

## I. LOCATION

i. Geographical area	The Near East and Beyond
ii. Region	Syria
iii. Site	Palmyra

## II. NAME

i. Full name (original language)	𐤌 𐤌 𐤌 𐤌 𐤌 𐤌 𐤌 𐤌 𐤌 𐤌 𐤌 𐤌 (PAT 0265, l. 4)
ii. Full name (transliterated)	mrz𐤌 dy kmry bl

## III. DATE

i. Date(s)	44 BC - 273 AD
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## IV. NAME AND TERMINOLOGY

i. Name in other forms	τὸ συμπόσιον ἱερέων μεγίστου θεοῦ Διὸς Βήλου, <i>to symposion hiereon megistou theou Dios Belou</i> (IGLS XVII.1 6)
ii. Name elements	Professional: <i>kmry, hiereis</i> : priests Status-related: <i>kmry, hiereis</i> : priests Theophoric: Bel
iii. Descriptive terms	𐤌 𐤌 𐤌 <i>m̄rz𐤌</i> ', συμπόσιον, <i>symposion</i>

## V. SOURCES

<p><b>i. Source(s)</b></p> <p><b>Online Resources</b></p>	<p>PAT 1524 (44 BC)  PAT 0265 (AD 117)  Schmidt-Colinet 2013: 245-6 no. 3 (AD 130/31)  IGLS XVII.1 9 (AD 140/41)  IGLS XVII.1 14 (mid-2nd century AD)  IGLS XVII.1 67 (AD 262-268)  IGLS XVII.1 351 (AD 167)  IGLS XVII.1 434 (2nd half of the 2nd century AD)  IGLS XVII.1 6 (AD 193)  IGLS XVII.1 15  IGLS XVII.1 157 (AD 203)  PAT 2033  PAT 2036  PAT 2037  PAT 2038  PAT 2039  PAT 2040  PAT 2041  PAT 1128  PAT 2743 (AD 243)  PAT 1358 (AD 272)  PAT 2812 (AD 273)</p> <p>!EDITOR! Please provide the date for all the sources.</p> <p><a href="#">AGRW ID 9452</a> (PAT 0265)  <a href="#">Agora de Palmyre 253, Annexe 40</a> and <a href="#">AGRW ID 10319</a> (IGLS XVII.1 67)</p>
<p><b>i.a. Source type(s)</b></p>	<p>Epigraphic source(s)</p>
<p><b>i.b. Document(s) typology &amp; language/script</b></p>	<p>Various typologies of texts (dedications, honorific inscriptions in honour of the leader of the group, tesserae etc) either written in Greek or in Aramaic.</p>
<p><b>ii. Source(s) provenance</b></p>	<p>References to the priests of Bel or to their symposiarch were found in several places at Palmyra. A number of them comes from the temple of Bel, but other texts mentioned above come, e.g., from the temples of Baalshamin and of Allat.</p>

## VII. ORGANIZATION

<p><b>ii. Leadership</b></p>	<p>The leader of the group appears to be defined as <math>\square \square \square \square</math> <i>rb mṛz</i> in Aramaic and as ἀρχιερεύς καὶ συμποσιάρχης, <i>archiereus kai symposiarches</i> in Greek (passim in the various texts). This was evidently the leading figure of this priestly college. A number of the sources cited above refer only to him, not to the group as such. In addition, not all of them contain the qualification "of the priests of Bel". I agree with Kaizer 2002: 230-1 (on PAT 1128, found in the temple of Allat) that we can generally assume that every <i>rb mṛz</i> mentioned in an inscription refers to the well-known leader of the priests of Bel. This also justifies the attribution of PAT 2036-2041 and Schmidt-Colinet 2013: 245-6 no. 13 (tesserae mentioning a <i>rb mṛz</i>) to the priests of Bel (cf. Gawlikowski, who argues that these tesserae were issued by them). Milik 1972: 110 argues from the frequent attestation of the <i>rb mṛz</i> / <i>symposiarchos</i> that he had authority over all the <i>symposia</i> of Palmyra. This is not necessary (at times, it may be merely a way of dating texts).</p>
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## XII. NOTES

<p><b>i. Comments</b></p>	<p>The priests of Bel are by far the most-attested organized group at Palmyra, and they are clearly not a private association. Their leader, the <i>rb mṛz</i>, was one of the most important people in the city. In PAT 0265, the <i>boule</i> honours one of them with a statue, and IGLS XVII.1 351 shows that the position could be connected with the priesthood of the emperors.</p>
<p><b>ii. Poland concordance</b></p>	<p>B *451G</p>

### iii. Bibliography

- Gawlikowski (forthcoming), 'The marze□ a of the priests of Bel and other drinking societies in Palmyra', in A. Cazemier and S. Skaltsa (eds.), *Proceedings of the International Symposium 'Associations in context: rethinking associations and religion in the post-classical polis'*.
- Kaizer, T. (2002), *The Religious Life of Palmyra. A Study of the Social Patterns of Worship in the Roman Period*. Stuttgart.
- Milik, J.T. (1972), *Dédicaces faites par des dieux (Palmyre, Hatra, Tyr) et des thiasés sémitiques à l'époque romaine*. Paris.
- Schmidt-Colinet, A. (2013), 'Tesserae', in: Schmidt-Colinet, A., and Al-As'ad., W. (eds.), *Palmyras Reichtum durch weltweiten Handel. Archäologische Untersuchungen im Bereich der hellenistischen Stadt. Band 2: Kleinfunde*, Wien: 243-7.

## XIII. EVALUATION

### i. Private association

Discarded

#### Note

It would be of no help to try to understand this group in the terms of private associations. Of course, worship is attested (Bel, but also other gods). Of course, there were functionaries (PAT 1358 and 2812 mention "guards" - presumably of the temple). And there were obviously activities: the tesserae seem to show that the priests (who are sometimes represented in images on them) celebrated meals, and PAT 2743 honours a *rb mrz□* because he provided the priests with good wine for a whole year (on debate over what is meant with "wine in skins, undiluted/unmixed", see Milik 1972: 153; Kaizer 2002: 190; Gawlikowski forthcoming). But all this is to be expected from the main priesthood of the city.