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Apollo and Artemis in the Decapolis

Apollo and Artemis were worshipped in various cities of the Decapolis during the Roman period and even earlier. Our knowledge of their cult is derived from various archaeological and artistic media, such as architecture, sculpture, numismatics and epigraphy.

Apollo

Apollo was the founder (ἀρχηγέτης or ἀρχηγὸς τοῦ γένους) and the main tutelary divinity of the Seleucid dynasty, whose kings considered themselves to be descendants of the god and adopted his cult.¹ According to literary sources, the colossal statue of Zeus (a copy of the Olympian Zeus at Olympia, the work of Pheidias) was placed in the Temple of Daphnaean Apollo in the Daphne suburb in Antioch-on-the-Orontes, founded by Antiochos IV Epiphanes (175-163 BCE) or, according to others, by Seleucos Nicator, with possible enlargement or embellishment by Antiochos IV.² Some scholars believe that in 93 BCE, Antiochos XI Philadelphos built two temples in Daphne, one for Apollo and another for Artemis, in which he placed gold statues of the gods.³

Architectural Evidence

There is very limited architectural evidence testifying to the cult of Apollo in the cities of the Decapolis. The earliest information is provided by the archaeological survey carried out by G. Schumacher during the 1880s in Transjordan. Schumacher reported that near the Sheikh's dwelling in Abila, a fine basalt

¹ See Dittenberger 1903: 339-343 (No. 219), 362-363 (No. 227), 390-391 (No. 237); Bouché-Leclercq 1913-14: 283, 465-466, 651-655, 658, 663; Mehl 1986: 5-6, 97-101; Norris 1990: 2337 and n. 48; Will *et alii* 1993: 438.

² See Ammianus Marcellinus, XXII.13.1; see also Bouché-Leclercq 1913-14: 283.

³ See, for example, Norris 1990: 2338, 2341.

archstone with an engraved egg ornament and frieze was found, evidently that of a gate approx. 3 m wide (perhaps of a temple?), Corinthian capitals and Attic bases for columns.⁴

Doubts as to whether the temple at Abila is in fact that of Apollo are reinforced by the fact that despite the rich numismatic finds uncovered in the city, no coins have been found depicting the figure of Apollo.

Sculptural Evidence

One may assume that in every temple dedicated to Apollo, his visual representation in the form of a cult statue would have enhanced the sanctity of the temple, as with other gods.

Schumacher refers to “a head of an Apollo, beautifully carved in basalt, but very much defaced,” found in the course of his survey at Abila.⁵ In fact, it was found in a sacred place (probably a *temenos*) in the area of the city of Dion.⁶ If the head of this statue is indeed that of Apollo, as attributed by Schumacher, it provides evidence for the existence of the cult of the god in Dion.

A Roman altar (H-74 cm, W-43 cm), found in Gadara, nowadays lost, shows Herakles depicted together with Apollo and Shadrappa (Fig. 1).⁷ Another sculptural find was discovered in the Roman Theatre at Beth Shean/Scythopolis during archaeological excavations carried out in 1961-1962 (Fig. 2).⁸ The marble statue consists of two dismembered parts from two different statues, diverging in style and date, artificially joined to form a new figure. The artistic quality of the head is greatly superior to that of the body, and possibly belonged to an earlier figure (3rd-2nd century BCE?). The muscular body of the statue is depicted standing in a slight *contrapposto*, supported by a tree-trunk. It is shown nude except for the *chlamys* draped over the chest and held by a *fibula* on the right shoulder; the left arm is broken off at the elbow and the right arm is missing. A half-destroyed animal, possibly a griffin, appears behind the right leg.⁹ The stance and characteristics of the body can be compared with the (headless) figure of Apollo accompanied by a griffin found at Eski-Zaghra in Phrygia, Asia Minor.¹⁰ We can therefore identify the body of the statue from Beth Shean/Scythopolis, dated to the 2nd-3rd century CE, as that of Apollo.

⁴ Schumacher 1889: 16-17.

⁵ Schumacher 1889: 16-17.

⁶ See Lichtenberger 2003: 57.

⁷ Jalabert 1906: 160, Pl. II (5); Weber 2002: 461-462 (AL 3); Lichtenberger 2003: 102, 106.

⁸ Applebaum 1986: 105.

⁹ Ovadiah and Mucznik 2009: 22.

¹⁰ Tissot 1882: 177-178.



Fig. 1. Gadara, altar of Apollo, Herakles and Shadrapha, now lost (after Jalabert 1906: Pl. 5 [2]).

