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The necropolis of Torre de Palma (Monforte, Portugal)

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Our study focuses on the unpublished Portuguese excavations of the well-known villa of Torre de Palma, which took place in the area north of the villa: several funerary areas, church / baptistery, and undefined structures east of the basilica. These old excavations are then completed with the American ones, in order to get a more complete picture of the funerary and religious aspects in Torre de Palma.

Keywords: Lusitania, Torre de Palma, church, graves, necropolis

Il presente studio prende in esame la documentazione inedita degli scavi portoghesi presso la villa di Torre de Palma, che interessarono l'area a nord della villa, comprendendo alcune aree funerarie, una chiesa/battistero e altre strutture dalla funzione non meglio definita a est della basilica. I dati di questi scavi sono stati poi integrati con la documentazione prodotta da più recenti scavi americani, per avere una visione più completa degli aspetti funerari e religiosi a Torre de Palma.

Parole chiave: Lusitania, Torre de Palma, chiesa, tombe, necropoli

1. Introduction¹

The archaeological site of Torre de Palma (figs. 1-2), discovered in 1947, consists of a *villa* (*pars urbana* and an important *pars rustica*) with various stages of occupation, between the 1st and 5th century AD². The last addition of this *villa*, during the 4th century, was an imposing bath, built southwest of the main house. At the end of the 4th century/

¹ This paper is part of my PhD (WOLFRAM 2011) at Paris IV- Sorbonne and Lisbon University (F.L.U.L.).

² The area of the *villa* was extensively analyzed and published by an American team of the University of Louisville led by Stephanie Maloney during the 1980s and 1990s, so this area will not be the subject of our study. We refer to all the articles S. Maloney mentioned in her bibliography.

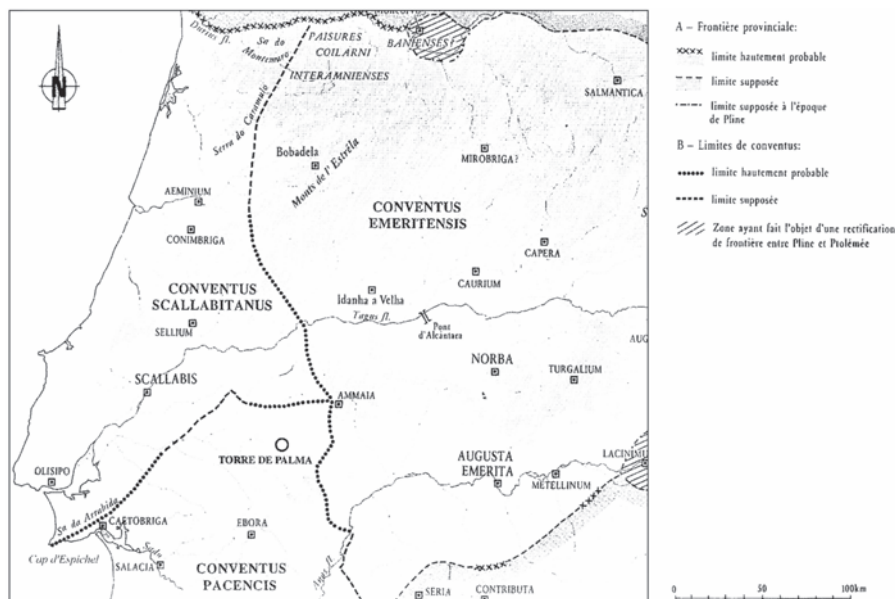


Fig. 1. Map of Lusitania (after Lancha, André 2000).

early 5th century AD, 150 m north of the *villa*, an early Christian church was built, to which a baptismal complex was added during the 6th century. Probably during the same period, a small building, with the same construction features as the basilica, was erected to the east of the complex and the agricultural part of the *villa* was renovated and expanded. The productive capacity of the mills reached its peak during the 5th and 6th centuries. The *villa* continued to be occupied, although it is not known whether there was a full or partial reoccupation, possibly until the 8th century when the entire set of constructions seems to have been abandoned. In the 13th century a small chapel in honour of S. Domingos was erected over the remains of the basilica. This chapel was in ruins when the excavations began.

Our study focuses on the Portuguese excavations, which took place to the north of the *villa* zone: several funerary areas, the basilica/baptistery, a probable delimitation of the sacred space and undefined structures east of the church called “Lado da Eira” (*threshing floor*)³. The ex-

³ We will study the American excavations of the basilica and of the “cemeteries” from the files archived in the Instituto de Gestão do Património Arquitectónico e Arqueológico (IGESPAR), from an analytic point of view, without the study of material and without questioning previous publications of archaeologists. The study of the material of the basilica and of the “cemeteries” will be published soon in a general monograph produced by the American team.



Fig. 2. *Villa* and basilica of Torre de Palma (after Lancha, André 2000).

cavations directed by Manuel Heleno between 1948 and 1962, as well as the surveys made by Fernando de Almeida in 1971 to 1972, were never published. Some summary articles were written but no material was studied nor was a monograph on these Portuguese excavations produced⁴. Since these excavations were not conducted according to the scientific criteria of today or recorded in a regular manner, it has not been possible to obtain a scientific report about this period of research. However, photographs, letters, reports, drawings, plans and some material coming from different funerary collections do remain. Our aim has been to synthesize all the documentation on the Portuguese excavations in order to extract the maximum amount of information possible regarding the funerary areas of the *villa*.

All the manuscripts related to the purpose of our study⁵, fully conserved in the Archives of Manuel Heleno (A.M.H.) in the Museu Nacional de Arqueologia in Lisbon (M.N.A.), consist of 28 letters by João Lino da Silva addressed to Manuel Heleno, six "reports" of João Lino da Silva (Silva 1951, 1952, 1953, 1955, 1956, 1958), part of an inventory of

⁴ According to the 1972 article of Fernando de Almeida, we know that this author was preparing a more in-depth paper about the basilica, but it has never been published.

⁵ We choose to mention only the documentation of A.M.H. relative to the years that interest us (1948, 1953, 1955, 1956, 1958, 1960-1962, 1971, 1972).

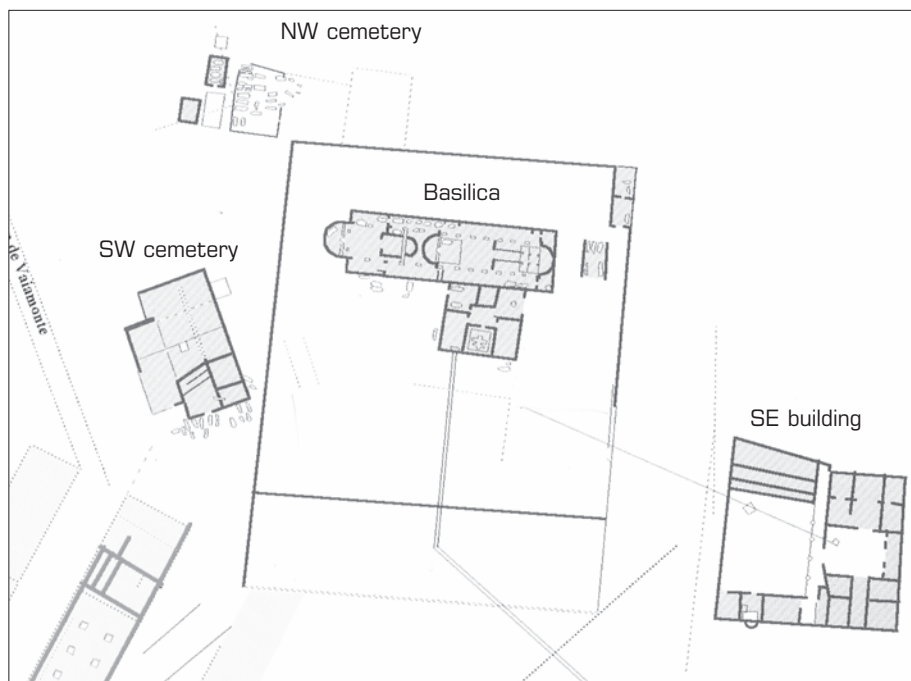


Fig. 3. Basilica and necropolis of Torre de Palma (after Lancha, André 2000).

material, undated; seven letters by João Saavedra Machado; two notebooks of Manuel Heleno; dozens of photographs taken by Manuel Heleno and a notebook of Fernando de Almeida. The letters of João Lino da Silva reveal an unstructured excavation technique (Boaventura 2002, p. 19; Lancha, André 2000, p. 21). The lack of grid cells was replaced by random “plots” that were opened according to the findings or abandoned if unsuccessful. There was no stratigraphic procedure but an excavation in layers of 25 cm or 50 cm. Since all the archaeological material retained in the M.N.A. has only a rough indication of where it was found and almost never an indication of these layers, the exact location of the material can be considered as awkward and approximate to its general location.

2. General reading of the archaeological reality: the Portuguese excavations

Three burial sites were excavated (fig. 3): A) the so-called south cemetery, the one that is closest to the *villa*, south of the basilica, excavated in 1953; B) several graves inside and outside the church and

baptistery, respectively excavated in 1955 and 1956; C) the cemetery northwest of the basilica called “graveyard near the hermitage” excavated in 1960. Finally I will also describe a building southeast of the basilica, excavated in 1961.

2.1. Cemetery south of the basilica

2.1.1. Data from the Portuguese excavations

Manuel Heleno made the first mention of a cemetery burial in his notebook in 1948 (Heleno 1947-1948, Notebook n. 3) as follows: “The campaign this year refers to this with the agricultural part (mills) and a large patio surrounded by columns. Near the chapel is a burial cemetery”. This sentence is the first reference to the “chapel”, i.e. the still visible ruins of the chapel of S. Domingos and a cemetery. Unfortunately we do not know which cemetery it refers to, the northwest one or the southwest, since both have burial graves and both are near the chapel. It appears, through this single sentence, that probing took place in the northern area of the villa of Torre de Palma.

As for the funerary complex of the south cemetery, the rare archaeological material that was found in the Portuguese excavations – six coins, two of which were in a grave; a “small coin” and an earring shaped object (Silva 1953) – was not identified in the Museum. This leaves only the documentary sources from 1948 and 1953 for information about this funerary complex.

According to the letters of Lino da Silva and the plans they provide (fig. 4) one can consider various types of occupation for this zone. The

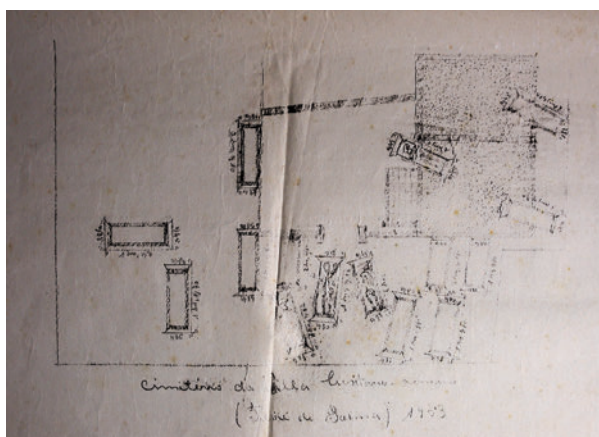


Fig. 4. Lino da Silva's drawing. “Cimetério da villa lusitano-romana (Torre de Palma), 1953” (A.M.H.).

structures are previous to the graves, and are composed of two rooms with mortar pavement, implying that they were closed rooms, for housing or storage. The third room, larger, with undetermined type of pavement, consists of an entrance to the south and a tiled fireplace in the southeast corner. From the characteristics of the pavement *formigão* (*opus signinum*) and the fireplace, one can assume that these structures are from the Roman period (somewhere between the 1st and 4th centuries), but no reliable dating can be done with so little data.

Reference is made to the orientation of the graves, their size and the presence of skeletons, but no information is given about the construction type. Lino da Silva drew fifteen rectangular graves (which we number from 1 to 15⁶) with the same characteristics, which does not seem to correspond to reality but more to a stereotypical way of representing them. Relative to the orientation and position, there seems to be two types of graves: 1) the graves “outside” of the architectural structures and parallel to them, i.e. to the south, and the orientation of which is north/south-type or with minor variations (northwest-southeast, northeast-southwest); 2) the four graves, oriented east-west, that cut the walls of the three rooms. At first glance, it can be determined that the graves in the first group are contemporary to the structures or immediately posterior to them. The fact that the graves respect the alignment of the walls indicates that they were not yet in ruins at the time of burial, which means the residential area already could have been out of use, but still standing.

The graves of the second group should have been completed at a much later moment in time, when the walls were no longer visible at ground level.

