

THE CHRISTIAN BASILICA NEAR THE CENCHREAN GATE AT CORINTH

INTRODUCTION AND GENERAL DESCRIPTION ¹

On the modern road running east from Old Corinth toward Cenchreae, and not far inside the gate in the ancient wall which has been named the Cenchrean Gate, there are the remains of a large and well-built basilica dating from early Christian times, which was discovered in 1928 by Dr. Carpenter and Dr. de Waele. Although its pavement lay hardly more than a metre below the modern field, enough is preserved to enable us to trace the history of the building with a fair degree of certainty.

This part of the city, even from Greek times, had been a cemetery,² and the church owes its special character to this fact. From the time of its erection, tomb chambers surrounded the walls, while later burials were made within the structure itself. In fact it would appear that the building was erected not only to honor some early saint or martyr, but also to provide a sacred precinct for the burial of wealthy or pious Corinthians.³

The original church, later altered, was a three-aisled Hellenistic basilica of conventional type, but with certain unusual features. It is a large building, 63.20 m. long outside, including the apse and narthex, and 23.30 m. wide outside at the east end. The interior measures 60.40 m. along the axis; the nave is 10.20 m. in width, the aisles 4.90 m. each at the east end. The arrangement is clearly shown on the plan (Pl. XII).

A narthex the full width of the building communicated with the aisles by doorways and with the nave by a three-arched opening with two columns. Two doorways opened from the narthex to the outside into an exo-narthex or more likely a portico. At the north end of this portico the foundations of a very interesting apsidal building were discovered just at the end of the excavation, at a slightly higher level than the

¹ I am chiefly indebted to Mr. Richard Stillwell, Director of the School at the time the excavation was carried on, for his encouragement during the work and in the preparation of this report for publication. Dr. F. J. de Waele and Miss M. Z. Pease, who carried out the preliminary excavations in 1928, both generously helped me on many questionable problems. Professor A. Orlandos of the Greek Archaeological Service was kind enough to visit the site and make many valuable suggestions. Space does not allow me to thank all those who have been of assistance to me, but a few instances of their many kindnesses will be noted later on.

² R. Carpenter, "Researches in the Topography of Ancient Corinth," *American Journal of Archaeology*, XXXIII, 1929, p. 345.

³ J. S. Northcote and W. R. Brownlow, *Roma Sotterranea* (London, 1897), I, p. 492, Appendix Note D refers at length to St. Augustine's opinion as to the advantages of being buried near a saint.

church but contemporary with it. This outbuilding, which has not been cleared, may be possibly the baptistry. At the south end of the narthex where a few trial pits have been made, the structure has been destroyed, but this area has not been thoroughly investigated. It remains uncertain also whether there was an atrium or not, although the presence of a portico would seem to indicate the negative.

While the aisles and narthex are raised a step above the nave, the aisles are further separated from the nave by a raised socle of heavy squared limestone blocks originally sheathed in marble, which supported the piers of the nave arcade. At the easternmost arches of the arcade, however, between piers 3 and 4, the arches themselves are wider than usual and the socle is interrupted to permit passage between the aisles and nave at this point. So far no stairs leading to an upper gallery have been found, but the full perimeter of the building has not yet been uncovered.

The nave is terminated on the east by a raised step in the floor and by a transverse ("Triumphal") arch marking off the square bema in front of the apse. On the same transverse line the ends of the aisles also are cut off by an architectural screen, probably two arches resting on a central column, a rather unusual feature, but by no means unique. These rudimentary "transepts" were divided also from the bema by arches resting on a column in line with the nave arcades. In the bema itself the foundations of the Holy Table are partially preserved in front of the projecting semicircular apse.

The latter is raised a step above the bema and had seats for the clergy around its circumference, raised two steps more, with the bishop's throne on three steps in the center,—the customary arrangement.

In general the construction of the original church conforms to the late Roman and early Christian method. Heavy foundations (i. e., apse, nave, arcades, etc.) were of squared limestone blocks, but some of the foundations (aisle walls, narthex) were rubble. The walls themselves were of flat Roman brick about a foot (30.5 cm.) square and 3 cm. thick, laid in heavy mortar, with quoins at the corners and bonding courses of cut stone. The apse walls of the church and triconch, however, seem to have been of brick alone without stone courses. The exterior of the walls was plastered with stucco with ornamental hatching in herring-bone patterns.

Presumably the roof was framed in wood with a covering of broad shallow pantiles the joints of which were covered with narrow cover tiles, all evidently of rough local manufacture.

Inside, the walls were richly covered with marble revetment, while at the east end fragments of glass mosaic were found scattered about. Marble columns with carved capitals, carved and pierced screens added to the rich effect. The floor was also of white marble in rectangular slabs with borders and panels of marble and slate in geometric patterns.

Of the tomb chambers shown on the plan, the vault in chamber A antedates the

church but was enclosed by a wall added to the original structure. Chamber B is contemporary with the church as shown by its paving, although it later was cut into by the addition of chamber C. The triconch is likewise part of the original building, with its little rainwater cistern E. Chambers C and D were additions, but well constructed and probably not a great deal later than the original building.

There are signs that the original church was repaired at some time, as the apse floor was roughly relaid, and the Holy Table evidently underwent a change.

At a much later period, when the building had been neglected long enough for about 30 cm. of earth to accumulate inside and the narthex apparently destroyed, a new narthex was created by a wall spanning the nave at pier 13, a screen being built between the columns which formed the original entrance to the nave. A flooring of coarse greenish-buff tiles set in clay was laid at this higher level, while the seats and throne in the apse, having lost their marble revetment, received a coat of stucco. The throne also seems to have been widened. Fragments of painted stucco on blocks built into late tombs may also belong to the decoration of this period of the church. A layer of charred matter and a large portion of the clerestory wall fallen and lying in the nave bear evidence as to the end of this phase of the structure.

In its latest stage, the building was curtailed to the easternmost portion. Heavy walls of squared stone with tiles in the joints were constructed at piers 3 and 5 to receive the vaults which replaced the wooden roof. Another lighter wall at pier 6 formed a narthex, while a carved pier base looking suspiciously Gothic marks probably the line of a shallow arcaded porch.

This last church was crudely floored with stone and marble slabs from various sources, and also has preserved the socle of marble for its iconostasis.

The third church was also probably destroyed partly by fire or pillage; at any rate it was thoroughly done, as so little remains, and even by the time of the Venetians and Turks its very existence was forgotten.

CHURCH I

WESTERN END. As stated above, the original church was entered from a narthex⁴ about 6 m. broad, extending the full width of the church, although not quite at right angles to the length, as can be seen from the plan (Pl. XII) and Figure 1. While the exterior wall is not very well preserved, the position of the two outside doorways is

⁴ Cf. G. A. Sotiriou, *Αἱ Χριστιανικαὶ Θῆβαι τῆς Θεσσαλίας καὶ αἱ Παλαιοχριστιανικαὶ Βασιλικαὶ τῆς Ἑλλάδος*, Ἀρχ. Ἐφ., 1929, plate B', p. 20, also figs. 8, p. 176, and 3, p. 216. This invaluable publication demonstrates that the Greek school of early Christian church-builders was quite distinct from those of Italy, Africa, or Syria and had its own characteristics as well as affinities with the other localities. As there is no other comparable publication, most of the references in this article will be to Sotiriou's work, which furnished the closest parallels.

marked by portions of the marble thresholds still in place. That there can have been no central door is shown by fragments of wall revetment still in their original bedding where such a door would have to come. While the wall itself is destroyed at this point, there is a sort of bench of rubble on the western side of the wall, which would have blocked a central doorway.