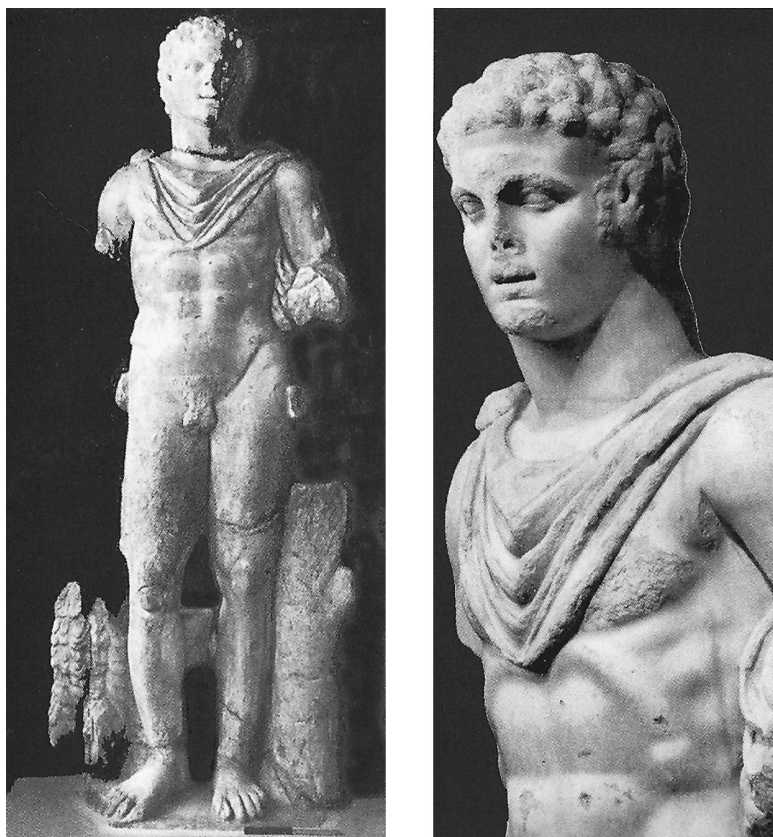


Fig. 2. Beth Shean/Scythopolis, statue of Apollo (after Ovadiah and Mucznik 2009: Figs. 28-29).

A terracotta statuette was uncovered at Gerasa (H-31.50 cm) depicting the “Resting Apollo” standing in *contrapposto*, with his right arm resting on his head and his left arm bent forwards. His appearance is reminiscent of the *Apollo Lykeios* of Praxiteles and his successors.¹¹

Epigraphic and Numismatic Evidence

The architectural and sculptural findings for the cult of Apollo in some of the cities of the Decapolis are reinforced by the epigraphic and numismatic evidence. This evidence significantly strengthens the identification of the cult of Apollo in the Decapolis, such as in the cities of Gerasa and Pella.

A Greek inscription from Gerasa from the 2nd century CE, engraved on limestone, is dedicated to the goddess Artemis and includes a clear reference to the god Apollo and his cult. The inscription reads:

Ἀγαθῇ Τύχῃ.	<i>In good fortune.</i>
Ἀκρίσιος Ἀμύντου	<i>Akrisios the son of Amyntos</i>
καὶ Διογένης καὶ Ἀμύν- τας υἱοὶ ἀρχιβωμιστῶν	<i>and his sons Diogenes and Amyn- tas the archibomistai</i>
Ἀπόλλωνος καὶ Κόρης	<i>of Apollo and Kore</i>
καὶ τῶν συννάων θεῶν	<i>and together with other gods</i>
εὐξάμενοι τῇ Κυρίᾳ Οὐρανίᾳ	<i>in fulfillment of a vow to the Lady Ourania</i>
Ἀρτέμιδι τὸν ἀκμάζοντα	<i>Artemis in the best (most fitting)</i>
Καιρὸν ἐκ τῶν ἰδίων	<i>time at their own expense</i>
ἀνέθηκαν.	<i>dedicated.</i> ¹²

This inscription includes the Greek term ἀρχιβωμιστῶν (*archibomistai*), which refers to brothers from the same family who were responsible for the altars of Apollo and Kore (Persephone) and for conducting religious ceremonies.

Additional epigraphic evidence from the city of Gerasa, apparently from the end dated to the 2nd century CE, testifies unequivocally to the presence of a statue of Apollo donated to the Temple of Artemis, patroness of the city. Inscribed on a limestone slab, the inscription reads:

Ἀγαθῇ Τύχῃ.	<i>In good fortune.</i>
Τὸ ἄγαλμα τοῦ	<i>The Statue of</i>
Ἀπόλλωνος τῇ κυρίᾳ	<i>Apollo to the Lady</i>
πατρίδι Τίτῳ Αἰλίου	<i>of the city (Artemis), Titus Ailius</i>

¹¹ Iliffe 1945: 8, No. 11, Pl. I (11); cf., for example, Bieber 1961: 18, Figs. 17, 19-21.

¹² Gatier 1988: 151-154 (No. 5).

Α[θ]η[ν... εὐσεβῶ]ν
ἀνέθηκε.

*of Athens(?) piously
dedicated.*¹³

Another Greek inscription from Gerasa, dated to the 2nd century CE, also refers to Apollo:

[Ἀγαθῇ Τύχῃ. Ὑπὲρ τῆς τῶν] Σεβασ[τῶν] σωτηρίας Φλαουίου
Μακερ[οῦ] [...] [Σ]αβε[ί]νου τοῦ Α[πολλωνίου] [...] τ[ὸν] Ἀπόλλωνα τῆ
πατρίδι ἀνέθηκεν.

*In good fortune. For the salvation of Augusti, Flavius Maker[...] [...] of Sabeinos of A[...] [(...)] Apollo, to the fatherland (city) dedicated.*¹⁴

These inscriptions appear to testify to the existence of the cult of Apollo at Gerasa, to the presence of the statue of the god, mentioned in the second inscription, and perhaps also to the existence of a temple in his honour. The inclusion of the term *archibomistai* mentioned in the first inscription permits this assumption. Furthermore, the content of the inscriptions records a civic and/or private cult existent in the city.

Some coins found in Pella provide architectural information on the Temple of Apollo in this city. H. Seyrig refers to two coins from the reigns of Commodus (180-192 CE) and Elagabalus (218-222 CE) depicting the *tetrastyle* Temple of Apollo, with a pediment supported by columns. The nude god stands within it, in *contrapposto*, holding a bow and a branch (perhaps a laurel branch), on both coins.¹⁵

On two additional coins minted during the reign of Elagabalus, one can distinguish the image of Apollo(?), in *contrapposto* within a *tetrastyle* temple topped by a pediment. On both coins, the figure holds a branch (laurel?) and a bow.¹⁶ The depiction of the Temple of Apollo on the city coins indicates the existence of a temple, which has not survived, dedicated to the god.

Apollo was one of the major gods in the Greek-Roman pantheon. His cult, which appeared throughout the Graeco-Roman world, was practiced at both the state and the civic level and perhaps also as a private cult, although the two inscriptions cited above clearly reflect the official state cult.

