The Synagogue of Ancient Ostia and the Jews of Rome
Interdisciplinary Studies

Edited by

Birger Olsson, Dieter Mitternacht and Olof Brandt

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Abstract
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In March of 1997 a research project on the ancient synagogue began at Lund University, Sweden, continuing a tradition of research that has its roots in the 1930s. The project’s title “The Ancient Synagogue: Birthplace of Two World Religions” suggests that Judaism and Christianity existed for a time in close proximity to each other and were shaped by the same particular milieu within the ancient world, namely, the synagogue. The synagogue in ancient Ostia was chosen as an initial case study, since there is evidence that it was built during the first century CE and consequently is one of the earlier synagogues in the Roman world to have been excavated.

Olof Brandt presents for the first time a more extensive description of the area outside the city walls where the synagogue was built. Anders Runesson surveys all the material that has been published about Ostia in order to make a new reconstruction of the synagogue’s history in Ostia. Magnus Zetterholm attempts, primarily with the aid of interpretative theories and general considerations, to sketch the relations in Ostia between Jews and Christians. His study poses important questions about how to use sociological models in order to better understand the ancient synagogue. In a second contribution Anders Runesson discusses ritual washings in Ostia and in other synagogues in the diaspora. Karin Hedner-Zetterholm presents a more general picture of Jewish congregations in Rome, and Sten Hidal analyzes what Roman authors of this period had to say about Jews, all in order to attain a better understanding of the life and activity in this particular synagogue.

The language environment at Ostia is elucidated in two studies, one by Georg Walser, dealing with the Jewish use of Greek in ancient Rome, the other by Per Å. Bengtsson who gives a detailed presentation of the surprisingly few Semitic inscriptions from Rome. Irene von Görtz-Wrisberg discusses what can be known about the synagogue worship service during this period in history and based on that knowledge reconstructs a Sabbath service in Ostia. All the articles in the present volume set forth new understandings about the synagogue in Ostia and offer insights into the many methodological difficulties that lie in wait for every scholar who researchers the ancient synagogue.

Keywords: Synagogue, Ostia, Rome, origin, building, organization, architecture, location, miqweh, triclinium, inscriptions, Greek language, Jews and Christians in Rome, Sabbath service, ritual washings, archaeology, sociology, resource mobilization, sociolinguistic, polyglossia, Rabbinical literature, Josephus, Philo, Roman authors.

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### Abbreviations

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<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AB</td>
<td>The Anchor Bible</td>
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<tr>
<td>ABD</td>
<td>The Anchor Bible Dictionary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANRW</td>
<td>Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ArchCl</td>
<td>Archeologia Classica</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ArchSAO</td>
<td>Archivio fotografico della Soprintendenza archeologica di Ostia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BollUMMGP</td>
<td>Bollettino Monumenti Musei e Gallerie Pontificie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ComHumLit</td>
<td>Commentationes Humanarum Litterarum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ConBNT</td>
<td>Coniectanea Biblica New Testament Series</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ConBOT</td>
<td>Coniectanea Biblica Old Testament Series</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIJ</td>
<td>Corpus inscriptionum Judaicarum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIL</td>
<td>Corpus inscriptionum Latinarum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIS</td>
<td>Corpus inscriptionum Semiticarum. Ab Academia inscriptionum et litterarum humaniorum conditum atque digestum, P. II (Inscriptiones aramaicae continens), Paris 1889.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPI</td>
<td>Corpus papyrorum Judaicarum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSEL</td>
<td>Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum Latinorum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DKNT</td>
<td>Dansk kommentar til Det Nye Testamente</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DissPontAcc</td>
<td>Dissertazioni della Pontificia Accademia romana di archeologia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EKKNT</td>
<td>Evangelisch-katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EncJud</td>
<td>Encyclopaedia Judaica</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hermeneia</td>
<td>Hermeneia – A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HTR</td>
<td>Harvard Theological Review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HUCA</td>
<td>Hebrew Union College Annual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICC</td>
<td>The International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICR</td>
<td>Iscrizioni delle chiese e d’altri edifici di Roma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICUR</td>
<td>Inscriptiones christianae urbis Romae</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IEJ</td>
<td>Israels Exploration Journal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JAC</td>
<td>Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JBL</td>
<td>Journal of Biblical Literature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JIE</td>
<td>Jewish Inscriptions of Graeco-Roman Egypt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JIWE</td>
<td>Jewish Inscriptions of Western Europe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JJS</td>
<td>Journal of Jewish Studies</td>
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<tr>
<td>JQR</td>
<td>Jewish Quarterly Review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JRS</td>
<td>Journal of Roman Studies</td>
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<tr>
<td>JSOTSuppSer</td>
<td>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament—Supplement Series</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LCL</td>
<td>Loeb Classical Library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MedLC-MS</td>
<td>Mediterranean Language and Culture Monograph Series</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEFRA</td>
<td>Mélanges d’archéologie et d’histoire de l’École Française de Rome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MemPontAcc</td>
<td>Memorie della Pontificia Accademia romana di archeologia</td>
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<tr>
<td>NBAC</td>
<td>Nuovo Bollettino di Archeologia Cristiana</td>
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<tr>
<td>NCBC</td>
<td>New Century Biblical Commentary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCE Suppl</td>
<td>New Catholic Encyclopedia Supplement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NJBC</td>
<td>New Jerome Biblical Commentary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSc</td>
<td>Notizie degli Scavi di Antichità (Atti della Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NTS</td>
<td>New Testament Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OCD</td>
<td>Oxford Classical Dictionary, 3 ed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PL</td>
<td>Patrologiae cursus completus, ed. J.P. Migne, Series Latina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QArchEtr</td>
<td>Quaderni del centro di studio per l’archeologia etrusco-italica</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RACrist</td>
<td>Rivista di archeologia cristiana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RendPontAcc</td>
<td>Rendiconti della Pontificia Accademia romana di archeologia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RM</td>
<td>Mitteilungen des deutschen archäologischen Instituts. Römische Abteilung</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SiRom</td>
<td>Studi Romani</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ</td>
<td>Römische Quartalschrift</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SBL</td>
<td>Society of Biblical Literature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SBLDS</td>
<td>Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEÅ</td>
<td>Svensk Exegetisk Årshok</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIMA-PB</td>
<td>Studies in Mediterranean Archaeology. Pocketbook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TDNT</td>
<td>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THAT</td>
<td>Theologisches Handwörterbuch zum Alten Testament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZAW</td>
<td>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZNW</td>
<td>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft</td>
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The Synagogue at Ancient Ostia
The Building and its History From the First to the Fifth Century

by

Anders Runesson

1. Introduction

Despite the fact that no mention is made of Ostian Jews in any Latin, Greek or Hebrew ancient literary texts, until the beginning of the 1960s many scholars had inferred from some inscriptions\(^1\) that there was a Jewish community at Ostia. Prior to this time, no synagogue had been found and the theories remained hard to prove. As so often in scientific work the great leap forward to establish theories as facts was the result of a lucky coincidence; in this case the construction of an expressway revealed remains of an ancient building outside the walls of ancient Ostia, later identified as a synagogue. What were previously uncertain hints of Jewish presence in the prospering port of Rome now became evidence throwing further light on the community as reconstructed from the synagogue building.\(^2\) In other words, since the excavations began, the synagogue building has been the focus for the study of the Jews at Ostia. The reconstruction of the architecture in its different stages is thus of crucial importance for our understanding of the Jewish community in this ancient city and, indeed, the results of such an investigation may affect our understanding of Diaspora Judaism at large.\(^3\)

1.1. The State of Research

Taking into account the importance of the findings,\(^4\) it is strange that the synagogue at Ostia has been the object of so little study by scholars dealing with Diaspora Judaism.\(^5\) Several articles mention the synagogue, giving a brief summary or discussing a certain problem. However, apart from the fact that many of these summaries are derived from the excavator’s, Maria Floriani Squarciapino’s, own summary in English in *Archaeology*, they are marred by errors and contain several misunderstandings.\(^6\)

Perhaps the situation can be explained, at least partly, by the fact that Floriani Squarciapino has not yet published a final report.\(^7\) What we have at our disposal are a couple of articles written after the first season, and some articles written during and after the second campaign. Adding to the unsatisfying state of affairs, the most important article by Floriani Squarciapino and the epigraphic study by Ploteus Fortunatus were found south of Ancient Ostia. See below, section 5, for further discussion.\(^2\)


I would like to express my gratitude to the excavator of the synagogue, Prof. Maria Floriani Squarciapino, who read the manuscript, and to Prof. Anna Gallina Zevi, Soprintendenza archeologica di Ostia, for generously providing photographs from the excavations. My thanks are also due to Dr. Olof Brandt, Rome, for reading the drafts and making valuable suggestions regarding several issues; to Prof. Greg Horsley at the Department of Classics and Ancient History, University of New England, for fruitful discussions of the Mindius Faustus inscription, to Dr. Tim Haetem Blomquist for helpful comments and corrections, and to Doc. Carole Gillis at the Classical department, Lund University, who not only checked my English but also discussed several archaeological issues with me. I am also grateful to architect Johan Sennström, Lund, Sweden, who provided valuable help in many ways. Last but not least, I extend my gratitude to the members of the Synagogue seminar and the New Testament seminar at the University of Lund for discussions of several versions of the present study. Needless to say, I alone am to be held responsible for the conclusions adopted or faults which remain.

\(^1\) Apart from a group of tomb inscriptions in Greek found at Portus (CJ 535–551), the most interesting is a Latin epitaph of the gerusiarcho Gaius Julius Justus from the early second century (CJ 533). It probably speaks of a Jewish synagogue, universitas ex collegium. To these inscriptions has now been added the Mindius Faustus inscription from the second to third century. Cut in two pieces it was found in the floor of the synagogue’s vestibule and in the room with the oven during the second season of the excavations (1962). In 1969 an inscription dating from the first to second century mentioning a certain archisynagogos, Ploteus Fortunatus, was found south of Ancient Ostia. See below, section 5, for further discussion.


\(^3\) I would like to express my gratitude to the excavator of the synagogue, Prof. Maria Floriani Squarciapino, who read the manuscript, and to Prof. Anna Gallina Zevi, Soprintendenza archeologica di Ostia, for generously providing photographs from the excavations. My thanks are also due to Dr. Olof Brandt, Rome, for reading the drafts and making valuable suggestions regarding several issues; to Prof. Greg Horsley at the Department of Classics and Ancient History, University of New England, for fruitful discussions of the Mindius Faustus inscription, to Dr. Tim Haetem Blomquist for helpful comments and corrections, and to Doc. Carole Gillis at the Classical department, Lund University, who not only checked my English but also discussed several archaeological issues with me. I am also grateful to architect Johan Sennström, Lund, Sweden, who provided valuable help in many ways. Last but not least, I extend my gratitude to the members of the Synagogue seminar and the New Testament seminar at the University of Lund for discussions of several versions of the present study. Needless to say, I alone am to be held responsible for the conclusions adopted or faults which remain.

\(^4\) In 1981 Foerster declares the Ostian remains to be “among the most important synagogue discoveries outside Roman Palestine” (“Ancient Diaspora Synagogues,” 170).

\(^5\) Cf. the complaints by Meyers and Kraabel from 1986, “Archaeology,” 187. “Discussion of the Ostian evidence has all but ceased in the past decade....”

\(^6\) See the critique of earlier studies by White, “Synagogue and Society,” 28, n. 16. However, not even White’s study from 1997 has escaped errors. From the very start misunderstandings have confused the study of the synagogue. Already in her first article on the synagogue from 1961, “La sinagoga di Ostia,” 326, Floriani Squarciapino complains about incorrect information that was spread from the beginning due to the importance attributed to the findings even outside the scholarly world. However, as can be seen in the critique in her report from the second campaign, “Seconda campagna,” 299, n. 1, errors cannot be blamed on non-scholarly writings only.

\(^7\) Zevi, writing in 1972, states that a final report is to appear soon in one of the forthcoming volumes of *Scavi di Ostia* (“La sinagoga di
rariani Squarciapi no, "La sinagoga di Ostia: Seconda campagna di scavo," is based on a lecture held while the excavations were still going on (1962). The only articles on the synagoge by the excavator after the excavations were completed are "The Synagogue at Ostia" (a summary based on her earlier articles but including some new information), and "Die Synagoge von Ostia Antica nach der zweiten Ausgrabungskampagne," both from 1963. We also have a popularised version in Illustrated London News from 1963, "The most Ancient Synagogue known from Monumental Remains." It contains several interesting photographs from the excavations and is also useful since it displays Floriani Squarciapi no’s latest views on some of the difficult issues discussed in previous articles. The short study from 1964, La sinagoga di Ostia, which is included in one or two bibliographies is a pamphlet written by the excavator at the invitation of the president of the Jewish community of Rome, Prof. Fausto Pitigliani, who wanted it to be a summary "at the disposal of foreign visitors who are interested in the history of the Jews in Rome." The pamphlet, which is written in Italian and English, does not contain any substantial new information apart from some photographs not published elsewhere.

To these studies on the synagogue building we may add "Ebrei a Roma e ad Ostia" from 1963 where the excavator relates her findings to Jewish inscriptions and other remains from Rome and Ostia, giving a picture of, among other things, the organisation of the Jewish communities in Rome and at Ostia. More important, however, is the article presenting and discussing the Plotius Fortunatus inscription, "Plotius Fortunatus archisynagogus," from 1970. This study also gives a more complete interpretation of the Mindius Faustus and the Gaius Julius Justus inscriptions than do the earlier articles. The inscriptions are used together with the synagogue findings to describe the Jewish community at Ostia. The latest information we receive from Floriani Squarciapi no on the synagogue itself, however, is dated to 1964. Unfortunately, due to the nature of the articles, the fact remains that none of her publications is complete and we still lack information about important issues.

Apart from Floriani Squarciapi no’s writings, we have at least three studies on the synagogue which deserve our attention: F. Zevi’s article from 1972, A.T. Kraabel’s from 1979 and the writings of L.M. White from 1990 and 1997. Accordingly, our discussion in the following will deal mostly with the work of these four scholars.

The present study is an attempt to collect all information now scattered in several articles and combine it with personal observations on the site. The purpose of this is to make a renewed evaluation of the evidence in search of answers on still unresolved questions relating to the synagogue and its history. As will be seen, there are still problems that cannot be solved at present. These problems will be pointed out and it is my hope that a publication of a final report from the excavations, and perhaps additional information received from future excavations on the site, will provide material for further study and lead us closer to a fuller understanding of this extraordinary synagogue. As no one has hitherto presented and discussed all the evidence in a comprehensive way, it is hoped that this study will promote a renewed and deepened discussion of the Ostian remains, awaiting the final report from the excavations.

Before proceeding to our task, a summary of the articles by Floriani Squarciapi no will be given. Short presentations of the conclusions of the other above mentioned scholars will also be made, focusing on the points where they disagree with the excavator or develop her results in a decisive way.

1.1.1 Maria Floriani Squarciapi no
The remains of the building were found in April 1961 and the first excavation campaign began in May 1961 (Fig. I); it concerned areas B, C, D and G. In June archive travels with Jew-
ish symbols were found, positively identifying the edifice as a synagogue. The work during this campaign was concentrated on the later building; the remains of the earlier stages were treated first during the second campaign, beginning in 1962. This excavation also included the other areas (A, E, F). The architectural development suggested by Floriani Squarciapino may be summarised in the following way:

First century. The original building, constructed in opus reticulatum, is dated to the second half of the first century, perhaps even as early as the reign of Claudius. The edifice consisted of areas B, C, D and G only. There were three entrances from the north (into B, C, and D) and three from area A, which was not included in the building at this time (one into B, and two into G). The floors were paved with cocciopesto; in area G and B there were no divisions, making this area one room. Broad benches lined the walls of G, forming a curve along the Southwest wall and reaching out into B. (Cf. Fig. 103.)

The characteristic feature of the synagogue, the four columns in area C, was part of the original edifice and marked the entrance into the main hall. On either side of the inner pair of columns were partition walls with doors. Thus, the synagogue hall of the earliest building (D) had three doors oriented towards Jerusalem. In the main hall itself were benches, described as “masonry seats for the faithful” and a podium. Finally, outside the building, in area A, were a well and a cistern.

Fourth century. The later building is dated to the beginning of the fourth century. The edifice went through a major renovation and was enlarged to incorporate areas A, F and E (Fig. 2; cf. Fig. 88).

The entrance of the vestibule (A) from the Via Severiana was flanked by two pilasters of which only the bases, covered with marble veneer, remain. The vestibule itself had a marble floor in which was found the main part of the Mius Faustus inscription (to which we shall return below). The well was furnished with a marble well head carved with a wave pattern, while the cistern was covered with a marble slab.

The main entrance (into B) was the same as in the original building but now flanked by two smaller doors. Sections G and B have become separate rooms and B is divided into three parts by balustrades, all sections having mosaic floors. The one in B was badly damaged and only one motive in its north-east corner is still visible: the excavator interprets it as

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18 The two doors flanking the main door were created later: “Synagogue,” 201.
19 The doors into G, which present a problem regarding the benches in the same room (see below), are considered original: see “La sinagoga di Ostia,” 331. Cf. “Synagogue,” 201.
20 There is some confusion regarding their measurements. Probably, they were 1.83 m wide as is stated in “Seconda campagna,” 311 and not 1.93 as is given in “Synagogue,” 200, or 2.00 as the excavator reports in “Ancient Synagogue,” 469.
a chalice and "some circular object which may be a loaf or a stylized crown." \(^{26}\)

Area B, raised to the same level as area C and the main hall (D), had a plain white mosaic with a black border. According to the excavator, this area could have been reserved for women. \(^{27}\) In the right aisle (B,) was a shallow basin with a floor paved in cocciopesto; this was used for ritual ablutions. \(^{28}\) The rest of the area was paved with a mosaic depicting a square enclosing a rosette inscribed in a hexagon, a common motif in Jewish art. \(^{29}\)

In area G an oven was constructed. Further, a table with a marble top was introduced as well as some amphorae which were sunk into the pavements, probably used to store wine, oil or other foodstuffs. \(^{30}\) Beneath the rough floor, in which several terracotta lamps decorated with a menorah were found, was a floor paved with mosaic. \(^{31}\) In the article based on the lecture held during the second season, the excavator claims that this mosaic belonged to the fourth century building, \(^{32}\) while in a later article she thinks that it probably originated in an intermediary period. \(^{33}\) The pattern of the mosaic further suggests that this room was divided by wooden walls into smaller sections. \(^{34}\) During the renovation a supporting pillar was also added to the room and the more northern of the two doors between G and A was blocked. \(^{35}\)

In her earliest articles Floriani Squarciapiino notes that the inner pair of columns in area C had holes indicating the existence of some kind of barrier, perhaps made of bronze or marble. \(^{36}\) In the main hall itself the floor was paved with opus sectile and that was possibly also the decoration style of the walls. \(^{37}\) The benches were removed but the podium was retained and renovated.

All doors from the Via Severiana were blocked during this renovation. Around the hall on the outside, supporting pillars and supporting walls were constructed in opus vitatum and opus latericium respectively. This leads the excavator to suggest that the edifice may have had a vaulted roof. \(^{38}\) The location and function of the two columns found in D are presented as a difficult problem already in the first article on the synagogue, \(^{39}\) and this problem is not solved in any of Floriani Squarciapiino's later articles.

Area F is called a short corridor, filling few other functions than providing access to area E. Room E had broad benches which the excavator likens to the cliniae of the triclinia. She suggests that it functioned as a meeting place, a law school or a hostel.

The Torah aedicula was a later addition, after the fourth century renovation had been completed. \(^{40}\) It stood on a podium and was reached by four steps. The excavator conjectures that a pediment "must have crowned the ensemble." \(^{41}\) At a later stage the podium was enlarged.

Floriani Squarciapiino states that as a free standing structure, the aedicula is unique. However, she connects its shape to the niche of the Dura Europos synagogue, the depiction of the aron on some gold glasses and a representation in a relief found at Beth She'arim. \(^{42}\) Regarding the form it is also connected to the inscription found at Side in Asia Minor which mentions a gift to the synagogue consisting of an ambos and a simma. The form of the simma, the lunate sigma (i.e., the same as a Roman C), is the same as the form of the aedicula and the excavator believes that the donation to the synagogue at Side may have been a structure similar to the aedicula at Ostia. Since the ambos at Side is most likely a bimah, the two synagogues would have had similar features.

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26 Floriani Squarciapiino, "Synagogue," 198. In her German article ("Zweiten Ausgrabungskampagne," 15) she mentions the crown first but in a later article, "Ancient Synagogue," 469, she prefers the loaf.

27 Floriani Squarciapiino, "Ancient Synagogue," 469; cf. eadem, "Zweiten Ausgrabungskampagne," 14-15. "Vermutlich waren die seitlichen Räume für die Frauen bestimmt." Here it seems as if she means both side rooms, B, as well as B., See also eadem, La sinagoga di Ostia, 22, "It may be that the two lateral sections were reserved for women."

28 It is clear that Floriani Squarciapiino claims that the basin was present in the later building, but she is very vague regarding its age. Thus, I have not included it in the description of the first-century building, even though she might regard it as original.


31 This mosaic floor is the floor preserved and visible today.


33 Floriani Squarciapiino, "Ancient Synagogue," 470. Regarding the intermediary period, see below.

34 Floriani Squarciapiino, "Seconda campagna," 310.

35 Floriani Squarciapiino, "La sinagoga di Ostia," 331.


37 Floriani Squarciapiino, "La sinagoga di Ostia," 335. The excavator does not mention the mosaic with a Solomon's knot pattern at the northern wall of the main hall in any of her articles. See further below, section 3.1.


An intermediary phase seems, according to the excavator, to have existed in between the first and the fourth century building. It is not clear, however, what features this phase included. In one of her latest articles she states that this phase included walls with slight traces of paintings dividing "the primitive vestibule" into four sections. Perhaps the mosaics of the room with the oven also belonged to this phase. Area B, was divided by a wooden wall. It should also be mentioned that according to all her articles, except the latest one from 1970 (see below), the Torah shrine mentioned in the Mindius Faustus inscription—but of which we have no archaeological remains—would have belonged in this phase.

No dates have been suggested as to when the renovation resulting in this layout of the edifice took place, but in some articles Floriani Squarciapino connects it to the Mindius Faustus inscription. However, she does not give us a certain date for this inscription and she seems to have changed her mind during the years. In the article written during the second season of the excavations she dates it before the third century on palaeographic grounds. In her article in Archaeology it is similarly dated to the late second or early third century, while she seems to be more uncertain in her article in The Illustrated London News. When she is writing on the Plotius Fortunatus inscription in 1970 she has left her earlier dating completely and argues that it belongs to the same period as the aedicula, referring to its construction and subsequent enlargement. (Fig. 3)

Regarding the original function of the building, Floriani Squarciapino became increasingly certain that the building was constructed as a synagogue. In her first articles she mentions the possibility that the first-century building could have been a synagogue, but it was by no means sure. The uncertainty remained during the excavations of the second season, but after they were completed she was convinced that the edifice was constructed as a synagogue. This made the synagogue at Ostia "the most ancient synagogue known to us from monumental remains."

As we mentioned above in section 1.1, Floriani Squarcia-
pino has also written about the Jewish community at Ostia, its organisation and its relation to the non-Jewish society. Her conclusion is that the Jews of Ostia were assimilated to a great extent into the Roman society even if they preserved their beliefs and customs. They were organised much like the Jewish community of Rome and professionally they were engaged in trade. Regarding the position of women, the excavator has interpreted the archaeological material as if there could have been separate rooms for women and men. Nothing more is said about the role of women in the Ostian Jewish community.

The assimilation of the Jews together with the size of the synagogue building has led Floriani Squarciapiino to assume a Jewish presence in Ostia long before the synagogue was built. After Claudius had built his harbour the Jewish community, which grew as did the rest of Ostia's population, decided to construct a synagogue to serve as a house for their religious and business meetings. On the grounds of the Greek inscriptions from Portus, it may also be noted that Floriani Squarciapiino conjectured that there might have been one more Jewish community at Ostia, located by the harbours.

1.1.2. Fausto Zevi

Zevi is careful to note that he is not going to put forward any new solutions to the many problems still unanswered ten years after the discovery and excavations of the synagogue. His purpose is only to summarise the findings from the excavations so far and present the state of the art for his readers. He explicitly states that scholars will not find big or startling news in his article. However, even if Zevi follows Floriani Squarciapiino's general outline of the architectural development, he nevertheless adds some important observations. Before we mention these we should note that while seeing that there was continuous renovation work performed on the building during all of its history, Zevi allows for only two major phases in the architectural development of the edifice; the first- and the fourth-century buildings. This leads him to assume that, e.g., some of the partition walls, including the wooden ones, belonged to the older building.

Among the difficult problems concerning our edifice are the mosaic floors and their date. One example is that the mosaic of B₂, which is in a bad condition now but was not particularly well done even from the beginning, seems to differ so much from the mosaic of B₁ that Zevi suggests the possibility of ascribing different dates to them. Further, he notes that the almost complete lack of figurative decoration should not be interpreted as an indication of Jewish piety since non-figurative black and white mosaics were usual in the Roman world of the second and third centuries.

