

christianitas
antiqua

fontes
vol. I

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świętego Porfiriusza
biskupa Gazy

z języka greckiego przełożył,
komentarzem i przypisami opatrzył
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Gdańsk 2003

Summary of general theses from Introduction

Over seventy years have passed since two Brussels professors of Byzantine studies, H. Grégoire and M.-A. Kugener, published a critical and, so far, the most careful edition of *Life of Porphyry*, a clergyman who was bishop in Palestinian Gaza in 395–420. *Life of Porphyry, a bishop of Gaza*, written by Mark the Deacon, belongs to the most controversial sources of late antiquity due to numerous problems connected with the chronology of its origin and anachronisms appearing in it. In the research carried out so far, this source has been used rather rarely to reconstruct the history of late antiquity. Its unreliability as a source of information has been emphasised too often. This last opinion has been present in the research since 1930, when M.-A. Kugener and H. Grégoire published the Greek version of *Life*, together with an extensive commentary. However, it is enough to read the contemporary reviews of the above-mentioned edition of *Life of Porphyry* to realise that this commentary isn't flawless. Yet, many researchers recognised (considering not so much editors' argumentation, as their authority) the aptness of hypotheses and opinions voiced by Kugener and Grégoire. Therefore, for the last seventy years *Life of Porphyry* has not been the subject of particular interest of either researchers dealing with the history of late antiquity, or those studying the history of ancient Christianity.

Interpreting the source data which appears in *Life* is not always an easy task. Numerous doubts arise already in connection with the author of *Life of Porphyry*—Mark the Deacon. About the author of *Life* we can only say this much as he wrote about himself in his work, namely that he came from province Asia and was a copyist by profession. He had arrived in Jerusalem before 392 and met Porphyry there. Further events in his life were connected with the activity of bishop Porphyry. However, it is unlikely that the author of Greek version of *Life*, in the shape we know it nowadays, was deacon Mark, an ecclesiastic from the circle of bishop Porphyry.

The most difficult problem in case of *Life* is the question of chronology and the place of writing down of this work. Considerations in this subject circle around two crucial questions. The first asks whether it is possible to uphold the claim made by Mark the Deacon that he was an eyewitness of the events described by himself. The second question, by far a more important one, is: when did the Greek version, which we know at present, arise? In connection with the problem of chronology of the work by Mark the Deacon, attention was drawn (Kugener-Grégoire, J. Zellinger) to borrowings, which we find in *Life of Porphyry* and *Historia Religiosa*, written in the 40s of the fifth century by Theodore, a bishop of Cyrus. These similarities are found both in Prologues to

these works as well as in further paragraphs. J. Zellinger, examining the question of the borrowings mentioned here, came to a basically different conclusion from the one drawn by Kugener and Grégoire. Namely, he stated that Theodore of Cyrus, describing lives of Syrian monks for the purpose of his work, had drawn on the text by Mark the Deacon. This remark, though fundamentally contradictory to the opinion held by the Brussels researchers, seems not deprived of its *raison d'être* after a closer analysis (which I carried out in the *Introduction* to this edition of *Life*). Moreover, one cannot exclude a possibility that both authors may have used a different unknown source (or sources). Compilation was a very common practice at that time, and especially in hagiographic works. So, why should it be different in this case?

