

URBAN CHANGE IN LATE ANTIQUE NORTH AFRICA

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## ABSTRACT

The period of Late Antiquity was a time of substantial and fundamental change in cities throughout the Roman Empire, and North Africa presents plentiful (if often frustratingly enigmatic) evidence of this. By the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD most if not all cities of any respectable size had a full complement of the monumental buildings which defined the standard Roman city, in particular a *forum* with its surrounding religious, administrative, business, and entertainment buildings. By the middle of the 5<sup>th</sup> century however it seems that many of these traditional urban centres had been abandoned, and that a new form of monumental architecture had appeared on the scene: the Christian church. The coincidence of these two events, the abandonment of the traditional *forum* complex and the rise of monumental Christian worship buildings, has caused some scholars to speculate on a link between them, and has even prompted some to propose that the churches replaced the *fora* as centres of urban life. This theory, however, rests on a number of questions which have not yet been fully answered. First, can the archaeological and epigraphic evidence support the assertion that churches were built at the same time as *fora* were abandoned? Second, did church buildings usurp any of the functions fulfilled by the *fora*, and in so doing replace them as urban foci? This thesis, by investigating both of these questions, shows that while the construction of churches and the decline of *fora* may indeed be related, that relationship is far more complex than one of simple replacement of function.

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## INTRODUCTION

“*Ubi est Africa,*” asked the 5th century bishop of Carthage, Quodvultdeus, forlornly, “*ubi tantae splendidissimae civitates?*”<sup>1</sup> This same question has taken a firm hold on many modern scholars of Late Antiquity, inspiring a growing number of case studies and tentative synthetic articles on the fate of the traditional Roman city in various areas of the Empire.<sup>2</sup> The Medieval city, with its chaotic street layout and lack of monumental public buildings, clearly differed dramatically from the ordered plan and lavish baths, temples, *fora*, and *basilicae* of the stereotypical Roman town. What is not at all clear is the process by which this change occurred. Was it sudden, perhaps violent, or was it gradual, perhaps hardly noticeable to most people - at least to people with less keen an eye than Quodvultdeus? The answer to this question, it is gradually becoming apparent, is very complicated and subject to many qualifications. Patterns in urban development between and even within different geographical areas can be almost black and white in contrast: around the year 540, for example, the British historian Gildas lamented that the *civitates* of his land “*desertae dirutaeque hactenus squalent,*”<sup>3</sup> while at the same time many cities in Roman Palestine and Arabia were experiencing their greatest prosperity ever.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Sermo II de tempore barbarico* 5.4, quoted by Lepelley 1992, 52.

<sup>2</sup> See most recently the collections The City in Late Antiquity, edited by J. Rich (London 1992), and Towns in Transition. Urban Evolution in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages, edited by N. Christie and S. T. Loseby (Aldershot 1996).

<sup>3</sup> Ruin of Britain 26.2. See Dixon 1992, from which this quotation is taken (149).

<sup>4</sup> See Walmsley 1996.

Roman Africa falls somewhere between these two extremes. North Africa in Late Antiquity (the 4th to the 7th century AD for the purpose of this thesis) was in many ways a prosperous territory. Vast quantities of grain were sown and harvested in the rich fields of the northern coast, while the drier inland and eastern coastal regions yielded a copious flow of olive oil.<sup>5</sup> The latter required the production of millions of ceramic transport *amphorae* every season to facilitate its export, and local landowners did not miss the opportunity to ‘piggyback’ substantial amounts of fine ceramic tableware onto the outgoing shipments.<sup>6</sup> Though certainly disrupted by the 5th century Vandal invasion, the "Byzantine" reconquest in the 6th century, and by periodic revolts and internal disturbances, the North African provinces maintained this export trade in oil, grain, and other products to numerous Mediterranean destinations at a relatively steady rate.<sup>7</sup> Though the total volume of exports began to decrease in the 5th century, North Africa maintained or increased its percentage share of the Mediterranean market, with exports continuing till the late 7th century.<sup>8</sup> These products were supplied by the rich countryside which, though affected by a certain degree of depopulation, remained an economic resource of key importance to the Imperial government: as late as the early 7th century the withholding of grain shipments to Constantinople was effectively used as a pressure tactic against the central government.<sup>9</sup> So great was the monetary return on this agricultural produce that the Byzantines were able to

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<sup>5</sup> For some of the best archaeological evidence of oil production, see Hitchner 1990.

<sup>6</sup> For pottery production sites see most recently Peacock 1990 and, for the transport of produce, Whittaker 1983.

<sup>7</sup> See Mattingly and Hitchner 1995, 211-213 and references cited there.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 211. See Hayes 1972, map 30 for African pottery distribution into the 7th century.

<sup>9</sup> Pringle 1982, 114-115; this tactic was used by the exarch Heraclius against the usurper Phocas.

buy off the invading Arab leader Abdallah b. Saad with a ransom of over two million gold *solidi* (coins valued at seventy-two to a Roman pound) after the defeat of the Exarch Gregory in 647.<sup>10</sup> The 9th century Arab historian Ibn abd al-Hakam recorded that when the conqueror inquired as to the source of this wealth, the Byzantine representative replied by showing an olive.<sup>11</sup>

Although declining somewhat in number and size, from the 4th to the 6th century the distribution of urban centres in North Africa remained extensive (in the central provinces of Proconsularis, Byzacena, and eastern Numidia at least), with settlements as far south as the great salt lakes.<sup>12</sup> These towns provided the products of the countryside with both local markets and with links to longer trade routes to the coast and from there around the Mediterranean. The wealth of the countryside in turn provided an impetus for urban development and renewal, as much of the revenue was expended on new building projects, first on buildings in the classical tradition such as baths, theatres, and other public buildings, and then increasingly on Christian churches.<sup>13</sup>

The earliest attempt at a broad synthesis of the evidence was made by Thébert, who essentially saw the 5th and 6th centuries as the crucial period of change, during which the traditional *fora* ceased to function and the two defining characteristics of the Byzantine North African city, the church and the fortress, rose to dominate the urban landscape.<sup>14</sup> In his opinion, the 4th and early 5th centuries were of lesser importance in this process, since

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<sup>10</sup> Mrabet 1995, 124; see also *ibid.* 126 for further examples of 7th century wealth.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 130.

<sup>12</sup> See Pringle 1982, 541 for map of Byzantine period towns, forts and roads.

<sup>13</sup> For detailed and complete analyses of civic building in the 4th and 5th centuries see Lepelley 1979 and Jouffroy 1986, the latter with graphic representation of patterns of municipal construction.

<sup>14</sup> See Thébert 1983, 109-116 and *idem* 1986, 38 and 41-46.

relatively few churches could be assigned to this period (at least as he read the evidence), and because the persistence of traditional institutions served to offset the potential power of the church.<sup>15</sup> For Thébert, this process of change involved the gradual abandonment of the traditional urban “points vitaux,” and their replacement by other “pôles,” namely Christian churches.<sup>16</sup> This idea was subsequently furthered by Potter in his own attempt at a synthesis of the evidence for the fate of the Roman North African city.<sup>17</sup> Potter advanced an earlier date of the late 4th or early 5th century for the general decline and disappearance of *fora* in many North African cities, and he linked this phenomenon with the rise of monumental Christian buildings and complexes, which in his view could have served as new urban foci.<sup>18</sup> The few exceptions to this pattern (one of which is the *forum* of Iol Caesarea itself, Potter’s excavation site, which appears to have been functioning well into the 5th century) are attributed to the effect of the construction of churches on these *fora*.<sup>19</sup> This view, that the traditional centres of North African towns went into disuse in the 4th or 5th centuries and were replaced by new monumental Christian urban foci, is one which has gained a certain amount of credence in the general literature.<sup>20</sup>

This thesis investigates this theory from two angles. First, is there sufficient

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<sup>15</sup> Thébert 1983, 105 and 108, and idem 1986 39.

<sup>16</sup> Thébert 1983, 107.

<sup>17</sup> Potter 1995.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 73 and 79.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., esp. 79. Cherchel, Sabratha, and possibly Carthage had *fora* which functioned in their traditional manner well into the 5th century. See also Mattingly and Hitchner 1995, 212-213 and Thébert 1986, 38.

<sup>20</sup> This view is accepted by Mattingly and Hitchner in their recent survey article of North Africa in Late Antiquity (1995, 210): “From the end of the fourth century, *fora* in a number of towns either no longer functioned or played a limited role as the traditional focus of urban life. They were replaced in this function by ecclesiastical complexes, which in some cases impinged on the public spaces of the earlier *fora*.”

archaeological evidence to support such a conclusion? Can it be demonstrated that the modification or abandonment of *fora* and their associated public buildings coincided with the construction of Christian churches? Are any patterns visible, or does each city go its own way? Second, what was the precise role of these new churches in their urban context? Did they assume functions previously performed by the *fora* and thus replace them directly or did they introduce new functions, supplanting those already provided by traditional public buildings? In what way did they actually serve as new urban foci?

Four North African cities serve as the basis of this study: Sabratha, Ammaedara, Sufetula, and Belalis Maior. These cities have been selected with the intention of providing a sample representative of the provincial towns of Roman North Africa. Sabratha was a large seaside port city in Tripolitania, one of the three main cities which gave the province its name. Ammaedara and Sufetula were both relatively large towns in the heart of inland North Africa but with different roles: the former was situated with military considerations foremost, a role which was maintained strongly (or revived) in the Byzantine period, while the latter was located at an important transportation hub in a rich agricultural plain. Belalis Maior in contrast was a rather small town, but still one wealthy and important enough to acquire the basic trappings of a Roman city. Each of these towns has seen a fair amount of excavation, with the result that it can be assumed with some certainty that most of their major monumental buildings have been uncovered. Nonetheless, this excavation has been far from perfect and, as will be discussed later, the current state of the evidence often leaves much to be desired. Carthage has been purposely excluded from this selection of main cities for study, although it is discussed in some detail in Chapter 3. The reasons for this are twofold: as a provincial capital, and indeed one of the foremost cities of the Mediterranean, Carthage

cannot be assumed to have been at all a typical example of urban development; and secondly, many years of UNESCO excavations notwithstanding, the archaeological evidence for the true appearance of ancient Carthage is surprisingly limited.

This thesis begins with an exposition and analysis of the available evidence and concludes with an interpretation of its significance. The first chapter sets the scene by examining the archaeological and epigraphic evidence for the urban topography of these four cities in the early 4th century, before any monumental churches were constructed. Chapter 2 then examines the process by which monumental churches were inserted into this traditional urban topography. The occupational history of the cities is traced from the 4th to the 7th centuries, focussing on the construction and expansion of Christian churches and on the later fate of traditional secular and religious monuments. This evidence is then compared and evaluated in Chapter 3, with the goal of determining to what extent it can support the theory of the replacement of traditional urban foci by church buildings. The final chapter draws on archaeological and literary evidence to investigate the role of church buildings in their urban context, through an analysis of the functions they performed. These functions are then compared to the known functions of traditional public buildings and spaces in an attempt to evaluate the extent to which churches formed new urban foci.

## CHAPTER 1: PRE-CHRISTIAN TOPOGRAPHY

The 4th century was a time of renewed prosperity for the cities of Roman North Africa. In many towns the wealth of the countryside was reflected in new construction projects, and the essential architectural foci of traditional civic life were maintained and in many cases embellished. In order to set the stage for the appearance of monumental Christian structures in the later 4th century, this chapter will explore the urban landscapes of four North African cities in the period immediately before the Christians undertook their first major urban building projects: Sabratha, Ammaedara, Sufetula, and Belalis Maior. A synopsis of the monuments of each of these towns will be presented, followed by a concluding discussion of the general condition of North African urban centres in the 4th century, their nature and extent, the nature and overall pace of construction, and changing patterns in euergetism. An attempt will be made to create an image of the physical state of these urban centres in the 4th century, focusing on the types of buildings and spaces available and trends in their construction, maintenance, or neglect.

### **Sabratha:**

Sabratha is located on the Mediterranean coast of Tripolitania. Its main monumental buildings (Fig. 1.1)<sup>1</sup> are situated along the coastal strip, with a major cluster of five large

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<sup>1</sup> In all following figure numbers, the first digit stands for the Chapter (in this case, Chapter 1) in which the figure is first referenced.

temples, a bath, and two public buildings around the *forum* in the western end of town; further public structures including a Theatre, baths, and two major temples are situated further to the east. Large-scale excavation took place between 1925 and 1942 under the auspices of the Italians, but large tracts of the city still lie beneath the sands. During the course of these excavations little information was recorded, much less published.<sup>2</sup> Immediately after the Second World War three seasons of excavation, mainly in the *forum* area, were carried out under the direction of J. Ward-Perkins and K. Kenyon; the results were published by P. M. Kenrick in 1986. Most recently, Italian projects have conducted study and excavation of selected monuments.<sup>3</sup>

The main layout of the *forum* in the 4th century was dictated by massive alterations dating back to the late Antonine period.<sup>4</sup> The main monuments (Fig. 1.2), clockwise from the east, consist of the East Forum Temple, the Antonine Temple (to the southeast of the E. Forum Temple), the Basilica, the South Forum Temple (south of the Basilica), the Cruciform Building, the Capitolium, the Temple of Serapis (lying off to the north-west), and on the north side of the *forum* the *curia*. The Seaward Baths lie off to the north-east along the coast, and the entire area around the *forum* is heavily built up with housing. To the east of the *forum* area lay more *insulae*, the Theatre (Fig. 1.3), the Oceanus Baths and the Temple of Isis (Fig. 1.1, in the east); a wall crossing the site of this temple has been interpreted as a 4th century defensive wall but this is by no means certain.<sup>5</sup>

It appears that all these structures were in good repair and remained in use up until

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<sup>2</sup> Kenrick 1986, 1.

<sup>3</sup> See Brecciaroli Taborelli 1974, Joly and Tomasello 1984, Bonacasa Carra 1989 and 1991.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 9 and 24-29, Forum "Period III."

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 318; Kenrick refuses to speculate on this subject.



the middle of the 4th century. An inscription allegedly found in the East Forum Temple by the Italians (**Sabratha 1**)<sup>6</sup> records the restoration of a temple to Liber Pater between the years 340 and 350; whether or not this was the East Forum Temple is uncertain. It was shortly thereafter that some major catastrophe appears to have struck Sabratha; evidence includes widespread destruction noted by the Italians (and confirmed in part by the British) which appears to have occurred in the early part of the second half of the 4th century. Indications of this destruction in the *forum* area include the rebuilding of the *curia* and the *basilica* (the latter using blocks from the Antonine and South Forum temples),<sup>7</sup> the repaving of the *forum* (using a number of inscriptions or fragments thereof), the laying of similar mosaics in the *basilica*, *curia*, and *forum portico*,<sup>8</sup> and the stockpiling of large amounts of marble sculpture, architectural fragments, and inscriptions in the vaults beneath the *capitolium*.<sup>9</sup>

Epigraphic evidence from two buildings on the *forum* reinforces the theory of a destruction in the third quarter of the 4th century. Two dedicatory inscriptions (**Sabratha 2a** and **b**) found *in situ* in the *curia* appear to be associated with its post-destruction refurbishment; datable to 364-367, they would support the idea of a speedy restoration of this important structure. Furthermore, a statue base (**Sabratha 3**) made from a re-used altar and found in the 6th-century paving of the *basilica*/Church I records a dedication to a certain Flavius Vivius Benedictus, *praeses* or governor of the province of Tripolitania, on the

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<sup>6</sup> References to inscriptions in the Appendix appear in the text in bold type.

<sup>7</sup> Kenrick 1986, 10.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 32. The mosaics are of simple plain white tesserae, which in itself is distinctive - see further references under discussion of the Basilica below.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 104; the latest dated inscription found beneath the Capitolium is *IRT* 54, bearing a dedication to Constantine as Augustus (306-337) or Constantine II (337-340). Fragments of the same inscription were also found in the pavement of the Forum.

occasion of the refurbishment of a bath, and possibly other buildings at Sabratha and throughout the province; the date of the dedication is given precisely as July 28, 378. A fourth inscription (**Sabratha 4**), rather later in date but found *in situ* in the *curia*, records a dedication to the *flamen* Lucius Aemilius Quintus in return for his continued labour on behalf of his province.

This destruction was originally attributed (with no solid evidence) by Bartoccini and subsequently Reynolds and Ward-Perkins (in *IRT*) to a hypothetical sack by marauding natives called the Austuriani in 363-365.<sup>10</sup> In an alternative theory Di Vita later suggested that this destruction should be associated with a large earthquake recorded in the Aegean on July 21 of the year 365 by Ammianus Marcellinus and other ancient writers.<sup>11</sup> Kenrick was aware of the unlikelihood of this quake's destructive effects being felt as far away as Sabratha, but felt that the archaeological evidence did itself speak for the occurrence of a serious and widespread destruction in Sabratha at about this date.<sup>12</sup> However, the possibility that this particular quake could be responsible for the destruction of these monuments at Sabratha has now been conclusively discounted. The epicentre of the actual quake has been convincingly located a short distance south of Crete on the sea floor of the Mediterranean, and its main destructive effects were limited to coastal areas of Egypt Greece and Sicily, as

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<sup>10</sup> See Bartoccini 1950, 33-35. His interpretation must be doubted, for Ammianus makes no mention whatsoever of Sabratha in his account of the troubles in Tripolitania, which began in 363 (Ammianus Marcellinus, 28.6). Bartoccini (*ibid.*, 34) attempts to get around this by suggesting that the destruction of Sabratha was such a grave event that Ammianus could not bring himself to mention it.

<sup>11</sup> See Di Vita 1980, and references there to his earlier works; for the ancient sources, see Jacques and Bousquet 1984, Appendix (27 sources cited).

<sup>12</sup> Kenrick 1986, 6, n. 1.

a result of a tidal wave generated by the submarine quake.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, the supposed epigraphic evidence taken as supporting the quake has been demonstrated as doing nothing of the sort.<sup>14</sup> Thus, the precise dating of the archaeologically attested Sabratha destruction of the third quarter of the 4th century cannot be taken as either 363 or 365. Nonetheless, substantial evidence does point to a fairly widespread destruction at about this time, for which the inscriptions may be taken as giving a *terminus ante quem*. Thus, in the following text I will refer to this event as the “c. 360 destruction.”<sup>15</sup>

The exact nature of the post-c. 360 *forum* is difficult to determine; the only thing that may be said with certainty is that there is no direct evidence for specifically Christian activity. The front of the East Forum Temple was blocked off by a mosaic-paved portico which cut through part of its podium (Fig. 1.4 shows Antonine period configuration; Fig. 1.5 the later modifications); nonetheless, a 5m wide space was left in the east wall of the portico

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<sup>13</sup> Jacques and Bousquet 1984. In collating the evidence of ancient authors, Jacques and Bousquet have shown that the event described was a tsunami which travelled east-south-east and west-north-west from its epicentre just south of Crete to strike Alexandria and Methone in the southern Peloponnesus (as described by Ammianus) and Sicily and nearby islands (as described by St. Jerome) - see 439-445, esp. fig. 1.

<sup>14</sup> Lepelley 1984. Lepelley's study of all North African inscriptions recording building in the period 364-383 reveals that restoration exceeded new construction by a ratio of 3:1 and that for the majority of the inscriptions on which the cause of the project is recorded, it is almost always due to collapse through age (485). The frequency of inscriptions in this period may be comfortably attributed to increased imperial attention to building in Africa (484-485). Moreover, Lepelley notes the conspicuous absence of any mention of this quake by Augustine (470-473), and Ammianus' failure to mention it in his important narrative on the “troubles” in Tripolitania (476-478). In sum, Lepelley finds that “rien n'atteste des ravages dûs à un tremblement de terre en 365” (489).

<sup>15</sup> Di Vita (1990) made a spirited and lengthy reply to the critics of the earthquake argument. The paucity of Di Vita's main chronological arguments and the uncertainty of his 19th century earthquake parallels notwithstanding, the questions of what caused this destruction or even what was its specific date are not of primary concern; what is important is that destruction apparently did occur at Sabratha at around the year 360.

to allow access to the temple steps.<sup>16</sup> The South Forum Temple appears to have gone entirely out of use, given up at some point to private housing.<sup>17</sup> The *basilica* was extensively remodeled in the form of a double-apsed hall, and almost certainly retained its secular function; this is indicated by the raised tribunal in the western apse, which was accessible only by means of an external stairway (Fig. 1.6 shows late Antonine phase of *basilica*, Fig. 1.7 is post-c. 360).<sup>18</sup> The new *basilica* quite likely dates to the same period as the refurbishment of the *curia* which, as mentioned above and as witnessed by a number of inscriptions, appears to have been rather quickly reconstructed.<sup>19</sup> Inscription **Sabratha 3** refers to a restoration and decoration of baths, and the Seaward Baths (to the north-east of the Forum) may be a good candidate for this restoration: they contain substantial coarse mosaic paving of a sort very similar to that of the *basilica*, *curia*, and *forum portico*.<sup>20</sup>

Meanwhile, at the west end of the *forum* the *capitolium* is assumed to have lain in ruin, with its substructure used as a marble repository.<sup>21</sup> The North-west Forum Temple is

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<sup>16</sup> Kenrick 1986, 10 and 32. Kenrick thinks that it is highly likely that the East Forum Temple was destroyed by earthquake (33) and, based on the reduced entrance, he assumes that it was not used subsequently as a temple. In support he also cites an Italian excavation report which says that the temple's architectural elements were found collected on the south side of the precinct; however, no precise date for this activity can be given. It seems to me that the provision of a 5m wide entrance directly from the Forum does indeed point to some sort of official use of the building, perhaps even in its former role as a temple, after its rebuilding.

<sup>17</sup> Joly and Tomasello 1984, 8.

<sup>18</sup> For description, see Kenrick 1986, 80-83 and Duval 1986b, 275-278. Kenrick (84) and Duval (288) are both of the opinion that Basilica I does not appear to have been intended as a church in its original post-c.360 form.

<sup>19</sup> This is indicated by the similarity of the Basilica's new mosaic floor (Kenrick 1986, 81 and pl. 23a; this plate shows the mosaic lying beneath a later church-period stairway leading up to the tribunal) to that in the renovated Curia (Bartoccini 1950, 29 and pls. 14 and 15a).

<sup>20</sup> Di Vita 1990, 458 and fig. 28.

<sup>21</sup> Kenrick 1986, 114. In a rather broad leap of reasoning Kenrick states "the superstructure was almost certainly destroyed in the earthquake of AD 365."

assumed to have shared a similar fate.<sup>22</sup> The domestic *insulae* around the *forum* however give evidence of continued and even prosperous occupation in this period: in the so-called “Casa Brogan” (officially Regio II, Insula 10, House G, just east of the Antonine Temple) new mosaic floors were laid in the second half of the 4th century.<sup>23</sup> Further from the city centre, however, there is evidence of decay and abandonment: excavations in Regio V, Insula 11 (by the Theatre) suggest a date of abandonment in the later 4th century, perhaps after the c.360 event.<sup>24</sup> The large private baths and public building (a storehouse? see Fig. 1.10) which were re-used in the construction of Churches III and IV may have been functioning right up to the time when the churches were built, but since the date of this work is not clear neither is the later history of the earlier structures.<sup>25</sup> This picture of decay on the fringes may be reinforced by the remains of a substantial private bath located about 350m due south of the forum in Regio VII; these appear to have gone out of use by the end of the 4th or very beginning of the 5th century.<sup>26</sup>

In sum, the archaeological picture of post-c.360 Sabratha is one of energetic renewal

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 116; at some later point dwellings of uncertain date were built atop it.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 143. This *insula* had previously been converted to an industrial function, so this 4th century refurbishment may be viewed as a renewal of residential occupation in the area around the Forum; see the discussion of the mosaic of Church III in Chapter 2 below for more on the date.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 226.

<sup>25</sup> Ward-Perkins and Goodchild (1953, 15) believed that the earlier buildings were likely functional when they were converted into churches, since there was little or no evidence of damage to their structure. Bonacasa Carra (1991, p.212) suggests that a disaster (she refers to the 365 quake) would have allowed the earlier buildings to become available for church construction. The churches may have been built in the late 4th century; see Chapter 2 below.

<sup>26</sup> Extensive Late Roman refurbishment of these private baths is indicated by new mosaics which have been archaeologically dated to the late 3rd or early 4th century (Brecciaroli Taborelli 1974, 206-207). Excavations of the back-fill of robber trenches cutting the last phase mosaics revealed ARS Hayes forms 59B (produced up till the first quarter of the 5th century), 68 (dated 375-400/420), and 71A (dated c.350-425) (ibid, 145-146), giving a plausible *terminus ante quem* for the use phase of the baths. See also Bartoccini 1927, 22-26.

in the city centre, albeit with limited resources and with some changes in the central assemblage of civic buildings, combined with abandonment in the outlying areas of the city. The epigraphic evidence indicates that this central urban renewal was not necessarily conducted in the same spirit as earlier constructions at Sabratha: the one major work of public euergetism after the middle of the century is recorded as being organized and paid for by a governor (**Sabratha 3**). Although the *ordo* and the citizenry were still able to erect statues to honour such benefactions (**Sabratha 3** and 4), the last major work funded by a private individual is recorded by the inscription of 340-350 commemorating the restoration of the temple of Liber Pater (**Sabratha 1**). In this light it seems that although the city itself was rather dramatically rejuvenated, its elite urban upper class may not have been, at least not to the same extent.

### **Ammaedara:**

The site of ancient Ammaedara (Fig. 1.11), modern Haïdra, lies far inland near the modern border between Tunisia and Algeria. Located on a bend along one side of the *oued* Haïdra, the city follows the land as it rises up from the bank of the river. Ammaedara was selectively excavated between 1925 and 1939 under the direction of a certain Dr. Dolcemascolo, who uncovered most of what is visible today; these excavations have left almost no records.<sup>27</sup> A later series of expeditions in the late 1960s and early 1970s under N. Duval focused on the cleaning and documentation of Dr. Dolcemascolo's excavations.<sup>28</sup> Though this selective excavation has left a very incomplete picture of the city, a theatre,

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<sup>27</sup> Duval 1982b, 635 and 645.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 651.

baths, market, potential *capitolium* and *forum* have been uncovered (along with five church buildings). Archaeological dating evidence for most of these structures is generally lacking, but epigraphic sources coupled with the work of Duval do allow a partial picture of Ammaedara in the 4th century to be reconstructed.

Ammaedara was first occupied by the Romans as a base for the Third Legion and, when the Legion moved on, as a camp for veterans (75 AC, under Vespasian).<sup>29</sup> The main considerations in its location were strategic, particularly nearness to a water source and a central location on the routes of communication.<sup>30</sup> The history of the city before the 4th century is unfortunately very unclear;<sup>31</sup> the archaeological record is only somewhat better.

In the approximate centre of the city a portico-surrounded tetrastyle temple has been tentatively identified as the *capitolium*, based on its dominant location (Fig. 1.12).<sup>32</sup> The layout of the nearby buildings helps to reinforce the idea that this is indeed the *capitolium*. A stairway leads down from the temple precinct to what may be the *forum* area; only part of the north end of this area has been exposed, but it is bordered by what appears to be a row of small rooms, perhaps shops. It is quite possible that this row of ‘shops’ formed the northern border of an open plaza, with its eastern boundary formed by the so-called “Windowed Building”<sup>33</sup> and its southern and western boundaries by the *decumanus* and

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 638-639.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 642-643.

<sup>31</sup> “On ne peut rien dire actuellement de l’histoire de la cité depuis sa fondation jusqu’au IV e siècle parce qu’il manque des points de repère essentiels.” Ibid., 650.

<sup>32</sup> See Baratte et al. 1973.

<sup>33</sup> It has been suggested that this was the civic *basilica* (in the late 19th century by Saladin: see Duval 1982b, 665), but excavation has been insufficient to prove this (ibid., 646).

*cardo* respectively.<sup>34</sup> Further evidence supporting the idea of this area as the ancient civic centre is the square building with central portico which lies to the east of the ‘*capitolium*,’ likely a *macellum*;<sup>35</sup> to the west the fragmentary remains of a number of earlier buildings have been found underneath the Christian Basilica I: the largest of these, with its impressive mosaic decoration, was possibly public in nature.<sup>36</sup>

Outside of the *forum* area, a theatre lies to the east. It was built or restored under Septimius Severus,<sup>37</sup> enlarged or improved at the end of the 3rd century (**Ammaedara 1 and 2**), and possibly restored under Julian.<sup>38</sup> Halfway between the theatre and the forum is an example of one of Late Antique North Africa’s most enigmatic public(?) buildings, a “monument à auges.”<sup>39</sup> Two rows of troughs divide the square central space, with an apse at the east end, from two flanking “aisles;” a corridor with further rooms across it runs along the west end of the monument, and to the south lies a colonnaded court.

While the evidence provided by the restoration of the Theatre at public expense hints at an active urban life in Ammaedara in the late 3rd century,<sup>40</sup> further evidence is generally

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<sup>34</sup> This configuration is suggested by Baratte et al. (1973, 166-168). The peristyle court of the ‘*capitolium*’ itself could potentially be taken as the *forum*, but this is highly unlikely since no buildings open onto it (ibid., 166).

<sup>35</sup> Suggested by Baratte and Duval (1974, 46).

<sup>36</sup> Duval (1981, 202) describes these remains as constituting “sans doute un monument public.” Baratte (1974, 32-33) dates the mosaics to the 4th century.

<sup>37</sup> Duval 1982b, 648; *ILTun* 460.

<sup>38</sup> **Ammaedara 4**. It is not clear exactly to which building this inscription refers.

<sup>39</sup> Duval 1982b, 655-657. These structures are confined to a fairly narrow geographic area encompassing south western Proconsularis and north western Byzacena (though Duval (1979, 1017) notes similar structures in Cyrenaica and Palestine), appear to date to the 4th and 5th centuries, and are of uncertain function; the only fairly certain conclusion that can be made is that they are not stables (see Duval and Duval 1972).

<sup>40</sup> See Lepelley 1981, 65.



lacking. An exception is a newly found inscription (**Ammaedara 3**) from the “Winter Baths” located north of the Capitolium, which gives evidence for the reconstruction of one of its apses in 336. A *curator* and *flamen perpetuus* is identified as being responsible for this work. The only other inscriptions recording the agents of acts of patronage from this period are the two inscriptions dating to the Diocletianic period (**Ammaedara 1 and 2**), which record work carried out by an unknown individual and *sumptu publico*, respectively. These inscriptions seem to indicate a pattern of euergetism not dissimilar from that discernible at Sabratha.

### **Sufetula:**

The ancient city of Sufetula (Fig. 1.13) was located next to a river on a fairly flat plateau in central Byzacena, about one hundred kilometres south-east of Ammaedara. Situated at an important crossroads, Sufetula was founded in the Flavian period and remained an important urban centre right up to its capture by the Arabs in 647.<sup>41</sup> It is recorded as having a bishop as early as 256, and in the late 4th and early 5th century it had two, one Catholic and one Donatist.<sup>42</sup> The bulk of the exposed monuments was excavated between 1907 and 1922, with further sporadic excavation between 1942 and 1966.<sup>43</sup>

The archaeological and epigraphic evidence for the state of Sufetula in the Late Roman period may best be described as spotty; nonetheless, sufficient details have been

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<sup>41</sup> For the date of foundation see Duval 1990, 503; for the loss of the city after the defeat of the exarch Gregory, who had chosen it as his base of operations against the invading Arabs, see Duval 1982a, 620.

<sup>42</sup> Duval 1990, 513.

<sup>43</sup> Duval 1982a, 597.

uncovered to indicate that the city was flourishing at this time. A triumphal arch (Fig. 1.13, #31) built in honour of the Tetrarchs over the road leading into the city from the southeast gives some idea of the topographic extent of the town; the placement of this arch so far out on the south-east fringe of town possibly indicates that no vacant land was available to build it closer to the centre, and that the edge of the inhabited area did indeed extend this far in the Late Roman period.<sup>44</sup> An indication of a similar spread of late settlement to the opposite end of town is provided by the ‘House of the Seasons’ near the amphitheatre (Fig. 1.13, #5). The apse of the *oecus* is dated by Duval and Baratte to the 4th century,<sup>45</sup> and examples of ornately carved capitals and lintels and a colourful figural mosaic may be dated even later (see Chapter 2 below).

The heart of the city was formed by the *forum*, a large, roughly square open space dominated by three temples placed side-by-side at its west end. The *forum* was surrounded by rows of small rooms on the north, south, and east sides, fronted by a portico (Fig. 1.14); there is limited but evocative evidence of 4th century activity in this area. The one main change posited in the 4th century *forum* is the extension of the southern enclosure wall 5m further south (denoted by the wall shaded with hatching on Fig. 1.14); this new wall was pierced with many large doorways giving access to a new fountain (Fig. 1.13, #18) constructed under Valentinian I and Valens,<sup>46</sup> and its associated plaza. The southern row of small rooms was kept in place, with a passageway behind them giving access to the doors to the southern plaza, and an apsidal building was built in the south-west corner of the new

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<sup>44</sup> The arch still stands; for the inscription **Sufetula 1**.

<sup>45</sup> Duval and Baratte 1973, p.68.

<sup>46</sup> For inscription of fountain 18: **Sufetula 2**.

extension: it may have had a public function.<sup>47</sup>

It is possible that two other monumental fountains (Fig. 1.13, #s 8 and 21) which are similar in plan may also be similar in date.<sup>48</sup> Fountain 21 in particular, built with a raised, paved platform in front of it which effectively blocked off the *decumanus maximus* for all but pedestrian traffic, appears to be a late addition.<sup>49</sup> The large central baths, located 100m east of the Forum, also show evidence of refurbishment in the 4th century: an inscription (**Sufetula 3**), badly mutilated but partly legible, records work carried out on a [*cellam piscinalem*] in the winter baths; archaeological evidence suggests that this entailed the installation of a new frigidarium in a large central room.<sup>50</sup> Further evidence of building activity in the 4th century has been found in the remains of what appears to be a finely-decorated residential garden beneath Basilica II.<sup>51</sup> Finally, a fragmentary inscription (**Sufetula 4**) carved on part of the theatre skene appears to record a benefaction by a certain C. Ceionius Rufius Volusianus, *consularis* of the province of Byzacena at some time before he held the office of urban prefect at Rome in 365.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Duval (1982a, 607, fig. 5) tentatively identifies this as the curia; the only evidence for such an attribution is the shape of the building - see the potential comparison with the likely *curia* of Belalis Maior, below.

<sup>48</sup> See Duval and Baratte 1973, 29-30, figs. 14 and 15.

<sup>49</sup> See Duval 1982a, 611 and figs. 7a and b.

<sup>50</sup> See Duval and Baratte (1973, 82-86) for report on the baths.

<sup>51</sup> In particular, a mosaic-lined basin with distinctly non-Christian marine iconography postulated to be a centre-piece of a garden (Duval 1971, 152-162). Duval notes parallels for the laurel wreath pattern in the 'Maison aux Chevaux' mosaics from Carthage, dated by Dunbabin (1978, 252-253) to the early 4th century; indeed, both the laurel wreath and the braid pattern used in the Sufetula mosaic are paralleled in the 'Seasons' mosaic from the Maison aux Chevaux *triclinium*, dated by Dunbabin to c.320-330 (compare Duval figs. 166 and 170 with Dunbabin fig. 166); unfortunately, as pointed out to me by K. Dunbabin, such patterns are so common as to be of little use for precise dating.

<sup>52</sup> Lepelley 1981, 309-310. *CIL* viii, 11334=242 and *ILAfr* 116. For his career (of which only the date of his tenure of the office of *praefectus urbis Romae* is known), see *PLRE* 978-979; amusingly, Ammianus (xxvii.3) notes that during his tenure of the office of prefect, Volusianus (identified by his

Sufetula then, as Ammaedara but in apparent contrast to Sabratha, shows distinct signs of growth in the 4th century; the larger body of evidence, both archaeological and epigraphic, allows this statement to be made with more certainty than for Ammaedara. However, the evidence for the identities of the patrons involved in the known works of construction or restoration is thinner: the only two patrons whose position in society can be identified (on inscriptions **Sufetula 2** and **4**) are noted as *viri clarissimi*, men of senatorial rank and in one case a governor. There is no evidence for work carried out by the populace or by civic officials.

### **Belalis Maior:**

Belalis Maior (Fig. 1.15), its ancient name inferred from inscriptions,<sup>53</sup> lay in the rich agricultural lands of northern Proconsularis, near the city of Vaga. It was a small town whose early Roman history and status is unclear; by the early 4th century epigraphic evidence (**Belalis 2**) identifies it as a colony, though this status may have been gained as early as the early 3rd century.<sup>54</sup> Excavations carried out in the 1960s by A. Mahjoubi<sup>55</sup> revealed an open plaza surrounded by buildings (the *forum*?) and two main churches, in addition to a few other isolated structures. Mainly dating to the 4th-7th centuries, the excavated monuments of Belalis Maior provide an example of the Late Antique occupational history of a small but

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*signum*, Lampadius) “in all parts of the city which had been beautified by the generosity of various emperors ... had his own name inscribed, not as the restorer of ancient buildings but as their founder” (trans. W. Hamilton); he was also reported to be an avid thief of building materials, and to have thus enraged the populace.

