households and family providers, and the traditional division of labor between the sexes, and will identify the informal sources of support on which unemployed men rely for extra income. Finally, it will enumerate the forms of public assistance which are granted, the degrees and causes of unemployment, and the negative and positive effects of public assistance on the unemployed.

Mohammed Shunnaq

The Arabic Pantheon in the Inscriptions at Palmyra

Some scholars have defined religion as belief in spiritual, supernatural beings who have influence on the course of life in this world, while others have defined it as an appeal to superhuman powers based on the belief that such powers order the course of natural events and human life. (Ali 1970, Vol. 6:5) The people of Palmyra believed in the existence of a number of spiritual beings, worshipped them, and tried to gain their favor. These powers were represented in a large number of gods. As we know, the Palmyrene religion was not a revealed religion; it was polytheistic. That it was polytheistic need not surprise us, in view of the fact that it was the result of mixing and blending of the many civilizations of the region and neighboring regions. The people of Palmyra were influenced by Mesopotamians and adopted from them the worship of the following gods: Nerjel, Bel, and Nebo. They also worshipped some of the Aramaic gods whose provenance was in the northwest: Yarhabul, 'Aqtabul, Malakbel, Astarte, and Ba'al Shamin. Finally, they were influenced by the cults of the Greeks and Romans, some of whose deities -- Zeus, Apollo, Athena, and Hercules, for example -- are represented in the Palmyrene pantheon.

Arabian gods also had a big role in the religion of Palmyreans. The Palmyreans worshipped most of the pre-Islamic Arabian deities, such as al-Lat, al-‘Uzza, and Munat, who are mentioned in the Holy Qur’an. For example, in Surat al-Najm we read: "Have you considered al-Lat and al-‘Uzza, and yet a third one, Munat? Can it be that, for you the male and for Him, the female?" (al-Najm: 19, 20, 21) Ibn Al-Kalbi says that these were some of the gods worshipped by the Arabs, and that the tribe of Quraysh used to circumambulate the Ka’ba saying: "By al-Lat and al-‘Uzza and yet a third one, Munat; these are the highest birds and we hope for their intercession." Munat was the most ancient idol worshipped by the Arabs. They adopted the cult of al-Lat after her and subsequently adopted al-‘Uzza. Thus al-‘Uzza was the newest addition. (Ibn Al-Kalbi 1924: 13-19).

There was a temple for al-Lat in Palmyra in the western part of the city. Two
inscriptions were found there. One --on the door of the temple -- is in Palmyrene, while the other --on a column next to the door -- is bilingual (Greek and Palmyrene). This goddess was the Lord of Warfare. The Arab tribes who had settled in Syria at the end of the Hellenistic age used to worship her. Herodotus is the first historian to mention her cult, but we also have evidence for this in some archaeological remains and in pre-Islamic Arabic sources (Gawlikowski 1983: 209). says that the cult of al-Lat was introduced to the Hawran area by the Nabataeans and Safaitic tribes but quickly acquired a Greek character. Thus al-Lat became identified with Athena. (Dussaud 1959: 121). This explains why Wahab al-Lat, the son of Queen Zenobia, was also called "Athenodouros."

This brings us to the issue of how the prominent people of Palmyra were given compound names that included the names of deities. In addition to the name Wahab al-Lat (CIS:4134-4139 and CIS:4141-4158) we have found inscriptions that mention Amat al-Lat and Salam al-Lat (CIS:3966), as well as Sa'd al-Lat (CIS:3973). The names of other Arabian gods are also found. The following Palmyrene text, for example, compares her with the god Rahim:

\[\text{Ilt wrhm 'bd wmwda rb'l br 'wyda br yd'w wdkyr sm' br qsyn}\]

Teixidor translates this as "To al-Lat and Rahim made with thanks Rabl son of Uwayda son of Yad'u; remember Shalma son of Qusayna". (Teixidor 1979:63) In another inscription (CIS:3955) al-Lat appears in a comparison with the deities Shams and Rahim, whom the author of the text describes as "good gods".

The Palmyrenes also worshipped the gods Arsu and 'Azizu. It is thought that the god Arsu is the god Ruda, while 'Azizu is the god al-'Uzza (who was represented as Venus among the Arabs). The gods Arsu and 'Azizu appear together in one inscription (CIS:3974).

The Palmyrenes also knew the goddess Munat; they had a temple for her. Teixidor mentions that Munat is never mentioned together with al-Lat in the inscriptions, which indicates that they came to Palmyra separately (Teixidor 1979:17). Munat and al-Lat are some of the deities held in common by both the northern and southern Arabs.

The god Shamsh appears to have been worshipped by the Palmyrenes, as we see in an inscription (CIS:3978) which says: "In the month of Aylul 396 [= 84 A.D.], at this place (hamana) where incense is burned [i.e. at this sacred place], they made and presented to Shamsh and Zubayda, sons of Malik bn. Yadya'al bal bn. Nasha, who is called 'Abdabel and who belongs to one of the clans of the Majdat to Shams the god of their ancestral house for their lives and the lives of their brothers and of their sons.

Scholars disagree about the interpretation of the word \text{hmna} in the original inscription; we have translated it as "the place where incense is burned" or "the sacred place." Ingholt says that it refers to the incense burner which is placed on the highest part of the great altar. Starkey agreed, even though he added that this could also be understood metaphorically, i.e. that the "place where incense is burned" could simply be a place of worship. Littmann, however, was of the opinion that the word was derived from \text{hmrm} and meant "to get hot, grow warm", a meaning that seems appropriate for ritual instruments. Gawlikowsky said that it referred to a temple for the god mentioned in the inscription. (Drijvers
The views of both Starkey and Ingholt -- that this refers to an incense burner -- seem reasonable and do not contradict Littmann’s opinion. Thus we accept the interpretation that this base was used for burning incense in a temple and was part of a sacrificial altar.

There were other widespread religious practices and rites in Palmyra, such as the annual holiday that fell on the sixth of April. These were ritual circumambulations on this holiday, religious feasts for which animals were sacrificed by the priests, and sacrifices of livestock in fulfillment of vows made by individuals wanting to gain the favor of the gods. (al-Bunni 1978:199-200).

Finally, when we speak of the Arabian deities in Palmyra, it is useful to point to the temple of Bel. This was one of the largest temples of the city. Purely Arab rites were carried out in this temple, including circumambulation and processions. It is known that circumambulation is a rite which closely matches pre-Islamic Arab rituals and has an Arab character. (al-Bunni 1978:201) This may perhaps lead to an important point: that the Palmyrean worshipped some Arab gods, and tried to give an Arab character to even those gods, that they took from other peoples by dedicating Arab religious rituals to them.

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