Part of a cement bedding outside the south doorway with imprints of paving



Fig. 1. Christian Basilica at Corinth, 1935. Narthex and West End of Nave Looking North

slabs, together with a long foundation wall almost paralleling that of the narthex, probably indicates a portico on the west end of the church rather than an atrium. Perhaps the Ionic impost capital of Proconnesian marble⁵ built into the later wall just inside the nave (Fig. 2) came from this colonnade.

The interesting apsidal building at the north end of the portico is preserved only to the level of the rough cement floor bedding, which is about two steps above that of the narthex, with the apse a step higher. The apse is turned towards the west, and like that of the triconch was enclosed in a rectangular wall outside (Fig. 3). This

⁵ Sotiriou, *loc. cit.*, fig. 75, p. 68.

is a common location for a baptistry, but until this chamber is fully cleared, its form and purpose cannot be definitely determined. It remains to be seen also if there may be a similar room off the south aisle as in Basilica A at Nea Anchialos.⁶

The cement bedding for the narthex floor is preserved, together with small portions of the wall revetment in addition to that mentioned above. The floor was level with the aisles, but about 15 cm. above that of the nave. The aisles were entered through large single doorways, the nave by a triple opening of arches resting upon



Fig. 2. Ionic Impost Capital in Late Wall

two columns, the bases of which remain in place (see Section, Pl. XIII). They are of marble, and of a crude, but fairly common, fifth-century type somewhat like an inverted Doric capital.⁷ There were a few small fragments found in the narthex of Corinthianesque capitals of the "Theodosian" type (Fig. 4) which may also belong with these columns. The step which must have taken up the difference in floor levels is represented by a much broken piece of heavy marble in the central opening.

AISLES. The north aisle is easily traceable in its entire length, although its north wall has been almost entirely destroyed above the foundation. Nevertheless a good deal of the original marble pavement is preserved near the west end.

Outside the church, opposite pier 11 of the nave arcade is a spur wall bonding with the church structure, which is doubtless connected in some way with the apsidal chamber off the narthex.

Near the east end, the parallel wall to the north, which might be taken to indicate a widening of the north aisle, seems rather to belong to another building.

While the south aisle is better preserved towards its east end, a trial pit opposite pier 14 failed to discover even a foundation at that particular point, but unfortunately no more extensive digging was possible at that time. The side entrance west of chamber D may have been cut when that addition was made. It is hard to tell, since the aisle wall is not well preserved.

⁶ Sotiriou, *loc. cit.*, pl. B, p. 20.

⁷ Sotiriou, *loc. cit.*, p. 215, fig. 43. The fountain in the atrium of H. Demetrios at Thessalonica has similar bases; also *Εὐπετήριον τῶν Μεσαιωνικῶν Μνημείων τῆς Ἑλλάδος* (Athens, 1927), Τεύχος Γ', p. 154, fig. 202, showing bases of the basilica at Glyphada.

As can be seen from the plan and sections, the ends of the aisles were screened off by an architectural feature, perhaps two arches resting on a central column. There are capitals and bases of an almost classical Ionic type found nearby which would have been suitable for such a screen. If we could be sure that the limestone block with a socket in it (shown at the north side of base Y in the south aisle) were in place, it might indicate a wood or metal grille as a further closure. Since everything else is of marble, however, the stone in question is more likely a later intrusion.



Fig. 3. Apse of Side Chamber from Southwest

In both of the elementary “transepts” thus cut off, small portions of the geometric marble and slate paving are fairly well preserved. In the northern one, furthermore, uncut lumps of glass and tesserae were found as though discarded by mosaic workers. The colors were clear and brilliant—turquoise, green, yellow, deep red, opaque white, and the deep blue which was a favored background color of the early mosaicists before the use of gold backgrounds. Probably, from the place where the refuse was deposited, the apse and triumphal arch were adorned with mosaic even if the rest of the church was not.

These “transepts” were similarly divided from the bema by arches resting upon a single column which rested in turn upon a low heavy parapet wall with openings

left near the triumphal arch and near the apse for passage. The side chambers would then have served as sacristies in the celebration of the ritual. This is a rather unusual arrangement, as the transept form has not been fully developed, but the same effect is achieved simply by partitioning off the ends of the aisles. The nearest parallel is Basilica B at Nikopolis in Epirus.⁸

NAVE. The nave extends eastward from the narthex wall some 40 m. to the triumphal arch and edge of the bema. The nave floor, partially preserved at the west end, is a step below the narthex, aisles, and bema. The central area is further separated from the aisles by an arcade on heavy piers (1.80 × 0.85 m.). The arches are also about 1.80 m. wide, except those just west of the triumphal arch which are 2.60 m. wide. The piers rest upon a continuous socle of heavy limestone blocks about 45 cm. above the nave floor, which is interrupted, however, at the wider arches to allow passage between the nave and aisles.⁹



Fig. 4. Fragments of "Theodosian" Capitals
Found in the Narthex

This separation of the nave and aisles provided space for persons who were customarily segregated from the main body of the church. While the aisles thus take over the usual function

of upper galleries, similar examples are known where galleries were provided as well.¹⁰

The portion of fallen wall now lying in the nave shows clearly the imprint of the arch carried by the nave piers. This exclusive use of piers in the nave arcade is very unusual,¹¹ and all the more strange since antique columns must have been available. The only plausible explanation may be a fear of earthquakes which inspired the more massive type of construction, since the effect must have been rather graceless and heavy.

⁸ Sotiriou, *loc. cit.*, p. 202, fig. 33. Also W. Lowrie, *Monuments of the Early Church* (New York, 1923), shows a similar arrangement (p. 104, fig. 27) in such widely separated places as Kalb Luseh in Syria and Sta. Maria Maggiore in Rome.

⁹ This separation of the nave and aisles is an almost universal characteristic of the basilicas of Greece; Sotiriou, *loc. cit.*, p. 216 top.

¹⁰ Basilica A at Nea Anchialos, Hagia Paraskevi at Thessalonica.

¹¹ At least in Greece. The small basilica at Paramythia in Epirus is the only other example. Piers are of course common in Africa and Syria. It might be noted also that the portico at the west end is a common Syrian feature, the atrium being associated with Hellenistic and Italian types.

