

Space, monuments, and religion

The christianisation of urban space in the late antique Levant

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Supervised by B. Ward-Perkins

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of my
Grandmother Joan who sadly passed away before
she could see me graduate.

Abstract

Space, Monuments, and Religion. The Christianisation of urban space in the late antique Levant.

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This thesis investigates the relationship between Christianity and urban monumental space in the late antique Levant. Through the analysis of both textual and archaeological evidence it seeks to clarify both the motives and the stages of the process of Christian takeover of the urban space of Levantine cities from the 4th to the 7th century AD. In doing so Christians were in essence both projecting their growth as the predominant religion and, at the same time, creating an entirely new monumental landscape. The case studies are presented in three separate groups, selected on the basis of the principal strategy that was chosen in the process of Christianisation of urban space. The first section analyses the cases of Gerasa, Jerusalem, Heliopolis, and Petra to illustrate the first of these strategies: the main method for occupying the symbolic space of the city was the construction of a contrast between the surviving ruins of the earlier, Hellenic, temples and the new Christian churches. The second group of case studies includes Scythopolis, Caesarea Maritima, Gaza, and to a certain extent Heliopolis. This section deals with those cities where the main strategy was the physical demolition of all or at least the most pre-eminent Hellenic buildings and their direct replacement with a new, and often grand, church. The third group, and the last, consists of the cities of Bostra, Gadara, Apamea, where rather than having to engage with a major Hellenic monument the main competitor was the secular state whether local or imperial. This is found to have resulted in a search for integration into the landscape rather than active competition.

Extended Abstract

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Morgan Di Rodi

St Cross College, Oxford

Hilary Term, 2015

This thesis will discuss the process through which urban space in the Levant was transformed and co-opted by Christians in Late Antiquity. For practical reasons the region has been defined on the basis of both administrative and natural boundaries as the Diocese of Oriens with the exception of its Microasiatic portion. In Part I, I examine how the relationship between the existing, and increasingly ruined residues of monumental Paganism were co-opted by the growing Christian communities to form part of a new landscape. Far from ignoring or excluding the earlier buildings, they were incorporated into a new sacred and symbolic world that they created directly, drawing from scripture and experience, and that they marked with both buildings and text. In Jerusalem this process is not only particularly visible but also extremely explicitly documented. The relationship between the Holy Sepulchre and the Temple mount is explicitly constructed in such a manner as to emphasise the success of Christianity by comparing the new church to the ruins of the old temple. It is important to note that this relationship is not evident neither before nor after the period of intense activity during the reign of Constantine, as

neither the Church of Holy Zion nor the Nea present any kind of relation with the Temple Mount. In Gerasa the main objective of the Christians is the Hellenic past rather than the, apparently minor, Jewish one. Again, the main moment of development of the competitive dynamic is focused on the earliest, and largest, complex: the Cathedral Church Complex. In this building, both position and language of the inscription on the lintel of the main access to it are intensely focused on the relationship with the neighbouring Temple of Artemis. In Petra, the earliest church was built within one of the Nabatean Royal tombs this allowed it overlook both the main administrative centre, the former Royal Palace, and the remains of the main temples of the city: the Temple of the Winged Lions and the Qasr al Bint. The other churches of the city were placed at the edge of the residential area between it and the suk with its associated temples. In Heliopolis the situation of the Christian community was small and embattled, and required repeated Imperial support to get itself off the ground. However, precisely because of the Imperial support Christians were able to appropriate the main Hellenic complex of the city: the temple of Baal. I intend to demonstrate how the foundation of this process was not only the availability of money, but also the presence of a relatively smooth transition between Hellenic and Christian dominance in the city, in particular in the civic council and the landed élite. In Part II I will examine how, the new landscape was not created via an interaction between the old and the new where the co-existence between Hellenes and Christian was conflictual: in these cases the new situation was the product of a violent removal of the Hellenic buildings, their destruction, and their replacement with new Christian buildings. In this case, the violent replacement of an existing building was often accompanied by external (often imperial) intervention at the behest of a local bishop. In these cases it would appear that Christians were and remained a minority in the city for some time, though the newly empowered community saw a surge in conversions around the time of this change in the balance of power (or

so it would appear). In Part III I will examine the relationship between Christian buildings and secular (for want of a better word) buildings. In this case I intend to chart the developing relationship between the rising Christian church and the existing, but also changing, later Roman state. In particular, I will focus on the differing relationship between the decaying civic and the rising state authorities. I suggest that as the Bishop rose in status vis à vis the depleted civic administration, public space was also taken over. The continued strength of the central administration and its role as a source of power and legitimisation for many Bishops meant that the space under its control remained more or less unchallenged.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Late Antiquity was a period of great change in the Roman state, which saw the rise to full prominence of a major religion in Christianity. In this context not only the people that made up Late Roman society but also the space they inhabited was radically transformed.¹

Part of this process was the co-option of public space for Christian purposes. At the beginning of Late Antiquity (see later in this chapter) public space was dominated by either civic/state secular buildings or religious buildings of the existing polytheistic religion, while by the end of the period the religious side of urban space can be said to have been taken over entirely by Christianity and the secular space had been quite substantially reduced by virtue of other partially related processes.

Through the examination of a number of case studies from the region, I propose to explore the relationship between the Christian hierarchy, the city and the state. I intend to do so by using the textual and material records available in the region to reconstruct the symbolic, religious and physical landscapes and their alterations. Thus I will attempt to build a paradigm for the region that can explain, and justify the choices of the individual communities in a way that attempts to re-create the nuanced reasons that may have been behind what appear to be relatively simple

¹Before proceeding, a brief terminological note is in order: where possible terms will be given in the commonly used English form (so for instance Constantinople rather than Constantinopolis or Costantinoupolis). Where this will not be possible I will use the appropriate language or transliteration, so cases where both the Latin and Greek are available given the fact that the Levant was mainly Greek speaking I have endeavoured to use the Greek name. The same goes for the names of locations and cities that are given in the appropriate late antique form rather than the contemporary one, the sole exception to this rule is Jerusalem where the names of Aelia Capitolina and Jerusalem are used interchangeably given the use of both in contemporary sources. Where the names of people or places are in languages other than Greek or Latin I have sought to use the most commonly used transliteration, however, for ease of redaction and due to the fact that they are not in common usage in the English language, I have not maintained the use of diacritic symbols. The names of Hellenistic kings have been given with their regnal numbers and the numbers of the iteration of their epithets even though these were not in common use the same can be said for Roman emperors, while Arab Caliphs and leaders are given with the use of their name and patronymic. Dates are all given in the Christian era with the indication of the *Annus Domini* rather than the use of CE for purely aesthetic reasons, where necessary the other calendar dates are also given though always accompanied by the Gregorian date. I will generally capitalise words only when they refer to a proper name so for instance cardinal points will generally be given in small case unless they refer to the name of a building or, in the case of east and west, they refer to the parts of the empire as in: the East vis à vis the east of the city. I will refer to the region as a whole as the Levant in order to avoid the pitfalls of contemporary politics and ideology that currently inform so much of the events currently occurring in the region.

and straightforward choices rather than taking into account mere pragmatism. In essence, I intend to explore not only what happened and when but, more importantly why these choices were made.

In approaching a process such as Christianisation one must be aware of possible pitfalls. First the majority of the textual material at our disposal is biased, being mainly Christian either through the author's religion or explicitly religious in content. In the earlier period this is partly mitigated by the presence of non-Christian sources, though these too are often heavily biased, and in part by taking into account the bias in the analysis. Furthermore, one has also to be wary of the construction of a teleological narrative: as pointed out by Peter Brown in *Authority and the Sacred*, it is far too easy to fall for such a narrative and accept the inevitability of the process along with the rhythm set for us by our sources.² In fact, at least until the late 4th century, total Christianisation was by no means a certainty and, if Emperor Julian had not embarked on a disastrous Persian campaign he might have seen his efforts gain some traction or at least have been able to secure a pagan succession.³ Though we will never know what the outcome would have been, it is relevant to note how throughout the 4th century and even in the 5th (when other cults were officially banned) there is significant evidence of Hellenic cults throughout the Levant, cults that needed much effort and many resources to eradicate.⁴ In fact a large number of cities saw large-scale rioting around the turn of the 5th century when the authorities took direct action against pagan cults and places of worship and careful negotiations were needed to restore order often involving major concession on the part of the Christians.⁵

In order to tease out the closest approximation to the truth in a context of limited and often incomplete and biased information, I will seek to re-construct the process

²Brown (1995) 4-6.

³A doctoral thesis is not the place to provide counterfactual history nor do I wish to argue that Julian necessarily had to be successful: I merely wish to point to the possibility of an alternative outcome that no Later Christian author would ever have considered.

⁴As we will see later on in the case of Baalbek it is likely that Pagan cults were not even close to suppressed at the arrival of the Arabs in the 650s AD. See below 3.5 Heliopolis page 179

⁵This happened in particular in Heliopolis, Petra and Caesarea.

by which space, and specifically monumental space, was taken over by Christians in Late Antiquity. The guiding light throughout my work has been the search to identify the circumstances under which different processes took place, the whys and the hows of the groupings rather than a one-size-fits-all paradigm subsuming all possible options: given the richness and variety of urban life in Late Antiquity one should expect variety in outcomes.

In Part I, I will examine how the relationship between the existing, and increasingly ruined, residues of monumental paganism were co-opted by the growing Christian communities to form part of a new landscape. I will seek to demonstrate how, far from ignoring or excluding the earlier buildings, they were incorporated into a new sacred and symbolic world that they created directly, drawing from scripture and experience, and that they marked with both buildings and text. I intend to demonstrate how the foundation of this process was not only the availability of money but also the presence of a relatively smooth transition between Hellenic and Christian dominance in the city, in particular in the civic council and the landed élite.

In Part II I will examine how the new landscape was not created via an interaction between the old and the new, where the co-existence between Hellenes and Christian was conflictual: in these cases the new situation was the product of a violent removal of the Hellenic buildings, their destruction, and their replacement with new Christian buildings. In this case, the violent replacement of an existing building was often accompanied by external (often imperial) intervention at the request of a local Bishop. In these cases it would appear that Christians were and remained a minority in the city for some time, though the newly empowered community saw a surge in conversions around the time of this change in the balance of power (or so it would appear).

In Part III I will examine the relationship between Christian buildings and secular (for want of a better word) buildings. In this case I intend to chart the developing relationship between the rising Christian church and the existing, but also changing,

later Roman state. In particular, I will focus on the differing relationship between the decaying civic and the rising state authorities. I suggest that as the Bishop rose in status vis á vis the depleted civic administration, public space was also taken over. The continued strength of the central administration and its role as a source of power and legitimisation for many Bishops meant that the space under its control remained more or less unchallenged.

1.1 The Context: the Roman Empire between the 4th and 7th centuries

In the western part of the Empire the upheavals of the Antonine Age were followed first by the relative stability of the Tetrarchy and then by the reunification of the Empire under Constantine and his successors. The situation in the West would be progressively worsened by the successive waves of Germanic peoples that invaded it from the turn of the 5th century producing what can be argued was a fundamental divergence between West and East.⁶ This resulted in the injection of a relatively large alien element into what had been, to that point, a substantially stable situation under Imperial rule. It was also a fundamental change in the economic and political fortunes of the region. The partial depopulation of large areas of the West, the impoverishment of material culture and the fundamental change in the rulers and also of the methods of ruling, had a fundamental impact on the development of urban life in the region.⁷

In contrast, the East survived these changes relatively unscathed, with the sole exception of the Gothic incursions into the Balkans and Asia Minor. Thus, the region faced major upheaval only during the Persian War of in the late 6th century, and the

⁶The issue of the fundamental change in the practices of daily life, government and governance in the West after the so called fall of the Roman Empire has been treated elsewhere in a much more complete and in depth manner than the general introduction to a doctoral thesis on the east could ever do. In particular see Ward-Perkins (2005) that deals specifically with many of the issues at hand.

⁷The decline of material culture and the effect of the Germanic invasions on the productive and trade networks of the western Mediterranean see Wickham (2006) Chapters II and IV.

Arab-Islamic conflicts that followed hot on the heels of the end of that conflict in 628. In this context, the Late Roman state and society developed as a radically different offshoot to the one that was coming into existence in the West. The Imperial Court remained the main source of authority and legitimisation, and persistent prosperity enabled unfettered development of urban life until the 7th century. Christianity's urban roots remained untouched and there was a significant availability of funds for both civic and religious projects.⁸ The only significant dents in this process would appear to have been the frequency and violence of earthquakes that struck the region, affecting the development of many cities, though in an uneven manner due to the different abilities to recover from the destruction.⁹

Nowhere were the urban roots of Christianity and its urban dimension more apparent than in the Levantine area, where Christianity had originated. Here, the prevalence of rich cities, and their cultured élites, provided an ideal place for the religion to thrive. The expanding Christian communities found a unique situation where they could not only expand in numbers and in wealth. The two clusters of cities that dominated the area: the Decapolis in the Jordan valley area and the Tetrapolis in the Orontes basin were rich and prosperous, profiting from an agricultural boom and from increased trade revenues from the flourishing east-west caravans.¹⁰ In this context, it is not at all surprising that Christianity was able to thrive, and develop a strong monumental *facies* in a context of urban survival.

From the reign of Constantine onwards, the increasingly emboldened and rich Christian Church, was able to assert itself increasingly over the population and the cityscape. Christians were not, of course, the only actors in this process: at the begin-

⁸This general regional prosperity did not stop individual cities from rising and falling due to local events.

⁹Earthquakes were generally followed by fire in these cases and the damaged caused by this often required significant amounts of money for repairs, one only has to think that the imperial donation to Antioch on the Orontes following just one of the earthquakes that struck the city in the period was 100 lb of gold. See Downey (1961) 524-525 and 546-552.

¹⁰The agricultural boom in the late antique Levant can be witnessed by the increased occupation of marginal areas of land throughout the period. Nowhere is this more obvious than in Tchalenko's now famous study of the Syrian Limestone Massif. See Tchalenko (1953) for the original material, while Kennedy and Liebeschuetz (1988), Foss (1997) and Walmsley (2007) provide more recent overviews.

ning of the period, Hellenes, as those who practiced the traditional Graeco-Roman polytheistic religion or one of its syncretic offshoots were known in the Christian literature, made up the majority of the population in most cities and an overwhelming one in the countryside.¹¹ Further, even though the officers of the state were increasingly Christian, and they posed less and less an obstacle to Christianisation, this did not mean that they were always forceful promoters of Christianity.

The Roman state also significantly changed during Late Antiquity: it had grown through the Principate and the earlier Imperial times and had developed as a patchwork of central and imperial competences. Key to this was taxation, that was in many parts demanded of local administrations and formed one of the cornerstones of local autonomy. It was this very same aspect that, when progressively stripped away from civic councils, deprived them of their importance, and in the course of the 5th and 6th centuries consigned them to obsolescence. Alongside the increased acquisition of powers and tax revenues by central government, the decline in urban self-government was mirrored and caused by profound social changes in the upper segments of urban society, the traditional landowning class or *curiales*. Initially, the heart of civic political activity and munificence, the curial class was either subsumed into the imperial elite (the upper segment) or reduced to political insignificance by the effective disenfranchisement of the local offices on which they relied. The *de facto* disappearance of civic self-government opened the road for the rise of the Bishop as a political figure, for he also had the intellectual and financial means to seek redress in the Imperial court, by counting on his influence, Imperial piety or financial clout to secure the interests of his city, as well as holding legitimacy as the leader of the Christian community.¹²

In the East, Late Antiquity was a period of (relative) military stability, but of

¹¹In defining the followers of polytheistic practices as Hellenes I am following the practice commonly used by Christian authors of the age and by F.R. Trombley amongst others. I feel that the use better describes the sophisticated urban followers and priests of these cults, while the term Pagan by its very etymology (coming as it does from the Latin *pagus*, that is countryside) carries of itself an implicit value judgment that I believe should be avoided. For more, see Trombley (1993a) introduction.

¹²Brown (1992) 147-152, Liebeschuetz (2001) 145-155.

great cultural and political upheaval. I believe the birth and meteoric rise of a new religion and polity with the appearance on the stage of the Islamic Arab Caliphate marked its end. In this context, the process of alteration of space and society that was set in motion by the decisions of Constantine and his family in Constantinople, Jerusalem and Rome, was abruptly interrupted. Though the Persian conquest of the region had had some effect, particularly in Egypt, the subsequent Roman reconquest of the region would, in time, have brought about some form of a revival of the process. The arrival and permanence of the Islamic Arab armies, the progressive Arabisation and Islamisation of the region and the explicit religious objectives of the new overlords of the Levant had a much stronger impact than the Persians did in a relatively similar timescale.

1.2 Periodization

The first step in framing the work is that of defining the span of time that it covers. Though it is difficult to assign precise dates to the beginnings and end of social and religious processes, I will endeavour to do so as objectively as possible. I have chosen start and endpoints that are commonly used for other purposes and are directly relevant to my thesis rather than exploring in detail the extensive debates on the limits of Late Antiquity.

The use of any date as a marker for the beginning or the end of a historical process is by its very nature artificial, as historical processes seldom fit conveniently into historians' brackets. Except for some very specific cases, the use of dates is more for the historians' convenience rather than an actual true representation of the beginning or end of the process that is by the very nature of human processes almost impossible to identify as often is the end. However, it is a necessary evil and I will attempt it.

The debate over the beginning and end of Late Antiquity has raged since the concept first gained prominence through the works of Peter Brown. Brown puts the

starting date at 200 AD and its end in the year 700 AD, AHM Jones places the Later Roman Empire (a concept that one can treat as analogous) between 284 AD and 602 AD.¹³ Others, when referring to the East have preferred to adopt the term Byzantine instead of late antique and have tended to start the period with the reign of Constantine, drawing an end to the "Early Period" which can in essence be considered analogous to Late Antiquity, somewhere between the reigns of Justinian and Heraclius, in effect distinguishing between the Later Roman and the Medieval Period of Byzantium proper.¹⁴ In effect part of the difference in the terminology between these various approaches depends on the regional perspective that the authors take: where the focus is on the east the preference tends to be for either a later beginning for the Middle Ages or an earlier beginning for the Byzantium.

As my starting point I have chosen the year 300 AD. Though not tied to a specific even or person, it is the most convenient date in exploring early Christianity in its built form as it sees, if not in the year itself soon after, the construction of the first significant examples of large churches, if not under the patronage at least through the toleration of the Emperor. Though starting with small examples after the year 312 the rise of Constantine to the throne, brought about the construction of the first two major imperially backed Christian buildings the basilicas of St John in the Lateran and the Holy Sepulchre. The former, whose construction started around the year 313 AD and terminated in 324 AD. Equally, the Holy Sepulchre, constructed in 325 AD was the first major Christian construction project in an established city of the East, as the nascent city of Constantinople had a very different context as it was for all intents and purposes a new build. It was also the first time that the construction of a Christian building had fundamentally altered the urban landscape, resulting in the removal of an extant Pagan structure and the re-definition of the relations between the buildings of the city. With the construction of the Holy Sepulchre, for the first

¹³For Peter Brown see, amongst many others, Brown (2006) introduction. For AHM Jones see Jones (1968) chapter 1. Equally Wickham has the Early Middle Ages starting in 400, though this is a mainly western perspective and less relevant to my work. See Wickham (2006) and Wickham (2009).

¹⁴For examples of this see Ostrogorsky (1993) chapter 1, Gallina (2008) chapter 1, Beck (1981) 44-46, Morrison (2007).

time the physical and symbolic maps of a city had been thoroughly redefined in a Christian sense, a process that would be repeated time and again in different scales throughout the region over the next three centuries.

Through the following centuries the process of Christianisation continued relatively unhindered by external events despite the upheavals and changes that occurred in the Empire as a whole, and by all accounts the region enjoyed a period of continued prosperity. This came to an end in the 7th century when the hammer blow of the Persian invasion was followed by the definitive loss of the region to the Muslim Arabs (with the exception of a brief re-conquest under John Tzimiskes). The bulk of the population remained Christian and there is no doubt that the community maintained its religious buildings in many occasions, but unquestionably the dynamic had fundamentally changed and the process that had begun three centuries earlier had for all intents and purpose terminated, and in many cases it had probably been fully completed. It is thus convenient, and symbolically effective to choose the year 634 as the endpoint of my work. This date is that of the fall of Jerusalem to the Muslim Caliphal army led by Omar ibn Hattab.

1.3 General Historical Outline of the Region

The Levantine region experienced a period of fundamental calm, especially if compared to the rest of the Empire, at least as concerned external attacks. It is easy to contrast the troubles of the western part of the Empire. However, one must remember that the East faced its fair share of troubles both from the outside with, amongst others Gothic, Avar, and Hunnic raids from the outside and internal troubles such as the Isaurians. For obvious geographical reasons these crises tended to be concentrated in the Balkans and in Asia Minor. The Levant appears to have been left relatively unscathed, though it did suffer significantly during the religious controversies that racked the Empire throughout the entirety of the period in question. The sole external enemy that it faced was the Sassanian Persian Empire, that was a

formidable one whose direct damage to the region was vast and one of whose consequences was to weaken both Empires to the point that it no doubt partially played a role in the rise of the Caliphate.

1.3.1 The Persian Wars

The Levant had been absorbed into the Roman Empire almost entirely by the 1st century BC through the conquest of the former Seleucid provinces undertaken by Pompey in 63 BC. From then onwards, the region, that was one of the richest in the Empire, remained a key part of the Roman Mediterranean system providing access to Asian trade goods via the caravan system that connected Rome to them via the Persian Kingdom. Persia was the one and only major power that could directly threaten the Roman world and it did so less effectively under the Iranic Parthian kings of the Arsacid dynasty (247 BC-224 AD) but much more so under the Persian Sassanians (224 AD- 651 AD). In particular, Sassanid Persia saw a revival of Persian imperialism and a consequent raise in the frequency and intensity of the conflict with the Rome. The Sassanians invaded Roman territory repeatedly starting in 230 under their first ruler Ardashir I, after which two centuries of endemic warfare followed with cyclical ups and downs in the fortunes of the empire.

Late Antiquity was little different and, after a period of relative quiet Shapur II (309-379) re-opened hostilities, and fought two wars with Rome (337-350 AD and 358-363 AD), with Armenia being the main bone of contention though they resulted in fairly limited changes to the situation. Shapur II's successors brokered a peace with Rome that was eventually signed in 384 AD and that would hold until 421 AD when Barham V briefly resumed hostilities, as they would again under Yezdegerd II in 440 AD, Khavadh I in 501 AD, 524-25 AD, and 530 AD. Between 532 AD and 627 AD Rome and Persia existed in a constant state of war under the Emperors Justinian, Justin II, Tiberius II, Phocas, Maurice and Heraclius and the Shahanshas Khusraw, Hormzid IV, Khusraw II. Not only did these wars ravage the Levant, Asia Minor and Egypt, they also resulted in the Persian occupation of the Levant and Egypt between

606 and 620 before Heraclius was able to re-take the territories and eventually defeat the Persians definitively. The almost 100 years of endemic conflict and in particular the last 20 under Khusraw left both the Persian and Roman Empires prostrate, and severely damaged many of the cities of the Levant that slowly and progressively rebuilt over the next generation, before the Arab-Islamic armies of the early Caliphs effectively swept away the weakened remnants of the Persian and Roman forces in the region taking control of the Levant and ending the Romano-Persian monopoly on urban life and monumentality that had endured since the turn of the Christian Era.¹⁵

1.4 Geography

Much as in the case of Chronology, a geographical distinction of an entity so interconnected as the later Roman Empire, is as much an exercise in convention and arbitrary division as it is one of reasoned and weighted decision. The Levant was highly integrated into the Empire as a whole and in particular into its eastern part. For practical and systematic purposes it is, however, necessary to define the geographic as well as the chronological extensions.

¹⁵A detailed analysis of the impact of the last round of Romano-Persian wars can be found in Foss (2003)

1.4.1 The boundaries of the region



Figure 1.1: The *Dioecesis Orientis* and its constituent provinces (Reproduced by kind concession of M. Mundell Mango, Map A. Wilkins)

This thesis will be concerned in the main with the Syro-Palestinian coast including the ancient provinces of Syria I and II, Phoenicia I and II, Palestina I, II, and III and Arabia. Though comprising the majority of the *Dioecesis Orientis*, with its capital in Antioch, I will not be considering that region as a whole, focusing rather on this smaller region for reasons both of expediency and of consistency.¹⁶ The area is rich in cities that formed an interconnected network that, though divided into subunits such as the Decapolis or the Tetrapolis, was highly integrated and with the rise of Christianity came to be a transit area for Pilgrims heading for the Holy Sites of Jerusalem. As previously mentioned, the distribution of the available evidence and this is perhaps one of the main reasons behind the definition of the extent of the region that I will cover in my thesis. The concentration of cities within the coastal region of the Levant is unique. To this one has to add the extensive amount of archaeological work that has been undertaken in them that provides us with a unique insight into their development. Further these cities shared a strong cultural connection, hailing all from the combined effects of Semitic, Greek, and Roman influence that makes them strongly comparable, even when taking into account the different histories and stories that they tell.

The sea in the west was as much a conduit for goods, people and ideas as it was a limiting factor. From the great harbours of cities like Caesarea, Tyre, Laodicea, and Gaza one could reach, and be reached by, anywhere within the Mediterranean and there is no doubt that much of the infrastructure of the region projected the Levant westwards into the sea and towards the rest of the Empire. Though the wilderness of the eastern desert that separated parts of the was to be feared as much as used, in many ways it resembled the sea, it provided routes of communication and commerce through which people goods and ideas also flowed, making and breaking the fortunes of the cities that controlled the caravan routes (such as Bostra, Petra and Gadara). The Sinai Peninsula was even less of an unpopulated wilderness, popu-

¹⁶Though the region as a whole does not have an accepted general name I will be referring to it throughout as Levant or Levantine coast. I am aware that *stricto sensu* both these terms refer to much wider areas and that the use that I make of them is improper but, lacking any viable alternative I feel compelled to do so.

lated as it was by monks, monasteries, and hermits, criss-crossed by traders and pilgrims it was a permeable barrier that nonetheless separated two very different worlds: the Nile valley and the Levant.

1.5 The importance of cities

Cities were unquestionably the foundation of the Roman administrative system.¹⁷ The model of city that was being exported was basically the Hellenistic model, with its institutions, and its buildings. The provincial elites bought into this ideal independently of whether they had a long history of civic activity, as the Greek cities of the coast of Asia Minor, or if it was a more recent addition, and their wealth ensured that this could be maintained. As such they survived the 3rd century and the reforms of Diocletian and Constantine. The main focus of the city's administration was the civic council that, as many other institutions of the period, was essentially timocratic and was thus limited to the wealthy landowning class of the city. The main responsibility of the city was revenue collection for both central and local government, the maintenance of the city and its monuments, and the funding of the cultural and sporting events considered necessary at the time. This system provided the Roman State with a twofold advantage: on the one hand it provided an outlet for the political ambitions of the local elites (one must remember that until the *Constitutio Antoniniana* of 212, civic service was alongside military service the main route to citizenship) and a means to channel civic pride; on the other hand it provided a stable system for the collection of taxes based on a de-centralised system rather than requiring the institution of a cumbersome centralised system. This context was further strengthened by the multiple types of cities that were envisaged by the Roman constitutional system. Outside Italy, in the Provinces, there was a complex hierarchy of civic rights that regulated the amount and type of tax that had to be paid. By the 4th century, however, the administrative reforms that started

¹⁷The importance of the Roman city has been stated many times. Amongst others see: Cracco Ruggini (2001), Liebeschuetz (2001)1-5, Dagron (2001).

with the edict of Caracalla, these distinctions had been rendered moot save for the prestige that they conferred to individual cities.

In this context it is clear how the Roman state developed along a two tier system: an upper tier of imperial administration: after Diocletian's reforms, there were Prefectures, Diocese and Provinces with all their associated structures; and a network of cities with a history of autonomy and self-government that prized and took great pride in them.¹⁸

1.6 Instruments and methodologies

1.6.1 The texts

The textual record is a key component of the study of Late Antiquity. As a highly literate and literary society, the Later Roman world produced a swathe of texts, many of which are unfortunately lost to us, both Christian and not. Thus in the course of my work I will rely heavily on textual evidence to complete the picture that is drawn by the archaeology.

Jerusalem is perhaps the city with the most literary material associated with it and thus merits treatment on its own: not only do Jerome, Origen, and Eusebius talk about it, but as Late Antiquity wears on there is an increasing availability of pilgrimage accounts. These latter authors vary greatly, from the anonymous pilgrims from Bordeaux and Piacenza, to Hegeria, and to the later post conquest ones such as Willibald of Eichstatt or the two anonymous Armenian visitors that discuss the construction of the Dome of the Rock in the 9th century. Lastly the city is the focus of historians from Josephus to Cassius Dio as well as later chroniclers such as the author of the *Chronicon Paschale*, and John Malalas.

¹⁸This is particularly true of the East where many of the cities had been heavily Hellenised prior to the Roman conquest of the region. If the Romanisation of places such as Spain required the creation of a whole new set of institutions and the buildings to support it and often lacked the underlying strength to ensure its longevity, the ancient traditions of civic government of the Levant made it much more receptive of these forms and much more resilient to crisis.

Jerome and Origen are the earliest Christian authors to discuss the city, though in the context of the aftermath of the second Jewish revolt and the destruction of the Temple as prophesied by Jesus Christ.¹⁹ They are however only limitedly available, with Origen in particular surviving exclusively in fragmentary form and Jerome relying heavily on Origen himself for the part that concerns Jerusalem. Eusebius is probably our most precious and detailed source for the Christianisation of Jerusalem, and he describes the process in great detail in his *Vita Constantini* as well as the *Historia Ecclesiastica*.²⁰

Of the pilgrims that visited the city the most valuable are the earliest: those of Bordeaux and Piacenza. Both describe Jerusalem before the exact locations of the holy sites had been crystallised, giving us an indication of a city whose religious topography was developing and evolving, as well as providing a direct eyewitness testimony to the monuments that had been built under Constantine and their impact on the landscape. Of the later pilgrims, the ones that I have used more extensively are Willibald of Eichstatt and Arculf, both of whom toured the Levant after the Arab conquest (Willibald in the mid 8th c. AD and Arculf in the 7th). Not only do these two pilgrims provide us with a very clear picture of the city after the process that began with Constantine had been completed, they also give us a clear indication of what parts of the city preserved symbolic importance and, perhaps more importantly, what was believed to have happened.²¹

After Jerusalem the city for which we have the most complete textual record is Gaza. Here rather than relying on a variety of documents, we have two major sources: Mark the Deacon and Choricius the Rhetor. The former is the author of an extensive biography of the first significant bishop of the city: Porphyry. While the text is by no means contemporary with the events it describes, dating probably to a generation or so later, and is probably heavily influenced in some of its parts by

¹⁹See below 3.2.1 The Temple Mount for a full discussion of the issue.

²⁰I do not consider Eusebius' work a fully accurate report of the events: however I do believe that it is an accurate report of how it was felt things should have gone and thus an invaluable tool in the re-construction of the process and the motives behind it.

²¹Again they are particularly relevant when discussing the Temple Mount. See 3.2.1

later events, it does provide us with a vivid picture of the city and of the process of its Christianisation.²² The later works of Choricus the Rhetor provide us with a much more fragmentary picture, as we are forced to rely on incidental references within works that have a different function. Yet these references are extensive and consistent enough both to confirm the situation presented by Mark, and to give a clear indication of developments in the time that had passed since he wrote.

Caesarea and Heliopolis are the last two cities to present relatively extensive textual records. In this case the references are to be found mostly in the work of Chroniclers, with the *Chronicon Paschale*, and the Ecclesiastical Histories of John of Ephesos and Socrates Scholasticus playing a major role in Heliopolis, while Eusebius' *Historia Ecclesiastica*, and a large amount of early rabbinical legal material are useful for Caesarea. All these sources provide us with snippets of information, and in Heliopolis in particular, the continued survival of Hellenic cults meant that chroniclers both secular and ecclesiastical refer to the city much more often than one would expect given the importance of the city.²³ Equally the reiterated Jewish and Samaritan revolts that took place in Caesarea ensured that the city, its communities and the buildings that were damaged, got attention from the outside, though again only in a disconnected manner, making it hard to build a continuous narrative for the city.

1.6.2 The archaeological record

The Levant is one of the Mediterranean's richest areas from an archaeological point of view, however it also has the highest level of urban continuity and, despite the extensive work that has been undertaken there, this poses a series of problems as concerns the archaeological data available. First of all, as many of the cities of the

²²There is much dispute over the authorship of the text and over whether it is in fact a description of the life of the bishop at all. Much of the criticism has revolved around the inaccuracy of the author in his description of the topography of Constantinople and of the members of the court; however the relative consistency of the narration with the topography of Gaza as described by Choricus leads me to think that at least that part is reliable. For more on the controversy and on the text of the *Vita*, see Trombley (1993b) appendix 1.

²³It has to be noted that despite the relatively high frequency of references to the city in the chronicles, the passages that do mention the city are often brief even when describing relatively important events, such as the founding of the city's Cathedral church (covered in but a few lines).

region are still inhabited, excavation can only occur when some form of demolition or public works occur. Even cities such as Pella or Apamea are only very partially excavated and, given their size and complexity will require many years before they will be understood in full.

The final issue, and perhaps the most problematic one, is that of the quality of the archaeology. As the Levant has been a source of interest for scholars, mainly biblical, since at least the mid 19th century some of the most important sites, such as Jerusalem, Heliopolis or Gerasa, have long histories of excavation. While this does provide a wider picture, and on occasion as in Heliopolis or Scythopolis the quality of the work is very good, often Late Antiquity is the part that was of least interest. This problem has mainly struck the domestic and residential parts of cities, as well as large swathes of the Islamic material, rather than the monumental remains, it has still meant that the picture can at times be confused.

The only exception to the generally positive picture of the archaeology in the region is Gaza. Here, due to intensive occupation and the continued volatile situation close to no archaeology has been undertaken and what has concentrated on the *suburbium* of the city depriving us of much needed information. Despite all of these problems, the picture is still, in the main, positive especially where monumental and Christian archaeology are concerned. Where extensive excavation has been possible, and especially in the earlier parts of the exploration of Levantine archaeology, it generally focused precisely on the Christian and Hellenic monuments of these cities, that is those parts that are of most interest to this thesis..

1.7 The religions

1.7.1 Christianity

As is well known, Christianity originated in the Levant. From a relatively small group it slowly but surely spread throughout the Mediterranean in the first two centuries of the Common Era. By the 4th century AD the new religion had spread

widely throughout the Levant and the Empire as a whole. In the Levant the spread was patchy and by no means was Christianity the sole religion there. Much of the élite was still Hellenic and many cities such as Gaza or Heliopolis were solidly tied to the old beliefs. Until the late 4th and early 5th century the Imperial administration was staffed by a mixture of Hellenes and Christians, with an increasing propensity for the latter. This did not stop Hellenes reaching prominent positions well into the 4th century. As the Theodosian dynasty settled in, however, there was an increasing benefit from being a Christian until, in 380 AD, the Edict of Thessalonica fully enshrined Christianity as an integral part of the state.²⁴ Thus in one fell swoop the power of the Imperial House was used to eradicate both non-Christian and non-Orthodox Christians and was a key moment in the process that would eventually lead to the complete Christianisation of eastern Roman society in the 5th century AD.

1.7.2 Hellenic cults

As previously said it is near impossible to find an all-encapsulating term for the followers of the multitude of different cults that was present in the pre-Christian Levant. They ranged from civic deities of the Graeco-Roman pantheon to local divinities such as Yahweh or Baal to syncretic cults such as the Zeus Baal of Heliopolis Baalbek, or even religious figures from further afield such as Mithras or Isis.

The only all-purpose and commonly used term to refer to pre-Christian cults is Pagan. The sole exception to this is the Jewish faith. Its close ties to Christianity meant that it occupies a special place in current literature, as much as in the ancient one. The long-term consequences of the Bar Kochkba Revolt had effectively reduced Judaism to a rump in the region and deprived it of much of its monumental apparatus. This is not to say that Judaism had disappeared from the scene, far from it: in fact it played a key role in forming the symbolic landscape of the most important Christian city of the region, but it is clear how it cannot be included in the remit of

²⁴Jones (1968) 208-216.

polytheism, and that it should be treated as a separate entity. For the followers of the polytheistic faiths, I prefer the use of the term Hellenes that is also the one best connected with Late Antiquity as it is the one used in most of the contemporary literature to refer to the followers of the old beliefs. It is true that this term too is not devoid of controversy as it is often used in Christian literature in a disparaging manner, it is inherently less negative and also mirrors more effectively the urban and refined nature of non Christian practises in the region.

Despite the soaring rhetoric of authors such as Eusebius, there is clear evidence that Christianity did not triumph during Constantine's reign and there is no doubt in anybody's mind that the practice of traditional Graeco-Roman polytheism and its eastern counterparts continued for much time after.²⁵ The repeated reference to mass conversions in the lives of saints (the most noteworthy of which are those in the life of the 6th-century bishop John of Ephesus who appears to have converted the entire rural population of his Bishopric more than once if one were to take his figures at face value²⁶) and the events that took place in cities such as Gaza and Heliopolis/Baalbek point to a clear persistence of the religion not only in its rural (pagan) forms but also in urban communities and amongst the urban élite.²⁷

Well past the reign of Julian (known as the philosopher by Hellenes and the Apostate by the Christians both definitions that display seriously biased positions) there is an, albeit decreasing record of officials in high positions that are practising pagans or Hellenophiles.²⁸ The picture changed somewhat after the reigns of Theodosius and his children, when anti-Hellenic legislation was enforced much more sternly, and being Christian became a significant advantage in political and social ascent. By the middle of the sixth century it can be said that Hellenes had become

²⁵Eusebius in *Historia Ecclesiastica* X, 9 extolls the many benefits of the victory of Constantine and of the divine blessings that followed. For the role of Eusebius in promoting the connection between Imperial rule and Christianity see Gallina (2008) 15-20; continued survival of traditional religion, with particular focus on sacrificial rituals, see Harl (1990) and Fowden (1982).

²⁶John of Ephesus *Historia Ecclasiastica* III, 37-39, in Smith (1860).

²⁷For the rural nature of the pagan élite see Fowden (1982) 38-45.

²⁸The events connected to the Christianisation of Gaza and Heliopolis will illustrate this in very practical detail. See below Heliopolis and Gaza.

a declining minority in the cities and almost insignificant amongst the élites. The picture was different in the countryside, especially in the more inaccessible areas - inland Anatolia being a perfect example for this - where the old religion survived not as the sophisticated cult of the cities but rather as the kind of paganism that is easily billed as superstition by later Christian authors.

1.7.3 Judaism

The third major religious group in the region was Judaism.²⁹ Though followed by a sizeable minority of the local population, both in the area of the former Hasmonean and Herodian Kingdom and beyond it due to the size and importance of the Diaspora, it will not be a significant player in the course of my thesis. In part this is a product of the process of selection of the sites under analysis. In the main I will explore cities where the Jewish presence is relatively small, or our understanding of it is limited. The latter is often tied to the distribution of excavation in them: for instance we know of synagogues in Caesarea and Scythopolis, but so far none have been conclusively recovered.³⁰ A further issue is that the largest and most important Jewish city of the region, Jerusalem, had ceased to be in its Judaic form and was reborn as a Roman city, *Aelia Capitolina* around 135 AD; this process, which will be discussed in much greater detail further on in this thesis, involved the removal of both the population and the city's buildings and their replacement, destroying both the Temple and the synagogues and academies of the city.³¹

Following the end of the Herodian dynasty, Herod's Kingdom, that had already been portioned between his children, was absorbed into the Roman polity, partly as *Provincia Iudaea* and partly by the expansion of the Province of Syria. The transition

²⁹Due to the fact that it will not figure strongly as a monumental actor within my thesis, Judaism will receive a more lengthy treatment here in order to both provide both an accurate backdrop to the region and a suggestion as to why it played such a limited role.

³⁰The case of Caesarea is particularly representative as we only know of one potential synagogue, probably because the Israeli mission has so far been unable to excavate a large section of the city due to it being buried under land that is in the ownership of the Greek Patriarchate of Jerusalem that has so far denied access to it.

³¹For more on Jerusalem see below 3.2 Jerusalem, p 87 for more.

into Roman rule was not painless and tension increased around the middle of the 1st century AD. As a result of this, between 66 and 70 AD the whole province was engulfed in rebellion whose suppression under the leadership of Vespasian first, and his son Titus later, resulted in the sacking of Jerusalem, including the Temple, which was razed to the ground.³² This revolt was followed by two more in the course of the following sixty years: one, mainly involving the diaspora communities of Egypt and North Africa, in 115-117 AD, and the final one in 132-135 AD in Judea again.³³ The suppression of this last revolt brought about the expulsions of Jews from the city of Jerusalem.³⁴

³²The events of the First Jewish Revolt are well known and will not be recounted in detail here for obvious reasons. For a fuller account see Eliav (2005 chapter 3).

³³Though the first revolt involved the destruction of the Temple, something that would have extremely important long term consequences, I would argue that it is the revolt of 135 AD that is perhaps the most significant, as it resulted in the definitive suppression of both the the aspiration to resurrect a Jewish state and the re-construction of the Temple, arguably putting in full motion the process of development of Rabbinical Judaism.

³⁴The destruction of the city and its refounding as *Aelia Capitolina* is discussed at length below in 3.2.1 The Temple Mount, p. 100.

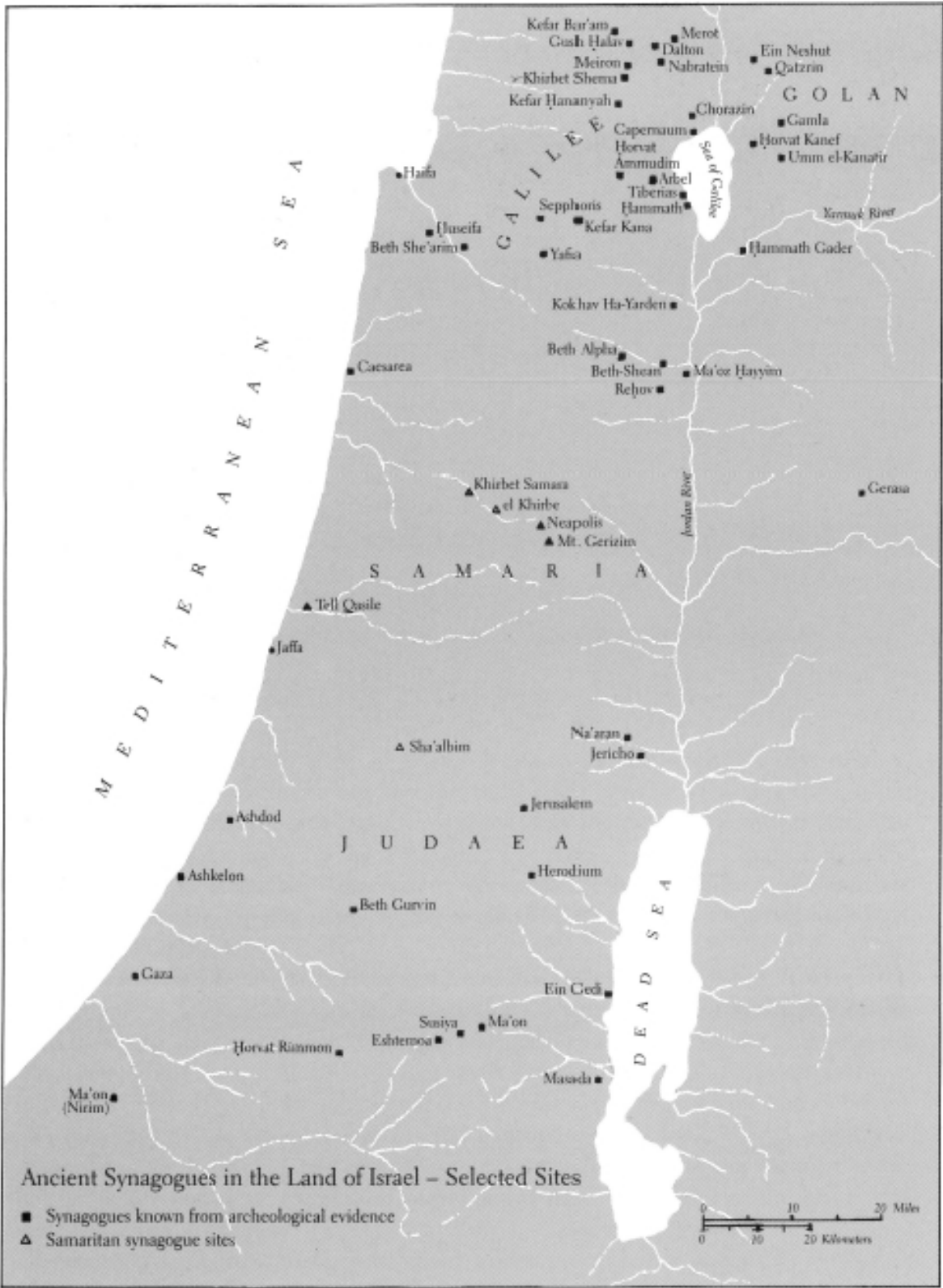


Figure 1.2: Synagogues in the Holy Land (Fine (1996))

The destruction of the Temple not only deprived Jews of their main ritual focus, but also fundamentally altered the role of monumental architecture within Judaism. While the reign of Herod the Great had brought about a boom in the monumental architecture of Jerusalem, the actions of Hadrian effectively reversed the process. In essence the Diasporic model became predominant both from a ritual point and from an architectural point of view. Though often rich and richly decorated, the synagogues of the Holy Land would continue to be more inward-looking buildings rather than outward-looking ones. Even in the case of Sardis, beyond the Holy Land in Asia Minor and clearly the product of a rich and prosperous community, the synagogue is notable for its adherence to the extant model for public meeting buildings and for how much of the effort was expended on the interior decoration of the building. Similar things can be seen in many of the synagogues excavated throughout the Levant; despite there being no lack of resources provided for them, there seems to have been little interest in the construction of major monumental structures.

The roots of the ambivalent and sometimes conflictual relationship displayed by the Jewish population of Judea and the non Jewish one, can be found in the conflictual relationship that had existed between Judaism and Hellenism before Romanisation first and Christianisation later. Though the region had been included within the bounds of the Hellenistic world since the days of Alexander the Great, this was not a peaceful inclusion. Despite this, throughout antiquity there is an almost inevitable process of Hellenisation, in particular in the Diaspora communities of Egypt, where it reached the point of an almost complete loss of many Jewish traits, including the command of the Hebrew language.³⁵ Despite ongoing Hellenisation, Jews and Judaism retained a significant core of unique beliefs, in particular religious ones, which sternly resisted the process of syncretism that was so widespread.³⁶ It is precisely the retention of this core and its conflict with the Hellenistic world that would

³⁵The concern for this was such that, according to tradition, it led to the redaction of the first official translation of the Hebrew Holy Book: the Septuagint.

³⁶Levine (1998) 30-31.

cause so many problems, when inflamed by contingent pressures leading to risings. The foremost of these was the revolt of the Maccabees, that occurred in response to the activities of Antiochus IV, that resulted in the re-establishment of a Jewish polity and the establishment of the Hasmonean dynasty. Though thoroughly Hellenised, these rulers ably trod a fine line between continued integration and traditionalism. The result was a number of rulers that, while thoroughly Hellenised and adopting the traits of a Hellenistic monarch (even adopting Greek names), were studious in their respect of Jewish religious traditions.³⁷ The result was a series of monarchs that in essence behaved as Greeks, with the Greeks and as Jews with the Jews.

After the absorption of the Herodian Kingdom into the Roman polity, this balance was broken and, in combination with social unrest, it rapidly triggered two major revolts within the space of 70 years, in 66 AD and in 135 AD. Though the bloody suppression of these rebellions ended any hope of Jewish statehood, this did not end localised trouble. Thus well into the 6th century AD we see revolts in cities with large Jewish populations like Caesarea, often as the result of a very similar combination of religious, moral and social grievances, and often including both Jews and Samaritans.³⁸

From the Jewish Revolt to Late Antiquity

Though native to the Levant, Judaism during Late Antiquity was far from the religion that would have been known by Christ. The upheavals caused by the first and third Jewish revolts (70 AD and 135 AD) not only ended Jewish statehood for almost two millennia, but also radically changed the nature of cult and of the building that hosted it. The actions of Titus first and Hadrian later, effectively destroyed both the

³⁷In fact Herod, perhaps the most Hellenised of these rulers, who even founded a Greek city with a temple to his divine nature in Caesarea Maritima, was responsible for a major expansion of the Temple.

³⁸There is extensive debate in the Halakic texts over the boundaries of Jewish space in cities such as Caesarea as well as the behaviours that are to be considered proper both within and without these spaces. This may well have been the result of attempts to mediate the different parts of the city and the conflicts arising from the different belief systems, but it most likely also produced friction. It is thus possible to see the later Jewish and Samaritan riots as following very much the same pattern as the great revolts that precede them.

building at the heart of the Jewish faith (the Temple) and, perhaps more importantly, the ruling class, both religious and temporal, that had been at its core.³⁹ The impact of this change would have been felt most in the core of the region, with Judea, the region around Jerusalem, being probably the most affected, followed by Galilee and then, like ripples in a pond that weaken in strength while they expand, through the diaspora.

Despite the explicitly anti-Jewish measures take by Hadrian in Jerusalem and Judea, this did not result in a structural change for the status of Jews throughout the Empire. Once the initial backlash from the Bar Kochba and Kitos Revolts subsided Jews seem to have reverted, with the exception of Jerusalem, to their prior status as one of the many different cultures of the Empire, and as a *religio lecita*.

The religious crisis that was triggered by the destruction was severe and it developed over the following century reaching a form that strongly resembles modern, rabbinical, Judaism.⁴⁰ The transformation seems to have crystallised in the first half of the 4th century. It was at this moment that both the Synagogue and the Rabbi appear in significant numbers and begin functioning as central functional parts of the new Judaism now centred around prayer and the teaching and interpretation of the word of God.⁴¹

The architectural focus of Judaism would appear to have moved from the monumental expression of the Second Temple to a more communal and inward looking form in the synagogue. Where the Temple had sought to be a physical embodiment of the majesty of God, the synagogue undertook and still undertakes a radically dif-

³⁹While it is possible that some form of Temple Judaism may have survived the First Jewish Revolt (much as it did after the destruction of the First Temple) the effect of the Bar Kochba Revolt was to effectively bring about the complete destruction of the structures that had been in place since the Maccabees. In essence what the suppression of the second Jewish revolt did was to end the hope of rebuilding the Jewish state and the Temple, forcing a coming to terms with this and the loss of centrality of the Holy Land that this entailed. See Levine (2005) 174-175.

⁴⁰Bali et al. (2010) discusses precisely the tensions that emerge around this issue, in particular pages 74-77 illustrate the tension between the various sections of the community and how Rabbinical Judaism emerged through the solutions found when dealing with issues that used to be solved at the Temple.

⁴¹The role of Rabbis or Sages was only set in stone at the turn of the 3rd century AD under the leadership of Rabbi Judah the Prince, when they truly rose to the status of leaders of the community. Fine (1996) 28-29, Levine (1998) 96-100.

ferent function.⁴² Developing beyond the borders of Jerusalem, both in Judea and in the diaspora, as a meeting place and a place for prayer, in the Second Temple period the use of the synagogue was complementary to the Temple, and seem in the sources to be a place for communal prayer and, more importantly, a place for communal reading of Scripture and teaching.⁴³ The centuries after 70 AD saw the increased appropriation of Temple attributes by synagogues: in particular the period of the Tannaitic Sages when a number of rituals once reserved to the Temple, in particular *shofar* blowing, priestly blessings, and prayers in line with the Temple calendar were introduced.⁴⁴ Thus by the end of the 2nd century AD the synagogue had become a hybrid space being at the same time as the Temple yet differentiated.

The synagogue

As the main place of prayer in the post-70 AD Jewish world, synagogues are also the main source for our understanding of Jewish ritual and monumental expression. It is here that, even more than in the case of churches, the community invested time and resources in the name of its God. The main source for synagogues is certainly the Holy Land where, though the Jewish population may well have been smaller than in the diaspora, we have documented the remains of over one hundred synagogues throughout the modern state of Israel, pointing to a thriving community throughout Late Antiquity and even beyond. The large number of buildings uncovered does allow us to make some significant considerations, but one *caveat* must be made before proceeding, unfortunately, due to a number of different reasons almost the entirety of the synagogues that have been recovered so far are from rural locations, mainly from what would have been villages or small towns. Of the 130 or so synagogues known, only a handful are actually from cities, and those that are, are

⁴²This is not to say that synagogues could not be magnificent, but, even the case of the most magnificent buildings attention is focused on the magnificence of the interior, while the exterior is dismissed simply by describing it as "(...)a kind of a large basilica, a portico within a portico(..)(Toseftah Sukkah 4:6 in Fine (1996)). See Fine (1996) 25.

⁴³Fine (1996) 22-25 gives a detailed analysis of the process and of the available sources.

⁴⁴It would appear that Jonathan ben Zakkai was instrumental in this. Fine (1996) 26-27.

often damaged beyond recognition.

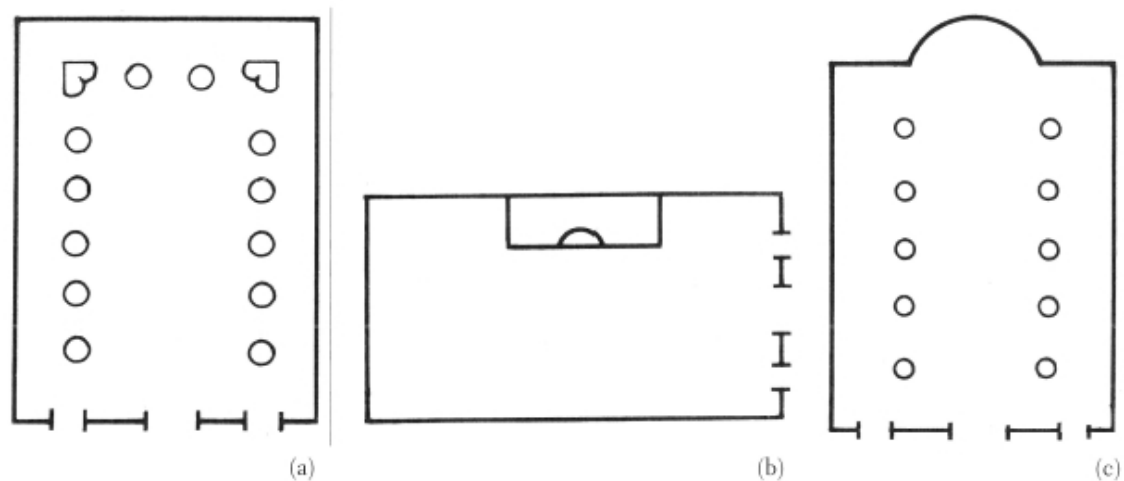


Figure 1.3: The three main synagogue types: (a) Galilean, (b) Broadhouse, (c) Byzantine (Fine (1996))

The evolution of the synagogue Late antique synagogues can essentially be divided into two categories: early or Galilean, and late or Byzantine.⁴⁵ The distinction is both chronological and typological and seems to trace the development of Judaism in the region and the consequent new requirements. Unfortunately, as mentioned previously, we only have a handful of surviving urban synagogues and the only one to be truly well preserved is this one at Dura-Europos, the rest being significantly damaged, either as a result of later structures being built above them, or due to the thoroughness of later demolitions.⁴⁶

Early or Galilean synagogues In their earliest form, the Galilean one that dates to the third century, synagogues consisted of a large rectangular room, oriented towards Jerusalem with the focus of worship on the long wall.⁴⁷ Though no permanent structure for the Torah scrolls or *bema* has been uncovered in any of the Galilean

⁴⁵This distinction is built on the types found in the Holy Land, but can effectively be expanded to many of the diaspora buildings as well.

⁴⁶Foerster (1987) 141-413, Tsafir (1987) 148-149.

⁴⁷In this late antique synagogues follow a pattern that was already visible in Second Temple synagogues, as well as Samaritan ones.

synagogues it is likely that this structure would have existed, probably built in wood or some other perishable material.⁴⁸ The building was entered by the short side, normally the south one, via a large portico that served as anti-chamber for the building. Once inside the space was generally divided into three aisles and the *bema*, when it was present was almost invariably on the wall pointing to Jerusalem. Extremely simple and in line with the building practices of the time, these structures do not appear to reproduce any of the existing models for cult buildings. Rather the form seems to have come from the need to respond to the new demands arising from the development of Rabbinical Judaism, and does not have much in common either with the known synagogues from the Second Temple period, or with any other contemporary religious structures.⁴⁹

Late or Byzantine synagogues The third phase of late antique synagogue development is that of the late or Byzantine ones.⁵⁰ This new type presents a number of differences compared to the earlier one. The basilical form becomes the preferred one and masonry Torah shrines and *bemata* are now regular features. The Ark is often located in an apse, something that may well be the result of Christian influence as may well have been the adoption of chancel screens, though this latter feature is not universal, and may just be limited to areas of high Judaeo-Christian interaction.⁵¹ The orientation toward Jerusalem is much more clearly marked and much is done to further emphasise the importance of scripture.

⁴⁸Meyers (1996) 13-14, Foerster (1987) 142-143.

⁴⁹In fact in the only case where we have well preserved contemporaneous Jewish and Christian buildings, in Dura-Europos the two buildings though sharing superficial similarities are radically different. Furthermore the similarities are more due to the similarities in the original buildings than with the new structures that were built. See below Dura Europos for more.

⁵⁰The denomination of Byzantine synagogues derives from the well known convention in the region of defining the beginning of the Byzantine period in 324 AD when emperor Constantine defeated Licinius. While I do not use this chronology in my work, I will for sake of ease and clarity still refer to these synagogues as Byzantine.

⁵¹Meyers (1996) 17.



Figure 1.4: Mosaic from the Hammat Tiberias synagogue, representing the Zodiac. (Fine (1996))

The main feature of the Byzantine synagogue is the richness of the decoration, in particular of the floor mosaics, which vary significantly depending on the area, with some floors having exclusively aniconic motifs, while others, generally found in proximity of areas known for their significant Hellenic presence are rich in images of animals and human, often drawn from scriptural narrative, though in at least one

occasion the zodiac and its personification are represented.⁵²

Christian influences Given the concurrent development of Christianity and Judaism, and given the equally concurrent development, at least from the late third century AD onwards, of their places of worship, a few words should be spent on the influence that the development of Christian architecture had on synagogues.

Though springing from the same region, even the same roots, in first century Judaism, and developing concurrently throughout the first two centuries AD, the initial trajectory of the cultic buildings of the two religions are quite far apart. Part of the reason for this can be found in the fact that Judaism, as an established religion faced fewer obstacles in establishing a built presence for itself. Despite the presence of synagogues both in Judea and in the Diaspora, the re-definition of Judaism that took place in *Palaestina* required new structures and new spaces to be developed, thus the rabbinical synagogue that emerged in the late second century AD had little in common with its second Temple antecedents, being rather a completely new expression.⁵³ Equally the developments throughout the intermediate phase seem to result from a mixture of the consolidation of the practices of Judaism and Christian influence. In this case it would seem that, rather than appropriating the model of the Roman basilica directly, it was co-opted through the mediation of Christianity. In this the emphasis that Byzantine synagogues place upon apses and, where they are present, chancel screens suggests that over time as the number of churches grew so did the influence of church architecture.⁵⁴ The area where Christian influence is most likely and visible is the mosaic floorings of the Byzantine synagogues. While the mosaics that have been uncovered in Palestinian synagogues, certainly share much in their motifs and themes with those found in contemporary churches, it is hard to say if this is a case of direct influence or of convergent evolution. While it

⁵²Meyers (1996).

⁵³The development of the early rabbinical synagogue has already been discussed and I will not go into significant detail, see above page 29 for more.

⁵⁴The possibility of co-evolution remains, especially since the synagogue was established as an independent form long before the church was, and that basilicas were an established mode, though this seems discounted by most authors. See Levine (1998) 143-146, and Tsafirir 1987) 149-151.

is true that, as time went by the number of churches built by far exceeded that of synagogues, it is also true that as they required similar types of material and similar standards of work, both Jews and Christians would have likely drawn on the same craftsmen, though given the larger mass of Christian buildings it is likely that they would have played a more significant role in forming these products. In the case of chancel screens, one is almost certainly facing a case of Christian influence on synagogue decoration. It also appears that as passed the influence of Christianity on synagogue decoration can possibly be seen from its negative effects. As of the 6th century AD an increasing number of buildings, especially in Galilee and the Golan, see the appearance of a majority of aniconic motifs, very possibly as a reaction to the heavily iconic art of the Christians.⁵⁵

Christianity and Judaism

There can be no doubt that the relation between Christianity and Judaism during Late Antiquity was fraught and difficult. Despite their common origin, or perhaps because of it, there is ample evidence of animosity and even open hostility towards Judaism right from the beginning of Christianity's time as principal religion of the empire. This hostility can be seen mainly in the words of the Fathers of the Church, that repeatedly talk in disparaging terms of both the religion and the buildings that hosted it. In this it is clear how the actions of the early Christians towards the Jews mirror very much those carried out towards the Hellenes, attacking both the buildings and the cults that they followed.⁵⁶ This is not to say that Jews were assimilated completely to Hellenes as a whole, as, despite all the hostility expressed towards them, they retained a special status in the Roman tradition of the *religio lecita*, where the religion remained legal and was not to be persecuted into oblivion.⁵⁷ Beyond

⁵⁵Since Galilee and the Golan are the regions where the Jewish and Christian communities were closest it is plausible that their presence may have hardened the aniconic stance present in Judaism.

⁵⁶I will not go into detail on the issue of Hellenic-Christian relations here as it is the main issue under analysis in this thesis as a whole.

⁵⁷Theodosius first and Justinian later legislated against Jews, restricting the construction of synagogues, while at the same time protecting them. *Codex Theodosianus* XVI.8.25-27, and Justinian *Novella* 131.

the legal framework, which in Late Antiquity as much as today is not necessarily proof of practice if anything the contrary, there is ample evidence in the texts of destruction of synagogues under the auspices or even the direct encouragement of local bishops.

In his letter to Theodosius I on the burning of the synagogue in Callinicum, Ambrose of Milan equates the reconstruction of a synagogue by a Bishop to apostasy.⁵⁸ He is very explicit in his discussion of the reconstruction, likening the emperor asking a bishop to pay for the rebuilding of a synagogue to a descent into heresy, and apostasy.⁵⁹ Clearly Ambrosius includes Judaism in amongst the number of the heathen religions. Ambrose's words are in direct contrast with imperial legislation and tradition, the synagogue after all was destroyed in a riot instigated by the bishop, yet he seeks to impede non-Christian worship as much as possible.⁶⁰ In the same text the bishop also refers to his involvement in the destruction of a synagogue in Milan, suggesting that this was the will of God. In the case of Ambrose the crux of the issue seems to be the polemic around the denial of Jesus as the Messiah by the Jews, who therefore are guilty of denying Christ:

*(...)I declare that I set fire to the synagogue, or at least gave the orders, so that there would be no building in which Christ is denied. If the objection is raised that I did not burn the synagogue here, I answer that its burning was begun by God's judgement, and my work was at an end.*⁶¹

The most prolific anti-Jewish polemicist is by far John Chrysostom.⁶² Unlike Ambrose who, in the cases of Milan and Callinicum, is concerned with the beliefs of

⁵⁸Ambrose of Milan *Epistula* 74 9-11.

⁵⁹Ambrose, *Epistula* 74, 7, 9.

⁶⁰Liebeschuetz and Hill (2010) 111-112.

⁶¹Ambrose *Epistula* 74, 9.

⁶²Chrysostom is not the only anti Jewish polemist, though he can be seen as the most thorough. A complete, and despite the date still very valuable, exploration of the work of John Chrysostom can be found in Simon (1936), Meeks and Wilken (1978) give a comprehensive picture for Antioch, while Simon (1986) gives a very good overview of the situation across the Empire.

the Jews and their places of worship John is concerned with the attractiveness of Judaism to Christians, suggesting that a significant amount of transit between the two.⁶³ In his criticism he focuses on the nature of the building rather than the cult that took place in it. In his *Aversus Iudaeos* in two different passages he chastises the Jews for using the Torah as the source of holiness for synagogues building on a perceived inconsistency between the book's holiness and the imparted holiness they delivered upon the building if that building is frequented by mis-believers:⁶⁴

5(...)Why do you reverence this place when you should disdain it, despise it and avoid it? "The Law and the books of the prophets can be found there" you say. What of it? You say, "Is it not the case that the books make the place holy?" Certainly not! This is the reason I especially hate the synagogue and avoid it, that they have the prophets but do not believe in them, that they read these books but do not accept their testimonies(...)

6(...) While books do have a holiness of their own, they do not impart it to a place if those who frequent it are defiled . You should think of the synagogue in the same way. Even if there is not an idol there, demons inhabit the place.(...) ⁶⁵

Chrysostom's language in trying to dismiss the site as unholy conflates the synagogue, which is after all a place of worship of the Abrahamic God shared by the Christians, with a Pagan shrine. To do so he must overcome the obstacle of the sacredness of the texts and that of the absence of idols. First he shifts the attention from the texts to the believers, whom he describes essentially as apostates in the same way that Ambrose did in his letter to Theodosius: no matter how holy the Book, if those who read it refuse to acknowledge the light of Christ the place where they do so but cannot be impure, essentially negating the word of God.⁶⁶ The issue

⁶³Wharton (2000) 204-206, argues convincingly that at least in late antique Antioch this transition must have been common, and thus a cause for anxiety amongst senior clerics of the city.

⁶⁴It is perhaps ironic that Chrysostom resorts to the argument of ritual purity and defiling by mis-believers against the Jews from which it has been inherited, while at the same time affirming implicitly the continued sanctity of the Torah.

⁶⁵John Chrysostom *Adversos Iudaeos* 1, 5-6.

⁶⁶Given John Chrysostom's development of the decide argument elsewhere in the same text, one cannot but see this as further proof in his eyes that the Jews are unworthy of the Word of God.

of the absence of idols is dealt by simply de-classing the synagogue from place of worship to place of residence for demons, with an emphasis again on the unholy nature of the building.

However the key in Chrysostom's concerns can be found in a number of passages where he inveighs against Christians for frequenting synagogues for a variety of reasons, ranging from an enjoyment of the ritual and the music, to incubation for the cure of diseases, to overlapping beliefs. This issue seems of particular concern to John, who compares synagogues to brothels and the reasons for visiting to the enticement of prostitutes.⁶⁷ Equally, though in a slightly different situation, and considerably later in time, Sozomen graphically describes the failed, and in his mind futile attempts at rebuilding the Temple under Julian as the Jews stubbornly refuse to understand and accept the repeated divine signs until at last the apparition of the Holy Cross on the garments of the workers convinced them of the futility of their endeavours.⁶⁸

Though not strictly addressing the presence of a synagogue, Sozomen expresses the understanding that the reconstruction of the Temple is not only futile but that it is even harmful, again reinforcing the anti-Jewish polemic around the refusal of Christ. The violence of the language, that is comparable to the most gruesome moments of the Old Testament in its most truculent passages, is clearly being used to convey the strength with which God (and perhaps therefore by extension all Christians) opposed the reconstruction. It is therefore not a stretch to see how, this kind of hostility could be transferred very easily to synagogues or at least their repair or reconstruction, given the fact that in Rabbinical Judaism the presence of the Torah rolls and of some temple rituals imparts a portion of the Temple's sanctity upon the

⁶⁷(...) *But the synagogue is not only a house of prostitution and a theatre, it is also a hideout for thieves and a den of wild animals.* John Chrysostom *Adversus Judaeos* 1.3. The reference to the den of wild animals may well be a further attempt at defining the synagogue as symbolically not part of the *urbs*, but rather outside and therefore a place of great risk of demonic presence following the well known trope that defines the wild outdoors as a place of high risk to one's soul due to the presence of demons much like those that attempted to tempt Christ in the desert (Matthew 4. 1-11, Mark 1. 12-13 and Luke 4.1-13.).

⁶⁸Sozomen *Historia Ecclesiastica* 5.22.

synagogue.⁶⁹

There is no doubt that the hostility of the Fathers of the Church reflected and formed the views of less eminent figures within Christianity, and there is ample evidence of the wilful destruction of synagogues throughout the Roman world and in the Levant in particular. It would appear that the Christians of northern Syria were particularly zealous in their actions, destroying the almost totality of the synagogues in the area, while we have indications in Malalas of the destruction in at least two cases of major synagogues in Antioch and Dafne, one of which was built on a site of particular importance that of the Maccabean martyrs, and in at least two of the cases presented in this thesis (Apamea and Gerasa) churches were built over synagogues.⁷⁰ Equally in the West there were repeated cases of attacks on synagogues that were censured by the political authorities all of whom were clearly keen to contain sectarian violence in a period where inter-Christian violence was more than high enough.⁷¹

Despite the widely held belief that Jews were apostates, or at least very close to them, it is also clear that they were, at least at some level, protected under the law, as were their practices. Thus one has to see the anti-Jewish actions of early Christians in a slightly different light to those undertaken against the Hellenes. There is a clear concern about the attractiveness of Judaism, and it is likely that there must have been a certain overlap between the two communities where the Jews were present in some number, and hostility certainly must have been driven by more more than the reasons suggested by John.⁷² It seems quite clear that in cities such as Antioch

⁶⁹Given the fact that the destruction of the Temple was seen as the fulfilment of Jesus's prophecy in Mark 24:1-2 and thus the will of God, and that Ambrose clearly states that the destruction of the synagogue in Milan was God-ordained this link could easily be made.

⁷⁰Northern Syria is amply discussed in Brenk (1991), for Antioch see Malalas *Chronographia* 16.6, for Apamea and Gerasa see below.

⁷¹It is likely not casual that, as well as the case of Callinicum that has already been discussed, the two other notable cases of intervention in favour of Jewish rights come one from Theoderic (who is both an Arian and a Goth) who chastises the Christians of Milan, Rome, and Genoa for attacking synagogues, and, perhaps more surprisingly from Gregory the Great who re-affirmed the traditional liberties of the Jews. For Theoderic, see Cassiodorus *Variae* 4.43, 5.37, and 2.27. For Gregory see Wharton (2000) 206-207.

⁷²It is hard to see a taste for exotic ritual or a the search for healing in holy sites as the main reason for as frequent a transition as is implied by the author's concern and comparison with a brothel.

there were significant numbers of Christianising Jews or Judaising Christians, who straddled the two communities, something that, given that it appears that late antique Judaism was dynamic and almost certainly included a missionary segment, would have been a worry for many Fathers of the Church just as Mithraism and Gnosticism had been previously.

The words of John Chrysostom and Ambrose have been used to argue that they were in the process of defining and partially segregating a Jewish space, a space that was for all intents and purpose forbidden to good Christians.⁷³ While this is in part true, and it is quite clear that authors such as John and Ambrose hold positions that are explicitly hostile towards Judaism on a point of principle, this definition may also have served a practical function. Though firmly entrenched at an institutional level by the time of both authors, Christianity was still facing or had recently just seen off, a series of threats to its existence and supremacy, and, though rapidly growing in importance, was yet to complete the conversion of a significant minority of the population.⁷⁴ It is this threat that I would argue was receiving an *ad hoc* response in these cases, riding entrenched positions yes, but *ad hoc* none the less.

The two synagogues that are treated in detail within my text in the cities of Apamea and Gerasa are also the two best examples from *Oriens* of archaeologically attested replacement of synagogues with churches.⁷⁵ In both cases the synagogues date to the fourth century AD and they both appear to have been built with notable expense and decorated generously. Their demolition occurred in slightly different moments, earlier in Apamea (around the end of the 4th century) and later for Gerasa (the church above it being built in AD 530) but appears to have been thorough in both cases. The buildings that replaced them were also similar, roughly identical to the previous one in size, though in the case of Gerasa the orientation had to be

⁷³Wharton (2000) 204-206 explicitly argues that this definition was the first step in a process of erasure of Jewish space, and by association Jewish culture and identity.

⁷⁴After all Libanius and Symmichus were either just recently deceased or still alive at the time and they were clearly by no means isolated amongst the population at large in holding onto traditional beliefs.

⁷⁵I will not go into detail about the buildings themselves as they are discussed further on in the relevant sections see below 3.3.3 and 4.5.2

changed as the synagogue faced Jerusalem in the west while the church faced east. It is unclear what brought about the demolition of the two buildings, though the closeness in date between the two Apamea buildings points towards a violent or intentional end, while the longer time the Gerasa building survived suggests a longer period of cohabitation. Certainly both buildings occupied central and prominent sections of the city: one of the main axes of the city in Apamea, and the top of the hill in Gerasa, but neither appears to have been particularly more visible than many other buildings, and if anything the building in Apamea, in adopting a large portico between the main prayer hall and the road, was less intrusive into the surrounding landscape than many other buildings.⁷⁶ One might therefore suggest that the two buildings fell prey to two different processes: in Apamea it seems most likely that, following the end of the rule of emperor Julian, the local Christians demolished the synagogue, whose construction may well have been encouraged by him (at the very least it was part funded by the Antiochene community) and replaced it with a church; in Gerasa it seems more likely that the co-habitation was somewhat more peaceful, and we have little evidence of the kind of tension that we have seen in Antioch; thus it is plausible that the displacement of the community was a gradual process that may have been the result of integration in the best case, or of sustained low level pressure in the worst, resulting in the abandonment of the synagogue.

1.8 The Case Studies

1.8.1 Apamea (4.5)

The city of Apamea on the Orontes was founded by Seleucus I *Nikator*, though the site had been occupied for centuries prior. Laid out in a Hippodamean plan it was a typical Hellenistic new town that benefited from its strategic position and its role as a key military and administrative centre. Excavation so far has not uncovered the monumental centre of the city though the theatre has been uncovered, nor does the

⁷⁶See below 4.5.2 p. 239 for more details on the plans of the buildings.

textual record have any mention of major monumental structures such as those that are recorded for its much larger neighbour Antioch. Despite this it is clear that a city of this size and scope must have had a monumental apparatus and a civic centre of some kind. The Christian centre of the city is well known: located in the south of the city, it comprised a Tetraconch Cathedral and a series of connected structures that probably comprised the *Episkopion*.⁷⁷ The importance and imponent of this large complex is undeniable and no one can doubt the impact it would have had on anyone who walked up to it. Equally it is likely that part of the church would have been visible, peeking above the roofs, from nearby parts of the city. However this does not mean that it would have dominated the landscape as the terrain in Apamea is fairly level and there would have been little or no advantage to be gained from the lay of the land.

1.8.2 Bostra (5.2)

One of the capitals of the Nabatean Kingdom Bostra was annexed by the Romans in 106 AD along with the rest of the region. Made the capital of *Provincia Arabia* it was garrisoned by the *Legio III Cyrenaica*. Over time Bostra supplanted Petra as the main terminus for the cross-desert caravans becoming one of the richest cities of the region because of it. Archaeological investigation has exposed large parts of the city and, uniquely large parts of the elevation of the buildings are preserved, often incorporated in the modern buildings in the village. During Late Antiquity six churches were built in the city, these can be divided roughly into two groups: one in the centre made up of four churches and another in the periphery made up of the remaining two. The churches in the first group are all built in or around the centre, carefully integrated into their surroundings. The two churches in the second group are large central plan churches built in open spaces, surrounded by large palatial villas, a context that I suggest was less problematic for this kind of building.

⁷⁷Though there is no independent confirmation that the complex of rooms and chapels to the east of the Cathedral was the bishops palace there are few other alternative options that would justify such a sizeable complex.

1.8.3 Caesarea Maritima (4.3)

Caesarea was the provincial capital of the province of *Palaestina* (*Palaestina* I after the reforms of the provincial establishment split it first into two then three parts). As such it was a city of political importance fact that, in addition to the wealth of its harbour, one of the largest and most developed in the region, made it a rich and vibrant city. Home to many different religious groups, it existed in a fragile balance between Jews, Samaritans, Hellenes and Christians, that often broke down with explosive results and rioting broke out on a regular basis.⁷⁸ Originally laid out by Herod, Caesarea was built on with a Hellenistic plan and, due to its importance, expanded by two thirds over the course of Late Antiquity but, as far as we know, its core remained the original area around the harbour. The fulcrum of the city centre was probably the *Augusteion* on the podium in front of the port, and when it was demolished it was rapidly replaced by a similar size octagonal *Martyrion* that dominated the harbour and provided a new Christian beacon to the city. In effect the new church had replaced the old temple in the landscape.

1.8.4 Gadara (5.3)

Gadara was a significant trade node along the east-west route that led the caravan trade from the east to the Mediterranean, and, by Late Antiquity, has been a site of human occupation for many centuries. Like so many other cities of the region it had a history of settlement that went at least as far back as the Bronze Age but it rose as a city from the 7th century onwards, and truly became prominent from the Hellenistic age when, as one of the pivotal cities in the tussle between the Ptolemies and the Seleucids it became a vital component of the region. Initially built around the east scarp of the hill which housed the city's acropolis Gadara straddled the

⁷⁸Jews and Samaritans in particular appear to have been extremely restive, rioting repeatedly over the course of the 5th and 6th centuries. At the same time it is clear from Talmudic texts that attempts were being made by the Jews to accommodate the presence of a dominant Hellenic power and rules were set down in by the rabbinate in order to mitigate any frictions. See Habas (1996) and Patrich (2011) for more.

main east-west road. During the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD the main thrust of the city's development shifted to the area to the west of the acropolis hill: the earlier temples to the east of the hill were abandoned and a new civic centre was built nearer the centre of the newly populated areas of the city. This westwards pull was exacerbated by the construction of a five-aisled basilica in the late 4th century. Its size, position, and form make it almost certain that it housed the tomb and the remains of a saint or martyr and was an important centre of pilgrimage. Further east, in the civic centre, two churches were built right next to each other, one at the beginning of the 5th century and one in the middle. Unlike the five-aisled basilica these churches were likely used for the city's residents. As they were built during a period of reconstruction of the city following the earthquakes that struck the city in the period, it is not surprising that they were consistent with their surroundings.

1.8.5 Gaza (4.2)

The city of Gaza was a thriving port city and served as an outlet for both long distance trade and the region's famous wine. Much as was the case with Rome Athens, and Antioch, the city did not have its own port, but rather relied on the port city of Maiumas. Despite the symbiotic relationship between the two cities they were very different: Maiumas was a cosmopolitan port with many different communities and a strong Christian presence (so strong in fact that it was granted independence from Gaza for over a generation on the basis of its Christian affiliation) while Gaza was resolutely Hellenic. The situation changed with the arrival of a charismatic and aggressive new Bishop Porphyry who would change the landscape of the city irrevocably. Even his arrival was complicated by the presence of such hostility and the author, no doubt embellishing for rhetorical effect, reports of how Porphyry had to smuggle himself into the city. As an attempt to establish himself and Christianity Porphyry initially relied heavily on processional liturgies and public prayer when this failed, despite his claiming responsibility for the end of a drought, he sought to attack the buildings and statues themselves. After being frustrated in his initial

attempts the Bishop travelled twice to Constantinople, securing imperial support both times and successfully shutting down all the temples of the city, demolishing the most important one the *Marneion* and erecting a giant church on the site: the Eudoxiana (or Eudokiana). Following this act, the Christian community in the city grew exponentially and rapidly took over the city both monumentally and politically. As a result no more than two generations later when Choricus the Rhetor wrote his orations there is no effective trace of paganism in Gaza, and the author's only concern is the state of the church or of individual churches.

1.8.6 Gerasa(3.3)

A Hellenistic foundation that briefly fell under Hasmonean control Gerasa can be said to be almost prototypical in its form as an eastern polis. Rich and prosperous and well placed within the Jordan Valley, it was part of the Decapolis league and enjoyed the benefits and freedoms of an autonomous city. Heavily monumentalised in the 2nd century AD, it was primarily populated by Hellenes, though the presence of a synagogue suggests that it also housed a reasonably large Jewish community that was rich enough to provide for a place of worship that was on par with anything the Christians would build later. It would appear that the growth of Christianity in the city was mainly endogenous, though it is possible that the nucleus of the community may have come from émigrés from Jerusalem after the destruction of the city in the 130s. Despite the wealth and prosperity of the city the archaeological record suggests that Christianity took some time to build up a sufficient head of steam to assert itself on the landscape, with the earliest known church, the so called Cathedral, being built at the beginning of the 5th century. It was only in the latter part of the 5th century and in the 6th that churches were built around Gerasa truly setting a monumental mark on the landscape. The growth of Christianity does not seem to have precluded the survival at least in a partial form of the previous temples, especially that of the main temple of the city: the Temple of Artemis, found in the city centre right next to the Cathedral Complex. While the Temple of Zeus in the south

of the city was at least partially demolished and spoliated, the Artemision survived in a better state and, as far as we can tell was attacked only in the Umayyad period when it was used for industrial purposes.

1.8.7 Heliopolis (3.5)

Located in the fertile Bekaa valley, the city of Heliopolis was a bastion of pagan cults. A major regional centre for the cult of Zeus (in this case a syncretic Zeus/Baal/Helios) it had one of the largest temple complexes of the Levant. The largest temple of the complex was probably never completed, and it appears to have been funded without imperial intervention, something very rare for a complex of this size. According to the sources the city's Christians were few and weak and it took repeated imperial intervention to give the city a Bishop and churches.⁷⁹ These interventions were in some way successful as they resulted in the construction work on the temple being interrupted, the altar of the great temple being demolished and a church being built in its main court out of the *spolia*. However while this was being done it does seem that the majority of the inhabitants of Heliopolis were resolutely pagan and resisted all attempts at Christianisation, so much so that Hellenes are reported in the city well past the end of the 5th century and that violent riots occurred under the reign of Julian presumably as retribution for the wrongs, real or perceived, that had been suffered under the previous Christianising Emperors. The construction of the new church meant that the main religious monument of the city was a Christian/Hellenic hybrid complex that dominated the landscape. It is a particularly interesting case especially since it would appear that the lesser temple remained in use, possibly unofficially, until the 6th century when it burned down.

⁷⁹This is particularly interesting as it would seem that the entirety of the Christianisation process was driven from outside the city, to the point where it took imperial initiative to kick start each step of the process.

1.8.8 Jerusalem (3.2)

The city of Jerusalem was unique in the late antique Levant. Razed to the ground after the *Bar Kochba* revolt in 135 AD, it was then re-built and re-settled as a Roman colony, entirely made up of gentiles, and became a relatively modest provincial town, base for a detachment of the *Legio X Fretensis* while the main centre of the region became Caesarea. The Jewish history of the city was erased and replaced with a new, Roman, set-up. The Christian community would doubtless have been small, since the original Judeo-Christian one would almost certainly have left the city and been banned from returning.⁸⁰ Despite the best efforts of Hadrian it was not entirely possible to erase the remains of the Temple, nor was it probably desirable, and the importance of the city in the life of Christ meant that a memory of the significant Jewish landmarks of the city would have no doubt remained, however limited and uncertain it may have been.⁸¹ The situation changed drastically in the early 4th century when Helena the mother of the Emperor Constantine initiated the construction of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre on the supposed site of the burial of Christ. Prior to this the only church in the city had been outside the *pomerium* of the city on Mount Zion. Given its exceptionality the main focus of Christian cult in the city was connected to the life of Christ and as such the Jewish monumental heritage of the city played a much bigger part in the process of Christianisation than could otherwise be expected, with the Temple Mount in particular playing a key role. The only major alteration to the pagan landscape came with the construction of the Holy Sepulchre when the Temple of Venus was demolished, though it would seem that this demolition was incidental, rather than intentional: any building on that site would have been demolished and it happened to be a temple.⁸²

⁸⁰It is possible that they escaped to Pella and other cities of the Decapolis. See below ?? Pella.

⁸¹One just has to think to the fact that over Late Antiquity the location of the tomb of James moved throughout the city in particular across the Temple Mount. See Eliav (2005)

⁸²Eusebius, our main source on the issue attributes evil intentions to Hadrian in building the Temple of Venus on the site. Given that the Sepulchre was part of a larger 1st century cemetery and that Hadrian had no reason to antagonise the small Judeo-Christian community on the city but rather was seeking retribution against the Jews that seems almost impossible.

1.8.9 Pella (5.4)

Located on a hill on the west bank of the Jordan just across from Scythopolis, Pella has been inhabited since the Bronze Age. Despite this long history of human occupation, the late antique city was, essentially the descendent of the city founded not long after the death of Alexander and named after the city of his birth. Taken by Alexander Jannaeus in the early 1st century BC, Pella was incorporated into the Roman domains under Pompey who also included it into the Decapolitan League in the mid 1st century BC. Though it was Hellenistic by foundation by the turn of the 1st century AD the city had a mixed Jewish and Greek population and from the middle of the century the arrival of Christian refugees from Jerusalem, that at the time was the centre of the first Jewish revolt, probably gave a significant boost to the Christian community of the city.⁸³ As excavations are still ongoing it is not possible to discuss the city as a whole and given the depth of the tel, not much is known of the layout of the city. Luckily three of the city's churches have been excavated in different parts of the city and thus give an idea of the Christian landscape of the city. The first of these is East Church that was probably part of a monastic complex and almost certainly also housed the relics of a saint. The West Church was a cemeterial church, and was located on the edge to the city in proximity of the city's largest cemetery. Finally the Civic Complex Church was built in the very centre of the city, just above the *agora*. This last church is probably the most interesting of all the churches of Pella as throughout its evolution it can be said to represent the changing status of the Church within the city: from an important yet separate part of the city to a key component of the city centre and possibly the most important player in the city's life.

⁸³It would appear that these refugees were Judeo-Christians who were attempting to avoid being lumped in with the revolters by a Roman state that surely would have been bent on retribution when the Jerusalem eventually fell.

1.8.10 Petra (3.4)

For a long time the capital of the Nabatean kingdom, Petra under the Romans maintained a portion of its previous status and wealth thanks to its role as the terminal for desert caravans. After the reorganisation of the provincial order, it became the provincial capital of *Palaestina III*, though it lost much of its long distance trade to Bostra further north. Much of the central area was already occupied by Nabatean monuments and temples as well as the royal complex and the royal tombs. Christianity is said to have reached Petra suddenly in the early 4th century AD and, though there is much indication of resistance by the local Hellenes, there are bishops of Petra attested from the mid 5th century onwards.⁸⁴ Certainly from the year 341 AD onwards there was at least one church in the city as one of the royal tombs, the Tomb of the Urn, was converted to a Christian church. The location of this church had a number of distinct advantages as it allowed the Christians to connect to the tradition of communal congregation in family tombs, it allowed the co-option of a space previously associated with the royal family, it gave them a dominant position over the city, and it offered a sheltered space from the flash floods that plague the city. In the century that followed two more churches were built in the city, both on the ridge above the main street on the north side across from the most important temples of the city. This position allowed them to be both perfectly placed on the edge of the main late antique residential quarter and in direct visual connection to the abandoned temples.

1.8.11 Scythopolis (4.4)

A Hellenistic foundation, Scythopolis was a rich agricultural town as well as being an administrative centre for *Palaestina II*. There is no doubt that it was a prosperous city in Late Antiquity as attested by the continued investment in the town's infrastructure: streets were maintained porticoes expanded to the point where a

⁸⁴See below 3.4 Petra p. 162.

sigma-shaped market was added to one of its streets. A new agora was built in place of one of the civic basilicas implying that was at least another such structure in the city though it has yet to be uncovered. In short Scythopolis was the picture of a prosperous city rich in money and culture. There were at least two temples in the city, though probably more, one at the crossroads of the two main streets, dedicated to the Muses, and the other above it on the summit of the tel, dedicated to Zeus. The temple on the tel was built on the site of a series of earlier temples and most certainly played an essential role in the landscape, placed as it was on the summit of the highest vantage point in the area.⁸⁵ It was this vantage point that gave rise to the most prominent Christian building in the city: the curiously shaped ambulatory basilica and the residential quarter around it. Not only was the church built on the site of the earlier temple but it now occupied the best vantage point in the city. At the same time the Temple of the Muses, that had been heavily damaged due to an earthquake, was restored and maintained as a public beauty spot for the citizens.

⁸⁵The earliest of these temple dates to the Bronze Age and it is followed by new buildings almost every time the dominant power changed in the city with Egyptian and Hellenistic buildings following the earlier ones.

Chapter 2

Before Constantine

2.1 Introduction

Before proceeding to the exploration of the process of Christianisation of *Oriens* a brief look should be given to the context within which monumental Christianity developed. Though long established in the region as a religion, we only have limited concrete and sure testimony of Christianity as a monumental, or in fact built, force in the archaeological and textual record, prior to the second quarter of the 4th century. I will not be giving a full account of all the cities in the region that have early Christian evidence, but rather attempt to provide a few short snapshots, that are representative of the situation.

The first of these will be Dura Europos. Located on the banks of the Euphrates Dura changed hands between the Persians and Romans repeatedly between the 1st and 3rd centuries AD. The last siege of the city also proved the final one and the city was completely abandoned in 256-7 AD. The final siege also provided us with the most interesting of the city's remains: encapsulated in the embankment built to reinforce the city wall, the remains of a church, a synagogue, and a mythraeum were discovered with much of their elevation preserved, providing a precious picture of a city frozen in time in the mid-3rd century AD.

The second case presented is that of the city of Nisibis. In this case it is a city found at the edge of the borders of *Oriens* in the province of Mesopotamia. Much like Dura the city changed hands repeatedly between Romans and Persians over the course of the centuries, remaining in the former's hands until 363 AD when it was ceded by the emperor Julian to the Persians. Despite this toing and froing and despite the fact that the Christians of the city were allowed to leave following the conquest, the city's Christians thrived and built a series of churches, at least one of which has been identified, though not fully excavated, pointing towards the development of widely used structures on a much larger scale than previously seen outside major cities and imperial donatives.

The third, and final case is that of Antioch. The long standing capital of the re-

gion and the most important city within it Antioch was a key and vibrant cultural and religious centre. Thus, it is important to note that the city had a well developed infrastructure, both civic and Christian, before the legalisation of Christianity and warrants discussion in this section, if only to point to the development of built Christianity in a less exposed, and wealthier city.

2.2 Dura Europos

2.2.1 Introduction

Though the details of the earliest phase of Dura's existence are hazy, the city of Dura Europos was for all its existence a Hellenistic city deep in the Syrian Desert from its foundation during the reign of Seleucus I *Nikator* to its destruction by the Persians of Shapur I in 256 AD.

It is unlikely that the city was a completely *ex novo* foundation as attested by the permanence of its Babylonian name Dura and the, if scant, presence of Babylonian material in the earliest levels of the fill of the city.¹ For the following five centuries the fate of Dura-Europos would closely match the alternating fortunes of the great powers of the region. Seleucid until the end of the 2nd century BC, the city was taken by the growing Parthian kingdom probably in the year 113 BC.²

The city was laid out, from the 3rd century BC, in a Hellenistic Hippodamean manner and maintained its plan throughout its existence. Initially, in the first two centuries the political, and perhaps demographic, preponderance of the Macedonian settlers resulted in the city's buildings being constructed in Greek style in ashlar blocks.³ With the Parthian conquest of the city in the late 2nd century BC the city plan was maintained but the fabric of the buildings progressively moved to the

¹Excavations provided a scattering of evidence of the Babylonian occupation of the site including a tablet that records a gift of land in Damara/Dawara the original form of the name Dura. See Rostovtzeff 1938 11, footnote 5

²The exact date is not clear but numismatic evidence points to 113 BC as a good *terminus post quem*. See Perkins (1973) 5, and Rostovtzeff (1938) 17-19.

³See Rostovtzeff (1938) 20-21.



Figure 2.1: The City of Dura-Europos and its major structures (Perkins (1973) 13)

use of mud brick in the Parthian style. Despite this the city's role as a hub for international commerce, its mixed heritage, and the Parthian empire's generally pro-Hellenic policies led to the city's syncretic cults and practices surviving and thriving without hindrance.⁴ Equally in the 2nd century AD the substantial autonomy of the city is unchanged by the tussle over its ownership between the Romans and the Parthians. In fact it would appear that, despite returning under Parthian control in 117 AD the city maintained many of its Roman connections and characters even

⁴Several Parthian rulers chose to mint coins with the title of *φιλέλληνας* as a message to their sizeable Greek minority.

preserving the triumphal arch built to commemorate Trajan's conquest of the city in 115 AD.⁵

The Parthian period saw Dura flourish and grow as a mixed culture with both Hellenistic and Parthian characteristics, not surprisingly given its mixed heritage and its continuing role as an important stop in the east-west caravan system. Roman expansion reached Dura during the reign of the Emperor Trajan who took it as part of his campaign for Seleukia on the Tigris in 115 AD. This conquest was, however, only temporary and it would not be until the year 165 AD that, after its capture by Lucius Verus, Dura would become permanently Roman.⁶ For the following century the city would remain solidly within the bounds of the Roman world, forming a key part of the Mesopotamian *limes*. In its role as a frontier fortress as well as key stopping point in the east-west caravan system as the last stop before Palmyra, the city flourished even further. The rise of the Sassanian empire in the mid 3rd century changed things radically as the Mesopotamian *limes* became again the focus of conflict between the Persian and Roman polities.⁷ Matters came to a head in the 250s AD, when the city was invested by the Sassanians. As part of the process of siege and counter-siege, mines and counter mines were sunk, and the western wall (the one that opened onto the desert side of the city and therefore the most vulnerable) was reinforced through the construction of an earthen parapet up against it including within it two *insulae* of the city.

After the definitive Roman conquest of the city in 165 AD the syncretic nature of Dura was further enhanced by the presence of a series of legionary *vexillationes* that brought with them both personnel, behaviour, and cults from around the empire.⁸ It is from the latest period of the city that perhaps the greatest variety of buildings, in particular cultic buildings, have reached us, this is due both to the abandonment

⁵See Perkins (1973) 5-6.

⁶See Perkins (1973) 6-7, and Rostovtzeff (1938) 22-29.

⁷Perkins (1973) 6-7.

⁸Over the course of the century or so of Roman rule in Dura *vexillationes* from the *Legio IV Scythica*, the *Legio III Cyrenaica*, *Legio III Gallica*, *Legio II Ulpia*, *Legio XVI Flavia*, and a *cohors miliaria equitata* from the *Legio XX Palmyrorum* were posted to the city.

of the site following the Persian capture of the city and to the construction of the large earthen ramp to support the west wall of the city in the face of the Sassanian siege-works. This has preserved the majority of the elevation of the buildings of the westernmost *insula* of the city, including, as we will see in greater detail below, a number of cultic buildings.

