



**BARCELONA  
IN LATE ANTIQUITY  
Christianity,  
the Visigoths and the City**

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After the great crisis of the 3rd century, which shook the political, social and economic structures of the Roman world, Occident went into a historical period known as *Late Antiquity* (4th-7th centuries), in which the spread of Christianity, becoming the official religion in the 4th century, and the movement of the Germanic peoples had a fundamental role.

*Barcino*, small in size, well protected by city walls and with a strategic position in the journey between Gallia and Hispania, became the *Barcino* of the Visigoth period.

# THE WESTERN MEDITERRANEAN IN LATE ANTIQUITY

In the 3rd century the convergence of internal disputes and increasing pressure from the countries beyond the boundaries of the Empire, greatly destabilised the Roman world. Like other populations faced with increasing insecurity, *Barcino* strengthened its walls between the 3rd and 4th centuries.

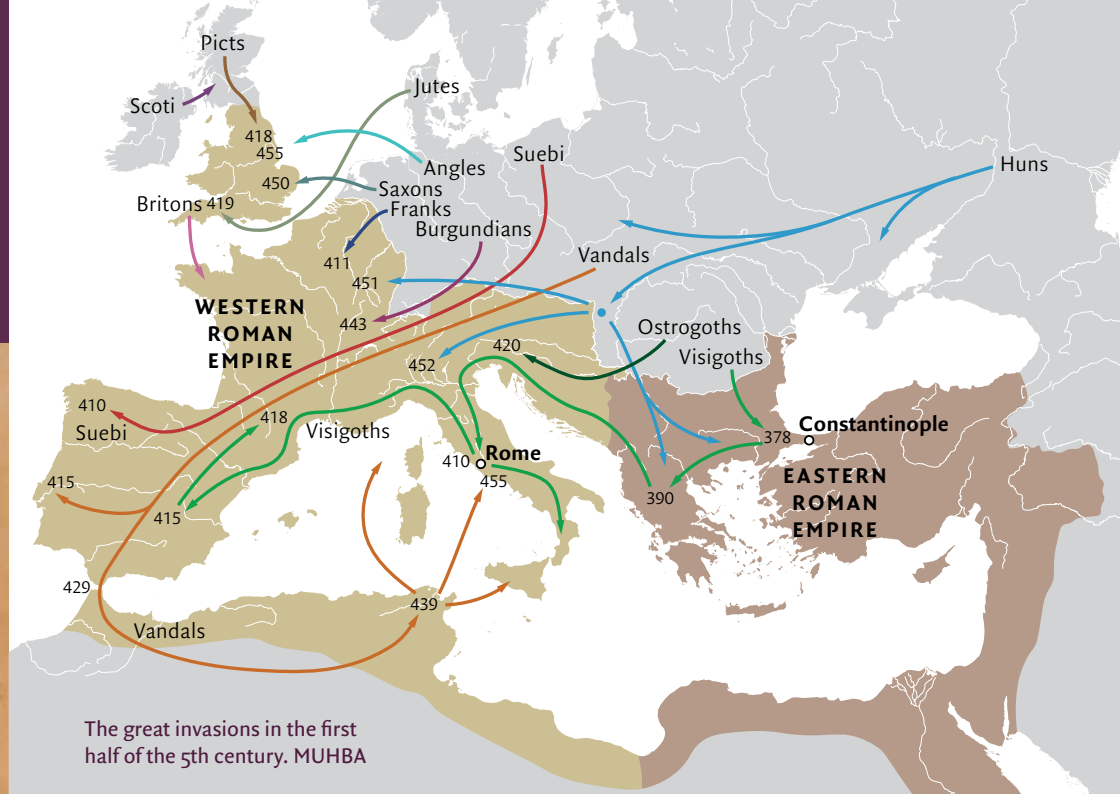
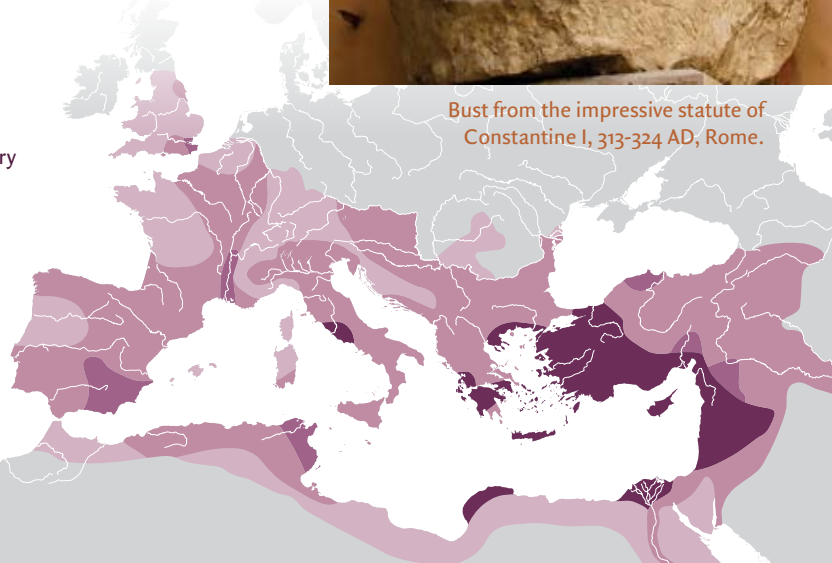


Bust from the impressive statue of Constantine I, 313-324 AD, Rome.

The spread of Christianity.

- in the 1st century
- in the 2nd century
- in the 3rd century
- after the 3rd century

Developed from A. Houot, *La diffusion du Christianisme*.



The great invasions in the first half of the 5th century. MUHBA

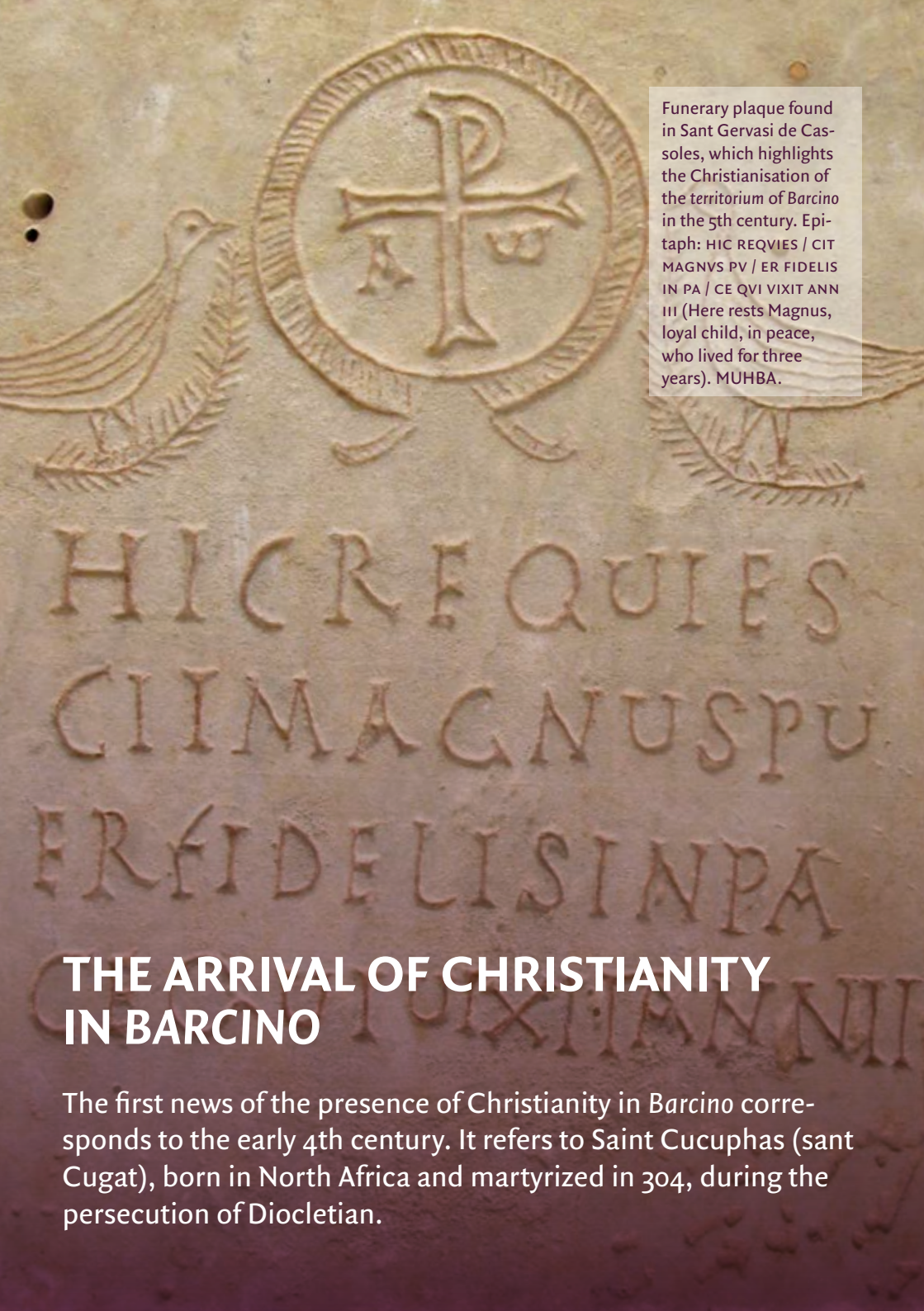
## The reorganisation and division of the Empire.