¹³ Gatier 1988: 154-155 (No. 7).

¹⁴ Welles 1938: 392 (No. 38) (with references); Lichtenberger 2003: 225 and n. 2061.

¹⁵ Seyrig 1959: 69-70 (Nos. 22, 25).

¹⁶ Spijkerman 1978: 214-215 (Nos. 14-15), Pl. 47 (Nos. 14-15).

The architectural evidence for the cult of Apollo in the cities of the Decapolis is, as mentioned above, very limited and does not enable unequivocal determination of the existence of temples dedicated to the god in the Decapolis.

The veneration and worship of Apollo in Pella is nonetheless evinced by its coinage from the reigns of Commodus and Elagabalus, depicting the *tetrastyle* temple dedicated to the god, which indicates the existence of the temple in this city.¹⁷ In addition, the sculptural findings from Beth Shean/Scythopolis, Dion, Gadara and Gerasa, and the epigraphic evidence from Gerasa, enable us to conclude that the cult of Apollo prevailed in these cities.

Artemis

Strabo remarks on how widespread the cult of Artemis was in the ancient world over an extremely large geographical area.¹⁸ The extensive distribution of her cult may be explained by a strong belief in the potency and power of the goddess.

The presence of the cult of Artemis in the eastern Hellenistic world and the eastern Roman Empire, which included the cities of the Decapolis, can be ascribed to immigrants from the west (Greece). The settlers established the cult of the goddess in these eastern cities, when they became integrated into the local culture with its indigenous eastern cults, consequently establishing the necessary components for the development and consolidation of religious syncretism.

The cult of Artemis in the Decapolis is apparent both from the architectural and sculptural remains and from the epigraphic and numismatic evidence. These findings confirm the importance of the goddess and her cult. Furthermore, her acceptance alongside Oriental goddesses, such as Atargatis/Astarte, Isis and others,¹⁹ was a natural and relatively brief process. Supporting the argument for syncretism, and based on inscriptions from the city of Gerasa, scholars have argued that Artemis appears as a heavenly deity (*Déesse Céleste*) and can be identified with the Syrian goddess Atargatis.²⁰ Of all the cities of the Decapolis, it was at Gerasa that the cult of Artemis reached its zenith.

Architectural Evidence

The construction of a monumental temple complex at Gerasa, dedicated to the goddess, was a magnificent and imposing architectural enterprise. The temple was considered one of the largest and most important sacred sites of the

¹⁷ Lichtenberger 2003: 178-179 and nn. 1541-1542.

¹⁸ Strabo, Index: s.v. 'Artemis,' 255-256.

¹⁹ Ovadiah and Mucznik 2009: 36, 38.

²⁰ Gatier 1988: 153.

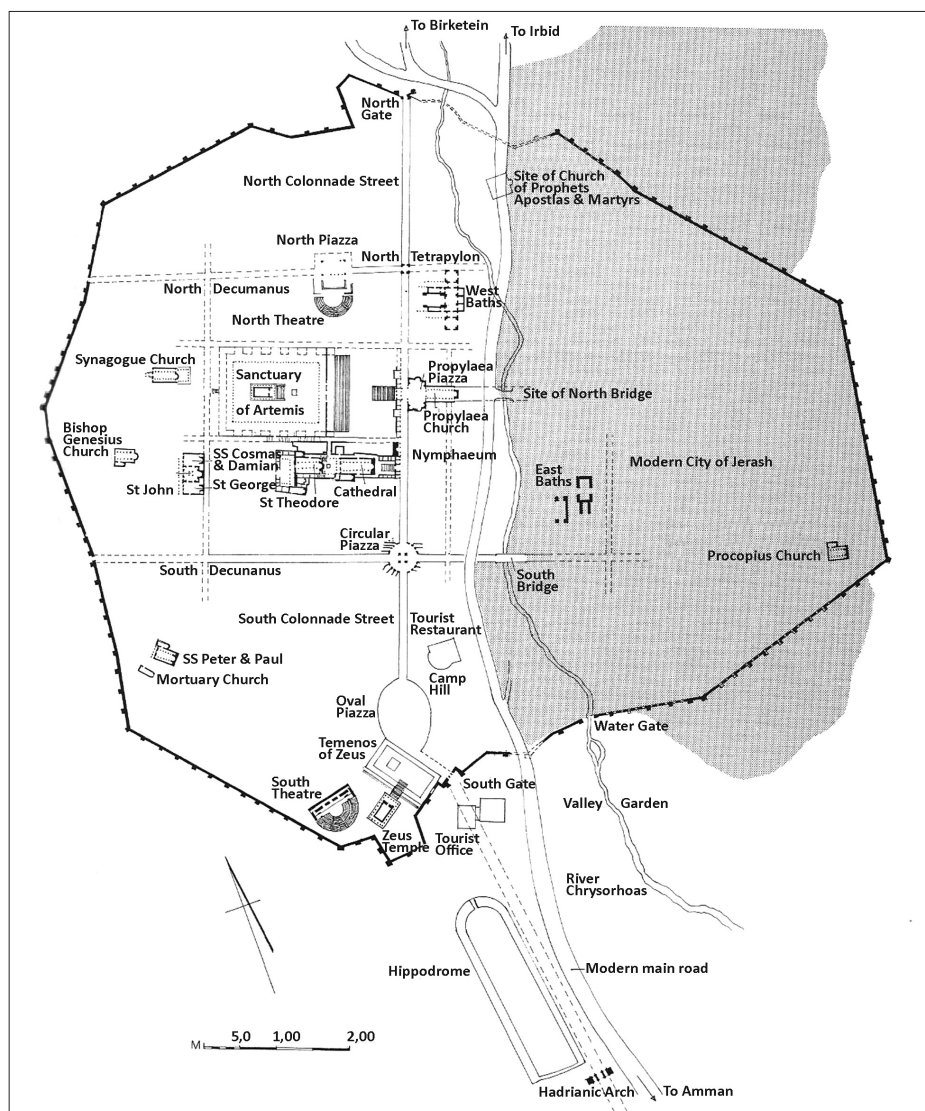


Fig. 3. Gerasa, plan of the city (after Browning 1982: 83).

eastern Roman Empire. Based on the epigraphic evidence, it appears that the temple probably existed in the second half of the 1st century CE, but was completed later in the 2nd century CE,²¹ and covered the huge area that can still be

²¹ See Parapetti 2002: 24; Lichtenberger 2008: 136-137 and n. 22.