Regarding the main hall (D), Zevi suggests that the two columns found here, but which no one has been able to propose an original place for, either were structural supports or could have been used as decoration on either side of the podium. He excludes the possibility of a balcony, since the height of the four columns in C and the location of the window in the reconstructed northern wall do not permit this. Another question arising from the design of the hall before the construction of the aedicula is where the ark stood. Zevi leaves it with a question mark but suggests the possibility that it could have been placed just inside the entrance, as in the synagogues of Galilee. A difficulty not discussed by the excavator but connected with what we know about Galilean synagogues is how we are to understand the liturgy after the renovation which included the taking away of the benches. Zevi brings up the issue but gives no answer.

An interesting detail in Zevi's survey is that he dates the capitals of the four columns in C to the first half of the second century, admitting that this date does not fit either of the major phases of the building, according to his interpretation of its history. However, noting that both the capitals and some of the shafts of the columns show clear signs of having been reused in antiquity, he argues that we are dealing here with material re-used during the fourth century renovation. Regarding the origin of the four column lay-out, Zevi follows Floriani Squarciapiino in judging it as part of the older phase of the building. Further, he believes that the holes on the sides of the inner pair of columns indicate the presence of a gate made of wood or metal, not a barrier as the excavator has suggested.

Finally, we may note that it is evident that Zevi, writing two years after the publication of Floriani Squarciapiino's article "Ploitus Fortunatus archisygnagogus," was not convinced by his new dating of the Mindius Faustus inscription (arguing that it belonged to the time of the construction of the aedicula). Instead, he states that it must have originated before the fourth-century renovation of the building.

Discussing the identification of the building as a synagogue, Zevi states that the edifice served such a use from the

57 Floriani Squarciapiino, "Ebrei," 139, 136–137
60 Floriani Squarciapiino, "Ebrei," 140.
61 Zevi, "La sinagoga di Ostia," 131. His careful approach might be explained by the fact that he is waiting for the final report from the excavator to appear within short (in the series Scavi di Ostia); see 137, no. 17. Zevi's own article is a translation into Italian, with some minor changes, of a Hebrew article which appeared in Scritti in memoria di Enzo Sereni. Saggi sull'Ebraismo romano, Milano and Gerusalemme 1970, 61–73.
63 Zevi, "La sinagoga di Ostia," 143.
64 Zevi, "La sinagoga di Ostia," 139–140.
65 Zevi, "La sinagoga di Ostia," 144. This statement is contrary to the interpretation of the excavator; cf. Floriani Squarciapiino, "Die Synagoge," 5.
67 With "liturgy" I do not mean a certain fixed order similar to the siddur of later times, but only the fact that people performing rituals together follow certain patterns, whichever these patterns may be. Cf. The criticism by S. Reif regarding anachronistic references to later prayer-books for the reconstruction of early Jewish liturgy, Judaism and Hebrew Prayer, 53ff. See also my forthcoming study, The Origins of the Synagogue.
69 Zevi, "La sinagoga di Ostia," 140.
70 Zevi, "La sinagoga di Ostia," 143.
71 Zevi, "La sinagoga di Ostia," 140.
72 Zevi, "La sinagoga di Ostia," 143.
very beginning. Among the arguments in favour of this interpretation of the earliest building, he mentions the benches in G (not in D1), the well in A and the rectangular cistern adjoining to it.\textsuperscript{73} However, he is well aware of the fact that the building differs in plan and decoration from any other known synagogue and at the same time that the building technique is similar to other buildings at Ostia: these facts have made the interpretation of the remains difficult in this regard.

After having studied both the archaeological remains from the synagogue and the epigraphic material (the first 4–5 pages deals with the Gaius Julius Justus inscription), Zevi arrives at the conclusion that the Jews at Ostia were "Romanised" in many respects and were flourishing under the benevolent protection of the emperors.\textsuperscript{74}

1.1.3. Alf Thomas Kraabel

Kraabel’s description of the synagogue at Ostia on four pages from 1979 is one of the few English articles which do not misread or misinterpret Floriani Squarciapino’s material.\textsuperscript{75} The article lacks detail—of course—but gives an accurate, short version of some of the excavator’s more important results.

Kraabel follows the architectural development of the excavator except on one point: the introduction of the aedicula.\textsuperscript{76} The problem is the keibotos, the Torah shrine, mentioned in the Mindius Faustus inscription, and its relation to the present aedicula with its awkward location in the building. Since, according to Floriani Squarciapino, the aedicula was built some time after the completion of the renovation in the beginning of the fourth century, there remains a period in which it can be assumed that there was a second Torah shrine, after that of Mindius Faustus but before the present aedicula. Kraabel’s suggestion is, however, that a second Torah shrine constructed after the fourth-century renovation is an unnecessary hypothesis if it can be shown that the aedicula was built at the same time as this renovation was made. Supporting such a conclusion is the fact that there is no archaeological evidence for a second shrine. Instead of two phases for the present (fourth-century) building Kraabel ends up with only one.\textsuperscript{77} The aedicula of Ostia and its location in the synagogue is further compared to the aediculae of Sardis, which were constructed in a similar way.\textsuperscript{78}

In his earliest article on the synagogue (1974), Kraabel states that no evidence of a balcony was found in the building. (Strangely, he also rejects the existence of benches, though he refers to Floriani Squarciapino’s article in Archaeology from 1963).\textsuperscript{79} In the same article he also states that women could have been relegated to the forecourt.\textsuperscript{80}

Kraabel agrees with Floriani Squarciapino that the first-century building was a synagogue.\textsuperscript{81} However, he finds it strange that a synagogue could have had such a monumental design at this early time.\textsuperscript{82}

Regarding the social situation of the Jews at Ostia based on the archaeological remains of the building, Kraabel seems to have changed his mind somewhat during the years. In 1974 he writes that “local conditions sometimes made it advisable to screen the building and conceal its purpose” and mentions Ostia as one example among others.\textsuperscript{83} However, in his 1982 article the position of the Jews at Ostia seems safer: “The Priene and Ostia buildings were not relegated to a ‘Jewish quarter’ nor were they disturbed by their gentile neighbours, to judge from the excavated evidence.”\textsuperscript{84}

1.1.4. L. Michael White

Since the publications of the synagogue by Floriani Squarciapino appeared, no one has challenged her interpretation of the evidence in such a decisive way as White.\textsuperscript{85} Apart from the excavator, White is also the one who has written most about the synagogue and the Jews at Ostia. His work is presented in two volumes entitled The Social Origins of Christian Architecture published in 1990 and 1997. However, the history of these studies goes further back.\textsuperscript{86} Important to note here is that volume 2 is based on a revised edition of an earlier work published under the title The Christian Domus Ecclesiae in its Environment in 1988. Volume 2 is thus not contemporary with White’s article in Harvard Theological Review (“Synagogue and Society”), which appeared in 1997,\textsuperscript{87} even if the new edition is said to be up-dated. This explains the different dates given for the original building in these studies. However, such differences will be discussed in section 3 below; this summary will focus on his latest views.

White’s architectural chronology can be outlined in the following way:

1. Early second century. The first building was constructed.\textsuperscript{88} Its main entrance was in C1 (the entrance in B2 being widened during the fourth century renovation and then

\textsuperscript{73} Zevi, “La sinagoga di Ostia,” 144.
\textsuperscript{74} Zevi, “La sinagoga di Ostia,” 144–145.
\textsuperscript{75} Kraabel, “The Diaspora Synagogue,” 497–500. Kraabel has also written several other articles including shorter notes on the Ostian evidence (see the bibliography).
\textsuperscript{76} Note, however, that while describing three construction phases in 1979 (“The Diaspora Synagogue,” 499) Kraabel states in 1982 and 1986 that there are only two phases attested (“Excavated Synagogues,” 228; “Archaeology,” 187).
\textsuperscript{77} Kraabel, “The Diaspora Synagogue,” 499–500.
\textsuperscript{78} Kraabel, “The Diaspora Synagogue,” 498.
\textsuperscript{79} Kraabel, “Synagogues, Ancient,” 439.
\textsuperscript{80} Kraabel, “Synagogues, Ancient,” 438.
\textsuperscript{81} Kraabel, “The Diaspora Synagogue,” 498. This opinion is also expressed in “Excavated Synagogues,” 228; “Archaeology,” 187; “Synagogues, Ancient,” 439.
\textsuperscript{82} Kraabel, “The Diaspora Synagogue,” 499.
\textsuperscript{83} Kraabel, “Synagogues, Ancient,” 437.
\textsuperscript{84} Kraabel, “The Roman Diaspora,” 14 (cited from the reprinting in Overman and MacLennan, Diaspora Jews and Judaism).
\textsuperscript{85} I have responded to White’s reconstruction and interpretation of the Ostian remains in “The Oldest Original Synagogue Building in the Diaspora. A Response to L. Michael White,” HTR 92.4, 1999, 409–433. In this article I focus on the earliest phases of the building. I also give an alternative interpretation of the social and religious situation of the Jews at Ostia.
\textsuperscript{86} See the preface in Originis, vol. 2, ix–xi.
\textsuperscript{87} After I had completed the present study I found a reprint of White’s HTR article in K. Donfried and P. Richardson (eds.) Judaism and Christianity in First-Century Rome, Grand Rapids 1998, 30–68. This version differs in some respects from the one published in 1997, and since the latter is more accurate, the reader is recommended to study the article in HTR.
\textsuperscript{88} White, “Synagogue and Society,” 28–29. White is prepared to go as early as the last decade of the first century (29), but prefers a second-century setting; cf. the caption to fig. 3 on 56 in the same article which says, “The synagogue, c. second-fourth centuries.”
Finally, White points out that the problem of the source of light for the main hall (D) after the renovation in phase 3 when its windows were blocked is not solved. His suggestion is that "the columns supporting the interior elevation may have carried a kind of shallow clerestory construction."\textsuperscript{100}

White is the only one so far who argues that the building was not a synagogue from the beginning, but was converted to this use after a later renovation (his phase 2). Instead, he believes that we are dealing with a private insula containing domestic quarters, shops (area B being a street-front shop) or workspace.\textsuperscript{101} A "formal synagogue structure" can be attested first during phase 2, i.e., from the second half of the second century.\textsuperscript{102} According to White, in this phase the building is very similar to other collegial halls at Ostia.\textsuperscript{103}

The latter part of White’s 1997 article in HTR includes an analysis of some of the epigraphic material from Ostia\textsuperscript{104} and his conclusion after combining his results from the investigation of the synagogue building with his interpretation of this material is that the Jews at Ostia were highly acculturated "even as they strove to retain their cultural identity and religious traditions."\textsuperscript{105} He continues, "Both the architectural and the epigraphic remains attest to numerical growth and upward social mobility for the Jewish community."\textsuperscript{106}

1.2. The Need for a Renewed Discussion of the Evidence

As the summaries above show, the present state of research is rather complex. Despite the thorough work and the many articles by Floriani Squarciapino, her writings from different

\textsuperscript{88} White, "Synagogue and Society," 32.
\textsuperscript{89} White, "Synagogue and Society," 33.
\textsuperscript{90} White does not mention it in any of his studies and it is not included in his plan: see "Synagogue and Society," fig. 3, 56.
\textsuperscript{91} White, "Synagogue and Society," 36.
\textsuperscript{92} White, "Synagogue and Society," 36.
\textsuperscript{93} White, "Synagogue and Society," 36.
\textsuperscript{94} White, "Synagogue and Society," 36.
\textsuperscript{95} White, "Synagogue and Society," 29.
\textsuperscript{96} White repeatedly speaks of the Via Severiana in relation to the original building ("Synagogue and Society," 32, 33, 36), seemingly unaware of the fact that this road did not exist until the time of Septimus Severus (193–211).
\textsuperscript{98} White, Origins, vol. 2, 387.
\textsuperscript{99} White, Origins, vol. 2, 387. This view, however, creates a problem. White states that the balustrades between B/C and B/C were constructed "concurrently with the aedicula" ("Synagogue and Society," 30). Since White has not mentioned any earlier partitioning of these areas it seems as if the re-orientation would have taken place on one and the same occasion, namely when the aedicula was built, despite what White has stated in his Origins.
\textsuperscript{100} White, "Synagogue and Society," 34–35, n. 35.
\textsuperscript{101} White, "Synagogue and Society," 33, 35.
\textsuperscript{102} White, "Synagogue and Society," 36.
\textsuperscript{103} White, "Synagogue and Society," 46.
\textsuperscript{104} Unfortunately, White does not discuss the important Plotius Fortunatus inscription, despite the fact that he once mentions the article by Floriani Squarciapino in which it is published ("Synagogue and Society," 38, n. 41). Without support from Floriani Squarciapino, who explicitly states that the inscription belongs to Ostia ("Plotius Fortunatus", 187), White assigns it to Portus.
\textsuperscript{105} White, "Synagogue and Society," 52.
\textsuperscript{106} White, "Synagogue and Society," 52.
times during and after the excavations contain several problems and some inconsistencies. The basin in B1, interpreted as a ritual bath, is not fully described, for instance, and its history is not clear. The description of the four-column construction is not complete and the implications of the assumed barrier between the inner columns are not outlined. The intermediary phase and its date have not been treated as thoroughly as they should and the complex of problems regarding the interpretation of the building as a synagogue before the fourth century renovation needs more attention. Several features and measures are not mentioned at all and details in the different articles contradict each other on several points. Finally, edifice K west of the synagogue, which was excavated after the completion of the excavations of the synagogue itself, has not been published at all.

Many scholars who have written about the synagogue have had minor—but important—objections to certain details in the excavator’s interpretations but have not dealt in depth with other issues of great significance. Further, White gives us so different an interpretation of the evidence that a renewed discussion of the entire material from the excavations—including the recent excavations of other buildings in the area around the synagogue—is necessary in order to get a clearer picture of what really happened there outside the city gates by the sea.

This is what we shall attempt to do on the following pages, distinguishing four main areas which will be kept apart for the sake of clarity: questions of location and orientation; the analysis of the building and its architectural development; the dating of the building; and finally an evaluation of the evidence for synagogue use in all of the different phases of the building. This mode of procedure will inevitably result in a certain amount of repetition, but it will be kept to a minimum; the reader is asked to make allowance for this inconvenience.

The result of such an investigation may have far-reaching consequences for our understanding of the Diaspora synagogue. If White is correct, all excavated synagogues outside the Jewish homeland show a common denominator: they were all renovated from buildings originally constructed for other purposes, mostly private edifices. Further, the development of the idea of synagogue buildings being sacred is understood by White as a result of the loss of the temple in Jerusalem, especially after the Bar Kochba war when it became obvious that the temple would not be restored in a foreseeable future. His dating and interpretation of the Ostian evidence confirms his overall theory. However, if the archaeological remains indicate a monumental building with facilities for ritual washings constructed for synagogue use in the first century, probably before the destruction of the Jerusalem temple, questions arise as to how we are to understand the sanctity of synagogue buildings in relation to the Jerusalem cult. The synagogue at Ostia would then be a witness to the diversity of early synagogues even in this regard: the design of the building would, at the time of its construction, be unparalleled among those structures hitherto found and excavated, and this is likely to carry ideological implications.

2. The Location and Orientation of the Building

2.1. Location

Being part of a newly excavated extra mural area outside the Porta Marina, the building rises near the ancient seashore, facing the Via Severana (Fig. 4). The fact that the synagogue was placed outside the official city limits has been the object of some conjectures as to why this was the case. Since the location of the synagogue may have implications for other issues related to the building itself, such as the well and cistern in area A, the supposed ritual bath in area B, and the original use of the building, we have reason to develop the arguments and discuss them at some length. This is done in my second article in this volume: “Water and Worship: Ostia and the Ritual Bath in the Diaspora Synagogue.” The results of that study suggests the following conclusion regarding the synagogue at Ostia:

The fact that the synagogue was located outside the city walls cannot be explained as the result of bad relations between Jews and gentiles, forcing the Jews to establish their community centre outside the gates. We have no evidence that there existed a “Jewish quarter” or “ghetto” at Ostia, and the epigraphic material indicates a high level of interaction between Jews and non-Jews, at least during the first phases of the building’s existence. Instead, the explanation should be sought within the Jewish community itself: namely, in their religious customs. These customs most likely included some kind of ritual ablutions in connection to synagogue activities. Therefore, we find in the Ostia synagogue, as in many other Diaspora synagogues, water installations to facilitate these rites. Such facilities existed—in different forms—during all of the building’s phases. Since ritual ablutions could be and were performed using sea water (this is evident in, e.g., Philo, Josephus and rabbinic halakhah), the conclusion is that a location near the sea would be preferable. In this regard the Ostian evidence fits well with what we know about the location and water facilities of many other—but not all—Diaspora synagogues.

Connected to the question of water for ritual purity is the view that existed among at least some Jewish groups in antiquity, namely, that non-Jewish cities were unclean because of idol worship. The proper place for the worship of the God of Israel would thus be outside the city gates, and, preferably, by water (Fig. 5).

2.2. Orientation

The orientation of the building in its final stage, that is, from the fourth century and onwards, is east-southeast towards Jerusalem. This is made clear from the monumental entry

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103 White, Origins, vol. 1, 64.
104 For an outline of the development of this part of Ostia during the different phases of the synagogue, see Brandt, “The Quarter Surrounding the Synagogue at Ostia.”
105 Cf. the ruling of r. Meg. 4:22 which states that synagogue gates should open toward the east in analogy with the meeting tent, which had its entrance to the east. Disregarding for a second the
area and the three doors into Area B; the main door is in the
wall between A and B₁ with two flanking doors into B₁ and
B₂. The strongest evidence for a conscious and theologically
determined orientation toward Jerusalem is, however, the
Torah aedicula built in C₃ in a second phase of the second
major renovation of the building (Fig. 56).  

According to White, the development of the architecture
suggests that the original orientation was on a north-south
axis through area C.  

However, he admits that the axial orientation of room D, the main hall, was east-west “from
some earlier stage.” Indeed, it may be argued that the
curved wall in D-west with its podium together with the
large door (w. 3.80 m) between B₁ and A, which is original,
marks the orientation of the building as being on an
east-west axis from the beginning.

Since I do not agree with White regarding the late date of
the four-column construction in C₃, but regard it as a part of
the original building (see below, section 3.2), I maintain that

fact that we should not confuse statements in rabbinic literature
with the situation in the Diaspora. If, hypothetically, the meeting
tent was the prototype for the orientation of the original synagogue,
Jerusalem was not the focus for the architect. However, at later
times it seems as if it was since the tri-portal entry resembles some
Galilean and other synagogues, which were oriented toward Jerusa-
lem, and not the east. Further, the direction of the Ostia synagogue
is east-southeast which makes it more likely that Jerusalem was the
focus from the beginning. See further below.


White claims that the door was widened during the second major
renovation, but he does not present any evidence supporting this
view (“Synagogue and Society,” 32). There is nothing in the ma-
sory work which would suggest such development.
Fig. 6. General view of the synagogue complex, looking east-southeast. Via Severiana in the foreground. (Photo: A. Runesson.)

Fig. 7. General view of the synagogue, looking west. (Photo: A. Runesson.)

Fig. 8. General view of the synagogue complex, looking east. Building K in the foreground. (Photo: A. Runesson.)
the position of the columns marked the hall as the core of the building from the beginning. If this reconstruction is correct, I cannot see how the doors facing north during the earlier phases (into B1, C1 and D118) can have an effect on the orientation of the building.

Further, White states that the reorientation "...corresponds to the partitioning of area B/C and the creation of the tri-portal entry in B, but antedates the construction of the apse-edifice in C2. Hence, the primary orientation of the new plan would have been toward the bema on the west end of the hall of assembly."113 Thus, White sees the podium (interpreted as a bimah), the division of areas B/C and the three doors from area A into B as focal points for an east–west orientation. It is noteworthy that even if the tri-portal entry into B was introduced at the second major renovation, the partitioning of areas B and C belonged to the first major renovation and the bimah at the western end of the main hall was original to the building according to the excavator.116 To this it may be added that the later tri-portal entry had a precursor in the entrance from C into D. Originally there were two doors into the main hall (from C1 and C2) flanking the four-column construction in C2.117 This means that the strongest evidence mentioned by White in favour of a re-orientation during the second major renovation, the addition of two doors between A and B/B1, was probably only a repetition of an earlier version within the building itself.

Since it is clear that the reorientation, as White has it, appeared before the introduction of the aedicula in the second phase of the second major renovation, and most features showing the change of direction belong to the earlier phases of the building, we should be careful speaking of a general reorientation of the building; I do not believe that such a re-orientation ever occurred. But perhaps it is of some value to distinguish between different kinds of orientations, taking the internal archaeological evidence as the point of departure.

The first feature to take into account is the podium by the curved western wall interpreted as the bimah.118 This was part of the earliest building and remained a focal point during all of the building phases. As has been pointed out, the person reading from the Torah most likely faced Jerusalem.119 Thus, we have an orientation toward Jerusalem from the first to the last phase of the building regarding the reading of the Torah. This orientation also makes sense together with the above mentioned indications of the same direction: the curved wall in D and the main entrance from A into B2.

The second feature is the ark. On top of the bimah and by the wall are found remains which could have been a platform carrying a fixed or, more likely, a portable ark before the aedicula was built.120 This means that the ark was not placed in front of the wall facing Jerusalem but on the opposite side of the building. The construction of the aedicula in the second phase of the second major renovation (about the middle of the fourth century) thus meant a change in praxis/ideology only regarding the location of the ark, which from now on stood as close to Jerusalem as possible while the bimah, and thus the reading of the Torah, retained its place.

The conclusion, then, is that the architectural history of the building does not support a theory of a reorientation of the edifice as a whole. What we do find is a change of direction regarding the ark in the latest phase of the building. Further, the addition of two doors in the entry area during the second major renovation need not be related to the question of orientation alone. This layout is similar to the entry areas of Galilean and other synagogues and may be seen as an aesthetic-ideological act expressing the close relation between the Jews of the Diaspora and in the homeland.121

Finally, we should also note that the synagogue was probably the first building to be constructed in this area outside the Porta Marina. The Via Severiana was not yet built, and no remains beneath it reveal that this road would have had a predecessor. Thus, the orientation of the synagogue could have been in any direction the builders liked since they were not constrained by other structures. Their choice of an orientation in an east-southeast direction, pointing the way to Jerusalem, seems to be more than just a coincidence; most likely it was religiously motivated.

3. The Architectural Development of the Building

There can be no doubt that the building existed in an earlier form than the present one. This is clearly shown by the fact that the core of the building is constructed in opus reticulatum mixtum, while later additions are mostly in some form of opus vittatum.

Apart from the different masonry techniques, we have several other indications of a development in different stages. As we shall see, there were ongoing renovations between the major renovations. If the major alterations could be determined architecturally, then a time frame could be established for these phases.

The edifice has three floor levels. Although there is insufficient archaeological evidence (or rather a lack of information about the earlier levels from the excavator) to document the existence of all three levels in all the rooms, there is enough to permit a tripartite division of periods: the original floor, the floors of a first renovation, which coincide with the erection of some inner walls dated to the second century on the basis of their paintings,122 and the floors of a second

114 This door is mentioned by Floriani Squarciapino, "recentemente scoperta," 129, and is still visible on the site. It was not original to the building but was created during the first major renovation and blocked during the second renovation. The door is not included in White's plan ("Synagogue and Society," fig. 3, 56).
116 See below, section 3.2 and 3.3.
117 See below, section 3.3.
119 Pavolini, La vita quotidiana a Ostia, 163–164
121 We shall return to this below in section 5.1 when discussing Jewish symbols and the identification of the building as a synagogue.
renovation which were laid when the building expanded beyond its original space. Thus, taken together, the evidence suggest that we reckon with three distinctive phases in the history of the building. This is in line with what Floriani Squarciapino has argued, even if she is only hinting at an intermediary period. As we have seen, White has challenged her reconstruction. However, one of the problems with his architectural chronology is that he does not identify all of these major changes. The result is that his second phase, which he calls the first renovation for synagogue use and dates to the “mid-to-later second century,” lacks any firm archaeological evidence but rests on conjectures about “minimal internal changes,” which he argues took place at this time.

Thus, earlier reconstructions of the building’s history seem to me to leave something to be desired. We shall therefore try to reconstruct its architectural development anew. The best way to proceed is to start with the building as it was found (that is, the latest building) and work down through the other phases.

3.1. The Later Building

3.1.1. Areas A, B and G

What we find during this period is a complex of rooms creating a large building (856 m²), serving the different needs of the community. From the Via Severiana, which runs along the northern side of the building, one enters through a doorway flanked by two small columns (this is the only entrance from the street after the second major renovation). Area A (c. 23.60 x 3.80 m) is two steps down from the street level and paved with a marble slab floor (Figs. 12–16a). This floor is quite different from the opus sectile floor of the main hall (D) and one is almost inclined to regard it as later than the second renovation. However, since the new entrance from the Via Severiana fits well with the overall monumentality of this renovation and there is no floor beneath the marble slab floor (which means that area A did not belong to the building in a strict sense before the floor was laid), it seems safe to assume that the owners chose different kinds of marble floors for the vestibule and the main hall respectively. The floor has been repaired on several occasions after the renovation.

