

THE ROMAN WEST AND THE PARTHIAN EAST

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LEARNED controversies are often rather like summer thunderstorms—moments of sharp, incisive noise and an occasional flash of bright light, interspersed with long periods of intermittent flickering and confused marginal grumbling. One always hopes that they will clear the air; but as often as not, just when they seem to have receded beyond the horizon, back they come from some unexpected quarter with renewed vigour, and all is very much as it was before.

Some years ago I had the privilege of addressing this Academy on the subject of one of the most notorious and heated of the academic controversies of its day.¹ This was the discussion, launched at the beginning of this century by Strzygowski under the title of 'Orient oder Rom', which revolved around the question whether the essential content of early Byzantine art was derived from Rome or from the ancient east. The ensuing argument absorbed the attention and energies of Byzantinists for nearly half a century; and although the situation was undoubtedly exacerbated by the dogmatic intransigence of both parties, in retrospect it is easy enough to see that the debate was in fact doomed from the outset by the terms in which it was formulated. The attempt to compress a complex historical situation within the framework of a simple choice between two so sharply contrasted entities was in itself almost bound to lead to distortion and oversimplification, the more so when one reflects that only on the narrowest of definitions could the terms 'Rome' and 'the Orient' be regarded as mutually exclusive. It may make good enough sense on the margins of the problem: silks from China, an Indian ivory figurine found at Pompeii or the fine table ware of Italy on the coasts of Madras present no problem. But how is one to define the vaulting of a Roman-period bath-building in the Syrian desert or the fine metalwork of Alexandria, whose markets ranged from the coasts of the Atlantic to Afghanistan? The area of overlap was such as to

¹ *Proceedings of the British Academy*, xxxiii, 1947, pp. 163–94.

make the question asked by Strzygowski meaningful only at the expense of emptying the problem of most of its content.

I have no intention this afternoon of returning over this ancient battlefield. It is, I think, now generally accepted that the art of early Constantinople was essentially the product of an historical situation in which, in varying degrees, many regions of the Roman Empire were engaged. The transfer of the seat of Roman authority from Italy to the Bosphorus was in the event to give special importance to those elements that were derived from the Aegean world and from the provinces further to the east; but at the time, the foundation of Constantinople was only another moment in the historic dialogue in which the classical world and its eastern neighbours had been actively engaged ever since the colonization of Ionia in the tenth century B.C. or, if you prefer it, since the establishment of Minoan trading stations in the Levant and the sack of Troy. For over a thousand years the classical world and the East had been meeting and mingling; and whether one is a student of Greece, of Rome, of Byzantium, or of the countries of Western Asia, it is the whole long process of mutual influence and mutual assimilation which one has to take into account.

In recent years there has been a marked shift of interest, away from specifically Byzantine problems and towards this wider theme of the relations between the classical world and its eastern neighbours; and my excuse for reverting briefly to a controversy of which the central issues are now for the most part happily resolved is that, although many of the terms of the earlier debate still apply within this wider field, I am not sure that the lessons have been fully learned. It would, I believe, take very little to bring the thunderclouds rolling up once more.

One of the main reasons for this recent shift of interest has been the spectacular increase in our knowledge of the ancient civilizations of Western Asia as a result of several decades of intensive archaeological activity.¹ Hatra, Bishapur, Nysa, Surkh Kotal, Begram, the Swat valley—these and other similar sites have a great deal to tell us about the material cultures that emerged from the melting-pot into which this whole vast area had been cast by the cataclysmic conquests of Alexander the Great. There are still many dark places, and many of the discoveries are still too recent to have achieved a fully agreed

¹ A useful and lavishly illustrated conspectus of recent work and discoveries will be found in R. Ghirshman, *Iran: Parthians and Sassanians*, Thames and Hudson, 1962, with bibliography at pp. 369–77.

consensus of interpretation. We still know tantalizingly little, for example, about the eastern half of the Seleucid Empire, that strange, ramshackle experiment in the marriage of East and West, which collapsed politically for lack of solid foundations,



FIG. 1. The frontier region between Rome and Parthia and the principal sites mentioned in the text.

but which left an enduring mark upon the civilizations that succeeded it, from the Euphrates to the Indus and from the Oxus to the Persian Gulf. The Greek kingdom of Bactria too is, archaeologically speaking, still virtually unexplored. On the other hand, a great deal of light has been thrown upon what was previously a very dark spot indeed, the material culture of the Parthian dynasty of the Arsacids, which in the hundred years or so following the mid-third century B.C. succeeded in establishing

its authority over the whole area from the Euphrates to the eastern borders of Iran. With their replacement early in the third century A.D. by a rival dynasty, the Sassanians, we emerge on to more familiar ground; but here too archaeology has been able at many points to add flesh and blood to the bare bones of our previous knowledge. We have long had the outlines of a political and military history of Rome's relations with Parthia. Now at last we can begin to draw up a realistic balance-sheet of the cultural relations also between the two great powers.

All of this is very much to the good. So too is, for example, the continuing attempt to distinguish among the classical elements present in these newly revealed oriental cultures, between those that are part of the Greek heritage of Alexander and his successors and those that entered the oriental world at a later date through contact with the expanding power of Rome. Nevertheless, I must confess to a certain uneasiness about some of the terms of the discussion. Very few of us are in fact equipped by training and experience to view the relations between East and West in a truly impartial perspective. This of course is not a new problem. It is as old as history. How can we help seeing the Persian invasions of Greece through the eyes of Herodotus and of Aeschylus, or feeling our sympathies irrevocably engaged on the side of the Athenians at Marathon or the Spartans at Thermopylae? In Roman times our vision is almost as inevitably coloured by the Roman literature, the Roman monuments, the grandiose titles of Roman epigraphy. For every one of us who is familiar with the great victory monuments of Rome how many know their Persian counterparts at Naqsh-i-Rustam and Bishapur? At Naqsh-i-Rustam, below the Tomb of Darius, the rock-cut relief portraying the Roman emperor, Philip, kneeling in supplication before the victorious Sassanian warrior king, Shapur I¹ (Philip, I may add in parenthesis, was not above calling himself 'Persicus Maximus, Parthicus Maximus'); or the splendid relief at Bishapur showing the same monarch trampling on the prostrate body of Gordian III, while receiving the homage of Philip and clutching by the wrist the emperor Valerian, who was to die in captivity in Persia?² This is history seen through the other end of the telescope.

¹ Ghirshman, figs. 204, 205. For the interpretation of these triumphal reliefs of Shapur I, see B. C. Macdermott, *Journal of Roman Studies*, xliv, 1954, pp. 76-80.

² Ghirshman, figs. 196-9. Cf. the cameo of Shapur I capturing Valerian, in the Bibliothèque Nationale (*ibid.*, fig. 195).

Now I am not for a moment suggesting that any of the distinguished scholars engaged in this field are unaware of this elementary historiographic difficulty. Nevertheless, it is one thing to be aware of the problem and quite another to escape from the angled perspective which it involves; and in discussing the relations between Rome and her eastern neighbours it does, I think, have the almost inevitable effect of polarizing the discussion in a way which, if it is not explicitly recognized and allowed for, can lead to serious misunderstanding. The classical historian may be well aware that his orientalist colleague faces historical situations no less complex than his own; but whereas he cannot stir a foot within his own territory without taking account of the extraordinary diversity-within-unity of the Roman Empire, it is all too easy (and often indeed perfectly legitimate) for him to define what is not classical simply by exclusion: what is not Roman is Parthian, or Iranian, or Oriental, or whatever other such generalized label may seem conveniently to fit the case. Similarly the orientalist, no less pre-occupied with the complex political and cultural relationships of the territories that extend eastwards from the Syrian desert into central Asia and India, is apt to label anything that lies to the west of these frontiers as classical, or at best to seek to distinguish chronologically between what is Greek and what is Roman.

As I remarked just now, this may work well enough on the periphery, although even here there are pitfalls. What, for example, is the significance of the classical elements in the art of Gandhâra? A few years ago it seemed as if the researches of Sir Mortimer Wheeler, Professor Buchthal, and others¹ had put paid once and for all to the notion that this classical strain was in any significant sense inherited from the Greek kingdom of Bactria, of which the monarchs of the Kushâna dynasty were the political heirs. The Buddhist sculptures of Gandhâra can hardly be earlier than the second century A.D.; and many of the classical motifs thereon patently derive from specifically Roman sources. It would be perverse to doubt that they are a product of the same historical situation as that which deposited the pottery of Arezzo on the shores of Madras or the fine metalwork and glass of Roman Alexandria at Begram, in a depot beside the caravan route from the Indus Valley up into central Asia. This Roman element is clear, specific, and well documented; and it is so

¹ H. Buchthal in *Proceedings of the British Academy*, xxxi, 1945, pp. 151-76; R. E. M. Wheeler in *Antiquity*, xxiv, 1949, pp. 4-18.

precisely because it is peripheric to the main stream of classical culture.