In the research on the chronology of the origin of *Life* so far, many more or less legitimate hypotheses have been formulated. One of them says that *Life of Porphyry*, written as early as the first half of the fifth century, was, for some unknown reasons, re-edited in the middle of the sixth century, and this version of *Life* has survived to our times. Supposedly, it was then that many anachronisms appeared in the text. According to P. Peeters (the editor of the Georgian version of *Life of Porphyry*), re-edition of the text is a consequence of the conflict between the supporters of chalcedonian council and their opponents - monophysites, who engaged in an argument in Gaza concerning the right of possessing a church, whose patron was saint Sergius. The literary work re-edited for the sake of this argument, clearly stated on whose initiative and in the aftermath of what events this church was erected, which was to be a weighty argument in the dispute. For, according to Peeters, empress Eudoxia and her spouse, emperor Arcadius, both orthodox believers who contributed to the fall of paganism in Gaza, fitted ideally to the roles of the founders of the church, having saint Sergius as a patron in the sixth century. Among zealous orthodox believers there were also John Goldenmouth (another one who can be rated among Constantinople advocates of the cause of struggle with paganism in Gaza) and closely unknown eunuch Amantius, whose orthodoxy was emphasised many times by Mark the Deacon.

Although the author of *Life* stresses that he knows Porphyry's vicissitudes from experience, it is easy to undermine the legitimacy of this statement. Surely, one cannot rule out that this deacon Mark was the author of the original version of *Life*, which was re-edited in the middle of the sixth century. When writing about anachronisms that appear in *Life of Porphyry*, we should not forget that the work by Mark the Deacon is, first of all, a text belonging to the hagiographic kind, and care about chronology or legitimacy of some characters appearing there are, on principle, not observed in this kind of sources. Thus, discussing the issue of chronology of the origin of the source we are interested in here, it seems right if we posed two questions. First, when did the original Greek version appear? Second, when did the Greek version that we

know at present originate? One may suppose that the original version of *Life* came into being as early as some time before the Chalcedonian Council. An argument supporting this thesis can be the fact that the shepherd of Jerusalem in the Greek version is called the term *bishop*, while in the Georgian version that we are familiar with, he is named as *patriarch*, which may suggest that the Georgian version of *Life* was created only after Chalcedonian Council, during which the Jerusalem Church was elevated to the rank of patriarchate.

The Greek version of *Life* that we know underwent a re-edition in the middle of the sixth century. What is the rationale behind this claim? The most important reason is the spotted similarity between the fragment of chapter 41 of *Life* (in which emperor Arcadius explains Eudoxia that the violent attack of the state on the pagans in Gaza would influence negatively the flow of taxes from this city to the imperial treasury) and the fragment of the novel CIII, 1 published by Justinian for Palestinian Cesarea in 534, in which the emperor praises the inhabitants of the province *Palestina Prima*, the capital of which was Cesarea, for model fulfilling of fiscal duties towards state. If we continue maintaining that the similarities are evident here, then we might venture to formulate the next hypothesis, namely that the re-edition of the text of *Life* was made in Cesarea in the local bishop's circles. What interests, then, could guide the commissioner of these amendments? An answer to this question should be sought in *Life* itself, more specifically in these paragraphs where the bishop of Cesarea appears accompanied by the matters of his bishopric. Why Cesarea? First, because the author of the corrections exactly in this place enclosed a fragment of Justinian's amendment issued for Cesarea and not for any other Palestinian city. However, not everyone was interested in making corrections to the text of *Life*, treating about some bishop acting in the far end of Palestine before over a hundred years. The inspirer of these corrections could have been someone who cared about introducing into the text of *Life* some contents absent from it, which acted to the benefit of the inspirer himself. In view of that, if we are to maintain that the re-edition of the text was really done in the middle of the sixth century, then it seems likely that it was done in Palestinian Cesarea, in the local bishop's circle. Correctness of this statement is further confirmed by the elevated style of these fragments of *Life of Porphyry* in which the bishop of Cesarea appears, and this cannot be explained only by the fact that this bishop was a metropolitan for our Porphyry. One should also have a closer look at these fragments of the text which refer to economic privileges, granted allegedly (as it stems from the text of *Life*) to the bishopric of Cesarea by emperors. It is possible, then, that in the sixth century the officials started questioning the privileges obtained by this bishopric. In any case, we remember that these economic privileges, allegedly accorded to Cesarea, were described in *Life* only generally, giving more room for manoeuvre to the party that received them (VP 46; 53). It is likely that in the middle of the sixth century, in the face

of undermining these privileges, it was necessary to remind them, reminding at the same time the circumstances in which they were granted to Cesarea. Obviously, just as well, some other circumstances might have necessitated the invoking of the economic privileges allegedly given to Cesarean bishopric by emperor Arcadius. Firstly, if they really existed, they may have been abused. It is also possible, which is an option we cannot rule out entirely, that the privileges were never given to the bishopric in Cesarea, and their very general characteristics justifies this claim.