It is thus possible, through this drawing, to have an initial idea of occupation of the site in four phases:

- phase 1: construction and occupancy of a residential area (Imperial period?);
- phase 2: abandonment of the site and use of the area as a funerary area with north-south orientation of the graves still respecting the previous structures (paleochristian or Visigothic period?);
- phase 3: abandonment of the funerary area (contemporary to the abandonment of the basilica?);
- phase 4: new funerary occupation, with graves already canonically oriented (at the time of the activity of the Hermitage of S. Domingos?).

⁶ This numbering is random and did not take into consideration the partial numbering that Lino da Silva made for three graves (the first three excavated?).

2.1.2. American excavations data⁷

The Luso-American team returned to excavate the “south cemetery” (jointly with the northwest cemetery), calling it the “southwest cemetery” in 1985, and from 1999 differentiating the “cemetery house” (residential structures) from the “southwest cemetery” (graves). In 1985 it was revealed that the south cemetery was “almost entirely made of stone tombs” (Caeiro 1985, p. 1), attributed to the 5th century, and was “in correspondence with the old phases of the Basilica”. Unfortunately, the graphic documentation in this report corresponds only to the north-west cemetery. In 2000, the “cemetery house” (CH) was excavated again (Maloney 2000). We note the relatively good correspondence between the drawing of Lino da Silva and the later scientific reality. Thus the three rooms revealed by Lino feature a sharper reading: the room with the fireplace is identified as a courtyard with fireplace (CH III) with two parallel walls northwest (CH V and VI) interpreted as levels of stairs, flanked by two rooms with *opus signinum* to the northeast (CH I and II) and two others to the southwest (CH VII and VIII). The rooms in the north (CH II and CH VII) have higher floors than those of the southern rooms. The “house” continues to the west side, with an additional small room and another space of undetermined function (CH VI). These structures continued to the west, but were interrupted. The discovery of a complete *mortarium* (CH VIII; Maloney 2001) in the room as well as the fireplace in the patio CH III confirms the domestic functions of this housing structure before being used as a burial space. The absence of walls on the southeast corner of the CH I room is interpreted as being a matter of erosion or theft, but Lino’s drawing represents a grave exactly where the walls are missing (grave n. 3).

The graves seem to have been numbered in 1986, but there is no written or graphic documentation of this, yet in the final report⁸ there is a plan (CH 5) with the numbering of SW1 to SW21 (Maloney 2001: CH 6). Some of the graves are new (SW1, SW8, SW17, SW18), but all the others match those found by Lino da Silva, with the graves n. 3 and n. 15 missing; the first because it no longer existed in 1986 and the second because it was not a grave, but the place of a possible furnace or fireplace where the full *mortarium* was found in 2000. The SW22 grave – that would have been discovered to the southeast of CH I room in 2000, parallel to the grave SW7 – cannot be found in any plan of the

⁷ All the documentation for this paragraph was consulted in the File IGESPAR 4.11.001.

⁸ The numbering is incomplete, in this drawing the graves SW3 e SW9 are missing, because Maloney realised later that they were not graves (MALONEY 2001: CH 366 e CH 370).

complex because it did not present a funerary structure, but only bones in anatomical position. The 2000 Annual Report (CH 7) describes this as being the skeleton of a woman, facing her left side, with bent legs, the left hand to the side of the head and the right arm folded across her chest. Due to the orderly position of the bones, the body likely had been wrapped with some sheets or bandages. The absence of artefacts and a funerary structure led archaeologists to propose that the deceased was of a lower social status. In 2001, the findings on the “cemetery house” support those presented in 2000. The furnace or fireplace type structure with *mortarium* in the passage area between the room CH VIII and the patio CH III seem to have belonged to a time “when the house was adapted to a new pattern of activity”, the eastern part of the structure, however, was part of the original Roman wall (Maloney 2001: CH 361).

The description of the sepulchral structures was detailed for the first time in 2001 (Maloney 2001: CH 365-376). These are graves that we can regroup into three main types, with minor variations:

- type 1: regular shaped burial pits (almost rectangular) or ending in ellipses, walls built with large blocks of stone more or less regular, with a rock bottom (SW1, SW2, SW6, SW7, SW10, SW11, SW13, SW14, SW18, SW19, SW20);
- type 2: regular shaped burial pits (almost rectangular), built with large blocks of stone and smaller stones linked with ceramic fragments and a tiled bottom (SW4, SW12, SW16, SW17);
- type 3: rectangular burial pits, walls built with tiles and a rock bottom (SW15).

Only one grave was found without architectural structure (SW22).

The American team did not find any grave good in this cemetery. Three coins dated ca. 330 AD are from the southwest cemetery, but the final report did not specify where they were recovered from (Huffstot 2000, p. 592), so we do not know if the findings are of a residential or of a funerary nature.

2.1.3. Conclusions about the south cemetery

I. The relative reliability of the drawing of Lino da Silva compared with the 2001 plans (with regard to the general planning of the structures with graves), although it is not a scientific design, may indicate the same reliability with the other drawings by this author.

II. The measurements of the graves provided by Lino da Silva and those that we calculated from the drawings of the final report of the American team are quite similar, differing from 2 to 20 cm. Because we do not know how Lino da Silva took the measurements, we have consid-

ered these differences as the variation between the inner measurement and outer measurement⁹.

III. The absence of skeletons in most graves in the design of Lino da Silva is surprising, since the American team finds osteological remains on five occasions (graves n. 1, 4, 7, 11, 13). We also noticed that only three graves with skeletons were numbered by Lino da Silva (the n. 10 with a "n. 1", n. 9 with a "n. 2" and n. 8 with a "n. 3"), which forces us to conclude that Lino da Silva's design is not finished.

IV. We note the total absence of references to grave covers in all excavation campaigns.

V. We call attention to the formal characteristics of the SW5 grave, which are different from the other graves: it must have been "offhanded" (Maloney 2001: CH 367-368) between the wall of the CH III courtyard and the fireplace, being very narrow and somewhat long. The bottom of this structure was excavated to reach the rock. The tiny space (128 x 28 cm) would only be sufficient for a child's grave, but these features do not prevent the identification of this space with other functions (storage ?) in relation to the fireplace.

VI. The SW22 grave, because it is the only one without an architectural structure and a skeleton in the lateral position, seems to us to be a Muslim grave (8th century).

In conclusion, the excavated part of the south cemetery consists of 21 graves, 19 of which have very similar characteristics, and thus can be assigned to the same period. At least 24 people were buried; on two

⁹ In two cases (SW7 and SW13), we noticed a large discrepancy between the measurements of Lino da Silva and those of the American team; this discrepancy can provide us with some interesting information: the SW7 grave is 86 cm longer and 30 cm wider than the grave equivalent n. 4 of Lino da Silva and SW13 has a length of 3 meters, as opposed to 1.18 m from the grave n. 9 of Lino da Silva! In the case of grave SW7 (n. 4) Lino da Silva must have opened and excavated a smaller area than the actual grave, and calculated only the area discovered. But in the case of SW13 (n. 9), the opening must have been half of the pit: 118 cm in the American design of the SW13 from the north (considering the scale of the drawing), we arrive at exactly the spot where the bones begin to appear in 2000. That is, the Portuguese excavators only opened half the grave, then removed the bones that belonged to the upper part of the skeleton (+ a skull of a reduction according to the plan of 1953) and calculated only the open half (the American archaeologists noticed this "partial cleaning" of the north of the grave, MALONEY 2001: CH 372, without noticing that only this half had been opened by the Portuguese excavators and calculated in plan). However, this should have been the only error, since no other grave excavated by Lino da Silva has such short measurements.

We can add another fact noted by the American team to the information on grave SW13: the fact that the pit is 50 cm longer than the body that was laid there (MALONEY 2001). This seems to corroborate the plan from 1953: the reduction of the previous deceased who may have been the one for which the pit was opened and who, apparently, would have been much larger than the second deceased. However, three meters do not represent a normal size for a grave: or did it have an internal separation in the space, made by a slab, leaving 50 cm at the feet of the skeleton space for further reduction? Internal separations in graves have been registered in various cemeteries such as in Silveirona (CUNHA WOLFRAM 2008).

occasions there seems to be multiple graves, i.e. simultaneous burials and probably family burials (SW1 and SW8), and on two other occasions there seems to be collective burials, i.e. reduction of the grave at the head of the second deceased (SW12 and SW13).

The general characteristics of this cemetery are very similar to the necropolis of Silveirona II, located 25 kilometres south of Torre de Palma and dated to the first half of the 6th century (Cunha Wolfram 2008, p. 76): 1) reuse of an abandoned Roman structure where the graves partially follow the alignment of walls; 2) construction types of graves; 3) graves ending in ellipsis (Silveirona grave VI); 4) generalization of burials (in Silveirona there still seem to be rare cases of cremation); 5) large dimensions of the pits; 6) multiple and collective burials, including adults with a child (Silveirona grave VII), and two adults together (Silveirona grave XII).

At first glance, the similarities between these two cemeteries would allow us to suggest a dating from the first half of the 6th century for the south cemetery of the basilica of Torre de Palma; however, there are differences that justify a more recent dating. In fact, in the south cemetery cremation no longer occurs; the use of mortar, fragments of pottery and tiles in the graves is less frequent compared to Silveirona; and the absence of grave goods, as well epigraphic inscriptions, is noted in all the graves.

Thus, we can propose that it may have functioned from the first half of the 6th century to perhaps as late as the beginning of the 8th century, if the evidence for the Muslim features of the grave SW22 is confirmed.

The French team (Lancha, André 2000, pp. 93-95) dates the Roman house to the late 4th century AD, attributing the graves to the middle of the 6th century AD, which coincides with our findings. Unfortunately, the methods by which they arrived at these conclusions are not specified.

2.2. Graves inside and outside the basilica and baptistery

2.2.1. Data from the Portuguese excavations

The data of the Portuguese excavations on the basilica and baptistery consist of two letters from Lino (08.09.1955 letters; 17.09.1955 with plan), reports by Lino da Silva (Silva 1955, 1956); a manuscript inventory (undated); some drawings about the basilica, the baptistery and the graves; a notebook of Manuel Heleno (1956) with a short description of the baptistery, dozens of photographs¹⁰, probably taken by Manuel Heleno during his visits, a plan of 1969; and a notebook Fernando de Almeida (1971) .

¹⁰ Unfortunately it was not possible to reproduce the photographs in this paper because they do not have sufficient definition.

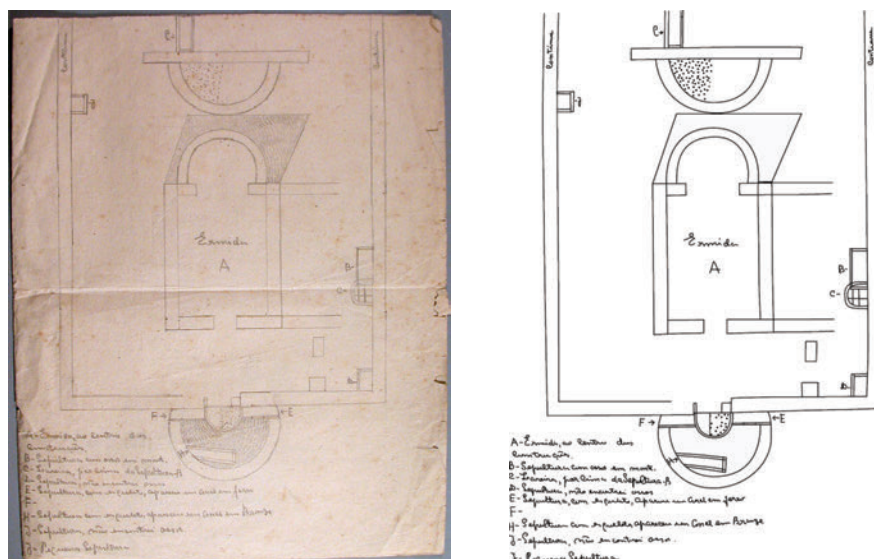


Fig. 5. Plan 1. Basilica, west part (+ vectorial image). Probably the older drawing. Presumed date: 1955 (A.M.H.).

For convenience, we will return here to the numbering of the apses of the church that was established by the American team: “apse 1” for the first eastern apse, “apse 2” for the counter apse, “apse 3” for the apse beneath the chapel of S. Domingos, and “apse 4” for the most western apse.

