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**I. Introduction**

The place known globally as Palmyra is famous worldwide, with its monumental Roman-period ruins serving as a backdrop for a long and storied past (see e.g. Gawlikowski, 2021; Raja, 2022a). Yet Palmyra has never had a singular identity: even in its Roman-era heyday, the site was bilingual in its public inscriptions and known both by its Greek name, Palmyra, and its Semitic one, Tadmor (Kaizer, 2017; Yon, 2008). The oasis city is also a site with a traumatic historical record, having undergone many catastrophic disruptions both in Antiquity and into the contemporary past. In AD 272, for example, parts of the site were destroyed when the Roman army invaded it during the reign of the Emperor Aurelian, in his campaign against its ruler Queen Zenobia (Andrade, 2018). The site has been occupied continuously since ancient times (Genequand, 2012; Intagliata, 2018), and both names continue today; the contemporary place is both famous for its UNESCO World Heritage archaeological site and infamous for its reputation as a notorious Syrian prison, and as the site of destruction by Da'esh (also known as Islamic State, IS, ISIS and ISIL) (Amnesty International, 2001; Cooke, 2011; Haugbølle, 2008).<sup>1</sup>

From the time European travellers began visiting Palmyra in the 17th century, knowledge of the site and its material culture began circulating in the Western world (see e.g. Sartre-Fauriat, 2021). The trip that Robert Wood and his entourage undertook in the middle of the 18th century led to Wood's publication in 1753, which made a massive imprint on architectural traditions in the European and colonial realm (Wood, 1753).<sup>2</sup> In particular, the monuments and art drew attention so that from the 18th century onwards, art objects made their way into European collections by way of travellers to the region despite, in some cases, local resistance and, later, Ottoman antiquities law.<sup>3</sup> From this period onwards, the city also began to take centre stage as a backdrop for European narratives about the East, which became reflected in art, architecture, literature, opera and other music in the 18th and 19th centuries (Sartre-Fauriat, 2019; Sartre, 2016; also see Charles-Gaffiot, Lavagne and Hofman, 2001).

With the institution of the League of Nations Mandates in the Middle East in the early 1920s, the political geography of the region was forcefully and profoundly changed, and that period is the focus of this article. The French Mandate of Syria and Lebanon gave rise, among a range of interventions, to the introduction of large-scale organised archaeological missions (Gillot, 2020). Europeans had travelled and conducted archaeological research in the region before then, but the Mandates brought new opportunities in the form of more stable working environments enforced by a strong military presence as well as regional infrastructure, and the possibility of the division of finds (*partage*) and the export of antiquities to foreign museums under Mandate authority. Under Ottoman-era antiquities law all finds belonged to the realm, so the Mandate-era change marked a major shift (Bahrani, 2011; Goode, 2007: esp. 25, 33–34; Griswold 2020). Archaeology was also a way in which Mandatory authorities could legitimise their claims to Middle Eastern landscapes, particularly via Classical sites (e.g. via the aerial survey conducted by Poidebard (1934); also see Helbig 2016). The community and site of Palmyra was physically and socially transformed during the Mandate era, largely in the service of archaeological narratives, so that the Roman-era remains could be presented and explored. This was a transformation that came at a cost for local ways of life and to the benefit of the colonial power and their allies.

Palmyra was one of the first of Syria and Lebanon's archaeological sites to receive attention from a large number of European scholars under the Mandate working under the authority of the French High Commission through a newly established Service des antiquités.<sup>4</sup> The archaeological projects at Palmyra were large scale and invasive, and reshaped the site as it had stood before the 1920s entirely, culminating in the relocation of much of the site's population from mudbrick structures in and around the complex known as the Temple of Bel to a new town north of the original material, constructed by the French military. From 1924 to 1928, Danish archaeologist Harald Ingholt worked intensively at the site. He recorded not only the archaeological objects which he collected and tombs he excavated, but also his relationships with Mandatory authorities, the French military, visitors and local people, including those with whom he worked (Raja, Steding and Yon, 2021). Examining the site immediately prior to that archaeologicalisation through Ingholt's archaeological diaries, it is possible to reconstruct the complexity of knowledge production at the site. In this article we aim to trace, analyse and discuss how what is generally perceived as 'archaeological knowledge' was gained, transmitted

and put to use by Ingholt. We ask what types of knowledge and credit have been occluded from the authorised and authoritative archaeological discourse, questioning the way in which the typical accounts of archaeological sites, the history of their discovery and the standardised, highly-curated scholarly corpora deliberately occlude the knowledge that local populations have contributed to the process, willingly and otherwise (Baird, 2011; Mickel, 2019, 2021). We take our point of departure in four objects out of several hundred mentioned which Ingholt recorded in his diaries written at the site, many of which he ‘acquired’. Through contextualising each of these ‘archaeological finds’ in their archaeological and historical contexts, as known through Ingholt’s diaries, we examine whether it is possible to identify the circumstances of such finds, including the local contribution and its value, to what is usually understood to be Ingholt’s work. In so doing, we hope to better understand the production of archaeological knowledge during the Mandate and the potential implications for ongoing archaeological knowledge and practice.

