

Title: **Christianisation of Palmyra: Early Byzantine Church in the temple of Bel**

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Abstract: According to archaeological evidence (twin churches excavated by M. Gawlikowski), the famous Roman frontier oasis city in the province of Syria was Christianized already in the 5th century, but its Christian revitalization took place in the 6th century. This was due to an extensive restoration program attributed to the emperor Justinian (city walls, inscriptions and other written sources). Besides the great church in the middle of the city built *ex novo* (currently excavated by G. Majcherek) and the church in a Late Roman building (excavated by M. Gawlikowski), there were in Palmyra other churches installed in well known pagan temples, their ruins still making a great impression on visitors. Although the church in the Baalshamin Temple is questioned nowadays, the existence of a church in Bel's Temple is well evidenced by the presence of modest remains of Christian frescos preserved on the inner walls of the temple. The traditional 6th century dating of these paintings is not certain, but probable, and their old interpretation by J. Leroy should certainly be revised. In any case, the church in Bel's temple was abandoned in the 8th century (Islamic graffito from 723). In the 12th century, this ex-temple and ex-church was transformed into a mosque.

Keywords: Palmyra, churches, Christian frescoes, Bel's temple