

**Title: New perspectives on the ritual and cultic importance of women at Palmyra and Dura Europos: processions and temples**

Author(s): Cynthia Finlayson

Journal: *Studia Palmyreńskie* 12  
*Fifty Years of Polish Excavations in Palmyra 1959–2009, International Conference,*  
*Warsaw, 6–8 December 2010*

Year: 2013

Pages: 61–85

ISSN 0081-6787

Publisher: Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology, University of Warsaw (PCMA UW),  
Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego (WUW)

[www.pcma.uw.edu.pl](http://www.pcma.uw.edu.pl) - [www.wuw.pl](http://www.wuw.pl)

---

**Abstract:** Major studies of Palmyra in Syria have long neglected the potential roles of women in Palmyrene society during the Hellenistic and Roman eras. This chapter examines archaeological evidence from both Palmyra and Dura Europos that may shed new light on the ritual and cultic roles of women within this important region of the Eastern Roman Empire. Much of this evidence has been neglected or misinterpreted by previous scholars unfamiliar with the costumes and headdresses worn by Palmyrene women during this critical period of Roman dominance in the East. Additionally, extant visual evidence highlighting women has also often been overlooked by male archaeologists and/or have deteriorated in the field before being studied in detail. The findings from both Palmyra and Dura Europos point to the important roles that women played in the religious life of these trade emporiums by the late 3rd century AD, thus explaining accounts by early male Christian writers of women's efforts in Greater Syria and Arabia to assume roles of influence in Christian ritual practices.

**Keywords:** Palmyra, women's costumes, iconography, religious life