Division of the Empire in 284 by Diocletian to better implement political and administrative control during times of crisis, marked the beginning of the period known as the Late Roman Empire. A century later the division became definitive with the death of Emperor Theodosius in 395. The strength of the Byzantine Empire was highlighted by the weakening of the Western Roman Empire.

## The spread and consolidation of Christianity.

Christianity was one of the religions coming from the Middle East which spread across the Mediterranean. It was propagated above all among the popular classes and was often considered with suspicion, or even persecuted, by the authorities until the time of Constantine I, who considered it a way of supporting the Empire. He legalized it in 313, helping establish it among the aristocracy and the administrative apparatus of the State and making Rome the capital of Christianity.

**The great invasions.** The great movement of people, most of whom were of Germanic origin, and their settlement within the Empire as independent powers greatly altered the entire Western Roman Empire. At the beginning of the 5th century the Suebi, Vandals and Alanis crossed the Pyrenees, and soon the Visigoths settled between the south of Gallia and Hispania.



Funerary plaque found in Sant Gervasi de Cas-soles, which highlights the Christianisation of the *territorium* of Barcino in the 5th century. Epitaph: HIC REQUIES / CIT MAGNVS PV / ER FIDELIS IN PA / CE QVI VIXIT ANN III (Here rests Magnus, loyal child, in peace, who lived for three years). MUHBA.

## THE ARRIVAL OF CHRISTIANITY IN BARCINO

The first news of the presence of Christianity in Barcino corresponds to the early 4th century. It refers to Saint Cucuphas (sant Cugat), born in North Africa and martyred in 304, during the persecution of Diocletian.

**Another conception of the world.** The symbols of Christian cultural order expressed a conception of existence and death very different from those of the classical world. The monogram of Christ, the fish, the crater of wine, the prayer, the bunch of grapes, the dove or the dolphin were all represented on objects of daily use.

Lamp of clear African *terra sigillata* with a monogram of Christ on the central disc. 5th-6th centuries. MUHBA.



Jet ring with representation of the monogram of Christ. 4th-6th centuries. MUHBA.

**Christian iconography in coinage.** Christian symbols are found on the backs of coins as from the 4th century, from the reign of Constantine I. The cross, the monogram of Christ, and the imperial standard (*labarum*) clearly show the adoption of Christian worship by the State.

Gold coin (*solidus*) of Valentinian I. Year of issue: 364-367. Mint of Rome. On the reverse side, the Emperor with a monogram of Christ in the standard. MUHBA.

On 28th October 312, Emperor Constantine I won the battle of the Milvian Bridge. According to the official account, the night before Constantine dreamt of the sign of victory. It was the monogram of Christ, which he added to the imperial standards.



Bronze coin of Maxentius. Mint of Lugdunum (Lyon). Year of issue: 350-353. Reverse side with the monogram of Christ and the Greek letters alpha and omega. MUHBA.

**The initial organisation of Christianity.** The first known bishop in *Barcino* was Pretextat, who in 343 attended the Council of Sardica. Pacia was bishop of *Barcino* between 360 and 390, and Lampi, bishop between 393 and 400.



The martyrdom of Saint Cugat soon made him one of the identifying features of the diocese of Barcelona. Representation of a reliquary from the 14th century. Museu Diocesà de Barcelona.

**The Christianisation of the Elites.** In the first decades of the 4th century there were already leading members of the local elites among the Christians of *Barcino*. They were people who had sufficient resources to be able to pay for sarcophagi decorated with Christian themes that came directly from the workshops in Rome.



Lateral fragment of a cover of a sarcophagus with a scene from the epiphany. Marble from Proconesia (Greece), c. 320. MUHBA.



Fragment of a sarcophagus with the representation of an orant. Marble from Proconesia (Greece), c. 320. MUHBA.



Rock crystal carving in the shape of a fish. 6th century. MUHBA. The fish symbolises the Eucharist and refers to the baptism.



Despite the emergence of Christian funerary pieces, the reuse of old sarcophagi with pagan iconography was very common during Late Antiquity, and continued until the Middle Ages.

Fragment of a sarcophagus cover that represents a summertime, with a sickle. Marble from Tassos (Greece). 230-240 AD. MUHBA.



Cover of a little box from the 4th-5th centuries. MUHBA. The early Christians considered rock crystal as a symbol of purity, identified with the Virgin Mary.

**The 4th-century basilica.** The first official see of Christianity in *Barcino* began to be built in the north corner of the city, using structures of an old *domus* that must have been used for Christian worship. Thus the first 4th-century episcopal centre was built, with a basilica and baptistery with square pool.

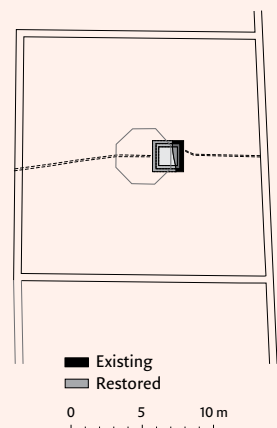


Diagram of the structures conserved of the 4th-century baptistery. Hypothesis by J. Beltrán de Heredia and Ch. Bonnet. Drawing by E. Revilla.

Marble sarcophagus found in Barcelona. 4th century. MAC.



General structure and interpretative plans of the first episcopal centre. Hypothesis by J. Beltrán de Heredia and Ch. Bonnet. Drawing by M. Berti and E. Revilla.



Visigoth gold coin (tremissis) of the Leovigild era, minted in Barcelona. Gabinet Numismàtic, MNAC.

## THE VISIGOTHS

In the early 5th century, the struggles for control of the Western Roman Empire involved both the military factions and the settlers inside it, who featured in major movements. This is the case of the Suebi, the Vandals, the Alanis and, later, the Visigoths, who went from Gallia to Hispania. *Barcino* was closer to Gallia, was well fortified and was smaller and more sustainable than the ancient capital, *Tarraco*, and it developed into a centre of Visigoth power and an important episcopal centre. Over time, its name changed to *Barcinona*.

**Struggles for Power and *Sedes Regia*.** At the beginning of the 5th century *Barcino* became a point of attraction of usurpers and monarchs and turned into a setting for power struggles. Later, the Visigoths chose the city as their royal see at diverse moments between the abandonment of Toulouse in 507, due to the advance of the Franks to the south, and the establishing of their court in Toledo in the second half of the 6th century.



The Western Mediterranean in the early 6th century. Developed from W. Hilgemann and H. Kinder.

Gold coin (tremissis) of Leovigild, king of the Visigoths from 572 to 586, minted in Barcelona. One can read *BARCINONA*. Gabinet Numismàtic, MNAC.



Depiction of the second Roman wall of *Barcino*. Drawing by F. Riart.





**Maximus is proclaimed Augustus.** In 409, in *Barcino*, a Hispanic aristocrat and military head in *Tarraco*, called Maximus, the Tyrant, was proclaimed Augustus (emperor) of the *diocesis Hispaniarum* (peninsula and north Africa) and minted currency with his name.

Silver coin (*siliqua*) of Maximus. Year of issue: 409-411. It bears the mark of the mint of *Barcino*. Gabinet Numismàtic, MNAC.



**Ataulf and Galla Placidia in *Barcino*.** The Visigoth king Ataulf and his wife, Galla Placidia, daughter of the Roman emperor Theodosius I, *The Great*, were living in *Barcino* in 415, where she had a son who died shortly after birth. Ataulf once again sought a power share with the emperor, and perhaps for this reason a faction against the pact murdered him.

Galla Placidia, who had been kidnapped by the Visigoths in the sacking of Rome in 410, was able to return to Italy some time after the murder of Ataulf. She was regent of the Western Roman Empire between 425 and 437, during the childhood of her son Valentinian III.

Gold coin (*solidus*) in the name of Galla Placidia. Minted in 425 in the mint of *Aquilea* (Italy). MUHBA.



