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GREEK INTO PALMYRENE: ODAENATHUS AS ‘CORRECTOR TOTIUS
ORIENTIS’?

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The relation between Odaenathus, the famous dynast of Palmyra, and Roman government in the 260s is unclear. Following the defeat and capture of Valerian by Shapur Odaenathus' timely intervention on behalf of Gallienus in 261 against Junius Quietus, son of the rebel general Fulvius Macrianus, and Callistus, Macrianus' praetorian prefect, was clearly of great importance in reestablishing imperial rule in the East. It is tempting to suppose that Odaenathus' power was officially recognised. Ancient sources suggested it was: 'totius prope igitur orientis factus est Odaenathus imperator' (SHA Gall. 3.3; Zonaras 12.24). Amongst moderns Clermont-Ganneau was the first to propose on the basis of Palmyrene epigraphical texts that Odaenathus was in fact given the title 'corrector' by the emperor.¹ This suggestion has been doubted by a number of scholars, but it has now been argued for forcefully once more by Potter.² The problem turns particularly on two honorary inscriptions, CIS II 3946 (= Cantineau, Inventaire III 19) from a statue base honouring Odaenathus and CIS II 3971 from a mile-stone reused under Diocletian honouring his son, Vaballathus. But there is also a wider question to consider of how we should approach the Palmyrene bilingual texts and what relationship we should expect between Aramaic and the Greek (and Latin) technical terminology of office holding.

With regard to Odaenathus it is helpful to set out the two main inscriptions again. The first (CIS II 3946) runs as follows:

ṢLM SPTMYWS 'DY[NT] MLK MLK'
 WMTQNN' DY MDNḤ' KLH SPTMY'
 ZBD' RB ḤYL' RB' WZBY RB ḤYL'
 DY TDMWR QRTṢT' 'QYM LMRHWN
 BYRH'B ṢNT 582

* I would like to thank Fergus Millar for his comments on this paper and also Sebastian Brock for his general assistance in Semitica.

¹ C.Clermont-Ganneau, RB 29, 1920, 400 (reading -note- in the main relevant texts, which are now CIS II 3946 and 3971, MDYT' ['city'], taken as it may be in the sense 'province') for the true reading MDNḤ' 'East'; cf. id., Recueil d'archéologie orientale 3, 1900, §28.

² Doubts: G.A.Cooke, A Textbook of Northsemitic Inscriptions, 1903, 291; J.Cantineau, JA 222, 1933, 217-20; F.Millar, JHS 61, 1971, 9-10, cf. G.W.Bowersock, Roman Arabia, 1983, 130 n.32 'ruler of all the East': D.S.Potter, Prophecy and History in the Crisis of the Empire. A Historical Commentary on the Thirteenth Sibylline Oracle, 1990, 381-394 (Appendix IV), cf. M.Gawlikowski, Syria 62,1 1985, 256 'correcteur de tout l'Orient', M.G.Bertinelli Angeli, Nomenclatura pubblica e sacra di Roma nelle epigrafi semitiche, 1970, 71, 111; ead., Serta Historia Antiqua 1, 1986, 174, 176.

Statue of Septimius Odainat King of Kings
 And MTQNN' of the whole East, the Septimii
 Zabda chief of the chief army and Zabbai chief of the army
 of Tadmor, kratistoi, set it up for their lord
 in the month of Ab of the year 582 [i.e. July-August 271]

The second text (CIS II 3971) reads:

.....α..[καὶ ὑπὲρ σω-]
 τηρίασ Σεπτιμίασ Ζηνο-
 βίασ τῆσ λαμπροτάτησ
 βασιλίσσησ· μητρὸσ τοῦ
 βασιλέωσ....υ....