## **II. Ingholt’s Diaries**

Ingholt donated major parts of his large research collection to the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek in Copenhagen in the 1980s. These records included more than 1500 images and handwritten research notes, which served as the basis for his 1928 monograph on the stylistic and typological development of Palmyrene sculpture (Bobou et al., 2021; Ingholt, 1928). Also among his donated records were a number of bound fieldwork diaries from his campaigns in Palmyra in the 1920s (Bobou, Raja and Yon, forthcoming; Bobou et al., forthcoming; Raja, Steding and Yon, 2021). Five of the six diaries related directly to his fieldwork in 1924, 1925 and 1928, respectively, although he was also present at the site at other times.<sup>5</sup> Ingholt maintained and expanded his research archive over decades, beyond his retirement from a professorship at Yale (see Bobou et al., forthcoming). The diaries focus mainly on descriptions of his fieldwork. They were also used over the long term as a living document for Ingholt during his research career, to be revisited when writing up his publications on the site’s artefacts and tomb architecture. This use of the diaries in long-term practice is reflected in the use, for instance, of different kinds of colour coding, as well as additions with dates of publications that only came out much later than the original entries that were made on site (Figure 1). The sixth diary is a concordance diary, which pulls together an overview of the tombs which he investigated over the course of his four campaigns in Palmyra (Raja, Schnädelbach and Steding, 2022).

[Insert Figure 1.]

In his diaries, Ingholt described his work in the underground tombs (*hypogea*), in addition to sculptures, inscriptions and other finds he recovered during his investigations. To a varying degree, he also included descriptions of his encounters and dealings with the local workers he employed and the population of the site, as well as with French administrative personnel, the military that was stationed there, scholarly colleagues working in Palmyra and officials, dignitaries, friends and tourists visiting Palmyra. While archaeological interest in the past has been on the grave complexes and the objects which Ingholt described or came into possession of, the diaries also provide an opportunity to investigate Palmyra during its transformation in the Mandate era. That transformation, while not directly remarked upon by Ingholt, happened around him, particularly the institutionalisation of archaeological exploration at the site, which included the clearance of the entire local village population and their mudbrick housing, built within and around the enclosure of the Temple of Bel, and their relocation to the newly built quarters located to the north of what became defined as the archaeological site. The temple's enclosure, measuring approximately 200 by 200 m, had long been a focus of local settlement, but also, from the 18th century, archaeological and tourist interest, which culminated during the Mandate with the displacement of the local population (Figure 2).

[Insert Figure 2.]

Through Ingholt's diaries it is possible to reconstruct some of the complexity of knowledge production at the site, which disrupts the accepted narratives of discovery with important consequences for how we might better understand and situate our knowledge about Palmyra's ancient past. More than object biographies or excavation historiographies, such work is necessary to resituate the local contributions into the history of investigations undertaken at this central site in the early 20th century, and consider the implications of archaeological work, not only as a tool for understanding the past but as work that had major repercussions at the contemporary site, which resonate today and are replicated through disciplinary practices, scholarly corpora and museum collections and display.

### III. Two Green Heads: Diarising Archaeological Knowledge

22 Nov [1928]...  
New Workers  
Ismi Mahmud  
Barekat Soleman } green head  
(diary 4.14: Raja, Steding and Yon, 2021: 916–917).

Ingholt's relations with the local population was in many ways an extractive enterprise, with the use of labour, knowledge and removal of objects. During his time at Palmyra he investigated more than 80 tombs and recorded and collected hundreds of objects. Some of the objects — including sculptures, an inscription, moulded stucco fragments, three glass vessels and more than a hundred tesserae — eventually became part of Danish collections (Raja, 2019). Others remained in Syria or found their way into other collections, such as that at the American University in Beirut (Ingholt, 1934; Woolley, 1921: esp. 28–29), via a variety of mechanisms. Those objects included not only artefacts excavated from the tombs but also those which Ingholt came into possession of or was told about and shown to by locals. Objects came to Ingholt, and Ingholt to objects, in a variety of ways across the three expeditions recorded in his diaries. By 1928 new workers were bringing a range of objects to Ingholt, seemingly in exchange for the right to work. For example, on 22 November, new workers also brought 11 tesserae, two inscriptions, one bagrut and another 'green head' (green-glazed sculpture fragment) (Figure 3).<sup>6</sup> Each object was listed in the diaries against the name of the worker(s) who brought it, as transliterated by Ingholt, giving a glimpse into the local people who were an essential part of Ingholt's collecting practices at the site, and the reasons they were compelled to participate in his work. In this particular quote above, the limitations of Ingholt's Arabic are also evident, as he recorded one name as 'ismi' Mahmud': what he believed to be a forename (*ismi*) actually means 'my name is...'.