**The circulation of money in the Visigoth period.** The Visigoth period continued and imitated the monetary patterns of the Roman Empire and its successor, the Byzantine Empire. Visigoth gold currency circulated along with small bronze coins, probably minted by the religious hierarchies or local aristocracies, and with old roman issues, very worn out and cut.

Gold imitation Visigoth coin (*tremissis*), minted in the name of the Byzantine emperor Justinian I. Found in *Barcelona*. Year of issue: 527-565. MUHBA.



Silver coin (*divisor* of *siliqua*), probably of Visigoth attribution. Found in *Barcelona*. 5th-6th centuries. MUHBA.

Small bronze coins found in *Barcelona*, used in transactions of small amounts. MUHBA.



Cut and imitation coin. The old Roman currency was copied and also divided and cut up to obtain pieces of lesser value. MUHBA.

**Hispano-Roman and Visigoth population.** Between the 5th and 7th centuries the population of *Barcino* was distributed between the inside of the walled precinct and the space outside, the *suburbium*. The Visigoths headed the dominant elite, but their contribution to the number of inhabitants of the city must have been limited. The population of Hispano-Roman origin coexisted with the military detachments of Visigoth origin and the civilians that accompanied them, and some Visigoth cultural traits were incorporated into local life, as can be seen from the daily objects.



↑ Ceramic *olpa*. Jar typical of Visigoth ceramic production. 7th century MUHBA.

**Ceramic objects.** The items of ceramics show both forms of local production and the continuity of trade contacts across the Mediterranean, above all with North Africa.



↓ Dish in African bright *terra sigillata* with decoration of palmettes and squares. 320-420 AD. MUHBA.

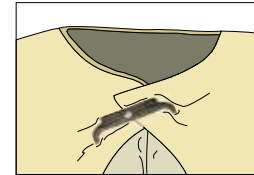
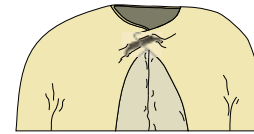
↑ Bowl of African bright *terra sigillata*. 490-550 AD. MUHBA.



**Clothing and accessories.** Pieces of clothing that belonged to the Hispano-Roman and Visigoth population. In the bronze work, one can appreciate Visigoth contributions and from the Mediterranean and Byzantine world.



← Double-hook brooch in bronze. These closures for clothing were used from the 6th-7th until the 9th-10th centuries. It seems they were also used as needles for shrouds. MUHBA.



← Drawing of how the buckle works by E. Revilla.



↙ Bronze buckle slide. Piece of military origin. End of the 4th century - early 5th century. MUHBA.

Women's brooch in bronze. Piece typical of Visigoth adornment. 6th century. MUHBA.



↓ Silver earrings. 6th-7th centuries. MUHBA.



Bronze brooch shaped like fish. 6th-7th centuries. MUHBA.



Bronze belt brooch. Piece of military origin. Second half of the 5th century. MUHBA.

**The Role of the Bishops in Late Antiquity.** From the eclipse of the Roman administration the figure of bishop had gradually gained influence. In Visigoth times, the bishops undertook authentic tasks of governance: they ensured the assurance of weights and measures, collected taxes and promoted works and rehabilitations. They also imparted justice in the episcopal court, an institution created by Constantine I that took on importance from the 5th century onwards.



← Bronze ring seal shaped like a horse and with the inscription DICNO VIR, "To the worthy man". 5th century. Piece of ceremonial use related to the bishop. MUHBA.

↓ Tile found in the rooms adjoining the episcopal hall. 7th century. It bears a verse from Psalm 106 (105), attributed to David: "Who can utter the mighty acts of the Lord? Who can shew forth all his praise?": [EPSAL] MIS DAVID IS / QVIS LOQVITER POTE[NTI] / AS D[OMI]NI AVDITAS FACIE[T] / OMNES LA V DES E[IVS] / XVI.

**The guarantee of weights and measures.** The official ponderal index of the Byzantine Empire was adopted as monetary standards by the Visigoth administration. In 545 emperor Justinian had established that the measures and *pondera* had to be kept in the churches. The bishop had to guarantee the correct use and avoid tax fraud.



Bronze *exagium* with the letters NE applied in silver. 6th-7th centuries. It corresponded to four *solidi*. MUHBA.

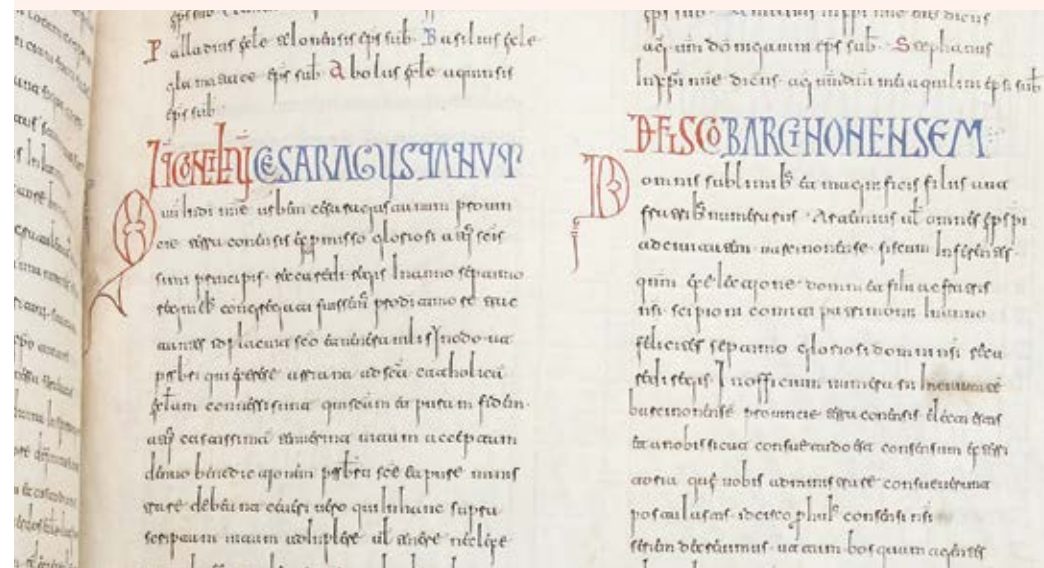


**The promotion of works.** The bishops acted as patrons and promoters of works to enlarge and add status to their sees. It was sometimes recorded in the ornamental ceramic plaques that were placed in the churches.

Plaque decorated with an architectural motif, a monogram of Christ and the Greek letters alpha and omega. On the sides it bears the invocatory inscription BRACARI VI/VAS CUM TVIS, "Bracarius, live with your people". 5th-7th centuries. It came from Baetica. Museu del Disseny Barcelona.

**Collecting taxes.** According to the epistle *De fisco Barcinonensi* (592), Barcelona's bishops collected taxes in an extensive region of Tarraconense, which covered the area between Empúries and Girona to the north, Tarragona to the south and Egara (Terrassa) to the west.

Epistle *De fisco Barcinonensi* (592) in the Codex Emilianense, compiled in the 10th century. Real Biblioteca del Monasterio de San Lorenzo de El Escorial.



