

ARCHEOLOGIA MEDIEVALE

Cultura materiale. Insediamenti. Territorio.

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*The early Christian complex of Son Pereto (Mallorca, Balearic Islands):
excavations in the 'West Sector' (2005-2008)*

1. INTRODUCTION

The Balearic Islands considered as a whole, this is to say the ancient *Balearides* (Mallorca and Menorca) and the *Pityussae* (Ibiza and Formentera), formed an independent province within the Western Roman Empire since the end of the 4th century. In 455 they were conquered by the Vandals, and later in 533-534 by the Byzantine forces. Ancient Christianity developed therefore in an archipelago undergoing continuous political change. Written sources, such as the circular of bishop *Severus* – that narrates the conversion of the Jewish community of Minorca settled in *Magona* (current Maò) in the early 5th century – or the letters of *Consentius* of the same period, have been essential in addressing the study of early Christianity in the islands¹. However, written sources are relatively scarce. In the Vandal period references are limited to the news of the bishops *Helias* of Mallorca, *Macarius* of Menorca and *Opilio* of Ibiza, called to the Synod of Carthage summoned by the Vandal king Huneric in 484². In the Byzantine period, the letter of bishop *Licinianus* of *Carthago Spartaria* to *Vicentius* of *Ebussus*³, or the letter from the Pope *Gregorius* to defender John concerning the monks of the monastery of *Capraria* (Cabrera)⁴, a small island in the southern coast of Mallorca, are the few documents that contribute to the knowledge of insular Christianity⁵.

The early interest in the history of Christendom in the islands (i.e. ROTGER 1900; FITA 1914) soon incorporated the archaeological evidence (see PÉREZ 1978; PALOL 1988). The discovery of some basilicas such as Cas Frares (Mallorca) in 1833 (ASSAS 1877; LAURIÈRE 1891-1892), the mosaics of Illa del Rei (Menorca) in 1888 (LLORENTE 1888), or Sa Carrotja (Mallorca) in 1908 (RUBÍO 1909-1910) were seminal discoveries of a specific and progressive interest in the Christian Archaeology of the islands. Certainly, apart from the analysis of the few written documents available, intense archaeological research was conducted, mainly thanks to M^a.L. Serra and P. de Palol and his collaborators, who excavated or re-excavated a good part of the Christian buildings known to date⁶. In Menorca, the sites of Illa del Rei (Maò), Son Bou (Alaior), Fornàs de Torelló (Maò) and Cap des Port (Fornells, Mercadal) are excavated. In Majorca, the basilicas of Sa Carrotja (Manacor), Cas Frares (Santa Maria del Camí), Son Peretó (Manacor) and Son Fadrinet (Campos) are the main evidence for rural churches in the Balearics.

Among these sites, Son Peretó, discovered in 1912 by Reverend J. Aguiló, has been object of various archaeological investigations since the earlier 20th century. Since its last restoration and archaeological excavations in the 80s, the Early Christian complex suffered from a worrying process of decay. This lay behind the Ajuntament de Manacor's decision to reopen the excavations, with the main aim being the consolidation and restoration of the structures, in order to open the site to visitors (RIERA I RULLAN *et al.* 2006, 2009, 2010). This initiative was framed in a renovated scientific interest in Christian buildings, settlement patterns and ceramics in Late Antique Balearics, articulated through the projects *CERPOANTAR* and *LRCWMED* (CAU 2009). This was also linked to the project *CARE-Hispania*, devoted to the study of the Christian architecture of the Iberian Peninsula and the Balearics, integrated in a wider European initiative (RIPOLL 2009, RIPOLL *et al.* 2012). In this academic context, and under the auspices of the Ajuntament de Manacor and the Consell de Mallorca, the work in Son Peretó concentrated, between 2005 and 2008, on the so-called West Sector, a series of rooms annexed to the ecclesiastical building.

The intention of this paper is to summarise the results of the excavations by emphasising the chronology and evolution of the structures documented. Although the West Sector was already excavated, new evidence allowing a better interpretation of the site, and in particular of these annexed rooms, have been

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¹ For the Letter of *Severus* and the letters of *Consentius*, see for instance, SEGÚI, G. 1937; AMENGUAL 1987, 1991-1992, 2008; SASTRE 2000; see also J. DIVJAK (ed.), *Sancti Aureli Augustini Opera. Epistolae ex duobus codicibus nuper in lucem prolatae, Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiastorum Latinorum* 88, Wien 1981.

