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CYRIL OF SCYTHOPOLIS ON RELIEVING THE DAMAGE IN PALESTINE INFLICTED DURING THE SAMARITAN REVOLT (529–531)*

Abstract. The text analyses a short account by Cyril of Scythopolis concerning the imperial decision to finance the repair of the damages caused in Palestine by the Samaritan uprising of 529–531. A description of the alleged circumstances of this decision and information regarding the amount of the sum granted are examined. According to Cyril's account, the granted sum, 13 *centenarii* of gold, was to be set aside from the tax revenues of Palestine and then used to rebuild (only) the ecclesiastical and monastic infrastructure. It is not clear from the text whether the repair of the aforementioned damage was to be financed only in the area of *Palaestina secunda* (where the main fighting of the rebellion took place) or also in *Palaestina prima*. Moreover, there is no mention in the text in question (as well as in other sources of the period) of the financing of the repair of other damages, which undoubtedly were also caused by the Samaritan uprising. The issue that interested the author most was the amount of money that the Emperor Justinian allegedly allocated for the above-mentioned purpose. In order to verify the amount, the author compared it with other data showing the abundance of the imperial treasury at the time of Anastasius and Justinian, as well as reached for other information on the wealth of the cities at that time. After analysing this data, the author has come to the conclusion that, despite some doubts, the sum of 13 *centenarii* of gold (1,300 pounds) mentioned by Cyril and allegedly allocated by the imperial court to repair the damage caused by the Samaritan uprising seems quite reasonable.

Keywords: Cyril of Scythopolis, early Byzantine hagiography, early Byzantine economy, money in hagiographic texts

There had been numerous Samaritan revolts during the early Byzantine period, primarily in the *Palaestina secunda*. Each time the hostilities were conducted with great brutality, which resulted in large demographic and economic losses. Both of these have been reported in the sources in a variety of ways, and in most cases we do not have information on how the damages had been dealt

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with. There is one exception in the form of a brief and, despite giving a specific figure, rather laconic account we find in *Vita Sabae*, the work authored by Cyril of Scythopolis. An analysis of this account is the subject of the below text.

Cyril's account on the sums donated for the restoration of Palestine

Among the early Byzantine authors, only Cyril noted the fact that the imperial court allocated gold for restoring Palestine, in the aftermath of the damages caused by the Samaritan uprising during 529–531. The information which interests us here appears in the *Life of Saba*, in the description of the journey he undertook to Constantinople in 531, soon after the quelled Samaritan uprising. As the uprising had been devastating for the entire province, it did not spare the local monasteries, either. According to Cyril's statement, Saba refused to accept money from the Emperor for the monasteries under his supervision. This was because these particular communities had been located far from where the hostilities were waged, and thus had not suffered during the uprising. Refusing the offered support, Saba asked for financial support for the reconstruction of churches and monasteries in Palestine that had been destroyed during the uprising¹, and for financial relief for the entirety of the devastated province².

Justinian naturally acted according to Saba's request. Cyril also described the manner in which Justinian fulfilled his promise. He authorised the bishops of Ashkelon and Pella to evaluate the damages and calculate the amount that was to be paid out for the restoration of the local infrastructure. The damage was estimated at a staggering sum of 13 *kentenaria* of gold³. The money for the financing of the damage remediation was to be taken from the additional tax income from Palestine and from the sale of the property confiscated from the Samaritans. In a later part of the *Life of Saba* we read that the oversight over the reconstruction efforts, which supposedly lasted twelve years (potentially attesting to the magnitude of the incurred expenditure), was entrusted by the Emperor to the bishops of Jerusalem and of the Palestinian Bakatha.