Just beneath the last step to the left stands a 0.70 m-high marble well head with an inner diameter of 0.42 m (Fig. 16b). The depth of the well today is approximately 2.60 m measured from the top of the well head.

Below floor level and attached to the well on the right is a cistern. This was covered with a marble slab during the second major renovation and thus no longer in use during the period we are discussing here. The fact that it lost its function is probably connected with the history of the shallow basin in area B, which was probably covered with a mosaic floor during the same renovation. We shall return to this below.

On the eastern side of area A we find some structures in opus reticulatum mixtum of uncertain origin and purpose. However, they must have become a part of the synagogue in its final stage since they were connected with the building by a wall (opus vittatum mixtum b) with a new entrance from the

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123 Her vague description leads, e.g., Zevi to assume only two major phases, "La sinagoga di Ostia," 137
125 For plan restorations of the different phases of the building, see figs. 87, 88, 101, and 103. The letters used to identify the different areas are those introduced by White (cf. "Synagogue and Society," 56, fig. 3).
126 Floriani Squarciapino, "Seconda campagna," 300.
127 This is Floriani Squarciapino’s measurement ("Seconda campagna," 300); White has 23.50 m ("Synagogue and Society," 29).
128 This measure refers to the narrowest part of area A, just inside the entrance from the street. The maximum breadth of A is 7.5 m.
Via Severiana. Perhaps these rooms functioned as storerooms, but we have no supporting evidence. The final report from the excavations and/or further excavations will perhaps provide new information. It is clear, however, that during the final stage of the synagogue, area A functioned as the vestibule where water could be drawn for different purposes.

Turning to the west we find a rather long wall in *opus reticulatum mixtum* (some sections being repaired with bricks) with four doors, some of which are flanked by small benches.

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139 It has been suggested that the northern room contained a tank or a bath (Fortis, Jews and Synagogues, 124). However, there is no archaeological evidence that would indicate this.
Fig. 12. Area A during the first excavation campaign, looking north. (Photo: ArchSAO)

Fig. 13. Area A during the first excavation campaign, looking north. (Photo: ArchSAO)

Fig. 14. Area A, looking north. (Photo: A. Runesson.)

Fig. 15. Area A, looking south. (Photo: A. Runesson.)
made of opus vittatum mixtum b. The main door of the building (w. 3.80 m) leads into B (5.37 x 4.15 m). It is flanked by two smaller doors (w. 1.03 m and 1.15 m respectively) leading to B (5.85 x 3.37 m) and B (7.40 x 3.35 m). These two doors were cut through the opus reticulatum wall during the second major renovation and were not part of the earlier building. According to White, the renovation also included a widening of the door into B, making it the main entrance (before this renovation, he argues, the main door was from the north into C) but there is no evidence supporting this conjecture: the door was part of the original building and did not undergo any changes during the different renovations of the building. South of this tri-portal entry is one more door (w. 1.20 m), leading into area G. At an earlier stage, there were two doors in this wall, but the northern one was filled with tufa blocks during the second renovation.

There are some problems relating to the different floor levels and the doors. The door from A into B is on the same level as the one into B, but while the level of the floor is the same as the door in B, it is 0.60 m below the door post in B (the difference in floor level between A and B is 0.33 m). It would have been natural to assume another floor above the one in B, but there is no evidence of this. Since the creation of the two doors into B, and B was probably based on ideological-aesthetic reasons such as making the entrance area similar to those of other synagogues in the land of Israel and elsewhere, their placement therefore would not be for practical-architectonic reasons. The door into B determined the level and the one into B, had to follow. Obviously, there was no need to raise the floor in B, and thus the strange difference of levels between A and B was created.

According to Floriani Squarciapiino, the door between A and B could not have been used, since just beneath it (in B) there is a shallow basin. For some reason, this basin is not mentioned by White or included in his plan of the synagogue. However, contrary to Floriani Squarciapiino, I do not believe that it belonged to this late period for several reasons.

First, the pattern of the mosaic in B, which now ends less than two metres from the door to area A, suggests a continuation further east. The mosaic with the rosette ends in a black border on all sides while at the eastern side a new pattern seems to begin, with a white border. If it was only one motif the symmetry of the pattern would have been broken (see Figs. 18, 19a–b). This impression is confirmed by the fact that the western edge of the basin is partly covered by this white border (Figs. 19a–b).

Second, the drainage of the basin was from B to A (see

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133 There is some confusion regarding these two doors. The correct information seems to be found in Floriani Squarciapiino, “La sinagoga di Ostia,” 531. However, in her second article, “Recentemente scoperta,” 128, it seems as if both doors were blocked, and in her report from the second season both doors seem to be intact at this time in the history of the building (“Seconda campagna,” 300–301). This third variant is followed by White, “Synagogue and Society,” 31. However, this suggestion is strange, since the material blocking the northern door is still there to be seen.
135 For the plan of the synagogue, see “Synagogue and Society,” 56.
same time as the renovation of the synagogue was carried through and which are located near the synagogue on the northern side of the Via Severiana, were used not only for secular but also for ritual purposes, this would indicate that there was a shift regarding both the place for washings and the type; the new baths imply immersion of the whole body, while the basin in B₁ would have been used for sprinklings. If, at this time, one immersed rather than sprinkled oneself, the shallow basin in B₁ would be of little use.

It is thus likely that area B₁ was completely covered with a mosaic with two separate patterns. If this is correct, it means that the door from A was probably in use. This fact makes any hypothetical door between B₁ and C₁ unnecessary. What was this room used for? It is difficult to say, but perhaps a portable ark was kept here, after the second renovation but before the construction of the aedicula. If this was the case, a door between B₁ and C₁ would have been useful when carrying the ark into the main hall.

The other floors of area B are also mosaics (see above section 1.1.1 for a closer description), separated from each other by balustrades. The floor level of B₁ and B₂ is 0.38 m below that of B₃, which is at the same level as areas C and D. No reason for the raising of this floor has been suggested. (Figs. 20–22).

Between B₁ and G there is a wall in opus vittatum mixtum b which was added during the second major renovation (Fig. 24). Entering G (6.20 × 10.50 m) from B₁ we have to de-

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Fig. 18. The mosaic of area B₁. (Photo: ArchSAO)

Fig. 19a. Area B₁, looking north. (Photo: A. Runesson.)

Fig. 19b. The blocked door in the northern wall of B₁. (Photo: A. Runesson.)
ash and fragments of marble and terracotta and laid above the mosaic floor, must be later than the second renovation. (Fig. 24).

Floriani Squarciapino seems to have changed her mind regarding the dating of this floor. In her article in *Archaeology* she argues that the style of the mosaics in G shows that they are connected to those in area B (which were laid during the second major renovation). She continues, “Evidently, in some later stage of the synagogue’s existence were added the oven, the table and the supporting pillar.” This would mean that the transformation of the room into a kitchen was later than the second renovation, since the mosaics would be contemporary with the renovation. However, in *Illustrated London News*, she states that “the mosaics of the ‘room of the oven’” could perhaps be referred to an intermediary phase.

It is clear that the oven and the table are later than the mosaic floor since they stand on top of it (Fig. 25). The earthen floor is probably to be dated along with the oven, since it marks a change in the function of the room. The question is, then, whether the renovated synagogue had use for a kitchen or if the kitchen was a still later addition. To be able to answer this and many other questions, we have to take into account both of the earlier phases of the building, anticipating the results of the following sections (for details, see sections 3.2 and 3.3).

**Floor levels:** In the beginning there was only one floor (cocciopesto) covering areas G and B. We know that a second floor was laid during the first renovation in area B when it was divided into two smaller rooms. Parts of mosaics were found indicating that this was a mosaic floor. Beneath the floor of B₂ was found a cocciopesto floor in two layers. We thus have three layers of floors in both G and B₂, the second floor being mosaic in both areas. We also know that the third floor in B₁ was laid during the second renovation, at the same time as the wall with the coin from the reign of Maxentius was erected.

Now, the difference in level between B₁ and B₂ in the later building is 0.38 m. The difference between B₁ and G is 0.45 m, measured from the second floor of G and the third of B₁. This means that the second floor level of G would be 7 cm lower than the third in B₁. The second level of B₂ (i.e., the second layer of cocciopesto) would thus be on the same level as the second level of the mosaic floor in G. Or to turn it around: adding the third, earthen floor of G would result in the same level of floors in G and B₂, and this level we know through B₂ belongs to the second major renovation. The second floor levels of G, B₁ and B₂ would thus be about the

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142 Adding to the confusing state of thing, in “Seconda campagna,” 310, Floriani Squarciapino mentions that while the mosaics in G are connected with those in the synagogue hall (meaning area B) they may be dated to the time of the transformation of the building into a synagogue (!).
same, which would indicate that the second floor in G belongs to the intermediary phase and not the later building.

*Types of floors:* If the mosaic of G belonged to the intermediary phase we would end up with different floor types in the eastern part of the synagogue, G and B₁ having mosaic floors and B₁ and B₁ being paved with *cocciopesto.* Such a change in floors would indicate different functions. We shall return to this below. Suffice it to note here that B₁ seems to have been connected to G during this period and B₁ was a closed room containing a basin. This makes the floorings in these areas intelligible. The strange thing is that B₁, as the main entrance from A, did not have a more expensive floor than *cocciopesto.* I have no answer as to why this would have been the case.¹⁴⁷

*Overall layout.* We may also consider the overall layout of on the one hand area G during the first phase and on the other hand the building during the remaining two phases. The benches that were present in the earliest building in area G must have been removed during the first renovation for the following reasons: the benches reached out into area B₁. At the first renovation, B₁ was divided into two separate rooms by a wooden wall. This layout of area B₁ excludes the possibility of benches during this phase. It is thus clear that the first renovation meant the taking away of the benches. Further, there is no other floor between the floor of the first phase in which remains of the benches were found and the mosaic floor. The change of floors in G from *cocciopesto* to mosaic must thus have coincided with the disposal of the benches. The conclusion must be, then, that the mosaic floor of G was laid during the first renovation and not in a later period.

Regarding the layout of the building as a whole, the first major renovation meant the creating of several small rooms making the entry area less majestic than the original plan;

¹⁴⁷ A conjecture would be that mosaic floor in B₁ belonged to the intermediary phase and was retained during the second major renovation. If this was the case, the second *cocciopesto* floor in this area must have been laid before the first major renovation, replacing the first level of *cocciopesto* which might have been worn-out since this was the main entrance already from the beginning of the history of the building.
walls were erected dividing it into four sections. The second major renovation returned to a more open solution with only balustrades not more than one metre high dividing areas B₁–B₃, even if a new wall was erected to maintain area G as a separate room. The mosaic in G consists of several patterns which suggest partition walls within the area itself. If this was the case, these would have been made of wood, since no remains of such walls have been left in the floor. If this is correct, the layout of G would fit the intermediary period better than the later building.

Functions. It is more probable that a major renovation like the second, with the creation of several new rooms indicating that the community had new needs, would include the construction of the kitchen rather than the kitchen being an afterthought not related to the other changes made to the building. For reasons to which we shall return, the second renovation indicates a closer connection between its members and thus to a certain degree a dissociation from outsiders. In this situation a kitchen would further indicate that the community was self-supporting: the construction of a kitchen fits well with other indications about the status of the community at the time of the second major renovation. (Figs. 27–29).

Further, the broad benches in room E (see below) show that the room could have functioned as a triclinium, the size of the room indicating that this community had grown since the earlier periods. It is not unlikely that the creation of E was connected to the transformation of G into a kitchen, and E was one of the major achievements of the second renovation.

Despite the arguments in favour of the view that the mosaic of G was created during the intermediary phase, some important problems regarding the third floor nevertheless remain. Above we mentioned that this floor was probably laid at the same time as the new equipment was introduced into the room. However, nothing of this floor has been left on the

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149 Floriani Squarciapino, La sinagoga di Ostia, 22 (using “yard” as measure).
site and the excavator has not given a closer description of its relation to the oven and table. All that is said is that the floor "may have been connected with the foundation of the cooking area itself or with the erection of a marble-topped table found there."\(^{52}\) Does this mean that the table (the marble top: l. 2.32, w. 0.78–0.92 m) was introduced later than the oven ("the cooking area")? If this is meant, one might ask why this has not been mentioned in any of Floriani Squarciapino’s other articles. The lack of information reduces any conclusions on this point to more or less qualified guesses.

Since we do not know whether the oven was placed on the third floor or whether that floor was laid up to its borders, it could be the case that the oven and the other features of the second renovation were placed on the mosaic floor from the earlier period and this floor was not covered with the new floor until later (any time after the second renovation to the last years of the building’s existence). The lamps that were found in the earthen floor may help us to approximate its age since these lamps are dated from the second to fourth century (Figs. 30, 31).\(^{53}\) Thus, the third floor could not be younger than the second major renovation. If this dating of the lamps is correct (it is admittedly vague), it fits well with the assumption that the new type of floor indicated a new function for the room: it is to be connected with the construction of the oven (and the table, if they were introduced at the same time) during the second major renovation.

A final observation about room G is the level between the door and the floor (A/G). The southern door, the only one in this period, is 0.50 m above the mosaic floor. The level of the third floor would be about 0.10 m above that of the mosaic, which gives us a difference of 0.40 m between floor and door. An overall conclusion about the levels in areas A, B and G around 300 CE is thus that even at this late date, the

\(^{52}\) Floriani Squarciapino, "Synagogue," 200.

\(^{53}\) Fine, Sacred Realm, 159.
rooms of the eastern part of the synagogue, with the exception of B\textsubscript{r}, were considerably lower than the ground level and the Via Severiana; after having ascended two steps from the street into A it was necessary to go down an additional 0.30 m to reach the level of the floor.

3.1.2. Areas C and D
To reach area C one has to ascend one step (0.20 m)\textsuperscript{154} located between the first two columns of the four-column structure. C\textsubscript{r} became incorporated into B\textsubscript{r} during the second major renovation and is separated from C\textsubscript{l} by a wall in vitatum simplex, but connected with it by a door in the same wall (w. c. 1.15 m) (Fig. 32). This wall probably reached the ceiling, concealing the back of the aedicula from the centre between the columns in C\textsubscript{l}.\textsuperscript{155} Since it seems to presuppose the aedicula, it is probable that it was constructed at the same time as the latter was introduced into the building, that is, in a second phase of the second major renovation.

The fact that C\textsubscript{l} became B\textsubscript{r} and was separated from C\textsubscript{r} (4.30 x 3.20 m\textsuperscript{156}) makes the change of flooring quite natural, B\textsubscript{r} being a mosaic while C\textsubscript{r} had an opus sectile floor. The floor of C\textsubscript{l} (4.85 x 2.72 m) has not been preserved but even if the excavator does not tell us anything about it in any of her articles, it seems likely that it too was paved with opus sectile (Fig. 34). However, we cannot be sure since we have a mosaic beneath the blocked door in D\textsubscript{r}; it could be the case that there was a mosaic in C\textsubscript{l}, too.

The most interesting question regarding area C is what function the four Greek marble columns had (height 4.65–4.75 m).\textsuperscript{157} The height of the capitals is 0.67–0.72 m;\textsuperscript{158} Figs. 35–38). The construction is unique among ancient synagogues and indeed, it is unusual taking into account other ancient public secular or religious buildings as well.

In some of her articles Floriani Squarciapino mentions the existence of holes on the inner sides of the two inner (western) columns and she suggests that perhaps they indicate the existence of a barrier.\textsuperscript{159} As far as I know, no scholar except Zevi has observed this.\textsuperscript{160} Nevertheless, this observation is of crucial importance for our understanding of the design of the building. The holes appear at identical heights above the floor, 1.01 m, the right one being slightly larger than the left (4.0 x 4.5 cm and 3.0 x 2.5 cm respectively) (Fig. 39). The location of these holes suggests a rather low barrier. Further, in the floor there are two grooves (Fig. 40). The larger one runs from column to column, being deeper towards the centre. In the middle is a hole, perhaps suggesting that this hypothetical barrier consisted of two parts with an abutment on one of them; probably the left one since the distance from the hole in the left column is slightly longer (1.75 m, the distance to the right column being 1.71 m). This might indicate that the barrier could be opened, which would mean that it was a gate rather than a barrier.\textsuperscript{161} From this hole in the middle between the columns runs the shorter groove in north–south direction (w. about 1.5 cm, depth about 1.5 cm). Probably, this construction has something to do with the construction of the barrier but it is difficult to say in what way.

The evidence seem to suggest one of two things. We might be dealing with a barrier or a gate that could be opened

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\textsuperscript{154} Above we have noted that the difference in level between B\textsubscript{r} (which is of the same level as C) and B\textsubscript{l} is 0.38 m. The floor is thus sloping.

\textsuperscript{155} The wall should therefore not be seen as a continuation of the balustrade separating B\textsubscript{r} and B\textsubscript{l} as Floriani Squarciapino suggests, “Seconda campagna,” 302.

\textsuperscript{156} Floriani Squarciapino, “Seconda campagna,” 304.

\textsuperscript{157} Floriani Squarciapino, “La sinagoga di Ostia,” 336, n. 4.

\textsuperscript{158} Floriani Squarciapino, “La sinagoga di Ostia,” 336, n. 4. The capitals are now in the museum.


\textsuperscript{160} Zevi, “La sinagoga di Ostia,” 140.

\textsuperscript{161} Zevi suggests that it was a gate, made of wood or metal, “La sinagoga di Ostia,” 140.
in the middle. If it was a gate, however, one would expect to find a second hole further down on both columns or in the floor. No such holes exists. Perhaps the more likely answer is that there was a barrier between the two inner columns blocking passage. If this is correct, the following conclusions may be drawn: first, the four-column construction was not part of the main hall (D). This is so despite the fact that the level of the floor is identical between D and C, just as the pavement was the same. Second, for practical reasons it could not have functioned as an entrance. This explains the existence of the door in the partition wall on the north side of the four-column construction between C and D (Fig. 41). The metal remains which are located 1.71 m above floor level on the north side of the north-western column shows, according to Floriani Squarciapino, that the column func-

Fig. 35. The four columns of area C (Photo: ArchSAO)

Fig. 36. The four columns as they were found during the first excavation campaign. (Photo: ArchSAO)

Fig. 37. Columns and capitals of area C (Photo: ArchSAO)

Fig. 38. The south-western column of area C, as it was found by the excavators. (Photo: ArchSAO)

162 Contra White, Origins, vol. 2, 383, who states that “this ‘gateway’ provided the main access... into the hall of assembly (D).”

163 It is likely that this wall, which is an opus reticulatum construction and goes back to the earliest building, reached the ceiling separating the main hall from other areas in the same way as did the aedicula when it was introduced. Floriani Squarciapino calls it a screen wall and notes that a similar construction was found beneath the aedicula (“Seconda campagna,” 304; see also fig. 3 on the same page = Fig. 97 in the present study). Further she states that the height of these walls reached the capitals of the columns, closing off the innermost area of the synagogue (“Synagogue,” 196–197). It is thus incorrect to describe the wall between D and C as a balustrade (White, “Synagogue and Society,” 30).
tioned as a doorpost.\textsuperscript{164} Even if some questions remain regarding this proposal, most likely this was the place to enter the inner hall after the aedicula was built on the site of the previous partition wall (between B, and D).

The function of the columns is thus not easy to grasp. The structure could not have been a \textit{bimah}, since the columns are located outside the main hall (\textit{Figs. 42, 43}).\textsuperscript{165} In any case, regardless of their function, the location of these columns marks room D as the main hall of the edifice, separating it from the rest of the building but at the same time allowing worshippers to have an open view towards Jerusalem.

Was this layout created during the second major renovation or was it formed from an earlier design related to the columns? The answer depends on how we date the four columns of area C\textsubscript{2}. We shall return to this issue below when dealing with the earlier phases. Suffice it to note here that there is enough evidence to prove that the four columns were not introduced during the second major renovation but most likely belonged to the original building.

The main hall (room D, 15.00 × 12.50 m) where the liturgy took place was thus effectively cut off from the other rooms (\textit{Figs. 44–48}). Since the room was given an outer supporting wall during the second major renovation, it may be worth noting that the \textit{opus reticulatum mixtum wall} was just 1.5 Roman feet thick (c. 44 cm). The floor was paved with \textit{opus sectile} except beneath the blocked door to the Via Severiana. This part had a black and white mosaic with a Solomon’s knot pattern (\textit{Fig. 49}). In the room were found two columns whose height and material were different from the four columns discussed above (\textit{Fig. 44}).\textsuperscript{166} The difference in height between them and the four columns makes it difficult to reconstruct the ceiling of the room. Indeed, from the beginning their position has been something of a mystery.\textsuperscript{167} Zevi suggests that perhaps they flanked the podium by the western wall.\textsuperscript{168} This seems to me to be a likely solution. However, their position and function is one of the problems which remain to be solved.

The features preserved in D are limited to the podium (w.

\textsuperscript{164} Fioriani Squarciapino, “Synagogue.” 197.
\textsuperscript{165} As a curiosity, it may be observed that there is a striking similarity between the design of the four columns in the synagogue and the \textit{bimah} of later synagogues in eastern Europe. Note, e.g., the vignette to the different tracts in the Vilna edition of the Babylonian Talmud. This vignette shows four columns forming a rectangle on a podium with two steps. The columns ends in low pillars. Between the two inner columns is a barrier.
\textsuperscript{166} See above, section 1.1.1. It is not correct to say, as White does, that the two columns were “of the same type as those in C,” (“Synagogue and Society,” 30).
\textsuperscript{168} Zevi, “La sinagoga di Ostia,” 142.
6.20, l. 1.25, h. 0.79 m\(^{169}\)) at the slightly curved western wall, which most likely was the bimah from which the Torah was read, and the Torah aedicula located at the south-eastern part of the room (Figs. 51, 52, 54), replacing the earlier partition wall. No benches existed in the room during this period.

Much attention has been paid to the aedicula in the studies about the synagogue (Figs. 53–61). The most complete description and interpretation of it is presented by Fine and Della Pergola.\(^{170}\) The apse measures 3.62 m in width and the two small marble columns with composite capitals have a height of 3.87 m. The architraves reaching out to the capitals of the columns measure 1.82 × 0.31 m. On each of the corbels of these architraves was carved a menorah with a shofar on the right and a lulav and an etrog on the left (Figs. 57–59). The menoroth are depicted as standing on three simple feet and they are decorated with designs imitating gems. The reliefs preserve traces of gilding. On the inner side of each of the architraves is a notch (c. 0.18 m deep and 0.26 m wide), which carried a transverse member which in turn most likely supported a pediment. At 0.75 m from the back of the apse is a low wall which may have supported a “cupboard-like

\(^{169}\) Floriani Squarciapino, “La sinagoga di Ostia,” 328.

\(^{170}\) Fine and Della Pergola, “Torah Shrine,” 50–57. Pages 42–50 are a summary of the material on the synagogue as a whole, but unfortunately this part of their article displays several errors and misunderstandings. See also the description of the aedicula given by the excavator as summarised above in section 1.1.1.
structure for storing the sacred scrolls. The podium on which the aedicula stands (0.92 m high) was enlarged at one time during its history. The aedicula is approached by four steps (w. 1.49 m) which had two small niches on either side of them (Figs. 56, 61).

Kraabel has presented some doubts regarding the excavator’s dating of the aedicula in a second phase of the third-century renovation, arguing that it was probably added directly during the first phase of this renovation. The reason for this earlier dating of the aedicula is a train of thought involving the Mindius Faustus inscription and the elimination of a hypothetical Torah shrine in the fourth-century building before the aedicula was constructed. However, as we shall see below in section 5.2.1 we should be careful using the Mindius Faustus inscription at all in the discussion about the features of our synagogue. Indeed, one needs only to examine the extant archaeological material. Let us look at the evidence.

First we must consider the relation between the aedicula and the four-column construction. White agrees with the excavator, “The aedicula is clearly secondary to the column and its footing.” There can be no doubt about this since the aedicula is fitted to the column. If, then, the columns and the aedicula were introduced in the fourth century, as White believes, it must be assumed that the aedicula was a later addition and not part of the first phase of the second renovation. Thus, he claims that in relation to the second major renovation, “The full Torah aedicula was probably an afterthought, since it blocked the third aisle (B/C,) of the tri-portal entry.” However, as we shall see below (section 3.2), the columns were not a part of the second renovation but belonged to the original building. Thus, they cannot be used to prove a later date of the aedicula. The second argument, that the Torah shrine blocked the third aisle, is a weak one since, as Kraabel argues, it is not impossible that such a solution could have been used. As I understand it, there is only one piece of evidence that can solve the problem: beneath the podium of the aedicula was found the mosaic floor of area B/C., This mosaic belongs to the second major renovation and thus the aedicula must be of a later date.

The conclusion is, then, that the major renovation in the beginning of the fourth century did not include the aedicula. This means that there was a continuity in the layout of D during the earlier phases and the first period after the second major renovation regarding the location of the Torah shrine; we have no evidence of an earlier aedicula at the same location. There could not have been such a structure since the present aedicula meant the destruction of a partition wall of the same kind as the one on the other side of the columns (described above). Thus there is no “natural” place for a Torah shrine in D except on top of the podium by the western wall.