'L H[YWH] WZ[KWTH DY] SPTYMYWS
 WHBLT 'TNR[WS NHY]R' MLK MLK'
 W 'PNRTT' DY MDNH' KLH BR
 SPT[YMY]WS ['DYNT MLK] MLK' W'L
 HYH DY SPTYMY' BTZBY NHYRT'
 MLKT' 'MH DY MLK MLK'
 BT 'NTYWKWS M 14

For the life and victory of Septimius
 Wahab-Allat Athenodorus illustrious King of Kings
 And 'PNRTT' of the whole East, son of
 Septimius Odainat King of Kings, and for
 The life of Septimia Bath-Zabbai illustrious
 Queen, mother of the King of Kings,
 Daughter of Antiochus. Fourteen Miles.³

The honorary inscriptions of Palmyra are mainly bilingual Greek and Palmyrene. In early texts the Palmyrene may be the fuller version (e.g. Inv. IX 11 of A.D. 24), but later on in texts of the second and third centuries the Palmyrene often seems secondary to the Greek.⁴ This is particularly plain with regard to the regular vocabulary of Greek honorary inscriptions - words like φιλόπατρις or εὐσεβής- which are expressed through periphrases in the Palmyrene. This looseness in translation has been held to have important consequences for Odaenathus. In CIS II 3946 his titles are 'King of Kings and MTQNN' of

³ Some errors have crept in to Potter's text and translation of this inscription.

⁴ Inv. IX.26 is a good example, the absence of SLM at the start of the Palmyrene showing clearly the influence of the Greek (cf. G.W.Bowersock, Chiron 6, 1979, 351f.).

the whole East'; in CIS II 3971 his son, Vaballathus, is called 'King of Kings and 'PNRTT' of the whole East'. 'PNRTT' is a Palmyrene borrowing of the Greek word ἐπανορθωτής. It is argued that MTQNN' is merely a variant of 'PNRTT' = ἐπανορθωτής, and that this variation is typical of how Palmyrene deals with foreign titles, now transliterating them, now using an Aramaic word for them. Yet the evidence behind this claim has been pressed too hard and will not stand up to examination. MTQNN' itself is a verbal noun based on the verb TQN 'made straight', 'established'. Its formation with an affirmative *-ân* is particularly common in Syriac and it is in fact only in Syriac that the word is found elsewhere. Here »mtaqnânâ« is used predominantly of God in the sense of 'conditor' or 'stabilitor'. And there is every reason to believe that in Palmyrene also MTQNN' has a general sense of 'restitutor' rather than the particular and technical one of 'corrector'.⁵

In the Greek and Palmyrene bilingual texts the Palmyrene can indeed diverge from the Greek (or in some cases Latin). Consider the examples noted by Potter. In CIS II 3932 the technical term οὐνηξιλλατίοισιν is glossed by LGYNY' 'legions'. This is not the only instance of this sort of change and it is true to say that the Palmyrenes 'were not greatly bothered about representing the precise details of Roman military organization in their own language'.⁶ But the other examples offered do not substantiate the notion of a general looseness. CIS II 3943 HPQ' alone for ἵππεύς 'Ρωμαίων is not a serious change ('Roman' being redundant).⁷ The contention that in CIS II 3932 'Julius Priscus... is described as dy sp "(man) in charge of the supplies"' in place of the Greek τοῦ ἐξοχωτάτου ἐπάρχου τοῦ

⁵ M.Goodman in his excellent *State and Society in Roman Galilee, A.D. 132-212*, 1983, 151, while noting rightly that 'Palmyrene and Nabatean translations and transliterations can be remarkably accurate in official contexts', finally decides that Palmyrene is after all inconsistent because ἐπανορθωτής is translated not only by MTQNN' and 'PNRTT' but also by a further form *M'MNN'. The latter however in fact rests on a mistranscription of the Palmyrene letter forms of MTQNN' printed in J.-B.Chabot, *Choix d'inscriptions de Palmyre*, 1922, 57; there are also some other slips in the Palmyrene words cited by Goodman.

⁶ Potter, o.c., 392 (but note that his rendering of Q[R]SPYNWS HYG MWN' WBDY 'TY LK' YT LGYNY' in this inscription as 'Crispinus who leads the legion [sic] here' in contrast with 'Ρουτιλλίου Κρισπείνου τοῦ ἡγηγαμένου καὶ ταῖς ἐπιδημηκάσαις οὐνηξιλλατίοισιν distorts the matter somewhat: the full passage in Greek 'he served [during] the continuous [periods of] residence of Rutilius Crispinus the governor and acted as agoranomos to the visiting vexillationes' is translated as 'he served when Crispinus the governor was here and many times when he brought the legions hither, and he was chief of the market' [RB ŠWQ = ἀγορανομήσαντα; cf. similarly Inv. X 115 [the only examples]]. Other examples of changes concerning military organisation: CIS II 3944 λεγ[εῶνος Κυρηναί]ϊκῆς: LGYWN' DY BSR ['legion at Bosra']; Inv. X 17 (a much superior text to CIS II 3962 which is used by Bertinelli Angeli, o.c. 1970, 80, 125, and by Potter, ib.; cf. Inv. X 22) III Scy(thicae): LGYWN' DY 'RB'T' ['legion of the fourth']; Inv. X 81 'legion' [Greek missing]; Inv. X 128 is better - [RB] 'L' DRMDRY' ['chief of the dromedaries'] translates ἐπάρχον εἴλης πρώτης [Οὐλπί]ας δρομαδαρίων - but several offices in the Greek version here are omitted in the Palmyrene.