If one were to believe Cyril, the reason behind such great generosity by Justinian towards the monasteries in Palestine was Saba's "argumentation", a prophetic encouragement to finance the planned undertakings. It was a kind of "linked transaction", co-financing by the state of certain investments in return for prayers for the welfare of the Empire ruled by Justinian⁴. According to Cyril, when the

¹ CYRILLUS SCYTHOPOLITANUS, *Vita Sabae*, 71–73, [in:] E. SCHWARTZ, *Kyrillos von Skythopolis*, Leipzig 1939 (cetera: *Vita Sabae*).

² *Vita Sabae*, 73. On *kentenarion* and the method of giving sums of money in early Byzantine sources, cf. C. MORIRISSON, G. DAGRON, *Le Kentènarion dans les sources byzantines*, RN 6, 1975, p. 145–162; J.P. CALLU, *Le "centenarium" et l'enrichissement monétaire au Bas-Empire*, Kt 3, 1978, p. 121–136.

³ *Vita Sabae*, 73.

⁴ *Vita Sabae*, 72.

Emperor was dictating the financial decisions to the clerks, Saba was reciting psalms for the fate of the Empire. However, it did not end there. Once the decision to fund the aforementioned undertakings was written down, Saba was to have said that *God will grant the Emperor a thousand-fold repayment, and will fulfil the old man's prophecy*. This statement refers of course to the successes of Justinian's expeditions in the West (conquests of the Vandals and the Ostrogoths), and to the gains, including material ones, which they brought to the Empire⁵. In Cyril's account we then read that Saba returned to Palestine and "proclaimed imperial orders" in Caesarea and Scythopolis⁶.

Critical remarks

In attempting to verify the epistemic value of the analysed account, let us consider whether the described audience could indeed have taken place, and whether the amounts of gold mentioned on this occasion are reasonable. Travels of the clergy, and in time also of the monks, to the imperial court in Constantinople, described in more or less fantastic terms, are recorded in early Byzantine hagiographic texts. In these accounts the petitioners arriving at the court also received substantial financial donations⁷. The supposed vision of the monk Saba regarding Justinian's western policy and the odds of its success are another aspect of the analysed narrative. This is because Saba was promoting the view that an Emperor cooperating with the Church (and with monastic communities) could count on "special" favours from God; and that only such an Emperor would be assisted by the Almighty, who will help in fulfilling any plans and goals of such a ruler.

From the cited account it follows that in the wake of the Samaritan uprising the infrastructure of Palestine suffered to varying degrees. Some of its areas, especially the ones located far from the cities (such as monasteries located on the edge of the desert) have not suffered much. The previously mentioned committee calculated the resulting damages to the total amount of 13 kentenaria of gold. What was the intended purpose for the donated funds? To assist in repairing damage caused by the uprising to the church and monastic infrastructure, or to the infrastructure of the entire province? The difference in this case is fundamental, and the somewhat laconic account along with references to this matter in a later part of *Life of Saba* appears to confirm that the Emperor, following the committee's findings, decided to donate such huge resources solely to the reconstruction of the church and monastic infrastructure. In Cyril's account we read that an additional one *kentenaarion* of gold was used to repair damages, caused during the uprising, in the

⁵ *Vita Sabae*, 74.

⁶ *Vita Sabae*, 74–75.

⁷ Cf. MARC LE DIACRE, *Vie de Porphyre, évêque de Gaza*, 39–54, trans. H. GRÉGOIRE, M.-A. KUGENER, Paris 1930 [= CB] (cetera: MARCUS DIACONUS).

vicinity of Scythopolis. Was this also in relation to church infrastructure? From the context in which this statement was included it follows that this was indeed so, and the author originating from this city decided that this fact should be specifically emphasized.

In deciding whether the sum in which we are interested here was reasonable, we will attempt to verify it by comparing it with other analogous data from the fifth century, primarily from the times of Anastasius and Justinian. The comparison data can be split into four groups: the amounts of other donations given to the church and monastic communities which appear in Cyril's work, information on the wealth of the imperial treasury in the sixth century, the size of analogous donations given by the imperial court to other churches during the early Byzantine period (using Palestinian Gaza as an example), and other information showing the economic means (affluence) of provincial towns in the early Byzantine period.