Unfortunately, however, for those who like nice simple, clear-cut answers to their historical problems, the ink was barely dry on Sir Mortimer Wheeler's classic article in *Antiquity* when a new site turned up in Afghanistan, about 200 miles north of Kabul,

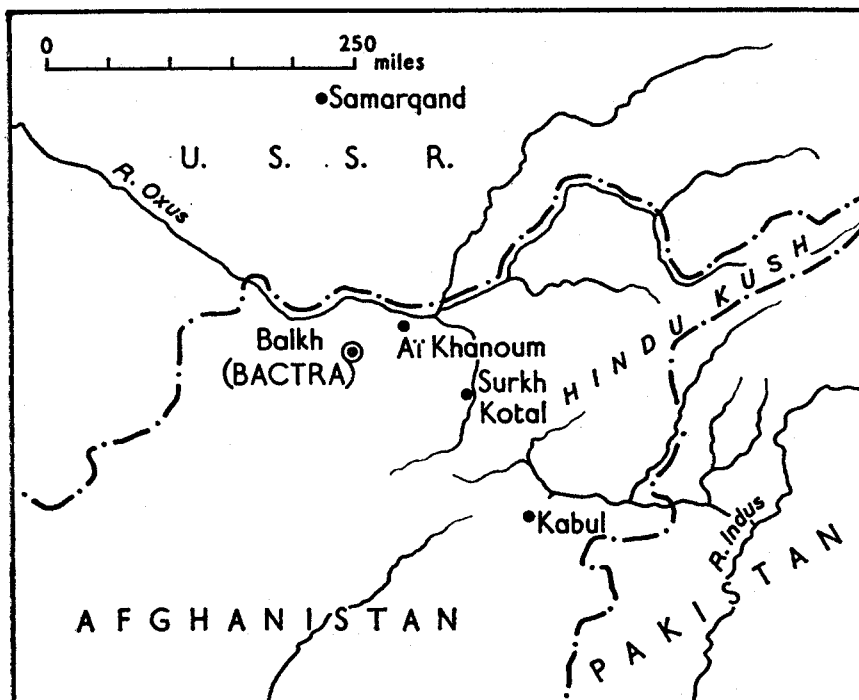


FIG. 2. Map showing site of Surkh Kotal.

beside the road down to the main Oxus valley. This was the site of Surkh Kotal, the discovery and clearance of which was the subject of a memorable lecture delivered before this Academy in 1960 by its excavator, M. Daniel Schlumberger.¹ The site proved to be that of a grandiose monument, probably a dynastic fire temple, built some time during the first half of the second century of our era by the great Kushâna emperor, Kanishka, and its excavation has thrown a great deal of valuable new light upon the wider setting of secular practice within which the specifically Buddhist art of Gandhâra came into being. Schlumberger has shown, most eloquently and I think convincingly, that for all the superficial differences between the art and

¹ Daniel Schlumberger in *Proceedings of the British Academy*, xlvii, 1961, pp. 77-95.

architecture of Surkh Kotal and of Gandhâra, they do in fact represent two facets of the same cultural complex. The differences are readily explicable in terms of function and of geographical situation; and when one has discounted the specifically Buddhist elements and those derivative from contemporary Rome, one still appears to be left with three distinct cultural strains that are common to both complexes. One is what Schlumberger refers to as 'the old world of the Iranian countries', the world of the Achaemenid Empire which Alexander destroyed. Another is 'the new world of the Iranian invaders', that is to say of the Parthians and Kushânas who overthrew the political framework established by Alexander's successors. The third is classical and, if Schlumberger is right, it is Greek, derived from the Greek kingdom of Bactria, of which the Kushânas must in this respect, therefore, be considered the cultural as well as the political heirs, very much as the Parthians were the cultural and political heirs of their Seleucid predecessors. Until the archaeological remains of Bactria have been explored the source of this Greek element can only be a hypothesis; but the presence of any such pre-Roman classical element, if rightly identified as such, would justify the designation of the art of the Kushânas, whether at Surkh Kotal or at Gandhâra, as 'Graeco-Iranian' in the same sense as that term is nowadays being used (rightly or wrongly) of the art of Arsacid Persia.

In all of this Schlumberger may well be right. At Surkh Kotal the Achaemenid element is quite evident, for example, in the architecture, both in the building materials and techniques and in the structural forms. The temple itself, built in the old Persian manner of mud-brick with timber reinforcements and stone details, consisted of a square inner sanctuary, enclosed on three sides by a corridor, with a timber roof supported on four internal columns (fig. 3). This is essentially the plan of the Achaemenid temple at Susa¹ and, even further afield and dating from the late pre-Roman period, that of a series of Nabataean sanctuaries in the Djebel Hauran of southern Syria.² Another typically Achaemenid feature of the buildings at Surkh Kotal is the decorative use of stepped merlons (Pl. XLIX*b*), as at

¹ M. Dieulafoy, *L'Acropole de Suse*, 1893, pp. 411-14, fig. 264; conveniently reproduced by F. Oelmann in *Archäologischer Anzeiger*, 1921, c. 277, Abb. 3a.

² H. C. Butler, *Princeton Expedition to Syria*, 1904-5, vol. ii, a: *Ancient Architecture in South Syria*, 1907 ff. *Sî*, (*Seeia*), pp. 365 ff., figs. 324 (Temple of Ba'alshamin) and 325 (Temple of Dushara); Sahr, pp. 441-6, fig. 387; Sûr, pp. 428-31, fig. 371. Cf. Oelmann, op. cit., Abb. 3 *c*, *b*, and *d*, respectively.

Persepolis and in any number of Near Eastern buildings, again right down to the Roman period.¹

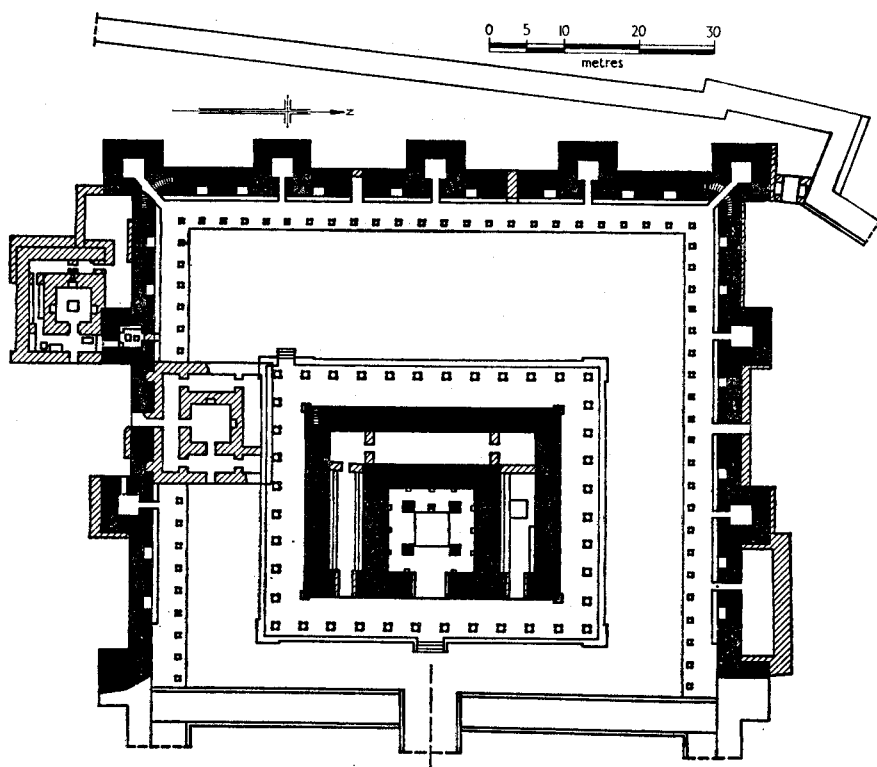


FIG. 3. Surkh Kotal: plan of the temple and its courtyard, first period only.

The Neo-Iranian element is no less evident than the Achaemenid in the sculpture of Surkh Kotal and other Kushâna centres, most conspicuously in the details of dress and weapons,

¹ Schlumberger, *op. cit.*, pl. xvii, *b*. To illustrate the range of this very characteristic feature it is sufficient to cite the examples at Persepolis, in the fifth century B.C. (A. Upham Pope, *Survey of Persian Art*, 1938 ff., vol. iv, pls. 85, 91-94), at Palmyra in the first-century A.D. temple of Bel (R. Amy in *Syria*, xxvii, 1950, p. 101 and fig. 17) and in the Parthian palace at Assur (Upham Pope, vol. i, fig. 96, after W. Andrae and H. Lenzen, *Die Partherstadt Assur*, 1933). The arrow-shaped ornament of the merlons at Assur closely resembles those of Surkh Kotal (repeated, again in a Parthian context, at Warka; Upham Pope, vol. i, fig. 93). For other Hellenistic and Roman examples see p. 195. Like many other Achaemenid architectural features it was inherited and revived by the Sassanians, e.g. in the monument of King Narsah (A.D. 293-303) at Paikuli, in Kurdistan (*ibid.*, fig. 144, A); in the fifth-century palace at Sarvistan (*ibid.*, fig. 142); on the reliefs of Chosroes II (590-628) at Taq-i-Bustan (*ibid.*, fig. 159, B); and, as a decorative motif, on their silverware, *passim*.

for which the statuary of Palmyra and of Petra offers innumerable parallels. I must confess, however, that I am not quite so happy about some of the features that are claimed as Greek. The Attic column-bases (Pl. XLIX*a*) rest on a square plinth; and although this plinth is a feature not altogether unknown in late Hellenistic architecture, it really only came into general use in the latter part of the first century B.C. I know of no single example in Syria that is certainly earlier than those of the temple of Jupiter Heliopolitanus at Baalbek. So, too, the moulded panels on the faces of the pilasters (Pl. XLIX*a*). These are a familiar classical motif misapplied, the lunette at one end being typical of (and in conventional classical usage unique to) the panel on the undersurface of a Corinthian architrave, where it echoes and frames the projecting rosette in the middle of the abacus of the capital; in the classical world the earliest recorded examples of this feature date from the middle of the first century A.D. Again, the fact that the order is Corinthian is itself significant. In Syria at any rate this is essentially a usage of the Roman period, the standard architectural order of the Hellenistic Age being the Ionic. The substitution of a figure for the central volutes is another detail characteristic of early Imperial usage.¹

