

EWA WIPSYCKA

## THE BASILICAS AT PTOLEMAIS: A HISTORIAN'S COMMENTARY ON THE RESULTS OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXPLORATION

It is well to begin by telling what subjects are not addressed in this study: I shall not discuss the architecture of the basilicas at Ptolemais or their decoration; I do not feel competent on this matter. I shall focus instead on what has remained outside the scope of the researches done by my colleagues of the Polish archaeological mission and by my predecessors who worked on the history of Christian architecture.<sup>1</sup> I shall study the character and pastoral functions of the basilicas of Ptolemais.<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately, I am not in a position (and this is the second limitation of my study) to refine their dating. We know only, and only based on a general understanding of the history of Cyrenaica, that they go back to the period from the mid-5<sup>th</sup> to the mid-7<sup>th</sup> c. and this unfortunately has to suffice. The dating of churches in other towns of Cyrenaica is equally imprecise, because suitable sources are lacking. After the death of Synesius (413), when we can no longer rely on his correspondence, we have neither good literary sources nor sufficiently abundant inscriptions. The form of the basilicas themselves affords no grounds for their accurate dating, and we are left to draw our conclusions from architectonic details (the form of the column capitals, shafts, cancelli, etc.), which are not a reliable source in themselves either. Even mosaics are of little use for dating the buildings. The date when a church was constructed may be different from the date when the mosaic was laid, as Noël Duval notes in his article, clever and brimming with polemic irony and gusto.<sup>3</sup> If we were to excavate the area of the churches at Ptolemais, we could make use of data from ceramology; non-invasive investigation alone does not offer any hints of use in absolute dating.

On many important issues I shall use information obtained not only from archaeological evidence, but also, or even mainly, from written sources. Without the help of the latter, archaeological evidence would not make it possible to sketch a picture of the pastoral activities of the basilicas in Cyrenaica. Unfortunately the texts directly concerning this region are not numerous, therefore I shall be obliged to take into account texts coming from other regions, mainly from Egypt, for which the available documentary and literary sources are particularly abundant.

### Character of the basilicas of Ptolemais and interpretation of their location in the city

Let me refer to the map of Ptolemais developed after the Autumn campaign of 2010 by Krzysztof Misiewicz and Wiesław Małkowski, published in Misiewicz's article in the present volume of "Światowit" (Pl. 34). We need to have it before our eyes to follow the arguments of the present study. According to our present knowledge (end of 2010), nine basilicas functioned at Ptolemais. The geophysical survey of the site has not yet been completed and we cannot be absolutely sure that in those sectors where the survey was done no ecclesiastical building has escaped our search; however, by far the greater part of the area has been explored and I do not expect that many more churches will be found in the course of future research. In towns of Cyrenaica other than Ptolemais the number of documented sites of worship is by far inferior: Apollonia – 4, Berenice – 1,

<sup>1</sup> As regards work done by my colleagues, I am referring to the papers by K. Misiewicz, J. Kaniszewski, M. Bogacki and W. Małkowski published in this volume of „Światowit” as well as to E. Jastrzębowska, *Le basiliche cristiane sconosciute nel centro della città di Tolemaide*, (in:) E. Jastrzębowska, M. Niewójt (eds.), *Archeologia a Tolemaide. Giornate di Studio in occasione del primo anniversario della morte di Tomasz Mikocki, 27–28 maggio 2008*, Roma 2009, 226–238. For all the researchers of Byzantine Cyrenaica the fundamental work, containing detailed information, is J.B. WARD-PERKINS' and R.G. GOODCHILD'S book *Christian Monuments of Cyrenaica*, published after the death of both authors by J. Reynolds (with her own contributions, which has caused her to be named as one of its authors rather than an editor); it was published by the Society for Libyan Studies

(London 2003). This work is to be read together with a study of N. DUVAL, *Les monuments d'époque chrétienne en Cyrénaïque à la lumière des recherches récentes*, (in:) N. Duval, F. Baritel, P. Pergola (eds.), *Actes du XI<sup>e</sup> Congrès International d'Archéologie Chrétienne: Lyon, Vienne, Grenoble, Genève et Aoste (21–28 Septembre 1986)*, vol. III, Rome 1989, 2743–2805, which, although old, is still relevant. A non-archaeological viewpoint, which does not mean ignoring archaeological data, is represented by a substantial book by D. ROQUES, *Synésios de Cyrène et la Cyrénaïque du Bas-Empire*, Paris 1987.

<sup>2</sup> All the churches of Cyrenaica (including Ptolemais) that are known to us are basilicas. Therefore researchers studying the churches of Ptolemais are in the habit of calling them basilicas.

<sup>3</sup> N. DUVAL, *Les monuments d'époque chrétienne...*, 2747–2754.

Cyrene – 3, Taucheira – 2 (possibly 4, if we include the basilicas outside the city walls). Naturally, the number of actually operating basilicas may have been greater, since none of these towns has been the subject of comprehensive archaeological excavation or geophysical investigation.

It is worthwhile comparing the data on the churches of Ptolemais with what we know about the churches of Northern Africa and of the Near East.<sup>4</sup> At Numidian Timgad there were 11 churches;<sup>5</sup> at Sufetula – 8, at Leptis Magna – 6, in the small town of Sabratha – 4, at Thelepte – 7 churches and 4 chapels.<sup>6</sup> Three towns to the east of the Jordan: Madaba – 10<sup>7</sup>, Gerasa – more than 19,<sup>8</sup> Umm al-Jemal – 14.<sup>9</sup> At Palmyra, according to the current status of research, there were 8 churches.<sup>10</sup> In Athens, 14 buildings were constructed for the needs of Christian cult; not until the 6<sup>th</sup>–7<sup>th</sup> c. were the big pagan temples turned into churches (Parthenon, Erechtheion, Hephaisteion).<sup>11</sup> To be sure, in many areas of the eastern part of the empire, ruins of cities were investigated by archaeologists; however, it was very seldom that excavations covered the whole area of a given settlement. Therefore, it is usually impossible to establish the number of places of worship, for so many of them have left no traces on the surface.

For their part, written sources do not offer this sort of information, except for the papyri which refer to two Egyptian towns of medium size: Oxyrhynchos – between

25 and 37 churches,<sup>12</sup> Hermoupolis the Great – about 50.<sup>13</sup> However, this data cannot be useful for drawing conclusions on the state of affairs in Cyrenaica. Egyptian churches were for the most part small structures of sun-dried brick, raised with little expense and without much delay. The fervour of the local community and patrons found an easy outlet in raising churches and chapels, short-lived, of course. The stone edifices of Cyrenaica required an appreciably greater input of labour and resources.

In the light of these facts the number of the churches that we know at Ptolemais appears to correspond to the normal situation in average-sized towns of the time. Confident as to the reliability of our source basis for investigating the churches of Ptolemais, we can try to determine their nature and pastoral function.

But before I address my subject, I find it necessary to include at this point a sort of a textbook introduction to the study of the network of Late Antique churches across the entire Christian world. I am aware of the need for this because, while reading archaeological publications, I noticed that their authors had too often stumbled for lack of sufficient understanding of the basic Church institutions.<sup>14</sup>

Our knowledge of this subject relies essentially on written sources, the most valuable of which are the

<sup>4</sup> I leave aside data concerning Rome, Alexandria, Antioch, Constantinople, for there is no sense in comparing them to Ptolemais.

<sup>5</sup> I. GUI, N. DUVAL, J.-P. CAILLET, *Basiliques chrétiennes d'Afrique du Nord*, vol. I: *Inventaire d'Algérie*, Paris 1992, nos. 1–11, 98, 263–286.

<sup>6</sup> On the last four towns I found information in: D. CLAUDE, *Die byzantinische Stadt*, München 1969, 86–87.

<sup>7</sup> A. MICHEL, *Les églises d'époque byzantine et umayyade de la Jordanie, V<sup>e</sup>–VIII<sup>e</sup> siècles. Typologie architecturale et aménagements liturgiques*, Turnhout 2001, 302–328.

<sup>8</sup> A. MICHEL, *Les églises d'époque byzantine...*, 224–274. Many missions have worked at Gerasa but the town has yet to be fully unearthed.

<sup>9</sup> A. MICHEL, *Les églises d'époque byzantine...*, 166–184. The name of this town in antiquity is not known to us.

<sup>10</sup> G. MAJCHEREK, *Polish Archaeological Mission to Palmyra Seasons 2008 and 2009*, “Polish Archaeology in the Mediterranean” XXI, in press.

<sup>11</sup> On the situation at Athens, see: G. DAGRON, *Le christianisme dans la ville byzantine*, “Dumbarton Oaks Papers” 31, 1977, 5: *Les travaux d'Alison Frantz ont montré qu'un grand nombre d'églises sont sans doute déjà construites lorsqu'on s'avise de procéder à la transformation des plus grands temples (Parthénon, Erechtheion, Héphaisteion) aux VI<sup>e</sup>–VII<sup>e</sup> s., la ville s'est alors rétrécie, appauvrie après les invasions des années 580, et elle accomode ses restes.*

<sup>12</sup> Calculations based on the liturgical calendar of Oxyrhynchos from AD 535–536, published in *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, vol. XI, eds. B.P. Grenfell and A.S. Hunt, London 1915, no. 1357. The original text has lost twelve lines which may have named twelve churches, not mentioned in the preserved part of the document. A commentary on this document has been given by A. PAPACONSTANTINO, *La liturgie stationale à Oxyrhynchos dans la première moitié du 6<sup>e</sup> s. Réédition et commentaire du P. Oxy. XI 1357*, “Revue des Études Byzantines” 54, 1996, 152–153.

<sup>13</sup> I write ‘about’ because not all of these data are certain. See: J. GASCOU, *Un codex fiscal hermopolite*, Atlanta 1994, 70.

<sup>14</sup> Information on this subject is to be found in a variety of textbooks. For my part, I would recommend a work which is not recent but is still the best (on matters fundamental for the network of churches we must not expect any great novelties, after all): J. GAUDEMET, *L'Église dans l'Empire romain (IV<sup>e</sup>–V<sup>e</sup> siècles)*, Paris 1958, and 1989<sup>2</sup> (‘avec mise à jour’; on many basic questions the author’s exposition takes into account the status of the Church institutions of the 6<sup>th</sup> c.). In writing the present study, I drew broadly on the most extensive and the best synthesis of the history of the Church during antiquity: L. Pietri (ed.), *Histoire du christianisme des origines à nos jours*, vol. III: *Les Églises d'Orient et d'Occident*, Paris 1998. These chapters I found to be particularly useful: B. FLUSIN, *Évêques et patriarches. Les structures de l'Église impériale (V<sup>e</sup> et VI<sup>e</sup> siècles)*, 485–543; idem, *Le christianisme impérial et ses expressions*, 609–657; F. MONFRIN, *L'établissement matériel de l'Église aux V<sup>e</sup> et VI<sup>e</sup> siècles*, 959–1051.

normative texts. Archaeological research may furnish important information but it gains sense only in correlation with the written sources.

