

THE SYMPOSIUM OF THE *KONETOI* IN AN INSCRIPTION
SET UP IN HONOUR OF ODAENATHUS AT PALMYRA

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This contribution will look briefly at a group of four inscriptions, three Greek and one bilingual (Greek-Palmyrenean), all of which were set up in AD 257/8 in honour of the Palmyrene leading citizen Septimius Odaenathus or his son Septimius Hairan. It aims to explore various ways to explain the Greek *hapax* KONETΩN, on which scholarly agreement has never been reached, and argues that an interpretation of this term as a transliteration of a Semitic word to denote a professional association may have an effect on the manner in which equally enigmatic terms at Palmyra are commonly approached¹.

The *hapax* appears in a text from one of the porticoes at the temple of Baal-Shamin²:

Σεπτίμιον Ὀδαίναθον
τὸν λαμπρότατον ὑπατικὸν
τὸ συμπόσιον τῶν ΚΟΝΕΤΩΝ
τὸν πά(τ)ρωνα
ἔτους 569

Translation: To Septimius Odaenathus, the most splendid consul, the symposium of the ΚΟΝΕΤΟΙ, to the(ir) patron, the year 569 (AD 257/8).

A second text, reemployed and found close to the tetrapylon, contains a similarly difficult term³:

[Σεπτίμι]ον Ὀδαίναθον
[τὸν] λαμπρότατον

¹ These inscriptions have been presented together by M. Gawlikowski, "Les princes de Palmyre", *Syria* 62, 1985, pp. 254-255; F. Millar, "Latin in the Epigraphy of the Roman Near East", in H. Solin - O. Salomies - U.-M. Liertz (eds.), *Acta Colloquii Epigraphici Latini*, Helsinki 1995, pp. 416-417; U. Hartmann, *Das palmyrenische Teilreich*, Stuttgart 2001, pp. 102-103; T. Kaizer, *The Religious Life of Palmyra*, Stuttgart 2002, pp. 216-219. The three new explanations proposed in this paper are offered in full appreciation that they cannot be other than mere hypotheses. Abbreviations (among others): *Inv.* = *Inventaire des inscriptions de Palmyre*, 1930-1975; PAT = D.R. Hillers - E. Cussini, *Palmyrene Aramaic Texts*, Baltimore-London 1996.

² C. Dunant, *Le sanctuaire de Baalshamin à Palmyre III, Les inscriptions*, Rome 1971, n°52; J.T. Milik, *Dédicaces faites par des dieux (Palmyre, Hatra, Tyr) et des thiasés sémitiques à l'époque romaine*, Paris 1972, p. 160; Gawlikowski, "Les princes de Palmyre", n°7.

³ *Inv.* XII,37; Dunant, *Le sanctuaire de Baalshamin à Palmyre*, p. 66 n.2, with fig.2; Gawlikowski, "Les princes de Palmyre", n°8.

[ύπ]ατικὸν
 [τὸ] συμπόσιον
 [τῶν] ΟΥΛΑΝΝΩΝ τὸν
 [π]άτρωνα
 ἔτους 569

Translation: To Septimius Odaenathus, the most splendid consul, the symposium of the ουαννοι, to the(ir) patron, the year 569 (AD 257/8).

A third text is inscribed on a console from the central colonnade, and records a relationship of patronage with Odaenathus' son⁴:

[Σεπίμιον] Αἰράνην τὸν
 λαμπροτάτον υἱὸν Ὀδαί-
 νάθου τοῦ λαμπρο-
 τάτου ὑπατικοῦ τὸ
 συμπόσιον σκυτ(έ)-
 ων καὶ ἀσκοναυτο-
 ποιῶν τὸν πάτρωνα
 ἔτους 569

Translation: To [Septimius] Hairan, the most splendid son of Odaenathus, the most splendid consul, the symposium of the leather-cutters and makers of rafts supported on inflated skins, to the(ir) patron, the year 569 (AD 257/8).