Regarding the benches, it may be noted that the fact that they were removed during the second major renovation could indicate a change in liturgical praxis. The aedicula was a new invention, probably not before the middle of the

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171 Fine and Della Pergola, “Torah Shrine.” 54. See also the reconstruction on 53, fig. 9 (as Fig. 61 in the present study).
177 Of course, it could also be the case that other benches of perishable material were introduced instead, but we have no evidence of this.

Fig. 45. The main hall (D), looking west. (Photo: ArchSAO)

Fig. 46. The main building and its supporting walls around area D. Building K visible to the right, the Via Severiana in the foreground. (Photo: A. Runesson.)
Fig. 47. The main hall and its restored northern wall; looking northeast. (Photo: ArchSAO)

Fig. 48. The main hall (D), looking northeast. (Photo: ArchSAO)
fourth century. This might imply further changes regarding the liturgy.

Finally we shall also note that the aedicula was later enlarged to incorporate the two small columns. This shows that the community was still alive and well as late as the late fourth century.

3.1.3. Areas F and E

Between areas B/C and F was a door (w. 1.75 m) in the *opus reticulatum* wall. Room F (2.73–3.23 × 10.50 m) was created during the second renovation by erecting *opus vittatum mixtum* walls; one blocking the door between F and H and thus connecting the *opus reticulatum* wall which became the southern wall of E with the southern wall of G, and one separating F from E (Fig. 62). The room contains a broad bench (1.02–1.30 × 3.70 m) set against the eastern wall and three small sections, probably some kind of storage rooms, placed after one another from the southern wall (Figs. 63, 65). Further, at the north-eastern side there is a cistern, which originally was used to collect water. Later a door was constructed in its northern side making such use impossible (Fig. 64). The floor was paved with *cocciopesto*.

Area F is difficult to interpret. Most often it is described as little more than a corridor between B and E.

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suggests that it could have been used as a *genizah*, where Torah scrolls which had been taken out of use were stored. However, while the innermost “rooms” could have functioned as storage space, the rest of the features of this room seem to suggest that we are dealing with a working area: the bench, the water basin (later turned into a cupboard) and the *cocciopesto* floor (the only floor in this material during this phase), which by this time was a working floor at Ostia. Perhaps it was related to room E (Fig. 66) which probably, among other purposes, functioned as a hostel.

Area E (length of northern wall: 14.10; eastern wall: 9.35; southern wall: 12.80; western wall: 9.90) is the second largest room in the complex and was reached through a door either from F (w. 1.20) or from J (w. 1.10) (Figs. 67, 68). It was created during the second major renovation by connecting the already existing *opus reticulatum mixtum* wall in the south with the curved western wall of D by an *opus vittatum mixtum* b wall (Fig. 66). The most important feature of this room is of course the benches along the southern and western walls. Today, the remains of these benches measure 1.26 m in depth. The height varies from 0.50 to 0.68 m. Originally they were probably 1.93 m in depth. The floor in this room is paved with a mosaic of which very little remains. It has a stylised braid motif which is similar to those of the baths of the Marciana outside the Porta Marina (see Fig. 67).

Regarding the function(s) of room E, several suggestions have been made. In his study of the social origins of Christian architecture, White claims the common view to be that it served as a dining room or hostel. However, in his most recent study in *HTR*, he prefers either a dining room or a social hall. Floriani Squarciapino admits the uncertainty of the matter in her article in *Archaeology* and gives three alternatives: a meeting place (cf. White’s social hall), or a school for the teaching of Torah, or a hostel. If it was a

183 Floriani Squarciapino has 13.90 × 10.18 m (“Seconda campagna,” 308).
184 White, “Synagogue and Society,” 31 states that they were 1.83, but this is probably a misunderstanding of the Seconda campagna article by Floriani Squarciapino. There is some confusion about the exact measurements of these benches and the benches in the original layout of area G. See below, section 3.3.
Fig. 55 (above). The aedicula. (Photo: ArchSAO) – Fig. 56 (right). The aedicula. (Photo: ArchSAO)

Fig. 57. The architraves of the aedicula. (Photo: ArchSAO)

Fig. 58. The menorah with a lulav and an etrog on the left and the shofar on the right. Relief on the corbel of the left architrave. (Photo: ArchSAO)

Fig. 59. The menorah with a lulav and an etrog on the left and the shofar on the right. Relief on the corbel of the right architrave. (Photo: ArchSAO)

hostel, it would, as Floriani Squarciapino points out, have a parallel in the Theodotos inscription from Jerusalem, which mentions a hostel adjacent to the synagogue built by Theodotos and his relatives. Shanks argues that the benches may have been used as beds, giving the room the function of a hostel, but suggests at the same time that it could also have been used as a meeting place, a beit midrash or school room where the Torah was taught. Fortis says that the law school is the correct guess, and Krinsky adds another alternative: the room could have served as a combined study and court room.

188 Shanks, Judaism, 168.
189 Fortis, Jews and Synagogues, 128.
190 Krinsky, Synagogues, 361.
As Floriani Squarciapino points out, the size of the benches makes one think of a triclinium.\textsuperscript{191} Since there were benches of nearly the same size in the original building in area G which probably functioned as a triclinium (see below section 3.3), and since it is likely that the Jewish congregation making the second renovation was considerably larger than that of the earlier phases (see section 5.2.1), it seems probable that room E functioned as a dining and social hall. However, perhaps it is best not to argue for just one function. It may well be that the room also served as a hostel for travellers and visitors. The other rooms in the building would match such a use; we have a kitchen and there is water for every purpose.

\textsuperscript{191} Floriani Squarciapino, "Ancient Synagogue," 469
Fig. 64. The former cistern in area F, transformed into a cupboard; detail. (Photo: O. Brandt.)

Fig. 65. Area F, looking north. (Photo: ArchSAO)

Fig. 66. Areas F and E, looking west. (Photo: A. Runesson.)
Fig. 67. The wall(s) between areas F and E, looking north. (Photo: A. Runesson.)

Fig. 68. Area E, looking east. (Photo: ArchSAO)

Fig. 69. The southern wall of area E seen from area H, looking west. Area K in the background. (Photo: A. Runesson.)
3.1.4. Areas H and K

Nothing much can be said of area H (Fig. 71). The southern side of these walls, i.e. their inner walls, was made in opus reticulatum, while the other sides were made of bricks. The south-western wall is opus latericiun all through. The structure shows us at least that there was more building activity south of the synagogue, but it would require further excavations to determine its nature. However, even if the evidence does not allow us to say much, it is likely that H belonged to the synagogue in one way or the other, since the sea would prevent any further building activities to the south.

The situation with building K (5.5–4.5 × 15 m, excluding the nymphaeum; Figs. 72–81) is quite different. This area was excavated after the completion of the work on the synagogue. As far as I know, White is the only one who discusses K in relation to the synagogue. However, he is using it only as comparative material for the reconstruction of the synagogue building in its first phase. The oldest part of K is built in opus reticulatum mixtum, and its walls are 1.5 Roman feet thick just like the walls of the synagogue (Fig. 73).

It was a two-storey building and the main entrance is from the north, one step down. The entrance area (K1) has a floor paved with mosaics (Fig. 75). Having entered the house, the staircase is on the right across the vestibule (Figs. 76, 77). The building seems to have been a private house, lavishly outfitted, at least during the time we are concerned with here.

On the basis of the location of the building in relation to the synagogue, the level of its floor (beneath the level of Via Severiana), the style of the mosaic at the entrance area, and the fact that its southern wall together with the southern wall of E has a door at the southern end of I, it seems likely that K belonged to the synagogue in some way. It is not unlikely that originally it was the house of a guild official (the synagogue being comparable to the house of a religious guild at that time, see below section 5.3), and that it continued to be the house of a prominent member of the con-

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192 It should be noted that no publication of this structure has yet appeared.
3.2. The Intermediary Period

Before the second major renovation, the building proper consisted of areas B, G, C and D. While it is difficult to say what areas E and F were at this time, these parts, just like areas A and K, were connected to the building in their own ways, being part of the overall plan of the community centre.

Fig. 72. Building K, looking south. Note the relation between the curved western wall of the main building to the left, separated from K by alleyway J, and the Via Severiana in the foreground. (Photo: A. Runesson.)

Fig. 73. The eastern wall of building K, looking north. (Photo: A. Runesson.)

Fig. 74. The entrance area of building K (K₁), most likely added in the fourth century. (Photo: A. Runesson.)

gregation responsible for the community and its centre (see below about the archisynagogos Plotius Fortunatus, section 5.3.1).

White does not mention the nymphaeum in K₁. This construction is the result of a renovation of the southernmost room of K (Figs. 82, 83, 87, 103). These changes to the building, which meant that the large room was divided in two parts on a north–south axis, were probably carried out during the first major renovation. No further changes to the room seem to have been made after this time. The overall measures are 5.95 x 1.95 m, the front facing east-southeast. It is divided into three parts, all paved with plaster. The centre (l. 1.70 m) has a small semi-circular basin with a radius of 0.83 m (Fig. 84). Below to the right is a drainage hole. To the left and right are two basins, or cisterns, with vaulted ceilings on top of which there seems to have been stairs (Figs. 85, 86).

If this water installation was more than decoration, it could have been used for ritual purposes. In that case, any washing was most likely restricted to the washing of hands, using the semi-circular basin in the centre of the construction.
Fig. 76. Building K: the staircase. (Photo: A. Runesson.)

Fig. 77. Area K₁, looking north. (Photo: A. Runesson.)

Fig. 78. Area K₃, the eastern wall. (Photo: A. Runesson.)

Fig. 79. Area K₃, the southern wall. (Photo: A. Runesson.)

Fig. 81. Area K₄, looking south. The nymphaeum in the background. (Photo: A. Runesson.)

Fig. 80 (left). Area K₄, looking north. (Photo: A. Runesson.)
3.2.1. Areas A, B and G

Before the second major renovation there was no floor in area A. Probably it was an alley since the structure east of A was present during all of the building’s phases. The alley was probably connected to the building since the structure to the east, at least the northern room which had one door facing the edifice, belonged to the complex (and was later incorporated into the building when area A was converted into a vestibule). Further, the main entrance was from the east into B, and the well and cistern stood to the right of this entrance.

(Fig. 89). Beneath the marble well head of the later period are the remains of an earlier well that goes back to the first building.  

The cistern (which was covered during the second major renovation) is attached to this well (Figs. 89, 91). Its floor slopes down towards the well from the west, the depth being 0.49 and 0.68 m on the western and eastern sides respectively. The northern side of the basin is slightly longer than

the southern, 1.14 and 1.06 m respectively, while the shortest distance between the western side and the well is only 1.02 m (Fig. 90). The bottom of the cistern is paved with cocciopesto. It is probable that the well and cistern was related to the basin in B1, which was built during the first renovation, but since the basin in B1 was constructed later than the well and cistern the latter two were independent of the former. We shall return to this shortly.

The main door into the building was located in B2 (this was the only door in area B facing east during this period). This must have been the case since the size of the door is more than one meter wider than the second largest doors in the building (B1 north and C1). Further, it matches the east-west orientation of the building (see above section 2.2). We cannot accept the suggestion by White that the main entrance was from the north into C1 before the second renovation, even if this door existed during the intermediary phase as did the door from the north into the main hall.

The other two doors of the eastern side were from A into area G. We have already discussed these doors above. Both doors were original to the building, but while the southern one remained unchanged, the northern door opening was partially bricked up, making it slightly narrower than it was originally (w. originally 1.20 m; now c. 0.90 m) (Fig. 92). Further, G had one door into area F. Since it was necessary to deal with the mosaic floor of G already above when trying to establish what kind of floor there was during the later period, we shall only repeat the conclusion: the mosaic of area G was laid during the first major renovation. It has been sug-

gested that the different patterns in the mosaics of this room indicate that there were wooden walls dividing the area into smaller sections. The existence of more than one door into this room may speak in favour of this view.

Area B2, in which was found remains of an earlier mosaic beneath the one from the second renovation, was probably connected to G during the intermediary phase. Beneath the balustrade separating B2 from B1 was found an earlier wall, which probably reached the ceiling. Another wall closed off the area from C1, isolating B2 from the entrance area, the south-eastern column of C being used as the north-western corner of the room. On these walls, just as on the similar partition wall separating area B1 from B2, was found remains of paintings depicting bunches of flowers and big vases (Fig. 93). Further, there was clear evidence of a wooden partition wall built in a north-south direction, dividing B2 into two rooms (Fig. 94). No doors existed from B1 into B2, C1 or A during this phase. This leaves only one possible way left to enter B1, and that is through G. Unfortunately, the relation between B1 and G is not visible on the published photograph of this area from the second campaign, and the excavator does not describe it in any of her articles. It seems likely, however, that there was a wall between G and B1 below the later wall which can be seen today. If this is correct, there must have been a door in this wall connecting the rooms, making access to B1, with its two rooms possible. Adding to this the fact that both rooms had mosaic floors, it seems clear that these areas belonged together during this period.

The functions of the rooms, however, are very difficult to determine. The flooring suggests that this was not a working area. Perhaps at least B2 could have functioned as a storage room. Since it is likely that the building was a synagogue during this period (see below section 5.2), a guess would be that the innermost space could have been a geniza, a storage room for Torah scrolls no longer in use. Perhaps a portable ark was kept in one of the sections in G, being brought into D via area A and B2 or via area F and C. If this was the place where the Torah scrolls were kept, perhaps one of the sections in G functioned as a study room, benches being made of wood which left no remains. Of course, this is just speculation, and no answer can be given unless further findings throw new light on these areas.

The main entrance (B2) leading up to the four columns seems to have been paved with cocciopesto. Floriani Squarciapino reports that two layers of this material were found under the mosaic of the second renovation, which could

195 White’s plan has two doors, but the southern one is not a blocked door but an opus mixtum panel.
197 Floriani Squarciapino, “Seconda campagna,” 312; eadem, “Ancient Synagogue,” 470 and fig. 16 on 471 (= Fig. 93 in the present study).
198 See the photograph in Floriani Squarciapino, “Seconda campagna,” 312 (= Fig. 94 in the present study).
Fig. 87. The synagogue: reconstruction of the fourth century complex after the second major renovation. (A. Runesson.)
Fig. 88. The synagogue: reconstruction of the fourth century complex after the introduction of the aedicula. (A. Runesson.)
Fig. 89. The original well and cistern in area A, looking north. (Photo: ArchSAO)

Fig. 90. The cistern in area A shown in section, looking north. (A. Runesson.)

Fig. 91. The well and cistern of area A. The well head is from the fourth century. (Photo: ArchSAO)

Fig. 92. The northern door between areas G and A, looking east. (Photo: A. Runesson.)

more likely that we have three floor levels in areas G, B₁, and B₂; during this phase the latter was the least expensive of them.

Turning now to area B₁, we find that during the intermediary phase this was a separate room like B₂; walls were erected during the first renovation between B₁/B₂ and B₁/C₁. No inner doors seem to have existed into this room, nor was there a door from area A. The only access to B₁ was from the north, through a rather wide door (2.40 m). This door, which was blocked during the second major renovation when the small door facing east was cut through the opus reticulatum wall, was most likely created during the first major renovation; before there would have been no need for it, since there were no division walls in areas G/B and the door into C₁ from the north was original.

The floor in B₁ was paved with cocciopesto and this was also the pavement of the shallow basin (Fig. 95).²⁰³ Above we have argued that it was covered by a mosaic during the second renovation. Further, it is probable that it did not exist in the original building.²⁰⁴ Indeed, it would be strange to find a basin in this corner in a room (G/B) with no separating walls.²⁰⁵ The erection of the walls made B₁ a separate room,

²⁰⁴ Noy, JIWE, vol. 1, 23.
²⁰⁵ Cf. Floriani Squarciapino, “La sinagoga di Ostia,” 334, who argues that the area where the basin is located most likely would have been separated from the rest of the hall. She compares it with the location of the ritual baths in the synagogues of Ma’on and Beth
Fig. 93. A painted wall between areas B₁ and B₂, dating to the intermediary phase. (Photo: ArchSAO)

Fig. 94. Area B₁, after the later mosaic had been removed. Note the remains of a partition wall dividing the area into two rooms. (Photo: ArchSAO)

Fig. 95. The basin in B₁, looking east. (Photo: ArchSAO)
which indicates that a basin of this kind needed to be isolated from the other areas. Thus we may conclude that the basin belonged to the intermediary phase only.

Was the basin used for ritual purposes as the excavator (and others) suggests? This is likely since there are few other uses for a basin like this in a synagogue. Further, the form of the basin tells us something about how these ablutions were performed. Unfortunately, the excavator has not left any closer description or photograph showing the whole basin. The basin is now filled in and its depth cannot be measured. However, we can approximate the following measurements. The basin was rectangular and had an overall size of c. 2.00 x 2.80 m. Regarding its depth, a guess from the picture published in Bollettino d’arte would be that it was about 0.40 m. If these measures are assumed, the basin would contain about 2240 litres of water. This is more than four times as much as is required of a miqweh according to the rabbis. However, the miqwaath of the Jewish homeland looked very different: they were narrow and deep since the method of washing was immersion of the whole body. It is obvious that the basin in B_1 would not have been built the way it was if one wanted to follow the customs of the land of Israel, which most likely originated from the Hasmoneans and was later codified by the rabbis. Presumably, the method of washing was not the same and perhaps even the motivation for ritual ablutions was different in the Diaspora compared to the home land.

The basin drained out to area A, not far from the cistern. This is one more detail invalidating the connection with the miqwaath of Israel which did not have any such arrangements. Further, according to the rabbis, the miqweh should be filled with water that had not been drawn from a well and carried in buckets or the like to the bath: the water should flow naturally into the basin. It is true that exceptions were made for the bathing pools of the gentiles outside Israel, but we are dealing with a basin in a Jewish building, constructed by Jews. Most likely, our basin was filled with water from the well in A, carried in buckets into B_1 via the door from the north. The conclusion must be that we are dealing with a ritual bath built in a synagogue and used in this context in a way different from the miqwaath of the land of Israel.

3.2.2. Areas C and D

Turning to area C, we shall first discuss the dating of the four columns. The question is whether the four-column construction was a creation of the fourth century or if the columns also existed during the earlier phases of the synagogue. White has recently claimed that they were introduced in the building during what he calls “the major renovation project,” taking place in the late third or early fourth century. This renovation is the same as we have chosen to call the second major renovation and have dated to the early fourth century. The idea of the columns as younger than the original building may be seen as a development of Kraabel’s doubts that such a “temple-like” construction could have belonged to a first century synagogue. White argues that the second major renovation meant a monumentatisation of the building, raising the ceiling through a supposed second storey existing during the previous phases. However, if the columns can be shown to have been a part of the building before the second major renovation, the hypothesis about the second storey is proved wrong.

From the beginning, Floriani Squarciapino’s view has been that the columns were present already in the first building. Her main argument has been that the foundations beneath the columns belong to the first structure (Fig. 96). This has been refuted by White with a single comment, “These foundations might have been original or they could have been dug down to lower levels for support.” In his HTR article from 1997 he treats the four columns together

She’arim and further states that the baths could also be located outside the synagogue, in an open yard or an adjacent room. Only the synagogue in Priene has a basin for ablutions in the hall to the right of the Torah niche. However, regarding the basin in B_1, she does not discuss its dating or the change in the layout of the room.


See also my “Water and Worship.”

The photograph that according to its caption shows the basin really shows only a little portion of one of its corners: see “La sinagoga di Ostia,” 330, fig. 6. Cf. Fig. 95 in the present study.

Floriani Squarciapino, “La sinagoga di Ostia,” 330, fig. 6 (= Fig. 95 in the present study).

The minimum amount of water should be 40 seah (m. Miqv. 1:4). The measurement is based on the calculation that 1 seah equals 12.148 litres (Blackman, Mishnayoth, vol. I, 18).

Cf. m. Miqv. 7:7 where it is suggested what to do if the ritual bath was too shallow in order to deepen it, making immersion possible.

See my “Water and Worship.”

See Fig. 91.

m. Miqv. 8:1: “The bathing pools of the Gentiles outside the Land are valid [as ritual baths] for such as have experienced a pollution, even if they have been filled by swape-and-bucket (ד”כ פיקד .)”


Floriani Squarciapino, “Synagogue,” 201. See also the photograph on 202 (= Fig. 96 in the present study).

with the two found in area D, despite the difference between them in height and material and ignoring the fact that no foundations for the two shorter columns were found in the building. He states, "These columns do not seem to have been part of the original form of the building...but a later addition." It is possible that the two columns found in D were a later addition, perhaps being introduced as supporting columns at the same time as the supporting wall in opus latericium was built around the main hall during the second renovation, or, more likely, as decorative elements on each side of the podium as Zevi suggests (see above section 1.1.2). The four columns, on the other hand, could not belong to this late phase for the following reasons.

First, White's explaining away of the foundations of the columns is not convincing. The fact alone that the columns were moved at one stage (which Floriani Squarciapiuno states in her report from the second season and later articles) shows that they must have existed over at least two periods with a slightly different layout of the building. Second, this rearrangement of the columns, which meant moving them further apart in a north-south direction, was most likely not part of the second renovation as Floriani Squarciapiuno suggests, but the first. This is because the two partition walls dividing area B into three sections reach the bases of the first pair of columns just as the balustrades do which were constructed during the second renovation on top of the remains of these walls. A rearrangement which meant the moving of these columns further apart would thus destroy the symmetry of the entry area's architecture in a way which is not likely to have occurred. No further adjustment of the four-column construction was thus necessary in the second major renovation, but could well have been prompted by the erecting of the walls in area B during the first.

To this we may add that Zevi dates the capitals of the columns to the first half of the second century. Even if he does not note the connection (since he does not reckon with a first major renovation), this date matches our reconstruction of the first renovation. It is likely, then, that the first major renovation included a renovation of the columns, which themselves belonged to the first-century building. This renovation of the columns was probably performed at the same time as they were adjusted to fit the new layout of the building.

This means that no second storey could have existed in areas B, C and D in any of the buildings phases. There are more problems associated with White's two-storey theory and we shall return to discuss these in relation to other issues.

Area C, was separated from area B and D by partition walls (see Fig. 97), as was area C, (c. 4.65 m x 3.35 m), now separate from B. A rather large door (w. 2.37 m) led into C, from the north but one could also enter area C from the opposite side from area F. Further, there were doors opening onto D from the partition walls between D and C, and C, respectively.

Now the problem is whether these two doors were the place to enter D from within the building, or if the main entrance was through C, during this phase: i.e., if the barrier between the inner columns was a later addition. It is very difficult to settle this question since only the excavator and her team has studied the earlier floor levels. In its final stage, there were clear indications of a barrier, or perhaps gate, in the floor. We have no information about similar indications in the floor beneath the later one; indeed we do not have any information even about what kind of floor it was. Floriani Squarciapiuno has suggested that the walls between the foundations of the columns could be associated with the stability of the construction or they could indicate that there were barriers between not only the inner (western) pair of columns but also the outer (eastern). However, she refrained from any positive conclusion, since the remains had not been analysed thoroughly enough at the time of writing.

The doors on both sides of the inner pair of columns together with the knowledge we have of the barrier of the later period seem to indicate that there was a barrier also before the second renovation. However, another solution is also worth mentioning, which takes into account the layout of areas G and B as well as area A in the later building.

As Floriani Squarciapiuno has noted, the two doors on either side of the inner pair of columns match the later doors between B/B and A. If there was no barrier between the columns, this would mean that we have the same pattern of one main entrance and two flanking doors into the main hall (D) during the earlier phases as we see in the entrance from the vestibule (A) into area B after the second renovation. Now the interesting thing is that when this construction with three doors into D was made in the original building, there were no divisions between G and B. This made the area in

Fig. 97. The remains of a partition wall separating area C, from area D. The wall, found beneath the later aedicula, was original to the building. (Photo: ArchSAO)

220 White, "Synagogue and Society," 34.
222 Floriani Squarciapiuno, "Synagogue," 201, 203.
223 Zevi, "La sinagoga di Ostia," 140.
224 See also below, section 4.2.
front of the first pair of columns similar to the vestibule of the latest building.\textsuperscript{22} The result according to this train of thought is that the vestibule in both cases (G/B and A respectively) leads up to an entrance area with three doors.

If this is correct we would have found a solution for the rather strange position of the columns during the earlier phases, since then they would mark the entrance in a rather natural way. There are problems though. The original layout of area G/B included benches and the room was most likely a triclinium (see below, section 3.3). Further, this theory leaves out the fact that in the intermediary phase, the layout of G/B was very different both from that of the original building and from that of the later building. From the first renovation and onwards there were partition walls dividing area B and G into separate parts (see above). This architecture can hardly be compared to a vestibule. Of course, this does not say anything directly about a barrier between the inner columns, but it means that the four-column construction cannot be as easily compared to an entrance area during the middle period as would otherwise be the case.

The conclusion is then that we do not know the exact design of the four-column construction before the second renovation. However, due to the continuity of the location of the columns and the walls by their southern and northern sides it is possible that there was some kind of barrier between the inner pair of columns.

