

More than “the last monument of Byzantine rule in Cyrenaica” Taucheira in late antiquity

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More than “the last monument of Byzantine rule in Cyrenaica”
Taucheira in Late Antiquity

Abstract: The city of Taucheira (modern Tocra) in Cyrenaica, Libya, has played a prominent role in established narratives of the 7th-century Arab conquest of Byzantine North Africa ever since excavations by Richard Goodchild in the 1960s uncovered a substantial walled compound there. Goodchild interpreted the compound as a fortress — “the last monument of Byzantine rule in Cyrenaica” — built in haste in the face of the approaching Arabs inside a much larger set of walls traditionally ascribed to the reign of Justinian I (r. 527–565). In the more than half a century since Goodchild’s publication of the walled compound, late antique and Byzantine studies have undergone radical transformations, but narratives around the walled compound at Taucheira, and about the city itself, have not been considered critically. This article presents a combined historical and archaeological reassessment of the city in light of contemporary developments in scholarship and argues that Taucheira was a vibrant urban centre throughout late antiquity, provided with walls at some point between the late 5th century and the Justinianic period. Detailed re-examination of the walled compound indicates it could not have served an effective defensive function and is better interpreted as an administrative area. Moreover, an Anastasian construction date is more probable than the conventionally accepted date in the 640s CE.

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Introduction

In ca. AD 642, ‘Amr b. al-‘As, the architect of the Arab conquest of Egypt, launched the first of a series of cavalry expeditions into the Byzantine province of Libya Pentapolis (Libya Superior or Cyrenaica) in the northeast of modern-day Libya.¹ These expeditions formed the precursor to the Arab conquest of the Maghreb, but details are scarce and their interpretation problematic. Nevertheless, one site has come to occupy a central position in these events—the city of Taucheira (mod. Tocrā)²—located on the Libyan coast, with the major cities of Ptolemais (mod. Tolmeita) and Cyrene (mod. Shahhat), together with the latter’s port at Apollonia-Sozousa (mod. Marsa Susa), to its east, and Euesperides/Berenike (mod. Benghazi) to its west (**fig. 1**). Based on the perceived convergence of written and archaeological evidence, Richard George Goodchild, who excavated at the site in the 1960s, identified an intramural walled compound at Taucheira, referred to in the literature as the ‘Byzantine fortress’, as the site of the Byzantine administration’s last stand in the Pentapolis in the 640s, and argued that it was constructed in haste by the Byzantine army in the face of the Arab advance in ca. 642 before the city ultimately fell to Arab forces in ca. 645.³ Goodchild duly suggested that the walled compound was “the last monument of Byzantine rule in Cyrenaica.”⁴

As so much emphasis has been placed on Taucheira at the point of its transition from Byzantine to Islamic rule, other possible histories of the city in Late Antiquity have been left untold. Our aim in this article is therefore to leverage the urban archaeology of Taucheira to assess the role and importance of the city throughout Late Antiquity, and to place the site into a more comprehensive historical framework of the vicissitudes of the wider Pentapolis, in particular from the late 5th c. to the mid 7th c. In the following pages, we first re-examine the written sources for the Arab expeditions into the Pentapolis in the 640s and Taucheira’s place within them. We argue that, while Taucheira undoubtedly played a role in these events, the interpretation of the written sources is not as straightforward as has often been assumed, and the historical reconstruction with which the archaeological evidence has traditionally been aligned represents only one of several possible interpretations. We next broaden the perspective and evaluate all late antique architectural and archaeological remains of Taucheira. This synthesis shows that even in the absence of precise dating, Taucheira is very likely to have been a thriving agricultural and port city in Late Antiquity. We then provide a detailed description of the intramural walled compound that is, at least in our opinion, mistakenly referred to as the ‘Byzantine fortress’, and re-evaluate its builders, phases, and functions throughout time.⁵ Finally, we put forward some alternative historical contexts for the construction of the compound, concluding that its interpretation as having been hastily constructed as a refuge against the oncoming Arabs is based on an overly narrow reading of the written sources and is not supported by the available archaeological evidence.

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¹ For ‘Amr b. al-‘As see A. J. WENSINCK, ‘Amr b. al-‘Āṣ, in (ed.) H. Gibb and et al., *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2nd edn, vol. 1. Leiden 1960, 451.

² The site is also known as Teuchira or Teuchira in modern scholarship.

³ R. G. GOODCHILD, Byzantines, Berbers and Arabs in 7th-century Libya, *Antiquity* 41, no. 162 (1967), 115–24.

⁴ GOODCHILD, Byzantines, Berbers and Arabs in 7th-century Libya, 121.

⁵ This structure has never been fully published, in part because of the premature death of its original excavator, Goodchild, in 1968, and due to the subsequent scarcity of records about the compound’s excavation. A brief historiography is provided in the article’s Appendix.

The methodology employed in this article is a desk-based one; we have not been to Taucheira. Instead, this research is based on secondary literature supplemented by records held by the British Institute for Libyan and Northern African Studies Archive (held at the University of Leicester) and diachronic photographic records hosted by the Manar al-Athar Digital Archive at the University of Oxford and the Ward-Perkins Collection housed by the British School at Rome. While fieldwork and site visits will doubtless remain a key component of archaeological research for years to come, our hope is to demonstrate that there is much to be gained from reassessing archival materials, all the more so since a comparison of historical photographic materials with more recent photos makes it clear that the excavated portions of Taucheira have deteriorated significantly in the interim. Taucheira's seafront, like that of other Roman cities along the Libyan coast, including Sabratha, Apollonia-Sozousa and Ptolemais, is threatened by erosion, worsened by increased intensity and frequency of storms driven by climate change.⁶ Climate change is also exacerbating threats of desertification, encroaching vegetation, and stone degradation. Degradation of cultural heritage sites is noticeable at most, if not all, other sites throughout the Mediterranean region, making the collation, accessibility and study of older photographs and plans invaluable.

Taucheira and the Arab conquests in the written sources

The written sources for 'Amr b. al-'As' expeditions into the Pentapolis offer at best a partial picture of these events. These can effectively be divided into three traditions. The most extensive account is offered by the Arabic source tradition. The earliest Arabic account is that of the 9th-c. Egyptian scholar, Ibn 'Abd al-Hakam, and all subsequent Arabic accounts appear to draw, directly or indirectly, on his text. In addition to the Arabic sources, 'Amr b. al-'As' expeditions into the Pentapolis are recorded by the chronicle of John, bishop of Nikiu, a universal chronicle produced in Egypt in the late 7th c., which contains a number of unique pieces of information concerning the Arab conquests; and in the *History of the Patriarchs of Alexandria*, a text composed by multiple authors over an extended period of time, which was edited into a single work in the 11th c., and survives as a component of later continuations.⁷ Even from this briefest of summaries, it is clear that the written sources for these events have complex transmission histories which render their interpretation problematic and their original sources difficult to determine. The precise chronology of the expeditions also remains unclear, in part because of inconsistencies both between and within the Arabic sources. It is, however, generally accepted that the initial expedition must have begun in mid- to late 642 and was followed by at least one other expedition in the next three years,⁸ and no attempt will be made to refine this chronology here. The episode recounted by John of Nikiu, discussed in detail below, has been assumed to correspond to the initial Arab incursion in ca. 642, since the chronicle does not report events beyond 643; while that recorded in the *History of the Patriarchs of Alexandria* must date to 644/5, based on proposographical data.⁹

⁶ See recent work by K. WESTLEY et al., The impact of coastal erosion on the archaeology of the Cyrenaican coast of Eastern Libya, *PLoS ONE* 18, no. 4 (2023), e0283703, <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0283703>.

⁷ R. HOYLAND, *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It: A Survey and Evaluation of the Christian, Jewish, and Zoroastrian Writings on Early Islam*. Princeton, NJ 1997, 446–7.

⁸ Date of first expedition: V. CHRISTIDES, Byzantine Libya and the March of the Arabs towards the West of North Africa. Oxford 2000, 38; GOODCHILD, Byzantines, Berbers and Arabs in 7th-century Libya, 116–8 (summer 642); A. BUTLER, *The Arab Conquest of Egypt and the Last Thirty Years of the Roman Dominion*. Oxford 1902, 427; J. THIRY, Le Sahara libyen dans l'Afrique du nord médiévale. Leuven 1995, 22. (after September 642). For a discussion of the dates assigned by the various Arab sources, with references, see THIRY, Le Sahara libyen dans l'Afrique du nord médiévale, 21–2.

⁹ The text claims that 'Amr undertook a further expedition towards the West and the Pentapolis during the patriarchate of the Coptic Patriarch Benjamin I (r. 626–665) (*History of the Patriarchs* I.496–500 [232–6] (ed.

Despite the prominence granted to Taucheira in these events by modern scholarship, it is important to recognise that the city is entirely absent from the Arabic sources. These report only the capitulation of Barqa (mod. al-Mardj) to the Arabs;¹⁰ and the Arab forces' subsequent move southwest, to Zuwila,¹¹ and west, into Tripolitania (north-western Libya), where the Byzantine provincial capital, Oea (mod. Tripoli), was captured and other cities were raided.¹² It is notable that the Arabic tradition does not indicate any encounter between 'Amr b. al-'As' forces and the Byzantine army, and that the capitulation of Barqa appears to have been negotiated by the local Berber population (the Luwata), rather than by any imperial official.¹³ It has therefore been understood that the Arab forces bypassed the key Byzantine fortifications along the coast of the Pentapolis—namely at Antipyrkos (mod. Tobruk) and Derna—as well as the assumed provincial capital of Apollonia-Sozousa,¹⁴ instead crossing the Pentapolis south

and English trans. B. EVETTS, *History of the Patriarchs of the Coptic Church of Alexandria* (S. Mark to Benjamin I), *Patrologia Orientalis* 1.2 and 1.4. Paris 1907). A *terminus post quem* is therefore provided by the recall of Benjamin from exile in 644 (*History of the Patriarchs*, I.490–96 [226–32] (ed. and English trans. EVETTS, *History of the Patriarchs of the Coptic Church of Alexandria*); see further DAVIS 2004, 117–28); and a *terminus ante quem* is provided by 'Amr's recall from Egypt by the caliph 'Uthman (r. 644–653) in 645 (Ibn 'Abd al-Hakam, *Futuh* 183; ed. C. C. TORREY, *The History of the Conquest of Egypt, North Africa and Spain Known as the Futūḥ Miṣr of Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam*. New Haven, CT 1922; English trans. C. C. TORREY, *The Mohammedan conquest of Egypt and North Africa, Biblical and Semitic Studies* (1901), 288–9); cf. al-Tabari, *Tarikh* 2813–4 (English trans. Stephen HUMPHREYS, *The History of al-Tabari: Volume XV: The Crisis of the Early Caliphate*. Albany, NY 1990), 18–19), who places this event in AH 27 (647/8)).

¹⁰ Ibn 'Abd al-Hakam, *Futuh* 171 (ed. TORREY, *The History of the Conquest of Egypt*; English trans. TORREY *The Mohammedan conquest of Egypt and North Africa*, 285); al-Baladhuri, *Futuh* 224 (English trans. H. KENNEDY, *History of the Arab Invasions: The Conquest and Administration of Empire: A New Translation of al-Balādhurī's Futūḥ al-Buldān*. London 2022, 233); al-Tabari, *Tarikh* 2645 (English trans. Rex SMITH, *The History of al-Tabari: Volume XIV: The Conquest of Iran*. Albany, NY 1994, 13).

¹¹ Ibn 'Abd al-Hakam, *Futuh* 170–1 (ed. TORREY, *The History of the Conquest of Egypt*; English trans. TORREY *The Mohammedan conquest of Egypt and North Africa*, 285); al-Baladhuri, *Futuh* 224–5 (trans. KENNEDY, *History of the Arab Invasions*, 233–4); al-Tabari, *Tarikh* 2646 (English trans. Rex SMITH, *The History of al-Tabari*, 14); al-Bakri, *Kitab* 10 (ed. W. MACGUCKIN DE SLANE, *Description de L'Afrique Septentrionale par Abou-Obeid-el-Bakri*. Algier 1857; French trans. W. MACGUCKIN DE SLANE, *Description de l'Afrique septentrionale*. Paris 1859, 28).

¹² Siege of Oea: Ibn 'Abd al-Hakam, *Futuh* 171 (ed. TORREY, *The History of the Conquest of Egypt*; English trans. TORREY *The Mohammedan conquest of Egypt and North Africa*, 285–6); al-Bakri, *Kitab* 8 (ed. MACGUCKIN DE SLANE, *Description de L'Afrique Septentrionale*; French trans. MACGUCKIN DE SLANE, *Description de l'Afrique septentrionale*, 24); with CHRISTIDES, *Byzantine Libya and the March of the Arabs towards the West of North Africa.*, 51 n.28. Arab attack on Sabratha: Ibn 'Abd al-Hakam, *Futuh* 172 (ed. TORREY, *The History of the Conquest of Egypt*; English trans. TORREY *The Mohammedan conquest of Egypt and North Africa*, 286–7). The chronology of these events has been variously interpreted by modern scholars, some of whom have seen the advance into Tripolitania as a continuation of the expedition launched in 642 (THIRY, *Le Sahara libyen dans l'Afrique du nord médiévale*, 22; GOODCHILD, *Byzantines, Berbers and Arabs in 7th-century Libya*, 122), while others assume that the capture of Oea represents a second incursion, with 'Amr seemingly withdrawing back towards Egypt in the interim (CHRISTIDES, *Byzantine Libya and the March of the Arabs towards the West of North Africa.*, 39; W. KAEGI, *Muslim Expansion and Byzantine Collapse in North Africa*. Cambridge 2010, 109–10.).

¹³ Ibn 'Abd al-Hakam, *Futuh* 170–1 (ed. TORREY, *The History of the Conquest of Egypt*; English trans. TORREY *The Mohammedan conquest of Egypt and North Africa*, 285). The Luwata have often been identified with the Laguatan/Ilaguas to which 6th-c. sources refer, and with whom the Byzantine Empire was in conflict in the mid-6th c. See further Y. MODÉLAN, *Les Maures et l'Afrique romaine (IVe–VIIe siècle)*. Rome 2003, 647–53. Lack of imperial presence at Barqa: CHRISTIDES, *Byzantine Libya and the March of the Arabs towards the West of North Africa.*, 38; R. HOYLAND, *In God's Path: The Arab Conquests and the Creation of an Islamic Empire*. Oxford 2015, 79.

¹⁴ The prominent position given to Sousa (Apollonia-Sozousa) in the geographical late 6th-/early 7th-c. treatise attributed to George of Cyprus (Ps.-George of Cyprus, l. 787; ed. E. HONIGMANN, *Le Synekdemōs d'Hiérōklēs et l'Opuscule Géographique de Georges de Chypre*. Brussels 1939), suggests that it remained the provincial capital in ca. 600, following the provincial reforms of the emperor Maurice (582–591) (A. CHASTAGNOL, *Les gouverneurs de Byzacène et de Tripolitaine, Antiquités Africaines* 1 (1967), 119–34; M. BENABBÈS, *Des provinces byzantines*

of the Jebel Akhdar and approaching Barqa from the southeast (**fig. 2**).¹⁵ Taucheira, being located ca. 25 km northwest of Barqa, may not have fallen within their path on this occasion.

An alternative, although not incompatible, tradition is presented in the chronicle of John of Nikiu. The chronicle claims that:

[...] ‘Amr reduced the land of Egypt and sent men in order to wage war with the men of Pentapolis. Thereafter he defeated them and did not allow them to live there. And he took a great quantity of plunder and captives from there. Abulyānos the official of Pentapolis and the troops who accompanied him and the elite of the region went to the city of Dušērā, because it was a fortified citadel, and they closed the gates against them. And the Muslims, having taken plunder and captives, went to their region.¹⁶

Dušērā has consistently been identified with Taucheira.¹⁷ Based on this passage, Goodchild assumed that, as the Arab forces advanced into the Pentapolis in ca. 642, the Byzantine administration of the province under the authority of Abulyānos withdrew from the provincial capital at Apollonia-Sozousa to Taucheira. The Byzantines, supposedly in a hurry, constructed a ‘fortress’ from which they resisted the Arabs for the next couple of years.¹⁸ The fall of Taucheira to the Arabs is not attested by any source, but is assumed to have occurred in 644/5, during the Arab incursion into the Pentapolis attested in the *History of the Patriarchs of Alexandria*.¹⁹

Modern interpretation of the archaeology of the walled compound at Taucheira has therefore been heavily influenced by John of Nikiu’s narrative. However, the interpretation and translation of the chronicle are far from straightforward. It survives only as a 17th-c. Ge’ez translation from Arabic and the language of the original text remains uncertain (although this was probably Coptic).²⁰ Most of those who have studied Taucheira, including Goodchild, were unable to consult the text in the original Ge’ez, and have therefore been dependent on translations into western European languages. Translation is however an art rather than a science, and scholarship on John of Nikiu in recent decades has revealed significant issues with both the French translations produced by the text’s original editor, Hermann Zotenberg, and the widely used English translation of Robert Charles.²¹ In light of this, the weight placed on the text in the interpretation of the walled compound at Taucheira warrants careful

à l’Ifriqiya: Continuités et changements dans les découpages administratifs, in (ed.) C. Briand-Ponsart and Y. Modéran, *Les provinces et identités dans l’Afrique romaine*. Caen 2011, 271–93: 278–80). However, the treatise need not reflect provincial organisation far beyond this (cf. BENABBES, *Des provinces byzantines à l’Ifriqiya: Continuités et changements dans les découpages administratifs*, 280, in relation to Tripolitania).

¹⁵ CHRISTIDES, *Byzantine Libya and the March of the Arabs towards the West of North Africa*, 38.

¹⁶ John of Nikiu, *Chron.* c. 120.34–35 (trans. Phil BOOTH). Daria Elagina and Phil Booth are preparing a new edition, translation, and commentary of John of Nikiu’s chronicle for the *Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium*. The authors are grateful to Phil Booth for making available to them his unpublished translation of this section of the chronicle, which is quoted here.

¹⁷ H. ZOTENBERG, *Mémoire sur la chronique byzantine de Jean, évêque de Nikiou*, *Journal Asiatique* ser. 7, 13 (1879), 377; and idem, *Chronique de Jean, évêque de Nikiou*. Paris 1883, 458, translates Dušērā as “Teucheira” without comment.

¹⁸ GOODCHILD, *Byzantines, Berbers and Arabs in 7th-century Libya*, 121–2.

¹⁹ *History of the Patriarchs* 1.496–500 [232–6] (ed. and English trans. EVETTS, *History of the Patriarchs of the Coptic Church of Alexandria*).

²⁰ Edition with French translation: H. ZOTENBERG, *Chronique de Jean, évêque de Nikiou*. Paris 1883; English translation: R. CHARLES, *The Chronicle of John, Bishop of Nikiu*. London 1916. On the transmission history: P. BOOTH, *Shades of Blues and Greens in the Chronicle of John of Nikiu*, *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 104, no. 2 (2012), 555–601; J. D. HOWARD-JOHNSTON, *Witnesses to a World Crisis: Historians and Histories of the Middle East in the Seventh Century*, in: Oxford 2010, 182–5; HOYLAND, *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It: A Survey and Evaluation of the Christian, Jewish, and Zoroastrian Writings on Early Islam*, 152–6.