In detail, then, I doubt very much whether Schlumberger's analysis of many of the classical details at Surkh Kotal as Greek will stand up to scrutiny. I make this comment with a certain reluctance, because I cannot help feeling that his basic contention may be (I nearly said must be) sound. Where else did the Kushâna acquire the Greek lapidary script in which the

¹ See most recently E. v. Mercklin, *Antike Figural kapitelle*, Berlin, 1962. Another distinctively Roman element in the architectural ornament of Surkh Kotal is the frieze found in the cella of the main temple (Pl. XLIX*c*, after Schlumberger, *op. cit.*, pl. xviii, *c*), with its obvious affinities to the well-known schist frieze from the Kimala monastery at Taxila (Wheeler, *op. cit.*, pl. v, *a*). Although it is not impossible that the motif of a garland supported by *putti* was already current in western Asia Minor in late Hellenistic times, its standardization and diffusion, both to Rome and to the provinces bordering on the eastern Mediterranean, belong unquestionably to the Roman period, above all at the hands of the workshops specializing in the sarcophagi of Proconnesus (Marmara) in Bithynia; see Ward-Perkins in *Archaeology*, xi, 1958, pp. 98-104, and in the *Report of the Smithsonian Institution for 1957*, 1958, pp. 455-67. The sarcophagi reproduced on Pl. L, from Adana in Cilicia and from Izmir (Smyrna) respectively, illustrate the impact of this motif on the schools of south-west Asia Minor. The bunches of grapes hanging from the garlands at Adana are a distinctively Proconnesian feature, faithfully reproduced at Taxila.

dedicatory inscriptions of this great sanctuary are cut?¹ A feature such as the colonnaded temenos around the temple could still very well be a survival from early Hellenistic times, as it probably was at Baalbek and in the sanctuaries of southern Syria. But whether the Greek element is sufficiently substantial to justify our calling this art 'Graeco-Iranian' is another matter. It looks as if any such pre-Roman classical constituent had worn pretty thin by the second century A.D. On the other hand, in accepting the predominantly Roman character of the classical elements in Kushâna art we do not have to dismiss out of hand the possibility that some may have been of earlier date and derivation, any more than the fact that many of them reached India across the sea from Alexandria and the Persian Gulf means that there may not have been other, more devious routes for the diffusion of classical ideas and influences. There are many possibilities, and until some Greek-period site in Bactria has been excavated we shall do well to keep an open mind.²

I make no apology for all this preliminary skirmishing. The subject of Kushâna art presents the problems of discussing the relations between the classical world and its eastern neighbours with a clarity which we can hardly expect nearer the centre. When we turn to the geographical heart of our problem, to the lands that lay along the political and military frontiers between Rome and Parthia, we are faced by a situation which both politically and culturally was bound to be far more complex.

Let me begin by reminding you briefly of the political facts. It was in 67 B.C. that Rome found herself in possession of the province of Syria as a result of the victories of Pompey the Great; and for the next six and a half centuries, until the Arab invasions, the eastern frontiers of Rome, and subsequently of Constantinople, were determined by the relative strengths of Rome and of the power that was known to the Romans as Parthia, at first under the monarchs of the Arsacid dynasty and then, from the second quarter of the third century A.D. onwards, under that of their successors, the Sassanians. Reduced to its simplest political terms the history of Rome's eastern frontier is

¹ Schlumberger, *op. cit.*, pl. ix, *b*; Ghirshman, fig. 8.

² Since this lecture was delivered, the writer learns from M. Schlumberger that what appears from its surface remains to be a site of purely Hellenistic date, with no overlay of later material, has been located at Ai Khanoum, in northern Afghanistan. The excavation of this site can hardly fail to throw light on the nature and duration of Greek influence in this region.

one of the confrontation of the two great powers, Rome and Parthia, the classical world and Iran.

However, the simplest terms are not necessarily the most informative. It is naturally the more dramatic moments of this relationship which bulk largest in the contemporary documents, moments when the temporary weakness or territorial ambitions of one or other power led to outbreaks of open warfare. But in fact a great deal of the time there prevailed a policy of what nowadays would be called peaceful coexistence; and one of the most effective instruments of this policy was the maintenance along the frontiers of a number of small, semi-independent principalities which owed real or nominal allegiance to one or other of the great powers, but which in practice enjoyed a considerable independence and served as an effective buffer between them. Armenia, Adiabene, Cilicia, Commagene, Emesa, Hatra, Palmyra, the territories ruled by Herod's family, Petra, Pontus—we need not delve into their tangled histories. For a vivid picture of what was involved let me recommend the account of Nero's eastern policy given by Tacitus in the *Annals*. The adroit mixture of diplomacy and of limited military engagement makes strangely topical reading today.

What matters more to us, and what certainly mattered a great deal more to those whose misfortune and whose opportunity alike it was to live along Rome's eastern frontier, is that for a great deal of the time this policy really does seem to have worked. The pattern was constantly shifting—it is not the part of diplomacy to buy lasting solutions—but the moments of open warfare really were limited, and for much of the time the eastern frontier was as much a bond as a barrier.

Let us glance for a moment at an example about which we happen to be unusually well-informed—the city of Dura-Europos on the middle Euphrates. Dura was founded about 300 B.C. by Nicanor to serve as a strong-point half-way between Antioch and Seleucia. About 140 B.C. it fell into Parthian hands, and for the next 300 years, except for a brief interlude during Trajan's short-lived conquest of Mesopotamia, it was under Parthian rule. Then, later in the second century, the growing weakness of the Arsacid dynasty enabled Lucius Verus and Septimius Severus to succeed where Trajan had failed. Mesopotamia was annexed, and for the last century of its existence Dura was a Roman garrison town. Finally, in about 256 it was besieged, captured, and blotted off the map by Shapur in the course of the campaigns which we saw just now recorded in the reliefs at

Naqsh-i-Rustam and Bishapur. The emperor Julian is said to have hunted lions among its ruins.

Now I think that one of the things that strikes one most forcibly about the remains of Dura is how remarkably little life seems to have been affected by these political vicissitudes. Over the years one does indeed see a steady decline in the classical Hellenistic element. The layout of the town was, and remained, characteristically Greek; but within this framework a great deal of the architecture, particularly the domestic architecture, was purely traditional. There were certain persistent classical detail—columns, mouldings, door frames—but these were just about all. Many of the monuments begun by the Seleucids were never completed. The Greek agora, with its tidy, symmetrical layout, was clearly part only of a more spacious scheme that was never put into effect; and the part that was completed was gradually transformed into a busy, crowded oriental bazaar (Pls. LI, LII).¹ Such processes must have been hastened by the transfer from Greek to Parthian rule; but they had begun even before the Parthians arrived, and they owed as much to the inherent incongruities of the initial foundation as to any changes in the city's political allegiance. As for the Romans, the garrison brought its barracks, its bath-buildings, and a little amphitheatre for its entertainment. But in most respects life seems to have gone on just as before. Despite a veneer of classical culture Dura was and remained essentially a city of the Mesopotamian orient.

I say 'Mesopotamian orient' advisedly. It is customary to speak of Dura as a Parthian city, and politically, of course, that is just what it was for more than half its history. But whether it is right to speak also of the culture of Dura as Parthian except in this wide, political sense, I very much doubt. Like the Romans after them, the Parthian rulers did inevitably bring a veneer of alien taste and practice. As always the *graffiti* offer a lively picture of the ways of everyday life. In them we see a vivid reflection of the costume of the Iranian aristocracy, their jewels, their weapons, their fondness for the chase,² just as, later on, we see the equipment, the weapons, the uniform of the Roman

¹ For the original intention to build the agora on more spacious lines, see *Excavations at Dura-Europos: Preliminary Report on the Ninth Season, 1935-6*, pp. 21-22 and fig. 10; and for the gradual conversion of the tidy Greek plan into a crowded bazaar-quarter, *ibid.* pp. 28-68 and figs. 16, 17, and 78.

² e.g. *ibid.*, *Fifth Season, 1931-2*, pl. xxxv, 3-4, and p. 157: two hunting scenes from the Temple of Azzanathkona. Cf. Ghirshman, figs. 60 and 63.

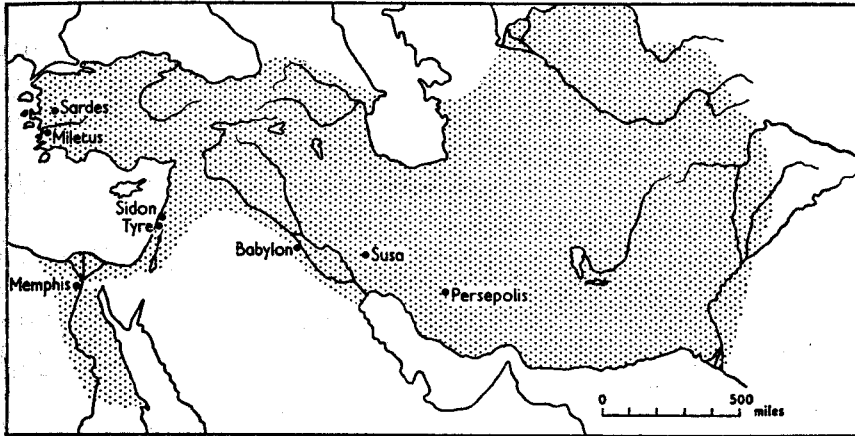


FIG. 4. The Achaemenid Empire at the time of its greatest extent, at the end of the sixth century B.C.

garrison.¹ Precisely the same features turn up again, in more formal guise, in the wall-paintings.²

That these alien elements, whether Iranian or classical, did

¹ e.g. *Fifth Season*, 1931-2, pl. xxxvi and p. 153: the tribune Heliodorus sacrificing to the Sun God, Iarhibol, from the same temple. The god wears the uniform of a Roman senior officer, and Heliodorus too is in uniform, whereas the third figure, on horseback, wears full Parthian costume.