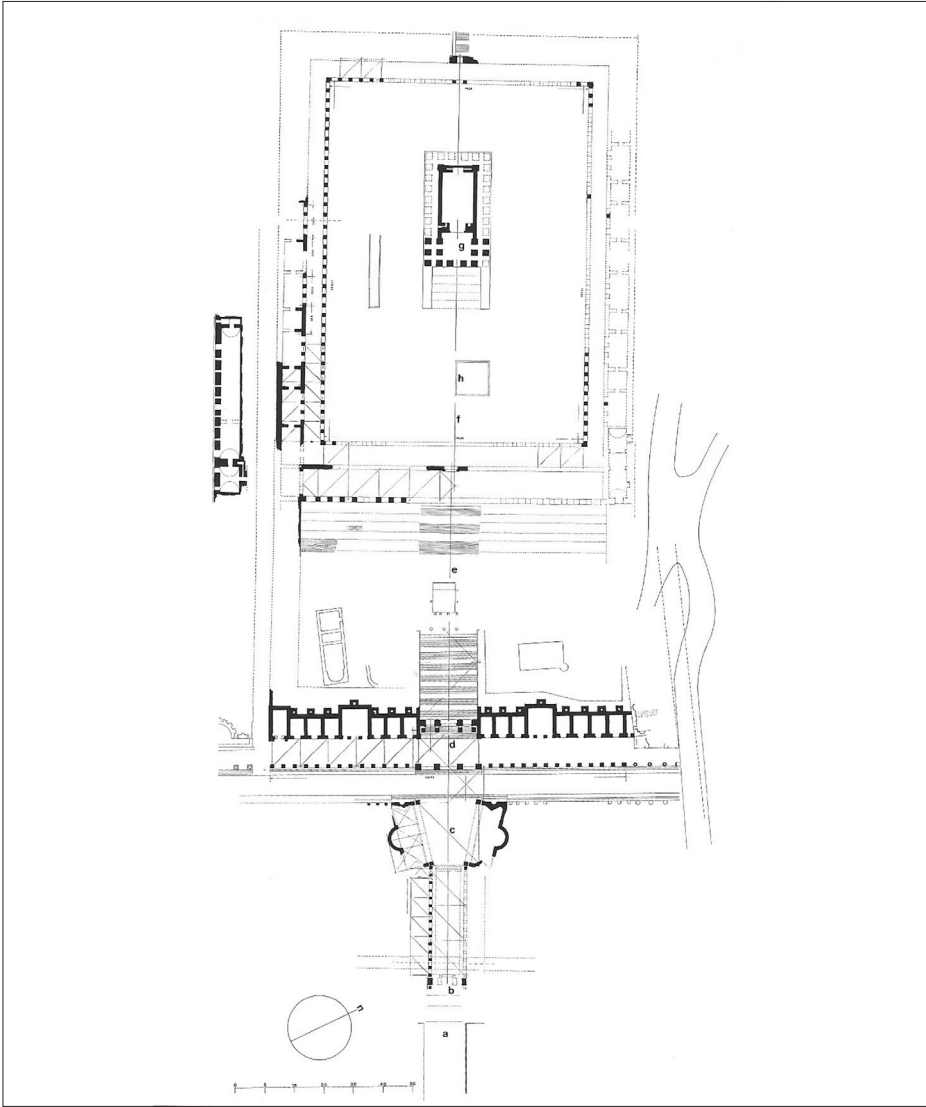


Fig. 4. Gerasa, plan of the Temple of Artemis (after Parapetti 2002: Fig. 34).

seen today. The inscriptions found in the vicinity of the temple, mentioning the goddess, also provide evidence for Artemis' cult in the city.²²

The monumental temple complex consists of five sections, built as an architectural continuum from the east (the city's residential area) to the west as far as the

²² See below, nn. 37-40; see also Gatier 1985: 308-312 (Nos. 2-3).