The first excavation campaign in the “constructions of the chapel” lasted only eleven days. Lino da Silva does not explain how he went about it, nor how it started, but in his letter dated September 8th, 1955 it appears that he began in the western part of the basilica around the “chapel” of S. Domingos. Through the report, we realized that he excavated two layers (0/25 and 25/50), from west to east. The design that he made of the “chapel” (fig. 5) shows that in mid-September he had excavated to a length of 25 m, i.e., until after apse 2. The report is obviously incomplete since it only describes seven graves as opposed to the ten illustrated in the drawing of the chapel, and it does not refer to the fireplace mentioned in the letter of September 8th, 1955; in addition, he has not drawn the walls described in the letter of September 17th, 1955. In fact, the walls marked by a cross in the drawing made of stone and earth seem more “modern” than the walls of stone and lime, which are better built (these should be the walls of the medieval chapel).

The material described in the report is not contextualized and does not correspond exactly to that described in the letters and in the inventory¹¹.

Thanks to photos from 1955 we can say that the entire surface of the basilica was excavated to an approximate level of 50 cm (or 75 cm in some parts). Twelve graves were uncovered: graves F and E on the west apse (apse 4); graves D, G, H and B around the "chapel of S. Domingos"; grave I on the north side of the apse 3; the small graves J and K against the north wall between the two apses 2 and 3; grave L in front of the apse 2; and the two graves against the south wall of the south nave of the basilica.

Some graves in the photographs have not been identified but a grave against the north wall opposite the room north of apse 1 may have been excavated. The grave parallel to grave L is not indicated by Lino da Silva but only as a rectangular stone, so it appears that it has not been opened or has been omitted in his descriptions. No mention is made about the small baptismal pool built in the southern sacristy but it was probably discovered at that time. Where the "baptismal font" (fig. 10) was found is also unknown.

After these eleven days, and under new instructions from Manuel Heleno, the diggers left the basilica and returned to "the construction of the villa" (Silva 1955). In 1955, Lino da Silva made several drawings of the same plane (the west side of the basilica), with variations: i) plan 1 (fig. 5), undated, with few graves yet discovered, numbered without skeletons designed but with a partial subtitle (A to J) stating that in two graves rings had been found along with skeletons; ii) plan 2, with more graves already represented with skeletons, unnumbered, including two

¹¹ In the report, in layer 0/25, some coins (five), some "iron objects" and others of "copper", some fragments of ceramic (four occurrences), fragments of "carved marble" and a ring were found. In layer 25/50, more coins were found (ten), of the seven graves one had a "tile with decoration" (SILVA 1955), another had a "brass ring" and one had a "fragment of marble" (SILVA 1955). As for the architectural material, the report refers to two columns, one column base as well as a "sink of marble with decorations". The material described in the letters varies as Lino da Silva commented that some coins in the chapel area around him seem "Arabic" (Silva, October 8th, 1955) and wrote that two graves had a ring of bronze and one had an iron ring. Outside the graves, "within the constructions" (Silva, October 17th, 1955), that it is anywhere between apse 4 and apse 2, he claimed to have found many coins, one fibula "that seems to be Visigothic", a brass ring and "others of iron" (Silva, October 17th, 1955), which significantly increases the metallic material compared with that which was described in the report. The 135 parts listed in the inventory by Lino da Silva come from Torre de Palma, Cabeça de Vaíamonte and from Monte do Pombal and have an indication of the site and of the layer. For the "chapel" of Torre de Palma, 34 pieces are referenced, which differ in part from information obtained from previous documents. For the layer 0/25 he relates only eight coins without further objects, of the layer 25/50 only metal objects are referenced, some of which are absent in previous papers (two fragments of a ring, an iron ring, two fibulae, a "lead object with decoration", an iron buckle) and two beads. It also refers to an additional layer, 50/75, in which appeared eight coins, an "iron hammer" and two capitals. Three rings were found in graves and another grave contained a coin. Perhaps this listing is all the materials found throughout the basilica and not in the western part described in the report?

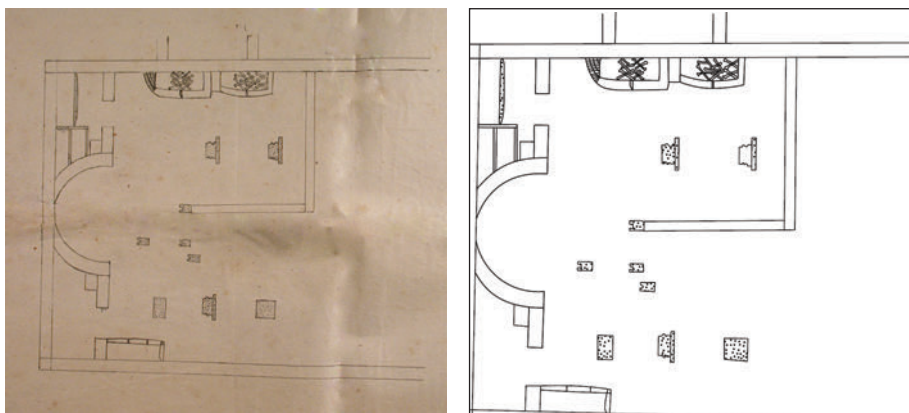


Fig. 6. Plan 4. Basilica, west part (+ vectorial image). Probably before the discovery of the baptistery in 1956 (A.M.H).

graves in the north nave and one to the north of the eastern apse, outside the basilica; iii) plan 3, dated September 18th, 1955, more complete, with all the graves represented, numbered and with skeletons, as well as a caption from A to Q. However, in the latter (?) drawing the rings mentioned in drawing 1 and the graves to the north in drawing 2 are not mentioned; iv) plan 4 (fig. 6), is the only plan that represents the western side of the basilica.

With no significant relevance in the various versions of plans 1, 2 and 3, we based our study on plan 3, taking into account the data from the other designs, which this one lacks (hereinafter, when the plan 3 is referred to, the additional data from the other two plans are always taken into account). The photographs of the 50s support the presence of all the graves shown in the drawings by Lino da Silva, as well as plan 6, in the graph paper dated 1969 (fig. 7).

In 1956, the second campaign in the “chapel” area proceeded. Unfortunately, the museum’s archive retained no letter from Lino da Silva for this campaign. The only sources we have left are a report by Lino da Silva (Silva 1956); a pencil drawing (undated) of the entire area south of the basilica, probably designed by Lino da Silva; and photographs and sketches of the baptistery in a small notebook of Manuel Heleno.

We know that there was (at least) one campaign of just over a month (from August 27th to September 29th, 1956) during which Lino da Silva and fourteen workers excavated the southern part (outside) of the church. The orientation chosen for the excavations cannot be understood through the report. There may have been several fronts, because

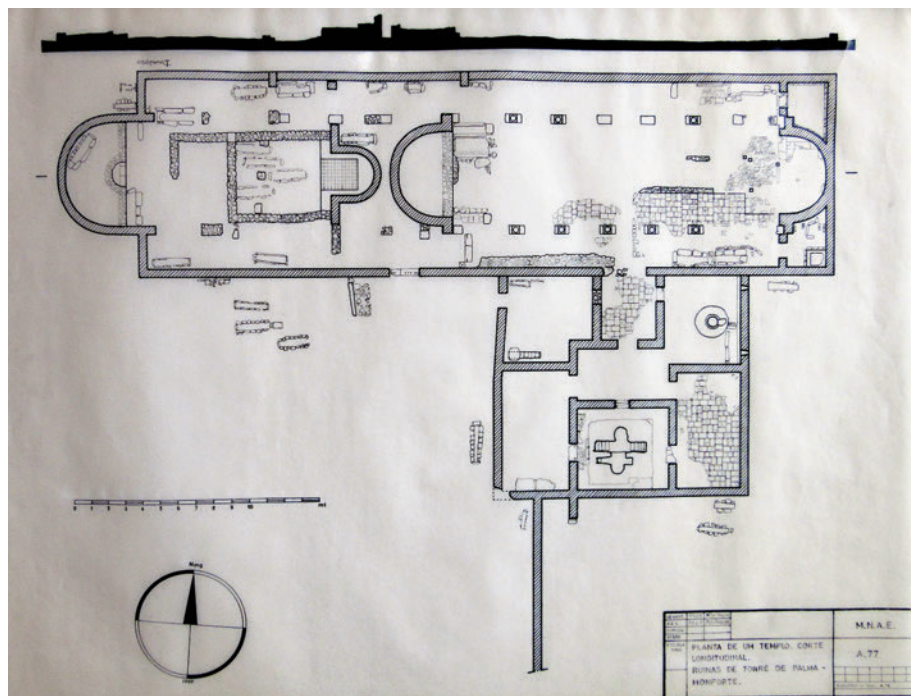


Fig. 7. Plan 6, drawn in 1969 for Fernando de Almeida (M.N.A.).

during the first few days they found in layer 25/50 “many fragments of tile” (Silva 1956) and the beginnings of “constructions”, as well as a grave, which may suggest that this is the building of the baptistery and one of the graves against the south wall of the basilica (grave 8 or 7), but then for several days, they dug an area where in layer 50/75 appeared sculpted marble fragments, and fragments of “iron objects” (Silva 1956), a weight and three graves. Only on the 14th day was the room of the cistern found; eight days later the baptistery was found. The only response to this seemingly incongruent information would be an advance of meter by meter along the entire length of the south wall of the basilica (44.50 m), each section having a width of just over one meter, thus revealing the constructions (building, cistern and baptistery) and the graves little by little and in disconnected way.

We noticed that the austerity of this report and the lack of apparent logic in the evolution of the excavations seem to reveal that it was written much later than the excavation. At this point, we question the accuracy of this report, since it does not even refer to the different rooms

that appeared in the baptistery building, or to the different floors that Lino da Silva usually marked, as well as the fact that it only divides them into seven graves of the fifteen represented in the drawing.

What modifies this bleak outlook is the pencil sketch and photos stored at the archive, which are essential to understanding the structures and burials at the time of the discovery. Through these papers we see that fifteen graves were discovered, of which only ten were marked with numbers followed by the letter "A". To the west of the baptistery, five graves were dug: a small unnumbered grave; two others against the south wall of the basilica; and three almost parallel identified as 1A, 2A and 3A. Around the baptistery, following the direction of the walls, grave 4 was to the west, 10A to southwest, 5A and 6A to southeast and 7A to the east, parallel to the south wall of the basilica. Inside the building of the baptistery, in the northwest room, were two graves 8 and 9 with the skeleton of a child, in the southwest room a cover of an unnumbered grave is shown and in the cistern room a structure that seems funerary is indicated, but it is not numbered.

The report (Silva 1956) gives some idea of the findings throughout the month of the excavation (ceramic fragments, iron weights, fragments of carved marble, roof tile fragments, ...), which are generally listed by layers but without context. At the end of the layer 25/50 three graves were discovered, one which had a "copper ring", and "the baptistery" (probably the level of the floor). The layer 50/75, along the first 14 sections revealed four graves, one of which contained a "visigothic fibula", and another with a "copper ring", nine fragments of carved marble and some miscellaneous fragments (a roof tile, four iron objects, a weight, an occurrence of nails and fragments of glass). As well as the baptistery, the cistern was also found on this layer.

These are the only indications of the excavation of the baptistery from the basilica of Torre de Palma. The sketches made by Manuel Heleno on November 1st, 1956, do not provide more information, except some measurements of the baptismal pool.

Between 1969 and 1971, Fernando de Almeida enjoined the making of a thorough survey of the basilica (fig. 7) in order to publish a monograph on the building. He began by publishing the first important article in 1972-1974 (Almeida 1972-1974); but unfortunately, it was not followed by any monograph.

The archaeological material stored in M.N.A. (figs. 8-9) referring to the graves of the basilica is divided into several categories (name of the grave/chapel; name of grave/cemetery; grave alone). Many of them present problematic readings since they are not mentioned in the report, nei-

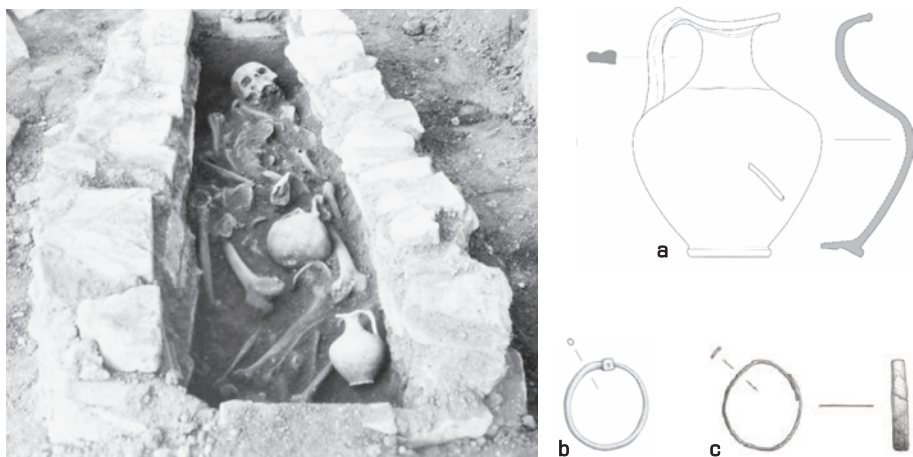


Fig. 8. Left, grave 1A during excavations (photo TP 41, Arq. Fot. M.N.A.); right, materials belonging to the burials found in the Portuguese excavations: a) jug TP.1.A.1 of grave 1A2, b) earring TP.2.A.1 of grave 2A, c). ring TP.5.A.1 of grave 5A.

