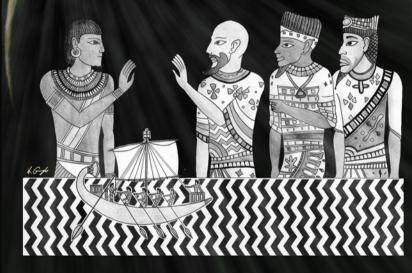# Land of Fertility III

The Southeast Mediterranean from the Bronze Age to the Muslim Conquest

EDITED BY

Łukasz Miszk
Maciej Wacławik

Land of Fertility III

Land of Fertility III:

The Southeast Mediterranean from the Bronze Age to the Muslim Conquest

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PREFACE

The papers in this volume are based on presentations given at the third and fourth international conferences, entitled "The Land of Fertility: The Southeast Mediterranean from the Bronze Age to the Muslim Conquest."

The first of them "The Migration of People, Goods and Ideas in Ancient Times", was held at the Institute of Archaeology, Jagiellonian University in Kraków, on June 10–11 2016. The main aim of the presentation was to look more closely at the migration of people, goods and ideas in ancient times, and their influences on civilization, in both material and spiritual culture, in the area called 'The Fertile Crescent', within the region, where the modern world began its long development at the very beginning of human civilisation. The question of immigrants, and their influence on the development or collapse of ancient states was also considered.

The fourth conference, entitled "Egyptian Perspective: Ancient civilisations in relation to The Two Lands", was held on June 9-10 2017. This time, the main theme of the conference was the relationship of the ancient Egyptian kingdom, its culture and economy, to neighbouring civilisations. Had they lived in peace or conflict? Were relationships based on partnership or supremacy? The period covered in the present collection spans from the beginning of the Bronze Age, through the ancient era, to the Muslim Conquest – almost 5,000 years of development of human civilisation.

<div align="right">Łukasz Miszk and Maciej Wacławik</div>

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Chapter One

Among the Gods of Fertility at Leptis Magna

Jakub Mosiejczyk

Abstract

This study discusses the presence of cults of deities associated with the sphere of fertility and abundance in the ancient urban space. They played an important role in the culturally diverse society of North Africa, which could particularly be observed in Leptis Magna,[1] as one of the best-preserved cities in the Southern Mediterranean. This is evidenced by quoted epigraphic sources, relics of sacred architecture, and design elements dating back to the first century AD. Sequentially, identified cults relate to Liber, Hercules, and Ceres. The temples of the first two deities were discovered in Forum Vetus, in the oldest district of the city. The latter cult took place in sacellum located at the top of the auditorium of the Augustinian theatre. Individual sources are examined in a social context. Their popularity could be explained by the divine domain, which corresponded to the city's economy, dependent on oil and grain production. The last aspect to be addressed is the question of the syncretic character of the indicated Gods. Individual deities embodied representatives of the Greek, Roman and Punic pantheon. This had been used in strengthening the ties of the municipium with Rome, by promoting images of the Julio-Claudian dynasty among the deities of fertility.

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[1] Leptis Magna, present Libya; the chronological frame of work discussed the time before the city received the colonial status as a *Colonia Ulpia Traiana Lepcitaniorum*, which took place during the reign of emperor Trajan as evidenced in the inscription on the triumphal arch: IRT no 353. Cited epigraphical source is the first testimony describing the city as a "magna" - *fidelis Lepcis Magnae*, thus in the article the city is simply described as Leptis.

Introduction: Gods of Fertility in the Context of History and the Urban Development of Leptis Magna

Determining the status of the deities associated with fertility among the society of Leptis in the first century AD appears to be crucial in understanding the processes of intense Romanisation which took place at that time. The reign of Augustus (27 BC - AD 14), and his successors, brought many changes in the way of shaping the urban landscape, both in Italy and North Africa. The official image of the Empire was shaped by architecture, urbanistic solutions, and also state buildings, erected by the local elite, dependent upon Rome (Favro, 2005, 234-263). The purpose of the article is to summarise the current state of knowledge about the formation of cult space in Leptis in the early years of the principate. It analyses the importance of shrines in the practices of the house of Augustus sequentially, consisting in propagating the official image of the Empire's ruler through the authority of local deities.

The origins of the city are traced back to the activities of the Phoenician colonists seeking strategic spots on the coast which seasonally served as stopovers for cabotage (Di Vita 1994, 685). Traditionally, researchers held a view that, together with other colonies, Leptis was founded by the metropolises of Tyr or Sidon. This hypothesis was influenced by ancient authors, primarily Plinius the Elder (*HN* 5.19.76) and Silius Italicus (*Pun.* 3.256). However, in the light of current research, it seems that the centre was founded in the VI - VII centuries, by the inhabitants of Carthage, as indicated by archaeological sources in the form of ceramics (Di Vita 1994, 686, De Miro & Polito 2005, 11-76), and historical studies (Lipiński 2004, 345-346). The organisation of the Phoenician colony at the early stage of the city's formation is hardly explored, due to the compact urban setting created during the Imperial period. It is assumed that permanent settlement was established along with the establishment of a necropolis (*tophet*), relics of which were discovered under the orchestra at the theatre (De Miro & Fiorentini 1977, 5-66). It is believed that the city was politically dependent on Carthage, cultivating the Phoenician traditions of the metropolis (Di Vita 1994, 685-686) along with the cult of the most important Phoenician gods, including Tanit, Milk'Astart/Melquart and Shadrapha (Markoe 2000, 117-129 and 140). At the same time, the process of adoption of indigenous cultural elements shaping the Punic culture took place, while maintaining the Semitic character. Until the late Hellenistic period, Leptis operated under the name Lpqy (Lipiński 2004, 345), as evidenced

by Punic inscriptions on numismatic data (Falbe, Linberg & Müller 1861, 3-13).

Leptis remains a specific example of a centre that was subject to diverse cultural influences. Since the end of the Second Punic War, it was heavily influenced by the Roman Republic (Romanelli 1959, 22-30), which perceived the city as an ally in the conflict, and captured its attention for economic reasons. Although, it should be noted that the cultural landscape of the city was shaped both by Greek cities from nearby Cyrenaica and Ptolemaic Egypt (Kreikenbom 2011, 3-4).

In the first years of the Principate, the areas of Tripolitania were disturbed by invasions of the indigenous Libyan tribes (Kotula 1972, 139, Mosiejczyk 2013, 69-70). Also, in this case, the strategic position of the region is visible. It was protected by the Roman state, although not formally part of it. The reasons for this were mainly economic. However, it is often noted that, at this time, the emporia actually had a privileged position, compared to other centres of northern Africa. They had not been obtained in the way of military conquest. Moreover, it is pointed out that there was no Roman colonisation of settlers conducted in the neighbouring areas (Birley 2008, 8-9), as it was within the African province. However, the same elites of Leptis were interested in the promotion of Latin culture and language (Decret & Fantar 1981, 207). On account of this, the examples of public investments carried out at the turn of eras are referenced. Among them, is the construction of the Augustan theatre, which is seen as an important institution of Romanisation (Caputo 1987). The building was erected on the initiative of Harmibal Tapapius Rufus, who was awarded the title of *ornator patriae*, which is conmemorated by bilingual inscriptions discovered in the theatre (Reynolds & Ward-Perkins 2009, 321-323). Important initiatives of the Punic elites also include those from the first years of the reign of Tiberius. During this period, the urban landscape of Leptis Magna was completely reorganised by the renovation of the centre and systematisation of the street network. Monumental market halls, *macellum* and *chalcidicum,* were created, surrounded by porticos (Haynes 1965, 92-93), but also objects of worship, among them an object in honour of the deified Augustus and Roma (Brouquier-Reddé 1992, 86-88).

The stage of urban development indicated resembles the model of the Greek type, self-governing, *polis*, which lasted from 201 BC till the end of the first century AD. It is sometimes also referred to as *la città aperta* - an independent, open *emporium* (Di Vita 1994, 686), whose freedom was paid for with taxes to Rome (Matthews 1957, 33-34, Mattingly 2005, 268).

The centre obtained the status of *municipium* in AD 77, which was associated with granting citizenship to the local elite (Gascou 1972, 82-83). At this time, the city formally belonged to the Africa proconsularis province. The indicated timelines mark out the proto-imperial period (Di Vita 1994, 686).

The outline presented above shows the elites of Leptis at first century AD as vulnerable to foreign cultural elements. Apart from motifs of the adopted change, the newly-formed urban landscape does not necessarily equate to mental change in the sphere of identity or spirituality. Leptis society should be considered as cosmopolitan, with welfare being the main factor in bonding the citizens of the city. The residents remained attached to ancestral traditions, including the Punic language, as shown by the epigraphical testimonies presented. Certainly, an equally strong bond was present in the sphere of religion. Local beliefs were tolerated in the Empire in order to avoid internal conflicts, as already evidenced in the religious policy of Octavian Augustus (Scheid 2005, 175-193). Traditional Carthaginian deities in Leptis Magna, in particular Tanit, Shadrapa, and Melqart, because of their importance, were 'domesticated' by their conventional counterparts (more properly to be defined as *interpretatio latina*) in the form of Ceres, Liber Pater, and Hercules (Decret & Fantar 1981, 261-270, Hvidberg-Hansen 1985, 197-205). Among their most important heavenly domains are aspects of fertility and abundance, which had a special place due to the nature of the economy of the city, based on the production of oil and in trade (Mattingly 2005, 89). Most importantly, the deities, in the light of epigraphic and archaeological sources, were cleverly engaged for the purposes of promoting the idea of Empire, as illustrated by the monuments presented below.

The Old Forum Temples

Within the first forum of Leptis Magna, called *Forum Vetus*[2], at least six temples were arranged over the centuries, [3] at different times. The oldest were built in the north-western part of the square in the early first century AD (Di Vita & Livadiotti 2005, 9-13). They were continuously used up to

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[2] The name of one of the main squares of Leptis Magna - *Forum Vetus* was popularised in the era of late antiquity. The testimony of this is the inscription from the time of Constantine the Great, found in the ruins of the basilica, see: Reynolds & Ward-Perkins, 2009, p. 467.

[3] The area remained a major religious and trade centre until the reign of emperors from the Severan dynasty.

late antiquity (Caputo & Vergara Caffarelli 1966, 85-86). In most cases, the deities, to whom the temples were dedicated, were identified, among them temples of Liber Pater, Augustus, and Roma, Milk'Astart – Hercules, and *Mater Magna* were distinguished. The other two temples have not been assigned patrons, due to lack of epigraphic sources. They are called the Temple of the 'Anonymous God' (*Il Tempio a Divinità ignota*), and the Three-Cellae Sanctuary (Brouquier-Reddé 1992, 73-91). Individual objects are arranged on a trapezoidal plan of the square. Three of them are located from the south-west side, along one of the main streets - *decumanus*. Others were placed on the north-western side of the forum, perpendicular to the rest, in order to surround the main square in a regular manner. The first archaeological excavations at the site were conducted under the direction of G. Guidi, head of *Soprintendenza alle Antichità della Tripolitania* in 1928-1936 (Guidi 1935, 237-253). In later years, a number of field verifications were carried out, which will be discussed along with the individual objects.

The oldest discovered settlement in this region dates back to the mid-seventh century BC (De Miro & Polito 2005, 23). The latest excavations, conducted in 1989-1999, undertaken by the University of Messina (De Miro & Polito 2005, 7), showed that in the late Hellenistic period, in the eastern part of the site, this area was already densely built-up. The discovered structures were small, and are interpreted mostly as storage rooms, as suggested by numerous finds of amphorae (De Miro & Polito 2005, 23-61). The transformation of the quarter occurred at the turn of the eras, and probably required demolition of some part of the old buildings. This is confirmed by the stratigraphic profiles with visible levelling layers, which date back to the first half of the first century AD (De Miro & Polito 2005, 13, 16, 18, 30, 32, 35, 39, 47). At that time, the space was transformed in the Roman manner. In the process of spatial organisation of *Forum Vetus*, directions passed by Vitruvius (*De arch.* 1.7.1) are evident.[4] Simultaneously, the regular character of the buildings was maintained. However, due to the above-mentioned conditions, the central square in the plan view is trapezoidal. At the longest point, it spans up to 55m, while its level corresponds to the course of the nearby streets (Caputo & Vergara Caffarelli 1966, 85).

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[4] The author gives, among others, the principle that in the port cities the central square should be located near the wharfs, the temple district situated at the highest point, with individual fronts of the temples facing the city.

Hercules Temple (Milk'ashtart Temple)

Of the three temples built at the north-western end of the forum square, the oldest seems to be the furthermost structure, created at the northern corner. Considering the location of the ruins on the plan, one can get the impression that the element is consistent with the remaining buildings and belongs to the official concept of development of this space (Di Vita 1968, 201). This hypothesis finds justification in both architectural form and decoration. However, the façade is extended beyond the building line determined by the location of the two other temples, which suggests that they were not created at the same time. Due to the noticeable deviation from the building line of the square, it is likely that the temple was located in place of an earlier sacred object (Ward Perkins 1970, 106).

Excavations at the site of the forum were carried out in the 1930s, and correspond to the studies cited above. The uncovered ruins, in comparison to the previous ones, were marked by a much worse state of preservation. The main sacred room was virtually destroyed (Guidi 1934, 245). The obtained material, and its analysis, remained unpublished for a long time. It was not until the next century that a monograph and article were published taking up more specific issues related to the architecture and design of the building (Ricciardi 2005, 309-383, Rocco 2010, 22-36). Until then, only a published plan of the structure was widely known (Ward-Perkins 1970, 106, fig. 2). The temple corresponds to the Ionian pseudo-peripteral form, which is characteristic of the local monumental constructions from the proto-Imperial period (Rocco 2010, 24). From the front, six columns were located, which were imposed by the form of *prostylos hexastylos* used. A wide staircase led to the sacred space. A *cella*, with dimensions of 6.70m in width and 9.50m in length, was located, relatively low, on a podium of approx. 2.50m in height (Ricciardi 2005, 346, 372). The podium was built on a rectangular plan, with sides of 15.12 and 13.35m (the total length of the temple, with a staircase, was about 23m (Ward-Perkins 1970, 106). The structure was built of local limestone. The usable space was covered by a stone floor. Directly in front of the monumental staircase, traces of tiles were discovered, carrying an inscription, originally incrusted with bronze (Brouquier-Reddé 1992, 89, Reynolds & Ward-Perkins 2009, 520). The source lists Gnaeus Calpurnius Piso, who was assigned functions of consul, pro-consul, and priest. He held the posts at the turn of the Proconsul eras (between 5BC and 2AD). The specified time interval is considered by some researchers as the time of the origin of the temple (Ward-Perkins 1970, 106, Di Vita-Evrard 1990, 367-378, Ricciardi 2005, 316, 318-319).

Over the years, different, sometimes opposing, assumptions were made regarding the religion celebrated in that place. The presence of the cult of the Imperial family (Guidi 1934, 245), Isis (Caputo & Vergara Caffarelli 1966, 86), and Hercules, (Floriani Squarciapino 1966, 84) was suggested. The latter seems to be closest to the truth in the light of the latest findings, i.e. the analysis of the neo-Punic inscription, which some believe should be assigned to the Hercules temple (Levi Della Vida, Caputo & Amadasi 1987, 31).

The cited epigraphic testimony was discovered near the forum, and its origin appears to be older than the inscription cited above, mentioning Proconsul Piso (Ward-Perkins 1970, 109-110). The document lists the names of Shadrapa and Milk'Ashtart as patrons of Leptis, who are identified with Liber and Hercules, which has also been noted in the inscription found in the area of the Punic market (Levi Della Vida, Caputo & Amadasi 1987, 25, Reynolds & Ward-Perkins 2009, 294). The text includes interesting information about the offering of the bronze cult statues dedicated to the city patrons. It seems they were to come from the funds of all wealthy citizens who could afford it, and those who graced the sanctuary with their work.[5] The probable chronology of the text has been determined as the second century, or the middle of the first century AD (Levi Della Vida, Caputo & Amadasi 1987, 31).

Therefore, there are two ancient testimonies at hand. The claim postulated by A. Di Vita, that the object was built in the first years of the first century AD, and was dedicated to Milk'Ashtart-Hercules, seems reasonable. At the same time, it can be assumed that the Punic deity was worshipped in this part of the forum at least half a century earlier. It has been suggested that the original temple could have existed in the place where the presence of the goddess Roma and the Imperial cult were recorded (Ward-Perkins 1970, 104-105). However, the hypothesis, seen as attractive for a long time, appears to have no confirmation in the archaeological sources. The pre-Roman structures in the old forum were registered in its north-eastern part (De Miro & Polito 2005, 21-35), and perhaps that is where material relics of the Punic religion should be looked for. This does not change the fact that the cult of Milk'Ashtart-Hercules, is characterised by the earliest origin, recorded in the Leptis pantheon of deities, which, given the location of the house of Roma and the Imperial cult, seems significant. This significance is further emphasised by the placing of the image of the deity,

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[5] The text of Levi Della Vida, Caputo, & Amadasi, 1987, no.31 is reconstructed, although accepted as a highly probable.

or its attribute in the form of a club, in the Leptis coinage, in issues from
the Augustan period, when Hercules was often shown on the reverse.

It should be noted that the pseudoperipteral plan of the early temples in
Leptis is dominant (Brouquier-Reddé 1992, 238). Considering the broader
urban context, joining adjacent objects with piers seems like quite a pecu-
liar solution. The depicted model of spatial organisation presupposes the
existence of a central object, which hosts the official cult. It would be
surrounded by temples of deities, being city patrons. Perhaps, during the
proto-Imperial period, such a solution was a counterpart of *Capitolium*,
which aimed to introduce the official Roman pantheon in the Punic envi-
ronment. A similar solution was applied in the nearby *emporium* of Zitha
(Mattingly 2005, 215-216), which makes such organisation of a cult com-
plex a specificity of Tripolitania.

