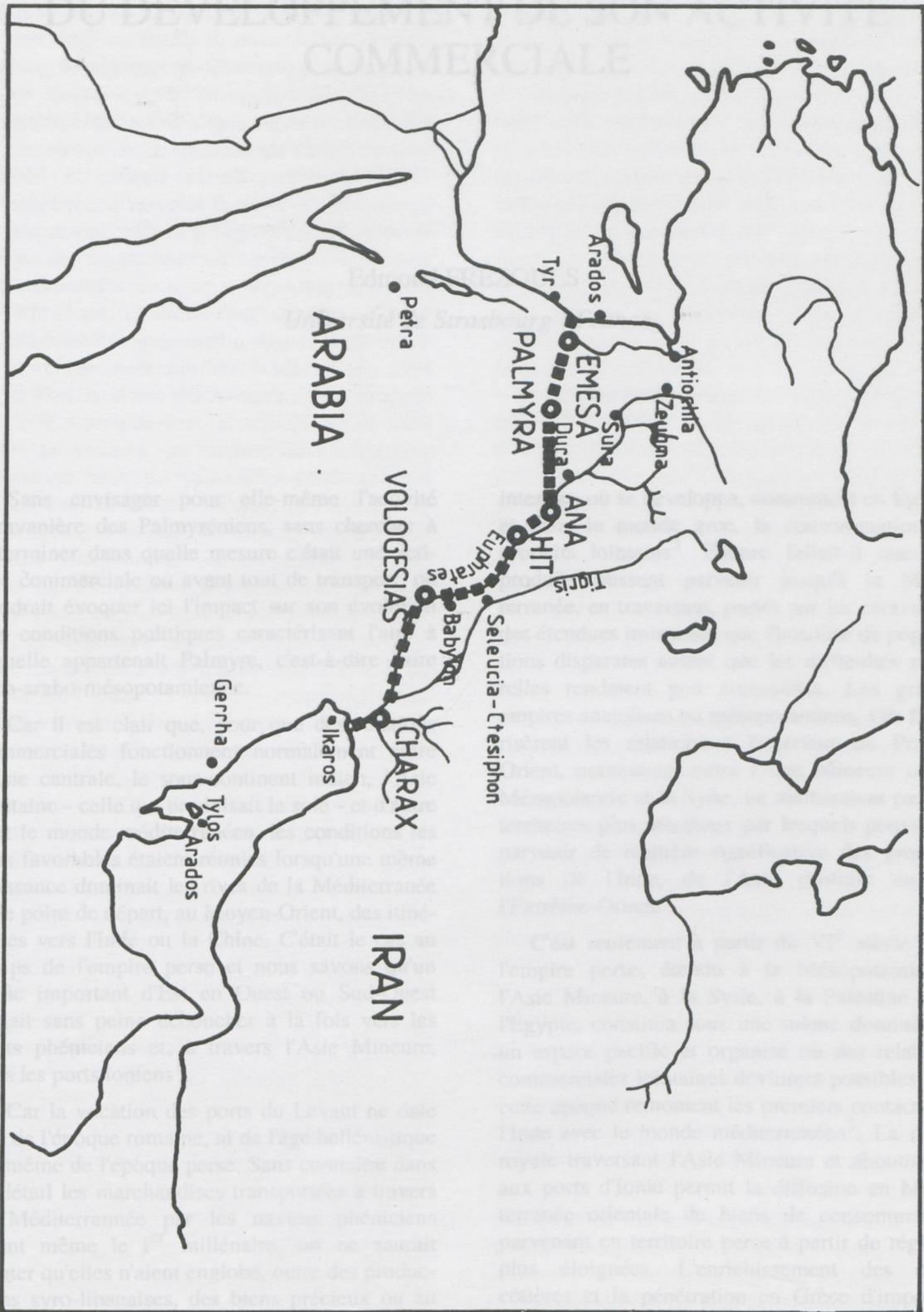
6- Chrysanthus: *CIS II*, 4235 (*IGRS III*, 1539, J. Cantineau, *Inv. VIII*, 57); Kilix: *CIS II*, 3913, II, 61-62, III, 45-46.

7- *Inv. IX*,6 = *CIS II*, 3924; the reading εμποροι is largely restored, and the Semitic counterpart of the term was omitted; the city name, recognized as such by M. Rostovtzeff, *Mélanges Glotz*, II, Paris 1932, p. 797, was also read as συνλόγια, "association" (so *CIS*).

8- J. Cantineau, *Syria* 12, 1931, 139-141, cf. H. Seyrig, *AS I*, p. 44-45; Gawlikowski, *op. cit.*, p. 80.

