

Damascus and the Centre

Damascus¹

C'est la plus sublime mosquée du monde par sa pompe, la plus artistement construite, la plus admirable par sa beauté, sa grâce et sa perfection. On n'en connaît pas une semblable, et l'on n'en trouve pas une seconde qui puisse soutenir la comparaison avec elle.^[1] [1326]

The builder-converters of the Umayyad Mosque (from the Roman Temple of Jupiter) were certainly aware that the structure they built on and modified was very old, Yakut relating how the foundations were dug out to ensure their solidity, perhaps because the masons knew that local stone needed checking,² as must have been known when the citadel was constructed.³ In the process they discovered an inscription in Greek conveniently predicting the mosque.^[2] Al-Muqaddasi described the richness of the materials and their decoration, including the mosaics^[3] which, before the fire, were also to be seen in the prayer hall.⁴ Dimashqi wrote that “par sa beauté, son élégance et sa perfection est comptée parmi les merveilles du monde,” lavished with marble and mosaics.^[4] Of its builder, “it is said that he expended the revenues of all Syria on this work.”^[5] This occasioned restrictions on the next ruler.⁵ Non-Muslims were for centuries forbidden access (cf. Chapter Two, under Haram/Forbidden), which is surely why Fermanel in 1670 affirmed that the “galeries, lesquelles, comme aussi la face de la Mosquée, sont peintes à la Mosaïque représentant plusieurs Saints Pères, ce qui autorise assez qu'elle a esté bastie par les Chrétiens.”^[6]

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- 1 El-Hage 2000 for photographs: 6–57 for the town, its visitors and photographers; 79–85 walls and gates; 87–98: Umayyad Mosque before the fire.
 - 2 Nour 1982, 147–148: Damascus poor in building materials, with the stone of poor quality.
 - 3 Hanisch 2007: it was built on late antique foundations.
 - 4 Gautier van Berchem 1970–1.
 - 5 Flood 2001, 244–5: Yazid III acceding in 744 had to promise not to lay “stone upon stone, brick upon brick,” or to dig canals.

If the mosque was indeed built as a competitor for churches,⁶ then it seems strange to modern minds that Christians were not admitted for centuries, the same case applying for the Dome of the Rock, an obvious comparison for the Holy Sepulchre, and elevated above it. Yakût tells a good tale which illustrates an attempt, as it were, to wipe the eye of the Byzantines. When Omar became Caliph in 717AD, he reportedly found the luxury of the mosque excessive, and intended to strip off marbles and mosaics, and return to the treasury the money got by selling them off. Not very surprisingly, this did not happen because (and this is worth quoting at length) ten ambassadors arrived from the king of the Greeks:

And they begged permission to enter and visit the Mosque. Permission was granted them to enter by the Bab al Barid, and a certain attendant was sent to accompany them who knew their tongue, in order to listen to their words, and report what they should say to 'Omar, they knowing nothing thereof. The envoys passed through the court until they came in front of the Kiblah, and they raised their eyes to look at the Mosque. Then their chief began to hang his head, and his colour became yellow, and when his companions inquired of him the reason, he replied, "Verily, I had told the assemblies of the people of Rûmiyyah (Byzantium) that the Arabs and their power would remain but a brief space; but now, when I see what they have built, I know that of a surety their (dominion) will reach to length of days." When 'Omar heard report of this, he said, "I now perceive that this your Mosque is a source of rage to the infidels," and he desisted from doing what he had intended therein. And 'Omar had before this studded the Mihrâb with jewels of great price, and he afterwards hung up here lamps both of gold and of silver.^[7]

From this reasoning, Omar's only justification for maintaining and enhancing the beauty of the mosque was to discomfit the Christians who, having once shared the complex with Muslims for worship, were presumably let inside to milk their admiration, just as were the ambassadors. However, this was also a town inside which Christians were not allowed to ride.^[8] Here the locals had a reputation for surliness, and so Thompson in 1767 "applied to the Governor: who gave Orders to an Officer of the Janizaries to let two of that Body attend

6 Flood 2001, 213–236: the architecture of Umayyad Mosque as competition with Christians, and also with Byzantine sources, including use of architectural elements. 219: foundation of Ramleh in Palestine, with Sulayman also going to the Emperor for antique columns.

us wherever we went, and prevent our being insulted or molested by the Populace.”^[9]

Fermanel's mistake about elements of the mosque's decoration suggests (and it is certainly likely) that he got not a peep into the interior, but made it up from what he thought was likely, and would convince his Christian readers: churches had mosaics, mosaics often depicted saints, ergo, so did Damascus. Who could trust such travellers? And what did they actually visit? Perhaps Arvieux did indeed get inside the Mausoleum of Baybars in 1660,^[10] and perhaps Thevenot did three decades later^[11] – so either he copied Arvieux, or haram rules were more flexible in the 17th century. Baybars it was who had built the famous Qasr al-Ablaq and its dependencies in 1266–67, designed as contrasting colours of stone in a technique which often keyed adjacent blocks together jigsaw-style. The Mosque might also have been open to Christians for periods in the 18th century, when Campbell entered in 1758, prayer-hall included.^[12] Pococke evidently walked right round the exterior of the mosque in 1745 (which was probably impossible a century later), positing a twelve-column portico on each of the mosque's four sides, and from his description he also saw the courtyard.^[13] He makes a lovely grab for symmetry all round – but what did he actually see, as opposed to reconstructing??^[14] According to Green in 1736, Damascus was then “but a Heap of Houses and Walls half ruined,” so perhaps restrictions were ignored.^[15]

Ali Bey entered the mosque in 1814,^[16] disguised as an Arab (he was Spanish), but in 1820 Squire managed only to find the west portico, “which after great difficulty, because it was in the midst of houses and harems, we succeeded in examining.”^[17] Four years later Richter evidently peeped into the courtyard, but no further, so brief is his description, but he did describe the columns in the courtyard as of granite, with Corinthian capitals.^[18] By 1838 the shutters were evidently down,^[19] and Robinson “ne me hasardai pas à pénétrer au-delà du porche,” referring instead to Buckingham's description of 1825,^[20] which is rather sparse. But Buckingham and his companions “by the aid of our beards, white turbans, and a certain conformity to Turkish or Arabic movements only to be acquired by habit, we passed undiscovered, and without even being regarded.”^[21] All Robinson could relay, visiting in 1852, was that an acquaintance “was able to clamber over the roofs of adjacent houses, and approach so near to the entablature and Corinthian capitals of the columns, as to reach them with the hand.”^[22]

But then matters quickly changed. Perhaps because of his rank, Monsignor Mislin entered in 1855, and described the building in some detail.^[23] And within a decade, there were no further difficulties: a fee got Christians inside.^[24] This was in part because of the French presence which resulted from the 1860

massacres of Christians.^[25] In 1875 Lycklama a Nijeholt offered a good overview of these changing times,^[26] but in 1881 Oliphant was unable to enter.^[27] Admission still caused some problems: in 1887 Raboisson objected to being charged 20 francs entrance fee, so slipped in with a group of Americans. He then photographed the prayer hall, but again tricked the locals, and avoided paying the 500 francs they demanded. In his opinion, the complex was more a church than a mosque, so his subterfuge was permissible!^[28]

