CHURCH CONSTRUCTION AND URBANISM IN BYZANTINE NORTH AFRICA

by

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THESIS ABSTRACT

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The primary aim of this thesis is to examine the construction and re-construction of churches and their ancillary structures such as baptisteries, pilgrim accommodations, and cemeteries in Byzantine imperial rhetoric and in a select number of North African cities: Carthage, Sabratha, Lepcis Magna, and Sbeitla. in order to understand how church construction impacted these cities' urban life and landscape in the period of Byzantine rule (534-647CE).

A series of archaeological case studies focused on the aforementioned cities, in conjunction with the broad application of textual sources such as the Decrees (*Novellae*) of Justinian allow us to adjust some long-held assumptions about cities and churches in Byzantine North Africa. Most significantly, the changes to our case studies' urban landscapes were driven by local interests and circumstances, not by the Byzantine emperors as Procopius' *Buildings* and many archaeologists assume. Even so, most church buildings in the cities selected conform to empire-wide trends.

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To my siblings Brendan, Genevieve, and Rainer

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I: INTRODUCTION
Aims and Scope

Justinian and his successors were unambiguous in their integration of Nicene Christianity—today known, thanks in large part to their efforts, as the Orthodox church—within their concept of empire. Justinian's objective of brining theological unity to his renewed Roman empire is most explicit in his decrees outlawing the practice of Judaism, paganism, and any form of Christianity deemed "heretical," especially Arianism, thus bringing to an end a religious freedom already threatened by firebrand bishops and their violent followers.[1] However, it was not through decrees and armies alone that Byzantine orthodoxy was enforced—it had to be built from the ground up through the construction and expansion of new churches, baptisteries, and martyr complexes.[2] Arguably, nowhere is this more evident than in North Africa, a bulwark of Arian Christianity conquered in 534 and the subject of this study.

The primary aim of this thesis is to examine the construction and re-construction of churches and their ancillary structures: baptisteries, accommodations for pilgrims, and cemeteries in Byzantine imperial rhetoric and in a select number of North African cities: Carthage, Sabratha, Lepcis Magna, and Sbeitla. in order to understand how post-conquest church construction impacted these cities' urban life and landscape. Although all politically significant, these cities represent the region's variety of urban and ecclesiastical landscapes. They are also relatively well-excavated.

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[1] Just.*Novellae*.5, 8.11, 37.

[2] A "martyr complex," is a church or set of churches devoted to a particular martyr along with any auxiliary buildings connected to said church, mainly accommodations for visitors (i.e. pilgrims) to the church.

The period of Byzantine rule (533-695 CE—all dates are CE unless otherwise stated) brought great changes to North Africa's urban landscapes even if the literary sources pass over the most important impacts in silence, and ecclesiastical structures were at the forefront of those changes, which included introducing urban pilgrimage complexes and intramural burial among other things.

A series of case studies focused on the aforementioned cities allow us to adjust or even overturn some long-held assumptions about cities and churches in late Antique North Africa pertaining to some of these developments, for example, baptistery construction, church abandonment, and intramural burial. More importantly, these studies will foreground the evident lack of direction from the imperial center of Constantinople. The changes to our case studies' urban landscapes were driven by local interests and circumstances. Yet despite the lack of top-down direction, and even conflict with Constantinople during the "Three Chapters Controversy," the church builders of Carthage still, for the most part, conformed with empire-wide standards and trends of architecture and urban planning.

Historical Context

North Africa was a Roman possession for centuries, beginning with the destruction of Carthage in 146 BCE at the hands of the Roman general Publius Scipio, after which Rome laid claim to much of Carthage's remaining territory, located in the modern nation of Tunisia. The Romans gradually expanded their rule to include all of modern-day Tunisia and much of modern-day Libya, Algeria, and Morocco.[3] North Africa thus existed as one of the most prosperous regions of the Roman Empire as a

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[3] For an overview see Brian Herbert Warmington, Roger Wilson, "Africa, Roman in the *Oxford Classical Dictionary (4th Edition)*.

major producer of grain, olive oil, and garum. According to several pottery studies, these provinces reached a peak of prosperity in the late third and early fourth century CE, when pottery of African origin can be found in large quantities in port cities of the Roman east and west.[4]

Roman rule in North Africa was brought to an end in 439 CE, when it was conquered by the Vandals under their king Geiseric. The Vandals' origin remains obscure, but they seem to have been a heterogenous group of Germanic peoples who migrated into Roman Spain at the beginning of the fifth century. In 429, Geiseric united these peoples and became their first king. He then proceeded to lead them in an invasion of North Africa due to reports of Africa's prosperity. The invasion was largely successful and the Vandals were granted rule of Numidia. After ten years of peace between the Vandals and Romans, Geiseric launched an invasion of the remaining Roman territory starting with the city of Hippo, the famed bishop Augustine's hometown.

Geiseric's victory was swift and decisive, and Roman Africa became Vandal Africa, with the exception of parts of Mauretania in the west. Two Roman emperors mounted and botched invasions of Vandal Africa, and after a particularly spectacular failure by the Byzantine emperor Leo in 468, the Romans resigned themselves to losing the territory.[5]

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[4] Andrew Wilson, "Developments in Mediterranean Shipping and Maritime Trade from the Hellenistic Period to ad 1000, "in *Maritime Archaeology and Ancient Trade in the Mediterranean* ed. by Damian Robinson and Andrew Wilson: 33-59, (Oxford: Oxford UP. 2011), "Cyrenaica and the Late Antique Economy," *Ancient West and East* Vol.3 No.1 (2004), 143-154. D.J. Mattingly, "The Olive Boom: Oil Surpluses, Wealth, and Power in Roman Tripolitania," *Libyan Studies* Vol.19 (1988), 21-41. Michael Fulford, "Carthage Overseas Trade and the Political Economy," *Medieval Readings* Vol. 6 (1980), 5-12.
[5] Pro.*Vandal War (VW).*1.1-11. *Ralf* Bockmann, *Capital Continuous: A Study of Vandal Carthage and Central North Africa from an Archaeological Perspective, (*Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2013), 11-13.

While the Vandals successfully fended off the Romans, they had more difficulty with internal strife, both within the ruling family, and between the natives of North Africa and their new overlords. This latter division manifested itself primarily in the distribution of land, much of which was seized from the Africans and handed over to Vandal colonizers, and in the religious division between the Arian Vandals and the predominantly Nicene Africans.[6] This internecine strife gave the Byzantine empire under Justinian a window of opportunity to re-conquer North Africa, when in 530 the Vandal king Hilderic was overthrown by his cousin once-removed, Gelimer, and imprisoned. The Byzantines invaded Vandal Africa in 533, led by Belisarius, under the pretext of restoring Hilderic to his throne.[7] Gelimer's resistance was weaker than expected, and by 534 he was led through the streets of Constantinople in the first and only revival of the traditional Roman triumph.[8] The Byzantines proceeded to re-establish Roman rule over the region, dividing their new conquest into five provinces: Mauretania, Numidia, Carthage, Byzacena, and Tripolitania. Carthage was (re)-established as the ecclesiastical seat of these regions and the site of (eventually mandatory) annual ecclesiastical councils.[9]

Byzantine control of North Africa remained fragile for over fifteen years after the initial conquest. Serious revolts against the Byzantines broke out in 535 as the native Africans felt that their local autonomy was threatened. Only a year later, much of the Byzantine army in the province revolted and joined the Africans because, according to

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[6] Bockmann, 88-93.
[7] Pro.*VW*.1.12.
[8] Pro.*VW*.2.9.
[9] Just.Cod..27.4.

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Procopius, they were Arians and resented their beliefs being outlawed by the Byzantines.[10] The Byzantines emerged from this war victorious in 549 under the general John Trogdolita. Although there were occasional revolts, Byzantine rule remined unbroken thereafter until the middle of the seventh century, as Arab armies began to follow up their conquest of Egypt with incursions farther west. In 647, a Byzantine army, led by an already rebellious general, was crushed by an Arab army at Sbeitla in southern Byzacena. However, Arab armies would not enter Carthage until 697, and even after that time there is evidence of more continuity than change in urban life.[11]

Religious Context

Christianity is attested in North Africa as early as the second century CE. The beginnings of Christianity there are unclear, and it had perhaps spread to Carthage in the early second century, some time before the first attested presence of Christians in 180.[12] Early Christian North Africa also produced a relatively high number of martyrs, and a number of African martyrs commanded wide international followings.[13] North Africa also produced some of early Christianity's most notable theologians, namely: Tertullian, Cyprian, and above all Augustine. North Africa, and the See of Carthage in particular held an important place in early Christianity.

Christianity at this time was far from a homogenous religious community, and violent conflict between different sects of Christians, as well as between Christians and

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[10] Pro.*VW*.12.17-27.

[11] Denys Pringle, *The Defense of Byzantine Africa from Justinian to the Arab Conquest*, (Oxford, BAR, 1981), 47-49.

[12] J. Patout Burns and Robin M. Jensen, *Christianity in Roman Africa*. (Grand Rapids, MI, Eerdmans, 2014), 4

[13] Johnathan Conant, "Europe and the African Cult of Saints: An Essay in Mediterranean Connectivity," *Speculum* Vol. 85 No.1, (Jan. 2010), 2-10.

those of other religions was common. Such conflict played an important part in North African politics and the main sectarian divisions that affected Africa are worth outlining here. Numerous church councils (gatherings of bishops and other clergy) issued rulings on a variety of issues relating to Christian doctrine and practice which (theoretically) applied to all Christians. The most controversial rulings had to do with defining the nature of Jesus Christ and his relationship with God the father. The Council of Nicaea (325 CE) ruled that Christ was not a being created by God but existed as "cosubstantial" with him and was "begotten" into the world of mortal men.[14] Those who believed that Christ was a created human being were labelled "Arians." The Council of Chalcedon (451 CE) declared that Christ was of two natures, a fully divine nature and a fully human nature.[15] Many Christians and prominent clergy, especially in the Near East, disagreed vehemently with this declaration, asserting that Christ was of only one nature, though they also differed among themselves. These variegated groups opposed to Chalcedon are known as "Monophysites," or "Miaphysites," though they called themselves "believers."[16]

North Africa suffered acutely from sectarian divisions, particularly between Nicenes –adherents of the rulings of the Councils of Nicaea and Chalcedon, known also so as orthodox or Catholic Christians— and a North African sect known as the Donatists. The origins and development of Donatism are poorly understood, but it seems to have

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[14] "Arian Controversy," in *The Cambridge Dictionary of Christian Theology*, edited by Ian A. McFarland, et al., (Cambridge: University Press, 2011),31.

[15] F. Schafer, "Council of Chalcedon," in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*. New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1908.

[16] E.g.In the chronicle of the Monophysite bishop John of Ephesus, a contemporary of Justinian and Procopius, preserved in *The Chronicle of Zuquin, Parts III and IV A.D. 488-775*, translated by Amir Harrak, Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies,37.

sprung from a contested election for archbishop and exploded into what was arguably the most destructive sectarian conflict of late antiquity.[17] The main bone of contention between these two sects was whether those who acquiesced to the governor of Africa's demand of burning the scriptures during a period of persecution under Diocletian should be members of the church.[18] Lists of bishops attending church councils show that up to sixty percent of Africa's bishoprics were home to a Donatist as well as a Nicene bishop, but it is unclear how many Donatists were left by the time of the Byzantine conquest.[19] While Donatist bishops had been regular attendees of church councils in Carthage during the fourth and early fifth centuries, none attended a council convened in 484 by the Vandal monarch Huneric, suggesting that Donatism was no longer regarded as legitimate in any way under Vandal rule and was probably in decline.[20]

This brings us to the other major sectarian conflict that unfolded in late antique North Africa, between Arians and Nicenes. The Vandals, who took over North Africa in 439, were Arians Unfortunately, these sectional conflicts have been difficult to gauge outside of our limited and Nicene-skewed literary sources, and because there is no apparent difference between Nicene, Donatist, and Arian sacred architecture.[21]

Apart from the divide between Arians and Nicenes, a major controversy embroiled the orthodox church in the 550s, known as the "three chapters controversy." In short, Justinian had declared previously condoned theological works, known collectively as The Three Chapters, to be heretical in an attempt to reconcile his orthodox views with

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[17] Burns and Jensen, 47-51.
[18] Burns and Jensen, 40, 47-48.
[19] Burns and Jensen, 51, 89.
[20] Bockmann, 88-90.
[21] Burns and Jensen, 100, note also Pro.*VW*.1.21.

those of the "Miaphysites." [22] Apparently, the newly re-integrated African clergy virtually broke away from the church in Constantinople over this issue, commissioning a treatise defending the Three Chapters and looking instead to the Pope in Rome for leadership. When the Pope, Vergilius, took the side of Justinian, many African bishops were deposed, imprisoned, or exiled. [23] However, it is far from clear whether ordinary African Christians were invested in this controversy.[24]

Methods and Contributions

In order to meet the avowed aim of understanding the impact of church construction on African urbanism, this study relies most of all upon the actual location and architecture of ecclesiastical structures in our case study cities: Carthage, Sbeitla, Sabratha, and Lepcis Magna. Excavation reports therefore form one of the pillars of this study. While chapter I contains a more-in depth history of excavation for each case study, such histories are worth summarizing here.

Overall, most of the excavations of Byzantine churches in North Africa that have been carried out have been scientifically sound, allowing for reasonable chronologies to be constructed for each building.[25] Unfortunately, very few of these structures feature dateable inscriptions that allow for precise chronologies.[26] Usually, structures and their different phases are dated by coinage or through the style of extant inscriptions or

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[22] Averil Cameron, "Byzantine Africa: The Literary Evidence," in *Excavations at Carthage 1978 Conducted by the University of Michigan* ed. by J.H Humphries, (Ann Arbor: ASOR, 1992), 45-49, Fergus Millar, "Rome, Constantinople, and the Near Eastern Church: Two Church Synods of 536 CE," *JRS* Vol.90 (2008), 62-63.

[23] Cameron, 1992, 47-48.

[24] Cameron 1992, 48 cf. Anthony Kaldellis, *Procopius of Caesarea: Tyranny, History, and Philosophy at the End of Antiquity, (*Philadelphia: UPenn Press, 2011), 42-43 where he asserts it was inconsequential.

[25] exceptions include several ecclesiastical buildings in Sbetla and Carthage, see chapter I.

[26] exceptions include several ecclesiastical buildings in Sbeitla, see chapter I.

mosaics. Based on this evidence, most of the Byzantine-era churches discussed here can be dated roughly to the reign of Justinian (527-565), though a few structures were clearly built later. While the chronology of each ecclesiastical structure is usually not precise enough to connect it with particular historical events or persons, it allows for drawing upon contemporary legal, historical, and material evidence dating to the mid-late sixth century.

Excavations of North African antiquities began in the nineteenth century following the establishment and consolidation of French rule. Excavations at Carthage began in the 1880s under the auspices of the "white fathers." These excavations were unscientific by modern standards; there are virtually no records from the digs and no attention was paid to the stratigraphy of the sites. Several scholars have attempted to extract more information from these early excavations by re-surveying the sites, but to little avail.[27] No major excavations were carried out from the first decade of the twentieth century through the 1970s. However, when the city of Tunis began to encroach onto Carthage at the end of the twentieth century, a half-dozen teams participated in UNESCO rescue excavations throughout the ancient city. These excavations carefully recorded each site's stratigraphy, but found only a small number of dateable finds, inscriptions, and monuments due to extensive looting. That said, the excavations carried out from 1985-2001 revealed that the full extent of the imperial Roman city was still inhabited in late antiquity and shed important light on sites such as the amphitheater and the circular

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[27] Most notably Lilliane Ennabli, *Carthage: une métropole chrétienne du IVe à la fin du VIIe siècle*, Paris: CNRS, 1997, see also the discussion in Stevens, Susan T., Kalinowski, Angela V., vanderLeest, Hans. *Bir Ftouha: A Pilgrimage Church Complex at Carthage*, (Portsmouth, RI, *JRA* Supplements, 2005), 15-26.

harbor. These excavations also uncovered the half-dozen churches which make up the Byzantine-era pilgrimage corridor.[28]

The first excavations of Sbeitla, Sabratha, and Lepcis took place at the beginning of the twentieth century. However, the heyday of these sites' excavations was during the period of Italian rule. The latest excavations at Sabratha and Lepcis, conducted by a British team, took place from 1948-1951. While these excavations revealed much about the churches and other monumental structures, the lack of wide-area excavation (apparently the technique had not been invented) severely limited the yield of information about housing in the Late Antique and Roman-period cities.[29]

Late antique and Byzantine-era Sbeitla was excavated by primarily French teams working intermittently from the end of the second world war through the early 1970s.[30] Their excavations revealed that Sbeitla remained a wealthy and important city in the late imperial and Byzantine era, with local elites engaging in building activity even during the troubled tetrarchy of the late third and early fourth centuries. Dedicatory inscriptions demonstrate that Sbeitla enjoyed one of the biggest church-building booms in Africa during the periods of Vandal and Byzantine rule.[31]

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[28] See J.H.Humphrey (ed.), *Excavations at Carthage Conducted by the University of Michigan (7 Vols.)* (Ann Arbor: Kelsey Museum, 1980-1992), H.R. Hurst, S.P. Roskams, M.G. Fulford, D.P.S. Peacock eds. *Excavations at Carthage: The British Mission (2 Vols.)* (Sheffield: British Academy at the University of Sheffield, 1984-1994) and Stevens above.
[29] Kenrick, Phillip M. Excavations at Sabratha, 1948-1951, London: Society for Libyan Studies, 1986.
[30] Noel Duval, *Sbeitla et les Eglises Africanes a Deiux Absides Vol. I.* (Paris:Library of the French Schools of Rome and Athens, 1971),
[31] Bockmann, 228-229.

In addition to the excavation reports, Duval, Ennabli, and Reynolds have all published valuable compilations of inscriptions, both dedicatory and funerary.[32] Unfortunately, very few securely dateable inscriptions have emerged from the Byzantine era, but many inscriptions can be dated to the Byzantine era based on stylistic factors.[33] Based on these inscriptions, I will argue that the practice of large-scale intramural burial began in the Byzantine period.

This thesis also builds upon the numerous archaeological surveys of North Africa. The study of North Africa in late antiquity in particular has benefitted from three major anglophone studies of this kind in the last two decades.[34] The most important of these for our purposes is Anna Leone's *Changing Urban Landscapes in Late Antique and Byzantine North Africa,* a study which covers similar ground to this one, but which is more preoccupied with broader questions about how urban life changed in North Africa than with church construction and Christianity.[35] Not only will this study depart from Leone's interpretations of certain urban landscapes, but will also draw on a much broader base of sixth-century Byzantine evidence. This allows us to go (if only a little bit) beyond

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[32] Lilianne Ennabli, *Les Inscriptions Funereaires Chretiennes de Carthage* (Rome: Ecole Francaise de Rome, 1991), Yvette Duval, *Loca Sanctorum Africae: Le Culte des Martyrs en Afrique du IVe au VII Siecle (2 Vols.)* (Rome, Ecole Franaise de Rome, 1982), Joyce Reynolds, *The Inscriptions of Roman Tripolitania*, (Rome: British School at Rome, 1952) and "Inscriptions of Roman Tripolitania: A Supplement," *Papers of the British School at Rome* Vol. 23 (1955): 124-147.

