

A Government Compound in Roman-Byzantine Caesarea

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Among the structures built by Herod at Caesarea was a great palace (*basilea*).ⁱ This palace served not only as a residency, it was also an administrative center. At 6CE, when Judaea first came under direct Roman rule, Herod's palace, known as Herod's *praetorium*ⁱⁱ became the seat of the Roman ruler. The governor was an official of an equestrian rank (with the title of "praefect" and later, after the short rule of Herod Agrippa I [41-44CE], - "procurator"), subordinate to the governor of the Roman province of Syria - an official of a senatorial rank and a command over four legions.ⁱⁱⁱ

The excavations of several expeditions since 1976 and until the present, had exposed this magnificent structure, which extended over two terraces: the lower, along a promontory surrounded by the sea on three sides, and the upper, extending eastward. The various wings of the lower terrace were arranged around a central pool and those of the upper terrace surrounded a colonnaded courtyard. Both terraces were equipped with audience halls and baths. This *praetorium* went out of use, at least partially, already in the mid to late third century.^{iv}

After the Jewish revolt, under Vespasian, Caesarea became a Roman colony,^v and the province was promoted to be ruled by an imperial legate of praetorian rank, who was the commander of the army, comprising of one, and latter (after 108 CE) two Roman legions. The governor continued to reside in "Herod's *praetorium*", that served as his administrative center (*officium*). But the financial affairs of the province were entrusted to an official of an equestrian rank - the *procurator provinciae*, and a separate compound and residency was required for him. This administrative compound is at the focus of the present paper.

Following the administrative reform of Diocletian (284-303 CE), the military command of a province was in the hands of a *dux*, while the administrative and financial control was in the hands of the civil governor, entitled first *praeses* and later *consularis*,

or *proconsul*. Our finds indicate that the former *praetorium* of the equestrian financial procurator became the seat of the Byzantine governor.

The recent excavations at Caesarea (1993-1997) in Area CC, partially explored by Avraham Negev already in the early 1962,^{vi} and in the 70's by the Joint Expedition to Caesarea Maritima (JECM) directed by Robert Bull,^{vii} had entirely exposed this compound. Of the various wings that such a palace will normally comprise - a private residency, a bath house, court yards and gardens, and an audience hall that could serve as a law court, it is mainly the last two components that were exposed in their entirety, while the other two were just partially preserved or uncovered.

Area CC is located in the first insula of Roman and Byzantine Caesarea to the south of the crusader wall and next to the sea - a prominent location. It occupies an area 65x55m of the 65x90m city grid block. The state of preservation is quite remarkable: the western and southern parts of the *insula* were constructed on vaults, large parts of which still stand solid and well preserved. Certain structures on the second floor are also quite well preserved. There are no vaults to the east along the *cardo*, where the structures have been severely looted. But on this side too, clear complexes may be discerned. To the NE is the Byzantine 'tax revenue office' - a complex of eight rooms with mosaic floors and Greek inscriptions that identify it as a *skrinion* (a provincial office) where an accountant (*noumerarios*) and clerks (*chartularioi*) were in office.^{viii} To the front there is a mosaic-paved portico. Farther to the S, along the *cardo*, there is a mosaic-paved *stoa*, and to its west - a public latrine .

Two stair rooms of similar dimensions let access from the *cardo* to a courtyard (the height difference being ca. 2m, required just 10 stairs to cover). This arrangement and the layout of the *cardo* pavers, which changes in the Byzantine phase from a diagonal to a parallel arrangement before the intermediate section of the *insula*, emphasize the axiality of the architectural complex.

The two staircases led to a courtyard with a circular water cistern covered by a domed roof at its center. All these structures were heavily looted, including the floor, the surrounding walls and even the *kurkar* fill beneath the floor. This resulted in the collapse of the domed roof of the cistern. Column drums, marble and *kurkar* bases, indicate that the courtyard was flanked by columns of a huge order of magnitude (1.4m in diameter) on one or more sides.

To the west of this courtyard and on a still higher elevation, was a second courtyard with a mosaic pavement of geometric-lozenges pattern. This esplanade extended to the east of the main building on the second story, which was an audience hall. In earlier stages, prior to the laying of the mosaic floor, this area was occupied by a fountain house.

The audience hall - a longitudinal basilica - extended to the west of the fountain. It was erected on top of the western vaults of the *insula* (vaults 1, 2, 11, 12 - ca. 30m long and ca. 5m broad.), and is contemporary with them. It was a vast rectangular hall, 13 x 18m in dimension, the south-eastern corner of which is still preserved. On the inside were found parts of the stylobate on which the columns that supported the roof were standing.