On the following day (23 November 1928), Ingholt noted that he had 'received' a 'green-glazed Egyptian-style sun-god' and another sun-god head (diary 4.15, 918–919). Are these the same two heads that were listed as coming from workers on the previous day? It is not clear.

Later, on the last page of this diary, a green head is listed as one of the objects that Ingholt was keeping in his sitting room at the hotel, alongside sculptures from tombs, a piece of cornice, 32 tesserae and a Syrian sun-god head (diary 4.32, 946–947). Was this one of the green heads brought to him by a new worker? It is impossible, now, to be sure, but the case illustrates well the complexities of working with such diaries to draw out both information about archaeological evidence, but also the stories they contain; we are limited in trying to reconstruct a narrative from personal notes whose full meanings were only ever meant to be understood by the man who wrote them — they were a personal *aide memoire* rather than a documentary account.

Further confusion follows from a reference that Ingholt added to the entry later, noting in black pen that the green head on that page had been published by him in *Berytus* in 1936 as plate 13.2 (but see Ingholt, 1936: 115, pl. 23.2). The description from Ingholt in the 1936 publication is as follows:

14. Head of Horus. Green-glazed head of boy, acquired in 1925 from one of the workmen (pl. XXIII, 2). Dimensions: height 9 cm; width 8 cm. Present location: Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen (deposit). The boy has above his forehead a diadem decorated with oblique lines; a lock of hair curls around his right ear and down under it. This is the child-lock and it immediately identifies the youthful head as that of Horus, the son of Isis and Osiris, whose cult was spread all over the Roman empire. Solar rays form the background of the head, the two middle ones provided each with a small protuberance near the base, probably meant to represent lotus buds, and between these is, finally, another rounded prominence, undoubtedly the development of the pschent, the royal double crown of Egypt.

While attention to detail is given when describing the object, the workmen are given considerably shorter shrift: if this is the object received from Mahmud and Barekat Soleman, then two people have been elided into one person with their names expunged from the record. There also seems to be a discrepancy in the year the object was found (1925 versus 1928) and some confusion over plate numbers (13.2 in the diary; 23.2 in the *Berytus* publication).

[Insert Figure 3.]

Are such discrepancies simple mistakes of memory? Even with the aid of diaries, slips occur and threads become tangled in ways that we may never fully unpick. What is important is to be sensitive to this complexity: both in the slipperiness of what we know about the archaeological past and in how it has come to be known. Even for objects which have a provenance (as opposed to being known via the antiquities market), as with these heads from Palmyra, there are still problems with actual context despite having been collected by an ‘archaeologist’. Further, our archaeological study of such objects has involved the erasure of the names of the local men who supplied them (Barekat Soleman and Mahmud). Also lost to us are the reasons and means by which they did so: nonetheless it is clear that these men knew where to find or acquire such objects and knew that supplying them to a foreign investigator was a likely route to securing employment or other gainful favour. Through Ingholt’s diary, then, we can reflect more fully the circumstances of how Palmyra came to be known, and the parallel losses — in this case, the loss of acknowledgement of the contributions by local Palmyrene people — that archaeological knowledge has entailed. Museum catalogues are complicit in the continuing erasures of such contributions, because standardised formats mean the contextual information for this object says only ‘found at Palmyra’ (Raja, 2019: esp. 468). There is also a loss from the local community in the objects that were taken and exported from the site. At least it is now possible to attach the stories, albeit partial, of Mahmud and Barekat Soleman, who joined Ingholt’s team 22 November 1928, using the green head as their ticket.

#### **IV. Hijjâr’s Magnificent Tesserae: Objects in Personal Networks**

‘April 11, 1925 ... Hijjâr brought me a magnificent tessera. Bakšiš for me. He did not want any money; we were like brothers. I could give him my jacket.’ (diary 2.45, 591).

‘Tesserae’ are the name given to small ancient tokens usually made of clay, often bearing religious imagery, which were used to gain access to religious banquets and frequently found at Palmyra (Raja, 2022b). While many tesserae are recorded seemingly as being archaeologically recovered at Palmyra by Ingholt, the majority were actually acquired in more complicated circumstances (Ingholt, Seyrig and Starcky, 1955 [=RTP]). Indeed, Ingholt did not systematically excavate most of the finds which he records. When Ingholt encountered them, they had already been collected by local people, and were in their homes, or (for larger objects and architectural



fragments) were part of the local built environment through their reuse within the settlement. We can see from Table 1 that Ingholt's knowledge of certain types of objects, especially smaller and more portable objects, were almost exclusively acquired by purchase or being shown to them by local people. This is particularly stark for tesserae where 97% of his collection was acquired in this way, with none recorded in his diaries as coming from excavations. Even where objects were predominantly excavated and found in tombs, such as sarcophagi and inscriptions, it should, of course, not be forgotten that the labour of acquiring those objects came from the bodies of the local people working for Ingholt.