²¹ See BOOTH, *Shades of Blues and Greens in the Chronicle of John of Nikiu*, 559–60.

consideration. Goodchild himself was clearly alert to issues surrounding the text of the chronicle. Records held by the British Institute for Libyan and Northern Africa Studies Archive which relate to the preparation of Goodchild's 1967 article include a list of questions relating to the interpretation of John Nikiu's text,²² and the appendix to the published article cautiously alludes to some of the issues surrounding the text, namely its complicated transmission history, and notes that Goodchild had consulted a specialist in Ge'ez.²³ These issues have not, however, been acknowledged by those who have subsequently followed Goodchild's interpretation.

Two aspects of John's text on the Arab expedition into the Pentapolis in particular merit further interrogation. First, John claims that Abulyānos withdrew to Taucheira "because it was a fortified citadel".²⁴ It is unclear whether the "fortified citadel" to which the text refers is the city walls, the intramural wall compound, or a combination of the two.²⁵ Be that as it may, the text makes no mention of the construction of new fortifications at Taucheira at this time, and clearly presents Abulyānos withdrawing to Taucheira because it was already a defensible position.²⁶ As will be discussed in greater detail below, the city was indeed surrounded by a city wall, enclosing an area about double the size of Apollonia-Sozousa.²⁷ Furthermore, the position of Taucheira offered several strategic advantages. While the coastal cities further to east, including Apollonia-Sozousa, could only be evacuated or reinforced by sea, being penned in against the coast by the Jebel Akhdar, the plain extending to the southwest of Taucheira permitted evacuation and reprovisioning by land.²⁸ Equally, Taucheira had an internal water supply, rather than being supplied by aqueduct, so could potentially withstand a siege.²⁹ It is therefore difficult to understand why, if Taucheira were deemed a defensible position, a further fortification should have had to be built in haste.

Second, the withdrawal of Abulyānos, together with troops and local elites, to the safety of Taucheira has been interpreted as evidence for the evacuation of the Byzantine administration of the Pentapolis from the provincial capital at Apollonia-Sozousa to Taucheira, more than 150 km away.³⁰ While Goodchild described this as a "planned strategic withdrawal" which recognised that Apollonia-Sozousa was vulnerable to naval assault and blockade,³¹ a complete administrative relocation as the Arab forces advanced suggests a high degree of panic on the part of the Byzantine provincial administration and an expectation that 'Amr b. al-'As' expedition comprised the beginning of long-term Arab territorial expansion into the Maghreb, as opposed to opportunistic raiding.³² Indeed, Goodchild went so far as to suggest that the

²² BILNAS Archive D51/2/2/1. In particular, the document notes the discrepancy between the translations offered by ZOTENBERG 1883 and by CATAENI 1911.

²³ GOODCHILD, *Byzantines, Berbers and Arabs in 7th-century Libya*, 123–4.

²⁴ John of Nikiu, *Chron.* c. 120.35 (trans. Phil BOOTH).

²⁵ Cf. CHARLES, *The Chronicle of John*, 195: "now its walls were strongly fortified", followed by GOODCHILD, *Byzantines, Berbers and Arabs in 7th-century Libya*, 117. Charles's translation might be argued to have been influenced by Procopius, *Aed.* vi.3.4.

²⁶ Cf. L. CAETANI, *Annali dell'Islam IV*. Milan 1911, 294; HOYLAND, *In God's Path: The Arab Conquests and the Creation of an Islamic Empire*, 79.

²⁷ D. SMITH AND J. CROW, *The Hellenistic and Byzantine Defences of Tocra (Taucheira)*, *Libyan Studies* 29 (1998), 35–83.

²⁸ GOODCHILD, *Byzantines, Berbers and Arabs in 7th-century Libya*, 121; R. G. GOODCHILD, *The "Palace of the Dux"*, in (ed.) R. G. Goodchild et al., *Apollonia, the Port of Cyrene. Excavations by the University of Michigan, 1965–1967. Tripoli 1976*, 245–65: 255.

²⁹ A. M. BUZAIAN, *Excavations at Tocra (1985–1992)*, *Libyan Studies* (2000), 59–102.

³⁰ CAETANI, *Annali dell'Islam IV*, 294; GOODCHILD, *Byzantines, Berbers and Arabs in 7th-century Libya*, 121; J. B. WARD-PERKINS AND R. G. GOODCHILD, *Christian monuments of Cyrenaica*. London 2003, 201. Cf. SMITH AND CROW, *The Hellenistic and Byzantine Defences of Tocra (Taucheira)*, 72. Contra H. KENNEDY, *The Great Arab Conquests: How the Spread of Islam Changed the World We Live In*. London 2007, 206.

³¹ GOODCHILD, *Byzantines, Berbers and Arabs in 7th-century Libya*, 121.

³² Modern scholarship remains divided as to the purpose of the Arab advance into the Pentapolis in ca. 642, variously seeing it as a series of successful *razzia* (CHRISTIDES, *Byzantine Libya and the March of the Arabs*

population of Apollonia-Sozousa was left to negotiate its own terms with the Arabs, having been abandoned by its administration and troops.³³ The large-scale relocation of the Byzantine administration to a position further west is certainly compatible with a need to construct new fortifications in haste. However, from a strategic perspective, one must question the apparent Byzantine decision to cede the eastern Pentapolis – the bridgehead to the Maghreb – to the Arabs uncontested.

The argument for a large-scale withdrawal to Taucheira is seemingly based on the identification of Abulyānos as the “Prefect of Pentapolis”, a title which should be treated with extreme caution.³⁴ Certainly, the implication of this translation is that Abulyānos was the governor of the province, and his withdrawal to Taucheira might therefore be represented as the relocation of the entire civic and military administration. However, Goodchild himself acknowledged that Abulyānos was as likely to have been the *dux* of the Pentapolis, the senior military commander of the province,³⁵ and the original Ethiopic text in fact permits Abulyānos to be either a civic or military official of unspecified status.³⁶ If Abulyānos were a military commander, rather than the provincial governor, there is no need to assume that he would have been permanently based at Apollonia-Sozousa. Indeed, there is evidence to suggest that Taucheira itself had functioned as a military base in Late Antiquity (see further below).

The picture offered by John of Nikiu’s text is therefore one in which Abulyānos, who is likely to have been a military commander in the Pentapolis and who may (or may not) have otherwise been based at Taucheira, withdrew within Taucheira’s existing defences as the Arabs advanced into the province, rather than proactively engaging with the Arab forces. In so doing, he was accompanied by a body of troops, who may well have comprised the city’s existing garrison, as well as elites from the surrounding area whose properties in the city’s hinterland were likely to have been easy targets for Arab raiding, as they had been for the Berber tribes in the preceding century (see further below). This would be an entirely pragmatic response at a time when the Byzantine administration at Constantinople was focussed on the threat posed by the Arabs in the East and in Egypt, and the possibility of military reinforcement in the Pentapolis was likely to have been limited; and one which indicates no assumptions regarding longer term Arab intentions in the region. It is, furthermore, consistent with the narrative presented by the Arabic sources, which contains no mention of direct engagement between ‘Amr b. al-‘As’ forces and the Byzantine army in the Pentapolis. Nothing in this picture directly precludes Goodchild’s interpretation of the walled compound at Taucheira, but, equally, it offers no explicit support for the hurried construction of fortifications in the city at this time. It is therefore necessary to reassess the alignment between the written and archaeological evidence in relation to both the walled compound itself and Taucheira’s position in wider late antique history.

towards the West of North Africa., 39; C. FENWICK, *The Umayyads and North Africa: Imperial rule and frontier society*, in (ed.) A. Marsham, *The Umayyad World* London & New York 2021, 293–313: 295; HOYLAND, *In God’s Path: The Arab Conquests and the Creation of an Islamic Empire*, 79) and as a component of wider Arab strategy in the region (Howard-Johnston 2010 HOWARD-JOHNSTON, *Witnesses to a World Crisis: Historians and Histories of the Middle East in the Seventh Century*, 469–70; ‘A.-W. D. ṬĀHĀ, *The Muslim Conquest and Settlement of North Africa and Spain* London 1989, 55.).

³³ GOODCHILD, *Byzantines, Berbers and Arabs in 7th-century Libya*, 121.

³⁴ GOODCHILD, *Byzantines, Berbers and Arabs in 7th-century Libya*, 117. In this, Goodchild is consistent with the English translation of CHARLES, *The Chronicle of John*, 195; and with the French translation of ZOTENBERG, *Chronique de Jean*, 458, who translated “gouverneur de la Pentapolis”. Cf. BOOTH, *Shades of Blues and Greens in the Chronicle of John of Nikiou*, 559 n. 17 on the difficulties of dealing with Greek titulature in the text.

³⁵ GOODCHILD, *Byzantines, Berbers and Arabs in 7th-century Libya*, 121.

³⁶ Phil Booth, pers. comm. 17 November 2022.

The urban archaeology of late antique Taucheira: an overview

In order to interpret Taucheira's intramural walled compound, an understanding of its wider context is essential. As Taucheira has been subject to almost two hundred years of archaeological interest, the basic lay-out of the city is understood, but the dating of individual constructions and construction phases has been very difficult throughout. Research is hampered by a lack of good dating material, in particular supra-local ceramics and the absence of coin lists from older excavations. Interpretation is also made more difficult by the site's long occupation, and intense reuse of buildings and recycling of building materials. Taucheira's harbour has been submerged and remains badly understood. Very little work has been done to synthesise the evidence for urban habitation in Taucheira. In the following sections, we bring together all information on the site's late antique layout and buildings for the first time. We are particularly reliant on the important groundwork laid by Fuaad Bentaher and Ahmed Buzaian based on their long-running fieldwork at the site.³⁷

Urban infrastructure

Taucheira had a rich local water supply, which remains evident today from its many oases, and it had access to a relatively fertile plain. Further fieldwork in this part of the Cyrenaican countryside is highly desirable, but Laronde has argued that the city's territory was well-suited to support a substantial rural population engaged in agriculture.³⁸ Habitation on the site itself probably goes back to the 7th c. BC, and continued uninterrupted into the Islamic period. In Roman times, Taucheira was well-connected with the wider empire by road and by sea. The precise course of the roads of Cyrenaica remains open to debate, but the available evidence provided by itineraries, occasionally supplemented by milestones, archaeological remains or the presence of holloways, suggests that roads connected Taucheira with its neighbours: Berenike to the west and Ptolemais to the east.³⁹ Taucheira lies on an exposed section of coast which provides no natural shelter for ships, but underwater surveys indicate that the city's port was equipped with either a breakwater or an artificial mole and two quays.⁴⁰ Moreover, as the 3rd-c. *Periplus Maris Magni* gives the sailing distances for Ptolemais to Taucheira and Taucheira to Berenike, these must have been established routes.⁴¹ Recent research has emphasised the importance of placing smaller ports within the context of complex systems of local and regional connectivity,⁴² and on this basis, it is likely that Taucheira's port was a small one, suitable for serving the city and its immediate hinterland.⁴³ It was probably about the same size as that of its immediate neighbour Ptolemais, but far smaller than the more complex port

³⁷ BUZAIAN in P. KENRICK, *Cyrenaica*. London 2013, 49-63.

³⁸ A. LARONDE, *Le territoire de Taucheira*, *Libyan Studies* 25 (1994), 23-9.

³⁹ On the roads of Cyrenaica see Barrington Atlas, Map 38 (MATTINGLY); also R. G. GOODCHILD, *Roman Milestones in Cyrenaica*, *Papers of the British School at Rome* 18 (1950), 83-91; R. G. GOODCHILD, *Roman roads of Libya and their milestones*, in (ed.) Fawzi F. Gadallah et al., *Libya in history : historical conference 16-23 March 1968*, University of Libya, Faculty of Arts. 1971, 155-71; 162-65. On the road network further east within Cyrenaica see also, A. LARONDE, *Cyrène et la Libye hellénistique = Libykai historiai : de l'époque républicaine au principat d'Auguste*. Paris 1987, 261-314.

⁴⁰ The measurements are ambiguous in the published record. G. D. B. JONES AND J. H. LITTLE, *Coastal Settlement in Cyrenaica*, *The Journal of Roman Studies* 61 (1971), 64-79 describe a breakwater ca. 100 m long, but R. YORKE, *A survey of ancient harbours in Cyrenaica*, *IJNA* 2 (1973), 200-1 writes of two quays and a mole which he posits is as long as 220 m. Further on-site recording is highly desirable in future.

⁴¹ *Periplus Maris Magni* 55-6 (ed. K. MÜLLER, *Geographi Graeci minores*, vol. 1. Paris 1855; repr. Hildesheim 1965, 427-514).

⁴² J. LEIDWANGER, *Roman seas : a maritime archaeology of eastern Mediterranean economies*. Oxford 2020, 154-226.

⁴³ D. J. STONE, *Africa in the Roman Empire: Connectivity, the Economy, and Artificial Port Structures*, *American Journal of Archaeology* 118, no. 4 (2014), 565-600.

at Apollonia-Sozousa, which better served larger ships for longer distance trade and communications.⁴⁴

Taucheira's urban core was delineated by a wall circuit from the Hellenistic period onwards, which we will review in more detail in the next section. The walls are about 2 km long and enclose an area of ca. 41.5 ha, or perhaps slightly more considering that the wall and city quarters along the coast have been submerged and badly eroded since antiquity (**fig. 3**).⁴⁵ The intramural area of the city is therefore significantly smaller than the estimated areas of Berenike (144 ha), Ptolemais (209 ha) and Cyrene (107 ha), but apparently double the size of the walled areas of Apollonia-Sozousa (22 ha), the capital of the Pentapolis from the later 5th c.⁴⁶ Several substantial quarries occupy the northwest of the intramural area and some of these were reused for rock-cut tombs, though their precise chronology is unclear.⁴⁷ Large numbers of rock-cut tombs are also located in the eastern and western suburbs, particularly in quarry areas.⁴⁸ The remaining living space within the walls was therefore about 40.5 ha. If we take inhabited surface to be an indicator of the size of the population in the late antique period, about 5,900 people could have resided inside the walled city centre.⁴⁹

Within the walls, the city was organised on a grid pattern, though this does not appear to have been entirely regular, with several unevenly shaped insulae blocks. It has been suggested that this was a deliberate device intended to disrupt high winds coming off the sea.⁵⁰ We have stronger evidence for the various east-west *decumani* than we do for the north-south

⁴⁴ STONE, *Africa in the Roman Empire: Connectivity, the Economy, and Artificial Port Structures*, 582.

⁴⁵ Indeed, the archaeology of Taucheira is under ongoing threat of coastal erosion, and a survey undertaken in the early 2000s indicates that over 20 m of coastline had been eroded since the British expedition of 1966. See P. BENNETT et al., The effects of recent storms on the exposed coastline of Tocrá, *Libyan Studies* 35, no. 113-122 (2004).

⁴⁶ J. W. HANSON, *An Urban Geography of the Roman World, 100 BC to AD 300*. Oxford 2016, 956 no. 476 (Berenike), 974 no. 488 (Ptolemais), 963 no. 481 (Cyrene), 951 no. 473 (Apollonia). The date of the shift of the provincial capital from Ptolemais to Apollonia-Sozousa remains debated. The earliest evidence for this shift appears in the *Synekdemos* of Hierocles, a geographical text listing 64 provinces of the Eastern Roman Empire and their cities. Internal evidence provides a *terminus post quem* for the text's composition of 528, but it appears to have been based on a 5th-c. original which was subsequently updated. See E. HONIGMANN (ed.), *Le Synekdesmos d'Hieroclès et l'Opuscule Géographique de Georges de Chypre*. Brussels 1939, 5-7. C. KRAELING, *Ptolemais: City of the Libyan Pentapolis*. Chicago, IL 1962, 27., GOODCHILD, *The "Palace of the Dux"*, 253, and, more recently, C. BARTHEL, *Apollonia-Sozousa in late antiquity: Some remarks on the caput provinciae of Libya Superior*, *Libyan Studies*, no. 48 (2017), 159-68, place the shift in the reign of Anastasius, or slightly earlier. Contra D. ROQUES, *Synésios de Cyrène et la Cyrénaïque du Bas-Empire*. Paris 1987, 276., who places it in the mid-5th c.

⁴⁷ These intramural tombs are marked e.g. on the plan in BEECHEY, F. W. AND H. W. BEECHEY, *Proceedings of the expedition to explore the northern coast of Africa, from Tripoly eastward; in MDCCCXXI. and MDCCCXXII., comprehending an account of the Greater Syrtis and Cyrenaica; and of the ancient cities composing the pentapolis*. London 1828., Plan XII.

⁴⁸ G. R. H. WRIGHT, *Excavations at Tocrá Incorporating Archaeological Evidence of a Community of the Diaspora*, *Palestine Exploration Quarterly* 95, no. 1 (1963), 22-64; R. D. BARNETT, *Tombs at Tocrá*, *The Journal of Hellenic Studies*, 65 (1945), 105-06; A. ROWE, D. BUTTLE, AND J. GRAY, *Cyrenaican Expedition of the University of Manchester, 1952: comprising an account of the round, rectangular, stepped, and rock-cut tombs at Cyrene. Some details of the architecture and planning of the city of Cyrene, by Derek Buttle, and of the Jewish inscriptions in Greek and Hebrew at Tocrá, Cyrene, and Barce by John Gray*. Manchester 1956, 43-56. See also M. REKOWSKA, *In Pursuit of Ancient Cyrenaica: Two Hundred Years of Exploration Set against the History of Archaeology in Europe (1706-1911)* Oxford 2016, 68-71. As we saw in our review of existing work on the site, some of these tombs have been subject to archaeological excavation but most were heavily looted during or since antiquity.

⁴⁹ Numbers based on the equation proposed in J. W. HANSON AND S. G. ORTMAN, *A systematic method for estimating the populations of Greek and Roman settlements*, *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 30, no. 301-324 (2017), .

⁵⁰ F. BENTAHER, *Site d'un arc à Tocrá et l'aménagement urbain de la ville*, *Libyan Studies* 32, no. 95-106 (2001), BUZAIAN in KENRICK, *Cyrenaica*, 51.

cardines, and while the main decumanus has been identified, running between the East and West Gates, the location of the *cardo maximus* has not been ascertained (fig. 4).⁵¹ One little-studied monument may provide a clue. The decumanus maximus was ornamented with a monumental arch, at a distance of around 250 m from the West Gate.⁵² This structure is aligned with a *cardo* which, with the customary doglegs seen in the other *cardos* as well, could correspond with a proposed south gate,⁵³ and which may therefore have been the main *cardo* of Taucheira. An inscription of the early 4th c. found near to the arch may indicate that it was maintained and/or constructed into Late Antiquity.⁵⁴

Monumental architecture

Within this grid, excavations have been undertaken in a piecemeal fashion, creating an island-like map of the city: while we have firm data about some monuments and structures, we know very little about what lies between them. Nevertheless, the majority of known intramural monuments were late antique in date. A new bath complex, the so-called ‘Byzantine Baths’, was constructed inside the remains of a former Hellenistic-period gymnasium (fig. 5).⁵⁵ These baths are clearly late antique in date, with the rooms arranged on a single access (‘row type’), but a more exact date for their construction could not be established.⁵⁶ The baths’ main entrance was from the decumanus, with a secondary entrance apparently present in the original western wall of the courtyard. The Taucheira late antique baths remained in use into the Islamic period and underwent several alterations during their life span.

