

Decolonizing Cultural Heritage

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Decolonizing Cultural Heritage

- What is 'decolonizing'? Why do we need it?
- The state of Roman Archaeology
- Digital colonialism in post-conflict reconstruction

WHAT IS 'DECOLONIZING'?

What does it mean to decolonize?

- In broad terms
 - The undoing of colonialism
 - Problems and issues
 - A political *process*
 - A striving for equality
- In an academic context
 - Breaking down structural inequalities across our employment, research and teaching
 - Needs an holistic approach

The problem

- Royal Historical Society – Race, Ethnicity and Equality Report 2018
 - BAME Historical & Philosophical Studies
 - UGs = 11.3%
 - PGs = 8.6%
 - Overall UK BAME pop in universities
 - UG 23.9%
 - PG 16.8%
 - 2011 UK census: overall BAME pop
 - 15%
 - Academic staff
 - **White: 93.7%**
 - Black: 0.5%
 - Asian: 2.2%
 - Mixed: 1.6%

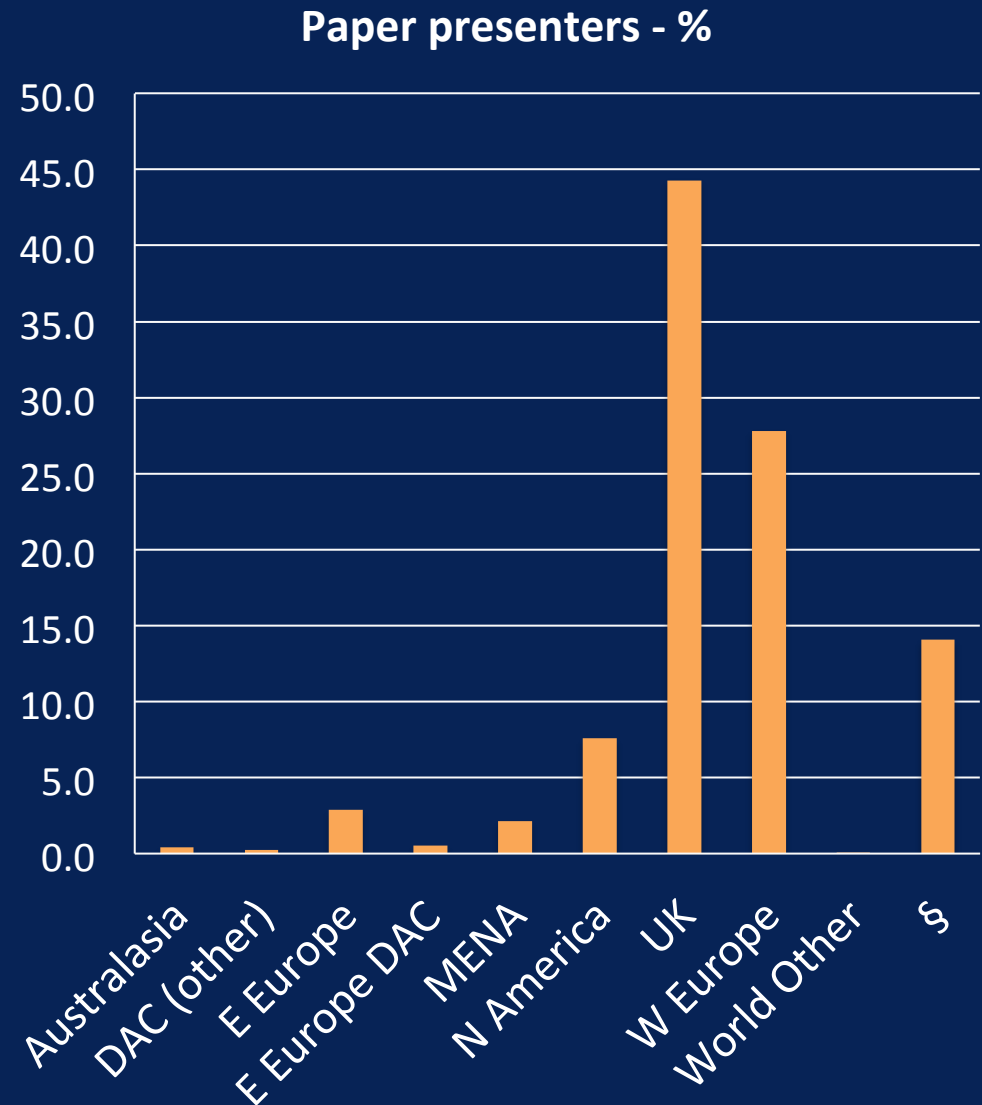
DECOLONIZING ROMAN ARCHAEOLOGY

TRAC/RAC Conferences (1991-2019)

- BAME
 - Session organisers: 2.4%
 - 2019: 10.9% BAME (3 people)
 - Paper presenters: 2.2%
- 2010: first session organised by BAME woman
- 2019: first BAME plenary

Synthesised country of affiliation

- UK
 - Session organisers: 47.9%
 - Paper presenters: 44.3%
- All western Europe
 - Session organisers: 68.7%
 - Paper presenters: 72.1%



Proximity to conference location?