The main unit of Church organisation during the age of interest was the diocese; the diocese network was overlaid on the network of cities and towns (there were some exceptions in poorly urbanised areas, but we need not concern ourselves with them here). All the sites of worship were under the supervision of the bishop, irrespective of how they originated and of the functions they fulfilled; all of the church revenue was at the bishop's disposal, at least, from the legal standpoint. The network of parish churches developed slowly and even in Egypt, where the process was the most advanced, it only covered the rural areas. We come across urban parishes only in very large cities (for example in Rome or Alexandria) where, by reason of the number of the faithful, the requirements of worship made it obligatory to establish churches autonomous from the liturgical point of view, with stationary clergy. None of the towns in Cyrenaica was large enough to have parishes. Therefore, we can safely assume that all the churches at Ptolemais were directly subjected to a bishop who organised the religious life.<sup>15</sup> Particularly, it was up to his decision who and in which church was to hold mass on days when mass was customarily held on a Sunday. The bishop could decide that mass was to be said simultaneously in two or three churches; we may assume that he did this when the number of the faithful taking part in the rites on these specific days was great.

The bishop usually preferred one of the churches in his city: the oldest, the largest, and as such, the most prestigious. This church was certain to have the largest complex of buildings attached to it: here was the bishop's

residence, the largest storage houses, since it was up to the bishop to organise charity in the town. But we need to remember that he could also put into safekeeping grain and other foodstuffs in buildings attached to other churches, organise the distribution of food there, and most importantly, preside over liturgical activity. Thus, they were bishop's churches on a par with what, somewhat anachronistically, we call the cathedral.

Construction of churches required the bishop's permission, who in particular had to see to that there was sufficient revenue to cover the expenditure associated with the functioning of a church. The initiative to build could be taken by the community, then the cost of construction was covered from the running income of the community itself. In many cases the building or at least the decoration of a church was funded by a rich member of the community. Among the sources attesting the role of rich individuals in this field there are inscriptions. Foundation inscriptions were usually inserted into mosaics.<sup>16</sup> In Syria and Palestine, as well as on the northern shores of the Adriatic, they are very numerous, in Cyrenaica they are unfortunately rare. This, however, does not mean that rich people in Cyrenaica were less inclined to give money for the foundation of churches: for reasons unknown, Cyrenaica is rather poor in inscriptions.

Rich people financing the building and/or the decoration of a church acted on religious motives, this is certain, but they also wished to show to everybody that they could afford the expenditure required to call to life a new place of worship.<sup>17</sup> The Christian elite inherited from the pagan elite of the past its predilection for ostentation, and riches could be displayed by building residences, but to an equal extent, also by raising churches.<sup>18</sup> When the founder

<sup>15</sup> C.H. KRAELING, *Ptolemais, City of the Libyan Pentapolis*, Chicago 1962, 100, writes, commenting on the function of the Western Basilica: *That the Fortress Church of Ptolemais is not the one at which Synesius officiated is likely on several counts. For one thing, its location in the southwest quarter of the city, remote from the presumed areas of densest population, was quite unsuitable for a parish or diocesan church.* He ignores the simple fact that at Ptolemais there was no parish at all.

<sup>16</sup> See: P. BAUMANN, *Spätantike Stifter im Heiligen Land*, Wiesbaden 1999, where bibliographical information is carefully put together, concerning not only the region indicated by the title of the book, but other regions as well.

<sup>17</sup> Let me draw for support on the authority of BERNARD FLUSIN, who wrote thus on this subject, in: L. Pietri (ed.), *Histoire du christianisme...*, 645: *Cette multiplication des lieux de culte tient sans doute à l'augmentation du nombre des fidèles, mais elle est surtout la mesure de la générosité des donateurs, qui, prenant ainsi la suite, parfois avec des motivations différentes, de l'évergétisme antique, ornent leur cité en dédiant à Dieu et à ses saints, sur leurs propriétés rurales ou urbaines, chapelles, martyria et églises. De ces faits, sauf*

*exception, la distribution des lieux de culte ne répond généralement à aucune logique particulière: elle est liée beaucoup plus à la répartition de la propriété privée dans la ville qu'à l'espace organisé de la cité.*

<sup>18</sup> See, for instance, a letter found at Oxyrhynchos (Middle Egypt): a rich land owner writes to his senior manager (or to a relative of his): *To my lord brother Athanasius, Didymos. By your God in Heaven, as you shall find wives for your male children, before all, with me as your debtor for this great favour, devote yourself to the church. As for the price for the donkey and the other three solidi, spend out of these and finish the church, for Isiacias the stonemason has found the stones already, so he made an agreement with the man. And buy two solidi (worth of stones?) and they will be enough. Finish the columns. Have the fishing-boat transport (them) from Tampemu before the river falls. I beg you, do not disregard this request of mine, for indeed you are acting for the sake of my soul and of yours.* There follow instructions concerning the author's property, then the author comes back to the building of the church: *Don't neglect the columns. Drive the stewards on. Find a free man to be doorkeeper (of the church).* (*The Oxyrhynchos Papyri*, vol. LIX, eds. P.J. Parsons, J.E.G. Whitehorn, London 1992, no. 4003 [IV/v.c.]).

of a church was the bishop it is hard to determine where the money came from: from the community coffers or from the bishop's purse. It is certain that a bishop having sufficiently sizable property was expected to undertake this sort of construction projects.<sup>19</sup> A great founder of churches within the empire was the emperor. His undertakings concentrated in new towns and ones that were important from the administrative standpoint, for example capital cities of provinces. This is, however, not the case in Cyrenaica; the beautiful basilicas of Apollonia do not bear any indications suggesting an imperial foundation.

It is worth bearing in mind that the person or institution founding a church had to have a suitable urban property (or to purchase one) in their town. Often, the reason for choosing one or another setting for the church building in the tissue of the town was the fact that the founder owned there a plot of land. To locate a church on one's property was not only an economical solution, it also helped add to the splendour of one's residence if this was in the neighbourhood.

Now I can come back to the basilicas of Ptolemais. It is worth noting their location. They stood in the main streets similarly as in other towns. The Central Basilica lies in an area focal for the public life of the city since the Hellenistic times, near the agora. The Western Basilica lies near the new centre of the Late Antique period, namely the large square of 30×30 m occupying two insulae (see: Misiewicz, this volume, p. 36) which seems to have been the main element of the western part of the city. The reason for this is obvious: the elite of the city was residing near areas with public buildings and in dwellings situated along the busy communication thoroughfares.

Without excavating the site of the Central Basilica we cannot say what stood previously on it. We can hardly assume that such a large area in such an important point of the city remained empty. It is true that the cities of antiquity, and particularly of the Late Antique period, had areas without buildings, sometimes of quite a substantial size.

Often the area inside the town walls included gardens and tracts of wasteland. Destruction of buildings in times of war or earthquakes could leave tracts of ground without buildings especially outside the strict centre, which, owing to their prestigious character, would be rebuilt after local disasters. On empty ground in other parts of the town churches are certain to have been built, but presumably not too often.<sup>20</sup>

In written sources no evidence can be found suggesting that ecclesiastical authorities tried to guide church construction in such a way as to answer the pastoral needs of a given city. It is true that the silence of the sources is often a weak or unsound argument, but in our case it gains force if we take into account the number and diversity of literary works and documents which inform us about the pastoral life of the Late Antique cities. Also, if we inspect the town plans of cities of Cyrenaica included in the book of J.B. WARD-PERKINS, R.G. GOODCHILD, and J. REYNOLDS (cited above, n. 1), we find that the location of churches is random. At Apollonia, three important churches cluster at a distance of 100 and 200 m from one another. I emphasise all of this here because archaeologists often try to draw conclusions on the intentions of the ecclesiastical dignitaries based on the network of churches in a city.

The existence of nine basilicas at Ptolemais probably exceeded the pastoral needs of the local community. I suspect that at Ptolemais, as in an average Late Antique town, mass was most often held on a Sunday (we know that Christians, outside holidays, did not attend mass regularly), not necessarily always at the same basilica.<sup>21</sup>

### Buildings associated with the churches

In the case of the Central Basilica, the geophysical survey revealed the presence of a complex of accompanying buildings (Fig. 1).

<sup>19</sup> At Gasr el-Lebia, an inscription on a floor mosaic attests that it was done 'at the time (epi) of bishop Theodor' (published by J. Reynolds in: J.B. WARD-PERKINS, R.G. GOODCHILD, J. REYNOLDS, *Christian Monuments...*, 282). Dates of this kind inscribed on a building usually imply that the bishop played a part in the construction.

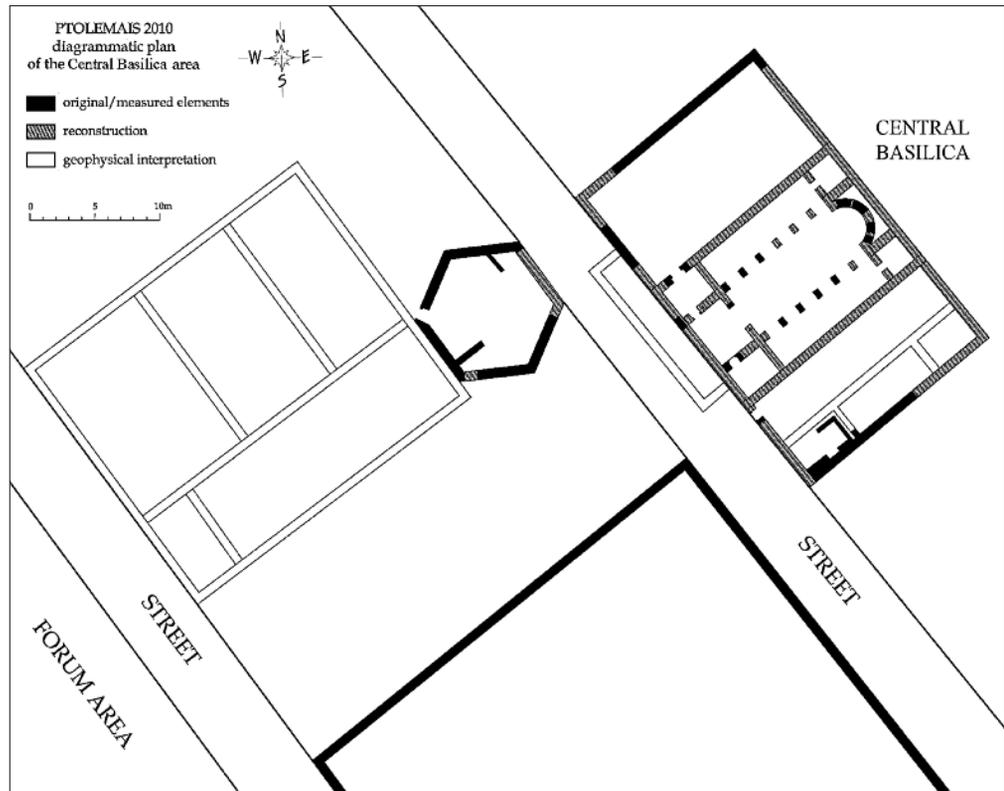
<sup>20</sup> The best known case of a church being built on a abandoned space, used as a dumping ground, is the foundation of the martyrion of John the Baptist in Alexandria. Athanasius is said to have taken the initiative of this foundation; the man who carried it out was certainly Theophilus. See: A. MARTIN, *Alexandrie à l'époque romaine tardive*, in the collective book *Alexandrie médiévale 1* (Ch. Décobert, J.-Y. Empereur eds., *Études Alexandrines* 3,

Le Caire 1998), 15–16; J. GASCOU, *Les églises d'Alexandrie: questions de méthode*, in the same book, 29.