The Liber Pater Temple

The temple was located along the north western side of the square. It was a
compact, regular building, situated between the temple of Augustus and
Roma, and the later *sacellum* from the period of the Antonines (Brouquier-
Reddé 1992, 73-91). The structure was erected on a platform with dimen-
sions of 20.72m in length (34.80m including a staircase) and 20.50m in
width (Mastruzo 2005, 109-111). A *cella*, with dimensions of 12.89m and
9.38m, was built of sandstone, while the floor was made of white marble
(Mastruzo 2005, 74). The sacred room was located at a height of approx.
5m above the level of the forum (Mastruzo 2005, 109). They were sur-
rounded on three sides by a Corinthian colonnade (Di Vita 1982, 553-
556). Inside, was a separate room, with three individual entrances, which
bears resemblance to the plan of *Capitolium* in Sabra (Kenrick 1986 99-
115). However, the crucial difference in the case of Leptis, is the fact that
the substructures did not directly face the courtyard, but the sacred space.
It is therefore proposed that they functioned as vaults, or priestly rooms, or
constituted *sacella* of associated deities. The temple was connected with
the neighbouring sanctuary of the divine Augustus and Roma by an arch-
based bridge (Brouquier-Reddé 1992, 83).

In light of the epigraphic sources discovered *in situ*, the sanctuary appears
as a place of worship of Liber. It is confirmed by an inscription, probably
from the second century AD, which has been determined based on the
style of the letters (Reynolds & Ward-Perkins 2009, 275). A votive offer-
ing to the temple was made by a marble merchant - Marcus Vipsanius
Clemens. Apart from the Italic name of the deity, an invocation of the

divine patrons of Leptis Magna was found (Reynolds & Ward-Perkins 2009, 275, lines 1-3). The rest of the dedication mentions Quintus Servilius Candidus, an official and priest of deified Vespasian, performing administrative functions, determined by the *terminus post quem* as 79AD, the year attributable to the moment of the deification of the emperor.[6]

It seems that Liber Pater did not remain the only patron of the temple. Testimony to that is both the organisation of the sacred space and the epigraphic sources – a votive plaque of white marble discovered in the ruins of the sacred room. As appears from the text, it was offered by the inhabitants of Leptis Magna. It had been dedicated to the divine Antinous, who was assigned attributes of the one who bears fruit - *Antinoo deo Frugifero* (Reynolds & Ward-Perkins 2009, 279). The document is dated to the second century AD. In this case, the *terminus post quem* sets the date of the death of the emperor's favourite at 130AD, although the sources are silent on the official deification of the youth (Cass. Dio 14.5.7).[7] His cult was particularly popular in Greece, and its most important centre was Mantineia in Arcadia (Birley 1997, 180).

The commemoration of the Emperor Hadrian's lover as *Frugifero* (Reynolds & Ward-Perkins 2009, 279), in the context of the discussed worship, seems natural. Liber Pater is among the deities focusing on the domain of fertility and harvest, next to Ceres, responsible for vegetation and fertility, as well as Libera, the guardian of fertility, germination and growth (Lipka 2009, 40). The domain was associated with the flourishing of nature and abundance of wine, which stemmed from archaic Italic beliefs. The deity was especially popular among the plebeian class, which was best exemplified in the seat of the Aventine Triad in Rome. There, the divine trinity, apart from Liber Pater, was made up of his divine spouse and Ceres (Lipka 2009, 18). From the second century BC, he had been worshipped in the Roman centre of religion as the Greek God of wine, which explains the success of religion among the population of the southern Italy (former

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[6] Reynolds & Ward-Perkins 2009, p. 275, line 5-7. The official figure is mentioned in the other second-century inscriptions, cf. Reynolds & Ward-Perkins 2009, no. 357, no. 358, no. 359. He was known for his public activity related to investments in water supply. A different opinion suggesting we are dealing with two different citizens was presented by Bassignano 1974, p. 40.

[7] The author describes the young with the word *devotum*. It seems that the official process of deification through the Senate did not take place. Perhaps the drowning in the Nile alone was perceived through the prism of the ancient Egyptian custom, which assumed the sanctity of people who died in the life-giving river: see Birley, 1997 pp. 248-249.

territories of *Magna Grecia*), mostly freedmen (Lipka 2009, 141). This
influenced the later syncretic nature of the deity, and also had repercus-
sions in the form of statues of iconic imagery; imaginations of fertility
deities often occurred with the Romanised retinue of Dionysus (Collins-
Clinton 1977, 38-39). An example of this phenomenon is the late ancient
temple of Liber in Cosa (Ansedonia in southern Tuscany), where he re-
ceived the attributes of Dionysus, Liber, and Hercules. This was observed
based on the analysis of the temple's design - a group of sculptures exhib-
ited in the main sacred room (Collins-Clinton 1977, 40-41). The same
situation should be noted in the case of Leptis Magna, where a *cella* was
decorated by sculptures, probably belonging to one group, composed of
figures of Liber, a satyr, and a panther. Most likely, the whole was com-
plemented by a statue of Bacchus (Bartoccini 1922, 73-84).

The cult of Liber is also mentioned in sources discovered outside the strict
area of the temple. A bilingual inscription, dated to the first century AD on
linguistic grounds, was buried in the rubble of the Punic market (Levi
Della Vida, Caputo & Amadasi 1987, 25, Reynolds & Ward-Perkins 2009,
294). The Latin text contains information on public investment dedicated
to Liber Pater by someone of apparently Semitic origin; Boncarth, son of
Muthumbalis. He was a member of the Punic city administration, one of
the three administrators of the market. For the public purpose, 62 denarii
were collected in taxes, to which 53 pieces of silver were added by the
donor from his own funds. This information was repeated consecutively in
four verses written in the neo-Punic language. Apart from the above in-
formation, also mentioned was the object of offering, which was a statue
(Levi Della Vida, Caputo & Amadasi 1987, 25). From the viewpoint of the
reconstruction of the cult, the Punic definition of the deity in the inscrip-
tion appears interesting. The name mentioned there, The Lord Shadrapha
(DN ŠDRP⁵), is treated as an *interpretatio punica* of Liber Pater, which
was first noticed by G. Levi Della Vida (1942, 29-32). The domain of the
deity coincides with its Roman correlate - he was responsible for fertility
and fruitfulness, and was also attributed the power to dispatch cures (Huss
1990, 369). The observation affects the interpretation of the cult's trans-
formation in the era of the second century. It seems that it was developed
towards dissemination of the official imperial ideology based on the divine
authority of the Semitic deities. The above conclusion is strengthened by
finding a base made of grey limestone, which was the pedestal of the stat-
ue of Liber. The monument was discovered near *chalcidicum* in region III,
insula 8 (Reynolds & Ward-Perkins 2009, 299). The inscription on it
reads: *I am Liber, and the God Amor, and beautiful Apollo* (Reynolds &
Ward-Perkins 2009, 299).

In the public space of Leptis, the worship of the God of the grape harvest occupied an important place. This is evidenced by the quoted votive offerings and dedications from the temple, as well as inscriptions recovered in other parts of the city. Ancient documentation is plentiful, compared to the testimonies of other cults, which may indicate a particular fondness among the commoners. The feast in honour of Liber and accompanying deities fell on March 17, under the name of Liberalia. It was associated with fertility, mainly identified with masculinity (Ov. *Fast.* 3.459-516). During the ludic festival a phallic procession ran through the streets of cities, which was to bring prosperity and fertility (Lipka 2009, 141). Manifestations of such rituals included, among others, *fascina* (Plin. *HN.* 7.2, Plut. *Symposium* 5.7, August. *De civ. D.* 7.21), preserved in the public space through reliefs and graffiti depicting an often winged and erected *phallus* of unnatural size. These had an apotropaic meaning, protecting against harmful magic in the form of an evil eye.[8] Among the examples from Leptis Magna, save for a small terracotta piece, are the well-known cartouches with reliefs carved in limestone blocks. They were registered in the regio II, near the *decumanus*, next to the baths of Hadrian.

The epigraphic sources show Liber Pater as present in all social strata, from plebeians to the city aristocracy, regardless of the ethnic origin. This phenomenon lasted for over three centuries, from the period of *municipium,* through the middle of the Roman Empire until the third century. The popularity of the divine character was surely influenced by its syncretic traits, but also the domain of fertility, emphasising the type of economy as an important centre of production of cereals, fruits, and olive oil, across the entire Mediterranean. Those elements are reflected in the monetary iconography of Leptis Magna. Next to Bacchus and Hercules, the majority of silver coins minted in the first century AD depicted Liber or his attributes.[9] This attests for a formed religious identity already in the proto-Imperial period. In the second century the divine patrons of Leptis had been successfully exploited in the construction of the official Imperial propaganda (Müller 1964, Falbe, Linberg, & Müller 1861).

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[8] This phenomenon was common throughout the ancient Mediterranean world; for the recently undertaken comprehensive study see Elliot 2015.

[9] From the period of Augustus the obverses show the portrait of the emperor wearing a laurel wreath, turned to the right. There are bilingual inscriptions, but predominantly Latin. The reverses of coins show the guardian deities of Leptis, or their attributes: the leopard, the sceptre as symbols of Liber and Bacchus, as well as the club as a symbol of Hercules.

The Temple of Rome and Augustus

The central place in the row of sacred buildings at the northern end of the forum square was occupied by a temple dedicated to the Imperial cult and the goddess Roma. It is located between the previously described temple of Melqart-Hercules and the temple of Liber, with a platform connecting the two buildings. Due to the architectural solutions, and analysis of the detail, it is believed that the joined temples were erected at the at the same time (Livadiotii & Rocco 2005, 230-231). They were separated from the neighbouring objects by streets, creating separate spaces. Archaeological excavations were carried out here after 1932, coordinated by G. Guidi, then S. Aurigemma. The result of the work was the unveiling of well-preserved architectural relics, and the identification of a Byzantine wall, based on elder structures at the back of the temple (Guidi 1934, 241).

The dimensions and plan of the structure are similar to those of the temple of Liber; Ionic pseudo-peripteral, with an entrance from the south-east which is 41.41m long and 21.20m wide. Individual elements on the podium were built mainly from the local yellow limestone from the outcrops of Ras el-Hammam, with a height of approx. 5.30m (Livadiotii & Rocco 2005, 236-239). The area had underground *favissae* that served as warehousing for votive offerings. They could be accessed through the door near the Rostra. They were lit by small, rectangular windows (Guidi 1934, 243-245). The sacred room could be accessed from the square through two pairs of stairs, situated on the sides, by platforms which acted as a lecterns. Another way was to overcome the central steps leading directly to the *cellae*. The surrounding colonnade was heterogeneous. Observations on the construction materials lead to the conclusion that the objects had been restored, probably in the mid-second century AD (Brouquier-Reddé 1992, 86-87). Pillars from the front are made of white marble, while the rear parts are of limestone. The sacred room was preceded by a vestibule, decorated with white marble tiles. On the lintel of the temple gate, an inscription in Punic was placed (Levi Della Vida, Caputo & Amadasi 1987, 22).

The cited epigraphic document remains the only written testimony which makes it possible to reconstruct the details. The text is quite extensive. It mentions Baliaton, son of Hannibal Satuminus, and Bodmelqart, with his son, Tabahpi Graeculus (Levi Della Vida, Caputo & Amadasi 1987, 22), who, it seems, were the initiators of the construction. The former held the office of (sufetes) shophet - the highest among the administrators of the city. They were to construct (probably at their own expense) a portico,

courtyard, decorated ceiling, and bronze gates. Decoration of the temple is mentioned as the personification of Rome, which is identified by the image of the goddess Roma and the statue of the deified Augustus, along with Tiberius and Julia Augusta, Germanicus, Drusus, and his wife Antonia (Levi Della Vida, Caputo & Amadasi 1987, 22, lines 1-2). The testimony has been confirmed by archaeological sources. In the ruins of the temple, fragments of sculptures of the above-mentioned members of the Julio-Claudian dynasty were discovered (Aurigemma 1941, 22-30, 43, 91). They must have been exhibited on a platform where the Rostras were placed. The identification was easier, thanks to Latin dedications placed on the bases of individual statues.[10]

As noted above, the object had been subjected to numerous modifications over the century. Some researchers have suggested that the first construction could have occurred as early as the mid-first century BC, as indicated by the location in the part of the forum which was influenced by the oldest urbanisation processes (Di Vita 1982, 553-556). But the argument is not confirmed by archaeological sources. It is commonly accepted that the neo-Punic inscription should be seen as the first testimony to the organisation of a new Imperial cult (Brouquier-Reddé 1992, 86-87). The works mentioned in it are dated presumably for years 14-19 (Levi Della Vida, Caputo & Amadasi 1987, 22). The range of dates should be taken as the *terminus ant quem* of the completion of the temple (the early years of the reign of emperor Tiberius). The document emphasised the connection of the *emporium* with Rome, which at this stage initiated the process of shaping the image of the Empire in the society of Leptis. The indicated place of worship was a religious and state institution. In the space discussed, political events must have taken place, evidenced by the oratory stands. The urban context should also be taken into account. The surrounding temples were dedicated to the holy patrons of the city. The location of the Imperial cult, between the temples of Liber and Hercules-Melqart, lent the divine Augustus and Roma a special authority, putting them amongst the most important religious symbols. The temple worshipping the Julio-Claudian dynasty functioned successfully, at least till the second century, when it went through a marble restoration. It was probably abandoned with the

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[10] Octavian (Reynolds & Ward-Perkins 2009, no. 326), Livia (Reynolds & Ward-Perkins 2009, no. 327), Tiberius (Reynolds & Ward-Perkins 2009, 333), Germanicus (Reynolds & Ward-Perkins 2009, no. 334), Drusus (Reynolds & Ward-Perkins 2009, no. 335) Claudius (Reynolds & Ward-Perkins 2009, no. 337) and Messalina (Reynolds & Ward-Perkins 2009, no. 340).

advent of Christianity, and, over time, its form was used for the construction of the defensive wall of the already-existing Byzantine centre.

To summarize the data on the architectural form, the object corresponds to the type originated in Rome, as seen in the example of the temple of Venus Genetrix, in *Forum Romanum*. In the African provinces, analogous monumental buildings of cult during the proto-Imperial period were erected in most cities of economic importance. Among them were the *Capitolia* in Sabra, Timgad and Subaitila. In the referenced examples, the presence of the oratory stands – *rostrae*- was also recorded (Rocco 2010, 23). The diffusion of the pseudo-peripteral model on a high podium was not solely reserved for the temples of the Triad. A similar plan of a cult building was recorded at Dougga in Tunisia. There, it was dedicated to Saturn (Rocco 2010, 24).

The Theatre Temples

The temple of the Imperial propaganda of Domus Augusta in the forum was not the only one during the time discussed. Another place of worship of Octavian Augustus, initially regarded as the temple of Dionysus (Romanelli 1925, 136), was located in the complex of the theatre, at the centre of an adjacent portico *postscenam*. The structure was located on the axis marked out by the temple of Ceres, at the top of *cavea*, and at the main door of the *scenae frons* (Hanson 1959, 56-57). The plan of the object was kept in the *prostylos tetrastylos* type, with dimensions of 9.5m and 16.5m and an entrance on the short side (Caputo 1987, 52-53). The facade of the temple was turned towards the south-west. A Corinthian colonnade surrounding the *cella* was made of grey granite. Its existing form is the result of a renovation from the third century (Caputo 1987, 52-53). In the back of the room the presence of three plinths, which were intended for the exhibition of the cult statues, was recorded. The middle part of the entablature was inscribed (Reynolds & Ward-Perkins 2009, 273). The inscription tells of the dedication of the temple to the Augustinian deities; Dis Augustis, by the proconsul of the province named Q. Marcius Barea, who held office in 43AD (Reynolds & Ward-Perkins 2009, 273), at the initiative of an influential representative of a local aristocracy, Iddibal Tapapius.[11] Prosopography indicates the moment of completion of the building.

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[11] He was a member of the family of the founder of the theatre - Annobal Ruso, mentioned in the epigraphic sources from the discussed place Reynolds & Ward-Perkins 2009, pp. 321-323.

A likely interpretation, which arises through the observation of the three cult plinths, is the thesis of worship of the deified members of the Julio-Claudian dynasty, in the persons of Augustus, Livia, and Claudius. However, the context of the portico, decorated with various images of Roman gods, may suggest that all guardian Gods of the Empire were worshipped in the temple (Brouquier-Reddé 1992, 279). At that time, the theatre was also perceived as a basic institution in promoting the idea of the Empire. Apart from the social role, it manifested functions of cult, which was the result of both tradition and customs law.[12] It seems that, in the Leptis theatre, one of the temples was intended initially for the deified members of the Julio-Claudian dynasty.