⁷ Confusion about ἵππικός and its Palmyrene transliterations reigns in commentators as a result of Chabot's statement ad CIS II 3937 that ἵππικός autem saepius respondet latino "vir egregius" ; rather, 'vir egregius' is κράτιςτος, while both ἵππεύς (or ἵππεύς 'Ρωμαίος) and ἵππικός (ἵππικός 'Ρωμαίος is found also) mean 'eques (Romanus)' (H.J.Mason, *Greek Terms for Roman Institutions. A Lexicon and Analysis*, 1974, s.vv.). There is no reason to take the four instances of Palmyrene HPQ' (HPQWS; ἩΡQWS: J.Teixidor, *Mél.Univ.Saint-Joseph* 42, 1966, 177 no.1) as meaning anything else than 'eques (Romanus)', for which Palmyrene sensibly employed one Greek borrowing rather than two.

ἱεροῦ πραιτωρίου is based on mistranslation. DY SP' [sic] in fact means 'of the vestibule/court'; the letters before these are missing, but it is reasonably clear that a word equivalent to ἑπαρχος should be assumed.⁸ In other words, the translation is perfectly satisfactory (and in the absence of other examples no claim about consistency can be made).

That there is some looseness between the different languages is understandable. But such changes as there are are by and large consistently made. For example, Διὶ ὑψίτω μεγίτῳ καὶ ἐπηκόῳ becomes LMR' 'LM' 'To the Lord of Eternity' or more usually and frequently LBRYK ŠMH L'LM' 'To Him Whose Name is Blessed for Eternity';⁹ or, again, Roman governors' titles are reduced to a simple 'governor'.¹⁰ What is more surprising is that in bilingual inscriptions which mention public offices of the Palmyrenes themselves there is in almost all cases a one-to-one correspondence between the Greek and the Palmyrene terminology (and in most of these the Palmyrene uses the same word as the Greek).¹¹ Perhaps the best way to illustrate this is by reference to the sequence of inscriptions for Septimius Vorodes set up between 262 and 267 (CIS II 3938-3943 = Inv. III 6-11). Vorodes' various titles (κράτιτος,¹² ἐπίτροπος, δουκηνάριος, ἀργαπέτης [an Iranian word signifying 'gouverneur de ville']¹³ are all reproduced in the Palmyrene without significant variation.¹⁴ Elsewhere a careful distinction is maintained between membership of the local βουλή (always BWL') - CIS II 3937 BYLWT: βουλευτής, Inv. X 29 BLWT B'NTKY': Ἀντιοχέων βουλευτήν - and the imperial senate CIS II 3944 SNQLTYQ': συνκλητικόν (cf. 4202, Inv. IX 28).¹⁵ The office of στρατηγός is also conscientiously

⁸ See J.-B. Chabot, CRAI 1941, 111f. (S is visible before DY SP'; since there is only room to read the letters PRYSQWS, Chabot suggested an error of the stone cutter for PRYSQ<WS HPRK> WS).

⁹ M. Gawlikowski, Recueil d'inscriptions palmyréniennes, 1974, nos. 119, 125; C. Dunant, Le sanctuaire de Baalshamin à Palmyre, III. Les inscriptions, 1971, no. 25; CIS II 3998; etc.

¹⁰ Cf. Dunant, o.c. no. 45 διατάγματι Ποβλικίου Μαρκελλίου τοῦ διασημοτάτου κυρίου ὑπατικ[οῦ]: HGMWN' MRN ('our lord governor'); no. 48 παρὰ...τῷ διασημοτάτῳ ὑπά[ρχ]ῳ: LWT HYGMWN' ('by the side of the governor').