<sup>53</sup> One honorary inscription refers to the *Belalitanii Maiores* making a dedication to Elagabalus; another inscription, funerary, names the deceased as a *civis Belalitanus* (Mahjoubi 1984, 64).

<sup>54</sup> Mahjoubi 1978, 107.

<sup>55</sup> Publication: Mahjoubi 1978.

prosperous North African town.

The *forum* consists of an open space measuring about 350 square metres, paved with stone flags and surrounded by a portico.<sup>56</sup> The colonnade is entirely gone, but marks on the stylobate reveal its location; fragments of its inscribed epistyle are preserved, and they bear an inscription which records the restoration of the portico between 317 and 324.<sup>57</sup> The *forum* is flanked on its west, north, and east sides by a series of small to medium-sized rooms. The most impressive monument in this series is the square apsed hall at the south-west corner of the *forum*. Although almost nothing of substance remains inside the building to indicate its function, an inscribed lintel (**Belalis 2**) just the right size to fit over its doorway refers to the rebuilding of a *curia* between 326 and 331. It is interesting to note the similarity between this hall and the possible *curia* at Sufetula, also built around this period. The rooms to the north of the *curia* are poorly preserved, and those along the north side of the *forum* while being of more substantial construction reveal little indication of their function. The rooms on the east side, however, all approximately the same size and once covered by vaulting,<sup>58</sup> were decorated with mosaic; in the third room down from the north, almost half of a polychrome geometric mosaic is preserved.<sup>59</sup> The function of these rooms is uncertain.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> This is small in relation to most other North African *fora* (for example Sufetula's at 1,300 square metres, or Sabratha's at 2,300), but larger than some (see Mahjoubi 1978, 140-141, and note 451 for measurements of other *fora*).

<sup>57</sup> **Belalis 1**. The lack of an earlier inscription indicates that the entire portico was reconstructed, not merely restored (Lepelley 1981, 80).

<sup>58</sup> As shown by finds of collapsed vaulting tubes in the rooms (Mahjoubi 1978, 146).

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 145-146 and fig. 46b, dated stylistically by Mahjoubi to the 4th century. The central pattern, braided guilloche framing florets, is very similar to one of the mosaics from the Regio VII baths at Sabratha, dated by stratified pottery to the early 4th century (Brecciaroli Taborelli 1974, 145; see Gozlan 1990, 1017-1021 for further parallels - this style appears to persist until the end of the 4th or beginning of the 5th century).

<sup>60</sup> Mahjoubi (1978, 154) refers to them as possible *scholae*.

The final major monument facing onto the *forum* is the Forum Baths, which occupy the entire south-east end of the *forum* area. Constructed in the 2nd century, the baths were enlarged in the late 2nd century and further refurbished at a later date; a damaged inscription (**Belalis 3**) found in the vestibule of the baths appears to indicate an early 4th century date for this reconstruction.<sup>61</sup> Another set of baths, smaller but well decorated, is located a short distance south-south-east of the forum. Archaeological evidence suggests a date in the first half of the 4th century for its figural and geometric mosaics.<sup>62</sup>

Outside of these main structures, the evidence for 4th century occupation at Belalis Maior dwindles. Immediately to the west of the Large Basilica in the north of town is a triconch room preceded by a columned hall; this structure appears to antedate the Christian church (and quite likely went out of use after its construction, if not before) and possibly formed the dining area of a major residential complex.<sup>63</sup> Two other fairly large structures, one an apsidal building which may have been a Punic sanctuary (located in the eastern area of town),<sup>64</sup> the other a large building arranged around a central court, possibly a house (located east of the *forum*),<sup>65</sup> were certainly in use in later periods and very likely were used in the 4th century; evidence however is lacking. It seems clear that Belalis Maior was a prosperous town in the 4th century. It attracted both local and imperial patronage (see

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<sup>61</sup> The (possible) reference to work on an obstructed drain may correspond to work (attested archaeologically) done on the conduit passing from the *frigidarium* to the latrines (ibid., 208).

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., figs. 87-91 for the mosaics, one of which incorporates a panel depicting Theseus and the Minotaur set within a maze pattern; the date is provided by pottery which is dated by parallels to Lamboglia to “entre l’époque de Maximien et le milieu du IVe siècle” (Ibid., 226-227).

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 367. See also Mahjoubi 1984, 68. In neither publication does M. appear to discuss the two courtyard buildings immediately to the west of the triconch structure, although they appear on pl. 1c (1978).

<sup>64</sup> Likely re-built in the 6th century and used as a church (ibid., 251-252).

<sup>65</sup> With a mosaic dated archaeologically to the late 5th-early 6th century (ibid., 242).

inscriptions **Ammaedara 2 and 3**) to repair and rebuild major monuments, and it had the resources to embellish these monuments with mosaics of relatively high quality. There is no evidence of decline.

### **Conclusions:**

This discussion of the major public buildings and spaces which served as the town centres of 4th century Sabratha, Ammaedara, Sufetula, and Belalis Maior reveals a number of common traits shared by all or almost all of these towns; at the same time, a number of differences from or exceptions to these common traits can also be noticed, and are of no less importance for understanding the make-up and function of urban centres in this period. As a conclusion to this discussion, I offer a number of brief, generalized observations on the urban topography of 4th century North African cities, which will hopefully provide an introduction to both the description of the arrival of monumental Christianity (Chapter 2) and the analysis of the ways in which Christian buildings affected the function of urban centres (Chapter 3).

All four cities possessed a large, open, paved area in the approximate centre of their urban layout - the *forum*. These *fora* were generally adorned with a portico (with the exception of Ammaedara), dominated by one or more major temple (with the exception of Belalis), lined on one or more sides with small rooms (with the exception of Sabratha), and provided with buildings certainly or probably identified as *curiae* (with the exception, to date, of Ammaedara). Less regular were the appearance of *basilicae* (Sabratha and, perhaps, Ammaedara) and *macella* (at Ammaedara only, and not directly on the *forum*). All *fora* however were characterized by close proximity to major baths: at Belalis Maior they could

be accessed directly from the *forum*, at the other sites they are no more than 150m distant (and often closer). All these general characteristics are essentially carry-overs from the earlier centuries of Roman presence in North Africa, and are indicative of a strong continuity of urban function into the 4th century.

Both archaeological and epigraphic evidence indicates that all (or almost all) of these important components of urban centres were maintained and, where necessary, entirely reconstructed well into the 4th century. In the case of Sufetula, evidence of definite expansion is also visible. Much of this maintenance and construction was financed by the generosity of individuals; there were however some significant changes in the old patterns of euergetism. One was the increased prominence of Imperial officials in dedicatory inscriptions, although never to the entire exclusion of local noteworthies or, as seen in the post-c. 360 inscriptions of Sabratha, the *ordo* and the *populus*. At the same time, this evidence appears to indicate some distinct differences between cities: the office of *curator*, for example, never appears in the inscriptions at Sabratha. Another change, less detectable in the relatively small sample of inscriptions examined above, was in the types of works undertaken: more restoration occurred, and temples were progressively (and not surprisingly) neglected - but, at least till the middle of the century, never entirely absent from records of euergetism. Further evidence of continuity in civic generosity can be seen in references to the restoration of places of entertainment (mainly theatres, as at Ammaedara and Sufetula). This continued custom of urban munificence, though reduced in scale and somewhat altered in form, nonetheless provides evidence of the symbolic role of urban building in the 4th century.

Differences are also apparent between cities. First, it is clear that not all towns



followed identical blueprints for urban design. Ammaedara is, for instance, different from Sufetula with respect to the layout of buildings in its urban centre; upon closer examination, however (and making allowance for the incompleteness of our knowledge of the '*forum*' of Ammaedara), both town centres can be seen to have been equipped with much the same complement of necessary public facilities. Sabratha's urban centre on the other hand, while superficially resembling that of Sufetula in its orderly plan, is clearly dominated by religious and governmental buildings, with no apparent provisions for commerce. Belalis's town centre appears remarkable for the absence of overtly religious structures; instead, civic monuments, buildings of public utility, and possible shops dominate. These apparent differences in the function of urban centres will be more fully examined in Chapter 3.

Finally, it is important to note in this examination of urban centres that the *fora* were not the only major public spaces in most towns. Sufetula provides a particularly good example of this: east of the *forum*, down a street lined with shops, one encounters a second public area composed of a temple, small plaza with fountain, a large set of baths, and another public building of uncertain function; to the west of the *forum*, on the road to the amphitheatre, is located another small plaza adorned with a fountain. At Sabratha, a portico across a small plaza from the entrance to the Seaward Baths (east of the *forum*) also seems a likely candidate for an urban gathering place close to but not directly connected with the *forum*. Many more such subsidiary urban foci are surely masked by the limited size of the excavated area of all the towns in this study.

## **CHAPTER 2:**

### **THE APPEARANCE AND SPREAD OF MONUMENTAL CHRISTIANITY**

The title of this chapter, while encompassing the overall focus of the text which follows, may be somewhat misleading - it is not intended to focus exclusively on monumental Christian buildings. Rather, this chapter will pick up from where Chapter 1 left off, just before the first confirmable monumental Christian structures were built in Sabratha, Ammaedara, Sufetula, and Belalis Maior, and will present the archaeological evidence for both the rise of monumental Christianity and the decline of traditional urban monuments. The relationships between these two groups of structures will then be summarized and evaluated in Chapter 3.

#### **Christian Sabratha:**

The Late Fourth-Early Fifth Century:

Three of the four known churches at Sabratha predate the Justinianic and most likely also the Vandal period: Church I, converted from the Forum Basilica, and Churches III and IV, in close proximity to each other about 600m along the coast east of the *forum*; their dates of construction, unfortunately, cannot be established with certainty.

The conversion of the Basilica into a church involved three main changes: the shifting

inward of the colonnades, the construction of an altar under a canopy in the central west section of the nave, and the installation of a baptistry in the rooms behind the west apse (Fig. 1.8).<sup>1</sup> The date of this transformation is not clear. Based on the idea that the conversion would not have occurred too soon after the remodeling of the civic *basilica* but before the decline of the city in the 5th century, Ward-Perkins favoured a date in the late-4th or early 5th century; Duval has suggested that, since the conversion would have required permission from or a breakdown in municipal or even imperial authority, a date in the early Vandal period may be possible.<sup>2</sup>

Churches III and IV (Fig. 2.1) together most likely form a single ecclesiastical complex. The larger of the two, Church III, is a three-aisled *basilica* with a western apse, an altar in the central western section of the nave, an atrium at its eastern end, and a baptistry on its south-west flank.

The remains of mosaics from the main church (Fig. 2.2) and from the baptistry indicate that these structures are contemporary; and a dedicatory inscription in the nave mosaic (**Sabratha 5**) has been described as comparable to the mosaics installed post-c. 360 in the Casa Brogan,<sup>3</sup> suggesting a similar date; this parallel however may not be entirely

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<sup>1</sup> Earlier interpretations held that the eastern apse was not used in the first church phase (Ward-Perkins and Goodchild 1953, 7, and Duval 1973, 275-278); however, a redating of the graves in this area to the Byzantine period and closer examination of the new church stylobates has shown that the eastern apse was indeed used in the early church (see Kenrick 1986, 83-84 and Duval 1986b, 278-279; Fig. 1.8 shows the new stylobates of Period IIIb, the north one of which was again moved inwards in Period IV).

<sup>2</sup> Ward-Perkins and Goodchild 1953, 7-12 (though Kenrick (1986, 83-85) finds most of Ward-Perkins' chronological arguments to be invalid, he does accept his dating for the earliest phase of Church I), and Duval 1986b, 288.

<sup>3</sup> On the Casa Brogan mosaics, see Kenrick 1986, pls. 50-52, esp. 51a showing the *tabella ansata* with inscription; a coin of Constantius II (352-357) provides a *terminus post quem* for the mosaic (ibid., 162).

appropriate.<sup>4</sup> Some limited archaeological evidence is available for the date of construction of the two churches. A coin of Magnentius (dating to 352-353), found below the mosaic pavement of Church III in 1943, provides a numismatic *terminus post quem*.<sup>5</sup> Using the evidence of the mosaic parallels and coin dates along with the pre-Byzantine plans of the Churches, the use of spolia, and some ceramic finds of the late 4th or early 5th century, Bonacasa Carra gives a rather broad date range of between the "earthquake of 365" and the Vandal invasion of 455 for the complex, although she seems to be inclined to place the construction early in this period.<sup>6</sup> At any rate, the archaeological evidence presents no obstacle to a date in the last quarter of the 4th century; at the same time, however, it does not by any means preclude a later date, for the late 4th century depopulation of Sabratha resulted in many areas of the city being abandoned at this time and any new construction, no matter how late, could be expected to yield later 4th century finds immediately below it.

Church IV, a much smaller structure to the north-west of Church III, is of the same general plan and, according to Bonacasa Carra,<sup>7</sup> it seems to have been contemporary to Church III; Duval however questions this association, noting the dissimilarity of the apse

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<sup>4</sup> The parallel was first mentioned by Ward-Perkins and Goodchild (1953, 17) and is noted by Bonacasa Carra (1991, 213); on inspection, however, it seems to be a weak one. Though superficially similar, the Casa Brogan and church mosaics differ markedly in composition, design of particular elements such as the craters, and in their palaeography.

<sup>5</sup> Bonacasa Carra 1991, 154-156; Bonacasa Carra (Ibid., 156) also mentions a hoard of 1096 bronze coins which are thought to have been found buried just in front of the apse; only 3 remain today, all of Constantius II (though described as "tutte leggibili," no specifics of type are given).

<sup>6</sup> Bonacasa Carra (1991, 213) summarizes the dating criteria; the ceramic finds, of potentially the most use, are not precisely located. Moreover, it is unclear if Bonacasa Carra intends this date range to define the period in which the complex was constructed, or its entire first period of use; the wording indicates that the entire period of use is being dated, but the actual evidence presented seems to be of use only to date the construction of the complex. On page 212 (ibid.), Bonacasa Carra refers to the complex having been built in the time after the "365 earthquake" and in an area which was peripheral to the city in the late 4th century.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 213.

designs of the two churches, and pointing out that the apparent similarity in construction technique could stem largely from the common re-use of building material.<sup>8</sup>

#### The Fifth Century:

The occupational history of Sabratha during the 5th century is nothing if not obscure. Procopius records that on the arrival of the Byzantines in the 6th century the nearby (and larger) city of Lepcis Magna was “deserted for the most part, being through neglect largely buried in sand;”<sup>9</sup> there is little reason to doubt that Sabratha shared the same fate, and indeed there is some archaeological evidence to support it.<sup>10</sup> There is little archaeological evidence for the use of Sabratha’s major buildings after the middle of the 5th century,<sup>11</sup> but finds from small excavations in the residential areas around and south of the *forum* do indicate that buildings in the heart of the town were progressively abandoned in the 5th century, with no revival until the coming of the Byzantines in the 6th.<sup>12</sup> Even the religious leaders of the city seem to disappear from sight: Sabratha was the seat of one of the five bishops of Tripolitania,

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<sup>8</sup> Duval 1996, 186.

<sup>9</sup> *De Aedificiis* VI.iv. Trans. H. B. Dewing.

<sup>10</sup> A layer of drifted sand c. 20cm thick was found over the paved surface of the Coast Road in Site M (Kenrick 1986, 235). Four small sherds of TRS from this layer are described as “probably ... of the fourth to fifth centuries.”

<sup>11</sup> The Forum contains a large number of burials associated with Church I which Ward-Perkins originally placed in the 5th century (Ward-Perkins and Goodchild 1953, 12); these however were redated by Duval (1975, 511-512) to the Byzantine period (see also Duval 1986, 278 and Kenrick 1986, 83-84).

<sup>12</sup> Excavation of a section across the Coast Road at Site M, just inside the South Byzantine Wall, revealed “much pottery” of the first half of the 5th century (ARS 67, 70, 71A, 89; TRS 6; Tripolitanian lamps) and little or nothing thereafter until the 6th century. Further excavation at the Byzantine Wall about 50m east of Site M yielded the same results (Kenrick 1986, 235). For the “Casa Brogan,” a “period of decay” is hypothesized in the 5th century (143). Unfortunately, in all other residential areas excavated by the British, the removal of upper strata by the Italians resulted in conclusions about their later histories being unclear at best (e.g., Regio II Insula 7 yielded no stratified finds later than the 3rd century (139-140), while Regio II Insula 6 yielded no material later than the 2nd century (133)).

and the last recorded presence of its bishop (and those of Lepcis and Oea) at council in Carthage was in 484.<sup>13</sup>

#### The Byzantine Period:

Following the Byzantine reconquest of North Africa, Justinian lavished much attention on the buildings of its major cities. At Lepcis, Procopius credits him with the building of a new circuit wall, the rebuilding of the palace of Septimius Severus, and the dedication of five church buildings.<sup>14</sup> “He also walled the city of Sabratha, where he also built a very noteworthy church.”<sup>15</sup> The wall, clearly visible today, encircled a limited area centered around the old *forum* (see Fig. 1.2);<sup>16</sup> the church has been convincingly identified with Church II, an apparently new construction of the 6th century to the north of the Forum. Constructed entirely from spolia, the only surviving evidence of its noteworthiness is its ornate mosaic; this indeed is of extremely high quality, and no other church in Sabratha is adorned with such a floor. The mosaic, almost certainly Justinianic in date, has parallels in western North Africa, particularly at Carthage.<sup>17</sup> The church itself is in the form of a three-aisled *basilica* with the apse (now eroded away) in the east; there is no associated baptistry and, though some of the northern *forum* graves have been tentatively associated with this

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<sup>13</sup> Ward-Perkins and Goodchild 1953, 5.

<sup>14</sup> *De Aedificiis*, VI.iv.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, VI.iv.13. Trans. H. B. Dewing.

<sup>16</sup> See Kenrick 1986, 227-233, which includes a report on the excavation of one of the wall's gates.

<sup>17</sup> For complete illustrations, see Aurigemma 1960, pls. 18-42. For dating, see Dunbabin 1985, esp. 13-14 on the Sabratha mosaic. The stylistic group to which this mosaic belongs has a *terminus post quem* of 533, and seems to have evolved into a different form by the reign of Maurice Tiberius (*ibid.*, 15). See also Duval 1971, 359-369, for parallels at Sufetula and elsewhere.

church, there appears to be no cemetery.<sup>18</sup>

The Byzantine period also saw the refurbishment of Church I and likely that of Churches III and IV. The eastern apse of Church I was cut off by a wall pierced by three arched doors, and the length and width of the nave was reduced (Fig. 1.9). The floor was repaved and an altar was constructed from re-used material, including column bases from the South Forum Temple.<sup>19</sup> At about this time the area around the church became extensively used for burial, and the Cruciform Building was converted into a baptistry.<sup>20</sup> Churches III and IV were also rebuilt, possibly after a violent destruction.<sup>21</sup> Church III had its nave colonnades shifted slightly and its exterior walls narrowed. The floor of the apse was raised, covering the original mosaic; the original mosaic floor of the nave, however, seems to have been retained with extensive patching. A new baptistry was built on the north side of the church. The date for these changes cannot be pinpointed, but historical considerations (in the absence of concrete archaeological or architectural evidence) have prompted a consensus

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<sup>18</sup> See Ward-Perkins and Goodchild 1953, 12-15. Kenrick (1986, 34) thinks that graves found in and extending from the north *forum* portico are “presumably connected with the Justinianic church north of the Forum.” The plan of the British excavations in the *forum*, however (Fig. 2 in Kenrick 1986), appears to show graves scattered throughout the *forum* area, with a concentration nearer Church I; there appears to be no compelling reason to associate graves in the north area of the *forum* with Church II, which lies beyond the *curia*.

<sup>19</sup> Kenrick 1986, 85-86. A total of 26 identifiable coins were found in the packing between the stones of the altar platform, dating from the mid 3rd century to the Justinianic period (86). Kenrick rather illogically proceeds to attribute the construction of the altar to the pre-Byzantine period, and attempts to explain the 7 Justinianic coins (see list on 265 and graph on 272) which were found in the altar packing as presumably representing “the offerings of the devout, inserted into crevices in the stonework” (271). In the light of an apparent absence of parallels for such a custom (Duval 1986, 283, knows of none), it is likely best to date the altar to the later Justinianic period.

<sup>20</sup> Kenrick 1986, 87.

<sup>21</sup> Bonacasa Carra 1991, 213-214; evidence includes reinforcement of both churches.

of a date in the Byzantine period.<sup>22</sup> The smaller Church IV was also remodeled, very extensively, and this activity can be dated to the same general period.<sup>23</sup> There is a large cemetery area to the south and south-west of Church III and a smaller scattering of graves around Church IV.

There is also evidence of some resurgence in residential settlement, at least within the limits of the new defenses, but on the whole this evidence is sketchy (due not least to the activity of the Italians). The “Casa Brogan” appears to have undergone a phase of restoration in the Byzantine period,<sup>24</sup> and there is ceramic evidence for occupation south of the *forum* as late as the 7th century.<sup>25</sup>

The later history of Sabratha is unclear; this is largely because of the lack of attention shown to the uppermost strata by the early excavators. A few Arabic graffiti, on the Cruciform Building and inside the cella of the Antonine Temple, do speak for the Arab presence, but there is little else.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Ward-Perkins and Goodchild 1953, 15-18. “There is nothing in the character of these alterations and repairs that suggests specific Byzantine influence: they follow closely on established practice. But repairs on this scale could hardly have been required so early as the first half of the fifth century; and it is hard to believe that they could have been undertaken at any time between the Vandal invasion and the Byzantine reconquest” (ibid., 18). Bonacasa Carra (1991, 214) also does not see anything Byzantine about the appearance of the renovations, but favours a date in the late 5th or early 6th century, in the period following the Vandal conquest and persecution; Duval (1996, 185) however, while apparently misreading Bonacasa Carra (he cites her date for phase 2 as in the first half of the 5th century), favours the Byzantine date, citing also the Byzantine nature of the associated burials.

<sup>23</sup> Ward-Perkins and Goodchild 1953, 18-19.

<sup>24</sup> Kenrick 1986, 143.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 235. Pottery from a layer of rubble forming the basis of a new roadway in Site M included 6th and 7th century forms (ARS 104A, 105, and/or 106).

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 316, and Bartoccini 1964, 40-42 and pls. 24-25 for Arabic graffiti of the 7th-8th century from the Antonine Temple.



### Conclusions:

Sabratha appears to have enjoyed relative prosperity up to and following an unknown catastrophe around the year 360; three of its four known churches may be assigned (with some uncertainty) to the late 4th or early 5th century. The evidence points to a severe depopulation and likely abandonment of many buildings in the later 5th century, followed by a revival, indeed almost a refounding, in the wake of the Byzantine reconquest. A new and splendid church was built and the earlier three refurbished; settlement became concentrated within new and contracted fortifications. The later history of Sabratha is not known, but ceramic and numismatic evidence suggests continuity of occupation into the 7th century.

### **Christian Ammaedara:**

#### The Late 4th and Early 5th Centuries:

This period at Ammaedara, as at other North African cities, was one of fundamental change; unfortunately, we have very little evidence for the exact process of transition from pagan to Christian dominance. The late 4th century likely saw the construction of at least two churches: Basilica I ('of Melleus or St. Cyprian') in the centre of town, and Basilica II ('of Candidus and Adeodata' - although this appellation is Byzantine in date; see below) in the necropolis area to the east of the town (see Fig. 1.11).

Basilica I (Fig. 2.3) was constructed just west of the '*capitolium*' over the remains

of a large, mosaic-decorated building which has been identified as a public structure.<sup>27</sup> The earliest phase of this church, consisting of a plain three-aisled *basilica* without an atrium or any other associated structures, is vaguely dated at best. A *terminus post quem* is provided by a number of 3rd century inscriptions re-used in the church's construction, the mosaic of the 'public' building below the church (dated by F. Baratte to the middle of the 4th century),<sup>28</sup> and by the use of spolia in the form of columns and flagstones from public buildings; thus a late 4th century date is possible, though a date in the early 5th is favoured by Duval.<sup>29</sup> Basilica II (Fig. 2.4), a three-aisled *basilica* originally built with a western apse, very likely served from its inception as a martyr memorial and a funerary basilica. Recent excavation has uncovered a large funerary enclosure at its eastern end, from which a number of early Christian inscriptions provide evidence of a date in the second half of the 4th century.<sup>30</sup>

It is possible but not provable that Basilica IV, the so-called 'Vandal chapel,' was built at this time;<sup>31</sup> it was certainly in existence before the Byzantine reconquest (see below). The function of Basilica I is unclear. Being the largest church in Ammaedara and situated in the centre of town, it may have been the cathedral; a role of prominence is also suggested

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<sup>27</sup> Duval (1981, 202) appears quite certain about the identity of this underlying structure, calling it "sans doute un monument public."

<sup>28</sup> Baratte 1974, 32-33.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 202-204.

<sup>30</sup> Duval et al. 1989, 145 and 165-170; see **Ammaedara 15** for the most chronologically relevant of these inscriptions. See also Duval 1975, 217-218 and 515 for another inscription found in the main church area (insc. 205) employing the formula *memoria*+name, noted by Duval as being 'early' (i.e., late 4th century).

<sup>31</sup> Duval (1982b, 655) notes that the re-use of early Christian inscriptions in the Vandal or Byzantine paving of the chapel may suggest a foundation dating back to the 4th century.

by epitaphs of clergy and bishops dated by Duval to the 5th and especially 6th centuries.<sup>32</sup> However, the apparent lack of a baptistry argues against this attribution. The occupational history of Ammaedara's churches becomes clearer in the more epigraphically rich Vandal period.

#### The Vandal Period:

The evidence of inscriptions indicates that, unlike Sabratha, Ammaedara continued to be occupied by an active Christian population with some strong ties to its past throughout the period of the Vandal occupation. The best examples (**Ammaedara 5** and **6**) come from Basilica IV, the 'Vandal chapel' (just north of the "monument à auges" on Fig. 1.11), which has a *terminus ante quem* provided by **Ammaedara 5** (dating to 510). Two inscriptions from this church (**Ammaedara 6** and **7**) mention the office of *flamen*, an interesting example of the continuity of traditional offices in a Christianized format; one such *flamen* is also titled *vir clarissimus*. Vandal activity is also attested in Basilica I, where an epitaph of a Vandal bishop called Victorinus was found on a paving slab (**Ammaedara 8**). It was possibly in this period that the atrium was added to Basilica 1.<sup>33</sup>

#### Byzantine Ammaedara:

The Byzantine period at Ammaedara was marked, as it commonly was in North

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<sup>32</sup> Duval 1981, 207.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid, 204-205; the precise date is unclear, but the atrium certainly post-dates the original construction of the church.

Africa, by the construction of a large fortress located by the river in the old city-centre.<sup>34</sup> Within this fortress was constructed a small church, Basilica III, which once bore in its apse a ‘hymn’ inscription (**Ammaedara 9**) of a type popular in the 6th century. This church was also used for funerary purposes, as evidenced by epitaphs of the “*locus + name*” formula inscribed on the interior of the north wall.<sup>35</sup> Basilica V, built outside the south-west corner of the citadel over the site of a spring, offers little evidence of dating but appears to Duval to be “très tardif.”<sup>36</sup>

Byzantine use is well documented in Basilicas I, II, and IV. Basilica I became the prominent burial location for clergy and bishops, the most famous of which was Melleus. Bishop Melleus set up an inscription in 568/9 (**Ammaedara 10**) recording his deposition of the relics of St. Cyprian, and was himself interred in the church in 578/9 (**Ammaedara 11**). Further funerary inscriptions indicate that Basilica I remained in use into the 7th century.<sup>37</sup> Basilica II apparently underwent a massive reconstruction in the 6th century, when the orientation of the church was switched and the area of the choir in front of the old west apse was converted into an elaborate mosaic-decorated martyr memorial.<sup>38</sup> A lengthy inscription both in mosaic and on stone records the dedication of relics of martyrs of the Diocletianic

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<sup>34</sup> Duval (1971b) links the construction of this fortress with Procopius’ reference to Justinian’s fortification work in the interior of Byzacena (*De Aedificiis* VI.vi.18).

<sup>35</sup> Duval 1975, figs. 195 and 197ff.

<sup>36</sup> Duval 1982b, 655; in 1973 however Baratte, Duval, and Golvin suggested that Basilica V may antedate the Citadel, since its eastern entrance is ‘inconvenienced’ by the west Citadel wall (Baratte et al. 1973, 178).

<sup>37</sup> Duval 1975, 507 and 513. These late inscriptions are not dated, but Duval notes that the formula of one (insc. 140) is paralleled in a dated Heraclian inscription from El Faouar.

<sup>38</sup> Duval et al. 1989, 148.

persecution by the *illustris* Marcellus.<sup>39</sup> In addition, the nave of the church was paved with mosaic, in which an inscription was set recording a dedication by Candidus and Adeodata.<sup>40</sup> A later 6th century reconstruction has also been identified, which did not significantly alter the plan.<sup>41</sup> Finally, Basilica IV contains a series of inscriptions dated by indiction, evidence of use in the Byzantine period.<sup>42</sup>

### **Christian Sufetula:**

Sufetula was extremely well endowed with church buildings.<sup>43</sup> At the north-west corner of the *forum* is a small church (Basilica IV), and to the north are two further churches (Basilicas I and II) which are joined along with a baptistry/chapel to form a large ecclesiastical complex. Basilica III lies a short distance east of the *forum*, Basilica V lies on the edge of the street grid in the south-east corner of town, and Basilica VI lies in the middle of the necropolis to the south of the city. The final known church, Basilica VII, is located a further three kilometres down the main ancient road to the south-east; it is excluded from this study due to its non-urban setting.

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<sup>39</sup> **Ammaedara 12 and 13.** Although soundings were made beneath the mosaic in 1933, the skeletal human remains found could not be definitely associated with the martyrrium (Duval 1989, 211).

<sup>40</sup> **Ammaedara 14.** Duval and Duval (1966, 1162) identified the mosaic, which entirely covered the nave at the time of excavation in 1933-4, as having parallels with other Byzantine period mosaics in Tunisia, particularly at Bulla Regia; see Duval et al. 1989, fig. 13 for a composite drawing.

<sup>41</sup> Duval et al. 1989, 148.

<sup>42</sup> Duval 1975, 250.

<sup>43</sup> Cameron (1993, 165) uses Sufetula as an example of those Late Antique cities which “contain far more and far larger churches than their population would seem to warrant.” This ignores the possibility of the churches being used by a large rural population, however (thanks to E. Haley for pointing this out).

Sufetula in the Late 4th and Early 5th Century:

Two or perhaps three churches (Basilicas I, IV, and III) and one shrine (beneath Basilica VI) can be assigned with some confidence to the earliest phase of Christian building in Sufetula. The largest of these, considered the Catholic cathedral by Duval, is Basilica I (Fig. 2.5). Located about 200m north of the *forum*, this three-aisled western-apsed *basilica* was apparently built over the site of and using many stones from a large (public?) building, the main remains of which are portions of a large portico.<sup>44</sup> A *terminus post quem* for Basilica I is provided by a number of coins found beneath its earliest floor or in association with the portico of the earlier public building, the latest secure ones of which date to the 340s.<sup>45</sup> A baptistry adorned with a large mosaic font appears to have been constructed during this period within the confines of another old portico building immediately to the west.<sup>46</sup>

At the north-west corner of the forum another large pre-Christian building, quite likely public, was converted into a church (Basilica IV, Fig. 2.9) in the earliest phase of Christian building activity. As with the building beneath Basilica I, the exact nature of the structure beneath Basilica IV is uncertain; it appears to have been a large rectangular structure with a porticoed front which faced onto the *cardo*.<sup>47</sup> The builders of Basilica IV re-used this portico and many of the stones of the original structure; in addition, the walls of

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<sup>44</sup> To the east of the Basilica one row of column bases from this earlier portico survives (see Duval 1971, 9-15, esp. Fig. 4).

<sup>45</sup> Coins 3 (Duval 1971, 95, 341/6 AC) and possibly 9 (*ibid.*, 96, 364/75 AC; Duval (29, n. 1) notes that the floors were not intact at the point where this coin was found, so it may be intrusive) come from layers below the earliest Christian construction; coins 12.1, 12.2, and 12.3 (*ibid.*, 96) were found above a conduit passing below the stylobate of the earlier portico - one is illegible, the other two date to the 340s.

<sup>46</sup> See Duval 1971, 131-132; there is no solid dating evidence for this earliest phase of the "Chapel of Jucundus."

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 328-330.

the church incorporated large blocks which are thought likely to have come from the *forum* temples and a number of pagan grave-markers from the necropolis.<sup>48</sup> A *terminus post quem* of the late 4th century is indicated by coins and pottery; Duval prefers to place the construction in the early 5th.<sup>49</sup> The church itself is similar in form to Basilica I, with two rows of double columns separating the nave from two aisles and a western apse flanked by two small rooms; there is, however, no evidence of a baptistry.

To the east of the *forum* a third public building, this time a temple, was given over to ecclesiastical use. A church was built in the temple's court (Basilica III) and a baptistry installed in the ruins of the *cella*. Duval has suggested that this may have been the Donatist cathedral, and thinks that the "earthquake of 365" may have freed up the temple for conversion into a Christian church.<sup>50</sup> He infers a date of the late 4th century through a comparison of the liturgical facilities with those of Basilica I.<sup>51</sup>

Two final pieces of evidence indicate the possible existence of two further Christian structures dating to this period. Beneath the floor of the Byzantine-period Basilica VI were found a number of burials and the remains of an unidentifiable rectangular structure.<sup>52</sup> A

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 330 for the re-use of elements of the earlier structure, 335 for blocks thought to be from forum temples, and 340-341 for funerary monuments. This type of grave monument can be dated with certainty mainly to the 3rd-early 4th centuries by dated parallels from other sites (Duval 1982, 616).

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 379. Duval does not specify the reason for this dating, but merely notes the *terminus post quem* and says "Elle daterait plutôt du Ve siècle." Likely, he does not believe that the plundering of the *forum* temples and necropoleis for building material could have occurred at an earlier date. Coin 1 (385, c. 360 AC) was found on the concrete floor of the old pre-church building at the bottom of the cindery fill-layer, outside the south-west wall, while coin 2 (385, partly illeg., late 4th c.?) was found in the cindery layer below the nave. The pottery, while mentioned (379) as being late 4th century in date, is not described in any detail.

<sup>50</sup> Duval 1982a, 617-618.

<sup>51</sup> Duval 1971c, 268-276.

<sup>52</sup> Duval 1973, 179-181 and fig. 107.

votive mosaic inscription to Saints Sylvanus and Fortunatus (**Sufetula 8**), on the level of the flooring of Basilica VI but not aligned with it, could be as early as the late 4th century in date;<sup>53</sup> this would clearly indicate the presence of an earlier martyr's chapel on the site. On the north-west edge of the city, within the area of the necropolis by the amphitheatre, an early Christian epitaph found along with a few sarcophagi may indicate the presence of an early funerary chapel; none, however, has been found.<sup>54</sup>

The evidence for the continued use of secular buildings in this period is slim. Neither the epigraphic nor the archaeological record offers any sound indications of the fate of the *forum*. The possible re-use of stones from the *forum* temples in the construction of Basilica IV can be taken as evidence of the abandonment of these structures, but says nothing of the late occupational history of the *forum* as a whole. The same ambiguity surrounds the fate of the central baths. There is a little more evidence available, however, for some continuation of domestic habitation in the north-west quarter: the 'House of the Seasons' contains carved column capitals and epistyles and an ornate figural mosaic which have been dated potentially to the 5th century.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 182-183. A coin of Valentinian II found beneath the inscription gives a *terminus post quem* of 382-393 AC. Duval originally (Ibid., 183) dated this inscription after the late 4th century and before the Byzantine period, but in his 1986 article on the Christian epigraphy of Sufetula he dated it (tentatively) to the late 4th (Duval 1986a, 389); he also suggests (1973, 183 and 1986a, 389) that the inscription may be a later copy of an earlier original.

<sup>54</sup> Duval 1955, 95-96, fig. 6 and 1986 pl. 2a. The epitaph, of a four-year-old named Alexand(r)ia, is dated by its simple formula and by the use of the Constantinian christogram to the late 4th century (Duval 1986a, 389). The associated sarcophagi "en dalles de plâtre" (Duval 1955, 95) appear to be similar to those used for other Christian burials in Sufetula; see for example burials beneath Basilica II (Duval 1971, 222-238; most if not all of these burials date to the Byzantine period).

<sup>55</sup> Duval and Baratte (1973, 68) note that the capitals and epistyle blocks parallel those from the 'Chapel of Jucundus.' For the mosaic, see Parrish (1982); much of the mosaic's iconography is paralleled in the illustrated calendar of 354 AC (ibid., 297-300) and dates have been suggested between the later 4th and early 5th centuries (ibid., 297; Dumbabin (1978, 268) tentatively dates the mosaic to the 5th century).