Another sanctuary was a small *tempietto* of *in antis* type, with dimensions of approx. 12m and 9.3m, decorated with Corinthian columns in *prostylos hexastylos* layout (Brouquier-Reddé 1992, 164-165). It was situated on a low podium at the top of the auditorium. Inside was a *favissa*, which could be accessed through an internal staircase. The establishment was closed off with a wall that ran along the line of the *theatrum*. Fragments of architrave block were preserved, informing about the dedication of the structure to the goddess Ceres as the divine guardian of the Empress – *Cereri Augustae sacrum*.[13] It is worth noting that it constitutes an *ex voto* of a woman coming from a wealthy Punic family. The dedication must have corresponded with the decor of the temple. It is believed that the interior of the *cella* was originally adorned by a cult statue of supernatural size, discovered in the lower parts of the building, showing Livia Augusta in the type of Ceres-Tyche (Caputo & Traversari 1976, no. 58, 76-79). The size of the sculpture was approx. 3.10m, which was estimated based on the exposed head of 0.7m (Caputo & Traversari 1976, 64). The monument must have dominated the entire premises. In the ruins of the theatre, two smaller examples of the portrait of Livia (Caputo & Traversari 1976, 79-81, no. 59, 60) were encountered, which have no finding place assigned. In the

[12] During the period of the Republic, the Senate would ban the construction of permanent theatre facilities. A trick in the form of connecting a complex to an object of cult made it possible to circumvent the regulation. It is worth noting that in the case of the theatre of Pompey in Rome, the main reason for allowing the foundation was attaching the temple of Venus Victrix, to which auditoriun steps were added, see Erasmo 2004, p. 84.

[13] Reynolds & Ward-Perkins 2009, p. 269: The founder was the daughter or wife of Annobal Ruso - Suphunibal, and the temple was dedicated by Gaius Rubellius Blandus, the consul, proconsul, and the priest of the province, which allows estimate the foundation date for 35-36.

subsequent years, already in the Imperial period, the place retained its character. In the first half of the second century, the decor was reorganised, and in the *cella*, a statue in the type of *statua seduta* was placed, depicting Sabina, wife of Hadrian, with Cupid (Caputo & Traversari 1976, 89-91, no. 68). The type of the statue showed elements of the iconography of both Ceres and Aphrodite. It is significant that, despite the age of Romanisation, continuous references were made to the deity of fertility, in order to promote the official image of the reigning Emperor and his spouse.

Conclusions: Promoting Ideas of Rome among the Gods of Fertility

The first Roman religious institutions were located in the oldest district of the city within the *Forum Vetus*. The introduction of official Emperor worship took place through the promotion of local guardian deities. Among them were those derived from old Carthaginian beliefs - Shadrapa and Milk'Ashtart/Melqart. They played a central role in the society of Leptis Magna. In the light of the bilingual inscriptions from the first century AD, residents remained strongly attached to Punic rituals and language. These elements were used in the construction of the temple of Augustus and Roma in *Forum Vetus*, where the object of worship was connected to the adjacent temples of Liber and Hercules, built in a new manner. During the proto-Imperial period, three temples could act as a local type of *Capitolium*. The official elements are highlighted by the decor of the central *aedes*, decorated with statues of the Julio-Claudian dynasty, as well as by a platform acting as a tribune (Rostra). At approximately the same time, another institution of Romanisation was completed, planned on the outskirts of the then city centre. It is hard to say whether it was the original Roman idea to situate the monumental building in a Punic cemetery, but this is a fact attested by archaeology. The theatre, in the light of Roman law and custom, had also to fulfil religious functions.

The monumental building was enriched by two places of worship. At the top of the auditorium was a *sacellum* of Ceres-Tyche, and in the portico connected with the complex, was a small *templum* for the guardian deities of Augustus' home. In the case of the former, the purpose of such choice should be emphasised. Ceres in *interpretatio punica* corresponded to Tanit, the Goddess of heaven and fertility. Therefore, the first three Roman temples revolved around the traditional Punic Triad. By these means, the Greco-Roman pantheon was introduced. At that time, it seems, this was done by means of the above-mentioned objects in *quadriporticus post scenam*.

The advent of a new dynasty did not change the approach to the organisation of the sacred space. Probably in the third quarter of the first century AD, the temple of Magna Mater was established in the forum. The eastern Goddess of fertility represented the desired domain in the centre, where the key sectors of the economy remained agricultural production and trade of agricultural goods. The historical circumstances of adoption, and the covenant of the Goddess with Rome, could have their propaganda value, thanks to which, according to legend, the course of the Second Punic War was changed.

Despite the introduction of the new deities, the cult of the local Triad remained important until the period of the first quarter of the third century, as indicated by the epigraphic sources. Cultural identity of the diverse society was shaped by the universal images of Gods shared through coins, décor, architecture, and urban space. Liber-Shadrapa appears as the divine patron of Augustus, Hercules-Melqart as the patron of Tiberius, whereas Ceres-Tanit appears as the patroness of Livia Augusta; the Imperial dynasty gained a strong divine support.

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Chapter Two

The Roman Emigrants in Syria: Local Coins as Evidence of Colonisation

Szymon Jellonek

Abstract

After the annexation of Syria, the next move of the Roman Empire was to introduce, and to maintain, power in the region. One of the methods used by the Romans in the process of integration, was colonisation. The attempt to strengthen the Roman government is clear. In the act of location, the reasons such as cultural, strategic, geographic, and socio-economic, were decisive. Colonies were founded in most of the provinces. In Syria, the colony of Berytus was founded by Augustus, Akko by Claudius, Tyre, Sidon, Emesa, Heliopolis and Caesarea ad Libanum by the Severan Dynasty, and Damascus by Philip I. What was the character of this foundation? Did the Roman veterans really come and inhabit these colonies? Or was the act of foundation just a way to grant privilege to the towns?

The strongest evidence of Roman emigrants in Syria is the colonies located in this area. It seems that, when a colony was established, the pure Roman settlers started their journey, the final destination of which was the place of the new colony. When all of the rituals had been celebrated, the colonists could start their new life in a town that was supposed to be a miniature of Rome itself (Papageorgiadu-Banes 2004, 18, Howgego 2005, 15, Edmonson 2011, 37). In many cases, the granted laws, were the same as, or equal to, those in Italy (*ius Italicum*). From this moment, the settlers started to achieve their personal purposes, but what was more important, they started to fulfill the quest given to them by the Roman government. Some colonies were located to strengthen Roman control in the area, e.g.,

Augustus established 14 colonies in Mauretania (Mackie 1983, 332-358), Trajan established a colony in the captured capital of Dacians, Sarmizegetusa, and Hadrian founded Aelia Capitolina in Jerusalem, after the Bar-Kokhba revolt (Watkins 1983, 334, Millar 2006, 188). The other colonies were established for economic/financial reasons. The aim of 'Romanisation' was never a key-point, but it could be a significant one. The colonies minted their own coins. The programme of images was based on Roman origins. The presentation of the *aratrum* ritual referred to the foundation day of a colony. The legionary standards and eagles reminded the colonists of their military past. The images were surrounded by Latin legends, which distinguished the coins from the numerous issues struck by cities in the Greek East. It seems that the act of foundation of a colony had to be entailed by the settlement of Roman colonists, who later became the keepers of the Roman culture in the area, surrounded by the local communities. However, there is some evidence that indicates that founding a colony, followed by the arrival of colonists, was not necessary. Furthermore, at some point, the act of founding a colony became rather the act of gaining privilege in the town, more than converting it to a Roman colony. The attempt is to determine which Syrian colonies represented the town inhabited by the Roman emigrants, and later by their descendants, and which were those where Roman colonists never arrived in significant number.

Syria, a country located in the near East, on the crossing of trade routes, played a significant role in the Ancient Age. The population of Syria consisted of many different ethnic groups. The impact of Phoenicians, Persians, Jews, Egyptians, Armenians, Greeks, and Romans, was blended there. The region was intercepted by different empires plenty of times. There is no need to mention all of the overlords that ruled this area. However, it is significant to highlight that the Ptolemies and the Seleucids fought six times to prove their control of these lands. In the first half of the first century BC, Syria became the target of Roman expansion. First, in 83BC, Tigranes, the King of Armenia, annexed Syria, and therefore later, during the third Mithridatic War, Romans decided to support the Seleucid Empire. Lucullus forced Tigranes to evacuate Syria and to return it to the Seleucids. Raised in Rome, Antiochus XIII became the King of Syria, which, in fact, was subjected as the next client kingdom of the Roman Republic (Downey 1951, 150). His rule lasted less than two years, and he was overthrown by his cousin Philip II (Diod.Sic. 40.1). The Romans decided to support their client once again. Pompey the Great forced Philip II to return the throne to Antiochus XIII, who ruled again for just a single year (Butcher 2005, 19-21). After Pompey defeated Mithrydates, Antio-

chus XIII, although he did no harm to Romans, surrendered, and Syria was annexed by Pompey in 63BC (Appian *Syriaca* 49). Syria became the province of the mighty Roman Empire, but when did the 'true' Roman emigrants settle down there?

During the fall of the Republic, some actions were taken. Even before Syria was annexed, in Antioch a circus was built by the Proconsul, Marcius Rex (Downey 1951,153). Nysa-Scythopolis was re-founded by Gabinius (57-55 BC). The typical Roman facilities, such as baths, hippodromes, and theatres, were erected (Rowe 1930, 46-53). Laodicea was renamed as Julia Laodicea, to honor Julius Caesar. The new era had been announced (Seyrig 1950, 26-32). These actions indicate that some Romans inhabited Syria during the civil wars at the dusk of the Republic. However, the first significant wave of Roman emigrants arrived in Syria in the age of Augustus. The names of cities were willingly changed to honour the Imperial family, e.g., Anazarbus was renamed Caesarea (Jones 1937, 205). The simple change of the name of the town is not essential proof that Roman emigrants settled in this town. The reliable evidence is the status of colony gained by the towns. The first colony that was found there was Colonia Iulia Augusta Felix, in Berytus, in 15/14BC (Pollard 2000, 61). However, it is possible that some veterans were placed there after the Actium battle (Strabo 8.7.5; CIL III,14165). No more colonies were established there until the reign of Claudius. Akko (also called Ace-Ptolemais) was refounded as Colonia Claudia Germanicia Felix Ptolemais, between 50-54AD (Kindler 1978, 54). A few colonies were established under Septimius Severus. Colonia Julia Augusta Felix Heliopolitana was previously part of the colony in Berytus, and gained its independence after AD194 (Jones 1937, 465, Grant 1946, 259). This was the punishment of Berytus for taking the side of Severus's opponent during the civil war (Jones Hall 2004, 49-50). Phoenician Tyre was refounded as Septimia Tyros Colonia Metropolis Phoenices (Jones 1937, 289). Laodicea ad Marem was renamed Laus Colonia Metropolis. It was a rival city of Antioch, which supported Niger, while Laodicea backed Severus. The first city was downgraded, and the other was rewarded (Jones 1937, 268, Butcher 2005, 232). However, there is no numismatic evidence, Palmyra was raised to the rank of colony as well (Jones 1937, 268, Howgego 2005, 17). These four foundations were connected with the loss of the civil war by Pescennius Niger, who resided in Syria. Emesa, the hometown of Julia Donma, was granted colonial status by her son, Caracalla (Millar 1993, 308, 2006, 202). The aforementioned Antioch on the Orontes, was raised to colonial status by Elagabalus in AD218 (Butcher 1988, 63), as was Sidon, the name of which was changed to *Colonia Aurelia Pia Metropolis Sidon*

(Millar 1993, 286, Butcher 2005, 152). The Emperor also established
Caesarea ad Libanum (formerly Arca) as a colony (Millar 2006, 213). The
last city that became a colony was Damascus - Colonia Damascus Me-
tropolis - during the reign of Philip I (Jones 1937, 288, Millar 1993, 316).
The acts of colonies' foundation were conducted for many different rea-
sons. The first elevation of Berytus was determined by Augustus' policy
of displacing his veterans in distant lands of the Roman Empire. In this
age, colonies were established in Mauretania, Spain, Africa, Macedonia,
Achaea and Asia Minor. Augustus wanted to strengthen the Roman gov-
ernment in these areas. However, the socio-economic reasons were strong
too (Sawaya 2002, 123-124, 2009, 282). It seems that, during the reign of
the Severan Dynasty, similar processes were introduced. Septimius Seve-
rus, after defeating Pescenius Niger, had to ensure peace in the areas
where his opponent had ruled. In this way, Severus showed his gratitude to
Tyre and Laodicea for taking his side during the war (Millar 1993, 291).

According to Sextus Julius Frontinus, there are three types of provincial
colony (Frontin. *De controversy agrorum* 2). The highest level is for those
which were equal to those located in Italy (*ius Italicum*). On a lower level,
were the colonies which did not pay the *tributum,* and on the lowest level
were the colonies that were subject to taxation (Watkins 1983, 319). The
most important source to determine the level of a colony is *Digesta Iustin-
iani* which was based on the work of jurists from Tyre Ulpian. According
to them, Berytus gained the Italic right, from the beginning (*Dig.* 50.15.1).
Heliopolis, Tyre and Laodicea, established by Severus, were also granted
ius Italicum (*Dig.* 50.15.2-3). Later, Caracalla granted Emesea with the
same rights (Jones 1937, 268). Akko had never had, or had lost at some
point, the Italic right (Millar 2006, 185). Therefore, we can assume that
the rank of Akko was lower than the other colonies, but we do not know if
Akko had to pay *tributum*. The colonies of Sidon, Antioch, and Damascus
were located after Carracalla granted citizenship to all free inhabitants of
the Roman empire, therefore there was no need for these colonies to obtain
the Italic right (Millar 2006, 201).

Who were the colonists that settled down in these locations? In Berytus,
veterans of V Macedonica and VIII Gallica legions founded the colony
(Jones Hall 2004, 46). Severan veterans could settle in Tyre and Heliopo-
lis. The veterans of III Legion Gallica seem to have settled in Sidon and
Tyre. The members of VI Legion settled in Damascus in the time of Philip
I. No matter where they came from, the whole process of colonists' set-
tlement had already been determined. The process of establishing new
colonies consisted of many different ceremonies and symbols. The colo-

nies were supposed to be the transferred imitations of Rome itself, on the new lands. The design of the cities, the hierarchy, the festivals, and the laws were corresponding to the Roman. One of the most important festivals in Rome was Parillia, celebrated on April 21ˢᵗ, in the common belief that was the day when Rome had been founded. The boundaries of the town were marked out by Romulus himself, in accordance with Etruscan ritual (Dion.Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 1.88). He ploughed a furrow, with two white oxen, around the planned town, leaving space for the gates. Furthermore, the act of foundation of the colony was described in the same way by the ancient author Varro (*Ling.* 5.143). This kind of ritual is called *aratrum* (which means ard/plow), and *sulcus primagenius*, which can be translated as the very first furrow. This act was believed to be the 'birthday' of Rome, and therefore of the initiation of the colonies, which were the reflections of the Capital (Eckstein 1979, 85-93). Of course, there were some other acts that could compete with this ritual, such as the performance of the first colonial *lustrum* – purification ceremony (Mommsen 1887, 636-638), or the presentation of *lex colonia* at the colonial forum (Salmon 1969, 26). However, frequent images on the colonial coins presenting *aratrum* ritual are decisive. On the coins of the oldest colonial mint, in Syria, Berytus, a scene featuring a veiled man, ploughing with two oxen, is presented on the reverse (Burnett et al. 1992, no. 4540). COL IUL, as the shortened version of *Colonia Iulia Augusta Felix*, is added. Such presentations emerged from the time of Augustus until Antoninus Pius (Heuchert & Howgego 2006, temporary no. 6757). In Akko, the same motive endures from the time of Nero (Burnett et al. 1992, no. 4749), until Hadrian (Amandry & Burnett 2015, no. 3912). The same situation occurred in Sidon, when the town became the colony, and introduced coins with a pair of oxen and a priest (Rouvier, 1904, no. 1509). However, such presentation is extremely rare here. On the colonial coins, there was another symbol which was based on Roman heritage, and referred to the military past of veterans. The legionary standards of (*vexillia*) and eagles (*aquillae)* were common motives in colonial coinage. In Berytus, such symbols emerged on many coins, from the time of Claudius (Burnett et al. 1992, no. 4547) to Gordianus III (Carson 1963, no. 254). In Sidon, the standard of the III Gallic Legion emerged behind the priest and oxen on the aforementioned coin (Rouvier 1904, no. 1509). In Heliopolis, two *aquillae* are presented with the legend 'COL HEL', on coins of Septiius Sever and Geta (Lindgren 1985, no. 1282). However, in this case, the military standards shall be regarded as the commemoration of the first Roman settlers of Bekaa Valley, who founded Berytus and Heliopolis before it was liberated by Septimius Sever (Okamura 1988, 128).

Other types which occurred in the coinage of Syrian colonies were not
strictly connected with the Roman tradition and culture, but rather based
on local patterns. The motives of local sanctuaries e.g., the temple of Jupi-
ter Heliopolitanus in Heliopolis (Lindgren 1985, no. 1280), and the temple
of Astarte in Sidon (Carson 1963, no. 243) and in Tyre (Carson 1963, no.
404). The rivalry between these two cities was constant, and did not slow
down during the time they were colonies. The duel manifested itself in the
images programme on colonial coins; both were towns using their tradi-
tional, local heroes, such as Dido or Kadmos. However, this time they
were surrounded by Latin legends (Butcher 2005, 152). The fact that the
coins were inscribed with Latin legends and the abbreviation of *colonia*,
was universal for all Roman colonies, no matter where they were found
(Papageōrgiadu-Banēs 2004, 32, Butcher 2005, 12). This characteristic
indicates the possibility that the town became a colony inhabited by the
Roman colonists. However, some exceptions emerged. An interesting
situation occurred in Emesa, where coins, that were struck after the town
gained the title of colony, remained inscribed with Greek alphabet, but the
meaning was transferred from Latin: EMIXΩN KOΛΩN (Millar 1993,
308). It seems that some cities, especially in the near East, gained the
status of colony, but no Roman colonists were settled there (Butcher 2005,
12). Therefore, there were no Latin legends on coins, and no Roman mo-
tives, like *aquilla* and *aratrum* rituals, on coins. Emesa used to be believed
as such an example, however the tombstones of Roman veterans discov-
ered there, deny it (Dąbrowa 2012, 36). Another sophisticated instance is
Palmyra, where no colonial coins were struck at all (Howgego 2005, 17).
In Laodicea, there were no traditional colonial coins with the *aratrum*
ritual or legionary standards. However, some coins with Latin legends,
indicating the colonial rank of town, were struck alternately with those
featuring Greek legend. In Damascus, the colonial issues were struck from
time of Philip I (Mionnet 1830, 63) until the reign of Gallienus and Sa-
lonina (Sear 1982, no. 4691). The image programme contained local mo-
tives, such as a hind with Telesphorus, a ram or a temple, but the tradition-
al military standards of the VI Legion emerged on a coin of Otacilla Sev-
era (Mionnet 1830, no. 70). Another significant type featured Marsyas on
the reverse. Marsyas can be interpreted as the allegory of *libertas*, and the
allusion of colonial freedom (Katsari & Mitchel 2008, 231). Furthermore,
it used to be believed by scholars to be the symbol of *ius Italicum*
(Klimowsky 1983, 88-101). Nevertheless, it was often presented on colo-
nial coins (Crenma, Berytus, Damascus), but non-colonial mints struck
issues with this satyr too (e.g., Scepsis, Apamea, Alexandria).