The city is known to have been a bishopric by the 4th c. and was well-supplied with churches.⁵⁷ At least two, and possibly three, churches have been located outside the city walls: one of these is some 200 m west of the West Gate and might date to the 6th c.⁵⁸ It comprises a triple-apsed basilica terminating in an apse on the eastern end and to the south of this a separate hall with atrium, terminating in an apse at its western end. These were apparently built at separate times. A second extramural church might be located to the south of the city, but is now partially underneath a mosque, and a third has been posited in the eastern cemetery area.⁵⁹ Inside the city walls, we know of at least two churches. The unexcavated West Church near the western edge of the town appears to be a three-aisled basilica with an apse at the eastern end.⁶⁰ In spite of the limited archaeological interest this complex has received, it has been suggested that it is the result of multiple phases of building activity.⁶¹ In contrast, the East Basilica has mostly been excavated (fig. 6). This was a three-aisled basilica with a range of auxiliary rooms

⁵¹ BENTAHER, Site d'un arc à Tocrā et l'aménagement urbain de la ville.

⁵² BENTAHER, Site d'un arc à Tocrā et l'aménagement urbain de la ville.

⁵³ SMITH AND CROW, The Hellenistic and Byzantine Defences of Tocrā (Taucheira), 36.

⁵⁴ BENTAHER, Site d'un arc à Tocrā et l'aménagement urbain de la ville, 97.

⁵⁵ G. D. B. JONES, The Byzantine Bath-House at Tocrā: a Summary Report, *Libyan Studies* 15 (1984), 107–11; JONES, The Byzantine Bath-House at Tocrā: a Summary Report; BUZAIAN in KENRICK, Cyrenaica, 58–60.

⁵⁶ R. G. GOODCHILD, Teuchira—Arsinoe (Tocrā), *LibAnt* 1 (1964), 144–45; JONES, The Byzantine Bath-House at Tocrā: a Summary Report.; S. MARÉCHAL, Public Baths and Bathing Habits in Late Antiquity : A Study of the Evidence from Italy, North Africa and Palestine A.D. 285–700. Leiden 2020, 390–1; S. MARÉCHAL, From balnea to hammams. Late antique bath design in Cyrenaica as inspiration for early Islamic hammams?, *Al-Qantara. Revista de estudios arabes* 44 (Forthcoming), for a comparison with other late antique baths in Cyrenaica, the date of which is often tentative.

⁵⁷ The lists of the Council of Nicaea tell us that the city had a bishop by 325 (Secundus: Mansi, *Concilia* II, 693, 697–8); and bishops are also attested at the councils held at Ephesus in 431 (Zeno: *ACO* I.i.2.33.136 (7); I.i.2.62.137 (60); I.i.7.73.133 (88); I.i.7.79.165 (116)) and 449 (Photeinos: *ACO* II.i.1.78.120 (81); II.i.1.884.99 (185); II.i.1.1053 (94); II.iii.1.1070 [1067].CXVI (257)).

⁵⁸ WARD-PERKINS AND GOODCHILD, Christian monuments of Cyrenaica, 214–16.

⁵⁹ WARD-PERKINS AND GOODCHILD, Christian monuments of Cyrenaica, 223.

⁶⁰ WARD-PERKINS AND GOODCHILD, Christian monuments of Cyrenaica, 210–12.

⁶¹ E.g. BUZAIAN in KENRICK, Cyrenaica, 63.

around it, including a narthex to the west, a columned chamber of uncertain function to the north and an audience hall on its southern side. The presence of the latter has led to suggestions that it was Taucheira's cathedral.⁶² Built in the 5th c., the church underwent later modifications, including the addition of further rooms and a staircase on the northern side, as well as various structural modifications within the building itself, indicating ongoing investment in and maintenance of the church, even if these cannot at present be closely dated. Additionally, very fragmentary mosaics in the southern aisle indicate that for at least some of its life this church was richly decorated. The mosaics were again removed in a later phase and are only preserved by areas covered by a stone bench. While the surviving remains are slender, this material evidence for the churches hints at the ongoing presence of communities that could pay for teams of specialised workmen for building projects at Taucheira.

Domestic architecture

To the south of the East Church, a 'palatial complex' with peristyle and rich figurative mosaic decoration was found.⁶³ Two phases of mosaics have been identified, the latest of which has been tentatively placed in the Justinianic period (527–565), the oldest in the 4th or 5th c. (**fig. 7**).⁶⁴ Some authors have identified the 'palatial complex' as an episcopal residence based on its proximity to the East Basilica and the Christian content of the mosaics. As, however, *episcopoeia* are notoriously difficult to identify and there is no decisive evidence here either—the 'palatial complex' is not even immediately adjacent to the church—it is more likely that this was the home of a wealthy family of Taucheira who self-identified as Christian. Important for the urban history of the city is that the wealth attested in the complex's two phases of mosaics underlines the presence of a thriving elite into the Justinianic period.

A number of domestic complexes with elite character have been identified to the north of the decumanus, across from the walled compound.⁶⁵ The dating of these is unclear and they have only been published in plan, though they may go back to the Early or High Imperial period, as their subdivision and reuse for agricultural processing and industrial installations has been assigned to the 3rd c. and later.⁶⁶ A further nearby structure of uncertain but quite possibly late antique date in the centre of the urban area, which has tentatively been identified as a 'blockhouse', may suggest the presence of fortified domestic units in the city centre.⁶⁷ This type of feature finds parallels in the other cities of the Pentapolis.⁶⁸ Several scholars have drawn comparisons with the fortified *gsur* (farmsteads) found across rural North Africa during the later Roman and post-Roman periods.⁶⁹ If such fortified structures were indeed present within the city centre of Taucheira, they are likely to predate the late antique renovation of the city walls (cf. *infra*). To the northwest of these larger houses, and west of the location of the *cardo*, more recent excavations have uncovered a complex of structures with a more artisanal function and a very long occupation history continuing beyond the Islamic conquest of the city.⁷⁰ Work

⁶² WARD-PERKINS AND GOODCHILD, *Christian monuments of Cyrenaica*, 203-09.

⁶³ F. BENTAHER AND C. DOBIAS-LALOU, *Étude préliminaire d'un bâtiment au sud de l'église orientale à Tocrâ*, *Libyan Studies* 30 (1999), 17–28; S. STUCCHI, *Architettura Cirenaica*. Rome 1975, 454.

⁶⁴ WARD-PERKINS AND GOODCHILD, *Christian monuments of Cyrenaica*, 218-22; BUZAIAN in KENRICK, *Cyrenaica*, 57-58.

⁶⁵ KENRICK, *Cyrenaica*, 62; G. D. B. JONES, *Excavations at Tocrâ and Euhesperides, Cyrenaica 1968-1969*, *Libyan Studies* 14 (1983), 109–21, especially figs. 7-8.

⁶⁶ A. WILSON, *Urban Economies of Late Antique Cyrenaica*, in (ed.) S. Kingsley and M. Decker, *Economy and exchange in the East Mediterranean during late antiquity*. Oxford 2001, 28–43: 32-35.

⁶⁷ BUZAIAN in KENRICK, *Cyrenaica*, 62; WILSON, *Urban Economies of Late Antique Cyrenaica*, 29.

⁶⁸ WILSON, *Urban Economies of Late Antique Cyrenaica*, .

⁶⁹ SMITH AND CROW, *The Hellenistic and Byzantine Defences of Tocrâ (Taucheira)*, 37; WILSON, *Urban Economies of Late Antique Cyrenaica*, 41.

⁷⁰ BUZAIAN, *Excavations at Tocrâ (1985-1992)*, 71–86; F. BENTAHER, *General Account of Recent Discoveries at Tocrâ*, *Libyan Studies* 25 (1994), 231–43.

by Libyan colleagues from the University of Garyounis (now the University of Benghazi) in the central area of the city between 1985 and 1992 also uncovered extensive evidence for post-antique housing and winding street plans at Taucheira, as well as pottery kilns, ovens, and vats reflecting ongoing artisanal activity throughout the 6th to 8th centuries.⁷¹ This evidence, as well as a possible Kufic inscription found in the bathhouse,⁷² and evidence for late occupation within the walls of the walled compound (cf. infra) shows that the history of site did not end with its conquest by the Arabs.

City walls

The major published description of the city walls of Taucheira is based on David Smith's survey of 1966/7, with a commentary by Jim Crow. The Hellenistic walls were extensively repaired in the late antique period.⁷³ Smith and Crow's description of the circuit mentions renovations to all sectors. A tower halfway down the western side of the wall may have been structurally connected to the adjoining West Church, as suggested by the presence of window mullions decorated with crosses.⁷⁴ In addition to the curtain wall and 31 rectangular towers, the late antique version of the walls of Taucheira included two features unknown elsewhere in North Africa: a *proteichisma*, a low defensive wall outside the main wall circuit, in front of the weakest southern section of the wall and extending from the West Gate to the sea,⁷⁵ and triangular-fronted/pentagonal shaped towers flanking the East and West Gates (**fig. 8**).⁷⁶ Towers of this shape are an anomaly in the wider region of late antique North Africa and are better known from the eastern provinces of the Eastern Roman Empire. Those flanking the East Gate apparently repeated the form of their predecessors, and it is not impossible that the teams responsible for rebuilding the gates were influenced by the physical presence of local antecedents. However, the duplication of this labour-intensive and costly shape at the West Gate, which in a previous phase was flanked by more common rectangular towers, remains more difficult to explain. It points towards a contemporary military requirement or at least to the involvement of engineers familiar with this type of countermeasure for siege-engines.⁷⁷ The

⁷¹ BUZAIAN, *Excavations at Tocra* (1985-1992).

⁷² The inscription is noted by JONES, *The Byzantine Bath-House at Tocra: a Summary Report*, 111; C. FENWICK, *From Africa to Ifrīqiya: Settlement and Society in Early Medieval North Africa (650–800)*, *Al-Masāq* 25, no. 1 (2013), 9–33. BUZAIAN in KENRICK, *Cyrenaica*, 60, however, notes that the inscription is now lost and expresses doubts about its find location. A possible image of the inscription (a reproduction of a negative) is held by the British Institute for Libyan and Northern African Studies Archive (D32, sheet 4) but this record does not provide any connection between the inscription and the bathhouse.

⁷³ SMITH AND CROW, *The Hellenistic and Byzantine Defences of Tocra (Taucheira)*. On city walls in Cyrenaica more generally, see now M. C. SOMMA, *Mura e città nella Cirenaica bizantina*, *Scienze dell'Antichità* 19, no. 2/3 (2013), 613-35.

⁷⁴ SMITH AND CROW, *The Hellenistic and Byzantine Defences of Tocra (Taucheira)*, 47; WARD-PERKINS AND GOODCHILD, *Christian monuments of Cyrenaica*, 212–14. Comparable examples whereby the fortifications are physically connected to a church building are for instance known at Berenike (WILSON, *Urban Economies of Late Antique Cyrenaica*, 29) and further west at Haidra (D. PRINGLE, *The defence of Byzantine Africa from Justinian to the Arab conquest: an account of the military history and archaeology of the African provinces in the sixth and seventh centuries*. Oxford 2001, 180-81, 567 Fig. 16.). The first has been tentatively placed in the Anastasian period.

⁷⁵ SMITH AND CROW, *The Hellenistic and Byzantine Defences of Tocra (Taucheira)*, 59 (description), 66-69 (discussion). BENNETT et al., *The effects of recent storms on the exposed coastline of Tocra*, 116 on the extension of the *proteichisma* from the West Gate to the sea. PRINGLE, *The defence of Byzantine Africa from Justinian to the Arab conquest: an account of the military history and archaeology of the African provinces in the sixth and seventh centuries*, 148-9 for the lack of evidence for *proteichismata* in North Africa.

⁷⁶ SMITH AND CROW, *The Hellenistic and Byzantine Defences of Tocra (Taucheira)*, 61-64 (description), 70-73 (discussion).

⁷⁷ SMITH AND CROW, *The Hellenistic and Byzantine Defences of Tocra (Taucheira)*, 70. Anonymous of Byzantium (*Tactica*, 12.8–17; trans. DENNIS 1985: 35); PRINGLE, *The defence of Byzantine Africa from Justinian to the Arab*

fear, immediate or more general, of a contemporary organised enemy is further supported by the presence of the *proteichisma*, also intended to counter a siege. There is no solid evidence to confirm that the rest of the rebuilding of the walls dates to the same period; it is perfectly possible that Taucheira's population had already renovated the Hellenistic walls before the towers and *proteichisma* were added. In any case, it can be concluded that Taucheira was, at some point in Late Antiquity, again defended by a fully functional system including contemporary state-of-the-art military structures. Such a system is indicative of the fact that the city had a supra-local importance for the region before the mid 7th c.

Further modifications to the East and West Gates can be interpreted as very late attempts to impede access to the walled interior of the city: immediately outside the East Gate a triangular-shaped wall was added centrally on top of the pavement of the *decumanus* (fig. 9). This would have seriously hindered wheeled traffic though not prevented it entirely.⁷⁸ By contrast, the removal of a more than 2 m-wide strip of pavement stones immediately in front of the West Gate ensured that it became impossible for wagons and carts to enter the city from this side.⁷⁹ The gap in front of the West Gate may have been filled in a later phase,⁸⁰ but the structure in front of the East Gate was never removed, suggesting that there was never a need to restore access to the city for wheeled traffic.

There is very little internal evidence to precisely date the renovations to the city walls. The only internal *terminus post quem* is provided by the reuse of blocks from the city's gymnasium, indicating this had already gone out of use by the time the eastern wall section was repaired.⁸¹ Gymnasia throughout the empire were, however, already going out of use in the 4th c.⁸² Features such as widespread reuse, the re-cutting of damaged corners and the closing of holes with smaller replacements, as well as a flexible approach to headers and stretchers, can be found in construction dated to all centuries of Late Antiquity. If the West Church and the adjoining section of the fortification were indeed respectively constructed and rebuilt in the same period, this is likely to have happened in the second half of the 5th c. or later. Likewise, if the (re)building of pentagonal towers was more than a local oddity and resonates with wider innovations in late antique defensive architecture, then they are likely to be late 5th c. in date at the earliest.⁸³ As such towers are mainly known from the Eastern Roman Empire, it was a small step for Smith and Crow to connect the entire large-scale renovation of Taucheira's city walls with a passage from the 6th-c. historian Procopius, who writes that "The emperor Justinian fortified the city of Taucheira with the strongest defences".⁸⁴ Subsequent publications have repeated this Justinianic date, although no one has tried to explain why Justinian's army felt it was necessary to provide Taucheira, and only Taucheira, with defensive features that elsewhere indicate the presence of an organised enemy equipped with artillery.

The reliability of Procopius' remarks on North Africa has been questioned on a number of occasions, both before and after the publication of the city wall survey.⁸⁵ Goodchild, in a

conquest : an account of the military history and archaeology of the African provinces in the sixth and seventh centuries, 147.

⁷⁸ SMITH AND CROW, *The Hellenistic and Byzantine Defences of Toca (Taucheira)*, 65.

⁷⁹ SMITH AND CROW, *The Hellenistic and Byzantine Defences of Toca (Taucheira)*, 65.

⁸⁰ The authors mentioned the gap in the pavement was found filled with earth and stones. They suggest this was a natural process, though there is nothing to discount a man-made fill.

⁸¹ SMITH AND CROW, *The Hellenistic and Byzantine Defences of Toca (Taucheira)*, 57.

⁸² S. REMIJSSEN, *The End of Greek Athletics in Late Antiquity*. Cambridge 2015, 347.

⁸³ For comparisons with other towers, see SMITH AND CROW, *The Hellenistic and Byzantine Defences of Toca (Taucheira)*, 70-71.

⁸⁴ Procopius, *Aed.* vi.2.4-5 (ed. J. HAURY AND G. WIRTH, *Procopii Caesariensis opera omnia IV: Peri Ktismata*. Leipzig 1964; trans. authors).

⁸⁵ D. ROQUES, *Procope de Césarée et la Cyrénaïque du 6e s. ap. J.C.*, *Libyan Studies* 25 (1994), 259-64; J. REYNOLDS, *Byzantine buildings, Justinian and Procopius in Libya Inferior and Libya Superior*, *Antiquité Tardive* 8 (2000), 169-76. See also PRINGLE, *The defence of Byzantine Africa from Justinian to the Arab conquest : an*

letter to Smith, already left an opening for interventions dated to another period (“... the latter must be mainly (but perhaps not exclusively) the work of Justinian”).⁸⁶ Roques has commented on the brief and patchy nature of the information provided by Procopius on Cyrenaica in general, a province for which “rien n'exigeait un tel programme de rénovation, [...] parce que la Cyrénaïque ne constituait pas une région menacée d'invasions catastrophiques [...]”.⁸⁷ He was also of the opinion that Justinian repaired rather than built the walls of Taucheira. A more cautious approach to the later history of Taucheira's city walls would indeed consider Procopius' comment as a *terminus ad quem* only and allow a broader chronological span for renovation, with the pentagonal towers and *proteichisma* added at the earliest in the late 5th c.⁸⁸ The adoption of state-of-the-art developments in defence suggests that these modifications were made at a time when a military threat, local or regional, or even empire-wide, was perceived. Moreover, although it has in the meantime been widely recognised that city walls were also renovated or built in Late Antiquity by local populations in the absence of a grand military strategy or even immediate threat, the nature of the renovations at Taucheira makes it unlikely that the initiative for the gates and *proteichisma* lay with Taucheira's civic authorities.

Much remains to be clarified about the urban history of Taucheira in Late Antiquity. However, the data available indicate that it was a town which still saw significant building activity after the 3rd c. Taucheira's population invested in their city's embellishment (the arch), religious life (the churches and their mosaics), public amenities (the bathhouse), defences and housing. The evidence that we have at present therefore indicates that Taucheira was an active town which continued to see substantial investment far into the 6th c. Yet, the walled compound in the centre of town is generally placed outside of this framework, supposedly postdating it by several decades at least.

The walled compound or 'Byzantine fortress'

As already mentioned, the walled compound has featured heavily in discussions of Taucheira. Three contrasting interpretations have developed in past scholarship: a fortress,⁸⁹ a “reduced

account of the military history and archaeology of the African provinces in the sixth and seventh centuries, 81, for the late antique Diocese of Africa; N. DUVAL, L'État actuel des recherches archéologiques sur Carthage chrétienne, *Antiquité Tardive* 5 (1997), 309–50, commenting specifically on Procopius' presentation of the Christian topography of Carthage; and D. ROQUES, Procope de Césarée: Constructions de Justinien Ier. Alessandria 2011, 414., n. 21, on Procopius' attribution of the rebuilding of the city walls at Berenike to Justinian.

⁸⁶ BILNAS Archive D1/2/1/2/2, letter of 18 June 1966 (Goodchild to Smith), 2.

⁸⁷ ROQUES, Procope de Césarée et la Cyrénaïque du 6e s. ap. J.C., 261; D. ROQUES, Procope de Césarée et la Cyrénaïque du VIe s. ap. J.-C. (De Aedificiis 6, 2, 1-23), *Rendiconti dell'Accademia di Archeologia, Lettere e Belle Arti, Napoli* 64, 1993-1994 (pub. 1996) (1996), Cf. ROQUES, Procope de Césarée: Constructions de Justinien Ier, 415 n. 20.