A fourth text, again inscribed on a console from the central colonnade, is a bilingual⁵:

Σεπ[τίμιον Ὀδαίναθον]
 τὸν λαμ[προτάτου ὑπατικ]όν
 συντε[χνία τῶν χρυσοχ]όων
 καὶ ἀργυ[ροκόπων τ]ὸν δεσπότην
 τειμῆς χάριν 569
 μηνεῖ Ξανδικῶ

Translation: To Septimius Odaenathus, the most splendid consul, the guild of the goldsmiths and silversmiths, to the(ir) master, the year 569, in the month Xandikos (April, AD 258).

⁴ H. Seyrig, "Les fils du roi Odainat", AAS 13, 1963, p.161; Gawlikowski, "Les princes de Palmyre", n°5; Kh. al-As'ad - M. Gawlikowski, *The Inscriptions in the Museum of Palmyra. A Catalogue*, Palmyra - Warsaw 1997, n°25.

⁵ PAT 0291; CIS II 3945; *Inv.* III,17; Gawlikowski, "Les princes de Palmyre", n°9.

šlm šp̄tmyws ʾdynt
 nhyr ʾhpt̄yqʾ mrn dy
 ʾqym lh tgmʾ dy qynyʾ
 ʿbdʾ dhbʾ wkspʾ lyqrh
 byrh nysn šnt 569

Translation: This is the statue of Septimius Odaenathus, the illustrious consul, our lord, which set up for him the corporation of the gold- and silversmiths, in his honour, in the month Nisan, the year 569 (April, AD 258).

Obviously, these four inscriptions are to be interpreted within the context of the spectacular rise to power of Odaenathus and his family, or rather of those years when they played a leading role as a senatorial family in a Roman *colonia*⁶. The associations which are recorded to have honoured Odaenathus or Hairan are otherwise unknown at Palmyra. Three of them are referred to as συμπόσιον, the other one probably as συντε[χνία]⁷. Two of these groups are professional associations, the corporation of the gold- and silversmiths (*tgmʾ dy qynyʾ ʿbdʾ dhbʾ wkspʾ*)⁸, and the symposium of the leather-cutters and ‘makers of rafts supported on inflated skins’ (συμπόσιον σκυτέων καὶ ἀσκοναυτοποιῶν)⁹. But the identification of the other two has proven much more difficult. Naturally, since both the gold- and silversmiths and the leather-cutters and raft-makers are presented as professional associations, one would expect that the two groups which are denoted by enigmatic terms are comparable organisations of craftsmen.

⁶ Gawlikowski, “Les princes de Palmyre”, pp. 254-255; F. Millar, *The Roman Near East*, Cambridge, Mass., 1993, pp. 159-173; id., “Latin in the Epigraphy of the Roman Near East”, pp. 414-419; Hartmann, *Das palmyrenische Teilreich*, pp. 102-108.

⁷ In the bilingual inscription συντε[χνία] is restored by Gawlikowski, “Les princes de Palmyre”, p. 255, and Milik, *Dédicaces faites par des dieux*, p. 161. CIS II 3945, Inv. III,17, and PAT 0291 read συντέ[λεια], “company” or “unity”, which is also possible. In any case, the Palmyrenean counterpart is *tgmʾ*, itself a transliteration of τάγμα, a term usually applied to denote a “body of soldiers” but which can also have the meaning of “club”.

⁸ Naturally, this corporation calls to mind the famous riot in the theatre of Ephesus, where St. Paul’s preaching in the city was believed to threaten the income of those who produced miniature shrines of the great city goddess Artemis. It is interesting to note that the restorations of the Greek terms denoting the craftsmen (συντε[χνία τῶν χρυσοχ]ῶων καὶ ἀργυ[ροκόπων]) follow different accounts of that story, see Kaizer, *The Religious Life of Palmyra*, p. 218 n.19.