### The Vandal Period at Sufetula:

Sufetula appears to have been a lively urban centre during the period of Vandal domination, at least as far as the evidence of church construction and refurbishment may serve as an indication. The largest project which may be dated to this period is the alteration and expansion of Basilica I and its surrounding structures into a true ecclesiastical complex. The main change was the construction of an entirely new church, Basilica II (Fig. 2.10). The largest church in Sufetula, Basilica II had five aisles, an apse in the west, and in its original form a rectangular vestibule/exedra in the east. The new church was built over what was probably a residential area (see Part 1 above) and, though the evidence is unfortunately slight, likely dates to the late 5th or early 6th century; it was almost certainly built before the Byzantine period, at any rate.<sup>56</sup> It appears to have been constructed originally without a baptistry, but one was added behind the western apse shortly after the construction of the church proper (shown on Fig. 2.11).

This addition of a baptistry to Basilica II is likely to have coincided with changes made to the earlier baptistry of Basilica I. In the very late 5th century (perhaps), a memorial epitaph to saint Jucundus, a bishop of the early 5th century who died in the persecution of

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<sup>56</sup> In the absence of conclusive archaeological dating evidence (Duval 1971, 291), the best criterion is furnished by a set of two inscriptions mentioning a certain Vitalis. One is the dedication (**Sufetula 5**) of the mosaic-lined font of the baptistry inserted behind the western apse of the church, which architectural criteria indicate was added on after the construction of the church (Duval 1971, 265-267). The second inscription (**Sufetula 6**) is the epitaph of a priest named Vitalis who (apparently) was born in the time of the Vandal king Genseric and died, if the age is read as 78, in 545/6 (Duval 1986a, 389-390; there is uncertainty over the meaning of *natus* in the inscription, which may refer to actual birth or to a symbolic birth “à la vie éternelle,” i.e., death, creating the alternate possibility of his death occurring in the later 5th century.) The possibility that the two people represent the same person is suggested (and favoured) by Duval (*ibid.*, 390), with the implication that Vitalis and his wife dedicated the baptistry while he was young, in the very late 5th or early 6th century.

Genseric, was installed in the antique portico surrounding the baptistry.<sup>57</sup> The main alteration however occurred inside the baptistry proper, where the mosaic-lined font was covered over with stone slabs and an altar and reliquary installed;<sup>58</sup> this change from baptistry to martyr shrine (to which the common appellation of “Chapel of Jucundus” refers) is logically hypothesized to have occurred at the same time as or shortly after the addition of the new baptistry to Basilica II.<sup>59</sup>

There were also changes made to Basilica I itself in the Vandal period (Fig. 2.6): a new eastern apse was added, a new and larger chancel screen was installed in the choir, and a new floor mosaic with a polychrome geometric-carpet motif was laid. Duval notes that this style of mosaic is rare in Tunisia, and indeed this mosaic is strikingly eastern Mediterranean in appearance; the date however is not clear.<sup>60</sup>

Two other structures which appear to have been incorporated into this ecclesiastical complex are an annex to the west side of Basilica II and a set of baths to the north of this annex (Fig. 1.13, #10). The annex, possibly a residence for clergy, may date to the construction of Basilica II; the baths likewise are potentially contemporary in date with

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<sup>57</sup> **Sufetula 7**; the date of the inscription is hypothesized by Duval (1986a, 389), on the basis of the monogram and palaeography used, to be “fairly late;” he hypothesizes that its installation may have corresponded to the return of Basilica I to Catholic control, perhaps around 495.

<sup>58</sup> Duval 1971, 122-124; within the disused font were found debris from the destruction of the upper part of the mosaic lining, tile fragments, marble fragments, and pieces of vaulting-tubes; Duval attributes these to either the transformation of the baptistry or its final destruction (122).

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 133.

<sup>60</sup> Duval 1971, 47-48; Duval finds general parallels in the floor mosaic of Basilica II (*ibid.*, 54) and a parallel for a specific motif a mosaic fragment from Thina. Both these parallels appear somewhat dubious, with the mosaic of Basilica II (see *ibid.*, 210-222) having only a superficial resemblance to that of Basilica I and with the Thina corner motif (*ibid.*, fig. 53, apparently unpublished elsewhere) not by any means an exact match.

Basilica II.<sup>61</sup> Together, these two *basilicae*, martyr chapel, annex, and baths appear to have constituted a unified ecclesiastical complex in the late Vandal period.

Basilica IV, near the *forum*, also saw modification in the Vandal period. The main change was the addition of a “cult centre” in the east end of the nave by the installation of a votive monument or altar. The main east doorway may have been blocked off at this time; a date of the late 5th or very early 6th century for these renovations is almost certain.<sup>62</sup>

The Vandal period at Sufetula, then, appears to have seen substantial church building and restoration activity. It is remarkable, though perhaps not surprising given the lack of records from earlier excavations, that there is little or no evidence for the fate of secular or residential buildings in the Vandal period. The lively activity apparent in the churches makes it very likely that the non-religious components of the town saw similar activity, but concrete evidence is lacking.

#### The Early Byzantine Period:

The evidence for the occupational history of Sufetula in the early Byzantine period is almost exclusively limited to ecclesiastical structures. The main architectural addition to Byzantine Sufetula was the construction of an entirely new Christian building, a shrine to the

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 299 for the annex, 304 for the baths. Both were excavated between 1913-1914, with no written records.

<sup>62</sup> For the “cult centre:” Duval 1971, 357-358. It appears that a new mosaic floor was installed in this period, but all that remains is its bedding; a coin found in this bedding was identified as “probably Vandal” (Duval 1971, 373). An epitaph of Gaudibundus (IV, 3, tomb 6, *ibid.*, fig. 386), associated by Duval in 1971 with the Vandalic phase of Basilica IV (*ibid.*, 379), is now dated to the 540s-50s (Duval 1986, 396, pl. 4c). A definite *terminus ante quem* is provided by the early Byzantine mosaic which is contemporary to a new *ciborium* installed over the “cult centre” (see discussion of Byzantine period).

martyrs Saints Sylvanus and Fortunatus (Basilica VI, Fig. 2.13). This shrine, a rare architectural type composed of a combined basilica and central-planned building with a central cupola, almost certainly replaced an earlier shrine in honour of the same martyrs (see above, discussion of late 4th-early 5th century Sufetula). The new building is securely dated to the second quarter of the 6th century, and there are also indications of a 7th century refurbishment.<sup>63</sup> Its primary role, judging from the burials and its location in the necropolis, was funerary.

In addition to this new church construction, there is extensive evidence of Byzantine-period refurbishment of the town's older ecclesiastical buildings. In the ecclesiastical complex, both churches underwent modification. Both apses of Basilica I were reconstructed (after which the western apse took on a role of funerary or martyr exedra), and some (rather unclear) adjustments were made to the layout of the nave (Fig. 2.7);<sup>64</sup> Basilica II also underwent reconstruction, involving the replacement of the eastern vestibule with another apse incorporating a new tomb as its centrepiece (Fig. 2.11).<sup>65</sup> There is an interesting contrast in the frequency of burials in each church: while the only firm evidence of burials in Basilica I consists of two sarcophagi in the western apse, no less than 35 burials (a mix of adults and children) were found in Basilica II, 33 of them in the nave, and these certainly do not represent the entire total.<sup>66</sup> The portico of the Chapel of Jucundus was also used for

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<sup>63</sup> The date of the original construction is provided by a series of eight dated epitaphs spanning the years 543-563 (Duval 1956, 287-294).

<sup>64</sup> Duval (1971, 87-88) suggests a date in the late 6th century for these modifications; the work in the nave most likely involved the re-location of the altar.

<sup>65</sup> Duval (*ibid.*, 294-5) hypothesizes that this is the tomb of a bishop named Praesidius, presumed to have been martyred by the Arians in 484. This phase would then date to the early 6th century.

<sup>66</sup> See Duval (*ibid.*, 222-238) for the burials in Basilica II, almost all of which date later than the first third of the 6th century.

two additional burials besides that of Jucundus, both adults, one of whom was identified by an epitaph as a bishop.<sup>67</sup> It is clear then that the ecclesiastical complex remained active in the Byzantine period; there is unfortunately no evidence of late occupation available for the annex or the baths.

Basilica IV, by the *forum*, also saw Byzantine refurbishment, and this is securely datable. The main evidence of this is the construction of a new *ciborium* over the “cult centre” in the eastern end of the nave and the laying of a new mosaic floor which can be dated through a wealth of parallels to the early Byzantine period, quite likely to the first few decades immediately following the reconquest.<sup>68</sup> Six burials were found within the church, and two immediately outside its walls; they may be mainly Byzantine in date, but this is not clear.<sup>69</sup>

Finally, one last chronologically enigmatic ecclesiastical building, Basilica V, must be included here. It is located at the south-east corner of town and was a relatively small *basilica* with two aisles flanking a central nave and an apse at the east end. The *basilica* was apparently dedicated to the martyrs Protasius, Gerbasius, and Triphon (though neither of the two inscriptions naming them was found *in situ*), but the only sound evidence of a date is one

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 124-127.

<sup>68</sup> Duval (ibid., 359-369) lists many parallels; Dunbabin (1985, 16) links the distinctive palmette pattern decorative motif with a new, homogeneous mosaic group which appears at Carthage likely in the second quarter of the 6th century; the chronology of this group is well established by archaeological dating (ibid., 15), and spans the second to third quarters of the 6th century.

<sup>69</sup> Duval 1971, 370-373 for burials within the nave and aisles; ibid., 342-345 for burials outside the walls; the latter appear in the section drawings (figs. 374 and 378) to be covered over by the ‘cindery’ layer which formed a levelling for the earliest phase of the church construction, so they may be earlier than the Byzantine period in date. One of the interior tombs, that of Gaudibundus, can be dated by its epitaph to the mid 6th century (see Duval 1986a, 396 and pl. 4). The lack of readable epitaphs or good archaeological evidence makes the remaining tombs largely undatable.

Byzantine-period epitaph.<sup>70</sup>

#### The Later History of Sufetula:

Late Byzantine Sufetula provides evidence of both activity in and neglect of the urban fabric. In Basilica I an ambiguous destruction resulted in a drastic shortening of the east end of the church and the construction of an entirely new eastern apse (Fig. 2.8).<sup>71</sup> Basilica II also experienced a second phase of reconstruction involving the rebuilding of both apses, in addition to changes made to the layout of the nave (Fig. 2.12).<sup>72</sup> There is no evidence for the occupational history of Basilica IV in the late Byzantine period, but finds of 10th-11th century pottery amid the ruined masonry of the apse may indicate continuity of occupation into the medieval period.<sup>73</sup> The funerary-Basilica VI on the other hand does show evidence of late Byzantine activity, in the form of a new floor and late graves.<sup>74</sup> Distinctive signs of degradation in the urban landscape are also visible in the recorded remains of late Byzantine Sufetula, including a heavy buildup of soil over road surfaces (above which new surfaces were constructed), the installation of oil presses beside Basilica V, partly blocking the main road leading south-east to Thina, and the conversion of the amphitheatre, forum, and three smaller houses to the south-east into fortified locations.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Martyr dedications: Duval 1955, 81; Byzantine period epitaph: *ibid.*, 90-91, fig. 5.

<sup>71</sup> Duval (1971, 87) suggests, as a “working hypothesis,” a date of post-647 (the capture of the town by the Arabs) for this late renovation.

<sup>72</sup> As with the latest phase of Basilica I the date is unknown, though Duval guesses at late Byzantine or even post-647 (*ibid.*, 295).

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 380 and 386. Glass lamp fragments found beneath the collapsed apse vault may indicate that the church was in use at the time of this final destruction.

<sup>74</sup> This activity is dated to the early 7th century by palaeographical characteristics of the late funerary inscriptions (Duval 1973, 182).

<sup>75</sup> Duval 1982a, 620-624; the dates of these late fortifications are unclear.

### Conclusions:

Sufetula from the late 4th to the 6th century presents the picture of an active and, if not growing, then at least evolving city. Distinct spurts of church construction and/or refurbishment are evidenced in the late 4th/early 5th century, the late 5th/early 6th century, and in the early Byzantine period. It is not until the late Byzantine period at the earliest that any appreciable signs of urban decay appear and, though our evidence is by no means complete, this supports the impression of Sufetula as an important urban centre.

### **Christian-Period Belalis Maior:**

The Christian monuments of Belalis Maior are, like its secular ones, smaller and fewer than those of Sabratha, Ammaedara or Sufetula; the picture they give of the urban evolution of this small city from the later 4th to the 7th century, however, follows along much the same line. Two main Christian structures are identifiable, both probably founded in the late 4th century: a Small and a Large Basilica, the former located 50m north-east of the *forum* and the latter about 135m further to the north (see Fig. 1.15).

### Belalis in the Late 4th and Early 5th Centuries:

The two main churches of Belalis appear to have been constructed in the same general period. The Small Basilica (Fig. 2.14), measuring only about 22.5 by 12.5m, is a simple affair with two aisles set off from the nave by four-column colonnades. It was constructed originally with a western apse, and there is no evidence of a baptistry associated with this phase. The date of construction is furnished by pottery finds from a number of

contexts associated with the foundation levels of the church, which seem to indicate a date as early as the mid-4th century.<sup>76</sup> Unfortunately, it seems that excavation undertaken prior to Mahjoubi's work removed most traces of flooring in the interior of the church;<sup>77</sup> four tombs were, however, associated with this earliest phase: one in the apse, one in the 'sacristy' north of the apse, and two in the nave.<sup>78</sup>

The Large Basilica (Fig. 2.15), built along the same general lines as the Small Basilica to the south, measures roughly 30 by 15m; it is uneven in construction, a feature likely due in part to the re-use of walls belonging to the earlier (residential?) building which occupied the area before the church was built (as shown by the remains of the triconch and columned hall to the west; see discussion of 4th century Belalis in Part 1).<sup>79</sup> Ceramic finds from the foundation levels of the western apse and the long walls of the church give a vague date of the 4th or 5th century,<sup>80</sup> but a series of mosaic funerary inscriptions set into the original polychrome mosaic floor of the nave offers potentially more useful dating evidence. Eleven such burials were found, of which only four retain legible inscriptions (**Belalis 4-7**). These are characterized by simple formulas, to the extent of occasional omission of age at death, and Mahjoubi takes this to indicate an early date of the late 4th to early 5th centuries.<sup>81</sup> One of these inscriptions is particularly useful because it furnishes a *terminus ante quem*: the mosaic of Tomb 3 (**Belalis 4**) was clearly laid after the original mosaic floor of the church,

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<sup>76</sup> Mahjoubi 1978, 427-428; as usual in Mahjoubi's work, the pottery is not illustrated and the references he gives for parallels are outdated.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 389 and 393.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 414-415.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 259.

<sup>80</sup> These are sketchy as usual, with dates ranging from 330 to 480 (ibid., 295 n. 727 and 367).

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 296.



since it cuts the polychrome mosaic pavement.<sup>82</sup> Though this is to be the only one of the funerary mosaics sufficiently preserved to be able to judge accurately its relation to the original floor (which is poorly preserved), others which are similar in style may very likely also be later additions.

Other late 4th century building activity is clearly attested by a broken stone lintel bearing an inscription (**Belalis 4**) datable to the very end of the century. Unfortunately the stone has been re-used, but it was clearly part of a public structure, possibly from the *forum*. At some point the east *forum* portico collapsed and was apparently repaired, with some of the blocks from the Constantinian frieze re-used in the flooring of the portico.<sup>83</sup> The *forum* baths appear to have remained in use, with the mosaic of the *tepidarium*, stylistically 4th century in date, showing clear signs of repair.<sup>84</sup> Similar restoration in the Baths of Theseus indicates that they remained in use into the late 4th century, though evidence of a final date for the use of this structure is lacking.<sup>85</sup>

#### Later Occupation at Belalis:

Though finds of Byzantine artifacts and inscriptions make it clear that Belalis remained occupied until the arrival of the Arabs in North Africa,<sup>86</sup> it is difficult to determine with accuracy the exact processes of change in the urban layout which occurred during the

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<sup>82</sup> This is clearly visible on Mahjoubi's Fig. 109a (ibid).

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 174.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 188-192 and 207, figs. 74a-e.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 226-227.

<sup>86</sup> The Arabs appear to have occupied Belalis immediately after their conquest, converting the Large Basilica into a fortress and leaving behind pottery and coins, including one dating to 694 (ibid., 371-387).

last two centuries of Roman occupation.

The best evidence comes from the two main churches of Belalis, particularly the Large Basilica. The Large Basilica underwent at least two main phases of refurbishment after its initial construction, the second of which occurred apparently after a major destruction and appears to have three sub-phases indicated by different pavements. The general date of this reconstruction is clearly Byzantine, as shown by mosaic funerary inscriptions bearing dates by indiction and the finds of two coins; the basilica appears to have been occupied well into the 7th century.<sup>87</sup> The earlier phase of the church, before the destruction, involved a re-orientation of the basilica and a refurbishment of the baptistry. The date is uncertain, but Mahjoubi puts it in the first half of the 6th century.<sup>88</sup>

The Small Basilica has only one identifiable phase after that of its initial construction; the main changes involved the lengthening of the nave, the addition of a new eastern apse, and the installation of a new baptistry in the 'sacristy' south of the west apse. A date in the 6th century for this remodeling is suggested by the finding of one piece of pottery at the foundation levels of the eastern apse and by the shape of the quadrifons baptistry.<sup>89</sup> The church contains a number of burials including one of a bishop of the Byzantine period.<sup>90</sup>

Further evidence of Byzantine activity, scattered but important, comes from some of

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 368-370. A coin of Maurice Tiberius (fig. 137 bis b) was found "above the level of" the floor of the first sub-phase of the reconstruction, while a coin of Heraclius (fig. 137 bis a) was found above the mosaics of the second sub-phase but below the concrete floor of the final sub-phase.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 368. Mahjoubi bases this on the small fragment of mosaic (fig. 127c) recovered from this level in the eastern apse, decorated with the remains of a geometric pattern and part of a crater with a bird beside it.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 428-429. The pottery is described as "sigillée D" (ARS) stamped with a cross design, which is indicative of a relatively late date in the production of this pottery; Mahjoubi (428) gives it the strangely broad date range of early 6th to the late 7th century, "environ."

<sup>90</sup> Though it is not absolutely certain that this stone properly belongs in this church, since it was found during the cleaning of the fill of the nave (ibid., 420).

the other structures on the site. Both the north-eastern rooms around the forum and parts of the *forum* baths were subdivided by walls built over their mosaic floors, presumably at a late date (Mahjoubi favours the late 5th or early 6th centuries).<sup>91</sup> It is possible that the small “Punic temple,” an apsidal structure located about 300m west of the Small Basilica, was converted to use as a Christian building.<sup>92</sup> One particularly telling structure is the “East Building,” located about 250m east of the *forum*, and apparently a private residence with a central court paved with flagstones and flanked by various rooms. A square exedra to the north side of the court was paved with a mosaic with three main panels; two geometric, and one (in the entrance) figural. This complex appears to be late Vandal in date at the earliest.<sup>93</sup>

#### Conclusions:

Archaeological evidence points to continuity, even prosperity of some degree, in the occupation of Belalis Maior from the late 4th to the late 7th century. After the late 4th or early 5th century, however, it is not possible to gain a good impression of what the overall urban settlement pattern looked like. Nonetheless, the clear early Arab occupation of the site demonstrates its continued viability after the passing of the Byzantines.

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 209 and 196, figs. 76a and b.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 252; broken fragments of a chancel screen found near the entrance (but apparently outside the building) suggest the ecclesiastical function. Walls associated with this last phase, says Mahjoubi (ibid.) are of a type not used at Belalis until the 6th century.

<sup>93</sup> Excavation below the mosaic produced pottery, the latest sherd of which dates (according to Mahjoubi, 242, n. 650) to 450-550.

## CHAPTER 3: SPATIAL AND CHRONOLOGICAL RELATIONSHIPS

This chapter aims to evaluate the archaeological evidence for the relationships between church buildings and traditional public structures and spaces from the late Roman to the Byzantine period. Patterns in urban topography will be sought, particularly in the earliest phase of monumental church construction, and the strength of the archaeological evidence for “replacement” of traditional public urban centers (especially the *forum*) by ecclesiastical buildings will be critically examined. Figures 3.1 to 3.4 present plans of the four main sites studied with indications of the foundation dates of the church buildings.

### The 4th Century: The First Churches

In the 4th century, Sabratha, Ammaedara, Sufetula and Belalis Maior all retained single central urban focal points in the form of a *forum*, a large open area where the main religious and government monuments of the city were located and near to which was invariably a large bathing complex. Smaller foci, particularly centred on entertainment buildings (theatres and baths), religious structures, or small squares also existed in some number - the *forum* was not the only important gathering place in these cities. It was into this setting that Christianity made its first monumental appearance with the construction of large, visible church buildings. Here I wish to examine the process of insertion of these structures into the existing urban topographies of the 4th century, and to put the occupational history

of these new buildings into the overall picture of development of the urban landscape of each city.

The identification of the very earliest monumental churches is problematic, and their initial construction dates are most often very difficult to determine. At Sabratha the first church building appears to have been Church III, and although it may date as early as the 360s or 370s there is no solid archaeological evidence for this interpretation beyond its *terminus post quem*. At Ammaedara, the earliest archaeological dates (funerary inscriptions, second half of the 4th century) come from Basilica II, out in the eastern necropolis. Both its location and the absence of a baptistry suggest that this church was likely not intended as the main church of Ammaedara, but likewise no baptistry has been found associated with the only other large church which may be dated to this period, Basilica I (to the west of the *capitolium*; possibly late 4th century, but placed in the early 5th by Duval). At Sufetula, Basilica I (north of the *forum*) is a clear candidate for the city's cathedral (and potentially its first church) but has only an archaeological *terminus post quem* of the 340s as evidence for the date of its initial construction. At Belalis, pottery finds beneath the Small Basilica suggest a possible mid-4th century *terminus post quem*, while mosaic epitaphs from the Large Basilica may indicate a late 4th or early 5th century *terminus ante quem*.

What we have then is a collection of buildings with possible construction dates in the 4th century, but no solid archaeological evidence to prove such beyond doubt. How should such dates be interpreted? Is it proper to assume that a 4th century *terminus post quem*, when available, is indicative of a 4th century construction date? There is evidence from other sites to suggest that such a conclusion would not be unlikely. Outside of Africa, Constantine is

generally credited with the construction of the earliest monumental churches,<sup>1</sup> but there is clear textual evidence of the existence of large, prominent Christian buildings before this time.<sup>2</sup> In Africa proper, the occasional use of provincial dating for inscriptions in Mauretania provides rare but valuable concrete evidence of 4th century church construction. The earliest evidence of an African church building consists of an inscription from Altava (**Altava 1**);<sup>3</sup> dated between 309 and 328, it appears to come from a funerary martyr-shrine located in the city's necropolis. Possibly the earliest example of a monumental church building is from Castellum Tingitanum, a large five-aisled *basilica* with a mosaic inscription (**Castellum Tingitanum 1**) dating its foundation to the year 324. The next examples of provincial era inscriptions are epitaphs from the ecclesiastical complex at Sitifis: Basilica A is earlier than 378,<sup>4</sup> and Basilica B is earlier than 389.<sup>5</sup> Between the *basilica* at Castellum Tingitanum and the ecclesiastical complex at Sitifis may be placed the first phase of the *basilica* at Rusguniae, which may date to the mid 4th century (**Rusguniae 1**). There seems no particular reason that monumental churches should have been constructed significantly earlier in Mauretania than in Proconsularis, Byzacena, or Tripolitania; moreover, epigraphic evidence from Sitifis indicates that the ecclesiastical complex was constructed in a period which also saw significant non-Christian public building, indicating that continued activity in the area

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<sup>1</sup> See for example R. Krautheimer, *Three Christian Capitals*, Berkeley 1983.

<sup>2</sup> Diocletian ordered the razing of churches to the ground (Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* VIII.ii.4), and Eusebius (*ibid.*, VIII.i.5-6) describes these pre-persecution churches as being "of spacious dimensions" (Loeb trans., J. E. L. Oulton). Lactantius (*De Mortibus Persecutorum* 12) describes the destruction of a substantial and widely visible church building (*ecclesia*) in Nicomedia.

<sup>3</sup> All inscriptions not from Sabratha, Ammaedara, Sufetula or Belalis Maior are listed at the end of the Appendix under the heading "Other Inscriptions," identified by city name and sequential number.

<sup>4</sup> Février 1965, inscs. A17 and 19, 78-79, figs. 75-77, large epitaphs in nave of church (see *ibid.*, fig. 6 for locations), both dating to 378.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, insc. B47, 104-105, figs. 128 and 129.

of traditional public building cannot be taken to preclude church construction in the same periods.<sup>6</sup>

With this evidence in mind, it is possible to construct a plausible model to explain the placement of early monumental churches in North African cities. In such a model, the earliest monumental churches would have been constructed within the urban layout but at a distance from the *forum*. Later churches, constructed at a time when the decay in traditional urban structures (especially the civic government and its attendant monumental spaces and structures) was well advanced, could be found encroaching on these traditional buildings and spaces. Perhaps the greatest potential difficulty in applying such a model is the fact that church building would not have begun in every town at the same time, nor would it have proceeded in the same manner in each town, and correspondingly neither would the process of decay of the traditional urban fabric.<sup>7</sup> Nonetheless, it is a model which, with some supporting evidence and none opposing, provides a viewpoint for analysing the early church buildings at Sabratha, Ammaedara, Sufetula, and Belalis. From this perspective, Church III at Sabratha, Basilica I at Sufetula, and possibly both the Large and Small Basilicas at Belalis may be taken as constructions of the later 4th century; this is comfortably within the (admittedly thin) archaeological evidence for their construction dates. Following on this, churches such as Basilica I at Ammaedara and Basilicas III and IV at Sufetula, situated directly in the traditional urban centres, built atop buildings of a possibly public nature, and making use of spolia from structures in or near the *fora*, may be taken to be relatively late

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<sup>6</sup> Lepelley 1981, 497-503: the amphitheatre saw activity under Julian (*CIL* viii, 8428), and facilities for the *annona* were restored under Valentinian II, Theodosius and Arcadius (383-392; *CIL* viii, 8480).

<sup>7</sup> For further discussion of this subject, see Chapter 4.

in date, perhaps early in 5th century.

The locations of the earliest churches and their relationship to the traditional urban foci vary from town to town. Church III at Sabratha is located about 350m east of the *forum*, in an area of residential housing north of the main east-west road. While this is not a central location relative to the traditional prime urban focus of the *forum*, neither is it particularly out-of-the-way. A similar pattern can be seen at Belalis, where the Large Basilica was inserted into a residential area distinctly removed from the old *forum* but still well within the occupied area of the city (at least, as far as this can be determined). At both of these sites, the first church constructions lay distinctly outside the *forum*/baths ambit (though this may be attributed to the extreme proximity of the baths to the fora of each town, and may not hold as true for Belalis if indeed the Small Basilica pre-dates the Large Basilica). At Sufetula, the situation is somewhat more ambiguous, especially considering the location of a set of baths of undefined size immediately north-east of Basilica I, but it does seem that the most important public baths were those located at the east end of the *cardo* leading from the *forum*, thus placing Basilica I outside the primary public ambit.

The model, then, fits well with what evidence there is for early church construction at these four sites. How do these conclusions compare with the evidence available from other North African sites? Examples of sites possessing securely defined *fora* and traditional public buildings in addition to a number of churches sufficiently well excavated and studied to allow for dating are rather few (Figure 3.5 locates all the sites discussed below). In Tripolitania evidence for the situation of early churches in the urban topography is almost non-existent: Lepcis possesses only one church whose construction can be dated earlier than the Byzantine period, Church 2 on the 'Forum Vetus,' which is almost certainly neither the



earliest nor the primary church of Lepcis;<sup>8</sup> the only other major city of the province, Oea, has yielded no major Christian monuments whatsoever. After Sufetula, Mactar (Fig. 3.6) is the most illuminating site in Byzacena; unfortunately, none of its four known churches has yielded definite dates earlier than the 5th century, and most of the visible remains are Byzantine.<sup>9</sup> In Proconsularis, Thuburbo Maius, Bulla Regia, Hippo Regius and Theveste provide limited evidence of early ecclesiastical construction (Carthage is a special case which will be dealt with separately below). Only one church has been identified with certainty at Thuburbo Maius (Fig. 3.7), the converted “Temple of Ceres” located c.200m south east of the forum, and it dates to the late 4th century or later.<sup>10</sup> At Bulla Regia (Fig. 3.8) a complex of two Christian basilicas has been identified c.250m west of the *forum*, but they have yielded no evidence of a date earlier than the Byzantine period.<sup>11</sup> Hippo Regius (Fig. 3.9) is of little more use with only one certain church building identified, located c.250m north east of the *forum* and with its initial construction undated (though quite possibly early, even 4th century).<sup>12</sup> Finally, the ecclesiastical enclosure at Theveste located north of the city’s late

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<sup>8</sup> Ward-Perkins and Goodchild 1953, 24-29, figs. 9-12, pl. XI d and e. The church is built over the podium of an old temple and has a baptistry dated by W.-P. and G. (27-28) to the Byzantine period; a date in the first half of the 5th century is suggested for the church itself (*ibid.*, 29), based mainly on the assumption that it could not have usurped the temple at an earlier date.

<sup>9</sup> Epitaphs form the best chronological indicators: see Prevot 1984.

<sup>10</sup> Duval 1971c, 277-290, figs. 9-16; the date of the conversion is based on an epitaph (*ILTun* 737) naming a certain Arifridos, clearly Germanic and perhaps Vandal, and another tomb containing jewellery which has been stylistically dated to the late 4th or early 5th century (and of course could have been buried at any time thereafter; *ibid.*, 286 n. 56 and 290). Another building located between the Portico of the Petronii and the Caelestis Enclosure may be a church, but this is not certain (Maurin 1967, 236).

<sup>11</sup> Duval (1973, 50) notes two Byzantine martyr inscriptions and the mosaic (see Beschaouch et al. 1977 figs. 36 and 37), which incorporates “degenerate” motifs of the new school of mosaics which appears at Carthage in the early Byzantine period (Dunbabin 1985, 16-17).

<sup>12</sup> Marec 1958, 23-98; Marec identifies five phases extending into the Byzantine period (extensive placement of burials in and repair of the mosaic floor is good evidence of this: see for example photos 33, 77, and 92), but bases his hypothetical construction date of the third quarter of the 4th century only on historical reasoning (43). A second building, the so-called “*église à cinq nefs*” situated just across the

Roman walls and about 700m from the forum appears to date to c. 400;<sup>13</sup> other church buildings including one possibly on the *forum* have been identified from the town proper, but archaeological evidence on the ground is lacking.<sup>14</sup> Numidia has somewhat more to offer, particularly the sites of Timgad and Cuicul. At Timgad (Fig. 3.10) the remains of no less than eleven churches and chapels have been identified;<sup>15</sup> unfortunately, none (with the exception of the chapel in the Byzantine fort) offer any solid indication of their date of initial construction. Two large extra-mural churches (2 and 7) may date to the fourth century, but this is uncertain.<sup>16</sup> An understanding of the relation of these churches to the urban topography of Timgad is hindered by the lack of complete excavation of the area outside the western walls of the old colony and by the lack of precise dating for the other major church of the city, Church 3 or the Church of Januarius, built only three blocks away from the old city *forum*.<sup>17</sup> Cuicul (Fig. 3.11), with a near-completely excavated urban area, presents an excellent view of its urban topography. Three churches are known: one in the north half of the city little more than 60m south east of the *forum* (no precise date available), and two more forming a complex on the far south-eastern extremity of the city (the smaller may be

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street to the north east of the “Grand Basilique,” has no distinctively Christian features; Duval and Février identify it as a house (Gui *et al.* 1992, 346).

<sup>13</sup> See Christern 1976 fig. 7 for plan of the city, 28-30 for description of the complex, fig. 8 for plan, and 215-225 for discussion of chronology.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>15</sup> Most recently, Gui *et al.* 1992, 263-286.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 267 for date of Church 2 (noted as having a Byzantine and a pre-Byzantine phase) and 278 for Church 7, which has mosaics and capitals possibly dating to the 4th century.

<sup>17</sup> A pre-Vandal and a Byzantine phase are suggested by Gui *et al.* (*ibid.*, 267-270).

late 4th or early 5th century; the larger may have a *terminus ante quem* of 411 or 553).<sup>18</sup> In Mauretania Sitifensis the city of Sitifis (Fig. 3.12) provides evidence of mixed value: while offering the certain remains of only two churches, it does offer precise 4th century dates (see above). They are located about 250m from the presumed centre of the later Roman town (and the *forum?*), but unfortunately there is insufficient data available to elucidate their relationship to the town's major traditional public monuments (mainly a lack of identification of said monuments). The site of the earliest known monumental Christian *basilica* in North Africa, Castellum Tingitanum in Mauretania Caesariensis, is also unfortunately able to offer almost no information on this very important church's topographic relationship with the rest of its ancient host city.<sup>19</sup> The available information on the possibly mid-4th century *basilica* at Rusguniae is little better: it is clear that it was located in the far northern end of the city, well away from any potential city centre but still inside the walls, but more is not known.<sup>20</sup>

Finally, it is possible that the large cathedral at Tipasa (Fig. 3.13) in Mauretania, located at the western end of the walled area of the city where the wall reaches the sea-shore, was a 4th century foundation.<sup>21</sup>

The *caput* of North Africa itself, Carthage (Fig. 3.14), presents something of a special

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<sup>18</sup> Février 1978, 33 and fig. 13 for the northern church, 80-83 for the southern complex; the date of the smaller northern church of the pair is based on a mosaic naming Pomponius Rusticus who may be the father of Pomponia Rusticula, whose funerary monument marks her death in 452 (*ibid.*, 66); the larger southern church is dated by an epitaph of the bishop Cresconius - a bishop of that name is attested in both 411 and 553 (*ibid.*, 82-83); Février prefers the later of the two dates.

<sup>19</sup> Gsell (1911, map 12, #174, p. 9) notes that this church was located "dans la partie orientale de la ville antique" - no plan is provided.

<sup>20</sup> For a map see Gsell 1911, map 5, #36, p. 7; the only other major identified monuments are two sets of baths in the south; this situation seems not to have changed, as Duval's 1985 map (Duval 1985, fig. 1) reveals no more than these three monuments.

<sup>21</sup> No solid data is available, but Gui *et al.* (1992, 24) believe that it may have been established in the course of the 4th century as the city was Christianized.

case. Although archaeological, literary, and epigraphic sources make us aware of a large number of church buildings,<sup>22</sup> unfortunately their earliest phases of construction remain generally unknown. Furthermore, the evidence for the nature, dates, and locations of major traditional public buildings and spaces is also very slim. Certainly there must have been a number of monumental churches in 4th century Carthage, and it is likely that they underlie many of the known later churches; however, no sites have yielded firm archaeological evidence of 4th century construction.<sup>23</sup> Literary and epigraphic sources clearly demonstrate a high degree of organization in the Carthaginian church of the 4th century. The city appears to have been divided into at least six regions, each presumably centred around a main church; five of these regions have been more or less tentatively identified, one in a central location on the Byrsa and four others in peripheral areas of the city.<sup>24</sup> The Byrsa church is postulated to have been converted from the old civic *basilica* on the central Roman *forum*, but although there are indications of partial refurbishment and restoration in the later 4th and 5th centuries and possibly a major Byzantine reconstruction, there is no solid evidence to indicate that this building ever served as a church.<sup>25</sup> In sum, the ecclesiastical topography of 4th century Carthage remains highly speculative.

The results of this brief inquiry appear to reinforce the conclusions suggested by the

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<sup>22</sup> See the Appendix of Frensd 1977 for a list.

<sup>23</sup> Duval (1972, 1125) noted that most known remains date to the 6th and, rarely, the 5th century, and more recent excavations have failed to shed further light on the subject. Duval (*ibid.*) notes however that there is evidence, from a number of the peripheral churches at least, of earlier antecedents (particularly in orientation and architectural survivals).

<sup>24</sup> See Ennabli 1986 for a discussion of these regions, the evidence for them, and their topographic identification.

<sup>25</sup> See Gros 1985, 114 for 4th and 5th century activity, 121-126 for evidence (particularly a column capital and references from Procopius) of Byzantine activity.

application of the ‘encroachment’ model to Sabratha, Ammaedara, Sufetula and Belalis. As far as can be determined, early monumental church buildings tended to be situated within the late Roman urban area, usually within 300m of the traditional urban centre. There appears to be no example of an early church inserted directly into the *forum* area or into the common *forum/baths* ambit, nor of any early church built at one of the lesser urban foci; unfortunately, the limitations of the evidence (particularly the common lack of complete excavation) are such that this cannot be taken as a final conclusion. The general absence of churches from the immediate vicinity of *fora* should be noted: even in the later 4th and early 5th century incursions by churches onto the *forum* are rare (see below). What then determined the choice of location for these earliest churches?