On the later coins of Damascus, the confusion of two languages is visible. On the coins of Volusian (Rouvier 1904, no. 99) and Salonina (Sear 1982, no. 4691) the Latin legend is distorted: COL ΔΑΜΑΣ ΜΕΤΡΟ. This is probably due to error on the part of the poorly-educated engraver, and evidence of an integration between the Roman and local communities.

The difference between colonies established by the Julio-Claudians (Berytus, Akko) and by the Severans (Tyre, Sidon, Heliopolis, Palmyra, Emesa, and Laodicea), is striking. The presence of Roman emigrants in Berytus and Akko is obvious and vivid. The coins featuring the foundation scenes and the *vexillia* surrounded by Latin legends were indicative of Roman inhabitants of the colonies. The numismatic evidence is strengthened by the archaeological finds. The remains of an aqueduct and water supply system was discovered. The design can be compared to one of Pont du Gard (Jones Hall 2004, 63). Latin inscriptions were widespread among numerous Roman remains, buildings, and facilities, e.g., basilica erected by *decuriones* in the name of Julia Domna (Lauffray 1978, 149). Inscriptions with *cursus honorum* were also discovered (Jones Hall 2004, 48-52). The import of Italian goods (e.g., lamps, pottery) strengthen the connection with the origins of colonists (Butcher 2005, 187). There is no question that Berytus and Akko were towns where Roman immigrants settled. The situation is different, however, if we focus on the colonies established by the Severan Dynasty. Most scholars are convinced that these towns were granted colonial rank and became title colonies, but no colonists were settled there, and in fact, the character of the towns never changed (Watkins 1983, 321, Butcher 2005, 232, Millar 2006, 191-196). On the one hand, the aforementioned numismatics partially indicate such a possibility. Tyre and Sidon struck plenty of coins with Latin inscriptions and abbreviations of colonial titles, but the typical Roman motives (*aratrum* ritual and legionary standards) barely touched on these issues. In Laodicea, there were no such presentations at all. Furthermore, Emesa never struck coins with Latin legends. In Damascus, the coins were inscribed with the Greek and Latin alphabets. Therefore, we can assume that these colonies were not traditional Roman colonies. Even if it was not necessary to celebrate the standard rituals, *Colonia* could just be the next title added to the name of the town (just like *metropolis*). On the other hand, the single-type coins of Tyre and Sidon, bearing the priest and oxen with the standard inscribed (LEX III GAL), indicate the possibility that the veterans of Septimus Sever were actually located there. A similar situation occurred on the coins of Ottacilia Severa, in Damascus, where a typical Roman she-wolf is presented with *aquilla, vexilium*, and the inscription LEG VI F (Mionnet 1830, no.70). The use of specific legions' names on

coins indicates the presence of veterans in these cities (Dąbrowa 2012, 32-35). Latin inscriptions with their names were found in every Syrian colony. They contain the names of Roman citizens, who inhabited these towns. Furthemore, the excavation carried out on the necropolis of al-Bass (Tyre) showed that the cemetery architecture is much more diverse then in other provincial centres. Furthemore, the sarcophagi there are similar to those of the necropolis of Berytus, therefore, they could demonstrate the effect of the combination of Roman and local influences (De Jong 2010, 626). This observation can indicate the presence of Roman emigrants in Tyre. However, there is no significant difference in the design of tombs before and after Tyre became a Roman colony, therefore the wave of emigrants arriving in Tyre in the age of Septimius Severus was not significant. Furthemore, the tombstones' inscriptions, discovered for instance in Emesa, referred to veterans too (Dąbrowa 2012, 36), although no coins with Latin legends were struck there. The similarities between the cemeteries of 'true' Roman and 'titular' colonies indicate the advanced process of integration between Roman descendants and local communities. This means that the process of 'Romanisation' was rather more 'globalisation' than an acculturation of local communities (Hingley 2005, 113-115).

Roman emigrants first came to Syria when Syria became a client kingdom of Rome, in the first half of the first century BC. The significant action of settlement was carried out under Augustus, when the colony of Berytus was established. Akko (Ace Ptolemais) was refounded by Claudius. The next acts of colonial foundation were carried out by the Severan Dynasty. Colonies were created in the time of Septimius Severus and his successors to show their gratitude for the loyalty of the towns. These towns were never converted into 'true' Roman colonies; their character remained provincial. However, some Roman colonists were actually settled in these centres, as an effect of military colonisation.

The total number of colonists is impossible to estimate. Furthermore, the influx of colonists was a single operation rather than a periodic process. Although the Roman emigrants eventually integrated with the local societies, they persisted in being Roman. The civic coinage, which was the manifestation of their identity, proved that. Even after provincial coinage ceased under Aurelian in Syria, some evidence remains noticeable. The base of the statue of Flavius Domitius Leontius, with a Latin inscription from Berytus, was dedicated in 344AD.

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Chapter Three

Roman Imperial and Provincial Coin Finds deposited during the Bar Kokhba War

Barbara Zając

Abstract

Stray finds and hoards of Bar Kokhba coins were found in a lot of sites, and give some information about territorial range, but unfortunately most of these coins are without archaeological context. In deposits from refuge caves or villages, some Roman imperial and provincial exemplars of Bar Kokhba coins that circulated in this region have been registered. The main characteristics of these coins were presented based on some of the selected deposits.

One source bringing information about the migration of people, or economic activity, is coin circulation. Coin finds define the territorial range of circulation, relations, or minting production, and determines ideological, as well economic and political, regions. In eastern Roman provinces, mostly bronze coins were minted by local request, restricted to the region where they were produced. Some mints struck silver coins, determined by political, military, or economic situations (Howgego 2014, 307-310, 312-314).

The study of the Bar Kokhba War is one of the most fascinating, and the most advanced, relative to the state of research. Great research, such as that of L. Mildenberg (1984) or Y. Meshorer (1982, 2001) have focused on the character of numismatics. One indicator of the place of revolt is the Bar Kokhba coinage. Iconography, minting production, and circulation reflect the territorial range of the war analysed by, e.g., Mildenberg (1984)

and Zissu & Eshel (2000, 157-158). Next to the Bar Kokhba coins, some Roman imperial and provincial exemplars, which circulated in this region are registered in deposits from refuge caves or villages. The main characteristic aspects of these coins is presented based on some selected deposits.

Bar Kokhba War (132-135 AD)

The Bar Kokhba Revolt was the second main war between Jews and the Roman Empire, after the first Revolt, between 66 to 73AD, and the Quietus War, between, perhaps, 115 to 117AD. It is very often overlooked by researchers, and is named after the main leader, Simon Bar Kokhba. The main region of rebellion was Judea, including mainly territories from the west coast of Dead Sea, and the Hebron area of the southern Judean Shephelah. Suppositions as to the reasons for the revolt are many, including anti-Jewish policy (not confirmed), decisions about the building of a Roman colony, Aelia Capitolina, in the place of Jerusalem, or the prohibition of some Jewish traditions, such as circumcision. The revolt lasted three years and was ended with the pacification of the local people (Ciecieląg 2008, 7-10, 97-101, 118-119, 205-206, Bijovsky & Leibner 2013, 117).

During the War, rebels minted their own coins, with various effigies, such as the amphora, the lyre, the grapes, the facade of the temple, or the wreath. Coins were overstruck with the Roman and Greek Imperial, in silver and bronze denominations (Kadman 1963, 32, Meshorer 1982, 134-135, 138-161). Coins have been discovered in places such as caves, which indicate the mobile mints, such as Khirbet el-Aqd (Kindler 1986-1987, 46-47). Stray finds of Bar Kokhba coins were found in a lot of sites, giving some information about territorial range, but unfortunately most of these coins are without archaeological context (Zissu & Eshel 2002, 157-167). The 29 Bar Kokhba coin hoards, discovered between 1889-1982, were distinguished by Mildenberg (1984, 49), and also Hendin (2000-2002, 180). Information about the next coin finds have been published in a few articles (e.g., Kindler 1986-1987, Bijovsky & Leibner 2013).

Coin Finds in Refuge Caves

Finds from the caves could indicate various periods of occupation and human activity in them. Caves were used largely as refuge places during the Bar Kokhba Revolt. This is confirmed by fragments of pottery, coins, and other artefacts, discovered inside. Coin finds from these caves are

divided into hoards and stray finds (Barag 1980, Eshel 1987, Zissu & Eshel 2002, Zissu, Eshel, Langford & Frumkin 2009-2010).

Murabba'at is located 25km from Jerusalem. In 1952, a hoard was discovered in a cave consisting of 119 Nabataean coins, 51 Roman denarii (the oldest attributed to C. Allius Bala and M. Cordius Rufus), and seven coins of Mark Antonius, 14 from Flavian dynasty, 23 attributed to Trajan, and one to Hadrian, 14 Syrian tetradrachms (Nero, Galba, Othon, Vespasian, Titus, three coins attributed to Trajan), and 43 coins struck by Rome or Antioch, misleadingly related to the Caesarean mint in Cappadocia (five tridrachms, five didrachms, 33 drachms – all struck during the reign of Trajan). These are two tridrachms with Arabia type, one with an effigy of Artemis Perge, nine drachms with camel type, and 23 drachms with Arabia personification. Nabataean exemplars and coins from the reign of Domitian are in worse condition than the coins of Trajan. They must have been in circulation longer than the Trajanic coins. This place was occupied by the Roman soldiers stationed there between 70 and 132AD (Milik & Seyrig 1958, 11-12, 23-26). Such as large hoard, with specific coins such as denarii from the Republican period or Mark Antonius, suggest the owners may have been officers from the Roman army, or Roman soldiers. Over the next years, nine Bar Kokhba coins were discovered in a cave (Zissu & Eshel 2002, 162).

In Nesher-Ramla Quarry, in the Lod valley, two hoards have been discovered. Hoard A was small, and included four coins from the first century BC. Hoard B, in a cooking pot, was hidden in a complex consisting of a shaft and two rooms. In the hoard, of heterogonous character, were 65 coins, ranging chronologically from the third century BC to the period of reign of Hadrian. The oldest coins, Ptolemaic coins from Alexandria, were autonomous exemplars from Side, Seleucids coins from various mints, and Hasmonean and Herodian exemplars. Provincial coins from the reign of the Flavian Dynasty and Nerva, were struck in mints in Sebaste, Caesarea, and Antioch. Trajanic provincial coins, were represented by 14 coins from Tyre, Tiberias, Alexandria, perhaps Rome, and Caesarea. Especially interesting are coins from Caesarea, in small denominations, found in a lot of places, that could have been circulated all over the province. Another group in this hoard is coinage of Hadrian, from mints located in Ascalon, Dora, Tiberias, Antioch, Akko-Ptolemais, Caesarea, and Bostra. These coins could have been introduced by merchants or Roman troops (Farhi & Melamed 2014, 113-129, Syon 2015, 208).

In Mugharet Umm et Tueimin, in the western part of the Jerusalem hills, three hoards of coins have been discovered. The cave was excavated in 1873, 1920, between 1970 and 1974, and in 2009. The first hoard contained 83 silver coins, overstruck during the Bar Kokhba War, hidden in an organic container which did not survive. Hoard B included nine silver coins, six Roman, four Judaean, and one perutah. Among Roman coin finds from this deposit are Imperial coins from the Domitian and Trajan periods and provincial coins struck for the Arabian province during the Trajan reign. Hoard C was five Roman gold coins, 15 silver, and four bronze. The gold coins were struck in the first century AD, during the reigns of Tiberius, Nero, Vitellius, and Vespasian. The silver imperial coins date to the periods of Vespasian, Domitian, Trajan, and Hadrian, and the provincial coins were struck in Antioch during the reigns of Galba, Vespasian, Trajan, and Hadrian (Zissu, Eshel, Langford & Frumkin 2009-2010, 113-143).

In 1980, during the excavation in the cave in Wadi ed-Daliyeh, around 16km north-west of Jericho, a hoard of 16 denarii dated from the reigns of Trajan and Hadrian, and one separate Trajanic provincial tridrachm, was found. The hoard was deposited after 129AD. During an earlier expedition, a bronze coin from the Bar Kokhba War was discovered (Damati & Erlich 1981, 33-37).

In the caves, a lot of stray finds are very often registered. In the el-Jai cave, 10km north-east of Jerusalem, 16 coins, among them one Nabataean, five provincial, from Sebaste, Alexandria, Gaza, and Aelia Capitolina, one imperial bronze, five denarii of Vespasian, Nerva, Trajan and Hadrian, and four Bar Kokhba coins, were discovered (Zissu & Eshel 2002, 160, 168-175). In western Samaria, in the Elqana Cave, during a survey in 2012, Persian coins from fourth century BC, one of Mattathias Antigonus, Roman denarii from reign of Vespasian, dated 74AD, and Trajan coins struck between 103 and 111AD, have been found. This differentiation of coin finds reflects a few phases of occupation of the cave (Zissu et al. 2014, 146-152). From the cliff shelters, in eastern Galilee, originate Trajanic coins struck in Tiberias and Sepphoris, deposited during this conflict (Ahipaz & Shivtiel 2014, 133-148, Shivtiel & Zissu 2007-2008, 112-117. In a cave in Wadi el-Mackuk, two coins have been discovered, one denarius of Hadrian, stuck between 125-128AD, and one Bar Kokhba bronze coin, dated 134-135AD (Eshel 1987, 151-152).

Hoards from Bar Kokhba War in the Village

Coin finds deposited during the Bar Kokhba Revolt are not only registered in caves. Eleutheropolis is located 53km of Jerusalem and was one of the important administration centres in the province during the reign of Septimius Severus (Sandberg 2011-2014, 173-174). During the Bar Kokhba War, a hoard consisting of 1,285 coins, was deposited. In this hoard were 58 Imperial and 76 provincial coins, 43 with Arabian personification and five with camels, struck during the reign of Trajan. Among these coins were noted coins from Antioch, and Tyre, and one Lycian coin from the reign of Trajan (Svoronos, 1907, 230-252, Metcalf 1975, 91-92).

In a Jewish village in Qiryat Sefer, located around 23km northwest of Jerusalem, two hoards dating to the Second Temple period were discovered, under the floor and in a niche of the rooms. One of them consisted of two aurei, and 147 silver coins, such as denarii, drachms and tetradrachms from the reign of Nero, Galba, Vespasian, Titus, Domitian, Nerva, Trajan, and Hadrian, struck in Rome, Bostra, Antioch, and Tyre. The second one contained 48 bronze coins dated between the third century BC and 128AD, originating from local and outside mints, such as Alexandria, Antioch, and Tyre (Zissu & Eshel 2002, 158, Farhi & Melamed 2014, 128). Bijovsky studied the coin finds from this place and compared them to others in the region, concluding research into the high occurrence of exemplars from Rome, Antioch, and Tyre. Local currency was limited to coins originating mostly from Caesarea and Aelia Capitolina. Distribution of such coins attested to some commercial and political links between cities and particular sites in the region (Bijovsky 2004, 251, Farhi & Melamed 2014, 127-128).

In 1996, in Khirbat Rafi'a, in the wall of a building, a hoard consisting of 142 Roman denarii of Vespasian, Domitian, Trajan, and Hadrian, and 42 denarii and tetradrachm overstruck by the Bar Kokhba administration have been found (Zissu & Eshel 2002, 165).

Khirbat Wadi Hamam was a village dating to the Roman period, located c.2km west of the Sea of Galilee. A hoard discovered from area B in a building, consisted of 60 coins, 17 silver and 43 bronze, dating between the reigns of Vespasian and Hadrian. The latest coins dated to the reign of Hadrian, and one provincial bronze coin, with the countermark *legio VI Ferrata*, dated to the period between 123-135AD. The majority of them attributed to the Trajan period. In the hoard from area B were 47 Trajanic coins; seven silver (five Roman Imperial, two Arabian) and 40 bronze

(one Akko Ptolemais, 14 Sepphoris, 24 Tiberias, and one Rome). The bronze coins were very worn, resulting from long circulation. The occurrence of coins from Sepphoris and Tiberias proved the local geographical area of circulation. Coins were found in the corner of the room, in some kind of pocket which did not survive. Moreover, in this room, a sword of Spatha type and a spearhead, issued to Roman cavalrymen, were found. A hoard from area A, discovered in a room which had been partly burnt, consisted of 11 bronze coins, one of Agrippa II, and four Trajanic coins; three from Tiberias, and one from Alexandria, as well as three autonomous coins of Tyre, and three provincial coins of Hadrian, from Akko-Ptolemais and Tiberias. According to these coin finds, some regional spreading of the Bar Kokhba Revolt could be observed. The presence of this war in Judea was confirmed by coins and destruction layers. This site is first placed in Galilee, which attests to some episode related to this Revolt (Bijovsky & Leibner 2013, 109-123). Other places in this region, such as cliff shelters, could confirm this thesis by some traces. Moreover, three silver coin hoards could be related to this revolt, including a hoard of 218 Roman provincial tetradrachms discovered in 1952, in Tiberias, a hoard of 46 tetradrachms belong to Roman soldiers and found in a military cemetery in Akko, and the hoard of 13 coins found at Kibbutz sha'ar ha'Amaqim (Bijovsky & Leibner 2013, 122-123, Ahipaz & Shivtiel 2014, 133-148, Syon 2015, 74).