<b>Object type</b>	<b>Excavated/found in tombs</b>	<b>Bought/shown</b>	<b>Unclear</b>
Tesserae	- -	70 97%	2 3%
Coins	- -	8 88%	1 12%
Lamps	8 38%	7 33%	6 29%
Sarcophagi	37 84%	7 16%	-
Inscriptions	264 87%	41 13%	-
All objects (tesserae, coins, lamps, sarcophagi, inscriptions)	309 69%	133 29%	9 2%

Table 1. Different modes of object acquisition from Ingholt's Diaries 1, 2 and 4.<sup>7</sup>

Ingholt’s diaries show that he is not only clearing tombs, by means of local labourers, but being guided around the settlement by certain individuals, whose first names he records in transliterated form in his diaries. Of those individuals, Hijjâr seems to have been one of Ingholt’s right-hand men and one of his most trusted workers, featuring regularly in diaries 1 and 2 (between 1924 and 1928). Indeed, Hijjâr is mentioned 41 times across the diaries, making him the most mentioned person of all people in the diaries (66 individuals are mentioned in total; see discussion below). He is followed by other men: Avvar with 36 mentions, Hadith with 13 and Jebbour with 12. Other local people appearing more than once are: Awwar (1925), Muhadj (1925), Muhammed (1925), Redjid (1925), Resid (1925), Hadith (1925), Said (1925) and Saleh (1925). Cheruau also appears twice in 1928.

Overall, there are 106 instances of people being named in the diaries either as ‘informants’ (who show Ingholt to places with objects or who bring objects to Ingholt for sale) or as ‘donors’ (who bring objects to Ingholt in exchange for the right to work). Within this group of 106, 66 individuals are named; 12 people are mentioned more than once (see above). Of these 66 individuals, 62 (94%) appear to be local people (Table 2). The numbers of people involved in bringing Ingholt to objects or objects to Ingholt, and concomitantly named individuals in the diaries, increase dramatically over time. In 1924, four people showed Ingholt to objects, mostly in other people’s houses; a further 12 names are known from those houses. This rose to 18 people in 1925 who were predominantly bringing Ingholt objects for sale. Mentions of individuals reached its zenith in 1928 where, as we have seen, workers were seemingly beginning to exchange objects for the right to work: 42 individuals are in this category. A further three people also provided information to Ingholt in 1928: Cheruau, Mudjahed (Cheruau’s foreman) and Dandurin. From this sheer volume of mentions of named individuals, it is clear how much Ingholt relied on these local people and how deeply woven they were into the fabric of his work at Palmyra.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Named local person</b>	<b>Named possibly non-local person</b>
1924	Hijjâr, Jebbour, El Moukdar <b>3</b>	‘Interpreter’ <b>1</b>

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1924 (house only)	Abdallah, Ahmed Hamedan, Ali el-Ayed, Ali el-Houssain, Fayed el Ares el Darddieh, Med el-Houssain, Mohammed, Mohammed Fordjani, Mohammed Jacem Menchar, Mohammed Saleh, Ramadan el-Achgar, Zaher el-Khatib (12)	
1925	Avvar, Djema'an, Gazem, Hadith, Hijjâr, Kazem, M. Christineh, Mahmoud, Muhammed Ahmed, Muhadj, Muhadjed, Muhammed, 'old man', Redjid, Resid, Sa'id, Saleh 17	'Caretaker of the ruins' 1
1928	Abdullah Madun, Abd en-Naser, Abed el Ahmed, Abed el-Hosen, Abu Djash, Ahmed Gazem, Ahmed Mutlak, Aleri al-Asad, Aleri ibn Muhammed Selim, Ali, Gazem, Ali Haleh, Ali Mahmud, Ali Nidjem, Awad ibn Muhammed Sabah, Da'es, Daher, Haleh Qamis, Hessen Hamdan, Hosen el-Hami, Hosen Fajjar, Hosen Gwal, Hosen Merava, Ismi Mahmud, Barekat Soleman, Mahmud el Mohammed Saite, Mohazi, Mudjahed, Muhammed Abdallah, Muhammed al Ahmed, Muhammed al Levi, Muhammed Ali, Muhammed Ali Ahmad, Muhammed Duhan, Muhammed Mahmud, Muhammed Mahmud Djas'allah, Muhammed Mursai, Omar Muhammed, Otman, Saud, Sehel, Soleman 42	Cheruau, Dandurin 2
<b>Total</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>4</b>

Table 2. People named in the diaries as bringing Ingholt to objects or objects to Ingholt. Also included are the names of people known from their houses in the 1924 diary. The total numbers do not include people named only from houses (for full diary references, see Raja, Steding and Yon, 2021: 1840–1843).

Hijjâr is never introduced in Ingholt’s records as a translator or informant, but in practice he fulfilled a number of such roles — a dragoman, but without any recorded formal title. In Ingholt’s descriptions it is evident that one of these roles included Hijjâr personally guiding Ingholt to many of his finds. Hijjâr did this, for instance, by helping Ingholt access people’s homes so that Ingholt could copy and record inscriptions. Ingholt’s recording practices would have required spending considerable time in such places, as Ingholt not only transcribed and described inscriptions, but also photographed them and made squeezes of them (a process of pressing damp paper onto the inscription and letting it dry, to record an impression).<sup>8</sup> On other occasions, Hijjâr sold antiquities to Ingholt, and less frequently (as in the quote above), he gave them to Ingholt as gifts, probably to secure favour and cement their relationship.