<sup>21</sup> Surprisingly, we have very little data as to the number of the people who gathered in church on Sundays. There are also few studies on this subject. I know of two works in which an attempt is made to determine how frequently the faithful attended mass: V. MONACHINO, *La cura pastorale a Milano, Cartagine e Roma nel secolo IV*, Roma 1947; P. RENTINCK, *La cura pastorale in Antiochia nel IV secolo*, Roma 1970. These works are worth reading. Both scholars tried to exploit the testimonies of well known ecclesiastical authors. These, however, do not offer precise information, most often they simply complain of the fact that people are sinning by not attending mass regularly.

Fig. 1. Plan of the Central Church at Ptolemais (drawn by W. Małkowski, based on the results of the geo-magnetic research conducted by K. Misiewicz. See also his detailed description, 35, 36, and Pls. 37:6, 38:9).

Ryc. 1. Plan Kościoła Centralnego w Ptolemais, por. 35, 36 i Pls. 37:6, 38:9).



Less legible is an analogous complex of the Central-Western Basilica. Next to all the other basilicas, the plans drawn up in the course of the investigation contain no evidence on companion buildings, which obviously does not mean that they did not exist. The destruction of the remains of their walls may have extended so deep down that they escaped detection by our instruments. In the case of the Western Basilica, the number of stone blocks left behind on the surface without any legible order by archaeologists reconstructing it is so significant that they full prevent making non-destructive investigation in the direct vicinity of that building. What we do see is buildings some distance off, which formed the city centre situated near the Tokra Gate.

The existence of buildings attached to churches (usually referred to as annexes) during Late Antiquity was not the rule, but happened very often. Admittedly, in churches typical for Cyrenaica, as are the basilicas found at Ptolemais, there usually were rooms on both sides of the apse, but they were not sufficiently large to answer the needs of the clergy when rites were performed. What was placed in them were – first of all – liturgical vessels and garments, and possibly, liturgical codices. The church, closed under a stout lock, was (but only just about) protected against theft. Moreover, the objects used in liturgy should remain in a consecrated location.

In important basilicas the annexe could occupy a substantial area. This we can ascertain by reading a law issued by Theodosius II in 431. This legal act, regulating

the rules for seeking sanctuary in churches by insolvent debtors of the *fiscus*, includes a unique description of the church complex.

CTh. 9.45.4

*Imperatores Theodosius et Valentinianus augusti Antiocho praefecto praetorii*

*Pateant summi dei templa timentibus; nec sola altaria et oratorium templi circumiectum, quod ecclesias quadripertito intrinsecus parietum septo concludit, ad tuitionem confugientium sancimus esse proposita, sed usque ad extremas fores ecclesiae, quas oratum gestiens populus primas ingreditur, confugientibus aram salutis esse praecipimus, ut inter templum, quod parietum descripsimus cinctu, et post loca publica ianuas primas ecclesiae quicquid fuerit interiacens, sive in cellulis sive in domibus, hortulis, balneis, areis atque porticibus, confugas interioris templi vice tueatur. Nec in extrahendos eos conetur quisquam sacrilegas manus immittere, ne qui hoc ausus sit, quum discrimen suum videat, ad expetendam opem ipse quoque confugiat. Hanc autem spatii latitudinem ideo indulgemus, ne in ipso dei templo et sacrosanctis altaribus confugientium quemquam manere vel vescere, cubare vel pernoctare liceat.<sup>22</sup> ipsi hoc clericis religionis causa vetantibus, ipsis, qui confugiunt, pietatis ratione servantibus.<sup>23</sup>*

English translation:<sup>24</sup>

*Emperors Theodosius and Valentinian Augusti to Antiochus, Praetorian Praefect.*

*The temples of the Most High God shall be open to those*

persons who are afraid. Not only do We sanction that the altars and the surrounding oratory of the temple, which encloses the church with a barrier of four walls on the inside, shall be set aside for the protection of those persons who take refuge, but also the space up to the outside doors of the temple, which people desiring to pray enter first, We order to be an altar of safety for those who seek sanctuary. Thus if there should be an intervening space within the circumference of the walls of the temple which We have marked off and within the outer doors of the church behind the public grounds, whether it be in the cells or in the houses, gardens, baths, courtyards, or colonnades, such space will protect the fugitives just as the interior of the temple does. No one shall attempt to lay sacrilegious hand on them to drag them out, lest a person who dares to do this, when he sees his own peril, may himself also take refuge and seek aid. Moreover, We grant this extent of space for this purpose, namely, that it may not be permitted

that any fugitive remain or eat or spend a night in the very temple of God, or on the sacrosanct altars. The cleric themselves shall forbid this for the sake of reverence for religion, and those who seek sanctuary shall observe it for the sake of piety.

Thus, we learn that inside the walls enclosing the churches, meant to divide the sacred from the secular space, we can expect to find cells, houses, baths, gardens, courtyards and colonnades. Let us note that the legislator prohibits eating, sleeping, spending the night "in the very temple of God" (consequently, in the building within which the Eucharistic cult is performed and where the altar stands). This prohibition does not apply in the area of the annexe (not that, anyhow, this prohibition was always respected in the churches).<sup>25</sup>

We find complexes of buildings attached to basilicas also in other towns of Cyrenaica: at Apollonia and Taucheira.

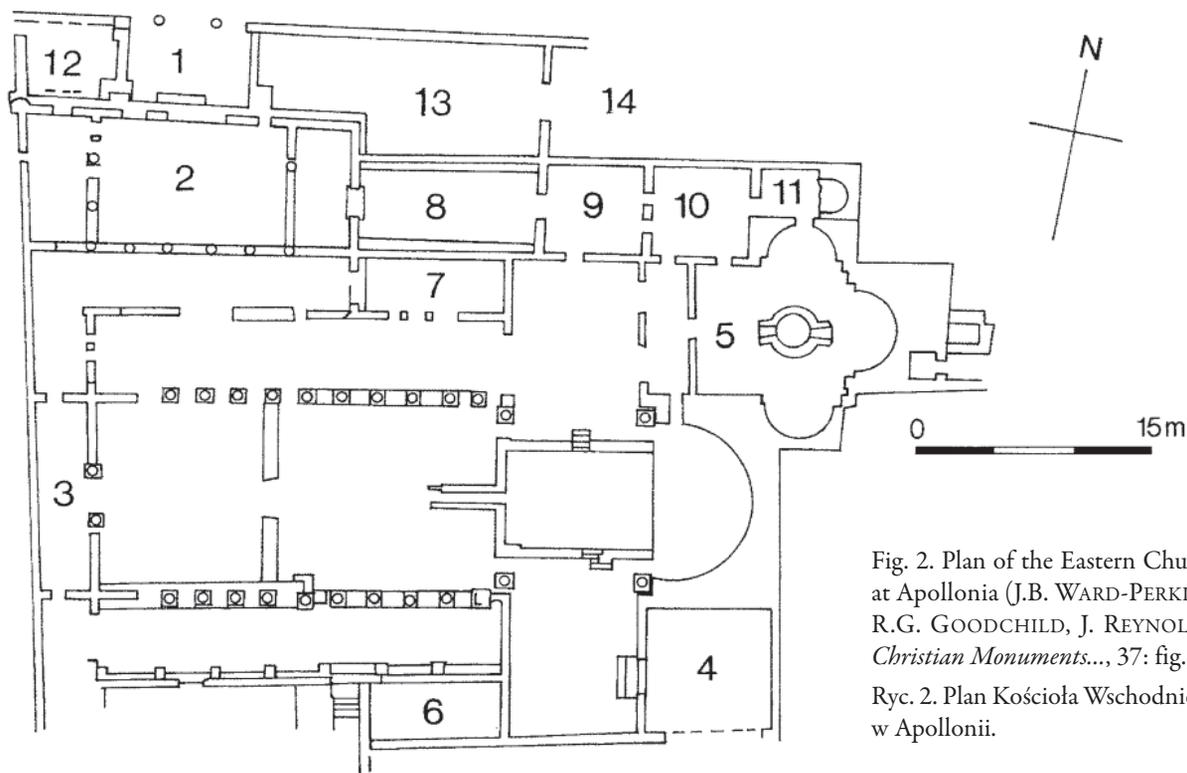


Fig. 2. Plan of the Eastern Church at Apollonia (J.B. WARD-PERKINS, R.G. GOODCHILD, J. REYNOLDS, *Christian Monuments...*, 37: fig. 2).

Ryc. 2. Plan Kościoła Wschodniego w Apollonii.

<sup>22</sup> If the lawmaker finds it appropriate to outlaw these practices, we have to conclude that this happened often, especially in large churches.

<sup>23</sup> *Theodosiani libri XVI cum Constitutionibus Sirmondianis. Edidit adsumpto apparatu P.Kruegeri Th. Mommsen*, Berlin 1905.

<sup>24</sup> *The Theodosian Code and Novels and the Sirmondian Constitutions. A Translation with Commentary, Glossary and Bibliography by C. Pharr*, Princeton 1952.

<sup>25</sup> This is evidenced by various hagiographic texts. Let me quote an

amusing text of Egyptian provenance, published by J. DRESCHER, *Apa Claudius and the Thieves*, "Bulletin de la Société d'Archéologie Copte" 8, 1942, 63–86, and commented on in my article *Church Treasures of Byzantine Egypt*, "The Journal of Juristic Papyrology" 34, 2004, 127–140. The thieves, out to remove valuable objects from the church, pretend they are pious individuals wishing to earn grace by an all night's prayer, so they let themselves be confined in the church locked for the night, after which they make themselves scarce with their booty.

The East Basilica at Apollonia (Fig. 2), a large transeptal basilica, was raised during the reign of Justinian on the site of a basilica building from the 5<sup>th</sup> c. Their builders used the remains of Hellenistic edifices. The entrance to the basilica was on its side (1-2), through a small courtyard with porticoes on three sides. Along the western wall there was a narrow chamber divided into three smaller ones, with no. 3 serving as a small narthex. On the

northern side of the basilica a few rooms were built that gave access to the baptistery (11) and the northern aisle (9, 10). There is nothing to indicate that rooms 13 and 14 were connected with the basilica. If they belonged to it, the entrance was from the street. The basilica was expanded during the 6<sup>th</sup> c. in the times of Justinian. Additions were made to its north-eastern corner, where a monumental setting for the baptistery was built.

