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Kapsam

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Dipnot (kitaplar için)

Richter 1977, 162, res. 217.

Dipnot (Makaleler için)

Oppenheim 1973, 9, lev.1.

Diğer Kısaltmalar

age.	adı geçen eser
ay.	aynı yazar
vd.	ve devamı
yak.	yaklaşık
v.d.	ve diğerleri
y.dn.	yukarı dipnot
dn.	dipnot
a.dn.	aşağı dipnot
bk.	Bakınız

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Olba is printed once a year in May. Deadline for sending papers is November of each year.

The Journal 'Olba', being published since 1998 by the 'Research Center of Cilician Archeology' of the Mersin University (Turkey), includes original studies done on antropology, prehistory, protohistory, classical archaeology, classical philology (and ancient languages and cultures), ancient history, numismatics and early christian archeology of Asia Minor, the Mediterranean region and the Near East.

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Footnotes (for books):

Richter 1977, 162, fig. 217.

Footnotes (for articles):

Oppenheim 1973, 9, pl.1.

Miscellaneous Abbreviations:

op. cit.	in the work already cited
idem	an auther that has just been mentioned
ff	following pages
et al.	and others
n.	footnote
see	see
infra	see below
supra	see above

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OLBA XXI, 2013

THE CHURCH OF VIRGIN AT AMIDA AND THE MARTYRIUM AT CONSTANTIA: TWO MONUMENTAL CENTRALISED CHURCHES IN LATE ANTIQUE NORTHERN MESOPOTAMIA

Elif KESER-KAYAALP*

ABSTRACT

Late Antique Northern Mesopotamia, which was situated at the eastern edge of the Byzantine Empire, was dotted with important cities such as Edessa (Urfa), Anastasiopolis (Dara), Amida (Diyarbakır), Martryropolis (Silvan), Constantia (Viranşehir) and Nisibis (Nusaybin). These cities were wealthy and highly cosmopolitan. As a result, the region had a sophisticated architecture which was by no means inferior to that found in other parts of the Byzantine Empire. This article deals with two monumental centralised churches in Northern Mesopotamia, namely the Church of the Virgin at Amida and the Octagon at Constantia. It concentrates firstly on the Church of the Virgin, which is an aisled-tetraconch church, a familiar plan type repeated in different parts of the Empire, and secondly on the Octagon at Constantia which has some unique features but shares the ambulatory design, long eastern chamber, use of materials and the monumentality with the aisled-tetraconch at Amida. By contextualising these two churches together, which has not been done in the past, this paper sheds further light on these neglected structures and reconsiders their reconstructions, dating, dedications and possible prototypes.

Keywords: Northern Mesopotamia, Late Antiquity, Church, Architecture, Amida, Constantia.

ÖZET

Amida'daki Meryem Ana Kilisesi ve Constantia'daki Martyrium: Kuzey Mezopotamya'da Geç Antik Döneme Tarihlenen İki Anıtsal Mezar Kilise

Geç Antik Dönemde Bizans İmparatorluğu'nun doğu kenarında yer alan Kuzey Mezopotamya, Edessa (Urfa), Anastasiopolis (Dara), Amida (Diyarbakır), Martryropolis (Silvan), Constantia (Viranşehir) and Nisibis (Nusaybin) gibi önemli

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şehirlere sahipti. Bu şehirler oldukça zengin ve kozmopolitlerdi. Bunun sonucunda bölgenin, Bizans imparatorluğunun diğer taraflarındaki mimariden aşağı kalmayan sofistike bir mimarisi vardı. Bu makale Kuzey Mezopotamya'da yer alan iki merkezi planlı kilise ile ilgilidir. Bunlar Amida'daki Meryem Ana kilisesi ve Constantia'daki Sekizgen'dir. Önce aisled-tetraconch olarak bilinen ve merkezde ve dışarda dört nişli bir organizasyondan oluşan bir planı olan ve İmparatorluğun diğer bölgelerinde paralel örnekleri bulunan Meryem Ana Kilisesine, daha sonra bazı ünik özellikler göstermekle birlikte ambulatuar, doğu tarafında uzunlamasına bir oda, malzeme kullanımı ve anıtsallık gibi özellikleriyle Amida'daki Meryem Ana kilisesi ile benzerlikler gösteren Constantia'daki Sekizgene odaklanılacaktır. Bu makale daha önce birlikte düşünülmemiş bu iki yapıyı aynı bağlamda ele alarak, ihmal edilmiş bu yapıların rekonstrüksyonlarını, tarihlendirmelerini, kime adandıklarını ve muhtemel prototiplerini değerlendirmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kuzey Mezopotamya, Geç Antik Çağ, Kilise, Mimari, Amida, Constantia.

Introduction

Late Antique Northern Mesopotamia, located at the eastern edge of the Byzantine Empire, was the setting for religious controversies, natural disasters and continuous warfare with the Persians. It was also a cosmopolitan area frequented by merchants, pilgrims, monks and soldiers from all over the Empire. It had important cities like Edessa, Amida, Dara, Constantia, Martyropolis and Nisibis (fig. 1). We know a great deal about these frontier cities mainly from the Greek and Syriac textual sources. However, in terms of material culture, little has survived. The most significant remains from these cities are from the city walls. In terms of ecclesiastical architecture, our evidence is even more limited making the surviving remains especially important. Although we know the names of at least twenty three churches in Edessa from the sources, none has survived. The two churches at Martyropolis and the church of Mor Cosmos at Amida that were recorded by Gertrude Bell in the beginning of the twentieth century have disappeared. In Dara, only the subterranean structures of some possible churches have survived. In Nisibis, a part of the 4th century baptistery still stands and the recent excavations uncovered a possible cathedral.

Two churches in the region have more surviving parts than any other example in the region: the Church of the Virgin at Amida and the martyrium at Constantia. These two monumental centralised churches are the subject of this article. Despite their remarkable architectural features, these two

monuments have not received their deserved attention. The neglect of these monuments- and of the region in general in the study of Byzantine architectural history- is most likely due to the image of Northern Mesopotamia created by an important scholar of Byzantine architecture, Krautheimer. He depicted the whole of Mesopotamia as a land characterized by primitive folk architecture, and identified any complex architectural sculpture of the region as imported from Syria. The limited discussion devoted to these buildings also seems to be a result of their problematic belonging to established architectural families: they were either misinterpreted or excluded from these families and abandoned. As a consequence of this neglect, the architecture, function, dedication and dating of these churches has long been needed to be reconsidered. This paper deals with these two churches, which are only one hundred kilometres away from each other as the crow flies. It proceeds in two separate parts, but encompasses a special emphasis on their similarities, which have never been sufficiently emphasized in past studies[1]. These neglected similarities are, I think, crucial for a more effective contextualisation of these buildings.

Amida

Amida was the metropolitan bishopric of Mesopotamia. It was an important military and administrative centre, located on a high plateau commanding the river Tigris. As a result of its strategic position, Amida had a primary importance in Byzantine-Persian warfare. The city was taken by the Persians in 359 and returned to the Romans due to the peace treaty agreed between the two empires in 363. However, in the same war, Nisibis which was the main Roman stronghold in Mesopotamia was lost. As a result of this loss, Amida became the main fortress in the area and received refugees from the lost territories. To accommodate the newcomers from Nisibis, a village outside the walls of Amida was fortified and its wall was linked with that of Amida[2]. This development changed the layout of the city, which was significantly enlarged in that period to almost twice its original size. Amida remained relatively unchanged until it was lost to the Arabs in 639.

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1 In my doctoral thesis, I analysed these two churches separately (Keser-Kayaalp 2009). However, contextualising these churches together and analysing them in more detail in this article have helped me reach different conclusions.