Two floor levels are preserved. The first was of marble plates and the second of mosaic. Soundings below the marble floor yielded only 1st cent. AD pottery.^{ix} To the south of the audience hall the JECM exposed a large room with a magnificent mosaic floor,^x depicting personifications of the Seasons, the Karpoi and Pegasus. A opening, later blocked, let passage between the mosaic floor of the hall and that of the room. According to stylistic considerations the mosaic floor cannot be dated later than the mid 4th cent.

The remains surrounding this hall indicate three separate phases. In phase one the hall was surrounded on N, E and S by a reflection pool. The facade of the hall was therefore on the W. A square fountain house was located to the east of the reflection pool. In phase two the reflection pool was converted into a garden by filling the pool with

hamra soil. The garden, of *horti pensiles* type, extended eastward up to the fountain, the dimensions of which were reduced at this phase, and a square water tank was built in the middle of the area between the fountain and the eastern wall of the audience hall. This location indicates that in this phase as well the facade still was on the W. Only at the third phase, to be dated ca. 300 CE, the water tank was entirely dismantled, and the facade of the audience hall, with three openings, moved to the E. The fountain was filled and the entire area in front of the new facade was paved by a mosaic floor, thus being converted into an open courtyard, or esplanade. A narrow porch was constructed in front of the facade. The room with the Seasons and Pegasus mosaic belong to this phase. Below, a pair of arch pilasters near the W end of vault 11, suggest that the audience hall was elongated on this side, perhaps due to an apse that had replaced the earlier facade.

Putting all the Late Byzantine remains exposed by us and by earlier expeditions on a block plan, amazingly reveals the prominent location of the audience hall in the *insula*.

A 5th century judicial Greek inscription, fragments of which were collected from several places in the *insula* and the surrounding area, gives rise to the assumption that this audience hall functioned also as a law court for civil affairs (see below).

To the N the 'law court' was flanked by an apsidal building. Impressive remains of its lower story were exposed already in the 70's by the JECM. They include a massive apse and supporting pilasters. The upper story was reached from W by means of a broad staircase that was uncovered beyond the apse. Access to the staircase was through a circular ante-chamber with a white mosaic floor. A Greek inscription in it is an acclamation for the provincial governor - a proconsul named Andreas, who was praised for his building activity.^{xi} All these structures were constructed in the 2nd half of the 6th century.

The apse was constructed over a square hall with a colorful mosaic floor. To the S of the hall was an elongated E-W corridor with five rectangular niches constructed in

its S wall. The easternmost niche is entirely preserved. Such niches regularly held wooden cupboards. The proximity of this building to the 'law court' and to the 'tax revenue office' gives rise to the interpretation that the hall and the corridor were parts of an archive (*tabularium*) or library of law or finances. Legal or financial records or codices could be stored in *armaria* set in the niches along the corridor, while the hall may have served as a reading room.^{xiii} I am also suggesting that the apsidal hall that replaced the rectangular hall had a similar function, namely - a library, or archive. A nice example of an apsidal library, though of an earlier date, is the one at Timgad.

The 'law court' was flanked on the S by a row of rooms constructed on top of the S vaults, along the *decumanus*. These rooms were perhaps used by the law court clerks and officials. In phases 1 and 2, vault 54, located in the lower story to the south of the fountain house, housed a small latrine. This installation was reached from the west through alley 3 and vault 19, and from the east by means of a staircase leading down to vault 54. This was perhaps a private latrine for the use of the law court officials. The general public could use the main latrine, located near the *cardo-decumanus* junction.

A well that went out of use by the construction of vault 12, yielded a wealth of 1st cent. CE pottery, including complete vessels. Soundings throughout the complex yielded similar finds, including several coins, indicating that the entire complex was constructed shortly after 70 CE, presumably under Vespasian who made Caesarea a colony. As was mentioned above, it was then, with the promotion of *Provincia Judaea* in rank, that a second official - the *procurator provinciae* needed another *praetorium* in Caesarea. The Latin inscriptions retrieved around (see below) indicate that the complex under discussion was indeed his *praetorium*.

During the 1997 season a rectangular hall 6x12m in dimensions was exposed attached diagonally to the NW corner of the complex described above. In its center was an octagonal basin ca. 3m wide. The floor of the hall, its walls (preserved to just 1-2 courses), and the basin, were all covered by a revetment of large, gray marble plates. The basin got its water through lead pipe from a large water container located to the W of the

circular ante-chamber described above. A room 6x3 m in dimensions with a mosaic floor, is located on the NE side of the marble hall.

