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Preventive conservation of the human environment
Architecture as an element of the landscape

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Palmyra has been a UNESCO World Heritage site since 1980. There were two main factors supporting this decision. The history of ancient town as well as the authenticity of monuments ruined since the antiquity, creating one of the best landscape of the ancient world. After 35 years in 2015, the situation has dramatically changed. The main ancient monuments have been destroyed, creating a largely flatten landscape with new heaps of ruins on the site. In the light of a pragmatic approach to historic monuments preservation of the 1980s, the lack of monuments, and more ruined landscape should have been a reason to not accept the site at the World Heritage List. History related to a heritage site is important, but not a significant matter in the cultural heritage evaluation. Here we should recall the historic town of Gdańsk, which had been destroyed in the II WW and therefore not included to the UNESCO World Heritage List. Fortunately, since than our approach to the cultural heritage has changed considerably, and has been succeeded by a much broader approach to cultural values. In fact, Palmyra is not only worthy of recognition because it is a picturesque site with monumental buildings, recognised as masterpieces of ancient art and architecture, (In the Near East there are many ancient monuments which can be compared with Palmyrene buildings) nor because of their boldness or beauty. It reflects the much deeper issue of the cultural significance of the site. This involves aspects related to the historic, scientific, social and spiritual values being embodied at the site itself as well as in the fabric of historic monuments. Therefore, a cultural landscape of Palmyra has become a heritage value in a much broader sense. Palmyra has fully embodied a concept of a cultural landscape defined by Bonnie Burnham: “The totality of building monuments, natural features and social, historic, ethnographic, and cultural practices that give a particular locality its character.”

Recovery of the landscape elements should also be treated as one of the important measures in implementing preservation policy, and this should be especially practiced in the aftermath of barbaric war destruction. The post war reconstruction of destroyed Polish towns can serve as an example. In the 21st century the problem also concerns incredible acts of vandalism. Discussion on Palmyra landscape recovery should not only be limited to technical aspects. Palmyra is a site of transcendent values, where history, monuments, local culture and religion had been mingled with people’s ambitions to create spectacular achievements. These aspects covered much broader concept of the cultural heritage, than the material monuments and three-dimensional landscape image. The material aspect of a monument is needed in man’s cognitive approach, and this can be perfectly reconstructed, even a destruction is almost total. On the basis of documentation and existing remains we can copy and reconstruct a former scale and building fabric of destroyed historic monument. This would perfectly restore iconic views of Palmyra’s landscape. The questions are simple. To which extent should we reconstruct destroyed monuments, as well as their decoration, in order to satisfy people’s expectations. Should we spend our efforts to restore past glory ? In a case of destroyed monuments of Palmyra we would say loudly and proudly, YES !

The town was famous because of its richness built on the control of trade between Rome and Orient as well as the dramatic defeat of the Palmyrean rebellion by Emperor Aurelian in 273 AD. The rebellion had been organised by a woman, Queen Zenobia, who pretended to be the Empress of the East. After this dramatic moment, the glorious town declined and in the following centuries became an distant oasis in the desert. Up to the end of the 17th century, the location of Palmyra in the middle of the Syrian desert limited access of European visitors. Due to the successful journey of two English merchants travelling in 1691 from Aleppo to Palmyra a new chapter in both the scientific interest in its monuments and the appreciation of the ruined city had been opened. This happened due to the publication of Rev. William Halifax, who described this journey and presented an

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1 Jonsson 1998.
3 Petzet 2002.
outstanding vista of ruined Palmyra a few years later, in 1695 in a volume of the Transactions of the Royal Society. The drawing made by Gerard Hofstede van Essen presented the site as a landscape packed with Roman ruins (Fig. 1). Soon this drawing would become an icon of Palmyra. Books published in the first half of the 18th century by the following authors: Abendego Seller, Bernard de Montfaucon, Fischer von Erlach, and Cornelius de Bruyn, all of whom described Palmyra, also republished this spectacular panorama, and therefore had enlarged fame and interest to the ancient site. The next expedition by Robert Wood and James Dawkins resulted in a great publication Ruins of Palmyra in 1753. Apart of its text which described the remaining monuments and inscriptions, much attention was set on architectural drawings (Fig. 2). It is interesting to note that Wood’s panorama of Palmyra recalls the version that had been drawn by Hoefstede. Perhaps it was a kind of confirmation or an accuracy test completed 50 years. Among the set of Wood’s drawings there were also images presenting other Palmyrenian monuments – the Monumental Arch, the Baalshamin Temple, the Great Colonnade, tower tombs. The magnificent panorama presenting the Palmyra landscape became iconic during the eighteenth

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5 Halifax 1695.

