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Professions, Identity, and Romanization: Craftsmanship in Palmyra and Rome in the 3rd Century CE

Tommaso Gnoli (Bologna)

Contexts other than family bonds played a relevant role in the construction of group identities in the ancient world. Being part of a lineage represented a crucial element in all ancient societies, but in the Mediterranean world often it was not the only one. In archaic Rome, beyond the family groups, and among the most original characters of society traditionally attributed to Romulus, there was the subdivision of the people into tribes and *curiae*, which allocated all the citizens in civic structures—in this specific case the *comitia*—getting past any genetic bond. The urban aggregation and the consequent creation of specialised functions made all genetic elements automatically not sufficient and required a more complex allocation based upon income and its sources. The Roman tradition of the 4th and 3rd centuries BCE ascribed Numa Pompilius, one of its kings, the social organisation of Rome upon crafts (Plut. *Num.* 17.1 and 3: ἡ διανομὴ κατὰ τέχνας).¹ According to this tradition, this was a stratagem in order to conceal the deep rift between Romans and Sabines in the Roman citizenship; the fact remains that the society was subdivided into the following crafts: flute players, goldsmiths, carpenters, dyers, rope-makers, tanners, blacksmiths, and potters, while all other *technai* were grouped together. Another source, on the contrary, was aware that the subdivision into crafts came together with the organisation of the citizenship in census classes (Flor. *Epit.* 1.6).

Those founding myths of the well-known institutions of the Roman society evidently played a relevant role. For a long time those *collegia*, which are hardly distinguishable from the religious associations connected to those of *technai* for their private nature,² had lived a complex life mostly unknown until the last decades of the Republic, when they became crucial political lever in the hard times of the Roman revolution.³ The Augustan appeasement eventually changed the roles of the *collegia* also through the institution of the *Augustales*. The new imperial order paid attention to the management of consensus not only in the *ordines* and the army but also in the *plebs media*.⁴

¹ Gabba 1984.

² Perry 2011; Fleckner 2020.

³ Vanderbroeck 1987.

⁴ Veyne 2000.

Augustus cared a lot about the latter and adopted a complex and well-structured language interwoven with religious traditionalism, which was invented from whole cloth. A large number of the male adult population was structured in private associations.⁵ There is a dispute about the real proportion of the members of those associations regarding the entire community. Even though it is impossible to give an ultimate answer to this question, a rough estimate reaches to about 25% of the entire population,⁶ and the diffusion of crafts above all in Italy was in a steady growth during the imperial period.⁷

In the Greek world, associations had existed for a long time as well, even though they showed differences in respect to the Roman ones. There was a greater variety of denominations,⁸ and there does not seem to have been any predominance of crafts unlike the *collegia* of the *fabri*, the *centonarii*, and the *dendrophori* in Rome.⁹ Onno van Nijf has reassessed the actual role the associations in the Greek cities of the Roman world had played in contrast to a general trend that tends to circumscribe it notwithstanding the existence of some crucial contributions in this field by Lellia Cracco Ruggini dating back to the 1970s.¹⁰ Actually, in the Greek world associations had more egalitarian features, or were less ‘oligarchic’—contrary to those of the Roman world, where decurions or magistrates played the main role within *collegia*; yet the differences between Roman and Greek world are rather negligible.¹¹ Also in this respect, the Greek language shows a richer vocabulary for the craft associations than Latin. However, van Nijf’s work is comprehensive, thus I refer to it and refrain from delving deeper into this subject here.¹²

On the one hand, the associations of citizens *κατὰ τέχνας* are well attested and diffused in the Greek towns of Asia Minor, but less so in the south of the Tauros.

⁵ But women were not completely excluded: Hemelrijk 2008.

⁶ Verboven 2016:181–182 with literature.

⁷ Patterson 1994.