As we have already mentioned, we have no information about the pavement of the floors of area C. It is difficult to decide whether the excavator speaks of both areas B and C when mentioning the two layers of cocciopesto beneath which no other floor exists, only sand.\textsuperscript{24} From what follows after this statement it seems as if C is not included. However, since no other information is given, perhaps one may guess that C2 had a cocciopesto floor just like B2; if it had been paved with mosaic, it would surely have been mentioned. If this is true, the strange fact remains that an entrance area of such monumental character had this kind of floor at this point in time, while a side room (G/B3) was paved with mosaic. Further, it seems as if we will have to settle for a cocciopesto floor in areas C1 and C3 as well, both of which are entrance areas, but this is also just a conjecture.

Before we turn to the main hall, we must return to White’s two-storey theory. His main argument for this theory is what he calls Floriani Squarciapiino’s description of a “low ‘bench’ construction (1.93 m wide) of an earlier masonry type (presumably meaning opus recticulatum) beneath the later aedicula platform (and now no longer visible for inspection).”\textsuperscript{23} Further he states that the excavator “speculated that this was an earlier Torah shrine, which she linked to the Mindi(u) Faustus inscription.”\textsuperscript{23} However, White interprets this “bench construction” to be the remains of a staircase leading to a second floor. He compares our building with edifice K, which is built with the same technique and has such a staircase on the right across the vestibule from the main door from the north. This proposed similarity between K and the synagogue is also one of the reasons for White to understand the main door to the edifice before the second major renovation to be through C1. His conclusion is that our building was an insula similar to other Ostian insulae and he conjectures that it is “plausible that B could have served as a street-front shop functionally segregated from other areas of the building.”\textsuperscript{22} Taking into account the other construction work around the synagogue, he states, “The adjacent edifices in areas H, J, and K...seem to be integral with the construction of the first edifice and contribute materially to an improved understanding of its character as a typical Ostian insula complex.”\textsuperscript{21}

There are several problems with this reconstruction. Before dealing with these, it should be noted that White is speaking here of the original building, i.e., the phase before the one discussed under this heading. Therefore, in the next section we shall return to White’s suggestion regarding the function of the original building. Before what he calls “the major renovation project” (phase 3) and after the first phase of the building, White understands the edifice to be a synagogue, but still having two stories.\textsuperscript{21} This is about the same period as our intermediary phase and we shall thus discuss the archaeological evidence for his theory here.

First, I believe White to be correct in connecting the surrounding structures with the synagogue (cf. Figs. 98, 99). However, the relation between them is not at all as clear as he suggests; we shall return to this below. Second, edifice K is interesting since it is the only building west of the synagogue and it seems reasonable to assume a connection between the buildings. However, in my opinion it is methodologically incorrect to compare their functions since K has a very different architecture, is much smaller and, most likely was a private house. Since the staircase is preserved, it is clear that K had two stories (Fig. 76).

Further, the external walls of this small edifice are 1.5 Roman feet thick, which is enough to support two stories. The walls of the synagogue are also 1.5 Roman feet. However, these walls are thin for such a large building: they could hardly have upheld two stories in a building with rooms of this size and form. It is thus not surprising that there are no indications of a second storey in any of its walls. Regarding the entrance from the north, there might have been a similarity between the buildings if it were not for the fact that it is difficult to imagine that the very large door from A into B1 was not the main entrance to the synagogue. The comparison between K and the main building, however, rests first and foremost on the location of the staircase. If there was a staircase, a second storey would be hard to discount; if there was no staircase, the whole theory about the supposed insula and its functions would fall. Thus, thirdly it must be stated that we have no evidence that a staircase in B2/C1 ever existed. Unfortunately, the whole theory of a staircase rests on a mis-

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\textsuperscript{22} Floriani Squarciapiino, “Synagogue,” 201. The benches present in G at this time are replaced by those in E in the later building according to the excavator; the function of G and B in the first phase is transferred to area A and E in the last phase.

\textsuperscript{23} Floriani Squarciapiino, “Seconda campagna,” 312.


\textsuperscript{21} White, “Synagogue and Society,” 33.

\textsuperscript{22} White, “Synagogue and Society,” 33.

\textsuperscript{23} White, “Synagogue and Society,” 33.

\textsuperscript{24} White, “Synagogue and Society,” 36.
and the later benches of area E. Perhaps White has confused
the bench in G with what he calls the low bench construction,
since these benches reaches out into area B. However, this
is discussed by Floriani Squarciapino on page 311 in "La si-
nagoga di Ostia: Seconda campagna di scavo." On the same
page it is stated that these benches are 1.83 m wide. Thus
White’s measurement of his bench construction (1.93 m)
cannot have come from this article. Seeing that the excavator
gives another measurement for the benches in G in her article
in Archaeology (1.93 m),238 which is exactly the same as the
one stated by White, perhaps these benches are the ones con-
fusing the situation. This is the only such measure given by
Floriani Squarciapino in any of her articles on the syna-
gogue. There are, however, more problems.

White states that this bench construction was found be-
neath the later aedicula. I cannot find an explanation for this
comment. The only things found when analysing the remains
beneath the aedicula recorded by the excavator are the earlier
partition wall separating D from B/C,237 and the mosaic
floor on top of which the aedicula was built.238 It cannot be
the case that White has confused the partition wall with the
remains of a staircase; this is made clear by his measure-
ments and the designation “bench.” The strangest state-
ment of all, however, is that Floriani Squarciapino speculated
that this “bench construction” was the Torah shrine of Mindius
Faustus. The excavator has said nothing about any archae-
ological remains of such a supposed shrine in any of her ar-
ticles on the synagogue. Since the bench in area G/B, and the
partition wall beneath the aedicula mentioned by Floriani
Squarciapino can hardly be confused with a Torah shrine,
she would not have made (and did not make) such a com-
ment about these features. I cannot explain why White at-
tributes this view to her. In any case, it is beyond any doubt
that the theory about the staircase is without foundation; we
have no remains of such a construction and no staircase
could have existed where White locates it.

Fourth, the other necessary prerequisite for the theory
about two stories is that the columns in area C were a late
addition, made during the second major renovation. We have
already discussed this reconstruction of their history and
shown that the columns must have predated this renovation.

To conclude: there is no evidence at all that a second
storey existed in the synagogue before the second major
renovation. In fact, every detail in the building’s early archi-
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decture points in the opposite direction.

Turning now to area D and its layout during the interme-
diary phase, no one has doubted the existence of benches
along the southern, western and northern walls of this
room.239 Unfortunately, we have no information of their

238 The same reference is made in his Origins, 386, n. 158.
238 Floriani Squarciapino, "Seconda campagna," 304, note the pho-
tograph (fig. 3) on the same page (= Fig. 97 in the present study).
240 Floriani Squarciapino, "Synagogue," 203; eadem, "Ancient
Synagogue," 469. Strange as it may seem, Floriani Squarciapino
does not mention these benches in her report from the second cam-
paign ("Seconda campagna"). We may thus conclude that when she
measurements and no photograph of the remains when the present floor was lifted has been published. However, from the plan in Fine and Della Pergola, which is based on the plan published by Pavolini, and the one in White’s article, it seems as if the benches in D were narrower than the later benches in E (and those in the original area G; see next section). This impression is confirmed by the fact that the benches ended on the left and right sides of the podium by the western wall, the sides of the podium indicating their depth. The sides of the podium measure 1.25 m. As the benches abutted it on either side, we may assume their depth was the same, 1.25 m. This means that they could not have had the same function as those in G, something emphasised by the fact that they both existed in the original building (see below, section 3.3). According to Floriani Squarciapiino, the benches in D were made for sitting, not reclining; they were “seats for the faithful, seats that are typical of the synagogues found both in the Diaspora and in Palestine.” But even if the depth of the benches is much less than those in E, they are still too deep, it seems, to sit on. I do not know on what basis the excavator interprets the benches for sitting. Perhaps they functioned as a podium on which wooden chairs were placed in a way similar to the Curia in the Forum Romanum. Or perhaps there was another level built on the ‘bench’, half its depth, creating two levels for sitting. If this was the case, these benches would indeed be similar to those of many synagogues in the land of Israel.

Regarding the pavement of the floor in this period we know nothing. Floriani Squarciapiino mentions that the remains of the benches were found when the later opus sectile floor was lifted, but she does not say what kind of floor, nor how many floor levels there were underneath. Since we know that there were three floor levels in areas G and B, it would be strange to find only two floors in the main hall. Nevertheless, this seems to be the case. Again, we may speculate that if there would have been a mosaic floor beneath the opus sectile floor, the excavator would probably have mentioned it. Further, the only information we receive is that remains of benches were found there, which she refers to the earliest building. This seems to indicate that the floor directly below the floor of the second renovation was that of the original building, i.e. a cocciopesto floor. It would surely be odd to have the main hall paved with cocciopesto and the smaller rooms to the east (G/B.) paved with mosaic. However, if only one floor was discovered beneath the present floor, this probably indicates that one of the floors, the middle one, was removed before laying the later one. Supposedly, this would have been a mosaic floor.

Before the second major renovation there were no external supporting pillars or walls around D. This means that the large windows which were later blocked were open during this phase. They were rectangular and located about 3.5 m from ground level where the pillars now stands, being about 1.20 m wide to judge from the blocked window in the northern wall which is still visible (see Fig. 50). In this wall, but further east, there was also a door measuring w. 1.15 m; i.e., of about the same size as those from A into G, B., and B., and more than one meter narrower than those in C, and B., which also opened onto the north. This door was blocked with tufa blocks during the second major renovation as were all the older doors facing north.

Finally, to say a word on the relation between the second and third phases of the buildings history, the most striking difference is that it seems as if we did not have a room with clinae in the middle period while such existed during the first (in area G) and last (in area E) periods.

3.2.3. Areas F, E, H and K

There is a consensus among scholars that before the second major renovation the building proper included only areas G, B., and D. Though there is evidence of earlier partition walls in area E before it received its present layout (Fig. 100), it is unlikely that it belonged to the synagogue in the way that it did later, since the opus vittatum mixtum walls connecting the area with the synagogue were erected during the second major renovation. These partition walls and other details are no longer visible for inspection and as far as I know no suggestion regarding their relation to the synagogue has been made. This is one more area to be more fully excavated and analysed. Until this has been done, I understand area E and F as in some way related to the synagogue on the basis of their nearness to the building and the relation between K, J and the opus reticulatum mixtum wall later constituting the southern wall of E. The door from E into F seems to have been original, which means that access to the building was possible from the south.

Further, as we mentioned in section 3.1 the southern room of area K (K,) was renovated during this phase and the new opus latericum walls erected created the nymphaeum and the room west of it. The former door into the original room from the east was blocked with a low opus vittatum simplex wall, which became the front of the semi-circular basin.

Area K, H and the eastern rooms of A further suggest the existence of construction activity on all sides of the synagogue except the northern one. These structures too need further excavation and analysis; today it is not possible to say how they were related to the synagogue except for K (see section 3.3). The only thing we can say is that the synagogue

held her lecture in 1962 resulting in the article mentioned, the opus sectile floor of D was not yet lifted in its entirety. On the other hand, already when the excavator was to present the findings for a German reading public in 1963, she included the findings of the benches ("Zweiten Ausgrabungskampagne," 16).


26. White agrees with the excavator about the presence of the podium during the intermediary phase, but doubts that it belonged to the original building ("Synagogue and Society," 32). We shall return to this discussion below.

27. Floriani Squarciapiino, "La sinagoga di Ostia," 328.


30. The door is mentioned by Floriani Squarciapiino ("Recentemente scoperta," 129).


32. See the plan in Pavolini, "Via Severiana," fig. 1, and figs. 3 and 100 in the present study. Cf. the comment by White, "Synagogue and Society," 31–32, n. 24. These partition walls and other features are not mentioned by Floriani Squarciapiino.
was not an isolated building on the shore. It was a monumental edifice surrounded by smaller structures. (Fig. 101).

3.3. The Earliest Building

Many of the features of the earliest building have been discussed above. The overall plan of the building proper was, as far as we know, identical before and after the first renovation, including areas G, B, C, and D (Fig. 103). Further, the well and cistern in area A, the structures on the eastern side of A, and area H belonged to the first phase of building activity south of the Via Severiana. Most likely, K was built at the same time as the synagogue. Originally, the southernmost area of K (K₁) was a large room with a door facing east.

The internal changes made in the early second century show us that the people using the edifice at that time had different needs than those who built it.

3.3.1. Areas B and G

Just as in the intermediary phase, the building had its main entrance through B₂. However, there were no divisions in area B, nor in area G; one floor paved with cocciopesto covered both areas making them one room.²⁵⁰ As we have already mentioned discussing the basin in B₁, even if there cannot be any certainty it is not likely that it belonged to the first period when no partitions existed. The dominant feature of the room (G/B) are the remains of broad benches that were discovered beneath the mosaic of area G and B₂. The excavator noticed that the earliest floor ended at a certain distance from the walls, leaving traces of the front part of a bench.

These benches ran along the eastern wall, made a turn at the southern and continued along the western wall; they ended at the southern door post in B₁ and just before the south-eastern column in C₁ (Figs. 102, 103).

The exact depth of the benches is not clear since Floriani Squarciapino has given us slightly different measures in different articles: 1.83 m (Ant), 1.93 m (Archaeology) and 2.00 m (London Illustrated News).²⁵¹ However, it seems as if the correct measurement is 1.83 m. In any case, it is clear that these are broad benches made not for sitting but for reclining. As the excavator points out, they are similar to the clinai of the triclinia.²⁵² Indeed, the layout of G recalls the triclinia of, e.g., the house of the triclinia, although the benches in G are larger.²⁵³ Most likely, area G/B₁ was a triclinium. The water facilities outside the building in area A were constructed at the same time as the building, showing the need for water not only for ritual purposes but also for consumption.²⁵⁴

²⁵⁰ Floriani Squarciapino, “Synagogue,” 200–201. White includes area C in this common floor (“Synagogue and Society,” 32; idem, Origins, vol. 2, 386). This has, however, no support in the reports of the excavator.
²⁵¹ Pages 311, 200, and 469 respectively.
²⁵³ See, e.g., Hermansen, Roman City Life, 63, fig. 12.
²⁵⁴ Above we have argued against White’s architectural reconstruction regarding the intermediary period, and these arguments are valid also for the first building. Here it may be added that the theory about area B being a shop (“Synagogue and Society,” 33, 35) is unlikely and can only be explained by the fact that White is unaware of the benches in G/B₁.
Fig. 101. The synagogue: reconstruction of the complex after the first major renovation. (A. Ruggles.)
It is interesting to note that there was a certain continuity between the first and second phase regarding G and B₂. Obviously these areas were seen together. During the first phase the benches covered the side walls of both areas (in the west reaching out to the corner of area C₂), a layout which the first renovation seems to have taken up since room B₂ was connected to G and separated from the other areas. In other words, using B₂ as an aisle was the creation of the second major renovation, which also supplied a door into it from area A.

The doors into G from A and F are a problem, since it seems strange that doors should have existed at the same time as the benches. However, the distance between the earliest floor level (the *cocciopesto* floor) and the thresholds of the doors is c. 0.75 m. Thus, there was plenty of space for the benches below the doors. (The reconstructed height of the later benches in E is c. 0.60 m.) It seems, therefore, that the doors into G from A and F were adapted to the height of the benches, making access possible directly into the *triclinium* from the other areas. No other doors (apart from the main entrance into B₂) existed in area B in the original building, since the one from the north into B₁ was probably created to meet the need of a door into the secluded room which resulted from the first renovation.

3.3.2. Areas C and D

Entrance into area C was possible from the main door via B₂, the northern door (C₁), and from the south (F/C₂). Regarding the columns there is the same problem for the original building as was discussed regarding the intermediary period. We have no information from the excavator about possible marks of barriers in the floor between the columns. However, the partition walls between C₁/D and C₂/D belonged to the original building. If there was no barrier between the inner pair of columns, this would mean that the main hall had one main entrance with two smaller flanking doors facing east towards Jerusalem. Just as in the rest of the building, the floor was paved with *cocciopesto* at this early date a common floor at Ostia.

Entering D, windows were the same as in the intermediary phase. The door from the north did not exist in this phase, but was the achievement of the first major renovation. The existence of benches along the walls and the podium at the curved western wall in the first building has been questioned by White. According to the excavator, these features were original to the building,259 and this seems to me to be correct for the following reasons. First it may be noted that White refers to the Italian article from the second campaign, pages 314–315, for the existence of the benches.260 However, on these pages only the original benches in area G and the later benches of area E are mentioned. As a matter of fact, the remains of the benches in the main hall (D) are not mentioned at all in this article. This is so because the *opus sectile* floor had probably not yet been removed in its entirety when the lecture was held in September 1962 (the excavations were not completed at this time as is acknowledged in the introduction to the article). Thus, it is only in the articles after the one from the ongoing excavations, all from 1963 and 1964, that we are told about the benches in D.262

Second, White’s only argument for dating the benches and the podium to a later period is that “…they might, however, as easily belong to a middle stage of renovation, focusing primarily on the interior of room D.” Of course, neither White nor myself has ever seen the floor beneath the present one; we have only the reports from the excavator to go on and she has not published a photograph showing the remains of the benches. The question now is whether White is correct in his criticism: is it just guess work on the part of the excavator to date the benches to the first century? Perhaps there could be a discussion if photographs had been published or if the present floor could be removed again for inspection. However, the judgement of the excavator was that the benches were set into the floor which she dated to the first century. As long as it is not possible to inspect the original floor, every guess lacking substantial argument must be regarded as of less value than the judgement of the excavator. We have no evidence at all of a renovation confined to the inner features of D at this early time.

What is strange, however, is that there are only two floors in this room.264 This fact was discussed above and we

257 Floriani Squarciapino, “Seconda campagna,” 313–314; it seems to me that all of the rooms of the earliest building are meant. However, the *opus sectile* floor of the later building was not yet lifted in its entirety when the lecture resulting in this article was held. Perhaps only some parts of the floor had been removed, revealing the earlier floor.
258 Pohl, Ostia, 8.
261 This is stated in the introduction to the article; “Seconda campagna,” 299.
264 This is clear from Floriani Squarciapino’s German article “Zweiten Ausgrabungskampagne,” 16 where it is said that the floor of the first century was underneath the *opus sectile* floor.
Fig. 103. The synagogue: reconstruction of the original building. (A. Runesson.)
reached the conclusion that a second floor of the intermediary phase could have existed but would have been removed before laying the opus sectile floor of the second major renovation. If this is correct, it indicates that the benches belonged to the first building. If there was only one floor from the time of the building of the edifice to the second major renovation about 250 years later, the benches could have been introduced in the first renovation of the building. But even this is unlikely since it should be possible to determine the matter from the relation between the floor and the remains of the benches.260 I can see no reason to doubt the opinion of the excavator, dating the benches, and the podium that they are attached to, to the first century building.

Regarding the function of D, we may conclude that it was the main hall where an activity took place that needed benches for sitting (see above section 3.2 about the function of the benches) and which had a focus on a raised platform which was present in all of the building’s phases. On the basis of its continuity, the podium says something about the function of the room. Since almost all scholars interpret it as the bimah from which the Torah was read, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that this was its function also in the original building. If this is correct, the main hall of the building in its earliest phase was dedicated to some form of worship. We would then have a triclinium in area G/B for banquets and perhaps sacred meals,266 and a separate hall for worship in D; indeed it seems like the building housed activities very similar to those of a religious guild. We shall return to this issue below when discussing the identification of the building as a synagogue (section 5.3).

We may conclude, then, that there seems to have been both continuity and discontinuity between the first two phases: continuity regarding the functions and features of the main hall with its benches and podium; discontinuity regarding area G and B. From having been a triclinium, walls were built and mosaic floors were laid creating rooms of which some have uncertain functions.

3.3.3. Excursus: Ceiling Heights and Second Stories
As Zevi has pointed out, we know very little about the upper part of the building.267 However, the mere fact that such an upper part actually existed requires a short digression about the height of the ceiling during the history of the building and a possible second storey after the second major renovation.

As we have already noted, the ceiling height of the main hall cannot have been less than about six meters, due to the columns in area C. The same accounts for area B. In the earliest building area G most likely had the same ceiling height as the rest of the edifice, since the benches in G reached out into B, and B, must have had the same height as the columns of C; G and B, were treated as one area at this time and it is not likely that there were different ceiling heights in the same room. Further, there could hardly have been two stories for the same reason, but also because we have no remains of a staircase. After the first major renovation we have about the same situation, G/B, still being treated as a unit and no remains anywhere in the building of a staircase.

During the second major renovation G is transformed into a kitchen and a supporting pillar is introduced. Further, G is separated from B, which now became an aisle belonging to the entry area. If there was ever a second storey in area G it seems most likely that it was after this renovation, but the evidence is scarce; the remains of the walls are too low to show us any beam holes or the like and we have no staircase in this room. We must leave it as a conjecture.

265 Cf. the relation between the floor and the remains of the benches in the first phase of area G. Floriani Squarciapino, “Seconda campagna,” 311.
266 See also my “Water and Worship.”
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The vestibule (A) which was created during the same renovation could—if it had a roof at all—have had a lower ceiling height than the entrance area and the main hall (B, C, D) but we do not know much about it. At most we can say that the width of the main door into B₁ may indicate a rather high ceiling.

These are just conjectures, of course, at best having vague support in some details in the building. However, conjectures may sometimes be more stimulating than silence. What we can say with certainty is that the building could not have had a second storey before the second major renovation and if then, only in areas G and F, and perhaps E.

4. The Dating of the Building

As Meiggs points out, while the dating of buildings at Ostia from the time of the Republic is uncertain and has a "considerable" margin of error, the dating of buildings in Imperial times is more certain. Generally, the method of dating buildings at Ostia is based mainly on the analysis of masonry techniques, the building material and, when present, brick stamps. To this may be added the comparative study of other buildings and construction work.

Until the studies by White, most scholars followed the dating of the synagogue in its different phases given by Floriani Squarciapino. Since White challenged the opinion of the excavator and prefers a later date regarding the first phase of the building, we have reason to examine the matter once more. Both Floriani Squarciapino and White overlook several important details when dating the synagogue, details which we now wish to add to the discussion. There are three discernible phases which can be dated with reasonable certainty.

4.1. The Earliest Building

The masonry technique *Opus reticulatum* was developed in 50–25 BCE at Ostia; we have a terminus post quem for this type of masonry work in the Augustan period. It continued into the Julio-Claudian period, but had to give way for the increasing use of brick. The masonry technique of the synagogue edifice, a variant of *reticulatum* called *opus reticulatum mixtum*, came into use during the first century, not before Claudius (41–54).

Floriani Squarciapino does not distinguish between these variants of reticulate masonry work in her discussion, which may confuse the situation for the reader. However, already in the first report on the excavations, she finds a first century dating probable on the grounds of comparative material from Ostia. In one of her later articles on the Jews at Ostia from 1963, she connects the building of the synagogue with the construction of Claudius' harbour, which meant a considerable increase in commercial activities and so also a rising number of the population, including its Jewish faction.

Most scholars (all except one) have followed this dating of the original building.

In his first volume of *Origins*, White followed the first century dating; in the second volume, however, he did this with some hesitation mentioning that the area outside the *Porta Marina* developed primarily during the reign of Trajan and Hadrian in the early second century. His doubts regarding the early date is more fully articulated in his article in *HTR* from 1997. There are two main arguments for his position. First, a more careful analysis of the masonry work seems to indicate a later date. *Opus reticulatum mixtum (mixtum a)* was common at Ostia in the late Flavian period (69–96), especially under Domitian (86–91), and under the emperors Trajan (98–117) and Hadrian (117–138). By the middle second century it was no longer in use. White's conclusion is that the building "most likely [dates] from the time of Trajan or even Hadrian." Second, White refers to the general development in the area outside *Porta Marina*. The synagogue would be a part of this expansion *extra muros*, and he refers to the work of Pavolini regarding the date when this happened.

I find White's cautious approach wise and his more detailed discussion valuable, but nevertheless believe a setting in the second half of the first century to be more likely for the following reasons. Regarding the dating of *opus reticulatum mixtum*, we have a terminus post quem during the reign of Claudius. Thus, if we take only the masonry techniques into consideration we may conclude that the building originated anywhere between 41 CE and 150 CE. However, we do not have to settle for this imprecise dating. When investigating the brickstamps of the building, Zappa found bricks belonging to the first century. Further, proceeding to the immediate context of the edifice, Pavolini has argued that the first major urbanisation of the quarter took place during the first century CE, predominantly during its second half, and in the

269 Meiggs, *Ostia*, 539.
270 White follows Boersma using the term *mixtum a*; see "Synagogue and Society," 57, fig. 4.
271 Heres, *Paries*, 29 n. 40 on 38. She refers to the then forthcoming study by Boersma, *Amoennisima Civitas*, for support.
272 Floriani Squarciapino, "La sinagoga," 327.
274 See, e.g., Zevi, "Sinagoga di Ostia," 135; Meiggs, *Ostia*, 587; Kraabel, "Diaspora Synagogues," 499; Rutgers, "Synagogue Archaeology," 70; Fine and Della Pergola, "Torah Shrine," 43; Noy, *JWE*, vol. 1, 22; Zappa, "Nuovi bolli," 283–285; Pavolini, "Via Severiana," 141; Hempel, "Synagogenfund," 72; Shanks, *Judaism in Stone*, 162; Pohl, *Ostia*, 24; Harsberg, *Ostia*, 144. I fail to see the point in calling this dating "naïve." as White does ("Synagogue and Society," 29, n. 19), when so many scholars have argued for it or accepted it as likely. This does not mean, of course, that a renewed investigation would be without interest.
275 In volume one of his *Origins*, there is no doubt regarding the first century dating (69), but in his second volume some hesitation may be seen: on 379 his heading reads: "The synagogue (late first-fourth century)," but the caption to fig. 43 on the next page reads: "ca. second–fourth centuries." See also 390, phase one.
beginning of the second century.\textsuperscript{281} He explicitly dates the synagogue to the second half of the first century, referring both to Floriani Squarciapino's article from 1963 ("Ebrei a Roma e ad Ostia") and Zappa's work on the brickstamps.\textsuperscript{282}

It should also be noted that the Via Severiana did not exist when the synagogue was built (it dates from the end of the second to the beginning of the third century\textsuperscript{283}), which explains the fact that the floor of the synagogue, just as the floor of building K, is lower than the street. We shall return to Pavolini's conclusions below when dating the two following phases of our edifice. Finally, we may also add the fact that we have a Jewish funerary inscription speaking of an archisynagogos at Ostia, the Plotius Fortunatus inscription, which is dated to the first or second century (see below section 5.3.1). If the epitaph is dated around the year 100, it means that Plotius Fortunatus lived and was the head of the synagogue at least by the end of the first century. In that case we have evidence not only of a Jewish population at Ostia by this time, but also of an organised Jewish community having a synagogue.