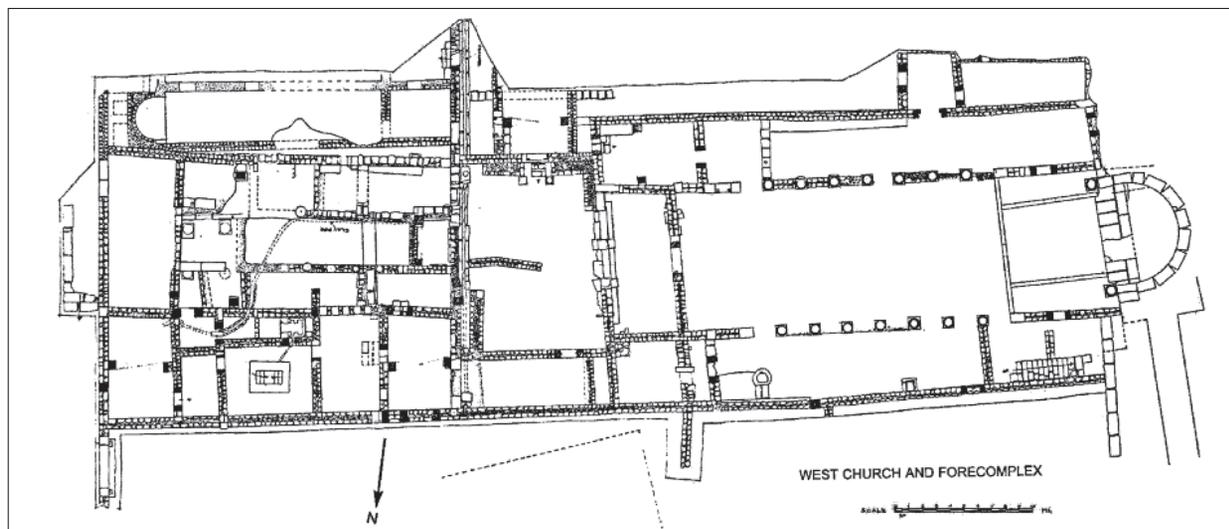


Fig. 3. Plan of the Western Church at Apollonia (J.B. WARD-PERKINS, R.G. GOODCHILD, J. REYNOLDS, *Christian Monuments...*, 86: fig. 53).

Ryc. 3. Plan Kościoła Zachodniego w Apollonii.

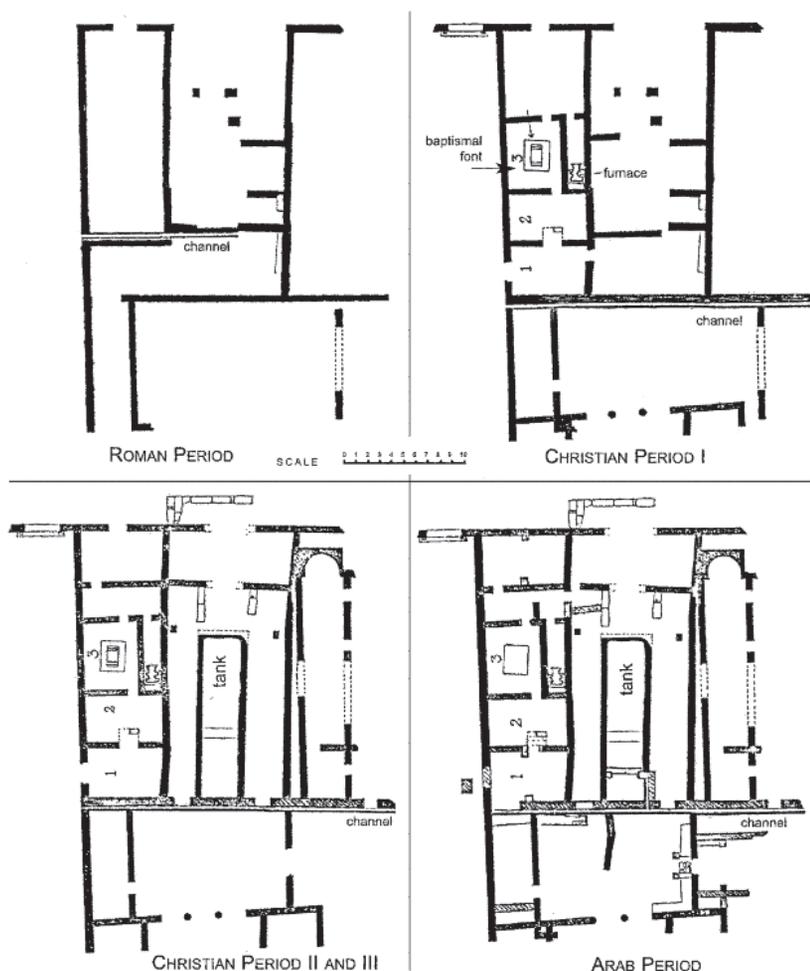


Fig. 4. Plan of the four phases (Roman, Christian I, Christian II and III, Arab) of the fore-complex of the Western Church in Apollonia (J.B. WARD-PERKINS, R.G. GOODCHILD, J. REYNOLDS, *Christian Monuments...*, 87: fig. 47).

Ryc. 4. Szkic planu *fore-complex* w czterech fazach chronologicznych: okres rzymski, okres chrześcijański I, okres chrześcijański II i III, okres arabski.

The buildings attached to the Western Basilica (Figs. 3, 4) were grouped on its east side, which induced their discoverers to call them the fore-complex. Reconstruction of the whole is largely hypothetical, because of both the remains of earlier buildings and later alterations. On the north-eastern side there was the baptismal complex. Attention is drawn by an oven in a chamber next to the baptistery; its discoverers believe that it was used to heat the water for baptism. The idea of having water heating for baptism during antiquity troubles me. The only text I know mentioning the possibility of using warm water for baptism is the *Didache* – a text no doubt from the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> century. There, at VII 1, we read: *And concerning baptism, baptize thus. Having first recited all these things, baptize in the name of the Father, and the Son and of the Holy Spirit in running water. But if thou has not running water, baptize in other water; and, if thou canst not in cold, in warm.*<sup>26</sup> This venerable source obviously does not

prove that water could be intentionally heated for use in baptism. I suspect that the archaeologists working at Apollonia were wrong in interpreting traces of a hearth found within the church complex. In my opinion, these may have been the remains of a bread oven (for baking bread within church complexes, see below). Striking is the presence of an open water-tank surrounded on three sides by colonnaded porticoes, not seen in other church complexes. One of the researchers suggests that fish were kept in the pond, but I find this implausible.<sup>27</sup> On the south side archaeologists exploring the complex unearthed a long hall with an apse, its floor laid with a mosaic, and an antechamber which led to rooms found farther south, unfortunately, not investigated. We encounter this form of hall (with apses in particular) in residences; perhaps, part of the non-liturgical fore-complex was used for residential purposes (then, the shallow water-tank would not have been out of place; we find its likes in houses of Ptolemais).<sup>28</sup>

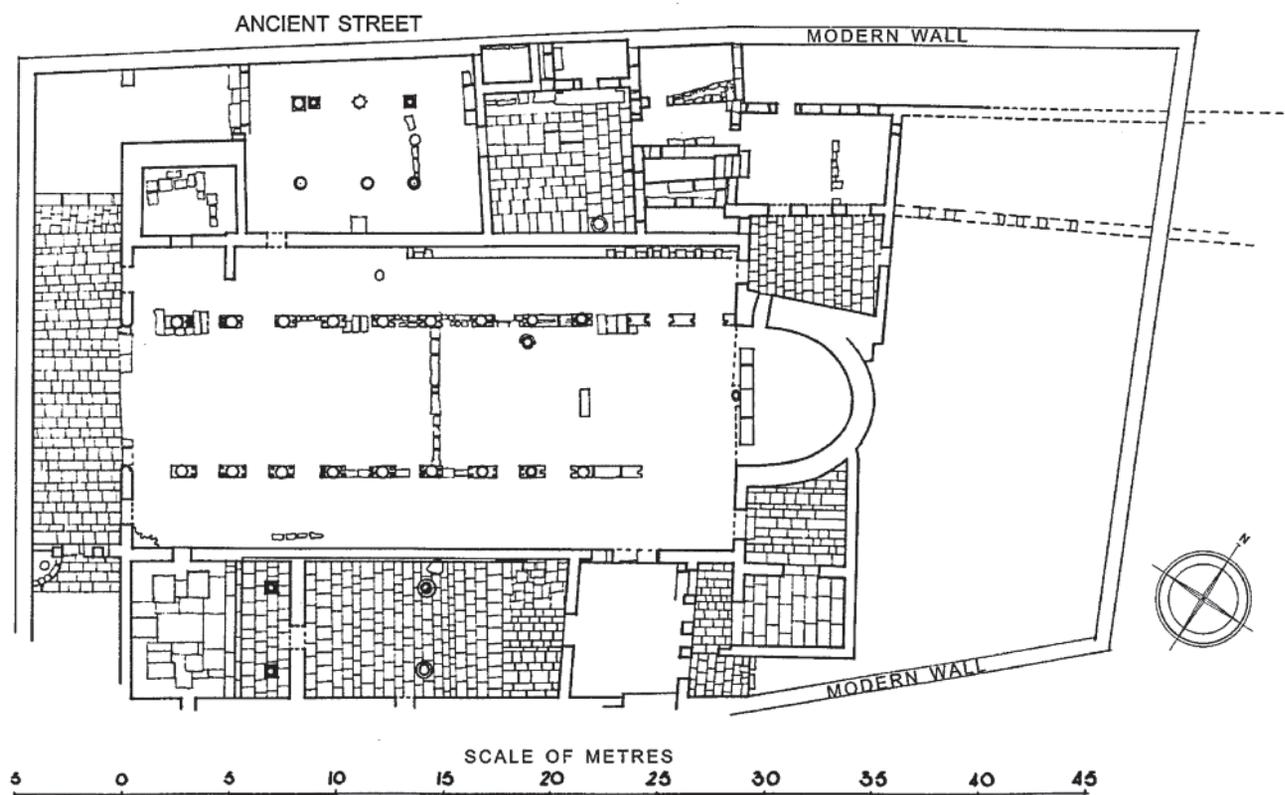


Fig. 5. Plan of the East Church at Taucheira (J.B. WARD-PERKINS, R.G. GOODCHILD, J. REYNOLDS, *Christian Monuments...*, 204: fig. 202)

Ryc. 5. Plan Kościoła Wschodniego w Taucheirze.

<sup>26</sup> C. BIGG, *The Doctrine of the Twelve Apostles*, London 1922.

<sup>27</sup> A. WILSON, *Management and Usage in Roman North Africa*.

*A Social and Technological Study*, Oxford 1997, 167–168.

<sup>28</sup> C.H. KRAELING, *Ptolemais...*, 15, 126, 128, 146.

The East Church at Taucheira (**Fig. 5**) constitutes a basilica with additional rooms on both its sides. On its east side there is a long ceremonial hall (audience hall?), on its west side there are various rooms and a small atrium. The whole originated (presumably) in the 5<sup>th</sup> c.

There was also an extensive annexe in the West Basilica at Taucheira. But very little can be said about it as it has not been an object of excavation. Identification of the rooms on the basis of traces visible on the ground is highly tentative.

