The purpose of this communication is to underline the major structural and architectural traits of the synagogues and houses of prayer within the ancient Graeco-Roman world during Classical times, insisting mainly on Anatolia and South-Eastern Europe. Apart from the physical features, their institutional role is also to be taken into consideration, especially as they represented religious and social centres proper to the local community as well. Nevertheless, even if sometimes contested, their power of attraction over the gentiles and their degree of influence on the local environment take the measure for the high integration of the Diaspora Jews within local societies.

Key words: synagogues, houses of prayer, Anatolia, South-Eastern Europe, Roman Period

Judaism was perceived by the Gentiles as a conservative system that depended on a written law, which still regularly adapted its interpretations of that law to apply to new conditions. Secondly, even if it claimed a firm monotheism, they found numerous ways to accommodate to the new rulers and their pretentions. Thirdly, though essentially ethnocentric, it tended to be universalist in practice, especially in the Diasporan communities, as it could easily attract new converts, in spite of a restrictive legislation towards proselytism.

At the very heart of the cult remained the Temple of Jerusalem. It had preeminence because it was in the Holy of Holies that the divinity specially dwelt in. There was a clearly stated or just alluded idea in the Palestinian Jewish texts that the world is divided as a concentric system with levels of sanctity according to the proximity to the Temple. The most sacred place was considered the Holy of Holies, where only the KoHEN GadOL or the high priest was supposed to enter once a year on the Yom Kippur to pronounce God’s holiest name. The emptiness of this inner shrine was not due to the absence of God himself but to the incapacity of
the people to represent Him. The next in sanctity was the court of the priests, the court of Israel, that of the women, and that of the Gentiles. Then it followed the areas of Jerusalem that were situated outside the Temple. Jerusalem, as it was the holy city, was more sacred than the rest of Palestine, and the Holy Land was even holier than the Diaspora. But when the Romans managed to take the Temple they did this because the divine dweller left it to its fate. For the Jews this represented the abomination of desolation as any sacrifice was virtually impossible from then on. According to Josephus, a voice from above Jerusalem was heard from the skies stating: ‘We are departing from this place’ (GOODMAN 2007, 219). According to some views, logically after this moment the synagogue replaced the Temple as a place of the highest sanctity, because the latter had lost its own and was no longer inhabited by God himself. Thus, what happened was a sort of transfer of sanctity from the Temple to the synagogue. Some researchers like Howard Kee or Heather Mc Kay even argued moreover that before AD 70 there had been no separate synagogal buildings if they were, their purpose did not serve as places to worship the Sabbath (VAN DER HORST 1999, 16-17; FITYPATRICK-MCKINLEY 2002, 56).

Two important modifications of the Herodian rebuilding programme of the Temple, i.e. the introduction of a court for the gentiles and another for the women, reflected the changing features in Judaism and the tendencies of the epoch. The series of the courtyards which, as we mentioned, indicated different degrees of holiness and proximity to God’s presence, represented one of the most important social and religious aspects of the Temple. The first alteration provided a place for the Gentiles, whose interest in Judaism grew considerably, to have a place to approach near, without being included in. The introduction of such an element could also indirectly reflect the numbers of the Gentiles who joined Judaism as proselytes. Still, there was no specific provision for the latter (RICHARDSON 2004, 328).

In the second case, that of the women, their social and religious role increased by the first century BC, and this trend continues for the next few centuries visibly. Thus, some of the most important donors who contributed for the construction or renovation programmes in Roman Anatolia for example were women.

Even if in some respects the synagogues adopted the model of the Temple itself, they were in no way special institutions designed to replace the role of the Temple, because they were incapable of doing this, as the sacrifices could no longer be performed after its destruction and the priestly titles remained only as a mark of honor (BLOEDHORN, HÜTTENMEISTER 1999, 270). The origins of the synagogues remain obscure, yet what is almost clear is that they did not lie in a historical crisis or specific challenge, but were the result of lengthy experimentation with building forms learned first in the Diaspora (RICHARDSON 2004, 207). The most clear among the biblical passages that could indicate the origins of the synagogue during the Babylonian exile is Ezekiel 11, 16: ‘I will remove them far off among the nations and scatter them among the countries, and I will be a little sanctuary to them in the countries where they are scattered, which could be interpreted according to the Targum of Jonathan as follows: And I will give them synagogues in addition to my sanctuary, and they will remain only a little in the countries where they are scattered’ (BLOEDHORN, HÜTTENMEISTER 1999, 267).