A *sondage* carried out farther to the N in 1995 in conjunction with modern drainage works, hit upon *hypocaust* columnnetes typical of Roman bath-houses. This *hypocaust* had a similar diagonal axiality. It seems therefore that the “marble hall” with its octagonal basin was a wing of the bath-house of the *praetorium*, presumably the cold room. A nice parallel of a bath set diagonally to the main complex was found in the 4th cent. palace of Piazza Armerina in Sicily.

In 1962, during Negev’s excavations, a hall with mosaic floor was exposed immediately to the north of the “tax revenue office”. It is quite possible that this hall was part of the residency of the *praetorium*, a large part of which was dismantled in the crusader period, while digging the moat, as was suggested above. The structures exposed by Negev are covered now by the dirt road leading to Crusader Caesarea. If we take into account that the original insula extended over an area of 65x90m, while the exposed CC area occupies just 65x55m, there was still enough room in the insula for the private wing and bath house of the *praetorium*.

Function and Interpretation:

The vaults and the audience hall on their top were constructed to serve as the *praetorium* of the financial procurator of Judaea/Palaestina. This identification is suggested by the Latin inscriptions retrieved from this area.^{xiii}

Out of 22 fragmentary Latin inscriptions of the second and third century retrieved from Areas KK and CC, five (and perhaps four more), are associated with provincial procurators of *Syria Palaestinae*, being dedications on their behalf, or acclamations in their honor. Three procurators of *Syria Palaestinae* are mentioned by name, two of them are new names, bringing the list of known procurators to 9. These finds bring to mind the villa of the financial procurator at Colonia Ulpia Triana Sarmizegetusa in Dacia Superior

(later Dacia Apulensis).^{xiv} Thus it seems that CC insula was indeed the official compound - *praetorium* of the provincial procurator of Syria Palaestina.

What happened later, in the Byzantine period, after the administrative reform of Diocletian? Wiemken and Holum had suggested ca. 10 years ago, on relatively scanty grounds, that insula CC served as the Byzantine *praetorium* of Caesarea.^{xv} The ‘tax revenue office’ bears evidence for the wing of financial administration. The existence of a Byzantine law court in this insula is indicated by eight fragments of a large Greek inscription retrieved from several locations in areas CC, CV and nearby - at KK. The fragments belong to marble plate, ca. 155x47cm in dimensions. The inscription was arranged in three columns of 20 lines. The top line has larger letters and ran across all three columns. The inscription is a copy of an imperial, mid 5th century edict, issued in the time of the praetorian prefect Flavius Pouseus,^{xvi} containing a *notitia consuetudinum* listing fees permitted for specific judicial procedures and services in the civil law court of the provincial governor. It is logical to assume that such an edict was placed outside a law court, visible to the public. The audience hall exposed in the axial center of area CC is the best candidate for this law court. In the *praetorium* at Gortyn (Crete), capital of the Roman province of Crete and Cyrene, inscriptions of the fourth and fifth century specify that they originally stood beside, or before the doors of Justice.^{xvii} Statues representing gods, emperors, and other officials were also abundant there.

Another Greek inscription was found *in situ* in the lowest of three mosaic floors in the southern part of the portico of the “tax revenue office”. The two lines inscription is framed in a *tabula ansata* 100x27cm in dimensions. It reads: “The *hypoboethoi* (subadjutors) made this in thanks giving”. The *hypoboethoi* were assistants of lower rank in the judicial or fiscal administration. Such an official, in a latinized form (*subadiuva* written in Greek - *soubadios*) is mentioned in *The Miracles of St. Artemios* - a collection of seventh century miracle stories of an anonymous Greek author of Byzantium. This *soubadios* or deputy in the office of the eparch assisted a litigant in the law court.^{xviii}

A lively description of the affect of law court assizes on city life and economics is given by Dio Chrysostom. Writing around the turn of the second century, he describes the extent to which Celaenae (Apamaea of Phrygia) profited from hosting biennial assizes: “And what is more, the courts are in session every other year in Celaenae, and they bring together an unnumbered throng of people - litigants, jurymen, orators, princes, attendants, slaves, pimps, muleteers, hucksters, harlots, and artisans. Consequently not only can those who have goods to sell obtain the highest prices, but also nothing in the city is out of work, neither the teams nor the houses nor the women. And this contributes not a little to prosperity; for wherever the greatest throng of people comes together, there necessarily we find money in greatest abundance, and it stands to reason that the place should thrive ... So it is, you see, that the business of course is deemed of highest importance toward a city’s strength and all men are interested in that as in nothing else. And the foremost cities share this business each in its turn in alternate years.”^{xix} Levine, who is citing this passage, adds: “If infrequent assizes added so much to prosperity of a local, the benefits accruing to a city where the government was regularly present for such proceedings must have been great indeed.”