One hoard, of 16 gold, silver and bronze coins, was discovered, according to Hendin (2000-2002), near Herbon, in a 'Herodian' oil lamp.[14] In the hoard were four distinguished aurei of Domitian, Trajan, and Hadrian, five denarii of Mark Antony, Trajan, and Antoninus Pius, and seven Bar Kokhba bronze coins. Denarius of Antoninus Pius, struck in 151-152AD, are the exception identifying coins kept together after the War. Hendin suggests that the meaning of this collection was not only financial, because Bar Kokhba coins after the War were of no commercial value, but that it was a collection of personal memories of this revolt (Hendin 2000-2002, 180-181). Another practice which recalled memories of the Bar Kokhba War was the piercing of coins and hanging them as pendants (Meshorer 1982, 163-165).

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[14] Type of this lamp is dated between first and early second century AD.

The Monetary Structure: Roman Imperial and Provincial Coins

The coin finds reflect monetary systems in particular areas. One of the problematic aspects of provincial minting activity is the function and use of some denominations. According to structure of coin hoards, it is possible to describe some patterns of circulation and monetization better in some areas (Katsari 2011, 18-19, Howgego 2014, 307-310, Amandry & Burnett 2015, 814-815). The indicator of deposition during the Bar Kokhba Revolt is the occurrence of Bar Kokhba coins, or the last exemplars, in hoards dated to the reign of Hadrian. Not all hoards included the Bar Kokhba coins, which were overstruck on other coins. Depositions such as coins could be related to the time before, or at the beginning of, the Revolt, before the Bar Kokhba coins were struck, or to owners who could be Jewish or not. Of course, the overstriking of some coins cannot be excluded (Farhi & Melamed 2014, 129). The deposits mostly represented emergency hoards, but some of them included antique coins that were not circulated in this period, which might be savings hoards, such as Hoard B from Nesher Ramla (Bijovsky 2004, 246, Katsari 2011, 15, Farhi & Melamed 2014, 128-129). In deposits in Judea, silver coins, mostly denarii, in Galilee tetradrachm, dominated. The domination of coins with higher fineness in hoards proves the Gresham Law about hoarding more valuable coins (Katsari 2011, 14). Analysing the structure of deposits, not counting some Bar Kokhba coins, the presence of Nabataean, Roman Imperial and provincial denominations from various mints, not overstruck by rebels, is viable.

Roman Imperial coins, dated to the reigns of Flavian, Trajan, and Hadrian, circulated in Judea very widely, but in Galilee in this period, only single exemplars are registered. Circulation patterns, based on the coin finds deposited during the Bar Kokhba War, indicate a large amount of Roman Imperial coins, struck especially during the reigns of Trajan and Hadrian. After the First Jewish Revolt, the Jewish coinages ceased from circulation. The Roman denominations were introduced to Syria perhaps under Nero, but still the main silver coin was the tetradrachm, struck in Antioch (Syon 2015, 72-74, 208-209).

Looking at the particular types of coin, it's possible to define emissions circulated in Eastern provinces. In Khirbat Wadi Hamam, in the hoard from area B, three denarii of Vespasian, were registered, in a worn condition which indicated long circulation. One of these coins is from the *Judea Capta* series, which is a very rare type of coin in this territory, not circu-

lated in Eastern provinces in large amounts. Only two exemplars are known from Israel, and the coins from Wadi Hamam are the third. Occurrence of these coins in the Judean territories could be very painful for the inhabitants of the province, and resulted in intensification of the anti-Roman influence. This coin came with Roman soldiers, an occurrence underlined by the rest of the finds in area B (Ostrowski 1999, 154, Ciecieląg 2008, 99, Bijovsky & Leibner 2013, 115).

Roman provincial coins deposited during the Bar Kokhba War were usually related to the geographical area where they were minted. Bronze provincial coins had a restricted circulation area (Bijovsky 2004, Bijovsky & Leibner 2013, 117). In cliff shelters from the territory of Galilee, Trajanic coins from Tiberias and Sepphoris were registered. From Wadi Hamam, a hoard registered exemplars from these two mints. Coin finds from Tiberias and Sepphoris are noted in 46 sites. Syon (2015) suggests that these coins were used by cities with Jewish councils (Bijovsky & Leibner 2013, 115, Ahipaz & Shivtiel 2014, 138-139, Syon 2015, 200-201, 206). In Nesher-Ramla a hoard was dominated by coins from northern mints, rather than from southern. The Bijovsky study indicates the high occurrence of exemplars from Rome, Antioch, and Tyre. Local currency was limited to coins which originated mostly from Caesarea and Aelia Capitolina (Bijovsky 2004, 251). Distribution of such coins attested to some commercial and political links between cities and particular sites in the region (Bijovsky 2004, 251, Farhi & Melamed 2014, 127-128). The domination of Tyrian currency among coin finds in Galilee is not surprising. Tyre had economic influence over this territory, marketing oil and other products, and was one of the main centres which supplied the Levant with money. Tyrian currency has its own, recognizable, value (Barag 1982-1983, 12-13, Syon 2015, 202). Another mint very visible in deposits is Caesarea, the provincial capital. Coins from this mint were in circulation in the territories of all provinces (Syon 2015, 208).

The monetary structure of deposits mostly consists of coins struck during the reign of Trajan. Among the silver provincial coins, types struck in Rome and Arabia for the Arabian province, after the conquest in 106AD, dominated. Looking at the particular types of drachms, the domination of effigies of Arabian personification is visible. Production of these coins would have been very extensive, compared to other types – e.g. camel (Amandry & Burnett 2015, 528, Zając 2017, 101-102).

The structure of coin hoards can identify their owner and his financial profile. Coin finds from Nesher-Ramla have a very specific character. The

hoard could have belonged to a merchant, or a Roman soldier. Another possible interpretation is that it could be a collection (Bijovsky 2004, 246, Farhi & Melamed 2014, 125-129). The owner, such as a Roman soldier, could be attested by the hoard from Wadi Hamam (Bijovsky & Leibner 2013, 109-123). Coin finds registered in refuge caves may have belonged to the rebels. The monetary structure of the hoards such such as that from Murabba'at se, sometimes suggests some loot from Roman soldiers (Zissu & Eshel 2002, 162).

Conclusion

Coin finds deposited during the Bar Kokhba War are a mixture of structures, dominated by Roman Imperial and provincial coins, struck mostly in Rome, Antioch, Tyre, Alexandria, and Caesarea. The occurrence of Imperial coins is the result of the *inter alia* paying of taxes by the province, and the presence of the Roman army in region. Arabian silver coins, struck in Rome and Antioch, mostly circulated in Judea and Arabia provinces. Based on the large amounts of these coins, they may have been minted for a new garrison in Bostra, after its conquest in 106AD. The occurrence of provincial coins in deposits, compared to others in a particular region, could indicate some economic and political lines between some cities and places where the coins were found. Moreover, some specific types of coin could have circulated in some regions, but this require deeper studies about particular emissions. More intensive study of large amounts of coin finds, and new deposits hidden during the Bar Kokhba War, will provide more information about monetary systems, their functioning, and economic relations.

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CHAPTER FOUR

FAITHFUL SUBJECTS OR FOES?
CHRISTIANS IN THE EARLY SASANIAN EMPIRE

DARIA OLBRYCHT

Abstract

Christianity emerged early in the East from the river Euphrates; its traces are already visible in the second century AD. When the Persian Sasanian Dynasty rose in Iran, aggressive wars of Shapur I led to the deportation of Roman citizens to the Iranian heartland, and to the destruction of Arab caravan cities. Christianity flourished, and Church structures developed under Sasanian rule until the third decade of the 4th century. After the conversion of Constantine the Great, Christians in Iran begun to be perceived as enemies and spies of the western Empire, and the Zoroastrian king commanded his subjects to convert. Severe persecutions during the reign of Shapur II are well documented in written sources. A selection of acts of Persian martyrs, when adapted to a certain style, provides extremely interesting information about the life of the upper class in Iran; wealthy craftsmen and members of the court. Christians were present in the immediate surroundings of the King, and mostly recognized his power. The picture of the early Sasanian Empire is incomplete without references to Christianity and its influences; furthermore, the impact of flourishing Syriac culture among the Arabs, in Armenia and Mesopotamia, is of first importance.

The history of Christianity in Iran goes back to apostolic times, when, according to the *Apocrypha*, both St. Thomas and St. Bartholomew were summoned to preach beyond the Euphrates. It is undeniable that the Christian faith reached the lands of the East very early, and developed mostly

autonomous of the great centers in Roman Empire.[1] There is already considerable evidence of Christianity in the second century AD in Edessa (Żelazny 2011, 27),[2] and in Adiabene, the possible homeland of Tatian.[3] The first known Christian building, the famous 'house church' of Dura Europos, dates back to the first half of the third century, and was found in a city located on the western bank of the Euphrates, on the border of Mesopotamia (Rostovtzeff 1938, 130-131).

The role of Edessa in the transition of Christianity beyond the Roman Empire is noticeable; it is clearly retained in the local traditions of the city, both in the *Doctrine of Addai*, where King Abgar writes letters concerning Christ to rulers of the East, and in later accounts about Mar Mari, who went on a mission from Edessa to Persia (Żelazny 2011, 31). We have certain information about Christianity (even if not quite orthodox) in the case of Bar Daisan, in the court of King Abgar in Edessa (Uciecha 2008, 1201-1204). Although the kingdom was already a Roman vassal, the western influences in the region were scarce (Uciecha 2007, 631), and the area was traditionally bound by its Syriac language and culture, to the rest of Mesopotamia.

Almost nothing is known about relations between the Arsacid kings and Christian communities; the lack of accounts most likely indicates quite a peaceful coexistence, as was the case with the numerous Jews settled in the Parthian Empire. However, the last Arsacid king was defeated in 224AD by Ardashir, son of Papak, founder of the Sasanian dynasty. Descending from Persis, probably from a local priest family, the Sasanians emphasized the power of Ahura Mazda, Mithra, and Anahita, the goddess of purity and water; a sacred fire lit on the King's altar marked his years of reign. The leading role of Zoroastrianism in the Sasanian court did not prevent (or, at first even confine) the spread of Christianity beyond Euphrates. Only during the last years of Shapur's I reign (Shapur died c.270AD) did his attitude towards religious diversity begin to change, with the execution of Mani and the rise of the Zoroastrian high priest, Kartir, who was first to list, in his famous inscription on Kaba'ye Zardust, the

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[1] A profound summary about Christianity in Parthian and Sasanian times is given by Russell, 1985.

[2] For local traditions on evangelization of Edessa see Segal, 1970, pp. 78- 82.

[3] Tatian, who translated the four Gospels to Syriac described himself as an "Assyrian". While his eastern connections are unarguable, there is much debate concerning his birthplace. See Sellwood, 1985.

'Christians' and 'Nazareans' (*Nāṣrā*) among other 'non-Mazdayans' struck down in the land of Iran (Skjærvø 2011).

These two different terms in Kartir's account may be explained by the arrival of numerous Roman captives, among them many Christians, distinguished from local groups of the same faith. In his two great wars with Rome (253-257 and 260AD) Shapur I captured and looted a number of cities, among them Antioch, Zeugma, Apamea on the Euphrates, and Dura Europos, which was never inhabited again.[4] One of the King's aims was to deport valuable Roman captives, especially craftsmen and architects, who were ordered to build cities and royal palaces in Persia. According to later sources, these captives contributed to the construction of 'Ceasar's bridge' in Shushtar, and populated a new capital city in Khuzestan, named Wēh Antiōk Šāpūr (better known as Antioch of Shapur), also known as Bet Lapat, and later an important Christian centre (Frye, von Müller, Otto, & Bengtson 1984, 298).[5] Western influences can be traced in mosaics from Shapur's royal palace in Bishapur, as well as in his great victory bas-reliefs, carved in a gorge near the city (Mackintosh 1973, 184). The reliefs also depict Roman captives among the subjects of the Persian king, with the most important one – Caesar Valerian, who shared their fate after the defeat of 260AD, near Edessa. According to a late, but reliable account in *Chronicle of Seert*, there were two churches in Rev Ardashir, erected by captives of Syriac and Greek origin (Freeman & Kennedy 1986, 478-481). The former bishop of Antioch, Demetrianus, although living only a short time in exile, managed to organize a church in Beth Lapat, which rose to be one of the most important episcopates in Iran (Beyer 2006, 83).

The Christian church in Persia underwent major development at the turn of second and third centuries; regarding the great persecutions in Roman Empire, the community was left quite unbothered. The writings of Aphrahat (c260 – after 345AD) show an established community of Christians in Mesopotamia, which already had its own traditions (Żelazny 2011, 34). It was only after the conversion of Constantine the Great, when Christians in Iran begun to be perceived as a suspicious group, likely to be associated with Roman Empire. Tension in Roman-Iranian relations (Constantine prepared to go to war with Persia; his death did not prevent a long-lasting conflict between Shapur II and Constantius II), as well as the increasing importance of Zoroastrian priests, led to the first major persecutions of

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[4] For the course of Shapur's wars see Edwell, 2008, pp. 184-197; Mosig-Walburg, 2009, pp. 31-52.

[5] More information in Shahbazi, Kettenhofen, & Perry, 1996

Christians in Persia. The main reason was an unfavorable change in King Shapur II's attitude, probably after his failure to capture Roman Nisibis in 337AD.[6] The history of persecutions until Shapur's II death in 379AD is reflected in the acts of Persian martyrs, which allow an interesting insight into the lives of Christians under Sasanian rule, as well as into their identity and authority issues.

Early Christian martyrdom accounts form a specific type of literary source; related events from Sasanian Persia share this common pattern as well, following Syriac Edessean and earlier Roman acts. Its structure reflects the Passion of the Christ – first, accusation and examination in the court, often extended to long discussion when persecutors might hesitate or attempt to save the victims, then the trial leads to severe torture and a heroic death. This pattern may cover up the true course of events, as the Persian acts were written down one or two generations after the death of martyrs, in the first decades of fifth century (Baumstark 1922, 56). Its author claims that he investigated the archives, and based his work on the accounts of living relatives, as well as the oldest, most respected bishops. Maybe it is something more than a conventional statement, but it was clearly impossible to reconstruct an exact content of interrogations, nor could the King himself – as shown in the acts – be involved in most of the trials.

Discussing the matter of credibility, one must recall the research of F. Burkitt on the martyrdom acts in Edessa (Burkitt 2007a, 9-11). On one hand, he presents the acts of Sharbel, clearly legendary-heroic, placed very early in time (during the reigns of Trajan and the Kings of Edessa), emphasizing the faith and chastity of Edessean people, set against the hostility of pagan priests. Personal names and some details seem to be taken from Edessean chronicles, and from *Doctrine of Addai*.[7] On the other hand, a similar scheme of narration in *Acts of Shmona, Guria and Habib* contains some important information. Description of their martyrdom is simpler, and details allow us to presume that the martyrs were actual inhabitants of Osrhoene, esteemed citizens imprisoned and killed during the persecution of Diocletian (Burkitt 2007a, 6-7).

The same distinction can be made with the acts of Persian martyrs. Four accounts are particularly valuable for the purpose of this article: the acts of

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[6] For the history of the Nisibis war see Harrel, 2016.

[7] which describes a half-legendary conversion of king Abgar of Edessa.

Bishop Mar Simon, of Pusai, his daughter Martha, and Bishop Shahdost.[8] There is little doubt that real people are described there; many details are given, such as professions, family names, place of living, titles of judges and Persian aristocrats, all corresponding well with other sources (Jullien 2008). It seems probable that the cult of martyrs spread quickly after their deaths, and facts about their lives were preserved quite faithfully by local communities.