The annexes of those basilicas of Cyrenaica that we know are modest. This is true even of the impressive Western Basilica of Apollonia. One becomes aware of this as soon as one compares it, for instance, with the annexe at Gerasa – a town more or less of the same size and importance as Ptolemais (**Fig. 6**).

areas of the Mediterranean world. They are not many, because no need was ever felt to describe church annexes in detail. (As a matter of fact, we have few detailed descriptions of churches, although it would seem that there were more reasons for describing them). Information about buildings attached to churches appears on occasion in scenes of Church life, when there was need to draw the background of specific events which occurred in these rooms. Using texts written outside Cyrenaica to interpret its church buildings does not raise methodological reservations: in the Late Antique period the process of elimination of local variants in the domain of liturgy and church architecture is sufficiently advanced, so that we can juxtapose information originating from different regions. Anyway, the form of church annexes was dictated by their purpose and by pastoral requirements, so storage spaces, dining halls,

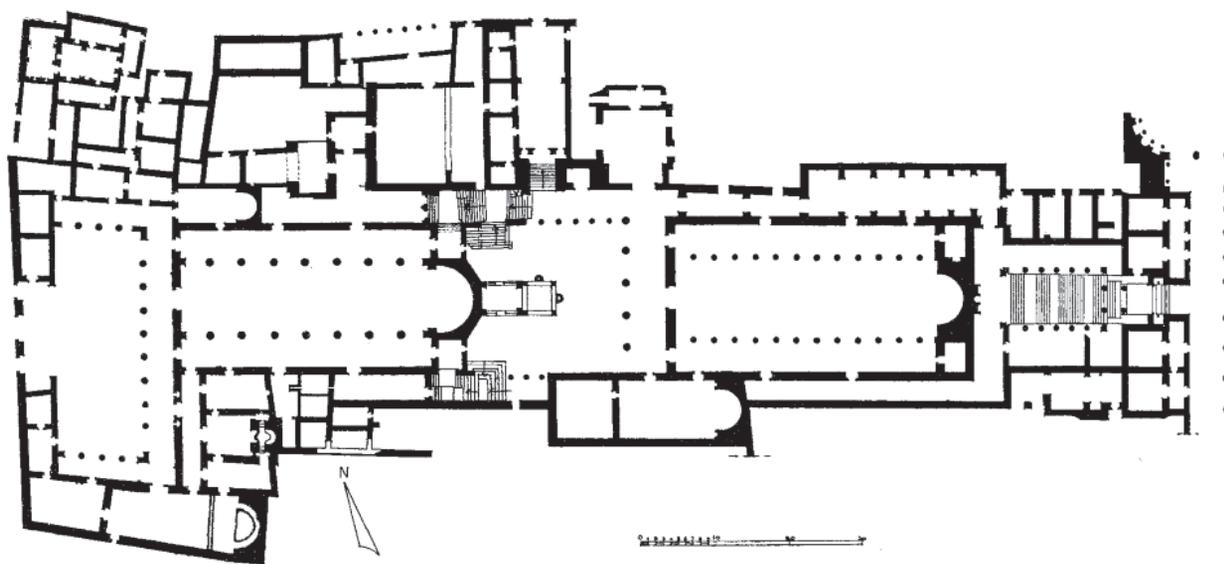


Fig. 6. Plan of the bishop's complex at Gerasa (J. LASSUS, *Sanctuaires chrétiens de Syrie: Essai sur la genèse, la forme et l'usage liturgique des édifices du culte chrétien en Syrie, du III<sup>e</sup> s. à la conquête musulmane*, Paris 1947, fig. 18).

Ryc. 6. Plan kompleksu biskupiego w Gerazie.

Unfortunately, the archaeologists who unearthed the basilicas at Apollonia and Taucheira were not able to extend excavations to the annexes, which (perhaps!) could have furnished information to let us specify the function of the rooms. We do not hear about small finds other than fragments of sculpture. In this situation, to understand the function served by individual rooms we can only seek for information in literary sources and inscriptions. We have no such texts for the Pentapolis but they exist for other

dormitories, baths, ovens, were raised everywhere in a highly similar way. What is more, they were not subject to any major change over time, unlike the architecture of the church buildings.

The most interesting and, at the same time, the earliest group of texts refers to churches of two towns in Numidia, namely, Abtunga (a medium-sized town) and Cirta (provincial capital, but not over large).<sup>29</sup> During the Great Persecution (AD 303) both churches were subject to

<sup>29</sup> The whole dossier bears the traditional name of *Gesta purgationis Caeciliani et Felicis*; it is published by H. VON SODEN, H. VON CAMPENHAUSEN, *Urkunden zur Entstehungsgeschichte des Donatismus*, Berlin 1950<sup>2</sup>, 25–32, 37–50. Its part of greatest interest from the archaeological point of view is the *Gesta apud*

*Zenophilum*, acts of legal proceedings on the charge of *traditio* against Silvanus, bishop of Cirta, and Felix. A comprehensive commentary (also archaeological) on the dossier is found in YVETTE DUVAL's book, *Chrétiens d'Afrique à l'aube de la Paix Constantinienne. Les premiers échos de la Grande Persécution*, Paris 2000.

searches, made by the local authorities on imperial orders, to confiscate sacred texts, liturgical vessels and valuables, belonging to the Christian communities. When the persecutions died down, members of the clergy (mainly the bishops), who, of their will, had handed over these objects were accused by the rigorists of committing the grave sin of *traditio* ('the handing over'), first of all, of the sacred scriptures. Controversy in the Church on these grounds led to a schism, known as the Donatist schism (from the name of its prominent leader, the bishop Donatus). The texts of interest are official documents drawn up by pagan municipal officers during the persecutions of AD 303. They were used during processes as material to illustrate the conduct of bishops who underwent trial in the reign of Constantine the Great, and for this reason are included in the dossier. In them we find information on various buildings of the church complexes where the search was made for objects subject to confiscation.<sup>30</sup>

Next to the prayer halls, with the bishop's throne and seats for presbyters, the church complexes at Abtunga and Cirta had other rooms: the apartments of the bishop, with rooms for his personal use, the library (at Cirta, the person who drew up the protocol even records 'libraries') for large collections of books (11 codices at Abtunga, 26 larger and 4 smaller codices at Cirta), furnished with bookcases and chests, for the works used in liturgy and devotional books.<sup>31</sup> With reference to one of the churches, mention is made of a dining hall (*triclinium*). Large stores of foodstuffs: wheat, olive oil, and wine were placed in it. There must have been other places for storing food. If there was a dining hall, then, next to it, there must have been a kitchen (which is not mentioned, presumably because the members of the committee did not look into it, as they had no reason to). The bishop's church at Cirta had a separate storage space for clothes for the poor: for women and girls – 82 tunics and 38 shawls to cover the head and shoulders, 47 pairs of sandals; for men – 16 tunics, 13 pairs of sandals, 18 cloaks.<sup>32</sup> To the storage rooms named earlier we may add smaller rooms in which were stored assorted lamps,

large and small, candelabra, and objects used in liturgy: chalices, patens, scoops for pouring the wine of the Eucharist, pitchers, large and small, basins for washing hands, etc. If they were in silver and bronze they were subject to confiscation and as such were carefully recorded in the official protocols.

All that we learn about the church rooms and the furnishing of churches at Abtunga and Cirta relates to the times of the persecuted Church, when the Christians formed a minority of the population of these towns! In later centuries the resources of the Church multiplied, and the main changes will affect the space where the rites were performed (the basilica will be born as the main form of building), but also the attached facilities will change. There appeared porticoes (in warmer parts of the Mediterranean the sick and the enervated slept in them, in areas with a less mild climate there was need for dormitories covered with a roof), more spacious kitchens, bread ovens, baths.

In Greek sources dating from late 4<sup>th</sup> and early 5<sup>th</sup> c. we come across, for the first time, the term *episkopeion* used to describe the complex attached to the bishop's church. It entered for good the language related to church matters. G.W.H. Lampe<sup>33</sup> says that its key meaning is: 'bishop's residence (bishop's palace); more seldom, 'property pertaining to bishop's establishment, bishop's household', and even, 'bishop's throne'. In cities where the bishop had substantial means at his disposal, true palaces were raised. In the times of John Chrysostom's episcopacy, forty bishops gathered in the ceremonial hall of his *episkopeion* (large gatherings took place in churches)<sup>34</sup>. The existence of an imposing residence encouraged the bishop to leave his own dwelling and move into the former. This was not obligatory, and the bishops who most often belonged to the town elite could have their own much more comfortable houses.<sup>35</sup> Synesius in any case did not leave his residence; he would set off for church from it, passing the agora on his way (ep. 67, 48–50). Ptolemais was not large enough a town that to remain in one's home would cause complications to the official duties.

<sup>30</sup> Note: at the very threshold of the 4<sup>th</sup> c. the basilica, as the basic form of the bishop's church, did not exist as yet; the Christian communities, led by the bishop and the clergy, gathered in large households, with courtyards and porticoes, typical of antique households. After suitable modifications as a result of which a large hall was formed, these could be used for worship. In the protocols they are described as *locus ubi orationes celebrare consueti fuerant* (Abtunga) and *domus in qua Christiani conveniebant* or *Casa Maior* (Cirta).

<sup>31</sup> *Gesta apud Zenophilum*, 25–32.

<sup>32</sup> *Gesta apud Zenophilum*, 37–50.

<sup>33</sup> G.W.H. LAMPE, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*, Oxford 1961, s.v.

<sup>34</sup> PALLADIOS, *Dialogue sur la vie de Jean Chrysostome*, VIII, 92 (A.-M. Malingrey, Ph. Leclercq eds., vol. I, Sources Chrétiennes 341, Paris 1988).

<sup>35</sup> An author writing in Gaul towards the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> c., GENNADIUS OF MASSILIA, in his work *Statuta Ecclesiae Antiqua*, Canon 1, says: *Ut episcopus non longe ab ecclesia hospitium habeat* (Corpus Christianorum, series Latina, 148, ed. Ch. Munier, Turnhout 1963). It was not obvious that the bishop had to take up his residence inside the church area; it was enough for him to be living close by.