Two functions of a *praetorium* are architecturally attested in a remarkable manner in area CC: the financial aspect and the judicial one. But, as was mentioned above, the two others - the governor’s residence and its bath - are attested there as well. Our 1993-97 excavations at Caesarea had thus exposed a prominent government and administrative center of Roman and Byzantine Caesarea.

Moreover, it is quite plausible that the government compound also extended on the eastern side of the *cardo*, in area NN, where a 4th cent Greek inscription blessing an accountant (*noumerarios*) named Eusebius, was found . An apse and a vast hall with a *distyloi in antis* facade and a magnificent mosaic floor were uncovered nearby. Some of the *praetoria* known in the Roman empire extended indeed over a vast area: that of Köln (Colonia) is estimated to occupy an area of 180x180m, taking up two blocks on the city’s grid; that of Aquincum (present day Budapest) 150x140m, that of Gortyn

100x120m, while the palace of the *dux ripae* at Dura Europus comprised only 88x63m. As was mentioned above, our complex in area CC stretches over 65x55m, which is less than 2/3 of the entire insula, occupying an area of 65x90m . Permitting another insula beyond the cardo, to the E, will give an area of 135x90m. In this case cardo W1 - just 5m wide, will become an inner street in this compound.

In the framework of the present archaeological project, in both IAA and University of Haifa fields, several palaces and administrative centers were found : Herod's *praetorium* on the promontory palace, parts of which went out of use by the end of the third century; the so called 'Byzantine palace'; the complex of the bath house, erected in the early 4th century, which in my opinion is not a public bath but rather a private bath of a palatial mansion; and the administrative compound under discussion, (in areas CC and NN?), erected in ca. 70 CE. The relationship between all these complexes in diachronic and synchronic respect, and their relation to the governors and high officials of Caesarea and to the administrative changes in the province during the Roman and Byzantine period deserves farther consideration.

ⁱ Josephus, *AJ* 14.375, 15.1; *BJ* 1.277-88.

ⁱⁱ Acts 23:35.

ⁱⁱⁱ M. Stern, "The Roman Rule in the Province 'Judaea' from the Destruction to the Bar-Kochba Revolt," in: Z. Baras *et al.*, *Eretz Israel from the Destruction of the Second Temple to the Muslim Conquest* (Jerusalem 1982) 1-17 (Hebrew). See also: A Schalit, *The Roman Rule in Eretz Israel* (Tel Aviv 1937) 72-104 (Hebrew); J. Ringel, *Césarée de Palestine* (Paris 1975) 93-109; I. L. Levine, *Caesarea under Roman Rule* (Leiden 1975) 18-22.

^{iv} For a description of the remains of Herod's palace and the Roman governor's *praetorium* in the context of Roman palaces and praetoria see: E. Netzer, "The Promontory Palace," in: A. Raban and K. G. Holum, *Caesarea Maritima: A Retrospective after Two Millennia*, (Leiden 1996) 193-207; Kathryn L. Gleason, "Ruler and Spectacle: The Promontory Palace," *ibid.*, 208-228; Barbara Burrell, "Palace to

Praetorium: The Romanization of Caesarea,” *ibid.* 228-47. See also: B. Burrell, K. Gleason, and E. Netzer, “Uncovering Herod’s Seaside Palace,” *Biblical Archaeology Review* 19 (1993), 50-57, 76. During the years 1995-97, in the framework of Israel Antiquities Authority excavations directed by Y. Porath, farther parts of the N, S, and E wings of the *praetorium* were exposed.

^v Pliny, *Naturalis Historia* V.69); Paulus, apud *Digesta* L, 15, 8, 7.

^{vi} *Illustrated London News* 6482 (1963) 684-86; 6483 (1963) 728-31.