⁸⁸ Fortification research in other regions of the Roman Empire has likewise (re-)dated walls with more care and also with acknowledgement of the gaps in our knowledge. Yet such overview works invariably have few contributions on the African provinces. When they do, they focus on the African diocese (e.g., A. RUSHWORTH, *Castra or Centenaria? Interpreting the later forts of the North African frontier*, in (ed.) R. Collins, M. Symonds, and M. Weber, *Roman Military Architecture in the Frontiers: Armies and their Architecture in Late Antiquity* Havertown 2015, 123–39.), leaving out the provinces of the East. A. DE MAN, The city walls of Lusitania revisited: a current perspective, in (ed.) Emanuele Ettore Intagliata, Simon J. Barker, and Christopher Courault, *City Walls in Late Antiquity : An Empire-wide Perspective : Proceedings of a Conference Held at the British School at Rome and the Swedish Institute of Classical Studies in Rome on 20-21 June 2018*. Oxford 2020, 21–26: 21-23. provides a concise overview of the changes in thinking about urban fortifications. Compare for instance C. FOSS AND D. WINFIELD, *Byzantine Fortifications: An Introduction* Pretoria 1986, 129ff., where almost no fortification in Anatolia is dated to the late antique period, to I. JACOBS, *Aesthetic Maintenance of Civic Space. The 'Classical' City from the 4th to the 7th c. AD*, *Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta* 193. Leuven 2013, 26-27., Table 1.1.

⁸⁹ GOODCHILD, *Byzantines, Berbers and Arabs in 7th-century Libya*, 121.

quarter”,⁹⁰ and a palace, perhaps with administrative functions.⁹¹ Any attempt to determine the function and the construction date of the walled compound should, however, start from an assessment of the archaeology. This assessment is complicated by the fact that we lack detailed records from the time the compound was excavated, but we are aided by several draft plans and section drawings of the walled compound which do not ultimately seem to have been published, and which are reproduced here.⁹²

The walled compound is located in the south-eastern quadrant of the city. It is L-shaped, covering ca. 1.15 ha and measuring approximately 119 m by 112 m at its greatest extent (**figs 10 and 11**).⁹³ It appears to have replaced about five pre-existing insulae to the south of the decumanus. It therefore occupied a highly visible position within the city walls, albeit not a particularly strategic one (cf. *infra*).⁹⁴ The complex’s northern wall was constructed close to the border of the paved road of the decumanus. The eastern wall presumably made use of an empty construction line provided by the *cardo* between the late antique baths and the predecessor-building of the compound. Not much is known of the southern or south-western areas of the compound, as these were covered by modern structures and gardens at the time of Goodchild’s fieldwork, though excavations of the south-eastern tower showed that it was built next to a dismantled wall (**fig. 12**). The extension in the north-western corner of the compound is somewhat peculiar, but again the presence of pre-existing structures and insulae was probably determinant for its eventual extent and shape.⁹⁵

The exterior walls of the compound were on average 1.2 m thick and built of two faces of reused sandstone ashlar with a mortared rubble core. A maximum of three rows of stretchers has been preserved. Although some care was taken to assemble the blocks, noticeable for instance in stretches formed with blocks of similar heights, there was apparently no attempt to make perfect rows by re-cutting corners or inserting smaller building elements. Consequently, the rows of building blocks undulate slightly (**fig. 13**). Moreover, these walls did not possess foundations but were instead laid directly on top of remains of predecessor buildings and compacted earth.⁹⁶ The predecessor buildings were also likely to have been a source of building material for the walls. Although it has been claimed that the compound was built with blocks deriving from the late antique baths,⁹⁷ this is highly unlikely—even if the western wall of the bath complex was demolished for the construction of the walled compound, it could have only

⁹⁰ STUCCHI, *Architettura Cirenaica*, 549-51; cf. R. G. GOODCHILD, *Fortificazioni e Palazzi Bizantini in Tripolitania e Cirenaica, Corsi di cultura sull'arte ravennate e bizantini* 13 (1965), 225–50.

⁹¹ WARD-PERKINS AND GOODCHILD, *Christian monuments of Cyrenaica*, 201; O. BROGAN, TAUCHEIRA, later ARSINOE (Tawqrah or Tocra) Libya, in (ed.) William L MacDonald, Marian Holland McAllister, and Richard Stilwell, *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Classical Sites*. Princeton, NJ 1976: 886.

⁹² No excavation diaries related to the walled compound are held in the BILNAS Archive.

⁹³ BUZAIAN in KENRICK, *Cyrenaica*, 61.

⁹⁴ Compare for instance to the much more strategic position of the fortress at Ammaedara (mod. Haidra), PRINGLE, *The defence of Byzantine Africa from Justinian to the Arab conquest : an account of the military history and archaeology of the African provinces in the sixth and seventh centuries*, 179-80. The position of the complex may have been indicated by easy access to the groundwater table in this part of the city, but that cannot be confirmed without much more extensive excavation.

⁹⁵ Based on the staggered location of the insula blocks to the north of the decumanus (BUZAIAN, *Excavations at Tocra* (1985-1992), 60; BUZAIAN in KENRICK, *Cyrenaica*, 50-51, Fig. 30), the northern section of the western wall of the fortress made use of a pre-existing *cardo*.

⁹⁶ GOODCHILD, *Byzantines, Berbers and Arabs in 7th-century Libya*, 121; JONES, *Excavations at Tocra and Euhesperides, Cyrenaica 1968-1969*, 115; B. JONES, *Beginnings and Endings in Cyrenaican Cities*, in (ed.) G. Barker, J. Lloyd, and J. Reynolds, *Cyrenaica in Antiquity*, BAR International Series 236. Oxford 1985, 27–42: 37; BUZAIAN in KENRICK, *Cyrenaica*, 61.

⁹⁷ BUZAIAN, *Excavations at Tocra* (1985-1992), 60; FENWICK, *From Africa to Ifrīqiya: Settlement and Society in Early Medieval North Africa (650–800)*, 39; JONES, *The Byzantine Bath-House at Tocra: a Summary Report*, 108, 11.

provided a fraction of the building materials needed. Indeed, as already mentioned above, the baths apparently stayed in use after the compound was built.

There appears to have been a gate halfway along the eastern wall. On the plan, the exterior wall is here interrupted over a length of slightly over 3 m. Additional walls behind this opening have been interpreted as belonging to a structure that somewhat resembles a double courtyard gate, albeit with very wide openings instead of narrow gates. The simplified plan of the compound further shows two east-west walls abutting the exterior western wall, located slightly more to the south than the eastern gate. Although they look like they could have belonged to a similar gate arrangement, the uninterrupted line of the western wall itself suggests that the excavators did not recognise an actual opening in the wall. Furthermore, even though the southern areas of the compound have hardly been explored, two further parallel wall sections near the southern wall could potentially indicate another gate-like structure there. By contrast, it is certain that there was no direct access to this compound from the decumanus, as the northern wall of the compound is continuous.

The northern corners of the compound are equipped with small circular towers, about 2 m in diameter, which encroach upon the road of the decumanus. They were later additions to the original exterior wall:⁹⁸ they abut the original corners, have thinner walls, and a slightly different construction style with ashlar arranged as orthostats at the bottom. Furthermore, there are no traces of a door connecting the interior of the enceinte with the inside of the towers.⁹⁹ It can only be assumed that the first floor communicated with a rampart walk. The towers at the southern corners of the compound were added later as well. They were roughly square in plan, had walls of ca. 1 m thick, and possessed sides of max. 2.5 m (**figs 12 and 14**). No additional towers were added to protect the long wall stretches in between or to protect the corners and turns in the western wall, which would have been particularly vulnerable.

Of the interior, only the northernmost parts have been excavated. Excavations uncovered a network of walls and structures, resulting from several phases of occupation. Dating proposals for later interventions have been put forward, but are not supported by material evidence.¹⁰⁰ Although it is clear that occupation of the compound continued into the Islamic period, without a detailed on-site re-investigation, a precise reconstruction of the internal organisation and phasing of the compound will not be possible. Nevertheless, some useful general observations can still be made.

First, the interior, at least in the north, contains complexes arranged around open-air courtyards. Barri Jones discerned two courtyards, the east and west courts.¹⁰¹ The west court was not fully excavated, but Jones suggested that it comprised a peristyle courtyard supported by wooden uprights (**fig. 15**). He interpreted the rooms on the eastern, northern, and western

⁹⁸ GOODCHILD, *Fortificazioni e Palazzi Bizantini in Tripolitania e Cirenaica*, 249-50; GOODCHILD, *Byzantines, Berbers and Arabs in 7th-century Libya*, 121; JONES, *Beginnings and Endings in Cyrenaican Cities*, 39. The towers in the eyes of both Goodchild and Stucchi were an Arab initiative, with the latter scholar suggesting they were intended to improve defence against Byzantine naval raids, see GOODCHILD, *Byzantines, Berbers and Arabs in 7th-century Libya*, 122; STUCCHI, *Architettura Cirenaica*, 556-7.

⁹⁹ Not all towers were necessarily bonded into curtain walls, see e.g., some of the towers at the fort of Timgad, PRINGLE, *The defence of Byzantine Africa from Justinian to the Arab conquest: an account of the military history and archaeology of the African provinces in the sixth and seventh centuries*, 234. The ground floor of towers in Africa did not play a role in the defence (PRINGLE, *The defence of Byzantine Africa from Justinian to the Arab conquest: an account of the military history and archaeology of the African provinces in the sixth and seventh centuries*, 156).

¹⁰⁰ For instance, a second phase of building in the western courtyard has been dated by both Goodchild and Stucchi to the short period before 'Amr b. al-'As' assault in 643 (JONES, *Excavations at Tocra and Euhesperides, Cyrenaica 1968-1969*, 118). As both scholars assigned the construction of the compound to the year 642, this would date the second phase to just one year later.

¹⁰¹ JONES, *Excavations at Tocra and Euhesperides, Cyrenaica 1968-1969*, 117-18; JONES, *Beginnings and Endings in Cyrenaican Cities*, 39.

sides of the courtyard as barracks for soldiers. They are roughly the same size. With internal measurements of ca. 3 m by 6.5 m or 19 m², they are somewhat larger than the *contuberia* of a legionary fortress and, if they were used to lodge men, could have accommodated eight infantry members each.¹⁰² Three ranges of eight rooms would amount to 192 men in total, though it should be noted that the west court would in that case have offered very cramped living quarters. Finally, the original plan of the excavations shows a staircase in the northernmost room of the eastern range. Considering its location, this is likely to have given access to a wall rampart, for which all other evidence has disappeared.

The east court is better understood. It also took the form of a peristyle, this time supported by stone columns (**fig. 16**). The plan of the excavations shows only one range of rooms, more spacious than those of the west court, with interior dimensions of ca. 4 m east-west by 5 to 6 m north-south, along the western side of the court. Long walls along the north of the court suggest structures or a longitudinal room of another, unknown function. Although not stated in any of the existing publications on the walled compound, the presence of cross walls in some of these rooms indicates a second storey. The rooms on the western side could have been used as lodgings as well, and if so, the arrangement here would have been far more comfortable than that of the west court. With only four and maximum five rooms in use as barracks and with eight to ten men per room, a maximum of 50 men would have shared this space. Limited excavations uncovered two phases of building activity, though the precise details of these phases and their chronology again remains uncertain.

The space in between the west and east courts today is occupied by an intricate arrangement of rooms, the interpretation of which is greatly complicated by the lengthy occupation span of the walled compound and the many alterations to this ‘middle court’. Originally, there was seemingly a third, smaller, court with rooms of similar dimensions along its eastern and western sides and rooms of more varied sizes along the north and south. A rectangular room facing onto this ‘middle court’ is marked on a published plan as a chapel.¹⁰³ However, this interpretation appears to be based solely on the presence of a stele bearing a cross near to the room’s only doorway.¹⁰⁴

The set of rooms in the south of this area (eventually) also had direct access to a small bath complex, measuring about 18 m east-west by 5.5 m north-south in total (**figs 17 and 18**).¹⁰⁵ The rooms of the baths are arranged in a functional, linear arrangement (‘row type’). Starting in the west, an apodyterium-frigidarium with benches along the northern, western, and southern walls and a small pool in the north-eastern corner, precedes a tepidarium, caldarium, and a furnace flanked by small *alvei* each large enough for only one person to the north and south. The hypocausts of the tepidarium and caldarium are made of stones rather than brick. The heat was evacuated through recesses or flues in the wall. Water was supplied from the north, where a cistern capturing rainwater and/or a well tapping into the ground water must once have been

¹⁰² PRINGLE, The defence of Byzantine Africa from Justinian to the Arab conquest : an account of the military history and archaeology of the African provinces in the sixth and seventh centuries, 86 with further references. The possibility that these rooms were used by cavalry, with horses on the ground floor and their riders on the first floor, can be excluded as it would have been very cumbersome to guide horses into this rather secluded courtyard.

¹⁰³ JONES, Excavations at Tocra and Euhesperides, Cyrenaica 1968-1969, 117, fig. 9; JONES, Beginnings and Endings in Cyrenaican Cities, 38, fig. 3.7.

¹⁰⁴ BUZAIAN in KENRICK, Cyrenaica, 62.

¹⁰⁵ In size they are comparable to for instance the 6th-c. Panayia baths at Corinth, see G. D. R. SANDERS, A Late Roman Bath at Corinth: Excavations in the Panayia Field, 1995-1996, *Hesperia* 68, no. 4 (1999), 441–80, Figure 3. MARÉCHAL, Public Baths and Bathing Habits in Late Antiquity : A Study of the Evidence from Italy, North Africa and Palestine A.D. 285-700, 186 for further comparisons.

located.¹⁰⁶ There must have been an easy connection from the exterior to the furnace of this complex, which can, however, no longer be reconstructed. The size of the baths indicates that they were used only by a limited number of people. The majority of the compound's occupants must have made use of the larger baths located outside the walls – the presence of an additional entrance in the original western wall of the court may have been intended to provide easy access for occupants of the walled compound –, or of other still undiscovered baths elsewhere in the city. It is worthwhile noticing that the 'fortress baths' could be entered both from the south, which appears to have been a more public access, and from the north, through a door connected to the 'middle court', which may therefore be identified as a privileged area, probably occupied by the person or persons in command of the compound.¹⁰⁷ Jones for instance identified the 'middle court' as the living quarters of the *dux*. However, it should be noted that the baths occupy an awkward position within the compound, seemingly overlying the original southern boundary of the courtyard, suggesting that they may be a later addition. Some scholars even place the construction of the baths into the Islamic period.¹⁰⁸ In any case, it is far from certain that the original compound would have had its own bathing facilities.

As mentioned, the organisation of the walled compound further south also remains unclear. Some assumptions can, however, be made from the state plan of the excavations. First, the beginnings of longer walls suggest that occupation here as well was arranged around courtyards. Second, the area behind the eastern gate was apparently not as densely built up as the northern third of the compound. Instead, there was a big open space, from where one could access the east court through a door in the east court's southwestern corner. The middle court could only be reached via the same access point, following a dog-leg corridor, and was therefore a much more secluded part of the compound. The available state plan does not, however, allow us to understand the connection between the open court behind the east gate and the spaces further west.

As with many other structures in late antique Taucheira, there is almost no archaeological evidence to determine the construction date of the walled compound. The only internal *terminus post quem* is an inscription mentioning the Roman Emperors Valentinian I and Valens (joint rule: 364–375) incorporated into the compound's exterior wall.¹⁰⁹ Goodchild deemed the compound to date to the reign of the Byzantine Emperor Heraclius (r. 610–641) on the basis of coins.¹¹⁰ Following Goodchild, Barri Jones suggested that the preponderance of issues of Heraclius dating to 630–648 found in the compound "is at least consistent with the suggestion that the fort was constructed on the eve of the Arabic invasion of AD 642."¹¹¹ This

¹⁰⁶ JONES, Excavations at Tocra and Euhesperides, Cyrenaica 1968-1969, 118; MARÉCHAL, Public Baths and Bathing Habits in Late Antiquity : A Study of the Evidence from Italy, North Africa and Palestine A.D. 285-700, 392-3, 201 (rain water supply).

¹⁰⁷ JONES, Beginnings and Endings in Cyrenaican Cities, 37.

¹⁰⁸ Fenwick has pointed out comparable arrangements between the bathhouse contained within the walled compound and the late 8th- or early 9th-c. hammam in the Idrisid complex at Volubilis (FENWICK, From Africa to Ifrīqiya: Settlement and Society in Early Medieval North Africa (650–800), 20-21; C. FENWICK, Early Islamic North Africa: A New Perspective. London 2020, 40.). Although the latter show some similarities to the late antique baths of North Africa, they are arranged differently (they are of the angular row type), possess two tepid rooms without hypocaust, and have no chimneys for heat evacuation (MARÉCHAL, Public Baths and Bathing Habits in Late Antiquity : A Study of the Evidence from Italy, North Africa and Palestine A.D. 285-700, 175).

¹⁰⁹ JONES, Excavations at Tocra and Euhesperides, Cyrenaica 1968-1969, 115-16.

¹¹⁰ GOODCHILD, Fortificazioni e Palazzi Bizantini in Tripolitania e Cirenaica, 249-50; GOODCHILD, Byzantines, Berbers and Arabs in 7th-century Libya, 121. For more recent work on coins from Tocra see also F. H. BENTAHER, Ancient Coins From Tocra. P. 2 (Roman coins), *Garyunis Scientific Journal* 1 (1990), 181–94 (in Arabic); F. H. BENTAHER, Ancient Coins From Tocra. P. 3 (Roman coins), *Garyunis Scientific Journal* 2 (1991), 138–53 (in Arabic).