2.2.2 Roman Dura

In many ways Roman Dura did not differ significantly from the earlier Parthian city. The city still followed its original Hippodamean plan laid out under Seleucus I more than four centuries previously, the buildings of the city were still built mainly in Mesopotamian fashion out of mud bricks. In fact much of the building activity undertaken in the 160s can be attributed to repairs to buildings damaged during an earthquake in 160 AD. The only significant signs of Romanisation are the construction of military barracks in the north of the city, the construction of a Mythraeum, probably by the local garrison, dated to 168 AD, and that of a Roman style bath.⁹ The major phase in the Romanisation of the city happened almost certainly after the increase in the garrison in 210 AD. After this the military camp was expanded by razing surrounding buildings, a *praetorium* was built, and, an indication of Dura's greatly increased military role within the *limes*, the palace was constructed for the *Dux Ripae*, military commander of this section of the Euphrates *limes*.

Religious buildings

The religious topography of Dura is at once both unique and conventional. As so many of the Greek foundations of the Levant its Pantheon is composed mainly of syncretised Greek-Eastern cults, which in the case of Dura appear to be prevalently

⁹The complete absence of any significant evidence for any earlier Mythraic cult in the city and the proximity of the construction to the arrival of the Roman Army, whose members are known to have provided not only the majority of followers of the cult but also the main vector for the cult, make it almost certain that the Mythraeum was built for and by the Roman garrison. See Perkins (1973) 23-24.

different versions of Zeus, as well as, again in common with many cities of the area, a certain development of the cult of the Palmyrene triad centred around Baal, as well as local cults. Thus the city housed temples to: Atragatis, Bel, Adonis, Aphlad, Zeus *Theos*, Artemis Azzanathkona, and Zeus *Megistos* (probably a local variation on Zeus *Olympios*). All of these buildings were distributed throughout the city in two main clusters: one in the centre and one in the south-west section of the city and were built almost exclusively in the so called Durene Style. This consisted of a walled complex which occupied the entirety of an *insula* of the city.¹⁰ The module is very similar: a walled *temenos* with a single house surrounded a courtyard within which, off centre and generally in axis with the only door in the walls, stood the *naos* of the temple surrounded by a number of cellular rooms leaning onto the external walls. The only exception to this model is the Temple of Aphlad, which appears to have had no walled *temenos* at all the cult being concentrated in an *andron* for ritual banqueting, and that of the Gaddè where the Palmyrene model of having the *naos* projecting from the rear of the court seems to have been followed.¹¹

After the Roman conquest of the city, with two notable exceptions in the church and the synagogue, the main religious buildings to be erected are directly connected to the military presence in the city and were also almost certainly built by the soldiers themselves.¹² The principal complex is a temple built on the eastern side of the military camp which has returned dedications to Jupiter *Dolichenus*, Jupiter *Helipolitanus*, Mithras, Turmasgade, and an unspecified "Lady", all new divinities to Dura.¹³

¹⁰The *Artemision*, which only occupied half a block, is the only exception.

¹¹This latter idiosyncrasy seems driven by the fact that the cult in question appears to have been confined to the Palmyrene inhabitants of the city who would have brought their building traditions as well as their religion with them. See Perkins (1973) 18-20 and Rostovzeff (1938) 43-46.

¹²It is entirely possible, if not plausible, that the Roman garrison and its soldiers were also instrumental in the construction of the church and synagogue but there is no concrete evidence of this.

¹³The fact alone that the temple celebrates the very Roman deity that is Jupiter is a clear indication that the new building was directly connected to the garrison.

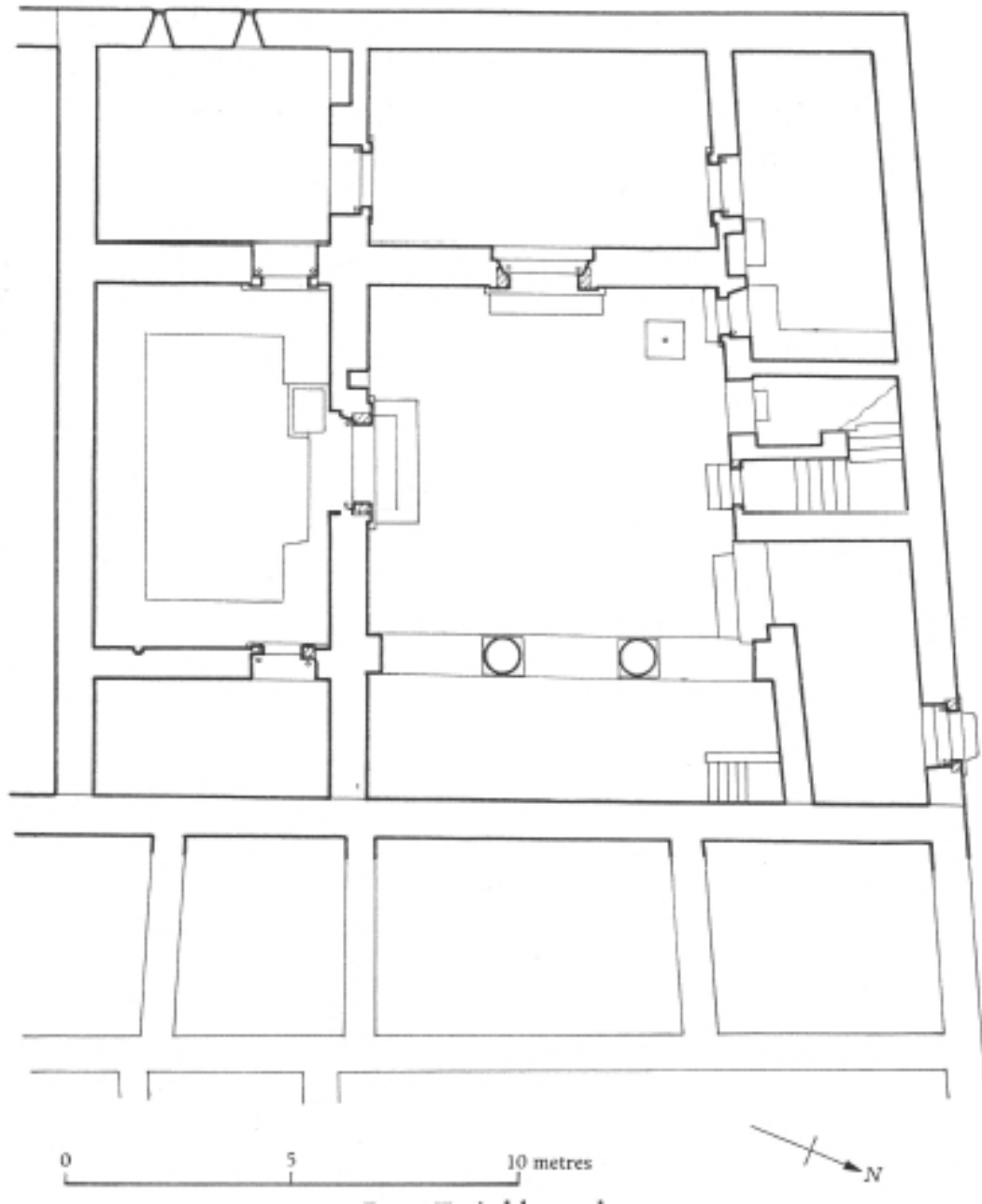


Figure 2.2: Typical plan of a house in Dura-Europos (Perkins (1973) 21)

The mythraeum, the synagogue and the church Compared to the other religious buildings, these three stand out for two reasons: first and foremost they are built to allow the worship of three religions that had previously been unknown in Dura, and secondly they are all built in converted domestic spaces.¹⁴ In this they are unique

¹⁴It is interesting to note that except for official cults connected to Jupiter the only late religious buildings are connected to the three missionary religions of the period namely Mythraism Judaism

within the Durene context, as, despite the fact that almost all the other temples of the city were built to fit into the city's domestic module, their spaces are the result, at least initially, of a negotiation between the original use of the space and the new one.¹⁵

The mythraeum The earliest of these places of worship, and the only one whose construction can unequivocally be tied to the arrival of the Roman garrison, is the Mythraeum. The first phase of this temple dates to immediately after the definitive Roman conquest in 160 AD, when a private house was adapted by the construction of a long bench-lined assembly hall with an altar at the rear. This building went through at least two more renovations, being expanded and embellished, transforming it from an adapted domestic space into a purpose-built and designed cultic space. In this last iteration, that is inevitably also the best preserved, the Mythraeum is fairly conventional, with a long corridor bordered by benches and an altar at the end. The space was well decorated with both sculpted material and a uniquely well preserved series of frescoes that give us one of the best insights into the cult of Mythras in Late Antiquity.

and Christianity.

¹⁵The fact that these three houses of worship were built in buildings that were previously used for domestic purposes does not have to be attributed to a lack of resources but rather as the result of the different needs of these religions that are by their own natures initiatic.

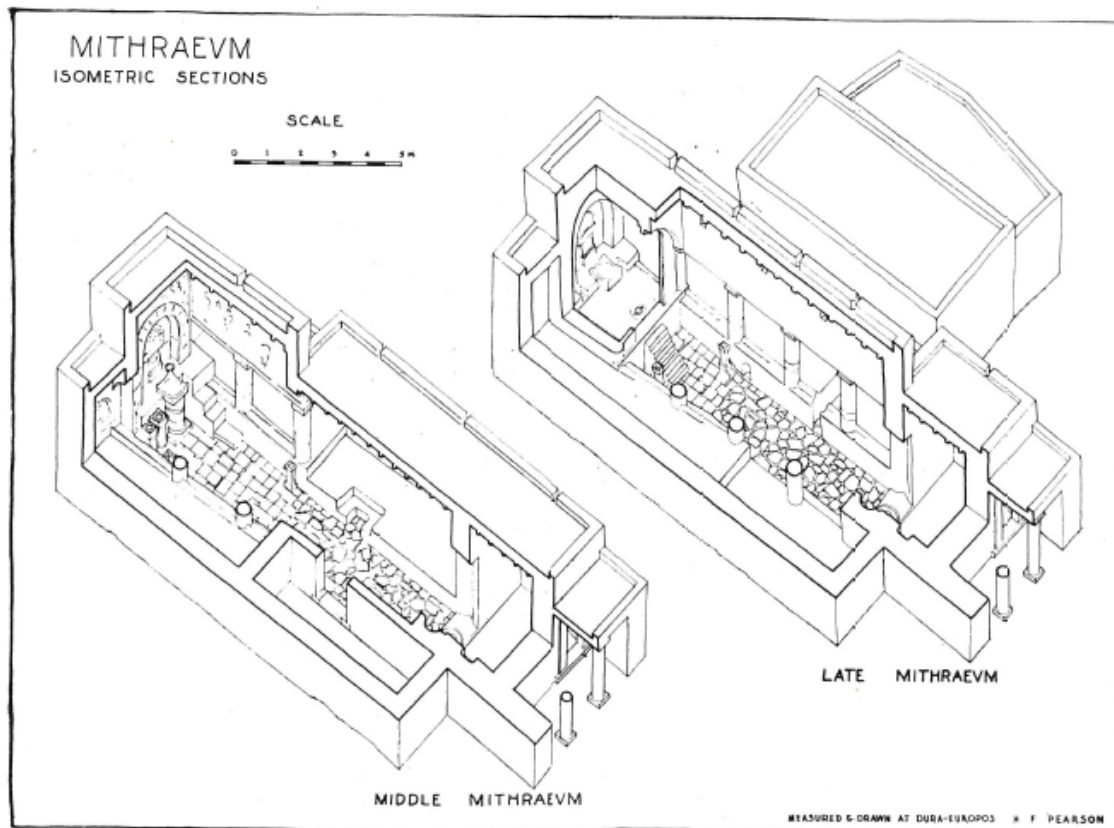


Figure 2.3: The Mythraeum (Perkins (1973) plate 7)

The synagogue The second new religious building to be erected after the Roman conquest of the city was the Synagogue. First constructed around the year 200 AD, again by adapting the internal spaces of a house, it is unclear whether it was built to service a local community or a new group that arrived with the new overlords of the city. In its initial phase the temple consisted of a court surrounded by a series of rooms: on the north side was the assembly room and on the south and east sides were a series of ancillary spaces.

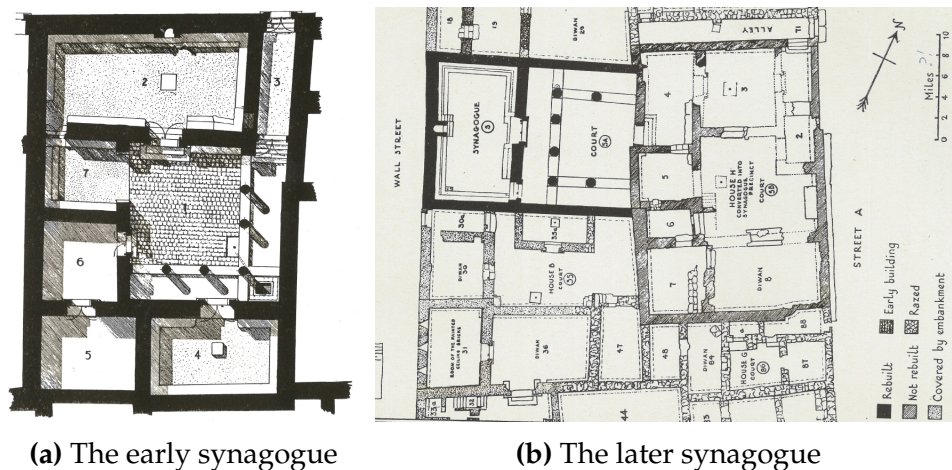


Figure 2.4: The two main phases of the synagogue of Dura-Europos (Roztovtseff (1938))

The second phase of the Synagogue is much better known being also the last one and therefore preserved in the fill of the earthworks of the 260's. Built in 245 AD, it involved a thorough transformation of the whole *insula*: the previous spaces were demolished, a much larger assembly hall was built, the ancillary rooms were demolished to make way for a much larger court, the house to the south was absorbed into the complex and entrance was gained via it, with the rest of the spaces in the southern part of the complex being converted into hostel space, or space for the officiants. The assembly hall was richly decorated with paintings depicting biblical scenes, while the Torah shrine was decorated with aniconic motifs.¹⁶

The church The third and final new religious building to be constructed in the Roman period is the Christian house-church. Again it is a converted house, though unlike the Mythraeum and the Synagogue, the alterations are relatively minor: the two western rooms of the house were merged into a single assembly hall that opened onto the main courtyard, while a room in the north-east of the building was converted into the baptistery. Unfortunately, however, we do not know much either about the congregation that used the church or about those who occupied the house in earlier years, as the only indication is a *graffito* of a *clibinarius* carved into one of

¹⁶The presence of pictorial cycles in a synagogue is of particular interest, as it contrasts with the aniconic tradition that is followed by later Judaism.

the walls. The assembly hall had a raised platform at its north extremity that likely served as a *bema*, while there appears to have been no permanent seating arrangement for the faithful, and it is possible, if not probable, that the arrangements were prepared *ad hoc* according to the number of people who were attending a given service.¹⁷

While the main *aula* appears to have been relatively bare and devoid of decorations, much more effort was expended on the baptistery. Built in a room in the north-west corner of the building, the baptistery is the only room in the building to have an extensive fresco decoration:

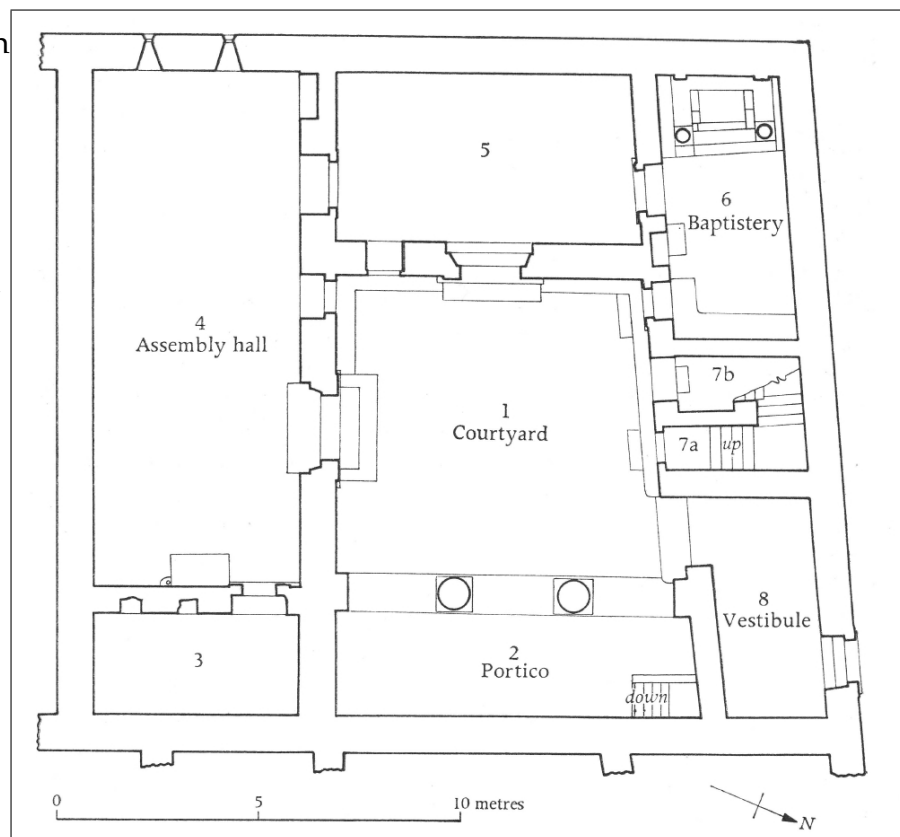


Figure 2.5: The Christian Church (Perkins (1973) p. 30)

the *aedicula* over the baptismal font

was decorated with a *faux* marble *crusta* and floral motifs, while the walls were painted with scenes from the Gospel, and the life of Christ designed to convey to the catechumen sin and virtue and the promises of Christ.¹⁸

¹⁷The suggestion of the excavator is that, without furnishing, the hall could accommodate up to 70 worshippers. See Welles (1967) 16.

¹⁸Rostovtzeff (1938) 131-133.

2.2.3 Conclusions

The city of Dura-Europos is unique for the level of preservation of its buildings and the extent of the excavated surface. The picture that one derives from this situation is one a city caught at the beginning of a religious transition. On the one hand, one sees a still extensive and thriving religious landscape, product of over four centuries of graeco-parthian hybridisation. Thus the city was amply populated with a vast array of different cultic buildings that responded to the needs of both locals, through the syncretic cults of deities, such as Zeus and Adonis, and of outsiders, with temples such as the temple of Baal and that of the Palmyrene Gods. It would appear that the definitive arrival of the Romans, and more importantly perhaps their soldiers, in 165 AD was the determining factor in changing the situation both on a religious and topographical level. Not only did the Roman conquest, and more importantly the construction of the barracks and the palace of the *Dux Ripae*, result in the demolition of a sizeable section of the city to make way for new structures, but it also brought with it new religions.

It is important to note that the building works undertaken to accommodate the new structure should not however be seen as disruptive of the religious and cultic landscape of the city, as they were generally respectful of the existing temple buildings and adding to them rather than replacing them.

It is almost certain that the cult of Mythras came to Dura-Europos with the legionaries, as his temple is built almost immediately after the definitive conquest of the city and grew continuously thereafter, becoming a large and rich structure. The position of Judaism within Dura is unclear. Unlike Mithraism and Christianity, both of which can be seen as “western” religions, and are often associated with the legionary presence, there is a long attested presence of Judaism in the Mesopotamian river basin, dating back to the Babylonian exile.¹⁹ It is thus equally possible that the

¹⁹Even though Mythraism and Christianity both originated in the East and were the product of eastern religious syncretism, they were “western” at least relative to the city of Dura. As to the role of Judaism, one has but to realise that the time of the construction of the Dura Synagogue, 200 AD, roughly coincides with the collation of the *משנה* (Mishnah), the earliest section of the *תלמוד* (Talmud), a text that according to tradition was composed in Babylon not far from Dura.

community was native rather than having arrived with the Romans. However it is important to note that, much as in the case of the other two religions discussed here, there is no indication of any Jewish presence in Dura-Europos prior to the arrival of the Roman army, and that the construction of the synagogue took place in very close proximity to its arrival, suggesting that, if the community was not Roman, then it was at least allogeous perhaps drawn to the city as a result of its inclusion within this new sphere.²⁰ The peculiarity of the Synagogue is further enhanced by the extensive pictorial cycles discovered on the walls that clash with the supposed aniconism of Rabbinical and Diasporic Judaism, in particular since the images appear to be the product of a very specific local tradition combining Roman and Parthian elements. It is also likely that Christianity came to the city on the back of the legionaries or at least as a result of the incorporation of Dura-Europos into the Roman sphere, though we cannot be absolutely sure of this. Despite the unique evidence of early Christian worship that we have in Dura we have no indication on the community itself, and the only non devotional image recovered in the building, a *graffito* of a *clibinarius*, likely dates to before the conversion of the building to a Christian house of worship. The complete lack of any evidence of a Christian presence in the city prior to the construction of the *domus ecclesiae* and the western, at least from a Durene perspective, nature of the religion make it at least suggestive to think that it reached Dura-Europos on the coat tails of one of the many legionary *vexillationes* that visited the city. Once in Dura it would be entirely reasonable for the community to have grown, even collecting proselytes beyond the confines of the Roman army, as it became increasingly settled. The clear investment in the baptistery, and the effort put into making this structure which marked a catechumen's transition into the community, as significant as possible, point to the importance that proselytism and catechises must have had in this phase, and sets the house church apart from the other two contemporary religious buildings.

²⁰It is important to note that the expansion of the complex of the Palmyrene gods in the early 3rd century suggests a growth in the Palmyrene community, that can similarly be justified by the trading route between these two cities now being within the same polity.

2.3 Nisibis

2.3.1 Introduction

Placed on the border of the Roman and Persian polities, the city of Nisibis served as the eastern keystone of the *limes* until its cession to the Sassanians in 363 AD, after which its place was taken by the newly founded city of Dara. Despite repeated attempts to retake it on the Romans' part, Nisibis remained in Persian hands until its eventual fall to the Arabs in 639 AD. Despite, or perhaps because of, the fact

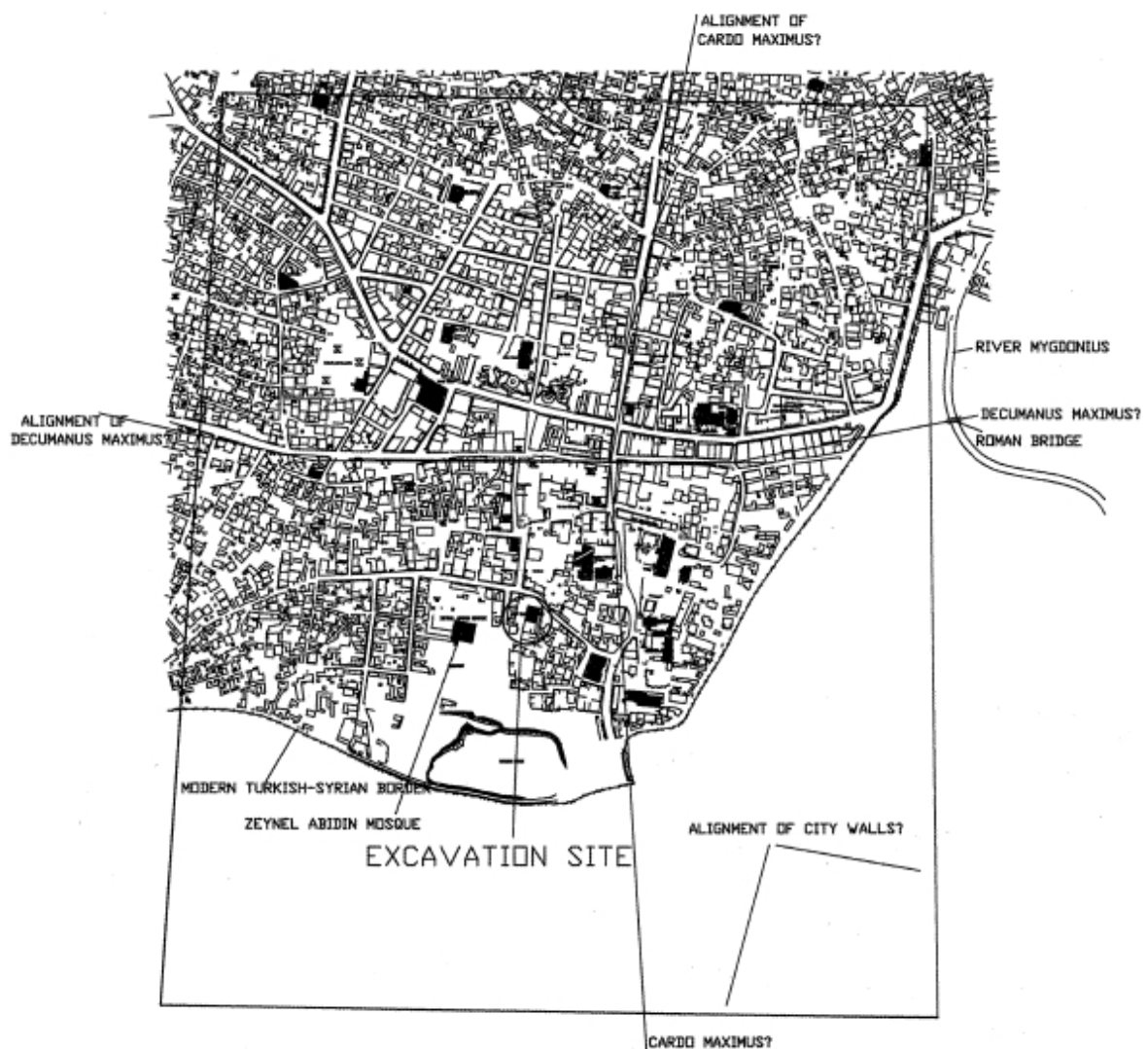


Figure 2.6: The city of Nusaybin, with the remains of Nisibis the small building to the right is the baptistery (Keser Kayaalp and Erdoğan (2013))

that it was under Persian rule, Nisibis would become an important centre for Syriac Christianity in the region. Despite this, due to its position, that straddles the border between Turkey and Syria, and the continued occupation of the site by a modern city, very little is known about antique and late antique Nisibis. The one exception is the so called Church of Mor Yaqub' currently being excavated in the south of the Turkish section of the city that is, uniquely in Nisibis, not only still accessible but appears particularly well preserved at least in its later phase.

2.3.2 The Mor Yaqub' Church

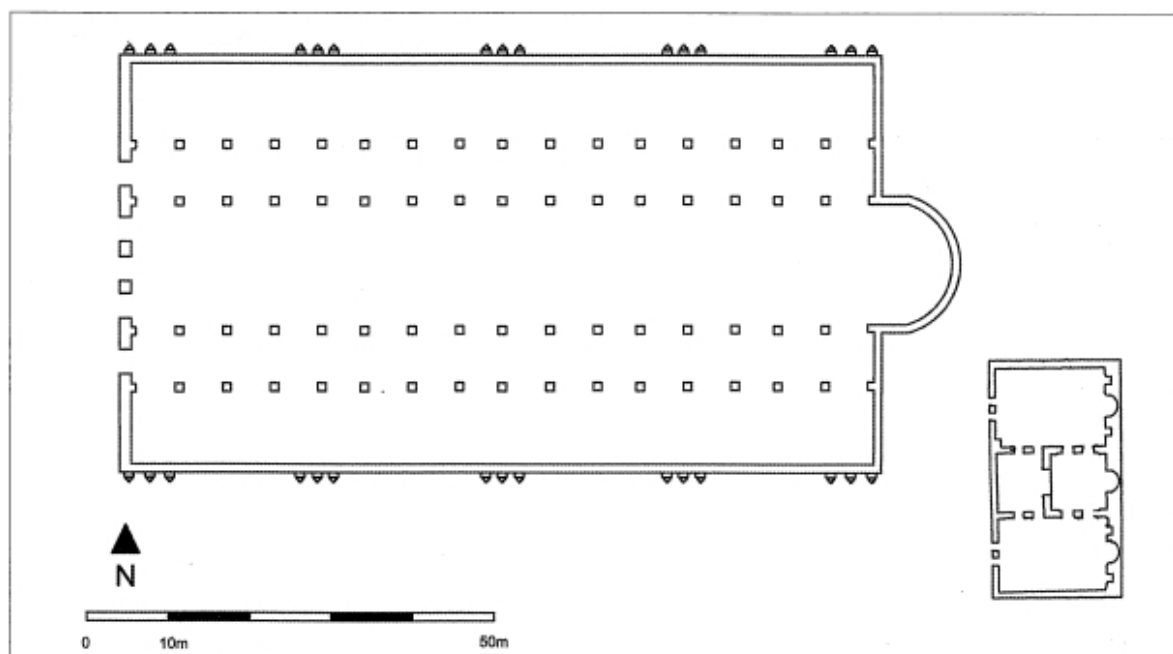


Figure 2.7: The five aisled basilica in Nisibis (Keser Kayaalp and Erdoğan (2013) 142)

As mentioned above the only one of Nisibis's churches to have been uncovered, if only partially is the s.c Cathedral Church or Mor Yaqub' Church. This is an extremely large, one could even say monumental, five-aisled, single-apsed basilica uncovered in the south of the city under the remains of a much later, and much smaller church building, long associated with the most famous bishop of the city. Though we have yet to access the archaeological record in any significant manner, we do have some indications on the nature of this building from textual sources. The earli-

est indication of the presence of a basilica at Nisibis is a passage of the *Chronographia* of Elias of Nisibis that reports the construction of a basilica under the episcopate of Bishop Jacob (308-338 AD) in the years 313-320 AD.²¹ Unfortunately the text is lacking in any description of the building but the relatively long period of construction (7 years) suggests a large church. The next relevant reference to a basilica comes from John Moschus who visited the city in the late sixth century (around 570 AD) and refers in praising tones to the Cathedral of the city, in particular referring to the magnificence of its five doors that, according to the description given in the text, would appear to open all up onto the same courtyard, giving the impression of a five aisled church.²² This description chimes very well with the remains uncovered in recent years in proximity of the Mor Yaquub' church, that can clearly be seen to be a large five-aisled basilica. Despite the lack of probative dating evidence from the excavation, it has been suggested, through comparison to other cases such as the Lateran in Rome, the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem and the cathedral in Tyre all of which are five-aisled basilicas, that this building is, in fact, the church built by bishop Jacob.²³ If this were the case it would make this building one of the very earliest major monumental basilicas in the whole of the empire, second only to the Lateran, which was supposedly completed in time for the Synod of 313 AD or at the latest by 320 AD a mere three years prior to the church in Nisibis; and, perhaps even more importantly, it would have been completed a full five years before the beginning of the construction of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. The only known and dated fourth-century building of the complex is the baptistery. This building, still standing, formed part of a larger complex implied by the visible remains that surround it. The baptistery was later incorporated into a larger building, with the construction of the more recent church probably in sixth century; but it has been dated in its original phase by an inscription found on the south wall, that relates its foundation

²¹Fiey (1977) 22-23.

²²"She took her husband and led him to the most holy church. Now the church at Nisibis has five large doorways." John Moschus *Pratum Spirituale* 185, in Wortley (1992) 155 and ff.

²³Keser Kayaalp and Erdogan (2013) 137-139 for both the textual history and the comparison.

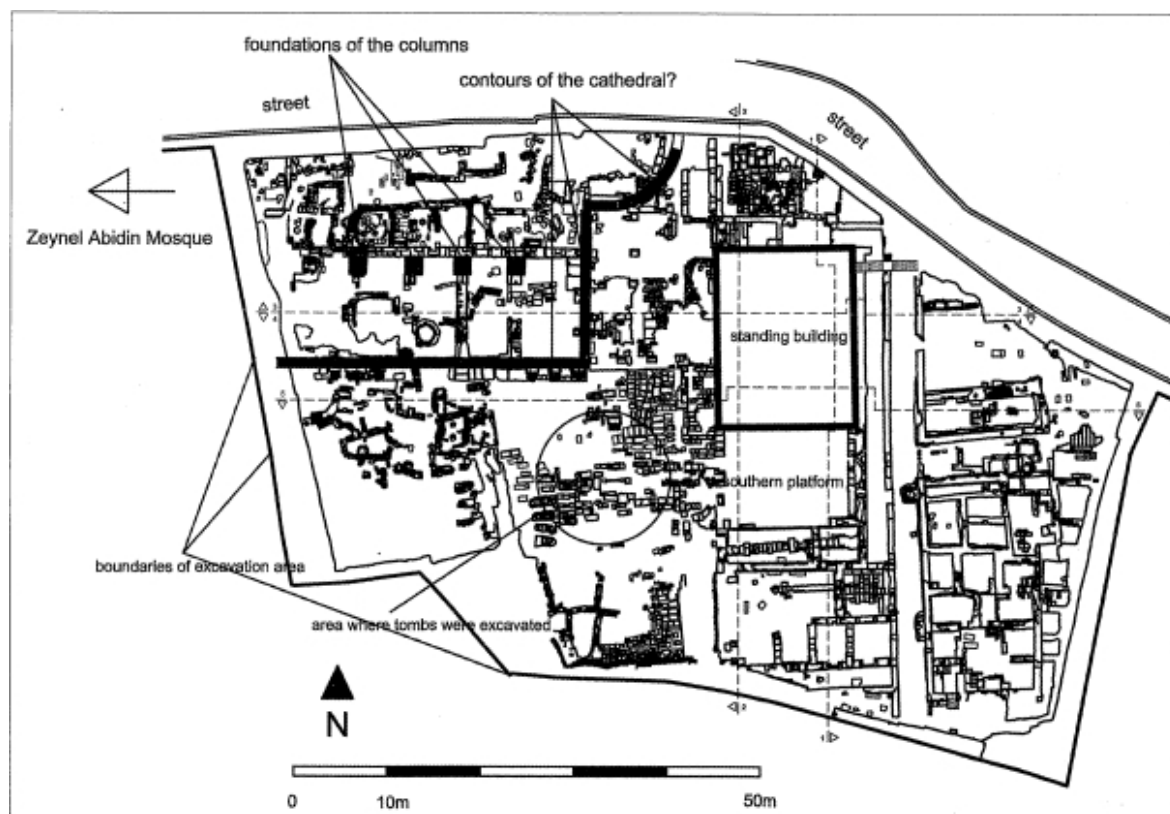


Figure 2.8: The visible remains of the cathedral, the small building to the right is the baptistery (Keser Kayaalp and Erdoğan (2013) 140)

to the year 359/360 AD.²⁴ The baptistery was a significant building, involving three apsed *aulae* with the middle one being about half the depth of the lateral ones, to allow space for a vestibule. The exact functions of the spaces are unsure, though the disposition of the doors, that open onto the two longer side spaces, may suggest that the different rooms may have had different functions, probably connected to the baptismal process, perhaps indicating that the catechumen proceeded through the building through each room during the process of initiation much as occurred in a number of smaller baths of the age. The architectural décor of the baptistery is consistent, in form and design with the date from the foundation inscription 571 of

²⁴The inscription is very clear on this fact, reading: ἀνηήρθη τό βαπτιστήριον τοῦτο κέ ἐτελέσθη ἡτους αὐξ' ἐν ξρόνῳ Οὐολαγέσου ἐπισκόπου σπουδῇ Ἀχεκψύμα πρεσβυτέρου γενῆτε αὐτῶν ἢ μή[μη...ἄ]πιόντ[ς...]θῦ, *This baptistery was erected and completed in the year 571 at the time of Volagesus the bishop, by the effort of the presbyter Akepsyma. May their memorial remain before God* (Translation by C Mango in Keser Kayaalp and Erdogan (2013) 148).

the Seleucid era (367 AD).

The dating of the basilica, is intriguing and must be considered carefully. First of all the comparison drawn with the Lateran Basilica in Rome, though apparently straightforward, does present some issues. The construction of the basilica in Rome was undertaken by the bishop of one of the most important cities of the empire, following a very extensive gift by the emperor. In addition, the basilica in Rome was directly modelled on the great imperial and civic basilicas of the city, that provided a direct model and whose construction provided the skilled manpower for the construction of the Lateran, something that would not have necessarily been available in Nisibis. Secondly the comparison with Tyre also has issues, since the only witness that we have for this latter church is Eusebius. In his *Historia Ecclesiastica* he presents a panegyric to the church in Tyre and describes it as a three-aisled basilica and not a five-aisled one.²⁵ There is thus both a lack of comparable models in the region for Jacob to have drawn on, as well as no evidence of imperial backing and, perhaps more importantly it is hard to see how the congregation of early fourth century Nisibis would have required such a large structure.²⁶ For all these reasons, in the absence of clear published evidence that the five aisled basilica at Nisibis can be dated archaeologically to the early fourth century, it is probably rash to attribute it to such an early date. It is entirely plausible that a church was built by bishop Jacob, perhaps even on this site, but there is no indication of its shape or size, and one could easily argue that it was a much smaller building, more in tune with the likely size of the community of the city. Equally the passage in John Moschus though most likely describing the church under excavation need not necessarily describe the basilica built by Jacob in 316 but rather a second building constructed later on, perhaps at the same time as the baptistery. This would place its construction at the tail end of

²⁵Eusebius *Historia Ecclesiastica* X, iv, 40-47. Tyre and Rome were by far more important cities than Nisibis: Rome the ancient capital of the Empire and, still, its most prestigious city, equally Tyre was a very important and rich port on the eastern Mediterranean coast. Nisibis, on the other hand, was a military city located on the border of the Roman world.

²⁶Though this period was one of sustained building activity by Constantine, he is very consistent in making sure that he claims or is attributed credit for all his works; despite this there is no indication of imperial initiative in this project, leaving it entirely to local episcopal initiative.

the reign of Constantius II precisely during a period of renewed hostility with the Sassanians when, under a Christian emperor in a Christian empire, it would make sense to build a much larger building as a statement to the Persians.

2.3.3 Conclusions

Thus, in conclusion, Nisibis presents a case that is intriguing, tantalising, and problematic. Due to our limited understanding of the city and its layout it is not possible to make any comments on the city as a whole. However the church itself is interesting in its own right, especially as concerns its date. Until excavation of the building, and in particular of its foundations, is completed, we cannot be sure of the exact date of construction and we are forced to rely on what textual evidence there is. This indicates that a church was built under the rule of bishop Jacob in 313-320 and that in the late sixth and by the time of John Moschus (who wrote around the turn of the seventh century) it had five doors (πύλη) and thus probably five aisles, just as the church that is currently being excavated. The only hard date that we have is the one for the construction of the baptistery that, according to an inscription, was built in the year 359/360 AD.

There can be no doubt that a church was built in the city through episcopal initiative in 313, a mere three years after the Milan Rescript and five after the edict of Galerius. If, as is suggested, this church were the five-aisled basilica, this would be an extraordinary fact. If this date were to be confirmed through archaeological excavation, one would be faced with possibly the earliest basilica of this scale, or at the very least the earliest building of such a scale built exclusively through episcopal initiative.

On the other hand if it had been built later it would not be quite as extraordinary but still significant. If the basilica does, in fact date from the reign of Constans II, as suggested by the date of the baptistery, it would still make it one of the earliest such buildings in the region, second only to the great Constantinian enterprises in cities such as Jerusalem and Antioch.

2.4 Antioch

2.5 Introduction

Located on a bend of the river Orontes, the city of Antioch was founded by Seleucus I *Nikator*, and modified extensively by his successors: it developed in the area between the river Orontes and Mount Sulpius. Since its foundation, it was a Greek city and was to remain a beacon of Greek culture in the region.²⁷ As one of the major cities and economic and cultural powerhouses of the Diocese of the East during Late Antiquity, it should be examined in the framework of the urban transformation of the time. Unfortunately the city currently lies partly under the modern city of Antakya, and while significant excavations were undertaken during the period of the French Mandate very little is known of the late antique ecclesiastical monuments.²⁸ This is particularly evident in the continued maintenance and expansion of the porticoed streets of the city that is clearly visible in the remains uncovered by the Princeton expedition. There can be no doubt that the city's role as *de facto* capital of the East for large sections of the 4th century, and its later role as capital of *Oriens* and Patriarchal see, made it a major player in the monumentality of the region.

Thus most of our knowledge of Late Antique Antioch is heavily dependent on chroniclers, church historians and ecclesiastical sermons, as well as, of course, the orations of Libanius.²⁹ Unfortunately the very nature of the sources means that their main focus lies in other aspects that are not those of interest for this chapter; for secular chroniclers the focus is more on large scale imperial enterprises, due to their intended audience that often lay in the imperial court or state bureaucracy; most of the ecclesiastical histories and sermons centre around theological conflicts

²⁷For a full description of Hellenistic and Roman Antioch Downey's monumental monograph is still the main and most reliable source of information. See Downey (1961) chapters 1-10.

²⁸The excavations were published between 1934 and 1972 by R. Stillwell and G. W. Elderkin. See Elderkin (1934), Elderkin (1937), Elderkin (1941), Lassus (1972). Liebeschuetz analyses the role of the city within the Late Antique context but avoids any reference to the built environment. See Liebeschuetz (1972). For the relationship between Antioch and modern Antakya, see Demit (2004), and Pinon (2004).

²⁹Again Downey has carried out a full analysis of the sources; see Downey (1961).

and internal diatribes in the community (the sermons), that were of more interest than building activities or even imperial acts, to both their readers and the authors; while the only non-Christian source for the period, Libanius, seems to ignore the majority of the activities of the Christian community, focusing mostly on political and cultural concerns, except where Christianity impinged on his areas of interest. Thus one is faced with a great scarcity of sources concerning the building activities or the changes in the religious makeup of the city, save where this interferes with the other aims of the authors.³⁰

³⁰Malalas for example only refers to church building when it is undertaken by an Emperor, and even then he is most interested in using it as a means to exalt the emperor. See Malalas, *Ioannis Malalae Chronographia* 13.3 and ff. in Jeffreys, Jeffreys, and Scott (1986)

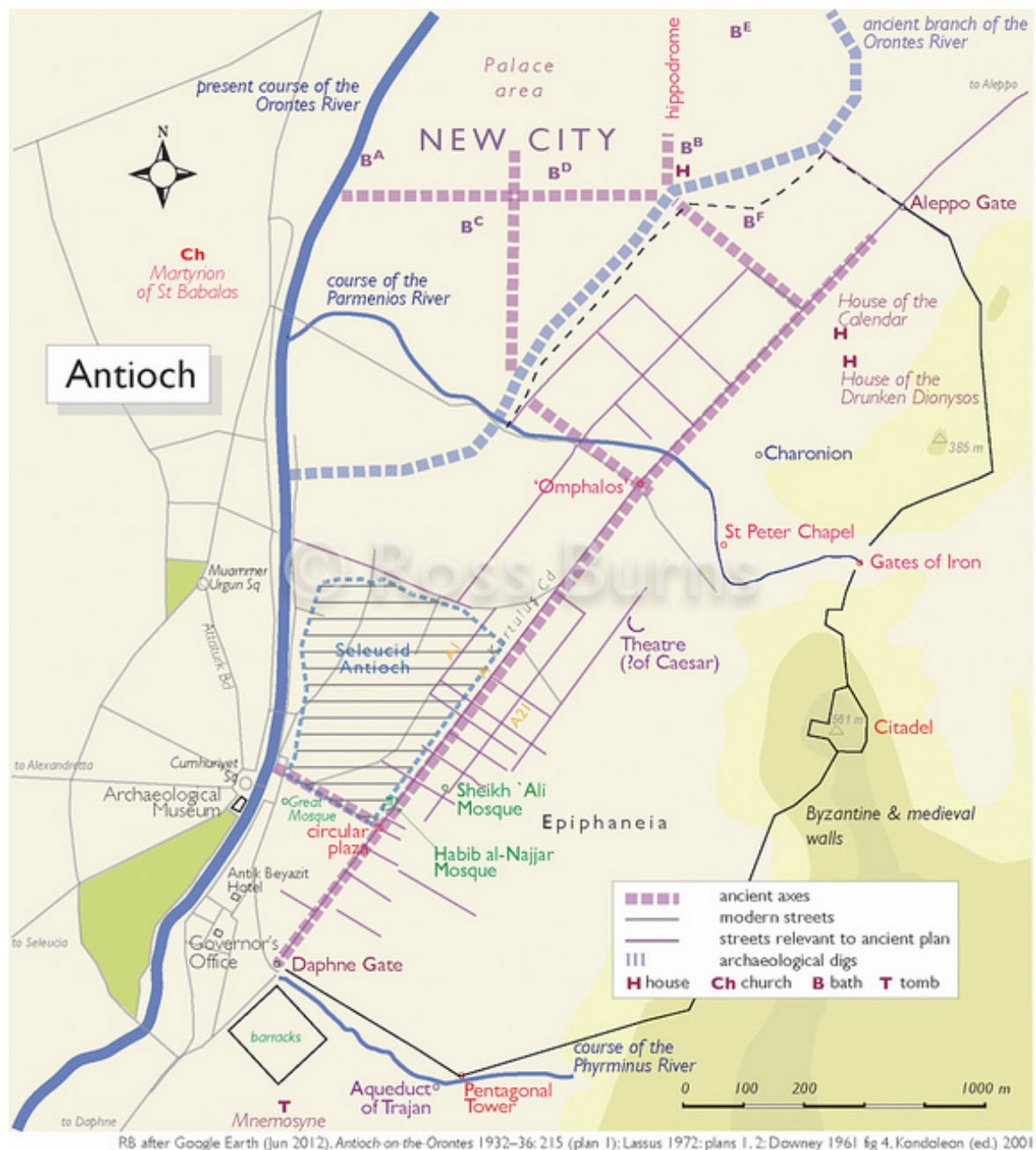


Figure 2.9: Plan of the city of Antioch

2.6 The streets

The city of Antioch and its streets were studied and excavated by Princeton University between 1932 and 1938. Because of the early date of the excavation, our knowledge of the city has suffered a fate not dissimilar from that endured by Jerash

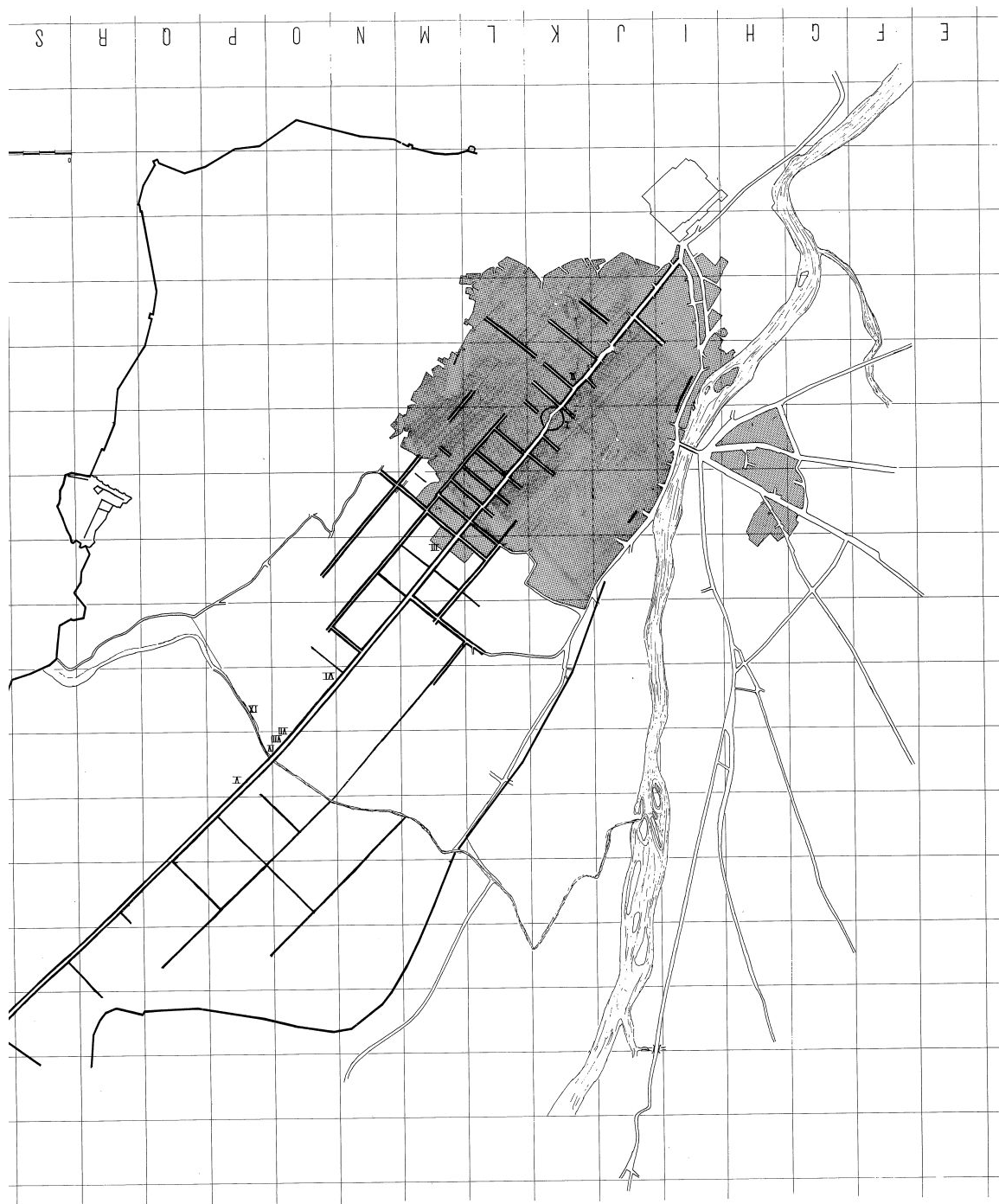


Figure 2.10: Plan of the city of Antioch and its roads superimposed over modern Antakia

in the same period. Due to the abundance of Roman and Hellenistic material that was present much of the later material was, in effect, removed with little consideration for it. However due to the significance of the Justinianean reconstruction after

the earthquake of 525 A.D. and the occupation of the city by Khusraw in 540 A.D., the presumed sixth century phase of the city also received much attention.

Excavation concentrated mainly on the *Cardo Maximus* and some of the side streets that meet it. The street itself was probably laid out at the foundation of the city in the late fourth century B.C. and in its original form consisted of alternating layers of beaten earth, gravel and stones. Paved around the turn of the Christian Era, it saw major remodelling under Antonine or Trajan and was transformed into the vast porticoed artery for which the city would be famed for centuries to come. The street was widened and paved with a hard blueish stone said to have been transported from Thebais in Egypt. Whether or not this is true is unclear; however

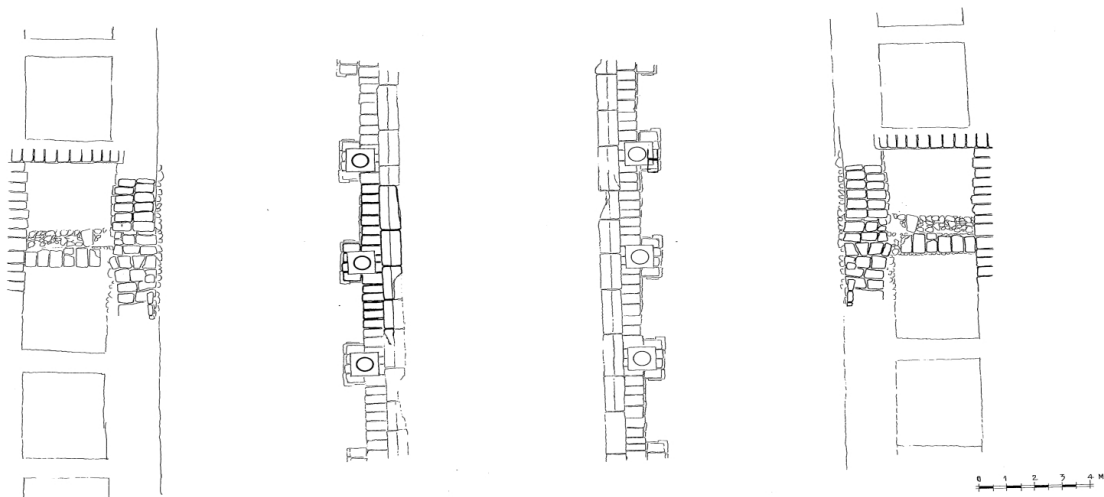


Figure 2.11: Justinian's *Cardo* (Lassus 1972)

the excavators report that the stone used for paving was entirely dissimilar from all of the local materials used in other parts and phases of the city. Further evidence of its foreignness is to be found in the fact that it appears to be sedimentary rather than the volcanic rock that normally occurs. The width of the street was set at 9 m. whilst the width of the porticoes, that were also paved with mosaic, was set at 8 m. with an intercolumnar distance of 4.85 m. If one were to take into account the shops that lined the portico, the total width of the new road would stand at 40 m. It is thus clear how the new road would have functioned as a majestic artery that would have enhanced both the commerce and the prestige of the city.

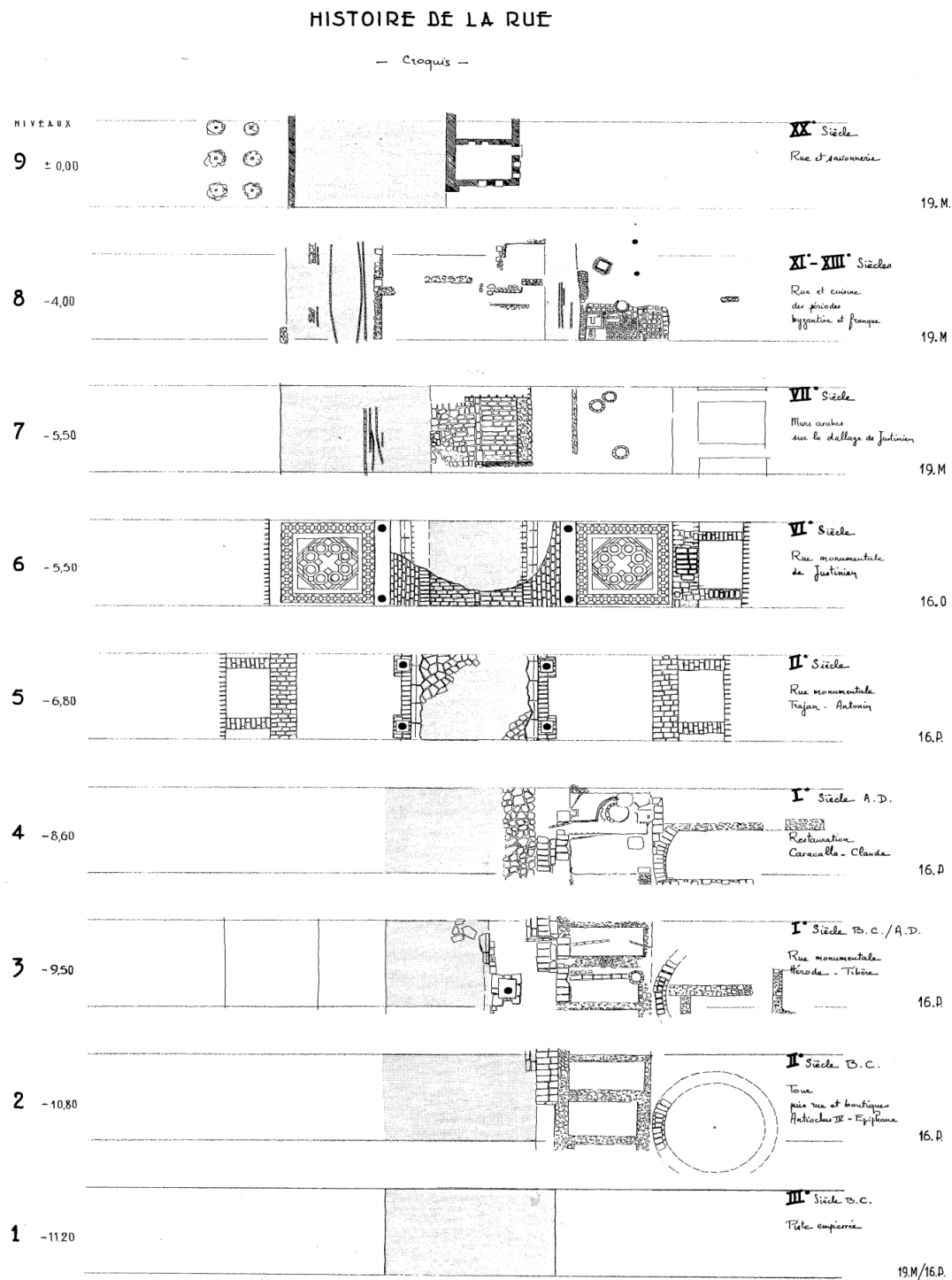


Figure 2.12: Phases of the *Cardo Maximus* of Antioch

After the second century there seems to have been a long phase of quiescence in building activity. The stratigraphy indicates that this period was followed by

a large and widespread destruction as indicated by the presence of a destruction layer. The excavators placed its creation in the early sixth century as they saw in it an indication of the 525 A.D. earthquake and the 540 A.D. conquest of the city by the Persians. The entity of the destruction layer and the impressiveness of the reconstruction programme that followed it makes this likely. After the destruction a calcite paved road was constructed on top of the rubble possibly as a temporary stopgap before the reconstruction could be completed. The new road was built on top of the levelled out rubble thus resulting in an elevation of 90 cm between the basis of the foundation of the Justinianean phase and the Roman street.

The presumed Justinianean phase consists of a porticoed street, that though slightly smaller, 5.45 m in width, was no less monumental than the previous ones; it is perhaps the best preserved of the streets as it was not followed by any major street, but by a chaotic mix of housing and inhabitation that was built on the site. Perhaps the most prominent feature of the new development is the porticoed oval plaza that was discovered at the crossroads between the *Decumanus Maximus* and the suggested *Cardo Maximus*, it was porticoed all around and the shops continued along it. Thus, if the dating of this phase is correct, the city appears to have recovered fully from the double shock of earthquake and conquest in the early/mid sixth century and went on to thrive for at least another century until the Arab conquest. Greater problems are encountered when attempting to understand the later developments of the main street. It seems that some time after the construction of the street a number of small structures were constructed on top of the street, and after this some large structures, probably houses, had been constructed either on the street itself or with foundations resting on the street after cutting through other layers.

2.7 The churches

2.7.1 The city before Constantine

Little is known of the condition of both the Christian community of Antioch and of its churches prior to Constantine's intervention in the city. It must be assumed that the community owned and ran a number of places of worship, as it would seem that it was relatively numerous even though it had suffered a number of martyrs during the persecutions of Diocletian and his successors.³¹ The only reference to any pre-Constantinian church in the sources is the report of the reconstruction of the Apostolic or Old Church under the episcopate of Vitalis (314-319 AD) and his successor Philogonius (319-324 AD).³² One can presume that given the title 'Apostolic', the church in question was the long standing Episcopal See of the city. No details about the building are known, and even its location is unclear since there is much debate over whether the indication "Old" refers to the age of the church (or the continued existence of a church on the site), or if it refers to the location of the building in the "Old City", that is that part of the city that constituted the original foundation of Seleucus I *Nikator*, in opposition to the "new" city on the island in the Orontes.³³ While Downey favours the former interpretation, in light of the text of Theodoret of Cyrrhus and his use of ἐν and the dative in his description of the actions of the two Bishops, I favour the latter interpretation.³⁴ Unfortunately, as previously mentioned, no actual description of the building is given, and one must assume that it was a basilica of some kind.³⁵

³¹See Downey (1961) 327-331.

³²Cameron and Hall (1999a).

³³See Downey (1961) 336 and footnote 82.

³⁴Theodoret I, 3, 1-2, clearly states: " ...ὅς καί τήν ἐν τῇ Παλαιᾷ...ὑποδόμησεν ἐκκλησίαν." Literally: "and he rebuilt the church the one in the old". It seems to me that he is unambiguous about the building being in the old area rather than it being an old church. See Canivet (2006) 150-151 for text and translation.

³⁵The only author that might have described the building in any detail would be Libanius, but throughout his work he seems uninterested or ignorant of the Christians' building activity, limiting himself to invectives against individuals or groups of Christians guilty of attacking Pagans, of excess zeal, or hypocrisy. See Festugière (1959) chapter 1.

2.7.2 The great Church of Constantine

The only Church of which we have any comprehensive knowledge is the great church of Constantine. A large central-plan church; its construction was begun under Constantine and completed during the reign of Constantius, his son. The initial dedication is unknown though it was variously referred to in the sources as *Domus Aurea*, in light of its splendour, as well as Μετάνοια and Ὁμόνοια (Repentance and Harmony).³⁶ The building was contained within a walled courtyard and is said to have included a number of “chambers and exedras” that may have been either free standing buildings (in which case they would have been ancillary buildings) or, if part of the main body of the building, were additions to the main body. The interior of the church is reported to have been decorated with much richness, and the dome was built out of gilded wood. As to the position of the church, this is unclear. Malalas says that it was built over the Baths of Philip, near the Basilica of Rufinus, without specifying where these were. It has been suggested that, it was to be found on the Island in the so called “New City”, and formed part of a greater complex with the palace and the hippodrome, though given the lack of excavation this remains unverified.³⁷

2.7.3 The Yakto mosaic

Apart from the textual sources outlined above, the only other source of evidence for the city that is currently available is the representation of the city found in the side band of a mosaic discovered by the Princeton expedition while excavating an extra urban villa in the 1930s.³⁸

The mosaic was severely damaged during the Islamic period, when much of the building was robbed out for its materials, and is thus only partially preserved. It

³⁶See Downey (1961) 346-347.

³⁷Downey is a strong proponent of this theory, and supports it by comparing this case with those of Thessalonica and Milan. While this may be the case the complete vagueness of the sources on the matter leaves me somewhat unsure. See Downey (1961) 344-345 and Jeffreys, Jeffreys, and Scott (1986).

³⁸Lassus (1934) 114-116.



Figure 2.13: The church in the Yakto Mosaic

would appear to present an imaginary tour of the city visiting not only its main monuments but also a number of its less large but no less important monuments. However, the extensive damage suffered by the mosaic and our limited knowledge of the exact placement of a number of the buildings mean that it is impossible to tell whether the itinerary was real or merely an idealised selection of the most well-known parts of the city.³⁹

The only Christian building presented in the mosaic is a great octagonal church, probably the one built by Constantine, but the damage to the legend has defaced all but the last four letters of the name - IANA (see figure ?? p 78). The church corresponds in shape to the one described in Malalas and Evagrius, and is associated with a large monumental column mounted by a statue, and is in proximity of the bridge on the Orontes.⁴⁰

The only other indication of Christian activity are a number of structures surmounted by the legend: “Τά ἐργαστήρια τοῦ μαρτυρίου”, that is the workshops of the *Martyrion*. It would appear that at the time of the laying of the mosaic there was

³⁹See Lassus (1969) for a discussion of the issue.

⁴⁰As I have stated above, unfortunately it is not clear whether the mosaic is an accurate reproduction of the city, however if one accepts Downey’s argument that the church was built in the “new city” on the island in the Orontes then the presence of the bridge to the island would suggest that it either was the Old or Apostolic Church given that I suggest that it was located in the “old city” on the east side of the river. For the location of the New Church see Downey (1961) 344-347, for the Island on the Orontes see Lassus (1934) 144-149. For Malalas see Jeffreys, Jeffreys, and Roger (1986) and for Malalas Whitby (2000).



Figure 2.14: The workshops in the Yakto Mosaic

another church in construction possibly in the area of Daphne, given the proximity of these workshops to the personification of the spring in Daphne.⁴¹

St Babylas

Little is known of the Church of St. Babylas. It was built during the reign of Gallus alongside the shrine of Apollo and its Oracle with the apparent intent of displacing the older shrine. The construction of the Church coincided with the translation of the relics of the saint, relics that were re-translated by Julian to the cemetery outside the city and then finally housed in a purpose built cruciform church on the other side of the Orontes under the episcopate of Meletius in the 380s or during the reign of Marcian in the 480s

⁴¹See Lassus (1934) for the position of the vignette. It is possible that the *Martyrion* in question was the Church of St Babylas that is known to house the relics of the saint during Late Antiquity, see Downey (1937). But see Donceel-Voûte (1988) 28.

Justinian's reconstruction

After the multiple shocks the city suffered during the 6th century, Antioch featured prominently in Justinian's building programme. However while the Emperor's activities in the civic sphere and in the building of new walls are given much attention and detail, this is not true of his church building activities. These are consigned to a mere notice in both Procopius and Malalas: the former refers to the construction of two churches during Justinian's reign, one dedicated to the Holy Mother of God and a second one to the Archangel Michael.⁴² Malalas on the other hand refers to a church of the *Theotokos* (presumably the same as the one cited in Procopius) and to a second one dedicated to SS Cosmas and Damianus, while he says that the church of St Michael was built by Empress Theodora.⁴³ No further details are known and it is entirely unclear where the churches were built or what their shape, size or position was. It is likely that the Theotokos was built as a replacement for the Church of Constantine that, according to Malalas, was destroyed in the great fire that ravaged the city for three days after one of the great earthquakes.

Conclusions

In conclusion, our understanding of the churches of Antioch is heavily distorted by the scarcity of verifiable information available to us and the bias of many of the authors. There is no doubt that, as one of the main cities of Diocese of the East, it would have received much imperial attention, and one cannot doubt that the Christian community of such an important city would have had an important monumental stock of its own. Unfortunately, with the exception of St Babylas, our reliance on written sources means that we only have notice of one such early church, the so called "Apostolic" one. Thus few considerations can be made and they concern in particular the construction of the two known churches: both of them are imperial foundations, and they involved, in the one case, the alteration of a significant

⁴²Procopius Buildings II x 22 from Procopius (1971)

⁴³Malalas 17.19.

area of the monumental centre and a severely altered the cityscape; in the other, the active and wilful displacement of a pagan shrine by a Christian ruler whose objective was to ensure the closure and sanctification of an alien site. As to the rest of the city, one must suppose that private and Episcopal patronage would have resulted in many shrines and churches being built, but, unfortunately, we have no information concerning them.

What we do have is an understanding of the monumental character of the city as a whole, not only in Late Antiquity, but beyond it. The excavation of the streets, and in particular of the *Cardo Maximus*, that was undertaken by the Princeton expedition, has given a very clear indication of the state of the city. From this emerges a picture that follows quite closely what is reported by the various textual sources at our disposal: that of a city rich in monumental infrastructure. Despite the numerous vicissitudes that the city endured, in particular in the late fifth and sixth centuries, through imperial intervention and through local resources it was able to not only recover but even expand its monumental infrastructure acquiring an even richer context.

Thus, in conclusion, there can be no doubt that the city of Antioch must have had a rich Christian monumental space. Despite the fact that we have precious little physical evidence for it, we do have some iconographic and textual evidence that both through local initiative (the reconstruction of the Apostolic Church for instance) and through external influence (such as is the case with Constantine's church or Justinian's intervention) the city was endowed with a significant Christian apparatus, worthy of a sometime imperial capital and, perhaps more importantly, of a Patriarchal see.

2.8 Conclusions

Drawing conclusions from what intends to be more of an illustrative section of work is somewhat difficult, though some considerations can be made. First and foremost

it is clear how, despite the massive impact that his actions would have, Christianity was developing a physical and monumental aspect long before the advent of the emperor Constantine. The case of Dura Europos indicates how within a city that allowed it Christians had clearly moved towards a form of more structured assembly hall. In its construction the priority was clearly given to the area of the baptistery, the most decorated and most elaborate part of the building, while the assembly hall was relatively bare and unadorned suggesting that catechism and proselytism were principal concerns. In Nisibis the picture is slightly different with the earliest churches being built by bishop Jacob in the early 4th century. It is unclear if the church currently being excavated in the city is the church built by the proto-bishop or if it was built at the same time as the baptistery in 359/360, just before the city fell to the Persians. In either case the building of a five-aisled basilica in a frontier city so early in the 4th century is noteworthy.⁴⁴ Antioch, is a different case, it would appear from what little we know that the churches of the city developed organically and occupied spaces as and when they came available. Unfortunately we do not have much in the way of detail about the late antique churches of the city, and this hampers any interpretation, though the Yakto mosaic does give a clear view of the city and suggests that the new church must have cast an imposing shadow over the city as a whole.

⁴⁴As we will see much richer and larger Gerasa does not see a large church built before the year 400 almost a generation after the one in Nisibis. See below 3.3.3 The Cathedral p 138 for more.

Chapter 3

Building Comparisons

3.1 Introduction

In this section I will explore the relationship that developed between standing (albeit often ruined) non-Christian and the new Christian religious buildings. For the purpose of my thesis I shall term this "building comparisons", in that I will argue that the main focus of this part of the process was the construction of a narrative of victory and domination for the new faith over the old one through the material comparison between the new churches and the old temples.

The importance Late Antiquity assigned to buildings is unquestionable: both Hellenes and Christians believed and stated that religious buildings harboured numinosity within their bricks and mortar. It was not uncommon for the destruction of a major temple to trigger mass conversions to Christianity. The continued use of religious buildings for cultic purposes after their closure and their ruin points clearly to their maintaining a significant symbolic and religious importance. One has but to look at the cases of Gaza and Alexandria where the destruction of the most important temple in the city (the *Marneion* in the former and the *Serapeion* in the latter) was brought about by the actions of a powerful bishop, and would appear to have triggered large-scale conversions.¹ Though only reported by Christian sources, these events are perfectly plausible. It is not surprising that the Hellenes would have turned to the victorious god, faced with the inability of their gods to prevent the destruction of their holy sites by the followers of another religion.

The connection is not limited to the site but is inherent to the fabric of the building, much in the same way as statues of Hellenic divinities were believed to contain the embodied spirits of the divinities or demons that they represented. Thus, when a temple was torn down, as in the cases of Gaza and Alexandria, it was common for the Christian authors who relay the fact, to state how the building resisted and fought back and how its collapse was accompanied by supernatural events.

In this context, the fact that a building was standing or not was an important indication of whether the strength of one's god was standing or lay in ruins. Much

¹See below: Gerasa.

as the god of the Jews had proven His valour and superiority by delivering the cities of the Canaanites to His followers and acted directly in the world to destroy the walls of mighty fortresses such as Jericho, through the actions of His emissaries the emperor and the bishops, the Christian God was doing the same to the old gods of the unbelievers. I argue that the comparison between the ruins of a temple and the magnificence of a newly built Christian church served as a constant daily reminder of the triumph of Christianity over the old gods.

To demonstrate my thesis I will analyse my case studies in detail first of all by giving an overall picture of the cities in the period. I will give a full picture of the city and an oversight of its history. I will then proceed to explore the specific details of the churches that were built in the city in the period and, finally I will explore the role of these churches within the landscape. While this process will involve extensive exploration of the urban topography that pre-dates Late Antiquity, this is essential in order to provide for what happened in the period.

The analysis of the case studies will not be limited to the archaeological and textual record, it will be aided by the use of GIS mapping to render as accurately as possible the ancient landscape. This also has the added advantage of providing an insight both into the current, often ruined, state of the cities and simulate the situation that prevailed during Late Antiquity. I will privilege the use of visibility tools, in particular viewsheds, as they cover precisely the choices that I am attempting to understand.

As already indicated previously (in particular 1.4, and 1.7), the case studies were chosen for their role as significant cultural and economic hubs of the region. For obvious reasons, in this section I will only treat those that are directly relevant to this part of the thesis, though some of these cases overlap with other sections, just as cases that will be discussed later overlap with this section, due to the diversity of the process throughout the region.

Jerusalem will be the first case study to be analysed: the most holy city of Christianity, which also occupied the same place of significance for the Jews and was

subject to three major phases of building, two before the period in question and one during it. Though the first two phases (Hasmonean and Hadrianic) did not take place in the course of Late Antiquity, they do directly impact on late antique Jerusalem, as they formed the urban and monumental context within which Christianity operated.

The second case study is that of Gerasa (modern day Jerash in Jordan): here Christianity would appear to have taken root and expanded in a gradual manner. Due to the limits of the archaeological and textual record, it is unclear when local Christians acquired property and physical roots for their cultural activities: however the early date for the first major building project (the s.c. Cathedral) and its prominence in the landscape do point to an early date. The very same reasons also point to the Christian community of the city being large and well established and it is likely that by the early 5th century Hellenic monuments had been abandoned and partly or wholly demolished.

The third case study will be that of Heliopolis (modern day Baalbek in Lebanon). Here the city remained resolutely tied to Hellenic cults for much longer than most other cities, and there are even reports of would be Christian proselytisers being attacked by mobs and severely beaten if not murdered (though it is possible that these reports are exaggerated, and are a common trope in the hagiographical lives of saints and Bishops, the fact that they are credible enough to be included does point to them being at least plausible).

The fourth case study is that of Petra. The former capital of the Nabatean Kingdom was incorporated into the province of *Palaestina*. Before and during Roman rule it had an extensive religious and monumental apparatus, made up of both temples, open-air high places of worship, and monumental tombs all of which formed an integral part of Petran religiosity. In this intricate context, Christianity appears to have made a quite sudden entrance in the 5th century: within about two generations, the entirety of the known churches in the city were built.

3.2 Jerusalem

There is no doubting the key role that Jerusalem played in the late antique Levant: its role within the development of the Christian religion and Church was paramount and brought a close and intense relationship with the imperial court and its patronage with the city. This relationship endured from the construction of the Holy Sepulchre by Constantine (326-335 AD) to the Arab conquest of the city (638 AD), with the exception of the brief interlude provided by the Persian occupation during the reign of Khusraw II, and would mark the cityscape indelibly. Only the vast scale of imperial munificence allowed for projects on such a scale that the underlying landscape was permanently altered, and that, in some cases, survive to this day.

Unfortunately the very element that makes Jerusalem such an important city in the study of the development of Christian urbanism, that is its role as a holy city, is also the main obstacle to the full and complete understanding of the process. Any attempt at exploring this issue is complicated by the fact that three major religions consider parts of the city to be holy places, and that these are precisely those parts of the city that would yield the most amount of information. Thus anyone wishing to reconstruct the cityscape of late antique Jerusalem must, perhaps more than in most other cities of the region save Damascus and Antioch, rely on a mixture of written sources and snippets of archaeological knowledge in unequal measure.²

The Christianisation of the city proceeded on two fronts: on the one hand the physical city that was being Christianised was *Aelia Capitolina*, a pagan city, whose religious structures were actively removed and replaced by new, Christian ones thanks to the direct intervention of the Emperor Constantine himself. On the other hand the Christian community was, inevitably, very much aware of the Jewish history of the city, thanks to the role that it had played in the events of the life of the Christ, and it is with this city and its monuments that much of the relationship was built, and with which the comparisons were drawn.

²In fact in the case of Damascus there is possibly even less archaeological evidence than for the other two cities.

The topography of the city was and is dominated by the hills on which it is built and the valleys that separate them. These are divided into two groups; one is made up of Mounts Zion and Golgotha on the western side of the city, while Mount Moriah (the Temple Mount) is the main feature of the eastern side of the city. The two parts are divided by the deep, almost chasm-like, Tyropeon Valley that cleaves the city in two and produces a distinct separation in its topography. By separating Mount Moriah from the other two hills the Tyropeon Valley also separated the ruins of the Temple from the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and, later, the *Nea*. This separation is accentuated by the fact that the Temple Mount is lower than the two main churches (the Mount is 40-45m lower than the Holy Sepulchre and 10-15 m lower than the *Nea*) and would have been dominated by them. The city was conquered by Israelites in the 14th c. BC. With the Jewish conquest of the city came the establishment of the first archaeologically known complex: the so called City of David, perched just to the south west of Mount Moriah , beginning the association of the Jewish people with this location.

From the conquest of David onwards, the fate of the city would be intertwined with that of the Jewish nation: the city thrived under Israelite domination until 586 BC, when the Babylonian conquest resulted in its destruction and the deportation of its inhabitants (known from Biblical narration as the Babylonian Exile). The Persian conquest of the region (538 BC) resulted in the Jews returning and the city being rebuilt, though it took at least two centuries to fully recover.

The conquest of the city in 332 BC by Alexander the Great brought Jerusalem fully into the Hellenistic sphere, with the result that the city was fully involved in the convulsions that followed the death of the Macedonian King. Over the next century the region would change hands between the Ptolemies and Seleucids on numerous occasions, until its final conquest by Antiochus III *Megas* around the year 200 BC. The increasing interference of the Seleucids into Jewish affairs in the city came to a head in the late 160s-early 150s BC when, during the rule of Antiochus IV *Epifanes*, the population rose up and, after prolonged conflict, installed a new,

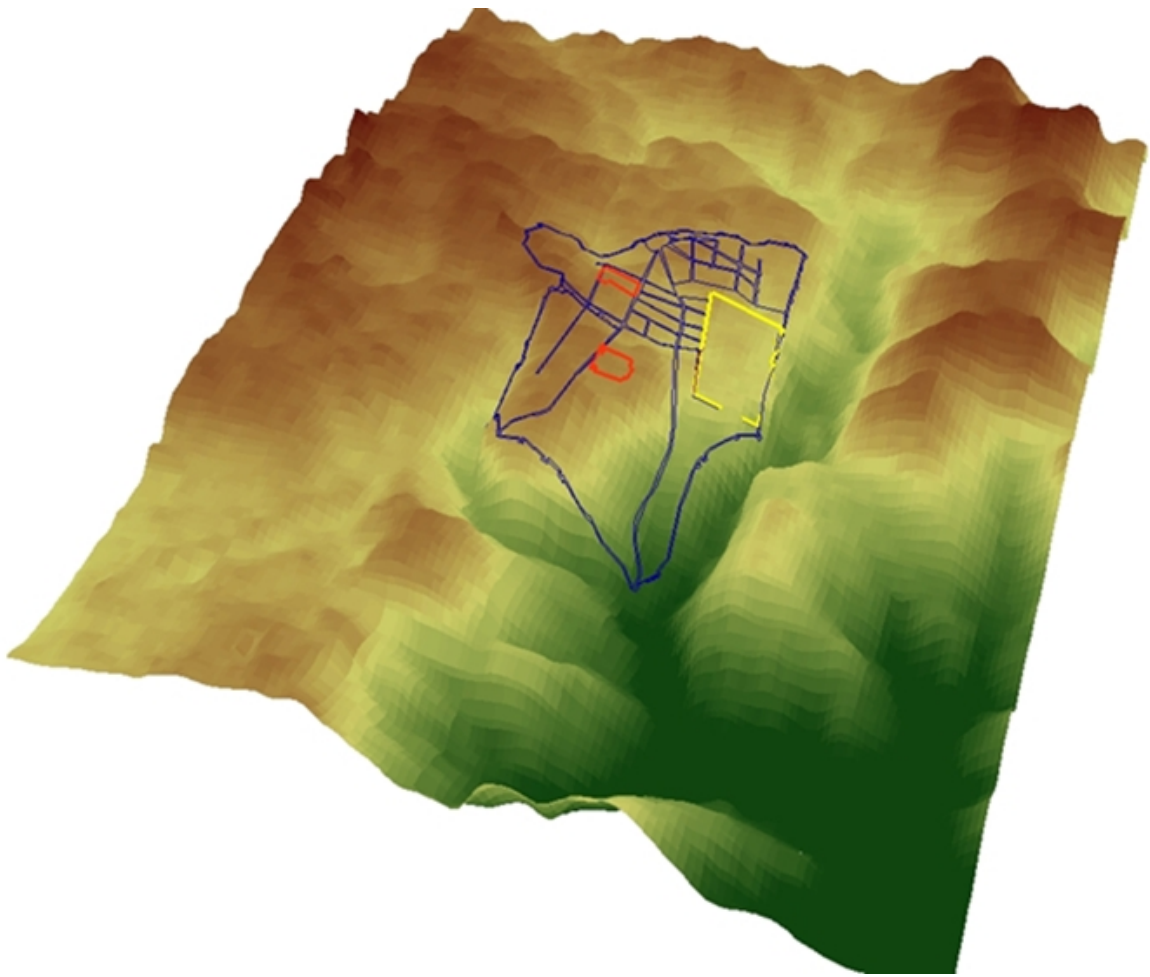


Figure 3.1: Computer generated topographic rendering of the late antique city of Jerusalem and its immediate surroundings: in blue streets and walls; in red Christian buildings; in yellow the Temple Mount

Jewish, dynasty: the Hasmoneans. These new rulers would reign independently until the Roman conquest in 63 BC, after which they were reduced to mere client kings. Over this whole period the city had continued growing despite endemic conflict and, by the beginning of Hasmonean rule, had regained the same extent that it had had prior to the Babylonian conquest. The reign of the most well known king of the Hasmonean dynasty, Herod, was perhaps the period of greatest transformation for Jerusalem: under his rule the Temple was replaced with a huge and lavish new building (whose base still stands as the Temple Mount), a new palace was built for the royal family in the north-west corner of the Upper City (the area now known as David's Tower). The rest of the city also saw much work expended

on it: a new circuit of walls was built encompassing a much larger area than before (an area that would not be reached again until the 6th c. AD), large civic amenities were added and the city was given a strong Hellenistic veneer. This state of affairs would not last long though, and quite soon Jerusalem would see the consequences of two failed rebellions (69 AD and 132 AD) that would mark the city deeply, and result in the destruction of Herod's Temple in 70 AD and the re-founding of the city as a Pagan, Roman one in 136 AD.

3.2.1 Aelia Capitolina

Hadrian re-founded the city of Jerusalem as a Roman colony, under the name of *Colonia Aelia Capitolina*, shortly before or, more probably, after the second Jewish Revolt (also known as the Bar Kochba revolt after Simeon Bar Kochba its leader).³ The choice of re-naming the city is likely to have been part of the de-Judaization of the province following the revolt (the name of the province itself was changed from *Provincia Iudea* to *Provincia Syria-Palaestina*).

The new city was built as entirely pagan, banning all Jews from re-entering it. The layout of the city itself has been source of much speculation, given that the remains lie below what is now the Old City in Jerusalem and archaeological access to them was and is relatively limited. While the new city shared part of the site of the old one, apart from cannibalizing part of the Herodian building material, Roman and Byzantine *Aelia* descend from this new foundation rather than the pre-existing Jewish city.

The topography of the city

Initially believed to cover the majority of the area of the Old City, more recently Roman Aelia has been located in the area north of the current Street of Chains and

³Scholarly opinion on the exact date is divided, as it is concerning whether the re-founding was cause or consequence of the revolt. For an analysis of the reasons behind the decision to replace Jerusalem with Aelia Capitolina, see 3.2.3 p 115.

David Street: roughly in the areas now occupied by the Muslim and Christian quarters of the city.⁴ Almost certainly the city had no walls at the time of its foundation and its *pomerium* was marked only by the gates. The wall would be erected only in the late 3rd c. AD or at the beginning of the 4th c. AD probably not long after the departure of the *Legio X Fretensis* that had been garrisoned in the city since the suppression of the Bar Kochba rebellion. The location of the legionary camp was possibly on the south-western hill of the city (currently known as Mount Zion) and the area previously occupied by Herod's palace (currently known as David's Tower), part of which appears to have been spared in the sack for this purpose.⁵

While the location is very well attested in the sources, it is less well preserved in the archaeology: a number of excavations have now taken place in the area and have failed to reveal any significant remains of the legionary camp. The only real evidence of its presence is a higher proportion of bricks, tiles and clay water pipes stamped with the legion's name in the area compared to the rest of the city. However, as we will see, it is highly likely that the legionary bricks were used extensively in the construction of the rest of *Aelia*, and are frequently found across the city.

However, given the intensive habitation of the area after the departure of the X Legion, it is not entirely surprising that not much material has been recovered, as it is likely that the construction of houses, churches and roads on the scale that followed would have most likely led to the area being cleared either in the late Roman period or in the Arab and Crusader periods when the area of the Jaffa Gate was heavily fortified.

The area of Roman *Aelia* that is perhaps most problematic in its location is the eastern limit of the *pomerium*. The most common location for it runs approximately along the current north eastern limit of the Old City: however the excavations that have been undertaken in the area of the eastern gate have failed to reveal any trace of a Roman gate that, similar to the northern and western parts of the city, one would expect to find. The only portal present in this part of the city is the so called

⁴For more on the debate concerning the extent of the city of *Aelia* see 3.2.2 p 105.

⁵This will be discussed further on; see below 3.2.1



Figure 3.2: Reconstruction of Hadrianic Jerusalem before the discovery of the Byzantine *Cardo* (Wilkinson 1975 fig 11)

Ecce Homo Gate (marked Triumphal Gate in figure in figure 3.3 and Arched Gate in figure 3.4). The Gate was discovered in the course of the reconstruction of the Sisters of Zion convent in the middle of the 19th c. and has been variously reconstructed. What is clear from the remains on the ground is that it was a three-arched monumental gate: it opened on the one hand onto a road that intersects the main *Cardo* perpendicularly, and on the other onto a large stone paved square known as

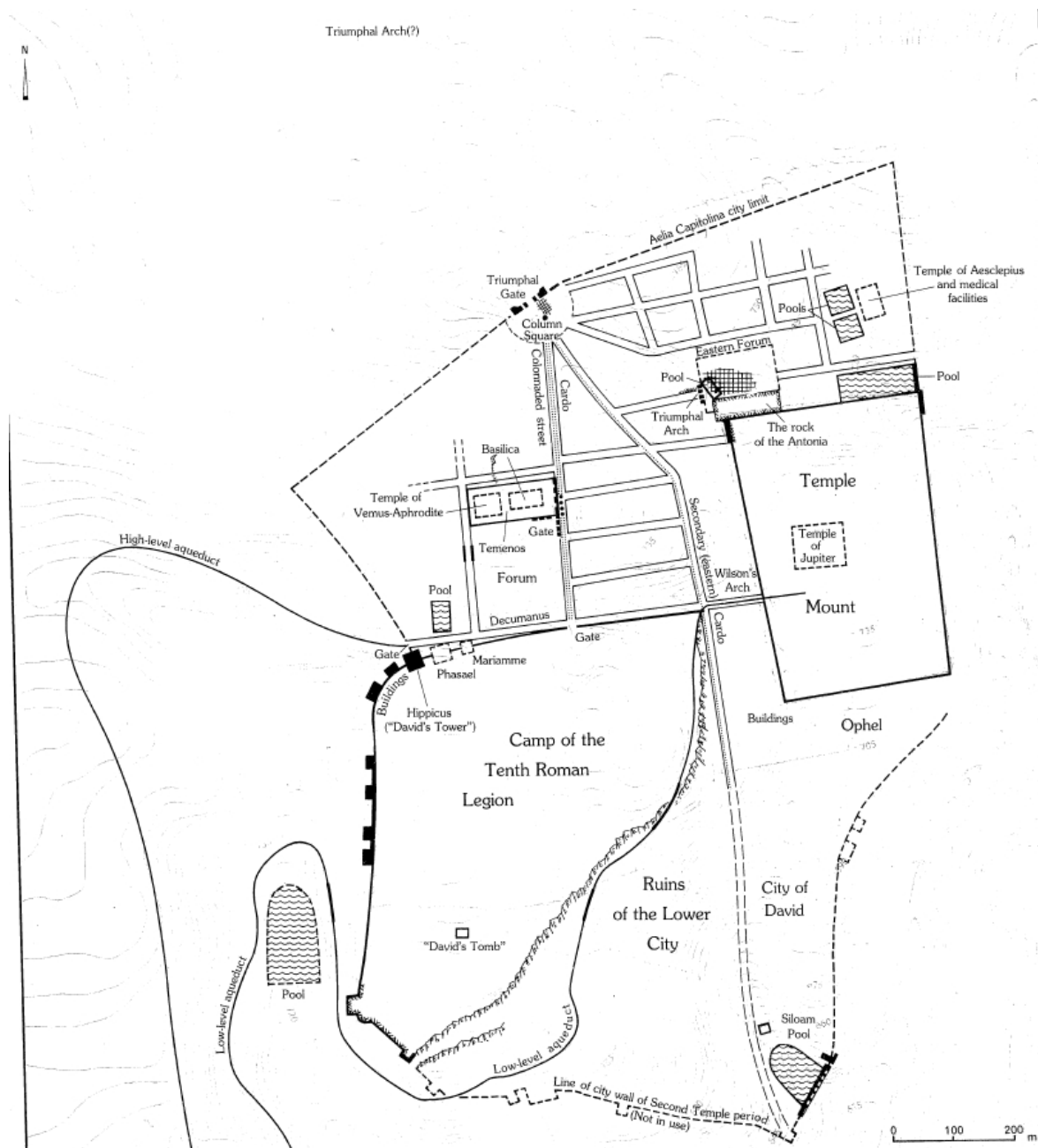


Figure 3.3: Traditional reconstruction of Jerusalem (Geva 1993 p 758)

Lithostraton.⁶ Conventionally it is described as the entrance to the so called Eastern Forum of Jerusalem, thus it would have served as the monumental access-way to a secondary forum (the main one is believed to have been just south of the current church of the Holy Sepulchre). Initially, the *Ecce Homo* Gate may have been the east-

⁶The stone paving covers a large cistern that likely formed part of the city's water supply; the apparent lack of city walls does mean that the presence of a cistern is not probative to the position of the *pomerium* as there would be no disadvantage to placing it outside the city limits.

Hadrian in 135 AD, it lay devastated and strewn with the ruins of the majestic building. The debate concerns the use of the Mount itself and in particular, the placement of the main temple of Hadrianic *Aelia*: the *Capitolium*. The literary sources inform us that Antoninus Pius placed two statues on the Mount and that the Jews were allowed to visit the Mount once a year to pray on the ruins of the Temple.⁹ Further sources report that the ruins were used as a source of building material (there are a number of Roman and Byzantine buildings in *Aelia* that used Herodian material in their construction).¹⁰ Some Christian authors report that the Mount also contained the *Capitolium*, however, as we will see I believe it quite unlikely that the *Capitolium* would have been built in the middle of a field of ruins.¹¹

If the *Capitolium* was not on the Mount, the only other option for its placement would be in the large *temenos* under the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. If, as I propose, Eliav's reconstruction is correct, and the city had no walls and its centre of gravity was in the area to the north-west of Jerusalem, there would probably not have been the need or any advantage to include the Mount within the *pomerium*. Only later, with the construction of the walls did it become necessary to deal with the Mount in some way so as to avoid the presence of high ground dominating the now fortified city.

The city walls are the final part of Roman *Aelia*'s topography : they were probably built in the course of the late 3rd c./early 4th as a response to the departure of the X Legion under Diocletian. The wall itself probably followed the contours of the Second Temple walls where possible, and likely enclosed a much larger area than the original Hadrianic city, thus including the former area of the legionary camp as well as the ruins of the Herodian city. It is also clear that where possible the original gates of the city were maintained, as witnessed by the *Porta Neapolitana* (now Damascus Gate) that was incorporated into the fortifications. This gate is a three-arched triumphal gate with two towers, one on either side, and a number of

⁹See below 3.2.1 The Temple Mount p 100 for the details of the situation on the Temple Mount.

¹⁰Eliav 2005

¹¹Eliav (2003), Belayche (2004) 392-395.

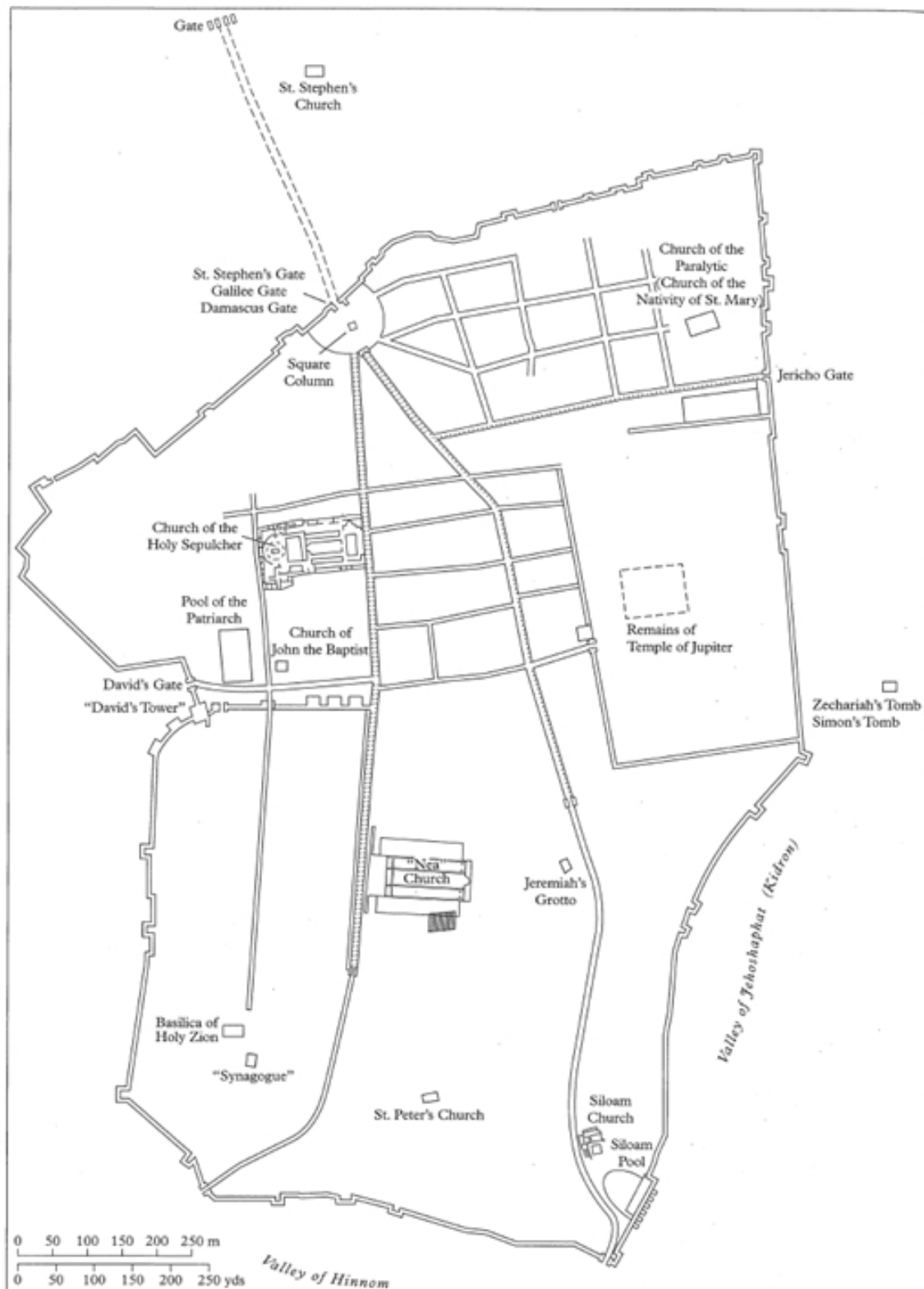


Figure 3.5: Late antique Jerusalem with its walls (Avi-Yonah 1993 p 768)

niches that would have held statues.