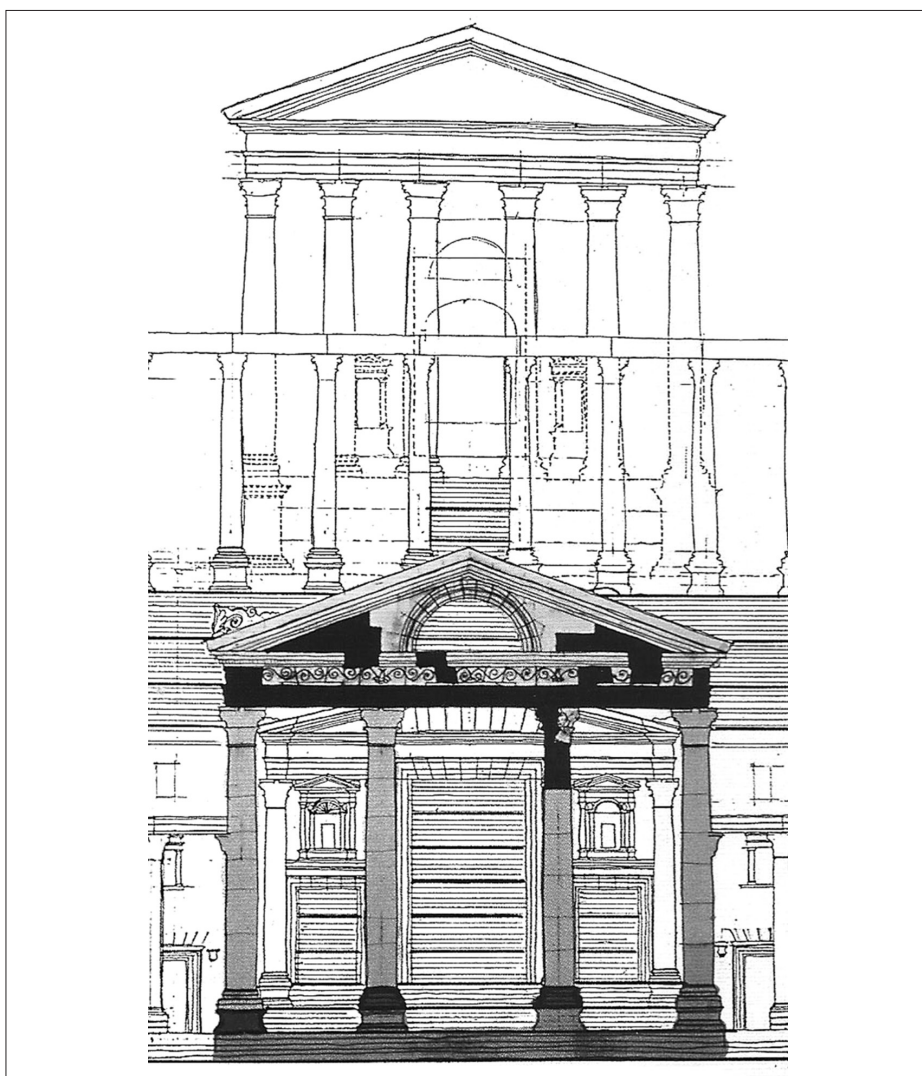


Fig. 5. Gerasa, longitudinal section of the Temple complex of Artemis (after Parapetti 2002: Fig. 36).

temple, some 500 m away from the eastern end. The five sections are: the *propylaea* east of the *cardo* with a trapezoid piazza, the *propylaea* west of the *cardo*, the forecourt, the inner court (*temenos*), and the *hexastyle peripteral* temple standing on a *podium* in its centre (an altar was placed in front of the temple) (Figs. 3-14).

The sacred way (*via sacra*), which terminates in the piazza, and the *propylaea* with its three main entrances, noted for its rich baroque-style embellishments,

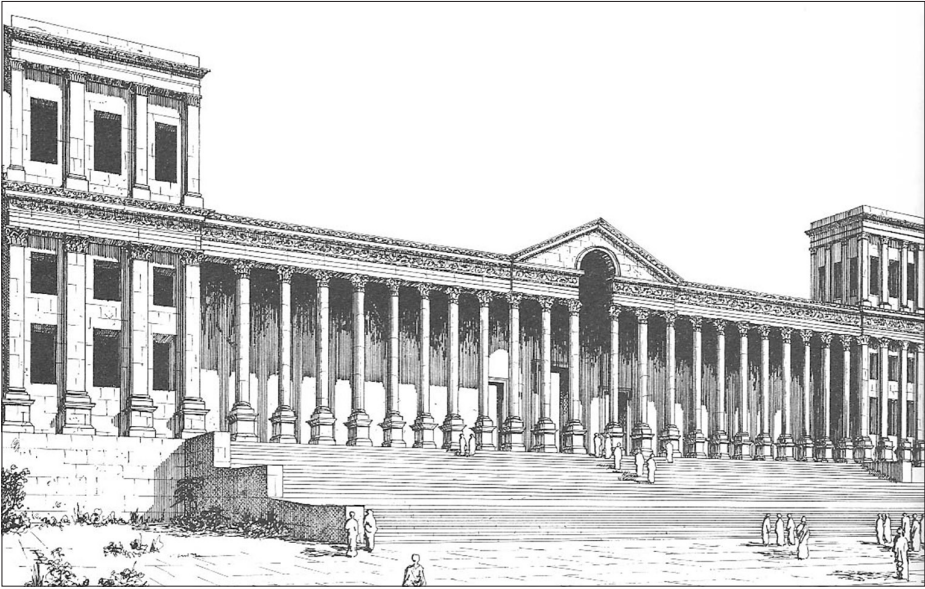


Fig. 6. Gerasa, a reconstruction of the eastern wall of the *temenos* of the Temple of Artemis (after Browning 1982: Fig. 92).



Fig. 7. Gerasa, the remains of the façade of the Temple of Artemis' *propylaea*, facing west (photo A. Ovadiah).

