

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

EVERYTHING IS FULL OF GODS:
REPRESENTING RELIGION AT THE EDGES OF EMPIRES

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JOE BONNI

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For my Dad, who always had more faith in me than I had in myself.

And who taught me to question everything...

...perhaps a little too well.

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ABSTRACT

Everything Is Full of Gods: Re-Presenting Religion at the Edges of Empire

Europos Dura was an ancient fortress city on the Euphrates River in modern Syria. Founded in 303 BCE as part of the growing, post-Alexandrian, Seleucid Empire, over the next 550 years, Europos fell from Macedonian, to Parthian, and then Roman control as it grew from a small fort (“dura” in Aramaic) protecting a river crossing, to a 50-hectare regional capital. In approximately 257 CE, the city was besieged and sacked by Sassanian forces who chose to abandon the city rather than re-populate it. Europos sat gathering sand for some 1,600 years until archaeologists rediscovered the site in the 1920s. Excavations lead by Yale University and the French Academy were conducted until 1937. In the 1980s, French excavations began at the site again and continued until the outbreak of the Syrian Civil War in 2011. Along with an unparalleled cache of Roman military documents, evidence of siege warfare (and chemical warfare), and almost two-dozen temples to Greco-Roman, Syrian and Mesopotamian gods, also uncovered was what is now recognized as the oldest extant Christian ritual space known archeologically. A small Christian temple – converted from a domestic space – was erected in the city during the third century, a period of chaos for the Roman Empire and also a period of on-again/off-again persecution of Christians by the Empire. The Christian temple at Europos not only bears evidence of an openly practicing and tolerated cult in the city, but in the construction of their ritual space, the architectural and artistic choices made by “Durene” Christians in their renovations of the building reveal considerable evidence of social interaction and integration of Christians at Europos with other Durenes in their daily life.

Originally conceived of as an investigation into why Christians at Europos chose to practice a religion frequently at odds with empire, and with the goal of determining if archaeological evidence at Europos provided enough resolution to reveal if the church community at Europos perhaps provided these early Christians tools of resistance (Comaroff 1985), or the conditions of possibility for resistance as articulated by Scott (1990, 2000), my research led me ultimately to another conclusion. Based on an analysis of the material culture of their ritual space, Durene Christians appear to have been well integrated into Durene society and well versed in local logics, customs and traditions regarding religion and ritual practice. Close and important social ties between Christians and other religious groups in Europos, and the Roman military garrisoned in the town, are revealed in the material remains at Europos as well as ties between Durene Christians and the history and religions of the oasis city of Palmyra, a nearby trading partner and sometimes Roman ally.

Stressing a shift to local/regional understandings of Christian practice and thick description rather than using categories constructed by theologians and religious historians long removed from the people and events studied, and questioning overarching categories (“Christianity”) that describe something so varied and diverse across space and time that it is too broad to be of much analytical use, this project provides a model for an anthropological archaeology and history of early Christianity.

Through a combination of evidence acquired through original excavations at Europos Dura in 2010 and extensive archival research at Yale and in Paris, I re-present Christianity in Europos as a localized, Syrian, Durene practice that need not be classified into any pre-existing Christian sects, factions or heresies, categories largely defined and shaped by later church fathers and centuries of religious discourse in the west.

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INTRODUCTION

On Easter Sunday of 2010 I found myself in Syria on the western bank of the Euphrates River standing among the remains of what is likely the oldest known example of a Christian temple¹ discovered by archaeologists. Excavated in the 1920s and 1930s by teams from France and Yale University, this Christian ritual space is one of almost two dozen temples that have been uncovered in the ancient, walled fortress-city of Europos Dura located in Salilhiye, a small agricultural town in southeastern Syria about 30 kilometers from the Iraqi border.

I was of course not visiting as pilgrim or believer but as an archaeologist. How and why both I and the temple came to be there, is, generally speaking, what the following pages will attempt to explain because both my presence there as an American archaeologist in Syria as well as the presence of a Christian temple constructed in a Roman city during the third century CE when Christianity was occasionally persecuted by the Empire are each curious events, epistemic even, made possible by very specific conditions of possibility.

¹ The Christian ritual space at Europos has been referred to as “The Christian Building” in Yale’s *Final Reports*, the “Christian Chapel” in much of Clark Hopkin’s writings (Hopkins was Yale’s director of excavations at Europos from 1931-1935 and wrote a general audience book on the site in 1979), and a “house church” in various literature, a common name used to describe the (often secreted) pre-Constantinian meeting places for the Cult of Christ. I will refrain from using the term “house church” in this work because, as I hope I will be made clear, the building in question, though originally a domestic space was converted to exclusively ritual and religious activities, was no longer a home, and was not secreted. The word ‘church’ alone is also problematic in that it is a Germanic derivation of the Greek terms for a “Lord’s House” (kyriakos oikos) or “congregation” (ekklesia) and so unlike ‘Synagogue’ or ‘Mithraeum’ (Greek and Latin respectively) terms used to describe the meeting places of worshippers of Yahweh and Mithras respectively, ‘church’ was not a term used by Christian worshippers at Europos and rather an appellation applied in the present. For simplicity’s sake and to avoid misapplying a modern name to the Christian ritual space which would not have been recognized by the worshippers themselves, I will generally refer to the building as a Christian ‘Temple’ derived from a generic Latin term for places of religious worship.

Early Christianity,² its histories and practices, long the domain of religious historians and theologians and generally interpreted through *textual evidence*, has rarely been examined through a practice-oriented study focused on local expressions of the evolving and competing forms of Christianity which existed in the first few centuries of the Common Era. The primary reason that earliest forms of the world's most followed religion³ have not been examined through an analysis and interpretation of *material evidence* is in large part because there isn't very much material to work with – early Christian material culture is, to oversimplify, difficult to differentiate from many other Mediterranean, imperial, ethnic and religious artifacts from the same era (Snyder 2003:1–4).

With these two concerns in mind – long-standing historical narratives of Christianity constructed by theologians and church authorities rarely challenged by archaeologists due to a lack of material culture to bolster or critique the claims of said narratives – this project seeks to explore and detail the relationships between early Christians, historically understood as a persecuted group in the Roman Empire before 309 CE, with other religious groups in Europos during the first half of the third century CE. Given that Europos possesses many of the earliest known artifacts and images that can reasonably ascribed to a Christian community, ample evidence will be presented to show that the Christian population at Europos were neither in hiding nor persecuted by Roman officials. All this towards the goal of adding to – if not correcting – some long-standing narratives of early Christianity.

A second goal of this work will be to offer evidence that the Christians at Europos resemble less the characterizations offered by so many religious scholars – a unique religious practice and

² Following Snyder (2003), “Early Christianity” in this thesis refers to pre-Constantinian Christianities, the first three centuries of the religion’s growth and movement throughout the Mediterranean before Constantine (reigned 306 CE – 337 CE) adopted the cult of Christ as his personal and then the Imperial religion of Rome in the early fourth century.

³ *The Future of World Religions: Population Growth Projections, 2010-2050*, Accessed March 2, 2017 <http://www.pewforum.org/2015/04/02/religious-projections-2010-2050/>

an outlier moral community within the Mediterranean (Stark 1997; Smith 1990:39–42) – and instead, show that the early Christian community there bore some striking resemblances to their neighbors. I share a view of early Christianity far closer to Jonathan Z. Smith’s claims in *Drudgery Divine* (1990), that early Christianity is a religion quite comparable to other Mediterranean religions of the period, rather than the efforts of social scientists like Rodney Stark (1997), who claim Christianity to be a unique set of religious and moral expressions by the time the Christians at Europos built their temple.⁴

Previous analyses of early Christian practice at Europos have attempted to reconstruct where the Christian population there might have come from, what sects of the various competing early Christianities Durene Christians belonged to or what year they might have first arrived in the city based on accounts in various early Christian texts often written long after the events they purport to chronicle and less than historically reliable (Kraeling 1935; Parker, Taylor, and Goodacre 1999; Joosten 2003). That is, a dominant question on the minds of many previous scholars investigating the Christian population at Europos has been where these Durene Christians fit in within religious historians’ established chronology and narratives of early Christianity.

I suggest instead, the Christian community at Europos is an entry point for a wider investigation, and an opportunity to rethink the category “early Christianity.” Centuries of arguments and analyses of texts, as well as doctrinal and theological questions have preoccupied the minds of modern researchers in search of a pure, unadulterated Christian practice before Rome’s adoption and adaptations. But such questions were likely of little import to Durene Christians in the third century. Further, as we will see throughout this work, there is little evidence

⁴ For a thorough discussion and critique of Stark’s *The Rise of Christianity: How the Obscure, Marginal Jesus Movement Became the Dominant Religious Force in the Western World in a Few Centuries* (1997), see *The Journal of Early Christian Studies*, Volume 6, Number 2, Summer (1998) which dedicated over 100 pages to critiques and reviews of the work.

that Durene Christians were attempting to reproduce some normative type of Mediterranean wide Christian practice (which arguably did not exist in the middle of the third century) but rather, Durene Christians looked to their neighbors, to local and regional forms of religious practice and logic when establishing their temple

Erected in the third century, a period of chaos for the Roman Empire and also a period of on-again/off-again persecution of Christians by the Empire, the Christian temple at Europos not only bears evidence of an openly practicing and tolerated cult in the city, but in the construction of their ritual space, the architectural and artistic choices made by Durene Christians reveal considerable evidence of social interaction with other religious communities in their daily life.

Europos Dura was an ancient fortress city on the Euphrates River in modern Syria founded in 303 BCE as part of the growing, post-Alexandrian, Seleucid Empire. Over the next 550 years, Europos fell from Macedonian to Parthian, and then Roman control as it grew from a small fort (“dura” in Aramaic) protecting a river crossing, to a 50-hectare regional capital. In approximately 257 CE, the city was besieged and sacked by Sassanian (Persia) forces who chose to abandon the city rather than re-populate it. Europos sat gathering sand for some 1,600 years. In the 1920s archaeologists rediscovered the site and excavations lead by Yale University and the French Academy were conducted until 1937. In the 1980s, the French began excavations at the site again until the outbreak of the Syrian Civil War in 2011. Along with an unparalleled cache of Roman military documents, evidence of siege warfare (and chemical warfare), and almost two-dozen temples to Greco-Roman, Syrian, and Mesopotamian gods – including the oldest known (and most decorated) Jewish Synagogue outside of Israel – also uncovered was what is now recognized as the oldest extant Christian ritual space known archaeologically: A small temple which, like the

Synagogue, a Mithraeum, and several other temples in the city, was converted from a domestic space to a ritual space.

While some researchers have suggested the city was in the throes of being “Romanized” at the time of its final conquest (Pierre Leriche, pers. comm., 2010), it is more accurate to suggest that for many people living in Europos during the third century CE, Europos was Roman in name only and thus many researchers have instead applied the unique appellation “Durene” to describe the result of a half millennium of cultural influences intersecting with one another in this near-forgotten regional capital (Leriche and Mackenzie 1996).

Originally conceived of as an investigation of how and why Christians at Europos chose to practice a religion frequently at odds with empire, and intending to determine if archaeological evidence at Europos provided enough resolution to reveal if the church community at Europos perhaps provided early Christians tools of resistance (c.f. Comaroff 1985) or the conditions of possibility for resistance as articulated by Scott (1990, 2000), my research led me ultimately to another conclusion. Based on an analysis of the material culture of their ritual space and comparison to other ritual spaces in the city, Durene Christians appear to have been well integrated into Durene society and well versed in local logics, customs and traditions regarding religion and ritual practice. This research revealed what I consider to be close and important social ties between Durene Christians, other religious groups in Europos, and the Roman military garrisoned in the town; and somewhat more widely, ties to the oasis city(-state) of Palmyra, a nearby trading partner and sometimes Roman ally.

Through a comparative analysis of the material culture found in this ancient city, including the art and architecture of the many temples and possibly associated domestic spaces,⁵ this

⁵ It has been suggested that the walled city of Europos was organized into ethnic enclaves or neighborhoods – and possibly religious ones as the two identities overlap considerably (P. Leriche, pers. comm., 2010)

investigation will attempt to unveil similarities and differences in ritual practice between Durene Christians and the numerous other religious groups in Europos during the third-century CE. Once some details of Christian practice at Europos have been established through an interpretation of the material evidence, they will be examined, contrasted and compared in light of long-standing narratives about early Christian practice in this era and region which have been constructed primarily from textual evidence. With evidence acquired through original excavations at Europos Dura in 2010 and extensive archival research at Yale and in Paris, I re-present Christianity in Europos as a localized version, a Syrian, Durene Christianity that need not be classified into any pre-existing Christian sects, factions or heresies manufactured through centuries of religious discourse in the west.

While a comparative project at heart, my focus, like so many anthropological projects examining colonial entanglements, is on the local. This project is at least in part an archaeology of marginalized peoples and a search for material remains which might permit us to focus less on how Europos fits into grand, classical narratives of antiquity (and early Christianity) but rather offer some detail regarding what daily and ritual life entailed in this specific, regional milieu.

Additionally, I am attempting to interpret and offer new narratives for an era, locale and people where long-established narratives, hewn with an ontological outlook immersed in Christian and western essentialism and universalism, have been widely accepted in many disciplines as scripture. Scholars have examined the Christian population of Europos in relation to the fragmented history of early Christianity in the third century, but not as a new and perhaps syncretized form of religious practice in the city. Further, the focus on just what type of Christians Durene Christians were, assumes Durene Christians were one of the various types of other early Christians as defined through historians primarily relying on texts and ancient dialogues. Such

evidence comes to us piece-meal and often long after the events being debated took place. Rather than asking, “Were the Christians of Europos adherents to Sabellianism, Monophysitism, or Gnosticism (or any of the other myriad -isms in Christian history)?” I will instead be asking about their position as civilians, soldiers, inhabitants of Europos, whose lives were likely deeply entangled in local traditions, imperial demands, and various forms of resistance, cooperation and ambivalence to and with local political pressures and other religious groups.

At Europos, researchers simply lack enough textual evidence to pursue arguments regarding which variation of early Christianity was favored there. But we do have some material evidence regarding how Christians there lived and practiced. The city is full of gods, or more accurately, the representations of gods built by people, who, in their everyday production of things “acquiesce, yet protest, reproduce, yet seek to transform their predicament (Comaroff 1985:1).” Over twenty unique temples have been uncovered at Europos (with only 25-percent of the city excavated to date) and yet, previous research of the Christian population at Europos attempts to place the Durene Christians in context with other early Mediterranean Christians – a diverse group about which we have limited knowledge – rather than within their local context, about which, I would argue, we know a great deal more.

One anticipated problem with a material-culture oriented interpretation of the relationship between Europos citizens generally and their Christian population specifically, is the disparities between the available datasets. The archaeological data come from three different excavation projects spanning the course of nearly a century with widely different methodological programs and research aims. As a result, the data suffer not only from typical biases of our discipline (trends in theoretical inclinations, financial limitations, the often arbitrary nature of preservation, etc.) but from epistemological limitations resulting not simply from religious bias but from a far thornier

set of dispositions and prejudices: the intersection of religion, academic research and modern nation-state building, a result of modern colonial entanglements in the Middle East beginning, arguably, with the lead up to World War I and ongoing today.

How were the data we have access to influenced by the fall of the Ottoman Empire, European Mandates, the Zionist movement, local uprisings and indigenous nationalisms in conflict with the West's goals of nation building? Goals based primarily on providing preferential access to natural resources by various victorious powers after World War I and not on local customs, traditions, histories and affinities. Are the archaeological data available any less ideologically (and/or theologically) determined than the textual evidence that so many researchers have relied upon in the past to build their narratives of early Christians?

The answer is, of course, "no." What artifacts and data early twentieth-century archaeologists selected to preserve, and what discursive limitations were in place at the time of discovery and interpretation are as problematic as the biases of preservation and validation of ancient religious texts. Rather than concerns of begging the question as regards the construction of Christian historicity, the data for this project contain biases, absences and assumptions linked to the goals of western colonial expansion, inextricably linked to the academy in the early twentieth century. "History," Trouillot (2015:22) said, "is always produced in a specific historical context. Historical actors are also narrators, and vice-versa." And indeed, this project must explore two sets of contexts and two sets of actors and narrators: the early to mid-third century in the Levant with its mix of ethnicities, soldiers and civilians who made Europos the city it was, and the modern academics and civil servants who excavated and interpreted the remains of Europos, attempting to speak for them in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

How then, can a comparative project, reflexive in the most traditional anthropological fashion, inclusive and sensitive to modern contested histories as well as ancient ones, excavate the excavators' evidence fruitfully? How might lessons learned from decades of post-colonial anthropological research and the work of historical archaeologists inform and advise interpreting the multiple archaeological reports produced over decades which will be in dialogue with one another for this project? These questions, along with teasing out some details of the lives of Durene Christians, will be confronted in the course of this work.

The rest of this Introduction offers a brief overview of the following chapters of the dissertation introducing the reader to some important definitions, terms and characters (historical and contemporary, fictional and non-) in order to set the stage for the rest of the story.

Because storytellers, in the final accounting, is what we are as anthropologists and archaeologists, a fact too often forgotten in the publish-or-perish pursuit of tenure tracks within an increasingly adjunct oriented and ever-corporatizing academe. This fact of the storytelling nature of our discipline is perhaps more easily recognized and rendered in the less semantically strict languages of German or French which elide the stark difference between “story” and “history,” a difference which English speakers take for granted. And that’s unfortunate. I believe the lack of precision in French and German encourages the reader to ascertain meaning through context – a concept that every twenty-first century anthropologist should be quite familiar with. There are stories obviously based on fables, myths, and impossible events. And there are stories grounded in solid data and time-tested theoretical interpretations of said data. This story is of the latter type, but unavoidably intertwined with the former, as stories about gods must be.

Without further ado, *eine Geschichte, une histoire...*

I. Theories: An Archaeology of Religion and Ritual

For the period of Late Antiquity, and in much of the archaeology of ancient civilizations, religion has generally not been proffered as an analytical tool with which to understand complex, colonial, social interaction. In the past, archaeologists have often classified “any artifact or feature that was strange, aberrant or inexplicable as religious” (Fogelin 2007: 59) reinforcing simultaneously that religious practice cannot be understood like other social practices and that ritual differs in a distinctive typological manner, primarily due to it not being a “functional” or utilitarian practice (Hodder 1983:164; Fogelin 2007:59).

But this problem of typology – seeking a genus for religion to fit into nicely and defining a set of characteristics to keep it safely away from other social practices of power (politics, law, science) is, per Asad, “a modern Western norm” (Asad 1993:28).

Religion is problematic to define because it is a coalesced social arena, an intersection of myriad social processes often fetishized as distinct by modern scholars having normalized and essentialized neoliberal, western notions of the necessity in western political (and some academic) discourse to separate “church and state.” So, religion is perhaps more accurately better defined – and redefined – under particular historical conditions. In *Religion and Empire: The Dynamics of Aztec and Inca Expansionism*, Conrad and Demarest (1984:5) observe that “in the modern world there are political and philosophical ideologies that are wholly divorced from religion” and of course proceed to point out that such a division was not the case for the subjects of their ethno-historical and archaeological investigation: native Mesoamerican and Andean civilizations. The same has been made eminently clear about the Roman Empire by religious studies professors (Horsley 2003), classicists (Ando 2008), art historians (Elsner 1998) and religious historians (Smith 1990). It is precisely because religion and politics are so intractably intertwined that an

archaeological exploration of one is bound to offer revelations about the other. Or perhaps a bit more ominously stated: It is impossible to “do” an archaeology of “just” religion due to the fact that the artifacts we interpret do not themselves make claims of being specifically “religious” or “political” or “domestic.” These categories are not uncovered or discovered in the screens of shifting but are instead categories constructed by the archaeologist herself, no doubt founded on a great deal of historical, ethnographic and other research but nevertheless, at best, useful approximations of how actors in the past conceived of and organized their worlds, and these interpretations are based in large part upon limited access to the material traces past actors have left behind. In truth archaeological reconstructions are part of an imaginary that can never escape being influenced by the needs, hypotheses and ontological and epistemological assumptions about the world possessed by those doing the research and not necessarily shared by those who broke the pots, built the altars and buried their dead centuries and millennia ago (Elsner 2012:12–15). This need not lead to some postmodern malaise of infinite uncertainty, but rather an opportunity and invitation to further discourse, to reveal stubborn epistemological blind spots and to resolve conflicts into new syntheses, particularly on topics as controversial and confusing as humanity’s relationship to religion through history.

It is exactly religion’s fluid and elastic character – propagandist for dominant powers, center of protest for subjugated groups, metaphors, myths and meditative transcendence for some, communal history and rules of social structure for others – that has made it both a murky arena for archaeologists to tread in and an intellectual battlefield particularly among social scientists. For William James religion was a personal, individual connection to something beyond that which science can explain (1902). Durkheim chafed at the idea that religion was either individualistic or inaccessible to the positivist and suggested that religion is the source of all human capacity to

categorize: the birth of science and society via ritual practice, prescriptions and proscription (1912). Geertz (1973a) tried to offer a universal systemization of religion; Asad deconstructed it, warning of western wishful thinking (Asad 1993); Riesebrodt offered a less famous but perhaps more utilitarian rescue of religion for the human sciences: religions and religious people have transhistorically and transculturally mutually recognized one other long before Western modernity (Riesebrodt 2003:21-25); and Rappaport (2010), most recently, picked up Durkheim's torch and has posited that religion alone of all human practices, ideologies, notions of cosmology – all and whatever religion might be – has the potential of allowing the human species to see itself as a collective on and beyond state, ethnicity, geography etc., as a species that must resolve its role as a part of nature lest it destroy itself. Indeed, all of these thinkers and more have justifiably condemned and resurrected religion as a useful topos in the social sciences.

For the moment, I can offer that this study will begin at the beginning, so to speak, and start with the assumption that Durkheim's, *The Elementary Forms of Religion* (1912), was indeed describing something *more* than just an historical category growing out of Western academic discourse (although it is that too). Religion is an eminently social practice which, as Riesebrodt (2003) suggested, is a relevant category of research because those who belong to a religious community are capable of both recognizing their own practitioners (due to special, sacred, marked events, proscriptions and prescriptions, etc.) as well as recognizing similar social phenomenon when practiced by others of different groups.

There are of course valid critiques of Durkheim's specific conclusions about religion, of the biases and epistemological limitations of the data available to him (largely a result of colonial practices and imperial adventures) and the appropriateness of his interpretations and conflation of modern indigenous people with "archaic" groups of the past. Indeed, the very historical causes

of his general project to “invent” Sociology will need to be considered: Much like the early archaeologists who excavated Europos, Durkheim too was immersed in epistemological and ontological assumptions (and debates) about religion. But, setting aside temporarily the limitations of Durkheim’s work, its utility – for this project especially – is that contra, for example, William James’ search for religion in the singular souls of men, religion, according to Durkheim is at its core a unified system of beliefs and practices which “explain not what is exceptional and abnormal but what is constant and regular” (Durkheim 1912:44). Per Riesbrodt, such social structuring, order and representations allow communities to recognize themselves and contrast themselves with other social groups. For archaeologists, this is important because we labor in the sandbox of sociality’s long-term, tangible, aggregated byproducts. Following this basic premise of Durkheim, I offer that a comparative analysis of the architecture and artifacts associated with ritual and religion can allow the archaeologist to recognize specific religious groups and then compare and contrast the “constant and regular” aspects of their lives with one another.

I offer in these introductory remarks regarding the construction and deconstruction of myriad theories regarding religion’s definitions, functions, utility, etc. – to suggest that in spite of the confusions and conflicts surrounding this most human practice, the debates themselves provide all which will be needed to build a useful definition of religion for this project.⁶ As this discourse continues I will attempt to align the always slightly misshapen lenses of theoreticians past and present in order to observe and analyze the material commonalities and differences between religious communities with a much higher resolution than any one lens might provide. Competing

⁶ Cf. James *The Variety of Religious Experience*, p25. “The field of religion being as wide as this, it is manifestly impossible that I should pretend to cover it. My lectures must be limited to a fraction of the subject. And, although it would indeed be foolish to set up an abstract definition of religion’s essence, and then proceed to defend that definition against all comers, yet this need not prevent me from taking my own narrow view of what religion shall consist in *for the purpose of these lectures.*”

theories about religion and ritual practice will be put in dialogue with the material remains of religious practice - their temples and ritual items (the latter of which are not nearly as clearly marked as the former) - with the goal of better understanding how these local communities internally cohere and compete while interacting with imperial power. Outlier religious communities in Roman Europos – Christians and Jews especially – will be given pride of place within this study due to historical narratives describing these communities as persecuted by, and resistant to, Imperial hegemony. In Christianity's case, its followers were sometimes considered religious at all – atheists even – by traditionalists within the Empire.

Religion, it would seem, has never been easy to define.

Nevertheless, a more detailed discussion, and working definition, of this analytical category will be provided in Chapter One. Drawing from over a century of inquiry into religion by social scientists, religion's utility for this project, and its inescapable connection to its perennial partner, ritual, will be detailed. Despite necessary post-colonial criticism of the construction of the category in the western academe and decades of deconstruction and reductionism (many recent attempts at defining religion rely too heavily on its relationship with the supernatural rather than its practice by real people (Riesebrodt 2010; Boyer 2001)), religions and their practice will be shown as revelatory categories as regards the relationship of Europos' early Christians to other Durenes, not the least of which were the Roman soldiers stationed there during the city's final decades.

II. On Dodgy Data

The conditions under which the archaeological data sets available to the modern researcher of Europos have been created are challenging.

In total, some forty seasons of excavations have been carried out by three different teams between the city's accidental rediscovery in 1920 and the cessation of excavations in 2011 due to the Syrian Civil War (along with a very heavy, single day of work by The University of Chicago's Oriental Institute founder, Henry Breasted – a team unto himself). As a result of the different methodologies used by excavators and researchers at Europos over the last century there exists an enormous amount of data with varying quality of provenience. The data sets are so disparate and, unfortunately, often lacking in even basic provenience information, that simply arranging the data of excavations spread out over almost a century has been a major preoccupation of at least two other researchers before me (Bossard-Couronné 2011; Baird 2006).

An “object register,” that is a simple typed spreadsheet of objects found at the site and some basic provenience information such as which building, which room, and perhaps some information on which corner of the room an object was found – south, north, etc. – was not even begun until 1931 after some five years of excavations conducted by two different teams had already taken place since the site's rediscovery.⁷

Efforts have been made to organize the poorly provenienced (but meticulously archived) data of the Yale excavations in order to answer questions posed by specific researchers but these efforts focused on only a subset of the data (domestic spaces for Baird; pre-Roman-conquest, polytheistic ritual spaces for Bossard-Couronné) and no attempt to synthesize these efforts with

⁷ The object register was not started by any of the lead excavators or researchers but by one of Yale's directors' wives, Susan Hopkins. Her recently published letters (Hopkins, Goldman, and Goldman 2011) offer a rare glimpse of a woman in the field in the early part of the 20th century and will inform Chapter Two's critique of Yale's work at Europos in the 1920s and '30s.

one another, or with the remainder of Yale's artefactual data not used in these researchers' work, or with data from later French excavations has been accomplished or even attempted. As discussed above, my project involves the comparison of space and objects across the site so the more robust tools at my disposal to assist in such an analysis, the less likely relevant patterns in the data are to go undetected. Thus, a synthesis of any accessible data and provenience information from each excavation is a necessary component of this project.

I have found it useful for this project to separate the work at Europos into four discrete research projects since 1920, ranging in length from one day to 30 years:

First, in March 1920 following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire after World War I, British troops operating in the Middle East bivouacked in a deserted ancient fortress and uncovered several ancient wall paintings. They quickly alerted European authorities. Approximately a month later the University of Chicago's James Henry Breasted, in Baghdad on business for the Oriental Institute (OI), made his way to the Syrian village of Salilhiye on the Euphrates where the ruins are located. Due to military concerns he was able to spend only one day at the site. He photographed several large paintings there *in situ*, discovered the name "Dura" in an inscription on a painting in the Temple of Bel, and in July of that year presented a nearly 150 page report to the French Academy (Breasted 1924).

Not bad for one day's work on site.

Then, in 1922 the French Academy of Inscriptions and Belles-Lettres dispatched Belgian scholar Franz Cumont to "Dura", under the protection of the French Military (who now had a military mandate in Syria). Two seasons of excavations under Cumont uncovered additional wall-art, coins, papyri and the second name of the city, "Europos."



Figure 1: Photo of mural in Temple to Bel taken by Breasted May 3, 1920. Black and white photo colorized based on Breasted's notes. Image: Oriental Institute

Political and military difficulties prevented excavations for several years but by 1928 the area was deemed safe again for research and Yale University joined with the French and excavated regularly until 1937 when global politics (the murmurings of World War II) and funding concerns brought an end to excavations.

Most recently, in 1986, Prof. Pierre Leriche, working with the Syrian Government (DGAM), *l'Ecole Normale Supérieure* (ENS) and CNRS, reopened excavations at Europos. After a lack of activity at the site of almost 50 years, the MFSED began a 30-year tenure. Due to the current political strife in Syria, the last excavation by the MFSED took place in spring of 2011 and the future of the site is now uncertain given the impact of the war on the region and the country and widespread looting of the site as a result of the conflict.

By June of 2014 over 3,000 looter's pits visible from satellite imagery and on-the-ground informants confirmed damage to structures there both ancient and modern, the extent of damage to the site cannot be overstated. A 2014 UNESCO report summarized:

The site has now been subjected to extensive looting; thousands of holes between 2 – 4m in diameter cover both the city and the surrounding necropolis outside the walls ... Reports estimated the holes to be approximately 3m deep in 2013, but 5 – 6m deep in 2014 ... possibly made using earth-moving equipment and drilling machinery which has also been reported on the site. The looting has caused severe damage to the necropolis and to buildings within the city, thus devastating the site. While the looting was initially attributed, at least in part, to the local people, the ongoing extensive looting has more recently been attributed to an armed gang of approximately 300 people (though some reports estimate closer to 1,000 people are involved), who are not thought to be Syrian ... The types of objects removed include wall frescos, tiles, pottery, glass, silver and bronze coins, stone statues and gold jewelry.⁸

Prof. Pierre Leriche, director of the *Mission Franco-Syrienne d'Europos-Doura* (MFSED) for some thirty years (a collaborative excavation at the site managed by *le Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique* (CNRS) in France and Syria's Directorate-General of Antiquities and Museums (DGAM)) managed to remain in contact with both officials from DGAM as well as locals in the town of Salilhiye where the site is located. With Syrian bureaucratic and economic infrastructures ineffective over the last few years, villagers, mostly farmers, sought out tools and other useful equipment. Some locals on the ground have also worked with DGAM to secure artifacts left in storage and in labs. And indeed, on the ground informants have provided photos showing the onsite museum destroyed, nearly every artifact that had been on display there now stolen.

From Breasted, Cumont, Yale and the MFSED come very different types of data, very different data sets in regards to both archaeological resolution and the various projects' goals. A closer examination of the limitations and opportunities of these data sets will follow in Chapter Two. For now, it is important to understand that both Baird and Bossard-Couronné designed highly detailed spreadsheets which include data on every known artifact mentioned in Yale's *Preliminary Reports*, *Final Reports* and the object register relevant to their research. In and of

⁸ *Dura Europos (Tell al-Salilhiye): Satellite-based Damage Assessment to Historical Sites in Syria*, Accessed September 14, 2016, http://unosat.web.cern.ch/unosat/unitar/downloads/chs/Dura_Europos.pdf

themselves these are remarkable and extremely useful documents, and the result of countless hours of work. But each researcher designed their spreadsheet in isolation from one another and furthermore these spreadsheets lack the ability to query data in complex manners as more robust database management systems do.⁹

Complicating matters further, the MFSED has no curated repository of artifact data. The MFSED had two major goals: first, the maintenance and protection of the site itself including salvage archaeology ahead of rehabilitation and restoration projects to preserve some of the monumental architecture at the site. Second, the MFSED aimed to finish and verify the work left unfinished by Yale including publishing several new *Final Reports* and numerous articles in several collected volumes over the last 30 years. Individual excavators were permitted to excavate using whatever methods best fit their investigation, from ground penetrating radar, to satellite imagery, to finely provenienced excavations. All such original data reside with the excavators, but not always the team (though copies of some excavation data reside at l'ENS in Paris), with the caveat that excavators invited to participate with the MFSED will publish their findings through the teams' collected volumes first. The result is that the best and most accurate information on artifactual finds by members of the MFSED isn't always found in spreadsheets or daybooks but through the periodic publications themselves.

⁹ There is currently no Database Management System (technically but rarely referred to as a DBMS by those working in Information Technology) which can both act as a digital repository of data (like the spreadsheets created, populated and used by my colleagues) but also is designed and formatted in such a way that a robust set of queries, comparisons, ordering of data, etc. can be carried out quickly and with minimal effort. Yale University has done considerable work making an image database of all objects and artifacts photographed by their team in the 19320s and '30s available both online and at their archives in Connecticut but by and large researchers have been left to their own devices in regards to organizing Yale's data and reconciling it with new data from the MFSED in order to run queries or searchers for patterns and outliers in the archaeological record.

III. A Brief History of Europos Dura (and its name(s))

Chapter Three explores the five-hundred-year history of the city with a particular focus on deconstructing imperial labels too often used in reductive manners. Such “lumping” can elide the diversity of the populations subsumed by typologies and are ineffective at parsing difference and diversity *within* said typologies. However, before delving into such a detailed history, a brief history of the half-millennium-plus life (and death) of Europos is necessary here at the outset of the project.

Il etait une fois...



Figure 2: 2001 aerial photo of Europos Dura facing southwest. The Euphrates flows at the bottom of the photo.
Image: MFSED

...there was a fort perched on a cliff at the edge of a plateau overlooking a vast plain while a great river flowed ceaselessly below.

The fort was ordered built in 303 BCE by General Seleucus I Nicator who, after Alexander the Great's death 20 years earlier, came to rule over much of Alexander's eastern Empire from the Indus River in the east to modern Syria where this fort, or *dura* in the local Semitic language of the region (Cumont 1926: xv), was located. While Seleucus never succeeded in reclaiming Macedonia as part of his Seleucid Empire – and in fact died while trying to do so – he did bequeath the name of his birthplace in northern Macedonia, *Europos*, to several settlements including this garrison guarding a river crossing on the Euphrates between his Mesopotamian and Levantine territories.¹⁰



Figure 3: Europos Dura: Near the border between modern day Syria and Iraq. Image: Google Maps

¹⁰ In addition to Europos Dura, the modern city of Carcamesh in Syria, and Rey, Iran, a suburb of Tehran, also bore the name of Seleucus' homeland, Europos.

The combined name “Europos Dura” or “Dura Europos” is a modern convention. The switch in nomenclature from “Dura Europos” – as the city has been called by researchers for almost 100 years – to “Europos Dura” is a recent trend in research on the city. “Europos,” the Hellenistic name attributed to the original fort and garrison by its Imperial founders and the Semitic “dura” both appear to have been used throughout Europos’ existence. Dura appears to have gained traction during the Roman occupation of the city in the late second and early third centuries CE. As a result, Professor Pierre Leriche, director of the Mission Franco-Syrienne d’Europos-Doura (MFSED) since the 1980s, has suggested that the city should be named in the order, chronologically, that the city was known to its contemporaries: “Europos,” first by its founders, then “Dura,” (fort) as it was called by regional populations that interacted with the growing garrison during Roman occupation (Bossard-Couronné 2011; Coqueugniot 2011; Leriche 2003; Leriche 2012).¹¹

The walled city of Europos stood 90 meters above the Euphrates on a cliff with a sheer drop over its eastern wall to the waters below. It was protected on its north and south by canyon-like wadis, dozens of meters deep and wide, cut into the plateau by year after year of brief but heavy seasonal rains running off into the Euphrates. To the west, outside the city’s main gate, lay an unobstructed view of the Syrian steppe. Damascus, 425 kilometers away west by southwest, was already over a millennium old.

During the second century BCE, almost 200 years after Europos was initially founded, this part of the Seleucid Empire was conquered by Persia’s Parthian Empire. Europos had by this time begun to grow beyond an initial plateau fortress and riverbank settlement further out onto the

¹¹ For consistency’s sake, we will refer to the city as “Europos” while using the traditional adjective “Durene” when describing various aspects of the city and its inhabitants (the other option, “Europoean” or “Europaioi,” as local Macedonians referred to themselves, would likely only confuse reader and author alike).

plateau. The original fort served as a citadel within an emerging walled city organized according to a Hippodamian plan. A large quarry had been excavated along the western side of the citadel which provided stone blocks for a nearly kilometer long wall stretching north to south between the wadis. The Parthian conquerors continued to develop the city along the Hellenistic orthogonal plan while allowing Macedonian noble families (or those who could make a strong enough claim to such ties) to maintain local political power (Leriche 2003; Leriche 2012).

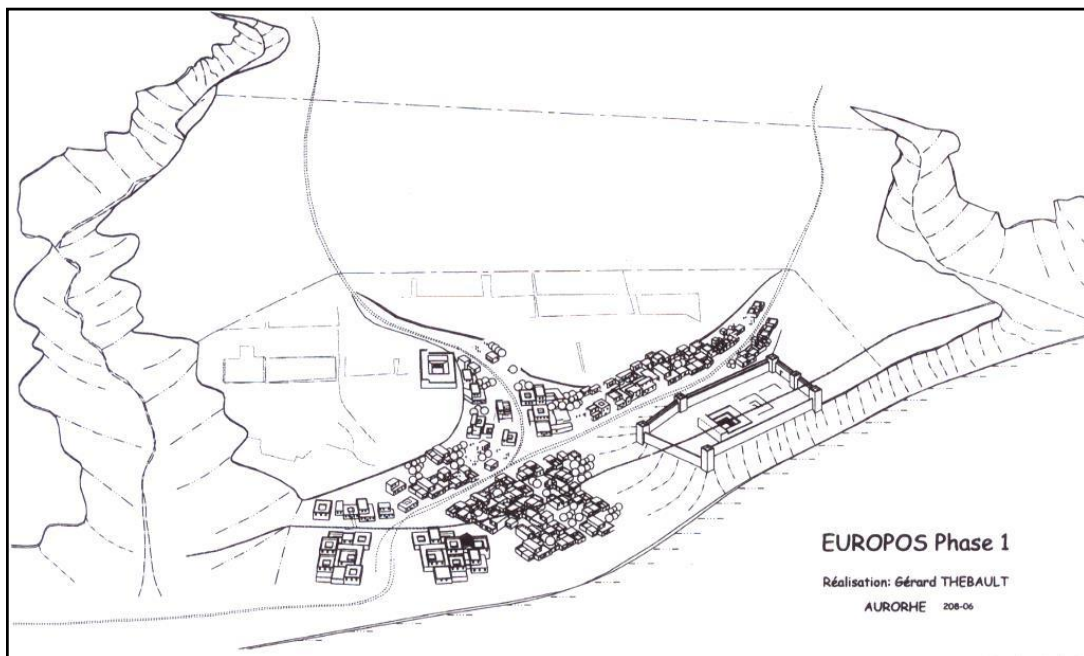


Figure 4: Europos as likely originally settled by the Seleucid Empire. The city would grow to occupy the whole of the plateau between the wadis left and right and a great wall would be constructed between them along the dotted line at the top of the sketch. View towards the west. Image: MFSED

By the beginning of the Common Era the Euphrates had become the default border between Persia and a rising Roman Empire and would remain so for the next several centuries. Not only did the river represent a bulwark against Persian incursions, but trade as far afield as China made its way through Syria in order to reach the Mediterranean. The “Silk Road” may be more myth and modern invention than a distinct and durable trading route in the past, but trade between east Asia and Rome was firmly established by the third century CE with nearby Palmyra a major stop

for caravans (Gawlikowski 1994; Millar 1998) and Europos situated near many of the major trading centers of Syria and Mesopotamia.¹² Rome occupied Europos briefly in the early second century CE under Trajan¹³ holding the city for only a few years before it was reclaimed by Parthian forces.¹⁴ However in 165 CE Rome pushed the Parthians back across the Euphrates and claimed Europos as its own. By ca. 210-220 CE, Rome had installed several thousand soldiers in Europos (James 2007) and converted the northern quarter of the city into a military camp, even building an internal wall within the city separating the military quarter from the rest of the city's thousands of inhabitants. Rome also appears to have allowed Macedonian nobles to continue to handle local affairs at Europos via the centuries old Greek form of democratic assembly, the *Boule*, which persisted during Rome's occupation (Leriche 2013; Edwell 2007:103; Cumont 1926:409). Rome's garrisoned forces at Europos were apparently little concerned with ruling the city – which after 400 years of settlement had become a regional capital – and were instead far more concerned with Persian incursions in the region.

And incur the Persians did. In 224 CE, the last Parthian king was killed during a period of internal strife in Persia. His vanquisher, Ardashir I, ruler over what is now modern Iran, founded the Sassanian Empire which would not only reunify Persia but would remain an important Imperial power in the region until the rise of Islam in the seventh century. Just twenty-five years after Ardashir's victory, his son Shapur I, marched across Roman Syria all the way to Antioch, just shy of the Mediterranean, sacking over three dozen Roman cities. It was during Shapur's return trip back to Persia in 256 CE that his troops sacked Europos building a siege camp which covered over

¹² The earliest known use of the term "Silk Road" is in the nineteenth century by a German geographer, von Richthofen (Ball 2002:156). Travelers like Marco Polo and Roman historians like Gibbon never named such a route and Ball (2002:137–9) insists the "Silk Road" is a "modern fabrication" (138).

¹³ Trajan built an arch to celebrate the occasion as he was wont to do and lucky for us he did or we may never have known about this brief Roman occupation.

¹⁴ In truth, Europos may not have been "reclaimed" as much as it was "returned" as Hadrian withdrew from parts of Mesopotamia after Trajan's death, the region being far too eastern and far too resistant to Roman control at the time.

three times the area of the city itself (Leriche, pers comm. 2014).¹⁵ With limited resources and no reinforcements to be had due to Shapur's campaign exhausting the Roman military in the region, Europos' Roman soldiers could not hold off the Sassanid troops. After a grueling siege which included frontal assaults, the construction of a siege ramp, sapping mines dug by the Persians with the goal of collapsing the western wall and its towers, counter mining by Roman soldiers, and perhaps the earliest known use of chemical warfare¹⁶ (James 2011), the last arrow finally flew. In 256 CE the Sassanid military succeeded in breaching the city's formidable defenses and took the city.

There was no wholesale slaughter.¹⁷

Europos had likely been held briefly by Sassanid troops a few years before the siege of 256 while the Roman garrison was involved in other maneuvers against more of Shapur's forces in the region. But even after Roman troops returned and retook the city, for many Durene citizens, the writing was on the wall and much of the civilian population had left the city by the time the siege began. When Shapur's troops came over the wall and entered Europos they likely found a civilian population only a fraction of the size it had been along with a beleaguered and abandoned Roman guard greatly reduced in numbers. For these unfortunate few a life of slavery was their probable fate (Baird 2006; James 1985).

Despite the majority of its fortifications remaining intact and its useful position on the Euphrates, Shapur ultimately decided to abandon the city rather than resettle it. Just one century

¹⁵ While in Paris at l'ENS, Leriche showed me a topographic map of the plateau on which Europos sits, drawn in one of the earlier MFSED seasons. Leriche explained that soundings and findings had been made in the area surrounding the walled city showing evidence of a Persian encampment least three times as large as the city itself and maybe five times as wide. To my knowledge there has been nothing published regarding these findings (Pers. comm., 2015).

¹⁶ It should be noted that James' hypothesis of the use of burning sulfur as a chemical weapon in the mines has not been accepted by the Director of excavations Pierre Leriche. James notes so in his 2011 article.

¹⁷ Or if there was the Sassanids cleaned up after themselves very well. But for a handful of bodies found in military towers and mines, no other human remains have been documented as excavated within the city walls.

later when the Roman emperor Julian led his own forces in the region (yet again against Persia) he came upon the deserted city and noted that Europos was now so empty and quiet that one could easily hunt deer within its walls.¹⁸ After Julian there has been only brief mention of the city in the annals of history: A Persian General of Shapur II mentioning a Christian ascetic living there perhaps in the 4th century (Cumont 1926:lxviii); the mounded sands mistakenly referred to as a famous tell, or an Arab outpost long forgotten (Hopkins 1979:4), and even as “the castle of Salihiyeh” (Bell 1911:80).

But there were always the sands. The Syrian steppe and its ceaseless sandstorms gradually burying the city for over 1,500 years, preserving the architecture of dozens of urban blocks, some buildings in their entirety, along with artefactual evidence representing every facet of Durene life from the quotidian to the tools and practice of siege warfare.

Most important for this study is that buried among Europos’ many buildings were several temples. This work will focus on one of the smallest and last built. Like many of the small temples that dotted the city, this temple had been converted from a former house and decorated with murals and an altar, the worshippers used Greek to write their texts and some inscriptions, the names of local worshippers were among the graffiti found on its walls, and the cult’s mythology included familiar stories: men born from gods, the apotheosis of a savior of the people, moral philosophy posed as puzzles. In so many ways the cult and its temple were rather unremarkable but perhaps for the deity worshipped. Christians – the followers of a relatively new eastern Mediterranean cult – gathered here. Christianity was a cult so new in fact that its temple at Europos is the oldest known example of a Christian temple in the world.¹⁹

¹⁸ Ammianus Marcellinus. *Rerum Gestarum*. 24.1.5

¹⁹ And one of only two archaeologically extant pre-Constantinian Christian ritual spaces – the other is in Aqba, Jordan (Parker 1998).

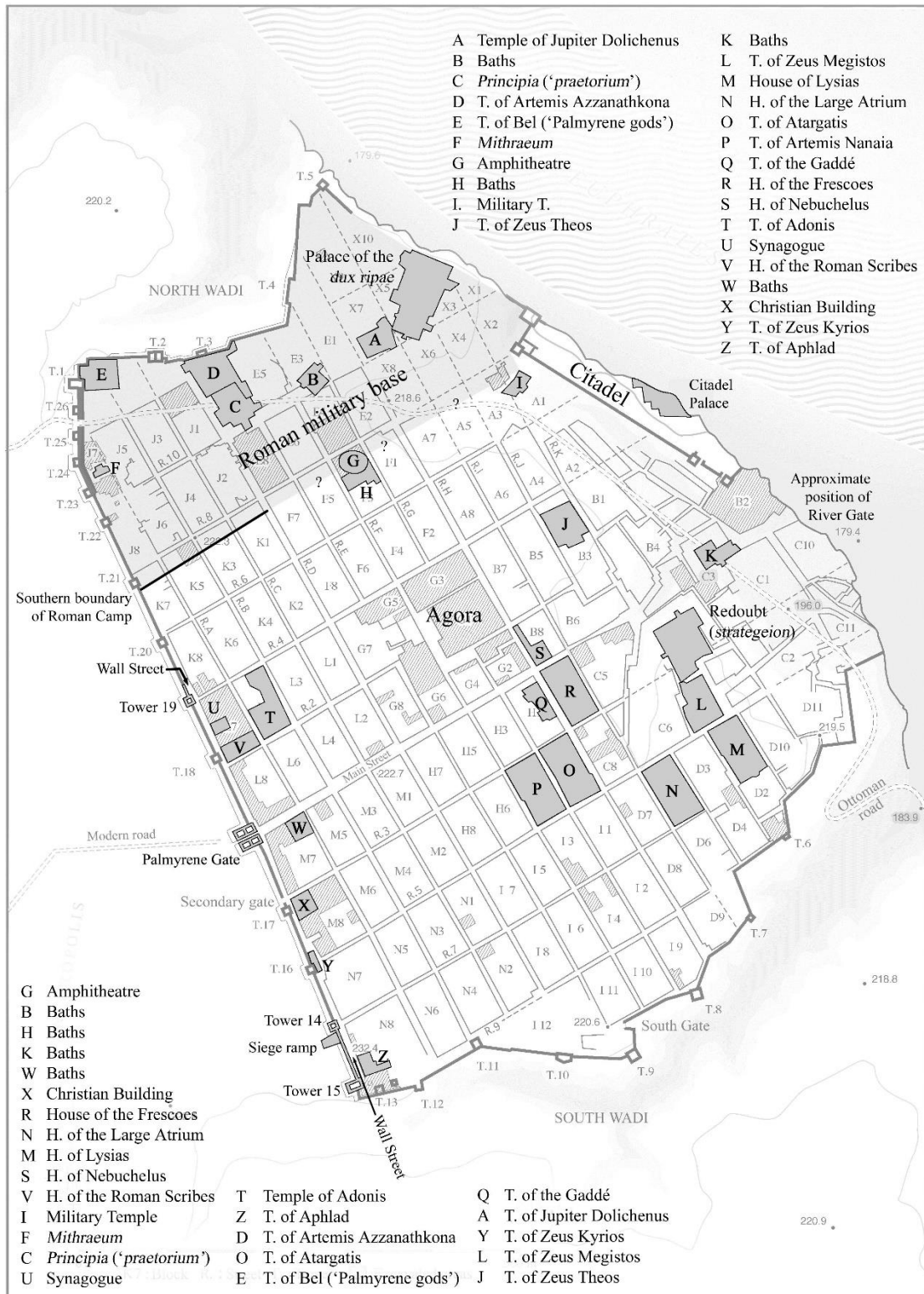


Figure 5: Europos Dura ca. 256 CE. A third century Roman military camp is highlighted at the top of the map and ritual spaces are noted. No compass was provided with the original image but the map is aligned with the top of page as North.

IV. This Old House Church & Other Others

With the various theoretical preoccupations of this project examined, and the artifactual and historical data and their associated problems thus discussed, I will show that the data can still serve to compare, contrast and describe ritual practices by the citizens of Europos. Most inhabitants of the city likely did not identify as Roman. Europos was home to several outlier communities within the Roman Empire including Christians, Jews, and indigenous Syrian ritual communities seen almost nowhere else in the Levant: e.g. the worshippers at the Temple to Azzanathkona a local Syrian Goddess often connected to the Greek Atargartis (or Dea Syriae as she was called by the Romans) and whose temple was preserved even though it sat in the middle of the portion of the town the Roman military commandeered.

My goal is not only to offer a more nuanced description of early Christian practice, but also to show how Europos was uniquely placed within the Empire to provide a safe haven of sorts for a cult that had been in conflict with the Empire in one manner or another for almost two centuries when they set up house on the Euphrates. Due to specific historical, geographical and imperial circumstances, Europos provided a heterogeneous, somewhat autonomous zone for outlier and otherwise marginalized groups to survive and even thrive, and we will see that the early Christian population there was perhaps not so dissimilar from its immediate neighbors in many ways.

Because the city of Europos endured for half a millennium, to call it “Roman” because that particular empire held it for its final century is to elide 400-plus years of its history and impose upon it a set of preconceived (if oft erroneous notions) of what a Roman society should look like. Europos was Greek (Macedonian and Seleucid), Persian (Parthian and Sassanian), Syrian (perpetually) and only for its final years Roman, an empire so vast in geography and history and so tolerant of foreign practices that the appellation often offers little insight into the practices and

beliefs of its subjects without grounding oneself first in period-specific, regional and local histories. We will return to the theme of the importance of regional, local and contextual understandings throughout this study. But for now, I hope to have impressed upon the reader that Europos was in many ways Roman in name only at the time of its fall and that the lives and identities of its inhabitants reflected the result of over 500 years of cultural exchange *between* empires and *with* local populations, inhabitants who, I argue, often did not necessarily recognize themselves as Imperial subjects regardless of which Imperial power laid temporary claim to the city.

Europos was a cultural crossroads where the Mediterranean met Mesopotamia. While imperial armies marched on one another in the region for centuries, the inhabitants of the city developed a particular set of cultural practices, importing, hybridizing and innovating the diverse traditions of religion, language, art and architecture, all of which arrived on a fairly regular basis with each new ascending imperial power.

Among these Durene practices we should include a religious tolerance that supersedes even Rome's general tolerance of the religions practiced in the lands the Empire conquered.²⁰ A walk along the city's western wall, the great wall which faced Palmyra, and further west Damascus, would reveal on its interior just along the alley that skirted the rampart, no less than seven temples. And while the Gods of Rome and Persia are represented by temples to Zeus and Bel respectively, so were two religions oft at odds with Rome (and later in history with each other): a Jewish

²⁰ Rome's tolerance – and even adoption – of alien religions had its limits. So long as the Empire did not see a religion as a political threat, it rarely interfered in local practices. Well known exceptions were Druidic practices in Celtic lands (Druids being both religious and political leaders who opposed Roman domination), and the Jewish people, particularly after the death of Roman's client king of Judea, Herod I. When Herod died and a tetrarchy replaced him, the new leadership could not quell internal divisions among Jews, and Rome's famous tolerance was nowhere to be seen as they quelled Jewish revolutions leading to the sacking of Jerusalem, the destruction of the Temple, Jews being exiled from Jerusalem and literally the wiping of Judea/Israel off the map by renaming the region as part of Syria (and the city of Jerusalem to Aelia Capitolina, after Emperor Hadrian - Aelia being part of his Roman name - and Rome itself (Capitoline Hill)).

Synagogue and a Christian Temple sat only a few blocks from one another each under the shadows of guard towers.

While this project is very much interested in “others” within this Imperial outpost and regional capital (like the Jewish population and the Syrian population that held onto their local Gods and temples despite Roman military occupation), the religious community at the center of this research will be the Christian population that called the city home, or more specifically, the archaeological remains of this unanticipated community: their temple.

In 230-256 CE, the period according to Yale during which the “House Church” was built, refurbished and occupied by Christians, Christianity was perhaps more at odds with Roman leadership than at any time before Constantine fully legalized and embraced the religion in the fourth century. It is this historical fact that has moved me as a researcher to focus on exploring what conditions of possibility allowed for the not-quite-criminal-but-more-than-curious Christian population to build and use a ritual space in the walls of an Imperial city while elsewhere in the Empire this cult had been intermittently and irregularly persecuted. Ample evidence will be presented to show that the Christians were not secreted away at Europos and must have been tolerated for at least several decades in Europos. But in preparation for the detailed discussion of the Christian temple later in this dissertation, first, a brief history of renovations and revelations.

Initially used as a private residence, the Christian temple, or “House Church” as it was called by Yale’s excavators, was originally constructed ca. 232 CE as a typical Durene home and then likely converted to strictly cultic use in the beginning half of the next decade (ca. 240-5) (Fin. Rep. 8.2: 38-9).²¹ It sat on the corner of a typical residential block along the city’s western wall

²¹ The majority of claims about the construction and renovation of the building that would ultimately become the Christian Temple comes from Kraeling’s *The Excavations at Dura-Europos. Final Report. Volume VIII, part 2* (1967). His almost obsessive analysis of the mixed bag of data and details provided by Yale along with an opportunity to excavate at the site myself and peruse the original notes and photographs that were at Kraeling’s disposal (at Yale’s

under a Roman guard tower. Architecturally an amalgam of local, Parthian and Hellenistic elements (Baird 2006: 90), the House Church followed the model of a typical Durene household, comprised of a non-descript central open-air courtyard with several rooms of different size and function leading off it and a single entrance to the building (figure 6). At some point ca. 240 extensive renovations took place including the construction of a windowless room with extensive murals and a colonnaded basin, and a large assembly hall capable of holding approximately 75 people comfortably.

Leriche has argued that even after the extensive architectural changes the building could still have had a multifunctional use as both domicile and ritual space (pers. comm. 2010). A lack of artifactual evidence in most Durene households due to the evacuation of most citizen residents before the final battle in 256 CE (and the assumptive looting of the city by Persians after a possible brief military occupation) along with a lack of strict provenience of what artifacts did remain, due to Yale's less than precise handling of quotidian artifacts in their expeditions in the 1920s and '30s, makes a functional analysis of the building based on artifact finds difficult (though not wholly impossible, *See* Baird 2006). Therefore, to a great degree architectural analysis will be my primary archaeological argument for this building's use as exclusively cultic after ca. 240 CE

The mortared and tiled basin – identified by Yale as a baptismal font – sat in a decorated and colonnaded alcove at the western end of the small rectangular windowless room. The walls were painted with murals including images from the Old and New Testament. Narrative Christian art would not arrive until after Constantine (Snyder 2003:13) but these images are the oldest extant collection of images representing events and characters from the Old and New Testament (and

archives) when he wrote the Report lead me to generally agree with his dating chronology and interpretations regarding the construction and renovation of the building. Some critiques and concerns with his interpretations will be offered in the latter half of this dissertation.

non-canonical early Christian texts) displayed in the same room together.²² Ritual purification by water did not originate with Christians but by all accounts baptism was a primary sacrament of early Christians (Smith 1990; Milavec 2003) and a room dedicated to the ritual speaks to its importance.

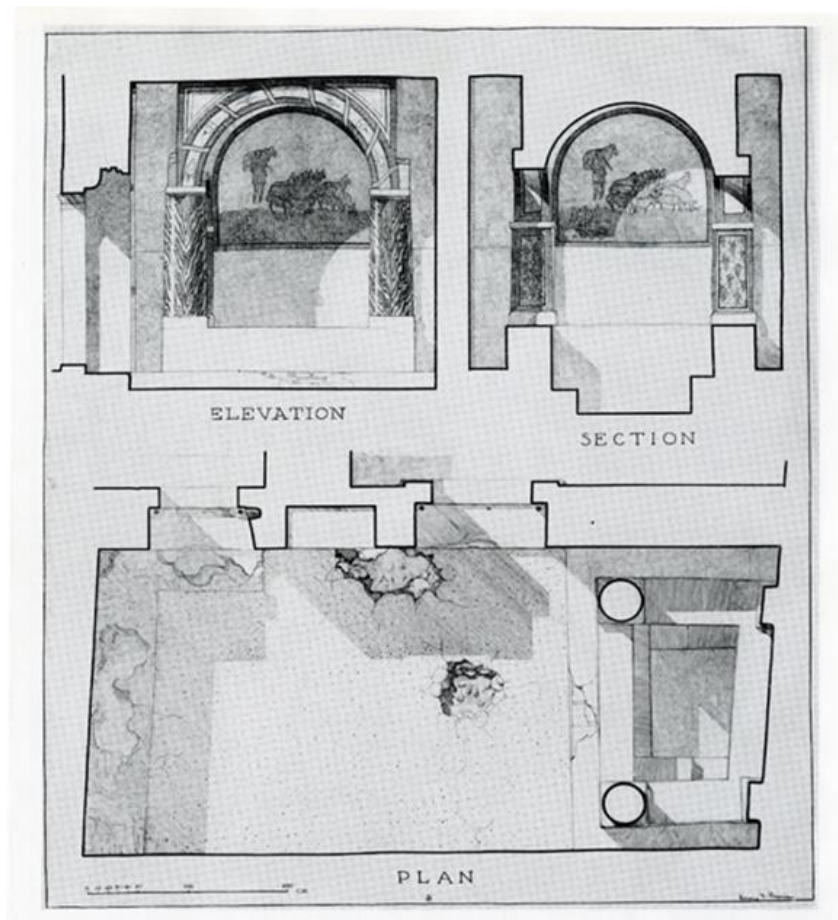
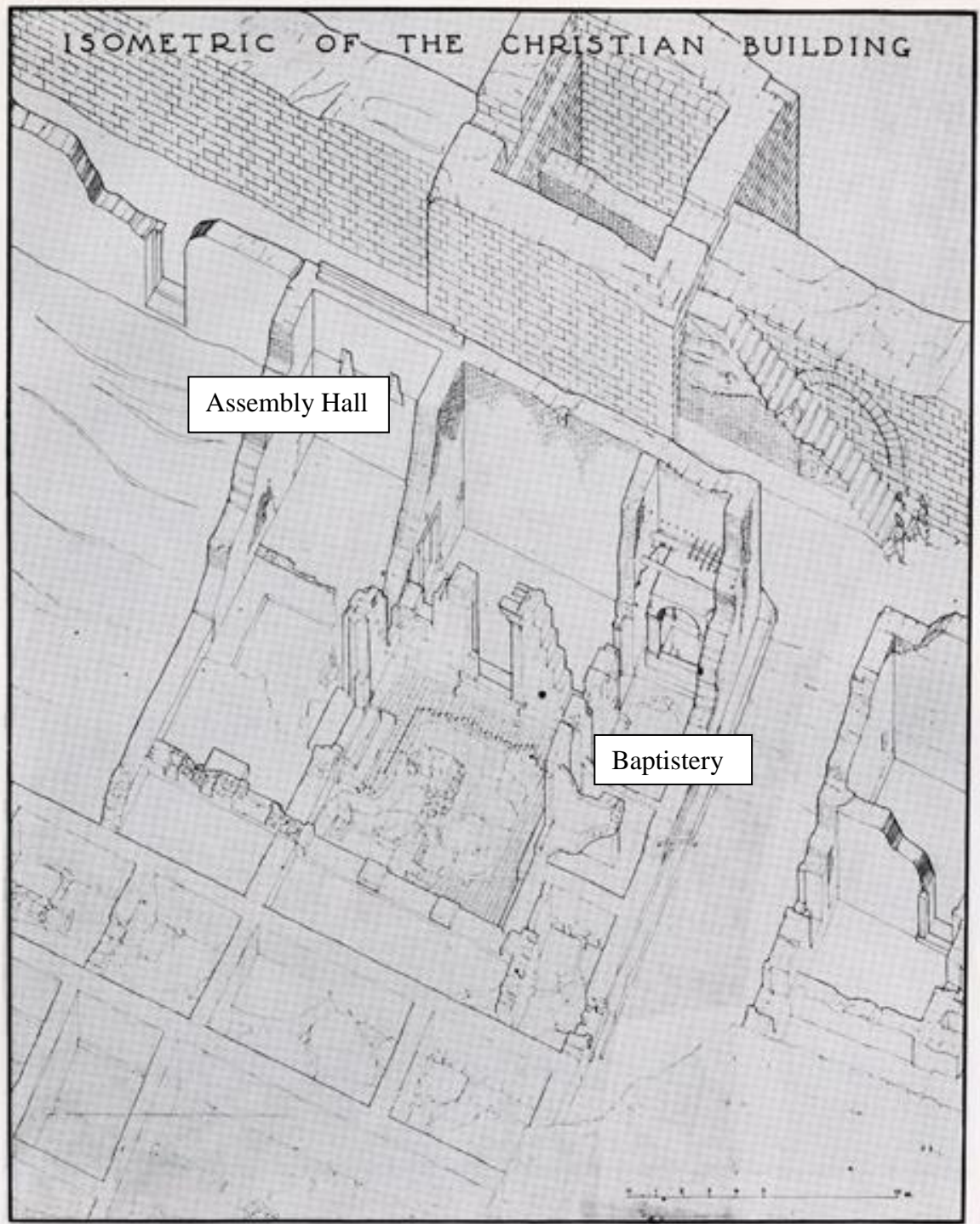


Figure 6 - Christian Building, Baptistry, Plan and Sectional Elevations.
Image by Pearson for Yale. Fin. Rep. 8.2

²² By “narrative art” I follow here the lead of Snyder (2003: 24), “Pictorial representations are not narratives. Attempts to read them as biblical stories will normally fail. Biblical illustrations or narrative art first appeared after Constantine (Bisconti, 1982 739-740).” Bisconti, Snyder and Weitzmann (1957) all work from the presumption that “narrative art” must relate to specific literature or “book art” (Weitzman 1957: 91). That is the art must depict the events from a known piece of literature. As there is no established liturgy, New Testament, or other codified Christian texts during the middle of the third century, Snyder prefers to call these images at the Christian Temple, “symbols” (2003: 24) out of an excess of cautions to prevent one from attempting to assign the images to literary (and specifically liturgical) narratives. It is not known which of the dozens of gospels and other early Christian writings Durene Christians drew from for their mural project, however we do see representations of non-canonical literature of which there is no ur-version and quite literally cannot be interpreted as narrative because researchers cannot be sure exactly what is being narrated. I find Snyder’s use of “symbol” problematic as these images are not entirely arbitrary as symbols are described in Peircean semiotics, but rather more akin to indexes or icons to the initiated, referencing a story familiar to initiates even if it has no canonical or final form during the third century.



CHRISTIAN BUILDING, ISOMETRIC PROJECTION OF EXTANT REMAINS (PEARSON)

Figure 7: Isometric Projection of Extant Remains of Christian Building. Image YUAG (artist H. Pearson). Note location of Guard Tower directly behind Church.

The economic and symbolic investment of installing the baptistery, the likely use of local artists and artisans for the murals, paintings and renovations, the demolition and reconstruction of large parts of the building (including tiling the courtyard and constructing benches on the *outside* of the building), and all this taking place directly under a military tower, suggest that the community using this building was hardly hiding from Imperial persecution in the city. Additionally, the conversion from residential space to a central location for cultic practice was also not uncommon in Europolis. A Jewish Synagogue, a Mithraeum and other temples in Europolis bear evidence of similar conversion.

The art and architecture in the Christian temple speak to ties to the local. The Christian temple possessed, of course, distinct evidence of its Christian community: the baptistery with a small bath-like font, walls covered with murals possessing the earliest known representation of images from Christian literature and the Hebrew Bible in the same room, and a fragment of a harmony gospel²³ was found at Europolis as well. But the art, artifacts and architecture all bore considerable evidence of emulating local, normative traditions and styles used in the construction of ritual spaces throughout Europolis (there is also a considerable homogeneity in domestic architecture leading researchers to prefer “Durene” to describe these styles rather than Greco-Roman, Mesopotamian, Babylonian, etc.).

This project is, at least in part, an archaeology of imperialism as practiced through the establishment and annexing of colonial territories; of marginalized and subjugated peoples; of countercultural practices; a search for material remains which will allow us to see not so much what daily life was like in eastern Rome in the third century CE – as vague as asking what life is

²³ A harmony gospel is a non-canonical gospel that combines the stories of the four canonical gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, into a single narrative omitting repetitions of the same stories. Tatian’s Diatessaron, was one of the most popular harmony gospels and one of most widely used Christian texts in Syria during the second and third century. There is strong evidence the parchment found at Europolis was from a Greek copy of the work.

like in the twenty-first century in the US or Europe – but rather what life was like for certain groups of people in a particular milieu. We are not searching for groups bounded necessarily by concepts of race, ethnicity, or nationality – these terms possess somewhat different meanings and perhaps even a lack of precision in Antiquity as compared to their (often equally problematic) use in modern anthropological investigations of counter- and sub-cultural practices. Instead, this project seeks to understand what sorts of material differences and commonalities existed in Europos between citizens of different religious affiliations, and if these differences can reveal new understandings of early Christian practice – long assumed to be marginalized and counter to Imperial Roman religious practice. Additionally, such an anthropological investigation offers the opportunity to contribute to the study of the history and development of early Christianity, a project long dominated by theologians, religious historians, philologists and textual evidence, but not oft trod by anthropological archaeologists. A comparative method allows us to develop a discourse of differences within a specific set of historical and cultural contexts (Smith 1990:42). Europos, with almost 20 temples representing over a dozen religious practices from the Mediterranean, Middle East and Persia offers a rich field for such analysis.²⁴

It is my contention that studying ritual spaces in a city as diverse as Europos is to study places where many local inhabitants reified and recognized local affiliations and notions of identity. While there was indeed a Mithraeum for Roman Imperial troops, and no shortage of widely recognized Greco-Roman deities that exemplify religion's ability to extend imperial messages/propaganda to the general population, there are also numerous spaces that suggest ritual

²⁴ It should be noted that only about 25% of Europos has been excavated. In the last few field seasons a small temple to Zeus and a second to Bel were discovered and confirmed respectively (Pers. Comm. Leriche, 2013) in areas that had already been excavated by Yale but not noted at the time bringing the total of known ritual spaces in Europos to 21. While suggesting that if excavating 25% of the site reveals more than 20 ritual spaces, the entire site might contain over 75 is tempting, it may also be folly in that the Yale expedition no doubt focused on revealing monumental and ritual architecture, the artifacts of such spaces making excellent prizes for their financial and academic supporters back in Europe and the US – another topic of which we will look at more closely in Chapter Two.

spaces were also used to at least remember, recognize and reify identities of a more local, familial and regional type – if not to contest imperial power in the city; Identities built less from recognizing oneself as belonging to an Empire but more so built through a recognition of needing to negotiate with Imperial Power. While there is no shortage of academic assertions of the role that religion can play in establishing hegemony over a newly subjugated people, this project aims to build a flexible and reciprocal notion of what religion and ritual can do not only by extending imperial power but also to resist it in order to remember and re-create social practices and beliefs outside the norms and demands of the imperium.

V. The Colonialism of Archaeology & an Archaeology of Colonialism

The penultimate chapter of this dissertation is dedicated to an analysis not only of the Christian Temple and what it might reveal to us about the early Christians living in Europos, but of several ritual spaces and what their art, architecture and artifacts compared both to one another and to some domestic spaces – the “neighborhoods” surrounding these temples – might tell us about the interactions between these outsiders and other religious groups in the City.

Unfortunately, the archaeological record is not an objective record that we dig up. It too is a cultural construction (Baird 2006:44). As such, much of the data are incomplete and therefore a selective collection of material remains from several ancient Imperial projects. Similarly, the archaeological projects themselves were part of modern colonial and imperial adventures in the Middle East with assemblages acquired through a conflation of political, religious and academic goals which have confronted archaeologists working in the region for well over a century.

When Dr. Pierre Leriche first met with the Syrian Department of Antiquities in the early 1980s to re-open excavations at Europos, one of the first concerns expressed by Syrian authorities was what the focus of this new project would be. Syrian researchers had concerns about the *Final Reports* of the Yale excavations. Not in regards to the accuracy or quality of the work done in the 1920s and ‘30s, but in regards to which topics Yale prized:²⁵ despite uncovering hundreds of buildings, and countless artifacts, nearly 1/3 of the approximately 2,000 pages of the *Final Reports* published by Yale between 1938 and 1968 focused on just two buildings: the Christian temple and the Jewish Synagogue.

The murals from the Synagogue at Europos are held in the National Museum of Damascus, a result of the *partage* agreement between Yale and Syria. They are housed in a dedicated wing,

²⁵ Pers. Communication, Leriche 2010

a reconstruction of the synagogue itself. In 2010 when I visited the museum a guard stopped me before I entered the synagogue wing and asked, “What country are you from?”

These two anecdotes, Leriche’s need to persuade Syrian officials that this would not be another effort on the part of Europeans to seek their own history in the Middle East and my need to prove to the Museum Guard that I was not Israeli (the point of my being asked where I was from), reveal some of the research preoccupations and predilections of the various parties involved in the excavations of Europos over the decades. They are offered here as brief examples highlighting the necessity that my project be in part a postcolonial critique of “the unequal and uneven forces of cultural presentation in the contest for sociopolitical authority within the current world order” (Meskell 1998). And for this project, it is not only in administrators’ offices and museum wings where the politics of presentation are to be found, but in the archives themselves.

As Nadia Abu el Haj pointed out in *Facts on the Ground*, archaeology, particularly in the Middle East, functions as a “cardinal institutional location of the ongoing practice of colonial nationhood, producing facts through which historical-national claims, territorial transformations, heritage objects, and historicities ‘happen’” (Abu El-Haj 2001:6). While Abu el Haj focused on issues of national identity, state-making, and the construction of social imagination and historical claims to sovereignty in Israeli archaeology today, what she describes has a long history in Middle Eastern archaeology writ-large. Consider this passage from a letter written by Henry Breasted in 1919 to his son Charles:

The number of educated Egyptians who can appreciate such things [Egyptian artifacts] is an insignificant handful, while on the other hand, as our birthright and inheritance from the past, Egypt can be a wonderful educational influence in civilized lands of the West. (In Emberling 2010:11)

These assumptions are not Breasted’s alone. Franz Cumont, Claude Hopkins and other researchers involved in the earliest excavations of Europos-Dura shared Breasted’s notion that it

is was the West's right to determine who holds the artifacts from the region, and to whose history they belonged. Specific religious and political agendas affected the research methods, goals and interpretations made by these men (almost always men) as they constructed the very data that modern scholars still find themselves working with today. In an analysis of the data we are once again concerned with regimes of power but this time, not the power of an Imperial military as in Europos, but of a more Foucauldian sense of power, the power of Colonial epistemology – the power to “name, classify, domesticate [which] doubles as the means to obliterate, silence and negate other histories and ways of dwelling in the same space” (Meskell 1998:5). Bernard Cohn (Cohn 1996: 77) observed the same construction of value by the British in regards to India, as British colonizers, created a system of classification which determined what was valuable, that which would be preserved as monuments of the past, that which was collected and placed in museums...” In Victorian ethnography and literature, Said (1993) shows that during imperial rule colonizers have the ability to create the narrative of colonialism and empire, to hegemonize. The early twentieth century archaeologists that excavated Europos were but a generation removed and the inheritors and new torch-bearers of such hegemony.

Any engagement with data from excavations in the Middle East must acknowledge contested and overlapping, modern and ancient histories. It must avail itself of both the personal archives of the researchers as well as the data produced by them in its earliest and most raw forms. The archives themselves become a series of archaeological sites, each to be excavated and interpreted with a historical awareness of the political and epistemological limitations of each project. The goal is not inherently a negative one, but rather to provide an “aware, responsible and engaged global archaeology” with the potential to be a “relevant positive force which recognizes and celebrates difference, diversity and *real* multivocality” (Meskell 1998: 5). The practitioners

of archaeology at Europos Dura have been entangled for decades in colonial and post-colonial politics, as well as influenced by the dominant narratives of classicists and theologians who have long claimed the authority to distill the past into a story that supports and validates a wide range of modern religious institutions and Western ideologies seeking affinity to Rome and its imagined ideals. Thus, there is a recursive nature to this project, no doubt influenced by a revisiting of Antiquity by a growing number of anthropological archaeologists who recognize that the very past we study has in many ways already shaped the discourse of how we will investigate and interpret it. Modern consciousness “has been in a sense colonized by the ancient Greeks and Romans” (Dietler 2010:3). The stakes and complications of this reality and how they have affected the data available on Europos will become evident (and unavoidable) in later sections of this dissertation. And in the final act of this story, we will necessarily review the state of the civil war in Syria and the current condition of its heritage sites.

CHAPTER 1

RITUAL : RELIGION :: PRACTICE : THEORY

“Like every other human institution, religion begins nowhere and yet permeates social life so that as Thales noted, ‘Everything is full of Gods’.” (Durkheim 1912:7)

On January 4, 2011 former Fox News commentator Bill O’Reilly invited the president of the American Atheists, Dave Silverman, to debate the existence of God on his show *The O’Reilly Factor*. At one point in their discussion, O’Reilly, arguing against Silverman’s position that all religions are “scams,” made the claim that the persistence and regularity of the tide could not be explained without divine intervention.

“The water, the tide – it comes in and it goes out ... You can’t explain that. You can’t explain it,”¹ O’Reilly opined to a baffled Silverman.

This chapter will not propose that religions are either scams or responsible for the tides but instead, that the ideas, people and practices that are categorized as religious have always been culturally and historically determined, and difficult to universalize.

In Antiquity, religion, as conceived, constructed and practiced by the diverse cultures in the Mediterranean for millennia, was a synthesis of what we today problematically segregate as religious and secular ways of being in the world. Religion was then, at the very least, a thread that wound through nearly every aspect of social and individual life. Most important for this project, in the period under investigation, religion and religious communities played a prominent role in political and social organization.

For example, at Euopos, Roman Mystery Cults were private secret societies, generally preferred by Roman troops and other Roman inhabitants in the city (that is, those citizens and their

¹ He really said that. <https://youtu.be/ZzkRHF12ppw>

families who immigrated into the city during the second and third centuries as Rome's presence on the border between Rome and Persia increased during this era). Perhaps akin to fraternal orders today, Mystery Cult initiations and ongoing participation within the religious community marked individuals as belonging to a local group who generally shared social status (or aspirations for such status) as well as ethical and moral beliefs represented and reiterated through ritual practice.

Besides Mystery Cults, the worship of regional deities in Europos helped bring dispersed groups together. Frequently in Europos, immigrants into the city from Palmyra, other parts of Syria, and other Middle Eastern and Persian origins, built temples to their homeland, and sometimes even hometown,² deities. Durenes used such spaces and performed rituals therein for reasons ranging from Durkheimian preservation of their group's (ethnic) shared practices and preferences, to claims of status and power within the city. Europos, from its conception a city of both outsiders and locals, possessed an ongoing and ever-increasing diversity of cultures within its walls, and their gods too.

As an analytical category, religion's definition is conceptual and historically contingent. And as problematic as any universalizing definition of the category might be, to the archaeologist's advantage, the evidence of religions practiced in the past is quite material. Art, architecture, texts, any number of common items (lamps, candles, oils, water, bowls, etc.) sacralized or dedicated to deities and ritual practices, all these tools and techniques, these material things are what archaeologists must concern themselves when speaking about the religions of past peoples.

However, determining whether an artifact is a ritual one or not, part of a civic ritual or a religious one, and what, if any, salient differences there are between such rituals, returns us to a problem of definition once again: If identifying religion is wiggly at best, how can one identify

² See Chapter Four for details on several Mystery Cults and regional/local deities known to have persevered in Europos.

ritual artifacts, those items pertaining to the practice of definition-resistant religion? Archaeologists concerned with religion's material traces can only truck with the remains of ritual practice but how do we categorize artifacts as sacred, as part of a practice with religious meaning? And what is the goal, the utility of such an investigation at this site?

Instead of universalizing traits or using appeals to the supernatural, I will build a case in this chapter that posits religion as more akin to language, most usefully conceived of as a human capacity and necessity to order the world and make sense of one's place in it, both the observed world and that which is not objectively or sensorially observable. This latter unobservable, subjective or phenomenological world is most often referred to as, "supernatural." But that word is overripe with preconceptions. Choosing to replace it with for example, "Culturally Postulated Super Human Agents" as proffered by McCauley and Lawson (2002:8), still conflates religion with the non-material and imaginary. I propose, as many have before me from Durkheim (Durkheim 1912) to Rappaport (Rappaport 2010), that rather than the supernatural, religion is manifested in and concerned with the material and the real, as well as ideas, events and experiences which can't be objectively measured, experiences which nevertheless affect and impinge upon human actions in, and conceptions about, the world we live and die in. Religion incorporates both a way of knowing and a way of doing, which draws from, and influences, some spheres of knowledge and practice more than others, from culture to culture, and across time.

I will detail below my conception of religion as ontology, and as a category admittedly (ill) defined by the Western academy. But as noted, archaeologists don't excavate dreams and visions, ethics or spirits, we excavate the detritus of religion in practice, not an idealized form that might perhaps be found in the soul of a religious person, or in doctrinal texts. Akin to language, religion is the *langue*, the principles and rules regarding the intersection of the sacred and profane that

religion is so concerned with. Ritual then, is akin to *parole*, the speaking, doing, and imperfect utterances related to a given religion's ideals and instruction (Saussure et al. 2011:9–13).

That is, ritual is to religion as practice is to theory.

I. Ritual as Practice

Certainly, there is widespread acknowledgement that religion is an awkward and imprecise cross-cultural category, difficult to define in ethnographic contexts and even more difficult to excavate. (Fowles 2013:x)

At the proposal hearing for my dissertation some years ago, a problem that would need to be explored in this final project was pointed out to me. “So, what’s your definition of religion for this project?” Professor Hussein Agrama asked. “Because you haven’t really defined it – just left it hanging out there as an assumed category but really, it’s a category that needs considerable unpacking.”³

Complicating things further for archaeologists who study past religions is the fact that religion, being a category, construct, a concept, an ill-defined but yet seemingly ubiquitous aspect of humanity and social organization, is not something archaeologists can excavate. We don’t excavate cosmologies, ontologies and philosophies. Archaeologists excavate the material remains of practice. Stuff and things; not ideas. Those tend to slip right through the screen. Religion, whatever its definition, is not something we find in the dirt. Rather, archaeologists excavate material traces of religion in practice, its ritual spaces, tools, artwork.

So, if this work is to compare the different religious communities in Europolis through the material culture of their ritual spaces, then not only do I need to answer Agrama’s question regarding what I mean when I use the term “religion,” I also needed to articulate the differences and relationship between religion and ritual for this project. The tension touched upon above, the

³ Hussein, a student of Talal Asad (one of our interlocutors below), was not simply providing good counsel at my proposal hearing. How to define and understand religion and its roles and limits socially – and more recently how to clearly distinguish or articulate the properties of religion’s modernist antithesis, secularism – has been central to much of Hussein’s research (Agrama 2012a) as well as Asad’s. A most peculiar aspect of secularism is that it is a young upstart, a “problem-space”³ (Agrama 2012b) constructed over the last few centuries at best and not a term that can or should be applied to the past.

materiality of ritual versus the amorphous or nebulous character of religion, loomed large as I considered the literature on the topic. I was unsatisfied with definitions of religion like Geertz's (1973), which focus on the symbolic qualities of religion rather than the social work necessary for the creation and ongoing communication of the symbols. That is, with Geertzian definitions of religion, symbols can too easily become more important than the lives of the people presenting these symbols. Religion is bracketed, sidelined if you will, to symbolic expression, a definition better fitting ritual (or any performance) than religion.

Along with the limits of conceptions like Geertz's, warnings like Asad's (1993) also guided my thinking.

There cannot be a universal definition of religion, not only because its constituent elements and relationships are historically specific, but because that definition is itself the historical product of discursive processes. (29)

In the final accounting, Asad, Durkheim (1912), Turner (1966) and Rappaport (2010) would inform the definitions I use for this work, and which I hope to articulate and explore further in future research. Religion is more than a system of symbols, it is more than the feelings, acts and experiences of individual men in their solitude (James 1902:31) and it can't be universally defined for all places and all times (Asad 1993).