6 Wood and Dawkins 1753.
and the nineteenth century documentation brought to became a basis for development of European scholarly interest to the town. The European perception of Palmyra in the 18th century was considerably enlarged to other fields. It is worth mentioning that, due to Wood’s publication decorative motives of the ceilings of the Bel Temple adytons had been adapted for decoration in many English manors. The next visitor, Mr. Louis Cassas also completed a set of drawings and a plenty of architectural documentation. They included drawings similar to Wood’s prints but also a set of romantic vistas, with Bedouins among the ancient ruins (Fig. 3). These published views of Palmyra became a set of a new iconic images acting like a magnet to the next travelers. Count Constantin Francois de Volney in his philosophical essay Les ruines ou Meditations sur les revolutions des Empires, published in 1791 mentioned Palmyra as a site where ancient history is expressed by the grandiose monuments of a fallen empire. The 19th century opened a chapter of voyages to the East in order to relive and contemplate the ancient history through ruins grandeur. Due to the memoires of Lady Hester Stanhope travels Palmyra was granted an aura of a special place to be visited, not only by men. Since the end of the 19th century, when an early photography was introduced, the landscape motifs of Palmyra have been memorised on millions photo prints. From the early years of the twentieth century scholarly research of Palmyra monuments was enlarged by a great archaeological activity of French, Syrian, Polish, Swiss, German, Japanese, and Italian missions. This research resulted in numerous publications on Palmyrean architectural monuments, sculptures, decoration, as well as material culture. The publications presented the history of Palmyra in a broader perspective of intercultural exchange between the ancient West and the East. The endangered ruins of Palmyra were protected and restored. Many fallen columns along the Great Colonnade were re-erected. Reconstruction of the Great Tetrarylon significantly improved the town’s landscape. In the second half of the 20th century Syria and Palmyra became a very popular tourist destination. This propitious situation lasted until 2011, when archaeological missions and tourist visitors were not allowed to enter the site as it was endangered by the Islamic rebellion in Syria. After conquering Palmyra, the entire World was shocked by having to witness the barbarian demolition of priceless sculptures and mass murders with the ancient ruins as background. Many ancient decorated sarcophagai and sculptures were demolished or robbed from the Palmyra Museum and from the tombs, where these sculptures had been left in situ. In 2015 Palmyra lost the Bel temple and the Baalshamin temple, the Monumental Arch, as well as seven tower tombs. This total destruction of important landmarks considerably changed the landscape of Palmyra. This action also affected the cultural heritage on a much greater area of the Near East. In Palmyra, concentration of such great evidence of historic and cultural objects in one place formed here an unique possibility to study differences and development stages at every field – architecture, art, religion, as well as building technique. There is no other place, where this evidence was so great and vivid. However, although many publications and studies have been published on Palmyra, there are still questions concerning its cultural impact on the region’s development. Therefore not only did tourists loose the possibility to appreciate a romantic landscape of famous Palmyra, and the Syrians their revenue, but we people of the World have lost a priceless cultural landscape of Antiquity, which has provide us with important historic and valuable cultural evidence.

This introduction was needed to explain the current situation. Some observers’ opinions favour the recovery of the destroyed monuments in Palmyra. They assume that the Syrians will reconstruct their national monu-

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7 Browning 1979: 90–96.
8 Cassas 1798.
ments. Others are saying that efforts should be spend for post war recovery and restoration of Palmyra's monuments can wait for a better times. Orthodox opinions have been voiced advocating that the site should be left as it is, in accordance with the concept of conservation and protection of historic monuments. There is also a pragmatic approach. Some entrepreneurs proposed building a 3D models of destroyed monuments, as a temporary solution helpful in collecting money for future reconstruction. There are also voices suggesting that it is useless to copy and build fake monuments, because their destruction is also a part of the eternal history of the site. Archaeologists say that destruction has only affected some of the monuments, and there is still 80% of non-excavated area to be researched. Apart of these voices we should consider some facts and discuss the problem of reconstructing Palmyra’s monuments from a different prospective.