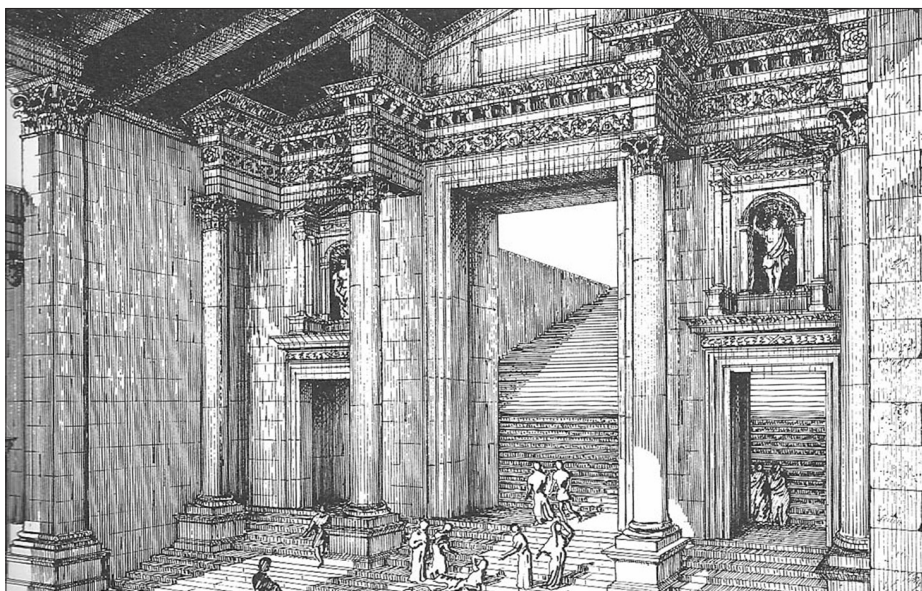


Fig. 8. Gerasa, a reconstruction of the façade of the Temple of Artemis' *propylaea* (after Browning 1982: Fig. 87).



Fig. 9. Gerasa, general view of the Temple of Artemis, facing west (photo A. Ovadia).



Fig. 10. Gerasa, general view of the Temple of Artemis, facing southwest (photo A. Ovadiah).



Fig. 11. Gerasa, rear view of the Temple of Artemis, facing southeast (after Parapetti 2002: Fig. 42).



Fig. 12. Gerasa, general view of the *cella* of the Temple of Artemis, facing east (after Parapetti 2002: Fig. 45).



Fig. 13. Gerasa, group of columns with Corinthian capitals in the portico of the Temple of Artemis (photo A. Ovadiah).

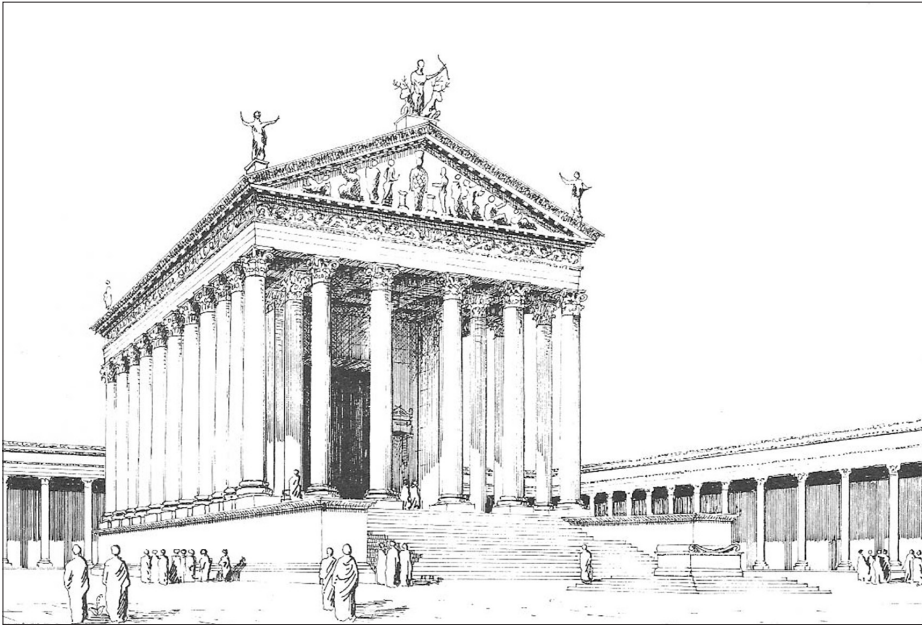


Fig. 14. Gerasa, a reconstruction of the Temple of Artemis (after Browning 1982: Fig. 97).

were constructed along a single axis with the sacred precinct. This forms a symmetrical axis that clearly defines the architectural conception of the complex. A wide staircase leads from the forecourt through a walled portico (*stoa*) with three openings, to the inner court (*temenos*) surrounded by colonnades, in the centre of which was the temple. The Temple of Artemis was situated on a *podium* (22 × 40 m) and is of the *peripteros hexastylus* type, with eleven columns along each side and six columns at its front. The temple consists of an outer hall (*pronaos*) and a *naos* (*cella*), and contains an arched niche where the cult statue of the goddess would have been displayed. The Temple of Artemis at Gerasa, with its various architectural components, was a monumental building achievement clearly emphasizing the veneration for the goddess and her cult.

The *temenos* with its various components is distinctive for its symmetry, characteristic of Roman architecture, and indicates architectural planning that would have enabled large numbers of people to participate in processions exalting the cult of Artemis in the city.²³ It can be assumed that followers of the cult would have made supplications to the goddess in order to improve their fortune,

²³ Kraepling 1938: 125-138; Browning 1982: Map 3, Figs. 92-93, 96-98; Segal 1997: 120-125; Parapetti 2002: 23-35; Lichtenberger 2008: Pl. LI.

since they believed in her importance, strength and ability to control supernatural powers, as well as to deliver oracles.

Thus, Artemis' cult at Gerasa became a powerful institution in the life of the city, having considerable influence on daily urban life, most apparent in the administration of the temple itself. It seems reasonable to consider that during the Roman period, Artemis' cult was practiced at Gerasa similarly to its practice at Ephesos. According to literary sources, the Temple of Artemis at Ephesos provided asylum for suppliants (ἰκέτιδες).²⁴ Moreover, the temple precinct served as a financial institution where many gifts and a great deal of wealth accumulated, enhancing the economic and religious status of the temple. It can therefore be surmised that the daily life in the city was dominated by the financial power of the temple priests. The above-mentioned historical evidence indicates that the cult of Artemis did indeed control civic life, far beyond the religious sphere, and references to it as *patria* (homeland) certainly reflect the status of the goddess' cult. It should be noted that during the Festival of *Artemisia* at Ephesos, held during March-April,²⁵ the religious procession wended its way from the *temenos* to the city, as far as the theatre, and from there back to the temple.²⁶ The religious procession at Ephesos may have been used as model for the one that took place along the *via sacra* at Gerasa.