As for ritual, it most definitely treats in symbols and almost always appeals to agents not necessarily of the material world. Foremost, rituals mark, or differentiate specific intentional action from the quotidian. During such a break, a liminal phenomenon (Turner 1966:96), ritual performance describes and explains a community's origins, histories, struggles, ethics, etc., through symbols and symbolic action. Ritual is "work" (Bell 1992: 221) and as such, rituals both reify beliefs, as well as play a role in creating those beliefs. In this last aspect rituals do more than

simply offer social cohesion as Durkheim suggested. Instead, rituals offer a space not only for transmission and reification of ideology but also an opportunity for cultural improvisation.

Ritualized practices, of necessity, require the external consent of participants while simultaneously tolerating a fair degree of internal resistance. As such they do not function as an instrument of heavy-handed social control. Ritual symbols and meanings are too indeterminate and their schemes too flexible to lend themselves to any simple process of fixed ideas (Bell 1992: 221).

In my models of religion and ritual, it is *ritual* that must be recognized as overripe with symbols and meanings that may be impenetrable to an outsider, but which offer a brief, temporary time and place for a society to re-present itself, its identity, ethics, genealogy both historical and mythological, all in an abridged and community-wide recognized symbolic manner.

While religious historians and theologians often attempt to reconstruct the belief systems, cosmologies, heresies or doctrine of a religion primarily through textual leavings, I will argue throughout this work that texts, generally written by the religious elite or most devoted worshippers, shed less light on the realities faced by religious practitioners than does evidence of their practice. And perhaps more importantly, the traces of on-the-ground practice of religion, rituals, often complicate, chafe and show variation and improvisation elided from religious texts. Sacred writings generally proffer idealized versions of religious beliefs and/or the theological debates between and among elites within religions and as such cannot address the daily, real-world diversity of religious practice in the way that a study via archaeological remains can. Bell (1992) noted that Durkheim's idealistic claim that rituals provide opportunities for social groups to bond, cohere, etc., neglected to include observations of ritual failure and competition, and how the results of such complications affected the society relying on the rituals.

In this study, rituals, successful or not, traditionally preserved or challenged and improvised, will be restricted to those learned, practiced and repeated acts and events performed

with some social goal in mind and concomitantly recognized by a social group, a community (a church in the Durkheimian sense) as ritual (Rappaport 2010). Thus, a contextual and particularistic view of the cultures and societies within which the rituals take place is necessary to interpret them, including, when possible, a multivocal historical understanding of the period in question.

Another of the defining criteria of rituals for this project, “is that they are in some way symbolically differentiated from everyday activities in terms of forms of action or purpose” (Dietler 2001:67). Rituals mark or differentiate specific intentional action from the quotidian. Rituals are actions that describe or explain socially held ideas about proper being in the world for a community through symbols and symbolic action – marked and comprehensible only to those who have been initiated or indoctrinated. The specific ideas and information conveyed might be about quotidian activity: why do we eat the foods we do and not others, why do we pray when we do, why do we let elders sit where they do at dinner, etc. But the actions taken to convey these ideas, the spaces and moments of time when and where rituals are practiced, separate the practitioners – at least momentarily – from the ordinary and the mundane. For a time, efforts are made to re-present a greater order of things and connections than immediately tangible. A prayer before a meal may serve to remind members of a community about the works of so many who made the meal possible, the proper ways and time to allocate rare resources (cattle, meat, fruits, etc.), to give thanks for a better harvest than the year before to powers not fully understood but whom one nevertheless wants to maintain a positive relationship with. While eating a meal is a typical and necessary thing for all humans to do, to offer specific thanks and lessons before dining is not universal, and even if such a practice is not entirely uncommon, the specific offerings and representations of any given community are differentiated from other cultures – prayer may not take place at every meal – and possess a social goal. In the brief example just described, the goal

being to remind the initiated that the food one eats only arrives through a functioning community with a positive relationship with unseen powers.

This preliminary conception of ritual still leaves us with the more problematic puzzle for the archaeologist: when is an artifact a ritual artifact? Which of the material traces collected from excavations and sitting in sifting screens do we categorize as ritualistic?

The art and architecture at Europos (the various temples and their accompanying artwork in several buildings) lend themselves to being somewhat easier to segregate as ritualistic. A temple is more widely and agreeably recognized as a space for religious ritual, an arena for the practice of a given religion, than say an oil lamp may be recognized as a ritual lamp. However even ritual spaces are not solely soulful spaces and we will examine the potential of multiple uses, temporary uses and a variety of re-uses of such spaces when we engage the data. Still, regarding the rest of our artefactual data, that is material evidence beyond the architecture and artwork of temples, we are faced with a valid and potent question for this study: how do archaeologists order things? Or perhaps better phrased, *why* do archaeologists order and categorize things the way they do?

While it is one thing to define ritual as I have briefly done so above, it is another thing entirely to claim to be able to recognize it through the remnants and remainders of past peoples. Elsner (2012) has raised concern over how it is (and why) that archaeologists categorize certain artifacts as ritualistic – and he posed these concerns in a manner relevant to (and I think resonant with) this project:

Ritual remains both an important category and an evocative one. What is needed in general is a more stringent justification of the empirical question – that is the leap from archaeologically attested visual or material evidence to the inference that it has ritual implications or origins; and at the same time, much greater care in defining what ritual means, not indeed in a transhistorical or transcultural sense, but for the author of a given paper in relation to a body of material being assessed (Elsner 2012:11).

Elsner's latter concerns, that ritual be carefully defined for a specific project, has guided these introductory remarks. As for his initial concerns, what are the factors that guide our decisions to define certain material evidence as ritualistic (per an author's specific definition), Elsner's suggestion that, "greater awareness of the anthropological literature is necessary in the material cultural disciplines than has so far been usual (2012: 11)" perhaps only hints at the complexity involved (and to a certain degree, imagination at play) in the construction of categories by the archaeologist.

In studying ancient ritual, archaeologists have appropriated many of their foundational understandings from cultural anthropology, religious studies, and sociology. In the process, archaeologists have been forced to develop material implications from what are, for the most part, more intangible theoretical perspectives (Fogelin 2007:56).

In Fogelin's overview, "The Archaeology of Religious Ritual" (2007), he agrees with Elsner that we must incorporate a wide field of interdisciplinary studies and lines of evidence in our efforts to understand the people we investigate. The archaeology of ritual must be interdisciplinary and accomplish the goal of providing context for its finds from not only socio-cultural anthropology, but also from art/historians, folklorists, and particularly religious studies.

At Europos, I have chosen to focus my investigation on the art, architecture and artefacts found in or near marked ritual spaces: the temples. Rather than over-reliance on the proper classification of any specific item as "ritualistic" instead we will examine assemblages (artifacts, art, architecture) associated with these ritual spaces and compare these assemblages from different temples to one another, not in search of a ritualistic lamp per se, but rather to compare the differences in lamps, clothes, coins, pins, etc. used by the persons who congregated in these spaces (and around them). Only then through assemblages compared to one another, can any relevant interpretations of difference or commonality between religious communities be interpreted.

Elsner is also justifiably concerned that the difference between religion and ritual are too easily elided in archaeological investigations: ritual is not always religious, and religion incorporates far more than ritualized actions and thus whatever we can glean about past religious behavior and ideas from the evidence of ritual practice is both limited and partial (2012: 11).

In regards to these concerns, I have made considerable effort in these opening pages to suggest both an unavoidable relationship between religion, as a theory of being in the world and making sense of life's material and immaterial aspects, and religious rituals, the attempt to express these ideas among an initiated church community in practice. Conversely, there is a necessary segregation of the terms: the former, religion, an analytical category classifying the myriad theories on bridging the material world perceived by our senses and the immaterial worlds of our psyche or soul, and the latter, rituals, the very human efforts to convey these ideas to one another.

I choose ritual spaces as the *axes mundi* of this investigation precisely because ritual has the capacity to prevent or delay the fragmentation of subjugated groups by providing an opportunity for the group to step outside of the daily social norms it lives under and provides ample room for like-minded individuals to come together and contest the status quo in ways unavailable to them outside of ritual practice. In Europos, temples linked to centuries old traditions which predated Roman occupation, or which belonged to religious practices regularly in tension with Roman Imperial power provide liminality, a blend of “lowliness and sacredness, of homogeneity and comradeship ... some recognition (in symbol if not always in language) of a generalized social bond” (Turner 1966:96). In this more “rudimentarily structured and relatively undifferentiated” collectivity – where ritual elders, not competing Imperial demands, determine what hierarchy if any exists – celebrate, communicate and represent their religious beliefs in action, ideally resulting in the collective effervescence that Durkheim argued rituals generate (Durkheim 1995: 217-8).

And so, I offer that a comparative investigation of the ritual spaces of Europos with a particular focus on those of the more localized type, minimally connected to the Imperial state apparatus and its pantheon – such as those belonging to practitioners of religions that according to historical narratives, clashed with Roman authority (such as Christians, Jews, and some local Syrian practices) – will provide an opportunity to glimpse evidence of lived heterodoxy.

Dominant classes in a culture have a clear motivation to reinforce, reify, represent and otherwise propagate social practices which maintain disparity as the norm, as a way of being and living that should be subsumed and unchallenged: the ‘taken-for-granted,’ or what Bourdieu (1977) called ‘doxa.’ On the other hand, “dominated classes have an interest in pushing back the limits of doxa and exposing the arbitrariness of the taken-for-granted (Bourdieu 1977:169).” The numerous Persian and Syrian places of worship still in place during the Roman occupation of Europos along with a Jewish synagogue and Christian temple all suggest that within Europos, religion had the potential to offer a method for many Durenes to, if not push back against the demands of Roman occupation, at least affirm that the taken-for-granted at Europos would include a wide and inclusive discourse.

It is for these reasons that this project will focus a great deal on the architecture, arrangement, artwork, artifacts, etc. of ritual spaces – particularly those that were in use and/or constructed in the decades leading up to the city’s abandonment, the period in which Christians at Europos established their own recognizable ritual community and when the Imperial presence of Roman soldiers was keenly felt and unarguably affected and changed many aspects of daily life in the city. In an Imperial project as complicated as Europos was, it is my contention that ritual there had the capacity to provide “a system of knowledge and practice ... permitting the marginalized to separate themselves definitively from [colonial power], to hold it at arm’s length (Comaroff

1985:213).” As such, there may be no richer social arena to investigate in order to understand daily negotiation (and resistance) to imperial projects in the Roman Empire than the rich and diverse religious practices of the Empire’s disparate population.

II. Religion as Theory

In this work, I posit that religion is the conceptual shorthand developed in the Western academy which refers to a combination of many types of work done for the purpose of bridging the gap between – defining or at least delimiting and ordering – the sensorially knowable and tangible (materiality and social worlds) as well as the unknowable (that which is beyond sensory perception but still impinges upon us). Religion’s goal is to bring social order and meaning to life – both its material and immaterial components – a life, which at times seems quite predictable and at other times seems arbitrary if not outright cruel (and often without any clear cause). Like its child-ontology, science, religion orders people, places, things, events, but unlike the limitations of the category science, religion provides a comparable space for treating with the ephemeral, dreams, death, and the potential for supernatural or superhuman actors and entities which most humans believe in and many perceive, even if in confusing, unsettling and nearly inexplicable ways. It is an ontology of what is, and what could or might be. This latter aspect, the “could or might be,” the as-of-yet-not-well-understood but psychically present, the ineffable, is ordered along with the material and social worlds in an ontological unification mutually recognized in every known culture albeit constructed in radically different ways. And it is in this ubiquitous ontological construction, connecting both the material and immaterial in a holistic world view, that allows religion the unique potential of finding a place, an order for everything humans might experience, conceive or perceive, material or not.

Numerous social scientists equate religion primarily to relationships with supernatural beings, up to and including recent psychological attempts to seek the source of religion within the structure of the human brain. Boyer (2001) posited an absolute necessity for “supernatural agents” (7). Terms such as “Culturally postulated supernatural beings” (Spiro 1971), and “Culturally

Postulated Super Human Agents” (abbreviated as “CPS-agents”) as proffered by McCauley and Lawson (2002:8), have also been used to describe these beings supposedly necessary to religion. Problematically, “Supernatural” and “superhuman,” like “religion,” are constructions which don’t necessarily translate well into other languages, cultures, and cosmological belief systems. Durkheim (1912) cautioned,

To have the idea of the supernatural ... it is not enough to witness unexpected events; these events must be conceived of as impossible besides – that is impossible to reconcile with an order of things. It is the positive sciences that have gradually constructed this notion of a necessary order ... religious conceptions aim above all to express not what is exceptional or abnormal but what is constant and regular ... hence any notion that equates religion with the unexpected is wide off the mark.” (26)

The model of religion I am proposing denies pride of place in discourse on religion to symbols and the supernatural (the gods, spirits, saints, ghosts, witches, magic), and brings back into the religious fold social practices often labeled secular today. And while the secular/religious divide is another binary construction that needs some clarification (Agrama 2012a), for this project such a segregation, a secular/religious divide in third-century eastern Rome, is not relevant because such categorization and segregation was not an ontological imperative for the societies under investigation.

This conceptualization of religion I am offering could include social practices today that are not considered religious. But this is not my idea. It was Durkheim’s – perhaps the most important aspect of his work:

A final [conception] can be added that emerges from this book as a whole: Along the way, I have established that the fundamental categories of thought, and thus science itself, have religious origins. (1912: 421)

This is what the conflict of science and religion is about. People often have a mistaken idea of it. Science is said to deny religion in principle. But religion exists; it is a system of given facts; in short, it is a reality. How could science deny a reality? Furthermore, insofar as religion is action and insofar as it is a means of making men live, science cannot possibly take its place. (1912: 432)

In this way of conceptualizing religion, it is the category which recognizes human efforts to produce and control social organization and the distribution of knowledge, the capacity to order events, objects and actors in this world and beyond, a species-wide adaptive property that can fall under many names (as Durkheim suggested) or any name (as James suggested). The term “religion” in the twenty-first century has become, I fear, the confusing clumsy way of describing only certain manifestations of this human capacity, with discourse regarding its definition delimited by various ideological and hegemonic practices.

This project’s working definition, religion as a category describing humanity’s necessity to organize its world and make sense of its place in it, is rooted in a century of discourse and debates about religion within the human sciences. Several specific debates guided me in this construction and they necessarily deserve some unpacking. Show, rather than tell, is ancient advice for writers. Above, I have told the reader what I have concluded that the category of religion is and does for this project. But how I came to this conclusion and how the various definitions of past researchers, from Durkheim’s championing of religion’s role as producing sociality and solidarity, to Rappaport’s conclusion that religion is at the heart of humanity’s genesis and survival, each influenced this work, needs to be shown.

First Resolution: Religion is “Eminently Social”: Durkheim vs. James

In *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (Durkheim (1912), Durkheim was, just as the title suggests, searching for the elementary forms of religious life – a search for universals no doubt in some tension with Asad’s assertions above. Still, Durkheim consciously and conscientiously tried to avoid the pitfalls of essentialism in two important ways (to what degree he succeeded is open for argument).

First, Durkheim offered a simple but savage opening salvo: “There are no religions that are false,” he insists at the beginning of *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. “All are true after their own fashion. All fulfill given conditions of human existence, though in different ways” (1912: 2). Durkheim wasn’t looking for a set of criteria to pose as a litmus test for religion but rather, Durkheim used examples of religious *practice* itself, not just their *symbols*, but the work done that produced these symbols, as his data. For Durkheim, all religions “are equally religious, just as all living beings are equally living beings ((912: 2)” and holding to this theme, Durkheim specifically chose to study the practice of religions as differentiated from Judeo-Christian practices as he could find.

Second, religion, for Durkheim, is not a reaction to the awe and mysteries of being in the world, archaically derived and passed down in turn over the centuries with little connection to the present, but rather religion is social work done to order, present, reorder and re-present the very society doing the ordering and presenting. Religions, however they might appeal to the divine, supernatural actors, cosmologies, etc., were first and foremost for Durkheim, collective representations of necessary and important social *work*. Symbols plays an important role for Durkheim, like Geertz, in his interpretation and understanding of religions foreign to him. But Durkheim stressed that in order to understand religion, one must study its social practice.⁴

The general conclusion of the book which the reader has before him is that religion is something eminently social. Religious representations are collective representations which express collective realities. (1912: 9)

Durkheim’s focus on the collective, the “eminently social” aspects of religion, ran contra William James’ (1902) conception of religion just a decade earlier in his classic work, *The*

⁴ While searching online for a public domain text with which to quickly copy and paste the quote above, I typed, “the elementary forms of knowledge” into the Google search bar rather than, “the elementary forms of religious life.” The error suggests my own conception of religion perhaps far more succinctly than all the pages in this chapter.

Varieties of Religious Experience (1902). James was interested in the psychological and individual experiences of religion. His investigation into religion and its hold on humanity ignored religious institutions, “systematic theology and the ideas about gods themselves,” so that James could, “confine myself as far as I can to personal religion pure and simple” (29).

James’ attempt to understand religion psychologically, along with his refutation of the importance of organized religion, was in and of itself an attempt to move out of theological conceptions of religion and towards more positivist ones, an effort to develop a science of religion, a torch that Durkheim would run with a few years later. But one might suggest that James threw out the baby with the bathwater. James not only dispenses with pantheons, orthodoxy and hierarchy (elements of religion that are frequent if not constant but which you’ll see only minimal discussion of in this chapter as we attempt to make sense of religion), he also ignores the social practice of religion. Religion, James lays out at the onset of his work, “shall mean for us, *the feelings, acts and experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider divine*” (31, emphasis in original).

“Eminently social” and “individual men in their solitude” are starkly different ways in which to frame the same topic. In fact, one might look at the title of Durkheim’s work as a direct stab at James’, laying out Durkheim’s disagreement before one even opens his book: “*Variety*” compared to “*Elementary Forms*”; “*Religious Experience*” as compared to “*Religious Life*”.

As a psychologist and philosopher within the academy for decades, James’ conception of religion’s social worlds conflated the “church” of various protestant Christianities in the 19th and early 20th century, with the quotidian social work of religious practitioners the world over. Unimpressed with the religious experience found within the dogmatic predilections and power dynamics of highly organized Christian churches, James instead wanted to understand *l’esprit* or

der geist from a scientific, psychological perspective, believing that some universal human capacity within individuals leads to the many manifestations of religion (like churches) in the physical world. James even suggested that the isolated, individuated object of his inquiry perhaps shouldn't be called religion.

I am willing to accept almost any name of the personal religion of which I propose to treat. Call it conscience or morality, if you yourselves prefer, and not religion – under either name it will be equally worthy of our study. (30)

James' ambivalence towards terminology is a mirror image of sorts of Asad's concern with the desire for precision in universalizing theories of religion. They are both describing inherently problematic aspects of how the term might be applied. But also, compare James to Durkheim: "It is *action* that dominates religious life" (Durkheim (1912) 1995:421, emphasis mine). Durkheim does not deny that individuals pray and make appeals to divine beings outside of social gatherings. But, *en route* to inventing sociology Durkheim does something eminently anthropological and so germane to this project: he studies what people do, organizing his entire project around ethnographic data. Obviously, the communities at the center of my project cannot be studied directly, but following Durkheim's lead I have chosen to study their actions, their doings, their work, specifically the traces of these efforts in the material record.

Second Resolution; Religion is a System of Symbols: Asad vs. Geertz

When Talal Asad (1993) insisted, "there cannot be a universal definition of religion, not only because its constituent elements and relationships are historically specific, but because that definition is itself the historical product of discursive processes" (29), he was not talking about discursive processes in some abstract sense. He is talking about, "a modern Western norm, the product of a unique post-reformation history" (28), which transformed conceptions about religion

in the West from “being a concrete set of practical rules attached to specific processes of *power and knowledge* to being abstracted and universalized” (42, emphasis mine).

Asad’s critique of anthropology’s relationship with religion, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (1993) is now a classic disciplinary deconstruction, informed not only by a Foucauldian, genealogical engagement with the category of religion and its centuries-long construction in a Western, Christian-dominated academy, but written by an intellectual who hails from a part of the world neither Christian, nor Western, nor dominant. But, genealogically speaking, Asad’s oeuvre is the upstart grandchild of earlier social scientists’ attempts to make sense of a category that Asad both deconstructs and yet utilizes as he attempts to compare two religions, Christianity and Islam, and their making through history. Asad insists we must move away from defining religion via developing a criteria or list of ubiquitous, recognizable traits (supernatural actors, cosmological concepts, etc.) and rather, constitute religion as a store or form of social power (1993:29) that is constituted differently not only between cultures, but across time.

Perhaps most important to Asad’s project is that the Western predilection to exorcise from religion certain domains of social and political power is neither a universal practice, nor – and this is what I believe troubles many (neo)liberals today about deconstruction workers like Asad – is such a separation a universal aspect of producing sovereign nation states in modernity. For the period under investigation in this work religion is hardly exorcised from domains of social and political power but rather part and parcel to them.

The result of Asad’s critique is a call to anthropologists to acknowledge that our fetish for defining religion as something other than “real,” as a collection of archaic ontologies and

supernatural actors embedded in legisigns and symbols,⁵ a la Geertz (1973), is a discourse constrained by a very specific epistemology often essentialized or unrecognized by academics and one which is biased towards diminishing religion's constant and pervasive role as store, author and agent of social and political power (Asad 1993: 28-31).

It is Geertz's notion that religion is, at its most fundamental, "a system of symbols" (1973:90) which Asad takes great exception with. Asad acknowledges that Geertz is hardly alone in his suppositions but is concerned that anthropologists in Geertz's camp have focused on the ends, and not the means, of religious practice, so to speak. That is, agency, work done in the world, i.e. practice, is necessary for any rules of association to be created with which, one might understand and interpret religious symbols.⁶ Much like the Old Testament, Geertz offers an origin story for that which is created (in this case, the system of symbols we call religion) but few details about the creator (the people who eventually create, use, and re-create said symbols). Concerns of history, agency and practice are not the focus of Geertzian approaches to religion as an anthropological category. Yet, in order for any given set of religious symbols to come into being, and to later be interpreted by academics or worshippers, a great deal of effort, time, trial and error, went into the construction of the symbols Geertz focused on.

Religious practices observed by Western social scientists since the nineteenth-century which still welcome or approve religion's influence in the construction of knowledge, law and

⁵ Peircean semiotics distinguish between the more generic concept of a "symbol," a sign which has no indexical or iconic reference – that is an arbitrary sign requiring cultural knowledge and experience to associate it with its interpretant (meaning) – and a legisign, a specific form of a sign that refers to a lawlike norm or habit. Some but not all legisigns are symbols, in that legisigns may have indexical or iconic qualities rather than arbitrary ones. All symbols are legisigns in that they refer to something that requires an understanding of some specific custom or culture and are grounded in said cultural norms, rules, laws, habits, etc. in order for their interpretant (meaning) to be clear and understood.

⁶ The Comaroffs make a similar argument for the anthropological conceptions of culture and ideology, "The anthropological conception of culture has long been criticized, especially by Marxists, for overstressing the implicit, systemic and consensual, for treating symbols and meanings as if they were neutral and above history, and for ignoring their empowering, authoritative dimensions" (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991:20).

politics, have been pre-determined to possess archaisms, hold-overs from some imagined less civilized era, which, given time, will inevitably be rejected in favor of secularism. According to such Western logics, any legitimized religious role in the construction of the political sphere will eventually melt away with *progress* a progress imagined and defined by Europe for everyone else (Asad 1993:19–24). Therefore, social science focused on the study of religion has not until recently concerned itself greatly with a theory of religion which recognizes its object of study as a form of power and practice, each specific example which needs to be understood in relation to the historical processes which shaped it. Our discipline has leaned towards efforts like Geertz’s, focusing on religion as primarily a store of meaning and signifiers which “*seem* uniquely realistic” (Geertz 1973:90). Such definitions are poorly equipped to confront and include “different kinds of practice and discourse ... intrinsic to the field which religious representations (like any representation) acquire their identity and their truthfulness” (Asad 1996: 54).

If it’s people which anthropology is concerned with, Geertzian definitions focus on *the symbols produced*, rather than *the production of the symbols*, and move the object of inquiry from real people doing things in their cultures to equivocal, abstract ideas and their less than objective representations. Efforts like Geertz’s, to universalize religion as an abstract end-product of sorts, overlook important aspects of any religion’s construction, not due to lacking comparative data on religious practice by peoples of different faiths, but due to epistemological presumptions, *political in nature* but *essentialized as natural* since the Renaissance (Hart 1999: xvii; Foreword in Rappaport 1999).

In this work, Chapter Three will detail “the diverse, idiosyncratic, and historically situated processes that allowed for” Europos to welcome Christians, Jews and Roman soldiers into their walls to celebrate the divine as each chose. “The production of the symbols” at Europos, the

architectural and artistic methods, and the types of rituals and phenomenon they aimed to facilitate, will play a much greater role in understanding the Christian community there than attempts at symbolic interpretation.

Third Resolution; Religion Might Save Humanity: Rappaport vs. The World

Mauriac: I read your paper in *Nouvel Observer*, but not without surprise, I must say.

Foucault: And you laughed? You are among those that I could already hear laughing.

Mauriac: No ... I only said to myself that as to spirituality and politics, we have seen what that gave us.

Foucault: And politics *without* spirituality my dear Claude?⁷

Perhaps Thales was exaggerating when he said that everything was full of Gods,⁸ but if we posit religion, like language, as a universal human capacity to develop systems of practices and ideas “whose object it is to express the world” (Durkheim 1912: 430), to make the confusing comprehensible, the unknown, known, that aims to make the invisible visible – at least in a manner that is satisfactory for a time – then nearly any set of social practices can fall under its categorical imperative to categorize. That today, we primarily attribute to religion the supernatural, ancestors past, divinities, and cosmology is itself a historical particularity, a specific condition of possibility which tends to highlight perhaps the most common and easily recognizable qualities of religion as generally understood in modernity (Riesebrodt 2003). But these are commonly understood and taken for granted qualities today. If anthropological data is to be drawn from observing what humans do (or did, in archaeology’s case), then religion is hardly a category limited to deities, demigods, demons, ghosts, geneses, apocalypses – mystical beginnings and endings. To the

⁷ Conversation recalled in author, journalist and friend of Michel Foucault, Claude Mauriac’s memoirs and quoted by Afary and Anderson (2005:91) in Ghamari-Tabrizi (2016:67).

⁸ He perhaps never said it at all, as the attributed quote comes not from any preserved original writings of Thales, but from Aristotle (De An. 411 a7-8), “Some think that the soul pervades the whole universe, whence perhaps came Thales's view that everything is full of gods.”

contrary of numerous researchers, from Riesbrodt's claim that religion's universality is due to institutions that are "associated with superhuman powers" (Riesebrodt 2010:1), to Boyer's necessary "supernatural agents," I fear modern academic discourse on religion is mistaking these unknowable, supernatural realms as religion-writ large, when in truth the discursive limits of religion in the modern West, in academia, has hegemonically invented these limits to religion's role in human affairs. Modern scholars have segregated religion from other expressions of power and knowledge and thus resort to religion only when religion's children, science, government, etc., reach their limits of explanatory power: death, origin myths, visions of past family, etc. But religion is not synonymous with the supernatural but rather is at its best when attempting to help make sense of the real.

An example to concretize what I'm suggesting is one that Roy Rappaport turned to in his deathbed confessional, *Religion and Ritual in the Making of Humanity* (2010): the current inability for our species to react in a timely and appropriate manner to the growing evidence and dangers of global warming and environmental decay caused by our species and threatening our very existence. This is exactly the form of social failure that may only be rectified by a religious re-ordering, a religious re-presentation of the world, according to Rappaport.

At the same time that epistemologies of discovery may subvert the saved and sanctified understandings on which human ways of life are founded, so many understandings of the world fabricated by humans may misconstrue the world's physical nature as to lead to actions that will damage it irreparably. (Rappaport 2010:454)

The "epistemologies of discovery," refers to the West's scientists and its technologies which have not had problems discovering, analyzing, and quantifying the impact of climate change. The problem we do have is disseminating the information far and wide in such a way that those who do not possess the same epistemological presumptions about the world might still understand and accept the important information science wishes to share, and then act upon the

problems well-informed. What science and scientists truly lack, Rappaport argues, is a method of convincing people to receive their message (Rappaport 2010:452). Such a project, such a knowledge and practice, requires forms of communication largely beyond the realm of earth sciences and well beyond the capacities of the dominant ideology of the twenty-first century: capitalism, the pursuit, protection and prominence in law and deed of the free flow of capital across the globe in as unfettered a manner as possible (Rappaport 2010: 454-5). Capitalism is founded on forms of knowledge and power that are ill prepared to deal with – and unconcerned with – existential crises, even ones rooted in natural causes such as the health of the global population, unless such issues interfere with achieving its immediate goals (Rappaport 2010: 454-5).

Along with the failures of science and capitalism, political organization and power has done little to staunch the environmental crisis of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Hundreds of polities cannot come to even the feeblest of agreements to stem the rising tide of ... well, the tide. Instead, smaller, disparate political groups make well-meaning but impotent attempts to solve a problem it took the whole of humanity centuries to create and which will take the whole of humanity to repair (if even possible).

This definition or understanding of religion which I am offering, the human need to make sense of ... everything, and most importantly the need and ability to innovate old ontologies to make account of new conditions, is the lens through which I will attempt to compare some of the religious practices in Europos and which I have attempted to articulate through contemporary events above. It is also the model, I will argue later in this project, which allows for the rise of Christianity in the first few centuries CE.

Drawing from both Asad's insistence upon historically contingent interpretations of religion (1993), and Bourdieu's practice theory (1977), my model posits dogmatic tradition as a

temporary state of religious practice and instead allows for change over time to traditions as a necessary aspect of the category (Asad 1993:42–5). Inevitably all societies experience crises in *Doxa* – when social order is no longer taken-for granted or assumed “natural” but rather the definition of the social world is at stake (Bourdieu 1977:168–9). To be human in the world is not a static practice of perfect reproduction of past lessons, but an adaptive practice to inevitable change. Such crises and change can lead to an expansion in the field of discourse on matters existential and pragmatic, resulting in new representations of the world, life in it, and the order of things.

###

In the first two parts of this chapter I have strived to accomplish two things. First, to establish that the term religion as used in the academy is a modern one and not always easily translatable to other times and places. It is best conceptualized as an analytical category for modern researchers to use when uncovering through ethnographic or archaeological research, evidence of social structures and their expressions which allow a people to bring meaning and balance to their experiences in the material/natural world, social relations, and experiences on and beyond the material and social, in communion rather than conflict with one another. Secondly, rituals are the practices, the efforts of transmitting messages related to such ontologies to members of a community subscribing to (believing) the ontological imperatives of their group (belief is never complete, and rituals are never perfectly recreated, being a human endeavor).

This distinction between religion and ritual attempts to mitigate for this project the challenges faced by other archaeologists struggling with the daunting task of defining ritual and religion in times and places far removed from the quasi-secularized modern world. Fowles (2013) is confronted with a premodern culture, Pueblos, whose native language did not possess words for

“religion” or “ritual.” Instead, those acts and beliefs that modern outsiders (from colonizers to ethnographers) may have perceived as religious rituals were referred to as “doings” by the Pueblos themselves. Fowles’ case, and his working through the complications involved when Western scientists attempt to articulate non-western, premodern belief and practice systems with modern, secular, terminology, are quite germane to this project as well. Fowles adapts the Native “doings” to describe activities and places usually described as religious or ritualistic, while noting that modern Pueblos have appropriated the words religion and ritual to define the “doings” that colonizers and missionaries had long tried to eradicate from Pueblo society (242-9). They did this in order to contest and make appeals to outsider societies that these practices have value and importance, using language and concepts comprehensible to colonizers (Spanish colonizers, Christian Missionaries and the US government) if not entirely commensurable to colonizer practices. This effort on the part of the Pueblos should make perfectly clear the impossibility of a universalizing definition of religion. Pueblo “doings” have been accepted or rejected by outsiders as religious or non-, largely due to historical context. The “doings” were never secular or religious but rather labeled one or the other by competing Western ideologies and epistemologies attempting to delimit discourse on just what a religion is (or should be).

Fowles entire oeuvre is a call for a post-secular archaeology that embraces the complications of translatability: custom, tradition, religion, ritual, doing... how to separate them – why separate them? Do universal definitions provide more utility or diagnostic data than thick description and localized terminology (251)? One of the most crucial claims Fowles makes as he reluctantly accepts the mantle of deconstruction worker, is, “Everyone believes in the real world as they perceive it really to be. Moreover, no one acts irrationally; everyone’s actions are performed for reasons that are, from the actor’s perspective, entirely reasonable” (9).

This quote articulates well why I have rejected specific traits as suggesting a universal definition for religion (be they supernatural beings, symbolic representation of a community between initiated members, etc.), and instead embrace a certain futility in “defining” religion for all peoples in all times. Within my conceptualizations for religion and ritual as described in the pages above, the Pueblos’ doings and the stories they tell each other about these practices would “qualify” as ritual and religion respectively. But “religion” in this case is not meant to be a label applied to their beliefs and practices but, a category for the researcher to qualify certain human activities as similar enough to others in order to allow for comparison.

In Chapter Four I will further articulate this model as I interpret the material remains of the Christian Temple in Europos and compare its art, architecture and likely functions to other ritual and domestic spaces in Europos. If my model adheres, it should prove, via the archaeological record, that Christianity at Europos was – among many other things – one of numerous ideological struggles to make sense of multiple imperial attempts to claim hegemonic control over the city and the region. The material remains of religion’s ritual practice at Europos will show that it was neither Roman, nor Persian, nor Macedonian empires which held sway, but rather a regional understanding of belonging, a regional religious ontology if you will, that outlasted every Imperial attempt to remake the city in its image, an understanding which impressed itself upon unique local expressions of religions while leaving room for individual ideologies to mark their own unique conflicts and understanding of the new normal that arrived with each new Empire.

III. On Comparison: J. Z. Smith Offers a Map

(Not to be confused with the actual territory)

What we study when we study religion is one mode of constructing worlds of meaning. Worlds within which men find themselves and in which they choose to dwell. What we study is the passion and the drama of man discovering the truth of what it is to be human. History is the framework within whose perimeter those human expressions, activities and intentionalities that we call “religious” occur. Religion is the quest within the bounds of the human condition, for the power to manipulate and negotiate one’s ‘situation’ so as to have ‘space’ in which to meaningfully dwell. It is the power to relate one’s domain to the plurality of environmental and social spheres in such a way as to guarantee the conviction that one’s existence ‘matters’. Religion is a distinctive mode of human creativity. A creativity which both discovers limits and creates limits for human existence. What we study when we study religion is the variety of attempts to map, construct and inhabit such positions of power through the use of myths, rituals and experiences of transformation. (Smith 1993:291)

In the epigraph above, Jonathan Z. Smith offers his conception of religion. There is no talk of the supernatural, of Gods, demons, divinities, walking on water, moving mountains, etc. Instead there is a focus on a quest for *knowledge* and an attempt to make sense of the world and understand and navigate one’s position (*power*) within it. To the best of my knowledge, there is no known culture that lacks an ontology which allows both the material world and that which transcends observation by the physical senses communion in thought and practice. Given this, then it should remain possible to compare religions to one another (and on this even Asad agrees given his comparison of Medieval Christianity and Islam which informs his work (1993)).

For this project, an examination of early Christianity in a Roman city 75 years before the legalization of the religion in the Roman Empire, the ability to compare religions at Europos is crucial. Christianity and its origins have too often been conceived of by theologians and religious historians as a unique incomparable event. Smith (1990:38) observes, “The most frequent use of the terminology of the ‘unique’ within religious studies is in relation to Christianity.” And his

frequent interlocutor, Burton Mack, observed in *A Myth of Innocence: Mark and Christian Origins* (1988:4):

The fundamental persuasion is that Christianity appeared unexpectedly in human history, that it was (is) at core a brand new vision of human existence, and that, since this is so, only a startling moment could account for its emergence at the beginning. The code word serving as a sign for the novelty that appeared is the term unique (meaning singular, incomparable, without analogue). ... It is this startling moment that seems to have mesmerized the discipline and determined the application of its critical methods.

Further, Smith (1990) criticizes that the positing of Christianity by scholars as “absolutely alien” possessed of a “radical incomparability” and endowed with a “theological affirmation of absolute uniqueness” moves it from an ontological conception to a historical event (39). “It is this illicit transfer from the ontological to the historical[ly unique] that raises the question of the comparison of early Christianity and the religions of Late Antiquity” (Smith 1990: 39). Smith’s *Drudgery Divine* (1990) is a monograph dedicated to the subject of the comparability of early Christianity to other Mediterranean religions of the same epoch. He too, as stated above, has a preference for religious communities to be analyzed as ontological phenomena and, comparable to one another at least in similar periods and regions. And it is the contextual – similar periods, regions, conflicts, cultures – that provides a third term, the where, the when, the conditions under, which provide the necessary element for valid and fruitful comparison, according to Smith (1988: 51), not some universal theory of religion across space and time.

Given the one of the primary arguments of this chapter by Asad (1993), that, “there cannot be a universal definition of religion, not only because its constituent elements and relationships are historically specific, but because that definition is itself the historical product of discursive processes (29)” what Smith is suggesting, and what Asad is imploring, are both very important to this work because the very word the West now uses for these ontologies of everything, “religion,” didn’t quite exist in ancient Rome. *Cultus, religio/ne, secta, colere* are all used to describe different

aspects of what might today be called cults, religions, moral philosophies not necessarily associated with a divinity, or specific sets of ethnic or political ritual practice akin to “worship” (Ando 2008:1–15). To complicate things further, over the course of the Roman Empire’s rise and fall, these terms took on somewhat different meanings in regards to whether they spoke of religions native to Rome, those of conquered peoples, practices that appealed to the divine for political or personal improvement, and other subtleties specific to time and place and not necessarily translated well by any notion of a static, universal, classical, Latin lexicon.

Ando (2008), wrestles with the very problem Smith is concerned about (1990) but from the opposite end; rather than Christianity being the unique incomparable religious practice to contend with, Ando is concerned about,

The analytic isolation in which we [classicists] continue to place *Roman religions* – the assertion of difference, even its uniqueness ... I concentrate here on ... the assertion of incommensurate difference and theoretical problems to which [the analytic isolation of Roman religions] gives rise. One solution to them might lie in the devising of second-order categories of the kind that might make comparisons meaningful and cross-cultural study possible. (xii; emphasis mine)

The second order categories that Ando (2008: x-xvii) uses in his detailed analysis of Roman ritual and religious epistemologies, is to reassert (though critically and in great detail) a common trope of classicists: Christians had *faith*, while Roman religion was a pursuit of *knowledge* (in particular about their Gods and the others they met along their way routing the Mediterranean).

So, on the one hand, Ando, like Smith, is trying to make a case to compare Christianity to Roman religion. But what I find troubling about Ando’s effort to argue that Roman religion is comparable to Christianity is that he is still reifying near incommensurate differences between Christianity and the religions of Rome. Most problematic for me, Ando seems to be generalizing both of these religious groups (Christians and Romans), suggesting that Rome had something akin to a singular and static religious practice for over 1000 years throughout an enormous Empire with

an ever-growing pantheon and increasing diversity in religious practices over time. We will see in later chapters that such a conception of Rome does not adhere at Europos.

While Ando offers a critical history of Classicists' approach to religion in antiquity, he still preserves a stark difference between the religions of Rome and early Christianity (which he proposes to overcome). For Ando (2008), Romans "subscribed in matters of religion to an empiricist epistemology" (xvi-xvii). Whereas, "Christianity *is* the history of doctrine, for that reason, Christians could disdain to acknowledge massive historical events like the sack of Rome in 410 CE," (xvii) because they had placed no faith in Rome and the upending of an Imperial power structure did not pose a challenge to their faith.

While "difference" is a key part of any comparative effort (Smith 1988: 36-8), to suggest that somehow Christian practice was unconcerned with the political and material worlds in which it proselytized, and that Roman religions⁹ failed to provide resolutions to crises despite their practice for a millennium, is at least confusing and more accurately requires very narrow definitions of religion, ritual and faith over the course of centuries through the greater Mediterranean basin. I will show in the following chapters that any division on-the-ground between knowledge and faith, politics and existential concerns, are not inherently segregated concerns to "Romans," who, at Europos anyway, are less Italic and associated with the Imperial center than they were Syrians, Macedonians, Persians, Palmyrenes, etc., who were variously citizens, slaves, soldiers, civilians, and participated in numerous cults for diverse reasons, including, most definitely, the assertion of ethnic (which was also political) identity.

⁹ All of them? Some of them? I'm still not quite sure after reading Ando. He speaks of state religions but draws from Republic and Imperial sources and practices while avoiding a number of religions practiced by Romans but which are not part of the Imperial religious apparatus. I believe that Ando is speaking primarily of the idealized version of State religion in Imperial Rome as detailed by the surviving texts of elite practitioners but that is not entirely clear in my opinion.

My concerns with Ando's postulation of Roman religion as faithless and Christianity as doctrinal (2008: xvii) is not just that these conceptions clash with the archaeological data at Europos,¹⁰ instead I am more concerned about the sources Ando uses to construct such a binary.

Ando's definition of "faith" (2008: 3-6) relies heavily on Augustine, a Church Father,¹¹ and Cicero, the Roman Senator who played a critical role in the transition of Rome from Republic to Empire. I question the utility of such sources to ascertain what Romans – in the widest sense of the word across space and over time – thought of and did regarding the ordering of their world in religious ways.

Augustine had a vested interest in stripping Roman religion of any pretense of faith. He served as Constantine's biographer. As a Church Father, he defined or contributed to definitions resolving such doctrinal conflicts in the early Catholic Church as, Just War theory, Original Sin, and just exactly what the Trinity was. Augustine had also been a long-time practitioner of Roman religion¹² and his *Confessions* is both an autobiography and a manual for conversion to Christianity. More relevant to this project, is Augustine's far too orthodox characterization of early Christianity. He came to the fore in Christianity some 350 years after the religion's founder's purported death. What Augustine insisted was proper Christian doctrine at the turn of the fifth century, is simply not reflective of the diverse Christianities throughout the Empire for over three

¹⁰ Chapters Three through Five will offer many examples of the diversity of religions at Europos, their mutual influences upon one another in the city, and, I hope, at least some insight as to the motivations of their participants at Europos.

¹¹ Church Fathers refers to those major figures in the early church (perhaps through the beginning of the eighth century) whose scholarly and theological writings were both influential in the creation of Christian Doctrine. Their works combined are generally referred to as Patristic Literature. Oddly, a number of Church Fathers and their contributions are now considered heretical.

¹² Manichaeism, a philosophy-religion popular in the Middle East and Mesopotamia from the third through seventh centuries. It was, interestingly enough, founded on the notion of eternal dualism: light versus dark, good versus evil, which would eventually result in all the good/light being removed from the material world which was inherently evil/dark. Manichaeism was briefly widespread and perhaps as well known and practiced as Christianity for a time. Augustine was raised as a Christian (his mother was a convert) but left the religion to follow Manichaeism for over a decade before returning to his mother's religion.

centuries before Augustine's conversion. The very fact that there was a necessity for Church Fathers to argue and create a doctrine indicates that indeed, the earliest forms of Christianity were not so doctrinal and there was very much a quest by early Christians for proper knowledge about their God(s).¹³

As for Cicero, his letters *Epistulae ad Atticum*, discovered by Petrarch in the fourteenth-century, have been a rich source of information on the history of the last days of the Roman Republic (first century CE) as it transformed itself into an Empire. The discovery of Cicero's letters are often credited with sparking the European Renaissance, a move not only out of the Dark Ages, but into a period of rejuvenation and reinvention: Europe as a new Rome and the early stirring of European imperialism organized on the ancient Roman model (Dietler 2010:28–9). As informative and transformative as these letters have been, they don't necessarily describe the average Roman's relationship to religious practice, worship, piety, etc., in that Cicero is the definition of an elite actor. He was consul of the Senate in 63 BCE (the highest elected position during the Roman Republic and counted among his confederates and immediate enemies, Marc Antony, Julius Caesar, and Pompey. Cicero was asked by Julius Caesar himself to be a part of his original triumvirate. The arbitrary nature of the textual record of ancient Rome has left us with an enormous number of Cicero's writings which classicists (hardly Ando alone) consult on all matters of concern regarding Roman politics, religion, philosophy, etc., despite Cicero's writings being the musings of a very uncommon and privileged Roman in a period where the very structures of power in Rome were being torn asunder. That is not to say that Cicero's writings have not been a

¹³ Debates about the Trinity in early Christianity posited quite a few conflicting ideas about the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, Or Spirit. Or: God, Logos and Sophia or... Just a few of the flavors of early Christianity that posited differing notions about the Trinity include, Monarchism, Adoptionism, Sabellianism, and Arianism. The differences are, quite literally, academic and resulted in heated accusations of heresy between major religious figures in the first few centuries of Christianity's evolution.

nearly unparalleled source for Roman scholars, particularly regarding the end of the Republic, only that Cicero cannot represent the changing views of Romans from all walks of life over centuries.

It is often the archaeologist's refrain that historical texts offer a very narrow and specific view of the world which they describe, and I would argue here that Augustine and Cicero are perhaps not the best sources to understand how Romans writ-large (countless ethnicities, languages, divinities, social and economic classes, etc.) actually understood their material world and how they included the ineffable into their daily lives.

And so, I return to Smith.

Smith offers a conception of the history of early Christianity in *Drudgery Divine* which situates Early Christianity as a religious practice not unlike other Mediterranean religious practices during the first three centuries of the Common Era. Smith noted, as has Snyder (Snyder 2003:2–3), that Christianity leaves no distinct material traces until at least 180 CE and “from 180 to 400 [CE] artistic analogies of self-giving, suffering, sacrifice, or incarnation are totally missing. The suffering Christ on a cross first appeared in the fifth century, and then not very convincingly” (Snyder 1985:165; as quoted by Smith 1990:113). Snyder (2003) adds that, “from Patristic literature we can discern individual opinions, but it is difficult to determine how the first Christians themselves deal with social issues” (2-3). We will take up the issue of Christian materiality in later Chapters, but here it is important to note that materially, and therefore archaeologically, Christianity is so similar to other Mediterranean religions that it develops no “unique” symbolic practices nor left any distinct material traces until some century and a half after the prophet credited with instigating the religion is thought to have died.

The first three centuries CE are not only the period in which Christianity went from a Jewish sect to its own set of diverse practices across the Middle East and Mediterranean (connected

by a growing collection of similar but differing liturgical texts), but it is also the period when Rome reaches its maximum expanse under Trajan, and perhaps most importantly for this investigation, the period when the Jewish-Roman wars were fought.

Lasting from approximately 66 CE to 136 CE and comprised of three major conflicts. The First Jewish Roman War (66 – 73 CE) resulted in the sacking of Jerusalem and the burning of the Second Temple there. Contemporary historian Josephus described the aftermath of that war. “Jerusalem ... was so thoroughly razed to the ground by those that demolished it to its foundations, that nothing was left that could ever persuade visitors that it had once been a place of habitation” (Jewish War, 7:1:1). Next came the Kitos war, a series of revolts outside of Judea (115-117 CE) by diasporic Jews who attempted to harass Trajan’s Eastern campaigns to recapture Armenia and firmly establish (and expand) the Empire’s eastern border with Persia. The revolt was crushed by Rome in two years. Next, in 130 CE Emperor Hadrian visited the ruins of Jerusalem and initiated a rebuilding of the city – and renamed it: *Aelia Capitolina*, a name derived from Hadrian’s family name, *Aelius*, and the God Jupiter Capitolinus for whom a temple was built over the ruins of the Second Jewish Temple. Many sources suggest Hadrian’s efforts to erase Jewish culture and history from Jerusalem was a leading cause of the last Jewish-Roman War, the Bar Kokhba Revolt (132 – 136 CE). The Revolt ended disastrously for the Jewish people. Roman historian Cassius Dio estimated that over a half million Jews lost their lives in the wars, with even more to hunger and starvation while survivors were sold into slavery. Jews were banned from Jerusalem and Hadrian, no longer satisfied with just building a new Roman city on the site of Jerusalem, renamed the entire province of Judea to *Syria Palaestina*, literally wiping the land of the people of Israel off the map.

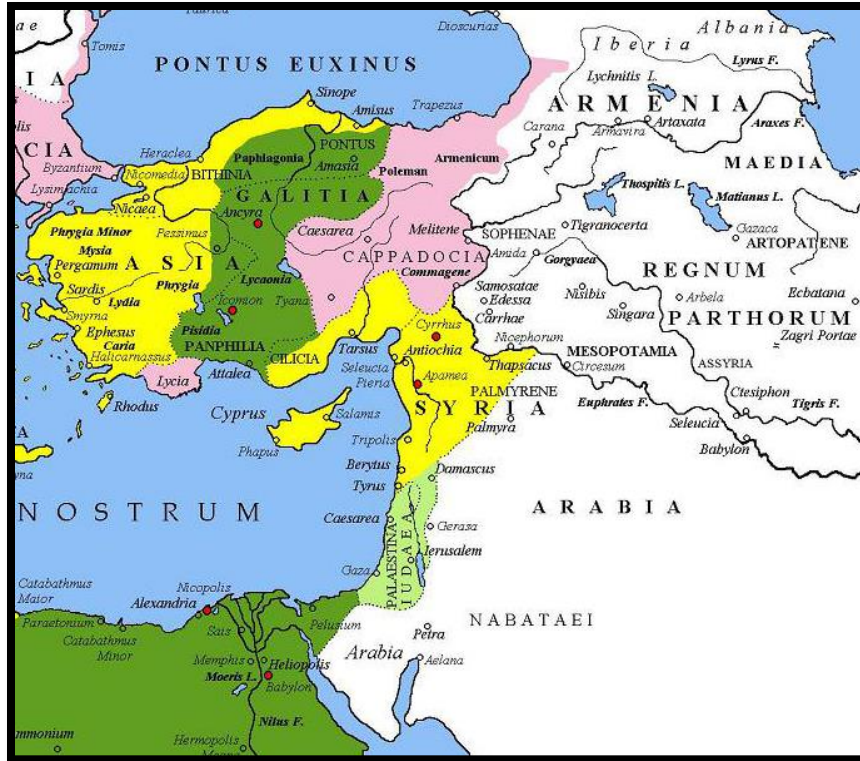


Figure 8: Map of Roman Middle East ca. 14 CE at the end of the reign of first Emperor Augustus. Judea occupies the land between Egypt and Syria.

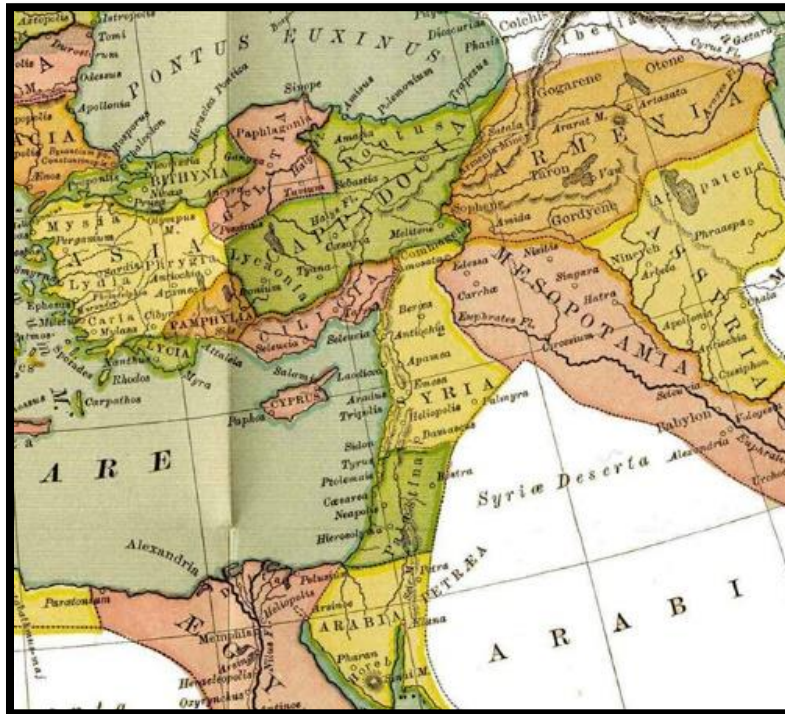


Figure 9: Map of Roman Middle East ca. 150 CE after the Jewish Roman Wars. The province of Syria has been expanded and the remaining land of Judea renamed (Syria) Palaestina.

At the same time as Jews found themselves in diaspora and facing both a crisis of faith and loss of their homeland (with some taking part in establishing new Messianic sects,¹⁴ a practice that began in the first-century CE with the emplacement of a client King by Rome, Herod, as the King of Judea (Horsley 1984), Mystery Religions¹⁵ grew in popularity throughout the Roman Empire.

It is for these reasons that Smith suggests that Early Christianity can and should be analyzed through a comparative lens and not as a religion or culture utterly unique in its own epoch. Its origins and evolution take place side by side with evolving Mediterranean traditions including new and old Roman and Jewish ones. Smith isn't simply offering a history lesson in *Drudgery Divine* (1990), he is encouraging a specific type of comparison that avoids binaries like Ando's.

Similarity and difference are not 'given'. They are the result of mental operations... It is agreed that the statement 'x resembles y' is logically incomplete, for what is being asserted is not a question of the classification of species x and y as instances of a common genus, but rather a suppressed multi-term statement of analogy and differenced capable of being properly expressed in formulations such as:

'x resembles y more than z with respect to...;'

or,

'x resembles y more than w resembles z with respect to...'

That is to say, the statement of comparison is never dyadic, but always triadic; there is always an implicit 'more than', and there is always a 'with respect to'. In the case of an academic comparison, the 'with respect to' is most frequently the scholar's interest, be this expressed in a question, a theory or a model – recalling in the case of the later, that a model is useful precisely when it is different from that to which it is being applied. (51)

¹⁴ One of many curious questions about the rise of early Christianity that this work does not have time to confront is the very use of the term "Christ" in English, in regards to Jesus. "Christ" is the transliteration of, "χριστός" (christos), the Greek word for the Hebrew *Hamsiach*, which transliterates (sort of?) in English to "messiah" and means, "the anointed one," a socio-political title (the anointed King of the Jews) with religious authority; the one so anointed is chosen by God and frequently through public acclamation (Horsley 1984). There were numerous messianic movements in Judea from the first-century BCE through the second-century CE. Horsley (1984) notes numerous individual claiming the title of King of the Jews, ranging from Bandit Kings to former servants of Herod, between 4 BCE and 136 CE, with Simon Bar Kokhbar (or alternately Bar Koseva) – a well attested to historical figure – called Messiah by Rabbi Akiva, who was at the time the Jewish "Chief of the Sages" and a major contributor to the *Mishna* during this period. Akiva was put to death by Romans after the failed Bar Kokhbar revolt in the early second century.

¹⁵ In Chapter Four we will examine the on the ground practice of several supposedly "Eastern" religions popular in the Roman Empire and practiced at Europos which, rather than offering connections to "light from the East," these Mystery Cults are very much "home-grown" affairs.

Per Smith, in the following chapters, I will be comparing the material remains of numerous ritual spaces to one another in light of the various Imperial forces Durenes had to contend with, and in regards to maintaining regional and local notions of identity and belonging in the face of frequent changes to claims to political (and by extension, religious) power in the city. Judaism and Mystery Cults are well represented in Europos with one of the most elaborately decorated Roman-era Synagogues ever discovered (Elsner 2001:281) sitting approximately 200 meters from the early Christian temple. Temples to two of the most popular Mystery Cults in Rome during the third century, those of *Mithras* and *Jupiter Dolichenus*, have also been discovered in the city. The presence of these particular religions in Europos is important to this work because in the discipline of comparative religion, it is these two religious practices, Judaism and Rome's Mystery Cults, which are most often used as models to compare and contrast Christianity. We will see however, that our x , y and z , are not the distinct and incomparable religious practices they are often generalized to be but rather local expressions of differing but mutually influencing ways of ordering the world (x and y) at the edges of empires (z).

CHAPTER 2

ANALYZING AND ARRANGING DISPARATE DATA

1920 CE – 2018 CE

No longer is Archaeology regarded as a neutral or a purely scientific discipline, but as a process influenced by the aims of its practitioners, who are, in turn, deeply affected by contemporary intellectual, social and political agendas. As well, research undertaken on archaeological practice in non-western settings, that is closely related to colonial issues, has highlighted how archaeology could be a tool of scientific, cultural, political and socio-economic domination. (Gillot 2010:1)

The archaeology of the Middle East has a controversial history (and still problematic present) as less an archaeology dedicated to revealing histories of the peoples of the region but rather, it has been regularly focused on establishing that Middle Eastern history, and in particular Roman Imperialism there, is the progenitor of European empire. The goal of such a focus has been to establish the West as the legitimate inheritors of the Middle East's history, rather than the local peoples of the region.¹ Roman colonial practices and processes have had a pervasive influence on the construction of modern European colonial ideologies (Meskell 1998; Abu El-Haj 2001; Sommer 2007; Dietler 2010:14; Gillot 2010), ideologies that shaped the European academe and the epistemological assumptions of researchers – such as the early twentieth-century

¹ Much of the archaeology of the modern state Israel would be a technical exception to this. Israel's goals with archaeology and other cultural heritage practices are frequently aimed at establishing a legitimate claim to the state of Israel by establishing that a local people, Jews, have been indigenous to the land for millennia. However, Israeli archaeology is hardly free from the colonial influences that have plagued Middle Eastern archaeology as a whole. Deploying archaeology to affirm or establish or justify a claim of belonging to a specific place in the face of local contestation (Palestine) is perhaps an over-simplified yet applicable description of colonial archaeology. One that fits Israeli archaeology which, for decades, was funded by the State and in particular the Israeli military (the IDF (Abu El-Haj 2001:1–5)). Nadia Abu el-Haj (2001) is probably the anthropologist whose critique of Israeli archaeology has stirred the greatest deal of controversy. Edward Said, said of Abu el-Haj's work, "What she provides first of all is a history of systematic colonial archaeological exploration in Palestine, dating back to British work in the mid-nineteenth century. She then continues the story in the period before Israel is established, connecting the actual practice of archaeology with a nascent national ideology - an ideology with plans for the repossession of the land through renaming and resettling, much of it given archeological justification as a schematic extraction of Jewish identity despite the existence of Arab names and traces of other civilizations. This effort, she argues convincingly, epistemologically prepares the way for a fully-fledged post-1948 sense of Israeli-Jewish identity based on assembling discrete archaeological particulars -scattered remnants of masonry, tablets, bones, tombs..." (Said and Rose 2003:47; emphasis added).

archaeologists at Europos – who then return to the original scene of imperial crimes with research questions largely about their own culture and history but not necessarily the regional population's. Thus, an epistemological quandary permeates the data drawn from excavations at Europos, the very data this project relies on: Why do we gather the data we do in the manner that we do? Whose past are we (Westerners) investigating when we excavate in the Middle East, in Syria?

The answer we will see has been too frequently, “ours, not theirs” as Henry Breasted made perfectly clear in the Introduction to this work.²

Beyond the epistemological concerns of looking to ancient empires of the East to understand, justify and normalize Western imperialism (a research practice so common in the Western academe that the phrase, “*LVX EX ORIENTE*”³ is unironically engraved upon the ceremonial cornerstone of Haskell Hall, my University's anthropology building but originally the location of Chicago's Oriental Institute) there is also an ontological problem that must take pride of place during this investigation: The modern historian's construction of ancient history has long faced the same problem so much early, colonial ethnography and anthropology did: we too frequently have studied the other/the past, less in order to describe said other/past but rather to define others' cultures and histories in relation to (and as subordinate to) modern western norms (Asad 1973, 1986, 1994; Said 1978, 1993; Kabbani 1986). Such problematic presumptions still influence anthropology today.

Modern anthropology (particularly British and American) retains a theoretical perspective and conceptual framework that were shaped by colonial conquest and imperialism. Consequently, anthropology was implicated in a complex historical web of colonial-imperial relations that also influenced developments in ethnography. (Jordan and Yeomans 1995:321)

² Introduction, p38: “The number of educated Egyptians who can appreciate such things [Egyptian artifacts] is an insignificant handful, while on the other hand, as our birthright and inheritance from the past, Egypt can be a wonderful educational influence in civilized lands of the West” (In Emberling 2010: 11).

³ “Light from the East.”

These practices of anthropologists and historians – with whom archaeologists are polygamously married – is a form of theft both metaphorically and materially perpetrated to justify the current global order of things. Given this, any attempt to re-interrogate the data of Europos’ excavations is not simply an effort to reconcile multiple diverse data sets but also a political project aimed at questioning, defining, explaining and critiquing the motivations behind the methods, the very real political, financial and religious factors that influenced, shaped, permitted and prohibited the data that have been collected to be collected the way they were.

In the following pages I introduce the reader to the disparate data that every Durene researcher must confront, how some researchers have overcome this disparity, and which of those methods and others will be employed in this work.

Colonial Collectors

One example from Europos that reveals the assumed privilege and entitlement of Western archaeologists would be the *partage* agreement. This agreement governed the “partition” of finds at the site between the West, as represented by Yale and the French Academy, and Syrian officials, who at the time were representatives of a Syrian government variously propped up by the French or in revolt against them – often, during the mid-1920s, both situations were occurring at the same time.

The Mandate that gave French control over some former Ottoman territories from approximately 1921 until 1946 was met with constant resistance and even at its inception established nothing akin to a unified country. The Mandate gave France control over the region that is now modern Lebanon and Syria but in the 1920s, the Mandate divided the area into *six* different states based loosely on ethnic affiliations (as interpreted largely by Europe). The nascent

state of Syria established no less than four governments during the mandate's first decade, while almost every one of the other individual states resisted French control through the 1920s and allied themselves with one another in various iterations. A major revolt occurred in 1925 which was part of the reason Franz Cumont was unable to continue his early excavations. That revolt was only ended when the French conducted aerial bombardments of Damascus (Provence 2005:104–7). Something France would do again with the assistance of the US and Great Britain in 2018.⁴

These were the actors involved in *partage*. The West, represented by Yale and the French state who had de facto control over Syria, and Syrian officials variously aligned with both occupying and revolting factions and attempting to speak for a people fractured by one form of imperial domination or another for centuries (Fromkin 1990; Provence 2005). The initial *partage* agreement designated that artifacts and artwork associated with the Christian Temple and the Mithraeum would remain in Syria, while the majority of artifacts and artwork associated with the Jewish Synagogue at Europos would be shipped to Yale. Syrian representatives initially acknowledged that preserving and presenting the Synagogue paintings (the most extensive Jewish religious artwork ever recovered from antiquity, *see* figure 9, below) “would be a monumental task” and “not popular for a time at least in Syria” (Hopkins 1979: 210), a not unreasonable assessment at the time.

In the 1930s, Palestine to the south of Syria/Lebanon, was then under British control and Britain had made it clear since the end of World War I that it favored a Jewish state in Palestine. These tensions would explode (literally) in 1948, but British support of Zionist efforts were no

⁴ As if to verify the old adage that if we do not learn from the past we are doomed to repeat the same mistakes of earlier generations, this section was written just a few days after France, along with the US and UK, bombed Damascus (April 14, 2018) in retaliation for alleged chemical weapons use in the ongoing Civil War there.

secret in the region. Concern about a Syrian display (and possession) of unparalleled Jewish artifacts in Damascus during the 1930s was legitimate.

However, in the spring of 1934, as Hopkins prepared several trucks to carry specific crates of artifacts to either Damascus (for Syrian curation) or to Beirut, to be shipped to the US, the *partage* agreement fell apart.

On March 26 the question of allocation was suddenly thrown wide open once more when no responsible official of the Syrian government would sign the necessary papers ... Syrian politics had raised its ugly head, with one party favoring the division agreed upon and, another strongly opposed. The underground reported a value of at least a million dollars [for the Synagogue paintings]; and someone thought that retention of the paintings by Syria might bring sizeable monetary gains, hinting that the party favoring the [original] suggested division was perhaps bartering away a national treasure. (Hopkins 1979: 210)

The Syrian Senate reversed the original *partage* decision and Syria decided to keep the artifacts and paintings that at the time had the most financial and political value: The Synagogue materials. Hopkins goes on to describe the “bitter disappointment” of the Yale team at the turn of events and while Hopkins never approaches Breasted’s arrogance by suggesting Syrian history is only of relevance to the West, the inheritors of Roman tradition, Hopkins does note the concern of his colleagues as to “what would become of the paintings and the whole Synagogue under Syrian control” (210-1). Hopkins own words regarding this event illuminate the epistemology of he and his western partners: The West is both entitled to, and the obvious curator of, the Middle East’s history.

Left out of Hopkin’s discussion of regret and concern are details regarding how the French occupied Syria with an intent to dissuade nationalist movements including the aforementioned aerial bombardment of Damascus just two years before the French and Yale would begin their excavation at Europos (Provence 2005).⁵

⁵ Al-Hariqa (The Fire) is the name of a modern square in Damascus built up from the rubble of the French bombardments in 1925.

As to what became of the Synagogue murals and other artifacts, they became the centerpiece of a wing at the National Museum of Damascus dedicated to Syria's classical age, with all the murals restored and displayed in a full-size recreation of the Synagogue.



Figure 10: The Synagogue murals on display at the National Museum of Damascus. The wing is a recreation of the room in the Synagogue where paintings covered all of the walls and the (approximately 450) ceiling tiles laid into the wooden roof. (Photo uncredited. Retrieved from: <http://www.thebyzantinelegacy.com/dura-synagogue> 04/16/18)

The National Museum of Damascus was expanded in 1936 to house the growing number of artifacts coming from numerous excavations across the country, despite constant turmoil and struggle with the West. And in the present, Syrian researchers, curators and other members of DGAM are risking their lives in order to preserve their nation's cultural heritage. In 2010 the

Synagogue display was rather breathtaking when I visited. As of 2015, the Syrian Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums (DGAM) has hidden in safe locations 99-percent of 300,000 items from 34 of its museums (Steele 2015) and has taken special care to protect the Synagogue artwork which is of course, immovable:

The museum building has been reinforced with massive steel doors. Special attention has been put to guarding one of its best-known treasures, the Dura-Europos synagogue from the third century AD. Discovered by archaeologists in 1932, its interior walls are covered by astonishing frescoes ... Police units are stationed outside the part of the building that houses the synagogue on a round-the-clock basis and the museum has installed a state-of-the-art system of electronic counter-measures to disable any attempt to trigger a car bomb beside it (Steele 2015).

In an interview with *Smithsonian Magazine* (Harkin 2016) Ma'amoun Abdulkarim, the director of antiquities and museums for DGAM, noted that ten of his employees have died during the efforts to secure all of DGAM's collections, casualties of the Syrian Civil War and conflict with Daesh.

Comments like Breasted's from The Introduction, stating that the ancient history of Egypt is, "our birthright and inheritance from the past ... a wonderful educational influence in civilized lands of the West" are not only racist but objectively wrong. They are ideological claims by a founder of the discipline whose work and words had a hegemonic effect on the discipline: Fifteen years after Breasted opined that Egyptians had no claim on their own history, Hopkins wrote of his "bitter disappointment" in Syria's decisions to hold the Synagogue artwork, but both Hopkins and Breasted ignore the devastating effects of European colonialism in both countries and give little credence to the justifiable desire of the nascent local governments to claim their own history.⁶

⁶ During my three-year stay in Paris, numerous members of DGAM, including Director Abdulkarim, visited *l'Ecole Normale Supérieure* at Prof. Leriche's invitation and discussed DGAM's efforts both informally and at invited lectures and conferences. The names of specific sources other than journalists are not being printed here for obvious reasons of safety and well-being of those Syrian researchers.

I hope that by the end of this work, I will have clearly articulated to the reader that Europos, whatever else it was, was Syrian, and as such, as we explore anything akin to identity in Europos, a recurrent, regional notion of belonging and traditions will often lead to describing the city's inhabitants, not as Roman or Greek, but instead as Durene, or Syrian, or even Palmyrene.

By “Syrian” I don't mean to suggest the modern nation state, or a static culture surviving for millennia. Smith potently argued against an essentialized archaeological subject (Smith 2004). Rather, by Syrian I am acknowledging a 2,500-plus year-old term applied – haphazardly at times for sure – to peoples living in between the Mediterranean and the Tigris and bordered north and south by Anatolia and Egypt (Rollinger 2006). Damascus has been continuously inhabited and recognized as a regional capital for some 3,000 years – a period for which most of, some variation of As/Syrian was continuously used to describe the people of the region both indigenously and by cultures outside the region. By the time Herodotus wrote his *Histories* circa 440 BCE the terms Syrian and Assyrian had already become conflated (VII.63). What it means to be “Syrian” has inevitably changed over time. But being Syrian is, nevertheless, something that has gone on for millennia in the region. By deploying the term “Syrian” I have no intention (or evidence) to link, “modern incarnations [of national identity] to ancient textual and archaeological materials through a presumed substantive transhistorical connection” (Smith 2004:9). This chapter, and the work as a whole, will make it very clear that there has never existed some sort of unilinear social evolution from the first millennium BCE until the present in the region long-called called Syria. The region has been at the center of too many imperial conflicts, from Alexander's conquest, to the Ottoman's, to the current Imperial adventures of Russia and its allies in the region fighting a proxy war in the modern nation of Syria against the US and its allies in the region. But there is no way to avoid the facts that Queen Zenobia called herself Syrian (and Roman and Palmyrene and maybe Egyptian),

as she conquered most of the eastern Roman Empire for a brief time (ca. 270-272 CE), and archaeologist Khaled al-Asaad, the head of antiquities at the ancient city of Palmyra, called himself a Syrian when he was beheaded by Daesh in 2014 for refusing to reveal the location of Palmyrene artifacts. Smith's concerns about essentializing an ancient people is that archaeologists may fail to recognize that "what should be of most vital interest to the social sciences is not the permanence of such markers but rather their constant alteration in relation to shifting sociopolitical contexts" (2004:10). This project will detail just such shifting geo-political contexts in the region being studied. But I lean towards Kohl's (2004) cautious criticism of Smith for my retaining the name Syria for the region and describing the humans who have peopled it for millennia.

It is necessary to add that there is also a positive political approach for interpreting archaeological evidence that Childe (1933)⁷ long ago recognized: demonstrate the continuous intercourse and diffusion of ideas and technologies from one culture and people to another throughout prehistoric times and insist that no single group was responsible for this constantly growing and shared history of cultural development.

And indeed, I am not referring to any single group of people who have called Syria home for more than a hundred generations. But to all of those cultures that have reshaped and reified the notion of something important called Syria. This project will reveal glimpses of two eras, Greco-Roman Syria from the third century BCE to the third century CE and Post Ottoman Empire Syria of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

Europos expanded for over five centuries in Syria and was a cultural crossroads of Greek, Roman, Persian, Semitic, and Arab, practices, including one of the newest amalgamations of said cultures, Christianity.

Syria's role in the birth of Christianity is perhaps overlooked with both the Holy Land and Rome (the city and the Empire as a whole) often described as the womb of this messianic practice.

⁷ Childe, V.G., 1933: Is prehistory practical?, *Antiquity* 7, 410–18

But one of early Christianity's first "capitals" was located in the region, in Antioch, the traditional Greco-Roman capital of Syria (and founded by the very same Macedonian general that founded Europos, Seleucus Nikator).⁸ Christian texts hold that the word, "Christian" was first coined in Antioch (Acts 11:26). But Antioch was also a center of Hellenistic Judaism and, like Europos, Antioch was a city of great religious and ethnic diversity. So too, Palmyra, a city-state about 200 kilometers from Europos which Rome relied on heavily during the third century to maintain order in the eastern Empire during the third-century CE. Like Europos, Palmyra was in many ways, Roman in name only. Queen Zenobia, claiming both Roman and regional heritage (and maybe Egyptian), briefly conquered almost all of the eastern Roman empire in the 270s CE (less than two decades after the fall of Europos). Daring to call herself Empress, the Palmyrene queen moved between Antioch and Palmyra and in her short reign, accommodated Christians, Jews, Egyptians, Hellenistic intellectuals, and countless other ethnicities into her court and administration (Nakamura 1993; Kaizer 2010; Andrade 2013).

While the Roman Empire has long been described as tolerant and diverse, what is often left out of such a description are the antecedents for such Roman tolerance, the Macedonian (Alexandrian) expansion from Greece to India and the countless long-term cultural interactions that occurred in the fourth century BCE. The Alexandrian and post-Alexandrian Empires inherited from Alexander's charge across Eurasia, polycultural, polytheistic, and polyethnic practices from Africa, Europe and Asia. A diversity and hybridity of cultural practices, it might be argued, that thrived more in the ancient past than in the present.

⁸ Ancient Antioch lies in modern Turkey today but was considered part of the province of Syria in Roman times. Curiously, not only was Antioch founded by Seleucus like Europos, but it suffered its worse sacking at the hands of the same Persian forces that sacked Europos in 256 CE, some 550 years later.

The Middle East's ancient history was long a seesaw between rival empires and regional resistance and collaboration as fate demanded. Its more recent history has been constructed in no small part to benefit the West's political order of things, extensively so after World War I. Endeavoring to identify colonial goals and influences in the construction of an archaeological record is to also an attempt to identify the Western biases in the construction of another people's history. Such a project will need to reexamine and re-classify data long thought finished speaking. The multiple excavations over decades by different missions and the epistemological and ideological blind spots that affected the collection and interpretation of data are obstacles that make reliable quantitative analyses of artifacts nearly impossible (as we will see below) and instead, a far more holistic and interdisciplinary set of methods and theory must be brought to bear on some 100 years of digging.

I. Breasted & Cumont

While the opening pages of this chapter primarily chronicled the general problems associated with archaeology in the Middle East through examples pertaining to the Yale excavation at Europos, the Yale mission was only one of four different research projects carried out at the site since 1921. Each of these projects have one thing in common: they were interrupted by war. Henry Breasted's single day re-discovering the site in 1920 was such a short stay due to the British unable to guarantee his safety due to the area having just days earlier been turned over to the French. Franz Cumont's two short excavation seasons in 1922 and 1923 were interrupted by violent resistance in the region to the newly established French mandate. Yale's work there between 1928 and 1937 ended due to funding issues and the stirrings of World War II.⁹ The most recent excavations, the MFSED's decades long project from 1986-2011, ended due to the violence of the current Syrian Civil War. While violent ends at the hands of imperial clashes sadly seem to be ubiquitous at Europos, from each project comes very different types of data, very different data sets in regard to archaeological resolution, methods and goals.

Before Yale arrived in 1928, both Henry Breasted and Franz Cumont, major figures in the establishment and expansion of colonial archaeology in the region, spent time at Europos and produced the very first data available.

On May 3, 1920, after receiving word from British Troops of "some ancient wall paintings in a wonderful state of preservation" (Breasted 1924:53; quoting a letter from Captain M.C. Murphy), Henry Breasted made his way to Europos from Baghdad where he had recently arrived

⁹ Rostovtzeff (1978:1), Yale's scientific director for all ten seasons, wrote that the excavations were ended in 1937 not due to lack of interest by Yale but due to a lack of funding. However, even if Yale had wanted to continue excavating, by 1940/1 the region was once again the site of European imperial clashes as England and Germany fought over Vichy Syria and Lebanon, while England also tried to keep Germany from aiding a newly independent Iraq for fear of Germany obtaining a foothold in Syria, Palestine and Iraq from which to attack Egypt.

while on a tour of the Middle East for Chicago's Oriental Institute (O.I.). Breasted (1924: 52-3) was not the first modern researcher to report on the site. Previous to his arrival a German engineer had written briefly on the site in 1875 (Cernik) after surveying the area for a possible railway between the Mediterranean and the Persian Gulf.¹⁰ Author, archaeologist, explorer and member of the British Administration in Mesopotamia, Gertrude Bell (1911) made mention of a "castle on the Syrian side of the Euphrates (80)" after travelling through the region in 1909. But neither Bell nor Cernik knew of the city's history or name. Beginning in 1898, German archaeologist Friedrich Sarre visited several times through 1912 but did not publish his results (nor his numerous maps and drawings) until 1920 (Sarre and Herzfeld 1920: 386-95). Sarre had determined the site to be an abandoned Hellenistic fort (1920: 388), but as his and Herzfeld's research was for a "monumental work on the ancient remains in the Tigris-Euphrates world" (Breasted 1924:52), no further identification was made in their report of the site at the turn of the century. They did surmise that the site would have been an excellent fortress for Rome on the Euphrates but ultimately concluded, "There is absolutely no historical or geographical mention, about this strange place, one of the most important cities of antiquity on the Euphrates" (Sarre and Herzfeld 1920: 388).¹¹

Breasted had no knowledge of Sarre and Herzfeld's work at the time of his visit in 1920. But Breasted's one day of work in the spring of 1920 resulted in a flurry of follow-up activity. He was "invited to give an account to the French Academy of Inscriptions and Belle-Lettres" (Hopkins 1976: 6) in July of 1922, after which Franz Cumont immediately took an interest in the O.I. founder's work. Cumont translated Breasted's presentation into French and worked with Breasted

¹⁰ "Notes of Travel." The Academy IX January-June 1876, no. Supplement July 1, 1876 (April 22, 1876): 382.; no author, quoting recent Cernik article in *Petermann's Mittheilungen* (1875)

¹¹ From the original German: *Also gibt es schlechterdings keine historischen oder geographischen Nachrichten, über diesen merkwürdigen Ort, eine der bedeutendsten Städte des Altertumes am Euphrat.*

to produce the first article that named the lost city on the Euphrates, including color plates from Breasted's time at "Dura" (Breasted and Cumont 1922). Motivated by Breasted's paper and presentation, The French Academy of Arts and Belles-Lettres commissioned Cumont to launch his own excavations at the site in November of that same year.

In 1924, Breasted published a more comprehensive report – a small book – on his single day at Europos and included data and personal letters from Cumont's ongoing field work at the time. *Oriental Forerunners of Byzantine Paintings* (Breasted 1924) was also the inaugural issue of *The University of Chicago Oriental Institute Publications*. Dedicated to Franz Cumont, it announced to the world "the nameless city ... the only surviving oriental forerunners of Byzantine painting, out of which arose the pre-Renaissance painting of Europe" (1924: 1).

Consider, that on page one of the first official publication of the Oriental Institute – and the first formal publication on Europos – Breasted notes as his primary interest, Europos' connection to European and Christian (Byzantine) art.

As for Cumont, he excavated for only two short seasons: a few weeks in November of 1922 and some five weeks or so in autumn of 1923. His description of the numerous murals that decorated the Temple to the Palmyrene Gods (Ba'al) – where Breasted focused most of his workday in 1920 – offers a somewhat different appreciation of the ruins at Europos.

Quand nous arrivâmes à Sâlihîyeh, les soldats avaient déjà entièrement dégagé les deux petites salles du temple décoré de peintures, et brusquement on nous mit en présence de la somptueuse décoration de ses murailles. Selon la croyance des anciens Perses, trente héros immortels attendent, plongés dans le sommeil, la venue du Sauveur et, les temps révolus, se relèveront à son appel pour l'aider à la restauration de l'univers. Nous voyions ainsi toutes ces figures, ensevelies durant des siècles, ressusciter sous nos yeux, comme par l'effet d'une incantation magique. Debout, dans une attitude hiératique, vêtues de brillants habits de fête, elles nous regardaient avec gravité, prêtes à nous révéler les secrets d'un lointain passé et à nous permettre de reconstituer un monde disparu. Ce fut un moment inoubliable. (Cumont 1926:iv)

[When we arrived in Salihiyeh [the modern Syrian town in which Europos is located] the soldiers had already entirely revealed two small rooms of the temple decorated by paintings, and we quickly made our way to the rooms to be in the presence of their sumptuous decorative murals. According to the belief of ancient Persians, thirty immortal heroes await, immersed in sleep, the return of the Savior and, in those bygone days, rise to his call to help restore the universe. We saw here all these figures, buried for centuries, brought back to life right under our eyes, as if by the effect of some magical incantation. Standing in a hierarchical fashion, dressed in brilliant celebratory costumes, they watched us with a severity, ready to reveal to us the secrets of a faraway past and allow us to reconstruct a vanished world. This was an unforgettable moment.]

For Cumont, whose interest and knowledge in Near Eastern religious practices was nearly unparalleled at the time, the murals at least represented Persia's culture and history, rather than European Christian history per Breasted. Cumont (1926) would go on to publish the results from his excavations in two volumes counting over 500 pages of text and illustration and some 125 photographic plates. No small effort in the 1920s. But like Breasted and Hopkins, the political realities of the excavations were clearly legible in his work, beginning with Cumont's dedication page. "Aux officiers, sous-officiers et soldats de l'armée du Levant dont le concours a assuré l'exploration archéologique de Doura-Europos." [Dedicated to the officers, non-commissioned officers, and soldiers of the Army of the Levant, whose assistance made the archaeology of Dura Europos possible].

From Breasted we have several articles and the premier publication of the Oriental Institute. From Cumont, a detailed two volume *Final Report* of his excavations in 1922 and 1923 (with some notes on the abandoned efforts of 1924 and 1925 when violence in the region made formal excavations impossible). As for less narrative and more quantitative data from these two researchers, that's another matter.