In the quoted diary entry above, from 11 April 1925, we are given a fleeting glimpse into the relationship between Hijjâr and Ingholt, which seems to have extended into friendship, at least on Ingholt’s part. Unlike other objects that came into Ingholt’s possession, this tessera seems to have been given to him as a gift, and Ingholt expressed a desire to give Hijjâr something personal in return. While we do not know how Hijjâr acquired or found it, it does appear he was both sensitive to Ingholt’s desire for tesserae and knowledgeable about which he liked best. In spite of the evident connection these two men seem to have shared, this friendship had limits and was likely rooted in what can only have been an ever-present awareness of hierarchy.

As with so many of the other workers on the site whose names we have from the diaries, no known photographs of Hijjâr exist. What it is possible to say is that Hijjâr was enough of an expert in ancient Palmyrene material culture not only to identify the tesserae, but also to recognise that it was a particularly fine example, an expertise he is able to leverage by providing this specific tessera to Ingholt. The phrase ‘Bakšiš for me’ in Ingholt’s diary is also a joke based on an inversion of the usual equation, with bakshish referring to the ‘tips’ or reward that were given to reward workers for artefacts, in addition to their salary. This colonial model was a

normal practice throughout the Middle East at the time and continued at some projects after Syrian independence (Mickel and Byrd, 2021; Gillot, 2010). The stochastic nature of these payments was one way of controlling and ‘incentivising’ workers to turn over small finds, with the amount paid often bearing a relationship to what an object could be sold for on the black market (on Max Mallowan’s use of *bakshish* at Tell Brak in 1930s Syria, see Barmby and Dolton, 2006). The unequal relationship between Ingholt and his workers is what makes the phrase funny (a foreign director would never receive *bakshish*), even if Ingholt is touched by the gesture.

From the descriptions in Ingholt’s diaries (Figure 4) we can identify this tessera as one that is now in the collections of the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, where it is listed as ‘acquired by Ingholt’ (NCG I.N. 3198; Raja, 2019, esp. 373, no. 149). The tessera was also included in the standard corpora of tesserae, *Recueil Tessères de Palmyre* (RTP 375), and of inscriptions, *Palmyrene Aramaic Texts* (PAT 2324). Neither entry provides any detail of how it was acquired, and *PAT* gives its provenance only as ‘Palmyre’. The standardised format for presentation of archaeological remains in the corpora including objects like tesserae and the writing inscribed on them had no means of including any kind of acquisition information: the creation of ‘scientific’ knowledge had no room for Hijjâr (on the production of archaeological knowledge through relationships, see Yarrow, 2006). In the process of tidying to create the authorised — one might even say sanitised — catalogues and publications of the site, this story of Ingholt’s relationship with, and reliance on, Hijjâr has been excised from the discourse.

[Insert Figure 4.]

Hijjâr held a privileged position in relation to Ingholt compared to other local workers, not only providing him with material directly but also guiding him to remains within the contemporary settlement. Ingholt’s diaries reveal what the official publications and *corpora* occlude: the part Hijjâr, and the people he provided Ingholt with access to, played in revealing what is known about ancient Palmyra through its material remains, the specialist knowledge people like Hijjâr had, and the ways that asymmetrical relationships of financial resources motivated and structured the collection of objects. Overall, there are 106 instances of named people who show Ingholt where to find things, or bring artefacts to him. The shape of the discipline means we were never

supposed to know the names of men like Hijjâr, who are excluded not only from gallery accession notes, but also from the standard corpora in which these objects are catalogued. While archaeology has epistemic dependence on ‘expert’ authority through such mechanisms (Hardwig, 1985), cases such as that of Hijjâr’s show that expert authority is often deeply dependent on local forms of knowledge.

### **V. An Inscribed Surface: Things Taken and the Voids Left Behind**

‘30 March [1924]. Round of the houses with Jebbour and el-Moukdar.... [Chez] Hadj. Houssain el Nesser el-Breghet. Inscribed surface. 5 piastres.’ (diary 1.54–56, 202–207).

The collection of antiquities by Ingholt and others for Western institutions created absences in Syria. In March 1924, guided around houses by people Ingholt names as Jebbour and El-Moukdar, one of several such tours guided by local people which Ingholt is taken on in that year, he is shown to the house of one Hadji Houssain.<sup>9</sup> There, he bought what he describes as an inscribed surface, measuring 0.21 m in height and 0.18 m in length, for five piastres. If, like the objects noted in the previous house visited on his tour on this diary page, this inscribed surface was ‘encased in the wall’, then Ingholt’s purchase would have left a significant hole in the fabric of Hadji Houssain’s house; photographs record that such reliefs were at least sometimes not only building material but placed in venerated positions within contemporary buildings (Figure 5). Whether used for building material or in a more decorative way, these ancient objects were intimately woven into the fabric of the homes and daily lives of the people living in Tadmor-Palmyra in the 1920s.