BEMA. The edge of the bema is very badly destroyed by late tombs which cut into it so that barely enough of the concrete bedding is left to indicate the step up from the nave floor in line with the western face of the triumphal arch. From analogy with similar contemporary basilicas of a monumental type we should expect to find traces of a high arched gateway (ὥραία πύλη)¹² projecting into the nave at the center



Fig. 5. Fragments of Pierced Screens

of this step, but unhappily it is precisely at this point that the evidence is most thoroughly destroyed, and so far no fragments which might belong to such a feature have been found. There are, however, many fragments of the pierced slabs (Fig. 5) and some of the square marble posts which formed the low parapet enclosing the bema.

In front of the apse, on the axis of the church is the foundation for the Holy Table (Fig. 6), consisting of two parallel marble blocks cut from Roman architraves, one of them in place, part of the other found near by. Each of these blocks had two sets of three shallow cuttings: one set of two square cuttings at the ends with a round

¹² Sotiriou, *loc. cit.*, p. 223.

one in the center, the other set of three round cuttings, partly obliterated by the former. These clearly show that the Holy Table was of a common type: a marble slab supported on six colonnettes.¹³ A small fragment which may belong to one of these colonnettes was found in the excavations (Fig. 7).

The diagram (Fig. 8) will make clearer the arrangement of the substructure of the Table. There was a space of about 40 cm. between the large blocks which was



Fig. 6. Foundations of Holy Table, 1935

closed at the ends by marble blocks of the same height, so that the marble and slate floor of the bema came right up to the foundation on all sides. Inside these end blocks were depressions slightly lower than the bema floor, and paved with a thin slab of marble. In the center, two upright plaques of slate enclosed a mass of very hard mortar. As this is the customary location for a reliquary, a portion of this mortar was laboriously cut away, without success. Instead of the hollow space containing the relic which might have been expected, the space beneath was completely filled

¹³ Sotiriou, *loc. cit.*, pp. 230, 231, fig. 58, except for the number of colonnettes supporting the Table.

with earth. Is it possible that the holy relics were contained in some receptacle above ground? Such an arrangement is quite unknown, yet the special treatment of the center of the area under the Holy Table suggests that it had some particular reason. Although some basilicas of this period in Greece are known not to have had reliquaries,¹⁴ in a memorial church of this kind one would certainly be expected.

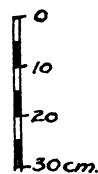


Fig. 7. Fragment of
Colonnette

The original marble and slate floor in a lozenge pattern is preserved on all sides of the Holy Table, although broken in places. Not enough of the later levels has as yet been removed to say whether or not there was a ciborium.

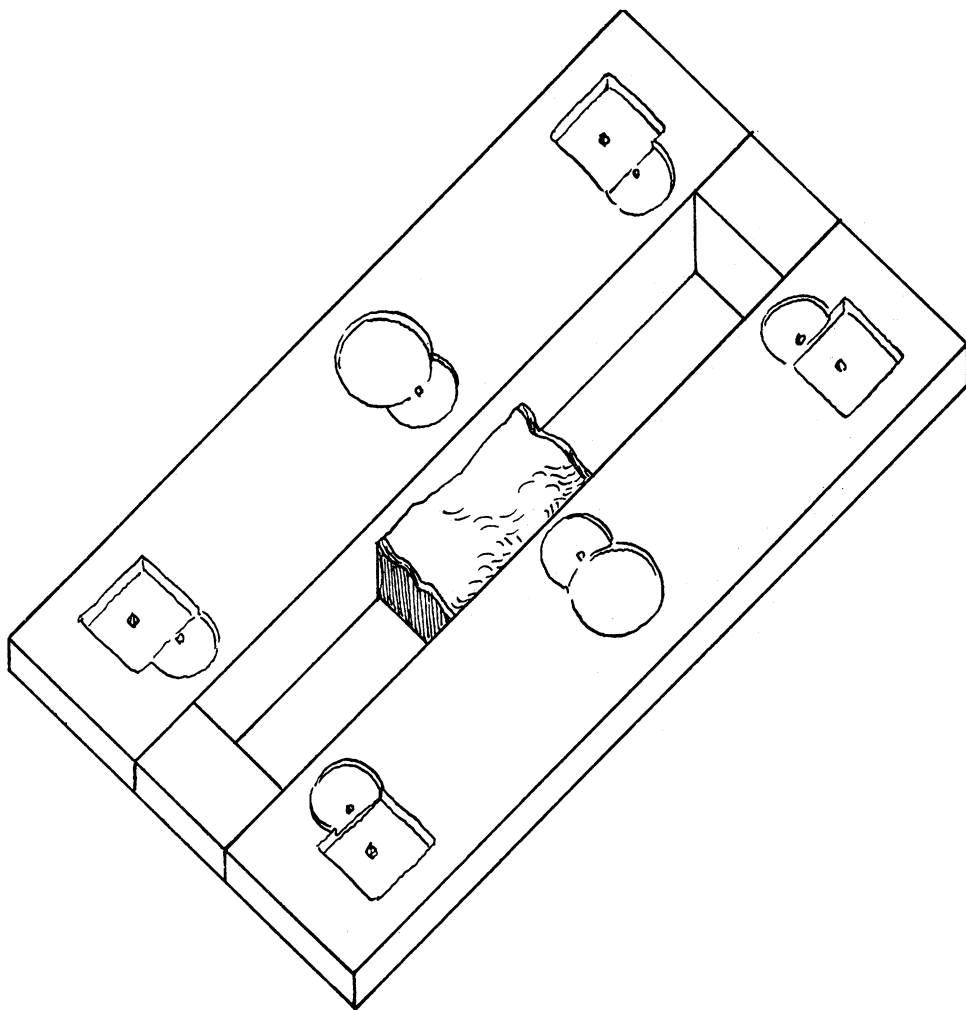


Fig. 8. Isometric Sketch of Foundation of the Holy Table

¹⁴ Sotiriou, *loc. cit.*, p. 236 (Basilica of Daphnoussei in Lokris, basilica on the Ilissus in Athens).

APSE. The apse presents no unusual features on the interior. The exterior foundations, however, show a puzzling series of projecting blocks which look like foundations for buttresses. As they occur several courses below grade and apparently were never carried higher, they may represent a scheme which was abandoned, for the wall of the apse was made quite massive.

Inside, the apse floor is a step above that of the bema. It does not exist in its original condition, but its broken fragments have been relaid at random at about the original level. With the obvious repair to the Holy Table, can we suppose that the apsidal half-dome may have fallen in at some time? At any rate it is clear that these are minor repairs to the original structure and do not belong to a separate period of general rebuilding.

Along the curve of the apse wall and two steps above the floor was a bench for the clergy, doubtless originally sheathed in marble. The long stones which look like partitions between seats were more likely inserted to provide a firm hold for bronze dowels and anchors to secure the marble revetment. There was a throne for the bishop in the center, of which the daïs of three steps remains. The throne itself was undoubtedly of marble.

TOMB CHAMBERS. The most interesting and characteristic feature of the church is the tomb chambers.

As has been noted, this area of the city was a cemetery even in Greek times, although it was within the walls. Actually the foundation for pier X in the north aisle rests in a Greek limestone sarcophagus, with another found near by, in the same pit, unfortunately rifled. Both graves rest on hardpan.