Cyril on other donations by the imperial court

In attempting to verify the sums supposedly donated for the reconstruction in Palestine, it is worth comparing it with other donations of the imperial court which appear in Cyril's work. Thus, in 511, Saba, while participating in a journey of several Palestinian igumens to Constantinople, received from Anastasius 2000 solidi (about thirty pounds of gold)⁸. It is true that in this account it is the main character of the *Life*, the monk Saba, who is in the spotlight, but one may nonetheless assume that during the audience the other members of the described audience received similar, or at least comparable, funds⁹. During the same visit to Constantinople, an imperial nephew Hypatius donated to Theodosius and Saba 100 pounds of gold (about 7200 solidi). After they returned to Palestine, this money was supposed to have been distributed between the monasteries in Jerusalem¹⁰.

When considering how reasonable was the sum allegedly donated for the reconstruction of the church and monastic infrastructure of *Palaestina Prima* after the Samaritan uprising, let us draw attention to the fact that during the same audience Justinian decided to fund two investments in Jerusalem: first, the construction of a hospital "for one hundred beds" and guaranteed the means for its operation. During the first year, the sum was said to have been 1850 solidi, while in the second the hospital was to be expanded up to "two hundred beds", with a simultaneous guarantee of its funding in subsequent years (without a mention of a specific amount). Justinian's second investment was co-funding of the construction

⁸ *Vita Sabae*, 51; 54–55.

⁹ *Vita Sabae*, 51.

¹⁰ *Vita Sabae*, 56. Cf. also M. AVI-YONAH, *The Economics of Byzantine Palestine*, IEJ 8, 1958, p. 45–46; J. PATRICH, *Sabas, Leader of Palestinian Monasticism. A Comparative Study in Eastern Monasticism, 4th to 7th Centuries*, Washington 1995, p. 309–323.

of a church of the Mother of God. While Cyril does not provide on this occasion what the donated amount was, he does state that the funds for the construction were to be provided by the Palestinian “tractatores”. In other words, similarly to the aforementioned 13 kentenaria, the means for this investment were to have been obtained from the taxes being collected in Palestine. During Saba’s audience at Justinian’s court in 531 it was also decided that a “stronghold” (a watchtower) will be built, with the intention of protecting monastic communities from the direction of the Arabian Desert. The Emperor supposedly donated 1000 gold pieces for this purpose. The aforementioned sum is too small in comparison with, for example, the funds allocated for the annual functioning of the Jerusalem’s hospital funded by the Emperor. The taxes collected in the following years in Palestine were also to be used for paying the crew of the stronghold protecting Saba’s monasteries¹¹. The cited examples confirm the principle that the local investments were being financed from the tax revenues of the respective provinces¹².

Wealth of the imperial treasury in the sixth century

The financial capabilities of the Byzantine Empire in the sixth century are illustrated by information on the wealth of the imperial treasury. According to Procopius, after the death of Anastasius (in 518), enormous reserves amounting to 320 000 pounds of gold were discovered in the treasury¹³. Can this information be considered reliable? Probably so, and Procopius appears to further confirm this in a later part of his account, when he states that the income of the imperial treasury for only nine years during Justin’s reign (when in fact the rule was in the hands of the young Justinian) amounted to as much as 400 000 pounds of gold¹⁴. Great financial capabilities of the state during this time are confirmed by another example. According to John Lydus, in 498 Emperor Anastasius was said to have gifted to consul Paul 2000 pounds of gold for the repayment of a loan from senator Zotikos. The loan was taken out to cover the cost of various celebrations and organized

¹¹ *Vita Sabae*, 73.