Breasted conducted no excavations proper. Cumont's published works describe hundreds of artifacts (ceramics, parchments, bronzes, etc.), detail numerous artworks uncovered, and discuss some architecture and its changes over time, but for a few tables describing a subset of less than

100 artifacts bound for museums in Syria, neither of the first two archaeologists at Europos provide data which readily lend themselves to quantitative analysis. The value and data of these excavations are found almost entirely through thorough reading, notation, analysis and cataloguing of described artifacts in their published works as accurately as one can.

Yale on the other hand – earlier criticisms of their methods and epistemological blind spots aside – would provide the only potentially quantitatively analyzable data set from any of the early twentieth century projects: An Object Register with some detail on the provenience for over 18,000 artifacts. Unfortunately, they did not begin such a Register until five years into the excavation.

II. Yale

Unfortunately, discovery was not combined with excavation skills. Down to the end of the Second World War, most of the excavators [doing the archaeology of early Christianity] had their training as architects. Their primary aim was to draw up accurate plans of the main building they were excavating, be it a temple or a Christian basilica. The upper levels which could provide clues to the building's subsequent history and destruction were often neglected; later buildings, sometimes Byzantine churches were destroyed without record, and small finds, unless they were valuable, ignored ... the result has been the loss of an immense amount of valuable historical evidence from important sites. (Frend 1996: xvii)

When William H.C. Frend, archaeologist, professor of ecclesiastical history, and Anglican priest, wrote the above critique in *The Archaeology of Christianity* (1996), he was hardly an uninterested party. His magnum opus, *The Rise of Christianity* (1984)¹² is a thousand-plus page tome that remains today as one of the most complete and thorough assessments of myriad classical and modern sources, towards the goal of writing a history of Christianity's rise from a Messianic Jewish sect in the first century CE to the official religion of the Roman Empire in the fourth century. However, in any retelling of Christianity's early histories, and any discussion of an early Christian population at Europos, we constantly must remind ourselves of the fact that such narratives are built on dodgy data. As Frend himself said above, a dozen years after publishing *The Rise of Christianity*, early archaeological methods resulted in "the loss of an immense amount of valuable historical evidence from important sites" and the situation in Europos was no different.

¹² Not to be confused with sociologist Rodney Stark's work of the same name (1997). See the Introduction for more information on Stark's somewhat social evolutionist proposition that Christianity was better adapted for the trials and tribulation of second- through fifth-century Rome than every other religion in the Empire.

Yale: The Pillet Years (1928 - 1931)

I mentioned the need for ink, labels and tags. He explained blandly but firmly that naturally I did not as yet know the desert. The lack of moisture caused India ink to dry up immediately. Labels glued to objects lost their adhesiveness, curled up, and fell off. “And you know how those little tags attached with string are, Monsieur Op-Kan. They are loose and get torn or fall off, and thus are useless.” ...He knew Susan was to be in charge of the Catalogue. Did he object to having a woman on the expedition? Or was he just opposed to catalogues as such?
(Hopkins 1979:37; referring to French Director of Excavations at Europos, Maurice Pillet)

Maurice Pillet was the first director of the joint Yale-French expedition, organized after Breasted and Cumont pressed for further excavations at Europos when violence in the region subsided. In 1927, Yale and the French Academy of Inscriptions and Belle-Lettres were given permission by the new Syrian government¹³ for a three-year joint expedition (Hopkins 1976: xxi). Each organization would have scientific experts on site and the direction would be led by the French.

Clark Hopkins would not become director of excavations at Europos until the fifth season (1932 – 1933). However, he and his wife, Susan Hopkins, began excavating with the joint mission in its second season in October of 1928. Both of the Hopkins, Clark and Susan, each wrote about the considerable personal and professional reservations they had with Pillet’s leadership (Hopkins, C. 1979; Hopkins, S., Goldman, and Goldman 2011). The quote by Clark above, described his first meeting with Pillet in Paris. Clark received a letter from Pillet a few months earlier suggesting that he bring a revolver with him to Europos and, since bringing weapons to Syria was illegal, Pillet suggested a “small .22 caliber weapon which could be concealed from customs inspectors” (Hopkins 1979:36). Susan Hopkins, despite a Master’s Degree in classics and being well-versed in Greek and Latin epigraphy, was assigned by Pillet to “supervision of housekeeping and the

¹³ This would be the “State of Syria” which lasted from 1924 – 1930 and began with massive uprisings against French control by 1925, leading to a full-scale revolution against the French in the region. More details on hostilities in Syria during the Mandate will follow below.

kitchen” (Hopkins, Goldman, and Goldman 2011:1–4). Susan would also, despite Pillet’s aversion to the practice, begin cataloguing artifacts daily in an “Object Register” that researchers still avail themselves of today. Susan Hopkins also translated an enormous share of the Greek inscriptions, graffiti and other Greek writings on site.¹⁴ Beginning in season five, after Pillet’s departure, Susan continued supervising the facilities and organizing basic needs of the team while also watching over her three-year old daughter who was on site for portions of seasons five, six and seven.

The answer to Hopkins’ questions about Pillet’s antipathy towards women and/or cataloguing finds was likely, “both.” Pillet was neither comfortable with women on site nor with troubling himself with catalogs and provenience. In addition to Pillet’s resistance to Susan’s cataloguing efforts, Clark Hopkins (1979) points out that Pillet had failed to consider women on who would visit when constructing latrine facilities (39-40). Far worse, according to Hopkins, was that Pillet had been trained “in the old school of archaeology ... archaeology was a treasure hunt for him, while as architect he was only waiting until the buildings were cleared in order to draw his plans and number the rooms” (51-2; cf. Frend 1996, above). A former director of French digs in Egypt, Pillet’s specialty was architecture and, as Hopkins (1979) put it years later, “At Dura he was out of his depth as field director, and he knew it” (63).

Clark Hopkins suspicions about Pillet in Paris turned out to be completely warranted. Pillet’s methods of cataloguing finds were less than exemplary.

The workmen were encouraged to sift the earth carefully by our giving *baksheesh* [a small amount of money] to those who found worthwhile objects. Pillet suggested we note on a piece of paper the object discovered and then have the workman present the slip of paper at the payable where he would be suitably awarded... On payday, Pillet personally disbursed the wages of each workman as he was called up to the payable. When one of my men presented his slips of paper, Pillet glanced at me, tore the notes in half, and declared the finds worthless ... At the end of the month however, he called me aside and

¹⁴ Including the names of worshippers inscribed on seats at the Temple to Azzanathkona which lead to a quasi-census of the town as names found at other locations on the site were compared to the dozens of worshippers named at the Temple in a search for familial connections – see Chapter Four for more details.

asked if I should like to see what had been found, and then he led me into his tent, where he produced a row of cigarette boxes containing the more valuable coins, trinkets, and bronzes discovered. As he smoked a box of fifty Bastos cigarettes each day, he had one box for each day's finds. I could not believe what I saw, for I had assumed we had catalogued all finds... I told him this procedure would not do, that all finds had to be catalogued by my wife and that each find had to carry a tag identifying the date and exact location of its discovery ... gradually all finds, as far as I knew, came into the catalogue. (Hopkins 1979: 50-1)

Susan and Clark were not on site for seasons three and four, but Susan did arrive with her husband for Season five and not only continued cataloguing finds at Europos but standardized the practice for the remaining seasons. In seasons five through ten (1931 – 1938) over 18,000 artifacts were logged in the Object Register Susan created. Registers for the first four seasons of excavation do not appear to have survived (Baird 2006: 140). What was lost during those first four years cannot be estimated.

Yale: The Hopkins & Co. (1932 – 1938)

Artifacts were recovered in quantity and in context and were well recorded and published for the time.

(Pollard 2000:45; describing the Yale excavations at Europos)

You're going to find that many of the truths we cling to depend greatly on our own point of view.
(Obi Wan Kenobi speaking to Luke Skywalker in *Star Wars*, Lucas, 1977)

When the original three-year agreement with Syria was extended, the French ceded directorship to Yale for the remaining seasons. Clark Hopkins took over excavations at Europos for Yale and the quality of the excavations was dramatically improved. Not only was the Object Register a standard rather than an afterthought but there was a change in focus as well. While architecture would still rule the day in regard to the most detailed data coming from the excavations, one might also identify what might be called a semiotic turn. From season five

onwards, images and texts (murals, frescoes, inscriptions, papyri, parchment, etc.) also became prized discoveries, with the murals from the Christian Temple and the Synagogue being held in especially high esteem back in the US, as well as an early Christian text (parchment) and the largest cache of military documents (papyri) from the eastern Roman Empire ever recovered.

F. E. Brown¹⁵ was appointed as Hopkins' assistant, about whom, in contrast to Pillet, Hopkins described as, "meticulous in his work, unflagging in energy, gifted with extraordinary insight, he was a bulwark on the work of the last three seasons of my stay at Dura ... a more admirable selection could not have been made" (1976: 119-20).

In addition to hiring a competent second, Franz Cumont returned to examine a Mithraeum uncovered in the military quarter of the city during Hopkins' tenure as director (Hopkins 1976: 194). The Mithraeum possessed extensive artwork and imagery preserved within it, like the Synagogue and the temples to Ba'al/the Palmyrene Gods, Aphlad, Azzanathkona, and the cult of Christ.

Charles Kraeling, who would author the *Final Report* on the Synagogue (Fin. Rep. 8.1 1956) and the "Christian Building" (Fin. Rep. 8.2 1967), visited Europos twice, once in 1933 (Fin. Rep. 8.2: x) and again in either 1934 or 1935 (FR 8.1: i)¹⁶ to see for himself both the Christian Temple and the Jewish Synagogue. Kraeling had been a Lutheran minister (as were his father and brother), a future Director of the Oriental Institute from 1950 – 1954 (Albright 1970), and an expert scholar at the time on the New Testament.

¹⁵ Brown worked as Hopkins assistant during seasons five through eight and then assumed Directorship himself for the final two seasons when Hopkins left Yale for Michigan to direct excavations at Seleucia-on-the-Tigris. Brown's contributions will be critical in an analysis of ritual spaces in Chapter Four. Brown would later become the Director of the Department of Antiquities of Syria after World War II (Kraeling, Fin. Rep. 8.1: i).

¹⁶ Kraeling mentions the season he visited, the eighth, but not which year. The eighth season stretched from the fall of 1934 to the spring of 1935.

However, as precise, progressive and diligent as the Hopkins were in their work compared to Pillet, the excavating and recording of data still suffered from a problem of precision by modern standards, and epistemological limitations of the era, including the non-academic demands of administrators and patrons back in the U.S. When Hopkins took over in 1931, he was told by his superior at Yale, Mikhail Rostovtzeff, “that unless more striking results were obtained ... there was a good chance we would have to discontinue operations at the end of the 1931-1932 season” (Hopkins 1976: 73-5). Hopkins added, that by “striking results” he inferred parchment, papyri or more painted temples.

On the one hand, methods and data collection improved under Hopkins’ direction but, on the other, which questions were being asked of the data, and even deciding on where to focus excavations (and assign the three hundred workers) in those seasons led by Hopkins and Brown still reveal methodical and epistemological concerns.

Daybooks Detail the Damndest Things

January 18 is often used by researchers as the date the Christian Temple was discovered. Using the archives at Yale, however, it appears that more accurately, that on January 16, Hopkins’ team began clearing bricks and fill from within the building intentionally placed there by Roman soldiers expanding the circuit wall next to the temple (*see* “Buried Treasure” section below for details on site formation processes). Hopkins noted,

A fresco on the wall was discovered in the little side chambers of the bldg in front of the tower just S of the main gate. It showed a geometric design in red and black.”¹⁷

¹⁷ Curiously, in Hopkins’ general audience book (1976) he claims the red and black pattern was revealed on the 17th, while it is clearly the 16th in the daybook.

On January 17, the team discovered the back wall of the temple (and revealed some of the alley between the great wall and the temple). And finally, on the 18th enough fill was removed to offer something of a clear view of the murals in the baptistery.

On January 18, we know from Hopkins field notes that the day was “clear and warm” and that he had hired 329 laborers with five foremen to lead them at several ongoing excavations in the city: one at the Temple to Azzanathkona in the northern military quarter, and another near Tower 17 along the great western wall (the tower that sits behind/to the west of the Christian Temple. *See* figure 13 below).

Monday January 18
5 – 150 - 179

Clear + Warm

The steps in the *salle des gradins* in E7 showed the dates of 107 and 25 AD.

In the fresco room in front of the tower S of the main gate the dirt came off one section and showed 5 people in a boat - 2 standing below, one on a bed on the shore - above a god on a cloud and a final figure coming up with the springs of a bed. The colors were pink yellow and red. Bob¹⁸ made a sketch + I took two photographs.

A silver bracelet was found in the S.W. angle.¹⁹

At this point, Clark Hopkins was not aware that he had uncovered an early Christian ritual space. In his daybook, he does not refer to the space as Christian until almost a month later, on February 14. However, by January 26, 1932, he was already aware that he had uncovered a Christian temple of some sort. Writing to a colleague in the US, Alfred “Ed” Bellinger, a numismatist who would write the *Final Report* on Europos’ coins (Fin. Rep. VI: 1949), Hopkins compared the discovery of the Christian temple to a “double touchdown.” In fact, so giddy was

¹⁸ Robert “Bob” Deigert was the chief architect at Europos during the 1931-1932 season.

¹⁹ From Clark Hopkins Daybook held at the YUAG. In this and the following excerpts from Hopkins’ daybook, all notes relevant to the Christian Temple will be boldfaced. The numbers at the beginning of each entry (e.g. 5 – 150 – 179) refer to foremen hired and two different groups of laborers. Hopkins (1976) notes in his general audience book, *The Discovery of Dura Europos* that it was common to hire 300 laborers or more during November, December and January when seasonal labor was most available (68, XX; Pre. Rep. 6: xvii). The *salle des gradins* is the large assembly room in the Temple to Azzanathkona (Room 9W – *see* maps in Chapter Four). The “fresco room” is the Christian Temple, but at this point, January 18, it has not yet been recognized as such, as the Temple’s several still-standing rooms, filled with and covered by mudbrick, were only just being cleared.

he about discovering the Christian Temple and several other major finds that year, Hopkins waxed poetic in said letter, comparing the excavations that season to a series of touchdowns vanquishing an “enemy” (whether the enemy was other university excavations, the threat of cancelled funding, or the desert itself is hard to determine).

...But you should have been here this month, Ed, it was as exciting as a football game of the first [illegible]. First, we made a touchdown in the south west corner of the city by discovering a sanctuary with bas-relief, fresco and inscriptions still intact [the Temple to Aphlad]. Then way over across the whole length of the city walls we made a touchdown in the north-west corner, pulling out one or two temples, a whole *sale des gradins* with 30 or 40 inscriptions in place [the Temple to Azzanathkona] and another bas-relief while all the Arabs and the souls of all the former inhabitants of Dura cheered along the wall. Just as the enemy was reeling from the charge, we pulled a hidden trapdoor trick – something that might well be used in football itself. Charging up among the spectators along the 30-yard line where the tower south of the main gate rises mournfully around the surrounding debris, we uncovered not one but a double touchdown hidden down under the seats, the bag holding a whole room-full of frescos – Christian besides which counts six more points and of the utmost importance which made the goals after touchdown a matter of routine. The hidden double touchdown had never been pulled before in this vicinity since Breasted, and our opponents swooned away by thousands and disappeared into shovelfuls of sand. We have been carrying them to the dumps ever since. I think the enemy is completely demoralized and we expect confidently to nab three or four field goals by parchments before the season is over.²⁰

More than Hopkins’ preference for sports metaphors, this letter offers a glimpse of the on the ground practice of archaeology in 1932. There are claims made by Hopkins in the letter that I believe speak directly to concerns about methodology at Europos during the Yale excavations (as well as that of Early Christianity and classical archaeology writ-large in the twentieth century), specifically the pace at which the excavation took place.

Hopkins noted excitedly, that the expedition had found three temples in the city just that season: pulling “out one or two temples” in the northwest corner of the city and additionally revealing the Christian Temple, all of which have clearly been extensively excavated when he

²⁰ Letter from Clark Hopkins to Alfred “Ed” Bellinger on official excavation letterhead, dated “Jan 26 ‘32” in Hopkins’ hand twelve days after first uncovering the frescoes in the Christian Temple. YUAG archive.

wrote to Bellinger on the 26th. It is important – necessary – to recall that all the rooms in the Christian Temple that Hopkins was clearing were filled with mudbrick and rubble and were cleared out in a matter of days. In fact, we have a reliable idea of just how few days thanks to Hopkins' field notes (and some information gleaned from the Object Register).

Again, from Hopkins' daybook.

Tuesday Jan 19

5-150-179

The men were paid at 3.

In the fresco room the arched section was uncovered by Deigert and myself. It showed a shepherd with a flock of fat-tailed sheep - black painting on light brown background above a deep red. Around arch a narrow black band around dark red and a second black. In the lower left were two people naked except for white loincloths picking apples from a tree, and in front a large serpent. The scene was bordered by two trees.

Two tents were stretched over the room just before the end of the day and held in place by nails to protect the paintings.

A bas relief on the wall of E7W9 [the Temple to Azzanathkona] showed Atargartis seated between her lions – above, a man apparently leading a bull. The scene was enclosed in a temple front with bird in pediment and well-fluted columns on the side.

Sent a cable to Bacquet by the post.²¹

The image of a shepherd bearing a ram for sacrifice predates Christianity and was a common image in Greco-Roman art. Called, *Kriophoros*, the ram-bearer, in Greek, the image was appropriated by Christians to represent Jesus as shepherd and sacrifice, with the addition of a flock of sheep representing his followers. Jesus, as the Good Shepherd, was also attested to in a popular early Christian text, *The Shepherd of Hermas*. This collection of visions, mandates, and parables was at one time in the early Church considered canon, but by the fourth century rejected, in part due to its claim that Jesus was born of flesh and “adopted” by the Divine. Such a claim contradicts the Trinitarianism that dominated the Church by the fourth century (the notion that Jesus, his

²¹ Emile Bacquet, “expert technician from the Louvre” (Hopkins 1979:104) was brought in to remove the murals from the Christian Temple to be shipped to Yale.

father, the Lord in Heaven, and the Holy Spirit, are three parts of a single whole; all divine and all co-equal).

This mural (below) at Europos may be the oldest known representation of “The Good Shepherd” that can be definitively linked to Christian use due to the fact that rather than present with distinctly pagan images as was often the case before the fourth century, it is combined with an image of Adam and Eve and the Tree of knowledge/life/forbidden fruit, etc., from the Old testament.

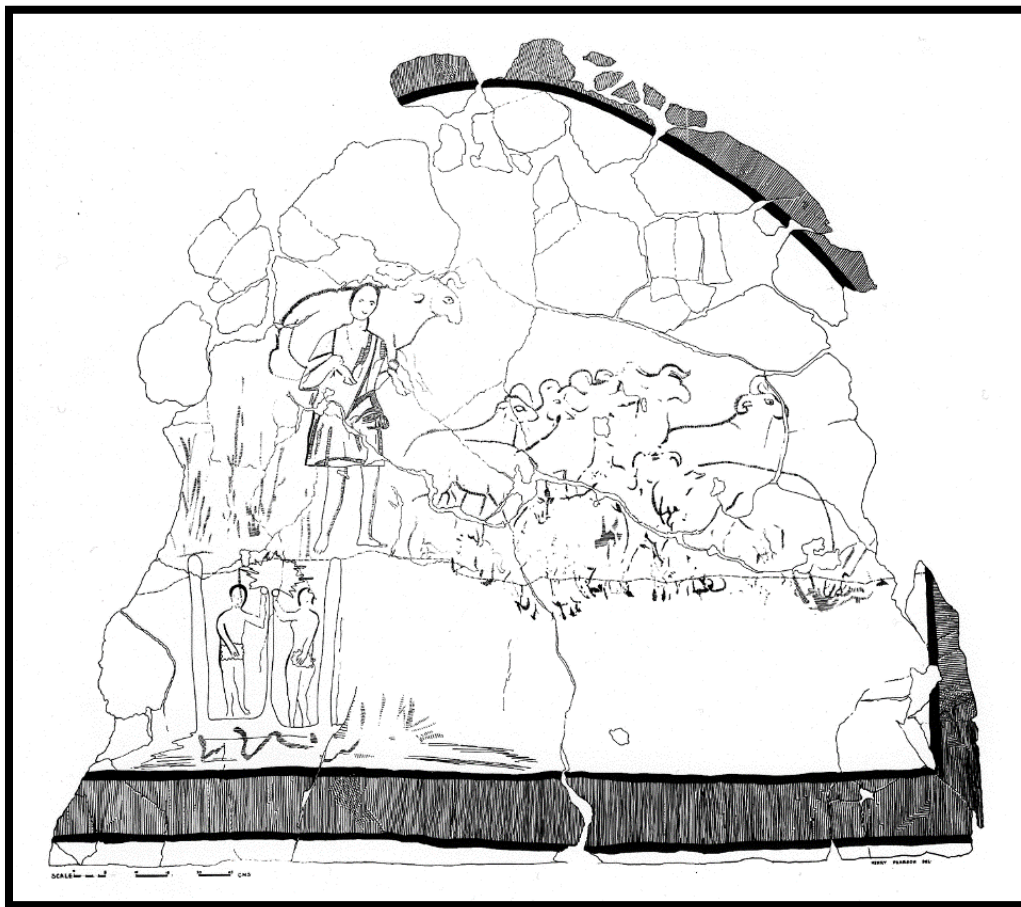


Figure 11: Drawing of the mural of “the shepherd scene” which Hopkins speaks of in daybook entries above. Adam and Eve at the Tree in the lower left quarter. Jesus/Good Shepherd of Hermas/Kriophoros bearing a ram with flock of sheep above. (YUAG)

Over the next five or six days, Hopkins' team would all but clear out the debris and mud brick filling the western rooms of the building, revealing the entire baptistery:

Wednesday Jan 20 – Day of rest Cloudy + pleasant

Pearson and I uncovered frescoes in the morning. The lower right-hand side of the room showed two men, one with wand like a small palm tree in right hand and bowl in left, the second with stick or sword in right, bowl at breast in left, both advancing left toward large white bldg pediment style with great star over each gable.

The scene at lower left side of room showed the top of a figure with arm raised holding a sword - on the arm was written ΔΑΟΥΙΔ [DAVID] – above an immense prostrate figure was inscribed Γολιθα [Golitha/Goliath] An inscr. by the door ran: ΤΟΝ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥ ΜΝΗΣ ΚΕΤΕ ΣΙΣΕΟΝ ΤΟΝ ΤΑΠΙΝΟΝ [sic²²; Approximate translation is: a blessing for Christ to remember well Siseon, the humbled one]

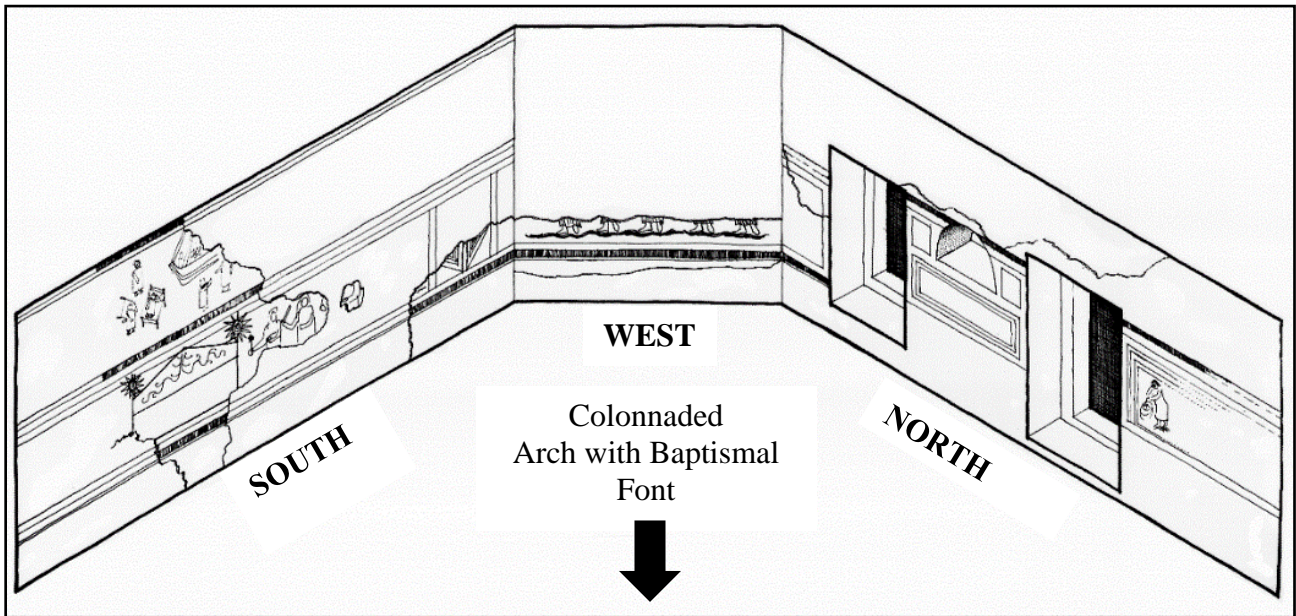


Figure 12: Clockwise from left, southern, eastern and northern walls of the baptistery in the Christian Temple, Extensive murals were preserved in this room as illustrated here and described in Hopkins' daybook. More detailed images and discussions of these murals will follow in this Chapter and Chapter Five. (YUAG).

Thursday Jan 21 Cloudy + Pleasant
5 – 153 – 182

A wall was built up in front of the fresco room when it was found they [the frescoes] were too wet to clean.

Deigert and I tried to fit together pieces from the top of the shepherd scene.

A lamp with a cupid was found in G, Several plaster busts were found in E7 G.

²² Hopkins used a seemingly arbitrary mix of upper- and lower-case Greek characters in his daybook. The original appears to be uncial (written in all capital Greek letters).

Saturday Jan 23

[Hopkins and his team received a visit from a German researcher, Dr. Papinberger, leading tourists down the Euphrates]

Sunday Jan 24

5 – 152 – 182

Spent the morning showing Dr. Papinberger and his comrades around. M. Basquet [sic] arrived at 3:00 P.M. delayed by snow in the [illegible]. **Bob** [Deigert] *and I put together the pieces of the shepherd scene in the afternoon.*

Monday Jan 25

Clear + Warm

5 – 153 – 182

Made notes on the frescoes. Bob measured the Room, Bacquet got ready to take them down.

On the following day, Tuesday, January 26, 1932 – the same day that Hopkins would write Bellinger – Hopkins' team uncovered a collection of papyri in the temple to Azzanathkona – a collection of military papyri that would become recognized as some of the most detailed information ever recovered regarding military practices in the eastern Roman Empire. Hopkins then turned his personal attention there.²³ Bacquet wouldn't have an opportunity to begin removing the murals until March and wouldn't finish the task until the beginning of the next season in November (Hopkins 1976), but the daybook entry indicating that the room (the baptistry) was measured and that Bacquet began preparation to remove the murals, indicate that the Yale team discovered the baptistry, cleared the room of most of its debris – dozens of cubic meters of fill – and began preparations to remove the murals in some ten days: January 16 – 26.²⁴

²³ These papyri are discussed in more detail in Chapter Four particularly regarding how their finding has influenced problematic interpretations of the temple to Azzanathkona as having been turned over the military after Roman troops commandeered the northern third of the city as their encampment.

²⁴ One mural, on the bottom of the east wall (facing the reader in *Figure 2* below) was not discovered until later in the season – details follow below.

To fully understand why all of this is so important, we will need to detail the conditions of the baptistery when Hopkins and his team came upon it in January of 1932. First, for reference purposes, an image of the baptistery after excavation, restoration and reconstruction, while on exhibition at the Yale University Art Gallery in the 1930s



Figure 13: The baptismal font of the Christian temple as displayed at the Yale University art gallery including original architectural and artistic elements as excavated by Hopkins as well as considerable reconstruction. The entire room was recreated at Yale from the 1930s until the 1970s. (Kraeling Fin. Rep. 8.2: x; Peppard 2016:3) (YUAG)

Next, let us recall an isometric reconstruction of the Christian Temple after it was fully excavated, presented in the Introduction:

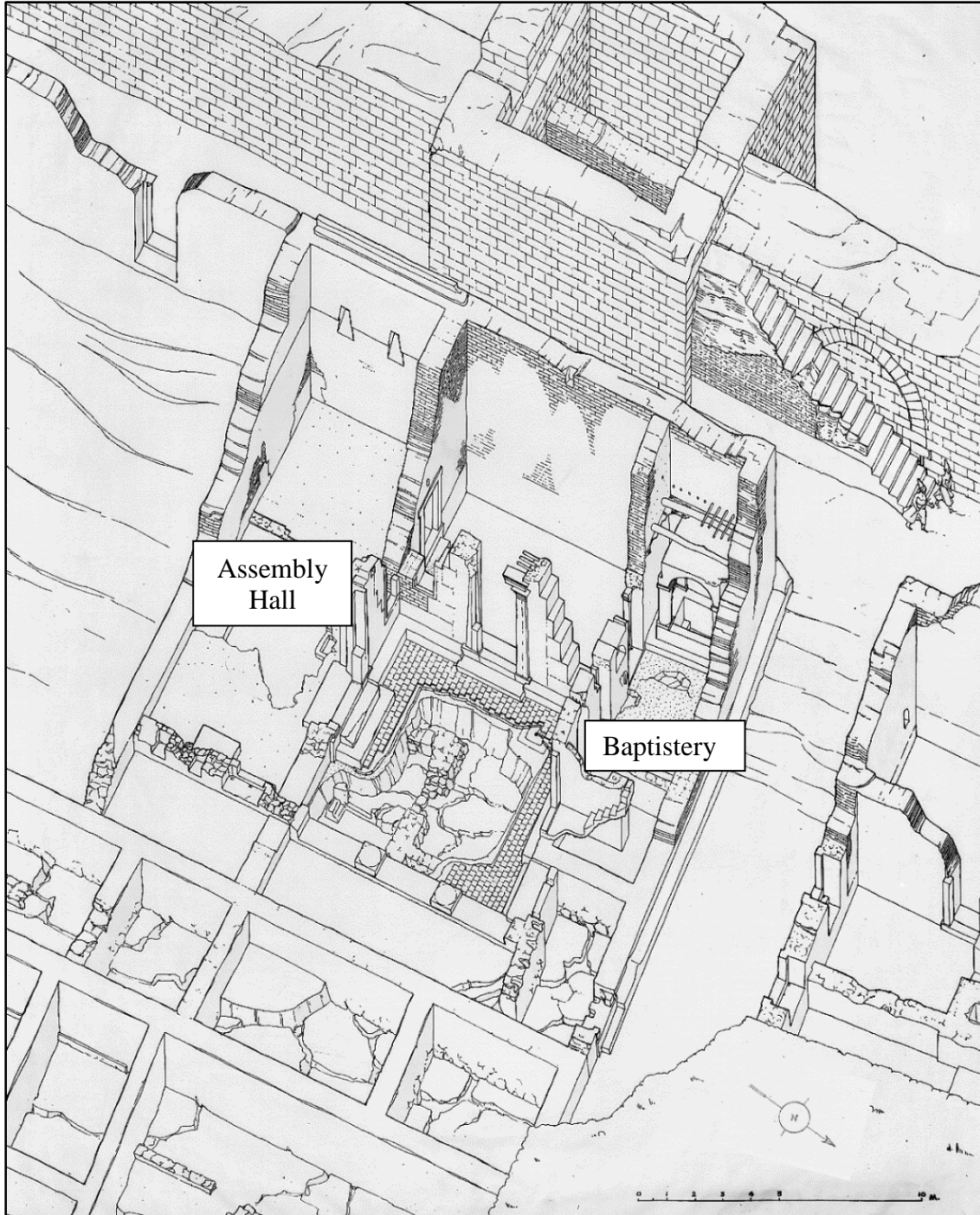


Figure 14: Isometric drawing of Christian Temple as excavated by the Yale team in 1932. City wall is west. Note that much more of the western part of the temple (closest to the city wall) was preserved than the eastern side. (YUAG)

With these two images, the reader should have sufficient context for the next section, which will detail how the building and parts of its interior came to be so well preserved, and why the

western rooms of the building were filled with mud bricks in the first place. The following pages will describe and illustrate the steps involved in the excavation of the Baptistery – and by necessity the site formation processes that lead to this method of excavation – and are presented in a narrative and illustrative manner for two reasons.

First, because more typical data, such as the precise provenience and counts of pottery sherds, coins, fine analysis of soil samples for macrobotanical remains, palynological appraisals, etc. are simply not available. Instead, we have the methods of excavation and their recording as described in Preliminary and *Final Reports* published by Yale, the archives of documents still extant at the YUAG which informed those reports, and the research published by the MFSED to make up our data sets.

The second reason for detailing the excavation of the baptistery in this manner is to make clear the problems and limitations that said methods present for the modern researcher and to show how much data may have been lost, per Frend's warning at the beginning of this chapter.

Buried "Treasure" – Site Formation Processes

At this point, in order to understand why the isometric image of the extant church as found by Hopkins and his team looks the way it does above (with its western wall preserved to its full height and the eastern walls all but gone), it's necessary to offer a summary of the historical events that lead to the Christian Temple being preserved to a height of more than five meters on its western side (FR 8.2 1967: 5), while the east side of the building was barely preserved to a height of 20 cm (FR 8.2 1967: 19).

When Europos was attacked by Persia in 256/7, Roman soldiers increased the breadth of the city's defensive wall by more than 15 meters from the wall's original width. Most of the

increase in size was added on the interior/city side of the wall including filling and covering any parts of any roads or structures in their way. Filling buildings with mud brick and other construction debris to make them load bearing required less time than demolishing buildings and building a rampart with mud brick anew (Fin. Rep. VII James 2007: 30-1; see figures 15 and 16 below). The expanded wall gave troops more space to organize their wall defenses and the new earthen ramparts were less susceptible to damage from catapult bullets (masonry tends to crack or shatter when hit with hard projectiles, while earth absorbs impact and is more forgiving).

Roman troops demolished any structures, or parts of structures, immediately abutting the newly expanded wall, thereby creating a *place d'armes* within the rest of the block to the east (figure 16).



Figure 15: Catapult bullets excavated in the Citadel by Yale. Child for scale(?) (YUAG)

This effort on the part of the Roman military meant that the portions of any structures nearest the wall were not destroyed but rather, well-preserved, filled with mud brick and covered in earth at the time of the battle in the 250s CE, protected from both war machines and the environment. Among those buildings protected thusly were the Christian Temple, the Temple to Azzanathkona, the Jewish Synagogue, the Temple to Bel, and the Temple to Aphlad.

In order to clearly understand the state of the Christian Temple when Hopkins came upon it, several images by Hopkins and Pillet can provide some context. The first is a very rough sketch of the Christian Building and its individual rooms as they were left by Pillet, the director who began excavating the building that would later be identified as the Christian Temple (figure 17).

But Pillet never advanced into the rooms filled with mud brick and rubble (labeled, “UNEXCAVATED,” in figure 17). He only cleared those rooms and that part of the temple which were minimally covered by the expanded ramparts and which bore no artistic or artifactual evidence that the building was used by Christians.

Figures 19 and 20 offer an impression of what excavators saw during their initial discovery of the Good Shepherd painting over the baptismal font as it was revealed from behind the mud brick and fill.

This first image (figure 19) shows just the top of the arch over the font as Hopkins’ team began clearing the room of brick and debris. The apex of the arch is about three meters above the level of the floor in the room.

Next (figure 20), we can see the point at which the Good Shepherd mural was revealed.

Lastly, figure 21 shows the baptistery nearly completely excavated.

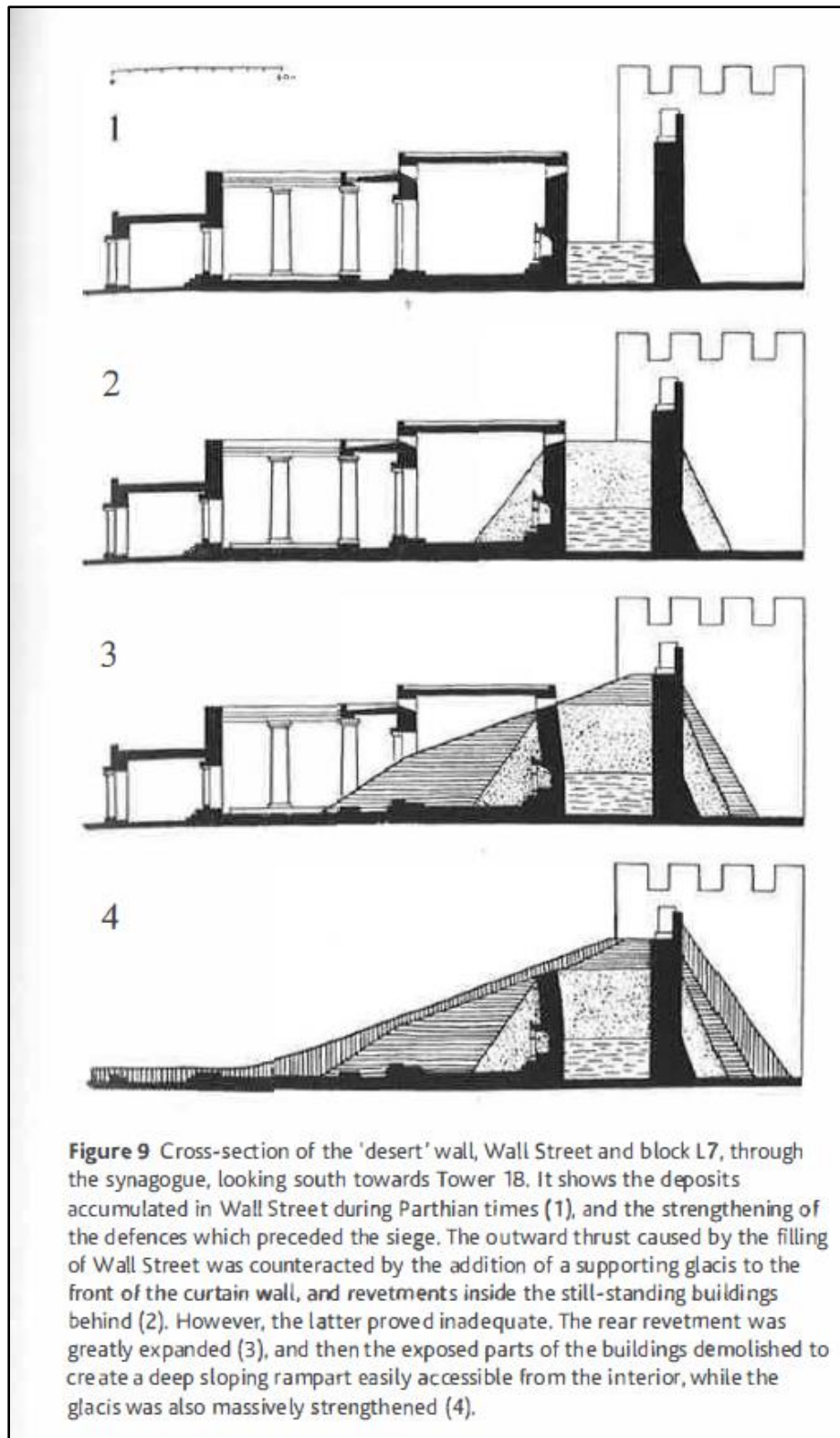


Figure 16: From James (2007: 31), a series of profiles showing the process of expanding the ramparts within the city and by filling in "Wall Street" and filling and covering portions of the buildings closest to the wall.

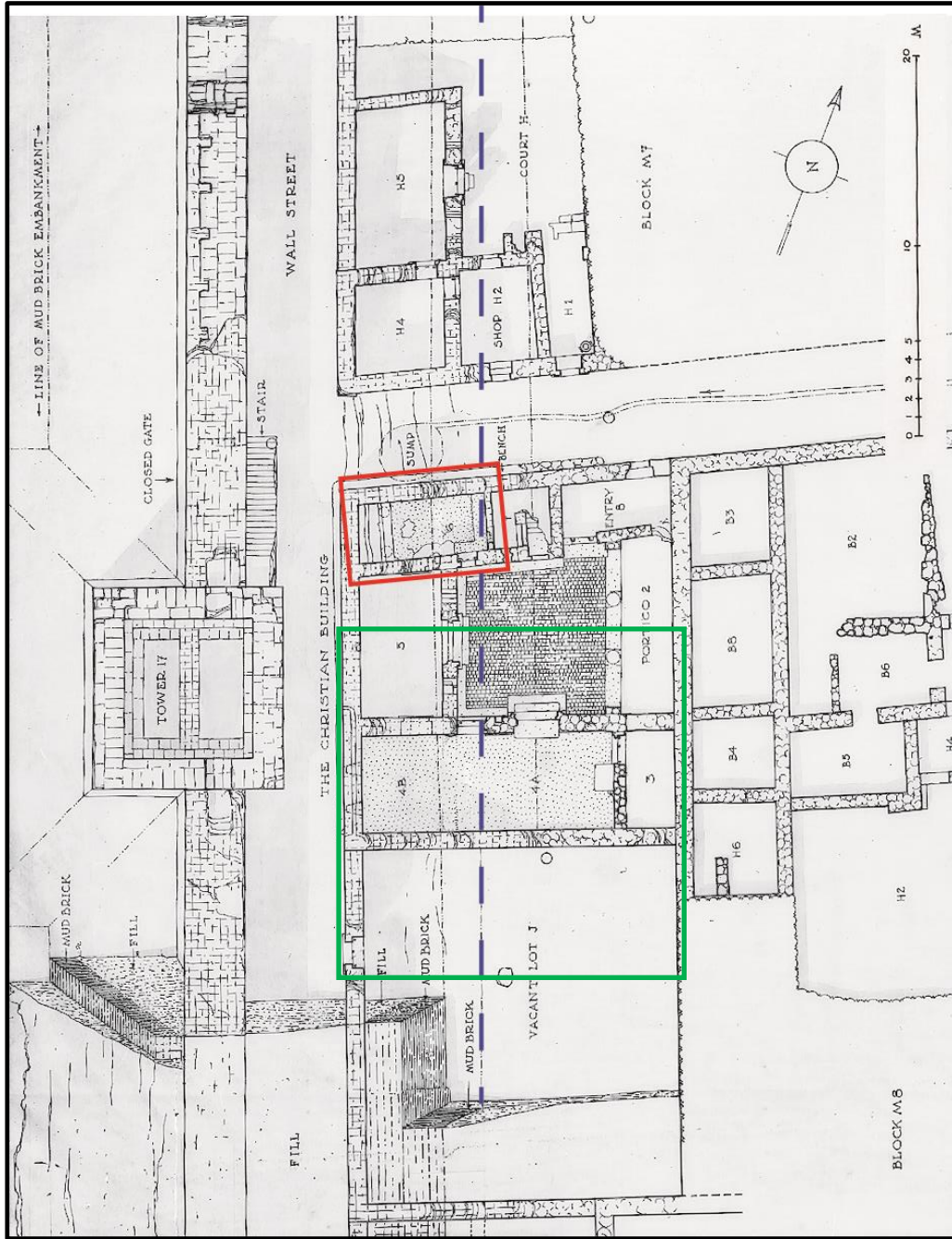


Figure 17: Plan view of eastern end of block M8 (where the Christian temple, outlined in green, is located), showing cut-away of mud brick and fill extensions of city wall during Persian siege in 256/7 CE. Baptistery is outlined in red. Limit of mud brick and fill used to support the new larger wall (and used within some standing structures to make them load bearing) is in blue. Everything west (to the left) of the dashed blue line was either covered in or filled with five-plus meters of brick and fill. The area east (to the right) of the blue line became a new place d'armes with all of the structures formerly located there (Rooms B and H at center right of the map) were razed to the ground so that only the foundations of the buildings are still in situ. (YUAG)

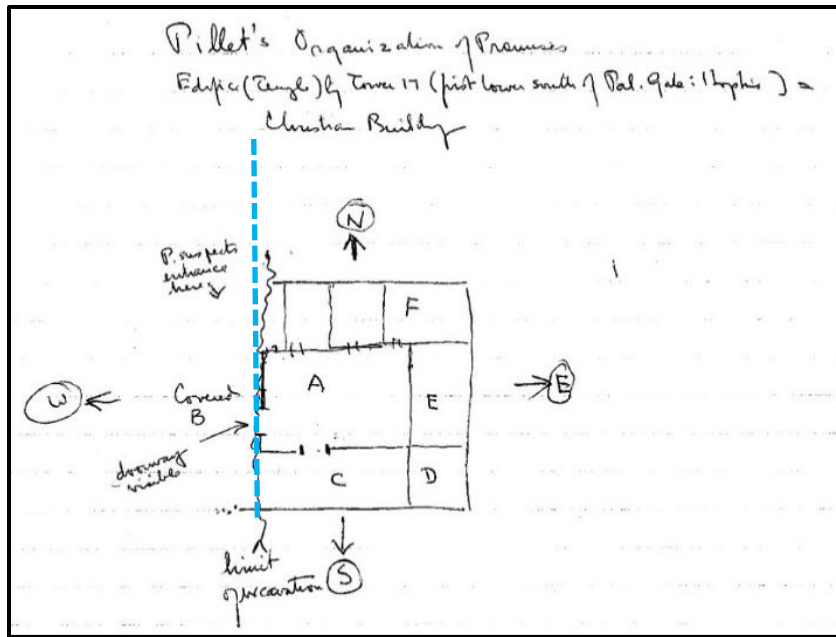


Figure 18: Handwritten text reads: "Pillet's Organization of [illegible] Edifice (Temple) by Tower 17 (first tower south of Pal. Gate: Hopkins) = Christian Building." The "limit of excavation" (blue dashed line) in this sketch corresponds with the limit of mud brick and fill in figure 16 above (also a blue dashed line). This original image preserved at the YUAG has neither an author nor date attached to it; however due to the fact that the plan names the "Christian Building" in the sketch – something Pillet was unaware of when he finished his work there – we can assume the sketch was made after January of 1932. (YUAG)

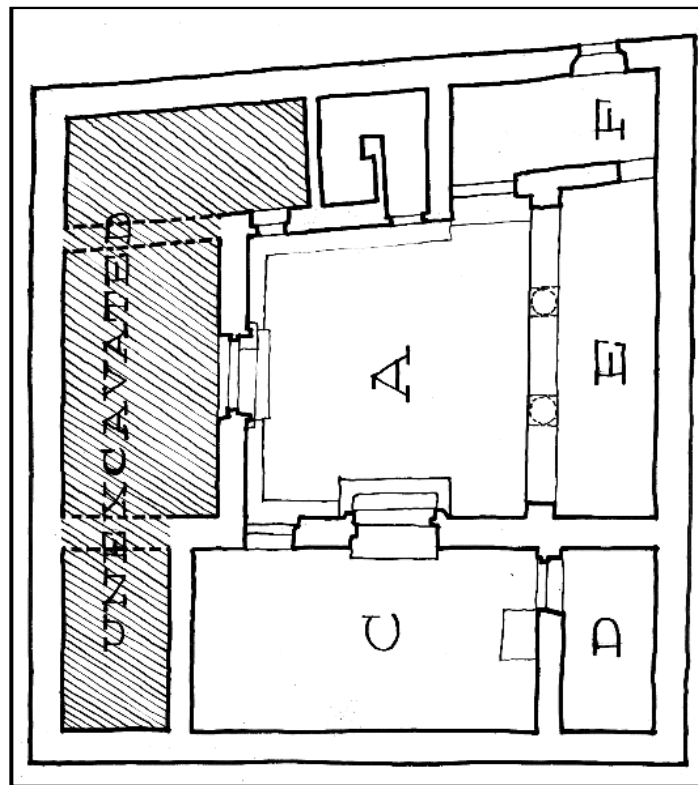


Figure 19: Publication ready plan based on figure 18. Artist unknown. Shaded areas were left unexcavated by Pillet – rooms were still filled with brick and debris when Hopkins re-started work on the building and rampart over the rear/western portion of the building. The long thin room, shaded in the upper left-hand corner (NW), is the baptistry. (YUAG)

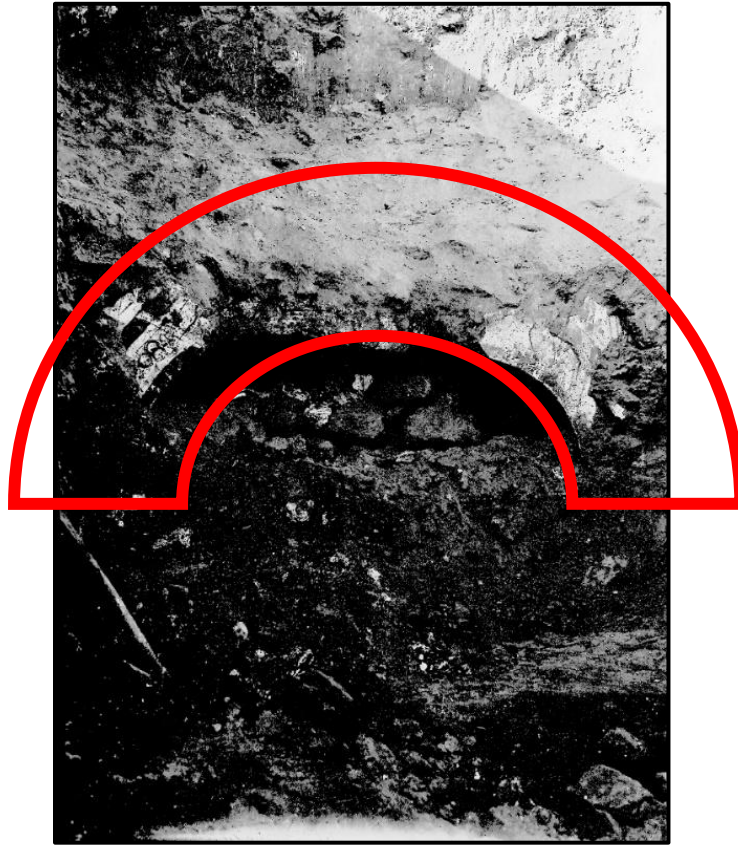


Figure 20: Though difficult to see, this is the top of the arched and columnated baptismal font with mud brick and rubble still filling most of the room and concealing the rest of the font as well as murals on the surrounding walls. Barely visible is the decorated arch above the font's basin. (YUAG)

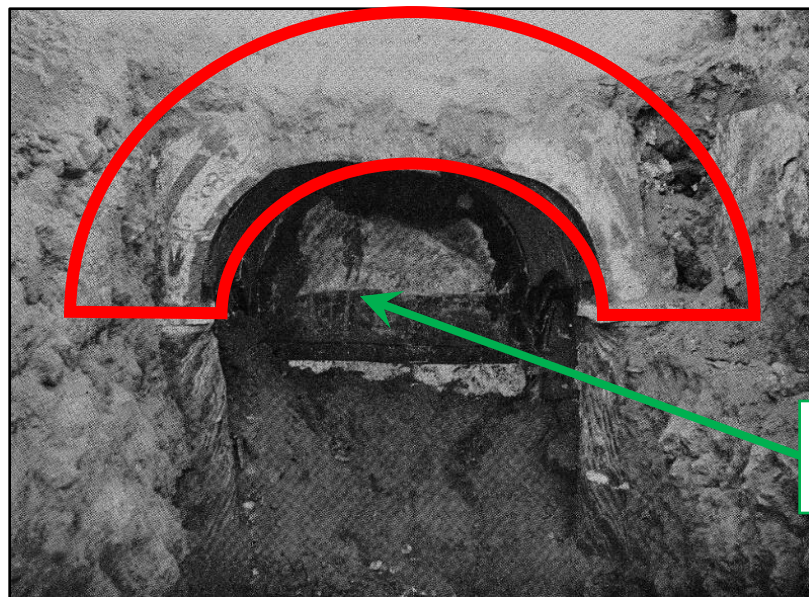


Figure 21: As brick and rubble were removed, more of the baptismal font was revealed along with the "Good shepherd" mural.



Figure 22: Baptistery largely excavated (some mud bricks still appear at left hand side of photo). The mural of the Good Shepherd under the arch, and the plaster font at the bottom have been removed. Photo likely taken in Spring or Fall of 1932.

Although Hopkins notes in his daybook that excavators did not reveal the font at the bottom of the colonnaded arch nor one of the murals at the bottom of the eastern (rear) wall until sometime in March, it is safe to say that the Baptistery was all but entirely excavated when Bacquet and field architect and artist, Robert “Bob” Deigert, measured and prepped the room on January 25 for the eventual removal of the murals.

Racing to the Bottom (of the Baptistery)

Let us recall some of the data offered in the above narrative (the reader should refer again to the isometric drawing of the building, figure 13, for a visual aid to the following discussion):

The western end of the Christian Temple was preserved to a height of approximately five meters under the expanded rampart and also filled with brick and rubble in order to make it a load bearing structure.

On January 16 enough of the earthen rampart was cleared that Hopkins noted in his daybook, “a fresco on the wall was discovered in the little side chambers of the bldg in front of the tower just S of the main gate. It showed a geometric design in red and black.”

On January 18, 1932, Hopkins noted that the fresco was the top of a mural in the room that would be revealed soon enough as the baptistery.

On January 25, Bacquet and Deigert measured the empty room and began preparing the murals for removal indicating that the vast majority of an enormous amount of brick and fill was taken out of the baptistery in less than 10 days.

Just how much fill? The baptistery was approximately 4.2 meters wide (N-S) and 7.5 meters long (E-W) with an aforementioned height of five meters: a space of over 150 cubic meters. Given that the colonnaded font installed in the room was some two meters in length by three meters in width by three meters in height, it would displace some 18 cubic meters if it were a solid block. But much of the baptistery is empty space and it too was filled with brick and rubble as seen in the images above (figures 15 - 21). Accounting for the space displaced by the colonnaded archway and its font and allowing for some fill still remaining on the floor of the room when the paintings were prepped on January 25, a conservative estimate of the fill removed would be about 125 cubic meters, which would weigh approximately 150 metric tons,²⁵ all removed between January 17 and January 25. Hopkins and his team were removing at least 15 metric tons of mudbrick and fill per day, the equivalent of about a dozen standard one by one-meter units, excavated a meter deep, each day.

Hopkins (1979) described the excavation years later, “We needed *several days* to dig out the Chapel and *some additional days* to identify all the scenes (91; emphasis mine).” A statement that suggests it took less than my estimated ten days to clear the building of fill. And when one consults the Object Register, there we find there are some 21 artifacts registered between Jan 16 and January 19 in Block M8 (the city block in which the Christian Temple is located), and then no more artifact entries for the rest of the season from the entire block let alone just the Christian

²⁵ Weight of fill determined by average weight of mud bricks provided by the Australian Government’s guide to environmentally sustainable homes: <http://www.yourhome.gov.au/materials/mud-brick> Accessed 03/26/18.

Temple. These data suggest the building was cleared of fill in just four days, from the 16th to the 19th. If true, then the volume of earth excavated per day estimated above should be doubled in order to accurately understand the rate of excavation that took place.

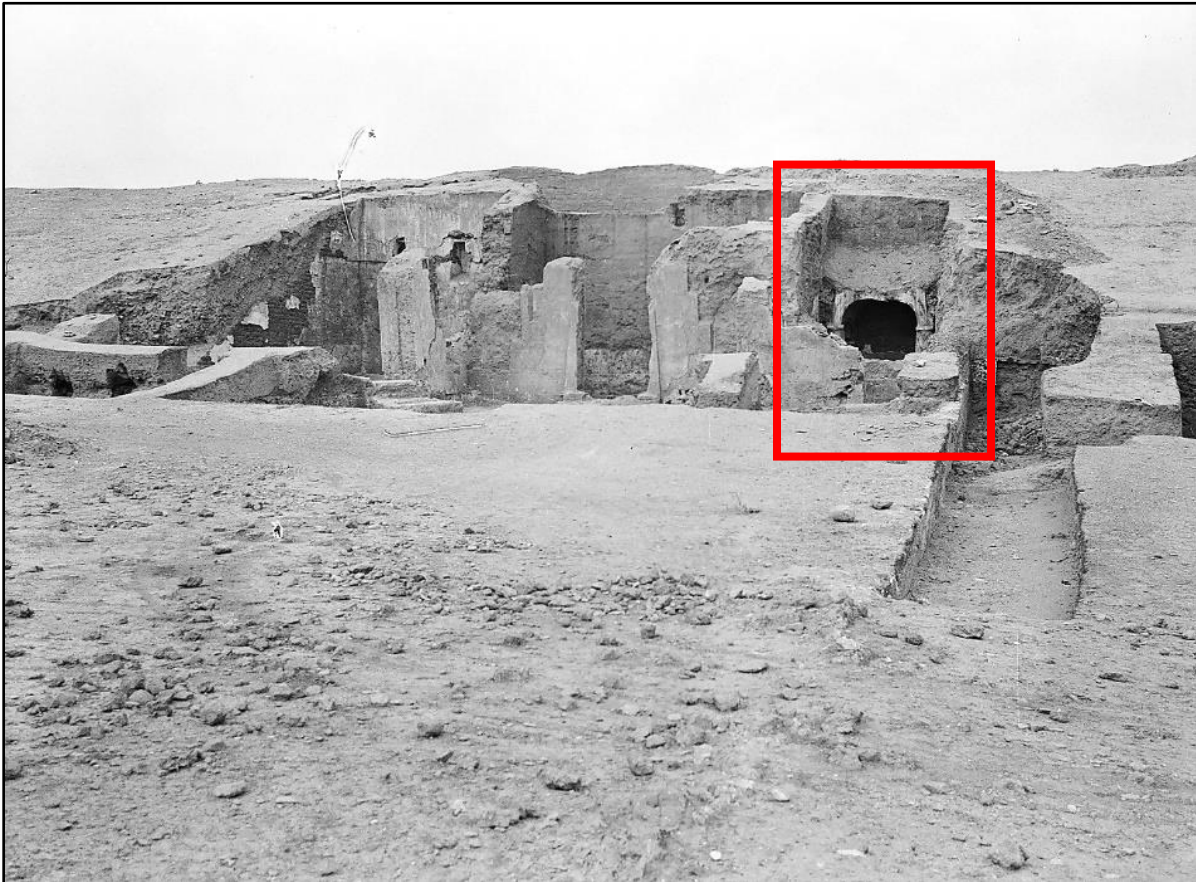


Figure 23: Picture of Christian Temple largely cleared of mud brick and debris (facing west) in 1932. Baptistery highlighted in red. Extant expanded ramparts made of brick and fill are immediately to the left and right of the building.

The sheer volume and speed of which fill was removed at Europos was not uncommon for such excavations in the Middle East in the first half of the twentieth-century. “Digging by guess or God,” *déblayage* (the clearing of topsoil indiscriminately to reach foundations of a specific period) a lack of attention to stratigraphy, and “large numbers of unskilled and often inadequately supervised workmen,” were all norms for the day (Frend 1996: 180-83).

Europos was hardly free from these very problems. During the entire fifth season, when the Christian Temple was excavated, of the twenty-six artifacts entered into the Object Register as

found in the entire block of M8, 14 of them are noted as coming from the Mud Brick wall, not the Temple itself. Several of the remaining 12 artifacts found on the block have no provenience at all and only nine artifacts are noted as coming from the Temple, either noted as found in “the fresco room” (the baptistery) or the “great chamber.”²⁶ Three of the artifacts listed as excavated from the Mud Brick wall in season five were not entered until the eighth season and have find dates in December of 1931, a month before any work was done by Hopkins’ team on block M8.

While errors like this are bound to occur when tracking thousands of artifacts across the world over decades, simply uncovering these errors required manipulating and analyzing data from the Object Registers in ways that require an expertise with the entire chain of custody, so to speak, of artifacts found at Europos, starting with understanding the conditions on the ground at the excavation and ending with how eventually the Yale University Art Gallery has since archived the data.

For example, comparably, in season six, when much more of block M8 was excavated including domestic spaces surrounding the Christian Temple, and the removal of the remaining fill between the circuit wall and the western exterior walls of all the buildings on the block, 1,168 artifacts were logged from block M8, most²⁷ from the fill in “Wall Street” the alley between the block and the circuit wall. It is true that in season five (1931-1932), only the western rooms of the Christian Temple and the fill immediately behind it (to the west) in the alley, were excavated, while in season six, an area ten times as large was excavated in Block M8. But while the area

²⁶ It is unclear as to which room in the Christian Temple is the “great chamber.” The central courtyard of the temple, or either of the two largely still-standing rooms to the south of the baptistery (*see Figure 8* above). The courtyard had been largely cleared by Pillet previous to Hopkins excavating at the building, so it is more likely that artifacts listed as coming from the “great chamber” were found in one of the other two rooms filled with mudbrick and debris. If true, this suggests that these rooms were also being excavated at the same time as the baptistery further multiplying the rate of fill being removed daily by Hopkins’ team.

²⁷ “Most” in this case is based on the search and query capabilities of a spreadsheet of known artifacts designed by Jennifer Baird (2006) and further developed by the author.

excavated in season six was ten times the area excavated in season five, the number of artifacts recorded for season six was 60 times as large as the number of artifacts entered in season five. While any number of unknown factors could be the reason for such a discrepancy, when one considers that excavations in Block M8 during season six were spread out over four months, while excavations of the baptistery and its adjoining rooms were done in less than ten days, the possibility that the rush to clear the baptistery and reveal the murals resulted in overlooking artifacts in the fill is high – and resembles Frend’s critique of biblical archaeology a bit too well.

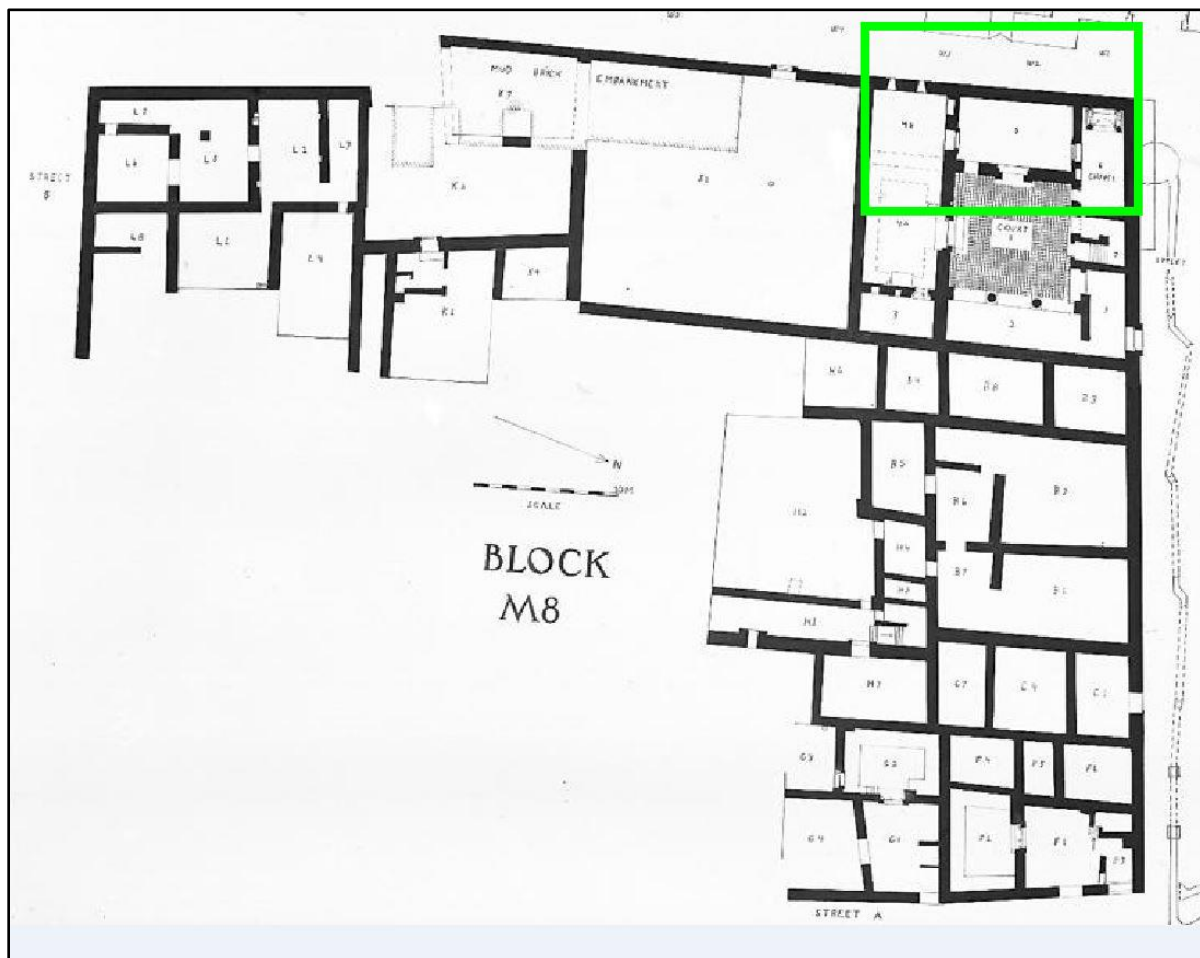


Figure 24: Block M8 as excavated by Yale during seasons five and six. The Christian Temple is in the northwest corner (top-right) and the green square highlights the area of the temple excavated during season five. The rest of the structures drawn on this plan map were excavated in season six. Twenty-six artifacts are entered in the Object Register as having been found in the area outlined in green during season five, while over 1,100 artifacts – over six percent of all artifacts logged at Euopos, were found in the remainder of the excavated areas.

It needs to be stated, of course, that the artifacts logged from the fill in the Christian Temple were out of context as would any artifacts overlooked while removing the fill. Associating them with the Christian Temple would be folly. This I cannot argue,²⁸ however my goal here is not to suggest the loss of early Christian artifacts specifically during the quick excavation of the Baptistery, but the loss of artifactual data in general during the excavation of the baptistery and the alley behind it. Undoubtedly using the “shovel broadcast method,”²⁹ at least tens of workers were moving crumbled brick and other fill into small cars that sat on temporary rails moving the excavated soil to other parts of the site, often in the middle of other streets in the city to prevent covering other buildings but complicating modern street excavations writ-large in that Yale’s backfill locations were not tracked (pers. comm. Pierre Leriche 2010). Accordingly, it is also safe to say that the artifacts found in the fill lack archaeological context writ-large, being of a quasi-structured deposition: artifacts were likely found in the fill either as a result of Roman soldiers and workers losing them when filling the building or they were in the matrix of debris from razed buildings or soil used to make the bricks.

Another and rather crucial provenience problem for this project involves determining what it means when an object is said to have been found in a specific room. Of those nine artifacts registered as coming from the “fresco room” or the “great chamber,” it is not clear from the Object

²⁸ In lieu of argument, it is worth noting that the only artifact not associated with the artwork and architecture of the baptistery which is also indisputably of Christian origin are papyri containing non-canonical Christian text found in the fill of the extended rampart about in between the Christian Temple and the Jewish Synagogue. “Judging from its condition and outward appearance when found, it had been crushed in the hand and thrown away as a piece of waste paper” (Kraeling 1935:3). Hopkins (Pre. Rep. 6: 172), concluded that the fill used to build the extended ramparts over Wall Street and the first few meters of buildings next to it, came from the destruction and razing of buildings in the western end of the blocks closest to the wall, both creating a new *place d’armes* and producing enough fill and debris to support the ramparts. The find-spot of the Christian papyri in the fill behind Block L8 near Tower 18 lends more credence to Hopkins interpretation that the fill for the extended rampart came from nearby, demolished buildings.

²⁹ “Shovel Broadcast” is borrowed from farming terminology for the spreading of seeds. I’ve only heard the term used once archaeologically in a classroom setting describing the process of shoveling dirt while looking out for artifacts as shovelfuls of earth are “broadcast” to a backfill pile or wheelbarrow (Stephen Silliman, UMass Boston, 2005). I was able to find a mention of the “method” in Fredrickson (2004).

Register whether these artifacts should be associated with the room listed as a find spot (as some coins were found in the plaster of a wall, or beneath the surface of a plastered floor) or if they came from the fill but excavators observed something that encouraged them to associate the object with the room rather than the mudbrick and debris. If the latter, such objects may not be associated with the room listed as a find spot regardless of the provenience data in the Object Register. Yale's archaeologists' records for this part of Block M8 cannot be entirely trusted in that the rapidity with which they excavated, the demands being made of Hopkins and Co. by Yale, and Hopkins' objective of revealing the Christian murals being his main concern, reveal clear biases towards the remarkable rather than the ordinary. To determine accurately the find spot within the room (fill or floor; associated with the room, or the debris), one must hope that an artifact with a room listed as a find spot is mentioned in some detail in either the Preliminary or *Final Reports*.

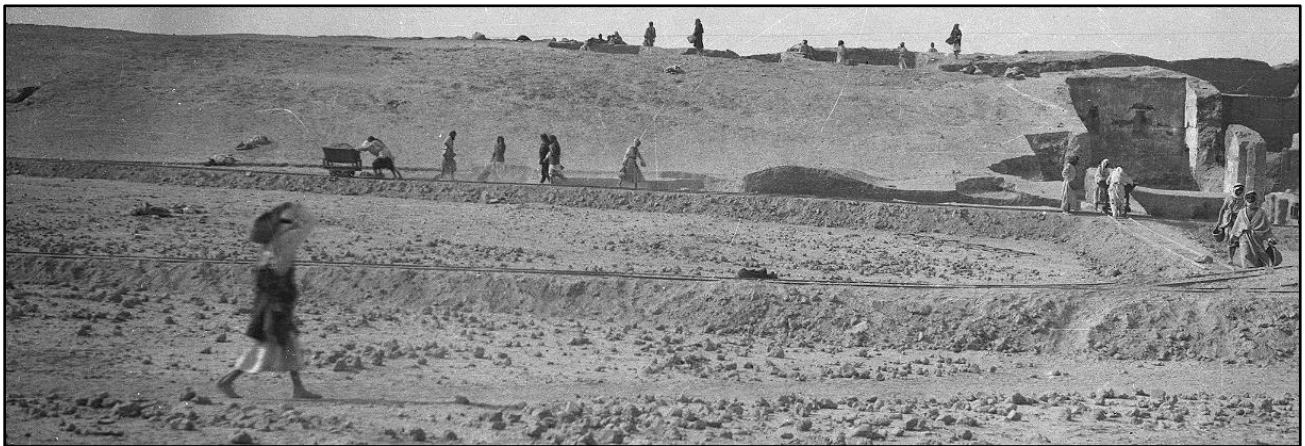


Figure 25: Worker clearing fill from Christian building via cart and rails. Room C from Figures 8 and 9 above is seen cleared at the right end of the photo. (YUAG)

It also doesn't bode well for the modern researcher to come across a photo like the one below (figure 25), taken at the east end of the baptistery showing a small pile of ceramics sitting on the ground within the baptistery walls:

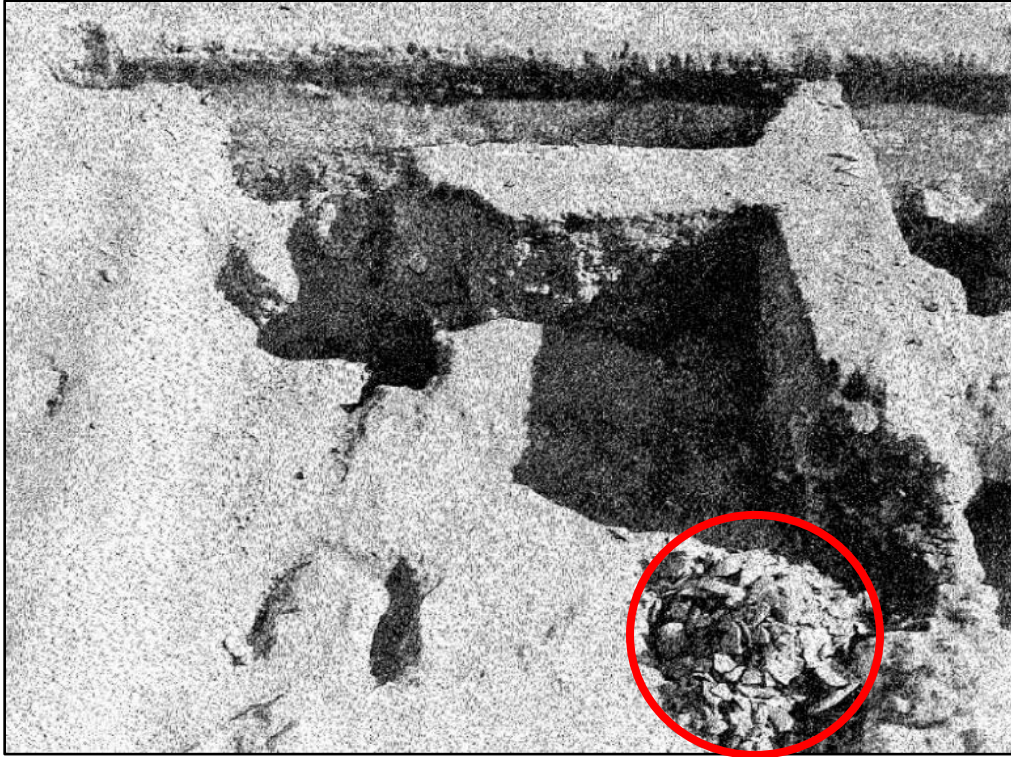


Figure 26: Images like this are doubly troubling because not only does this image's negative number not match any negative info from Yale's image database (AXS) it is described as taken at the Christian Temple, but when and why are a mystery (YUAG).

No data in *Preliminary Reports*, *Final Reports* or Object Registers³⁰ notes such a large ceramic find in the baptistery, either in the fill, or when excavating the floor of the room itself (which if the latter case, said ceramics might arguably be artifacts associated with the Christian Building, if not Christian practice).³¹ Further, the photo above lacks clear metadata as to when it was shot (a rare thing because the Yale University Art Gallery has done an incomparable job of retrieving data and metadata for the thousands of photos sketches, plan maps, etc. that resulted

³⁰ One of the three *Final Reports* on ceramic finds offers no context information on the ceramics discussed (Pre. Rep. IV, Part 1, Fascicle 2, Greek and Roman Pottery). The other two offer as much provenience information as available but have no indices, making it near impossible to access the types of ceramics found in any one locale (block, building or room). As noted by Dyson (1968: vii; PR IV, Part 1, Fascicle 3), "In view of the changes in the roster of excavators over the year ... it is understandable that the system of designating places of finding (*loci*) of the pottery changed from time to time and that not all of the loci are understandable ... numerous pieces came to Yale without any indication of locus at all, and some of these escaped even being inventoried."

³¹ In season nine there is an entry in the Object Register for artifacts found in the Christian Building that reads, "Brittleware sherds" but does not indicate the count, a room designation or an "accession number" which refers to any photograph taken of listed artifacts. If the photo above (figure 25) is of all brittleware (impossible to determine) and was taken in the ninth season, no such information on the photo was ever recorded.

from the Europos excavation). Knowing when the photo was shot would allow one to at least focus on one single season of entries from the Object register in an attempt to find any data on such a collection of ceramics. But as Baird (2006) noted, “whilst there are *Final Reports* on some of the pottery that was collected, from a quantitative standpoint these are all but useless and are heavily biased towards material from the necropolis” (56). The necropolis, a region of above- and below-ground tombs that dotted the plateau outside the city’s main (Palmyra) gate, was a source of complete ceramic objects, the type of artifact that was both diagnostic and impressive to non-specialists (who ultimately funded the excavation).

While it is not this author’s intention to dismiss Yale’s work in the 1920s and ‘30s, it is important to detail the on the ground realities of both excavation and recording methods at the time so that one can more fully understand the epistemological concerns that underpin both the claims of this dissertation, and previous works using Yale data less than critically. It is one thing to self-reflexively bemoan the state of our discipline nearly a century ago in regards to biases and brute excavation methodologies, but conversely, it’s worth noting that the Yale team were among the best and brightest in regards to shared and acquired knowledge of many related disciplines necessary to interpret the material remains of life at Europos (religious history, Roman history, Persian history, ancient architecture, numismatics, regional and period ceramic identification and dating, etc.) and they had access to considerable technology for the day from cameras, to a small convoy of automobiles, still rare in the Syrian steppe in the 1920s and ‘30s. So, rather than generalizations about archaeology’s “tomb-raiding” past, I have opted in the preceding pages to offer a narrative showing the daily practice of excavation during Yale’s tenure at the site drawing from the mission’s recorded data and the rich archives of the expedition held at Yale.

From Yale's archives, the primary source of quantitative data from Yale's expedition, is the Object Register referred to frequently in this chapter and sourced by countless researchers who have written on Euopos. In the preceding pages, several concerns with the data on the 18,000-plus artifacts catalogued on hundreds of typewritten pages have been described: poor provenience, an arbitrary collection (percentage) of artifact types collected and preserved due to the type of excavating methods used in the field, and a lack of correspondence between objects listed in the Register and other evidence of artifacts at the site that don't appear in the Register – like the pile of ceramics shown above (figure 25).

Happily, present-day researchers have made enormous efforts in the last decade or so to digitize the data, improving the utility of the original records by adapting the data to spreadsheets. In the next (and last) section on Yale's data collection, I will discuss the creation, present state and future possibilities of making these data more readily available to researchers, and more easily interrogated using modern database software and technology.

Yale: Incomplete Inventories

The Yale excavations – all modern frustrations with early twentieth-century methodologies aside – produced Object Registers for seasons five through ten (1931 – 1938) which include some provenience data and other relevant details for over 18,000 artifacts. As for the first four seasons, Dr. Jennifer Baird (2006) put it best in her dissertation, “object registers exist for the mid-fifth through last seasons; those of earlier seasons are not lost but rather never existed” (140). The Pillet years (seasons one through four) ultimately produced no official accounting or find-spots for artifacts. It wasn't until Susan Hopkins arrived with her husband Clark in season five, with Clark as the new field director, that Susan was able to formally establish the Object Register, which until

2006 was the most detailed and complete resource for researchers wishing to attempt any construction of assemblages, or accomplish any sort of artifact analysis involving comparing artifact dates, counts or types to one another, or across space between rooms, buildings or blocks.

In addition to the finds from seasons five through ten, Susan Hopkins also attempted to record some artifact information in seasons two and four (Hopkins 1976: 37, 51) but a consistent inventory and entering of data into formal Object Registers did not begin until Season Five (Fin. Rep. 4.1.3: vii).

Besides the sometimes minimal or questionable provenience data and other recording problems discussed in this chapter, another major difficulty for modern researchers using the Object Register is that the Register in Yale's archives is comprised of hundreds of typewritten sheets and unwieldy in this "analog" form. However, for her thesis, Baird (2006), compiled a spreadsheet of the data held in the Yale Registers, complementing the original Registers' data with additional information on any artifacts also mentioned and detailed in Preliminary or *Final Reports*, including citations for each reference in said Reports.³²

Baird included this massive undertaking with her dissertation and although the spreadsheets themselves (the actual files) were not available with her thesis, they were published in such a manner that they could be scanned and converted back into a spreadsheet with minimal effort.³³

³² Baird also compiled as much similar information as possible for artifacts mentioned in the Reports for seasons one through four, but only for spaces she could reliably determine to be domestic spaces – the focus of her dissertation.

³³ For details on the creation of the spreadsheet used in this work, see the Appendix for this Chapter.

DATE	NO. OF OBJECT	WHERE FOUND	WHERE PUT	DESCRIPTION
Oct. 27 '31	E1a-j	B'8	Basket 1 L	Fragments large stamped jar (D)
Oct. 28 '31	E2 + E+0	C7g1	Main Room 6	Statuette Hadad & bulls (F)
	E3	B'8h1	Shelf 2	Small Roman Lamp (D)
1932.147	E4	B'8h1	Shelf 3 Y	Small Roman Lamp (D)
	E5	B'8h1	En. 1 Y	Coin
	E6a-f	C7 & B'8	En. 2 Y	Coins
1932.147	E7a-b	C7 & B'8	En. 3 Y	Bronze spool & bronze fragment
	E8a-d	g6Cumont's House	En. 4 Y	Coins
1932.147	E9a-e	g6Cumont's House	En. 5 Y	Button & Bronze fragments
	E10a-b	g5House opp. Cumont's	En. 6 Y	Coins
	E11a-c	g4ump on cliff near Yale house	En. 7 Y	Coins
1932.171A	E12	g4ump on cliff near Yale house	En. 8 Y	Bone stick 0
Oct. 29 '31	E13	C7g12	Shelf 3 Y	Stone inkwell (?) (D)
1932.147	E14a-b	C7g12	En. 9 Y	Coins
	E15a-b	B'4	En. 10 Y	Coin fused to sherd

Figure 27: A page from the original Object Register as produced in the 1930s. (YUAG)

J. A. Baird											Dura-Europos Objects		1	
Field Number	Excavation Date	YUAG Accession Number	Block	Locus	Sublocus	House Designation	Room Type	Description	Material	Notes in Object Register	Dura P. R. Reference	Notes	Dura E. R. Catalogue Number	Dimensions
E299	16-Nov-31		C7	A	1	C7A	Courtyard	Faience Bottle Stopper	Faience	Drawn				
E1000	16-Jan-32		E7	W	6		Mud brick Wall	Coin	Metal					
E1001	16-Jan-32		E7	W	3			Coin	Metal					
E1002a	16-Jan-32	1932.149 5a	M8	Mudbrick Wall				Small Bronze Bell	Bronze	Drawn		In YUAG Catalogue, one number, 1932.1495a, says "two bronze bells". Incised concave type.		Height 2.0cm, diameter 1.5cm.
E1002b	16-Jan-32	1932.149 5a	M8	Mudbrick Wall				Small Bronze Bell	Bronze	Drawn		In YUAG Catalogue, one number, 1932.1495a, says "two bronze bells".		
E1003a	16-Jan-32		M8	Mudbrick Wall				Coin	Metal					
E1003b	16-Jan-32		M8	Mudbrick Wall				Coin	Metal					
E1003c	16-Jan-32		M8	Mudbrick Wall				Coin	Metal					
E1003d	16-Jan-32		M8	Mudbrick Wall				Coin	Metal					
E1003e	16-Jan-32		M8	Mudbrick Wall				Coin	Metal					
E1003f	16-Jan-32		M8	Mudbrick Wall				Coin	Metal					

Figure 28: One of the 1,008 pages of the improved and authoritative Object Register as appended to Baird's 2006 thesis.