South of the late east-west wall in the north "transept" can be seen on the plan and section the south side of a chamber, well-built of a rubble of limestone and marble fragments, with a vault of stone voussoirs carefully dressed to the curve, the first course of which is still in place. The west and north sides are evidently gone, but the east side shows part of a doorway. While a coin of Constans I (A.D. 333-350) came from between the chinks of this chamber near the bottom, it is not absolutely sure that the fill had been undisturbed. However, from comparison with similar construction at Corinth there is no doubt that the vault must be Roman.

The importance of this chamber lies in the fact that its orientation, the same as that of the Greek graves, is also the same as the vault in chamber A, and evidently belongs to the general system in vogue before the building of the church. The vault in chamber A, although somewhat cut into by the builders, was evidently respected and kept open. In fact it was later incorporated into the church structure by an enclosing wall.

This vault (Figs. 9 & 10) is well made of flat bricks in heavy mortar similar to the construction of the church, resting on a rubble foundation. The side walls had

niches for lamps, while the south wall contained the entrance opening. Within the vault was one grave, desecrated as usual, built of tiles and stuccoed inside, with a marble cover. All of this obviously antedated the church, if one may judge from the manner in which the church foundation cuts into the brickwork, and from the orientation.

Outside this vault to the south is another brick-lined grave not stuccoed, at a higher level, which is oriented more nearly with the church. Does this mean that the



Fig. 9. Chamber A, Looking Southeast, 1935

orientation of this grave was determined by that of the church? If not, we should expect it to conform to the orientation of other graves in the vicinity, which it does not. This would seem to indicate, therefore, that the grave was dug after the church had been built.

Between the second grave and the vault entrance a third grave is simply cut in the hardpan. It was covered with rough limestone slabs coated on the underside with coarse gray stucco. The second grave comes so close to this latter one that it is hard to see how the second grave could have been dug afterward without going through, whereas the earth-cut grave could easily have been dug last since the tile lining of

the second grave would have supported the thin layer of earth between them which at one place is only a few centimetres thick.

The reason for going into this elaborate argument as to sequence is that grave 3 contained the only undisturbed datable evidence in the entire complex. In it were found two skeletons, a plain bronze ring, an iron buckle, fragments of coarse pottery and broken lamps, and two Christian lamps of type XXVIII which Dr. Broneer kindly examined and dated not later than the end of the fifth century after Christ.¹⁵

If our sequence is correct, and grave 3 is of the fifth century, then grave 2 and the church were also constructed before the end of that century. Fortunately this is

borne out by the general scheme of the basilica and the details of its ornamentation which are strikingly similar to other churches of Greece dated in that period.

So much has been destroyed that the relation between Church I and the wall enclosing chamber A is not very clear, but it seems safe for several reasons to call the wall a later addition. The opening from the north "transept" has obviously been cut through, although of course it may be an enlargement of an existing opening. As the wall is so fragmentary, it does not appear whether it could have bonded with the church wall, but its construction differs from that of the church, being quite similar in fact to that of chambers C and D, which are obvious additions. Also this enclosing wall is arched over

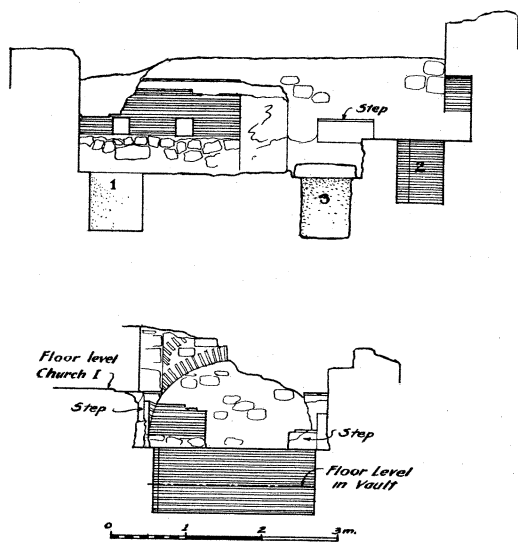


Fig. 10. Chamber A, North-South (top) and East-West (bottom) Sections

the corner of grave 2, which probably, as explained above, is later than the church.

Even after the enclosure of chamber A, the vault seems to have been kept open, for there is a stuccoed step (Fig. 10) over the west end of grave 2 and another over the east end of grave 3, leading down. At a still later date, the top of the vault was cut off, its end filled with the heavy wall shown on the plan, and a floor of square tiles was laid at the same floor level as Church I. There is no evidence that the floor was ever raised.

The next tomb chamber is B, just south of the apse. After the late grave found in the first campaign had been removed it was found that the original floor of slate and marble, rather calcined by a fire, extended well into the corner (Fig. 11). A nicely

¹⁵ This is only one instance of the help given me by Dr. Broneer, upon whom I depended greatly for advice especially in the actual method of carrying on the excavation as well as information in many other fields.

made grave, in this chamber, stuccoed on tiles and with a marble cover was opened and found to contain, strange to say, an undisturbed burial, but unfortunately without any datable objects.

Chamber B probably originally extended to the south side of the doorway in chamber C, which formed its original entrance until chamber C was added, when this door was walled up and the present one cut into chamber B.



Fig. 11. Chambers C and B, Looking Northwest, 1935

The most interesting feature of the entire church is the imposing funerary chapel off the south aisle (Figs. 12 and 13). It has a trefoil shape (triconch) or rather that of a square room with three projecting apses.¹⁶ The apse walls are built of brick, the

¹⁶ E. H. Freshfield, *Cellae Trichorae* (London, privately printed by Rixon & Arnold, 1913-18), I, p. 13: "These chapels [in Sicily] have certain leading features in common: a cruciform ground plan, a square nave covered with a flat dome with apses on three sides . . . and each building is situated in or near a burying ground."

Lowrie, *op. cit.*, p. 147: "Cross-shaped chambers were sufficiently common in Roman Architecture; in the early Christian period they were commonly used as mausoleums or memorial chapels." Examples follow, too many to quote at length.

others of brick and cut stone. Outside the foundations of the lateral apses are water tables of rubble with sloping cemented top to shed the water away from the foundations. Between the eastern apse and the church wall and next to the doorway into the south aisle is the small rainwater cistern E (plan, Plate XII, and Fig. 14), which was lined with tiles and stuccoed to catch the drip from the intersecting roofs of the aisle and triconch. No good reason can be given for the rectangular wall which encloses



Fig. 12. Triconch, Looking North

the southern apse unless it was intended, as has been suggested, to simplify the roofing problem.

A door in the south aisle opposite the first arch of the nave arcade gives access to the triconch, the floor of which was at the same level as that of the aisle, and of similar material and design as shown by the existing portion. The eastern apse was raised a step above this, but whether the western one was also raised is not clear. However, the walls at the sides of the western apse show vertical cuttings as though for a rail or low screen about 95 cm. high to enclose it. In the triconch also were found several more fragments of "Theodosian" capitals shown in Figure 15.