There are no doubts as to its Imperial construction or to its integration into the late antique wall circuit thanks to ample survival of segments of the walls that are materially consistent with the rest of the late antique ones found in the rest of the city.¹² The walls are mainly made of large ashlars with a smooth surface, and there is widespread use of Herodian material. This was undertaken by incorporating both individual blocks and the surviving stretches of wall into the new construction. The new perimeter thus brought the Temple Mount within the limits of the city, a decision that is quite understandable even without accounting for any symbolic implications, given the lie of the land.¹³

The streets

It has been long proposed that the layout of the streets of Roman *Aelia* can be seen in part of the current layout of the Old City along the lines of what J. Sauvaget suggested for Laodicea.¹⁴ It was also suggested that the Roman city covered approximately the surface contained within the current set of walls. In more recent years, thanks in particular to the excavations conducted by Avigad in the area of the Jewish quarter it has become clear how the Hadrianic foundation included a much smaller area, effectively covering only the modern day Christian and Muslim quarters.

Much of our knowledge of these streets comes from the remarkable representation of Jerusalem in the Madaba Map.¹⁵ The map, discovered in 1897 in the *diakonia* of the Christian church in Madaba, presents a large area of the Eastern Empire; in particular it is famed for its representation of the city of Jerusalem that, though damaged, gives what has been accepted as a relatively faithful representation of the sixth-century city. It is presented as a rough oval and there seems to be a symbolic approach to the proportions used by the creator: the only clearly identifiable build-

¹²Wightman (1989) 35-39.

¹³Avi-Yonah (1993) 770-771.

¹⁴This is particularly evident in the books written by K. Kenyon. See Kenyon (1967), Kenyon (1974), Kenyon (1979) and Wilkinson (1975). For Laodicea see: Sauvaget (1934)

¹⁵Avi-Yonah (1954), Piccirillo (1999)

ings on the map are: the church of the Holy Sepulchre, the *Nea* Church, the two *cardines*, and a third church probably that of Holy Zion.¹⁶ It is unclear whether the other structures included in the map are representations of actual buildings or just stylized representations of the city in general with no topographic relevance.

The city seems to have been built along the lines of the classic Hippodamean plan, though with a certain pragmatism, that can be very often encountered in Roman cities. The *Cardines Maximi* (interestingly enough there appear to be two of them in *Aelia*, even though it would seem that one was less important than the other) have been identified, and partly excavated, and are still quite clearly visible in the present day city plan. Less evident is the existence of the *Decumanus Maximus* (if it existed at all). When it was believed that the city extended into the area of the Jewish and Armenian quarters, it was strongly suggested that the *Decumanus Maximus* might be located under the modern day Chain and David streets. The fact that the southern part of the *Cardo* is now known to be Byzantine, probably Justinianic, makes this unlikely since, in this case, the *Decumanus Maximus* would have been located adjacent to the *Pomerium* in an extremely marginal position. It is more likely that, if there was a *Decumanus Maximus* of any significance, it was to be found amongst one of the *decumani* that ran next to the *Temenos* or the forum.

In the north the city was accessed via a monumental gate known as the *Porta Neapolitana* situated on the site of the current day Damascus gate. This gate gave onto a large oval plaza with a column in the centre, from which descends one of the Arabic names of the gate, Bab-el-'Amud (Gate of the Column). From the plaza two large *Cardines* branched off: the main one was the eastern one that proceeded southwards in a straight line towards the south-western hill where it reached a gate. The second, lesser, *Cardo* branched off south-east and has been identified with the modern day Valley Street.

¹⁶In this I suggest that the best interpretation to follow is that drawn out by Ranuccio Bianchi Bandinelli in his description of later Roman art as using perspective in a symbolic rather than naturalistic sense. See Bianchi Bandinelli (2002) chapter 1.



Figure 3.6: Detail of the Madaba Map. 1. Holy Sepulchre, 2. Nea Church, 3. Holy Zion. (Photo by author)

The Temple Mount

The effective destruction of the city by Hadrian during the second Jewish revolt (the Bar Kochba revolt), and the banishment of the Jewish population from the city, meant that *Aelia Capitolina* became, in effect, wholly Roman. The population was likely composed of veterans and administrators, as well as the soldiers of the *Legio X Fretensis*. It is most likely that the Judeo-Christian part of the population had fled the city in 132 AD at the beginning of the revolt, and that, given the status of Judeo-Christians as Jews for some time after, they too would have been banned from returning after it was crushed, and may well have stayed in Pella.¹⁷

After the re-conquest of the city the troops were again stationed there and given the destruction of the city's walls they would have provided both security for the city and controlled the surrounding territory that was inhabited prevalently by Jews and Samaritans and that would remain restless for centuries to come.¹⁸

As mentioned above, the city was centred around the temple complex sited at the forum, on the site now occupied by the Holy Sepulchre. The two main question marks concerning Hadrianic and post-Hadrianic *Aelia* are the use of the Temple Mount and the position of the camp of the X Legion. While the location of the camp after the first Jewish revolt is given by Josephus, no source clearly indicates its position after the second Jewish Revolt and it has long been assumed that the legionaries resumed occupation in their former position after re-entering the city in 135.¹⁹

¹⁷Eusebius *Historia Ecclesiastica* 4.6.3: "To Pella those who believe in Christ migrated from Jerusalem; as if holy men had abandoned the royal metropolis of the Jew and the entire Jewish people" All citations from the *Historia Ecclesiastica* are drawn from Louth and Williamson (1989).

¹⁸In Caesarea for instance Jews and Samaritans revolted at least three times between the second Jewish revolt and the Arab conquest. See below: 3.3 Caesarea. On the role of the X legion see Mazar (2011) chapter 1.

¹⁹Josephus Wars VII, i, 1-2: "Caesar gave orders that they should now demolish the entire city and temple, but should leave as many of the towers standing as were of the greatest eminency; that is, Phasaelus, and Hippicus, and Mariamne; and so much of the wall as enclosed the city on the west side. This wall was spared, in order to afford a camp for such as were to lie in garrison, ... 2. But Caesar resolved to leave there, as a guard, the tenth legion, with certain troops of horsemen, and companies of footmen" All citations of Josephus are drawn from Thackeray et al. (1965). For a bibliographical study of the placement of the Roman camp see Mazar (2011) chapter 1.

The presence of large amounts of materials carrying the seal of the legion on the western hill appear to confirm this: however excavations by B. Mazar in the area of the Ophel and the Wailing Wall revealed three buildings dating to the 2nd and 3rd centuries: a bathhouse, a bakery and another unidentified building. These buildings were all constructed with material bearing the legionary brick-stamps, something that led Mazar to suggest that, in this phase, the legionary camp was to be found on the Temple Mount. In this context the summit of the Mount would have been fully Romanised and housed the Temple of Jupiter at the centre of the camp. While this is a suggestive hypothesis, it is not entirely convincing: it rests on the assumption that the buildings uncovered by Mazar were directly connected to the legionary camp because of the marks of the legionary factory on the building materials, and of the presence of a large number of coins bearing the insignia of Aelia found on or in the vicinity of the Mount. While it is fascinating to think that the legionary camp may have been on the summit, the evidence is very limited, even weak. It can equally be argued that the bathhouse and bakery could have been built to serve the legionary camp on the western hill or even the rest of the city to the north, nor does the fact that the buildings bear the legionary mark mean that they were for legionary use only. Brickworks were most likely very large enterprises and did not only supply military buildings, especially given the scale of the reconstruction project that would have had to been undertaken after 135 AD. Lastly, as will be shown below, there is a conclusive argument for the fact that the Mount was left empty; while there is no doubt that the presence of a legionary camp would have left significant remains on the site.

While the Second Temple (or Temple of Herod) was demolished in 70 AD by Titus after the first Jewish revolt, and there are no doubts that it still stood in ruins during the intervening period, there may have been an attempt to re-build it under Simeon Bar Kokhba.²⁰ After the foundation of Aelia, the Temple Mount's role is unclear. Based on a passage in Cassius Dio the most widespread suggestion is that

²⁰For the conquest and destruction of the Temple our best source remains Josephus: see *Wars* VI.vii-x. For the possible attempt at reconstruction see Shanks (2007) 33 and 47.

Aelia's Capitolium was constructed on the Temple Mount:²¹

At Jerusalem he [Hadrian] founded a city in place of the one which had been razed to the ground naming it Aelia Capitolina, and on the site of the Temple of the god he raised a new temple to Zeus. This brought on a war of no slight importance nor brief duration, for the Jews deemed it intolerable that foreign races should be settled in their city and foreign religious rites implanted there.

22

Dio's assertion has been accepted by the majority of scholars. While it is possible that he may be right, I feel that a certain scepticism is in order for a number of reasons: first of all Dio is the only ancient source that mentions the temple; secondly none of the Christian pilgrims, even the early ones like the Bordeaux pilgrim, explicitly mention the presence of even ruined remains of the *Capitolium*; thirdly I find it unlikely that Julian would have been so enthusiastic in his support for the re-construction of the Jewish Temple if this would have involved the demolition of a Pagan temple.

The only sources that do not appear to have drawn from Dio in reporting the presence of the *Capitolium* on the Mount are two late-seventh-century texts, one in Greek and one in Georgian: they both refer to the *Capitolium* on the Temple Mount and both seem to imply that the Dome of the Rock was built on its site.²³ The two texts have led many scholars to re-affirm Dio's statement. However despite this being the *lectio faciliior*, there are issues with this interpretation. As already pointed out by Beylache and Eliav, there is much material that contradicts this: in particular, as we shall see later, the writings of Eusebius, the Bordeaux Pilgrim, Hegeria, and Jerome all follow a similar, and different, line though apparently independently one of the other.

²¹For an analysis of the passage in Dio see Eliav (1997). A number of well-known authors support the Dio argument, among them Mango (1992), Avi-Yonah (1993), Kenyon (1974), and Avigad (1983). It is however interesting to note that the first major work on Jerusalem, that of Fathers Vincent and Abel does not espouse this hypothesis preferring to locate it in the area of the Venus Temple as part of a complex; see Vincent and Abel (1912), chapter 3.

²²Dio, *Historia Romana* 69:12:1 in Cary and Foster (1927).

²³Flusin (1992) puts forth a complete discussion of both the texts, in particular see 29-31.

The earliest passage by a Christian author that may refer to the Temple Mount is a surviving fragment of Origen's Commentary on Matthew:

*At the beginning the abomination of desolation took the form of statues of Hadrian and Gaius*²⁴

As we shall see later, though the fragment may initially appear obscure and hard to place, this may refer to the two statues of emperors, probably Hadrian and Antoninus Pius, placed on the Mount.²⁵

The second author in order of date to discuss the mount is Eusebius who, understandably, is most interested in the state of Jerusalem at the time of the reign of Constantine. In particular he describes what must be read as the Temple Mount in ruins by contrasting it with the newly constructed Holy Sepulchre:

Given Eusebius's interest lies more in the Holy Sepulchre, in the promotion of the activities of Constantine and the imperial family, it is not surprising that he devotes a limited amount of attention to the Mount, and that what attention he does devote is closely tied to the construction of the Holy Sepulchre. His passage however is most easily read as supporting the idea that the Mount was abandoned and that there was no Hadrianic temple on it.

A more extensive description is given by the anonymous pilgrim of Bordeaux who visited the Mount in 326 AD as part of his tour of the city:

Jerusalem is twelve miles further on. In Jerusalem beside the Temple are two large pools, one to the right and the other to the left built by Solomon, and inside the city are the twin pools with five porches called Bethsaida. (...)

There is also a vault there where Solomon used to torture demons and the corner of a very lofty tower, which was where the Lord climbed and said to the Tempter,

²⁴Origen, Commentary on Matthew 24: 15 fragment 4 in Benz and Klostermann (1941), for the English translation and commentary Murphy-O'Connor (1994) 410. The reference to Gaius appears to be an error by the author, and it is likely he confuses the subjects of the statues with the suppressors of the first Jewish revolt.

²⁵The precise attribution of these statues and the reasons behind them will be discussed below. For more on the role of Origen in the debate, see Murphy-O'Connor (1994) 410-411.

Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God but him only shalt thou serve. And there also is the great corner stone of which it was said, The stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner. (...)

And in the sanctuary itself, where the Temple stood which Solomon built there is marble in front of the altar which has on it the blood of Zacharias you would think it had only been shed today. All around you can see the marks of the hobnails of the soldiers who killed him, as plainly as if they had been pressed into wax. Two statues of Hadrian stand there, not far from them, a pierced stone which the Jews come to anoint each year. ²⁶

This is the most extensive contemporary description of the Temple Mount, and is notable for its complete ignoring of the presence of any Roman buildings save the two statues. In this the Pilgrim echoes Origen, and again appears to have mis-attributed the statues. While it is likely that one of the statues was dedicated to Hadrian it is extremely unlikely that both would have been, it is likely that the Pilgrim mis-read the dedication of the statue: a base currently visible in the wall above the Golden Gate reads TITO AEL(io) HADRIANO—ANTONINO AUG(usto) PIO—P(atri) P(atriae) PONTIF(ici) AUGUR(i) D(ecreto) D(ecurionum) which likely formed the base for one of the two statues. ²⁷ If this were the case it would be easy to understand how a pilgrim with knowledge of the city's re-foundation by Hadrian would have mistaken it for a statue of his predecessor. If this is the likely case, one statue would have been dedicated to Hadrian and the other to Antoninus Pius which would make much more sense.²⁸

Later, at the beginning of the 5th century, the Temple Mount is described by Jerome: in his commentary on Isaiah 2: 9 he refers to there being a statue of Hadrian and Jupiter on the site of the Temple, and in his commentary on Matthew 24:15 he refers to the presence of an equestrian statue of Hadrian on the same site. While

²⁶Bordeaux Pilgrim *Itinerarium Hierosolymitanum* 589-591. The omitted parts are descriptions of individual structures that do not influence the narrative of the text.

²⁷The titulature is consistent with that of Antoninus Pius whose full title was *Titus Flavius Aelius Hadrianus Antoninus Augustus Pius*.

²⁸Murphy-O'Connor (1994) 411.

these two passages simply corroborate material found in earlier sources and may well have been informed very strongly by Origen, Jerome describes post-Hadrianic *Aelia* in much broader terms in one of his epistles:

*From the days of Hadrian until the reign of Constantine, roughly 180 years, Pagans worshipped a likeness of Jupiter set up in the place of the resurrection and a marble statue of Venus on the rock of the cross*²⁹

Here he quite clearly places the Temple of Jupiter at the site of the Sepulchre and the Temple of Venus at the site of the *Calvarium*. While this may seem like a small site for two temples it must be remembered that Jerusalem at the time was a small provincial city, a mere shadow of itself during its Herodian glory days. By comparison the main Hellenic temple at Caesarea, capital of the province, a larger and more prosperous city than *Aelia Capitolina*, measured roughly 50x30 m which is significantly smaller than the size that would be proposed for the combined Venus and Jupiter Temples if they were to occupy the space within the *Temenos*.

3.2.2 Late antique and Byzantine *Aelia*/Jerusalem

The topography of late antique *Aelia* can be said effectively to start with the decision by Constantine to construct the religious complex which later came to be known as the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Until then the city had not seen major modifications in its shape and nature since the late 3rd century (which saw the construction of its walls after the departure of the X Legion). Perhaps even more important than the construction of the church itself were Constantine's legalisation of Christianity, and more importantly, of the Christian Church, alongside his generous endowment to the new religion, that meant that *Aelia* would rapidly become a major centre of cult and pilgrimage for the whole of the Roman world.

²⁹Jerome *Epistulae* 58, 3 in Wright (1933).

Constantine's city

The form of the fourth century city is relatively well documented: it was effectively still contained within its late-third-century walls and really had not seen much alteration within, apart from the construction of the Holy Sepulchre. However, we do know that the practice of pilgrimage had already started and a number of the traditions that would later shape the urban landscape of Jerusalem had already taken root, although there may not have been many major Christian building projects, the only other new structures lie outside the city walls and are connected to the nascent cult of the places of the life of Christ: they are the *coenaculum* and the pool of St. Mary, the former being on the Zion hill while the latter is found on the Mount of Olives.³⁰

The fifth century

The topography of fifth-century Jerusalem clearly shows the magnitude of the impact Christianity had had in a century. Outside the confines of the fourth-century walls the attractiveness of the large church complexes present on mount Zion and at the Siloam pool had caused the city to extend southwards into an area that had not been occupied since before the siege of 70 AD, if ever. As a result a new fortification system had to be constructed: it goes under the name of the "Wall of Eudokia". These walls have been excavated in a number of locations: in particular in the late 19th century by Bliss and Dickie and then by Kathleen Kenyon in the 1960s and by Mazar in the 1970s, with the early excavations having excavated the longest section.³¹ Reconstructing it from the excavated sections, the walls would appear to consist of large ashlar blocks laid on foundations that vary according to the circumstances of the terrain. Where possible they sit on rubble foundations but, where the scarp requires it, they have a series of smaller stepped sections in their place. They

³⁰The earliest of these pilgrims is the Bordeaux pilgrim, an anonymous writer who reports on his travels to and within Jerusalem at the beginning of the fourth century, his account is sometimes vague and often leaves much room for doubt, but is still invaluable for the study of Constantinian Jerusalem. For a review of the sources see Aist (2009) 14-21.

³¹Bliss and Dickie (1898), Kenyon (1967), Kenyon (1974) and Ben Dov (1985).

are between 2.5 and 2.8 m thick with projecting towers every 35 to 40 m (though some are at shorter intervals) each of which is approximately 9x3 m. Where possible the builders included sections of the earlier Hasmonean and Herodian walls, as in the case of the section between Towers 3 and 5 of the Bliss and Dickie excavations.

Slightly to the east of the Church of Holy Zion, another road was unearthed on the slopes of Mount Zion. Unfortunately it has not been possible to trace it to the walls but its trajectory suggests that it would have met the city walls in the proximity of Tower 5. This street was constructed by levelling out part of the scarp and by filling in the void that remained partially by constructing a cistern and by infilling with debris; where the scarp was not high enough vaults were constructed to maintain the level of the road.³² South of Tower 5 it has not been possible to identify the walls of the city, it is presumed that they followed the line of the second temple walls, joining the buttressed walls in proximity of the Siloam pool that appear to have survived relatively intact and may have required some minor alterations but nothing significant.³³

Fifth-Century Jerusalem seems to have had an organic development around the new cultural centres in its south-western area. The walls of Eudokia brought the city back to the dimensions it had held during the latter part of the Second Temple period. It is unclear whether the construction of the new walls involved the demolition of the south curtain of the Constantinian walls, as no excavation has been carried out in the relevant areas. As far as can be understood from the limited discoveries that have taken place, the streets follow a combination of the lines of the original plan of *Aelia* and the topography of the newly re-occupied area. Thus the major religious structures are served by the two major arteries that develop starting from the *Cardo Maximus* in the north (the church of Holy Zion) and the so called "Valley *Cardo*" (the Siloam church and the *Coenaculum*).

³²Bliss and Dickie (1898) 78-79.

³³Wightman (1993) 213.

The sixth century

The sixth century saw the largest-scale alterations to the city's form in a brief period of time since the reign of Constantine. Much of this was due to the activities undertaken under the reign of Justinian, as part of his Empire-wide programme of monumental reconstruction. The two largest and most important elements of his activities in Jerusalem were the construction of the *Nea Church* and the monumentalisation of the southern section of the *Cardo Maximus*.

The southern section of the *Cardo Maximus* was discovered in the late 1970s and early 1980s by N. Avigad whose excavations revealed a long section of road, about 2m below the current level, that slopes from south to north.³⁴ In order to compensate for the variations in level the road was constructed on an artificially levelled surface: in its western part this was achieved by cutting the roadbed in the bedrock; in the eastern part the lower level was compensated for by raising the street on an earth fill (a fact that is partially responsible for the more deteriorated state of this part of the street).

The street itself is 22.5 m wide, including a portico on both sides, the road in the middle being 12 m in width.³⁵ Due to the inclination of the slope, the western portico was cut out of the bedrock. In doing so the builders also included a number of cellular rooms, probably shops; in the south section of the street these were all communicating and were also cut into the rock though they were most likely plastered. On the other hand, the eastern portico appears to have lacked any major commercial structures and, by all accounts, was enclosed by a simple wall. As to the elevated part of the portico, the excavators also recovered a large amount of architectural decoration, pointing to a lavishly decorated superstructure, in line with the size of the new artery and the importance of the areas of the city that it connected. The complete absence of remains of structural elements of the roof point to it having been made of wood, rather than brick or stone, as was common except in the most

³⁴Avigad (1983) 221-230.

³⁵Avigad (1983) 221.

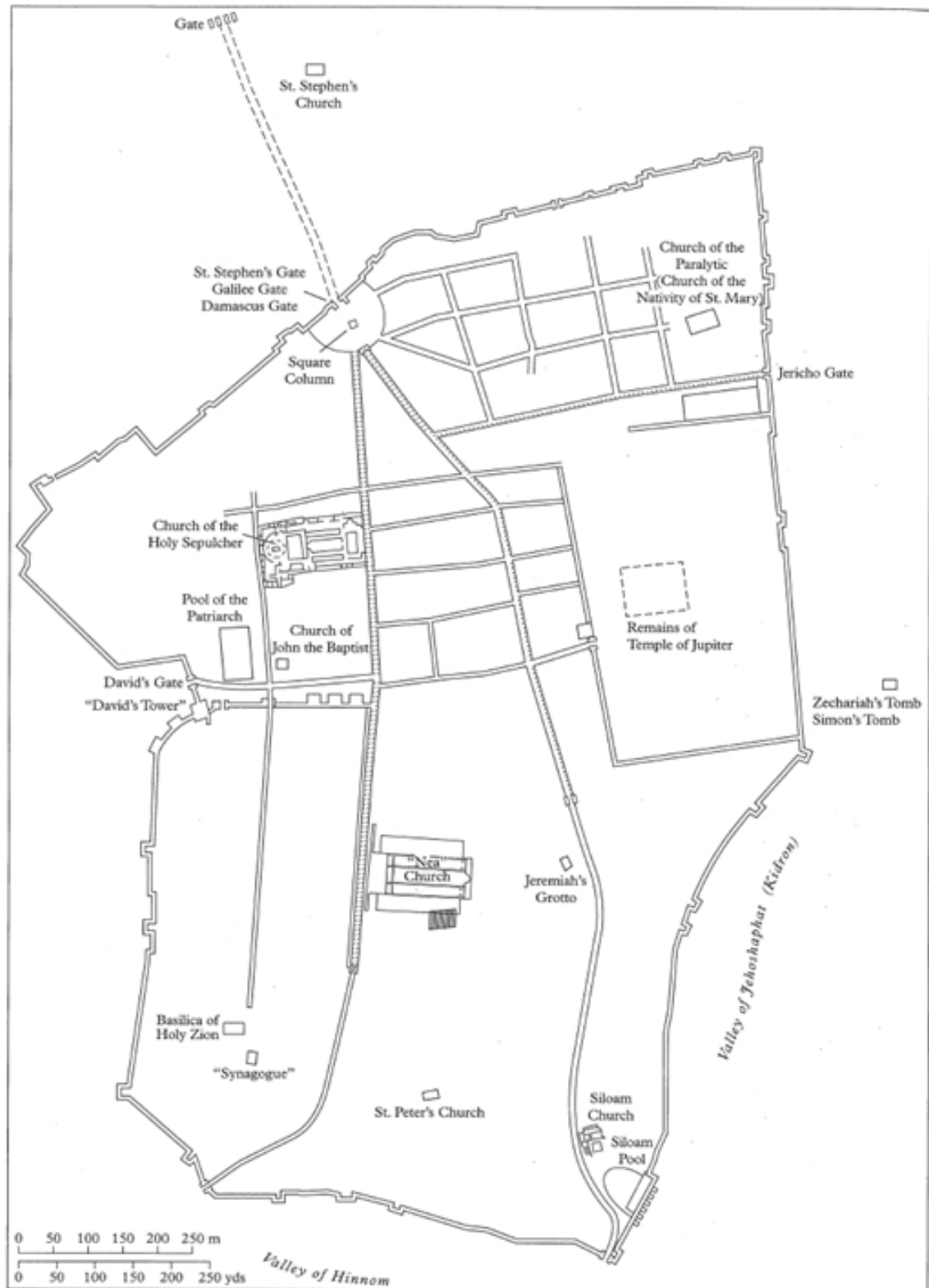


Figure 3.7: Jerusalem after Justinian's building programme (Ben Dov 2002 p 156)

monumental of *stoai*.

On the basis of current evidence it is not yet possible to date the *Cardo* with absolute certainty, but all the evidence does point convincingly towards the actions of Justinian. First, the street connects the two major religious foci of the city: the Holy Sepulchre and the *Nea* church (both built by emperors), providing a direct monumental link between these two crucial linch-pins of Christian devotion. Secondly the measures and proportions of the *Cardo* are almost certainly based on the Byzantine foot (32 cm) rather than the Roman one (29.6 cm).³⁶ Further, the decorative material that was recovered in the course of the excavation presents stylistic traits generally associated with material from the fifth and sixth centuries.³⁷ Lastly, and most importantly, the only archaeological material found both in the foundation fill and the drainage channel is consistent with the Byzantine period. The two most important groups of finds are the pottery recovered from the foundation fill and the coins recovered in the drainage canals under the road. The former mainly consists of coarse ware used in everyday or bulk storage and thus can only be used as a generic indicator; the latter, a more probative material in the search for a date from before the Arab conquest, further strengthening the case for a sixth century date.

3.2.3 The churches of Jerusalem

The religious complex known as the church of the Holy Sepulchre consists of three main parts: the Basilica (or *Martyrion*), the Holy Sepulchre itself (or *Anastasis*) and the rock of Golgotha. These three elements are aligned within the complex from east (the entrance to the *Martyrion*) to west (the *Anastasis*), with the linear and devotional focus clearly placed on the supposed site of the burial of Christ. The complex itself remained essentially unchanged in its major structural forms until the sack that followed the Persian capture of the city in 629 AD, during which it suffered much damage.

³⁶Avigad (1983) 225.

³⁷Avigad (1983) 226-227.

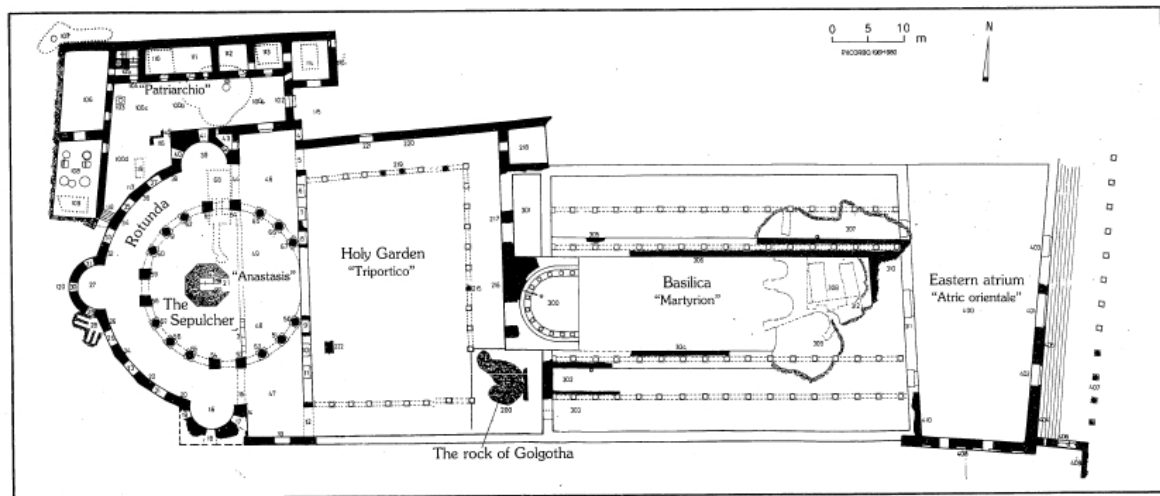


Figure 3.8: The Church of the Holy Sepulchre (Corbo 1981)

In his *Vita Constantini* Eusebius, whose version is followed by many successive authors, reports that the site of Christ's crucifixion and burial were discovered when the platform of the Pagan temple of Aphrodite was removed to make way for the construction of the new basilica ordered by Constantine (though the sources also report the presence of a *Capitolium*, it is most likely that the Temple of Venus is the correct one). Eusebius also states that the site was known to the inhabitants of Jerusalem as the site of the Crucifixion, a fact that led some Fathers of the Church (Eusebius in particular) to ascribe a wilfully malignant anti-Christian intent in Hadrian's choice of placing a pagan building on the site.³⁸ Though an interesting position it appears unreasonable and it seems much more likely that Hadrian, an emperor not known for a particular anti-Christian zeal, chose the site for its location at the centre of his newly re-founded city of *Aelia Capitolina*. According to the same tradition, in the course of the construction work the dowager empress Helena also discovered the True Cross in a cave not far from Golgotha.

³⁸It is impossible to tell how well founded this tradition was, especially considering the upheavals that involved both the city of Jerusalem and its Christian community in the centuries that separate the crucifixion of Christ and the construction of the Holy Sepulchre. In particular the two Jewish rebellions, and the re-foundation of the city as *Aelia Capitolina*, must have had a significant impact on the ability of the Christian community to pass down knowledge from the early days of the Church to Late Antiquity.

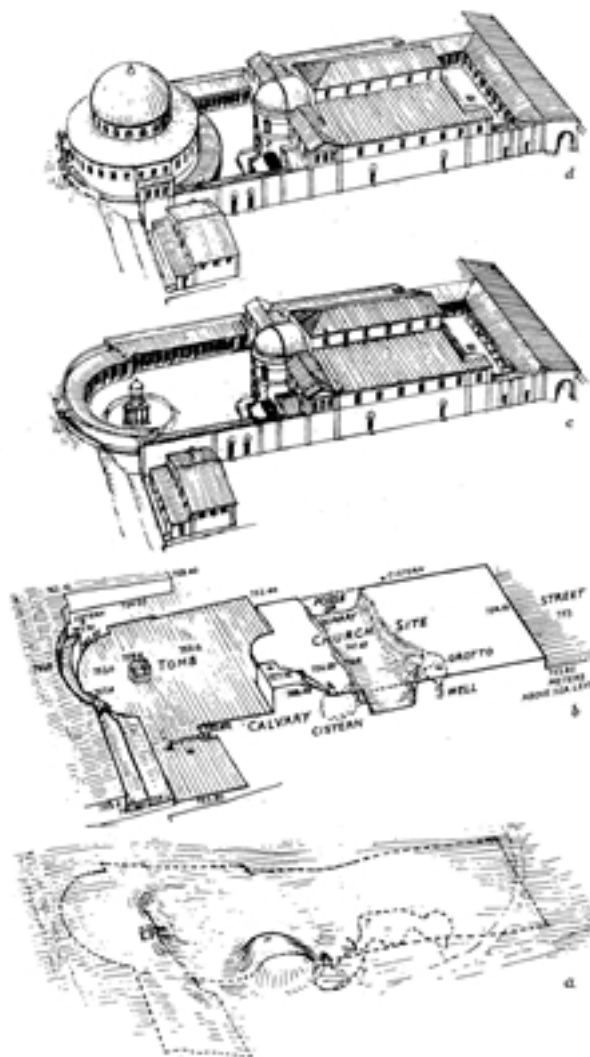


Figure 3.9: The Construction of the Holy Christian site, Constantine drew from Sepulchre (Conant 1956)

Whether or not this be the case, it is certain that the Constantinian phase of the church involved major alterations to the landscape and resulted in the separation of the chosen religious elements from the rest of the terrain and their display, in isolation within the new building. Given the scale of the alterations conducted in the course of the construction it is unlikely that the layout of the new structure was based around pre-existing buildings whether this be the case for the Basilica, sometimes said to be modelled on the pre-existing Roman civic basilica, or the *Anastasis*, whose circular form has been suggested to descend from the presence of the Temple of Venus on site. It is much more likely that, rather than take inspiration from a pagan monument for such an important

other sources such as imperial mau-

solea.³⁹ It is more likely that this is a case of simple adaptation of known structural forms (the basilica and the mausoleum) for an exceptional use. Lying on its western edge, the *Anastasis* was the spiritual and symbolic centre of the complex. It consisted of a large circular structure surrounding the presumed tomb of Christ. The shrine was divided into two parts: the outer one is composed of a western apsidal external façade with eight doors that allowed access and the eastern façade made

³⁹One has but to think, amongst others, to Thessaloniki and the Mausoleum of Galerius.

up of a porticoed transept that opened onto the Holy Garden or *Triportico* where the so called rock of Golgotha is also located.⁴⁰

The inner part of the complex was the Rotunda: the mausoleum that housed the Holy Sepulchre itself. This consisted of a large round building resting on 12 columns divided into groups of three within which, slightly off-centre to ensure its inclusion within the gated area, stood the Holy Sepulchre. The tomb itself was separated from the rest of the rock within which it lay in the course of the construction. It appears likely that the area contained a number of Herodian burials as indicated by the presence, not far from the sepulchre of a multi chambered tomb of the same period.

The Anastasis was entered preferably from the eastern side, here, passing through the 8 entrances on the Triportico, grouped into two sets of four on the north and south ends of the façade. This layout was initially known only from the sometimes conflicting reports of pilgrims. However, the excavations by Father Corbo in the 1980s provided concrete proof of it and laid to rest any controversy. In particular they revealed a number of the doors of the original structure (now entirely replaced by the later building). These were quite large, having been found to have jambs between 3.04 m and 4.18 m apart, and culminated in an arch as was visible from the partial remains recovered in the excavations.⁴¹ Having passed through the entrance ways, one entered a large transept, 8 m deep and 43.5 meters wide. The transept was closed on the inside by a series of gates, much like the ones one would expect to find in the chancel of a church. In effect, these separated the pilgrims from the holy site, allowing the clergy control of access to the sanctuary according to the ritual calendar, thus creating a space that, while open towards the inside, was for all intents and purposes separate from it.⁴² The transept, in turn gave access to the apsed building within which sat the rotunda, whose diameter was 21 m, that stood

⁴⁰Corbo (1981) 23.

⁴¹Corbo (1981) 51-53.

⁴²Corbo (1981) 55 points out how the excavations simply confirmed what had already been reported by a number of pilgrims. In particular he quotes Hegeria's description of the arrival of the Bishop.

on twelve columns grouped into four sets of three.⁴³ In the centre of this, at about 2.5 m from the central axis stood the marble, gold and silver-clad mausoleum that housed the Holy Sepulchre itself.

East of the Holy Sepulchre lay an area dedicated to the *Calvarium/Golgotha*. It was composed of a large porticoed plaza known as the *Triportico*. There is only scant evidence of the Constantinian phase of this part of the building as it was the area that saw the most building activity during the Crusader period.⁴⁴

In view of the scant evidence, the importance of the site, of its complicated history and of the complicated governance of the church, any reconstruction of the late antique phase of the Holy Sepulchre is controversial. The shape of the portico itself is debated, with Father Vincent's interpretation of it as being colonnaded on the north, south, and west sides being challenged by Father Corbo, who, following his excavations in the *catholicon*, proposed that it was porticoed on the north, south, and east sides.⁴⁵

The rock of Calvary, was, and is, to be found in the south-western corner of the portico, it seems to have been hewn from the surrounding hill during the construction of the complex. Bejewelled and enriched by precious gifts until the Persian sack of 614, the rock lay in an open-air space and the tip of it was accessible via steps carved into its northern side.⁴⁶ After 614, this part of the complex endured the same fate that befell the rest of the city: it was despoiled of all its precious decorations and saw extensive repair work conducted on it in the aftermath. Initially it had lain unadorned, as did the Holy Sepulchre, as it was felt that the glory of the holy site was sufficient decoration for it. However, like the Sepulchre, the rock was quite quickly decorated and from the fifth century adorned by a large golden cross donated by the Emperor Theodosius II.

The third and largest component of the complex of the Holy Sepulchre was the five aisled basilica, also known as the Martyrion.

⁴³Corbo (1981) 51.

⁴⁴Corbo (1981) 81-82.

⁴⁵Vincent and Abel (1912) and Corbo (1981) 82-83.

⁴⁶Geva (1993) 779-780.

The Temple Mount and the Holy Sepulchre

The key to the monumental and symbolic landscape of Jerusalem in Late Antiquity is to be sought in two huge construction projects, the Holy Sepulchre and the Nea, and the largest pre-Christian monument of the city: the Temple Mount. Though the city as a whole sees a glut of construction activity, that results in the city returning to the size it had during its Herodian apogee and then further, the Temple Mount appears to be untouched for the entirety of the period between the two Jewish revolts (69 and 135 AD) and not long after the Arab conquest of the city (637 AD) following which the first phase of the Muslim complex that still occupies it, the Al Aqsa Mosque was constructed.⁴⁷ The decisiveness with which the Muslim conquerors appropriated the Mount, and in particular the placement of the Dome of the Rock over what is traditionally known as the rock of Abraham, indicates that the site had not lost any of its numinosity.⁴⁸

As we have seen previously it is most likely that the Mount lay abandoned, strewn with ruins for the entirety of the period in question. However, the absence of recorded building activity between 135 AD and 691 AD must not lead one to presume that the Mount was outside the Roman and then Christian consciousness, and there is no doubt that the Temple remained in the imagery of the Christian community if only for its association with the events of the Old Testament. In 326 the anonymous pilgrim of Bordeaux visited the Mount as part of his tour of the city and gives a vivid description of it.⁴⁹

Though it may well have fallen outside the *pomerium* of Hadrianic *Aelia*, the po-

⁴⁷The only notable exception to this trend is during Julian's reign when the emperor authorised the Jews (that had been expelled in 135) to reconstruct the Temple. According to Christian sources (the only ones available) these attempts ceased after a series of catastrophes. See Eliav (2005) 146-148. The Al Aqsa Mosque was probably built either under the reign of Umar ibn-al Khattab (634-644) or, more plausibly, early in the reign of Muawiyah (661-680). Though in the latter case the hiatus between conquest and construction would be approximately 30 years, it would make the appropriation of the Temple Mount one of the earliest acts of the Umayyad Caliphate and thus still a potent symbolic act. The earliest reference to a mosque on the mount comes from the testimony of Arculf in his *Loca Sancta* dated around 679 and referring to a standing building. See *Loca Sancta* 1.I in Macpherson (1895).

⁴⁸On the role of the Mount in pre-Christian *Aelia* see Belayche (1997), for Pagan *Aelia* in general see Belayche (1999).

⁴⁹See above 3.2.1 for details on the issue as well as the exact words of the Bordeaux Pilgrim.

sition of the Temple Mount, placed as it is across the Tyropeon valley from the main focus of *Aelia Capitolina*, would have made it a dominant feature in the topography of the city and a key landmark in the landscape of the Late Roman city.⁵⁰ Nor did its function change after its inclusion into the city after the construction of the new city walls by Eudokia. The Piacenza Pilgrim refers to it, though not with the detail of the Bordeaux Pilgrim; and even after much time the parts of the temple connected to the life of Christ and the Old Testament were still some of the commonly visited sites.⁵¹ For Christians it would have stood as a reminder of both the life of Christ and more importantly of his prophecy that had foretold the fall of the Temple. The words of Jesus in the Gospels leave no doubt on the nature of the prophecy:

Mark 13.1-2

"As Jesus was leaving the Temple one of his disciples said, "Look Teacher! What wonderful stones and buildings!"

Jesus answered, "You see these great buildings? Not a single stone here will be left in its place; every one of them will be thrown down."⁵²

In this context of avoidance of the Temple Mount and given its continued numinosity, enhanced by its association with events from the life of the Christ, one is forced to ask why neither Constantine, nor any of his successors, nor any of the Bishops of the city chose to build a church on the site. This is particularly intriguing as there was no aversion to building churches, large or small, on sites occupied by functioning temples of other deities, let alone ones that had been destroyed and abandoned centuries before (in Jerusalem alone two churches were built on the site of existing temples: the Holy Sepulchre on the site of the Temple of Artemis and the *Probatika*

⁵⁰One must remember that the level of Roman *Aelia* was about two metres below the current one and that the city was much more open than the old city currently is, as it was dominated by wide porticoed streets, rather than the narrow, covered alleys of today.

⁵¹See Eliav (2005) 140-144 for a fuller description of the pilgrims' activities.

⁵²Luke 21.5-6 and Matthew 24.1-2, follow in very similar terms.

church over the *Asclepeion*.). Nor was there in any way any concern or reticence on Constantine's part in building multiple large-scale ecclesiastical complexes both *intra muros* and *extra muros* within the same city if the situation warranted it, as he proved in Rome where he provided for the construction of both St. Peter in the Vatican outside the walls and the Lateran complex within them. Given Constantine and Helen's apparent awareness of the presence of the tomb of Christ on the site that would become the complex of the Holy Sepulchre, it is clear why that site should be the chosen one for the construction of the first and, more importantly, largest church in the city.⁵³ However, within the context of the terrain of Constantinian *Aelia* this also had the merit of placing the new church in direct opposition to the abandoned Temple Mount. The Holy Sepulchre would have faced the ruin-strewn Herodian Temple in a contrast that would have reminded the faithful of the power of Christ and the fate that had befallen those that had rejected him.⁵⁴ This was not lost on Constantine and his court and was most explicitly expressed by Eusebius in the *Vita Constantini*:

*...New Jerusalem was built as the very Testimony to the Saviour, facing the famous Jerusalem of old, which after the bloody murder of the Lord had been overthrown in utter devastation, and paid the penalty of its wicked inhabitants. (2) Opposite this then the Emperor erected the victory of the Saviour over death with rich and abundant munificence, this being perhaps the fresh, new Jerusalem proclaimed in prophetic oracles, about which long speeches recite innumerable praises as they utter words of divine inspiration.*⁵⁵

It seems clear to me that in Eusebius' mind there is a direct link between the old Jerusalem and the new, that is between the old and new Temples, and that this

⁵³See Vincent and Abel (1912), Corbo (1981), Couasnon (1974), Krautheimer (1986) 59-60 and Eusebius, *Vita Constantini* 3:25-27. For the *inventio* of the Holy Sepulchre and Holy Cross see Drijvers (1992) and Walker (1990).

⁵⁴Early Christian theologians were well versed in anti-Jewish rhetoric and often pointed to the Jews' refusal to accept the Christ as the cause for their downfall. This is true of both the East and the West with, among others, both Ambrose of Milan and John Chrysostom being leading figures.

⁵⁵Eusebius, *Vita Constantini* 33:1-2.

link is expressed through the symbolic and physical opposition between these two buildings. This argument is further reinforced if one carries out even a cursory analysis of the city with basic visibility tools. When running a viewshed of the church of the Holy Sepulchre from its entrance (that is the point where pilgrims would have entered and exited prior to the Crusader modifications, and thus the only point of the structure from which the outside would have been visible) one sees a direct connection with the Temple Mount.

A first glance of the image highlights how large portions of the city are visible from the Holy Sepulchre. If one accepts that the building itself would have created a cone of shadow behind it, it becomes clear how the most prominent structure that is visible from the church is the Temple Mount. What is even more interesting is that the area of the Mount that is most immediately visible is the entrance of the Temple itself. If this were the only material available, one might dismiss it as a flight of fancy or as a simple coincidence, but given the very clear references in the text and the well-known and explored relationships between Christianity and Judaism there is a very clear argument. Further the fact that the Mount is almost entirely ignored by Christians, and sees no Christian buildings upon it until the Crusader period, points, in my mind, to the importance of it remaining in ruins. While it may not have had the same sacrality as the site of Christ's burial and Crucifixion, its role in the life of Christ was such to have at least justified a *sacellum* or small church of some kind. The complete absence of such a structure in the reports indicates that it must have been absent, a fact that cannot be dismissed by the argument that the Mount was outside the *pomerium* of the city, for in and around Jerusalem there are numerous churches constructed on the site of places associated with the life of Christ but outside the city walls.

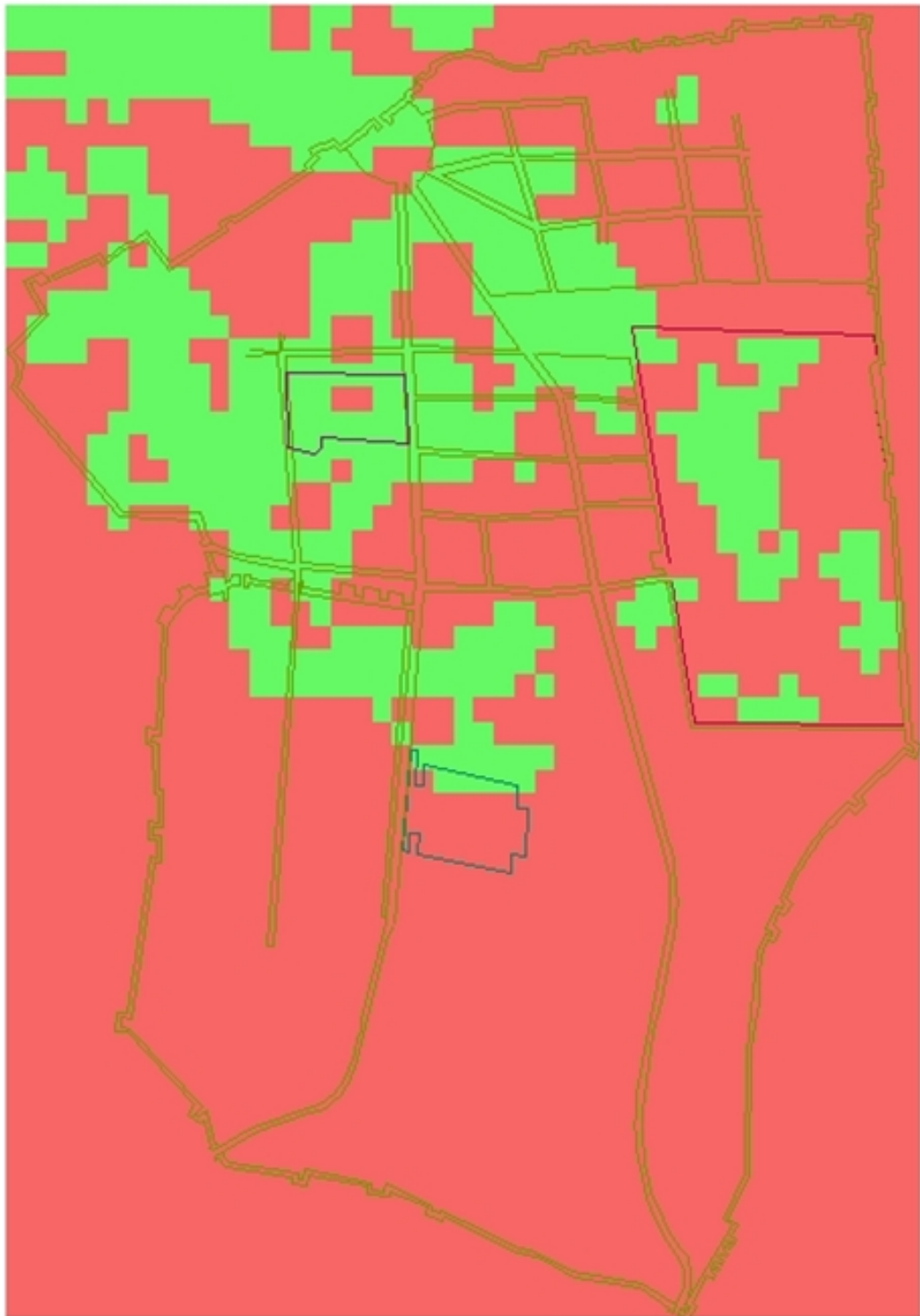


Figure 3.10: Result of a viewshed analysis of the entrance to the Holy Sepulchre (in green the areas that are visible)

The *Nea* Church

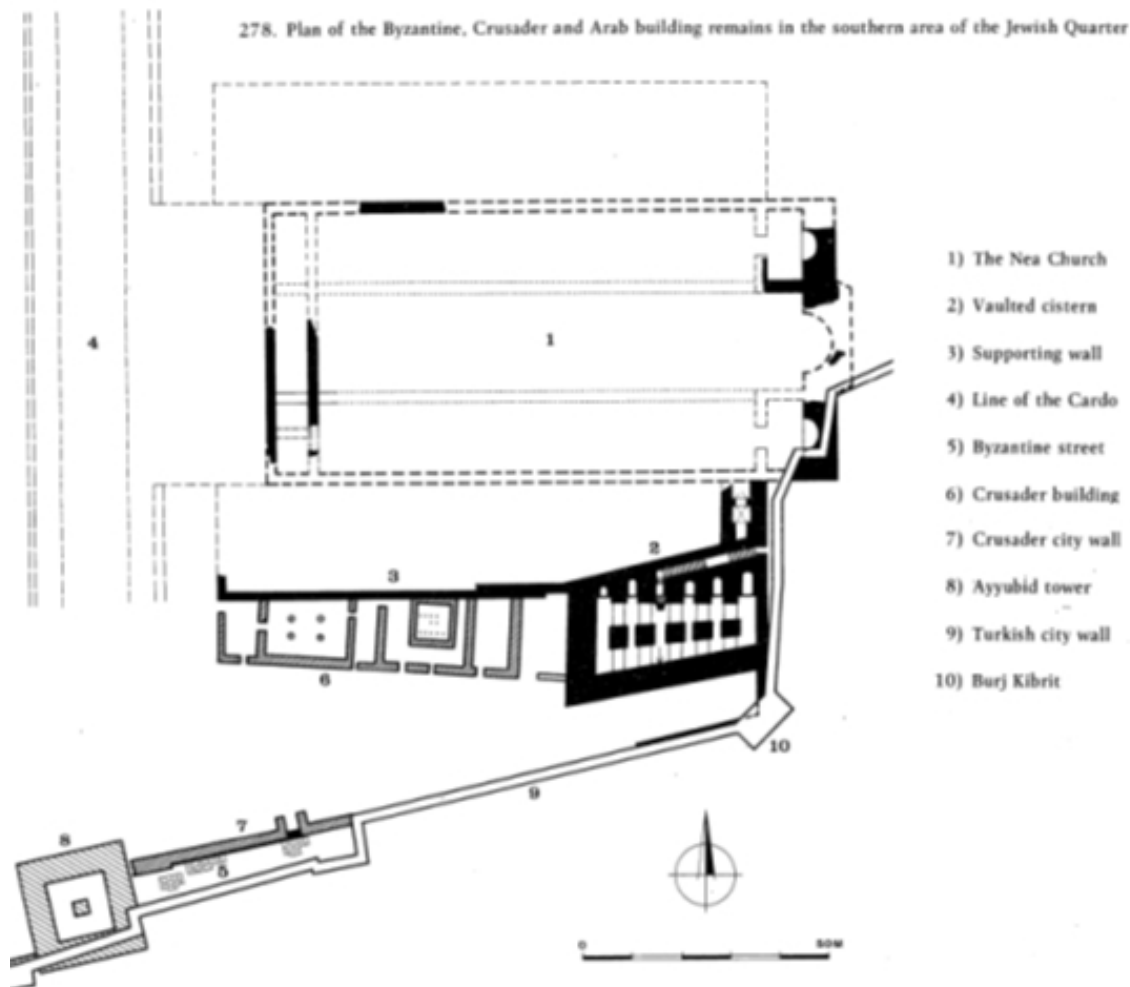


Figure 3.11: Plan of the *Nea* (Avigad 1983 278)

The second major influence on the religious and symbolic topography of Jerusalem was that of the *Nea* Church. Constructed under the reign of the Emperor Justinian the majestic complex of the New church of the Holy Mother of God (ἡ νεά ἐκκλησία της Θεοτόκος), had an impact second only to the church of the Holy Sepulchre on the city: so much so that in the Madaba Map it is one of the very few recognisable structures. The complex housed not only the basilica itself but also a number of hostels for pilgrims and other ancillary buildings, and thus involved large scale alteration of the urban landscape.

Destroyed in the course of the 7th century, its location and form were uncertain and reconstructions were once solely dependent on textual sources. However this changed in the late 1970s and early 1980s when excavations first discovered and then partly revealed the church. The attribution was confirmed both by the massive scale of the construction and by an inscription recovered in one of the walls, that left no doubts.

Although the Avigad excavations exposed only part of the complex, this has proven enough to give a more comprehensive understanding of the form and size of the building than the indications that can be gleaned from the written sources.⁵⁶ As is the case with many other structures in this part of the city it had to deal with the unevenness of the terrain thus to level a sufficiently large area of terrain required the use of vaults. In the course of the excavations the southern and eastern sections of the church were discovered revealing the three apses (on the eastern side) and a series of large vaulted cisterns (on the southern side). The latter served as both water supply to the building and as a foundation for the extended platform on which the church was placed. Excavation of the cisterns also revealed an inscription that confirmed the identity of the construction as the *Nea* church, indicating that Justinian paid for the construction of the vaults, probably in the year 549/550 (the inscription only bears the indication of the indictional year as 13, giving three possible alternative dates: 534/535, 549/550, and 564/565).

From a topographic point of view there is no doubting the importance of the building in a citywide context. This is underlined by the fact that its construction was accompanied by the monumentalisation of the southern section of the *Cardo Maximus* that ran through the southern section of the city past the Zion Gates. Through his construction programme Justinian re-defined the monumental landscape of the city adding both a symbolic counterweight to the Holy Sepulchre and completing the induction of Mount Zion into the monumental centre of Jerusalem.

⁵⁶The excavations remained long unpublished in their full edition until relatively recently. Their publication confirm, with greater detail, what was already published in Avigad (1983). For the most recent publication see Geva and Avigad (2000).

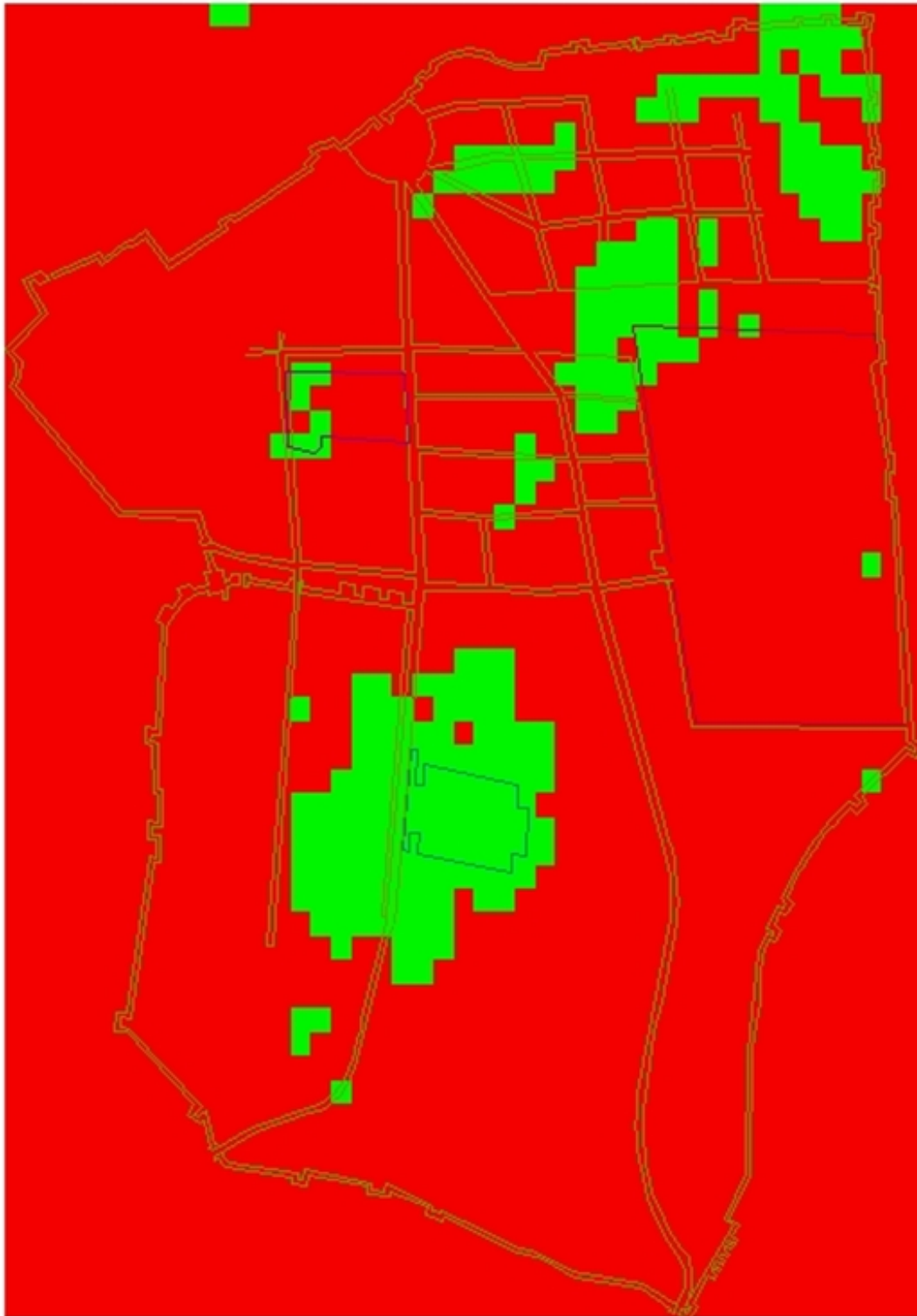


Figure 3.12: Viewshed from the *Nea* Church

While, as can be seen from the viewshed, the position of the *Nea* did not place it in direct competition with the Temple Mount, it was built along the same axis as the Holy Sepulchre. Thus while with his choice of location for the *Nea*, Justinian almost certainly did not place himself in direct monumental competition with the ruins of the Temple, the *Nea's* position certainly connected it to the Holy Sepulchre. Further the *Nea's* construction was not an isolated project, but formed part of a greater expansion of the city by Justinian. In this the emperor replicated in Jerusalem what he was doing in cities such as Antioch on the Orontes where he promoted himself as a great city builder, and what better opportunity to do so than by replicating the actions of Constantine in the Holy City. It is clear how the fact that the *Nea* lay at a similar position on the new *Cardo* as the Holy Sepulchre did on the old *Cardo*, and was placed, not insignificantly perhaps, on the other side of the monumental street, played an important role. In constructing both the *Nea* and monumentalising the southern part of the city Justinian achieved two complementary aims: firstly he placed himself in the footsteps of Constantine by monumentalising and in a way Christianising part of the city of Jerusalem; secondly he placed himself in direct competition with Constantine by placing the church opposite to and symmetrical with the Holy Sepulchre.

The Church of the Holy Zion

A third major church of the city that requires consideration is the Church of the Holy Zion. Located on the south-western hill of the city of Jerusalem, the church of the Holy Zion was probably the earliest important centre of the Christian community of the city (for its location see figure 3.7). Originally placed outside the walled area of the city, it was built on the presumed site of the meeting of the apostles after the crucifixion, and thus associated with Pentecost. Because of this it would have held a high symbolic value for the community, as well as housing the episcopal centre of Jerusalem. It is possible that this was the site of the primitive Christian church of Jerusalem and its association with the Pentecost would have made it an

attractive alternative to the *Sepulchrum/Golgotha* site, then occupied by the Forum of *Aelia Capitolina*.⁵⁷ It is also likely that the church was associated with the cult of St. James, and in the fourth century the church held what was believed to be the throne of St. James, brother of Jesus and first bishop of the city.⁵⁸ These two associations with major elements of the early Christian Church in Jerusalem further point to the likelihood that this was indeed the site of the early Christian community in the city. It was only after the construction of the Holy Sepulchre by Constantine and the transferring of the episcopate to it, that the church would acquire its role as second most important religious centre of the city.

The initial form of the church is unclear and it was later re-built as a basilica, though the claim that this was done by Constantine as part of his programme of Christianisation of the city seems a little far-fetched.⁵⁹ Though it was important, at the time the church would still have fallen outside the circuit of the city walls and it was only after the construction of the walls of Eudokia in the fifth century that the church and the surrounding suburb were brought into the city proper. It would seem that it was only in the second quarter of the fourth century that the church was subjected to large-scale renovations and converted into a large Basilica.⁶⁰

The absence of any major excavations on the site means that we only have a general idea of the actual form and shape of the building and must rely on the information related to us by the sources. There are some considerations that can be made however. First of all, as indicated above, Holy Zion played a major role in the birth and growth of the Christian community in *Aelia*. Its position outside the city walls indicates how marginal the role and position of the Christians in *Aelia* probably was. The fact that the city walls were expanded to include Mount Zion in the fifth century, points to the importance of the area for the builders of the wall.

⁵⁷Walker (1990) 286-287.

⁵⁸Walker (1990) 290-291 and Vincent and Abel (1912) 4.

⁵⁹Vincent and Abel (1912) 451.

⁶⁰Vincent and Abel (1912) 451, suggest that the church that St. Cyril refers to in 347 was in fact the church of Holy Zion. See in particular footnote 3.

3.2.4 Stational and processional liturgy

Though the construction of churches on and their position within the landscape is the most visible and tangible indication of the Christian co-option of space in Jerusalem, there was a second component to the process: the liturgy. In this we are incredibly fortunate that in the case of Jerusalem, due to its unique role within the Christian imagination, we have clear descriptions of how it was organised fairly early on. This is particularly true from the late 4th century onwards when the influx of pilgrims had grown and the liturgy had been codified by bishop Cyril.⁶¹ The earliest text to discuss the liturgy is the account of the pilgrimage to the holy land of Egeria who visited the region between 381 and 384 AD.⁶² In her description she describes how the bishop of Jerusalem lead service in different churches of the city on different days of the week and different days of the year, in particular during the Holy Week.⁶³ from the text, it would appear that the mobility of the ritual starts within the Church of the Holy Sepulchre itself, with different parts of the daily Eucharist taking place in the *Martyrion*, the garden of Golgotha, and the *Anastasis* with different participants according to the phase, with catechumens in particular taking part in the initial phase in the Basilica but not in others, probably as a reflection of their uninitiated state.⁶⁴ Equally there is variation during the week, with evening Eucharist being held at Holy Zion, the original Christian see of the city, on Wednesdays and Fridays.⁶⁵ The major liturgies of the Epiphany and Easter saw greater variety of locations by the bishop throughout the city for the Eucharist. During the

⁶¹While we do have pilgrims visiting the city in the early 4th such as the Bordeaux pilgrim, their narrations do not concern themselves overly with the religious rituals they encountered, concentrating more on a description of the city and its holy sites. See above 3.2.1 and 3.2.3 for details.

⁶²The text is not consistent through the sources, but the attribution is now undisputed. See *Itinerarium Egeriae*, introduction.

⁶³The text is not, and cannot be seen as, a liturgical text but rather is a description written by a well informed but ultimately visiting pilgrim and thus is varied in its depth as well as being often inconsistent, however it remains possibly the most precious document for this period. See Baldovin (1987) 58-60 for a discussion of the flaws of the *Itinerarium* on the matter of liturgy. and Davies (1954) 93-95 for a discussion of the exact date of Egeria's visit

⁶⁴*Itinerarium* 45-47. I will not go into the debate around Egeria's description the Eucharist in Jerusalem as it is of little interest here, suffice it so say that the text separates different moments of the daily service spatially as well as chronologically.

⁶⁵*Itinerarium* 46.

Epiphany Octave the bishop celebrated in the *Martyrion* for the first three days, in the Eleona Church on the fourth, in the Lazarium for the fifth, in Holy Zion on the sixth day, in the *Anastasis* on the seventh day and in the atrium between *Martyrion* and *Anastasis*, probably in the proximity of the rock of Golgotha, on the eighth.⁶⁶ The build-up to Easter and Easter itself was probably the most significant period in the Christian calendar of Jerusalem, as it was and is home to the sites of the passion, death, and resurrection of Christ. On each Saturday of Lent, there was a service at Holy Zion followed by a procession that accompanied the bishop to the *Anastasis* this procession would have not only connected two important buildings but, much as the services in the Lazarium and Eleona churches, connected extra-urban sites relevant to the life of Christ, with the great urban heart of post Constantinian Jerusalem.⁶⁷ The week preceding the Easter festivities saw the ritual re-enactment of the events of the passion, with services taking place at the Holy Sepulchre, on the Mount of Olives, Gethsemane, and at Holy Zion. Again, even when held within the Holy Sepulchre complex, the rites are moved within it to reflect the events as well as allow the faithful to mimic them as closely as possible. Thus the main service of the day was held in the *Martyrion* for the first three days of Easter week, moving to the Eleona on the fourth day, the *Anastasis* on the fifth, Holy Zion on the Holy Friday (In memory of the last supper that was believed to have occurred on the site), the Rock of Golgotha on Holy Saturday, and back to the *Martyrion* on Easter Sunday. The identification of the locations with the events of the passion is quite clear and the fact that each of the extra-urban locations was reached by procession would have further strengthened this link.⁶⁸

The only other late antique source available on the stationary liturgy is the so called Armenian lectionary that, in a 10th-century manuscript reproduces a 5th-century Hierosolymitan typikon, and relates the ritual calendar of the city around the middle

⁶⁶*Itinerarium* 54-56.

⁶⁷This would of course change in the 440s AD when the euergetic programme of the Empress Eudokia expanded the walls back to their maximum Herodian extent including within the circuit the church of Holy Zion. See above 3.2.2 p 106

⁶⁸*Itinerarium* 63-85.

of the 5th century AD.⁶⁹ The liturgy that it describes does not diverge significantly from that described by Egeria though the church of St Stephen is added to the circuit covered by the bishop during the year. Again the emphasis is on the replication of the events of the life of Christ through the practice of the Eucharist and other services on the sites and the procession of the faithful between the Holy Sepulchre and these sites, often found beyond the walls of the city. At Easter the main focus is on processing to and from the Mount of Olives and Holy Zion, with more emphasis placed on the processions than in Egeria, though this may be the product of the different priorities of the two authors rather than a substantial difference.

3.2.5 Conclusions

The transformation that took place in Jerusalem and the urban history of the city are, to say the least, extremely complex. At the beginning of the reign of Constantine, the city was little more than a provincial backwater dominated by a former legionary camp and the ruins of a once imposing city. The monumental apparatus of the city was not modest with at least one if not two major temples, but equally not imposing by the standards of the region. The small Christian community was centred around the church of the Holy Zion in the outskirts of the city. Pilgrimage was probably a small scale affair and centred on the places of the life of Christ, but was nowhere near the level that it would reach in later centuries, even when the city was under the control of Muslims.

The situation changed dramatically when the Emperor Constantine (probably prompted by his mother Helena) made the decision to construct the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. An entirely Imperial project in funding and mandate, the construction of the new building radically altered the landscape of Jerusalem. The temple on the site and part of the forum were demolished; the hill on which these structures rested was levelled, isolating *Golgotha* and the Sepulchre, and finally a large multi-part structure was erected, consisting of a basilica church, a garden or open court

⁶⁹See *Rituale Armenorum* Introduction, and Baldovin (1987) 64-65.

and a *sanctum sanctorum* for the Sepulchre.

The placing of the new structure was not, of course, free from constraints, as it depended on the reported location of the burial site of Christ. However Constantine's actions also had another effect: the placement of the church exploited a very important relationship of the site with another holy site in the city: the Temple Mount. In Late Antiquity this site, the holiest site of Christianity's parent religion Judaism, had lain in ruins for at least two centuries, and appears to have been excluded, if not physically, at least symbolically from the city. However the Temple had been associated with Christianity from its inception through the events of the life of Christ, and its fall had been foretold by Jesus in his pronouncements. This long term connection was reinforced by the words of Eusebius who, in his *Vita Constantini*, clearly drew a connection between the two buildings.

This connection is not necessarily visible in modern-day Jerusalem where the orientation of the Holy Sepulchre has been completely transformed by the Crusader-period rebuilding of the Church, and the inhabited part of the city as a whole is at least 3m higher than it was at the time, but if one recreates the late antique landscape with the use of GIS software, one can get an idea of the relationships between the buildings. Doing this, one sees how the two buildings were directly related via line of sight, and how when exiting the Holy Sepulchre one would likely have seen the ruins of the Temple, thus reaffirming the successful rise of Christianity and the fall of the old religion.

The second major phase of development of the city came during the reign of Justinian. Under his reign the southern section of the city was thoroughly redeveloped: the *Cardo* extended and monumentalised, new housing was presumably built and a huge church complex was constructed. It is not possible to say in what state the Temple Mount lay during the reign of Justinian, but it is most likely that it lay abandoned. It would thus have offered a prime site for the construction of a church such as the *Nea* in a perfect position with unchallenged visibility and a dominant position that would have made it an extremely serious challenger to the Holy Sepulchre.

There is no doubting Justinian's ambition either, and he was certainly not one to shy away from the prospect of outdoing one of his predecessors. Yet he, like his predecessors, chose to ignore the Mount, an action that would continue until the Muslim conquest of the city when, almost immediately the new masters of the city would take over the space for their own religious purposes.⁷⁰ In absence of any explicit counter-argument, I believe one can suggest that the same logic that led Constantine to leave the Temple Mount in ruins may well have been still valid during the reign of Justinian thus, partially explaining his decision.

This new church, the New Church of the Mother of God, was intended as both a church and hostelry and occupied a larger area of the city than the Holy Sepulchre did, though in a less prominent location. The choice of the position is very interesting, despite having the choice of almost the entire city for his New Church and, in particular, the ruin-strewn platform of the Temple, Justinian chose to construct the *Nea* on an artificial platform in the south of the city. There are many reasons that may have led him to do this, however it is important to note that the placement of the *Nea* in a new area of the city had several advantages over other possible locations: first of all it allowed Justinian to preserve the link between the Holy Sepulchre and the Temple Mount; secondly it allowed him to build his new structure in a symbolic balance with the Constantinian basilica as it was placed on the other side of the valley and on the opposite side of the city; thirdly it allowed the construction of a new segment of the city to coincide with the construction of a new church in a way allowing him to partially re-found the city in his own image and strengthen his ideology of Imperial re-foundation and his role as a city-building ruler.⁷¹

In conclusion I argue that the Temple Mount occupied a key role in the symbolic map of Jerusalem. The intimate connection between the ruins of Solomon's Temple,

⁷⁰ As mentioned previously, while the Dome of the Rock dates to the 690's the original phase of the Al Aqsa mosque probably dates to the very beginning of the reign of Muawiyah or even the mosque of Umar, and is reported as well established in the 670's. See above page 115.

⁷¹ Justinian's ambition to re-found or at least reconstruct the Roman Empire is well known. Equally he is widely known for his role in re-constructing cities like Antioch and endowing them with important religious structures. He also undertook important foundations like the one of *Justiniana Prima* (modern day Caricin Grad) that he founded entirely *ex novo* as a capital for Illyricum.

the events of the life of Christ and his prophecy played a key role in this, a role that was reinforced by the works of key figures in the early church such as Eusebius. The later Christian topography of the city must have been shaped by the existing buildings and by the competing egos of successive emperors, yet the Mount looms large for the absence of any reported building work upon it, work that given the importance of the city would not have gone unreported. It is thus clear in my mind that it was left intentionally in a state of ruin to serve as a symbolic counterweight to the Christian churches of the city as well as an affirmation of the triumph of Christianity over the Jews that had refused the salvific message of Christ.

In all this the major absentees are the gods of the Hellenes: the Temple of Venus was obliterated by Constantine in the construction of the Holy Sepulchre, and it ceased to play a role of any kind in the narrative of Jerusalem if not as the object of vituperation by Christian authors for covering the site of the crucifixion and burial of Christ. The *Asclepeion* was also converted into a church and the site maintained its curative role, but for the majority of the period it was an extra-urban site well beyond the boundary of the city's *pomerium*. Apart from these buildings we have no record of any other major Hellenic religious buildings apart from the much disputed *Capitolium* whose location is in doubt, and it would appear likely that after Constantine's intervention Hellenic cults were relegated to the private sphere. In Jerusalem thus the contrast Christians wished to emphasise was with the rival, and senior, monotheistic cult, Judaism. Elsewhere in the Levant, as we shall see, it was with traditional Hellenic cults.

3.3 Gerasa

3.3.1 Introduction

The site of Gerasa has probably been occupied since the Neolithic. It rose to prominence during the Hellenistic period when, under the auspices of Perdiccas (one of

Alexander's generals) it was established as a city.⁷² In the centuries that followed it existed as a Greek city and changed hands along with the rest of the region with the ebb and flow of the conflict between the Ptolemies, the Seleucids, and the Hasmonians.⁷³ Absorbed into the Roman Empire by Pompey in 62 BC, Gerasa continued to prosper from the proceeds of agriculture, trade and industry. Left mostly unscathed by the two Jewish revolts, it was transferred from the province of Syria to that of Arabia at the formation of the latter in 111 AD.

The 2nd century AD brought with it much prosperity and, in the tradition of local civic euergetism, a complete reconstruction of the city centre was undertaken, resulting in its full monumentalisation, re-construction of the major temples, a triumphal arch (probably built in occasion of Hadrian's visit in 130 AD), and a Hippodrome.⁷⁴ This major transformation was to provide the monumental context for the city's development in the following centuries. As well as its Roman monuments the city has also been long famed for its churches and, thanks to the extensive excavations undertaken in the 1930s, many of them have been revealed. Most are relatively well preserved as are most of the mosaic floors, which means that the dating of the majority of the churches is relatively straightforward using their foundation inscriptions. It is my intention to examine the relationship between these churches with the hope of better understanding the development of the Christian city after Christianity took hold. It is also my intention to explore the relationship of these churches with the rest of the built environment in general, as I believe the chronology of these buildings is especially relevant. Thanks to the fact that for most of them there is a firm date, the process of development of ecclesiastical buildings in the city can be established.

⁷²Herzog (1993) 470-471.

⁷³Aubin (1997) 215.

⁷⁴The excavation of the monuments and their characteristics is fully discussed in Kraeling's monumental tome. Kraeling (1938) in particular chapter 2, 73-169.

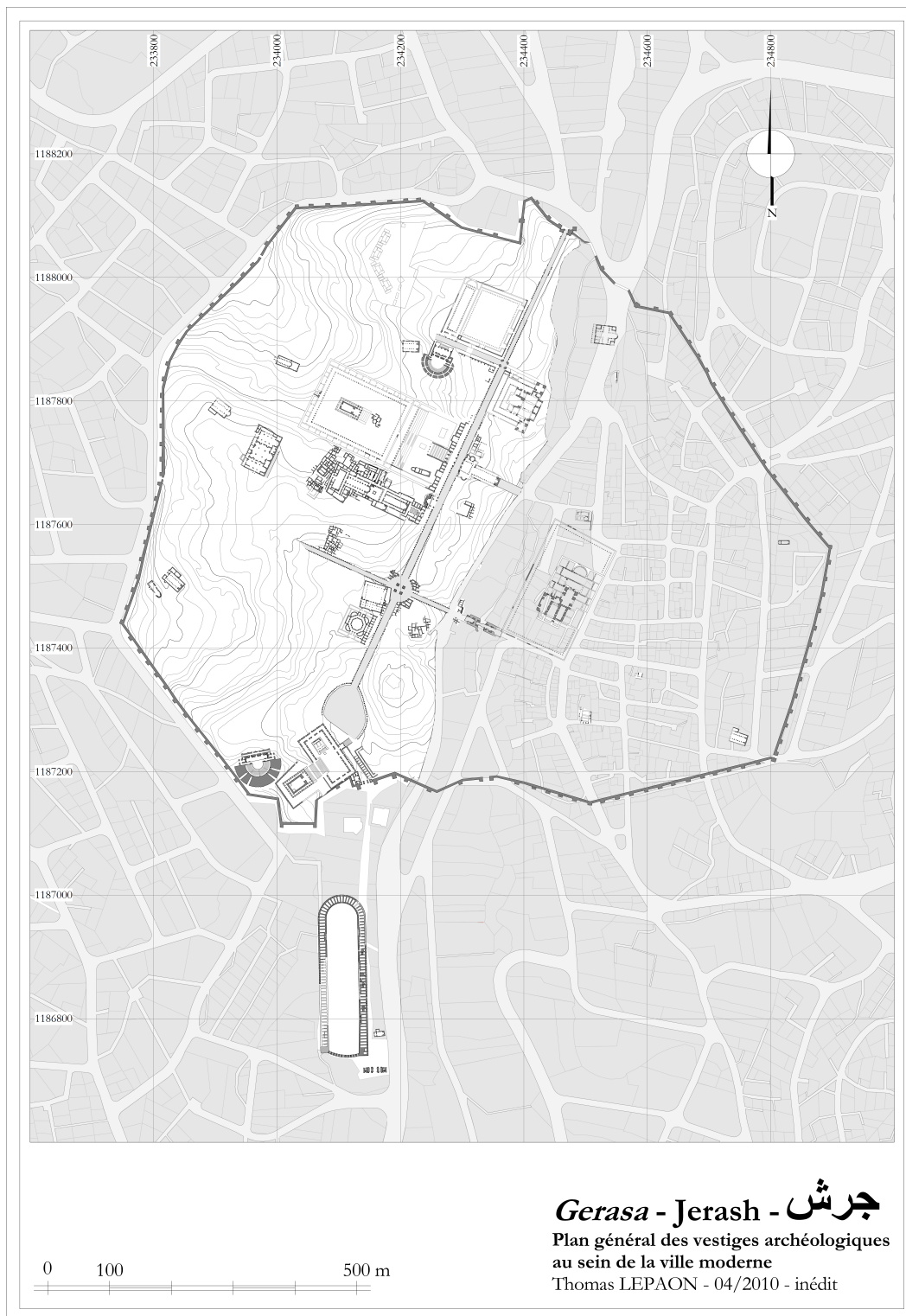


Figure 3.13: Plan of the excavations undertaken in Gerasa, (By kind concession of Dr F. Bressard)

3.3.2 The pre-existing monumental and civic infrastructure

Most of Gerasa's infrastructure dates back to the 2nd century AD. The currently excavated part of the city includes many of the civic and Hellenic buildings that one would expect to find, though some of them, such as the *Bouleuterion* have yet to be found and one can assume that they lie in the still unexcavated or unexcavatable parts of the city. Unquestionably, the two most imposing buildings of pre-Christian Gerasa are the two major Hellenic Temples: the Temple of Zeus and the Temple of Artemis. The hippodrome is the largest civic building, and the others are generally bathhouses though an indoor market, or *macellum*, has also been found. As both the pattern of excavations and the layout of cities of the age would lead us to suppose, most structures were aligned along the main axes of the city, in particular along the main north-south thoroughfare. Here one finds the main temples, the *macellum* and the largest baths and the two largest known squares: the large octagonal porticoed square and the smaller square at the interception of the *Cardo Maximus* and the *Decumanus Maximus* where a *tetrapylon* was erected in the 3rd century.

In essence, this part of the city can be construed as the upper city with the majority of the civic and monumental infrastructure with a limited (though not insubstantial) amount of housing, while it is likely that the rest of the city on the other side of the *wadi* served as the main area of habitation. The presence of the large *propylaeon*/bridge in front of the Temple of Artemis (later adapted and transformed into the so called Propylaea Church) suggests that there was a need to connect the two sides of the city ritually as well as physically and recurrent processions are likely to have followed this route.

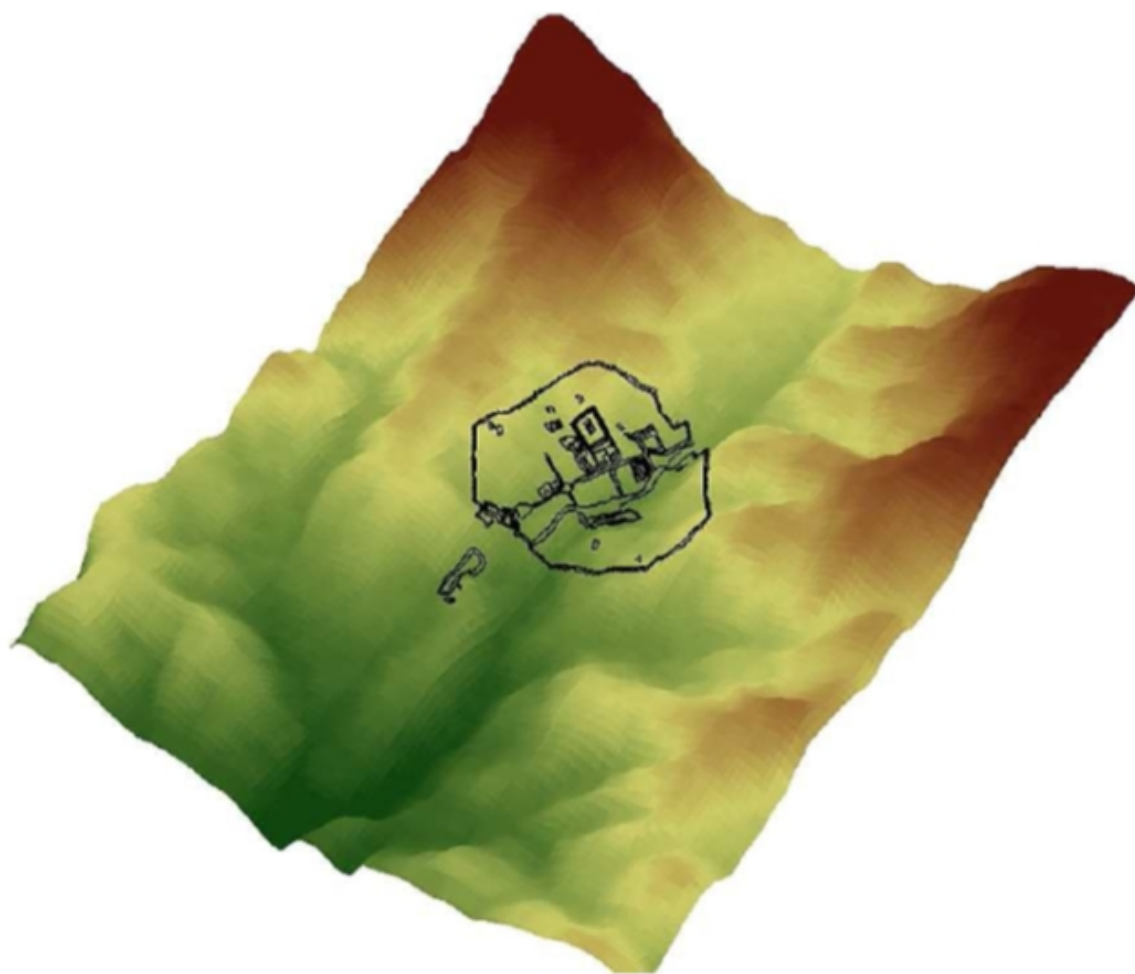


Figure 3.14: The city of Gerasa and its topography

The Temple of Zeus

The Temple of Zeus stands in the south of the city on a small hill that allowed the construction of a double pedestal, and ensured that the building overlooked the lower city across the *wadi* as well as a large part of the upper city. The current remains date to the year 163 AD and appear to be the latest in a series of such temples, suggesting that the site had been of some prominence for much of the history of the city.⁷⁵ Below the main podium lay a second terrace, which housed a smaller temple, that connected the complex to the oval *agora*; as well as providing space for the monumental staircase, though unlike the case of the Temple of Artemis there were

⁷⁵See March (2004) 147-150.

no *propylaea*, it also housed a *cryptoporticus* that opened onto the plaza as well as a row of shops.

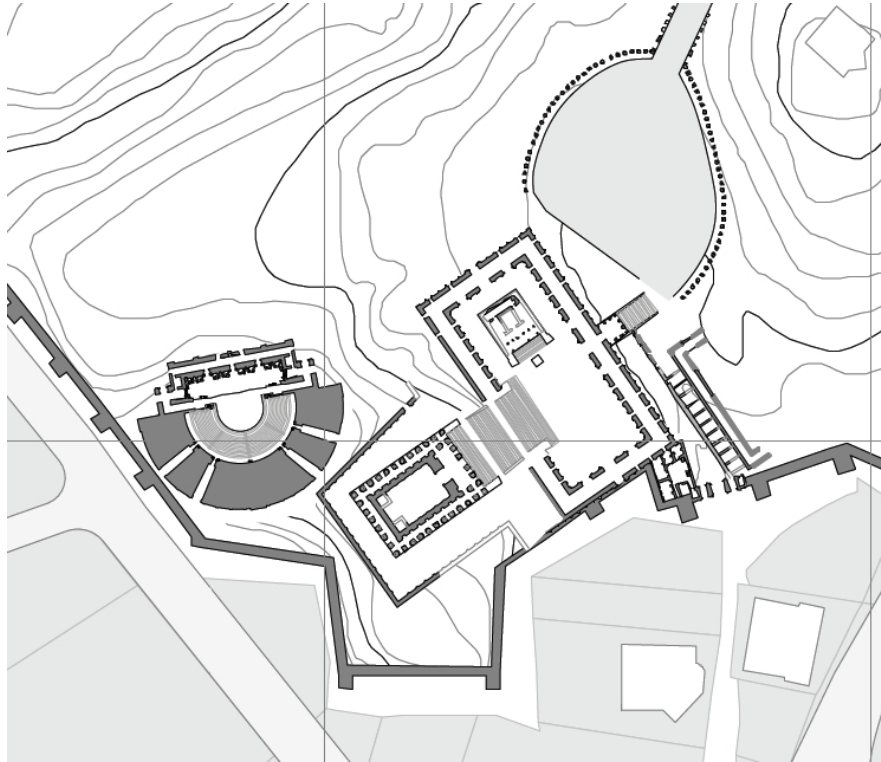


Figure 3.15: The Temple of Zeus and the surrounding structures

The Temple of Artemis

By far the most imposing of the Hellenic buildings of the city, the Temple of Artemis, stands on a terrace of the main hill of western Jerash and its imposing mass (over 34,000 m²) is visible from throughout the city. Current ruins have been heavily reconstructed, and probably give a good approximation of the form of the building when it was completed in the 2nd century AD.

The whole complex is oriented east-west and was accessed from the east as are all the complexes found along the *Cardo Maximus*, the city's main thoroughfare. Abandoned sometime in the 4th century AD the temple apparently stood in ruins until the arrival of the Arabs. After the conquest, much like the rest of the city centre, the Artemision was taken over by the new arrivals and turned over to industrial use (as happened with the theatre and the area behind the Temple of Zeus). There is little

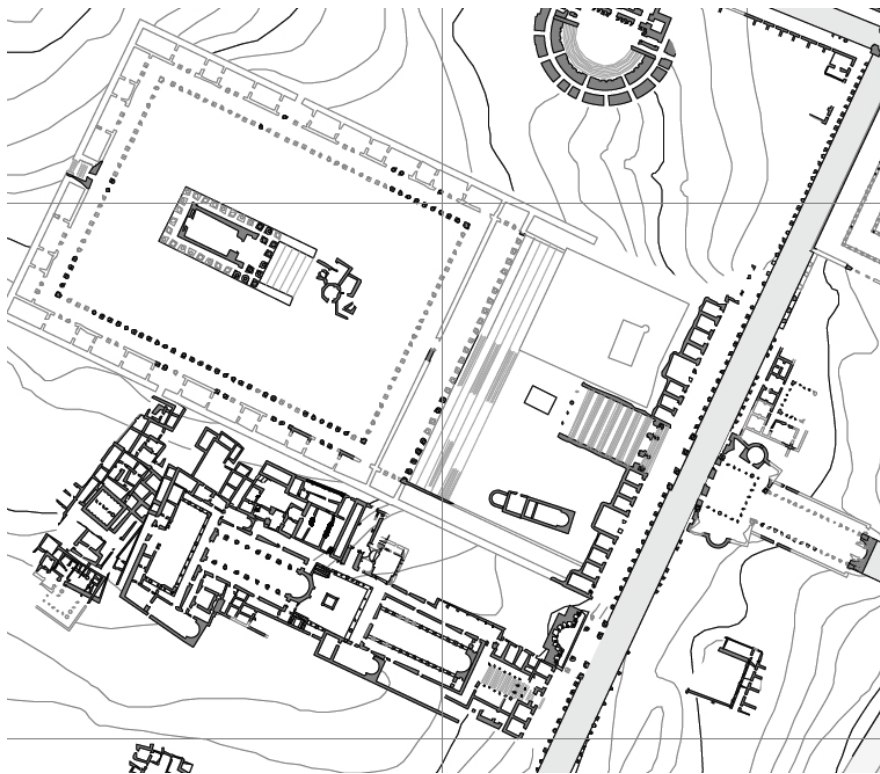


Figure 3.16: The Temple of Artemis and the surrounding structures

indication of the use of the building between the 4th century and the arrival of the Arabs, the only trace is a fragmentary inscription surmounted by a cross reported by Kraeling.

Unfortunately the inscription itself was too badly damaged to allow for a reconstruction and one has to believe that the building was left abandoned, especially given the rapid reconversion to industrial purposes that would otherwise be inconsistent with other patterns of Arab behaviour in the city.⁷⁶

The building was accessed through a double set of *propylaea*, one that opened onto the road and a second one that has already been mentioned, that connected it

⁷⁶For instance the houses excavated to the north of the *macellum* see complete continuity in use after the Arab conquest, and the recently discovered mosque was built on the site of a bathhouse that, by all accounts had already been partially abandoned in the course of Late Antiquity. If the Temple of Artemis had seen some kind of continued use one would expect a hiatus between conquest and conversion to industrial purposes. Further there is no indication of use in the written records. However it must be noted that the subsequent alterations carried out by the Arabs first, and the Jordanian restorers later, may well have resulted in the demolition of such remains. For the *macellum* and the houses, see Uscatescu and Martín-Bueno (1997); for the Artemision, see Kraeling (1938) 139-148.

via a bridge to the other side of the river. The main set of gates, those west of the *Cardo*, were 19.53 m wide and 14.8 m deep and highly ornate with both *exedrae*, columns and reliefs.⁷⁷ Though many parts were later damaged, the *propylaea* were maintained throughout Late Antiquity, most likely to maintain the aesthetic and decorative continuity of the street front. From the gates one entered the forecourt and then the large porticoed court where the temple stood. The bulk of the temple consists of a large *peripteros* building of the Corinthian order based on a podium that measures 22.6 m in width, 40.1 m in length and 4.32 m in height. The columns are around 13m wide at the base, and are made out of local limestone, as is the rest of the complex.

⁷⁷The scale of the *propylaea* is such that the building would be re-used later on as a church, and the road leading to them from the bridge was 11 m wide. For the church, see below Propylaea Church; for the road, see Kraeling (1938) 126.

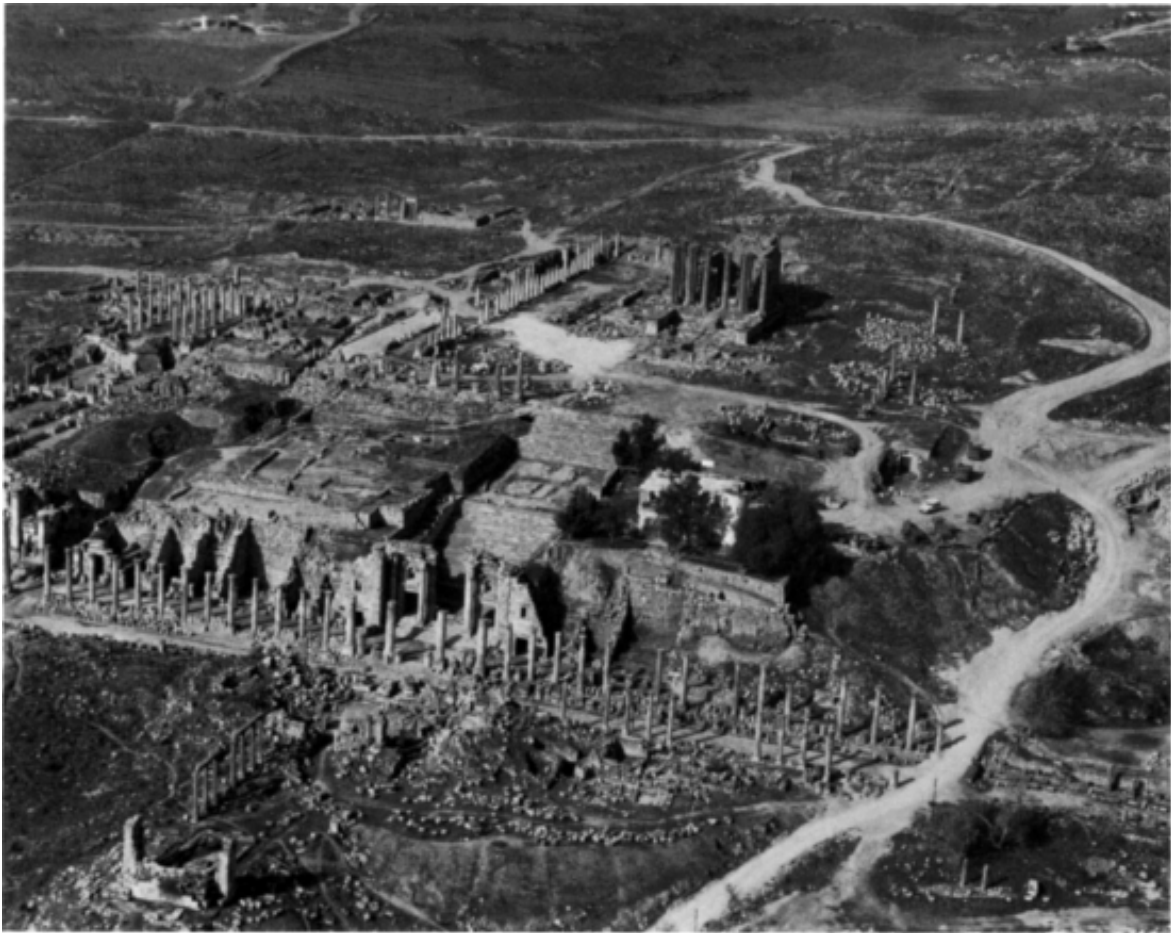


Figure 3.17: Aerial photograph of the Artemision prior to the anastylosis conducted by the Italian mission in 1984 (Parapetti 1989)

3.3.3 The churches

The Cathedral Church

The pre Christian temple The presence of a temple under the Cathedral was first suggested by Crowfoot in the publication of the original Anglo-American excavations of the building.⁷⁸ More recent excavation has not only confirmed it but also given us a clearer idea of the sequence of events that occurred on the site. It is unclear to what deity the temple was dedicated, but it would seem that the popularity of the deity in question fell in the 2nd and 3rd centuries as the building does not come anywhere near the temple of Artemis in size or, as far as one can tell, in

⁷⁸Crowfoot (1938) 201.