⁹ There has been some discussion over σκυτέος, here translated as “leather-cutter” or “shoemaker”. In BES, p. 29, Teixidor interpreted the term as “saddler”, and argued that its counterpart is attested as ʾškpʾ in a Hatrean inscription (H212). Compare B. Aggoula, *Inventaire des inscriptions hatréennes*, Paris 1991, and K. Beyer, *Die aramäischen Inschriften aus Assur, Hatra und dem übrigen Ostmesopotamien*, Göttingen 1998. According to A. Bounni, “Métiers et fonctions à Palmyre”, in *Études et Travaux* 15, 1990, p. 80, the terms ought not to be confused. See further Kaizer, *The Religious Life of Palmyra*, p. 218 n.20. The *hapax* ἀσκοναυτοποιός has been explained by Seyrig, “Les fils du roi Odainat”, pp. 163-166, as “maker of rafts supported on inflated skins”, devices to be used for crossing the Euphrates. Seyrig recognised such a floating structure on a much older Assyrian relief, see *ibid.*, fig.3.

As regards *κουετοι*, there is no such word in Greek¹⁰, and it is likely that the term is the transliteration of an Aramaic word. Various options have been proposed by different scholars. Whereas the original editor argued that *κουετοι* should be explained as a geographical or ethnic name¹¹, and even a translation as “first-class players on the lyre” has been put forward¹², later contributions proposed craftsmen. Gawlikowski suggested to interpret the term as “metal-workers”¹³, and Ingholt saw the word as coming from *κουία*, “plaster”, and accordingly translated “workers in stucco”¹⁴. As will be made clear below, it is indeed plausible that the solution is to be found in an etymological explanation of *κουετοι* as a transliteration of a Semitic denotation of a professional association. Now,

¹⁰ It ought to be mentioned that ὁ κουητής in the meaning of “servant”, appears in Hesychius' fifth-century Lexicon. Also referred to by Dunant, *Le sanctuaire de Baalshamin*, p. 67. The otherwise not attested *κουητρον* in a Christian inscription from Aphrodisias probably has a similar meaning, see C. Roueché, *Aphrodisias in Late Antiquity*, JRS Monographs 5, London 1989, n°226.

¹¹ Dunant, *Le sanctuaire de Baalshamin*, p. 67. P. Collart - J. Vicari, *Le sanctuaire de Baalshamin à Palmyre I, Topographie et Architecture*, Rome 1969, p. 242, wanted to see τὸ συμπόσιον τῶν ΚΟΝΕΤΩΝ as identical with the φυλή Χωνειτῶν. The latter is the Greek equivalent of the Bene Komare (*bny kmr*'), one of the most important groups within Palmyrene society (PAT 1063, from AD 198). In other bilingual inscriptions their name, which literally means “the sons of the priests”, is rendered with the transliteration Χωμαρήνοι (e.g. PAT 1942, from AD 122/3). Milik, *Dédicaces faites par des dieux*, p. 37, has argued that Χωνειτῶν φυλή is a transliteration of a synonym of *kmr*, a term derived from a root *khn* which equally denotes sacerdotal status.

¹² Milik, *Dédicaces faites par des dieux*, pp. 159-161, claiming that the Greek term comes from *qnyr*'. He recognised this Aramaic word on four tesserae, each time in connection with the name of the god Nebu (RTP 306-9; PAT 2284-7), and pointed to the fact that at Palmyra Nebu was identified with Apollo, the Greek deity who was well-known for his playing on the lyre. Compare Caquot, in RTP, p.148, who preferred to link the term with Syriac *q'nāytā* and its rather obscure appearance in the sense of “gang”, and accordingly translated the term on the tesserae as “association”. But see now E. Lipiński, “*Maqlūta*, *Qinīta*' et *plug qduš* à Palmyre”, in Z. Kapera (ed.), *Intertestamental Essays in Honour of Józef Tadeusz Milik, Qumranica Mogilanensia 6*, Krakow 1992, pp. 308-310, who has convincingly argued that *qnyr*' comes from Akkadian *qinītu* and refers to sacred payment to a temple in kind. It remains uncertain whether the forms *qnyr*' and *qynt*'/*qyny*', which appear a number of times in Palmyrenean and Hatrean, ought to be kept apart “rigoureusement”, as Milik argued. For all references, see DNWSI, s.v. *qynh*, *qyny*, *qnyh₁* and *qnyh₂*.