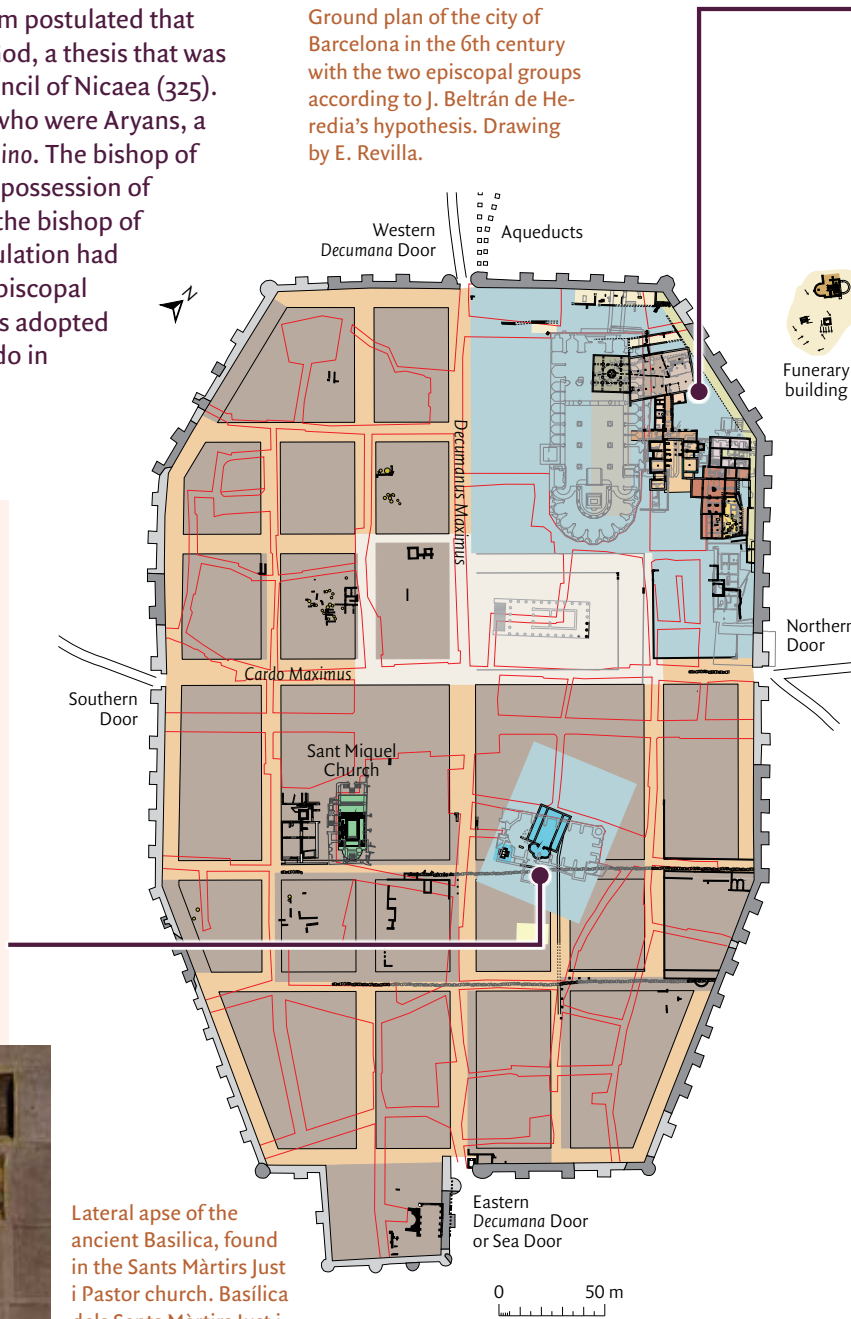
**Two bishops for one city.** Aryanism postulated that Jesus was the son of God but not God, a thesis that was considered heretical in the 1st Council of Nicaea (325). With the settling of the Visigoths, who were Aryans, a duality of worship occurred in *Barcino*. The bishop of the new Aryan Visigoth elites took possession of the existing episcopal see, so that the bishop of the Hispano-Roman Catholic population had to look for another one. The two episcopal structures survived until the Aryans adopted Catholicism at the Council of Toledo in 589.

**The second episcopal centre.** The new Catholic episcopal centre was smaller and, according to recent hypotheses, was based in the Basilica of the Sants Màrtirs Just i Pastor. The basilica, the baptistery with a cruciform baptismal pool and a privileged tomb (probably of a bishop) have been discovered, but there must have been other rooms. The abandonment of Aryanism by the Visigoths would have put an end to the duality of the bishoprics, returning the cathedral of the Santa Creu to Catholic worship. The archaeological remains of this episcopal centre can be visited inside the basilica.



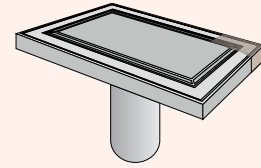
Lateral apse of the ancient Basilica, found in the Sants Màrtirs Just i Pastor church. *Basílica dels Sants Màrtirs Just i Pastor*. Photograph: P. Vivas.

Ground plan of the city of Barcelona in the 6th century with the two episcopal groups according to J. Beltrán de Heredia's hypothesis. Drawing by E. Revilla.



**The first episcopal complex and the centre of Visigoth power.** The occupation of the Aryan bishop of the existing episcopal see in the north corner of the walled city gave a boost to its shaping as *Barcino*'s centre of power, when in the 6th century new buildings were added by the Visigoth administration. Thus the centre was formed where the ecclesiastical hierarchy and the *comes civitatis* or count of the city lived.

Fragment of a *mensa* or altar table found in the baptistery. 5th-7th c. MUHBA. Restitution drawing by E. Revilla.



Marble patens found in the baptistery and the cruciform church of the episcopal complex. 6th-7th centuries. MUHBA.



**The councils of the 6th century and reunification.** Two councils were held in Barcelona in the 6th century. The first one took place in 540, in the time of the catholic bishop Nebridius, and was possibly held in the basilica of the Sants Just i Pastor, with the presence of six bishops. The second was held in 599 in the cathedral of the Santa Creu, ten years after religious reunification in Toledo, and eleven bishops attended, among which was Ugne, the former Aryan bishop, who had continued as Catholic bishop.

→ Bishops and king Reccared at the 3rd Council of Toledo (589), represented in the *Codex Vigilanus* from the 10th century. Real Biblioteca del Monasterio de San Lorenzo de El Escorial.



Shafts of columns of the forum and capital of the Roman basilica used in the cruciform church, of the episcopal group. Basement of the Plaça del Rei, MUHBA. Photograph: L. Casals.

# BARCINONA, THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE CITY AND SUBURBIUM IN THE 5TH-7TH CENTURIES

From the 5th century on, the effects of a certain urban destructuring began to be visible. The forum losing its use, the Roman public buildings began to be dismantled or used for other purposes, the streets were narrowed and diverted, the drains fell into disuse and the old *domus* were divided up. Christianity had a key role in the transformation of the landscape, which featured the formation of the new centre of power, with the episcopal complex in the north of the walled precinct, and the martyrial basilicas and extramural monasteries in the *suburbium*.



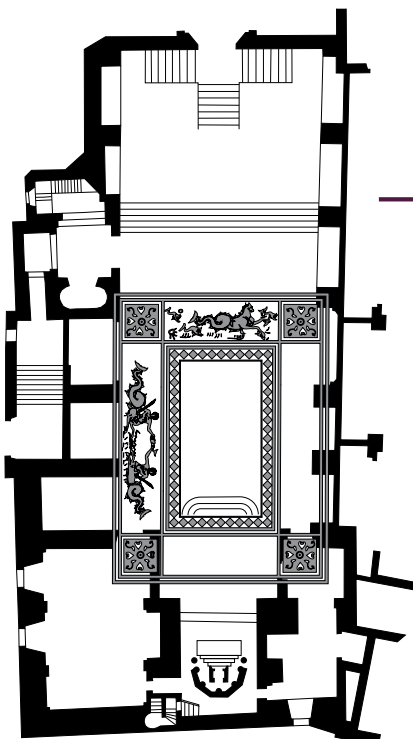


Honorary forum pedestal. In the upper part one can see a space to keep the relics. It was found in the foundations of Santa Maria del Pi church. MUHBA.

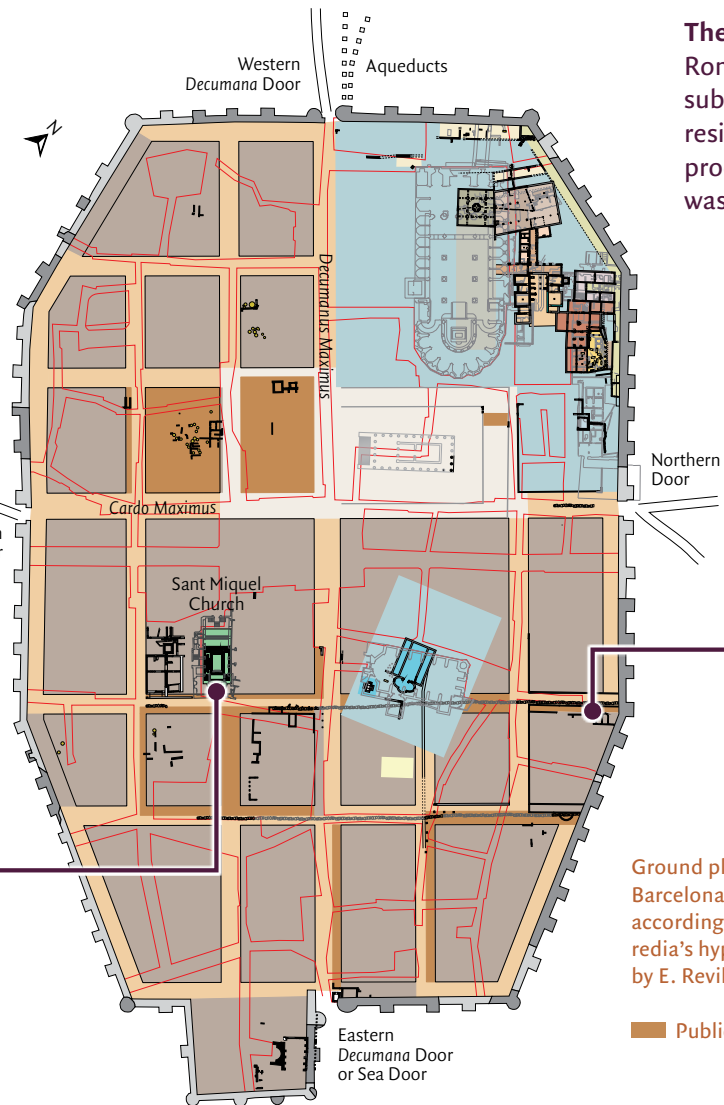
**The loss of use of the Forum.** The forum had lost its former role as an administrative and religious centre and the large public buildings changed in use or were dismantled. The stones, capitals and columns were reused as constructive material.