Certainly a major factor in siting new church buildings would have been the availability of a suitable building site. Often this appears to have been provided by the re-use of old public buildings (as, perhaps, with Church III at Sabratha and Basilica I at Sufetula) or private residences (as apparently at Belalis). If private land were relied on, the choice of a construction site would then presumably be limited by the possessions of church members. The use of privately owned land by the church was important: Augustine thanked a wealthy benefactor, Italica, for her promise to intercede on his behalf in the matter of obtaining for the church a private dwelling joining onto property already occupied by an *antiqua ecclesia*.<sup>26</sup> It is interesting to note that the “Grande Basilique” at Hippo was clearly built atop a private house, making use of a number of its mosaics in the new church floor.<sup>27</sup> There is limited archaeological evidence on other North African sites for the construction of church buildings

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<sup>26</sup> *Ep.* XCIX, discussed by Février (1982, 370). In this letter Augustine also mentions *antiqua praedia* held by the church.

<sup>27</sup> Marec 1958, 35-42, fig. 3.

on land previously occupied by private dwellings: the pre-378 Basilica A at Sitifis was built over an area of private housing,<sup>28</sup> and the undated north church at Cuicul also overlay private houses.<sup>29</sup> There does not seem to have been a clear pattern in the conversion of public structures into the earliest churches: Church III at Sabratha and Basilica I at Sufetula were built re-using buildings in relatively out-of-the-way locations which have only been tentatively identified as public; there is no definite evidence at other sites for the conversion of public buildings into churches before the end of the 4th century, and the few conversions which may date to this period (for example, Basilica III at Sufetula) tend to be made from temples. What does seem clear is that none of the key buildings of public administration, the *basilicae* and the *curiae*, were converted to churches in the 4th century.

### **The Later Churches of the pre-Byzantine Period**

Church constructions of the period following the building of the earliest churches but prior to the Byzantine reconquest, as far as can be determined from scanty evidence, follow some distinctive patterns. One is the expansion of early foundations by the construction of more buildings, whether specifically religious or not. This can be seen at Sabratha, where the smaller Church IV was constructed close by Church III,<sup>30</sup> and at Sufetula where a large ecclesiastical complex was formed by the construction in the late 5th or early 6th century of the large new Basilica II beside the older Basilica I. The ecclesiastical complex at Sufetula is an exception in that it is fairly clear when each of its two churches was constructed; the

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<sup>28</sup> As confirmed by excavation - Février 1965, 40-41, figs. 4 and 5.

<sup>29</sup> Février 1978, 33.

<sup>30</sup> This is the view of Duval; Bonacasa Carra believes the two to be contemporary (see Part 2 above).

same cannot be said of many other such complexes in North Africa, including the one at Sabratha. It is possible but by no means certain that the larger of the two churches in the ecclesiastical complex at Cuicul was constructed at a later date than the smaller,<sup>31</sup> and at Sitifis Basilica B may be later than A but only by a little more than a decade;<sup>32</sup> the complex at Bulla Regia offers no information at all for the pre-Byzantine period.

To this period also appears to belong the only solid evidence of Christian monumental encroachment onto the *forum* proper. At Sabratha the old civic *basilica* was converted in the first half of the 5th century (?) into Church I, and in the early 5th century (?) at Sufetula Basilica IV was installed in a large public building adjoining the *forum* enclosure, making use of spolia from the *forum* temples. Other known examples of conversions of civic *basilicae* are surprisingly rare - besides that at Sabratha, a conversion of unknown date occurred at Tipasa<sup>33</sup> and the Severan *basilica* at Lepcis was also converted, but not until the Byzantine period.<sup>34</sup> As noted above, the large civic *basilica* on the Byrsa at Carthage may have been converted into a church, but this cannot be confirmed. Just as rare is the conversion or, more often, replacement of other traditional buildings on *fora* - a temple on the Forum Vetus at Lepcis was replaced by a church (in the 5th century?; see above), and a small church building was constructed on the *forum* at Iol Caesarea in the first half of the 5th century.<sup>35</sup> As with the dates of construction of the earliest churches, it is very difficult (in most cases impossible) to determine exactly when these Christian encroachments on the *fora*

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<sup>31</sup> For the discussion, without particulars however, see Duval et al. 1972, 240.

<sup>32</sup> Février (1965, 41) takes A to be the older of the two.

<sup>33</sup> Duval 1988a, 255; Gui *et al.* (1992, 29) put the date in the 5th century on the assumption that a conversion would not have been made until the forum had lost its traditional function.

<sup>34</sup> Duval 1988b.

<sup>35</sup> Potter 1995, 44 - *terminus post quem* provided by coins (410) and pottery (later?).

occurred; moreover, it is very important to remember that in North African cities as a whole such a pattern was not common: most *fora* did not have churches built directly onto them.

### **The Byzantine Period**

The Byzantine period is clearly over-represented in North African ecclesiastical architecture. Not only were numerous churches founded or restored by Justinian, but in many cases excavators have failed to probe beneath these remains. This does however have the advantage of making this period easier to study topographically. Byzantine period use (mainly indicated by epitaphs) is evident in Churches I, III, and IV at Sabratha, Basilicas I, III, and IV at Ammaedara, Basilicas I to V at Sufetula, and both the Large and Small Basilicas at Belalis Maior; in addition, most of these buildings show evidence of Byzantine-period refurbishment or reconstruction. Brand new church construction in the Byzantine period is also clear at Sabratha (the Justinianic Church II), Ammaedara (Basilica III in the Byzantine fortress), and Sufetula (the martyr church in the south necropolis, Basilica VI). The locations of these three new Byzantine churches vary greatly, and illustrate well the greater freedom apparently available to church builders in the Byzantine period with regard to the location of building sites: at Sufetula the new church is out in a necropolis (likely replacing an earlier church), at Ammaedara it is located within the new Byzantine fortress, and at Sabratha it is just north of the old city *forum* - and, as at Ammaedara, within the new Byzantine fortification. The evidence from other sites indicates that these were common phenomena: Byzantine-period restorations to older churches were extremely common, conversions of older buildings did occur (the Severan Basilica at Lepcis Magna was



converted into a church in the Byzantine period),<sup>36</sup> churches could be placed very close to the traditional city centres (it is possible that a small church in the south-west corner of the Severan *forum* at Lepcis is also Byzantine in date),<sup>37</sup> and new Byzantine fortresses were commonly provided with churches (at Timgad a small church was constructed in the new Byzantine fortification).<sup>38</sup>

Unfortunately, although there is plentiful evidence for churches and fortifications in the Byzantine period towns, there is seldom any indication of the survival or use of other public structures. The overall impression given by the archaeological evidence for urban topography in the Byzantine period is of towns dominated by ecclesiastical structures, which can now be expected to appear anywhere within the old town layout, including near or in the *forum*. There appears, however, to be no clearly discernible pattern in the relationship between churches in use in the Byzantine period and the location of new Byzantine fortification works. For one thing, while some of the new fortifications centred on the old civic centres facilitated an apparent survival of these areas in some form (as at Sabratha), others clearly replaced these centres entirely (as at Ammaedara). Furthermore, the construction and refurbishment of churches does not seem to be related to the presence of such fortifications: at Sabratha two major churches, including one newly constructed, existed within the Byzantine fortification while a third church complex outside the fortification also saw use; at Ammaedara on the other hand, only one church (new and relatively small) is located inside the new fortification, while the much larger Basilicas I and II were located

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<sup>36</sup> Church 1, see Ward-Perkins and Goodchild 1953, 22-24 and more recently Duval 1988b.

<sup>37</sup> Church 3 outside the Forum, see Ward-Perkins and Goodchild 1953, 29-31, fig. 13.

<sup>38</sup> Church IX, Gui *et al.* 1992, 280-282; for the fortress: Pringle 1981, 232-236.

outside the walls.

## Conclusions

Potter,<sup>39</sup> in his recent evaluation of the results of the excavations at the *forum* of Iol Caesarea, concluded that *fora* generally died out in North African towns in the late 4th and early 5th centuries, to be replaced by new “Christian foci;” he cites Iol Caesarea, Sabratha, and possibly Carthage as exceptions. This theory is difficult to evaluate. It seems clear that the first monumental churches were originally situated solidly within the urban landscape, but at a distance from the traditional civic centre of the *forum*. There is some evidence to confirm (and none to deny) that the earliest monumental churches were constructed at a time when effort was still being put into repairing and even constructing anew traditional public buildings. On the other hand, the archaeological and epigraphic evidence indicating continued vitality (and in some cases substantial expansion) of these early church foundations through the late Roman to Byzantine periods is not matched by similar evidence from the traditional urban centres. Certainly by the Byzantine period it seems that most or all *fora* had ceased to grow and many had clearly gone out of use entirely. Procopius would apparently have us believe that Justinian’s building programs were geared in part towards restoring the traditional way of urban life (and presumably the buildings which were traditionally necessary for this),<sup>40</sup> but there is very little archaeological evidence to back up

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<sup>39</sup> 1995, 79.

<sup>40</sup> In Caputvada, writes Procopius, “the rustics have thrown aside the plough and lead the existence of a community, no longer going the round of the country tasks but living a city life. They pass their days in the market-place and hold assemblies to deliberate on questions which concern them; and they traffic with one another, and conduct all the other affairs which pertain to the dignity of a city” (*De Aed.* VI.vi.15-16; trans. H. B. Dewing).

such an assertion. Can this combination of evidence (for churches) and lack of evidence (for *fora*) be taken along with known historical factors, particularly the animosity between Christians and pagans, as indication of a direct link between the rise of new Christian buildings and the demise of the traditional urban centre, and perhaps the usurpation of the function of the latter by the former?<sup>41</sup> From the evidence examined in this chapter, it does not seem that the earliest monumental Christian foundations were specifically intended to directly usurp the traditional role of the forum in urban life; that is, they are normally not located at either major or minor urban foci, and they often coexist with functioning *fora*. However, less than 50 years after the initial proliferation of church buildings in North African towns the epigraphic record of traditional civic activity all but dries up<sup>42</sup> and by the Byzantine period it is clear that churches dominated the monumental urban landscape. How closely are the rise of churches and the decline of *fora* related? Did churches actually become urban foci, replacing the *fora* in that function? If churches did indeed replace the functions of the *fora*, how did this come about? Did church buildings provide new locations for the traditional urban activities of the population, or did they introduce or facilitate new forms of urban public life? The next chapter of this thesis will examine this question and explore the function of the new church buildings in the urban landscape.

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<sup>41</sup> Potter 1995, 73.

<sup>42</sup> Lepelley 1979, 317 and 412.

## CHAPTER 4: THE FUNCTION OF CHURCH BUILDINGS

An examination of the dates and locations of both traditional urban public buildings and churches (Chapters 1 and 2) leads to the general conclusion that the archaeological case for replacement of traditional urban foci by churches or church complexes is far from clear (Chapter 3). In order to explore the question further, this chapter will examine the evidence for the actual functions of church buildings. After a brief discussion of the functions of traditional public buildings, the functions of churches will be discussed. This analysis will examine in turn the earliest churches, hypothesized to have been built before any encroachment on the *forum*, the changes which occurred in church function after this period, and finally the role of churches in the Byzantine period.

### **The Function of Traditional Buildings in Urban Public Life**

The most important part of the Roman North African city from the point of view of public life was the *forum*, and this section will focus on forming a brief definition of the function of these architectural conglomerations. Careful scrutiny of the *fora* at Sabratha, Ammaedara, Sufetula, and Belalis Maior has shown that they are far from standardized units. Nonetheless, although the exact types, sizes and numbers of buildings which surrounded these *fora* could differ dramatically, they can be seen to have shared a number of functions crucial to public life in the ancient city.

Foremost among these was a religious function, as clearly attested by the presence of one or more major temples at each *forum* with the exception of that of Belalis. The importance of traditional (pagan) religion in the daily public life of a citizen of a Roman city was very likely immense, and what evidence we have on this subject indicates that it may be easily underestimated. Religion appears to have been infused into most or all of the activities which took place in the *forum* and was necessarily (but not exclusively) centred on the temples. Examples from Rome indicate that the temples, besides serving as a focus for religious festivals, fulfilled a number of political functions. They served as meeting places for the Senate, played primary roles in the ceremonies associated with the first acts of new censors and consuls, and served as official seats for magistrates (particularly the censors, consuls, and plebeian aediles).<sup>1</sup> Vitruvius, in discussing the preferred locations for temple buildings, makes close associations between the deities concerned and certain activities with which they should be associated - Mercury *in foro*, Isis and Serapis *in emporio*, Apollo and Liber Pater *secundum theatrum*, for example.<sup>2</sup> As with many of Vitruvius' maxims, these appear to have been seldom followed; nonetheless, they demonstrate the close ties of religion to the major facets of urban public life. Indeed, temples themselves were not specifically needed to ensure a religious presence: to the pagan grammarian Maximus of Madauros, writing to Augustine in 390, the *forum* of his town was "occupied by a crowd of beneficent

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<sup>1</sup> See Stambaugh 1978, 580-583.

<sup>2</sup> Vitruvius I.viii.1; Stambaugh (1978, 562) notes however that concerns of visual impact and propaganda appear to have played more of a role in actual practice, especially under Augustus and his successors.

deities.”<sup>3</sup> Madauros appears to have possessed only one temple in its *forum*,<sup>4</sup> and Augustine (*Ep.* XVII) in his reply to Maximus takes issue with what he perceives as the evil influence of two statues of Mars. In this light, while religion clearly played a major role in some *fora* (as at Sabratha, with its multiple temples), it appears that even *fora* with no clear temples (such as at Belalis) could have had important religious functions. Tertullian is illustrative of the potential extremes of Christian opinion on this matter, for to him all spaces public or private were contaminated to some degree by idols.<sup>5</sup> As will be seen in the following discussion of *basilicae* and *curiae*, religious function was so infused into some public structures that it is not possible to pin down specific architectural provisions necessary for this role to be fulfilled.

A second important function of *fora* was as focal points for city politics and administration. The most obvious physical manifestation of this function is the presence of *basilicae* and *curiae*: of the four town *fora* studied here, only Belalis’ definitely lacks one of these crucial monuments, in that it has no *basilica*. The *curia* served as a meeting place for the towns’ *decuriones* and, as shown by the late 4th century affair of the statue of Victory in Rome’s own *curia*, they could also have strong religious associations. Religious associations with North African *curiae* are reflected in inscriptions which use temple terminology, such

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<sup>3</sup> Augustine, *Ep.* XVI: “*At vero nostrae urbis forum salutarium numinum frequentia possessum nos cernimus et probamus.*” (Trans. J. H. Baxter).

<sup>4</sup> The single small temple is attached to the *curia* - see Balty 1991, 79-81 and fig. 53 for a plan of the *forum*. This temple is not the *capitolium* according to Barton (1982, 271), although an inscription referring to *sacerdotes kapitoli* (ILAlg I.2146) does suggest that a *capitolium* existed somewhere in the town.

<sup>5</sup> *De Spectaculis* VIII: “*Ceterum et plateae et forum et balneae et stabula et ipsae domus nostrae sine idolis omnino non sunt: totum saeculum satanas et angeli eius repleverunt.*”

as *aedes sive curia* (**Belalis 2**) or *templum ordinis*.<sup>6</sup> *Basilicae* may originally have had a mainly commercial function in the city of Rome, but already by the time of Vitruvius it was customary to include some form of *tribunal* for the use of magistrates in conducting judicial business.<sup>7</sup> These two types of buildings were as a rule large and required specific architectural provisions, including seating in the *curiae* and a columned hall with *tribunal* for the *basilicae*.

Besides functioning as religious, political, and judicial centres, *fora* could also serve the rather more mundane function of market place. The structures most commonly associated with this commercial function are rows of small rooms usually located at the back of the portico, as seen at Ammaedara, Sufetula, and Belalis. However, it is usually impossible to determine just what exactly the function of such rooms was. Vitruvius (V.i.2) mentions that *argentariae tabernae* were to be located *in porticibus*, and indeed Augustine (*Conf.* VI.9) records the shops of moneylenders in the *forum* at Carthage. Furthermore, Augustine (*ibid.*) also notes that a crowd of shopkeepers assembled to witness the arrest of his friend Alypius, wrongly apprehended during an attempted burglary of said moneylenders' shops. These shopkeepers presumably had their businesses on or very near the *forum*. Moreover, as with temples and religion, the absence of potential shop structures does not necessarily preclude the economic function of the *forum*, since simple porticos (even porticos of temples) could serve as locations for doing business and for the buying and selling of

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<sup>6</sup> The *curiae* of Mactar (*CIL* viii, 11824) and Lambaesis (*CIL* viii, 18328) have such terminology in their inscriptions (Balty 1991, 608).

<sup>7</sup> Vitruvius V.i.6-8; in his discussion of the *basilica* at Fano, Vitruvius notes that the *tribunal* was situated within an *aedes Augusti* located *in medio latere parietis basilicae*, again demonstrating the pervasiveness of religious function.

goods.<sup>8</sup>

Finally, *fora* also fulfilled very important social functions. The most obvious of these was to serve as a meeting place where people could interact in the course of conducting business. The ubiquitous porticos which provided ample opportunity to meet and socialize in a sheltered space were not of course limited to the *fora*, but in most towns there was no larger space undisturbed by traffic. The proximity of major public baths to the *fora* of Sabratha, Ammaedara, Sufetula, and especially Belalis emphasizes this social role. A further social function, and a crucial one with regard to urban public life, was fulfilled by the display in the *fora* of inscribed monuments recording the euergetism of the town's prominent citizens. New monuments by or in honour of benefactors to the city were erected in or near the *forum* as late as the 370s at Sufetula (**Sufetula 2**) and the 380s at Sabratha (**Sabratha 4**). Although by this time the pace of civic euergetism was definitely slowing, there is clear evidence of its continued survival in North Africa into the late 4th and early 5th centuries: in a later 4th century inscription from Thugga (*CIL* viii, 26569) a local notable is recorded as having restored a building and given banquets for the people, apparently as an *ob honorem* expenditure on the occasion of his assumption of the office of *duovir*; at Casula, a *flamen perpetuus* restored statues of his elders between 408 and 423;<sup>9</sup> and at Uzali Sar in 408, a man of senatorial rank donated a fountain to his *municipium*, in fulfilment of a vow.<sup>10</sup> Local aristocrats were not the only figures to be honoured by inscribed monuments in the *forum*; the influence of the imperial government was always strong, and it grew stronger in the 3rd

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<sup>8</sup> For this activity in temple precincts, see Stambaugh 1978, 585-586.

<sup>9</sup> *CIL* viii, 24104.

<sup>10</sup> *CIL* viii, 25377; see also Lepelley 1981, 245, n. 8.



and 4th centuries as local elites were progressively overshadowed by imperial officials, particularly governors. With such monuments prominently on display, the *forum* would have served as a clear statement of a city's Roman character, a function which may perhaps be best described as ideological.<sup>11</sup>

Thus, the *forum* served religious, political, judicial, economic, social, and ideological functions. Religion was the most pervasive of these, and though temples provide blatant evidence of religious function they are not indispensable - the *forum* at Belalis Maior quite likely had a distinctly pagan religious character even though it had no major identifiable temple fronting onto it. The political and judicial functions of the *forum* were fulfilled by distinctive and specific buildings, but economic or market functions are more difficult to associate with certainty with any *forum* monument. The social function of the *forum*, although clearly manifested in its role as a meeting place for all who would come to do business or pass time there, is most sharply defined by the numerous inscribed monuments which stood as records of the most noteworthy efforts of the most important figures in the public life of the town. All of these functions together clearly mark out the *forum* as the heart of the classical North African city. How then did the first churches relate to these monumental complexes?

### **Functions of the Earliest Churches**

If, as suggested in Chapter 3, the earliest monumental Christian buildings were often constructed at a time when the *fora* were still active, functioning, pagan-dominated urban centres, how did their functions compare to those of the other monumental buildings of the

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<sup>11</sup> This function first manifests itself in the imperial *fora* at Rome; see Martin 1971, 916.

towns, particularly the temples and the *fora*?

Functions of House Churches:

The obvious place to start in the determination of church function is with the pre-monumental or house churches. Unfortunately, securely identified examples of such structures are exceedingly rare and none have been found anywhere in North Africa. The literary evidence offers a little more information, particularly the description of a search of a Christian house church by the *curator* of Cirta during the persecution of 303.<sup>12</sup> In the *domus in qua christiani conveniebant* was a *triclinium*, a *biblioteca*, and storage facilities sufficient to hold a large amount of clothing and church supplies. If this text can be taken as representative of early Christian house churches, it indicates that one of their functions was as a place of meeting and dining; in this way they bear resemblance to the meeting places of the *collegia*.<sup>13</sup> However, the further apparent function of storage, suggesting a role in the practice of charity, sets the house church apart from the club houses of the *collegia*. Moreover, dining actually formed a primary feature of early Christian worship, making this an overtly religious function and not merely a social one.<sup>14</sup> The library, while holding texts necessary to worship ceremonies, also hints at another important church function which will be discussed below: teaching.

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<sup>12</sup> *Gesta apud Zenophilum (Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum XXVI, 185-197).*

<sup>13</sup> Stambaugh (1978, 602) notes the similarity of early Christian buildings to the *scholae*, which shared a number of features with temples, even in some cases containing an aedes to a patron god (*ibid.*, 588-591). These *scholae* are almost as enigmatic as the early Christian house churches, with the Rome evidence limited to epigraphic sources (*ibid.*, 589), though a number of examples have been excavated and identified at Ostia (see G. Hermansen *Ostia*, Edmonton 1981, Chapters 2 and 3).

<sup>14</sup> Tertullian describes the Christian worship-dinner (*Apologeticus* 39.16-19) and the practice of charity (*ibid.* 39.5-6) in late 2nd century North Africa.

### Functions of the Earliest Monumental Churches:

What then of the functions of the first monumental churches? Did they differ from the house churches that went before? The evidence here is surprisingly only somewhat better than that available for the early house churches. Although a good number of early monumental churches are known, the exact nature of their earliest phases is most often very hard to determine. Most of the structures consist of a basilical hall and, perhaps, a baptistry. All too often excavation has halted before any outbuildings have been explored.

The primary function of the earliest monumental churches as places of mass worship is clear, and this main function is reflected in their large size and liturgical fittings. Architectural evidence suggests that the dining aspect of this worship function was minimized - there are no provisions such as couches or benches for the congregational masses. Augustine (*Ep.* XXIX) however still found himself having to fight against those of his parishioners who wanted to conduct a drunken feast in the church on the occasion of a martyr festival.<sup>15</sup> In the same letter (XXIX.10-11) Augustine states that similar drunken feasting occurred in Rome and also in the Donatist church next door to his. It appears then that the switch from house to monumental church did not bring about a total change in worship practice.<sup>16</sup> Another function of the house church which most certainly was carried out in the monumental buildings was that of meeting place - it can only be expected that large-scale public church services would provide an opportunity for people to meet and converse. Some churches (such as Church III at Sabratha and Basilica I at Ammaedara) have

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<sup>15</sup> *Ep.* XXIX.6: "...etiam honorem ecclesiae deferre cuperent et, si potestas daretur, totum tam magnae basilicae spatium turbis epulantium ebriorumque complerent..."

<sup>16</sup> In an interesting contrast, a number of Christian funerary complexes did have dining facilities clearly intended for the use of visiting faithful. See P.-A. Février "A Propos du Repas Funéraire: Culte et Sociabilité," *Cahiers Archéologiques* 26 (1977), 29-46, esp. 29 for discussion of the Tipasa necropolis.

courts or *atria* attached to one end of the building, but these are generally rare in North Africa. Aside from *atria*, it is difficult to identify any particular architectural features of the earliest church buildings which seem to be primarily intended to serve as places of informal meeting, although it should be noted that the basilical hall itself was in its origin designed to serve just such a function. The final function which is attested for house churches, that of storage connected perhaps to charitable distribution of goods, is not clearly reflected in church buildings either. While some churches (such as Church III at Sabratha, Basilica I at Ammaedara, and possibly Basilica I at Sufetula) do have small complexes of rooms linked to them, it is not possible to determine their function with any certainty. In no case have excavations produced finds from such rooms which might aid in this task, nor is it possible to associate them with any specific literary references to facets of early church function.

The actual architectural form of early monumental churches then only allows for limited inference of function, mainly bearing on their role as places of worship and meeting. Literary evidence does however allow for some extra functions to be added to this list. One of these is that of teaching. Parishioners would not just attend church to worship and to meet and greet, but also to be educated through sermons; Augustine (*Ep.* XCI.3) refers to the Christian churches rising up all over the world as *sancta auditoria*, or “holy lecture halls.”<sup>17</sup> Certainly this function would have been carried out in house churches too, but the accelerated growth of Christianity in the 4th century and the proliferation of heresy would have made it all the more important to ensure that all members of the community received proper religious education.

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<sup>17</sup> Augustine’s *Ep.* XXIX provides a good example of the practicalities and importance of sermonizing to the *inperita multitudo*.

Another function of early church buildings was as a place of sanctuary. Augustine twice makes mention of people seeking sanctuary in his church in Hippo in order to avoid arrest by an *officialis comitis* (*Ep.* CXV.1) or *exactores* (*Ep.* CCLXVIII.1).<sup>18</sup> This was not a particularly uncommon practice, apparently, and Augustine in both cases exerted himself on behalf of the asylum seekers.<sup>19</sup> This function of church buildings is also attested to by imperial legislation enacted to discourage this recourse for debtors.<sup>20</sup> Related to this from a legal perspective is the emergence of ecclesiastical courts, with the bishop(s) acting as judges. The earliest legal evidence is in a law of Constantine I which grants the right of bishops to hear legal cases.<sup>21</sup> Further laws stipulated that bishops should not stand trial in civil courts (*C.Th.* XVI.2.12, dated 355) and that clerics must be accused only before bishops (*C.Th.* XVI.2.41, dated 411). In 391 the emperors Arcadius and Honorius, writing to the *proconsul* of Africa, instructed that bishops must judge all cases relating to religion (*C.Th.* XVI.11.1) and in 408 an edict stated that all judgements made by a bishop should be considered valid if the person on trial had consented to such an ecclesiastical hearing (*C.Th.* I.27.2). Augustine (*Ep.* 24\*) implies that such cases were common enough to be a burden to him, although he also laments the inability of the church to punish transgressors of high rank, those who hold positions of *honor vel curiae vel fori* (*Ep.* 9\*.2). It is not clear however where the actual trials took place, although they may very well have occurred in the church

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<sup>18</sup> Two of Augustine's new letters (1\* and 22\*) indicate however that the clergy, even the bishop himself, were not always able to exercise their power on behalf of such asylum seekers.

<sup>19</sup> In *Ep.* CXV Augustine writes that the *conductor* Faventius *ad Hipponiensem confugit ecclesiam, et ibi erat, ut confugientes solent, expectans quo modo per intercessionem nostram sua negotia terminaret.*

<sup>20</sup> *C.Th.* IX.45.1-3, dating to 392, 397, and 398.

<sup>21</sup> *C.Th.* I.27.1, dated 318, mentions an "episcopal court" - *episcopale iudicium* as translated by Pharr. Pharr also notes (31) that this text may be corrupt.

proper (an interesting parallel to the traditional judicial function of the *basilica*).

Fourth century Christians also sometimes used their churches as places of burial. Basilica II at Ammaedara and the Large Basilica at Belalis Maior both have funerary mosaics dated to the later 4th century, and the dated funerary mosaics from Basilicas A and B at Sitifis demonstrate that this practice dates back in that city at least at least to the 370s. Still, it does not seem that this was an extremely common practice for most of the 4th century and it was most likely limited to wealthy, important individuals.

#### Church and *Forum* In the 4th Century:

From archaeological and literary evidence a picture emerges of early monumental Christian churches as multi-purpose structures which inherited many of the functions of earlier house churches, namely worship, teaching, and meeting. In addition, the new monumental *basilicae* could serve as a place of sanctuary or burial, and could also offer a much larger space for the fulfilment of functions such as worship and meeting.<sup>22</sup> It should be noted that the non-uniform pace of religious change in North African towns would have meant that some towns acquired monumental churches before others, and that even when such a building was constructed older house churches would have almost certainly continued in use in some towns. Did these early monumental churches offer an alternative to any of the public functions traditionally fulfilled by the *fora*? From the evidence available, it seems probable that to some degree they did. The first alternative, clearly, was religious; the *forum*'s temples traditionally served as centres for large public festivals, the equivalent of

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<sup>22</sup> Another important potential social function of the first monumental churches, that of a focus for acts of euergetism, will be discussed below in the context of the decline of traditional secular patronage.

which (in a form as solemn as a martyr feast directed by Augustine or as raucous as one held by his Donatist neighbours) could now be enjoyed by the Christian faithful in the privacy of their own capacious buildings.<sup>23</sup> Secondly, monumental churches offered Christians an opportunity to meet and socially interact with their co-religionists in a large, relatively public place unsullied by the pagan connotations of the *fora*. Thirdly and perhaps most importantly, monumental churches began to represent for Christians an alternative to the traditional civic governing bodies housed in the *curiae* and *basilicae* on the *fora*. This is most clearly manifested in the right of sanctuary and (to a more limited extent) the role of bishop as judge, functions which gave an indication of the rising importance of the bishop in civic life. It is very difficult if not impossible, however, to determine to what extent these earliest monumental churches did serve as alternatives to the traditional public functions of the *fora*, particularly at a time when the evidence often indicates that many of these traditional urban centres continued to function more or less as they always had. Nonetheless, it cannot be denied that the *fora* did lose their primacy in the late 4th and early 5th centuries; the following section will examine the role of monumental Christian buildings in this period.

### **Functions of Churches in the later pre-Byzantine Period**

As outlined in Chapters 2 and 3, the late 4th and early 5th centuries saw a number of trends in the intensifying process of urban change. First, monumental churches increased in number and size and, in some towns, began encroaching on the traditional urban centres. At about the same time (although precise dating is not possible), these urban centres began to

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<sup>23</sup> See Stambaugh 1978, 576-577 for pagan festivals centred on temples.

decline: temples were abandoned, closed, or turned to other uses,<sup>24</sup> and after a final 4th century peak (beginning around the time of Julian and continuing to about 383) the epigraphic record of the construction and repair of other traditional urban public monuments all but dries up.<sup>25</sup> How do these two phenomena relate, if at all? Did church buildings usurp any of the functions and thus, in whole or in part, the role of the traditional urban centres?

#### Churches Encroaching on the *Forum*:

The first factor which must be examined is the encroachment of church buildings into the traditional urban centres, on or more commonly near the *fora*. At Sabratha this occurred with the conversion of the civic *basilica* into Church I in the late 4th or early 5th century, at Ammaedara with the construction of Basilica I just west of the *capitolium* in approximately the same date range, and at Sufetula with the conversion of an existing building just north of the *forum* into Basilica IV, possibly in the early 5th century, and the conversion of a courtyard temple into Basilica III, perhaps as early as the late 4th century. These new churches have intimate connections with the fates of the respective *fora*, from which some basic conclusions concerning the function of the latter can be drawn. The encroaching churches at Ammaedara and Sufetula both make use of spolia from *forum* temples, clearly indicating that these structures had gone out of use at this time; furthermore, the conversion of the civic *basilica* at Sabratha (which had been reconstructed only relatively recently in the 360s) gives clear evidence of the disappearance or at least transfer of judicial function from

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<sup>24</sup> Augustine, in an undated letter (*Ep.* CCXXXII) to the largely pagan *ordo* of Madauros, wrote “*Vidētis certe simulacrorum templa partim sine reparatione conlapsa, partim diruta, partim clausa, partim in usus alios commutata...*”

<sup>25</sup> Lepelley 1979, p. 302. See Kotula 1994 for a study of the surge in dedications in the time of Julian.



this *forum* building. On the other hand, all three of these buildings also appear to be fitted into the traditional city centre layout, rather than being roughly or haphazardly inserted as if into an abandoned area. Church I at Sabratha appears to have retained the portico and *forum*-facing entrance of the old civic *basilica*, Basilica I at Ammaedara did not encroach over the road which appears to have formed the main link between the *forum* and the baths to the north, Basilica IV at Sufetula was provided with a monumental porticoed façade facing onto the *cardo* which gave access to the north side of the *forum*, and Basilica III likewise retained its main entrance through the old temple's portico facing onto the *decumanus maximus*. All four of these churches give the appearance of having been placed into the ambit of still-functioning *fora*.

Just what functions did these *fora* still fulfill, and how exactly did the new “downtown” churches relate to them? This is a difficult question to answer, particularly considering that archaeological evidence for the later occupational history of the *fora* is exceedingly slim. Even at a site like Iol Caesarea, where the excavations of the city's *forum* and attached church have been carefully executed and recorded, it has proved all but impossible to determine with any precision which of the late features were in use at the same time.<sup>26</sup> Nonetheless, some inferences can be made from the evidence available. Firstly, the careful integration of new churches into the old urban centres of Sabratha, Ammaedara, and Sufetula suggests that these churches may have functioned as ‘Christianizing’ elements, negating the pervasive pagan associations of the *fora* and replacing these with Christian ones. In and around the *fora* themselves few of the abandoned temples were converted to churches, but it is clear that they could sometimes be re-used for secular purposes; the reduced post-c.

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<sup>26</sup> See Potter 1995.

360 entrance to the East Forum Temple at Sabratha may be an example of this.<sup>27</sup> The political functions of the *fora* may in many cases have been maintained, but there is little direct evidence for this. Most likely, the prime functions of the late 4th/early 5th century *fora* remained economic and social, with the large spaces used for places of meeting and doing business.

However, it must be noted that although churches may have been inserted into still-functioning city centres in the later 4th and 5th centuries, these churches generally appear not to have become the main churches of the towns, nor were they apparently able through their presence to ensure the survival of the traditional urban centres. While some of these churches were large and well-appointed (such as Church 1 at Sabratha or Basilica III at Sufetula), others were relatively small and/or appear to lack important fittings such as baptistries (e.g., Basilica I at Ammaedara and Basilica IV at Sufetula). It is not these churches which have been identified as the potential new urban foci of many North African towns in Late Antiquity; rather, it is the apparently earlier churches built further from the city centre, some of which began to expand into what have been termed ecclesiastical or episcopal complexes.

#### Ecclesiastical Complexes:

Both Sabratha (Churches III and IV) and Sufetula (Basilicas I and II) offer examples of ecclesiastical complexes, that is, groupings of one or more churches with extensive attached structures. Did such complexes assume new or expanded functions, relative to the

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<sup>27</sup> See also Augustine *Ep.* CCXXXII.3 (*templa ... partim in usus alios commutata*) and Libanius *Or.* XXX.42 (arguing for preservation of temples as objects of civic adornment by conversion to secular usage).

earliest monumental churches, in the later 4th and 5th centuries? Unfortunately neither of these complexes has been excavated in its entirety. The state of excavation of the potential complex at Sabratha offers little more than the remains of two *basilicae*, a baptistry, and a funerary area. The ecclesiastical complex at Sufetula is somewhat better defined, consisting of the two *basilicae*, a martyr chapel (formerly the baptistry of Basilica I) between them, a small annex to the east of Basilica I and a larger one to the west of Basilica II. To the north of Basilica II, but not definitely connected to it, lay a set of baths.

What functions did the ecclesiastical complex at Sufetula fulfill? Clearly religious function remained primary, and in particular this complex would have been one of the only two locations in town where the Christian initiation ritual of baptism could be performed; this duplication may be explained by associating Basilicas II and III with, respectively, Catholics and Donatists. It seems, however, that many components of the complexes were not public, at least not in the sense that the *fora* and their associated buildings were. The doors giving entry to the complex from the street all open onto rather confined areas, essentially passages which serve as access routes to the major buildings. The buildings themselves, aside from the two churches, are far from grand in plan. It might not be improper to presume that they were primarily intended to serve the needs of the church staff, the bishop, priests, deacons, and their slaves; the rooms making up the two-storey annex to the west of Basilica II have been identified by Duval *et al.* as the residence of the bishop.<sup>28</sup>

Parallels for this type of ecclesiastical complex do exist in other North African cities, but they are limited and far from uniform in plan or in the types of buildings of which they

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<sup>28</sup> Duval *et al.* 1972, p. 224.

are composed.<sup>29</sup> Only four “groupes épiscopaux,” according to Duval, can be identified with certainty; two of these are the complexes at Sabratha and Sufetula.<sup>30</sup> About thirty more potential bishop’s churches have also been identified, including Basilica I at Ammaedara and the Large Basilica at Belalis, but few of these have associated complexes.<sup>31</sup> Moreover, the functions of these structures are not generally made clear by their layout; Duval suggests that they may have served financial/administrative purposes, functioned as audience halls for the bishop, as dispensation points for charity and poor-assistance, or as lodging for travellers.<sup>32</sup>

There is some limited legal evidence which bears on the question of the functions of ancillary buildings within ecclesiastical complexes. Edict IX.45.4 of the *Codex Theodosianus*, issued on March 23, 431 to the Praetorian Prefect of the East, deals with the locations in which people seeking refuge can find it:

*“Pateant summi dei templa timentibus; nec sola altaria et oratorium templi circumiectum, qui ecclesias quadripertito intrinsecus parietum saeptu concludit, ad tuitionem confugientium sancimus esse proposita, sed usque ad extremas fores ecclesiae, quas oratum gestiens populus primas ingreditur, confugientibus aram salutis esse praecipimus, ut inter templi quem parietum descripsimus cinctum et **post loca publica** ianuas primas ecclesiae quiquid fuerit interiacens **sive in cellulis sive in domibus hortulis balneis areis atque porticibus**, confugas interioris templi vice tueatur. Nec in extrahendos eos conetur quisquam sacriligas manus inmittere, ne qui hoc ausus sit, cum discrimen suum videat, ad expetendam opem ipse quoque confugiat. Hanc autem spatii latitudinem ideo indulgemus, ne in ipso dei templo et sacrosanctis altaribus confugientium quemquam manere vel vescere, cubare vel pernoctare liceat... Proinde hi, qui sine armis ad sanctissimum dei templum aut ad*

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<sup>29</sup> Collected in Duval *et al.* 1972, and discussed more recently, with a focus on the role of the bishop, in Duval 1989.