- Australasia
 - Session organisers: under 1%
- BUT
 - Eastern Europe session organisers: 1%
 - MENA session organisers: 1.3%
 - North America session organisers: 7.7%
- MENA by country
 - Session organisers (8)
 - 5 = Israel
 - Paper presenters (61)
 - 29 = Israel

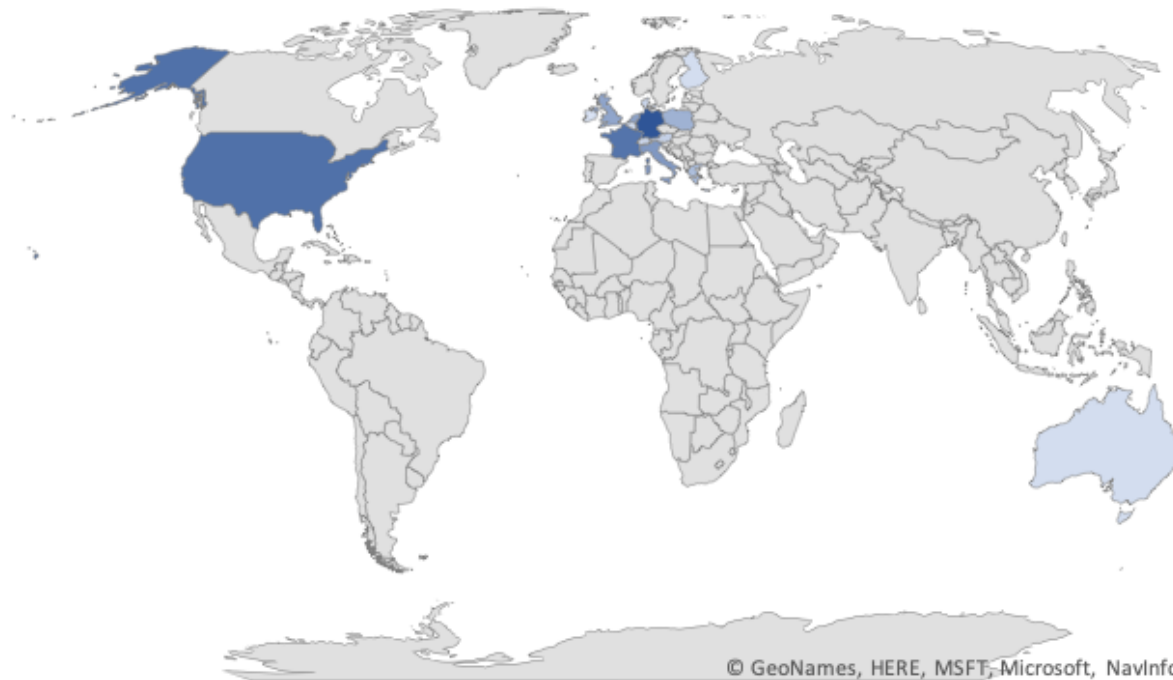
Papyrology: Katherine Blouin, Rachel Mairs, Usama Gad 2019

Members of the International Committee of Papyrologists according to Country of Affiliation 1930-2016

Total Numbers of the Members of Intrnatioanl Committee of Papyrologists



1 47



DIGITAL COLONIALISM AND POST- CONFLICT RECONSTRUCTION

‘Archaeology is not political’

- Apolitical objectivity is a myth
- Biases inherent from beginning of discipline
 - Step 1: Acknowledge past
 - Step 2: Acknowledge impact on present
 - Step 3: Try to change

Robert Wood *The Ruins of Palmyra* 1753

- Process of occlusion and claiming for West
- Euro-centric view
- Writing out Arab historians from historiography of Palmyra
- Denigrating people he meets and with whom he travels

Writing out Arab historians

- ‘fable and wild conjecture’ [Wood 1753, 2]
- Only writer mentioned by name: Abulfeda
 - ‘Of the Arabian writers, some take no notice of Palmyra, and of those who do, Abulfeda prince of Hamah, a city in its neighbourhood, who wrote about the year 1321, **seems to be the only one worth quoting.** ... He was **very probably ignorant, both of its Greek name and history, and only calls it Tedmor.**’ [Wood 1753, 14]