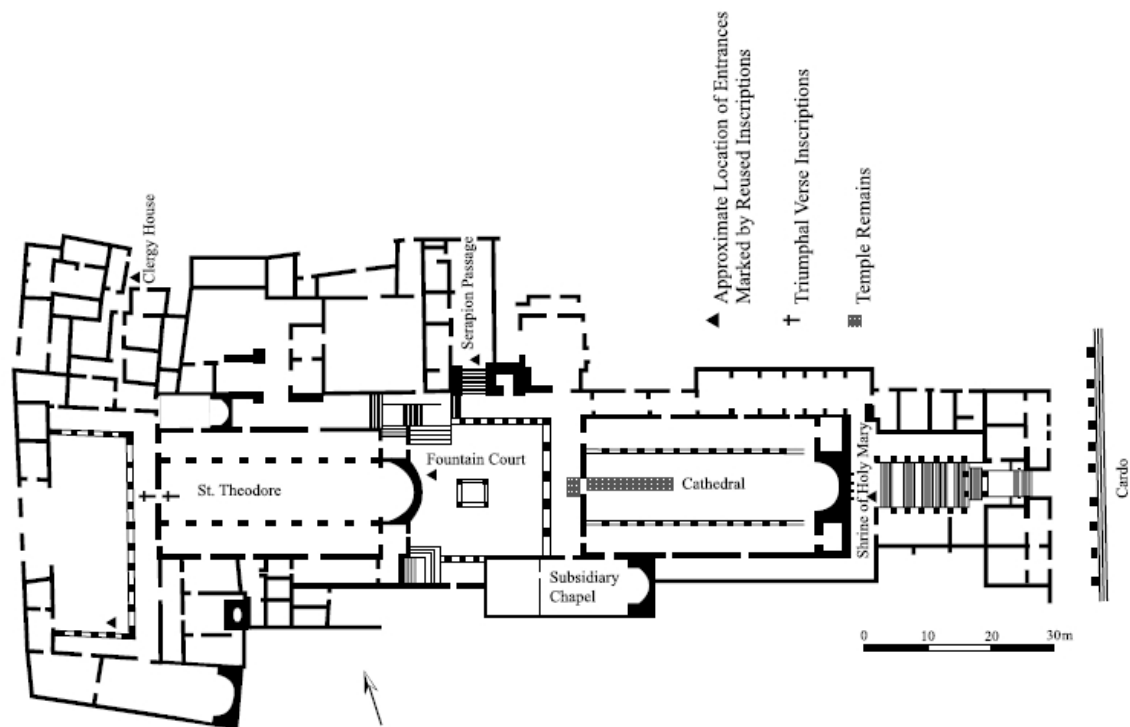


Figure 3.18: The Cathedral and the Church of St Theodore (Moralee 2006)

lavishness, though it possibly may have initially played a more important role in Gerasine devotionality. The pre-Christian building would appear to have had two phases: the first one in the late Hellenistic/early Roman period and the second one in the Antonine period.⁷⁹

Phase 1 The first phase of the Temple dates from the turn of the C.E., it has been discovered below the level of the Cathedral, and was built in the course of the 1st c. AD. The building was constructed in the ochre limestone that was prevalent at the time. From the remains of the lower courses of masonry, the exterior appears to have been whitewashed while the interior of the *naos* was decorated with colours. The temple podium was probably contained by the large wall identified by the Swiss mission in the 1996 campaign.⁸⁰ Little else can be said of this early phase as it was

⁷⁹Brenk (1998) 426.

⁸⁰Brenk, Jaeggi, and Meier (1997) 312.

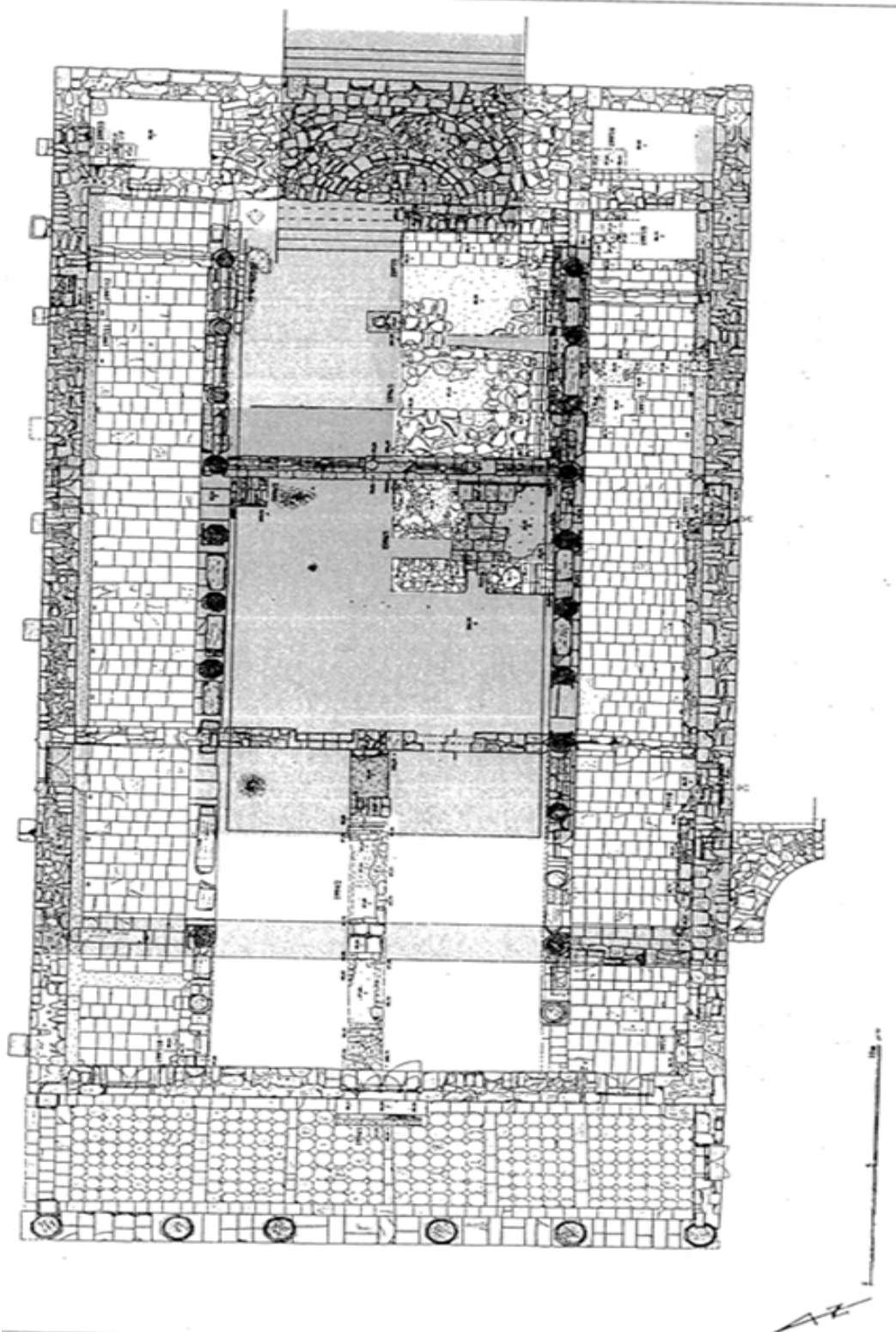


Figure 3.19: Plan of the Cathedral as excavated, in light grey the footprint of the Temple (B. Brenk et al. 1995)

significantly altered in the 2nd century as part of the large scale monumental renewal of the city undertaken at the time. The establishment of the exact date of this phase, and in consequence the previous one, was complicated by the presence of material that ranged in date from the mid 1st c. BC to the early 2nd century AD, that initially led to the attribution to the late Hellenistic period, and phase 2 to the 2nd century AD.⁸¹

Phase 2 During the second phase of the temple dating to the Antonine period, major alterations were carried out on the building. The old building was demolished and a new, more monumental structure was erected in its place. Most of the material newly used in building was the same pink hard stone that was also used for the temple of Artemis; from which phase the re-used material in the Cathedral came. Relatively little can be said of the elevation of the temple as it was almost entirely demolished by the constructors of the church. While, as previously stated, the numismatic material dates this phase to the 2nd century AD.

Phase 3 Around the middle of the 4th century, the temple was severely damaged and abandoned, perhaps as the result of an earthquake.⁸² Though initially it seemed that there was a direct link between the temple and the Cathedral, it now appears that there was a period of abandonment of the site. In this intermediate period, that lasted about a generation, the space was re-used for industrial purposes, probably metalwork, though only one actual furnace has been found. The temple may not have been restored due to the presence of a growing Christian population as well as the presence of a much larger and active Pagan cultural centre next door in the temple of Artemis. This intermediate phase would seem to come to a close around the turn of the 5th century, when the old structures were demolished and the surface levelled to make way for the new, Christian church that was to be built.

⁸¹Brenk (1997) 313.

⁸²Beat Brenk suggests that it may have been the earthquake of 363 AD, it is an intriguing possibility and, though unsupported by any evidence, it remains the most likely candidate. Cfr Brenk (1997) 312.

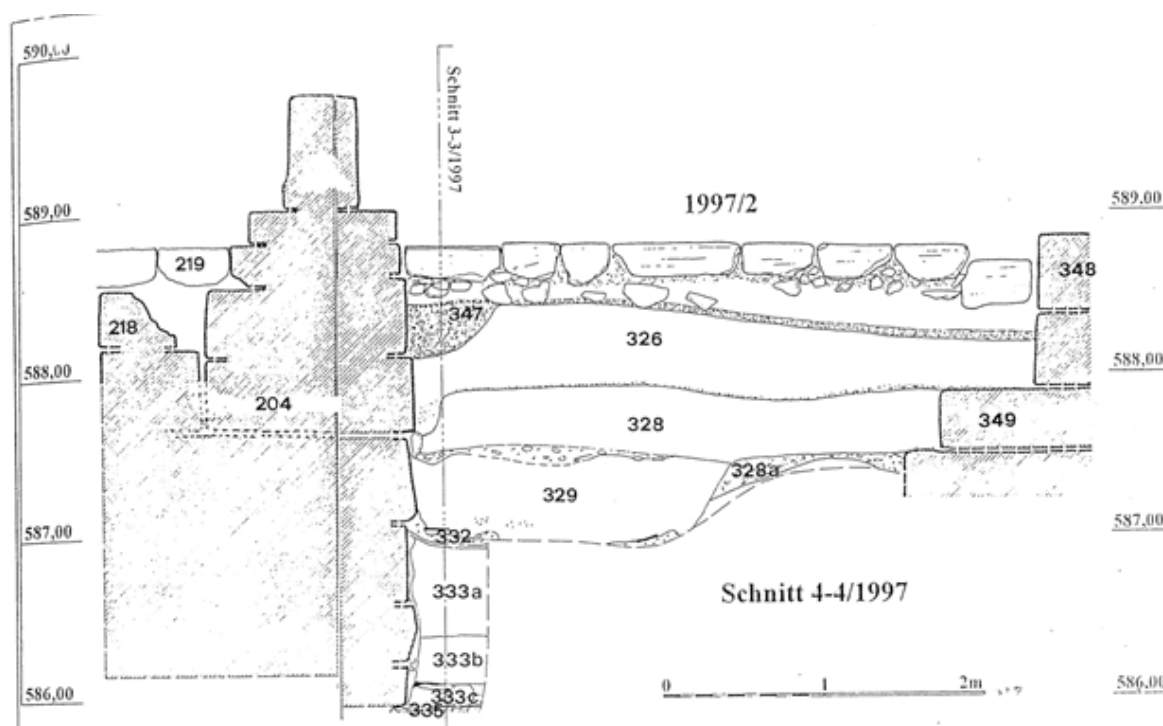


Figure 3.20: The stratigraphy of the Cathedral. 332 Remains of the Kiln. 329 Intermediate occupation level. 328a Roman temple. 326 Foundation level of the Church. (B. Brenk, Jaeggi, K., Meier, H.-R. 1998 fig. 2).

Phase 4 The fourth phase of the building consists of the Christian Cathedral. The Anglo-American expedition initially attributed it to the middle of the fourth century on the back of the quality of the building technique and of the presence of a fountain in the porticoed area to the west of the church.⁸³ In their interpretation, the Cathedral was the *martyrion* with a miraculous fountain that was mentioned by Epiphanius of Salamis in 375 AD in the *Panarion Haereticon*.⁸⁴ This date would have made the Cathedral of Gerasa the only fourth-century church built on the site of a former Pagan building other than the Holy Sepulchre.

The recent Swiss excavations have led to a more precise date for the building, thanks in particular to the over 150 bronze coins found in the fill brought in to form bedding for the original floor of the church.⁸⁵ Initially dated to the 370s the latest of them, and therefore the building, have more recently been reattributed to the year

⁸³Crowfoot (1938) 218.

⁸⁴Epiphanius Pan. Haer. 51, 30, 1-2 in Williams (1994).

⁸⁵Brenk (1997) 314.

404 AD: given the fact that they show practically no signs of wear it is reasonable to assign this date as the *terminus post quem* for the construction of the Cathedral. It would thus appear that the site lay partially abandoned and was used for industrial purposes for about 40 years, until it was taken over by the Christians to build what may well have been the first major building. Though later than the originally suggested date, this date still means that the Cathedral, is one of the oldest large-scale Christian buildings to be constructed on the site of a Pagan sanctuary.⁸⁶

Because of the constrictions of the pre-existing topography of the city and the location of the site within it, access to the Cathedral was gained from the east, via a monumental staircase and a set of Propylaea. These appear to be *spolia* from another part of the city and can be dated to the 1st century; however there seems to be little doubt that their installation was contemporary with the construction of the church. Because of this, access to the interior of church required that the visitor follow a corridor around the north side of the church to reach one of the side doors or proceed all the way around the building to reach the west end of the church. Above the *propylaea*, possibly in the fifth century, a small chapel was built and dedicated in all likelihood to the Virgin Mary and the Archangels Michael and Gabriel, as suggested by the only epigraphic material recovered within it.⁸⁷

At the western end of the Basilica a large porticoed square, containing a fountain was located. Initially thought to be the fountain mentioned by Epiphanius, it was presumed that it was specially constructed for the celebration of the miracle that he reports as occurring during the feast of the saint in celebration of the feast of Cana with the fountain giving wine instead of water. The fountain itself is, as it currently

⁸⁶The Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem is the earliest and largest scale example, the church within the temple of Zeus in Heliopolis (Baalbek) is the only other major case. Cfr Brenk (1998) for the date of the construction of the Jerash Cathedral and Moralee (2006) 187-188 for Jerusalem and Heliopolis.

⁸⁷Crowfoot suggests that the chapel be dated to the fifth century, asserting that the cult of the Virgin Mary did not reach the area until the middle of that century. The lack of any further dating evidence makes this claim a little fragile. However, given that the shrine was constructed some time after the cathedral and that this building has now been dated to the early 400s, a date somewhere in the third quarter of the fifth century may still be plausible. Cfr Crowfoot (1931) chapter 1 and Crowfoot (1938) 208-209.

stands, a large square basin, measuring 4.7m by 4.7m. It consists of two sets of *spolia* from previous structures: the north, south and east sides are consistent with one phase, being made with local stone and similar technique. The west side, is made of earlier ceiling coffers that have been altered to fit the basin and provide decoration.⁸⁸ It also seems that the structure had previously been in use elsewhere, disassembled, and then reassembled near the Cathedral.⁸⁹

St Theodore

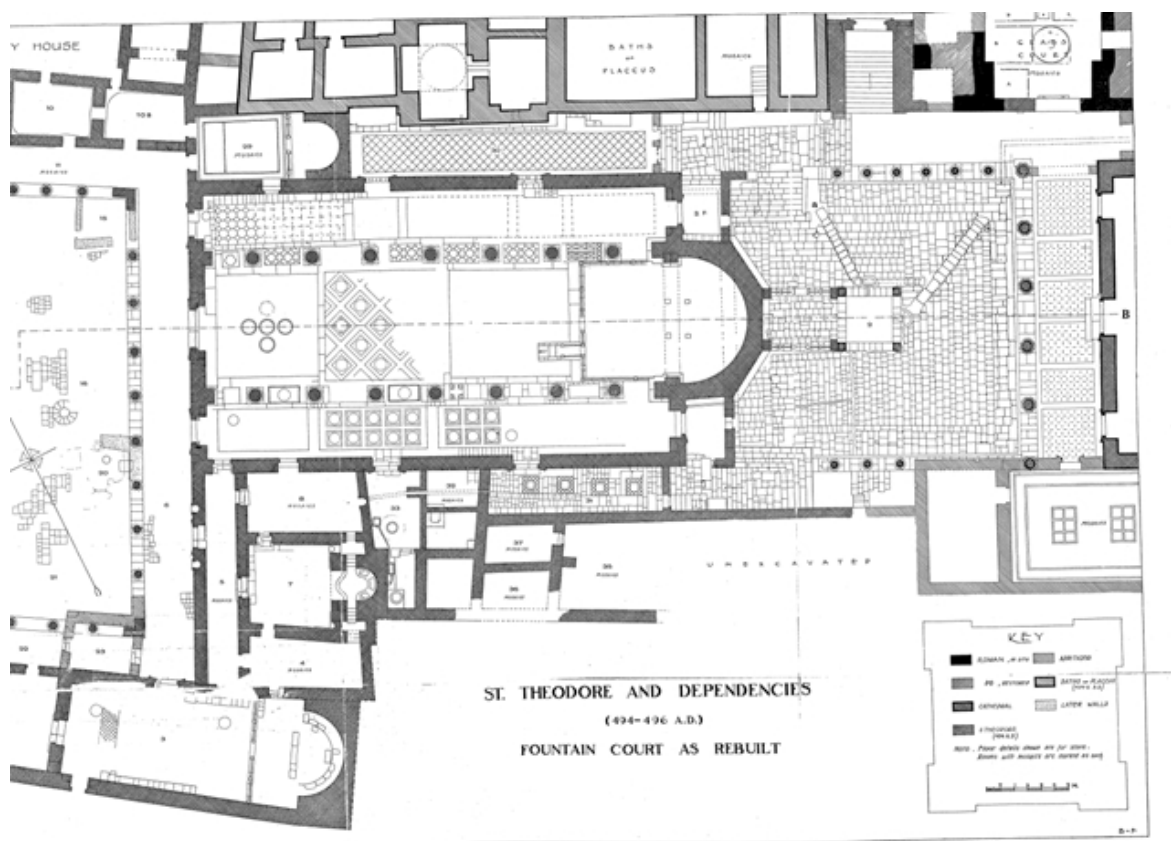


Figure 3.21: St Theodore (Crowfoot 1938). To the right the fountain court with the fountain at its centre.

The church of St. Theodore sits about 5 m above the Cathedral, in the third level: it too was built as a basilica and is only slightly smaller than the Cathedral itself. Unlike the case of the previous church, one reaches the apse not only from the level

⁸⁸Brenk, Jaeggi, and Meier (1994) 353.

⁸⁹Brenk (1994) 315.

below but also from a court on the west side. However, access is not only gained from a side entrance, or by circling round the north side of the building and reaching the narthex and front entrance, but also through two entranceways one being placed at the end of each aisle. Though the presence of entrances on the east side of the church is uncommon in Jerash itself, another two places of worship have a similar arrangement: the Synagogue Church and the Propylaea Church. Again, as in the case of the Cathedral, the main basilica is provided with side chapels, probably added in a later period. However, there is a clear indication that St. Theodore and the fountain were linked: the axis of the church and that of the fountain are aligned. Dating this church is easier than the Cathedral, as an inscription recovered on the lintel indicates that the foundations of the building were laid in 494 AD and the lintel itself was raised two years later. Thus it is clear that this church was constructed at the end of the fifth century, coming into full use at the beginning of the sixth. The church is dated through its foundation inscription that clearly states the date of construction:⁹⁰

Outside

Θάμβος ὁμοῦ καί θαῦμα παρεχομένοισιν ἐτύχθην. Πᾶν γὰρ ἀκομῆς λέλυται νέφος, ἀντί δέ λήμης Τῆς προτέρης πάντη με θεοῦ χάρις ἀμφιβέβηκην. Καί ποτε τετραπόδων ὅποσα μογέοντα δαμειή Ἐνθαδε ρίττομένων ὁδμή διεγεί ετο ο λυγρή Πολλάκι καί παριων τις ἐῆς ἐδραχατο ρίνοθ Καί πνοιῆς πό[χον εἴρσε καχοσμίην ἀλεείνων. Νῦν δέ δι ἀμβροσιόιο πεῖδου περωόντες ὁδεῖται Δεσιτέρην παλάμην σφετέρ προσάγουσι μετώπ, Σταυροῦ τιμήντο[ς ἐπὶ σφρ]ηγῖδα τελοῦντες. Εἰ δ' ἐθέλεις κ(αι) τοῦτο δαμήναι, ὄφρ' ἐν' εἰδῆς, Αἰνείας τόδε κάλλοθ ἐμοί πορεν ακιέραστον Πάσοφος εὐσεβί μεμελημένος ἱεροφάντης

Inside

Αχραντος δόμος εἰμί ἀεθλοφόρον Θεοδώρου, Μάρτυρος ἀθανάτου, Θεοσιδέος οὗ κλέος ἔπτη ἐν χθονί κ(αι) πόντ καί τέρμασιν Ωκεανοῖο. Σῶμα γὰρ ἐν γαί,

⁹⁰The inscription, was first reported by the Yale/British School expedition and is still perfectly legible without need for any integration. See Welles (1938) nos 299-300 p. 476-478.

ψυχὴ δ' εἰς οὐρανὸν εὐρύ, Ἀγγελικῆς μετὰ πότμον αἰετὶ μετέχουσα χορείης.
 Ερκος ἀλεσίκακ[ο]ν τελέθει ἀγῆραον ἔρμα Ἀστει καὶ ναέτσι καὶ ἐσσομένοισι
 πολίταις. Θάροτι τοῦ θ(εο)ῦ ἐθεμελιώθη τό ἅγιο[ν μα]ρτύριον μη(νι) Δί της γ'
 ἰνδ(ικτιῶνος) κ(αι) ἀνῆλθεν τὰ ὑπέ[ρ] θύρα ἐν μη(νι) Δί τῆς ἐν ἰνδ(ικτιῶνος)
 τοῦ θνηφ ἔτ(ους).

Outside

I have been made at once an amazement and marvel to those passing by, for the entire cloud of disorderliness has been dispersed, [and] instead of the former eyesore all the grace of God has surrounded me. And formerly so many four-footed toiling beasts fell down here that a stomach-turning stench arose. And often someone nearby pinched his nose and gave up the desire of breathing to avoid the bad smell. But now those passing over the fragrant ground carry [their] right hand to their brow, making the sign of the honourable cross. And if you wish to learn in order that you might know [it] well, Aineias gave this desirable beauty to me, the all-wise priest practiced in piety.

Inside

I am the undefiled house of victorious Theodore, [the] immortal martyr, godlike, whose fame rushed over land and sea and [the] limits of [the] ocean. While [his] body is in [the] earth, [his] soul [has gone] to "broad heaven", after death joining the angelic choir. He has become a bulwark against evil, an aged foundation for the city and for the inhabitants and for future citizens. By the grace of God this holy martyrdom was completed in the month of Dios in the third indiction, and the lintel was raised in the month Dios in the fifth indiction of the year 559.⁹¹

⁹¹The year is indicated in the local Gerasene calendar and corresponds to 494 AD. For more on the calendar, see McCown (1933). Translation by J. Moralee (2006) 194.

The Procopius Church

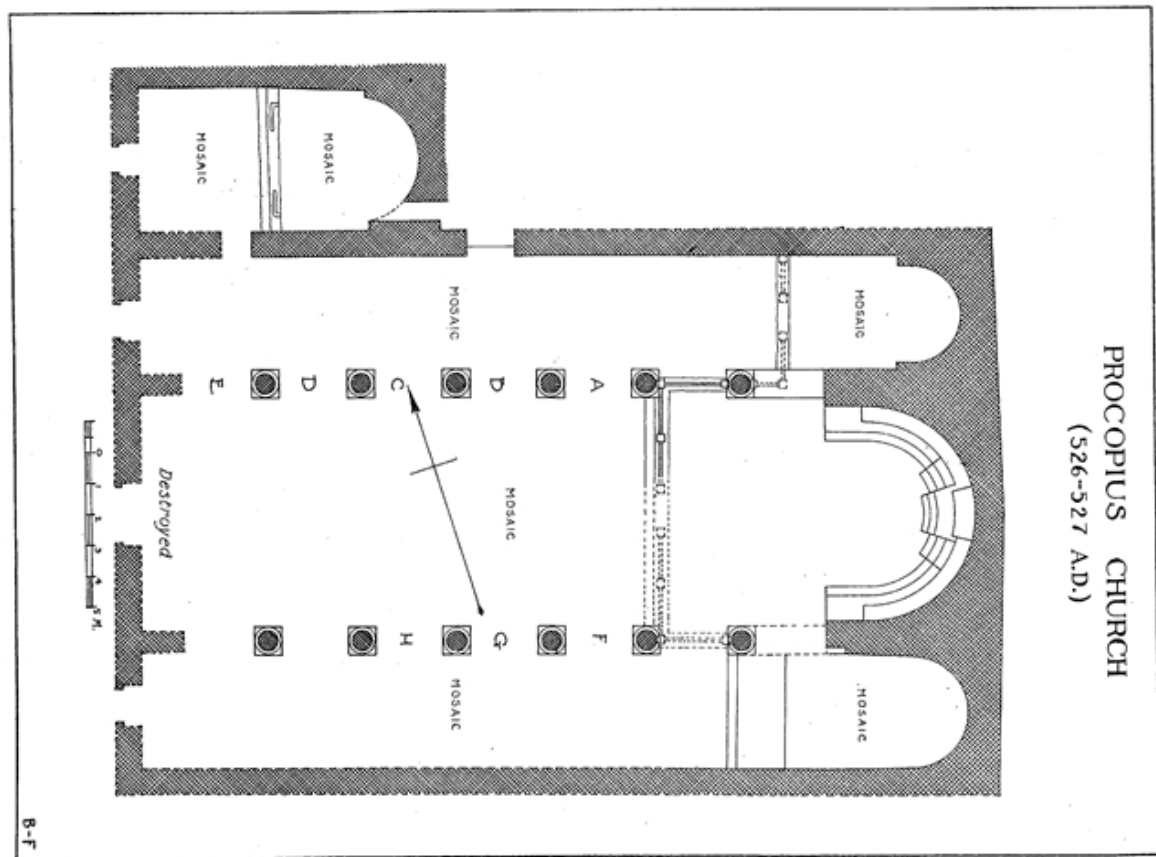


Figure 3.22: The Procopius Church (Crowfoot 1938)

Due to its proximity to the modern town the majority of the church walls have not survived, as is also true of most of the mosaics. The church is a three aisled three-apsed basilica inscribed within a rectangle. Entry was through one of five entrances: three located in the west wall of the church, and two on the north wall. One of the north entrances led to a small one aisled basilical chapel. The floors of both the church and chapel were paved with mosaics but, much of it has been destroyed in the time that has passed since the abandonment of the building. The surviving mosaic did, fortunately contain the foundation inscription. The mosaic is partially mutilated and unfortunately the number of the indiction has not survived, meaning that it is only possible to narrow it down to the two years that cover the year 589 of the Gerasine era: that is the years 526-527 AD.

The Churches of St. John the Baptist, St. George and SS. Cosmas and Damianus

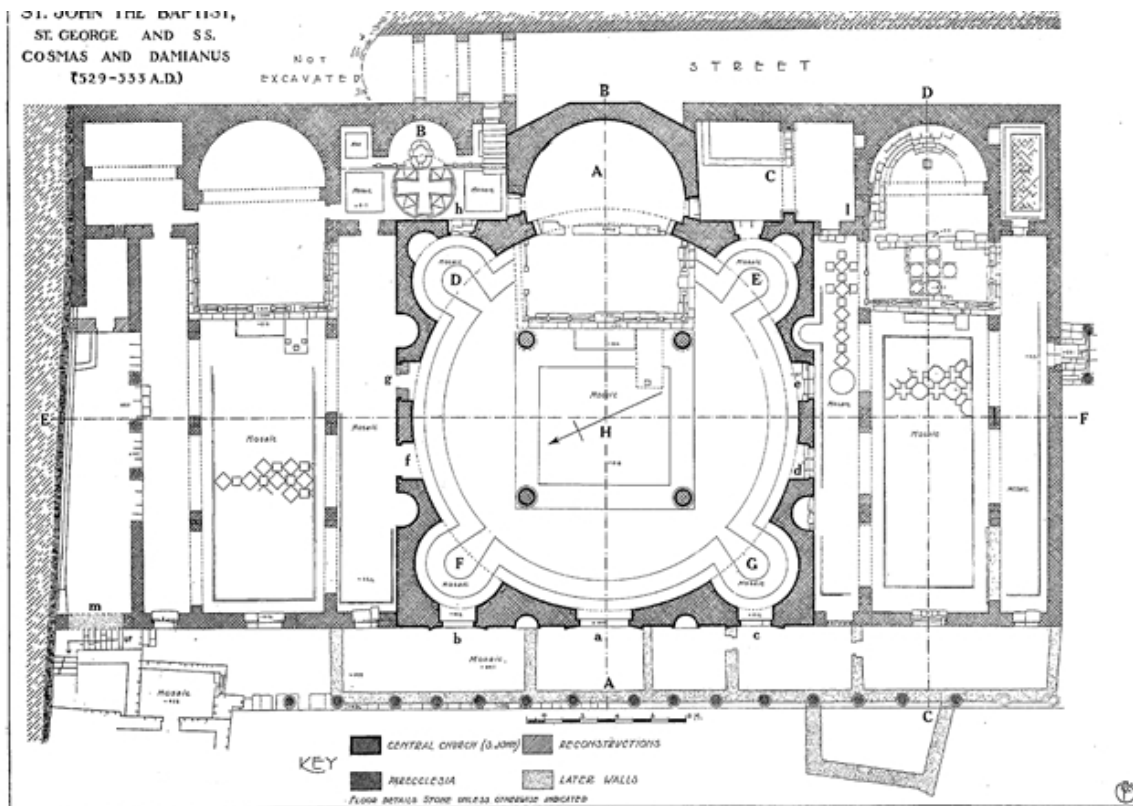


Figure 3.23: The Churches of St. John, St. George and SS. Cosmas and Damianus (Crowfoot 1938)

Forming a single integrated complex, the three churches of St. John, St. George and SS. Cosmas and Damianus sit on the hill above the Cathedral complex. They are all part of a single building and are laid out side by side, with the church of St. John in the middle sharing its walls with the other two. All three churches open on a common atrium. As the design would suggest they were built all in the same period with inscriptions indicating dates between 529 and 533 AD. The churches of St Cosmas and Damianus and of St. George are very similar in layout and form, both being three aisled basilica churches. St John's, on the other hand, has a central plan with four semi-circular apses and seems to reproduce the form of the Cathedral at Bostra.⁹²

⁹²Kraeling (1938) 241, 243, 245.

The Synagogue Church

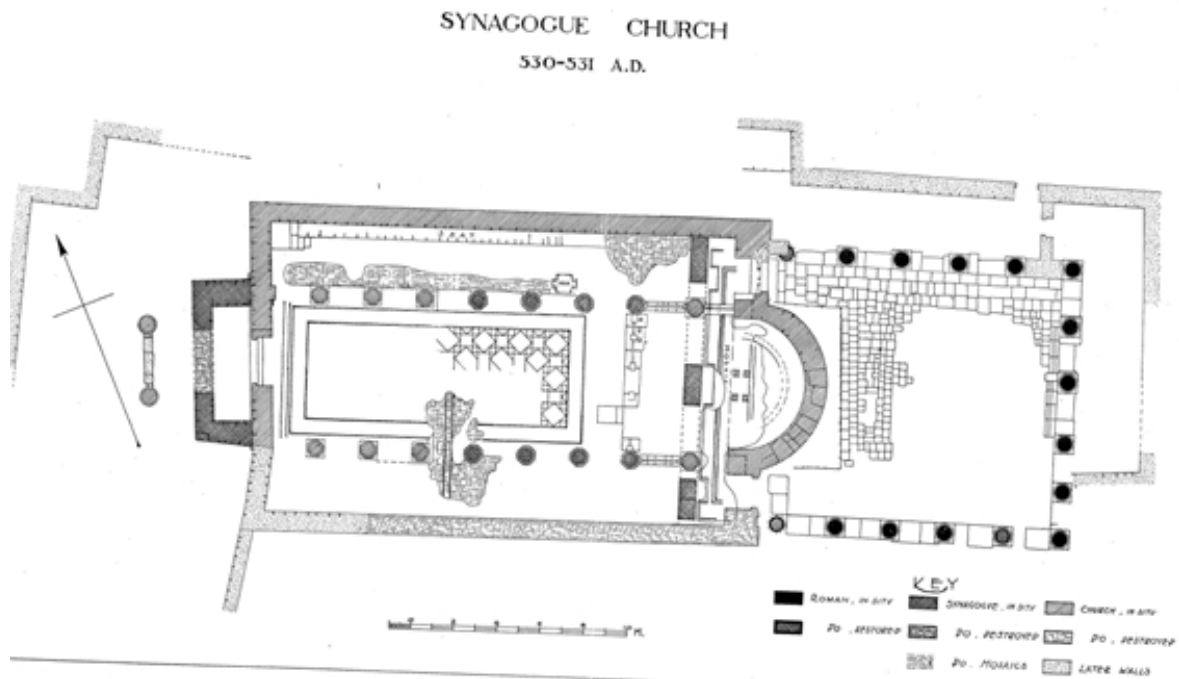


Figure 3.24: The Synagogue Church (Crowfoot 1938)

The Synagogue church is located on the hill above the Cathedral complex. It was built by converting a pre-existing Jewish Synagogue. Because Synagogues of the time were constructed as basilicas, and essentially followed the same lines as Christian churches, the conversion was relatively simple. The synagogue was re-oriented and the focus of devotion shifted from Jerusalem to face east, explicitly Jewish symbols were removed and the floor at the west end of the building was raised to provide a level surface. The church itself can be accessed both from the west and from the east, via the entrances placed at the end of the aisles as in the case of St. Theodore and the Propylaea Church. The first conversion took place almost certainly under the episcopate of Bishop Paul as indicated by the only legible parts of the inscription found in the mosaic floor in front of the chancel step, dating it to 530/531, even though much repair work seems to have been undertaken in the years that followed.

The church of SS Peter and Paul

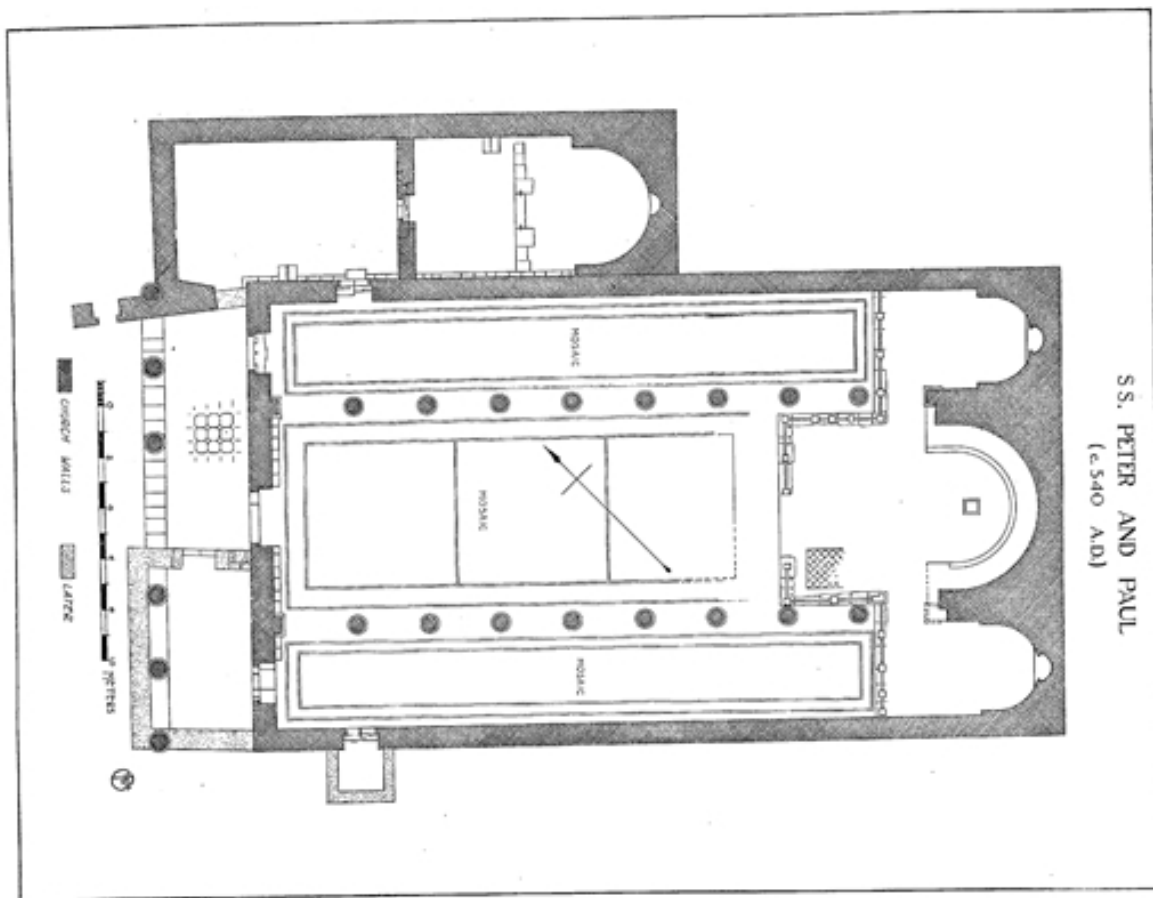


Figure 3.25: The Church of SS Peter and Paul (Crowfoot 1938)

The church of SS Peter and Paul has three aisles and, three apses, each with its own chancel. The dimensions of the various parts of the church suggest that it was laid out in Byzantine feet (0.32 m), as the length, width of the aisles, width of the nave and intercolumnar spaces are respectively 100, 12, 24, and 6 Byzantine feet. whilst if the Roman foot had been used they would have been fractional multiples. Most of the elevation has been lost, probably due to robbing in antiquity. At the time of the excavation (1929), a large part of the atrium was under cultivation. There are five doors: three on the west end, one on the south side, and one on the north side that leads into a chapel. The aisles and the nave were separated by two sets of eight columns that bore arches. All of the columns have fallen and their bases and remain-

ing drums point to the re-use of pre-existing material as they differ in form and size. During the excavation eleven capitals were recovered all in good condition. They all belong to the Corinthian order and the majority of them were ascribed by the excavator to the 2nd-3rd centuries. The remaining two differ quite significantly: one is larger, had an enriched abacus and *fleurons* decorated with naturalistic flowers; the second one is reported to have an enriched abacus and be significantly earlier.

The floor of the church was decorated with a mosaic, within which six inscriptions were recovered: five in the centre of the nave and one in the north aisle. Of these, three, two of those in the nave and the one in the north aisle, report the name of the Bishop Anastasios, with one the central one in the nave also reporting the dedication of the church to SS Peter and Paul. Unfortunately the mosaic at the east end of the nave did not survive and thus no foundation inscription was found. Because of this, unlike many of the other churches in Jerash, we do not have a firm date for the construction of the building: thus it has been necessary to infer the date from stylistic comparison with neighbouring churches. The mosaic and decoration are reported to be consistent with those found at Procopius's church, built in 526-527 AD under the Bishop Paul: given that Paul was still alive in 533, when the church of SS Cosmas and Damianus was built, it would appear that Anastasios (the builder of SS Peter and Paul) was his immediate successor, perhaps around 540 AD. Though the date is not as firm as those of most of the churches in the city the consistency in building and decoration techniques with the clearly dated buildings in the city, mean that it can firmly be placed in the middle of the sixth century.

The Propylea Church

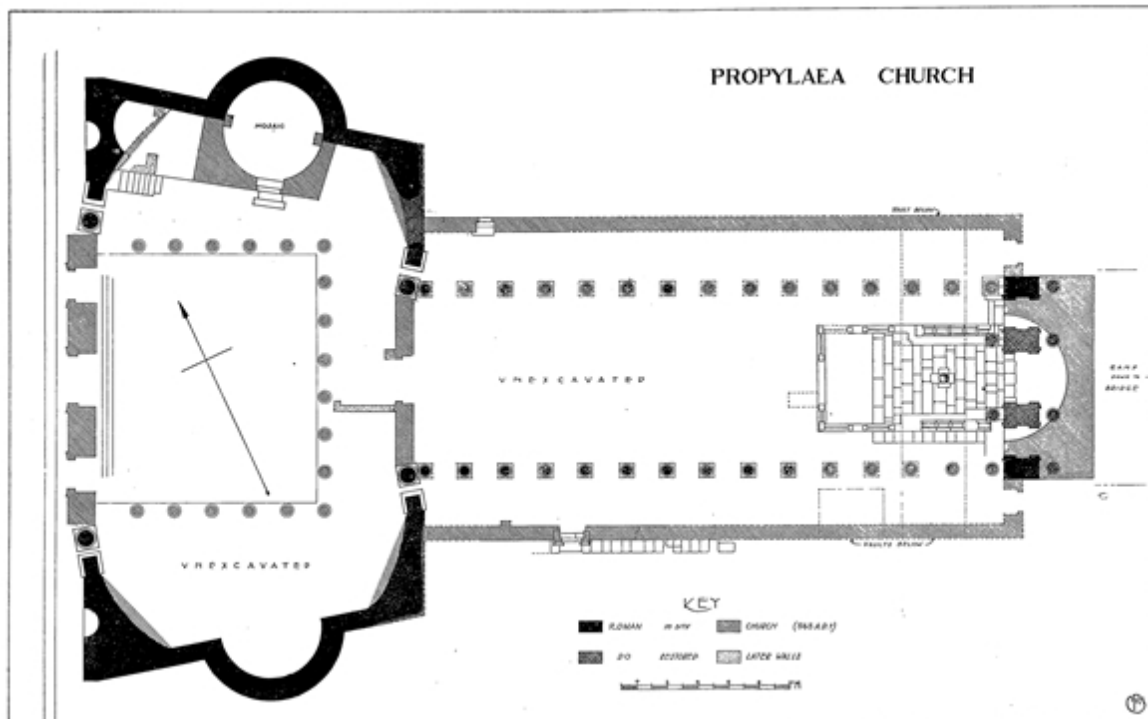


Figure 3.26: The Propylea Church. (Crowfoot 1938).

The Propylea Church is located immediately across the street from the *Propylaea* of the temple of Artemis. The basilica was constructed by adding the body of the building to a pre-existing colonnaded court that, albeit slightly modified, functioned as an atrium for the church, providing space for both catechism and accommodation. The church itself extends eastwards from the classical atrium with the nave continuing the width of the doors that gave access to the classical court. The church could be entered either through the atrium or, as at the church of St. Theodore, through doors on the east side one for each aisle. A *diaconicon* was created by converting one of the apses of the atrium into a circular room. The floor of the room was decorated with a mosaic that contained two inscriptions: one, placed in an oval with a decorated border, referring to an image of Anastasios, possibly a fresco on one of the walls, and a second one in the border around the previous inscription indicating that the *diaconicon* was built in the thirteenth indiction of the year 627

(May 565 AD).⁹³ Whether this was the date of construction of the whole church is unclear as no other epigraphic material has been found in it. However, according to the excavators, the material and techniques used for the church are consistent with the late sixth century. The fact that those who commissioned the mosaic, and thus presumably the whole *diaconicon*, felt the need to point out the date for its laying lead me to think that it is more likely that the *diaconicon* was constructed at a later time than the rest of the church, even though it is probable that it was not long after.

The Church of Bishop Isaiah

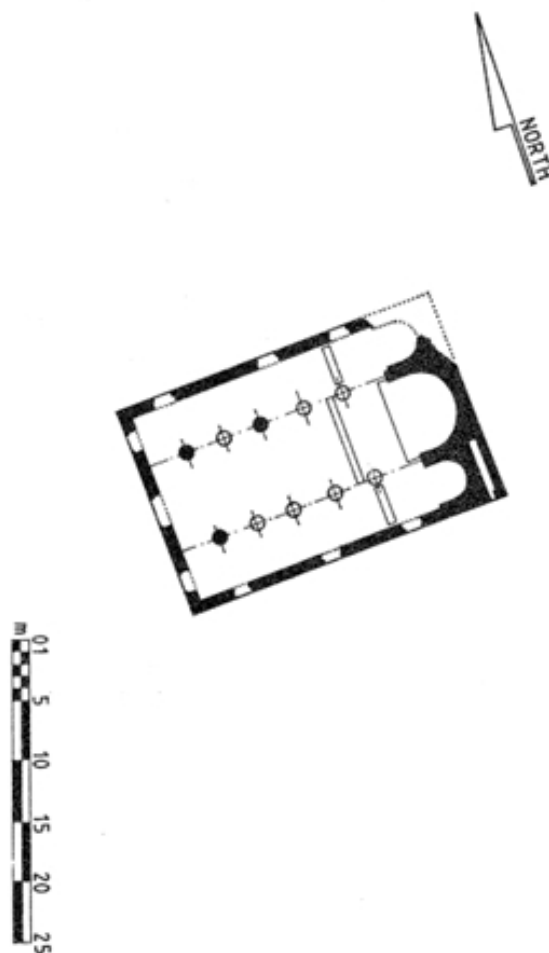


Figure 3.27: The Bishop Isaiah Church (Clark 1986)).

⁹³Kraeling (1938) 233.

The church of Bishop Isaiah is located in the northern part of the city in proximity of the north theatre and north Decumanus. According to its foundation inscription it was constructed in 559 AD under the episcopate of Isaiah following a donation.

The church itself is composed of three aisles and is basilical in form, at the end of each aisle there was an apse that was separated from the aisles by an individual chancel screen. The apses themselves are inscribed into the rear wall of the church so that the structure forms a regular rectangle from the outside. Five columns each side divide the nave from the aisles, the columns are approximately 3.3 m apart and carry arches that rise directly from the capitals. The two aisles are different in width: the north one is approximately 3.9 m wide while the S one is 4.15m wide. There was no narthex but there was a portico on the west side of the building that may have served as an atrium, though limited excavation has not entirely revealed the relationship between the two structures. Each apse had its own chancel and was accessed via a low step.

The Church of Bishop Marianos

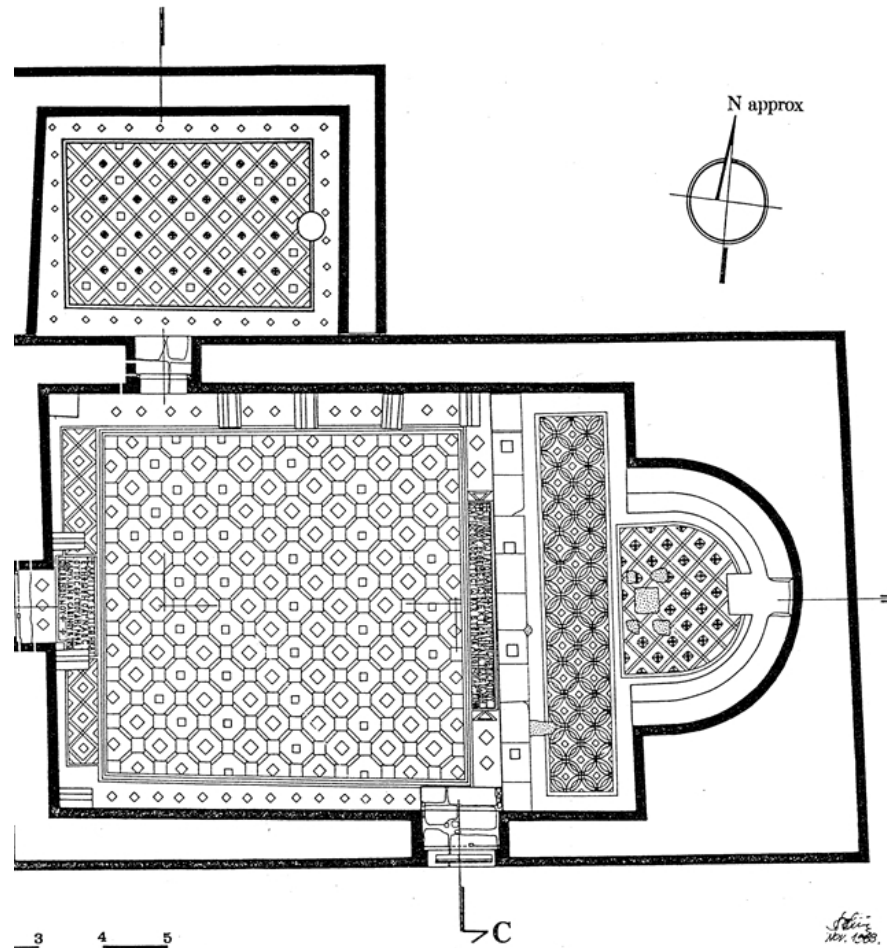


Figure 3.28: The Bishop Marianos Church. (Gawlikowski 1986)

The church is the second most recent to have been discovered in Jerash, being older only than that of Bishop Genesios. The dating of the church is very solid, the foundation inscription, located in front of the chancel indicates that the foundation took place in the year 632 in the month of Xanthicos in the third indiction (April 570 AD).

The material recovered from the strata under the mosaic flooring is fully consistent with this date, consisting mainly of pottery and glass that terminates with material from the middle of the sixth century.

The main church is an aisle-less apsed basilica with extensive mosaic covering. In the apse, behind the altar, stood the bishop's throne whilst in front of the altar,

just beyond the chancel, one finds the foundation inscription. The *diaconicon* and the narthex were later additions to the building as indicated by the lack of consistency and cohesion between the material and texture of the walls. Two large inscriptions were also found: the first at the entrance to the nave, bears the names of the donors responsible for the construction of the church. Whilst it is a relatively standard inscription and most of the names are quite common, the name Raphaa is quite uncommon and is clearly Semitic in origin and may have belonged to a convert given its rarity.

The Bishop Genesios Church

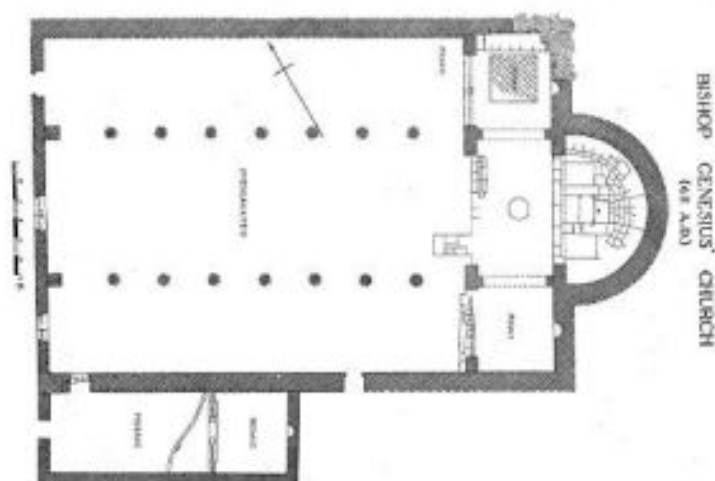


Figure 3.29: The Bishop Genesios Church. (Crowfoot 1938).

The church is the most recent of those found in Jerash, being founded almost forty years after the church of Bishop Marianos. The church itself is basilical in form and has three aisles and an apse and a small chapel on the southern side. The building was partially excavated in the 1920s by the American mission and has not been examined since. There are five entrances, three on the west side of the building and two on the south side, one of which led into the chapel (so not an entrance in the strictest sense of the word). Both naves and aisles were paved with mosaic but in

the nave only the cement base has survived. The north aisle was decorated with a floral motif with a border of panels decorated with birds; the foundation inscription was found in a *tabula ansata* within this border, the chancel step has encroached on the mosaic of the aisle a clear indication that the current chancel was the result of a later remodelling of the church. The foundation inscription is perhaps the most significant aspect of the building as it allows us to date it quite accurately. It reads:

τῆς ψηφώσεως τό εὐπρεπές ἐυχρονοῖς γέγονεν Γενεσίου τοῦ ἁγιωτ(άτου)
 ἡμῶν ἐπισκ(όπου) ἐκ προσφορά[ς Ἰ]ωάννου χρυσοχόου καὶ Σαῶλα κο[.] ης-
 σαμειοῦς τῷ γοχ' ἔτει μήνος Σεπ[τ]εμβρίου α' Χρό(νων) ιε' ἰνδ(ικτιῶνος)

As in the case of the previous two churches, in this case too one is confronted with a foundation inscription relating the construction of a church to a donation by a wealthy citizen in this case a jeweller (χρυσόχου). As to the rest of the mosaic decoration its nature is unclear as it must be noted that the main body has only been partially excavated. The chancel screen is perhaps one of the most interesting features of the church as, rather than having been individually built for aisles and nave, it forms a continuous line, much as in the current layout of orthodox churches. The structure was in marble and the presence of sockets and grooves in the remains point to the presence of the usual panels between the pilasters. As has already been pointed out, it is incongruous with the other Gerasene churches and is clearly the result of a later alteration, perhaps from the eighth century when the use of the *templon* becomes widespread in the Eastern Church. The apse contains an altar, that is set further into it than is usual and below it a hole was found, perhaps an access point to a reliquary, which stands in front of the bishop's throne. The chapel has a relatively simple layout and is made up of a nave with a small niche replacing the apse separated from it by a chancel screen. The floor of the chancel was decorated with a mosaic of heart shaped leaves contained in a wave border

3.3.4 Conclusions

In conclusion, an analysis of the church building activities in the city of Jerash suggests three phases of construction, separate both in date and typology. It would seem that in the first phase of construction the Christians chose places of importance both for their numinosity and their position within the city, thus in effect re-defining the spiritual and visual landscape of the city. By doing so, Christianity would have been projecting itself into the minds and lives of the citizens of Gerasa, both Christian and non-Christian, taking over the role that had been up until then the purview of civic religion.

Church	Date
Cathedral Church	Post 404 AD
St Theodore	494 AD
Procopius Church	526-527 AD
St George/St John the Baptist/SS Cosmas and Damianus	529-533 AD
Synagogue Church	530 AD
Church of SS Peter and Paul	540 AD
Church of the Bishop Isaiah	559 AD
Propylaea Church	Pre-565 AD
Church of Bishop Marianos	570 AD
Church of the Bishop Genesios	611 AD

Table 3.1: The churches of Gerasa and their foundation dates.

The continued concern with the maintenance of the aesthetic quality of the city is expressed in the continued pursuit of uniformity in the city and in its monuments and in the re-use or maintenance of structures such as *propylaea*. Yet at the same time, unlike in the cases of Scythopolis and Alexandria, the city's temples are not maintained but left to ruin.⁹⁴

The two main examples are the Cathedral complex and the Synagogue church. The history of the Cathedral complex is long and complex, but it is clear both from the form and location of the first church and the text of the lintel inscriptions from St Theodore, that they express the first moments in the large scale expansion of the

⁹⁴In both Scythopolis and Alexandria there is clear evidence that religious buildings were maintained solely for the purpose of continued aesthetic value or as museums. See below 3.4 Scythopolis.

Christian population. The choice of location was most certainly made out of practical concerns (it is clear that the site was abandoned and no longer used for devotional purposes) however it also carried major symbolic implications. In taking over the site of what must have been a major pagan site whose memory must still have been present in the population, and that was placed in the heart of the city, the Christians were most certainly striking a blow in their ongoing battle for supremacy. This discourse is most apparent in the lintel inscriptions from St. Theodore, in particular the one above the atrium door: here there is a clear opposition between what came before the Church (presented as a foul smelling dump: Πᾶν γὰρ ἀχομῆς λέλυται νέφος, ἀντί δέ λήμης τῆς προτέρης πάντη με θεοῦ χάρις ἀμφιβέβηκην. Καί ποτε τετραπόδων ὅποσα μογέοντα δαμειή Ἐνθαδε ρίττομένων ὁδμή διεγεί ετο ο λύγρη) and after, when sweet smells waft from the new Church, and perhaps also from the martyr's relics. It is unlikely that the site was a real dump due to the proximity to the cathedral, though there is no archaeological proof either way, but whether real or symbolic the opposition is very real for those who visit St. Theodore's. It is much more probable that the inscription refers to the animal sacrifice that had taken place on the site of the neighbouring *Artemision*, and possibly even on that of the previous temple, though, given the amount of time that had passed since the abandonment of the temple on the site of the Cathedral and its intermediate use, this is much less likely. In this context the direct reference to animal remains is of great importance: these remains and the foul dump they make up refer to activity in the temple and the construction of the church is presented as a direct cause for the cessation of these activities and therefore of the dump. The fact that the inscription was placed on the external part of the lintel is particularly significant, as it is clearly an outward projection, designed to be read not only by the faithful but also by the uninitiated, a group that would have been a prime target for such a message and for its ideological implication. Another indication of the major symbolic importance of the site for the Christians is that they go to quite a length to place the building where they do, even though it involved a major effort as it is accessible only from the east side,

forcing the construction of side entrances or, as in the case of St Theodore, entrances in the aisles of the east side. Thus the monumental entrance to the church had to be sacrificed and in its place a large set of 1st century *propylaea* is employed, possibly to provide monumentality as well as to preserve the continuity of the monumental facies of the street. This aspect may also have enhanced the initiatory aspect of entering the church, for it placed a further barrier to access, and, if the fountain in the porticoed court between the cathedral and St Theodore was the one where the miracle described by Epiphanius took place (though this appears unlikely due to the dates) it would have further enhanced its separation from the outside world.

It is interesting to note that the Christian community chose to leave the ruins of the Temples of Artemis and Zeus in place, despoiling them of much reusable building material, rather than go down the route of converting them into churches.⁹⁵ It would seem that, much like in the case of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem: the choice was one of glory by comparison rather than by substitution. However in Gerasa the object was the Pagan temples and not a Jewish holy place in Gerasa the Jewish Synagogue: conversion took place sometime later and is unlikely to have been a major ideological statement. The Synagogue Church and the three conjoined churches are placed high up on the hill and would have certainly strengthened the visual impact of Christianity on the landscape, particularly as they were built at the time when Christianity had become truly dominant. In this perspective the choice of replacing the Synagogue could also be particularly relevant, as it would indicate that the local Jewish community was no longer able or allowed to maintain a structure that would have been important for them. If one compares this situation with that that is found in Sardis, where the Bath-Gymnasium complex is partially converted into a synagogue in the late third century and remained in use until the very end of the late antique occupation of the city, the difference is immediately obvious.⁹⁶ The second group of churches consists of those built during the episco-

⁹⁵There is more evidence for the spoliation of the Temple of Zeus than for that of Artemis. Parapetti (1989).

⁹⁶See Crawford (1990) , Foss, Yegül, and Bolgil (1986) for more details on the Synagogue in Sardis.

pate of Paul, it consists of five churches: the Procopius Church, St George/St John the Baptist/ SS Cosmas and Damianus, Church of SS Peter and Paul. These are all very large buildings, and in the case of the large three-church complex have a major monumental aspect. They were mainly constructed through donations but bear the mark of a strong Bishop and seem to me to represent a period when the growingly rich Christian community expanded under the aegis of an euergetic leader.

The Propylaea Church is much later and less is known about its construction. It does occupy the site of a previous building, but not one with particular symbolic meaning. It may however indicate something about the general state of the city at the time of its construction; in particular it would seem that at the time of its planning one of the two bridges that led across the river that divides the city was no longer functional, since the new church blocked any practical access to it.

Later the third set of churches were built: they comprised the churches of the Bishops Isaiah, Marianos and Genesios. These churches were built somewhat later than the previous ones, being constructed between 570 and 611. Their form is also different, as all three are simple basilica churches, significantly smaller in size than those that preceded them. All of them were also *ex novo* constructions and do not appear to occupy sites of any religious or spiritual significance. All bear foundation inscriptions that indicate that the funding for their construction came from private donations, and all of them, rather than being dedicated to a saint, bear the indication of the name of the Bishop under whose episcopate they were constructed. It would thus appear that this third group of churches, rather than satisfying the initial need of the Christians for large places of worship, with an additional spiritual significance, seem to fulfil the twin needs of: the élite for social recognition - after all what better way for an individual from a rich family to prove both his devotion to the church and to the city in the post-curial environment than build a church? - and of the city for a more diffuse network of places of worship. The high quality of the workmanship and the costly interior decorations - all the churches were decorated with well-crafted mosaics and many fragments of marble decoration were

found - point to high level commissions and certainly not, as one might suggest given the much smaller scale of the buildings, to a fall in standards or resources. In conclusion it is my belief that a comprehensive study of the typology and chronology of the churches at Jerash can give a vision of the development of the Christian community and city. After an initial period in which the community expanded its monumental horizon through the construction of two major basilicas, a number of closely associated churches were constructed under the aegis of an activist Bishop. Later on with the community established, private donations continue but the emphasis for the donor shifts from the Bishop to the promotion of the donors, within a more articulated and now dominant Christian community and society. Further, the positioning of the earliest Christian building in the city, the Cathedral, and the text of its foundation inscription give a clear indication of the construction of a relationship between the extant monumental landscape and the new world that was being created.

3.4 Petra

3.4.1 Introduction

Located about 80 km south of the Dead Sea, the city of Petra occupies the Wadi Mousa a 1.5 km long seasonal river valley that is surrounded by high ridges and bisected by a number of river gorges. The high ridges provide what are in effect a natural wall to the city and allowed the fortification of the city with minimal effort (something that was very efficiently done throughout the history of the city from the Nabateans to Late Antiquity). The topography and hydrology of the area mean that water plays a fundamental part in the history of the site, with much attention being devoted to both the storage of water and the control of the flash floods that frequently affect the city.⁹⁷

⁹⁷Precisely because of the arid nature of the area winter rains often result in flash floods that can rise several meters high and deposit significant amounts of sediment.

The Nabateans were speakers of a proto-Arabic language, and their origin and that of their kingdom is still unclear. Prior to the rise of King Aretas in the mid 2nd century very little is known of their kingdom, its cities (if there were any) and its structure. As indicated by Diodorus Siculus, who describes their way of life and the expeditions of Antigonos Monophthalmos against them, it is possible, if not likely, that the Nabateans were originally nomadic though it is more likely that they were semi-nomadic and only later settled more permanently.⁹⁸

The city was probably founded in the Hellenistic period, though there is very little evidence of Nabatean material culture anywhere before the 2nd century BC when both material and textual sources combine to reveal what is a fairly structured Nabatean Kingdom that controlled the trade routes from both Arabia and across the desert to Mesopotamia. This phase of the city's history is not well known as very little material evidence has survived, perhaps indicating a continuation of earlier less permanent building tendencies. From the end of the 1st century BC the city's growth seems to have increased exponentially, exploding in the Augustan and Julio-Claudian periods when what we now consider the Nabatean style emerged and consolidated.⁹⁹ This resulted in the construction of both public buildings, in the form of baths temples and theatres, and private buildings. All are indications of the growth of the capital of a kingdom, that had by then grown to become the *antonomasia* for a caravan trading hub.

The death of the last Nabatean King Rabbel II in 106 AD led to the annexation of the kingdom by Trajan and the incorporation of all the territories formerly held into a new province: Arabia. Despite not being the main military centre for the region (the only military force in Arabia was the *Legio III Cyrenaica*, stationed in Bostra to the north), the city retained its pre-eminence in the region and became the administrative capital of the new province. Promoted to Metropolis in 116 AD and re-named by Hadrian in 131 AD as Hadriana Petra Metropolis or Ἀδριανὴ Πέτρα it

⁹⁸See Diodorus Siculus II, 48 and XIX 94-100 in Oldfather et al. (1969). For a full and detailed discussion of the issues surrounding the origin of the Nabateans, see Graf (1990) and Parr (2002) where both the historiographical and linguistic issues are tackled in full.

⁹⁹Schmid (2002) 56-57.

was granted the status of *colonia* by Elagabalus in the 3rd century AD giving rise to the full titulature of the city that would remain in use until the 6th century: *Augusto-colonia, Antoniana, Metrocolonia, Hadriana, Petra Metropolis*.¹⁰⁰ There is no doubt that the inclusion of Petra into the Roman world, with the direct connection to Caesarea and the Mediterranean and the administrative capacity, meant that the city continued to flourish, and in fact experienced a veritable construction boom after the annexation.¹⁰¹ In particular the civic centre experienced a significant expansion as indicated by the rebuilding of the porticoed street and the complete reconstruction of the South Temple.¹⁰²

This state of affairs would last well into the 4th century when it was to serve as the capital of the newly created, but much smaller, province of *Palaestina Salutaris* (or *tertia*) following the restructuring of provincial administration by Diocletian. This change seriously diminished the importance of the city and with additionally, the northwards shift of the caravan routes to Bostra decline slowly set in. The real hammer-blow came from the devastating earthquake that hit the city in 363 AD: the tremor destroyed or damaged much of the infrastructure of central Petra: the shops of the colonnaded street were damaged, as were the Temple of the Winged Lions, the South Temple and the theatre. Most of these buildings were never restored and worst of all the earthquake crippled the anti-flash-flood defences of the city. Other of its parts were rebuilt wholly or partially only to fall victims to a second earthquake in 419 AD, after which the whole of the ez Zanthur Hill was abandoned. The attempts at rebuilding Petra after the two earthquakes can best be seen in the so called colonnaded street: here, those shops or parts of shops that had been too damaged to be patched up were blocked off and even backfilled with rubble to provide a structurally stable support for buildings behind them on the hill (the earthquake had also resulted in subsidence of the hill) while the others were put back into use.

¹⁰⁰Fiema and Frosen (2002) 61 and Negev (1993) 1181-1182.

¹⁰¹The construction of the Via Nova Traiana meant that Petra, placed at the southern terminus was directly connected to the road network of the Levant and had a direct outlet for the goods that flowed through it thanks to the caravan routes. See Fiema and Frosen (2002) 62, 64-65 and footnotes.

¹⁰²Fiema (2001) 120-122.

The reduced space was compensated for by the takeover of the public space in front of the *tabernae* with makeshift structures mainly made up of *spolia*. Despite these troubles, the city would go on to recover, probably with a different centre slightly to the north.

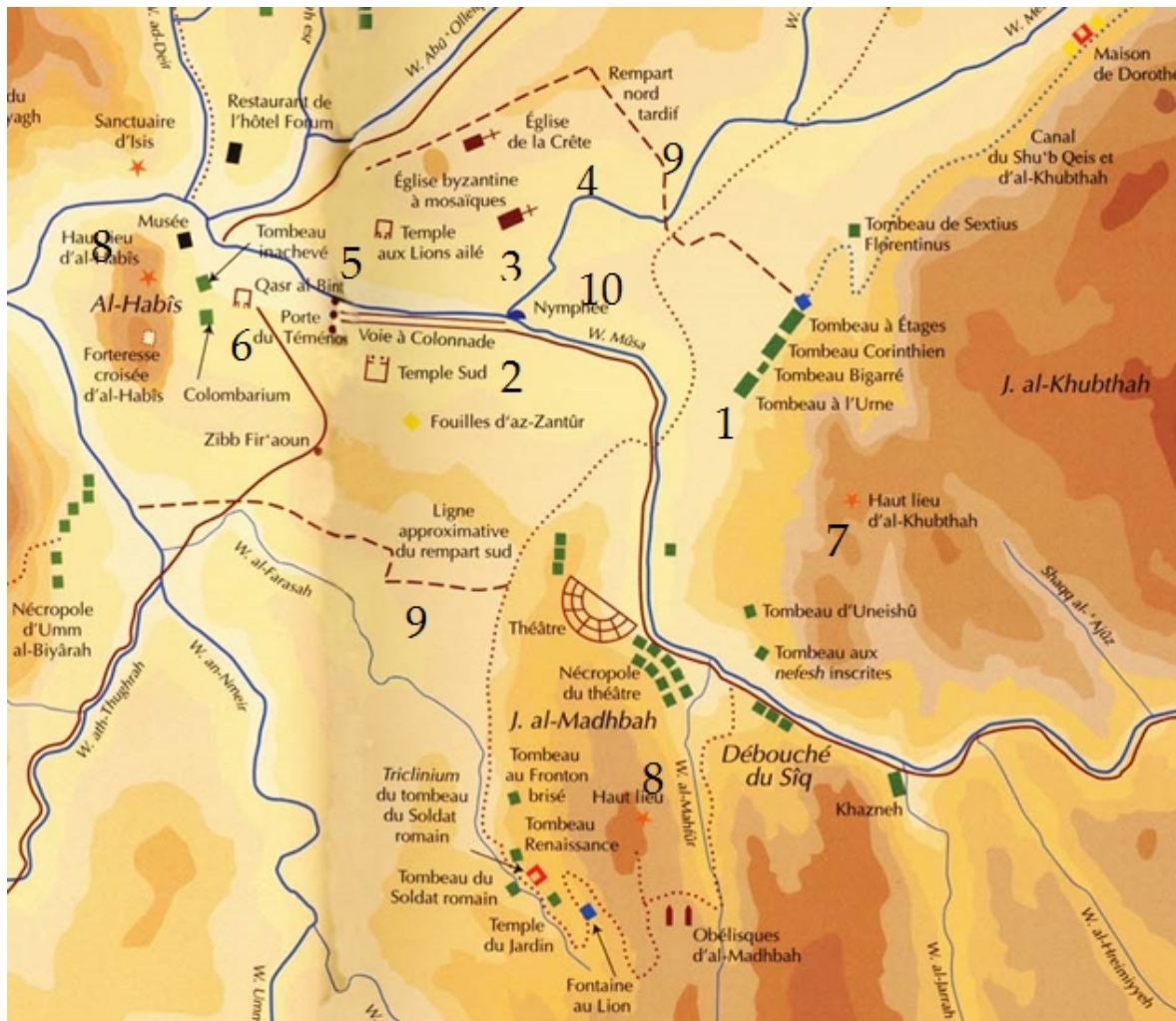


Figure 3.30: Plan of Petra. 1. Urn Tomb and Church. 2. South Temple. 3. Petra Church. 4. Ridge Church. 5. Temple of the Winged Lions. 6. Qasr al-Bint. 7.-8. High points of Worship. 9. Late Antique Walls. 10. Nabatean Royal Complex

Some form of Christian community must have existed prior to the edict of toleration in 313 AD, as the governor of the city Maximus was promoted on the back of his zeal in repressing Christians in the city during the reign of Diocletian.¹⁰³ The

¹⁰³For the sake of expediency I will not outline the modern history of the site, for more on the issue see Parr (1990) and Fiema (2001).

Bishop of Petra appears in the ecclesiastical rolls at the Council of Sardica in 343 AD. However, the community seems to have resisted Christianisation quite strongly, and Sozomen, Evagrius, and Eusebius all make reference to the continued presence of Hellenic cults in Petra well into the 5th century. According to the life of Barsaumas the Syrian, the city remained resolutely Hellenic until the arrival of the saint who, having lived as an extreme ascetic for many years, led a Christian mob on a rampage through Arabia destroying temples and synagogues.¹⁰⁴ Having reached Petra around 423 AD they bullied their way into the city and rioted through it; after they had achieved their goal they announced the end of the persistent drought that had afflicted the region and rain soon followed. While there is no corroborating evidence for anti-pagan violence in the city or for the destruction of temples, it is true that the fifth century appears to have been the moment when Christianity seriously took hold in the city and the moment when most church building, or at least the founding took place.¹⁰⁵ There can also be no doubt that the absence of restoration work on the city's temples after the earthquake of 419 must be indicative of a fall from grace of Hellenic cults at least on an institutional level. Equally, the conversion of one of the Nabatean Royal tombs, the so called Tomb of the Urn, into the Cathedral Church in 446 AD must have made a significant impact on the city as would have the later, but not much later, construction of the three churches north of the porticoed street.¹⁰⁶ The nearby monastic complex on Jebel Haroun, that rapidly became an important focus for Christian pilgrimage in the region would have been equally important and would most certainly have brought a constant flux of people to it.¹⁰⁷ Despite the partial disrepair of the city there are clear signs that Petra did not simply spiral slowly into oblivion. The discovery of the 6th-century papyrological archive known as the *Petra Papyri* has shed light on the life of the city at the time. In

¹⁰⁴Nau (1927).

¹⁰⁵Taylor (2001) 203.

¹⁰⁶All of these churches will be discussed in detail later on in the chapter.

¹⁰⁷Given its role as an extra-urban monastery, I will not be discussing Jebel Harun and its monastery but it must be noted for its importance, and its closeness to the city certainly must have meant that the complex and its monks almost certainly played a significant role in Petra's life. For more on the complex see Fiema (2004) and Frosen et al. (2004).

spite of providing a partial and limited view of the city as it is a private rather than public archive, it does conclusively prove that the city had a fully functional fiscal, ecclesiastical, and administrative apparatus.¹⁰⁸

3.4.2 The civic and religious infrastructure of Petra in Late Antiquity

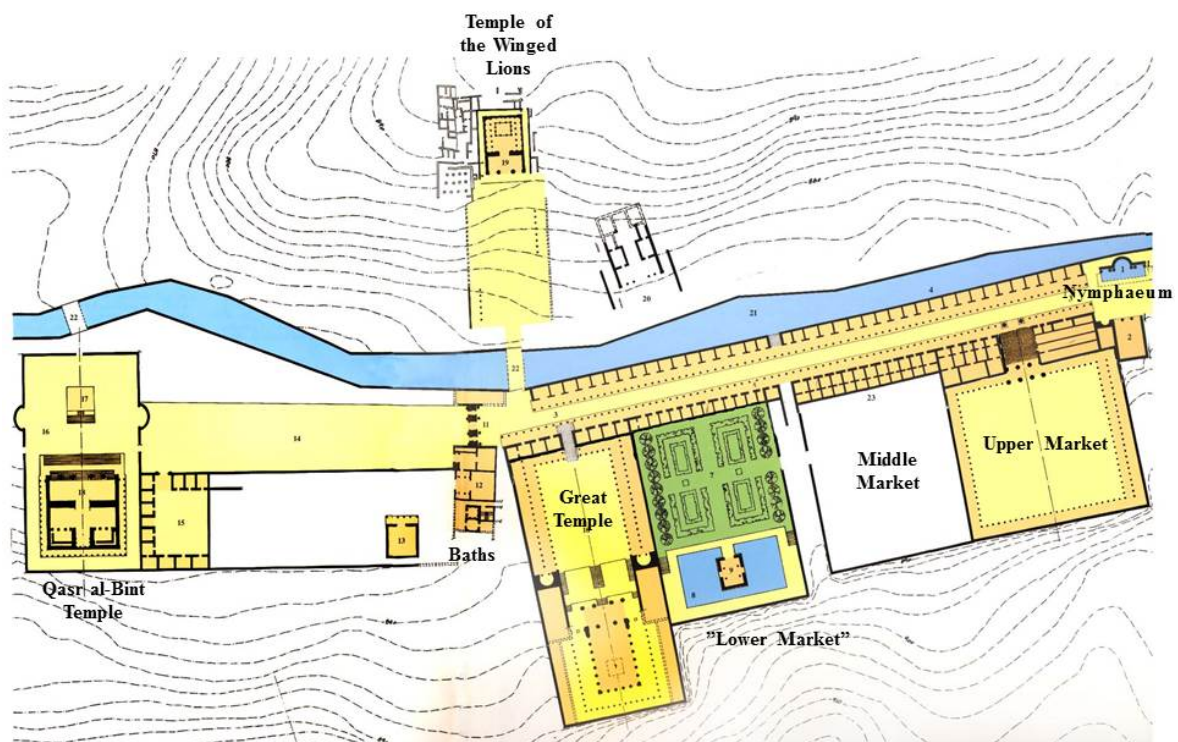


Figure 3.31: The Colonnaded Street and the Hellenic Temples (By kind concession Prof Z.T. Fiema)

The temples

Given the entire Nabatean pantheon's Semitic origin and though cross-identifications were not uncommon in cities like Bostra, in Petra there is a lack of any signifi-

¹⁰⁸Fiema and Frosen (2002) 66-67.

cant syncretism after the Roman annexation of the kingdom in the 2nd century AD, though the foreign cult of Isis appears to have found its way in to the city.¹⁰⁹ The temple buildings found in the city have an idiosyncratic character and reflect the peculiarities of local religiosity connected to the network of high places of sacrifice around the city.

The Great Temple The Great Temple is certainly the largest of the religious buildings in Petra. This enigmatic building, presents many of the characters of a temple while at the same time appearing almost more like an assembly hall in function. In its surviving form it is the result of many alterations over time the last of which probably coincided with the construction of the Colonnaded Street at the end of the 1st century. From the street level a *propyleon* opened onto the large court of the lower *temenos* a large court surrounded on the north-east and west sides by a double *stoa*. From there one reached the upper *temenos* via a monumental staircase that connected directly to the main body of the complex. The main building is an *in antis* tetrastyle with a large *pronaos* through which one accessed a large *theatron* that could sit 565-620 people. Below the main structure lay a complex series of rock cut canalisations whose use is still unclear. The complex is decorated in the eclectic style favoured by the Nabateans in the 1st and 2nd centuries AD with a mixture of classical and oriental features with Ionic columns standing alongside elephant and lion's head capitals, egg-and-tongue motifs and reliefs of Nabatean divinities and Corinthian capitals. The use of the *theatron* is equally unclear as it appears to be designed in such a way to be too small for a large-scale assembly though also has some of the elements that one would expect of such a hall, like a *pulpitum*. It is likely that it served a sacred or quasi-sacred role perhaps as the site for ritual plays and for the civic/religious rituals of the Nabatean kings.

¹⁰⁹The main god of the Nabatean pantheon, Dushara (or Dusares depending on the transliteration) was first identified with Zeus during the Hellenistic period and then with Dionysius after the Roman takeover of the region, however these identifications appear to be mainly limited to outsiders and the resilience of the Nabatean kingdom appears to have prevented local syncretism. For more on the cult of Dushara and Nabatean religion see Zayadine (2002).

After the Roman annexation, the building could equally have functioned as a *bouleuterion* now devoid of the royal connection, and yet still functional. If this were the case, it would not be entirely surprising that the damage caused to it by the earthquakes of 363 and 416 was not repaired: the combination of Christian growth in the city and the progressive stripping of power and prestige from local councils that was taking place, could have easily made any such structure redundant.

The Temple of the Winged Lions Across the street from the Great Temple, the Temple of the Winged Lions sits roughly halfway up the slope of the northern hill of Petra. It is part of a wider complex of buildings that includes interconnected workshops and annexes. The main body of the complex resembles the temples of the mystery cults in both form and decoration.¹¹⁰ The only access to the building was gained via two doors in the front that gave access to a forecourt that functioned also as a *pronaos*. From here via a large door, one entered the *naos* and a large square platform, while the space around it was divided into three by two rows of columns while the walls were divided into niches by a sequence of engaged semi-columns. It is not entirely clear what cult was practiced in the temple, and excavations have uncovered two different idols that were probably connected to it. The first is a carved limestone *staele* carved in the likeness of a woman, the second is a bronze bust of a male divinity. Unfortunately, due to the lack of identifying features on the bronze bust, and to the damage to the inscription on the *staele*, it is not possible to identify the specific divinities that they represent. The case of the unknown goddess is especially relevant as it would appear that she is the main focus of worship of the temple. Given the form of the temple and the unusual form of some of the decorations of the building, it is possible that it may have been a temple of Isis or possibly of a syncretic *al-'Uzza*/Isis divinity.¹¹¹

The auxiliary structures connected to the western side of the temple consisted of three large workshops identified mainly on the basis of the materials found: the

¹¹⁰Hammond (2003) 223.

¹¹¹Hammond (2003) 224-226, Taylor (2001) 129-130.

painter's workshop (that mainly returned pottery), the metal workshop (iron and bronze materials), the marble workshop (marble).¹¹² On the north side the rooms were probably used as lodgings for clerics and temple staff, possibly even as a hostelry.¹¹³

The Qasr al-Bint The third large temple of Petra, and the best preserved, is the so called Qasr al-Bint al-Faroun (the Temple of Daughter of the Pharaoh). It is found at the end of the colonnaded street and is a large tetrastyle building. The Qasr had a set of monumental marble steps that led to it from the road, a porticoed colonnade around the east west and south of the temple and four large columns on the front that led into the vestibule via a set of steps. Through the vestibule one entered the naos, which was divided into four spaces: a large space in the north, and three spaces in the south. They were probably a cultic niche, and possibly two side altars. The decor of the temple is in typical Nabatean eclectic style, the columns and capitals are Corinthian and much of the rest of the decor is a mixture of Asian and Roman motifs. It is still unclear exactly what goddess was worshipped in the Qasr, but it was most likely a high-ranking female goddess.

The high places of worship and the rock-cut tombs The second focus of Nabatean religion, and in particular that of Petra, were the so called High Places of Worship, these are sacrificial and ritual areas placed high above the city on the ridges that surround it. The particular nature of the topography of Petra and the area around Wadi Mousa (see topographical map figure 2.30) mean that these locations dominate not only the city and also the surrounding landscape. These locations were not used for day-to-day worship but rather for processional rituals on significant occasions. Two main such spaces are present in Petra one on each side of the valley. They both have identical features, being essentially large rock-cut *triclinia* with a sacrificial altar or space. This structure allowed the space to be used for different divinities and

¹¹²Hammond (2203) 228, Amadasi Guzzo and Equani Schneider (2002) 169-170.

¹¹³Amadasi Guzzo and Equini Schneider (2002) 170.

ceremonies. The rock-cut tombs that line the access route to the city past the area behind the royal compound (where the royal tombs stand) are the final art of the religious universe of Petra. The tombs vary in size and design but, save for the royal ones, they generally functioned as both a place of burial, of ancestor worship as well as ceremonial feasting and libating. As a result, many of the tombs, at least those that are large enough, have a rock carved *triclinium* or at least an area for libations.

3.4.3 The Churches

Despite the scale and monumentality of the Hellenic buildings of the city the churches of Petra are more modest, and often embedded into the urban context of the area most associated with late antique occupation. The exception to this was the so called Church of the Urn, that is located in a converted abandoned Nabatean tomb in the cliff above the royal complex in the east of the city.

The Church of the Urn The Church of the Urn, whose original dedication is unknown, was located in a pre-existing Nabatean tomb, commonly known as the Tomb of the Urn, hence its name. Placed high in the cliff face, the church was entered from the original door of the tomb, via a flight of monumental stairs (the current ones date to the 6th c. AD renovation of the church) that must have been inherited from the earlier monument. The church itself is roughly square, a room measuring 20 m in both width and depth, with three niches at the east end of the building, two in the north and one in the south.¹¹⁴

¹¹⁴The size and form of the church were, of course, dictated by the original tomb builders rather than the Christians, who however clearly found it suited their needs.

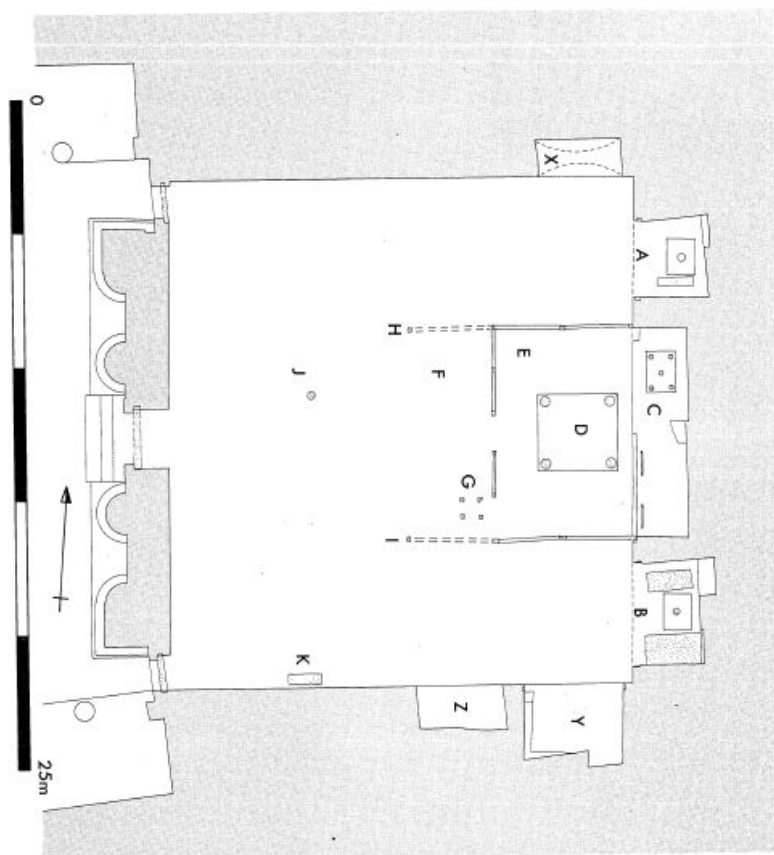


Figure 3.32: The Church of the Urn (McKenzie 1990)

Little remains of the interior decoration, though some suggestions can be made. In the central niche of the eastern wall, the remains of five feet may suggest the presence of a table of some sort, perhaps linked to the ritual. In front of the niche a set of four larger feet suggest the presence of a bigger table, perhaps a large altar table.

The eastern niche and the table were encompassed by what would appear to be a chancel that may well have extended almost to the end of the church, though this is disputed. The only part of the church's history that can be identified with any certainty is the dating inscription of the church which is still present and points to the year 446-447 under the episcopate of the Bishop Jason. It reads:

Επι τοῦ ὀσιωτάτου// Ἰάσωνος ἐπισκόπου// ποῦ θ(εο)ῦ χάριτι ἡγι // ἀσθη ὁ
τοπὸς τῆς// ἐ Λωδου τοῦ ἔ(τους) τμάρ// παρόντος νουμέ// ρου τῶν γενναίω//

τάτ[ω] και [Τερτιοδαλμα]// τ[ω] και Ιουλιανοῦ δι //ακόνου ΑΠ.ΝΙΑΣ// Χρ(ιστοῦ)
 σώζοντ[ος]

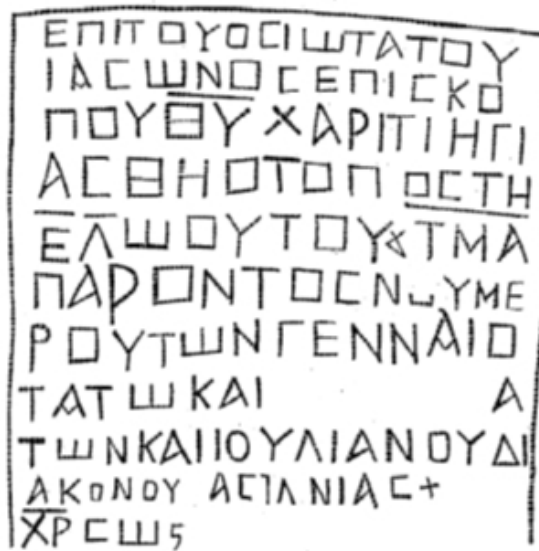


Figure 3.33: The inscription from the Church of the Urn (Michel 2001)

*Under the most holy Bishop Jason, by the grace of God, this place is consecrated, the 5th of Loos (in the year) 341, in the presence of many of the Tertiodalmates and of Julian, the Deacon[...].of Christ our Saviour[...]*¹¹⁵

¹¹⁵Translation by the author with comparison to Michel (2001) 157.

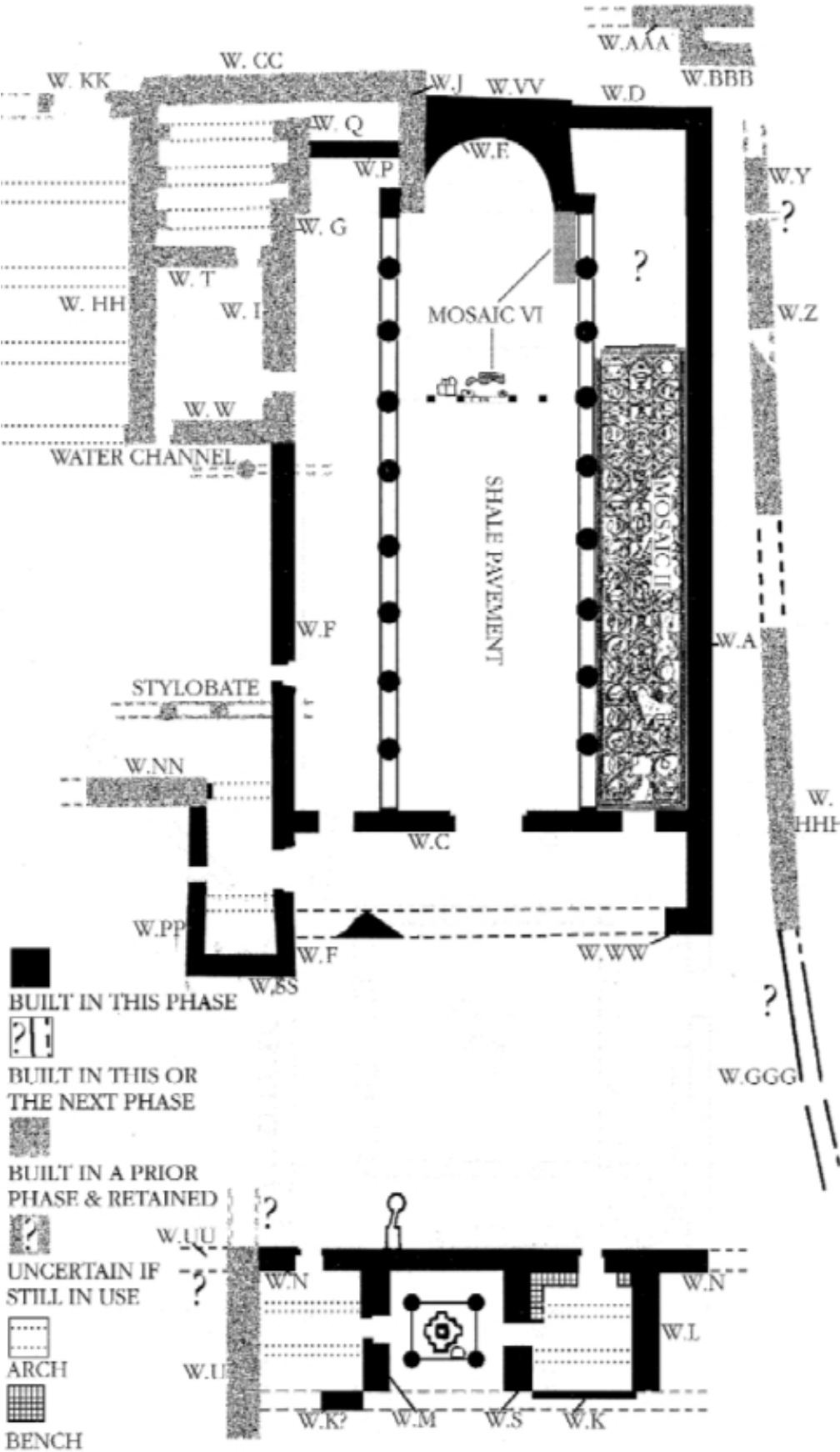


Figure 3.34: The Residential Quarter Church (Fiema and Bikai 2001 fig 39)

The Residential Quarter Church (Petra Church) The largest Church so far recovered in Petra is the one located in the residential area, approximately 100m due West of Wadi el-Mataha and 135m North of Wadi Mousa. The church is perhaps one of the best excavated in the city having been fully explored in the latter part of the 20th century by a Finnish mission. The area had been used for residential purposes previously and excavations have attested use for this purpose in the Nabatean and Roman periods, which is why the architects of the building had to adapt both their design and their construction choices.

Phase IV The first Christian phase of the site is IV, the earlier ones being the Nabatean and Roman occupation phases. Since it was not possible to demolish the entirety of the residential area, the design of the church had to be adapted by emphasising the longitudinal axis of the complex rather than extending it on the lateral axis as is more common: in fact as well as the basilica itself there is a narthex, an atrium and a baptistery. Further, again for practical reasons, the construction of the church also involved the incorporation of a number of pre-existing walls.¹¹⁶

The complex itself consists of a three-aisled basilica that respects the principles of early church building: it is 23.31 m long and 15.35 m wide (a 3:2 ratio) and the nave to aisles ratio was also proportional (2:1).¹¹⁷ The nave ended in a large inscribed apse while at the end of each aisle there was a square room or *pastophorion*. At the west end of the building there was both a narthex and an atrium that would presumably have served as a place of assembly for the congregation. West of the *atrium*/narthex there were three rooms, one of which was a baptistery, whose font has been excavated. Little is known of the interior of the church as much of it was obliterated by the later alterations. However, some remains have been recovered and reveal what was most certainly a very rich interior: in the south aisle a full length mosaic carpet was recovered while traces of mosaics have also been found in

¹¹⁶throughout the whole of its development the building expanded along its East-West axis rather than its North-South one.

¹¹⁷Fiema and Bikai (2001) 30-31.

the chancel, and it would appear that the nave was paved in shale. The easternmost part of the nave was separated from the rest of the church by the customary chancel screen, whose post sockets and screen grooves have been recovered. However, no trace of the liturgical apparatus has been recovered.

Dating the complex is not easy: initially it was attributed to the end of the 5th century AD, but later excavations have suggested it may be earlier, perhaps of the second quarter of the fifth century. There is no incontrovertible dating evidence as no foundation inscription for the church has been recovered. The material recovered in the course of excavations and wider comparative analysis within the region gives a reasonable certainty to the date. Taking this into account, the church would be essentially contemporary with the previously described the Church of the Urn.

Phase V Phase V consists of a complete remodelling of the basilica. This involved the installation of inscribed apses in the place of the *pastophoria* and the raising of the chancel to form a *bema*. The floor of the main apse was also raised to bring it up to the level of the new *bema* (0.6 m). The raised platform was created by building up layers of ashlar, earth and rubble. Again, as in the case of phase IV, little is known of the liturgical apparatus of the church due to the modifications undertaken in phase VI. The two side apses were provided with marble chancel screens, whose remains have been recovered. In the case of the aisles, the floors of the church were carefully removed and replaced, with fine glass and marble mosaics, while the nave and *bema* were paved with marble slabs and *opus sectile*. The narthex was removed and the atrium was expanded significantly.

Analysis of the fill of the new *bema* makes it possible to suggest a clearer date than for the previous phase: the fill was found to contain much ceramic material that varies from the 1st century BC to the late 5th/early 6th century AD with some outlying fragments from the 7th century AD.¹¹⁸ This means it is most likely that the renovation of the church took place in the course of the early 6th century, uncon-

¹¹⁸These are accounted by the excavators as later contamination. Fiema and Bikai (2001) 57

nected to any catastrophic event but rather to the desire to re-decorate and re-design the church.

Phase VI Phase VI consisted of alterations to the internal form of the church. The main apse was altered by the addition of a *synthronon*. The floor of the apse was also raised vis-à-vis the *bema* by 0.35 m which led to the need to replace the floor with a new marble one. Further, the eastern part of the south aisle was re-paved with a new zoomorphic mosaic, while the two side aisles were also replaced. The discovery of a large number of marble fragments in the centre of the *bema* has led to the suggestion that this may be the altar table, though it is not possible to prove it. The room to the north of the basilica contained a large number of papyri that help date this phase. The last papyrus recovered from room 1 is dated to 582 AD, suggesting that the church was in full use at least until this date if not past it, placing the date for this phase of the church in the middle of the 6th century.