2 Malalas 336.5.

Amida measured about 1.5 by 1 km between the gates at its cardinal points, comparable in size with Gerasa and Ravenna. The late Roman cardo and decumanus had most probably been the street between the Urfa and Harput gates and the street from the Mardin gate towards the Great Mosque respectively. The walls of the city are still the most significant feature of the urban landscape (fig. 2). In the Middle Ages there was considerable rebuilding of the walls but they essentially still follow the fourth to the sixth-century foundations[3]. The city had an amphitheatre, apotheta (which were store-buildings built by the order of Anastasius in all cities but especially in Amida), public baths (which Kavad, the Persian shah, attended upon taking Amida (503-4), and afterwards ordered baths to be built in towns across the Persian territory) [4], aqueducts, a tetrapylon and perhaps a tripyrgion[5]. The wealth and prosperity of the city impressed the Sasanian kings who attempted to take it several times[6].

The landscape around Amida was dotted with several monasteries. From John of Ephesus, we learn the names of the monasteries founded in close vicinity of the city; such as the monasteries of John Urtaya, Ar'a Rabtha, Zuqnin, Mar Giln, Mar Mama and Kalesh[7]. There are also the names of further monasteries around Amida; such as the monastery of Hawronyotho (white poplars, located to the east of Amida, opposite the hot spring of Abarne), the monastery of the lepers and the monastery of Tella-d-tuthe (which might be the same as Zuqnin) and the monastery of John of Anzetene[8]. Chronicles record that there were monasteries also inside the city[9].

Concerning the existence of churches inside the city in Late Antiquity, we know the names of the following churches: of the Forty Martyrs[10],

3 The main study of the walls was undertaken by Gabriel 1943, who also drew the extension mentioned above.

4 Joshua 76, 81, 61 respectively.

5 Zachariah 156, 159, 296.

6 Zachariah 158-9.

7 John of Ephesus, Lives, v.18, 57, 608, 620, 657.

8 Zachariah VII, 4.

9 Zachariah VII, 3; II, 26.

10 Zachariah VII.3–4; Chr. 819, p. 4.

St. Thomas, Mor Ze'ora[11], St. John the Baptist[12], Beth Shila[13] and the great church of Amida[14]. The church of the Forty Martyrs was probably the cathedral of the city at some point as it is referred to in the sources as the "Great Church of Forty Martyrs[15]." Al-Wāqidī (d.822) mentions a great church dedicated to St.Thomas[16] and it is usually assumed that[17] this church, which was supposedly built by Heraclius in 629[18], once stood in the place of the Great Mosque[19]. Tuncer mentions two further churches from the late antique period: Mor Stephanos and St. George[20]. However my own research among ancient sources did not reveal a mention of a church dedicated to Mor Stephanos in Amida. According to local tradition, St. George, the citadel building mentioned by Bell[21], was converted to a mosque in the 14th -15th century[22]. The so-called church is now under restoration and will soon be converted into an archaeology museum. It can be dated to the medieval period based on its building technique and the size of the ashlar blocks. It is curious that we do not find the name of the best-preserved church in Northern Mesopotamia from the Late Antique period, the Church of Virgin, in the late antique sources; we can speculate that it must have had a different name when it was founded.

The Church of the Virgin (Yoldath Aloho, El-Adhra, Meryem Ana) at Amida

The Church of Virgin is located in the western part of Amida (fig. 2). The church today has a rectangular nave with a brick dome. A portico composed of four reused columns defines the entrance of the church to the west. Parts of the west wall of the modern church are higher than the rest, showing that the original wall had been higher. The architectural sculpture

11 Zuqnin 144 (153).
12 Zuqnin 144 (153).
13 Zuqnin 60 (33).
14 John of Ephesus, Lives, v. 19, 258 (604); Zuqnin 144 (153).
15 Chr. 819, p.4
16 Palmer 2006, 131.
17 Such as Max van Berchem 1910, Guyer 1916 and following them, Creswell 1998.
18 Chr. Zuqnin: 142
19 Guyer 1916, 196.
20 Tuncer 2002, 5
21 Bell – Mango 1982, 66.
22 Van Berchem – Strzygowski 1910, 173.

on the piers of the apse, fragments of the apse archivolt and the mullions reused as modern chancel barriers are of a classicizing early sixth-century style. To the north of the present church stands a smaller church dedicated to Mor Yaqub where extensive spolia has been used.

The current church of the Virgin is surrounded by additional structures, namely the house of the bishop, a guest room, the house of a Syrian Orthodox family and other annexes which were mostly built in the late 19th century when the church was temporarily used as the seat of the Patriarch. Aside from the parts of the church building extant today, no traces of a late-antique structure are easily visible when viewed from the inner courtyard of the church. However, upon walking around the church property, the contours of the original building can be deciphered (fig. 3). These remains clearly show the plan of the original church as a monumental structure. In Figure 4, the curved walls and L-shaped corners of the outer walls, still discernible from the streets surrounding the church today, are marked in bold. Gertrude Bell reconstructed the outer shell as a circular structure[23] but the surviving remains clearly show that it was a tetraconch with L-shaped corners.

Guyer's reconstruction of the outer walls as a tetraconch is correct[24] but his suggestion for the transition from the chancel to the outer four-lobed ambulatory wall seems problematic in terms of dimensions. One would expect to find a symmetrical arrangement in the corners of the outer lobes, as is the case in other aisled-tetraconch churches in the Empire which are discussed below. The remains would actually allow a symmetrical reconstruction (fig. 4). The internal arrangement is another point that should be discussed in relation to Guyer's reconstruction. Guyer suggested a triconch which is open on its east end. He probably suggested this inner layout because there is a similar type of arrangement in the aisled-tetraconch at Rusafa where the eastern bay is elongated and turns into an apse. However, in the aisled-tetraconch at Amida, there is a separate elongated room, which ends with an apse.

Amongst the many aisled-tetraconch churches built all around the Empire, the churches at Seleucia-Pieria and Apamea are the closest

23 Bell – Mango 1982, 25.

24 Guyer in Sarre – Herzfeld 1911, v.2, fig.149.

parallels to the Amida church in terms of overall layout and dimensions[25]. Thus, it is most likely that the church at Amida shared a similar inner layout with these churches which have a four-lobed arrangement in the middle. The church at Apamea has huge piers from an earlier building. Since it was not built on top of an earlier structure, it is more probable that the church at Amida had a similar interior arrangement to the church at Seleucia-Pieria: i.e. L-shaped slender piers placed in the corners of the lobes and with columns between them. The pinkish coloured column shafts reused in front of the apse and in the narthex of the modern church may have originally been situated between the L-shaped internal piers. The church at Amida was probably roofed with timber, as the aisled-tetraconch churches at Seleucia Pieria, Rusafa and Bostra seem to have been. The extent to which the apse protrudes in the east is significant in the churches at Seleucia Pieria, Apamea and Amida. The same is the case also in the Octagon at Constantia which is discussed below.

Judging from the above, it seems that the closest parallel to the aisled-tetraconch in Amida is the church at Seleucia Pieria. The latter has been dated sometime between 459 to ca. 490[26]. According to Kleinbauer the carved elements surviving in the aisled-tetraconch in Amida date back to approximately 526-44: when the relations between Antioch and Amida were close under Ephraemius of Amida who was appointed as comes Orientis and then as the patriarch of Antioch[27]. However, given the strong tradition of architectural sculpture in Northern Mesopotamia, which did not owe much to Antioch, this reasoning by Kleinbauer is not convincing[28]. The architectural sculpture in the church can also be assigned perfectly well to the late 5th and early 6th centuries (fig. 5). Thus, a dating similar to the church in Seleucia Pieria is more probable.