⁸ List in Waltzing 1895–1906, 4:1–242. Cf. meaningful preliminary information in van Nijf 1997:10, who underlines that one and the same craft could have more than one denomination, such as the one of the linen workers which was named *synergasia*, *omotechnon*, *plateia*, or *phyle*, depending on the perspective from which this phenomenon was taken into consideration. However, I consider this example as quite uncertain given the special complexity pertaining the situation of the linen workers; cf. Cracco Ruggini 1976a:465–466.

⁹ These are named *collegia principalia* in CIL XI 5749, cfr. Waltzing 1895–1906, 1:129–130; 2:193–208; Verboven 2016:176 n. 16.

¹⁰ Cracco Ruggini 1971; 1976a; 1976b. This preconception proven wrong by Cracco Ruggini, and then by van Nijf, is most probably due to Waltzing 1892:349, who speculated that the craft associations in the Greek cities were of Roman origin. So also Clemente 1972:157.

¹¹ Cracco Ruggini 1976a:468–470; Perry 2011:506–508.

¹² van Nijf 1997:8–9.

The main urban centres of that region such as Antioch have left a few inscriptions; however, it is also true that without the late antique orator Libanius' so precious testimony we would be almost completely ignorant about the associations in Antioch. From the literary sources, we know they were very active and relevant in the cities' dynamics.¹³ Thus, any *argumentum e silentio* shall be adopted carefully in this field as much as in all other domains that rely on a scarce and mostly casual documentation.

There is a city, however, in inner Syria, for which we are quite certain that the lack of testimonies about craft associations is not casual. On the contrary it is structural, and this place is Palmyra.

Professions in Palmyra

The city of Palmyra represents a unicum in the Roman Empire. From the urban area and its surroundings comes a substantial number of epigraphic documents of any kind. Even though many of them are written in Greek,¹⁴ there are a few Latin testimonies;¹⁵ yet texts in a modified Aramaic dialect called Palmyrene represent the bulk of Palmyrene epigraphy.¹⁶ The great majority of those documents are private texts, mostly epitaphs, but longer public inscriptions are there as well, some of which dealt with legal topics.¹⁷ It is unavoidable to mention the most important inscription in the whole Roman East, the great customs inscription that was discovered close to the *agora* in 1882 by the Russian prince Simon Abamelek-Lazarew, who took it to St. Petersburg where it is still displayed in the Hermitage Museum.¹⁸ The other great inscriptions of the *agora* and the Great Colonnade had a different destiny,¹⁹ the great majority of which remained in Syria, either in Palmyra itself or in Damascus. Among those texts there is a special group which is often called 'caravan inscriptions' as they are variously connected to the camel caravans that made the city rich and well-known in the first three centuries of the Empire.²⁰

¹³ Petit 1955.

¹⁴ Yon 2012.

¹⁵ al-As'ad, Delplace 2002.

¹⁶ Hillers, Cussini 1995.

¹⁷ Cussini 2016.

¹⁸ *PAT* 259; Kottsieper, Jördens 2004; Gawlikowski 2012; Healey 2014.

¹⁹ Delplace, Dentzer-Feydy 2005.

²⁰ The debate about the role of long-distance trade in Palmyra, on the organisation of caravans, and the meaning of the so-called 'caravan inscriptions' owes a lot to the sharp scepticism of Millar 1998. I have tried to take part in it, see Gnoli 2000. The debate is intense now, but it has lost many of its original contact points with Millar: cf., e.g., Seland 2015; 2016; 2017; and also Smedile 2019; but literature is much wider.