It thus seems safe to date the first building to the second half of the first century. Following the excavator, it is perhaps even possible to go one step further and assume a date close to the reign of Claudius. In favour of this early dating is the fact that a major renovation of the building took place as early as the first half of the second century (see below). It seems best to reckon with a longer period of time between the construction of the edifice and such major changes. If this is correct and if the edifice was a synagogue from the beginning, history has left to us a synagogue predating the fall of the temple and still standing at the end of the fifth century.

4.2. The First Major Renovation

Within the building itself, we find some evidence helping us to date the intermediary period. Investigating the brickstamps found in the synagogue, Zappa concluded that the majority of them were dated to the equivalent of 123 CE, i.e., to the time of Hadrian (117–138).\textsuperscript{284} To be sure, it was not uncommon that bricks were reused in later construction work. However, even if Zappa states that only further excavations can decide the matter, she prefers a theory about an intermediary period. She connects the brickstamps with the partition walls in area B below the latest floor level. The paintings found on these walls can be dated to the second century and thus match the date of these bricks.\textsuperscript{285}

Further, Zevi dates the capitals of the four columns in area C to the first half of the second century.\textsuperscript{286} This date matches the date of Zappa's brickstamps and most likely the columns went through a renovation at the same time as the rest of the building.

To this may be added the building activities outside the edifice which can help to complete the picture. During the reign of Domitian (81–96) the ground level of Ostia was raised about 1 meter within the walls.\textsuperscript{287} Outside the Porta Marina, this raising of the ground level took place a little later, probably because the area was peripheral to the rest of the city.\textsuperscript{288} The work was carried out during the second century, i.e., after our building was created—yet another indication that the original building must have predated the turn of the first century. It did not include the construction of the Via Severiana, which was built at the end of the second or the beginning of the third century and did not imply further raising of the ground level.\textsuperscript{289}

Finally, perhaps we should also mention that the Gaius Julius Justus inscription may be dated to the first part of the second century. If this date is correct and if the inscription is to be connected with our synagogue—and it seems as if this may be the case (see below, section 5.2.2)—it is not unlikely that the prominent men mentioned in the text were involved in the first renovation.\textsuperscript{290} Despite the many uncertainties, the inscription may thus be used as an additional piece of evidence for the dating of the first major renovation to the first half of the second century.

Noting that the brickstamps, the dating of the paintings, the raising of the ground level in the area outside Porta Marina, and the date of the Gaius Julius Justus inscription all coincide in the early second century, it seems likely that the renovation in question took place during the reign of Hadrian. Another fact supporting this conclusion is that the whole of Ostia was transformed during his reign. Ostia's population more than doubled and "public buildings and amenities reflect the new prosperity."\textsuperscript{291} As Meiggs claims, "Hadrian was almost certainly the emperor to whom Ostia owed most."\textsuperscript{292} Further, it seems likely that the progress of the area outside the Porta Marina during the second century is likely to have affected the building of the Via Severiana at the end of this century.

We thus conclude that the first major renovation should be dated to the first half of the second century, most likely to the time of Hadrian.


\textsuperscript{282} Pavolini, "Via Severiana," 141, n. 15. It is difficult to see why White does not mention these things or refer to the studies cited by Pavolini; they are not even included in his bibliography. It may also be added that Pavolini has retained this dating of the synagogue in his later writings; see La vita quotidiana a Ostia, 163. Here he states that it is positive that a first building phase goes back to the middle of the first century.

\textsuperscript{283} Pavolini, "Via Severiana," 142.

\textsuperscript{284} Zappa, "Nuovi bolti," 285. The bricks were not found in situ, but on the floor of the fourth-century synagogue.

\textsuperscript{285} Zappa, "Nuovi bolti," 285.

\textsuperscript{286} Zevi, "La sinagoga di Ostia," 140.

\textsuperscript{287} See Meiggs, Ostia, 64ff, and Pavolini, "Via Severiana," 142.

\textsuperscript{288} Pavolini, "Via Severiana," 142.

\textsuperscript{289} Pavolini, "Via Severiana," 142.

\textsuperscript{290} Cf. White, "Synagogue and Society," 44. Assuming that Frey's dating of the inscription is correct (early second century, c. 117–160), he writes, "The size (reflected by the gerusia [ruling council] of several men), social status, and economic strength of these individuals all apparently correlate with the phase 2 renovation of the building in the form of a collegial hall." However, this date seems to fit better with my dating of the first major renovation to the first half of the second century than with White's dating of his phase 2 in the mid-to-later second century, continuing into the early third century (36).

\textsuperscript{291} Meiggs, "Ostia," 658.

\textsuperscript{292} Meiggs, "Ostia," 658.
4.3. The Second Major Renovation

While the earliest building and the first renovation include many difficulties regarding the dating, the second major renovation is easier to handle. The masonry techniques used in the new construction work are opus vittatum mixtum a and b, vittatum simplex, and some opus latericium, techniques which may be dated around the late third to fourth century.

The style of the mosaics and the reliefs on the architraves of the aedicula reveal a date in the fourth century.\textsuperscript{293} The strongest evidence for an early fourth century dating is a coin from Maxentius found in the partition wall built between areas G and B\textsubscript{2}.\textsuperscript{294} This gives us a terminus post quem of 306 for the renovation of at least this part of the building. However, it is likely that the erection of this wall was contemporary with the other construction work of this renovation, since the change of function of room G resulted in the addition of other areas which presumably took over G's previous function(s) (see above section 3.1 and 3.2).

To this we may add that the whole area around the synagogue underwent major renovation work showing that this section of Ostia, as well as the rest of the city, was prospering during this time.\textsuperscript{295} It seems safe, therefore, to date the second major renovation to the beginning of the fourth century.

4.4. Decline and Abandonment

After the second major renovation was completed, the aedicula was introduced and subsequently enlarged (probably about the middle to late fourth century) showing a vital community at this time. Later we find minor renovation work being performed: the purpose, however, was only to maintain a functioning structure and in fact shows that the building was declining. We see it for example in the repair work of the opus secitile floor of the main hall. The regular patterns were destroyed when the floor was repaired with random marble slabs, some of which were inscribed with gentile epitaphs.\textsuperscript{296} Nothing in the edifice bears marks of violent destruction in any of the phases of the building’s history.

Most scholars date the abandonment of the synagogue to the fifth century, contemporary with the general decline of the city.\textsuperscript{297} According to Pavolini, life in our quarter continued after the prosperous period in the fourth century into later times, though in more modest forms.\textsuperscript{298} The Via Severiana still functioned in the middle of the fifth century, even if it was in bad shape. Further, some buildings along the street were used as baths by this time.\textsuperscript{299} To be sure, this does not prove that the synagogue was still in use, but it shows that there was activity around this part of the area outside the Porta Marina as late as in the middle of the fifth century. After this time we have nothing showing continuing activity here and we may thus agree with the majority of scholars claiming that the synagogue was abandoned about 150–200 years after the second major renovation.

5. The Identification of the Building as a Synagogue

The identification of the building as a synagogue is dependent, of course, on how one reconstructs the history of the building. Regarding evidence of synagogue use, we are dealing mainly with three phases. No scholar has hitherto put together and critically discussed the evidence for the identification of the building as a synagogue in its different phases. What we have to do now, then, is to list the arguments for such a use. This will be done using certain criteria as well as discussing the possible functions of the different rooms, as these two tasks are closely related. The following criteria will be used for evaluating the evidence:

1. The form of the building. Since we are dealing with synagogue architecture, public buildings built specifically for Jewish religious worship rather than any private house or other building where a congregation could have gathered and religious activity taken place, we must look for architectural features revealing public use.\textsuperscript{300}

2. The presence of Jewish symbols. This criterion is dependent on the first one (just as the first is dependent on this), since such symbols (e.g., on lamps) may be found in any house belonging to Jews. Together, these criteria makes a strong case that the building was a synagogue.

3. Interior features typical for Jewish public buildings, such as benches, a bimah or a Torah shrine.

4. Location\textsuperscript{301} and orientation of the building.

5. Existence of water facilities for ritual and other purposes.\textsuperscript{302}


\textsuperscript{294} Floriani Squarciapino, “Seconda campagna,” 310.

\textsuperscript{295} See Pavolini, “Via Severiana,” 142.

\textsuperscript{296} One of these has been left in situ and may still be seen.


\textsuperscript{298} Pavolini, “Via Severiana,” 142–143.

\textsuperscript{299} Pavolini, “Via Severiana,” 143.

\textsuperscript{300} Cf. White, “Synagogue and Society,” 36. Making a distinction between two phases in the early synagogue he writes, “While it is possible that the building was used by the Jewish group in phase 1, no clear evidence of a formal synagogue structure is detectable prior to the renovations of phase 2.”

\textsuperscript{301} Cf. Sukenik, Ancient Synagogues, 38: Discussing the case of Delos, he states that one of the features that "renders its [i.e. the buildings] Jewish character almost certain" is the location of the building "outside the town and by the water." The fact that Sukenik was later convinced by Mazur's study from 1935 (Studies of Jewry in Greece) that the edifice was not a synagogue after all was dependent on other evidence which seemed to outrule the first; for Sukenik, the argument based on location did not have enough support from other evidence to be effective. As we shall see, in the case of Ostia it has.

\textsuperscript{302} See my “Water and Worship.”
6. Existence of adjacent rooms, such as triclinia, hostel facilities, etc.

7. Knowledge of Jewish presence in the city, town or village in question from other sources than the building itself.

Masonry techniques or architectural styles cannot be used as criteria, since Diaspora synagogues display great diversity depending on local custom and social situation.301 However, certain features must be taken into account such as the tri-portal layout of the entrance area facing Jerusalem which have several parallels among Galilean and other synagogues.

Most of the above criteria are dependent on each other. If several or all criteria fit the building described, we have a strong case that the building was a synagogue. As we shall see, the evidence gets thinner the further back we go in time. Still, there is reason to believe that we are dealing with a building originally constructed for the purpose of Jewish gatherings and worship.

5.1. The Later Building

Most of the criteria mentioned above fit the building in this phase; without doubt it was a synagogue during the fourth and fifth centuries. There is a complete consensus regarding this in the scholarly literature. Nevertheless, it may be useful to list the evidence and arguments systematically, since it has not been done before. This procedure will also turn out to be useful for answering the more difficult questions concerning the earlier phases.

The building is clearly a public one and several Jewish symbols and motives belong to this phase. Engraved on each of the corbels of the two architraves of the aedicula are a menorah, a shofar, a lulav and an ethrog, as mentioned before (see Figs. 38, 39). Further, a mosaic with the common Jewish rosette inscribed in a hexagon motif was found in area B (Fig. 18). In the entrance area (B1) there is a mosaic down at the north-east corner which is difficult to interpret, but which probably depicts a chalice and a loaf (Figs. 20, 21). If this is correct, it could perhaps be related to the kidush. Since the mosaic floor of B1 is in bad shape we cannot say if there were more symbols, but it is likely that there were on the grounds of the possession of the one still visible. Further, in the earthen floor of area G belonging to the third phase (see above, section 3.1) were found several lamps decorated with the menorah and one depicting a Torah Shrine (Figs. 30, 31).

In her earliest articles, the excavator informs us of something that could be the remnants of the paws and mane of a stone lion that were found behind and beside the aedicula.304 She suggests that it could have been placed on the aedicula or some other place in the synagogue.302 Lion sculptures have been found in other synagogues, e.g., Sardis.306 Nabratein, Chorazin, and Capernaum, and lions were also depicted on mosaics and gold glass beside an ark.307 No photograph has been published showing the Ostian remains, but if it can be ascertained that we are dealing with a lion and that it belongs to the building, we have yet another indication that the building was a synagogue.

It may also be of interest to note what was not present during this period. The mosaic floors did not display any living creatures, which is in accordance with biblical and rabbinic law. Neither do we have any wall paintings preserved from this period,308 the walls most likely being paved in opus sectile.309 However, this can hardly be used as an argument ex silentio indicating synagogue use since depictions of both animals and humans are usual in other synagogues in the Diaspora as well as in the land of Israel. Floriani Squarcia- pino suggests that the Jewish community gathering in this synagogue made another, more strict interpretation of the law.310 However, as Zevi tells us, we should be careful using the mosaics in this way since non-figurative black and white mosaics were common in the Roman world.311 Further, if the above mentioned remains should be interpreted as a lion, we have at least one living creature represented in the synagogue.

Moving to the criterion of interior features, we find a Torah shrine, unique in its form as a free-standing structure, and a bimah, both in the main hall (Figs. 54, 55; 51, 52). As we noted above, the aedicula was built as close to Jerusalem as possible, breaking the partition wall between D and B/C. This was a conscious, theologically determined act. The location and orientation of the building (see above, section 2) fit our criteria for identifying the building as a synagogue. Connected to the question of location is the criterion of water facilities. In this period the basin in B1 was taken out of use as well as the cistern in area A. However, the piece of evidence among others “clear enough” to indicate that the building was a synagogue; see “The Diaspora Synagogue,” 490. Bruneau, Recherches, 490, finds the “cistern” at the Delos synagogue “un argument nouveau en faveur de l’identification comme synagogue” and argues that it was used for ritual purposes (490-491). Sanders, Practice and Belief, 223 and n. 24 on page 521, is of the same opinion. Levine, “The Second Temple Synagogue,” 11, is more careful regarding the function of the bath in Delos, writing that it was “possibly a ritual bath.” The important thing, however, is that Levine mentions the bath when discussing the controversy concerning the identification of the Delos synagogue; according to him it is evidence strengthening the conviction that the building was a synagogue.

301 See the studies by Kraabel listed in the selected bibliography below. The diversity of the Diaspora synagogue is now widely recognised among scholars. However, some caution must be taken not to overlook the similarities that actually exist; see below, section 6.

302 Floriani Squarcia-pino, “La sinagoga di Ostia,” 335; eadem, “Recentemente scoperta,” 133. No one has discussed this finding except Fine and Della Pergola (“Torah Shrine,” 55, 57).


305 Floriani Squarcia-pino, “La sinagoga di Ostia,” 335. See also Fine and Della Pergola, “Torah Shrine,” 55.

306 The wall paintings which were found when the mosaic of area B1 was removed belongs to the intermediary period. They were not preserved in the later period since the walls with the paintings were taken down during the second major renovation.


well in area A was still in use, now furnished with a marble well head (Fig. 16). Washing could also have taken place at the nymphaeum in K, (Figs. 82, 84), and if the baths on the northern side of the Via Severiana were used by Jews for ritual purposes, we have an indication of a change in the method of ritual washing; the baths imply immersion of the whole body. It is also possible that the covered cistern in area A was replaced by a now lost receptacle for the washing of hands.

As many other synagogues, the synagogue at Ostia also had several rooms, with different functions: the building was a Jewish community centre (see the plans, Figs. 87, 88). Apart from the main hall we find rooms which could have functioned as kitchen, school, meeting and/or dining hall and hostel.

Finally, the second major renovation meant the opening up of two additional doors between A and B₁ and B₂. As we have already discussed above (section 3.1) this was most likely an aesthetic-ideological act imitating the entry areas of synagogues in the Jewish homeland and elsewhere.312 As such, and together with other criteria, this architectural feature may be used as a criterion showing that the building was a synagogue.

5.2. The Intermediary Phase

The evidence of the building being a synagogue during this phase is weaker than above, but still we find some indications of such a use. First, the edifice is a public building. This is also recognised by White, who argues that by this time only "minimal internal modifications" were made which distinguish this phase from the first and make it a "formal synagogue structure."313 Regarding internal features we find benches along the southern, western, and northern walls in the main hall (D) and the bimah by the curved western wall. Further, it is possible that a portable ark was placed on the raised dais on the platform by the same wall.

It is important to note that no Jewish symbols have been found from this period. Wall paintings existed, however. Since we only have a few remains on the partition walls between B₁, B₂ and B₃ (Fig. 93),314 we cannot say whether there were more paintings in other parts of the building, although it is likely. The paintings that were found show bunches of flowers and big vases; no living creatures have been depicted as far as we know. Again, this fact may say more of the kind of Judaism that was practised by the community than of synagogue use. And, to be sure, this evidence can only be valid together with other, clear evidence that the building was a synagogue.

The criterion of location is, of course, the same as above, and regarding orientation we have argued against White's hypothesis of a north–south orientation in the earlier phases.315 There is no evidence of a general reorientation of the building in the archaeological material. The orientation was therefore toward Jerusalem even before the second major renovation and the introduction of the Torah aedicula; our criterion of synagogue use is thus valid also here.

Water facilities were confined to the well and cistern in area A and the basin in area B₁ (Figs. 89, 95).316 To this may be added that the nymphaeum in K, probably was constructed during this phase. Regarding the question of additional rooms during this phase, we are left with only areas B, C, D and G (see the plan, Fig. 101): the same plan as the earliest building. The core of the building being area D, it is very difficult to determine the function(s) of areas G and B₁ during this period.317 One guess could be that one room was some kind of storage room, perhaps containing a portable ark, which, as it has been suggested, was carried into the main hall during services,318 while another was a study room.

It seems to me that enough of our criteria fit the building before the second major renovation to indicate that the edifice was a synagogue during the intermediary phase, from the early second century and onwards. Especially the layout of area D, the main hall, would suggest that since the podium and the location of the ark remained in the same place before and after the second renovation.319 However, I have left out the most usual argument and, as it seems, the strongest one, used by scholars to prove that the edifice was a synagogue at this time: the Minius Faustus inscription. There are several reasons why we should be careful using this inscription the way that has been done in the past.

5.2.1. The Minius Faustus Inscription

The inscription (marble tablet, 36 × 54.3 × 2.5–3.5 cm; additional fragment below; Fig. 105) reads as follows.320

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312 Cf. also the tri-partite entrances of the temple in Jerusalem.
316 Regarding the history of the bath in B₁, see above, section 3.1 and 3.2
317 See the discussion above, section 3.2.
319 The aedicula was not introduced until a second phase of the second renovation, about 350 CE.
320 See Fig. 105. The inscription was found cut in two pieces. The main part of it had been used as repair material in area A and was discovered during the second season of the excavations. Most likely it was put face down, since the text is so well preserved. The smaller fragment, containing the last three letters, found among other marble fragments in area G during the first excavations in 1961 was then added to it. See Floriani Squarciapino, "Plutus Fortunatus," 183–184.
321 The translation follows Noy, JIWE, 22, except for the plural reading of the first line. The restoration of lines 6–7 is Horsey's. It is strange that White, writing in 1997 ("Synagogue and Society," 39) claims that "no formal publication has yet appeared, except for a simple translation by Floriani Squarciapino." He seems unaware of Noy's work from 1993, which in turn refers to the work of earlier scholars, none of them cited by White. It is unfortunate that White did not update his analysis in his 1997 article, since Noy contradicts his conclusions on several points and the reader would have benefited from a discussion between them.
The inscription shows clear signs of a second hand (lines 6–7). Since the characters of these lines are later and rougher, they are too different from lines 1–5 to be an early correction of a mistake. This means that we have two dates to deal with. The first five lines are dated to the second half of the second century, and lines 6–7 to the second half of the third century.

Despite the fact that Floriani Squarciapieno stated as a condition for using the inscription when dating the synagogue that further study must confirm that the inscription belongs to the synagogue, scholars have assumed that it did, without such investigations being made. Indeed, Floriani Squarciapieno himself became increasingly certain that it belonged to our synagogue, neglecting her own condition about presenting the evidence; in her articles from 1963 she does not hesitate to use it as proof that the building was a synagogue before the second major renovation. However, the complex situation is emphasised by the fact that the excavator

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322 As Noy notes, JIWE, vol. 1, 25, the upper right corner is missing, leaving just enough room for one more letter. Indeed, the size and arrangement of the letters makes it likely that the plural AVG (augustorion) instead of the singular AVG (augusti) is the correct reading. If this is true, we may have an indication of which emperors the inscription refers to. Noy suggests the following alternatives: M. Aurelius (161–180) and either L. Verus (161–166) or Commodus (177–192), or Severus (193–211) and Caracalla (198–217). Cf. the inscription from Osijek (Mursa) in Hungary dated to the second half of the second century. Beginning with the dedication [Pro salute trium (pratoriorum) (I. 1), the AVG (I. 3) of this inscription refers to L[cui]i Septim(i) Severi Petriani, [et M(arci) Auri(lii) Antonini] Aug[ustoriorum] (II. 2–3). See A. Scheiber, Jewish Inscriptions, 51–55. It is also possible that the reference in our inscription is to the imperial family. If only one person is referred to, the identity of the emperor cannot be established with certainty. Cf. Lazzerini, "Iscrizioni," 185, who suggests the reading Aug[usti] (n(onii)], Quaderucci, Epigrafia Greca, 17, suggests that it refers to M. Aurelius or Commodus (though ending the sentence with a question mark).

323 ε replaces α

324 α replaces ε

325 The general meaning being "wooden box" or "chest," the word could also be used for Noah's ark. As Noy notes, JIWE, vol. 1, 26, "The earlier form of 'ark' in the synagogue may well be the wooden cupboard depicted on some of the inscriptions from Rome (e.g. CJU 401)."

326 I do not agree with White ("Synagogue and Society," 39, n. 47) that "the lunette E at the end of Line 6 seems to be from the first hand." The form of the letter is different compared to those of lines 2–4; the middle bar extends further right in the epsilon of line 6. It is more likely that the second hand wrote in the non-erased space.

327 According to Noy, JIWE, vol. 1, 26, this emendation of the text is likely, since it fills the available space well. It may be added that the empty space at the end of line 7 could be dependent on the original text ending further right, and thus requiring the second hand to make more space than he needed for his new words. Further, Noy argues that the position in the end of the sentence and after μετά suggests that ιδιώτα must indicate family or household rather than property. White does not discuss these suggestions, but states that it would be "typical of the form of such inscriptions if lines 6–7 would have given the name of important relatives (or patrons)." ("Synagogue and Society," 40, n. 48).
seven years later argues that the inscription refers to the present aedicula and its subsequent enlargement, both events occurring after the second major renovation.\textsuperscript{335} This date, placing the inscription in the middle to late fourth century, has very different implications than the one noted above.

We must therefore ask some questions concerning the probability that the inscription belonged to the synagogue; it is not so self-evident as it may seem. The first question is the most obvious one: for what reason was the inscription placed in the floor of the vestibule and in area \textit{Q}?\textsuperscript{336} Since it was cut in two pieces and most likely was put in the floor face down since the letters are so well preserved, it is obvious that its location in the floor was not an honorary position.\textsuperscript{337} Most likely it was put there by the owners of the building, the Jewish community, and it must have been considered outdated. This leads us to consider, among other things, the dates of the inscription.

As we have seen, the history of the inscription may be divided into two stages. The first commemorates the donation by a person whose name we do not know of an ark for the Torah and another object which is unknown—but probably not a whole building—to a community of Jews. This happened sometime during the second half of the second century, perhaps during the reign of Marcus Aurelius and Commodus. This is later than the first major renovation of the building which was carried out during the first half of the second century, most likely during the reign of Hadrian.

One possible explanation is that during the second half of the third century a man called Mindius Faustus ordered lines 6 and 7 to be erased and replaced the name(s) of the original donor(s) with his own name and probably a reference to his relatives. This happened before the second major remodelling of the building, which took place in the beginning of the fourth century,\textsuperscript{338} after which the present aedicula was built and enlarged.

What, then, did Mindius Faustus achieve, what was his gift to the Jewish community? It is not likely that if a building and an ark were the gift of the first donor (as White claims), this inscription could have been reused by Mindius Faustus without additional modifications being made in the text.\textsuperscript{339} If, however, the inscription commemorates the building of a podium for the ark as well as the ark itself (as Noy says), it could be the case that the gift of the second donor replaced the structure established by the first; it would be simple just to change the names of the donors.