Phase VII and VIII Following phase VI the church seems to have no longer served any religious purpose. Probably the building was used for the storage of building materials and other stores. Then in phase VIII the building appears to have burned down and then been completely abandoned. Given the date on the latest papyrus from the store in room 1 is 582 AD it is likely that the church was out of religious use at some point in the last decade of the 6th century or the beginning of the 7th.

The Ridge Church This church is a small basilica, located slightly to the north of the Petra Church. It is a small three aisled basilica with a single external apse at the end of the nave. The church was accessed from the east via a portico that, given the terrain, is slightly higher than the church itself (2.6m) The three aisles were separated by eight columns on each side of the nave. The chancel was elevated to form a *bema*, but no trace of a chancel screen has been recovered. The whole of the church was decorated with a number of mosaics with phythomorphic and geometric

decorations. None of the recovered material made it possible to date the building, however the typology suggests the 6th century.¹¹⁹

3.4.4 Conclusions

Despite the limited amount of work that has been carried out on Petra's late antique phase, some conclusions can be drawn. There is no doubt that Petra's Nabatean heritage meant that its religious traditions were both unique and resilient with a deep rooting in local consciousness. Because of this, Christianity struggled to take root in the city and it was only in the mid 5th century that the religion truly got a hold. Whether this was because of the intervention of the monk Barsauma and his mob, or due to the progressive growth in the city is unclear but there is no doubt that the 5th century is the key moment in the Christianisation. Despite this fact there is little or no evidence to show that Petra's temples were destroyed or that extensive spoliation and re-use took place. All the damage that can be identified is consistent with the two earthquakes of 363 and 419, and there is little or no evidence of deliberate damage.

As far as we know, the Cathedral or the Church of the Urn was the first church to be built in the city and it is a converted Nabatean royal tomb cut into the rock of the eastern edge of the Wadi Mousa, above the area that had previously housed the Nabatean Royal Complex and later possibly the Roman governor's house. This position had three advantages: first of all it allowed the Cathedral to dominate the city as a whole, secondly it occupied a former royal tomb which, considering the importance of tombs in Petra, must have played a significant role; thirdly the proximity to the former and current centre of political activity must also have played a role.

The other two churches of the city are close to each other at the southern edge of the residential area, an area that seems to have experienced the greatest amount of late antique activity. Not only would they have provided ample space for their flock

¹¹⁹Michel (2001) 158.

but they occupied a dominant position over the ruined remains of the old temples and possibly even a ritual barrier between the old and the new religious spaces. Further their presence at the edge of the residential quarter, on the side of the suk, would have enhanced this perception.

In conclusion, there can be no doubt that the relatively certain direction of the expansion of the late antique city and the apparent lack of wide spread demolition of Hellenic buildings, suggest that, much like in the previous cases of Gerasa and Jerusalem, the predominant behaviour appears to be that of adding church buildings to the landscape rather than replacing the pre-existing structures. The role of the Urn church is particularly relevant, as it and the processional liturgies connected to it would have marked the landscape; the presence of such a significant structure in a royal tomb above the former royal, possibly now gubernatorial, compound would no doubt have been significant.

3.5 Heliopolis

3.5.1 Introduction

Like many cities of the Levant, Heliopolis had seen human occupation on the site from the Neolithic onwards. However, due to current occupation of the bulk of the site by the modern town of Baalbek, it is very difficult to give an archaeological picture of the city except in some small areas. Based on the few excavated buildings, it would seem that the axes of the city ran south-west to north-east and north-west to south-east, very much as in Gerasa, with the sanctuary of Jupiter on high ground in the north-west segment of the city overlooking the rest of the settlement.¹²⁰ The only area to be well known is that of the *tel* on which the temple of Jupiter and the Christian Basilica stand, that has been excavated repeatedly since the 19th century.¹²¹ The key monument would have been the sanctuary of the Heliopolitan Triad

¹²⁰Lehmann (2007) 178-179, Van Ess (2003) 110.

¹²¹Unfortunately the basilica was demolished by the French excavators of the mid 20th century in an effort to uncover the temple. For the early occupation see Rheidt (2007) 221, for the demolition

deacons and presbyters to it:

58 (1) These things might well be regarded as among the Emperor's great achievements, as indeed might the local dispositions he made in particular provinces. Such a case was Heliopolis in Phoenicia, where those who worshipped unbridled pleasure under the title of Aphrodite had in the past allowed their wives and daughters without restraint to act as prostitutes. (...) (3) There also he supported his words with matching actions, setting in their midst also a very large church building for worship, so that what had never yet from the beginning of time been heard of now became for the first time a fact, and the Pagan city was granted presbyters and deacons of the Church of God, and a Bishop consecrated to the God over all was appointed to oversee the people there. (...) ¹²²

Apart from the repetition of the closure of the cults and the presence of sacred prostitution, the most noteworthy point is that Constantine not only suppressed cults, but built a church in the city and appointed a bishop. This may well indicate that, as one could imagine given the events that would follow, the Christian community in the city was extremely poor and would not have otherwise been worthy of a bishop. Perhaps, more importantly, it may well have been impossible for a church to be built in the city otherwise.

The next imperial intervention in the city probably dates to the reign of Theodosius II. According to the *Chronicon Paschale*, the Emperor not only took interest in the city but also ordered the construction of a church on the site of the temple, and this is most likely the basilica discovered in the court of the temple of Zeus:

...Constantine contented himself with closing the temples of the Greeks, but Theodosius destroyed them; he transformed into a Christian church the temple of Heliopolis, that of Baal Helios, the great Sun-Baal, the celebrated trilithon... ¹²³

¹²²Eusebius, *Vita Constantini* I, 58.

¹²³*Chronicon Paschale* I, 561.

The fact that the elite of the city was solidly pagan was surely one of the main reasons for the large-scale pagan survival well into the 6th century and not surprisingly John of Ephesus reports that the city was still largely non-Christian in 579 AD.¹²⁴ Sources suggest the elites of the city resisted Christianisation and were backed in this by the local population. This resulted not only in a refusal to convert, but in open and active opposition leading to recurrent riots and even in open persecution and pillaging of churches during the reign of Julian.¹²⁵ This is particularly apparent in the words of Sozomen:

The inhabitants of Gaza and of Alexandria were not the only citizens who exercised such atrocities against the Christians as those I have described. The inhabitants of Heliopolis, near Mount Libanus, and of Arethusa in Syria, seem to have surpassed them in excess of cruelty. The former were guilty of an act of barbarity which could scarcely be credited, had it not been corroborated by the testimony of those who witnessed it. They stripped the holy virgins, who had never been looked upon by the multitude, of their garments, and exposed them in a state of nudity as a public spectacle and objects of insult. After numerous other inflictions they at last shaved them, ripped them open, and concealed in their viscera the food usually given to pigs; and since the swine could not distinguish, but were impelled by the need of their customary food, they also tore in pieces the human flesh. I am convinced that the citizens of Heliopolis perpetrated this barbarity against the holy virgins on account of the prohibition of the ancient custom of yielding up virgins to prostitution with any chance comer before being united in marriage to their betrothed. This custom was prohibited by a law enacted by Constantine, after he had destroyed the temple of Venus at Heliopolis, and erected a church

¹²⁴John of *Historia Ecclesiastica* 18.

¹²⁵The anti-Christian activities are reported by both Gregory of Nazianzus and Sozomen. The latter expends much interest in the description of the atrocities carried out by the rioters. Gregory of Nazianzus *Oratio* 4, 86-7.

upon its ruins.¹²⁶

3.5.2 The late antique city

Little is known of the city itself, as most lies below the modern Lebanese town of Baalbek. The main surviving feature of the ancient city is the great temple complex of Zeus Heliopolitanus that stands on a podium above the city, the Temple of Venus area and a few other monuments scattered through the city. Apart from the cultic buildings little else survives, though traces do emerge from time to time in different areas of the city in the course of building work. Early European travellers and their descriptions give us some idea, although they mostly only describe the most visible and picturesque ruins, that are also the only excavated ones to date. It is impossible to reconstruct the urban context of the city at any point during its history, and in this paragraph I will limit myself to describe briefly those monuments that do survive so as to give a flavour of the monumental context of the city.

The Temple of Zeus Complex The complex of the Temple of Zeus Heliopolitanus dominates the city of Baalbek and has done so since its construction began in the 2nd c AD, though it is doubtful it was ever completed. It was the last in a series of buildings that had stood on the site since the 2nd millennium B.C as indicated by the discovery of the remains of the ancient city tel in the course of the excavation of the podium.¹²⁷ As well as uncovering the vestiges of a Bronze Age settlement, German researchers also discovered a small altar roughly in the area of the temple court, at the bottom of a natural crevasse, suggesting that this was the original site of the cultic centre of Baalbek. By the end of the 2nd millennium B.C. a large enclosed court with an altar had been built on the site and the temple area began to take on the features we know today.

The evolution of the temple seems to have stalled during the Hellenistic period

¹²⁶Sozomen *Historia Ecclasiastica* V.10

¹²⁷Wiegand (1921) chapter 2.

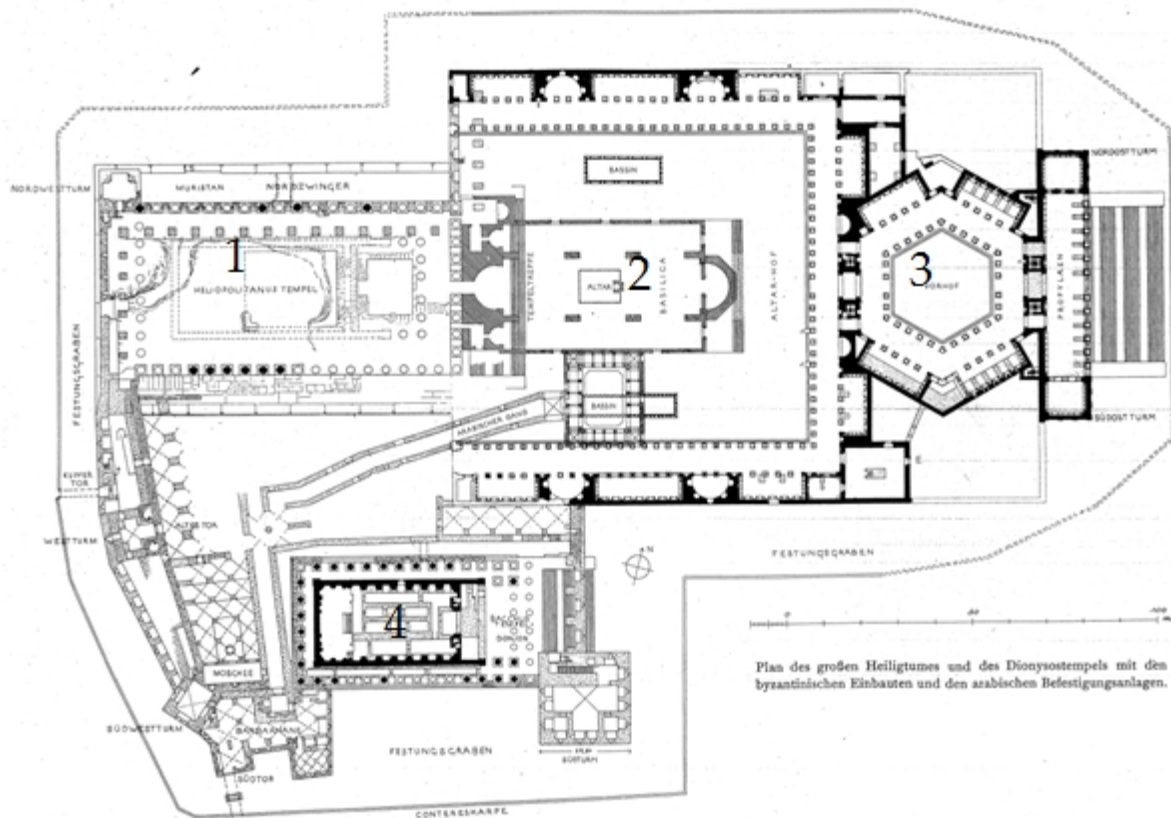


Figure 3.36: The complex housing the Temples of Zeus and Bacchus (Wiegand 1921). 1. Temple of Jupiter. 2. Basilica. 3. Propylaea. 4 Temple of Bacchus.

mainly due to the continuous conflict between the Seleucids and Ptolemies over the region, and a podium seems to have been built so that the temple could be extended westwards while maintaining the court and the altar intact, so as to bring it level with the court. The conquest of the region for the Roman state by Pompey in 64 B.C. changed the situation, if only by ending this constant warring and providing stability as well as potential patronage to the temple where probably only the podium had been completed. By this point the Semitic trinity of Baal-Aliyan-Anat had long been syncretised with Zeus-Hermes-Aphrodite, and had been carried over to the Roman divinities Jupiter-Mercury-Venus. Given the great success of the syncretic Jupiter/Baal that was worshipped in Heliopolis, the plans for the new temple were rapidly expanded and the process of constructing the building as we now know it was begun.

The last construction phase stretched from the reign of Augustus to that of Hadrian and possibly beyond. In this time the temple of Jupiter became the centrepiece of a complex that included the naos, a large sacrificial altar in the court and a second temple to Bacchus outside of the court to the south, which connected to the main temple. The temple took up the whole of the western third of the complex occupying all the available space. As far as can be told, building began during the reign of Augustus and involved the contemporary construction of podium and temple, as indicated by the use of partially worked material initially destined for the temple, in particular a large column drum, being used for the podium. In front of the temple stood the altar likely intended to provide prominence to the sacrificial practices and maintain the importance of the altar area as it had been in the previous arrangement, though the new arrangement had diminished its importance. The court itself was surrounded by a *stoa* on three sides, the fourth being the rear of the temple. The complex as a whole was accessed by a set of *propylaea* flanked by two towers of eastern influence that recalled the pre-existing entrance of the complex. Though at least one Emperor is known to have visited the city (the Emperor Hadrian in the 130s AD) it would appear that the bulk of the funding for the project came from donations and contributions, probably from the greater region, not from the imperial coffers, something that is probably not true for the Christian buildings of the city as we will see below. The scale of the building work is testament to the wealth of the city and of Phoenicia as a whole, as well as a plausible reason for the slow pace of the work: one only has to think that the foundation blocks of the temple, collectively known as the *trilithon*, weigh in at approximately 800 tons each. The complex was probably not completed before the early 4th century when all building stopped, probably as a result of the anti-Hellenic legislation of the period or due to the intervention of the Emperor as reported in the chronicles.¹²⁸

¹²⁸Construction, in particular of the Propylaea, and decoration continued through the 3rd and into the fourth centuries, as witnessed by numerous inscriptions and by references in other media; see Ragette (1980) 38-40 for details. See above introduction, for details of the chronicles and the interventions of Constantine and his successors in Heliopolis.

The Temple of Bacchus Alongside the Temple of Jupiter, likely part of the same building project, stands the Temple of Bacchus (marked 4 in figure 3.36). Unlike its much larger neighbour, there does not seem to be an antecedent to it in earlier cult though the cult of Dionysius, with whom Bacchus is syncretised, is widely attested in the region.¹²⁹ Despite being smaller than its neighbour, one should not think of the temple as small. The building was large, the columns are no more than 2.5 m shorter than those of the Temple of Jupiter, and decorated in the Corinthian order. It remained in use probably past the closure of the temple of Jupiter. According to some of the sources it remained in use until its destruction in the 6th century, which Michael the Syrian attributes to a fire brought about by a bolt of lightning striking the roof while sacrifices were still taking place.¹³⁰ It was built in the Hellenistic manner in un-mortared stone and was lavishly decorated, as well as being adorned with wood and metals both precious and not.

The Temples of Mercury, Venus, and the Muses The remaining three buildings, the temples of Mercury, Venus, and the Temple of the Muses, have survived in foundation only. The Temple of Mercury was built on the hill across from the Temples of Jupiter and Bacchus, and survives only as a few ruins that include an inscription to Mercury as well as being represented in a group of coins of Philip the Arab.¹³¹ The other two temples occupy an area below the large complex and survive in slightly better condition, as do the associated stoa and drainage system.¹³²

3.5.3 The churches

The Temple Complex Basilica The exact date of the closure and demolition of the Temple of Baalbek is not known though it is possible that the construction may not have been finished and was almost certainly still under way when temples were

¹²⁹Ragette (1980) 42, and Jidejian (1975) 30-32.

¹³⁰Michael the Syrian Chronicle 9.29.

¹³¹Ragette (1980) 63-66.

¹³²The area in question will be discussed further in this chapter, see below 2.6.3.2 "The so called temple of Venus".

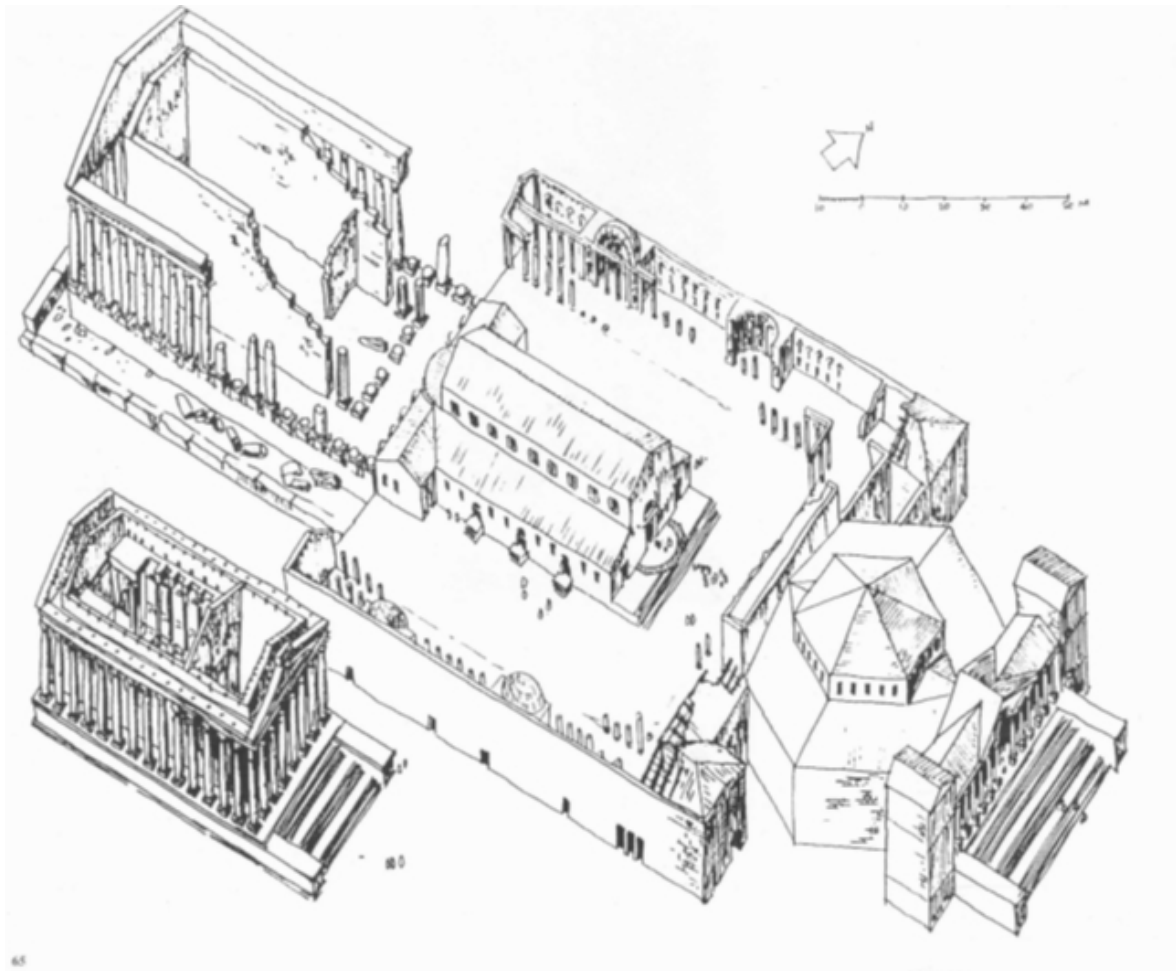


Figure 3.37: The temple complex in Heliopolis (Wiegand 1921)

closed.

The Christian takeover of the *temenos* resulted in major demolition activities and alterations, concentrated in two main areas: the court and the entrance complex. In the court the two altar structures were demolished to make way for the new church re-using most of their material. The *stoai* that surrounded the court may well have also been partially demolished. The construction of the podium for the church also involved the re-use of much material and, given the vast amount of decorative material recovered from it may have involved the demolition of parts of the temple itself.¹³³

¹³³See Wiegand (1921) 132-135, and Westphalen (1999) 65-66 for details of the alterations carried out on the *propylaea* and hexagonal court.

The *propylaea* of the complex were appropriated and maintained both in function and decor. The large hexagonal court that stood between the *propylaea* and the great court was also maintained though it was altered more substantially, by constructing a large timber roof over the open part in the centre thus creating further internal spaces in the complex.¹³⁴ Finally, the two large Roman cisterns to the North and South of the building remained in use for the whole of Late Antiquity, and it would also appear that the rest of the courtyard was at the very least kept clear of debris and in some form of order.

Phase 1 The basilica, now demolished to make way for the excavation and reconstruction of the Temple, occupied the centre of the complex's courtyard. It was constructed mainly out of re-used materials, probably recovered from the demolition of the main altar and tower, as well as from the partial demolition of the Temple and the rest of the *Temenos*. The interior was divided into three aisles, the side aisles being 7.89 m wide and the nave 12.59 m wide. The aisles were separated from the nave by four 4 m wide pillars, two on each side, and four engaged semi-columns, two on each side as well. There were three apses, a larger one for the nave, and two smaller ones for the aisles. They seem to have been inscribed into a wall of imposing thickness; however, as with the case of the relationship with the east part of the temple, the extent of later alterations means that one cannot be sure of the exact form of this part of the building. The *bema* platform was about 20 cm high and the sanctuary had a chancel screen, the remains of which were discovered during excavation.

The exact date for the construction of the basilica is unclear and the conflicting information supplied by the various available sources makes it complicated: according to Sozomen and Socrates Scholasticus, pagan cult was banned in Baalbek during the reign of Constantine; this does not however necessarily imply the construction of the basilica.¹³⁵

¹³⁴The exact use of this space is unclear, the shape would initially suggest a baptistery there is no evidence to the use of the *propylaea*.

¹³⁵Sozomen *Historia Ecclesiastica*, V.10, Socrates Scholasticus *Historia Ecclesiastica* XVIII.

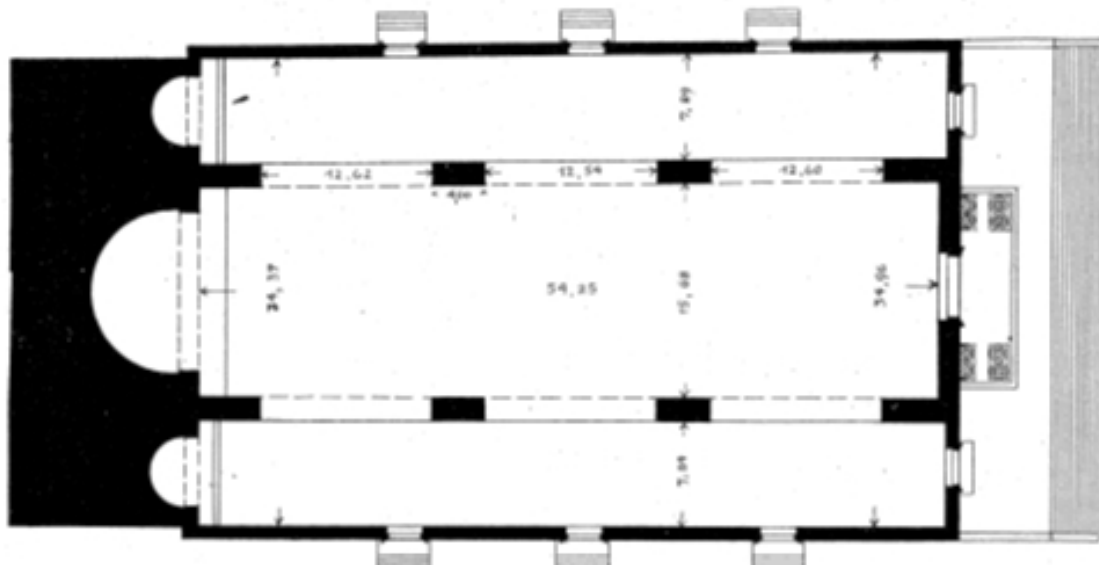


Figure 3.38: Phase 1 of the Basilica. (Jidejian 1975 fig 12)

The church itself may not have been constructed until the reign of the Emperor Theodosius II, though again the only record is textual and comes from the *Chronicon Paschale*.¹³⁶ The archaeological record is even poorer: as there is no firm dating evidence, and all reference to date is merely constructed via the relative chronology between the temple and the church and the assumption of the length of the hiatus between the abandonment of the temple and the construction of the church, leading Wiegand to suggest a date in the early 5th century.¹³⁷

Entrance was through 9 doors, three on each of the east, north, and south sides, with the central door on the eastern face of the building being the largest and most important one, and the other two being of a smaller size. Unusually it was entered from the eastern side maintaining the axis of the complex as a whole rather than adhering to the most common orientation of churches.

It is unclear whether the alignment was chosen for ritual or practical purposes, though I favour the latter: in adopting an east-west, rather than west-east alignment, the church maximises the monumental alignment of the complex as a whole. This means the entrance was perfectly aligned with the axis of the propylaea and

¹³⁶Jidejian (1975) 63 and footnotes.

¹³⁷Wiegand (1921) 131.

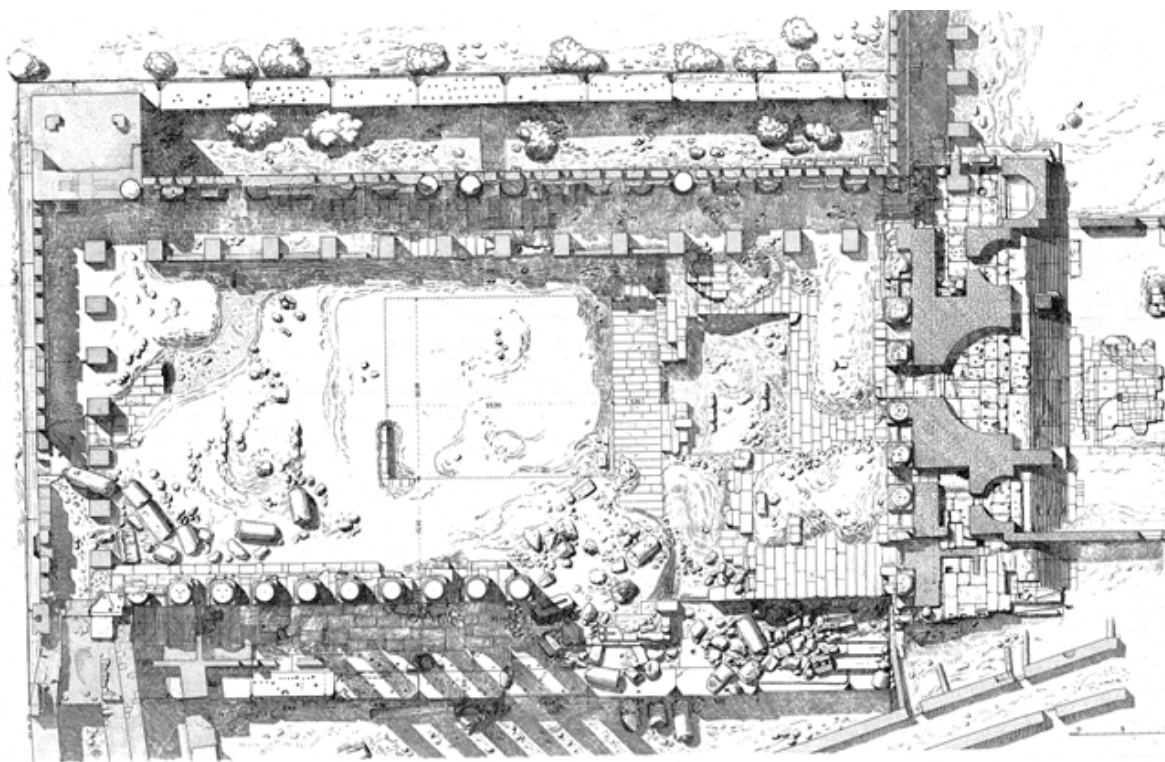


Figure 3.39: The interface between the temple and the church (Wiegand 1921)

the hexagonal court, and the church could be entered directly in a straight line thus projecting the Christian building over the now abandoned temple when entering it. Furthermore, one could enter directly via the court rather than by proceeding around the whole of the building and negotiating the remains of the temple while entering the building. Though this would seem like a practical solution, it is not necessarily a common one. In the case of Gerasa where the Cathedral was built in the same period and where a similar situation occurs, a different solution was adopted: here rather than changing the alignment of the church, the builders adopted a complicated, and one might even say cumbersome, solution to the problem. Though the main entranceway to the church and the rest of the ecclesiastical complex, appears to have been via the monumental *propylaea* to the East, the building itself maintained a West-East orientation, forcing the faithful to proceed around one of the sides and either enter through one of the side doors or to go all the way around the building and enter from the West.¹³⁸

¹³⁸See Gerasa, 3.3.3 p 138.

Phase 2 The exact date of the construction of the second phase of the church is unclear but since the basilica was originally constructed in the early 5th century, the modifications probably occurred in the late 5th early 6th c., when the basilica was probably modified quite extensively, as a response to the strengthening of the application of the rules on religious orthodoxy and on the alignment of buildings.¹³⁹ As a result of these modifications, the building was completely re-aligned and given a more conventional layout, while the advantages that the previous layout gave were sacrificed.

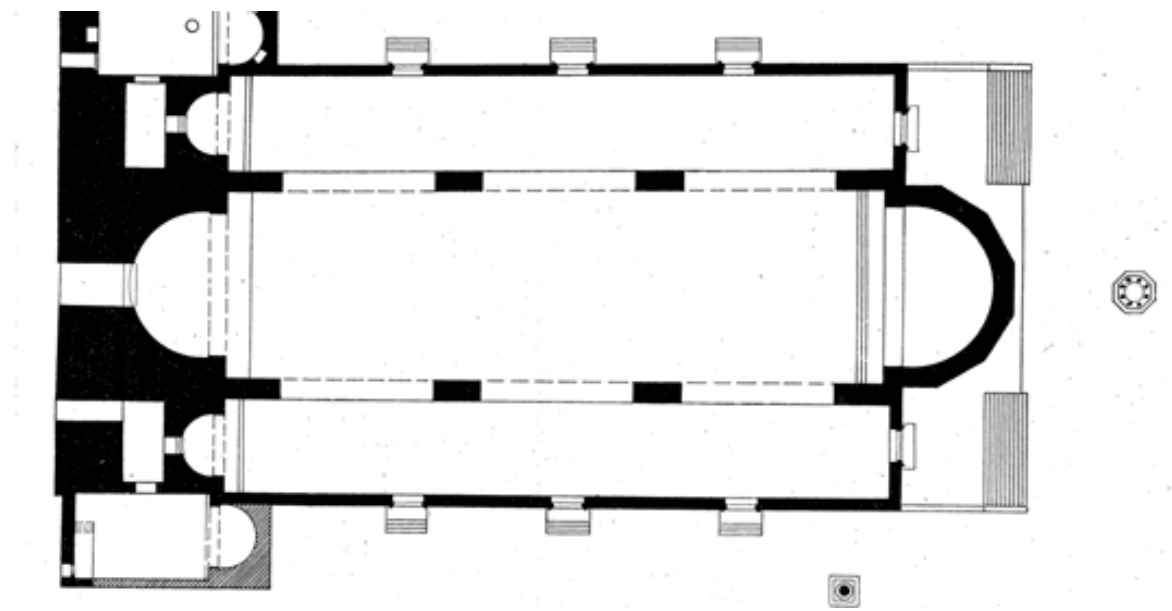


Figure 3.40: The church during phase two with the modifications to the apses and the alignment (Wiegand 1921)

To achieve this re-alignment, the building was completely inverted: the central part of the eastern façade and of the stairs leading to it were demolished and replaced with an apse, and the west side of the building was also substantially altered. The new apse consisted of an external semi-dodecagon while internally it was semi-circular, lined with a set of benches. The *bema* was about 50 cm in height and housed the sanctuary behind the chancel. The steps leading to the two side entrances were maintained as were the doors, leading to the assumption that they must have stayed in use. However, the temple was modified and the *peripteros* and *pronaos* partially

¹³⁹For the causes of the re-alignment see Ragette (1980) 71 and Westphalen (1999).

demolished to make way for passage; one must assume that this was because of sustained use of the new entrances built into the western side.¹⁴⁰

In the west of the building, the apse was pierced to create an entrance, as were both the side apses. Rather than connecting with the exterior of the building, these passages led into vestibules or *diakonika* that served to connect two small chapels built to the north and south of the church. The addition of these two structures expanded the west face resulting in it covering the entirety of the entranceway to the temple.¹⁴¹

Little is known about the elevation of the church, due to the ruinous state of the building when it was excavated. Wiegand suggested that the building was plain and undecorated both inside and out to serve as a contrast to the temple and its decorations.¹⁴² Unfortunately, as mentioned above, the complete lack of evidence means that it is all but impossible to confirm it.

The so called Temple of Venus The only other known Christian building in Heliopolis is the converted "Temple of Venus".¹⁴³ Found to the south-east of the monumental *propylaea* it was part of a complex dedicated to the Muses: it is a circular temple with a tetrastyle *protasis* that sits on a double podium. It was intentionally located in an area subject to flooding and the cult there may have been connected with water. This required constant attention to manage the flooding problem, attention that continued well into Late Antiquity, when in 430/431 AD a large canal was constructed to protect the temple, with an inscription that accompanies it still referring to the cult of the Muses. This is of particular relevance as it proves quite clearly that Hellenic cults were being not only carried out privately but also publicly well past when they had been officially banned. The site remained in continued use well into Late Antiquity up until the Arab conquest of the city and, though there is no

¹⁴⁰Wiegand (1921) 135.

¹⁴¹Wiegand (1921) 134.

¹⁴²Wiegand (1921) 135.

¹⁴³The most recent publication on this building is Hoebel (2007) and all references here are to his work.

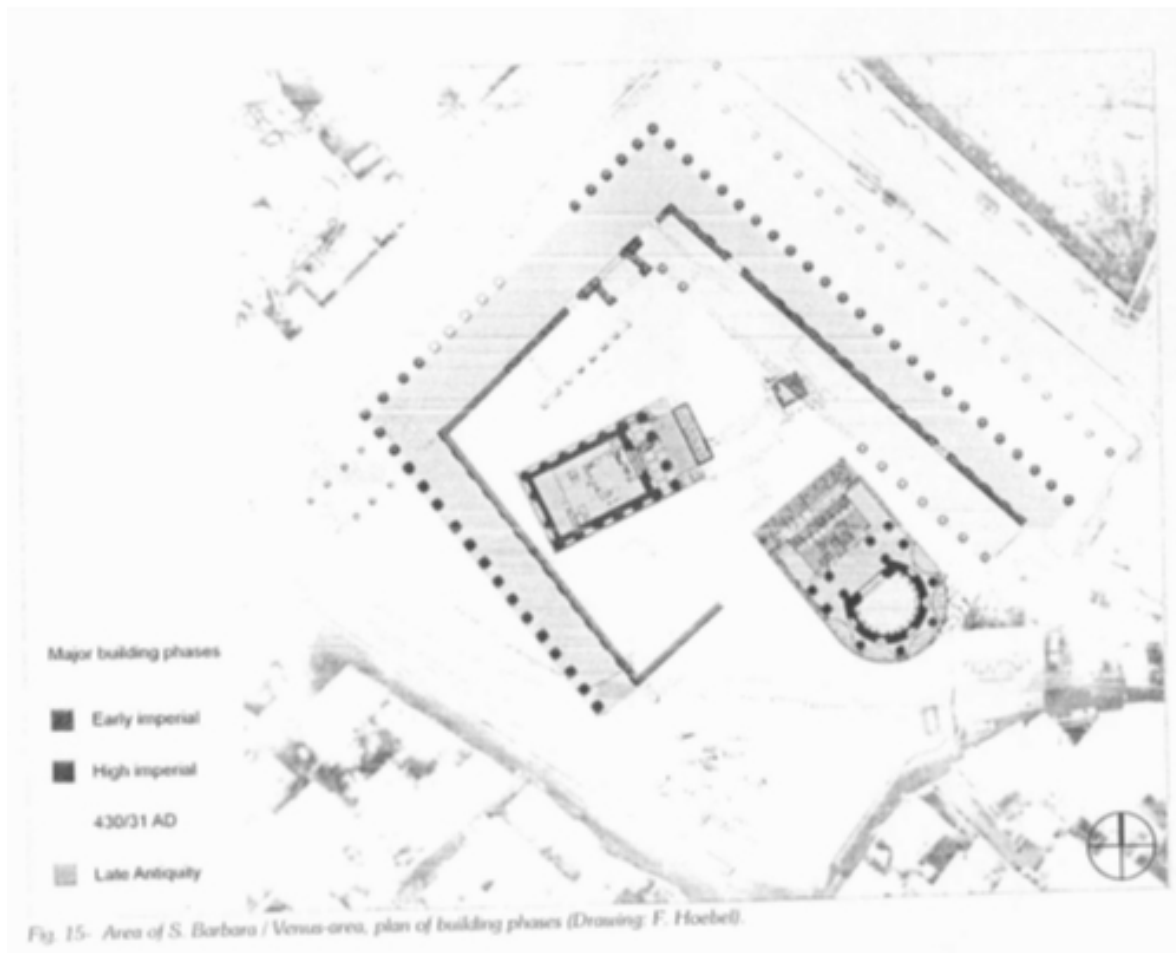


Figure 3.41: The Venus Temple Area (Hoebel 2007 fig 15)

direct indication of Christian activity at the site, along with a local tradition dating back at least to the 16th century, if not earlier, it is this that leads to the suggestion of the temple having being converted into a church.¹⁴⁴

3.5.4 Conclusions

The city of Heliopolis was a centre of Hellenic religion and culture at the beginning of Late Antiquity and probably remained so throughout the period. Despite repeated attempts at Christianising it, the city remained essentially pagan until the Arab invasion.¹⁴⁵ The first attempt came under Constantine who closed the tem-

¹⁴⁴Hoebel (2007) 172-173, and Rheidt (2007) 235.

¹⁴⁵As previously stated there are references to the strength of the Hellenes in Heliopolis at least until the late sixth century, John of Ephesus in particular reports the strength of these cults in 579

ple and named a bishop for the city but, given the limited results, one must assume that this top-down attempt was essentially unsuccessful.¹⁴⁶ Later activity is not well chronicled, but the excavation of the court of the Temple of *Zeus Heliopolitanus* (a Baal/Zeus/Jupiter syncretism) have revealed a church that is most likely the one mentioned by the *Chronicon Paschale*, described as having been built during the reign of Theodosius. Given the convergence between the date of the church (that Wiegand places in the 5th century on stylistic base) and that of the report and position of the church, I believe there can be no doubt that the basilica is in fact the church mentioned by the *Chronicon*.

The structure of the basilica complex is also unique. The relationship between the church and the temple is extremely close, as the Christian building overlaps partially with the westernmost part of the temple, and the construction of the new building involved the demolition of the grand altar to Zeus. This latter act involved a certain element of replacement as the main external and public structure of the temple was demolished and its material incorporated into the new building. However in the context of the complex as a whole its position and size directly compare it to the temple. By taking over the court both for the church and for the other structures, the Christians had in effect laid claim to the heritage of the great temple. Further the effect of entering the court and the church from the east would have superimposed the new building onto the ruined temple (see figure 2.37). This effect would have been diminished, by the inversion of the axis of the church in the 6th century but, however, would have remained a key component in the visual impact of the building.

A further significant point is that, in Heliopolis all the mentions of major churches are connected to imperial activity. While this may in part be due to the sources at our disposal (Eusebius and the chroniclers), it is also due to the fact that the local Christian community was unable to pursue a building programme of its own and

and it is not a stretch to imagine that less than two generations later, and with no mass conversions reported in the sources this was still the case. John of Ephesus *Historia Ecclesiastica*.

¹⁴⁶Eusebius, *Vita Constantini* I, 58.

certainly would not have been able to build church in such a prominent and sensitive position without powerful support. Imperial backing (and presumably legislation too) would have made this possible and would have come with money as well, as had been the case for both Jerusalem and Gaza, enabling the Christians in Heliopolis to proceed. Perhaps the most interesting issue is that the construction of the church apparently did not bring about rioting, something that had occurred during the reign of Julian, when according to accounts the Hellenes of Heliopolis had exacted fierce retribution on the Christians.¹⁴⁷ However, no later source suggests rioting when the church was built, and it is thus possible that either the continued toleration for the other cults in the city (that may well have been closer to the hearts of the citizens) may have defused them, or that along with money and orders the Emperor sent in troops that contained revolts.¹⁴⁸

Though the continued survival of both the ruins of the Great Temple and those of the Temple of Bacchus may partly have been down to the aesthetic appreciation of their structures and to the desire not to anger what by all accounts was a hostile Hellenic majority this cannot have been the only reason. It is unlikely that this would have been reason enough for such a significant choice: after all the construction of church on the site and out of the altar would have been anything but an uncontroversial move and, if one is to believe the sources it took the intervention of two emperors on at least three separate occasions to drive through the establishment of a bishop and the construction of the basilica; with this kind of investment and the precedents set in nearby Jerusalem and Gaza, one could reasonably expect more decisive action. Thus I suggest it is likely that there must have been other factors in play, and given the closeness of this behaviour to that at Gerasa, that a similar process of symbolic comparison may have been attempted, unfortunately

¹⁴⁷While the sources for this are all Christian and thus must be taken *cum grano salis*, Heliopolis was not the only city where this was reported, and, given the policies of Julian it is perfectly plausible. Both Gregory of Nazianzus and Sozomen report the rioting in very colourful terms.

¹⁴⁸There is no reason for the Christian authors that report the construction of the church to have masked the fact that it brought about unrest in the city, as it would simply have furthered their agenda.

less successfully.

In conclusion Heliopolis is a hybrid case. On the one side the form and position of the basilica church (the only one known to us) relates it directly to the temple, whose continued presence would have formed a perfect backdrop to it, and thus make it fall into the paradigm of comparison. On the other hand, the fact that it could only be built through direct imperial intervention and that its construction involved the demolition of a significant portion of the temple (the altar) means that it is akin to the case of Gaza that will be discussed below.¹⁴⁹ This hybrid nature is almost certainly due to the peculiar set of circumstances that were present in the city. Despite continued imperial pressure, and no doubt at least occasional bouts of proselytism by local bishops, the city remained resolutely tied to its Hellenic traditions. However, at the same time, precisely because of the repeated imperial investment into the city the local community could move beyond local resources and co-opt the most significant local monument to its uses.

¹⁴⁹See below 4.2 Gaza p 208.

3.6 Conclusions

In the cases I have presented the transition to Christianity involved a significant alteration of the monumental space of the city. The construction of churches and the abandonment of Hellenic religious buildings was driven partially by the need to provide adequate places of worship for the growing new communities, and partly by the imperative of giving concrete, physical embodiment to the new religion and the community that was forming around it.

The Christian community was not immediately successful and, as I have already said and will do so again, had to contest the social and physical space of the late antique Levant with the Hellenes. In the cases I have presented in this chapter, I have shown how under the right circumstances, rather than via a violent confrontation, this contest was resolved by the Christians proving the error of the old beliefs. This meant placing them in a context where the existing temples were either abandoned and left in ruins, used as quarries for building material or, at most, maintained as hollowed-out beauty spots, while the newly erected churches stood in ever growing majesty, recipients of both private and imperial munificence.

Jerusalem is perhaps where one sees the clearest-cut situation, thanks to the abundance of both written and archaeological evidence. Here the Church of The Holy Sepulchre was constructed on the site of the Temple of Venus though the presence of the latter was not the main objective: after all why would the imperial family be concerned with the fate of a temple in a provincial town, but rather with the fact that the true burial place of Jesus was thought to lie under the Temple of Venus. It was on the back of the presence of this most holy of sites that the giant building project that was the Holy Sepulchre was undertaken. Its construction involved a substantial alteration to the landscape of the city, with the flattening of a hill among other things, but did not change the centre of gravity of *Aelia Capitolina*, as the forum of the city lay directly to the south of the new church. It also spoke to another monument of Jerusalem's past: the Temple whose ruins probably still stood on the

summit of the mount. Not only had the Mount played a significant role in the life of Jesus, but the fall of the Temple had been prophesied by Christ himself, a prophecy that resonated with later authors like Eusebius.

It is unfortunate that we do not know the exact history of the Mount following the Bar Kochba Revolt, but most literary sources indicate that it was left in a state of ruin, possibly quarried for materials. The connection was not only symbolic but also physical: though the ancient landscape is irreparably lost to us, it is possible to reconstruct it to a certain extent through the use of GIS software. This makes it possible to test the relations between buildings in space. Standing at the entrance to the Holy Sepulchre at the time of its construction, one would have been able to see the ruins of the Temple peeking over the rooftops of the Roman city. Allied to the knowledge that the pilgrims had of the life of Christ, this would have led them to place the Holy Sepulchre within a symbolic landscape that included the places of the life death and resurrection of the Son of God, with which the locations that marked the old and new covenant were directly connected. In this relationship pilgrims could see how the new Israel that was Christianity had triumphed over the old Israel of Judaism.

The case of Gerasa is significantly different. Here extensive archaeological work has been possible, though the size of the site does mean that only a fraction of it has been exposed. Excavations have revealed at least 12 churches and almost as many inscriptions. In the Cathedral the floor was replaced in the 6th century and none of the elevation survives, while in the case of the Synagogue Church the inscription is extremely fragmentary. This wealth of archaeological and epigraphic knowledge is not matched by an equal amount of material in the surviving written sources. Examination of the material reveals a fundamental difference between what is believed to be the main episcopal complex and the other churches: the group also includes a set of baths constructed by Bishop Placcus, and the two churches further emphasize the connection with the episcopate, more concerned with the world around them, one could almost say outward-looking. The two inscriptions from the Church of St

Theodore both seek to promote the Christian victory on the site. As Jason Moralee explained in great detail and very convincingly in his 2006 article on St Theodore, there can be no doubt that the language of the inscription in both words and content, is seeking to engage paganism.¹⁵⁰ To his observations I would add the fact that it is significant that the entirety of the triumphalist message is contained in the external inscription, that could be read by all that walked the street that ran in front of the Church. The inscription on the inside of the lintel concerns itself exclusively with the saintliness of the martyr and the details of the foundation of the church. The distinction is total and the opposition could not be stronger: to the outside, and more importantly to the uninitiated, the building projects triumph and victory, with the reduction of Hellenic cult to the role of rubbish dump and abattoir, while inwardly it is entirely concerned with the saintliness of the eponymous martyr and his worthiness. I would also suggest that the competition was not a generic one addressed at the Hellenes in general; rather that it was addressed to the Temple of Artemis that stood right next to the Cathedral complex. The new church would have been roughly at the same level of the temple and would have been equally visible to the inhabitants of the city, especially those in the large, and largely unexcavated, part that was on the opposite side of the wadi, where one might suggest that the majority of the population lived. This situation is well borne out by the viewsheds of both buildings. Unsurprisingly, these cover roughly the same area of the city and more importantly the majority of the eastern section of the settlement. The case for the other churches to be part of this process is not so strong: they are generally built in the same period, but none of them presents any indication of an explicit link with the existing Hellenic monumental infrastructure. The location of a number of them around the general position of the temple and cathedral may be connected and may be part of the process. However, I would rather suggest that it is down to the size of the two complexes together and to the physical obstacle that they posed in the landscape. The most likely situation is that the close connection of the Cathedral to

¹⁵⁰Moralee (2006), in particular page 193-196.

the bishop was what made it possible to build and explicitly state the connection with the Hellenic past and that because of this it was limited to this complex.

Petra is an altogether different case. Here, though the information must be taken with a pinch of salt, the arrival of Christianity coincided with catastrophic damage to the city walls (plausibly an earthquake) followed by mass conversion. Though this narrative conveniently fits into both Christian and biblical antecedents, it may well carry a grain of truth as it is not unknown for mass conversions to have taken place in Late Antiquity following catastrophes (after all what better sign of the displeasure of God than a catastrophic earthquake?). Unfortunately the pattern of excavation has, as in many other cases, focused mainly on the Nabatean and Roman monumental infrastructure of the city and has generally neglected the large area to the north of the Siq thought to be the main area of late antique habitation and thus the most likely site of most churches.

Despite the aforementioned circumstances, three churches have been excavated: one in a re-used tomb overlooking the area now known to be the site of the Royal Palace complex of the Nabatean kings (the Church of the Urn), the second on the ridge just to the north of the porticoed street and the third slightly further north in the residential area (it is in this church that the "Petra Papyri" were uncovered. The Church of the Urn is perhaps the most interesting of the three from the point of view of the design as its construction involved substantial alterations to the existing structure of the tomb, while the other two are relatively conventional buildings of the "Palestinian Basilica" type. Locations are, however, more interesting: the church of the Urn effectively overlooks the whole of the city and the Hellenic monuments, as well as occupying what must have been a royal tomb of the Nabatean kings. Its position would also have meant that any cultic or processional activity would also have been visible from the whole city. The Ridge Church also occupied a notable position as it stood right across the road from the Hellenic temples, in particular the so called Temple of the Winged Lions, holding a dominant position that would have been even more so given the elevation of the church. The Residential Quar-

ter Church is less significantly placed, but may have played a significant role in the community especially given the amount of notarial material recovered in the archive.

In Heliopolis the situation is somewhat of a cross between comparison and replacement, though it does fall more in the former than in the latter. Especially the position of the Cathedral Church in the temenos is extremely interesting: it involved the demolition of the great altar in the court and the re-use of the material in the church (a fact that will be discussed later on in the next section); it was also integrated into the structure of the temple in a way that could leave no doubt about there being a relationship between the two. In its first phase the church was accessed from the east and the altar was in the west, anybody who entered the church would not have failed to see the church projecting onto the backdrop of the peripteros. There can also be no doubt that one would be inevitably drawn to compare the two buildings highlighting differences. The message that this juxtaposition sent would be reinforced by the level of Imperial involvement in the life of the community, the construction of the church, and the closing of the temple. One can easily imagine how the faithful would be reminded that they had God and the emperor on their side, while the Hellenic population of the city, still a majority and a hostile one at that, would be constantly reminded of the fall from grace of their cult, at least on an institutional level. There is no doubt that without imperial support the citizens of Heliopolis would not have been able to build anything close to what they did and there is equally no doubt that the Hellenic citizens of the city would not have tolerated it. This would have been clear in the minds of all the inhabitants of the city.

Though the contexts of all four cities are different, they all experienced similar developments in the way Christians approached the Hellenic heritage that surrounded them. Rather than taking an explicitly and physically aggressive stance towards the closed temples and demolish them, using the resulting space for a new Christian building, they chose to integrate them into the new Christian context that

was being created. Jerusalem was the earliest, and possibly the model for all of them, thanks to the strong motivation for Imperial intervention and, more importantly, the connection with the life and deeds of Christ which made the link easy to establish. In the other cases the connection was not as direct, yet it was established.

Chapter 4

Replacing the old gods

4.1 Introduction

In the second part of my thesis I will focus on those cases where churches were built on or out of the ruins of pre-existing temples. There can be no doubting the symbolism that such an act implied, and the importance of such a clear takeover of space. This would have been inevitably strengthened by the widespread belief that the presence of the old gods, or rather of the demons that impersonated them, still haunted the sites if not the very component matter of the buildings and statues that had been used for their cults. Such beliefs were widespread in the east and would have added a sinister tinge to the numinosity of these holy places for the Christians, while reinforcing the attachment that the Hellenes felt for them even if closed and in a state of disrepair.¹

Though imperial law had progressively impeded Hellenic cults and then provided for the closure of temples by the reign of Theodosius, this did not mean that they had been removed from the consciousness of the population, and there are cases where, in spite of being closed, temples were maintained as civic monuments, much as were statues of Emperors, notables, and at time even deities (though at times Christianised by the incision of a cross on the statue itself). The latter behaviour is particularly visible in the Asiatic city of Aphrodisias where statues, reliefs and even buildings were appropriated by the late antique Christian population.²

The same can also be seen in the Levant, sometimes even in close proximity to Christian buildings: for instance in Scythopolis the temple at the confluence of the Valley and Silvanus streets was closed, but its façade was maintained as a beauty spot until its destruction along with much of the city in an earthquake; in Pella the church overlooking the main *agora* of the city was flanked by the *bouleuterion* on its south side and by the so-called Ionic Building on its northern side, both buildings

¹As stated in the general introduction to the thesis, I use the term Hellenic and Hellenes to refer to the sum of pre-Christian cults and beliefs that are often referred to as Paganism and to their followers respectively.

²See the introduction to Roueche (1989), and Smith (2006) chapter 1 for details of the continued use of statuary in late antique Aphrodisias.

having been deeply associated with Hellenic religion, the latter most likely having been a hall for ritual banquets of some kind.³ Even in Jerusalem itself there is clear evidence of statues being maintained on the Temple Mount and admired not only by the citizens of the city but also by pilgrims who had come to visit the Holy City.⁴

While most cities in the Levant saw a peaceful or relatively peaceful transition to Christianity this was not true for all, and it is my contention the more the Hellenic population resisted, the more aggressive the Christian building practices. I will argue that this occurs in those cases where proselytising bishops faced opposition and in many cases active hostility: they sought to make a powerful statement and physically remove the most prominent symbols of the Hellenic religion replacing them with a symbol of Christianity. I will also seek to demonstrate how, precisely because one of the conditions for replacement to occur was the active hostility and opposition of non-Christians of all ranks and walks of life, bishops were not able to act independently, nor were they able to rely on the support of the local civic or imperial authorities, who were unable or unwilling to aid in the face of such a scale of resistance. In this context it was necessary for the Bishop to seek or be granted Imperial aid and backing, sometimes more than once, to complete their plans for the city.

I argue that this type of external intervention was a fundamental condition for replacement to occur, as it provided the Bishop with the financial and manpower resources to undertake the transformation, often providing outright military support to allow local prelates to overcome the existing obstacles, which ranged from non-Christian officials, to corruption, to resistance and rioting by the unconverted citizens of the city. Despite appearing relatively minor, such issues were generally sufficient effectively to forestall any progress, and could often be broken only with the aid of the Emperor or at least a member of his inner circle.

To demonstrate my thesis I will use five main case studies that will illustrate in

³For Scythopolis see later in this chapter, for Pella see 5.4 p 304.

⁴See above 3.2.1 The Temple Mount p 100 for the details of the late antique use of the Temple Mount.

different ways and with different evidence this process. In the first case, the one of Gaza, we will see through the words of both chronicle and hagiography, to reconstruct the actions of the first important Bishop of the city, Porphyry.⁵ According to the Mark the Deacon, he, with much help from the Imperial Court and in particular the Empress Eudoxia attempted to turn around the fortunes of the minute Christian community of the city that had until then existed in a perilous balance of power with the largely Hellenic population of the city. Initially rejected and even attacked by the people at large, despite a number of miracles, Porphyry was unable to co-opt more than a small fraction of the population. Only thanks to repeated interventions by the civil government and the Imperial Court was the Bishop able to coerce the population into accepting the closure and destruction of the Hellenic temples and the construction of a major Christian church. After the destruction of the Marneum the situation appears to have changed rapidly and drastically: mass conversions quickly made Christianity the main religion in the city and were followed by the construction of many churches as witnessed by the references in the works of Choricus of Gaza.

In Caesarea events were equally complex. Initially built as a Hellenic city, by the 4th century it had become a major centre for both Jews and Samaritans as well as Hellenes and Christians, providing an explosive mix that would result in at least two major riots that degenerated into anti-Christian revolts. The monumental centrepiece of the city was the great temple, possibly an Augusteion, built by Herod the Great on a large platform that dominated the city's harbour. This temple was almost certainly in use until the end of the 4th century and stood until the year 400 AD. After its demolition, though with a short hiatus, a large octagonal Martyrion was constructed. Though we have no textual evidence of the role of the church in the city there is no doubt that it stood proudly over the port and most certainly stood as a beacon for all those who entered what was at the time the main port of entry into the Palestines as well as the capital of Palaestina I. Thus here too it is likely that

⁵As will be seen, the main source for the life of Porphyry is the *vita* composed by Mark the Deacon. See below 4.2 Gaza p 208.

the demolition of the temple and its replacement with a church had a major impact on the city and its population.

In Scythopolis, the situation is similar to that of Caesarea. The city was and remained a political and cultural centre for the region (as it was the capital of Palaestina II). The excavation of the city has revealed a landscape that is richly endowed with buildings and monuments of the Classical tradition. The main temple of the city appears to have been a large free standing Temple of Isis at the top of the tel that most certainly dominated the landscape. In the city below the only other religious building to be discovered is a Temple to the Muses at the crossroads immediately below the Tel. Following an earthquake in the 4th century the Temple of the Muses was re-built not as a religious building but, rather, as an element of civic beautification. The main temple on the tel was demolished in its entirety and its summit was occupied by a large and curiously shaped church and a residential quarter were built. This new structure took the place of the old temple and most certainly would have made an impression on the inhabitants of the city and the region as a whole, making a powerful case for the new religion.

Finally in Apamea we will see a similar picture to Scythopolis. While we have relatively little if any written material for the site, what we do have is a reasonably extensive archaeological record. Though this does not provide the full picture that we would all like to see, it does give us snapshots of the city. The two clearly identified Christian buildings are found in the southern part of the city and, though we do not know where the main Hellenic focus of the city was, they do reveal a great deal about the relations between Christians and non-Christians in Apamea. The Atrium church was constructed on the site of a Synagogue, while the Cathedral was built over the remains of a Neo-Platonic School, both sites of previous religious importance and of memory.

4.2 Gaza

Built on a site that has been occupied for millennia the city of Gaza was a thriving commercial centre in Late Antiquity acting as entrepôt for the region's production of wine and oil as well as goods from further afar carried along the caravan routes of the East.⁶ Unfortunately, as is the case for many other cities of the region, continued occupation of the site and subsequent political issues, in particular over the past sixty years, have meant that archaeological excavation has proven often possible only sporadically and in marginal areas.

Occupied since the Chalcolithic, Gaza soon fell into the Egyptian sphere of influence within which it stayed, with the occasional break due to the waxing and waning of Egyptian power, until the early 5th century BC, when the region fell under Persian domination. It would stay as part of the Achaemenid Empire until the advent of Alexander and his victories, that brought Gaza within the Hellenistic world. The city remained Ptolemaic until 63 BC when the whole region was taken by the Romans under the leadership of Pompey. It would remain Roman for the next seven centuries (with a brief exception after Actium when Gaza would be ceded to Herod, and then another one when the Persians overran the region for about a generation in the 7th century), and would experience a great deal of prosperity from serving as an entrepôt for exotic goods coming across the Arabian Desert as well as profiting from the lucrative trade in the wines produced by its hinterland.

For the 4th and early 5th c. AD we are heavily reliant on written sources and in particular on the life of Porphyry, Bishop of Gaza by Mark the Deacon, that gives a detailed, if heavily biased picture of the process of Christianisation of the city of Gaza.⁷ For the later centuries we rely on other authors, in particular Choricus, and a number of chroniclers.

We will see how the most information about the Christianisation of the city comes from the writings of Mark the Deacon on the life of Bishop Porphyry who,

⁶See NEAHL 464-5.

⁷All references to the *Vita Porphyrii* are drawn from my own translation, with comparisons to the 1913 and 1930 editions. See Hill (1913), and Grégoire and Kugener (1930).

whilst not being the city's first Bishop was most certainly the most influential. Through his actions he would progressively force a crisis between the Christian and Hellenic populations of the city, then with the aid of the secular authorities he would proceed to forcefully close the temples of the city (in two phases) and then erect a major church on the site of the largest and most famous Hellenic building of the city: the Temple of Zeus *Marnas*.

4.2.1 The Christianisation of the city

Establishing the religious history of the city of Gaza prior to Porphyry's arrival in the city is somewhat complex: as with many other aspects of the life of the city we are entirely reliant on the patchy reports of authors whose objectives were other than relating the form and disposition of the urban landscape. What can be said is that according to Mark the city boasted eight major temples at the time of the arrival of the new Bishop:

...There were eight public temples in the city, those of Helios, Aphrodite, Apollo, Kore, Hekate, the so called Heroeion, that of the Tyche of the city, which they call Tychaion, and the Marneion, which they say is that of the Cretan born Zeus and reckon to be the most splendid of temples everywhere. There were many idols in the townhouses and villages whose numbers no one could count...⁸

In this description one can see not only the extent and piety of Hellenic devotion in Gaza but also the variety of cults that were followed in the city, as the list includes not only the fortune (Tyche) but also a mixture of syncretic cults (most likely both those of Zeus and Helios fall in such a category), purely Greek divinities (Aphrodite and Hekate who have no known syncretic cult in the region), and probably Roman as well, though no specifically Roman cults are reported. It would be surprising if such a large port city did not have at least a smattering of Mythrea and other such

⁸*Vita Porphyrii* 64, 4-16.

places of worship perhaps not spectacular enough to merit inclusion in the list of temples, but none the less important.⁹

As to the Christians in the city the situation is also only partially clear. Prior to the arrival of Porphyry, and for some time after, the Christian community of Gaza appears to have been minute and the majority of Christians seem to have lived in the villages surrounding the city.¹⁰ The small size of the Christian community of Gaza would have been exacerbated by the presence of a larger one in the city's port (Maiumas), where the religion appears to have arrived from outside, as the majority of its followers are reported to have been Egyptian sailors and wine sellers.¹¹ The vast majority of the population was resolutely Pagan as were the commercial and political élite of the city, holders of the major civic government positions. Pagan cults were vital and well rooted in popular practice, a context that would cause Porphyry many problems during his mission.

Following his arrival, the new Bishop took a more aggressive stance to conversion and may have attempted to increase the visibility of the Christian community.¹² At this point the only church in the city was probably a relatively small and peripheral one known as the church of the *Hagia Irini*, while pagan worship was strong and had much support amongst the more affluent segments of society.

Having taken over the congregation, Porphyry quickly set about expanding his base. The first major event in this process came on the occasion of an extended drought that struck the city not long after his arrival. The new Bishop began to

⁹On the syncretic cults of the city, see Trombley (1993a) 188-189 and Sivan (2008) 328. For a full analysis of the cult of Zeus Marnas and its origins, see Teixidor (1977) 97-99.

¹⁰The text refers to only 280 followers: *...the Christians came together with men, women, and children, to the number of two hundred and four score... Vita Porphyrii* 19, 20-23. As to Gaza, and its port Maiumas, Mark is rather generic about the relation between the urban Church and the *suburbium* of Gaza but it has been argued convincingly that it must have been in control of it and in fact been drawing income from it. See Trombley (1993a) 204.

¹¹It is well known that the port town, tied to Gaza in a relationship similar to that of Athens and Piraeus physically separate but dependant both economically and administratively, was mainly Christian: so much so that at the beginning of the 4th century AD it was separated from Gaza by Constantine as a reward for embracing Christianity. This separation was reversed by Julian and the two cities were re-incorporated under the primacy of Gaza, but the port city maintained its independent bishop. See Humbert (2000) 60-61 and Trombley (1993a) 226-227.

¹²*Vita Porphyrii* 10.

hold public prayer vigils to call for wind, to his great satisfaction the rituals and offerings of the Hellenes of the city failed to bring about rain while after these had ceased rain came on the day of the Nativity, vindicating in his eyes the Christians of the city. This miracle, supported by what in the *vita* would appear as a constant reminding of his success, brought about a modest increase in the congregation but did not result in the kind of mass conversion that he clearly hoped for.¹³

Having failed to elicit mass conversions through preaching and miracles, Porphyry dedicated himself to suppressing Hellenic cult in the city with all his energies. Idol worship, as Mark calls it, appears to be both Mark and Porphyry's main concern and the main focus for their attention. The first cult to feel the attention of the Bishop was that of Aphrodite that centred on a statue used both to propitiate and mend marriages, as well as aiding fertility. By leading a procession by the statue and carrying holy relics he banished the daemon that escaped into the wilderness, and in doing so caused the statue to fall and shatter killing two worshippers in the process.

*(...) when we came unto the place where the aforesaid idol of Aphrodite (but the Christians were carrying the precious wood of Christ, that is to say the figure of the Cross), the daemon that dwelt in the statue beholding and being unable to suffer the sight of the sign which was being carried, came forth out of the marble with great confusion and cast down the statue itself and broke it into many pieces. And it fell out that two men of the idolaters were standing beside the base on which the statue stood and when it fell, it slit the head of one in two, and of the other it brake the shoulder and the wrist. For they were both standing and mocking at the holy multitude.*¹⁴

As a next step Porphyry sought out the support of his ecclesiastical superior, the Bishop of Caesarea, an especially important step since he was an external appoint-

¹³In fact the Pagans attributed the drought to the arrival of Porphyry in the city, likely as a reaction to his zeal and missionary intent as well as his being an outsider. See *Vita Porphyrii* 19, Trombley (1993a) 190-191.

¹⁴*Vita Porphyrii* 59.

ment and his community was extremely small. On his advice Porphyry travelled to Constantinople to seek Imperial support from Arcadius, support that he received. With Imperial backing Porphyry returned to Gaza via Caesarea where he secured troops and officials from the provincial governor, with whose support he hoped to secure victory over the Pagans. However, though he did succeed in closing down most temples, the main temple of the city, the *Marneion* that was dedicated to Zeus *Marnas*, remained open, probably as the result of bribes, and possibly some sort of connivance between the Imperial officer and the local élite. There is no doubting that at this point in time the bulk of both the populace and the élite of Gaza was still resolutely tied to Hellenic cults, and it is likely that in Gaza itself Christians were in effect barred from taking up public office, a fact that would both justify the level of hostility to the incoming Bishop and partially explain the absence of any converts in the upper reaches of Gazan society.¹⁵

Undaunted Porphyry returned to Constantinople with the Bishop of Caesarea and, having secured the support of the Empress Eudoxia, received more Imperial support in the form of troops and funds to erect a new church on the site of the *Marneion*. Returning home with much more support Porphyry and the Imperial emissary Cynegius, raised a mob of Christians from Maiumas and Gaza and attacked the temples of the city, but initially avoided the *Marneion*.

*So they spent ten days overthrowing the temples of the idols, and after the said days they took counsel concerning the Marneion also, how they should deal with it.*¹⁶

The main issue with the pause and debate seems to have been deciding what to do with the temple, and more importantly how to destroy it. While the closure of the building itself was of course beyond doubt, the method was important, and there appears to have been a choice of three options: burning the temple, demolishing it or converting it into a church. Unable to reach a conclusive decision Porphyry

¹⁵Trombley (1993a) 190-192, Sivan (2008) 332-333.

¹⁶*Vita Porphyrii* 66, 1-5.

chose to leave the decision to God, and after having conducted a mass a child was possessed by the Holy Spirit and led the community to burn down the temple.

*(...) for some said that it should be dug out, others burned down, and others that it should be purified and consecrated into a church of God, and there was much discussion on the matter. But during the celebration of the Communion, a child of about seven years, which was standing with its own mother, cried out suddenly, saying: 'Burn the inner temple to the foundation; And in this way burn it: bring liquid pitch and sulphur and pig's fat, and mix the three and coat the bronze doors and set fire to them. And after the fire having purified the place, found there a holy church.'*¹⁷

Thus Porphyry had achieved what we must imagine was his main objective from the start: the closure of all temples, their demolition and the construction of a new and massive church in place of the *Marneion*, named the Eudoxiana after Porphyry's Imperial patron. The new church, whose plan was sent from the Imperial court and whose execution was commissioned from an architect from Antioch, was so large that even Mark appears to question its necessity. The whole process resulted in at least two riots led by prominent Hellenes of the city but mainly made up of the general populace showing that, despite Imperial authority and the presence of a number of soldiers provided by the secular authorities, the population was not prepared to take the Bishop's activities lying down.¹⁸ The subversion of the *Marneion* was completed by using the reliefs of the temple on the road or forecourt in front of the Eudoxiana. This excited the Hellenic community of the city and may have even started riots, driven by the fact that not only men were walking on the concourse but also women and dogs.¹⁹

¹⁷*Vita Porphyrii* 66-67.

¹⁸In this Gaza follows the pattern of many other cities in the region such as Alexandria, Heliopolis and even Caesarea, where activist bishops caused major rioting in the city through their anti-Hellenic activities. It is interesting to see how in Heliopolis and Alexandria the reaction was so strong that Christians had to recede partly or entirely from their intents. On the rioting in Gaza see Trombley (1993a) 200-203, for Alexandria see McKenzie (2007), and for Heliopolis see Jidejian (1975)

¹⁹*Vita Porphyrii* 76. The use of pagan reliefs as paving has been archaeologically attested in Aphrodisias, where it presumably served the same function. See Trombley (1993a) 203.

Incident	Date	Size of congregation	Increment	New Total
Porphyry's first year	Jan 396	280	-	280
Rainstorm	Late winter 396	280	127	407
Various Conversions of Aelia	end of 396	407	35	442
	398-401	442	64	506
Destruction of the Shrine of Aphrodite	402	506	41	547
Post-Marneion house search	402	547	300	847
Aftermath of the Marneion	403-420	847	1,800	2,647

Table 4.1: Attempted reconstruction of the progression of the community in Gaza under the episcopate of Porphyry the numbers are drawn from Mark's description of the events. (Trombley 1993a)

It is clear from the narration of the *Vita Porphirii*, that prior to Imperial intervention monumental Christianity was at best unlikely to develop in any way in Gaza, while the majority of the Christian community was made up of people of a low extraction and very few *possessores* belonged to the community. This fact, along with the need to shut down pagan cults and temples forcefully and render them irreparably lost, meant that drastic action had to be taken.

The demolition of the main temples was not enough, and Christianity had to prove its mettle and its importance by actively replacing the existing cult, by proving its superiority in an unmistakable manner. In effect the Bishop used Imperial muscle to compensate for the refusal of the locals to convert and for the lack of resources. Only then could he also use his community in acts such as processions to acquire control over the whole of the city. The choice of removing friezes and holy images from the temples and using them as paving material for a square follows in this pattern. The objective of his actions is that it must be made clear to the unbelievers that they are in the wrong, their symbolic and ritual landscape must be irrevocably

changed and re-focused around a new, Christian centre. The key to this is obviously the replacement of the *Marneion* with the new, vast, Cathedral whose role is not to compete with but to replace the previous building and prove the superiority of the new religion.

4.2.2 Gaza after Porphyry

The main source for our understanding of the form of Gaza after the episcopate of Porphyry, are the orations of Choricus of Gaza. Unfortunately, much as is the case with the *Vita Porphyrii*, Choricus is quite sparse in his references to the churches of the city, and forces modern scholars to undertake careful analyses of his work to glean what evidence there is.²⁰ Choricus refers to three urban churches built or renovated under the episcopate of Macarius, a Gazan native: those of St. Sergius, of St. Stephen, and of the Holy Apostles, as well as to an unknown and unnamed rural one.²¹

Very little is known of the church of the Holy Apostles. It was quite small and, according to Choricus, it was in a state of utter disrepair, a fact that was severe enough to merit mention, and that was made worse by its location in a place of passage and trade that made it visible to many people. The church of St. Sergius may well have been a later incarnation of the church on the site of the *Marneion* that Mark called the *Eudoxiana*, and that was built at the behest of Porphyry and the Empress Eudoxia, since there is no further mention of any church under such name. It may, however, also have still stood, unchanged in a different area of the city and the author's silence may have been due to the objectives of the rhetorician rather than to such a dramatic change in name. In his work, Choricus intends to magnify the works of the Bishop rather than the glory of the Church in Gaza; the survival of the *Eudoxiana* would thus have been of little interest.²²

²⁰The analysis of the works of Choricus is a task far beyond the scope of this thesis. For my interpretation I rely on the work of C. Glucker and C. Saliou in Glucker (1987) and Saliou (2005).

²¹See Saliou (2005), and Saliou (2007).

²²Saliou (2000) 74.

St. Sergius was located near the *agora*, and Choricus praises both the size of the church and the beauty of its decorations, and the size of its dome. Given this emphasis on size and position one could suggest that there may well be representations of the church in the vignettes of the Madaba Map, where Gaza is shown in some detail with much emphasis on its walls and on what would appear to be a Basilica, and of the mosaic in St. Stephen in Umm al-Rasas, where the city is represented by its church and walls alone as are all other cities of the region.²³ St Sergius was not, however, a free standing church as Mark suggests the Eudoxiana was, rather it was part of a larger complex, housing a baptistery, a hostelry and the Bishop's Palace. In the generation that separated Porphyry from Choricus, the Eudoxiana may have been expanded and change in name, though it would appear odd that the Episcopate would have given up on such a direct reference to Imperial preference, and, equally, it would seem peculiar that Choricus would have neglected to refer to such a significant church.

Choricus gives even less information about St. Stephen. Based on the few references made by the rhetorician we can assume that it must have been a basilica of some kind and that it was built on a much smaller scale than St. Sergius. The only annex that is mentioned is a vestibule or *diakonikon* whose entrance connected it to the atrium rather than the main body of the church.²⁴

4.2.3 Conclusions

It would thus seem that in the generation that followed the life and activities of Porphyry, the Christian community of Gaza flourished and took over the city without any further setbacks, the Hellenes resistance having been broken. It is still likely that the Pagan population did not disappear at once, given that it is known to have survived for much longer in other parts of the Empire in a similar situation: Baalbek is a perfect example, having a very similar situation with an ample pagan élite

²³Saliou (2005).

²⁴Saliou (2005).

and continued resistance to Christianity that resulted in very similar outcomes to those experienced in Gaza with riots and forced conversions.²⁵ The construction of several other churches would seem to have been undertaken quite quickly by the community and the Bishop's role in this would seem to have continued to be determining. After the removal of the Pagan élite, the Bishop would seem to have rapidly gained the role of civic leader and main focus for euergetism. The presence of small churches in Choricus' text and his decrying of their state, would suggest that popular devotion spread and that by his time Christianity was a matter of course and a key part of everyday life.

4.3 Caesarea Maritima

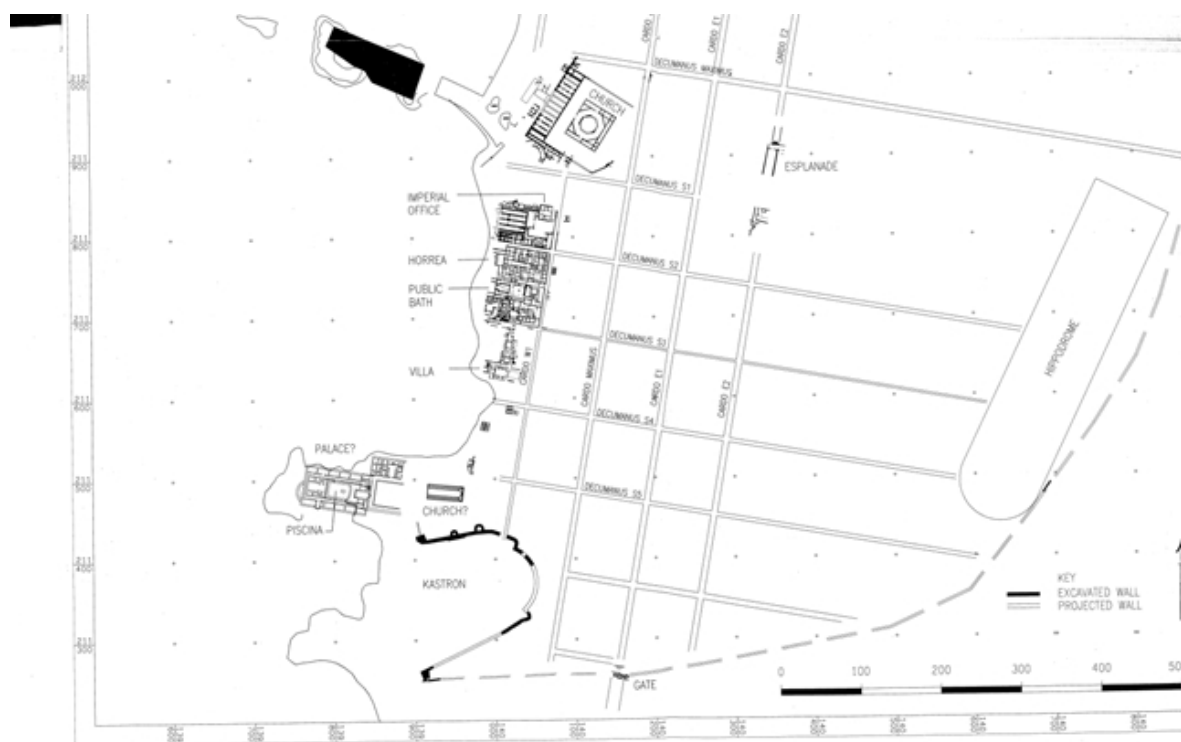


Figure 4.1: Figure 3.1 Late antique Caesarea (Holum 1998 plan 1)

²⁵See above 3.5 Heliopolis p 179.

The city of Caesarea Maritima was founded in the late first century B.C. by Herod on the site of the emporium port of Strato's Tower. Set out in a typical Hellenistic manner, it was named after the ruler in Rome and rapidly became an important centre of Hellenistic culture for the region. As a thoroughly Greek city (founded by the Hellenophile and Romanophile monarch as a counterweight to the Jewish Jerusalem) Caesarea had a regular orthogonal Hippodamean plan and a full panoply of monuments: a theatre, a royal palace, an *agora*, and a number of temples. The population, in the main would also appear to have been Greek, though there was a Jewish community too. Above the city towered the most important religious building of the city the Temple of Roma and the divine Augustus, a large Ionian order *peripteros* temple on a high podium carved from a rock outcrop.

After the annexation of Judea in 6 AD, Caesarea became the capital of the newly established province of *Iudea* (that would be renamed *Palaestina* after the Jewish revolt). However, due to its foundation by a vassal ruler, it was not until after the Jewish Revolt of 70 A.D. that it became a *colonia* and acquired political importance.²⁶ Its pre-eminence in the region, as well as its role as main commercial thoroughfare for Jerusalem and the other major cities of the interior, meant that it did not experience decline in the later Roman period.²⁷ On the contrary, the city grew and was substantially redeveloped and expanded in the sixth century resulting in the construction of a whole new city district and of new walls, that almost doubled its surface being 2,500 m. in length. The city maintained this form until after the damage wrought by the Persian conquest first (614-28 AD) and the Arab one later (638 AD), after which it still survived but much diminished.

Religiously Caesarea was, from the start a mainly Hellenic city, with a smattering of Jews. It is said that the Apostle Peter founded the first Christian community in the city; however it is likely to have been massacred by the other citizens of Caesarea during the first Jewish revolt alongside many of the Jews of the city. After its elevation to *colonia* by Vespasian the city grew quickly and by the middle of the 3rd

²⁶Levine (1975) 1-2.

²⁷Levine (1975) 1-5, and Holum (1988) 164-165.

century AD it housed large Christian and Jewish communities that had given rise to prominent rabbinical and theological schools and given birth to an intellectual of the calibre of Origen. Much as in the rest of the Empire Caesarea's Christians suffered from repeated persecutions, the details of which are chronicled by Eusebius in his acts of the martyrs of Palestine. In his work, the future Bishop of the city describes a city with large Hellenic, Jewish and Samaritan communities, while Christianity was present in numbers and with some churches but without a major presence.

Unfortunately we know much less about the earlier period; while authors such as Origen and Eusebius provide us with a description of the functioning of the Church as an institution in the city, they provide very little information about the churches in the city or the city itself and its monuments. We know of three major temples: the *Augusteion*, the *Tibereion*, and the *Hadrianeion* (interestingly enough all temples connected to the Imperial cult); apart from the major temples there was probably a *Tychaion* (reported in the sources), and there must have been a number of synagogues both Jewish and Samaritan.

As Late Antiquity progressed, the city grew thanks in particular to its port and to its role as metropolis of the province, and with economic growth came physical growth for the city that expanded physically beyond the Roman walls. From the 4th century AD onwards the Christian community grew, aided and backed as it was by Imperial decrees, and it shared the city with equally prosperous Jewish and Samaritan communities. Both these latter groups were heavily invested in the city, with its ritual purity being extensively discussed in rabbinical texts.²⁸ From these very same texts it is clear how specific parts of the city were considered pure and others impure and the same was true for its roads: thus it is possible to suggest that the city was somehow divided into religiously specific areas, at least for the observant members of the faiths.²⁹ The Samaritans were certainly the most restless of the city's minorities, revolting no fewer than five times during Late Antiquity, and in the course of at

²⁸For a detailed description of the ritual condition of Caesarea and indeed of its *suburbium*, see Habas (1996) and Patrich (2011).

²⁹Patrich (2011) covers the details of the parts of the city that were pure, in particular 49-53 for the streets, and Habas (1996) 455-458.

least two of these rebellions (484 AD and 555 AD the latter also involving the Jews of the city) the revolters took the torch to Christian buildings of the city and massacred Christians. The recurrence of the revolts and the ferocity of the rebels suggest that religious tensions within the city were high, but the chronicles of the revolts do also give us an idea of the religious geography of the city in the 6th century AD and certainly give us an indication of the scale of Christian monumentality.

4.3.1 The Octagonal church on the platform

The Temple, the platform, and the transition

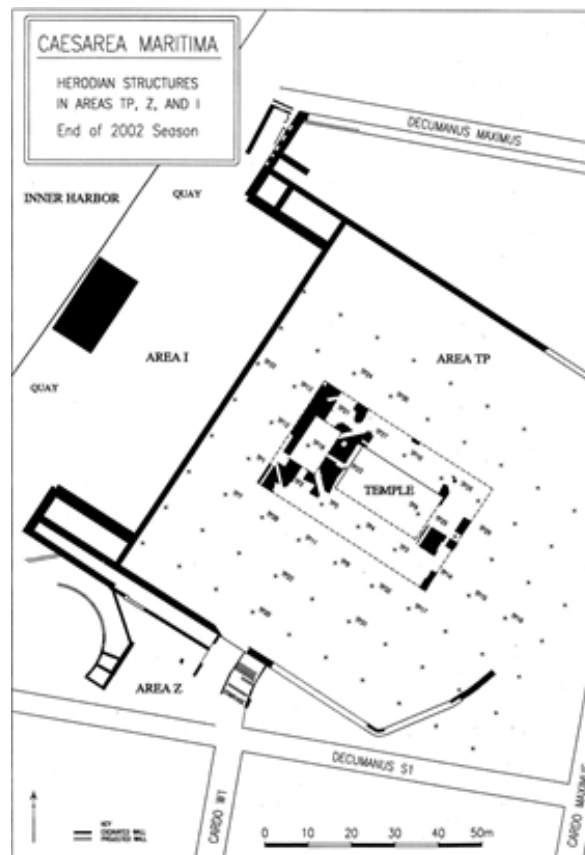


Figure 4.2: The temple platform and the temple (Stabler and Holum 2008 plan 2)

Initially built by Herod the Great in the 1st century BC, the *Augusteion* was a *peripteros* temple of the Corinthian order, built on a platform cut from a natural outcrop of kukrar stone that was expanded and regularised through the construction of vaults

that served the dual purpose of sustaining the building and providing *horrea* for the port (figure 4.3).

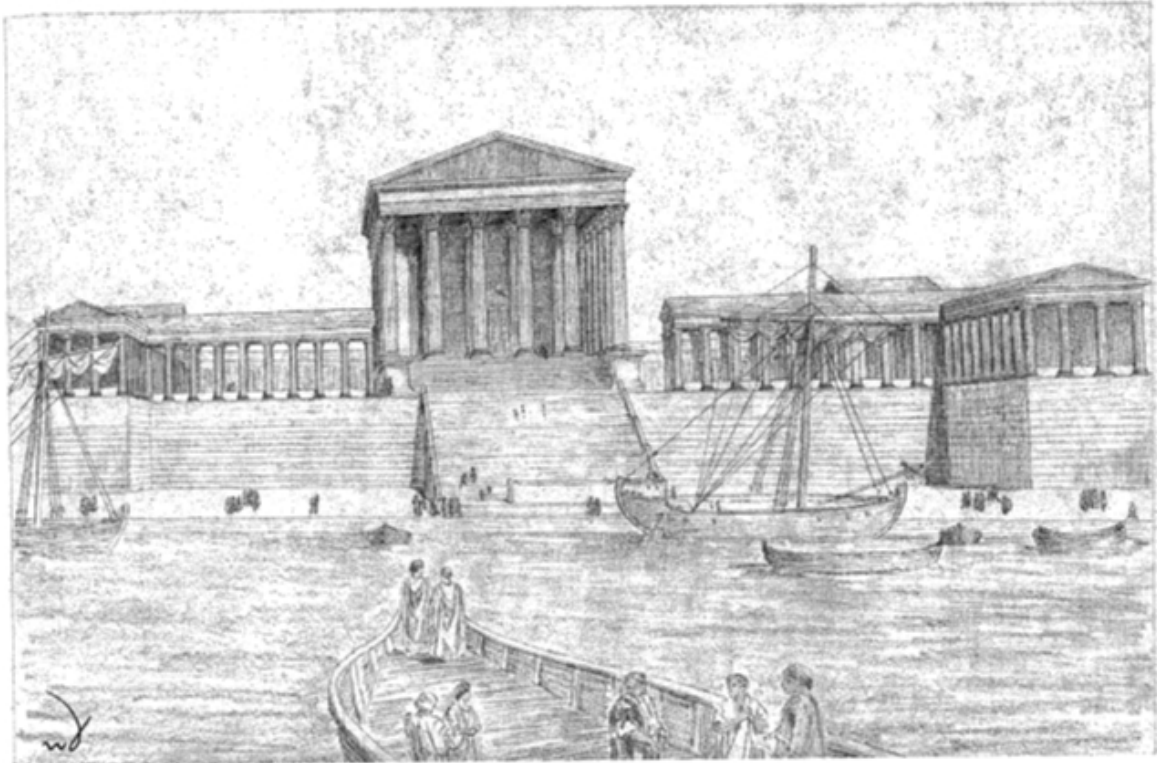


Figure 4.3: Artist's rendition of the Herodian temple (Patrich 2008)

The *Augusteion* stood, and probably was still in use until the 4th century AD, and there is no indication of its destruction at least until 400 AD.³⁰ While it is possible that the building collapsed due to neglect, this is unlikely, and the thorough demolition that followed its destruction points to it having been an intentional act.³¹ After the demolition of the temple the podium was raised by several feet at some point in the late 5th century, and from around circa 470 AD a new building was erected on the site, unfortunately this building was demolished to the foundation in the construction of the octagonal church. However the foundations do survive and they provide a rough idea of the building: it was a rectangular structure, roughly aligned east (though out of alignment with true east) constructed with an ashlar elevation,

³⁰The few remaining vestiges of the temple that escaped destruction were embedded in a fill containing early fifth century pottery and coins dating to 425 AD. See Stabler and Holum (2008) 17, Raban (2008) 1666-1667.

³¹Stabler and Holum (2008) 20.

whose only traces are the marks left in the foundation mortar (figure 4.4).³² The size of the foundations, their quality and the fact that they supported ashlar blocks suggest that the building was of some importance, though these traces do not give any suggestion as to the formation of the building itself.

Shortly after the construction of the intermediate building it was destroyed by fire, probably in the 490s, it is at this point that the structure is demolished and the platform is levelled again with a fill consisting mainly of earth and rubble, that has yielded material mainly from the 4th to the end of the 5th centuries. It is in this fill that the octagonal church's foundations were cut and upon which it was built. It thus appears that the intermediate building experienced some sort of catastrophe in the late 5th century that resulted in it burning down and being demolished.



Figure 4.4: The transitional structure (Patrich 2008)

³²Stabler and Holum (2008) 23.

The octagonal church

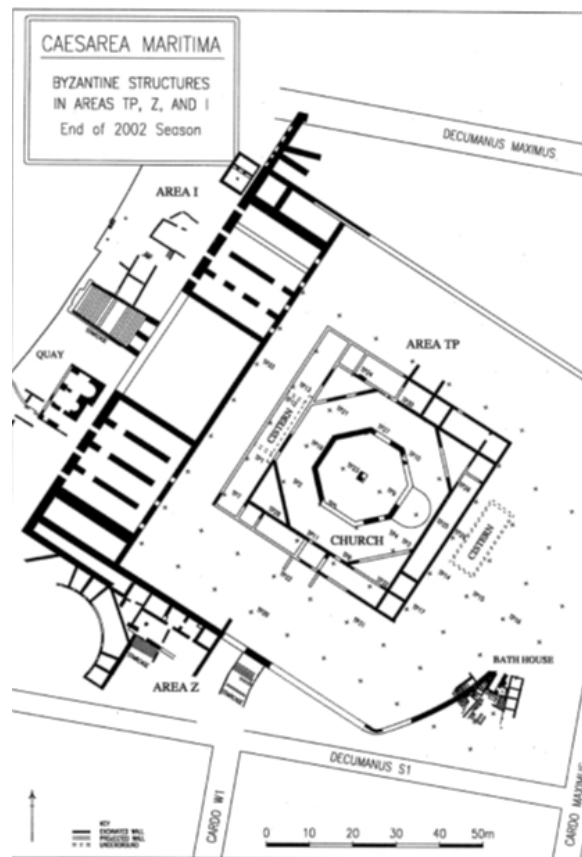


Figure 4.5: The Martyrion (Patrich 2008)

The church on the temple site was constructed on the platform previously occupied by the *Sebasteion* constructed by Tiberius.³³ The western part of the platform was extended before the construction of the church through the construction of barrel vaults, probably used as a cistern.³⁴ The church was an octagonal central plan church, a form that is quite common in sixth century Palestine (Figure 4.5).³⁵ The structure is made up of two concentric octagons: the exterior one was the main structure while the interior one probably held up the dome at the centre of the church. The church itself sits in the middle of the platform above the remains of the temple, with its foundation trenches cut through the previous structures to reach the

³³This building replaces the earlier Herodian temple that probably had become an *Augusteion*, some time before.

³⁴Holum (1995) 850, Holum (1999) 27.

³⁵Holum (1995) 853.

bedrock. No apse has been found by the excavators, and the only possibility is that the church had an internal apse that has yet to be identified. The form of the church, the presence of the cistern ancillary buildings, as well as its position within the city, point to its use not as a place of communal worship but rather as a place of pilgrimage.³⁶

When constructing the church the architects clearly kept in mind the presence of the Herodian temple, evidence that it must have still have existed in some residual form. Thus the church and temple followed the same axis, making the focus of the church, and the crusader building that followed it, 118 north rather than true east. Having said this, the foundations of the church cut through a number of robbing trenches that despoliated part of the temple, so it is likely that it existed only in a ruined state and was serving as a convenient quarry for both the church and other monuments in the city. The position of the church was also influenced by the presence of the Herodian temple as part of the foundation walls of the church lay in coincidence with the west wall of the naos forcing the builders to extend levelling courses to the west of the building to construct the walls.³⁷

³⁶Holum (1995) 852-853.

³⁷Holum (1999) 27.

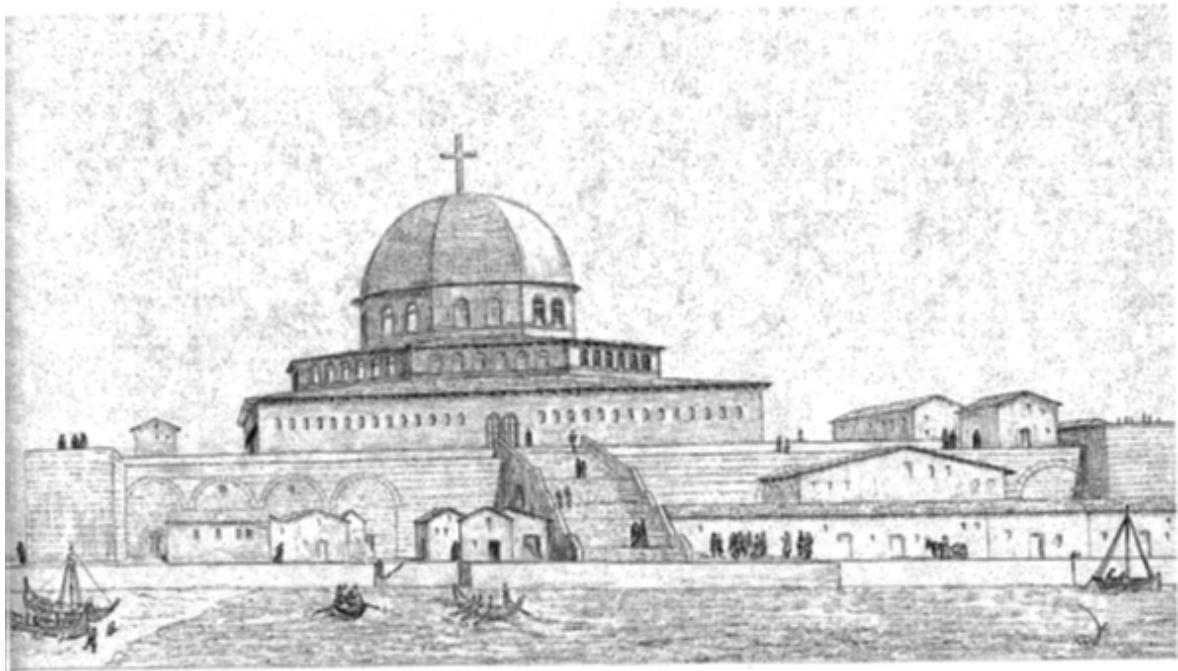


Figure 4.6: Artist's rendition of the church and the harbour (Stabler and Holum 2008)

The elevation of the building was made up of large *kukrar* blocks partially robbed from the temple, much of the decorative material was also robbed from previous buildings, even though it would seem that most of the capitals from inside the church came from 4th or 5th century structures. The surviving *kukrar* blocks have clamp holes cut into them both in the exterior and the interior, probably to allow the fixing of a marble revetment.³⁸ The most significant of the decorative materials recovered in the course of excavation is a group of 10 capitals. They are all of the Corinthian order and differ in form. As to the date: the shape of the acanthus leaves, the abacus and the bell are indicators that it is highly likely that these date to the late fourth century or the early fifth. The consistency of the decorations and the presence of a small number of mason's marks make it likely that the capitals were produced by the same workshop, or a small number of workshops, while the similarity of the decorative motifs makes it likely that they came from Constantinople, at the time a thriving exporter of such materials.³⁹

³⁸Holum (1995) 851.