¹¹ On the Latin equivalents to which the Palmyrene and Greek terms used in the following texts and others answer see Bertinelli Angeli o.c. 1970, 65-83, o.c. 1986, 170-6; F. Millar, in H. Solin and M. Kajava, Roman Eastern Policy and Other Studies in Roman History, 1990, 42-6. The difficulty of knowing precisely how far the Palmyrene-Greek reflects Roman terminology is shown for example by Bertinelli Angeli's silence on ἀργαπέτης (see below).

¹² κράτιτος is commonly translated in the texts by QRTSTŠ (vel. sim.) with the single exception of CIS II 3913 where QRBLWN KŠYR' 'Corbulo the excellent' is rendered (l. 196) Κουρβούλων ὁ κράτιτος (but here κράτιτος is not technical in the sense of 'vir egregius').

¹³ C. F. Jean and J. Hoftijzer, Dictionnaire des inscriptions sémitiques de l'Ouest, 1965, 23; the word occurs also at CIS II 4105 (of Vorodes).

¹⁴ The variations are of a minor order: 3938 κράτιτον ἐπίτροπον: 'PTRP' only; 3940 ἐπίτροπον Σεβαστοῦ: 'PTRP' only; 3941 omission of second κράτιτος; 3904 ἱππικός: HPQWS (Greek termination), 3943 ἱππεύς Ῥωμαίων: HPQ' (Palmyrene termination).

¹⁵ On Inv. IX 28 (Aurelian and Septimius Haddudan) see M. Gawlikowski, Syria 48, 1971, 412-21.

rendered by its equivalent,¹⁶ as is that of ἄρχων,¹⁷ and that of γραμματεός.¹⁸ Consistency can also be shown where Palmyrene uses the non-Greek terms like RBNWT MRZHWT for συμποσιαρχία,¹⁹ or DY RB' '[collector] of the quarter [tax]' for τεταρτώνης.²⁰ By contrast the merchants who plied the caravan trade on which Palmyra's wealth was built were not so careful or concerned to match terminology.²¹

The degree of consistency in bilingual texts is, then, remarkably high, especially in terms for offices. In particular, it is not the case that more than one Palmyrene term is used to express the name of an office or an office-holder.²² How does this affect interpretation of CIS II 3946 and 3971 and the position of Odaenathus and Vaballathus? Vaballathus is described as 'PNRTT' in the Palmyrene, and this term was very probably matched in the damaged Greek text with an equivalent ἐπανορθωτής.²³ Since the Palmyrene elite were fully versed in Greek and Greek culture,²⁴ it would be difficult to deny that ἐπανορθωτής recalls 'corrector', though, as Cantineau noted, it does not necessarily *mean* it.²⁵ What of Odaenathus? According to Chabot ad loc. CIS II 3946 is a 'titulus palmyrenus, qui graeca interpretatione caret.' Cantineau knew different: 'inscription primitivement bilingue; le text grec a disparu...et il ne reste trace que de 2 ou 3 lettres.'²⁶ So, one may assume that the Greek text contained the essentials of the Palmyrene. But it is not clear that MTQNN' would

¹⁶ CIS II 3932, 3934 στρατηγῆσαντα: HW' 'STRṬG LQLNY' ('was general of the Colony'), B'STRṬGWTH ('in his generalship'); 3939 στρατηγός: 'STR<T>G'; Inv. X 115; cf. 3959 στρατευμάτων: 'STRṬW[M'].

¹⁷ CIS II 3913 ἄρχοντες: 'RKWNY' (bis); cf. M.Gawlikowski, Palmyre VI. Le temple palmyrénien. Étude d'épigraphie et de topographie historique, 1973, 43-5.

¹⁸ CIS II 3913 GRMṬY' (γραμματεία), GRMṬWS DY BWL' W-DMS ('grammateus of the senate and people [always DMS in this context]); 3959 'was GRMṬWS for the second time' (γραμματέα γενόμενον τὸ δεύτερον); Inv. X 7; X 39 GRMṬWS...BGRMṬY' DY LH HLK [ŠPY]R 'as grammateus...he proceeded through his grammateia finely' (γραμματέα...ἄγνων γραμμα[τεύα]ντα).