The aisled-tetraconch at Amida has gone through many restorations, during the course of which many original features have been destroyed. Two Arabic inscriptions record that the church was restored in AD 1533 and 1688/9 or 1692/3[29]. A Syriac inscription on the wall separating the

25 Balty who also recognised their similarities published the plans of these three churches together (Balty 1969, 108).

26 Kleinbauer 1973, 94.

27 Kleinbauer 1973, 107.

28 Mundell Mango 1982a.

29 Pognon 1907, 195f

choir and nave states that it was restored in AG 2030 (AD 1710) [30]. Akyüz also notes that there are inscriptions stating that parts of the church were restored in 1881, 1851 and 1914[31]. During the recent restoration of the church in 2005, the plaster from the facades was removed and this revealed the construction technique of the church consisting of alternating courses of stone and brick (fig 6). This technique was common in other parts of the Empire in the 6th century and confirms the dating of the church to that century. This building technique is relatively rare in Northen Mesopotamia but a good parallel has survived in the early sixth-century church of el-Adhra at Deir Zafaran near Mardin.

The aisled-tetraconch was a widespread plan type in the Eastern Roman Empire in the Late Antique period. Twenty-three structures were recorded throughout the Mediterranean basin and beyond: in Italy (at Milan and at Canosa in Apulia), in Greece and the Balkans (at Athens, Lake Ochrid, Perushtitsa, and Adrianople), in Egypt (two at Abu-Mina), in Syria and Mesopotamia (at Seleucia Pieria, Apamea, Bostra, Aleppo, Rusafa and Amida), the south coast of Asia Minor (Corycus and Perge), in Armenia (at Zuart'noc', Bana and Ishani), and in Azerbaijan (at Ljakit) [32]. Kleinbauer explored some of these churches in an article published in 1973, which remains one of very few studies that deal with the aisled-tetraconch at Amida. Some aspects of Kleinbauer's arguments are outdated by recent archaeology.

Kleinbauer classifies the aisled-tetraconch at Amida within the architectural family which included six aisled-tetraconch churches in Oriens that he thinks were all cathedrals, namely those in Seleucia Pieria, Rusafa, Apamea, Bostra, Aleppo and Amida. Besides having similar plans, the churches in this architectural family were probably all single-storied structures which had no galleries above the ambulatories and whose central space was covered either with a pyramidal roof or with a dome made of timber. Kleinbauer supports his idea by pointing out that all these churches were situated in cities of considerable importance, which were geographically close to each other. In addition, all were built within a seventy-five

30 Bell – Mango 1982, 90. fn.78

31 Akyüz 1999, 55-56.

32 Kleinbauer 1987, 280. See Grossmann 1983: fig.3 for the plans of seventeen aisled-tetraconch churches.

year period; from about 460 to the second quarter of the 6th century, and were vast in size[33].

Kleinbauer explains the resemblance of these churches to each other by proposing that they derived from a common prototype. Since he offered as a working hypothesis that the aisled-tetraconches in Oriens all functioned as cathedrals and metropolitan churches in the Patriarchate of Antioch, he suggests an Antiochene prototype from which they could have derived independently from each other. He tentatively proposes the Megale Ekklesia, the so-called Golden Octagon at Antioch founded by Constantine the Great in 327 and finished by his son Constantius in 341, as the prototype of these buildings[34].

Eusebius described the great church in Antioch as an ὀκταέδρου[35] and this church has usually been reconstructed as an eight-sided building with ambulatories and galleries resembling the church of San Vitale in Ravenna or the church of Sts.Sergius and Bacchus at Constantinople. Kleinbauer questions the meaning of ὀκταέδρου and thinks that formal possibilities other than an octagon such as the aisled-tetraconch, should be explored, one of them being the aisled-tetraconch[36]. Eusebius points out that the church is "....unique in size and beauty. On the outside, he (Constantine) surrounded the entire church with enclosures of great extent, while the interior of the house of prayer he raised to an immense height. This was made in the form of an octagon ringed all around with chambers both on the upper and lower levels, and was decorated with a profusion of gold, brass and other costly materials"[37].

The text describes the "Great Church" with galleries above the ambulatories ringing the central space, a feature, according to Kleinbauer, absent in all Syrian, Mesopotamian and Caucasian examples. Kleinbauer proposes two suggestions for this divergence. Firstly, the patrons of the later tetraconches may have found galleries unnecessary and simply may have eliminated them; secondly, the "Great Church" may have lost its galleries

33 Kleinbauer 1973, 91.

34 Kleinbauer 1973, 111. Smith also thinks that there was an Antiochene prototype of the aisled-tetraconch churches (1971: 115).

35 Eusebius, Vita Constantini III, 50.

36 Kleinbauer 1973, 112.

37 Eusebius, Vita Constantini III, 50. Translation of Mango 2000, 11.

after the earthquake of 458. Consequently, according to Kleinbauer, the first tetraconch in Apamea built just after that earthquake may have been modelled on the new "Great Church" which had lost its galleries. Kleinbauer's suggestion remains merely hypothetical and there may be other possibilities for a prototype. As will be argued below, Eusebius' description also recalls the Octagon in Constantia.

Kleinbauer's argument suggesting that the aisled-tetraconch churches in Oriens were cathedrals can also be disputed. The aisled-tetraconch at Rusafa was thought to be a cathedral because it has a space for a bishop's throne in its synthronon, a baptistery communicating with the apse, and episcopal tombs. However, all these exist also in Basilica A and it has convincingly been argued that the latter was actually the cathedral of Rusafa[38]. There is a possible rural example of an aisled-tetraconch church in Akdeğirmen höyük in the district of Yavuzeli of Birecik (Birtha), dated to the late 4th, early 5th century[39], which shows that the form was not primarily chosen just for urban churches in that particular region. As such new discoveries prove the difficulty of assigning certain functions to certain forms used in Byzantine architecture, we should be sceptical of taking a typological approach towards the peculiar plan type of the church at Amida and determining its function and date[40].

Smith, like Kleinbauer, suggests an Antiochene origin for the church at Amida but, on the other hand, introduces this building as a martyrium[41]. Having identified the building as a martyrium, he explains the long eastern apse through liturgical needs. He thinks the building was divided into two ceremonially separate units: "one the tomb memorial for the martyr's cult and the other the usual apsidial sanctuary where the Eucharistic cult was celebrated at the altar tomb of Christ"[42]. We do not know for sure if the aisled-tetraconch at Amida had a tomb and thus was a martyium. An excavation in the central location of the church, which Smith claims was covered by a dome, may shed light on his claims. Nevertheless, Smith's

38 See Key Fowden 1999, 82-91, summarising the latest suggestions about the chronology and introducing Basilica A as the cathedral.

39 Candemir – Wagner 1978, 202.

40 The problems of the typological approach have been dealth with by Ousterhout 1999, 26-27; Mango 1991, 41.

41 Smith 1971, 115.

42 Smith 1971, 116.

explanation for the long eastern apse is convincing. Not many scholars had thought about this peculiar feature which we find also in the Octagon in Constantia as will be mentioned below.

Kleinbauer suggests also that the aisled-tetraconch churches were built as Chalcedonian churches. Based on this argument, there have been further attempts to contextualise churches with aisled-tetraconch plans, claiming that this type was used in Armenia as a symbol of Chalcedonian position and thus "to demonstrate the patron's alliance with the Byzantine political and cultural world." The example used to make this argument is the aisled-tetraconch at Zuart'noc', built most probably in the first 10 years of Nersēs' office as the patriarch, 640-661, in Armenia[43]. In Northern Mesopotamia, it is difficult to differentiate churches as monophysite and Chalcedonian in the Late Antique period since the bishops building the churches could have been from either sect or the churches could have changed hands.