¹¹¹ JONES, Excavations at Tocra and Euhesperides, Cyrenaica 1968-1969, 116; JONES, Beginnings and Endings in Cyrenaican Cities, 37.

view of the chronology is endorsed by the vast majority of other scholars who have written about the compound.¹¹² Yet these coins only tell us about when the compound was used. In the absence of foundations or a foundation trench for the perimeter walls, they cannot come from a secure context which dates construction. The Heraclian coins very likely attest to the presence of the military (for whose wages new mints had been established) in and/or after 630–648. They dominate coin assemblages in several sites on the Eastern Mediterranean coast,¹¹³ and may at Taucheira have led to the neglect of earlier coins in the compound's assemblage, for which detailed information is regrettably not available. Moreover, the Heraclian coins only provide a *terminus post quem* for activity, which probably continued well after the loss of Byzantine control of the site.¹¹⁴ Luke Treadwell has argued that people in Arab-ruled Syria continued to use Byzantine issues into the 8th c.¹¹⁵ Recent assessments of numismatic assemblages at Jerash (Jordan) and also further afield in, for instance, Athens, Emporio (Chios) and Kourion (Cyprus) offer further confirmation.¹¹⁶ In Cyrenaica as well, it is very likely that bronze coinage saw a similarly extended use, as suggested by Michele Asolati's recent synthesis of the, albeit very limited, available data.¹¹⁷

In the absence of evidence for absolute dating, relative dating and especially the relation of the walled compound to its surroundings, becomes essential. The dismantling of the western end of the public late antique baths to the west of the compound has been taken as confirmation for its mid 7th-c. construction.¹¹⁸ However, this connection does not withstand scrutiny: there is no evidence to connect the dismantlement to the first construction phase of the walled compound instead of to one of the later interventions like the addition of corner towers; the western bath wall by itself certainly would not have been a substantial source of construction materials. Moreover, there is also no internal dating evidence for the construction of the baths, which may be early 6th c. in date or even earlier. Dismantlement of the western wall could have occurred at any point after that. In fact, the side entrance in the original western courtyard wall may well have been intended to provide easy access for the compound's occupants. Even in the absence of secure dating evidence for their construction, it can be said that the late antique baths and the walled compound were in use contemporaneously at the end of Roman antiquity and into the Islamic period. Likewise, the decumanus was still in use when the walled compound was added within the city's fabric. Although the northern wall of the compound apparently encroached on the southern edge of the street, the road remained perfectly usable. In addition, the round towers added to the northern corners may not have been very useful as

¹¹² STUCCHI, *Architettura Cirenaica*, 549–51; CHRISTIDES, *Byzantine Libya and the March of the Arabs towards the West of North Africa.*, 17; BUZAIAN, *Excavations at Tocra (1985–1992)*, 20; BUZAIAN in KENRICK, *Cyrenaica*, 61; SOMMA, *Mura e città nella Cirenaica bizantina*, 621; FENWICK, *From Africa to Ifrīqiya: Settlement and Society in Early Medieval North Africa (650–800)*, 20; FENWICK, *Early Islamic North Africa: A New Perspective*, 38.

¹¹³ C. MORRISSON, *Byzantine Money: Its Production and Circulation*, in (ed.) A. E. Laiou and Charalampos Bouras, *The Economic History of Byzantium: from the seventh through the fifteenth century*. Washington, DC 2002, 909–66: 913., Fig. 6.1 (Aphrodisias), 6.2 (Pergamon), 6.4 (Sardis), 6.5 (Athens), 6.7 (Priene), 6.8 (Ephesus) 6.10 (Sicily).

¹¹⁴ JONES, *Excavations at Tocra and Euhesperides, Cyrenaica 1968–1969*, 117.

¹¹⁵ W. L. TREADWELL, *The chronology of the pre-reform copper coinage of Early Islamic Syria*, *Supplement to the Oriental Numismatic Society Newsletter* 162, no. Winter (2000), 1–14 with further references.

¹¹⁶ Jerash: I. SCHULZE AND W. SCHULZE, *The Coins of the Jerash Northwest Quarter Project and the Umayyad Money Circulation in Jund al-Urdunn*, in (ed.) A. Lichtenberger and R. Raja, *Metal Finds and Coins: Final Publications from the Danish-German Jerash Northwest Quarter Project II. Turnhout 2020*, 131–78: 139–40. Athens, Emporio, Kourion: P. ARMSTRONG AND G. SANDERS, *Kourion in the Long Late Antiquity*, in (ed.) P. Panayides and I. Jacobs, *Cyprus in the Long Late Antiquity. History and Archaeology Between the Sixth and Eighth Centuries*. Oxford 2023, 121–35: 125–31.

¹¹⁷ M. ASOLATI, *Bisanzio, Alessandria e la Cirenaica*, in (ed.) M. Asolati, *La moneta di Cirene e della Cirenaica nel Mediterraneo. Problemi e Prospettive*, *Atti del V Congresso Internazionale di Numismatica e di Storia Monetaria*, Padova, 17–19 marzo 2016, *Numismatica Patavina* 2016, 343–86.

¹¹⁸ JONES, *The Byzantine Bath-House at Tocra: a Summary Report*, 108.

defensive features, but they must have been more expensive and fancier than the simpler rectangular towers, suggesting that they as well, even though they were later additions, were a statement feature intended to be seen from a functional main street.

Such a scenario, whereby the walled compound is inserted into an otherwise functional city, does not sit well with the most widespread narrative, which, as outlined above, connects the compound to the dramatic events precipitating the loss of North Africa to the Arabs. Goodchild suggested that the original wall circuit for the compound was built in haste, in ca. 642, in response to looming enemy aggression, with the identifier ‘fortress’ indicating the conviction that this was a defensive structure.¹¹⁹ The internal structures were considered to be contemporary with the building of the perimeter walls, as part of a unitary building programme providing quarters for a military commander, perhaps the *dux* of the Pentapolis, and his entourage.¹²⁰ Both assumptions, that of hasty construction and defensive purpose, are worth engaging with explicitly and in detail,¹²¹ before we turn to alternative contextual settings for the construction of the walled compound in a following section of this article.

The architectural evidence for the walled compound having been constructed in haste is: (1) the fact that the internal buildings are “visibly out of line”, (2) the reuse of building materials derived from buildings on site and, and (3) the lack of foundations.¹²² In the years since this assessment was published, our understanding and appreciation of construction in the late antique period has been greatly altered and these three arguments are less convincing today. ‘Misaligned buildings’ are omnipresent in late antique construction in the cities of the Pentapolis, as indeed in the rest of the Mediterranean, as underlined for instance by both the overall lay-out of Apollonia-Sozousa but also the internal organisation of its churches.¹²³ The second argument may also be discounted in its entirety, as the use of materials from older structures was common practice for most construction in Late Antiquity. Moreover, although reuse of older blocks could have saved up to 80% of the building time,¹²⁴ this does not consider the time needed to prepare the building site. The walled compound at Taucheira did not make use of a pre-existing open space like the forum or of sturdy pre-existing buildings.¹²⁵ Instead, it apparently replaced structures spread over several insulae. The construction process would therefore have started with the taking apart of existing buildings on site to create space, first for the construction of the surrounding wall, and then for the interior buildings. Let us assume that there was space nearby to keep all recovered building materials close, as taking them further away and bringing them back at a later stage would have taken even more energy and

¹¹⁹ BUZAIAN, *Excavations at Tocra* (1985-1992), 20; CHRISTIDES, *Byzantine Libya and the March of the Arabs towards the West of North Africa.*, 17; FENWICK, *From Africa to Ifrīqiya: Settlement and Society in Early Medieval North Africa (650–800)*, 20; P. PENTZ, *From Roman Proconsularis to Islamic Ifrīqiyah*. Göteborg & København 2002, 109. Cf. BUZAIAN in KENRICK, *Cyrenaica*, 61, who cautiously notes alternative moments in time at which the construction of a defensive compound would have been suitable, notably the advance of the Persians in the early 7th c.

¹²⁰ GOODCHILD, *Fortificazioni e Palazzi Bizantini in Tripolitania e Cirenaica*, 249-50; GOODCHILD, *Byzantines, Berbers and Arabs in 7th-century Libya*, 121; JONES, *Excavations at Tocra and Euhesperides, Cyrenaica 1968-1969*, 117; JONES, *Beginnings and Endings in Cyrenaican Cities*, 37.

¹²¹ For a brief overview of the methodology, see B. JANSEN, *Defensive Funktionen*, in (ed.) Silke Müth et al., *Ancient Fortifications : A Compendium of Theory and Practice*. Oxford 2016, 101–25., esp. 107-109.

¹²² JONES, *Excavations at Tocra and Euhesperides, Cyrenaica 1968-1969*, 115.

¹²³ WARD-PERKINS AND GOODCHILD, *Christian monuments of Cyrenaica*, 58-69 (Central Church) and 78-91 (West Church).

¹²⁴ C. COURAULT, *A statement on the late antique city walls of Córdoba*, in (ed.) E. E. Intagliata, G. Barker, and Christopher Courault, *City walls in late antiquity : An empire-wide perspective : Proceedings of a conference held at the british school at rome and the swedish institute of classical studies in rome on 20-21 june 2018*. Oxford 2020.

¹²⁵ A. LEONE, *Changing Townscapes in North Africa from Late Antiquity to the Arab Conquest*. Bari 2007, 191-93., for a summary of examples from the African diocese.

time. Judging from the remains of the wall and the interior structures, building elements were also separated based on size. To speed up construction, construction in one corner of the compound might already have been started whilst elsewhere buildings were still being demolished, but it remains highly unlikely that such a compound could have been completed in face of an immediate threat, i.e. an invading Arab force.

Both reuse and a lack of foundations also characterise the late antique domestic and artisanal buildings excavated to the northwest of the fortress.¹²⁶ The lack of foundations underneath the so-called fortress could have been the result of many factors, haste being but one of them. The geological underground of the site—sand that becomes very hard when exposed to the elements¹²⁷—may have made their presence less necessary, especially if there was no anticipation of undermining of the walls by an enemy. Indeed, the absence of foundations is more easily explained if the main function of this site was not defensive.¹²⁸ In fact, when we compare the details of its construction with those of other known military complexes, it appears that the walled compound, by itself, was unsuited for the Byzantine administration to seek safety. Taucheira's compound differs from known late antique fortresses in the North African provinces in numerous respects. First, its walls, with their average thickness of 1.2 m, are thinner than those of Justinianic and later fortifications in the diocese of Africa, where walls occasionally or locally are ca. 1.3 m and mostly 2 m or more thick.¹²⁹ Likewise, the walls of the fortress of Gasr Beni-Gdem located in the hinterland of Cyrene have a thickness of 2 m, as have those of the fortified farms overlooking the Barqa plain.¹³⁰ The city walls of Apollonia-Sozousa and Ptolemais were considerably larger, being between 2.1 and 2.3 m and ca. 2.6 m wide respectively.¹³¹ Finally, most stretches of the curtain of Taucheira's city wall are 1.8 m or more wide, though this diminished to 1.2 and 1.3 m in the stretches closest to the West Church.¹³² Wide walls were useful not just to prevent a breach, but also to accommodate a rampart walk from where the exterior could be monitored. As the walls of the compound are rather thin and there is no trace of internal arcading, the rampart walk, if present, must have been corbelled or carried on wooden beams. As the walls are not preserved to a large enough height, there is no evidence for this feature either.

Monitoring the walls from the top would have been essential in the case of Taucheira's walled compound, as it originally had no towers, and even after the corner towers were added, they were remarkably few and small. The square towers in the south apparently had sides of about 2 m, whereas the round towers in the north had a diameter of ca. 3.5 m. Consequently,

¹²⁶ BUZAIAN, Excavations at Tocra (1985-1992), 72-86.

¹²⁷ J. BOARDMAN AND J. W. HAYES, Excavations at Tocra, 1963-1965. Bol. 1: The Archaic Depoits I. London 1966, 5.

¹²⁸ Monumental public buildings in Late Antiquity no longer possessed deep foundations, as underlined for instance by the one of the authors' recent excavations of a late 5th-c. bathhouse at Aphrodisias.

¹²⁹ For an overview, see PRINGLE, The defence of Byzantine Africa from Justinian to the Arab conquest : an account of the military history and archaeology of the African provinces in the sixth and seventh centuries, 148. The thickness of the walls of Cululis, between 1.2 and 1.4 m (PRINGLE, The defence of Byzantine Africa from Justinian to the Arab conquest : an account of the military history and archaeology of the African provinces in the sixth and seventh centuries, 196), was exceptional. Walls of a fortress like that at Thamugadi were 2.4 to 2.7 m thick (PRINGLE, The defence of Byzantine Africa from Justinian to the Arab conquest : an account of the military history and archaeology of the African provinces in the sixth and seventh centuries, 234).

¹³⁰ Gasr Beni-Gdem: R. G. GOODCHILD, The Roman and Byzantine Limes in Cyrenaica, *The Journal of Roman Studies* 43 (1953), 65-76, Fig. 18; farmsteads in the Barqa plain: GOODCHILD, The Roman and Byzantine Limes in Cyrenaica, 68-69.

¹³¹ Apollonia: D. WHITE, The city defenses of Apollonia, in (ed.) R. G. Goodchild, J. G. Pedley, and D. White, Apollonia, the Port of Cyrene: Excavations by the University of Michigan, 1965-1967. Tripoli 1976, 85-105: 93-104. One section of the wall (between Tower XIX and the sea) saw two successive thickenings of its western side, increasing its width from 2.1 m to 4.15 m and then 4.85 m (WHITE, The city defenses of Apollonia, 104).

Ptolemais: KRAELING, Ptolemais: City of the Libyan Pentapolis, 53.

¹³² SMITH AND CROW, The Hellenistic and Byzantine Defences of Tocra (Taucheira), 40-59.

these towers offered room for only a handful of archers.¹³³ By comparison, the smallest towers known from the diocese of Africa are those of the fort at Limisa (mod. Ain Lemsa, Tunisia), 5 by 5 m large.¹³⁴ Corner towers of the fort at Thamugadi (mod. Timgad, Algeria) measured 7.10 by 5.85 m.¹³⁵ Plus, the wall sections in between are all over 100 m long, i.e., too long to be adequately defended from the towers. Pringle's overview of Justinianic and later fortifications in the African diocese showed that towers were spaced 40 to 95 m apart.¹³⁶ Fortresses of sizes much smaller than Taucheira's walled compound were equipped with interval towers.¹³⁷ The towers at Taucheira therefore seemed at most to have served as platforms to monitor intramural movements around the compound rather than as serious defensive structures.

In addition, even though only the northern half of internal built-up has been excavated and later interventions greatly hamper the reading of the original lay-out of the compound, the arrangement of rooms around courtyards is not a common feature of military architecture in the eastern provinces or Africa in Late Antiquity. Barracks more often take the form of ranges fronted by porticoes, as for instance, is the case in the fortress at Thamugadi (potentially Justinianic).¹³⁸ Spacious courtyards only occur at the Diocletianic fort of Qasr Qarun-Dionysias in Egypt,¹³⁹ a sizeable fort of 83 by 70 m, and at Umm al-Jimal (Jordan) on the eastern frontier, constructed under the Severans but enlarged in Tetrarchic times to a size of 98 by 112 m.¹⁴⁰

A vital difference between Taucheira and other forts of which the internal lay-out is known is that, in the latter, precautions were taken to enable fast movement of troops from one side of the fort to the other. The interior sides of the courtyards at Qasr Qarun-Dionysias as well therefore take the shape of a freestanding range of rooms; at Umm al-Jimal streets cross the compound. At Thamugadi, open spaces and alleys allowed swift movements from east to west and north to south. By contrast, the east and west courts at Taucheira formed closed-off units, accessible through one or at most a few narrow doors. As argued above, the space in between was probably occupied by further rooms around a central court and even the bathhouse occupies a remarkably central position, further hampering swift north-south movement. There simply would not have been enough space for quick movement of troops from one location within the compound to another.¹⁴¹

A similar problem is noticeable outside the walls. According to Jones a "clear field of fire" was created around the walled compound.¹⁴² This has again been repeated in more recent

¹³³ PRINGLE, *The defence of Byzantine Africa from Justinian to the Arab conquest : an account of the military history and archaeology of the African provinces in the sixth and seventh centuries*, 150 on the importance of archers.

¹³⁴ PRINGLE, *The defence of Byzantine Africa from Justinian to the Arab conquest : an account of the military history and archaeology of the African provinces in the sixth and seventh centuries*, 152.

¹³⁵ PRINGLE, *The defence of Byzantine Africa from Justinian to the Arab conquest : an account of the military history and archaeology of the African provinces in the sixth and seventh centuries*, 234.

¹³⁶ PRINGLE, *The defence of Byzantine Africa from Justinian to the Arab conquest : an account of the military history and archaeology of the African provinces in the sixth and seventh centuries*, 152.

¹³⁷ PRINGLE, *The defence of Byzantine Africa from Justinian to the Arab conquest : an account of the military history and archaeology of the African provinces in the sixth and seventh centuries*, 143-44.

¹³⁸ For an overview of the eastern provinces: see I. ARCE, *Tetrarchic quadriburgia, Justinian coenobia, and Ghassanid diyarat: Patterns of transformation of limes Arabicus forts during late antiquity*, in (ed.) R. Collins, M. Symonds, and M. Weber, *Roman Military Architecture in the Frontiers: Armies and their Architecture in Late Antiquity* Havertown 2015, 98-122. PRINGLE, *The defence of Byzantine Africa from Justinian to the Arab conquest : an account of the military history and archaeology of the African provinces in the sixth and seventh centuries*, 89-109 remains the most comprehensive overview for Africa.

¹³⁹ J. LASSUS, *La forteresse byzantine de Thamugadi (1938-1956)* (I). Paris 1981, 233-37.

¹⁴⁰ ARCE, *Tetrarchic quadriburgia, Justinian coenobia, and Ghassanid diyarat: Patterns of transformation of limes Arabicus forts during late antiquity*, 108.

¹⁴¹ On the importance of swift interior movements, see JANSEN, *Defensive Funktionen*, 120-21, 25, 'Checkliste 2.1.1; 2.2.4'.

¹⁴² JONES, *The Byzantine Bath-House at Tocra: a Summary Report*, 108.

publications, even though the evidence cited to support this remains limited to the dismantlement of the western wall of the courtyard of late antique baths. The actual bath suite was not touched and remained in use.¹⁴³ The field of fire created on the north-eastern corner of the fortress was therefore less than 20 m wide.¹⁴⁴ Likewise, the distance between the northern wall of the walled compound and the antique remains of the ‘unidentified structure’ to the north of the decumanus, another structure that could have been used by potential enemies, was only 22 m. This can hardly be viewed as a substantial field of fire and is far less than what would be expected if defence was the main consideration, especially considering that archers had an effective range of ca. 140 m.¹⁴⁵

The creation of the walled compound within the city centre was a highly invasive change to Taucheira’s existing urban fabric and it is very unlikely that this was a decision made by the civic government for local usage alone. The occupants of the walled compound were more likely to have been a new addition to Taucheira’s local population, were separated from them by a wall and, in a second phase, could monitor their movements from four corner towers. Yet, the physical details of the structure deny that the compound was conceived as a defensible and efficient military stronghold. It needs to be interpreted in combination with the city walls which formed the real line of defence for a much larger settlement. The fact that the walled compound was inserted into a larger community is confirmed by the continuity of the late antique baths and the further usage of the road of the decumanus, at least up until the moment that final changes to the road were undertaken at the city’s East and West Gates. Reliance on the city walls as the main line of defence also clarifies why the defensive qualities of the walled compound were not majorly improved over the course of the two/three years the Byzantine administration supposedly stayed here. In fact, this more holistic view is consistent with the picture offered by the *Chronicle* of John of Nikiu, which presents Taucheira, at the time of ‘Amr b. al-‘As’ first expedition into the Pentapolis, as a defensive position with established fortifications. Although the coin evidence suggests that the compound was heavily used in the mid-7th c., it cannot be associated with its construction.

Having established that the walled compound may already have been in existence long before the mid-7th c., and having also cast serious doubts on the Justinianic construction date of the city walls, it is necessary to revisit the vicissitudes that befell Taucheira and the Pentapolis in the preceding centuries, and the possible contexts in which centralised decisions might have been taken to improve Taucheira’s defences, starting in the 5th c., the earliest period in which improvements to Taucheira’s defences appear to have been undertaken.

Taucheira and the Pentapolis between the 5th and the mid-7th c.