¹³ M. Gawlikowski, *Palmyre VI. Le temple palmyrénien. Étude d'épigraphie et de topographie historique*, Warszawa 1973, p. 36, followed by Bounni, “Métiers et fonctions à Palmyre”, p. 80 (“métallurgistes, artisans sur métaux, batteurs de cuivre”). In his review of Dunant's corpus of inscriptions from the temple of Baal-Shamin, in *Berytus* 22, 1973, p. 146, Gawlikowski was still following Milik's interpretation (“association des citharèdes”). His later solution (“métallurgistes”) is not explained, but see for a similar interpretation of *rb qynt*' in Hatrean inscriptions 43 and 202 also A. Caquot, “Nouvelles inscriptions araméennes de Hatra (VI)”, *Syria* 41, 1964, p. 271 (“maître de la forge”), and F. Vattioni, *Le iscrizioni di Hatra*, Suppl. 28 agli *Annali*, vol.41/3, 1981, *ad loc.* (“capo dei fabbri”). However, the most recent collections of Hatrean texts, Aggoula, *Inventaire des inscriptions hatréennes*, and Beyer, *Die aramäischen Inschriften*, translate “maître du chant ou des esclaves” and “Leiter der Singsklavinnen” respectively. As we have seen above, the corporation of the gold- and silversmiths at Palmyra was designated in the local dialect as *tgm' dy qyny*' ‘*bd' dhh' wksp*'. Compare DNWSI, s.v. *qynh*, *qyny*, *qnyh₁*.

¹⁴ H. Ingholt, “*Varia Tadmorea*”, in *Palmyre. Bilan et perspectives, Travaux du Centre de recherche sur le Proche-Orient et la Grèce antiques 3*, Strasbourg 1976, p. 133, with n.170, now followed by M. Sartre, *D'Alexandre à Zénobie. Histoire du Levant antique, IV^e siècle av. J.-C. - III^e siècle ap. J.-C.*, Paris 2001, p. 806 (“artisans en stuc”).

not only to add to the speculation and confusion, but also to show how easily one could join in and thus how careful one ought to approach *any* interpretation, I raise three further possibilities of crafts. Firstly, Syriac *q'nāytā*, with which Caquot had explained the term *qnyr*¹⁵ as “association”, is more commonly used in Syriac to refer to “images”. Acknowledging a shift of vowels, one could speculate that the ΚΟΥΕΤΟΙ were the producers of sacred idols, in the same way as the Ephesian silversmiths from *Acts*¹⁵. Secondly, one could carefully raise the hypothesis that the symposium of the ΚΟΥΕΤΟΙ was an association of “dyers in blue”: the Aramaic root *qn* and the Akkadian *qunātā*, both meaning “woad” (*isatis tinctoria*), may have been behind a word *qnyr*¹⁶. Thirdly, along the same lines but admittedly highly unlikely, the ΚΟΥΕΤΟΙ could have been “artichoke growers”¹⁷. However, it cannot be stressed enough that these explanations are only hypotheses, and that the problem must remain unsolved.

The same may be said with regard to τὸ συμπόσιον τῶν ΟΥΛΑΝΝΩΝ from one of the other above-quoted inscriptions. The reading of the -λ- on the photograph is clear, but since this produces an unpronounceable word, it may well be a scribal error for a (still unknown) word ΟΥΑΝΝΩΝ¹⁸. Analogous to ΚΟΥΕΤΟΙ, Dunant has argued that ΟΥΑΝΝΟΙ should be explained as a geographical or ethnic name¹⁹. Most scholars now follow Gawlikowski, who translated the term as “winnower”, from Latin *vannus*²⁰. Ingholt, while referring to the same Latin word, proposed to translate ΟΥΑΝΝΟΙ as “hydraulic workers”²¹. In either case, it remains uncertain to what degree an original -F- was still

¹⁵ Caquot, in RTP, p. 148, and above, n.12. Compare J. Payne Smith (ed.), *A Compendious Syriac Dictionary*, Oxford 1903, p. 511. Indeed, the result of this interpretation seems to be very similar to Gawlikowski's “metal-workers” and Caquot's “smiths”, see above, n.13.