It is the large southern apse which provides the reason for this elaborate chapel in the form of an unusually large vaulted tomb constructed of flat brick arched over and stuccoed inside. The apse floor above the tomb is raised. The east end of the tomb has an opening covered with a stone slab which was removable, and access was further assisted by footholds formed in the sides of the tomb under the opening. Since



Fig. 13. Triconch, Looking South

quite a number of burials had been made in the vault, this feature seems to have been put to good use.

This tomb very plausibly has been taken to be the sepulcher of some noteworthy father or early martyr to whom the church was dedicated and in whose honor this imposing chapel was erected. A similar theory has been applied to the subterranean vault of the basilica on the Ilissus at Athens.

There are reasons why another supposition might be true. It is well known that Eastern churches, when consecrated to a saint, usually had the relics deposited under



Fig. 14. Rain-Water Cistern E



Fig. 15. Fragments of Theodosian Capitals from Triconch

the altar, or at least in a sealed crypt, not exposed.¹⁷ Now the vault in the triconch was expressly designed to be entered from time to time. The basilica on the Ilissus also has three very commodious graves,¹⁸ easily accessible but hardly a place to accommodate worshippers as the stairway is narrow and the room cramped. While these churches were doubtless erected to honor some early saints and enshrine their remains it seems not unreasonable to suggest that the tomb chambers were erected for the benefit of the family of the donors or possibly for the clergy connected with the church since they seem in both cases to have been particularly designed for repeated burials.

The other four tomb chambers strengthen this hypothesis as they show for one thing that private burial chambers were permitted to be added to the church. In fact chamber C alters the original structure to the extent of blocking up the old door, and curtailing chamber B which then became a sort of vestibule to chamber C.

Chamber D was entered from the outside but the door into the south aisle of the church may have been cut through at this time although the destruction of the church wall here makes it difficult to say.

Chamber C contains one vaulted brick tomb and one with a marble slab relieved by an arch of brick above, neither of them stuccoed inside. The two graves in chamber D were similarly of brick with segmental brick vaults, one of which was centered on a form of reeds, the other on boards as shown by imprints in the end of the vault. These graves are likewise not stuccoed, and all had openings at the east end, covered by slabs of stone.

The walls of these chambers were of rubble with bands of brickwork and were probably originally stuccoed while the interiors may have had a revetment of marble. Chamber D appears to have been floored with thick lozenge-shaped clay tiles. As for their relation to Church I, even the most cursory examination shows clearly that they were later additions, although the construction of the chambers and the style of the graves indicates that they are not a great deal later.¹⁹

¹⁷ Sotiriou, *loc. cit.*, p. 239, section on tombs of martyrs. Lowrie, *op. cit.*, p. 49, remarks that the removal of the body of St. Valentine to a new site was altogether exceptional. Other basilicas were erected in the most inconvenient places to accommodate themselves to the site of the existing tomb and to avoid disturbing it (Sta. Agnese, Sta. Petronilla).

¹⁸ *Εὑρετήριο τῶν Μεσαιωνικῶν Μνημείων τῆς Ἑλλάδος* (Athens, 1927), Τεύχος Α', p. 52, fig. 39, plan and section of the hypogeum of the basilica on the Ilissus.

¹⁹ The tombs in the church exhibit certain characteristics which deserve mention. In general, those graves which appear to be contemporary or slightly earlier than the church are built of square tiles stuccoed inside and are covered with a flat slab of marble. This is a well-known late Roman type (grave I in chamber A, grave in chamber B. The grave in the triconch is stuccoed, but was vaulted). The next type was likewise built of tiles but not stuccoed, and was mostly covered over by a vault with an opening left at the eastern end to be closed by a slab (chambers C and D).

Tombs of the later periods were built of rubble and covered either with vaults or slabs from various sources. A very common type subsequent to the destruction of Church II consisted of large curved roof tiles placed like the letter A over the body, which rested on earth.

CHURCH II

After a lapse of time sufficient to fill the church with 30 or 40 cm. of earth, possibly corresponding to the Avar occupation of Corinth (A.D. 588 to 805),²⁰ enough of the ancient structure still remained to make repairs worth while, testifying to the solidity of the original building. The portico and narthex had evidently been destroyed, however, since a new narthex was created by walling off the westernmost bay of the nave and closing up the nave arches. This roughly laid rubble wall included such fragments as the boldly modelled Ionic impost capital mentioned above (Fig. 2).

The space between the columns of the original triple entrance to the nave seems to have been closed as well, since a few small stones remain in place, and the marble bases themselves have had shallow sockets cut into their upper faces and show the wear of a pair of gates or doors in the central opening. How the side openings were closed does not appear.

The nave and aisles seem to have remained as they were, except for a floor of square greenish tiles at a level with the top of the socle on which the nave piers rest. At the east end of the church, the seats in the apse, having lost their original marble revetment, received a coat of stucco which clearly belongs to this period as it turns out over the edge of the tile floor. Additions were also made to the throne of the bishop of which only a few small stones remain in place; it seems merely to have been a broadening of the platform upon which the throne rested. The other features of the east end at this period have been obliterated by the building of Church III which is at a not much higher level. Perhaps the iconostasis of Church III is actually re-used from this period. One carved panel (Fig. 16),²¹ now in the museum, probably belongs to this church. The openings between the "transepts" and the bema were walled up, at least to the floor level.

It does not seem that the floor levels of any of the tomb chambers have been raised but probably, as they were no longer necessary to the functions of the church, they had been disused and allowed to fall into ruin.

A few blocks of stuccoed limestone with traces of frescoes found built into late tombs may belong to this church, as the original decoration of marble and mosaic would have been destroyed.

At any rate, this phase was ended by a disastrous fire which damaged the structure very badly. Indeed, a portion of the clerestory wall of the north side of the nave which fell in is still lying in the center of the church (Fig. 17).

²⁰ See G. R. Davidson, "The Avar Invasion of Corinth," *Hesperia*, VI, 1937, pp. 227-240.

²¹ It was found covering a grave beneath the iconostasis of Church III.



Fig. 16. Marble Plaque from Church II



Fig. 17. West Wall and Narthex of Church III. Fallen Wall of Church II Seen above the Marble Threshold in the Center of the Picture

CHURCH III

Even with this, enough of the east end remained to make a third rebuilding worth the trouble. Heavy abutments were built against pier 3 and a heavy wall thrown across the nave at pier 5. At pier 6 another lighter wall with the marble column bases of the same type as those at the nave entrance, shown in Figure 17, enclosed a narthex,



Fig. 18. Base of Porch Pier, Church III

while at pier 7 is the remaining jamb with bases of engaged colonnettes (Fig. 18) of what appears to be an arcaded porch in the Western style.²² The masonry is characteristic of eleventh and twelfth century work in Greece, of squared stones with tiles in both the horizontal and vertical joints. The heavy abutments would indicate vaults of some sort to replace the original wooden roof.

Ancient columns and other fragments have been re-worked into a basis for the iconostasis (see above), from which may also come some of the plaques now in the Museum (Figs. 19, 20).

²² Churches of full Gothic type are extremely rare in Greece, even in centers of Frankish occupation, although many churches exhibit traces of Gothic influence. While arcaded porches are not common, they do appear at Mistra, and at Arta (St. Theodora).