[Insert Figure 5.]

What kinds of negotiations would have been made for this purchase and the concomitant removal of part of a living house? How does one price a piece of living heritage such as this, so that it can be transformed into something static, to be exported? In the same year, we know from the diaries that he also buys the following objects using piastres as currency: a basket (presumably of finds) for five piastres; an inscription on a column for ten piastres; and a bilingual inscription for 25 piastres. The sale price for this inscribed surface, then, was at the lower end of amounts Ingholt was paying for objects in 1924. Given this comparatively low

price, costs such as repairing any damage done in the removal of the object, appear not to have been taken into account.<sup>10</sup>

Further absence is created by the transcription Ingholt takes at the time and enters into his diary, from which two lines are missing (see footnote in Raja, Steding and Yon, 2021: 203). This lacuna is, to a limited extent, filled by a later note Ingholt makes, in red pen, on the diary page where he makes a cross-reference to a publication which gives the full transcription: ‘Stark Inv. XI, 1, p. 6’. In *PAT* (no. 1430). That corpora entry also gives us more insight into what the ‘surface’ is: a dedicatory inscription on an altar. The provenance given in the publication entry, however, is reduced to ‘Palmyra’; while the corpus entry does an effective job of filling in one gap in the record as preserved in the diary (the type of object), we lose the wider context of how this archaeological knowledge was created, who brought this knowledge to light and how the altar had been living another life curated by Hadji Houssain in the fabric of his house. Hadji Houssain and his inscription are excised from the official archaeological record just like Hijjâr was from the record of his magnificent tessera.

Finally, although Ingholt took a squeeze of this inscription (recorded as ‘Estampage’ no. 1971), this too has been lost, together with all the squeezes taken in these expeditions and photographs referenced in the diaries, creating a significant absence from the knowledge that had been created and activated by Ingholt through and with numerous local people during these expeditions. It is not known precisely when the squeezes were lost, but they are no longer at Yale nor in the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek (Raja, Steding and Yon, 2021: 11). Ingholt’s presence, then, also resulted in various types of absences both at the time of his visits and also as that knowledge was transmitted into the future. We cannot fully recoup these losses and refill the absences they have created, but paying attention to their traces might give us pause to (re)consider how actions by international heritage organisations in the current life of Palmyra, and their plans for the future of its archaeology and by extension its people, might also have (unintended?) consequences of occluding certain stories and voices (see e.g. Kamash, 2017; Munawar, 2017; Plets, 2017). Rather than focusing on the manifold needs of the people of Tadmor-Palmyra, the Western media and international heritage organisations have reinforced a preoccupation with the archaeological remains of the place that we can trace back at least as far as Robert Wood in the 18th century, through the 1920s and into the present. Projects such as the Syrian-led ‘Palmyrene Voices’ project show us alternative ways in which heritage can be used explicitly and powerfully

to support local people and provide spaces where their voices can be heard in discussions about the future of the town and its heritage (Palmyrene Voices project, n.d.). By turning our focus in this article back on to the locals who were living in Tadmor-Palmyra in the 1920s, we hope to play a part in reinscribing their voices into these narratives and discussions.

## **VI. The Altar in the Captain's Room: Mandatory and Military Contexts**

1 April [1924] 'Altar in the Consellier. Found by the interpreter quite far from Palmyra, heading south-west. Is standing up at the top of the stairs which lead to the Captain's room ...' (diary 1.63, 220–221).

Ingholt, of course, was far from the only foreigner collecting objects from Palmyra in this period. The French military were a constant presence, and one that permeates his diaries. Curiously less visible in his diaries are the French archaeologists who were also active at Palmyra during his visits: Ingholt was working with Maurice Dunand directly but scarcely mentions him in the diaries. Dunand, for his part, reportedly trained with Ingholt in 1924 at Palmyra (Michel, 2008), when both Dunand and Ingholt were there directly under auspices of the recently created Antiquities Service (Institut français du Proche-Orient, 1924: esp. 385). Dunand, in 1925–1926, was clearing Palmyra's monuments by means of the labour of the Armée du Levant (as reported by the head of the Mandatory antiquities service, Virolleaud, 1926: esp. 241). In 1925, the 'Dépôt des Antiquités' in Palmyra was established by Dunand and Captain Carbillet (Gelin, 2002; Al-Maqdissi, 2008; also see Khoury, 1987: 155–159; Wright, 1926 on Carbillet). Ingholt was embedded within the Mandatory authority as it was enacted through the military, and as his 1926 publication noted, he considered that he was doing such work directly on behalf of the French (Ingholt, 1926: esp. 128).