^{vii}For the Joint Expedition to Caesarea Maritima excavations in Field C see: L. E. Toombs, "The Stratigraphy of Caesarea Maritima," in: R. P. S. Moorey and P. J. Parr (eds.), *Archaeology in the Levant: Essays for Kathleen Kenyon*, Warminster 1978, pp. 226-229; R. Bull & L. E. Toombs, "Notes and News: Caesarea," *IEJ* 22 (1972), pp. 178-180; R. Bull, "Mithraic Medallion from Caesarea," *IEJ* 22 (1972), pp. 178-190; *idem.*, *ibid.* 23 (1973), pp. 260-262; 24 (1974), pp. 178-190; *idem.*, "Caesarea Maritime," *RB* 82 (1975), pp. 278-280; *idem.*, "The Mithraeum at Caesarea Maritima," *Études Mithraïques, textes et memoires* 4 (1978), 75-89; *idem.*, "The Ninth Season of Excavations at Caesarea Maritima," *AJA* 85 (1981), p. 188; *idem.*, "Caesarea Maritima. The Search for Herod's City," *BAR* 8 (1982), 24-40; *idem.*, "Caesarea Maritima 1980, 1982, 1984," *ESI* 3 (1984), pp. 15-16; *idem. et al.*, *The Joint Expedition to Caesarea Maritima: Preliminary Reports*, Drew University Institute for Archaeological Research 1985 (microfiche).

^{viii}K. G. Holum, "Inscriptions from the imperial revenue office of Byzantine Caesarea Palaestinae," *The Roman and Byzantine Near East: some recent archaeological research [Journal of Roman Archaeology Supplementary Series 14]* (Ann Arbor 1995) 333-45.

^{ix} *Loci* CC11240, B. 0307, 0308, 0312; CC11241, B. 0309, 0313, 0314; CC11242, B. 0310, 0315. Prior to these soundings the construction of the vaults was dated by me to ca. 200 AD, on the basis of soundings within the vaults. A second inspection had proved these soundings to be non sealed, but rather contaminated. The 200 AD date was published in the abstracts for the 1996 ASOR Annual Meeting at New Orleans, and in a Hebrew preliminary report. See: J. Patrich, "A Roman-Byzantine Government Compound in Caesarea," *Ariel* XIX/122-123 (1997) 101-107. Later soundings in other sealed *loci* of fills yielded pottery finds similar to those of CC11 sealed *loci*.

^xMarie Spiro, "Some Byzantine mosaics from Caesarea," in R. L. Vann (ed.), *Caesarea Papers 1 [Journal of Roman Archaeology Supplementary Series 5]* (Ann Arbor 1992) 245-60.

^{xi} K. G. Holum, "Andreas *Philoktistes*, A Proconsul of Byzantine Palestine," *Israel Exploration Journal* 36 (1986) 61-64.

^{xii} On Roman libraries see: C. Callmer, "Antike Bibliotheken," *Opuscula Archaeologica* III (1954). Evidences for a procurator's *tabularium* were found in the Roman governor's

palace in London. See: P. Marsden, *Roman London* (London 1980) 79-106; H. H. Scullard, *Roman Britain* (London 1979) 54-55.

^{xiii} The Latin inscriptions were studied and will be published by Prof. Werner Eck of the University of Köln in the final report on the excavations. I am grateful to him for his advice.

^{xiv} Dorin Alicu and Adela Paki, *Town Planning and Population in Ulpia Triana Sarmizegetusa* [*BAR International Series 605*] 1995.

^{xv} R. Wiemken and K. G. Holum, "The Joint Expedition to Caesarea Maritima: Eighth Season, 1979," *BASOR* 244 (1981) 27-52. On the authority and activity of the Byzantine provincial governor in Caesarea and in the province see: Leah Di Segni, "Metropolis and Provincia in Byzantine Palestine". In Raban and Holum, *supra* n. 4, 575-592.

^{xvi} This and other Greek inscriptions from the excavations were entrusted to Dr. Leah Di Segni, of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. They will be published by her in the final report on the excavations. I am grateful for her assistance.

^{xvii} B. Borrell, *supra* note 4, n. 39.

^{xviii} I am indebted to K. G. Holum for bringing this interesting and vivid source to my attention. See V. S. Crisafulli and J. W. Nesbitt, *The Miracles of St. Artemios*, (Leiden-New York-Köln 1997) 114-121.

^{xix} J. W. Cahoon & H. L. Crosby, *Dio Chrysostom, Discourse, 35*, 15-17 [Loeb Classical Library] III, 389, 405-407; I. L. Levine, *Roman Caesarea*, Leiden 1985, p. 48. For law court assizes at Caesarea presided by the governor see also: J Megilla, III, 2, 74a.