who contracted to exploit the owner's natural resource, and sometimes also groups of brickmakers. As to the presence of indiction dates on some bricks, B. suggests that this was part of official verification of the delivery of production quotas, a possible explanation; the fact that it is easy to imagine ways in which the state could have checked delivery of essential supplies might explain why dates are uncommon on sixth-century bricks; it might also suggest that other explanations should be pursued. B. sensibly accepts that the information on the stamps may have been recorded for a variety of purposes (pp. 19–20).

B. provides a useful survey of the development of late Roman Constantinople (Chapter 4), as a precursor to his attempt to establish a chronology of stamps (Chapter 5); for this, factors such as the size of bricks, which became smaller during the sixth century, and construction techniques such as the proportion of bricks to stone and the thickness of mortar are significant. The chronology draws on information from dated sites (Chapter 6) and provides a context for some undated sites (Chapter 7). Chapter 8 then surveys the detailed information on brickstamps from the sites discussed in the two previous chapters to construct a chronology of names, while the following chapter returns to the issue of using stamps to date specific buildings. This approach might sound circuitous, but it is in fact a meticulous demonstration of how to cope with such difficult evidence, which is complicated by uncertainty about the find spots for some of the earlier material as well as by the practice of reusing bricks for repairs and even new constructions, and how to apply this to complex sequences of structures. Chapter 11 then demonstrates what can be achieved with the accumulated evidence: among the gains, the cistern on Divâni Ali Sokagi cannot be attributed to Phocas on grounds of brick size (pp. 129–30), Mango's suggestion that the church complex at Beyazit be identified with the Diakonissa is correct (pp. 131–4), and the Peristyle and Apsed Hall in the Great Palace is probably post-Justinianic (pp. 134–47). B. has succeeded in establishing a baseline for future work on Constantinopolitan bricks; as he notes, there is a large collection in the National Archaeological Museum, though this may be impossible to allocate between different sites and so be of limited use, but there will certainly also be new discoveries as central Istanbul is further developed. In the light of this ongoing work, it would be useful for scholars to have an electronic version of this catalogue, but B. has already provided excellent service to all those interested in the early history of Constantinople.

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A PALMYRENE TEMPLE

A. Bounni, J. Seigne, N. Saliby: *Le sanctuaire de Nabū à Palmyre. Planches.* (Bibliothèque Archéologique et Historique 131.) 104 b/w and colour pls, ills. Paris: Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1992. Cased. ISBN: 2-7053-0679-X.

A. Bounni: *Le sanctuaire de Nabū à Palmyre. Texte.* (Bibliothèque Archéologique et Historique 131.) Pp. iv + 122, ills. Beirut: Institut Français du Proche-Orient, 2004. Cased. ISBN: 2-912738-32-6.

A sigh of relief went through the world of Palmyrene scholarship with the

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publication in 2004 of the text volume on the temple of Nebu (rather than Nabu, to distinguish him from the Babylonian god: the vocalization of the divine name in Palmyrenean Aramaic can be deduced from the Greek transcriptions of some personal names). The remains of the sanctuary, which the ubiquitous Theodor Wiegand in the early-twentieth century had labelled the 'Corinthian temple', were laid bare during campaigns in 1963–4 and 1970 by a Syrian team headed by Adnan Bounni. The plates were published in 1992, though not distributed, awaiting the companion volume. Only occasionally a copy managed to sneak into the wider world and got referred to in scholarly literature. Analysis of the material and presentation of the inscriptions had been made in B.'s unpublished Sorbonne thesis from 1986, which allowed only the happy few to be aware of what was in store.

The story of the peristyle cella on a large platform, placed within a (slightly irregular) trapezoid enclosure with propylaea, could already be told from the plates volume and from the preliminary reports: from a supposed and now completely lost archaic structure, the present sanctuary developed from the end of the first century A.D. ('dans ce cadre general de relations politico-économiques entre Rome et Palmyre', *Texte* 21) in several steps into a monumental classical building. The most remarkable development was the cut in the northeast corner of the temenos and the subsequent abandoning of one of the most recently added porticoes, which was forced upon those responsible for the sanctuary by the constructors of the great colonnade towards the end of the second century A.D. It raises numerous questions as to the place of the temple, its cults and its clientele in Palmyrene society.

The text volume—which does not account for the above-mentioned delay in the process of publication and even lacks a preface altogether—gives a brief overview of the excavations and restorations (Chapter 1), a description of the various parts of the sanctuary and its history (Chapter 2), an analysis of the architecture (Chapter 3), and a study of the deity concerned (Chapter 4). A catalogue deals with all sculptures and other objects found at or near the temple, some of which were published long ago, but others less well known or even unpublished. The bibliography that closes the book covers publications up to 2001.

Real excitement about the appearance of the text volume is caused by the fact that a large group of new inscriptions, both in Greek and/or in Palmyrenean, is now available for further exploration. They reveal how two families exercised control over the temple (on which see J.-B. Yon, *Les notables de Palmyre* [Beirut, 2002], pp. 81–7), but also how its conventional name is an oversimplification of the cultic reality (on which see my *The Religious Life of Palmyra* [Stuttgart, 2002], pp. 89–99)—although B. does not pay attention at all in Chapter 4 to the other gods who are either mentioned in the inscriptions or portrayed on the sculptures from the temple. From the viewpoint of the historian of religions, the most significant text is the bilingual no. 17, which provides a key to a new interpretation of those dedications in Palmyra (and elsewhere in the Near East) that were according to their Aramaic formula literally 'made by the gods themselves'—the Greek counterpart directly refers to a divine command in the form of an oracle (cf. *Klio* 86 [2004], 172–5). The fact that B.'s commentary on the inscriptions is in general brief will give plenty of opportunity to others for further epigraphic restoration and interpretation. Note that the inscribed blocs referring to the enigmatic 'ten columns' (τοὺς δέκα κείονας), found in numerous fragments (*Planches* 92.113; Fig. 45), are not included in the list of inscriptions in the text volume.

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