**The reconversion of the thermal complex into a church.** In the 5th century the public baths that were close to the forum were reused as spaces for Christian worship. The *frigidarium* or cold room of the thermal complex became the church of Sant Miquel (nowadays disappeared) which preserved the 2nd-century mosaic paving.

Ground plan of the church of Sant Miquel with the 2nd-century mosaic of the baths. Drawing by E. Revilla.



0 5 10 m



Ground plan of the city of Barcelona in the 6th century according to J. Beltrán de Heredia's hypothesis. Drawing by E. Revilla.

Public space occupation

Bronze seal for marking the liturgical bread found in the excavations of Sant Miquel. 5th century. It bears the inscription PETRUS / PAULUS, in honour of the fathers of the Church. 5th century. MUHBA.



0 50 m

**The compartmentalisation of the houses.** Some large Roman *domus* were used only partially. Others were subdivided to house more families, converted into residential homes. The living space was alongside the production and storage areas, stables and domestic waste dumps.

The paving (1), the position of the fireplace (2) and the hole for the roof pole (3), clearly visible in the *domus* of Bisbe Caçador, show their transformation in Late Antiquity. Photograph by N. Miró and E. Revilla.



**Changes in the Roman urban layout.** The private occupation of the porches and part of the public space turned the streets of the ancient Roman colony into irregular and narrow byways. At the same time, the changes in the gradients and the difficulty of maintenance led to gradual abandonment of the drains, in the 6th century.

**The monumentalisation of the episcopal centre.** The episcopal see or *episcopium*, established from the 4th century in the north corner of the walled precinct, was remodelled in the 5th century and enlarged and monumentalised in the 6th century. On adding the buildings of Visigoth civil power, it came to occupy almost a quarter of the urban extension.

The excavations of the different buildings of the episcopal complex have provided a notable series of architectural sculpture related to the monumentalisation undertaken in the second half of the 6th century.



↗ Capital. White marble from Sant Beat (Haute Garonne). 6th-7th centuries. MUHBA.

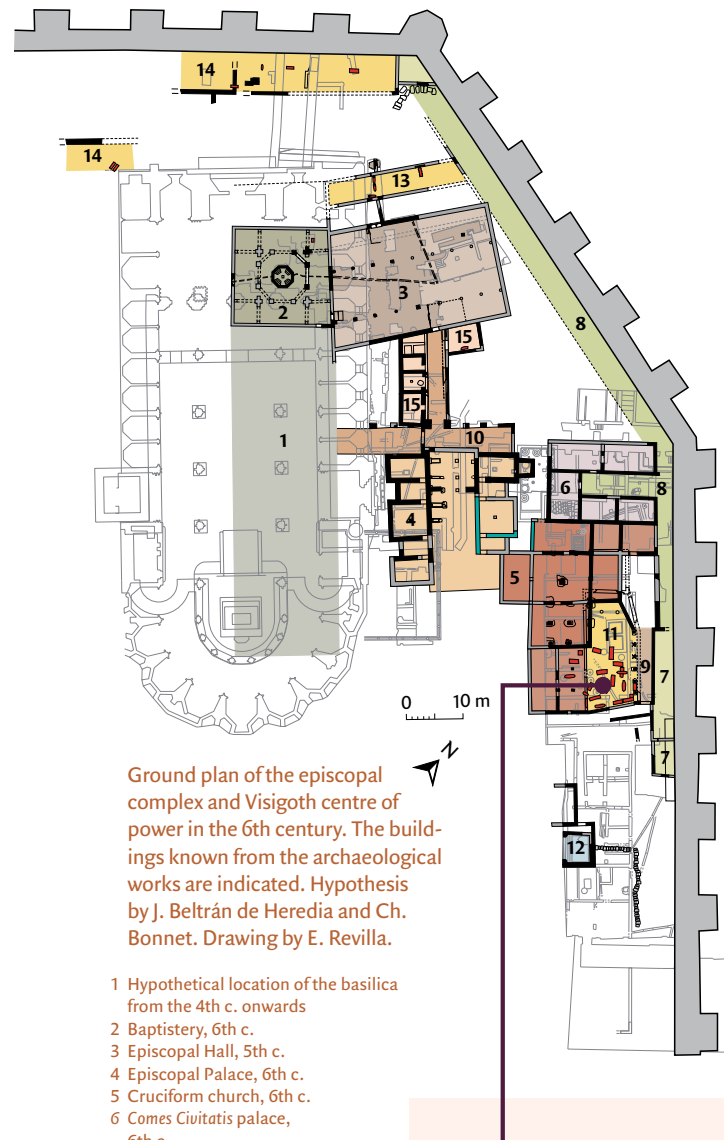
↓ Inner door panel. Marble from Paros (Greece). Second half of the 6th-early 7th century. MUHBA.



↑ Impost or frieze with geometric plant decoration. Marble from Luni-Carrara (Italy). Second half of the 6th - 7th century. MUHBA.

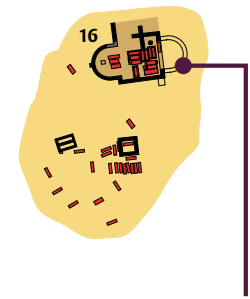


Altar support. Marble from Luni-Carrara (Italy). 6th-7th centuries. MUHBA. Drawing by E. Revilla.



Ground plan of the episcopal complex and Visigoth centre of power in the 6th century. The buildings known from the archaeological works are indicated. Hypothesis by J. Beltrán de Heredia and Ch. Bonnet. Drawing by E. Revilla.

- 1 Hypothetical location of the basilica from the 4th c. onwards
- 2 Baptistery, 6th c.
- 3 Episcopal Hall, 5th c.
- 4 Episcopal Palace, 6th c.
- 5 Cruciform church, 6th c.
- 6 Comes Ciuitatis palace, 6th c.
- 7 Guardhouse
- 8 Military road
- 9 Portico, 6th c.
- 10 Passages and corridors reserved for the bishop and the clergy
- 11 Burials and necropolis, 6th-7th c.
- 12 Baths complex, frigidarium pool, 6th-7th c.
- 13 Funerary portico, 6th-7th c.
- 14 Funerary areas
- 15 Rooms adjoining the episcopal Hall, 5th-6th c.
- 16 Funerary building



**A funerary building for the ecclesiastical elites.** The funerary building beneath the current Plaça d'Antoni Maura, probably related to the episcopal complex, contained tombs of dignitaries, and attracted numerous burials close to them. It features a 5th-century mosaic sepulchral stone with Christian symbology.

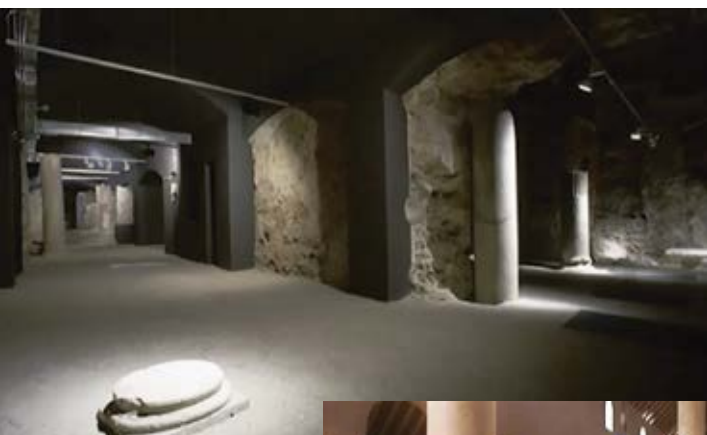


↑ Sepulchral stone from the 5th century that shows a monogram of Christ and the Greek letters alpha and omega (Christian symbol of God as the beginning and end of all things) and decoration of African influence. It corresponds to an important member of the Christian community, certainly a bishop. It came from the funerary building under Plaça d'Antoni Maura. MUHBA.