Field Number (Season)	Excavation Date	YUAG Accession Number	Block	Locus (Building)	Sublocus (room)	House Designation	Room Type	Description	Material	Notes in O.R.	P.R. References	Notes	Field Report Catalog Number	Dimensions
1 E216a	12-Oct-31	1932.12	Surface					Alabaster Bottle with Cuneiformscript		Photographed		Photo and drawing in YUAG CardCatalogue		
2 E216b	12-Oct-31	1932.12	Surface					Alabaster Bottle with Cuneiformscript		Photographed		Photo and drawing in YUAG CardCatalogue		
4 E217	12-Oct-31		G1			1		Coin	Metal					
5 E218	12-Oct-31		G1			7 G1B		Coin	Metal					
6 E221a	12-Oct-31		G1			9 G1C	Courtyard	Coin	Metal					
7 E221b	12-Oct-31		G1			9 G1C	Courtyard	Coin	Metal					
8 E221c	12-Oct-31		G1			9 G1C	Courtyard	Coin	Metal					
9 E222a	12-Oct-31		G1			10 G1A	Courtyard	Coin	Metal					
10 E222b	12-Oct-31		G1			10 G1A	Courtyard	Coin	Metal					
11 E223	12-Oct-31		B8	G			2	Coin	Metal					
12 E224	12-Oct-31		C7	C		6 C7C 2		Coin	Metal					
13 E225	12-Oct-31		C7	D		8 C7D	Diwan	Coin	Metal					
14 E226	12-Oct-31		C7	D		8 C7D		Coin	Metal					
15 E227	12-Oct-31		C7	D		6 C7D		Small Commonware Pitcher	Ceramic					
E228a	12-Oct-31	1932.128*2, *1938.4799	C7	D		6 C7D		Small Faience Vase	Faience			Drawing and Photo in YUAG CardCatalogue. Green-glazed pitcher mended from E228ad E228b.	Height	
17 E229	12-Oct-31		G1			12 G1A		Coin	Metal					
18 E230	12-Oct-31		C7	G		23 C7D		3 Coin	Metal					
19 E288b	12-Oct-31	1932.13	C7	D		6 C7D		Small Faience Vase	Faience					
E1a	27-Oct-31		B8					Fragment of Large Stamped Jar	Ceramic	Drawn		Appears in YUAG Dura photo E124.		
E1b	27-Oct-31		B8					Fragment of Large Stamped Jar	Ceramic			Appears in YUAG Dura photo E124.		
E1c	27-Oct-31		B8					Fragment of Large Stamped Jar	Ceramic			Appears in YUAG Dura photo E124.		

Figure 29: Screen capture of author's spreadsheet made by scanning, scraping, and reconciling data from Baird's PDFs

In a spreadsheet format, it is possible to search for artefacts by location (block numbers and building and room numbers when available), material type, season, and several other variables. However, such spreadsheets can only be interrogated insofar as Microsoft Excel's³⁴ formulas and search options allow. In truth, what is needed is a DBMS which would allow far more robust interrogations of multiple variables simultaneously ("show me all ceramic artifacts from block M8..." and then "show me all ceramic artifacts from Block M7..." and then "show me any matches in ceramic style (or vessel type)" and so on).³⁵ Of course, any such analysis needs to keep in mind all of the cautionary tales and critiques about context in the preceding pages, but what Hopkins and Baird have created is of enormous value to all future projects on Europos and more improvements are likely. Drs. Simon James and Baird are in the nascent stages of seeking funding

³⁴ Or comparable spreadsheet software.

³⁵ Such searches and inquiries can be accomplished in most spreadsheet software as well but require some knowledge and perhaps expertise with logical operators and other commands native to the software being used (called "functions" in Microsoft Excel, there are over 300 functions that allow one to query, organize or otherwise manipulate data). And an ideal DBSM would also link to Yale's extensive image archives online. See fn 36, below.

for a DBMS project to incorporate not only the Object Register data but also GIS data and links to online repositories of other Euopos data including artifact photographs and scans of thousands of Euopos-related documents from Yale's archives (Pers. Comm. January 2018).

While the Object Register offers consistent if often poorly detailed data on collected artifacts at Euopos during Yale's tenure, some of the most important archaeological finds and material culture at Euopos come not in small things almost forgotten, but in the architecture and artwork preserved under the sands of the Syrian steppe. These important data and assemblages are not systematically recorded at Yale and are only accessible, and identifiable through close readings of the Preliminary and *Final Reports* along with a coordinated effort at the YUAG to track down additional information (sketches, photos, daybook notes, etc.) on such structures and art.

In addition to the Object Registers, and Yale's archival data (including photos of thousands of artifacts and scans of thousands of archival documents from maps to personal letters),³⁶ any future efforts to make archaeological data from Euopos available and comparable (between various teams' excavations for example) would also need to include artifact data from Breasted and Cumont, the MFSED, and, and data from the analysis of art, architecture and artifacts of thirteen ritual spaces conducted by Mathilde Bossard-Couronné (2011) in her dissertation, "Les Sanctuaires Polythéistes D'Euopos-Doura: Recueil de Données et Pistes de Réflexion," a five-volume, 1,200-page thesis and currently the last word on the archaeology of thirteen polytheistic ritual spaces ("*sanctuaires*") she chose to analyze. Her thesis includes new and excellent detail on the architectural elements of these buildings and her work will be referred to in Chapters Four.

³⁶ Many images, photos and scans have been made available online by the YUAG. Over 15,000 photographs and images from the YUAG Euopos archives are available at: <http://sscommons.org/openlibrary/#1> Over 11,000 images (many of artifacts described in the Object Register) are available here: <https://artgallery.yale.edu/collection/search/Euopos>

IV. The MFSED

The Mission Franco-Syrienne d'Europos-Doura (MFSED) was a joint effort between the French (represented by *le Centre Nationale Recherche Scientifique* (CNRS) and the Syrian Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums (DGAM). Directed by Prof. Pierre Leriche from *l'Ecole Normale Supérieure* (ENS), the Mission began in 1986 and continued annual excavations until its 2011 season which ended just weeks before the first shots of Syria's Civil War were fired. Compared to the 300-plus laborers of Yale's excavations, the MFSED campaigns were a much more modest operation generally consisting of a dozen or so international researchers and some 30-40 local laborers on a daily basis, excavating for two months in late winter/early spring. The MFSED's goals were primarily concerned with closing the book on unfinished Yale projects. That is, the Franco-Syrian project's aim was (and still is) to publish the remaining volumes of the series of *Final Reports* left unfinished by Yale, by revisiting the site and confirming and/or adding to the archaeological record that Yale constructed in the 1920s and '30s.³⁷

To this end, members of the MFSED have published the *Preliminary Report* for Season 10 (Matheson 1992) which had never been fully compiled and released by Yale,³⁸ and *Final Report VII, The Arms and Armour and Other Military Equipment* (James 2004), also planned but never published by Yale.³⁹

³⁷ Between 1937 and 1956 several proposals for the topics of *Final Reports* were made. In an undated document with a TAQ of 1959 (based on which documents were listed in the document as already published and which remained to be published), what might be considered the final version of the *Final Report* series was outlined with budgets and timelines. This list can be found in Appendix 2.1.

³⁸ Matheson (1992) points out that the last two seasons, nine and ten, were largely considered one extended season by then Field Director Frank Brown and also, that the *Preliminary Report* for season nine, released in three volumes and published between 1944 and 1952, included data drawn from season ten as well.

³⁹ Susan Downey, also a Durene researcher with the MFSED, published two addendums to *Final Report III Part 1* (Fascicles 1 (1969) and 2 (1977)) before the creation of the MFSED, using exclusively Yale archive materials.

In addition to the MFSED's efforts to complete Yale's proposed series of Reports, the mission and its members have published five volumes of "Etudes," dedicated issues of the journal *Syria* reporting the results of the ongoing excavations through 2005. In 2012 the *Institute Française du Proche-Orient* (IFPO) published the first of several *Varia* ("Collections") of articles which aim to publish and report research done between 2005 and the end of excavations in 2011.

The mission's archives, that is field notes, photographs, maps, and correspondence, are, unfortunately, not as well-organized or easily accessible as Yale's. During my time in Paris (2012 – 2015) said archives were held primarily at the office of Prof. Leriche at ENS, while maps (and other images) are held in the department of archaeology's library. Additionally, countless digital files (including unpublished articles and many scans of the hard-copy documents) were being curate by both Prof. Leriche and his assistant at the time, Dr. Segolene de Pontbriand.

Currently, one can only access these archives through direct communication with Leriche, who, although retired, is still organizing the publishing of new research. While the modern excavations have provided excellent data to re-examine and improve interpretations made by Yale, some of which will be presented in Chapters Three, Four, and Five, an effort to make the MFSED's archival and "raw" data more easily accessible and organized would provide researchers with new evidence to continue analyzing life at Europos, even while the site is inaccessible and severely damaged by looters.

V. Art, Architecture, Artifacts and Archives: An Interdisciplinary Adventure

It is no longer the business of the historian to prove that this religion is true, and all the others false; but his function is, so far as possible, to determine its place in history, and its relation to worships which have preceded it, or with which it has been in contact during the centuries of its existence. (Loisy 1910: xx)

How's Your Aramaic?

When my proposal was in its nascent stages I reached out to faculty experts on the history and texts of early Christianity; the history, methods and limits of textual criticism and paleography as a tool for dating; and guidance on several other methods and theories that I was less than familiar with and for which I needed assistance in acquiring a deeper understanding. On this quest, I experienced an interesting confluence (and conflict) of events.

On the one hand, an expert in early Christian texts was not convinced one should attempt research on early Christianity without an extensive knowledge of early textual sources. “How’s your Aramaic?” was the first question posed to me when I described my dissertation project to a recommended literary historian of ancient Christianity.⁴⁰

On the other hand, “texts dominated the study of Early Christian archaeology” (Bowes 2008:11) and the dating and verifying of authors of ancient texts, using textual criticism and paleography (which attempt to date and determine the original versions of ancient texts either through their literary content or writing styles, respectively), provide the bulk of data used to write the history of early Christianity – especially for Yale researchers in the first half of the 20th century. Detailed knowledge of the written and spoken languages used in the period is not unimportant.

⁴⁰ Pers. Comm. Name withheld, November 12, 2007. For the record, my Aramaic is non-existent.

Unfortunately, there are tensions between the associated disciplines that truck with early Christian history regarding their reliance on texts, and the accuracy of textual dating methods and how they compare to material sciences such as radiocarbon dating (C14).

Part of this tension revolves around the fact that “many major libraries (e.g., the British Library) have a policy that does not permit any destruction of an item in any measure. (Hurtado 2014)⁴¹ While radiocarbon dating requires as little as a 0.5 – 1.0 milligram sample from a document (Bonani et al. 1992: 844), it is nevertheless technically destructive and therefore prohibited by most curators and owners of ancient New Testament texts.

New Testament scholar and historian of early Christianity, Larry Hurtado (2014) wrote on his professional blog that one private collection of such texts has allowed some carbon dating, The Green Collection. One of the world's largest private collections of rare biblical texts and artifacts, it is owned by the Green family, the founders of retail chain Hobby Lobby, who have frequently been in the media due to conservative positions on numerous identity and political issues in the US.⁴² Politics aside, far more concerning is that no small portion of their artifact collection has come from looters in the Middle East, resulting in a \$3 million fine from the U.S. Department of Justice in 2017⁴³ and leading to the forced return of over 3,600 artifacts which were purchased by The Green Collection in 2010.⁴⁴

Hurtado’s post on C14 dating and the Green Collection continued to discuss an,

invitational conference in Oklahoma City on dating papyri (sponsored by the Green Scholars Initiative) ... I found the presentations on Carbon-dating especially informative and also of some significant import ... the results from the three labs were basically/broadly in agreement [with one another], which gives some assurance about the reliability of the

⁴¹<https://larryhurtado.wordpress.com/2014/04/01/carbon-14-and-palaeographical-dating-of-papyri/> Retrieved 6/18/18

⁴² In 2014 the Supreme Court granted Hobby Lobby – the company, not the family that owned it – a religious exemption regarding providing birth control to employees through mandated health care packages.

⁴³<https://www.justice.gov/usao-edny/pr/united-states-files-civil-action-forfeit-thousands-ancient-iraqi-artifacts-imported> Retrieved 6/18/2018

⁴⁴<http://www.newsweek.com/hobby-lobby-will-return-thousands-ancient-artifacts-smuggled-out-iraq-907906> Retrieved 6/18/2018

[C14] process. But also, these [C14] results were broadly in agreement with the prior/independent paleographical dating of these items. (2014)

Hurtado offered no specific examples in the blog post nor did he indicate which documents were being tested. He did state that a collection of articles was forthcoming with results discussing the paleographic dates and radiocarbon dates of several early Christian papyri. Unfortunately, I have found no such publication in the ensuing years. The Green Scholars Initiative, the organization which sponsored the “invitational conference,” makes no mention of any radiocarbon dating projects among many ongoing projects⁴⁵ and Hurtado was intentionally careful not to name the researchers involved as, “It was a condition of the conference that we respect the intellectual property rights of all presenters” (2014).

If the conference papers were ever published I can find no copies or mention of them.

However, another group of researchers in the early 1990s (Bonani et al. 1992) were given access and permission to radiocarbon date samples from several fragments of the Dead Sea Scrolls,⁴⁶ all of which had paleographic dates ascribed to them with wide acceptance of said dates within the various disciplines which study such texts. The Dead Sea Scrolls are not New Testament texts, but rather ancient Jewish writings from the last few centuries BCE through the first century CE. Historically and archaeologically there is solid evidence showing which Jewish peoples occupied the region near the Dead Sea (Qumran, in the West Bank) where these texts were written over several centuries. Even better, some of the Dead Sea scrolls were not religious in

⁴⁵ The Green Scholars Initiative is a program sponsored by the Museum of Biblical History in Washington, D.C. (chaired by Hobby Lobby president Steve Green, for whom the Green Collection is named).

⁴⁶ The Dead Sea scrolls are a collection of writings found in caves near the Dead Sea in the West Bank. They are comprised of Hebrew religious texts, both canonical and non-canonical, and sectarian documents dating over the course of centuries (both radiocarbon and paleographic methods put the scrolls between early fourth-century BCE to the latter half of the first century CE (VanderKam and Flint 2002; Bonani et al. 1992)). Later scrolls speak of an “opposition movement” and “righteous teacher” (never named) during the period after Rome sacked Jerusalem and burned the Second Temple there (First Jewish-Roman War 66-73 CE).

nature and contained personal letters, business agreements, and the like – and some of these had written in them the dates of the events and transactions described therein (Bonani et al. 1992:844).

Table 1. Results of ¹⁴C and paleographic dating of Dead Sea Scrolls. Samples 2–6 and 9–11 are from the Qumran site. The names of the other samples are identical with the locations of their discovery. The precise location where Scroll 12 was found is not known. Wadi Seyal (= Nahal Se'elim) was a general term used by Bedouin treasure hunters to mislead interested scholars.

Sample no.	ETH no.	S*	Scroll	Material	¹⁴ C ages (yr BP)	Calibrated age range(s)**	P† (%)	Paleographic or specific‡ age
1	6637	3	Wadi Daliyeh	Papyrus	2289 ± 55	405–354 BC 306–238 BC	55 45	352–351 BC‡
2	6640 7082	4	Testament of Qahat	Parchment	2240 ± 39	388–353 BC 309–235 BC	34 66	100–75 BC
3	6639	3	Pentateuchal paraphrase	Parchment	2139 ± 32	339–324 BC 203–117 BC	12 88	125–100 BC
4	6651 6813	4	Book of Isaiah	Parchment	2128 ± 38	335–327 BC 202–107 BC	5 95	125–100 BC
5	6641 6642	5	Testament of Levi	Parchment Linen thread	2125 ± 24	191–155 BC 146–120 BC	59 41	End 2nd century–beginning 1st century BC
6	6643	2	Book of Samuel	Parchment	2095 ± 49	192–63 BC		100–75 BC
7	6652	4	Masada Joshua	Parchment	2086 ± 28	169–93 BC		30–1 BC
8	6812	2	Masada Sectarian	Parchment	1971 ± 46	33 BC–AD 74		30–1 BC
9	6650 6811	5	Temple	Parchment	2030 ± 40	97 BC–AD 1		End 1st century BC–beginning 1st century AD
10	6646 6647	4	Genesis Apocryphon	Parchment	2013 ± 32	73 BC–AD 14		End 1st century BC–beginning 1st century AD
11	6648 6649	5	Thanksgiving	Parchment	1979 ± 32	21 BC–AD 61		50 BC–AD 70
12	6644	3	Wadi Seyal	Papyrus	1917 ± 42	AD 28–122		AD 130–131‡
13	6645	3	Murabba'at	Papyrus	1892 ± 32	AD 69–136		AD 134‡
14	6638	2	Khirbet Mird	Papyrus	1289 ± 36	AD 675–765		AD 744‡

*S = Number of measured subsamples
 **Calibrated age ranges are given at the 1-σ level
 †P = Probability of finding the true ages in the respective time windows, when more than one calibrated range is given
 ‡Specific age from date-bearing scroll

¹⁴C Dating of 14 Dead Sea Scrolls
845

Figure 30: Results of radiocarbon dating on 14 Dead Sea Scrolls (Bonani et al. 1992: 845). Four scrolls (in red) are date-bearing documents (Samples 1 and 12–14).

Bonani's findings are hardly controversial and instead suggest that each method has similar but perhaps distinct levels of confidence. For each date-bearing document, the date given in the text either fell within the first confidence interval (samples 13 and 14 in figure 29) that resulted from the radiocarbon dating process or within a decade or two of the latest date within the first confidence interval (Samples 1 and 12).⁴⁷ For the rest of the documents which had no dates with their texts, paleographic methods consistently arrive at dates on average, 35 years younger than the latest dates in the first confidence level provided by C14 dating, showing a consistent trend

⁴⁷ The C-14 for Sample 2 is far off from paleographic dates. The methods used and possible contamination of that sample are discussed in Bonani's paper (1992: 847-8). He believes accidental contaminations during testing was involved.

that, for the Dead Sea Scrolls at least, text-based methods of dating possess an accuracy almost as reliable as C14 dates, with a particular trend towards later dating, a result that Bonani indicated deserves further research (Bonani et al. 1992: 847).

The point to all of this last minute discussion on text criticism, paleography, radiocarbon dating, and text versus material based investigations of antiquity and early Christianity, is to point out one last problem with the data and methodologies surrounding the research site at the heart of this work: attempts at interdisciplinary work on early Christianity between material scientists, social scientists, religious historians, classicists, and theologians has been less than coordinated or very fruitful, and sometimes there has been genuine hostility between researchers, not infrequently made public in print and at conferences. Twice in the last 35 years or so, scholars have put together committees or think tanks of a sort to consider questions regarding the historicity of Jesus. Both of these efforts, the Jesus Seminar (1985 – ca. 2005) and the Jesus Project (2007 - 2009), had less than success.

The Seminar's purpose was to review the sayings and deeds of Jesus in order to determine the likelihood of their authenticity and the accuracy of their transmission. The Seminar was comprised of a mix of dozens of academics and laypeople of various qualifications who voted on any given act or saying by using colored beads which gave each act or deed in questions a score from zero to three points. The higher the score and weighted average, the more likely, according to the Seminar, the deed or act was authentic (Mack 2001:31–2). While the Seminar published its results in three reports (Funk and Hoover 1993; Funk 1998; Funk 1999) their conclusions were dogged by critique from renowned experts in related fields.

Hoffman⁴⁸ (2009), who was the co-chair of the later Jesus Project, a proposed five-year investigation where 32 academics from various fields would present evidence and interpretations towards the goal of determining whether Jesus should be considered a historical figure, was forced to shut down the project after just two years:

But the chief reason that it is time to sound the knell for all such projects is that that they cannot function collaboratively, both by virtue of what they want to achieve—that is, the over-speculative nature of the task—and because they are examples of the perils of false collaboration: an incoherent anthology of opinion derived from the private prejudices and objectives of Jesus-makers. (2009)

While this dissertation will not wander into questions of messianic historicity, many of the same epistemological problems plague an archaeological investigation of ritual practice by early Christians using primarily material culture. As noted at the opening of this section, my lack of ability to read and translate Aramaic raised concern by a prominent New Testament Scholar as to whether I was qualified at all to investigate questions pertaining to early Christian life – such assumptions fail to encourage interdisciplinary work, and worse, can lead to mutual suspicion rather than cooperation as the various Jesus projects attempted in the past have shown. Reversed is no better: can a religious historian or theologian with no archaeological training speak to a period in history where so many of the texts relied upon did not come from the period being investigated but from later copies? Or where the texts hardly reveal the day to day lives of diverse and non-elite actors who are nevertheless extremely important political actors during a period of revolt?⁴⁹

While artifacts that can be directly tied to Christian practice don't appear in the archaeological record until around 180 CE (Snyder 2003), there is a large body of archaeological data from the region and period available to historians revealing the material culture from daily

⁴⁸ <http://www.bibleinterp.com/opeds/hoffman1044.shtml> Retrieved 6/18/2018

⁴⁹ Christianity's earliest texts are argued to be from the latter half of the first or early part of the second century, the same period of time that Jews attempted to revolt against Rome several times with the result being that by the 130s CE, Rome had literally wiped Israel off the map and banned Jews from Jerusalem.

laborers to the most elite (especially the elite). Similarly, there is no shortage of research on Afro-Asiatic languages, the family under to which various Semitic variations – like Aramaic – used in the ancient Middle East belongs. The Western academy’s fetishization of the Middle East’s history and culture has seen to this. So much so, that what becomes most interesting to an anthropological historian is not the confidence (or lack thereof) one has in a given date or specific deed, saying or translation of an ancient text, but instead, the variations in opinion themselves become a subject of study. The goal being to identify epistemologically, at least some partial causes for these differences.

At Europos, the only Christian document, Dura P. 24, is a single parchment, a page of a non-canonical gospel written in Greek with a somewhat anomalous (possibly localized) uncial script. It has been translated several times and debated for a century by researchers who are experts in *Koine* Greek and in the language’s relationship to the Syriac form of Aramaic (Joosten 2003:160).⁵⁰ The issue that divides different scholars’ translations of this single text – and which has been debated for decades – is whether or not P.24 bears the text of a specific “harmony gospel,”⁵¹ Tatian’s *Diatessaron* – a compilation of the four canonical gospels which was used widely in Syria before a Christian canon was firmly established in the fourth century. Some researchers believe P.24 belongs to a more general tradition of such compiled “harmony gospels” (Kraeling 1935; Plooiij and Dolder 1935; Parker, Taylor, and Goodacre 1999; Joosten 2003).

⁵⁰ Syriac is the standardized form of Aramaic used to diffuse eastern Christianity, written with Greek characters. It is not necessarily the language a Jewish itinerant preacher from Galilee would have used in the first half of the first-century CE but the language that was used to spread the cult of Christ later.

⁵¹ A Harmony Gospel is an attempt to create a single narrative from the four canonical gospels, avoiding duplication between them and creating a single, shorter and more accessible narrative of the life of Jesus of Nazareth. Tatian is believed to have created his Harmony Gospel, the *Diatessaron* in the second century and it is known to have been widely used by early Christians in Syria (and is assumed to have originally been written in Syriac). If P.24 is from a copy of the *Diatessaron*, it would be the only version of the text in Greek.

Scholars of ancient Greek and early Christian texts have not come to an agreement regarding this in over 75 years.

Their disagreements are an important part of my data.

The tension, confusion, and constant critique (the stakes at hand for the researchers involved, the types of evidence accepted, rejected and revisited by each researcher, etc.) is as much data for this project as the varying translations themselves. In chapters Three through Five we will see specific examples where conflicting interpretations and the lack of interrogation of earlier researcher's work in various disciplines studying either *Europos* or early Christianity, necessitate a more interdisciplinary deployment of the research on *Europos*.

CHAPTER 3: HISTORIES

In the Introduction to this work, three brief histories were introduced: a history of the city of Europos Dura, a history of the construction and renovation of the Christian Temple in the city, and a history of the excavations of Europos from its rediscovery in 1920 to the cessation of excavations in 2011. In truth, each of these brief histories outlined earlier were simply chronologies of well-attested events. The Previous Chapter explored in detail the history of excavations at the site. This Chapter will explore the histories of Europos and how they were constructed, including new data, interpretations and chronologies.

The first Part of this Chapter will dig deeper into the first of these histories, that of the city itself. The goal, both to offer some insight on how it is we have come to know what we know about Europos' past, and to show how that knowledge has been created, disputed and re-interpreted in the near-century since Europos was first excavated. Ample evidence will show that Europos was a particularly unique fit for outsider groups like Christians and Jews to call home.

The second part of this chapter will focus on the period of Roman occupation, when Christians arrived and established their temple. The Roman military, though sometimes compared to a total institution¹ (Pollard 1996), was neither strictly segregated from the general population in Europos alongside whom they worked (and played), nor entirely monolithic. Thus, the Roman military's presence in the city is far less an isolated enclave of Imperial power casting a shadow over the city, but rather another internally diverse population who both influenced and were influenced by the ancient city's population.

¹ Here I refer to Goffman's general definition offered in *Asylums: Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates*. "Their encompassing or total character is symbolized by the barrier to social intercourse with the outside that is often built right into the physical plant: locked doors, high walls, barbed wire, cliffs and water, open terrain, and so forth" (Goffman 1961: 4)

I. 303 BCE – 160 CE

The Long Road to Becoming Roman

When exactly Europos became “Roman” is a complicated question – as is defining when it was “Persian” or “Greek.” A proper Roman historian or classicist could offer a history of the various changing rules, regulations, obligations, prescriptions and proscriptions that the Empire used throughout its history to grant citizenship to individuals, or *Colonia* status to the lands it conquered. But this project is less interested in the legal minutiae that determined whether or not one was Roman at a given time during the Empire but rather how one living within the (militarily determined) political borders of the Empire may or may not have identified as “Roman,” be it an identity ascribed, avowed, avoided, or viewed with ambivalence. By the time a modest home in Europos was being renovated in the mid third-century for the cult of Christ, multiple imperial populations, Macedonians, Romans and Persians, had all clashed and/or cooperated with each other and with local Syrian peoples for centuries in this walled city situated at the edge of empires.

Central to this chapter will be recognizing that errors in assumptions and interpretations by Yale have been reproduced uncritically for decades by researchers working on Europos (Edwell 2008: 93). However, in the last 20 years, historians and archaeologists (Edwell, James, Leriche and Baird to name a few) have begun to re-examine the original reports by Yale and have also excavated anew at the site itself to correct, detail, add and complicate the history and archaeological record of Europos.

Table 1: Chronology of important imperial events at Europos Dura

331 BCE	Alexander conquers Mesopotamia.
312 BCE	Establishment of Seleucid Empire (During post Alexander Civil wars).
303 BCE	Seleucid foundation of Europos.
~113 BCE	Parthian conquest of Europos from Seleucid Empire.
115-7(9) CE	Brief occupation of Europos by Romans during Parthian wars.
~119-165	Europos again under Parthian administration (but direct control is debatable).
160 CE	Earthquake in the Region (destroyed a great deal of early Greek architecture at Europos).
~165 CE	Roman conquest of Europos.
~165 – 200	Roman military slowly moves into city. Palmyrene control possible.
200-220 CE	Roman military occupies northern quarter of city. Most of the main Military Structures in Europos built during this period.
224 CE	Sassanid Dynasty rises to power in Persia; end of Parthian rule in region.
230 – 256 CE	Several Temples are renovated or built anew during Roman occupation of Europos including the Jewish Synagogue, Christian Chapel, Temple to Bel, the Mithraeum and a military temple.
~253 CE	Likely brief occupation of Europos by Sassanid troops marching up the Euphrates. By 254 CE Europos is once again in the hands of Roman soldiers and its defenses are improved.
256/7 CE	Sassanid siege and conquest of Europos and gradual abandonment.
363 CE	Julian passes through a deserted Europos on his Parthian campaign

This project aims to add to these researchers’ work. The history of Europos is somewhat complicated: an ancient Hellenic city, built in Syria with conquered local populations, by a Macedonian empire that held no lands in Macedon (or even in Europe), then developed and expanded upon for over two centuries by a Persian empire, and further influenced in its waning days by the eastern arm of a Roman Empire so diverse it reached from just shy of modern-day Scotland to Egypt. And yet, the first large scale excavation of the site by Yale (1928 – 1937) resulted in some two thousand pages of *Final Reports*, one-third of them detailing just two buildings: “The Christian Building” (Fin. Rep. 8.2), one of the smallest and most modest temples in the city, and the Jewish Synagogue (Fin. Rep. 8.1) which lay just two blocks away from the Christian temple.

In a walled city covering 50 hectares² – by comparison, Pompeii covers 65 hectares – just these two buildings became the focus of dozens of academics and experts during the twentieth century. Compare this to the fact that the Temple to Bel complex within the city, one of the largest and oldest temples in Europos, was given no *Final Report* of its own. If it seems somewhat hypocritical or at least ironic that I have chosen the Christian population and its ritual space as the focus of yet another exploration of Europos, I would counter such criticism by suggesting that the Christian Temple and its congregants function a bit like a MacGuffin from film and literature. The pursuit of a greater knowledge and understanding of this temple and its worshippers will necessarily require a re-examination of several other “stories,” some aspects of classical history that might benefit from anthropological critique – not the least of which will be examining the often paradoxical descriptions of ancient Rome and early Christianity as both monolithic institutions and also possessed of considerable internal diversity.

The archaeology of the first half of the twentieth century was indeed handmaiden to history (Hume 1964; Frend 1996:1) and to historical projects interested in using the past to explain – and even justify – the political and cultural dynamics of the modern era. Ivor Noel Hume’s famous essay, “Archaeology: Handmaiden to History” (1964) was, despite its title, a harsh critique of the negative influence of “pot-hunters” and relic collectors seeking remnants of the United States’ all but eradicated indigenous population. Hume addressed the problematic reality that professional archaeology serviced specific state historical concerns (literally the state of South Carolina for him) rather than an academic pursuit of information to be shared and added to ongoing

² Most literature on Europos states the city’s area as approximately 75 hectares. However, a far more accurate calculation of the area within the city walls indicates 50 hectares (earlier calculation may have included the necropolis outside the walls, a triumphal arch leading into the city and less than fully accurate measures of the undulating walls that follow the wadis on the north and south of the city’s borders (Gérard, forthcoming; de Pontbriand pers.comm. October 21, 2016).

constructions and discourses of social history. One of Hume's primary concerns – which haunts my project as well – is that archaeological sites often possess information that no written records do, even for periods for which written records abound. And often these sites are overwritten, poorly excavated, or even destroyed intentionally (1964: 217-9). Material culture with the potential to modify considerably historical records largely based on texts is often lost forever, a reality I fear for my own site which has much to offer researchers wishing to complement and complicate current histories of antiquity largely based on written records.

Similarly, I contend, archaeological efforts to examine the origins of the most influential religious practice on the West, Christianity, have suffered from a “doubly inflected view” (Dietler 2010:14). The tradition of textual criticism and other philological endeavors have established a set of narratives regarding early Christianity to which archaeology has served as primarily handmaiden rather than providing an authoritative voice in dialogue (and when necessary in conflict) with established historical narratives (Snyder 2003:10–11). These established narratives have been constructed under the auspices of an aforementioned epistemological elision: The question, “Whose history are we constructing?” was rarely asked. Archaeology in the Middle East was hardly an attempt to assist the living populations there to engage the material culture of their past but rather to lay claim to these early empires as the progenitors of and justification for Western Imperialism.

Somehow, analyzing the early history of an eastern Mediterranean religion, an offshoot of Jewish practices with traditions shaped by (and which shaped) one of the largest ancient empires, and was primarily practiced in the Middle East and Africa long before anything resembling modern Europe took up the practice, has become less a unique investigation of alterity in antiquity, but rather an attempt to explain and justify the reality of white, Christian, practice, privilege and culture

in the modern era. Western Empire has been intertwined with Christianity and claims to being Rome's successor for over 1500 years: from Constantine to the Holy Roman Empire to the Papal Bulls that divided the Americas between Portugal and Spain, to France's retort that "Adam's Will" said nothing about the world belonging to just Spain and Portugal, to The British Empire of the nineteenth and early twentieth century and its divinely appointed monarchs claiming one quarter of the globe and its population as subjects. Over the one and a half millennia of imperial adventures in which the Catholic Church, its hierarchy, and its Protestant opposers played a supporting and often authorizing role, countless new bureaucracies and institutions arose to support them. The academy as we know it is part and parcel to this project; its history and foundations also linked directly to the Church.³ Thus, the history of early Christianity and the cultural practices of its earliest adherents has been constructed by an academy deeply influenced by the cosmological and ontological prejudices of second millennium Christianity along with an epistemological assumption that much of the truth about the past has already been established: the rise of holy, righteous empire, the rise of the modern, 'civilized', European world, was inseparably linked to the birth of Christianity and the Roman Empire, an empire which despite centuries of rejecting and persecuting the cult of Christ ultimately embraced the religion. This so-called "unique" religious event (Smith 1990:38-9; Mack 1988a:4), the Christianization of the Roman Empire, became synonymous with the right to rule in Europe for centuries afterwards, a Darwinian notion of religious competition if you will. The role of archaeology: to affirm, detail, and clarify lacuna in the written/textual record.

³ For example, in the US, its oldest University, Harvard, began by training clergy; The University Oxford in England was strongly influenced by many religious orders during its establishment in the thirteenth century and one of its earliest colleges and the model for many that followed, Merton, was organized by Walter de Merton, a Bishop.

However, both the written and artifactual record for early Christianity through the beginning of the fourth century is problematic. Snyder (2003) notes in *Ante Pacem: Archaeological Evidence of Church Life before Constantine*, that until 180 CE, “the nascent Christian culture either was not yet distinguishable from society in general, or the first Christians lacked sufficient self-identity to establish for itself symbols, language art and architecture” (2003: 3). Snyder (2003) also notes that many of the earliest identifiable references to Christianity in the archaeological record are largely funerary (67-73). Europos on the other hand possesses artifactual evidence generally associated with early Christian liturgy and living practice.

As for the textual/written record, “No New Testament manuscripts are dated to the first and only very few to the second century. Recently even these early dates have been called into question” (Orsini and Clarysse 2012:2). Those texts whom historians still attest early dates to have been dated so using paleographic methods. These include documents that are either clearly not extant to the period they are attributed to and so are later copies, or, those texts claimed to be extant from the earliest centuries using paleographic methods cannot be verified by established methods from the physical sciences such as radiocarbon dating. “Many major libraries (e.g. the British Library) have a policy that does not permit the destruction of any item in any measure.”⁴

Our MacGuffin then, the Christian temple at Europos and its congregants, is indeed one of the earliest extant examples of early Christian practice and expression and, per Snyder (2003), established only some 50 years after the earliest known examples of Christian expression in art and architecture are attested to in the archaeological record. This nascent construction of identity

⁴ <https://larryhurtado.wordpress.com/2014/04/01/carbon-14-and-palaeographical-dating-of-papyri/> Accessed September 27, 2016. Hurtado does claim that paleographic methods have been shown to be “broadly reliable” when used on those rare early manuscripts where permission has been given for C-14 dating. Most frustrating regarding museum and library policies that prohibit C-14 dating is that the amount of material required for reliable testing is in the range of just a few milligrams.

(literally and figuratively) was influenced by its locality, neighbors, and regional logics of worship and community. Whether it bore any similarities to other Christian ritual spaces from the period we cannot say because we have no extant archaeological evidence with which to make a comparison.⁵

For some readers, this critique of the construction of early Christian history by researchers who both individually and historically were and are invested in the narratives that come to dominate both the academy and the public imagination, may seem patently obvious. For others, I fear, I will be criticized as painting in far too broad strokes.

Despite the challenge, I offer now to begin our history of Europos, the city itself, with a brief biography of one of the major historical characters involved in our investigation which I hope will illustrate my claim that the representation of colonial ideologies past to present results in innovative retellings of the same myths, appeals to the same types of heroes throughout antiquity, which then plays no small role in establishing ideologies of righteous empire in the present.

βασιλευς των βασιλευοντων (Basileus ton Basilion: King of Kings)

By his death at the age of 33 his list of accomplishments was such that they would be remembered for millennia. Much of what we know of his life has been shaded with mythological retellings. Although many have written about him, we have nothing written by him. There are myths that suggest divine parentage. His death was possibly the result of conspiracy, betrayed by

⁵ The only other archaeologically extant pre-Constantinian Christian ritual space is in Aqaba Jordan ('Aila' in its Roman period). The church in Aqaba was purpose built in the more commonly recognized "basilica" style during the last decade of the third-century CE (not a converted building as in Europos). The Aqaba building postdates the latest possible use of the Europos church by nearly half a century so its utility as a comparative model would be questionable if such a comparison was even possible: Unfortunately very little has been published on this edifice as the supervisor in charge of the *Final Report* died of cancer in 2005 before she could finish the task and the director of excavations, Thomas S. Parker, was left with the task which is still ongoing (Thomas S. Parker, director of Aqaba excavations, Pers. Comm., 2012, 2013).

someone close to him fearing his growing political power. Despite being called the king of kings, his final resting place is known to no one.⁶ Some have suggested an apotheosis. He left no recognized heirs to carry on his great works and wars have been fought over his legacy. Today his name is one of the most recognizable in the world.

However, Alexander the Great, for all his accomplishments, never looked to the West.

He was, by all accounts, preoccupied with the lands that lay east of Macedon, his homeland. Greek colonies in the western Mediterranean had been prosperous and suffered little conflict compared to Persia's persistent threat to the Greek city-states which Alexander rallied together to check the advancing Achaemenid Empire. And check it he did. Legend has it that after crossing into Asia Minor, Alexander planted a spear into the soil and accepted the continent as a gift from the Gods, a conceit that we have already seen was still held by those of European heritage well into the twentieth century, and, given current geopolitical events and the West's inexhaustible appetite for natural resources from the region, it's difficult to argue that Alexander's sentiments aren't still held by many well into the twenty-first century.

Alexander spread his Macedonian empire to the edges of the Indus Valley. Perhaps forgotten by those who would come after him, while attempting to bring these regions to heel under Western rule, Alexander often and openly adopted the cultural practices of those lands he conquered. He encouraged intermarriage and adopted the dress, foods and gods of conquered lands into his life and that of his military. Aspects of Persian politics and court organization were combined with Macedonian practices. By the time of Alexander's death in Babylon, some of his closest advisors had criticized his infatuation with and embracing of foreign cultures. While there is no doubt Alexander's conquests brought Hellenistic customs across western Asia, the opposite

⁶ The title, "King of Kings" for Alexander was borrowed from the kings of Persia (*Shahmsha*) which was borrowed from Assyrian rulers (*šar šarrāni*) which was then later used to describe Jesus of Nazareth (Timothy 1:15).

was also true: the “Greek” empire that stretched from colonies in modern-day Spain to conquered kingdoms in modern India, was a multi-cultural, hybridized and diverse one, spanning three continents, and which included practices and peoples that would likely have been unrecognizable in the city-states from where Alexander and his generals first marched.

One of those generals was Seleucus I Nicator. After the death of Alexander in 323 BCE, Seleucus spent some dozen years in wars with other generals fighting for control of Alexander’s enormous empire (the wars of the *Diadochi*). By the close of the fourth century BCE Seleucus emerged firmly in control of much of the eastern portion of Alexander’s empire ranging from the Indus River in the east to the Mediterranean in the west. Persia, Mesopotamia and much of the Levant fell under the Seleucid Empire’s control. Seleucus built a new city, Seleucia on the Tigris, as his capital around 307-305 BCE (in present-day central Iraq). Europos was founded by his empire in 303 BCE. The ostensibly Hellenistic settlement was in truth, a fortress built at a river crossing by a “Greek” empire that held no lands in Europe. This Macedon-less Macedonian Empire was headquartered in Mesopotamia and its new Syrian city on the Euphrates necessarily included local Syrian populations in the construction and settlement of the fortress town which was likely inhabited and defended from the beginning by troops of mixed heritage given decades of fighting, conquering, intermarriage and alliances between Alexander, his generals, and Mesopotamian, Persian and even Indian militaries. (Seleucus received 500 elephants in return for turning over lands in the Indus Valley to local rulers there⁷ – we should assume that the beasts came with local handlers.)

History notes that Seleucus founded dozens of cities as he established and solidified his empire, including three which bore the name of his hometown in Macedon, Europos.⁸ Europos

⁷ Strabo 15.2.9

⁸ See footnote 10, Introduction, for a list of Europoses.

Dura began its life in 303 BCE as a fortress, a *phrourion*, not the walled, Hippodamian city that Rome would conquer in the second century CE. Europos was likely built not to protect against local uprisings or against Persian, Arabic or other Middle Eastern invaders, but against the Antigonids, another Macedonian empire founded by another of Alexander's former generals that fought against Seleucus in what is now northern Syria (Pollard 2000:45; Grainger 1990:43–44). Yale and the MFSED have determined that the extant Citadel on the western edge of the city was built over the original *phrourion* (Downey 1986) while a quarry carved out of a *wadi* that cut into part of the plateau upon which the citadel sits, allowed access to the river bank below where a nearby settlement began to grow. Only during the second century BCE, as the riverbank settlement grew in size and a rising Parthian empire (Persia) found military success against the aging Seleucid empire, did work begin on the great walls that would outline the city. Despite considerable natural fortifications, the five-meter-plus city walls followed the cliff-face against the Euphrates on the west, along the wadis north and south of the plateau, and stretched almost a kilometer north/south running between the aforementioned wadis (Leriche 2003; 2012). Leriche calls this new plan "*Le Deuxieme Europos*" (Leriche 2012: 42) and it has only been in the last decade or so that proof of the earlier and smaller riverbank settlement has come to the attention of archaeologists. The expanded, or "Second Europos," was increased in size to include colonists coming from other parts of the Seleucid Empire and also to house the inhabitants of the earlier settlement which was destroyed in the process of expanding the quarry to cut the stone necessary in establishing the permanent walls and fortifications around the new city (Leriche 2012).

The original Yale excavators claimed that the *Oikiste* of Europos did not finish these grand plans in time and that the invading Parthian military overran a city in the throes of building defenses (Pre. Rep. 7/8: 25; Hopkins 1979:256–7). It was Yale's contention that only during the

Parthian era were the massive fortifications finally finished as Parthia began to worry they may fall to Rome the way the Seleucids did to Parthia. But the MFSED excavations, far more detailed than Yale, provided a different picture.

As Edwell has recently pointed out, the director of Yale excavations in the 1930s, Clark Hopkins, and one of his leading architectural experts were “keen to fit observations of Dura’s walls” into a narrative that allowed them to claim that the Parthians, long after conquering Europos, expanded fortifications against an advancing Rome during the first century BCE (Edwell 2007:115). That is, the archaeology of Yale was indeed playing handmaiden to established ideas about ancient history in the early twentieth century. However, MFSED excavations have shown that the stone walls which skirt the city were realized during the last 50 years or so of Seleucid occupation and that additional mud-brick extensions of these walls were perhaps constructed hastily as the Seleucid rulers of Europos began to realize – too late – how much of a threat a rising Parthia was to the region and the city (Leriche 2012: 44-5).

What the Parthians did find unfinished when they arrived were indeed some battlements, a partially renovated citadel, and several temples. These structures, in turn, would all become part of an architectural renaissance of sorts at Europos, where the incoming Parthians made use of and respected many of the Seleucid works, from the Hippodamian street plan just beginning to expand throughout the city, to finishing some battlements and fortifications, and most important for this project, constructing numerous temples during the course of the several centuries that Parthia held the city. This new detailed chronology from the MFSED helps explain “the paucity of the remains of the Hellenistic [period] and their incompleteness (Leriche 2012: 12)” when Yale came upon the city in the 1920s. The city may be Macedonian/Hellenic in origin and design, but it was not the founders who filled the city and finished the plan.

Parthian Period: Almost 300 Years of Prosperity (with help from Palmyra)

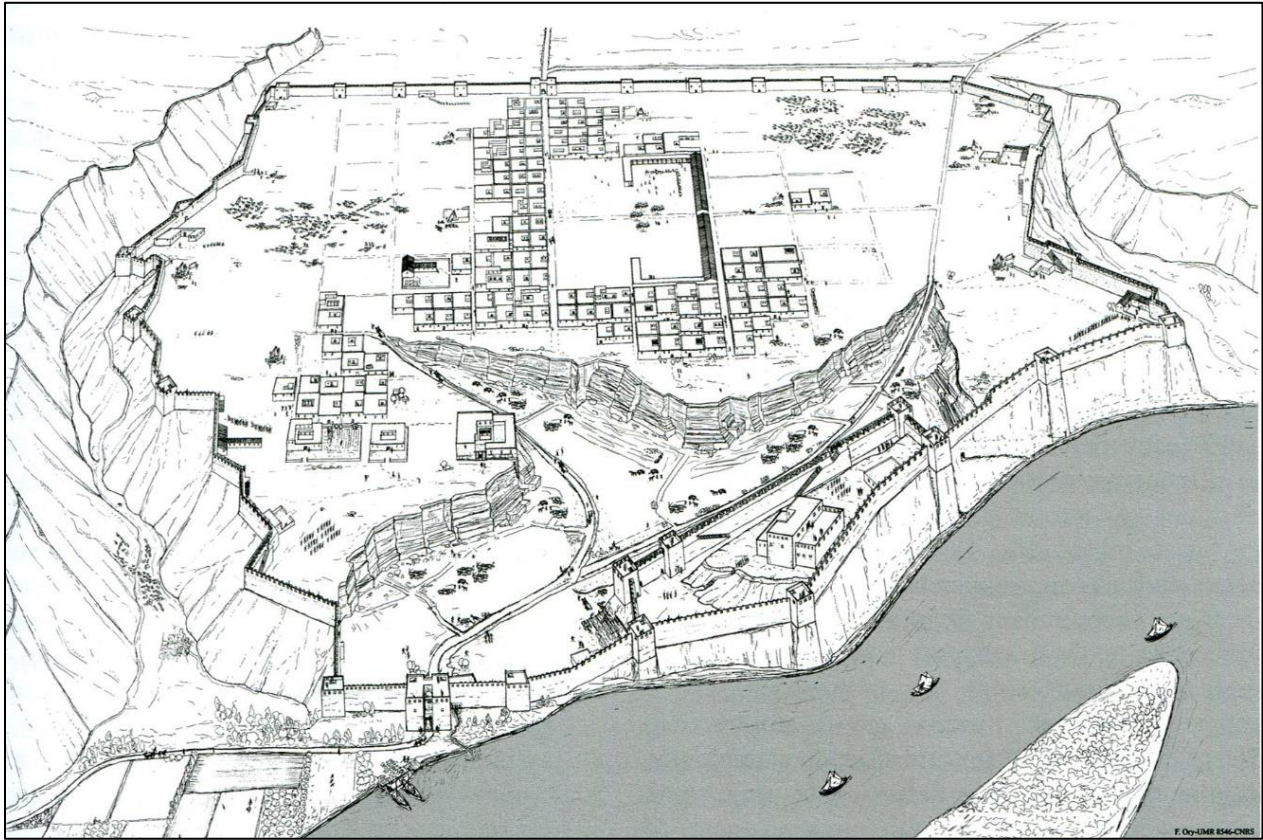


Figure 31: Artist's rendering of Europos towards the end of the second century BCE around the time of Parthian conquest.
Image: MFSED

The Parthian Empire took the city of Europos somewhere between 116 and 110 BCE; more precision than that is not possible from the archaeological or historical record.⁹ What is certain is that after 110 BCE the Parthian conquerors acquired, improved and held the city for over 200 years until a brief skirmish with Rome in 116/117 CE, and then likely held the city again until about 165 CE (Leriche 2012).

⁹ Yale offered a date of 113 for the Parthian capture of the city (Fin. Rep. 6: 200-1) but as Edwell has pointed out this date was based on scant and problematic numismatic evidence (2008: 102-3). Edwell is resistant to suggest any specific date for capture, suggesting only “the end of the second century BC (2008: 101),” and further, “Dura Europos came under Parthian control at some stage in the process of the Seleucid disintegration of the late second/early first century BC, and it was well within the territory considered to have been under Parthian suzerainty during the first century BC (2008: 102).” Leriche however is comfortable with the range of 116-110 based on both MFSED and Yale excavation evidence (2012: 44).

It is hardly surprising that the Parthians continued to build Europos according to Hellenistic plans. The Parthian Empire, like the Seleucid which it largely displaced over several centuries, was also heterogeneous, incorporating much of modern-day Iran but also parts of the Arabian Peninsula, modern day Turkey and Mesopotamia. Parthia integrated both Persian and Hellenistic political, religious and cultural traits. Greek was one of several languages used regularly within the Empire and they conducted trade as far afield as China.

Parthian heterogeneity dovetailed nicely with a city that was already accustomed to diversity. Perhaps even more influential in Europos' growing cosmopolitanism was the reality that Parthia was not the only empire vying for power in the region during the last century BCE and first century CE when the city was prospering under (possibly loose) Parthian control. Rome was also making claims to the region (as the Yale team were perhaps a bit too eager to point out in their analyses of the city's great walls) and Edwell suggests that much of the prosperity Europos experienced during the Parthian period, "was due to the city's links with the world of the Roman Near East rather than with the Parthians" (2008: 102). Edwell continues with a critical analysis of the textual evidence for Parthian control which shows that Greek was still the most important language in administration of the city and that the Parthians "exercised some control at Dura, using [existing Seleucid] hierarchies and civic structures at Dura through which to rule" (2008: 113). Edwell doesn't deny that the city lay in Parthian territory and under its sovereignty, but he cautions against suggesting that the prosperity and expansion of the city during this period is due to Parthian influence.

During the Parthian period, Dura Europos flourished as a Hellenistic city in a Semitic milieu and as such it was similar to many cities of the Near East under Roman control. Parthian control appears to have been distant and relatively loose, which allowed Dura to engage extensively with the cities and regions under Roman influence and control further to the west – hence the archaeological evidence for the city's prosperity in the Parthian period. (2008: 113)

As for the “Semitic milieu” and cities under Roman control, two nearby cities in particular are attested to extensively in the archaeological record as influencing the population of Europos: Palmyra and Anatha.¹⁰

Palmyra was a major city-state in ancient Syria located 200 kilometers west of Europos, Semitic in linguistic tradition with an indigenous dialect of Aramaic (Palmyrene) as its dominant language. Established in the second millennium BCE it traded hands among numerous empires over the ensuing centuries eventually allying with the Seleucid Empire against Ptolemaic Egypt while cautiously maintaining independence and trade with both Rome and Parthia after the Seleucid Empire fell. By the first century CE Palmyra was a client kingdom of Rome (Edwell 2008: 34) possessing a privileged status under the Roman Empire as well as considerable autonomy (Bryce 2014:278) and like Europos, possessed many Hellenistic administrative and political institutions (Smith 2013:122). Palmyra would play an extremely influential role after Rome conquered Europos in approximately 165 CE sending some of the first soldiers which would occupy the city during its final century. But long before Rome took the city, Palmyra’s influence was unmistakable, so much so that historian Lucinda Dirven dedicated an entire book, *The Palmyrenes of Dura-Europos: A Study of Religious Interaction in Roman Syria* (1999) examining just the religious influence of the Palmyrene community at Europos, a community attested to in the city since before the beginning of the Common Era (Dirven 1999:xv–xvi). The enormous Temple to Bel, also called the Temple of the Palmyrene Gods, which contained the large murals

¹⁰ Anatha is a 4,000 year-old town referred to as Anatho by Isidore of Charax (*Parthian Stations* 1.3-4). and Anatha by Amianus Marcellinus, (XXIV), it was an island city on the Euphrates in antiquity and located near modern day Anah in Iraq, a town occupied by ISIS since 2014 (<http://www.nytimes.com/2014/06/23/world/middleeast/iraq.html> accessed 8/17/16)

that helped Henry Breasted first ascertain the name of the city, is only one of several ritual spaces that express Palmyrene presence in Europos.

About 350 meters outside the city walls, the Yale excavation uncovered the remains of a small temple to the Palmyrene gods Bel and Yarhibol dedicated by members of two Palmyrene tribes in 33/32 BCE (Pre. Rep. VII/VIII: 310-320; Edwell 2008: 103 – 108). The cohort of archers sent from Palmyra during the earliest days of Roman control over the city in the mid-second century made dedications at a Durene Mithraeum in 168 CE and also had a strong presence in the temple to the Syrian goddess, Azzanathkona.¹¹

The Temple to Azzanathkona offers evidence of another city in the region with strong connections to and influence on Europos: Anatha. Located about 60 kilometers downstream from Europos (Leriche 2012: 44), this island city on the Euphrates is offered by Yale as the name sake for a regional variation of Atargatis (Dea Syriae to Romans) the Goddess to whom the Temple of Azzanathkona at Europos is dedicated (Pre. Rep. V: 142-5). Constructed by 12/13 CE, this temple dedicated to the protector deity of a neighboring city (akin to the Greek *Tyche* or Roman *Fortuna*) not only suggests a close connection between the populations of the two cities but the temple also shows evidence of enlargements and modifications up to and during the Roman occupation of the city. The Temple to Azzanathkona at Europos is the only known extant temple to this regional goddess. The names of individuals inscribed on steps and extant in graffiti in other locations throughout the temple reveal that individuals with both Greek and Semitic names worshipped here. In addition to this temple, traders from Anatha also raised and dedicated the Temple to Aphlad in 54 CE and like the Temple to Azzanathkona, the Temple to Aphlad at Europos is the only known surviving example of a temple to this regional deity (Edwell 2008: 107; Downey 1988: 99–115).

¹¹ Palmyrene troops used at least part of this temple during Roman military occupation of the city in the third century – further discussion on this claim by Yale’s excavators will follow below.

These temples to Bel, Yarhibol, Azzanathkona, and Aphlad are not just all regional (and archaeologically rare if not entirely unique) but also Semitic in origin. That is, during the Parthian occupation of the city, regional (Syrian, Semitic) populations made their home in Europos in considerable numbers alongside incoming Persians and long-established Macedonian families.

During this Parthian florescence, Leriche points out:

Avec la multiplication des communautés, on assiste à une augmentation parallèle du nombre de sanctuaires consacrés à des divinités régionales. C'est à l'époque parthe que se constitue une sorte de grammaire religieuse où les temples adoptent une conception non pas grecque, ni iranienne mais plutôt babylonienne, la demeure du dieu est un naos de dimensions réduites, entouré de stèles et d'autels au sein d'une grande cour contre le péribole de laquelle sont édifiées des salles à banquettes ou, à une certaine époque, des salles à gradins (2013 : 45).

[With the arrival of multiple communities, we witness a parallel increase in the number of sanctuaries consecrated to regional divinities. It is during the Parthian period that a sort of religious grammar is established where the temples adopt a style neither Greek nor Iranian but rather Babylonian, the house of god is a *naos* of smaller dimensions, surrounded by stelae and altars in the heart of a large courtyard around which are built rooms and benches or, in certain periods, rooms of raised benches [like bleachers, or a small theater].

It is this “Babylonian” religious grammar, a Mesopotamian courtyard plan which is commonplace throughout most ritual spaces in Europos (Dirven 2004:4), and perhaps better defined as “Durene” (Baird 2006: 12), which will inform interpretations later in this thesis. Suffice to say that by the time Rome arrived and claimed Europos, the mix of regional architecture, both military and religious, the perduring Greek political philosophy of democracy, and a city expanded to welcome arrivals from regional Semitic cities of import and multiple empires – empires which included peoples from the western Mediterranean to the Indian subcontinent – had thrived for over 400 years.

Parthia and Rome Wrestle on the Euphrates

Rome's acquisition of Europos during the second century is not exactly straight-forward. In the early second century CE, Emperor Trajan expanded the Roman Empire to what would be its maximum territorial extent. Part of this expansion included marching down the Euphrates to the Persian Gulf around 115 CE by way of Europos Dura (Pollard 2000:17) and conquering several cities including Ctesiphon – modern day Baghdad – the capital of a waning Parthian Empire. Trajan marked his taking of Europos by building a triumphal arch outside the city walls (Pre. Rep IV: 4, 55-68). However, in 117 CE, “most of these eastern conquests were abandoned as provinces after Trajan’s death and a large-scale revolt” (Pollard 2000: 17) as Trajan’s successor, Hadrian, fended off several challengers.

Pollard (2000:17) also remarks that Parthian authority in the middle Euphrates was weak at this time (no doubt if indeed Trajan was able to march to its capital and briefly hold it). So, as to which empire if any Europos answered to for the next 50 years after Roman withdrawal in the early second century CE there is no straightforward answer. Pollard notes that Rome may have had some nominal authority over the region, but it is clear from historical sources that Hadrian was not keen on investing the military assets necessary to hold such distant lands as he came to power. Additionally, Palmyra exerted growing cultural and religious influence on Europos during this period (Dirven 1999; Millar 1993:114–7).

The *longue-durée* and diversity of regional, imperial, ethnic and linguistic influences that all play a role in the development of Europos shows that the city had been growing for some four hundred years before Roman troops ever set foot there. Its Greco-Macedonian-lead local government survived through multiple imperial exchanges of the city, with documentary evidence that even during Parthian control, individuals retaining Greek names occupied the upper stratum

of society and politics (Fin. Rep. 5.1: 7). Its art, architecture and population were drawn from both regional and multiple imperial sources. And for perhaps some of the time between Rome's exit from the city after Trajan's death and their arrival again in 165 CE, Europos may have pledged allegiance to no empire at all.¹²

By 165 CE however, Parthia again possessed enough military influence over the city that Rome was forced to stage a siege in order to claim the city once and for all (James 2004: 11) and would stay put until the city's final days not quite a century later. By comparison, Parthia exerted some sort of political control and influence over the city for over 275 years by the time Rome seized Europos in the 160s CE. The date of 165 CE, commonly used to indicate the year in which Europos fell to Roman control is approximate and a "reasonable proposition" (Edwell 2008: 116) for the date of Roman conquest but there is no Roman acknowledgement of the event in the historical record nor is there evidence from the site which is conclusive regarding exactly when Rome reclaimed Europos (Edwell 2008: 116). Rather the date of 165 CE coincides with the military campaigns of Emperor Lucius Verus, led by Syrian-born senatorial commander, Avidius Cassius, which subjugated a revived Parthia and not only reclaimed Europos for Rome but destroyed both Seleucia on the Tigris (the former capital of the Seleucid empire now in Parthian hands) and Ctesiphon, the capital of the Parthian Empire. With these conquests Verus and Cassius established Roman military control over the whole of northern Mesopotamia (Pollard 2000:18; James 2004:11; Millar 1993:115–7). With these successes, the Euphrates no longer constituted a frontier between Parthia and Rome but rather "a key axis of communication – and invasion –

¹² Palmyrene presence in Europos can be dated through textual evidence as far back as 33 BCE – the aforementioned small temple to Bel outside the city walls (above p19). Millar suggests that Palmyrene military role may have persisted in the city until the arrival of Roman forces in the latter half of the second century and beginning of the third century CE (1993: 114-5). Pollard acknowledges Palmyrene troops are also attested to by inscriptions within the city during the Parthian possession of Europos (2000: 37).

between the heartlands of Babylonia and Syria (James 2004:11).” And so, in 450 years, Europos Dura grew from a small Seleucid fort strategically placed after the post-Alexandrian civil wars of the *Diadochi*, to a regional staging and launching platform for Rome’s ceaseless clashes with Persia (long Parthia but soon, in 224 CE, the Sassanid Empire would rise in Persia to replace the Parthians).

II. 160 CE – 257 CE: Are We Rome Yet?

Prof. Simon James wrote the book on the military at Europos. Quite literally. Twenty-plus years in the making, *The Excavations at Dura Europos. Final Report VII: The Arms and Armour, and other Military Equipment* (2004) is an exhaustive effort to complete one of the tasks left unfinished by Yale: a thorough accounting of the archaeology of military material culture discovered at Europos.

One afternoon in the spring of 2010 I had the opportunity to walk with James across the ruins of the military quarter of the city. He showed me the remains of an internal wall the military built, dividing a large portion of the city commandeered by the incoming Roman military from the rest of the city – ostensibly still civilian in nature. While we walked, James pointed out numerous buildings built, rebuilt, or repurposed by the military for the various duties they needed to carry out. He relayed to me effortlessly, countless pieces of information regarding typical Roman military and bureaucratic necessities while he also took dozens of photographs. One of James' goals during the 2010 excavation season, the penultimate season to be conducted by the MFSED, was to create a digital image archive of the military quarter as it stood that year. This was an invaluable endeavor given the state of the site today.¹³ However, James had not taken me out to assist in in the project. Instead he wanted to draw my attention to an internal city wall built during Roman occupation, segregating the part of the city Roman soldiers claimed for themselves in the north, from the civilian population.

The Roman military built a 1.65 meter-wide mud brick wall east to west across at least four city blocks (Pre. Rep. XI, Pt. III: 69) and then used public works (an amphitheater, a bath and a military temple to name a few), gates and other constructions to divide civilians from soldiers

¹³ James is still at work on the archive project. Seeing as he recently called the project a “200k [word] monstergraph,” using “forthcoming” seems perhaps optimistic. Pers. comm. August 8, 2016.

within the city. But new evidence indicates that the Roman military at Europos was not as segregated from civilians and civilian life as has been suggested in some literature on Europos. Rather, there is ample evidence that soldiers negotiated with locals in regards to preserving certain aspects of the civilian structures claimed; granted access to civil and religious buildings on the military side of the wall; that civilians, including women and children, lived within the military quarter; that the military conducted regular trade and commerce with civilians in the quarter; and that the military population was so large in number that they were also billeted outside the military camp's borders.

The Roman military encampment within the city walls of Europos has been used as a primary source for much research on the Roman military writ-large and the military of the eastern Empire in particular, not only due to the relatively excellent archaeological preservation of buildings, weapons, armor and other material traces of the thousands of soldiers who called the city home, but also due to one of the largest and most referenced collections of preserved papyri related to the Roman military found anywhere in the world (Southern 2007: 7; James 2007: 1). The military quarter itself has provided concrete evidence at Europos (or at least mud brick evidence) of a military arrangement more common to the eastern Empire than the west: the stationing of troops near to or within an urban area rather than camped outside as was more common with western troops (Pollard 1996:212).¹⁴ This arrangement is not only one of different military tactics used east and west but one with implications for an important difference in relationships between soldiers and civilians. One goal in the east was to encourage civilians to view “the soldiers based nearby not as an imperial force of oppression but as individuals with

¹⁴ Pollard makes pains to point out that both arrangements can be found throughout the Empire but a general pattern of Roman troops billeted in conquered pre-existing cities in the east, while cities themselves tended to rise around military fortifications in the west is attested to regularly by researchers and the historical record.

whom they enjoyed close personal ties as friends and relations” (Pollard 2000, 2-4). Pollard, however, also argued in an earlier work (1996) for the possibility that the Roman military at Europos, despite spatial proximity to the civilian population may have resembled something akin to sociologist Erving Goffman’s “Total Institution” (1962), a theme Pollard also touches upon in a later appraisal of the Roman military in the Middle East:

Separation of soldiers and civilians is a recurring theme in Syria and Mesopotamia. While soldiers lived close to civilians in large numbers and often were drawn from the civilian population, they were separated politically, socially, and economically by official duties; by an institutional outlook on social relationships, religion, and similar matters; and by their position within an exploitative economic system (2000: 7).

While admitting Goffman’s model was an imperfect fit, Pollard nevertheless suggested that “the concept of a ‘total institution’ has proved to be a useful one in an analysis of the social, cultural and economic relationships between soldiers and civilians at Dura-Europos” (1996: 226).

I aim to show instead that something more complicated and integrative took place at Europos and a fair portion of the evidence for my claim lies within the military quarter itself.

When Pollard wrote in both 1996 and 2000, important research by Baird (2006, 2012) on domestic spaces at Europos, including domestic spaces converted for use in the military quarter, James’ (2004, 2007) extensive work on the military quarter, and more than a decade’s worth of recent research by the MFSED had not yet been published. While Pollard’s expertise on the region and the period of conflict between Persia and Rome is not in question, some of his, and other researchers’ observations about Europos – and in particular its military quarter – rely on Yale’s work, on previous observations “originally made on slender and difficult grounds [but which] are still accepted or only subjected to limited questioning” (Edwell 2008: 93). Like Yale’s attempt to date the construction of the great walls and fortifications of the city to the period of Parthian occupation rather than as the MFSED has shown actually took place during the waning years of

Seleucid control, the notion that the military quarter at Europos was segregated thoroughly enough to be considered, as Pollard suggested, “separated politically, socially and economically” by an “institutional outlook on social relationships [and] religion,” is more difficult to accept when new data are incorporated into analyzing daily life at Europos after the Roman military set up shop there.

Current research reveals a more complicated and less segregated reality than the interpretations and assumptions relying exclusively on Yale’s conclusions. Also, as regards Roman occupation at Europos, the elephant in the room needs to be noted: some researchers¹⁵ have suggested that the Christian population at Europos arrived with (and potentially included) Roman soldiers, so understanding the way the military inhabited the city is germane to this study.

Good Fences Make Good Neighbors

According to Yale, a flurry of new construction and renovation of existing structures to serve the military occupation took place during the reigns of co-emperors Septimus Severus (193 – 211 CE) and Caracalla (198-217 CE) – much of it during the waning years of Caracalla (Pre. Rep. IX, Pt. III: 69). James states that the troop garrison at Europos was already “substantial” by 200 CE and “probably already occupied a significant part of Dura” before the building of the military quarter was begun (2007: 3). Mathilde Gelin, who excavated with the MFSED between 1991 and 2004, narrowed down much of the military quarter’s construction to a “concerted

¹⁵ Lassus (1969:138–9) summarized Kraeling’s suggestion (Fin. Rep. 8.2: 202) that based on an analysis of the artwork, known Christian communities in the region during the third century, and troop movements, that at least some of the Christian population were military and that there was evidence of an Antioch (Pauline) tradition and link with the Christian population at Europos. This claim, that Christianity came to Europos via the Roman military, has been repeated in numerous papers, usually without citation. However, Dirven (2008) has argued that some of the artwork in the Christian temple (A small painting of Adam and Eve in particular) suggests a local Syrian variation of Christianity, not necessarily Pauline.

campaign over a few years, especially 211-212” (Gelin 2000, 308–11 cited in James 2007: 3).¹⁶ Evidence of military housing being constructed during this period – both barracks for soldiers and mixed use buildings including stables and spaces for officers and other bureaucratic activity – have been attested to in blocks E4, E8, J1, J7 and K5 (Baird 2006; see figure 31 above). While other blocks in the quarter likely housed soldiers as well – given the number of troops stationed at Europos – these are the only five blocks which have been archaeologically investigated and shown to have housed soldiers behind the mud brick circuit wall that runs eastward from Tower 21 across several blocks. James also suggests the possibility that additional soldiers were housed in “J4, J6, J8 and the incorporated blocks K south of Eighth St.” and points out that the term “barracks” may not properly describe the “labyrinthine” subdivisions of these former domestic houses and blocks (James 2007:16)(James 2007: 16), since office space, officers’ homes, and evidence of soldiers’ families were also found in the camp where soldiers were allowed to marry and married local women.¹⁷

The most obvious piece of evidence for the separation of the military quarter from the rest of the city is the aforementioned 1.6-meter-wide mud-brick wall which runs eastward from the city’s western (desert) wall, beginning just south of Tower 21, and continuing on until at least D Street.¹⁸ The wall was interrupted by a gate at B Street some three meters wide and close enough to Tower 21 and the main city wall to be easily observed by patrols there (James 2007: 9-11). The wall’s construction has been dated to either 211/212 or 217. The inscription Yale relied upon for

¹⁶ Several citations for Gelin (2000) will be via James (2007) due to two separate microfiche versions of Gelin’s 2000 dissertation received by the Regenstein Library being nearly unreadable.

¹⁷ P. Dura 32, a papyrus document found at the site describes the divorce proceedings of a soldier, Julius Antiochus, and his wife, Aurelia Amimma, named as a citizen of Dura in the document which also contains the date of the divorce corresponding to 254 CE (Grubbs 2002: 217–18). See below for more detail.

¹⁸ As is hopefully evident from the map in Figure 2 above, Yale excavators labeled each street running north-south with a letter and each street running east-west with numbers. Additionally, each block was given a designation of a letter followed by a number (the full extent of the labelling system can be seen on the map in the Introduction).

dating is confusing: “a fragmentary and substantially erased *tabula ansata*¹⁹ inscription found in a barracks” in block E8 (Pollard 2000: 48). Only partial names of emperors are listed on the plaque and the inscription doesn’t necessarily speak directly to the construction of this wall (but is a dedication to the completion of “a” wall) and several characters on the tablet are illegible and difficult to determine (Frye et al. 1955, 161–2; Pollard 2000: 48).

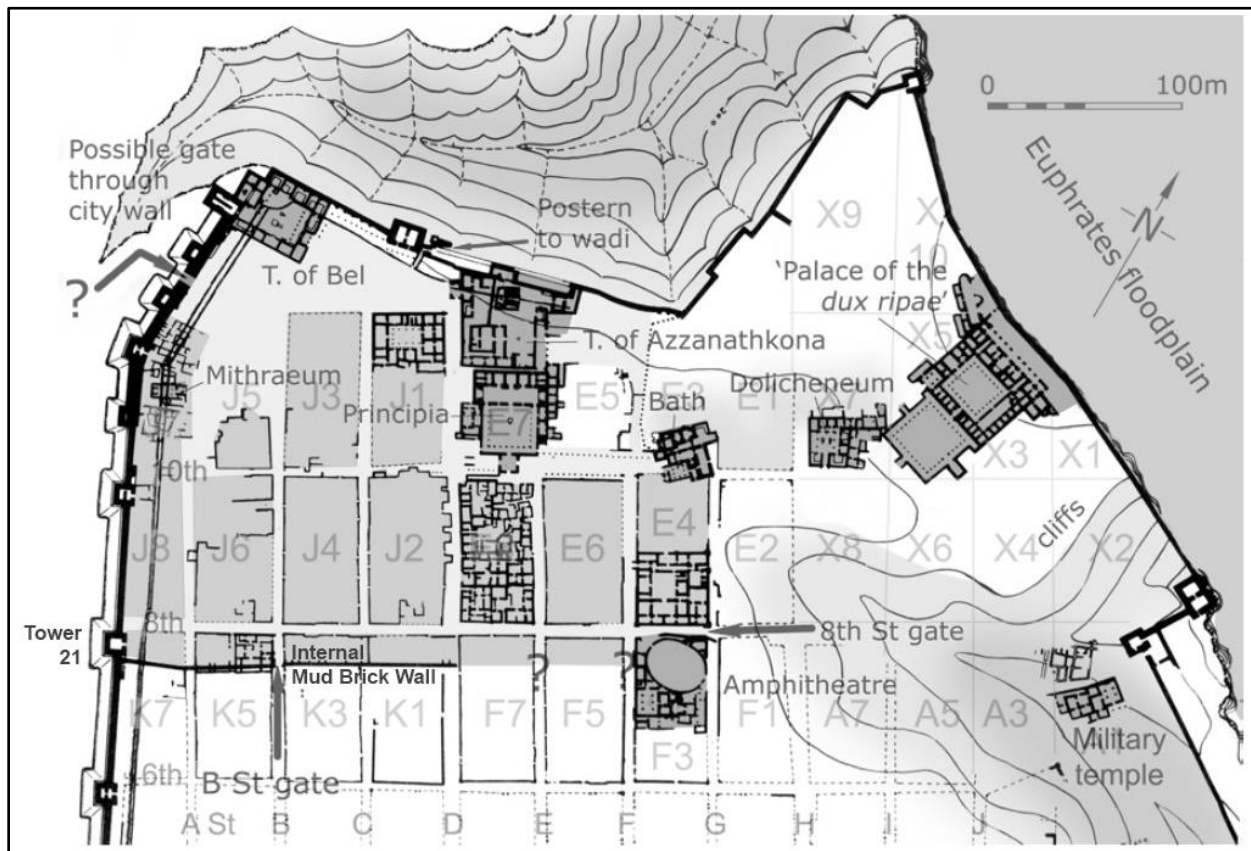


Figure 32: The Military Quarter at the northern end of Europos with edifices and fortifications providing relative seclusion. Based on Detweiler; updated by James (2007) and Bonni.

In the several blocks through which the internal wall runs (K1, K3, K5 and K7), rather than requisition the entire lot, James (2007) and Gelin (2000) have shown that the Roman military only

¹⁹ A tablet or plaque with ornamental handle/projections on its sides.

destroyed some structures or rooms in these blocks that would have interfered with the stretch of the internal circuit wall, leaving the remaining southern portions of these blocks apparently in civilian hands. On the military side of the wall the buildings were repaired and rebuilt right up to the newly constructed internal mud-brick wall. Additionally, the circuit wall occasionally “dog-legged” in between blocks to “keep clear of doorways in the existing buildings because it was intended they stay in use (James 2007: 9).”

While Yale traced the internal wall’s remains from the Western wall to D Street they did not find (or at least did not report) archaeological evidence that this wall continued beyond “D Street.” Excavations by Gelin (2000: 308-311) also found no evidence that the wall continued past or through block F7. Thus, it is not clear how E Street and F Street were blocked in order to prevent civilian access to the military camp via these roads but there is little doubt that the amphitheater in Block F3 served as the southeast corner of the military quarter (Pre. Rep. VI: 68-80). Constructed by the Roman military by razing and repurposing earlier structures on the block including an earlier Roman bath,²⁰ Yale dated the amphitheater’s construction to 216 CE via an extant dedication on the arena’s wall (Pre. Rep. I: 76). In Yale’s discussion of the construction of the amphitheater, Brown²¹ notes that during this period (the early third century) there was no immediate Parthian threat, and a civil war of sorts was taking place in Parthia (by 224 CE, however, a new dynasty, the Sasanians, would rise to power and indeed threaten eastern Roman holdings and eventually sack Europos in 256/7). Brown instead suggests that the reason for garrisoning so

²⁰ The pre-existing Roman bath was dated by Yale based on style and design to the third quarter of the second century (Pre. Rep. I: 77) suggesting it was in use after the initial occupation Europos by Roman troops in the 160s until the construction of the Amphitheater and a new more extensive bath immediately to the amphitheater’s north – also a part of the buildings and walls that limited access to the military quarter.

²¹ Frank E. Brown was added to the team in 1932 due to his expertise in architectural drawing. He eventually became the director of excavations for the last two seasons replacing Hopkins. See Chapter Two for more details on Brown and several other researchers and investigators at Europos.

many troops in Europos at this time was in preparation of a Parthian campaign that Emperors Severus and Caracalla were planning and carried out in 216 CE (Pre. Rep. I: 80).

Whatever the historical impetus, the new amphitheater was raised, the old bath razed, and a new bath built on block E3. The amphitheater possessed an external circuit wall of its own that ran north along G Street reducing G Street's width to only pedestrian traffic. This allowed further control over the Eighth Street gate because traffic consisting of carts or other large vehicles could only approach the gate coming from the east via Eighth Street (James 2007: 14-5).

The Roman military obviously wanted control and use of both Eighth and Tenth streets within the quarter. Tenth Street was likely the main thoroughfare for the camp with some colonnaded sections and access to the *principia*. Yale suggested that the majority of Tenth Street was colonnaded, however James having returned to the site and examined it far more closely in 2005, suggested that any "colonnaded area west of the 'praetorium' (*principia*)²² appears to be largely wishful thinking" on the part of Yale (2007: 6, fig. 4). Eighth Street terminated at the gate on G Street which along with the gate in the internal wall on B Street appear to be the only gates accessing the quarter from within the city.

Interesting to note is that despite wanting to control these streets, the Roman military did not requisition the entirety of the K blocks that bordered Eighth Street. Instead the military left most of these blocks in the hands of the civilian population even though it should have been simpler, cheaper, and required far less labor to have walled up just the widths of the north-south

²² Generally, when discussing Roman military, a *principia* is the headquarters of a military camp, a *praetorium* is the residence of a military commander and his headquarters. Yale preferred calling this building a *praetorium* (Pre. Rep. IX, Pt. III: 85) while James (and Pollard 2000: 49) prefers *principia*, with good reason, because the evidence determining its exact use (a general military headquarters versus a military general's headquarters) is imprecise at best. Hopkins and H.T. Rowell, who wrote the chapter on the *praetorium* in PR 5 debate these definitions at length (205-6) and conclude that at the time of their writing "praetorium" was the appropriate term for a building with both bureaucratic and ritual functions regardless of whether a military or civil leader lived there ("praetorium" is also used to describe the "official residence of the governor of a province (206)."

running streets between these blocks and claim considerably more space and many more buildings for the camp. One could reasonably speculate from the efforts to dog-leg the wall to allow existing entrances to remain in use and leaving most of these blocks in civilian hands that the Roman military showed some restraint in how much land within Europos' walls they claimed for themselves. How such negotiations between civilian and military leaders was arranged will likely never be answered but referring back to the historical tendencies of eastern Roman military detachments establishing closer ties with the cities they were stationed in than their western counterparts (Pollard 1996: 212), such restraint and cooperation isn't necessarily unusual. Further, such restraint indicates some sort of coordination between military and civilians at both a 'street' and bureaucratic level.

With the north and west boundaries of the military camp marked by the great city walls, the southern boundary shown to be a combination of internal walls, standing structures and controlled gates, and most of the eastern boundary of the camp described from the amphitheater in the southeastern corner of the camp northwards to the newly constructed bath on block E3 (comfortably placed at the end of perhaps the most "Romanized" street in the city, the partially colonnaded portion of Tenth Street between the *Principia* and the bath itself), only the northeastern boundary of the camp is left to detail.

In nearly all existing literature on Europos' military quarter written before the turn of the new millennium, the Palace of the *Dux Ripae* is generally proffered as a military structure belonging to, and part of, the border of the military quarter. However, such claims are based on uncritical reception of Yale's investigations. It is in this corner of the camp, though, where Yale's interpretations of the military quarter face perhaps the most scrutiny: Yale over-reached in claims

they made about the role of both the *palace of* and the *status of* the *Dux Ripae*, an oft-touted commander of the military at Europos who may have only briefly served in the city.

The Dux Ripae: The Man, the Myth, the Mansio.

The building was once an impressive structure, and the desire of Rostovtzeff and others to find a senior official for whom it was constructed was strong. They found such an office in the *dipinto* naming the *Dux Ripae*. It has been shown that the *dipinto* is the only evidence for the *Dux Ripae* and that the subject of the *dipinto* was not the *Dux Ripae* but an actor²³ who had died. The location of the palace next to the army camp may indicate some military function, but as it seems that the building was not within the demarcated area of the camp it is possible that its importance to the army at Dura or on the middle Euphrates was actually limited. Given the speculative nature of the conclusions reached about the *Dux Ripae* and the palace it is appropriate to question them seriously and consider alternative uses for the building (Edwell 2008: 135).

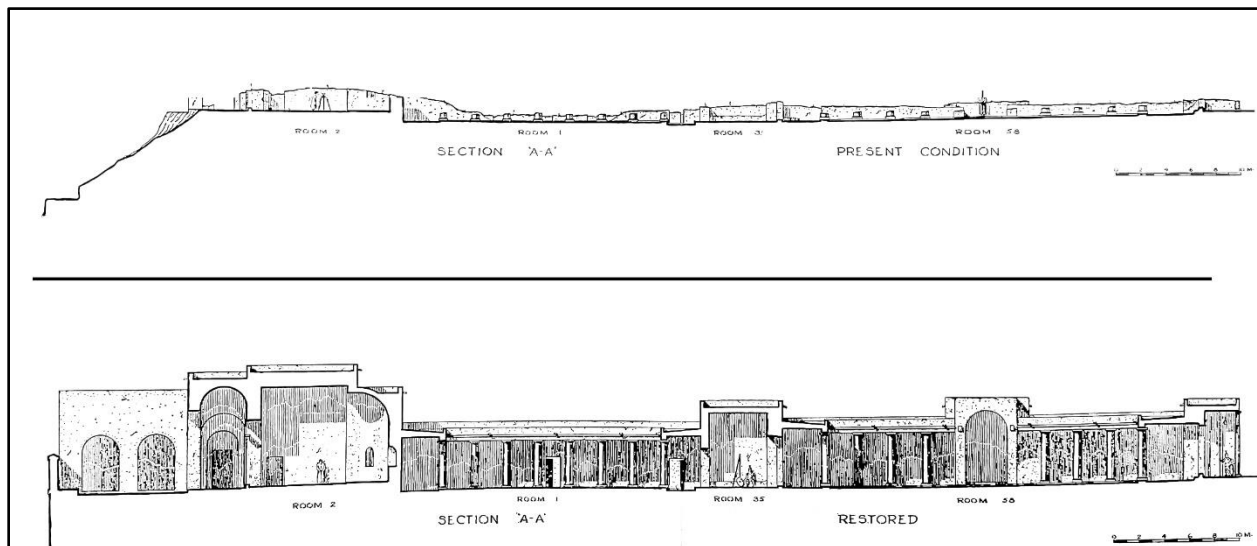


Figure 33: Palace of the *Dux Ripae*. Top image: foundation ruins as found by Yale.