One of the most intricate aspects of Persian martyrs' acts is their attitude towards the King of Iran. Roman accounts simplify the matter of power, even though some authorities tend to show compassion – the list of undecided judges, converted soldiers, or even headsmen is long. In the Edessean acts of Shmona and Guria, the Roman Governor hesitates to punish the confessors – he wants no riots in the city – so he offers a reward for fulfilling the required sacrifice (Burkitt 2007a). The figure of a 'sympathizing prosecutor' imitates Pilatus, but can also correspond with truth – victims of persecution were in many cases people locally esteemed, soldiers from the same unit, or colleagues from the municipal *curia*. In many regions of the Roman Empire, persecutions were limited to the requisition of sacred books; in Edessa, a city with considerable Christian populations, only individuals were caught. The headsmen of Shmona and Guria were begging for forgiveness, though in *Acts of Habib* the Governor and his soldiers are more oppressive (Burkitt 2007a, *Habib* 20-38). But the main source of evil remains the Caesar, whether it is Decius, Diocletian, or Galerius; an Emperor who forced the worship of idols, or the acknowledgement of him as God, both options unacceptable for Christians. To sum up with the words of F. C. Burkitt (2007a, 8-9): *"The resultless dialogue between the Judge and the Martyrs is simply part of the 'common form' of this kind of Act: that the gods are no gods, that the tortures are nothing compared with eternal torment, that the Emperors are only men, that one must obey God rather than men – in all this there is not a single original thought."*

Persian acts reveal a Christian attitude towards Iranian rule. Considering the scarcity of other sources, it is probably their main value. Undoubtedly, views on this matter varied between priests and communities. Bishop Mar Simon is said to be a friend of Shapur II until the time of the persecutions; on the contrary 'the Persian Sage' Aphrahat, who lived at the turn of the second and third centuries, describes the King openly as vain, cruel, and

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[8] The only complete translation of *Acts* remains Braun, 1915. Transcription of names given in this article follows his work.

evil, like the biblical Nebuchadnezzar. Remarkable is his comparison of the Iranian king to a ram with broken horns – a ram was symbol of a king's glory, *farr*, often depicted with royal ribbons on Sasanian seals. Aphrahat made therefore a strict statement, that the ruler is deprived of his rights. Moreover, Aphrahat hopes, that the Roman Emperor (at this time Constantine) will defeat the king; he writes his letters in secret, although it is significant that his hostile words apparently did not get him into trouble with the authorities (Beyer 2006, 96-108).[9]

Quite unexpectedly, early Persian martyrs' acts show the Persian king in a more favourable way. Maybe it is a reflection of the more tolerant years of Shapur's II reign, maybe the memory of former Iranian kings, who did not suppress, and had even supported communities of other faiths. It is important to note that people of Roman Empire perceived Sasanians from Persis as successors and followers of the Achaemenid Dynasty. It was clearly stated in Herodian writing that Sasanians claimed rights to cities of Asia Minor, as belonging to the old Achaemenid Empire (Herodian 6.2.2).

It is disputable whether the memory of Cyrus and Darius I survived in Iran,[10] but there were numerous Jews in the East, who kept some accounts about the old Persian Empire in the Bible. Cyrus the Great was portrayed exceptionally positively, as a pagan king of upright character, chosen by God to liberate Jews from Babylonian Exile. Later, relations between Jews and Arsacids, both in the Roman and Parthian Empire, were distinctly friendly, with mutual support in times of uprisings. In the synagogue of Dura Europos (in the first half of the third century) the aristocrats are depicted in clothes inspired by the chiton, and roman togas with purple *clavi*; the kings however, including David, the most important one, wear adorned garments of Iranian rulers – embroidered tunics, long trousers, and boots. Even when Aphrahat's attitude towards Jews was quite hostile (Uciecha 2006, 115), there are no doubts that Syriac and Persian Christianity relied strongly on Jewish tradition (Żelazny 2011, 133-140). Moreover, the biblical description of David being chosen by God, and anointed by a prophet to become the King of Israel, corresponds well with the Iranian idea of kings' glory. As mentioned above, the concept of *farr* was probably recalled by Aphrahat; early Sasanians justified their defeat of Arsacids with

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[9] More about the mysterious figure of Aphrahat see Skoyles Jarkins, 2008.
[10] The discussion of so-called *Interpretatio Romana*, with E. Kettenhoffen and recently K. Mosig Walburg, stating that the memory of Achaemenids was replaced by eastern Iranian legends of Kayanians; for the opposite opinion see Winter & Dignas, 2007.

a choice of fortune – according to legend, the *farr,* in the form of a ram, abandoned the last Arsacid ruler and came to Ardashir I (*Kārnāmag* 4.11.16). Such ideas could also have been appealing for Christians in Iran, both as subjects of the King and inheritors of some Jewish traditions. Therefore, it is clearly shown in the Acts, that the Persian Christians, as described by Wiesehöfer, had to deal with *divided loyalty* between the rightful King of Iran and their faith (Wiesehöfer 1993).

The Act of Holy Mar Simon depicts how Shapur II begun persecutions in Iran after the death of Constantine (Braun 1915, 5-57). The Roman emperor is praised in this account as an angel of peace, sent by God to restrain the blood of confessors. Shapur II, being in need of money due to his wars with Rome, restricted Christians with a double tax. His reasons are clear: Christians lived in his country, but shared faith with his biggest enemy. As already mentioned, the situation deteriorated, probably after an unsuccessful siege of Nisibis in AD 337. Bishop Mar Simon, thus far highly valued by the King, assured the King that he would respect his orders, but claimed to have no power to collect taxes from his fellows. An appeal, put in mouth of a Persian dignitary, certainly reflects the dilemma of Iranian Christians: "there is no power, that would not come from God", so it would be right to obey the King's order, as commanded in Christian scriptures. Mar Simon replies that they were willing to pay normal taxes, but not double; quite a worldly attitude compared to his later statement, that the whole of Christian lives and their belongings, save for their souls, were subject to the power of the King. Shapur considered the refusal as a rebellion – not so much for religious reasons, more due to the suspicion that Mar Simon was a servant and spy of Caesar. Some strict advice for persecuted Christians were put in the mouth of the bishop; to avoid contact with Jews and heretics, such as Macrionits, described in the text as 'dogs'. A long discussion of Mar Simon and the King is followed by the bishop's martyrdom. The apologetic and didactic role of this text is clear; additionally, it shows how political tensions affected the previously peaceful life of Christians in Iran.

The acts of Pusai were also known in the West, as they are mentioned by Sozomen (*Hist. eccl.* 2.11). Pusai was a descendant of Roman captives, taken by Shapur (called son of Hormizd, though it must have been Shapur I, son of Ardashir) to Iran, and settled in Bishapur, Persis (Braun 1915, 58-75). He lived there in peace as a Christian, had a Persian wife and raised children in his faith. Shapur II, who continued the policy of deportations, decided to settle new Roman prisoners, with families gathered from the whole of Iran, which unintentionally helped Christianity to spread. The

family of Pusai was also moved to a new place, as, despite Pusai's western origins, he was already treated as an Iranian. Skilled in gold embroidery, he worked for the highest aristocrats, and later for the King himself. When the persecutions started, and Mar Simon was killed, Pusai confessed his faith in public. The Great Mobed (high Zoroastrian priest) asked, if Pusai had learned Christianity from his parents; Pusai assured him, that he was born in the faith. It is clearly stated that this was no crime in Iran; nevertheless, Pusai was imprisoned because of his high position in the King's court.

Shapur was shocked to hear the news about Pusai. Considering him Persian, the King was convinced that Pusai was practicing the Zoroastrian religion as well; otherwise he would not have offered him such privileges. This is an unimpressive explanation, as it was known that Pusai was of Roman descent; it seems more probable, that, in earlier years such 'dubious' people were not prevented from serving in the court, and were tolerated by Persian officials. It was so with Mar Simon, a Christian bishop, and a known and respected man in the King's capital at the same time. Apparently, it was also allowed for Christians to keep their faith in secret, because nobody discovered Pusai's true confession.

Interestingly, in the following conversations Pusai shows much respect to the King. His speech could have been given by a Zoroastrian Persian; being a servant of the true God, he did not want to insult the King, but considers him "a famed ruler, a King of Kings".[11] Later on, Shapur expresses his belief (which sounds like a concern) that every Christian hates him. Pusai opposes this, claiming that Christians are friends of the King. It is an unexpected fragment to be found in the martyr Acts, even when later explanations lessen its implications; there is an evangelical rule to love ones enemies, and Christians have to obey the King in everything that is not contrary to the faith. Shapur hesitates to sentence Pusai to death, as he is 'very useful for the kingdom', so the Great Mobed is ordered to talk to him once more. The following conversation raises some questions and concerns that may have bothered Iranian Christians: "Are you not blind, Pusai? (...) Don't you see, that the Sun is God, and in his light dwells all the creation?" Pusai answers comprehensively: "We worship what is unreachable, infinite and invariable, and we await goodness, even when invisible in this world." Worthy of citation is a beautiful and sophisticated declaration: "...so we Christians do not worship it (the sun) but its Creator. And when we see the sunbeams, we do not praise them, but the Crea-

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[11] All fragments are translated after Braun, 1915.

tor. Also, when we see a pearl, we do not admire it, but the power of the Wise Designer, who made many creatures and gave them to men without jealousy, so they could have a human joy from it, and could praise their Lord." These are not words of an ascetic monk, but of a skilful artisan. It is more in the spirit of Bar Daisan than of Ephraim; the latter is yet to come. Even the Mobed says, that the undoing of Pusai was his wisdom and skilful words. Consequently, Pusai is sentenced to death, but the crowd is allowed to bid him farewell in peace.

Martha was a daughter of Pusai, interrogated after her father's death by the Great Mobed (Braun 1915, 76-82). Like her father, she expresses her high regard for the King: "Long shall live king Shapur, and may the blessing not leave him, and his mercy may be preserved, as the life he loves." Still, the words of respect have some hidden meaning; Christians do not want to share the earthly joys of the King, and nor does Martha, who lives in chastity. An interesting aspect of this account is that the Mobed allows Martha to keep her faith, since she is not a member of the royal court. In fact, it is probable, that laic Christians were not bothered in this phase of Shapur's reign; as mentioned above, the city crowd could show its sympathy to Pusai as well. Nevertheless, Martha is ordered to marry, and her refusal is given in a skilful, and quite humorous, way. She stated that she was already betrothed, to a known man, a merchant. He was on a long journey, but would return soon. The Mobed guessed who it was, only when Martha explains that her fiancé has literally gone to heaven. Such glimpses of humour are not uncommon in other acts, in discussions about the nature of sacred fire fed by manure, or in passages describing helpless Zoroastrian priests and persecutors. This seems to be a characteristic trait of Syriac narrations, perceptible in other stories such as *The Tale of Euphemia and the Goth* (Burkitt 2007b), written in a keen and skilful way.

The account of the martyrdom of Shahdost, the Bishop of Ktesiphon, is much shorter than others cited above (Braun 1915, 93-96). His name, meaning 'the friend of a King', and also a high rank in the Iranian court, is here explained in a Christian way, as 'a friend of the heavenly King'. Nothing remains of the courtesy toward Shapur II; it seems that the persecutions were more and more severe, and the chasm between King and Christians was too wide to bridge. There were 128 people killed with Shahdost, and as later acts attest, the persecutions lasted till Shapur's death in 379AD. The King is called a 'godless foe to justice' in the Acts of Barbashmin (Braun 1915, 104), and one of the minor Kings, Narse Tamshapur, is cursed as a tyrant and godless son of hell (Braun 1915, 105-109).

As it was previously in the Roman Empire, severe persecutions did not overcome Christianity. In fact, the hostilities ceased during the reigns of Shapur's successors, who allowed a Synod to be held in the capital city of Ktesiphon in 410AD, under the auspices of King Yazdegerd I, who even opened it with a prayer (Asmussen 1983, 941-942).[12] Syriac was a recognized language of Christians, both in Iran and in Roman Mesopotamia; it allowed culture development, the exchange of ideas, and migration of people over the borders. In 363AD, Saint Ephraim left the city of Nisibis, newly gained by Persia, to teach in Roman Edessa, which became a Christian centre of great importance in the borderland.[13]This famous theological 'School of Persians' moved back to Nisibis in 489AD, due to its Nestorian tendencies, and it was the Nestorian faction which was finally recognized as an official Christian church in Persia. Despite the complicated history of wars, persecutions, heresies, and mutual suspiciousness, between Byzantine and Sasanian Empires, Christianity marked Iran profoundly with its works of art, literature, monasteries, and scholars, reaching as far as central Asia and China. According to Arab tradition, it was the Christians who buried the last Sasanian King, escaping from Islamic invasion (Russell 1985). It is worth remembering that Christian communities of the East, originating from the first centuries AD, have survived, in spite of many misfortunes, until today.

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[12] Still, king Jazdegerd changed later his attitude and begun new persecutions.

[13] For the history of School of Nisibis see Becker, 2006.

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CHAPTER FIVE

YOU ARE ALL ONE:
THE CROSS-BORDER ASPECT OF MONASTIC
COMMUNITIES IN THE NEGEV DESERT

MACIEJ WACŁAWIK

Abstract

Men and women in the Negev and Sinai Peninsula in the Byzantine Period decided to leave their lives behind and become monks. The new life they chose was full of situations exceeding limits in many ways. First of all, they crossed ethnic limits, when people from remote regions lived together with their previous enemies in one coenobium. They also moved freely from one monastery to another, to develop their spirituality under the supervision of the famous Desert Fathers. Secondly, they crossed limits of nature, by erecting communities in environments unfriendly to life, where they changed dry land into gardens (Is 51,3b). By renunciation, they also crossed their own limitations, and by overcoming temptation, they got closer to the God they believed in. By their lives, they tried to fulfil the promise of heaven, a time when all peoples will be united.

Introduction

Most of the time, when we think about borders, we consider them as limits, and restrictions. There is always something that is beyond our abilities, that we have to fight for, as well as something forbidden, that involves a punishment. Very rarely, the positive aspect of limitation is noticed, that limits also help us to define ourselves and the surrounding world. Everything that exists actually has borders, like length or weight, resulting from its physical properties, and without which things do not exist. A similar situation is found with all ideas invented by humans, what can be easily observed in typologies created by archaeologists. Some of the ideas not only fulfil their primary objective, but also, unfortunately, were (and still

are) used to divide society and separate one person from another. During centuries, because of the improper use of social, ethnic, and religious ideology, thousands of human beings were persecuted and suffered death. On the other hand, groups of people, aware of their limits and differences from others, used them to build cultural bridges, rather than walls, leading to periods of peace, prosperity and development.

A good example could be the communities of monks who lived in the Negev and Sinai deserts in the Byzantine period. This region covers an area of over $73,000km^2$, almost 55% of the territory of modern Israel and around 6% of Egypt. It extends from the Mediterranean coast in the west, to the Arabah Valley in the east and south of Hebron to the Aqaba Bay in the north and the Gulf of Suez in the south (Dahari 2000, 3, Erickson-Gini 2010, 1). In the third century BC, the Nabataeans established their kingdom, and founded most of the Negev settlements during the second century BC (Figueras 2013, 11). In 106AD, that region, as a part of the Nabataean kingdom, was incorporated into the Roman Empire, and, in the Byzantine period (the beginning of the 5th century AD – 641AD), it was a part of the province *Palaestina Tertia* (Parker 1999, 137). Very important for the development of this region was the monastic movement, which started in Egypt, and very quickly penetrated through the Sinai to the Negev Desert. Despite the fact, that coenobitic communities were established on the basis of the words *You are all one*, from the letter of St. Paul to the Galatians (3.28b), monks had to face limitations in their daily life, such as geographical and natural obstacles, ethnic, class, and gender divisions, as well as religious differences.

Borders overcome

The first border monks had to face was their own physical limitations. Based on biblical verses (e.g., Mt 4, 1-11, or Ga 1, 15-1), they tried to fulfil the prophecy of Isaiah (51,3b), that God will *'change the dry land into a garden'*. They tried to 'conquer' the space that was the area of the devil and daemons, in both Jewish and Christian tradition, as well as fighting against their own weaknesses (Wacławik 2016, 136). Those were the reasons, why monasteries and *laurae* were erected in such unfriendly climates, such as the desert. The desert area also helped to isolate monks from the urban life they wanted to leave behind, to get closer to God, in whom they believed. In the case of the Negev, where towns were established in the desert, monasteries were set either in the towns, or close to them. A good example for this could be ancient Sobata (Shivta of today),

where the architectural complex of a church and monastery determines the northern range of the settlement (Segal 1985, 321, fig. 4). There were also isolated *laurae*, like Mitzpe Shivta (Figueras 1995, 420) or 'Ein 'Avdat (Figueras 1995, 412), where monks could spend their time in silence and solitude, but after such a retreat they normally returned to their main monastery. This close location allowed monks, on the one hand, to live outside the society, on the other, to be close enough to it to help and serve people, which fits the model of monasticism they had adopted (Wacławik 2016, 137). It looks like they took very seriously the words from the Letter of St. James (2.20), that' *faith without works is of no use*'. They taught in schools, were involved in local administration, worked in fields, and, of course, took care of the religious needs of the towns' inhabitants.

The second border monks had to overcome was related to ethnicity. One of the most fundamental aspects of a group of people when defining them in contrast to others (Eriksen 2013, 32), ethnicity was, and is still even today, used to divide society and set one against another. Epigraphical sources from the region indicate that people from many parts of the Roman world went in pilgrimage to the Negev and Sinai monasteries, and sometimes stayed there as monks. Evidence of Nabataeans, Judeans, Syrians, Egyptians, Armenians, Persians, and Italians, communicating in at least five languages, can be found in written and epigraphical sources. For them, as for most of the society, Greek was the *lingua franca*. In the sixth-century travel diary of the Piacenza Pilgrim (37), it is said that three abbots of the St. Catherine monastery knew Latin, Syriac, Egyptian, and Persian, and that there were many who could translate from a foreign language. A similar situation in Jerusalem was mentioned by Egeria (47) two centuries earlier. John Moschus (*Leimon pneumatikos* 16.116) mentioned that monks from Sinai, Egypt, and the Judean Desert travelled freely from one monastery to another, looking for a leader on their spiritual journey. It seems probable that a similar practice also existed among the Negev monks, who lived along the way between these regions, especially if we take into consideration the epigraphical and historical sources related to the Ailanate bishops (Figueras 1995, 407). Also very interesting, is the information we have about a monk from Sinai, who summoned one of his spiritual brothers from Aila before his death. The inscription from Nessana, written on a plastered voussoir stone, and mentioning seven saints, eight fathers, and three mothers who have been recognised as representatives of monasteries from Egypt, Palestine and western communities (Colt 1962, 151-152, no. 38, Figueras 1995, 427), could confirm that assumption. Information about monks crossing the language barrier can also be drawn from the diaries of pilgrims who travelled to the Christian holy sites

of Palestine, Negev, and Sinai. They stayed in guesthouses that were part of the monastery complex, like in Sobata (Figueras 1995, 438), or Nessana, where a new church was founded by an ex-lawyer from Emessa (Figueras 1995, 429). In the case of pilgrims, also interesting is a Greek graffito found on the wall of a dwelling cave in ●boda (Avdat), which could be translated as *'drink, you shall live'* (Figueras 2013, 51). The same sentence decorated glass cups, found in tombs in Rome. This graffito might thus be interpreted as evidence of the visit of a pilgrim from the western part of the empire, maybe from Italia, in this town of Negev.