¹⁶ See DNWSI, s.v. *qnyr*. In Classical Syriac, *qna'*, “to turn blue”, has a participle *qāna'*. Compare J. Black - A. George - N. Postgate (eds.), *A Concise Dictionary of Akkadian*, 2nd (corrected) printing, Wiesbaden 2000, p. 291. It would probably go too far to postulate any direct influence of Akkadian on Palmyrenean in this case. According to S.A. Kaufman, *The Akkadian Influences on Aramaic*, Chicago - London 1974, p. 161, any Akkadian loanwords in Palmyrenean will have formed part of the vocabulary of Imperial Aramaic. With regard to otherwise inexplicable changes of vocals, Kaufman allows for occasional Canaanite influence.

¹⁷ This third and most speculative option relates to an interpretation of the same Akkadian word *qunātā* as “artichoke”. See W. von Soden, “Aramäische Wörter in neuassyrischen und neu- und spätbabylonischen Texten. Ein Vorbericht. II”, OrNS 37, 1968, p. 264, and id., “Aramäische Wörter in neuassyrischen und neu- und spätbabylonischen Texten. Ein Vorbericht. III”, OrNS 46, 1977, p. 193, referring to an unspecified plant in Jewish Aramaic. DNWSI, s.v. *qnyr*, adds two question marks. See also M. Sokoloff, *A Dictionary of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic of the Byzantine Period*, Ramat-Gan 1990, p. 482, who refers to the plant *qwnyth*, appearing in the Talmudic tractate *Ma'asrot*, as “unclear”.

¹⁸ For the photograph, see *Inv. XII*, pl.IX,37. The editors of *Inv. XII* presented the term, without any further elaboration, as ΘΟΥΑΛΛΩΝ

¹⁹ Dunant, *Le sanctuaire de Baalshamin à Palmyre*, p. 67.

²⁰ Gawlikowski, “Les princes de Palmyre”, p. 255 (“vanneur”), without commenting upon it. He is followed by Bounni, “Métiers et fonctions à Palmyre”, p.81 (“vanneurs (?)”), Hartmann, *Das palmyrenische Teilreich*, p. 102 (“Getreidesieber”), and Sartre, *D'Alexandre à Zénobie*, p. 806 (“vanniers (?)”).

²¹ Ingholt, “Varia Tadmorea”, pp. 133-134 with n.171. He referred to an early article of H. Seyrig, “Les jardins de Kasr el-Heir”, *Syria* 12, 1931, pp. 316-318, which discussed “baies ... pourvues de vanes

recognizable at the beginning of ἀίνω, “to sift” or “to winnow”, and I would consider it very strange if a guild of Palmyrene winnowers would have named themselves after the Latin name of the device which they used to sift grain or to expose it to a current of air so that the lighter pieces were blown away. In contrast, Seyrig ingeniously suggested to restore [Θιλ]ουαννων, which would refer to the inhabitants of a town in Characene with which Palmyra is known to have established contact²². Nevertheless, it is still possible that also in this case an explanation ought to be sought in the transliteration of an unknown Semitic word.

As I have written above, it is natural to expect that τὸ συμπόσιον τῶν ΚΟΝΕΤΩΝ and τὸ συμπόσιον τῶν ΟΥΑΝΝΩΝ are professional associations of craftsmen comparable to the organisations of the gold- and silversmiths and of the leather-cutters and makers of rafts. If that is correct, they all provide a brief glimpse of an unknown world, and as such are a reminder of how much we do not know²³. It is more than likely that those Palmyrenes who worked in the same craft organised themselves along similar lines as their colleagues in cities elsewhere in the Roman empire, and - since one would expect that such Palmyrene *collegia* fulfilled certain socio-religious functions in addition to their economic importance - the lack of epigraphic sources recording the involvement of professional associations in ritual ceremonies and religious occasions is indeed striking: it would be only normal if the members of professional associations at Palmyra had gathered also for cultic meals²⁴. Nevertheless, at Palmyra the main way to identify individuals, and to mark their standing in society, was the application of kinship terminology. But it would be wrong to conclude that therefore all groups in Palmyrene society which were designated by kinship terminology (*bny* X, “the sons of X”) necessarily matched, in one way or another, their connotations of real genealogical connections. Kinship terminology could equally be only secondary, while groups could be organised around other forms of community²⁵.

