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UBI PAULUS ET SILEAS IN CARCERE FUERUNT: SACRAL TOPOGRAPHY AND THE POLITICS OF CHRISTIANISATION IN PHILIPPI

This paper discusses the impact of Christianity on the formation of civic identity, focusing on the example of Philippi in Macedonia. It is argued that the narrative offered by the city through its monumental and sacred topography was retailored in the early fourth century, so as to include the story of the Apostle Paul's mission and suffering. The construction of the early fourth-century Christian shrine known as the Basilica of Paul is interpreted as a manifestation of a dialogue among the city of Philippi, the local Christian community, and the emperor Constantine. The Philippians invested in the founder of the local church, Paul the Apostle, in order to promote their city as a significant Christian centre, in a privileged relationship with the Christian imperial regime. The celebration of the city's connection with the Apostle continued throughout Late Antiquity, and was expanded through the construction in c. AD 500 of a second shrine in his honour, Basilica A. A new reading of this complex reveals thus far overlooked aspects of the cult of Paul at Philippi.

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»Gentlemen, you that inhabit this splendid city, listen to me, a sojourner and stranger to whom every city is foreign, by reason of my heavenly citizenship, and all the world is my city, by reason of the gift of God who created all things«¹.

According to the third- or fourth-century *Life of Saint Polycarp of Smyrna*, these were the words by which the Christian bishop Polycarp addressed his fellow citizens of Smyrna, when they summoned him to a civic assembly and requested his prayers during a period of draught. The hagiographer offers an idealized image of a dialogue which must have taken place among several ecclesiastical and civic communities during Late Antiquity. Polycarp sets himself and his flock apart from the citizenry of Smyrna, calling himself a sojourner, stranger and foreigner to every city, and a citizen of heaven and the whole world at the same time. He voices the spirit of a universalist and world-rejecting faith which was, at first level, incompatible with local civic identities, as its adherents were told that they had »no lasting city« in this world².

¹ *Life of Polycarp*, 30.12/5, in *The Apostolic Fathers* (ed. and transl. J. B. LIGHTFOOT [London: Macmillan, 1877/1889]); ALISTAIR STEWART-SYKES, *The Life of Polycarp. An Anonymous Vita from Third-Century Smyrna* (Sydney [Australia]: St Pauls Publications, 2002).

² Hebr. 13,14.

Despite their self-perception as citizens of the eternal city, however, Christians were still scattered in earthly cities and communities, and, consequently, were liable to local identities and rivalries. The process of authority building in the early Christian movement generated competitions of seniority and primacy which were linked to local history and collective memory. By the late second century, there seems to have been a widely accepted view that an ancient church founded by an apostle could claim higher authority in doctrinal and disciplinary issues. The Greco-Roman city, within which the Christian movement grew, provided a favourable cultural backdrop for this development. The cities vied with one another for power and privileges, and one of the means they employed for claiming their authority was their narratives of origins, often centering on the story of an historical, heroic, or divine founder (οἰκιστής/κτίστης/*conditor*)³. The idea of origins and the role of founding figures were central to the discourse of authority in both civic and ecclesiastical politics.

The interactions between city and church, and between cities with one another, were affected by their dealings with a third party – the Roman emperor. The rapprochement, imaginary or true, between the civic community of Smyrna and bishop Polycarp, which is outlined in the above quoted *Life of Polycarp*, was eventually overturned by a persecution of the Christians, which led to the execution of the bishop. In the early fourth century, the changing policies of the tetrarchs and Constantine caused dramatic fluctuations in civic-ecclesiastical relations, as the once persecuted Christians suddenly became the emperor's favoured religious community. At the same time, the administrative reforms introduced by these emperors brought radical changes in the structures of civic power and abolished old privileges. It was a fluid and uncertain time which brought dangers and opportunities for both civic and ecclesiastical communities.

This paper approaches these processes, based on one specific case, the prosperous city of Philippi in Macedonia. A civic community of colonial status and home to an ancient Christian Church associated with the mission of Paul the Apostle, Philippi preserves evidence for a dialogue among the city, the local church, and the emperor in the fourth century, which had defining consequences for the city's life in Late Antiquity. We shall analyze how the shifts of power in the era of Christianization reshaped local civic identity and memory. The religious topography of the town echoes a political struggle for the control not only of physical space, but also of collective memory, at the heart of which was the articulation of the community's narrative of origins.

Civic Memory and Cults at pre-Christian Philippi

The city of Philippi had its origins in Datos/Daton, a probably Thracian polity that controlled the marshy basin between mounts Pangaion and Orbelos in what was then southern Thrace. The region was rich in resources, including fertile land, gold and silver mines, shipyards, and marble quarries, which rendered Datos proverbially wealthy⁴. In c.

³ WOLFGANG LESCHHORN, *Gründer der Stadt. Studien zu einem politisch-religiösen Phänomen der griechischen Geschichte* = Palingenesia 20 (Stuttgart: F. Steiner, 1984).

⁴ Strabo, *geogr.* 7a.1.33.17/34.7. [[reference checked]]

360 BC, the Thasians, under the leadership of the exiled Athenian statesman Kallistratos, conquered the area and founded a colony known as Daton or Krenides. Four years later, the Thracians counterattacked and besieged the young town, but Philip II of Macedon intervened, and established it as an autonomous *polis*, named after himself Philippi⁵. Very little is known about the development of the city until the Battle of Philippi (42 BC), when the town was declared a Roman veteran colony. Its establishment was originally decided by Antony, but his foundation was soon superseded by the victorious Octavian who dedicated the city to the memory of Julius Caesar and granted it the florid title *Colonia Iulia Augusta Philippiensium*⁶.

Although several historical figures could be regarded as founders of Philippi, it is doubtful whether the city developed a proper oikist hero cult, because none of its founders was buried in the city. Kallistratos was executed by his compatriots in Athens⁷. The second oikist, Philip II of Macedon, most probably did have a shrine with its own land, which is epigraphically attested in the Hellenistic period, but its location is unknown⁸. As the cult of a Macedonian ruler, this shrine is unlikely to have survived the Roman conquest and the establishment of the Augustan colony.

The *Colonia Iulia Augusta Philippiensium* apparently adopted the cults of Augustus and Caesar, but there is currently no epigraphic testimony to suggest that this was anything more than a generic version of the imperial cult⁹. The colonial community celebrated its origins from Rome by reproducing the traditional civic cults, priesthoods, and festivals of its metropolis, while the intertwined political and religious identities of the city were evocatively expressed in building: in the first to second centuries, the centre of Philippi was occupied by the stately architectural complex of a forum and a high terrace of temples. The civic square included a temple of the imperial cult, while the terrace was occupied by a group of temples which are likely to have included a capitol¹⁰.

⁵ Diod. Sic. 16.8.6; Appian. *bell. civ.* 4.105. 439; Steph. Byz. D 29, Ph 69, ed. PAUL BILLERBECK and CHRISTIAN ZUBLER, CFHB 43 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2006-2017); MILTIADE HATZOPOULOS, *Philippes, πόλις ἑλληνικῆς Μακεδόνων κτίσμα*: J. FOURNIER (ed.), *Philippes, De la Préhistoire à Byzance. Études d'archéologie et d'histoire* = Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique Supplément 55 (Athènes: École Française d'Athènes, 2016) 97/112.

⁶ For a full survey of the sources, see PAUL COLLART, *Philippes. Ville de Macédoine, depuis ses origines jusqu'à la fin de l'époque Romaine* = Travaux et Mémoires 5 (Paris: Boccard, 1937) 133/257; CHAIDO KOUKOULI-CHRYSTANTHAKI, Philippi: R. LANE FOX (ed.), *Brill's Companion to Ancient Macedon. Studies in the Archaeology and History of Macedon, 650 BC–300 AD* (Leiden: Brill, 2011) 438/9; eadem, *Colonia Augusta Iulia Philippiensis*: CH. BAKIRTZIS / H. KOESTER (ed.), *Philippi at the Time of Paul and after His Death* (Harrisburg Pa.: Trinity Press International, 1998) 5/35; ATHANASE RIZAKIS, *Société, institutions, cultes*: J. FOURNIER (ed.), *Philippes, De la Préhistoire à Byzance. Études d'archéologie et d'histoire* = Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique Supplément 55 (Athènes: École Française d'Athènes, 2016) 174/97 ; CEDRIC BRELAZ, *Philippes, colonie romaine d'Orient. Recherches d'histoire institutionnelle et sociale* = Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique Supplément 59 (Athènes: École Française d'Athènes, 2018).