<sup>30</sup> Duval 1989, 348.

<sup>31</sup> See Appendix of Duval 1989, 392-399 for list.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 355-356. One of the best recorded ecclesiastical complexes, that at Tebessa, is also one of the least standardized. Very monumental in appearance, it nonetheless lacks a baptistry and has been identified as a pilgrim church; see Christern 1976.

*sacrosanctum altare sive usquam gentium sive in hac alma urbe confugiunt, somnum intra templum sive ipsum altare vel omnino cibum capere absque aliqua eorum iniuria ab ipsis clericis arceantur, designantibus spatia, quae in ecclesiasticis saeptis eorum tuitioni sufficiant, ac docentibus capitalem poenam esse propositam, si qui eos conentur invadere. ...”*

The churches (*templa*), instruct Theodosius II and Valentinian III, are to be open to those seeking refuge; however, so as not to clutter or defile the interior of the churches proper, the emperors extend the area of religious sanctuary to the area between the (presumably exterior) walls of the church and the foremost doors of the *ecclesia*, just behind the *loca publica* (τοὺς δημοσίους τόπους in the Greek version). In the *Codex*, the word *ecclesia* is used to refer to a number of different things. In early 4th century legislation it appears as an abstract term referring to the church as a body or institution;<sup>33</sup> by the later 4th century, however, this term could be used to refer to the actual buildings in which Christians met.<sup>34</sup> Moreover, these different meanings were both used from this time on, and possibly even mixed in a single piece of legislation.<sup>35</sup> In this particular case, *ecclesia* appears to refer to an entire complex. The *ianuas primas* appear to be the same as the *extremas fores ecclesiae*, mentioned earlier as the doors through which people desiring to pray enter first. Between these doors and the church building itself lie the cells, houses, gardens, baths, open areas and porticoes which may be used by those seeking refuge. In relation to the *templum*,

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<sup>33</sup> For example *C.Th.* IV.7.1, an edict of Constantine dated to 321.

<sup>34</sup> In *C.Th.* XVI.1.1, dated to 380, the emperors instruct that, in dealing with heretics, “*nec conciliabula eorum ecclesiarum nomen accipere*” - their meeting places are not to be called *ecclesiae*.

<sup>35</sup> In *C.Th.* 16.1.3, dated to 381, the Proconsul of Asia is instructed by the emperors that to the Catholic bishops “*tradi omnes ecclesias mox iubemus*;” such people are defined as Catholic who follow the bishops of certain *ecclesiae*, such as the *Constantinopolitana ecclesia* - this refers to the “church” of the city as a whole, not to any specific building.

the outer doors of the *ecclesia*, and the various spaces and buildings between them, the *loca publica* appear to be outside the complex. This complex, in which certain spaces are to be designated by the clerics for the use of refuge seekers, is then referred to as the *ecclesiasticus saeptus*, or ecclesiastical enclosure. From this piece of legislation, it appears that the various and multiple amenities within ecclesiastical complexes were not considered to be public places. Ordinary people entered them only to pray or to seek refuge. This should likely be taken as a warning against interpreting complexes such as that attached to Basilicas I and II at Sufetula as constituting open, public structures which could conceivably replace some of the traditional urban amenities. In all likelihood it was the church staff and hierarchy who would use these areas, not the common lay public.

From a functional point of view, then, ecclesiastical complexes should likely be seen as architectural conglomerations established primarily to serve the needs of the church leaders and administrators. Still, the presence of certain buildings and persons would have given these complexes a wider range of function for the lay parishioner. Not only would the churches themselves serve a religious function, but the presence of the bishop and his staff would have created a political/judicial function and some of the rooms may have served for the administration of charity.

#### Churches as Foci for Euergetism in the pre-Byzantine Period:

It may be said that the single most important driving force behind the formation of traditional Roman urban centres in North African towns was the phenomenon of euergetism, the practice of public gift-giving, often in the form of monumental public buildings or their

parts or adornments, by wealthy townfolk seeking or demonstrating upward social mobility. There is also evidence, mainly epigraphic, for the role of early monumental churches as a focus of euergetism.<sup>36</sup> Three churches from two of the towns studied here contain potential evidence of Christian architectural gift-giving in the later 4th and 5th centuries: Church III at Sabratha has an inscription (**Sabratha 5**) recording a votive mosaic dedication, and Basilicas VI and II at Sufetula have similar inscriptions (**Sufetula 8** and **5**). These inscriptions are clearly dissimilar to traditional *tituli aedificium*, particularly in their universal mention of the discharge of vows, and give the impression of offerings made by the faithful in return for favours granted. In this context, the naming of the dedicant can be interpreted as a reflection of the desire to form a bond between the honoured saint and the dedicant.<sup>37</sup> The purpose of forging this bond was to ensure the intercession of the saint on behalf of the dedicant (and often their relatives, as indicated by the frequent use of the phrase *cum suis*).

This focus on the fulfilment of vows suggests that traditional religious votive rather than secular dedicatory inscriptions should be looked to as the source of Christian dedications.<sup>38</sup> Indeed, pagan *tituli sacri* have much in common with the bulk of Christian dedicatory inscriptions. The standard pagan formula consists of the name of a divine entity, followed by the name of the dedicant(s), and often concluded with a statement of why the dedication was made (commonly a reference to the discharge of *vota*). Also, women figure

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<sup>36</sup> This idea has been advanced by a number of authors, for example J.-P. Caillet (1993), B. Ward-Perkins (1984; W.-P. uses the terms “munificence” and “patronage,” not specifically “euergetism”) and, with regard to early Christian and Jewish patronage, L. M. White (1990, 77-85; again the term “euergetism” is not used, but the mechanisms of patronage described by White make its application very suitable). P. Veyne (1990, esp. 19-34) uses the word but is careful to redefine it in Christian contexts.

<sup>37</sup> Y. Duval 1982, 588.

<sup>38</sup> Thanks to E. Haley for this suggestion.

much more prominently in pagan *tituli sacri* than in *tituli aedificiorum*, most often in association with their husbands but sometimes alone. There are however some differences. One is in the nature of the epigraphic supports: pagan *tituli* were most often inscribed on a small altar (which could be but was not always set up in a larger sanctuary), while their potential Christian equivalents are most often found within churches (most often but not always on the floor); this situation, partially due no doubt to the new physical context of Christian worship, could conceivably have led to Christian dedications being exposed to a wider audience than their pagan counterparts. Anonymity is remarkably rare in the Christian dedicatory inscriptions of the four main cities studied here: of eight such inscriptions,<sup>39</sup> only one is without the name of the dedicant.<sup>40</sup> In addition, Christian dedications were often of a more functional nature than pagan ones: while some pagan *tituli sacri* refer to dedications of entire buildings, most often they apply to small altars which, though often potentially functional, likely did not constitute important material contributions to the pagan worship community. Christian dedications on the other hand were often of potentially great use to the congregation, either materially (mosaic floors) or spiritually (martyrs' relics). Another difference is that Christian *tituli* are much more likely than pagan ones to include phrases which attempt to gain blessings for the relatives of the dedicant (such as *cum suis*);<sup>41</sup> this perhaps reflects the greater Christian emphasis on community.

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<sup>39</sup> Sabratha 5, Ammaedara 10, 12, 13, and 14, Sufetula 5, 7, and 8.

<sup>40</sup> Ammaedara 13; Ammaedara 12, which is a twin of this inscription, does name the dedicant.

<sup>41</sup> Only about 2% of the *tituli sacri et sacerdotum* listed in *ILS* use phrases such as *cum suis* or *pro se et suis* (35 out of 1,948 inscriptions, out of which about 200 are funerary inscriptions of priests and thus not relevant).



Are these votive inscriptions installed in Christian churches, baptistries and shrines examples of euergetism? The answer would seem to be a tentative yes, but with the important distinction that this new Christian manifestation of the phenomenon had much heavier religious overtones. The heavy religious overtones of the inscriptions distinguish them from the traditional phenomenon, but at the same time the prominent display of personal names and in some cases vocations (**Sabratha 5**) or even titles (for example, **Rusguniae 1**) indicate that earthly recognition was also valued by the dedicants. This phenomenon will be discussed further below, in the context of the more epigraphically rich Byzantine period.

#### Summary:

Did church buildings form new urban foci in the later 4th and 5th centuries? In comparing their functions to those of the *fora*, it can be seen that churches offered alternatives to the religious, social, and possibly even judicial functions of the traditional urban centres. However, there is little or no evidence to suggest that churches offered alternate venues for the economic functioning of the *fora*, and it appears that ecclesiastical complexes should generally be interpreted as serving the needs of the church staff and not the public. If church buildings did indeed replace the *fora* as urban foci in the late 4th and 5th centuries, they constituted a different form of urban focus.

#### **Functions of Churches in Byzantine Period**

In many ways, the Byzantine period in North Africa presents a picture of urban life

sharply different from that in the 4th or even early 5th century. Towns were distinctly smaller, traditional municipal euergetism had died, and most of those traditional public monuments which had not been converted to new functions had gone out of use entirely. Some towns, such as Sabratha, could be said to be entirely new foundations. Unfortunately, although the Byzantine period is perhaps the best represented period in North Africa with regard to church buildings, there is usually very little evidence for the precise nature of the rest of the urban makeup of towns of this period.

Are there any noticeable changes in the functions of churches in the Byzantine period? The archaeological evidence offers very little to judge by, and indeed appears to indicate that there was little change. One pattern can be picked out: the increasing frequency of burial within church buildings and around intramural churches. Church decoration, refurbishment, and even sometimes construction was common in Byzantine Sabratha, Ammaedara, Sufetula and Belalis. As with the preceding period, however, it is difficult if not impossible to identify other buildings associated with the churches, much less to determine their architectural history or function.

It is interesting to note the markedly strong continuity in the practice of making epigraphic record of ecclesiastical dedications in the Byzantine period. Ammaedara is particularly well endowed with inscriptions of this sort, with two dedications of martyr relics (**Ammaedara 10, 12 13**) and one dedication of, apparently, a mosaic floor (**Ammaedara 14**). The identities of the donors, a bishop, an official of senatorial rank, and a couple, indicate that such dedications could come from a fairly wide spectrum of people. As in earlier periods, it is difficult to identify the precise motivation of the dedicants. However,

even with references made to vows, the possibility of dedications made *nominis causa* should not be immediately discounted. This aspect of Christian patronage, though usually not obvious in Christian dedicatory inscriptions, is clearly stated in the preface to Novella 67 of the *Codex Justinianus*: *Multi enim nominis gratia ad sanctissimas ecclesias condendas festinant*. Justinian's legislators sought to stem such selfish motives, and in particular the shoddy construction and lack of provision made for the running and upkeep of the churches which seemed to result from such patronage, by placing the local bishop in charge of all such acts. The strong continuity in the practice of ecclesiastical euergetism (if this term may be used) in Byzantine North African towns suggests that church buildings continued to play a major social role in the lives of town people.

It is extremely difficult to relate the functions of churches to the functions of other major buildings. Only one major type of monument besides church buildings is well represented in Byzantine North African towns: the fortress. Both Sabratha and Ammaedara have such forts, constructed immediately after the reconquest, while Belalis seems to have remained unfortified and Sufetula only acquired small fortified buildings late in the Byzantine period. The fortifications at Sabratha and Ammaedara have little in common, even though they were both built at the old urban centres of the two towns. At Sabratha the new walls enclosed the old *forum* area and contained both the old Church II, converted from the civic *basilica*, and the new Church I. The *forum* itself appears to have remained an open area but was turned into a cemetery; it should be noted however that the burials were all carefully made without disrupting the flat paved surface of the *forum*, leaving open the potential for its use as an area of meeting. The fort at Ammaedara, on the other hand, was

placed partly over the southern end of the old *forum* and the *forum* appears to have gone entirely out of use; within the fortification itself there was only one relatively small church. Both towns however share the characteristic that there were major churches which lay well outside the new fortifications but which were nonetheless extensively refurbished during the Byzantine period; in the case of Sabratha, the ecclesiastical complex is left well out of the fortifications. This raises the question of the functions of the fortresses and of the large churches left outside of them. What roles did they play in the life of the towns? Why would a town like Sabratha have large church structures located both within and without the fortifications? Why would there have been large important churches in use outside the fortifications at Ammaedara but only one small church inside them? It seems clear that there was a strong continuity in the occupation of church sites; however, there is insufficient archaeological evidence to allow their exact roles in the Byzantine cities to be understood.

## **Conclusions**

It is possible to identify a number of different major functions fulfilled by church buildings. The earliest churches served as religious centres, venues for teaching, meeting places, and dispensation points for charity. Later churches became places of burial, increasingly important seats of the secular power of the bishop, and the focus of votive or euergetic dedications. These functions offered alternatives to the main functions of the traditional urban centres, the *fora*, in many ways. There were however three important exceptions. Churches were not provided with market facilities, they did not provide an alternative to the *curia* and its municipal council, and they did not constitute public spaces

*per se*. However, markets could be held elsewhere, people could meet in any open area (including the *forum*, as it seems to have often remained in use well into the period of Christian domination of urban landscapes), and the ranks of the *decuriones* were already in decline before the *curiae* disappeared. From a strictly functional point of view, churches could have stepped in to compete with and eventually replace the functions of the *fora*. It does seem likely that this did happen in some cases, but it is also clear that the church as an urban focus functioned in a manner very different from the *forum*. Indeed, the functions not fulfilled by the churches and ecclesiastical complexes were often retained by the *fora* and their associated structures; this is evident in the case of towns like Sufetula and Ammaedara.

## CONCLUSION

Is there sufficient archaeological evidence to link directly the decline of *fora* to the rise of monumental church construction? This question cannot be answered with a simple yes or no. Thébert proposed that the construction of churches be viewed as part of a rather long period of change beginning essentially in the 5th century and culminating in the Byzantine city of the 6th.<sup>1</sup> Potter has suggested a gradual replacement of *forum* function by church buildings, culminating in the first half of the 5th century for most sites.<sup>2</sup> The archaeological, epigraphic, and literary evidence examined here suggests that it might be best to look at this problem from another, slightly different perspective. I would tentatively identify three main phases in the Late Antique history of North African cities. First, as is suggested by evidence at cities such as Sabratha, Sufetula, and Belalis Maior, a case can be made for the earliest monumental churches in many towns having been placed firmly within the urban area but not intruding on the traditional *forum*-baths ambit of the city centre. Secondly, in the 5th and perhaps as early as the late 4th century in some towns, more monumental churches began to be constructed directly in the city centres, either in or near the *fora*. At Sabratha, Ammaedara, and Sufetula these churches did not substantially alter the overall layout of these areas, indicating that these newly ‘Christianized’ city centres continued to function to

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<sup>1</sup> Thébert 1986, pp. 39-43. Thébert (p. 39) considers few churches as belonging to the 4th century, a view which may be overly pessimistic (see Chapter 3).

<sup>2</sup> Potter 1995.

some degree as they had before. At the same time, these ‘downtown’ churches seldom seem to have assumed the role of main church. This role was taken on by the generally older urban churches, farther from the city centre, which began to expand into ecclesiastical or episcopal complexes. Finally, after the poorly understood Vandal period, the Byzantine reconquest brought a new urban monument onto the scene: the fortress. Few if any links can be noted between fortress placement and the locations of established churches - often the latter, even if they are substantial cathedrals, are left undefended in open territory. This period is the most poorly understood of all.

These conclusions must be approached very tentatively. In most cases the archaeological evidence is ambiguous at best, and seldom does one single site provide good data for both churches and traditional public monuments and spaces. Because it is clear that different cities could evolve along radically different lines (consider the contrasting cases of Christianized Hippo Regius and its apparently pagan-dominated contemporary Madauros, discussed in Chapter 3) one must be extremely cautious about seeking patterns in amalgamated parallel data.

What of the functions of these new monumental churches in the urban landscape? Potter’s label of these new buildings as “urban foci” is clearly in need of more careful definition.<sup>3</sup> The earliest monumental churches do seem to have offered an alternative venue for some of the traditional functions of the *forum*, as places of public meeting, foci for religious devotion, and to some extent as an alternative to civil justice. It does not seem that the expansion of many of these early monumental churches into ecclesiastical complexes added substantially to this list of functions. An important additional role however can likely

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<sup>3</sup> Potter 1995, p. 79.

be ascribed to the churches which were built on or near *fora* - that of a 'Christianizing' element. If anything, these churches served to preserve and prolong the use of the *fora*. At the same time, there were clearly certain functions of the traditional urban foci which were not assumed by new church buildings. Foremost among these is the economic role of the *forum* and its associated buildings. The disappearance of buildings like *macella* cannot be linked to any known development in Christian architecture. In addition, although there is substantial indication of an increase in the judicial power of bishops in the 4th and early 5th centuries, they did not by any means fully replace civil authorities in this role. In many cities some form of traditional civic government with magistrates and *decuriones* persisted into the late 4th or early 5th century. The Vandal period however presents a major problem, for municipal inscriptions vanish almost entirely and the archaeological record is similarly impoverished.<sup>4</sup> Because of this it is very difficult to assess properly the significance of urban building following the Byzantine reconquest.

In summary, much more work (particularly accurate archaeological exploration of 4th and 5th century levels) is needed before any definite conclusions can be reached on the question of the role of monumental churches in the changing urban topography of Late Antique North African towns. The evidence currently available indicates that churches did play an important role in this process, and even supports to some extent the theory that they formed new urban foci. It is clear however that the function of these urban foci differed substantially from that of the traditional *forum*. The real picture, as always, is far more complicated than first meets the eye.

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<sup>4</sup> See Lepelley 1979, p. 412 for epigraphic sources.



## APPENDIX: INSCRIPTIONS

This appendix contains all the inscriptions from each of the four main cities studied which date to the early 4th century or later and pertain to acts of euergetism and/or aid in the dating of a particular structure. Thus, all pagan and Christian *tituli aedificiorum* are included, but no pagan *tituli sepulchrales* and only those Christian ones which aid in the dating of a church or shrine. Translations of two inscriptions (**Ammaedara 12** and **13**) are given because of their length, complexity, and importance.

### Sabratha:

Sabratha 1 (*IRT 55*, allegedly found in the East Forum Temple), dated between 340 and 350:

A[ede]m Liberi Patris quam antiqua ruina cum lab[e...] / p[...2 or 3...]ius  
ins[ta]urationem ea[...c.5...]riso... / Dd[ominorum] n[n(ostrorum)] Fl(avi) Iu]l(i)  
Consta(n)tii m[aximi et Fl(avi) Iul(i) Co]nsta(n)tis max[imi triumphato]/rum se[mper  
Aug]ustorum [...c.9..] am[... / rimum praesidicium v(iri) p(erfectissimi) Fl(avi)  
Victoris Calpurn[i ...c.8..] ser/vavit hanc L(ucius) Aemilius Caelestinus duovir  
[quinquenn]alis fl[amen] / perp(etuus) amor patriae studiose respon[dit ...c.12..]a  
V(iro) p(erfectissimo) / [p]atrono prov(inciae) dedican[te ..25-30..]r fecit / ex  
[decreto ordinis?]

Sabratha 2a (*IRT* 57; found in the Curia); this inscription and the following one were presumably erected after the association of Valens with Valentinian (28 March 364) and before the elevation of Gratian (25 August 367; Bartoccini 1950, 33):

Iustitia pariter ac / pietate caelesti adq(ue) / Romanae felicitatis / perpetuo fundatori  
 / d(omino) n(ostro) Valentiniano vic/toriosissimo ac totius / orbis Aug(usto)  
 Antonius / Dracontius v(ir) c(larissimus) agens / vicem praefectorum prae/torio per  
 Africanas pro/vincias numini et / maiestati eius semper / dicatissimus.

Sabratha 2b (*IRT* 58; found in the curia); see inscription above for date:

Iustitia pariter ac pieta/e caelesti adq(ue) Romanae / felicitatis perpetuo / fundatori  
 d(omino) n(ostro) / Valenti victori/osissimo ac totius or/bis Augusto / Antonius  
 Dracon/tius v(ir) c(larissimus) agens vicem / praefectorum prae/torio per Africanas  
 / provincias numini et / maiestati eius semper / deditissimus.

Sabratha 3 (*IRT* 103), dated August 28, 378:

[Fl(avi) Vivi Benedicti v(iri)] p(erfectissimi) / totius integritatis modera/tionis  
 iustitiae provisionis / fidei benignitatis fortitudinis / ac beneficentiae viro Fl(avio)  
 Vivio / Benedicto v(iro) p(erfectissimo) praesidi prov(inciae) Tripol(itanae) / inter  
 cetera beneficia sua quibus / omnem provinciam compendiis re/mediis et virtutibus  
 fovit suble/vabit erexit etiam ob ea quae sibi / specialiter conlata sunt civitas /  
 Sabrathensis exsultans quod po/st ruinam et abnegatum therma/rum populo  
 exercitium citra ullius / dispendium ornamentis patriae / revocavit, ordo populusque,

/ concinentibus omnibus vo/tis statuam patrono pr(a)estan/tissimo gratanti studio /  
conlocavit. The date, on top right border: Dedicata / cons(ulum) d(ominorum)  
n(ostrorum) Valentis VI et Valent(in)iani II A[ug(ustorum)] die V kal(endas)  
Aug(ustas).

Sabratha 4 (*IRT* 111); L. Aemilius Quintus is also mentioned in an inscription at Gigthis  
(*CIL* viii, 27) which is dated to 383-388:

L(uci) Aemili Quinti fl(aminis) p(er)p(etui) / quod laborem continu(u)m / pro  
provinciae suae / necessitate sustinuit / et quod miseras com/munes sacris aurib(us)  
/ intimabit et remedium / meruit ordo et popul(us) / splendidae col(oniae)  
Sabrat(hensis) / secundum decreta totius / provinc(iae) dedic(averunt) cur(ante) /  
Fl(avio) Valentio.

Sabratha 5 (*IRT* 13, on the floor of Church III); date uncertain (see Chapter 2):

Fl(avius) Bon[...] / exceptor [...] / m suis de[...] / votum s[olvit].

### **Ammaedara:**

Ammaedara 1 (*ILTun* 461), date 293-305:

[Florentissimo] saeculo Dddd(ominorum) Nnnn(ostrorum) [Dio/cletiani et  
Maximiani a]ugg(ustorum) et Constanti et Maximia/[ni nobb(ilissimorum)  
caess(arorum) ..... canc]elli per orchestra(m) ambitum et casam / --- his die ludorum  
suorum propriis.

Ammaedara 2 (*CIL* viii, 309, on an epistyle block found near the theater), dated April 1, 299:

Dd(ominis) nn(ostris) Diocletiano Aug(usto) VII et Maximiano Aug(usto) VI  
Co(n)s(ulibus), / kal(endas) Aprilib(us), porticus theatri sumptu publico / coloniae  
Ammaedarensium restitutae...

Ammaedara 3 (Benzina Ben Abdallah 1992, found at Winter Baths north of capitolium),  
dated 336:

Nepotia[no et Facund]o co(n)s(ulibus); / P(ublius) Rutilius V[---, flam(en)] /  
perp(etuus), curator [r(ei)p(ublicae)] /, absidam a solo [in ther]mis / hiemalibus sua  
pecunia addidit.

Ammaedara 4 (*CIL* viii, 310, on three fragments of the same epistyle block); the date, if the  
Claudius Julianus referred to is indeed the emperor (as it seems to be, as this name is  
otherwise almost unknown in North African inscriptions and Julian was responsible for  
substantial building programs there) is 361-363:

[C]laudi Iulia[ni]  
[lon]ga vet[ustate]  
[d]ilaps...

Ammaedara 5 (Duval 1975, *insc.* 419, 281-3, figs. 232a-d) from Basilica IV (the ‘Vandal  
chapel’), dated Febuary 24, 510:

Quiebit Festa in pace / s(ub) d(ie) VIII k(a)l(endas) martias, ano / XIII d(o)m(ini)  
r(e)g(is) T(hra)s(a)m(undi) =;

Ammaedara 6 (Ibid., insc. 413, 273-277, figs. 226a-d) from Basilica IV (the ‘Vandal chapel’), dated December 6, 526:

Astius Muste . . / lus fl(amen) p(er)p(etuus) cristi/anus, vixit an/nis LXXII. Quievit  
VIII / id(us) decem- [[Hilderich?]] / bres anno / III d(omini) n(ostri) regis / Ildirix

Ammaedara 7 (*CIL* viii, 450) from Basilica IV (the ‘Vandal chapel’), likely Vandal period:

Astius Vindicianus / v(ir) c(larissimus) et fl(amen) p(er)p(etuus).

Ammaedara 8 (Duval 1975, insc. 58, p. 87, figs. 70 and 71) from Basilica I; the epithet ‘Vandalorum’ is thought to have been added later, in the Byzantine period, to specify the identity of the bishop (ibid., p. 88):

Victorinus / Episc(opus) / in pace / Vandalorum.

Ammaedara 9 (Ibid., insc. 300, pp. 228-229, fig. 196) from Basilica III, likely 6th century (see text, Part 2):

Gloria in [excel]/sis D(e)o et in te/rra pa[x]. Hominib(us) / bone bolu/mtatis.

Ammaedara 10 (Ibid., insc. 1, p. 20-22, figs. 4 and 5) from Basilica I, dated to 568/9:

Hic abent[ur] / reliquie beat[i or (issim)i] / martiris et an/tistitis Cypria/ne,  
d(e)p(osite) a beat(o) Mel/leo ep(i)sc(op)o, an(no) III / D(o)m(in)i Iustini  
Imp(eratori)s.

Ammaedara 11 (Ibid., insc. 3, pp. 25-27, figs. 8 and 9) from Basilica I; dated August 9, but as with all dates by indiction, this one is uncertain; however, the only known indiction which would fit reasonably with Melleus' dedication of the relics of St. Cyprian in 568/9 is the indiction of 578/9 (ibid.):

Melleus, ep(is)c(opus) Un(i)t(a)t(i)s, re/queibit inp(a)c(e). Bixit ann(i or o)s / pl(u)s  
m(i)n(u)s LXX. D(e)p(o)s(it)u)s s(ub) d(i)e / V id(u)s agustas, ind(ictione) / XII.

Ammaedara 12 (Duval and Duval 1966, 1174, the mosaic inscription from Basilica II):

Gloriosissimis beatissimisq(ue) m[artyri]/b(us) qui persecutionem Diocletiani et  
Max[imiani] / divinis legib(us) passi sunt, qu[o]rum corpor[a, / hoc l]oco deposita,  
aput D(eu)m in aeternum m[a/nen]t. <H>is cui divinitus inspirare hoc in animo /  
dignatus est, nomina eorum veneran/daq(ue) corpora anaclitis(=anaglyptis) lapideis  
cum / (h)ermulis adq(ue) mensa conclusit; unde divine cle/menti(a)e cum suis  
omnib(us) Marcellus illustr(is) / gratias agit qui memoriae martyrum me/rita exoptata  
vota complevit Felix / semper vivat qui intentissime lege/rit; felicior qui Deo  
omnipotenti per Xr/(is)t(um) eius tota fide craediderit. +

“To the most glorious, blessed martyrs who died in divine covenant (during) the persecution of Diocletian and Maximian, whose bodies, deposited here, remain forever before God. He to whom (God) ordained by divine influence to inspire this in (his) soul, entombed their names and venerable bodies under stones worked in relief along with herms and a table; whence Marcellus *illustris*, who fulfilled his deserved and longed for vows to the memory of the martyrs, gave thanks for divine mercy along with all his (relatives) ... May he live forever happy who reads (this insc.) with diligence; more happy he who believes with all his

faith in all-powerful God through Christ.” This translation and that following was made with reference to Duval’s analysis (ibid., 1178-1187). The date may be Vandal or Byzantine; the rank *illustris* appears on Byzantine-period tombstones at Ammaedara (ibid., 1187-1188). Although soundings were made beneath the mosaic in 1933, the skeletal human remains found could not be definitely associated with the martyrium (Duval 1989, 211).

Ammaedara 13 (Duval and Duval 1966, pl. V, the stone inscription):

Gloriosissimis beatissimisq(ue) martyribus qui persecutione(m) Diocletiani et Maximian[i] / divinis legibus passi sunt, quorum corpora, hoc loco deposita, aput Deum in aeternum manen[t]. / <H>is cui divinitus inspirare hoc in animo dignatus est, nomina eorum venerandaque / corpora anaclitis(=anaglyptis) lapideis cum hermulis adque mensa conclusit; unde divine clemen/tiae cum suis omnibus gratias agit qui memoriae martyrum merita exoptata / vota conplevit [[Marcellus illustr(is)?]]. Felix semper vivat qui intentissime legerit; / felicior qui Deo omnipotenti per Cristum eius tota fide craediderit.

“To the most glorious, blessed martyrs who died in divine covenant (during) the persecution of Diocletian and Maximian, whose bodies, deposited here, remain forever before God. He to whom (God) ordained by divine influence to inspire this in (his) soul, he entombed their names and venerable bodies under stones worked in relief along with herms and a table; whence he who fulfilled his deserved and longed for vows to the memory of the martyrs gave thanks for divine mercy along with all his (relatives) ... May he live forever happy who reads (this insc.) with diligence; more happy he who believes with all his faith in all-powerful God through Christ.”

Ammaedara 14 (*ILTun* 470a), from the mosaic in the nave of Basilica II, likely Byzantine in date (see text, Part 2):

+ De donis Dei et sanctorum eius Candidus et Adeudata f(e)c(e)r(un)t.

Ammaedara 15 (A mosaic *insc.* from the burial area at the east end of Basilica II, dated to the second half of the 4th century by the use of the title *vir perfectissimus*: Duval et al. 1989, fig. 31, p. 172)

Casidiu/s Iunior / vir p(e)rfect/issimus / vixit an/is LXXI in / pace.

### **Sufetula:**

Sufetula 1 (*CIL* viii, 11326=232; Lepelley 1981, 309) from the triumphal arch along road to south-east of town, dated to 284-305:

Dd(ominis) N[n(ostris) impp(eratoribus) Caess(aribus)] Dio[cletiano et Maximiano]  
/ invictis Augg(ustis), item Constantio et Maximiano [nobi]/lissimis Caesaribus,  
d(omino?) n(ostro?) ... [A]ugusto ... /istic in provincia sua ... tutos ... .

Sufetula 2 (*CIL* viii, 11329=234; Lepelley 1981, 310) from the monumental fountain south of *forum*, dated to 375-378:

... [dd(ominis) nn(ostris)] Valentiniano et Valen[te Augg(ustis)] ... / ... [fontem] ... lius  
Festus v(ir) c(larissimus) ... civibus [suis d(ono) d(edit)?].



Sufetula 3 (*IL Afr* 141; Lepelley 1981, 310) from the central baths, likely 4th century:

... [cellam] piscinalem thermarum hiemalium squalentem ... .

Sufetula 4 (comprising *IL Afr* 116a and b, *CIL* viii, 1134=242, and *CIL* viii, 23218; see Lepelley 1981, 309-310) on epistyle blocks from theater *skene*; in relative order the fragments are:

... Volusiano ...                      ... [v]iro clari[ssimo] ...

... [c]onsulari provi[nciae] V[a]leriae Byzacenaе ...

... domini nostri ...

Volusianus is linked by Lepelley to C. Ceionius Rufius Volusianus, prefect of Rome in 365-366.

Sufetula 5 (Duval 1986a, *insc.* II, 24) on mosaic-lined font of Basilica II's baptistry, date likely very late 5th/early 6th c. (*ibid.*, 389-390 and discussion in text above, Chapter 2):

Vitalis et Cardela votum s(olver)unt.

Sufetula 6 (*ILCV* 3477; Duval's Sufetula *insc.* II, 1, see Duval 1986a, 389-390) from Basilica II; Duval favours the interpretation of *natus* as the actual birth date of Vitalis (September 12, 467, if the reign of Genseric is taken to have begun with the conquest of Carthage) and 78 as his age, thus dating this inscription to 545/6:

(Monogram) / In nomine patris et fi/li et sp(iritu)s s(an)c(ti) amen. / Bitalis  
pr(e)sb(yster) vi[xi in pace] / d(e)i annis XXXVIII or LXXVIII, re[q]ui[esco ho?] /  
die. Hic positus pla[cida in] / pace reserbor pulberi. / Spes michi multa manet, na[m

te] / venturum spero, d(o)m(i)n(e), qui cuncta / creasti tibi, ut cinere[s] istos / suscites  
 ipse potens. Hec est / speciosior sole et super omnem / s[t]ellarum dispositionem.  
 / Luci comparata inbenitur prior, / dum sit una omnium potens et / in se permanens  
 omnia inno/dans. Natus anno XXVIII / regis Gesiric pridie idus / septembres.

Sufetula 7 (Sufetula insc. II, 3, see Duval 1986a, 389 and 395) on a paving slab in the portico  
 of the “Chapel of Jucundus,” dated to the late 5th century (see text above, Chapter 2):

Hic inventa est d(e)p(ositio) s(an)c(t)i Jucundi ep(i)sc(o)p(i) per inquisitione Amaci  
 ep(i)sc(o)pi.

Sufetula 8 (Y. Duval 1982, #34, pp. 75-79) dedication in funerary Basilica VI (“of Saints  
 Sylvanus and Fortunatus”), late 4th century?:

Dominis sanctis martyrib[us---] / Silvano et Fortunato t[---] / Bonifatius votum  
 so[lvit]. / A quibus petimus ut o[r]at[i]ones / nostr[a]s in mente hab[e]atis, /  
 mar[tyre]s cum comites vestros.

### **Belalis Maior**

Belalis 1 (Mahjoubi 1978, 165-169) on epistyle of forum portico in monumental letters,  
 dated to 317-324:

[Beatissimo saeculo ? domi]norum nostro[rum Consta]ntini Maximi [et Liciniani]  
 Licini semper [Augustorum et Flavii Valerii Crispi et Lic]iniani Licini [et Fl]avi  
 Clau[di Constantini] Iunioris florentissimorum Caesarum....

2 further fragments appear to be part of the same inscription (*ibid.*, p. 168):

...Garg[ilius]....                      ...pecunia...

Belalis 2 (*CIL* viii, 14436 = *ILS* 5518, Mahjoubi 1978, 149-150) on a lintel, dated to 326-331:

Beatissimo saeculo in[v]i[c]torum principum [Fl(avii) Valerii Constantini Maximi]  
/ victoris semp(er) Aug(usti) et Constantini iun(ioris) et Constanti(i)  
gloriosissim(or)um) Caes[arum ...] / aedem sive curiam sed et sexsagonem serva[t]a  
[in hoc parte operis ?, cu]/riam vero a fundamentis conla(psam), procunsulatu  
M(arci) Ce[io]ni Jul[iani] c(larissimi) v(iri) [auctoritate eiusdem ?] / et Gezei Largi  
Materniani c(larissimi) v(iri), leg(ati) eius, pat(roni) c(oloniae) n(ostrae), ex  
istitutio[ne...] / et aiutorium L(ucii) Modi(i) Valentionis cur(atoris) r(ei) p(ublicae)  
eius, curante [...]

Belalis 3 (Mahjoubi 1978, 207-209, fig. 85bis) found in vestibule of Forum Baths, dated to 326-331:

Beatissim[o saeculo invictorum principum Fl(avii) Valeri(i) Constantini Maximi  
Bictoris semper Augu(usti) et Constantini iun(ioris) et Constant(i) ?  
Glori]/osissimor[um Caes(arum) ---] / parva solum [---] / Quo cla(u?)sa cl<o?>[aca?  
--- pro]/[con]sul(atu) [M(arci) C]ae(i)on[i(i) Juliani c(larissimi) v(iri) ? ---] / [...] a  
vetusta[te conlapsa ---] / [---]

Belalis 4 (Ibid., 276-278) tomb 3 mosaic insc. from Large Basilica, earliest phase (late 4th century?):

Vin/cernal/os vics/it XLIX (or XLIV).

Belalis 5 (Ibid., 280-282) tomb 7 mosaic insc. from Large Basilica, earliest phase:

Boni/fatius / subd(iaconnus) / v[ix]it an(nis) L...

Belalis 6 (Ibid., 286) tomb 9 mosaic insc. from Large Basilica, earliest phase:

Honoratus / innocens /fidelis in pace.

Belalis 7 (Ibid., 288-289) tomb 11 stone insc. from Large Basilica, earliest phase:

Olimpia in pace / vixit annis LXXXIII pl(us) m(inus) / et Ianuaria inn(ocens) / in pace et Leta / pax fides karitas.