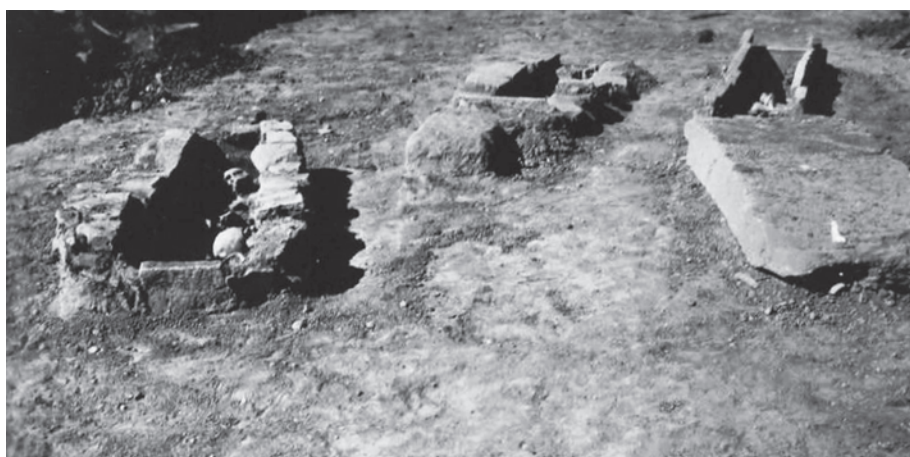


Fig. 9. General view of graves 1A, 2A and 3A (photo TP 34, Arq. Fot. M.N.A.).

ther in the letters nor in the drawings, or even contain information contrary to the drawings.

We do not know if this funerary use is contemporary to the functioning of the church or immediately after its use. There are two graves (F and E) that follow the walls of apse 4, another is outside of it and grave G is opposite the apse; two graves are in front of apse 2 (L without number) and another lays outside of the apse 3 (grave I). All other graves

are aligned to the walls of the north and south naves. Three graves are in adjacent rooms to the baptistery (8A, 9A and the grave next to the cistern). Grave B lies beneath a fireplace (clearly visible in the photograph TP 197 and drawing 3), which shows that this grave is of a date prior to the abandonment of the basilica, perhaps when it was used as a domestic space. However, although it is considered that these graves should not be dated to a time much later than the construction of the basilica, not much more can be said about them, in the state in which they were found by the Portuguese team. The complement from the American excavations will help to clarify this problem.

Manuel Heleno, in his 1962 article, mentions that in the basilica "graves with Visigoth belt fasteners" were found; unfortunately it is not known in which graves they appeared. The belt fasteners kept in the M.N.A. probably come from one of these graves. Fernando de Almeida says in his notebook (p. 33) that a Visigothic belt buckle was found in a grave in the north nave of the eastern basilica. Based on the sketches he presented, the grave in question seems to be grave G of Lino da Silva's drawing. We do not know, once again, to which buckle of the M.N.A. he refers.

The only graves of the Portuguese excavations that seem safe to study would be 1A to 10A. Of these, only three contained funerary material. All are located south of the basilica. Graves 1A, 2A and 3A (+ a small grave without number) is the only group that does not touch or does not directly follow the walls of the basilica. All other graves touch or are strictly parallel to the basilica and baptistery. This may indicate that graves 1A, 2A, 3A could be prior to the construction of the church.

Besides the funerary material retained in M.N.A. we also present two architectural pieces: the baptismal font found (fig. 10) in 1955 somewhere in the basilica in the layer 25/50 (Silva 1955) and a chancel (fig. 11) mentioned by Fernando de Almeida in his 1974 article. Fernando de Almeida wrote: "several fragments of a grid of small arches" appeared "next to the Basilica (...) during the excavations" (Almeida 1972-1974, p. 106, fig. 11); however we do not know to which excavations he refers.

The material is sparse and of incongruent dating. What we can say is that the presence of a high-imperial tomb south of the Basilica proves that it was built over a high-imperial necropolis, of which the incineration graves on the northwest side were a part.

The oriental style of the baptismal font is more difficult to place. It could be dated during the 4th and 5th centuries AD, when there was no monumental baptistery in the church. However, baptism since its origin and up to at least the mid-7th century was done by immersion, which



Figs. 10-11. Left, baptismal font found in 1955; right, chancel of the church.

makes the functions of this small sink incompatible with this kind of ritual. There are thus two possibilities: either it dates to the first phase of the basilica with an auxiliary function to baptism; or it dates much later, when the ritual became baptism by aspersion, from the 8th century. The second hypothesis is unlikely because the church should have already abandoned its liturgical function.

The chancel (fig. 11), of which traces of the socket are visible in the central nave, is probably part of the remodelling phase of the church, attributed to the 6th century by the American archaeologists, which coincides with the stylistic dating of the small arches which we establish in our doctoral thesis (Wolfram 2011).

Finally, mention should be made of the funerary structures east of the basilica, still within the grounds. Two rooms are located in the northwest corner, with three burials and some parallel structures to apse 1 with more burials. Saavedra Machado may have excavated these structures in 1961 when he was responsible for the excavations. He wrote a letter that began “opening a field in the circular of the chapels in Torre de Palma” (letter of Saavedra Machado, October 5th, 1961). We do not know if the circular means the path or the enclosure that contours the basilica. On October 29th he wrote: “in the field of circular to the chapel I have already stopped my work since it might be better to complete it when we continue to explore the cemetery” (Saavedra Machado, October 29th 1961).

2.2.2. American excavations data

The analysis of the architectural structures of the basilica had been performed numerous times before the American excavation, then by this team and subsequently by other independent researchers (see bibliography below), so we will confine ourselves to the aspects that are of interest here: the presence of graves, their possible accommodation within

the construction of the church, as well as the existence of anterior and posterior structures, which may help to understand the space from a diachronic point of view.

However, we still consider the conclusions of the 1984 campaign (Caeiro *et al.* 1984) as the most clear and evident, in regard to the constructive phases, especially when compared with all subsequent theories, supported by analysis of the mortar that has further complicated the overall understanding of the site:

1. Around 400 AD (or until the middle of the 5th century): the construction of a "great basilica" with two apses (two construction phases for the whole area), baptismal tank to the southeast of apse 1, west narthex.
2. During the Visigothic period, the addition of the baptistery (at least two building phases) and an apse (apse 3) perhaps of funerary nature within the narthex.
3. In the final phase, destruction of the western wall of the narthex to enlarge it and building a fourth apse (one constructive phase) ("little basilica").
4. Abandonment of the whole complex sometime in the 8th century.
5. 13th century: building of a chapel to S. Domingos over apse 3, functioning of which extends to the 16th century.

However, we disagree with the reference to the western space as being a "little basilica" since it makes no sense to think that it had functioned as an independent basilica¹² to the "great basilica". Instead, it may have been a place of burial/martyrdom cult that functioned in addition to the main church (baptismal/eucharistic). In the same way, we have no information about the chronology of the enclosure around the building. It is likely that it dates back to a time when it was necessary to restrict the sepulchral area. It is curious to note that the latest data for dating the mortar provided for the funerary structures (other *mausolea*?) east of apse 1 are of the 4th century AD (Maloney 2001), which could reinforce the idea that the Roman necropolis would have occupied all that space in the eastern zone.

Regarding the revision of the chronology obtained by studying the mortar through C14, the dating of the basilica with the double apse would go back to 535-565 AD, with, however, "many fragments of the 4th and 5th centuries that suggest a first church" (Maloney 2001, p. 472). Meanwhile, the first phase of the baptistery would go back to the

¹² The French team of Lancha incorporates the rooms with the graves to the east of the basilica and the enclosure in a 8th phase of occupation of the *villa*, a phase that would date from 306 to 365 AD, contemporary, according to them, to the construction of the oriental basilica (LANCHA, ANDRE 2000, pl. XXIV). We do not have any data from the Portuguese or American excavations that could give us any clue to the dating of these enclosures.

early 5th century¹³ and a second phase of the 7th century, a date which also corresponds to apse 3 (Maloney 2001, p. 472). The mere fact that the time of the first phase of the baptistery is prior to the construction of the church shows the fragility of these mortar datings. Although a date for construction of the basilica, indicated by the presence of coins embedded in the floor mortar of the choir (Huffstot 1998, pp. 221-226) seems too early – knowing that the coins circulated for decades – we can advance the time of the first building to the middle or end of the 5th century, but hardly to the middle of the 6th century AD. Radiocarbon dating probably indicates a second construction phase of the basilica. We believe therefore that the readings obtained from the stratigraphic observation are the most reliable. With regard to apse 3, the dating of the mortar points to 640-655 AD, which, if correct, eliminates any case of precedence of this structure in relation to the rest of the basilica (Lancha, André 2000, p. 92).

2.2.2.1. Building previous to the basilica

In 1983-1984, foundations of a previous building to the basilica were discovered under its eastern part, partly following its walls (Caeiro *et al.* 1983). However, no materials associated with the structures were found (Maloney 2001, p. 460), so nothing is known about these structures except for the shape (a rectangle of 5 m of width by 11.5 m of length with three compartments of different sizes, oriented north-north-west/south-southeast) and the foundations (large stones laid without mortar and fitted into the bedrock). These data do not provide more information other than the fact that there was a building prior to the basilica. Due to its position in a funerary area during the high imperial period, if this building was contemporary to the necropolis, we may be faced with a funerary structure that had been reused for the construction of the basilica, perhaps for some religious reason. But this argument cannot be sustained while no element of dating and funerary nature has been found. The relationship with this structure and the ara to Mars reused in the building in the southwest is purely hypothetical.

2.2.2.2. Typology of re-excavated graves

The team of Stephanie Maloney cleared and re-excavated graves discovered by Lino da Silva and assigned them a different numbering.

¹³ Agreeing with the dates proposed by Lancha for a first construction phase of the baptistery (LANCHA, ANDRÉ 2000, p. 93).

Strangely the only clearly high-imperial grave (grave 1A) is not indicated, perhaps because it was no longer visible at that time. Already in 1978 Thilo Ulbert, in his study of basilicas with double apses, studied the inner graves with no mention the outer graves (Ulbert 1978, p. 97).

Most of these graves were individually drawn and detailed in 1984 (Caeiro *et al.* 1984).

Through observation of the drawings, it is possible to define three key building types and some variants:

- type 1: graves of which the walls are built with large blocks of stone more or less regular, sometimes clogged in small places by fragments of pottery (S, O, P, N, L, Z and two graves with non-legible numbers in the 1984 document);
- type 2: graves built with blocks of stone and tiles (X, Y, DD, U, W, M, 8 K, H, B: grave B is composed of two low walls: one of large stone slabs covered by a wall of mortared bricks);
- type 3: graves with brick walls, sometimes lying, sometimes standing (AA, BB, EE, D, Q).

Grave C is made of blocks of mortar, probably from the abandoned *villa*.

It is interesting to notice that the four graves of apse 4 are made with large stones (type 1), while all the graves that are outside the basilica and inside the baptistery are built with bricks (types 2 and 3). These different materials could mean a difference in status between the Visigothic tombs. Unfortunately, as the dating for most of the graves cannot be proven, little can be concluded.

The American excavations, while determining various construction phases in the basilica, have thus confirmed that the two graves in front of apse 2 were likely built in a second phase, when the floor of the church was raised in order to hold the eastern walls of apse 2 (Maloney 2000, p. 434).

A detailed analysis of the church by Thilo Ulbert in 1978 is essential even if he did not study the archaeological material. Through analysis of the graves, the author states that the ones outside the church are from an earlier date (Imperial era), and those within the church are all from a later period. He differentiates on one hand the graves under the floor of the second construction phase – graves 14, 16, 17, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24 and under the floor baptistery: graves 25, 26 – and on the other, the graves after the abandonment of the basilica – graves 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 (these two with materials plundered from the *villa*), 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 18, 19 and in the baptistery grave 27 (Ulbert 1978, p. 100).