The first direct references to the proseuchai as ‘houses of prayer’ or ‘places of prayer’ (or even ‘prayer hall’) (RUNESSON et al. 2008, 17) could be traced in the Hellenistic Egypt, during the reign of Ptolemy III Euergetes (246-221 BC). Their locations were at Schedia, south of Alexandria and at Arsinoë-Crocodilopolis in the Fayum (JIWE, 22, 117; KASHER 1995, 205; HORBURY 1999, 360). The two inscriptions have an almost identical content. The first one was translated as follows: ‘On behalf of king Ptolemy and queen Berenice his sister and wife and their children, the Jews (dedicated) the proseuche’, while the second is dedicated: ‘On behalf of king Ptolemy, son of Ptolemy, and queen Berenice, his wife and sister and their children, the Jews in Crocodilopolis (dedicated) the proseuche’. Yet, in the case of Egypt we can say that three out of the ten inscriptions mentioning the houses of prayer could also be attributed to the sympathizers worshipping the Most High God, because the Jews, according to Walter Ameling, never made a direct dedication to God himself as they considered Him to be ‘too exaltedly to be addressed publicly in such a manner’ (AMELING 2009, 209; contra KASHER 1995, 210).

The terminology used for the Jewish public building and for the community itself varied considerably according to region, period, and type of evidence employed. It seems that initially the term proseuché was preferred because it better expressed the purpose for which it was designed: the public praying and the To-
There was a long-term debate over the nature of the synagogues as institutions and how they were perceived in the Diaspora. For example, Kee considered it an informal gathering of people, Horsley as a public formal gathering, and Oster more recently as a public assembly in a purpose-built edifice, but Hengel, Richardson and Harland identified it with a voluntary association similar to the same category as the Graeco-Roman collegia (RUNESSON et al. 2008, 11-12). This last option is the most credible, even if some corrections were operated by Anne Fitzpatrick McKinley and Lee I. Levine. The former points to a relative exclusivism within these groups based largely on an ethno-religious identity. She gives as example the passage from Josephus (War, 2, 488) which records that the Ptolemies gave the Jews a quarter in the city so that... they might observe a purer life, mixing less with people of other races. This aspect could be seen from other perspectives as well and denotes the complexity of relations between the Jews and the Gentiles in the same area and the care to avoid any confrontation. It is sufficient to think that at certain occasions Jews, proselytes and Godfearers created mixed associations as the dekania from Aphrodiasia in order to perform a certain social task like aiding the poors of the city through the donations to the soup-kitchen (patella) who provided them the daily food (MITCHELL 2005, 216-217).

Besides its spiritual, religious and cultural role, the synagogue had also in the Roman period an entirely secular role. It was probably on this ground that the term synagogē was preferred as it implied a social component. The dichotomy is visible through its form of the community organization, as the administrative functions were normally different from the religious ones. The Jewish communities adopted the model of the voluntary associations from the Graeco-Roman world, but created a structure of their own. On the administrative side, the community was normally headed by a gerousia which was the local Sanhedrin, having as members numerous presbyteroi. The archontes formed a sort of executive committee who supervised the activity of the archon pases times or the general treasurer, the administrator of the goods, i.e. the phrontistes, and the secretary of the community, the grummateus. On the strictly religious side, the one who presided the congregation during the religious events was the archisynagogos who assured the order in the synagogue, delegated the persons who were supposed to read from the Torah, addressed a sermon or took care of the proper conser-
vation of the goods in the building. He was helped in his duties by a certain hyperetes, which in the rabbinical sources is known under the name of hazzan. The very same structure as that of the Jewish communities of the Diaspora was also adopted by a pagan association of sympathizers called association of worshippers (synthontes theskcetai) who dedicated an inscription to Zeus Hyspistos in AD 250–260. The assembled worshippers of the God Zeus Hyspistos put up the stele, when Urbanianus Blistus was logistes, Aurelius Nigerion was archon under the archisynagogos Aurelius Cepion of Pierion, and Aurelius Severus was prostates, and Aurelius Theophilos formerly of Pierion was grammateus, and the other worshippers who are written below... This inscription proves a certain relationship between this pagan community and the Jewish environment and moreover impact over these pagans.

Occasionally the Gentiles or proselytes were entrusted certain titles of honour in exchange of their commitment and support over the Jewish community itself. These titles were archisynagogos or archon for life, prostates (the so-called ‘patron’ or ‘advocate of the community’), pater laou (‘father of the people’), pater or meter synagogos (‘father’ or ‘mother of the synagogues’).

Several examples prove the active implication of the Gentiles and the proselytes alike in the building programmes of the Jewish communities as a proof of good relationships between the Jews and other local religious groups. On the contrary, some other external sources apparently indicate bitter attitudes regarding the Jews and their activity, but could easily turn to misleading conclusions. Let’s first analyze the case of Sardis.

When we deal with the relationships of the Jewish communities and of the synagogues as its interface, several anachronistic situations should be clearly avoided. The first one is to perceive Judaism and Christianity as totally opposed to each other and having no sort of institutional as well as individual contact. The second is to see the Jewish associations as segregated communities living in a hostile environment in virtual isolation (RUTGERS 1995, 260–261) The third one is to consider that the rabbis played an important role in the diasporan synagogues prior to the 4th century (RUNesson et al. 2008, 3).