The altar itself is described by Ingholt as being 0.75 m high by 0.33 m long at its base with an inscribed surface measuring 0.24 m in height and 0.23 m in length. Like the inscription from Hadji Houssain discussed above, Ingholt took a squeeze (recorded as 'Estampage' no. 1912) of this inscription, which is now lost. A note added later in red ink on the diary page notes that this inscription was 'not in Stark'. The concordance in the diary publication lists this inscription as one of ca. 120 unpublished inscriptions found throughout the diaries (Raja, Steding and Yon, 2021: 1813–1817). While Ingholt was a prolific author, the volume of material he collected was far beyond what any single man could publish in detail. His intent may have been



to publish all of what he found and collected, but the scope of that ambition left much unpublished (for a full list of Ingholt's publications, see Raja, Steding and Yon, 2021: 1827–1828). As a consequence, we are witnessing here the gradual deterioration of knowledge from the original physical object to a squeeze to silence for nearly 100 years. What started as a substantial physical object in both size and material managed to sustain itself in the landscape surrounding Tadmor-Palmyra for several hundred years. When encountered by Europeans in the 1920s, we see the knowledge embodied by that object rapidly declining. The object was moved from its landscape to a military building and then we do not know where. The squeeze could never challenge the original as a physical object. It was, of course, meant by Ingholt to preserve what he viewed as the content of the object's knowledge (i.e. its inscription), so that the inscribed knowledge embodied in the original could be published and enter the authorised discourse. We do not know what happened to the object itself or the squeeze, but neither manage to make their presence felt in the archaeological narratives of the site. That once substantial object was reduced to a note in a diary, until now when it is finally being heard in published form.

## **VII. Conclusion**

Antiquities from Palmyra are now globally dispersed as a result of their collection and trafficking since at least the 18th century (Baird and Kamash, 2019); sculptures from Palmyra, for example, can now be found in at least 34 nations and 147 different institutions and 50 private collections (nos from the Palmyra Portrait Project database). Ingholt was among those collectors, with objects gathered by him now in Beirut, Copenhagen and New Haven (Yale University Art Gallery and the Babylonian Collection), among other places. Through Ingholt's diaries it is possible to trace acquisition of more than 200 objects with details about the circumstances of their acquisition (on Ingholt's collection at Copenhagen, see Nielsen, 2019; Raja and Sørensen, 2015). Among those objects, certain types of artefacts predominate: sculpture, including the funerary reliefs for which Palmyra is well known; inscriptions, including those made on sculpture, but also on altars and other objects; and the tesserae. Through Ingholt's diaries we can see that the objects he collected through acquisition, recording or excavation all relied almost entirely on local intermediaries and local labour.

The way in which narratives about Palmyra have emerged, been discussed, developed and been curated since the outbreak of the conflict in the country in 2011 has pushed ideas about the site's archaeological past in a certain direction. By foregrounding the devastating destructions of the site's antiquities, mostly those of the Roman period, the way in which we speak about the site has mainly been from the view of how to preserve and potentially reconstruct Palmyra. In that discourse, actually *knowing* Palmyra's historical past and all that lies between antiquity and today has fallen to the background. Rather than trying to rebuild the site in 3D or reconstruct it through the archaeological and historical sources, we have here tried to foreground a different aspect of Palmyra, through careful attention and focus on the way in which the knowledge of Palmyra's past was gathered from local people in the early 20th-century Mandate period, using hitherto unexplored legacy data as a resource for discovering different narratives and disentangling object biographies, re-embedding people at the centre of such narratives.

The point of departure has been objects mentioned by Harald Ingholt and the original accounts of their 'discovery' in Palmyra, namely from living places, via living people, from within the environment of Palmyra's local population, their houses, courtyards, public places and town. The archaeologicalisation of the site from the 18th century onwards drove ever increasing numbers of visitors, with corresponding impacts on the local economy and local relationships to the ancient past and the way it was valued. Through Ingholt's diaries it is possible to view some of the multiple values that the ancient past held, both for foreign archaeologists and local people. It is also very clear that foreign archaeologists such as Ingholt were deeply dependent on local knowledge, not only for the physical labour of excavation but also for access to, and collection of, archaeological objects. Further, by tracing those same objects in museum collections and scholarly corpora, it can be shown that this dependence was erased by the very forms of standardised recording which are meant to ensure the discipline of archaeology is a rigorous one. Through Ingholt's descriptions, while incidental and unintended for any audience other than himself, it is nonetheless possible not only to describe Ingholt's own context more clearly but to use his own words to reveal narratives in which his reliance on local knowledge is clear, and to credit, here, at least some of the names of those who have long been lost from archaeological accounts. By highlighting such local contributions, we hope to destabilise traditional narratives of discovery which archaeology often depends on.

Currently we are standing at a tipping point not dissimilar to that which the region and the site experienced in the 1920s. This comparison should be used with caution, but it nonetheless draws attention to the fact that we cannot only look ahead at what we might believe the site should be or become after, hopefully, the end of the devastating conflict in Syria. The structural inequalities continue in innumerable ways (see Almohamad, 2022; Munawar, 2022). It is also necessary to account for the harm done by archaeology or in its name: dispossessing people of their homes, erasing their names from the objects they found and evading their place in the writing of the archaeological past. Archaeology cannot hope to have a place in contributing meaningfully to post-conflict Syria until it reckons with its own past.