³⁹Roussin (1992) 173-174.

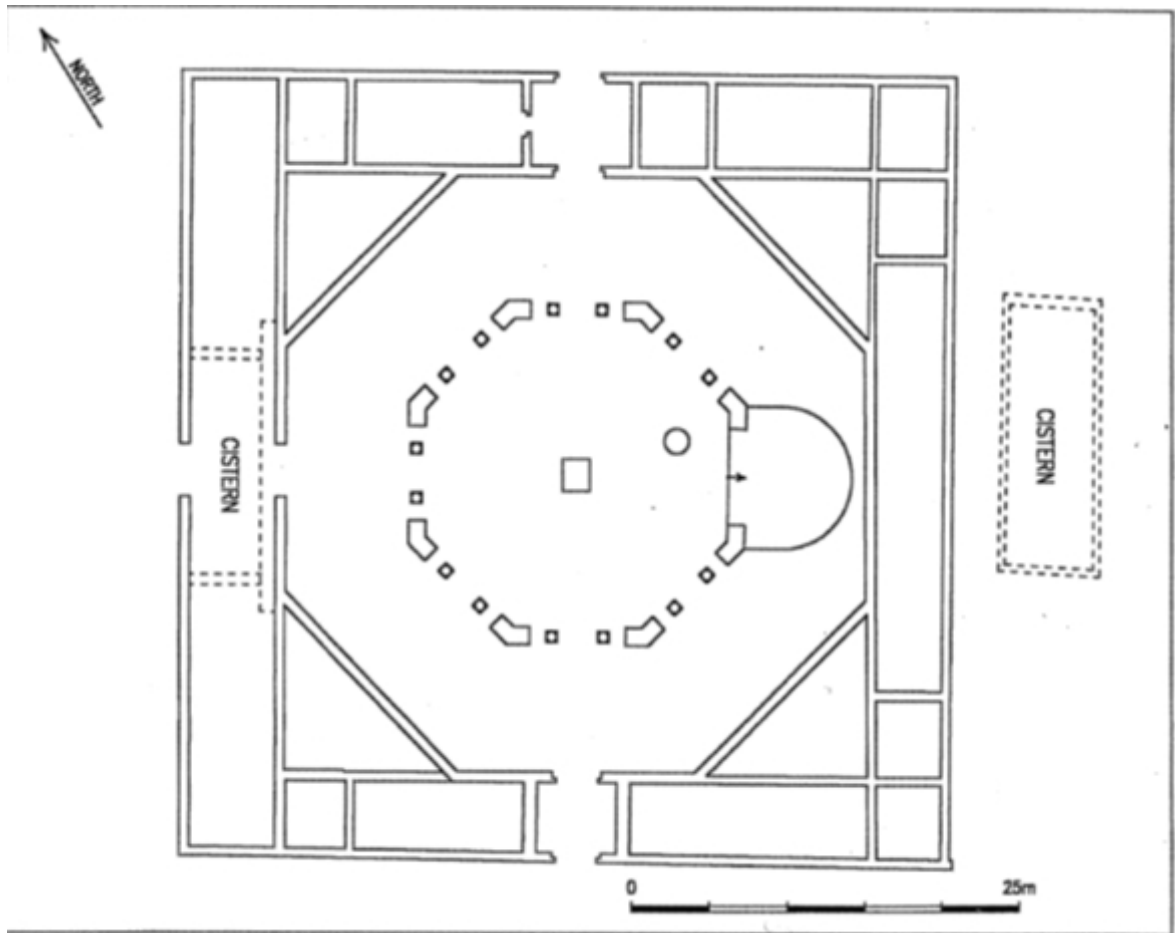


Figure 4.7: Plan of the Octagonal Church (Stabler and Holum 2008 plan 2)

The floor of the church appears to have been paved in marble, and traces of it have been found both within the church, as well as impressions left by large slabs in the mortar near the stylobate whose level and date can only be consistent with the marble flooring.⁴⁰ The paving of the ancillary buildings was mainly made up of a red, grey and white marble *opus sectile* as evidenced by the presence of bedding mortar and fragments of *tesserae* in trench six.⁴¹

4.3.2 Conclusion

While the excavation of the podium excludes direct continuity between the temple and the octagonal church, as was originally proposed, this does not mean that the

⁴⁰Holum (1995) 852.

⁴¹Holum (1995) 852, Holum (1999) 27.

site of the podium in Caesarea is any less relevant for the purposes of my work.⁴² The demolition of the temple was clearly intentional and probably done by Christians, the *Augusteion* was thoroughly demolished, and the current date would put this roughly in line with the demolition of other temples in the region such as that of Gaza and Baalbek, both of which were followed by the construction of churches on the site. In Caesarea, after a relatively brief lapse, during which the podium's height was raised, a new building was constructed on the site, though its function remains unknown. However some considerations can be made on the building and its context that, in my opinion, can lead one to suggest a function for the building. First of all Caesarea was the metropolis of the province of Palestine, and the see of the metropolitan Bishop of the province, it was a prosperous city with a major port and it would be unlikely that such a prominent space in such an important city would have been left empty or turned over to a secondary use; secondly the timing and the nature of the destruction of the intermediate building, by fire in the 5th century suggests that it was likely destroyed in the Samaritan riots of 484 AD when it is reported that the rioters destroyed many churches, including that of St. Procopius the martyred proto-bishop of the city and most likely its most revered martyr. In view of this, though it cannot be incontrovertibly proven that the building was a church, this is a distinct possibility: I suggest that though circumstantial, the evidence available is strong enough to back up this attribution and that if the building was not a public church, it was a Christian building of some sort that was burned down in 484 AD and then replaced by the octagonal church in the 6th century AD.

The octagonal church is consistent with the building trend in the Siro-Palestinian area, and with other buildings in Caesarea itself. It is partly constructed with *spolia* and partly with new material much along the lines of what was being done at a similar time with the roads and the "governor's palace". It would seem that in this period, even though the city was thriving and capable of undertaking large-scale construction projects, there seems to have been a preference for marrying new

⁴²For the initial dating of the transition between the temple and church, see Holum et al. (1992) 103-104.

materials with re-used ones. It would seem that this was partially undertaken out of convenience, after all why go to the expense and trouble of procuring new material when there is a readily available source of prepared one nearby, but probably not out of inability, technical or financial, to procure it, as shown by the ample use of new material in the walls and in the decorated floors. As to the building itself, as said above, it fits a not uncommon model. The apse has yet to be uncovered but apart from that all the major structures are present. It would have stood tall over the city and would, with all likelihood have presented a highly visible sight to approaching ships. The building itself is not suited for congregational devotion and is most likely a ceremonial or pilgrimage site. However due to lack of information on other churches in the city it is impossible to suggest much about the role of the *martyrion* within the greater context. However, what it certainly did was to celebrate the triumph of the new religion over the old.

4.4 Scythopolis

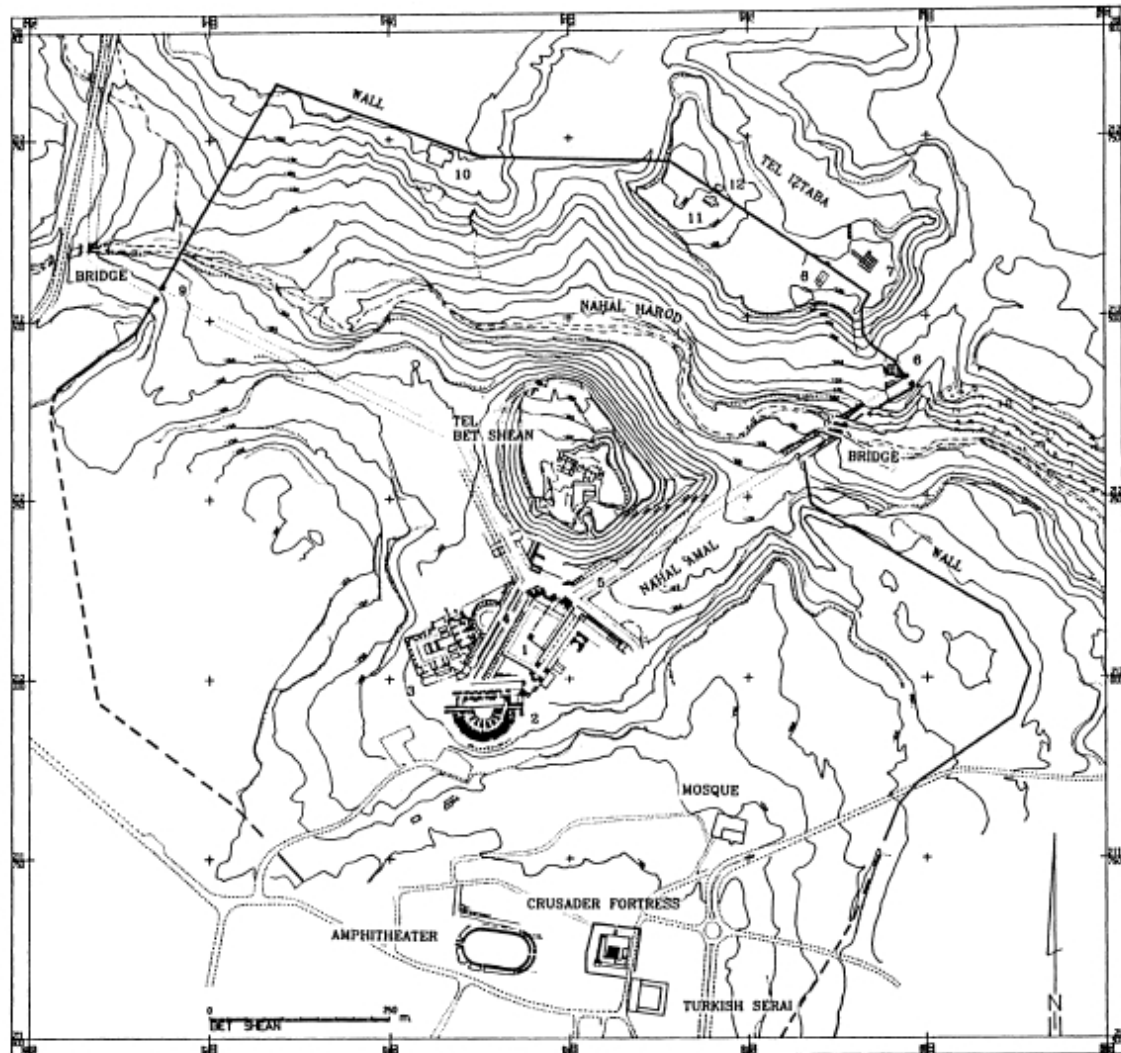


Figure 4.8: Scythopolis, 1 tel church, 2 the IAA monastery, 3 the Pennsylvania Expedition monastery (Tsafrir and Foerster 1997, fig. C.).

Settled in the Neolithic, the site at Scythopolis has seen almost continuous occupation since, as have many cities in the region. Located as it is at the centre of the Beth-Shean valley in close proximity to the Jordan River, the fertile land and abundant water resources, as well as the largest natural or man-made elevation in the region made it an ideal site for settlement. The city first appears as Beth-Shan or a variation thereof in Egyptian sources from the mid and late 2nd millennium BC,

as well as appearing in the Bible during the Israelite conquest of Canaan as one of the unconquered cities, and then again during the reigns of Solomon and Shishak. During the Hellenistic period control of the city swung between the Ptolemies and the Seleucids (the former controlling it until approximately 198 BC when the latter managed to wrest control of the whole of Palestine). The city, then known as Nysa-Scythopolis, remained Seleucid until 108 BC when John Hyrcanus took it for the re-constituted Jewish Kingdom. Following its incorporation into Roman rule under the Proconsul Galbinus it was a founding city of the Decapolis League in 57 BC, where it would remain until the Arab conquest in 636 AD.

A prosperous town and, from 390 AD the capital of the province of *Palaestina Secunda*, late Roman Scythopolis had a rich and well maintained civic centre and a religiously diverse community. The city sported *nymphaea*, temples (one to Zeus on the summit of the tel and one in the civic centre dedicated either to the Tyche or to Dionisius), a theatre, an amphitheatre, and probably two *agorai* (the late Roman one has been found on the site of an earlier basilica leaving open the question of the location of the original one).

It was in this context that late antique Scythopolis developed as a Christian city, and it is apparent that the new religion only had limited impact on the city, with two out of three of the known Christian structures being relatively late monasteries found on the edge of the city. The only church in the centre of the city is the large deambulatory one found on the *Tel*, and it will serve as the main focus of my work as it provides the only case of interaction between Christian and Hellenes in the city so far discovered. This is mainly due to the fact that only a small portion of the city's total surface has been excavated, that means we have a very small number of excavated religious buildings in general. For instance, only two temples have been uncovered so far, both of which are closely related to the civic centre and the Tel.

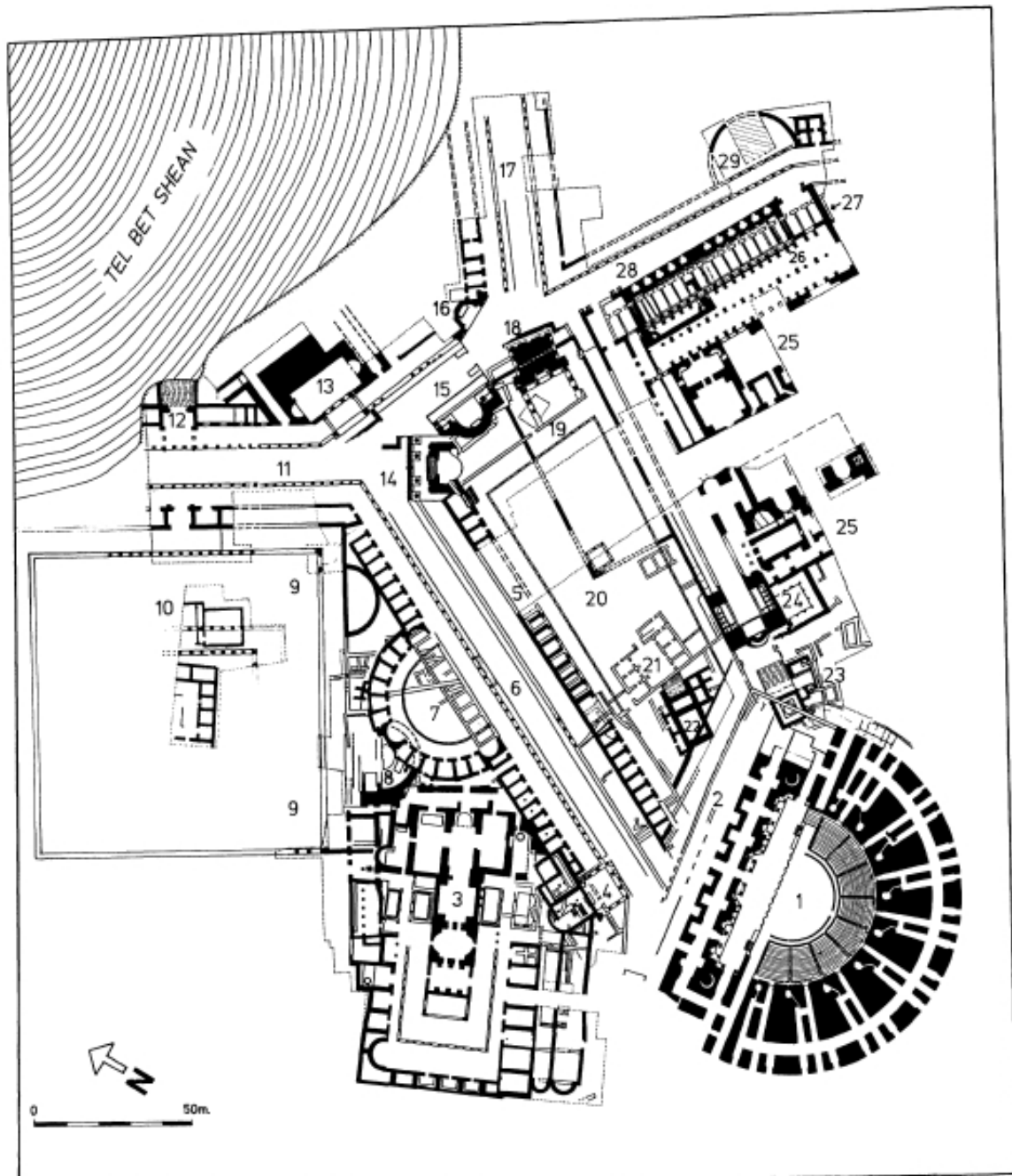


Figure 4.9: The city centre of Scythopolis. 1. The Theatre. 3. The baths. 6. The colonnaded street. 7. The Sigma portico. 14. The Temple of the Muses. 15. *Nymphaeum*. 20. Late antique *agora*. 26. Umayyad Market (Tsafrir and Foerster 1997, fig. D).

4.4.1 The church on the *Tel*

The large church on the *Tel* forms part of the Later Roman development on the summit of the *Tel* in Scythopolis, and was excavated in 1921 by the University of Penn-

sylvania. The church has an unusual even unique form that has no comparison in the region. It was built as part of what would seem to have been a large scale re-development of the summit as a whole through the 4th and 5th centuries, that included the construction of administrative buildings, a large palatial mansion and other residential buildings.⁴³

The tel itself had a long history of sacrality prior to the advent of Christianity. From the 11th c. BC four Canaanite temples were constructed in sequence on the summit and they stayed in function for at least three centuries until the Assyrian conquest of the city and its abandonment in the 8th c. BC. Occupation of the tel saw, like the city, a hiatus until the Hellenistic period when a new temple was constructed on the summit, possibly dedicated to Isis. During the Roman period another temple, dedicated to Zeus *Akraios*, was constructed and remained there until the construction of the Church, as the only significant feature of the summit.⁴⁴ Thus the tel summit was without doubt a highly sacred space for the city. Given that during the Roman period the temple was the only building on the summit, and the whole of the area at the top of the tel may well have been the *temenos* of the temple, building a church there would most certainly have had serious implications in the perception of the citizens, Christian or not.⁴⁵

⁴³Mazar (2006).

⁴⁴For more details on the history of the tel see: Mazar (2006), and Rowe (1930). For more on the pre-Roman temples see Rowe (1940).

⁴⁵Mazar in particular suggests that, because the summit was essentially untouched in the Roman period save for the temple, the whole of the summit acted as a *Temenos*. If this were the case the late antique alterations to it would be all the more significant, since it involved much additional construction, for residential purposes. See Mazar (2006).

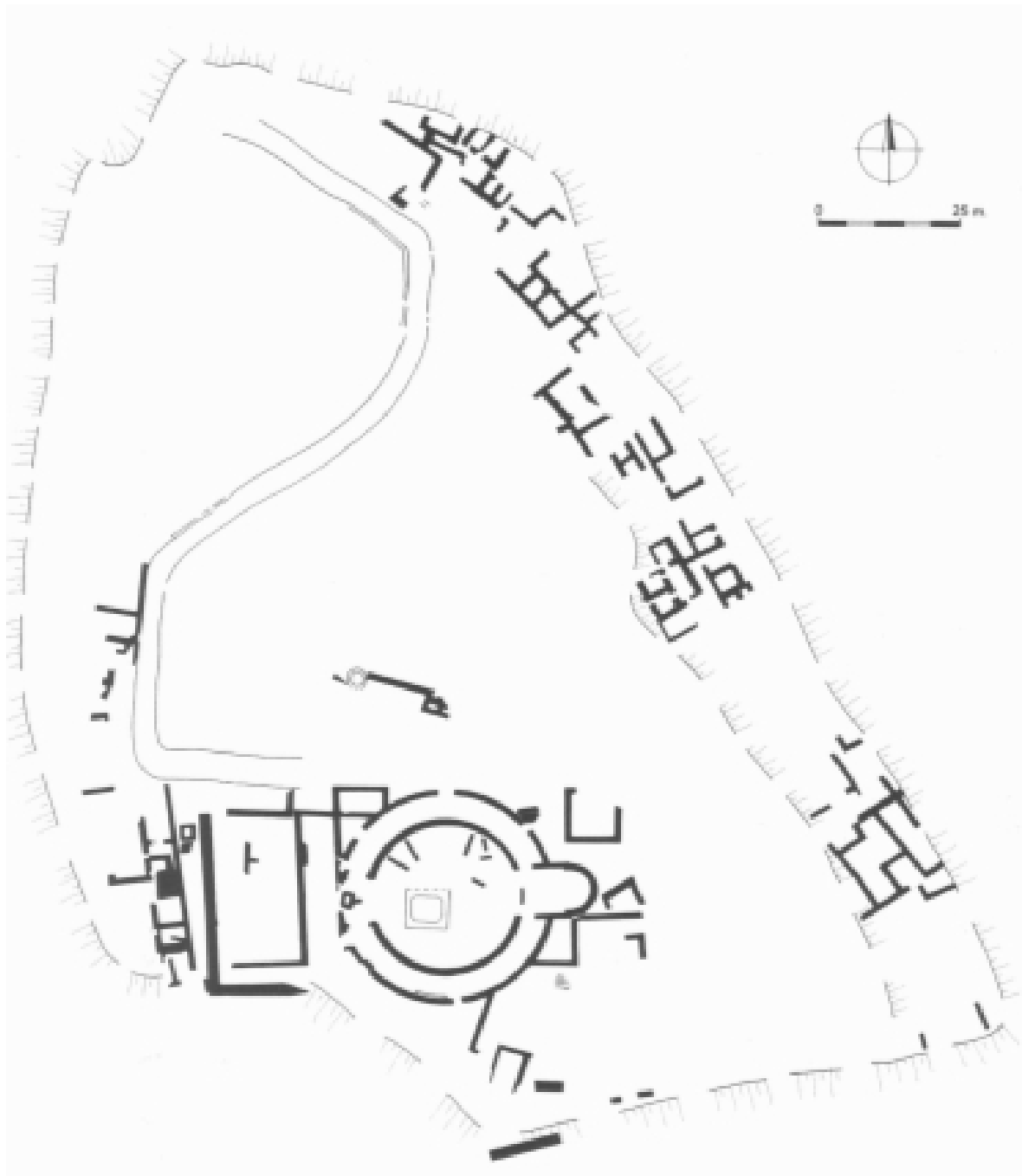


Figure 4.10: The late antique tel with the church. (Fitzgerald 1931)

Accessed through a rectangular narthex on its eastern side the building consists of two concentric circular walls with a projecting apse. This peculiar arrangement resulted in the creation of a 7.1 m wide ambulatory that surrounded the main core of the church. The ambulatory was paved in mosaic and clad in marble, and through

it one could access the church via doors in the north and south sides of the circle.⁴⁶

It is unclear how the building was accessed as it stood higher than existing known contemporary buildings, and the access road to the summit as a whole is still unclear (the road that was initially proposed by Fitzgerald has since been found to be later than the church as it was built over a fill of later Roman pottery). The only remaining viable option is that the structure to the west of the church was, in fact, the atrium of the church, and that the remains of stairs that were discovered there were the access route.⁴⁷

The apse is the only projecting part of the church and, though the rest of the church is different, is not dissimilar from the apses found in the cathedrals in Apamea and Bostra.⁴⁸ It cut through both the ambulatory and the inner wall, though there were doors between the apse and the ambulatory, and housed a *bema* that elevated the sanctuary about 20 cm off the ground.

Unfortunately none of the elevation has survived and it is not clear how the building developed. Some of the decoration has survived and was used by Fitzgerald, in the absence of any other material, to date the building to the 5th century, through comparison with the church of St Stephen in Jerusalem built during the reign of Empress Eudokia in 431-433 AD.⁴⁹

The position of the church points to its importance within the city: from its vantage point it would have been highly visible and constituted an important landmark not only in the urban context, but also in the wider context of the valley, as the *tel* is still the most prominent feature of the area to this day. However, even though the church is by far the most prominent religious structure of the city, the city centre (the main area so far excavated) is entirely lacking in other Christian buildings, although there is no doubt of the continued interest in maintaining the monumental infrastructure of this part of the city. In this context it is interesting to note the different uses of the two temples known in Scythopolis: while the temple on the *tel* was

⁴⁶Fitzgerald (1931).

⁴⁷Mazar (2006).

⁴⁸See *infra* Apamea and Bostra for a full description of their cathedrals.

⁴⁹Fitzgerald (1931).

demolished to make way for the newly constructed church, the temple at the cross-roads just below the *tel*, was closed but maintained as a public amenity for aesthetic purposes, rather than Christianising it.⁵⁰

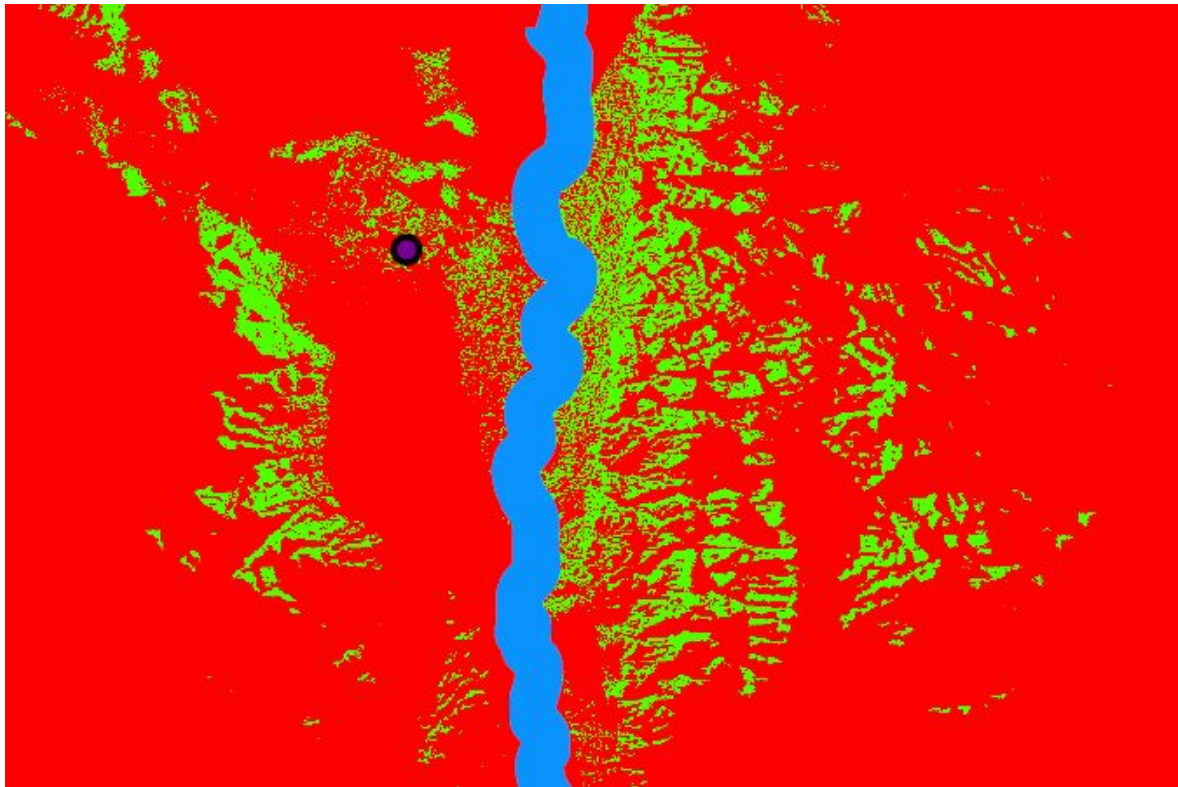


Figure 4.11: Viewshed from the top of the tel. Green visible, red non visible, blue approximate location of the river Jordan.

4.4.2 Conclusions

The Church on the tel was most certainly a significant topographical statement on behalf of the Christian community in Scythopolis. It is also the earliest church constructed in the city and it has a very peculiar form as it is a circular deambulatory church. It also replaced the temple of Zeus that had stood on the site for centuries and, though it is possible that this had been closed for some time given the repeated imperial prohibitions of cult and orders to close temples, it is possible that its structure had been maintained, as was the case for the temple in the lower city just below

⁵⁰See Tsafirir and Foerster (1997) for a the fullest description and chronology of the late antique development of Scythopolis, and Mazor and Najjar (2007) for a more recent update.

it. It is equally noteworthy that the only other excavated churches (the *Kyria Maria* church and the Church of Andreas) have been discovered a certain distance from the city centre, perhaps suggesting that, though formally the dominant religion, Christianity may have struggled to gain a significant material foothold, though it is likely that a more extensive excavation of the site will provide in future a more nuanced picture. With regard to the church on the *tel* there is no further information on whether the construction of the church was ordered backed or financed from the outside. It is important to note that the demolition of the temple in a city such as Scythopolis, proud of its classical heritage and that did much to maintain it, would have been no small fact and may well have been caused by or been the cause of tension and unrest in the city. Further the fact that the *tel* had been unoccupied by any other building apart from the temple, and that the church's construction was accompanied by that of houses and streets, points to the building forming the fulcrum of a new part of the city. This new upper city would most likely have been entirely Christian (why build a house or live in one so close to a church otherwise), and may have served both as a convenient enclave and as a secure zone, much as it did for Muslims after the conquest when the whole area was levelled and replaced with an Arab area.

4.5 Apamea

4.5.1 Introduction

Like many other sites of the region, Apamea has been occupied more or less continuously since the Neolithic.⁵¹ It served an important role throughout the Bronze Age and is recorded as Nija in Egyptian, Akkadian, and Hittite sources. Its existence continued under Achaemenid rule and it remained an important centre under the name of Φαρνακέ.⁵²

⁵¹Balty (1997) 145-146.

⁵²Balty (1997) 145-146.

Founded as Apamea around 300 BC by Seleucus I Nikator it is named after his wife Apame, a policy common to the kingdom where many cities were founded or re-founded by the monarch and given dynastic names connected to the royal family. Under the Seleucids the city served as a military and administrative headquarters for the region and would have seen the presence of a large number of soldiers and administrators, providing it with a steady flow of income and a strong connection to Antioch and the court. Apamea continued in its role as a key military and trading hub for the region, being by all accounts a prosperous and well-populated city.⁵³

A Hellenistic new town, Apamea was laid out with a regular Hippodamean plan, structured around a central north-south axis with a grid network extending east and west and two main east-west thoroughfares. The *insulae* are built roughly along the line of a 2/1 ratio (north-south/east-west). However despite excavations having been carried out on the site, not much is known of the Hellenistic monuments and infrastructure of the city, nor do we have evidence of the specific nature of the city's religious cults.⁵⁴

⁵³Balty (1981) 31-34.

⁵⁴Despite the fact that very little evidence for the monumental centre and the religious buildings of the city has been found, what has been excavated does limit the areas in which these buildings could have been. For the history of the excavations of the city and of its topography, see Balty (1977) 3-5.

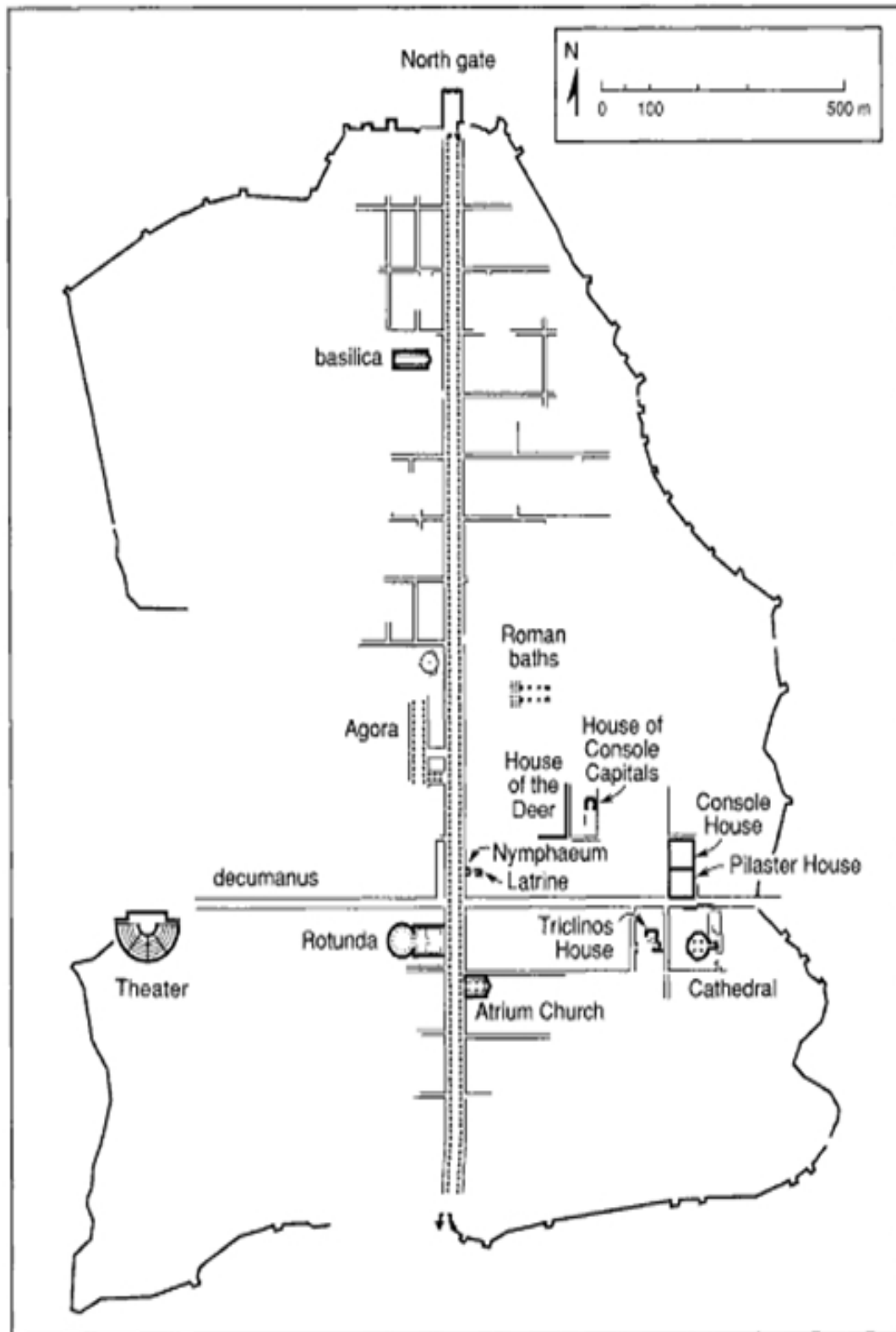


Figure 4.12: Apamea (Balty (1981) plan)

This layout remained essentially unchanged through the whole of the city's history, and the module of the city remained the constraining feature. The Roman conquest brought about a substantial monumentalisation of the city: the main streets were colonnaded, the streets were re-paved, and temples and fora were built; however the essential plan of the city still remained unchanged and all new construction was designed to fit into the module that had been established in the 4th century BC. This remained true into the Later Roman period when, after two devastating earthquakes in 526 and 528 AD, large parts of the city had to be reconstructed under the auspices of Justinian. Even then, after almost a millennium, the main plan of the city was essentially that laid out under Seleucus I.

4.5.2 The churches

Most ecclesiastical buildings of the city date from this latter reconstruction, at least in their last extant phase, but there are few doubts that the city must have had earlier structures as well.⁵⁵ There is no doubt that there must have been a number of churches in the city prior to the earthquakes. There was an established Christian community in Apamea from the beginning of Late Antiquity, and it is also well known that it was well organised with a Bishop of Apamea being present at church Councils from Nicaea until the ultimate demise of the city in the 8th century. Thus there cannot be any doubts that a well organised church of a wealthy city such as Apamea would have seen churches built at least from the 5th century onwards if not earlier.

The *Atrium* Church

Located in the heart of Apamea the *Atrium* Church is the earliest Christian building that we know of. It developed over a period of about two centuries, going through a major redevelopment in the sixth century, probably around the same time as the

⁵⁵As will be seen later, the so called *Atrium* Church has at least two phases that precede the latest remains, but it must be the case that a number of other, earlier structures lie yet undiscovered in other parts of the city.

Cathedral was being built. Prior to the construction of the church the site appears to have been occupied by a synagogue, built deep within the *insula*, possibly in a similar manner to the synagogue in Dura-Europos.⁵⁶

The early structure The *insula* within which the Atrium Church was constructed was by no means empty previously. Though much of the structure was obliterated by the construction of the second phase of the church, some remains are still preserved enough to give an impression. It would appear that the immediately below the phase 1 church there was a synagogue, possibly as part of a larger structure that included domestic spaces as well.⁵⁷

The synagogue, or at least its last phase, can be clearly dated thanks to a mosaic floor recovered by the 1930s Belgian expedition.⁵⁸ The floor was very large (120 m²) and, as well as being decorated mainly with geometric motifs, it includes a large number of inscriptions, indicating the donations and the donors that paid for the decoration of the floor. The main one of these was the central dedication inscription that records a large donation by an ἀρχισυνάγωγος των Ἀντιοχέων on the 7th of January of the year 703 of the Seleucid era (392 AD), giving us the date for the construction of the floor and of this phase of the building.⁵⁹ The other inscriptions, as mentioned, are votive texts that follow a generally formulaic pattern, reading a variation on Εὐξάμενος ὑπὲρ σωτηρίας πάντων τῶν ἰδίων (following a vow for the salvation of all his own), including the name of the donor and the square footage of the mosaic that had been paid for. The only structural element of the synagogue that is known to us is the apse excavated on the eastern wall of the building, roughly in line with the later, Christian, structure.⁶⁰ Beyond this, very little is known, though it

⁵⁶See 2.2 Dura-Europos p 51 for more.

⁵⁷It is plausible that a set-up similar to those encountered in Dura-Europos or in Sardis, where synagogues were constructed as part of a broader structure (a *domus* in Dura and a bath complex in Sardis), was also used here. See Dura, the Synagogue p 58 and Crawford, (1990) chapter 1 for Sardis.

⁵⁸The summary of the excavations in the early to mid 1930s can be found in the first four volumes of *L'Antiquité Classique*, in particular the synagogue is reported in Mayence (1935).

⁵⁹This dates the synagogue to the reign of Julian, and it is just possible that its building was connected to the emperor's favouring of traditional cults.

⁶⁰Mayence (1935) 200.

is entirely plausible that the building did extend as far as the colonnade with which it likely interfaced.

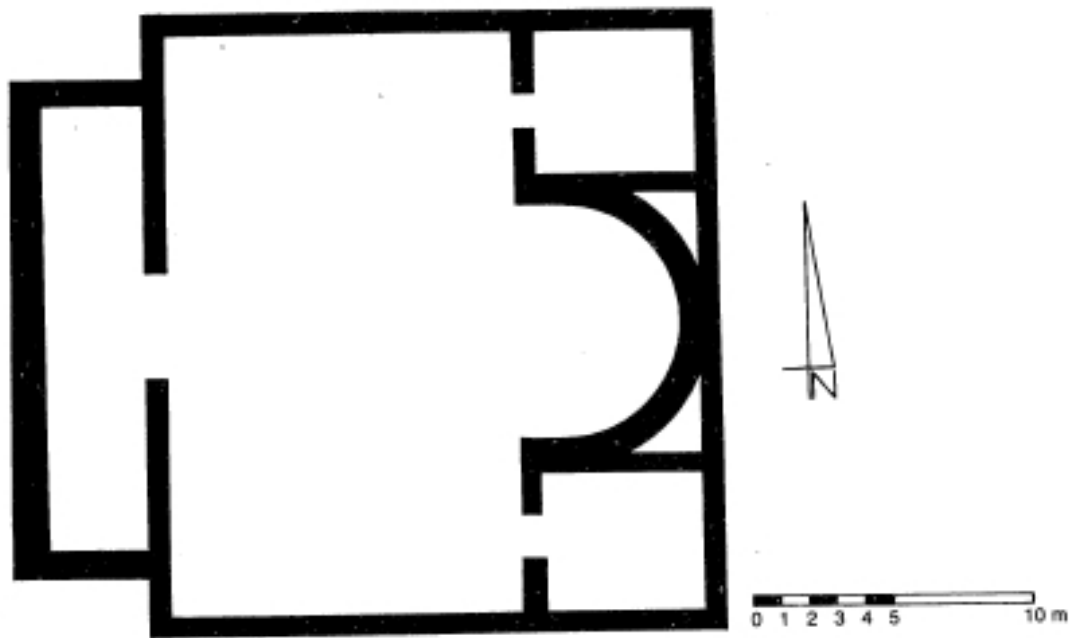


Figure 4.13: The first phase of the Atrium Church (Donceel-Voute (1988) fig 195, p 216)

Phase 1 The first phase of the church consists of a relatively small building, much smaller than the *insula* that contains it. The building is almost square in plan, being slightly longer than it is wide, and has a plan that resembles a cross between a basilica (with its pronounced apse) and a central plan church with its square form. Very little is known about the internal form of this phase of the church, due its the effective demolition down to the foundations that was undertaken during the construction of phase 2. Based on her interpretation of this phase, Napoleon-Lemaitre suggests that the earlier church too must have been three-aisled, though there is no evidence either way.⁶¹ To the north and south of the apse, outside the main body of the church but still part of its structure, lay two square rooms. The one on the north side has been identified as a *Martyrion*. The room itself is quite small but the mosaic flooring clearly indicates its likely importance, and in phase 2 the same room hosted

⁶¹Napoleone-Lemaitre and Balty (1969).

a number of marble reliquaries, specially adapted to allow for the flow of holy oils through them, presumably to produce contact relics. The room to the south of the Apse is similar in size but has much simpler paving, being covered with a simple stone flooring, and has been identified as the *diakonikon*. The form of the western façade of the church is not known as it has not seen sufficient survival. However, given the distance of the church from the street it is plausible to suggest that in this phase too there was some kind of portico or courtyard between it and the street to allow access to the complex.

Dating this phase of the church is not easy and mainly relies on external elements: firstly the mosaic that covered the pre Christian phase of the building is dated to the fourth century, giving a *terminus post quem* for the whole building. Secondly the abutting building to the east of the church, that is in all likelihood contemporary with it, also has mosaics, containing an inscription that dates them to 391/392 AD. Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, the rubble bedding of the floor of the church contained a coin from the reign of Arcadius and Honorius of the *Gloria Romanorum* type celebrating the elevation of Theodosius II (401 AD) thus dating it to the beginning of the 5th century.

Phase 2 The second phase of the church, in the 6th century, saw a massive re-development. The new structure was significantly larger, though it seems to reproduce the same plan as the previous phase, with a roughly square building, slightly wider than it is long at: 20.8x22.5m. The new building was clearly three aisled with three apses one at the end of each aisle. The church and the associated structures occupied the whole insula and the whole complex was accessed via the portico that lined the street. Once one passed through the portico, access was gained to the atrium of the church through which one could use one of the five doors into the church. The nave had a large chancel screen that followed the lines of the earlier church and separated it from the rest of the building. On the two sides of the nave ran two aisles that also terminated with apses, but there is no sign that there was

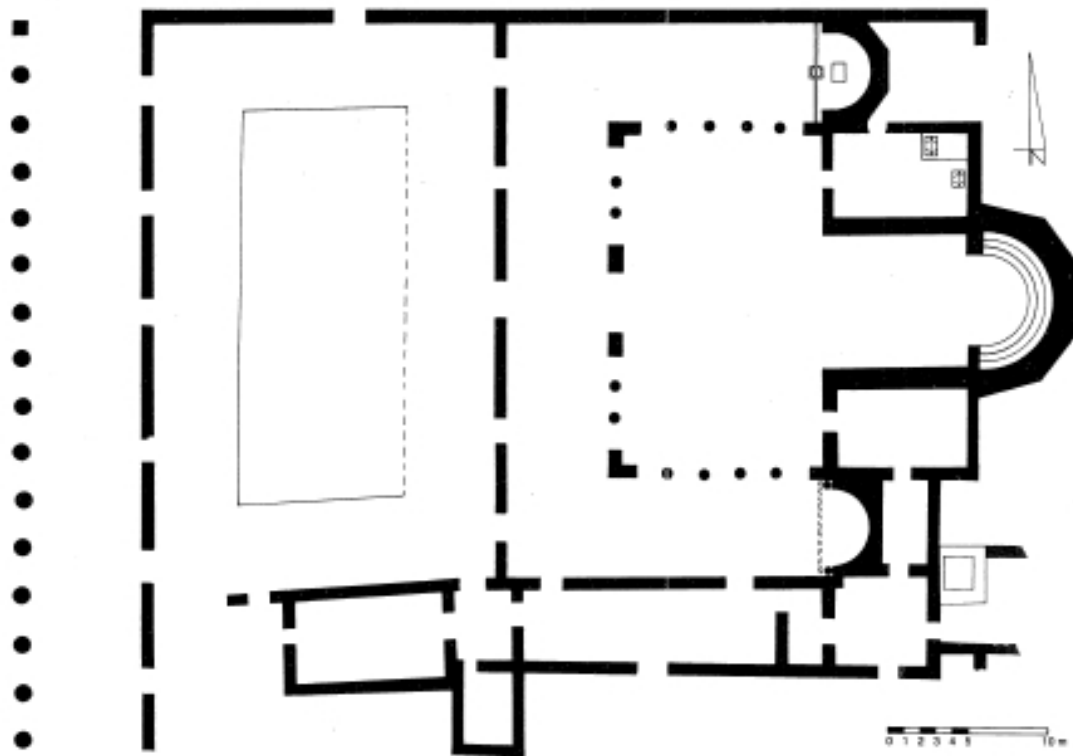


Figure 4.14: Phase 2 of the Atrium Church (Napoleone-Lemaire and Balty 1969)

a permanent chancel. The *Diakonikon* and the *Martyrion* were both extended and decorated with mosaics, perhaps an indication of their increased importance; access to the *Martyrion* could be gained both from the inside of the church and from the outside. On the south side of the church a number of ancillary buildings were constructed including a baptistery at the very south.

Dating this phase is much more complicated than the previous one, as there are no incontrovertible dating elements. The architectural decorations found were typical both of the 5th and the 6th century as were the type of letters used on the reliquaries. However, it is most likely that the building dates from the middle of the 6th century, after the earthquakes of the 530s, and its building techniques are consistent with such a dating.

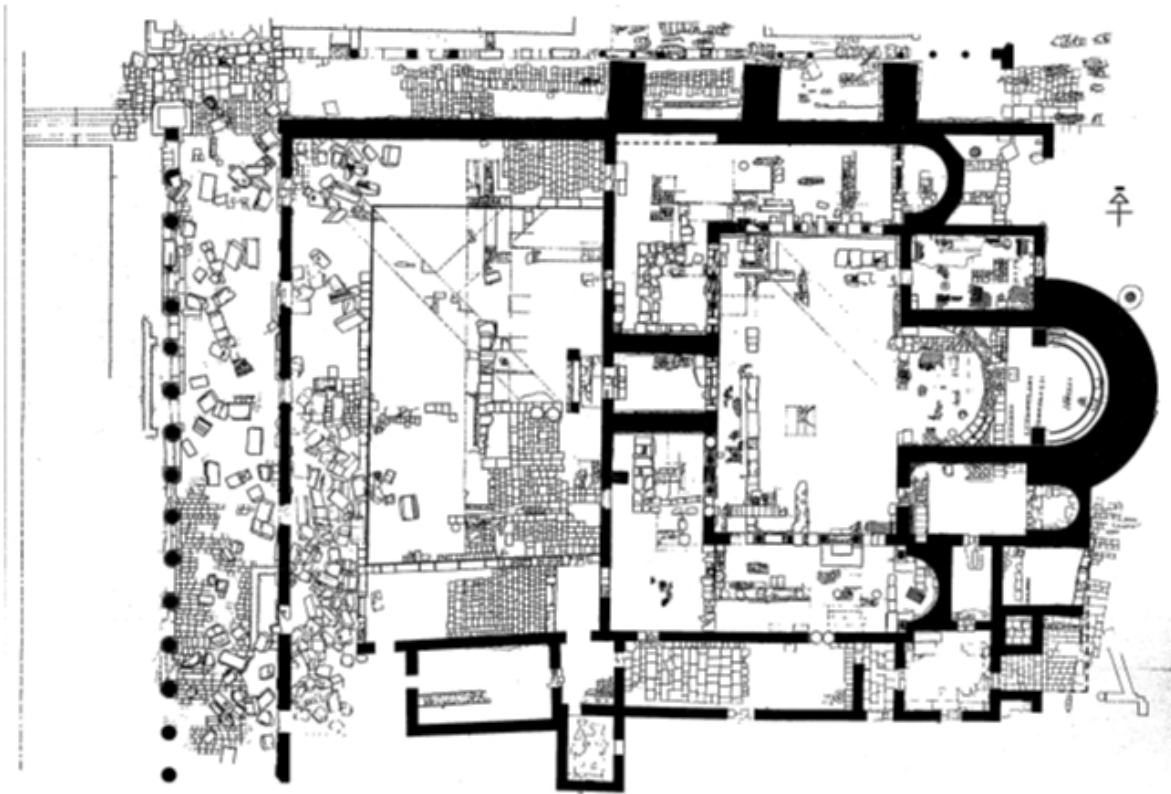


Figure 4.15: Phase 3 of the Atrium Church (Napoleone-Lemaire and Balty 1969)

Phase 3 The third phase of the construction belongs to the 7th century when the south and east walls were heavily reinforced, probably following the earthquakes that struck the region. Further, the decorated floor was replaced with plain stone and the church was in effect separated into three parts by the construction of walls that cut off the central entrance to the church from the two lateral ones. Thus these two east-west walls joined the chancel with the outside wall. The dating of this phase is complicated by the lack of evidence, but one can make some suggestions: the flooring replaces the mid 6th century Justinianic *opus sectile*, after the large number of earthquakes that struck Syria in the late 6th century. This phase is likely to have followed them and took place at some point before 630 AD when the Arabs took the city.

The Cathedral

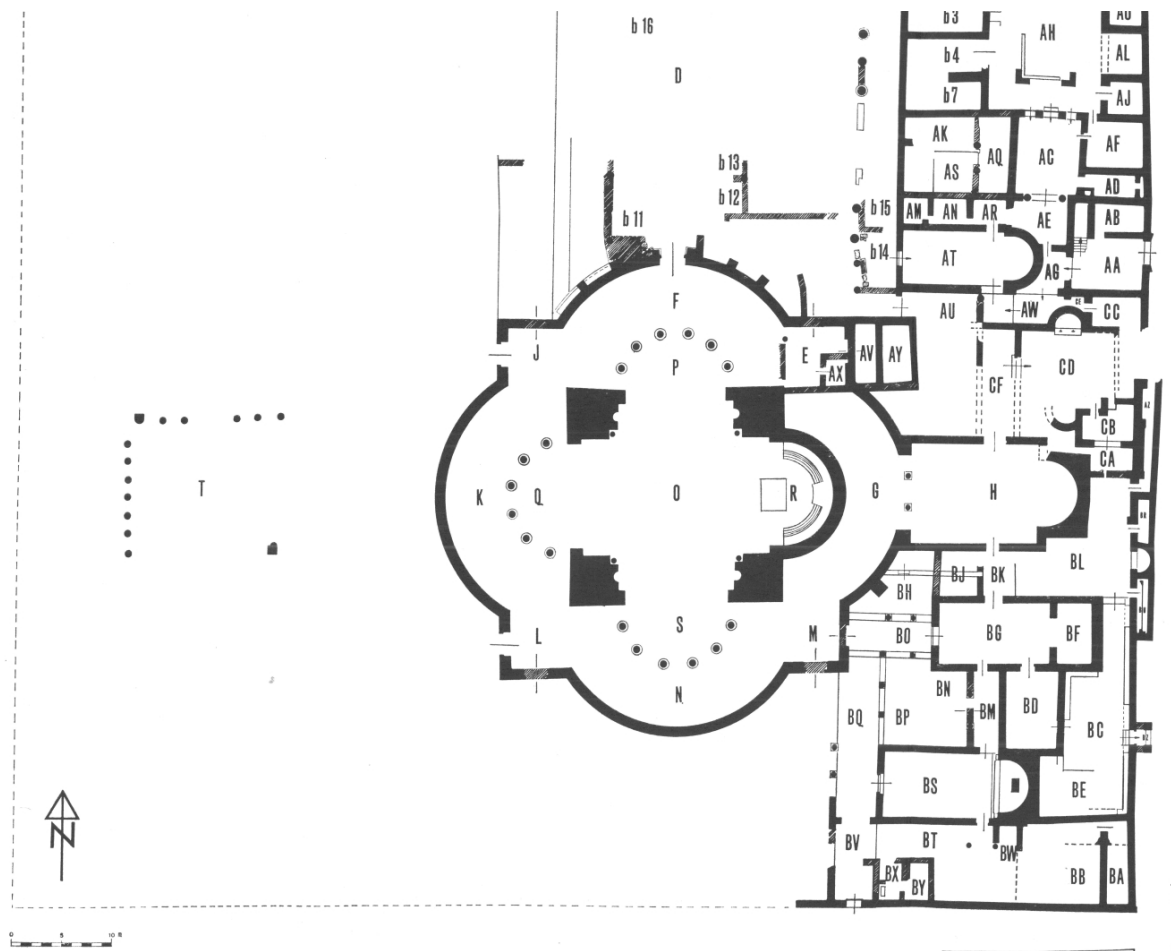


Figure 4.16: The Cathedral Church complex (C. Balty 1977)

Located in the south-eastern quarter of the city the supposed Cathedral church was built in the sixth century, and would have transformed the landscape of the city. Built over an earlier structure, some of whose mosaic flooring survived, the church formed the heart of a greater complex including the episcopal palace, also known as the *Domus* of the *Triclinium*, suggesting that its construction coincided with a concerted effort to re-develop the area in a Christian sense and provide the community with a strong nerve centre.

The pagan building Before being used for the site of a major Christian church, this area in the south of the city housed a pagan building, probably a Neo-Platonic

school. The building occupied an area to the east of the later Cathedral occupying in particular the area under the protruding apse (see below fig 4.20) where the best preserved specimens lay.



Figure 4.17: The Therapinedes panel of the Hellenic mosaic

These mosaics are the only tangible remains of the Hellenic building and they are formed of three figurative panels separated by geometric decoration. The first panel, the easternmost, is also known as the Therapinides panel, after the inscription *θεραπαινίδες* in the top left hand corner, presumably a legend. It represents 8 figures divided into two groups: on the left two men and a woman stand before an architectural background, while on the right four women dance in a garden. The composition probably represents a scene from the *Odyssey*, where Penelope and Odysseus recognise each other (canto XXII verses 144-147 and 207-208).⁶²

⁶²There are other possible interpretations but this one would make it by far the less obscure and far fetched. See Balty (1972) 164-165.



Figure 4.18: The Socrates panel of the Hellenic mosaic

The second, and middle, panel represents seven sages, the central one of whom is identified by the legend *σωκράτης*. Given the presence of Socrates, who is represented in a teaching pose, and that many of the other figures hold scrolls it is likely that the panel represents a meeting of sages or philosophers around Socrates.⁶³ The suggestion is that the scene represents Socrates and six of the seven sages and may well be drawn from a similar iconographic prototype as scenes representing Christ and his disciples.

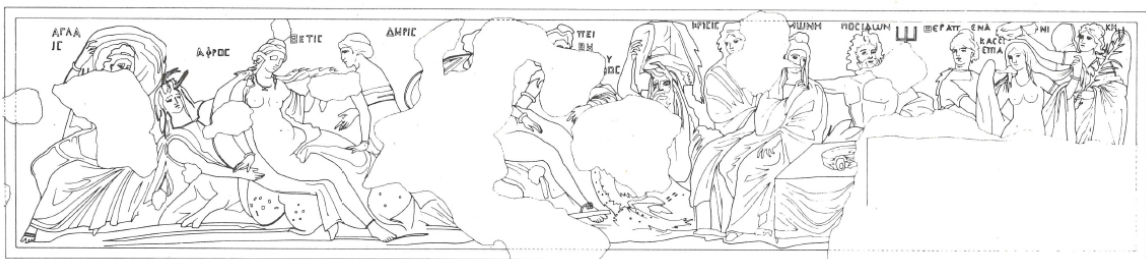


Figure 4.19: The judgement of the Nereids

The rightmost panel is heavily damaged though, fortunately, enough of the scene is still visible to allow a reconstruction of the scene. It is a complex *tableau* represent-

⁶³Balty (1972) 166-167.

ing fourteen different figures, twelve of whom have fully or partially surviving legends; the central legend of the panel is partly damaged but most likely reads $\chi\rho\acute{\iota}\varsigma$ $N[\eta\rho\eta\acute{\iota}\delta\omega\nu]$ identifying the characters as those of the judgement of the Nereids. The other legends identify, from left to right, the characters involved: Aglais, Aphros, Tethis, Doris, Aphrodite (though her legend and body are damaged beyond recognition), Peitho, Bythos (only partially visible), Amymone, Poseidon, a servant girl ($\theta\acute{\epsilon}\rho\alpha\pi\epsilon\nu\alpha$), Cassiopea crowned by Victory.

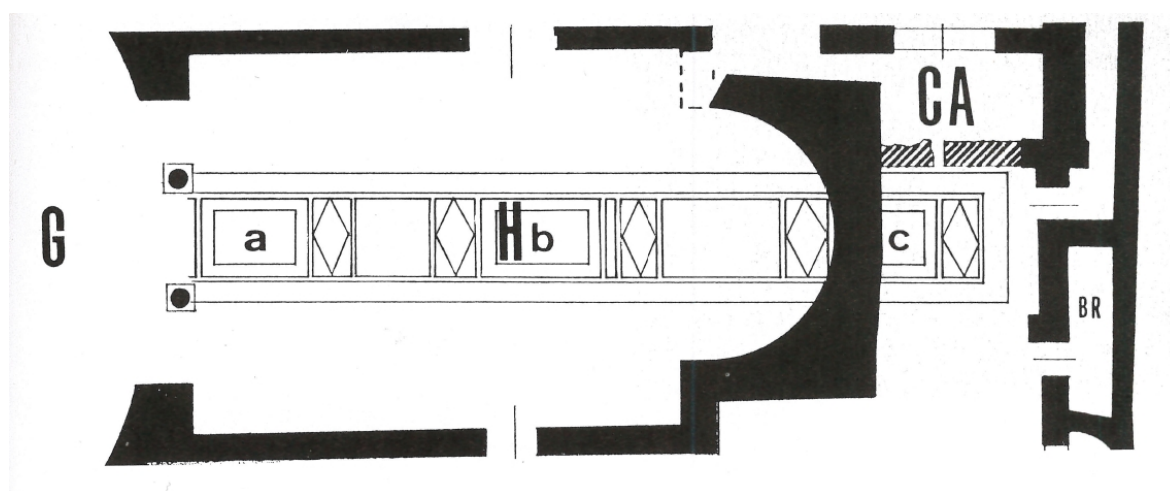


Figure 4.20: The position of the mosaics under the Cathedral

The Christian Cathedral This church is most certainly the most imposing Christian structure in Apamea. The church was a tetraconch with an extended apse in the east. In the interior of the church it was divided again by the presence of an internal tetraconch made up of columns and an internal apse. The external apse and the church itself were most certainly of one build as there is no indication in the building techniques and materials of it being otherwise. The church probably dates to the 5th century, though there is no concrete evidence to prove this. The only definite date is an inscription from the year 845 (533 AD) that celebrates the re-laying of the floor under Bishop Paul as an *ex voto*. The 526-528 earthquakes were almost certainly responsible for the damage that was repaired. Balty suggests that the church was initially a Martyrion for the relics of the Holy Cross held in the

city. The suggestion is that the tetraconch shape was chosen to allow circulation of pilgrims to take place. While this is intriguing, the fact is that the tetraconch was a common plan in the region in this period, used at the cathedral in Bostra, in the Church of St. George in Jerash, and the Martyrion at Seleucia Pieria. Thus it appears to be quite in vogue for important buildings. Later on, in the late 6th or early 7th century, a large number of ancillary structures were added on the east side of the building, including a baptistery and two chapels as well as a large number of other spaces. It is this enlargement of the complex and the addition of a large number of extra spaces that has led to suggestions that the church had been elevated to the role of Cathedral though there is no indisputable proof for this and much of the city remains unexplored.

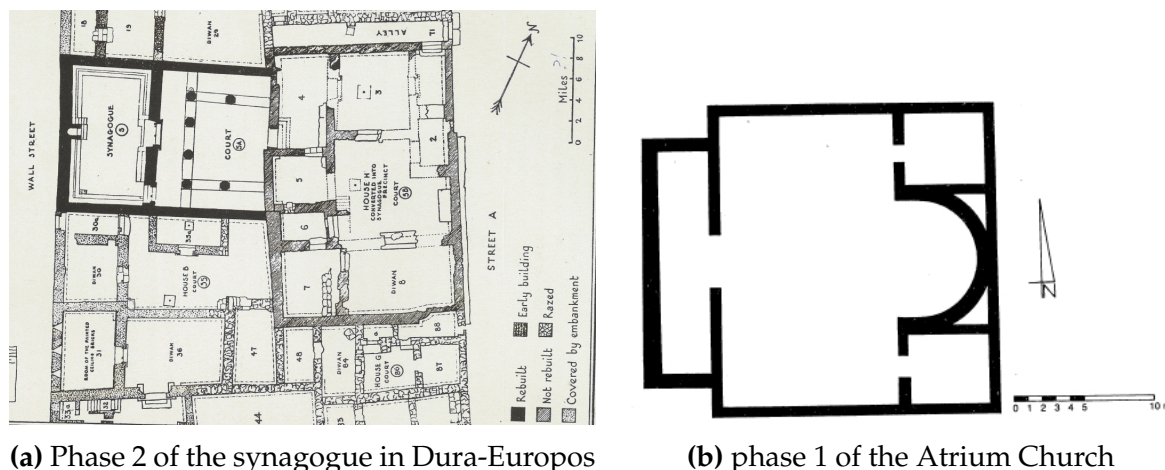
4.5.3 Conclusions

The inclusion of Christian buildings in Apamea seems to have taken place in a thriving environment. However the key fact that can be established is that both the main Christian buildings of the city were built on top of pre existing religious structures: a synagogue in the case of the Atrium Church and a Neo Platonic school in the case of the “Cathedral”.

The Atrium Church is the oldest known church in Apamea: it developed over three phases, the earliest of which dates to the late 4th century. Built over an earlier synagogue, the Atrium church began and remained throughout all of its existence removed from the street front, perhaps a sign of an initial choice to not impose Christianity on the landscape in a strong visual manner. Unfortunately we do not have a clear understanding of the exact form of the synagogue but it appears that it was built deep in the *insula*, while maintaining some kind of interface with the street, possibly in a similar manner to the building in Dura-Europos in its second phase.⁶⁴ Though we do not know exactly what prompted the transition in use of the building at such an early date (by comparison, the synagogue in Gerasa is not con-

⁶⁴See above 2.2.2 The synagogue p 58.

verted until the 530s almost one hundred and fifty years later, by which point the Atrium Church would be in its second phase) but it would appear that the builders of the new structure still kept their new building at a distance from the street in a not dissimilar manner to the synagogue.



(a) Phase 2 of the synagogue in Dura-Europos

(b) phase 1 of the Atrium Church

Figure 4.21: The synagogue at Dura-Europos and the first phase of the Atrium Church compared

The plan of the Atrium Church in phases 2 and 3 is also very interesting: though Napoleon-Lemaitre suggests that it is a variation on a three-aisled basilica, given the maintenance of the earlier church in the chancel and the apses at the end of the aisles, it may be suggested that this church resembles more the three-church complex of St. George in Jerash with one central plan church and two *paraekklesia* connected by a common Atrium. In the case of the Atrium Church, the central section is in effect a central plan and the two aisles could be seen as the two basilical *paraekklesia*, joined both by the atrium and by the western part. This layout is even more apparent in phase 3 following the erection of walls that separate the entrances to the central part of the church from the two lateral ones: considering that there was most likely a solid chancel, the central part was in effect both physically and perhaps symbolically separate. Thus one can see how initially the building was little more than a chapel, set back from the street, deep in the heart of the insula, though unfortunately the later constructions obliterated all the evidence of the surrounding structures and of the chapel's relationship with it. Phase 2 brought with it a much larger footprint

and the church expanded to the point that it took up much of the insula. Though it was significant, this expansion took place in the direction of the interior of the block leaving the distance between the entrance of the church and the *stoa* unaltered, in spite of an atrium built to connect the two.

The Cathedral Church was the product of a very different process. As far as can be told, it did not develop over time, gradually taking over a section of the city as the Atrium Church did: right from the start it was built with the intention of being a large and bold building. Construction can be dated between the end of the 5th and the beginning of the 6th century AD: it was the core of a much larger complex, most likely the *episcopium*, and probably the biggest church in the city.⁶⁵ The site it occupied was however likely previously occupied by another earlier, building. In this case there is little evidence of the exact shape or nature of the building, though the extensive mosaic decoration that has been uncovered under the main apse of the building, and more importantly the nature of the scenes it represents does give some kind of an inkling as to the nature of the structure. The three mosaic panels all represent scenes from classical mythology, the central one is the most revealing, presenting a composition that includes Socrates and a selection of sages drawn from antiquity. Though, due to the lack of any other surviving structures from the period, we cannot be absolutely sure, it is entirely plausible that the structure that housed it was some kind of a Hellenic structure, probably a Neo-Platonic school.

Thus in the case of Apamea it appears that both the major ecclesiastical buildings of the city were built over pre-existing religious buildings. In the case of the Cathedral the replacement would have been poignant as well as expedient: while the demolition and replacement of a pre-eminently Hellenic building like a Neo-Platonic school would have had significant symbolic resonances, the fact that the area appears to house a number of large urban villas (such as the *Triclinium Domus*) would have had the added advantage of allowing a large amount of space to be cleared easily, permitting the construction of an imposing building like the Cathe-

⁶⁵This is even more true if one accepts the suggestion that the so called *Domus* of the *Triclinium*, nearby was, in fact, the episcopal residence of Apamea.

dral. The situation of the *Atrium* Church is slightly different. While in this case there can be no doubt that the earlier structure was a synagogue (the texts of the inscriptions are very clear on this) and it is possible that the earliest phase of the Christian building may have even overlapped with the earlier one as the apses are almost perfectly aligned. It would be intriguing to suggest that the replacement was due to the fact that the building (which as far as we know was erected in the course of the reign of the emperor Julian and thus may have been the result of his policy of encouraging the traditional cults over Christianity) was replaced by a Christian one as a deliberate act. What is certain is that when Christianity did come to Apamea in a built form it did so with intent and a splash. The construction of the Cathedral, in particular, would have made a significant mark on the landscape as well as sending a powerful signal. The *Atrium* Church, while initially being less bold may well have been equally as powerful, since it replaced an earlier place of worship that, given the extent and quality of the mosaic that covered it, must have been of some import.

4.6 Conclusions

The four case studies that I have presented paint a clear picture. In those cities where Christianity was and remained a minority or at best part of a plurality, Bishops were not always able to expand their congregations or expand their churches to fit their congregations. In cities such as Gaza, Heliopolis and Jerusalem the majority of both the population and the élites were Hellenes, and, given the government structure of Roman cities, having a majority of the élite against them would have proven to be an insurmountable obstacle.

This is particularly evident in Gaza, where the citizens and in particular the curial class were not only indifferent to Christianity but actively campaigned against it, and where, during the reign of the Emperor Julian, they attacked both Christians and their churches. Despite the attempts of Bishops such as Porphyry, there was no way forward and imperial intervention was sought. After repeated negotiations

and two separate attempts, the Bishop succeeded in achieving his goal of eradicating the temples of the city and replacing the largest and most magnificent of them, the *Marneion*, with a magnificent church paid for by the empress Eudoxia and designed by an Antiochean architect of her choice. So aggressive was Porphyry that he used the reliefs that had adorned the temple as paving for the area in front of the church, further degrading Hellenic cults. In this he sought the total annihilation of the physical embodiment of the Hellenic religion, and the humiliation of the images of its gods, in effect proving once and for all the success of the new religion over the old one.

In Heliopolis the situation was even more extreme. The Christians were few and far between, so few that they were not even able to elect their own Bishop, and one had to be imposed through imperial intervention by Constantine.⁶⁶ Despite this the community was unable or unwilling to attack the Hellenic temples in the city and again imperial intervention was required to close them, though the *Chronicon Paschale* appears to be over-optimistic in its claim that they were later demolished under Theodosius, as shown by the archaeological evidence and the testimony of John of Ephesus on the widespread presence of Hellenic cults in the city in the late 6th c AD.⁶⁷ However there is clear evidence that these repeated interventions did yield some results, as the main temple of the city, dedicated to Zeus *Heliopolitanus*, was closed, its great altar demolished, and the material re-used in the construction of a large basilica in its forecourt. The whole complex was appropriated and, while part of it was maintained, a significant portion of the ritual structures was demolished to make way for the new building, bringing it into a position where it pertains at the same time to comparison and to replacement.

This pattern was repeated in a slightly different form in Jerusalem. Here driven by the desire to uncover the burial place of the Christ, Constantine ordered the demolition of the temple of Venus that was effectively obliterated from the landscape

⁶⁶*Vita Constantini* I, 58: for the first time a fact, the pagan city was granted presbyters and deacons of the Church of God, and a Bishop.

⁶⁷*Chronicon Paschale* I, 561: Constantine contented himself with closing the temples of the Greeks, but Theodosius destroyed them. John of Ephesus *Historia Ecclesiastica* III, 28.

and the *temenos* of the temple. While the main focus of his actions seems to have focused on the relationship with the life and death of Christ, it is still important to note that the construction of the new church involved the closing and demolition of a functioning temple. While, as I argued in the previous chapter, this destruction was driven mainly by the desire to find the tomb of Christ, it is significant that it was not the Bishop that attempted it or even petitioned the Emperor for it, but it was the Emperor who drove through the plan.

Jerusalem, or rather *Aelia Capitolina* to use the correct late antique name of the city, also faced a similar situation: a small Christian community living in some form of equilibrium (that may well have been precarious, we do not know). The only difference from Gaza and Heliopolis is that the importance of Jerusalem in Christian history and religion, meant that *Aelia* was singled out for special attention from Constantine and Helen first and many of their imperial successors later. The result was a complete annihilation of the existing Hellenic infrastructure of the city and an alteration of the landscape worthy of any great imperial project.⁶⁸

There can be no doubting, however, that all of these cases have a number of common elements; first and foremost is the almost universal presence of a hostile environment for Christianity.⁶⁹ As such it almost always required the intervention of the secular authority in the form of the Emperor or his local officials. The conflicting narratives of Gaza and Heliopolis offer a powerful reminder of how the presence of a charismatic local figure remained an essential part in maintaining the momentum of the process: if Porphyry had not been present in Gaza it would have been unlikely that the Emperor would have been able to intervene in the first place, but, even if he had, it would most likely have resulted in the continuation of the kind of arrangement that seems to have resulted from the first visit by the Governor of Palestine

⁶⁸One has to only think of the major alterations that Rome and Constantinople underwent by imperial will: for instance the construction of the Forum of Trajan whose construction involved cutting the Quirinal and Capitoline hills.

⁶⁹Though Scythopolis does not present open signs of anti-Christian activity it was however famed for both its Jewish and Hellenic communities as well as its Christian ones and it most certainly had its fair share of tensions.

to the city, whereby all but one of the Hellenic Temples, that of, Zeus *Marnas* were closed but not demolished.⁷⁰ It was only through the sheer will and stubbornness of Porphyry that a second mission was carried out and the final showdown pursued. In Heliopolis on the other hand the apparent absence of strong personalities in the community and despite several reported interventions by more than one Emperor, the community never became strong enough nor was it ever confident enough to force a confrontation with the Hellenic majority. Even as late as the late 6th century Heliopolis is still given as a hotspot of Hellenic cults, and the author is under no doubt that it is a majority non-Christian city.

In Caesarea the religious situation was somewhat more complicated. As well as Hellenes the Christians in the city had to deal with significant groups of Jews and Samaritans. However, while the most restless parts of the population were the latter two groups rather than the Hellenes, yet the most visible monuments of the city were, and had been since the foundation of the city by Herod, Hellenic. The main monument was the *Augusteion* that towered over the city and remained in use until the first half of the 5th century. Unfortunately, while it is possible to date the destruction of the temple quite accurately it is not possible to reconstruct the building that followed it shortly after it. It is entirely possible, and in fact likely, that it was a Christian building of some sort, and it is certain that it was burned down in the late 5th century, probably during the Samaritan revolt of 484 when a number of Christians were killed and Christian buildings were destroyed. After this a much larger Church was built on the site with a size and a shape that dominated the landscape.

In Scythopolis the situation is even less clear. The only church that has been excavated is a peculiar round building with a deambulatory. It was constructed on the top of the *tel* that dominates the city and replaced the temple of Zeus *Akraios* that had likely been closed some time before, though it probably still stood. Despite the

⁷⁰Mark the Deacon attributes this compromise to the corruption of the governor; while this is possible it may well also be that he was seeking an accommodation that did not result in the wholesale closure and demolition of all temples, in order to maintain peace in the city.

closure of the temples in the city, the other temple that has been excavated, the one at the conjunction of the Valley and Silvanus streets, was maintained until the earthquakes that devastated the city in the 6th and 7th centuries. Further the construction of the church on the *tel* was accompanied by that of a number of houses and one can suggest that actually this was part of a wider re-urbanisation and Christianisation of the *tel* (that had been essentially unoccupied since the time of the Ptolemies). It is also the case that by occupying the *tel* Christians were projecting their presence over the city as a whole in a way that could not have been achieved in other ways.

In the second group of cases, Caesarea and Scythopolis, one has two provincial capitals both known for their religiously diverse populations composed of Jews, Samaritans, Hellenes and Christians.⁷¹ Yet they were also seats of government of a state that would, over the course of the 4th and early 5th century become increasingly Christian and decreasingly tolerant of other religions. It is not surprising therefore that, at least in the case of Caesarea, we have repeated reports of violent outburst and rioting.

Finally in Apamea the construction of the two main religious buildings of the city are both constructed on top of pre-existing religious buildings. The Atrium church, the earlier of the two, was built on the site of a synagogue built in the mid-4th century AD through the contribution of the Antiochene community. The speed of the demolition suggests that the presence of the synagogue may have been seen as a hostile act, and its demolition a priority.⁷² The cathedral church was built on the remains of a Hellenic building, possibly a neo-platonic school, whose mosaics survive under the main apse of the building. Again, though there is limited indication of a direct demolition and replacement, it is likely that at the very least the space vacated by the building in such an area was at least seen as very advanta-

⁷¹Caesarea in particular was known for its ample and extremely well read Jewish population, whose leaders were heavily involved in the development of Rabbinical Judaism in the post *Bar Kochba* world.

⁷²Given the fact that the main contributor to the construction was an ἀρχισυνάγωγος from Antioch it is possible that the court of Julian was involved at some level and that its construction may have been seen as a threat.

geous. Certainly there can be no doubt that the presence of what must have been an imposing building, would not have faded from the memory so quickly and, while the position of the apse probably has more to do with pragmatic reasons such as the shape of the church and the available land, it would have been comforting to know that the remains of such an unholy place were safely sealed under the altar of the main church of the city.

In conclusion, in the cities of the Levant replacement of temples with churches tended to occur in specific circumstances. First and foremost it occurred in cities where Christianity was under pressure from an unstable or hostile environment, due to the religious balance of the city.⁷³ Secondly, imperial intervention, and often funding, is an almost absolute requirement with the Emperor serving almost as an icebreaker to break religious opposition in the city, either because he was called in by the Bishop (Gaza and possibly Caesarea) or because the Emperor decided of his own volition to intervene (Jerusalem and Heliopolis). Given that, in the case where it is sure that the intervention was the result of the Bishop's request (Gaza), he was an outsider and by all accounts a zealous one, in my opinion it is possible to say that, in effect, replacement was more the result of external intervention than the result of internal process.

⁷³Scythopolis may be an exception, but we do not know enough about the situation in Late Antiquity to be able to determine this.

Chapter 5

Co-existing with powerful neighbours

5.1 Introduction

In the third part of my thesis I will analyse the last group of case studies that make up the core, where, rather than imposing its mark on the landscape, Christianity sought to avoid confrontation, integrating into the surrounding city or at least seeking less prominent areas: Bostra, Gadara, Pella. As in the previous chapters, one has to account for the practical and pragmatic reasons underlying these choices and there is no doubt that the availability of space certainly played a role in choosing locations for churches. However, I believe that pragmatism alone would not have been enough to justify the length to which in these cases communities went to hide themselves from sight.

In all three cities at least one ecclesiastical building, sometimes one of major significance as in the case of Pella, was built in such a way as to be carefully integrated if not almost concealed in the surrounding cityscape. Its Civic Complex Church is undoubtedly a major feature of the city and its location within the central complex surrounding the agora cannot be said to be marginal: but, though it was built over a previously occupied space, it sought to avoid a direct interaction with public space before it. Rather it initially integrated itself into the surrounding landscape (behaving much as a *Tychaion* might). It was only much later in the life of the city that this church would seek direct interaction with the *agora* below it, entering a spatial conversation with what had been, up until then, a separate space.

In Bostra there was a very similar situation. While the Bath Complex Church and the Bahria Basilica (though it is not entirely clear that this building was a church) were carefully integrated into the surrounding context, either through the maintenance of its exterior form, in the case of the Basilica, or by building it in an appropriate position and style, as in the Bath Complex Basilica, preserving the centre of the city's monumental landscape while maintaining its aesthetic and functional features, these churches did not function as the kind of disruptive forces that I outlined in the previous two chapters. Once again Bostra, like Apamea, displayed much

larger and more impressive churches, located in the eastern quadrant of the city. This was an area of palatial buildings and at least two late antique “palaces” have been uncovered not far from each of the churches, while a 2nd-century palace has been identified under one of the churches, in the immediately preceding phase. The churches here are large, each having a footprint that is roughly the same as the villas, and both would have stood relatively isolated and highly visible from much of the surrounding area.

In Gadara, there is a strong contrast between the building activities of the central area and those of the periphery, though the particular history and topography of the city make the case slightly more complex compared to the previous ones. By Late Antiquity when the first Christian buildings were erected, strung out along a major road, the large temple complex to the east of the civic centre was abandoned for some time and converted to secular use, though it is unclear where the new religious focus was. Twin churches were built in the civic complex, carefully nested within the environs of the major civic buildings of the city. On the other hand, in the west of the city there was an imposing five-aisled basilica. This complex completely dominated the western access to the city and appears to have contributed to accelerating and exacerbating the already ongoing process that was dragging the city westwards along the Roman highway away from both the Hellenistic centre of the city and the later Roman one.

Thus we will see that in all three cases the prevailing narrative strongly contrasts the behaviour in the centres of these cities compared to that of the more marginal, peripheral areas. In the centre, especially in those areas with many civic buildings, much effort was expended in blending the new buildings into the surroundings, melding them with the existing monumental framework. On the other hand much more freedom was taken in the peripheries of the cities, with large, heavily monumentalised, and generally free-standing, buildings being constructed.

5.2 Bostra

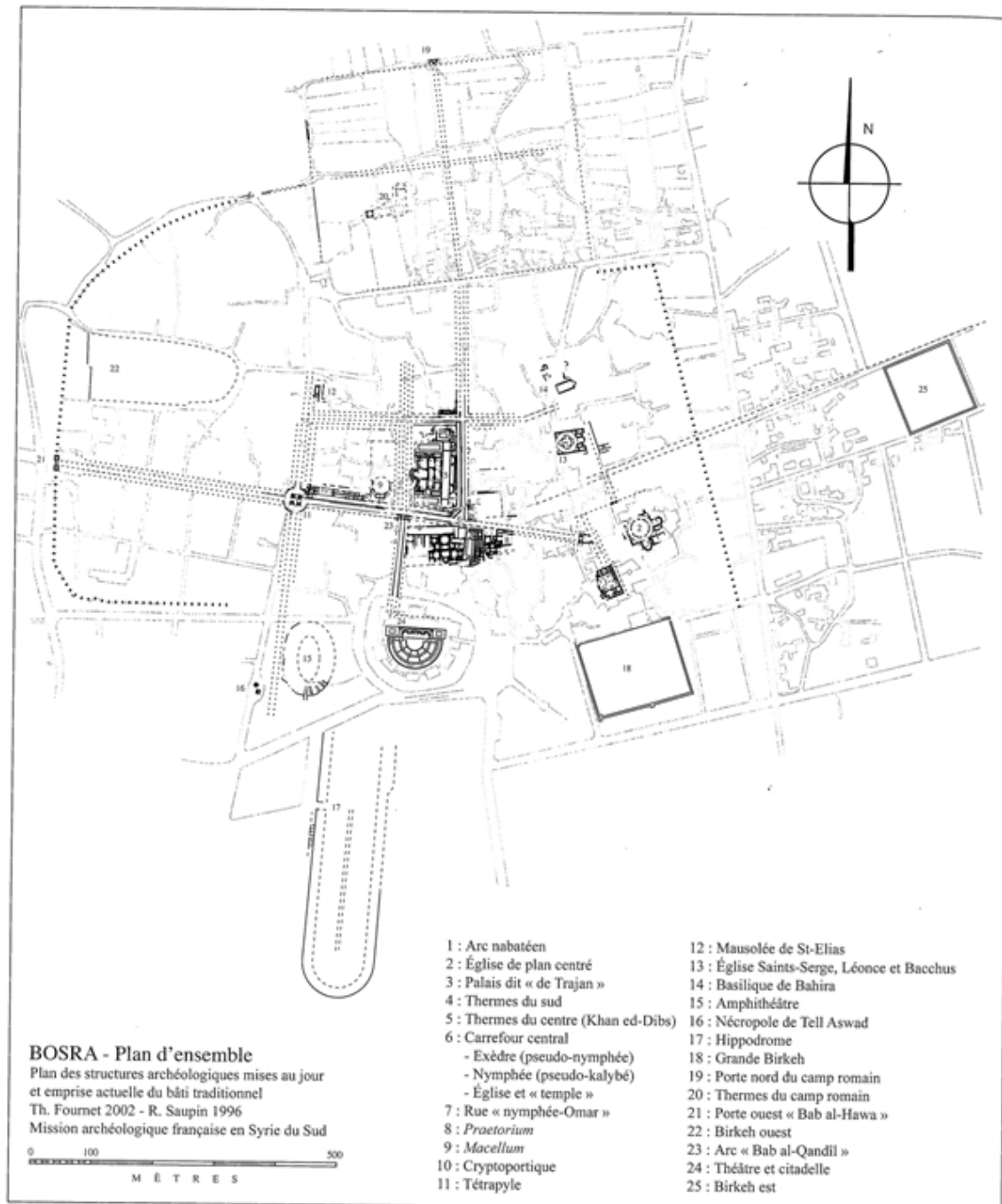


Figure 5.1: The excavated remains in the city of Bostra (Dentzer-Feydy 2007 p35)

The city of Bostra was incorporated into the Roman Empire in the year 106 AD along with the rest of the region which became a Roman province after the annexation of

the Nabatean Kingdom.¹ In the centuries that followed, the city continued to thrive in its role as a terminal for cross-desert caravans. In 120 AD the city was granted the status of polis as ἡ νέα Τραιανή Βοστρεῶν πόλις and alongside this the institutions of the Greek poleis. The city continued to grow through the second and third centuries and, during the reign of Severus Alexander (208-235), it became a Roman colony and was re-founded as Nea Traiana Alexandriana Colonia Bostra: while this no longer gave the city the benefits of Roman citizenship after the decisions of Caracalla it would have still carried weight within the region and elevated Bostra above the level of the other cities within the region, of which it was capital.² Alongside these elevations came a large-scale programme of monumental construction that provided among others: baths, theatre and amphitheatre.

Though increasingly Romanised, in particular by the presence of the Legio III Cirenaica, there is clear evidence of the continuing survival of Nabatean practices, in particular in the religious sphere with the continued existence of the cult of the triad of Dushara, Allat, and al-'Urra as confirmed by the use of the temple on Bostran coins and the institution in the third century of the Dousaria Acta as a celebration of the god. The final step in the growth of the city came in the late 3rd c. AD when the city was made a metropolis under Philip the Arab.

Christianity appears to have reached Bostra relatively early (not surprising given the proximity of the city to Palestine) and it was certainly well established by the time of the Milan Rescript in 313 AD. Given its status within the administrative framework of the Empire, it is also not surprising that the city was an episcopal see from very early on, with Bostrene bishops present at Nicea in 325 (Nicomachus) and at Serdica in 343 (Anthony). The church continued to grow and thrive and there are indications of the increasingly active role of the bishops in urban life.³

One would expect a city of such economic, administrative and ecclesiastical im-

¹For a full discussion of the annexation of Bostra, see Sartre (1985) p. 63-70, and also Dentzer-Feydy (2007).

²For more on this, see Sartre (1985) p. 76-83 and Dentzer-Feydy (2007).

³Dentzer-Feydy (2007) and Sartre (1985) 99-119 for a full discussion of the development of early Christianity in Bostra.



Figure 5.2: Late antique Bostra (Dentzer-Feydy 2007 p 60)

portance to house a large number of churches, for instance considering the excavation of the settlement at Umm al-Jimal that is a mere *kastron* has revealed 20 churches, and the only partially excavated Gerasa 13. Yet, so far, only four churches have been found in Bostra, and one can only imagine that the remaining churches lie somewhere under the yet unexcavated parts of the city.⁴ The four churches that have been excavated are, however very revealing as they represent very different

⁴Currently only about a third of the city has been excavated. For a full discussion of the excavations at Bostra, see Dentzer-Feydy (2007) and Dentzer, Blanc, and Fournet (2002).

moments in the process of christianisation of the city: one is built over a former temple and part of the baths, one is built by re-using a pre-existing basilica that was likely used for religious rather than civil purposes, and the last two are large central plan churches built in the east part of the city and would have seriously impacted on the urban context in which they were built.

5.2.1 The Churches

The Bahria Basilica

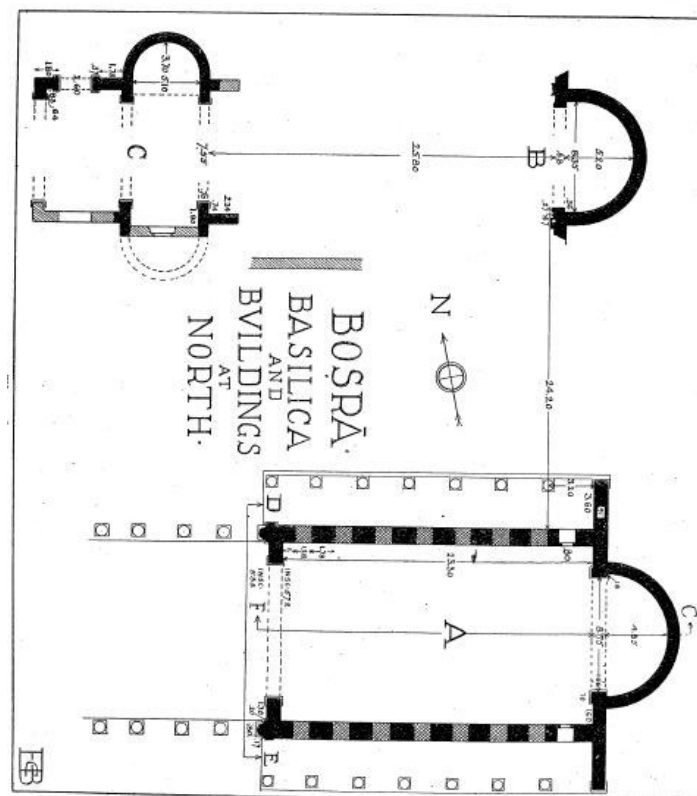


Figure 5.3: The Bahria Basilica (Butler 1919)

The Roman basilica was probably built during the 2nd or 3rd century as a civic structure, in the north of the city. It was part of a larger complex that included many apsed buildings, that formed what may have been a civic structure of some kind.⁵

⁵Bucci (2004) 279-280, Segal (1988) 57, Piraud-Fournet (2003) 295.

The basilica is named after a Nestorian monk who, according to legend, conversed with the Prophet Mohammed.

Its western façade was initially open in the so called ‘Syrian style’ with a large decorated arch, which was closed at some point in the 4th or 5th centuries and adapted for use as a Christian church. Though none of the decoration from the Christian phase has survived there are clear indications that this was the use that it was put to from the traces that were left: the columns were marked with crosses and the columns and floor of the apse bear the carved channel to accommodate the chancel screen.⁶ Unfortunately, as the building has remained standing to this day and in use, there is no clear indication of dates of construction, conversion and abandonment, nor can we clearly indicate the exact alterations that were made.⁷ As far as can be told, the only major alterations were the blocking up of the large entrance way and the construction of a chancel screen. The basilica was single-apsed and supported by engaged Ionic semi-columns; both the roof and the vault of the apse were constructed in coementicium with volcanic rock inclusions and, like the rest of the material, it appears local in provenance and manufacture.

Church Number 1

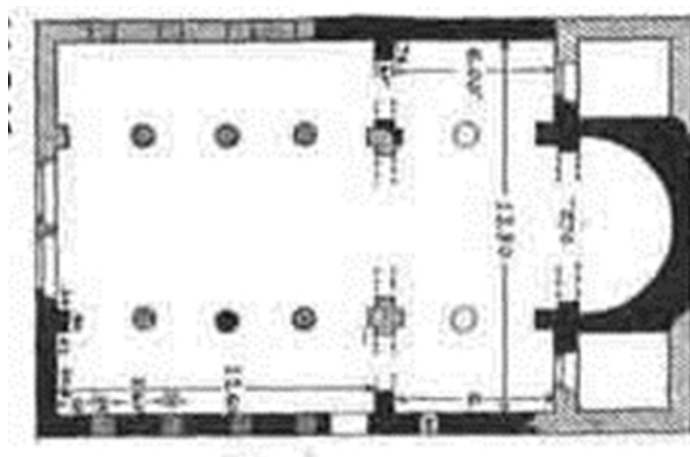


Figure 5.4: Church Number 1 (H. C. Butler 1969)

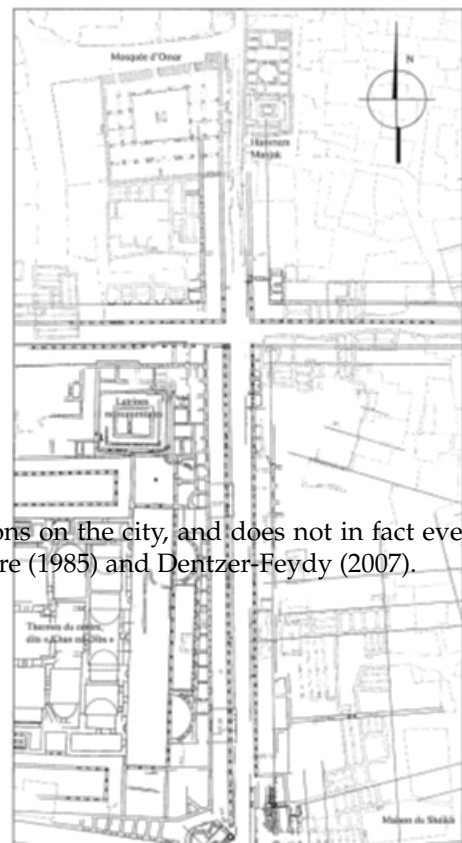
⁶Piraud-Fournet (2003) 296.

⁷Butler (1919) 265-266.

Church Number 1 in Butler's catalogue is a small church in the southern part of the city, of unknown attribution. It is a small three-aisled basilica with a double entrance in the west and a single inscribed apse in the east. To the north and south of the apse are two square rooms, probably *diakonika*. The easternmost part of the basilica is separated from the rest by the presence of two cross-shaped pillars that may well indicate the presence of a transverse vault or the presence of a dome over the area preceding the apse. If this were the case one would have to describe the plan of the church as cruciform, as does Butler.⁸ However given that all other churches in the city are basilical or central in their plan I am loathe to do so and prefer the suggestion of the two pillars being the support for a dome, perhaps a transitional form between the basilical and the central-plan forms. Apart from the anomalies of its plan, relatively little can be said of the church as it has not been examined or excavated since the Princeton team's visit, so much so that it has entirely disappeared from the more recent publications on the city, presumably having been absorbed by the modern village.⁹

The Bath Complex Church

The Bath Complex Church (Church number 3 in Butler's survey¹⁰) is located in the southern bath complex. Due to the extensive spoliation of the building and the subsequent construction of houses on the site, very few remains of the structure have survived apart from the foundation level. The western third of church was built over the podium of a pre-existing temple, and the rest occupied the northern section of the



⁸Butler (1919) 279.

⁹It is not reported in either of the descriptive publications on the city, and does not in fact even appear on the otherwise excellent plans of the city. See Sartre (1985) and Dentzer-Feydy (2007).

¹⁰Butler (1949).

Gymnasium. The temple, dedicated to an unknown deity, opened onto the main east-west decumanus, almost exactly in line with the large porticoed road that descends from the north to form a T junction with the Decumanus. like the two other ones further to the west along the Decumanus, this junction is heavily monumentalised with the presence of a large Nymphaeum and a monumental exedra. Very little else can be said about the temple, as the only physical evidence for its structure to have been recovered consists in a floor mosaic that likely covered the floor of the cella and that would appear to have been laid in the 4th century AD, though the temple itself would seem to be from the 1st-2nd century AD.¹¹ Apart from the mosaic the only other surviving traces of the temple consist in the podium, and two much later robbing trenches along the borders of the mosaic: presumably they were the result of the robbing out of the foundations of the temple during the construction of a much later structure that date from the 15th and 19th centuries.¹² One can safely assume that the temple was demolished to floor level when the church was constructed, that the building material was presumably re-used and that the floor was paved over. The area of the temple is only a small part of the church itself, about a third, and the level was extended eastwards by constructing a series of vaulted rooms that extended the surface of the church to about 30x21m. It is these vaulted rooms that are the only significant survivals of the church, with the rest of the elevation of the building being demolished over the course of time.

¹¹For a more extensive discussion on the dating of the mosaic see: Farioli Campanati (1989) and Dentzer-Feydy (2007) 217-218. For the temple itself see below and Masturzio (1997).

¹²See Masturzio (1997) 461-462.