... qu'une poignée d'hommes pouvait ouvrir en quelques minutes”, illustrated with similar constructions at Kasr el-Heir (*ibid.*, pl.LXII,1) and Palmyra (*ibid.*, pl.LXII,2).

²² Thus H. Seyrig, in *Inv.* XII,37. Seyrig referred to a bilingual from AD 131 which records how a king of Characene installed a Palmyrene citizen as satrap of Thilouana (al-Bahrain), see PAT 1374 (*Inv.* X,38). But compare Hartmann, *Das palmyrenische Teilreich*, p. 102 n.157: “Eine Ehrung durch Tylos ist jedoch nach dem Ende der palmyr. Faktoreien in der Mesen kaum vorstellbar”. On the relation between Palmyra and the Gulf kingdom see now above all M. Schulz, *Die Charakene*, Stuttgart 2000, pp. 380-387.

²³ Most of the relevant material has been assembled by Bounni, “Métiers et fonctions à Palmyre”, pp. 77-86. For an impressionistic description of the societal setting of Palmyrene craftsmen see now P. Veyne, “Préface”, in G. Degeorge, *Palmyre, métropole caravanière*, Paris 2001, p. 12, and compare *ibid.*, pp. 138-139, for a picture of the porticoes of “boutiques” which opened to a road near the theatre. For a general overview of the eastern provinces see O.M. van Nijf, *The Civic World of Professional Associations in the Roman East*, Amsterdam 1997.

²⁴ See also E. Will, *Les Palmyréniens. La Venise des sables*, Paris 1992, p. 125: “Les usages des associations professionnelles pouvaient comporter, elles aussi, des banquets sacrés”.

²⁵ Compare also G. Garbini, “Divinità, confraternite e tribù a Palmyra”, *AION* 28, 1968, p. 78, who described many of the Palmyrene groups as “associazioni legate particolarmente a determinate divinità, che sotto un'etichetta apparentemente tribale costituivano in realtà gruppi ben definiti sul piano politico, sul piano sociale e sul piano religioso”. With regard to the Ancient Near East, M. van de Mieroop, *The Ancient Mesopotamian City*, Oxford 1997, esp. pp. 108-110, has argued that some

The proposition that the term ΚΟΝΕΤΟΙ (and possibly also ΟΥΑΝΝΟΙ) is to be interpreted as a Greek transliteration of a Semitic word which denotes a professional association could affect the interpretation of unknown Palmyrenean words which are attested only on tesserae and which have been explained too readily as family names. Dijkstra has argued that the numerous groups introduced by *bny* which were inscribed on the small clay or bronze tickets of admission to sacred banquets “refer to a number of children of the same father who jointly bore the expenses of the feast”²⁶, and it is also possible that some of those groups were named after the person who paid for the banquet. In any case, one should not overlook the fact that most of the tesserae, out of sheer necessity, apply the shortest grammatical forms possible, and that we are most likely faced by certain standard formulae. But, without giving any suggestions with regard to their etymology here myself, it is worth taking into consideration the option that some of the names of those groups known only from tesserae (such as the Bene ʾly on RTP 98, 109 and 503, the Bene *gwg* on RTP 80 and 100, and the Bene *šz* on RTP 977), actually denote professional associations.