The situation of destroyed architectural monuments differs depending their individual state. This concerns a scale of the buildings as well as a degree of their destruction including decorated blocks. 3D modelling and the analysis of historic photographs will be helpful tool for making reconstructions. Rebuilding of the Bel Temple will be a challenging project, but it is possible due to a perfect documentation completed by Robert Amy. Fortunately, before destruction, the temple had been documented with a laser scanning (Fig. 4). There is also a vast collection of photographs representing almost each part of the building which have been shot by archaeologists and thousands of visitors. The re-erection of walls can be done easily. The rich carved decoration of the temple adytons will, however create some problems for the reconstruction. Some parts of architectural ornamentation can be easily reproduced on the basis of surviving fragments. The reconstruction of the northern and the southern Adyton walls, will however be also possible. The inclusion of remains in reconstructed Adytons facades seems a possible measure. Reconstructing the individually carved zodiac cupola of the North Adyton ceiling can also be achieved. A similar problem will be faced during the reconstruction of a monolithic ceiling of the Southern Adyton. Copying the excellent carvings onto a large monolithic block will be a challenge, but analysis of surviving pieces could be very helpful in such a reconstruction. If the ancient sculptors did such decoration, present day masters guided by surviving fragments should be able to recreate this masterpiece as well. The idea of the Bel temple reconstruction is also supported by other arguments. It was a main temple of Palmyra which survived up to our times in almost perfect condition. This structure, constructed by Greek master represents pinnacle building technology present in Greece and the Near East prior to the Roman conquest. It was also a model building for the development of the local building techniques. Its revolutionary use of hard stone, completely changed previous traditional building techniques. A modern post and lintel construction system, was perfected to the span and the stone weight. The temple portico was covered by a series of large decorated stone slabs. The experience gathered while building this temple was fundamental for the future development of the building techniques in Palmyra. Although it was built a Classical Orders, the temple building is not a simple repetition of a Greek temple. It has a remarkable plan with a side entrance to the Temple cellar and two adytons. Moreover, the unique wall decoration at the North Adyton provided us with a evidence for the appearance of the, the original Bel temple, prior to the great temple's construction. The representation that is visible on this wall is of immense importance in comparison to other temples in Palmyra.

Compared with the Bel Temple, the Baalshamin Temple is a small building. It was constructed in the middle of the 2nd century AD according to the Vitruvian ideas (Fig. 5). The building had a spectacular decoration on the

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9 Amy, Seyrig and Will 1975.
Adyton front.\textsuperscript{10} But its shape is completely different than in the Bel Temple. In this case we have rich architectural decoration around the empty central opening. Michał Pietrzykowski researching Adyta of Palmyrene temples indicated that the god – Baalshamin was represented here not as a sculptured idol, but as a frontal relief or what is even more as a painting\textsuperscript{11} (Fig. 6). The documentation of the building was completed by a Swiss mission, and can serve as a perfect base for its reconstruction. Reconstruction of a rich architectural decoration is possible according to numerous photographs which may be confronted with small decorated remains which may be found after blowing up the temple. However an architectural form of the Baalshamin temple is very common to the second century Roman architecture, we have a few reasons to reconstruct it. This temple was represented on each landscape painting of Palmyra. It is a perfect example of a new Roman architectural style introduced in Palmyra. It is an example of a stylistic unification of the previous temple, honoring ancient god, represented in a completely different form. A crucial reason for its reconstruction is also a fact of large number of ashllars survived at the site, and this creates possibility of a partial anastylosis.

In Palmyra, besides the Bel and the Baalshamin temples there are two further temples. Fortunately, because they were ruined monuments, the terrorists were not interested in blowing them up. Despite being ruined, these monuments are necessary to understand the spectacular change in sacral architecture in Palmyra. The Temple of Nabu constructed \textit{ca} 80 AD also replaced an earlier temple. The Allat temple constructed \textit{ca} 150 AD in a Classical style similar to the Baalshamin temple, is extremely important in order to understand not only changes in a sacred architecture in Palmyra. It remains are a spectacular confirmation of unique will to protect an earlier temple. While the Allat temple has a similar plan and size to the Baalshamin temple, its internal organization is completely different. In a case of the Allat Temple, the Adyton was not built as a new structure, as it happened in the Bel or in the Baalshamin temples. Here

\textsuperscript{10} Collart and Vicari 1969; Collart 1969.
\textsuperscript{11} Pietrzykowski 1997: 75–94.
we have evidence of a previous temple or a small shrine constructed of a different form and size, being adopted as the new temple’s Adyton. The construction of a larger temple could have simply demolish it, but instead, the old temple was not dismantled, but honored. Moreover, the new superstructure had been tailored to protect and expose the original building. Thus we, we have absolutely unique evidence that in ancient Palmyra protective measures were adopted for the preservation of an earlier building. This raises the following issues. Was this done out of a respect to sacred idol or representation of the god, as happened in many reconstructed or enlarged temples in the Greco–Roman world, or was it concerned with the preservation of the sacred fabric of the temple building. If so, should we consider this as the willful protection and commemoration of a former building? If we compare this with the front wall of the North Adyton of the Bel temple, the second idea seems more likely, because at the Adyton wall we can see in a relief representation of altars which may have previously stood on both sides of the original the Bel temple. If so, all temples in Palmyra constitute a unique act of commemoration of both the sacred god and his building. Such, rich evidence exists only in Palmyra. Therefore, the reconstruction of two destroyed temples is of immense importance in explaining and understanding an ideological approach to the sacral building in the ancient society. Should we also call it an early example of historic monument protection? Such an idea should not be excluded, however it seems more likely that the primary motivation was religious and not of pragmatic.