Supposedly, it would be helpful in determining the chronology of the origin of the Greek version of *Life of Porphyry* known to us if we paid some attention to similarities between this source and *Lives of the Monks of Palestine* by Cyrill of Scythopolis (written down in the second half of the sixth century). When reading the work of Cyrill of Scythopolis, one cannot help the feeling that some of its fragments (*Vita Sabae*, 51; 71) are too reminiscent of the relevant episodes from *Life of Porphyry* (VP 39–40; 43; 54). These similarities are too explicit to regard them as accidental. It is possible, then, that Cyrill, the author of *Lives of the Monks of Palestine*, coming from Scythopolis (situated near Cesarea, where most probably *Life of Porphyry* was re-edited in the middle of the sixth century) knew *Life of Porphyry* and, possibly, borrowed from it some descriptions for the purpose of his written work.

Literature knows a few more hypotheses concerning the chronology of the origin of the source we are interested in. Among them, the hypothesis created by R. van Dam deserves our attention. The author maintains that, although Mark the Deacon comes over as the author of both versions of *Life* known to us, that is the Greek version and the Syrian-Georgian one, yet both versions are based upon *Mark's original diary*. Even though van Dam does not reveal the way he has come to that conclusion, one may suppose that he was inspired by one of the hypotheses put forward some time by H. Grégoire, who maintained that *Life of Porphyry* was written down as late as the seventh century and is a development of the description of the journey to Constantinople, which was made together by Porphyry, the bishop of Gaza, and his deacon Mark. This hypothesis is not senseless. Since we know a parallel example, that is *A Panegyric on Macarius, Bishop of Tkôw* by pseudo-Dioscuros, patriarch of Alexandria.

Interesting is also M. Gigante's conception, who maintained that the work of Mark the Deacon is a biography of a bishop orygenist, which was re-edited, for obvious reasons, in the sixth or even the seventh century. It was then that many corrections were made in the text, e.g. John, the bishop of Jerusalem favouring orygenists, was replaced by Praylios, his orthodox substitute. Additionally, traces of orygenism (VP 29; 33) likewise pelagianism (VP 8; 101) are still visible in the text of *Life*, despite the corrections made.

There remains one more question to discuss, namely the place of origin of the source we are concerned with here. We have already assumed that the original

version of *Life of Porphyry*, written in the first half of the fifth century, for some unknown reasons was subject to re-edition, and this was done most probably in the middle of the sixth century of Palestinian Caesarea in local bishop's circles. But where was the original version of *Life of Porphyry* written down? And whom was it addressed to? Venturing to answer these questions, in the absence of independent source data, we are forced to look for the answer in the text of *Life* itself. Even if we adhered to the statement that Porphyry's deacon Mark is really the author of the source, this does not mean that he wrote down *Life* exactly in Gaza. If not in Gaza, then where? Assuredly we will never know the answer on this question. However we can suppose that *Life* was addressed to Christians outside Palestine and in my opinion, it is indicated by the precise description of the location of Gaza, which author of *Life* enclosed in the beginning of the fourth chapter of his work. There we read: *Gaza is a popular city in Palestine, located on the border with Egypt and belonging to the most populated and wealthy cities.* If *Life of Porphyry* had been addressed only to Christians in Palestine, have been necessary, then, to specify exactly the situation of Gaza on the map of the Empire? Obviously, we remember that in case of the above description one could seek similarities in an analogous statement found in *Life of Jacob (Historia Religiosa I, 2)*, where Theodore, specifying the location of Nizibis (Jacob's home city), states that it is situated on the border between the Roman Empire and the country of Persia.