If these statements can be corrected and completed today – thanks to the material (with and without context), to the data vaguely provided

by Heleno and Almeida, as well as Lino da Silva's — Ulbert is still the first author to conclude that "the Basilica raised over an ancient necropolis connected to the confining *villa*" (Ulbert 1978). This is the conclusion we have reached thanks to the sparse material collected at the museum and to the American excavations.

2.2.2.3. Graves excavated between 1983 and 1986

New graves were found in the basilica and on the outside, which completes the funerary panorama of this building. While Lino da Silva mostly excavated medieval or Visigothic graves, the American team excavated graves with different characteristics, mainly after the abandonment of the basilica but among these is a possible Roman grave excavated in the bedrock.

Undoubtedly the most important discovery regarding to the graves, was made in 1984 but, despite being referenced in the report of this year (Caeiro *et al.* 1984, p. 2) and commented in the final report (Maloney 2001, p. 465), it never appeared in a basilica plan or in an evolutionary plan of the site. This is the rock-hewn tomb found in front of apse 2 (grid N024-E032), oriented north-south, with some remains of bones and iron padlock at the bottom of the grave (fig. 12). In the review of the 2000 report, this grave "is potentially one of honour" and based on its significant position opposite apse 2, may have been venerated during antiquity.

It is necessary to take into account several aspects about this grave; its north-south orientation, its structure excavated in the rock and covered with stone slabs, seem to prove, in fact, its early dating. The almost complete padlock (12 x 3.5 cm, not counting the bent part of the padlock measuring 5 cm), which was found in this grave, has Roman features. A similar padlock is described in an article by Jorge Alarcão about padlocks



Fig. 12. Iron padlock in a grave front of abside 2 (photo Câmara Municipal de Monforte).

and locks of Conímbriga (Alarcão 1974, p. 14, fig. 3): the parallels are from the catalogue of the British Museum "Antiquities of Roman Britain". Therefore, this grave is proof that the northwest cemetery continued under the basilica and to the south of it. The presence of the lock makes this an enigmatic grave; it is a piece of coffin or sarcophagus, or most likely a door (due its size). This finding in itself does not reveal its spectacular or exceptional character (if we assume that the lock meant nothing of great importance). However, and as Stephanie Maloney stated in the 2001 report, its position opposite apse 2 is certainly not casual.

The coin finds by the American team in the basilica refer to an As of Julio-Claudian period and seven medieval coins.

2.2.2.4. Use of the basilica after its abandonment

The rough wall construction that was found along the south wall of the south nave from the basilica is associated with bones of domestic animals and "Roman and High Medieval" pottery (Maloney 2001, p. 465). It is probably a more recent construction, posterior to the religious life of the building, possibly in a period of domestic use of the site after the 8th century. This discovery is put in relation with the fireplace discovered by Lino da Silva over grave B (U grave Maloney) and perfectly visible on the photo TP 197 dated 1955. This fireplace was probably removed during the excavations of the 1950s since it is no longer listed in any subsequent study and plan 6, drawn in 1969 (fig. 7) and used in Fernando de Almeida's publication, no longer presents it.

What can be seen is that the abandonment of the religious functions of the basilica was followed by a domestic occupation (shelter or permanent housing?). However, using a holy place to live in assumes that the place no longer had meaning or had been abandoned by the religious authorities. We therefore believe that this has to have occurred sometime after the use of the Visigothic church. The domestic structures were against the walls of the old basilica, so at this unknown period these walls were still standing or partially standing.

2.2.3. Conclusions about the graves inside and outside the basilica and baptistery

The conclusions about the archaeological data of Portuguese and American excavations are lean: in addition to realizing that almost all the graves were excavated in the 1950s, without proper care, the data provided by the University of Louisville team about the graves are scarce.

The graves located there can perhaps be organised into three phases: 1) Roman or prior to the construction of the church; 2) contemporary, which may account for the majority (including the grave 2A and 5A); 3) medieval or posterior to abandonment of the building.

The architectural structures beneath apse 1 may be part of the Roman funerary phase, but may also be only a first construction phase of the basilica, a tripartite bedside.

2.3. Cemetery northwest of the church

2.3.1. Data from the Portuguese excavations

This cemetery was excavated in 1960 for a few days in August and in a second phase in late September. We have only a few letters¹⁴ and a pencil-drawn plan by Lino da Silva to reconstruct how this cemetery, which he calls “the cemetery near the chapel”, was organized (fig. 13). Unfortunately, the excavator does not reveal the numbering of the graves or their precise locations.

Through Lino da Silva’s drawings only twenty-two graves are visible (which we number from n. 1 to n. 22 to facilitate its study), four of which are within a small rectangular building with an entrance marked on the south wall. Based on the formal characteristics of these structures, we call this building “west mausoleum”¹⁵. Thanks to the letter dated August 18th 1960, we know that this building was dug into the rock, had stone and lime foundations and the inner walls were probably decorated by marble slabs. The materials found were “a few pieces of pottery, two urns, two fibulae and two coins”. Unfortunately, we do not know where he found this material, if within graves or, if so, which ones.

Nine graves are part of another structure, which is larger, and which is east of the mausoleum. This structure is, according to Lino da Silva, “a building of stone and earth very difficult to understand”, but he thought “that it was to hold the walls of the tombs” (Silva, August 18th 1960). The nine remaining graves are laid out and around this larger structure. In general, the graves are oriented east-west, but three (n. 10, n. 14 and n. 15) are oriented north-south.

Lino da Silva’s drawing provides some useful information. First, it indicates internal partitions made of stone and lime, topped with marble in-

¹⁴ Letters of Lino da Silva dated August 18th (with plan), August 25th, September 20th, September 28th, October 4th, 1960 (A.M.H.).

¹⁵ These small internal separations are no longer visible in the American excavations, only around grave n. 4 (NW 1a).

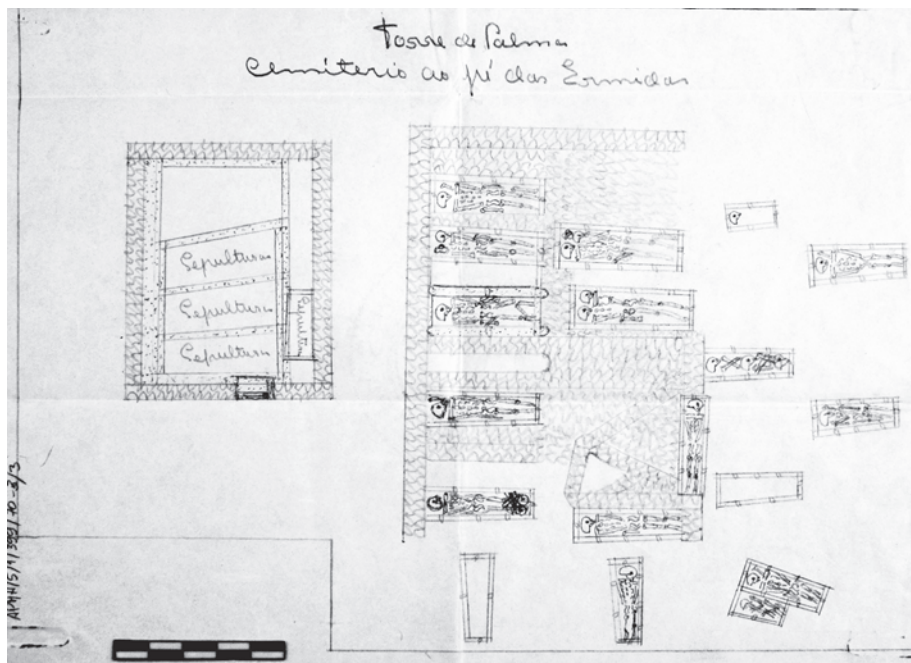


Fig. 13. Northwest cemetery of Torre de Palma. Lino da Silva's drawing, August 18th 1960 (A.M.H.).

side the west mausoleum¹⁶. Second, Lino da Silva's drawing shows the existence of skeletons or bones in sixteen graves, but no skeleton was drawn within the four graves located in the mausoleum. This could mean that the graves had not been open, which does not seem feasible because Lino da Silva excavated all the graves he found. The other hypothesis is that Lino did not draw them. Strangely there are records of bones in graves n. 1, n. 2, n. 3 and n. 4 of the "graveyard of Torre de Palma" in M.N.A. According to Hale (1995, p. 459), there would be "local informants" who have stated that one of the graves of the west mausoleum didn't contain skeletons but only ceramic pieces, which could indicate the presence of a cremation grave of incineration.

All the skeletons drawn on graves are within the area to the east of the mausoleum and inside isolated graves. At least six graves are visible within the area with collective and/or multiple burials: one with clear re-

¹⁶ These internal separations are no longer visible in the American excavations, only around the grave n. 4 (NW 1a).

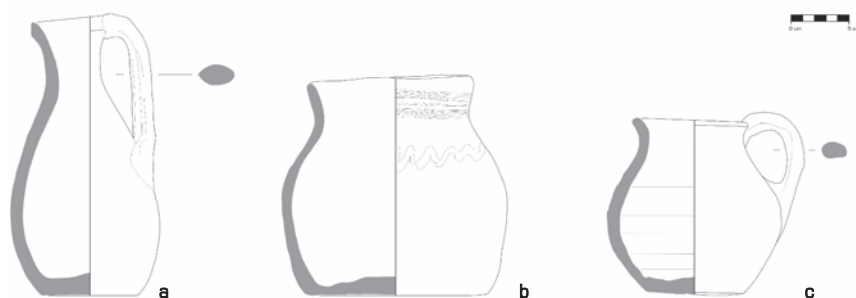


Fig. 14. Grave goods stored in the musum: a) jug TP.VI.1 of grave VI; b) small jug TP.VIII.1 of grave VIII; c) pot TP.VII.1 of grave VII.

duction of two skeletons buried at the foot of the last (n. 9), two with a skeleton in anatomical connection and a skull next to its head (nn. 11, 12), and three with bone(s) over the last person buried (nn. 5, 19, 21). The remaining graves appear to have contained only one skeleton (nn. 6, 7, 8, 13, 14, 15). In the isolated graves, two are empty (nn. 10, 18), three present disorganized bones of several skeletons (nn. 17, 20, 22), one is the grave of a child (n. 16), and a set of two back to back graves, one an adult with a complete skeleton, and one a child with a disorganized skeleton (n. 19 and n. 20)¹⁷. There are no representations of the cremations (pits and/or urns) that Lino da Silva mentions in his letters.

The third piece of information that can be drawn from this drawing refers to the grave goods of some graves. In fact, in three of these graves succinctly drawn pieces appear to be visible: in grave n. 6, on the right shoulder of the skeleton, a small jug with a long neck and wing facing north is visible, like the pitcher inventoried at the museum as being from “grave 6” (fig. 14a); in grave n. 11 another pitcher appears at the foot of two skulls, more bulbous, with the handle facing north, like the cup inventoried at the museum as coming from “grave VIII” (fig. 14b); in grave n. 12, below the left shoulder, one can spot a pot of curved profile, like the one in the museum as “grave VII” (fig. 14c). Unfortunately, we cannot be sure about these analogies. The numbering of the graves at the museum is divided into two parts: the graves with Latin numerals (containing archaeological remains) and the graves with Arabic numerals (which contained only bones). In fact, the numbers continue 1 to 30 and change characters depending on whether or not they contain archaeo-

¹⁷ This last set will not appear in the American excavations.

logical material. It is likely that this numeric system of the Museum followed the indications given by Lino da Silva on the pieces.

Finally, during the second phase of excavations in September, he began to find several cremation graves containing ceramic pieces of *terra sigillata*¹⁸ (Silva, September 28th 1960). This statement proves that this road (or path) probably would have been one of the access roads to the north of the *villa*. It should be noted that Fernando de Almeida also found fragments of *terra sigillata* near the road when probing took place in 1971 (Notebook F. Almeida, 1971 file M.N.A.), confirming the data of Lino da Silva.

The only grave with artefacts summarily described by Lino da Silva comes from this area near the path that currently separates the cemetery from the basilica: "(...) grave of incineration; inside I found the following pieces: 6 ceramic bowls of *terra sigillata*, with some marks, a whole piece of glass, with a bottle shape, 6 pieces of coarse pottery. (...) The cemetery crosses the road, more or less in the direction of the chapel, I found this grave on the edge of the road, I think there are more beneath it" (Silva, September 28th 1960). Within the material kept in the museum, a grave called "Grave XXVII - Cemetery of Torre de Palma" contains exactly the number and type of pieces described in the letter (figs. 15a, 15b): six pieces of *terra sigillata*, six pieces of common pottery (including a piece of ceramics of thin walls) and a piece of glass (an ointment jar).