² *Notitia provinciarum et civitatum Africae*, in M. PETSCHENIG (ed.) in *Victoris episcopi Vitensis historia persecutionis Africanae provinciae, Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiastorum Latinorum* 7, Wien 1866 ss. See also, AMENGUAL 1991-1992.

³ See for instance, *Epistulae Liciniani Carthaginensis*, in A.C. VEGA (ed.), *Scriptores Hispano-Latini veteris et medii aevi*, Typis Augustinianis Monasterii Escorialensis 1935; MADDOZ J. 1948, *Liciniano de Cartagena y sus cartas. Edición crítica y estudio histórico*, Madrid, pp. 125-143; R. PRIEBSCHE 1936, *Letter from Heaven on the Observance of the Lord's Day*, Oxford; AMENGUAL 1991-1992.

⁴ See; and also *Gregorii I papae registorum epistolarum*. XIII, 47, in P. EWALD, L. M. HARTMANN (ed.) *MGH Epistolarum* I-II, ed., Berlin 1891-1899 (re-printed in Munich in 1978); and D. Norberg (ed.), *Sancti Gregorii Magni Registorum Epistolarum (CCL, 140-140 A)*, Turnholt 1982; AMENGUAL 1991-1992.

⁵ For a deeper vision of the ecclesiastical organisation see, for instance, AMENGUAL 1991-1992, 2008; ORLANDIS 1999; VALLEJO 2005.

⁶ For a general view of the Christian buildings of the Balearics and the development of the archaeological research see, for instance, PALOL 1967; GODOY 1995; ALCAIDE 2011, where the reader will be able to find most of the older bibliographic references. For Son Fadrinet, as the most recent excavated basilica, see also ORFILA, TUSET, ULBERT 2000; ULBERT 2003; ULBERT, ORFILA 2002; ORFILA, TUSET 2003.

obtained. The next few paragraphs provide a brief summary of the site. Later the main phases of occupation of this area of the site and their chronology will be described and discussed. Overall, the paper intends to offer a synthetic, but clear, first insight on the evolution of the sector attached to the basilica and baptistery of this important early Christian complex found in Mallorca (Balearic Islands), based on new evidence.

2. THE SITE OF SON PERETÓ: A SHORT SUMMARY

The site is located in the municipality of Manacor, in the eastern part of the island of Majorca, 6 km by the road that links this town with Sant Llorenç des Cardassar (*fig. 1*). It is located in a small hill, surrounded by arable lands dedicated to the cultivation of wheat and fruits.

Archaeological investigation dates back, as we have already mentioned, to the early 20th century when it was discovered in 1912 by Aguiló (1923), who excavated different parts of the site (PUIG I CADAFAELCH 1915-20). Later, in 1963 D. Iturgáiz (1963, 1970) investigated the baptistery, in particular the large baptismal font. The site drew the attention of P. de Palol and colleagues, who investigated the area in the late 60's, in particular the baptistery and the western part of the church (PALOL 1967, 1989; PALOL *et al.* 1967). They also studied the mosaics found in old excavations, trying to understand their disposition in the different spaces of the church. The work also included the restoration of different parts of the site. It was not until the 80's, when an extensive excavation, directed by G. Rosselló, P. de Palol and M. Orfila, was undertaken, which uncovered many parts of the so-called West Sector.

All this research, carried out since the early 20th century, helped to uncover a Christian church with a baptistery attached to the West, and several associated rooms both westwards and southwards of the religious buildings, which provide a good example of ecclesiastical architecture (*fig. 1*).

The basilica is a three navate building with an apse which is semicircular on the inside, but is squared outside. Both sites of the *presbyterium* have attached rooms that seem to belong to a later phase of the building, forming a tripartite head. It presents a *chorus* right in front of the shrine separated by a chancel. In the opposite direction in the feet of the basilica a different liturgical space was located, known as a *contra-chorus*. The church was paved with mosaics at least in one, and probably in more, of its phases. The altar is formed by a monolithic rock containing a space to deposit relics. Some liturgical objects were found (ALCAIDE 2005, 2011). Epigraphy was also found at the site. The epitaph of *Bassus*, presbyter of the *Sancta Ecclesia Romana* who was buried in Son Peretó, is notable (VENY 1965). Some mosaics were of a sepulchral character, such as the one with the inscription of *Baleria*.