### Other Inscriptions

Altava 1 (Y. Duval 1982, #195, pp. 412-417) Dedication of a *mensa* and a *basilica dominica* to martyrs at Altava, Mauretania Caesariensis, found in the NE cemetery area (with no further provenance known - *ibid.*, p. 413), and dated by provincial year; the final portion of the date is broken, making a range between 309 and 338 possible (*ibid.*, p. 417):

Mesa Ian/uari mar/[t]uris. P[i]/e, zes(es)--- / [...]ssione sancti ET basilica dominica / [..]memoria b(eatorum) v(ironum) X L(ucii) Honorati LP, Ta[n/n]oni Victoris z(aconi) et Tannoni R[...] / [..]iani LP. Fecit L(ucius) Tannonius Rog[at/ianu]s III

f(ilius) ab Honorato, an(nno) p(rovinciae) CCLX[x---].

Castellum Tingitanum 1 (*CIL* viii, 9708; for recent discussion see Caillet 1987, 146-151)

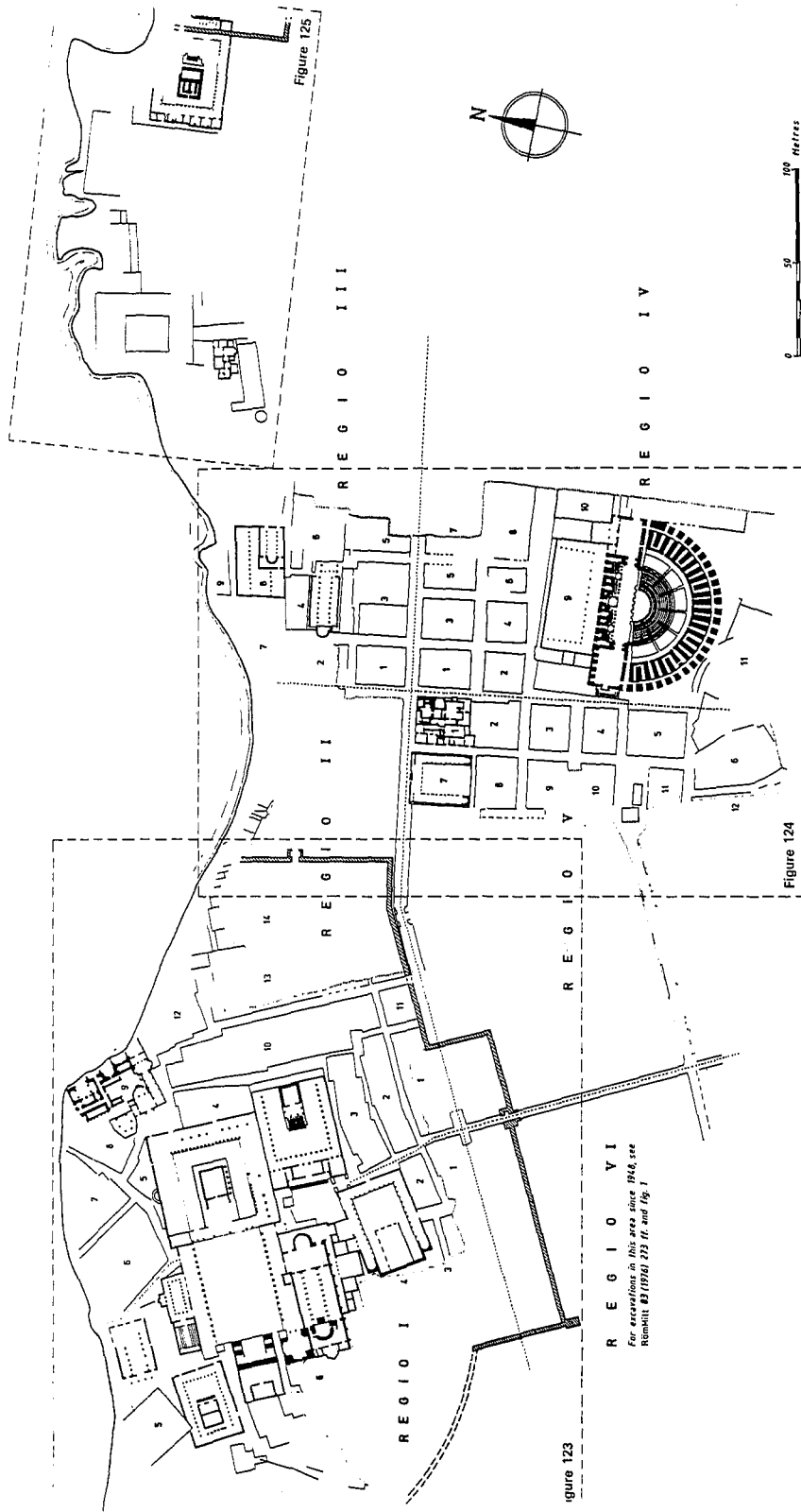
Dedication in mosaic of large basilica, in medallion in central west end of nave; laying of foundations dated by provincial year to 324; the second date (between 329-338; *ibid.* p. 150)

refers to an unknown action, perhaps the consecration:

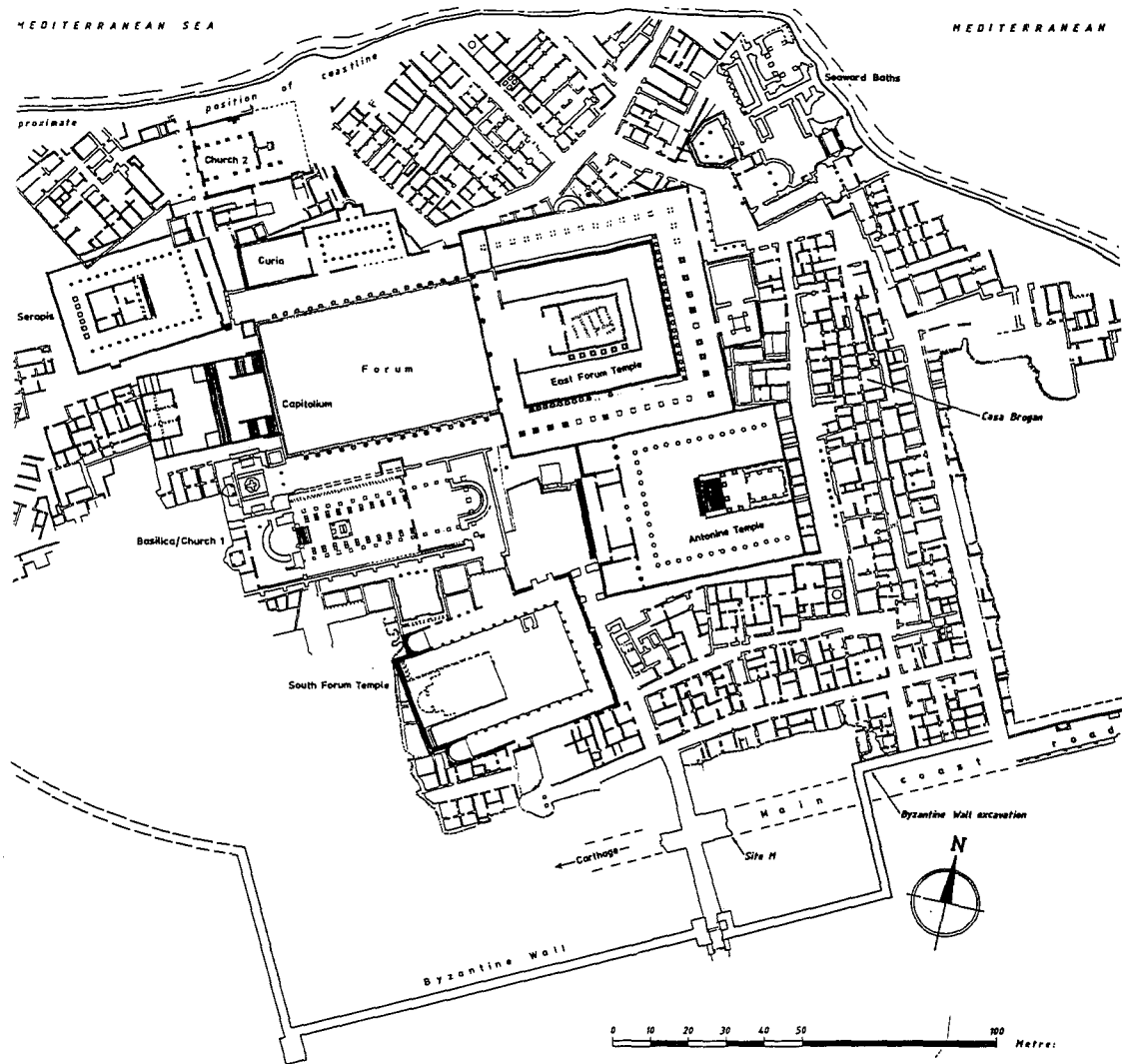
Pro(vinciae anno) / CCLXXX et V, XII kal(andas) / dec(embres), eius basilicae /  
fundmenta posita / sunt et ..... / prov(inciae anno) CC et ..... [in?] / mente  
habea[s]..... / servum Dei ...[et in?] / Deo vivas.

Rusguniae 1 (Y. Duval 1982, #167, pp. 351-353; date: mid 4th century?) Dedication of a basilica consecrated to a fragment of the True Cross at Rusguniae, Mauritania Caesariensis; support unknown:

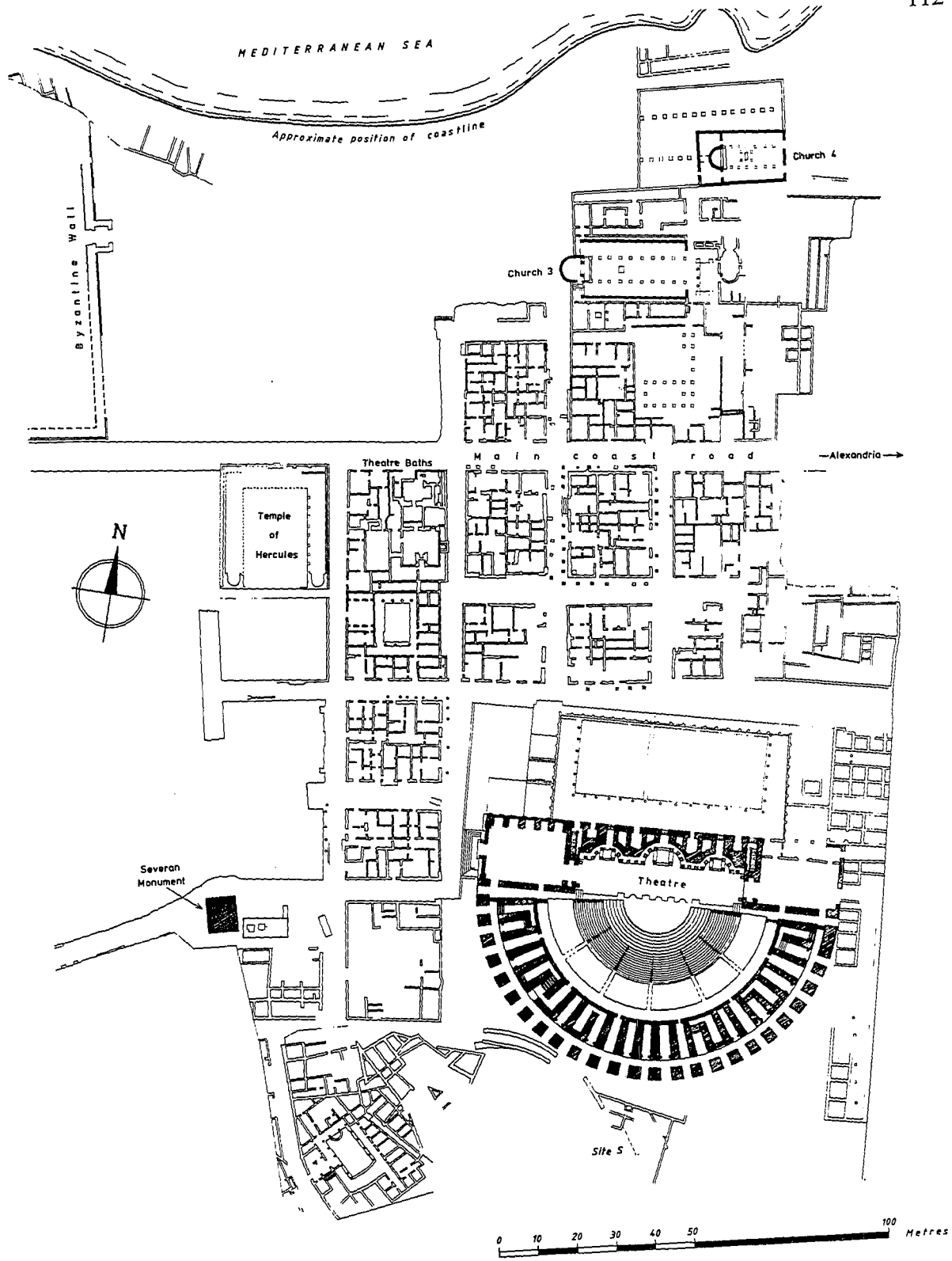
D(eo) sancto ligno crucis Christi Salvatoris adlato / adq(ue) hic, sito, Flavius Nuvel  
ex praepositis eq(u)itu/m armi[g]erorum [i]unior(um), filius Saturnini viri  
perfectissimi ex comitibus et Col[e]cia[e](?), honestissima/e feminae, pr[on]epos(?)  
Eluri Laconi[ci](?) basilicam voto promissam adq(ue) oblatam con coniuge Nonni/ca  
ac suis omnibus dedicavit.



I.1 Sabratha

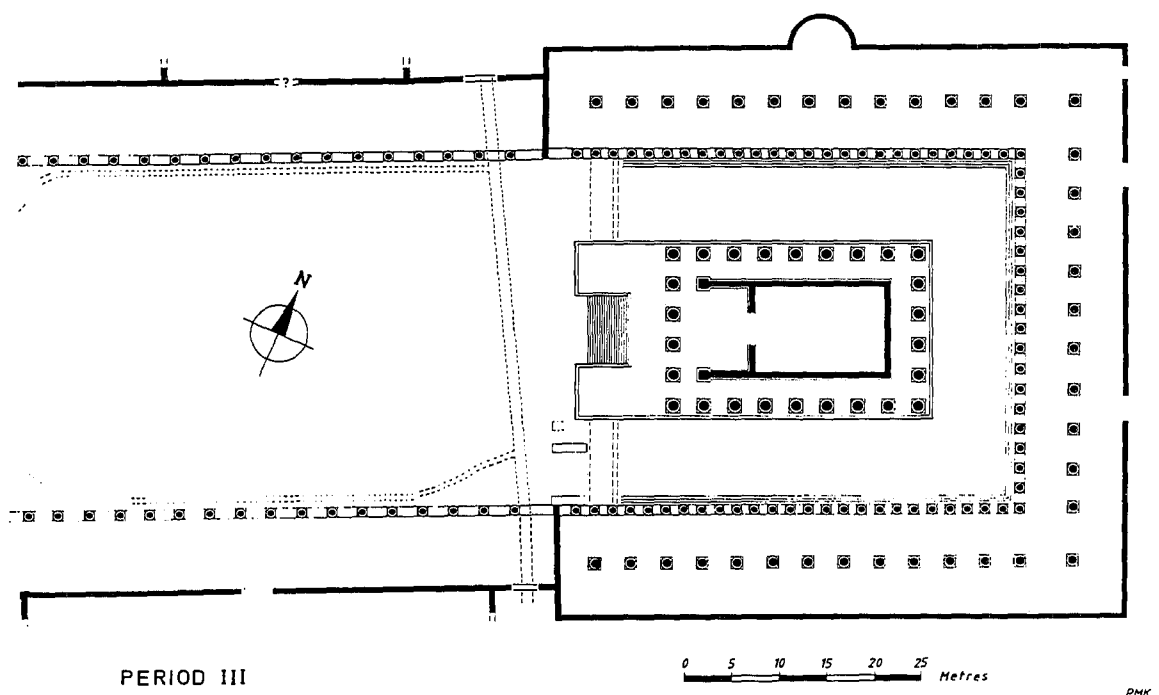


1.2 Sabratha, forum area.

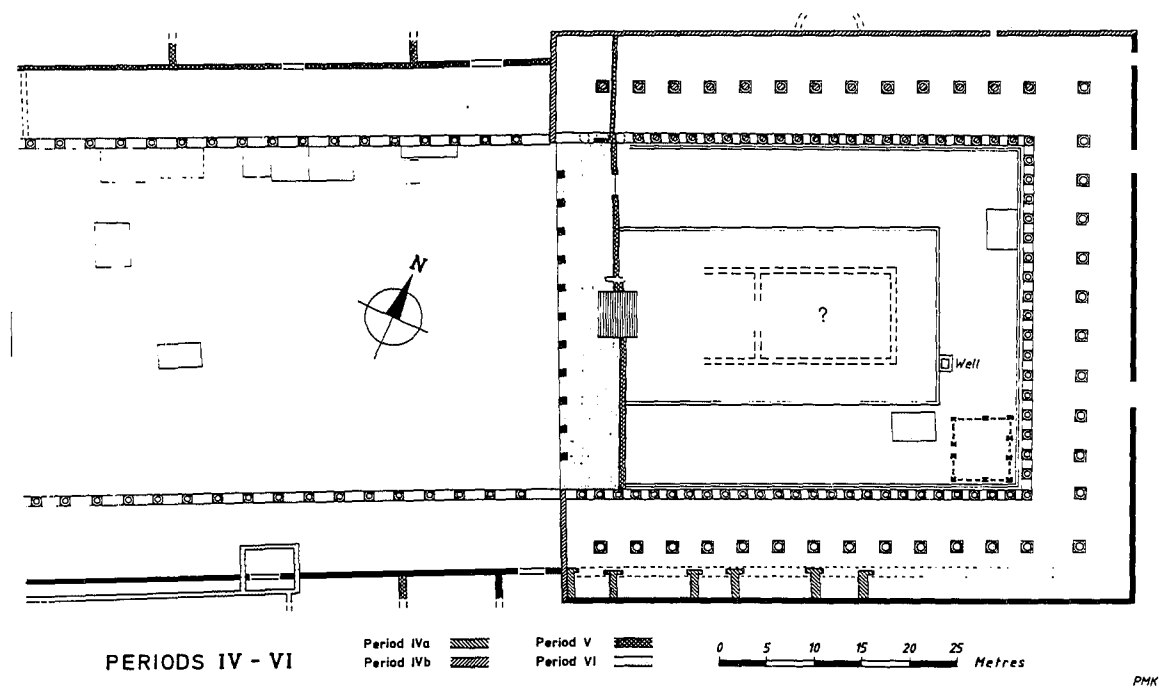


1.3 Sabratha, eastern area.

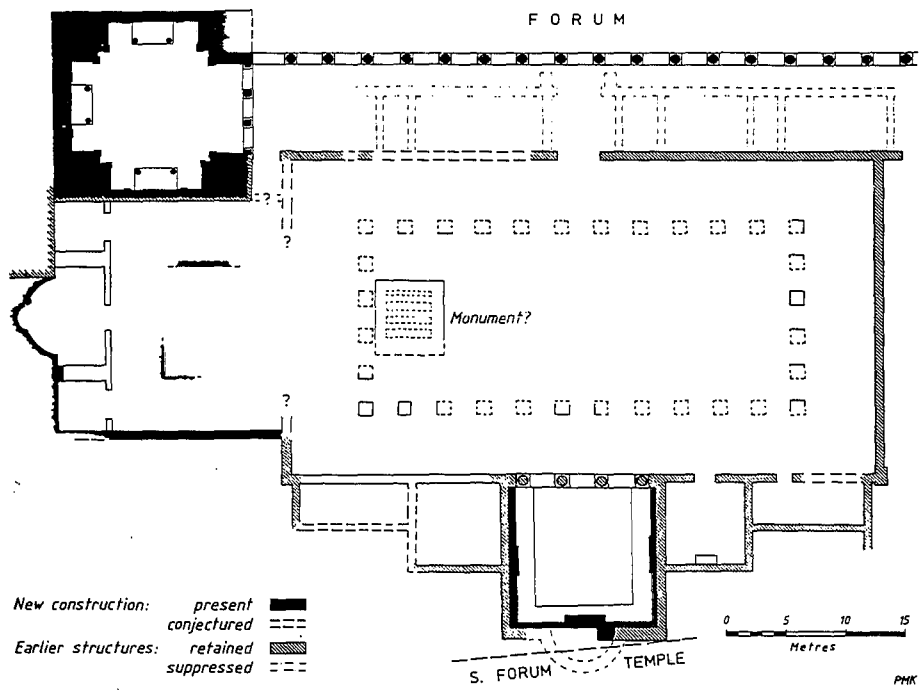




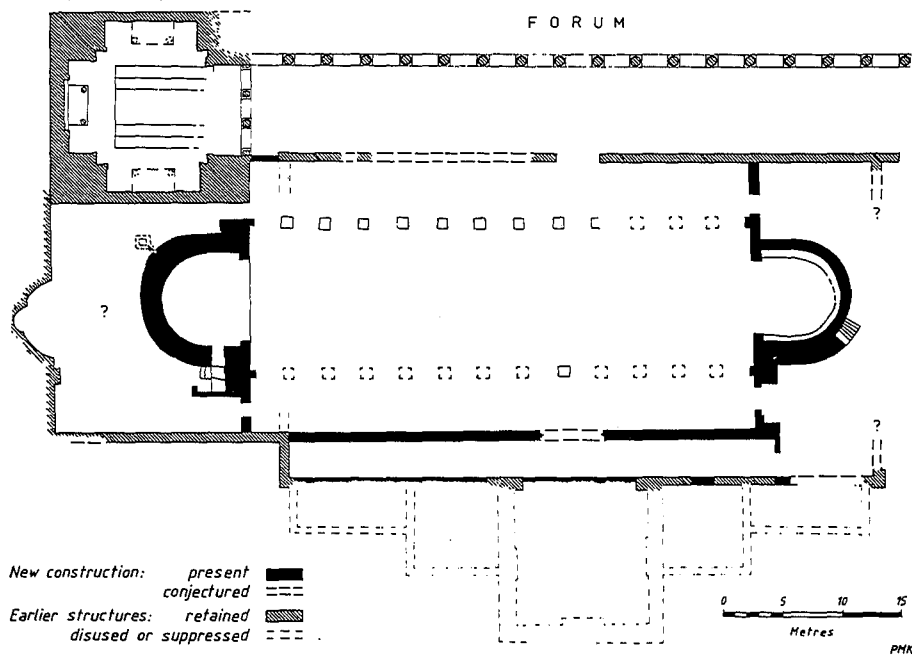
1.4 East Forum Temple at Sabratha, late Antonine period.



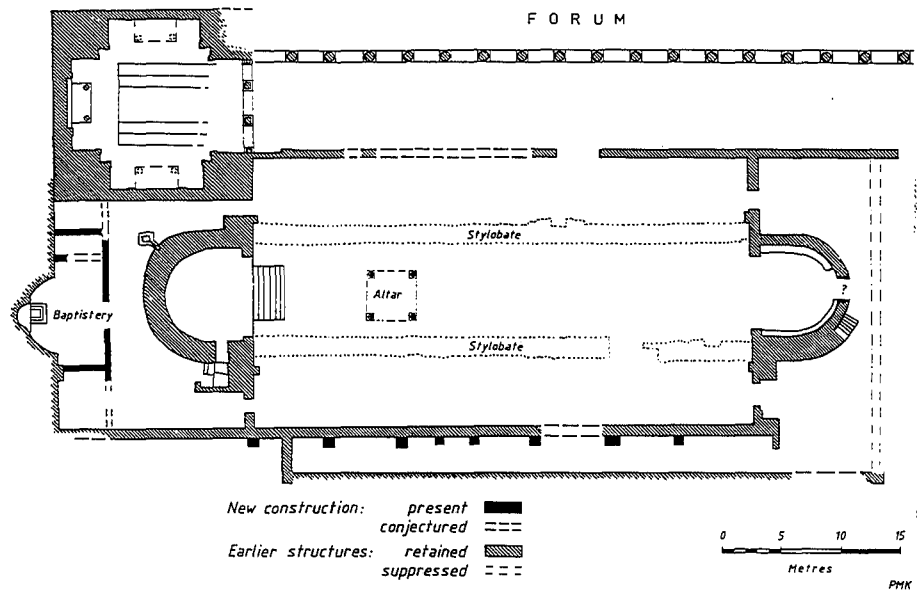
1.5 East Forum Temple at Sabratha; Period IVa = second quarter of 3<sup>rd</sup> century, Period IVb = 340-350(?), Period V = post c. 360 event, and Period VI = post 533.



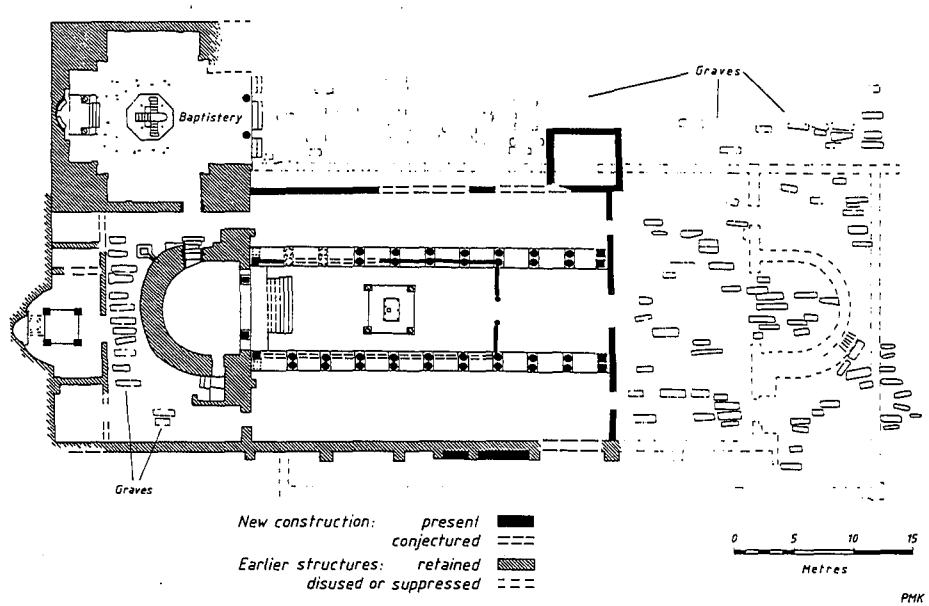
1.6 Basilica at Sabratha, late Antonine period.



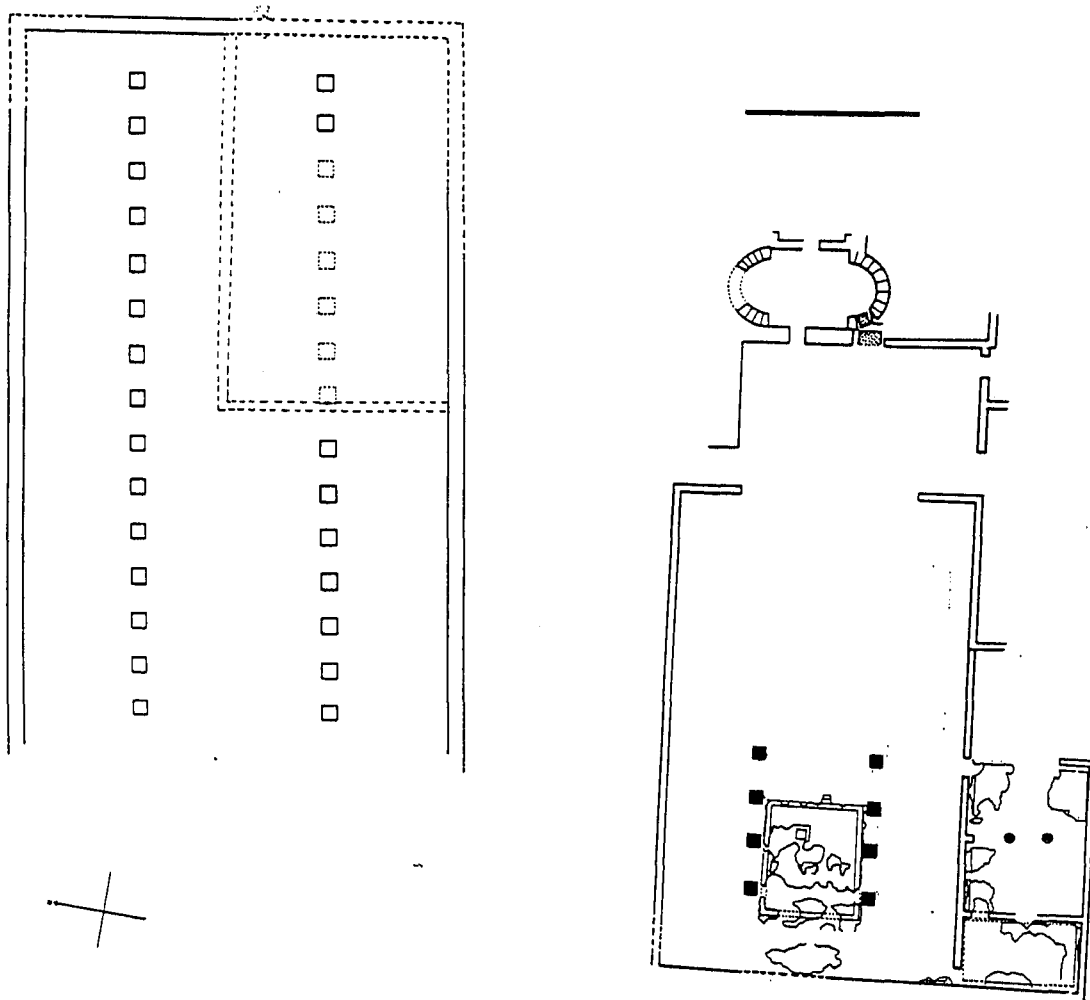
1.7 Basilica at Sabratha, post c. 360 event.



1.8 Basilica at Sabratha, early 5<sup>th</sup> century(?).



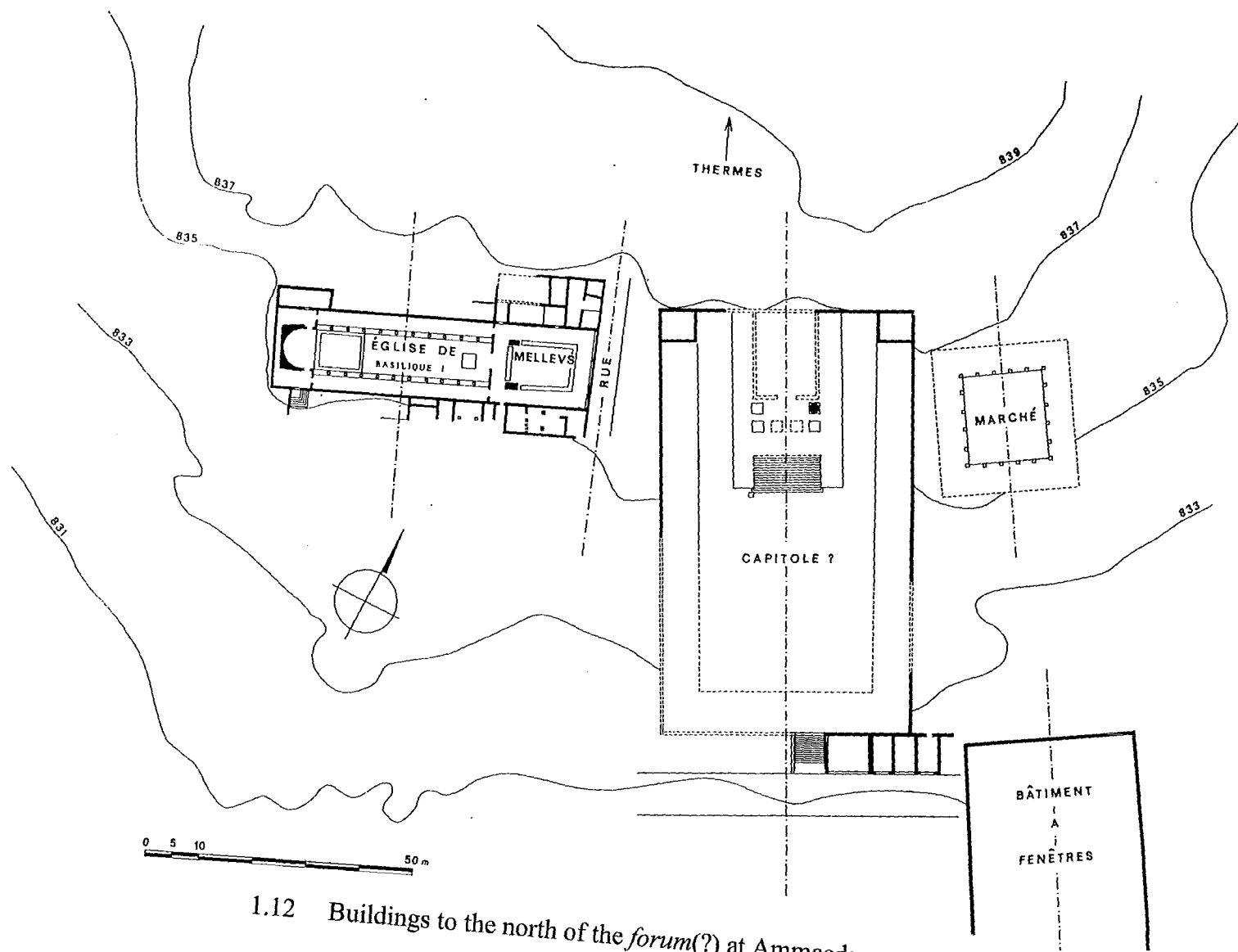
1.9 Basilica at Sabratha, post 533.



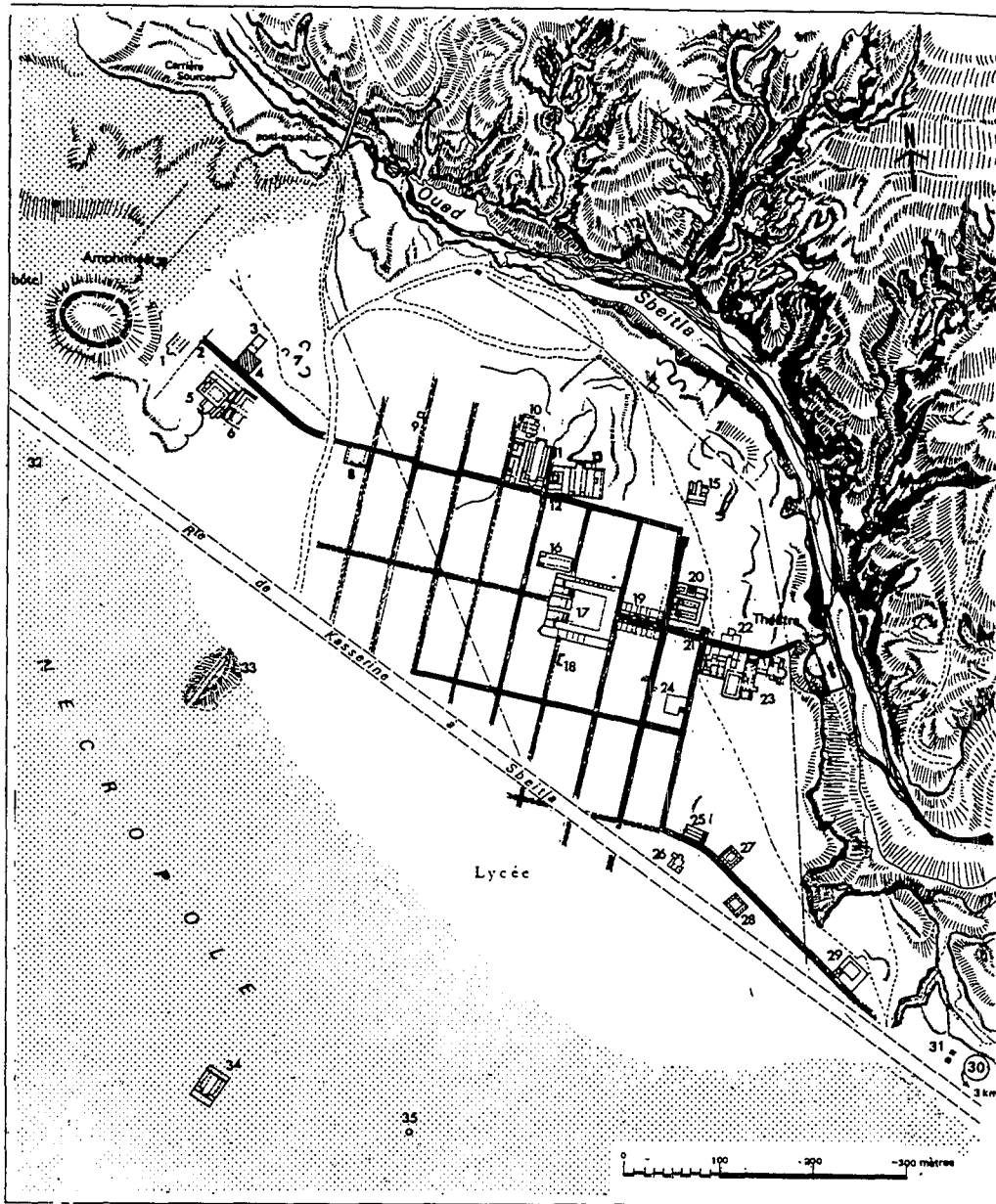
1.10 Earlier buildings partially re-used in construction of Churches III and IV at Sabratha.