- 9- So H. Seyrig, "L'incorporation de Palmyre à l'empire romain", *Syria* 12, 1931, p. 266-277, and "Le statut de Palmyre", *Syria* 22, 1941, p. 155-175; objections of B. Issac, *The Limits of Empire. The Roman Army in the East*, Oxford 1990, p. 141-147, tend to dismiss systematically the available evidence, admittedly uncertain. For the temple, cf. M.A.R. Colledge, *Palmyre, bilan et perspectives* (colloque Strasbourg 1973), 1976, p. 45 s.
- 10- Inv. IX, 11 (= CIS II, 3915, incomplète).
- 11- See the enclosed list, nos. 20 and 24; for Scythia as the name of Saka kingdoms of NW India, cf. H. Seyrig, *Mélanges Cumont*, Paris 1936, p. 397-402 (= *Scripta Varia*, Paris 1985, p. 259-264); for possible restorations of the texts, see J.-T. Milik, *Dedicaces*, Paris 1972, p. 32-33.
- 12- Inv. IX, 15 (= CIS II, 3917).
- 13- See esp. E. Will, "Marchands et chefs de caravanes à Palmyre", *Syria* 34, 1957, p. 262-277, and most recently, G. Bowersock, "Social and Economic History of Syria under the Roman Empire", *Archéologie et Histoire de la Syrie II*, J.-M. Dentzer -W. Orthmann éd., Saarbrücken 1989, p. 63-80.
- 14- Inscriptions 14-16, in the list hereafter; add private texts: Inv. X, 56, and *Berytus* 19, 1970, p. 65.
- 15- On the extent of the kingdom of Mesene, see now P. Bernard, *Journal des Savants* 1990, p. 28, even if this author prefers, p. 40, n. 47, the location of Vologesias near Ctesiphon as proposed by Maricq (cf. note 26 hereafter).
- 16- M. Gawlikowski, "Le Commerce de Palmyre sur terre et sur eau", *L'Arabie et ses mers lordières I. Itinéraires et voisinages*, Travaux de la Maison de l'Orient, Lyon 1988, p. 165-172.
- 17- Directly confirmed in 225 A.D., J. Cantineau, *Syria* 14, 1933, p. 178-180, but already in 132 A.D., CIS II, 3973, cf. E. Lipinski, *Orientalia* 45, 1976, p. 73, n. 164 (inscription left in Palmyra by a Nabatean cavalryman having served in the "fortress and the camp of 'Ana'"); for J. Teixidor, however, *Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society of the Columbia University*, 5, 1973, p. 405-409, and *Semitica* 34, 1984, p. 24, the dedicant was in Parthian service.
- 18- H. Seyrig, *AAAS* 13, 1963, p.159-166.
- 18- M. Postovtzeff, *Mélanges Glotz*, II, Paris 1932, p. 807; F. Cumont, *Fouilles de Doura-Europos*, Paris 1926, p. XL.
- 20- R. Mouterde - A. Poidebard, "La route antique des caravanes entre Palmyre et Hit", *Syria* 12, 1931, p.101-115.
- 21- Cf. J. Rougé, *L'organisation du commerce maritime en Méditerranée*, Paris 1966, p.345-360.
- 22- *Semitica* 36, 1986, p. 87-99.
- 23- G. Bowersock, "La Mésène antonine", in *L'Arabie préislamique et son environnement historique et culturel* (colloque Strasbourg, 1987), 1989, p. 159-168. The inscription was first published by Wathiq al-Salihi, *Mesopotamia* 22, 1987, p. 159-168; cf. F. A. Pennacchietti, *ibid.*, p. 169-186. See now P. Bernard, "Vicissitudes au gré de l'histoire d'une statue en bronze d'Héraclès entre Séleucie du Tigre et la Mésène", *Journal des Savants* 1990, p. 3-68.
- 24- The name is confirmed by Syriac sources, cf. J. Teixidor, *Mesopotamia* 22, 1987, p. 192 n.19, and R. Zadok, *Afo* 28, 1981/82, p.139, on TLWN = Dilmun. See, however, G. Bowersock, *Classical Philology* 82, 1987, p. 179, who prefers to restore a form like Thilouos (= Tylos).
- 25- H. Ingholt, *Syria* 13, 1932, p. Z78 292 (also inscr. 29 = Inv. X, 44).
- 26- A. Maricq, "Vologesias, l'emporium de Ctesiphon", *Syria* 36, 1959, p. 264-276.
- 27- M. L. Chaumont, "Études d'histoire parthe III. Les villes fondées par les Vologèse", *Syria* 51, 1974, p. 76-89.
- 28- Vologesias on the Euphrates could have been intended for the defense of the kingdom against Arab nomads: cf. E. Dabrowa, *La politique de l'État parthe à l'égard de Rome d'Artaban II à Vologèse I*, Krakow 1983, p. 164; E. J. Keall, "Parthian Nippur and Vologases' Southern Strategy: a Hypothesis", *JAOS* 95, 1975, p. 625.

PALMYRE ET LES CONDITIONS POLITIQUES



... pour envisager pour elle-même l'existence d'une route commerciale fonctionnelle dans quelle mesure cette route commerciale ou avait tout de suite pu être utilisée pour évoquer les conditions politiques caractéristiques de cette époque. Celle-ci appartenait à Palmyre, c'est-à-dire à un royaume arabo-mésopotamien. Car il est clair que les routes commerciales fonctionnelles dans le monde méditerranéen et dans le monde oriental, celle-ci appartenait à Palmyre, c'est-à-dire à un royaume arabo-mésopotamien. Car il est clair que les routes commerciales fonctionnelles dans le monde méditerranéen et dans le monde oriental, celle-ci appartenait à Palmyre, c'est-à-dire à un royaume arabo-mésopotamien.

Ces relations sont les premières contacts de l'Asie avec le monde méditerranéen. La route royale traversant l'Asie Mineure et aboutissant aux ports d'Ionie permit la diffusion en Méditerranée orientale de biens de consommation parvenant en territoire perse à partir de régions plus éloignées. L'enrichissement des régions et la réputation en Grèce d'un grand état à cheval sur l'Asie méditerranéenne et sur l'Asie centrale. Ajoutons que, bien entendu, il n'existait pas alors de liaison maritime directe entre l'Égypte et l'Inde.