¹² A more detailed discussion of these donations, cf. I. MILEWSKI, *Kyryllos von Skythopolis über Spenden an palästinensische Klöster. Ein Beitrag zur Wirtschaftsgeschichte der ausgehenden Antike*, [in:] *ANTIQUITAS AETERNA. Classical Studies dedicated to Leszek Mrozewicz on his 70th Birthday*, ed. K. BALBUZA, M. DUCH, Z. KACZMAREK, K. KRÓLCZYK, A. TATARKIEWICZ, Wiesbaden 2021, p. 231–241.

¹³ PROCOPIUS, *Historia arcana*, 19, [in:] *Procopius with an English Translation*, vol. VI, *The Anecdota or Secret History*, ed. H.B. DEWING, Cambridge Mass. 1960 [= LCL, 290] (cetera: PROCOPIUS, *Historia arcana*). Cf. also E. STEIN, *Histoire du Bas-Empire*, vol. II, *De la disparition de l’Empire d’Occident à la mort de Justinien (476–565)*, Paris 1949, p. 193; A.H.M. JONES, *The Later Roman Empire, 284–602. A Social, Economic and Administrative Survey*, vol. I, Oxford 1964, p. 235–237; H.-U. WIEMER, *Kaiser und Katastrophe. Zur Bewältigung von Versorgungskrisen im spätrömischen Reich*, [in:] *Staatlichkeit und politisches Handeln in der römischen Kaiserzeit*, ed. IDEM, Berlin–New York 2006, p. 276–277.

¹⁴ PROCOPIUS, *Historia arcana*, 19.

entertainment (mainly circus performances) during the time when he held the consul's office¹⁵. According to Zacharias Rhetor, in return for part of the lands of the bishopric in Mesopotamian Dara, to be used for expansion of the city, Anastasius offered the local bishop, Thomas, "several kentenaria of gold"¹⁶. According to John of Antioch, Anastasius also made an offer to the usurper Vitalian (in 515). In return for abandoning the siege of Constantinople, he offered him the office of *magister militum per Thracias* and 9000 pounds of gold, as well as an unspecified "larger amount" for freeing the Emperor's nephew, Hypatius¹⁷. The same Emperor, after the Bulgarian raid on Macedonia and Thrace in 517, ordered the prefect of Illyricum to collect 1000 pounds of gold from the obtained income to ransom the captives¹⁸. The wealth of the treasury during the times of Anastasius and Justinian is also attested to by the information relating to the tax income. Every five years 140 pounds were collected in Syrian Edessa in respect of the chrysargyron tax¹⁹ and, if one were to believe Procopius of Caesarea, the annual income from the *aericon* tax during Justinian's reign amounted to as much as 30 kentenaria of gold²⁰.

The wealth of the imperial treasury in the sixth century is also evidenced by the tributes which Constantinople paid out to invaders during that time. Without going into the details of the circumstances in which they were being paid out²¹, let us compile the amounts paid. In 506 Anastasius, after lengthy negotiations during which the Roman side offered a lower amount (7 kentenaria of gold), it agreed to pay the Persians 10 kentenaria of gold (1000 pounds, around 72,000 solidi)²². In 518 the Persian king Kabades demanded from Emperor Justinian I 50 kentenaria

¹⁵ JOANNES LYDOS, *De magistratibus populi romani*, III, 48, ed. R. WÜNSCH, Lipsiae 1903.

¹⁶ *Die sogenannte Kirchengeschichte des Zacharias Rhetor*, VII, 6, ed., trans. K. AHRENS, G. KRÜGER, Leipzig 1899 (cetera: ZACHARIAS RHETOR), p. 116–117. Cf. also *Vita Sabae*, 54, where we read that Emperor Anastasius gave to Saba returning to Palestine a sum of one thousand solidi and ten pounds of gold (the equivalent of 720 solidi), so a total of 1,720 solidi.

