

PALMYRA - THE RISE AND FALL OF THE CITY

ABSTRACT

Palmyra is an extraordinary ancient city in Syria, the cradle of the human civilization. Unfortunately, both the city and the country as a whole have been witnessing lots of woes since the beginning of the ongoing civil war. The Author realized that examining certain processes that occurred in Palmyra would enable us to reach more generalized conclusions, and to extrapolate the proposed recommendations on the entire Syrian territory.

The Author defined several objectives for her work as follows:

The First of them is to further develop the Theory of Urban Factors put forward by the Polish architect and urban planner, Tadeusz Tołwiński.

The Second Objective is to preserve, as much as possible, the cultural heritage of Palmyra for both present and future generations.

The Third Objective is to commemorate the Syrian heroes who stood up bravely against evil, sacrificing the dearest a man has; their own souls in their battle to protect the city. The 'Research by Design' method was used to achieve this objective.

The Fourth Objective is to clearly identify and highlight the urban factors that, according to the Author, should be applied and stimulated in order to provide catalysts for the reconstruction of Palmyra, and Syria in general. Again, the method of 'Research by Design' was applied here, in addition to presenting a defined solution on the planning, urbanistic, and architectural levels, such as the concept of 'The Golden Triangle' connecting the most touristically attractive cities in Syria, and the Khaled Al Asa'ad Memorial Park Project in Palmyra, in addition to transforming the Palmyra Prison (already demolished by ISIS) into an International Archaeological Station bearing the name of Khaled Al Asa'ad.

The Thesis of the Dissertation is to confirm that the urban factors, which Tadeusz Tołwiński claimed as always having a positive charge and thus positive effects, can also have a negative charge, and in such cases they rather have destructive more than constructive effects. This Thesis is proven in this Dissertation, after investigating the Natural Conditions Factor, the Economic Factor, the Communication Factor, and the Religion and Law Factor.

While the first three objectives are achieved in the Dissertation, achieving the Fourth requires time, suitable circumstances, and appropriate efforts by the people and authorities of Syria.

Akin to many of its sister Syrian cities, Palmyra has been reduced almost completely to mere ruins and heap. However, one should always keep in mind that Syria is located in the Fertile Crescent, the stage where the Great Agricultural Neolithic Revolution played out around 10,000 years ago. It was exactly there where our human civilization saw the light- this should never be forgotten.

Palmyra means 'invincible' in its own Aramaic language, and there is always a silver lining for it, despite all the calamities it went and still goes through. Hence, before launching the reconstructions, renovations, and new constructions after the war ends, it is a must to maintain the spirit of greatness and glory, in order to understand this amazing history and the origins of our civilization, which was born on the shores of Mesopotamia with all its majestic cities and fascinating architecture.

The Author hopes that Palmyra, which has always been a symbol of glory, would soon reclaim its grandeur, and will control the roads of the desert as it did in the glorious past.

The long and complicated history of Palmyra, the invincible and noble city thanks to the exceptional traits of its people, obliges the people of today and their successors to preserve the remaining characteristics of the city, and to plan and design a better future for the Invincible City and its people.

In this same light, the Author also hopes that her Dissertation and the Palmyra-Khaled Al Asa'ad Memorial will be part of this process.