² e.g. *Sixth Season*, 1932-3, pl. xlii, a and pp. 146-67: a mural from a private house (now in the Louvre) with scenes of banqueting and hunting wild asses; see also Ghirshman, fig. 62. The banqueters, who have native names written in both Greek and Palmyrene script, wear Greek costume, whereas the mounted huntsman is in Parthian dress and carries a bow. One sees much the same mixture in the paintings of the third-century synagogue (*Dura, Final Report*, viii, part 1: Karl Kraeling, *The Synagogue*, 1956); the horsemen invariably wear Parthian costume.

The best known of all paintings of Dura (J. H. Breasted, *Oriental Forerunners of Byzantine Painting*, 1924, pls. viii-xix; Franz Cumont, *Fouilles de Dura Europos*, 1922-3, pls. xxxi ff.; Ghirshman, fig. 59) dates from the last quarter of the first century A.D. and shows the members of one of the principal families of Dura sacrificing in the Temple of the Palmyrene divinities. The names of the men are all pure Greek, but the daughter is called Bithnanaia and all wear Parthian costume. This is in marked contrast to another and later (first half of the third century) painting from the same temple, showing a Roman officer, Julius Terentius, and members of his cohort sacrificing to the Palmyrene gods (Breasted, pl. xxi; Cumont, pls. xlix-li). Not only the soldiers but also the figures of the gods wear Roman military costume, in both cases closely resembling that portrayed in the drawing referred to in n. 1, above; and the scene is completed by the figures of the Tychai of Palmyra and of Dura, identified as such by inscriptions and clearly derivative from the famous Tyche of Antioch, by Eutyichides.

For some sensible remarks on the significance of Parthian costume in this context, see M. Avi-Yonah, *Oriental Art in Roman Palestine*, 1961, p. 80.

not really go very deep becomes very apparent when we look at the temples and cult statues of Dura or of the neighbouring, and in many respects very closely related, Parthian city of Hatra.¹ Not that the pantheon of either city was in any sense exclusive. All comers were welcome, and they figure in a bewildering variety of syncretistic forms. Some are shown in classical semblance, as regularly Hercules (who seems to have been a great favourite)² or as the figure of Allat, portrayed in the costume of Athena on an otherwise thoroughly unclassical cult-relief from Hatra (Pl. LIII).³ From the Iranian world we have Mithras; and we find the divinities of Palmyra worshipped as honoured guests of Palmyra's neighbour, Dura. All were welcome; but the nucleus of the pantheon was Semitic, and it was to the old Semitic divinities that the newcomers were, wherever possible, assimilated. The Roman-period religious life of these Mesopotamian cities is neatly epitomized in the splendid cult-statue of Assur-Bel, again from Hatra (Pl. LIV).⁴ The armour is classical, as is the Medusa on the back of his cloak. The eagles that protect him and the radiate head on the middle of his breastplate are those of Shamash, the local sun-god; and crouching at his feet is the symbolic figure, of Hellenistic origin, of the Tyche or guardian divinity of the city of Hatra.⁵ But, despite these alien trappings, the god himself, with his full Assyrian beard, is as native as his name. His is a stock

¹ Pending the substantive publication of the large-scale excavations undertaken since 1951, the basic publication remains that of W. Andrae, *Hatra*, Berlin, 1908-12. For the recent work, see Naji-el-Asil in *Illustrated London News*, Nov. 1951, pp. 762-5 and 806-7, and Dec. 1954, pp. 1115-17 and 1160-1; articles by Fuad Safar in *Sumer*, vols. vii-x, 1951-4; H. Lenzen, *Archäologischer Anzeiger*, 1955, cc. 334-75; and the writer's article in vol. iii of the Treccani *Enciclopedia dell'arte antica, classica e orientale*, pp. 1116-22.

² e.g. *Illustrated London News*, 25 Dec. 1954, p. 1160, fig. 3; Lenzen, *op. cit.*, Abb. 1.

³ Now in the Museum at Baghdad. The costume of the other two divinities is typically Parthian, whereas the iconography of a divine being standing on the back of a beast belongs to an older, Mesopotamian tradition. The completely unrealistic, analytical composition, with the beast in profile and the three figures frontal, is characteristic of the native output of Hatra, as of Dura.

⁴ This figure (*Illustrated London News*, 18 Dec. 1954, p. 1116, figs. 5 and 6; Lenzen, Abb. 2, 3; Ghirshman, fig. 1) is carved in Mosul marble and was the cult statue of one of the lesser temples (Temple V) that surrounded the main sanctuary. In the forehall of the same temple was found another of the finest pieces of Hatrene sculpture, the statue of the princess Washfari, daughter of King Sanatruq (*Illustrated London News*, *loc. cit.*, fig. 4).

⁵ Cf. the Tychai of Palmyra and Dura, referred to in p. 187, n. 2.

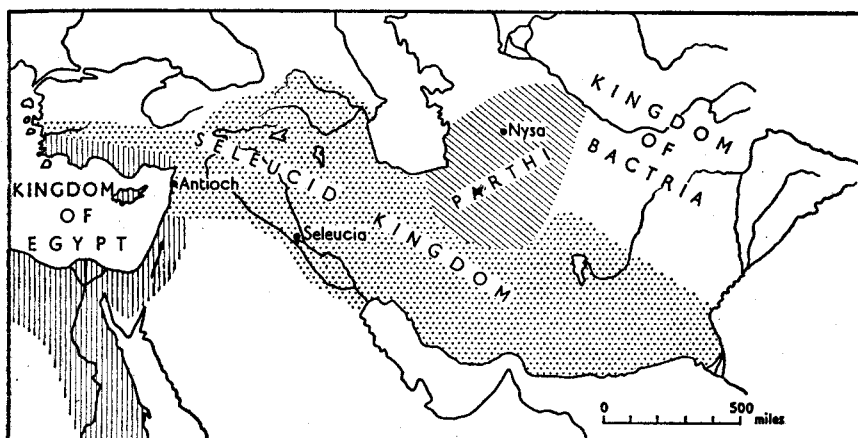


FIG. 5. The Hellenistic Kingdoms of the Near East in the second half of the third century B.C.

that goes back far beyond the empires of Persia or of Alexander, of Parthia or of Rome.

I do not want to labour the point. Let us be content with one more illustration, again from Hatra. Hatra, you will recall, lies in northern Mesopotamia, on the western margin of the ancient Assyria. It is remarkable for the quantity and often very high quality of its architectural and sculptural remains, all of which date from the two and a half centuries prior to its destruction by Shapur about A.D. 250; and it is of exceptional importance for our present inquiry in that, except for a brief period just before its final destruction, it was on the Parthian side of the frontier, a semi-autonomous principality occupying much the same position in relation to Parthia as Palmyra did to Rome. This geographical and political relationship means, of course, that the remains from Hatra offer a very valuable control upon those from the cities and principalities which lay on the Roman side of the line and which constitute the bulk of the available evidence.

One's first and most obvious impression is of the number of features that these frontier cities have in common. At Palmyra the root stock is more Syrian than Mesopotamian, and the impact of Rome was inevitably stronger and went deeper. But one is left none the less with a very clear impression that a citizen of Palmyra would have felt quite as much at home in Hatra or in Parthian Dura as he would, for example, in Roman Antioch. No doubt this was due fundamentally to a community of ethnic, cultural, and spiritual background; but it was constantly being reinforced by an interchange of men, goods, and ideas which seems to have taken remarkably little account of

political barriers. Just as in Roman Palmyra one is faced at every turn by the impact of Parthian manners and customs, so in Hatra one is left in no doubt whatsoever that the classical world lay just across the frontier.

The great central monument at Hatra, the temple of the sun-god Shamash,¹ was already well advanced by the third quarter of the first century A.D. (a date equivalent to A.D. 77 appears in an inscription on the façade) and it is a fascinating mixture of east and west. With its great vaulted *iwan* its plan is essentially Mesopotamian: the fire temple too (if it be rightly identified as such), though vaulted like all the rest of the buildings, belongs to the same family as that of Surkh Kotal, and that as we have seen goes back to Persian Susa. The masonry, on the other hand (Pl. LVa), is quite clearly the work of craftsmen from Roman Syria (it is the only dressed stone building of its age in Mesopotamia).² So, too, in its broad conception, if not in its detail and proportions, is the idea of an applied columnar façade, a Hellenistic scheme of which the Roman architects of the late Republic and early Empire made great use, but which seems to have originated in Asia Minor and of which one can already detect the influence in late Hellenistic Syria.³ The capitals

¹ The sacred character of the building seems to be established beyond doubt by the many inscriptions revealed by the excavations. Dio Cassius (lxviii. 31) refers to the whole city as dedicated to the sun. The previous identification of this, the principal building, as a palace rests on its obvious affinities with later, Sassanian palace architecture. It is important to remember, however, that here we have 'Parthian' architecture still in its formative, experimental stage. Whatever the sources of its individual elements, such as the *iwan*, the way they were used here and the scale on which they were used must in some cases have lacked precedent. Some innovations, e.g. the masonry conventions, do not seem to have been repeated outside Hatra; others passed into commonplace Parthian and Sassanian usage.