¹⁷ JOANNES ANTIOCHENUS, *Fragmenta*, 242.14, ed. S. MARIEV, Berlin 2008; MARCELLINUS COMES, *Chronicon, sub anno 515*, [in:] M.J. LESZKA, S. WIERZBIŃSKI, *Komes Marcellin, vir clarissimus. Historyk i jego dzieło*, Łódź 2022 [= BL, 45] (cetera: MARCELLINUS COMES, *Chronicon*); ZACHARIAS RHETOR, VII, 13; THEOPHANES, *Chronicon*, AM 6006, trans. C. MANGO, R. SCOTT, Oxford 1997.

¹⁸ MARCELLINUS COMES, *Chronicon, sub anno 517*.

¹⁹ JOSHUA STYLITA, 31.

²⁰ PROCOPIUS, *Historia arcana*, 21, 1–2. Cf. also J. KARAYANNOPULOS, *Das Finanzwesen des früh byzantinischen Staates*, München 1958, p. 177–178.

²¹ More on the circumstances of paying tributes at that time, by the imperial court in Constantinople, cf. A.H.M. JONES, *The Later Roman Empire...*, p. 185–229; J. IŁUK, *The Export of Gold from the Roman Empire to Barbarian Countries from the 4th to the 6th Centuries*, MBAH 4.1, 1985, p. 79–102; IDEM, *Ekonomiczne i polityczne aspekty cyrkulacji złota w późnym Cesarstwie Rzymskim*, Gdańsk 1988, p. 134–138; K. MAKSYMIOUK, *Die finanziellen Abrechnungen in den persisch-römischen Kriegen in den Zeiten der Sasaniden*, HiS 5, 2016, p. 149–157.

²² PROKOP, *Perserkriege*, I, 9. 4, ed. O. VEH, München 1970 (cetera: PROCOPIUS, *De bello Persico*); JOSHUA STYLITA, *Chronicon*, 59, ed. W. WRIGHT, Cambridge 1882 (cetera: JOSHUA STYLITA).

of gold. He also made the same demand of young Justinian in 527²³. In 532, while concluding a so-called “eternal peace”, the Persians were paid 110 kentenaria of gold²⁴. In 540, after conquering Antioch and initiation of the peace talks, Chosroes demanded from Justinian an immediate payment of 50 kentenaria of gold, and an annual payment, from the following year, of 5 kentenaria²⁵. In 545, following further hostilities, the negotiated tribute was reduced to 4 kentenaria per year²⁶. Only six years later, in 551, the Persians demanded payment of a further tribute of 20 kentenaria of gold, and an annual, regular tribute of 6 kentenaria. Ultimately, Justinian paid the Persians 44 kentenaria of gold²⁷. In 562 a peace was concluded “for fifty years”. At the same time an annual tribute of 4 kentenaria of gold was agreed. The tribute for the first ten years was to be paid out in two instalments, the tribute for the first seven years was due at the time the peace was concluded, the rest (three years’ tribute), was to be paid at the beginning of the eighth year of peace²⁸. Beside the Persians, Constantinople also made payments to the Avars. It is estimated that during the 570s and 580s the latter received from the Byzantine Empire at least 83,333 pounds of gold²⁹.

Procopius, cited above, provides further information illustrating the wealth of the imperial treasury in Justinian’s times. He mentions 10 kentenaria of gold (1000 pounds) spent on receiving Persian envoys at Justinian’s court³⁰, and an otherwise unspecified tax amounting to 4 kentenaria (400 pounds) collected from the inhabitants of Armenia³¹.

The size of financial donations made by the imperial court to local churches during the early Byzantine period. The example of Palestinian Gaza

In verifying Cyril’s information on the amount of the sum said to have been donated by Emperor Justinian for the reconstruction of the church and monastic infrastructure in Palestine, it may be helpful to examine an account of a different instance of imperial funding. The sole and reliable example known to me is found in the work of Mark the Deacon, *Life of Porphyry, bishop of Gaza*, a city

²³ *Chronicon Miscelaneum ad 724 pertinens*, ed. J.B. CHABOT, Paris 1903, p. 111; ZACHARIAS RHETOR, VIII, 5.