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### **Endnotes**

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<sup>1</sup> Much has been written on the destruction of the site, its reconstruction and digital initiatives which aim to preserve Palmyrene heritage. For understanding the destruction itself and the number of actors, ASOR's (2014–) reporting is valuable. The prison at the site was already in use during the time Ingholt was present in the 1920s (Moubayed, 2018: 28).

<sup>2</sup> Among that entourage was its funder, James Dawkins, drawing on his family's plantation wealth. The engravings in the published volume were based on the drawings of Giovanni Battista Borra, who also was among the expedition (Dardanillo, 2013; Hutton, 1927).

<sup>3</sup> Wood himself reported scathingly local resistance to his 'collecting' in the preface to his 1753 volume (Baird and Kamash, 2019: esp. 11). From 1884, Ottoman law stipulated that technically all objects were under national ownership and should be deposited in the National Museum in Constantinople. And yet, guidebooks such as Baedeker's published throughout the 19th and early

20th century advised European tourists not only where such objects could be procured, but how much they should pay (e.g. Baedeker and Socin, 1876: 521; Baedeker et al., 1912: 344).

<sup>4</sup> Before the Mandate, the major expedition at Palmyra had been led by the German Theodor Wiegand (1932). On the creation of the Mandatory antiquities service by René Dussaud, see Gelin (2002: esp. 280). On Dussaud and his archaeological policies in the antiquities service, see Al-Maqdissi (2019). For the context of French archaeology in the Middle East, see Chevalier (2002: esp. 460-471) on the French financing of archaeological service.

<sup>5</sup> The material is not complete and some parts of it seem to have been lost, for example the squeezes of inscriptions and photos referred to in the diaries, which are held neither in Copenhagen nor Yale.

<sup>6</sup> ‘Bagrut’ seems to be a misspelling for an Ottoman penny, usually transliterated as ‘barghout’. In diary 1, Ingholt uses different spellings on consecutive pages (Raja, Steding and Yon, 2021a: 386–388).

<sup>7</sup> Diaries 1, 2 and 4 are the main places where Ingholt writes about his acquisition of objects.

<sup>8</sup> For instance, on 7 May 1924 he wrote ‘Lord have mercy. Dragged tourists round the place. In the afternoon with Hijjâr in the houses. 6 Tesserae.’ The tesserae are each then described and illustrated (diary 1.85, 267).

<sup>9</sup> El-Moukdar may be a name, or an indication of the title for a village notable. No disambiguation is given by Ingholt.

<sup>10</sup> Understanding prices and wages in 1920s Syria is complex with numerous currencies in circulation. Ingholt lists various wages for workers but does not regularly give the currency; nor is it clear how wages are being calculated (e.g. was there a wage scale with more expert people being paid more than others? Are the amounts listed in the diary per day, per week or calculated in some other way, such as by amount of finds recovered?), see e.g. diary 1, 374–385. In the 1920s, 100 piastres seems broadly to be equivalent to 20 French francs (Global Financial Data, 2022). The French franc varied widely in international value in the 1920s; in 1923–1924, 80–115 French francs were equivalent to one British pound (see Blancheton and Maveyraud, 2009, fig. 1).

## Abbreviations

NCG I.N.: Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen, inventory number.

*PAT*: Hillers DR and Cussini E (1996) *Palmyrene Aramaic Texts*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

*RTP*: Ingholt H, Seyrig H and Starcky J (1955) *Recueil des Tesserae de Palmyre*. Paris: Impr. Nationale.

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### List of Illustrations

Figure 1. Diary 1, p. 74 (1924). On 16 April, Ingholt transcribed three inscriptions. In later years, he added, in red pen, references to a 1955 publication of the inscriptions by Starcky (© Rubina Raja and the Palmyra Portrait Project, courtesy of the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek).

Figure 2. *Palmyre / Dessiné et héliogravé au Bureau topographique des Troupes du Levant d'après photographies aériennes, travaux du cadastre et documents divers*. French map from 1939 made by the topographic unit in the French troops in the Levant showing the new settlement, the oasis, the ancient site including the Sanctuary of Bel (source: gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France).

Figure 3. Green-glazed clay-moulded Horus head (faience), which Ingholt most likely received in 1928. Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek's collection, Copenhagen, inv. no. 2832 (© Rubina Raja and Palmyra Portrait Project).

Figures 4a and 4b. Terracotta-moulded and stamped tessera now in the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, inv. no. 3198. Side A: Two registers of busts (deities). Side B: Palmyrene priest reclining on a couch. Presented to Harald Ingholt by Hijjâr at Palmyra in 1925 (courtesy of the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen, photographer Anders Sune Berg).

Figure 5. A loculus relief is embedded in the façade of the house of the sheik in Qaryatein, located between Homs and Palmyra (© Rubina Raja and Palmyra Portrait Project).