² The facing of the walls with alternate courses of orthostates and of flat slabs, which project inwards to grip and to contain the crudely mortared rubble core, is typical of Hellenistic and Romano-Hellenistic building. The vaulting, in radially laid courses of stone voussoirs, with a backing of mortared rubble, is in its design characteristic of the stone-vaulted monuments of Roman Syria (e.g. the baths at Gerasa), but is carried out on an unprecedented scale, with spans of up to 14.80 m., which may perhaps reflect local models in lighter materials. There is an excellent analytical diagram in Upham Pope, vol. i, fig. 92, after Andrae.

³ e.g. the tomb of Hamrath at Suwêda in the Hauran, datable to the first half of the first century B.C. De Vogüé, *La Syrie Centrale*, pl. i; H. C. Butler, *Princeton Expedition to Syria, 1899-1900*, part I: *Architecture and Other Arts*, 1903, pp. 324-6. For tombs closely comparable in this respect at Hatra, see Upham Pope, vol. i, fig. 113, after Andrae.

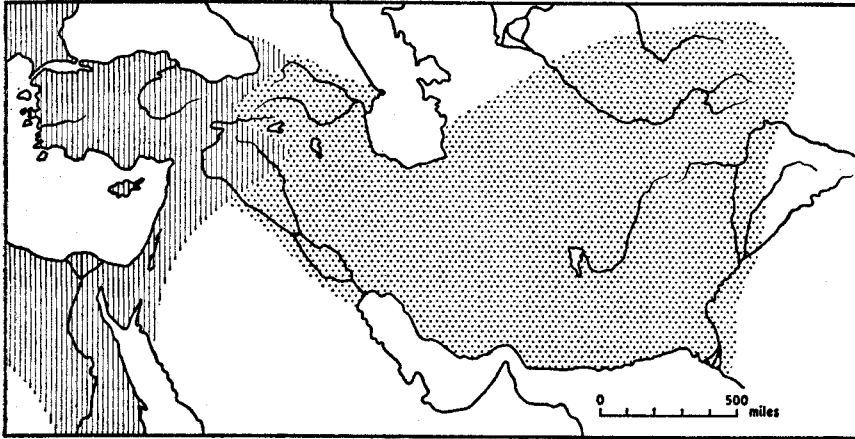


FIG. 6. The Roman (*vertical hatching*) and the Sassanian (*stippled*) Empires in the fourth century A.D.

(Pl. LVI) are essentially classical, and the same is true of a great deal of the carved detail. Some of it is very local in spirit and treatment, though even here I think one can detect the impact of classical craftsmanship. Some of it is as unmistakably classical in derivation as, for example, the most classical of Gandhâran work (e.g. Pl. LVIII*b*).

What are the immediate sources of the classical elements at Hatra? Rather than discuss this question *in vacuo* I should like to show a couple of features which seem to indicate a relationship, direct or indirect, between the temple at Hatra and an almost exactly contemporary monument of the Roman side of the line, the great temple of Jupiter Heliopolitanus at Baalbek.

The temple at Baalbek was standing to capital height in A.D. 60¹ and the fact that the plan incorporated elements both of native Semitic and of Hellenistic derivation does not alter the fact that in many respects it was a very Roman building; indeed it is one of the few buildings in Syria which was Roman in the fullest sense of the word, having been directly influenced by the contemporary architecture of metropolitan Rome. This makes it all the more interesting to find, incorporated in the entablature of the temple, elements that are Roman only by virtue of their context. One of these is the frieze, the garlands of which are looped from the projecting forequarters of alternate bulls and lions, symbolic respectively of Jupiter-Baal and of his youthful male colleague within the Heliopolitan triad (Pl. LVIII*a*).

¹ *Bulletin du Musée de Beyrouth*, i. 1937, pp. 95 ff.; *Syria*, xxxi, 1954, p. 97, n. 1.

There was nothing new in the architectural use of this fore-quarter, or *protome*, motif as the supporting member of a capital or bracket. Such capitals are typical of Achaemenid Persian architecture,¹ and the Persians carried them with them to Syria and Lebanon and very possibly into Asia Minor. There is a fine fifth-century capital of just this sort in the Museum at Beyrouth, which comes from Sidon. The motif turns up again in Hellenistic Delos and at Miletus, and we even find it at Pompeii in the Hellenistic-inspired Style II stuccoes of the House of the Cryptoporticus.² It is no surprise, therefore, to find it also at Hatra (Pl. LVb).³ Whatever the immediate source in this case, it was a motif which from the fifth century B.C. onwards would have been available for use anywhere within the area with which we are today concerned. In Schlumberger's terminology it was part of 'the old world of the Iranian countries', or, as I would prefer to say, it was an element of the very mixed, eclectic art which the Achaemenid Persians made their own at Persepolis and Susa, and which they then rediffused over large areas of western Asia and the Levant.

The protome frieze, however, is not the only intrusive element at Baalbek. The lion-head spouts and scrollwork of the sima (Pl. LVIIa) are purely classical, deriving ultimately from the Hellenistic architecture of Asia Minor and more immediately (one presumes) from the classical cities of the Syrian coastlands. The key pattern below it must have had a very similar pedigree, since, although it was very common in the Roman architecture of southern Syria, it was already present on the earliest surviving Roman-period monuments of this region at Si',⁴ But what about the curious, corkscrew-like moulding between them? There is nothing classical about that. So far as I know the only parallels are on a random block at Samaria;⁵ on the façade of

¹ Eugen v. Mercklin, *Antike Figuralkapitelle*, 1962, pp. 27-30, nos. 82 (Pasargadae), 83 (Susa), 84 (Persepolis), 85 (Naqsh-i-Rustam), 86 (Salamis in Cyprus), 87 (Sidon). Cf. Upham Pope, vol. iv, pl. 101.

² V. Spinazzola, *Pompei alla luce degli scavi nuovi di Via dell'Abbondanza*, 1953, vol. i, fig. 557, and pl. xxi. For the westward diffusion of the motif in Hellenistic and Roman times, see E. von Mercklin, *Römische Mitteilungen*, lx-lxi, 1953-4, pp. 184-99.

³ In the flanking wall of one of the pair of *iwan* added to the north end of the main façade at a somewhat later date. For a bracket of this sort at Bishapur in the third century A.D., see Ghirshman, fig. 190.

⁴ In the doorway of the Temple of Dushara; H. C. Butler, fig. 336 of the work cited on p. 181, n. 2.

⁵ Crowfoot, Kenyon, and Sukenik, *Samaria-Sebaste*, vol. i: *The Buildings*, 1942, pl. lxxxv, 1-2: on an architrave bracket found out of context.

the temple at Hatra, where we find it used in company with mouldings which are for the most part classical and seemingly of Hellenistic derivation (Pl. LVII**b**),¹ and used as the necking of a column at Assur.² Where this curious corkscrew moulding comes from is, on the available evidence, anybody's guess. Mine would be that it is analogous to the early first-century mouldings of Palmyra, which are non-classical and which Seyrig has convincingly attributed to Palmyra's commercial contacts with the Parthian east.³ If so, it is the reverse equivalent of the specifically Roman classical elements which we find at Hatra and elsewhere in and beyond the eastern frontiers of Parthia.

This Roman-period civilization of the frontier cities was clearly a culture with deep roots, with a character of its own and capable of vigorous development and, at its best, of considerable creative originality. I see no reason to question the familiar view that it was a product of the political and social conditions established in the first instance under Arsacid Parthian rule, and later modified by the steady spread of Roman influence in and beyond Syria. Most of the surviving manifestations that we have been discussing belong in fact to the time when Rome was already a factor in the equation. But we are also beginning to get a clearer picture of the immediately pre-Roman phase both within and beyond the late Hellenistic Parthian frontiers—within them notably from Nimrud Dagh, the royal mausoleum of King Antiochus I of Commagene;⁴ beyond them at a number of sites both in the Lebanon and, far to the south, at Petra and

¹ The acanthus-leaf frieze and the kymation illustrated here both derive from Hellenistic models. I owe this observation to Mr. D. E. Strong. For other examples of this corkscrew moulding at Hatra, see Andrae, *Hatra*, vol. ii, Abb. 76, 140, 232, 242-4.

² W. Andrae and H. Lenzen, *Die Partherstadt Assur*, 1933, p. 88 and pl. 41, e.

³ *Syria*, xxi, 1940, pp. 277-337. See H. Kalayan in *Bulletin du Musée de Beyrouth*, xvii, 1964, pp. 105-10.