The Urban Developer

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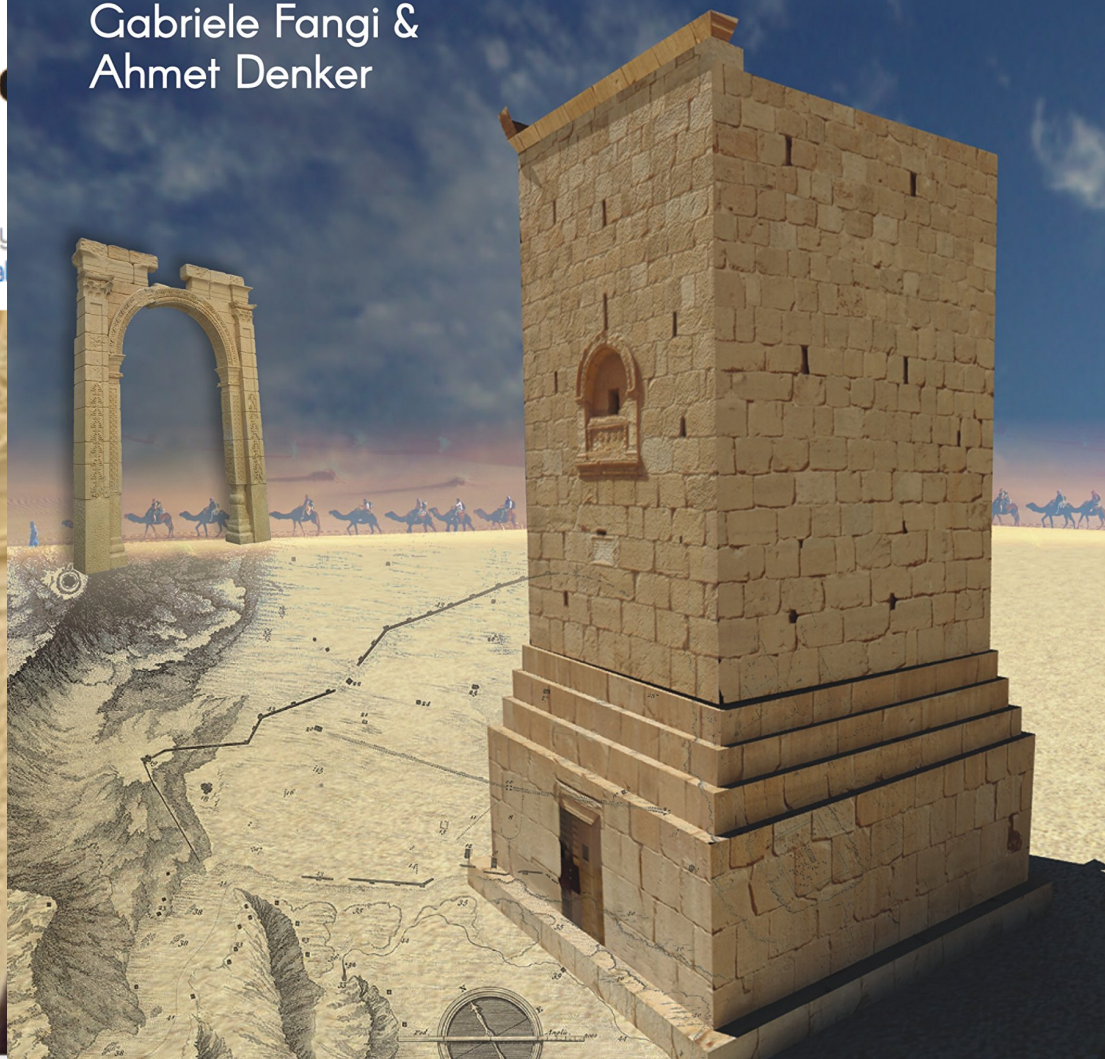
REVIVING PALMYRA IN MULTIPLE DIMENSIONS

Images, Ruins and Cultural Memory

Minna Silver,
Gabriele Fangi &
Ahmet Denker

ISIL-Destroyed Printing

11th October 2016 | Category:
Research, Residential, Sustainable



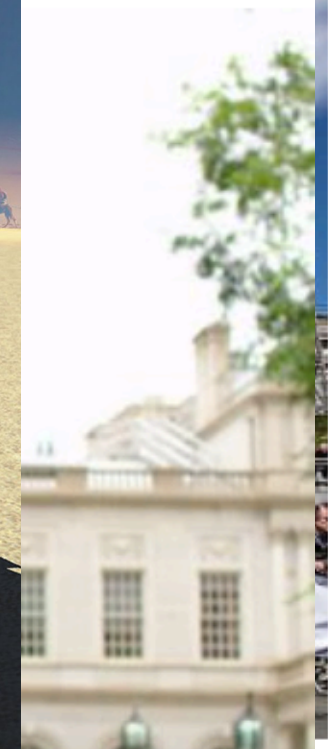
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International, Middle East,



The impact of Wood: post-conflict reconstruction

- Total projects
 - Tadmor-Palmyra: 25
 - Aleppo: 14
 - Mosul: 8
- Media articles
 - Tadmor-Palmyra: 226
 - Aleppo: 70
 - Mosul: 111
- Tadmor-Palmyra as ‘purely archaeological site[s], not embedded in modern [city]’ [Laura Spinney ‘Ancient cities rescued from rubble, bit by bit’ *Nature* Oct. 2018]