In the dossier from AD 303 mention is made of a dining hall (*triclinium*), without specifying who took their meals there: the poor, members of the clergy, or lay people invited by the bishop? This is a great pity as it would be worth knowing what was at that time the form of distribution of food to the poor: meals eaten on the spot or provisions taken home? Without fail, the dining hall was used by the bishop to receive guests. These were often numerous, since the bishop, according to the customs of urban elites of antiquity, led a social life and met regularly with different people at his table.<sup>36</sup>

As a rule, after mass the members of the clergy would meet in the dining hall refectory of the church complex for a common meal. We learn of this custom from two collections of rules, known as the Canons of Saint Athanasius<sup>37</sup> and the Canons of Saint Basil.<sup>38</sup> Bread, wine, and other products shared by the members of clergy are a part of the offerings made by the faithful, offered solemnly during mass. Of this we learn in quite rich detail:

*But every [thing] that shall be given of corn and wine and oil and beasts shall go to the clergy of the church as choice offering (prospora), to be offered upon the altar; and what things are over from the altar shall be eaten of them that serve it. (Can. Ath. 63 Ar.)*<sup>39</sup>

*No priest shall speak in the Tafir, which is the place of the offering, neither sit there at all. Neither shall they divide anything there. (Can. Ath. 32 Ar.)*

*But they shall have a place apart from the people, wherein to divide the bread. The youngest among the priests shall divide it; no priest may divide it when a younger than he*

*is there. Likewise the place where the priests eat shall be apart from the people. (Can. Ath. 33 Ar.)*

*Keiner soll im Chore oder rings um den Altar sprechen; vielmehr soll ausserhalb desselben für sie ein Raum angelegt werden, wo sie essen und das Brot verteilen. Wenn sie dazu kommen, das Brot zu verteilen, soll der kleinste das Brot verteilen, damit kein Murren im Klerus entstehe; und keiner soll darauf sehen, wer es verteilt. (Can. Bas. 96)*<sup>40</sup>

*The Bishop shall eat often with the priests in the church, that he may see their behaviour, whether they do eat in quietness and in the fear of God. [...] The bishop shall not fail in all this thrice a year: at Paschal feast and at the feast of Pentecost and at the feast of Baptism on the eleventh of the (month) Tübah. (Can. Ath. 66 Ar.)*

*None among them shall talk while they eat, nor shall they, while they eat, raise their faces one toward another. And if the bishop speak God's word, they shall all give heed. (Can. Ath. 67 Ar.)*

The presence of the members of the clergy at mass and directly after it, at the communal meal, was obligatory; those who came late were punished by being deprived of the portion of food which was due to them.

*Now concerning the trades of clerics, they shall not work at any trade wherein is thieving or wherein they have not leisure for the hour of the offering (prospora). And if he be a husband and come not to church on the Sabbath and the Lord's Day ere the psalter hath been read, he shall fast and shall not take (of the bread); but he shall go unto the place of eating. Yet when they go up to altar, he shall not go. (Can. Ath. 49 Copt.)*

<sup>36</sup> The clergy of Constantinople held it against John Chrysostom that he took his meals alone. Among the charges formulated against him and examined during the 'Synod of the Oak' we find the following passage: (*charge*) *twenty-fifth, that he ate gluttonously alone, living like Cyclops*. (Incidentally, this physically frail man had serious stomach problems, so there could be no question of eating gluttonously). The text survived in Photius' *Bibliotheca*, Codex 59. Edition: PHOTIUS, *Bibliothèque*, vol. I, ed. R. Henry, Paris 1950.

<sup>37</sup> *The Canons of Athanasius of Alexandria, in Arabic and Coptic. Edited and translated by W. Riedel and W.E. Crum*, London 1904. These originated probably late in the 4<sup>th</sup> c. and survive in a Coptic translation (Sahidic dialect) dated to the 6<sup>th</sup>–7<sup>th</sup> c., and in an early 11<sup>th</sup> c. version in Arabic. They have the form of a free admonishing discourse, put in the mouth of a church dignitary, more of a sermon than a set of rules. The text is fully original, free from interpolations from older collections of canons. This is important for us as we can have confidence that the information contained in the text comes from the age during which it was written and not from a more distant time. There is nothing to indicate that the author of the canons was Athanasius, bishop of Alexandria (329–373); the canons were ascribed to him to give them greater authority.

<sup>38</sup> Basil's Canons (more accurately, the Canons of Pseudo-Basil: their attribution, similarly as in the preceding case, is fictitious) survive in the Sahidic dialect of the Coptic language (their full text exists but has not been published yet) and in Arabic (unpublished text, only a German translation was published in *Die Kirchenrechtsquellen des Patriarchats Alexandrien, zusammengestellt und zum Teil übersetzt von W. Riedel*, Leipzig 1900). The Coptic texts of the canons prove that the collection must have originated during the 6<sup>th</sup>, at the latest, the 7<sup>th</sup> c. The Canons of Basil reflect well the church practice of the Byzantine period.

<sup>39</sup> *To be offered upon the altar* is not to be treated literally. The offerings of the faithful were carried towards the altar in a ceremonial manner but the only offerings placed upon it, offered during the Eucharistic transubstantiation, are bread (not corn) and wine. The formula of the canon combines elements dating from a more distant past with the liturgical situation of the 4<sup>th</sup> c. On the subject of the liturgical context of offerings made during the Eucharistic sacrifice, see: TH.F. MATHEWS, *The Early Churches of Constantinople: Architecture and Liturgy*, London 1971, 155–171.

<sup>40</sup> The text of Basil's canon is later than the Canons of Athanasius, their author/editor simply rewrote it.

*And concerning a cleric that hath come before they have read and they do but see him and afterward he departeth and doeth his business until the hour of celebrating (synago), unto him shall not be given (of the sacrament); yet shall he go unto the place of eating. But if it be a necessity that hath befallen him and not neglectfulness, he shall partake. Howbeit he shall ask leave of the presbyter ere he go, if it be possible. If it be a cleric that hath gone unto the celebration (synaxis), but doth not liturgical service (leitourgeo) when he is needed, and if he yet be not sick, but is neglectful, he shall not partake. None shall take the rank of clergy and leave it and be idle, doing not his service like all the levitic brethren. (Can. Ath. 50 Copt.)*

The author of the Canons of Athanasius devoted one of the canons to stipulating where the liturgical garments were to be kept:

*The garments of the priests, wherein they celebrate, shall be white and washed. They shall be laid in the store-chambers of the sanctuary. At the hour of going to the altar they shall be found laid in the sanctuary, in the store chamber, in charge of him that guardeth the vessels, even as the prophet Ezekiel hath ordained. (Can. Ath. 28 Ar.)*

From one of the Canons of Basil (no. 96) we learn that the liturgical garments could not be taken out from the church chambers where they were kept together with the sacred scriptures.

One more mention in the Canons of Athanasius, important for us to picture other elements of the church complex:

*It is not permitted unto a priest to go out on account of the bread of offering and to stand at the oven; but as he serveth the people, so shall the subdeacon serve him. For the prophet Ezekiel saith: Whoso serveth, he shall be served. (Can. Ath. 34 Ar.)*

The presence of a bread oven in the church complex was the result of the widespread injunction (one not justified on any doctrinal grounds) that Eucharistic bread is to be baked on church grounds, and only by members of the clergy.<sup>41</sup> Whereas during the first centuries of Christianity breads brought by the faithful were consecrated,

during the age of interest to us this would have been inadmissible.

None of the texts cited here makes a reference to a church archive, but there must have been one housed in a separate room, to guarantee the safekeeping of various documents: letters, copies of letters and documents dispatched by the bishop, acts of synods, used in the course of Church practice, documents associated with economic activity of a given church. Scattered acts, originating from such archives, have been found in many places in Egypt; we can be sure that in other areas, also in Cyrenaica, similar customs prevailed. Texts were kept in baskets and boxes set on shelves, kept in order by specially appointed members of the clergy. The higher the position of a church in ecclesiastic hierarchy, the more important its archive would be.

Richer in knowledge on African and Egyptian churches, let us return to the buildings attached to the basilicas of Ptolemais legible thanks to the geophysical survey.

Of the annexe of the Central-Western Basilica we can only say that it existed, but not what it was like. The other churches are an utter mystery in every respect.

The area occupied by the church annexe of the Central Basilica is substantial, especially if we compare it with the area of the basilica itself. I suspect that it was older than the buildings of the annexe: these might have been added with time to the earlier existing sanctuary, which the bishops were reluctant to leave owing to the prestige which tradition bestowed on it.<sup>42</sup> In any case, it would have been easier to add on new rooms to the complex than to build a new one. Naturally, this is purely a working hypothesis, one that needs to be tested by excavation. We can clearly recognize a rectangular complex (c. 30×22 m) composed of a basilica and two halls (4 m wide) flanking it symmetrically. We do not know what the function of a narrow room (121×2.5 m) on the south-west side was; it might not have belonged to the basilica complex from the beginning.

On the other side of the street a building can be seen of which Misiewicz writes (p. 34) that it was a dwelling house and belongs to the last phase of the existence of

<sup>41</sup> This rule is confirmed by texts originating from Egypt, unfortunately, rather late ones. The earliest confirmation of the rule which reserved the baking of bread to the members of the clergy in Egypt is found in canons from 1086: O.H.E. BURMESTER, *The Canons of Cyril II, LXVII Patriarch of Alexandria*, "Le Muséon" 49, 1936, 282: *The bread of Eucharist must not be baked, except in the oven of the church, nor must a woman knead it.* The author of liturgical entries in *The Coptic Encyclopedia*, New York 1991, Archbishop Basilios, claims (s.v. 'Eucharistic bread') that baking the Eucharistic bread in the present day Coptic Church is a duty of the deacons. Even if this rule was formulated for the first time

during the early Middle Ages, it fixed an older custom, one resulting from a tendency which we observe universally, namely, the need to emphasise the sacred nature of all acts associated with worship, even the most trivial ones, and reserving them for the clergy. The fear of committing sacrilege by attempting transubstantiation of soiled (in a ritual sense) bread was very strong.

<sup>42</sup> Grzegorz Majcherek, in charge of the excavation work at Palmyra, told me of a similar situation in that city, of an exceptionally large annexe found next to a basilica, which by no means is the largest in the complex of four basilicas built close to one another, along the same street.

the town. On its south-west side it touches a hexagonal building which was c. 75 m<sup>2</sup> in area and made of great stone blocks, carefully dressed. S. Stucchi saw in the latter building a baptistery.<sup>43</sup> We accept, with Misiewicz, this idea as a reasonable hypothesis. Of course certainty is impossible before excavation.

If this was a baptistery, it is remarkable that it had no communication with the basilica. Situations of this kind are extremely rare with Late Antique baptisteries.<sup>44</sup> Let us recall that the position of the baptistery in a church or directly next to it had a liturgical justification: after the end of the rite the newly baptised attended mass and for the first time took part in communion, thus it was important for the passage to the church to be without impediment. I believe we can explain the irregular position of the baptistery of the Central Basilica by paying attention to the entrance in its wall to a 5 m deep cistern. This cistern predates the baptistery, which was positioned so that water could be drawn from it for baptism and other accompanying tasks, never mind whether by making the water flow so that it would pass through the baptismal pool, or by drawing it with pitchers. The presence of water on the site simplified the operations associated with the rite.