Fig. 19. Plaque



Fig. 20. Fragments of Marble Plaque

GENERAL HISTORY AND SUMMARY

The first church can be safely attributed to the fifth century after Christ, as it has so many similarities to other Greek churches of that period. Most of the carved

fragments have been mentioned in connection with the structure, but very little was found in any case. One column fragment bears the monogram shown in the accompanying photograph (Fig. 21), but this scanty clue as to the identity of the structure has not been of much help. Small finds were almost non-existent; the most important have been mentioned.



Fig. 21. Column with Monogram

Roman through the fourth century after Christ into the fifth, then a gap until the early part of the tenth century, another series, and another gap between A.D. 976 and

²³ I am very much indebted to Dr. K. M. Edwards for classifying the coins and going over them with me.

1056, and finally an unbroken series running into the thirteenth century, with stray Turkish and Venetian coins later.

The first lacuna corresponds roughly to the period of the Avar occupation. Church I was then either partly destroyed or perhaps simply left to decay.

During the tenth century, coinciding with an era of prosperity under the Basilian emperors at Constantinople, the church was remodeled and repaired, as we have seen (Church II), but toward the end of the century suffered a disastrous fire which all but ruined it.

In the eleventh century, a period of great building activity in Greece, the eastern end was utilized as the nucleus for a small, but well-constructed church. From the numismatic record, which ceases about the middle of the thirteenth century, it would seem that the second fire, which caused the destruction of this phase of the church, was probably due to the wars and raids of the period subsequent to the fourth crusade,²⁴ so that by the time of the Venetian and Turkish occupations the building had ceased to exist, and until Dr. Carpenter's explorations discovered it by chance, its presence was not even suspected.

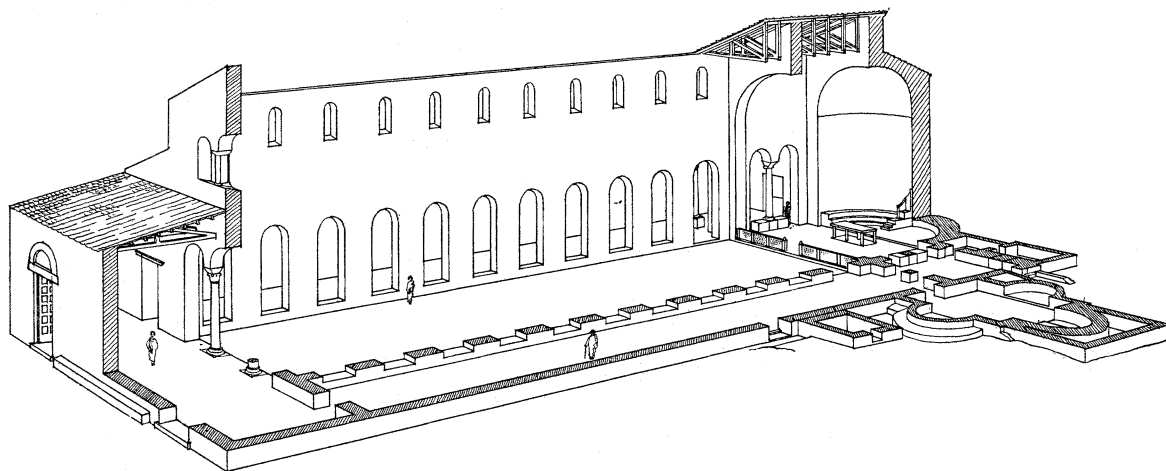


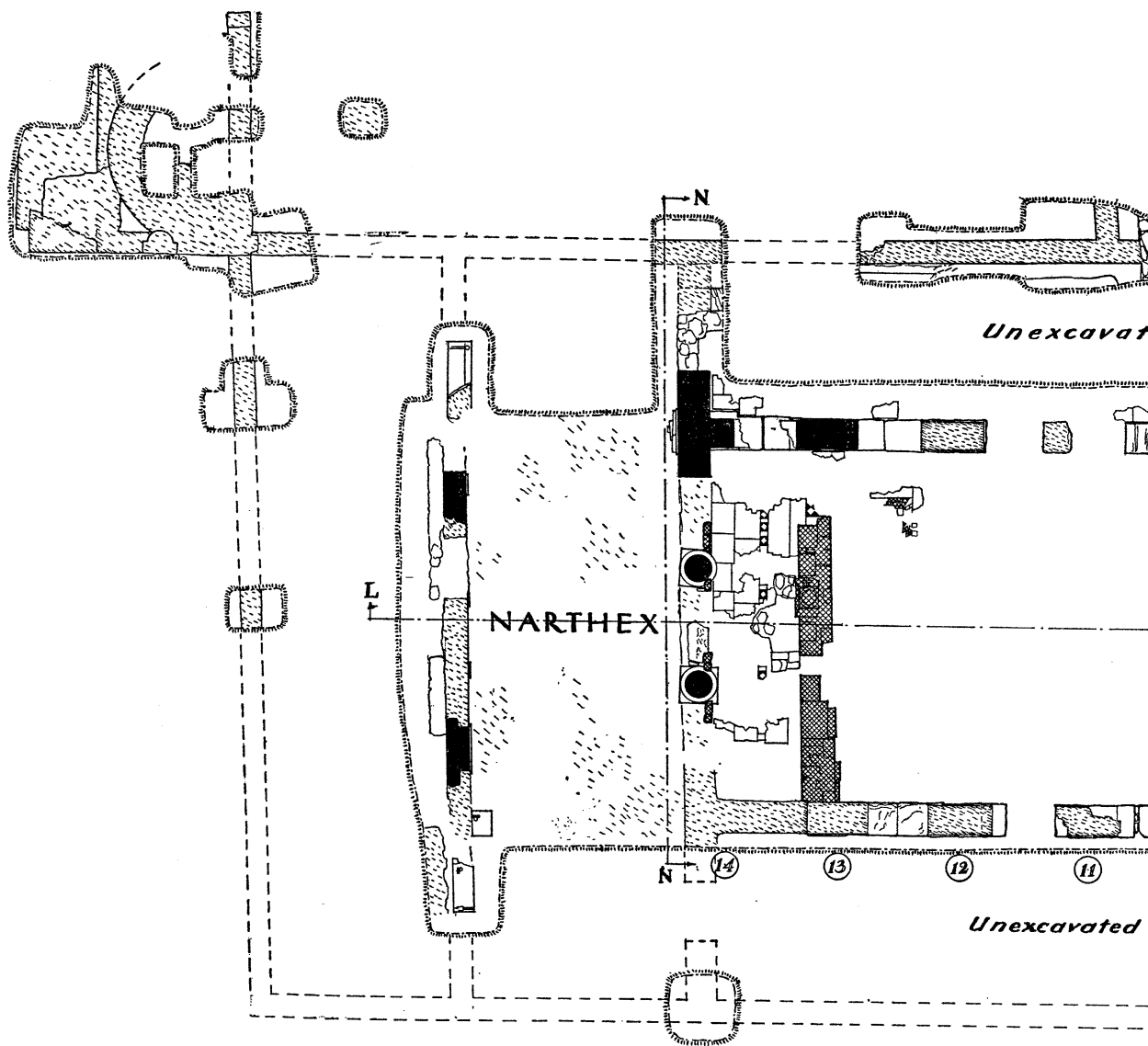
Fig. 22. Schematic Perspective of Basilica

The perspective reconstruction with which I end this article is schematic rather than accurate as the actual remains are scarcely more than the low walls indicated in the foreground (Fig. 22). The superstructure is argued from analogous structures. Since the extent of the porticoes and other additions at the west end are unknown, they were omitted.