Unfortunately, in spite of the easing of restrictions on admission, we still know less than is desirable about the details of the structure, let alone its various alterations,⁷ for example the configuration and appearance of the Christian church,^[29] or the rebuild following the sack by the Tartars.^[30] This is because of the dearth of detailed descriptions by Easterners after the mediaeval ones cited above, but also because of the great fire of 1893, which destroyed parts of the structure and much of the decoration.^[31] For example, what did the marble pavement in the prayer hall look like, and also the columns in the courtyard, encased in masonry by 1880?^[32] What happened to the great granite pillars that supported the prayer-hall dome, and the syenite and porphyry ones?^[33] “It must have been a beautiful building before the fire, and even now excites the admiration quite as much as St. Sophia or any of the mosques in Constantinople,” wrote Curtis in 1903.^[34] We can answer some of the above questions. Most of the columns were destroyed, and replacement with shafts from Baalbek was contemplated, but it was then decided to quarry afresh in the nearby town of Al-Mazza.⁸ The old shafts, it is said, were cut up for use as paving stones.⁹

Apart from the Great Mosque, few other traces of the city’s antique past remained, or even of early Muslim buildings, such as the Umayyad palace,¹⁰ known from early chroniclers.^[35] This is due in part to the collapse of the Umayyad Dynasty in 750AD, after which “the palaces of the Caliphs, shining with gold and marble, fell into ruins and their very graves were not spared.”^[36] Other structures from the same period and earlier have recently been uncovered.¹¹ When foundations were being dug for a church in 1895, Roman

7 DeGeorge 2010, 42–59 *Métamorphoses du temple païen*. Greenhalgh 2009, 292–295: the fitting out of the Umayyad Mosque, including plenty of spolia.

8 Weber 2009, 87–8, fig 31 for the special wagon built showing part-shafts slung with ropes under the chassis.

9 DeGeorge 2010, 9. Cf. Richard Spiers in *PEFQS_1897_296*.

10 Flood 2001, 147–159: the Khadra, the Umayyad palace.

11 Saliby 1997 for a Byzantine/Umayyad palace near the peribolos of the temple; they uncovered only a part, dated end 5th first half 6thC, and still occupied in Umayyad period;

remains were found some 15 feet down,^[37] indicating that discovering the Roman city could not be easy.

The town walls were in part antique, with many later repairs;^[38] and in 1854 Van De Velde found “a great many ancient hewn stones, pieces of columns, and fragments of walls and buildings,” but much overbuilt with later structures, so that “I doubt whether archaeologists will be able to decypher much from these ancient relics.”^[39] This did not stop Porter in 1855 from speculating that the city once boasted colonnaded streets,^[40] such as were to be seen elsewhere in Syria. He was correct. Certainly Muslim interest in colonnades continued at Anjar and Ramleh. And, writes Flood, “the once-popular paradigm of Muslim invaders rupturing the continuous fabric of urban life in Syrian cities such as Damascus is becoming increasingly untenable,” placing the Damascus colonnade plus tetrapylon as Umayyad royal patronage.¹²

The underground canals were decribed in the 14th century, suggesting the Roman sewers and drains were known.^[41] Vergoncey had admired a “fort magnifique” bath in 1615, built with (spolia) marble and porphyry; we cannot now identify this bath, but the remains of the ancient city were disappearing into such structures,^[42] as well as into the many private houses which travellers described as early as the 16th century,^[43] sometimes at length, often contrasting the squalour of the public streets with the magnificence within.^[44] (This was a characteristic to be seen also in Cairo, as Affagart explained in 1533.^[45]) Mosques with mosaics and coloured marbles were also built outside the city.^[46]

Macbrair in 1839 was decidedly sceptical about the wonders of Damascus,^[47] and in 1824 Richter could find few antiquities to buy, although forgeries were already being made.^[48] As Hahn-Hahn noted in 1845, “you may wander throughout the whole of this large wide-spreading city, without meeting with a single interesting object.”^[49] Damascus, like Beirut, was modernising and expanding (from 110,000 inhabitants in 1876 to 300,000 by 1910). Indeed, little of archaeological interest remained by the 1830s,^[50] let alone the 1870s.^[51] By the end of the century “Damaskus kann heute eine Touristenstadt par excellence genannt werden,”^[52] but modernisation through demolitions left little of the older city visible.¹³

it had extensive mosaic floors, and the walls had large stones from earlier monuments, presumably the nearby temple.

- 12 Flood 2001, 139–147: Porter’s Colonnade, which had gone by the end of the 19thC. Flood suggests this was a Muslim remodelling of the ancient town; 145 for quote.
- 13 Weber II 2009: the catalogue of buildings and demolitions throughout Damascus: how much survives today?

Damascus was a natural starting place for the expedition to Palmyra. However, the state of the country varied so much that several travellers were to be disappointed. Pfeiffer and Count Zichy were blocked first by the pasha:

he had ceased for some time to allow travellers to undertake this dangerous journey, as until now all strangers had been plundered by the wandering Arabs, and in some instances men had even been murdered

and then by the exorbitant demands of various Bedouin chiefs: "Thus it became necessary to give up the idea altogether, and to proceed instead to Baalbek and to the heights of Lebanon."^[53] Stories of the loss of clothing and money were frequently retailed here, often because of the lack of a sufficient escort against Bedouin deprivations.^[54]

Baalbek

The Mussulman quarrying material for his mosque, the Christian for his church; the Bedouin rudely pulling down whole columns for the few pounds of lead which cemented their sections; the bigot destroying for the sake of destruction; the antiquarian disturbing in his pursuit of knowledge; and lastly, repeated shocks of earthquake have strewn the area with fragments of the stately temples which once rose proudly to the sky.^[55] [1864]

Palmyra was a complete city, with colonnaded streets, monumental tombs, and a fortress overlooking the site.^[56] Baalbek was a temple complex, built (as we now know) from the later first into the third century AD, parts of which were converted by Muslims into a fortress and with a village close by,¹⁴ and surrounded by walls which Maundrell thought were late, because they were part-constructed of Roman inscriptions.^[57] But even for classically aware travellers, the complex was confusing because (unlike, for example, Ephesus) it scarcely appeared in the ancient record, and inscriptions on the site were sparse. Ibn Battuta did not even mention any of the various buildings, although he praised Baalbek for its cherries.^[58] Because of the mystery, travellers like Michaud & Poujoulat could write that "tout était vague et fantastique dans mon admiration pour les monumens de Balbek; j'aurais pu, comme les Arabes, attribuer leur construction au pouvoir merveilleux des Djins."^[59]

14 Bloch 2006, 127 Baalbek: fine wares 9–16thC with majority 12–14thC.

The complex amazed because of the enormous blocks in parts of the structure, the height of its columns (and hence of its main temple), and the extravagance of its decoration.¹⁵ In the biggest-is-best stakes, it beat Didyma and Cyzicus. Didyma also amazed travellers to Asia Minor, although earthquakes had brought much of it down. Of Cyzicus, on the Sea of Marmara, and therefore convenient for spoliation, little was left by the 19th century both because of earthquakes, and because many of its marble blocks had been carried away for reuse of its marble in Istanbul; it did not appear on many traveller itineraries.