[33] Reynolds 1952, 13-15.

[34] Anna Leone, The End of the Pagan City: Religion, Economy, and Urbanism in Late Antique North Africa, (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2012) and, Changing Townscapes in North Africa from Late Antiquity to the Arab Conquest, (Bari: Edipuglia, 2007), Sears, Gareth. Late Roman Urbanism: Continuity and Transformation in the City. Oxford: Archaeopress, 2007.For a more contemporary approach see J. Andrew Dufton, "The Architectural and Social Dynamics of Gentrification in Roman North Africa," AJA 123 No, 2, (April 2019): 263-290.

[35] Leone 2007a,

Leone's identification of trends and interpret Byzantine church construction as a manifestation of local, rather than imperial, religious and political interests.

The main methodological contribution of this thesis is its expansive application of textual sources such as Justinian's *Novellae* to modern questions about sixth-century church construction and urbanism. Past archaeological surveys of late-antique African cities have relied almost exclusively on the archaeological remains to make their judgements about urban development.[36] Using textual sources allows us to better understand and contextualize a variety of church-related phenomena that took place during the Byzantine period, including church abandonment and increased baptistery construction.

This thesis also contributes to our understanding of Procopius' *Buildings,* one of the texts that has been an important source for scholars of sixth-century architecture and archaeology.[37] First, it re-affirms earlier studies that have scrutinized the *Buildings* and have found more misleading than helpful.[38] Furthermore, this thesis examines Procopius' aesthetics of more ordinary churches as expressed in the *Buildings* and the extent to which African churches met those standards of beauty. Previous studies have focused almost exclusively on the *Hagia Sofia* but this one considers the aesthetic and spiritual merits Procopius attributes to ordinary churches.

Outline of the Thesis

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[36] Bockamann is

[37] Cameron 1985, 84-88, 98-99, Saradi, 71-79..

[38] Croke, Brian, and Crow, James. "Procopius and Dara" JRS Vol.73 (1983): 143-159 and Reynolds, Joyce. "Byzantine buildings, Justinian and Procopius in Libya Inferior and Libya Superior," Antiquité Tardive Vol.8, (2001): 169-176. See also Cameron 1985, 84-88, 98-99.

The remainder of this project is divided into two chapters and a brief conclusion. Chapter one features archaeological case studies of Byzantine-era towns and cities. This chapter examines how church construction and re-construction impacted each city's urban landscape and assesses the motivations behind and results of said impacts.

We argue that in Carthage, Byzantine Africa's crown jewel, a 'pilgrimage corridor,' a set of streets passable only on foot in order to direct pilgrimage traffic to certain churches, was established in a way similar to urban pilgrimage complexes elsewhere. In the city of Sbeitla, we observe the engagement of local churches in economic activity that once took place in the rural hinterland and the power and high status of the local clergy as manifested in elevated *presbyteria* (seating for the clergy installed in the apse of a church) in every extant Byzantine-era church. In the cities of Sabratha and Lepcis Magna, we see churches and their graveyards dominate what was once the Roman *forum*, becoming the new center of urban life.

The second chapter outlines how historians, in the imperial center of Constantinople, Procopius chief among them, understood the role of church construction in Justinian's imperial project to re-unite the old Roman empire under the banner of Nicene orthodoxy, particularly with respect to North Africa. It then compares this understanding with contemporary legal and archaeological evidence to argue that the Byzantine historians' portrayals are broadly misleading that church construction in urban North Africa was embedded in a more complex web of social, economic, and religious trends and that these churches were not simply military bastions or churches in the pagan wilderness. This chapter also suggests new ways of understanding common features of North African cities in the Byzantine period namely abandoned churches, and ubiquitous

new baptisteries. It argues that imperial patronage of church buildings likely had little impact on North Africa. The thesis ends with a brief conclusion summarizing the chief arguments and suggesting avenues of further study.

II: ECCLESIASTICAL STRUCTURES AND URBAN LANDSCAPES: CARTHAGE, SBEITLA, LEPCIS MAGNA, AND SABRATHA
Introduction

This chapter examines the transformation of the sacred and urban spaces of the cities of Carthage, Sbeitla, Lepcis Magna, and Sabratha during the period of Byzantine rule (533-679 CE), particularly ecclesiastical buildings (churches baptisteries etc.). This chapter is divided city-by-city. After providing some historical context, each section will discuss how Byzantine-era church construction changed each urban landscape. Churches were at the forefront of urban change in the Byzantine empire, especially in the introduction of economic activity and through altering the city's landscape to accommodate increased pilgrimage traffic.[39] Here we show how those trends, which were accompanied by the installation of an enormous number of baptisteries and the widespread appearance of intramural cemeteries, appeared in North Africa's cities.

This essay will then discuss changes to the interior spaces and ancillary structures of these churches. These renovations not only prepared church spaces for greater numbers of pilgrims, but also brought the ritual experiences of mass and pilgrimage into line with broader trends in the Eastern Roman Empire. The conformity observed regarding church interiors suggests that African clergy and donors wanted to ensure that they themselves and visiting pilgrims received their due spiritual rewards through the

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[39] Saradi, 385, for pilgrimage see chapter II below.

orthodox construction and use of sacred space. Thus, the independence asserted in the promotion of African saints was situated in and constrained by an eagerness to be understood and experienced as "Nicene," following the long period of Vandal Arian rule in Africa.

Historical Context: Carthage

Our first case study city is Carthage. Carthage served as the political and administrative 'capital' of both the Vandal (439-533) and Byzantine (533-679) regimes in north Africa. It was also the region's ecclesiastical heart, and hosted numerous summits which bishops from all over Africa attended even in the Byzantine and Vandal eras.[40] While Procopius, who was an eyewitness of the conquest as the general Belisarius' secretary, was probably exaggerating when he wrote that the Byzantine capture of Carthage was wholly peaceful on account of the general Belisarius' leadership, archaeological excavations of Carthage have not revealed a destruction layer from the Byzantine period.[41] The extensive church construction and re-construction that took place of Carthage in the Byzantine period probably cannot be explained as recovering from the conquest.

Altering Carthage's sacred landscape served as an important way for the city's new Byzantine overlords to transform Carthage into a city of empire-wide note. Church construction must be viewed as part of a wider urbanization project that included a new set of baths, *stoas* lining the street near the harbor and fortifications on the Byrsa, the hill

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[40] *Cod. Just.*1.27., Ralf Bockmann, *Capital Continuous: A Study of Vandal Carthage and Central North Africa from an Archaeological Perspective, (*Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2013), 29-46.
[41] VW.1.3.12.,

at the center of the city.[42] Carthage is also another center where intramural burial in various forms accelerated in the Byzantine era.[43] This change in burial practices cannot be attributed to the city's forming a new "civic center" around a cemetery church or a need to defend valuable graves. Arguably this new trend ultimately has to do with Carthaginians seeking out privileged burials near martyrs—even those housed in downtown Carthage. Privileged burials as well as the spate of newly-constructed or refurbished ecclesiastical structures suggest that Nicene adherents were free to express competition and desire for status in a religious manner under the new Nicene, Byzantine, regime.

Historical Context: Pilgrimage and Church Construction

From the foundation of the complex at Golagatha (Jerusalem) in the reign of Constantine after the pilgrimage there by Constantine's mother, Helena, pilgrimage and the veneration of martyrs became increasingly important Christian practices over time.[44] Pilgrims travelled to martyr churches in order to thank the deceased saints for sacrificing their life for the faith and to ask for the saint's intercession on their own behalf or on behalf of a deceased person.[45]

In Africa, the veneration of martyrs and their physical remains (relics) became a central facet of Christian worship by the early fifth century. In 401 an ecclesiastical council at Carthage condemned false Christian altars which did not contain a relic, the

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[42] Pro.*Aed.*6.5.8-12.

[43] For an overview see Anna Leone, "L'inumazione in "spazio urbano" a Cartagine tra V e VII secolo d.C." *Antiquité tardive* 10 (2002): 233-248.

[44] Voltaggio, Michele. "Xenodochia and Hospitia in Sixth-Century Jerusalem: Indicators for the Byzantine Pilgrimage to the Holy Places," *Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palastrina-Vereins* Vol. 127 No. 2, (2011): 197-198.

[45] J. Burns and Robin Jensen, *Christianity in Roman Africa: The Development of its Practices and Beliefs*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdman, 2014), 538-548.

implication being that true altars had to be associated with a relic.[46] Many also subscribed to the idea that being buried near a saint or martyr ensured that saint's or martyr's intercession for the deceased. Despite clerical debunking and discouragement of this idea, it became so influential that churches associated with relics (which in Africa would be any church) became the site of cemeteries, even if they were within the city walls.

Churches devoted to pilgrimage existed in Africa long before Byzantine rule. The pilgrimage complex at Theveste (modern Tebessa) is a good example (fig.1). Dedicated to the famous African martyr Crispina, Theveste is a typical late-Roman pilgrimage complex first in that it is relatively remote—it sits upon a large hill in what was a rural area even in antiquity. The late Roman phase, dated to around 400, is also typical in that a space separate from the rest of the church—in this case a triconch room— was dedicated wholly to the martyrs.[47] The late Roman complex also featured small rooms attached to both sides of the church which probably housed pilgrims.

During the reign of the emperor Justinian (r.528-565), whose general Belisarius conquered North Africa from the Vandals, pilgrimage complexes increased in number and size. An illustrative example is the sizeable pilgrimage complex constructed in 547 across the street from the Nea church in downtown Jerusalem.[48] There are several plausible causes for this expansion. Justinian's legal code includes laws that encourage bequests to monasteries (often the hosts of pilgrims) and allow monasteries and churches to participate in economic activities.[49] The Code of Justinian also preserves a letter from

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[46] *Corpus Christinorum, Series Latina* No. 149.
[47] Bockmann, 225-226.
[48] Voltaggio, 205-210.
[49] Cod.Just.2.17.

Justinian to the pope, John, in which Justinian vows to unite all of Christendom under the orthodox Nicene creed.[50] This desire for spiritual uniformity is apparent in the standardization of church spaces across the empire during Justinian's reign. While church layouts remained diverse and adapted to the landscape, certain elements of ritual import became more or less standard in the reign of Justinian: churches were aligned east-west if possible, baptisteries became a standard feature of most churches, and, if necessary, altars were moved towards the center of the church.[51] While it is not clear whether people whose church spaces changed in this time felt there were any theological or identity-related consequences to these changes, the reign of Justinian was somewhat successful in ensuring that a Nicene Christian's ritual experience changed very little regardless of where they were in the Byzantine empire.

Yet consistency in church construction was not simply a matter of ensuring spiritual health, it was also a matter of spiritual authority and prestige. Procopius, writing of Justinian's sweeping building programs, emphasizes the beauty and inventiveness of the churches constructed under Justinian, most notably the Hagia Sophia in Constantinople.[52] This was also true at the local level, as local magnates increasingly diverted their wealth away from constructing 'civic' buildings such as baths and theaters to constructing churches and monasteries in order to promote either themselves or their families.[53]

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[50] Cod.Just.3.2.
[51] Burns and Jensen, 98-101.
[52] Pro.Aed.1.1.,1.6.
[53] Anne Marie Yasin, *Saints and Church Spaces in the Late Antique Mediterranean: Architecture, Cult, and Community.* (New York: Cambridge UP, 2009), *102*-110

It was in this context of expanding pilgrimage, with new standard interior features, and local and empire-wide competition for prestige and authority that Carthaginian clergy, worshipers, and donors found themselves politically re-integrated into the Byzantine empire. They too, took part in this process of pilgrimage promotion and interior standardization, but while doing so promoted their own African saints—and thus the ancient authority of their ecclesiastical tradition.

Churches and Urban Space in Carthage : The Suburban Churches and the Pilgrimage Corridor

Carthage's urban landscape was transformed in the Byzantine period through the extensive renovations of the major extramural churches, and through the establishment of a "pilgrimage corridor," an extensive north-south area whose streets were blocked off by sacred spaces and pilgrimage accommodations, and which thus became the center of pilgrimage traffic at Carthage (figure 1). The city's largest churches were located outside of the circuit wall. Although these churches are technically outside of the city, they served as important burial grounds and processional stops during religious festivals, especially that of Carthage's most celebrated martyr, the bishop Cyprian.

The grandest of these churches, located almost a kilometer to the northeast of the city proper, is known as Mcidfa (fig. 2). In antiquity it was known as the *basilica maiorum*, a church that the Nicene bishop Victor of Vita notes was taken over by the Arian church during the first phase of the Vandal conquest.[54] The identity of the church was confirmed by an inscription marking the burials of the martyrs Felicitas and

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[54] Vic.Vit.*Historia Persecutonis*.1.9.

Perpetua, whom Victor of Vita also mentions in his chronicle as being buried there.[55]

Felicitas and Perpetua were martyred in the early third century CE and became famous internationally, particularly in Italy, due to the survival and dissemination of Perpetua's diary describing her visions of the divine. After the martyred bishop Cyprian, Perpetua and Felicitas were the most important African saints. Unfortunately, the precise construction chronology of the building is impossible to recover because the structure was excavated from 1906-1909 without anyone recording the various phases of construction. However, evidence for Byzantine-era use of the church exists in the form of (fragmentary) inscriptions.[56]

Two large extramural churches were associated with the famed martyr Cyprian, who was bishop of Carthage from 249-258. Cyprian gained international prominence as a prolific writer and important theologian who dealt extensively with the problem of accepting and re-baptizing lapsed orthodox Christians.[57] In 258 he was executed as part of a wave of persecutions that claimed the lives of many prominent clergymen, including Pope Sixtus II. Cyprian's feast day was the biggest holiday of Christian Carthage.[58] We know from the writings of Augustine that as part of the celebration services were held at two different suburban churches: a vigil took place on the night before Cyprian's feast day at the spot where he was executed, and the next day a service was held in the church

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[55] Yvette Duval, Loca Sanctorum Africae: Le Culte des Martyrs en Afrique du IV au VII Siecle Vol. I, (Rome: French School of Rome, 1982)No.6. Vic.Vit.*Historia Persecutonis*.1.9.
[56] Bockmann, 93-95.
[57] Burns and Jensen,. 187-190.
[58] Burns and Jensen, 23-24,535.

which commemorated his burial.[59] Both of these churches, central to Carthage's spiritual life, have been tentatively identified by archaeologists.

The church commemorating where Cyprian was executed has been associated with a third church which has been excavated at Bir Ftouha (fig. 3).[60] On this site, adjacent to what some claim is an older basilical church, but is probably a late-Roman secular basilica, the Byzantines constructed a sizeable (80 x 50m) "basilical complex," that has rightly been referred to as an "architectural show-piece." [61] Another large (100m x 40m) basilica, seven-aisled like Mcifda, located north of the city, St. Monique, which lies near the sea, has been associated with Cyprian's burial.[62] This church is oriented NW-SE, following the shoreline, and also features a peristyle atrium at its SE entrance. While there is no extant evidence that martyrs were venerated here, there have been no recent excavations, and an underground element of the atrium that remains mostly unexplored. These three churches, dedicated to Africa's most famous saints, were all extensively built-up during the Byzantine period. Moreover, these churches became more easily accessed from the city proper through the construction of a "pilgrimage corridor," that began in the south harbor area and ran all the way to the neighborhood of one of the city's northern gates. This pilgrimage corridor took up two, perhaps three *kardines* (avenues)—*Kardo IX or X* and *Kardo XI* which were blocked off at both the northern and southern ends, ensuring that no non-foot traffic could move through the corridor.[63]

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[59] Ibid.

[60] Susan T. Stevens, Angela K. Kalinowski, Hans vanderLeest, Bir Ftouha: A Pilgrimage Church Complex at Carthage,(Portsmuth, RI: JRA, 2005), 15-26.

[61] Bockmann, 100.

[62] Bockmann, 98-99.

[63] Bockmann Plate 8 Fig.1, Plate 5 Fig.1.

At the southern end of the pilgrimage corridor stood the only church in the city

whose construction can be securely dated to the period of Vandal rule, at a site named Bir

Messaouda (fig.4), which is located in the southeast quadrant of the city's street grid,

approximately 50 meters southeast of the Byrsa Hill. In the middle of the 5th century, the

Vandals constructed their church into an existing *insula*, measuring approximately 51 x

17 meters, with only one doorway which faced the city street. In a second phase, which

probably occurred at the beginning of the sixth-century CE, the rooms of the *insula*

adjacent to the south end of the church were demolished and a new entrance on that side

was installed.[64] The Vandals constructed a three-aisled basilica which, in its initial phase

did not feature an apse. An apse was installed during the undated second phase of

construction at the north end of the church. Another church, just one block away was also

constructed during the Byzantine period. It was built into what was once a villa, and the

villa's old rooms could well have been used for hosting pilgrims.[65]

In the northeastern quadrant of the city, the Byzantines engaged in multiple re-

designs of a church known as Dermech I (fig. 5), which was constructed sometime in the

5th century as a *martyrion*. The original, pre-Byzantine, structure, a five-aisled basilica,

oriented north-south, and featuring two apses at the northern and southern ends of the

structure, measured 40 x 18 meters. A second building phase, dated by pottery to the first

half of the sixth century, demolished the northern apse and added a hexagonal baptistery,

measuring 12.5x 10.25 meters, to the eastern side of the original structure. The Byzantine

phase of the church also features a cemetery, from which only one inscription has been

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[64] Bockmann, 105-107.

[65] Liliane Ennabli, Carthage: une métropole chrétienne du IVe à la fin du VIIe siècle, (Paris: CNRS, 1997), 64-68.

recovered.[66] While this establishment of an intramural cemetery seems unusual—perhaps even unprecedented, it seems typical for the Byzantine era (see the discussion below). A third phase saw a reliquary inserted into the altar, making this church a pilgrimage destination.[67]

The Dermech neighborhood is home to many other structures of a potentially ecclesiastical nature that suggest that the area formed a sizeable pilgrimage complex. It featured accommodations as well as the martyrial church itself. Surrounding the Dermech I church are several buildings that have been variously interpreted as monasteries or simply as houses. A building across the street from Dermech I, labelled the "maison triconche," for example, resembles pilgrimage hostels in the Jerusalem area, featuring not only rooms (eleven in number) to stay the night but also a small chapel for prayer.[68] According to the excavators, this villa was divided up during the early Vandal period, and abandoned and looted during the closing years of Vandal rule. However, the Byzantines re-built this apartment building during the mid-sixth century, around the same time as the installment of the reliquary in the Dermech I church. [69] It is therefore plausible that this building was renovated to accommodate pilgrims traveling to see the newly-installed relic. The Dermech I complex blocks off the *kardo* forming the northern end of the pilgrimage corridor.