For a lot of historians it will be surely difficult to maintain that *Life of Porphyry* was also addressed to Christians outside Palestine, as it seems that there was no demand for that. And that is because bishop Porphyry was neither a famous speaker, nor a monk whose achievements in the field of practising asceticism deserved praising and propagation. We do not find him either in the reports concerning the most famous church intrigues of those times. He was the bishop of a small provincial town instead, and the events described in *Life* (fights with pagans in Gaza and destruction of local temples) were not anything special at the time, either. Similar acts took place at the turn of the fourth and fifth centuries in many cities of the Roman East.

Life of Porphyry, the bishop of Gaza, regardless of its title, is not a biography in the strict sense of the word. Although it shows many features characteristic of the so-called Plutarch model of biography, the content of *Life* itself fundamentally differs from a biographical work. This source is, instead, a description of struggle between Christians (I deliberately do not speak Porphyry here) and pagans in Gaza at the turn of the fourth and fifth centuries. What reasons allow us to adhere to this statement? Namely, the facts about Gaza and religious conflicts in this city dominate in the source. Not much, as for a source of an allegedly biographical character, is said in *Life* about Porphyry himself, his family, his home city, etc. Porphyry sometimes even disappears from the pages to give place to characters who seem only supporting from the point of view of a biographical work.

An important question connected with the source we are interested in here is the language in which the original version of *Life* was written down. Although the prevalent opinion says that it was Greek, there is also a hypothesis that the original text of *Life* was written down in Syrian language. This hypothesis was put forward by P. Peeters in connection with his publishing of Georgian version of *Life*. He claimed that the original text of *Life* of Porphyry was written down in Syrian language and the Greek and Georgian versions, which have been saved to our times, are only more or less exact translations of the Syrian original. What reasons allow to sustain that standpoint? According to P. Peeters, it is, first of all, the fact that in Georgian version, which is closer to the Syrian original in his opinion, names of the characters in *Life* originate in Syrian language.

Peeters's hypothesis has its many weak points, though. Firstly, if we assume that the author of *Life* is really Porphyry's deacon Mark, coming from a province of Asia, then it is very unlikely (though obviously possible) that a copyist skilled in Greek wrote down the *Life* of his bishop in Syrian language. And if that were to be true, who would be the addressee of the text, then? Obviously not the local people, who, we have to admit, used Syrian language, but were mostly illiterate. Moreover, in Christian literature from that period, translating of popular works of hagiographic kind was practised indeed, but, on principle, the direction was from Greek to Syrian or Coptic and not the other way round. And, finally, the last remark: the language of culture in early Byzantine Palestine was still Greek.

In historical studies concerning late antiquity, only Greek version of *Life of Porphyry* is being cited. Yet, the Georgian version of *Life* is also known. It was published in 1941 by bollandist P. Peeters. When comparing the two versions of *Life*, he came to two conclusions. First, the Georgian text contains two versions of *Life*: longer and shorter (which is the translation of the Greek version of *Life of Porphyry* that we know). Second, the Georgian version that he acquired is closer to the original one, which was written down in Syrian language, according to him. Additionally, from his point of view, although it is hard to say how P. Peeters had come to this conclusion, the Georgian version was written in the sixth or seventh century on the basis of the Syrian original. P. Peeters was absolutely convinced of the correctness of his hypothesis and, because of that, he resolved all doubts to his advantage.

What reasons, according to P. Peeters, justify the claim that the Georgian version of *Life* is closer to the alleged Syrian original? He maintained that, since *Life of Porphyry* arose in the Syrian language area, it must have been written down in Syrian. He claimed also that, according to the rules of early editions of biographical texts, they were usually a little shorter from the subsequent versions, which were *piously beautified* with time, and so they expanded as a result of adding to them some fragments of text.