¹⁹ CIS II 3919, etc.

²⁰ Inv. X 29,113 [in Latin also: manc(i)pi III mer(caturae)].

²¹ CIS II 3928 συνοδία...συνοδιάρχου: BNY ŠYRT'...B-RBNWT ŠYRT[' DY ('sons of the caravan...during the headship of the caravan of'); 3936 ἀ]ρχέμπορον... συνοδία: RB ŠYRT'... ŠYRT' ('head of the caravan...caravan'); 3948 (Inv. III 28; cf. IX 14) συν]οδιάρχη οἱ cὺν [αὐτῷ ἀ]ναβάντες...[ἔμποροι]: RB ŠYRT'... BNY ŠYRT' DY SLQW 'MH ('head of the caravan...sons of the caravan who came up with him'); Inv. X 44 has significant differences between Greek and Palmyrene.

²² Cf. as further examples CIS II 3968, 3976 'PMLṬWT (= ἐπιμελητεία), 'PMLṬ' (ἐπιμελητής); Inv. X 102 GMNSYRKS ('gymnasiarch' [no Greek]); X 1113 PRGMṬT' (πραγματευτή[ς]).

²³ One may note that the most attractive proposal to complete the last two lines of CIS II 3971 (βασιλίσσης· μητρὸς τοῦ Ἰ βασιλέως... v....) is θυγ. τοῦ Ἀντιόχου (see Clermont-Ganneau, RB 1920, 414; Chabot, CIS ad loc.), which would omit from the Greek the Palmyrene claim that Bath-Zabbai was 'Mother of the King of Kings'; that is strange given the inscription, probably dating from 262, honouring one of Odaenathus' other sons as [β]ασιλεῖ βασιλέων in the context of a victory over the Persians which also appropriates their best known royal title (D.Schlumberger, Bulletin d'études orientales, 11, 1932-1943, 36-50; reproduced in Potter, o.c. 385). One wonders whether the claim was made in the Greek of CIS II 3971 about Vaballathus himself.

²⁴ A.Stein, Hermes 58, 1923, 452-6; Bowersock, o.c. Rom.Arabia, 135; Potter, o.c. 70-72.

²⁵ Cantineau, o.c. 218f.

²⁶ Ad loc. Inventaire III. no. 19.

answer to an ἐπανορθωτής. No firm proof is available here either way, of course; but one can say on the basis of the other honorary inscriptions that we would expect a putative ἐπανορθωτής to be matched by an 'PNRTT' in the Palmyrene version. If it were not, that would be highly unusual. That is to say, it is most unlikely that MTQNN' stood opposite an ἐπανορθωτής and the notion that it is intended to mean 'corrector' is one that should be resisted.

Further, consider the other titles in CIS II 3946. The two generals of Odaenathus, Septimius Zabda and Septimius Zabbai, are called respectively 'chief of the chief army' and 'chief of the army of Tadmor' (RB ḤYL' RB'; RB ḤYL' DY TDMWR). They are also QRTST' (= κράτιςτοι). These titles are found again in the same order in a complete bilingual inscription (CIS II 3947) from the same year (July-August 271) which honours Zenobia. Here the Greek terms are ὁ μέγας στρατηλάτης and ὁ ἐνθάδε στρατηλάτης (QRTSTW' - κράτιςτοι is also found). It is striking that the Palmyrene texts do not employ transliterations of στρατηλάτης as one would expect but make use of conspicuously native titles. This again advises against taking MTQNN' as a translation of ἐπανορθωτής and an official term meaning 'corrector'. As Chabot remarked, 'susplicari licet ad mentem Palmyrenorum MTQNN' non esse adaequatam versionem vocabuli graeci, sed eius accommodationem, latiore sensu usurpatam'.²⁷ For the key point of the inscription was to honour Odaenathus as a great hero. Just as his son was earlier hailed as 'King of Kings' after a victory against the Persians in 262 (or thereabouts),²⁸ so the statue of Odaenathus erected after his death by his generals proclaimed him to the world as the 'Restorer of the whole East'.²⁹