In a recent work published in the proceedings of a conference organised within an important international project mainly funded by the Danish Academy of Sciences,²¹ and aiming at cataloguing the thousands of Palmyrene portraits—about 4,000 mainly coming from the very rich cemeteries in the outskirts of the city have been catalogued in a sylloge—I have realised that the testimonies about the professional activities are very rare.²² That Danish project focused on the iconographic aspect of the materials, and the meeting about *Positions and Professions in Palmyra* (2017) urged me to a reflection on this subject: undoubtedly, many elements in the portraits are directly or indirectly related to professions. Nevertheless, reflecting on this problem I had to conclude that in the Palmyrene inscriptions, at least from the epigraphic point of view, the clear mention of professions is really exceptional notwithstanding the high number of funerary texts we possess, even though epigraphic data about professions in Palmyra are not completely absent.

In thousands of inscriptions in Greek, Latin, and Palmyrene, except for the famous Tariff—which represents a problem in itself and will not be dealt with here—and apart from those activities which are connected to long-distance trade, just 23 inscriptions contain words that can be related to some professional activities. However, it is very typical of the epigraphic culture of Palmyra that none of those allusions to professional activities comes from a funerary context: The inscriptions of a butcher²³ and a baker²⁴ are actually dedications discovered in the precincts of temples inside the urban area of Palmyra, not in necropolises. There is the possibility that the portrait of a sitting man on the side of a tessera—no. 36 of the Ingholt, Seyrig, and Starcky collection—coming from the city, so once more not a funerary document, alludes to a professional activity.²⁵ Furthermore, among the four inscriptions that pertain stonecutters or sculptors (*glwp*), none comes from a necropolis. Finally, an inscription mentioning a teacher is a bilingual graffito that has been discovered in a rather strange location, viz., in a niche of the Temple of Bel.²⁶ A little more complex is the problem about two words: *'sy*, from the Akkadian language *asû*, ‘medicine, doctor’, as much as *'mn*, from Akk. *ummānu*, ‘craftsman’. The former word occurs three times in Palmyrene Aramaic Texts, but Jean-Baptist Yon affirms that there is another unrecorded attestation within the corpus.²⁷ However, the alleged error by the editors of the corpus is not that

²¹ Palmyrene Portraits Project, project leader Rubina Raja (Aarhus University).

²² Gnoli 2017a.

²³ PAT 415: *tbh*.

²⁴ PAT 1458: *nhtwm*, from Akk. *nuḫatimmu*.

²⁵ Ingholt et al. 1955, no. 36.

²⁶ PAT 1349 = IGLS XVII/1 38, Ar. *sbr*, Gr. καθηγγητής.

²⁷ al-As‘ad, Yon 2002:102.

important for my purposes, as all occurrences come from the same tomb in the south-western necropolis of the city. Both Michał Gawlikowski and Yon share the position that the word 'sy has the function of a nickname for all the members of the family group buried in that large hypogeum:

Il est possible que le terme «médecin» ait été utilisé comme surnom par cette famille ... Dans ce cas, le mot s'appliquerait, dans le texte, au père de Yedi'bel et non à ce dernier. On a sans doute une preuve de cet emploi comme véritable «nom de famille» dans le texte VI de la tombe: la généalogie des deux propriétaires se présente ainsi: *ywlys 'wrlys nwrbl wml' bny mlkw rb' br mlkw br mlkw br nwrbl dy mtqr' 'sy'* («Iulius Aurelius Nûrbel et Iulius Aurelius Malê, fils de Malkû l'Ainé, fils de Malkû, fils de Malkû, fils de Nûrbel, qui est surnommé le médecin»).²⁸

The word 'mn is engraved as a caption on four bust portraits from Palmyra, three out of which are now at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York,²⁹ while the fourth one is at the National Museum of Damascus.³⁰ Even though we ignore everything about the story of their discovery (the New York exemplars were bought at Sotheby's) it is highly probable that also these four busts come from one grave, and consequently, that what is true for the 'physicians' might be true also for the artisans of Palmyra. It is important to stress that in these cases there is no possibility to consider those burials as common graves belonging to professional *collegia*. The words 'sy and 'mn designate single individuals since they have entered the genealogies, and therefore they shall be considered nicknames.

Whether my conclusions on the words 'sy and 'mn are accepted or not, what seems unquestionable to me is the fact that in Palmyra, professions did not identify people. This crucial point can be shown also by analysing not only the professional context—about which I have already talked—but also the civic functions. Many public, mostly bilingual, inscriptions discovered in the area of the *agora* and the Great Colonnade mention a *boulé* in a perfect transcription of the Greek word into Palmyrene.³¹ The existence of this institution drove the life of the city during the first three centuries of our era: thousands of people belonging to the top classes of the city had to be members of this assembly, according to some sort of rotation. Those individuals were the same ones who at the end of their lives were buried

²⁸ al-As'ad, Yon 2002:102.

²⁹ *PAT* 614, 617, 618.

³⁰ *PAT* 5.

³¹ Cf. Yon 2012:440 index, *sub voce*.

in large graves around the town and were commemorated with inscriptions listing their long and complicated genealogies, but rarely their priestly functions, and never, I stress: never, their belonging to the *boulé*, not even in the case of proedrias or any other managerial function:

Si l'existence de la *boulé* n'est pas en cause, J. Teixidor a justement remarqué que les inscriptions de Palmyre ne mentionnaient à peu près jamais de *bouleute* ... C'est incontestablement un fait étrange quand on constate le nombre élevé de textes mentionnant la *boulé* à Palmyre, ou lorsque l'on compare cette situation avec d'autres villes de Syrie ... Faut-il en conclure que Palmyre comptait une *boulé* sans *bouleute*?³²

In my contribution to the conference in Copenhagen, I proposed some considerations of anthropological nature. In the traditional Arabic world, what identified individuals were not their professional activities, functions, or abodes. What really mattered was only their belonging to a stock. The most prominent citizens of Palmyra did not escape this rule, which is still operating in many traditional communities from Oman to Yemen.³³ Nothing in their portraits betrays anything about their profitable activities; only their opulence becomes clear from the images of their richly bejewelled wives.

Against this general background of a substantial indifference towards professions,³⁴ a group of four documents emerges within Palmyrene epigraphy, three in Greek and a bilingual one, where craft associations are clearly mentioned as they act as dedicators. They are all well-known as they have been the object of study and discussion, because the dedicators are the same ones in all four cases: Septimius Odainat, in one inscription together with his son Hairan, both identified as *lamprotatoi hypatikoí*, i.e., *clarissimi consulares*.³⁵

These four inscriptions are not trivial at all: *IGLS XVII/1*, 55, 56 (= *PAT* 291), 59, and 143 are actually four out of the nine testimonies regarding Odainat and his son Hairan. Eight of them come from Palmyra, while the dating of the ninth,

³² Sartre 1996:388.

³³ W. & F. Lancaster 1999; cf. also Gnoli 2017a:103–104.

³⁴ To avoid misunderstandings, note the voluntary omission in this contribution of those Palmyrene professions that are connected with long-distance trade, for which the situation is different at home as much as abroad, above all: cf., e.g., the famous inscription from Koptos, in which the guild Ἀδριανοὶ Παλμυρηνοὶ ἔμποροι appears: *AE* 1912, 171 = *AE* 1984, 925 = Bingen 1984.

³⁵ Some time ago, I have dealt with the usurpation of Roman titles in these peripheric areas in the first centuries of the Empire: Gnoli 2000; 2005; 2007.

a dedication discovered in Tyre, is quite problematic. It is easy to imagine what intense debate these texts have opened, to which I have contributed a long time ago.³⁶ However, in this paper it is time to focus on subjects that have not attracted the scholars' attention so far.³⁷

The bilingual inscription is the only one among the three discovered at the Great Colonnade that was engraved on the shaft of a column, while the other two were etched on two of the characteristic pedestals decorating the high columns of that famous street.³⁸ The inscription catalogued as *IGLS XVII/1*, 143 was engraved on the shaft of a column in the grand temple of Bel. Notwithstanding that the places of their discoveries do not allow us to tell whether we are in front of a monumental building conceived as a unity or not, it is however noteworthy that these four dedications show very clear common characteristics that lead us to maintain that they were written on the same occasion. The details about this special occasion, however, are lost. The characteristics of these texts are:

1. A heavy formulaic standardisation.
2. Coincidence of the dedicatees as they are all dedicated either to Septimius Odainat (55, 56, 143) or his son Hairan (59).
3. All these inscriptions date back to the Seleucid year 569 = 257/258 CE; only the bilingual one 56 = *PAT* 291 additionally displays the month, besides the year of composition (*Xandikos* = *šin* = April).

What we can deduce from this is that among thousands of inscriptions from Palmyra, the only ones that mention crafts associations were all set in the same year. This raises the suspicion that they were dedicated also in the same month, i.e., April. These associations are always called *συνπόσια* in the Greek inscriptions (55, 59, 143), while in the bilingual text the word *συντεχνία* is employed. For the latter there is a strange translation into Palmyrene with a *hapax legomenon*: *tgm*³, a word that never occurs in all known Semitic languages. It is nothing else than a transliteration of Gr. *τάγμα*, a loanword which, at least in this case, underwent some semantic shift so that its meaning coincides with the word *συνπόσιον*, which

³⁶ Cf. in particular Gnoli 2000:125–153. Recent updates are by Sommer 2018; Andrade 2018; Smedile 2019.

³⁷ These texts are rarely adopted in the research field of the craft associations: cf. however Cracco Ruggini 1971:103; Carrié 2002:330. Van Nijf 1997 sticks only on the inscription of Koptos, cited *supra* n. 27.

³⁸ About Palmyrene topography cf. Schnädelbach 2010. About the Colonnade cf. now Burns 2017 with Waelkens 2020. More specific on Palmyra, see Lassus 1974 and Segal 1997.

does, however, not pertain to it. A comparison with the other three inscriptions can help in this regard.³⁹

The craft associations that let those inscriptions be engraved raise questions about their proper identification. A clear recognition regards the guild of the goldsmiths and silversmiths which dedicated the inscription *IGLS XVII/1, 56*, συντεχνία τῶν χρυσοχόων | καὶ ἀργυροκόπων. The συμπόσιον σκυτ(έ)ων καὶ ἀσκοναυτοποιῶν, who dedicated *IGLS XVII/1, 57*, has been understood as an association gathering tanners and makers of the leather jars that were used to build the rafts for the navigation on the river Euphrates.⁴⁰ I want to stress the existence of another *hapax legomenon*, this time a Greek one: ἀσκοναυποιοί. Much more complicated is the identification of the other two associations. In this case as well we find words that never occur elsewhere in Greek, and the inscriptions also shows lacunae or writing mistakes (line 5 of *IGLS XVII/1, 55* was previously read ΟΥΑΝΝΩΝΤΟΝ). If the amendment of *lambda* into *alpha* confers a possible reading of line 5, it is also true that we are compelled to a risky hypothesis as far as the activity of those men is concerned. Ted Kaizer in 2002 systematically collected and presented us a vast range of hypotheses proposed regarding the possible meaning of the profession of the dedicators of inscription no. 55. Eventually, he showed a propensity for the translation ‘winnowers’, the workers who separated the various parts of wheat in the farmyards.

Also about the meaning of another word, one in inscription no. 143, most probably to be read κονετοί, there is uncertainty, and hence speculation. Kaizer reflects on probable meanings⁴¹ as an association of *chitara* players (this hypothesis was first proposed by Milik),⁴² or an association of metal workers (this hypothesis was first formulated by Gawlikowski),⁴³ or an association of artichoke growers, which Kaizer seems to prefer. To these proposals, I oppose that all meanings connected

³⁹ Cracco Ruggini 1976:477–478 n. 49: about Soz. *H.E.* 5.15 (GCS 50, 214–215), where two τάγματα πολυάνθρωπα, of the ἐπιουργοί and the τεχνῖται τοῦ νομίσματος are mentioned, she highlighted that «the word τάγμα seems never to appear to define an association». The inscription under analysis now emends this evaluation.