²⁴ PROCOPIUS, *De bello Persico*, I, 22. 3–5; ZACHARIAS RHETOR, IX, 7.

²⁵ PROCOPIUS, *De bello Persico*, II, 10. 19–24.

²⁶ PROCOPIUS, *De bello Persico*, II, 28. 10.

²⁷ PROCOPIUS, *De bello Persico*, VIII, 15. 16–18.

²⁸ Detailed discussion of these calculations, cf. H. TURTLEDOVE, *Justin II’s Observance of Justinian’s Persian Treaty of 562*, BZ 76, 1983, p. 292–301; A. GARIBOLDI, *La clause économique della Pace dei 50 anni (561/62)*, Bi 11, 2009, p. 249–259.

²⁹ J. IŁUK, *Ekonomiczne i polityczne...*, p. 137–138.

³⁰ PROCOPIUS, *De bello Persico*, II, 28. 31–44.

³¹ PROCOPIUS, *De bello Persico*, II, 3. 4–7.

situated in the territory of a neighbouring province, Palaestina Prima. Without going into too much detail on the circumstances in which these donations were made³², let us make a summary of these. The author of the account which interests us here describes four audiences of the protagonist of his work, Bishop Porphyrios, at Empress Eudoxia's court³³. At the conclusion of the first one, the bishops received from the Empress "three handfuls of solidi" (about 50 solidi)³⁴. To the returning to Gaza Porphyrios, the Empress gave 200 pounds of gold³⁵. This was an advance payment for the start of construction of a basilica in Gaza, which was to be erected at the site of the demolished temple of Zeus Marnas. As the account's author stated, Bishop Porphyrios, having received such a generous donation, was authorised by the Empress to demand additional funds in the future, as construction costs were incurred on raising the basilica. This is likely a topical statement, although it cannot be ruled out that it was specifically formulated to make it easier for the Gazan bishopric to obtain funds from the local authorities for the expansion, or even renovation, of the basilica in the future. The basilica was indeed built, we can see it, for example, depicted on a mosaic from Madaba³⁶. Entrusting Porphyrios with the aforementioned 200 pounds of gold, Empress Eudoxia also ordered him to build a xenodochium in Gaza³⁷. During the farewells, Eudoxia also gave each of the bishops 100 solidi to cover the cost of the journey, and in addition to that, the bishop of Caesarea in Palestine was also given "one thousand gold pieces and precious vessels"³⁸. The final audience at the court took place before Emperor Arcadius, who gave each of the bishops 20 pounds of gold, paid out from the taxes gathered in the Palestinian provinces³⁹. Mark also mentioned the granting of otherwise unspecified privileges and incomes⁴⁰.

³² A detailed discussion of this issue, cf. I. MILEWSKI, *The Economic Condition of the Bishopric of Gaza (Palestine) during the Rule of Bishop Porphyry (circa 395–420)*, SCer 8, 2018, p. 193–207.

³³ MARCUS DIACONUS, 39–40 (first audience); 42–43 (second audience); 45–46 (third audience); 50–51 (fourth audience).

³⁴ MARCUS DIACONUS, 40, 54.

³⁵ MARCUS DIACONUS, 53.

³⁶ G. DOWNEY, *Gaza in the Early Sixth Century*, Norman 1963, p. 17; C. GLUCKER, *The City of Gaza in the Roman and Byzantine Periods*, London 1987, p. 48 et sqq; L. RYDEN, *Gaza, Emesa, and Constantinople*, [in:] *Aspects of Late Antiquity and Early Byzantium. Papers read at a Colloquium held at the Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul, 31 May – 5 June 1992*, ed. L. RYDÉN, J.O. ROSENQVIST, Stockholm 1993, p. 133–137.

³⁷ MARCUS DIACONUS, 53.

³⁸ MARCUS DIACONUS, 53.

³⁹ MARCUS DIACONUS, 54.

⁴⁰ MARCUS DIACONUS, 46; cf. 48–50, 53–54.