⁴ Th. Goell and F. K. Dörner, *Nemrud Dagh: the Excavations of the Hierothesion of Antiochus I of Commagene* (not yet available to the writer). Good illustrations of most of the more important pieces will be found in Ghirshman, figs. 57-67. See also the article 'Nemrud Dagh' in vol. v of the Treccani *Enciclopedia dell'arte antica, classica e orientale*, pp. 409-13. The extraordinary mixture of Greek, Persian, and native elements is faithfully reflected in the pantheon of divinities portrayed in the sculpture and described in detail in the great dedicatory inscription (L. Jalabert and R. Mouterde, *Inscriptions grecques et latines de la Syrie*, vol. i: *Commagène et Cyrrestique*, 1929, n. 1): Zeus Oromasdes (=the Persian Ahura Mazda), Apollo Mithra Helios Hermes and Artagnes Herakles Ares (=the Persian Verethragna), together with the personification of Commagene.

elsewhere in Nabataea, along the southern fringes of Syria towards Arabia. Antiochus of Commagene, who died in 34 B.C., was a vassal of the king of Parthia who had adopted many of the customs and practices of his overlords, including their dress, as one sees him, for example, in the well-known reliefs that show him clasping the hands of, respectively, Herakles-Verethragna, portrayed (as at Hatra) in the Greek manner, and of a wholly orientalized Apollo-Mithras.¹ The mausoleum of Nimrud Dagh is a grandiose and, in the fullest sense of the word, barbaric monument; and, with its mixture of Achaemenid Persian, Hellenistic Greek, and contemporary Parthian elements, it is one to which the term 'Graeco-Iranian' can very reasonably be applied.²

But how do we stand when we turn to a monument such as the altar at Kalat Fakra, illustrated in Pl. LIXa? Kalat Fakra is a typical 'High Place' of Hellenistic and early Roman date in the Lebanon, not far from Baalbek.³ The character of the site and the form of the altar are both Semitic; we now know that it was altars just like this that were the immediate precursors of the great altars of sacrifice in front of the Temple of Jupiter at Baalbek.⁴ But the masonry traditions and the architectural detail are both alien accretions. The 'crowstep', or merlon, pattern on the parapet is a legacy from the time when this countryside was ruled by the Achaemenid Persians. As we saw

¹ Ghirshman, figs. 79 and 80.

² See the penetrating analysis of the traditions represented in this sculpture at Nimrud Dagh by Schlumberger in *Syria*, xxxvii, 1960, pp. 276-81.

³ Since the publication of this site by D. Krencker and W. Zschietzschmann in *Römische Tempel in Syrien*, 1938, pp. 48-49, Abb. 69-72, it has been partially cleared and restored by M. Kalayan on behalf of the Department of Antiquities. The site is that of a 'High Place' with a group of altars and altar-towers of varying sizes and dates. The largest, which bears obvious analogies to the altar-towers in the Great Court at Baalbek and is of Claudian date, has the same Egyptian cornice and 'crowstep' merlons as that illustrated here.

Similar altars have been located on a number of other sites in Lebanon, most strikingly at Maschnaka, in the mountains above Byblos, where the Hellenistic altar, very similar to that here illustrated, incorporates an earlier, simpler altar, and has itself been subsequently classicized by the addition of an outer ring of columns. H. Kalayan in *Bulletin du Musée de Beyrouth*, xvii, 1964, pp. 105-10.

⁴ An altar of this form, with the same 'Egyptian' cornice moulding, was a prominent feature of the immediate predecessor of the present, early Imperial sanctuary. I owe this information to the Emir Maurice Chéhab. For the present altar-towers, which were demolished by Theodosius and have recently been reconstituted, see P. Collart and P. Coupel, *L'Autel monumental de Baalbek*, 1951.

just now, it was already a feature of the great palace of Persepolis in the fifth century B.C.; it was still current when the Temple of Bel at Palmyra was being built, in the second quarter of the first century A.D., and throughout the century it was to remain a standard feature of the rock-cut tomb-façades of Petra and of its southern outpost, Medaein Saleh (Pl. LIX*b*). The moulding below it is ultimately Egyptian and may derive from the period during the third century B.C. when the Lebanon was part of the kingdom of the Ptolemies. Alternatively it too may well go back to Achaemenid times.¹ The Lebanon was never under Parthian rule, and there is nothing here that is specifically Parthian. But both in the Lebanon and in Nabataea the Achaemenid Persian element is as clearly and specifically documented as the Hellenistic Greek. You will recall the square Nabataean temples which I showed you just now as parallels to the temples at Surkh Kotal and at Susa. These are usually taken to be the result of contemporary contacts with Parthia; but I am inclined to agree with M. Schlumberger² that they are just as likely, if not more so, to represent a legacy from the time when the whole of Syria was under Achaemenid rule. The picture that is beginning to emerge of the late pre-Roman civilization of this whole area does in fact bear a very strong family resemblance to that of northern Syria and Mesopotamia.

To describe the civilization of Parthia as 'Graeco-Iranian' is surely thoroughly misleading.³ The fact that the term could equally well be used of much that is patently not Parthian is perhaps unimportant. What is, on the other hand, crucial is that this definition omits what in most cases was probably the most significant single component of the cultural cake. In Mesopotamia and in Syria the Achaemenid Persians, the Greeks, the

¹ For the 'Egyptian' cornice (or '*gorge égyptienne*') it will be sufficient to cite the examples of the palaces at Persepolis and Susa (e.g. Upham Pope, vol. iv, pl. 86, in the Palace of Darius) and the various monuments cited above, at Baalbek, Palmyra, Petra, and Medaein Saleh, where it occurs regularly in company with the 'crowstep' merlon. It subsequently entered the repertory of the architects of Sassanian Persia (e.g. at Firuzabad, *ibid.*, pl. 146).

² *Art. cit.* (p. 194, n. 2), p. 276. One of the reasons for underestimating the effects of Achaemenid rule upon the arts of their subject territories is the highly eclectic character of Achaemenid art itself, well exemplified in the case of the 'Egyptian' cornice-moulding.

³ In disagreeing with M. Schlumberger upon this point of terminology, I would like to emphasize that in other respects I consider his article (p. 194, n. 2) to be the outstanding recent contribution to the whole question of the characteristics and sources of 'Parthian' art.

Parthians, and the Romans ruled in succession over peoples whose civilization was already old long before their conquerors had stepped on to the stage of history. In varying manners and degrees each newcomer left some mark. But the more one studies the remains of these frontier cities, the more one is impressed by their capacity to absorb and to transmute these alien borrowings into something new and vital, and very much their own. To the extent that we polarize the history of western Asia in Roman times into a confrontation of the two great powers, Rome and Parthia, we tend to obscure the part played by this cultural third force within the territories on either side of the political frontiers. These territories were indeed the middlemen for the passage of goods and ideas from west to east and from east to west. But they were also something very much more than that. They were a creative centre in their own right, a melting-pot and a forcing-house for many of the most vital of the new ideas that were to carry the ancient world forward into the Middle Ages.

When I first planned this lecture I had hoped to conclude by discussing in some detail one of the most fruitful and far-reaching of the ideas that emerged from this region during the Roman period, that of the use of frontality as a dominating rule of artistic composition. Not, of course, as used in the charming family group from near Edessa illustrated in Pl. LXa.¹ This merely conforms to a convention of communication between subject and beholder which might belong to any age; apart from the exotic costumes there is little that might not have been found, let us say, on a tombstone in contemporary Rome. I am thinking rather of the application of this same frontal convention to scenes which the Greeks would unquestionably have presented in a naturalistic, narrative convention, with the principal actors facing, not the audience, but each other (Pl. LXb). This frontality is a characteristic of late antique and Byzantine art which many people—and I am one—are convinced owes a great deal to the art of these frontier cities.² Unfortunately there are many reputable scholars who would dispute this, and the subject is clearly not one to be discussed adequately in the few minutes that remain. Let me be content to remark that the critics of a western Asiatic origin have a lot on their side. They

¹ The family of a local dignitary named Moqimû. *Syria*, xxxiv, 1957, pp. 315–18 and pl. 22; cf. *Illustrated London News*, 21 Feb., 1953, p. 287.

² As already noted by Breasted, soon after the discovery of the first paintings at Dura, in *Oriental Forerunners of Byzantine Painting*, 1924.

are absolutely right in denying that this convention is a heritage from the ancient east;¹ they are right too in claiming that the formal equivalent of these Parthian frontal compositions can be found all over the Roman world, at first on the frontiers and then gradually permeating the centre, and that they represent a breakdown of the old-established classical canons which was by no means limited to the cities of the eastern provinces.

Where I feel that the critics are at fault is in concentrating almost exclusively on the formal, art-historical properties of this convention. It also had, or could have, a meaning. At Dura, at Palmyra, at Hatra, that meaning is clear. It is a device for emphasizing the spiritual qualities of the persons and scenes portrayed by putting them in close and direct contact with the beholder.² This is exactly the inner meaning of so much Byzantine ecclesiastical art, and I do therefore find it very difficult indeed not to accept the rows of divinities, priests, and warriors of Palmyra, Dura, and Hatra as the linear ancestors of, let us say, the rows of saints in S. Apollinare Nuovo at Ravenna; or again the figure of Abraham in the synagogue at Dura³ as the forebear of innumerable similar patriarchs, apostles, saints, and martyrs on the walls of Byzantine Christendom.

Finally, and equally briefly, a glance at another familiar but still controversial problem, that of the origins of the Byzantine dome. The Strzygowskian dispute upon this topic hinged very largely on the formal architectural properties of the dome as most commonly used in Byzantine architecture over a square bay. 'Squinches' and 'pendentives' became virtually terms of abuse, to be hurled recklessly at one's opponents; and given this very restricted framework of reference it is not altogether surprising that the argument was inconclusive, since in fact both in the east and in the west the dome can be shown to have been used in the Byzantine manner well back within the Roman Imperial age. The sort of questions to which the earlier contestants might usefully have devoted more attention was how the Byzantine domes were related to the broader architectural systems of which they were a part, what were the historical antecedents of the building techniques employed, and what

¹ The point is made very tellingly by Ghirshman, fig. 87, juxtaposing an Achaemenid frieze of warriors at Persepolis with one of the same subject from Palmyra.

² For a penetrating restatement of this position, with recent bibliography, see Schlumberger, *art. cit.* (p. 194, n. 2), pp. 253 ff.

³ Kraeling, *op. cit.* (p. 187, n. 2), pl. 78.

was the symbolical significance of the dome in Byzantine architecture.