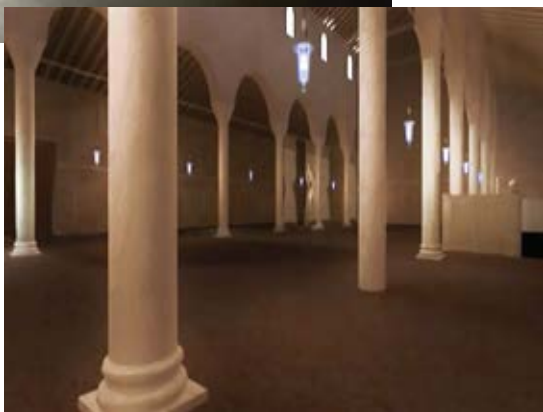
**The privileged funerary world.** With Christianity, a privileged minority of the population could be buried within the walls. Nevertheless, the majority of the population continued to be buried outside the city walls.

← Necropolis of privileged burials linked to the cruciform church, plaça del Rei. Fons d'Excavacions Antigues - MUHBA.

**The episcopal hall.** The bishop's reception room, built in the 5th century, had a basilical ground plan. Building of three naves, with a raised space enclosed with marble inner doors where the cathedra or episcopal throne was. It was a space of representation, in accordance with the importance of the functions that the bishop undertook. The building was intended for receiving guests, for trials (*episcopalis audientia*) and meetings with the local synod, and where the councils were held.



MUHBA. Photograph: P. Vivas.

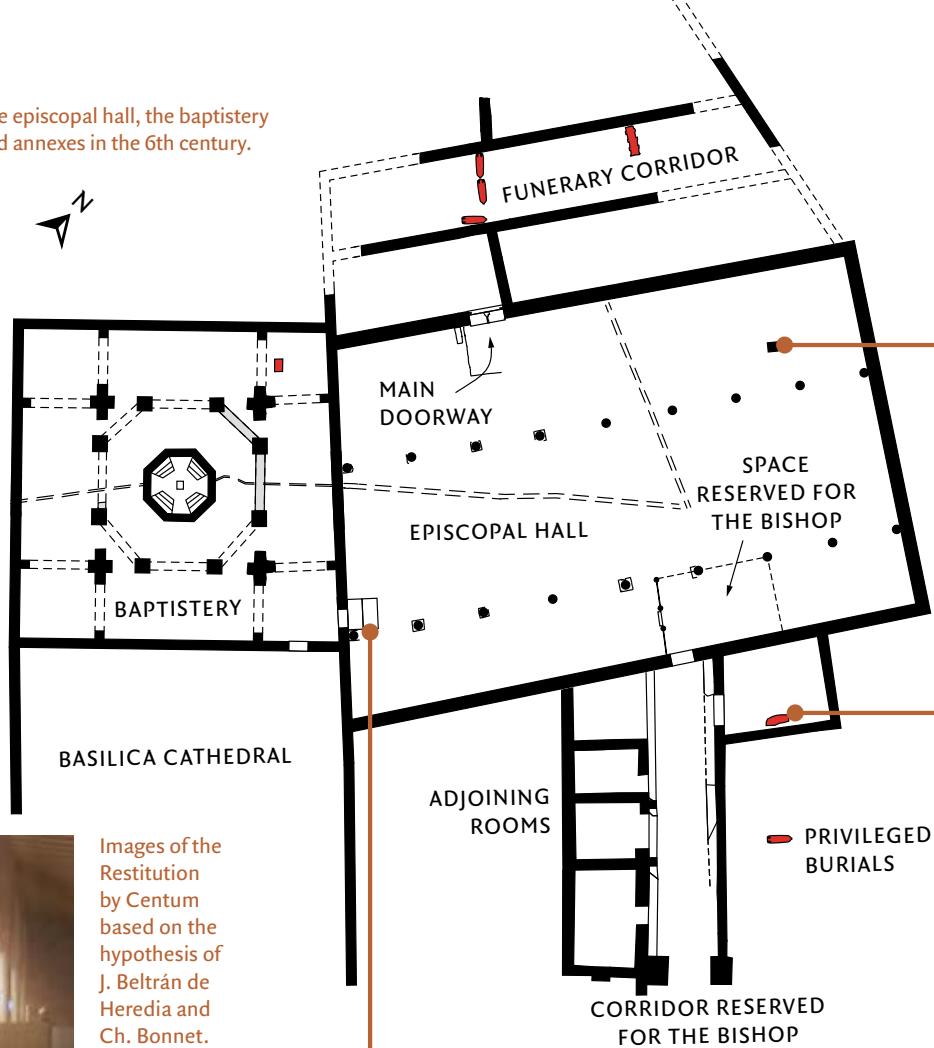


Images of the Restitution by Centum based on the hypothesis of J. Beltrán de Heredia and Ch. Bonnet.

↓ Paintings from the 5th century that decorated the walls of the episcopal hall. They depict architectural motifs, marble panelling and columns. A part of the decoration was restored during the 6th century following the same decorative motifs. Drawing by C. Puerto.



The episcopal hall, the baptistry and annexes in the 6th century.



Base of a mensa that must have been used as a lectern to support the texts that were read during the acts held in the building.



Burial of a four-year-old boy, carried out in the 6th century beneath the flooring of marble plaques. It is a privileged spot. Fons d'Excavacions Antigues - MUHBA.



Door reserved for the bishop to enter the baptistry and the basilica-cathedral



**Baptistry.** Baptism is an essential ceremony for the Christian community. From the establishment of Christianity in the city until the 8th century, the ritual of baptism was done by immersion. The person that had to be baptised, always an adult, entered the baptismal pool while the bishop administered the sacrament from outside the pool.

→ The baptistry in the 6th century. Restitution by Centum based on the hypothesis of J. Beltrán de Heredia and Ch. Bonnet.



↓ The baptistry in the 6th century, MUHBA. Photograph: R. Muro.



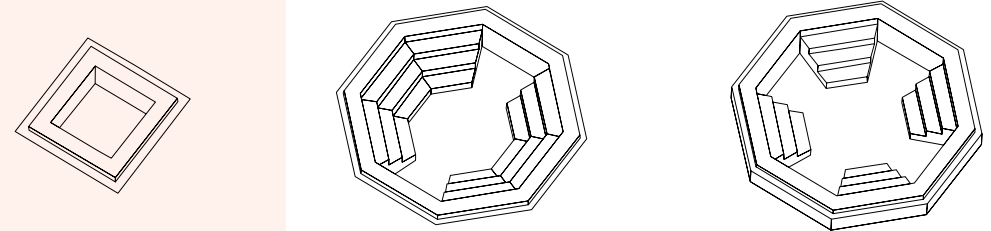
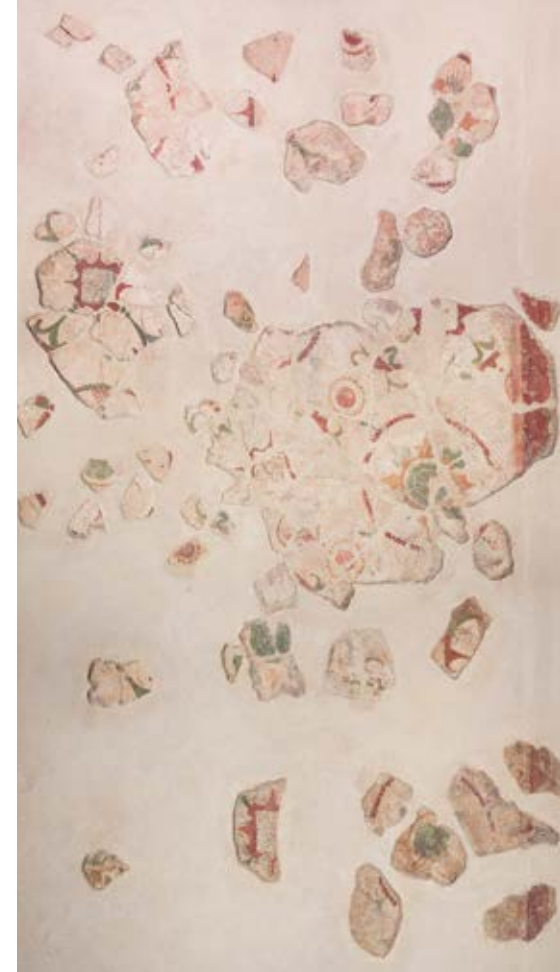
↓ Wall painting with a ceremonial inscription found at the baptistry. 6th century. MUHBA.

Renounce the devil that was pronounced before administering the baptism: “[...]He commands the renunciation of the [ene] my of the Lord [...]”: [...] O: IUBET RENUNTIARE [INI]MICUM DOMIN[...]