When comparing the two versions of *Life of Porphyry*, Georgian and Greek, we immediately notice that the Georgian text is shorter. As regards contents, it does not differ a lot from the Greek version. We are going to discuss briefly these differences. First, these are the differently sounding names of characters appearing in *Life*, which is probably the consequence of the fact that the Georgian text was written on the basis of the translation of the Syrian version of *Life*, which was, in turn, the translation of the Greek version of the source we are interested in here. Some of the characters like, for example, eunuch Eutropios and bishops Irenion and Enneas do not show in the Georgian version of *Life*. Moreover, the Georgian version contains a piece of information (which is absent from the Greek version known to us) about the erection of xenodochium by bishop Porphyry in Gaza.

Namely, even if we consider some facts which appear in both versions of *Life*, in the Greek version they are presented in greater detail. Nevertheless, that *Syrian trace* cannot be ruled out entirely in case of Georgian version of *Life*. There are too many borrowings from Syrian language in it, which strongly suggests that it is a translation from this language. Whereas the Syrian version of *Life*, which may have really existed, was only a translation of the Greek text (only after interpolation, which was probably made in the sixth century). Tracing the description of the life of Porphyry, his struggle with pagans in Gaza, a conclusion emerges that the author of the Georgian translation deliberately left out or just summarised some fragments of the Greek text. Why? It may have resulted from the Georgian translator's conviction that exactly these paragraphs have little learning value. Therefore, if we adhere to the statement that the author of the Georgian version intended to translate only these fragments of the text which are crucial for the proper subject matter of the work (that is, presentation of fights between Christians and pagans in Gaza), then we will view the fact of summarising or skipping of some fragments (present in the Greek version) as more intelligible. The details which make the Georgian version of *Life* richer do not diminish the learning value of the Greek version of *Life*.

Unfortunately, *Life of Porphyry* is a source full of contradictions and disagreements with other sources appearing in it caused that its learning value has often been undermined, even though in relation to many subjects it is the only known source. Discrepancies between *Life* and other contemporary sources are, unfortunately, numerous. Some of them concern the characters appearing in *Life*. However, we should not forget that a common feature of hagiographic works is the appearance of characters who cannot be easily fitted in concrete historical reality. Also *Life of Porphyry* is not an exception here.

The bishop of Jerusalem, Praylios (VP 10;12;14), could not have participated in the events depicted by Mark the Deacon, dated at the turn of the fourth and fifth centuries, because, although he really possessed the bishop's throne,

but it was only as late as in 416-425 years. We encounter a similar situation in case of Kynegios, also appearing in *Life of Porphyry* (VP 51; 54; 63; 69), but who cannot be identified with Maternus Kynegios (a fervent Christian and a consul in 388). The same situation concerns John, the archbishop of Cesarea, who, as it is said in *Life* (VP 12-13; 15-16; 32-33; 35; 52; 53; 62), ordained Porphyry to the bishop's throne in Gaza. If, in case of bishop Preylios, we find an obvious anachronism (the bishop of Jerusalem, John, favouring orygenists and pelagians, was deliberately replaced by Praylios), then, in case of Kynegios, and, to some extent, John, the bishop of Cesarea, one might venture to explain the situation. Controversial is also the person of eunuch Amantios, a supporter of John Goldenmouth, who appears in *Life* in connection with bishop Porphyry's efforts in the imperial court to obtain consent to destroy pagan temples in Gaza. The historicity of Amantios as a eunuch by empress Eudoxia is usually questioned. However, there are some reasons that justify the claim that eunuch Amantius, appearing in *Life of Porphyry*, was a historical character. Namely, there are no obstacles which would forbid the identification of Amantios with a cubicularion, bearing the same name, who played an important role in the emperor's court at the beginning of the reign of Theodosius II. He is mentioned by Zonaras and in *Anthologia Palatina*.

