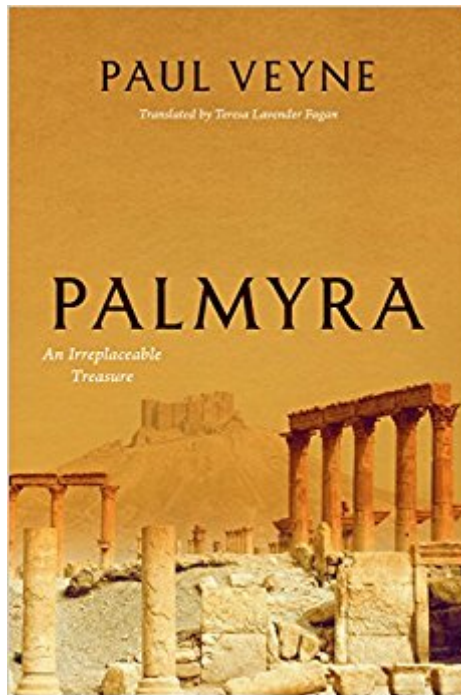


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Palmyra: An Irreplaceable Treasure



Synopsis

Located northeast of Damascus, in an oasis surrounded by palms and two mountain ranges, the ancient city of Palmyra has the aura of myth. According to the Bible, the city was built by Solomon. Regardless of its actual origins, it was an influential city, serving for centuries as a caravan stop for those crossing the Syrian Desert. It became a Roman province under Tiberius and served as the most powerful commercial center in the Middle East between the first and the third centuries CE. But when the citizens of Palmyra tried to break away from Rome, they were defeated, marking the end of the city's prosperity. The magnificent monuments from that earlier era of wealth, a resplendent blend of Greco-Roman architecture and local influences, stretched over 40 miles and were among the most significant buildings of the ancient world until the arrival of ISIS. In 2015, ISIS fought to gain control of the area because it was home to a prison where many members of the outlawed Muslim Brotherhood had been held, and ISIS went on to systematically destroy the city and murder many of its inhabitants, including the archaeologist Khaled al-Asaad, the antiquities director of Palmyra. In this concise and elegiac book, Paul Veyne, one of Palmyra's most important experts, offers a beautiful and moving look at the history of this significant lost city and why it was and still is important. Today, we can appreciate the majesty of Palmyra only through its pictures and stories, and this book offers a beautifully illustrated memorial that also serves as a lasting guide to a cultural treasure.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"Veyne, the most eminent living historian of Rome, has written an elegiac lament on the

meaning for world history of this looted city. His short book describes how Palmyra, an oasis on the route across the north Syrian desert, around the turn of the common era became immensely wealthy as a staging post in the trade route from the Roman Empire to the Parthian Kingdom and the lands beyond as far as India and China. . . . Veyne's account offers an excellent survey of the relationship between the city and the wider Roman Empire. (Times Literary Supplement) "Palmyra (a best seller in France in 2015) is the merest wisp of a book. You could comfortably read it in an hour. It offers no radical new theories about the history or culture of ancient Palmyra. Mr. Veyne is one of the foremost living historians of the ancient world, and here, without jargon or pedantry, he describes the city's art, its religion, its architecture, and its people. What cannot be expressed in words is shown in photographs. . . . Scarcely more than a page is explicitly dedicated to the Islamic State, but don't be fooled. The Islamists' destruction of Palmyra is the true subject of every word of the book. . . . Mr. Veyne's book is propelled by an argument of luminous simplicity. . . . The final sentence of the book should be carved over the entrance to every school in the world: "Yes, without a doubt, knowing, wanting to know, only one culture—one's own—is to be condemned to a life of suffocating sameness." Mr. Veyne does not mention Islamic State; he doesn't need to. . . . This is a book of passion and moral integrity that ought to be read by anyone with the slightest interest in the ancient world." (Wall Street Journal)

Paul Veyne is a French archaeologist and historian and an honorary professor at the Collège de France. He is the author of several books in French as well as *Did the Greeks Believe in Their Myths?*, also published by the University of Chicago Press. Teresa Lavender Fagan is a freelance translator living in Chicago; she has translated numerous books for the University of Chicago Press and other publishers.

Exc svc

Valuable book about the importance of Palmyra, which was savagely vandalized by ISIS. Short and articulate. Dedicated to the Syrian archaeologist who was tortured and beheaded by ISIS. Veyne states Palmyra was "perhaps the most extraordinary" archeological site ever uncovered. I have been there and I agree. Antiquities Destruction and Illicit Sales as Sources of ISIS Funding and Propaganda (The LeTort Papers)

Good introduction if you are interested, but know little or nothing about ancient Iraq/Syria during the Roman Period.

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