⁷ Lycurgus, *Leocr.* 93.

⁸ MILTIADES HATZOPOULOS, *Macedonian Institutions under the Kings 2. Epigraphic Appendix* = *Meletēmata* 22 (Paris: Boccard, 1996) 98 (nr. 83); CHRISTIAN HABICHT, *Gottmenschen und griechische Städte* = *Zetemata* 14 (Munich: Beck, 1956) 16.

⁹ PAUL COLLART, *Inscriptions de Philippes*: *Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique* 56 (1932) 192/31, esp. 194. 220 ; BRELAZ, *Philippes colonie* 185/209.

¹⁰ MICHEL SEVE / PATRICK WEBER, *Le côté Nord du forum de Philippes*: *Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique* 110/1 (1986) 531/81.

The only known pre-Roman sacral structure which was preserved within the Roman city was a tomb-shrine located in the second insula east of the forum, near the intersection of the two central streets (fig. 1, nr 2; fig. 4, nr. 1). It centered on a second-century BC vaulted tomb which contained a cist grave with the body of a young boy whose name was inscribed on the marble lid: Euēphenēs, grandson of Exēkestēs/Exēkestos (fig. 2)¹¹. The burial chamber was found looted (in Antiquity), and preserved no other remains or offerings except for the cist grave which apparently escaped the attention of the looters. The fact that Euēphenēs is only related to his grandfather is remarkable, and may suggest that this was a family tomb, with the most important individual buried in it being Exēkestēs/Exēkestos, even though his burial did not survive the looting of the tomb. The reasons for the intramural burial of Euēphenēs and perhaps Exēkestēs/Exēkestos can only be speculated. It may have been the family tomb of a civic benefactor or hero¹².

It has been questioned whether the tomb was originally intramural or whether the tomb shrine was included within the city during its expansion in the Roman period¹³. Be that as it may, its preservation and centrality within the Roman urban texture are by themselves indicative of its cultic importance. The shrine was the only Hellenistic structure which was preserved within the Roman lower town, and it stood in the center of a Roman insula, in perfect alignment with its orientation. It occupied a prominent and central position in the urban plan, near the point where two of the main urban arteries, the ›commercial street‹ and the diagonal *decumanus*, met at an oblique angle. It stood on relatively high ground and was accessed from the ›commercial street‹ which was lined with shops, a *macellum*, and a *gymnasium/palaestra*. This was the commercial part of the city, and the Hellenistic tomb was the most accessible shrine for people visiting or working at the shops, baths, and other amenities in central Philippi. At the same time, however, it was markedly isolated from the forum and the temple terrace (fig. 1, nr 2; fig. 4, nr 1).

The topographic context of the Hellenistic heroon has implications for the character of the cult. At least in terms of location, it was more integrated into the living space and

¹¹ Εὐφρόνης Ἐξηκέστου υἱώνος. Excavation report by DEMETRIOS LAZARIDES in *Archaiologikon Deltion* 19 (1964), vol. B3, 372/4. The word υἱώνος (‘grandson’) was read only recently: KOUKOULI-CHRYSANTHAKI, Philippi 443/4. The second name is attested in both second and first declension forms. For Ἐξηκεστός/Ἐξακεστός, see e.g. Demosthenes, *Aristocr.* 142.3 and 143.2; Ἐξηκέστης is attested in Egyptian ostraka from the mid-third century BC (see Trismegistos nrs 4181 and 4182).

¹² There is a hypothesis that Exēkestēs/Exēkestos was an initiate of the Cabiric shrine of Samothrace, on which see: EDUARD VERHOEF, Syncretism in the church of Philippi: *HTS* 64.2 (2008) 697/714, esp. 698/702; KOUKOULI CHRYSANTHAKI, Philippi 443.

¹³ The possibility that the tomb became intramural only in Roman times was suggested by MENTZOS who also questioned whether it had any cultic importance in the Roman period: ARISTOTELIS MENTZOS, Ζητήματα τοπογραφίας των χριστιανικών Φιλίππων: *Egnatia* 9 (2005) 103/19. His reconstruction of the limits of the Hellenistic city is probably too restrictive. The position of the Hellenistic west gate of the walls suggests that the so-called Via Egnatia and its adjacent *insulae*, including the tomb, were within the Hellenistic fortifications. Even if MENTZOS’ hypothesis about the limits of the pre-Roman city is correct, however, the solitary preservation and topographical centrality of the tomb within the Roman city still indicate cultic prominence. Nearby Thasos provides an illuminating example of the significance of a tomb’s preservation during a phase of urban expansion. During the Classical period, the city was enlarged, necessitating the removal of an older cemetery. The city, however, preserved the tomb of the local oikist hero Glaukos within its new Classical agora and made it an object of veneration. JEAN POUILLLOUX, Une énigme Thasienne: le passage des Théores: *Thasiaca* = Bulletin de Correspondence Hellénique Supplement 5 (Paris: Boccard, 1979) 129/41, esp. 135/8; idem, ›Glaukos, fils de Leptine, Parien‹: *Bulletin de Correspondence Hellénique* 79 (1955) 687/8.

perhaps the religious life of the working classes than the political elite of the town. At the same time, the ancient tomb was a direct reference to the city's pre-Roman origins, and a reminder of the fact that the story of the Philippians went further back than the plantation of the *Colonia Iulia Augusta* and extended beyond its links with the Roman metropolis. Perhaps, this was a shrine for the subaltern component of the colonial city, and a monument to its heritage and origins. We shall probably never know whether this echoes a rivalry between colonists and subalterns within the population, or just the early Roman city's ability to accommodate different traditions, which in Philippi was otherwise also reflected in the flourishing of foreign cults and religious associations¹⁴.

The Memory of Paul the Apostle

About eighty years after its establishment, the Augustan colony of Philippi received the visit of a Roman citizen from Tarsus. He preached the faith of a new religious sect which had recently appeared in Palestine, and this soon led to troubles. Paul of Tarsus was arrested, publicly flogged, and kept in prison, before being released and asked to leave the town¹⁵. Yet he managed to attract some followers, with whom he remained in contact, and addressed to them at least two letters which were later united into the single document known as Paul's *Letter to the Philippians*¹⁶.

The *Acts of the Apostles* mentions that Paul visited Philippi at least twice after his first stay, but it does not describe these later visits¹⁷. The Christian community of Philippi, however, is likely to have preserved memories, or to have developed legends about them, aspects of which may be echoed in the apocryphal *Acts of Paul*. The fragmentary chapter of this text on Philippi seems to be set during one of Paul's later visits. The narrative can be understood only partially¹⁸. The Apostle seems to have converted the wife and daughter of

¹⁴ Voluntary associations are known to have practiced the cults of western and oriental deities (Silvanus, Isis, Serapis, Cybele, etc.) at shrines located at the foot of the acropolis hill, near the terrace of the civic temple. Local religion was also expressed through votive reliefs on the rock faces of the surrounding slopes. Local Thracian deities in the guise of various Greco-Roman avatars, especially Dionysus/Liber Pater, and Artemis/Diana seem to have been particularly prominent. On the cults of Philippi, see: COLLART, *Philippes* 389/486; PAUL COLLART / PIERRE DUCREY, *Philippes I. Les reliefs rupestres* = Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique Supplément 2 (Athens: École Française d'Athènes, 1975); PETER PHILHOFER, *Philippi 1. Die erste christliche Gemeinde Europas* = Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 87 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1995) 92/113; RIZAKIS, Société 183/90. BRELAZ, *Philippes colonie* 185/209.

¹⁵ Act.16.11/40.