Even though it might be tempting to try to harmonise the two phases of the inscription with the two major renovation projects of the edifice, comparing the dates of the inscription and its wording and the architectural development of the building, it is hard to make them match each other. From the period of the first donor, which is about half a century later than the first renovation of the edifice, we have no traces of an ark or a platform for it. In the same way, the building during the period of the second donor, Mindius Faustus, has no evidence of any such building activity, the second renovation project beginning shortly after the inscription was altered—the aedicula being constructed even later in the fourth century.

Returning now to the question of the place of the discovery of the inscription, what does this tell us about the history of the tablet? The second major renovation took place in the beginning of the fourth century, a renovation which in a second phase included the introduction of the present aedicula, making any previous structures containing the Torah scrolls superfluous. From now on, we can be sure that the Mindius Faustus inscription does not relate to any building activity in the synagogue; the second renovation project’s second phase replaced the structures that the tablet speaks of. Further, since the Mindius Faustus inscription was used when repairing the marble slab floor which was laid in the beginning of the fourth century, we may conclude that at least by the end of the fourth century (probably earlier), the inscription was not only not related to any building activity in the edifice, it was not held in higher regard than any ordinary marble slabs reused to repair floors.

What happened during these hundred years or so, from the beginning to the end of the fourth century? There are two possible answers: the first would be that the tablet belonged to our synagogue but was taken down during the second renovation and saved because the donor(s) still lived and/or was held in high regard as benefactor(s) of the synagogue, or that it was saved simply to be used for possible repair work in the future. However, it seems strange that such important construction work as that done by Mindius Faustus, deserving an inscription placed in the midst of the Jewish congregation and beginning with a dedication to the emperor, would be outdated so soon by a new renovation.

Further, it seems odd that a congregation would remove an inscription carrying a dedication to the emperors during a time when the Jews were experiencing a growing threat from Christianity, which was now beginning to dominate the religious scene at Ostia,\textsuperscript{340} a time when one would expect that they would be seeking good relations with the Roman authorities. That such dedications to the emperor was not unimportant for the relation between the Jews and the Roman authorities can be seen in Philo.\textsuperscript{341} Complaining about riots

\textsuperscript{335} Fiorani Squarciapino, "Plotius Fortunatus," 185.

\textsuperscript{336} Despite the fact that this question is justified, as far as I know only one scholar, R. Briliant, has recognised the problems connected to the use of the inscription in the floor ("Jewish Art and Culture," 76). He suggests two solutions: either Mindius Faustus was already forgotten or the building was converted to other uses in late antiquity. However, as we shall see there are other more probable answers to our question.

\textsuperscript{337} The fact that the plate was cut when it was reused in the floor makes the possibility that it broke when the second donor was erasing the previous name(s) and inscribing his own less likely. If it had been a mistake, the location in the floor would have been easier to explain. A further argument against this suggestion is that if the plate broke when it was rewritten, it would have been replaced by a new one; no such second inscription has been found as far as I know.

\textsuperscript{338} See above, section 4.3.

\textsuperscript{339} One could also mention the location of the inscription and its size; different construction work would demand different location and thus different sizes of the tablet.

\textsuperscript{340} On the relation between Jews and Christians at Ostia, see Zetterholm, "A Struggle Among Brothers."

\textsuperscript{341} \textit{Ad Gaium} 133. Cf. the many inscriptions from Egypt mentioning the emperors in connection with Jewish places of worship (Horary and Noy, \textit{JIE}, nos. 13, 22, 25, 27, 28, 117, 125).
against the Jews of Alexandria when the prayer-houses of the city were attacked. Philo mentions specifically that the tributes to the emperor (which consisted of among other things slabs and inscriptions) were pulled down though they should have been spared from destruction by the mob, who, it was assumed, would pay respect to the emperor. He even states that the synagogues, or prayer-houses, were intended to show reverence for benefactors of the Augustan house.342 If an inscription mentioning the emperors should be reused like the one in the floor of the synagogue, it seems more plausible that there was a distance both in time and space between the original owners of the inscription and those responsible for the repair work.

The second answer to the question about the history of the inscription would be that it did not belong to our synagogue at all, but was the property of another synagogue which still is waiting to be found. It would not be strange at all if there were more than one synagogue at Ostia, the city having a population of about 50,000-60,000 during the Antonine period.343 We know of at least eleven synagogues in the city of Rome344 and several in each section of the city of Alexandria.345 It is not unlikely that Ostia, being the harbour of Rome,346 was inhabited by so many Jews that more than one synagogue would be needed. Probably there were several house-synagogues, some perhaps converted into public buildings, before and during the time of our synagogue.

How, then, would the inscription have found its way to the synagogue by the sea? Perhaps an answer may be found in the relations between Jews and Christians and society at large. It is probable that Christianity at Ostia gained adherents in a growing number during the period when the synagogue was in use, and perhaps many of the converts were Jews.347 Further, the change of character of the Ostian economy could also have meant that Jews who were traders moved from the city as did other traders. At the same time, the second major renovation meant a considerable enlargement of the synagogue at a time when one would expect the number of Jews to decrease. A possible explanation for this could be that the renovation of the synagogue was the result of two or more synagogue communities joining together, building a common community centre by enlarging the synagogue by the sea.348 In an exposed position, such an act would have strengthened the identity of the Jews, and indeed, it is also in this period that we find symbols and architectural details expressing a strong Jewish identity. Perhaps there even arose hostility directed against the Jews, creating yet another reason for them to join together outside the city walls.

If this is correct, the Mindius Faustus inscription would have been the property of another synagogue, this community bringing it with them as they moved.349 The "new" community composed of different Jewish groups now concentrated in our synagogue would then have less attachment to the inscription, at least by the time it was used repairing the floor; no structure in the present synagogue would have anything to do with the inscription and the donor(s), no longer among them, belonged to another congregation during his lifetime.

As we have seen we have two possible answers regarding the history of the inscription, and the evidence could serve for both. Thus it is advisable to be careful in attributing the inscription to our building, using it for identifying the edifice as a synagogue. For now, we will have to make do with uncertainty: it could have belonged to the synagogue from the beginning, or just as well have been moved there from another building. In any case, the inscription shows us that there was a Jewish community at Ostia in the second half of the second century, even if it was not the community who gathered by the sea.

Apart from the Mindius Faustus inscription, we have two more Jewish inscriptions which are contemporary with the intermediary period of the synagogue.350 The later of them is the Marcus Aurelius Pylades inscription, dating from the third century.351 More interesting is, however, the Gaius Julius Justus inscription.