The palace of the *Dux Ripae* is perhaps the best of several problematic candidates for demonstrating the over-reach on the part of Yale in describing the military quarter. M. I.

²³ It is likely, though not definitive, that by “actor” Edwell is referring to a slave of high status who administers a household or estate (Clauss 2001:39), in this case quite likely the palace at the center of our discussion.

Rostovtzeff was the director of excavations at Europos for Yale²⁴ as well as editor of all the Preliminary and *Final Reports* published by Yale and a contributing author to the *Preliminary Reports*. While considered an “intellectual titan” of ancient history (Bowersock 1974:15)²⁵ much of Rostovtzeff’s work on the collapse of the Roman Empire has long since been discredited. Bowersock, in an appreciation of Rostovtzeff’s overall contribution to the studies of classical civilization, said about the “titan’s” work on Roman collapse, *The Social and Economic History of the Roman Empire* (Rostovtzeff 1926), that, “Today there is probably not one reputable historian who would accept the basic thesis of Rostovtzeff’s book” (1974: 15). Clark Hopkins, both an assistant field director for several years and eventually field director himself at Europos beginning in 1931 said of Rostovtzeff, “[He] was more at home in armchair archaeology than with roughing it in the field” (1979: 29).

To be fair, before Rostovtzeff’s emigration from a civil war-torn Russia in 1918, he was not only an acclaimed philologist but also an early proponent of “the importance of non-literary evidence for writing ancient history” (Bowersock 1974: 16). His appointments after his exile from Russia, first at Wisconsin, and then Yale as the Sterling Professor of Ancient History, were hardly without merit. It is however important to recognize the epistemological groundings of the individuals leading the discipline of archaeology in the early twentieth century and responsible for constructing the record at Yale.

So, when the Yale team dated erroneously the completion of the great walls that surround Europos to the Parthian period in order to coincide with a grand narrative of Rome and Persia clashing on the Euphrates at a recently Persian fortified Europos, it was not simply the result scant

²⁴ Though not the field director – that position would change hands several times and the quality of excavations and recording of data varied with each field director and one of their wives: without Susan Hopkins, we may have nothing resembling provenience for any of Yale’s seasons. See Chapter Two for more details on problems with provenience.

²⁵ Also: <http://classics.yale.edu/events/michael-i-rostovtzeff-1870-1952> Accessed September 27, 2016.

data but also a desire to fit what data they had with contemporary interpretations and personal agendas: Rostovtzeff was keen on comparing Imperial Russia's collapse to Imperial Rome's and while the error of dating the construction of the walls to a later day shouldn't be considered an effort to achieve that specific goal, his leadership at Yale and as editor of the Preliminary and *Final Reports* cannot be discounted in shaping the choices and narratives surrounding the data, particularly since he wrote a great deal of the *Preliminary Reports* and yet, as Hopkins pointed out, was not a field archaeologist and not on site as frequently as the field directors.

In regards to the palace of, and the position of, the *Dux Ripae*, we see perhaps a bit more clearly the role of the personalities, interests and agendas of the early directors and editors, in influencing interpretation. It is fairly certain that Yale strained the limits of available data regarding the *Dux Ripae*'s military position and palace. Edwell's concerns as noted above are two: First, that the position of *Dux Ripae*, a "river general" and commander of troops along the Euphrates, and a permanent fixture at Europos, has been overstated by Yale. Second, that the enormous palace built in the northeastern corner of the city and attributed to this supposed resident military leader was not the military palace and symbol of Roman military power and exclusivity that has been attributed to it for decades by researchers.

The Palace of the *Dux Ripae* is undoubtedly of Roman construction. It followed Roman methods and measurements and was built outside of and at odds with the Greek Hippodamian street plan which most of the rest of city adheres to (Pre. Rep. IX, Pt. III: 2-6). Yale was only able to date the palace's construction to somewhere between 211 and 222 CE favoring a date in the reign of Elagabalus (218-22) based on the reconstruction of a single dipinto (Pre. Rep. IX, Pt. III: 95). Gelin's work also placed the construction of the palace in the same period but, based on the types of bricks used and their similarity to those used to construct the *praetorium* and the internal

military wall, she prefers the earlier dates of 211/12 (2006: 11). Both dates create a bit of a problem for Yale: There is no evidence that the *Dux Ripae*, whoever or whatever his role, existed in Europos before 245 CE. So why then did Yale, and researchers following Yale's lead, suggest the position of the *Dux Ripae* existed decades earlier and that a palace was built for him at the turn of the century?

The only specific mention of a *Dux Ripae* in all of Europos is on one of several *dipinto* fragments painted on plaster which had fallen from one of the rooms in palace. Seven fragments were assembled by Yale to form an inscription offering the name of a "pious and just commander of the river bank"²⁶ (Edwell 2008: 128; Pre. Rep. IX, Pt. III: 30-6, 95-6), Domitius Pompeianus, a name mentioned on two other fragmentary *dipinti* from the palace. But neither of these other fragments include the title of *Dux Ripae*. And while the several mentions of Domitius in the palace might suggest that this individual was the (a?) primary resident of the palace, they are "so fragmentary that their purposes are difficult to establish" (Edwell 2008: 130).

To reiterate, the only mention of a *Dux Ripae* at Europos is a single *dipinto* from the palace which associates the position with the name Domitius Pompeianus, a name that appears partially on two other *dipinti* in the same room but with no mention of the title. Additionally, by Yale's own admission, "Unfortunately, we cannot date Domitius Pompeianus, nor the institution of the office which he held (Pre. Rep. IX, Pt. III: 95)."

And yet they tried.

There are other mentions of *duces* on papyri and inscriptions in the military quarter at Europos which were interpreted by Yale to be the same *dux* mentioned in the palace. Yale suggested this single position was a "commander of the garrisons of the middle Euphrates in the

²⁶ Dux = commander. Ripae = River bank.

first half of the third century” residing at Europos (Edwell 2008: 128; Pre. Rep. IX, Pt. III: 95-6). However, the title of *dux* is not an uncommon one sometimes referring to a provincial governor, other times to a temporary command of troops for particular campaigns. There is no evidence that the other *duces* mentioned in various papyri at Europos over several decades refer specifically to a *Dux Ripae* (river commander) mentioned in the palace *dipinto* (Edwell 2008: 131).²⁷

Drawing the conclusion that all *duces* mentioned in texts at Europos referred to the *Dux Ripae* would be problematic enough if that were the only questionable conclusion Yale came to regarding the *Dux* and his palace. However, the situation becomes even muddier the more we examine the evidence.

Based on the other papyri mentioning *duces*, which did possess datable references (the one *dipinto* mentioning a *Dux Ripae* in the palace was not datable), and then assuming those other *duces* were one and the same with the *Dux Ripae*, Gilliam (1941) could still only date the earliest existence of any *duce* at Europos to 226/227 CE and offered no datable evidence for the creation of the specific post of the *Dux Ripae*.²⁸ But Yale, deciding that the palace was a part of the military quarter and therefore must have housed an important military commander, determined that the palace must have belonged to the *Dux Ripae* mentioned in the lone *dipinto* and decided the position of a *Dux Ripae* had to have coincided with the palace’s construction. Since the palace was built in the first quarter of the third century CE, and since Yale was convinced the palace was the home of a unique river commander heretofore unseen in the eastern Empire, Yale claimed that the *Dux*

²⁷ To add to the confusion regarding the role of the *Dux Ripae* is the fact that the title of *dux* takes on different and specific roles during the reign of Diocletian (284 – 305 CE) decades after the fall of Europos but which Gilliam (1941) tries to suggest can be gleaned from the post of *Ripae* at Europos, a pre-saging of sorts for the role *duces* would have in the latter half of the third century.

²⁸ In the same article Gilliam contradicts himself stating in his opening paragraph, “Evidence has been found at Dura of the existence there of a *dux ripae* as early as A.D. 245,” and then in his conclusion, “His office was created, by 245 at the latest, to meet the Persian menace and presumably passed out of existence at the time of the capture of Dura.” The 19 pages in between these statements do little to offer conclusive evidence of either claim.

Ripae was an elite military commander, housed in a palace built for his personal and bureaucratic position and needs, and who was stationed in Europos from the early 200s CE onwards.

James noted this problematic set of assumptions (2007) a year before Edwell's sleuthing (2008) when discussing Gelin's excavations from the 1990s and early 2000s which suggested the palace may have been constructed as early as 211-212 CE.

Such an early date for the 'Palace' indicates that it originally had some other purpose than headquarters and residence for the *dux ripae*, apparently a regional military command only created some decades later. It remains to debate its original purpose and the history of its actual use, but I suspect that it was in practice multifunctional; while it may have served as a main or temporary residence for various officials, from visiting provincial governors to figures such as the *praepositus praetenturae*, it was surely also de facto an official *mansio*, providing fitting accommodation for diplomatic envoys in transit to or from Ctesiphon, and probably emperors on campaign (2007: 4-5).

Millar also noted problems with Yale's assumptions about the palace and the *Dux Ripae* and his own concern about how to interpret the military quarter's size and exclusivity.

... the excavators' conception of the military takeover of the whole quarter may be correct. But it is all very uncertain, and cannot be used for historical purposes. What is certain is (in general) no more than the clear evidence for the close integration of the army into the life of the town (Millar 1993:133).

The reasons for my questioning the palace and post of the *Dux Ripae* are several.

First, to call attention to Yale's circular reasoning and questionable interpretations of limited data in order to fit a narrative establishing a regional general at Europos in charge of Roman troop movements on the Euphrates who inhabited a palace built at the highest point of the city and overlooking the great Mesopotamian plain (admittedly an impressive display of Imperial dominance if it were true). However, as touched upon in Chapter Two, the excavators at Europos were constantly under pressure to justify their cost via discoveries that resonated with financial backers in the US. The oldest Christian Temple, a uniquely ornate Synagogue, the cache of

military papyri – all these were just some of the extraordinary discoveries made at Europos. But Hopkins recalled years later, there was always new pressure.

I confess we felt a pressing need to uncover striking finds in that period of the Great Depression, even Rostovtzeff's enthusiasm and eager elucidation of the new Christian building at Dura had met with disappointing reactions among Classical scholars, who were more concerned with Greece and Rome than with early Christianity, and with only moderate response from American churchmen, more interested in the modern interpretation of the Bible, than in older biblical representations and ancient meetinghouses. The discovery of a house dedicated to Christian worship in the period before Constantine, they admitted, was splendid and unusual – yes, even unique. But there it ended. European clergy and the continental schools were much more interested in the history and development of the church, but they were in no position to give aid to Dura. (1979: 121)

If indeed Europos was also a regional military headquarters with a palace housing a heretofore unknown regional general of Rome's forces on the Euphrates, what an opportunity to rewrite history with these finds.

The second reason for teasing out a more accurate understanding of the palace and post of the *Dux Ripae* is to show that the palace or *mansio*,²⁹ as James perhaps more accurately calls it, was not necessarily a part of the military quarter but rather a likely place of intersection between Roman political and military representatives, and those of Europos and other visitors and travelers of significance.

Lastly, we must acknowledge that we are not quite clear how the military quarter was closed up in its northeastern corner and instead only know that it bordered with a monumental public edifice, palace-like for sure, but with potentially multiple and non-military roles. Such a conclusion hardly suggests a military quarter entirely closed off from the city with an elite Roman military leadership peering down upon the civilian population from on high, but rather, a much more complicated, at times cooperative relationship between soldiers and civilians at Europos.

²⁹ A rest stop for travelling Roman officials.

In order to understand just how cooperative that relationship may have been, we should now move beyond the borders of the camp and spend some time with the citizens and soldiers who interacted both in the camp and around the city.

Incomplete Information and Less than Total Institutions

With soldiers pulled from around the eastern Mediterranean and also Northern Africa slowly expanding the already multicultural population of Europos by the thousands, the arrival of Rome via its military is less the arrival of a secluded and segregated population but rather a continuation of a half-millennium old trend in the city: with the arrival of Roman troops, Europos only became more cosmopolitan.

When Pollard (1996) compared the Roman military to Goffman's Total Institution it was before many of the critiques and excavation reports discussed above were made available to researchers. Pollard himself acknowledged that the Europos military camps was an imperfect fit for Goffman's model (Pollard 1996: 211-213, 226), and his attempt "to analyse the Roman Near East, and indeed the empire, outside of the outmoded Romanization paradigm, grounded as it is in colonialism, and move on to something more sophisticated and less homogeneous which will allow for the identification of the many discrepant experiences (Baird 2006: 191)," is not without merit. But some of Pollard's claims no longer hold up given new evidence and old evidence revisited.

Yale may not have recorded detailed provenience of small finds; that said, they recorded other data whose insights about the intersection of civilians and soldiers at Europos are exceptional and almost haunting in their detail. Inscriptions, graffiti, *dipinti* and even small altars located in the towers at the main (Palmyrene) gate along the great western wall reveal the presence of both military and civilian officials monitoring the primary passageway in and out of the fortress city.

The titles of Roman soldiers stationed in the guard tower at the gate were still legible when Yale arrived in the 1920s (Pre. Rep. I: 32 – 41). They reveal several dates including the reign of Commodus (180 -192 CE) as well as a specific inscription dated to 196 CE. These dates predate the commandeering and partitioning of the northern portion of the city for the military encampment by over a decade and show Roman military presence some 30 years after the siege and conquest was well established even if the northern camp was not. The titles and dates of these inscriptions suggest that the soldiers at the gate were not part of some emergency war time measure but a regular part of the policing of Europos (Pollard 2000: 47). Working with the soldiers at the gate we have evidence of civilian customs officials and gatekeepers, and even their names and local titles. Inscriptions and graffiti at the Palmyrene Gate mention the Roman and Aramaic names of several civilians and soldiers who worked there: Selaios, the son of Barnaios, is a customs officer (*telenos*, a military position) and Gosaios and his son Naastabos were both gatekeepers (*pulouros*, a position pre-dating Roman occupation and likely locally staffed). This father and son were also *boukolos* which the original excavators suggested may have indicated that this father and son not only worked the main gate but also leased oxen for ploughing farmlands outside the city walls (Pre. Rep. II: 156-9). Additional inscriptions suggest the same mix of civilians and soldiers at other gates allowing entry into the city (Pollard 2000: 46).

Baird (2006) analyzed the domestic structures at Europos and the material culture found within them as recorded by Yale. In essence, offering a “*Final Report*” of domestic spaces and quotidian life at Europos. Explaining that such a project holds “the potential to provide a level of understanding of the realities of ancient life that studies of public buildings or even historical texts do not (2006: 9),” her work further complicates Pollard’s problematic proposition of modeling the military camp as a Total Institution.

While Baird agreed that the cluster of local homes north of the internal military wall were modified to increase food production (several blocks E and J) with larger ovens and more millstones, for example (2006: 175), indicating a certain degree of self-reliance and sufficiency within the military camp, more intriguing, are her observations in the northern military quarter which reveal evidence for the presence of women and children in the camp (199-200). Acknowledging that earlier studies tended to focus on the impact of soldiers on civilians throughout the city, Baird turned her attention to “a need to look within the military quarter for evidence of civilians [there]” (199). Jewelry, including earrings and toilet instruments historically ascribed to women during this period are found in the military quarter along with some jewelry “too small for an adult” (199).

Yale recorded finding plaster dolls in the military quarter which differed from terracotta figurines found elsewhere in the city but unfortunately these artifacts have not survived to the present for further analysis. Baird noted that, “The presence of children would certainly seem to indicate that at least some of members of the military had families with them at Dura, or accumulated families while based there, despite the suggestion by Pollard that families of soldiers lived in the ‘civilian’ part of the city [Pollard 2000: 56]. Indeed, a document from Dura attests to a soldier living with his family” (2006: 199-200).³⁰

These finds when considered in light of the fact that in 197 CE Emperor Severus had lifted a ban on soldiers marrying, provide evidence for the general presence of women and children in the area behind the internal wall. Another document from Europos dated to 254 CE³¹ describes a divorce between a Roman soldier, whose name is not entirely legible but was likely Marcus Julius Antiochus, and a local woman with a family name of Aurelia and who appeared to Yale to be “a

³⁰ P. Dura 46

³¹ P. Dura 32

local woman of Aramaic or Arabian origin” (Fin. Rep. 5.1: 166-7). The document makes a compelling argument that soldiers at Europos were marrying locally (not simply bringing wives from other stations with them) and this hardly offers evidence for the soldiers’ lives being incompatible with family life, one of Goffman’s defining characteristics of a Total Institution (1961: 11).³²

In addition to the instances of soldiers and civilians living and working together at Europos as outlined above, regular interaction between these two groups occurred in other quotidian ways including at brothels;³³ the agora (a public assembly space, akin to a town square); and as mentioned earlier, by the presence of Roman soldiers policing the city at gates and on the streets (Baird 2006: 200). It’s true that each of these lines of evidence of interaction vary in the numbers and ways civilians and troops shared space, and the very fact that the military possessed the authority to commandeer a large portion of the city indicates disparity between soldiers and civilians vis-à-vis political power but such disparity is a far cry from an analysis like Pollard’s suggesting that soldiers, per Goffman, were cut off from wider society and leading an “enclosed formerly administered life” (Pollard 1996: 211).

Perhaps nowhere is such an assumption on the part of researchers more glaring – and more problematic for this project – than the claim and interpretation that civilians and soldiers did not use the temples within the military quarter together (Pollard 1996: 213, 222-3). According to

³² In 254 CE, the date of this divorce document, Rome would have recently retaken the city after a brief Persian occupation in 253 CE (James 2004) making the divorce possibly all the more heartbreaking: the wife may have been fleeing with other civilians, the soldier remaining to deal with Sasanian aggression on the Euphrates. If the soldier Marcus Julius did remain for the final siege, his likely fate was either death or slavery if he survived the battle.

³³ Baird notes the difficulty in identifying brothels in Europos in that many buildings were mixed-use (commercial and residential). Given the sparse small finds at Europos a brothel is difficult to identify as distinct from other small-scale commercial enterprises sharing domestic and commercial spaces (Baird 2006: 168). Making the identification of brothels at Europos even more problematic is art historian Bernard Goldman’s contention that, “salacious drawings” are missing from the collection of pictorial graffiti at Europos “perhaps because they were deemed improper, inappropriate for review within the censorious American climate of the 1920s and 1930s” (Goldman 1999).

Pollard, “There is little evidence of religious integration of the two populations” (1996: 223). It is my contention that nothing could be further from the truth.

The City that Prays Together

While the Roman military destroyed numerous buildings on several northern city blocks to construct both the internal wall that segregated their quarter from the rest of the city, as well as a variety of structures within the quarter specific to their needs (the *praetorium*, amphitheater, new baths), at least two temples built before Rome’s arrival located within the military quarter were left undamaged when the military occupied the north of the city: the Temple to Bel, one of the largest temples in the city, and the Temple to Azzanathkona, as mentioned earlier a temple dedicated to a deity of the nearby city Anatha and likely built by Durene residents originally hailing from there. Two “mystery cults” also had temples at Europos located in (or adjoining) the military quarter, a Mithraeum, and a temple to Jupiter Dolichenus (the *Dolicheneum*) which was constructed near the palace of the *Dux Ripae*. In the past, researchers assumed the *Dolicheneum* to be part of the military quarter along with the *Dux*’s palace. But as discussed above, the palace complex should no longer be assumed to be strictly military in use or occupation and so there is now some reason to also question whether the *Dolicheneum* was a temple serving strictly military worshippers.

Temple to Bel/the Palmyrene Gods

Pollard (1996) noted that the temple to Bel “certainly shows evidence of civilian and army use” but then he concludes, “there does not seem to be any decisive proof that both [soldiers and civilians] used the temple at the same time” (213).

However, a section from Susan Downey's work *Mesopotamian Religious Architecture* (1988), which Pollard cites just before his conclusion, shows clear evidence of civilian barbers and bakers at the Temple to Bel, as well as soldiers using it as early as the 160s, decades before the military camp was established and segregated from the rest of the city while the temple was still a center of public worship. According to Downey there are inscriptions at the temple including long lists of items donated and their donors with Semitic, Greek and Roman names. Further, Downey states in the section cited by Pollard that "evidence from inscriptions and graffiti shows that all segments of the population worshipped in the Temple of Bel" (1988:108). Downey stresses the temple's importance in civic life and ends the section cited by Pollard with these words:

In spite of the difficulties of interpretation, the cult installations, paintings and inscriptions and graffiti in the temple of Bel provides unusually full information about the temple rituals and personnel. The inscriptions and graffiti show that all segments of the population, including both civilians and the military worshipped in the temple and the dedication of an altar by the city suggests the temple played a role in the official life of the city as well (1988: 110).

The altar Downey refers to was dedicated in 160 CE after an earthquake in the region, just a few years before Roman occupation. At this point in time the Temple to Bel was at least over a century old (Downey 1988: 108; Pre. Rep. II: 86-93) and was one of the largest temples in the city, incorporating a guard tower and the city's main walls into its courtyard complex. So while I cannot say that Pollard was incorrect when he said there is no "decisive" proof that soldiers and civilians prayed together at the temple to Bel, I can argue that there is also no evidence to the contrary and further, state an adage appropriate to all archaeological adventures: absence of evidence is not evidence of absence.

I argue that none of the evidence offered about the temple to Bel and its long use by diverse actors suggests that it was used exclusively by civilians *or* soldiers during the last half century that Europos stood. Pollard's suggestion of segregated use of the Temple of Bel by soldiers and

civilians is not based on the interpretation of the archaeological data available but instead reflects a problematic assumption, that the military quarter was a far more isolated space than this chapter has shown it to be. With that proposition off the table, to suggest that the Temple to Bel was never used by soldiers and civilians simultaneously is simply not a claim which can be supported by what evidence we have at our disposal.

Mithras

Claims in the literature on Europos that that the *Dolicheneum* and Mithraeum were exclusively used by soldiers are also on shaky grounds and overstated. Franz Cumont, the first excavator at Europos in the 1920s, was also the world's most prominent researcher of the cult of Mithras at the turn of the 20th century. He had hoped his discovery of a Mithraeum at Europos would offer him a definitive link between the Roman cult of Mithras and its assumed eastern/Persian progenitor, Mithra, a deity which Cumont (1903) associated with an earlier Hindu deity, Mitra, known through archaeological evidence to have been worshipped since the second millennium BCE (Claus 2001: 3; Hopkins 1979: 200). Cumont, seeking a connection at Europos of the Roman Mithras to the Iranian deity Mithra was disappointed to find that inscriptions and dedications in the earliest of three phases of the Mithraeum at Europos pointed to Roman – or more specifically Palmyrene – soldiers dedicating a shrine in what was likely a private residence at first but which would be rebuilt and enlarged twice during the military's occupation of Europos (Pre. Rep. VII/VIII: 63, 85–7; Hopkins 1979: 200). Hopkins, however, thought the artwork and architecture of the *Mithraeum* pointed to a Parthian founding of the cult in Europos (Hopkins 1979: 203).

Unfortunately, both Cumont and Hopkins worked under a mistaken assumption established by Cumont and presumed accurate until the latter half of the twentieth century: The Roman cult of Mithras was a continuation of Persian practices from centuries earlier, encountered by Roman soldiers in the east and spread throughout the Empire via the military.

While no doubt the cult of Mithras was a cult favored and spread by the Roman military, modern research has refuted Cumont's claims and shown that the Roman cult of Mithras can only be traced to perhaps a late first century CE origin within the Empire itself and not as "light from the east," but originating within Italic and Germanic provinces (Claus 2001: 16–28). Hopkins, convinced as was Cumont of an eastern genesis of the cult within the Empire, believed that the cult of Mithras was brought to Europos by Persians during the Parthian occupation.

But Claus has concluded that the earliest dated evidence for the cult of Mithras in the Roman Empire comes from Germania Superior by "soldiers recruited from Italy, and persons in the service of Italian customs-farmers or other Roman citizens from Italy who carried the new cult to the provinces" (2001: 21-2). Further, according to Francis (1975), soldiers from the Palmyrene *numerii*³⁴ were stationed on the Danube frontier in Dacia and Moesia (which comprised much of modern-day Eastern Europe from southern Poland to Macedonia) and likely brought the cult back to Europos with them from the west (430-1).³⁵

So, rather than a connection to the east, the Mithraeum and its cult at Europos appear to have been brought to Europos by Palmyrene soldiers who had served in Germania and then, once

³⁴ A term usually reserved for "barbarian" (native/indigenous) troops allied with Roman forces, or temporary detachments (as from the client-kingdom of Palmyra) fighting alongside traditional Roman military units.

³⁵ The movement of legions between the eastern and northern borders of the Empire was not uncommon. "It should further be emphasized that troop transfers between East and West from the reign of Domitian [reigned 81 – 96 CE] to that of Marcus Aurelius [reigned 161 – 180 CE] were reciprocal. The Danubian armies were not so superior that they did not require eastern reinforcement on occasion" (Wheeler 1996:234).

in Europos, set up a shrine to Mithras near the Temple of Bel, which was also called the Temple of the Palmyrene Gods.

It is not without a bit of heart-breaking irony that Cumont, hoping to find a direct link in Europos of a Persian origin to the Roman Mithras had actually discovered the most eastern *Mithraeum* known archaeologically. That is, Cumont had not found an origin for Rome's Mithras in the east, but rather, he had uncovered a Mithraeum attesting to the furthest known expansion of this cult from the Empire's center.

Mystery cults, as opposed to the Imperial or public cults of Rome, differed primarily by their being immersed in secrecy and private practice rather than the public worship, sacrifices and rituals common to so many Roman religions. Almost always involving secret initiation rites, they also generally conferred upon initiates a notion that they had been transformed and made privy to knowledge that would offer some sort of salvation or protection in the material world. They were not exclusive in the same way that Christianity and Judaism are often described, that is, one could be an initiate into more than one Mystery Cult and also participate in public cults (Claus 2001:14-5). The Roman cult of Mithras is one of the Mystery Cults best attested to archaeologically and yet, despite all of Cumont's efforts, we know little of its doctrines, beliefs and teachings. Mystery cults appear to have primarily relied upon ritual to reveal the meanings behind the symbolic elements common to most temples rather than revelation through liturgical texts. What little we know about the rituals and beliefs of several popular Mystery cults (like Mithraism and the worship of Jupiter Dolichenus) is attested to by the surviving works of a small number of individuals who wrote about their experiences. Thus, anything resembling an established canon for these cults is non-existent and perhaps never existed.³⁶ Further, more recent research on the religion shows

³⁶ Gawlikowski (2007), excavated a highly decorated Mithraeum in a cave in Hawarte, northern Syria under a fifth-century Christian church. While definitively dated to the fourth century, one section of the cave contained fill that

Mithraism was not an exclusively military cult as it is often described historically. Clauss, working from “inscriptions in which the dedicants of votive objects name themselves” – as many researchers into mystery cults must do for the data available is slim – noted that Mithraic congregations were comprised of soldiers, minor members of the imperial administration, slaves, and freedmen from private households, frequently with multiple family members mentioned in inscriptions (2001: 33-41). Slaves with imperial posts are regularly named as dedicants at Mithraea while priests and heads of Mithraic congregations appear to be exclusively Roman citizens (and often, based on their names, of Italic origin). So, while unarguably a cult popular with the military it is difficult to accept that Mithraism was “observed apparently exclusively by the military at Dura (Pollard 1996: 221)” or anywhere in the Empire.

Jupiter Dolichenus

Another cult popular at this period, and like Mithra with a large military following, was that of Jupiter Dolichenus. Like Mithras, the history of the deity Jupiter Dolichenus portrays him as both a popular cult with the Roman military and an adapted eastern (in this case Syrian) religion. The connection of Jupiter Dolichenus to its ancient Syrian (Hittite likely) progenitor is an easier case to make than that of connecting Roman Mithras to its Iranian counterpart (Seidel 1978).

indicating some sort of sacrificial practices in the cave dating back to late first-century CE. However, Gawlikowski noted it was impossible to link the early deposit to the later decorated Mithraeum, nor suggest continuous Mithraic use for several centuries.

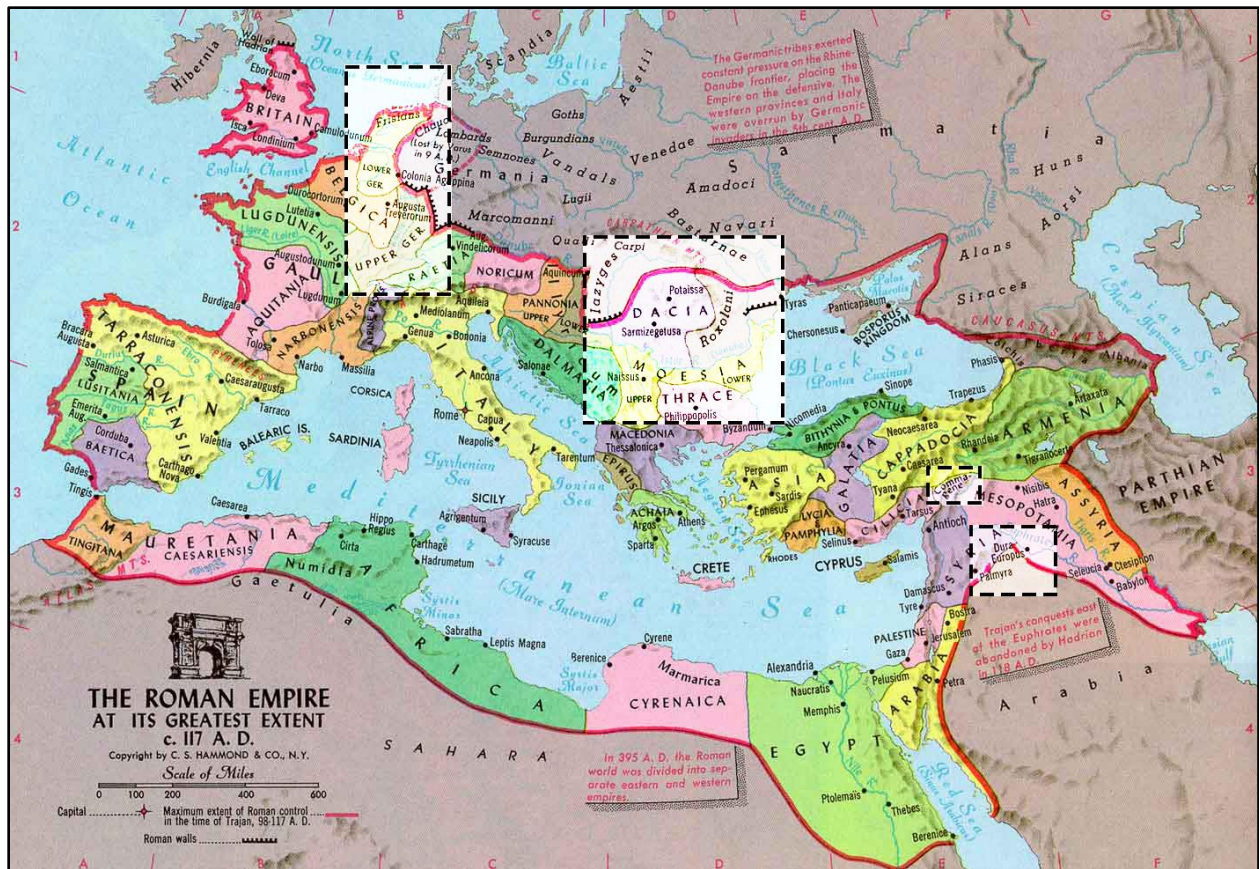


Figure 34: Map of Roman Empire at its greatest extent ca. 117 CE. Note Europos between the border of Syria and Mesopotamia in the lower right portion of the map. The Parthian Empire is to the east and Commagene the small highlighted box to the north of Europos.

The city of Doliche (modern Dülük in Turkey) was taken along with the Kingdom of Commagene in the first century BCE by Roman troops conquering what is now Eastern Turkey and northern Syria. Seeing as the earliest temples to Jupiter Dolichenus begin to first show up in northern Africa, the city of Rome proper, and in Dacia after Doliche's conquest (all in the first half of the second century CE) there is little argument among researchers that Roman troops from the conquered city of Doliche, a ritual center for the region dating back millennia, repurposed the local Ba'al (Lord) there. Roman troops designated this regional God as the Jupiter of Doliche, Jupiter Dolichenus, following Roman tradition. However, how the cult was propagated throughout the Empire and just who practiced it is less clear. Its connection to the military is attested to in

countless inscriptions, dipinti, etc., and several researchers have made efforts to track the dedications of *Dolichenea* with the movements of various legions (Speidel 1978; Pollard 1996: 222) and political figures (Collar 2012: 99–108). But perhaps most interesting for our purposes is the affirmation by several researchers that the cult was hardly strictly military (Fowlkes-Child 2012: 219–22; Speidel 1978: 38–45) and that in Rome proper the cult had a considerable civilian following (Fowlkes-Child 2012). Speidel (1978) noted that perhaps a bit more than 50-percent of the dedications to Dolichenus at temples and various altars in the Empire available to him when he was writing could be reasonably attributed to the military. As for the rest of the dedications:

To the contrary, examination of the votive reliefs ... suggests an essential unity of the cult whether civilian or military. It is imperative, therefore, to reconsider the theological inferences drawn from the assumption that the cult of Iuppiter Dolichenus was a military religion and to see what results such a re-examination may have for the spiritual nature of the cult (Speidel 1978: 38-9).

Fowlkes-Childs noted that prominent donors to the cult “without conspicuous links either to the military or Syria (2012: 220)” were present at the Aventine *Dolicheneum* in the city of Rome and suggested that this *Dolicheneum* on the southernmost hill of the Eternal City attested to “how the Dolichenian cult adapted to a local context as early as the middle of the second century, and continued through the Gallienic period (253 - 268) outside of Rome’s military installations” (2012: 219).

Given the work of Speidel, Collar and Fowlkes-Child, and adding to their research James’ and Edwell’s conclusion that the palace of the *Dux Ripae* – which the *Dolicheneum* was closely related to if not constructed along with – was not likely an exclusively military space, we should not extend that erroneous military-only-use assumption to the *Dolicheneum* either. There is historical evidence that Jupiter Dolichenus was worshipped by soldiers and civilians alike within the Empire and so we should hesitate in claiming that this *Dolicheneum*, which cannot be

confirmed as even being within the restricted military quarter, was visited “exclusively” by soldiers (Pollard 2000: 146). Instead, the archaeological evidence paints a rather confusing picture of who used the temple since, as Yale noted, the *Dolicheneum* had been constructed and renovated in three phases.

The first phase was a smaller structure with living space for a priest and chapels to two deities according to Yale: a regional god Turmasgade, about whom to this day little is known but who may also hail from Commagene (Pollard 2000: 146) which ruled over the city of Doliche, and “the other [deity worshipped at the temple] is presumed to have been Dolichenus” (Pre. Rep. IX, Pt. III: 97).

However, a close read of Yale’s *Preliminary Report* actually shows that Yale found an altar dedicated to Jupiter Dolichenus in the street outside the remains of the temple. Yale attributed this itinerant altar to the early chapel (Pre. Rep. IX, Pt. III: 97) possibly because what little is known about Turmasgade suggests origins in Doliche as well.³⁷ In addition to Dolichenus and Turmasgade, another deity referred to as *Kyria* or “The Lady” – perhaps another reference to Atagartis/Dea Syriae – was also worshipped in the first phase of the temple (Pre. Rep. IX, Pt. III: 97). As for the second phase, Yale could only date that the construction of the Palace of the *Dux Ripae* next to the temple resulted in some destruction of the first phase but “what changes took place within the temple at this time we cannot say definitely” (Pre. Rep. IX, Pt. III: 98-9).

The Dolicheneum that Yale describes extensively in its *Preliminary Report* (Pre. Rep. IX, Pt. III) and from which I fear most researchers are describing when they write of exclusive military

³⁷ A recently published chapter, “A new altar for the God Turmasgade from Dülük Baba Tepesi,” appears in the 2017 publication, *Vom eisenzeitlichen Heiligtum zum christlichen Kloster. Neue Forschungen auf dem Dülük Baba Tepesi*. Bonn: Rudolf Habelt (101–123). Brief abstracts of the article found online suggest that excavations in modern-day Duluk have uncovered a previously unknown altar to Turmasgade in ancient Doloche. Unfortunately, the book was only recently published (March 15, 2017) and the only two copies listed in Worldcat are in Germany and Switzerland and unavailable for interlibrary loan so further details on this discovery will have to wait until a copy can be made available to this researcher.

Mystery Cults at Europos, is the final phase which Yale dated to 251 CE – just five years before the fall of the city (Pre. Rep. IX, Pt. III: 99). This temple also included chapels to Turmasgade, dedications to Mithras, a room with a triclinium which Yale suggests was used in a ritual sacred meal shared by worshippers, and perhaps most damning for suggesting this late phase was used exclusively by Roman troops, “The Dolicheneum is built on the principle of the Parthian period temples at Dura (an open court surrounded by rooms), otherwise unknown in the religious buildings founded during the period of Roman occupation” (Pre. Rep. IX, Pt. III: 105).

In summary, the Dolicheneum that Pollard suggested possessed an “exclusively” military character was a short-lived temple likely built outside the military quarter, next to what is probably a monumental palace and courtyard providing for the intersection of military and civilian leaders and constructed according to regional architectural traditions recalling the Mesopotamian/Babylonian religious grammar found throughout Europos previous to Roman occupation. Given the historical and archaeological evidence at hand, to claim that soldiers and civilians did not share in the worship of Dolichenus and the other deities represented here stretches the boundaries of credulity.

Azzanathkona

Lastly, as regards the potential shared use of ritual spaces within the military quarter, the Temple to Azzanathkona must be revisited. As detailed above, this temple was likely built and dedicated by Durenes hailing from the town of Anatha and dedicated to a regional variation of the chief Syrian Goddess, known as Atargatis in Greek and Dea Syriae by Romans. The Goddess Azzanathkona appears to also have been syncretized, according to Yale’s interpretations of

inscriptions at the temple, with the Greek goddess Artemis (akin to Diana in the Roman pantheon). But who was worshipped here is less important than who worshipped here.

Just as with the palace of the *Dux Ripae*, the *Dolicheneum* and the Mithraeum, the question of import regarding the temple to Azzanathkona is whether or not this temple was solely frequented by soldiers when it was sequestered behind the military's boundary walls. The complex of rooms and courtyard was built long before Roman occupation – inscriptions in a room of the temple indicates use of the ritual space as far back as 12/13 CE (PR 5: 131) – but was located in the northern quarter of the city which Roman troops eventually took for themselves. According to Yale, after Rome occupied the northern quarter of the city at least part of the temple to Azzanathkona, located immediately behind (to the north of) the newly constructed *praetorium*, became a headquarters of sorts for either the Palmyrene cohort stationed in Europos or *cohors Ulpia* (Pre. Rep. IX, Pt. III: 151-180; based on finds of military papyri and a few small finds linked to soldiers in several rooms - see below for maps, tables and discussion). Yale postulated that the entire complex may have been a garrison for troops. However, that narrative of Palmyrene soldiers garrisoned in the temple is problematic. Like the wishful thinking of a *Dux Ripae* stationed at the city for decades, or exclusively military uses of the Mithraeum and *Dolicheneum*, just who used the temple to Azzanathkona and for what purposes after Roman soldiers claimed the northern part of the city has been challenged by Edwell (2008: 123-4). A re-examination of the details in Yale's *Preliminary Reports* and other archival materials at the YUAG can provide some answers to Edwell's concerns and a new, more refined and accurate interpretation of the temple: a considerable portion of the Temple to Azzanathkona complex was likely never occupied by the Roman military and most of the temple appears to have been left to ritual use.

Perhaps even more intriguing is that considerable evidence suggests the temple to Azzanathkona was a cult exclusive to women (Baird 2006: 184; Downey 1988: 126; PR 5: 180) with one of its altars large enough to allow for animal sacrifices, and artwork in the temple which suggests such practices (Downey 1988: 101). Was the Temple to Azzanathkona a headquarters of sorts for Palmyrene soldiers, or a major center of worship by Durene women of regional heritage?

Why not both?

Edwell's problems regarding the interpretation of the Temple to Azzanathkona as a "headquarters of *Cohors XX Palmyrenorum* (2008: 124)" was again based on a concern he had for circular arguments justifying the interpretations of both the *praetorium* as a *praetorium* (rather than a *principia*) and the Temple to Azzanathkona as a military headquarters. While there is little doubt that the building called a *praetorium* by Yale was constructed and used by the Roman military after the turn of the third century as discussed earlier in this chapter, its specific role (*praetorium* or *principia*) has been justifiably questioned by both Edwell and James (and the terms themselves suffer from a lack of precision as well).

The discovery of a well-preserved cache of papyri in room 14(W) of the Temple of Azzanathkona (see plan maps of temple below pp 41-7) directly related to the Palmyrene cohort's activities, provide to this day an unparalleled knowledge of the workings of a Roman military unit (Edwell 2008: 124). These papyri from Europos have long been considered one of the most detailed collections of documents for any single unit in Roman history. Important as these documents have been for Roman military history, Edwell is concerned their importance was overestimated in regards to identifying the entire Temple complex as a military headquarters for Palmyrene troops. These papyri documents – found in only one room of the complex's almost two dozen – have been used to suggest the entire Temple might have been turned over to the

military. According to Edwell, the proximity of Europos' largest cohort, *Palmyrenorum XX*, headquartered in the Temple of Azzanathkona, influenced Yale's position that the military building immediately to the temple's south must be of even greater importance and so Yale determined it to be the residence and office of a military leader (a *praetorium*) rather than a more general military center (a *principia*).

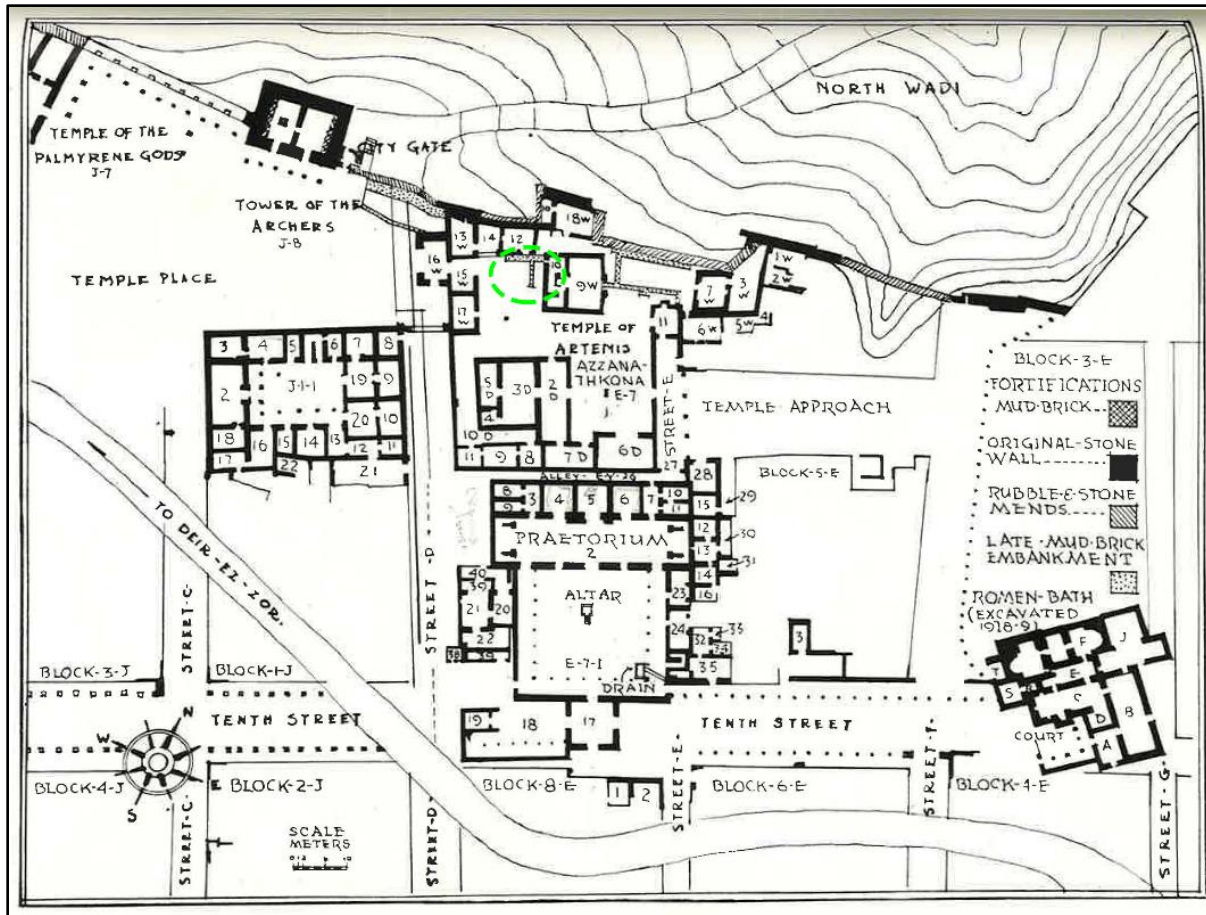


Figure 35: Henry Pearson drawing published in 1934 (*Pre. Rep V: 151*) of part of the Military Quarter including the Temple to Azzanathkona, Praetorium, steam baths, and excavated military buildings (Block 1-J). Note in the green ellipse a partial wall within the Temple to Azzanathkona. This “late – mud brick embankment” (*Pre. Rep V: 151*) appears inconsistently in shape and size in various plan maps of the temple which will be of prime importance for the following discussion

The first problem with this interpretation is that Yale made conflicting claims about the use of the Temple to Azzanathkona regarding the entirety of the Temple being commandeered by the military. Hopkins at first simply suggests that Rooms 12 and 14, which surrounded room 13 where

the cache of military papyri were found, might be “office rooms of the military scribes” (Pre. Rep. V: 152). Later in the same *Preliminary Report*, Hopkins offers,

The great majority of inscriptions and papyri referring to [the] cohorts was found in the Temple to Azzanathkona. It would appear, then, that this temple served as headquarters for the forces occupying Dura before the praetorium was built and that even after its construction, the auxiliary forces continued to deposit their records in the earlier archives (216).

At the end of the section on the Praetorium in *Preliminary Report V*, Hopkins then offers a less sure interpretation, suggesting the military papyri, associated inscriptions and some scant artifacts might indicate that an *auxilia* of either the Ulpian or Palmyrene cohort used the temple. “Perhaps the headquarters of the *auxilia* was in the Temple to Azzanathkona rather than the praetorium” (Pre. Rep. V: 229).

Hopkins ultimately offers several different possible interpretations ranging from clerks’ offices in the northeast corner of the building, to a full occupation of the building temporarily, or maybe not. These early attempts at interpretation which were never fleshed out in a *Final Report* for the Temple (recall that only two temples got *Final Reports*, those for Christians and Jews) have been repeated by historians but often without stressing the lack of surety about such claims. Pollard for instance stated,

Parts of the Temple of Azzanathkona, in the same block, contained graffiti and papyrus rolls pertaining to *cohors XX Palmyrenorum*, an auxiliary unit, and were interpreted by the excavators as the headquarters or archive of the auxiliary troops and perhaps an early headquarters for the whole garrison (2000: 49).

But further investigation of data on the Temple at YUAG showed that there is convincing evidence from Yale’s own archives that the Temple to Azzanathkona was never wholly taken over by Palmyrene troops as their base of operations, but rather, the temple complex was divided by a late mud-brick internal wall setting off military usage to rooms west of this wall and leaving the

eastern rooms of the Temple complex – which include a large courtyard and those rooms which appear to be central to communal meeting and ritual practice – in the hands of civilian worshippers.

The plans, maps, and tables on the next few pages are offered in order to show that the artifacts and other data found in the temple associated with the military were quite scarce and limited to only three rooms in the entire complex – all clustered and connected in the northwest corner of the temple. More importantly, all three of these rooms are located to the west of an internal wall which was partially and inconsistently represented in various plans drawn of the Temple and *praetorium* for Yale's *Preliminary Reports* (see figure 34 above and figures 35 - 39 below).

While the plan map by Pearson of the military quarter above (figure 34) was the earliest published map of the temple, it was not the last word or work done on the building. In 1935 or '36, newly hired site architect, A. Henry Detweiler, made a detailed drawing of the Temple to Azzanathkona on site with a theodolite. This later Detweiler sketch (figure 35 below) not only includes the partial wall as shown in Pearson's drawing but includes points shot at the wall's limits (where it joined with other walls and where it terminated into rubble) and presents this partial wall similarly in width as others in the complex. It is reasonable to assume that both Detweiler and Pearson had reason to believe the wall was important. However, curiously, there is no mention of the partial wall in Hopkins' discussions of the Temple to Azzanathkona in *Preliminary Report V*.

In *Mesopotamian Religious Architecture* (1988: 101), Downey offers an exploded or magnified plan map of the Temple based up on the drawing by Pearson in *Preliminary Report V*. Downey also presents the partial mud-brick wall (also circled green) noting as Pearson did on his drawing, that is a "late mudbrick embankment" (101).

Figure 37 tells a slightly different story, however. According to the YUAG, this is an unpublished plan map drawn by H. Detweiler in 1937, after the publication of *Preliminary Report V*, and based upon his Theodolite measurements (figure 35). In this map, the partial wall from Pearson (and Downey's) drawings – that is the “late mud-brick embankment” seen in Figures 35 and 36 – is now rendered as a fully intact wall running south from Room 12W to the north of Room 3D (highlighted in green). What makes this map important is that it is the most fully rendered plan of the Temple to Azzanathkona made after the excavations' architect closely measured the building site, and after the maps drawn for publication in *Preliminary Report V*.

The placement of this wall results in a clear division of the complex. To the west of this wall are Rooms 12-17W and 8-10(D), with an entrance to the western section of the building noted in rooms 15W and 16W. The only artifacts associated with the military were found in this part of the complex in Rooms 12W-14W (highlighted in red).

To the eastern side of “Detweiler's Wall,” where no military artifacts were found, are a complex of rooms with altars. Rooms 3D and 5D are a pronaos and naos respectively, and 6D has been described as a chapel of sorts by both Yale (Pre. Rep. V) and Downey (1988). There are also communal gathering rooms along with the main altar rooms of 9W and 10W to the east of Detweiler's Wall (9W has extant graded bench seating with the names of worshippers still visible as of my visit in 2010; see figure 38 below).

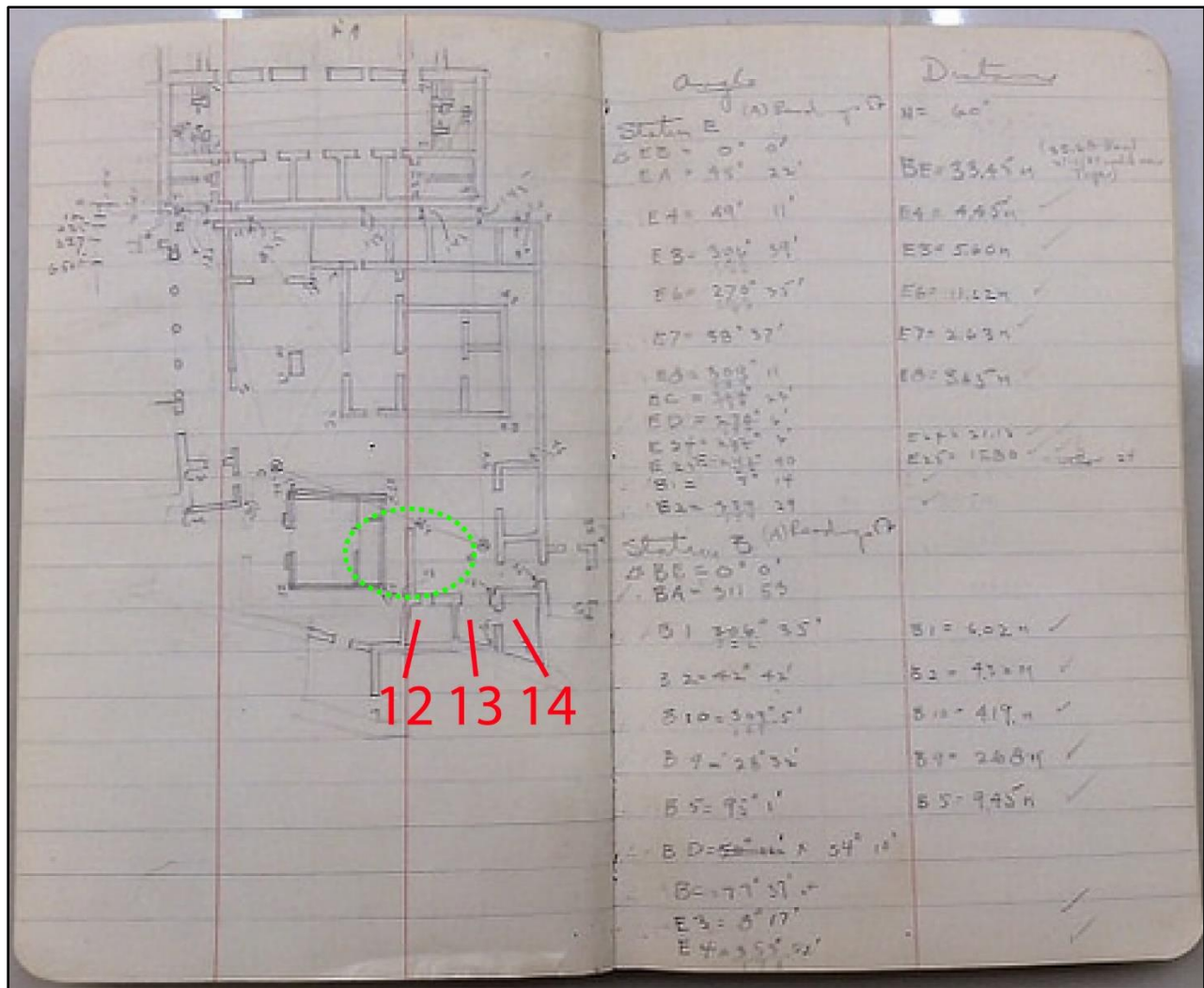


Figure 36: Field sketch of the Temple of Azzanathkona with angle and distance measurements as taken by Detweiler in 1935/6 (YUAG). This sketch is done with North to the bottom left as opposed to top and right as in most drawings and maps of Euopos, so it is “upside down” as compared to other images. Several more pages of theodolite measurements followed this sketch. While the handwriting in this scan is nearly illegible, the plan map and accompanying data name several “stations” and points measured from said stations. A still standing portion of the mud-brick wall discussed in this section, bisecting the temple complex, is circled in Green. Rooms 12W – 14W (the rooms with military papyri, inscriptions and artifacts) have been labelled. Although difficult to see in this version, the portion of the internal wall shown here (circled in green) is drawn in the same style and to the same dimension (in thickness) as all the other walls in the complex. The sketch includes data points where this internal wall joins the horizontal wall of room 12 (bottom of green ellipse) and where the wall terminates (towards the top of the green ellipse) providing theodolite information in order to calculate its length, breadth and location in the complex for the drawing of finished maps (below, figures 36 and 37), some of which included this wall partially and some of which projected its length in an attempt at reconstructing its appearance during the Temple’s final phase during Roman occupation

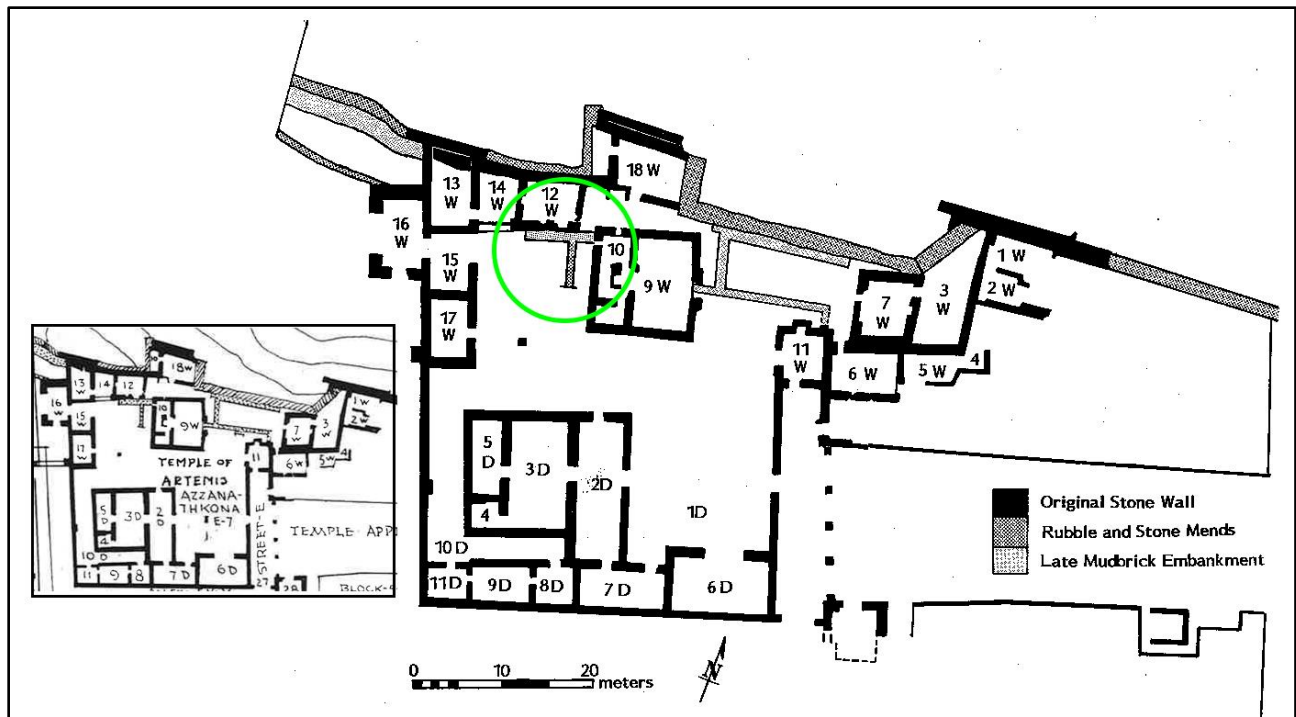


Figure 37: Plan map of the Temple to Azzanathkona by Downey (1988: 101) based on Pearson's sketch from Preliminary Report V (figure 34, above). Again, in green, the aforementioned partial wall from Detweiler's original field drawing. Inset is the portion of Pearson's drawing that Downey used.

Since no *Final Reports* were planned for any of the religious spaces other than the Synagogue, the Christian Church and the Mithraeum, Detweiler's continued work on creating more accurate and detailed plan maps for the Temple to Azzanathkona is a bit of a mystery. An undated document at the YUAG (TPQ 1956 due to information mentioned in the document) shows that Yale's plan for *Final Reports* included eight volumes, some with several parts or fascicles. Volume eight was to include *Final Reports* on three temples: The Synagogue, the Christian Building (both written by Kraeling in the 1950s and '60s) and the Mithraeum (unfortunately, no *Final Report* was ever produced on the Mithraeum).

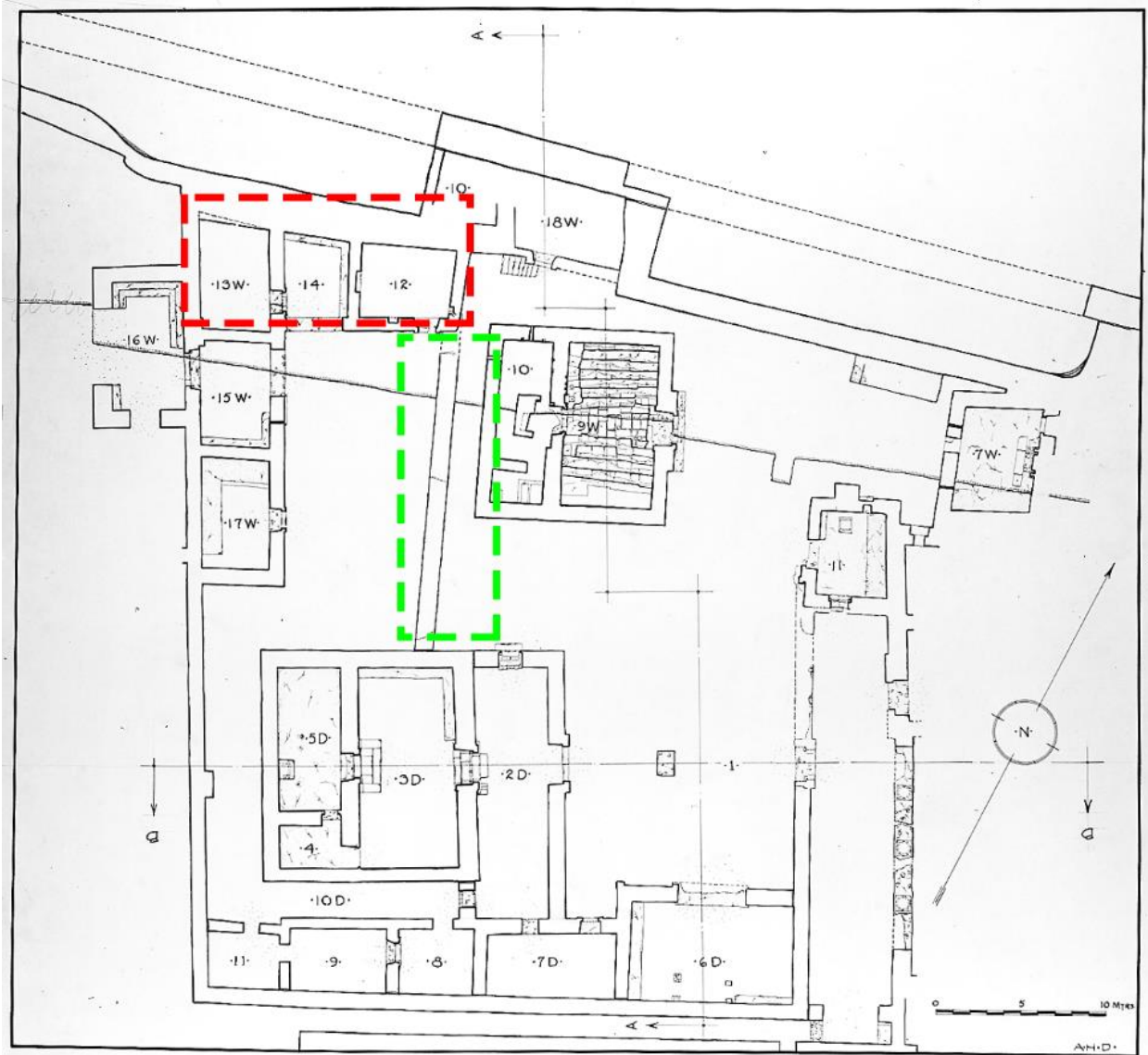


Figure 38: Unpublished sketch by Detweiler from YUAG dated to 1937, after the publication of Preliminary Report V. In this detailed sketch of the temple to Azzanathkona, Detweiler has drawn a full wall (outlined in green) where his theodolite sketches showed the partial wall. Reconstructing the wall in this way separates the rooms associated with military artifacts from the majority of the temple complex. NB: There are two rooms "10" and one room "10D" in both the published plan in Pre. Rep. V and this later map by Detweiler with no discussion of this confusing labeling in the text of the Preliminary Report).



Figure 39: Temple of Azzanathkona, Room 9W, a main gathering room with bas-relief of goddess (to the left) and graded seating with names or worshippers (all female according to Yale) still visible at the base of these benches. Keep an eye on that small block in front of the bas relief. Small rectangular altars like this one were ubiquitous in Europos and they will become a focus later in this study.

Perhaps Detweiler was preparing new maps for one of the several other *Final Reports* that never saw the light of day under Yale’s direction. For example, *Final Report 7* which was to be dedicated to cataloguing and analyzing the “Arms and Armor” at Europos, a document of no small importance given the military artifacts both Persian and Roman in abundance at the site, only saw publication in 2004 (James). The most likely candidate for Detweiler’s maps seems to be the never-published, *Final Report 2* on “Architecture and Town Planning” which was left to Frank E. Brown to complete. As mentioned earlier, Brown began working with the Yale team in 1932 due to his expertise in architecture and eventually became Field Director at Europos for the last two seasons. In the same YUAG document that outlined the planned *Final Reports* to be published,

the unnamed author of the document indicates, “There are at present no plans for Vol. II, Architecture and Town-planning, unless Mr. Brown ~~consents~~ is willing to write it ~~after his departure from Yale~~ [edits in original letter].”

While Brown never wrote the *Final Report* on “Architecture and Town-planning” he did write a 40-page unpublished article or overview on the architecture of the many temples discovered at Europos stressing their contribution to understanding the city’s architecture historically. Though unpublished, Brown appears to have written the document as if he were expecting some sort of academic review or publication in that the article is heavily annotated and referenced with some 98 footnotes and later edits by hand. The manuscript opens with these comments by Brown:

In the course of the excavations of Dura-Europos seventeen ancient religious buildings have been brought to light. Two of these, the Christian Building and the Synagogue, do not come within the scope of the present inquiry. The remaining fifteen were built at various times from the third century B.C. to the third century of our era. Two of them have continuous histories covering this entire period. Taken together these fifteen temples furnish remarkably full evidence for the history of religious architecture at Dura. They constitute as well, the largest single body of dated evidence for the history of the city’s architecture in general.

The undated manuscript³⁸ then goes on to offer preliminary and summary notes on the various phases of architecture of each building, noting numerous changes in many temples during different Imperial periods during the city’s history.

Brown dedicated two pages of the article to the Temple to Azzanathkona and in those pages mentioned something that Hopkins did not discuss at all in *Preliminary Report V*: Brown describes Detweiler’s Wall and its purpose:

The northwest corner of the temple comprising rooms 12, 13, 14, 15, and 17W was shut off from the rest of the temple by a wall of mudbrick extending from the southeast corner

³⁸ While the manuscript is not dated, based on his comments about the Synagogue and Christian Temple in his opening remarks, Brown was aware of those edifices in detail. Additionally, the latest date of any source used in the manuscript was from 1937 (a Yale dissertation) with the rest of the sources coming from 1936 or earlier and most from the 1920s and ‘30s. The TPQ for the manuscript is 1937 and I suspect it was written not much later than that (soon after Yale’s final season in Europos, 1937).

of room 12W to the north wall of the sanctuary. These became the offices of the Roman military secretariate (*sic*) [*inserted by hand with carat*: “Doorway 14-13 was cut,”] and 15W was made an entrance vestibule with porch 16W added before it.

Another plan map was drawn by Detweiler even later than the one in figure 37. This, the latest of all drawings of the Temple shows the full wall in place (see figure 39, below). This time the plan map is drawn to scale and in the same style as all the other maps drawn for *Preliminary* and *Final Reports* and in fact, is drawn along with a slightly modified and updated plan map of the *Principia/Praetorium* immediately to the south of the temple.

This is the most detailed and final plan of the Temple to Azzanathkona produced by Yale and clearly represents the wall Brown discusses in his unpublished manuscript. However, in all of the literature I have read on Europos, the military quarter and the Temple to Azzanathkona, I have come across only one mention of this curious wall and its inclusion, or lack thereof: Bossard-Couronné (2011) addresses Brown’s unpublished comments and Detweiler’s field sketch (figures 35 and 37, with the theodolite data) in her dissertation. Having excavated at Europos in 2008, Bossard-Couronné had an opportunity to see the recent state of the temple walls that still remained. After cleaning the north face of the north wall of Room 3D (from which the wall heads northwards towards room 12), she reported that there was only evidence of collapsed materials from the walls of Room 3D. She also acknowledged there were no traces of Detweiler’s Wall left at the time of her visit (see figures 39 and 40, below) but suggests that Detweiler and Brown were likely mistaken, supporting this interpretation by noting that Hopkins never mentioned the wall in his contribution on the temple to *Preliminary Report V*.

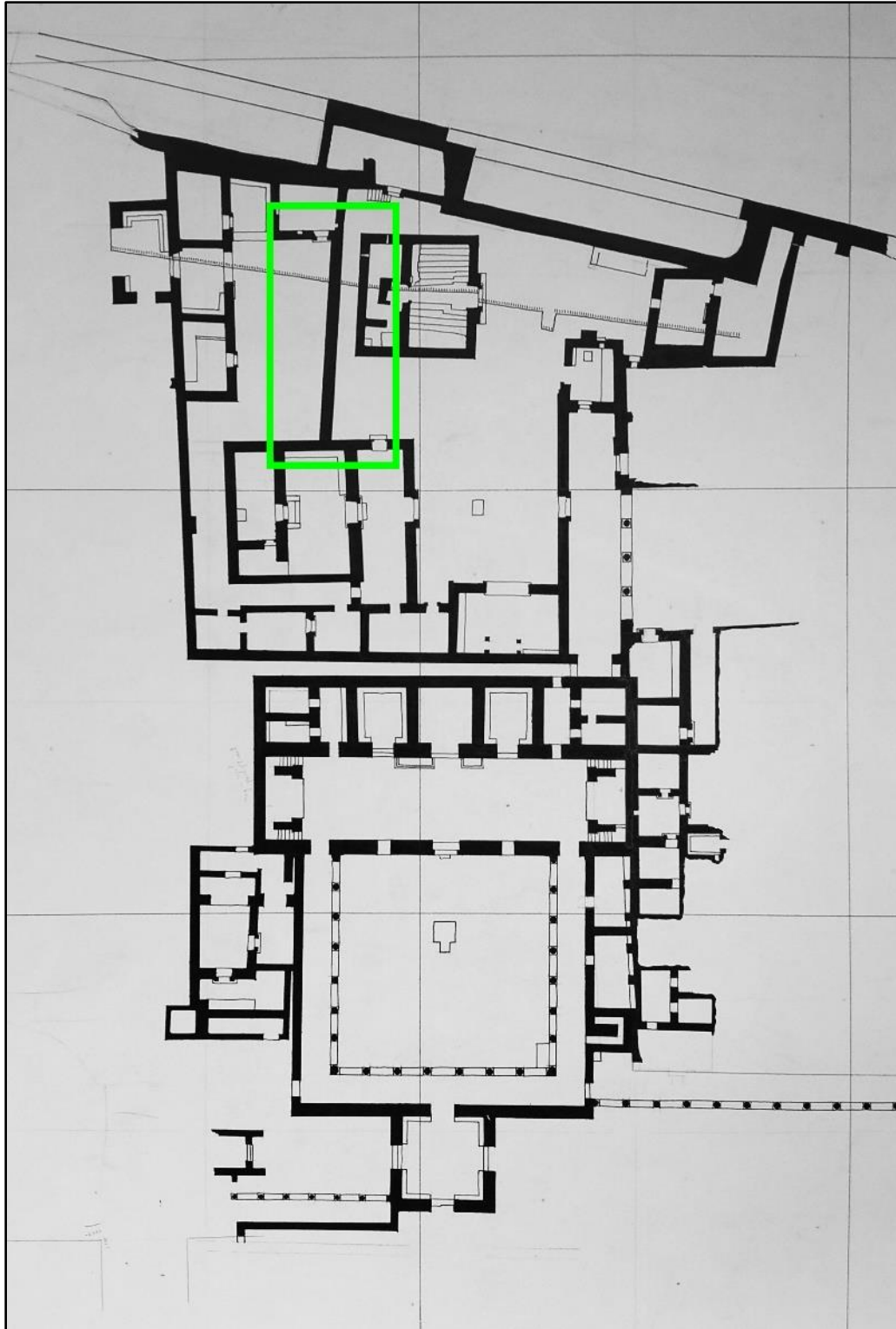


Figure 40: Final map of the Temple to Azzanathkona prepared by Yale, likely by Detweiler, showing "Detweiler's Wall" outlined in green. Brown concluded in an unpublished manuscript written after the publication of Preliminary Report V. Rooms 12, 13, 14, 15, and 17W [were] shut off from the rest of the temple by a wall of mudbrick extending from the southeast corner of room 12W to the north wall of the sanctuary."

However, Bossard-Couronné concludes that although she believes Detweiler's addition of the wall in his preliminary sketch is a guess, an "uncertain reconstruction" (2011: vol. 2 p.89) any final conclusion about the wall between rooms twelve and three are premature without further work.

Le mur dessiné sur le plan semble donc n'être qu'une reconstitution hasardeuse. Toutefois, toute conclusion définitive sur cette question serait prématurée en l'attente de nettoyages complémentaires de la partie Nord de ce mur. En effet, dans ce secteur théorique, on peut voir actuellement un talus de terre/brique fondue, dont il est difficile de savoir s'il s'agit d'un déblai de fouille ou d'un vestige pratiquement arasé de mur (2011 : vol. 2 p.89).

[The wall drawn on the plan [figure 37 – Detweiler's field sketch] appears to me a questionable reconstruction. However, any definitive conclusion on this question would be premature pending further cleaning of the northern part of this wall. Indeed, in this theoretical sector [the location of the wall], one can presently see an embankment of mixed earth and brick from which it is difficult to determine if it is debris from digging or actually the levelled vestiges of a wall.]



Figure 41: Room 7W in the Temple to Azzanathkona looking east as photographed between 1931 and 1933



Figure 42: Same location in 2008 (photo: Bossard-Couronné, 2008). The state of the site some 75 years later is considerably different given Yale's excavation techniques and exposure to the elements during the intervening years.

Since Bossard-Couronné was excavating some 70 years after Yale had finished with the site and could not herself tell if the debris she was looking at was Yale's backfill, collapsed portions of the northern wall of Room 3, or traces of the wall Detweiler measured and drew, and that Brown discussed, I am hesitant to accept her hesitant conclusion that Brown and Detweiler were mistaken. Bossard-Couronné does not consider the chronology of data collection and interpretation from the 1930s: Detweiler took his theodolite readings after Hopkins's wrote in *Preliminary Report V* and so both Detweiler and Brown had access to more detailed measurements and field data than Hopkins did when he wrote. It is my conclusion that Hopkins makes no mention of the wall in 1935 because Detweiler had not yet made his detailed field-sketch of the temple complex and Brown had not begun his perfunctory work on analyzing the architecture of the Temple for a potential *Final Report* on the city's architecture.

Rather than Brown and Detweiler being mistaken or offering a questionable interpretation of the site, with more data and time at their disposal, they instead concluded that a temporary wall was built separating a few rooms used by the military from the rest of the temple.

Continuing to drill down what available data we have, I have included below a list of artifacts, inscriptions, artwork and architectural features of these rooms as described in *Preliminary Report V* and verified with the Yale team's "Object Registry" (tables 2 and 3 below). Table 2 includes those rooms west of the wall (what I propose was the military's share of space in the complex) while table 3 possesses what relevant data we have on those rooms east of Detweiler's Wall, rooms that I am proposing were never occupied by soldiers and were in use by worshippers even after the military commandeered the north of the city.

Given this chronology of plan-maps and interpretations of the use of the Temple to Azzanathkona by various Yale team-members (Hopkins, Detweiler and Brown); the unpublished notes and maps which should be considered revised versions of earlier essays in the *Preliminary Reports* (which are, of course, "preliminary" and neither wholly accurate nor the final word on the excavation); and the artifactual evidence which although scant, maps clearly with my suggested division of the Temple (see tables 1 and 2) and offers no contradictions, I am not only sure, like Edwell, that the interpretation of the Temple to Azzanathkona as a headquarters for a military cohort is overstated, but also confident in calling that interpretation incorrect.

The goal to this revisiting and reinterpretation of the Temple after the military quarter was commandeered is not simply to reveal past errors (and their problematic repetition and recycling in the literature) but this new interpretation further complicates notions of a sequestered military existing in some sort of Total Institution, particularly because the Temple to Azzanathkona was likely a Temple visited by primarily if not exclusively local women. That is, the Roman military not only left the majority of the temple to civilian cultic use, but, for some time would have also allowed processions of local women into the temple.

Table 2: Material Culture uncovered by Yale in the Temple of Azzanathkona in rooms to the west of “Detweiler’s Wall” showing evidence of military presence in rooms 12W – 14W.

Room #	Artifacts and Architecture	Inscriptions and Artwork
8	Rooms 8 and 9 are combined in PR 5 description (142-5): a few coins, a large bronze bell (D8) a roman lamp (D9)	Close to the doorway leading to D9 an inscription in Greek dedicating the room in 161 CE “in the precincts of Artemis to Artemis, the goddess called Azzanathkona...”
9		
10D		
11		
12(W)	2 bronze roman scabbard tips (151-2)	- A lintel/stele w/ inscription by a Heliodorus (called a stele on 131, a lintel on 151). Inscription invokes wellbeing for his family and offers date of 153 as well as several names of family members. - Invocation noting Emperor Septimus Severus by an <i>actuarius</i> (military) in red letters.
13W	This was the room with a cache of military papyri and parchment. Hopkins states that many of the finds “lay in confusion on the floor” and that the papyri were in very good condition effected not by rain but worms (166).” Also: a leather shoe, pieces of cloth, ceiling reeds, wooden “rods,” an arrow shaft, silver ring, bronze fibula, busts of a male, Egyptian glass [faience], few coins, inlaid bone disc (166).	A fair amount of graffiti in Greek listing primarily names, some of them Roman represented in Greek.
14(W)		Several illustrations and numerous graffiti including: A painting (in red) depicting a priest offering sacrifice on “blocked up” doorway to 12. Also in red on another wall a Roman military dedication painting of a “god” with rayed head and uniform of a Roman military officer with another image of sacrifice next to it and an image of a horseman possibly representing a Palmyrene VIP nearby. Evidence of Roman dating (not common in Europos). Inscriptions indicate God (or one of the gods) is Iarhibol (Palmyrene) and possibly Malkhbel (also Palmyrene). Also, a hunting scene, three SATOR squares (Latin) and at least one other inscription in Latin (152 -165)
15W		Pen and ink sketches of dogs and gazelle (168-169). Possible rendering of Roman names with Greek characters (169).
16W		Geometric pattern fresco.
17W	Bronze lockplate; bronze ring with intaglio of Victory/Nike (both Latin and Greek names of goddess are used in description)	

Table 3: Material culture uncovered by Yale in the Temple to Azzanathkona to the east of "Detweiler's Wall," none of which appears military in use or nature.

Room #	Artifacts and Architecture	Inscriptions and Artwork
1	2 bronze pendants; courtyard with remains of main altar	
2D		
3D	Bronze wing of a bird, bronze leg of a "stand"	
3W	5 "commonware" vessels, half dozen coins, three bronze pieces (137).	
4D	One coin, no details (139).	
5D		Fragmentary fresco of a man's head with the name, "Apollonios Daddou," called a priest by Hopkins (138).
6D		Fragmentary fresco of two men, one in Roman armor (identified as <i>lorica squamata</i> – scale mail armor – by Hopkins); A large number of fragmentary words and names in red paint on walls likely referring to painting (139 – 141).
7D		Tracing on undercoat of plaster with a date but no year: 10 Xandikos (approx. March) (142).
7W	Altar ~ 1 x .8 m; a few coins; a bronze "instrument"; terracotta figurine (145).	Several graffiti give the names or worshippers (almost all Semitic), no dates, all male names (145-149).
9W	Rooms 9 & 10 are combined in PR 5 (170-80). Several bronze or silver heart-shaped pendants,	Fresco fragment of a hand; bas-relief of Azzanathkona w/ lions "to the right" of the doorway w/ evidence of "incense altar" between 9 & 10. In room 9 there were 46 "inscribed steps" with names (see text for a discussion of these many names) rising from a center corridor running east west. Dates w/ names run from 12/13 CE to 107 CE; Several graffiti including a depiction of crenelated walls/towers (a "fortress"), a man holding five "arrow shaped" objects, another man in likely in armor.
10 (W?)		
11 (W?)	Bronze ring(s) or part of a necklace.	Rubble altar ~0.6 x 0.6m, 0.3m high; A variety of "pious" names. Hopkins notes names in this room are almost all Greek whereas in 7W they were almost all Semitic (149-150)
18W	18 fragments of papyri too damaged to recover or read; 2 bronze pendants; bronze dish; single coin (170).	
10 (?)		

CHAPTER 4 SETTING TERMS

“Progress is made not so much by the uncovering of new facts or documents as by looking again with new perspectives on familiar materials.”
- J.Z. Smith, *Drudgery Divine* (1990:viii)

In 2010 I returned to the *maison de fouille*, at Europos after one of several days spent cleaning, mapping and measuring the Christian temple. I found Simon James at the *maison*, reading. He asked me how the work at the Christian temple was going. He was aware that I was only doing a preliminary surface investigation in order to prepare for a multi-season excavation of the temple and several other domestic spaces nearby over the following few years.

“Well,” I said, hesitating before I continued. “I think I found an altar.”

James asked me if I meant within the Christian temple itself.

“Yeah. It was smashed, I think, along with the wall behind it to create the *place d’armes* near the circuit wall. But Yale didn’t think it was an altar. They saw the same rubble in the ground and called it a dais but...”