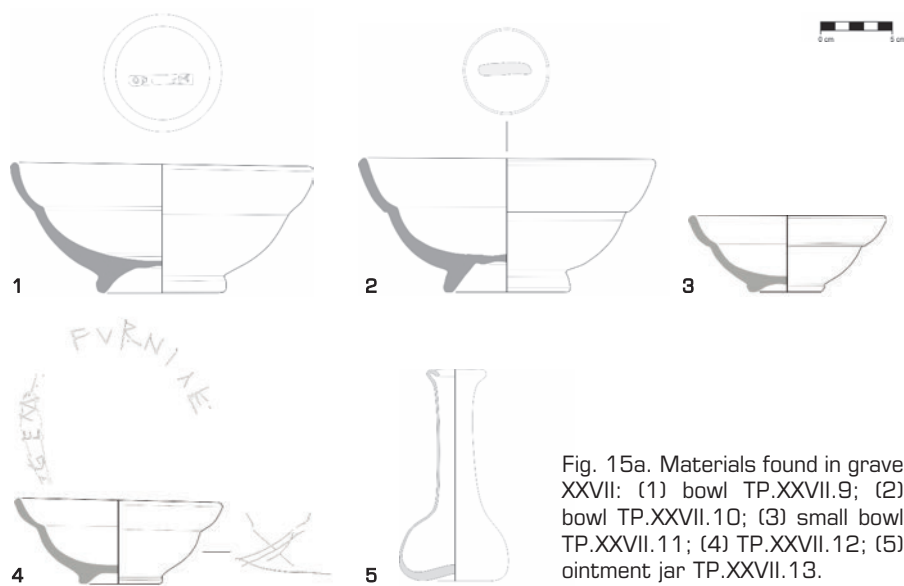


Fig. 15a. Materials found in grave XXVII: (1) bowl TP.XXVII.9; (2) bowl TP.XXVII.10; (3) small bowl TP.XXVII.11; (4) TP.XXVII.12; (5) ointment jar TP.XXVII.13.

¹⁸ These graves do not appear in the drawing dating from the beginning of the excavations.

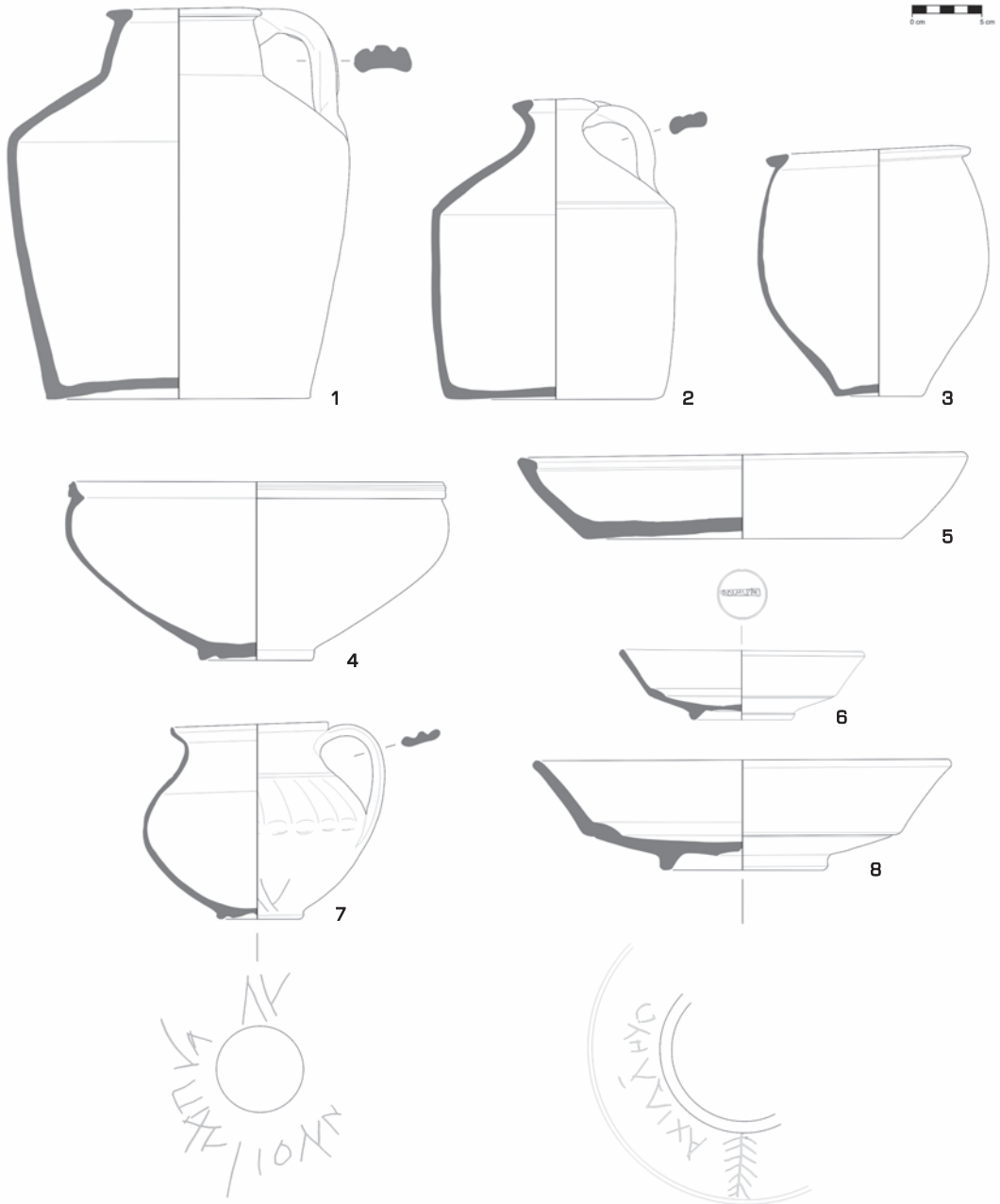


Fig. 15b. Materials found in grave XXVII: (1) bottle TP.XXVII.1; (2) bottle TP.XXVII.2; (3) pot TP.XXVII.4; (4) bowl TP.XXVII.6; (5) plate TP.XXVII.3; (6) plate TP.XXVII.8; (7) little jug TP.XXVII.5; (8) plate TP.XXVII.7.

2.3.2. American excavations data

In 1985, the Luso-American team made the same assumption that we did, that is, that the cemetery northwest was comprised of a “large number of graves proven Visigothic and not Roman (as hitherto assumed)” which led them “to conclude the occupation of that space for at least 150 years and perhaps even at the time of the Muslim invasions” (Torre de Palma, Campaign 1985, Archives of IGESPAR). This conclusion proves to be incomplete, as can be seen through the dating of the mainly high-imperial material from the graves of incineration.

There is additional information to the Portuguese excavations that is taken from the final report (Huffstot 2000a, pp. 442-458).

The construction of the walls of the west mausoleum, called “mausoleum NW1”, is similar to the basilica. The mausoleum was composed of four graves of adults and one of a child, all carved into the rock and built, each at different heights, as if it were a ladder system (except the grave of the child, which is perpendicular to them). The grave of a child NW1a consisted of two bricks at the bottom; the walls were built by fragments of tiles and bricks together with mortar. This set was fixed by a part of the bedrock that was not removed. The only grave (NW1b) that was still visible was the one composed of bricks inserted on a base of white mortar. Its head rested against the rock holding the grave of a child. The walls have disappeared but it seems that a rock had been cut for its construction. The only traces of the grave NW1c are the mortar base where it should have been placed. The NW1d grave also was composed of a brick bottom. A small rock wall separates it from NW1e, which is at a lower elevation. It was cut into the rock and from the remaining traces it is possible to see how the surfaces were smoothed with mortar and covered by thin slabs of marble, as in grave NW27.

The structures to the east of this mausoleum are considered a possible precinct for the graves (“partial enclosure”, Huffstot 2000a, Basilica 442), which confirms Lino da Silva’s suggestion (Silva, August 18th 1960).

The 35 graves, beyond the five mausoleums, had been excavated in 1960, which complements the total number of graves excavated in 1960¹⁹, against the 22 from Lino da Silvas drawing. There was no mention of cremation graves (Roman and pre-Roman), perhaps because they had not been preserved or they are not in this area but closer to the road, east of the cemetery. The orientation of most of the graves coin-

¹⁹ With exception to the NW34 grave (HUFFSTOT 2000a, Basilica 443).

cides with that presented of Lino's drawing, with more finely tuned variations, resulting in a general northeast-southwest orientation, but we still find the same three graves with the north-south orientation (NW7, NW8, NW10). Five graves (one in the mausoleum), which the American team considered to be the graves of children, are much smaller.

All graves are described individually, making it possible to combine them in different building types (such as we have done for the basilica and southwest cemetery):

- Type 1: pits with regular forms (almost rectangular), walls built with more or less regular large stone blocks, with rock bottoms (NW7, NW9, NW19, NW33);
- Type 2: pits with regular form (almost rectangular), built with large blocks of stone and smaller stones and ceramic fragments, with mainly tiled bottoms (NW3, NW4, NW10, NW11, NW12, NW15, NW18);
- Type 3: rectangular pit walls built with bricks and rock bottoms (NW8, NW17 (?), NW21, NW26 (incomplete), NW29, NW34);
- Type 4: graves entirely built with tiles (NW2, NW5, NW6, NW13, NW14, NW16, NW23, NW35).

One grave was fully lined in marble (NW27).

In three graves (NW10, NW34, NW18), a total of three earrings and a belt buckle of Visigothic typology was found (Caeiro 1985).

2.3.3. Conclusions about the northwest cemetery

It is a partially excavated funerary area, with 42 graves: four inside a mausoleum, 16 inserted in another enclosure, one isolated burial in a third precinct, and the remaining dispersed to the northeast side, between family enclosures and the basilica. The population of this part of the area amounts to at least 54 individuals²⁰.

However, through i) the high-imperial artifacts; ii) the references to cremations by Lino and the records of the M.N.A.; iii) the investigations carried out by Fernando de Almeida in 1971 near the road²¹; iv) the identification of a secluded grave north of the precincts of the basilica and v) the high-imperial graves in front of apse 2 and south of the basilica, we

²⁰ We added the 25 individuals (skulls) represented in the drawing by Lino, we suppose at least one individual per empty grave for the two excavations (27) and at least 2 individuals in the multiple grave NW34. The number of individuals represented through the osteological remains of the M.N.A. being unknown, we prefer to confine ourselves here to the drawing by Lino da Silva.

²¹ "Opening of a ditch 20 x 1.5 m, in place of the cemetery, on the opposite side of the Basilica, with the path between one and another (...) 3 small shards appeared of Hispanic TS, plain, one of them must be one Dragendorf Bowl 29" (Notebook Fernando de Almeida, 1971, pp. 5-7, Archives of M.N.A.).

can assume that there had been a broader use of the space, extending to the north and east (across the road and underneath the church). No cremation grave is indicated in the drawings by Lino or in the 2000 report; the reference to a carbonized spot in the NW24 grave was a unique situation. If there were cremations, as in Santo André, the artifacts would be in a simple pit or with urns. Now, the two urns identified in M.N.A. as coming from the "cemetery" (2000.404.7 and 2000.405.10) and from the grave XVI (2000.419.1) are dated from the first half of the 1st millennium BC (Langley *et al.* 2007), not fitting well with the material of 1st and 2nd centuries AD that we studied.

Bringing together all the information between 1960 and 2000 and the archaeological material studied, we can reach the following conclusions.

- West mausoleum:

The parallels for this type of mausoleum with a complex internal spatial organization are in El Cami del Molí dels Frares and El Albir (Valencia), the first dating from the 4th century AD and the second from the end of the 3rd century AD - mid-4th century AD (Villaescusa 2001, pp. 239-240, 361-362). A mausoleum with similar characteristics, dating from the 3rd and 4th centuries AD (Boninu *et al.* 1987, pp. 27-31 *apud* Villaescusa 2001, p. 240), also was found in the necropolis of San Gavino, the ancient city of *Turris Libisonis* (current Porto Torres in Sardinia).

The dating of the 4th century AD would be acceptable here, considering the fact that the construction type of the west mausoleum is very similar to the church, having probably preceded the church, since we are in a funerary space used since the High Empire. Therefore, a proposed dating from the 3rd to 4th century AD seems feasible here.