The aisled-tetraconch church at Amida received the name el 'Adhra (the Virgin in Arabic) in the medieval period. However, its late antique dedication is problematic. We do not find any mention of a church named after the Virgin in the Late Antique period. The first great church mentioned in the city dates to 463/64. This church was later destroyed[44]. In 483/4 John Sa'oro of the Qartmin Monastery, who was the bishop of Amida, built a large and splendid church dedicated to the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste[45]. We learn from Zachariah that the church of the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste was 'the Great church' built on a monumental scale[46]. During his siege in 502, the Persian king Kawad razed the metropolitan church to the ground, which was subsequently rebuilt under imperial order. In 560 Jacob Baradeus consecrated the rebuilt Great church of Amida[47]. We do not know if the "Great church" in these accounts refers to the cathedral or simply to a large church in a generic sense.

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43 Maranci 2001, 105-107.

44 Anec. Syr., I.65

45 Chr. 819, 4. The cult of the Forty Martyrs seems to be prominent in the region. Churches were dedicated to Forty Martyrs at Qartmin and possibly at Tell Besme (Mundell Mango, forthcoming, 202). A church dedicated to the Forty Martyrs is known to have existed in or near Edessa in the late 9th century (Segal 1970, 199; Michael the Syrian 21:4) and there is a much later church in Mardin which still functions today (See Keser 2002, 82- 85).

46 Zachariah, VII, 4.

47 John of Ephesus, Lives, v. 19, 507

In an entry in the catalogue of manuscripts at Homs, it is mentioned that at Amida in February 1214, the sultan (of the Artuqids?) destroyed the great cathedral, the church of the Forty Martyrs and the church of Mor Cosmas in Amida, and had destroyed the church of Mor Yuhannon at Constantia not long before them[48]. This entry shows that by the early 13th century, the cathedral and the church of Forty Martyrs were two different buildings. As mentioned above some earlier accounts mention the church of Forty Martyrs as the Great Church. Thus we can not rule out the possibility that the church mentioned in the medieval account was a different church and the first church dedicated to the Forty Martyrs (483/4) was the cathedral.

From a slightly later account by Bar Hebraeus of the events of 1297, we get the impression that the el 'Adhra church was the cathedral of Amida as he narrates that the "Great church of the Mother of God" at Amida, which was looted and burned, "and its buildings were destroyed, and its beautiful and wonderful porticoes and pillars were overthrown; and through the intensity of the conflagration and the fierceness of the flames it was reduced to a mere heap of stones"[49]. It is not clear if the aisled-tetraconch was built as the cathedral of the city. It may have been the cathedral dedicated to the Forty Martyrs built in 481 as the date fits well with the architectural features of the building. Its dedication may have been changed later to the el 'Adhra. However, it is difficult to reach any conclusions on the exact date and function of this church. Its location, which is away from the centre, towards the west of the city, also raises doubts regarding its being the cathedral of the city- as a cathedral would typically be located in the middle of the city. The site of the Great Mosque which is claimed to have been built on top of a church is a more likely location for the cathedral of the city.

Constantia

Constantia (Tella de Mauzelat in Syriac, modern Viranşehir, a town of Urfa) was the headquarters of the doux of Mesopotamia in 363-527 and 532-40. It was an important military centre strategically located between Edessa and Dara. A schematic plan of the walls of the city is provided here (fig. 7). This plan is not a measured plan but is scaled according to

48 Brock et.al 1994, 604.

49 Bar Hebraeus XI, 598.

a modern map of the town. The city had a rectangular plan, rather than a square one as described by Consul Taylor, who gave the dimension of each side of the city as half a mile[50]. A modern pamphlet produced by the municipality of Viranşehir tells us that there were twenty-four towers of which only a few survive[51]. There are some partly survived circular towers around the city. Apart from them, the modern town has few remains left of its Late-Antique past and these are mostly concealed in the private gardens of the houses.

In searching for the ancient town, Humann and Puchstein recorded seeing a tetrapylon[52]. Mango suggested that Bell's two photographs might show parts of this tetrapylon[53]. In their descriptions, Humann and Puchstein claim that the columns had Corinthian capitals. A capital that I found in a garden in Constantia supports both their description and Mango's identification of the engaged piers as parts of the tetrapylon. This Corinthian capital carved into the basalt has a cross-section similar to the engaged piers. It is deeply carved and classical in character (fig. 8) [54].

Numerous Greek inscriptions from the city were recorded in the early twentieth century[55]. Some of them that have been used as spolia have survived until today. A more recently discovered inscription records the construction of a horreum in 543[56]. None of the churches in the city have survived. The churches that we know by name through inscriptions and texts are the Church of Mor Cosmos and Damian, a church dedicated to the

50 Taylor 1868, 354.

51 In the same pamphlet, there is an incorrect layout of the city. While placing the towers on the plan, I nevertheless took it as a reference (only 22 towers are depicted). Further work needs to be done on the plan of the city.

52 Humann – Puchstein 1890, 403.

53 Bell – Mango 1982, 155.

54 There are many other basalt capitals in the city scattered in the gardens. A drawing is published in Preusser 1911, abb.18.

55 Oppenheim and Lukas, 60f. Nos. 92-96. A Syriac inscription on a basalt sarcophagus has also been recorded (Moritz 1913, 171. No.8).

56 Marlia Mango published the photograph of the structure to which the inscription was attached (Mundell Mango 2000a, fig. 9). The inscription was found on a structure of which only two rows of stone have survived. Today nothing can be seen above the ground. However, I think, those rows of stones belonged to a subterranean structure that I saw in the city in 2005. The structure has transverse arches on which rest large stone slabs, forming a flat slab. On top of that probably stood another structure. The cross on the central arch and the building technique indicate that it was from the Byzantine period.

protomartyr -probably St. Stephen-, and the Church of Mor Yuhannon[57]. Just one kilometre west of the city walls, scattered architectural fragments and a high standing pier have survived. These belong to a monumental octagonal church.

The Octagon at Constantia

When Guyer visited Constantia in 1911, he recorded seeing eight monumental piers and the exterior walls of a church just outside the city walls[58]. Gertrude Bell visited the same site during that year and saw only six piers of the church standing. Her photographs show extensive rubble around the piers. In the late 1970s, there were only two piers of this church left[59] and today only one pier stands (number 4 in fig. 9). This pier is faced with basalt ashlars and filled with a rubble core (fig. 10). There are some column shafts and capitals lying around the pier. They may have belonged to the structure or may have been gathered from elsewhere in the city to be displayed there. Fragments in limestone and basalt which were both common amongst the remains of the city of Constantia, and were also recorded by Procopius for the walls of the city[60] can be found in the site of the church.

Joseph Strzygowski, who had never been to the site, uses Puchstein's accounts and plan in his contextualisation of the church. Strzygowski suggests that the church had a barrel-vaulted ambulatory and above this a barrel-vaulted gallery. From Bell's photographs and the remaining pier, one can recognise the springing of an arch, which points to the existence of a vault at gallery level. Probably because of Puchstein's drawing, Strzygowski described the building as oval-shaped, with an east-west diameter of 32 m and a north-south diameter of 34.5 m. Puchstein drew the church as an oval but actually described it as a circle. The circular outer wall encloses an octagon, which is 17.5 m in interior diameter. The monumental piers may have supported either a wooden or a brick dome. The nave piers are curved on the sides facing the ambulatory and the nave. They are built of rubble masonry, faced with basalt blocks with rows of

57 The first is mentioned in the Chronicle of Michael the Syrian, book 11, ch.26. For the inscription mentioning the protomartyr, see Humann - Puchstein 1890: inscr. No. 4. Brock, et. al. 1994, 604.