Was Baalbek a temple or a fortress, and who built it? Al-Idrisi, writing in 1154, recorded the common story that Baalbek had been built by Solomon and, as it were, seeing through the fortifications, described the structures as temples.^[60] Dimashqi, in the 1320s, described both the height of the columns, and also the well inside the fortress.^[61] It is conceivable that early European travellers – such as Bertrandon de la Broquière (1432), who does not mention it^[62] – were kept away from the complex precisely because it was a military zone. Yet Aramon, travelling in 1549, retailed the stories of who built the complex (he preferred Romans to Solomon), including “un chateau fort bien basti et d’une belle architecture” which he said the Cairo Circassian Mamluks had erected.^[63] Maundrell in 1697 identified the complex as originally a “noble ruin,” once a heathen temple, and “together with some other edifices belonging to it, all truly magnificent; but in latter times these ancient structures have been patched and pieced up with several other buildings, converting the whole into a castle, under which name it goes at this day.”^[64]

When in 1758 Campbell suggested that the structures “have of late years been repaired and converted into a castle;”^[65] he must have meant “updated” perhaps to deal with gunpowder weapons. As Castlereagh wrote in 1847, “Baalbek has been turned into a fortress, and bastions and batteries have been erected among her colonnades and porticoes,” and one had to hunt for surviving bas-reliefs, because “of modern Vandals, who broke down pillar and capital, frieze and bas-relief, to construct a wretched mosque, and make a fortification that was useless.”^[66] Leary surely knew this in 1913, writing that

Mosques and khans, barracks and castle walls have been built out of this immense quarry of ready-cut stone, yet the supply seems hardly diminished. The cannonballs of the Middle Ages fell back harmless before

15 Schlumberger 2010, 101–174: Les formes anciennes du chapiteau corinthien en Syrie, en Palestine et en Arabie – reckons impact of Baalbek ensured free-form capitals were replaced by canonical ones.

twenty feet of solid masonry, and only God's earthquake has been able to shake the massive foundations of the Temple of Baal.^[67]

Earthquakes devastated the site, and helped bring down several members. The violence of past earthquakes might sometimes be calculated by the number of columns they brought crashing down, as at Sardis.^[68] A century ago, wrote Baron Taylor in 1854, "ces vestiges étaient beaucoup plus imposants qu'ils ne le sont aujourd'hui,"^[69] meaning that parts had collapsed in the intervening years. In 1549 Pierre Belon counted nine columns in the Great Temple of Jupiter-Baal, which were "plus grosses que celles de l'hippodrome de Constantinople,"^[70] by which he perhaps meant the obelisks on the spina (he was wrong). We know of serious tremors in 1158, 1203, 1664 and especially 1759, which brought down three columns of that enormous temple.^[71] In 1866 the Emir told Hill quite accurately "that a tradition existed among the Arabs here, that the temples within the walls of the citadel which we had examined were nearly entire about three generations before the present time, when they were overthrown by an earthquake."^[72] As well as the columns already noted, nine also fell from the smaller (and incorrectly named) Temple of Bacchus. The entrance keystone slipped somewhat in 1784, and considerably more by 1844.^[73] "There it remained suspended for nearly a century and a half, until a German engineer, by means of a most ingenious device, restored it to its former position and braced it so firmly that it may outlive many more centuries."^[74] Anyone who has stayed in Pozzuoli or the Japanese islands will know that small earthquakes can sometimes occur several times a day – hence the slippage of the multi-ton keystone amidst its unstable supports.

Although the site and its Muslim fortress featured in the Crusades, because the site is nowhere near the great roads which led north from Damascus, or west toward the coast, it appears that the temples at Baalbek first came to the notice of travel-reporting Europeans in 1507, when Baumgarten visited and admired the stones in the quarry. These "resembling for bigness a tower or a hill;" near it, he says, stand "three pillars, not unlike those that are to be seen in St. Mark's place in Venice;" these have disappeared.^[75] But the site is only 86km from Beirut, which was by the mid-19th century one of the most prosperous towns in Syria, with an improving port and (eventually) road network.^[76] The nearer to Damascus, the safer the trip, especially under the rule of Ibrahim Pasha; this was a golden age for safe travel, and its end was much regretted.^[77] Carne, at Baalbek by 1838, saw an American, a Pole, a German, a Russian and a Greek.^[78] But the greater the distance, the more problems arose. Problems included not only bureaucracy, but also just getting there, Palmyra being a prime example.

The Temple of Jupiter-Baal was immense, on foundations some 300m in length, and with columns (22.9m) the tallest in the Roman world, but in drums, because these are not monoliths.¹⁶ The temple of Bacchus (really Venus-Astarte) was much smaller, but more highly decorated. Large foundation blocks (including the famous trilithon) amazed everyone, and left Burton thinking “how very superior in stone-lifting and transporting the Pagans must have been to us Christians of 1870.”^[79] Yet more remarkable was the even larger block left part-cut-out in the quarry; and an even larger stone, at some 1,650 tonnes, was discovered near it in 2014. There was much speculation about how such behemoths had been moved.^[80] Holes for inserting wooden tenons to help move them were visible on many of the stones.^[81] De Vogüé thought the immense stones were pre-Roman, which led to a standard lament about decline: “Ainsi les murs de Baalbeck semblent un défi ironique jeté à nos théories sur le progrès de l’humanité: chaque race nouvelle a apporté sa pierre plus petite et plus éphémère.”^[82]

The size and jointing of the building blocks impressed everyone, with the trilithon stones being so large that many of the upper blocks “would excite astonishment were they met with elsewhere; but here, eclipsed by three enormous monsters, lying consecutively in the same course of the building, about twenty-five feet from the ground, they are overlooked as trifles in comparison.”^[83] Some of the stones weighed over 1,000 tons^[84] – and how were such monsters raised some 10m off the ground?^[85] Bird’s 1872 comparison of one of the trilithon stones as “of the size of a small farm-house” sets the context,^[86] or for truly mechanised American travellers, “large enough to contain a Pullman sleeping-car.”^[87] Nothing in Europe compared: “Les deux colonnes de Venise, les monolithes de Rome, l’obélisque de la place de la Concorde, ne sont que des jouets d’enfants à côté des pierres de Balbek.”^[88] Pococke thought they must have come from the quarry on rollers.^[89]

Blocks for the Great Temple were cut so accurately that (in a standard comparison) “the blade of a knife [sometimes a sheet of paper] could not be inserted between them;” and the limestone so hard that it resembled marble.^[90] And what of the immense stone still in the quarry? “It is calculated by Dr. Saulcy, that the united efforts of forty thousand men would be required to put this miniature mountain in motion.”^[91] Even in 1880 “all must feel that it is a monument which surpasses the capability of this age.”^[92] Thomas in 2007

16 Elagabalus’ temple in Rome had monolithic shafts estimated at 17.66m; the cipolino shafts for the Temple of Antoninus & Faustina were 17m; the granite shafts of the Pantheon’s pronaos were a mere 12.5m, although it has been suggested that taller columns were intended but for some reason unavailable.