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[66] Ennabli, 68.

[67] Bockmann, "Capital Continuous," 109.

[68] 25 Simon P. Ellis " The Ecclesiastical Complex: Stratigraphic Report 1997," in Excavations at Carthage 1977:
Simon P. Ellis " The Ecclesiastical Complex: Stratigraphic Report 1997," in Excavations at Carthage 1977: Conducted by the University of Michigan,Conducted by the University of Michigan, ed. by J.H. Humphrey (New Delhi: Thomsons Press, 1980), 10.

[69] Ellis, 27, 36.

As late as the seventh century new pilgrimage accommodations were still being constructed, suggesting that the number of pilgrims travelling to Carthage indeed increased. At the northern end of the "pilgrimage corridor," a small chapel adjoining a round shrine was built into what was once a residential villa around 610. Moreover an inscription was discovered in the floor which dedicates the space to the martyr Perpetua and her companions.[70] Not only, then, was this villa probably transformed into a pilgrimage hostel (which often featured a chapel), but it is explicitly associated with one of the suburban churches, substantiating the proposed link between the pilgrimage corridor and the prominent martyr churches outside of the city.

The discussion above has suggested that the urban space within the walls was transformed in order to encourage and accommodate pilgrimage to the churches outside of the walls. Yet as we have observed earlier, the encouragement and accommodation of pilgrimage, particularly in urban spaces, was the trend throughout the Byzantine empire.[71] What makes Carthage's Byzantine-era ecclesiastical landscape unique is the choice of martyrs to promote for pilgrimage: native-born African saints who had already garnered an international following, such as Cyprian.[72]

While it might be said that every major city had its own unique martyrs, Carthage's promotion of native saints is significant in light of its status as a newly re-conquered province, which imperial-minded writers such as Procopius portrayed as a set of dangerous frontiers that were far from fully Christianized.[73] Despite their popularity,

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[70] Ennabli, 90-92. Duval, No.3 (7-10)
[71] see the extensive discussion of pilgrimage and martyr veneration in chapter II
[72] Conant, 6.
[73] Pro.Aed.6.6.8, 6.7.

neither Cyprian nor Perpetua managed to find their way into the Byzantine liturgical calendar, but were celebrated throughout Italy and in areas of France and Spain.[74] Therefore the promotion of Cyprian and Perpetua as Carthage's marquee martyrs was not a case of Byzantine spiritual imperialism but rather a local Nicene response to their new situation as free to express their spirituality and as Byzantine subjects, one which promoted local martyrs to attract pilgrims from Africa, Italy, and France, and also to enhance African martyrs' spiritual currency through large and aesthetically pleasing church structures.

Church Interiors

Church interiors and ancillary structures in the Byzantine period differed from their earlier counterparts as well. In general, the interiors of Carthage's churches followed trends found across the Byzantine empire. Native African worshipers may have found their accustomed worship practices mildly altered, while pilgrims from elsewhere in the Byzantine empire would have likely been 'at home' within the confines of Carthage's Byzantine-era churches. The most conspicuous change from earlier forms of church space was the installation of a baptistery in or near virtually every church. Baptisteries were installed at all of the churches mentioned within the city walls, as well as at the new Byzantine-era complex at Bir Ftouha. and at the *Basilica Maiorum*. The cause of this empire-wide phenomenon is far from clear.

The re-alignment of churches onto an east-west axis is another empire-wide trend that could have a more dramatic effect on an already-existing church than the addition of an adjoining baptistery. Bir Messaouda, and another church outside of the city walls

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[74] Conant,6, .10 ,14.

called Damous al-Karita are two dramatic examples of this change to sacred space.[75] As with the installation of baptisteries, the impetus behind and spiritual significance of this re-alignment of churches is poorly understood, and its effect on those unfamiliar with it unknown.

The final change worth mentioning here took place only at Mcidfa and probably at St. Monique too—the installation of a *confessio*.[76] A *confessio* is a crypt built into the floor of a church which holds the remains of a martyr. This structure is atypical (at least in Africa)—usually an inscription marking the spot of the martyr's death or remains was installed in the floor and closed off with chancel screens. Other pilgrimage complexes such as Theveste (fig. 5) created their own relic chambers that could be entered and exited without having to walk through the basilica proper. The *confessio* simultaneously allowed pilgrims a more interactive experience with their object of veneration than a slab surrounded by screens while also joining the veneration process to walking through the rest of the church. The *confessio* at Mcidfa features a staircase at either end in order to create a smooth, orderly veneration process that forces the viewer to walk through and admire the rest of the church as well.

Carthage: Conclusion

Unsurprisingly, Africa's largest city also underwent perhaps the most dramatic transformations of ecclesiastical space in the region following the Byzantine conquest. While some of the transformations that occurred, such as the installation of baptisteries, were implemented across the region, or even the whole Byzantine empire, Carthage

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[75] Bockmann, 100-102, 106.
[76] Bockmann, 95, Plate 6 Fig.1. Duval, No.10.

stands out in the efforts the Byzantines made to enhance the experience of pilgrimage in the city, both by constructing new martyr churches and making existing martyr churches more hospitable to pilgrims through the establishment of reliquaries. While the Vandals seemed largely averse to transforming the ecclesiastical and broader urban landscape of the city, the Byzantines had no such compunction. Even if we are skeptical about Procopius' claims for enormous additions to the cityscape, the demolition of the *insula* into which the Vandals had carefully integrated their church and the establishment of a cemetery within the city walls demonstrates Byzantine enthusiasm for making a distinctive mark on the urban landscape. The enormous outlays for new mosaic floors and baptisteries as well as for newly-designed churches suggest a new surge in religious patronage, which cannot, however, be linked directly to the regime through materials from imperial quarries, and thus is probably the result of renewed patronage by the wealthy Nicenes who were left in the city.

These transformations to Carthage's urban landscape served to promote pilgrimage to the saints Cyprian, Felicitas, and Perpetua, who were native African martyrs of international renown, and the construction of additional pilgrimage accommodations in the early seventh century suggest such efforts were successful.

Sbeitla: Historical Context

Our second case study city, Sbeitla, (fig. 6) located in the Kasserine region approximately two hundred kilometers southwest of Tunis, was a Roman city probably founded during the reign of Vespasian. Due to its strategic position in the fertile valleys of Byzacena, it flourished from its founding through late antiquity, and boasted an amphitheater, a Capitolium, and several bath complexes. The city is also home to one of

the few extant arches dedicated to the tetrarchs, a sign of its late-imperial prosperity.[77] It continued to be a vitally important urban center during the Byzantine period. The Byzantine authorities invested significant resources into rebuilding and enhancing the city's ecclesiastical structures (six seem to have been in use in the city) as well as building entirely new structures. There is evidence that during the Byzantine era that agricultural processing, especially that of olive oil, became centralized at Sbeitla, and the new and improved churches at Sbeitla were probably constructed to serve a larger population and enhance its quality of life. The city was important enough that in 647 the (rebellious) *dux* of Africa at the time, Gregory, fought and died in an attempt to fend off an Arab attack on the city.

The city was excavated by French teams operating intermittently from 1906-1931 and from 1953-1971.[78] Most of the excavation efforts, both fortunately and unfortunately for this study, concentrated primarily on the extant Christian architecture and the city's forum. While the Byzantine-era church structures all align with the city's traditional street grid, the lack of excavation of Byzantine-era (or any era, for that matter) domestic buildings has left scholars mostly in the dark when it comes to the city's plan during the Byzantine period. This problem is compounded further by the fact that nearly half of the ancient city is currently covered by a modern town. Despite these challenges, the Christian architecture of Sbeitla is rich enough to assess its role in the city's Byzantine-era incarnation.

Churches and Urban Space in Sbeitla

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[77] Bockmann, 229.
[78] Bockmann, 230.

The extent to which Sbeitla's urban landscape changed during the Byzantine period is open to interpretation, but ecclesiastical structures played a key role in the changes that occurred. As in Carthage, the city's pilgrimage infrastructure expanded. This expansion is most evident when we examine the largest churches in the city, located side-by-side just north of the city's forum (labelled Basilicas I and II, fig. 8). These basilicas pre-date the Byzantine conquest, with Basilica I dating to the fourth century and Basilica II dating somewhere between the middle of the fifth and the beginning of the sixth century.[79] Further evidence for these churches functioning as a pilgrimage destination arises from the ancillary structures connected to them, which include a sizeable residential building and baths. Though Duval has proposed that this is where the clergy (including the bishop) resided, the baths are of such size that they likely accommodated crowds larger than simply a few members of the clergy, and more likely housed pilgrims.[80] While these churches underwent considerable renovations in the Byzantine period (discussed below), they did not radically alter the urban landscape. The same could be said of the basilica labelled "Basilica IV," by Duval, a three-aisled basilica located on the northwestern edge of the forum.[81]

While basilicas I, II, and IV were re-modeled in the Byzantine period, two more basilicas, (creatively) named basilicas V and VI were new, Byzantine-era constructions.[82] Basilica VI's impact on the urban landscape is ambiguous. It was located outside of the city proper, but how far outside has never been properly gauged, as the basilica was

[79] Duval 1971a, 87, 291-293.
[80] Duval 1971a, 299-309.
[81] Duval 1971a, 5.
[82] Bockmann, 230.

located in the midst of a farm during the original excavations and now stands in the middle of the modern town. Judging by the numerous tombs inside and around this church, the area seems to have been a cemetery. [83]

However, it is through basilica V (fig. 9) and its surroundings that Byzantine Sbeitla has been interpreted as an example of a novel type of late antique urban layout standing in contrast with the "classical," street grid of earlier centuries. Basilica V lies at what appears to be the eastern edge of the city on the *decumanus maximus*. Immediately to the south of the church, in the middle of the road sits a Byzantine-era mill and olive oil press.[84] A little farther to the east, on each side of the road, stand two thick-walled square structures that have been interpreted as fortresses. The initial incarnation of Basilica V has been dated by coinage to the reign of Justinian, but later in the sixth century the church was renovated and re-dedicated.[85] The mill and the square structures are dateable only to the Byzantine era. Duval and Leone have argued that the mill, press and what they claim are fortresses were in use only during the "late Byzantine period," in which the city transformed from a traditional grid and became a militarized series of "strong points," centered on this church and the forum, which was walled up sometime during the Byzantine period.[86]

While it is true that Sbeitla was a military city—as several late sixth and seventh-century tombstones of military official from basilica VI attest, there is little reason to believe that the Basilica V area constituted a fortified complex.[87] The two thick-walled

[83] Duval 1971a, 5.
[84] Y. Duval 1982, 50-51, Leone 186..
[85] Y. Duval 1982, 50-51.
[86] Leone 2007, 184,citing Duval 1964.
[87] Duval 1971b, 428-435.

structures which Duval and Leone call 'fortresses' are much too small to actually act as such. These two thick-walled structures are not aligned sufficiently parallel to form the posts of a gate, and if they were watch towers, they would partially block each other's view. In short, these structures would be useless as defenses and therefore were probably not defensive in function.

These structures make much more sense as storage towers—silos if you will. The thick walls suggest that a highly-flammable dried crop such as wheat or hay was stored there. The new dedicatory inscription inside the church substantiates the theory that hay was stored in these towers—the inscription dedicates the church to the saints Tryphon, Gervasius and Protasius, the latter two being the patron saints of haymakers.[88] While Leone and Duval are probably correct to view these structures as a single complex, it was an agricultural complex rather than a military one, such as can be found elsewhere in Byzantine North Africa, and there is little reason to believe that the street grid disappeared, though it may have contracted, with this complex on the outskirts.

While church construction did not alter Sbeitla's urban landscape as much as it did in Carthage, the changes that did occur were somewhat similar: Pilgrimage infrastructure expanded, and new economic activity was introduced. While Carthage saw new industries appear in the circular harbor area, Sbeitla saw activities traditionally relegated to rural *villae* become part of the urban landscape.[89] One departure from

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[88] Mershman, Francis. "Sts. Gervasius and Protasius." *The Catholic Encyclopedia*. Vol. 6. New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1909

[89] Leone 2007, 168-171, H.R. Hurst, *Excavations at Carthage: The British Mission Vol.2.1.* (Oxford:Oxford UP, 1994).

Carthage is that there are no churches that were swiftly abandoned, as we have seen at

Carthagenna and Dermech II in Carthage, suggesting that the local clergy and notables

actually possessed the resources and the willpower to maintain their churches.

Ultimately, Sbeitla is not unique so much in terms of urban development as in respect to

the architecture of its ecclesiastical structures, the most "African," of any structures from

our case studies, as will be demonstrated below.

Sbeitla: Church Architecture and Interiors

The individual churches exhibit some distinctly "African," traits namely a

tendency to legitimate altars using relics, and two apses instead of one. Basilicas II, III,

and VI, all feature centralized altars and a *ciborium* or canopy over the altar, as was

fashionable in Constantinople and elsewhere in the empire.[90] Moreover, every extant

church, whether two apsed or one-apsed features not only a presbyterium an elevated

floor in the apse, but an extant *synthronos*, bench installed in the curve of the apse where

the clergy sat. The plans of Basilica II and Basilica VI, both of which also feature a

centralized altar and between the altar and the *synthronos*, extensive chancel screens that

created an isle in narthex of each church, highlighting the clergy's privileged position and

role in administering the eucharist, and thus salvation to their Christian flock.[91]

There is, however one notable difference between Basilica II and Basilica VI

apart from the size of each church (app. 20x50 m. and 20x20 m. respectively), that is

their orientation. Basilica II which pre-dates the Byzantine takeover, is oriented north-to-

south (N/S), while the purely Byzantine Basilica VI is oriented east-west (E/W), as we

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[90] Eg. Bir Messaouda above and see chapter II's discussion of Procopius' church aesthetics.
[91] Noel Duval "Inscriptions Byzantines de Sbeitla," Antiquite Vol. 83 (1971b): 424.

would expect of a typical Byzantine church. Unlike in Carthage, where several N/S oriented churches were renovated to be oriented E/W, the Byzantine-era renovators of Sbeitla did not re-orient the older Basilicas I, II, and IV. In light of the fact that the major re-orientations at Carthage were performed on Arian churches, this lack of re-orientation implies that the extant churches were uniformly Nicene.[92] However, the late-sixth or early-seventh century re-dedication of Basilica VI to Gervasius and Protasius not only suggests haymaking activity, but also carries heavy anti-Arian connotations.[93] These saints became popular throughout Italy following the discovery of their remains by Ambrose, bishop of Milan, in 386 and his installation of their remains in his newly-built basilica, in defiance of the Arian empress Justina, thus legitimized his authority as bishop and that of his Nicene sect.[94] As a result, there is evidence for both a lack of sectional friction in Sbeitla and for Nicene anti-Arian sentiment.

Another type of ecclesiastical structure, the baptistery, has long been used to suggest that Basilica III, a 33x28 m. basilica with five isles, oriented N/S, and located one block east of the forum, was in fact a Donatist cathedral.[95] As has been mentioned earlier, the idea behind this supposition is that only cathedrals contained baptisteries because only bishops were authorized to baptize new Christians. With Basilicas I and II (correctly, in my view) designated as the Nicene cathedral complex, Basilica III and its baptistery has been referred to as a Donatist cathedral by process of elimination.[96] There

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[92] Namely Bir Messaouda, constructed by the Vandals, and Damous al-Karita, which probably was in Vandal hands as well—see the discussion of Carthage above.
[93] For the re-dedication see Y. Duval 1982, 50-51.
[94] Augustine, *Confessions*.9., Ambrose, *Epistula* 22.
[95] Duval, 1971b, 437.
[96] Bockmann, 235, Burns and Jensen,152-153, Duval, 1971, 437.

is, however, simply no further evidence to back this assertion. While the earliest phase of the church itself is soundly dated to the end of the fourth century the first incarnation of the baptistery, which is a separate structure altogether, has not been securely dated. Moreover, the Byzantine-era re-building and continued use of the baptistery despite its proximity to the baptistery of Basilica II, suggests that there is not need to posit a sectional conflict, and certainly not a "one baptistery only," rule.

Tripolitania: Lepcis Magna

Lepcis Magna, (fig. 10) as its name implies, was the principal city of Tripolitania from the beginning of Roman occupation of the region in the second century BCE. The city was excavated over the course of two decades from the 1920s until World War II by Italian excavators.[97] The city was re-surveyed in the early 1950s by Ward-Perkins and Goodchild.[98] The territory was immensely productive by the triumviral period and expanded during the Augustan, Antonine, and Severan dynasties. However, in the fourth century the city endured both increased seismic activity and constant raids by the nomadic Austoriani, who besieged Lepcis in 363 CE.[99] Such dire circumstances had motivated the construction of a defensive wall at the beginning of the 4th century, by the end of which the city's resources seem to have been drastically reduced and its re-building efforts limited. According to Procopius, most of the city had been reclaimed by the sand dunes when the Byzantine army arrived in 533.[100] As with Sbeitla, the churches

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[97] Sears, "African Urbanism," 70-71.
[98] Ward-Perkins, J.B., Goodchild, R.B. "The Christian Antiquities of Tripolitania," *Archaeologia* 95 (1953): 1-84.
[99] Sears, "African Urbanism," 71.
[100] *Pro.Aed.*6.4.1.

and *fora* of the city have been excavated relatively thoroughly while no Byzantine-era domestic buildings have been excavated.

Tripolitania had suffered disproportionately during the Vandal period. While the Vandals invested heavily in *Proconsularis* (Carthage and environs) and Byzacena (what is now central Tunisia), Tripolitania was practically abandoned, and according to Procopius Lepcis had been occupied by recalcitrant Berber tribes by the time the Byzantine troops arrived. Procopius' claim is substantiated by the fact that the Byzantine-era circuit walls of each city encircle a much smaller area than their imperial-era predecessors (see figures 10 and 13). As a result, the Byzantine garrison and colonists quickly became the most influential subgroup in the cities of Tripolitania and had more latitude to shape the urban landscape according to their needs.

Lepcis Magna: Church Construction and the Urban Landscape

As the summary above suggests, Lepcis' urban landscape was impacted most not by a church or set of churches but the new circuit wall that reduced the city to an area of 96 square acres. That said there are some interesting church-related developments. Like in its fellow Tripolitanian city Sabratha (discussed below), a judicial basilica built during the Severan dynasty was transformed into a church (Basilica I), and along with the forum area, was reinforced with thick walls. This made the Severan forum essentially part of the circuit wall. Not only was Basilica I fortified, but it was dedicated to the Virgin Mary, strongly suggesting that is was intentionally built into the fortifications to serve as an "unconquerable protector," in the words of Procopius describing similar churches at Constantinople.[101]While this embedding of a church into fortifications can be found in

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[101] Leone,2007, 185, Pro. *Aed*.1.3.8-9.