58 Guyer 1925, 93.

59 Bell – Mango 1982, 155.

60 Procop. Blds., II.5.3.

bricks in between. The courses of brick in the piers can be identified from Bell's photographs. There were square rooms protruding on the north, south and west sides. The one on the west was slightly more elongated with a dimension of 11 m. On the east, there was a deep rectangular room (22 m long) terminating in an apse. This eastern room is tripartite on its long side. To the south of the west entrance, a staircase in the antechamber leads up to a gallery and down to a crypt. Including the protruding structures, the church was 67.5 m in length and 50 m in width[61].

Strzygowski notes five windows in the outer circular wall with the middle window (1.78 m wide) wider than the rest. The main entrance was marked with massive piers, probably to strengthen the visual connection with the massive structure. A simple diagonal cyma under the springing of the arches and a cornice piece on the outside, as well as a few dark brown coloured marble remains of engaged columns and other columns were also mentioned in Strzygowski's account of the church[62]. In Constantia, there are scattered Late Antique remains, including window mullions which are now far from the site of the church (the mullion recorded by Preusser[63] is lost today). The scattered mullions which are pinkish in colour are almost identical to those used as chancel barriers in the church of the Virgin at Amida. They appear to be from the 6th century and are similar to other sixth-century mullions found at Antioch[64]. Some of these mullions may have belonged to the church, since, amongst the remains on the site of the church, fragments cut from a similar stone are found. On the site of the church which will be referred as the Octagon here after[65], there are fragments decorated with uncut acanthus leaves. Although this type of sculpture is not remarkable enough to help with the dating, we should note that in the 6th century, there seems to be a tradition of sculpture composed of uncut acanthus leaves in the region parallel to the more significant classizing tradition[66].

61 Humann – Puchstein 1890, 406.

62 Strzygowski 1903, 97-101.

63 Presusser 1911, taf. 71.

64 Stilwell 1941, pl. 39.

65 Bell – Mango 1982, 157.

66 For the classical tradition in Northern Mesopotamia, see Mundell Mango 1982a. The uncut acanthus leaves –most probably dating to the 6th century- are found also in Edessa, Dara, monasteries around Edessa and Constantia and Tur Abdin. See Keser-Kayaalp 2009, pls. 167 and 169.

In the nearby village of Oğlakçı, a local man gathered ancient architectural fragments in his garden over the last twenty years. The fact that there are no traces of any foundations in the village indicates that the fragments must have been transferred from somewhere else, most probably from the city. Fragments include a molded door lintel, column capitals, and a block with a Greek inscription which may well have been the architectural fragments from the Octagon as they are big in scale and were probably part of a large structure. The Greek inscription at Oğlakçı (fig. 11) is one of those published earlier without a photograph. It records that Bishop Thomas started 'this work' in 542[67]. We do not know what 'this work' is but it is worth considering that it is the building of the Octagon.

The similarity of the Octagon with the aisled-tetraconch church of Zuart'noc' built by Narses III in around 641-651 has been emphasized in the past[68]. The dimensions of their diameters, 32 m in the Octagon and 38.7 m in Zuart'noc' are comparable. Apart from that, the walls of both have a rubble core faced with basalt ashlar. The existence of an upper storey, the monumentality of the piers and the existence of a crypt are other important features, which they share. In both structures the outer wall has a circular plan. Based on these similarities a 7th century date was suggested for the Octagon. As Constantia was under Persian rule in the early 7th century, the Persian shah Khusro II has been associated with its construction. Dating the Octagon to the early seventh century and thus associating it with him is tempting. Khusro II is known to have stayed at Constantia and is claimed to have favoured Armenian monophysitism.

However, the dating of the Octagon based on its similarities to the church of Zuart'noc' is problematic. The differences between these two monuments are significant: even their basic layouts differ. The inner core is a tetraconch at Zuart'noc' and an octagon in Constantia. This is an important difference because the classifications of the centralised churches which have an ambulatory are done according to the tetraconch lying in their centre as we mentioned above when we discussed the aisled-tetraconch at Amida. The lack of attention to the Octagon at Constantia may be mainly due to the fact that it has not been included in any of the architectural families proposed by scholars. The overall forms of these two churches

67 Humann – Puchstein 1890, 405.

68 Bell – Mango 1982, 157.

are also different. The surviving columns of Zuart'noc' are significantly shorter than the monumental piers of the Octagon. While in Zuart'noc', we have a structure composed of levels, the Octagon seems to have had a bulkier appearance from the outside. The most significant feature of the Octagon, namely the elongated apse, is absent in the church of Zuart'noc'. Thus there is certainly not enough in common between these churches or other evidence to date the Octagon to the seventh century.

As Maranci has noted, it has often been suggested that the church of Zuart'noc' was influenced by the aisled-tetraconch churches of Syria and Mesopotamia which we mentioned above. She rather prefers to see that church as a way of realising Nerses' intention to be related to Byzantium. She thus emphasises the parallels of this church with those in the capital. Similarly, one can find other and even stronger parallels for the Octagon in Constantia. For example the Octagon shares a lot with the aisled-tetraconch church at Amida, namely the church of the Virgin, which we mentioned above. They share a double-shell arrangement and a significantly long east room. The latter is relatively rare and, as has been suggested, it may have served for a separate celebration of the Eucharistic cult at the altar of Christ. The use of basalt alternating with brick in the walls, the use of limestone in the interior architectural elements, and a monumental quality are also common to both. As we mentioned above, the church of the Virgin dates to the early 6th century.

In the 6th century, there was considerable building activity in Northern Mesopotamia, despite the continuous waging of wars. Some found it difficult to reconcile finding a monumental church outside the city walls in the dangerous circumstances of the sixth century and for this reason did not consider the 6th century dating[69]. However, similar examples exist in the region, the most remarkable being the monumental church at Ambar. Ambar, located 3 kilometers south of Dara, was in the middle of a stage of war between the Romans and Persians. The church at Ambar has a transverse-hall type plan which was common in the monastic churches of the region. However, given its location, it was suggested that this church could not have been a monastic church but might have been built for soldiers[70]. Spiritual protection was important in times of warfare and this

69 As has also been argued by M. Mango (Bell – Mango 1982, 156).

70 Mundell Mango 1982b.

could have been provided by the case of the Octagon, and its relics of an important martyr.

The presence of a crypt, the centralised plan with an ambulatory, the church's location on the main route of Northern Mesopotamia from Edessa to Constantia and Dara, outside the walls but not far from the city, hint that this church was a martyrium. In Late Antiquity, martyria were built extensively. They were initiated to commemorate the holy places of Palestine or may have enclosed a martyr's tomb. In the early periods, many martyria had centralised plans attached to a basilica, like the Anastasis Rotunda of the Holy Sepulchre (326) or the church of the Nativity at Bethlehem. Later, martyria were built detached, but still with centralised plans[71]. Octagons were one of the most preferred plan types for martyria[72]. Some well-known examples of the type are the church of the Theotokos at Mount Garizim (484), the octagonal church at Capernaum, the church of St. Philip (?) (5th c?) at Hierapolis[73], the octagonal church at Caesarea (484?)[74] and the Kathisma church near Jerusalem[75]. As the migration of martyrs' relics became widespread, all churches could possess some relics and the difference between martyria and congregational churches became vague, while martyria of monumental centralised plans became rare[76].