To all of these questions we can in fact now give answers that would be agreed by most scholars. We can see that the broad architectural concepts of space and mass embodied in early Byzantine architecture derive in the main from the west, from the concrete-vaulted architecture of Imperial Rome. But the building materials and techniques are not Roman at all. The Byzantine vaults were of brick; and the vaulting techniques too were of a very distinctive type, derivative from the mud-brick architecture of the ancient east, where one can trace them right back to the second millennium B.C., and where they have remained in use through Roman and Islamic times right down to the present day.¹ I am not suggesting that the architects of Constantinople went to Mesopotamia for their inspiration. They did not; they used the materials and techniques already established in the northern Aegean when Constantinople was founded. But these techniques had in the first place filtered westwards into Asia Minor from the neighbouring provinces of Syria and Mesopotamia.

Why then did the architects of Constantinople choose the dome? They chose it because in the ancient east it already had a clear and specific symbolic meaning that was precisely attuned to the needs of Christianity, which was, remember, an oriental religion. It was the canopy of heaven, the symbolic covering proper to the person of a divinity or of his representative on earth, the divine monarch. These are concepts with which we are all familiar in Byzantine and medieval art; and since Karl Lehmann published his remarkable paper on 'the Dome of Heaven' nearly twenty years ago there can be little doubt of the effective source of these ideas.² Whenever we see the figure of the Pantocrator gazing down upon us from the crown of a Christian dome we are looking at something of which the pedigree had been established long, long before, as for instance in the little carved dome over the holy of holies of the Temple of Bel at Palmyra.³ At the centre of this we have, instead of Christ, the figure of Jupiter. The figures encircling him are the six other planets, and in the outer corners winged beings support the

¹ See the writer's chapter on Byzantine building methods in *The Great Palace of the Byzantine Emperors*, ed. D. Talbot Rice, 1958, pp. 52-104.

² *Art Bulletin*, xxvii, 1945, pp. 1-27.

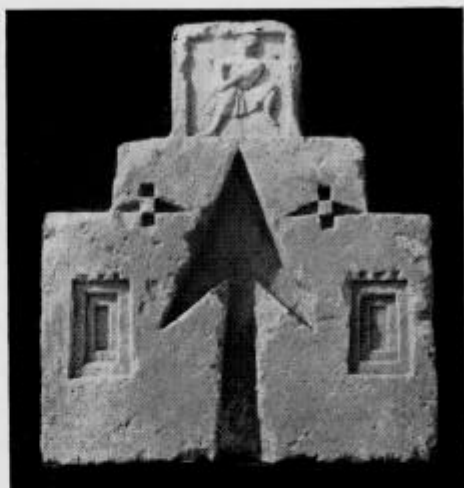
³ See H. Seyrig in *Syria*, xiv, 1933, p. 254, fig. 1; L. Curtius, *Römische Mitteilungen*, 1, 1935, pp. 348-53.

circuit of the firmament. In Christian usage the latter became cherubim (as in the dome of Hagia Sophia) or winged evangelists; and the attendant planets became apostles or prophets. The meanings have shifted, but the central theme and much of the iconography is what it had been for over a thousand years past.

These are just two instances of the sort of far-reaching ideas which first took shape in Roman times in these countries along the eastern frontiers. The Romans had a saying *ex Africa semper aliquid novi*, 'there is always something new from Africa'. They were apt to be rather blind to the meaning of what was going on in the east, and so at times I think are we. I hope I have succeeded this afternoon at any rate in conveying the idea that the ancient East was very far from being a spent force in Roman times. Far from it. It had lost its political power but it was still, as it had always been, one of the vital creative centres of the civilized world. Only if we remember that fact can we hope to make sense of Rome's relations with the Parthian East.



a. Surkh Kotal: pilaster of the Buddhist platform



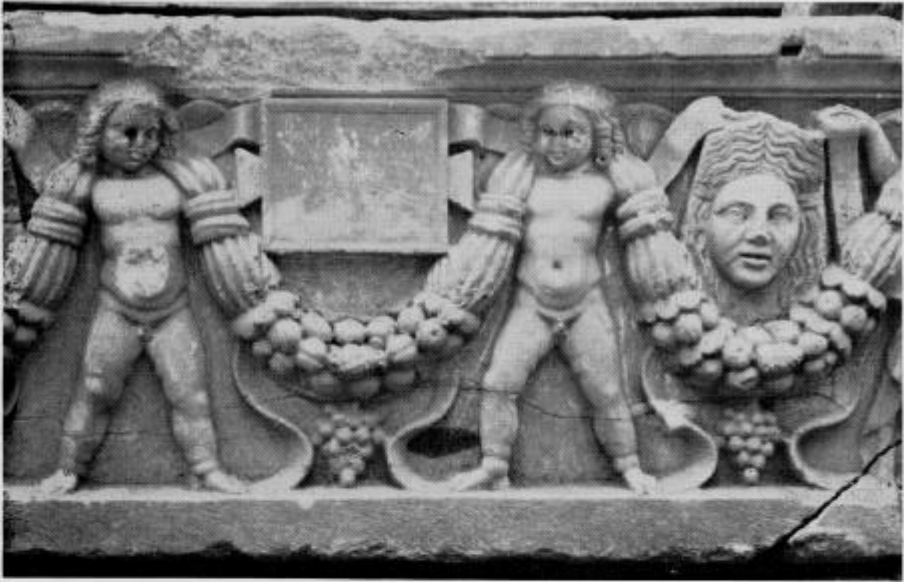
b. Surkh Kotal: stepped merlon



c. Surkh Kotal: fragment of a frieze

Photographs Daniel Schlumberger

PLATE I.

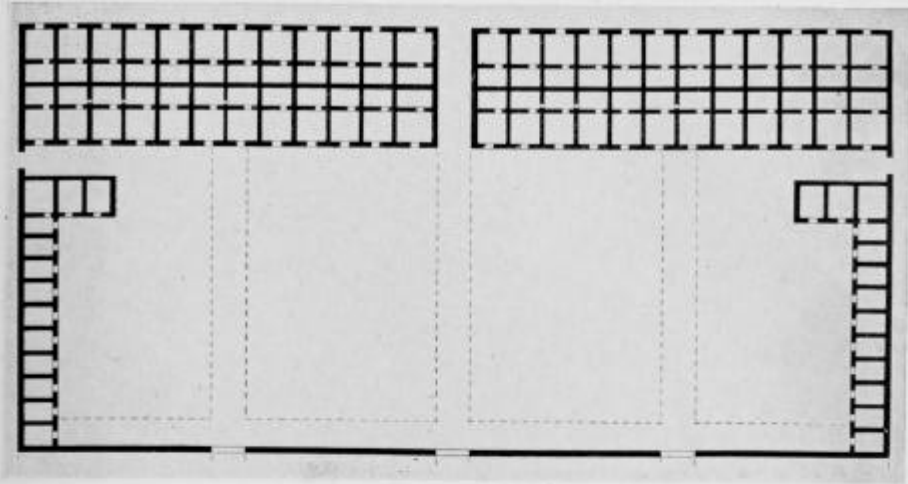


a. Adana, Cilicia: marble sarcophagus



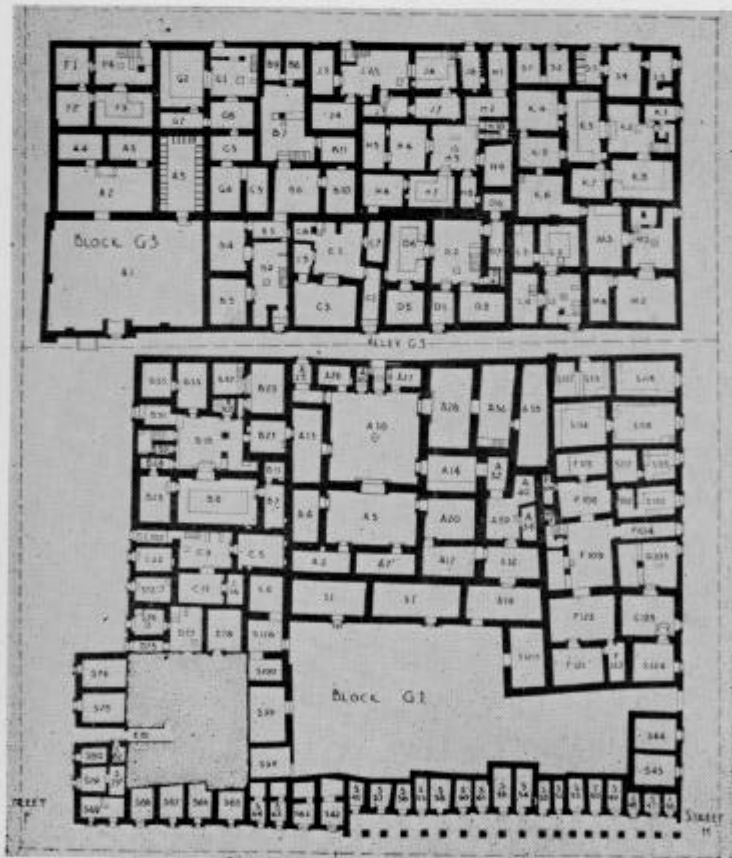
b. Izmir (Smyrna): marble sarcophagus

Photographs J. B. Ward-Perkins



a. Dura: plan of the Seleucid Agora. The original plan, curtailed during construction, called for the incorporation of four more *insulae*, which would have nearly doubled the open central space