We know nothing about baptisteries of other basilicas at Ptolemais. It is not impossible that the Western Basilica had one, in the form of a large stone basin; however, both E. Jastrzębowska and J. Kaniszewski reject this idea (see p. 43 n. 11); in the case of the other churches the geophysical survey cannot reveal what lies at a deeper level. The existence of a large baptistery next to the Central Basilica is not in itself a feature diagnostic for its status of a 'cathedral'. During the period under scrutiny here, baptism was administered also in non-episcopal churches, as is shown by numerous field investigations made in different regions of the Mediterranean world. We also have evidence from the written sources. In one of the Coptic papyri originating from the small town of Jeme, lying west of the Nile across from Thebes, we find a contract between the clergy and the bishop of Hermonthis, the diocese within which Jeme lay, dealing with the terms of performing three 'customary' ceremonies of baptism.<sup>45</sup>

The large size of the baptistery by the Central Basilica does not have to be the consequence of pastoral needs. The baptistery may have been built by a prosperous town dweller (or the town's wealthy bishop) who wished to leave behind a testimony of his piety and wealth. Such foundations, made by members of the elite, are well known to us from other areas.<sup>46</sup> The works of Synesius, and in particular, his letters, prove that the aristocracy of Cyrenaica thought, felt, and acted like the aristocracy in other regions of the empire. At the same time, their potential was limited – the towns of Cyrenaica (even Apollonia), in comparison with towns of the same size in the Middle East, were evidently more modest, which found expression in the architecture of its churches.

Ptolemais is a fine example of a town which lost much when it lost its role of a provincial administrative centre.<sup>47</sup> The letters of Synesius on Church matters help us sense how many diverse matters pertaining to the churches of other towns and localities used to be resolved at Ptolemais when it had the rank of a metropolis. The bishops came to it to synods with their accompanying entourage of presbyters and deacons. There must have been many people arriving with matters of controversy which needed settling: the metropolitane usually acted as mediator, more seldom as judge in the *episcopalis audientia* (in the letters of Synesius there is not the slightest trace of this but absence of information is not symptomatic in this case). The moving of the metropolis to Apollonia drastically reduced the number of affairs that had to be settled at Ptolemais. A large and dynamic group of members of the élite had removed to Apollonia – people with ambition and in charge of offices with substantial means at their disposal. We know that provincial governors and military commanders, if they remained in one place for a long period, usually played the role of founders not only of churches or chapels, but also of mosaics intended for the church interiors, floors of marble slabs, marble columns, cancelli, etc. On site at Ptolemais remained landowners, members of families resident in the region. These people without doubt were also wealthy, but their number was lower than previously and the psychological pressure exerted by the spectacle of the generosity of others lessened.

<sup>43</sup> S. STUCCHI, *Architettura Cirenaica*, Monografie di Archeologia Libica IX, Roma 1975, 397–398.

<sup>44</sup> S. RISTOW, *Frühchristliche Baptisterien*, Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum. Ergänzungsband 27, Münster 1988, 25–26; I. ACHIM, *Les baptistères paléochrétiens du diocèse de Thrace. Le cas des provinces de Thrace, de Mésie Seconde et de Scythie Mineure*, "Cahiers archéologiques. Fin de l'Antiquité et Moyen Age" 51 (2003–2004), 2006, 5–27. The author in her article did not limit herself to material originating from Thrace.

<sup>45</sup> This text is quoted in my book *Les ressources et les activités économiques des églises en Égypte du IV<sup>e</sup> au VIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Bruxelles

1972, 73.

<sup>46</sup> P.G. CARON, *Les 'seniores laici' de l'Église africaine*, "Revue Internationale des Droits de l'Antiquité" 6, 1951, 7–22; C. LEPALLEY, *Le patronat épiscopal aux IV<sup>e</sup> et V<sup>e</sup> siècles: continuités et ruptures avec le patronat classique*, (in:) E. Rebillard, C. Sotinel (eds.), *L'évêque dans la cité du IV<sup>e</sup> et V<sup>e</sup> siècle. Image et autorité*, Roma 1998, 17–33.

<sup>47</sup> The evidence concerning this change is collected in C.H. KRAELING, *Ptolemais...*, 27; D. ROQUES, *Synésios...*, 94–95. The precise date is not known; it must have been in the period from 431 to 460.

What were the reasons behind moving the metropolis to Apollonia? This city certainly could not boast a better location than Ptolemais; the new metropolis was moved to the east, c. 40 km from the border of Libya Inferior, also called Libya Sicca. I can hardly believe that such a decision was taken owing to particular damages to Ptolemais caused by barbarian raids in the first decades of the 5<sup>th</sup> c. As a matter of fact, similar attacks threatened all cities of Cyrenaica. If we know nothing about them in the case of Apollonia, this is undoubtedly because there was there no man like Synesius, who could describe them in an equally skilful and detailed manner.

The description given by Synesius of the attacks of the barbarians and of the damages caused by them is so impressive that we are inclined to imagine that Ptolemais and other towns of Cyrenaica were severely ruined and began to decline. However, archaeology does not confirm this impression. Eleonora Gasparini, who studied the palaces of Ptolemais which were still functioning and developing in the 5<sup>th</sup> c., proved that the town healed its wounds and entered a fifty year period of stability and good economic condition.<sup>48</sup>

In my opinion, the moving of the metropolis resulted from a local and/or accidental factor (for example the influence that a group of notables from Apollonia may have exerted in Constantinople, in the emperor's entourage: we know that ancient cities led a severe struggle for status in the provinces).

Another question is whether the research carried out by the Polish mission examining the basilicas of Ptolemais is in any way informative in respect to the economy of the city after the middle of the 5<sup>th</sup> c. Did Ptolemais endure in the state from before the barbarians' attacks or was it gradually declining, suffering a decrease of population and a general deterioration of the living standards? The results of the non-invasive investigation are hardly of any use in this matter, mainly because they do not enable us to establish exact dates for the churches and the buildings surrounding them, not to mention serious doubts concerning the reconstruction of their plans.

Owing to the uncertainty of the evidence there is no agreement among the members of the archaeological mission working at Ptolemais as regards the situation of the

urban tissue after the middle of the 5<sup>th</sup> c. Misiewicz, Małkowski and Muszyńska write: *Preliminary results seem to indicate that the majority of Byzantine structures were located within the limits of Roman insulae and were placed on the same axis as the earlier buildings. In the majority of cases these buildings incorporated an area of the adjacent street, e.g. in late antiquity the E cardo was narrowed from 9 to app. 4 m; such examples are numerous (see above). Among the excavated buildings only the Western Basilica is located with disregard for the Roman insula layout, but we can suppose that it was part of a large, fenced complex, the walls of which are visible N of the basilica, running along the decumanus. This phenomenon must be analyzed further when complete information from geophysical survey is obtained.*<sup>49</sup> Jerzy Żelazowski, however, is convinced that the street network and a considerable part of the buildings underwent disintegration. According to him the town shrank, limiting itself to an area near the harbour, and protected this area by building new walls.<sup>50</sup> Inside these walls it was possible to construct buildings without bothering about the limits of the insulae.<sup>51</sup>

I shall add to this a few remarks of my own. I have already mentioned the fine stonework observed in the case of the hexagonal building near the Central Basilica, of the Western Basilica and of the building which archaeologists call the Palace or Headquarters of the Dux (a fortified military complex). These constructions were erected from stone blocks prepared specially for them. The construction of the Central-Western Basilica is also technically faultless. The inhabitants of Ptolemais did not make use of stone blocks taken from abandoned buildings, which means that their intention was to raise buildings of a class higher than could be achieved with reused material. While architects and their helpers required for erecting a large stone building could be brought from outside, stonemasons working in such an endeavour were local people. The fact that the latter could be found in Ptolemais proves that the city could afford large-scale construction works, not only raising and renovating private houses.

It is hard to assess the damages caused by the raids of the Berbers. Unfortunately the evidence in written sources is very scanty for the period after the death of Synesius, i.e. after 413.<sup>52</sup> Raids on the cities of Pentapolis in

<sup>48</sup> E. GASPARINI, *Edilizia domestica e autorappresentazione a Tolemaide nel periodo tardoantico*, (in:) E. Jastrzębowska, M. Niewójt (eds.), *Archeologia a Tolemaide...*, 157–181.

<sup>49</sup> W. MAŁKOWSKI, K. MISIEWICZ, M. MUSZYŃSKA, *The Topography of Ptolemais. Preliminary results of geophysical surveys*, "Archeologia" (Warsaw) LIX (2008), 2010, 77–78.

<sup>50</sup> This opinion is presented by him in an article in the volume

entitled *Ptolemais I* (forthcoming).

<sup>51</sup> J. LITTLE, *Note on the 1988/89 Seasons of Tolmeita*, "Libyan Studies" 21, 1990, 23–24.

<sup>52</sup> D. ROQUES, *Synésios...*, 270–277; E. WIPSYZKA, *Le incursioni dei Mazikes in Cirenaica viste in una prospettiva egiziana*, (in:) E. Jastrzębowska, M. Niewójt (eds.), *Archeologia a Tolemaide...*, 205–209.

AD 512–515 are mentioned by John of Antioch, a chronicler from the 6<sup>th</sup>/7<sup>th</sup> c. An edict of Anastasius, preserved in an inscription (we do not know its exact date, which must be somewhere between 491 and 518), banned travelling to barbarians and trading with them.<sup>53</sup> The activity of the barbarians coming from the west was also felt in Egypt: the Mazikes launched several attacks on Scetis in 434, 444, about 570–580, and during the reign of Emperor Maurice (582–602). In 450 the barbarians raided the Great Oasis. Of course, the attacks on Egyptian towns, even those located near the Libyan Desert, could not endanger the inhabitants of Cyrenaica; they only prove that the barbarian tribes were able and ready to carry out looting expeditions on a large scale, hence we could all the more expect their activity on a local scale. The above-mentioned testimonies are certainly not sufficient to recognise the barbarian raids as one of the most important or even the main reason for the economic degradation of Pentapolis. I do not, however, intend to deny the existence of such raids or of damages caused by them. On all desert borders of the Roman empire the interrelations between the desert and steppe culture on the one hand and the culture of the arable land on the other very often resulted in conflicts, even in the most flourishing periods of the empire. The erecting of numerous desert forts of various sizes, which formed the *limes* protecting Cyrenaica, proves the above statement.<sup>54</sup> But this *limes* already existed well before the period we are interested in, hence it cannot be evidence for the escalation of conflicts. Also, the presence of many fortified farmhouses (Arabic *gsur*), described by Goodchild as being 'probably of much later date', is insufficient to corroborate a permanent catastrophe. I admit to my disbelief in the possibility of dating such farmhouses more precisely (without ceramological studies, any attempts at establishing their chronology are hardly credible); their tentative dating resulted from an a priori assumption that the barbarian raids intensified at the end of antiquity. I would venture a statement that we should not imagine that the inhabitants of Cyrenaica con-

stantly had to cope with attacks on a scale similar to those from the beginnings of 5<sup>th</sup> c., when the whole region was threatened and the looting was extensive.