Sculptural Evidence

The popularity of Artemis' cult in the Decapolis, as revealed by the architectural,²⁷ epigraphic and numismatic evidence,²⁸ is reinforced by the sculptural evidence, particularly from finds at two of the Decapolis cities: Gadara and Abila. Indeed, archaeological excavations carried out at Gadara in 1987 by the German Protestant Institute of Archaeology revealed a large number of fragments of statues near the city *nymphaion*. One statue of the goddess depicts her in the Ephesian Artemis type (Fig. 15). The marble statue was revealed without head, armless and lacking its base (preserved to a height of about 1.20 m). The

²⁴ Pausanias, VII.ii.7: αἱ δὲ ἀπὸ Θερμόδοντος γυναῖκες ἔθυσαν μὲν καὶ τότε τῇ Ἐφεσῖα θεῷ, ... καὶ ἡνῖκα Ἡρακλέα ἐφυγον, αἱ δὲ καὶ Διόνυσον τὰ ἔτι ἀρχαιότερα, ἰκέτιδες ἐνταῦθα ἐλθοῦσαι (It is a fact that the women from the Thermodon, ... sacrificed to the Ephesian goddess both on this occasion and when they had fled from Heracles; some of them earlier still, when they had fled from Dionysus, having come to the sanctuary as suppliants).

²⁵ Strelan 1996: 57-58.

²⁶ Pliny (XXXV.xxxvi.93) mentions an artist who painted a Procession of Magabyzus, the priest of Artemis of Ephesos. According to Sokolowski (1965: 429), "Some sources do indeed mention a group of Ephesian priests and priestesses who on certain occasions brought dresses in procession to Artemis. The dispatch of cloaks to Sardis seem to have had the same intention, namely to provide Artemis with new clothes."

²⁷ See above, Artemis – *Architectural Evidence*.

²⁸ See below, Artemis – *Additional Evidence*.

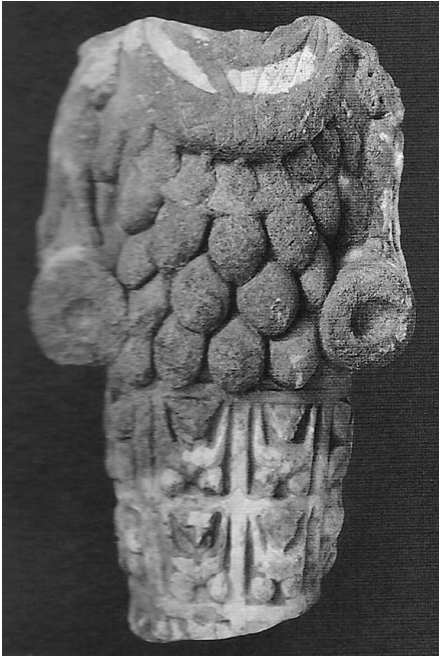


Fig. 15. Gadara, statue of the Ephesian Artemis (after Weber 2002: Pl. 37 [A]).



Fig. 16. Abila, statue of Huntress Artemis (after Weber 2002: Pl. 99 [A]).

front of the statue is divided into two sections: the upper section is carved with a large number of breasts clustered together; the lower section is clothed in an *ependytes* (ἐπενδύτης) with various zoomorphic designs carved in rectangles. On the whole, the carving is unskilled and lacks refinement and detail.²⁹ It contrasts with another marble statue of the Ephesian Artemis, also headless and armless, found north of the Roman theatre at Caesarea Maritima, dated to the 3rd century CE (currently on display in the Israel Museum, Jerusalem). Although the latter appears with a similar division between the lower and upper parts, with a multi-breasted chest and its lower part divided into squares, this statue is skillfully carved and shows a greater awareness of the natural proportions of the body.³⁰ The Ephesian Artemis revealed at Gadara can be interpreted as an imitation of the statue from Ephesos, but of poorer artistic quality. The statue at Gadara indicates the existence of the goddess' cult in this city, but it is unclear whether a temple dedicated to the goddess was constructed there that would have housed the cult statue. On the other hand, the image of Artemis

²⁹ Weber 2002: Pl. 37(A).

³⁰ Frova 1962: 305-313; Fleischer 1973: 6, 69-70, 90, Taf. 7-9.

appears on coins from Gerasa,³¹ as well as on coins from the cities of Gaza and Rafiah,³² Acco/Ptolemais³³ and Shechem/Neapolis.³⁴ These examples leave no doubt as to the existence of an Artemis cult at Gadara, whether the city had a temple dedicated to her there or not.

A life-sized marble statue (ca. 1.64 m high) uncovered at Abila, near the remains of the Christian basilica in Area A, was identified as a statue of the Greek goddess Artemis. Unlike the Gadara Artemis, which belongs to the Ephesian type, the Abila statue, of the Diana Sevilla-Palatine type, represents the Classical statue of Artemis the Huntress (Fig. 16). The goddess appears with her familiar attributes: a quiver of arrows slung across her back and her sacred animal, the deer. The image has no head or arms and one leg is missing. The torso is dressed in a *chiton* girded high under the breast, with an *apoptygma* (ἀπόπτυγμα) below the waist. The leg has survived and the foot is shod in an elaborate sandal. All these features indicate that the goddess is depicted as a huntress.³⁵ The statue of Artemis from Abila appears to be a Roman copy (2nd-3rd century CE of a Greek original (Late Hellenistic period). The statue reinforces the argument that Artemis' cult existed in the city, as it did elsewhere throughout the Decapolis. Another statue of the goddess, headless, without arms and left leg, and of a similar huntress type, was found at Paneas/Banias.³⁶