As has often been remarked, the coverage of events in the Pentapolis from the 5th to mid-7th c. by the written sources is both limited and uneven. By far the most comprehensive picture exists for the late 4th and early 5th c., for which period detailed information is provided by the writings of Synesius, bishop of Ptolemais from ca. 410 until his death in ca. 414. In contrast, the following two centuries tend to be regarded as an irrecoverable lacuna in the history of the region. Certainly, narrative histories of the Pentapolis from the 5th to mid-7th c. are largely lacking. Furthermore, while some information concerning the social, economic, and

¹⁴³ JONES, The Byzantine Bath-House at Tocræ: a Summary Report, 108: “tactically, it would have been essential for the fortress to retain a clear field of fire at this point and, for this reason, the western side of the atrium was substantially demolished.”; On the importance of space outside fortifications, see JANSEN, Defensive Funktionen, 125, ‘Checkliste 2.1.1; 2.2.5’.

¹⁴⁴ Distance measured off Google Maps satellite imagery, between northeast corner of fortress and most northwest surviving remains of the bathhouse. The distance between the fortress and the entrance to the baths is only 28 m.

¹⁴⁵ PRINGLE, The defence of Byzantine Africa from Justinian to the Arab conquest : an account of the military history and archaeology of the African provinces in the sixth and seventh centuries, 150.

administrative history of the region may be derived through analogy with better-documented provinces of the empire, such an approach must be employed with caution, not least because the Pentapolis' late antique trajectory has sometimes been argued to have differed from that of neighbouring provinces.¹⁴⁶ Nevertheless, the Pentapolis remained a component of the Eastern Roman Empire throughout this period and cannot be interpreted in isolation from wider imperial strategy and policies either, particularly when considering imperial intervention in the region. Through a closer examination of the shifting balance of power in North Africa between the 5th and 7th c. and wider imperial responses thereto, we will argue that both the late 5th c. and the early 7th c. afforded moments at which the defence and security of the Pentapolis might have held particular significance for the imperial administration, and that both the reinforcement of Taucheira's defences and the construction of the walled compound must be set within this broader historical picture.

The 5th-c. context

One indicator of perceived insecurity—and one which is almost exclusively to be associated with imperial, rather than local, perception and decision making—is changes to provincial, and particularly military, administration.¹⁴⁷ The civic and military administration of the Pentapolis in the 5th and 6th centuries remains poorly understood, with the best documented years again being those of the late 4th and early 5th c.¹⁴⁸ Nevertheless, it is clear from the legal texts that, at some point in the second half of the 5th c., a change occurred in the military command structure of the region. Since the administrative reforms of the Roman Emperor Diocletian (r. 284–305), the two provinces of Libya, the Pentapolis and Libya Inferior, had existed as a single unified military command under the *dux Libyarum*, but at some point between 443 and 472 this unified command was separated into two distinct ducal commands—the *dux* of the Pentapolis and the *dux* of Libya.¹⁴⁹ The decision to create smaller, and more local, ducal commands allowed each military commander to devote more attention to the security of his province, and may be interpreted as a sign that the empire was not confident of the region's security.¹⁵⁰ It is plausible that one phase of the improvements to Taucheira's circuit wall should be associated with the insecurity which prompted this change to military administration.

The precise date of the change to the Pentapolis' military administration remains debated. It has often been noted that, after a period of comparative stability in the 4th c., the late 4th and early 5th c. saw a resumption of Berber raids in the Pentapolis, notably by the

¹⁴⁶ E.g. A. WILSON, Cyrenaica and the late antique economy, *Ancient West and East* 3, no. 1 (2004), 143–54.

¹⁴⁷ Cf. S. PULIATTI, Ricerche sulla legislazione «regionale» di Giustiniano Milan 1980., on the military reforms undertaken by the Eastern Roman emperor Justinian I and their implications.

¹⁴⁸ See further ROQUES, Synésios de Cyrène et la Cyrénaïque du Bas-Empire, 219–26.

¹⁴⁹ A *terminus ante quem* for the separation of the military commands is provided by a constitution of the Eastern Roman emperor Leo I (r. 457–74), preserved in the 6th-c. *Codex Justinianus* (xii.59.10.5; ed. P. KRUEGER, *Corpus Iuris Civilis II: Codex Iustinianus*, 5th edn. Berlin 1895), and dated to 472 (see ROQUES, Synésios de Cyrène et la Cyrénaïque du Bas-Empire, 225 n. 50); while a *terminus post quem* is provided by a constitution of the Eastern Roman emperor Theodosius II (r. 402–450), dated to 12 September 443 (*Nov. Th.* xxiv.5; ed. T. MOMMSEN AND P. MEYER, *Leges Novellae ad Theodosianum pertinentes*. Berlin 1905), which confirms that the separation of the commands had not yet occurred at that date.

¹⁵⁰ ROQUES, Synésios de Cyrène et la Cyrénaïque du Bas-Empire, 225–6.

Austuriani and Mazices.¹⁵¹ A second wave of raids appears to have occurred in ca. 449,¹⁵² and the instability resulting from the activities of the Berber tribes would continue into the 6th c.—raids by the Mazices are attested during the reign of Eastern Roman Emperor Anastasius (491–518).¹⁵³ Significant changes in the tribal political geography also occurred in the first half of the 6th c., with the movement of the Ilaguas (otherwise known as the Laguatan) from the Libyan pre-desert into the Roman provinces of Byzacena, Numidia and Tripolitania.¹⁵⁴ Certainly, Synesius already presents tribal raiding as a serious threat to the settled population of the Pentapolis during the period between 405 and 412.¹⁵⁵ In this context, the literary and rhetorical nature of Synesius’ writings must be acknowledged—it is clear that he drew on the classical *topos* of the barbarian in their presentation of the Berber tribes; and the resumption of Berber raids in ca. 405 forms an integral component of his characterisation and condemnation of the then *dux Libyarum*, Cerealis.¹⁵⁶ Nevertheless, it has largely been accepted that his writings reflect a genuine period of local crisis, and the events of the first half of the 5th c. have sometimes been seen as the catalyst for a change in the military administration in the Pentapolis in the period between 443 and 449.¹⁵⁷

However, while it is tempting to associate attempts to improve the province’s security with tribal raiding, this explanation alone poses some difficulties. A direct relationship between the raids described by Synesius in the early 5th c. and the changes to military administration in, at the earliest, 443 appears to be unlikely given the ca. 30-year interval between them. On the basis of chronology, the conflict with the Austuriani in the middle of the 5th c. noted by the historian Priscus of Panium might offer a more likely possible cause for administrative change.¹⁵⁸ Again, however, a direct connection between the two events remains unproven, especially now that Yves Modéran has convincingly demonstrated that the activities of the Berber tribes presented by Roman sources represent not a migration but typical tribal economic activity.¹⁵⁹ Thus, while tribal raids posed a danger to the local population, and a disruption to the local economy, it is doubtful that, in the absence of additional destabilising factors, this

¹⁵¹ Austuriani: Synesius, *Ep.* 41.69–76; 78.35–9 (ed. and French trans. A. GARZYA and D. ROQUES, *Synésios de Cyrène: Correspondance*, 2 vols. Paris 2003); *Catastases II passim* (ed. and French trans. ed. J. LAMOUREUX AND N. AUJOLAT, *Synésios de Cyrène: Opusculs III*. Paris 2008). Cf. Philostorgius, *HE* xi.8 (ed. J. BIDEZ, Philostorgius: *Kirchengeschichte*. Berlin 1972), writing of attacks by both the Austuriani and the Mazices at the end of the 4th c. On the two groups see MODÉRAN, *Les Maures et l’Afrique romaine (IVe–VIIe siècle)*, 266–7 (Mazices) and 279–288 (Austuriani).

¹⁵² Priscus, frag. 15.4 (ed. and English trans. R. C. BLOCKLEY, *The Fragmentary Classicising Historians of the Later Roman Empire II*. Liverpool 1983). Date: MODÉRAN, *Les Maures et l’Afrique romaine (IVe–VIIe siècle)*, 166 n. 38.

¹⁵³ John of Antioch, frag. 216 (ed. K. MÜLLER, *Fragmenta historicorum graecorum* 4. Paris 1851).

¹⁵⁴ The reasons for the westward migration of the Ilaguas in the 6th c. remain debated. See, in particular, MODÉRAN, *Les Maures et l’Afrique romaine (IVe–VIIe siècle)*, 616–29; and E. FENTRESS AND A. WILSON, *The Saharan Berber diaspora and the southern frontiers of Byzantine North Africa*, in (ed.) S. Stevens and J. Conant, *North Africa under Byzantium and Early Islam*. Washington D.C. 2016, 41–63: 41–63. The relationship between the Austuriani and the Ilaguas remains unclear, but it is likely that they are either the same group, with 6th-c. references to the ‘Austur’ (Corippus, *Ioh.* ii. 89, 91, 209, 345; v.172; vii.283; ed. J. DIGGLE AND F. GOODYEAR, *Flavii Cresconii Corippi Iohannidos libri VIII*. Cambridge 1970), or that the Austuriani had been assimilated by the Ilaguas by the 6th c.

¹⁵⁵ E.g. Synesius, *Ep.* 41, 78 104, 113, 122, 125, 130–34 (ed. and French trans. GARZYA and ROQUES, *Synésios de Cyrène*); *Cat.* II (ed. and French trans. LAMOUREUX AND AUJOLAT, *Synésios de Cyrène*). See further discussion in ROQUES, *Synésios de Cyrène et la Cyrénaïque du Bas-Empire*, 279–90.

¹⁵⁶ Cerealis: PLRE II, 280–1 (Cerealis 1). On Synesius’ presentation of Cerealis see ROQUES, *Synésios de Cyrène et la Cyrénaïque du Bas-Empire*, 255–60.

¹⁵⁷ ROQUES, *Synésios de Cyrène et la Cyrénaïque du Bas-Empire*, 226.

¹⁵⁸ Thus, ROQUES, *Synésios de Cyrène et la Cyrénaïque du Bas-Empire*, 225–6.

¹⁵⁹ MODÉRAN, *Les Maures et l’Afrique romaine (IVe–VIIe siècle)*, 154–74, 279–310. Migration: D. ROQUES, *Synésios de Cyrène et les migrations berbères vers l’Orient (398–413)*, *Comptes rendus des séances de l’Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres* 127, no. 4 (1983), 660–77.

commonplace activity held great significance for the imperial administration. The Berber tribes of this period rarely seem to have launched direct assaults on urban centres, instead pillaging rural settlements and urban hinterlands,¹⁶⁰ and it seems clear from Synesius' writings that, in the early 5th c. at least, this was simply not of interest to the imperial administration.¹⁶¹ One would therefore expect to see a local response to the problem of tribal raiding—both the withdrawal of vulnerable populations to more secure locations and the development of local defence initiatives—as is indeed evident in the early 5th c., when, for example, Synesius himself coordinated defence initiatives, including the organisation and arming of troops, both in his capacity as a local landowner and as a bishop—rather than the top-down approach implied in changes to provincial military organisation.¹⁶²

A stronger argument can perhaps be made for assigning the changes to military administration to the end of the possible date range—that is, shortly after 470—as a response to changing regional geopolitics.¹⁶³ The Vandal conquest of the Roman provinces of Africa in the mid-5th c. delivered a significant blow not only to the territorial integrity of the Western Roman Empire, but also to the balance of power in the wider Mediterranean world. The conquest was a progressive process, as the Vandals advanced from west to east, and it is possible that Tripolitania, the most easterly of the provinces of the Roman diocese of Africa, was never securely under Vandal control.¹⁶⁴ There is certainly no indication that the Pentapolis, administratively part of the Eastern Roman Empire from the late 4th c., and subsequently part of the Prefecture of Oriens rather than the Prefecture of Africa, was at direct risk from Vandal territorial expansion – although it is clear that a Vandal naval assault on the Eastern Roman Empire, and particularly Egypt, had been a genuine fear for its inhabitants in the 460s.¹⁶⁵ Equally, however, the province, suddenly at the frontier between two states, could not have failed to feel the wider effects of these events.

In 468, in part in response to growing alarm over Vandal naval attacks in the western and eastern Mediterranean,¹⁶⁶ the Eastern Roman Empire launched a multi-pronged attack on the Vandal Kingdom designed to recover the former Roman provinces of Africa.¹⁶⁷ While

¹⁶⁰ On the nature of the threat posed to urban populations posed by tribal raiding in the early 5th c. see A. DE FRANCISCO HEREDERO, Synesios of Cyrene and the defence of Cyrenaica, in (ed.) A. de Francisco Heredero, D. Hernández de la Fuente, and S. Torres Prieto, *New Perspectives on Late Antiquity in the Eastern Roman Empire*. Newcastle Upon Tyne 2014, 163–90: 182.

¹⁶¹ For the lack of imperial response to the Berber raids of the early 5th c. and the need for local defence initiatives in this period see DE FRANCISCO HEREDERO, Synesios of Cyrene and the defence of Cyrenaica, .

¹⁶² E.g. Synesius, *Ep.* 107–8, 132 (ed. and French trans. GARZYA and ROQUES, *Synésios de Cyrène*); with DE FRANCISCO HEREDERO, Synesios of Cyrene and the defence of Cyrenaica, 180, 87–9.

¹⁶³ Thus, BARTHEL, Apollonia-Sozousa in late antiquity: Some remarks on the *caput provinciae* of Libya Superior, 165–68.

¹⁶⁴ The Vandals crossed from Hispania in ca. 429 (Hydatius, *Chron.* 302.5 [90]; ed. and English trans. R. W. BURGESS, *The Chronicle of Hydatius and the Consularia Constantinopolitana: Two Contemporary Accounts of the Final Years of the Roman Empire*. Oxford 1993), and captured Carthage, the capital of Africa Proconsularis, in 439 (Cassiodorus, *Chron.* 1233 (s.a. 439) (ed. T. MOMMSEN, *Cassiodori senatoris chronicon: in Chronica Minora saec. IV. V. VI. VII. (II)* (MGH AA 11). Berlin 1894); Prosper, *Chron.* 1339 (s.a. 439) (ed. T. MOMMSEN, *Epitoma chronicon: in Chronica Minora saec. IV. V. VI. VII. (I)* (MGH AA 9). Berlin 1892); and Marcellinus Comes, *Chron.* s.a. 438; with discussion in R. STEINACHER, The so-called *Laterculus Regum Vandalorum et Alanorum: A sixth-century African addition to Prosper Tiro's Chronicle?*, in (ed.) A. Merrills, *Vandals, Romans and Berbers: New Perspectives on Late Antique North Africa*. Aldershot 2004, 163–80: 175.). On Vandal control of Tripolitania, which was probably limited to the littoral see Y. MODÉLAN, *Les Vandales et l'Empire romain*. Arles 2014, 146–7.

¹⁶⁵ *Vita S. Danielis Stylitae*, 56 (ed. H. DELEHAYE, *Les saints stylites*. Brussels 1923). See also BARTHEL, Apollonia-Sozousa in late antiquity: Some remarks on the *caput provinciae* of Libya Superior, 163–4.

¹⁶⁶ For a discussion of Vandal military campaigns in the western Mediterranean in the lead-up to these events see A. MERRILLS AND R. MILES, *The Vandals*. Chichester 2010, 116–22.

¹⁶⁷ Hydatius, *Chron.* 312.2 (247) (ed. and English trans. BURGESS, *The Chronicle of Hydatius*); Procopius, *Bella* iii.6.5–24 (ed. J. HAURY AND G. WIRTH, *Procopii Caesariensis opera omnia I–II*. Leipzig 1963)) = Priscus frag.

attention has generally focussed on the failed Roman naval assault on the Vandal capital of Carthage, led by Basiliscus, the brother-in-law of the Eastern Roman Emperor Leo I (r. 457–474),¹⁶⁸ a land offensive, under the command of Heracleius and Marsus also occurred.¹⁶⁹ Together with troops from Egypt, Heracleius and Marsus captured the city of Oea (mod. Tripoli) in Tripolitania from Vandals, and then marched north, with the intention of joining Basiliscus once he seized Carthage.¹⁷⁰ However, with the failure of Basiliscus' expedition, the land offensive was also forced to retreat.¹⁷¹ The written sources note only that the campaign had come to an end, but it is assumed that Heracleius, together with his forces, must have withdrawn back through Tripolitania.¹⁷² Furthermore, it has been speculated that Oea may have remained in Roman hands until a new agreement was struck between the Vandal king Gaiseric and Leo I in 470/1, at which point the Romans must have ceded their territorial gains in Tripolitania.¹⁷³

In the short-term, these events cemented the position of the Libyan provinces as the African frontier zone between the Eastern Roman Empire and the western successor kingdoms. Any expectation on the part of the Eastern or Western Roman Empire that the African provinces could be recovered in the following decades would appear to have been abandoned—when these aspirations were revived by the Eastern Roman Emperor Justinian I (r. 527–565)

53.3 (ed. BLOCKLEY, *The Fragmentary Classicising Historians*); Theophanes, *Chron.* AM 5961, 5963 (ed. C. DE BOOR, *Theophanis chronographia*. Hildesheim 1963–1965, 115–116, 117) = Priscus, frags. 53.1, 53.5 (ed. BLOCKLEY, *The Fragmentary Classicising Historians*). For summaries of these events see MERRILLS AND MILES, *The Vandals*, 121–3; and MODÉLAN, *Les Vandales et l'Empire romain*, 193–99.

¹⁶⁸ Procopius, *Bella* iii.6.10–24 (HAURY AND WIRTH, *Procopii Caesariensis opera omnia I–II*) = Priscus frag. 53.3 (ed. BLOCKLEY, *The Fragmentary Classicising Historians*); Theophanes, *Chron.* AM 5961 (ed. DE BOOR, *Theophanis chronographia*, 115–116) = Priscus, frag. 53.1 (ed. BLOCKLEY, *The Fragmentary Classicising Historians*). Cf. Jordanes, *Romana* 337 (ed. T. MOMMSEN, *Iordanis Getica et Romana* (MGH AA 5.1). Berlin 1882); Paul the Deacon, *Hist.* xv.2 (ed. H. DROSEN, *Pauli historiae romanae libri XI–XVI* (MGH AA 2). Berlin 1879); Marcellinus Comes, *Chron.* s.a. 468 (ed. T. MOMMSEN and English trans. B. CROKE, *The Chronicle of Marcellinus* (Byzantina Australiensia 7). Sydney 1995).

¹⁶⁹ Procopius, *Bella* iii.6.9 (HAURY AND WIRTH, *Procopii Caesariensis opera omnia I–II*) = Priscus frag. 53.3 (ed. BLOCKLEY, *The Fragmentary Classicising Historians*) Theophanes, *Chron.* AM 5963 (ed. DE BOOR, *Theophanis chronographia*, 117) = Priscus 53.5 (ed. BLOCKLEY, *The Fragmentary Classicising Historians*). Procopius' only names Heracleius as the commander of this expedition, but Theophanes claims he was accompanied by Marsus. On these individuals see *PLRE* II, 541–2 (Heraclius 4); 728–9 (Marsus 2). There is a chronological discrepancy between the account of Procopius, who suggests that Heracleius' expedition and its retreat were contemporary with Basiliscus' expedition, and that of Theophanes, who dates Heracleius expedition and its subsequent retreat to 471. It is, however, likely that Theophanes has misdated these events, and they should be placed in 468 or shortly thereafter. See further R. BLOCKLEY, *East Roman Foreign Policy: Formation and Conduct from Diocletian to Anastasius* Leeds 1992, 212., n.37; MODÉLAN, *Les Vandales et l'Empire romain*, 197–8. Contra C. COURTOIS, *Les Vandales et l'Afrique*. Paris 1955, 202–4.