The octagonal church at Constantia did not find its place in Grabar's volumes on martyria or in Smith's discussion of domed buildings with an emphasis on martyria[77]. It is clearly a confusing building. Its date and dedication are not certain although there have been some suggestions about both. It has common features with other martyria but its monumentality, circular ambulatory, protruding rooms at the cardinal points, and remarkably long eastern apse make this church unusual. In terms of size

71 Such as the martyrium of St.John the Baptist at the Hebdamon, the shrine of St.Babylas lying near Antioch which was cruciform, martyrium built by St.Gregory of Nyssa (mid of 4th c), Constantine's mausoleum-church of Holy Apostles in Constantinople; the Martyrium of St.Philip at Hierapolis, the church of Sts.Karpos and Babylas, the church of Santa Constanza at Rome (4th c. 340?), the church of the Prophets, Apostles and Martyrs (464-65) at Gerasa, Qalat Siman and the complex of St.Symeon Stylites the Younger, near Antioch, etc.

72 See Wilkinson 1981 for a discussion about the geometry of octagonal churches.

73 Krautheimer 1986, fig.124.

74 Holum 1995.

75 Avner 2003.

76 Mango 1976, 73.

77 Grabar 1943 and Smith 1971.

with a diameter of 32 m, it is closest to the Anastasis Rotunda of the Holy Sepulchre which has a diameter of 33.7 m. The diameters of the central spaces are also comparable in these two structures; 19.5 m in the Holy Sepulchre and 17.5 m in the Octagon at Constantia.

The Rotunda of the Holy Sepulchre was a 'highly venerated prototype' which was copied in great numbers. In the west, its copies were built from the 5th to the 17th century. As Krautheimer notes these copies are different from each other and their prototype. There was actually no concern about the geometry, architectural shapes and patterns when copying[78]. The sixth-century Octagon in Constantia is actually very similar to some medieval copies of the Holy Sepulchre in the west. Among those, the plan of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre at Northampton is almost identical to the plan of the Octagon, although half of its size. While we have similar but not identical plans to the Octagon at Constantia in the Late-Antique Mediterranean, to find an almost exact plan in the West in the Medieval period is remarkable. This confirms Krautheimer's observations about the concept of copying in the Medieval and earlier minds.

Actually, both churches do not have much in common with the Holy Sepulchre itself. For example, the elongated apse was not an original feature of the Holy Sepulchre; it was added in the 12th century by the Crusaders. However, it features in the earlier copies. Similarly, the Octagon has projecting rooms in the cardinal points which recall the exedras in the Rotunda of the Holy Sepulchre but in the latter, they were added in the 7th century. This phenomenon might be interpreted in many different ways. There may have been changes in these copies along with the changes in the Holy Sepulchre or they could have been built in the first place as interpretations of the Holy Sepulchre without much concern for the geometry or the architecture. In the case of the Octagon, it may have had a different prototype, possibly Antiochene. Given the similarity of the elongated eastern room of the Octagon to the aisled-tetraconch churches in Amida, Apamea and Seleucia Pieria, it is likely that it had this feature originally and was an interpretation either of the Amida church, the Antioch church or the Holy Sepulchre. The variety of church plan types, both in the urban and rural parts of Northern Mesopotamia, and the existence of some peculiar and original forms show the capability of local builders to play with forms

78 Krautheimer 1942, 4-8.

and invent new things. The Octagon at Constantia can be considered as a good example.

Dedication

Concerning the dedication of the Octagon, Marlia Mango suggested three alternatives: Theodore Stratelates, John of Tella and Jacob Baradaeus.[79] The latter is known as the founder of the West Syrian Church. He died in Egypt and his relics were brought back to Tella (Constantia), to his monastery (Phesiltha) in 622. Elsewhere, I have identified a rock-cut structure with the monastery of Phesiltha[80]. It has tentatively been suggested that Khusrou II may have patronised a project for Baradaeus' honour in 622[81]. Her second suggestion, John of Tella (d.537) was another important figure in the foundation of the West Syrian church hierarchy[82]. He was also a native of Constantia and has been highly praised for his efforts to protect the city. Marlia Mango does not give any justification for her suggestion apart from the fact that John was a native of Tella but in an entry in the catalogue of manuscripts at Homs, we are told that in February 1214, the sultan destroyed the great cathedral, the church of the Forty Martyrs and the church of Mor Cosmas in Amida, as well as the church of Mor Yuhannon at Constantia not long before them[83]. The church mentioned here as the church of Mor Yuhannon (most probably dedicated to John of Tella) seems to be a significant church that was worthy of mention amongst those the sultan destroyed. The church of Mor Yuhannon is described as "in" Constantia. The Octagon is not in the city but it is so close to the city walls that it can be described as "in" the city.

Michael the Syrian records a church of Mor Cosmas and Damian in Constantia where the monks of Mesopotamia gathered in 751[84]. Apart from that, a Greek inscription that was found in the city records a church (?) dedicated to the Protomartyr (who is usually St. Stephen) built by the bishop Sergius with the offering of fruit-bearing lands[85]. We do not have

79 Bell – Mango 1982, 157.
80 Keser-Kayaalp 2008.
81 Bell – Mango 1982, 157.
82 See Menze 2008, 106-8.
83 Brock, et.al 1994, 604
84 Chr. Michael, b.11, ch.23.
85 Humann - Puchstein 1890, 404.

any further evidence to make a case to claim that the Octagon was one of those. Based on a Greek inscription recorded on a baptismal basin from Constantina, which reads Ma&r ?(tuj) + Qo […]. it has been argued that the church to which this baptismal font belonged was dedicated to a martyr[86]. This basin which is lost today may have belonged to the Octagon which was clearly a martyrium. In addition, as noted above, an inscription from the fragments in present day Oğlakçı village mentions a certain bishop called Thomas, whose name may have been inscribed on the baptismal basin. On the other hand, it is clear that this monumental church was dedicated to an important saint. Thus, it is possible that this martyrium was dedicated to the Apostle Thomas who was highly venerated in the nearby city of Edessa which claimed to have his relics[87]. Thus, I suggest that the church was built by Bishop Thomas in 542 and was dedicated to St. Thomas whose relics may have actually been brought from Edessa. When the Eternal Peace was signed between the Romans and the Persians in 532, the dux of Mesopotamia was moved from Dara to Constantia. As a result, Constantia gained more importance. Although the year 542, the date of the inscription mentioned above, is only two years after the Eternal Peace between the two powers failed, we do know that problems started first in the North and by 542 Northern Mesopotamia should have still been stable.

Conclusions

This article dealt with two monumental centralised churches in Northern Mesopotamia, namely the Chruch of the Virgin at Amida and the Octagon at Constantia. As the aisled-tetraconch at Amida had always been contextualised with other aisled-tetraconch churches, the complementing features of these churches were not realised. By treating them together, which has not been done in the past, this paper has shed further light on these structures and reconsidered their reconstruction, dating and dedication. This study focused firstly on the Church of the Virgin which is an aisled-tetraconch church, a familiar plan type, repeated in different parts of the Empire, and secondly on the Octagon at Constantia which shares

86 Canali De Rossi 2004, n.44.

87 It was Addai rather than Thomas who went to Edessa but as early as the time when Egeria went to Edessa (between 382 and 386), the cult of Thomas probably became more popular than Addai as Egeria makes no mention of Addai (Segal 1970, 65- 66).

the ambulatory design, long eastern chamber, use of materials and the monumentality of the aisled-tetraconch at Amida.