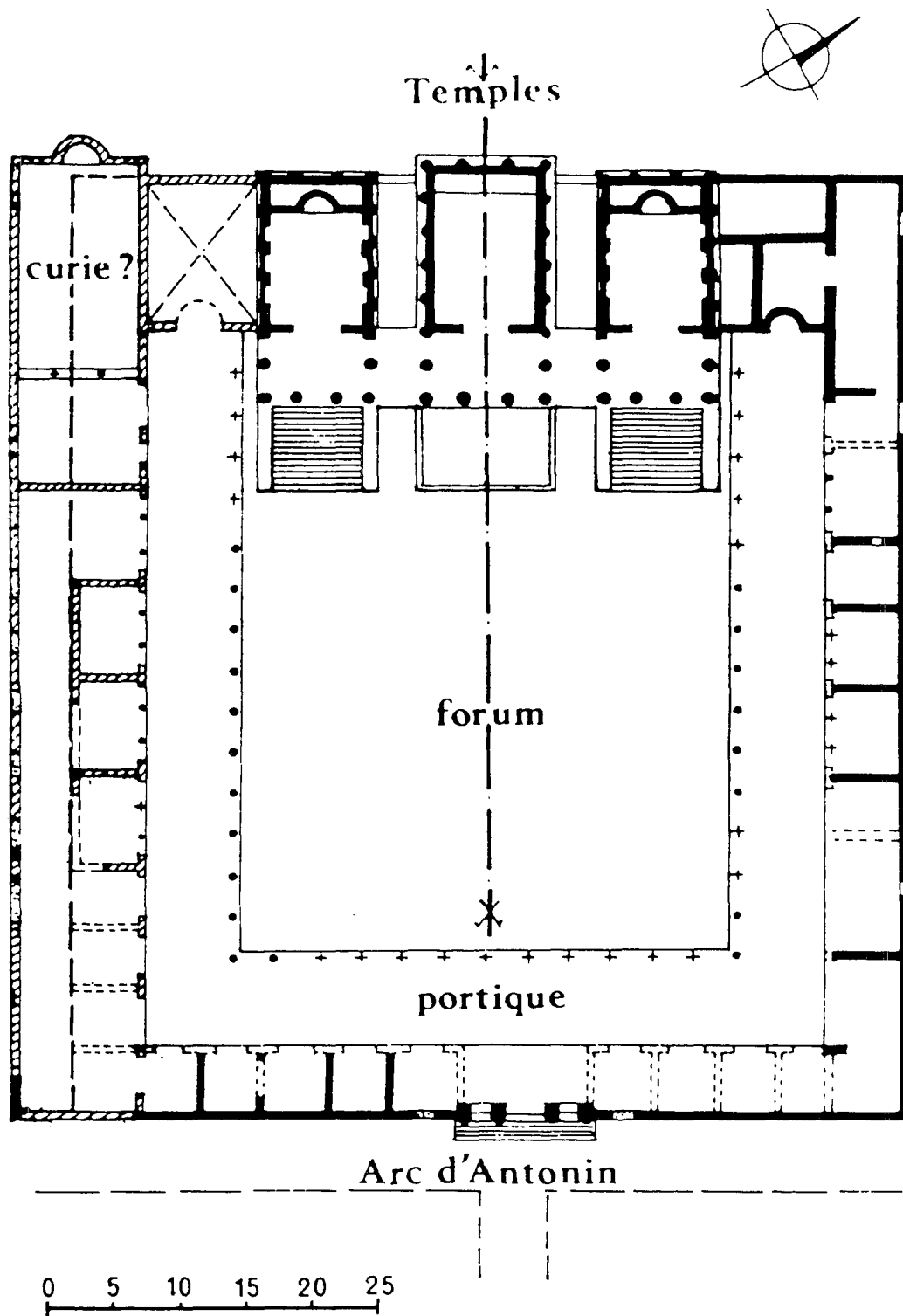
1.11 Ammaedara.



1.12 Buildings to the north of the *forum*(?) at Ammaedara.

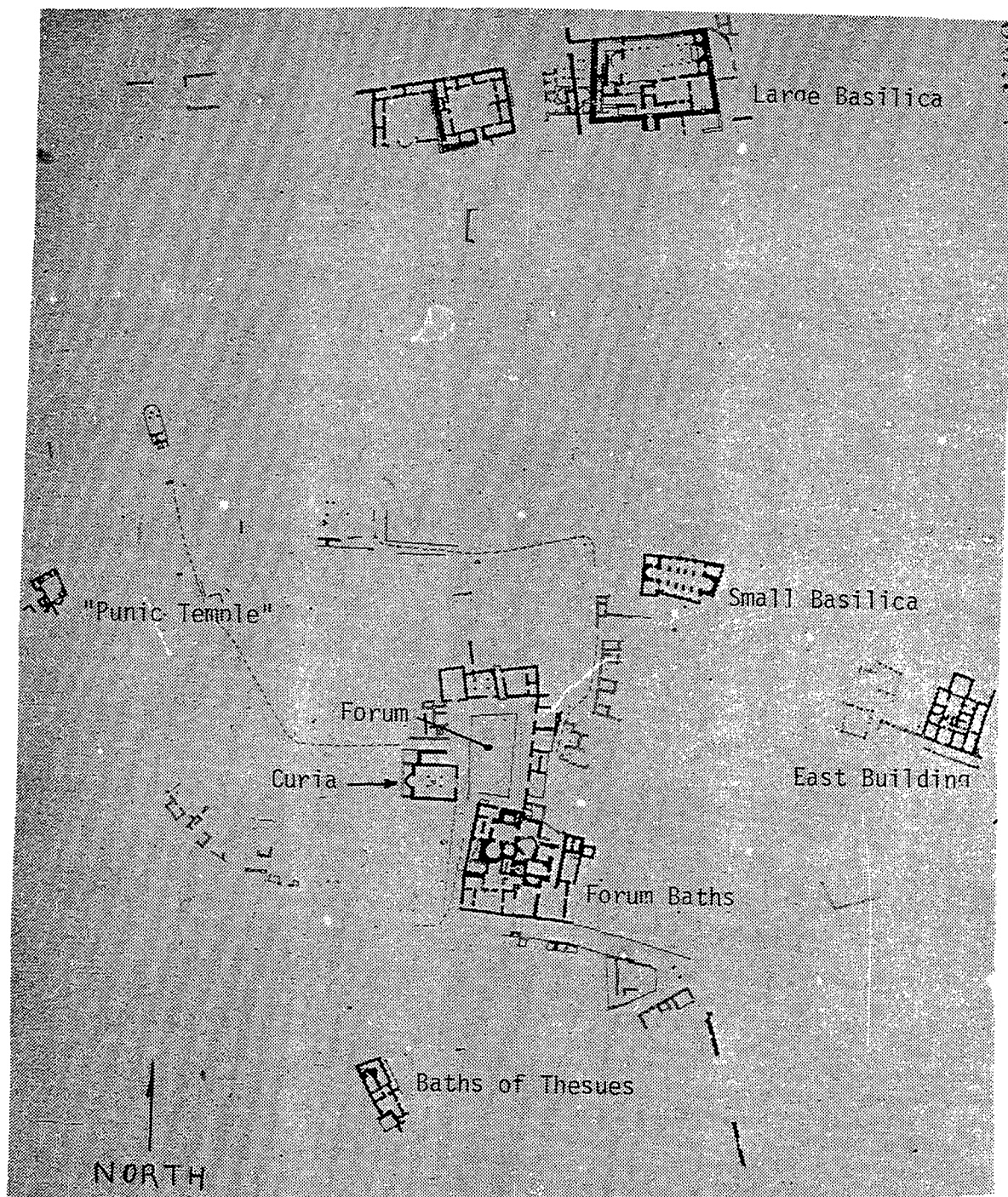


1.13 Sufetula.

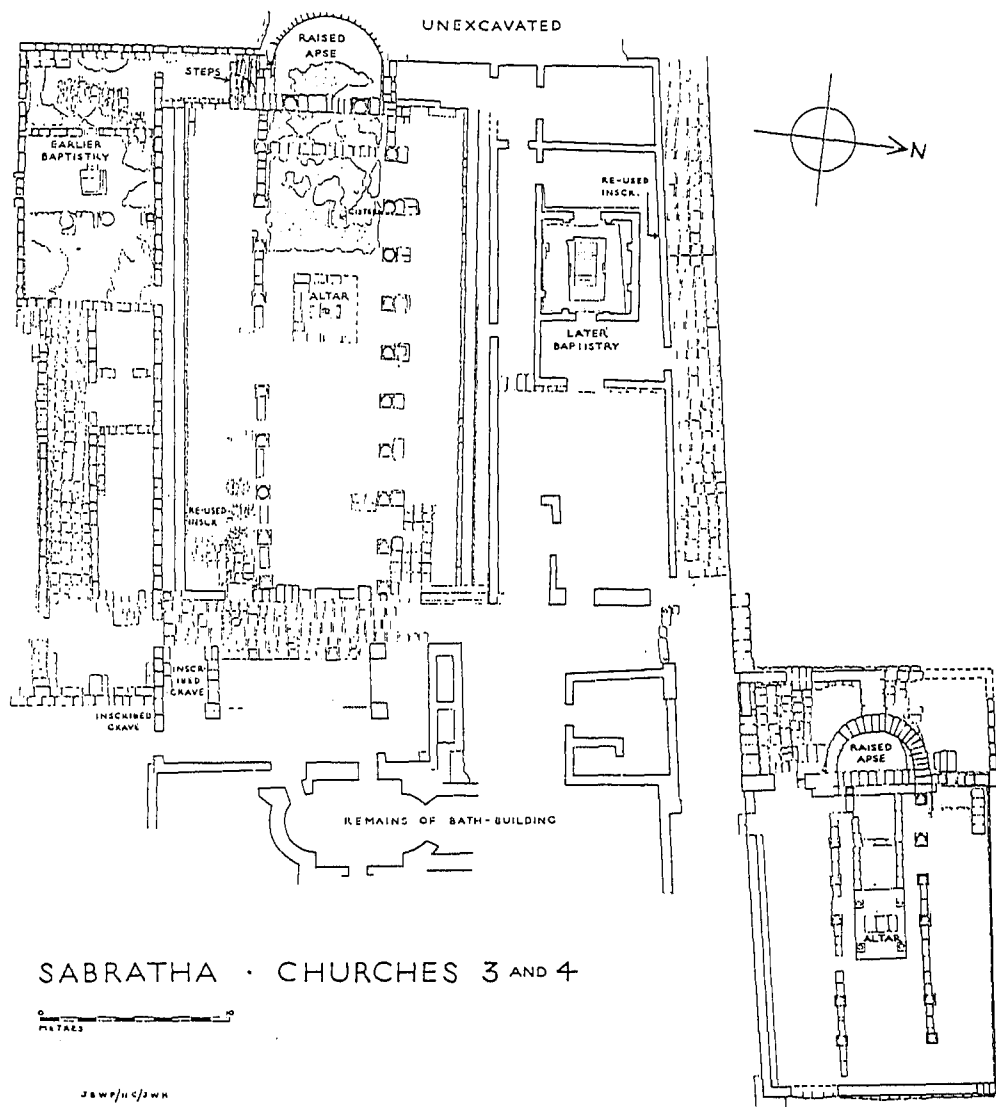


1.14 The *forum* at Sufetula.



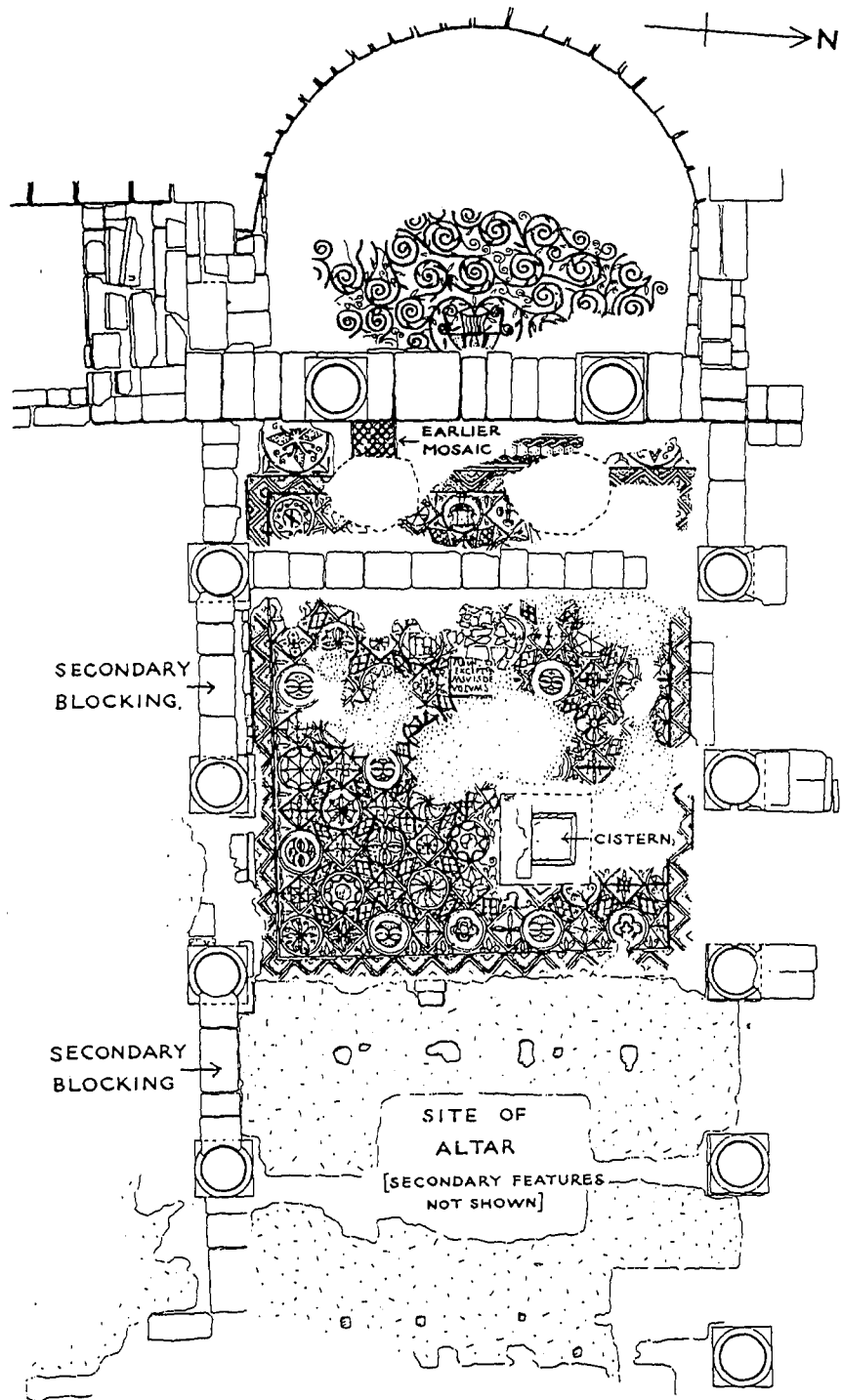


1.15 Belalis Maior.

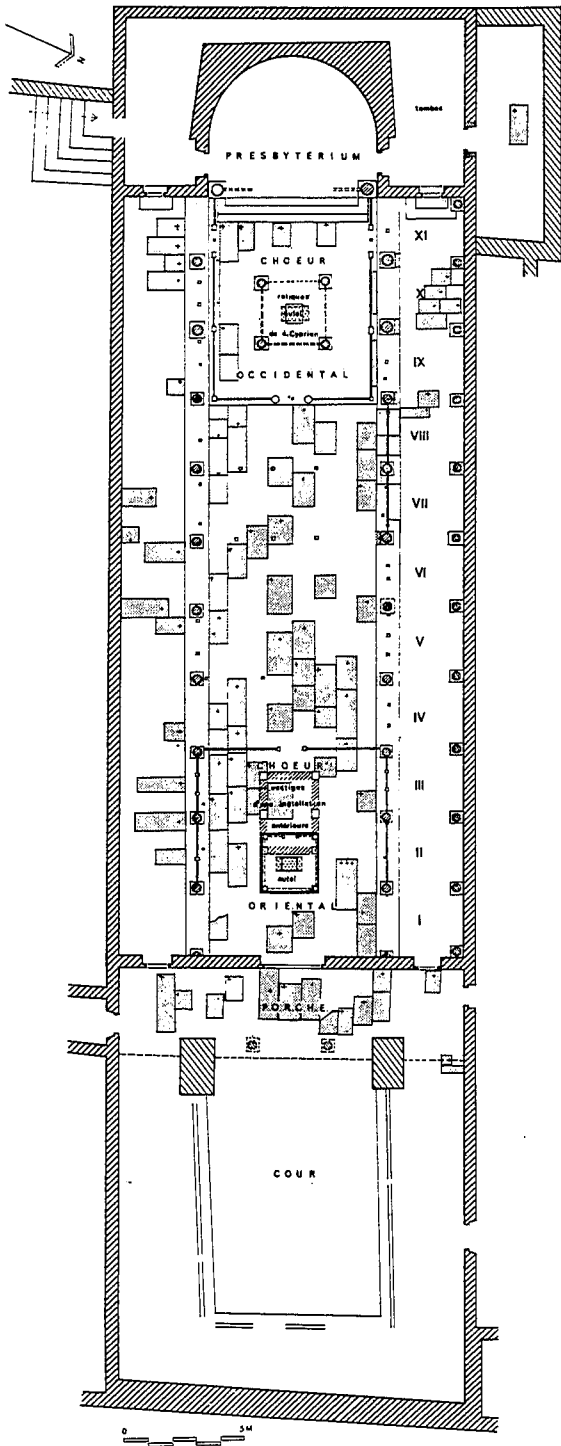


SABRATHA · CHURCHES 3 AND 4

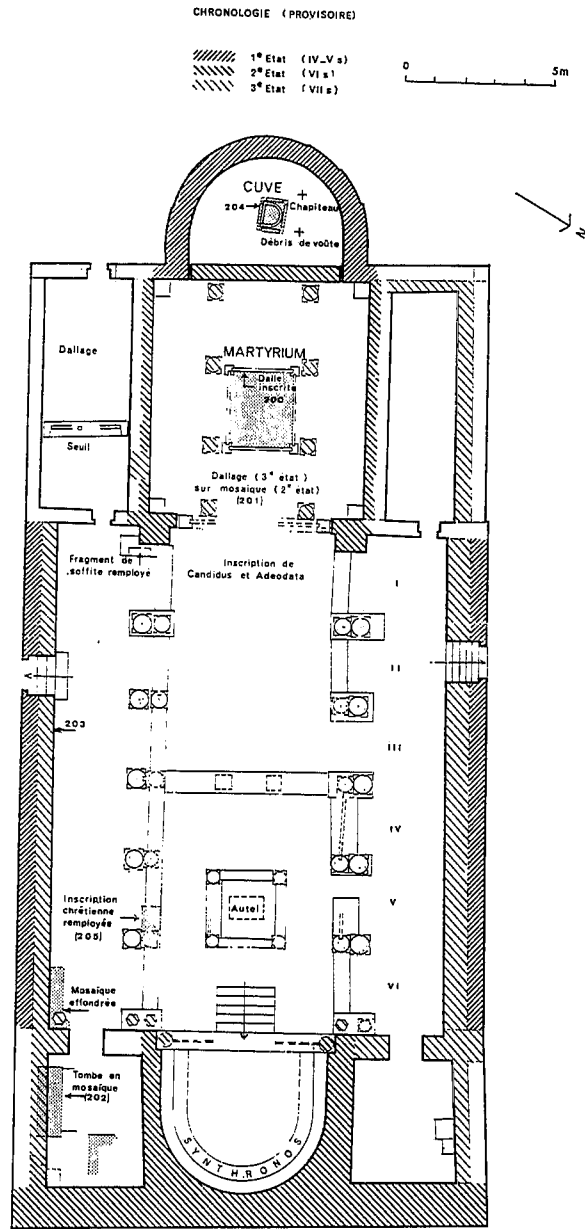
2.1 Churches III and IV at Sabratha.



2.2 Church III at Sabratha.



2.3 Basilica I (of Melleus) at Ammaedara.

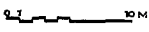
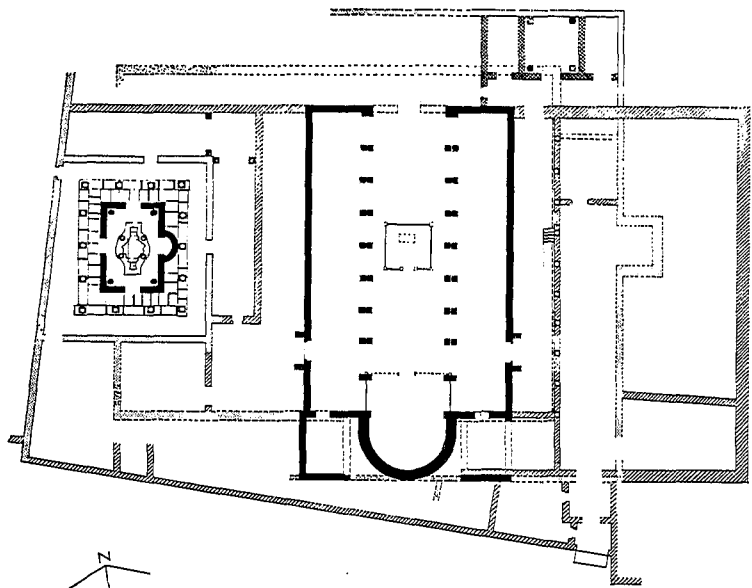


2.4 Basilica II (of Candidus) at Ammaedara.

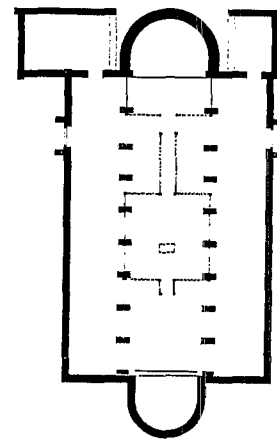
CHRONOLOGIE (PROVISOIRE)

- 1<sup>er</sup> Etat (IV-V s)
- 2<sup>er</sup> Etat (VI s)
- 3<sup>er</sup> Etat (VII s)

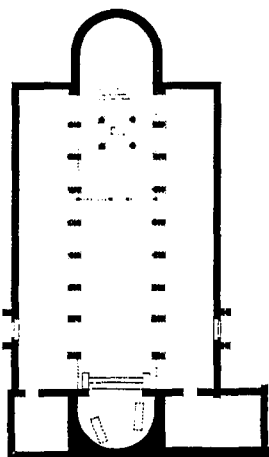
0 5m



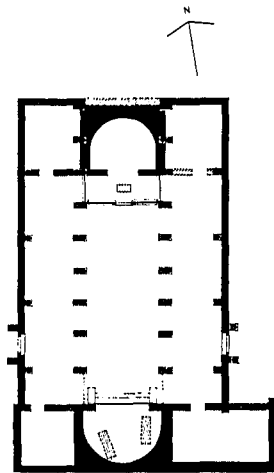
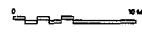
2.5 Basilica I at Sufetula, 1<sup>st</sup> phase.



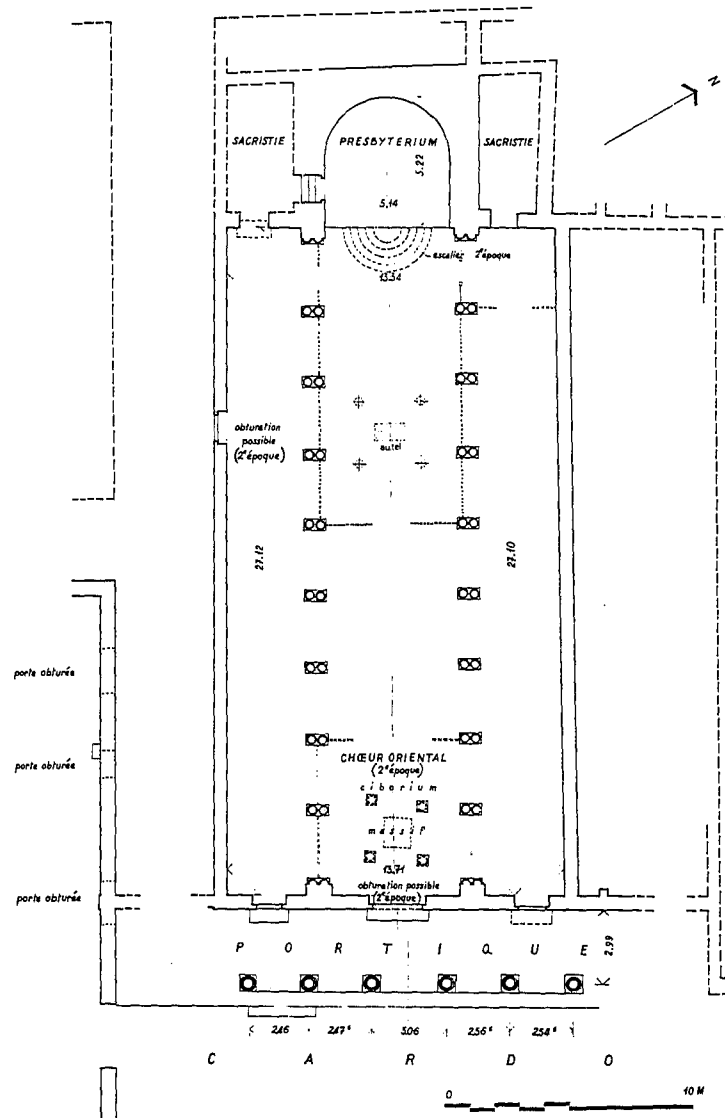
2.6 Vandal period.



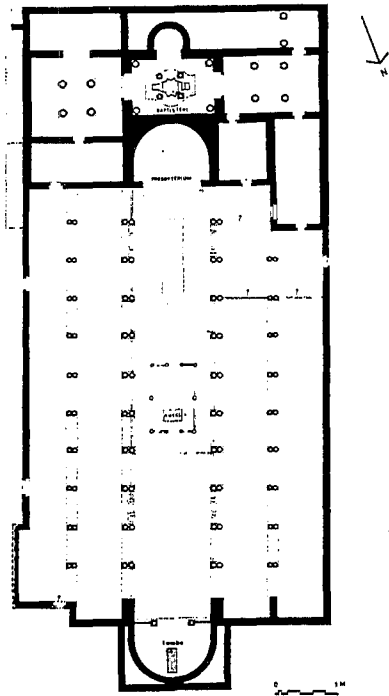
2.7 Early Byzantine phase.



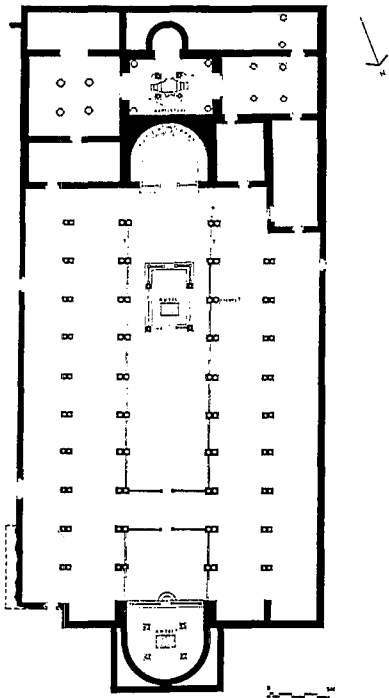
2.8 Late Byzantine phase.



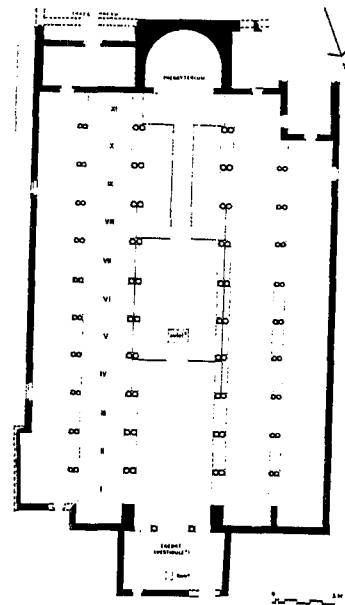
2.9 Basilica IV at Sufetula.



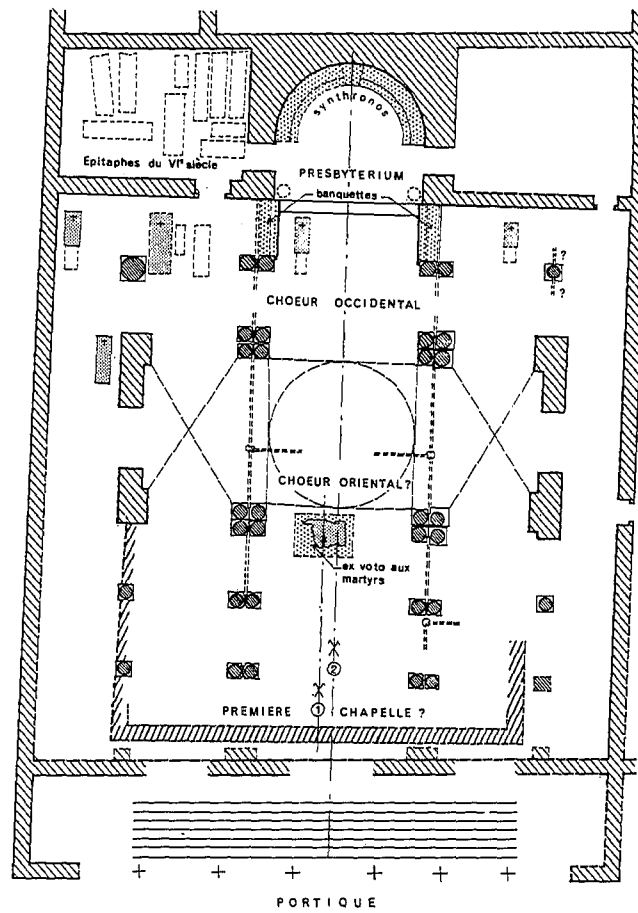
2.10 Basilica II at Sufetula, earliest (Vandal) period.