**Painting on the ceiling of the baptistry 6th century.** The painting was part of the decorated ceiling of the corridor surrounding the baptismal pool, found in the demolition of the 9th century baptistry. It has geometric floral motifs which are organised in a continual register, typical of a side or passing area. Stylistically, it falls within the Roman tradition and follows patterns that in Late Antiquity persisted in the western Mediterranean.

→ Fragments of the decorated ceiling of the baptistry. 6th century, MUHBA. Photograph: P. Parer.

↓ Restitution by Centum based on the hypothesis by E. Albiol and L. Font.






↑ Evolution of the baptismal pool in the 4th, 5th and 6th centuries. Hypothesis by J. Beltrán de Heredia and Ch. Bonnet. Drawing by E. Revilla.

The baptismal pool of the 4th century was square in shape and was demolished in the 5th century to make way for a new one with an octagonal shape. In the 6th century, the inside steps to enter the pool were cut out to give it the shape of a cross.



**The suburbium.** Around the walled precinct extended the suburbium, where a part of the population lived. Additionally, following the Roman tradition, many burials were done in the necropolises situated along the ways or paths. In this landscape of the suburbium featured, along with the monasteries, the martyrial basilicas.

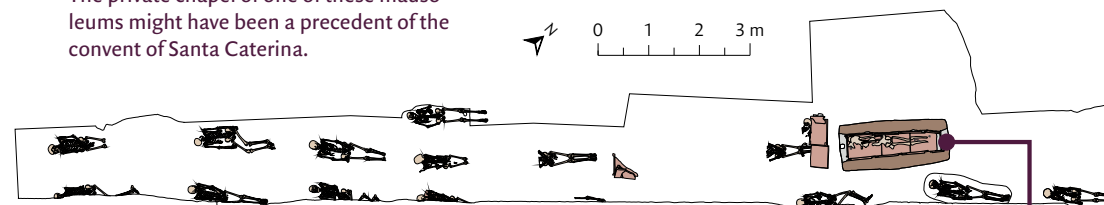
Barcino and its suburbium in Late Antiquity, 5th-7th centuries

-  Areas of necropolis documented by the archaeology
-  Suburban basilicas
-  Road network

Hypothesis by J. Beltrán de Heredia. Drawing by E. Revilla.

Close to the Via Augusta there were funerary precincts with family mausoleums that contained between three and six burials. The private chapel of one of these mausoleums might have been a precedent of the convent of Santa Caterina.

Partial ground plan of the necropolis outside the Via Augusta, nowadays Santa Caterina neighborhood. Plans by E. Revilla.



Apse of the church before Sant Pau del Camp. 6th century. Photograph by N. Miró. Plans by E. Revilla.



Paten and glass bottle from a 4th-century burial. MUHBA.

Christian burials usually only have elements of clothing and complements, although there are exceptional cases where pieces of trousseau are found.

**The martyrial basilicas.** The suburban basilicas were popular due to the reliquaries they held. The faithful came in search of protection and many wanted to be buried in the necropolises spread around them. Of note were the basilicas of Santa Maria de les Arenes (where now stands Santa Maria del Mar) and of Sant Cugat (where now stands Sant Cugat del Rec square).



Amphora from Baetica used in a child burial located in the suburbium. Second half of the 4th - 5th century. MUHBA.

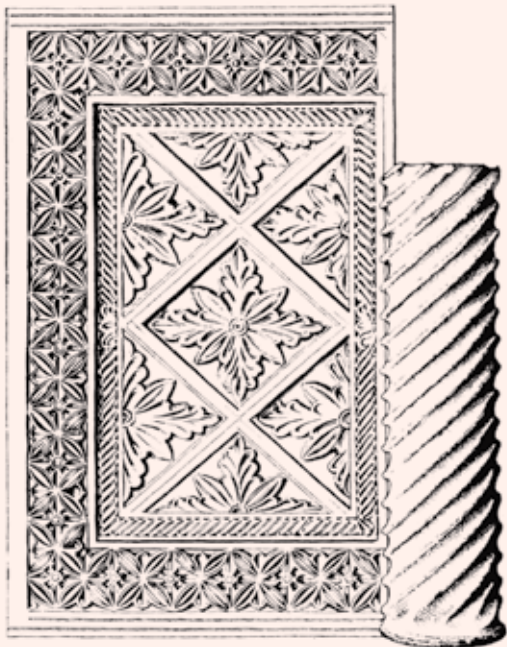


Bronze plaque of a box of reliquaries. 6th century. It bears the inscription S[AN]C[T]I IVLIANI MART[R]IS. "Reliquaries of Saint Julian, martyr". MUHBA.

# EPILOGUE. THE DISCOVERY OF LATE ANTIQUITY BARCELONA

The Late Antiquity period of Barcelona still gives rise to many questions, despite the intense research that has taken place over the last few years. The reception of Christianity, the impact of the Visigoth presence, the dismantling of the forum, the transformation of a quarter of the city into an episcopal stronghold, the process of population dispersion or the configuration of the *suburbium* continue to be studied.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the first cathedral and the buildings of the episcopal complex around it stir up questions with more than 70 years of history, encouraged by successive archaeological researches since the 1930s and by the changes in their interpretation.



Drawing from the Fons d'Excavacions Antigues - MUHBA of the spiral shaft and the inner door panel of marble from Paros, second half of the 6th - 7th centuries. They were part of the spheres of representation of the episcopal complex.

## Barcino under Plaça del Rei, 1930-1936.

In the 1930s a new era in the discovery of the late Barcelona began, as a result of the archaeological seasons organised by the Arxiu Històric de la Ciutat, promoted by Agustí Duran i Sanpere. Relocating Casa Padellàs, due to the opening of the Via Laietana, brought about the excavation of Plaça del Rei, where very important remains of Roman Barcino and Late Antiquity *Barcinona* were found.



Drawing of the lamp found at the Visigoth necropolis under Plaça del Rei. Fons d'Excavacions Antigues-MUHBA.

The finding of a Visigoth necropolis provided materials relating to burial and liturgical uses of the time.



Excavations of Plaça del Rei, 1935. Fons d'Excavacions Antigues-MUHBA.

**The hypothesis of the first Christian basilica by Agustí Duran i Sanpere, 1954**

"Of the first Christian basilica of Barcelona one knew of its dedication to the Santa Creu and Santa Eulàlia; the names of some of its bishops; the date of the councils that were held, and the name of its altars, but there was absolutely no knowledge of its location and its material characteristics until the exploration of the subsoil beneath Carrer dels Comtes in Barcelona uncovered it.

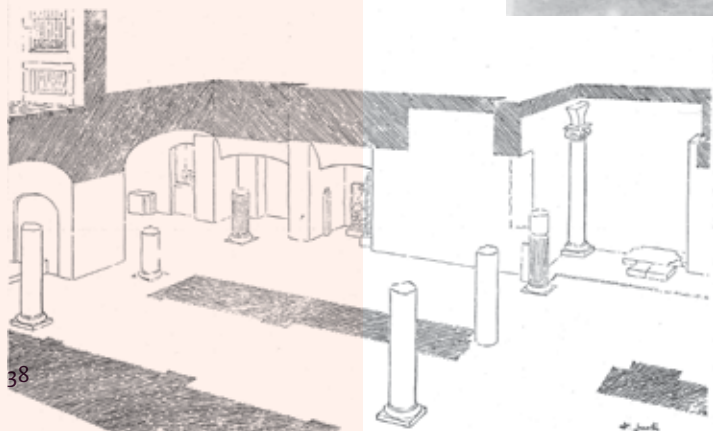
The bases of the columns found in situ indicate a basilical ground plan of three naves, facing east, with Roman paving. The columns, found nearby, are white or grey marble or granite; one of them, fluted, indicates the angle of the enclosure of the central area. In the 6th century the basilica must have been decorated with marble doors and other decorative elements of which various fragments have been preserved."

Agustí Duran i Sanpere, *Noticia y guía de las excavaciones de la calle de los Condes de Barcelona*, 1954. The visual restitution, by D. Juste, appeared in the 1957 edition.

**In search of the first Christian city, 1944-1954.** After the Civil War, from 1944, the archaeological excavations on Carrer dels Comtes, directed by Duran i Sanpere, uncovered what is now considered the remains of the paleo-Christian basilica of the city and as residential buildings of the Visigoth Palatium.



↑ Columns and paving of the building with three naves discovered under Carrer dels Comtes. Fons d'Excavacions Antigues-MUHBA.