What of Vaballathus? CIS II 3971 is placed by Potter before his assumption of the title αὐτοκράτωρ on an inscription (IGR III 1027) in honour of Claudius II dated to 269.³⁰ The titles he has in CIS II 3971 are thus 'the same as those of Odaenathus at the time of his death.' That is possibly true, but by no means inevitably so. For a start, one notes that the titles of ἐπανορθωτής and 'King of Kings' found on CIS II 3971 are missing on IGR III 1027. 'King of Kings' might have been inappropriate at this time, but what was wrong with a presumed 'corrector totius orientis'? Perhaps the juxtaposition with Claudius made the choice of one title - αὐτοκράτωρ - sufficient. On the other hand, it would be reasonable to

²⁷ Ad loc. CIS II 3946.

²⁸ Schlumberger, o.c.

²⁹ Cf. the title 'Restitutor Orientis' found on coins of Valerian, Gallienus, and especially Aurelian (RIC V 1, 1927, Valerian 286, 287; Gallienus 448; Aurelian 140, 141, 233, 234, 350, 351, 374, 375).

³⁰ [Αὐτοκράτορι Καίσαρι Ἰ.Μ. Αὐρ. Κλαυδίῳ, ἰ ἀρχιερεῖ μεγίςτ]φ, [ύ]π[άτ]φ, ἰ ἀνθυπάτ[φ πατρὶ πατρίδος] ἢ ἀνεικήτφ Σεβακτῶ, ἰ καεῖ Σεπτιμία Ζηνοβία ἰ Σεβακτῆ μητρὶ τοῦ ἰ [δεσπό]ἰ[του ἀηττήτου ἡμῶν Αὐτο]κράτος Οὐαβαλλά[θου] ἢ Ἀθηνοδώρου. Cf. ILS 568 for Claudius' titles. αὐτοκράτωρ is attested once in Palmyrene: Inv. IX 26 [ʿW]TQRṬWR QS[R]. On Vaballathus' titles, especially in relation to Aurelian, see H.Seyrig, Mélanges Michalowski, 1966, 659-62; J.R.Rea, Oxyrhynchus Papyri XL, 1972, 15-30.

suggest, if we believe Zonaras,³¹ that ἀποκράτωρ had already been given to Odaenathus himself at the time of his Persian wars and so, on this scheme, should have passed to Vaballathus by inheritance. Really speaking, it is not possible to say whether Vaballathus inherited his father's titles, or how far his own differed from them. That Vaballathus called himself ἐπανορθωτής seems sure. But this does not mean that Odaenathus was awarded such a title or that the description of him by his generals after his death as MTQNN' DY MDNH' KLH implies it in a technical sense rather than the more general idea of a 'restitutor'. In the same way it was surely on the basis of his own power and glory that the author of the final section of the Thirteenth Sibylline Oracle trumpeted Odaenathus' rule over Rome and his humbling of Persia.³²

The discovery of official titles behind Semitic terms has been carried on diligently in recent years.³³ But it is not always clear how far official (Latin) titulature can or should be looked for. Sensitivity to context is at all times important.³⁴ The institutions of Palmyra clearly develop from those of a typical Greek city (as we see them in the great tax law) to those which are regularly associated with Roman colonial status (strategoi = duumviri; agoranomoi = aediles).³⁵ On the other hand it is in the period of its colonial status that we find the Persian title 'argapet' being used at Palmyra to describe Septimius Vorodes' governorship in the city. This word is simply transliterated in the Greek parallel texts (there is no clear Latin equivalent). It serves to remind us that Palmyra-Tadmor looked east as well as west for its civic organisation. To illustrate this sort of world view we might consider briefly the outlook ascribed to Bardaisan, the famous second century sage of Edessa, in the Book of the Laws of Countries, which was written perhaps in the early third century and amply demonstrates the meeting of East and West and the attitude of a city which looked both ways.³⁶ The form of the work is a Platonic dialogue.³⁷ But when Bardaisan comes to exemplify his thesis, that human actions are not predetermined by fate, by examining the variant activities and moral attitudes of the different peoples of the earth, he begins 'with the East', which is he says 'the head of the whole world' (25 Patr.Syr. VI). He then lists the laws in a more or less consistently geographical order from east to west starting with the Chinese, Persians, Parthians, etc., and finishing with the north and west of Europe (26-36),

³¹ 12.24 Ὀδέναθον δὲ τῆς ἀνδραγαθίας ὁ βασιλεὺς ἀμειβόμενος πάσης ἀνατολῆς αὐτὸν προχειρίσατο στρατηγόν, corresponding to SHA Gall. 3.3, 12.1; Syncellus I, p. 716 Dind.