I think that historians would probably have neglected the scarce mentions in literary sources, had it not been for archaeologists who put forward and supported the hypothesis of the destructive activity of the Berbers, namely Kraeling,<sup>55</sup> Goodchild,<sup>56</sup> Reynolds,<sup>57</sup> and finally Wilson.<sup>58</sup> It was Kraeling who first formulated such a statement, as during his excavation at Ptolemais he found material proofs of the desert tribes incessantly threatening the city. According to his view, in Late Antiquity Ptolemais was deprived of defensive walls, as they were dismantled most probably after the death of Synesius, who mentions them many times. A new tactics was employed instead, a tactics in which a few fortified houses (called 'blockhouses' by Kraeling) constituted refuges where people could hide in case of danger and wait until the enemy had gone. Kraeling also thought that two official buildings fulfilled an analogous function: the Western Basilica (its defensive character is obvious, for which see the article by Kaniszewski in this volume, p. 44) and the 'Palace of the Dux' (together with its peculiar annexe called the East Fortress).<sup>59</sup> Regretfully, our knowledge about 'blockhouses' as well as about the 'Palace of the Dux' is meagre, as subsequent excavators paid no attention to these structures. It is hard for me to believe that the four 'blockhouses', the 'Palace of the Dux', the East Fortress, and the Western Basilica could ever be sufficient for the defensive needs of the whole city. All of them could house only a limited number of people and only for a limited time (apart from the 'Palace of the Dux', in none of these buildings was it possible to wait for a long period for the enemy to leave). We can accept Kraeling's theory only if we assume that Late Antique Ptolemais had no more than a few hundred inhabitants, which I take to be an exaggeration.

Kraeling's ideas became widely accepted by scholars, the only exception being Roques who fought against them with passion in his substantial book<sup>60</sup>. He was not

<sup>53</sup> *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum*, vol. IX, J.J.E. Hondius (ed.), Leiden 1938, no. 356.

<sup>54</sup> R.G. GOODCHILD, *The Roman and Byzantine Limes in Cyrenaica*, "Journal of Roman Studies" 43, 1953, 65–76 (reprinted in: *Libyan studies: Select papers of the late R.G. Goodchild*, London 1976, 195–209).

<sup>55</sup> C.H. KRAELING, *Ptolemais...*, 100–107.

<sup>56</sup> R.G. GOODCHILD, *The Decline of Cyrene and the Rise of Ptolemais: Two New Inscriptions*, "Quaderni di archeologia della Libia" 4, 1961, 83–95.

<sup>57</sup> J. REYNOLDS, *The Cities of Cyrenaica in Decline*, (in:) P.-M. Duval, E. Frézouls (eds.), *Thèmes de recherches sur les villes*

*antiques d'Occident*, Paris 1977, 53–58.

<sup>58</sup> A. WILSON, *Urban Economies of Late Antique Cyrenaica*, (in:) S. Kingsley, M. Decker (eds.), *Economy and Exchange in the East Mediterranean during Late Antiquity*, Oxford 2001, 28–43; idem, *Cyrenaica and the Late Antique Economy*, "Ancient West and East" 3, 2004, 143–154.

<sup>59</sup> Quotation marks are required here for two reasons: firstly, this was not a palace but a fortified building, and secondly, it was no longer dux's residence, because the metropolis was moved to Apollonia. The edifice certainly had a military character and must have served a garrison remaining in Ptolemais. For this building, see: E. WIPSYCKA, *Le incursioni dei Mazikes...*, 206–210.

<sup>60</sup> D. ROQUES, *Synesios...*, 27–52.

convinced by the arguments by which Kraeling tried to prove that the city walls were dismantled; he believed in their subsequent existence and did not accept the theory of the use of 'blockhouses'. He is undoubtedly right in criticising archaeologists who misinterpreted Synesius' description of war damages: they did not take into consideration the literary character of these texts, which made use of both ancient and biblical stereotypes in their rhetoric, in order to obtain help for Cyrenaica (locust attacks and devastations caused by them are undoubtedly a biblical motive).

The other question I would like to pose is whether we can include the change of the climate resulting in the decrease of rainfall among the reasons for the economic decline of Cyrenaica and Ptolemais in particular, as proposed by Stucchi.<sup>61</sup> Can we make use of a story told by Procopius of Caesarea about shortage of water in Ptolemais? In his *De aedificiis* (*On Buildings*, a panegyric in honour of the building activity of Justinian), which he did not manage to finish before his death in 553, Procopius writes:

*There is a certain city there [i.e. in the Pentapolis, EW], which in ancient times had been prosperous and populous, but as time went on it had come to be almost deserted owing to extreme scarcity of water. For the great majority of the population, driven by the thirst, had moved from there long ago and gone wherever each one could. Now, however, this Emperor has restored the city's aqueduct and thus brought back to it its former measure of prosperity.* (6, 2, 9–11).<sup>62</sup>

The text cannot be accepted at face value. While there is no doubt that Justinian genuinely helped the town to rebuild its aqueduct, the assessment of the scale and outcome of his initiative belongs to the panegyric layer of the work, which needs to be treated with due criticism. Procopius was out to present his ruler's merits in a suitable light, so in keeping with the rules of the literary genre he was cultivating, he used amplification. In his treatment the town became almost deserted. Someone who has been at Ptolemais, as I have, knows well that in early October the rainy season starts, with heavy rains lasting until March. The city built for itself a great number of subterranean cisterns connected into a system with conduits; the aqueduct was certain to be useful, but even without it people and

animals had water to drink. Procopius' description not only is guilty of exaggeration but is stereotypical as well. Its elements are seen elsewhere in his *De aedificiis*, when he reports on imperial projects such as aqueducts. As such, it cannot be of service to us in our discussion of the reasons for difficulties experienced by Ptolemais. It is the economic difficulties that made it impossible for the town to restore its aqueduct without the help of the emperor; it was not a shortage of water that caused the economic difficulties.

During the discussion about the results of our research on the churches of Ptolemais Jerzy Żelazowski observed that, since there was a big system of cisterns, the aqueduct must have been necessary not for direct consumption in the town, but for the watering of fields and orchards in its neighbourhood. This may be true, but the area of cultivable land near the town was narrow because of the Gebel el-Akhdar; the fields of the wealthy lay far away, beyond the first line of hills.

In a word, we can hardly make any use of Procopius' text in discussing the climatic transformation in Cyrenaica. Alas, no other source allows us to draw any valid conclusions in this question. It is true that we find mentions of droughts in Libya in a few sources, referring to specific places and periods. Yet, even if we regard them as true information and not stylistic devices (like *arida Barce* in Claudian's *De Bello Gildonico*, 159),<sup>63</sup> they may at best represent periodical fluctuations of rainfall characteristic for Libya in various periods, even today.<sup>64</sup> Reynolds also denied Stucchi's concept: *That is a controversial view. Throughout antiquity there was a need to conserve water, as there is today; it is not clear that the number of cisterns associated with the period of the churches in fact constitutes markedly more provision that had been made previously, nor that there has been any change in the rainfall régime between antiquity and modern times.*<sup>65</sup>

Prof. dr hab. Ewa Wipszycka  
Institute of Archaeology  
University of Warsaw  
e.wipszycka@uw.edu.pl

<sup>61</sup> S. STUCCHI, *Architettura Cirenaica...*, 357.

<sup>62</sup> *Procopii Caesariensis Opera omnia, recognovit J. Haury, addenda et corrigenda adiecit G. Wirth*, vol. III/2, Leipzig 1964; for the commentary on this text, see: J. REYNOLDS, *Byzantine Buildings, Justinian and Procopius in Libya Inferior and Libya Superior*, "L'Antiquité Tardive" 8, 2000, 169–176.

<sup>63</sup> *Claudii Claudiani Carmina. Recensuit Theodorus Birt*, Monu-

menta Germaniae Historica. Auctores Antiquissimi X, Berlin 1892.

<sup>64</sup> D. ROQUES, *Synésios...*, 400–403.

<sup>65</sup> J. Reynolds in her introduction to the book by R.G. GOODCHILD and J.B. WARD-PERKINS, *Christian Monuments of Cyrenaica...*, 1.

EWA WIPSYCKA

**KOŚCIOŁY W PTOLEMAIS: KOMENTARZ HISTORYKA DO WYNIKÓW BADAŃ ARCHEOLOGICZNYCH**

Artykuł ten został pomyślany jako podsumowanie zamieszczonych w tym numerze „Światowita” studiów przedstawiających to, co nam wiadomo o kościołach Ptolemais na podstawie badań nieinwazyjnych i opisu pozostałości w terenie. Autorka świadomie przyjęła inną perspektywę, mianowicie historyka instytucji kościelnych i ich działalności pastoralnej. Dwie kwestie wymagały rozpatrzenia: miejsce kościołów Ptolemais w tkance miejskiej i funkcje pomieszczeń wchodzących w skład kompleksu budynków towarzyszących (często zwanych aneksami). W obu częściach tego studium trzeba było sięgnąć po źródła zewnętrzne w stosunku do Ptolemais, a nawet do Cyrenajki, gdyż materiałów miejscowych jest zbyt mało, aby na ich podstawie można było budować satysfakcjonujące wyjaśnienia.

Czytelnik znajdzie w artykule zestawienie danych na temat liczby kościołów w niektórych miastach cesarstwa (tych, dla których mamy stosowne źródła), a także ustalenia na temat ich położenia na planie miasta w stosunku do starych centrów miast, pogańskich budynków kultowych, obszarów peryferyjnych. Zestawienie to pozwala nam wyjaśnić położenie kościołów w tkance miejskiej Ptolemais.

Wykopaliska prowadzone na terenie Cyrenajki dostarczyły kilku ważnych kompleksów towarzyszących kościołom, zostały one szczegółowo omówione. To one stanowiły punkt wyjścia dla interpretacji wyników badań geofizycznych bazylik Ptolemais, z wyjątkiem sporej budowli w pobliżu Kościoła Centralnego, w formie hexagonu, dla której nie znajdujemy odpowiedników w innych miastach

Cyrenajki. Bez badań wykopaliskowych trudno odpowiedzieć, jaką pełniła ona funkcję; autorka artykułu jest zdania, że prawdopodobnie mamy do czynienia z baptysterium zlokalizowanym poza kościołem, który ono obsługiwało. Takie położenie jest czymś niecodziennym.

Funkcje poszczególnych pomieszczeń w kompleksach kościelnych Ptolemais (a także innych miast Cyrenajki), poza baptysteriami, pozostają dla nas tajemnicą, gdyż źródła archeologiczne nie są w stanie ich wyjawić. Trzeba więc było odwołać się do źródeł pisanych, tekstów normatywnych i literackich, niestety z innych obszarów, gdyż Cyrenajka ma ich od drugiej ćwierci IV w bardzo niewiele. Warto wiedzieć, że tematyka aneksów kościelnych nie była dotąd szczegółowo studiowana, artykuł stanowi więc uzupełnienie istotnej luki w wiedzy o architekturze kościelnej, choć autorka nie jest historykiem architektury i nie pretendowała do zajmowania się tą tematyką.

Autorka artykułu, tak jak każdy badacz epoki późnoantycznej Ptolemais, stanęła przed pytaniem o kondycję miasta. Położenie kościołów w planie zabudowy miasta, ich rozmiary i charakter należą do najważniejszych argumentów w toczącej się dyskusji na ten temat. Autorka, świadoma hipotetyczności swoich opinii, plasuje się po stronie ostrożnych optymistów, którzy nie widzą w posiadanym przez nas materiale archeologicznym dostatecznie silnych dowodów na drastyczne skurczenie się liczby ludności, upadek miasta, i szerzej, Cyrenajki.