¹⁶ JULIEN M. OGÉREAU, *Paul's Koinonia with the Philippians: A Socio-Historical Investigation of a Pauline Economic Partnership* = Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 377 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014). Also see various papers in : J. FREY/ B. SCHLISSER/ V. NIEDERHOFER (ed.), *Der Philipperbrief des Paulus in der hellenistisch-römischen Welt* = Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 353 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015).

¹⁷ Act. 19.21/22, 20.1/6.

¹⁸ See aggregated fragments in translation with comments and references to the Coptic and Greek original texts: EDGAR HENNECKE / WILHELM SCHNEEMELCHER, *New Testament Apocrypha 2: Writings Relating to the Apostles, Apocalypses and Related Subjects*. English translation edited by ROBERT MCLACHLAN WILSON (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co Ltd, 1992) 213/70, esp. 227/9. 254/8 (frg. 7-8). Cf. French translation: WILLY RORDORF, *Acts de Paul: F. BOVON / P. GEOLTRAIN (ed.), Écrits apocryphes chrétiens* (Paris: Gallimard, 1997) 1115/77 (frg. 10-11). Commentary: OTTO ZWIERLEIN, *Petrus und Paulus in Jerusalem und*

a powerful man called Longinus, wherefore he was condemned to labour at a quarry or mine (referred to as ἔργαστρα in the Greek version)¹⁹. A girl called Frontina (probably Longinus' daughter) was condemned to death and killed by being thrown down from a cliff. Paul raised her from the dead and brought her back home, while the crowd was glorifying his god. While in Philippi, the Apostle received a letter from the Corinthians and replied with his *Third Letter to the Corinthians*.

The *Acts of Paul* was a compilation of legends circulating among the Christian communities of the first centuries and, despite being classified as non-canonical, it was a popular and influential text²⁰. In the early fourth century, Eusebius of Caesarea simply listed it as a contested text, but refrained from condemning it²¹. The Philippian chapter of the text may have derived its information from the early Christian group of Philippi. It is also significant that Paul's stay in the city is presented as the setting for the writing of *Third Corinthians*, a document which enjoyed wide acceptance as canonical, especially in Syria, and its presence would have increased the validity of the narrative which contained it²². Tertullian reports that the author of the *Acts of Paul* was a presbyter in Asia, who was deposed for having composed an apocryphal text, even though he had acted out of love for the Apostle²³. Indeed, like many *apocrypha*, this work can be described as proto-hagiography – a literary composition driven by the Christian devotion to a particular holy figure, and intended to propagate this figure's story – and it was precisely as a source for hagiography and the cult of saints that it remained influential in Late Antiquity²⁴.

Both the canonical and apocryphal *Acts* contain vestiges of the foundation story of the Philippian Church, which included at least two episodes of suffering and confrontation with the civic community – Paul's imprisonment and forced labour. The theatres of these stories could have been recognized in the city: as a seat of administration, Philippi will have had a gaol for criminals awaiting trial, and it was built on a site of marble quarrying²⁵. Stories of suffering and their purported theatres were instrumental in the development of the cult of martyrs and saints in Late Antiquity. Accordingly, the narrative of origins of the Philippian Christian group had the potential of becoming the basis for the development of a cult of its founding father, Paul.

The First Pilgrim

Rom: *Vom neuen Testament zu den apokryphen Apostelakten* = Untersuchungen zur antiken Literatur und Geschichte 109 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013) 191/220.

¹⁹ Mentioned in the Greek text of the Hamburg papyrus, p. 6 [[this must stay p. the publication divides into 'Seiten']], lines 4-5. C. Schmidt and W. Schubart, *Πράξεις Παύλου, Acta Pauli. Nach dem Papyrus der Hamburger Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek* (Glückstadt: Augustin, 1936) 44.

²⁰ GLENN. E. SNYDER, *Acts of Paul: the Formation of a Pauline Corpus*, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 352 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013).

²¹ Euseb. *h. e.* 3.3.5; SNYDER, *Acts of Paul* 237/9.

²² SNYDER, *Acts of Paul* 225.

²³ Tertull. *bapt.* 17; ANTHONY HILLHORST, Tertullian on the Acts of Paul: J. Bremmer (ed.) *The Apocryphal Acts of Paul and Thecla* (Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1996) 150/63.

²⁴ SNYDER, *Acts of Paul* 240/2; UWE-KARSTEN PLISCH, Paulus III (in den neutestamentlichen Apokryphen): RAC 26, 1224/8.

²⁵ Cf. MENTZOS, *Ζητήματα τοπογραφίας* 144/6.

It seems indeed that, already under Constantine, Philippi advertised itself to its Christian visitors as the setting of the Apostle's exploits. The city's earliest recorded visitor with Christian interests was the Bordeaux Pilgrim who passed through the area in AD 334, and kept a note on 'the city of Philippi where Paul and Silas were in prison' (*civitas Philippis ubi Paulus et Sileas in carcere fuerunt*)²⁶. In order to fully understand the importance of this testimony, it is necessary to look into the context of the *Itinerarium Burdigalense*²⁷.

The Bordeaux Pilgrim was a Christian who travelled from Bordeaux to Jerusalem and back again in AD 333/334. The author (whose gender is unknown) used the imperial highways and their travelling infrastructure, and recorded their journey in the format of a typical Roman road itinerary. Mostly a list of *mutationes*, *mansiones*, and *civitates*, the document is enriched with sporadic notes on sites of interest, which become dense in Phoenicia and turn into a meticulous and exhaustive recording of sacred sites in Palestine. The text's comments about sites outside the Levant are very few²⁸. The author found nothing worth noting in Gaul, Italy and Pannonia, but, in Moesia, they recorded Viminacium as the place where Diocletian had murdered Carinus. Passing Thrace and Constantinople without comments, they noticed the tomb of Hannibal in Bithynia, the horse-breeding estate of Palmatius in Cappadocia, and the birthplace of Apollonius at Tyana. Their only note of Christian interest before reaching the Holy Land was on Tarsus which they singled out as Paul's birthplace. On their way back to Gaul, they followed the same roads through Anatolia, which they recorded without comments. In the Balkans, they now took the Egnatian Way, and put down their three last notes: at Philippi, Paul and Silas' prison; at Arethusa, the tomb of Euripides; and at Pella, the birthplace of Alexander the Great²⁹.

This excursus on the Bordeaux Pilgrim suggests that the note of this text on Philippi does not derive solely from the author's awareness of scriptural narrative, but testifies to the local prominence of the specific narrative of Paul's incarceration. The author kept haphazard notes on curiosities which impressed them during their journey – things which they saw or heard. The note on Paul at Philippi could easily imply that the author was either shown Paul's prison or was told the story while staying in the city³⁰.

The First Church Building

²⁶ *Itin. Burd.* 603.10/604.10; LEMERLE, *Philippe* 58/60. 87/90.

²⁷ JAS ELSNER, *The Itinerarium Burdigalense: Politics and Salvation in the Geography of Constantine's Empire*: *JRS* 90 (2000) 181–95.

²⁸ ELSNER, *Itinerarium Burdigalense* 190.

²⁹ *Itin. Burd.* 604.7. 605.4 (ed. J. Schnetz, O. Cuntz, *Itineraria Romana*, Leipzig, 1929, CCL 175, 1/26). A few years after the Bordeaux Pilgrim, the tomb of Euripides was also seen by Ammianus Marcellinus. As a pagan, Ammianus had little interest in Paul, but, while visiting Macedonia, he probably saw Aristotle's birthplace at Stagira: *Amm. Marc.* 27.4.8.

³⁰ On the importance of prisons as a motif in hagiography and the cult of martyrs, see: CHRISTODOULOS PAPAVERNAYAS, *Gefängnis als Schwellenraum in der byzantinischen Hagiographie: Eine literarische Untersuchung der Märtyrerakten in früh- und mittelbyzantinischer Zeit*, Dissertation (Wien: Universität Wien 2018).