The Church of the Virgin at Amida was considered to be the cathedral of the city together with some other aisled-tetraconch churches in the Oriens. I suggest that it might not have been the case and I offer alternative possibilities for its dedication. It is likely that it dates to the late 5th, early 6th centuries, as similar aisled-tetraconch structures were built across the region within a seventy-five year period from about 460 to the second quarter of the 6th century. Equally important evidence for its dating is the surviving architectural sculpture in the church which is typical of the late 5th and early 6th centuries in the region.

The Octagon at Constantia is a martyrium located just outside the city walls. Based on its similarity to the Zuart'noc' church in Armenia, an early seventh-century dating has been suggested for the Octagon. This dating raises some interesting suggestions for its dedication, such as Jacob Baradaeus, who is considered to be the founder of the Syrian Orthodox Church hierarchy, as his relics were brought back to Tella from Egypt in 622. In this paper, I argue that the similarities of the Octagon with the aisled-tetraconch at Amida are more significant than those with the church at Zuart'noc'. Based on the similarities mentioned in the text, I think that both structures date to the 6th century when there was considerable building activity in the region. As for the Octagon, if we accept that the above-mentioned inscription came from the Octagon, we can date it to 542. The inscription on the baptismal basin may indicate that the martyrium was dedicated to the Apostle Thomas whose cult was popular in Northern Mesopotamia and churches were dedicated to him in both Edessa and Amida. As for its possible architectural origins, I also brought the Holy Sepulchre into the discussion.

This article is a study of the two monuments, which have not been excavated at all. The Church of the Virgin at Amida is in use but the garden of the current church –the central location of the original church- is suitable for a sounding which may help in clarifying if the church had a bema or a tomb or a water source there. In contrast, the Octagon at Constantia is perfectly suitable for an archaeological excavation, which may lead to important discoveries that may change some of the earlier arguments and also the conclusions presented in this article.

Bibliography and Abbreviations

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Chr. 819	Chronicon anonymum ad annum Domini 819 pertinens.
Eusebius	In Mango 1986a The art of the Byzantine Empire, 312-1453: sources and documents. Toronto, Ont.:University of Toronto Press.
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Zachariah	*Historia ecclesiasica Zachariae Rhetori vulgo adscripta 2*. (also known as Chronicle of Amida of 569). Ed. by E.W. Brooks, trans. under the title, *The Syriac Chronicle known as that of Zachariah of Mitylene*. Hamilton and Brooks 1899.
Zuqnin	Pseudo-Dionysius of Tel-Mahre, Chronicle; trans. Witakowski 1996; Parts iii and iv: A.D. 488-775 trans. Harrak 1999.

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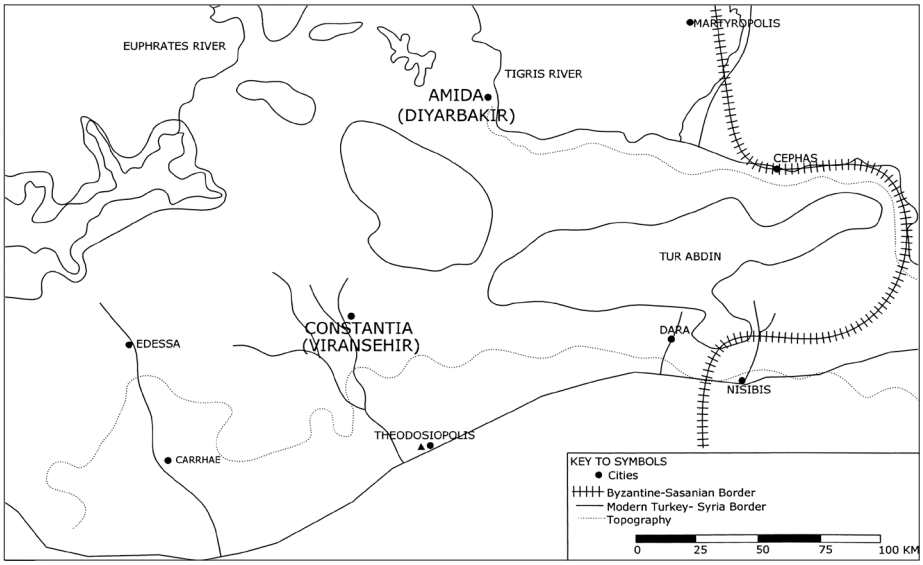

Fig. 1 Map of Northern Mesopotamia.

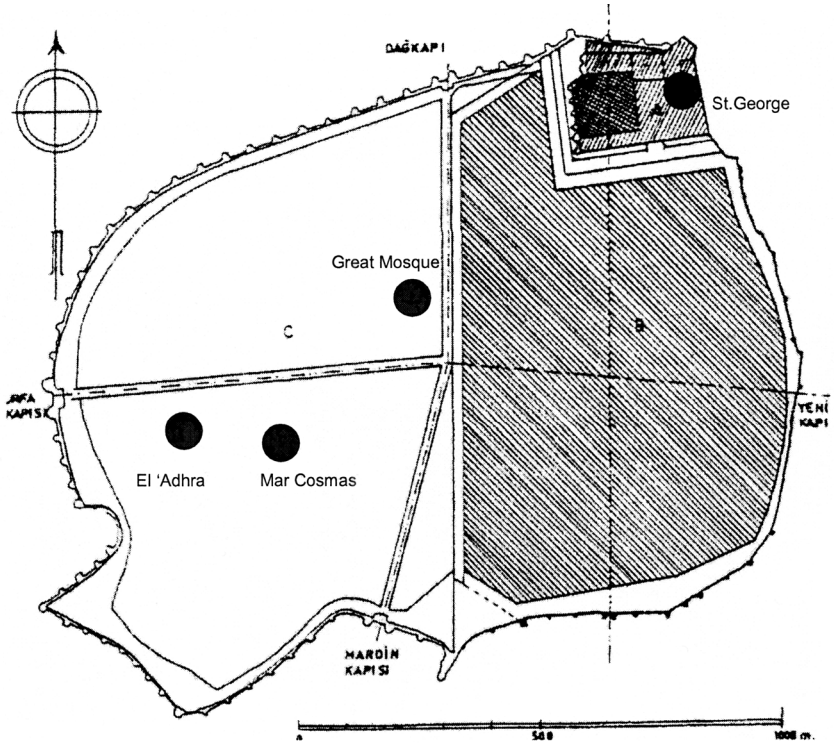

Fig. 2 Layout of the city of Amida (After Gabriel 1940 and Tuncer 2002).

Fig. 3 Exterior walls of the Church of the Virgin at Amida.

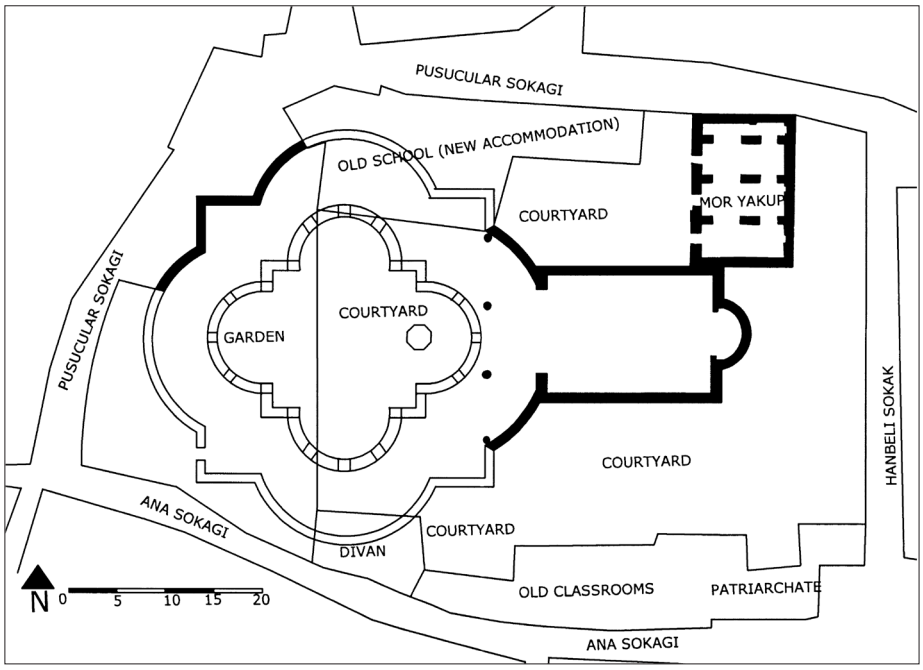

Fig. 4 Layout of the Church of the Virgin at Amida (After Tuncer 2002).