I then proceeded to share with James my measurements, and interpretations of a peculiar bit of rubble construction at the eastern end of the largest room in the Christian temple.¹ I noted to James that I was becoming increasingly convinced of my own interpretation but found it difficult to believe no one else had ever noticed some peculiar assumptions on Yale’s part when they excavated the assembly room and interpreted the rubble where I believe the altar resided. James reminded me that I was likely the first archaeologist to set foot in that space with a trowel and

¹ For details of my field work at the Christian temple in 2010, please see Appendix 2.5 “Unpublished 2010 Field Report: Christian Building.”

questions in hand in nearly 80 years.² He also reminded me that his own work on the military quarter had resulted in several interpretations and finds that added to or challenged the narrative and interpretations proposed by Yale (Pers. comm. James, April 2010).

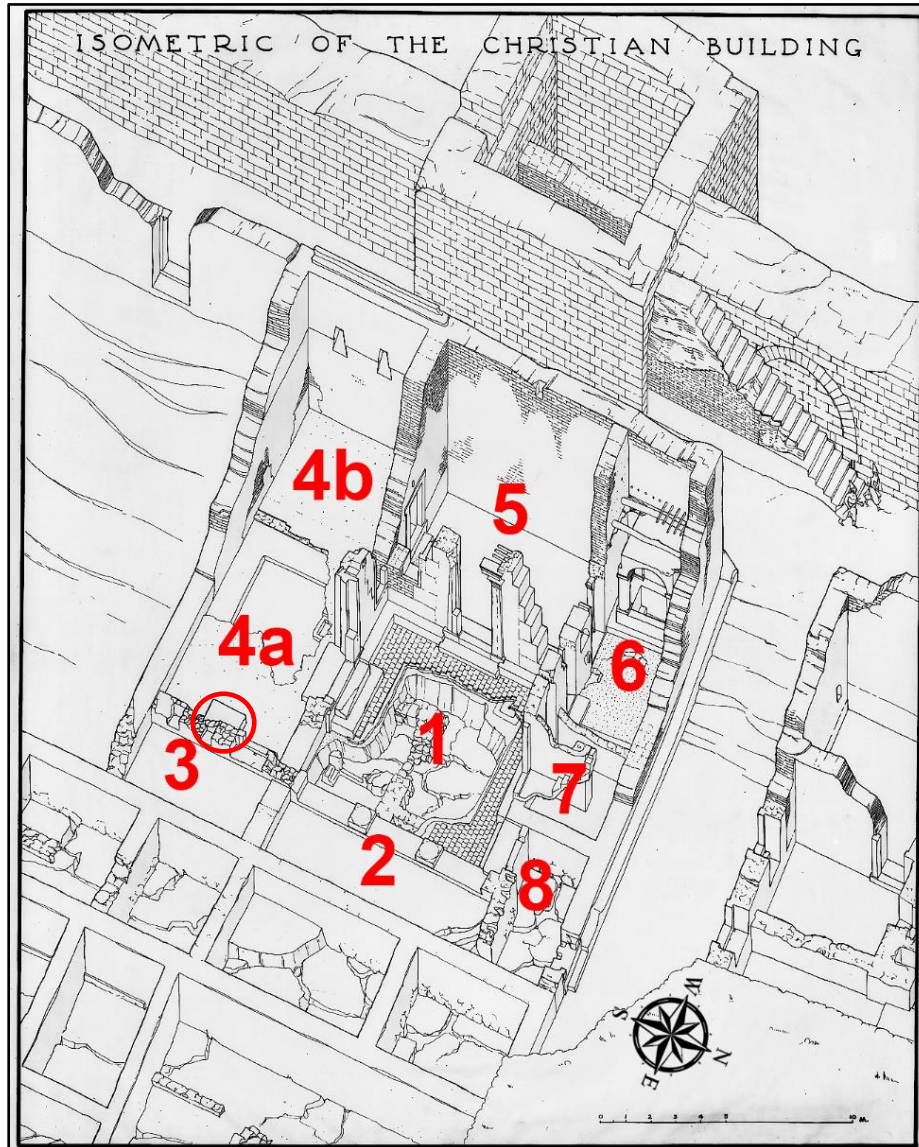


Figure 43: Isometric recreation of Christian temple after excavation. The detail here reveals elements of both phases of the Christian temple, as private home and then renovated to ritual space. Rooms 4a and 4b show evidence of two smaller rooms, including a former triclinium in a “diwan” (living/bedroom), which were combined and then filled to make a level floor for a single larger assembly room. At the east end of room 4 (in red circle) is a small rectangular plaster and rubble platform that Yale identified as a low (~25cm high above the floor) dais for preaching from. Yale likely have misidentified this structure.

² Restoration work was done at the Christian temple in the 1990s but not excavation. I failed to find any documents with details on the restoration project even while in Paris with access to the MFSED archives. Prof. Leriche indicated that there was an article published, but no such article was listed in Leriche’s own compilation of articles written on Europos through 2005 and I never received or found a copy myself. Pers. Comm. 2010.



Figure 44: View north from Room 4 showing extant “Dais” and east wall between rooms 3 and 4 in situ.



Figure 45: Extant Dais in 2010, fully exposed with some plastered floor still in situ. View east (Photo by author). At some point since the 1930s, it is possible a vertical (E-W) cut has been made, reducing the right hand (south) side of the Dais from its extant size during the Yale renovation – compare to figure 43 above.

Similarly, if Yale did misinterpret the plaster and rubble structure on the Christian temple's floor, and my investigation bore out my hypothesis, then (the base of) the oldest archaeologically extant Christian altar in the world is sitting in rural Syria (hopefully, still). And the extant 20-25 centimeters high patch of rubble, which was *in situ* at the site when I left in 2010, still has something to say about religion, ritual and the early Christian population at Europos.

However, before any detailed discussion of the of the Christian community and the altered altar at the Christian Temple can be discussed, it is necessary first to detail the ritual landscape of Europos and define some terms used with some imprecision in literature on the city. With categories more precisely defined, we will then be able, in the final Chapter, to fruitfully compare the Christian community at Europos with their neighbors.



Figure 46: Map of Europos Dura showing identified religious buildings as well as other notable public, military, domestic and commercial locales within the city. Courtesy MFSED

I. Let's Meet the Neighbors

So, let's make the most of this beautiful day,
Since we're together, we might as well say,
 Would you be mine?
 Could you be mine?
 Won't you be my neighbor?

 Won't you please,
 Won't you please,
Please won't you be my neighbor?
(Fred Rogers)

*On the road from Palmyra, a kilometer west of the main gate of Europos Dura.
Sunrise, spring, 244 CE...³*

The courier, Mirsal, had been riding for five days (well, mostly nights - the desert is already dangerously hot this late spring). As the sun began to rise on the horizon ahead of him, he could finally see the familiar towers dedicated to the dead. The air was still this morning. A blessing given that the Syrian Steppe needed little encouragement to stir itself into a sandstorm. But the air was clear, and he could easily see the silhouettes of the monumental tower tombs of Dura's necropolis. There was hardly a dozen such towers standing before the kilometer-long wall that protected Dura's thousands of residents from the on again off and again conflicts between Persia and Rome. But Mirsal had heard stories of when there were far more tower tombs casting long shadows on the roads leading to the main gate. An earthquake almost a century ago saw to it that the wealthiest families of the 500-year-old town would have to start from scratch. And they did. Mirsal was approaching the first of the several towers. It was nearly 20 meters tall and looked almost exactly like one standing in the necropolis of Palmyra from where he rode. In fact, much of Dura reminded Mirsal of home. Palmyrene auxiliaries had been stationed here for almost 100 years along with Roman legionaries, and in the last few decades nearly a third of the city had come under military sway in one way or another. But still, Mirsal appreciated the garrison town for its rather unique mix of citizens and soldiers. Greeks, Persians, Jews, his own people: Syrians...

Odaenathus is my king and Rome would not hold the east without him! Mirsal reminded himself and smiled.

³ This section of narrativity is not simply a story, but a map of sorts. Each bit of dialogue and each change in setting reveals a relevant locus for the discussion below. Each architectural or artistic description or claim is supported by Yale's research.



Figure 47: Necropolis, general view, reconstruction by Pearson and Toll

He swore he'd met a Carthaginian or three at Europos and was very certain the last prostitute he'd hired here was Egyptian.

Then again, she seemed as much a Helene as an Egyptian. *Mirsal reflected a moment.*

That confusion and conflation of race and identity, the city's teetering between Rome and Persia; between the Mediterranean and Mesopotamia; part military fort, part trading post; home to settled thousands as well as the rarely settled: sailors going up and down the Euphrates or savvy merchants carefully trading goods between rival empires. And, one had to march among the dead of Dura before they could pass through the limen to meet the living.

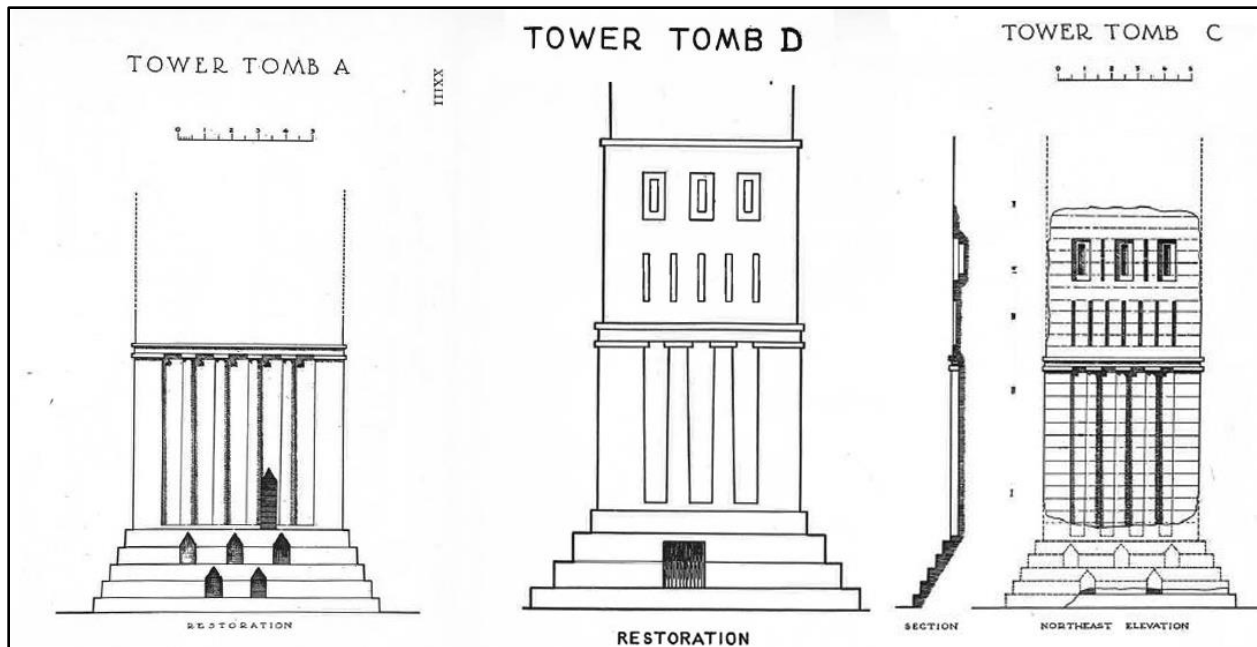


Figure 48: Architectural Restoration of several tower tombs excavated by Yale. Original images Pre. Rep. IX, Pt. II. Composite image by author. No scale was provided for Tomb D in original.

Surrounding the ostentatious tower tombs and dotting the entire approach to the city's main gate were the capped entrances to countless catacombs. The city had stood for centuries and much of its ancient population still remained close to home. There were hundreds of tumuli marking the dromos cut into the limestone which lay not two meters under the surface. Several barrows that ran somewhat haphazardly for hundreds of meters along the plateau before the gate suggested more ancient catacombs long since forgotten and thickly blanketed in sand and rubbish.

So much rubbish.

After the earthquake years ago, many of the buildings of Dura had to be razed and rebuilt. The growing sandy barrows became dumps during those days and still until today as well. The entire expanse which lay before the city was testament to the ravages of time, but inside...

Mirsal carried a scroll with the royal seal of Palmyrene king, Odaenathus. The Roman guards at the gate were Palmyrene in fact. They all chatted a bit in their native language, a dialect of Aramaic that along with Greek was spoken by anyone in Dura who wished to interact with more than their immediate family. Mirsal then made a small offering (in coin) to the city's Tyche – fortune personified – at an aedicula of sorts just next to the gate. The Roman military officer for whom Mirsal had a message was not in the Military Quarter at the moment, the guards had told him. Instead, the military quarter had been marginally taken over by local women today as they reclaimed their temple to the Goddess Azzanathkona for a celebration of some sort (the temple sat directly behind the military's principia (headquarters)). Azzanathkona, Mirsal knew, was a regional goddess not unlike Diana or Artemis, largely worshipped by those Durenes who had come from the island city Anath, downstream from Dura. But for a few priests and elders, while the

daughters of Anath attended their temple in the growing military quarter, their men were likely at the temple to Aphlad, Azzanathkona's consort, doing the same.

With all the pomp and circumstance in the military quarter, the officer Mirsal sought, a Primus named Barnaios, had taken the opportunity to attend to some Gods as well. Just not his own.

"Why do they call Jupiter, Yahweh?" Seleios, one of the two guards that met Mirsal, asked.

"They don't even call him that – they're afraid to even write the name of their god," the other guard, Naastabos, replied.

"Odd ways, the Jews, but that Messianic sect of theirs—"

"The Jews don't consider the Messianics as Jews," Naastabos interrupted with a small laugh. "And the Messianics definitely don't consider themselves Jewish."

Mirsal listened to their confusing but joking argument.

"Then why do the Messianics use the Hebrew Bible?" Seleios, the dimmer of the two it seemed, asked.

"Cuz they're God or prophet, or whatever, was Jewish? I guess? Some sort of heretical rabbi or some such thing? Was centuries ago – who the hell knows." Naastabos, shrugged his shoulders as if to say, "Do I look like a Jew or a Messianic?"

"So then, the Messianics' god was Jewish, but the Messianics aren't Jewish?" Seleios snickered.

Mirsal nodded in understanding, "They use the Greek, not the Aramaic or Hebrew to call themselves. Not 'messianics' but, I think, 'the cult of the christ'."

"Ah yes, another 'anointed one,' Joshua, the Nazarene!" Seleios quipped.

"Just more atheists. Jewish is Jewish," Naastabos said curtly. "Though you'd think they'd given up Yahweh by now what with Rome crushing their temple, their city, their kingdom."

"Still," Seleios said taking a sip from a wineskin, "Some of the Jewish families here are among the wealthiest. They're rebuilding their meetinghouse."

"And that's where you'll find the Primus," A very tall and very broad-shouldered third soldier said coming out of the guardhouse. "Apparently the Jews have hired all the damn painters and artists in the city and Barnaios needs a few to take care of some repairs in the barracks. It's too pretty a job for our own artisans apparently."

"It's for the Mithraeum, right?" Seleios asked excitedly. "I heard the brothers talking about needing more space for initiation with the constant buildup of soldiers here."

The big guard, clearly a superior officer, gave Seleios a stern look.

"It's ok," Mirsal said. "The mysteries have been revealed to me," he offered, letting the superior know that no harm or foul had just been committed by the dim-witted Seleios.

"Still, Sal, if you don't keep your damn mouth shut, you can become a Jewish initiate next!" All the guards looked down at their groins shaking their heads and laughing nervously.

"I hear those Messianics do the same thing." Naastabos muttered.

“You’d think they’d get along better eh?” Seleios said after sipping again from his wineskin. “The Messianics and the Jews? Same stories, same gods, same fetish with Jerusalem – er, Capitolina.”

“Same fetish for disfiguring their cocks too.” Naastabos reminded them all.

“The followers of the Nazarene believe in sacrifice during this life to earn acceptance to a greater kingdom waiting for them after death,” the big guard said. The other guards and Mirsal turned to him. He was huge but spoke quietly, almost passionless. “My wife has been spending time with those Messianics. Sweet people, but all mixed up I’d say. Apparently, they came here with the Roman and Palmyrene troops years ago. They have a small temple now, not far from here.”

“Yeah, against the wall – the low-rent district of Dura.” Naastabos said out of the corner of his mouth.

“You can piss on the roof of their temple from the wall,” Seleios informed them with a hint of pride.

The big guard looked sternly at the smaller, younger guard again.

“I mean, you could if you wanted to – it’s that close.” Seleios hemmed and hawed. “What? It’s not like we’re feeding them to lions!”

“You piss on a building my wife is in again and I’ll do more than make you a Jew, I’ll make you a goddamn eunuch and you’ll be pissing on yourself for the rest of your life.” The officer turned to Mirsal. “You’ll find the Primus at the Jewish meeting house – you know where that is?”

Mirsal nodded, shook hands with each of the soldiers and fellow kinsman, and made his way to the Synagogue.

Scaffolding surrounded the building while workers were laying new brick, plastering old walls, and knocking down crumbling adjacent structures.

“What do you mean you can’t spare anyone? I’m not asking! I’m ordering you to let me have some of these workers, the painters specifically. Now.”

An older bearded man dressed in far too much black under the Syrian sun was being berated by the Roman officer Mirsal was seeking. He was shouting in Greek.

“You can’t do this Primus!” The bearded man responded anxiously. “These are the finest artists in the city. Most of them studied in Palmyra, some even in Antioch. I have already paid them in silver. You cannot simply take them away. We must finish the rebuilding of the temple by—”

“You have hired every damn painter in the city!” The Roman cut off the Jewish elder.

“No no, Primus! That’s not true at all!”

“I was at the Agora yesterday inquiring with the workshops – they say you have hired anyone capable of holding a brush.”

“An exaggeration. These are all the masters and journeyman. Their apprentices are busy elsewhere but I’m sure you could convince them to help the Empire. The job they are doing is small.”

“Where are they?”

“That cult of the Christ was looking for artists to paint their temple. I let them have the apprentices.”

“Oh gods.” The officer paused. “Don’t they ... make you nervous?”

“Those cultists? They are heretics. They make me sad.”

“You know they blame you guys for killing their God?”

“Not even you Romans believe the Gods can be slain by men.”

“Ehhhh... you’d be surprised. More than few of the soldiers are celebrating the Mysteries with their brothers one night and then make their way to that little house of ‘the messiah’ once a week for some sort of love feast.”

The bearded man sighed. “I know only too well.”

The officer raised an eyebrow.

“My youngest daughter prays to the false messiah every sunrise and attends those dinners as well.” He looked down shaking his head.

“Well, from what I understand, at least your daughter has a head start on any Greeks or Romans joining the cult – she already knows half their myths growing up with you!”

The bearded man glowered, obviously not finding the joke amusing.

“I’ll go fetch the apprentices, but I swear to you Dositheos, if I have any trouble there I’m coming back here and conscripting anyone I damn well need.”

“Have a blessed day.”

As the officer walked away from the old man, Mirsal introduced himself and handed him the message from the Palmyrene court.

Mirsal was familiar with many of the temples of Dura. Two enormous sanctuaries occupied the northwest and southwest corners of the city. One had become a center of worship for those with Palmyrene roots, the temple to the god Bel. Palmyra’s temple to Bel⁴ may have dwarfed the one at Dura, but nevertheless, for Durenes, the temple was still a center of religious, military and civic activity. The other grand sanctuary was the temple to Aphlad. Mirsal had not been to the Mithraeum at Dura but knew it had been erected by Palmyrene soldiers decades ago, even before the Roman military had properly occupied the town. He had counted at least three temples to various incarnations of Zeus during his previous visits. As they walked south through the city, numerous shrines to countless deities and ancestors outside of homes, in abandoned niches and the like, were ubiquitous. Mirsal and Barnaios passed a Roman bathhouse and then

⁴ The Temple of Bel in Palmyra was destroyed by Daesh in August of 2015. Built in the first century CE, it sat on a tell which shows evidence of human occupation of the area for some 5,000 years.

proceeded west towards the great wall. The last house on the left had a newly plastered bench along its exterior, giving way to a solid wooden door. Barnaios knocked.

“You know, I don’t even know if anyone still lives here,” he said waiting at the door as his left hand moved to steady the hilt of his sword. “They spent a lot of time gutting this place and rebuilding it recently. I kept an eye on it from the tower.” Barnaios pointed to the guard tower only meters away from the small house they stood next to. It was more than 10 meters tall. It must have cast a permanent shadow on the modest home well until midafternoon, Mirsal observed.

“I think this place belonged to a Greek Merchant named Siseos,” the officer continued. “He died, left it to his son but I think his wife handed it over to the cult.” They could hear someone approaching the door on the inside.

“I’ve never met a Messianic before,” Mirsal said in a hushed tone. “What do they look like?”

The door opened, and a very pregnant young woman dressed in a white stola [toga for women] and smelling slightly of myrrh stood in the entrance.

The officer dropped his head and sighed. “Apparently, they look like my daughter.”

II. Setting Terms

“The manifestation of the sacred ontologically founds the world.”
(Eliade 1957: 21)

Space, Place, Landscape

Social scientists have increasingly turned to defining and refining our understanding of how humans are influenced by, and adapt to, their geography, and how humans adapt and influence their geography to their needs. The terms “space,” “place,” and “landscape” – generally deployed to call attention to specific and different aspects of this relationship between humans and their environment – are not interchangeable but nor are they entirely independent of one another. This trio of terms possess both specific utility, and to some degree simplicity in their meaning and importance to the study of human culture. Geographer Yi-Fu Tuan (1977), offers as succinct a description of the primary difference between space and place as I have read.

Space is more abstract than place. What begins as undifferentiated space becomes place as we get to know it better and endow it with value ... if we think of space as that which allows movement, then place is pause; each pause in movement makes it possible for location to be transformed into place. (6)

Following Tuan, it would be more accurate in this work to refer to “ritual places” rather than ritual spaces. But, as much as I agree with Tuan, the term “ritual space” has, accurately or not, dominated literature on ritual and so I have demurred to its use in this work. But as I hope I showed in Chapters Three and Four, and will do below, the temples discussed in this work are all places endowed with value, intention, pause. As ritual is a break from the quotidian, a liminal state “betwixt and between” the beginning and ending of a journey (a journey often both symbolic and literal), so is ‘place’ a marked departure from space, a temporary pause not simply to *rest* – an act which serves one’s own basic needs – but to pause with purpose. A purpose constructed by

and learned through social interactions. The construction of places, like religion, is an eminently social act, “collective representations which express collective realities,” (Durkheim 1912:9).

Perhaps “space” came to dominate the description of ritual arenas rather than place because, as I hoped I made clear in Chapter One, ritual is associated with action and movement – crossing from the norm, into the liminal, and back again (Turner 1966; Bell 1992:19; Gennep 1960). As a realm which one moves through, ritual possesses at least this similarity with ‘space.’ But ritual is also pause, a break in society’s normal structure, a time-out from a community’s daily expectations, an opportunity to change the rules (or change one’s status) at least temporarily. That is, while ritual is the active practice of representing a community’s ethics, mores, expectations, hierarchy, history – a community’s ontological origins and order (its religion) – ritual only takes place when the energies invested in the rote, in the daily activities that satisfy and supply an individual with their daily bread so to speak, are redirected and focused instead on a social goal, an intentional un-structuring of the norm, to create a break in the day for collective meaningful pause to engage with concerns of collective import (Turner 1966).

What is missing in the quote from Tuan above (but not at all in his work writ-large) is that the type of value that endows a place with its ‘place-ness’ is social. The transformation from space to place requires agreement among a group that it need be marked, bounded, and assigned socially relevant pro- and prescriptions. “Place is best understood as a locus of meaning (Smith 1987:28)” and as such, within any space, there can be countless places cut from the fabric of space and each imbued by a place’s inhabitants uniquely, though with common threads linked to, comprehensible to, and constructed by a community over generations of presenting and representing such cleaved arenas of import. Each of which, though born from the greater space, yearns towards some form of independent recognition among the whole.

Landscapes then, are a fascinating intersection of space and place. A mountain range in the distance on the horizon unknown to a traveler is just part of an expansive backdrop to the space before her. Perhaps an obstacle to be traversed, but not to her knowledge a place to be revered.

A mountain range that is frequently encircled by clouds, struck by lightning and from which flood waters impact nearby communities is likely to be imbued with meanings due to its relationship with people living near it. What those meanings are should never be reduced to simple functionalist notions of myth-making, but an *histoire* of the people scrawled palimpsest-like across the space which runs from them to the horizon. Here I use “*histoire*” as I did in the Introduction to this work: a conflation of the words history and story signifying the importance of the places under discussion is not whether or not we speak of legends, myth, or history, but rather that we are speaking of how a people has chosen to represent itself in the medium of the material world upon which they – and us – are trapped. A community ascribes to the expanse, specific and relevant meanings for the community and of course, the community is affected by the resulting stories, discoveries, myths, legends; this recursivity is not unlike the role of ritual-as-practice, a practice ascribing and affirming symbolic value to performances which in return define and imbue cultures, and often specific individuals within a culture, with greater understanding of herself and community, new status, new roles, pro and prescriptions for succeeding in those new roles and status, etc.

Ingold (Ingold 1993:151-153) sounding a bit like Heidegger (1971) focuses on memory and memorializing in the identification of landscapes.

You can ask of land, as of weight, how much there is, but not what it is like. But where land is thus quantitative and homogeneous, the landscape is qualitative and heterogeneous. ...to move beyond the sterile opposition between the naturalistic view of the landscape as a neutral, external backdrop to human activities, and the culturalistic view that every landscape is a particular cognitive or symbolic ordering of space. I argue that we should adopt, in place of both these views, what I call a 'dwelling perspective', according to which

the landscape is constituted as an enduring record of - and testimony to - the lives and works of past generations who have dwelt within it, and in so doing, have left there something of themselves. (151-2)

So, landscapes are not just land, or nature, or space, but rather an intentional ordering, remembering and representation by a people of space which was either previously 'empty' of dwelling and recently transformed, or long filled with chaos, shifting sands, endless floods and other natural calamities, but which have been confronted over generations and that relationship indelibly embellished into the geography of a people. Nature does not truck in right-angles, nor is it static over time (nature is always in a perpetual state of change and movement). But people do truck in such artifice, and with purpose. Right angles and oral traditions whether people construct *temples* or *stories* around a mountain, either way, the mountain is possessed of something far more human, social, and not so easily identifiable by the geologist, geographer, cartographer – those disciplines interested in measuring and ordering the *physical* world. Landscapes are more, manifestations and creations of humans for humans, marking the natural world with memories and myths, concretizing certain places, fixing them in time and space, even as the very land itself slowly shifts and changes shape over geological time. To quote Eliade (again), “The manifestation of the sacred ontologically founds the world” (Eliade 1961:21).

Rituals and landscapes therefore both possess common qualities: Marked breaks in the quotidian, not entirely tangible, but not without affect; a social construction overripe with meaning with signs pointing to past, present and future for those trained to read them ... and yet, despite their similarities, when the term “ritual landscape” is used by archaeologists, it is not exactly linked overripe ruptures in spaces that we speak of.

“Ritual Landscape” is a problematic term that has slipped the bonds of academic use and is deployed by both popular media and institutions concerned with heritage preservation. In these

latter uses, ritual landscape takes on a somewhat different meaning than “an enduring record of – and testimony to – the lives and works of past generations who have dwelt within it, and in so doing, have left there something of themselves,” as Ingold (Ingold 1993:151–2) suggested above.

Instead,

The compound term 'ritual landscape' enjoyed something of a vogue in the 1980s as specialized enquiry into the evidence for ritual activity gathered pace... in the early 1980s as archaeologists began to look for evidence of inter-monument ritual activity: “These developments have encouraged some prehistorians to postulate the existence of 'ritual landscapes', distinct tracts of territory containing a series of separate monuments ... but this term is unsatisfactory since it is rarely known whether these areas were kept apart from the settlements of the same period” (Bradley & Chambers, 1988, p. 272). These authors maintain that exclusivity, the intended segregation of ritual from domestic space, is both a crucial criterion of the concept and difficult to verify. (Robb 1998:163)

Here, Robb seems to be suggesting that a stark segregation between ritual and domestic spaces is a necessary component to apply the appellation “ritual landscape” to a series of interlinked ritual spaces. And further, that understanding the relationship across time and space between monuments and other potentially related spaces is not so straightforward. But such a focus on a major monuments and related sacred sites segregated from domestic spaces offers a false impression of a ritual landscape somehow devoid of secular and quotidian places – homes, workshops, latrines, kitchens and all the other ‘profane’ places and practices necessary to maintain a major ritual center. Cunliffe (1993) acknowledged the complications, though cautiously

Recent work. ... has emphasized that the picture is far more complex than the standing monuments alone imply, offering a timely warning that our vision of the ritual landscape may be distorted by the few upstanding sites. While this proviso must always be borne in mind, the clustering of ritual sites within circumscribed landscape is a most striking feature of the archaeological record as it is presently known (89-91).

Ironically, given the qualities of ‘landscape’ discussed above – an arena of marked places within a wider space that recalls important figures or events (mythical, legendary, or historical) and represents the peoples so marking their territory – ‘natural’ environments are not always the

best candidates for applying the more specific term, ‘ritual landscape.’ I suggest instead, in Mediterranean Antiquity especially, the city, the urban center, was a lived ritual landscape that satisfies the social scientist’s desire to recognize important places of pause within a larger social milieu.

Cities are travelled through (space) and temples are places of meaningful pause. And in a city like Europos with likely dozens of temples at the time of its destruction, the appellation, ritual landscape, is undeniable. All of the qualities necessary for being classified as so are checked: Site lines; indivisibility patterns; parade routes; shared aesthetics, resources and techniques between places; tension and conflict revealed between others (ethnic, political, class, and other differences between religious groups and their places of practice revealed in myths and mysteries); marked and prescribed boundaries for the laying of the dead; loci noted for occult and magical practices (catering to personal, and private needs); sites which wobble between the personal and the collective like family and roadside shrines; and finally, and most important for the current use of the term ritual landscape, monumental edifices, social places for collective recognition, reverence and representation of a community’s ethos personified, anthropomorphized, and always linked, in antiquity, with civic and political practices and meanings as well. Most importantly, the city as ritual landscape necessarily negates the notion that a ritual landscape is one that is dedicated to a single cult or culture. Instead, at Europos, we must embrace that ritual landscapes present an opportunity to explore diversity in religious practice, not, as typically presented, homogeneous and orthodox practices across a wide region of human occupied space.⁵

⁵ The narrativity portion of this chapter was written the way it was, with moments of pause at shrines and temples, memories and descriptions of sanctuaries in the midst of military quarters, and diversity – embraced and resulting in tensions – all in play, within a landscape where ritual and domestic spaces rub so close together that friction, whether warming or burning, is constantly affective.

Synagogue? Domus Ecclesia? Templum? Church? What's in a name?

The most common language used at Europos was Greek, not Latin. The word ‘temple,’ is used in this work to describe any individual edifice used primarily if not exclusively for ritual practice. It is derived in English from the Latin ‘*templus*.’ In Greek, the word ‘temenos’ generally refers to sacred sites. While temenos and *templus* have similar – but not the same – meaning, there is consensus that both words derive from a proto-Indo-European root word, ‘*tem*,’ meaning “to cut.” Conceptually, temenos or *templus* indicates a place cut away from space, reserved, often marked for elite or other special and specific purposes. As regards the relationship of such structures to rituals, the very names themselves, be they Greek or Latin, lends credibility to the choice of either term as a general description of the edifices we are investigating: structures that provide liminality, a place betwixt and between, cut away from the quotidian. My choice to use the Latin term over the Greek in a city that spoke primarily Greek is only a result of the Greek word, temenos being widely adapted in the archaeology of antiquity to refer to larger ritual space complexes rather than individual buildings. Additionally, there is the received and common understanding of the word “temple” in English, whereas “temenos” is far less commonly understood outside the study of ancient Greece. Given that Latin was a contender with Syriac as the second most widely used language in the city at the time of its fall, using the Anglicized “temple” as the generic term for any building dedicated to ritual practice in this work is a compromise between an attempt at historical accuracy (Europos was more Greek and Syrian than Roman at the time of its fall but Latin was hardly unknown and used widely throughout the military and inscriptions in the city), along with a desire to avoid preferential treatment of Christianity in antiquity by using a modern term, one arguably religion-specific, “church,” to describe a third-century ritual space.

“Church” is an English word with Germanic roots. Derived from the Greek *ekklēsiastēs* (and its Latin cognate, *ecclesiasticus*), meaning an assembly or congregation, this root can be seen in several Latin derived languages (*iglesia, eglise*). Even in its ancient form, the word was never applied to an early Christian ritual space by early Christians themselves (Sessa 2008). The formula “house church” is an anachronistic one applied in the present to buildings (extant or idealized) in the past, and drawn from the Latin, *domus ecclesiae* (Schloeder 2012).

The only problem for this romantic model of a domestic residential architecture, built for a small gathering of early Christians celebrating a simple *agape* meal, is its dubious merit. *Domus ecclesiae* – “house church” – the popular term among liturgists emphasized the communal nature of the assembly is not particularly apt. It is also anachronistic. The phrase *domus ecclesiae* is not found in Scripture. No author of the first, second, or third century uses this term to describe the church building. The phrase *domus ecclesiae* cannot be found to describe any church building before the Peace of Constantine (313 AD), but rather seems used to imply a house owned by the Christians, such as a bishop’s residence. (Schloeder 2012:14)

In fact, the appellation of “house church” at Europos by Yale, was likely one of the major contributors to this confusion. By applying the term to a pre-Constantinian edifice, and due to the temple’s unique position in archaeology as the oldest extant Christian temple, this small building played an oversized role in establishing a term and concept as extant a century before there is any evidence the term existed. (Sessa 2008:94–5; Schloeder 2012: 14). Simply put, the phrase and its accumulated, though inaccurate, historicity was not used in the third century when Durenes, Christian or non-, spoke of meeting places. To be accurate, “meeting place,” rather than “house church” is a more accurate translation of the Greek and Latin roots of the phrase.

Whether rendered in Greek (οἶκος τῆς ἐκκλησίας) [*oikos tis ekklisias*] or Latin (*domus ecclesiae*), the phrase itself defies obvious translation and offers little insight into its original context or meaning. Modern readers usually translate it either literally (and elliptically) as 'house of the church' or more loosely as 'assembly house' or 'community house'. Some simply employ it as an ancient sounding synonym for 'house church' ... To be clear, however, there is nothing in the Latin or Greek that identifies the term as an architectural category of Christian cult space. (Sessa 2008:94)

In summation, there is no evidence that “house church” was a category of any sort until the fourth century, when the phrase came into use under Constantine’s patronage of the church, nor is there any evidence the term was used contemporaneously by early Christians to refer to either specific homes converted (like in Europos) or the long-standing traditional assumption that early Christians met in private homes to avoid persecution.

As for the “Synagogue” and the “Mithraeum,” these terms do attempt to reflect contemporary usage within the third-century, Roman-occupied Middle East. “Synagogue,” the anglicized Greek word for bringing or coming together (συναγωγή, *synagogē*) was used in Greek New Testament writings to describe Jewish meeting places, called *bet-k’neset* in Hebrew. I prefer to avoid using the term “temple” to describe the Jewish ritual space at Europos because when speaking of the first few centuries CE and of Syrio-Palestinian history, the temple in Jerusalem, a series of monumental edifices constructed over centuries in the political and religious capital of Judaea, too easily comes to mind. While the Synagogue in Europos was uniquely and extensively decorated suggesting no small expense in wealth and effort, its role in Europos was a regional meeting place and not the *axis mundi* for an entire religion and ethnicity as *the* Temple in Jerusalem served.

“Mithraeum” is an emic and contemporary Latin term for a temple (*templum*) to the god Mithras and is derived from the earlier Greek *Mithraion* (e.g. Μιθραίου; P.Gurob 22). Such an appellation is not uncommon in the Greco-Roman world. Temples (or schools) dedicated to Athena, the goddess of wisdom for example, were known then by a term still used today, “Athenaeum.”

In Europos, several temples are known to have been converted from domestic spaces, not just the Christian one.

...the city developed a cosmopolitan and syncretistic religious culture, despite its relative isolation. The prominence of monumental public temples in daily life can be seen in the development of a peculiar Durene temple type, which can be found in Greek, Parthian, and Roman construction. ... Three Durene temples are of particular interest, since all were constructed on property previously occupied by private houses and shops: the temple of Adonis, the temple of Zeus Theos, and the temple of Gadde. (White 1990:40)

It is usually the Synagogue, Mithraeum and Christian temple that are trotted out as evidence of a Durene habit of converting domestic spaces into ritual spaces over time. White chose Adonis, Zeus Theos, and Gadde not only because each of these temples subsumed pre-existing domestic spaces in their construction but because each was completed during the middle of the second century, a period betwixt and between Roman and Persian rule when the city went from a Persian to a Roman territory briefly around 115-117 CE, returned soon thereafter to Persian (and/or quasi-independent) rule for the next few decades until, by the end of the 160s CE, Rome, with the help of Palmyrene auxiliaries took the city and would hold it until its final siege.

The temple to Adonis was built on a block “built up of houses of the poorer sort” (Pre. Rep. 7VII/VIII: 135). Its construction necessitated razing several of those houses but incorporated at least two of them into its final phase. The construction of the temple to Zeus Theos was similarly situated in a domestic block, and the temple to Gadde, a local Palmyrene deity, went through four construction phases, beginning as “an unpretentious ‘chapel’ in a private domestic complex” (White 1990:41). However, it’s White’s conclusion about these ritual spaces and their relationship to earlier domestic spaces that is most insightful for our purposes (and entirely relevant to the construction and renovations of the Christian temple, Synagogue and Mithraeum as well). While discussing the last of his three examples, the temple to Gadde, White (1990:43) offers,

This architectural progression indicates the growth of the cult from a small domestic setting to monumental public proportions. Through the epigraphic remains it may be possible to correlate this architectural development with the social circumstances of a group of ethnic Palmyrenes, mostly merchants, living in Dura from the second century BCE. The temple served as a guild hall and social center as well as a religious sanctuary. One prominent

family seems to have held a leading position in the sanctuary's operations through several generations and with substantial benefactions to the temple. We might well guess that the local worship of Palmyrene Gadde was initially established in the private home (House B) of this family, and that eventually the entire house was devoted to the cult.

If one is to call the Christian temple a “house church” than the same can and should be done of several of the temples and sanctuaries at Europos which, as is suspected with the Christian temple, saw a small familial or community cult grow from private worship in a primarily domestic space, to a larger congregation that acquired or converted domestic space to facilitate ritual practice by its growing numbers.

Given all the above, I reject the term “house church” to describe the Christian temple at Europos. The term suggests specific and unique qualities both architecturally and historically of which none are true nor unique to Christianity.

Sanctuaries, Temples and Shrines (oh my!)

While the usual count is 19, I would suggest instead, that 18 edifices at Europos have been excavated and interpreted as “temples” – that is, the primary if not exclusive use of these spaces has been interpreted as a venue for the veneration of specific deities through ritual practice. The 19th ritual space is presumed to have been dedicated to the Tyche (fortune personified) of Dura near the Palmyra Gate. Evidence for an actual temple or sanctuary for the deity, besides the dedications to Tyche in a “shrine” of sorts at the Palmyra Gate and a nearby building Yale associated with the inscriptions – but which possessed no evidence itself of being dedicated to deities or rituals – are “*tres incertaine*” (Bossard-Couronné 2011:17).⁶

⁶ Some detail on this transient temple will be offered below.

Two other temples in the city are possibly mentioned in dedications and inscriptions uncovered by Yale's team. The first temple was mentioned in several dedications by father and son priests, Alexander and Epinicus, to an unnamed Semitic deity. Three inscriptions by these priests were discovered by Yale, two on a stone in the Mithraeum and one other "not far away" (Pre. Rep. VII/VIII: 128). The inscriptions indicate that these priests had built a "naos" or "oikos" to their unnamed deity and also, that Roman soldiers who occupied the city briefly in 116 – 117 CE, removed the doors to this edifice and took them (Pre. Rep. VII/VIII: 129-30). While these inscriptions suggest that the doors to the unnamed temple were large and/or well-built enough to provide useful materials for the Roman military, they tell us nothing about which deities the temple venerated, which inhabitants of Europos worshipped them (although the fact that a Semitic language was used might offer some chance to narrow down possibilities), or where said temple may have been located within the city. At the time the inscription about the theft of doors was made, Emperor Trajan was leading a campaign in the east, sacking much of western Parthian Persia and expanded the Roman Empire to its largest extent, capturing Europos briefly in 115-117 CE.⁷ It is not unreasonable to assume it was soldiers involved in this campaign who stole Alexander and Epinicus' doors.

The second potential but undiscovered temple noted during the Yale excavations was described by du Mesnil du Buisson, Clark Hopkins' French co-director after the departure of the less than competent Pillet. Du Mesnil du Buisson suggested there might have been a "temple des Génies" in Europos. "Genies," or "Jinn," is a collective term used in Arab and Semitic languages to describe ancient (pre-Islamic) supernatural beings generally associated with a specific tribes

⁷ Trajan's successor Hadrian would relinquish many of Trajan's eastern most conquests just a year or two later due to political infighting in the Empire making holding the new conquests too difficult. Some 50 years later Rome, with the assistance of Palmyra, would take Europos once and for all – *See* the Introduction and Chapters Three and Four for detailed histories of Europos' seesawing between Empires for half a millennium.

(Lebling and Shah 2014)). But Bossard-Couronne (2012) points out that du Mesnil du Buisson made the suggestion with scant evidence: the discovery of a single relief with a Palmyrene inscription dedicated to “Asadu and Sa’dai” (17).

This relief is one of the most reproduced images from the Europos artifact collection but alas, it very well may not be of deities. The stele is part of a recognized style of Syrian reliefs referred to as, “*stèles au cavalier parth*” (Sartre-Fauriat 2012:185), “Parthian cavalry/horsemen.” In an examination of several known versions of these sculptures, Sartre-Fauriat (2012) notes that all but one extant example have inscriptions in Aramaic (as does the one from Europos) and there is now debate as to whether various inscriptions on these stelae refer to specific deities (jinn), or mortal heroes, and whether or not some inscriptions extant on some of these stele may refer to regional towns (and possibly to heroes and/or local divinities there - tribal jinn). That is to say, given what was known about these stelae in the 1930s, and the strong desire to find more temples in the city (or more accurately strong *need* in order to insure ongoing funding (Hopkins 1979:73–5)), du Mesnil du Buisson’s hypothesis that the individuals in the relief were the likenesses of gods was not out of the question, but it is far more likely that the names on this stelae venerate real people, with Asadu and Sa’dai likely Semitic names for regional heroes or legends⁸ and that no temple dedicated to these two figures (historical, legendary or divine) ever existed.

⁸ Pers. comm. Kristin Hickman, August 2018. Conversant in several dialects of modern Arabic and having conducted ethnographic research on the use of regional Arabic dialects in print media, as well as having archaeological field experience, Hickman was not convinced that Asadu and Sadai are anything more than the names of individuals.



Figure 49: Stele with dedication to Asadu and Sa'dai in Aramaic. It is interesting to note that this image, widely reproduced for framing and mounting as a graphic, is frequently reproduced backwards. That is, it has been reproduced with the image reversed: The horse would be riding towards the left-hand side of the image. Getty Images possess a high-resolution image that they license for reproduction and that image in the Getty collection is reversed. It is likely Getty's image which is the culprit behind the reversed images available for sale. The author has contacted Getty.

In addition to the 18 excavated temples there was also the necropolis outside the city's kilometer long western circuit wall, which is its own ritual landscape. The necropolis extended as far as half a kilometer westward from the city. Yale counted almost 1,000 catacombs here, as well as countless single burials, evidence of at least eight standing tower tombs, and surmised that the

wadis bordering the city to the north and south were also used for burials but the annual flow of rainwaters through these sandy canyons has washed away reliable evidence over the last 1,700 years (Pre. Rep. IX, Pt. II: 1-9). In addition to the various manners of marking the dead, from grand towers to near-surface level unmarked burials, a temple to the Palmyrene gods Bel and Iarhibol was founded in the necropolis in 33 BCE. Included among my count of 18 above, this temple was maintained as a place of worship until the fall of the city. The only temple discovered outside the city walls, and with its deities tied closely to Palmyrene worship, the Necropolis temple was one of several reminders of Europos' close connection to Palmyra, the oasis trading town 200 kilometers to the west, that one would unavoidably witness as one approached the city.

Tower tombs, catacombs, temples, shrines, sanctuaries ... they litter the landscape of Europos. They are also terms that lack precision. "Sanctuary," "temple," and "shrine," are not interchangeable categories although in Yale's reports this was not always recognized. In this work I have deferred to Baird (Baird 2018, 96–97) and Bossard-Couronné (2011: 22-3) for guidance in terminology which will largely reflect the scale of the ritual space in question. A *sanctuary* is a large place separated from profane space for the purpose of communing with the divine. Within a sanctuary, there may be several *temples*, individual buildings dedicated to specific deities. *Shrines* can be installed most anywhere: within the courtyard of a sanctuary, within temples (but when within a temple we will sometimes need to use more precise terms; *see* below), civic/public spaces and domestic spaces – perhaps dedicated to a specific incarnation of a deity or paying homage to an ancestor whose patronage to a temple or sanctuary is recalled by living members of the congregation.

With this scheme in mind, "temples" like the one to Azzanathkona with several structures and courtyard space, or the temples to Atargatis and Artemis which face one another in blocks H2

and H4 and include a domestic building as well which Yale deemed as belonging to priests of these regional deities, all might better be called sanctuaries. So too for the temples to Bel and Aphlad which dominate the northwest and southwest corners of the city incorporating numerous buildings, altars and even the city wall as part of the religious complex. Similarly, parts of the gate towers at the Palmyrene Gate possessed several altars to several regional deities (Pre. Rep. 1) and though it was not described by Yale as a temple, the altars were likely a part of some sort of persistent ritual practice at the limen between the city and the void of the desert and the dead in the necropolis. As such, the Palmyrene Gate possessed important shrines which likely influenced the aforementioned overinterpretation of a building next to the gate as a temple.

The identification of the building next to the gate as a temple was made by Rostovtzeff (Pre. Rep. III: 37-9) and his interpretation relies,

...d'une part sur le fait que l'édifice concerne [au sud de l'ilot L8] <<ressemble>> a un temple et d'autre part sur la présence de dédicaces à la Tyche dans le Porte de Palmyre située à proximité. Mais comme l'a souligné S. B. Downey [1976 : 29], il est probable que la Tyche ait été honorée près la porte de Palmyre sans pour autant qu'un temple spécifique ait été construit à son intention. (Bossard-Couronné 2012: 17)

[... partly on the fact that the building concerned [at the south of block L8] *resembles* a temple and partly on the presence of dedications to Tyche in The Palmyrene Gate located nearby. But as pointed out by S.B. Downey [1976: 29], it is probable that the Tyche had been honoree near the Palmyrene Gate without a specific temple being built for the deity.]

Yale tended to label most ritual spaces “temples” regardless of scale and complexity, and also apparently with only the slightest of connections to evidence of ritual practice such as associating the shrine and altars of the Palmyrene Gate with the adjacent building that *resembled* a temple.⁹

⁹ The reader should recall that in Chapter Three we noted that Yale determined the *Dolicheneum* to be a temple to the Baal of *Doliche* based on finding an altar with an inscription to the deity on a town road near a building that bore other evidence suggesting it was a ritual space.

When naming these temples (shrines, sanctuaries, buildings that resemble temples, etc.) Yale also had a tendency to privilege “the Greek deity over the Near Eastern one even when the inscriptions are bilingual” (Baird 2018: 97). We have already seen this when discussing the temple to Azzanathkona which, while dedicated to a deity associated with the important down-river city of Anath, possessed several rooms dedicated to other gods. The temple itself has also been referred to as the temple to Atagartis and Artemis (confusingly; As there are in Europos temples to both Atargatis and Artemis along G Street that as was just mentioned above, might better be called a sanctuary). Similarly, the so-called *Dolicheneum* had a room dedicated to the veneration of another regional god Turmesgade. To be fair, even the Christian temple should be looked at as venerating more than one deity given that Yahweh, the god of the Jews, was recognized along with the prophet Jesus of Nazareth.¹⁰

One more set of terms should be clarified before we begin to interpret what we can of the lives of Durene Christians from the ritual landscape of Europos. As regards the interiors of temples and sanctuaries (as defined above), Yale used a mix of Latin, Greek, Arabic and English terms. “Chapels” was frequently used to describe small rooms around a sanctuary’s courtyard (Baird 2018:97) and indeed, the baptistery in the Christian temple is sometimes referred to as a chapel in literature on Europos. *Diwan* “is the name given by the Yale excavators at Dura to the large central room off the courtyard ... often flanked by one or two secondary rooms” (Baird 2006:99), but in the case of the Christian temple, when a *diwan* and its accompanying chamber were combined to a larger single room, Yale referred to the new combined room (still only one of several rooms off a central courtyard) in English, as an “Assembly Hall.” While at the same time, the Greek terms

¹⁰ The presence of an image of Adam and Eve, and a scene from the story of David and Goliath provide strong evidence of the importance of the Hebrew Bible to Durene Christians. The artwork in the Baptistery of the Christian temple does include images that are clearly from Christian gospels and the Hebrew Bible/Septuagint.

naos and *pronaos* were generally applied by Yale to indicate the central room or chamber of a building dedicated to ritual practice (a “temple” in this work’s parlance) and the *pronaos*, an antechamber to this room. The term “sacristies” was also used in Yale’s reports and how this differs categorically from a chapel in the literature is not clear to me.¹¹

In the interest of clarity, I will demur here to simplicity when discussing the interiors of any religious edifices: I will offer plan views of any building being discussed and refer to the rooms by their number or letter assignment on those plans and provide as much description as to their function as evidence allows. When rooms have been given specific or proper names, like the baptistery in the Christian temple, I will make it clear that these appellations are common use based on Yale’s interpretations. I will elide for both myself and the reader any attempt to determine which rooms are chapels, sacristies, *naos*, *pronaos*, etc. since the terms themselves are collected from multiple cultures and disciplines, conflating and confusing descriptions at times rather than offering advantage or precision.

In short, in the following chapter I will prize thick description and visual representation over categorization or classification.

¹¹ In *Preliminary Report VII/VIII*, while discussing the layout of the temple to Adonis (135-9), it appears sacristy is used with its modern/traditional connotation as a room or vestibule for the keeping of sacred instrument and clothing (although the rooms called such are acknowledged to have possessed no artifacts to suggest such a use). “Chapel” is still a bit more ambiguous used for spaces as varied as the Baptistery in the Christian temple, as well as shrine like niches in the temple to Adonis (Pre. Rep. 7/8: 135-9; PI IV,1), which were each uniquely numbered and yet it was also acknowledged that their “precise utility is not apparent” (142).

CHAPTER 5

RENOVATIONS AND REVELATIONS

The fundamental persuasion is that Christianity appeared unexpectedly in human history, that it was (is) at core a brand new vision of human existence, and that, since this is so, only a startling moment could account for its emergence at the beginning. The code word serving as a sign for the novelty that appeared is the term unique (meaning singular, incomparable, without analogue).

For the originary event the word is transformation (rupture, breakthrough, inversion, reversal, eschatological). (Mack 1988b:4)

What is required is an end to the imposition of the extra-historical categories of uniqueness and the “Wholly Other” upon historical data and the tasks of historical understanding. From an historian’s point of view, to cite Toynbee [1934-61: vol. 12, 11], ‘This word “unique” is a negative term signifying what is mentally incomprehensible.’ What is required is the development of a discourse of ‘difference,’ a complex term which invites negotiation, classification and comparison, and at the same time, avoids too easy a discourse of the ‘same’. It is after all, the attempt to block the latter that gives the Christian apologetic language of the ‘unique’ its urgency. (Smith 1990:42)

In Chapter Three the use of several temples in Europos by a mix of citizens and soldiers, men and women, Roman and non-, was discussed. The goal of that discussion was to show how the archaeological data available from Europos old and new, can be used to deconstruct old narratives about the city and its religions, and establish new ones. New narratives based on reexamining earlier interpretation and innovating them with recent archaeological and historical data less intertwined with the epistemological and even financial motivations of the original excavators.

In this chapter I will bring these same evidentiary sources to bear on the Christian community at Europos. While there is a vast, if inconsistent and contested, historical record regarding early Christianity, much of the exegesis of early Christian writing suffers from a conflation of the terms ‘unique’ and ‘distinct’; that is, Christianity is oft posited as a ‘unique’ religious event described as autochthonic, self-generated, and borrowing from no other religions

but Judaism (which it simultaneously repudiates by accusing its followers of not recognizing that its own prophecies have been fulfilled). But some modern scholars have deconstructed this notion of the uniqueness of Christianity, and instead, recognizing the distinct differences and also similarities between the many religions of the Roman Empire, they have posited a more fruitful line of questioning regarding early Christians (Smith 1990): “In what ways is early Christianity similar to and different from other contemporary religions in Antiquity?”

Jonathan Z. Smith’s *Drudgery Divine* (1990) is a study of the effect of “covert apologetics agendas” in comparative religion studies. Smith focuses on comparing early Christianities with other Mediterranean religions of Antiquity and reveals that much of the research on early Christianity is epistemologically intertwined between an underlying Protestant-Catholic polemic. One of the major thrusts of his work is that comparison of early Christianity to other contemporary religious practices in antiquity has long suffered from the problems of uniqueness or sameness. On the one hand, apologetics hold that Christianity is a unique religion in its time and place and largely incomparable with other religions of the same period. On the other are efforts to suggest that Christianity is nothing more than another dying-and-rising deity (Frazer 1935) common to the region and period (cf. Adonis, Dionysus, Osiris, Attis etc.) (Loisy 1911-2: 51; as cited by Smith 1990: 42). Smith and Mack (1988) both hold that if Christianity is defined as just another reiteration of a religious type in Antiquity, such a claim “has swallowed up the differences that would render a chain of comparisons interesting” (1990: 43). Similarly, the apologetic argument of ‘uniqueness’ is problematic in that it assumes a singular practice of Christianity that differs so completely from other religions that it can only be understood through its own history, a history which is largely a modern polemic searching for an original or ‘true’ Christian practice. Such a search for origins teeters between finding a pre-Constantinian practice untainted by the pomp and

popery of the religion's fourth-century imperial evolution (the largely Protestant argument) and the notion that Christianity was saved by its infighting and heresies by its codification and canonization when it became synonymous with the Roman Empire (the general Catholic argument).

The historical contest that occupies much of Smith's work is not the focus of this work but his claim that Christianity can and should be compared to contemporary religious practices through a "discourse" of difference, is a cornerstone for this work.

In the case of the study of religion, as in any disciplined inquiry, comparison in its strongest form, brings differences together within a space in the scholar's mind for the scholar's own intellectual reasons. It is the scholar that makes their cohabitation – their sameness – possible, not 'natural' affinities or processes of history. (Smith 1990: 51)

For Smith, comparison is never dyadic "but always triadic" (51) and in this work, the third term is the necessary historical and geographic context, Europos' final decades in the eastern Empire. The comparative work is engaged is not to find a common thread between early Christian practices throughout the Mediterranean in the third century but rather, the commonalities of a local Christian community at Europos with other religious communities there.

Architecture, art, artifacts and archives; these four sources, their limitations and opportunities for interpreting daily life at Europos, were discussed in Chapter Two. In Chapter Three, it was shown that combining these sources carefully and assiduously with appropriate caveats allows for necessary reinterpretations of the use of certain ritual spaces in Europos. The temple to Azzanathkona, previously assumed claimed by the military exclusively after the Roman army moved into the northern half of the city in the early third-century, was shown to have been left largely intact for ritual use with only a small portion of the sanctuary used by military scribes. The *Dux Ripae* (river general) was shown to be a likely short-lived position at Europos and the palace attributed to this military leader shown to be more likely a much longer-standing

monumental civil structure that brought together civilian and military leaders as well as regional VIPs and diplomat-types in the city. The Mithraeum and *Dolicheneum*, long thought to be ritual spaces exclusive to the military, have been shown historically to possess much wider appeal than simply soldiers, as had been assumed in the past, with no evidence that at Europos things were different.

This chapter's analysis of the Christian population at Europos will largely focus on a very short time period in the City's history, the city's last 25 years or so from approximately 230 CE until the city's fall to Persia in 256/7 CE. This last quarter-century of the city's life is not only the period in which the Christian population grew large enough (and we must assume wealthy enough) to acquire and renovate a house into a temple, but also, this is a period when several other local religious communities made extensive renovations, additions, and improvements to their ritual spaces.

I. Architecture

Low Rent and High Expenses

As Carl Kraeling noted in his *Final Report on the Christian Building*,

The zone immediately inside the city wall was the most poorly ventilated and the one where the nuisances of flies and of the accumulation both of refuse and of wind-borne sand were the greatest. (Fin. Rep. 8.2: 36)

That is, for the lack of a better term, the land closest to the near kilometer-long city wall and Palmyrene Gate was a low-rent district of sorts which was not only home to the cult of Christ but also where the Jewish Synagogue was located, on the block closest to the wall. Kraeling also surmises these were some of the last sections of the city to be built along the city's orthogonal plan and that construction in these previously empty or minimally developed areas of the city increased as the number of Roman soldiers increased after 168 CE (Fin. Rep. 8.2: 3, 36-8). That Judaism and Christianity were ostensibly monotheistic religions that did not recognize the Greek, Roman, Persian and Syrian gods that dominated the city, and that each had a long-troubled history with imperial acceptance by the third century, provide argument that it wouldn't be unreasonable to suggest these outsider religions were nudged to the least desirable parts of the city. However, (Dirven 2004:5) has suggested another possible explanation.¹

[A] period of intensive rebuilding took place shortly after 209-216 CE. At this time the northern half of the city was confiscated by the Roman army and was turned into a military camp. This not only led to major alterations in the northern quarter itself, but also caused many changes in the remainder of the city, since residents from the northern quarter were forced to settle here. The fact that the synagogue, the Christian cult building and the Mithraeum were all enlarged and redecorated around 240 CE is indeed a remarkable coincidence and testifies to an increased popularity of the three cults.

¹ The earliest papyri attributed to the Roman military at Europos is dated to 208 CE (P. Dura 56). Along with considerable archaeological and other textual evidence (inscriptions, graffiti, paintings, etc.) the major effort to segregate the northern third of the city from the rest of the town for a military camp is assumed to have taken place in the first two decades of the third-century.

Elsner (2001) has suggested that the renovations of these three temples (Synagogue, Mithraeum, and Christian) may represent attempts by each of these congregations to signify to the other their growing presence, and that a rather “single-minded focus (even by a Roman military tribune) on local gods might imply a certain provincial disdain for the center” (299). Dirven (2004) rejects notions of religious competition being a major influence in these expansions and points out, as we have already, the local and familial aspects of religion at Europos, “[religion] was not competitive. People worshipped the gods of their family and the city gods” (19).

Perhaps the expansion of the Synagogue and the ostentatious decoration (for a Synagogue) added to it during its final renovation around 244/5 CE was a case of Jews in Europos feeling it necessary to reaffirm their presence in the city as the Roman Garrison grew, or, perhaps as many in Europos had, they benefitted economically by the presence of thousands of soldiers and poured some of this wealth into the Synagogue (or perhaps both explanations are in part accurate). Whichever, they were moved to do so around the same time the Mithraeum was expanded and renovated, and the formerly domestic space near Tower 17 was renovated into a Christian temple. The population of the city, and the population of these cults grew together.

As for the renovation of the Christian building, some architectural details were offered in the Introduction to this work. It was initially used as a private residence and constructed ca. 232 CE and likely converted to strictly cultic use in the beginning half of the next decade (ca. 240-5) (Fin. Rep. 8.2: 38-9). It sat on the corner of a typical residential block along the city’s western wall under a Roman guard tower. Architecturally it was an amalgam of local, Parthian and Hellenistic elements (Baird 2006: 90), and followed the model of a typical Durene household, comprised of a non-descript central open-air courtyard with several rooms of different size and function leading off it (figure 49). At some point ca. 240 extensive renovations took place

including the construction of a windowless room with extensive murals and colonnaded basin, and a large assembly hall capable of holding approximately 75 people comfortably (figure 50).

What follows are descriptions of the renovation work done at the Christian temple per Yale (Fin. Rep. 8.2) along with some estimates of how much labor and materials would likely have been involved. The primary reason for providing these data is to argue against any notion that the Christian temple was secreted away in Europos or that the Christian community there worshipped covertly. Some researchers (Silver 2010) do not hold such interpretations, nor did Hopkins himself, “Obviously, when these changes were made there was no longer any attempt to conceal the fact that it was the meeting place of Christians” (Pre. Rep. 5: 247).

The same cannot be said of all Europos researchers. MFSED Director, Prof. Pierre Leriche has rejected this hypothesis (Pers. comm. 2010); a classics professor from Italy who joined the MFSED team in 2010 when I was there also lectured me (in the metaphoric not academic sense) to, “Listen to your professor,” and then offered several arguments against a tolerated Christian community at Europos drawn from the received wisdom of theologians and early Christian texts and letters.² If the hypothesis that Christians practiced openly was only being rejected by older classicists in the academe, I would likely not strive to make such a strong case for it, however, this received wisdom of a secreted house church, despite not being the opinion of the original excavators, still influences research and the re-presentations of Europos to the public today. A recent example of the tension can be seen in a brief quote in *Archaeology* (2010), where two well-respected modern researchers still show some disagreement on the topic.

The Christian building is located “right underneath one of the wall towers,” says [Simon] James. “Clearly, the garrison knew these guys were there,” he says. “The implications, such as we have, are of a sort of multi-ethnic complex society.” However, [Lisa] Brody

² While I do have a record of this conversation in my journal from my time at Europos in 2010, I neglected to write down the name of the professor, likely as a result of my hearing being damaged, she spoke English heavily accented, and so did Leriche who introduced her to me.

says that “the evidence suggests that that was [more of an] underground religious community.” Their place of worship “was a house converted into a meeting-place,” she adds, indicating that “the Christian community was still, at that time, persecuted.”

Simon James’ work has already been cited numerous times in this work. Dr. Lisa Brody is the Associate Curator of Ancient Art at Yale and her supervision of the Europos archives is unparalleled in my estimation. But it is impossible for any single researcher to be aware of every detail in the Preliminary Reports and all the literature pertaining to religious practice at Europos over the last 75-plus years. With the following data, I will make clear the extraordinary difficulty that would have been presented to the Christian community at Europos if they had wished to remain secreted away.

In the list below of major architectural changes to the Christian temple from its origins as a domestic space, room numbers and descriptions refer to the two plan maps (figures 49 and 50) that precede the discussion of said changes, one which shows a plan of the temple as it was originally constructed (figure 1) and the other after its conversion to ritual space (figure 50).

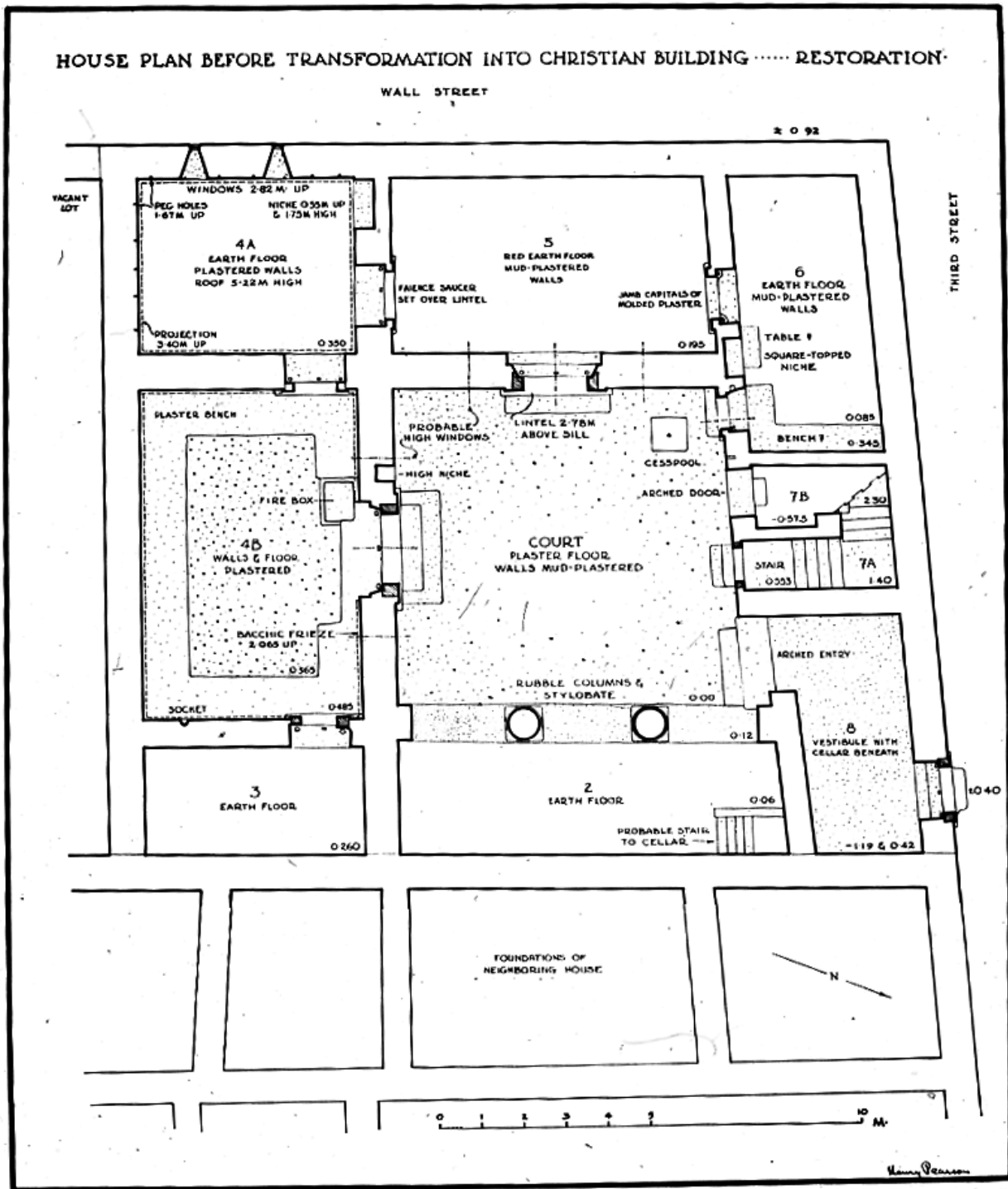


Figure 50: Plan view of the original home converted into a Christian temple.

Detailed List of Renovations from Private Residence to Christian Ritual Space³

Beginning with the Courtyard, Room 1 on Yale's plans (figures 49 and 50) and working clockwise (Room 2 at the bottom/6 o'clock, and so on) the following is a list of renovations highlighting those with both the most evidence and the most investment in labor and materials.

- In the Courtyard of the building, Room 1, a formerly rammed earth and dry plaster floor was tiled (laid on a bed of cinders over the original earthen floor). Each tile was approximately 7cm thick and 20cm square, covering an area of almost 60 m². Kraeling lists the thickness of the floor, the size of the tiles, the area of the courtyard, but not the type of material the tiles are made from. However, it is safe to assume they would weigh somewhere between that of gravel spread the same thickness as the tiles across the courtyard, and concrete spread across the courtyard. Therefore, the renovation used somewhere between 5,000 and 10,000 kilograms of tiles.⁴
- The tiling in the Courtyard covered the "cesspool", that is, it capped and sealed a former 3.2-meter-deep plastered "bottle shaped" hole which had a fitted gypsum slab (12). While many homes in Europos had features like this, Baird raises the possibility that they may be either cesspools or possibly cisterns, Yale's excavations did not provide enough data to make a definitive claim one way or the other (Baird 2006: 126-8). However, she did note that such features in the center of home may have been some sort of cistern but those in more discrete locations may have served as some sort of latrine/cesspool. The feature in the courtyard here is not in the center but in the Northwest corner of the courtyard just outside Room 6 (which would be converted into a Baptistery) but during the buildings original use as a domestic space it is not clear what purpose Room 6 served though Kraeling suggested, "Conceivably it served, under the supervision of the women, to store what was needed for the practical purposes of housekeeping and at the same time provided living quarters for the slave or slaves that performed the menial duties" (23). He offered this interpretation given the size, irregular shape and lack of light or ventilation that this room possessed, as well as its proximity to the cesspool.
- The addition of "plastered rubble (11)" benches inside the courtyard approximately 0.5m wide and 0.42cm high running along the western walls of the courtyard for some 15 meters (11-12). Using the same weights to estimate the weight of tiles (*see* fn. 19 below) some four to eight thousand kilos of plaster and rubble would have been required to construct the benches.

³ All data Kraeling: Fin. Rep. 8.2 except where noted.

⁴ Weights for gravel and concrete per cubic yard are easily obtained through commercial landscaping and construction estimates of 2,400 lbs. – 2,900 lbs./cubic yard for gravel and, for concrete, one cubic yard weighs about 4,000 lbs. Converting to metric and estimating the volume at .07cm x 8.55m x 7.7m (the dimensions of the courtyard and thickness of tiles in Fin. Rep. 8.2: 11), we wind up with a range of weight for the tiles as noted above, between five and ten thousand kilograms.

- The removal of an interior wall (between Rooms 4a and 4b on Figure 49) to combine two smaller rooms into one larger room (Room 4 in Figure 50). The former “diwan” (Room 4a) and Room 4b were filled with approximately 7.5 cubic meters of dirt to raise the original floor level above the height of the benches that had skirted the walls of the diwan in the original layout (Room 4a “bench”). One cubic yard of aggregate, sand, or dirt is equivalent to 1.5 tons.⁵ Close to 7,000 kilograms of sand and dirt would have been required to raise the floor.
- And lastly, like the benches in the courtyard, Kraeling showed (through an analysis of the stratigraphy of debris layered in Wall Street), that an exterior bench along the exterior of the northern wall was also installed during the renovation. Benches along the exterior of buildings in Europos are not uncommon. The benches here likely represent not only the growing size of the Christian community, but also some effort to “fit-in”, to acculturate and also suggest no concern about Durenes gathering and socializing outside their ritual space (or congregating there themselves). Like the courtyard additions, the bench along the exterior of the building would also have been built in clear view of any soldiers stationed near or in Tower 17.

Numerous other architectural changes were made, some of which will be addressed later in this chapter, but these major modifications were chosen to show just how much labor and materials went into the structural renovations of the building. Literally tens of thousands of kilos of plaster, rubble, tiles and sand were acquired and used in these renovations. Along with all the attendant laborers, tools, preparation, etc., which would have been in use throughout the building over some time. Much of the work, especially that in the courtyard and outside the building, was in plain view of any soldiers posted to Tower 17, a structure so close and so tall (almost 20 meters), it literally cast a shadow over the temple every sunrise.

This place was not hidden, it was surveilled.

⁵ <https://www.soildirect.com/calculator/cubic-yard-calculator/> Accessed 9/19/18

Basins, Baths and Baptisms

With few exceptions, the temples in Dura follow a courtyard plan of Mesopotamian type and are not visible from the street. The private character of the Christian building and synagogue is therefore consistent with the architectural practice of the greater community of which these cults are part. (Dirven 2004:4)

In the previous section I reviewed major architectural changes to the Courtyard (figures 49 and 50, room 1), the Assembly Hall (rooms 4a and 4b combined into room 4) and the addition of benches to the exterior to the building, a practice common in Europos. In this section we will focus on Room 6, the baptistery, perhaps the most ‘unique’ thing about the Christian temple. While baptism, or ritual purification with water in general, is not entirely unique to Christian practice, baptism did and has served as the major initiation rite for Christians and a Durene version of the rite took place in this room. This room also contained extensive artwork (the oldest extant combination of Christian and Jewish religious imagery in the same room known archaeologically), a mural program undoubtedly relevant to the initiation ritual. We will take up that aspect of the room further below. Instead, I would like to draw attention to the baptismal font and the aedicula in which it was fabricated.

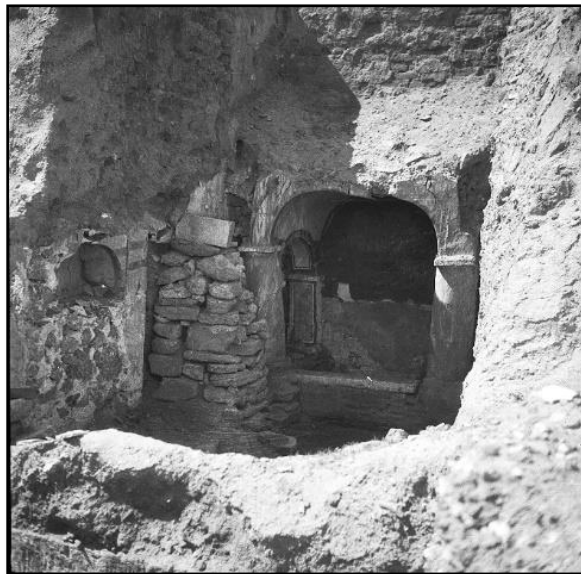


Figure 52: Excavation of Baptistry (room 6) by Yale in 1932.

In Chapter Two, while discussing the rate at which excavations took place at Europos, a series of images similar to figure 51 (above) were provided.

Those photographs of the baptistery, taken during several days of excavation, were used to illustrate the speed at which the baptistery was cleared of fill. Once cleared, the aedicula, that is the colonnaded arch and font that sat within the room, was extensively photographed, measured, and sketched before being cut and pulled out of the ground and shipped back to the US. There, the font went on display at the Yale Art Gallery Museum and appeared as it does in figure 52.

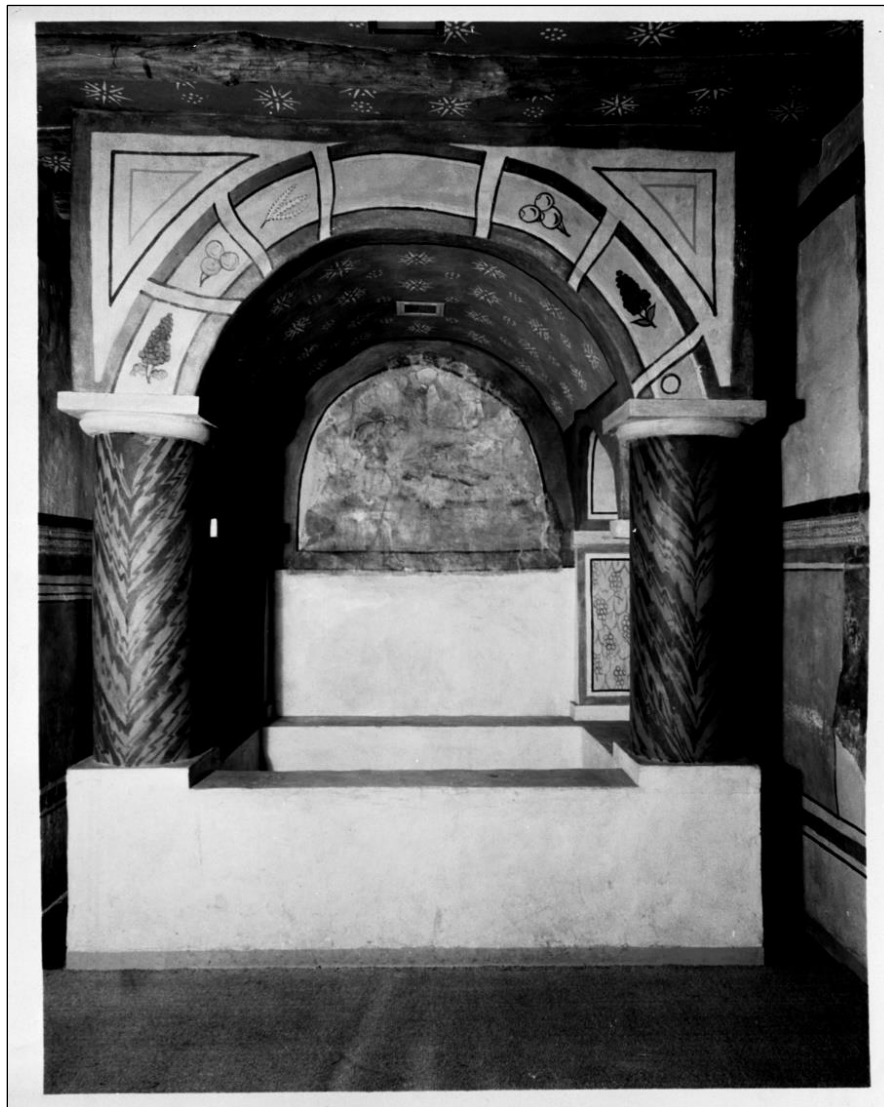


Figure 53: Baptismal font as restored at the Yale Art Gallery Museum.

While baptism was a particular initiation rite to Christians, colonnaded arches, fonts, and decorated aedicula like this one, were not. Two blocks away, in the Jewish Synagogue, we find another well preserved aedicula, raised above the floor with decorated columns and arch, but rather than a baptismal font, Yale identified this as a Torah Shrine (figures 53 – 55).

Another shrine in the style of an aedicula was found preserved in the Mithraeum (figures 56 - 58). All three of these aediculae (Christian, Jewish and Mithraic) were installed into or along the western (rear) wall of each of these edifices.



Figure 54: Aedicula in the Synagogue after being fully excavated by Yale.

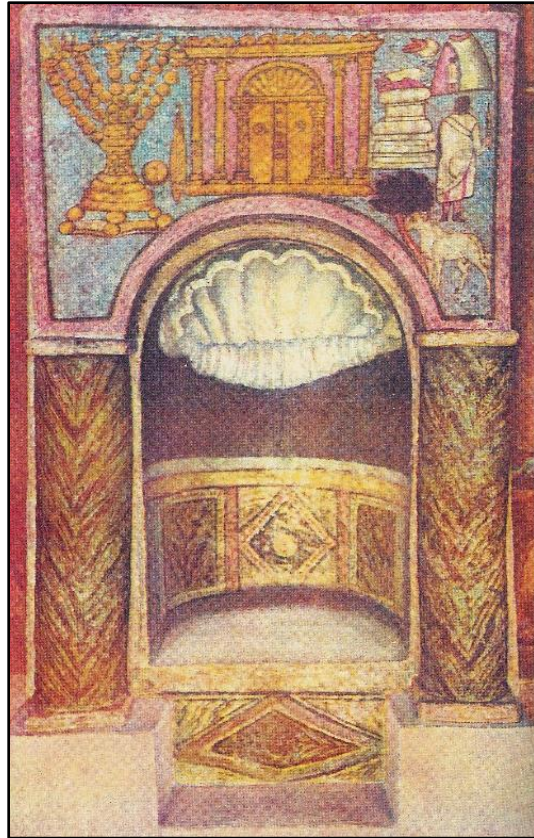


Figure 55: Torah Shrine aedicula as restored at the National Museum of Damascus.



Figure 56: Synagogue assembly room as restored and recreated at the National Museum of Damascus. Note the benches running along the walls similar to the courtyard of the Christian temple.



Figure 57: Excavation of the aedicula in the Mithraeum.



Figure 58: Aedicula in final phase of the Mithraeum in situ and fully excavated by Yale.



Figure 59: Mithraeum aedicula as reconstructed and displayed at the Yale University Art Gallery, 2017.

Each of these three aedicula⁶ are the central focus of a room full of painted murals, crowded with imagery related to the religious beliefs and stories of the community. In addition to the Mithraeum, Synagogue and Christian temple, Bossard-Couronne (2012: 68-70) counted another 14 colonnaded and 6 “niche” style aediculae⁷ in the 13 temples she examined in her dissertation.⁸ She also determined that aediculae at Europos are absent from most public and domestic buildings (2012: 68). Unless one proposes that Christians in Europos came to use this Greco-Roman style shrine out of some sort of extraordinarily coincidental, independent innovation, rather than recognition and repetition of a regional and local conception of worship, it is difficult to suggest

⁶ “Aedicula” is the Latin word used to describe small shrines in homes or temples, usually colonnaded and arched or with lintel. In Greek, *naiskoi* (little *naos*) served similar function with similar design, usually lacking columns, but still presenting a canopied shrine, often in a funerary context.

⁷ “Niche” aediculae are similar to the Mithraeum’s aedicula, lacking the faux-columns of plaster and rubble as we see in the Christian temple and Synagogue examples above in figures 51 - 55. Bossard-Couronne developed a typology of altar types for Europos which we will examine in detail below.

⁸ Bossard-Couronne (2012) did not include any monotheistic or post-Roman occupation constructed temples in her dissertation and so did not include in her count the Mithraeum, Synagogue or Christian temple.

that Durene Christians were not influenced by, if not actual congregants of, other temples in the city. Consider the Synagogue and Christian temple aediculae's columns (figures 11- 14).