It was only a few years after the arrival of the Bordeaux Pilgrim that Philippi witnessed the building of its earliest archaeologically documented church. The site chosen was no other than the pagan tomb-shrine which we described earlier. The Christian building was erected against the south façade of the Hellenistic tomb, occupying the southern part of its sacred precinct (fig. 3). It was a single rectangular hall, paved with mosaics which, according to an inscription, were made under a bishop Porphyrios. The latter is thought to have been the bishop of Philippi who signed the acts of the Council of Serdica in 343, and the building has therefore been dated to the early fourth century³¹. It must be pointed out though that the inscription only talks about the making of the mosaics rather than the building. If Porphyrios was indeed the signatory of Serdica, the building itself could have been constructed before the 340s.

Several features of this church are unique for the age when it was built. Perhaps the most striking is its central location and the aggressive way it appropriated the pre-Christian cult site. Although a common practice in the fifth and sixth centuries, no church is known to have occupied such a prominent location in a city, or to have taken over a pagan shrine in the pre-Theodosian period, except for the imperial church buildings in Constantinople and Jerusalem. Rome itself had hardly any churches in its central areas before the fifth century, while notable fourth-century churches in provincial capitals such as Aquileia, Trier, Salona or Cologne appeared in the outskirts rather than the centres of these cities. The modest size (27.5 by 9.9 m) and simplicity of the Philippian church building, combined with the mosaic inscriptions, allow us to exclude an explanation of it as an imperial building project. It was apparently built by the local Christian community, though it will have benefited from Constantine's legislation demanding the construction of monumental churches, and may have been subsidized with imperial funds³².

The mosaic inscription designates the hall as the »Basilica of Paul«. If this phrase means 'a church dedicated to Paul', this is one of the earliest known examples of a Christian church dedicated to a particular saint – alongside the basilicas of Saints Peter and Paul in Rome and the Holy Apostles in Constantinople. Given the close connection of Philippi with the mission of the Apostle, the Basilica of Paul could have hosted his veneration. This would provide an exceptionally early and rare attestation of his cultic prominence outside Rome, for, despite his central role in the New Testament, Paul's cult is scarcely attested at the places he visited and evangelized³³.

³¹ Πο[ρφύ]ριος ἐπίσκοπος τῇ[ν κ]έντησιν τῆς βασιλικῆς Παύλου[ν ἐπ]οίησεν ἐν Χ(ριστῷ) (= »Bishop Porphyrios made the mosaic of the basilica of Paul, in Christ«). SEG 27 (1977) 304 = ICG 3247 (JULIEN OGERAU); PETER PHILHOFER, *Philippi 2. Katalog der Inschriften von Philippi* = Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 119 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000) 337/8 (Nr 329/ G472 IV). The inscription was first published by STYLIANOS PELEKANIDES, *Ἀνασκαφή Φιλίππων: Πρακτικά τῆς ἐν Ἀθήναις Ἀρχαιολογικῆς Εταιρείας* 1975, 91/102, esp. 101. For the Acts of Serdica, see: *Collectanea antiariana parisina* (ed. ALFRED FEDER = CSEL 65, 134).

³² NOEL LENSKE, *Constantine and the Cities: Imperial Authority and Civic Politics* (Philadelphia : University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016) 179/196.

³³ At Thessalonica, Athens, and Corinth, we currently have no direct evidence for Paul's cult. A possible chapel of his has been tentatively recognized at Caesarea Maritima, and he was depicted in a grotto at Ephesus, which may have housed his cult. See: ERNST DASSMANN, *Archäologische Spuren frühchristlicher Paulusverehrung: Römische Quartalschrift für christliche Altertumskunde und Kunstgeschichte* 84 (1989) 271-98, esp. 277/8; idem, Paulus IV (Ikonographie u. Kult): RAC 26 (2015) 1239/42; JOSEPH PATRICH, A

The architectural formation of the Basilica of Paul indicates that the old tomb which it had inherited from the pre-Christian heroon continued to be an object of veneration. The central bay of the church hall opened directly onto it and it was surrounded by a sequence of corridor-like rooms resembling an ambulatory (fig. 3; fig. 5; no. 5). Its superstructure was probably demolished or rebuilt in a different form, and the tomb surface became a room within the ecclesiastical complex. It was very probably inaccessible to visitors, and the same certainly applies to the subterranean tomb chamber. One could walk around the tomb, following the rooms of the ambulatory, and view it from two small platforms, without entering it. 527 Roman and late-antique bronze coins were found on the surface, suggesting that worshippers used to mark their prayers by throwing some change, like a wishing well³⁴.

ARISTOTELES MENTZOS assumed that the tomb was venerated as the site of the public flogging of Paul and Silas. This hypothesis cannot be confirmed textually or epigraphically, but it is based on an important observation: there is no indication to suggest that the tomb was venerated as a tomb³⁵. In all probability, it was revered as a holy site, associated with the Apostle's mission and suffering. Given the fact that the Basilica of Paul was probably built shortly after the visit of the Bordeaux Pilgrim, the tomb could have been the purported prison of the Apostle, which the Gallic visitor may have seen in 334. Be that as it may, Christian worship and the memory of the Philippian Church's founder superseded a pre-Roman cult and an urban landmark related to the city's pre-colonial origins. Paul and his community took the place of the last memorial of the city of Philip of Macedon and its heroes in the sacral landscape.

The Tomb of Paul?

A radical theory concerning Paul's memory in Philippi was proposed by HELMUT KOESTER, ALLEN D. CALLAHAN, and CHARALAMBOS BAKIRTZIS, in a collection of papers published in 1998. In two papers discussing the New Testament sources, KOESTER and CALLAHAN proposed that, during the early second century, there was a memory, genuine or

Chapel of Saint Paul at Caesarea Maritima?: *Liber Annuus* 50 (2000) 363/82; RENATE PILLINGER, Die Paulus-Grotte: N. ZIMMERMANN / S. LADSTÄTTER (ed.), *Wandmalerei in Ephesos von hellenistischer bis in byzantinische Zeit* (Wien: Phoibos, 2010) 174/81.

³⁴ For a concise description and bibliography, see: CHARALAMBOS BAKIRTZIS, Paul and Philippi. The Archaeological Evidence: CH. BAKIRTZIS / H. KOESTER (ed.), *Philippi at the Time of Paul and after His Death* (Harrisburg Pa.: Trinity Press International, 1998) 37/48; BEAT BRENNK, *Die Christianisierung der spätromischen Welt. Stadt, Land, Haus, Kirche und Kloster in frühchristlicher Zeit* = Studien und Perspektiven 10 (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2003) 8/10; DASSMANN, Paulusverehrung 278; STYLLIANOS PELEKANIDES, Kultprobleme im Apostel-Paulus-Oktogon von Philippi in Zusammenhang mit einem älteren Heroenkult: *Atti del IX Congresso Internazionale di Archeologia Cristiana. Roma, 21–27 Settembre 1975* (Rome: Pontificio Istituto di archeologia cristiana, 1978) 393/9; ELLI PELEKANIDOU / ARISTOTELIS MENTZOS, Οκτάγωνο Φιλίππων. Πρώτα συμπεράσματα μετά τις νεότερες έρευνες: *Μνήμη Δ. Λαζαρίδη. Πόλις και χώρα στην αρχαία Μακεδονία και Θράκη* = Recherches Franco-Helléniques 1 (Thessaloniki: École Française d'Athènes, 1990) 597/607. Sadly, the movable finds of the excavation of the tomb have not been published, thus leaving a major gap in our knowledge. The study of the coins, in particular, is a great desideratum, since it could provide evidence for the diachronic development of the cult.

³⁵ MENTZOS, Ζητήματα τοπογραφίας 101/49.

invented, which claimed that Paul had died and was buried as a martyr in Philippi³⁶. According to CALLAHAN, this was originally the subject of the fragmentary Philippian chapter of the *Acts of Paul*, but it was deliberately edited out, so as to accommodate the narrative of Paul's death in Rome, with which the *Acts of Paul* in their extant form end. According to his theory, the *Acts of Paul* in their original version ended with Paul's death in Philippi rather than Rome, while *everything that follows the absent Philippian episode in the Acts of Paul shows the signs of artifice*³⁷. Given the fragmentary state of the text, this is a bold suggestion to make, and it relies on an understanding of the *Acts of Paul* as a unified text, which is far from certain³⁸.