¹⁷⁰ Procopius, *Bella* iii.6.9, 11 (HAURY AND WIRTH, *Procopii Caesariensis opera omnia I–II*) = Priscus frag. 53.3 (ed. BLOCKLEY, *The Fragmentary Classicising Historians*); Theophanes, *Chron.* AM 5963 (ed. DE BOOR, *Theophanis chronographia*, 117) = Priscus 53.5 (ed. BLOCKLEY, *The Fragmentary Classicising Historians*). Following Procopius' reference to a Roman fleet, MERRILLS AND MILES, *The Vandals*, 122 suggest that the Roman force arrived at Oea by sea. In contrast, BLOCKLEY, *East Roman Foreign Policy: Formation and Conduct from Diocletian to Anastasius* 76; F. HAARER, *Anastasius I: Politics and Empire in the Late Roman World*. Cambridge 2006, 77; and M. WHITBY, *The army, c. 420–602*, in (ed.) A. Cameron, B. Ward-Perkins, and M. Whitby, *The Cambridge Ancient History* 14 Cambridge 2000, 288–314: 98. n. 147, infer from Theophanes' reference to Egyptian troops that the Roman force travelled overland from Egypt.

¹⁷¹ Procopius, *Bella* iii.6.25 (HAURY AND WIRTH, *Procopii Caesariensis opera omnia I–II*) = Priscus frag. 53.3 (ed. BLOCKLEY, *The Fragmentary Classicising Historians*); Theophanes, *Chron.* AM 5963 (ed. DE BOOR, *Theophanis chronographia*, 117) = Priscus 53.5 (ed. BLOCKLEY, *The Fragmentary Classicising Historians*).

¹⁷² BLOCKLEY, *East Roman Foreign Policy: Formation and Conduct from Diocletian to Anastasius* 76; MERRILLS AND MILES, *The Vandals*, 122; MODÉLAN, *Les Vandales et l'Empire romain*, 146.

¹⁷³ Theophanes, *Chron.* AM 5963 (ed. DE BOOR, *Theophanis chronographia*, 117) = Priscus 53.5 (ed. BLOCKLEY, *The Fragmentary Classicising Historians*); with MERRILLS AND MILES, *The Vandals*, 122.

in the early 530s, they were initially rejected by his advisors, who continued to fear a repeat of the failures of 468.¹⁷⁴ In the face of this new reality—that a frontier in Africa might be expected to exist for the foreseeable future—it would not have been surprising if the Eastern Roman Empire had sought to improve the security of this frontier and the reforms to military administration might reasonably be dated to this period.¹⁷⁵ If this were indeed the case, such a period of imperial interest in the security of the Pentapolis would also offer a fitting context for at least one phase of the improvements to the city walls of Taucheira. As both a port and an urban centre close to the border with Tripolitania, Taucheira would have had to be bypassed by an enemy attempting to reach the provincial capital of Apollonia-Sozousa from the west. It would therefore have held particular strategic significance at a time when a threat from the west was perceived.¹⁷⁶ Goodchild already associated the reinforcement of the city's seaward walls with a perceived Vandal threat,¹⁷⁷ but the interventions may very well have encompassed the entire circuit. The addition of pentagonal towers and a *proteichisma*, elements to counter siege engines, may not have been particularly relevant in this immediate context—the Vandals are not known to have engaged in siege warfare—, but they would have been part of the state-of-the-art fortification package with which engineers with experience along the eastern frontier were familiar.

The agreement struck between Gaiseric and Leo I in 470/1 was ultimately short-lived – with the death of Leo in 474, Gaiseric resumed raids in the Mediterranean.¹⁷⁸ However, in 476, the Eastern Roman Empire and the Vandal Kingdom agreed a long-term treaty, under which both parties would refrain from hostile action against the other.¹⁷⁹ The terms of this treaty seemingly remained in effect until the Roman invasion of Africa in 533 and it is clear that the Eastern Roman Emperor Anastasius (r. 491–518), at least, took pains to establish friendly diplomatic relations with the Vandal Kingdom.¹⁸⁰ One might therefore imagine that the military threat posed to the Pentapolis from the west would have been seen as diminished and that the province's strategic significance would have declined. However, the security of the Pentapolis does not seem to have been taken for granted by the Roman administration in the decades following 476.

While information concerning the Pentapolis during the reign of the Eastern Roman Emperor Zeno (474–491) is lacking, the reign of his successor, Anastasius, may have seen more defensive building projects undertaken in the province, with fortifications both built *ex novo* and restored.¹⁸¹ While the decision to undertake fortification projects in the absence of any immediate threat was long not considered a possibility, it is now recognised that large scale building projects could only be undertaken in times of peace, when personnel and financial resources were not otherwise required for defence. Indeed, the utilisation of a lull in hostilities to reinforce defensive infrastructure appears to have been characteristic of the pragmatic approach to defence adopted by Anastasius, who does not seem to have assumed that any

¹⁷⁴ Procopius, *Bella* iii.10.1–17 (HAURY AND WIRTH, *Procopii Caesariensis opera omnia* I–II).

¹⁷⁵ Thus, BARTHEL, *Apollonia-Sozousa in late antiquity: Some remarks on the caput provinciae of Libya Superior*, 165–8.

¹⁷⁶ C. CAPIZZI, *L'Imperatore Anastasio I (491–518). Studio sulla sua vita, la sua opera e la sua personalità*. Roma 1969, 157., emphasises that Libya would have been perceived as providing a bridgehead for an assault on the economically vital province of Egypt.

¹⁷⁷ GOODCHILD, *Fortificazioni e Palazzi Bizantini in Tripolitania e Cirenaica*, 235.

¹⁷⁸ Procopius, *Bella* iii.7.26 (HAURY AND WIRTH, *Procopii Caesariensis opera omnia* I–II); with BLOCKLEY, *East Roman Foreign Policy*, 79.

¹⁷⁹ Procopius, *Bella* iii.7.26–7 (HAURY AND WIRTH, *Procopii Caesariensis opera omnia* I–II). Procopius presents this treaty as being a “peace without end” [σπονδαὶ ἀπέραντοι].

¹⁸⁰ Procopius, *Bella* iii.7.26, 8.14 (HAURY AND WIRTH, *Procopii Caesariensis opera omnia* I–II).

¹⁸¹ E.g. al-Motanib. See F. BENTAHER AND A. BUZAIAN, *The fort of al-Motanib*, in (ed.) M. Luni, *Cirene e la Cirenaica nell'Antichità* (Cirene "Atene d'Africa" III). Roma 2010, 229–33: 229–33.

cessation of conflict would be long term.¹⁸² For example, during the period of negotiations between the Eastern Roman Empire and Sasanian Persia in ca. 505, Anastasius took the opportunity to strengthen the defences of the eastern frontier, and to ensure that necessary infrastructure – including that relating to food and water supply – was improved where necessary.¹⁸³

Although much more attention has been paid to Anastasius' interventions on the eastern frontier of the empire,¹⁸⁴ the Pentapolis, alongside Arabia, was also one of the provinces subject to military reforms during Anastasius' reign.¹⁸⁵ Three inscriptions, found at Ptolemais, Apollonia-Sozousa, and Taucheira respectively, preserve the text of an imperial edict, sometimes known as *De rebus Libyae Pentapolis denuo constituendis*.¹⁸⁶ While the edict has sometimes been dated to 501, its content does not permit a more precise date than to the reign of Anastasius (i.e. between 491 and 518).¹⁸⁷ The three inscriptions offer slight differences of transcription, but are not substantively different in content.¹⁸⁸ The edict is addressed to the *dux* of the Pentapolis, Daniel, and presents fourteen provisions relating to the responsibilities and powers of the *dux* and to the soldiers whom he would command, including the registration of the *duces*, the number of officials who would serve in the ducal *officium*, unit and troop numbers, rationing, the rights of the soldiers, and the regulation of payments.¹⁸⁹ It has generally been interpreted in light of Anastasius' wider military reform programme, which has been seen as aiming to improve conditions of service.¹⁹⁰ However, while Anastasius may well have had a concern for the well-being of his soldiers, the desire to regulate the conditions of the rank-and-file and to minimise financially exploitative practices by military commanders also speaks to a concern to improve recruitment, discipline and morale, and to reduce corruption, which was essential to the effective functioning of a military force, particularly in frontier regions.¹⁹¹

The inscription from Taucheira was inscribed on a single block, which was found near the Perrène fort, in the south of the city (fig. 19).¹⁹² Oliverio assumed that the block must

¹⁸² For a general assessment of Anastasius' defence strategy in the East see BLOCKLEY, East Roman Foreign Policy: Formation and Conduct from Diocletian to Anastasius 87–93.

¹⁸³ E.g. Ps.-Joshua the Stylite, *Chron.* 81 (English trans. F. TROMBLEY AND J. WATT, The Chronicle of Pseudo-Joshua the Stylite (TTH 32). Liverpool 2000).

¹⁸⁴ CAPIZZI, L'Imperatore Anastasio I (491–518). Studio sulla sua vita, la sua opera e la sua personalità, 213–28; G. GREATREX AND S. N. C. LIEU, The Roman Eastern Frontier and the Persian Wars: Part II: AD 363–630 New York & London 2002, 74–77; HAARER, Anastasius I: Politics and Empire in the Late Roman World, 65–70.

¹⁸⁵ ROQUES, Procope de Césarée et la Cyrénaïque du VI^e s. ap. J.-C. (De Aedificiis 6, 2, 1–23), 399. For the broader context of Anastasius' military reforms see HAARER, Anastasius I: Politics and Empire in the Late Roman World, 213–6.

¹⁸⁶ *IRCyr2020*, A30, P116, and T219. Cf. *SEG IX*, nos. 356 (Ptolemais), 414 (Taucheira), and XXVII, no. 1139 (Apollonia); G. OLIVERIO, Il decreto di Anastasio I° su l'ordinamento politico-militare della Cirenaica, iscrizioni di Tocra, El Chamís, Tolemaide, Cirene. Bergamo 1936, 141–3. The inscription from Apollonia was originally inscribed on at least two marble panels and was preserved as ten fragments built into later walls in the vicinity of the so-called Palace of the *Dux*, with one fragment found in the Palace itself (GOODCHILD, Byzantines, Berbers and Arabs in 7th-century Libya, 253–4). That from Ptolemais was originally inscribed across three limestone panels and was preserved as seven fragments in the façade of the so-called Fortress of the *Dux* (*IRCyr2020*, P116). The inscription from Ptolemais represents the most complete copy of the text.

¹⁸⁷ J. REYNOLDS, The inscriptions of Apollonia, in (ed.) R. G. Goodchild et al., Apollonia, the Port of Cyrene. Excavations by the University of Michigan, 1965–1967. Tripoli 1976, 293–333: 309; ROQUES, Synésios de Cyrène et la Cyrénaïque du Bas-Empire, 226, with no. 51.

¹⁸⁸ The text from Apollonia, unlike those from Ptolemais and Taucheira, does not employ paragraph breaks. OLIVERIO, Il decreto di Anastasio I° su l'ordinamento politico-militare della Cirenaica, iscrizioni di Tocra, El Chamís, Tolemaide, Cirene, 135.

¹⁸⁹ Nothing further is known concerning Daniel. See *PLRE II*, 345 (Danielus 4).

¹⁹⁰ HAARER, Anastasius I: Politics and Empire in the Late Roman World, 213–16.

¹⁹¹ W. KAEGI, Byzantine Military Unrest, 471–843: An Interpretation. Amsterdam 1981, 43.

¹⁹² OLIVERIO, Il decreto di Anastasio I° su l'ordinamento politico-militare della Cirenaica, iscrizioni di Tocra, El Chamís, Tolemaide, Cirene, 135.

originally have been located in the ‘military quarter’ of the city – possibly the area of the so-called ‘Byzantine fortress’.¹⁹³ The copies of the inscription from both Ptolemais and Apollonia have been used to infer military functions for buildings in the vicinity of the find locations,¹⁹⁴ but there is no reason why the edict could not have been erected in a civic setting. While the contents of the edict are specific to the Roman army in the Pentapolis, and this must have been its primary audience, it was common practice for new legislation to be published to the population,¹⁹⁵ and it is probable that a secondary function of the edict was to engender confidence in the populations of cities of the Pentapolis hosting garrisons. That said, an inscribed copy of the edict is therefore likely to imply that there was a military presence in the vicinity.¹⁹⁶ This is further suggested by the text of the edict itself, which specifies that the province was to have five *arithmoi* [numeri], based in the cities of the provinces, in addition to units of *castresiani* [limitanei] based on the frontier.¹⁹⁷ While the cities in which these troops were to be based is not specified, it is likely that the intention was to base one *arithmos* in each of the province’s major cities – Apollonia-Sozousa, Berenike, Cyrene, Ptolemais and Taucheira.¹⁹⁸ It may therefore be assumed that the city of Taucheira was garrisoned from this period.

An established military presence at Taucheira in the late 5th or early 6th c. potentially offers an explanation for the construction of the city’s walled compound. As has been argued above, the walled compound does not appear to have fulfilled a defensive function. However, this does not mean that it was entirely unconnected with the military. The role of the *dux* was a complex one, which encompassed logistics and financial management as much as command in the field. The decree makes clear that he had an administrative staff of forty at his disposal, in addition to the regular troops who were co-opted into administrative roles, and the administrative functions of the ducal *officium* would have required both work and storage space, both of which would have been catered for in the walled compound.¹⁹⁹

It has generally assumed that the *dux* of the Pentapolis must have maintained a ducal palace at the provincial capital of Apollonia-Sozousa, and, while it is not the intention here to re-evaluate the identification of the so-called ‘Palace of the *dux*’ at Apollonia-Sozousa, this is indeed likely to have been the case. However, there is no reason to assume that the *dux* only maintained one base.²⁰⁰ Indeed, evidence for earlier practice in the Pentapolis, and for later practice in neighbouring regions, suggests the contrary. It is clear from Synesius’ *Ep.* 94, which dates from the second quarter of 411, that the then *dux Libyarum*, Anysios, who held the military command for both the Pentapolis and Libya Inferior, had spent time based at Taucheira, in addition to (presumably) the provincial capital at Ptolemais and at least one location in Libya Inferior.²⁰¹ While this was, admittedly, a command which covered a far larger area than that of the later *dux* of the Pentapolis, it is nevertheless noteworthy that Taucheira

¹⁹³ OLIVERIO, Il decreto di Anastasio I° su l’ordinamento politico-militare della Cirenaica, iscrizioni di Tocrà, El Chamís, Tolemaide, Cirene, 18.

¹⁹⁴ The inscription from Apollonia has been connected with the so-called Palace of the *Dux* and that from Ptolemais with the so-called Fortress of the *Dux*. See n. 185 (above).

¹⁹⁵ E.g. *J. Nov.* 8 edict. pref. (ed. R. SCHOELL AND W. KROLL, *Corpus Iuris Civilis III: Novellae*, 1st edn. Berlin 1895).

¹⁹⁶ WARD-PERKINS AND GOODCHILD, *Christian monuments of Cyrenaica*, 201.

¹⁹⁷ *IRCyr2020*, P116 §5 (citations are given to the version of the text found at Ptolemais, as the least lacunate). On the functions of these classes of troops in Late Antiquity see WHITBY, *The army, c. 420-602* [CHECK], 300–08.

¹⁹⁸ ROQUES, *Synésios de Cyrène et la Cyrénaïque du Bas-Empire*, 97, 255.

¹⁹⁹ *IRCyr2020*, P116 §2. Cf. SMITH AND CROW, *The Hellenistic and Byzantine Defences of Tocrà (Taucheira)*, 72–3.

²⁰⁰ ROQUES, *Synésios de Cyrène et la Cyrénaïque du Bas-Empire*, 230.

²⁰¹ Synesius, *Ep.* 94 (Taucheira) (ed. and French trans. GARZYA and ROQUES, *Synésios de Cyrène*). For the date see Roques 2003, 345. See also KRAELING, *Ptolemais: City of the Libyan Pentapolis*, 26 and n. 129.

was already deemed a position of interest. Furthermore, when the legislation establishing the military administration of the Prefecture of Africa was issued in 534, following the conquest of the region by the Eastern Roman Empire, it specified that the *dux* of the province of Byzacena was to be jointly based between the cities of Capsa (mod. Gafsa, Tunisia) and Thelepte (near mod. Medinet Kedima, Tunisia).²⁰² The latter may perhaps offer a useful parallel for understanding the situation in the Pentapolis in the 5th c. It is likely to have reflected imperial awareness that Byzacena, which was in 534 only nominally under Roman control, remained an unstable region and that both positions were strategically significant.

The Pentapolis' 5th-c. historical context offers a first alternative setting for the renovation of both city walls and construction of walled compound. The development of Taucheira's late antique defences might legitimately be interpreted in the context of its increased role in the defence of the capital Apollonia-Sozousa shortly after 470. Even though the addition of elements designed to counter siege engines was not necessary, their introduction can be explained by hypothesising the involvement of engineers with experience along the eastern frontier. If the walled compound was added around the same time, a military-administrative function can be put forward, i.e., military units may certainly have been housed here, but the more inaccessible courtyards would have been better suited for storage and administration of supplies for the troops in the wider area. The influx of a new, military, component into the city moreover may have been the motivation to construct, next to their base, a new bath complex.

The early 7th-c. context

Evidence for the perceived security of the Pentapolis in the early 7th c. is, unfortunately, even more limited than that for the late 5th c. Nevertheless, it is plausible that the cities of the Pentapolis perceived a threat from Sasanian Persia between 618 and ca. 628, during which period the Sasanians occupied Egypt.²⁰³ The possibility that the walled compound at Taucheira, at least, might have been a response to this perceived threat has previously been suggested by Ahmed Buzaian.²⁰⁴ Evidence to support further improvements to the city's defences, and particularly the additional of the *proteichisma*, during this period may perhaps be found in the Syriac source tradition.

It has often been argued that there is no evidence that the Sasanians advanced, or intended to advance, beyond Egypt.²⁰⁵ This in itself need not suggest that the Byzantine Empire and the inhabitants of the Pentapolis did not perceive the Sasanian presence in Egypt as a threat to the wider region. The 9th-c. Byzantine chronicler, Theophanes Confessor, claims that:

In this year [AM 6107 = 614/15 CE] the Persians occupied all of Egypt and Alexandria and Libya as far as Ethiopia...²⁰⁶

²⁰² *CJ* i.27.2.1 (ed. KRUEGER, *Corpus Iuris Civilis* II).

²⁰³ For a recent summary of these events see J. HOWARD-JOHNSTON, *The Last Great War of Antiquity*. Oxford 2021, 128–32.

²⁰⁴ BUZAIAN in KENRICK, *Cyrenaica*, 61. The possibility that improvements to Taucheira's defences may have been undertaken during the period of the Persian occupation of Egypt is also acknowledged by WARD-PERKINS AND GOODCHILD, *Christian monuments of Cyrenaica*, 201; and SMITH AND CROW, *The Hellenistic and Byzantine Defences of Tocra (Taucheira)*, 73.