"frontier towns" such as Haidra, it is surprising to find in a provincial capital. Considering that this region was the first to fall to the Arabs (645), one supposes it was especially vulnerable to invasion.[102]

There are two other churches that have been excavated thoroughly. One, Basilica III, lies just to the west of Basilica I, on the other side of the Severan forum. It seems to have served primarily as a funerary chapel.[103]The church labelled Basilica II (fig. 11), on the other hand, had a greater impact on the cityscape. The church was built on top of an old temple of Magna Mater, probably during the reign of Justinian, on the southeastern edge of the city's old (pre-Severan) forum, which became the center of the Byzantine city, albeit centered on a new Nicene church.[104]

Tripolitania:Sabratha

The city of Sabratha (fig. 13), which lies on the coast of modern-day Libya, some seventy kilometers to the west of Tripoli, was the other major city of Tripolitania during the Roman period. Excavations carried out in 1950-51 pointed to extensive pre-Roman settlement of the site as well, but unfortunately the excavation methods employed at the time did not allow for more than a piecemeal understanding of the pre-Roman settlement.[105] Excavations of the Roman-era settlement, particularly the forum area, the theater, and adjacent bath complexes have been more thorough. The extant Roman cityscape arose in the first-century CE, when the temples (including a probable *Captioleum*) at the center of town were either built or rebuilt. The city expanded eastward

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[102] Pringle,47.
[103]Ward-Perkins and Goodchild, "The Christian Antiquities of Tripolitania," 30-31.
[104] Leone 2007, 186-187.
[105] Sears, "African Urbanism," 73-77, Phillip M. Kenrick, *Excavations at Sabratha*, 1948-1951, (London: Society for Libyan Studies, 1986), 8 .

during the second century with the construction of a number of insulae, the amphitheater, and a bath complex.[106] The city suffered throughout the fourth century, to which two destruction layers have been dated. Earthquakes remain the most plausible explanation for both destruction layers, though some continue to argue for destructive nomadic incursions.[107]

Major changes to the urban landscape, including the earliest-known construction of churches, occurred after the second round of destruction, dated tentatively to 365, when an enormous earthquake is known to have struck the cities of North Africa. The rest of the Forum area was partially rebuilt as well. Both the new church structures on the east side of town and the re-built Forum area were constructed with re-used materials from the ruins of the town. Archaeologists discovered a 'storeroom' of architectural pieces to be re-used in one area of the Church I. The city's population seems to have dwindled considerably during the Vandal Period (439-533) but contrary to Procopius' claims there is evidence of occupation of the city at the outset of the Byzantine re-conquest. The Byzantine city was considerably smaller, as the defensive wall constructed at that time demonstrates.

Sabratha: Church Construction and the Urban Landscape

Sabratha, like Lepcis above, was dominated in the Byzantine period by new circuit walls.[108] However, the newly-constructed and several re-built churches of this city also contributed to changes in the urban landscape. The most impactful church is known as Church I, and it sits on the edge of Sabratha's forum. The city's two main churches in

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[106] Kenrick, 8-10, Sears, "African Urbanism," 73-76.
[107] Sears, "African Urbanism," 74-75.
[108] Kendrick, 227-233.

pre-Byzantine time, labelled Church III and Church IV, now lay at a considerable distance outside of the city walls, and served primarily as cemeterial churches. The Byzantine residents of Sabratha therefore converted Church I into the city's main church, installing a baptistery in an abandoned building adjoining Church I. Even more strikingly, however, Byzantine-era Church I was also home to a sizeable cemetery, featuring burials not only inside the church but also in the forum to the north and what had been a street to the east.[109]

At Sabratha, the new trend of intramural burial is most conspicuous among our case study cities. While this may signal a major shift in attitudes for the residents of the city towards the dead and their rightful place, intramural burial may simply have been the safer and cheaper option than a burial near churches III and IV.[110]The new, Byzantine-era church a 40 m. by 30m three-aisled basilica labelled Church II, was probably built so that people did not have to journey outside the walls to churches III and IV for church service. It has been dated by its imported mosaics to the reign of Justinian.[111]

Conclusion

This chapter has surveyed the ecclesiastical structures of the principal cities of Byzantine Africa. Several trends have emerged across the cities surveyed, though in differing degrees: an increase in pilgrimage capacity, an increase in the number of baptisteries, the introduction of economic activity, sometimes associated with a church, and major, if varied impacts on overall plan of each city. Now that the archaeological evidence is out

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[109] Kendrick, 86-90, c.f.Ward-Pekins and Goodchild, "Christian Antiquities of Tripolitania,"9-11.
[110] Just.*Novellae*., 59.5. see discussion in chapter II.
[111] Ward-Pekins and Goodchild, "Christian Antiquities of Tripolitania," 12, Pro.*Aed.*6.4.13.

in the open, the next chapter will attempt to explain some of these trends by examining

them in the context of literary and comparative archaeological evidence.

III: IMPERIALISM, URBANISM AND CHURCH CONSTRUCTION IN SIXTH-CENTURY BYZANTIUM

Introduction

This chapter aims to place church construction in Byzantine North Africa in its broader political, social, and ecclesiastical contexts. Utilizing sixth-century textual sources and, to a lesser extent, material evidence from the Byzantine empire outside of North Africa, this chapter will allow us to evaluate the evidence found in our case studies against empire-wide trends in beliefs and practices. This chapter begins with a survey of the sources used. There follows a thematic examination of these sources as they pertain to church construction in the Byzantine empire, moving from the empire-wide perspective of Procopius' Buildings to a narrower focus on the components of individual church structures, such as baptisteries. Based on the evidence we have, contrary to Procopius' portrayal and despite the fact that Africa was a fresh conquest, the construction of churches in North Africa was very much in step with church construction elsewhere in the Byzantine empire.

Sources

The works of Procopius (c. 500- c.565), the secretary and historian of the Byzantine general Belisarius, provide the most complete extant record of church construction during the reign of Justinian (r.527-565). North Africa was conquered by the Byzantine general Belisarius in 533-534 and pacified by the generals Solomon and John Trodgolita through 548-549, when the last major resistance to the Byzantines in North

Africa is recorded.[112] The conquests of North Africa, Italy, and parts of Spain were all under the direction of Justinian, who envisioned the Roman empire united again under an orthodox Nicene ruler.[113] Procopius authored three extant works: the *Wars*, narrating Belisarius' many conquests across the Mediterranean, what is known as the *Secret History*, in which Procopius embarks upon a fierce polemic against Justinian and his co-ruler Theodora, and the *Buildings*, which details the numerous churches, baths, and entire cities that were re-built or newly constructed under Justinian's auspices.

Volumes three and four of Procopius' *Wars* narrate the Byzantine invasion of Africa. Procopius' narrative begins with a history of the Vandals and how they came to rule Africa. He is our lonely extant source that details this period of Vandal history apart from a small section of Procopius' contemporary Gregory of Tours' chronicle.[114] He then narrates the various conflicts in North Africa from 533-549. Scholars for the most part accept Procopius' narrative at face value, and when it comes to his description of *events*, as opposed to his ethnographies, character sketches, or speeches, there is little choice but to do so with the qualifications outlined below, as there are few sources which can serve to verify or deny his version of events.

While he was an eyewitness to the initial invasion, his job as Belisarius' counsellor (πάρεδρος) necessitated that he follow Belisarius, who left Africa in 534, returning for only a few months in 542, the remainder of the war he observed from afar, probably in Constantinople.[115] Moreover, Procopius tends to emphasize his own role in

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[112] Denys Pringle, *The Defense of Byzantine Africa* (BAR International, 1981), 38-39.
[113] Cod.Just.1.4., Fergus Millar, "Rome, Constantinople, and the Near Eastern Church: Two Church Synods of 536 CE," JRS Vol.90 (2008): 64-68.
[114] Gregory of Tours, *History of the Franks*.2.2-3.
[115] Pro. *Vandal War*.1.3.14.

events when he can and champions his boss Belisarius, coloring his narrative with character sketches of Belisarius and other Byzantine generals that are not necessarily to be trusted.[116] The tendency to characterize the Vandal rulers of Africa as pagans that plagues the *Buildings*(see the discussion below), also appears in the *Vandalic Wars*, in which Vandal soldiers vandalize churches and terrorize Christian clergy.[117] In short, the *Vandal Wars* may accurately convey many events in detail, but it is far from disinterested or unbiased in what it narrates.

However, the *Buildings* will occupy most of our attention. Although the date of its production is uncertain, previous scholarship has convincingly situated the *Buildings* as the latest chronologically. It was probably written in either 554 or 559.[118] This theory has strong support in the fact that the *Buildings* is a clearly unfinished work; some sections are complete with rich descriptions of cityscapes and churches while others are mere lists of towns and fortresses. Moreover, Procopius openly refers to his *Wars* as a work completed in the past.[119]

Procopius divided his work geographically, dedicating a book to Constantinople and its environs which he describes as the "foundation of this work," and then works his way through large swathes of the empire, often covering multiple administrative regions in one book. Our focus will be on Procopius' description of Constantinople and its suburbs, and naturally, his description of Justinian's building program in North Africa, as

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[116] e.g. Pro. *Vandal War.*1.3.14 (Procopius picks up key intelligence), 1.3.12, 15 (speeches). 1.3.13. (character sketch) For further discussion see Cameron 1985, 134-151, 171-187.
[117] Pro.*Vandal War.*1.3.8.
[118] Averil Cameron, *Procopius,* 9-11. Some argue for 559 because Procopius mentions a bridge over the Sangrios River which a later source, Theophanes, claims was constructed in that year. 554 is accepted as the *terminus post quem* because Procopius omits Italy, conquered in 554.
[119] Pro.*Aed.*1.1.6.

well as selected examples from other books. The text is interesting not only for the
obvious reason that it details the construction of churches across the Byzantine empire,
but also because it is Procopius' most openly panegyrical work.[120] Procopius is
consciously striving to provide a suitably orthodox and flattering imperial vision for his
readers, one that we can reasonably assume reflects Justinian's own envisioning of his
domains and construction projects.[121]

Even today, archaeologists are generally content to use Procopius' *Buildings* as a
relatively objective catalog of sites whose listings they often include in their own
discussions of Byzantine-era urban space.[122] However, upon close examination, much of
the *Buildings* has been found faulty in its description of individual structures and scholars
have detected a tendency to attribute structures, especially walls, to Justinian that were
actually erected by his predecessors.[123] The accuracy of Procopius' reporting cannot be
taken for granted, but will be assessed on a case-by-case basis. That said, what is most
interesting for our purposes is not Procopius' catalog of structures in itself, but the role
Procopius accords ecclesiastical structures in the empire of Justinian in the *Buildings*.
This section will attempt to extract the values and objectives attributed to Justinian's
church buildings and examine the extent to which extant church structures from

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[120] e.g. Pro.*Aed.*1.1.12-13. comparing Justinian favorably to Cyrus, founder of the Persian empire.
Predictably, Cameron *Procopius,* 84-85, and Anthony Kaldellis *Procopius of Caesarea: Tyranny, History,
and Philosophy at the End of Antiquity,* (Philadelphia: UPenn Press, 2011), 50-52 are somewhat at odds in
their assessments.

[121] Pro.*Aed.*1.1.6-9.

[122] e.g. Liliane Ennabli, *Carthage: une métropole chrétienne du IVe à la fin du VIIe siècle, (Paris:
CNRS, 1997),*39-42, Ward-Perkins, J.B., Goodchild, R.B. "The Christian Antiquities of Tripolitania,"
Archaeologia
95 (1953), 227.

[123] Brian Croke and James Crow, "Procopius and Dara" *JRS* Vol.73 (1983): 144-146. and Joyce Reynolds,
"Byzantine buildings, Justinian and Procopius in Libya Inferior and Libya Superior," *Antiquité Tardive* Vol.8,
(2001): 169-176

Justinian's reign bear out those values and objectives. Procopius was not the lone

Byzantine historian of the sixth century, nor the only writer to celebrate the extraordinary

nature of the "main church" the Hagia Sofia. However, he is the only sixth-century

writer to place a heavy emphasis on church construction broadly.

A similar approach will be taken when dealing with Justinian's decrees, known as

the *Novellae*. The *Novellae* were laws which either amended or added to the *Codex,*

Digest, and *Institutes* which were established by 534 as the definitive code of laws across

the empire. The decrees which will be dealt with in this study are generally reactive in

nature, and will usually be understood as evidence of problems that were widespread and

serious enough to be addressed by the emperor and his top officials. We will not assume,

however, that these decrees were universally and perfectly enforced in North Africa or

elsewhere.[124] Still, the content of the *Novellae* presents a wealth of information on the

social and economic role of churches during Justinian's reign.

While Procopius and the *Novellae* form the foundation of this chapter, eighteen

dedicatory inscriptions recorded in the tenth-century text known as the *Greek Anthology*

provide valuable information about royal and private patronage in sixth-century

Constantinople.[125] The texts have been dated to the fifth and sixth centuries, as many of

the dedicants have at least been tentatively identified. While the historicity of all eighteen

of these inscriptions is generally assumed, only one of these inscriptions has even been

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[124] On the problems of provincial governance broadly see Cliff Ando, *Imperial Ideology and Provincial Loyalty in the Roman Empire*, (Berkeley: UC Press, 2000), especially 89-247. For these problems in a Byzantine context see Averil Cameron, "Images and Authority: Elites and Icons in Late Sixth-Century Byzantium," *Past and Present* No.84 (Aug. 1979): 3-35, A.P.Kazhdan, *People and Power in Byzantium: An Introduction to Modern Byzantine Studies,* (Washington DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 1982), *Leonora* Neville, *Authority in Byzantine Provincial Authority: 950-1100,* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004) and Anthony Kaldellis, *The Byzantine Republic: People and Power in New Rome* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2015).
[125] I'm using the Loeb edition of this text, published in 2014 by W.R. Paton.

partially excavated. On balance, it's impossible to make a sure claim for most of the texts' reality, yet we will treat them as texts that are realistic if not necessarily real. Many of the inscriptions of the *Greek Anthology* echo the language of actual inscriptions, and the one text whose existence has been corroborated demonstrates that the elevated language we see in some of the inscriptions is not necessarily embellishment on the part of the compiler(s).

Procopius: Churches in an Imperial Context

How did our main source for North African history and church construction view those topics? Procopius' writings on Africa consistently portray the region as exotic and pagan despite its venerable Roman heritage and prominent role in the pan-Mediterranean Nicene Christian community. This exoticizing tendency manifests itself in Procopius' portrayal of church construction in Africa and other newly-conquered regions. In the *Buildings* Procopius misleadingly designates churches constructed in Africa solely as companions to fortifications, as fortifications themselves, or as vehicles for the conversion of pagans. Procopius implicitly contrasts these frontier churches with churches in the Constantinople area, which were attached to markets, hostels, and halfway houses for recovering sex workers. This false dichotomy is in line with the *Buildings*' stated goal of demonstrating that "Justinian built walls, and strengthened the borders of the whole empire by building strongholds," but ultimately renders his work unhelpful for assessing the actual impacts of church construction on North African cities.[126]

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[126]Pro.*Aed*.1.1.11. *ἐπέρρωσε καὶ ὀχυρωμάτων οἰκοδομίαις ἀπάσας αὐτῆς τὰς ἐσχατιὰς ἐτειχίσατο.*

Procopius establishes this dichotomy at the outset of the *Buildings*. Not only does he organize his work along the territorial lines found in Justinian's decrees, but he declares that

"the [churches] in Byzantium should rightly be the foundation for my tale, for it is necessary, in accordance with the old saying, 'with a work being begun, it is necessary to establish a far-shining face."[127]

Procopius thus establishes the churches of Byzantium as inherently superior to those of the barbaric frontiers to be described elsewhere.

The remainder of Book One of the *Buildings,* dedicated to Constantinople and its metropolitan area constitutes the longest and most detailed section of the entire work, providing helpful details for church aesthetics (discussed below). This is not necessarily surprising. Procopius undoubtedly had easy access to these structures, while in contrast, his experiences abroad were temporary, even rushed, and often took place during the time of the actual conquest and not the extensive building afterward. The way Procopius divides the *Buildings* also reflects the administrative divisions found in Justinian's edicts, which treats Constantinople and its suburbs as its own district, whereas everywhere else constitutes "the provinces."[128] In any case, Procopius conveys important details about the role of Justinian in church construction and the values (often aesthetic) that influenced which buildings were re-built and how.

Procopius first mentions one perhaps unexpected function of church structures—using churches to mark important boundaries—in Book One. Apparently Justinian

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[127] Pro.*Aed*.1.1.18-19. εἴη δ' ἂν εἰκότως τὰ ἐν Βυζαντίῳ παρὰ πάντα τῷ λόγῳ κρηπίς. ἀρχομένου10 γὰρ ἔργου, κατὰ δὴ τὸν παλαιὸν λόγον, πρόσωπον χρὴ θέμεναι τηλαυγές

[128] e.g.Just. *Novellae* 1, 46.

constructed two churches dedicated to the Holy Mother as structures attached to the outside of the city walls. Procopius says that this was done in order to mark the city's boundary and protect the city from invaders.[129] Churches dedicated to the Holy Mother were also used to mark the outer limits of the empire, so it might seem strange to create such a strong boundary around Constantinople; but as we have noted before, this exact division is found in the edicts. It lent divine legitimacy to the idea that Constantinople was Justinian's personal domain while the remainder of "the provinces" were governed by royal proxies on a day-to-day basis.

For Procopius, such ancillary structures to churches namely hostels and hospitals are just as valuable, perhaps more so than the church structures themselves, especially in Book One. Immediately following his detailed description of the Hagia Sophia, Procopius provides an equally detailed account of how Justinian and Theodora put the adjoining property to good use by building two shelters for the poor. Book One of the Buildings culminates in Procopius' description of an old palace on the golden horn which was "dedicated to God," and served as refuge for "repentant," former sex workers following Justinian and Theodora's banishment of pimps and sex workers from the city.[130] While archaeologists have uncovered many structures adjoining church structures in North Africa, the use of these structures cannot be pinpointed, so the extent to which church builders in Carthage and elsewhere also strived to maximize the utility of their churches cannot easily be gauged.

Procopius: Provincial Churches

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[129] Pro.*Aed*.1.3.8-9. He refers to them as ἀκαταγώνιστα φυλακτήρια- "unconquerable safeguards,"
[130] Pro.*Aed*.1.8.20-1.9.1-10. He refers to this passage as "the long-expected portion of my history," ἡ πάλαι τῆς ἱστορίας προσδοκωμένη μοῖρα-1.8.20.

In contrast with his description of churches in Constantinople and its environs, Procopius is sparing in his description of churches in the provinces. While there are no more musings on aesthetic concerns, the theme of utility remains consistent in the provincial sections of the *Buildings*. Conveniently, all of the uses to which one could put a church in the provinces (in Procopius' view, anyway) can be found in book six of the *Buildings*, which covers North Africa.