Even if we accept, however, that a narrative placing Paul's death at Philippi had existed down to the second century, one may question its impact in subsequent periods. The Christian group of Philippi was in communion with other early catholic communities, among which the tradition about Peter and Paul's deaths in Rome was known by the late second century the latest, as demonstrated by the letter of Dionysius of Corinth to the Romans³⁹. Shortly before AD 200, the catholic author Gaius of Rome, in his epistolary debate with the Phrygian Montanist leader Proclus, declared that Rome had the tombs of the Apostles Peter and Paul, to which Proclus responded that Phrygia had those of Philip and his daughters at Hierapolis. At roughly the same time, the bishop of Ephesus, Polycrates, in his dispute with Pope Victor I on the date of Easter, also declared that the province of Asia possessed the tombs of John and Philip⁴⁰. These statements are known only from quotations by Eusebius, isolated from their original context, but their presence in polemical texts discussing ecclesiastical doctrine and discipline can hardly be a coincidence. The possession of apostolic tombs underpinned claims to higher authority. One would have expected that a Philippian claim to Paul's tomb would have attracted attention from other catholic sources.

Even if CALLAHAN's theory about the forging of the *Acts of Paul* under the influence of the Roman tradition is correct, it only corroborates the impression that the belief in Paul's death in Rome had started to impose itself as orthodox by c. AD 200. And, if that was the case in 200, how likely is it that Porphyrios, a bishop who attended Serdica alongside the bishops of the West in 343, would have been advertising his town as the resting place of Paul the Apostle, as CHARALAMBOS BAKIRTZIS suggests⁴¹? The tomb of the Basilica of Paul received veneration uninterruptedly at least until the late sixth century. Did they continue to claim that Paul was buried there as late as that? There is a considerable distance in chronology and historical context between the world which produced the canonical and apocryphal New Testament, and the one which produced the Basilica of Paul. What may have been a possibility within the incipient Christian movement cannot

³⁶ BAKIRTZIS / KOESTER (ed.).

³⁷ A. D. CALLAHAN, *Dead Paul: The Apostle as Martyr in Philippi*: Bakirtzis / Koester (ed.) 80.

³⁸ SNYDER, *Acts of Paul*.

³⁹ Eusebius, *hist. eccl.* 2.25.8.

⁴⁰ Eusebius, *hist. eccl.* 2.25.5/7; 3.31.1/3; KOESTER, *Paul and Philippi* 64-65. KOESTER underplays the importance of these attestations. For a survey of the early sources on Paul's death and burial in Rome, and on the importance of this narrative in second-century ecclesiastical politics, see: ZWIERLEIN, *Petrus und Paulus* 105/29.

⁴¹ BAKIRTZIS, *Paul and Philippi* 47.

necessarily explain the activity and objectives of a bishop of the imperial church in the fourth century.

The City, the Church, and the Emperor

The political implications of the aggressive appearance of the Basilica of Paul in the urban texture of Philippi have not been sufficiently discussed so far. The takeover of a city's most ancient pagan shrine in such an early period will have required the approval of the civic authorities, and some degree of agreement between city and Church. If the Basilica of Paul was built during the reign of Constantine or shortly after his death, this agreement will have been influenced by the new religious policy of the emperor. It seems that the Philippians actively sought the favour of the victorious Christian emperor, as indicated by a monument in his honour on the forum of Philippi, which acclaimed him as 'founder/builder (*conditor*) of the most splendid colony of the Philippians'⁴². This was a striking title. The city had set up several monuments for emperors in the past, but it had never called anyone of them its founder⁴³. It is probably no coincidence that the inscription also avoids using the old civic epithets *Colonia Iulia Augusta*, but styles the city by the novel title *splendidissima colonia Philippiensium*⁴⁴. Implicitly, the city declared the beginning of a new era under the protection of Constantine, Philippi's new Octavian.

Philippi's contact with Constantine was not an isolated case, but can be understood in the light of the evidence for communication between this emperor and various civic communities, which was recently analyzed by NOEL LENSKI. The change of civic title recalls the case of another Augustan colony, Hispellum in Umbria, which was instructed by Constantine himself to replace its old title, *Colonia Iulia*, with the new imperial epithet *Flavia Constans*⁴⁵. The bids of Philippi and Hispellum to establish a special relationship with Constantine and the change of their civic titles may be related to the declining prestige of their old colonial status. With the Edict of Caracalla (AD 212), the status of a colony was reduced to a mere title of honour, while the hardships of the third-century crisis imposed equality in misery among all civic communities. Within the new administrative landscape emerging from the tetrarchic and Constantinian reforms, the equality of colonies to other

⁴² [Imp(eratorem)] Caes(arem) Flavium Const[antinum] | [P(ium) F(elicem)] Max(imum) Victorem A[ugustum] | [c]onditorem spl[endidiss(imae)] | [c]oloniae Phil[ippi(ensium)] vac. r(es) p(ublica) d(euota) [n(umini) m(aiestati)q(ue) eius]. Text: CEDRIC BRELAZ, *Corpus des inscriptions grecques et latines de Philippes. Tome II, La colonie Romaine. Partie 1, La vie publique de la colonie*. Etudes Epigraphiques 6 (Paris : Ecole française d'Athènes, 2014) 129 (Nr 29).

⁴³ BRELAZ, *Philippes colonie* 218.

⁴⁴ The epithet *splendidissima* (or its Greek counterpart λαμπρά/λαμπροτάτη) was awarded to several cities in the early fourth century. See: EFTHYMIOS RIZOS, Civic administration in Illyricum and Thrace: *Antiquité Tardive* 26 (2018) 201/13, esp. 202. The original title *Iulia Augusta* was not dropped altogether (it reappears in inscriptions during the fourth century), but its omission in a phrase where Constantine is called *conditor coloniae* cannot be fortuitous. BRELAZ, *Corpus des inscriptions* 133 (Nr 31).

⁴⁵ LENSKI, *Constantine and the Cities* 114/130.

provincial towns was finalized⁴⁶. For minor cities this may have been good news, but for colonies like Hispellum and Philippi it was a loss of prestige. As their old titles of honour and privileges were becoming irrelevant, cities like these will have sought for ways of renewing their privileges.

Hispellum's excuse for contacting Constantine was a request to establish its own temple and festival of the imperial cult, and to stop sharing its ritual obligations with the neighbouring city of Volsinii. Conceivably a predominantly pagan community, Hispellum had a traditional understanding of the channels through which a city could cultivate its relationship with the imperial centre. These were the institutions and celebrations of the imperial cult. Constantine allowed the Hispellates to dedicate a temple to the *gens Flavia*, provided that it was kept free of *the deceits of any kind of contagious superstition*. The imperial cult was to remain a part of civic life, but had to be dissociated from the pagan religion, in order to be compatible with the emperor's new religious preferences. Given the close link between the civic and imperial cults, however, this implied that the Hispellates were expected to revise their civic religious customs. Without saying it openly, Constantine asked for a religious reform.

Constantine's religious conversion created pitfalls for practitioners of the old traditions, while providing opportunities for the followers of his own faith. At the same time as Hispellum, the rural township of Orkistos in Galatia appealed to Constantine requesting civic independence. It invoked the Christianity of its inhabitants, in order to break from the civic jurisdiction of its pagan neighbour, Nacolea. The civic religion of the Orkistenes was to the emperor's liking, and he had no recommendation to make as to how they were to practice the imperial cult, if at all⁴⁷. Of course, unlike Hispellum and Orkistos, the subject of the dialogue between the Philippians and Constantine is unknown, but the construction of the Basilica of Paul and its exceptional features suggest that the status of Christianity in the city was involved in it. In order to achieve the emperor's favour, the city probably used its Christian community as a political asset, and ceded to it a privileged position, both spatially and institutionally, allowing it to build a church in the centre of the town.