JOSEPH M. SHELLEY

ORANGE, NEW JERSEY

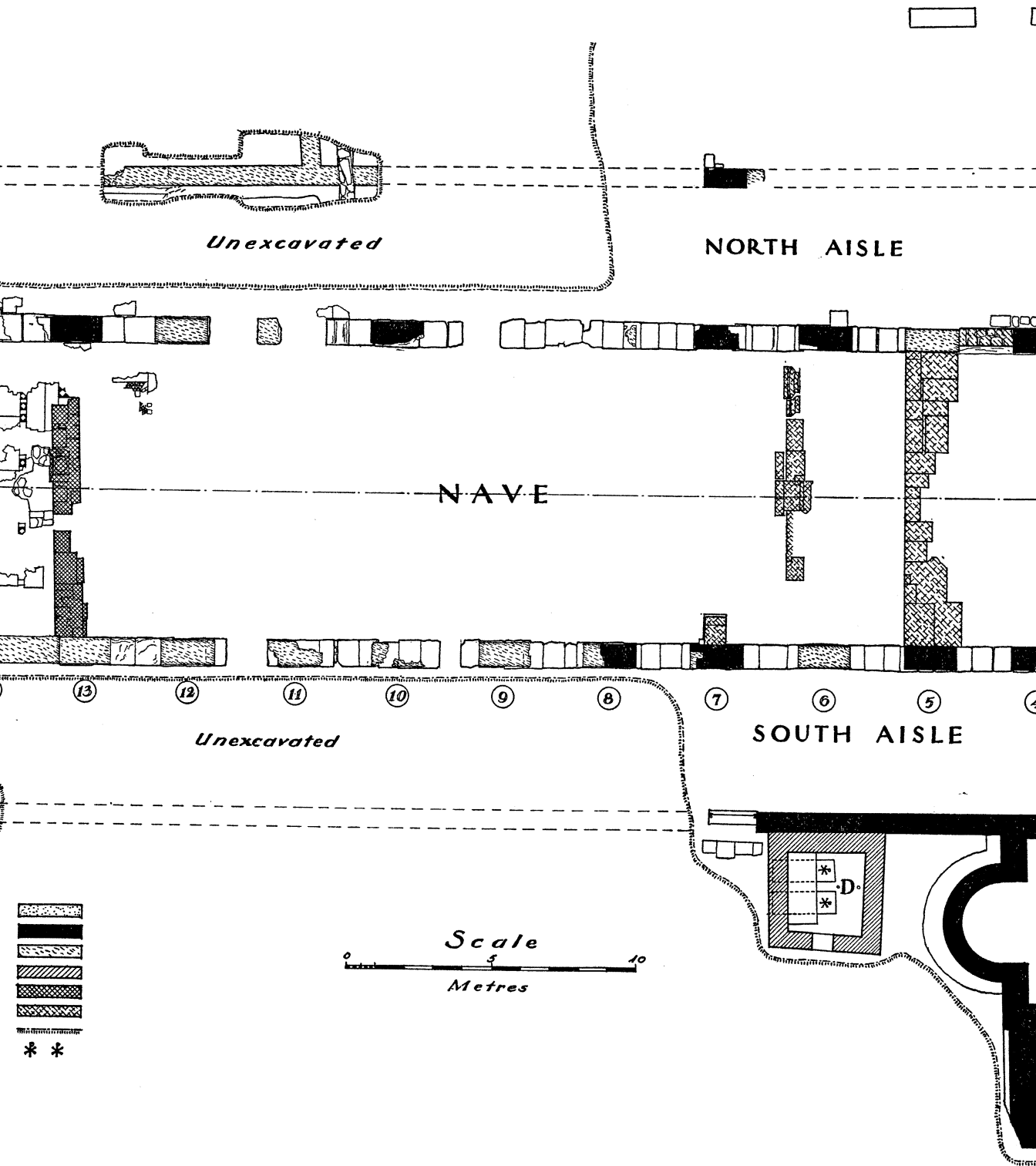
²⁴ Corinth was sacked by Geoffrey I Villehardouin in 1210-1212 A.D. G. Finlay, *History of Greece* (Oxford, 1877), IV, p. 194 footnote.