As we saw with the circuit-wall churches at Constantinople, a church dedicated to the holy mother could be built to mark an important border. Procopius writes that a church dedicated to the holy mother was built to mark the westernmost limit of the empire at the Pillars of Hercules in Mauretania with an accompanying garrison.[131] The existence of this church finds support in an edict of Justinian mandating that a fortress and church be established beyond the Pillars of Hercules and right across the Strait of Gibraltar from Spain.[132] Procopius' portrayal of church construction seems to be accurate concerning the one shared function of churches on the frontiers and those in Constantinople. A Byzantine-era church in our case-study city of Lepcis may have served this very same protective function. The church in question, Lepcis I, is situated just outside of the city walls adjacent to a Severan-era forum that was fortified in the Byzantine period. The church is dedicated to the virgin, like the border churches mentioned by Procopius, and thus suggests some empire-wide functions of churches..[133]

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[131] Pro.*Aed*. 6.14-16.

[132] Just.Cod.27.4-

[133] Ward-Perkins and Goodchild, 72-73, Anna Leone, *Changing Townscapes in North Africa from Late Antiquity to the Arab Conquest*, (Bari: Epdipuglia, 2007), 274.

Churches in the provinces also served the important function of converting the hordes of 'pagans' in North Africa and elsewhere.[134] In the *Buildings* the Africans, namely the residents of Lepcis and inland Cyrene, serve as one of two primary examples of peoples who still practice paganism alongside the Tzanica hitherto-unconquered people in the Caucasus.[135] This portrayal is in line with how Procopius characterizes many Africans in his *Vandal Wars*.[136]

 Procopius elides the actual theological battles taking place within Africa, between Nicenes, restored to their full rights and property versus Arians, whose denomination was outlawed under Justinian.[137] By portraying Justinian's foes and reluctant subjects in Africa as pagans, Procopius implies that there is only one true type of Christianity—the Nicene sect. While some might argue that this is simply a "classicizing" move on the part of Procopius, his de-legitimizing portrayal of "pagan" Africans serves Procopius' strict Nicene overlords too well for this argument to be convincing. Despite his avowed contempt for theological disputes in the *Wars*, in the *Buildings* Procopius seems to have joined in.

Church Construction: Patronage

Two of the thorniest issues pertaining to church construction and its significance during this period are 1) who exactly was behind the construction or re-construction of a particular structure, and 2) to what extent did the imperial government in Constantinople assist local clegy in their construction efforts. Procopius addresses these problems in

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[134] Pro.*Aed.*6.2.21., 3.6.12.
[135] Pro.*Aed.*3.6.
[136] e.g. Pro. *Vandalic War.*2.10. —Procopius' origin story of the Berber natives.
[137] *Novellae.*37.

book one of the *Buildings*, when he describes the re-building of two churches situated on either side of the Golden Horn, at sites named Anaplus and Brochi. According to Procopius, the local priests petitioned the imperial government for assistance because the churches in town were falling apart. They had no choice but to petition Justinian because capital was so scarce throughout the empire that only the imperial government had the money to finance new construction projects.[138] Justinian agreed to assist in re-constructing the churches, but did not simply send a sack of coins for the clergy to use as they saw fit. Instead, Justinian simply took over the entire project. Procopius conveys that "Justinian tore the churches up completely." On the western side of the Golden Horn at Anaplus, Justinian established a marketplace on the shore immediately in front of the church, around which he constructed a circular *stoa*.[139], Procopius relates that Justinian expanded the church at Brochi, but he does not provide details.

Unfortunately the remains of these churches have not been recovered, so this anecdote cannot be confirmed. However, it certainly demonstrates Justinian's willingness to use ecclesiastical property as he saw fit—not only for worship but to encouarage economic activity. Archaeological excavations of contemporary churches in Africa confirm that Procopius' account is plausible. At a church bordering the forum of Iol Caesarea in Mauretania, for example, excavators uncovered postholes for wooden market stalls.[140] In the North African cities featured in this study, there is some evidence that

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[138] Pro.*Aed*.1.8.5.
[139] Pro.*Aed.*1.8.8-12.
[140] Helen G. Saradi, The Byzantine City in the Sixth Century: Literary Images and Historical Reality (Athens: Society of Messenian Archaeological Studies, 2006), 193.

churches engaged in economic activity, but the primary 'practical' role for urban churches is as cemeteries.[141]

Ultimately, Procopius' claim that Justinian held a monopoly on church repairs is misleading. The inscriptions in the *Greek Anthology* show Justinian did not have a monopoly on church repairs even in Constantinople. Insofar as it existed, Justinian's patronage of churches in the Byzantium area seem to have been in competition with other notables. The most famous competitor with Justinian and his Hagia Sofia was the noblewoman Anicia Julianna, who built two churches in Constantinople. One has been partially excavated, and its dedicatory inscriptions survive in the *Greek Anthology*.[142]

Yet Procopius statements in the *Buildings* do reflect the financial troubles many churches found themselves in during Justinian's reign, which are described in several of Justinian's edicts. For example, Justinian had initially issued a blanket ban on sales and long-term leases of ecclesiastical property in his *Codex* of 530.[143] However, in 536 this ban was lifted. In his repeal of the law, Justinian acknowledged that the initial ban had been too restrictive, that he had not considered the debts churches across the empire owed, and that churches in the provinces were experiencing a serious shortage of money.[144] We get a more detailed example of this problem when in 538 he issued a special dispensation for the Church of the Resurrection in Jerusalem, which had taken on considerable debt lessened only by the long-term lease of apartments in church

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[141] A church in Sbeitla owned some olive presses, and there is evidence for the existence of shops in the Severan Forum next to Church I. See chapter below.
[142] *GA.*10-11.
[143] Novellae 46.
[144] Novellae 46.

buildings.[145] In the same year, Justinian moved to prevent privately-donated churches from being built in the first place by requiring that anybody who wished to construct a church obtain the permission of the bishop and prove that they could finance maintenance costs as well as construction costs.[146] As noted above, this edict also complained that people constructed churches "in order to perpetuate their names," but without the money to pay for clergy, staff, or repairs—there was, in short, a church bubble.

Procopius' statements , these edicts of Justinian, and the inscriptions from the *Greek Anthology* together provide important context for our study of North African churches. First, the Edict of 538 allowing the Church of the Resurrection to lease (long term) "residences in church buildings," lends strong support to the idea that the small rooms often attached to ecclesiastical structures were indeed rooms for rent by wealthy visitors. Moreover, the financial troubles and gratuitous church construction alluded to in the edicts allow us to think about the large quantity of churches discovered in many extant late-antique cities as well as the evident abandonment of such structures. Earlier studies have argued that churches featuring columns and decorations made of marble from imperial quarries were built by the imperial government, but they probably simply attest that the church's builder was well-connected. Far from directly funding churches and bailing them out, Justinian's government instead drastically altered its own laws in order for churches to remain financially indepenent through leasing and selling property. From the information provided by these sources, I am inclined not to attribute the

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[145] Novellae.40.
[146] Novellae.67.

construction of churches to Justinian unless an inscription or a royal monogram attests otherwise.

If we cannot attribute North African church patronage primarily or even partially to Justininan, then it is necessary to explore other motives behind church construction. By the time of the Byzantine conquest of North Africa in 533, church construction had come to very much resemble traditional Greek euergetism, that is, private citizens constructing buildings for public use and enjoyment.[147] This resemblence is attested to in many extant donor iscriptions, which often employ the traditional language of pre-Christian euergetism. Even though Christian themes began to predominate in these inscriptions in the sixth century, scholars nevertheless describe many privately-constructed churches as products of euergetism.[148]

Church construction could be just as politcally-motivated as the construction of baths and theaters, used to promote an individual's or family's standing in their community. The church of St. Polyeuctos,constructed in Constantinople by Anicia Julianna is a case in point with connections to the politics of Byzantium and the Vandal kingdom in Africa. Julianna was no ordinary noblewoman; she was a granddaughter of the emperor Valentinian III (r.425-455) and the daughter of the short-lived emperor Olybrius (r.472). Her mother, Placidia, was kidnapped in 455 by the Vandals when they staged a dramatic raid on Rome at the request of Euodoxia, Valentinian's widow who had been forced to marry his assassin Maximus.[149] Placidia was detained in Carthage for

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[147] Ann Marie Yasin, *Saints and Church Buildings in the Late Antique Mediterranean,* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP,2009), 102-110, Saradi, 163-165, 412-422.
[148] Yasin, 108-110, Saradi, 417-422.
[149]

years, while Placidia's sister, Eudocia, married the Vandal prince (later king) Huneric, marrying the Vandals into the Roman imperial family. When Juliana completed her church to St. Polyuectos in 527, her cousin Hilderic, Huneric's son, ruled the Vandal kingdom. Juliana's family was still a royal one—just at Carthage. In the dedication written for her church of St. Polyeuktos, Julianna's inscription emphasizes that

ἐλπίδας οὐκ ἔψευσεν ἀριστώδινος ἀνάσσης,

ἀλλά μιν ἐκ βαιοῖο μέγαν καὶ τοῖον ἐγείρει,

κῦδος ἀεξήσασα πολυσκήπτρων γενετήρων…

·… τίς γὰρ Ἰουλιανὴν οὐκ ἔκλυεν, ὅττι καὶ αὐτοὺς

εὐκαμάτοις ἔργοισιν ἑοὺς φαίδρυνε τοκῆας, εὐσεβίης ἀλέγουσα;

"she (Julianna) did not cheat the expectations of the queen bearing the best children, but raised this great (building) from a small one, having increased the glory of her many-sceptered ancestors…for who has not been hearing of Julianna, that by her well-worked deeds she even cleansed her very own parents having cared for piety?" (GA.1.10.10-15).

This rhetoric acknowledges that building a church could serve more than one purpose—Julianna "cared for piety," and "cleansed her own parents," while emphasizing the positive and wide reception her bulding project received ("who has not been hearing?"). Julianna increased her standing not only because she"increased the glory of her ancestors," but "cleansed her own parents." The term "cleansed," may have both

political and religious connotations. On one hand, her father Olybrios had seized power in Rome from a certain Athemius, whom the Byzantine emperor Leo had nominated as emperor of the west, and he had done so as an ally of the Vandal king Geiseric.[150] Olybrios' actions may well have contributed to Juliana's family falling out of favor, further suggested in lines 39-41, when she asks that the "servants of the heavenly king...well-intentionedly carry her away with her son and his daughters, and may the unspeakably great (granted) prayer of her best-toiling progeny remain as long as the sun drives his fiery chariot."[151]

   Scholars have consistently argued that the numerous references to her ancestry and the blatant self-promotion of this epigram reflect Juliana's opposition to the regime of Justinian and his adoptive uncle Justin I, both of whom were of obscure birth and therefore viewed as upstarts by the Byzantine establishment.[152] This opposition came out into the open during the Nika riots in 532, when a cabal of Byzantine nobles tried to elevate a new emperor as Constantinople burned.[153] A story from Gregory of Tours' *Regarding The Glory of the Martyrs,* according to which Juliana gilded the roof of St. Polyeuctos in order to avoid having her wealth taxed by Justinian, has been used to

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[150] Pro. *Vandal War*.1.6.6.
θεράποντες ἐπουρανίου βασιλῆος... προφρονέως ἐρύεσθε σὺν υἱέι, τοῖό τε κούραις:
μίμνοι δ' ἄσπετον εὖχος ἀριστοπόνοιο γενέθλης,εἰσόκεν ἥλιος πυριλαμπέα δίφρον ἐλαύνει.
(*GA*1.10.38-42)
[152] R.M. Harrison, *Excavations at Sarachnae in Istanbul Vol. I*, (Princeton; Princeton UP, 1986), 418-420. Mary Whitby, "The St Polyeuktos Epigram (AP 1.10): A Literary Perspective," in *Greek Literature in Late Antiquity: Dynamism, Didacticism, Classicism*, edited by Scott Fitzgerald Johnson, (Aldershot; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2006). Accessed online https://chs.harvard.edu/CHS/article/display/3263.mary-whitby-the-st-polyeuktos-epigram-ap-1-10-a-literary-perspective
[153] Pro. *Persian Wars*.1.24.

substantiate this claim.[154] Gregory's story cannot be confirmed and suggests Juliana only renovated the roof when excavations have shown the entire church was built by her. There is no other evidence that suggests that Juliana or her family considered themselves rivals to Justinian. On the contrary, Juliana's cousin Hilderic was a guest-friend of Justinian who had stayed with him as a Vandal ambassador to Constantinople.[155] Hilderic was even deposed by his fellow Vandals in 530 on account of his close relationship with Justinian, and it was for his sake that the Byzantine invasion of Africa was ostensibly undertaken.[156] It seems just as likely that Juliana emphasized her illustrious ancestry and cleansing her parents in order to secure a 'seat at the table,' for her family in Justinian's regime, in particular for her son Olybrius, who had been declared Consul as a child in 491 but was now old enough for a real career.

Private church donations were so great in number that Justinian felt a need to regulate them. Justinian sent an edict to the Patriarch Menas (r.536-552) in 538, which complained that too many people were building churches "for the sake of their name," (*causa nominis*) and in many cases abandoned the churches after they had constructed them.[157] The decree mandated that anybody who constructed a church must also have the funds to maintain it.

That said, some extant church dedications cite rather different motivations for constructing a church. On the one hand, some people dedicated churches to saints who

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[154] Gregory of Tours. *de gloria martyrium*. 71. cols. 793-795 quoted in full in Harrison 1986, 8-9. For interpretations see Harrison 1986,418-420 above but c.f. R.M. Harrison "The Church of Saint Polyeuectos and the Temple of Solomon," *Harvard Ukrainian* Studies 7, (1983): 276-279.
[155] Pro. *Vandal War.*1.9.5.
[156] Pro. *Vandal War.*1.
[157] *Novellae*.46.

intervened on their behalf. Procopius mentions an instance of this, when Justinian

dedicated a church to the saints Cosmas and Damian after they appeared to him in a

dream and cured him of a serious illness.[158] The *Greek Anthology* contains a dedications

citing a similar case, in which the dedicant gives thanks for escaping a fire.[159] On the

other hand other dedicants, such as Justin II and Sophia, Justinian's successors, are

straightforward in portraying their church as a gift to god which will be duly rewarded, in

their case with "victory upon victories over the plagues and barbarians," while another

inscription suggests a cause-and-effect relationsship between the dedication of the church

and its dedicator becoming Consul.[160] Still others cited gratitutde to their family

members.[161] Unfortunately, very few dedicatory inscriptions survive in the cities of our

case studies, and the ones that do are quite minimal, simply identifying the donor.

Ultimately, individual motives for each church can only be guessed at, but for churches in

Carthage that were quickly abandoned, namely Carthagenna and one of the Dermech

churches, we can argue that the were simply built *causa nominis* as the decree discussed

above suggests.[162]

Pilgrimage & Martyr Veneration

Pilgrimage, travel for (primarily) religious purposes, was popular in antiquity

among pagans and early Christians, but it became one of the defining practices of late

antique and medieval Christians. The practice's enormous popularity manifested itself in

churches across the Christian world, as the sixth century saw a boom in the construction

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[158] Pro.*Aed.*1.6.5.
[159] *GA.*6.
[160]*GA.* 11, 4
[161] *GA.*7, 10.20-21, 38-40.
[162] See chapter II below for an extended discussion of these churches.

of ecclesiastical structures dedicated to pilgrimage. In many cities, the construction of intramural pilgrimage complexes brought major changes to their urban environment, with North African cities being no exception. Thus the major changes related to urban pilgrimage complexes in North Africa conform to empire-wide trends..

Before discussing the components and urban impact of pilgrimage complexes, it is worth surveying the nature of early Christian pilgrimage and its significance to Christian worshipers. Considerable scholarly energy has been devoted to these questionst, and the definition of 'pilgrimage' itself has been debated at length, as our scattered and often fragmentary primary sources do not use the term 'pilgrimage' even as they describe a wide range of activities that could be categorized as such. Some 'pilgrims' travelled for the sake of *historia* –inquiry into the life of Jesus and other biblical figures.[163] Others travelled seeking wisdom from 'holy men,' such as Jerome or Joshua the Stylite.[164] Egeria, one of the most famous early Christian pilgrims, spent much of her time schmoozing with influential clergy and local officials.[165] In late-antique North Africa, however, only one type of pilgrimage is well-attested, namely travel for the purpose of venerating a martyr. We will focus on this form of pilgrimage for the remainder of this section.

Martyr veneration was one of the most popular motivations for religious travel. As an edict from the year 401 attests, North African Christians in particular were attached to martyr veneration from an early date. The edict, issued by a church council at Carthage

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[163] For an extensive taxonomy of ancient Christian pilgrimage see Jas Elsner and Ian Rutherford, "Introduction," in Pilgrimage in Graeco-Roman and Early Christian Antiquity: Seeing the Gods, eds. Elsner and Rutherford, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 1-38, especially 24-ff.
[164] Elsner and Rutherford, 29.
[165]*Pilgrimage of Egeria*.17, 31-32, 36-27.

stated that worshipers should avoid false altars which did not feature the remains of a

saint or martyr, the implication being that any legitimate church structure would possess

some saintly remains.[166] Moreover, ecclesiastical structures devoted to pilgrimage for

martyr veneration were built well before the Byzantine takeover, as early as the fourth

century.[167]

According to the extant sources, North African worshippers were moved to

venerate martyrs for two reasons. On the one hand, theologians such as Augustine of

Hippo encouraged veneration out of gratitude for the sacrifices martyrs made for the

Christian community.[168] On the other hand, even Augustine acknowleged that the main

reason for venerating a martyr was to request that martyr's intercession on behalf of the

venerator or their relatives.[169] Intercession could take a variety of forms, including

miracles.[170]

The sixth-century increase in pilgrimage's popularity had a major impact on

North Africa's churches. Unfortunately, no extant early Christian source provides a blow-

by-blow account of the ritual associated with martyr veneration, but it is clear that

pilgrims valued proximity to the martyr's remains and usually came as close as possible

to them.[171] North African churches employed a variety of architectural techniques in

order to enhance the pilgrimage experience. Many churches, such as Theveste or Bir

Messaouda at Carthage, featured a room attached to the church but accessible from the

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[166] *Corpus Christinorum, Series Latina* No. 149.
[167] Namely Theveste, see Yasin, 161-165.
[168] Aug.*Serm.*22.4*,* 280.6, Burns and Jensen 539
[169] Aug.*Serm.*284.5, 285.5, Burns and Jensen 539-540.
[170] Burns and Jensen, 545-548.
[171] Burns and Jensen, 543-545, Yasin, 70, 91-97.

outside, so that venerators did not have to walk through the entire complex if they did not desire to. Others, such as the *Basilica Maiorum* in Carthage, installed a *confessio*, an underground crypt, in the middle of the church.

Catering to pilgrims could explain a unique feature of North African churches in the Byzantine period: a tendency to move the altar towards the center of the church from the back, near the apse. For large churches with a separate area for the martyr's remains, a centralized altar allowed for a greater flow of traffic through the church complex. The enormous Damous Carita complex just outside the walls of Carthage is a good example of this (fig. 14).