The Philippian Christians grabbed the opportunity for a strong statement of their authoritative position not only within their city, but perhaps within the broader Christian community as well. Surprising as this may seem, the Church of Philippi was also facing the prospect of a loss of prestige, comparable to that experienced by the city. During the pre-Constantinian period, the Christians of Philippi, although faced with the hostility of the imperial authorities, seem to have enjoyed a special position within the early Christian movement, and we hear more about it than any other Christian group north of Corinth. In the mid-second century, the Philippians received a letter from Polycarp of Smyrna⁴⁸. In c.

⁴⁶ On the impact of the tetrarchic reforms on civic administration in the Balkan provinces, see: RIZOS, Civic administration 201/13.

⁴⁷ LENSKE, *Constantine and the Cities* 87/113; ANDRÉ CHASTAGNOL, L'inscription constantinienne d'Orkistos: *Mélanges de l'Ecole française de Rome. Antiquité* 93 (1981) 381/416; RAYMOND VAN DAM, *The Roman Revolution of Constantine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) 151/83.

⁴⁸ On the Philippian community of the second and third centuries, see: Polycarp. ad Philipp.; DIMITRIOS KYRTATAS, Early Christianity in Macedonia: R. LANE FOX (ed.), *Brill's Companion to Ancient Macedon. Studies in the Archaeology and History of Macedon, 650 BC–300 AD* (Leiden: Brill, 2011) 585/ 91; HELMUT

AD 200, Tertullian named them as the apostolic church presiding over Macedonia, alongside Corinth in Achaia, Ephesus in Asia, and Rome in Italy⁴⁹. His statement cannot derive simply from the city's representation in Scripture – otherwise why not refer to Thessalonica, provincial capital of Macedonia and recipient of two letters from Paul? The church of Thessalonica indeed appears puzzlingly silent in the pre-Constantinian period, and it would not be unreasonable to suggest that it was a less significant Christian group. This situation, however, started to change after Constantine's triumph. Christian worship was now free, but the transformation of the networks of local congregations into an imperial church imposed a new hierarchy of power. The Fathers of Nicaea ordered that the bishops of provincial capitals should exercise jurisdiction over all the bishops of their provinces⁵⁰. For the Philippian Christians, this must have meant an unwelcome downgrading. Once the leading church of Macedonia, they were now subject to higher authority of the bishop of Thessalonica.

By the 320s, the authority of both the ecclesiastical and civic communities of Philippi was threatened by the overall administrative and religious transformation of the Roman world. Both Christians and pagans in the city were confronted with a common challenge regarding the future and dignity of their community: what should be done to secure for Philippi its privileges and special position? The answer seems to have been an alliance between city and church and their rapprochement with the Christian emperor. Philippi reaffirmed its colonial status by proclaiming Constantine its new founder and, at the same time, reinvented itself as the home of an ancient Christian church, firmly rooted in the teachings and labours of an Apostle. This was a message with multiple recipients. First, it was a gesture of ostentatious loyalism towards Constantine's Christian imperial regime. Second, it constructed a new narrative of origins for the local population, which acknowledged the ecclesiastical community as a central part of the story of the city. Third, it declared to the Christian hierarchy of the region the special position of this city within the history and life of the Church. Philippi repositioned itself within the political and religious landscape of the changing Roman world with remarkable resilience.

Shift of Power

Constantine's favoured religion had hitherto been practiced mostly by members of the non-elite classes, and his triumph provided an opportunity for unprivileged communities to claim political emancipation. The profile of the Christian communes which appealed to him

KOESTER, Paul and Philippi. The Evidence from Early Christian Literature: CH. BAKIRTZIS / H. KOESTER (ed.), *Philippi at the Time of Paul and after His Death* (Harrisburg Pa.: Trinity Press International, 1998) 49/65; LEMERLE, *Philippes* 60/68.

⁴⁹ *Age iam, qui uoles curiositatem melius exercere in negotio salutis tuae, percurre ecclesias apostolicas apud quas ipsae adhuc cathedrae apostolorum suis locis praesident, apud quas ipsae authenticae litterae eorum recitantur sonantes uocem et repraesentantes faciem uniuscuiusque. Proxima est tibi Achaia, habes Corinthum. Si non longe es a Macedonia, habes Philippus; si potes in Asiam tendere, habes Ephesum; si autem Italiae adiaceres, habes Romam unde nobis quoque auctoritas praesto est. Tertullian, De praescriptione haereticorum 36.*

⁵⁰ Canons of the Council of Nicaea 4, 5, 6. Text: P. P. JOANNOU, *Discipline Générale Antique (Ile-IXe s.)*, Fonti 9 (Roma : Tipografia Italo-Orientale « San Nilo », 1962) 26/9.

requesting civic independence confirms this social dimension of his religious revolution: besides the rural township of Orkistos, they included two port settlements of sailors and freighters, Maiuma and Portus⁵¹. Philippi, of course, was not an unprivileged city, but its alliance with the Christians will have empowered a hitherto disenfranchised part of the local community. This may be echoed in the decision to cede to them the Hellenistic tomb shrine which, as we suggested earlier, had probably been associated with the lower classes. It is possible that the Christians were allowed to take over a shrine of the less privileged to whom they had belonged themselves. The seclusion of the tomb-shrine from the forum remained unchanged after its conversion to Christian use. After Constantine, however, the social profile of the Church changed rapidly. The Basilica of Paul created a parallel center of communal life, existing side by side with the old civic buildings of the forum, but without merging with them. The power dynamics between the ecclesiastical and civic authorities are reflected in the evolution of the two complexes over time.

The forum remained functional and was probably maintained, but its late antique state gives an impression of stagnation, if not decline. Very few inscriptions or monuments were added during the fourth century, and probably none during the fifth⁵². The fate of the temples' terrace appears similar. No new dedications, construction or maintenance of pagan religious buildings is archaeologically attested after Constantine⁵³. Conceivably, the confiscation of temple and municipal estates led to the economic suffocation of the old religious institutions and rendered the maintenance of their buildings difficult. It is impossible to assess for how long the old temples were preserved and whether they were functional in some form. A possible sign of desacralization of the area is noted in the late fourth or early fifth century, when a bathhouse was built between the forum and the temple terrace. The sight line between the piazza and the shrines was broken through the insertion of an unassuming utilitarian building, thus reflecting the end of the functional union between civic government and the pagan religion⁵⁴. The temples of the terrace and their cults had apparently ceased to matter. In the late fifth century, the porticoes of the forum were damaged by an earthquake and were rebuilt. Philippi is the only city in the Balkan provinces, which is known to have repaired its monumental early Roman forum after AD 400, which indicates great prosperity. The repair, however, was also accompanied by a significant change. The forum square was connected with the Basilica of Paul through the construction of a ramp which gave direct access to the atrium of the church⁵⁵. After three hundred years of existence, the civic centre was now linked with the religious site to its east, having previously been cut off from the temple terrace to its north.

Unlike the forum and the terrace, the state of the ecclesiastical complex was one of steady flourishing and expansion from the fourth century on. During the fifth century, the simple fourth-century Basilica of Paul was replaced by a lavishly decorated octagonal

⁵¹ LENSKI, *Constantine and the Cities* 87/113, 131/135, 144/147.

⁵² BRELAZ, *Corpus des inscriptions*; MICHEL SEVE / PATRICK WEBER, *Guide du forum de Philippes* = Sites et Monuments 18 (Paris, De Boccard, 2012) 20/22.

⁵³ Admittedly, the archaeological traces of these shrines are extremely poor. Any conclusion about their state in Late Antiquity is necessarily tentative: MICHEL SÈVE / PATRICK WEBER, *Le côté Nord du forum de Philippes: Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique* 110/1 (1986) 531/81.

⁵⁴ SEVE/WEBER, *Guide du forum* 21.