²⁰⁵ P. SPECK, *Das geteilte Dossier: Beobachtungen zu den Nachrichten über die Regierung des Kaisers Herakleios und die seiner Söhne bei Theophanes und Nikephoros*. Bonn 1988, 75–7; followed by GREATREX AND LIEU, *The Roman Eastern Frontier and the Persian Wars: Part II: AD 363–630* 305 n. 112.

²⁰⁶ Theophanes, *Chron.* AM 6107 (ed. DE BOOR, *Theophanis chronographia*, 301; trans. C. MANGO and R. SCOTT, *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor: Byzantine and Near Eastern History, AD 284–813*. Oxford 1997, 432).

The same tradition, which has usually been attributed to the 8th-c. Syriac chronicler, Theophilus of Edessa, as the so-called Common Source,²⁰⁷ may be found in the 12th-c. Syriac chronicle of Michael the Syrian:

Shahrbaraz [the Sasanian general] entered Egypt and subjected it and also he conquered Alexandria and killed many in it. He also subjected Libya to the Persians as far as the border of the Ethiopians.²⁰⁸

The sense of “Libya” in this context is, of course, open to question. Eastern chroniclers are unlikely to have had any detailed knowledge of the geography of Africa, and, in addition to being used to refer to the Byzantine provinces of Libya Superior and Libya Inferior (the Pentapolis and Tripolitania), the term “Libya” was used by Graeco-Latin late antique writers to refer to North Africa in general, as well as potentially to the western areas of Egypt,²⁰⁹ and a similar range of semantic fields can be found in the use of the term by Syriac writers.²¹⁰ Nevertheless, the use of the term here seems specific, with the sources distinguishing between Egypt, Libya and Ethiopia, and the possibility that this tradition reflects a concern that the Sasanians intended to push west into the Pentapolis.

The 7th-c. threat posed by Sasanian Persia therefore offers a second alternative context in which the additions of proteichisma and pentagonal towers to Taucheira’s city walls can be placed, particularly because this was seemingly the first time that the Pentapolis might have faced a threat from an enemy competent in siege warfare. Furthermore, the Sasanians’ ability to engage in siege warfare would have been well-known to the Byzantine military command, which was probably responsible for the work on the fortifications at Taucheira—the empire’s commanders were likely to have gained their military experience against the Sasanians on the eastern frontier, which had been the major theatre of conflict for the Byzantines in the preceding two decades. The possibility that improvements were made to Taucheira’s walls in the early 7th c. does not contradict earlier renovations as referred to by Procopius nor the suggestion that some work may have been undertaken in the late 5th c.; as mentioned above, it may well have been possible that the late antique interventions to the walls of Taucheira belong to more than one period. However, given the walled compound’s lack of defensibility, it is unlikely that it should be dated to this period.

Discussion and conclusion

This article has sought to re-evaluate the written and archaeological evidence for the walled compound at Taucheira, and to set this within the wider contexts of the archaeological evidence for the site and the geopolitical history of the region in Late Antiquity. Richard Goodchild’s interpretation of the walled compound at Taucheira and, by association, the 7th-c. history of

²⁰⁷ Cf. R. HOYLAND, *Theophilus of Edessa’s Chronicle and the Circulation of Knowledge in Late Antiquity and Early Islam*. Liverpool 2011, 65.

²⁰⁸ Michael the Syrian, *Chron.* XI.1 (English trans. R. HOYLAND, *Theophilus of Edessa’s Chronicle and the Circulation of Historical Knowledge in Late Antiquity and Early Islam* (TTH 57). Liverpool 2011, 65). Jean-Baptiste Chabot, the editor of the chronicle (J.-B. CHABOT, *Chronique de Michel le Syrien, patriarche jacobite d’Antioche*. Paris 1899–1963, vol. 2, 401 n. 1), contrasts Michael’s account with that of the 7/8th-c. chronicle of Jacob of Edessa, which notes that: “The Persians conquered [Egypt] and subjected [Libya]” (Jacob of Edessa, *Chron.* 325 (English trans. A. PALMER, *The Seventh Century in the West Syrian Chronicles* (TTH 15). Liverpool 1993, 39).

²⁰⁹ On the use of the term “Libya” among late antique writers see ROQUES, *Synésios de Cyrène et la Cyrénaïque du Bas-Empire*, 55–8. On the use of the term in the Arabic historiographic tradition see C. E. BOSWORTH et al., *Lībiyā*. 1. The name, in, *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd edn., vol. 5. Leiden 1986, 753–4: 573–4.

²¹⁰ See R. PAYNE SMITH, *Thesaurus Syriacus*. 2 vols. Oxford 1879–1901., vol. 2, 1903 [ܠܒܝܐ].

the city, has been almost universally adopted into narratives of the late antique Pentapolis.²¹¹ This has implications not only for our understanding of the history of the 7th-c. Arab advance into the Pentapolis and the Byzantine response to it, but also for our interpretation of the urban development of Taucheira and the city's wider strategic significance in Late Antiquity. Goodchild's arguments have seen little critical evaluation in the nearly sixty years since they were proposed, even though our view of Late Antiquity has changed drastically and the texts that were once used to support the compound's chronology have been subjected to much more critical readings. It is, at this point, incautious to assert that the written and archaeological evidence support the compound being constructed in haste by the Byzantine administration of the Pentapolis as a defensive position from which to evade the Arab advance into the region in ca. 642. The criteria originally presented in support of this argument—the 'misalignment' of the building, its lack of foundations, and its reuse of building materials from existing structures—do not withstand scrutiny in light of more recent research on late antique construction techniques. Moreover, the compound's construction would have taken time, since it did not make use of pre-existing open space or buildings, but replaced structures across several insulae, which would have involved the dismantling of existing buildings. From a practical perspective alone, it is therefore highly unlikely that the compound could have been constructed in haste in the face of an immediate threat in ca. 642.

It is also clear that, despite its designation as a 'fortress', the walled compound was not conceived as a defensive structure. The ostensible layout of the compound, around several courtyards which functioned as closed-off units, would not have allowed the necessary rapid movement of troops from one side to the other; and, despite arguments to the contrary, the position of the compound, particularly in relation to the late antique baths, does not appear to have provided it with either a clear field of vision or a clear field of fire to the northeast, with the baths continuing to function beyond the construction of the compound, and therefore creating an obstruction.²¹² The compound was furthermore inserted into the pre-existing fabric of the city, whose infrastructure continued to function around it. This does not sit well with the established narrative of an emergency response, and suggests that the compound existed prior to the threat posed by the Arabs in the mid-7th c. Nevertheless, the construction of the walled compound was, in a similar manner to the construction of a fortress, a highly invasive change to the city, and one which established the residents of the compound as a separate community within its walls. It was therefore unlikely to have been an initiative of the civic government for local use alone.

In the absence of defensive features, the walled compound, and those resident within it, must have relied on the defence provided by Taucheira's city wall, renovated in Late Antiquity. That the city walls were perceived to be the city's primary defence is confirmed by John Nikiu, in his assertion that "they [the Byzantines]" closed the gates against them [the Arabs]".²¹³ Rather than trusting Procopius' claims of renovation under Justinian,²¹⁴ we have argued that improvements to the walls were undertaken in several phases over an extended period. Some interventions may have been undertaken by the local population, and would not necessarily have required a grand military strategy. The picture presented of late antique Taucheira by the archaeological evidence is indeed one of a thriving agricultural and port city, whose community was as to make significant investment in civic building projects into the 6th

²¹¹ BUZAIAN, *Excavations at Tocra* (1985-1992), 59–60; CHRISTIDES, *Byzantine Libya and the March of the Arabs towards the West of North Africa.*, 17, 38; SOMMA, *Mura e città nella Cirenaica bizantina*, 621; FENWICK, *Early Islamic North Africa: A New Perspective*, 38–40.

²¹² Contra JONES, *The Byzantine Bath-House at Tocra: a Summary Report*, 108.

²¹³ John of Nikiu, *Chron.* c. 120.35 (trans. Phil BOOTH).

c. By contrast, the addition of up-to-date defensive features such as pentagonal towers to the gates and a *proteichisma* are unlikely to have been initiatives of Taucheira's civic authorities. These modifications drew on innovations to military architecture first seen in the eastern provinces in the late 5th c. (pentagonal towers), and indicate a fear (real or imagined) of an attack by an enemy experienced in siege warfare and/or that the work was undertaken by military engineers who had previously gained experience on the eastern frontier. In either case, the very fact of the renovations speaks to the supra-local importance of the city during Late Antiquity. In this respect, the renovations to the city walls parallel the construction of the walled compound, and the relationship between the two structures is key to the latter's interpretation.

Both the construction of the walled compound and the renovations to the city walls attest to outside intervention in the urban development of Taucheira. We have therefore sought to highlight, through an assessment of the strategic developments in North Africa and the wider Mediterranean world between the mid-5th and mid-7th c. several possible moments when the region might have attracted a level of imperial interest which would justify these constructions. In the case of the city walls, these moments are likely to have been those at which a military threat to the province was perceived. An initial phase of improvements might theoretically be dated to the third quarter of the 5th c. This period had seen the failed Roman attempt to recover the provinces of Africa from the Vandals in 468 and had cemented the Libyan provinces as the African frontier zone between the Eastern Roman Empire and the successor kingdoms in the West. These events are likely to have prompted changes to the military administration of the of the Pentapolis in c. 470 in order to enhance the region's security, although they are less likely to have resulted in the addition of Taucheira's pentagonal towers and *proteichisma*: not only would these have been extremely new innovations at this date, they would also not have been seen as necessary to counter a perceived threat from the Vandals, whose military expertise lay in cavalry and naval warfare rather than siege warfare. A more likely date for these modifications would be the early 6th c., at which time the Eastern Roman Emperor Anastasius undertook further defensive building projects in the province, likely drawing on military architects who had served in the East during the preceding period of conflict between the Eastern Roman Empire and Sasanian Persia, and who might therefore be expected to incorporate state-of-the-art developments in military architecture. Equally, the addition of the *proteichisma* and the later modifications to East and West Gates might date to the early 7th c., when the Sasanian presence in Egypt could have caused imperial and/or provincial authorities to fear siege warfare in the Pentapolis.

In the case of the walled compound, the impetus for outside intervention may have been connected with the military, but is, given the compound's lack of defensive features, unlikely to have directly motivated by threats to regional security. Instead, we have suggested that an explanation for the function and date of construction of this structure might be provided by the military reforms enacted in the province during the reign of Anastasius. By the date of the edict of Anastasius at the latest, Taucheira is likely to have housed a city garrison, and would therefore have required facilities for the associated logistics. The walled compound might therefore be interpreted as secondary ducal base, from which the military administration relating to the city garrison could be undertaken. The prior existence of both a garrison and a ducal base at Taucheira would have added to the advantages of the city as a place of retreat in ca. 642, providing headquarters from which Abulyānos could oversee the situation. The walled compound may well have originally functioned as living quarters for a *dux* and his entourage during this period, albeit not because the compound was itself defensible.²¹⁵

²¹⁵ Pace JONES, *Beginnings and Endings in Cyrenaican Cities*, 37.

In conclusion, through contextualisation of the walled compound at Taucheira within its wider archaeological and historical settings, we have argued that the traditional interpretation of these buildings is much less likely than that of an earlier ducal base if the frame of historical reference is widened. Furthermore, in considering both the construction of the compound and the city walls of Taucheira from the perspective of agency and outside intervention, we have demonstrated that imperial interest in the Pentapolis during Late Antiquity was not as limited as has often been assumed. The Pentapolis was an ‘eastern’ province and an exchange of individuals and expertise clearly occurred between the provinces of Oriens. However, in the late 5th and early 6th c. the Pentapolis also formed part of the Eastern Roman Empire’s ‘western’ frontier, and excluding the province from the wider events, and political instability, of the western Mediterranean in this period has arguably limited interpretations of the region’s position within the wider empire. Further excavation of the walled compound, and particularly the southern area of it, would undoubtedly help to elucidate the phases and function of the compound further. On a methodological level, we hope to have demonstrated that, even in the absence of on-site assessment, there is much to be gained from the re-assessment of historical data—existing excavation reports, archival records, and diachronic photographs; and, equally, that there is much value in the integrated re-examination of written and archaeological evidence, which are so often assessed in isolation.

Appendix: a brief history of the archaeology of Taucheira

Taucheira has been subject to almost two hundred years of archaeological interest. Past work has recently been summarised by Monika Rekowski.²¹⁶ There is thus no need to repeat the history of excavations at Taucheira, but in this short appendix we would like to make some brief observations about circumstances affecting past work there by Richard George Goodchild which help explain why we know less than we might wish about the city's archaeology in general and the walled compound in particular.

First as librarian at the British School of Rome, and from 1953 as head of the Antiquities Service for Cyrenaica, Goodchild undertook a major programme of work at Taucheira, including an urban survey and excavation of the walled compound. In collaboration with John Ward-Perkins, he studied the churches of Taucheira, though their findings were not fully published until 2003 thanks to the editorial work of Joyce Reynolds.²¹⁷ From 1962 until 1965 Goodchild undertook excavations at the site, partially excavating a late antique bath house and uncovering the so-called fortress.²¹⁸ Erosion of the shoreline in 1963 exposed potsherds which Goodchild recognised as being of Greek Archaic date, and in 1964–1965, John Boardman and John Hayes led excavations of this site, which uncovered an Archaic deposit and a 'later deposit' of Byzantine material.²¹⁹ A season of survey work focussing on the fortifications of Taucheira was attempted by David Smith and colleagues in 1966, but this was curtailed due to bad weather; he was forced to return in 1967 to complete the survey as well as making plans of a range of buildings in the intramural area.²²⁰ However, Goodchild was only to publish findings from his own work in a preliminary format.²²¹ Archival materials held in the British Institute for Libyan and Northern African Studies indicate that fuller publication of the whole site, including these excavations was envisaged.

We should have a book about Tocra, but circumstances conspired against this. An undated draft table of contents — including contributions on the defences, ceramics, and the churches — held in the British Institute for Libyan and Northern African Studies Archive indicates a book project was started but never realised. It was envisaged that the British surveys and excavations across Taucheira would be published by a team of scholars including Goodchild, Joyce Reynolds, David Smith, Barri Jones, Jim Crow, John Riley, John Ward-Perkins, John Little, and Bob Yorke.²²² They intended to describe the site, its defences, the internal plan and known buildings, with separate treatments of the churches and cemeteries, as well as an underwater survey. The so-called fortress was to be written up by Smith (survey), Jones (excavations) and Riley (pottery).

It is apparent that Goodchild himself intended to write more about the walled compound. In a letter to David Smith dated to 1967, he wrote: "I shall therefore reserve for my own attentions later this summer the Byzantine Baths and the Byzantine-Arab Fortress, both on the south side of the decumanus. If your surveyor has time to make plans of these buildings, too, it would be of enormous help to me provided I could have copies to work on in June or July. Failing that I should have to find another surveyor to help me, as my existing plans are really not good enough for publication."²²³ Goodchild died the next year, at the age of just

²¹⁶ REKOWSKA, *In Pursuit of Ancient Cyrenaica: Two Hundred Years of Exploration Set against the History of Archaeology in Europe (1706–1911)* 58–71.

²¹⁷ WARD-PERKINS AND GOODCHILD, *Christian monuments of Cyrenaica*, 201–24.

²¹⁸ JONES, *Beginnings and Endings in Cyrenaican Cities*, 36.

²¹⁹ BOARDMAN AND HAYES, *Excavations at Tocra, 1963–1965*. Bol. 1: *The Archaic Deposits I*; J. BOARDMAN AND J. W. HAYES, *Excavations at Tocra, 1963–1965*. Bol. 1: *The Archaic Deposits II and later deposits*. London 1973.

²²⁰ SMITH AND CROW, *The Hellenistic and Byzantine Defences of Tocra (Taucheira)*, 35.

²²¹ GOODCHILD, *Fortificazioni e Palazzi Bizantini in Tripolitania e Cirenaica*, 249–50; GOODCHILD, *Byzantines, Berbers and Arabs in 7th-century Libya*, 121–22.

²²² BILNAS Archive D1/2/3/1.

²²³ BILNAS Archive D1/2/1/2/1.

49.²²⁴ The write-up of the compound does not appear to have been abandoned immediately after Goodchild's death. A report on the 1969 British Archaeological Mission to Benghazi and Tobra recommends that "[u]nless further work on a really large scale is envisaged in the near future - and there is no sign of this - Tobra is now at the stage when it could and should be published as an entity i.e., preferably as a book."²²⁵ Charles Daniels, Barri Jones, David Smith and Charlotte Tagart met in the summer of 1978 to discuss,²²⁶ and minutes of the Society for Libyan Studies [the predecessor of the British Institute for Libyan and Northern African Studies] Council Meeting held on 2 December 1980 include a report on progress on the intended volume on Taucheira, albeit including doubts over the completion of work on the underwater archaeology of the site.²²⁷ Yet the idea of producing a monograph ultimately appears to have fallen by the wayside, and had certainly been abandoned by 1986 when a letter from John Lloyd to David Smith discusses alternative places to publish Smith's intended contribution.²²⁸

Various articles on the site subsequently appeared in *Libyan Studies* and elsewhere. Barri Jones, in particular, published summaries of work on the walled compound, the Byzantine baths, and various houses.²²⁹ David Smith's survey of the city's defences, with a commentary by Jim Crow, was also later published in *Libyan Studies*.²³⁰ The write-up of the other areas of the site, however, was never completed as envisaged, and our knowledge of the walled compound in particular has remained at a preliminary stage, based essentially on Goodchild's publications with modifications provided by Jones.

²²⁴ O. BROGAN, Obituary. Richard Goodchild, *Azania: Archaeological Research in Africa* 3, no. 1 (1968), ix-x.

²²⁵ BILNAS Archive D1/2/2/2/3, 6.

²²⁶ BILNAS Archive D1/2/2/2/4.

²²⁷ BILNAS Archive D24/6/2/38.

²²⁸ BILNAS Archive D24/1/9.

²²⁹ JONES AND LITTLE, Coastal Settlement in Cyrenaica, 70-71; JONES, Excavations at Tobra and Euhesperides, Cyrenaica 1968-1969; JONES, The Byzantine Bath-House at Tobra: a Summary Report; JONES, Beginnings and Endings in Cyrenaican Cities, 36-39.

²³⁰ SMITH AND CROW, The Hellenistic and Byzantine Defences of Tobra (Taucheira).

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Abbreviations

ACO = *Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum*, ed. E. Schwartz (Berlin, 1927–).

Barrington Atlas = Talbert, Richard J. A. ed (2000) *Barrington Atlas of the Greek and Roman World*. Princeton, N.J. ; Oxford: Princeton University Press.

IRCyr2020 = J. M. Reynolds, C. M. Roueché, G. Bodard, *Inscriptions of Roman Cyrenaica* (2020), available at: <http://ircyr2020.inslib.kcl.ac.uk>

Mansi, Concilia = Mansi, J. D., *Sacrorum Conciliorum Nova et Amplissima Collectio* II (Florence, 1759).

PLRE = Jones, A. H. M., *et al.*, eds., *The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire* (3 vols., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971–1992).

SEG = *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum*