

PALMYRENES IN HATRA:
EVIDENCE FOR CULTURAL RELATIONS
IN THE FERTILE CRESCENT

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During the first three centuries of the Common Era, people from Palmyra were attested in many places outside their famous caravan city. Archaeological evidence testifying to the presence of Palmyrenes has been found from Roman Britain in the west to Bahrain in the east.¹ Not surprisingly, the evidence that testifies to the presence of Palmyrenes abroad is particularly rich in Dura-Europos, a city located about 220 km east of Palmyra (Dirven 1999). In Hatra, the famous city of the sun god located in the eastern Jazirah in present day Iraq [Fig. 1], Palmyrenes figured far less prominently in the archaeological record. In 1986, a small Palmyrene relief was found in one of the small shrines (al-Salihi 1987: 55–58, Pl. XIII) [Fig. 2]. It is the first find from Hatra that unambiguously testifies to cultural contacts between the two cities.² Notwithstanding the scarcity of the material, it was postulated frequently in the past that contacts between both cities were strong

1 For an overview of this material, see Dirven 1998. On recent finds, see Yon 2013a, in this volume.

2 According to al-Salihi 1987: 58–61; 1990: 34–35, Temple XIII yielded another Palmyrene monument; a limestone altar adorned with figures in relief. The Palmyrene origin of this object is, however, far from certain. In addition to material from Temple XIII, two inscriptions, H214 and H293, are sometimes cited to illustrate the connection between the two cities. Both refer to the Bene Taimu. In Palmyra, Bene Taimu refers to a clan or family group. It is by no means certain, however, that the name refers to a clan in Hatra: Dijkstra 1995: 186, has shown convincingly that H214 is more likely to mention sons of the same father. Since the personal name Taimu is extremely common in the region, no conclusions can be drawn from its occurrence here. On the implications of this material for the relationship between Hatra and Palmyra, see Yon 2013b.