⁵⁵ SEVE/WEBER, *Guide du forum* 23.

church (fig. 4, no. 1, 2). The old tomb retained its central position north of the new building, and the rooms around it were further enhanced with a baptistery, a holy water fountain, and an offertories table (fig. 5). The church appears to have incorporated the neighbouring *insulae*, and the Christian complex grew into a size exceeding 7,000 m² – corresponding to three quarters of the area of the forum⁵⁶. The contrast between the dynamism of the new ecclesiastical centre and the stagnation of the old civic one reflects the great shift of power which rendered the Church dominant in local political life. This shift was, of course, universal and not specific to Philippi, and took place gradually in the course of Late Antiquity, reaching its peak between the reigns of Anastasius I and Justinian I (AD 491-565). During this period, the forum of Philippi was surrounded by massive churches on all of its sides.

Paul's Cult Expanded

The first ecclesiastical complex to be built in Philippi after the Basilica of Paul was probably the building known as Basilica A. It was now the turn of the temples' terrace to be conquered by the Christians. Around AD 500, the remains of the old temples were cleared and a large basilica was erected on their site⁵⁷. Unlike the relatively modest fourth-century Basilica of Paul, Basilica A was a monumental and costly affair from the very beginning. No expense was spared for its decoration, as the lavish amounts of freshly imported Proconnesian marble suggest – especially columns and large floor slabs. Fine opus sectile floors marked the most sacred spaces. The walls were resplendent with frescoes, mosaics and marble incrustation, and the windows had lead-glass panels⁵⁸.

Basilica A was a longitudinally arranged building ensemble, comprising a sizable three-aisled transept basilica in its eastern half, and two consecutive peristyle courts/atria in the west (fig. 6). The double court is a striking feature which has attracted hardly any attention so far. Double courts/atria can be found only in some major shrines such as the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem (Constantinian), the great basilica of Lechaeum in Corinth (late fifth century), and the domed church of the shrine of Saint Thekla in Meryemlik (late fifth century)⁵⁹. With the exception of the Anastasis in Jerusalem, the cultic function of the second atrium in these examples remains unclear, but it can be plausibly associated with the special requirements of worship at pilgrimage centres. The presence of two courts at Basilica A suggests that this was a pilgrimage shrine.

⁵⁶ For a full description of these structures, see BAKIRTZIS, Paul and Philippi; GEORGIOS GOUNARIS, *To βαλανείο και τα βόρεια προσκτίσματα του Οκταγώνου των Φιλίππων* = Βιβλιοθήκη της ἐν Ἀθήναις Ἀρχαιολογικῆς Ἑταιρείας 112 (Athens: Ἡ ἐν Ἀθήναις Ἀρχαιολογικὴ Ἑταιρεία, 1990) 39/57; SLOBODAN CURCIC, *Architecture in the Balkans from Diocletian to Süleyman the Magnificent* (New Haven : Yale University Press, 2010) 114/9.

⁵⁷ LEMERLE, *Philippes* 291-299.

⁵⁸ LEMERLE, *Philippes* 393-412.

⁵⁹ Corinth: DEMETRIOS PALLAS, *Corinth: Reallexikon zur byzantinischen Kunst* 4 (1982) 770; idem, *Ἀνασκαφαὶ ἐν Λεχάειο: Πρακτικὰ τῆς ἐν Ἀθήναις Ἀρχαιολογικῆς Ἑταιρείας* 1959 129. Meryemlik: HANSGERD HELLENKEMPER, *Die Kirchenstiftung des Kaisers Zenon im Wallfahrtsheiligtum der Heiligen Thekla bei Seleukeia: Wallraf-Richartz-Jahrbuch* 47(1986) 63-90.

The main entrance into the complex of Basilica A was through an apsidal gate on the street (the so-called Via Egnatia), where the visitor would have encountered a flight of steps with a small fountain to the right, leading up to the west court (fig. 7). In the middle of the western peristyle stood the remnants of the *cella* of one of the early Roman temples of the terrace. The temple ruin and the grand flight of steps in front of it were the only pre-Christian structures of the terrace which were preserved within the Christian complex. It seems that the *cella* was turned into a cistern or pool, having had its interior deepened and paved with bricks (fig. 8). The excavator suggested that this was a convenient solution for the construction of the cistern, but his view seems unsatisfactory, because Basilica A, as a whole, demonstrates a preference for monumental rather than economical solutions⁶⁰. The preservation of the temple ruin and the construction of the peristyle were probably dictated by something more than practical necessity. It seems that the ruin was presented to the visitors of Basilica A as an object of cultic significance, and it is likely that the water stored in it was distributed for blessing or used for ablutions. The Christian shrine probably appropriated the older sacred building, investing it with a new narrative, but preserving its sacrality. It seems that the precedent of the Basilica of Paul, and of the way it incorporated the older tomb-shrine, was repeated here as well.

Next to the temple ruin, another point of special importance and perhaps veneration seems to have existed at the southeast corner of the western court. It was a very small apsidal room with two entrances, built against the rear wall of the neighbouring atrium (fig. 7, no. 4). Its small size suggests that it either marked a holy spot or housed some object of veneration⁶¹. Its plan, with two entrances, was probably designed to facilitate the flow of visitors, while its importance is suggested by its fine opus sectile pavement. Opus sectile was an expensive decoration technique which, within Basilica A, was reserved to a very few spots, very probably as a marker of their importance – it is found on the floors of the altar space and transept, the small apsidal room discussed here, and the so-called baptistery.

East of the first peristyle, one entered the atrium proper which was a space of exceptional splendour, adorned with one of the grandest ecclesiastical fountains known from Late Antiquity⁶². Water was abundantly supplied to Basilica A through the Roman aqueduct of the city, which terminated near the ecclesiastical complex and was functional at least into the sixth century. Water installations dominated both of the peristyle courts. As we saw above, water was also centrally important in the rooms surrounding the tomb at the Octagon church. Monumental fountains can also be found in the two courts of the basilica of Lechaëum in Corinth⁶³.

At the north end of the narthex of the basilica proper, one approached what may have been yet another space of major interest and veneration (fig. 6, no. 9; fig. 9). Cramped between the north wall of the basilica and the rocky cliff, there was a suite of three rooms of unknown use. A small antechamber gave onto an almost square room sumptuously paved

⁶⁰ LEMERLE, *Philippes* 297/299; SEVE/WEBER, *Le côté Nord du forum* 536/553.

⁶¹ LEMERLE, *Philippes* 299. The excavator proposes as possible interpretations that it was a room for the blessing of baptismal water, or one for the salutation of the bishop, or a *diakonikon*. To the former, one can object that the room is not related to a baptistery. To the latter, that the room was tiny and placed in a rather inconvenient location for such a function.

⁶² LEMERLE, *Philippes* 301/22.

⁶³ PALLAS, *Korinth* 770

with opus sectile – the finest floor of the entire complex. Its roof was supported by four posts (two marble pillars and two columns), forming a small tetrastyle (figs. 9 and 10)⁶⁴. The room's walls stand to almost full height and have no windows. If it received any light, it will have been from above, perhaps through a *compluvium* opening or a lantern. To the east, it was connected by a door to a narrow corridor-like space which was visible through narrow windows. At some point, this last room became a chapel, with a small apse and a table or altar added to its northeast corner. PAUL LEMERLE called this series of rooms a baptistery, even though it included no traces of a baptismal font or hydraulic installation. Yet, as we saw above, Basilica A was amply supplied with running water, and it would be paradoxical if the baptistery had been the only space without water supply⁶⁵.

Very probably, the so-called baptistery was also a site of veneration, indeed the culmination of a visitor's tour through the holy objects and sites of Basilica A. The configuration suggests that the holy of holies was the inner room which could be viewed by the faithful through the windows. Much like the tomb in the Octagon, this seems to have been a holy site, inaccessible but visible to the visitors. A similar architectural arrangement around a holy space can be found in the grotto and basilica of the shrine of Saint Thecla in Meryemlik, where the holiest spot was probably not to be accessed, but could be seen through a wall with two windows, possibly corresponding to the western *fenestella confessionis* (fig. 11). The grotto shrine of Meryemlik is roughly contemporary with the Basilica of Paul in Philippi, or slightly later, and it seems to have also housed the veneration of a holy site⁶⁶.