Besides the previous structural analysis of the communities, there are two other ways of analyzing the potential relationships between the Jews and the Godfearers and the local ground. The first one is to valuate the adaptation to the social backgroud by taking into account the degree of integration to the patron-client system. The second is to follow the professional environment of the two groups in order to estimate their compatibility. At least three examples, besides the Sardis inscriptions and the previously-mentioned examples, prove the implication in the patronage system through the important donations made by the pagan sympathizers for the Jewish synagogues, the most famous being the one of Iulia Severa from Akmonia, which dates from the first century AD and mentions that the building or the hall (oikos) was donated to the community by her (RAJAK 1999, 143 sqq, LIPSHITZ 1967, 34–36; white II, 1997, 307–310; RUNesson, Binder, OlsSon 2008, 134–135). The epigraphic and the literary material, as far as we know indicate the recruitment of the proselytes and Godfearers alike from the same social and professional environment. This fact acts as an argument against the theories regarding the social seclusion of the Jews in this period. We see that the occupations preferred by the Jews were connected to the productive and commercial activities which implied control of money and of valuable goods.

A Christian inscription from Ephesos (IJO, II, 35) clearly mentions ‘the Jewish love for money.’ The most common occupations attested by the literary, archaeological and epigraphical sources were those related to the textile and leather industry (carpet-makers, linen-weavers, dyers, tent-makers, shoemakers). Also widespread were the categories of merchants, goldsmiths, bronzesmiths, blacksmiths and doctors, but also at least in the European provinces, bankers, painters, meat-sellers, and actors. In at least two instances, the Jews and the Godfearers were members of the same professional guilds. At Hierapolis, the Jew Publius Aurelius Glykon entrusts two associations, one of purple-dyers and the other one of carpet-weavers the task to take care of his own grave and to decorate it on the Festival of Passover and that of Pentecost (TREBILCo 1991, 178).

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The inscription of Aphrodisias is the one which most visibly underlines two aspects regarding the social life of the Diasporan Jews: on one side, it expresses the local interaction at the level of the socio-professional relationships, and on the other side it shows the importance
represented by the implication of Jews in the charitable actions. Despite the interminable disputes regarding the datation of this evidence, what is really important here is the fact that we clearly have the indication regarding the clear-cut distinction between the true-born Jews, the proselytes and the Godfearers.

In the case of the Aphrodisias material, those who deny the initial datation (among them A. Chaniotis and M.H. Williams) try to demonstrate that the real proselytization activity started with the moment when Christianity became legal in the Roman Empire at the beginning of the 4th century as a result of the discriminatory measures applied to the Jews. Thus they would have eventually coped with this situation by trying to strengthen the support and sympathy from their fellow Christians and pagans in the local communities. With the reserve of the observation that this change of attitude toward the Jews started only with the reign of Theodosius I, we shall underline that clear evidences indicate the fact that this activity started centuries earlier. We previously mentioned that Herodes the Great modified the structure of the Temple by adding the courts of women and of the Gentiles, which corresponded to the demands and trends in the epoch. On the other hand, another indication could be furnished by the very modification of the rules regarding conversion and intermarriage. Up to the 2nd century AD, the offspring of a mixed marriage was considered a Jew if the father were a Jew. We find numerous examples of the kind in the books of the Old and New Testament, for example in the passages that indicate the ancestry of Jesus. After this date, apparently unexplainable, the rabbinic sources obviously specify that the lineage should be taken according to the matrilineal principle. We believe that the most plausible explanation is that the enforcement of restrictive measures from the 2nd century on would have determined such a turn. It is the very case of the legislative decisions pertaining to Hadrian and Antoninus Pius, that were reinforced by Septimius Severus which stressed upon two main aspects: (1) the interdiction to circumcize the non-Jews and (2) the limitation of the activities regarding proselytism. Through these proselytizing activities the Jews actually promoted their own socio-institutional and religious image among the Gentiles. The fact that these legislative measures would have been a hard blow for Judaism is indicated mostly by this modification of the principle of lineage. Moreover, it is not by hazzard as it evidenced mostly by the Microasian inscriptions, that the role of the women was so important. A great deal among them were sympathizers or proselytes. Therefore, the most plausible explanation is that women were especially focused on to be converted, an action that was supposed to take place without any risks and without circumcision. In addition, the initial ethnical belonging was in most of the cases difficult to prove in their respect. And the son of a proselyte was automatically recognized as being a Jew, and thus, in both cases they didn't break any law of the Roman state.
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IZGRADNJA BOŽJE KUĆE. SINAGOGE I MOLITVENE
KUĆE U ANATOLIJI I ISTOČNOJ EUROPI TIJEKOM RIMSKOG DOBA

Iulian MOGA

Svrha ovog rada jest da istakne glavne strukturalne i arhitektonske osobine sinagoga i molitvenih kuća u antičkom grčko-rimskom svijetu tijekom klasičnoga doba, usredotočujući se uglavnom na Anatoliju i jugoistočnu Europu. Osim fizičkih obilježja, također se mora uzeti u obzir njihova institucionalna uloga, jer su one predstavljale vjerska i društvena središta svojstvena mjesnim zajednicama. Ipak, iako ponekad osporavana, moć kojom su privlačile nežidove i stupanj njihova utjecaja na mjesnu sredinu znatno su utjecale na visok stupanj uklapanja židova iseljenika u mjesna društva.