Few steps left

Access to a coenobitical community was open to representatives of all social status. There were no limits for someone who wanted to abandon his previous life and focus on his relationship with God. Special attention might be given to soldiers who had converted from their previous life and thought to serve people they had been fighting against on the frontiers. Indirect evidence of their number and esteem of worship of saint soldiers like St. George and, especially in the discussed region, St. Theodore, could be of great importance. The latter saint is mentioned in many inscriptions, e.g., from St. Catherine's Monastery in Sinai (Dahari 2000, 61), or cave no. 2. in 'Ein 'Avdat (Figueras 1995, 412). An epitaph from the pavement of the south church in ●boda informs us that this building was a *martyrium* of that saint (Figueras 1995, 32). And there is also a barely-visible *dipinto* on a wall of the cave mentioned above, in the context of the 'drinking' inscription, probably representing both saints, George and Theodore (Figueras 2013, 51).

The monasteries were open to people of all states, but few limitations in this sphere can be observed. First of all, as we learn from Egypt, a slave could only join the community if his owner would agree to it (Wipszycka, 2014, 237). Also, by analogy with the situation in Egypt, the theory, that most of the monks had been peasants before they changed their lives, should be rejected (Wipszycka, 2014, 237. Higher layers of society were also represented in monasteries, especially high offices which were executed by monks descending from the aristocracy and the nobility. Because of their literary abilities as well as their language skills, they were better prepared to live not only in monasteries as abbots, but also in local town communities as representatives of Imperial authority. Letters found in the premises of the church of St. Sergius and Bacchus, from the Muslim governor of Gaza to the people of Nessana after the Arab conquest, were

probably delivered to the *hegoumenos* of its monastery (Kraemer 1958, 73, Figueras 1995, 430). It can be assumed that a similar situation existed in the previous period, when the whole region was under Byzantine rule, especially taking into consideration the Christian influences in the Imperial court. Another evidence for some limitation in this sphere could be the story of the lawyer from Emessa mentioned above, founder of one of the churches in Nessana (Figueras 1995, 429). From the inscription on the church floor, we know that he became a monk, and it is hard to imagine that he did not spend the rest of his life in the monastery he founded, becoming its abbot and the superior of the congregation. Other inscriptions (e.g., Negev, 1981, 52-53, no. 52) inform us that some monks and abbots had children, probably from their previous lives, as in the case of St. Augustine of Hippo. These sons sometimes also became monks, and it is very probable that the role of leader of the community was passed down from fathers to their descendants, as in the St. Sergius and Bacchus monastery in Nessana, where the list of successors has been reconstructed (Figueras 2013, 111). On the other hand, the title of *abbas* was used not only for the leader of a coenobitical community, when it should be translated as 'abbot', but also for venerable monks, in this case translated just as 'father' (Meimaris 1986, 235-239, Figueras 1995, 420). The abbots became spiritual fathers, to whom other monks would go to learn. A good example could be John Climacus, the author of *Scala Paradisi*, the most popular book in the Eastern monastic movement (Dahari 2000, 23). Nothing certain can be said about his origin and life, but in his old age, he was asked by the monks of Sinai to become the superior of their monastery, because of his spiritual experience and knowledge (Clugnet 1910).

Borders non crossed

There were also borders that were not overcome in the coenobitical life. First among them was the one related to religion and faith. Because of the very basic assumption in establishing that monastic movement monks could only be Christians, it was impossible not to share the Christian faith and participate in that kind of community. Most of the monks from the Negev and Sinai seem to have been followers of the Christian orthodoxy, a fact evidenced in the sources. *John, by God's mercy priest and monk* was a signatory of the decisions of the Second Council of Constantinople, *in the name of all the monks of Aila in the Third Palestine* (Figueras 1995, 406). Similarly, Pope Gregory the Great mentioned in his letters his *great love* for the monks of Sinai, and he admired their work (Dahari 2000, 23). He was even the founder of a pilgrim hostel in St. Catherine's monastery

(Dahari 2000, 56). Similarly, the scene of the Transfiguration, known from
the wall painting in the South Church of Sobata (Figueras 2013, 60), as
well as the wall mosaic from the church of St. Catherine's Monastery in
the Sinai (Dahari 2000, 60) could indirectly indicate the religious orienta-
tion of monks. On the other hand, the Negev and Sinai were close to
Egypt, the region where the Monophysite doctrine was highly supported
by the clergy. This is evidence that it influenced the Sinai monks (Dahari
2000, 22), but it seems that this took place only in the very beginning of
the developing of such doctrine, no longer than half of the fifth century. In
the Negev, no satisfactory traces of similar theology can be found. The
hypothesis that one of the churches in Sobata might be used by Monophy-
sites, as well as a proposed explanation of an unusual relief with three
crosses from Mampsis, relating it to the Arian or Pneumatomachian doc-
trine, should seemingly be rejected (Wacławik 2017). The same must be
said of the assumption that the monastery in Tel Masos had a Nestorian
community, as no sufficient evidence can be found in the sources
(Figueras 1995, 443).

The second non crossed border in the case of the Negev and Sinai monas-
ticism is the gender issue. Despite the fact that celibacy was not mandatory
for the clergy, in the monastic movement, great attention was paid to sex-
ual purity from its beginning (Wacławik 2016, 136). Also, in many Patris-
tic writings for monks, the suggestion to avoid contact with women to gain
spiritual growth can be found. Because of it, there were separate monaster-
ies for men and women. A significant certainty about the existence of
female monasteries is provided by the Piacenza Pilgrim (34), where in-
formation about such a congregation can be found, as well as by the
Nessana papyri, where gifts from the *matronikia* of Nessana to the Church
of St. Sergius are mentioned (Kraemer 1958, Pap. 79.29,31,62). There is
also an epitaph from Oboda, mentioning a *parthene Theou (God's virgin)*
(Figueras 1995, 434). Also, the names of some sites still used by the local
population, such as Deir Banat, imply their purpose as women's monaster-
ies (Dahari 2000, 137).

Conclusions

To sum up all of the above, it can be concluded that monasteries in the
Palaestina Tertia in the Byzantine Period were functioning as small com-
munities, open to everyone who wanted to share similar values. Monks
treated each other as spiritual brothers, regardless of their origin, past, and
social status. They travelled freely from one monastery to another, to learn

from those who had gained enough experience and knowledge to become leaders in the spiritual journey of their brother-disciples. It seems as though they had fulfilled the words from the Scripture, that *'they are all one in Christ'* (Ga 3.28b).

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CHAPTER SIX

THE OPENING OF THE MOUTH RITUAL
IN ANCIENT EGYPT AND MESOPOTAMIA:
A BRIEF COMPARISON

MARCIN GAMRAT

Abstract

*The Opening of the Mouth ritual was an important part of cult perfor-
mance in both ancient Mesopotamia and Egypt. Egyptians practiced it
mainly on mummies and pharaoh statues, so they could speak, eat, and
breathe, which was closely connected with a cult of the afterlife, but some-
times it was performed also on tombs, temples, and private statues. Baby-
lonians and Assyrians, on the other hand, used it to purify newly created
effigies of gods, which were later put in temples. Through this process, the
figures could receive gifts offered by priests. Rich textual sources and
depictions from chapels allow us to reconstruct both rituals, and interpret
them in the social and religious contexts. Thanks to them, we know much
about the specific tools and incantations which were crucial in those cer-
emonies. The current data suggests that Egyptians were the first to per-
form it, and later it was adopted in Mesopotamia. The differences between
them, and changes over time, reflect the characteristic elements of each
culture and its religion.*

Statues played a great role in the religious beliefs of ancient Egypt and
Mesopotamia, although they served a different purpose. Despite many
differences, one element is strikingly similar, the ritual called the Opening
of the Mouth. An analysis of two versions of the ceremony shows many
common elements and ideas, such as endowing the object with life energy,
and the symbolic mouth opening with various tools, so it could receive
offerings and communicate with the world. It is interesting to observe how
each culture transformed these ideas, according to their own needs.

The Opening of the Mouth ceremony is one of the best-known rituals from ancient Egypt, thanks to the New Kingdom ritual texts (Bjerke 1965, 14). The oldest mentions come from the Old Kingdom Period, from the tomb of Meten (4th dynasty), however, it is only mentioned there by name (Otto 1960, 6-7). Other examples appear in the sun temple of Neuserre (5th dynasty), and the temple of Pepi II (6th dynasty), in some private tombs from this period, and in the Pyramid Texts from the Pyramid of Unas (Schulman 1984, 171).

Remains from the Middle Kingdom Period are somewhat vague and small in number. There are some mentions of the name in the Coffin Texts, however, these were not ritual inscriptions (Bjerke 1965, 207).

The most abundant renmants concerning this ritual come from the New Kingdom Period (Baly 1930, 174). Numerous depictions were found in tombs of Tutenkhamun and Seti I, from the chapel of Amenirdis I, private Theban tombs, of which the most well-known is the one of Rekhmire, and from papyri like the Papyrus of Hunefer.

Each depiction of the ritual was divided into a series of scenes which contained a specific aspect of the ritual, such as the killing of the ox or food offerings, the object of the ritual, or a priest performing rites. Under, or next to, the illustration, were texts, written in colunms. Each scene was surrounded by a frame, which separated one from another. It is clearly seen that scenes from different tombs are similar, which shows that there was low variability between depictions. Thanks to this, it is much easier to establish their position in the whole ritual, even when only two or three scenes were preserved.

E. Otto has collected more than eighty tombs with such depictions, mostly from the Theban region (Otto 1958). According to the results of his studies, the complete ritual comprised 75 scenes, however usually the remains were poorly preserved, often only a couple of scenes and some parts of inscriptions. The given number was based on a reconstruction, made by him according to the gathered data. The most complete illustrations were found in the tombs of Rekhmire (51 scenes), Seti I (47 scenes), and the chapel of Amenirdis I (45 scenes). The latest known depictions came from the 26th dynasty and the Ptolemaic Period, which show the continuation of spiritual beliefs through the history of ancient Egypt. Some representations were comprised only of three or four scenes, probably the most crucial for the ceremony. In almost every case, the scenes with purification rites (2-7

according to Otto's list) and the mouth opening (scenes 26-27) were present, which indicates their importance.

The ritual was performed mainly on statues and mummies of the deceased (Finnestad 1978, 118), but there are known cases when the object was a coffin (Otto 1960, 26), a boat (Goyon 1972, 90), or even a temple (Blackman & Fairman 1946, 77). The objects could differ, but the overall idea remained the same. According to Theban texts, the ceremony was concentrated around the burial and funerary rites (Bjerke 1965, 208). It was meant to transform the object in such a way that it could be used as a channel to communicate with the dead person. Thanks to this, the dead could also receive offerings. Without proper rites, all the statues were just dead stone. The mummification was seen as a process of transformation of mortal and human elements into the eternal and divine. It remains uncertain if there were any significant differences in the ritual, or how it was seen by the Egyptians when it was performed on different objects. In his next publication, Otto created a basic classification (Otto 1960, 29-30), depending on the presence of the statue or the mummy, however, there are also known cases including temples, tombs, or boats. It was already pointed out (Serrano 2014, 292), that the versions of the ceremony with the mummies omit some scenes, 8-18 and 29-30, which are related to the artisan who created the statue, and to the animation of the stone. It is not a strictly-followed rule, and there are some known exceptions, from the New Kingdom Period.

The deceased person could have more than one statue, available for the living, or hidden from them, inside the tomb. The question is if the ritual was performed on all of them, and if so, whether there were any differences during the first and successive rites. There are some known examples, mainly from stelae, which show that the rites were sometimes performed on multiple objects at once (Schulman 1984, fig. 3, 4, 19). An analysis of these artefacts, and the differences between them, led the researchers to the conclusion that the artists did not create a generic vision of the ritual, but probably each showed a particular ceremony from that concrete tomb (Schulman 1984, 175). The ritual was also performed on different objects in one tomb. It seems logical that each of these objects had a different cultic meaning, otherwise it would be enough to perform it only once (Finnestad 1978, 132-133). Some depictions also show the deceased as a living person. It is unknown if this symbolizes the statue, or the coffin on which the ritual was being performed, or if it is the already-animated statue seen as alive.

From the New Kingdom Period, depictions from tombs and papyri show numerous tools used during the ritual; different kinds of adzes, chisels, *Ur-Hekau* or *Seb-Ur*. What is interesting, is that they do not show the tools which are known from the oldest references from the Pyramid of Unas, the *nṯrwj* blades (Roth 1993, 57). These blades, made from meteoric iron, are known, in at least three different contexts, from the Old Kingdom Period. The first one, already mentioned, is the Pyramid of Unas. The second one is the funerary temple of Neferirkare in Abu Sir (Posener-Krieger 1976, 173-174), and the third ones are examples of the blades in the private tombs from the 5th and 6th dynasty (van Walsem 1978, 224-225). The blades found in tombs were part of sets of ritual tools used during the ceremony. In those sets, the excavators have found the *psš-kf* knife, also known as the fish tail knife, bottles made from basalt and limestone, or calcite, and four cups with straight walls (Roth 1992, 114-116). All these tools were enclosed in a special container made from a limestone slab, with pockets to put the tools inside.

Most of those objects, however, did not have any utilitarian function. The knives were made from alabaster or limestone, with blunt edges, and the cups did not have the interior space, besides a small hole at the top, so it was impossible to pour any liquid inside them. It suggests that they were probably used only as symbols. According to the Pyramid Texts, those bottles and cups contained beer and wine, which were offered to the deceased (Roth 1992, 121). The role of the *psš-kf* knife is also not certain. This type of artefact is found in graves from the Naqada I period, and its shape evolved over time (Hikade 2003, 139). In the early Predynastic period, they were located behind the body, near the pelvis. In later periods, this changed, and they were found in front of the deceased, near the chest, which might suggest that their function changed over time as well. Usually they were 10-20cm long, broadened at one end. Some researchers say that they were used to cut the umbilical cord after a child's birth, and that the blades were connected with the female role of the midwife (Roth 1992, 123), but many of the examples found were in the graves belonging to men (Hikade 2003, 138). Another theory is based on the Pyramid Texts, suggesting that the knives were put under the jaw of the deceased, used as a wedge (van Walsem 1978, 193-249). The shape of the *psš-kf* knife was also seen at some point as symbolic. Some drilled examples, described by W. M. F. Petrie (1920, Pl. XXVIII, nos. 14, 15, 16, 18), were used as amulets, but there are also many finds from the Middle Kingdom Period (Roth 1992, Fig. 7) and a very characteristic bronze model of the knife from Tutenkhamun's tomb (Carter & Mace 1927, pl. 53b), which was placed

between two shrines, with two pairs of cups, which contained natron and raisin.

The ritual usually began with putting the statue on a sand mound, facing the south (Blackman 1924, 54). The *Sem* priest, dressed in a panther or leopard skin (Schulman 1984, 173), led the ceremony. He fumigated the object with incense, and purified it with water and natron. After that, he symbolically transmitted vital energy to the statue. Next, the opening of the mouth took place, with the use of different tools mentioned earlier. In the Egyptian ritual, the important part was the sacrifice of animals, usually two oxen, gazelles, and a goose. The forelegs and the hearts of the oxen were presented to the statue as offerings, connected with Upper and Lower Egypt (Assmann 2003, 57). Between the offerings, the priest repeated the mouth opening. Sometimes, besides using adzes and chisels, the mouth was washed with milk and the eyes were painted black and green. After that, the offerings were given, mainly food to nourish the deceased. Different types of clothes were put on the object of the ritual. At the end, the ground around the object was swept away to ensure purity. The statue of the mummy was moved to its final destination; the shrine, chapel, or tomb. Interestingly, often in the last scene depicted, the dead person is shown as a living one, sometimes reaching out towards the table to feast on the offerings (Serrano 2014, 284). It shows that the ritual was completed successfully, and the communication between the two worlds was established.

Lately, studies connected with the Swiss Mummy Project (Seiler & Ruhli 2015) argue that the ceremony was a ritualized counterpart of the opening of the mouth procedure performed during the mummification process. Palaeopathological findings showed that the mouths of the deceased were actually opened physically before mummifying. During the studies, special attention was given to the *post-mortem* damage around the teeth. It was clearly visible that many mummies had destroyed or badly damaged crowns of teeth, some teeth were missing, or pushed into the pharynx. Similar observations were also noted by R. Lichtenberg (1972), G. Korkhaus and E. Otto (1975), as well as J. Harbort (2003). The authors of the newest study suggest that this breakage could have been done during the successive greasing and washing of the head after the body was dried, with an analogy to the text with the description of the mummification of the Apis bull (Seiler & Ruhli 2015, 1214). They also suggest that Egyptians used the *psš-kf* knife during this process, and its later ritual meaning came from actual physical use.