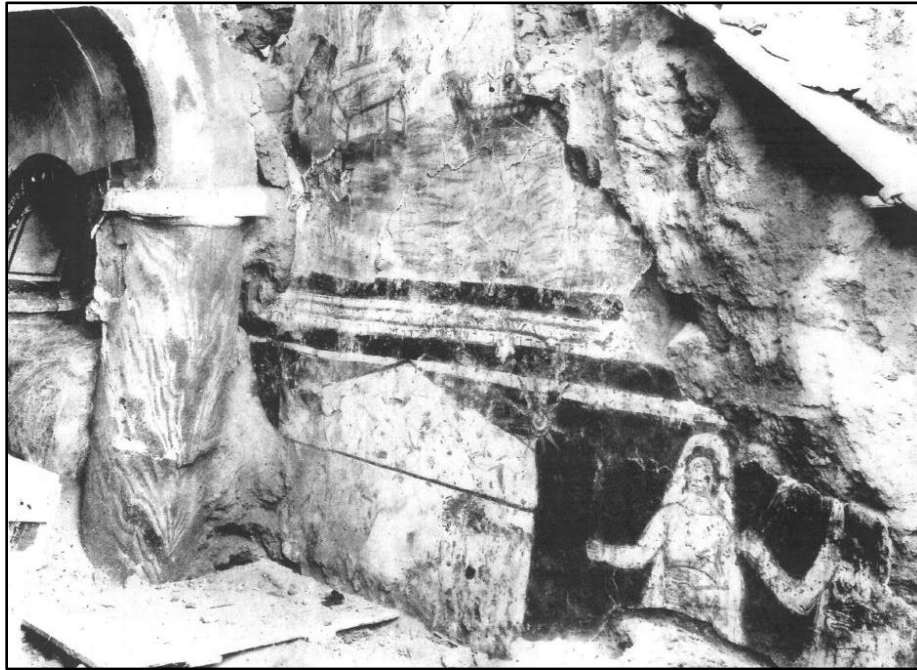


Figure 60: Northern wall and aedicula column from Baptistry (room 6) as excavated by Yale.



Figure 61: Reproduction of same view with original murals as installed at YUAG



Figure 62: Aedicula in the Synagogue (Torah Shrine) in situ as excavated by Yale.



Figure 63: Aedicula in the Synagogue as restored and installed in the National Museum of Damascus (Image: National Museum of Damascus).

Admittedly, reproduced in print, some of the above images may be difficult to see clearly. Figures 59 and 61 were photographs taken during Yale's excavation. Figures 60 and 62 are photos taken of the Christian and Jewish aediculae as they were restored and installed at the Yale University Art Gallery Museum (YUAG) and the National Museum of Damascus, respectively. Obviously, for comparative purposes, it is better practice to use images taken during the excavation process and not photos of these shrines as restored and reproduced installments in the Museums of Damascus and Yale. It is clear from photos that some poetic license was taken with the restoration and reconstructions of the 1930s. However, including the restoration photos with the original excavation photos, can offer some evidence of the degree of said poetic license.

With some effort, one should see that along the columns in both aediculae, there is decoration, a series of blended, downward-pointing carats or "v"s is clearly similar in both. Both sets of columns are made of rubble and plaster and the decoration is meant to suggest marbling. When describing the baptismal font, Kraeling notes the colors of the columns:

Irregular dark green and black lines, representing veins, are applied to the columns to imitate marble. They flare diagonally upward from a line running vertically down the face of the columns, following a pattern appropriate to complementary marble slabs set alongside each other. (Fin. Rep. 8.2: 44)

Here it is also worth noting that Kraeling wrote the Final Report for the Synagogue (Fin. Rep. 8.1) several years before writing the Final Report for the Christian Temple (Fin. Rep. 8.2). In a footnote to the above quote, Kraeling adds, "The same design appears on the columns of the Torah Shrine in the Dura Synagogue. See Final Report, VIII, 1, PL LI" (Fin. Rep. 8.2: 44, fn. 3). When one reads his description of the Synagogue aedicula columns, one discovers not just the design, but the color scheme is noteworthy: "green and dark green veining applied to the columns of the façade to produce *V*'s quite in the manner of the intermediate panels in the wainscot and the design on the step" (Fin. Rep. 8.1: 55). The wainscot and step he refers to are decorated panels

around, and stairs leading to, the Torah Shrine, and they too possess the same coloring and marbling decoration. Bossard-Couronné (2012) noted any decorations on the colonnaded aediculae she included in her analysis of the 13 pre-Roman, polytheistic ritual spaces at Europos. She mentions only one column that was decorated, from the temple to Gadde (2012: 69). Those columns were described by Yale thusly: “The colonnettes were green with oblique black veining” (Pre. Rep. VII/VIII: 253).⁹

More curious than the similarity in color and description is the likelihood that the final phase of the temple to Gadde was built in the second half of the second century (Pre. Rep. VII/VIII), the period when Roman military began showing up at Europos and the city shifted hands from Persia to the Roman Empire. The aedicula in the temple to Gadde likely stood for 50-100 years before either the Christian temple or the Synagogue were renovated and their aediculae added to the buildings.

The same design and colors were used on the only aediculae columns showing any painted decoration uncovered in the city. Their being built decades apart either suggests continuity or curious coincidence. If not coincidence then what little evidence we do have regarding the use of aediculae in Europos suggests at least one known Durene style of green-decorated, faux-marble, rubble and plaster colonnaded aediculae exists in Europos. Such a common style over time and in multiple temples suggests local style and mutual recognition (individuals and/or workshops/laborers familiar with the style) and thus interaction by the Christian community with Jews or laborers in the city who possessed a regional logic and knowledge – techniques – of sacred architecture and art.

⁹ Probably Brown. *Preliminary Reports* had multiple authors and attribution for each section is not always clear.

In one of the most recent analyses of the artwork of the Christian Building (Peppard 2016), the words “column,” “font,” and “aedicula(e)” are not listed in the index. Peppard, a theologian, focuses on the painted murals in the Christian baptistery to arrive at an initiation rite not entirely linked to birth and resurrection (a general assumption about baptism’s meaning and purpose), but a ritual with a message of healing and coming together (he proposes a strong link between baptism and a spiritual marriage into the Cult of Christ). However, like so many researchers examining early Christianity at Europos, Peppard’s comparanda for making the interpretation are by and large, other Christianities across time and space. The architecture in the room and its similarity to other temples in the city are not addressed. Instead, in the room’s artwork, he sees marriage processions and bridal chambers. But for the painting at the back of the aedicula with the Good Shepherd and Adam and Eve, little else about the font drew his critical eye. While his interpretation of the imagery in the Baptistery is novel, it is in the small things, like the colors and designs of seemingly innocuous or mundane relevance, that we might find what was forgotten: Christians, Jews, Mithraists and other worshippers in Europos are familiar with each other’s practices and temples. While I differ with Kraeling on several interpretations, he was not unaware of the correspondences between the Christian temple’s font and its typical role in Durene religious tradition.

Against the center of the important west wall is placed the font with its arched and column supported canopy, corresponding at least as a structural motif to the Synagogue's Torah Shrine and to the aediculae of the pagan temples...Beginning at either side of this focal area and precisely in the same manner as in the pagan temples of Dura series of individual pictorial compositions, ranged in separate ascending registers, run along the lateral walls of the chamber and around its eastern end...Clearly we are dealing with a tradition of long standing that has deep local roots. (Fin. Rep. 8.2: 158)

More evidence for long standing Durene traditions is to follow, all towards the goal of revealing that the various cults of Europos mutually recognized one another due to similar and

common patterns and assumptions about ritual spaces – even if the ritual *practices* themselves, deities worshipped, and cosmological inclinations, all varied.

Along with the matching column decorations, the small, square, undecorated capitals (Fin. Rep. 8.2: 26) of each aedicula column in the Synagogue and in the Christian temple supports the placement of a tall, heavy, and wide arch and canopy. Each canopy is decorated with illustrations both frontally and underneath. Facing the neophyte, the decorated arches in the Christian temple had several images of fruit – as did the Torah Shrine.

All but one of the fruit designs could be identified. Beginning at the left they were a bunch of purple grapes, a cluster of three yellow pomegranates and a sheaf of three yellow ears of grain. Beginning at the right they comprised a single pomegranate, a bunch of grapes, a cluster of three pomegranates and a sheaf of three ears of grain ... The decorations applied to the several parts of the canopy over the font may cohere more closely and meaningfully than would appear at first glance. At Dura the fruit garland, for instance, can be seen again on the Torah Shrine of the Synagogue, (Fin. Rep. 8.2: 45)

We will look at some of the other painted decorations and illustrations much closer soon enough, but for the moment, what I am drawing attention to here is (a) the ubiquity of aediculae in Durene temples, (b) the striking similarity of style color and design between the three aediculae known to have painted columns and (c) the similarity in design and decoration techniques between the Synagogue and the Christian temple aediculae specifically. Kraeling was inclined to agree:

Concerning these conventional elements of the decoration of the Torah Shrine, two things are to be noted. The first is that the treatment of the columns and the intrados [the lower arch supporting the canopy] is virtually identical with that of the corresponding elements of the aedicula housing the font in the baptistery of the Christian Chapel at Dura and executed some 15 years earlier.¹⁰ This merely underlines what was said earlier about the conventional nature of such decorations [in Europos]. (Fin. Rep. 8.1: 55-6)

¹⁰ This comment, that the Torah Shrine was constructed 15 years before the baptismal font in the Christian temple is based on dates for the conversion of the Christian temple and the renovation Synagogue which should not be assumed to be as accurate as the Yale team assumed. *See* below for more details on dating of the Christian temple.

Dirven (2004:17), in her paper arguing against religious competition at Europos noted that during the third-century in Syria, “Christians were on speaking terms with the Jews and may have gone so far as to visit the synagogue [at Europos].”

I’m inclined to agree.

While the columns of the aediculae of the Synagogue and Christian temple bear more than a passing resemblance in style and fabrication, another part of the aedicula in the Christian temple hearkens to one of the other temples built up against the great wall, the Mithraeum. The Christian temple was not the only temple – or religion – in Europos to focus on rites involving water. While the defining event in Mithraic cosmology is Mithra’s slaying of a bull, and the sharing of that sacrifice as a cult meal long assumed to be a central part of the initiation rite into the Mysteries, another major feat of the god Mithras is the “water miracle” whereupon the god shoots an arrow (or drives a dagger or sword) into a rockface and brings forth water. Thus, along with the killing of the bull, Mithra provides food *and* drink for all who follow. Some Mithraea may have even been designed to allow water to flow through an opening in the large bas-relief image of Mithras killing the bull (a “Tauroctony”) which was central to all Mithraea (including the one at Europos).¹¹ In both the middle and final phases of the Mithraeum at Europos, basins were set into an “altar shelf,” a counter that sat under the Tauroctony.

While not nearly as large or central to initiation as the font in the Christian temple, we still see that in myth and in ritual presentation, Mithra creates a life-giving font, a mythological act materially reflected in the tools, art and architecture used and displayed in the cult’s ritual space.

¹¹ A Mithraeum in Dacia may have had an aperture in its Tauroctony in Mithras’ navel and it is suspected to have allowed water to flow from him into the ‘world’ (Clauss 2001:72-3).

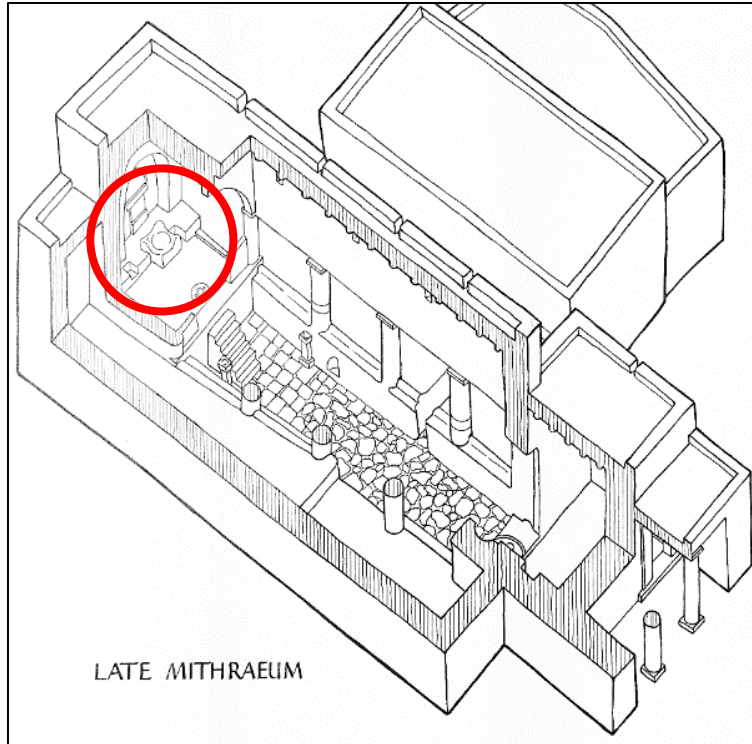


Figure 64: Late (final) phase Mithraeum with basin centered at top of stairs (see also Figure 65 below)

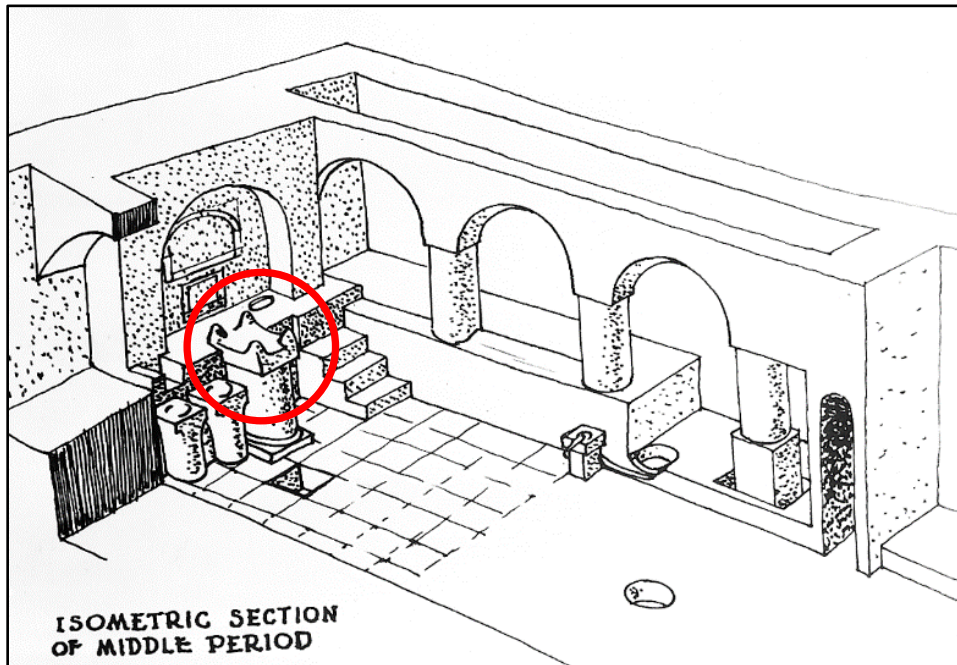


Figure 65: Isometric Drawing of Middle Phase Mithraeum with basin in altar shelf circled in red.

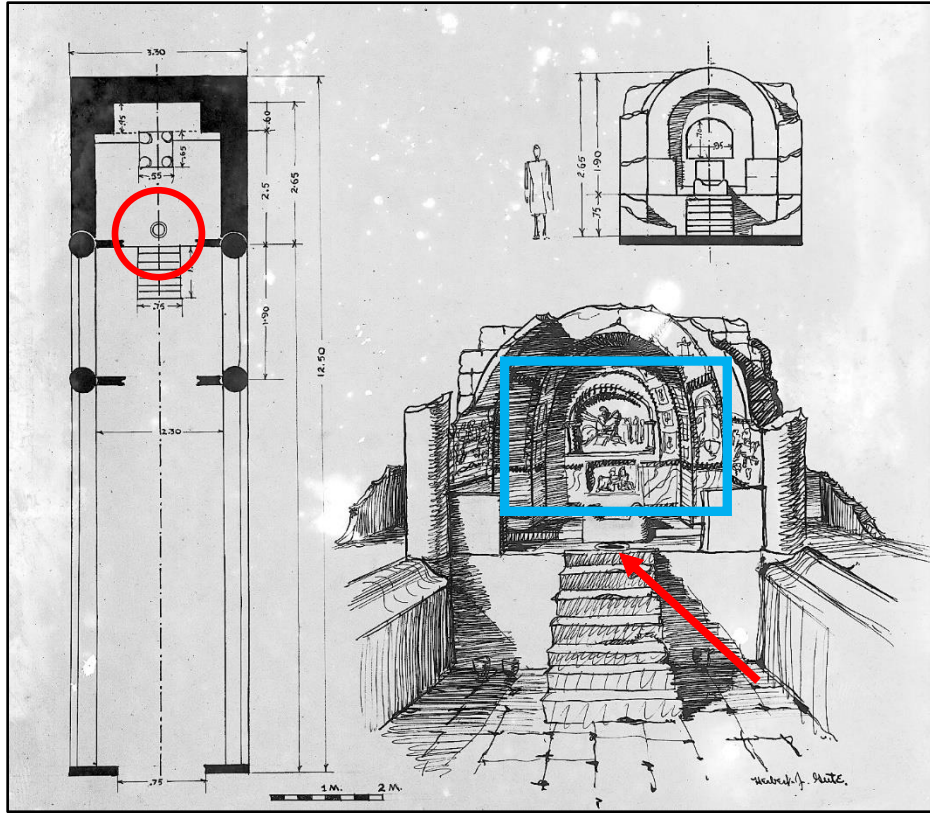


Figure 66: Architectural rendering of late/final phase Mithraeum. Plan view on left shows basin centered and at top of small stair. Arrow on right shows where basin would be encountered as an initiate in the room, or worshipper approaching the altar. Tauroctony outlined in blue square and below (figure 66).



Figure 67: The Tauroctony from the Mithraeum at Europos, removed and preserved at YUAG.

Apart from the cult-meal, the water-miracle offers the clearest parallel to Christianity, spreading through the Empire at the same period as the Mysteries of Mithra. The thinking that underlies these features of each cult is naturally rooted in the same traditions. The water-miracle is one of the wide-spread myths that originate from regions plagued by drought ... Each in his own manner, Mithras and Christ embody water, initially as a concrete necessity, and then, very soon, as a symbol ... Apart from such iconic representations, the importance of water for all manner of ritual purposes [in a Mithraeum] is revealed by the water basins and cisterns ... water-basins were clearly part of the basic equipment of all Mithraea. (Claus 2001:72–3)

Water is of course essential to the rite of baptism¹² in Christianity. The method of baptism may vary between sects: adult or infant baptism, submersion in a larger body of water versus the simpler sprinkling of a child with holy water in the sign of a cross, etc. But it always involves water. Its likely predecessor comes from the ritual act of *tvilah* in Judaism where it has been used as part of the process of conversion or to ritually purify an individual who has acted in such a way as to need purification (the handling of a corpse for example). However, its role as *a rite of initiation* into the Cult of Christ, the fundamental and necessary act of anyone wishing to join a Christian community, does appear to be unique within the ancient world. What is perhaps most intriguing about the baptismal font at Europos is that it is not a basin (in the strictest sense) but more akin to a small Roman bath, squared, stepped, flat bottomed, and a meter deep, from the top of the lip to its plastered bottom.

¹² From the Greek βαπτισμῶ/*baptismo*, to immerse, submerge.

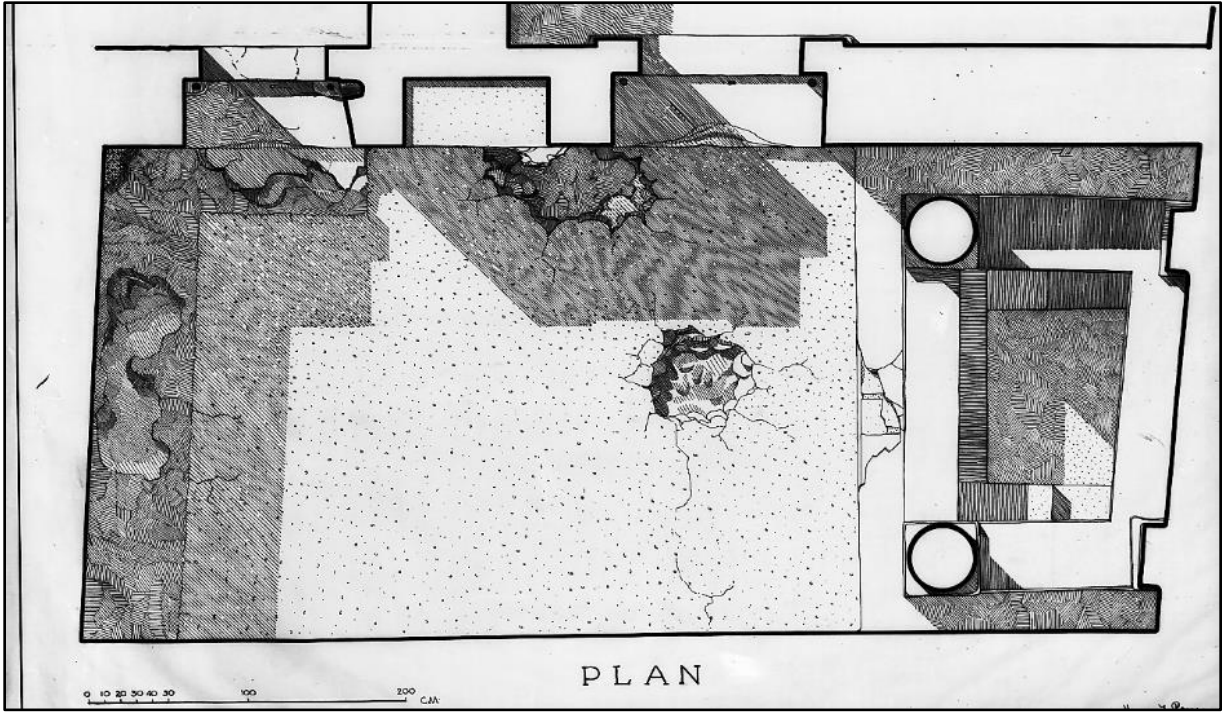


Figure 68: Plan view of Baptistry (Room 6) showing font on the right with stepped bath-like interior.

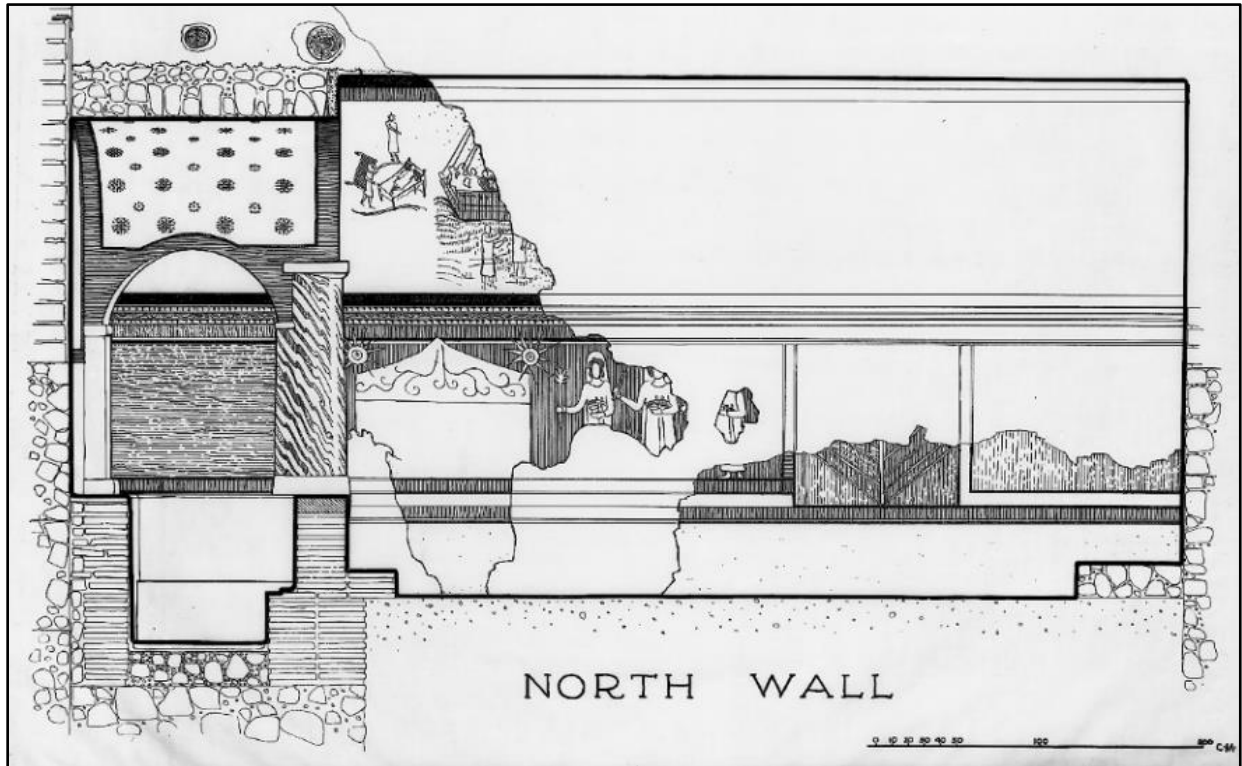


Figure 69: Cross section of Baptistry showing interior of baptismal font,

And there's a good reason for that. Kraeling (Fin. Rep. 8.2: 26) noted in his Final Report on the temple that, "the fabric of the font matches that of the basins found in the Roman baths at Dura." As for the fabrication of the baths in Europos, while discussing the three Roman Baths built in the city, Brown stated they though were, "Sharply differentiated in plan, style, materials, and methods of construction from the other buildings of the city, they exhibit remarkable homogeneity as a group" (Pre. Rep. 6: 84). These descriptions of baths and baptismal fonts from Brown and Kraeling reveal more than just similar plastering methods.

First, someone who was familiar with the standard (homogeneous) techniques used to construct Roman baths – unique to the Roman occupation of the city – was involved in the construction of the Christian font. If the fabrication method of the font is the same as the basins in the baths, and that technology is unique to the post-Roman occupation of Europos, then the technology was uncommon to most Durenes, unlike, for example, rubble and plaster colonnaded aediculae painted to look like marble which were present in many temples for decades if not centuries (Bossard-Couronné 2012). Second, one of those three Roman baths was literally around the corner from the Christian temple.

Lastly, while describing the construction of the font, Kraeling also made note of some piping running under "Third Street," parallel to the Christian temple's northern wall (the vertical dotted line in between blocks below in figures 69 and 70), leading to a drainage sump underground at the intersection of Third Street and Wall Street where the Christian temple sat (the sump is circled in blue in figures 69 and 70 below).

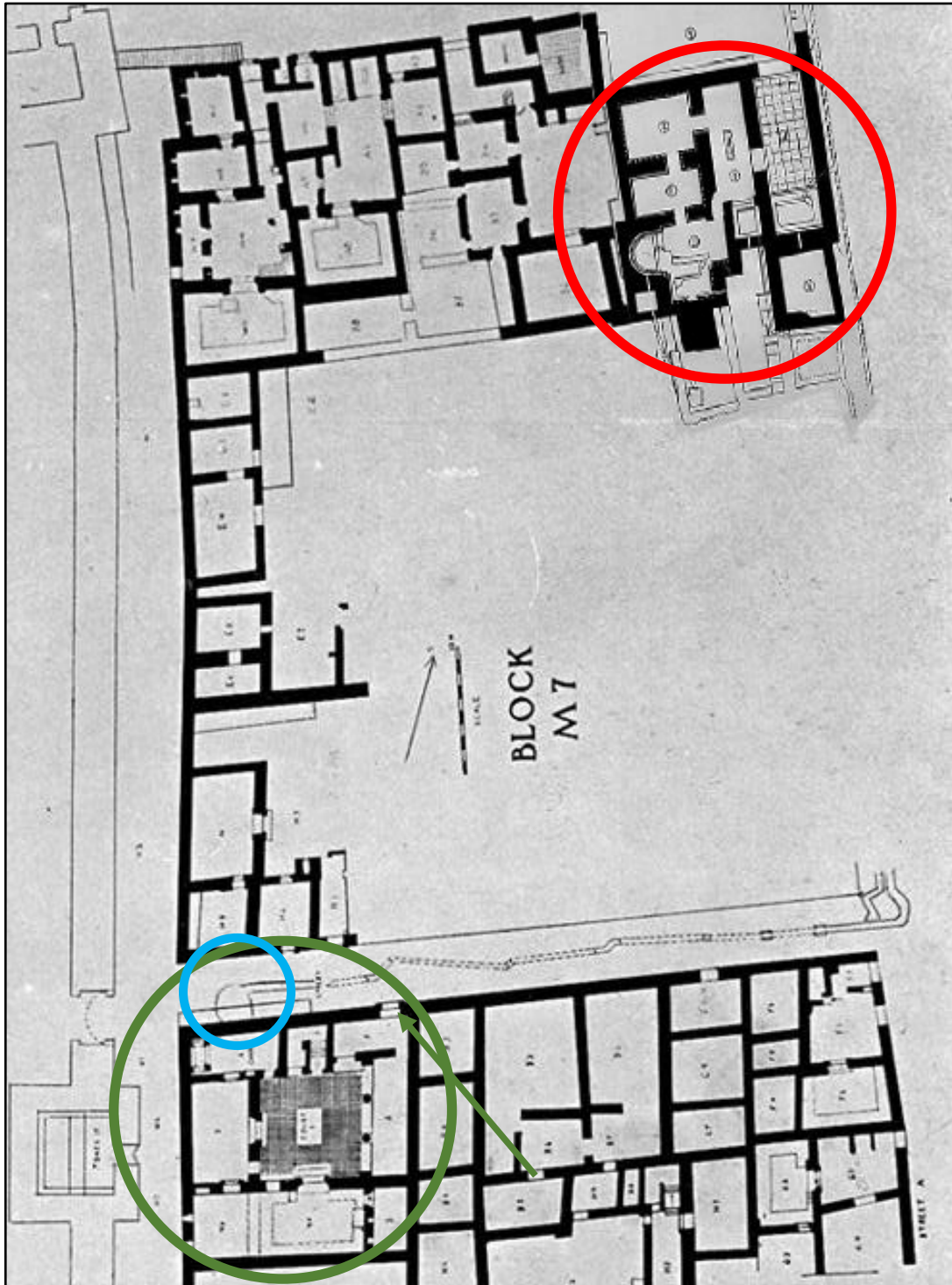


Figure 70: Map of northern side of block M8, with the Christian temple circled in green, and block M7 with Roman Bath circled in Red. The walking distance from the entrance to the temple to the bath (green arrow), eastward down Street 3 (with dotted line showing remnants of drainage system from the bath) and then north along A Street to the bath is a little over 100 meters.

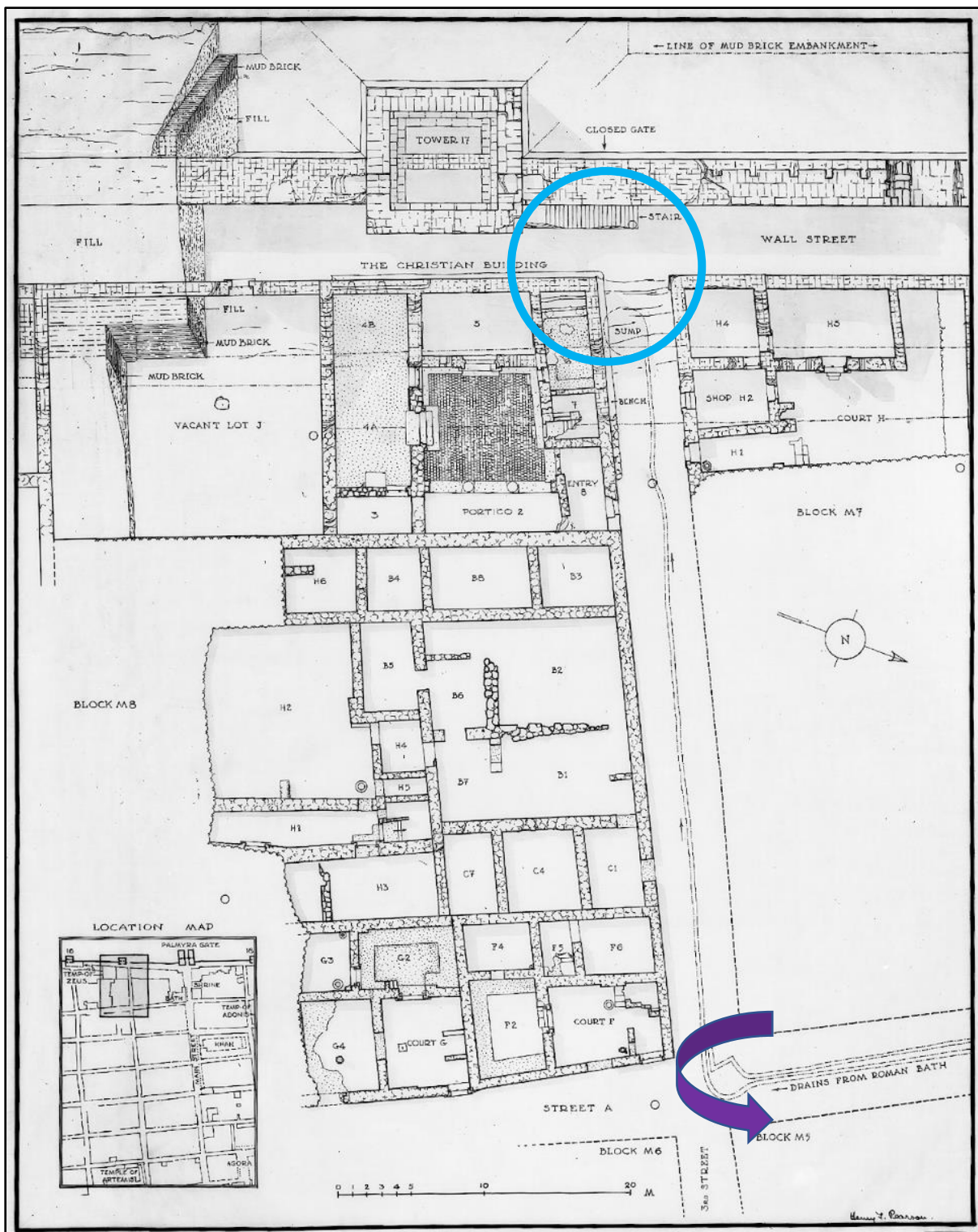


Figure 71: Map of blocks M7 and M8 showing location of original sump, as well as location at intersection of A and Third Streets where the drainage routed was reversed (purple semi-circle) and sent back down A Street, northwards to Main Street and then westward out the main Palmyra Gate.

In fact, at some point the bath's drainage was rerouted at the corner of A and Third Street (marked with purple above in figure 70) and sent northward back to Main Street where the drain pipes then headed westward and, Brown assumed (Pre. Rep. VI: 88-90), outside of the city's main gate.¹³ The bath was built at some point between 210 and 215 CE (Fin. Rep.: 37; Pre. Rep. VI: 104) along with many other Roman military construction projects. The house that would become the Christian temple was likely constructed around 232/3 CE.¹⁴ As Wall Street was one of the least desirable parts of the city to live near, it was still underdeveloped when the Roman military construction projects began in earnest during the early third century. Draining the new bath to Wall Street would not likely have been a problem between 210 and 215 CE. However, Kraeling surmises that around 230 CE, when construction on what would become the Christian temple began,

... the trenches for the foundations of the Private House [the Christian temple] were dug [and] they were immediately flooded by water from the drain and the sump. There could be no more obvious reason for the reversal of the drainage system than the complaint of the owner of the property on which the Private House was erected. (Fin. Rep. 8.2: 37)

While Kraeling elides what I consider to be other possibilities, such as the military owned, rented, or otherwise occupied and was developing property in blocks M7 and M8 and may have had their own vested interest in rerouting the sump out of the city, Kraeling does support an argument made in Chapter Four. I argued against Pollard's (1996) description of Europos as a "Total Institution" (Goffman 1962) where soldiers lived lives largely segregated from the civilian population. I would return to that argument again here. According to Kraeling, the original owner or builder of the home that would become the temple was able to persuade those who ran the bath

¹³ Brown (Pre. Rep. VI: 89) and Hopkins (Pre. Rep. VI:88-90, 178-9) only describes the drain as being followed southward down Main Street and gives no indication excavators followed the drain out the main gate. However, given that if the drain didn't exit the city, a sump would have established itself on Main Street in the very first dozen meters or so east of the Main Gate. Hardly ideal or acceptable.

¹⁴ For details on dating the construction and renovation of the Christian temple *see* below.

(likely Roman soldiers or those attached to the garrison in some support capacity) to redirect their drainage system; and not just redirect their drainage system, but to invest in laying it under Main Street and the main Palmyra Gate. Several years later, the occupants of the same building, in the process of converting the windowless small Room 6 into the baptistery, employed the same techniques used in Roman baths to build their font. Kraeling (Fin. Rep. 8.2: 36-7), writing about development in the city as the Roman garrison grew during the first half of the third century, notes,

Houses in the non-restricted part of the city were being expropriated or rented for the use of military supply officers, as in the case of the House of the Scribes in Block L7, or gave way to such installations as Roman Baths used largely, no doubt, by the military, as in Block M7. At this time, then, space was definitely at a premium at Dura and one can count on even the least desirable plots being either appropriated by the military, as were Lots J and K in Block M8, or used for private construction.

Interactions between soldiers and civilians during this period of construction necessarily included requisitioning, commandeering, etc., but also needed to include negotiation and compromise in order to maintain order in a city of thousands expanding with thousands more soldiers and hangers-on. Whether they were the instigators or the benefactors of the rerouting of the drain, the original owners of the building necessarily interacted with Roman builders. And, whether having a congregation member learn the techniques of Roman bath building or whether a Roman attached to the garrison assisted in the manufacturing of the font in the baptistery, again the occupants of the building that became the Christian temple had some sort of constructive (literally and metaphorically) relationship with the Roman military as it expanded into the last remaining undeveloped space in the most western blocks of the city.

Lastly, regarding basins, baths and baptisms, or perhaps more simply, initiation rites, there is one more relationship between the military and the Christian temple that needs to be examined via the Mithraeum. In *Preliminary Report VII/VIII*, Rostovtzeff and Cumont offered some sixty pages of descriptions and interpretations of the Mithraeum at Europos. A *Final Report* was

intended to be written on it as the third installment of Volume 8. Volume 8.1 was the *Final Report on the Synagogue*, Volume 8.2, the “Christian Building,” but unfortunately, Volume 8.3 never saw the light of day – much like being in a Mithraeum or the baptistery at the Christian temple.

Both ritual spaces were absent windows, and both created a ritual space absent any natural light. Mithraic rites have long been known to take place in darkness by torch or lamplight and early Mithraea were built into caves, adopting the Latin word for caves, *spelaeum*, to describe the long, windowless, benched hall leading to the altar and Tauroctony.¹⁵ Early Christian baptisms on the other hand, we know little about archaeologically. The Gospel stories of John the Baptist describe John immersing his own followers in the Jordan River, and then baptizing Jesus and his followers this way as well.¹⁶ I hesitate to stress the obvious here, but one of the largest rivers in the world flowed less than a kilometer away from the temple, just on the other side of the city. Should these Durene Christians had chosen to emulate canonical Gospel stories in their own initiation rite, they did not lack a river to do so.¹⁷ On the other hand, the use of an intentionally darkened room for initiation, covered in a program of murals, with benches for initiates and/or the initiated on the inside, a room where the center of focus was on a highly decorated aedicula with a basin installed,

¹⁵ Pearson (Pre. Rep. VII/VIII:68) notes no evidence of windows in the minimal remains found of the first phase of the Mithraeum uncovered by Yale (which was more properly called a shrine within a private home at that time) but based on the type of nave used, Pearson suggests there may have been small windows for ventilation. This is an excellent example of general notions of form in antiquity impressing themselves upon an author so intensely, that despite knowledge of ritual darkness, and the use of caves as Mithraea (a *spelaeum*), and the lack of evidence for windows in this building, Pearson still feels the need to suggest, “the architectural form, that of a high nave, was created to make room for windows and it would be odd if that form in this case also did not serve that purpose. Small windows, used more for ventilation than for light, are not impossible in this clerestory.” That is, neither the lack of evidence nor the possession of knowledge of the importance of ritual darkness convinced Pearson this particular nave may have been windowless. While this may seem trivial, I would argue instead this is precisely the type of epistemological blind spot that prizes formal categorization over on-the-ground practice.

¹⁶ All four canonical Gospels refer to the baptism. The Gospel of John implies but not does not describe the baptism of Jesus by John. In the other Gospels, Jesus is baptized by John in the river Jordan and in one form or another, the “Holy Spirit” (often in the form of a dove) is bestowed upon Jesus. Non-canonical Gospels (such as The Gospel of the Nazarenes/Hebrews) also chronicle Jesus’ baptism

¹⁷ A typical rebuttal to such a claim is that Christians could not practice openly in the third century. However, at this point – or at least by the end of this work – it should be clear that Christians were neither hiding themselves or their temple, nor avoiding contact with other Durenes, temples or the Roman military.

and with an image of the god being worshipped above the basin, at eye-level, dominating the view of anyone looking at the aedicula ... nothing like this is attested to in pre-Constantinian Christianity in that we have no other material evidence of baptisteries from the third century. But a ritual as just described does have a doppelganger within the city of Europolis, on the same street, seven blocks to the north, in the Mithraeum.

The baptistery at the Christian temple was not simply lacking light due to its former position as some sort of closet, storage, or otherwise low status room within the house. It was not uncommon to have windows located high on the walls in Europolis. Room 6 was, like the entire house, over five meters tall and perhaps did have windows near the top of its walls. However, when the Baptistery was redecorated top to bottom, a ceiling was added dividing the Baptistery horizontally cutting it off from any light let through windows above.

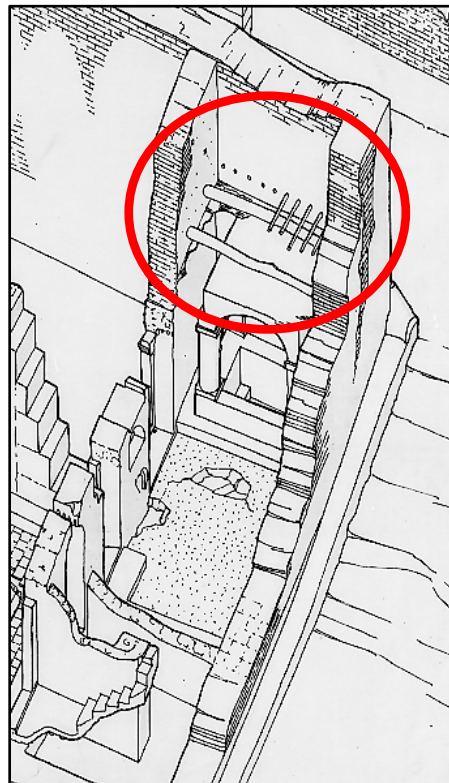


Figure 72: Isometric of Christian temple after Yale excavation showing the baptistery font installed. Immediately above it are the traces of a ceiling dividing Room 6 into two stories. The lower story, the baptistery proper, had no windows and when the doors were closed was devoid of natural light.

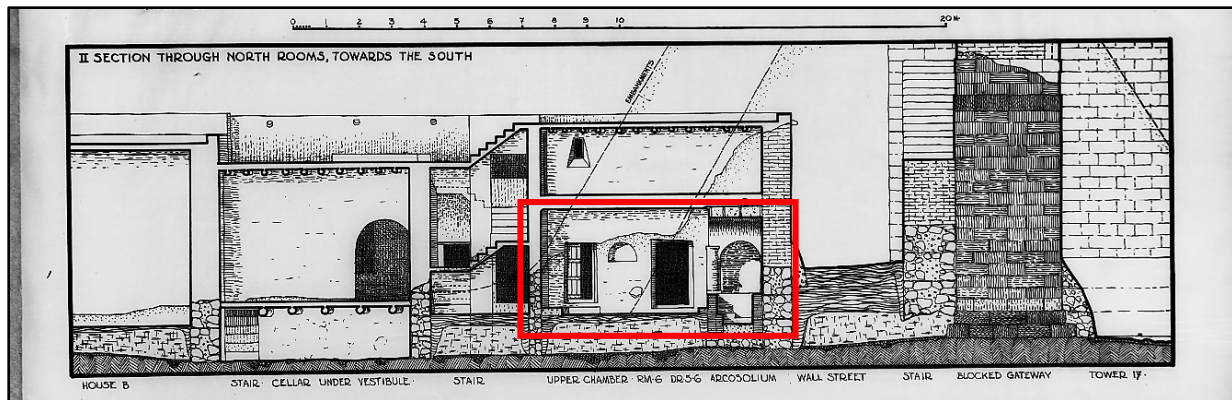


Figure 73: Sectional rendering of Christian temple. Baptistry is marked in red. The upper story of the room is presented with a likely window installed.

Along the floor of the Baptistry, benches were added to parts of the eastern and southern walls, murals were painted along all the walls, the font installed at the western end of the room and a much lower ceiling was installed at about 3.2 meters high (Fin. Rep. 8.2: 27). When the doors closed to this room, it would remain dark until a lamp or candle was lit. And then, when there was fire-light, not only would an initiate be completely surrounded by mural images, but if an initiate looked up at the ceiling, she would see a blue sky, with dozens of white stars painted on the ceiling.

I can imagine any number of researchers on early Christianity looking for analog or explanation in Christian literature or history for a baptism in darkness. And in fact, Kraeling made just such an effort (Fin. Rep. 8.2: 198-200) combining ancient Jewish myth with Babylonian myth and extensive use of later Latin hymns to suggest the sky and stars painted on the Baptistry's ceiling represented a transition into the light and rebirth with allusions to the creation myth of Genesis (in which light and water are two of the major creations during Yahweh's six-day work-week). Kraeling was a Lutheran minister, taught at seminary, and previous to his role with the Europos excavation was a New Testament scholar. His scholarship was exceptional in the early 20th century and his knowledge of doctrine and church history also so. However, again, we have an analysis of Durene Christians which reaches to myths and hymns from other cultures and other

Christianities across space and time, but with no strong links to other cults in the city. It is my conclusion that the simplest place to look for an explanation as to why Durene Christians may have chosen this star motif and chosen to initiate in darkness, is in the Mithraeum. There, in its middle and final phases, the canopy over the altar and Tauroctony at the Mithraeum was also painted a deep blue...

...with white stars. The stars have eight points and are alternately small and large. This decoration is very similar to the vault of the later shrine [the final phase of the Mithraeum] and may indicate that the stars have some significance. They are also similar to the stars decorating the ceiling and vault of the baptistery in the Christian Building. (Pre. Rep. VII/VIII: 102)

It is not clear whether Kraeling noted this information from the Preliminary Report published in the 1930s when writing on the Christian temple in the 1960s. As the author of both final reports, Kraeling had an extraordinarily detailed knowledge of the architecture and archaeology of both the Synagogue and the Christian temple at Europos. But as for how thorough his knowledge was of the decoration on the vault's ceiling in the Mithraeum, I cannot say. What can be stated securely however is that eight-pointed stars alternating in size, on a deep blue background on the underside of a canopy over an aedicula is not unique to the Mithraeum.

In fact, these stars covered the entire ceiling of the baptistery—not just the canopy over the font. Fragments of painted plaster attesting to this were found on the floor of the baptistery by excavators. The temporary ceiling in the baptistery, built to reduce the height of the room and eliminate light from any higher placed windows, was forcefully taken down when Roman soldiers filled the room with mud brick and debris to build the expanded rampart for Europos' final siege.

Before the ceiling plaster was smashed and fell upon the floor, two small holes were dug in the baptistery floor, the fill of each sat beside their hole and one small fill pile of dirt still held several illegible coins. Kraeling suggests the digging into the plastered floor of the baptistery was

the doing of Roman soldiers looking for valuables before filling the building and uncovering a small coin hoard.



Figure 74: Underside of canopy over baptismal font in Christian temple during Yale's excavation. Note small and large eight-pointed stars. Close-up of canopy below (Figure 74).



Figure 75: Close-up of stars painted on blue background on underside of canopy over baptismal font in Christian temple during Yale excavation. Note larger eight-pointed stars with radiating lines and dots around a center circle, alternating with smaller stars made up of eight small circles around a ninth in the center.

The prime indications of this treasure hunt are two large irregular holes dug into and through the plaster floor of the room, the one immediately in front of the font, the other before the ledge or table applied to the south wall of the room between its doorways (Plan VIII). Earth and stones excavated from below floor level were found heaped up beside the holes on top of the floor and under a layer of painted plaster fragments belonging to the ceiling. The holes had therefore been dug before the ceiling was dismantled. In the pile of earth on the floor beside the hole dug in front of the font there were found four small bronze coins, all illegible. (Fin. Rep. 8.2: 28)

Below I reproduce “Plan VIII” mentioned by Kraeling.

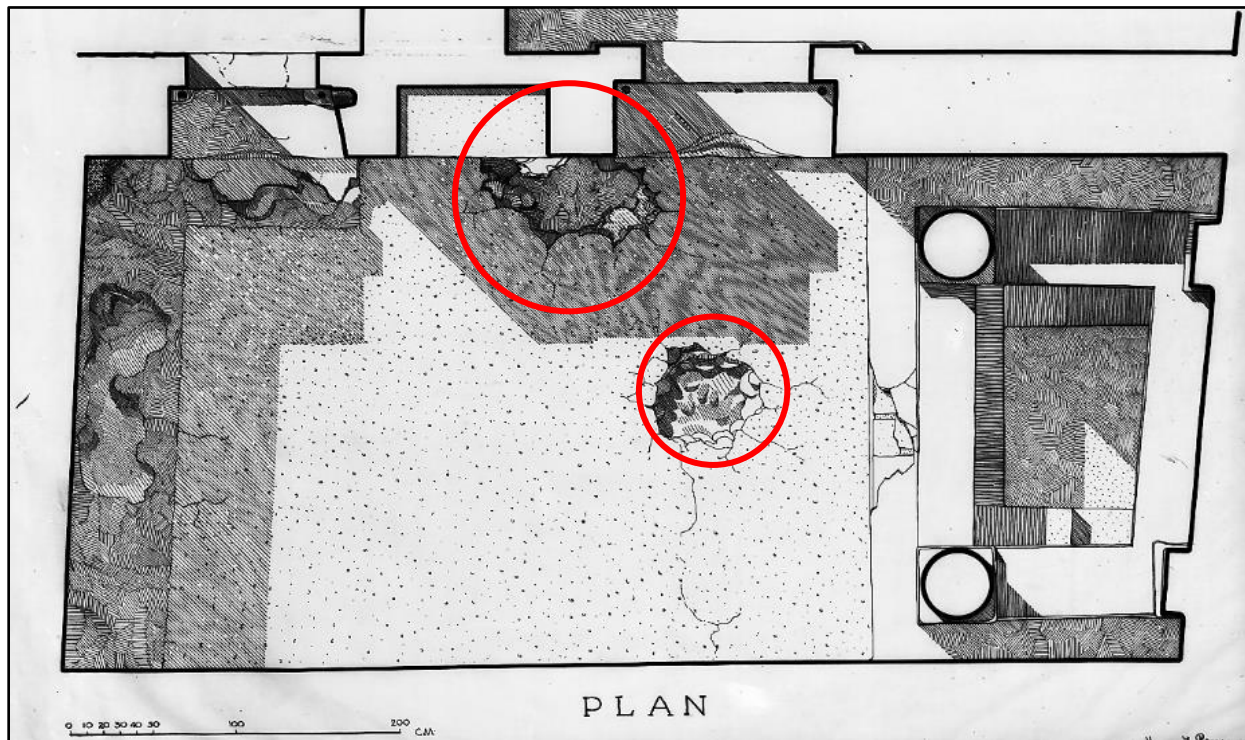


Figure 76: Plan view of baptistery (Room 6) showing the stepped font in place and two holes dug inot the plaster floor which were covered in plaster and other remains from the room's celing.

If indeed the two small holes did hold coin hordes (burying coins, likely before the siege in hopes of returning to the city after the battle was done, was not uncommon in Europos), to assume it was Roman soldiers digging up the coins demands too much of the meager evidence. The entire floor was not dug up by whoever went searching for those coins (if indeed it was coins they were searching for – this is presumed by the four coins left in the fill from the holes (Fin. Rep. 8.2: 28)). Instead, it appears that whoever went digging knew where to dig. They only dug in two

spots, underneath the niche holding a painting of David and Goliath from the Old Testament, and directly in front of the font. It is difficult to understand why soldiers and laborers, with no knowledge of where there may be coin hoards in a building, and who had considerable tools at their disposal, wouldn't simply tear up the entire plaster floor if they were looting before building the rampart. While I am grateful for Kraeling's attention to detail in the baptistery I can't help but interpret this treasure hunt as not a hunt, but an intentional withdrawal by a fleeing community, or an inside job.¹⁸

As for the ceiling plaster that covered these holes and their purported resemblance to the ones painted on the ceiling of the Mithraeum I could find only one image with a trace of the Mithraeum's stars in situ (figures 76 – 78, below):

¹⁸ While I have frequently bemoaned the excavation techniques of the 1930s, the Yale team recorded detailed stratigraphic information of the baptistery's floor: Soil under the plaster floor, the plastered floor, the intersection of the hoard pits cutting through the plaster floor, the debris and plaster from the collapsed ceiling and on top of the wholes and fill are all described by Kraeling in *Fin. Rep.* 8.2.



Figure 77: Photo of Mithraeum aedicula and vault, in situ. Area circled in red has the faintest trace of an eight-pointed star similar to those found on the ceiling of the baptistery in the Christian temple. As the faint star is not likely to reproduce well in print, a close-up of the area circled in red and the star in question, with contrast adjusted in Photoshop, follows below.



Figure 78: Close up of area highlighted in Red from figure 77 above. Contrast enhanced in Photoshop. Note similarity of eight-pointed star design to similar design in figure 79, below.



Figure 79: Eight-pointed stars decorating the underside to the vaulted aedicula in the Baptistry of the Christian temple. These same stars also decorated the entire ceiling of the room.

I do not intend here to attempt to interpret the “significance” of the stars in both temples nor do I wish to add to a long, troubled and inaccurate pseudo-history suggesting that Mithraism and Christianity are some sort of divergent forms of a single long-past cult. All I wish to point out here, and in this entire section, is that the architectural choices made by Durene Christians reflected a knowledge and acceptance of local religious practices (including burying coin hoards in temple rooms). I do not know why, nor would I attempt to offer an explanation as to why, it appears Durene Christians preferred their baptisms in the dark and in a room decorated to emulate being under a night sky. I don’t believe enough evidence has been uncovered to make such claims. What I can offer is that such types of initiations existed in more than one temple at Europos, especially in the Mithraeum, a cult long favored by Roman soldiers (though not exclusively so as shown in Chapter Three), the same community within Europos that also possessed *technologies* used in the construction of the Christian baptismal font. And to further the point, Durene Christians, in a fairly typical adaptation of local religious practices, chose to build their font in the *style* of both Roman aediculae and baths, neither of which were unusual in the city.

Whichever sects Durene Christians belonged to, whatever texts they used, canonical or non-, they built their temple in ways that not only resembled, but openly acknowledged local, Durene, Mesopotamian style and architecture. While the star in the above image of the Mithraeum *in situ* is difficult to make out (figures 76 and 77), both of Yale’s reproductions and presentations of the Mithraeum and the Christian temple at their Museum used the same starry motif (figures 79 and 80, below). I hesitate to close this section with idealized images from museum restorations and representations but, since this work is also an analysis of the data collection, its collectors, and their epistemological inclinations, I surrender to the urge because the phenomenological experience intended to influence museum visitors is not without import:



Figure 80: Reproduction of Christian temple at Yale. Note stars under canopy and on reconstructed ceiling in upper right corner of photo.

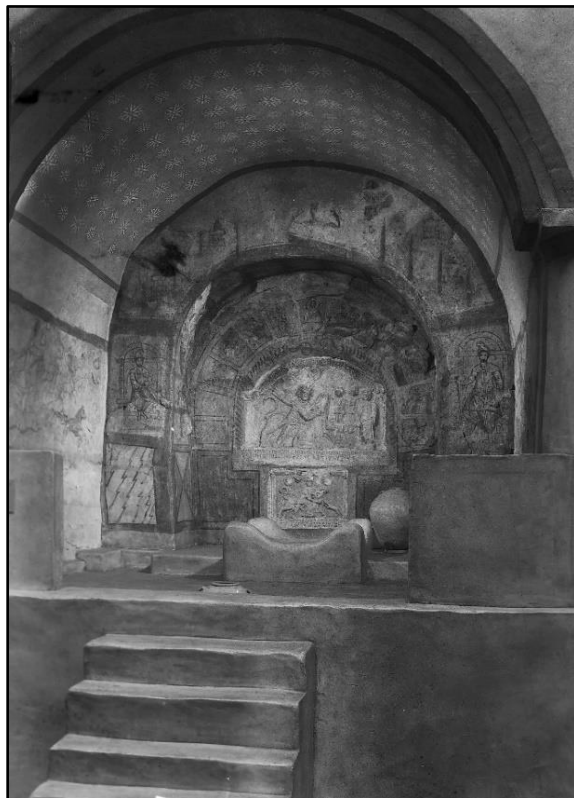


Figure 81: Mithraeum reconstruction at Yale, 1939. Note stars on ceiling of vaulted canopy.

Evidence of Absence

While the baptistery possesses architectural clues as to how the Christian community necessarily interacted with soldiers and other religious communities in Europos, including first-hand knowledge of other temples, knowledge of technologies largely reserved to the military community, and the likelihood, due to multiple efforts to emulate local style and form in religious architecture, that Durene Christians visited the temples of other religions in Europos, the rest of the rooms in the Christian temple have less to say. Lacking the effort to establish a liminal space as the baptistery was designed, these rooms are far less adorned, and simpler in their presentation. But they are not absent of useful data to further our knowledge of the Christian community and their relationship with other Durenes and Rome as represented by the military presence in the city.

Running clockwise, Rooms 7, 8, 2 and 3 (figure 81, below) – all those rooms lying on the eastern side of the building – have little to add to this discussion. They were leveled to the ground for the most part when the sloping rampart was built to extend the city wall behind the building. While there is some evidence that the stairway (Room 7) which lead to the roof of the building was modified when Room 6 was divided horizontally into two stories, so as to allow access to the upper chamber from the stairwell, there is little else worthy of note for this discussion. Room 8 is the entrance vestibule to the building with a doorway in its northern wall opening onto Third Street. Noteworthy about Room 8 is that it had a small cellar under it that was entered by a stairway in the portico (Room 2). When excavated, the cellar revealed, “fragments of several broken oil jars, such as might well have normally been stored in the cellar” (Fin. Rep. 8.2: 11). Room 2 was a colonnaded portico which Kraeling suggests was traditionally an open-air cooking area in Durene

homes (Fin. Rep. 8.2: 13).¹⁹ Reduced to nearly its foundation, the stylobate (the foundation stones that support columns – it runs horizontally between Rooms 1 and 2 in the isometric, figure 81 below) were almost not recognized during the excavation. What Room 2 and Room 5 were used for when the building was converted to a temple isn't known (but that hasn't stopped some researchers from hypothesizing despite a dearth of artistic, architectural or archaeological evidence (Fin. Rep. 8.2: 151) – we will address this in a bit more detail below).

Arriving at Rooms 4a and 4b, both resemble traditional domestic living spaces throughout Europos. A *diwan* (4a) and accompanying chamber (4b) (Baird 2006: 97-108) were renovated into one large room devoid of the benches that had once occupied 4a and which were common in domestic spaces in the city.

“Room” 1, that is, the courtyard, was discussed briefly above (*Low Rent and High Expenses*), making note of the effort in labor and potential cost to tile the courtyard and add plastered rubble benches to the walls, creating a far more sumptuous open-air meeting space with seating for a dozen or two people. Similar benches were constructed in the baptistery (Room 6) as well (and can be just barely noted on figure 81) and likely allowed initiates and other congregants to gather in the baptistery, perhaps for specific ritual purposes, perhaps simply to contemplate the artwork within. While I have no doubt that the room was used for baptismal rites, Kraeling noted the curious fact that the Christians at Europos had “given over one whole room entirely to the celebration of the comparatively *infrequent* rite of baptism” (Fin. Rep. 8.2: 146; emphasis mine). If the cult baptized even only one person per month over some 10 years (and may

¹⁹ Baird (2006: 150-1) is less certain about cooking activities in Europos but her assessment does not rule out the open-air portico. She notes, “though the original excavators termed certain areas kitchens, this label is anachronistic. The evidence at Dura for preparation of food is that of cooking fixtures, such as tanurs, movable cooking equipment such as braziers, and cooking vessels ... The tanurs then were likely the site of food preparation, and every known example comes from the courtyards of the houses, with some of those being in arches beneath the staircase but immediately off the courtyard.

have been in use for 15 or more years), that would result in a Christian population of 120 people in addition to those who originally supported the renovation of the temple. It must be kept in mind then, that the room was used infrequently for the baptisms of initiates, unless one suspects a Christian population of hundreds or thousands at Europos – all of whom would never fit in the modest temple and who would make for a major Christian population center in the third-century that was curiously never mentioned in early Christian texts.

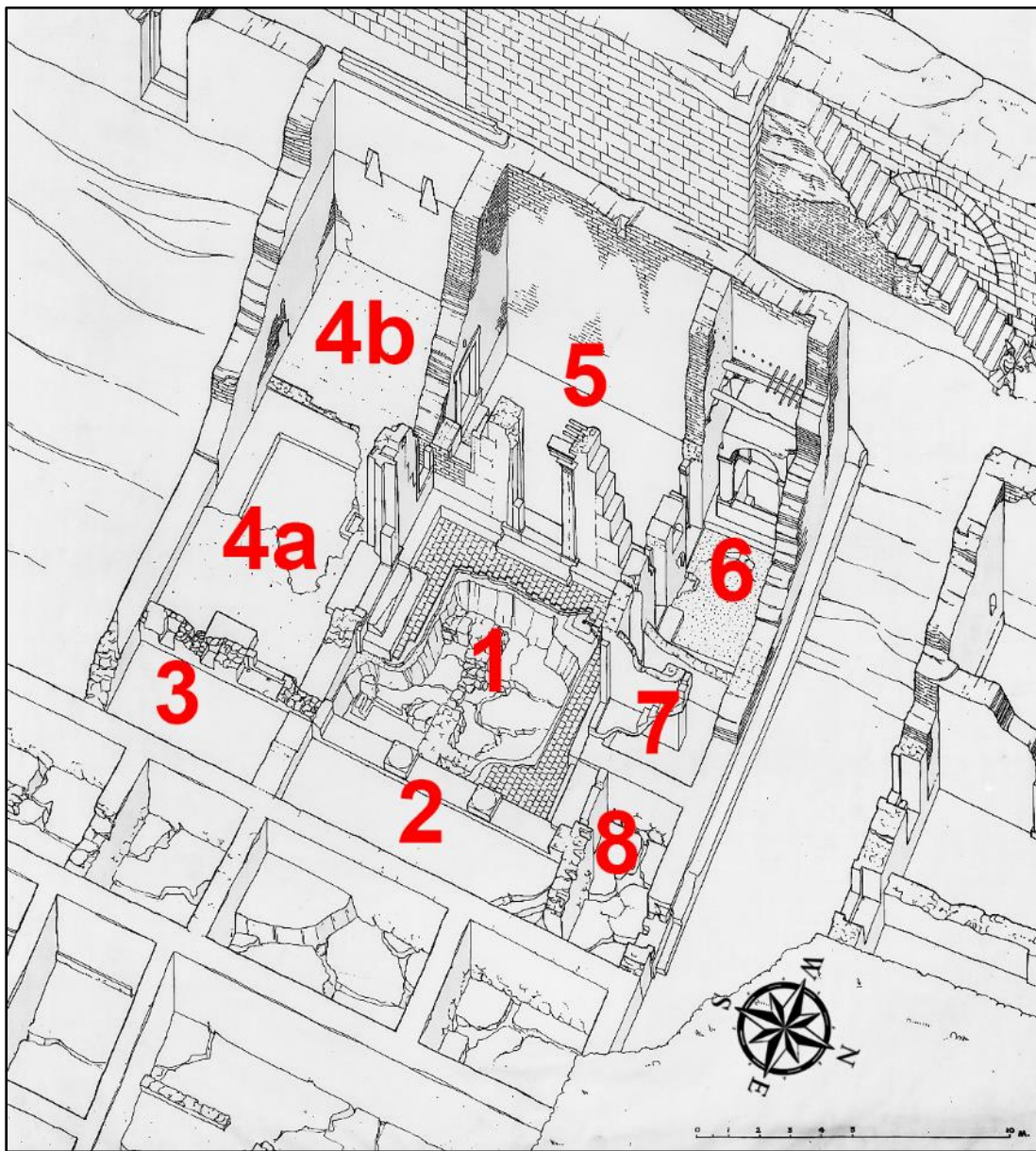


Figure 82: Isometric drawing of Christian temple after Yale excavation and clearing showing architectural aspects of both phases, domestic and ritual.

Along with the benches and tiles of the courtyard there was a cistern or cesspool covered with tiles near the baptistery. I am persuaded that this was a cesspool, that is a place for waste, and not a reservoir for water. Both the cesspool's location (near a likely storage room or other low-status chamber) and the tradition of keeping water in jugs, amphorae, cisterns, etc., throughout the city – that is above ground – point in that direction.

What these details all suggest together is that in its final phase, the Christian temple was no longer well-appointed for domestic use: No *diwan*, no cesspool, a courtyard dedicated to larger crowds (and benches along the outside of the building as well suggesting the potential for a fairly large number of people to be present at any given time comfortably), and no clear evidence of regular cooking or waste disposal anywhere else within the building. That is not to say that it was impossible for anyone to live here. The chamber over Room 6 may have been inhabitable and Room 5 is largely a mystery. Its walls and floors were not plastered when Yale excavated it and it showed little evidence of much renovation but for notable plastering around the doorway to the baptistery from this room (figure 82). Kraeling described the plaster-work on the door jamb as “even more elaborate than that of the trim of the door leading from the courtyard into Room 5” (Fin. Rep. 8.2: 21) figure 83).

Despite the minimal architectural changes, lack of artifacts and general emptiness of Room 5, Durene researchers have attempted to identify this room “as the ‘church’ proper (with prothesis and diaconicon on either side), as a room for the celebration of the agape, and as a school room and library” (Fin. Rep. 8.2: 151).²⁰

²⁰ “prothesis and diaconicon” refer to sacralized spaces and objects used in Eastern Orthodox and Eastern Catholic sects of Christianity.

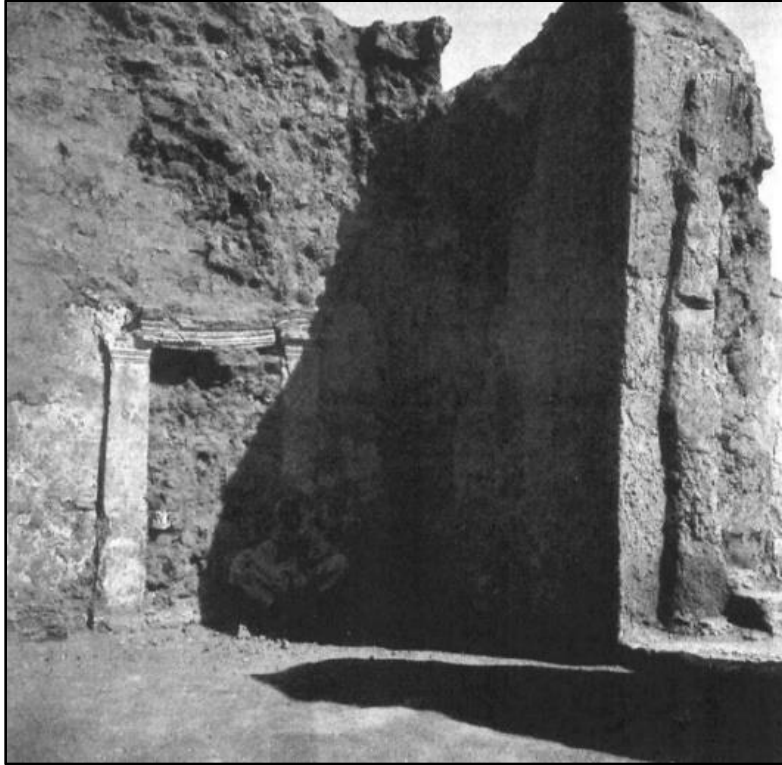


Figure 83: Doorway from Room 5 to baptistry (Room 6). Note decorated jambs and lintel.



Figure 84: Doorway leading from Courtyard to Room 5 for comparison (see Kraeling's description above)

Factual evidence bearing on the function of the room is limited to four items, namely, first that its walls and floor did not receive a plaster coating in the adaptation of the building as did the Assembly Hall and the Baptistery; second, that the doorway leading from it to the Baptistery was set out with a new molded plaster door frame; third, that it received at the southeast a low-level window giving on the court; fourth, that all its doors were provided with apotropaic devices, including the dipinto on the left jamb of the door leading to the Baptistery. (Fin. Rep. 8.2: 151)

That dipinto was, “done in red and consisting of four Greek letters and an eight-pointed star,” interpreted (Fin. Rep. 8.2: 20). In fact, there were a number of apotropaic “devices” – inscriptions or dipinti – on most of the doorjambes in the Christian temple, and several can be confirmed to have been inscribed or painted during the building’s existence as a Christian temple (Fin. Rep. 8.2: 20, 125).²¹ All told there is considerable evidence of knowledge and practice of other religions in the Christian temple itself. Whatever “meaning” eight-pointed stars held for Durenes, they were not simply a representation of the night sky but possessed a locally understood power against evil influences at the very least. By and large, these renovations provide an ironic evidence of absence, that is, evidence that this building was primarily and near-exclusively used as a temple and no longer a domestic space in Durene tradition. It would appear, for instance, that the most important work done in Room 5 was not to adorn it or improve it as with the courtyard, baptistery and Assembly Hall (Room 4) but to plaster and decorate the entrance to the baptistery from the room to ensure that the door closed tightly, keeping out light and any evil and unwanted supernatural presence. If there were efforts made to the building to provide shelter or living space to members of the community, they were not uncovered by Yale.

²¹ Apotropaic devices were also found in the Synagogue (Dirven 2004: 8).

Altered Altars

We'll finish our architectural tour of the Christian temple with a walk through the building's largest room, the "Assembly Hall," Room 4. As noted earlier, a considerable amount of construction and renovation took place in this room. Formerly two rooms, a *diwan* and accompanying chamber, the wall between them was torn down and the floor of Room 4a raised in order for the new larger room to be level across its longer length. All of the walls and the floor in this room were plastered, and in fact it is the plastering over of the areas where the earlier dividing wall between Rooms 4a and 4b once stood that provided Yale some of the information used to date the construction and renovation of the building.

A graffito in the area that was Room 4b with Seleucid dating (common in Europos until the end) includes a dedication made in the year 232/3 CE. When the dividing room between rooms 4a and 4b was taken down, a new layer of plaster was applied to all the walls in the room to cover the traces of the former wall and give the entire room a homogenous appearance. The plaster that covered the gaps left by the tearing down of the wall also covered this dated graffito. Debate as to whether this date should be associated with the building's original construction or the renovation have never been properly settled with the evidence at hand. Kraeling makes a creative and respectable attempt to examine the rate of accumulation of debris on Wall Street and how the rising of the level of that road against the foundation of the Christian building compares to the changes in debris and rising road levels against the foundation of other buildings on Wall Street with surer dating. In particular Kraeling looks at how changes made to the outside of the Christian Temple (the bottom of benches, the lower limit of plaster used in foundation repairs) which he associates with the renovation, relate stratigraphically with rises in the road. That is, if a building's construction or plastering elsewhere on Wall Street could be securely dated through inscriptions,

graffiti, or other data that can be used as absolute dating, he could then compare which layers of the rising street level met where renovations ended on the exterior of the Christian Temple, indicating the height of the Wall Street at the time of that particular act of construction or maintenance (Fin. Rep. 8.2: 36-9). This was no small effort and from it Kraeling estimates the renovations took place at the temple in the early 240s CE, and therefore the graffito in room 4b was made during the time the building was being used as a private residence, and likely the year of its construction. There is nothing about Kraeling's work one can find objective or specific fault with, but neither is there any guarantee the method is reliable, and that Wall Street rose consistently or evenly along its 800-plus meter length.

Since the Graffito dated 232/3 CE was clearly covered by the plaster used to give the larger Room 4 a new coat, all that can be guaranteed is that in 232/3 CE, the room had not yet been plastered. A TPQ of 232/3 CE for the plastering of the Assembly Room is the only fully reliable dating we have and does not answer the question of the date of the building's conversion one way or the other. It does tell us, however, that if the graffito was made before the conversion, as the plaster suggests, the longest possible time the building could have been used as a temple for the Christian Community, if they stayed until the end of the siege, was 25 years. If instead, as Kraeling surmises, the renovations took place around 240 CE (Pre. Rep. 8.2: 34-9) and Christians, like many Durenes, left the city before the final siege, then the building was in use as a temple for less than 15 years before it became part of the foundation of the expanded rampart, and perhaps as few as ten years.²² Given that in Europos it was very common to renovate and improve ritual spaces over

²² Baird (2012) has offered a more likely and more complex timeline for the abandonment of Europos. Through multiple lines of evidence, she has shown that before Europos was sieged in 256/7, Sassanian troops likely held the city temporarily for some time, around 253 CE while the Roman garrison was occupied fighting elsewhere. The occupation was temporary, and the garrison did return, retake and hold the city until ~256/7. The likelihood that civilians began leaving the city in 253/4 is quite high.

time, there is a reasonable possibility that the Christians at Europos were still in the process of appointing the entire temple when forced to abandon it and Room 5 was robbed the opportunity of its eventual adornment.

Thus, unlike so many temples at Europos, the Christian temple is a temporal snapshot of a snapshot, a local iteration of a fairly new, diverse, still evolving and adapting religious practice, representing perhaps two decades in the lives of this community in the middle third-century. Using this temple's data to assist in establishing or confirming a larger narrative of the history of early Christianity across the Empire is risky, almost an abuse of the data – one I believe that has been overlooked due to the rich and rare imagery, rightfully recorded and analyzed as the earliest known artistic expression of a practicing Christian community in their own ritual space, but also a risk overlooked because of a strong desire, perhaps hope, that this building can provide answers regarding the foundation of the world's largest religion.

Instead, as I have suggested throughout this work, this temple tells us more about how Durene Christians adapted diverse early Christian practices to local traditions and customs. The data here provides clues to early Christian practice insofar as to how plastic it was, and how local practitioners appear to have come from and belonged to numerous other religious communities. This temple tells us a good deal about the early Christian community at Europos but not necessarily early Christianity writ-large or even “the character” of “early Mesopotamian Christianity” as Kraeling has suggested” (F.R 8.2:121). To draw conclusions from this one building about a religion spread over thousands of miles, over two centuries, with numerous conflicting authorities unsettled on sacred texts, liturgy, or even whether certain rites should take place at day or night, stretches the available evidence too far. But we can use the evidence at hand to offer some insight on local Durene Christian practice.

For one thing, the Christians at Europos had an altar in their Assembly Room that Yale never noticed.

To say, “altars are ubiquitous” in ritual spaces throughout Europos would not be inaccurate but neither would it be a statement of much value to any researcher because the word, “altar,” though generally understood, does not have a precise definition or standard in religious or archaeological practice. At Europos, Yale used this term (as they did temples, shrines, sanctuaries, etc.) less than consistently. When discussing the use of the word “altar” in publications on Europos, Bossard-Couronné (2012) noted:

De façon générale, c’est le terme « autel » (« altar ») qui y apparaît de façon récurrente. Or très souvent, en l’absence de description précise, d’une photographie ou d’un schéma, il est impossible de savoir à la seule lecture du rapport de quoi il s’agit précisément. La confusion est d’autant plus grande que ce terme, qui désigne théoriquement la fonction d’une construction, est apparemment utilisé dans de nombreux cas pour parler de sa simple forme. (64)

[Generally, it is the term "altar" that appears regularly. But very often, in the absence of a precise description, a photograph or a diagram, so it is impossible to know from the mere reading of the report what the term is referring to precisely. The confusion is all the greater because this term [altar], which theoretically indicates the *function* of a construction, is apparently used in many cases to speak simply of its *form*. (emphasis in translation is mine)]

Bossard-Couronné’s solution to Yale’s imprecision, describing any number of small constructions in ritual spaces as altars, was to indeed focus on architectural elements of the various items described as “altars” by Yale and assign them to one of three categories with several sub-categories (2016: 64-70, 882; Illustrations and photos of each type follow on next page, figure 84).

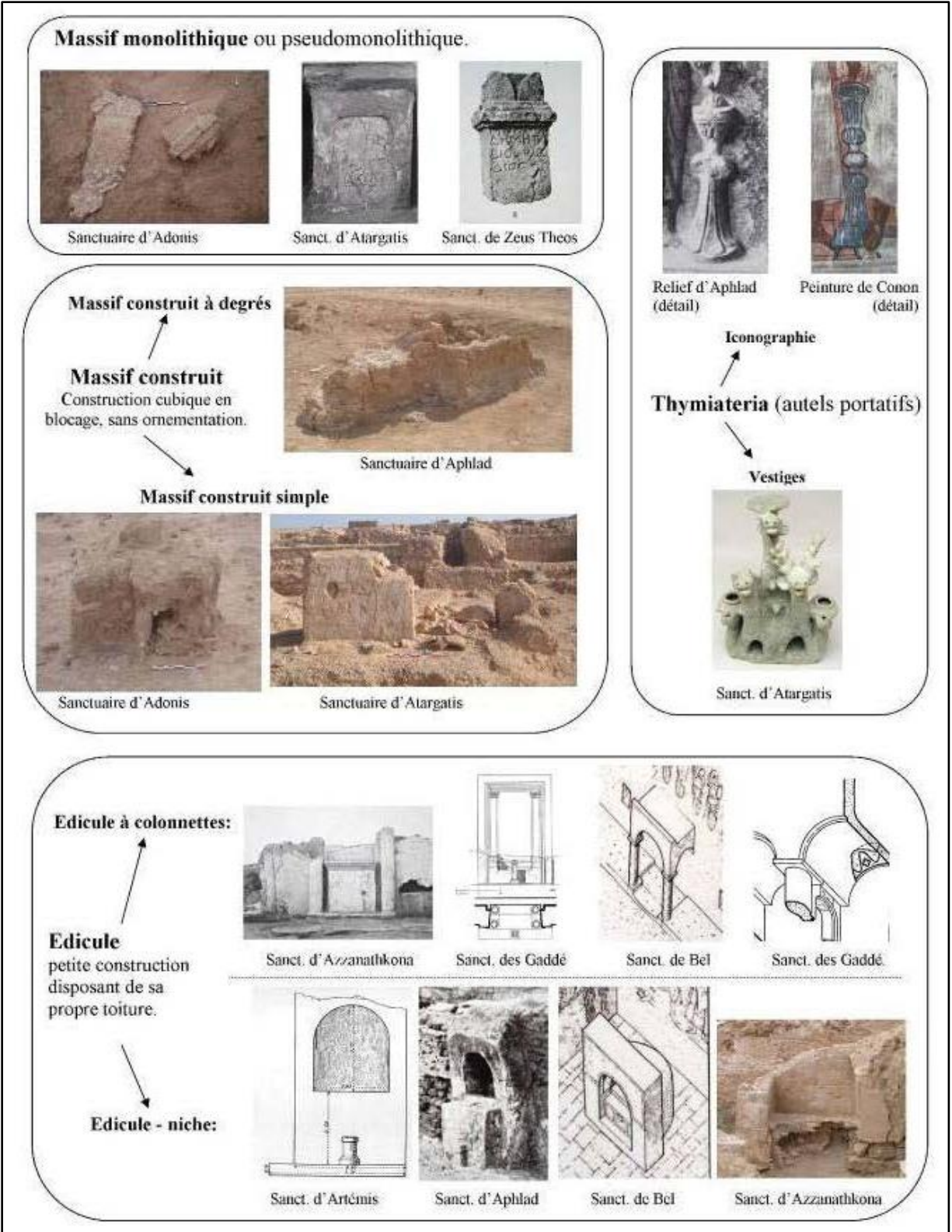


Figure 85: Bossard-Couronné's typology of altars based on architectural form and fabrication materials (2012: 882).

1. Les Massifs Construits (Solid Construction)
 - a. Les massifs construits simples (Simple)
 - b. Les massifs construits à degrés (Stepped)
2. Les massifs monolithiques ou pseudo-monolithiques (solid monoliths or pseudo-monoliths)
3. Les Edicules (Aediculae)

We have already discussed aediculae as a specific type of installation in temples and sanctuaries and referred to them as “shrines” in this work. For the remainder of this work, “altar” will refer to either of the first two categories, “Massif Construit” and “Massif Monolithique (ou pseudomonolithique).” Bossard-Couronné listed almost 100 discovered altars of these two types in the 13 temples she analyzed (2012: 311-312).

The former category, Massif Construit, she divided into two subcategories, “simple” and “à degrés”, that is, stepped. Stepped altars are not my concern here. I found no trace of such a *massif* in the Christian building during my fieldwork at Europos in 2010. However, “Massif Construit Simple” and the monolithic types are worth discussing.

As for the “Simple” altars of mass/solid construction.²³

Ces massifs mesurent généralement 50 cm à 1 m de côté environ. Lorsque les élévations sont suffisamment conservées pour estimer la hauteur d’origine, celle-ci est d’environ 60 cm à 1 m. Ces massifs sont assez fréquents dans les édifices de culte.

[These *massifs* usually measure about 50 cm to 1m along each side of the base. Based on the height of altars sufficiently conserved they averaged approximately 60 cm to 1m tall. These massifs are quite common in cult buildings.]