Fig. 5 Architectural Sculpture from the Church of the Virgin at Amida.

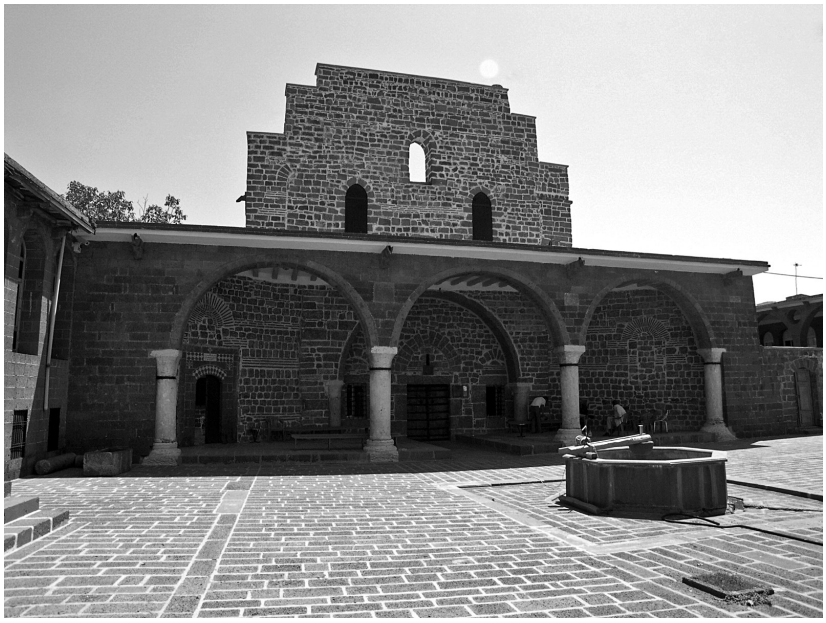

Fig. 6 West wall of the current Church of the Virgin at Amida.

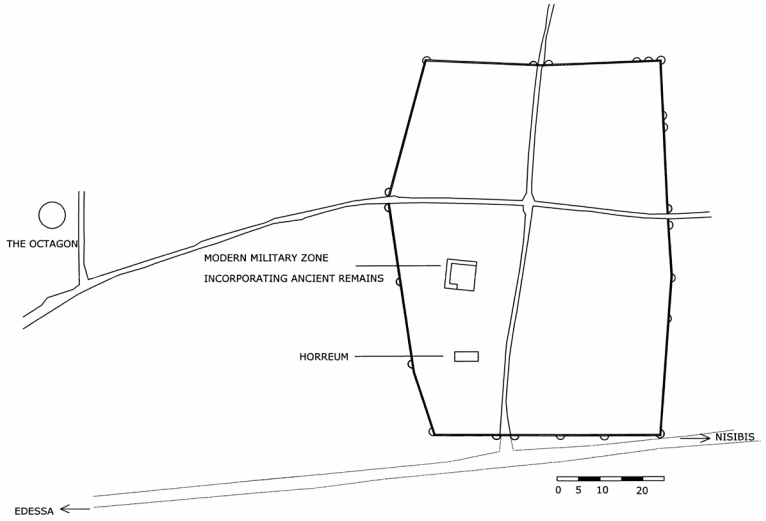

Fig. 7 Layout of the city of Constantia.

Fig. 8
Capital from the tetrapylon (?).

Fig. 9
Surviving pier of the martyrium at Constantia.

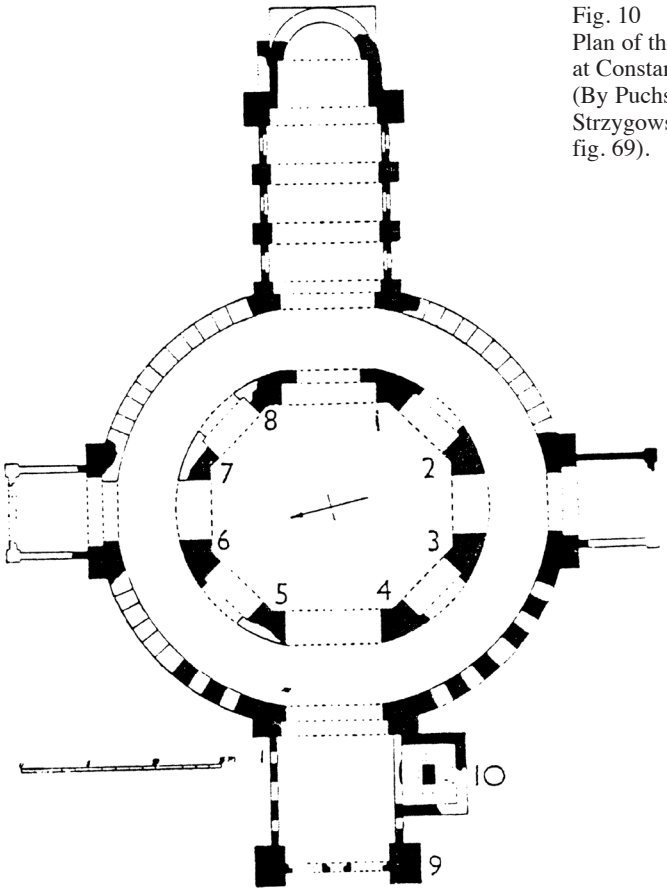

Fig. 10
Plan of the martyrium at Constantia (By Puchstein in Strzygowski 1903, fig. 69).

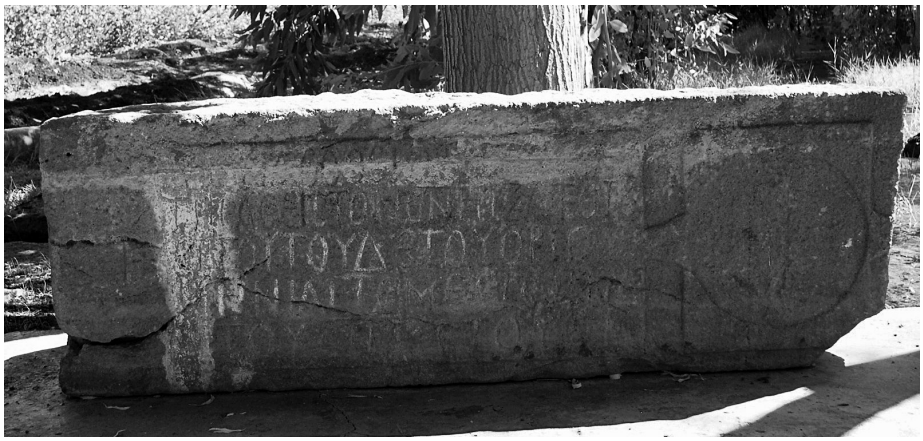

Fig. 11 Greek inscription from the martyrium at Constantia (?).