- Precincts to the east:

The archaeological and documentary information (Silva drawing) for the graves VI, VII and VIII of the M.N.A. seem to coincide with regard to the material itself (one object with similar characteristics) and the type of burial: simple burial in grave VI and multiple burials in graves VII and VIII if we consider the design in the graves n. 6, n. 11 and n. 12 respectively. These graves are of a similar construction typology (type 2) and the dating of the material is consistent (6th-7th century), but this fact may be a mere coincidence. Even if this construction type of graves is only within the funerary structure, we find it imprudent to assign a Visigothic chronology only to the construction type 2, since there are also graves of other types within the precincts and many graves outside the premises no longer are identifiable.

NW10, NW18 and NW34 graves contained artefacts of Visigothic

dating which can reassure us in assigning this period to most of the graves of east precincts. Joining this archaeological data to that from the graves VI, VII and VIII of the M.N.A. and observing the guidelines and consistency in the types of graves in the east precinct, we have a clue to the organization in spatial and chronological accordance with the basilica (contrary to the southwest cemetery governed by adjacent architectural structures) during the 5th to the 7th centuries AD.

We may, however, hypothetically maintain the greater antiquity of the west mausoleum, due to its more elaborate construction type than the structures to the east: the mausoleum could well be a construction of the 3rd or 4th century and the east precincts (as well as the premises to the southwest with the northwest grave 34) a development starting in the 5th century, with an occupation up to the 7th century.

3. Archaeological material and dating (figs. 14-19)

The dating of the archaeological material from the graves studied here is divided as follows:

- 1st to 2nd centuries: graves XII, XII, XIV, XV, XXIII, XXIV, XXVII
- 3rd to 4th centuries AD (uncertain dating): grave XXX
- 4th to 5th centuries AD (uncertain dating): grave XXIX
- 6th to 7th centuries AD: graves VI, VII, VIII and NW10, NW18 and NW34.

We cannot make conclusions about a funerary space of more than 40 graves based on the material of 15 graves.

Grave XXVII seems to have the full ceramic dishware for two people. We note two coarse sets: two bottles for liquids (TP.XXVII.1 and TP.XXVII.2), two dishes (one of common ceramic TP.XXVII.3, another thin-walled, TP.XXVII.6), two cups (one of common ceramic TP.XXVII.4, another imitation of thin walls, TP.XXVII.5) as well as two fine sets of dishware (TSH): two plates (TP.XXVII.7 and TP.XXVII.8), two cups (TP.XXVII.9 and TP.XXVII.10) and two bowls (TP.XXVII.11 and TP.XXVII.12). The ointment jar is added to this set. Thus, this appears to be the oldest of the preserved graves; its age is attested by TSH dating of the material and the number of objects that form the artifacts of this grave. All the other graves, which contain only one piece or little more, could already be from the beginning or middle of the 2nd century AD, revealing the beginning of a trend (burying less property with the dead) that was to become more pronounced during the 2nd and 3rd centuries.

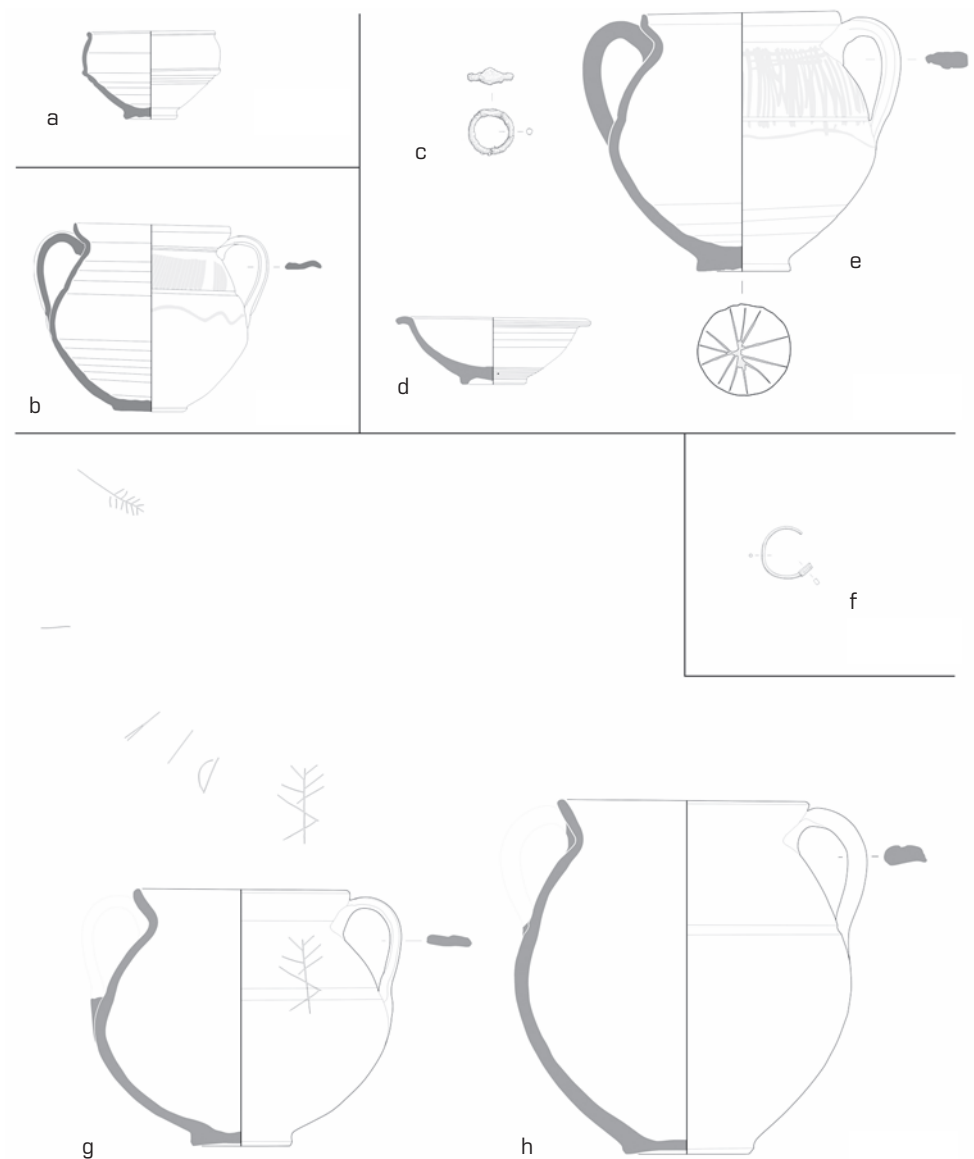


Fig. 16. Grave XII: a) small bowl TP.XII.1; grave XIV: b) cruse TP.XIV.1; grave XV: c) ring TP.XV.1, d) bowl TP.XV.3, e) little jug TP.XV.2; grave XXIX: f) earring TP.XXIX.1; grave XXIII: g) little jug TP.XXIII.1, h) cruse TP.XXIII.2. Scale 1:5.

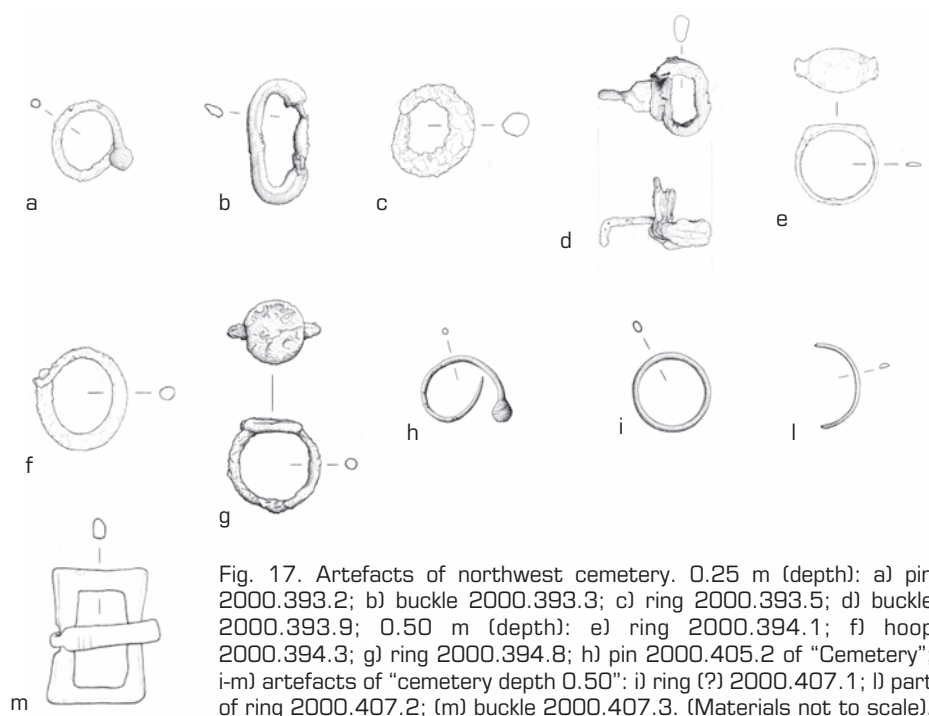


Fig. 17. Artefacts of northwest cemetery. 0.25 m (depth): a) pin 2000.393.2; b) buckle 2000.393.3; c) ring 2000.393.5; d) buckle 2000.393.9; 0.50 m (depth): e) ring 2000.394.1; f) hoop 2000.394.3; g) ring 2000.394.8; h) pin 2000.405.2 of "Cemetery"; i-m) artefacts of "cemetery depth 0.50": i) ring (?) 2000.407.1; l) part of ring 2000.407.2; (m) buckle 2000.407.3. (Materials not to scale).



Fig. 18. Left: small jug TP.XIII.1 of grave XIII (legend on picture: "Torre de Palma. Sepultura Incineração n. XIII"); right: little jug TP.XXIV.1 of grave XXIV (legend on picture "Torre de Palma, sepultura incineração XXIV") (Arq. Fot. M.N.A.).

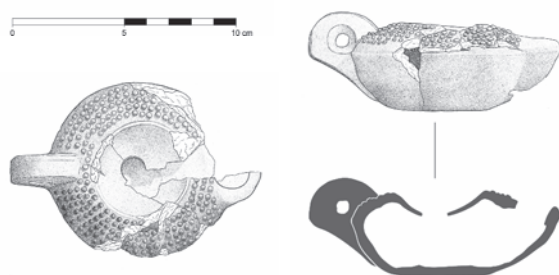


Fig. 19. Lamp TP.XXX.1 from grave XXX.

4. The southeast building

We have to mention the great building, still with undetermined functions, located southeast of the basilica. Its location suggests a role dependent on the church, perhaps housing for the clergy, but it also could be a residential building.

4.1. Data from the Portuguese excavations

For this campaign we are left with a report of Lino da Silva (Silva 1958) dated from August 19th to October 10th 1958 and several photos, as well as a plan made in 1971 at the request of Fernando de Almeida (fig. 20).

As of September 15th, Lino writes “sent personnel to the side of Eira (threshing floor) to reveal some buildings, where some investigations took place” (Silva 1958). It is unknown when these probing activities took place. This building, located about 40 m southeast of the Basilica is here called “side of the Eira (threshing floor)” possibly because at the time Lino was writing it was an area where the owners of homestead dried cereals (Costa Falcão family).

Much of the building was excavated; Lino da Silva describes a total of thirteen rooms. Unfortunately, we do not know where he began or how he proceeded, but it would probably have been by the eastern part mainly because he excavated rooms with *opus signinum* floors (“Formigão”). He excavated by layers of different thickness, between 20 and 40 centimeters and stopped at floor level in each room. The floors, which appear to unite 30/40 cm from the surface, are of *Formigão* for eight rooms; the rest of the floor is rough earth (*terra brava*) (Silva 1958). Large quantities of fragments of tiles and brick were found, possibly from the roof toppling. Other archaeological material is rather poor (some fragments of pottery, glass, coins, a piece of an iron knife, two iron axes, a lead weight); three column bases appeared in one of the rooms, probably the central room in the western part of the building.