We do not possess, unfortunately, too many independent reports concerning the events in Gaza described by Mark the Deacon. How should one explain the lack of information on this subject in, at least, the contemporary Church Histories? Most likely the reason is that Gaza was only a provincial city and its bishop only a local activist, like there were plenty of them at that time. The protagonist of our source, Porphyry, the bishop of Gaza, did not participate in great political events of the epoch, and, probably, he did not take part in any of the intrigues, which troubled the contemporary Church, either. Also, bishop Porphyry's journey to the capital, his contacts with the imperial court, the course of the audience at the imperial couple (the description of which could partially, if not entirely, be made up by the author of *Life*), were nothing special. Additionally, the fights of Christians with pagans in the period in question, similar to those in Gaza, were not an isolated case. However, we possess a few source reports which refer to the events described in *Life of Porphyry*. Worth noticing, though a little troublesome, is the piece of information that we find in Sozomen's Church History (HE VII,15). It stems from his report that already in the second half of the 80s, and, therefore, in the period of activity in the East of prefect praetorio Maternus Kynegios, Gazean pagans, like the inhabitants of other cities in Palestine and Arabia, *stood up for their temples*. Worth noticing are also reports by Hieronymus. In one of his letters, dated only to 403, he states that Gazean Marneion remains untouched. Whereas in the commentary to the *Book of Isaiah* (VII, 17), Hieronymus speaks about Marneion as

an already destroyed temple, on the site of which God's church was erected. Surely, it was Eudoxiane that he had in mind.

Even more scant are the reports concerning bishop Porphyry himself, the protagonist in the work by Mark the Deacon. Both interesting and controversial is the report by John, the bishop of Jerusalem, who (and not bishop Praylios), as we already know, ordained Porphyry presbyter. In one of the few speeches that have survived, he refers probably to Porphyry when he says about constituting in Jerusalem the first staurophylax (the guard of the relic of the holy cross). It is hard to say, though, to what extent this report can be connected with bishop Porphyry. The protagonist in Mark the Deacon's work was surely one of the participants of the bishop synod of *Palaestina Prima* in Diospolis in 415. Among the participants of the synod we find also Porphyry, the bishop of Gaza. Any accidental convergence of names should rather be excluded here. Possibly, also Sozomen (HE V, 3) refers to the person of bishop Porphyry (or his successor). Namely, he maintains that *some contemporary* bishop of Gaza, after the death of bishop of Majuma, undertook an unsuccessful attempt to unite two Churches under his authority. But because of the not fully clear chronology of the origin of History of the Church by Sozomen, the above statement should be considered as too rash.

In connection with the events described by Mark the Deacon, there are many more questions, which must, unfortunately, remain unanswered. One of them is why rhetor Choricios (active in Gaza in the sixth century), praising in his speeches the acts of his contemporary Marcian, bishop of Gaza, does not say a word about bishop Porphyry. Maybe bishop Porphyry did not deserve such mentioning in Choricios's opinion for some reasons, e.g. favouring orygenism, which cannot be excluded. Choricios does not mention also Eudoxian basilica. One should assume, though, that in the sixth century the Mark's name of the basilica, Eudoxiane, did not function any more. As one may suppose, empress Eudoxia, regarded as the person responsible to a large extent for the adversity and death of revered in the christian East John Goldenmouth, was no longer identified with this impressive building. Moreover, even if immediately after the basilica had been built it was really named Eudoxiane, the name was only parallel, pointing to the founder of this building. Whereas the basilica itself must have had its patron saint.

Life of Porphyry, despite many controversies connected with it, is not only an interesting, but also (contrary to opinions of many historians) a precious source of knowledge about late antiquity, everyday life and functioning mechanisms of the state at the turn of the fourth and fifth centuries. As far as its learning value is concerned, it does not differ from other contemporary hagiographic works.