As for the monolithique and pseudomonolithique types, she described them as such:

A côté des massifs appareillés ou construits dont nous venons de parler se trouvaient les massifs monolithiques ou pseudo-monolithiques, de taille plus réduite. Contrairement aux massifs construits, ils possédaient souvent une décoration simple et pouvaient être inscrits.

²³ “Massif” here defies easy or exact translation and I use “solid” in order to stress the simple plaster and rubble rectangular blocks that are the basic form for this type.

[Besides the *massifs* fitted/cast/solid which we just spoke of, one finds also monolithic or pseudomonolithic *massifs*. Unlike the *massifs* construct, these often have decorations and may be inscribed].

My interest in these two categories (Massifs Construct Simple and mono- or pseudomonolithic) is due to both their ubiquity and their size and form.

Let us return to Room 4 in the Christian temple. Figure 81 above presents an isometric rendering of the Christian temple showing Room 4 both during the domestic phase of the building and after its conversion to a temple. Below (figures 85 and 86) are two separate plan views of Room 4 before and after conversion (north is to the right).

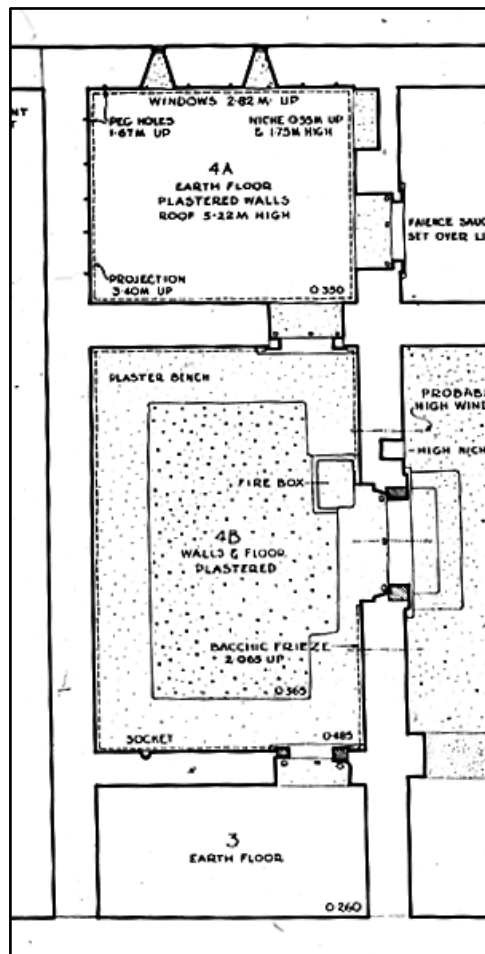


Figure 86: Plan view of Rooms 4a and 4b before conversion.

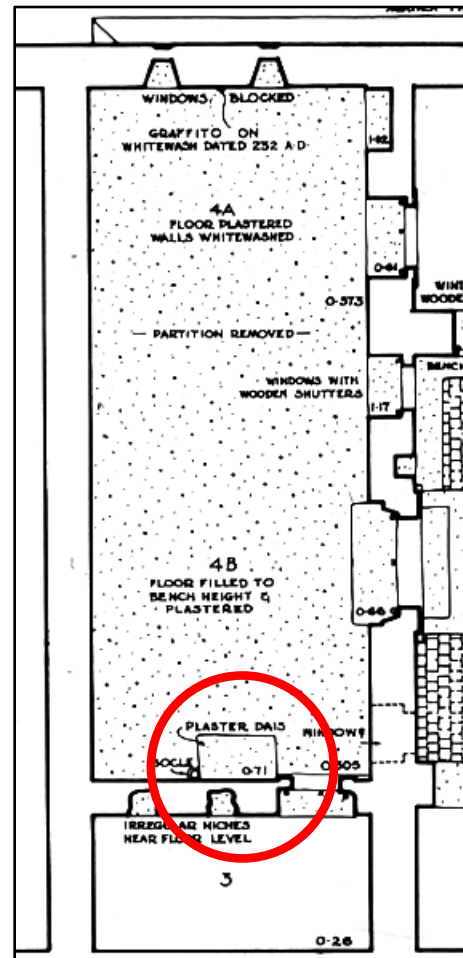


Figure 87: Plan view of Room 4, Assembly Room, after conversion. Dais/bema at east end is circled in red.

While far less adorned than the baptistery, the Assembly Room shows considerable evidence of work done to establish it as a functional part of the temple (*see* Low Rent and High Expenses, above). As to its role in ritual practice, we are far less sure than with the baptistery due to the minimal additions, decorations or adornments to the room and also due to the fragmentary evidence regarding Christian ritual in the third century.

The *Didache* is an excellent example of the fragmentary understanding of early Christian practice and liturgy. Also called, “The Training of the Lord through the Twelve Apostles to the Gentiles” and “The Teachings of the Apostles,” the text is a manual for teaching and converting gentiles. Milavec (2003:ix) suggests the *Didache* “encapsulated the lived practice by which non-Jews were initiated into the altered habits of perceiving, judging, and acting characteristic of one branch of the Jesus movement during the mid-first century.” Milavec is careful in his introduction to the ancient text to specify its contextual use. The *Didache* does not retell the life of Jesus and, “in fact is older than the canonical gospels” according to Milavec (2003: ix). Instead, the *Didache* offered guidance on various rites including baptism and the eucharist. However, until 1873 no complete text of the *Didache* was known to exist, several chapters and other fragments being the primary witnesses to a whole work yet undiscovered. Some researchers have dated the text far later than Milavec, to the second century (Slee 2003:58). And in the fourth century, Church father Eusebius called the work “spurious.”

Let there be placed among the spurious works the Acts of Paul, the so-called Shepherd and the Apocalypse of Peter, and besides these the Epistle of Barnabas, and what are called the Teachings of the Apostles, and also the Apocalypse of John, if this be thought proper; for as I wrote before, some reject it, and others place it in the canon.²⁴

Eusebius also thought the Apocalypse of John (often referred to as “Revelations”) was spurious and yet that work *was* accepted into canon – the *Didache* was not. All of this to say that

²⁴ Historia Ecclesiastica III, 25.

it is very difficult to ascertain what Durene Christians might have done in the Assembly Room outside of assembling. Internal disagreement among early Christians on issues ranging from canonical texts to the proper way to interpret the Holy Trinity was not uncommon, and church leaders spilled considerable ink arguing among one another and calling each other (and their beliefs) heretical.

The archaeological evidence that suggests this to be an assembly hall of some sort is fairly straight-forward. The renovations in this room resulted in a large, pristine, plastered and whitewashed space that could hold dozens standing or sitting, could be closed off from light or not, and had at its eastern end what Yale called a dais or *bema* (circled in figure 86 above).

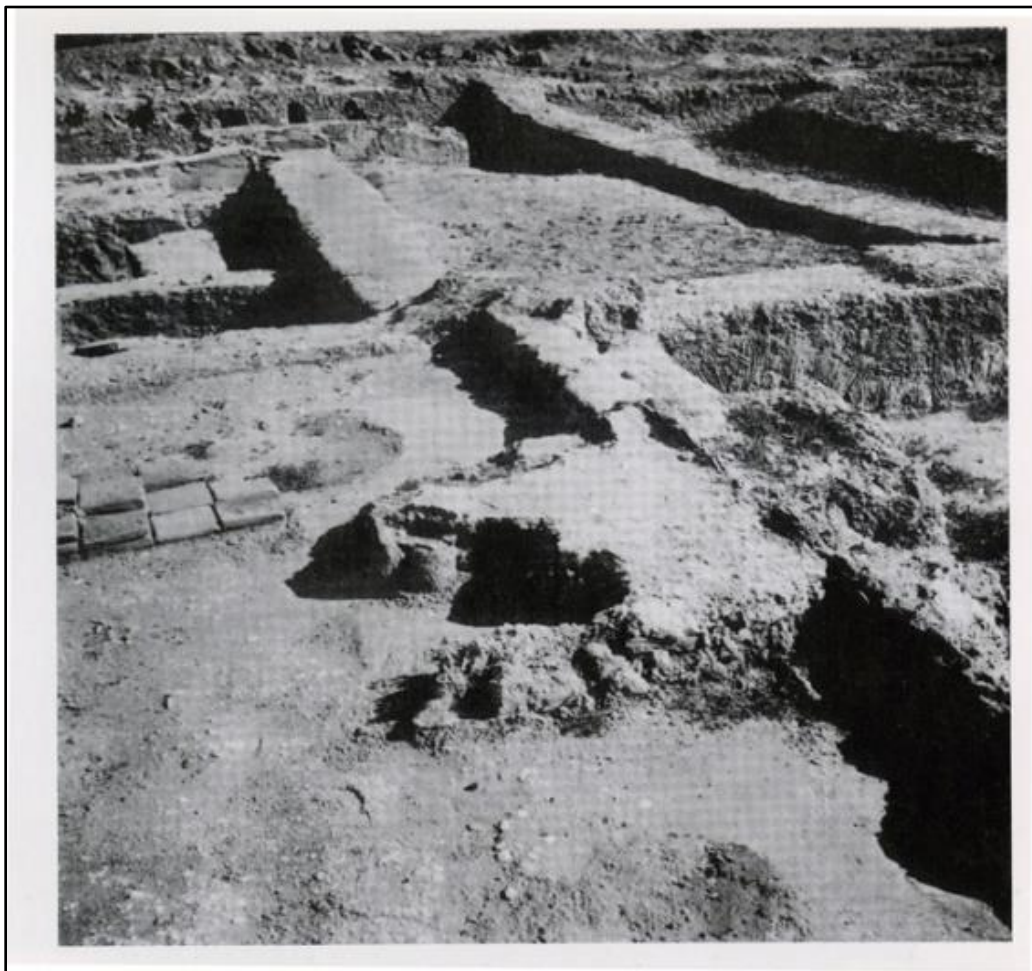


Figure 88: View north from Room 4 showing bema/dais in situ as excavated by Yale along east wall between Rooms 3 and 4.



Figure 89: Extant dais in April 2010 as photographed by author.

This low, rectangular mass of plaster and rubble is in fact the only installation made in the room during renovations. Kraeling calls it both a “dais” and a “bema” numerous times and seemingly interchangeably (Fin. Rep. 8.2). As neither word has a strict archaeological or architectural definition we see here clearly the problem with inconsistent categorizations and classifications that both Baird (2006) and Bossard-Couronné (2012) noted in their dissertations. Kraeling does eventually make clear what he means by the terms through his description of what he believed took place in the Assembly Hall and how the dais or bema fit into such gatherings (“bema” can mean/be an “altar” in function²⁵ in some traditions).

The Assembly Hall of the Christian Building at Dura has as its only permanent installations the low raised platform set against its short eastern wall and the small plaster socket placed

²⁵ The function of an altar for this work being an installation built and designated for offerings or sacrifice of some type, be they prayers, incense, coins, blood, etc.

in the corner between the south side of the platform and the wall from which it projects. The platform has from the beginning been interpreted consistently and correctly as the podium or bema provided for the person presiding at the assemblies, whether bishop, priest, teacher or reader. Bemas are, of course, of different lands and serve different purposes secular and religious. They are regular features of ancient synagogues, where they were used as stands for the reading of Holy Writ and are thus functionally similar to the podium in the Christian Assembly Hall, but structurally they are quite other, being mobile pieces of wooden furniture without special masonry substructure. (Fin. Rep. 8.2: 143)

This passage by Kraeling in the Final Report illustrates well my contention that researchers on Europos reach to other cultures, times, places, too frequently and unproblematically for comparanda, and are even willing to disregard local architectural tradition in order to fit evidence at Europos to preconceived notions of early Christian practice. Above, Kraeling notes that bemas are not local or regional aspects of religious practice at Europos (“from other lands”). He notes the fact that the bema in the Christian temple is built nothing like its supposed analog in a Synagogue, “structurally they are quite the other, being mobile pieces of wooden furniture without special masonry substructure.” As noted earlier, the installation in question in the Christian temple is made of rubble and plaster and immovable. Kraeling did find one other similar installation in the excavation archives on Europos, “At Dura there is one example of a similar low podium of but one step in the private audience hall in the Palace of the Dux” (143).

We have already established that interpretations of the Palace of the Dux by Yale were far off the mark. And here I must take exception with Kraeling’s overconfident interpretation of this small rectangular mass of rubble and plaster at the eastern end of Room 4. Kraeling’s interpretation rests on a series of general assumptions about early Christianity that may not hold for Europos. He turns to non-canonical Christian literature recalling stories about chairs and thrones on platforms, and then claims that this may be a podium where church leaders, including possibly bishops, stood, or sat in some sort of sanctified chair on the dais and spoke to the congregation (143-4), a practice not uncommon in early Christian literature. But, all of Kraeling’s

comparanda are again, other Christianities, or analogs from other regions and cultures. There is an irony here in that Kraeling likely possessed more information and knowledge about the diversity in practice and in texts of early Christianity and its relationship to ancient Mediterranean traditions than the Durene Christians themselves likely did. On the other hand, as has been shown repeatedly, Durene Christians knew a lot about the religious practice of their neighbors.

I've actually seen in person, touched, photographed, sketched and extensively measured the rubble rectangle in question, and despite Kraeling's admirable work, the simplest explanation for this installation is that it was the base of an altar in the Massif Contruit Simple or monolithic types as described by Bossard-Couronné (2012). This explanation need not incorporate any analyses of questionable comparanda and instead looks to local notions of worship: the ubiquitous small altars in Europos which fit the description of the plaster and rubble remains at the east end of Room 4 near perfectly,²⁶ and fits with what we know about the site formation processes at the temple, the smashing of that end of the building by Roman troops ; a process absent from Kraeling's interpretation but crucial to a reasonable interpretation of what was found by Yale.²⁷

As already discussed, altars of the monolithic and simple varieties were ubiquitous with Bossard-Couronné counting nearly 100 such examples in 13 temples. The Preliminary Reports and archives at Yale contain countless images and sketches of them.

²⁶ The installation, at almost 1.5 meters wide (north-south) is wider than the average altar of the monolithic type (~50cm – 1m), but not beyond the range of the non-aedicula altars she analyzed. But perhaps more importantly, the installation is wider (north-south) than it is long (east-west). Chairs are usually the opposite, extending more forward if placed against a wall, than to the left and right. One's legs require even more space in front of the chair. If a bishop or church leader did sit on some sort of sacred seat atop the bema, the installation would be better suited for them to sit sideways from the assembly's perspective.

²⁷ During the remainder of this section I will occasionally refer to the Field Report submitted to the MFSED in 2010 summarizing the results of my cleaning, measuring and the briefest of excavations at the site of the Christian temple in Europos. This report is included with this document as a separate file. *See* Appendix 2.5 for details on accessing the report.



Figure 90: An entirely arbitrary collection of photos taken of altars excavated in Europos of primarily the monolithic and pseudomonolithic types.

An example of Construit Simple Massif altars was seen in the temple to Azzanathkona lying at the foot of a bas relief (figure 90). A small shelf likely used for offerings to the deities portrayed in the sculpture above.



Figure 91: temple to Azzanathkona with bas-relief and small altar of the Construit Simple Massif type.

Pseudo- and monolithic types have been seen many times in this work, not the least of which was a “horned” type from the Mithraeum sitting in front of and underneath the Tauroctony (figure 91).



Figure 92: "Horned" pseudomonolithique type altar from Mithraeum.

A more typical (and better photographed) example comes from the temple to Atargatis:



Figure 93: Altar from temple to Atargatis in monolithique style.

What should be clear from the collection of the monolithic type altars in figure 89 above is that not only do altars of this type bear a similarity in form, size and materials to one another, but they could be removed by excavators largely intact indicating they are molded/fabricated and then installed wherever they need be. Both of these points are extremely important for interpreting the rubble and plaster rectangle in the Assembly Hall as the plinth or base to an altar smashed along with the wall behind it when the eastern end of Room 4 (and all the walls of Room 3) were leveled to create the *place d'armes*, discussed in detail in Chapter Two (Site Formation Processes).

This isometric drawing of the temple remains (figure 81, above) gives the impression that more of the height of the wall between Rooms 4 and 3 was preserved than was in reality. Figures 87 and 88 above, photos of the plinth *in situ* both in the 1930s and 2010, offer a different picture than the isometric, one where the wall behind (to the east of) the “bema”, separating Rooms 3 and 4 was found to be reduced to the same level as the height of the “bema.” I am not relying on old photos to make this claim, instead it was the photos that moved me to investigate.

In 2010 I was able to use height measurements taken by Yale at various points on the remaining foundations of the temple to re-establish their datum (which had been on top of the tiles in the courtyard, long since removed by the time I arrived). In doing so I found that both the plaster and rubble installation and the wall behind it were of the same height both in 1932 and in 2010. It should also be noted that when I began to excavate in 2010, my first task was to remove an enormous amount of windblown sand that covered this area of the temple. As a result of being buried, erosion from rains does not appear to have affected the extant portion of wall and “bema” on this part of the site (for details on measurements and how I reestablished the Yale datum, *see* Appendix 2.4). Based on these measurements, in order for Kraeling’s interpretation of the rubble being a bema to be accurate, one would have to believe that when the Roman military razed this

portion of the building, they just happened to also raze all the nearby walls to nearly the same height as the bema, and the wall immediately behind it to exactly the same height.

I hypothesize that the rubble and plaster installation at the eastern end of Room 4 was, like the wall behind it, originally taller, and was smashed to the same height as the walls around it. The most likely candidate for what that taller plaster and rubble installation might have been in a ritual space in Europos is a Simple, monolithic (or pseudo) style altar, its base or plinth still secured to the floor today.

To further this claim, I recorded that some of the original plaster floor of Room 4 was also still *in situ* and ran under the rubble in question.



Figure 94: Circled in red, the white area just in front of the installation is part of the room's original plastered floor and ran under the installation.

The area circled in red (above, figure 93) is the plastered floor showing where a small chunk of the plaster and rubble installation has long been removed revealing the floor underneath it. The plaster ran under the installation.

Lastly, the installation in question was not built into the wall behind it either.



Figure 95: Northeast corner of installation showing it was a separate construction from the wall and the door jamb to the immediate left.

Figure 94 shows that the installation was a separate entity both from the wall and a doorjamb built next to it. Unless one accepts that Roman laborers coincidentally razed the walls surrounding the “bema” to the same height as the bema *and* the Christians renovating the temple molded a 25-centimeter-tall, one meter by one and a half meter block of rubble and plaster to lay at the end of their Assembly Hall, then the more likely interpretation is that an altar stood at the end of their assembly room (not unlike the Mithraeum) and was destroyed along with Room 3 and the eastern end of Room 4 when Roman soldiers razed the eastern part of the building to build their *place d’armes*. While this interpretation may interfere with Kraeling’s desire to see a bishop standing 10 inches above his congregation proselytizing, it also suggests two things that very well may have taken place in the temple: Offerings akin to those made in temples all across Europos, and a brief moment in the 250s CE when Roman soldiers or laborers under their command smashed one of the earliest Christian altars ever erected.

II. Art

The artwork in the baptistery of the Christian temple at Europos has been written about countless times. The interpretations and assessment of the images as varied as the Christianities that dotted the Mediterranean in the first three centuries CE. To some, the artwork is primitive, or “crude” (Elsner 2001: 280) compared to other religious artwork in Europos. To others it is “sumptuous” and clearly bears the style of Durene paintings from other temples (Fin. Rep. 8.2: 24). In so far as interpreting the murals that covered the walls of this room, life, death, marriage, celibacy and shedding ones flesh “that these garments are changed into ‘garments of light’ and Paradise is regained” (Dirven 2008:46) have all been suggested as symbolized in the artwork and a part of the message a neophyte may have received during his initiation into the cult of Christ. Neither an art historian nor an expert in third century Middle Eastern art or early Christian art, I will not propose any sort of clearer understanding of how these images were explained and interpreted within the Durene Christian community, for such is not my bailiwick. Rather, there are a few claims that can made on the artwork here that I’ve not read elsewhere, claims that will again show evidence of interaction and integration of Durene Christians into the wider religious landscape of Europos.²⁸

Kraeling himself noted the similarities between the organization of the murals in the baptistery and other temples in Europos.

From the purely formal point of view the decorations of the Dura Baptistery are quite in accord with what is known about religious wall painting generally in the city. They follow a long-established local tradition suggesting that the most important part of a religious edifice should be embellished by wall painting and adopt the typical combination of

²⁸ While the baptistery murals are well known to many disciplines few others have had an opportunity to view them extensively. I refer the reader once again to Yale online repository of images: Over 15,000 photographs and images from the YUAG Europos archives are available at: <http://sscommons.org/openlibrary/#1> Over 11,000 images (many of artifacts described in the Object Register) are available here: <https://artgallery.yale.edu/collection/search/Europos> I encourage the reader to spend a few minutes with these images. Although I will be including several images in the text that follows, they offer only a whisper of what the full mural project sings.

pictorial compositions and ornamental designs for this purpose. They single out one wall of the decorated chamber to serve as a focal area and devote this to a single composition. They divide the other walls of the room horizontally into registers by formal framing devices and present in these registers successive individual scenes. (Fin. Rep. 8.2: 41)

The horizontal registers he speaks of are most easily illustrated through a comparison of the organization of the Synagogues murals to the Baptistery. While the Synagogue's project is far more ambitious, of a consistent high quality in style and form, and covers many times the space of the more modest baptistery project, it is also perhaps the most extensively preserved example of this Durene tradition.



Figure 96: Rear wall of the Synagogue's Assembly Room as excavated by Yale (Clark and Susan Hopkins are the couple on the right holding their daughter Mary Sue). Note the horizontal arrangement of murals with decorated borders between them. On the very right edge of the photo is one of the columns of the aedicula (Torah Shrine), the focal area of the Synagogues project.

The baptistery's mural project also includes the formal characteristics of Durene religious painting as described by Kraeling above. Unfortunately, photos taken of the Christian murals *in situ* were all in black and white and reproduce poorly if one is not already familiar with what one is looking at. All color photos of the murals taken by Yale were shot in the immediate years that followed their removal from the walls at the temple in the 1930s when they were put on display at the YUAG. Many of these photos have yellowed with age just as many of the murals preserved at Yale have faded over the years. The fading of the murals is due largely to the paintings not being true frescoes, where paint is applied to wet plaster and binds with it. The Christian paintings had pigment applied to dry plaster and as such, despite every effort on Yale's part, that pigment has slowly degraded over time leaving only a hint of their vibrant colors when they were painted (pers. comm. Lisa Brody, January 2018).

The following images below, a combination of architectural renderings, sketches, color and black and white photos, are presented to offer the reader some small idea of what Christians themselves observed in the third century. One thing to keep in mind when looking at the images is that much of the mural project in the baptistery was destroyed and damaged and perhaps one-third of the original project has been preserved.

We'll begin with a rendering in ink of the north wall done by Yale's excavation architect, Henry Pearson. Underneath the drawing by Pearson are several photos of the paintings taken by Yale when the paintings were on display in the 1930s. Researchers are nearly unanimous that the images in the baptistery should be viewed counterclockwise beginning and/or ending with the images behind the baptismal font (The Good Shepherd and Adam and Eve, below). However, from a phenomenological perspective, in truth, whether one entered this room through the door

leading into it in the courtyard or the door leading in from Room 5, the north wall would be the first thing one would see (figures 96 and 97).

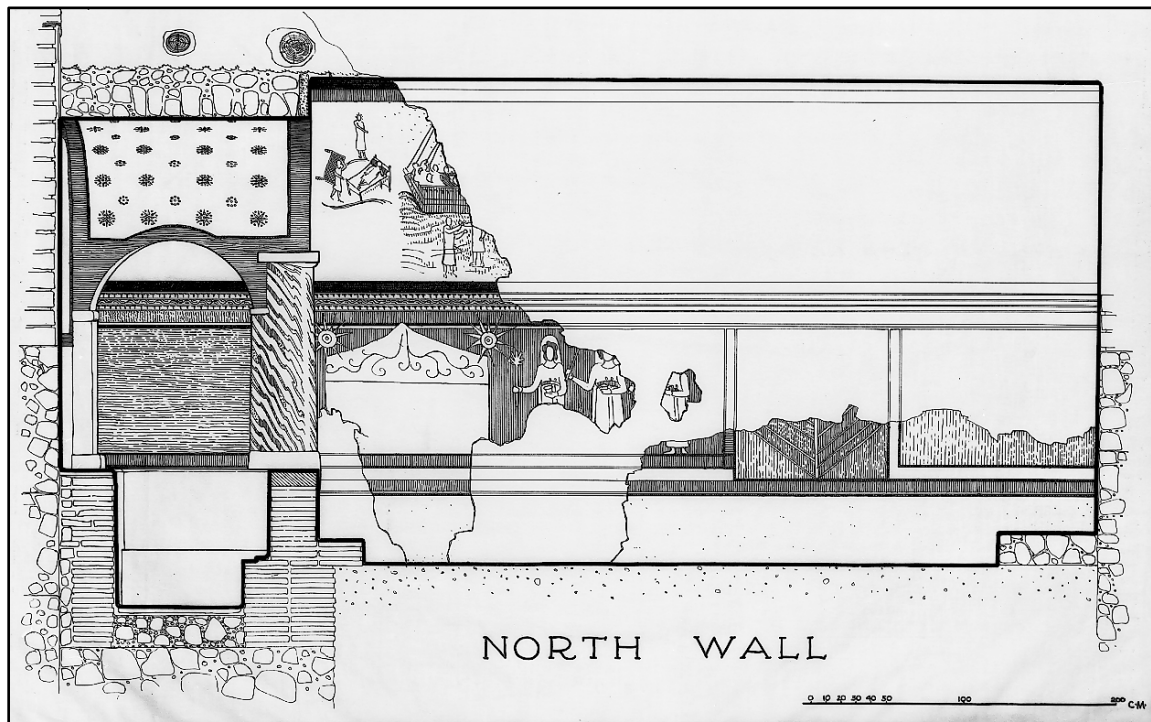


Figure 97: Artists reproduction of extant mural program in Baptistery at the time of the Yale excavation.



Figure 98: Fragments of the actual murals themselves on display at the YUAG.

Beginning with figure 96 above and moving from right (east) to left (west), the first visible image on the wall is what appears to be the bottom corner of some structure. Kraeling described it as, “two opposed parallelograms that face each other across the central axis of the field and whose lower sides slant diagonally upward from the axis toward the frame at either side” (Fin. Rep. 8.2: 75). Many researchers are convinced this image represents the bottom of a door, I am only convinced it resembles what Kraeling has described.

Next, three women carrying torches and bowls approaching what is generally agreed upon to be some sort of tomb (figures 96 and 97, above which, two 11-pointed stars seem to hover.



Figure 99: Section of mural in the Baptistery representing two stories from the Gospels, the healing of the paralytic and Jesus walking on water. Photo taken of the original painting at Yale after being cut from the temple's walls and shipped to the US

Above the women and the tomb, in the higher horizontal register, are illustrations of two stories from the Gospels (figures 96 and 98), the healing of the paralytic (who carries away his own bedsprings after being healed), and half a boat in water with several figures in the boat and two others in the water representing the miracle of Jesus walking on the waters of lake Galilee and likely the Apostle Peter who in Matthew 14:22-31 tries to walk out to Jesus himself and begins to sink when he doubts the miracle possible.

Turning counter-clockwise one would then turn to face the baptismal font and the painting at the rear of the aedicula, under its canopy, figures 99 – 101. This is an image discussed earlier (Chapter Two), the Good Shepherd (or Shepherd of Hermas, figures 99 and 100), and also, in the lower left-hand corner a small sketch of Adam, Eve, a tree and a small serpent slithering under them.

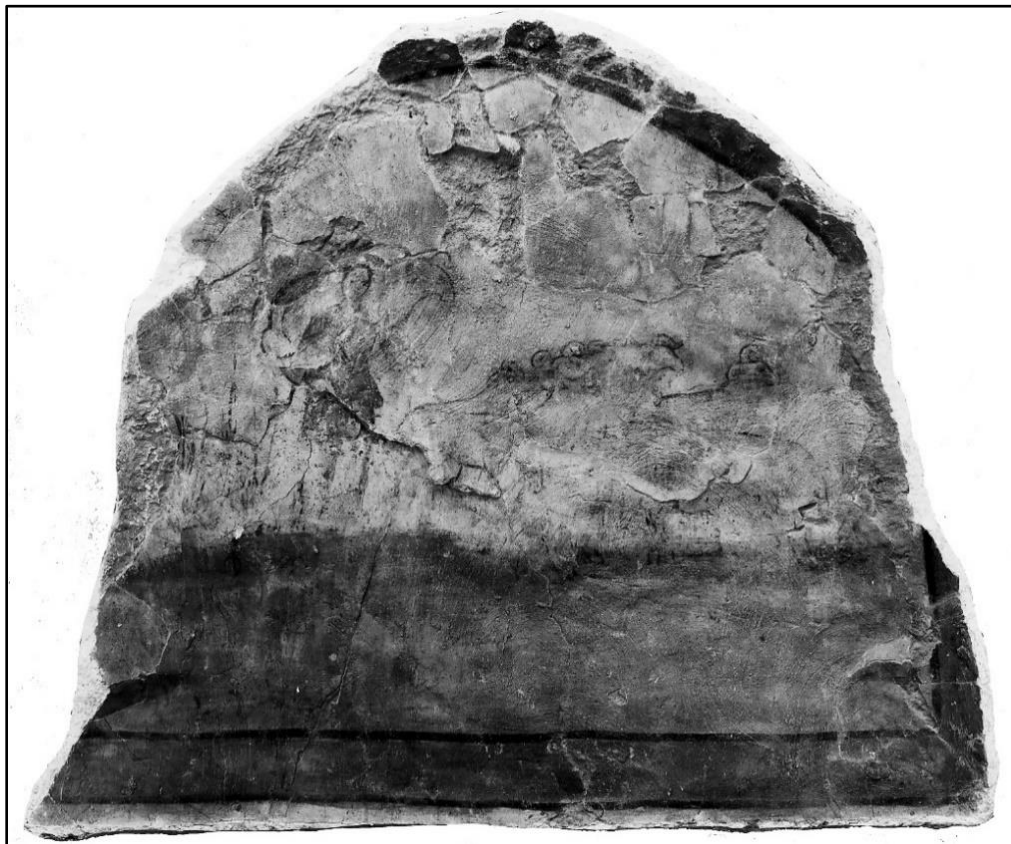


Figure 100: Section of mural from behind the baptismal font representing the Good Shepherd and Adam and Eve at the Tree of Knowledge/Life. Photo taken of the original painting at Yale after being cut from the temple's walls and shipped to the US.



Figure 101: Artist's rendering of mural section in figure 99.



Figure 102: Detail of Adam, Eve, a tree and a snake from figures 100 and 101.

Turning left to the South Wall, we have an image of a woman at a well (figures 102 and 103) and an image under the niche on the wall between the room's two doors which bears a scene from the story of David and Goliath and is the only image preserved with text naming the image. The names of David and Goliath are written in Greek (figures 102 and 104).

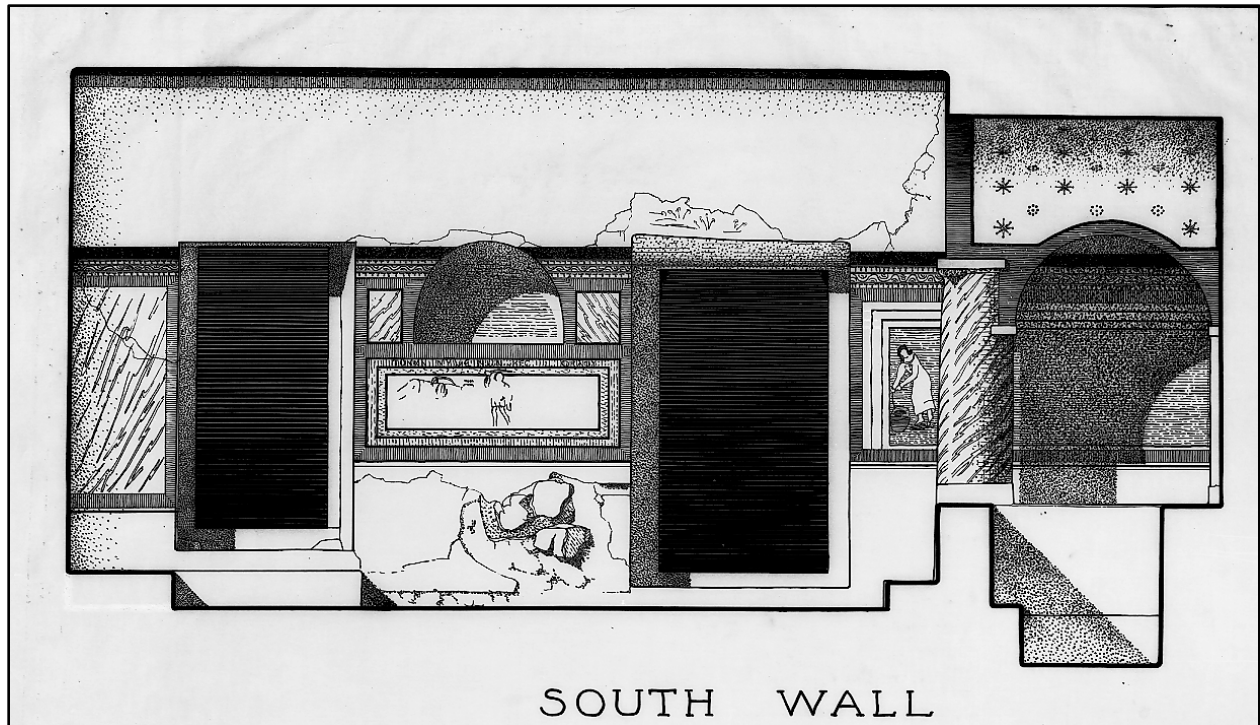


Figure 103: Artist's reproduction of extant murals on south wall of Baptistery.



Figure 104: Photograph of Woman at the Well, after removal from Syria and curated at Yale.



Figure 105: Photograph of David and Goliath mural after removal from Syria and curation at Yale.

The back wall (west) of the baptistery was also decorated but that wall survived to less than a meter in height and had benches in front of it, the only painting that survived is that of five pairs of feet in procession, just above the panels bottom border (figures 105 and 106).



Figure 106: Western wall of baptistery; Photo of bottom of mural showing bottom border and five pairs of feet in situ.

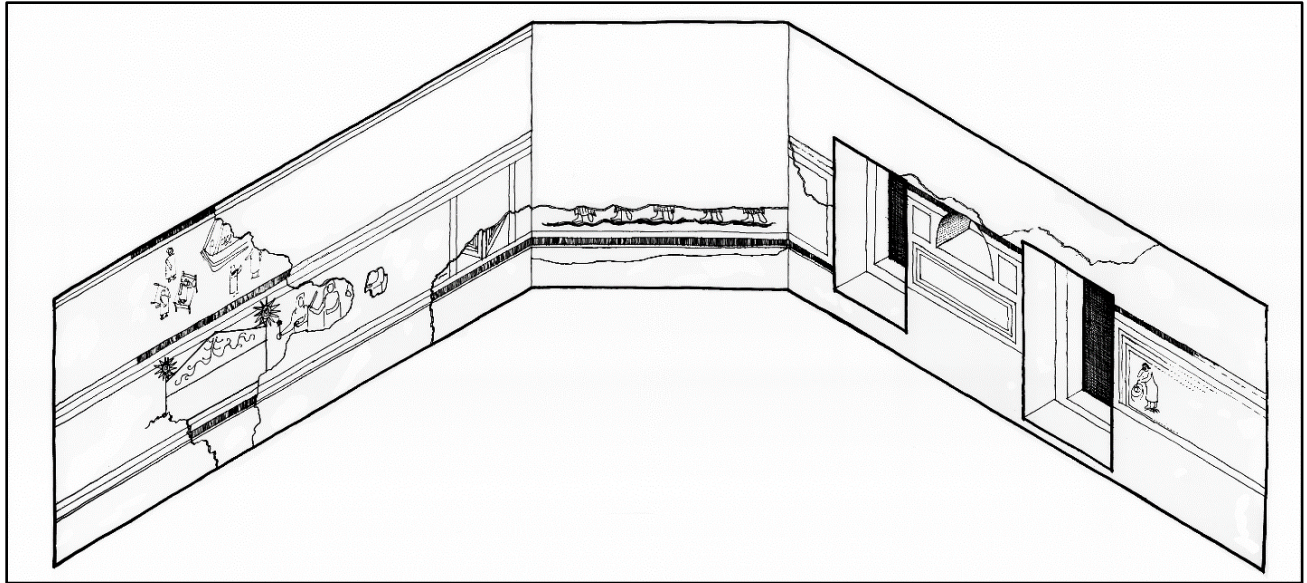


Figure 107: Recreation of extant Baptistery mural program, facing east. Doorways to courtyard (Room 1) and Room 5 on south/right.

All told, there are eight individual “scenes” in the baptistery, only six of which allow an obvious connection to Christian texts. The feet along the eastern wall and the image of something’s “corner” along the northern wall (which given its location makes it very enticing to assume said corner is the destination of the people who belong to the feet) do not provide enough context for what their whole images may have conveyed (though many researchers have proffered hopeful guesses).

As for the remaining six scenes, two are drawn from the Hebrew Bible (Adam and Eve, and David and Goliath),²⁹ three are from canonical Gospels (The Healing of the Paralytic, The Woman at the Well, and Jesus Walking on Water) and one is from a non-canonical text.

²⁹ I have read in various literature that the two Jewish images are from the “Torah.” Baird (2016: 108) most recently repeats the same description. The story of David and Goliath is not in the Torah, also called the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Hebrew Bible. It is told in the Book of Samuel, a part of the historical stories of Israel and the Jewish people. I bring this up both as a point of clarification but also to indicate that Durene Christians were familiar with both the Torah (in which the story of Adam and Eve is told) and other parts of the Hebrew Bible. The “Old Testament,” had not yet been established in the third-century and would come to include several texts not included in the Hebrew Bible (and depending on which Christian faith one asks today, the number of “deuterocanonical” books in the Old Testament differs widely)

The image of the shepherd may reflect a general notion of Jesus as the Good Shepherd in relation to a long-standing tradition of the *Kriophoros*, an image of a shepherd bearing a ram for sacrifice which predates Christianity and was a common image in Greco-Roman art.³⁰ Or it may indicate knowledge of the now non-canonical text, *The Shepherd of Hermas*. I tend to think the latter, that Durene Christians were familiar with the text because as the primary image one would see as they stepped into the baptismal font, it would be strange if the Christian Community did not have at least an oral tradition, if not the text itself, relating the meaning of the image. As for the Woman at the Well, the story this image represents is from the canonical Gospel according to John. But the story is one referenced far more often in modern Eastern Orthodox and Eastern Catholic traditions, where the Woman has been given a name, Photina (illuminated one) and has been canonized a saint. In the Roman Catholic Church, the woman remains an unnamed Samaritan, a Jewish sect at odds with the Jews of Israel at the time.

Or to put all of this another way, four of the identifiable six images come from Jewish, Eastern or Syriac Christian traditions.

I will leave to theologians and art historians the debate about what these images might signify. What do the five pairs of feet leading to a “door” indicate? Why are there three women with torches and bowls approaching a gabled structure with glowing stars? Are they the two Marys and Salome mentioned in Mark 16:1-8? Were there possibly more women in that panel that did not survive being buried for 1,700 years? Are those glowing stars some version of the angels purported to have met the women visiting the tomb of Jesus in Luke 24:1-12? If so, does that mean that the Gospel of Luke was better known or preferred than Mark, the latter which only

³⁰ See Chapter Two for more details on the Good Shepherd/*Kriophoros*.

mentions a single angel at the tomb? Why is there no imagery of a resurrection? Or, if there was in the missing registers, why was it not a focal point of the initiation ritual or room?

I don't know. And I'm not sure anyone can (or should) seek those answers in partial images painted by a Christian sect whose textual traditions are largely unknown. The images admit to knowledge of the Hebrew Bible, some version of the Gospels and likely the Shepherd of Hermas. But only one piece of Christian text was found in Europos, a parchment with a portion of a Harmony Gospel, likely the Diatessaron, but the debate over whether the text found is truly a copy of Tatian's Diatessaron, or a similar harmony gospel is still ongoing.³¹

Based on the evidence that survived, the art, architecture and artifacts (the parchment), Durene Christians present a practice distinct from the Church that would rise under Constantine in the fourth century. Influenced by local logics of worship and a harmony gospel purported to be written by an individual called "Tatian the Syrian" by some historians, there is little need to reach across time and space to other Christianities to understand what "flavor" of Christianity was practiced in Europos. Instead, Durene Christianity, as revealed through the community's material culture, would better serve as a model which assumptions about early Christian sects and their beliefs, drawn entirely from textual sources, should be compared to.

Before we move on to the final section of this Chapter, examining briefly the role of artifacts and archives in this analysis of the religious life of Durene Christians, there is one more claim I feel can be adequately made and supported concerning the artwork in the baptistery.

Elsner (2007: 25), while discussing ritual-centered visuality explained,

In effect, ritual-centered visuality denies the appropriateness of ... interpreting through the rules and desires of everyday life. It constructs a ritual barrier to the identifications and objectifications of the screen of discourse and posits a sacred possibility for vision, which is by definition more significant since it opens the viewer to confronting his or her god.

³¹ See Chapter 2, 139-40.

Imagery plays a central role in ritual practice. Here, Elsner makes a case that the very images themselves can provide an entry point into the limen. I have no argument with this claim or concept. Ritual by necessity is a break with the quotidian, a break from “the rules and desires of everyday life.” In large part, why I have avoided interpreting images in the baptistery, as to what meanings or significations these images had for Durene Christians, is because my goal with this work is to establish the everyday lives and interactions of Durene Christians through their use of material culture to create their limen. What I hope to establish is that in order to explain or interpret symbolic meaning from images that are undoubtedly presenting “sacred possibility,” we must first establish the daily, the normative, the rules and desires of everyday Durene Christians before we can conceptualize their break from it. After having done that, there is then room for interpreting images that were intended to lead worshippers away from mundanity. And I have taken this task up because so little literature on the Christian community art Europos inquires upon what their daily lives were like in a Roman city as diverse as Europos. Sometimes, Durene Christians were just Durene.

It is implicit in such a study that identities will interact; none is static, nor is any in a vacuum. They are all defined vis-à-vis differences, perceived or imposed, with other groups ... The only common current running through the various identities is their fluidity. All are dynamic; relationships with states and ruling powers changed, most religions were not exclusive, texts and people could be multi-lingual, and a person’s status within their household changed over the course of their lifetime (Baird 2006: 177).

In *their* city, in *their* interactions with *their* neighbors is where we can begin to see *their* lives. Durene Christians did not appear to live in tension or competition with other religions, or in resistance to the Roman Empire, an assumption I possessed nearly ten years ago when I began this project but no longer consider a major concern of the Christians at Europos given that there are

too many links between the Christian community there and the Roman military to assume animosity between them.

Returning to Elsner's claim that "*interpreting images*" need be done through a lens as free of the mundane as possible, I agree. But I hold that such is not the case when *creating* those images. Requiring a combination of technical skill and traditional techniques, making sacred art is perhaps as much a part of the realm of economics – the learning of a trade – as it is sacred work. To this end, let us look at the end of the mural program on the north wall (assuming that the images were organized to be viewed counterclockwise from the font and then around, ending at the three women approaching what most have reasonably interpreted to be a tomb of some sort).



Figure 108: Murals from northern wall of baptistery reassembled at Yale after removal from Euopos. Some smaller fragments are not shown here. Compare to drawing of north wall program above

Peppard (2016) has offered recently a novel interpretation of the program in the room, suggesting it narrates a spiritual wedding, a uniting with Christ. He interprets the gabled object in the final mural as a bridal chamber of sorts. His research is magisterial and incorporates analyses of texts and images, canonical and non- and delves into other eastern and Greek religious practices as well. He too was perplexed by the five pairs of feet on the eastern wall and three women in front of the gabled-object holding torches. He notes that there is no other known text or image of the “myrrophores” (Marys) holding torches. Instead they are consistently displayed or described in early Christian art as holding lamps as they head to Jesus’ tomb and find him missing after his crucifixion. The number of women presented is also intriguing for depending on which Gospel one consults, the number and names of the women who found Jesus’ tomb empty differs. Peppard came to a similar conclusion as I suggested above that since there is more space for additional individuals on the final mural it is difficult to suggest that the number of women shown (or to be more accurate, pairs of feet) offers insight into which Gospels may have been prized in the painting of this mural. Kraeling suggested that the Diatessaron, as a compilation of all the Gospels, included all of the women mentioned in each canonical Gospel, totaling five, hence the five pairs of feet (Fin. Rep. 8.2: 213).

But both Kraeling and Peppard reach elsewhere for explanations of Durene Christian practice. I suggest instead that the answer to what the gable-roofed object is lies (literally) in Europos’ necropolis.

In most of the excavated tombs not completely devastated, were more or less visible remnants of wooden coffins ... In some cases the exterior surface of the coffin was covered with a layer of plaster 0.1 – 0.5cm. thick and was painted (Pl. L V I I). This coat of plaster helps considerably to establish the shape of the lid of the coffin, which has the appearance of a gabled roof. (Pre. Rep. IX, Pt. II: 99)

As mentioned in Chapter Five, Europos' necropolis was vast. While a handful of tower tombs dotted the steppe in front of the great wall, the land was also littered with entrances into catacombs (over 950). Yale excavated over 50 of these catacombs and noted that the most common form of burial was in a gabled, wooden coffin, often plastered and decorated. What plaster remains Yale could find suggested that the decorations were modest, and some fragments possessed a decoration described as so: "The colors are brownish red and black the design a geometrical wave pattern or a schematized laurel wreath with triangular leaves, both decorations running in horizontal stripes" (Pre. Rep. IX, Pt. II: 100). As for the gabled-object in question on the northern wall, Kraeling, believing this object to be a sarcophagus, described it as such, "The body is unadorned but the lid was decorated at its end with a vine design in light brown, the branching elements of which spread irregularly to the right and the left from a stock at the apex of the gabled lid" (Fin. Rep. 8.2: 75).

Once again, I call attention to the ubiquity and similarity of a local religious tradition, this time burials. Not knowing which texts and traditions Durene's Christian's favored or were aware of (beyond those mentioned above), I don't believe we possess enough evidence to suggest sarcophagi or bridal chambers. However, gabled, plastered (the object in the painting is white), wooden coffins, decorated with leaves and vines with brown hues are traditional funerary furniture in Europos. I have stated earlier my position that the acquisition of a home and conversion of it to ritual use indicated a growing Christian community in Europos that had both need and wealth enough to engage in such a project. This also assumes Christians in Europos for years before they acquired their own temple. If the local tradition of burial at Europos is underground and in a gabled coffin, I'm not sure there is any need to go much further than the necropolis to explain why there are several women bearing torches and approaching a gabled object assumed to be Jesus'

tomb. A local painter, even one initiated into the cult of Christ, being asked to portray women coming to an empty tomb, who does not have access to centuries of pre-existing Christian images to draw from and, quite possibly was among the first human beings ever asked to depict such a thing, could only draw from his or her own known and habituated funerary traditions, not Jewish burial traditions from two centuries earlier.

III. Artifacts and Archives

As for how the archives can and have been used to illuminate the lives of Christians at Europos, not much more need be said than what was discussed at length in Chapter Two and then deployed throughout the following chapters. Whether Preliminary or Final reports, the unparalleled collection of nearly 100 year old images maintained in excellent condition in a digital repository, the letters and daybooks of excavators on site, the indefatigable staff at the YUAG, and so many more resources on offer by the team there, the quantity and quality of data preserved at Yale is exceptional and provides a level of resolution that could only be improved by having been on the ground with the Yale team in the 1920s and 1930s.

As for artifactual data and its use in detailing the lives of Durene Christians, that is another story. An “artifact” at Europos is defined as any object entered into the Object Register described in detail in Chapter Two. As discussed in that same chapter, Baird (2006) compiled a spreadsheet for her dissertation, adding an enormous amount of additional artifactual data she drew from any description of artifacts listed in the Object Register which were also described in Preliminary or Final Reports, or other archival materials (such as information on an index-card catalogue that Yale has also preserved). From the publication of this spreadsheet in hard-copy form, I was able to reconstruct a functioning spreadsheet (*See* Appendices 2.3 and 2.4) where it became possible to search for registered artifacts by location, material type, season, and several other variables.

Armed with the most robust digital repository of artifact data from Europos, I attempted to search for any correlations in “assemblages” between temples (Buildings with specific designations), or between blocks on which temples sat. My working hypothesis was that temple to temple, and block to block, Yale researchers were generally interested in the same types of artifacts: objects that possessed obvious diagnostic properties (for dating, evidence of specific

technologies associated with either Macedonians, Persians Or Romans, identifiable bronze and bonework, coins, etc.). While artifact collection was biased, incomplete, and relied on untrained laborers, my hypothesis assumed that those problems existed consistently from site to site in the city. My first goal was to verify numerous previous claims that there were no legible neighborhood enclaves in Europos (Most recently, Baird 2016: 12). For example, a question I posed was, is there an artifact signature in the block surrounding the Jewish temple that differs significantly from that of the blocks of other temples which were surrounded by primarily domestic spaces?

As suspected the results were simply too arbitrary to suggest religious or ethnic enclaves based on artifactual data. The homogeneity of domestic architecture throughout the city suggests no such enclaves either. Much like in the construction of ritual spaces, Durenes possessed a local logic of domestic architecture (Baird 2012: 87-90, Pearson in Pre. Rep. V), an idealized version of which may look strikingly familiar to readers (figure 108, below).

The same insignificant results were obtained in block by block comparisons as well. The artifactual data is too thin, too arbitrary and not provenienced well enough to provide the necessary resolution to suggest sameness or difference by building or block.

What the spreadsheet does provide however is a previously heretofore (before Baird's work) ability to analyze artifact data quickly belonging to a specific block, building or room, or to create a catalog of all artifacts of a certain material or type (the bones at Europos, the bronze at Europos, etc.). And further, if a researcher is interested in a specific genre of artifacts (say material, bone) and finds in their refined search a particularly curious artifact, Baird has provided all references to that artifact in the written reports and archives, so that said researcher can easily acquire all known data about the artifact (including contacting the YUAG with clear and specific requests). While Yale's artifact collection methodology, typical if not superior to excavations of

IN/CONCLUSION

“All this evidence is biased in its production, in its survival, or by academic choice. Written evidence is dominated by the literature and by documents of the politically powerful.” (Pollard 2000:9)

Paraphrased from a conversation, September 2018, with a colleague from the Graduate Program in Anthropology at the University of Chicago:

“So, you said that you think the Christian population and the Jewish community were both seeing their economic situations improve as more soldiers showed up and there was a greater demand for resources and labor, right?”

“That’s the general gist, yeah.”

“Did Christianity have a prohibition against money lending at the time?”

“There is no ‘Christianity’ acting as an agent nor even a Mediterranean wide institution at the time. There are Christians. They live in many places with various alliances with various bishops and texts. One of the things I’m trying to do with this work is to dissuade researchers from notions of idealized or highly restrictive collective identities in the past when they don’t adhere; and to argue against the use of religion – either as a concept or referring to any specific religion – as a historical agent. Religion is an analytical category, an order of things for offering useful explanations for where we came from, where are we going, and how do we use all the stuff at our disposal to get there. It’s an ontology, not so different from ‘science.’ Religion, in the generic, non-specific sense isn’t even an ‘institution.’ Institutions have specific and often singular goals, be they economic, ideological, whatever. ‘Religion’ isn’t that, though some specific religions include such things among their doctrine. European Christianity of the past 500 years by and large supported European colonialism. But Christianities, largely Catholicism, in Central and South America in the last 75 years has been deployed often as part of a resistance to colonial and capital interests, leaning more towards a social system where collective needs and an ethics recognizing those needs are influencing political institutions there. Same for Zionist churches in South Africa (Comaroff 1985). Evangelicalism in the US, most would argue, has done the opposite. But concepts don’t do things. People, humans, sometimes using religions and sciences in different

ways, do things, but religion doesn't start a war and science doesn't drop a bomb on Hiroshima. People do that, often cloaking themselves in things like religious, ethnic and nationalistic identities and ideologies. Religion didn't end the civil rights movement, but without black churches as an alternative political community to the dominant one, it may not have succeeded. The church allowed a space for action and coherence for African-Americans which was not offered by the hegemonic political tools available to whites at the time. 'Religion' didn't start the Crusades. Ostensibly, Catholic city-states like Venice or Florence ignored the Pope's request to send troops to the 'Holy Land' (whose Holy Land?) because it would have interfered with the wealth they were generating by trading with partners in the Middle East. People, human beings, often acting collectively with the goals of increasing their own or collective power, wealth, access to resources, etc. make the decisions to go to war, to spend resources on a military, to indoctrinate people, and sacred sites are resources in the construction of religious and national identity, necessary collective identities which, when one group has acquired enough power, they can 'other' another and define that other as a threat."

"Huh. You didn't answer my question."

"Nothing called 'Christianity' had a Christian-wide prohibition or prescription on anything in the third-century. That would be a Constantinian edict decades later. Many Christian communities had various prohibitions and aligned themselves closer to or in resistance to others with similar such rules. I mean, the man that became Bishop of Antioch, Paul of Samosata, about ten or fifteen years after Europos fell, was ultimately branded a heretic and had to be forcibly removed by Roman troops from his Syrian bishopric. The Romans were more than happy to help because he had aligned himself with Palmyra's Empress Zenobia who – depending on who you ask – either revolted against Rome or proclaimed herself the true Roman ruler of the East in absence of stable Roman governing. Paul was known to be a part of her court as she travelled back and forth between Palmyra, the capital of her Kingdom, and Antioch, the Roman capital of Syria where he resided. Point is, at the time of Europos' fall, you still had major divisions between important Bishoprics leading to claims of heretics and forced removal of bishops in the very region where Durene Christians would have been raised up. So, I don't know if 'Christianity' had a prohibition against money lending. And the meager textual evidence at Europos doesn't tell me what Durene Christians thought about such things. But if my assumption was right that at least some Christians had visited the Jewish Synagogue down the street from their temple and that some

interaction between peoples who both read the same ancient texts as part of their religious and ritual practice did happen, then ... maybe? According to doctrine Jews couldn't charge interest to other Jews ... no idea how Durene Christians would have adopted or if they adopted such ideas. I only know that it is difficult to be a merchant along caravan routes without some economic arrangements that leave coin in safe places while travelling for days across a desert that had seen 500 years of regular warfare between empires. What sort of local arrangements were made and by whom for such necessities isn't legible at Europos. Long story short: Jews and Christians at Europos did what needed to be done to survive and thrive in Europos, no doubt taking to heart their religious views, but no doubt innovating and adapting at a local level. Neither 'Christianity' nor 'Judaism' did anything, but Durene Christians and Jews did quite a bit."

I. East Side, West Side, All Around the Town

There is no way to know for certain which of the competing Christianities the Christians at Europos may have subscribed to although Kraeling (F.R. 8.2) made a considerable effort.

What the nature of the Christian faith may have been in the Tigris-Euphrates basin generally and at Dura in particular in the period of the Christian Building is the last and most important of the questions to be considered in this context. Obviously the best evidence for what was believed at Dura is provided by the decorations of the Dura Baptistery. (Fin. Rep. 8.2: 116).

If Kraeling had stopped there and then, using the material and textual evidence of the only known ritual space of the period and region to compare, contrast and necessarily challenge the received wisdom of ancient texts, he and I would be in complete agreement. But just two sentences later it becomes apparent that what is on the ground at Europos (and in it) is not where he wishes to focus his analysis.

The nature of Christian thought in the Tigris- Euphrates basin takes on recognizable form in the mid-fourth century beginning with the period of Aitallaha, bishop of Edessa from 325-345/6, and of Ephraem Syrus (*ca.* 300-373). (Fin. Rep. 8.2: 116)

What follows this claim are pages of discussion of the competing sects and factions of Christianity at Edessa, some 325 kilometers away, beginning around 200 CE. And all that to explain that the competing factions and sects of Christianity in the Tigris-Euphrates basin were numerous. After many pages of summarizing many aspects of what was known of early Christian history at the time and the naming of dozens of texts, Kraeling comes to the problematic conclusion that birthed this project. “It would make it imperative, finally, to give precedence to source material representing the eastern Christian point of view in appraising the meaning of the Dura Baptistery decorations.”

That is, if I understand Kraeling, there isn’t consensus in the Tigris-Euphrates basin on what should be considered normative Christian beliefs, and yet there is some sort of “eastern

Christian point-of-view” of Christian practice that should be used to interpret the baptistery decorations and by way of association determine which sect Durene Christians may have belonged to. Not only have I made it clear that I think this sort of interpretation is backwards, using conflicting religious texts to interpret a singular, material presentation of said religion’s ritual practice, but some forty years later, Hopkins suggested the exact opposite. “Durene Christianity came from the West and remained in the Western tradition, not quite the tradition of catacombs, but rather that of a westernized Syria” (1976: 117). And by “westernized,” Hopkins means Roman.

Hopkins, Kraeling, and many researchers of early Christianity all suffer from what I believe to be the same epistemological assumption: Europos Dura’s Christian temple must reflect a Christian tradition in the region as understood through textual evidence. Instead, I offer that no such solution can be found at Europos and rather, theologians and academics who study early Christianity must regard Durene Christians as a problem.

The evidence available points to a combination of early Christian ideas and traits that don’t allow one to fit the people into categorizations of sects and factions established through the long and often tenacious discourse of Christian leaders around the Mediterranean – or even just those in the Middle East – leaders who had the desire and opportunity (time, leisure) to write about the divides. The evidence at Europos shows a Christian Community well integrated with other Durenes and even (and perhaps especially) the Roman military. I am obviously not denying that there were nameable and theologically identifiable divides and that church leaders argued vehemently, sincerely and passionately about their theological positions and their desire to see a doctrine that reflected those inclinations. What I am arguing is that the facts on the ground don’t line up well with any specific tradition or heresy because that’s not how religion works on the ground (*see* Chapter One). Christians, just like Jews, immigrants from Anath, Palmyrenes, etc.

adapted their religious beliefs in Europos to various local and regional traditions and logics. Arguments taking place in Edessa and martyrs in Rome were not reflected in the surviving evidence of the cult of Christ at Europos. But regional Syrian texts and local art and architectural styles do tell us about the lives of Durene Christians, a Christian sect overlooked in every ancient Christian text known.

II. Pax Palmyra

In previous chapters we have explored the extensive influence Palmyra had on Europos. Given this, it should be noted that Paul of Samosata, the Bishop of Antioch, and a confidant of Palmyrene Queen (and then Empress) Zenobia in the years immediately following the fall of Europos (~260-272), subscribed to a monarchist view of Jesus – that is, he believed Jesus was not born divine, but just a man. Paul of Samosata and his monarchist beliefs were determined to be heretical by a Synod of primarily Greek bishops around 268 CE. However, as a favored adviser of Queen Zenobia, Paul refused to give up his Bishopric while his Queen and then Empress rose in political stature. It was not until 272 CE, and with the first invited intercession of a Roman Emperor in Christian affairs, Aurelian, that Paul was removed. It should also be noted that in 272 CE, Aurelian defeated Paul's patron, Zenobia, and reclaimed the Roman east from the Palmyrenes who had seized nearly the entirety of it, from Egypt to Turkey, for several years. Aurelian, unsurprisingly, sided with the Synod of Bishops, and had considerable political reason to want any of Zenobia's closest allies far removed from political power.

The importance of a Monarchist becoming Bishop of Antioch – the first Bishopric formed by Jesus' favored Apostle Peter according to Christian texts, and still one of the most important in the third century as well – is telling because it suggests that the divinity of Jesus was in doubt in Syria by at least some prominent early Christians there. Such beliefs were often criticized by other early Christians as “Jewish” beliefs, as still holding to a singular notion of godhead (Yahweh) rather than the trinity that would come to dominate orthodox Christian Practice after Constantine and the council of Nicaea decided the question of the trinity and Jesus' divinity in 325 CE (also with the assistance of a Roman emperor, Constantine).

I close with this small bit of eastern Roman and Palmyrene history because I believe the evidence on the ground at Europos does offer us one fairly solid lead as to where researchers might look to better understand Durene Christians outside of Europos: Palmyra.

Arriving in mass as the auxiliary to first occupy Europos under a Roman banner, Palmyrene soldiers flooded the city in the 160s (and built the first Mithraeum). Palmyra possessed a great deal of independence within the Roman empire in the middle of the third-century and although it has been pointed out that martyrdom and persecutions of Christians in the Europos is exaggerated in the public mind, still, if there were a place to be less likely to strictly implement Roman edicts, Palmyra, removed from the Imperial Center and with a several millennia old history, identity and independence streak, qualifies readily. The Palmyrene influence on the city is extensive in temples and religious structures. As early as 33 CE Palmyra had status, numbers, and wealth enough to build a temple in the Necropolis, a Necropolis with Tower Tombs in the tradition of Palmyra's necropolis. Dirven (2008) suggests that Durene Christians came from Antioch or Edessa, a common refrain in the literature. But also, a common refrain is that the Christian population at Europos had its ranks filled by at least some Roman soldiers (and material evidence presented in this work attests to the same). A Palmyrene population at Europos had been there for centuries before the military buildup began to increase after 168 CE when the garrison at Europos began to grow. Palmyrene soldiers appear to make up the bulk of the occupying forces at Europos, and this growth of the Palmyrene population would have taken place at the same time that a Christian population at Europos was growing, such that after decades in the city, both Christians and soldiers found need to each improve the material conditions of their ritual spaces within the same decade (~240 CE).

Historical and material evidence lead me to believe that the Christians in Europos arrived with the Roman occupation which was largely a Palmyrene project. However, religious historians would take me to task for such a claim. Dirven's (1999) *The Palmyrenes of Dura Europos* is an unparalleled examination of the religions of Palmyra and their place in Europos over the first three centuries CE. But the word "Christian" does not appear in it once. Nor is there any reason to expect it to. Archaeologically and historically there is no mention of the cult of Christ in the ancient oasis city. Then again, there is no mention of Durene Christians in ancient texts either. And yet, there they are. If the Christians in Europos had built their temple one more block to the east, we would not know of their existence either, since their baptistery would have never survived to the heights it did, never having been covered in sand and filled with mudbrick.

Palmyrene Christians? Perhaps. And perhaps one contribution I can offer to the disciplines of religious historians and theologians as fascinated with early Christianity and the region it was born in as I am, is to approach all categories suspiciously with the spirit of Foucault always haunting. Categories must be useful. And indeed, for theologians and religious historians, categorizing and chronicling the history of Christianity, its heresies, arguments, sects, divisions etc, almost exclusively through textual evidence, has been useful to answer many questions theologians and religious historians pursue. But with Europos, we have a preponderance of a different type of evidence: material culture. And as such, attempting to fit Europos into those pre-existing categories has been problematic at best. Europos doesn't fit well into preconceived notions of early Christian practice because it is ... unique. That is, until academics are willing to rethink their categories. For a social scientist like myself, I have become intrigued with Durene Christianity and wonder if decades from now a Palmyrene Christian community might also be discovered. And if it is, I would not expect the material culture there to suggest a community that

fit well into the categories of early Christianity constructed by centuries of Church fathers' writings and academic discourse. Instead, I would expect it to adhere to some notions of some early Christian traditions and present unexpected and previously unrecorded combinations of traits and qualities. But until such time, researchers interested in the material culture of the religion that shaped the West have only one data set to work with, from a modest walled city on the Euphrates. And it does not care if it does not fit well with what we think we know about early Christianity. It avoids easy classification; it demands close attention and thick description; it demands to be recognized for being unique within known early Christian traditions and yet easily recognizable compared to local Durene religious traditions. It is the only early Christian sect about which we have material evidence of just how plastic early Christianity truly was. It calls for a new schema of categorization that treats with the tensions between text and material culture that most historical periods have always had to treat with. Europos looks at the categories created by a western academe for an eastern religion rooted in Semitic peoples and responds, not me. I don't fit that. I'm a problem in search of a novel solution.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX FOR CHAPTER 2: DATA SOURCES

As discussed in Chapter Two, multiple missions to Europos have resulted in diverse methods of data collection making it difficult for researchers to find and use all known artifactual data. The following appendices discuss several data sources from the Yale Excavations presented in Chapter Two, including both the Preliminary and Final Reports, published and planned, as well as Yale's Object Register. In addition, Dr. Jennifer Baird's work on the Object Register is also discussed, her improvements and additions resulting in the most authoritative data set on artifacts at Europos for any mission there. In Appendix 2.4 (below) I will explain why I needed to digitize Baird's published work into a spreadsheet and how this was accomplished. And finally, I have attached a copy of my field report as submitted to the MFSED at the end of the 2010 field season which contains data to be used in the analysis of the Christian Temple in Chapter Five. This field report is unpublished but remains in the archives at the MFSED under the curation of Prof. Pierre Leriche. Each of the documents discussed below were provided to my Committee but some of these files cannot be circulated and will not be deposited with my dissertation due to some of their data being the intellectual property of other researchers who have not yet published or otherwise publicly circulated data shared with me for my personal research.

2.1 Preliminary & Final Reports: Planned & Published

During Yale's excavations, Preliminary Reports were published on a near annual basis offering overviews of each season's work. Primarily narrative publications, they also included field sketches, maps, illustration, copies of written texts (papyri, parchment, inscriptions, graffiti),

and photographs. Edited by Yale's Director of Excavations for Europos (as opposed to field director), Mikhail Rostovtzeff, and a rotating set of associate editors (Baur (1929, 1931, 1932, 1933), Bellinger (1932, 1933), Hopkins (1936), Brown (1944, 1946, 1952) and Welles (1944, 1946, 1952), the first eight seasons of Preliminary Reports were published soon after their respective excavations with contributions from many of the field archaeologists, architects, and other experts on site. The ninth season was published in three volumes over the course of eight years and included some excavation data from the tenth season as well, the third volume arriving some 14 years after the close of excavations at Europos. A Preliminary Report for the tenth season exclusively was never published by Yale, but Susan Matheson, the YUAG's current Curator of Ancient Art, compiled a reconstruction of events during the tenth season (1982) using the archives held at Yale and a brief report by Rostovtzeff.¹

In addition to the Preliminary Reports, a series of detailed Final Reports on specific artifact types, buildings and areas within the city were proposed numerous times with several changes made to the proposed series over the years. The last proposal for a series of Final Reports which I could find in the Yale archives is reproduced below verbatim from the first two pages of an undated and unsigned memorandum discussing finishing the Final Reports series and the projected costs. It was written at some point between 1959, after the publication of Final Report V, Part I (The Parchments and Papyri, noted below as in print) and 1963, the publication date of the Final Report IV, Part V (The Glass Vessels) which is mentioned as in production but not yet in print in a later part of the memorandum not reproduced below. This memorandum is, as far as I know, the last word on Yale's intentions to publish Europos' data.

¹ "Rapport sur les fouilles de Doura-Europos, campagne de 1936-37", Comptes rendus de l'Académie des inscriptions et belles lettres (1937) 201-204.

DURA PUBLICATIONS

A series of Preliminary Reports covering the first nine campaigns of excavation (ten volumes in all) has been published, and no further Preliminary Reports are contemplated. These were intended as interim publications to acquaint the scholarly world with the major results of the excavations as soon as possible after discovery. Much of this material demands fuller publication but some areas -- notably the agora and bazaar quarter and the necropolis -- are published in this [Preliminary Report] series in their final form.

A series of Final Reports is planned, as follows:

- I. History of the City
- II. Architecture and Town-planning
- III. Sculpture, Figurines, and Painting
- IV. Minor finds: pottery, glass, implements, personal ornaments, furniture and hardware, miscellaneous
- V. Witten Records: Parchments and Papyri, Inscriptions
- VI. Coins
- VII. Arms and Armor
- VIII. Synagogue, Christian Building, Mithraeum

The following volumes or fascicles have already appeared:

- IV, Part I, fasc. 1: N. P. Toll, the Green Glazed Pottery
- IV, Part I, fasc. 2: D. H. Cox, The Greek and Roman Pottery
- IV, Part II: R. Pfister and L. Bellinger, The Textiles
- IV, Part III: P. V. C. Baur, The Lamps
- IV, Part IV, fasc. 1: T. G. Frisch and N. P. Toll, The Pierced Bronzes; the Enameled Bronzes; the Fibulae
- V, Part I: C. B. Welles, R. O. Fink, and J. F. Gilliam, The Parchments and Papyri
- VI: A. R. Bellinger, The Coins
- VIII, Part I: C. H. Kraeling, The Synagogue

Since the writing of the memorandum above, several more Final Reports were finished by Yale, including:

- IV, Part V: C. W. Clairmont, The Glass Vessels (1963)²
- IV, Part I, fasc. 3: S.L. Dyson, The Green Glazed Pottery (1968)
- VII, Part II: C.H. Kraeling, The Christian Building (1968)

² A proper bibliographic formatting of all these sources can be found in the References Cited section of this dissertation. I represent them here as they were written in the Memorandum, for consistency's sake.

Additionally, two Final Reports were compiled by archaeologist and art historian, Susan B. Downey. The first, a dissertation project the memorandum makes note of as forthcoming. The latter published outside the auspices of Yale University Press. Although Downey would later join the MFSED and excavate anew in Syria, her contributions to the Final Reports were written before the MFSED began its mission in the 1980s.

III, Part 1, Fascicle 1: The Heracles Sculpture (1969)

III, Part I, Fascicle 2: The Stone and Plaster Sculpture (1977)

And lastly, Prof. Simon James published the Final Report on arms and armor in 2004.

VII: The Arms and Armour and Other Military Equipment (2004)

It should be noted that Final Reports I and II, listed in the memorandum, have never been published, and several of the topics for individual parts or fascicles of other planned Final Reports never saw the light of day either – several topics for Report IV were never published and no Final Report was ever written for the Mithraeum (VIII, Part III ostensibly).

2.2 Yale's Object Register

As discussed in detail in Chapter Two, the Yale mission to Europos entered some 18,000 artifacts into a typewritten “Object Register” created by Susan Hopkins. I have included as an attachment (Yale Object Register.zip) a complete digital scan of the original 300-plus pages, broken down by season so that readers might understand “first-hand” the intricacies and eccentricities of the data and also to preserve a digital copy for myself and other researchers who may need access to the original data but cannot access Yale’s archives as easily or frequently as I have been able to.

2.3 Baird's Improved & Authoritative Object Register

As discussed in Chapter Two, Jennifer Baird (2006) published an expanded and vastly improved version of Yale's Object Register, including all the data in Yale's Register³ and adding several more fields which add more detailed provenience data for any artifacts described in the Preliminary or Final Reports, as well as links to known photographs of objects in Yale's archives and the "accession numbers" given to artifacts by the YUAG when they arrived in New Haven from Syria. Accession numbers differ from the "field number" given to artifacts at the excavation. The accession numbers allow researchers to find corresponding photos, drawings or other images associated with an artifact in the YUAG archives or online at one of two publicly accessible online collections of these images.

Baird released the final results of this project in a 1,008-page PDF with her dissertation. She has not yet however circulated, published or otherwise made available the Excel spreadsheet she created to output the PDF document. She and Prof. Simon James have recently begun seeking funding and partners to place Baird's data in a publicly accessible online database but the project is still in its nascent stages (pers. comm. James, 7/9/18). Baird's dissertation and the appendix with her improved Object Register should be available to other researchers at the British Library's dissertations service site for free (pers. comm. Baird 2/6/14), Baird having embargoed it until the

³ Baird (2006) did not include one column in Yale's Object Register, "Where Put, referring to what part of the field house the artefacts were stored. As the objects were subsequently sent to Damascus and New Haven or disposed of this information was thought no longer meaningful" (142). Baird does point out that the "where put" column in the original Object Register allowed her to determine that Season Six's entries in the Object Register was likely "collated" at the end of the season due to the entries not being in sequential order by date as other seasons were entered. Instead, objects were entered in the order they were shelved or stored (Baird 2006: 142). These types of detailed observations when working with the original Object Register provide clues to daily on-the-ground practices not described in other archival materials

publication of her book manuscript in 2014. However, a recent visit to the British Library's website⁴ showed the dissertation still embargoed (it should be available for purchase).

2.4 Re-Creating a Searchable Spreadsheet

As discussed in Chapter Two, Baird's monumental effort to produce the most authoritative data set on Euopos' artifacts from any of the missions is published as a PDF with her dissertation (2006). Baird used an Excel spreadsheet in its creation (pers. comm. 6/13/14), which was also used for analysis in her dissertation. The PDFs provided in her dissertation are not searchable or queryable due to the PDFs being in a static file format. Faced with the prospect of having data on 18,000 artifacts available to me but unable to interrogate the data in any fruitful manner I converted Baird's PDFs into a functional spreadsheet.

I think it prudent to note the steps and software I used to create a searchable spreadsheet so that any future readers may duplicate my efforts and/or further refine or verify my results until Baird and James succeed in creating a publicly accessible online database.

VeryPDF is a company that specializes in designing software to convert computer file formats. One of their products, "VeryPDF Table Extractor OCR"⁵ is designed to recognize horizontal rows of characters in a scanned hardcopy spreadsheet and allows the user to set boundaries for vertical columns in the document. Due to its limitations, one can only extract data from about 50 PDF pages at a time, and so I executed this process some 21 times and then combined the 21 separate Excel documents that resulted.

⁴ <http://ethos.bl.uk/OrderDetails.do?did=47&uin=uk.bl.ethos.432935> Accessed 7/10/18.

⁵ <http://www.verypdf.com/app/pdf-to-table-extractor-ocr/index.html>

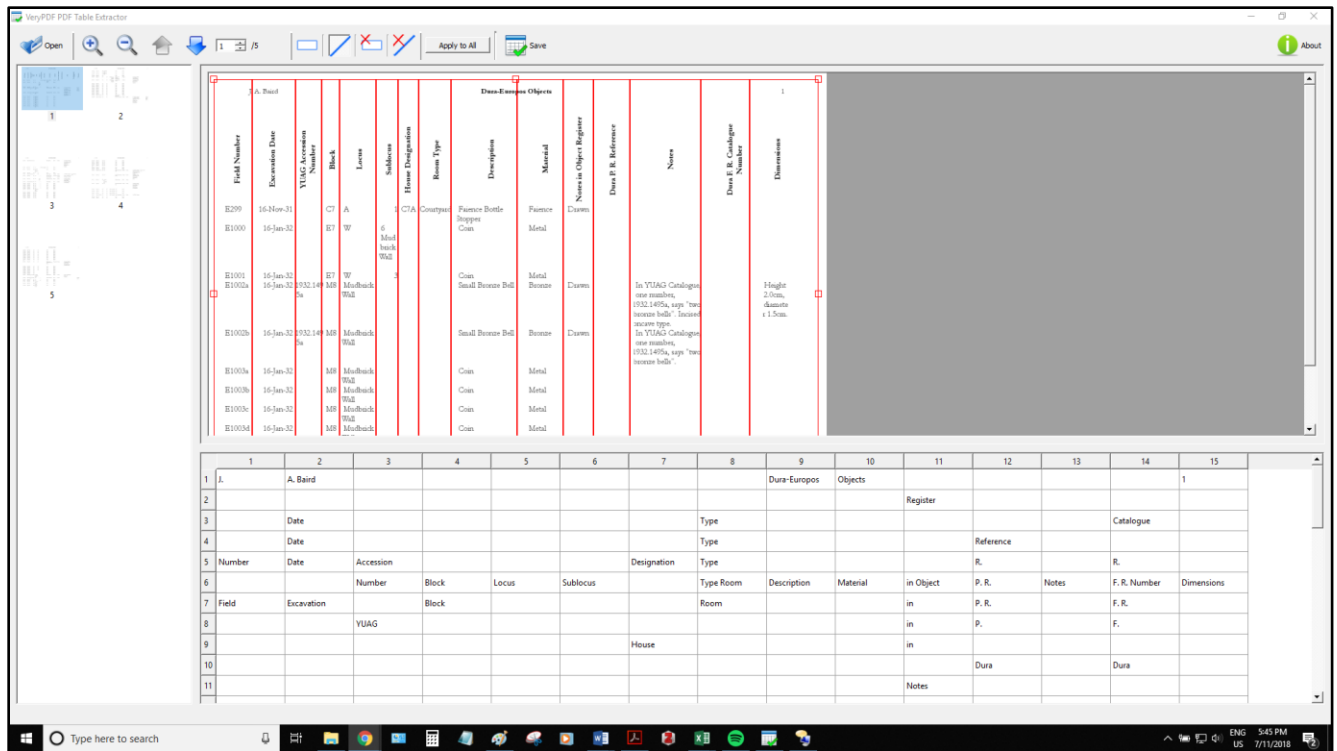


Figure 110: Screen capture of column creation and output preview in VeryPDF Table Extractor.

Three types of errors were noticed in the conversion.

- 1) The first was that in Baird’s PDF some artifacts used multiple rows for descriptive categories while most artifacts with less detailed data used only one row. The VeryPDF software could not parse this difference accurately and so created many more than 18,000 entry rows. For example, artifact E1002a (see Figures 1 and 2) had a detailed description in the “Notes” column which were output to five consecutive rows in the initial VeryPDF conversion. But only the first row contains all relevant provenience data; the additional rows contain descriptive text for the same artifact but the conversion software read that text as individual entries and entered them on separate spreadsheet rows. Happily, the error was consistent and was eliminated with a small bit of code written in Python. The coding was done for me by Bart Longacre of the University of Chicago’s Social Science Computing Services and is included with permission as an attachment with this dissertation (kitsui ver2.py) and can be executed by any machine running Python 3.6 or later (an open source programming language with installations for all major computer operating systems).

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N
1	Number (Season)	Excavation Date	Accession Number	Block	Locus	Sublocus	House Designation	Room Type	Description	Material	Notes in O.R.	P.R References	Notes	Catalog Number
9	E1002a	16-Jan-32	1932.149	M8	Mudbrick				Small Bronze	Bronze	Drawn		In YUAG Catalogue,	
10			5a		Wall								one number,	
11													1932.1495a, says "two	
12													bronze bells"; Incised	
13													oncave type.	

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N
1	Field Number (Season)	Excavation Date	YUAG Accession Number	Block	Locus (Building)	Sublocus (room)	House Designation	Room Type	Description	Material	Notes in O.R.	P.R References	Notes	Field Report Catalog Number
1	E1002a	16-Jan-32	1932.149	M8	Mudbrick				Small Bronze	Bronze	Drawn		In YUAG Catalogue,	
			5a		Wall				Bell				"one number,	
													"1932.1495a, says "two	
													bronze bells".	
													Incisedoncave type.	

Figure 111: Initial results from VeryPDF conversion above. Note multiple rows associated with artifact E1002a. Leaving the spreadsheet this way would result in any artifact with long descriptions in one of the vertical columns would become associated with numerous rows in Excel and no one row containing all the data pertaining to a single artifact. Below, all data associated with E1002a is entered in a single spreadsheet row, allowing for more functional and reliable results from searches.

- 2) A second error originating from the VeryPDF conversion was that leading quotes (“) used in descriptive categories were converted into their ASCII symbol ("), so every leading quote was replaced with the symbol. This was easily fixed by using Excel’s Find and Replace function (there were over 1000 errors of this type).
- 3) Lastly, occasionally the data in two specific fields, “sublocus” and “house designation” were combined and presented in the “House Designation” field as one entry. The error is a result of the customized vertical lines that VeryPDF allows a user to place in order to demarcate vertical columns being off by a few pixels in some of the 21 conversions. As of this writing (7/10/18) I have no automated solution to the problem⁶ but being aware of it, and knowing how these fields should read, means that if a search result brings up a “house designation” that also includes sublocus information, I can easily identify that field as possessing additional or extraneous information.

The utility of this spreadsheet cannot be overstated. Excel includes almost 500 different functions or commands for parsing data in spreadsheets, allowing one to search for combinations of data (“all ceramics in block M8”) and the ability to sort by any of the columns (date/season,

⁶ The simplest solution will be to determine which of the 21 partial conversions have this error and run VeryPDF on those sections again, avoiding the manual error, and then stitching the new partials conversions into the full document, replacing the error-contain versions, and then running the Python script and the Find and Replace command on the entire spreadsheet once again. However, since this spreadsheet is not being circulated or published and is for my personal research only, and I can recognize the error when it occurs in a search, I’m satisfied with the current output.

block, material etc.) and combinations of columns. Additionally, those who are familiar with Microsoft's Visual Basic programming language (or Python) can sort the data to provide even deeper levels of resolution and/or more complex searches and comparisons of artifacts and assemblages.

2.5 Unpublished 2010 Field Report: Christian Building

In 2010 I excavated for two months at Europos Dura. The majority of my time was spent excavating at the Citadel in an effort to find the base of the quarry that the inhabitants of the city dug next to the Citadel. This was "salvage" archaeology in that the Citadels foundation was eroding due to seasonal rains and the way in which they drained along where the citadels enormous walls met the plateau. Syrian authorities were prepared to install drainage pipes to redirect rainwater, but first we needed to remove several meters of sand that had filled the quarry since Yale's excavation.

However, on weekends I undertook (something akin to) a Phase I investigation of the Christian Temple, removing some 75 years of collected windblown sand from the floor of several rooms in order to find the limits of Yale's excavation wherever possible. Those efforts and the possible discovery of an altar in the Christian building previously identified as a "dais" by Yale are detailed in the attached field report (ED 2010 M8 Day Notes English Version.docx) which provides original data for Chapter Five.

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