2.11 Early Byzantine period.

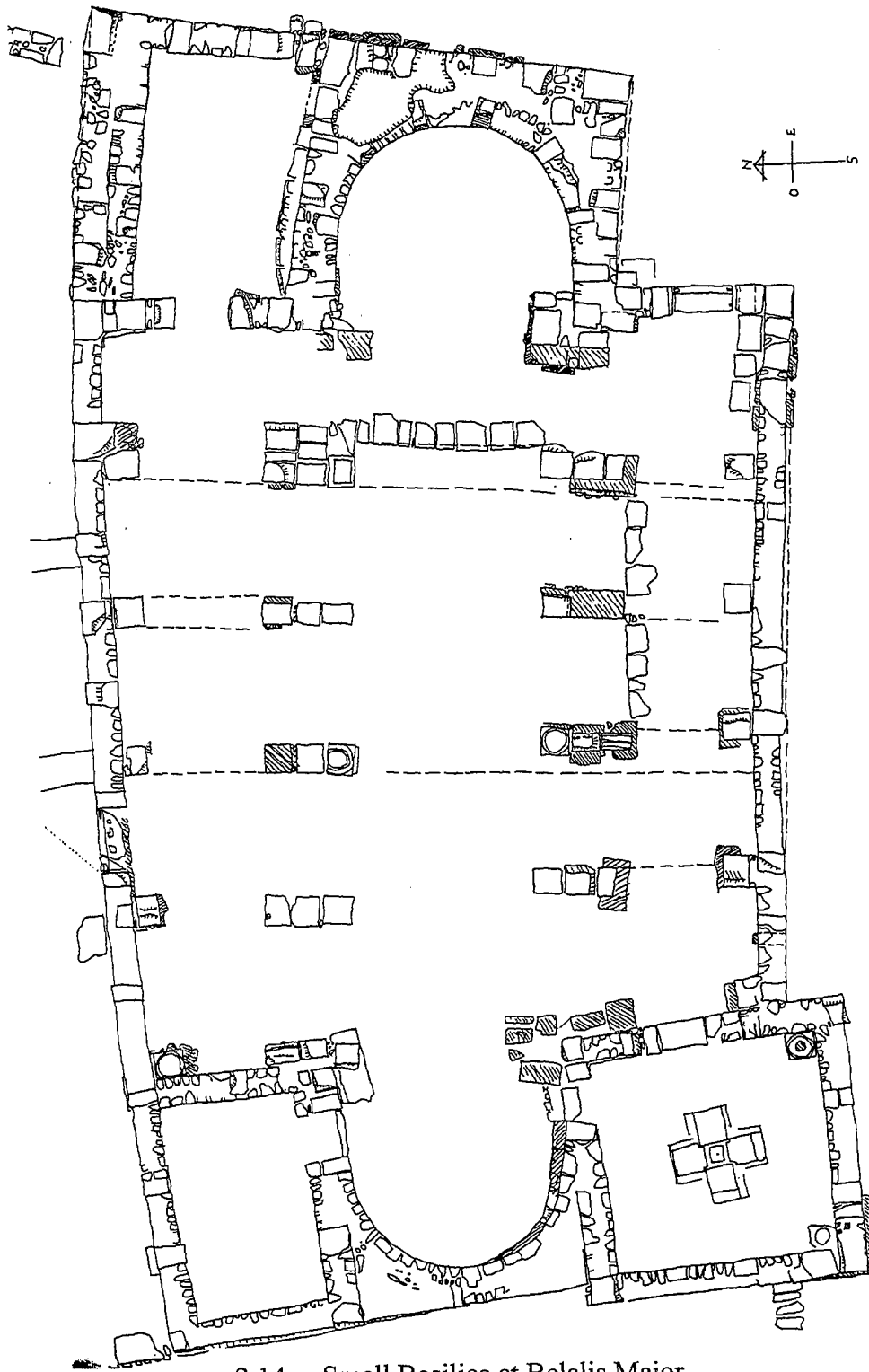


2.12 Late Byzantine period.

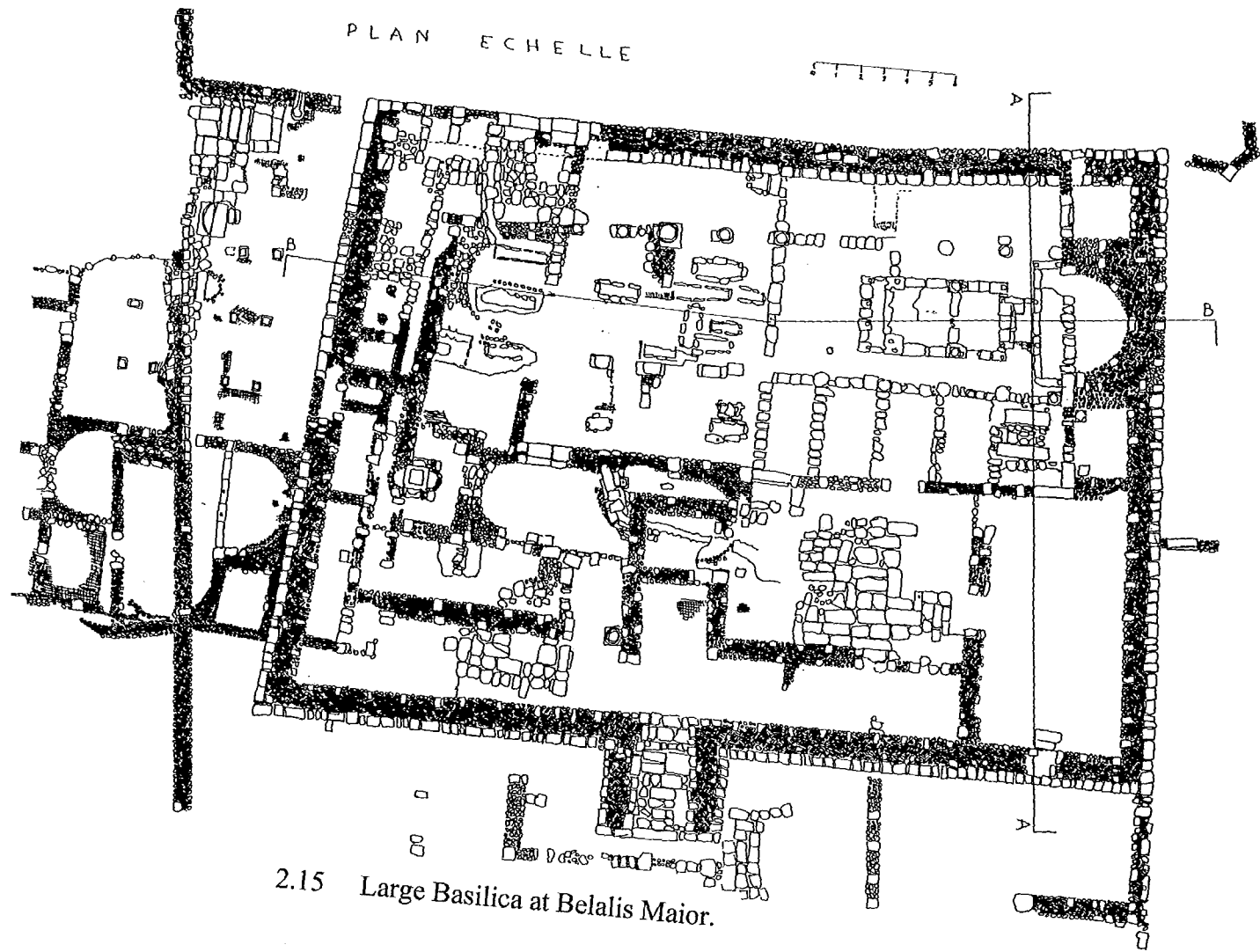


2.13 Basilica VI at Sufetula.

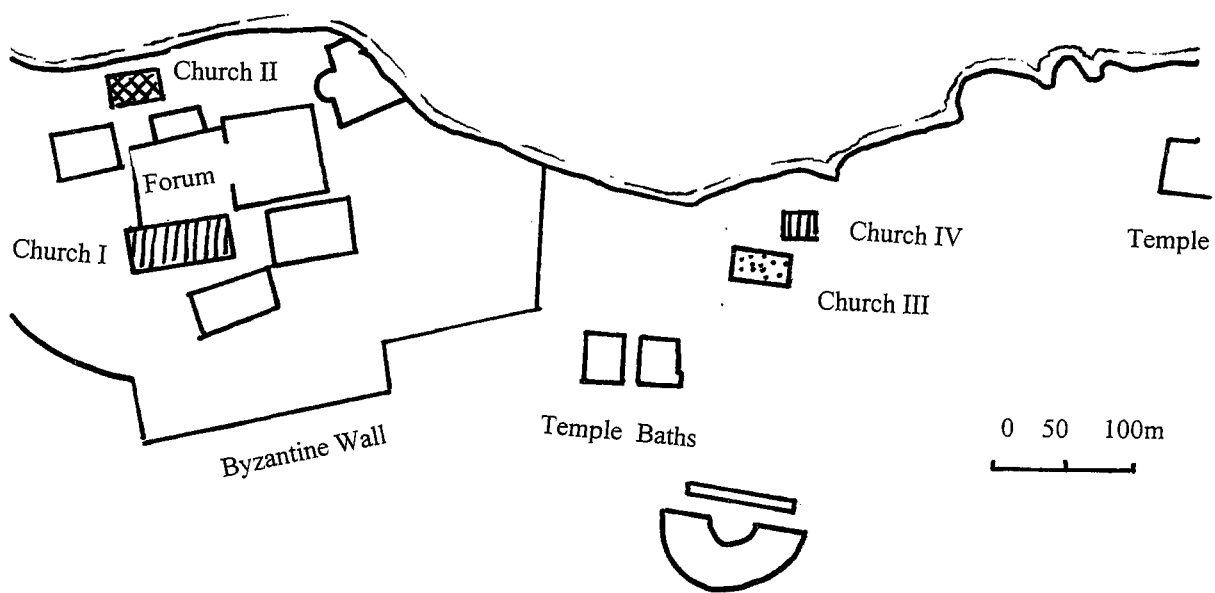







2.14 Small Basilica at Belalis Maior.



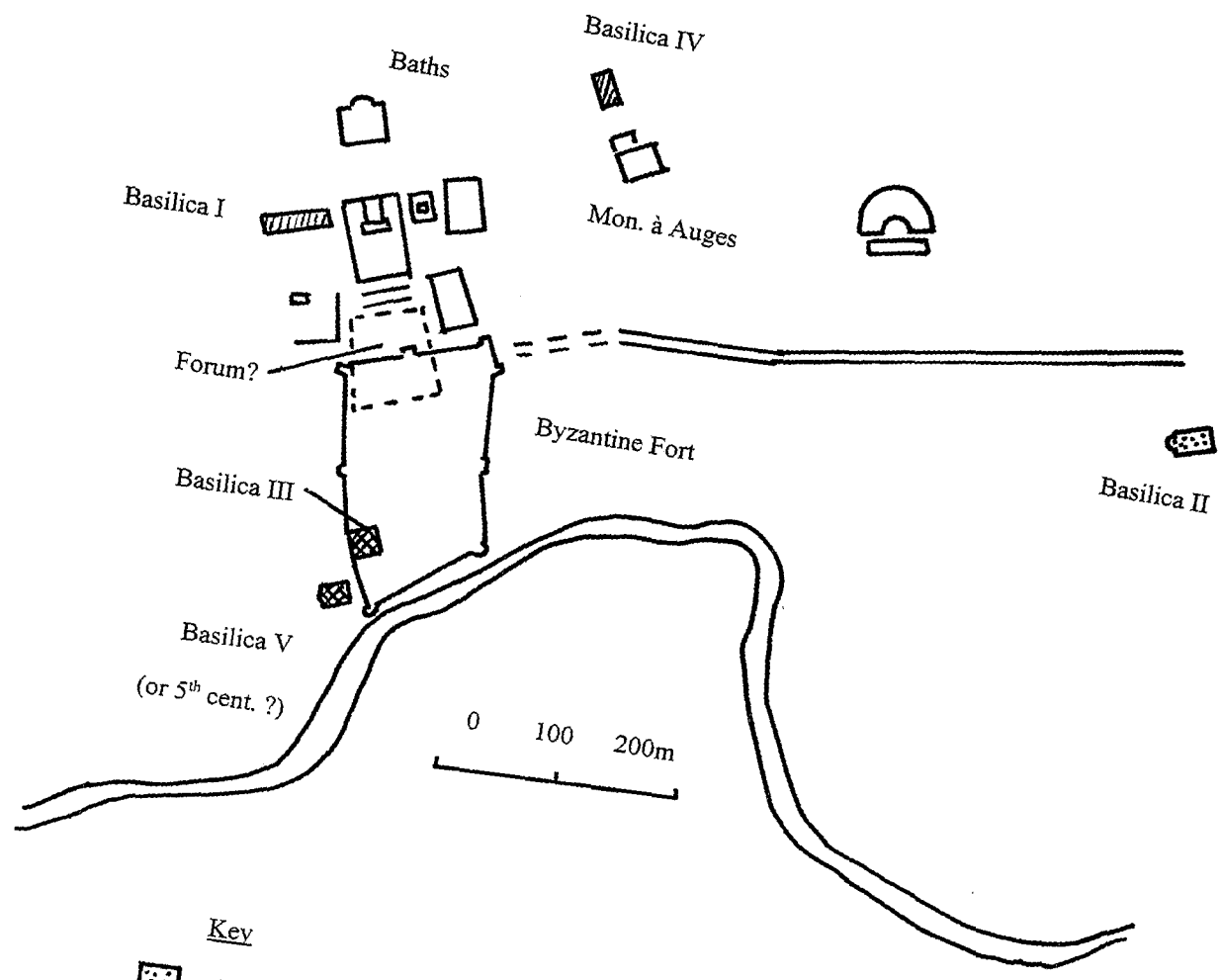
2.15 Large Basilica at Belalis Maior.






Key

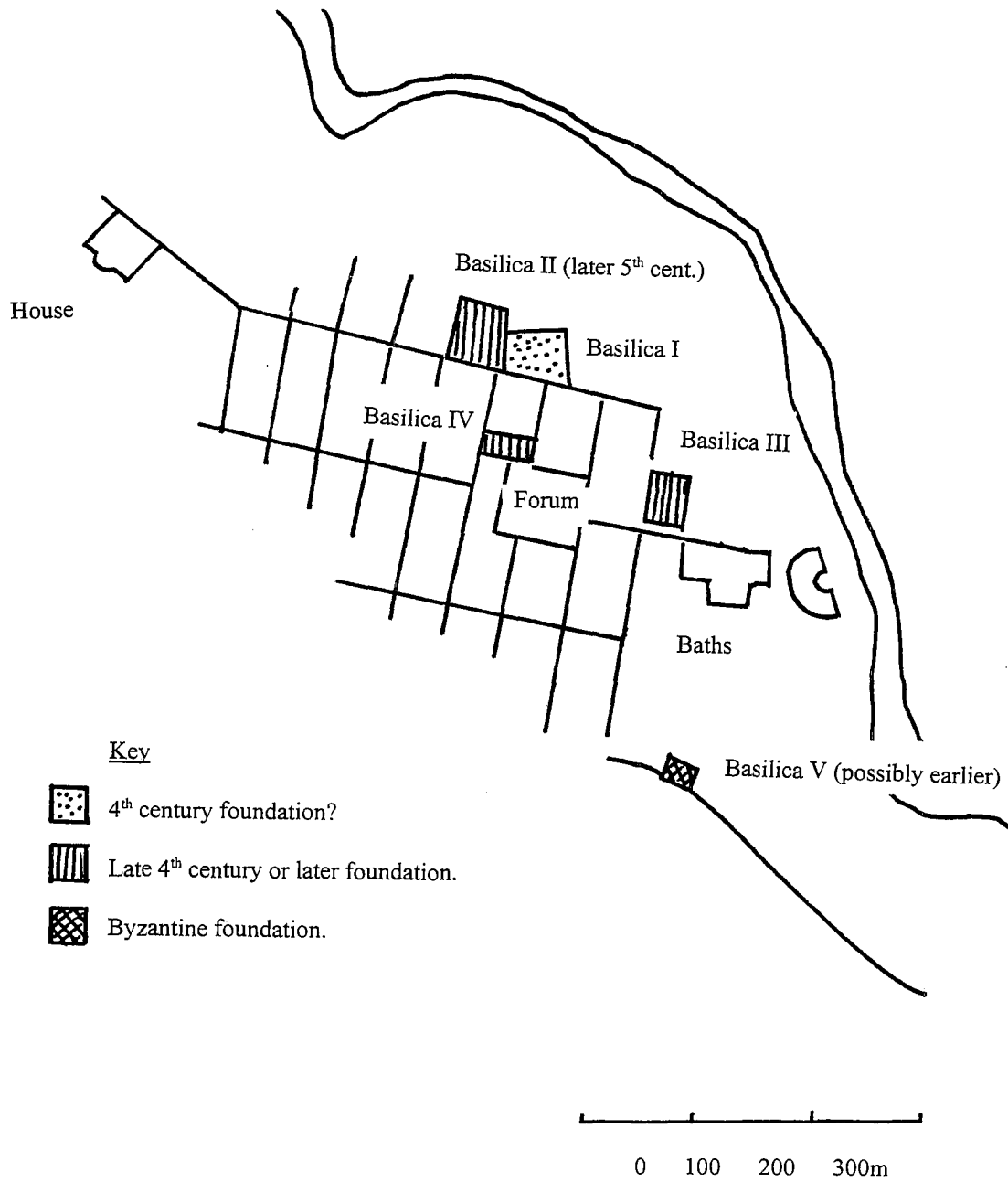
-  Likely 4<sup>th</sup> century foundation date, first church?
-  Likely later 4<sup>th</sup> century or later.
-  Byzantine foundation date.

3.1 Sabratha.



- Key
-  4<sup>th</sup> century foundation date.
  -  Later 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> foundation.
  -  Byzantine foundation.

3.2 Ammaedara.



### 3.3 Sufetula.



Large Basilica

Key



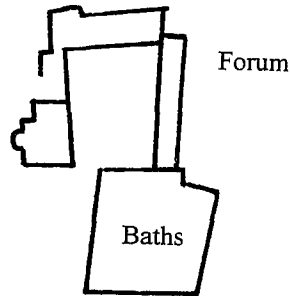
Likely 4<sup>th</sup> century foundation date.



Later 4<sup>th</sup> century foundation?

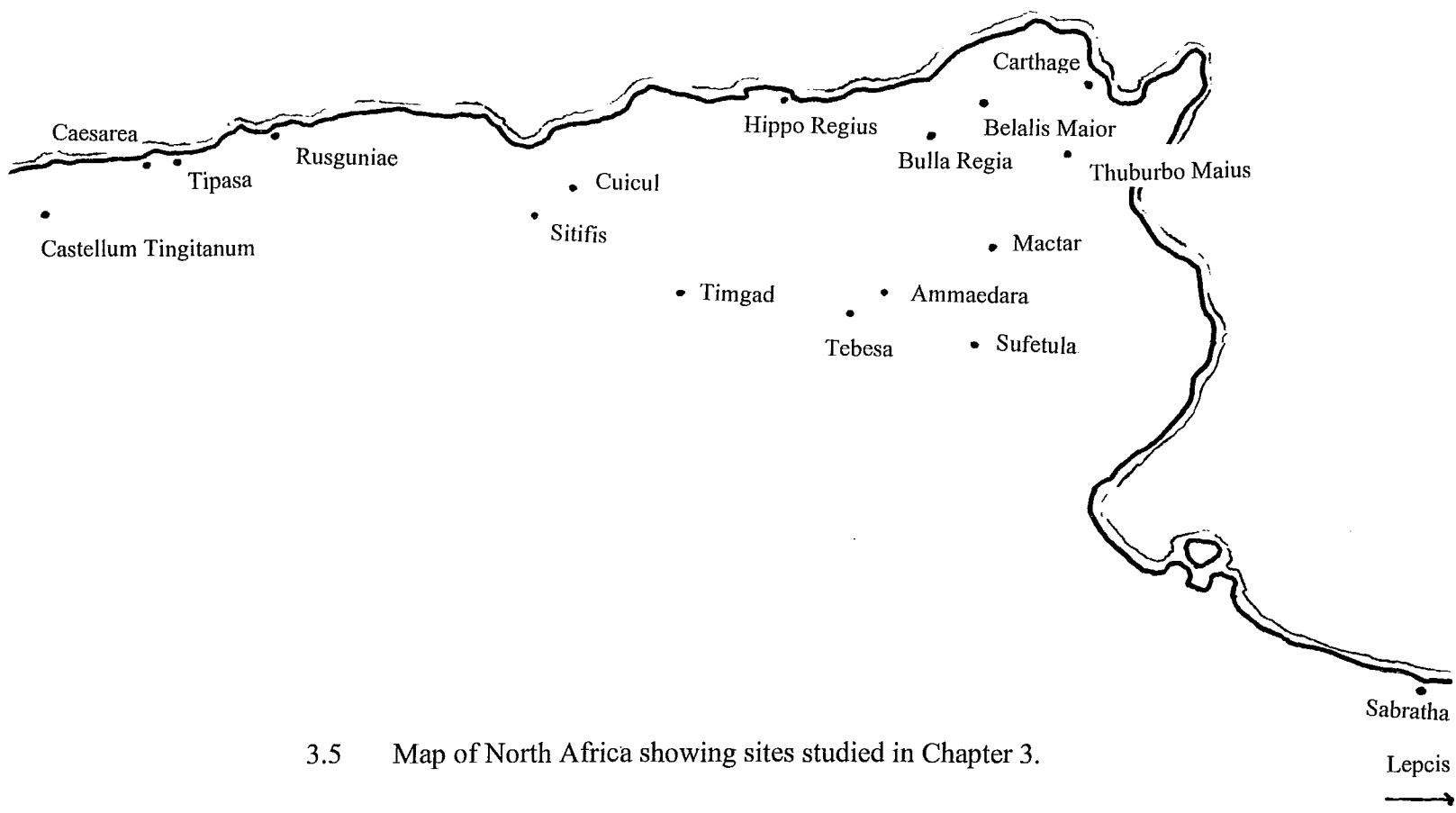


Small Basilica

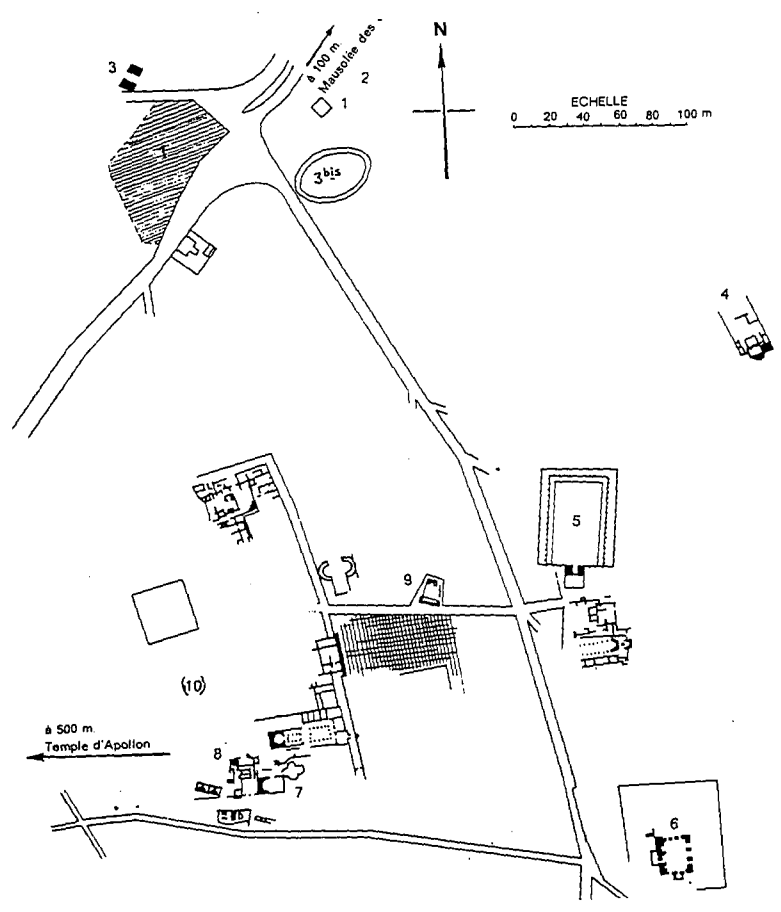


Baths

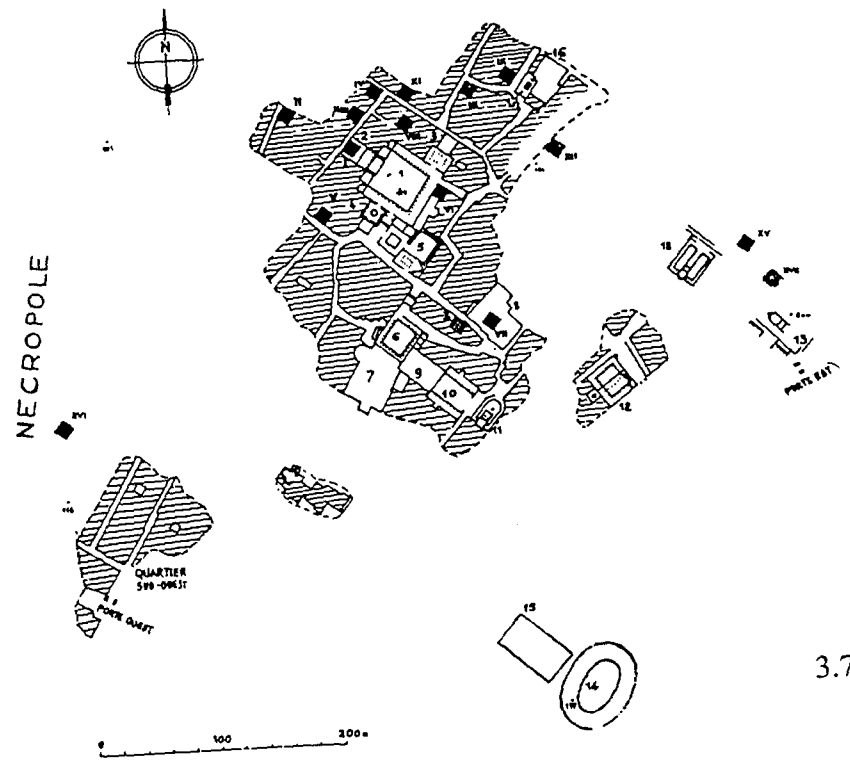
3.4 Belalis Maior.



3.5 Map of North Africa showing sites studied in Chapter 3.

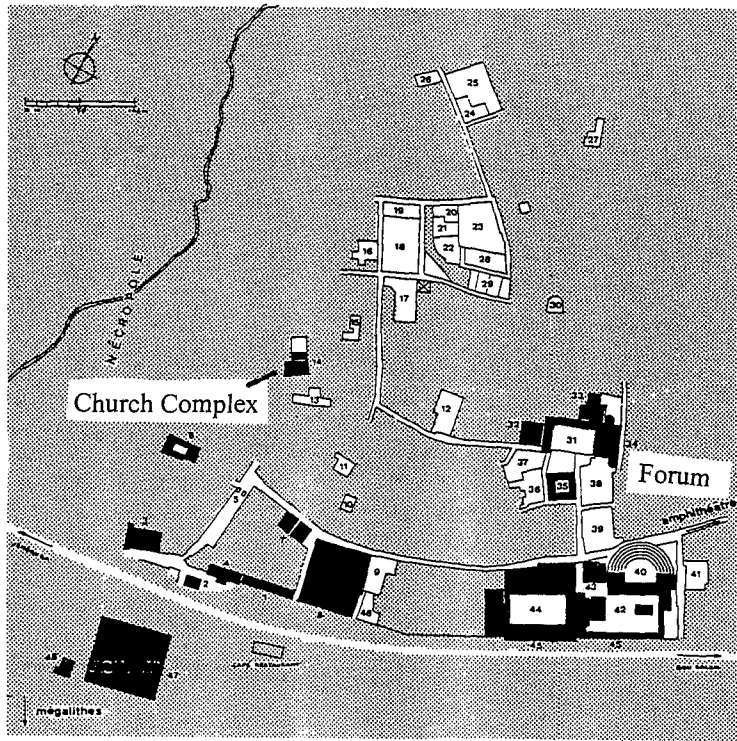


3.6 Mactar.

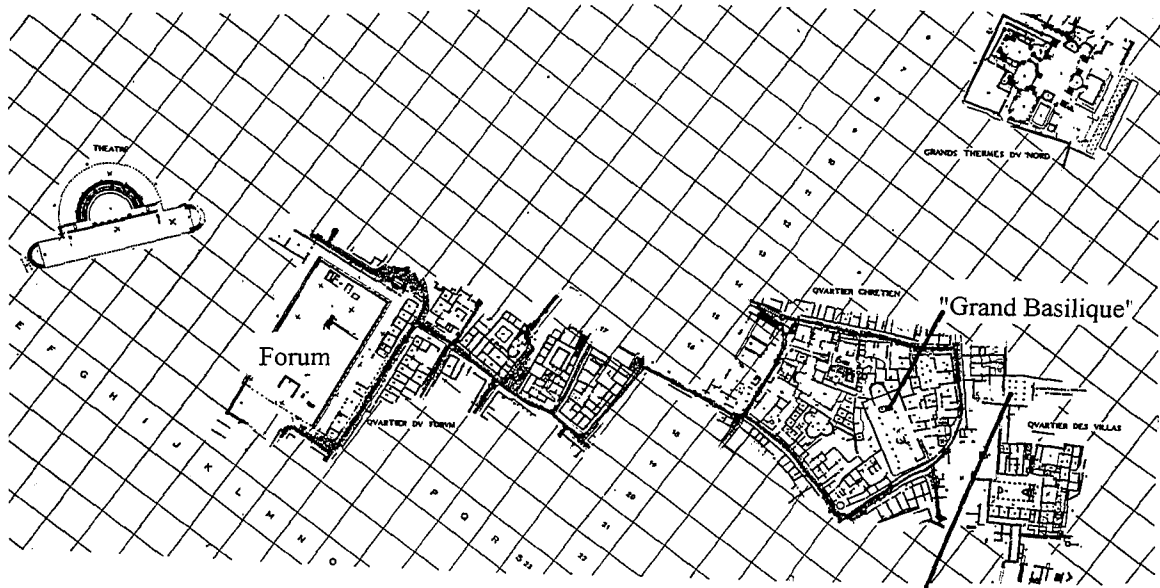


3.7 Thurburbo Maius.



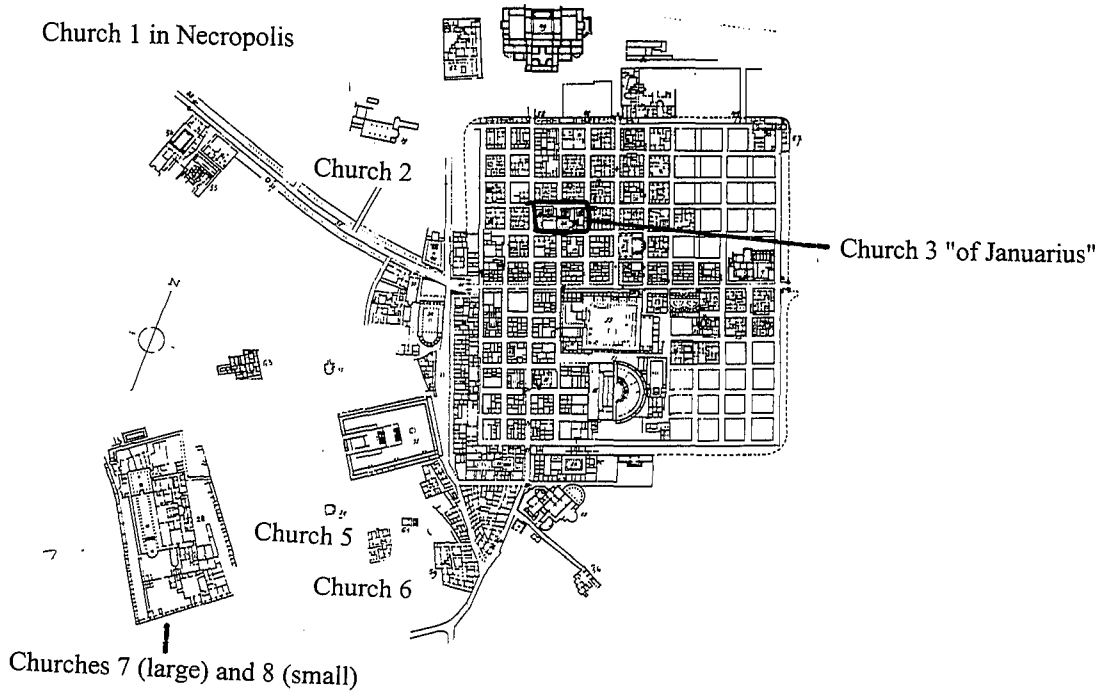


3.8 Bulla Regia.



3.9 Hippo Regius.

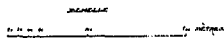
Building with five aisles



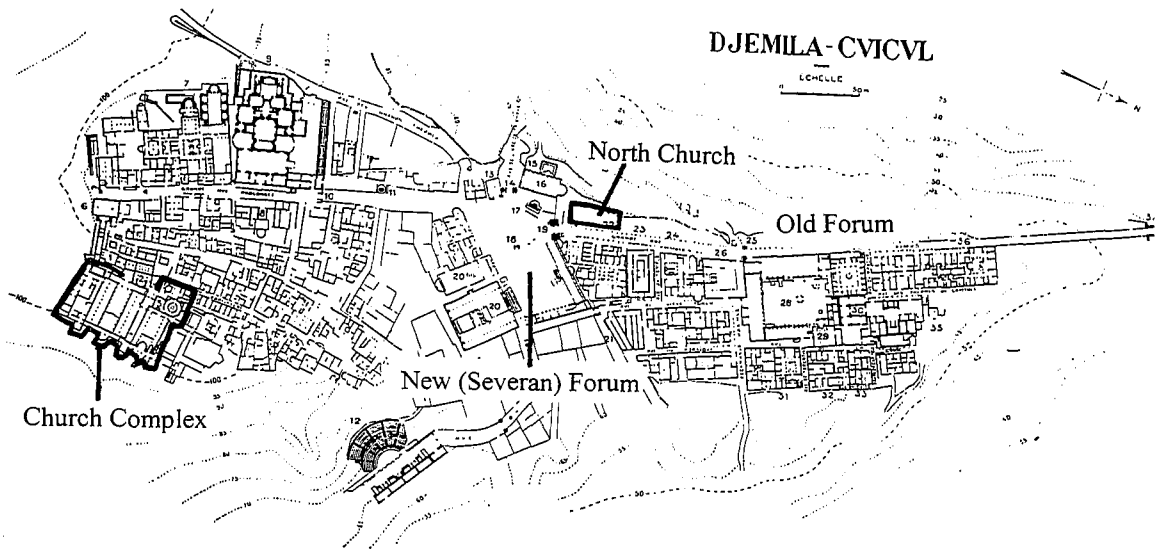
TIMGAD

(ITHANUGADI)

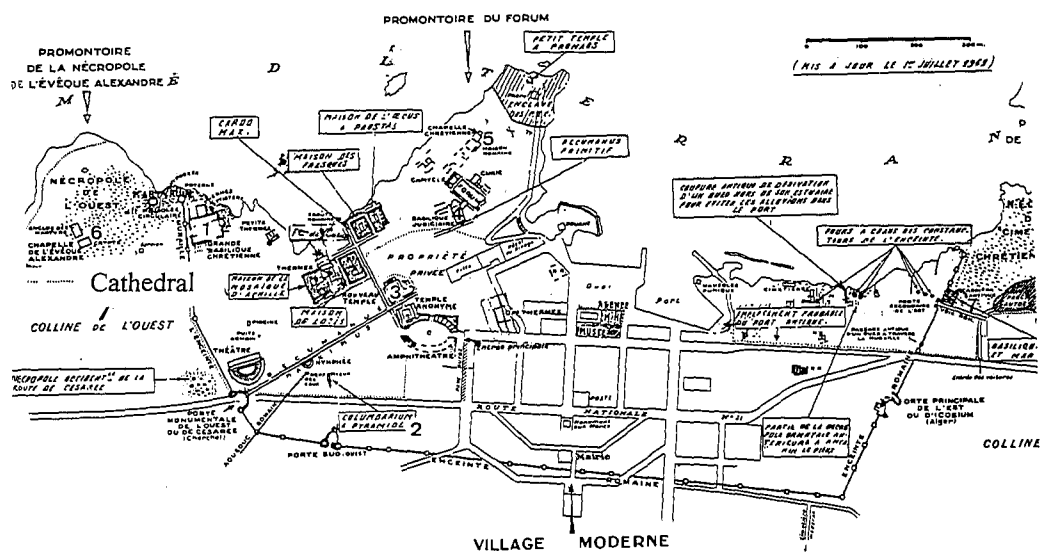
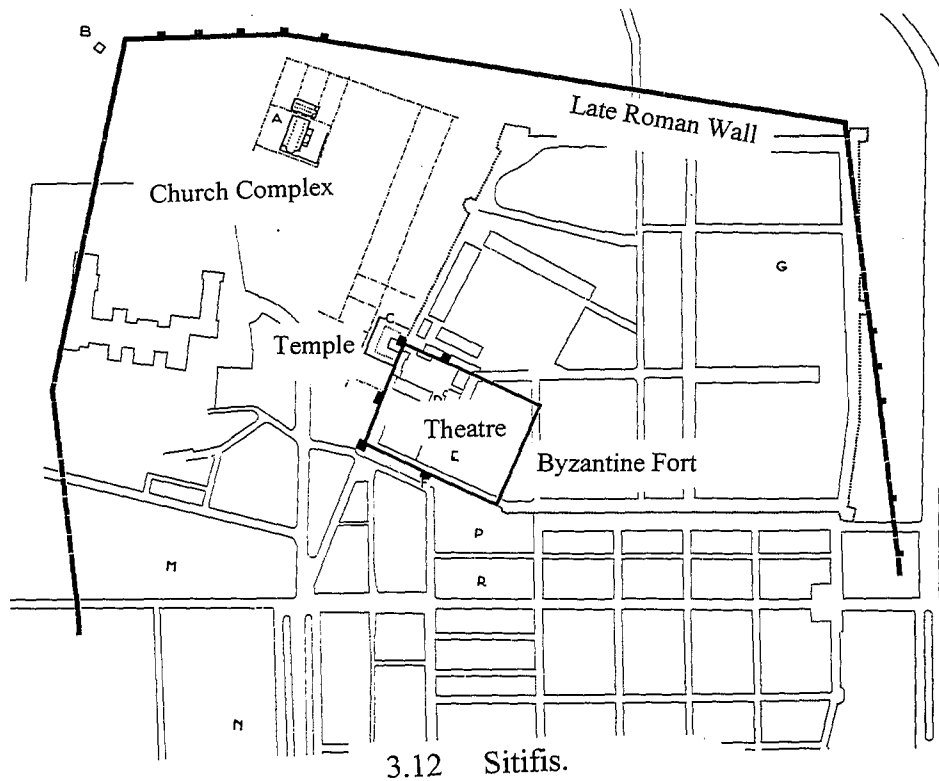
État des Fouilles



3.10 Timgad.

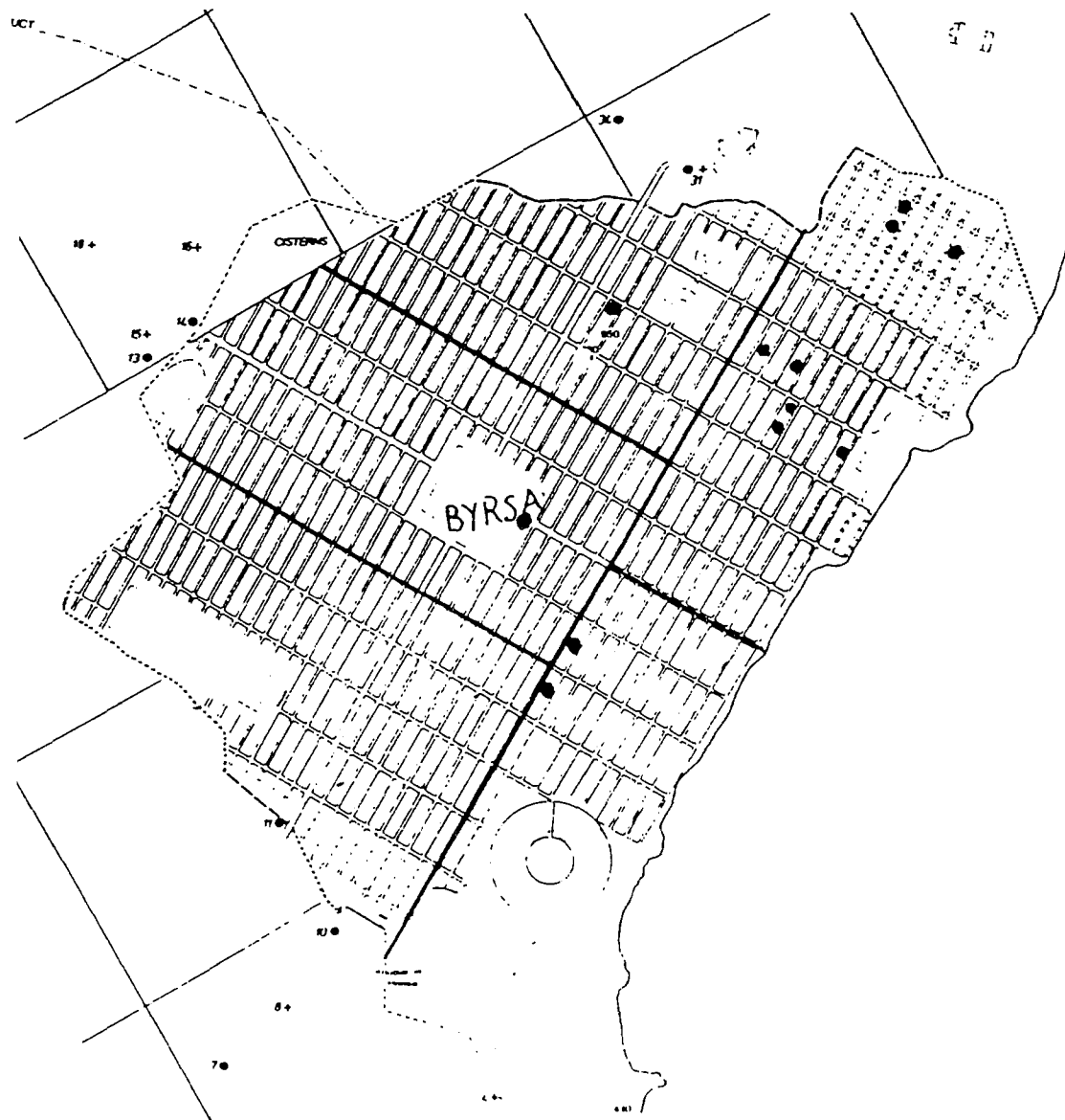


3.11 Cuicul.



Plan général de la ville antique (vers 1950).  
 1 : cathédrale.- 2 : emplacement de l'église détruite de l'angle sud-ouest.- 3 : église installée dans la cour du "Nouvel Temple".- 4 : Basilique civile transformée en église.- 5 : "Chapelle-maison" de l'acropole.- 6 : Chapelle de l'évêque Alexandre.- 7 : Basilique des Saints-Pierre-et-Paul.- 8 : Eglise de Sainte-Salsa.

3.13 Tipasa.



3.14 Carthage.

Key: Ennabli's large 'blobs' indicate the locations of the known major intra-mural churches of Carthage.

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