Pilgrimage's soaring popularity and the inccreasing monetization of worship initiated changes to the urban environment of many cities in Byzantine North Africa and across the Byzantine Empire. Prior to the sixth century, the vast majority of martyr complexes were situated outside of the city walls; but the sixth century saw an explosion of intramural complexes. Pilgrimage complexes comprised not only a church and a space for the martyr itself, but often featured courtyards, gardens, accomodations for travellers.[172] Cities sometimes altered their street plan entirely in order to direct pilgrim traffic towards these complexes. Two of the most conspicuous examples from the reign of Justinian are the Nea church in Jerusalem and the complex at Abu Mena in Egypt.[173]

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[172] Ann Marie Yasin, "The Pilgrim and the Arch: Pathways and Passagways at Qal'at, Sem'an, Sinai, Abu Mena, and Tebessa," *in Excavating Pilgrimage: Archaeological Approaches to Sacred Travel and Movement in the Ancient World* edited by Troels Myrup Kristensen and Wiebke Friese,. (Routledge, 2019), 166-167.

[173] Other examples include the city center of Jerash/Gerasa in modern day Jordan and Apamea in Syria—see Saradi 398-401.

The Nea church, located on mount Zion in Jerusalem, was begun in 527 by the local clergy but was not completed until 543 due to a lack of funds.[174] Not only was a massive superstructure built to support the church on the hill, but the church's completion coincided with the construction of *stoas* lining both sides of the street adjoining the church.[175] These *stoas* would have eased the journey up the mountain by focusing the pilgrim's gaze and providing some shade as well.

Abu Mena was a suburb of Alexandria which was constructed solely to serve as a pilgrimage destination.[176] The pilgrimage complex was situated on the the acropolis in the midst of the city. The city planners directed traffic to the pilgrimage complex by constructing a street that goes straight up the acropolis, breaking from the street grid. This street also narrows partway through, with the narrowed area and the subsequent entrance to the complex marked by gates (fig. 15).[177] In short, the city clearly intended to direct the flow of pilgrims by creating an unconventional "pilgrimage corridor," and by clearly demarcating space intended for pilgrims through building gates inside the city. As the next chapter illustrates in detail, Byzantine-era Carthage also underwent considerable changes to its urban landscape as pilgrimage churches arose through the establishment of its own 'pilgrimage corridor.'

Christian Practice: Baptism and Burial

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[174] Michele Voltaggio, "Xenodochia and Hospitia in Sixth-Century Jerusalem: Indicators for the Byzantine Pilgrimage to the Holy Places," *Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palastrina-Vereins* Vol. 127 No.2, (2011), 197-198.

[175] Pro.*Aed.*5.6.1-15., Voltaggio 198.

[176] Yasin 2019, 173.

[177] Yasin 2019, 173-174.

The two ceremonies which marked the beginning and end of a Christian life: baptism and burial were centered on church structures more in the Byzantine period than in earlier times. During the sixth century baptisteries went from being rare to commonplace and cemeteries breached city walls. These developments signal important changes occurring at this time, though what exactly those changes were is still a matter of debate.

Two edicts of Justinian answer two important questions about baptism in the Byzantine empire. First, did bishops have the sole authority to conduct baptisms? It is clear that in late imperial times the responsibility for baptizing new Christians fell upon bishops, though bishops could delegate the ability to baptize to others.[178] Archaeologists have tended to take this point to its most extreme, arguing that any church featuring a baptistery must have been the seat of the bishop When archaeologists discover multiple baptisteries in a single city (as they almost always do), they usually attribute this to the presence of competing religious sects within in the city, even if the dating and location of the baptisteries do not warrant such an interpretation.[179]

Part of an edict of Justinian, dated to 565, the final year of his reign, contradicts this supposition. It mandates that "all the bishops and presbyters shall pronounce the prayers in connection with the holy eucharist and holy baptism not silently, but with a voice that can be heard by the faithful."[180] This edict clearly assumes that large numbers of presbyters are carrying out baptisms across the empire (and phoning it in too). In this period, a Presbyter was a senior member of the clergy who managed an individual church

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[178] Burns and Jensen, 105.
[179] Burns and Jensen, 105, Bockmann, 235-236.
[180] *Novellae*. 137.6.

on behalf of the bishop. In short, Presbyters were equivalent to modern-day pastors.[181] In most churches, the it was the Presbyter who carried out the eucharistic and, in this period, baptismal rites. There is no need to assume that a baptistery equals a bishop.

An explosion of baptisteries across the empire during the reign of Justinian and his successors is evident from the archaeological data. The most natural explanation for this increase in baptistery construction is that there was an enormous number of people entering the Nicene church as Justinian essentially ended freedom of worship.[182] An edict of Justinian from 535, which specified precisely how many clergy (priests, deacons etc.) and non-clergy (singers, doorkeepers) were to staff the Hagia Sophia and its neighboring churches. The decree justifies its high number of staff (525) by citing an influx of recently- converted "heretics" seeking the church's services.

It is, of course, possible that Justinian is exaggerating, but we know from the outcome of the Council of Carthage in 518 that there was a considerable Arian community in Constantinople.[183] Whether or not Justinian is fudging the numbers of Nicene converts in Constantinople, in North Africa, where the ruling class had been composed of Arians for ninety years, such a flood of converts is entirely plausible. This surge of converts and consequent demand for more clergy could explain not only the increase in baptisteries but also the increase in *presbyteria*, benches for the clergy installed in the apse of the churches which we see in North Africa, especially the city of Sbeitla.

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[181] Burns and Jensen, 405-407, *Canons of the Council of Chalcedon* No. 29
[182] *Novellae.*37.
[183] Vic.Vita.*Historia Persecutonis.*2.3-4.

Another important Christian practice referenced by Justinian's edicts is burial. Based on archaeological evidence from North Africa and elsewhere in the Byzantine empire, a major change in burial practices occurred in the sixth century. Burials transitioned from taking place almost exclusively outside of urban spaces to a more even split between burials situated within the walls of a given city and outside.[184] When precisely and why this transition occurred has continued to puzzle scholars. Unfortunately, the edicts shed only some light.

One edict lays out a set of precise rules and regulations for a good Christian burial. Included in this edict are standard prices for funerary services. The edict established two different rates for funerary services, one for services which took place within the walls, and a higher one for services which took place outside of them.[185] What precisely these pricings entail is ambiguous. It is tempting to argue that this edict acknowledges the widespread legitimacy of intramural burial and even encourages it by charging a lower rate for intramural services. On the other hand, the term employed is "funeral rites," not burial *per se,* and this edict simply assumes that all burials are extramural. The varying rates may simply reflect the fact that it was somewhat inconvenient for members of the clergy, hired mourners, and pallbearers to travel to suburban or rural residences and perform funeral services.

An odd story from Procopius' *Buildings* about the Church of the Holy Apostles in Constantinople may also reflect contemporary attitudes towards intramural burial. Procopius writes that Constantine's son Constantius established the Church of the Holy

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[184] Leone, 199-204.
[185] *Novellae*.59.5.

Apostles, well within the walls, as a royal cemetery where emperors and empresses were to be buried.[186] Procopius goes on to describe how the saints Luke, Timothy and Andrew, hitherto 'invisible,' were discovered by chance as Justinian's workers were clearing the grounds. Procopius, for his part explained the sudden appearance of these saints' coffins as a sign that "they did not deem the faith of the king unworthy," (*οὐκ ἀπαξιούντων, οἶμαι, τὴν βασιλέως πίστιν*) referring, presumably, to the Nicene faith.[187] One could simply take this explanation at face value, but Procopius himself warns against it with the qualifier *οἶμαι*-"I suppose." This happy discovery of the saints might not only serve as an endorsement of the Nicene creed, but also act as an explanation for why the royal family had been practicing intramural burial for centuries, as this church turned out to be the resting place of martyrs, rendering the intramural burials acceptable. At this time, virtually all intramural burials, including those in North Africa's cities, were associated with churches containing the relics of a saint, usually a martyr (see chapter II).[188] Unfortunately, the extant literary sources are too ambiguous to answer why intramural burial became acceptable. The most likely explanation to this author is that Constantius and the royal family set a precedent and people quickly took advantage of the more convenient burial venues, though still preferring the presence of saints' remains which were an important feature of extramural cemetery churches. The higher prices for extramural funerals suggest, contrary to some recent scholarship, that higher status burials were universally within intramural cemeteries.

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[186] Procopius.*Aed.*1.4.19.
[187] Procopius.*Aed.*1.4.18
[188] Anna Leone, Changing Urban Landscapes: "Burials in North African Cities from the Late Antique to the Byzantine Periods," *Mortuary Landscapes of North Africa*. ed. by David L. Stone,(Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 164-203.

Procopius: Church Design and Aesthetics

Book one of Procopius'' *Buildings* is more useful to us in its discussion of church interiors and design than for its exaggerated portrayal of Justinian as empire-wide patron and fortification-builder. Procopius' preoccupations with both the utility of church structures and what distinguishes tasteful churches from unworthy ones strikes a strong didactic tone, and it is worth considering whether church builders in Byzantine North Africa were diligent learners and followed Procopius' metropolitan tastes.

Procopius' opinions on church aesthetics and their relationship to religious experience have been examined in previous studies, but have focused almost exclusively on Procopius' famous *ekphrasis* of the Hagia Sofia.[189] However, not only did no North African churches attempt to emulate the Hagia Sofia, but Procopius' description emphasizes its uniqueness.[190] It is not advisable to assume that his comparison of worshiping the Hagia Sofia to worshiping in heaven itself applied to all aesthetically pleasing churches. Apart from the unique beauty of the Hagia Sofia, Procopius outlines some clear 'dos' and 'do-nots' of tasteful church building that are worth testing against our North African churches.

The most pointed example of a poorly-built church mentioned in the Buildings was a church dedicated to St. Michael. Procopius complains that even though the church was constructed by a "certain patrician senator," (πρὸς σενάτορός τινος τῶν πατρικίων) it was "least of all fit to be sent up to the archangel." (ἥκιστα τῷ ἀρχαγγέλῳ ἀνεῖσθαι

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[189] Bell, 320-336, Nadine Schibille, *Hagia Sophia and the Byzantine Aesthetic Experience* (Farnham: Asgate, 2014),
[190] Pro. *Aed.*1.1.21-27.

πρέπον).[191] What made it unworthy? It was not only small—Procopius compared it

unfavorably to a poor person's house, but it was dark (ἀφεγγὲς). This church constituted

such a crime against fashion that Justinian himself ordered that it be demolished and re-

built. The new version of the church garnered high praise from Procopius. He

complimented its new layout: a rectangular structure with an apse installed at the eastern

end of the church. Variously-colored marble columns lined the central isle.[192]

Procopius also lauded a new incarnation of the Church of the Holy Apostles, one

of the city's earliest churches and the burial ground of the royal family. Procopius

delights in the installation of an altar and accompanying canopy (ἱερατεῖον- a

"sanctuary," in Procopius' terminology) in the middle of the cruciform church, whose

interior perimeter is lined with columns.[193] There was a dome supported by four arches

and a barrel vault directly above the altar. Apart from the Hagia Sofia and the church at

Anaplus, these are the only two detailed accounts of church construction in this section of

the Buildings.

While it is certainly the case that only two extant churches in North Africa's

major cities featured domes like the Holy Apostles or the Hagia Sofia: one at Sabratha

and one in Carthage, virtually every extant church resembled the impressive church of

Michael the Archangel to some extent. That said, there are some features of North

African churches, such as the preponderance of double-apsed churches and the high

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[191] Pro.Aed.1.3.14.
[192] Pro.Aed.1.3.15-16.
[193] Pro.Aed.1.4.9-18, 17-18.

quantity of *presbyteria* that cannot necessarily be explained as simply standard imperial good taste.

Conclusion

The few literary sources surveyed here add considerable nuance to our interpretation of the archaeological evidence. The edicts of Justinian demonstrate that churches were financially independent and that Justinian encouraged them to stay that way. The idea put forward by the *Buildings,* and accepted by earlier studies, that Justinian and his imperial government undertook a sustained church building and re-building program, must be treated with great caution.[194] We will treat all of the churches examined in the following chapter as funded by local interests rather than the emperor, even in the cases of imported marble decorations as we find at the Al Tun churches in Cyrenaica or imported mosaics such as those at Sabratha II and Cartegenna in Carthage.

While church construction was not necessarily directly subsidized by the government in Constantinople, churches in North Africa were still, with a few exceptions, constructed in line with the aesthetic standards of Nicene Christians in the capital and these standards included an eastern apse and a centralized altar. When it comes to making their churches as useful tools of Christian charity as those built by the royal family, provincial aristocrats throughout the empire seem to have fallen far short, and those of North Africa were probably no exception.

The edicts record an increased demand for new clergy, laws mandating that bishops remain in their sees and discouraging travel, and laws granting considerably

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[194] c.f. Saradi, 416.

increased power to the clergy.[195] Edicts of these types probably all contributed to the sharp increases in baptisteries and *presbyteria* uncovered in North African churches.

IV: CONCLUSION

Although the study of North African ecclesiastical architecture initially seemed somewhat narrow to me, considering the number of publications surveying North African cities more broadly, the narrow focus has proven worthwhile. This study has advanced new (re) interpretations of individual archaeological sites and challenged several pervasive presuppositions about churches in North Africa, from the patently dubious (baptisteries equal bishops) to the ostensibly well-supported (Justinian as a major patron). The broadest, and arguably most consequential, conclusion drawn by this study is that we should interpret church construction and the associated alterations to the urban landscape as manifestations of local interests and agency, rather than of the imperial center in Constantinople. By firmly attributing agency to local interests and identifying their potential motives, we are able to move beyond simply cataloguing trends and advance stronger interpretations of the changes we witness in the Byzantine period to North Africa's cities, especially Carthage. Although new data may very well overturn the arguments this thesis has advanced about particular sites or structures, the primacy of local agency will hopefully endure.

This thesis has also argued for several adjustments to our understanding of individual sites and texts. Regarding individual cities, the construction of a "pilgrimage corridor," in Carthage has was posited. This thesis also argued that the "fortresses" of

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[195] *Novellae*.6, 86, 149.

Sbeitla be re-designated as storage towers for wheat, disputing that city's supposed re-organization as a series of fortified clusters. When it comes to the textual sources, this thesis has further demonstrated the *Buildings*' lack of reliability while also foregrounding neglected elements of the *Buildings* concerning the aesthetics of church construction. A close reading of Anicia Juliana's dedicatory inscription for her church of Saint Polyeuctos argued that the inscription is an attempt to be a part of the powers that be rather than to oppose them.

That said, due to constraints of space and especially time, this study was restricted to the major cities of Byzantine Africa which were well-excavated. The result is a portrait that is skewed pro-Byzantine, as church builders in these cities adopted many church-building trends seen across the empire. Expanding this kind of study to more rural and 'frontier' towns such as Haidra, would add an enormous amount of valuable data about church construction, pilgrimage, and urban development. In short, much work in this vein remains to be done in Africa alone. That said, further cross-regional, comparative study would also be beneficial. Examining church construction and urban development in Byzantine Italy, the only region not covered by Procopius' *Buildings* would be of particular interest. Undoubtedly, however other regions would benefit from such an examination.
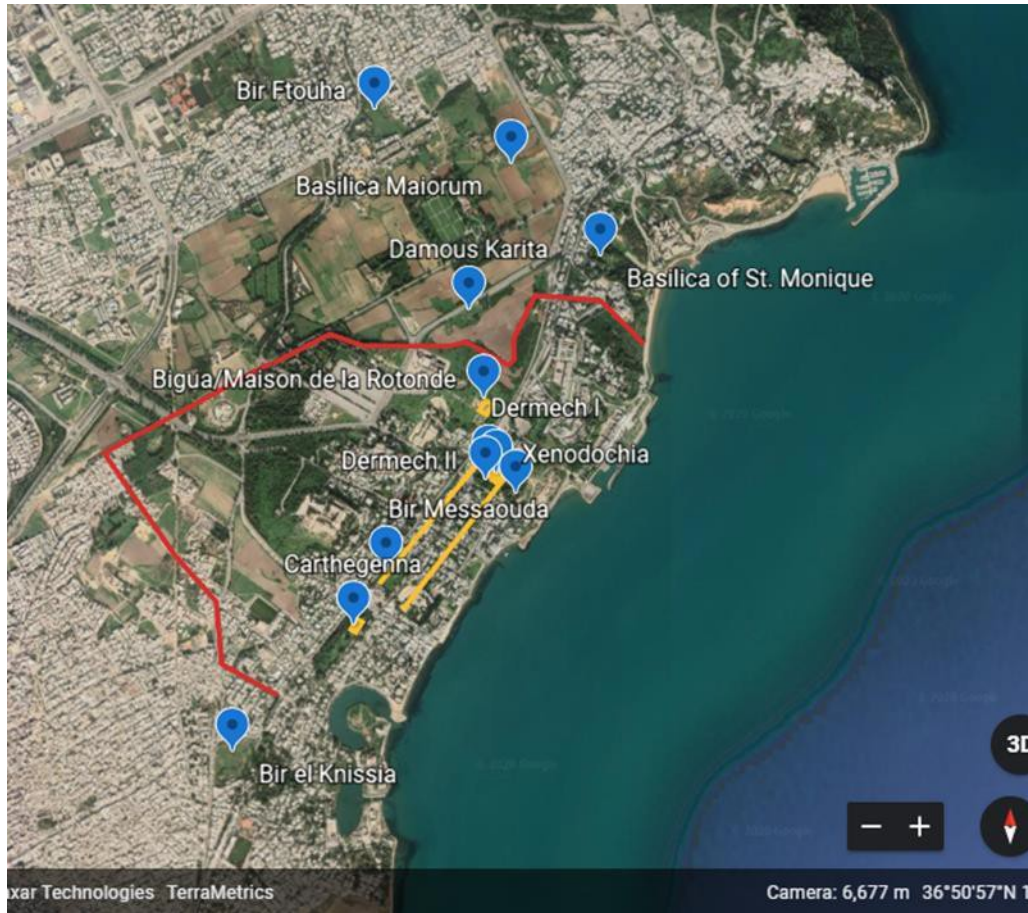
Fig. 1. Byzantine-era circuit wall outlined in red Byzantine-era church structures marked with blue dots, with some of them outlined in yellow and the hypothesized pilgrimage corridor is also outlined in yellow.
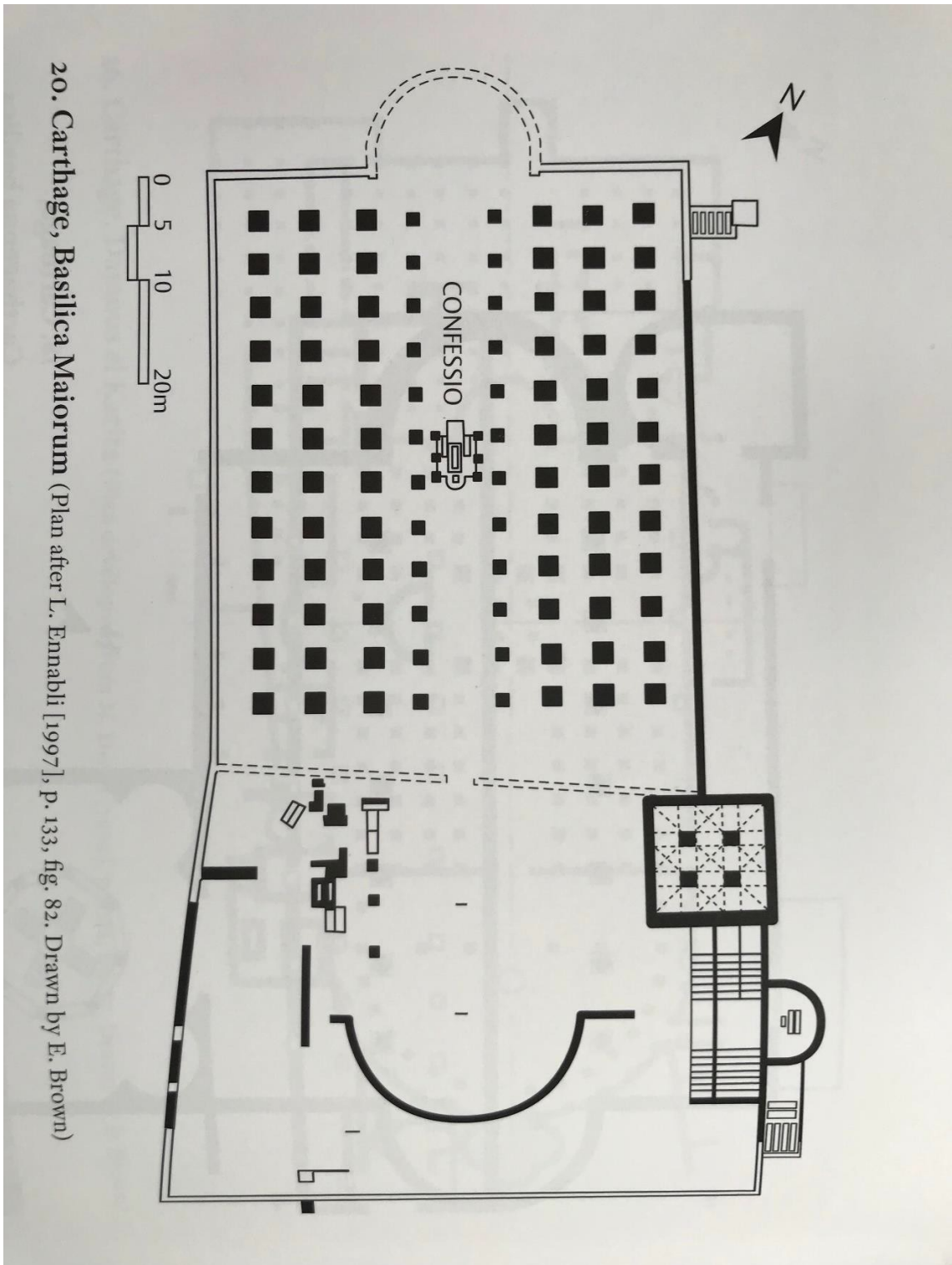
20. **Carthage, Basilica Maiorum** (Plan after L. Ennabli [1997], p. 133, fig. 82. Drawn by E. Brown)