### 5.2.2. The Gaius Julius Justus Inscription

The Inscription (marble tablet, 53 × 59 cm. Only the right part preserved; Fig. 106) reads as follows.352

```plaintext
[synagoga?] ludeorum
[in col(onia) Ostiensis] commorationium qui compar- verunt ex conlat(?)ione locum C(ai)lui Iusto
[geriarchiae ad munimentum struendum]
[donavit, rigantibus(?)]ius Livio Dionysio patre et
[..............]nus 50er iarchiae et Antonio
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342 In Flaccum 49: "...everywhere in the habitable world the religious veneration of the Jews for the Augustan house has its basis as all may see in the meeting houses, and if we have these destroyed no place, no method is left to us for paying this homage." (translation by Colson). Of course, these words of Philo are apologetic in purpose. Nevertheless it reveals what a Jew could allude to in order to uphold good relations with Roman authorities.

343 Meiggs, Ostia, 532–534. Meiggs’ estimate is valid only after the imperial harbours were built; before that happened, the number of the population would have been "considerably less" (534).

344 See Hedner-Zetterholm, "Jewish Communities."

345 Philo, e.g., Ad Gaium 132.


347 See Zetterholm, "Struggle Among Brothers."

348 This conclusion goes against the usual explanation that the renovation was necessitated by a growing community, see, e.g., White, "Synagogue and Society." 38.

349 Such a procedure, moving an inscription belonging to an older edifice to a new one, is testified in relation to another group at Ostia: the naviculari brought with them a dedicatory inscription to the schola which was their guild seat. See Hermansen, Roman City Life, 72–74.

350 The Lazzarini ("Iscrizioni," 186) mentions some important inscriptions which have not been published, one of which was found in the same floor as the Mindius Faustus inscription. This inscription is said to have a Latin text on one side and a Greek one on the other. The Latin inscription is in a bad condition, but the Greek text clearly mentions a grammateus according to Lazzarini. I have not seen these inscriptions and since no dating has been proposed for them we must await the final report from the excavations before including them in our discussion.


352 See fig. 106. The inscription was found at Castel Porziano about ten kilometres south of the port along the Via Severiana and published by Ghislanzoni in 1906.

353 Text and translation follows Noy, JWE, vol. 1, 32ff.

354 Cf. The reconstruction by White, "Synagogue and Society," 43; [col(legii)] patro(no).
[..... dia] biu anno ipsorum, consentient[e]|e] ge[r
us(i)a). C(aius) Iulius ]ius]us gerusiarces fecit sib[li]
[et cons]uae lib(ertis) lib(ertabusque) posterosque eorum
[in fro]nte (pedes) XVIII, in agro (pedes) XVII.

The community(?) of the Jews living in the colony of Ostia (?),
who acquired the place from a collection(?), gave (?) it to the
gerusiarh Gaius Julius Justus to build a monument.

It was on the motion (?) of Livius Dionysius the father
and...nus the gerusiarh and Antonius ... the life-officer (?),
in their year, with the agreement of the gerusia.

Gaius Julius Justus the gerusiarh made (the monument) for
himself and his wife, and his freedmen and freedwomen and
their descendants. 18 feet across. 17 feet away from the road.

It has been assumed by most scholars that this inscription be-
longs to Ostia since it was found in the area used for Ostian
burials.335 If this is correct, the inscription gives us valuable
information about the Jewish community in this city.336 Here
we shall confine ourselves to only two important questions:
the date of the inscription and the office of the gerusiarh.

Frey dated the inscription to the beginning of the second
century357 and he is followed by White who argues that this
dating is confirmed by the text's similarity in form to other
funerary monuments at Ostia, Isola Sacra and Portus: "a
Hadrianic to early Antonine date (c. 117–160)."358 Noy is
more cautious and though he states that the letter forms and
the final formula indicates a second century context, he ad-
mits that it could be earlier or later.359 If the inscription is
from the beginning or first half of the second century it is
contemporary with the first years of the intermediary period
of the building's history.360

If these two premises, the place and date of the inscription,
are correct, and that seems to me to be the case, Gaius Julius
Justus was gerusiarh at Ostia during the period after
the construction of the synagogue, and possibly soon after Plo-
tius Fortunatus, the archisynagogos, passed away.361 Dis-
cussing the Mindius Faustus inscription above, we men-
tioned the possibility of the existence of more than one Jew-
ish community at Ostia. If the office of gerusiarh, the
administrative head of the gerusia, meant responsibility for
more than one synagogue, we might have further indications
that this was the case.362 However, today most scholars doubt
that such a central council existed in Rome,363 and we must
leave the suggestion regarding Ostia open.

In any case, the Gaius Julius Justus inscription shows that
there was an organised Jewish community at Ostia at an
early date, even if we must be careful in drawing too quick
conclusions due to the relative uncertainty of the origin of
the inscription. If it can be ascertained that it does belonged
to Ostian Jews, we have reason to believe that this leader
and his people belonged to the synagogue by the sea, since
due to its monumentality the synagogue probably was the most
prominent at Ostia.

5.3. The Earliest Building

As Kraabel has stated, the further back in time we go, the
more difficult it will become to identify a building as a syna-
gogue, “They are not so differentiated in their uses as are the
later buildings, nor will there be obviously Jewish symbols
present. They existed in some numbers surely; the literary
evidence is overwhelming—but their functions and features
are not wholly clear, and their religious uses may have been
less central while the Temple still stood.”364

This description of the earliest remains of synagogue
buildings match the earliest phase of our edifice; we do not
have any Jewish symbols at all, no paintings, and probably
no bath in B.

So, how much evidence do we have that the building was
a synagogue originally? As we have argued above in section
3.3, White’s reconstruction of hall D is not convincing: most
likely it included the benches and the podium. Further, we
found that the first building had the same overall plan as the
second; it included areas B, C, D and G (see the plan, Fig.
103). The large door in the east together with the four-col-
umn construction in C created a monumental impression
which could only belong to a public building. This is further
evidenced by the benches and the podium in D.

The curved wall in the main hall played an important role
for Kraabel when identifying the original use of the build-

335 See the discussion by Hedner-Zetterholm, “Jewish Communities,” and referred literature there. Meiggs, Ostia, 588, states that
after the discovery of the synagogue, we may be “reasonably cer-
tain that the inscription from Casel Porziano... refers to the Ostian
community.”
336 See White, “Synagogue and Society,” 44: “While a direct con-
nection with the synagogue edifice remains uncertain, the social
implications of this inscription deserve further discussion.” See
357 Frey, CIJ, 393.
358 White, “Synagogue and Society,” 44.
359 Noy, JJEWE, vol. 1, 33.
360 White refers it to his second phase; “Synagogue and Society,”
44. See also above, section 4.2.
361 See further below, section 5.3.1
362 On the office of gerusiarh and the relation of the gerusia to the
separate communities, see Levinskaya, Diaspora Setting, 186–187
and the discussion by Hedner-Zetterholm, “Jewish Communities.”
363 Levinskaya, Diaspora Setting, 186.
ing.\textsuperscript{365} This way of construction is a unique architectural feature not only among synagogues in the Diaspora and in Israel,\textsuperscript{366} but it is also unusual among other secular or religious buildings at Ostia. The slightly curved wall does appear but only in buildings otherwise dissimilar to the synagogue. Interestingly, we find an inner wall of the same appearance as in our building in the house of the triclinium, the guild house of the house builders.\textsuperscript{367} To this we shall return below. For now it may suffice to note that the curved wall in our edifice can indicate only that it was constructed as a public building from the beginning; in itself, it cannot prove synagogue use, since it is not part of any known architectural style used especially for synagogues.

Taken together, the architectural features of room D and the monumentality of the edifice thus show that we are dealing with a public building. We may now go one step further and ask if any of these details reveals a Jewish usage. Two of the features might point in that direction. First, the podium has been interpreted by most scholars as the bimah from which the Torah was read during the two later phases.\textsuperscript{368} It is difficult to see that it would have had another function in the first phase, since it is connected with the overall layout of the room. Second, the benches along the side walls which join the podium at the western curved wall must be seen together with the podium, shaping a hall identical to the one present during the intermediary period. Taking this into account, it would surely create more problems to assume a change in function of the main hall than not to. Similarity in plan is also one of the main arguments for the continuous use of the building as a synagogue for several scholars.\textsuperscript{369}

During the earliest phase area G had benches along its walls. Further, there were no divisions between areas G and B; the same floor in cocciopesto covered the whole area. Thus, the layout of this area differs from that in the second phase, and therefore must have had other functions. Most likely area G was a triclinium. No specific evidence of Jewish usage may be found in relation to this area, but triclinia have been found in connection to other synagogues\textsuperscript{370} and may thus be an indication speaking in favour of interpreting the building as a synagogue.

The bath present in B, during the second phase probably did not exist during the first. Evidence of water facilities is thus limited to the well and cistern in area A. Such facilities were present in connection with the houses of other guilds at Ostia\textsuperscript{371} and, again, we are led towards an interpretation of the building as a guild house.

Hermansen has listed several features characteristic of guild houses at Ostia. These include a sanctuary, facilities for meetings and banquets and good water supply for ritual purposes and consumption.\textsuperscript{372} Further, some of the buildings are characterised by “a monumentality that goes beyond that of private buildings.”\textsuperscript{373} The layout of the meeting places differed, but one of them, the House of the Triclinia, the site of the House Builder’s guild at a later stage included triclinia for this purpose.

Looking now at our building, we find that it includes all of these features, though perhaps in a modified way. This is, however, only in line with the diversity among the other guild houses. As a matter of fact, these modifications seem to indicate Jewish usage. The sanctuary of “ordinary” guilds could, of course, not have any place in a Jewish context. Instead, we find in the main hall (D) a podium, probably used as a bimah, from which the Torah was read. This is the focus of the room and may thus be said to take the place of a statue of a god in a guild sanctuary. This means that the room had a religious function to fill, even if we must be very cautious when speaking of which kind of worship that took place here. Perhaps Philo’s description of what went on in the synagogues of Alexandria could apply to Ostia too at this stage: according to him the activity in synagogues, or houses of prayer, were confined to the reading and expounding of the Torah.\textsuperscript{374} Further, it is likely that some kind of prayer activities were part of the worship, even if the fixed order of later times does not apply to our period. This fits well with the features of room D; the bimah, on which perhaps stood a portable ark, and the benches along the walls.

Area G was the triclinium. We do not have any remains of cooking facilities during this period, but perhaps the structures east of the building could have contained such equipment.

For the religious gatherings of the guilds at Ostia, it was custom to use water for ritual purposes. We also know that ritual washings took place in connection to synagogues.\textsuperscript{375} It has been suggested that the Jewish custom of washing before performing religious duties is likely to have been influenced by gentile practices.\textsuperscript{376} In the earliest phase of the building we find water facilities very similar to those of other (non-Jewish) guild houses. Taking into account all similarities between other guild houses and our edifice, it seems reasonable.

\textsuperscript{366} Cf. Shanks, Judaism in Stone, 168.
\textsuperscript{367} See, e.g., Hermansen, Roman City Life, 63, fig. 12.
\textsuperscript{368} See above, section 2.2 and 5.
\textsuperscript{370} Cf. the inscription from the Stobi synagogue which mentions a triclinium, Lifshitz, Donateurs, no. 10. See also the inscription from Caesarea. Lifshitz, Donateurs, no. 66. When finishing the present article I received news from Israel that a building which is interpreted by the excavator, Ehud Netzer, as a synagogue and dated to 75–50 BCE, has been found in Jericho. One of the rooms contained a U-shaped bench which seems to be similar to the one found in the Ostia building, and this room has been interpreted as having been used for ceremonial meals.
\textsuperscript{371} Hermansen, Roman City Life, 60-61.
\textsuperscript{372} Hermansen, Roman City Life, 74. It may also be of interest to note that some of the buildings, those of the augustales and the ship owners, were renovated to include an apse.
\textsuperscript{373} Philo, De Somnii, II 127. The words, uttered by an enemy of the Jews to threaten them to break the Sabbath, reads as follows: “And will you sit in your conviventes [ἐν τοῖς συναφίασις ἱµαῖραι] and assemble your regular company and read in security your holy books, expounding any obscure point and in leisurely comfort discussing at length your ancestral philosophy?” (translation by Colson and Whitaker). Cf. the Theodotos inscription which states that the synagogue he and his father and grandfather built was constructed “for the reading of the law and the teaching of the commandments.”
\textsuperscript{374} See my “Water and Worship.”
\textsuperscript{375} See, e.g., Sanders, Jewish Law, 270.
to assume that water was used for ritual purposes here too. As a matter of fact, the location of the building would also indicate this.\textsuperscript{337}

Finally, regarding the orientation of the building I have already argued against White’s hypothesis (see above, section 2.2). If my conclusion is correct, this means that we may have a conscious orientation of the building already in its first phase, the main entrance in the east (towards Jerusalem) and the \textit{bimah} in the main hall by the western wall being the focal points.

Taken together, the evidence thus suggests that the building was used by a guild and most likely a Jewish religious guild.\textsuperscript{379} Thus the Ostian evidence displays a connection between the guild and the development of the synagogue institution. However, there are some more details which support this conclusion.

The \textit{nymphaeum} in K2 was probably a product of the first major renovation, but K itself is constructed in \textit{opus reticulatum mixtum} and belongs to the first phase of the building. Above we have argued that in some way it belonged to the synagogue structure during all its phases and now we must ask what function it could have had in the early days. My suggestion is that, as could be the case with other guilds,\textsuperscript{379} this guild housed a guild official when the synagogue was built. A Jewish guild official would probably be an archisynagogos. Interestingly, in November 1969 an epitaph in Latin was found south of Ancient Ostia perfectly preserved, dated from the first to second century, and mentioning an archisynagogos.\textsuperscript{380}

5.3.1. The Plotius Fortunatus Inscription\textsuperscript{381}

The inscription (marble plaque, 23 × 43.6 cm; Fig. 107) reads\textsuperscript{382}:

Plotio Fortunato
archisynagogos (f.c(e)runt) Plotius
Amphatus Secundinus
Secunda PTN\textsuperscript{383} et Ofrilia
Basilia coiugi b(e)nci m(eri)nti

For Plotius Fortunatus
the archisynagogos.
Plotius Amphatius, Secundinus (and)
Secunda made (the monument) …
and Ofrilia Basilia for her well-deserving husband.

The Jewishness of the inscription revolves around the word \textit{archisynagogos}. According to Noy, when used outside the Aegean area this title refers without exception to a Jew.\textsuperscript{384} He excludes the possibility that it may have been an Aegean trader buried at Ostia since it is unlikely that a traveller would have been recorded by his family and commemorated in Latin. Further, if that would have been the case it would have been natural to mention his place of origin.\textsuperscript{385} The conclusion is, then, that Plotius Fortunatus was a Jew and held the title of archisynagogos at Ostia.

If it could be ascertained that only one Jewish community existed at Ostia, we would have the name of one of its prominent members. If the inscription is dated in the middle of the time range given by Noy, i.e., around the year 100, Plotius Fortunatus must have lived and been an active member of the synagogue during the second half of the first century. However, since the Mindius Faustus inscription may indicate the existence of more communities in the city, we must be careful in connecting Fortunatus to our synagogue.

It is possible that building K could have been the living quarters of the head of the synagogue. Further, if Plotius Fortunatus was the \textit{archisynagogos} of this synagogue, we have the names of the family living in K, provided that the one carrying the title had a function in relation to the community.\textsuperscript{386} Since it has been suggested that the title of \textit{archisynagogos} was not seldom distributed to people of some

\textsuperscript{337} See above section 2.1 and my “Water and Worship.”

\textsuperscript{379} Cf. Floriani Squarciapierno, “Plotius Fortunatus,” 191. After noting that the economic growth of Ostia resulting from the construction of Claudius’ harbour led to the building of the synagogue, she suggests that this synagogue was used for both prayer and business meetings. However, it should not be forgotten that not all guilds were connected with trade. As Meiggs states, “Among the old-established guilds at Rome some were connected with public religion. Such guilds were not uncommon in imperial Ostia. Though serving a different purpose they closely resembled the trade guilds in organization, and offered similar social attractions in addition to their religious functions. They had their own guild houses, and a similar hierarchy of officers and patrons” (Ostia, 332). Cf. Richardson, “Early Synagogues as Collegia.”

\textsuperscript{380} Hermansen, \textit{Roman City Life}, 31–32.

\textsuperscript{381} Floriani Squarciapierno, “Plotius Fortunatus”; Noy, \textit{JIWE}, vol. 1, 26. As evidence for the early date, Noy refers to the lettering and the names (27).

\textsuperscript{382} See \textit{Fig. 107}. The inscription was found during agriculural work in 1969 in the area of Pianabella, also called Procoio, south of ancient Ostia between the modern Via del Mare and Castel Fusano. Along the roads on this plain were the burial grounds of Ostia (Floriani Squarciapierno "Plotius Fortunatus," 187–188).

\textsuperscript{383} The translation follows Noy, \textit{JIWE}, vol. 1, 26.

\textsuperscript{384} According to Noy, \textit{JIWE}, vol. 1, 28, this abbreviation, which is not known elsewhere, probably stands for \textit{pa]|ri| n|ostro}, since the three names preceding the name of the wife are almost certainly the names of his children (27). This is also the interpretation of Mann, \textit{Gardens and Ghettos}, 211. Floriani Squarciapierno also interprets the three names as the names of the sons, “Plotius Fortunatus,” 188.

\textsuperscript{385} Noy, \textit{JIWE}, vol. 1, 27. See also Rajak and Noy, “Archisynagogoi.”

\textsuperscript{386} Noy, \textit{JIWE}, vol. 1, 27.

\textsuperscript{387} See the discussion of the different opinions concerning the meaning of the title in Hedner-Zetterholm, “Jewish Communities,” this volume.
wealth who donated money to the community and if Plotius Fortunatus lived during the second half of the first century, it may well be that Plotius was the one behind the building of the synagogue. This is of course only conjecture, and we will never know the answer for sure.

6. Interpreting the Synagogue and its History. Some Concluding Remarks

Even if the present study differs in several ways from the excavator’s description of the synagogue and its development, the analysis of the evidence undertaken here confirms her basic architectural chronology. However, Floriani Squarciapino only hints at the intermediary period, which has led some scholars to assume that there were only two major phases; before and after the fourth century renovation. It must thus be stressed that the second period is clearly marked in the remains of the building; it is independent, the architectural layout showing a time in the life of the Jewish community when different needs compared to the first and third period existed which resulted in the re-building of some important areas.

On the other hand, White’s reconstruction rests partly on a misunderstanding of the preliminary reports from the excavations (phase one) and on conjectures about a renovation including only “minimal internal modifications” (his phase two). The confused situation regarding the Mindius Faustus inscription also plays a part in creating difficulties when dating the different phases. Kraabel, who mainly follows the excavator’s chronology, has correctly noted the difficulty in having a hypothetical Torah shrine in the fourth century synagogue before the aedicula was built. However, as we have argued above, the Mindius Faustus inscription should not have a primary role when interpreting the evidence, since it cannot be determined with certainty whether or not it belongs to our synagogue but could have been brought there from another building. Further, the aedicula is built on top of the mosaic floor of the second major renovation which shows that it belonged to a second stage of the second major renovation. The analysis undertaken in the present study suggests the following architectural chronology:

Phase 1. Second half of the first century, perhaps close to the reign of Claudius. A Jewish religious guild constructed a public building which functioned as a synagogue (defined as a place where Jews held religious meetings in which their holy scriptures were read and expounded). Other activities, such as banquets, also took place in the edifice.

The building, which had its main entrance into B, included a large hall (D) with benches and a podium, most likely to be interpreted as a bimah. This room was separated from other parts of the building by partition walls (with doors) between D and C, and C respectively and marked as the centre of the building by its size, the slightly curved western wall and the monumental four-column construction in area C. Further there was a triclinium (G/B) and water facilities existed in area A: the well and the cistern, which was attached to its side. Area A was not included in the building proper at this time. Apart from the main door, the edifice had one door from the north (into C,) and one from the south (F) into area C, Further, there were three doors into area G; two from area A and one from area F. These doors were contemporary with the benches in the same room (G), which must have been no higher than the thresholds of the doors (c. 0.75 m above the original floor level).

At the same time as the synagogue was built, a private house (K) was constructed west of it. Perhaps this was the residence of a leader of the synagogue, or to use other terminology, the home of a Jewish guild official. The Plotius Fortunatus inscription telling us about an archisynagogos at Ostia is dated to the first to second century CE and may thus belong to this period.

Phase 2. First half of the second century, probably during the reign of Hadrian. The edifice went through a major renovation which included the erection of decorated partition walls in area B. The benches of area G/B, were removed and mosaic floors were laid in G and B, respectively. B, was divided into two rooms on a north–south axis by a wooden wall and possibly there were such walls in area G, too, but on an east–west axis. B, was entered through G and the two areas were treated as a single unit, just as before the renovation. In B, which was made a separate room, a shallow basin was constructed which most likely was used for ritual ablutions. To make access possible to this room a door was created from the north. The four-column construction was renovated—the capitals of the columns were replaced—and the whole structure was modified by moving the columns, making the space between them slightly bigger in order to fit the new layout with the partition walls in area B, which were decorated with paintings. The main hall (D) was left without changes except for the expansion of the podium towards the centre of the room and the introduction of a door from the north. (Perhaps a new floor—of which we have no remains—was also introduced). The southernmost room of K was divided on a north–south axis. The eastern part was made into a nymphaeum. The Gaius Julius Justus inscription probably belongs to the beginning of this period and the Mindius Faustus inscription, in both its phases, is to be dated here too, even though a little later.

Phase 3. The beginning of the fourth century, not before 306 CE. A second major renovation, transforming and enlarging the synagogue in a decisive way. Area A was incorporated

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387 Rajak and Noy, “Archisynagogoi,” 84–88
388 Cf. Rajak and Noy, “Archisynagogoi,” 87 where it is stated that, among other things, “archisynagogoi are found as donors of whole synagogue buildings.”
392 See also the plans, Figs. 103, 101, 87 and 88.
393 Cf. the conclusion by White (152) regarding the synagogue on Delos, “The building followed the style of other collegial halls on Delos and would have served as a community centre as well as a religious edifice.” This is important since the synagogue on Delos is older than the synagogue at Ostia.
into the building as a vestibule entered from the Via Severiana. The marble slab floor with which the area was paved covered the cistern while the well received a marble well head and retained its function. The partition walls in area B were removed and replaced with balustrades, the basin in B1 was covered by a mosaic floor and two doors were created between A and B1 and B2 respectively, flanking the main door into B2 in a way similar to the design of Galilean and other synagogues. The floors of B2 and B1 were paved with mosaics; the floor of B2 was raised to the level of area C and the main hall (D). In G a new floor was laid and an oven and a table with a marble top were introduced as was some other equipment showing that the room was now transformed into a baking area or kitchen. The northernmost door between G and A was blocked as was the door from G into F.

Further, areas F and E were added to the building: F, with its floor in cocciopesto, was a working area while E most likely had more than one function. Probably it was a social and dining hall, its broad benches being made for reclining, but it could also have been used as a hostel. The main hall was re-floored in opus sectile, the same technique also being used to decorate the podium and the walls. The benches were removed and perhaps the two columns (of different height and material compared to those of area C) were introduced during this renovation as decoration on either sides of the podium at the western wall, the podium retaining its place. Between the inner columns of C there was a barrier or perhaps a gate. If it was a barrier, the two doors between D and C1 and C2 respectively were the only possible entrances to the main hall. The door from the Via Severiana into D was blocked as was the other two doors facing north. Supporting walls in opus latericium and supporting pillars in opus vittatum were erected around three sides of D, blocking the windows which existed in the earlier periods. We have no evidence of a second storey, but it is possible that one was built during the second renovation above areas F and G and perhaps (although less likely) E.

Edifice K received an extended entrance area from the north, two steps down from ground level.

About the middle of the fourth century, in a renovation project separate from the second major renovation, the aedicula housing the Torah scrolls was introduced in the wall of the main hall nearest to Jerusalem. This stage in the history of the synagogue may be designated 3b since it presupposes the changes made during the second renovation but at the same time contradicts it through the blocking of the door between B2/C1 and D. The aedicula was later enlarged, probably at the end of the fourth century.

These are the main periods of the history of the building, based on the major renovations performed by the Jewish community. As we have noted on several occasions, there were also lesser changes and repair work made in between these two renovations and after phase 3b.

There are several difficulties regarding the use of the different rooms in the different periods. However, the history of the building clearly shows a development regarding the functions of a synagogue and its design. This is perhaps best seen in the introduction of the aedicula, the permanent Torah shrine decorated with Jewish symbols, which was placed as close to Jerusalem as possible. This novelty meant the changing of the direction of the ark, which earlier probably was portable and placed on top of the podium at the western wall. The bimah, however, retained its place by the same wall and thus the reading of the scriptures maintained its orientation towards Jerusalem. The liturgy most likely became more elaborate. The removal of the benches from the main hall (D) could imply that meetings of different kinds were moved to other areas of the complex and that the hall was used exclusively for worship. The benches created in E may indicate this though their size differs from those in D. Even if it cannot be excluded that other, wooden benches were introduced in D to replace those taken away, we have no evidence of this. In the present state of things, it seems best to assume that benches were no longer needed in this room.

If the first building was more like the guild house of a religious guild, the later building shows a design closer connected with a later concept of synagogue as we know it. The symbols used in this late period also signal an understanding of the synagogue as sacred space through their connection with the Jerusalem temple, even if the plan of the earlier phases of the building and the presence of water facilities may indicate that the oldest structure was also regarded as a holy place.

The changes made in the first renovation are more difficult to interpret. One thing seems clear, however, and that is that the basin constructed in B2 shows us that the importance of ritual washings did not diminish after the fall of the temple, but rather the other way around: washing which necessitated a separate room must have been more extensive than the ones witnessed by that practised in the first period of the building which most likely was similar to the practices of other (non-Jewish) guilds at Ostia.

The changes made during the first renovation in area G, which originally had broad benches, is more difficult to explain. Perhaps this became a study room and/or a place for keeping a portable ark when not used. In that case we would see a development already in the first half of the second century in which different activities are separated into different rooms. If room E was used for different kinds of meetings and banquets after the second renovation, and if there was a second storey, the study room could well have been moved from the first storey to a second by the fourth century. The real problem, however, is to explain why broad benches existed both in the first building (in G) and in the last (in E) but not in the intermediary period. Perhaps further excavations can answer that question.

The architectural development of the building may also tell us something of the relation between the Jews and the Ostian society. The first thing to note is of course that the synagogue was built outside the city walls. However, this may say more of the religious needs of the Jews than of their relation to the non-Jewish society. The absence of specific Jewish symbols and the similarity with other guild houses before the second major renovation imply that Jews did not feel the need to mark their otherness regarding their public meeting place at this early time. Indeed, it is not until the sec-
ond renovation we find specific Jewish symbols in the building. Further, the baking area, or kitchen, can also be seen as an accentuation of Jewish identity and food laws. The kitchen together with other facilities in the complex created a community centre which was self-sufficient.

If the reconstruction proposed above that Ostia probably had more than one Jewish community, and that the second renovation occurred as a result of a growing community but to the contrary, a diminishing amount of Jews at Ostia merging together from two or more congregations into one community in the community centre by the sea, we have a situation where Jewish identity becomes increasingly important for those who remain. Further, on the way to becoming the dominant religion of the Roman Empire, Christianity was most likely a rapidly expanding religion at Ostia, giving the Jewish community all the more reason to keep together. The fact that other Graeco-Roman cults were declining at the same time suggests a situation where Christianity was the major religious force provoking the self-preservation of the Jewish community. This materialised in an increasing emphasis on identity markers regarding the community centre.

It must be noted, however, that the building technique and decorations follow the general development and modern taste at Ostia; the blocking of doors facing the street, apsidal constructions, black and white mosaics, opus sectile floors and walls with strong colours, the style of the well head, etc. Even the design of the menorah on the architraves reveals influence from Roman life, the decoration on them imitating jewels. The Jews thus lived in and adapted to a Roman context, but at the same time expressed their unique religious position and marked their identity. These specific signs of otherness only appear in the later building.

In his article in HTR, White analyses the epigraphic evidence which he finds relevant for the Jewish community at Ostia in order to understand the relation between the Jews and the Graeco-Roman society. According to White the evidence show a "high degree of acculturation of Jews to the social life of Italian cities, even as they strove to retain their cultural and religious traditions." This seems to me to be an accurate description of the situation. However, he continues, "Both the architectural and the epigraphic remains attest to numerical growth and upward social mobility for the Jewish community." As I have argued above, I do not believe that the second renovation indicates an increase in the number of Jews at Ostia. However, I agree with White regarding the social interpretation of the inscriptions with the additional remark that all four inscriptions—including the Marcus Aurelius Pylades inscription indicating close interaction between Jews and the non-Jewish society—are contemporary with the earlier phases of the synagogue, before the second major renovation. Thus, the second renovation may indicate an increasing marginalisation and a need to accentuate identity-strengthening symbols.

As Floriani Squarciaipino has suggested, it is likely that a Jewish community existed at Ostia long before the synagogue was built. If this is correct it could explain why we find traces of acculturation already in the second half of the first century. On the other hand, one could also argue that prior to the time when the second major renovation took place, it had never been necessary for the Jews to mark their religious identity in the way that was done in the beginning of the fourth century when Christianity began to be dominant. The degree of acculturation seen in the first-century synagogue would then be the "normal" position which had to change when a rival religion, and especially one whose basic tenets had their roots in Judaic tradition, began to take over the scene.

A word on the architecture of the building and the position of women may also be in place here. The excavator has suggested that women could have been relegated to the fare part of the synagogue, and Krabel, Krinsky and Fortis have followed this suggestion, though with some hesitation. First it must be noted that this suggestion can only refer to the period after the second major renovation since before this renovation, area B1, the place suggested for women, was a separate room connected to area G, and before that, in the original building, it was occupied by the benches of the triclinium. However, it is hardly likely that area B1 served this function even in the fourth century building. During this phase B1 was an aisle leading to a door in the partition wall isolating the main hall (D) from the rest of the building. After the installation of the aedicula during the second phase of the second renovation, this aisle ended at the back of the Torah shrine, making participation in worship even more impossible from this place. Further, we have no evidence for the existence of a balcony. The conclusion must be that the synagogue did not have any separate section for women. The implications of this fact for the relation between men and women both socially and in a religious context is an issue that deserves more space than can be admitted here.

Thus, the evidence from the synagogue building together with the epigraphic evidence suggests a social situation in which the Jews at the time of the construction of the synagogue were acculturated to the non-Jewish social context and way of organising community life (the guilds). There are

384 See above section 5.2.1 and cf. Floriani Squarciaipino, "Ebrei," 140, who conjectures from inscriptions found at Portus that there could have been two Jewish communities at Ostia; one in the city of Ostia and one at the harbours (reminding us that the harbours belonged to Ostia until the time of Constantine).
385 See, e.g., Pohl, Ostia, 24. It should also be noted that the temple of Hercules was renovated as late as 394 CE. This renovation may be interpreted as a reaction against Christianity (see Harsberg, Ostia, 150). Thus, it would appear as if two separate religions were reacting against the growing dominance of Christianity.
386 See Zetterholm, "Struggle Among Brothers." Cf. Hachlili, Jewish Art and Archaeology in the Land of Israel, 402-403. Commenting on the characteristic features of synagogue architecture, she states that these "helped Judaism in maintaining its identity in a world of Christian expansion and the decline of paganism."
388 Zevi, "La sinagoga di Ostia," 144.
392 See above, section 5.2.1.
393 Regarding Floriani Squarciaipino and Krabel, see above section 1.1.1 and 1.1.3. Krinsky, Synagogues, 361; Fortis, Jews and Synagogues, 124, 126.
clear indications of upward social mobility, the Jews taking active part in society. Later, at the beginning of the fourth century, we find a development towards a more specific way of expressing Jewish identity in the community centre.

Regarding the relation between the Jews of Ostia and the land of Israel, we have noted that the tri-portal entry created during the second major renovation may have been influenced by contacts with other synagogues. Among Diaspora synagogues it may be noted that the Torah shrine in the main hall, added a little later, has parallels in, e.g., Sardis and perhaps in Sidon. It is thus not only a question of contacts between the Diaspora and the homeland but also between different Diaspora communities. We shall return to this below. These features all testify to the fact that the synagogue had become the new unifying “symbol” after the loss of the Jerusalem temple, the new centripetal force for Jewish religious identity.

The symbols found on the architraves of the Torah shrine from the second phase of the fourth-century renovation are all connected to the Jerusalem temple. In a way one may see in the Torah shrine at Ostia the epitome of the development in which the synagogue became the only symbolic centre of Jewish life, replacing the temple as a unifying symbol; the permanent ark shows the position and holiness of the building. The aedicula is not so much an indication of the increased importance and holiness of the scriptures as such, but rather of the holiness of the room in which it is installed. The unique position of the scriptures goes further back in history than this.

The symbolic value of the synagogue itself was most likely strong even before the fall of the temple. The temple-like design and the presence of water for ritual ablutions in the Ostia synagogue seem to indicate a holy place already in the first phase of the building. Holiness was not something restricted to the temple exclusively, even if it—of course—was the holy place. In the period after the destruction of the Jerusalem temple the synagogue took on the symbolic value of the temple in such a way that fixed Torah shrines were built to house the ark. This development is indeed complex and cannot be treated here. As I understand it, there seems to be four important aspects to deal with here: the temple, the holy scriptures, the synagogue building, and the Torah shrine. The temple, the synagogue and the scriptures have their own sort of holiness while the Torah shrine symbolises their interrelationship in a new situation, solving a religious and symbolic problem in a synthetic way when the temple was gone. The synagogue at Ostia may indeed reflect this development and provides important material for a continued discussion.

Summing up, we have several features appearing at the second major renovation which may lead us towards assuming a stronger connection between the synagogue at Ostia and synagogues in Israel and in the Diaspora. At the same time, this link between synagogues has implications for the development of the concept of holiness in the synagogue. Noting that rabbinic Judaism had gained some influence in the Diaspora by this time, perhaps we are witnessing in the synagogue building at Ostia the first steps towards the dominance of rabbinic Judaism outside the home land, a dominance that was destined to become and remain mainstream Judaism.

Since the synagogue at Ostia was constructed de novo as a synagogue and remained a synagogue through all periods of its history, as far as the archaeological remains can tell us, it provides a unique opportunity to study the development of the Diaspora synagogue. There is still much which remains to be done. However, one thing that seems clear is that the Ostian synagogue proves that the lack of monumentality found in many Diaspora synagogues is due to the fact that these buildings had previous functions, usually that of a private house, before they were converted into synagogues; the usual modest design was determined practically and was not an ideologically or religiously conscious choice by the Jewish community. Ostia shows us that when a building was constructed from the beginning as a synagogue, the layout of the edifice was monumental. Monumentality was thus not perceived as belonging to the Jerusalem temple alone, something which may have implications for our understanding of Jewish worship and religious gatherings outside Jerusalem as we have discussed above. Most likely the design of the original building—even if some specific features were unique—was inspired by other Graeco-Roman guild houses at Ostia, which often had monumental features. The archi-

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406 Cf., e.g., Fine and Meyers, "Synagogues," 123, who compare the placement of the Torah shrine by the tri-portal facade in the Sardis synagogue with the layout of the fourth-century phase of the Ostia synagogue as well as with some Galilean-type synagogues.
407 The menorah and the shofar are, of course, part of the temple symbolism, while the lulav and the etrog are connected to it as being part of the symbolism of sukkot, one of the pilgrimage festivals.
408 Cf., e.g., 1 Macc. 12:9 where the scriptures are called τὰ βιβλία τὰ στυριά. See also Philo, De Vita Mosis, II. 34ff. Note how important it is for Philo that the LXX is an exact translation of the original text, made by inspired scholars who are called prophets rather than translators.
409 Cf. Josephus who could call a synagogue ἐπολὺ (Bellum, VII. 45) and Philo, who says that synagogues are sacred buildings (ἐγώ αὐτά τοις προμάχοις) (In Flaccum, 48). For Philo, however, there is a clear distinction between the holiness of the Jerusalem temple and the synagogue of his time (Ad Gaium, 191). See also the discussion by Busink, Der Tempel von Jerusalem, 136ff.
410 For a discussion of the sanctity of the synagogue in the second temple period, see Binder, "Into the Temple Courts." For the development after the fall of the Jerusalem temple, see Fine, This Holy Place. Both authors treat the Diaspora as well as the land of Israel.
411 We know that the rabbis were present in Rome before the second major renovation of our synagogue. The establishing of a law school by rabbi Matthias ben Hersh (second century CE) suggests that they wanted to influence Diaspora Jewry with their own interpretation of Judaism after the fall of the temple. See b. Sanh. 32b.
412 See, e.g., White's studies of the remains of synagogues in antiquity: Origins, vol. 1 and 2. For a summary of his view, see vol. 1, 62–64.
413 The synagogue at Sardis is indeed monumental, but this is due to the fact that the earlier structure was a public edifice. However, the fact that the already existing structure was converted into a synagogue supports our view. According to Kraabel, this was probably done during the third century CE (discussed by Seager, "The Building," 173).
414 For a description of guilds in Ostia, see Hermansen, Roman City Life, 55–123. Regarding monumentality as one of the features revealing a building as a seat of a guild, see 74.
tecture of the synagogue thus shows us on the one hand that when Jews were to build a synagogue, they had no second thoughts about looking at and imitating non-Jewish secular and religious buildings and institutions, and on the other hand that they regarded their religious (and other) gatherings to be of such a character that they preferred a temple-like structure.

On many occasions, Kraabel has argued for a new understanding of Diaspora Judaism, criticising older views saying that the Jews of antiquity were marginalised and unimportant in the Graeco-Roman society. Instead he takes the evidence from Sardis as a point of departure, finding in this city “a Jewish community of far greater wealth, power, and self-confidence than the usual views of ancient Judaism would give us any right to expect.”413 He admits the possibility of Sardis being an exception. However, he predicts that “the [old] consensus...will soon undergo revision, with Sardis as catalyst.”414

The evidence from Ostia strengthens this view, taking us further back in time. In the search for the nature of the earliest synagogues, the synagogue at Ostia gives us valuable information which may be used together with the literary evidence speaking of synagogues of considerable size and monumental character.415 A full understanding of the ancient Diaspora synagogue can only emerge from a study of both literary and archaeological evidence.

To conclude, then, it is clear that Diaspora synagogues do not follow any one standard. However, we must also point to the fact that the ancient synagogues had several features in common, creating a unifying bond between them. We have already touched upon this issue above in section 5, giving criteria for the identification of a building as a synagogue.

Time has a role to play here too; the further we go forward in time, the more similarities we find. Thus, a traveller in time and space visiting different synagogues during the first four or five centuries of the Common Era would find that most synagogues were community centres with several rooms, sometimes including triclinia for common meals and hostels to take care of travellers and visitors, rather than single edifices for worship only. Further, there would be water facilities in the forecourt and not seldom the main entrance would be flanked by two smaller doors. The mosaic floors would have geometric patterns or display specifically Jewish symbols and there would be benches present in at least one of the rooms. The main hall would have an apse construction or a niche and a bimah. Finally, Jewish symbols like the menorah, the shofar, etc. would be present at different places in the buildings.

To be sure, not all of these features would be present in all buildings at all times, but the pattern is obvious enough to create a common impression. These similarities would then be contrasted with the different building techniques and architectural styles used at different geographic locations, imitating local (non-Jewish) customs. In this way, ancient synagogues—the synagogue at Ostia being one of the most interesting and important of them—display both unity and diversity.416

7. Appendix. Terminology of Techniques and Legend of Plans

In modern archaeological literature, not seldom different terms are used to designate the same type of masonry work. Therefore I shall make a short overview describing the terms used in this study, following Heres.417 The relevant techniques used in the synagogue building are the following:

Opus reticulatum mixtum. In most literature relevant for the synagogue, this technique is usually referred to simply as opus reticulatum, but it may also be called opus mixtum. It consists of a network of tufa blocks with tufa or brick-quoinings.418 Boersma makes some further subdivisions in mixtum A–D,419 but for our purposes it is enough to describe the technique used in the earliest phase of the synagogue as opus reticulatum mixtum.

Opus vittatum. This type may sometimes be referred to as opus listatum. Heres has two kinds of vittatum, simplex and mixtum. Vittatum simplex consists of tufa blocks only, excluding the use of bricks.420 The other type, vittatum mixtum is made of tufa blocks and bricks in alternation.421 Heres has

413 Kraabel, "Impact," 178.
415 Cf. the descriptions of the great synagogue of Alexandria in the Tosefta (1. Sukk. 4:6) and Tal. Hak. (6. Sukk. 51b). See also Philo, Ad Gaion, 134, the synagogue, or prayer house, in Tiberias is likewise reported by Josephus to have been an imposing structure (Vita 54, 277).
416 After the completion of the present study in 1998 new books and articles discussing the Ostia synagogue have appeared. In 1999 the above mentioned (see nn. 12, 408) dissertation by Donald D. Binder (Into the Temple Courts. The Place of the Synagogues in the Second Temple Period) was published by the Society of Biblical Literature dissertation series (no. 169). His valuable discussion of the Ostia remains is found on 322–336. In 2000 Lee Levine published his 748 page book The Ancient Synagogue: The First Thousand Years. Ostia is treated in relation to several issues; the discussion of the architectural development of the building is found on 255–258. An article authored by Peter Labar discusses the archaeological remains and relates the findings to other Diaspora synagogues: "Ostia antica die òllestè Synagoge Italiens," Tramah 10, 2000, 131–158. In an article published by Harvard Theological Review in 1999 I focussed the first phase of the building responding to Prof. White’s analysis of the remains ("The Oldest Original Synagogue Building in the Diaspora: A Response to L. Michael White," HTR 92-4, 409–433). White replied in the same issue of HTR: "Reading the Ostia Synagogue: A Reply to A. Runesson," 435–464. In this article, White modifies several of his earlier conclusions and presents a new analysis of the synagogue. Unfortunately, some parts of his latest analysis contains problems that must be the object of a continued discussion. I have therefore written a detailed response to White’s latest reconstruction of the building’s history ("A Monumental Synagogue From the First Century: The Case of Ostia," Journal for the Study of Judaism 33 [2002] forthcoming). I am grateful to Prof. White for his willingness to discuss the synagogue and hope that our dialogue will further the study of this important aspect of Judaism in its Graeco-Roman setting.
418 See Heres, Paries. pl. 1:3.
419 Boersma, Amoensissima civitas, 302–303.
420 See Heres, Paries. pl. 1:1.
421 See Heres, Paries, pls. 1:2 and 4:1.
two names for mixtum; mixtum a refers to a regular alteration of 1:1 and mixtum b refers to any other alteration. In the synagogue, both types of mixtum are used: mixtum a in the aedicula and mixtum b in, e.g., the wall separating area F from E. In the present study, Heres’ definitions are used.

*Opus latericium* is used for brickwork.

*Opus sectile*. This is a technique used on floors or walls, consisting of marble slabs laid in regular patterns. Any other floor consisting of marble slabs is called marble slab floor.

*Cocciopesto*. The term is not mentioned by Heres or Boersma. This type of floor is perhaps best described as “random pottery fragments, set in concrete.”

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**Building techniques**

- **Opus reticulatum mixtum**
- **Opus vittatum mixtum b**
- **Opus vittatum simplex**
- **Opus vittatum mixtum a**
- **Opus latericium**

**Walls**

- Presence of wall suggested but not confirmed

- Presence of wall confirmed

**Doors**

- Presence of doorway

**Floors**

- **C** Floor paved with cocciopesto
- **M** Floor paved with mosaic
- **SE** Floor paved with opus sectile
- **MS** Floor paved with marble slabs (without regular patterns)
- **EF** Earthen floor

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