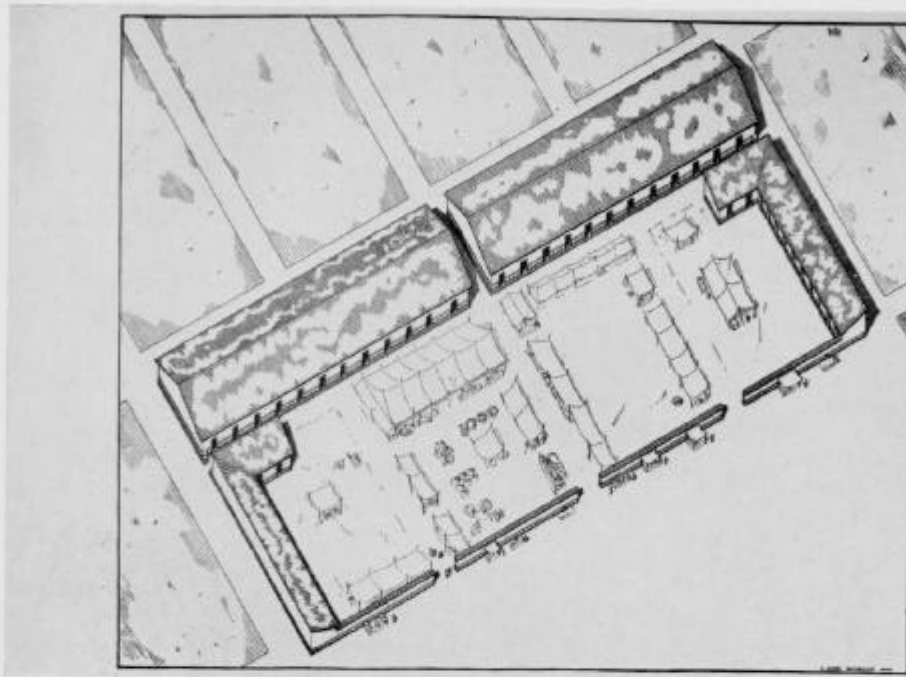
From the *Excavations at Dura-Europos: Ninth Season*



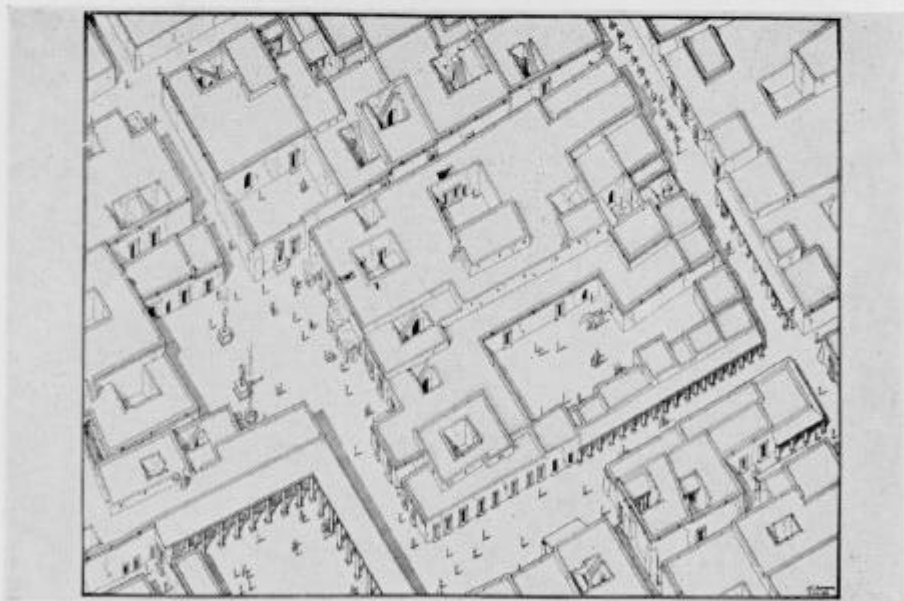
b. Dura: plan of part of the Bazaar Quarter which grew up within and over the remains of the Seleucid Agora. The area shown corresponds roughly with the right-hand part of the plan illustrated above

From the *Excavations at Dura-Europos: Ninth Season*

PLATE LII



a. Dura: reconstructed view of the Seleucid Agora (cf. Pl. LI a)
From the *Excavations at Dura-Europos: Ninth Season*



b. Dura: reconstructed view of part of the Bazaar Quarter (cf. Pl. LI b)
From the *Excavations at Dura-Europos: Ninth Season*



Hatra: bas-relief of Athena-Allat and two attendant
divinities, from Temple V
Iraq National Museum



Hatra: cult-statue of Assur-Bel
Iraq National Museum



a. Hatra, the Great Temple: flanking wall of one of the added *isean*, with decorative frieze of bull *protomai*



b. Detail of the above

Photographs J. B. Ward-Perkins

PLATE LVI



a. Hatra, the Great Temple: Corinthian capital



b. Hatra, the Great Temple: Ionic capital

Photographs J. B. Ward-Perkins



a. Baalbek, Temple of Jupiter Heliopolitanus: Cornice



b. Hatra, the Great Temple; moulding in the doorway of one of the great *iwān*

Photographs J. B. Ward-Perkins



b. Hatra, the Great Temple: head of a youth,
from the façade
Institut français d'Archéologie, Beyrouth



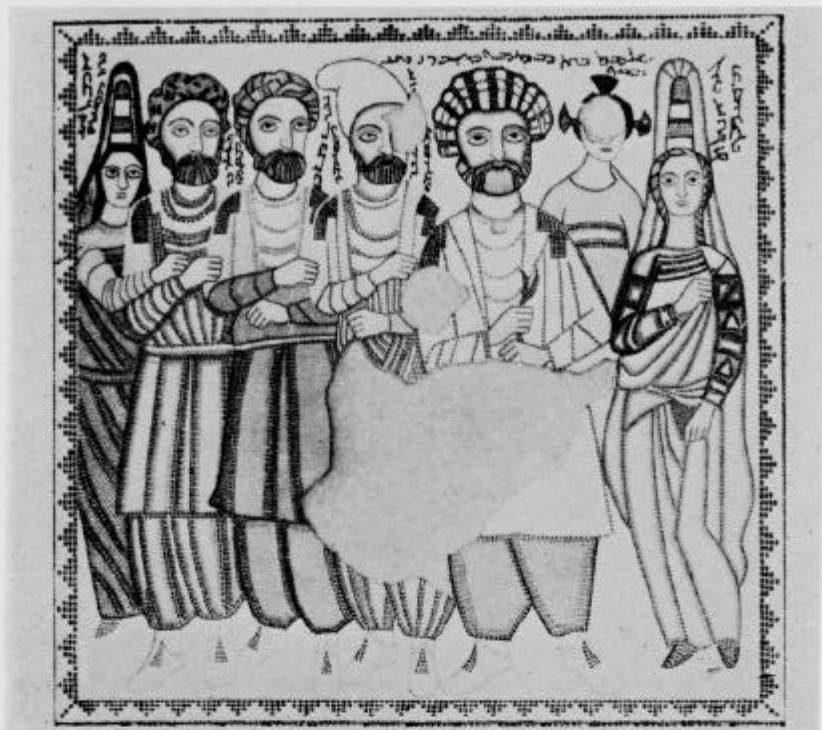
a. Baalbek, Temple of Dionysus: detail of the main frieze
Institut français d'Archéologie, Beyrouth



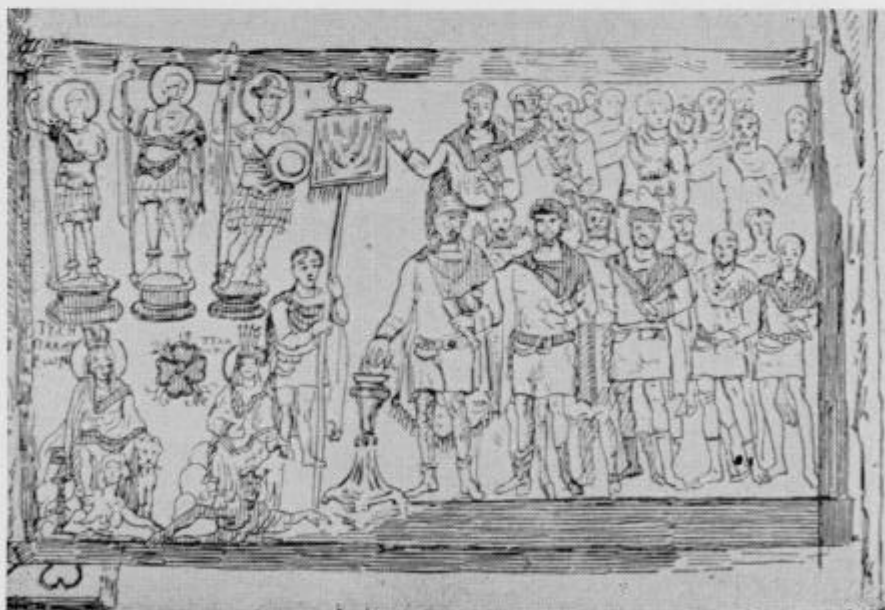
a. Kalat Fakra, Lebanon: altar
Photograph J. B. Ward-Perkins



b. Meda'in Saleh, Saudi Arabia: rock-cut tomb façades
Photograph H.E. the Saudi Arabian Ambassador to the Quirinal



a. Edessa, funerary mosaic: the family of Moqimû
From the *Illustrated London News*



b. Dura, wall-painting in the Temple of the Palmyrene Gods: the tribune Terentius
and his troops sacrificing to the gods of the temple
From the *Excavations at Dura-Europos: Fifth Season*