According to one interpretation, the main Palmyrene god Bel is mentioned in his function as protective deity of the oil merchants (*bl gd mšh*ʾ) on some tesserae, which show on the obverse a deity with a *kalathos* holding twigs and on the reverse a set of knives and a whetstone²⁷. This Palmyrenean formula to express the notion of the *Gad* or personified Good Fortune of a professional association would not be unique: a Hatrean inscription seems to refer to “the *Gad* of the fullers”²⁸. Further away from home, when professional associations grew in importance compared to other forms of social grouping, the Palmyrene *collegia* could come to play a dominating role in the interplay of dedications and contributions to construction works between benefactors and beneficiaries: in Koptos in Egypt a group of shipowners and merchants who worked on

professional associations organised themselves as extended families. See for further details and discussion Kaizer, *The Religious Life of Palmyra*, pp. 53-54 and pp. 213-216.

²⁶ K. Dijkstra, *Life and Loyalty. A Study in the Socio-Religious Culture of Syria and Mesopotamia in the Graeco-Roman Period based on Epigraphical Evidence*, Leiden 1995, p. 90.

²⁷ RTP 131-2 (PAT 2137-8). Another translation, along similar lines, would be “Bel, the *Gad* of the surveyors”. See T. Kaizer, “*De Dea Syria et aliis diis deabusque*. A study of the variety of appearances of *Gad* in Aramaic inscriptions and on sculptures from the Near East in the first three centuries AD’ (part 1)”, OLP 28, 1997, pp. 162-163, and (part 2), OLP 29, 1998, p. 58, both following a suggestion by Dr. Sebastian Brock. In the past the formula had been interpreted as referring to the *Gad* of the olive or of the (olive) oil. See DNWSI, s.v. *mšh*₃. Compare M. Gawlikowski, “Liturgies et custodes sur quelques inscriptions palmyréniennes”, *Semitica* 23, 1973, p. 117, who suggested to translate with “*Gad* of the anointment”, and proposed to interpret *byt mšh*ʾ in a cultic regulation from the early first century AD (PAT 1981) as the locality used for such a ceremony. In addition to the plates in RTP, see also a photograph in the catalogue of an exhibition held in the *Institut du monde arabe* in Paris, *Syrie. Mémoire et civilisation*, Paris 1993, at p. 303 (bottom right), with the commentary at p.305, which is a representation of another tessera of the same type.

²⁸ H58: *gnd*ʾ *dy ksry*ʾ. For this interpretation, see Aggoula, *Inventaire des inscriptions hatréennes*, p.45, followed by Kaizer, “*De Dea Syria et aliis diis deabusque*” (part 2), p. 33 and p. 58 with further references. See on the place and functioning in society of fullers in the eastern provinces of the Empire also Van Nijf, *The Civic World of Professional Associations*, pp. 88-91.

the Red Sea honoured a Palmyrene benefactor because he had built anew, from the foundations, the gateway, three porticoes and the doorways of an unspecified building²⁹.

This brief look at the four inscriptions set up by distinctive groupings within Palmyrene society in honour of the leading citizen or his son has provided the reader with a set of hypotheses rather than with clear-cut answers. Against the background of a new study of urban economic life in Roman Syria³⁰, and of a fresh look at the phenomenon of euergetism at Palmyra³¹, the time may well be ripe for a reconsideration of the thousands of Palmyrene tesserae, and especially of their formulaic expressions and enigmatic words.

²⁹ SEG 34, 1984 (1987), n°1593, with J. Bingen, "Une dédicace de marchands palmyréniens à Coptos", *Chronique d'Égypte* 59, 1984, pp. 355-358, and id., in "Bulletin Épigraphique", REG 1988, p. 474, n°975. On the participation of Palmyrenes in the Red Sea trade, see now G.K. Young, *Rome's Eastern Trade. International Commerce and Imperial Policy*, London - New York 2001, pp. 80-82.

³⁰ Sartre, *D'Alexandre à Zénobie*, pp. 791-850.

³¹ J.-B. Yon, "Evergetism and Urbanism in Palmyra", in L. Lavan (ed.), *Recent Research in Late-Antique Urbanism*, JRA Suppl. 42 (Portsmouth 2001), pp. 173-181.