The most interesting finding is undoubtedly the famous (and only) ara discovered in Torre de Palma, which was dedicated to Mars by M. Coel[us] Cell[us]us (IRCP 568) and found in a survey “in front of the rooms already discovered” (Silva 1958). Lino da Silva ordered this survey to see if a mosaic pavement showed up. Instead, at a depth of 20 cm, he found an ara “back turned, with the figure and inscriptions downward, inside a destroyed door of a building block”, i.e. in a re-use context of one of the walls from this building. For this purpose, the upper frame

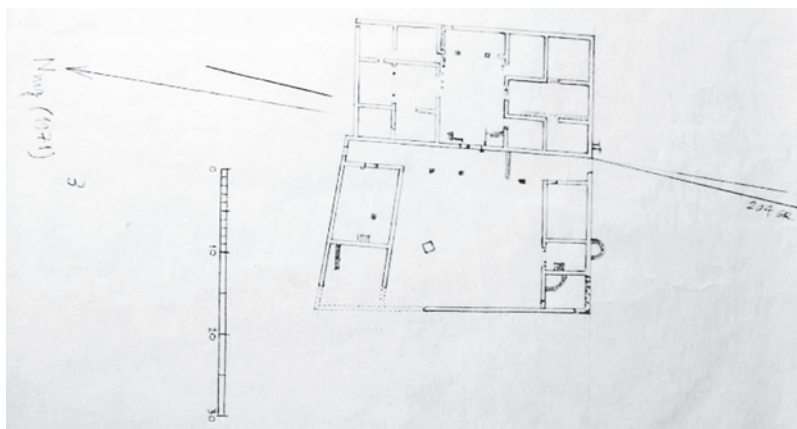


Fig. 20. Southeast building. Plan of 1971 (Arq. M.N.A.).

was cut as well as the upper right corner. Unfortunately it is impossible, to know exactly where it was found.

The scientific community's lack of awareness about the context in which this ara was found led to the interpretation of this building as a "pavilion to Mars" by Fernando de Almeida (Almeida Notebook, Archives of M.N.A.) and Stephanie Maloney. The American archaeologist proposed that there was a small temple to Mars located under the apse of the basilica 1 (Maloney 1995, p. 452), but, as we have seen, there is not enough data to claim the functions of these structures. The ara proves the existence of a temple, but the only one that has been excavated to date is the one located in the south courtyard of the *villa*. Our proposal meets the assumptions made by Jeannine Lancha (Lancha, André 2000, p. 123) with the advantage of knowing a bit more about the conditions of discovery through documentation in the M.N.A.

The 1958 report is illustrated, among others, by a fragment of marble with a form of thumb (*ex-voto*? fragment of sculpture?), two iron axes and plows to Mars found in "side of the Eira". The only building plan before the American excavation was made in 1971 at the request of Fernando de Almeida (fig. 20).

Using this data, the only secure element is that, because of the use of a Roman votive ara for the construction of one of the rooms, it seems to be a late building, at least dating from a time when this ara would no longer have any significance. It cannot be dated before the 4th century or even the 5th century AD, which means this building is probably contemporary to the church.

4.2. American excavation data

Called the “northeast building” by the American excavations, it was cleaned and partially re-excavated in 1999 (Maloney 1999, 2000). The agreement between the plan carried out by this team and the team from 1971 is almost complete. We will return at this point to the numbering of the rooms taken by the American team.

The building was divided into two parts: “the hall complex” (main body) and “the courtyard complex” to the west. The study of structures of “the hall complex” shows that we are dealing with one single construction phase for this part of the building (Maloney 1999, p. 4). The quadrangular structure in the southwest corner of the central room of the main building (room XIII) was identified as a fireplace with few modifications during its period of use (Maloney 1999, p. 8) while the functions of the structures across the threshold were not identified. The foundations along the wall in the northeast corner of room XIII and along the western wall of room X, as were referred to in the 1971 plan, indeed suggest the existence of a “previous building on the site or that there was a change in the plan during the construction process” (Maloney 1999, p. 7).

The “courtyard complex” is constructed almost entirely the same way as the “hall complex”, showing one construction phase, except for the corner of aisle III with the latter complex which does not appear to be contemporary (Maloney 1999, p. 6). The “enigmatic” semicircular structures in rooms V and VI were excavated and found to be built of “stone of medium size and with earth”. The materials found were “ashes mixed with bones and fragments of burnt pottery” (Maloney 1999, p. 9). The authors believe that these two semicircles as well as the foundation under the fireplace of living room VI form an industrial structure with ovens and a workspace comparable with local architecture of the 19th century. In room I, the small part of the wall without a foundation looks newer (Maloney 1999, p. 10) and unrelated to the previous foundations of the remaining rooms. The wall that seems to close corridor VIII is clearly considered part of this construction phase and is undifferentiated as it was in the 1971 plan. The two small rectangular structures of rooms II and VI were identified as fireplaces. In 2000, the building walls that run east and south of it were excavated, probably revealing spaces for rubbish disposal or gardens (to the south).

Of the 10 coins found in the building, the oldest is an *antoninianus* of 268-270; the other nine date from the 4th century AD (Huffstot 2000, p. 592). Unfortunately we do not know in which exact spot they were found, but these coins refer to a construction not previous to the 4th century.

4.3. Conclusion on the southeast building of the church

This building was contemporary with the church²² and it may have been a residential house for the local clergy. Functions associated with a clerical school are also possible here. It could also be some kind of *xenodochium*, based on some similarities with the suburban annex to the basilica of Santa Eulalia of Merida, such as the high number of rooms, the presence of large courtyards and its proximity to the church.

5. Conclusions

5.1. Funerary zones (fig. 3)

The first burial area of the Torre de Palma is located 150 m north of the *villa* on the site called here “northwest cemetery”, which has graves dating from the mid-1st century AD until the 2nd century AD and probably from the 3rd and 4th centuries. The area that was excavated is small, considering that the total area would encompass the entire space where the church was later built. The “west mausoleum” probably dates from just before the construction of the basilica or contemporary to the first phase.

A second small funerary area in the site called “southwest cemetery” was used in an unknown, but probably later, phase to the first phase of the northwest cemetery, since the graves are located above Roman housing structures. Based on its formal characteristics, this burial area would have been utilized in an advanced stage of the basilica’s use, perhaps when it became integrated into a community space and/or even for a few years after the Muslim invasions. If the enclosure of the Basilica had its complete form as Jeannine Lancha suggests (Lancha, André 2000, pl. XXVIII), it would appear to have been necessary to restrict to a certain point the burials outside the basilica area. In fact, the graves that seem to be contemporary to the religious building (6th-7th centuries) are mainly confined to outside the premises (northwest and southwest cemeteries), except for some in the basilica and adjacent to it. The site was not fully excavated, so it is possible that there were more graves, but it is also probable that we are facing a rapidly abandoned space. It would only be a religious landmark many centuries later. The relationship between the chapel of S. Domingos and the Visigothic basilica may have

²² This building is dated by Jeannine Lancha end of the 4th century (365-392 AD), by comparisons to the constructive methods of the basilica (LANCHA, ANDRÉ 2000, p. 93).

more to do with a territorial circumscription by the Order of S. Domingos, perhaps based on a religious belief about the site (the chapel was constructed in exact alignment to the old basilica, indicating that it was still visible) rather than a real continuation of the cult, since there is a gap of five centuries between them.

5.2. Basilica

The construction of the basilica in the late 4th or early 5th century close to the northwest cemetery, used during the High and Late-Empire, shows that the origin of this building fits more within a funerary/martyrium context (privileged grave > mausoleum > church) than the evolution of a cultic building (pagan temple > church). However, we cannot exclude either of these two hypotheses. The Roman grave with padlock situated in front of apse 2, as interesting as its location is, tells us little about its importance during the construction of the basilica. If we are tempted to see a similar evolution to that of the basilica of Santa Eulalia of Merida, we have no texts or concrete data to suggest a particular venerated burial²³.

The problem with considering the basilica of Torre de Palma in a purely funerary/martyrium context in its first phase is the presence of the small baptismal pool in the room adjacent to the south of apse 1, which belongs to the initial design of the building. The practice of baptizing in a rural church in the 4th and 5th centuries is not surprising. At this time, the Church was in full expansion and yet still did not control the buildings on private land. We know, moreover, that it was possible for a rural priest to practice baptism and wait for the arrival of the bishop for the sacred anointing of the neophyte²⁴.

Nevertheless, the three functions — funerary (not necessarily martyrium), baptismal and eucharistic — may have been contemporaneous and have coexisted until the abandonment of the site. In fact, we observe from the 6th century AD the construction of a monumental baptistery, of the eucharistic worship by partitioning the sacred space with chancels, and perhaps of the martyr cult (acquisition of relics?) with the construction of the west wing of the basilica, with apse 4. The funerary character remained, since a great number of burials in the 6th and 7th centuries AD occur inside and outside the building. The precincts around the basilica may have had, as we have seen, functions prohibiting the

²³ The fact that the basilica of Santa Eulalia is in a suburban area unlike Torre de Palma does not prevent a comparison since the *villa* of Torre de Palma took on monumental proportions during Late Antiquity; it is often identified as a village or monastery.

²⁴ The Council of Elvira (early 4th century) refers to rural Christian communities probably organized in the best way possible by a deacon who can administer baptism (JORGE 2002, p. 102).

continuation of such burials so close to the church, revealing a change in the status of religious building.

Regarding the existence of a small baptismal pool since the beginning of the construction, we make the following proposal: a continuation of the cult of the waters in the form of baptism in a Christian context. As already stated by Jeannine Lancha (Lancha, André 2000, p. 32), the epigraphic data proving cults linked to water, and more specifically to the riverside of Avis, are not directly linked to Torre de Palma but were found a few kilometers from the *villa*. These include a votive inscription to the Nymphs (IRCP 569) that was gathered in the church of Santa Maria in Monforte and possibly the baths of Cabeço de Vide (Fronteira) and an inscription to *Fontanus* from Ervedal (IRCP 437). Therefore, the presence of a baptistery in this rural area may be justified as the Christianization of a pagan cult. If this hypothesis seems too bold, we cannot dismiss the importance of tanks, wells and aqueducts across the site of Torre de Palma, including in one of the rooms next to the baptistery. The easy access to water and the major works done to make the water reach the *villa* and the basilica, are without a doubt the most important component in the choice of building a baptistery. In fact, the water was always plentiful, even in the summer, thanks to its steady arrival through the fountain near the Furnas (Gorges 1979, p. 93).

However, it is not the only reason. Issues related to “influential power” among bishoprics or geopolitical reasons (López Quiroga 2005, p. 194) may also explain the rise of one church against another, since other sites with the same characteristics had not developed a religious building with baptismal service. Such is the case with Milreu, where the cult of the nymphs was evident and the Christianization of which also occurred around the 5th century AD. However, here there was no church building with a baptistery, perhaps because it was too close to the episcopal city of *Ossonoba*. Another example is the *villa* of Monte Cegonha, in the county of Vidigueira, which features a small (however late) baptismal pool in a room adjacent to the apse, but that does not seem to have received a mass population as happened in Torre de Palma.

Its various liturgical functions make the basilica of Torre de Palma a church with a vital impact at the local and even regional level. Locally, we still have to ascertain the type of occupation that the site must have had from the abandonment of the *villa* as a private residence (Chavarría Arnau 2007). Regardless of whether it was connected to a village (Lancha, André 2000, p. 41) or a monastery (Maloney 2000, p. 401), this church must have had an immeasurable influence on the local population. The construction of a winery during the 5th century met the need to export large quantities of wine, which represented great economic growth

for the local community. The expansion of the western baths at the same time seems to correspond to the demand of this same local community (Lancha, André 2000, p. 95). The existence of a cross engraved on top of a counterweight of the mill shows the invocation of the Christian God in the making of wine (Lancha, André 2000, p. 117), but it is not enough to consider the site a monastery. Such crosses could have had a more superstitious than properly consecrative function.

Through the study of Lancha (Lancha André 2000, pp. 29-34) on the geographical location of the *villa* and the settlement around it, it is known that its zone of influence would have been approximately a radius of 40 km, making it the largest rural site of the *civitates* of *Abelterium* and probably the *conventus emeritensis* or *conventus pacensis*²⁵. The numismatic findings (even though out of context), from the whole area, show diversity in the origin of the production centers and economic continuity between 1st and 5th centuries AD, but with a substantial increase of coins from the beginning of the 4th century coming from Rome and Arles (whose first coinage center opened in the year of 313)²⁶.

Since the basilica was implanted and grew shortly after the *villa* was abandoned as a private residence, it clearly shows a change of occupational status and type. Perhaps it was a property bought by a bishop (the seat of the bishopric of Merida?) or one that was made public, as happened frequently from the 6th century on the Iberian Peninsula, where communities of farmers focused around a former aristocratic *villa* (Chavarría Arnau 2007, p. 43). What seems clear is that there was a transfer of ownership, in which the location passed from a private domain of socio-economic importance (Imperial era) to an essentially religious domain and hence socio-economic one.

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²⁵ Although the French authors consider Torre de Palma on the grounds of *conventus pacensis* (LANCHA, ANDRÉ 2000, p. 123), there are no concrete data (i.e., epigraphic and archaeological) of such assignment, the place lying on the threshold of several *civitates* and two *conventus*.

²⁶ LANCHA, ANDRÉ 2000, p. 73. This same economic continuity is demonstrated in the study of coins found by the American team (HUFFSTOT 2000a, pp. 588-612).

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