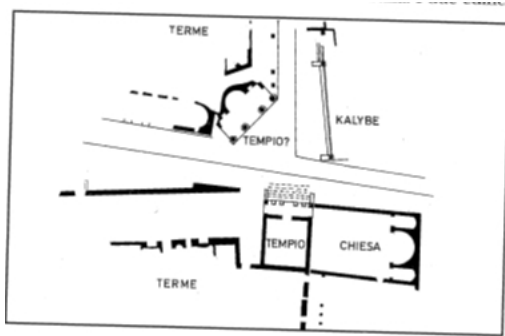


Figure 5.6: The junction with the temple and the nymphaeum. after Masturzio (1997)

There is little doubt that the vaulted rooms were used for more than just simple structural purposes: they were almost all divided to create cellular rooms, probably shops that opened onto the Decumanus, with the inner part likely serving as a storeroom. The only exception to this is the central vault that was open all the way through and that led to the Gymnasium to the

south, and the semi-circular vault under the apse that was completely sealed off. The only part of the elevation to survive is the foundation layer of the floor and no more than three courses of the walls. These reveal a simple, three-aisled church with three inscribed apses as identified by Butler.¹³ Because of the ruinous state of the building not much can be said about the rest of the building or on the interior of the church. The church re-used the monumental staircase of the pre-existing temple in the north-west corner of the building rather than building an entirely new one on the west wall (fig 4.10). Even though the entrance is in an unusual position the church still had three doors all giving access to the north aisle. Thus it would seem that the desire to provide the church with three doors with all its symbolic implications (in particular for the central one the *porta regia* for feast days, and the two lateral doors for general use) overrode underlying practical reasons without necessarily adding any necessary practical advantage. It was likely a symbolic rather than practical choice, making the entrance to this church an intriguing mixture of the pragmatic, for the staircase, and the symbolic, for the entrances. The construction of the church had implications for the bath complex as well, which in many ways integrated the new building into the complex rather than just carving a portion out of it. By extending the temple platform eastwards, the

¹³Masturzio (1997), Butler (1969).

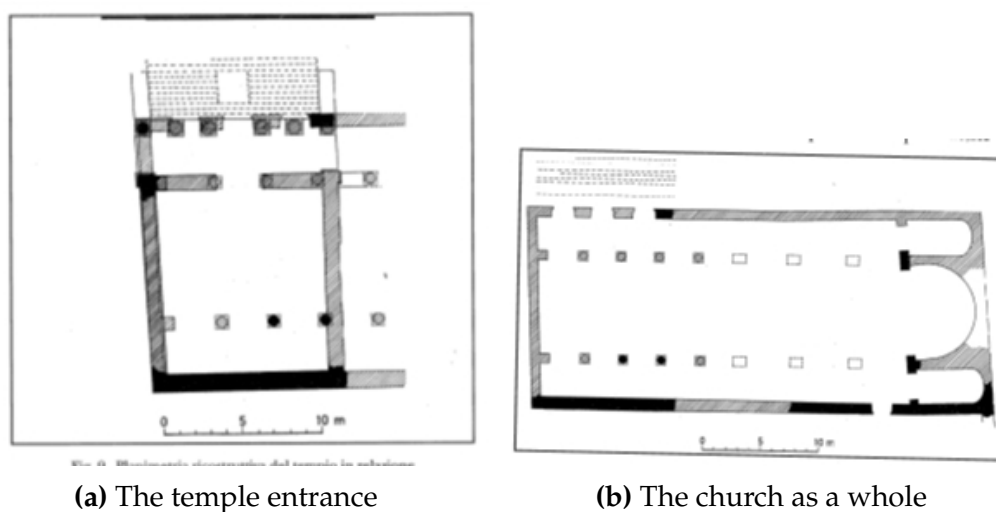


Figure 5.8: Detail of the entrance to the church and of the podium (Masturzio 1997 fig 8-9)

church absorbed a large part of the north half of the Gymnasium. The Gymnasium would seem to have still been in use at the time, and would appear to have experienced some form of continued use, as the central vaulted room under the church was built as a passageway from the Decumanus to the Gymnasium giving access to the centre of the room. Further, by using the monumental staircase of the old temple rather than building a new one on the west side of the building, the builders preserved the porticoed north entrance to the baths leaving the rest of the complex in effect untouched. Dating the church has proved difficult, with the authors who have attempted to do so giving varying dates from the 4th to the 7th century AD.¹⁴ This is not surprising given the parlous state of the remaining structure and the almost complete lack of dating (and datable) material from the excavation due to the construction of houses on the site in later centuries. However, it is possible to gain some insight by contextualising the construction of the building and its relationship with the surrounding structures. Further, the high quality of the masonry and the care and attention in integrating the building as much as possible into the surrounding structures point to an earlier rather than a later date.¹⁵ The mosaic is the

¹⁴Amongst others: Butler (1949, Masturzio (1997, Dentzer, Blanc, and Fournet (2002, Dentzer-Feydy (2007, Farioli Campanati (1989).

¹⁵It must be noted how the east apse of the Church of SS. Sergius, Bacchus and Leontius is judged to have seen some sort of later modification due to the different, and in the words of the excavator,

only element of certainty in the examination of the temple structure: though heavily damaged, enough of it survives to allow a number of considerations to be made. The decoration is typical of Late Antiquity with a combination of three colours: red, white and blue arranged in geometric patterns (mainly squares and rectangles).¹⁶ As well as the decoration, part of the dedicatory inscription also survived. It reveals that the mosaic was commissioned by a *Flavius Procopius doux*, though partially mutilated and lacking the date. The name and the title are not enough to identify this functionary exactly, but the lettering points to the 4th-5th century AD and the title points to it having been laid prior to the reign of Justinian.¹⁷ As a final dating element one has the masonry of the podium itself: though well-cut and executed it is almost certainly neither Roman nor Nabatean, belonging rather to the 4th-5th c. AD. Given all this evidence together, it is almost certain that though built in the imperial period, the temple was substantially refurbished during the 4th and 5th centuries. I believe that the latter part of the 4th century, probably during the reign of Julian, is a the more likely date, as it is unlikely that a temple would have been refurbished so thoroughly during the reign of the 5th-century Christian emperors especially after the Edict of Thessaloniki. Further, given the extent of the pressure on the pagans of Bostra that is reported in the sources, it would be credible that during the reign of Julian a pagan functionary would have felt it not only auspicious but necessary to finance such a project.¹⁸

inferior masonry. Given that the church was built in the early sixth century and the modifications are believed to have taken place later I believe that this disqualifies any date after the construction of SS Sergius, Bacchus and Leontius, for the Bath Complex Church for if the community was not willing or able to expend the resources to maintain the building standards on one of its première churches there is no reason to believe that this would have been the case for a much smaller church. See Guidoni Guidi (1988) for a full description of the issues surrounding the apse of SS Sergius Bacchus and Leontius.

¹⁶Farioli Campanati (1989).

¹⁷See Farioli Campanati (1989), and Masturzio (1997), and "Procopius" in Jones, Martindale, and Morris (1971).

¹⁸For the history of the transition between Paganism and Christianity in Bostra see Sartre (1985) chapters 2 and 3, Masturzio (1997) p 471. I also feel that the suggestion that the temple was adapted for civilian use is less credible, given that it is neither located in an area of the city where administrative space would have been needed nor would a peristyle temple been easily suited to such a use.

Taking all of this into account, and given that the damage to the temple would appear to have been caused by falling materials (such as those one would find in a collapse caused by an earthquake), I would suggest that the temple be dated to the third quarter of the 4th century AD and that the church was probably built sometime after the first quarter of the 5th century making it one of the earlier churches of the region and placing it in a similar position to the cathedral in Gerasa.

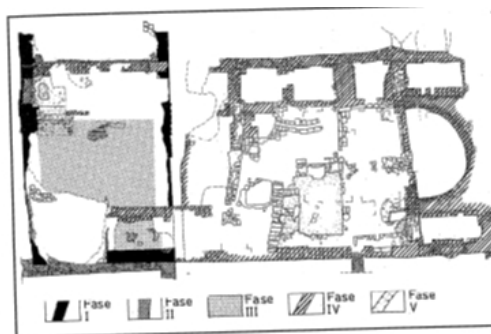


Figure 5.7: Detail of the plan of the church (Masturzio 1997 457-8)

The Church of Ss. Sergius, Bacchus and Leontius

The Church of Ss. Sergius, Bacchus and Leontius was built in the early 6th century AD in the north-east quarter of Bostra. It was long believed to be the Cathedral of Bostra, until the discovery of the larger church further south in the 1980s. The church was built over an earlier building, of which partial remains have been excavated. The exact date of construction is 512-513 AD as clearly indicated by the foundation inscription, now lost, that reports both dedication and year of consecration (404 of the era of Bostra).

The inscription reads:

Επί τοῦ θεο[φ]ι[λ]εστάτου καὶ ὁσιωτάτου Ἰουλιαν[οῦ] ἀρχιεπισκόπου ὡξο-
δομήθη καὶ ἐτελιώθη ὁ ἅγιος ναὸς Σεργίου, Βάχχου, καὶ Λεοντίου, τῶν
ἀθλοφόρων καὶ καλλινίκων μαρτύρων. Ἐν εἰ υἷ' ἰνδικτιῶος ς.

Under the most beloved of god and most pious Julian, Archbishop, the holy sanctuary to the victorious and triumphant martyrs Sergius, Bacchus, and Leontius was constructed and completed: in the year 408, 8th

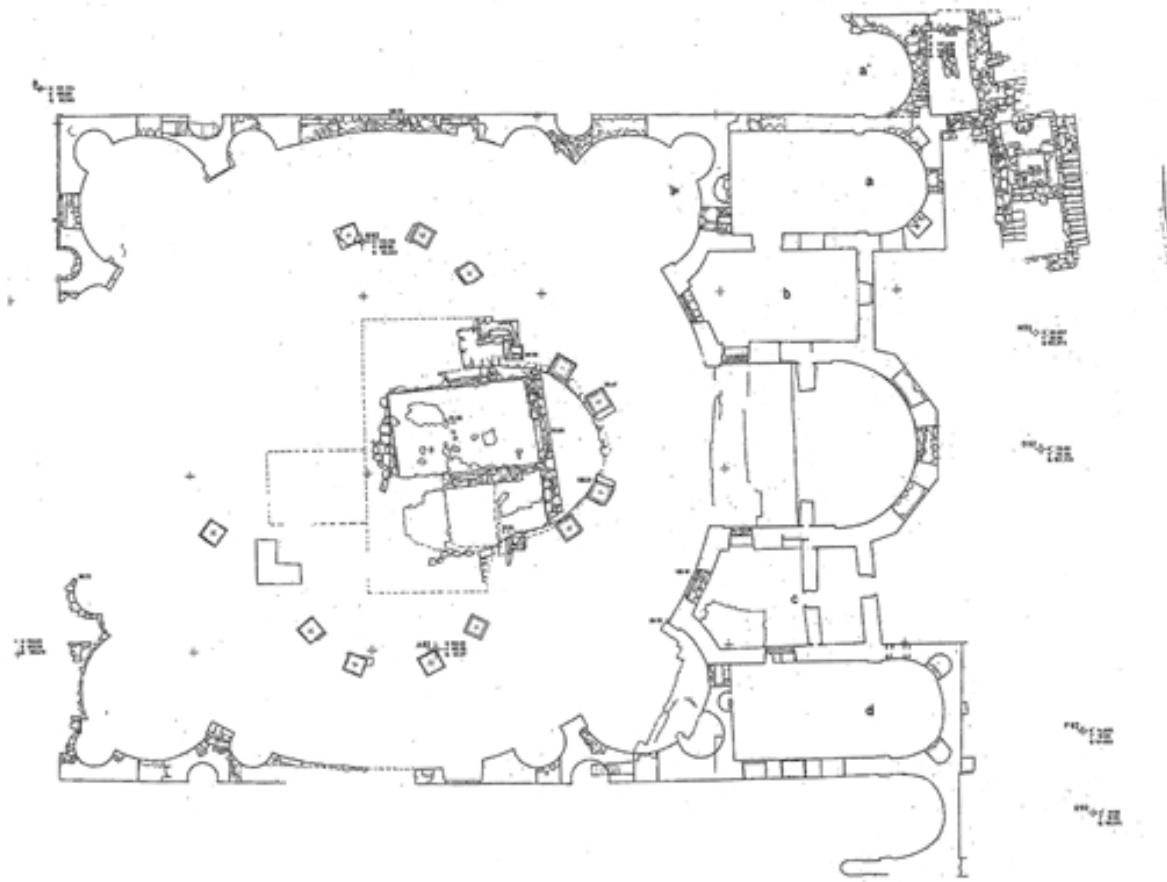
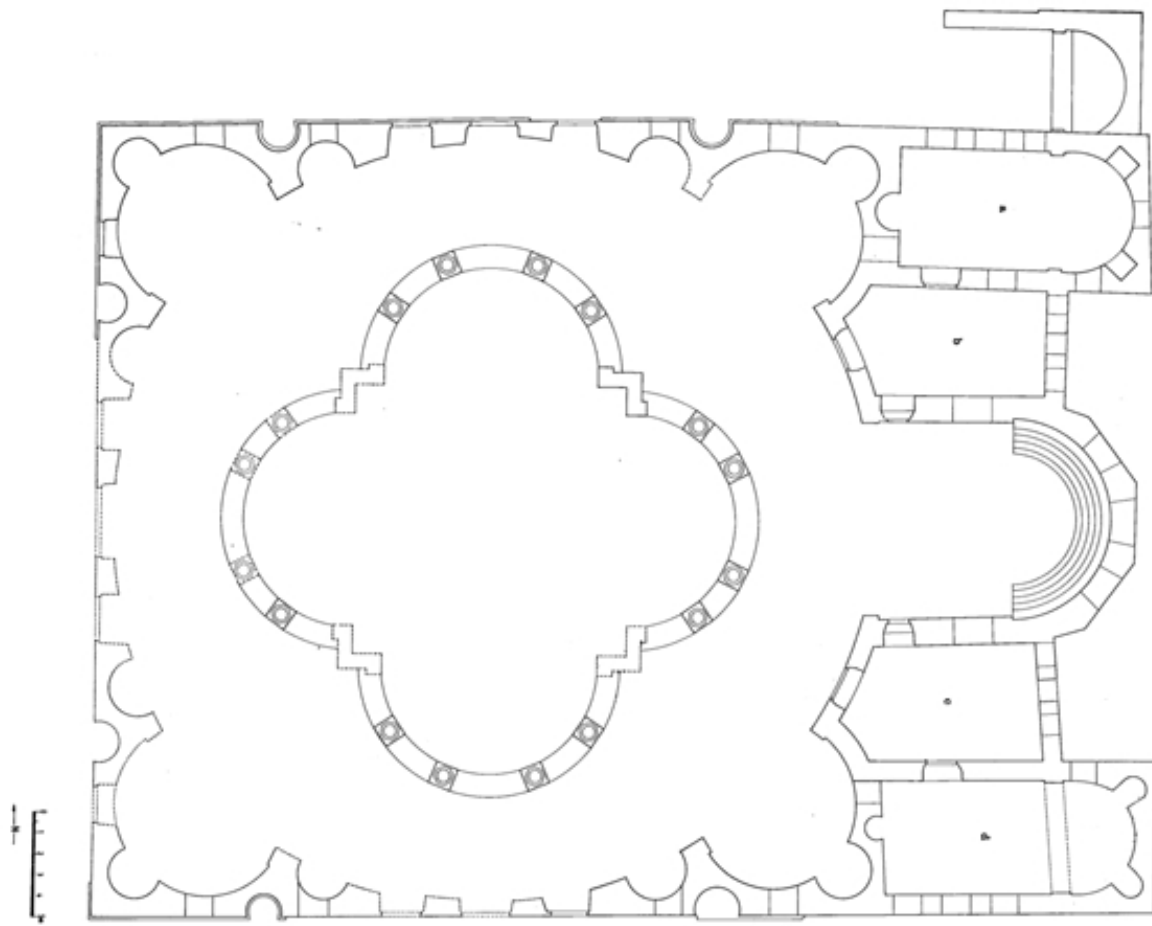


Figure 5.9: The excavated remains of SS Sergius Bacchus and Leontius (Guidoni Guidi 1988)

indiction.¹⁹

Reading the inscription, it is clear that the Ss Sergius, Bacchus and Leontius is not a martyrium but a church, as the foundation inscription describes it as a “holy sanctuary” ὁ ἅγιος ναός. The key is the use of the word ναός: in the context of the Levant this is frequently used in the context of church inscriptions (probably in a classicising effort), but only when it is referred to fully-fledged churches rather than martyria (however small or large these may be), thus though its plan has more in common with the martyria of the region, it seems to me that the scale of the building alongside with this inscription points certainly to this being a fully functional general-use church.

¹⁹Translation after Lassus (1947). Unfortunately the physical inscription has not survived and we are forced to rely on the early reports. For the original publication, see IGLS.



[H]

Figure 5.10: Reconstruction of the plan of the Church of SS Sergius, Bacchus and Leontius (Guidoni Guidi 1988)

The church has a central plan, formed by a circle inscribed within a square with one large apse in the east and four small apses in the corners; north and south of the main apse, and accessible both from the apse itself and from the main body of the church, are two sets of two rooms. These rooms would appear to be service areas (perhaps for the use of the clergy during day-to-day activities), however some time after the construction of the church the northern and southernmost rooms had east-facing apses added to them. The exact date of construction of these modifications is unclear, although the quality of both the material and of the technique used in their construction suggest a late date, at some point in the late 6th or early 7th century.

Unfortunately no evidence of the exact use of these rooms has survived, nor has any amount of decorative material that would hint at it, but it is possible that they may have been converted to chapels or martyria.

In the central part of the building, a tetraconch was formed out of columns. The main apse protrudes quite significantly from the circular structure almost as if forming a protruding basilica the *presbyterium* was in fact used as such later for the construction of a small basilica after the collapse of the roof of the main church.²⁰ Excavation has revealed remains of the chancel screen and part of the ambo indicating the form of the sanctuary that had in the apse a five-stepped *synthronon*.²¹ The central plan part of the church presents a tetraconch formed by four sets of four columns (only two were found complete while the other two are only partially preserved) arranged in pairs and separated by four L-shaped pillars, whose role was presumably to sustain the dome or roof of the church.²² The plan of the church has been amply discussed in the literature and has often been called a tetraconch. Though the internal feature is most definitely a tetraconch, the general plan of the building has rather more in common with other central plan churches in the region.

In particular it shares many features both with the Church of Saint John the Baptist in Gerasa that was built slightly later and that mirrors the plan almost exactly, though slightly in smaller scale. Further similarities can be found in a number of

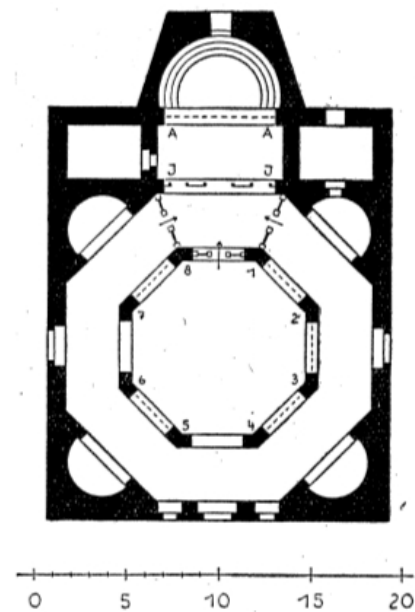


Figure 5.11: The Martyrion at Ezra (J. Lassus 1947)

²⁰This happened almost certainly beyond the scope of my timeframe for a full discussion of the later "basilichetta" see Farioli Campanati (1999) and bibliography.

²¹Farioli Campanati (1985, Masturzio (1994) 369-371; Farioli Campanati (1979).

²²There has been much inconclusive debate on the exact form that this covering had, unfortunately there is no real and concrete evidence to prove or disprove any hypothesis and I feel that the issue will remain open. For more on this argument see: Guidoni Guidi (1988) 141-149.

martyria in the surrounding area, in particular in the octagonal churches in Ezra and Myr'aye.²³

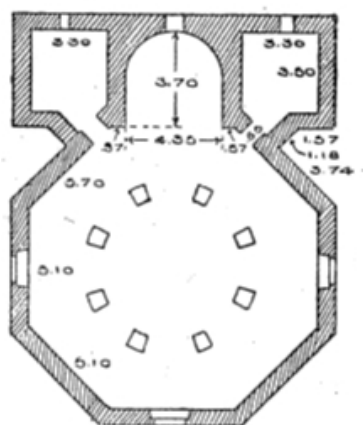


FIG. 58. — Mir'ayé.
Octogone (vi^e siècle).

Figure 5.12: The Martyrion at Myr'aye (J. Lassus 1947 fig 58)

It would seem to me that rather than a fully-fledged tetraconch, common in the episcopal sees of Syria, in the case of SS Sergius, Bacchus and Leontius one may be faced with something of a hybrid between the tetraconch and the central-plan church.²⁴ Given that much of the analysis was undertaken when this church was believed to be the cathedral of the city, attempting to classify it amongst the tetraconchs makes sense as they are generally associated with the Bishop. However, since the discovery and excavation of the much larger church to the south of SS Sergius, Bacchus and Leontius, it would now appear that the cathedral was elsewhere, thus, given the less prominent role of this church, its hybrid nature appears more clear.

It is possible that by building a “tetraconch” out of the structural elements that sustained the covering of the main space of the church, the designers of this church wanted to recall the great episcopal tetraconchs while building a structure that was more compact and, perhaps, more familiar.²⁵

The Bishop's Palace

Just to the east of the Church a large palatial residence was identified by Butler and put forward as a Bishop's Palace. Unfortunately only a very small portion of the building is visible, and no excavation has been undertaken on the building itself.

²³Lassus (1947)142-143.

²⁴For the distribution of Tetraconchs in the Episcopal sees of Syria see Sartre (1985) 124-125 and footnotes, Kleinbauer (1987), and Kleinbauer (1973).

²⁵The tetraconch at Apamea almost certainly pre-dates the construction of SS. Sergius, Bacchus and Leontius, while the other similar central plan churches such as St. George at Ezra and St. John the Baptist in Gerasa are almost contemporary. See Lassus (1947) 142-143.

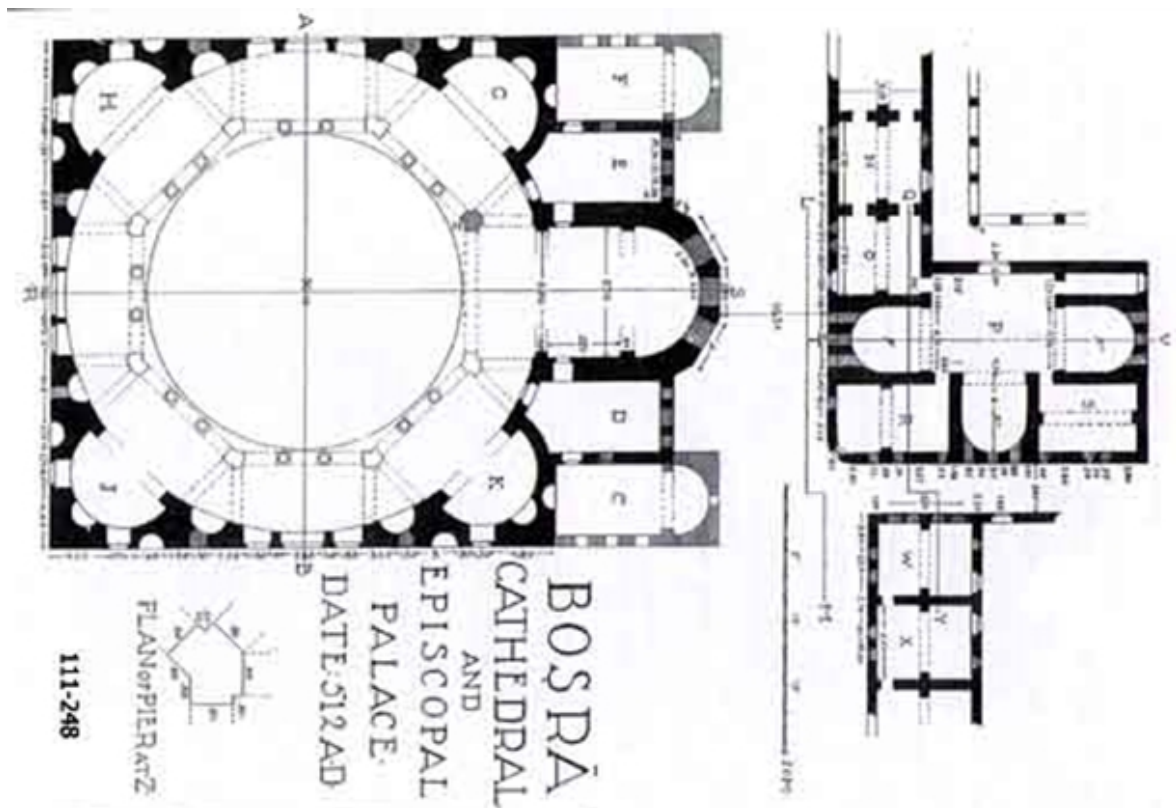


Figure 5.13: The Cathedral and the Bishop's Palace (H.C. Butler 1919 fig 111)

The attribution of the building to the bishop rested on two main factors: first of all the proximity to the church (that at the time was believed to be the cathedral), secondly the scale of the building itself that was at the time the largest habitation building in the area (Trajan's Palace was believed to be earlier).²⁶ Given the more recent discoveries and excavations, this attribution is certainly tenuous. There is however no doubting the wealth of the owner of the domus, and it still has a significant importance within the general understanding of the urban development of the area.

The Central Plan Church

The church was discovered in the late 1980s during the excavation of the area in proximity of the Nabatean arch at the end of the Decumanus. The so called Central Plan Church may well be the cathedral of Bosra. Like the Church of the SS Sergius,

²⁶Sartre (1985)120-125 and Farioli Campanati (1999).



Figure 5.14: The Central Plan Church (Dentzer et al. 2002)

Bacchus and Leontius, this church was built over an earlier, residential building. Excavation below the level of the church has revealed a large portion of the foundations of an earlier phase. It would seem that the area was used during the Nabatean and Roman period for a large porticoed court, accessed through a monumental arch, with one or more structures within it: the whole area is yet to be fully prospected due to continued occupation as a residential area. The suggestion is that this was

a *temenos*, possibly for a temple to one of the Nabatean divinities.²⁷ During the imperial period, it is most likely that the site housed a temple to Rome and Augustus, since a fragmentary inscription recovered carries the wording: RWMH KAI AUG. It is plausible that the cult of Rome and the divine Emperor may have been associated with an earlier temple, that would most likely have been Dushara, whose cult had similar importance for the Nabateans on a dynastic and political level.²⁸ Thus the arch would have originally been planned to open up onto a vast court that likely included multiple religious buildings. Excavation has revealed an intermediate occupation level between the Roman/Nabatean temple phase and the central-plan church, that has to be dated to the 4th century, based on the relative chronology of the phases, as no diagnostic dating evidence was recovered during the excavations.²⁹ The only structure that was recovered from this phase is a large mosaic that covered areas of the north part of the enclosure. Though no particular evidence has emerged, it has been suggested that this new phase corresponds to an initial phase of church building. I feel that though this may be possible, the evidence that is presented is purely conjectural, and that, given the legal framework of the period required imperial approval for such a conversion and given that there are very few examples of this kind of conversion in the 4th century, I feel that one might be more than a little sceptical about it.

The building is similar in plan to SS Sergius, Bacchus and Leontius : a central-plan church with a circle inscribed within a square and four small apses, one in each corner. It differs from the neighbouring church on three counts: first, it is significantly larger, secondly, it does not appear to have had a tetraconch within it, thirdly, and most importantly, it has at least two (but probably three) large apsed halls, one each on the east and south sides with traces on the north side. The presence of the aisled spaces adds a different dimension to the church and provides it with additional spaces for ritual and functional uses. In particular the east hall served as a

²⁷Dentzer, Blanc, and Fournet (2002) 87-89.

²⁸For the inscription see Sartre (1985) 83, 156.

²⁹Dentzer, Blanc, and Fournet (2002) 89.

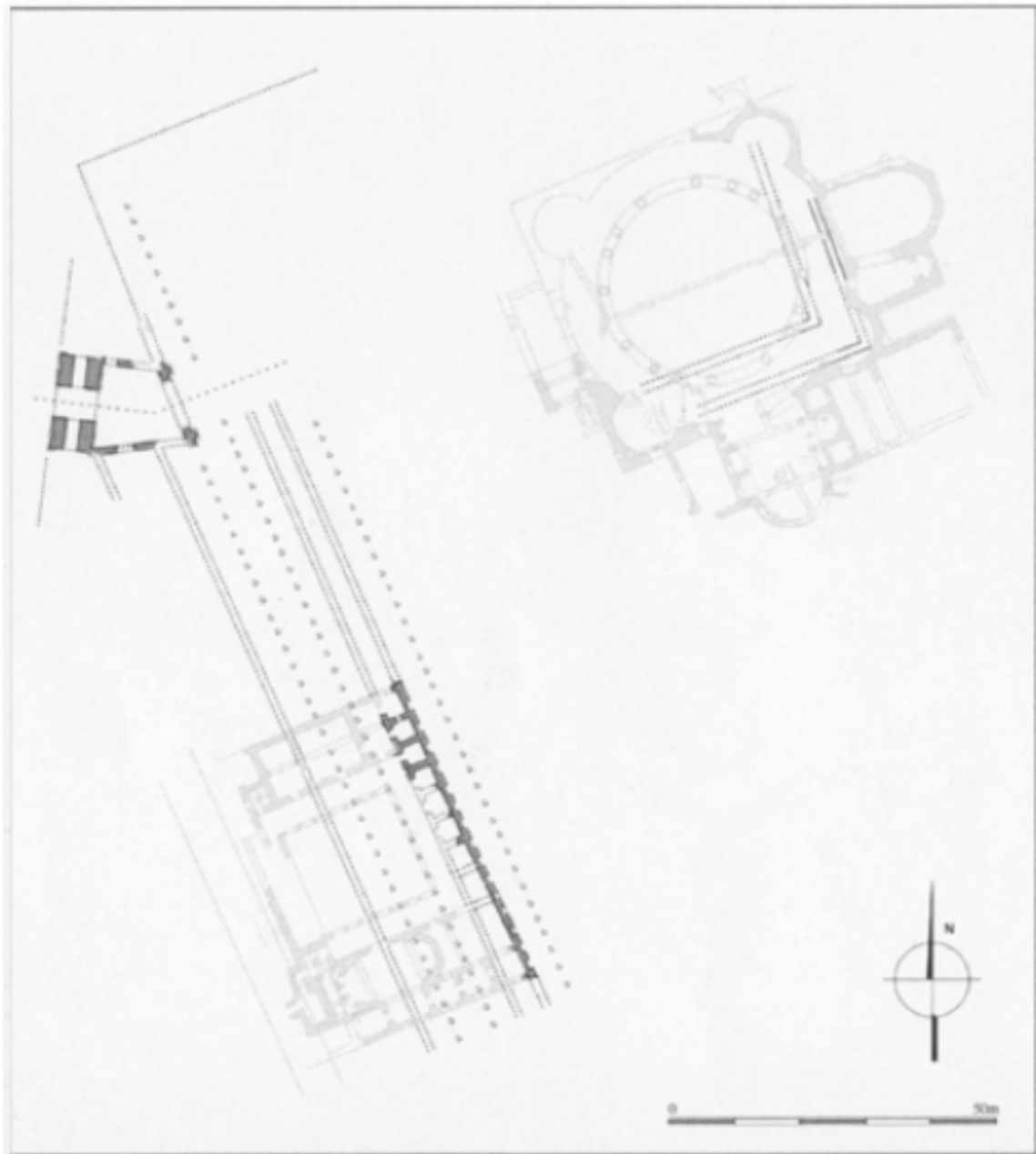


Figure 5.15: Reconstruction of the Nabatean phase of the area of the Cathedral in the north-east part of Bostra (Piraud-Fournet 2003)

sanctuary and *presbyterion* for the church, while the south one served as a chapel with a small apse in the east and a baptistery in the south apse. In the north part, the church is only partially preserved but part of a small apsed chapel remains, hinting perhaps to a similar set-up as the one that is in place in the south. In the west

the church was accessed via a monumental staircase and *propylaea*, though there is no trace of narthex or atrium. The monumental staircase open in line with the Nabatean Arch and there is a high likelihood that the area between the church and the arch would have been open, perhaps as a large square. This would have given a large visual impact when exiting the arch and given a very strong monumental dimension to the church and a strong presence within the area.

Conclusions

The city of Bostra was a major economic centre under the Nabateans, a state of affairs that continued till after the Roman conquest in 106 AD. Subsequently its economic importance was compounded by the designation of the city as a provincial capital and then metropolis. This administrative importance alongside the proximity of the city to the Christian heartland made Bostra an early site for Christianisation, and an early bishopric. In view of this it is quite surprising that so few churches have been discovered so far. However those that have been found have much to tell about the development of Christian Bostra.

The only church to be found within the central area of the city is the Bath Complex Church which was built in the heart of the city as part of the southern bath complex on the site of an earlier temple. The location and the form of the church point to it being fully integrated into the existing structures: the northern face of the podium was used to house shops and an access to the Gymnasium (part of which was taken over by the church). By re-using the monumental staircase of the temple the Church was also fully integrated into the topography of the city maintaining the axiality of the entrance with the north south road that connected the centre to the military camp. In maintaining this integration with the surrounding structures the Bath Complex Church partially sacrificed its monumentality: by placing the main entrance on the north wall of the Basilica, and effectively secreting the western façade of the church with its proximity to the entrance portico of the baths, it would not have been possible to enact a monumental programme that could have



Figure 5.16: The eastern complex. 1. The Arch, 2. the Central Plan Church and 3. the Palace of Trajan (Piraud-Fournet 2003)

in any way rivalled the surrounding buildings.

The situation is completely different where the two central-plan churches are concerned. By building them in the north-east quarter of the city, the two largest churches in Bostra would have shared their space only with the large palatial buildings that surrounded them. Thus the magnificent and highly complex monumental

programmes that they expressed would not have had to compete with any major rivals in the area. Further, by placing them in the east, these large churches would have found themselves both in the line of sight and of approach to the city from the east, the direction from which the caravans that provided so much of the wealth of the city would have come. Thus one can say that the relationship between topography and monumentality was finely balanced in Christian Bostra. Where the cityscape was crowded, and construction of large-scale monumental projects would have been difficult, the Bath Complex Church reveals a propensity towards integration in the surrounding cityscape. Where the competition was less significant and space more available, a large scale monumental project was implemented not once but twice, in the case of the two large churches in the city, providing the bulk of Christian monumentality in the city.

5.3 Gadara

5.3.1 Introduction

Gadara was located east of the Jordan Valley, on the edge of the limestone plateau and developed along the east-west road that traverses it. The site at Gadara had been occupied since the 7th century BC, though its last phase is connected to a Hellenistic foundation.³⁰ After the death of Alexander, like the rest of the region Gadara oscillated between the Seleucids and the Ptolemies, until it was taken by Antiochus III in 218-217 BC. Possibly re-named Antiochia, it was taken by Alexander Jannaeus and remained under Hasmonean control until 63 BC when it was taken by Pompey and incorporated into Roman rule.

The original core of the Hellenistic settlement was a fortified acropolis on the hill in the middle of the Roman city. Over the course of the 2nd and 1st centuries BC the city expanded north and east with a large temple complex, probably dedicated to Zeus Olympios, being built near the east gate.³¹ After the Roman conquest the focus of the city's development moved from the acropolis to the highway, in particular the westward part of the plain. Over the course of the 1st and 2nd centuries AD, Gadara benefitted from the prosperity of the region, and the new section of the city was endowed with porticoes, a basilica, a nymphaeum and a hippodrome all aligned along the highway.³²

In the 4th century the westward growth trend continued and the city expanded in that direction while expanding outwards north and south to accommodate the growing population. Now an episcopal see, its continued prosperity resulted in the construction of the final elements of the civic centre and baths, and the conversion of the theatre into amphitheatre.³³ The first Christian structures also date to this period: in proximity of the western monumental gate, a 2nd century hypogeum tomb was expanded with the addition of a crypt built from spolia of the nearby Tiberias gate. Later, the complex was expanded by the construction of a five-aisled basilica,

³⁰Hadidi (1997) 281.

³¹Buhrig (2008) 98.

³²Buhrig (2008) 98-99.

³³Buhrig (2008) 98-99.

probably built to accommodate pilgrims, whose construction date is unclear.³⁴

In the earthquakes of 365 and 447 AD the city was severely damaged, and re-construction took place by re-using existing spaces and materials. In particular the market basilica was demolished to make way for two interconnected churches in the civic centre.³⁵ It would seem that the damage wrought by the earthquakes, though extensive, was not crippling for the city as the reconstruction proceeded in earnest with the addition of the so called Heraclius Baths, and at least two sigma-shaped exedrae possibly built to compensate for the loss of commercial space caused by the demolition of the basilica. The same is true for the extension of the porticoes beyond the limits of the city walls to the monumental gate further to the west all accompanied by the construction and re-construction of dwellings in the whole city. This shows how important the construction of churches was then, a small and by no means the most important part of a larger process, as many of the resources of the city went to maintaining and expanding the secular infrastructure of Gadara. As we will see, there is also a significant difference in the form and size of the two church complexes, and I intend to concentrate on this aspect rather than on the development of the city as a whole.

5.3.2 The churches

The Octagonal Church

In its final phase the octagonal church in Gadara is a complex of two churches: the octagonal church and a three-aisled basilica conjoined to it. The church presents itself with a central plan describing an octagon inscribed in a square with four apses, one in each of the four corners of the square. The eastern side of the building has survived to a much larger extent due to the differing level of the scarp on which it was constructed leading to a different depth of debris covering the building. Thus

³⁴T. Weber, who excavated the structure in the late 1980's and early 1990's postulates a date around the mid 4th century, I will discuss the details of the dating later in this chapter. See Al-Daire (2001) and Weber and Hubner (1998) for the dating.

³⁵Vriezen et al. (2001) 540-541, Buhrig (2008) 99.

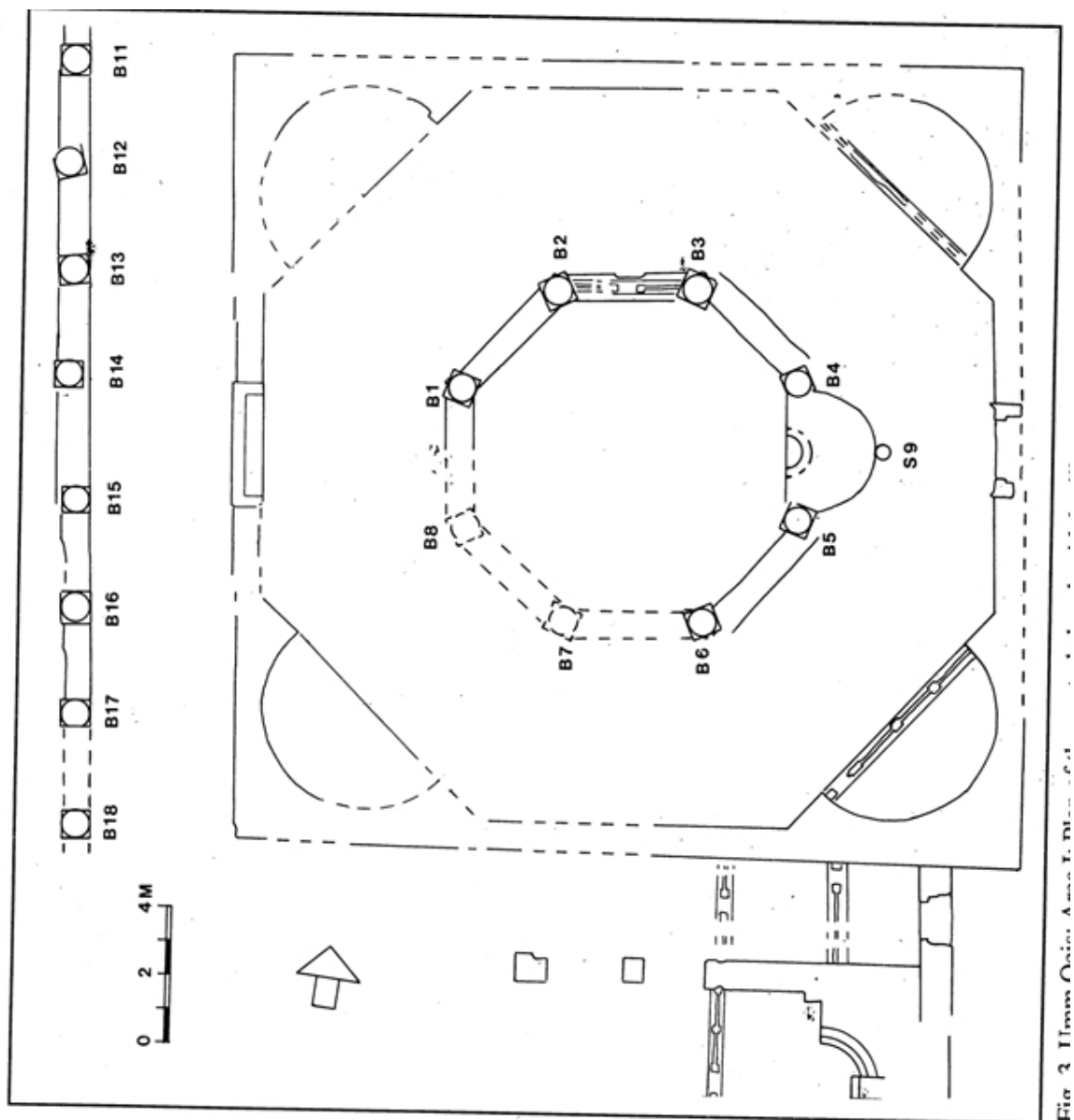


Figure 5.18: The Octagonal Church (Wagner-Lux and Vriezen 1980 fig 3)

the walls of the eastern third of the building survive to a height of 1.98 to 2.43 m while the western part survives to decreasing levels, with nothing but the foundations being present at the far west end of the building.³⁶ Access to the building was gained via a portico on the western side that allowed entry through a single door placed in the centre of the façade.

The church itself is relatively large, each side being approximately 24 m long.

³⁶Wagner-Lux and Vriezen (1980) 157-158.

Only the eastern two apses survive of the original four to the extent where one can make any kind of description of them. The level of destruction that the western part of the building experienced means that this is not equally possible.³⁷ The two eastern apses both have chancel screens perhaps suggesting that they may have served as secondary sanctuaries. The lack of evidence for the west means that it is not possible to say whether this is tied to their position at the east of the church or whether all four apses served a ritual role.

A second smaller octagon with an apse at the eastern end was at the centre of the church. This interior octagon was formed by placing eight columns, one at each corner, which were probably re-used as evidenced by the fact that all the surviving ones (6) have square bases that do not well adapt themselves to the shape. The separation of the inner octagon from the rest of the church was further reinforced by the presence of basalt blocks 0.8 m wide and 0.04 m high. The presence of grooves on both sides of columns B1 and B2 and on the western side of B3 and B6, and their corresponding floor slabs, suggests that there was most likely a chancel screen separating the inner octagon from the rest of the church. One must however always remember that the damage to the western part of the building, in particular the south-west corner, is such that this suggestion cannot be confirmed. The remaining spaces between columns B5 and B6 and B3 and B4 were closed by two walls that sit directly on the basalt stones. Finally the easternmost side of the octagon, that lay in line with the east-west axis of the church, was closed by a semi-circular apse, with a re-used column at its centre. The space between the two octagons is paved with polychrome stone tiles arranged in geometric patterns. Lastly, the central octagon seems to have had two different types of flooring: in the east side fragments of stone tiles laid in a cruciform pattern while in the west a simple stone paving was used.

³⁷Wagner-Lux and Vriezen (1980) 158.

The Three-Apsed Basilica

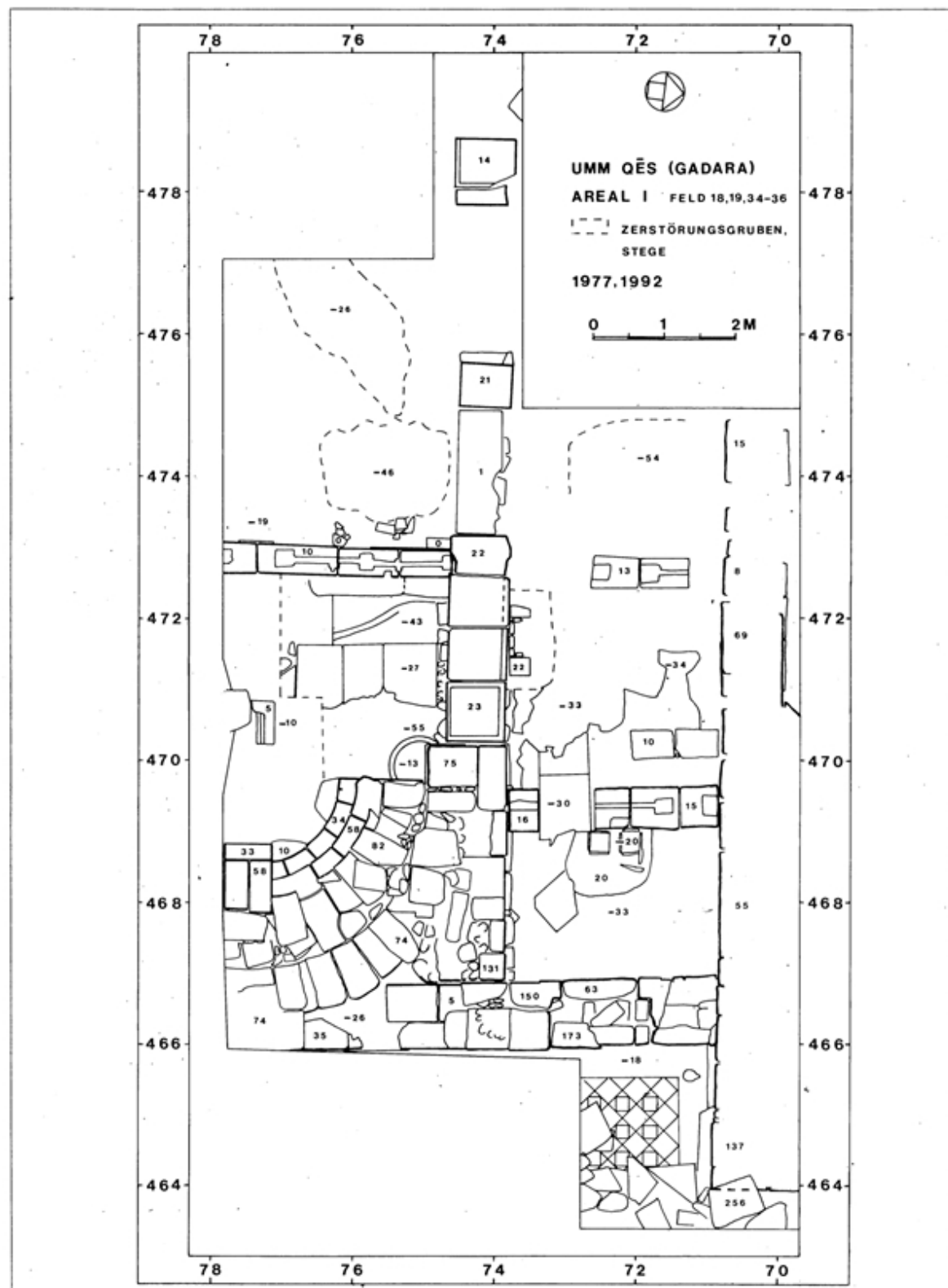


Figure 5.19: The Three apsed basilica in Gadara (Wagner-Lux et al. 1993)

Adjacent to the south wall of the octagonal church, part of a three-aisled basilica has also been excavated. The discovery was unintentional and happened during the excavation of the octagonal church, with which it shared a wall, leading to the suggestion that it was a later addition to the structure. Only the northernmost aisle and part of the nave of the church have been excavated, offering a partial vision of the building. The church itself appears to be fairly typical, as a three-aisled single-apsed basilica. The construction materials and techniques are quite similar to those employed in the octagonal church: mainly re-used *spolia* and limestone blocks, while the floor was paved in *opus sectile*. As in the case with the other church only the easternmost portion of the building survives to any great height, but the remains that are present in the western part of the building are sufficient to suggest a reconstruction.

The northern aisle was separated from the nave by a wall in the first part and then by a row of columns creating an enclosed rectangular space at the end that was separated from the rest of it by two chancel screens creating a sort of Synthronon and isolating the main apse within the body of the building.³⁸ As far as can be told, the nave is fairly similar, though wider, and terminates at the chancel screen that separates the slightly raised sanctuary from the rest of the church. The apse itself contains a cathedra, three rows of seats along the semi-circular wall, and a large rectangular stone basin that may have served to contain a reliquary.³⁹

The Five-Aisled Basilica

The Five-Aisled Basilica complex gives all the indication of being the site of martyr-ial veneration as it is constructed at the very edge of the city, in the midst of earlier cemeterial structures one of which it absorbed.

³⁸Wagner-Lux et al. (1993) 388-389.

³⁹Wagner-Lux et al. (1993) 388.

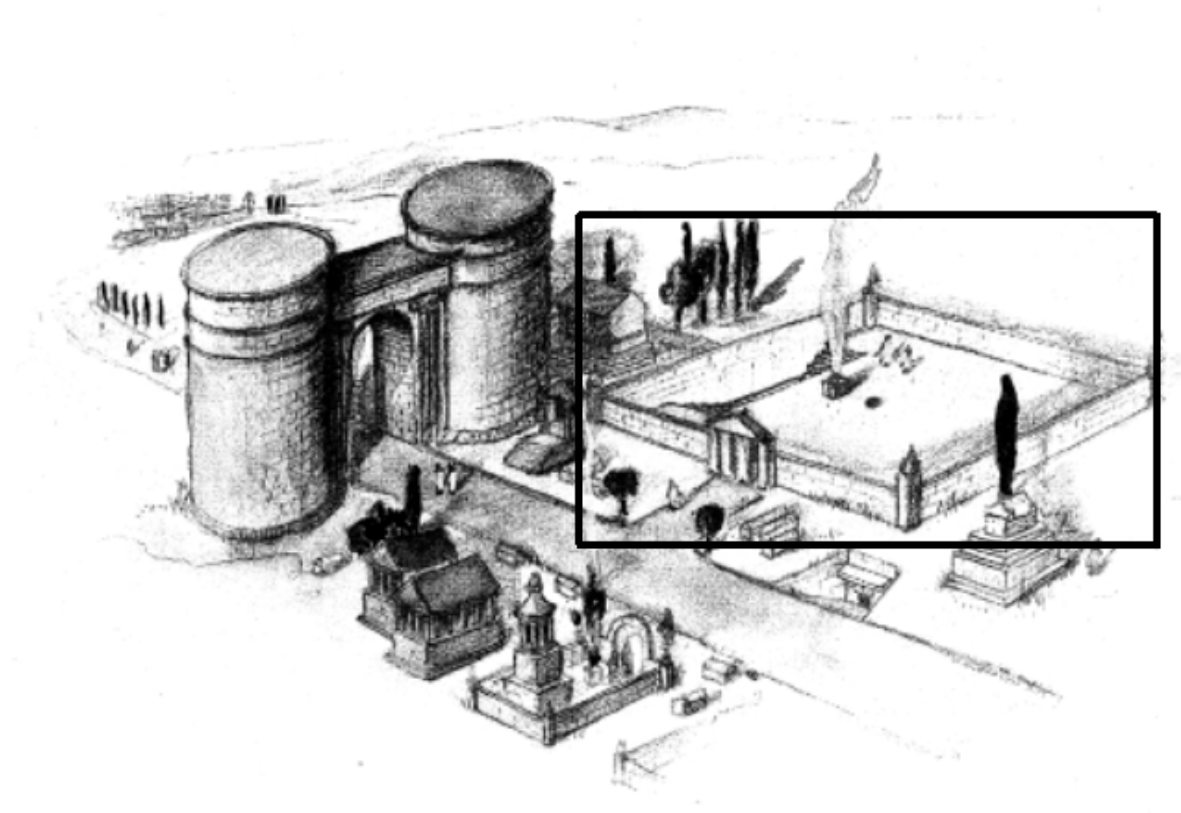


Figure 5.20: The Roman cemetery at the monumental gate with the early martyrial complex in the square (Weber 2000)

The earliest phase of development consists of a 2nd-century AD hypogeum to which a larger crypt was added in the mid-4th century.⁴⁰ Though the exact function of the crypt is unclear, it most likely served to allow the burial of others in proximity to the holy burial, in a form of *ad sanctos* burial, and other aspects of martyrial worship.

⁴⁰Weber and Hubner (1998) 445-446.

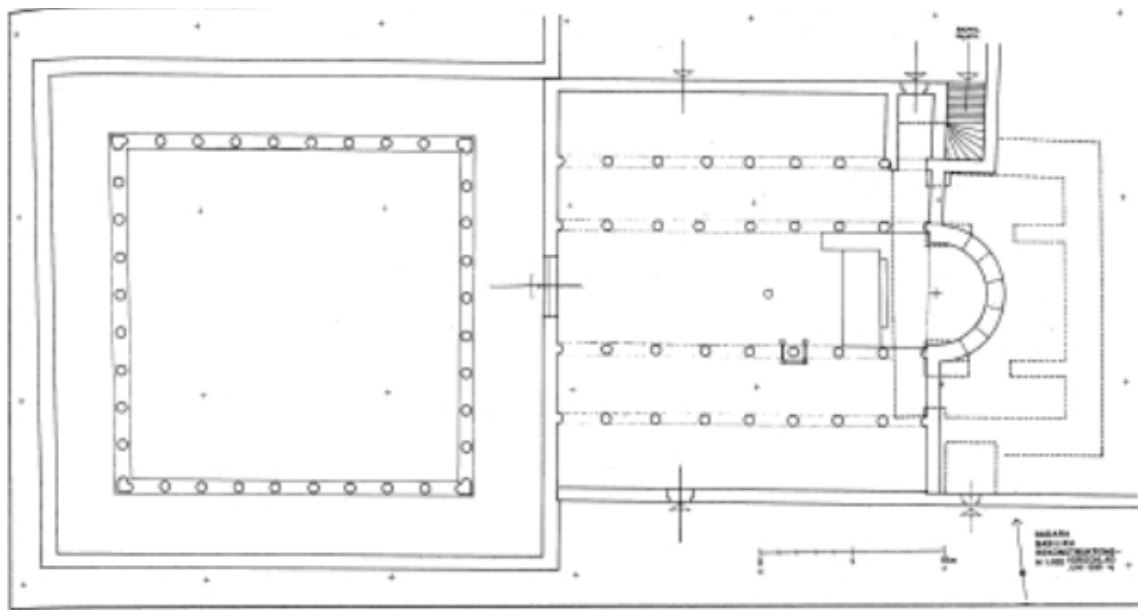


Figure 5.21: The Basilica (Weber and Hubner 1998)

A large five aisled basilica church was built above the underground complex, apparently in a single phase. The exact date of the construction of the church is controversial. T. Weber, who excavated the complex between the late 1980s and early 1990s dates the crypt to the mid-4th century on the basis of the use of *spolia* from the nearby gate (that was demolished in the mid-4th) attributing the same date to the construction of the church⁴¹. Further evidence brought forward is extremely circumstantial, being based on comparison with the churches in Bethlehem and Jerusalem and by comparison of the architectonic decoration of the building.⁴² Though it is undeniable that the crypt complex was most likely built in the 4th century, it does not mean that the church was, and the fact that much of the apse was heavily damaged by a combination of spoliation in antiquity and damage during the 1967 war means

⁴¹One must be mindful of early attributions, as the case of the Cathedral in Gerasa that was initially dated to the 360's-370's and has been recently moved in date to the early 400's. See Al-Daire (2001) 559-560, Weber and Hubner (1998) 324-325 for its date.

⁴²The use of churches such as the Nativity and the Holy Sepulchre as terms of comparison is dangerous in my opinion, since they are exceptional due to the importance of the sites they occupied and of the amount of imperial funding they received. While it is clear that the church at Gadara must have been connected to a cult of a certain importance, I strongly doubt it would have been of the same scale. It also seems unlikely that there would have been enough Christians or Christian pilgrims in Gadara in the early 4th century to justify such a structure, something that would have been much more likely in the mid 5th century following the Theodosian reforms. See Al-Daire (2001) 560, Weber and Hubner (1998), Weber et al. (1990) 324-325 for the comparisons.

that the crucial relationship between the two structures is hard to identify. However, if the crypt was built and maintained as part of an active cemetery it would make sense for the church to have been built around the time or just after the time when the last tombs were laid.⁴³ This argument is reinforced by the close connection between the church and the *hypogeum* that, rather than pointing to a cult connected to the events of the life of Christ (such as the Gadarene Swine), points to a martyrial cult that is more likely to have developed in the 4th and early 5th century.



Figure 5.22: Reconstruction of the basilica and the 5th-century quarter surrounding it. (Weber 2000)

The plan of the basilica itself is fairly straightforward: a large porticoed atrium in the east opened onto the narthex of the church. Inside the five aisles were similar in size with the exception of the nave that was about one third larger than the others. The aisles were separated by rows of columns, while the bema was separated from

⁴³Both the crypt and the burials seem to go out of use in the 420's and the only mosaic from the crypt to have been dated has a *terminus ante quem* of 427, date of the *Codex Theodosianus*. See Weber and Hubner (1998) 445-446.

the rest of the church by a chancel screen. The single apse was at the end of the nave and, due to damage, it is not clear whether it had a synthronon like the other two churches in the city. As the city expanded westwards the basilica came to be a full part of the urban area over the course of the 5th century AD. It remained part of the city for an extended period of time and, when the city contracted back on to its core in between the end of the 6th and the beginning of the 7th century the area around the basilica survived as a semi-independent settlement probably fed by the need to supply the pilgrims and the trade that they brought.

5.3.3 The baths at Hammat Gader

Initially built in the 2nd century AD, probably under Antoninus Pius, the baths at Hammat Gader (known at the time as Εμμάδα or *Emmata* and during Late Antiquity as the Baths of Elijah) are located in a bend of the Yarmuk river. The area is rich in natural springs and water and the baths are ideally located to exploit the surrounding geography. The complex was quite extensive and included, as well as the baths, a theatre and, later, a church and a synagogue, as well as an extensive residential area presumably supplying the manpower and services required for such an extensive complex.⁴⁴

⁴⁴See Hirschfeld (1997) 1-14 for a more detailed description of the site.

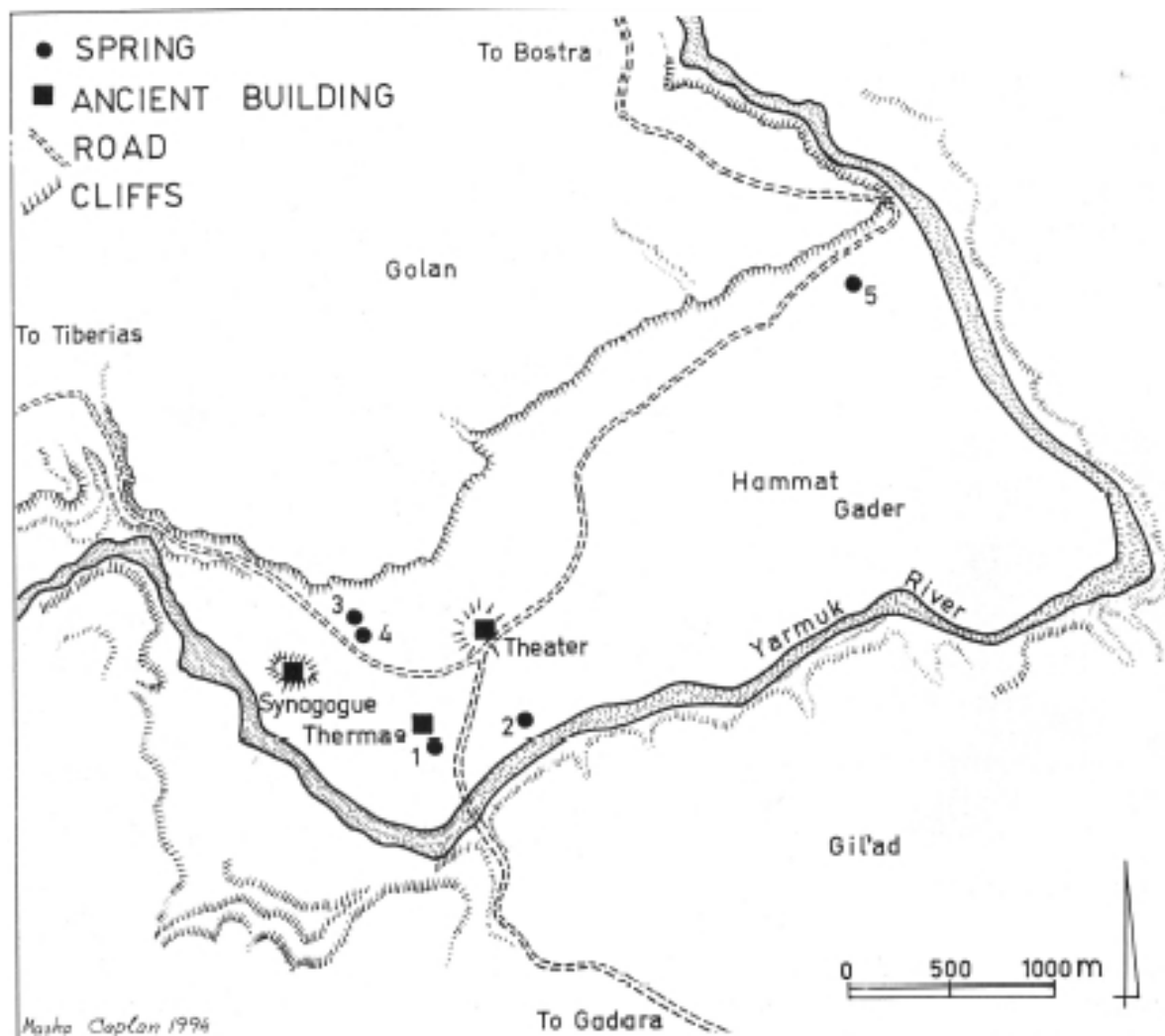


Figure 5.23: The Baths at Hammat Gader and the surrounding features. Numbers 1-5 indicate springs in the surroundings. (Hirshfeld 1997 fig 3 p3)

The baths developed beyond being a local amenity into a much more significant centre over time and it became well known throughout the region, being reported by the *Tabula Peutingeriana* and numerous pilgrims including Antoninus of Piacenza and even being visited by the Empress Eudokia.⁴⁵ Though initially constructed as a typical 2nd-century bath Hammat Gader saw at least two later phases each with the relevant transformations. The first change occurred in the late 3rd century when, in line with well known changes in bathing practices that are amply visible throughout the region and beyond, the preference for individual bathing resulted in a number

⁴⁵ Antoninus of Piacenza *Itinerarium* 7, while the visit of the Empress Eudokia is witnessed by a long inscription related below p 298

of tubs being constructed either in the paving around the main pools or the pools themselves were filled in and used for these new purposes with the result that only two halls (A and G in figure 5.25 p 297) retained their previous layout

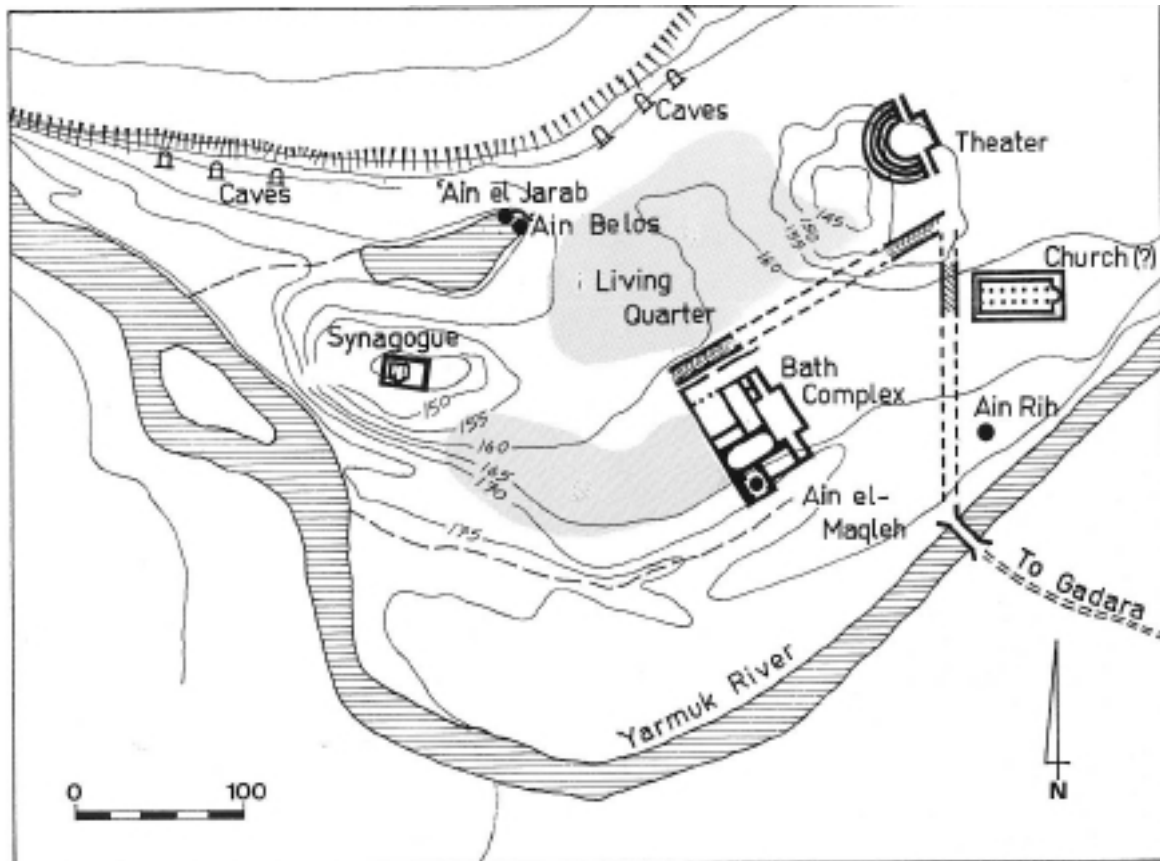


Figure 5.24: The baths at Hammat Gader and the surrounding building

Later still, and of more interest to the discussion at hand, a second major phase of alterations was undertaken in the late 4th early 5th century. This alteration involved the complete filling-in of the pools and baths in three rooms (B, C, and E) and the filling in of just the side pools in a further hall (D), and the re-paving of the entirety of the baths. These alterations seem no to respond to the needs of a change in bathing practice but rather to the rise of *Εμμάδα* as a significant site for an incubation cult.

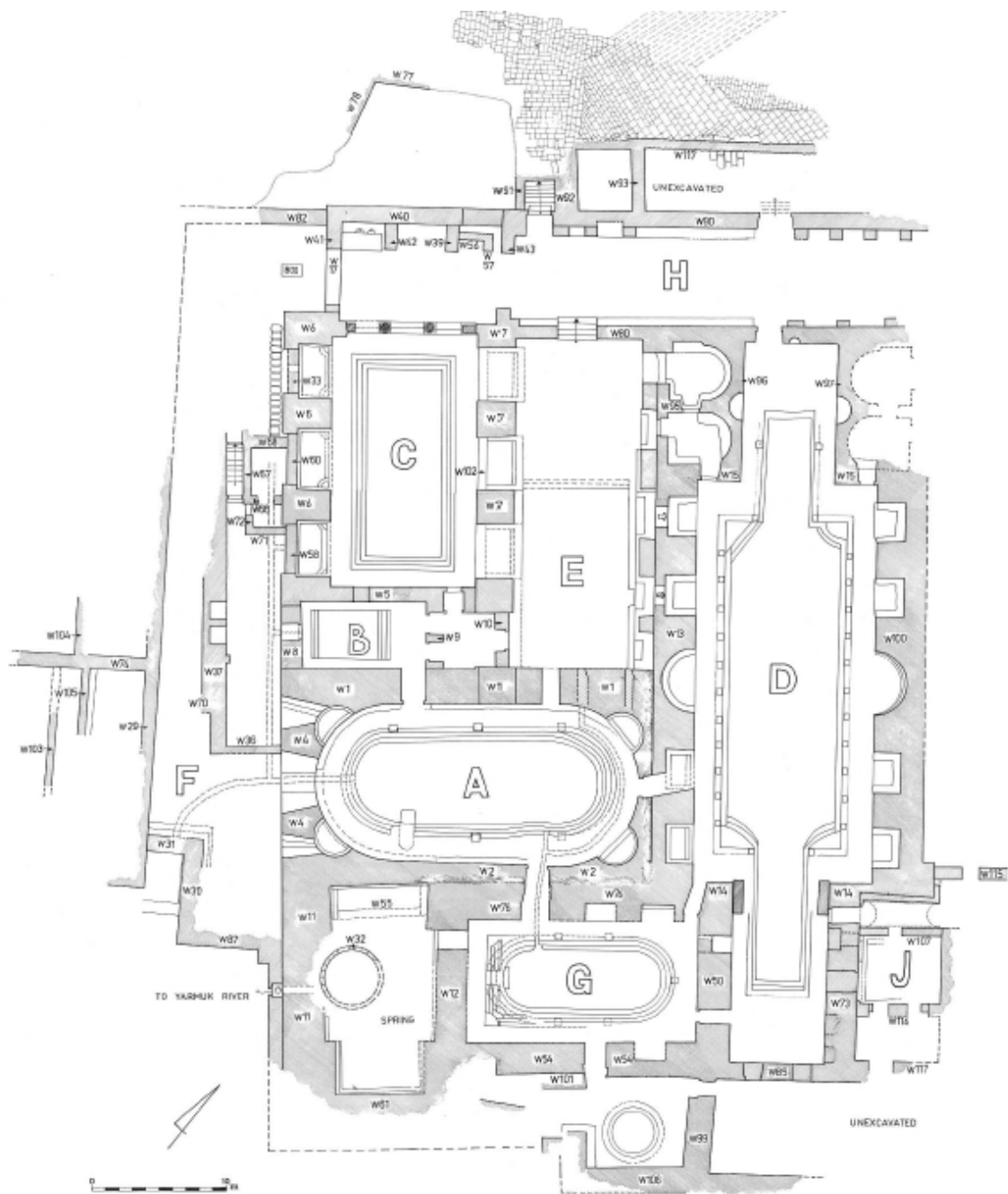


Figure 5.25: The Baths at Hammat Gader. A. The s.c Oval Hall. B. Passage rooms. C.s.c Hall of Piers. D. s.c Hall of Fountains. E. s.c Hall of Inscriptions. F. Service area. G. hot spring complex. H. Entrance corridor. J. The eastward extension

A consequence of the new use of the baths and of the re-paving was the addition of a large number of inscriptions to the paving, in particular in halls C and E. These appear to all be intentionally inscribed into the flooring and produced *in situ*,

with no evidence of them being *spolia*, even though some of the slabs were certainly re-used. The first of these inscriptions (number 1 in the Catalogue) recalls the re-laying of the paving of the baths by one Nikas (the name is only partially preserved in the inscription due to damage to the slab) probably in the 450's-470's following a major earthquake.⁴⁶ This text can be seen as the first in a series of six in total, that report the successive interventions of governors of Caesarea that starts with Nikas (who most likely was a governor given his investment and given that all the others euergets of the baths were governors) and terminates with an inscription by an Arab governor of the *Jund* of al-Urdunn (the Arab province that replaced *Palaestina Secunda*) at the time of the Caliph Mu'awiya, Abdallah abu-Hashim who, through the intermediation of a local magistrate John the Gadarene (though abbreviated his title is reconstructed as that of *μειζότερος*), paid for the maintenance and clearing of the hot water system (*clibanus* or *κλιβανος*) of the baths. The presence of crosses on the inscription, the intervention of a local magistrate, and the explicit language (the text refer to the baths as a place for the healing of the sick *εἰς ἰασην τῶν νοσοῦντων*) suggest that the site maintained its role as both a Christian sanctuary and a healing centre. The other inscriptions recovered on the site refer directly to the incubation cult and tend to follow a very formulaic pattern, consisting of the thanks of the pilgrims and their families and little more except the occasional prayer. The exception to this is a long 17 line inscription over two columns that contains a poem by the empress Eudocia celebrating the baths and her visit to them (probably to cure her of an ailment during her Hierosolymitan exile). Beyond the importance of the event it celebrates and the undoubted quality of the text, it is important as it gives us one of the few explicit indication to the nature of the cult in Hammat Gader. In the text Eudocia refers to the presence of a cult connected to the prophet Elijah (Ἡλίας ἄγνός), and to the healing benefits of the springs.

⁴⁶The inscriptions from the baths at Hammat Gader are collated by Leah Di Segni in an exhaustive catalogue, and all references here are drawn from there. See Di Segni (1997) 185-266

5.3.4 Conclusions

The churches of Gadara served two very different purposes and the spaces they occupied and the forms they took were dictated by these: the twin churches in the civic centre were deeply integrated into the urban context and likely served a local congregation as well as probably being the episcopal see. Their position within the city would also have been complemented by their integration into the monumental and aesthetic context of the surrounding buildings. It is unclear what the relationship between the two conjoined churches was, though it is clear that the octagonal church had been constructed earlier.⁴⁷ This suggests two possible interpretations: either they co-existed and the basilica became a sister church to the octagonal church, as in the case of the three sister churches in Jerash, or the basilica replaced the earlier church perhaps following an earthquake.⁴⁸

⁴⁷Wagner-Lux and Vriezen (1980) 157-158 and Wagner-Lux et al. (1993) 388-389.

⁴⁸Wagner-Lux et al. (1993) 389 footnote 14.

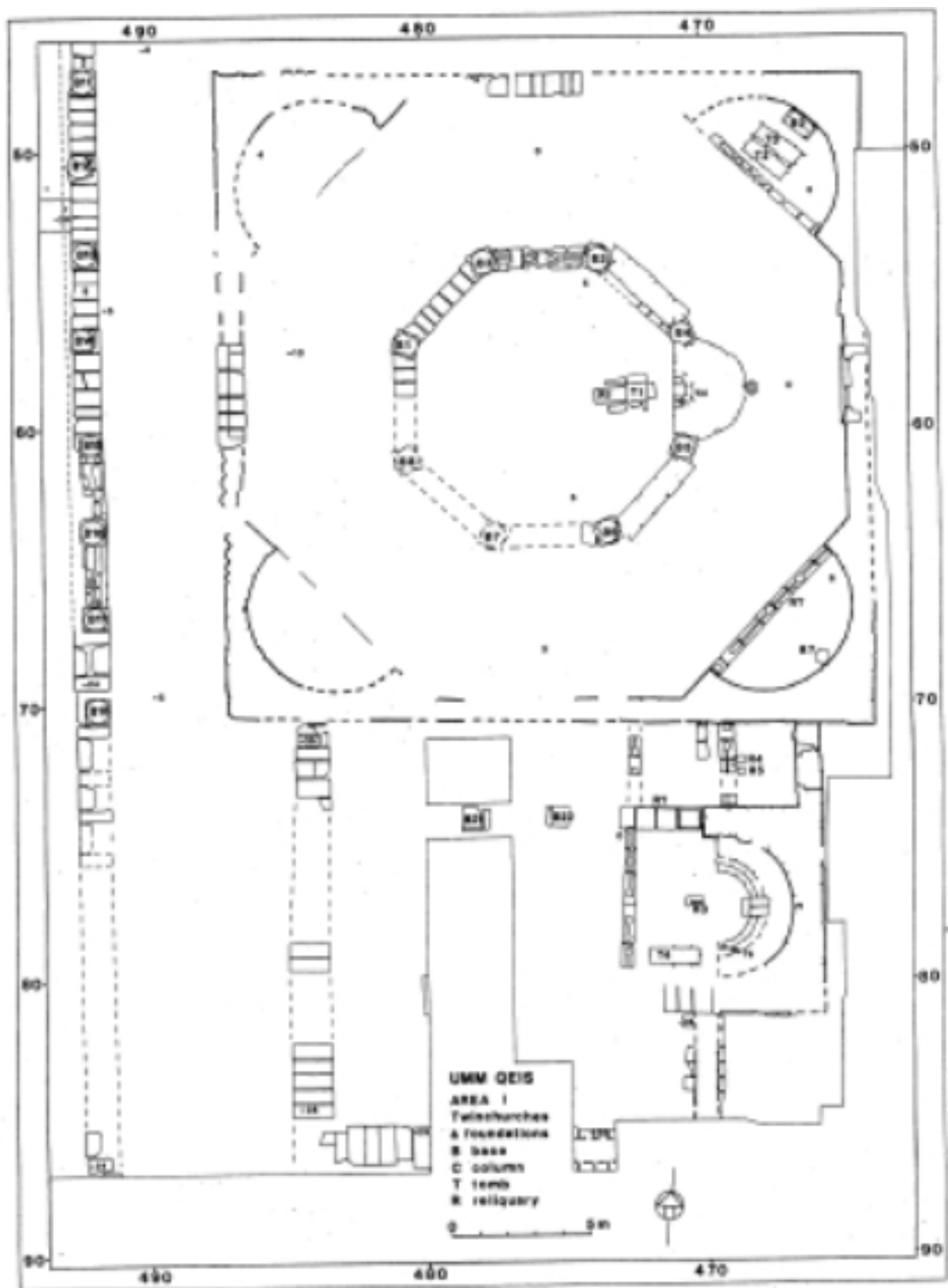


Figure 5.26: The conjoined churches in the Civic complex (Vriezen et al. 2001 fig 1)

Though it is not possible to determine which of the two is true, there are arguments on both sides: the presence of the cathedra points to the church being im-

portant enough to host the bishop, and the possible presence of a reliquary further enhances the likely prestige of the building. This would point to the church having at least equalled if not replaced the status of its neighbour. On the other hand, the fact that the church suffered extensive damage and that it was constructed with a wall in common with its neighbour points in the direction of it having been built at a time when the building was strong enough to sustain the basilican church. If the octagonal church had been damaged beyond repair, it would seem unlikely that one of its walls would have been strong enough to maintain the weight of a new church. It is also intriguing to note how the octagonal church strongly resembles the Church of St. George in neighbouring Gerasa that was built with two *parekklesia* alongside it; there is no indication that this is the case at Gadara but it is certainly thought provoking and it is not impossible that, when faced with the need or will to expand their existing church the inhabitants of Gadara may have taken that building as a model.

As well as the discussion of the date, the Five-Aisled Basilica, also played a straightforward role within the city and the landscape. Probably dedicated to the cult of a martyr, it was an exceptional building in size and scope. Because of its connection to the cemetery it occupied a peripheral position at the edge of the city as it incorporated the tomb of the martyr within the fulcrum of its cultic structure. In this, rather than to the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem or the Nativity in Bethlehem to which it has been compared, it can be more closely approximated to St Peter's in the Vatican in Rome being initially at the very margin of the city, and then being first incorporated into it, and then becoming a focus of its own supporting the surrounding area independently of the fortunes of the rest of Rome.⁴⁹ This attraction was so strong that by the late Umayyad and early Abbasid period the majority of the inhabitants of Gadara were no longer in the old Hellenistic centre or in the late antique one, but rather clustered around the basilica.

⁴⁹Of course the fortunes of St Peter's were different, given the amount of imperial intervention, and there is no intent to compare the Bishop of Gadara with that of Rome, rather it should be seen as a model for the importance of a large martyrial church.

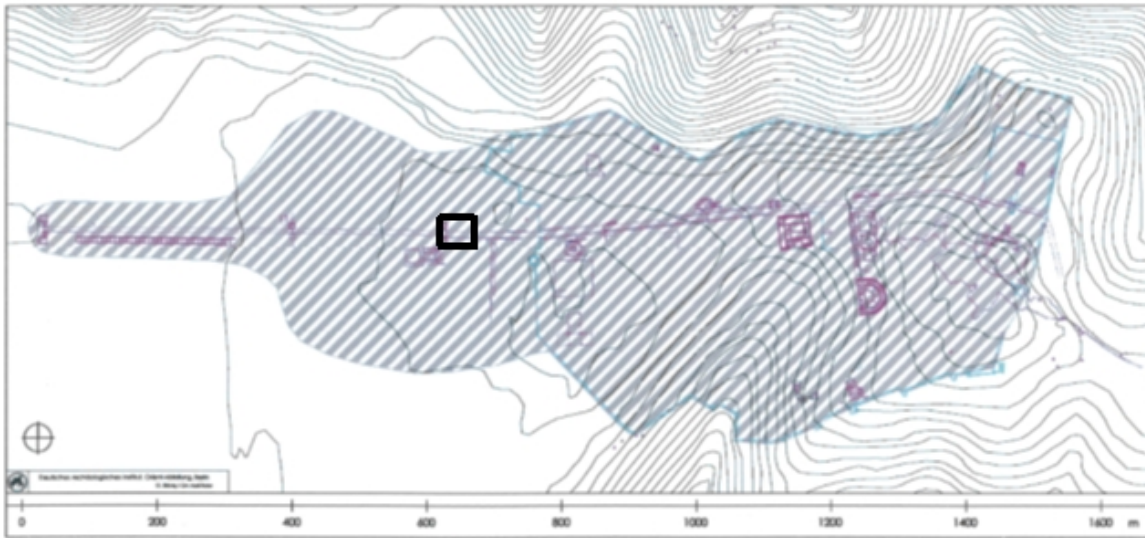


Figure 5.27: full extent of Gadara in the 3rd century, the square roughly outlines the cemeterial area (Buhrig 2008 fig 9)

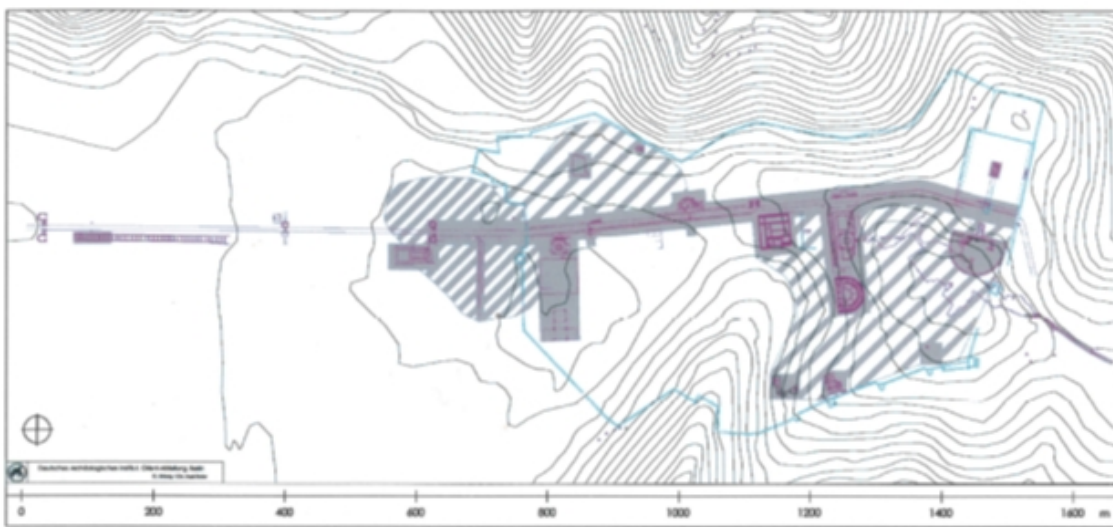


Figure 5.28: Gadara in the 6th and 7th centuries (Buhrig 2008 fig 10)

Thus, in conclusion, the case of Gadara is truly unique within the region. Pulled westwards by the strength of its longitudinal axis and by the effective abandonment of its main religious complex, in the east of the city, the city developed along a very specific pattern. The presence of the powerful incubation cult nearby at Hammat Gader would also have played a role. Not only was it a centre of pilgrimage in its own right, but it would likely have combined with the Five-Aisled Basilica to

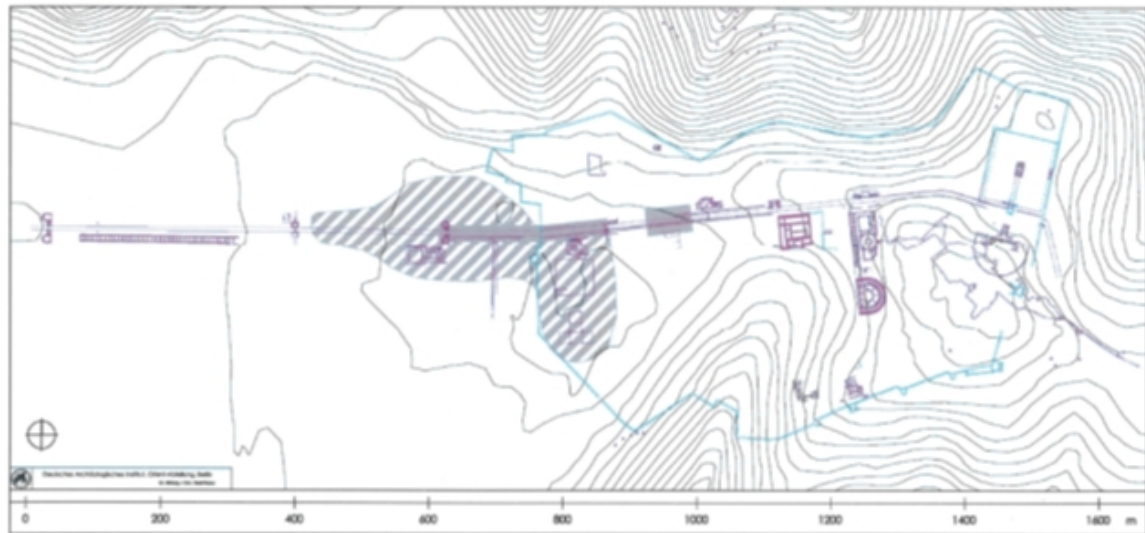


Figure 5.29: Abbasid Gadara (Buhrig 2008 fig 12)

magnify the effect of both as pulls for pilgrimage. The westwards pull was amplified by the presence of the Five-Aisled Basilica whose role in attracting and housing pilgrims would have given rise to a need for both structures and services to provide for them.

The civic centre churches were built as part of the reconstruction of much of the city following earthquakes and were thus closely connected with the rest of the city. Rather than disrupting the surrounding environment, the particular context of their construction allowed them to be organically inserted into them, using their structures, and even mimicking them. Effectively there was no need for those buildings to stand out and it appears that the main concern was the reconstruction of the city rather than making a strong statement of presence on behalf of these buildings. This would have been amplified, as in the case of Bostra, by the presence of the five aisled basilica that, like the central plan churches of that city, would have supplied a more than ample remark on the importance of both Christianity and, in this case at least, of its sainted martyrs.

5.4 Pella

5.4.1 Introduction

Located on the east bank of the Jordan, the city of Pella has been inhabited since the Bronze Age. Blessed with excellent availability of water and a commanding position over the river valley, the city stood on a 400 m ovoid hill that is partially natural and partially the result of the successive layers created by human occupation.

Though it does not appear in the Bible, the city is amply present in Egyptian sources as an ally. Re-founded as Pella by Alexander the Great in memory of the Macedonian city of the same name it shared the conflicted history of the region, and, according to Josephus it was destroyed by Alexander Jannaeus in the mid-1st century BC.⁵⁰ After Pompey's annexation of the region it was incorporated into the Decapolis League along with the other major cities of the Jordan valley and south Syria.

Christianity came early to Pella, probably in the early 1st century AD, when refugees from the besieged city of Jerusalem are said to have fled to the city seeking refuge and hoping to be able to distance themselves from the First Jewish Revolt and the inevitable Roman retribution that would follow.⁵¹ Though it is likely that the majority of these Christians did not stay behind, some must have and probably formed the nucleus of the community in the city, though the sources do not give us specific indications on this.

Rich and prosperous, the city was famed for its baths and monuments. However the partial excavation of the site, where very few remains are visible from the surface apart from those of the civic complex, means that we still only have a patchy understanding of the full development of the city throughout Late Antiquity. The final years of existence of the city were racked with conflict and catastrophe: taken by the Arabs following the battle of Pella in 635 AD, the city had already seen a number

⁵⁰Josephus *Antiquities* XII, 397 in Thackeray et al. (1965).

⁵¹Eusebius *Historia Ecclesiastica* IV, 6, 3 in Cameron and Hall (1999b) and Epiphanius of Salamis *Panarion Haereticon* 29,7 in Williams (1994).

of earthquakes over the previous century that had seriously damaged it, leaving it vulnerable to even further damage in future years. It is not surprising that it was an earthquake that finally destroyed the city that was already semi-abandoned, in 747 AD, after which it was abandoned definitively.

Though, as I have mentioned, the excavation of the city is patchy, three churches have been excavated over the last half century: the Civic Complex Church, the East Church, and the West Church. These three buildings served very different purposes, though their form is very similar. The East Church was probably part of a monastic complex as well as serving as the repository for relics, possibly even those of one of the early Christians that journeyed to the city in 70 AD. The West Church is almost certainly a cemeterial church, located as it is at the edge of a large cemetery that was extensively in use through the period. Both these churches are unfortunately isolated from the surrounding context, as the excavations have yet to fully explore their areas of the city. However the same cannot be said for the Civic Complex Church: here the context is well known and thus it is possible to discuss the issue in depth, over the whole of the life of the building, from its foundation to its eventual destruction in the 747 AD earthquake. In this case the church went through two precise and different stages in its interaction with the *agora* and *odeon*. Initially separate from the forum, located above it and with the atrium wall to keep the spaces divided, in its later phase, that follows the abandonment and spoliation of the *odeon*, it became an integral part of the square, with a monumental door and staircase built for it as part of a general restoration of the *agora*.

5.4.2 The Churches

The Civic Complex Church

Located next to the Odeon in the centre of Pella, the Civic Complex Church is likely to have been the Cathedral Church of Pella. Constructed entirely out of spolia, the Cathedral underwent three different phases of use that spanned from the early 5th

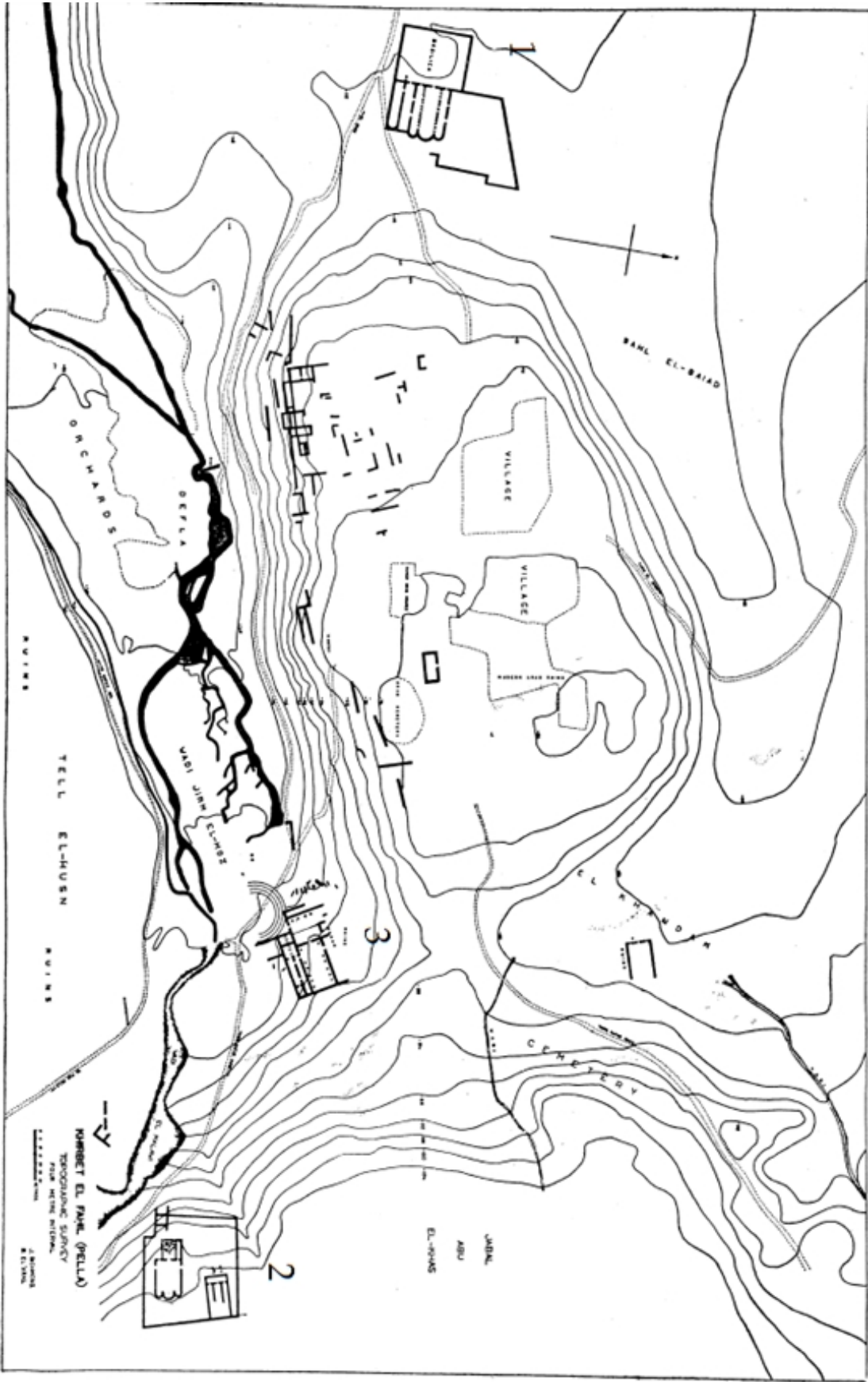


Figure 5.30: Plan of the excavations in Pella (R. H. Smith et al. 1982). 1. West Church. 2. East Church. 3. Civic Complex.

to the 8th century. Though it was constructed out of re-used materials it was none the less well built and designed, at least in its first two phases, and was highly decorated. Unquestionably both the church and the atrium in front are certainly *ex novo* constructions as there is no indication of previous buildings on the site.

Throughout the three phases, the complex was a three aisled-basilica with an atrium on its western side. Beyond the atrium, to the west, there was a large retaining wall that dropped down to the level of the forum several metres below, thus precluding any access from the west. The atrium itself was most certainly constructed at the same time as the first phase of the church and remained in use, with modifications, until the complex was abandoned. Accessed from the north, the atrium had a four-sided portico, with the eastern *stoa* being significantly larger and more decorated, perhaps serving as a proto-narthex. Later on, in the third phase a large monumental staircase was added to the west end of the atrium and a new entrance was opened here, changing the axis and frontage of the complex entirely.

The Church was constructed in the open space between the so called "Ionic Building" to the north and the Odeon to the south; it was forced to adapt itself to the available space and thus had to be oriented north-east/south-west rather than the more usual east-west alignment. Another significant adaptation to the circumstances is that rather than entering the atrium from the west, its entrance was on the north side through the Ionic Building that was almost certainly incorporated into the newly constructed church. Thus to get to the church, one had to enter through another building, pass the atrium and, having made a sharp left turn, reach the church passing through the monumental east portico.