⁴⁰ Seyrig 1963:160–166 [266–272]. Cf. also Cracco Ruggini 1971:103 n. 105. On the navigation along the two Mesopotamian rivers, cf. Carter 2012; Rollinger, Ruffing 2013 with full documentation concerning the *keleks*, the rafts with jars, well attested also in visual representations (*IGLS XVII/1, 57* is discussed at pp. 408–410); Mitford 2018:esp. 247 fig. 161; cf. also Smedile 2019:134.

⁴¹ Kaizer 2002a.

⁴² Milik 1972:159–161.

⁴³ Gawlikowski 1973:36.

to agricultural activities are quite unlikely,⁴⁴ while I prefer to propose in this case and in general for the Roman world the existence of associations of workers who were active in more dynamic sectors related to city manufacturing activities. I do not think that much can be deduced from the words that in these inscriptions define these associations. Actually, if on the one hand the word *συμπόσιον* attested in the inscriptions nos. 55, 59, and 143, seems to refer mainly to a cultic context—notoriously not unrelated to the craft associations; on the other hand, the bilingual inscription no. 56 clearly mentions *συντεχνία*, it is about the very professional associations that borrowed their terminology from the well-known and much-studied religious *συμπόσια* attested in all towns throughout ancient times.⁴⁵

If ever we could solve all the philological problems of these documents, the fact remains that all these inscriptions were written in the same year: 257/258 CE, probably all in April. In 256 CE, Šābuhr had penetrated Syria once more, and eventually he had conquered the city of Dura Europos.⁴⁶ Valerian hastily left Rome and moved to the East, where he would start operating against the Persian troops the following year until his capture. Those years were decisive for the transformation of Odainat's power, who from being 'chief of Tadmor', *rš dy tdmwr*, *δεσπότης τῶν Πάλμυρηνῶν*, by then had become *λαμπρότατος ὑπατικός*, i.e., a *vir clarissimus consularis*. And I have shown elsewhere,⁴⁷ it was the attempt to transform in a 'mimetic' way the Palmyrene city institutions, which had always been susceptible to organisation systems from abroad.⁴⁸ Nevertheless, as can be seen in other cases, the adoption of different organisation forms did not entail any real transformation of the Palmyrene society and its subgroups. The professional *συμπόσια* that were so dynamic in 258 CE, do never appear again in the later Palmyrene epigraphy, just as they never occurred before. Quite often, the study of the social structures takes advantage of an analysis outside of researchers' comfort zones. This is the reason why the study of frontier contexts is so fascinating. There, the processes of exchange are intense and adaptations are more evident. In cases such as Palmyra the comparison can be advantageous.

⁴⁴ I have tried to show why in Gnoli 2017a:103–104.

⁴⁵ About the religion of Palmyra, the reference work is Kaizer 2002b.

⁴⁶ Recent update with relevant chronological revisions: Johnes 2008; on Dura Europos: James 2019.

⁴⁷ Gnoli 2000.

⁴⁸ Well stressed in a challenging way by Sartre 1996. The debate caused by that contribution has been going on until now.