³² 'Fame will attend him; he, perfect, unblemished, and awesome, will rule the Romans, and the Persians will be powerless' (169-171).

³³ Bibliography can be found in Bertinelli Angeli, o.c. 1986, 145ff.

³⁴ Pertinent remarks are made on this by F.Millar in an as yet unpublished paper provisionally entitled Latin in the Epigraphy of the Roman Near East.

³⁵ Cf. Millar, o.c. 1990, 43f.

³⁶ For the Edessene viewpoint cf. H.J.W.Drijvers, Bardaisan of Edessa, 1966, 91; on eastern, esp. Parthian cultural influence, see G.Widengren, Iranisch-semitische Kulturbegegnung in parthischer Zeit, 1960, 6-24.

³⁷ Cf. G.W.Bowersock, Hellenism in Late Antiquity, 1990, 32.

finally appending (further) remarks on the Parthians and a section on the Amazons as a transition back to the Chaldean astrologers he is concerned to refute. The section on the Greeks has unfortunately been damaged.³⁸ It is perhaps significant that there was none on the Romans.³⁹ Rather, they are mentioned incidentally and as demonstrating particularly the thesis that men make their own customs and laws, since 'yesterday the Romans conquered Arabia and took away all their previous laws' (43).

The problem for us is to try to follow Bardaisan and to read the cultural relations of the Middle East from an eastern perspective rather than from the obvious Romano-centric one. Returning to Palmyra it is instructive to consider the title MRN 'our lord' on CIS II 3945 = Inv. III 17 from the year 258 which has been put forward as an hereditary title granted to Odaenathus by Septimius Severus with an equivalent in the Greek of δεσπότης 'master'.⁴⁰ Although this might seem to conflict with Palmyra's colonial constitution, it is possible that the leading family of the colony should have been recognised in this way. However, as it turns out, δεσπότης seems to be nothing more than a recognition of Odaenathus' social status as a patron of a local trade guild, while MRN is part of the normal Palmyrene way of making Roman government intelligible. In the Palmyrene version of this text (I.2) Odaenathus is honoured as NHYR' HPTQ' MRN which corresponds in the Greek (I.2) to τὸν λαμ[πρότατον ὑπατικ]όν. In I.4 of the Greek he is called additionally τὸν δεσπότην. One can be reasonably sure that MRN qualifies only 'illustrious consular', for this is in accordance with normal phraseology;⁴¹ δεσπότης, which has no equivalent in the Palmyrene, is how the trade guild presented their relationship with Odaenathus (not a celebration of his official powers) and is in fact here the Greek language equivalent of πάτρωνα which is used of Odaenathus by three other trade guilds at Palmyra in the same year.⁴² This shows well enough the care that has to be taken in assessing the terminology used in the Palmyrene epigraphy. With regard to Odaenathus and Vaballathus themselves we would do well to remember that even though 'PNRTT' is a transliteration of ἐπανορθωτής, it is not of course a 'real' Roman office ('corrector'), but an appropriation of an idea of power. That is even more so the case for MTQNN'. Sensitivity to the context makes it abundantly clear that this term has nothing to do with Rome or with the institutions of Roman government (except in a hostile sense). The focus is rather Palmyra and the foundation under Odaenathus of her days of glory.

Oxford

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³⁸ §34 - there are traces of an attack on Greek pederasty (cf. Eusebius' translation in Praep. Ev. 276d).

³⁹ Rome did not officially control Edessa during Bardaisan's lifetime nor probably when the work was written.

⁴⁰ Potter, o.c. 389.

⁴¹ Cf. Dunant, o.c. no.45 HGMWN' MRN 'our lord governor', and CIS II 3938 and Gawlikowski, Syria 1971, 420 QSR MRN 'our lord Caesar'; the translation, however odd it sounds to us, is then 'our lord illustrious consular'.

⁴² Best consulted in Gawlikowski, o.c. 1985, nos. 5, 7, 8; cf. no. 4.