Fig. 2. Mcidfa Complex, Carthage. From Burns and Jensen Plate 20.
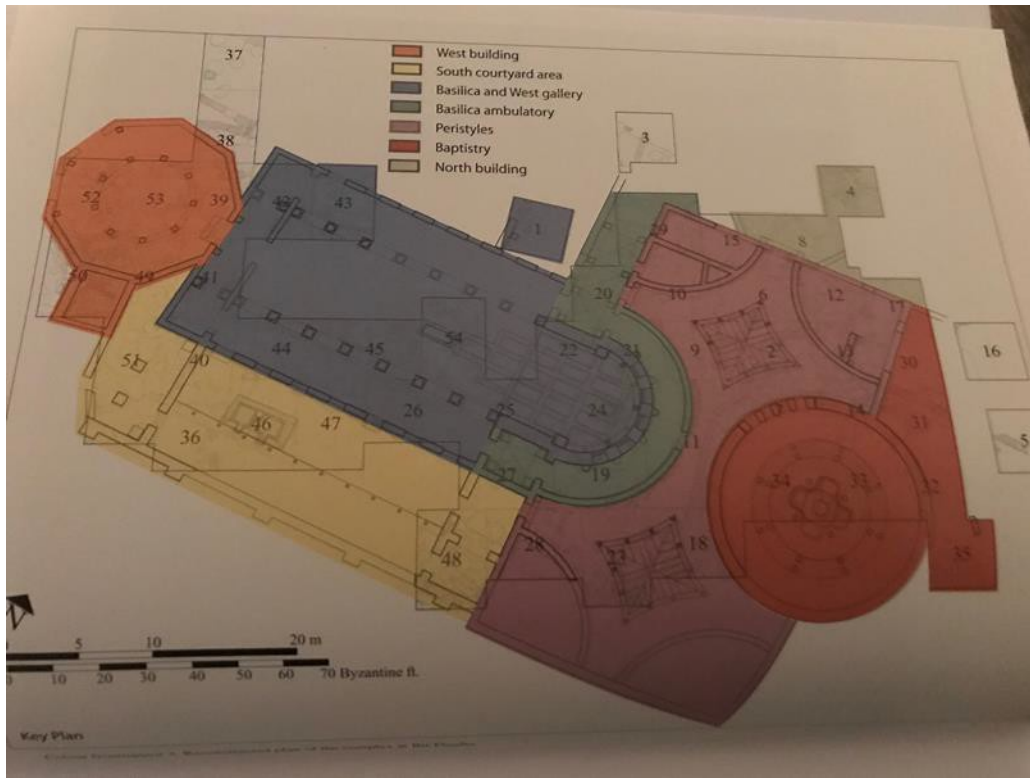
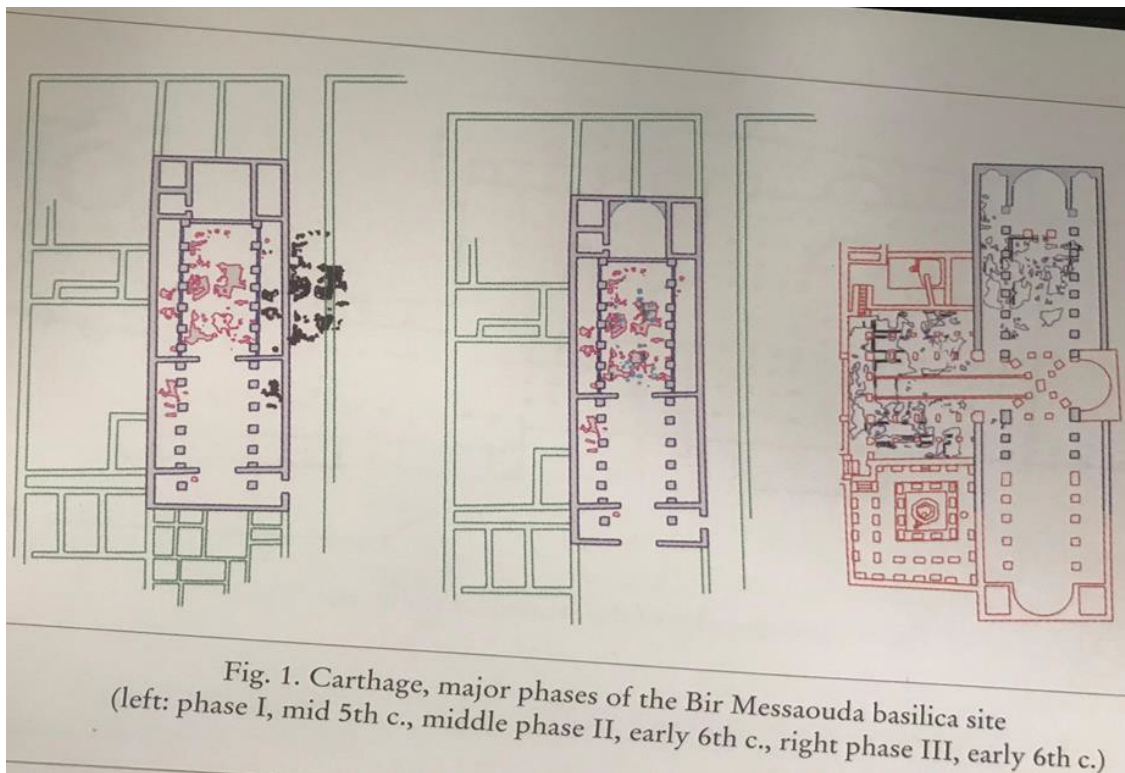Fig. 3. Plan of Bir Ftouha, Carthage. From Stevens 1995, Frontpiece 3.

Fig. 1. Carthage, major phases of the Bir Messaouda basilica site
(left: phase I, mid 5th c., middle phase II, early 6th c., right phase III, early 6th c.)

Fig.4 Plan of Bir Messaouda, Carthage. From Bockmann Plate VII fig. 1
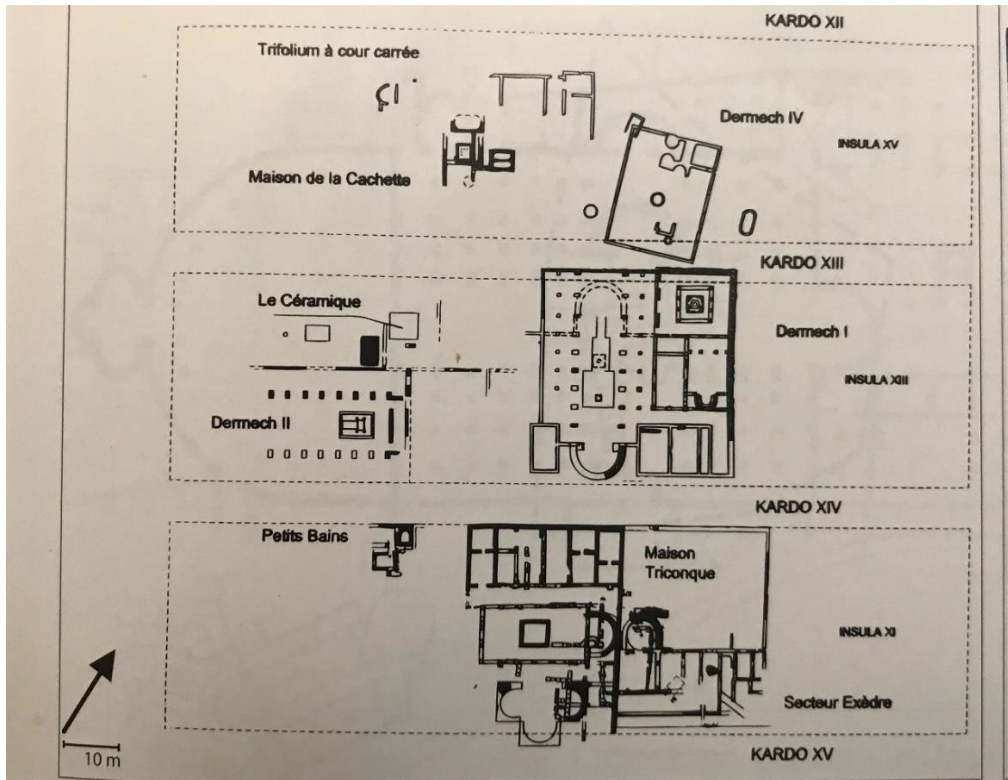
Fig. 5. Dermech Complex, Carthage. From Bockmann Plate 5 Figure 1.

Figure 4.5 Plan of Tebessa Basilica complex
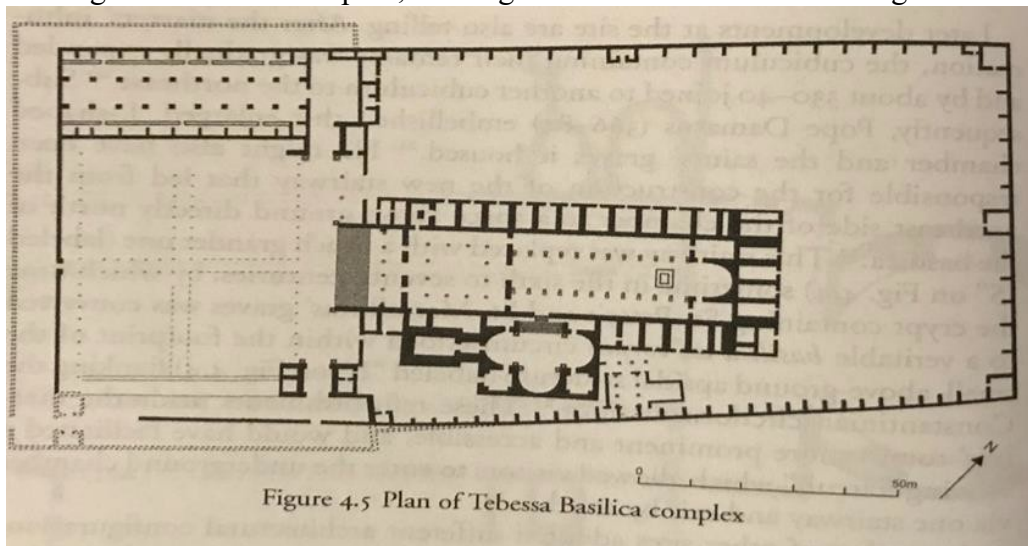
Fig. 6. Pilgrimage Complex at Theveste, mid-sixth century incarnation from Yasin 2009, 106.
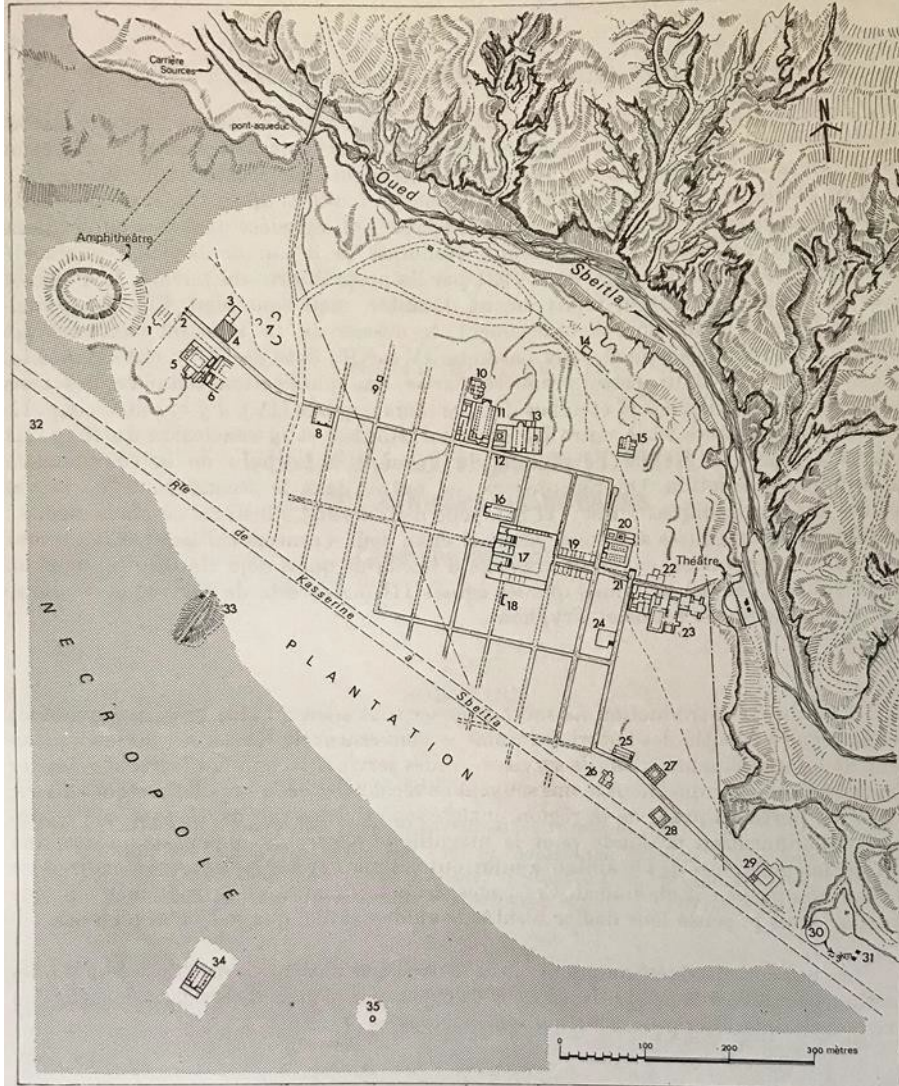
Fig. 2. — Plan schématique du site de Sbeitla (Dessin Carrier d'après la fig. 1).