**The decades 1960 to 1980. A line of continuity.** From 1957 the Museu d'Història de la Ciutat took charge of the archaeological excavations of Barcelona. With Frederic Udina as the Museum Director, in 1959 Josep de C. Serra Ràfols led the exploration of the interior of the Roman wall and in 1960 new excavations took place in Plaça del Rei, directed by Joan Maluquer de Motes, with the aim of covering the archaeological site with a large slab of concrete.

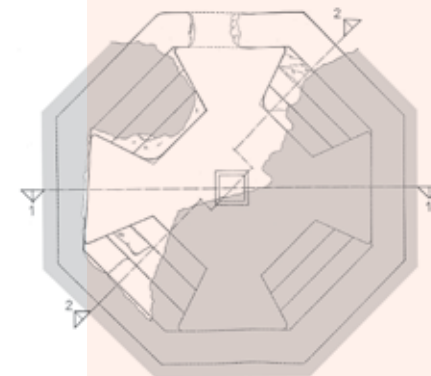
From 1964 the actions were once again focussed around the primitive Christian see, beneath the current cathedral. Anna Maria Adroer, Joaquina Sol, F. Pau Verrié and Pere de Palol were important parts of this. In 1968, led by Verrié, the paleo-Christian baptistery was discovered. It was without doubt, a new step forward.



Excavations in Plaça del Rei, 1960. Fons d'Excavacions Antigues-MUHBA.

**The paleo-Christian baptistery according to F. Pau Verrié, 1969**

Known ground plan of the baptismal pool in 1969, at the 8th International Conference on Christian Archaeology. (F.P. Verrié, *Le baptistère de Barcelone*).



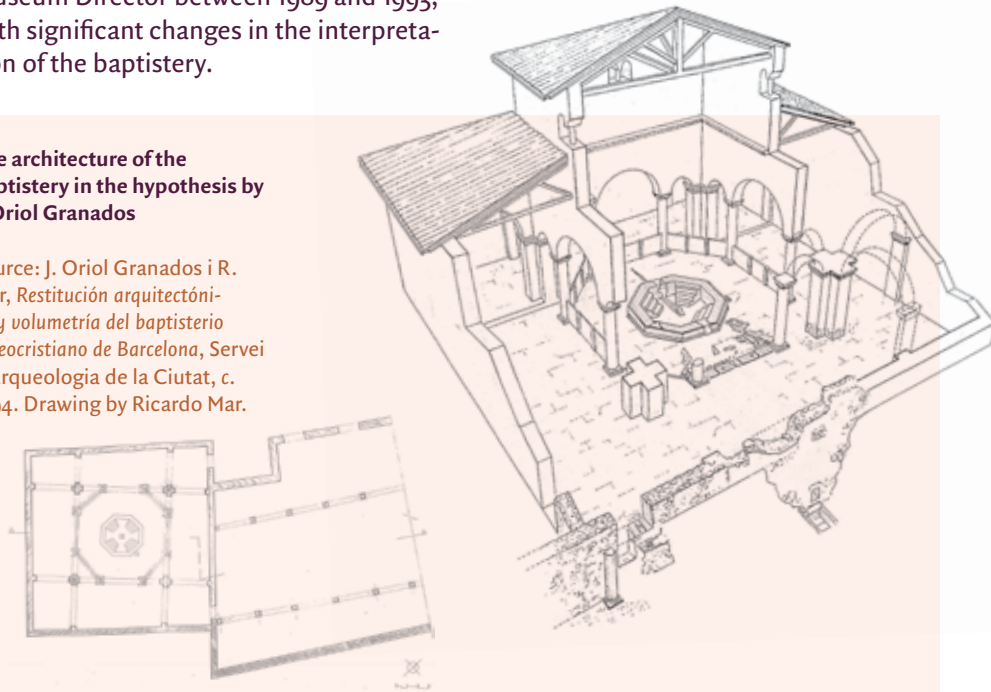
Ground plan of the basilica and baptistery published by F. P. Verrié in *Barcelona cristiana i visigòtica*, 1970.



Between 1978 and 1993 new searches took place, of particular note were those motivated by J. Oriol Granados, who was the Museum Director between 1989 and 1993, with significant changes in the interpretation of the baptistery.

**The architecture of the baptistery in the hypothesis by J. Oriol Granados**

Source: J. Oriol Granados i R. Mar, *Restitución arquitectónica y volumetría del baptisterio paleocristiano de Barcelona*, Servei d'Arqueologia de la Ciutat, c. 1994. Drawing by Ricardo Mar.



**The 1990s and later. New interpretations.** In 1993 the Museu d'Historia de la Ciutat, directed by Antoni Nicolau i Martí, undertook the task of renewing the presentation of its archaeological subsoil. Some months later, around March 1994, the course *Topografia urbana i territorial de l'antiguitat tardana (Late Antique Urban and Regional Topography)*, organised by the University of Barcelona and run by Nancy Gauthier (University of Tours, France), Charles Bonnet (Archaeological Service of Geneva, Switzerland) and Gisella Cantino (University of Turin, Italy), made it possible to share many thoughts on

the subject. Participants in the debate at that time included Julia Beltrán, Cristina Godoy, Josep Oriol Granados, Josep Maria Gurt, Pere de Palol, Gisela Ripoll and Isabel Rodà, along with Noël Duval (University of Sorbonne, France).

At the end of 1994 the Museum began to rebuild its museographical presentation, using the theses proposed by Charles Bonnet with Julia Beltrán de Heredia as the starting point. Later Beltrán developed them, with the Museum team, as the chief curator of the monumental complex of Plaça del Rei.

**The episcopal complex in the hypothesis by Ch. Bonnet and Julia Beltrán de Heredia, 1998**

**Episcopal hall.** This structure that was interpreted as a paleo-Christian basilica was no such thing, rather it may be interpreted as a reception room for the bishop or episcopal hall. The basilica might have been located under the current cathedral, spreading eastwards and with the chevet aligned with that of the cruciform church.

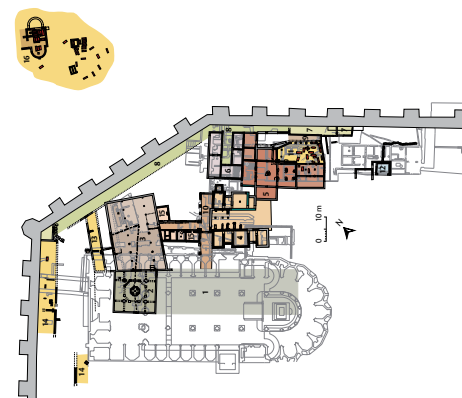
**Episcopal palace.** The structures of the large residential area underneath Carrer dels Comtes, thought to have been a Visigoth palace and, later, a 9th–11th century building, was the bishop's palace. It was located between the basilica-cathedral and the cruciform church.

**Cruciform church.** Some structures, near the Visigoth necropolis located under Plaça del Rei, could be interpreted as the remains of a cruciform church, incorporated into the episcopal complex at the end of the 6th century or beginning of the 7th century, in which one could distinguish two construction stages.

A little later, the hypothesis incorporated other elements. This is the case of the **Comes Civitates palace**. It may have been located outside the wall.



Restitutions by Centum based on the hypothesis by Julia Beltrán de Heredia and Charles Bonnet. Above: Episcopal hall and baptistery. Below: Episcopal palace and Cruciform church.



Ground plan of the episcopal complex and Visigoth centre of power in the 6th century according to the hypothesis by J. Beltrán de Heredia and Ch. Bonnet, 2013. (bigger plan at page 29).

In 2013 Julia Beltrán de Heredia also published the hypothesis of a double episcopal see during the early years of the Visigoths. The Aryan bishop may have taken over the existing episcopal complex and may have formed a second, Catholic, episcopal complex at the basilica of the Sants Màrtirs Just i Pastor.

Thus, Late Antiquity Barcelona continues to be a rich area for research and new proposals, which enable the corroboration or amendment of the hypotheses regarding the period between the Roman colony and its incorporation into Al-Andalus at the beginning of the 8th century.

**BARCELONA IN LATE ANTIQUITY.  
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**Project Director:** Joan Roca i Albert

**Research and curatorship:** Julia Beltrán de Heredia

**Architecture and museographical design:** Josep Llinàs

**Archaeological supervision:** David Prida

**Graphic design:** Andrea Manenti

**Coordination support:** Lola Repiso Venegas and  
Mònica Martínez Bajo

**Archaeological planimetry and drawing:** Emili Revilla

**Audiovisual West in Late Antiquity:** Centum

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Repiso Venegas

**Activities:** Mònica Blasco and Teresa Macià i Bigorra

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Gemma Bonet

**Visits and itineraries:** Fragment

**Communication:** Àngels Bertran

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