Pre Christian Phase Soundings under the Church floor in both the atrium and the interior have established the nature of the pre Christian structures on the site of the church. Immediately below the structure there is a layer of fill material containing late Roman pottery and refuse and below that there are the remains of the Roman *parvis* that occupied the area between the Odeon and the civic complex. It would

appear that when the decision was taken to construct the Cathedral the spot was chosen as the only viable option in the central part of the city, the only alternative being the forum. What is clear is that there were no pre-existing buildings on the site.

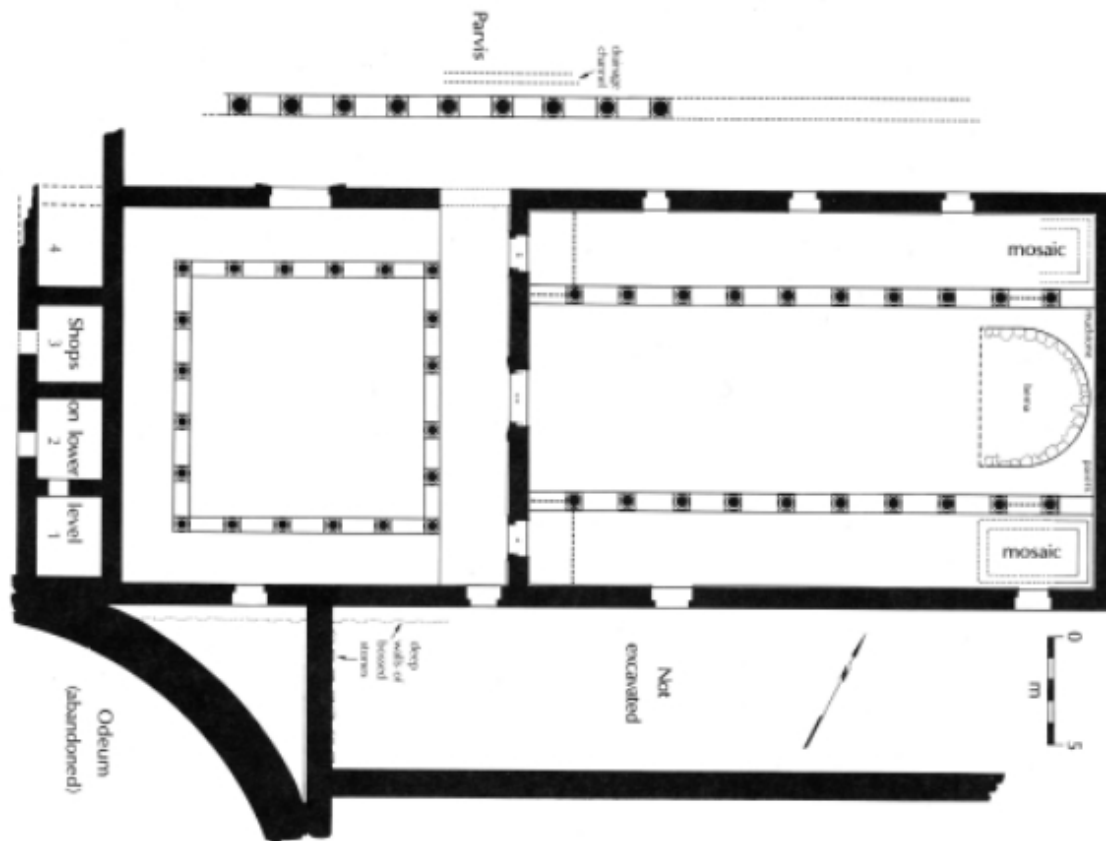


Figure 5.31: Phase A (R. H. Smith and Day 1989)

Phase A The first phase of the church consists of a relatively simple structure. The church was a three-aisled basilica with one inscribed apse. It was likely to have been built not long after the year 400, as shown by the presence of early-fifth-century coins and fourth-century pottery in the foundation fill. As this fill extends under the whole church and follows down into the foundation trenches, it may well have been backfill from the preparation of the site for the construction of the church.

Interestingly enough, though it is a three-aisled church it only has one apse at

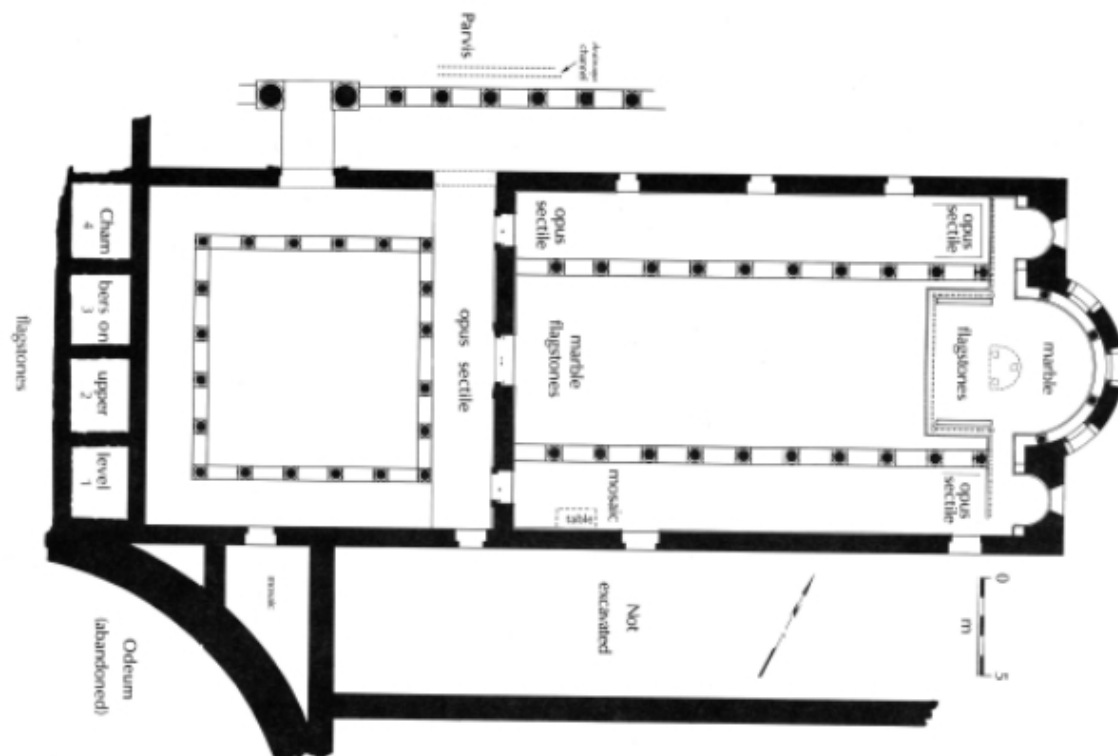


Figure 5.32: Phase B (R. H. Smith and Day 1989)

the end of the nave, while it is missing one at the end of either of the side aisles. The area at the end of the aisles is marked out by a different mosaic carpet, perhaps indicating that it was separated from the rest of the church by some kind of screen or partition in perishable material that has disappeared with no trace. In the case of the southern aisle this hypothesis is further reinforced by the fact that one of the side openings of the church opens directly onto this segregated area.

Phase B The second phase in the use of the Church was of the early 6th century. It involved a large-scale re-construction of the east portion of the building that was completely re-built. The result of the alterations was that apses were constructed at the ends of all three aisles, inscribed in the case of the lateral aisles and projecting in the case of the nave; the chancel platform was extended, and windows were

constructed into the east wall. The wall itself is significantly thicker than the other, older walls, of the building and was built with inferior quality materials and building technique. It is not clear what drove the choice of the thickness of the wall, the builders may have felt that the insertion of apses and windows required a more robust structure or that they felt that an allowance had to be made for the slope of the hill behind the church and provided for it.⁵²

The interior of the building was completely re-paved and the previous mosaic floor was completely removed leaving only the foundation layer behind. The only exception to this removal is the area under the extended chancel platform that was built directly over the mosaic. In place of the mosaic the chancel platform was paved with flagstones, the central nave with *opus sectile* and the side aisles with a geometric mosaic. The *bema* was enlarged to enclose the sanctuaries of the two side apses, that were raised to the level of the chancel, and was enclosed by a chancel screen that re-used parts of the earlier one. The flooring of the church was completely re-done: gone were the mosaics of the previous phase, the chancel was paved with limestone flags, the nave was paved with *opus sectile*, and the side aisles were paved with geometric pattern mosaics.

⁵²I feel that the latter is more likely as apses had been part of Roman civic architecture for centuries. Even though the quality of the wall is inferior to the previous phase this is hardly enough to justify this choice.

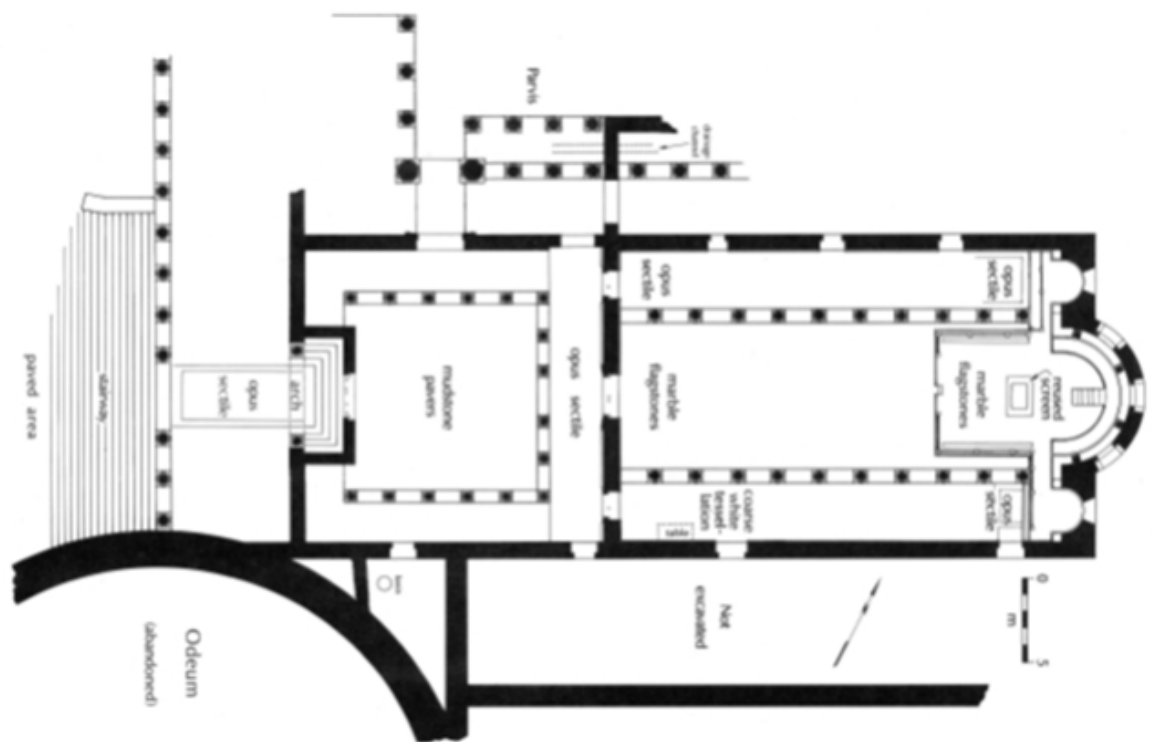


Figure 5.33: Phase C (R. H. Smith and Day 1989)

Phase C The third and final phase of use of the Church dates to the early 7th century. Like the previous phase it involved modifications of both the interior and the exterior of the building. The quality of workmanship of the alterations is significantly inferior to the previous phases, and it shows especially in the apse though there were attempts to disguise this with a polychrome marble cladding.

On the inside of the Church, the south aisle was re-paved with a mosaic of plain white *tesserae*, whose base was laid directly over the previous floor, that showed clear signs of wear and even buckling. At the east end of the building the chancel platform was extended westwards by 7m, re-paved and saw the addition of a *synthronon*. This latter structure is impressive and seems too high to allow seating directly on the steps and either required some form of seating, presumably in a perishable material, that has not survived, or it may have served solely as a frame for the bishop's throne that was set at the centre of the apse and could be reached via

steps in front of it.

Outside the church, the most significant alteration of this phase took place in the atrium. Previously access had been gained through the Ionic Building to the north of the atrium. Now, a monumental staircase was built in front of the west face of the atrium, a new, larger entranceway into the courtyard was built changing the axis of the complex completely. This seems to have been the result of a re-development of the forum area, where the level of the entire complex was raised by about a 7 m, and the whole square re-paved at the higher level.⁵³

Such large-scale alterations imply a continued use of both the church and the wider civic complex, though the *Odeon* had by this point been robbed to such an extent that it could not still have been in use. Certainly, the construction of the new staircase and the consequent re-alignment of the entrance axis of the church points to a significant re-alignment of the complex (depriving it perhaps of the separation from the rest of the civic complex), and it meant that the church now played a larger role within the monumental and symbolic framework of the centre of the city of Pella.

⁵³It is not sure what exactly caused the need to raise the whole area by such an amount, as there is no evidence of silting. However it has been suggested that the blocking of the drainage channels and the damming of the Wadi by farmers may have caused the water table to rise.

The West Church

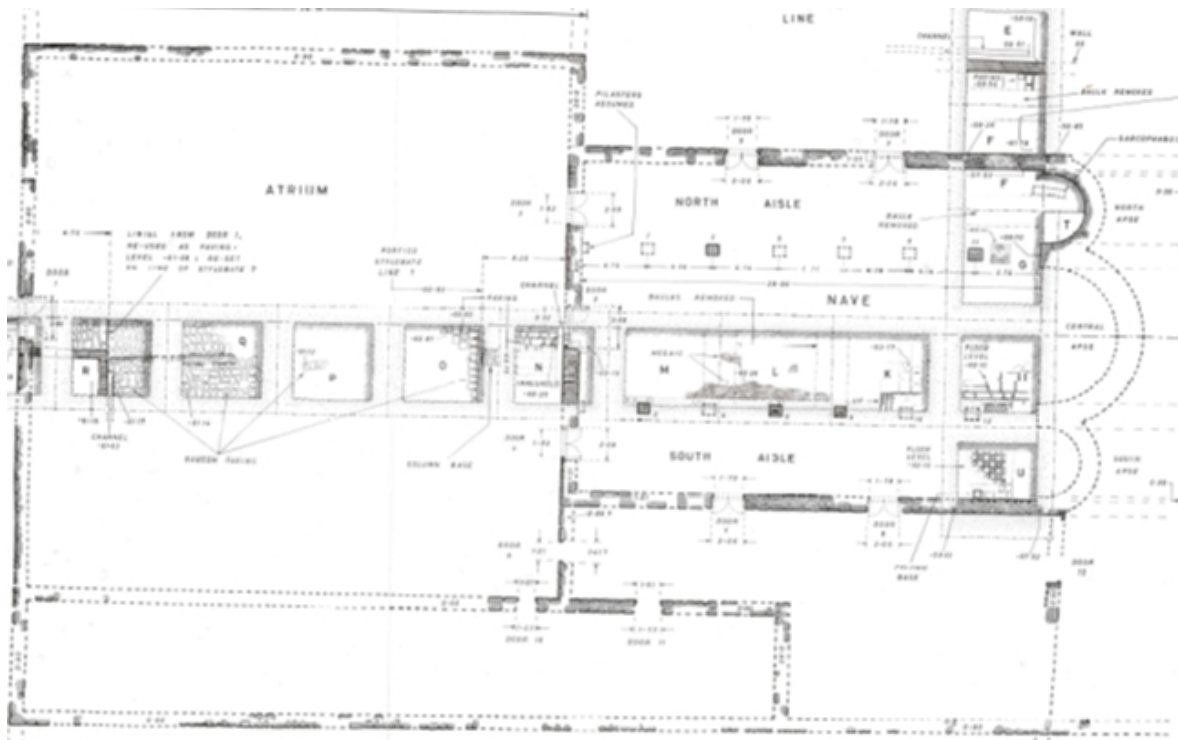


Figure 5.34: The West Church (R. H. Smith 1973a)

Like the other churches in Pella, the West Church is a three-aisled, three-apsed basilica with an atrium on its west side. Though it was constructed in a single phase the building suffered damage on at least three occasions and was repaired after the first two cases, though with decreasing levels of skills and quality in the workmanship. Such repairs did not however alter the general size and shape of the church but rather intervened to remedy damage where possible. The church was constructed on the site of a pre-existing cemetery that dated from the Bronze Age and had seen a large amount of activity during the Roman period. The church may have been built to replace an earlier, smaller church built over the site of a saint's burial.

Phase A The first phase saw the construction of the church. This likely took place in the late fifth or early sixth century; though the exact date is not clear, it can be suggested convincingly given the stylistic analysis of the mosaic in the nave and the pottery found in the layers below the mortar. The walls of the church were

constructed over a foundation made up of two layers: the lower one of rubble and the higher one of rubble and mortar smoothed down so as to form the platform upon which to build the structure. The walls are consistent in their quality and thickness, and are constructed out of *spolia*. The *spolia* had not been re-dressed and the size and shape of the blocks is inconsistent: it was necessary to use fillers to make up for this. The only inconsistency is the west wall that is made up of slightly larger blocks and is thus slightly thicker than the others. The cause of this choice is unclear as there seems to be no direct reason. It may have just been down to the availability of larger material or to the presence of two different groups of artisans.

The north apse contained what is perhaps the most significant discovery in the church: a large sarcophagus was found buried underneath its floor. The sarcophagus most certainly pre-dates the construction of the church itself, but its deposition and the care that was taken in integrating it into the context of the church points to its continued use within the church's history, confirmed by the fact that the sarcophagus was used for a secondary burial in the mid-7th century after the first set of repairs. The sarcophagus was interred in a tufa and mortar cist that may have been its original place of deposition, as part of a mausoleum (like a number of other ones found in the surrounding cemetery), and this may have been the holy burial around which the earlier church was built. This seems unlikely to me as it would have been more appropriate to place such a significant relic in the centre of the apse under the main altar of the church (as in the case of the East Church). The excavator suggested that this may have been the burial site of one of the Jewish Christians that escaped Jerusalem just before the Jewish revolt of 66 AD. While this is an intriguing hypothesis, evidence is insufficient to prove it, and, given the fact that the sarcophagus was used for a secondary burial later on, it is unlikely it will ever be known. What is certain is that: given the prominence of its placement and the great care taken in burying and sealing it, the sarcophagus must have housed a person of great importance to the congregation.

Phase B Following a traumatic event that involved much damage to the interior of the church, the building was renovated at the beginning of the 7th century. In essence, the renovation involved the patching up of the damage. The dado of the sanctuary, which was damaged beyond repair, was removed and replaced with plaster. Further alterations meant that the west door of the atrium was blocked up as was the door between the north apse and the dependences to the north of the Church, the floor of the north apse was raised by about 40 cm and the flagstone floor was repaired using fragments of the discarded marble cladding of the dado.

Phase C Following a catastrophic earthquake at the beginning of the eighth century the flimsy repairs to the church collapsed and the building entered a continued phase of abandonment, save for its use on occasion for squatting or the housing of domestic animals. In effect it had ceased to be used as place of worship and was now consigned to being a mere quarry for building materials.

The East Church

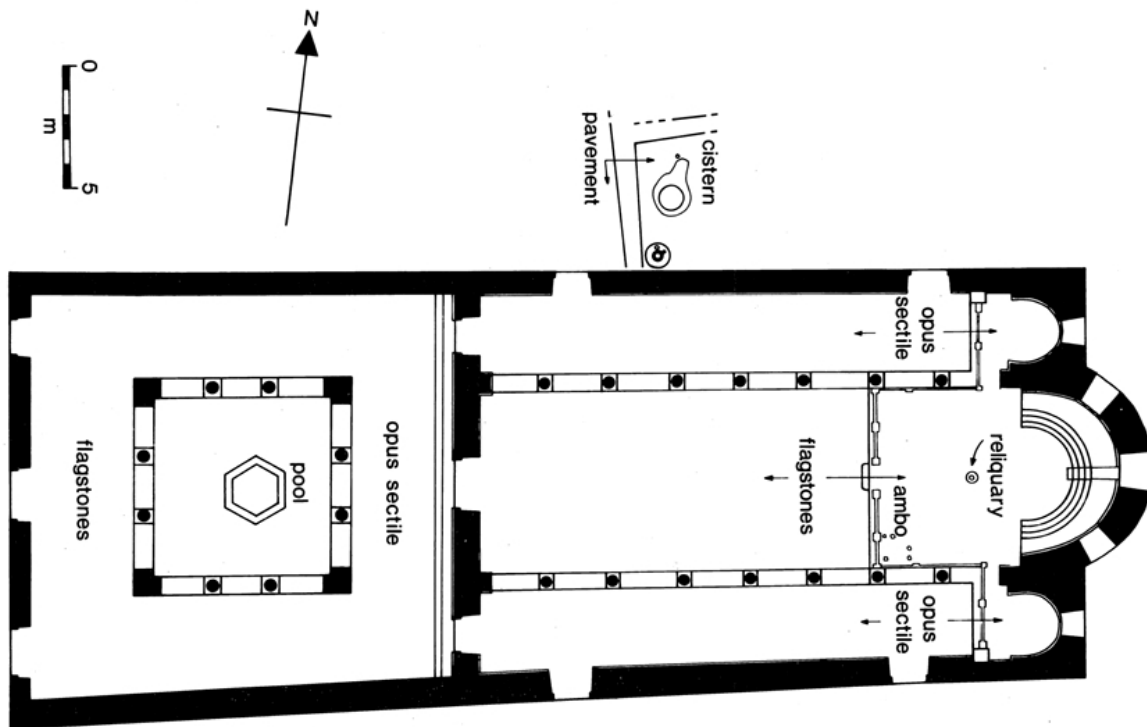


Figure 5.35: The East Church (R. H. Smith 1973b)

The East Church was a three-aisled three-apsed basilica, 29.23 m. long and 17.4 m. wide with a probably square (18x18m.) atrium on its west side. The church is quite well preserved, while the atrium is only partially extant as erosion has all but destroyed its western portion. Given the square shape of the other atria discovered in Pella, this one is likely to have also been square. The church appears to have been built in a single phase and to have seen relatively few alterations in the course of its existence (in this it is different from the other two churches in Pella that saw significant changes to their layout in the course of their lifetimes). The church appears to have been an entirely *ex novo* construction and there does not seem to have been a previous structure on site, though the area was levelled prior to the construction of the church, so in the east part of the building, all trace of previous construction would have been erased. As is the case with all the churches in Pella, the exact date

of the foundation and construction of the building is unclear: the only elements that allow any kind of suggestion of the date (save for the style of the decorations) are the coins found in a small hoard discovered in the foundation groove of the chancel screen. The coins, all bronze, are heavily damaged and appear to be minimis of uncertain date. Given that the general context of the church points to the late fifth or early sixth century, and that the reforms of Anastasius briefly took minimis out of circulation at the beginning of the sixth century, this discovery seems to confirm the general date for the site.⁵⁴

The physical nature of the church is relatively uncontroversial for Pella, and fits in with the general template for the construction of churches in the greater Palestine region: with an atrium, three aisles and three apses. Much like is the case with phase B of the Civic Complex Church (and I would suggest with the West Church, though the aisles remain at the best of my knowledge unexcavated), the two side apses are inscribed while the central apse is prominent. The western wall of the atrium and of the Church are pierced by three doorways each, the central one being the most prominent. Further doorways were also cut into the two side aisles, in the number of two each, though the easternmost one in the south aisle seems to have been blocked up, either during, or immediately after construction to serve as an additional window.

The walls of the church are of good quality *spolia* and were built by erecting two dry stone walls with a rubble and mortar core at their centre. While the masonry work is good, what is surprising is the quality of the foundations: in many parts of the building, in particular to the east where the builders levelled out the terrain and cut into the bedrock, rather than cut a foundation trench the bedrock is simply modelled to form a pedestal upon which the walls were built. This may have appeared to have the same effect as foundations, although it caused structural weakness and may well have contributed to the collapse.

⁵⁴The excavators suggest a date of 525 as a *terminus ante quem* given the context of the reforms of Anastasius, the argument though is vague and only sketched out in its general terms and I am thus unable to confirm or refute it without further looking into the reforms of Anastasius.

Most of the decorative material in the Church was robbed out in two different waves, one before and one after the collapse of the upper part of the building, and it is likely that it was the first phase of robbing that involved structural elements such as the pillars that supported the roof that caused the collapse. The floor tiles and other decorations seem to have been robbed out in the second phase as the only surviving examples that we have come from those areas of the building too deeply buried in rubble for it to be viable to remove them.⁵⁵ A similar fate has befallen the walls of the church that are poorly preserved in the west part of the building due to a combination of robbing and erosion, in the east part much more has survived due to the deposition of large amounts of eroded material from Jebel Abu el Khan that is located just to the east of the building.

Thus there is a quite clear record of the form of the eastern part of the church. The sanctuary was raised on an elevated *bema* about 40 cm high that was accessed via a large limestone step. It incorporated all three apses and was encompassed by a marble chancel screen a few remains of which have been recovered.⁵⁶ Inside the chancel area the remains of the *ambo* have also been discovered and consist principally of the post-holes for it, though a few fragments of decorated marble may also be part of it. At the very centre of the sanctuary a cylindrical *cippus*, containing a reliquary sealed inside it, was discovered under the tiling. It contained a small sarcophagus-shaped gypsum reliquary and indicates the position of the altar table that would have been placed directly above it. The reliquary itself almost certainly pre-dates the construction of the church and was most likely initially designed to be used in association with libations or oils, as it has a circular hole in its base to allow the escape of liquids as is commonly found in this kind of artefact. It shows significant signs of wear and would have certainly changed use completely after deposition as it was carefully sealed within the *cippus* and would no longer have been available, serving perhaps as a consecratory relic for the church. The main apse stood behind the reliquary. Its

⁵⁵Smith, Mcnicoll, and Hennesy (1982) 114 and Smith, Mcnicoll, and Hennesy (1992) 159-160.

⁵⁶Interestingly enough the only remains of the chancel screen that have been discovered inside the church are parts of the screens. The pillars that would have supported them, and whose post-holes have been identified, are entirely missing and were probably robbed out at an early stage.

most notable feature is the marble and mudstone-clad *sythronon*. Though the steps that composed it were too small to allow seating, as they measure less than 25 cm in height and depth, it served as a frame for the seat that was placed just above it at the centre of the apse.

The only part of the interior decoration of the church that has survived to any degree is the floor. Though this too was robbed significantly, the collapse preserved enough of it to allow a description. The atrium was paved almost entirely with mudstone flags, with the exception of the east portico that was paved with a trichrome reticular opus sectile, perhaps as an indication of its superior status as a proto-narthex. This decoration extended into the two side aisles and the two side apses. The nave and the central apse were paved with alternating pink limestone and white marble flags within a border of brown mudstone.

5.4.3 Conclusions

So far only three churches have been identified within the city of Pella. The earliest of the three is the Civic Complex Church constructed in the early fifth century. This was followed about a century later by the East and West Churches that appear to be of similar date. It must however be pointed out that in the case of the West Church, evidence would suggest that perhaps the site had previously been occupied by another, perhaps smaller, church or was at least a focus of veneration given its position within a cemetery and the incorporation of the large second century sarcophagus into its sanctuary. The reliquary that was discovered embedded in the bema of the Civic Complex Church also points to earlier Christian worship of some consistency in the city and may well come from another, so far undiscovered church.

It is interesting to note that the earliest church in the city, and possibly the cathedral, was built in the very heart of urban life, lodged between the Civic Complex, the *Odeon* and the Forum. This very pre-eminent position certainly underlines the importance that the church must have had for the community. At the same time as the church was growing (being rebuilt quite substantially in phase B), conversely

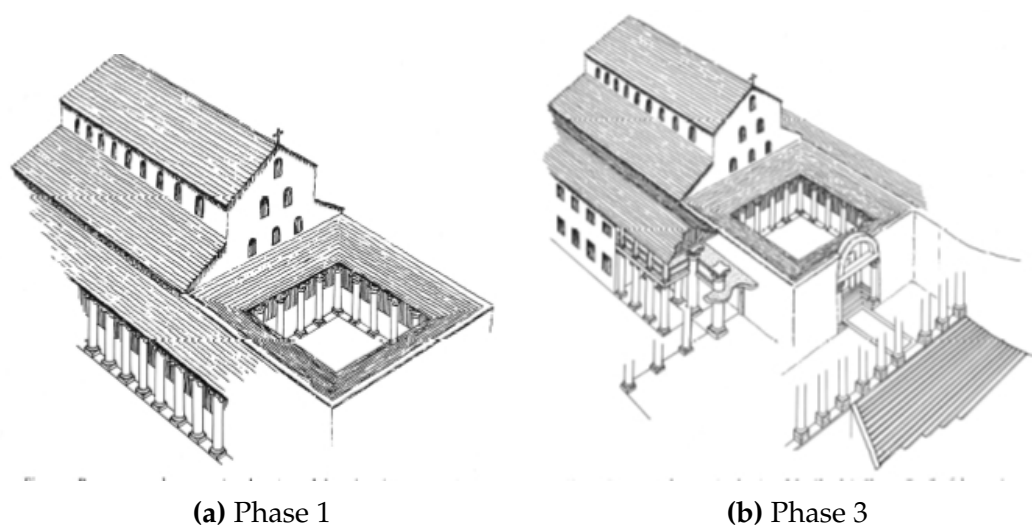


Figure 5.36: Reconstructions of phases 1 and 3 of the civic complex church (R. H. Smith 1973a)

the non-Christian structures alongside which it was built were decaying: the Ionic Building to the north of the church had almost certainly been part of the ecclesiastical complex since the beginning, and served as entrance to the atrium and possibly *episkopion* (though there is no firm evidence of this).

To the south of the church, the *Odeon* was probably still in use at the time of the building's consecration, though by the 6th century it had gone out of use and was consigned to being used as a quarry. The Civic Complex Church, was thus transformed from being one of a part of the cityscape of central Pella to being the main element, and the main indicator of this is the construction of the monumental staircase that allowed direct access to the atrium of the church from the forum. Thus one might almost say that the building was transformed from being one of the elements that framed the forum (almost in the same guise that temples of the civic *tyche* did in some classical fora), to being the centrepiece of the monumental context of the city.

The East and West Churches present a different situation. They were built later, in the sixth century, and occupy less notable positions within the city. Both of them also suffered extensive damage in the late seventh century and were comprehensively robbed of all decorative material. These two churches have a very different

history: though they were built with a high level of decoration and were the result of large investments by the community, within a short period of time they seem to have fallen into some form of decay and, as a result, the damage they suffered through earthquake or invasion (both events that occurred quite regularly in the late sixth and seventh centuries) was not carefully repaired and the buildings were simply patched up to extend their lifetimes, until they ended up being abandoned and thoroughly robbed out. One might suggest that the combined effect of natural disaster, the Persian, and finally the Arab invasion meant that the community was no longer able to sustain the monumental infrastructure that it previously had, and was forced to make do, even the Civic Complex Church saw declining standards of construction, until finally the buildings were abandoned at the beginning of the eighth century.

5.5 Conclusions

In conclusion it is clear from the evidence presented in this chapter that there were circumstances in which rather than seek a direct confrontation with the monuments of the existing religions, Christians sought a different approach. In the cities that I have examined in this chapter there often was a limited scope for competition with Hellenic monuments. It would also appear there was no desire to compete aggressively with secular buildings, even civic ones. This is not entirely surprising as the same people who were funding the construction of these buildings were also running civic councils.

Bostra has many excavated churches, with at least six having been identified. Of the three basilicas each is unique in their own way, yet they all share common traits. All of them occupy spaces within the centre of the city, close to major civic structures and all of them seek to blend in with their surrounding environment. The Bahria Basilica, was in fact a converted earlier civic basilica. Apart from the necessary alterations, very little else was done to the building, that already had the appro-

priate shape and orientation to serve the intended purpose. On the other hand, the Bath Complex Church was the product of significant alterations to the surrounding buildings. An earlier temple, that likely had already been abandoned and possibly converted into a civic building in the previous decades, was demolished to the podium, its platform extended eastwards over the northern part of the neighbouring gymnasium by the construction of a series of cellular rooms, and a church built on the new structure. Despite the disruptive nature of these actions their execution was calculated to blend the building as well as possible into the surrounding landscape: the church was accessed from the same staircase that had been built for the temple, even though it meant changing the normal entrance axis of the church. By doing this the builders preserved the integrity of the neighbouring baths, and maintained the axial relationship with the street around it and the monuments across the road from the church. Though the building was expanded over the northern part of the Gymnasium, the rest of the room seems to have remained in use and the one of the cells under the church was kept as an entrance for it. The two central-plan churches tell a completely different story. Located in the east of the city in an area of large palatial villas, and probably beyond the edge of the original *pomerium*, as indicated by the presence of the Nabatean gate and the change in the alignment of the road grid, they were both built with a statement of size and intent in mind. Both of them are large central-plan buildings free-standing and unchallenged, relating in a much less discreet manner to their surroundings, that they essentially dominate.

In Gadara form truly follows function. If the position and form of the Five-Aisled Basilica is entirely due to the presence of the cemetery (that had been there for centuries), its size was almost certainly dictated by the need to accommodate large number of pilgrims on a regular basis.⁵⁷ The other churches in the city were to be found in the area around the civic complex. Here over two distinct phases two churches were built: one an octagonal central-plan church and the other a three-

⁵⁷One might even suggest that the cult involved some kind of incubation, as it seems unlikely that the number of pilgrims that the city of Gadara attracted warranted a church similar in size to the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem for many other reasons.

aisled basilica. Both the buildings were built during a period of renovation for the city and both are carefully integrated into the surrounding context, progressively taking over the space occupied by the Market Basilica. It is important to note that none of the churches in Gadara is related directly or indirectly to earlier religious buildings, nor could they, as they are all built after the core of the city had moved away from the original, Hellenistic centre of the city to the east. While the civic centre churches did not play a major role in the transformation of Gadara, the Five-Aisled Basilica did, but not in the Christianisation of the city. As time went by its presence exacerbated the tendency that the city already had had to grow westwards, and later became the core of Islamic Jadar in the centuries that followed.

In Pella the building that is most informative of the Christianisation of the city is the Civic Complex Church. While the East and West Churches were large, and no doubt important buildings within the city, they were specialised buildings that served specific tasks, one was a cemeterial church and the other a monastic church/*Martyrion*, and were thus constricted in their location near or beyond the edge of the city. The Civic Complex Church, on the other hand, was located in the heart of the city next to the abandoned *Odeon* and overlooking the *forum*. The evolution of the church is very well documented in the archaeological record and shows a progressive evolution, not so much in the form of the church itself, though it does change to some extent, but rather in its relationship with the surrounding buildings and spaces. The church was built around the year 400 in between the so called Ionic Building that by this point had lost its original function, whatever that was, and the *Odeon* that had either just been or was soon to be abandoned. Despite the western end of the church's atrium abutting the edge of the forum, the entrance to the church was not there. Rather it was through the Ionic building that was incorporated into the church complex (though the exterior appears to have been maintained unchanged) that one entered, passing through the atrium and accessing the core. It was only in the third phase of the church's development that the situation changed: a monumental staircase and doorway were built opening up the whole complex onto the

agora, changing the complexion of the city centre completely and allowing direct communication between the two spaces.

In conclusion, in the cities of Bostra, Gadara, and Pella the main priority, especially in the earlier period, was to integrate into the existing context, where there was interaction with civic buildings, but expressing more where this interaction was absent. Churches were built in different forms depending on their position, and while it is almost certain that part of this was due to the availability of space, the effort that Christians went to, to integrate themselves, almost blend into the background, suggests that there was a conscious process of self-restraint. Equally, when in less challenging areas of the city, many of the churches were large and blatant making their mark felt on the landscape in a safe and unthreatening area. This approach can perhaps be seen embodied in one building: the Civic Complex Church in Pella. Here, in a single case, one has both a church that almost hides in the background (the church was in a prime position above the *agora* so it cannot be said to hide entirely), not directly engaging directly with the public space beyond its walls. Later, when the position of Christianity was completely secure and there was no longer a significant civic government left, the church was opened up onto the forum with a monumental staircase and portal.

Chapter 6

Continuity and change in the monumental landscape

6.1 Introduction

The pre-existing monumental infrastructure of the cities under examination -that is before Christianity begun to have an impact on late antique urban context- was primarily of Hellenic character. Yet it would be wrong to describe it at the turn of the 4th century AD as uniform, even monolithic. Clearly, as is the case today, cults rose and fell and preferences changed in devotional patterns both public and private. Such processes influenced the form that religion took in the built environment and the use of the monumental infrastructure, thus inevitably affecting the use and re-use of these buildings in later centuries as well as their role in the city.

Addressing the issue of the state of Hellenic monumental buildings in the Empire as a whole would go excessively beyond the scope of this study. What this section offers is a definition of the situation as it stands in the region under examination, with the occasional foray into neighbouring areas. I will also provide an overview of the legal and ideal framework that underlies the issue.

The legal status of Hellenic temples, and that of their continued existence within the framework of the Christian Roman empire will be discussed first. In this I am glossing over the legislation promulgated during the rule of Emperor Julian as, though notoriously operating in favour of all the traditional cults, much of it was repealed rapidly by his successor and effectively left little if any trace.¹ Though often more aspirational than effective, and generally promulgated in response to local issues in individual provinces, this legislation is, however, useful in defining the bounds within which these buildings operated and, more importantly, the conditions that Christian emperors considered should be applied to these buildings. There is no doubt that the late antique Roman state was generally well structured and efficient, but there is also no doubt that its writ did not extend universally. There

¹The only case that I have encountered within my work where Julianic legislation pertaining religious matters was retained is that of the re-unification of the cities of Gaza and Maiumas. This act though motivated by the desire to reverse a previous pro-Christian separation in effect reinstated the *status quo ante* of the territorial administration and seems to not have been significant enough to merit reversal.

are countless occurrences of individuals or groups acting in direct contradiction to both the anti-Hellenic edicts and the pro-temple edicts thus any discussion of these laws must be seen as that of an aspiration rather than that of reality.²

I will then proceed to briefly re-examine the evidence for the individual cities I presented, concentrating in particular on the Hellenic monuments that have been uncovered. I will briefly outline the paths that these buildings took over the century or so that followed Constantine, attempting to shed greater light on their fates, beyond their connection to the growing Christian context of the cities.

6.2 The legislation of *Codex Theodosianus* XV-XVI

In exploring the rise of monumental Christianity and its interaction with its surrounding built environment, the status of Hellenic monuments within the empire must be considered. This is particularly important when investigating the developments that took place within the Levant which, with the exception of the Persian occupation in the late 6th century, remained under the full control of the imperial authorities, and thus the writ of imperial law, for the duration of the period under examination. Thus the legal framework would provide a restraint to the desires of Christians, where it was applied, and certainly influenced their behaviour.³

The legal protection of Hellenic temples continued into Late Antiquity, underlining the concern of the now Christian Emperors for the continued survival of the monumental infrastructure that they had inherited. Despite this the repeated presence of rescripts from the 4th century onwards points towards a disconnect be-

²It is somewhat of a truism that all law, let alone that of a pre-modern state, is somewhat aspirational, but nonetheless it represents a picture of the ideal situation that the legislators sought to produce and is thus noteworthy. It is reasonable to imagine that within the context of a Christian empire with a Christianising population anti-Hellenic acts would not necessarily have received neither the notice nor the retribution that they merited *stricto sensu* as they would have coincided with the overall direction of the times.

³The clearest case for this will be seen in Gaza where the bishop requires imperial intervention in his attempts to overcome the resistance of the local Hellenes, both for practical reasons but also, one suspects, to enable him to fully carry out his program.

tween the desires of the court and the reality on the ground.⁴ Thus in spite of their conversion to Christianity, Emperors continued to protect temples and retained the exclusive right of reverting them to *locus profanus*, thus depriving them of their protection.⁵

The earliest of the relevant texts is a constitution of Constantius II from 357 AD where the emperor preserves the ornamentation of smaller towns from being removed in favour of larger ones.⁶ Though not explicitly mentioning temples the later concern for the preservation of the aesthetic condition of these buildings leaves little doubt that they should also be included. Again Constantius II, in a law from 362 AD that while mandating the completion of ongoing building works bans the continuation of the construction of temples.⁷ Valentinian I from 364-365 AD also deals with the issue. This text concerns the maintenance of monumental buildings, and the preservation of decorated material from them. It is particularly addressed to the preservation of smaller centres and avoiding that they be stripped to maintain the centres of larger cities close by. This law, by demanding the enforcement of the regulation to the provincial governor, is consistent with the rest of the section, that increases the the role of governors in the maintenance and promotion of public buildings, something that is also born out by the evidence from inscriptions.⁸ Similar motives lay behind two further laws again promulgated by Valens and Valerian that mandate restoration and preservation of the civic centres and their decorations, a sign that at the forefront of the imperial legislators intentions lay the preservation of the inherited environment over the pursuit of new projects. It is clear how, the wish was that, these buildings should remain as a part of the cityscape, as depowered civic decorations, well maintained and well integrated into the landscape.

⁴The majority of the legal material that we have concerning this comes inevitably from the Theodosian Code, in particular Title XV that focuses on public works, their maintenance and regulation.

⁵This was true even when they were being used for such illegal use they retained legal protection as was the case in Egypt where there is ample evidence of the illicit use of temple sites for banned practices.

⁶*Ch. Theo.* XV 1.1.

⁷*Ch. Theo.* XV 1.3.

⁸*Ch. Theo.* XV.1.14, the language used recalls that of XV.1.3. For more on the inscriptions see Marano (2011) 63-65.

If this is implied in the rescript of Arcadius and Honorius, it is explicitly stated in a law of 382 AD where Gratian, Valentinian II, and Theodosius authorise the opening of a Temple in Osroene for its artistic merit.⁹ Because of this, temples, and their decorations, were protected not as holy sites but as buildings, forming an inviolable part of the décor of the Empire. A law of Arcadius and Honorius of the year 393 AD reinforces this concept, declaring these buildings *publicorum operum ornamenta* instructing the governor of Africa to maintain the shell of the building after having removed altars and statues.¹⁰ Yet at the same time the preservation of temples was being made progressively harder, mainly through the stripping of their privileges and of their resources, in particular in the latter part of the 4th century AD.

After the end of the 4th century the fortunes of the East and the West diverge, with temple demolition becoming preponderant in the West as the 5th century AD progressed and becoming extremely widespread in the course of the 6th century AD with an increased convergence between ecclesiastical and secular authorities on the issue. This becomes particularly relevant in the post Roman successor Kingdoms. Certainly as the 5th century progressed both in the East and the West the emphasis moved away from the preservation of the existing to the promotion of the developing Christian monuments.¹¹

If *Codex Theodosianus* XV includes the legislation that protected temples as buildings and, as the heritage of the cities, volume XVI includes the legislation aimed against Hellenic cults and their sites. The entirety of Title 10 is given over to the issue of Pagans and temples.¹² The main focus of the legislation appears to be sac-

⁹The same argument is invoked by the Council of Carthage in 401 AD where the aesthetic argument is used to justify the demolition of temples in North Africa, pointing to how deeply rooted the concept was within the Late Roman world.

¹⁰Despite the fact that they were initially addressed to individual governors the inclusion of texts such as this one in the *Codex Theodosianus* implies that they were to be extended to the empire as a whole. As we will see later in this Thesis this is exactly the kind of operation that was carried out for the so called Temple of the Tyche in Scythopolis. See Below 4.4 Scythopolis, p 229.

¹¹This is especially true in the West where over the course of the 5th and in particular the 6th century AD the concerns of the rulers of the successor kingdoms were particularly concerned with the promotion of their own agendas often related to internal Christian struggles or the consolidation of their position.

¹²The fact that pagans and their temples comes in one but last in the chapter after considerations on bishops, clerics, monks, heretics, apostates, baptism, Jews and Samaritans, and slaves speaks

rifice, which is condemned and banned time after time, probably a symptom of the difficulty faced in its suppression during the 4th century. Yet in at least seven occurrences the text refers explicitly to temples as buildings modulating the response of the Christian state to the continued existence of Hellenic temples. The first occurrence is an edict of 342 AD by Constantius protecting the extra-mural temples of Rome due to their role in the lives of the Roman people.¹³ A law of Arcadius and Honorius addressed to the Vicar of Spain, again prohibits the practice of sacrifices but protects the buildings themselves, even mandating their preservation and prohibiting any damage or destruction.¹⁴ Again in 399 AD the Proconsul of Africa, is instructed to ban sacrifice and protect temple buildings. However the temples are not to be repaired and are to be stripped of all idols.¹⁵ Much the same is demanded by Arcadius, Honorius and Theodosius in 408 AD who, in a much longer text than the previous ones, prohibit the practice of sacrifices, mandates the removal of all idols from temples as well as any remaining altars, they also banned ritual banquets, and set strict penalties for any magistrates violating the order.¹⁶ The final two pieces of legislation are much more aggressive in nature. In the first one, dating to the reign of the emperors Honorius and Theodosius, not only sets out severe penalties for the remaining Hellenic priests, but also stripped the temples of all their assets incorporating them into the imperial fisc. Further, it again mandated the removal of all altars and other objects connected to sacrifices.¹⁷ The final piece of legislation is perhaps the most significant as it is the only section of the *Codex Theodosianus* that directly invites the destruction of temples. In the text the emperors Theodosius I and Valentinian II, mandate that sacrifices be banned in the strongest possible manner. This time though they go further than in the previous laws ordering the destruction and purification with the cross of all surviving temples, exempting any who do so

perhaps to it being just one of the many issues concerning imperial legislation.

¹³*Ch. Theo.* XVI 10. 3.

¹⁴*Ch. Theo.* XVI 10. 15.

¹⁵*Ch. Theo.* XVI 10.18.

¹⁶*Ch. Theo.* XVI 10.19.

¹⁷*Cod. Theo.* XVI 10.20

from punishment under the law.¹⁸

6.3 Hellenic monuments

The fate of Hellenic monuments in the Levant varied greatly from city to city, often following that of the local cults. Despite this some overall patterns can be identified from the cases that I put forward.¹⁹ On the one hand one sees a group of cities where there is an initial phase of abandonment that pre-dates Christianity quite significantly and that must have been due to the decline of the cults within the city as there is no evidence of a systemic decline within the cities themselves. On the other hand you have cities such as Heliopolis and Gaza that were thriving centres of Hellenic cult and attracted pilgrims from the region as a whole, while continuing or expand their temples. The majority of the cities seem to either fit somewhere within the spectrum, with a mix of waxing and waning cults with a variety of different conditions and, occasionally, the preservation of at least the aesthetic aspect of temple buildings, something that, as we have seen above, very much fits within the aspirations of the imperial legislator at the end of the 4th century.

Apamea and Pella are the hardest of the cases to discuss from this point of view, as very little of the two cities Hellenic religious infrastructure has been excavated. Both were large and prosperous and one would assume they had extensive religious monuments. What has been excavated in Pella is mainly the civic centre, where the *Odeon* is the only building with religious connections to be uncovered. This building was maintained past the 5th century when it fell into disrepair and was demolished for its materials.

Jerusalem in contrast is perhaps the easiest of the cases to discuss. Re-founded by Hadrian after the Bar Kochba revolt, and shorn of its Jewish population, the city was essentially a Hellenic stronghold within the region. As a small provincial city

¹⁸*Cod. Theo.* XVI 10.25.

¹⁹Given that the buildings themselves will often be discussed again further on in thesis I will generally refrain from duplicating descriptions here, limiting myself to describing just those buildings that are not treated separately.

it did not have a particularly large apparatus but it certainly had at least one large urban temple in the Temple of Venus, and a number of peri-urban shrines, mainly connected to healing cults. There appears to have been no significant variation in the use of these buildings prior to Constantine's intervention in 325 AD, and, given the popularity of healing cults as well as the continued use of the sites as Christian healing sites, it is reasonable to suggest that the peri-urban sites also enjoyed a similar continued success.

In Heliopolis the city's Hellenic cults were thriving and the city was well known for the wealth and prominence of its Hellenes. The great Temple of Zeus/Baal/Helios was begun during the 3rd century. Its construction, the resources for which were apparently provided by private donations and gifts of pilgrims rather than imperial donatives, was still ongoing when it was halted by Constantine and a church was built on the site. Despite the closure of the Temple of Zeus, Hellenic cults continued in the neighbouring Temple of Bacchus well into the 4th century, when it burned down following a lightning strike. Despite this and despite the imperial legislation that banned continued cult, it appears that Hellenic religion continued well into the 5th century as an inscription from the Temple of Venus indicates that it was still in use and being maintained as a site of the cult of the Muses .

Petra was also a city firm in its Hellenic convictions, with a long heritage of Nabatean cults. There is little or no indication that traditional religion declined in the city in the 3rd century AD. It would appear that the existing cultic structure, that combined worship in family tombs, outdoor sacrifice, and public, official, cults in large temple buildings continued unabated. It is difficult to say if the relationship with the pre-Roman Nabatean rulers continued as strongly as before due to the state of the royal tombs, but there appears to be no fall into disrepair of the other cultic sites prior to the 5th century. This narrative is very similarly presented in Christian sources which describe Petra as a bastion of Hellenism until the sudden and violent intervention of the monk Barsaumas in the early 5th century AD, despite the fact that Petra was and had been a provincial capital and therefore, presumably, the see

of a governor in an empire that by the end of the 4th century was at least nominally Christian.

Gerasa had two main, large temples: the Temple of Zeus, and the Temple of Artemis. These two buildings both occupied prominent positions in the centre of the city and appear to have reached Late Antiquity in continued use. The more important of the two appears to have been the Temple of Artemis whose role within the city appears to have been key, with the large scale *propylon* (now preserved within the *Propylaea* Church) to its east indicating the importance of its connection with the rest of the city found on the other side of the river, probably as part of the civic processional liturgies around the celebration of the main festival of the Goddess. This is not to say that all the cults of the city prospered equally, since a temple to an unknown god, destroyed in a fire of the 2nd century was not rebuilt, and the site was re-used for industrial purposes, suggesting that neither the building nor the cult it housed were prominent or important enough to merit reconstruction. Equally the site must not have acquired significant numinosity as there were few qualms in re-using the site for less than noble uses. The city also housed a Jewish community that must have been relatively large and prosperous, as witnessed by the synagogue excavated under one of the churches. The fate of these buildings in the course of the 4th century is unclear. Later conversions, transformations and restorations have deprived us of a clear indication of at what point the buildings were abandoned and fell into ruin. What we do know is that the Temple of Zeus seems to have had the worse of it and that it was stripped of part of its decorative material for the beautification of the new phase of the civic centre being built around the site of the Cathedral Church.

Scythopolis presents an interesting mix in the fate of its temples. On the one hand the main temple of the city, the Temple of Isis was demolished and replaced with a church, something that will be seen in greater detail further on in the text, while the second known temple suffered a different fate entirely. The Temple of the *Tyche* (or Venus the exact dedication is not entirely clear), was closed and stripped

but not demolished. Rather, in the spirit of law of Arcadius and Honorius of 393 AD reported in *Codex Theodosianus* XV, it was preserved as a civic monument. The position of the building and its connection to the neighbouring *nymphaeum* certainly made it a particularly important building within the centre of the city and its preservation no doubt stemmed from the desire to preserve the *dècor* of the area as well as the appreciation for the aesthetic value of the building.

The main temple in Caesarea was probably an *Augusteion*, and was erected by Herod the Great during the early 1st century AD as part of his efforts in building the city. It stood above the harbour until the end of the 4th century AD when it was demolished to the foundations. It is this demolition that means that we have little evidence as to the causes of its abandonment or the state it was in. Unfortunately we do not have much indication from the textual record either: the Christian sources that discuss the city, first amongst them Eusebius's *Martyrs of Palestine*, do not discuss it. The suddenness and thoroughness of the demolition suggest that it was intentional and possibly connected to Christianity. Jewish sources indicate that the city had an extensive Hellenic decorative apparatus much of which was dedicated to deities.

Gadara possibly has the most varied outcomes in its temples. As one of the capitals of the Nabatean kingdom first and of the Roman province of *Arabia* later and a thriving caravan for the cross desert trade, the city was rich and vibrant with no lack of resources to invest in its monumental infrastructure. However, while the civic buildings of the city were ample and well endowed the excavated Hellenic temples suffered differing fates. During the 2nd century AD the entirety of the temple complex in the east of the city was demolished and abandoned, not to be used again. The city as a whole seems to have projected westwards and there appears to have been no concerted attempt to build a new religious centre for the city in the new area.

Bostra, as one of the capitals of the Nabatean kingdom, would certainly have had a significant Hellenic infrastructure, though only two are known and both were

abandoned in different manners and different times before the establishment of Christianity in the city. The first temple to be abandoned and demolished was located in the east of the city. Dedicated to the Nabatean god *Dushara* it was discovered under the site of the so called cathedral church, and it was demolished to the ground during the 2nd century AD and a large villa was built on the site. There is no evidence to why the site was abandoned and demolished though it is entirely possible that the fall of the Nabatean Kingdom with the consequent loss of patronage for *Dushara*, compounded by the increase in wealth of the city as it replaced Petra as the main site for cross-desert caravans led to the concurrent demise of the cult of the God. The second temple, was a small podium temple dedicated to an unknown god found near the South Baths. This building was abandoned as a temple in the late 4th century and converted to an administrative building as indicated by the mosaic floor that was installed for the occasion. Again there is no clear indication for what brought about the abandonment of the temple, though clearly the cult of the god it housed was abandoned, some time before the Edict of Toleration, let alone the Edict of Thessaloniki, and thus unrelated to the rise of Christianity. Despite the abandonment of the temple, it was however preserved in the most, perhaps in an attempt not to disrupt the setting in which it lay. Beyond these two buildings there is no clear picture of the Hellenic monumental infrastructure of Bostra at the turn of the 4th century AD, though it is probable that some form of cult site must have been present, perhaps in the *suburbium* of the city.

Though we have little understanding of the urban context of Gaza from archaeology, Mark the Deacon's *vita* of bishop Porphyry does paint a clear and vivid picture of the city's Hellenic Temples, showing the numbers and variety that we would expect.²⁰ Beyond the well known cult of Zeus *Marnas* the city was home to a cult of Aphrodite, that appears also to have had an associated processional liturgy attached to it. Much as in Heliopolis the cultic environment seems to have been thriving and certainly it is clear that, again as in Heliopolis, the community was extremely keen

²⁰For the discussion of the text itself and of the events recounted in it see below 4.2.1 p 209

on preserving not only the buildings themselves but also the cults performed within them. It is entirely plausible that Porphyry's actions in visiting the imperial court were not only related to the desire to seek support in his endeavour, but also to seek authorisation for his actions, which would after all violate *C. Th.* XV. Certainly in closing the temples of the city the governor of *Provincia Palaestina* was effectively only fulfilling his legal requirements, though he seemed ready to compromise, possibly as a result of bribery, as suggested by the hagiographer, or perhaps as part of a deal to avoid unrest in what was still, after all, an overwhelmingly Hellenic city.

6.4 Conclusions

The situation of Hellenic monuments in the Levant at the turn of the 4th century AD is, as one would expect, extremely fluid. There appear to be, as in much of the empire, a divergence between those cults that were successful such as those of Zeus *Marnas* in Gaza and the cult of Zeus *Heliopolitanus* in Heliopolis and other cults that were declining such as those that in the late 2nd century fell from grace in cities such as Gadara and Gerasa and whose temples were abandoned and even demolished. At the same time there are a number of cases where the evidence seems to point to a more mixed picture.

The legislation of *Cod. Theo.* XV is quite clear in its encouraging both the preservation and the maintenance of existing temples, while prescribing their closure and the removal of all statues and decorations connected to the previous cults. What is also clear is that the primary concern of the legislator is aesthetic, and the main focus is not on the previous nature of the building but rather on an attempt to preserve the integrity of the cityscape.²¹ This interest seems to be in direct contradiction with the actions of some of the more zealous members of the Christian community on the

²¹This is not entirely surprising given the huge volume of monumental infrastructure that the late antique Roman empire had inherited from the previous age. I would suggest that it is this that played a significant role in the limiting of the building activities in parts of Late Antiquity, rather than seeing it as a result of secular decay. In this I would suggest that the process suggested by Ine Jacobs for Asia Minor can be seen in the Levant as well. See Jacobs (2013) Chapter 1 and Avni (2014) 14-17 and 40-42 for the decline model.

ground and, if one is to use the Council of Carthage as an indication of the feelings of many within the Church, possibly even the Church as a whole.²²

On the other hand *Cod. Theo.* XVI has a much more varied approach, as the priority is no longer the aesthetic maintenance of the cities of the empire but rather the promotion of Christianity and the end of the traditional cults. Thus, apart from the repeated banning of sacrifices, the main concern is that of ending any vestigial cults, and finally, possibly in the face of continued resistance, an increasingly aggressive line ending with *Cod. Theo.* XVI 10.25 where the emperors mandate the destruction of temples across the empire and the re-consecration of the grounds with the sign of the cross.

From the point of view of the available evidence, our view of Hellenic cults may well be distorted by our sources, and it is not unsurprising that the cases where cults and temple buildings appear to be most resilient, such as Gaza and Heliopolis, were also the same ones where Christianity struggled to impose itself. While in Heliopolis we are lucky and have at least some epigraphical evidence of continued cults into the late 5th century AD, as well as Arab material that relays the presence of Hellenic cults in the city, in Gaza we have to rely entirely on the word of Christian hagiographic texts that have every interest in inflating the importance of the resistance to Christianity to enhance the reputation of Porphyry. However both cities seem to share a common feature: in both cases interventions were made to enforce the closure of the cities' temples and in both cases the local population was able to resist this through bribery or even outright revolt. The significance of this lies not so much in the attempts, which were after all in line with imperial legislation that had been in force for some time, but rather in the willingness of local, though not minor, officials to compromise and allow the continuation of cults and even perhaps sacrifices.²³

²²Certainly if one reads the works of Libanius one gets the strong impression that there was extensive violation of the protections afforded to temples under Roman Law. Even though there can be few doubts that Libanius is emphasizing the violence and frequency of these attacks there can be few doubts that they must have occurred widely. See Libanius *Oratio* 30 *Pro Templis*.

²³It is noteworthy that the one case where we have an almost total preservation of the Hellenic heritage within the context of a Christian city is that of Aphrodisias in Caria. Though it is significant,

At the other end of the spectrum we have Gadara and Bostra, where it would appear that a significant amount of the Hellenic temples had been abandoned and even demolished long before Christianity was anywhere near becoming the dominant religion in the region. The causes for this are unclear, though the most plausible, and simplest, explanation is that the cults that these temples housed had fallen from grace, through either the loss of major patronage, as can be suggested in the case of Dushara in Bostra, or through a shift in both the cult and the urban centre of gravity, as was the case in Gadara.

Most cities though seem to fall somewhere in between these two extremes, with a mixture of successful and unsuccessful cults. The case of Gerasa is perhaps emblematic, with at least one temple being abandoned very early on following its destruction in a fire and the site was re-used for metal smelting, hardly an indication that the site was considered particularly significant. On the other hand the two main temples, dedicated to Zeus and Artemis are part of the re-development of the city that was commissioned that was undertaken in the mid-2nd century AD on the occasion of an imperial visit.

The exception to this pattern is Jerusalem. Here rather than an organic process, one is faced with an enforced brake with the previous tradition. The actions of Constantine broke completely with the previous situation thus ending the presence of urban traditional cults as a monumental expression, without them necessarily having experienced a significant change in following.

Thus, in conclusion, the state of Hellenic cults and their monumental infrastructure varied from city to city. Though there is only limited evidence for a direct causal link, it is reasonable to suggest that local variations played a significant role in the survival, or not, of these structures. However in many of the cities it is clear that Christianity, and more importantly the continued stream of Anti-Hellenic legislation that was issued in the course of the 4th century AD played a significant role in the process. Imperial legislation appears to be quite straightforward in its

there is no doubt it is exceptional and amply recognised as such. For more on the issue see Roueché (1989).

intentions, despite the open and understandable hostility towards Hellenes, it repeatedly seeks to protect surviving temple buildings on the basis of their aesthetic value, despite this the repetitive nature of the imperial decrees both on preserving buildings and on banning Hellenic practices suggests that these were likely being ignored.²⁴ The successive pieces of legislation become progressively more strident in their criticism of the activities and progress towards a crisis. This point is reached with XVI 10.25 that would have not only encouraged new attacks on temples but also likely been used to retroactively legitimise the actions of any who had attacked temples previously. Thus the fate of such buildings would have been sealed in all those cities where the local population was not sufficiently invested in the survival of their Hellenic monuments for cultural or religious reasons.

²⁴The *Codex* is after all but a selection of the vast number of laws produced in the 4th century AD and before. Further it is a widely held view that the continued repetition of the same legislation indicates its not being observed and the need to constantly be reaffirmed.

Chapter 7

General conclusions

In my thesis I have sought to examine the process of Christianisation of the cities of the late antique Levant. In doing so I have attempted to avoid the pitfalls of teleology and of buying into the established narrative by seeking to build a picture based first and foremost on the available evidence. In using the archaeological record extensively, I have intended to introduce an element of verifiable material to the picture, to bring me as close as possible to the true material picture of the process. There are also questions with the archaeological record though, as it represents but a series of snapshots, often of endings, rather than a dynamic picture. Thus it is only in particularly rich contexts, like Gerasa and Jerusalem, that one can see the picture evolve over time. GIS software helps partly bridge the gap between the archaeological record and the full extent of urban life. More importantly it allows the analysis of relations between contexts and between buildings in a way that is easily replicable and easily definable and is not based on mere autoptical observations, with all the possible bias this may include.¹

The written material that has survived from the age is equally enticing and problematic: it is further complicated by the variety of different forms that the textual record takes. Chronicles are plentiful but they often lack in detail, especially as concerns the built environment, preferring to focus on the actions of emperors and patriarchs, often mentioning buildings when they are damaged by earthquakes or other catastrophes.² Lives of saints are extremely biased texts and focus on the life and activity of the saint in question. While this may appear to be a disadvantage, it actually provides us with much interesting information, by showing the issues that most concerned the saint, or rather what it was felt should have concerned the saint, they tell us what was important in the mind of the authors.³ Lastly theological writ-

¹This is an inevitable product of the process by which buildings are created in a space that is already in use: the cost in time resources and labour involved in the construction of a building, especially an important building, generally mean that once built it was kept in the same position and where necessary and possible altered to fit any new conditions.

²Church histories are somewhat more helpful than lay chronicles, as they tend to describe in more details the events and activities of senior clerics.

³Eusebius's *Vita Constantini* should really be included in this category as, though it ostensibly reports on the life of an emperor and not a saint, in many ways it follows the rules of hagiography much more than those of biography.

ings: as well as providing an insight into the theological reasons behind the ideas of space and Christianisation, these also provide a surprisingly acute insight into the world of the early Christian church and its relations with the predecessor religions.

The process of Christianisation of the cities of the Levant did not follow, as one might expect, a single paradigm, a pattern that, with allowances for local conditions, repeated itself in a fairly uniform manner. Despite the many points that Levantine cities had in common, such as their wealth, their ancient urban histories, their continued growth and expansion, and despite the efforts of the imperial court and the Church there is much variety in the stories that can be told about the region.

The first key to my interpretation of the process is understanding the junction between the physical space and the symbolic one in these cities. As a new religion Christianity was not only feeling its way into a dominant position, it was also in the process of creation of both its traditions and of its collective memory. As pointed out by Maurice Hawlbachs first and later by Eric Hobsbawm, traditions are the result of a combination of conscious and unconscious construction.⁴ In particular, Hawlbachs in his essay on the creation of the legendary topography of the Holy Land focuses in on precisely the progressive takeover of the city of Jerusalem by Christian sacred topography.⁵ Hawlbachs argues that the process was partly a process of creation of a collective memory and partly a process of creation and implantation of new Christian traditions.⁶ I suggest that this process could not be limited to the mere presence of people and ideas, but rather that, in the process of constructing their churches and maintaining or destroying the pagan buildings, early Christians were in effect building both a physical and ideal landscape. This landscape was experienced daily and it was created by a combination of the buildings of the city, the beliefs of the people, and the liturgical activities of the Christian community.

This is the process that I believe was taking place in the first two groups that I

⁴Hobsbawm concentrates mainly on the 19th and 20th centuries but I believe that his observations concerning the need for a semi-mythical antecedent and the difference between 'custom' and 'tradition' are relevant to my work. See Hobsbawm (1993) 2-4.

⁵Hawlbachs (2008) 10-13.

⁶Hawlbachs (2008) 14-15.

examined, though in different manners. On the one hand, in the cities of Jerusalem, Gerasa, Petra this new landscape was created through the maintenance of the ruins of the abandoned temples as standing mementos of the victory of Christianity. On the other hand one has Gaza and Caesarea Maritima, where the old temples were demolished and replaced with magnificent new churches, standing proud and reminding all of what had been there before and what stood now. The last two cases to fit this paradigm are Heliopolis and Scythopolis, though in my analysis I assigned them to different groups for ease of categorisation, Heliopolis in Chapter two and Scythopolis in Chapter three: they are in fact hybrid cases where both processes occur simultaneously, though not with equal strength, and should thus be treated separately here. They serve as reminders that the ways in which Christianisation occurred should not be intended as exclusive alternatives, but rather as positions along a spectrum, if one will *vel* and not *aut*.

In Jerusalem this process is visible right from the start. The construction of the Holy Sepulchre involved the demolition of the Temple of Venus; this was not the main objective of Constantine and Helena: the Hellenic temple was simply an obstacle on the route to the construction of the church. The objective was always the celebration of the death, burial and resurrection of the Christian Saviour, whose miraculous return from death had sealed the new covenant between the second Israel and God, just as the Tablets of the Law had sealed the first covenant. Thus the events of the life of Christ played a key role in the narrative surrounding the construction of the Holy Sepulchre, to the point that, according to Eusebius, its construction involved the recovery of the True Cross. The main relationship was therefore with the Temple, that, as the holiest place of the Jewish religion, was seen as the main adversary of the new church in the monumental landscape.

Rather than being a threat, the presence of the ruins of the Temple became in fact, an opportunity to celebrate Christianity's victory, to remind all of the punishment that Jews had encountered for refusing the Messiah: in effect the relationship between the Holy Sepulchre and the Temple Mount reinforced the victory of Chris-

tianity over the old religion. The later addition of the Nea Church by Justinian reinforces the importance of placement in the construction of the physical, liturgical and symbolic landscape of the city. While Constantine had functionally had the whole city at his disposal in choosing the site for his church, but had had his freedom of action limited by the desire to honour the burial of Christ, Justinian did not face such problems. The only part of the city of Jerusalem that had major significance in the life of Jesus and that had not already been exploited was the Temple Mount, yet Justinian chose not to build on it but rather preferred to expand the whole city southwards, extending the *cardo* and building his church there.⁷ By constructing the Nea in an area that was previously unoccupied and opening up a whole new section of Jerusalem, while ignoring the prime site of the Temple Mount with its high vantage point and deep symbolic implications, Justinian was placing himself on the same level as Constantine. This is not at all surprising considering Justinian's wider programme of renovating, re-founding and founding cities, and considering that by the time of his reign the majority of Christian discourse had moved from Christianisation to Orthodoxy. Furthermore, although this is beyond the timeline of this thesis, the importance of this process can be underlined by the speed with which the Arabs co-opted the Temple Mount, not for its value as a Jewish holy site, but as a way of claiming the city without directly interfering with the existing Christian buildings. Equally, when the Crusaders took the city they appropriated the Temple Mount, that had by then become the visible focus of Muslim cult and thus had to be eradicated.

Gerasa experienced a similar process to that of Jerusalem where, as we have seen, the major temples of the city were allowed to survive.⁸ Here the inscription on the exterior of St Theodore makes clear reference to the relationship with the neigh-

⁷It is important to note that the Crusaders took over the Temple Mount as soon as they took the city, re-consecrating the Dome of the Rock as a Christian church and then building a church in what is now the Al Aqsa mosque.

⁸The only apparent exception to this is the temple under the Cathedral Church, however this building had long been abandoned by the time of the construction of the church in the early 5th century AD. See Above 3.3.3 page 138.

bouring temple, portraying it as a marker of Christianity's triumph. The inscription was carved into the lintel of the main access to the church, and contained different messages on the inside and the outside. While the interior inscription was mainly concerned with the promotion of the virtues of St Theodore as a saint and as a martyr, concentrating in particular on his role as a bulwark against evil; the exterior almost exclusively discusses the role of the church within the surrounding context, drawing comparison between it and the neighbouring temple. Both the inscription and the archaeology indicate that this is the key relationship in Early Christian Gerasa. The inscribed material builds a direct opposition between the church and the temple: where the Christian building is beautiful, sweet-smelling and orderly, the temple is disorderly, ugly and foul-smelling, likened to an abattoir. This alone is a strong enough indication of the direct connection between the two buildings in the minds of the church builders, and if one adds that the two buildings were in very close proximity, and that it would appear that the temple was left relatively untouched all together then the picture becomes very clear. The construction of the Propylaea Church in the outer Propylaea of the Temple of Artemis meant adding to the message in three ways: first, it added another church in proximity to the temple standing between it and the main residential area on the other side of the *Wadi*, secondly it would likely have added another stop on the processional routes of the city, and thirdly its occupying the area previously used for the temple's processional liturgies would have made an impact as well. In the course of the 6th century more churches were built in Gerasa. Dotted around the hill, as far as we know they replace existing religious buildings only once, with the construction of the Synagogue Church. The wide distribution of these churches suggests that they served more of a day-to-day function for the community, the sole exception being the small chapel constructed near the monumental gate of the city, the Church of Bishop Marianos, that served to cover the space outside the city walls, but within the city bounds, in an area that had seen activity throughout Late Antiquity.⁹

⁹It is entirely possible that the church served the same purpose as those built by Ambrose of Milan at the extramural gates of the city of Milan to protect the city from the supernatural threats that might

Petra also saw a progressive takeover of the cityscape, though we have relatively little knowledge of how well or badly it was received by the non-Christians of the city. The only evidence we do have for the arrival of the new religion at the city is the Life of St Barsaumas, claiming that this violent Syrian monk single-handedly forced his way into the city, converting it in the process. Though the tale is colourful it is likely also a tall one, as there is ample evidence that Christians were present in the city in the early 4th century AD, with Maximus, governor of the city under Diocletian, being promoted due to his zeal in suppressing Christians in Petra and, even more importantly, a bishop of Petra being recorded at the Council of Serdica. What is entirely possible is that, much as we have seen in cases like Gaza and Heliopolis, the city remained overwhelmingly loyal to its traditional cults and that it took much more time, and perhaps outside intervention, to truly get the new religion going in the city. Be this as it may, the earliest church to be established (built not being the best word in this case) was opened in the year 446-447 AD: the Urn Church. It occupied one of the former royal tombs, directly above the former royal compound overlooking most of the late antique city and, more importantly the monumental centre. Not only did this assert the presence of Christianity in a city used to the presence of overlooking sacred spaces, the so called High Places dotted on the cliffs that surround the city, but any form of public liturgy or procession towards the church would have by the very nature of the city been visible and audible from almost anywhere west of the building. The later churches were more conventional in form, but I believe their position to be as relevant: placed on the ridge above the porticoed street in the centre of Petra, not only did they overlook the remains of the Hellenic temples, that were not demolished or significantly altered as far as we know, but they would also have formed a barrier between them and the major residential area of late antique Petra.

In Gaza, the activities of Porphyry seem to follow a series of steps that could almost be said to illustrate the process of active co-option of the city and its mon-

come along the roads.

uments by Christians. According to the *Vita* the city's Christians were few, poor, and weak, suffering as much from the nearby presence of Maiumas as the oppression of the Hellenes. After Porphyry's arrival he quickly set about attempting to grow his flock and to claim the public space in the city through public prayer and procession. Mark the Deacon, the author of his biography, points to the occurrence of anti-Hellene miracles during these processions as proof of God's support for the bishop's actions. Porphyry seems to adopt a two-pronged strategy: on the one hand he attempts to claim the space with public prayer and procession, going to the point of averting a drought according to the hagiographer, and on the other he attempts to undermine the public cult of idols by attacking them directly and indirectly. However, it is clear that the Hellenic majority of the city was not at all happy with these attempts, was very aware of what they meant, and reacted violently. Undaunted, Porphyry escalated and sought outside help from the government, specifically the imperial court. Support came in the form of money, but more importantly in the form of military support and orders from the governor of Palestine in Scythopolis to intervene. The latter's intervention seems to have been hesitant and almost reluctant, one suspects he was well aware that carrying out Eudokia's orders would be nowhere near as easy as she thought, thus the closure of the temples and the cessation of public cults was only partial, leaving the great Temple of Zeus *Marnas* untouched. As one would expect, Porphyry was enraged and again sought imperial help and again succeeded. When he finally succeeded, he demolished the most important temple of the city, the *Marneion*, and replaced it with a church completing the first stage of the takeover of the city's symbolic and sacred space. According to Mark, this was so successful to expand almost immediately the numbers of the Christians in the city massively, making them effectively dominant. Porphyry's behaviour could almost be seen as describing the options that were given to many late antique Hellenes: comply and perhaps save at least the shell of the temples as elements of beauty, resist and be crushed by the might of the state.¹⁰ While we have

¹⁰As mentioned, the *Vita Porphyri* has been challenged as a later composition or even a complete work of fiction. I do not have the means or the scope to confirm or deny the authenticity of the

no way of verifying the words of the *Vita* and they have been seriously challenged, it is interesting to note that the works of Choricus, composed roughly a generation later, describe a city that is thoroughly Christianised, leading one to think that there may well be a significant element of truth in Mark's account.¹¹

In Caesarea Maritima, as in Jerusalem, the Christians had to contend with a number of religions. As well as the Hellenes, the city was home to large communities of Jews and Samaritans.¹² The city appears to have been relatively segregated, with the various communities occupying separate spaces, while the central area was a mainly Hellenic space, since no Jewish or Samaritan houses of worship have been uncovered so far in that area. The principal temple was probably the large *Augusteion* built by Herod on a rock outcrop near the port.¹³ Though it is the only temple excavated so far, we know of at least another three: the *Tibereion*, the *Hadrianeion*, and the *Tychaion*. Although it is possible that the cult of Tiberius, Hadrian and Augustus were housed in the same building or complex, this means that the city had at least two major pagan temples as well as numerous synagogues. Unlike the cases of Jerusalem and Gaza, where we have much written material on the 4th and 5th centuries, for Caesarea we have to rely much more on the archaeology. The *Augusteion* was demolished in the early 5th century and replaced with a structure of unknown use. This building stood for about a century and when it burned down it was replaced by a large octagonal *Martyrion*. Unfortunately, the demolition of the intermediate building was complete and thorough, but it is tempting to think that a church of some kind stood on the site, only to be burned during the Judeo-Samaritan riots of the late 5th century.¹⁴ The new church altered the landscape of the port of

text, however, at least the part concerning the processes he went through to Christianise the city are entirely consistent with the steps taken by the bishops of Alexandria, and to a certain extent some of the events that took place in Scythopolis and Heliopolis. See Trombley (1993a) introduction.

¹¹See above p 209

¹²The city had become the most important centre for Rabbinical Judaism, following the second Jewish revolt that ended in 135 AD.

¹³The outcrop was levelled, but also expanded to house the temple, with the result that the sub-structure of the podium could be used for a large number of horrea probably dedicated mainly to grain, oil and wine storage.

¹⁴As is shown by the plan in figure 3.5 the alignment of some of the foundations is off the east-west alignment, that would be normal for a church it is possible that the structure included several

Caesarea completely, and effectively provided all those who approached by sea with a Christian marker for the city; given that as the 5th and 6th centuries progressed the city became one of the, if not the main, port of entry for pilgrims travelling to Jerusalem by sea, it would certainly have served its purpose admirably.

As mentioned previously, Scythopolis and Heliopolis were intermediate cases in their process of Christianisation. While the other cities were predominantly taken over through either replacement or co-option of the religious buildings of the predecessor religions, the latter two cases display a mixture of the two strategies: Christianity struggled to take root in Heliopolis, and may in fact never have converted a majority or even a plurality of the city's citizens. However this did not impede emperors from turning their attention to the city and the plight of its Christians from time to time. From the chronicles we know that the emperors Constantine and Theodosius both took interest in the community and both funded the construction of churches in Heliopolis, where the situation appears to have seen little change in the period between their reigns. The main cult of the city before Christianity was a syncretic Zeus/Helios/Baal god whose temple, though never completed, promised to be one of the largest of the region if not the largest.¹⁵ The Christian community, on the other hand, was small and weak unable to elect a bishop or build a church before Constantine's intervention in the early 4th century, and given this, could definitely not deal with the temples, though it appears that religious activity in them was at least restricted under Constantine's children since we are informed of their re-opening under Julian.¹⁶ Decisive action against the temples was taken only under Theodosius I, when they were closed and the basilica in the temple court was built. The fact that imperial mandate was needed is not entirely surprising; the fact that, as far as we know it was completely unsolicited is. It appears that over a century of imperial favour had not been sufficient to strengthen the Heliopolitan

different rooms that served various purposes.

¹⁵The fact that this cult involved some kind of sacred prostitution seems to have been particularly offensive to Christian authors who expend a large amount of time and space on this fact and on the multiple attempts at suppressing it.

¹⁶We also have reports of rioting and anti-Christian violence in the city during the reign of Julian.

Christians to the point where they felt able to claim such an important space. In fact in the 6th century, when much of the region was Christianised, or at least when very few Hellenes admitted to their beliefs the city continued to be proudly pagan at all levels of society.¹⁷ The context described above makes Christian possession of such an important landmark from the reign of Theodosius II onwards an extremely significant fact, and one can imagine that in conjunction with a strong bishop, the situation could have turned out differently, as happened in Gaza. The hybrid nature of the church in the Temple of Baal rests in the fact that, rather than take over the temple, or even demolish it, it was built in the court, replacing the great altar and abutting the steps of the temple.¹⁸ The peculiar alignment of the basilica, which uniquely was entered from the east, placed it in a perfect position to be superimposed over the temple in the eyes of anybody who entered the court. Thus, at the same time as the altar, which in the Greek tradition was probably the main point of public worship for the temple, was replaced, demolished and its material incorporated into the new church, the temple was left standing, incomplete and ruinous, witness to the defeat of the old gods and the triumph of the new.

Much like in Caesarea, Hellenes, Jews and Christians co-habited in Scythopolis. The city had at least two temples, one in the main core, near the crossroads between the so-called Valley and Sylvanus streets, the other high on the Tel. The former, probably dedicated to Dionysius, went out of use probably in the course of the 4th century AD, when it was converted to a public monument and maintained as such until its destruction in an earthquake in the 8th century. The temple on the Tel was much older, larger, and more important, as the site had housed temples since the Bronze Age in almost every phase of occupation of the city. At the time, the only building on the summit was the Temple of Zeus *Akraios* and when

¹⁷As mentioned in 2.5, John of Ephesus reports in the 570s that the city was still a nest of pagans. Though he is often prone to exaggeration when discussing this kind of thing, it is most likely that there was a significant kernel of truth in his statement, as similar conditions are reported by Arab chroniclers over a century later.

¹⁸It is ironic that the people who demolished the Basilica to re-construct the altar were French Christians in a non-Christian land who sought to re-establish what they saw as the original, true and proper state of the complex, the pagan one.

this was demolished, probably in the late 5th century AD, the whole of the summit was completely re-purposed: a peculiar ambulatory church was constructed on the edge, while a large residential area was built around it. Unfortunately the whole late antique layer was destroyed when the earlier temples were exposed in the 20th century, but the extent of the residential area is such that it is unlikely that it was merely built to serve the church alone but formed a new quarter, probably a Christian one. While the church was built on top of an earlier temple, its position meant that it dominated the landscape for miles (see fig 4.11 p 235), overseeing any and all in the surrounding landscape, including the temples. Thus it would have been impossible to avoid it when moving anywhere in or near Scythopolis.

In Apamea, no major temple has yet been uncovered, and, while one has to assume that there were a number of such buildings, it may be the case that none of them had a major monumental component. The two major churches that have been uncovered were both built over pre-existing religious buildings. The Atrium Church, probably the older of the two, was built over the site of a synagogue. Though replacing it it stayed similar in size and shape, only expanding in a second moment, becoming a much larger and more substantial structure. The Cathedral church, on the other hand, was built later, in the late 5th early 6th century AD this time on the site of a pre-existing Neo-Platonic school, whose structure was completely obliterated, surviving only in the mosaics that were buried by the apse of the church. It is unfortunate that we have little or no textual evidence for the Christianisation of the city as it would cast some light over the motivations of the actions of the Apamene Christians, but, at least in the case of the Atrium church, the short amount of time elapsed between the construction of the synagogue and that of the church suggest that it was motivated by a desire to obliterate and replace the synagogue following the end of the reign of Julian.

Though the process of co-option of urban space is clear in the cases that I have presented so far, many other questions remain: what happened in those cases when the main monumental competitor was not religious but secular? Where it was not

the temple of a discredited god but rather the home of a strong government, or the buildings that provided the essential services of the city? I believe that the answer can be seen in the cities of Bostra, Gadara, and Pella.

In Bostra the contrast is even starker: with the city almost divided into two areas, one where the churches were almost completely integrated into the surrounding context and another where they sought to build structures that would stand out due to their size, shape and position. Three churches have been uncovered in the central area of the city: the Bahria Basilica, the Bath Complex Church, and Church Number 3. Unfortunately, despite all three churches standing in some form in the middle of the 20th century when H. C. Butler surveyed the region, by the time excavations commenced in the 1980s, Church Number 3 had been completely demolished for its building materials and the site of the building itself had been incorporated into the local village.¹⁹ Thus the only excavations that have been possible have been undertaken on the Bahria Basilica and the Bath Complex Church. The former was a converted Roman civic basilica, whose structure was essentially respected, albeit with minor alterations that were generally connected with the adaptation of the building to allow it to serve for Christian religious purposes. The Bath Complex Church was a new build that incorporated some existing structures. The western part of the building was built on the podium of a pagan temple that had been reconverted to civic use some time previously. The rest of the church was built on a purpose-built podium, sustained by a series of vaulted rooms built over the northern part of the gymnasium. Despite impinging quite heavily on the south bath complex, it also integrated into it carefully. By maintaining the same entrance as the temple, it maintained both the axiality and the role of the earlier building. Equally, despite the fact that it took over the northern part of the *palaestra* the fact that the central vaulted room was open all the way through meant that the space could still be used for its original purpose.

The churches built in the east of the city are in a completely different context

¹⁹This incorporation has been so thorough that we are unsure even of the exact position of Church 3, having only vague indications from Butler's text.

and, more importantly, are completely different in shape and role. These churches were built in an area that appears to have entirely consisted of large palatial mansions, possibly including the episcopal palace, and, rather than attempting to blend in, clearly strove to stand out. While the two basilicas in the city centre are incorporated into their surroundings the two central plan churches are free standing. While the churches in the centre of Bostra are relatively small and functional, those in the east of the city are massive domed structures designed to be seen from afar and impress the observers. As I mentioned earlier, context is the key to understanding these differences: not only would building a large church in the central area have involved demolishing important civic buildings, it would have also required the alteration of the whole layout of the area. In the eastern quarter, on the other hand the construction of these much larger churches would have only involved the demolition of a single, albeit large, building, something that is much easier.

In Pella rather than seeing differences in the form of the churches, one sees a stark difference in the interaction of the main church of the city with its surrounding space. Unlike the two previous cases, where different positions led to different forms, all three churches in Pella are three-aisled basilicas, and all three remained substantially unchanged in their internal form. However, while the East and West Churches did not change at all save for maintenance issues, the Civic Complex Church was built in between the so called Ionic building and the *Odeon* that, though no longer in use, probably retained its integrity. The church itself was built set back from the edge of the *agora* with a large atrium between its entrance and the outside. The atrium served a number of purposes: first of all it provided an intermediate space for the community and for those who were still preparing to join it; secondly, given that the complex was entered from the north via the Ionic Building, it allowed this unusual entrance to be co-opted and the main entrance of the church to be kept on its western side; lastly it also put space between the church and the *forum*. It is the relationship between these two spaces that I believe forms the core of the evidence for the change in use of this space. In its first phase the church was set back and the

western wall of the atrium gave no means of access to the *agora*. Phase 2 brought little change to the situation concerning the relationship between the church and the square. The church was slightly modified and the walls of the *forum* were lined with shops; and yet the church stood just as before, removed from the public space of the main square despite the complete abandonment of the *Odeion* and its almost complete demolition. It is only in phase 3 that the situation changed. Following a major re-modelling of the *agora*, a new door was built into the western wall of the atrium and a monumental staircase was built, connecting the church on the higher level with the *forum* on the lower one, and the shops were demolished. Thus in phase 3 the Civic Complex Church moved from being a separate section of the complex, a separate space that could not be accessed from the main square, to something that was completely integrated into it, a building that had, in fact become the dominant monument of central Pella. One could say that, if in the earlier phases the Civic Complex Church existed as a separate space from the main complex, behaving much like a *Tychaion* would, while, in phase 3, it became an integrated and even dominant part of the landscape, a fully functional part of the *forum* and thus of the heart of city life.

The city of Gadara was a major stopping-point for caravan traffic and, in the Roman period it straddled the main east-west road of the area. As such it was drawn along this axis in its expansion rather than growing radially as many other cities did. The original nucleus of the city was to the east of the Acropolis Hill, and was made up of the Hellenistic buildings of the city, including a temple complex that, interestingly, had been abandoned for quite some time by Late Antiquity. The presence of the road, and the traffic associated with it, pulled the city westwards, and throughout the 2nd and 3rd centuries it expanded continuously in that direction. In the late 4th and early 5th centuries the city was struck by at least two major earthquakes that severely damaged the city and resulted in a temporary contraction of the inhabited area. Despite this, Gadara recovered and not only re-built but expanded again. Part of this re-building programme was the construction of twin churches on the site

of the so called Market Basilica. These churches were built in sequence, with the octagonal church being the earlier of the two and the basilica following, but were carefully integrated into each other and into the surrounding civic centre. This was due to their construction being part of a greater overall programme and the lack of obvious monumental competitors. However, in the far west of the city an entirely different building was built: the Five-Aisled Basilica. The exact date at which it was constructed is debatable, as the excavators initially suggested the mid-4th century on the basis of the relationship with the crypt and, the nearby extra-mural gate, and on a stylistic basis but no internal evidence is published, and the size and scale of the church are such that this extremely early date is unlikely, and a date a century later is more likely.²⁰ Despite the uncertainty concerning the dating of the building, one thing is sure: it played a major role in the development of the city. In one of the few cases in the Levant of a Christian building actively influencing the development of the city in which it was built, this church pulled the city towards it. By the 5th century a major new quarter of the city had developed around the basilica, with a growth that can only be attributed to the pilgrimage industry connected to the martyr whose tomb was incorporated in the building.²¹ This trend would continue and even increase over the next centuries, so much so that by the Abbasid period most of the city was in the area around the church, and by the Ayyubid period Gadara survived as a small village clustered round the basilica.

The missing link in this analysis is almost certainly that of processional and stationary liturgy. With the exception of the case of Jerusalem we know relatively little of how these fundamental aspects of Christian devotion developed in many of the cities of the Levant. What is clear from the case of Jerusalem is that they served a key role in the weaving together of the different religious and symbolic spaces

²⁰The building also shows no sign of earthquake damage and repair, something which one would expect given the early date that is proposed and the scale of the tremors that occurred in 365 and 447 AD.

²¹The presence of a 2nd-century tomb carefully incorporated into the crypt, and the size of the building, completely out of scale with the city as a whole, lead one to conclude that the only function the church could have served was as a centre of pilgrimage.

of the city, re-enacting the events of the life of Christ, affirming the miracle of the passion and the resurrection, while laying claim to a city that would otherwise be more Pagan than Christian, especially since the original city, the one that had known and was known by Christ had been destroyed by Hadrian in 135 AD. The fact that, apart from the Holy Sepulchre, the majority of the important religious sites of the city were, until the mid 4th century AD extra-urban would have no doubt reinforced this process and allowed perhaps the creation of a context where the inside/outside dichotomy was broken and where the processions for the faithful formed a continuous link between the sites.²² It is equally tempting to imagine that in cities such as Petra or Heliopolis the cathedrals, located as they were in prominent spots would have served as perfect start and end points in very similar rituals that, rather than reconstruct the events of the life of Christ, would have allowed Christians to attempt to lay claim to the, often initially hostile, urban space that surrounded them linking their churches and effectively casting a net over the city as a whole. An attempt at this is clearly visible in the actions of Porphyry bishop of Gaza who repeatedly, before and after obtaining imperial support, uses processions to both make his presence felt but also to challenge the existing order, calling for rain in one occasion and banishing the demon that inhabited a statue of the goddess Aphrodite, destroying it and killing a pagan as a consequence.²³ Later, in destroying the temples of the city and ultimately the *Marneion* one could almost say that he led his followers in a sort of procession throughout the city, mimicking his earlier actions but on a much grander scale. Nor were his actions purely aimed inwards, it is clear from the sometimes reactions of the Hellenes in the city to his early efforts at occupying the public space of the city through his processions that his actions are seen as threatening beyond the size of his flock or the limited success of his initial endeavours, but rather represent a challenge to the established order.

A further issue to be confronted is that of time, and the differing priorities that

²² Again one has but to cast one's eye over modern day Jerusalem where pilgrims still tread these steps with a particular attention to the stations of the cross.

²³ I have described these events more fully above. See 4.2.1 p 209.

develop as it passes. Though my work by the nature of it ends up focusing on points in time, it is clear that there are differences between the circumstances of the 4th century AD and the 7th. This difference is not uniform through the cities and, as we have seen, each city tells a unique tale varying from Jerusalem whose space was co-opted and converted rapidly at the beginning of the 4th century to Heliopolis where the tussle seems to have continued until the arrival of the Muslim Arabs. Throughout the region however, the key moment seems to have been the 5th century AD, when the majority of large Hellenic cults in the region were closed down or died. *Codex Theodosianus* XVI.10.24 may well have given a new impetus to this but there can be no doubt that a century of continued anti-Hellenic legislation and proselytism had taken its toll. Certainly there is little evidence of the kind of building programme that was undertaken in the 5th century in the previous one. Over the course of the century large churches were built throughout the region and the cities space was fully co-opted. By the 6th century much of the process was completed, however this did not mean that the process was completed, rather in cities like Pella we see a subtler process going on, where the negotiation, rather than occurring on a citywide level takes place in a more localised fashion, and the main concern appears to have become the co-existence of Christian and civic buildings, with the eventual full integration of the Cathedral into the *agora*. This shift in priorities is most visible, again, in Jerusalem. While the actions of Constantine and their recounting speak most to the Jewish and Hellenic past of the city, those of Justinian are completely different. In developing the south section of the city, but also arguably throughout his whole building program in the region, Justinian is speaking to his imperial predecessors. In building a new section of the city he is acting as a city founder much as Hadrian and Constantine before him. Equally in building the *Nea* where he did he was privileging the dialogue with the Holy Sepulchre, and therefore again Constantine, rather than Christ and his life engaging with whom would have been best served by the construction of a church on another Holy site such as the Temple Mount. The case of Jerusalem is stark and the presence of emperors as the driving

force behind these changes make sit much clearer, but it is clear that similar issues are occurring in the other cities of the region as in Gaza where two generations after Porphyry Choricus paints the picture of a city whose Christians are more concerned with the state of their churches than Hellenic cults; in Petra the Residential Quarter Church expands continuously throughout its existence without apparent direct contact with earlier buildings; equally in Pella, while the Civic Complex Church was built and developed in a complex dynamic with the area, the other two churches appear entirely unrelated to existing structures.²⁴

The final issue that emerges from my work is the role of Jerusalem. I believe that rather than being simply one case amongst many, its unique history and its exceptional role made it more than just a single case. In developing the narrative for Jerusalem, what was effectively being done was the development of a template. Despite the conscious nature of this process this template would not reach the level of sophistication or intentionality as that expressed by Augustine in his *De Civitate Dei*, or that seen in later medieval attempts at reproducing the landscape of Jerusalem through the construction and naming of churches in the Latin West.²⁵

In conclusion, how did the process of Christianisation develop in the late antique Levant? Despite what one might have imagined, it was not a single, uniform process. Rather one has three different processes: one where the key is comparison, a second one where the key is the replacement of the earlier buildings, and a third where, lacking a major monumental opponent, the main relationship was with the secular space. The first key development was the creation of a sacred space. This involved the co-option of the surrounding city and the overlaying of a new landscape over it. This new landscape did not need to be a complete re-incarnation of the city, but rather the absorption of the old one into the new one. One cannot and must not forget that the Christians were none other than the descendants of the same Hellenes

²⁴The limited amount of excavated surface is somewhat of a constraint in our understanding of Pella, but still the argument at the moment stands.

²⁵A personal favourite of mine is that of the Church of St. Stephen in Bologna that has a chapel for each of the major churches of Jerusalem and whose Easter procession reaches the nearby church of S Giovanni in monte ulivetum that in the liturgy takes the place of the Mount of Olives.

that had built and developed the cities that were now being co-opted, and that very often were heirs to the same values that had resulted in euergetism being the major driving force behind urban development. Though this may not be immediately apparent from the cities of the Levant, one need only turn to neighbouring Asia Minor, to find cities like Aphrodisias, where extraordinary amounts of effort are expended to maintain the city's form and appearance. This was also done by co-opting statues and buildings, though often discreetly, and by adapting the main temple of the city, which was completely turned inside out and converted into a church, something that was by no means of little impact. This behaviour is not entirely dissimilar to that encountered in Scythopolis, though more extreme, and it would appear that many of the cities of the Levant saw an overall more troubled conversion. It remains thus likely that cities like Scythopolis and Aphrodisias were the exceptions rather than the rule, and it is certain that Christianisation, especially when led by what one can define very easily as zealots, often encountered firm resistance, resulting in repeated and extensive rioting in cities such as Caesarea, Heliopolis, Gaza or Alexandria all of whom required military intervention and negotiation to be quelled.²⁶ This kind of reaction shows how, not only was Christianisation far from easy, but that it was very well understood by its Hellene contemporaries who attempted repeatedly to fight back, though they would, in the end, be unsuccessful. Thus, in conclusion, despite all the triumphalist rhetoric of the Christian authors of the age, it took almost two centuries from the acts of Constantine that set in motion the takeover of the city, for Christianity to truly take over, and even then it was only by reaching a compromise with the secular authorities. Thus, looking at cities like Pella and Gadara, one might even say that, despite all, it took the fall of civic government truly to empower Christianity in its complete monumental domination of the late antique city.

²⁶When thinking of the extremes to which some Christians went, one only has to turn to Libanius who describes the monks who attacked the rural temples of Antioch, in extremely vivid, albeit biased, terms in his *Oratio 30 Pro Templis*.

Chapter 8

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