Palmyra and Rome, 260s–270s CE

Thirteen years after the craft associations were introduced to Palmyra by Odainat, another prominent leader, emperor Aurelian, took recourse to the same institutions, i.e., the professional *collegia* for his vast enterprise to build the city walls that still bear his name. The situation in Rome differed completely from the one in Palmyra. There the *collegia* had been playing a crucial role for a long time, as I said before. The news about the involvement of the guilds in the construction of the walls—even though it is reported only by John Malalas⁴⁹—has never been challenged, and I think pertinently, even though this entails several historiographical problems that are quite difficult to solve.⁵⁰ Most probably during the last months of the year 271 CE, Aurelian imposed a liturgy to all Roman guilds (συνέργεια). The latter replied in such way that deserved an imperial decree (θείαν), which conferred on all the ἐργαστηριακοί of Rome as a reward the right to be named Αὐρηλιανοί, ὑπὲρ τιμῆς καὶ κόπων, again according to Malalas. He perfectly synthesises the terms of the matter: the conferring of honour as an outcome of an immense effort. The hendiadys honour/duty found in this passage by Malalas is, however, a recurring characteristic of the relationships between the craft associations and the imperial state, above all when some decades later, the reforms by Diocletian and Constantine completely changed the role of the guilds in the Roman world.⁵¹ Strictly speaking, we cannot even be sure whether to consider the passage of Malalas as out-of-date, when he states that «all the workers in town» (οἱ τῆς πόλεως πάσης ἐργαστηριακοί) were rewarded with the title of ‘Aurelian’. However, it is worth highlighting that this argument should be added to those in which are anchored the diverging opinions about the compulsory duty to belong to guilds in Late Antiquity that oppose the arguments of Boudewijn Sirks and Jean-Michel Carrié.⁵² What is clear to me is that the brief reign of Aurelian represented a crucial moment in the evolution history of craft associations, in particular with regard to their new set-up in post-Diocletian times. Perhaps also the famous, but still mysterious revolt of the minters (see below with n. 53) can be figured out as a moment of extraordinary tension between the professional associations and the imperial state (even though in this case it was about associations undergoing *munera*, thus they were *corporata*).

⁴⁹ Joh. Mal. 12.231, Thurn = pp. 299–300 Dindorff. In general on Malalas as a source for the 3rd century CE, cf. Mecella 2017.

⁵⁰ I started to deal in detail with the complex subject of the sources about the reign of Aurelian in Gnoli 2017b and 2019. On this problem, see my forthcoming biography of Aurelian.

⁵¹ De Robertis 1971; Banaji 2001; Carrié 2002.

⁵² Cf., e.g., Sirks 1993, besides the contributions of these two scholars in Lo Cascio 1997.

The situation of Palmyra differed completely from its counterpart Rome. There, the guilds, the two we can identify with certainty and the other two which cannot be further defined, were no *corpora*, i.e., associations that carried out *munera* that were necessary to the life of the city. In fact, there is little affinity between the Palmyrene *symposia* and, e.g., the minters who took part in the revolt of Felicissimus,⁵³ let alone the thousands of further nameless ἐργαστηριακοί that in an incredibly short time built the great city walls of Rome. Aurelian turned to social organisations that were deeply rooted in the urban society, well structured, and extremely efficient as well as extraordinarily effective, as the outcomes of the entire story still show. In Palmyra, the new *consularis*, Odainat, was so eager to adapt ‘his’ city to Rome far away that he artificially created four associations. All what the goldsmiths and silversmiths, the leather jars makers, the ‘winners’, or these strange ‘artichoke growers’ (?) left behind in April 257/258 CE were the engravings on pre-existing monuments of their dedications to the ‘Lion from the East’, as Odainat and his son Hairan were called in the Sibylline Oracles.⁵⁴ The purpose for their creation was to make Palmyra look like any Greek town emulating Rome’s institutions in the Roman East. Hence, when they were not needed anymore, they simply disappeared.

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⁵³ On this very obscure episode, I suggest Cubelli 1992, but cf. also Estiot 1995, and Crisafulli 2012. On Felicissimus, cf. *RE* VI, Stuttgart 1909, 2162–2163 [Stein]. Most probably he is identical with *Aurelius Felicissimus v. e. procurator*] of *CIL* IX 4894: cf. *PLRE* I, Felicissimus 1).

⁵⁴ Potter 1990.

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