Additional Evidence

Apart from the architectural and sculptural evidence, epigraphic and numismatic data also exist, particularly at Gerasa (as well as in one case in Dion [see below, n. 38]), adding further important substantial evidence of the cult of the goddess and her veneration. The inscriptions revealed at Gerasa show that the goddess had various epithets: *Thea Patroa Artemis* (ΘΕΑ ΠΑΤΡΟΑ ΑΡΤΕΜΙΣ),³⁷ *Artemis Kyria* (ΑΡΤΕΜΙΣ ΚΥΡΙΑ),³⁸ *Thea Artemis* (ΘΕΑ ΑΡΤΕΜΙΣ),³⁹ *Kyria Ourania Artemis* (ΚΥΡΙΑ ΟΥΡΑΝΙΑ ΑΡΤΕΜΙΣ)⁴⁰ and *Thea Laka(-?) Epekoa Artemis* (God-

³¹ See below, nn. 41-42.

³² Meshorer 1985: 29-30 (Nos. 56, 60, 62), 32 (No. 72); Ovadia and Mucznik 2009: 36-37, nn. 21, 26-28, Figs. 58-59, 410-411.

³³ Meshorer 1985: 15 (No. 14); Ovadia and Mucznik 2009: 36, nn. 20, 22, 25, Fig. 57.

³⁴ Meshorer 1985: 49 (No. 132); Mare 1997: 278; Ovadia and Mucznik 2009: 36-37, nn. 23, 39, Fig. 56.

³⁵ Mare *et alii* 1995: 71-72; Mare 1996: 261; Mare 1997: 277-281; Mare 2002: 47 (Abb. 63), 49-50; Weber 2002: Pl. 99 (A, C); Lichtenberger 2003: 75-76.

³⁶ See Ovadia and Mucznik 2009: 35, Fig. 55.

³⁷ Welles 1938: 388-389 (No. 27); see also Lichtenberger 2003: 286-287.

³⁸ Welles 1938: 389-390 (Nos. 27-28); Gatier 1985: 310-312 (No. 3). It should be noted that an inscribed altar dedicated to Artemis Kyria, from Antoninus Pius' reign, was found in Dion (see Lichtenberger 2003: 286-287).

³⁹ Welles 1938: 391, No. 32; see also Lichtenberger 2003: 286-287.

⁴⁰ Gatier 1988: 151-154 (No. 5); see also Lichtenberger 2003: 286-287; for the full Greek

dess Laka[-?] Artemis who listens to prayers).⁴¹ On some coins issued in Gerasa during the reigns of Hadrian, Marcus Aurelius, Lucius Verus, Commodus, Septimius Severus and Caracalla, the image of Artemis is depicted with the inscription *Artemis Tyche Gerason* (ΑΡΤΕΜΙΣ ΤΥΧΗ ΓΕΡΑΣΩΝ), namely “Artemis, the Tyche of the citizens of Gerasa.”⁴² According to this inscription, Artemis is identified with Tyche wearing a mural crown (*corona muralis*) or turreted crown.⁴³ Beyond her religious and cultic significance, therefore, Artemis thereby not only answers spiritual and religious needs, but as patroness of the city is responsible for the safety and welfare of its citizens and commands considerable power. Only at Gerasa was Artemis the Huntress identified with the Tyche of the city, indicating her dualistic role. There is no evidence that Artemis was identified with the City Goddess (Tyche) in other cities of Asia Minor and Syria, and thus the case of Gerasa is unique.⁴⁴ In addition, Artemis is depicted on civic coinage of different denominations and types.⁴⁵

Some scholars presume that the presence of Zeus and Artemis at Gerasa stemmed from two different ethnic groups⁴⁶ or possibly two religious streams.

The monumental Temple of Artemis at Gerasa clearly shows the importance attributed to the cult by the inhabitants of the city and the region. Sculptural evidence demonstrates the presence of Artemis’ cult in two other cities of the Decapolis (Gadara and Abila), adding to the artistic-visual-aesthetic aspect of her cult in these cities.⁴⁷ The sculptures represent different artistic concepts, showing the same goddess in different types. The distribution of the Artemis cult among more than one sector of society in the urban context may indicate that the goddess was accorded an important status. The epigraphic evidence at Gerasa, where many inscriptions were dedicated to Artemis, with various epithets (see above), expressed the integration of the goddess’ cult in the region, beyond the narrow religious connotation. It can be surmised that the cult was involved in the structure of urban life in these cities.

The numismatic evidence from Gerasa shows that the goddess appears to have been accorded a significance beyond her religious and cultic role. Partic-

inscription dedicated to Artemis and Apollo, mentioning *Kyria Ourania* (The Heavenly Lady) *Artemis*, see above, n. 12.

⁴¹ See Lichtenberger 2003: 287.

⁴² Spijkerman 1978: 157-165, Nos. 4-8, 13-15, 18-20, 24-28; Meshorer 1985: 94 (Nos. 252, 254); Lichtenberger 2003: 196; Lichtenberger 2008: 139-143, Pls. LIII-LIV.

⁴³ Spijkerman 1978: 160-163, Nos. 9-12, 16-17, 21-22; Meshorer 1985: 94 (Nos. 253, 255).

⁴⁴ McCown 1933: 131.

⁴⁵ Cf. Lichtenberger 2008: 138, Pls. LII, LV.

⁴⁶ Cf. Parapetti 2002: 24.

⁴⁷ See above, Artemis – *Sculptural Evidence*.

ularly in view of the appearance of Artemis as Tyche on coins of the city⁴⁸ (see above), it is quite probable that she was held responsible for the city's safety and the welfare of its citizens, as well as having a religious role.

The architectural, sculptural, epigraphic and numismatic evidence from the above-mentioned cities of the Decapolis underlines the esteem and honour accorded to the goddess and her cult.

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