recalls Aristides' assessment of Cyzicus: "You might say that each of its stones took the place of a whole temple, that the temple took the place of a whole precinct, and that the temple precinct was big enough to enclose a city."¹⁷ Because of the stones still in the quarry, Monconys guessed that the complex was unfinished.^[93] Pococke was saddened that "the barbarous people of these countries continually destroy such magnificent buildings" – but the chink of light in this case was that although "they privately chip the pillars in order to undermine them, . . . when they fall, the stones are so large that they can carry away but very few of them."^[94] They could, nevertheless, destroy or mutilate bas-reliefs.¹⁸

Islamic travellers of course knew about the complex and its size and quality (just as European travellers knew about their accounts^[95]), because it was an important Islamic fortress.¹⁹ In the 10th century it is noted by Masudi, who writes of the elements which impressed everyone else. "Les dimensions de ces monuments, leurs assises énormes, leurs colonnes élancées, leur vaste portique, tout cet ensemble de constructions excite l'étonnement."^[96] Ibn Hawqal, later in the same century, writes (correctly) that there was a palace within the complex,^[97] which was part of the fortress into which the structure had been converted. This was still called El Kala'a in the 20th century, and was studied by the German excavators, as well as being noted by various travellers.^[98] The complex also contained projectiles ("great round chunks of marble as big as footballs") which, Carpenter reckoned in 1923, were probably cut from column drums.^[99] There were certainly plenty of re-usable elements, as Volney saw in 1792: the hexagonal court was "semée de fûts de colonnes brisées, de chapiteaux mutilés, de débris de pilastres, d'entablemens, de corniches."^[100] Rousier also seems to imply that the Turks used gunpowder to bring various parts crashing to the ground.^[101]

That Baalbek was built by Solomon,^[102] and was where he married the Queen of Sheba, was a story presumably picked up by early visitors from the locals, except that several large structures throughout Syria are given the same parentage. Vergoncy relays it in 1615,^[103] as in part does Breves in 1628,^[104] while Beaufort in 1874 laughs at the notion.^[105] The trilithon stones ("the largest

17 Thomas 2007, 217: "The trilithon . . . is comparable in dimensions to many cult buildings in the Hellenistic and Roman East." Ibid. 46–50 for an account of Baalbek.

18 Picard 1939 for the Temple of Bacchus: all friezes comprehensively hammered on the blocks, which remain in place: see his figs 5–8, 11–12.

19 Gaube 1998: Islamic Baalbek, with plentiful quotations from Arabic sources. 325: German excavators showed the whole of the interior of the citadel occupied by rural courtyard houses, two mosques, and a bath.

hewn stones in the world"^[106]) were perhaps laid by Solomon: "Some think they date from Solomon, others would have them ante-diluvian."^[107] Naturally, the complex received plaudits from travellers who struggled to find comparisons further west. For Wood in 1757 it was "the most surprising structure in their empire,"^[108] and he collected antiquities (including manuscripts) and sent them back home.^[109] For Geramb "nowhere in Asia are there ruins so magnificent, so vast."^[110] As for the courtyard, "La magnificenza di questa galleria sorpassa ogni espressione."^[111] After comparing it with S. Peter's Pigeory was "pris à douter de l'omnipotence de Michel-Ange,"^[112] while another saw nothing in Italy to equal it.^[113] For one author it was more imposing than the Acropolis at Athens or the Roman Forum,^[114] and for another "there is nothing in Rome itself so imposing, nothing which so nearly attains that spiritual elegance of impression which marks Greek architecture."^[115] Lombay did not agree: they outdid the Acropolis and the Colosseum in scale,^[116] but

Malgré ses proportions colossales ce temple ne dépassait pas en beauté le Parthénon d'Athènes dont les formes idéales représentent ce que notre esprit peut concevoir de plus harmonieux; les blocs sont joints les uns aux autres avec une adresse inférieure à celle des constructeurs héliens de la meilleure époque; la qualité même des matériaux laisse à désirer, le marbre du Pentélique n'ayant nulle part son pareil.^[117]

Wilson's hilarious comparison for the large temple in 1823 is with "the church of St. Martin in the Fields, in London, and St Andrew, at Glasgow, built after that model,"^[118] which would surely surprise their architects. And what about Palmyra? "By those who have seen both I was told that Palmyra is much inferior in its details to Baalbec, but superior in general effect, from the greater extent of ruins and the long avenues of columns which adorn it."^[119] Did the West ever build any monuments to compare with Baalbek? Yes, in the Middle Ages "quand nous étions chrétiens: nos cathédrales l'attestent."^[120] Lindsay was interested in the Muslim buildings, in ruin by 1838, but with

semi-vaulted portals, scooped shell-wise, like the ceilings of the Alhambra, lead to staircases, one running down into the platform, but filled up with rubbish, – the other leading to the roof. Peeping through the chinks of a door a few steps up, I saw a large chamber with pointed arches, now used, apparently, for a magazine.^[121]

There was plenty of room within the town walls for the modern village, which in the 19th century by no means filled the available space,^[122] although the

size of the ruined mosque (made largely with spolia) suggested a much bigger population.^[123] Ferrières-Sauveboeuf in 1790 was struck by the contrast between its hovels and the grandeur of the monuments.^[124] In 1820 Squire estimated that only one-fifth of the town's area was occupied, with "a most wretched appearance, as the principal part of the hovels have been destroyed by earthquakes."^[125] Brocchi visited in 1842, and was distressed by the sparse population and other signs of ruination:

E uno spettacolo per verità rattristante quello di vedere un paese lungo tre quarti almeno di miglio, le cui case sono deserte e per metà diroccate. In mezzo ad esse ve n'ha una sessantina all'incirca di abitate, le quali costituiscono tutta la popolazione del paese.^[126]

The town contained the ruins of a church,^[127] but even the Christian bishop's house was "but a sort of cottage, darker, and less roomy than that of a peasant in Europe."^[128] It was "the little huts of the poor peasants" which predominated, so the available ruins were left alone, perhaps because the locals did not possess masonry skills.^[129] This was not always the case, since Bourassé noted in 1867 that "plusieurs des cabanes du village actuel de Baalbekk sont bâties avec les fragments des temples et des palais: de simples murs de clôture ont des moellons en marbre et des sculptures que nos musées seraient fiers de posséder."^[130] In the early 15th century there might well have been inside the complex the remains of a colossal statue (perhaps a cult statue?), although the narrator only heard of it, and did not set eyes on it.^[131]

Visitors did not need to stay in the village with the locals, for there was still plenty of room on the site in the 1860s: they could pitch their tents among the ruins, and do their cooking there as well,^[132] although they had to beware of any brigands,^[133] and try and avoid the Saracen and Crusader additions, "walls within and without, which now remain to the extreme discomfort of the traveller."^[134] Many residents had taken short column shafts from the site to keep their earth-covered house roofs rolled flat and compact, and therefore watertight.^[135] This was a common practice throughout the Middle East.²⁰

Visiting the complex incurred fees in cash or in kind, for the area was considered the property of the local emir, who extracted a telescope from Squire in 1820.^[136] The host to Aucher-Éloy in 1830–1 demanded he be shown where the treasure was hidden,^[137] this happening at least in part because some visitors copied inscriptions.^[138] In 1867 Macedo was relieved to find that guides had not yet arrived, "pour y dépouiller les visiteurs, comme font les Bédouins aux

20 Bendakir 2008: survey of earth-built houses, with plenty still in use today.

Pyramides, où ils exercent la plus arbitraire extorsion, au mépris du règlement de police du pays.”^[139] Some tourists were evidently warned (cf. warnings for Jerash, or Palmyra) that it was dangerous to wander alone around the temples, but this might have been overplayed. Pfeiffer met “no one but a few curious inhabitants, who wished to see the newly-arrived Franks,” and he thought travellers’ tales were spiced up: “My journey was a very long one through very dangerous regions; on some occasions I travelled alone with only one Arab servant, and yet nothing serious ever happened to me.”^[140]

It may be the case that the dangers which kept both settlers and travellers away from ancient sites helped to protect monuments. In 1743 Perry intended to go to Baalbek, but “the Aga’s [warriors] upon that Road were at Variance and Blows amongst themselves; which render’d our passing that Way impracticable, or at least dangerous.”^[141] In 1881 Oliphant suggested the Turks charge admission to the site and, because visitors were evidently chipping souvenirs from the ruins, also carve fragments from the quarry, label them “Baalbek,” and sell them to the tourists.^[142] Such low-quality souvenirs would not have prevented the captain of the *USS Constitution*, visiting in 1837 from seeking and receiving permission to take down a bas-relief eagle and carry it away. Unfortunately, “the block on which it was sculptured formed the key stone of an arch and could not have weighed less than four tons, perhaps five of them. It had been displaced from its position by the jarring of an earthquake” and could not be removed without bringing down surrounding stonework. “So deeming discretion the better part of valor we contented ourselves with breaking off some round sculptured pieces from the frieze & returning to our tents.”^[143] Evidently Berners, who condemned the locals who excavated columns for lead,^[144] should also have considered the toll taken by foreigners.

Improvements were on the way: by the later 1880s “the village, or town, of Baalbek is extensive and flourishing,” which must have come from tourism and perhaps agriculture, and the governor had decorated the approach to his house with a headless colossal statue seated between colossal lions.^[145] More tourists were to arrive, because of the site’s proximity to the railway.^[146] In 1892 Marquette paid an entrance fee, and reckoned that in the touristy months of April and May “il recueille ainsi de huit à neuf mille francs, que l’on devrait employer à restaurer, ou du moins à conserver ces ruines saisissantes, qui malheureusement se détériorent chaque année.”^[147] Organised tours also brought income, but provoked the contempt of independent visitors: “Ces brigands de Cook savent toujours bien choisir leurs places. Nous leur envoyons de nos gâteaux, qu’ils s’empressent de jeter à l’eau [they were installed near a stream] après y avoir touché.”^[148] The Kaiser with his large retinue visited in 1898 on

his way to Jerusalem,²¹ as part of what has been called “The political theater of the past,”²² and was given *carte blanche* by the Sultan to excavate the site: they

laid down a rail-road track for the dirt cars to carry away mountains of earth and debris. As a result of their work and modern machinery for lifting huge stones into place we have at last a view of these most wonderful temples more as they were in their glory.^[149]

There was certainly plenty of digging to do: Lamartine wrote in 1832 that “*Le fer de nos chevaux glissait et se brisait à chaque pas dans les acanthes polies des corniches, ou sur le sein de neige d’un torse de femme.*”^[150]

The materials for the temples were largely of the hard local limestone, but some visitors got it wrong: in 1823 Wilson wrote of “stately Corinthian columns, each of one solid piece of marble,” when they were in drums, and of limestone. He also thought part of the complex was a theatre.^[151] Berger was still calling the columns of the great temple “marble” in 1895^[152] – and perhaps the confusion was with Roman monuments seen further west, where the columns often were of marble or granite. Lucas thought he needed more than a week to explore the ruins, but labelled the tombs he saw as marble.^[153] Jones recognised the red Egyptian granite monoliths in the square court, which had retained their polish.^[154] Paxton in 1839 saw small granite columns in the mosque, and asked “how could masses of rock three feet in diameter and ten or fifteen feet long be brought over Mount Lebanon, which is so steep and high that it is a great labour for man unloaded to pass?”^[155] Like Seetzen,^[156] he knew that Syria had no granite quarries – which increased their wonderment at the monuments. Lindsay in 1838 noted that a colonnade visible in 1688 had completely disappeared, leaving only the podium;^[157] and Measor, writing in 1844, complained about the “confused patchwork put together in haste by the Saracens” forming an “unseemly confusion” to turn the complex into a fortress.^[158] So for some the later builders were “*plutôt des vandales que de vrais architectes.*”^[159]

As already noted, some travellers were also distressed at the continuing destruction of the temples, especially the gouging of the columns for the small quantities of iron which joined the drums^[160] – and bad luck if the whole column fell. Visitors could still “rebuild” the great temple by counting surviving

21 Scheffler 1998: the Kaiser left Oct 11, 1898 for tour of Constantinople, Jerusalem, Beirut, Damascus and Baalbek with an enormous number of tents, horses, coaches, etc.; Lemke 1998 for large number of postcards and photos recording the Kaiser’s visit.

22 Scham 2013.

column shafts (nine) and also bases,^[161] not all of which survived, presumably because they were easier to reuse. Just what part earthquakes played in demolition is difficult to determine. It was indeed extensive, but we must doubt Basterot's assertion that the great temple lacked scarcely more than its roofing before the great 'quake of 1709'.^[162]

Palmyra²³

There are wonderful buildings here erected on pillars. The people say they were built by the Jinns at the order of Solomon the son of David. At the present day the people there live in a castle surrounded by a stone wall. It has a double gate of stone, and there are temples, of which three remain standing to the present day.^[163] [1225]

This important antique trading centre (with art and architecture that looked east as well as west)²⁴ saw a decline into insignificance^[164] which helped for centuries to preserve her many monuments.²⁵ Occupied in early Islamic times,²⁶ Palmyra was famous with Muslim authors such as Yakut, quoted above, whose "castle" is the Sanctuary of Bel, still a stronghold in the 19th century. It was a site with so many wonders that like Baalbek its building was ascribed to Solomon, aided by the djinns – a persistent idea.^[165] If Hellenism had a list of wonders, so did Islam. "Parmi les merveilles du monde," wrote Dimashqi in the later 13th century, "est aussi la ville de Tadmor avec ses colonnes et ses murailles, ses décombres et ses ruines, dont on ne trouve pas de pareilles en longueur et en hauteur, en quantité et en qualité des carrières d'où elles ont été tirées."^[166] The site remained in very good condition, apart from sculptures where "Muslimischer Vandalismus hat alles stark beschädigt."^[167] Even the continentals agreed that the site's "discovery" was British,^[168] so that Le Brun

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- 23 Smith 2013, 1–32: Roman Palmyra and its setting; with 21–32 for Palmyra's history and urban development. Carita 2004, 131–146 for Palmyra, with Byzantine sources; Hammad 2010, 54ff. for mediaeval and later history; *ibid.* 54: in 1177 walls of the peribolos of the Temple of Bel were strengthened with a large number of column drums – cf. fig. 116; *ibid.* 62: Diocletian's wall dismantled 745–6, and the town shrank into the enceinte of Bel, until the inhabitants were expelled under the mandate in 1929.
- 24 Schlumberger 2010, 227–390: *Descendants non-méditerranéens de l'art grec* – deals with Gandhara and Palmyra, some of which he compares with material further east.
- 25 Delplace 2014 for a survey.
- 26 Gawlikowski 2008; Gawlikowski 1997: houses in the section dug by the Poles abandoned only toward 800, after occupation for more than six centuries.

wrote honestly in 1714, “*quoi que ce que j’ai à en dire ne soit pas de moi, mais d’un autre de qui je l’ai emprunté.*”^[169]

One curiosity is just how late the site was properly surveyed (was this a result of insecurity?). In spite of the deficiencies in Wood’s 1753 account, “only the highest praise can be given to so magnificent a work, accomplished under such difficulties and long before archaeology as a science was born,” wrote Murray in 1917. Wood himself stated his concern for the truth,^[170] aware, perhaps, of other decidedly fanciful publications. Murray wanted to know why no more than a preliminary report on the site had yet been published^[171] – an eternal question for many archaeological sites. Michaelis, on the other hand, denigrated a part of Wood’s work: “what they brought back in the way of antiques does not appear to have been of great importance.”^[172] But then perhaps large quantities had already been misappropriated: the mummies of Palmyra had been broken up in the hope of finding treasure, and for this reason Wood, writing in 1753, could not locate a whole one.^[173] Nevertheless, Volney in 1792 describes the ground as strewn with antiquities:

ce ne sont de toutes parts que fûts renversés, les uns entiers, les autres en pièces, ou seulement disloqués dans leurs articulations; de toutes parts la terre est hérissée de vastes pierres à demi-enterrées, d’entablemens brisés, de chapiteaux écornés, de frises mutilées, de reliefs défigurés, de sculptures effacés, de tombeaux violés, & d’autels souillés de poussière.^[174]

With its colonnades, temples, fortress and tombs, “beautified by decay,” as Sykes has it,^[175] Palmyra was an important attraction for travellers, in part because of knowledge through ancient authors of its feisty Queen Zenobia, who gave the site an identity that Baalbek did not possess because it went unmentioned (which puzzled more than one traveller). However, Baalbek was near to the coast, even if the access was in early years by a track through the mountains.²⁷ Palmyra, on the other hand, was 235km from Damascus across the desert, throughout which roamed marauding Bedouin. Hence it was usually difficult and expensive to get to, and the trip could be dangerous if the various competing marauders had not been squared. The site itself was ruled by the local sheik, frequently with an iron fist, ensuring security once there and the “ransom” paid by travellers who generally had nowhere else to go but back west toward Homs/Hama, thus temporary desert captives. This distinguished it from Amman and Jerash, where mayhem ruled both on the journey and at

27 Apostolou 2009, 161–173: Palmyra and Baalbek.

the sites. Strangers were to be feared. In 1691 Halifax tried to enter the settlement of thirty or forty families:

ye whole power of ye village if I may so call it, being gathered at ye door, whether to stand upon their defence in case we proved Enemies, for some of them had their guns in their hands, or meer curiosity to stare upon us I know not: however our guide being a man known among them, we had an easy admittance.^[176]

The population was estimated at fifty huts in 1876, and lived within the great temple precinct, which had probably been a fortress since the Middle Ages.²⁸ Le Brun had reported a similar population in 1714, and in the same location: “entre les murailles d’une grande place, dans l’enceinte desquelles il y a un tres beau Temple des Payens,”^[177] and Campbell likewise in 1758.^[178] These huts were of antique materials cemented with mud, and the mosque was built with fragments of sculpture in its walls,^[179] but this “wch tho of a more artificial frame & composure than many I have seen yet is not worthy to stop us in ye way to things both of greater antiquity.”^[180] Baron Taylor had evidently not looked too carefully in 1854, also stating that the huts were of mud, and “c’est là tout ce qui reste de ce peuple riche et policé, de cette nation qui fut plus grande par les arts que par la guerre.”^[181] The mosque was the sanctuary of the temple, and the sheikh took Beaufort inside in 1874: “at each side are two small chambers with richly-carved ceilings, one of which has the signs of the zodiac, with figures of the deities still visible, despite the efforts of the Mooslims to destroy them.”^[182] Certainly, several antiquities had deteriorated since Wood drew them in 1753.²⁹ Others had patently disappeared, but to where? Sachau wanted to know where the remains of the city had gone to, since there were no nearby settlements:

Wer das Ruinenfeld durchwandert, dem drängt sich bald die Frage auf: was ist aus dem gesammten Baumaterial der Stadt geworden? wo ist es geblieben, wohin gerathen? Es sind niemals in der Nähe Palmyras neue Ortschaften entstanden, zu deren Bau die Steine von dorthier geholt worden wären, auch sind die Transport-mittel in der Palmyrene zu jeder Zeit die primitivsten gewesen.^[183]

28 Wiegand 1932 II, 70: aerial views of the Sanctuary of Bel in 1929, with its complete Arab village, and 1930, in the process of clearing out the inhabitants.

29 Wiegand 1932 II, 45 for Camp of Diocletian in Wood’s plate of 1753, and the much less left to see in a photo of 1902.

Inhabitants had been so few because Palmyra was no longer a busy entrepôt, and was naturally called a village.^[184] It had grown by the 1880s, presumably because of the opportunities brought by the tourists,^[185] but the temple enceinte was still the “seule partie habitée de la grande et somptueuse reine du Désert.”^[186] In 1899 Oppenheim thought there were 1,500 inhabitants, and both trade and travel were on the increase, with a sheikh “welcher durch seine Begleitung verschiedener europäischer Reisenden bekannt geworden und zu grossem Wohlstand gelangt ist.”^[187]

In 1840 Blondel heard stories of travellers robbed and stripped on the way to Palmyra. He liked the system whereby the sheikhs left hostages at Damascus against their good conduct (a system as old as the hills), but making the necessary arrangements would have taken too much time, so he chickened out, and “nous nous vîmes en conséquence dans la dure nécessité de renoncer à cette excursion.”^[188] The identical excuse had been used by Coote in 1780, who likewise wrote that he could not spare the time for the necessary negotiations.^[189] So many ruins, so bound to miss things if robbers were lurking – and they were! The trip was still dangerous in 1848, if one met “une de ces bandes errantes de Bédouins dont l’état habituel est la guerre, qui ne vivent que de rapines et de brigandages.”^[190] Indemnification was sometimes sought and won against tribes who had assaulted travellers.^[191]

Once arrived, there could also be problems. In 1829 Fuller met with an ingenious Bedouin wrinkle in the sacred custom of hospitality, when the local sheikh resented payment being made to those overseeing the route rather than to the locals, and produced his own variation on visitors being allowed into monuments such as fortresses, but not out again:

The inhabitants themselves, the natural guardians of the antiquities, derived no benefit from their visits, but on the contrary were obliged to provide entertainment for another’s guests. “The hospitality of the Arabs,” continued he, “forbids me to show any incivility to strangers; you are welcome to remain in my house, and to eat with me for as long as you please; but I will not allow you to go out to visit the curiosities of the place, unless you pay me the same sum which you have paid to Nasr.”^[192]

By 1876 Cook was writing up twelve-day tours to Palmyra, but warning (as one might expect from a company trying to attract custom) that the site was “under the power of rapacious sheikhs, and great care has to be observed in arranging for a tour to that city of grand ruins.”^[193] Yet travel there was easier, because “since the extension of the military frontier of Turkey from Aleppo to Palmyra, and along the whole margin of the Syrian desert, which took place in 1870,

the expedition has been freed from much of its difficulty and expense.”^[194] Abandoned after 14thC Mongol invasions, control was re-established by the Ottomans with an imported population to control the margins and increase agriculture.³⁰ Nevertheless, the half-ruinous barracks of the soldiery^[195] can hardly have inspired much confidence. By 1913, it is reported, so many caravans had passed that way that one could ride all the way by bicycle; it was easy for cars, but with no garages en route, the idea was abandoned: “Our own party traveled on horse-back.”^[196]

Travellers were astonished by the extent of the ruins (19sq.km including necropoleis), and by the beauty of their structure (such as the entrance to the Temple of the Sun^[197]) and their stone. The preponderant one was “une pierre calcaire tirée des montagnes voisines, fort dure, dont la beauté égale presque celle du marbre, et dont la teinte dorée s’harmonise admirablement avec celle du paysage de sable qui entoure les ruines,”^[198] but there was also some granite, recognised as having been brought here from an immense distance.^[199] Nevertheless, many people thought the colonnades and other blocks were marble, and still thought so at the end of the 19th century.^[200] Volney in 1796 described the sight as “a countless multitude of superb columns standing erect, and which, like the avenues of our parks, extended in regular files farther than the eye could reach.” Invited into the enclosure of the Temple of the Sun, “I accepted the hospitality of some poor Arabian peasants, who had established their huts in the very area of the temple. Here I resolved for some days to remain, that I might contemplate, at leisure, the beauty of so many stupendous works.”^[201] Richter in 1824 went into the château (the Temple of the Sun) to rest, and “Hassan-Saléh, Arabe, qui se donnoit pour le cicérone de tous les voyageurs, vint me prendre pour parcourir les ruines.”^[202]

Because the temple precinct was the village, enclosed by high walls and packed with huts, on leaving it “the eye is at first utterly bewildered, and even at last unable, except with imagination’s aid, to estimate its grandeur.”^[203] As for the colonnades, these were indeed plentiful. “Elles sont rangées en files tellement prolongées,” wrote Volney, “que, semblables à des rangs d’arbres, elles fuient sous l’oeil dans le lointain.”^[204] Breuvery emphasises the point:

Des colonnes, rien que des colonnes, voilà la magnificence de Palmyre. Plus de trois cents sont encore aujourd’hui debout au milieu des ruines, et un plus grand nombre est renversé à leurs pieds.^[205]

“But I spare the reader further description the more readily,” wrote Beaufort in 1874, “since I myself never got so far as to see the half of them.”^[206] Clearly, for

30 Al-Dbiyat & Jaubert 2006.

this traveller it was indeed better to journey than to arrive, and “all their imposing extent and grandeur of situation”^[207] did not seem to impress him: seen one column, seen them all? For others, however, Palmyra was the epitome of the picturesque: “Palmyra at sunrise, and Baalbec at sunset, are Claudes treasured in the cabinet of the memory, which neither accident can injure nor beggary deprive one of.”^[208] Or, as Wood has it in French translation, “l’effet le plus romanesque que l’on puisse voir.”^[209]

The stones of Palmyra also fascinated the locals, according to Breuvery, whom they quizzed about extracting metals. Lead or copper was used to join architectural elements, and setting fire to shafts could sometimes succeed in extracting the metal. But they were also convinced that the metallic sound the shafts made when struck meant that they were really of bronze, and nothing Breuvery could say would dissuade them. Extracting molten metal from joints would have encouraged this notion, but it does appear as if the capitals of what is now called the Temple of Bel were indeed covered with gold- or silver-decorated sheet brass, so perhaps the locals had seen some on the ground, and retrieved the metal. Certainly, in 1881 Ellis states that the shafts had both bronze capitals and bases,^[210] so presumably he had been talking to the locals. He found it ironic that “presque toujours les moyens employés par les anciens pour assurer à leurs grands édifices une solidité qui pût braver les siècles, soient devenus pour ces monuments une cause de destruction,” so that “partout où le fer ou le cuivre ont été employés avec le plomb pour joindre les assises des pierres ou les tronçons des colonnes, les blocs qui seraient demeurés intacts ont été brisés pour les en arracher.”^[211]

For Sykes in 1905, the glory days of Palmyra visiting were past, because Cook’s Tours had arrived, and

the dyspeptic colonels and “Poppas” of America will be driven by chattering servants from Zenobia’s bath to Zenobia’s bed, from Zenobia’s bed to Zenobia’s temple; the young Oxford Don will write poetry in the Temple of the Sun during the vacation; the English clergy will write to the Times concerning the disgraceful charges of the hotel.

And he published the (imaginary?) advertisement:

To Palmyra and back in Five Days £10
Ruins and Tombs!
Spots of Interest!
Hotel – Special Rates! Home Comforts!
Children half-price – Wines included!
Reliable Guides, &c.!^[212]

Anjar, Mejdal Anjar & the Nearby Temple

A ruined town-wall, inclosing an oblong square of half an hour in circumference; the greater part of the wall is in ruins . . . In the enclosed space are the ruins of habitations, of which the foundations alone remain. In one of these buildings are seen the remains of two columns of white marble, one foot and a quarter in diameter. The whole seems to have been constructed in modern times. Following the Mountain to the southward of these ruins, for twenty minutes, I came to . . . springs . . . In the wall of a mill, which has been built very near these springs, I saw a sculptured architrave. These remains appear to be much more ancient than those of Andjar, and are perhaps coeval with the buildings at Baalbec.^[213] [1810]

When Burckhardt visited Anjar in 1810, there was little to be seen inside the walls, and he correctly half-dated the site as “modern,” in fact built by the Umayyad caliph al-Walid I early in the 8th century.³¹ Seetzen, visiting in 1805 with a Druze guide who hoped he might find treasure there, was clear that its main feature suggested that it was in fact antique, or at least based on Roman camp layouts: “man sieht noch den Umfang der Stadtmauer und viele Thürme der Mauer, aber, so wie alles Uebrige, gänzlich ruinirt. So viel sähe ich indessen aus den Mauerresten, dass dieser Ort nie ansehnliche Gebäude des Alterthums aufzuweisen hatte.”^[214] Superstitions surrounded its name.^[215] The site was subsequently abandoned (it is unknown just when), but repopulated with Armenians from the Musa Dagh area in 1939. Cobb notes that the site “was built from scratch in the style of a Roman legionary camp, but is unambiguously Umayyad, with its palaces, mosque, Syrian style houses, baths and shops.”³² Until the site was investigated and parts rebuilt by archaeologists from the 1950s, there was indeed little to see inside the walls of Anjar.

In 1852 Robinson visited, noting “the ruined walls and towers of an ancient fortified city or citadel, in the form of a square, about a quarter of an English mile on each side,” and stating it was the ancient Chalcis.^[216] He then camped

31 Hillenbrand 1999: exposition of Anjar and Early Islamic urbanism. Petersen 2007 for Mamluk new towns in Palestine: Magdal NE of Ascalon – this is Magdal-Gad, now el-Medjdel [= the fortress]; a lot of sites have the same toponym. 501–505; Safad.

32 Cobb 2010, 248; Nicolle 2008: well illustrated accounts of Anjar, the Amman Citadel, and the Desert Castles. Milwright 2010, 76: “a startling illustration of the tenacity of Roman–Hellenistic principles of urban planning . . . In accordance with classical models, the two major arteries meet at a tetrapylon and are colonnaded with lines of cubicles on either side.”

by the fountain at Mejdél, and called the temple there “one of the finest antique temples now existing . . . The temple is simple, massive, and beautiful, and obviously of a severer and earlier type than those at Ba’albek. Nothing can be finer than its position.”^[217] Just like Robinson and Burckhardt, Seetzen also went to Mejdél, the source of Anjar’s water, and the natural place to camp, since presumably aqueducts no longer worked at Anjar itself. Again he was impressed by the temple above the deserted village, especially by its large stones:

die Ruinen eines alten Tempels, welcher die gewöhnliche länglicht viereckige Form hatte und aus Ungeheuern Steinen ohne Mörtel bestand. Vor seinem auf der Nordseite befindlichen Eingänge war ein Peristyl von Ungeheuern Säulen befindlich, welche alle zerbrochen unter dem Schutte umher lagen, und von keiner bestimmten Ordnung gewesen zu seyn schienen.^[218]

Porter described the temple, thinking it considerably older than those at either Baalbek or Palmyra:

The foundations of the cell are composed of huge blocks of limestone; one I measured being twenty-four feet long and six high . . . The interior was ornamented with fluted semi-columns of the Ionic order, supporting a fine cornice. Between the columns were niches for statues. A portico of massive columns stood in front, with antae behind. These columns are now completely prostrate; but the huge fragments are scattered around, half covered with luxuriant vines. One portion of a shaft I measured was twenty-four feet long and four feet six inches in diameter. The door leading from the portico to the cell was lofty and spacious; the jambs were massive monoliths, richly moulded.^[219]

No doubt in a desire simply to keep the record straight, Robinson noted that Burckhardt, although he went to the springs at Mejdél, did not mention the temple.^[220]

Already by 1854 Porter saw little on the site: “the foundations of the walls alone can be traced, enclosing a rectangular space about a mile in circumference. In the interior are a few mounds covered with soil, from which some hewn stones and pieces of broken columns may be seen here and there projecting. These are the only remnants of palaces and temples.” Camping by the fountain he saw “traces of an aqueduct running along the high ground toward the ruins.”^[221] Two years later Robinson affirmed the little interest the site seemed to hold for travellers, and at the same time indicated the motor for its further ruination:

Although the ruins lie within fifteen minutes of the great Beirut and Damascus road, and in full view, Seetzen and Burckhardt were the first travellers to visit and describe them; and very few have done it since.^[222]

By 1862 there was surely less to see on the site, when Beke reported that road works were plundering the site: “the ruins of this city are now rapidly disappearing, the broken shafts of columns, hewn stones, and other architectural fragments being either worked up for the masonry of the bridges of the new carriage-road, or else burnt into lime.”^[223] Mislin in 1876 wrote:

L'enceinte de la ville, encore facilement reconnaissable, avait une demi-lieue de tour; on y voit les débris de quatre portes, de trente-deux tours, de belles colonnes en marbre et en granit, des sculptures, des restes de temples, des bassins, des citernes et des sarcophages.^[224]

This might indicate that the walls were already being dismantled, for the town in fact originally had forty towers, not Mislin's thirty-two. In the same year Baedeker reckons that “an important town and fortress must have stood here in ancient times,” and notes that the springs are “at about the same distance from the station” (a stop on the diligence route, not a railway station) as the ruined town – a clear indication of how the remains were disappearing.^[225]

[1] Ibn_Battuta_1982_173

[2] Le_Strange_1890_260–261

[3] Le_Strange_1890_227

[4] Al-Dimashqui_1874_262

[5] Ibn_Haukal_1800_42–43

[6] Fermanel_1670_315

[7] Le_Strange_1890_263–264

[8] Broquière_1892_32–33

[9] Thompson_I_1767_140

[10] Arvieux_II_1735_451

[11] Thevenot_1689_689

[12] Campbell_1758_153

[13] Pococke_II.1_1745_120

[14] Cf. Robinson_1856_462B

[15] Green_1736_39

[16] Ali_Bey_1814_III_219–220

[17] Squire_1820_315

[18] Richter_1824B_27–28

[19] Dieterici_1853_II_358

[20] Robinson_1838_299

[21] Buckingham_1825_307–308

[22] Robinson_1856_462

[23] Mislin_1876_I_548–549

[24] Paul_1865_144

[25] Tilley_1864_358

[26] Lycklama_a_Nijeholt_1875_549–550

[27] Oliphant_1881_53

[28] Raboisson_1887_289

[29] Vogüé_1876_76

[30] Lammens_1921_II_21–22

[31] Oppenheim_1899_56

[32] Wilson_II_1881_149

[33] Cuinet_1898_401–402

[34] Curtis_1903_129–130

[35] Von_Kremer_1920_155

[36] Von_Kremer_1920_182

[37] Wright_1895_386

[38] Buckingham_1825_328–329

[39] Van_De_Velde_1854_II_458

[40] Porter_1855_I_47–48

[41] Al-Dimashqui_1874_263

[42] Vergoncey_1615_421

[43] Thenaud_1864_114

[44] Tristram_1865_612

[45] Affagart_1902_175B

[46] Le_Strange_1890_414

[47] Macbrair_1839_106

[48] Richter_1824B_29

[49] Hahn-Hahn_II_1845_42

[50] Conder_III.11_1830_41

[51] Seiff_1875_158

[52] Oppenheim_1899_49

[53] Pfeiffer_1852_186

- [54] Berners_1876_254-255
- [55] Tilley_1864_371-372
- [56] Thompson_I_1767_128-135
- [57] Wright_1848_499
- [58] Ibn_Battuta_1982_167-168
- [59] Michaud_&_Poujoulat_VI_1835_244
- [60] Le_Strange_1890_296-297
- [61] Al-Dimashqui_1874_268
- [62] Basterot_1869_100
- [63] Aramon_1887_111-112
- [64] Wright_1848_496
- [65] Campbell_1758_159
- [66] Castlereagh_II_1847_277
- [67] Leary_1913_192
- [68] Bird_1872_27
- [69] Laorty-Hadji_1854_164
- [70] Aramon_1887_111-112
- [71] Laorty-Hadji_1854_164
- [72] Hill_1866_431
- [73] D'Estourmel_I_1844_287
- [74] Curtis_1903_172
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