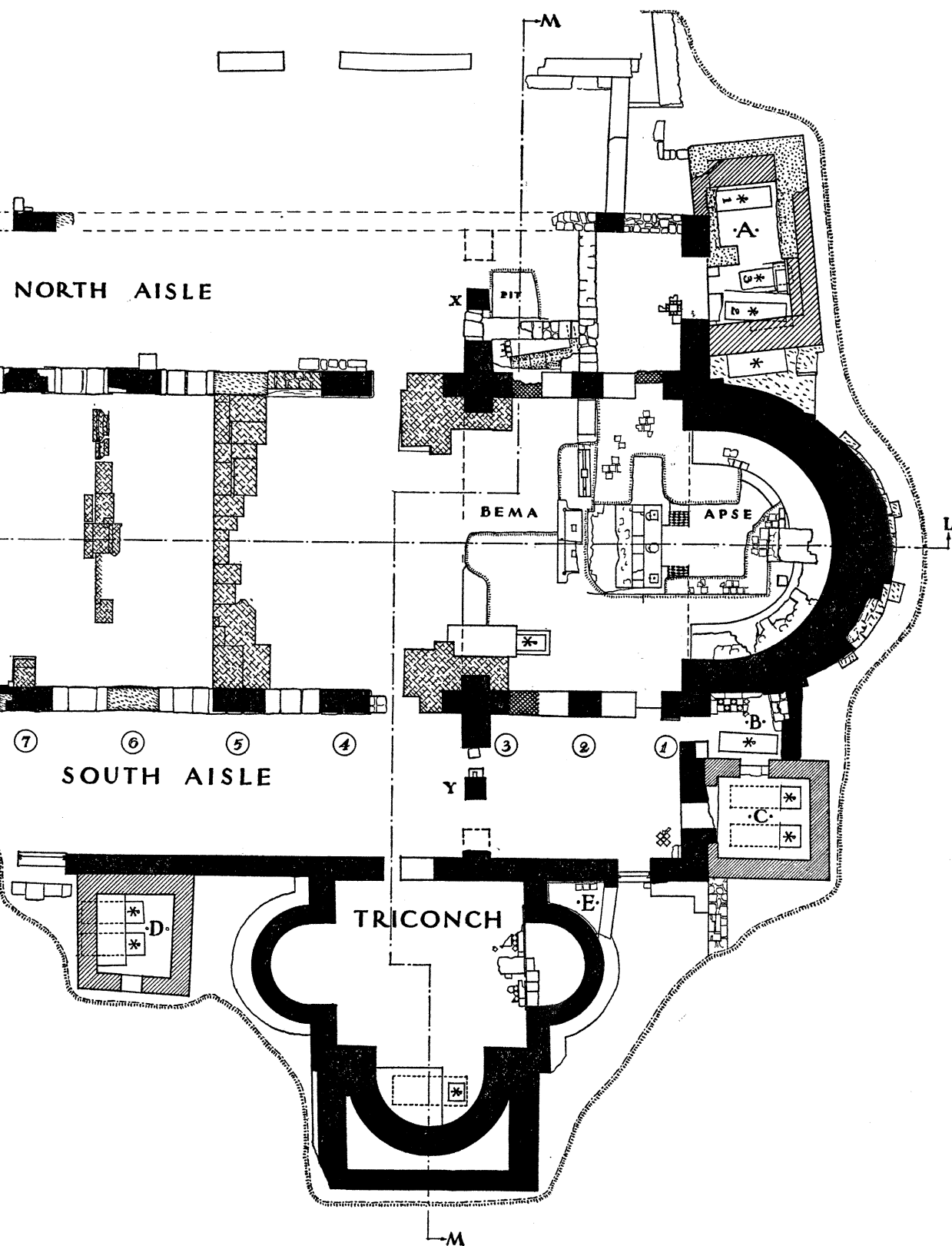
LEGEND

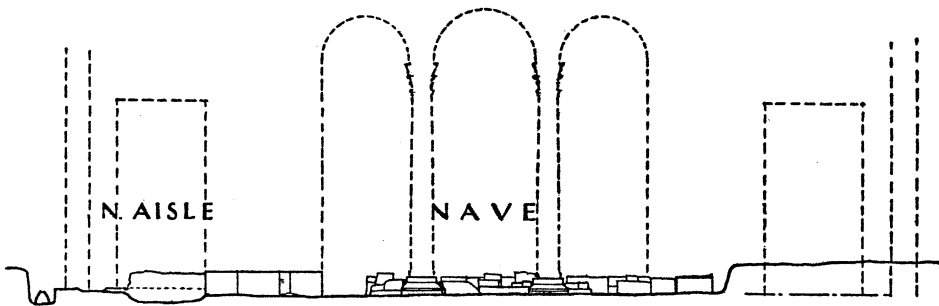
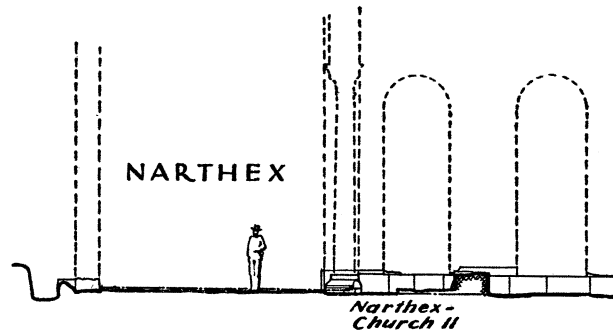
Remains Earlier than Church I
Church I - Walls
Church I - Foundations
Additions to Church I
Church II
Church III
Limit of Excavations
Graves



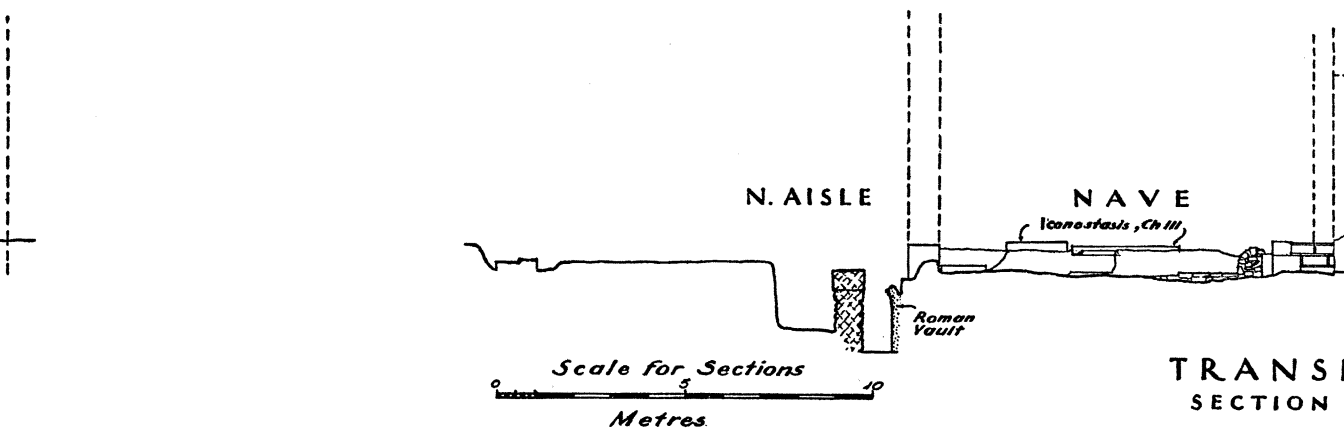
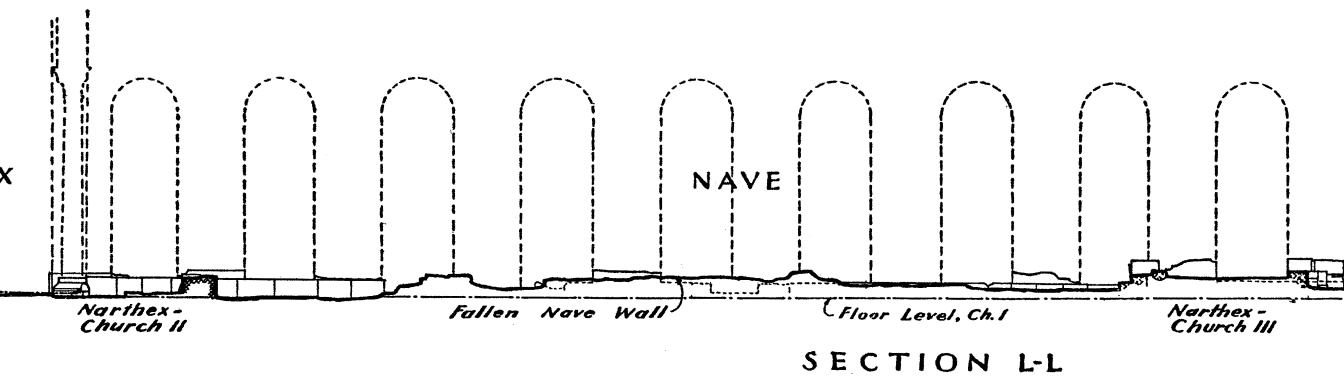


SECTIONS THROUGH CHRISTIAN BASILICA AT CORINTH





NARTHEX
SECTION N-N



CHRISTIAN BASILICA AT CORINTH