1. « Petite basilique près de l'amphithéâtre » (sans doute une maison). — 2. Arc nord. — 3. Temple (non identifié). — 4. Anc. maison des fouilles. — 5. Édifice des Saisons (sans doute une maison). — 6. Maison (incomplètement fouillée). — 7. Absides partiellement fouillées (thermes ?). — 8. Fontaine. — 9. Thermes (incomplètement fouillés). — 10. Thermes. — 11. Basilique II dite de Vitalis. — 12. Baptistère primitif ou « chapelle de Jucundus ». — 13. Basilique I dite de Bellator. — 14. Thermes (incomplètement fouillés). — 15. Thermes. — 16. Basilique IV. — 17. Forum avec les trois temples du Capitole. — 18. Fontaine sur une place. — 19. Boutiques et logements le long du decumanus. — 20. Basilique III dite de Servus, ancien temple à cour. — 21. Fontaine. — 22. Monument public incomplètement fouillé. — 23. Grands thermes d'hiver et d'été. — 24. Réservoir. — 25. Basilique V des Saints-Gervais-Protais-et-Tryphon. — 26. Petits thermes tardifs. — 27-29. Fortins d'époque byzantine. — 30. (à 3 km au S.-E. de la ville) Basilique VII ou « chapelle de l'évêque Honorius ». — 31. Arc sud (de la Tétrarchie). — 32. Tombes d'époque chrétienne. — 33. Colline de cendres (avec stèle à Saturne). — 34. Basilique VI des Saints-Sylvain-et-Fortunat. — 35. Mausolée.
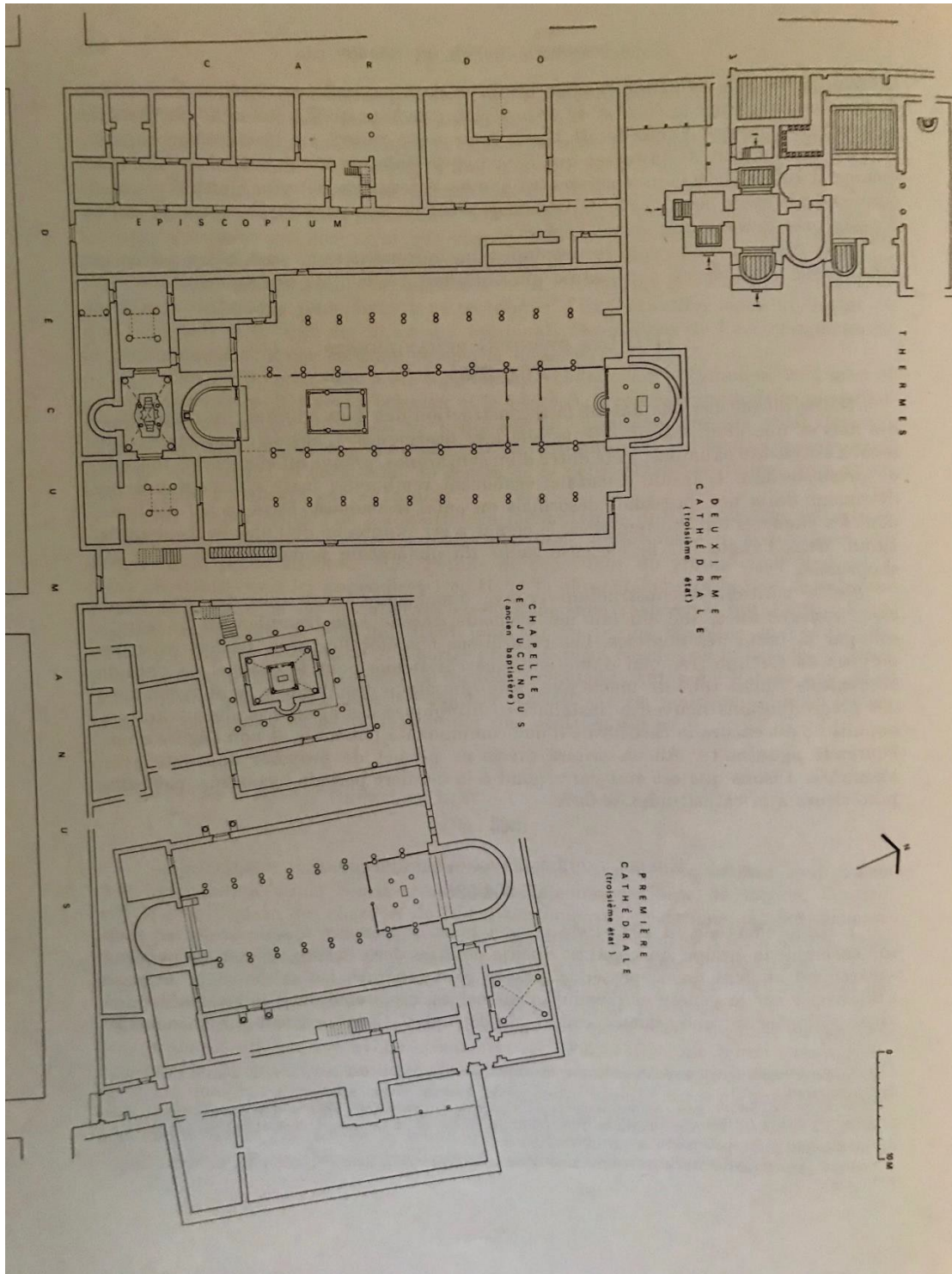
Fig. 7. Map of Sbeitla. From N. Duval 1971, Page 5.

Fig. 8. Plan of Basilicas I, II, and the "Chapel of Iucundus," at Sbeitla. From N. Duval 1971, fig. 344.
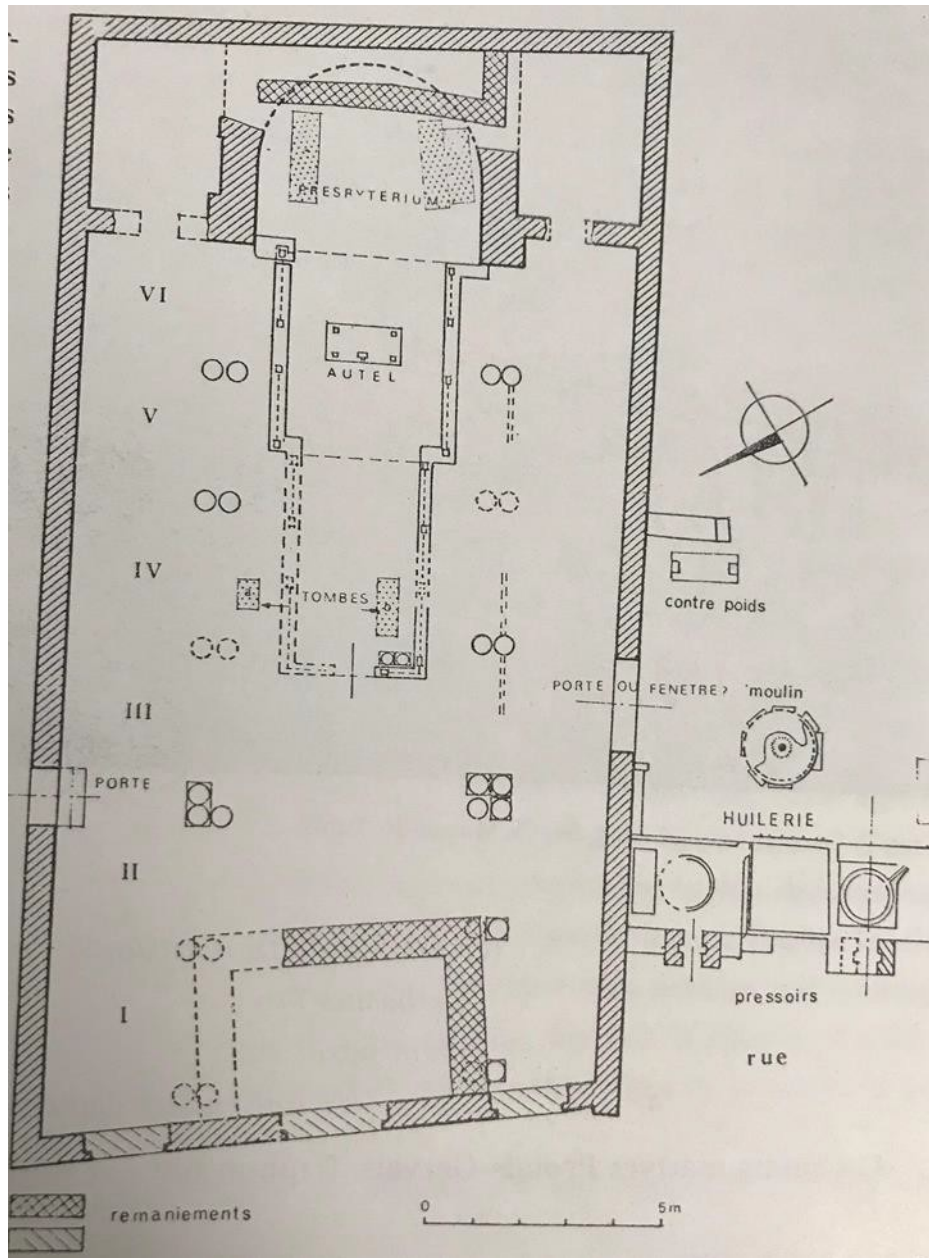
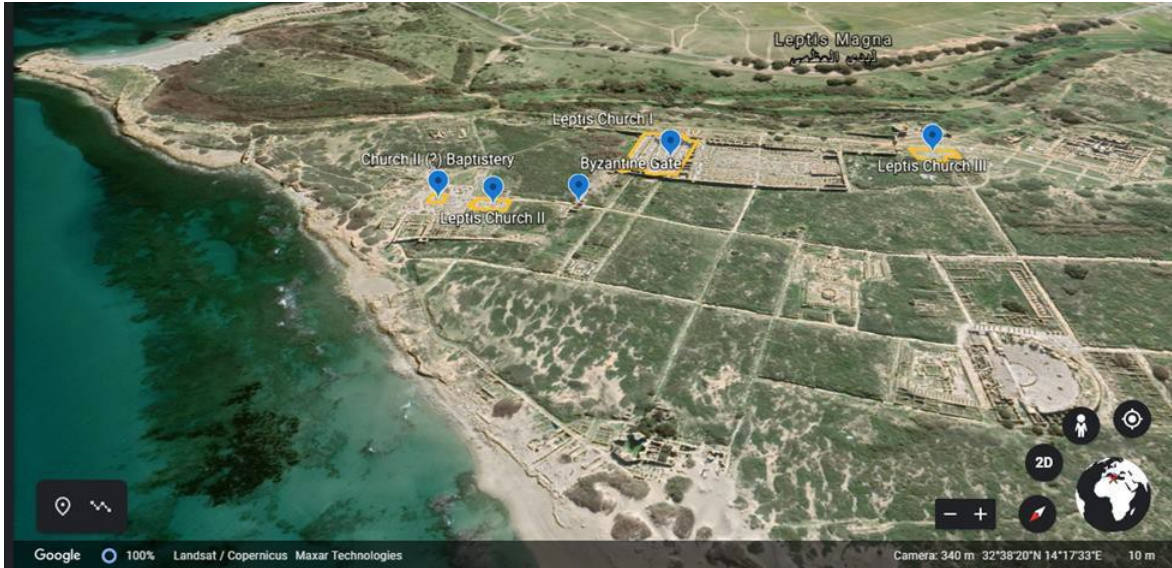Fig. 9: Plan of Sbeitla Basilica V, with adjacent mill and oil presses from Y. Duval 1982, pg. 81.

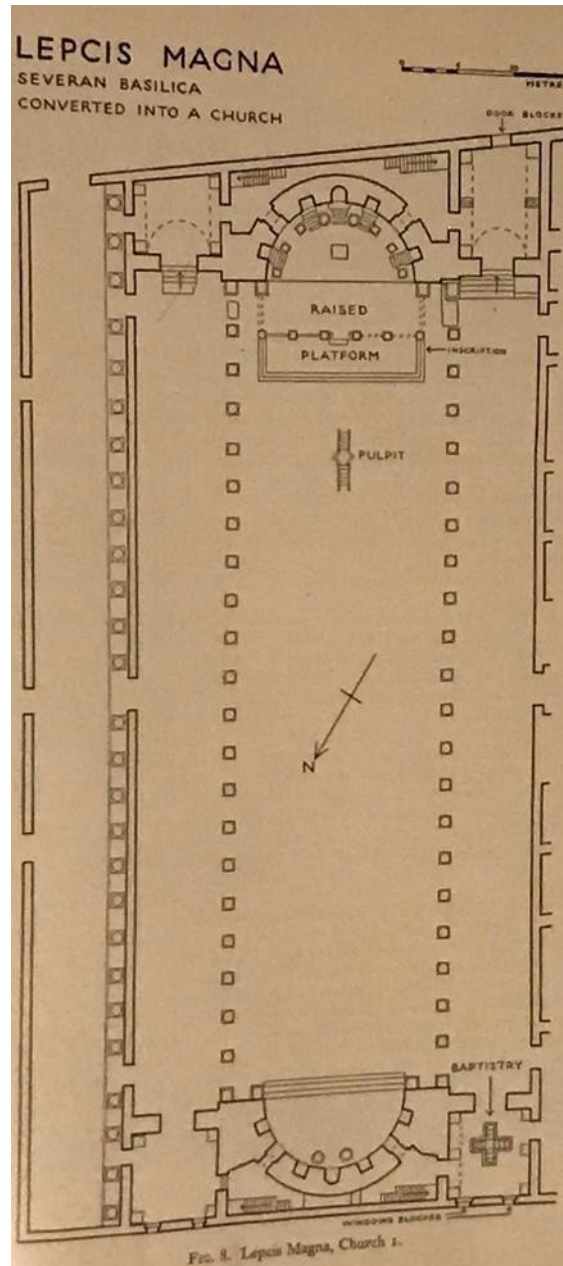Fig. 10. Map of Lepcis Magna. Churches and the Byzantine Gate Marked

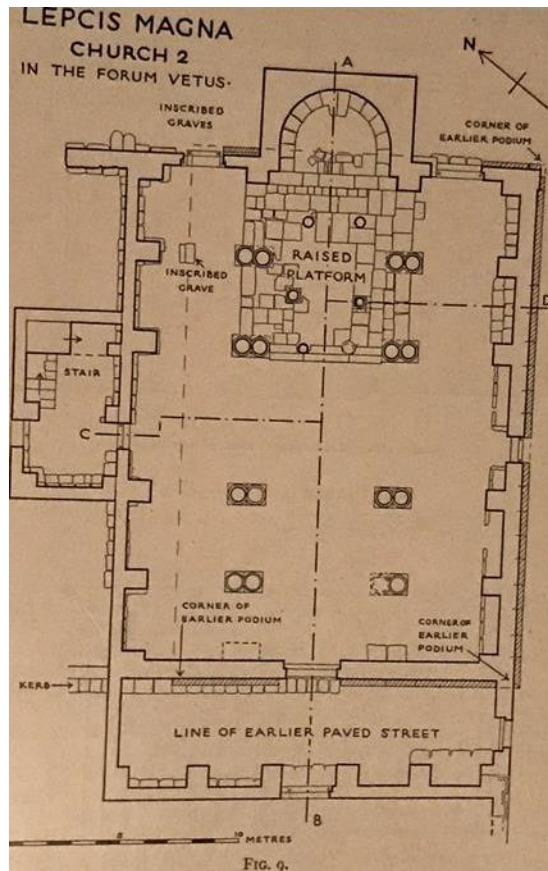Fig. 11. Plan of Lepcis Basilica I. From Ward-Perkins and Goodchild, 23

Fig.12. Plan from Ward-Perkins and Goodchild, 25.

Fig. 13. Map of Byzantine Sabratha. Securely dated Byzantine structures are labelled and outlined in yellow, with the Byzantine-era circuit wall outlined in red.
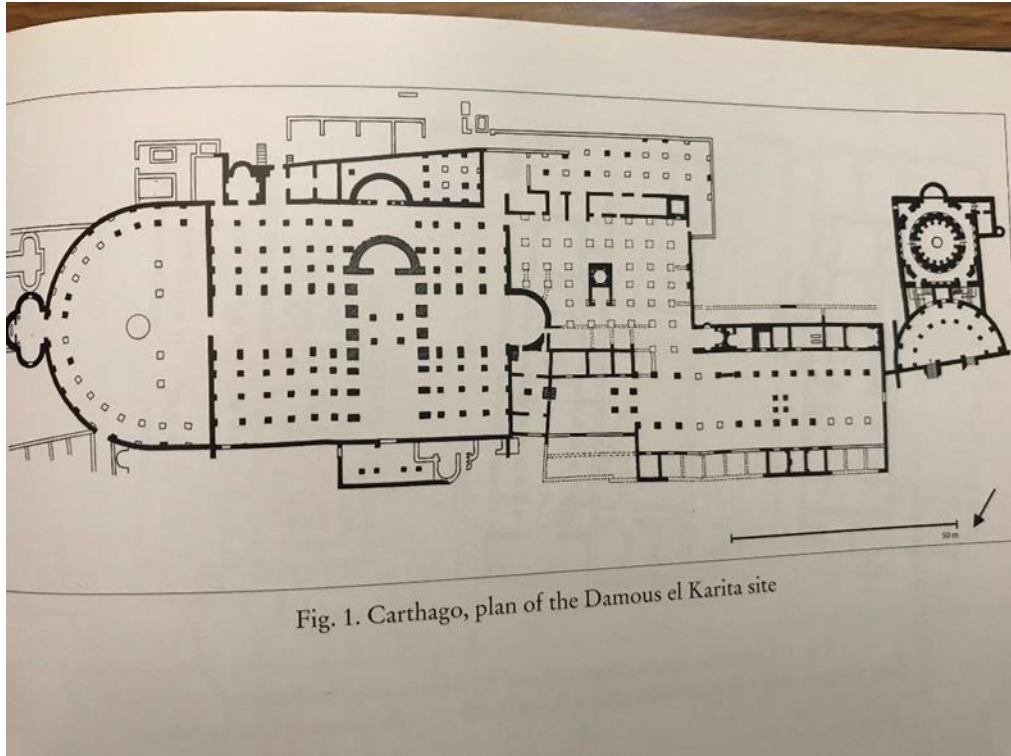
Fig. 1. Carthago, plan of the Damous el Karita site

Fig. 14 Plan, Byzantine-era of Damous al-Karita complex, Carthage. From Bockmann
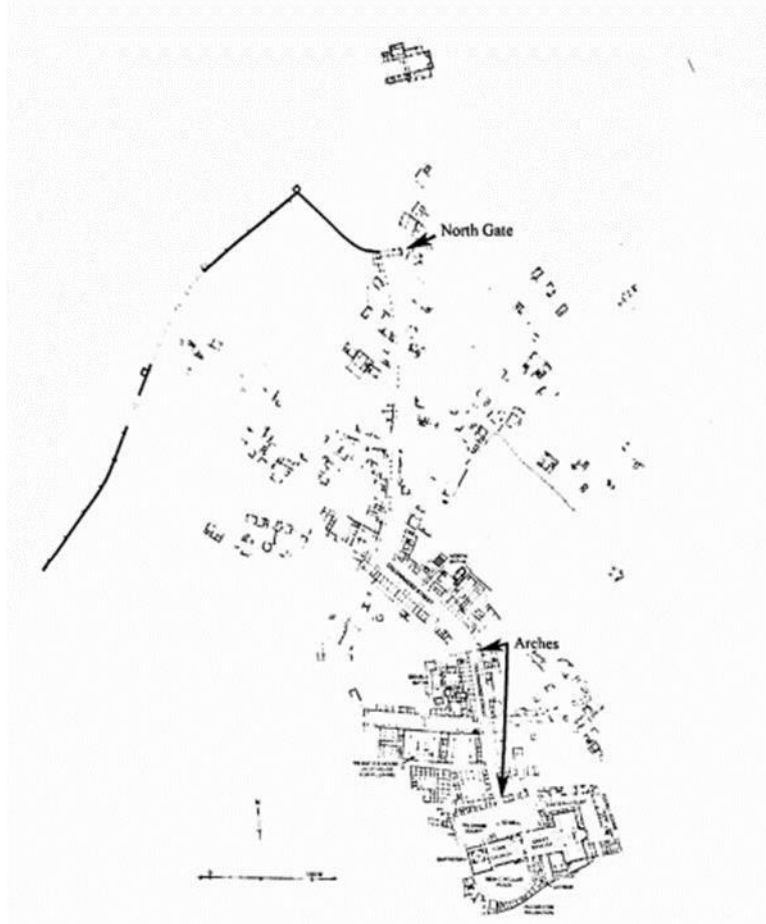Plate 7, Fig.1.

Figure 10.4 Abu Mena, plan of St. Menas pilgrimage complex and town to the north with arrows indicating archways (after McKenzie, *Architecture of Alexandria*, p. 292, fig. 485 and Grossmann, "Abū Mīna. 13.," fig. 2).

Fig. 15. Plan of Abu Mena, with arrows pointing to excavated gates. From Yasin 2019, fig. 10.4.

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