Other information illustrating financial capabilities of early Byzantine cities

While information of this nature is abundant, using it as comparative material may be debatable, since the greater part this data relates to the ransoms collected or demanded from besieged cities by the Persian king. The “eternal peace” concluded in 532 lasted a mere eight years. It was broken in 540 by Chosroes, at the time when Justinian was engaged in military operations in the West. Most of the data of interest to us comes from this period. Without going into the details of the circumstances in which the ransoms were collected⁴¹, let us make a summary of the data in chronological order presented by Procopius in his description of the first Persian war: the demand of 2000 kentenaria of gold from the inhabitants of Sergiopolis for the freeing of hostages from the city of Sura and abandoning the siege of the city (undoubtedly, an incredible sum!)⁴²; 2000 pounds of silver from the inhabitants of Hierapolis in return for abandoning the siege of the city⁴³; an alleged proposal made by the Bishop of Antioch, offering 10 kentenaria of gold in return for withdrawing from the the Empire⁴⁴; 4000 pounds of silver from the inhabitants of Beroe⁴⁵; 1000 pounds of silver from the inhabitants of Apamea⁴⁶; 200 pounds of gold from the inhabitants of Chalkis⁴⁷; 2 kentenaria of gold from the inhabitants of Edessa⁴⁸; 1000 pounds of silver from the inhabitants of Dara⁴⁹. In verifying the above, one other information is important. After conquering the fortress of Dara in 574, the Persians laid their hands on the alleged sum of 200 kentenaria of gold (20,000 pounds)⁵⁰. The author of this information, John of Ephesus, unfortunately did not write why such a great amount of funds had been gathered there.

How to evaluate Procopius’ information on the size of the ransoms? The data appears questionable even if only compared with one another. Furthermore, we do not know much about the real wealth of the cities from which the ransom was demanded. Beside the affluent Antioch (which certainly was able to pay 10 kentenaria / 1000 pounds of gold⁵¹), only in relation to Edessa do we have some clues

⁴¹ Cf. K. MAKSYMUK, *Die finanziellen Abrechnungen...*, p. 149 et sqq; I. MILEWSKI, *Lýtron. Okup za odstąpienie od oblężenia miasta jako element strategii wojennej Chosroesa I w De bello Persico Prokopiusza z Cezarei*, SDŚ 23, 2019, p. 143–170 (a detailed discussion of the data provided by Procopius of Caesarea).

⁴² PROCOPIUS, *De bello Persico*, II, 5. 1–29. Cf. also II, 5. 30–32.

⁴³ PROCOPIUS, *De bello Persico*, II, 6. 20–24.

⁴⁴ PROCOPIUS, *De bello Persico*, II, 6. 25.

⁴⁵ PROCOPIUS, *De bello Persico*, II, 7. 5–6.

⁴⁶ PROCOPIUS, *De bello Persico*, II, 11. 1–3.

⁴⁷ PROCOPIUS, *De bello Persico*, II, 12. 1–2.

⁴⁸ PROCOPIUS, *De bello Persico*, II, 12, 6, 31–34. Cf. also H.-U. WIEMER, *Kaiser und Katastrophe...*, p. 267.

⁴⁹ PROCOPIUS, *De bello Persico*, II, 13. 16–28.

⁵⁰ JOANNES EPHEINUS, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, VI, 5, ed. E. W. BROOKS, Louvain 1952.