If our reading of Basilica A is correct, its visitors will have followed a route through a series of at least three *loca sancta*: the temple ruin, the small apsidal room of the west court, and the so-called baptistery⁶⁷. But what was the narrative associated with them? The late antique building has produced no inscription to guide us, but its medieval successor indicates that this was yet another sanctuary related to Paul. The late antique basilica was probably destroyed in the early seventh century by an earthquake which left the entire city in ruins. Christian cult, however, continued on the site. A small Byzantine church of the cross-in-square type was erected immediately east of the late antique main gate, using an earlier underground cistern as a crypt. This was decorated with frescoes depicting episodes from Paul's stay at Philippi – the healing of the possessed girl, Paul's flogging, imprisonment, and liberation, and the baptism of his keeper. Since its discovery in the nineteenth century, the structure has been shown to visitors as »the prison of Saint Paul,«

⁶⁴ Tetrastyles resembling early Roman *compluvia* were common in the churches of Philippi and seem to have been a local peculiarity. Besides Basilica A, they also appear in the complexes of the Octagon (fig. 5, no. 4) and Basilica B (which is not discussed in this paper). In both shrines, they seem to have served as forecourts of rooms of special veneration, perhaps imitating a small atrium. For a discussion of similar courts in the context of Roman domestic architecture, see PAOLO BONINI, *La casa nella Grecia romana. Forme e funzioni dello spazio privato fra I e VI secolo* = Antenore quaderni 6 (Rome: Edizioni Quasar, 2006) 56/9. On the functions of the atrium in ecclesiastical architecture, see: SIBILE DE BLAUWW, *Kultgebäude: RAC 22* (2007) 353-358.

⁶⁵ LEMERLE, *Philippes* 332/44.

⁶⁶ SAMUEL GUYER / ERNST HERZFELD, *Meriamlik und Korykos. Zwei christliche Ruinenstätten des Rauhen Kilikiens* = *Monumenta Asiae Minoris Antiqua* 2 (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1930) 38/45.

⁶⁷ For a discussion of the pilgrim's route through sacred sites in late antique churches, see: ANN MARIE YASIN, *Saints and Church Spaces in the Late Antique Mediterranean. Architecture, Cult, and Community* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009) 157-171.

and it is possible that this interpretation was ascribed to it in the Middle Ages too⁶⁸. It is questionable, however, whether it was an object of veneration also in Late Antiquity when it seems to have been a functional cistern feeding a fountain, inaccessible and devoid of any sort of decoration⁶⁹.

The association of Basilica A with Paul's story means that the projection of the Apostle's narrative onto the topography of the city was now expanded to a second site. Basilica A and the older shrine of the Basilica of Paul (in the form of the grand Octagon) coexisted and housed the cult of the Apostle into the early seventh century, which indicates that the two sanctuaries were associated with different aspects of Paul's narrative. As we saw above, Paul's tribulations as related by the canonical *Acts of the Apostles* and the apocryphal *Acts of Paul* included two major episodes of suffering – his imprisonment and forced labour at the mine/quarry, respectively. Basilica A may have been linked to either or both of these narratives. For the apocryphal episode of the quarry, in particular, the terrace of Basilica A would have provided a convincing setting, since it had been indeed partly formed through quarrying.

The erection of Basilica A initiated a boom in ecclesiastical building which produced another three monumental basilicas around the forum⁷⁰. Whether these were also associated with Paul's story, as argued by MENTZOS, remains to be confirmed by an epigraphic find and further excavation in the future⁷¹. What these buildings undeniably reflect is the city's importance as an ecclesiastical centre, and the material and political power of its church – the long term outcome of a shift of power which began in the early fourth century.

Concluding Remarks

It is a part of the formation of every human community to develop a narrative of origins. The way societies recount their past – when, how, and by whom they were established – influences and is influenced by their present concerns and future aspirations, and it is instrumental in the construction of corporate identity and authority. Changes in one of these domains – the reading of the past, the agendas of the present, and the structures of power – are likely to affect the others. The paradigm of religious change in its civic context, as exemplified by the case of Philippi, conforms to this model.

The topography of early Roman Philippi reflected a narrative of origins, focusing on the two main aspects of the city's identity and its successive pre-Roman and Roman

⁶⁸ ELLI S. PELEKANIDOU, Η κατά παράδοση φυλακή του Αποστόλου Παύλου στους Φιλίππους: *Η Καβάλα και η περιοχή της. Α' Τοπικό Συμπόσιο* (Thessaloniki 1980) 427/35; LEMERLE, *Philippes* 296.

⁶⁹ Contra: MENTZOS, *Ζητήματα τοπογραφίας* 130/4.

⁷⁰ For an overview of the evidence for ecclesiastical building and bibliography see: SAMUEL PROVOST/MICHAEL BOYD, Application de la prospection géophysique à la topographie urbaine, II. Philippi, le quartiers Ouest: *Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique* 126 (2002) 431/488, esp. 460/469; EUTYCHIA KOURKOUTIDOU-NIKOLAIDOU, Philippi: J. ALBANI/E. CHALKIA (ed.), *Heaven and Earth. Cities and Countryside in Byzantine Greece* (Athens: Ministry of Culture and Benaki Museum, 2013) 94/103; CURCIC, *Architecture in the Balkans* 114/9, 207/9.

⁷¹ MENTZOS, *Ζητήματα τοπογραφίας* 136/49.

colonial foundations. The forum and the Roman imperial and civic shrines was a celebration of Philippi's link to Rome and the imperial house, by virtue of its re-foundation as a colony by Augustus. At the same time, however, the city preserved the cult of a Hellenistic tomb shrine which, although centrally located, was separated from the forum and the main civic temples. The pre-Roman origins of the town were acknowledged, but were left out of the spaces which celebrated the story of the Augustan colony. In the third century, however, the colonial status lost its political importance, and its ritual expressions must have gradually become irrelevant.

Constantine's triumph and religious reform provided an opportunity for Philippi to regain some of its lost prestige. Embracing its Christian heritage, the city reformulated its own identity in accordance with the new religious trajectory of the empire. The hyperbolic acclamation of Constantine as the city's founder and the roughly contemporary appearance of the first Christian church indicate that Philippi went through an intense 'Constantinian moment,' expressed through gestures of loyalism to the new Christian imperial regime, and through the emulation of the emperor's ecclesiastical building policy. Constantine's monumental churches provided for the first time a setting of opulence for Christian worship, and embodied the upgrading of the Church to a new position of social and political eminence. The Philippian Basilica of Paul could not compete in size and splendour with the imperial churches of Rome, Jerusalem, and Constantinople, but it surpassed many of them in urban prominence, while the aggressive appropriation of the pagan shrine by it remains unparalleled in the pre-Theodosian period. The institution represented by the Basilica of Paul claimed a place in the heart of the city, both spatially and ideologically.

By allowing the church and the cult of Paul to replace the pre-Roman heroön, the Philippians allowed the foundation narrative of the Christian community to substitute for a part of their own civic narrative of origins. The city continued to worship at its most ancient shrine, but it now saw something else in it. The first monumental church hosted the incipient cult of Paul the Apostle, exemplifying the close link between the emergence of monumental ecclesiastical building and the rise of the cult of the saints – two central aspects of Constantine's Christian policy. Furthermore, it demonstrates the role of the cult of the saints in the construction of a civic identity linked to Christianity. The cult of Paul and those of various martyrs around the empire provided a Christian alternative for civic religion. Stories from the heroic age of the Church's early years were the Christian response to the cities' memories of their local histories and founders.

As the power of the Church of Philippi grew, the Pauline cult and its material representation in the city were further elaborated, leading to the erection of yet another shrine for the Apostle. The architectural features of the lavish Basilica A suggest that Philippi became a pilgrimage centre. The old *Colonia Augusta Iulia Philippiensium* was gradually transformed into a place of Christian memory, inscribed onto the map of the Christian Roman Empire as *civitas Philippis ubi Paulus et Sileas in carcere fuerunt*⁷².

⁷² *Itin. Burd.* 603.10/604.10.

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