Palmyrene Tower Tombs are the next group of destroyed monuments (Fig. 7). Their decorative elements and commemorative inscriptions are smashed into tiny pieces, but fortunately some walls of the destroyed tomb remained. In such situations, we can reconstruct the buildings or protect their vestiges. However there are many other tower tombs remnants in Palmyra, the destroyed ones were the best preserved ones (Fig. 8). There are two crucial factors indicating a need of recon-

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12 Gawlikowski 1990.
struction. The first is a recovery of a famous landscape of the Valley of Tombs. Ruined tower tombs dominate Wood’s and Cassas’ drawings, and their destruction totally changes the view of the Valley. The second reason that justifies the reconstruction of destroyed tower tombs is because of their building technique. In the 1st century AD, a construction technology considerably changed in Palmyra. The walls of the earliest towers, for instance the Athenatan Tower had been built of undressed boulders joined with a clay mortar, while at the end of the 1st century buildings were constructed with masonry using a hard limestone ashlars set in rows. Reconstructing the development stages of these towers confirm a few other significant changes. The earliest tower tombs were constructed around a with very narrow staircase. During the next stage, in the middle of the first century construction system of tower tombs was governed by the idea of a chambers covered with a corbelled vault. In the following stage, high corbelling had been introduced. This provided Palmyrene masons the possibility to partition a high space under the corbelled vault and adopt it for two stories with more spanning the lower chamber. Building a larger roofed chambers required hard limestone slabs for the floors separation. But even with adoption of this solution the chamber’s walls were not vertical. The solution was found at the beginning of year 80 AD, when a hard limestone was used for construction both the walls and ceilings. Chambers with perfectly vertical walls, provided a possibility for ceiling slabs spanning 3 m at each floor. Vertical communication in these high towers were made possible by building large and roomy stair cases. An important feature was the use of arches and cupolas in the tombs, but they were only a formal replication because their structure was that of a corbelled system. In such context a reconstructing the tower tombs in order to recover the historic landscape of the Valley of Tombs, should not be a blind repetition of their architectural form, but also provide room for reproduction of their building technique. The construction of the towers should to some extent encompass the three main stages of their development and this can be done in the case of the Athenatan, the Kithot, the Jamlikh or the Elahbel towers. The reconstruction of other towers can be limited to restoring their outward form, with interiors adopted for the modern purposes, for example as larger exhibition rooms.

The Monumental Arch constructed about 200 – 220 AD, represents a completely different problem. The Arch superstructure was simply torn down (Fig. 9). Such destruction provides with the possibility to make an anastylosis, because all stones remain on the site, and only some of them have been be damaged. The monument was surveyed by a French mission. The Monumental Arch re-erection will be a significant recovery of the Palmyrene landscape. A study study of arch building technique has confirmed that its construction is not that of a true arch but corbelled structure. Ancient builders made this masterpiece of perfectly dressed individual blocks. Therefore, its reconstruction will be a puzzle involving setting each individual stone block in its correct position (Fig. 10). Research into the local building techniques provided us with important evidence that the construction of arches, walls, and columns were performed differently than in other areas of Syria. The construction of the Monumental Arch can be seen as a mile stone, which ends a transition period, in building technology. In the third century we witness the total abandonment of the old ideas in a favor of innovative solutions. Arches are constructed using regular voussoirs. In the manner of the erection of columns and walls we can distinguish revolutionary solutions that are helpful in facilitating more economic and fast building techniques. This new construction system, being called _opus pal-

15 Amy 1933.
myrenum, involving the use of large but thin slabs for wall construction. The engineering idea behind this locally used technology had been developed in a long process of changes and perfection of an older techniques.

Palmyra and its ancient remains is a significant site. Its architectural evidence has considerably enlarged the issue of the Near East cultural heritage protection, also to an aspect of intellectual values ingeniously treasured in stone. In such a situation, we should not discuss the issue of destroyed monuments in the sense of their commemoration, but rather consider their reconstruction. Therefore, international assistance would be of immense importance in an optimal recovery of this indisputable World Heritage site, which has been destroyed so dramatically. 70 years ago, professor Jan Zachwatowicz presenting the concept of the post war recovery of destroyed monuments in Poland remarked: “Because the Nation and the monuments of its culture are one, certain basic conclusions emerge from this theory, not always in accordance with the scientific point of view. Not accepting that our cultural monuments should be wrested away from us, we will erect them, reconstruct them in order to relay for future generations at least their form, alive in our memories and records, even if it is not authentic”. Saying this standing on the ruins of Warsaw, he presumably had not expected that its reconstruction will be so successful. Today, when looking at the ruins of Palmyra, we should repeat this statement.

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