From Mesopotamia, we know of two rituals connected with the cult of god statues; *Pit-pî* (the opening of the mouth) and *Mîs-pî* (the washing of the mouth). However, they were usually performed together, and sometimes only one name was mentioned in the text, while both were described. Usually, Assyrian texts use both names, when, during the Neobabylonian times, only the washing of the mouth term is written down. It seems that the washing of the mouth was sometimes used in a broader sense for the purification of both objects and humans, while the opening of the mouth was applied only to objects, to endow them with life or sacred energy (Walker & Dick 2001, 17). This distinction is hard to interpret clearly, because the names appear in different contexts, often in incomplete texts. They were complementing each other, and it was very rare that only one of them was performed, because, in the eyes of the ancient Mesopotamians, they were seen as one, greater, cultic act (Hurowitz 2003, 147).

The earliest mentions come from the Ur III Period (Civil 1967, 211, Roth 1993, 78), however, a more or less complete description of performance is from the IX century BCE. Some founds of Sumerian incantations related to the opening of the mouth of the statue may indicate that the ritual is much older (Cunningham 1997, 163). Unfortunately, there are no depictions or illustrations of this ceremony, so scholars must depend only on descriptions deciphered from clay tablets. Most of the sources come from the Neoassyrian and Neobabylonian periods, from sites such as Nineveh, Sultantepe, Babylon, Sippar, Nippur, or Uruk (Walker & Dick 2001, 36).

Mesopotamian rituals were not connected with the afterlife like the Egyptian ones. Babylonians and Assyrians also did not use sophisticated tools like the *psš-kf* knife or ritual sets made of stone. The ceremony was performed on the newly-created effigies of gods, which were later placed in the temples (Hurowitz 2003, 147). The purpose of the ceremony was to animate the statue, so the god could live inside it. This way he could receive the offerings, communicate with priests, and protect the city. The tablets contained ritual actions and incantations in Sumerian and Akkadian, recited by the priest.

Usually, it lasted two days and was led by *ašipu*, the Mesopotamian exorcist, priest, and healer (Hurowitz 2003, 149-150). According to the texts, it was to be performed during the first part of the month of *nisan* (March/April). The date of every ritual was very important; in this case, for example, if it had been performed in the second part of the month, it could have brought death and misfortune. *Ašipu* began with preparing many materials which were believed to have mystical powers, to use later,

during the ceremony. The long list included different kinds of wood, like tamarisk or cedar, but also beer, wine, and holy water, incense, silver and gold, honey, and butter. Cuneiform texts do not usually specify where the priest put those objects, but, based on some other inscriptions of exorcist rituals, we may assume that he carried a special linen bag (Schwemer 2010, 483) with him. It is hard to establish the purpose of all objects mentioned in the texts. Beverages were used for libations, butter and honey for anointing the statue. Wood was probably burned during fumigations. Gold, silver, and different kinds of stone, might have been put in the eyes and beard, to finish the creation of the statue.

The rites started at the workshop (*bit mummi*) where the statue was created, usually during the night (Smith 1925, 38). The priest swept the ground and sprinkled it with holy water, while reciting formulas invoking gods. After the first purification, he led the procession to the river bank, sat the newly-born god on a reed mat facing the East, and prepared an altar and three thrones for Ea, Shamash, and Marduk, or Asalluhi, the divine exorcist. The river was to take away all impurities from the statue, so they would not get into the city and temple. The first mouth opening was performed with an adze, and after that, purifications with water and incense followed. A ram was sacrificed, and offered to the god, along with fruits and wine and a beer libation. Some formulas used during the offering were meant to consecrate the gifted food and other substances, and give them some kind of magical power. Unlike in Egypt, food was presented to the statue almost constantly, after each mouth washing and opening. The craftsman who created the statue said, out loud, that he was not the maker, but the gods themselves were, and later, he threw his tools into the river. It was an important part of the ritual to disconnect the statue from human actions and the mortal world, so it could be a suitable place for a god created by other gods, not by people. Sometimes the eyes of the newly-created god were also opened, usually with a tamarisk twig. The first day of the ritual ended in the temple garden or orchard.

On the second day, the *ašipu* again erected the altar and three thrones, along with a circle of reed huts round the statue, and performed mouth opening and purification rites. The second ram was slaughtered and offered. The procession continued to the temple, where the statue was installed, and the last offerings were made at the temple gate. After the ritual ended, the priest went to the *abzu*, probably the water tank in the temple courtyard, and purified himself. The tablets say that all ritual texts were taboo, and only *ašipu* and initiates could read them (Walker & Dick 2001, 84).

To strengthen the claim that the statue was seen as a living god, it should be added that some tablets give guidelines on how to proceed when the statue is damaged beyond repair. The King and priests lamented over a dead deity, while *ašipu* took it to the river bank, wrapped it in linen clothes, along with some precious objects, and threw it into the river so it could return to Ea, and be reborn later into another statue (Hurowitz 2003, 155-157).

There are some differences in details between tablets describing the same ritual, perhaps an expression of regional differences between cities. For example, in the Niniveh tablet, paragraphs talk about wrapping the neck of the statue with a white, red and blue linen, while the tablet from Sultantepe has some incantations used during the preparation of *egubbu*, the vessel for holy water, which were absent in the Babylonian version, but were present at Niniveh, though in a different order (Walker & Dick 2001, 20). This may also be the result of changes over time in the course of the ceremony. The biggest problem with those interpretations is that the tablets are rarely complete; often the text must be reconstructed, and some parts may be lost forever. The lack of depiction also hinders the study.

With time, the terms 'washing the mouth' and 'opening the mouth' have lost their literal meaning, and are used for consecrating any object. One such ritual was applied to the bronze tambourine used by temple musicians in Babylon (Blackman 1924, 52). Sometimes, this ceremony was also performed on small figurines and images during exorcisms, to expel demons or neutralize a curse thrown on a sick person by a witch. There are many mentions of mouth washing used in other rituals, for example during *bit Rimki* (Laessoe 1955, 51, Seux 1976, 393), during some of the Namburbi ritual (Maul 1994, 294), or applied on some sacred objects, like *tukkannu*, a leather bag connected with the oracles (Walker & Dick 2001, 12). Also, the priests had their mouths washed as a part of the purification process (Borger 1973, 170). On the other hand, the term 'mouth opening' is never used in reference to a man or animal, unlike in Egypt where it was applied to mummies and the statues of human beings.

It is clearly seen that the versions of the Opening of the Mouth rituals performed in Egypt and Mesopotamia were connected, and probably have a common origin. Most scholars agree that it was first created in Egypt and then 'borrowed' and adjusted by Mesopotamians to their own needs and beliefs. It appeared for the first time in the Old Kingdom Period, during the rules of the 4th dynasty, and remained an important element of the funerary process for the whole history of ancient Egypt. Inhabitants of

Mesopotamia adopted it a little later, at least in the Ur III period, however it could be older, according to some scholars. Studies on differences between those two regions can show how one root idea is transformed and changed, under the influence of culture and religion. The ceremonies were used in different contexts, and performed in different places, however the purpose was fundamentally the same, to endow the object with life energy so it could communicate with the human world. In both versions, they were adorned with clothes, censed and anointed, purified and nourished. The food offerings, and slaughtering of two animals, were important parts of the ceremony. The differences between those rites result in differences between two cultures, used in different places and contexts, but for the same purpose. It is an example of close connections, and perhaps even the common origin of ancient Middle Eastern beliefs.

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Chapter Seven

Taken out of Egypt?
Sources of Christianity in the Negev

Maciej Wacławik

Abstract

The Negev Desert, in the southern part of Israel, was a place of *development of human civilisation from its very beginning. In AD 106, it was incorporated into the Roman Empire, and became an important area, for both its trade and frontier's security. In the fourth century, the Christian religion entered the region through the harbour of Gaza, with the Egyptian monk Hilarion, who built the first church in Elusa. From this city, it spread to the whole region, with monks, who set up churches and monasteries near the old, Nabatean towns, and quite a distance from them, helping pilgrims, and cultivating the earth, turning the desert into a flourishing garden. Both written and archaeological sources confirm the close similarities of monasticism and relationships between monks from the Negev and Egypt, especially the Sinai Desert. Another important source of Christianity in the region could be Roman soldiers, who were stationed in garrisons throughout the desert, but with the scarcity of sources, it is hard to state the initial character of their influence on Christianisation.*

Introduction

After decades of persecutions and hidden liturgies, Christianity became an official religion of the Roman Empire at the end of the fourth century. From this moment, churches were erected, replacing former sanctuaries with basilicas, and old gods with the Holy Trinity. The province of Palestine was of special importance as a source of new imperial religion, as was the Sinai Peninsula, because of Mount Horeb, holy both for Christians and Jews. Pilgrims, migrating between these two regions, became a new source of income for the inhabitants of settlements in the Negev Desert,

influencing them, not only in an economic, but also a cultural way. During centuries, they became flourishing towns, with monumental religious architecture, settled in one of the most arid environments. It is interesting to look closer for the sources of Christianity in the Negev, which are disappearing in the sands of time.

St. Hilarion – The Apostle of the Arabs

Earlier researchers mostly agree that the first person who brought the idea of Christianity to the Negev was St. Hilarion, the Apostle of Arabs – Saracens (Mayerson 1963, 167, Patrich 1997, 44, Kirk 1941, 65, Stemberger 2000, 115). This statement is based mostly on the biography of the saint, *Vita sancti Hilarionis eremitae* (*VH*), written by St. Jerome.[1] From it, we can learn that the Saint was born in a wealthy, pagan family, living in the Gaza region. His parents sent him to study rhetoric in Alexandria, in Egypt, where he made the first contact with Christian believers, and with St. Anthony the Great, the father of monasticism. Around 305AD, St. Anthony established the first anchoretic centre near Pispir (Wipszycka 2013, 16, 2014, 25). The inhabitants of it created a community related to the founder, having no codified rules, but based on respect, and obedience for the elders. Their main aim was life in solitude, away from the world and everything it can offer. This new lifestyle fascinated St. Hilarion, and he joined St. Anthony in the desert. This fragment is probably not true, and written by Jerome to connect both Desert Fathers.[2] After some time, he decided to come back to his country, and started living in a similar way there. He settled in the wilderness, close to his birth-town, in Maiums, so poor that he had no fear of robbers, because he had nothing, and getting more attention in the cities of Palestine, Egypt and Syria because of his ability to perform miracles.

On one occasion, he reached the city of Elusa (*VH* 25) with a group of monks, at the time of the festival related to the goddess Venus Luciferis. The inhabitants of the city respected him because of his healing ability, and he promised that he would visit them more often if they would believe in Christ, instead of stones. He also assigned their priest as a Christian one, and drew an outline of a church, which probably later became a cathedral for bishops, known from ecclesiastical documents and the *Story of Nilus*.

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[1] Translated by White, 1998, pp. 89-115.

[2] The author is grateful to one of the reviewers for sharing this information.

Monasticism: The Situation in Egypt and Negev -
An overview

It is possible to say, that this moment in the *VH* is the first one when Christianity started to interact with the settlement of the Negev. From the same source, it is possible to assume that some monastic communities developed in the desert earlier, but it is not estimated which ones. Nevertheless, there were sources of their activity in ancient Egypt, where the idea of Christian monasticism had started developing. However, the idea of living in communities away from civilisation is much older, and quite common around the Mediterranean.

The climate in Egypt was definitely conducive to the progress of development based on the idea of desolation and solitude. Ubiquitous deserts greeted all who wanted to start a new life, different from the one they had earlier.[3] This motif, of escape from a prosperous life, is present in the biographies of most of the Desert Fathers: Anthony the Great or Pachomius of Thebes, as well as the aforementioned Hilarion. All of them were descendants of wealthy families and could spend a hassle-free life, but they had a feeling that they wanted something different. Meeting with Christian communities inspired them to abandon society and go into the wilderness. With time, they became famous, and surrounded by groups of disciples/followers.

The most important centres of the monastic movement were located in Wadi el-Natrun, where, in ancient times, monks lived in Scetis, Nitra, and Kellia (Wipszycka 2014, 385-388). Monks lived alone, sometimes in small groups, in fenced complexes of seven to eight rooms, an oratory or chapel, living rooms, a workroom, kitchen, and storerooms, as well as a courtyard with a well or cistern and a small garden. That region has quite a high level of groundwater, enabling the digging of wells. Also, annual rainfall on the level of around 200-300 mm is greater than in other parts of Egypt, so rainwater could be collected in cisterns, which have been found during excavations. Mudbricks from local clay, mixed with sand and salts, were used as a building material that, when dried, is as hard as concrete. Parts of the walls and floors were covered with hydraulic plaster, sometimes decorated with crosses, floral motives, or prayers. The basis of the economy was the cultivation of the garden, weaving baskets and mats, as well as seasonal labour in nearby villages (Shore 1997, 153, Wipszycka

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[3] More about the cultural meaning of the desert for Jewish and Christian tradition You can find in Wacławik, 2016, pp. 135-136.

2013, 79-81). Even if monks lived together, they did not create a community. The idea of living in community, with a superior as a leader of a congregation – *coenobium* has been invited by Pachomius the Great, in Thebes, around AD 323 (Wilkinson 1981, 25, Wacławik 2016, 137). Available sources confirm that the eremitical, not coenobitical, monasticism left Egypt and arrived at other regions, including Palestine and the Negev (Bacchus 1913, 466), as was mentioned through St. Hilarion.

It is interesting that monks did not only pray and work in solitude in the Negev, but were also involved in the life of local societies, through taking care of their spiritual needs, and helping in the cultivation of land crop processing, as well as teaching in schools or representing authority (Wacławik 2016, 138). They also took care of pilgrims travelling to Mount Sinai. It was suggested by P. Figueras (1995), that most of the churches in the region were related to monastic activity. This theory seems to be not very reliable. First of all, the model of the congregation, where monks lived together in a small area in dormitories, close to the church, is more similar to the medieval abbey in Western Europe, than to the situation in the East Mediterranean at the very beginning of this movement. In addition, some instruction about the building of the church is included in the *Testamentum Domini nostri Iesu Christi* (1.19),[4] dated to the fifth century, including that in the church complex should be some additional buildings like the Exorcisterium, the Treasury, the House of Oblation, or even the houses of priests or deacons (Kraeling 1938, 175-176). Nevertheless, monks lived in the Negev, but probably in solitude, and distant from civilisations, such as 'Ein Avdat or Mitzp Shivta, which are evident lauras. Their life model was closer to the one known from the aforementioned, above the Nitrian Desert, or the Sinai Peninsula, where it is known that monks from these two regions kept in touch by mutual visits, or via the Judean Desert. All of these monastic complexes consisted of rooms and a chapel, and were accompanied by orchards, fed with water collected in wells or from a dam system built in *wadi* (Chitty 1966, 15, Patrich 1997, 44, Dahari 2000, 39). Analysing the situation in the closest regions, as well as information from *VH*, it seems rather implausible, that monasticism in the Negev would be much different, especially in its initial phase. Considering this, most of the churches in the Negev seem to be part of the ecclesiastical, not monastic, structures, with the organisation based on parishes and dioceses.

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[4] Ephrem Rahmani, *Testamentum Domini nostri Jesu Christi nunc primum editur, latine reddidit et illustravit*, Mainz 1899. The author was using fragments translated into English by Kraeling, 1938, pp. 175-176.

Religion brought by an army?

In later periods, many times people were forced to convert to Christianity – especially by armies conquering new lands. It is possible that new religions also came to the Negev with Roman soldiers, but in this case, it was rather a peaceful way, probably even earlier than the mission of St. Hilarion.

From the period of Septimius Severus, soldiers were allowed to marry, and their families could be stationed with them in the camps or forts (Jones 1964, 630). The fortification of *Limes Palaestinae* as well as other major trade routes, such as *Via Nova Traina* are dated to the period of Diocletian (Stemberger 2000, 10, Patrich 2003, 485). In this period, the *Legio X Fretensis* was also transferred from the Aelia Capitolina – Jerusalem to Alia in the Gulf of Aqaba, and is recorded as still camping there at the time of the compilation of the *Notitia Dignitatum* (34), when it is reported as serving under the *Dux Palaestinae*. On the border of *Palestinae Tertiae*, in Betthorus, soldiers of the *Legio IV Martia* were stationed, which is also mentioned in *Notitia Dignitatum* (38). It is a truism to say that the Roman army was important in the process of the promotion of Christianity.

In the Negev, it is possible to observe the beginning of the development of caravanserais, in the period from the beginning of the fifth century. In many cases, as in Mampis (Gutwein 1981, 71), Nessana (Gutwein 1981, 96), or Oboda (Erickson-Gini 2010, 78), it started with the building of a fort for a garrison on the top of a hill. Their presence could probably influence local society, not only by ensuring the safety, but also by creating a market for their products, not only for soldiers but also their families. It is also important to note that *limitanei*, units under the command of a *dux limitis*, could also be involved in the cultivation of land, with the same status as civilians, but they were not peasant farmers (Isaac 1988, 139, 1992, 209).

A short distance from the forts, churches have been erected. In some cases, like in Oboda, both fort and church were constructed at the same moment, as a part of one complex (Erickson-Gini 2010, 78). It is also very noticeable that most of the churches built in the fifth century were dedicated to Saint soldiers; St. Sergius and Bacchus in Nessana, St. Theodore in Oboda, St. Longinus and St. Theodore in Aila, or St. George in Mitzpe Shivta (Figueras 2013, 164). The special veneration of this particular group of Saints might indicate an alternative way of Christianisation of the region, especially that these Saints could be venerated, not only because of

their local origin, but also because their relation to the specific social group was as *limitanei*.

Conclusions

The Christian religion was one of the important factors of the development of society in the Negev. It entered the region possibly by two different ways, independent from each other. From Egypt it was brought by St. Hilarion, who initiated the development of the monastic movement there. The second way was probably related to Roman *limitanei*, protecting trade routes in the desert, who took their religion with them, probably at the same time that Saints erected the first churches and monasteries.

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