

Abstract:

This diploma thesis deals with the issue ancient caravan trade in the region of Roman Syria. The available evidence on ancient over-land trade is analyzed here, as well as its routes, main trade commodities, and historical events connected with the trade in the Near Eastern Roman provinces. The intention was to process all the accessible sources concerning the local epigraphy in its urban context, complemented by examinations of the archaeology of the city and narrative sources.

The goods arriving to the province of Syria are divided typologically and also according to their utilization and provenience. The prices of main trade commodities are summarized in the chart.

The main trade routes crossing the region of the Roman province of Syria are divided geographically into southern and northern routes, and to the routes leading westwards from Palmyra or Antioch to the Mediterranean ports. I also explored the caravan trade of south Arabia mediated by the Nabateans, and its development according to Roman provincial policy. According to the analyzed sources, the decline of the Nabatean trade is examined. The decline was primarily caused by the Roman effort to weaken the influence of the Nabatean kingdom.

The key issue of the thesis reveals the Palmyra's caravan trade development in its hinterland and abroad. Caravan trade was crucial for Palmyrene community formation and urban prosperity. It provided the welfare that led to extensive Palmyrene settlement in communities throughout the Parthian Empire, primarily along the Euphrates down to the head of the Persian Gulf. In all of these communities, Palmyra's commercial success depended upon amicable relations between Palmyrenes and their Parthian neighbors. The evidence from the caravan inscriptions supports this assessment of Palmyra's participation in this trade.

In connection with the caravan trade, its administrative organization is discussed, including the tax system, the geographical scatter, historical events and also the Roman influence over the caravan cities during the period of this study.

Key words:

Caravan trade, Palmyra, Trade routes, Province of Syria, Roman Syria, Frankincense