⁵¹ PROCOPIUS, *De bello Persico*, II, 6. 25.

that would allow us to make an approximate, at best, estimate of the financial capabilities of the contemporary cities. An insight into the wealth of Edessa during the first half of the fifth century, and specifically into that of the local bishopric, is given by two remarks found in *Vita Rabulae*, a text created in the second half of the fifth century. There, we read about 1000 pieces of silver donated by the regional bishopric to cover the running costs of a local hospital⁵², and of the donation by the bishopric of 7,000 solidi to cover the cost of the local charitable activity⁵³. From the perspective of our research, of greater value is the information about the tax obligations of the inhabitants of Edessa at the end of the fifth century. According to Joshua the Stylite, the *chrysargyron* paid by the local inhabitants amounted to 140 pounds of gold, paid every five years⁵⁴. If we were to believe Joshua, due to the famine in Roman Mesopotamia in the first years of the sixth century, the taxes in Edessa were halved, and Emperor Anastasius donated to the city 2 kentenaria of gold (200 pounds) for the reconstruction of a bath-house destroyed in an earthquake⁵⁵.

Concluding remarks

Considering the compiled data, how to assess the amount of the alleged subsidy for the remediation of damages in Palestine provided by Justinian? The cited accounts confirm that it was a known practice in the early Byzantium to finance the local investments from the taxes collected in the same provinces. The compiled comparative material also confirms that confiscation of property from pacified insurgents was also employed⁵⁶. We do not have other sources which would have confirmed the activity of the committee estimating the losses caused by the Samaritan uprising. We cannot however rule out that such a committee had indeed been appointed. The local officials and clergy, whose activity at the time far exceeded ecclesiastic duties, knew best what has been destroyed, and to what extent. Obviously the most problematic is the verification of the estimated sum, the 13 kentenaria of gold. Most importantly, the sum given by Cyril was not topical. The compiled comparative data offers a certain idea, but doubts still remain. Information on the size of income of the imperial treasury, although important, is not particularly helpful in making further estimates. With few exceptions, we do not have information that would have allowed us to, even approximately, determine what part of this sum

⁵² *Vita Rabulae episcopi edesseni*, ed. G. BICKELL, Kempten 1874 (cetera: *Vita Rabulae episcopi edesseni*), p. 205.

⁵³ *Vita Rabulae episcopi edesseni*, p. 194.

⁵⁴ JOSHUA STYLITA, 31.

⁵⁵ H.-U. WIEMER, *Kaiser und Katastrophe...*, p. 276–277.

⁵⁶ See the example of confiscated property of the Isaurians, who supported the revolt against Anastasius, cf. K. FELD, *Barbarische Bürger. Die Isaurier und das Römische Reich*, Berlin–New York 2005, p. 332 et sqq.

has been collected from the provinces as taxation. The data provided by Procopius on the payment of ransoms by the cities in Syria and Mesopotamia to the Persian king are also doubtful. Regarding the amounts used to finance the Church in the sixth century by the state, we have presented the data from the Palestinian Gaza. From a researcher's perspective, these too, of course, have certain flaws: there is the question of the reliability of the account, and of the size of the mentioned sums. Some idea, however, of the amount of funding for the Church in the sixth century is confirmed by another, rather reliable example from the time of Anastasius. I am referring here to the ordinance proclaimed in 508, guaranteeing an annual subsidy of 70 pounds of gold to cover the running costs of the Church of the 12 Apostles in Constantinople⁵⁷. It was equivalent to half of the *chrysargyron* collected every five (or, as Joshua tells us, every four years) from the inhabitants of the Syrian Edessa⁵⁸. Compared to this, the 1300 pounds of gold for the reconstruction of only the church and monastic infrastructure in Palestine destroyed in the Samaritan uprising appears to be well founded.

Translated by Michał Zytka

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⁵⁷ *Codex Justinianus*, I, 2, 18, ed. P. KRÜGER, Berolini 1892. On the imperial generosity towards Palestinian monastic communities in the early 6th century cf. also THEODOSIUS, *Liber De situ Terrae Sanctae*, 20, [in:] J. WILKINSON, *Jerusalem Pilgrims before the Crusades*, Warminster 2002.

⁵⁸ JOSHUA STYLITA, 31. Cf. also E. KIRSTEN, *Edessa*, [in:] RAC, vol. IV, ed. T. KLAUSER, Stuttgart 1959, col. 559.

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