A baptistery was attached to the feet of the basilica westwards. One of the particularities of the site is the presence in the baptistery of two baptismal fonts, one deeper and one smaller, probably related to a change in ritual from immersion to aspersion, which has generated much debate (for a discussion see, for instance, GODOY 1989, 1995; PALOL 1994; DUVAL 1994; ALCAIDE 2011). Another interesting aspect of this *baptisterium* is that some tombs covered by flagstones, and orientated East-West, with the head westwards, were documented.

The chronology of both the church and baptistery and their constructive phases have been object of debate (i.e. PALOL 1967; SCHLUNK, HAUSCHILD 1978; GODOY 1995; ALCAIDE 2011, 102-106). Some authors defend a Byzantine filiation, while others tend to lower the chronology to the end of the 5th century or

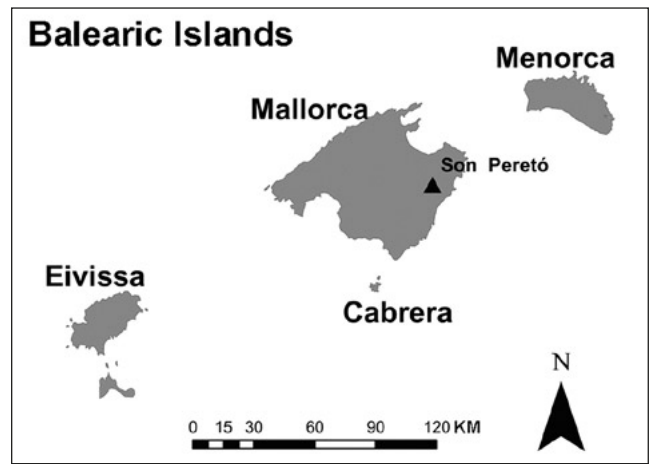


fig. 1 – Situation of Son Peretó (Mallorca, Balearic Islands).

beginning of the 6th century in the Vandal period. Probably the hypothesis of P. de Palol, who considers the existence of several constructive phases, is the most widely accepted, but a precise chronology for the foundation and abandonment of the church is still lacking.

In the excavations of the 1980's, a series of rooms were uncovered attached to the Christian building, oriented towards the West and South. Also several tombs were found in these areas.

3. THE NEW EXCAVATIONS IN THE WEST SECTOR

From 2005 to 2008 the archaeological seasons were focused in the annexed rooms to the West (*fig. 2*) for two main reasons. Firstly, because these rooms were in a dangerous state of preservation. Secondly, because we thought this could probably be the sector where the stratigraphical sequence would be better preserved, and most suitable (considering only the areas already excavated) for obtaining new evidence to define the chronology and evolution of the site. Earlier excavations mainly investigated the abandonment levels of these series of rooms.

It was not clear whether the Basilica and the Baptistery were the original buildings of the site to which the West and South Sectors (*fig. 2*) were progressively attached. The enormous destruction of the walls (*fig. 3*), preserved mainly only in their foundations, blurred the observation of the relationship of the Baptistery with the structures of the West Sector. It was certainly difficult, looking only at the incardination of the west wall of the Baptistery and the east wall of the West Sector, to know which one was built first. The fact that three of the walls of the Rooms I and II are attached to the west wall (SU 06) of the Baptistry (*fig. 2*) seem to prove that the West Sector was build later. It seems therefore that the Basilica and the Baptistery where built earlier than the vast majority of the structures found in the western area.

The relationships between the walls of the West Sector denote some refurbishments that suggest a relatively long use. Most of these walls show the same technique of construction. According to the description of the finds of the excavation of 1982, and to the excavations carried out in 2005 and 2006, the walls are made with the same construction technique, with a foundation of stones bound with clay and a mud wall or adobe bricks on them. The roofs were probably made of perishable materials, as few roof tiles were uncovered in the excavations. An exception could be Room IV (the so-called 'roof tiles room' in the old excavations diaries), although the total number of tiles would

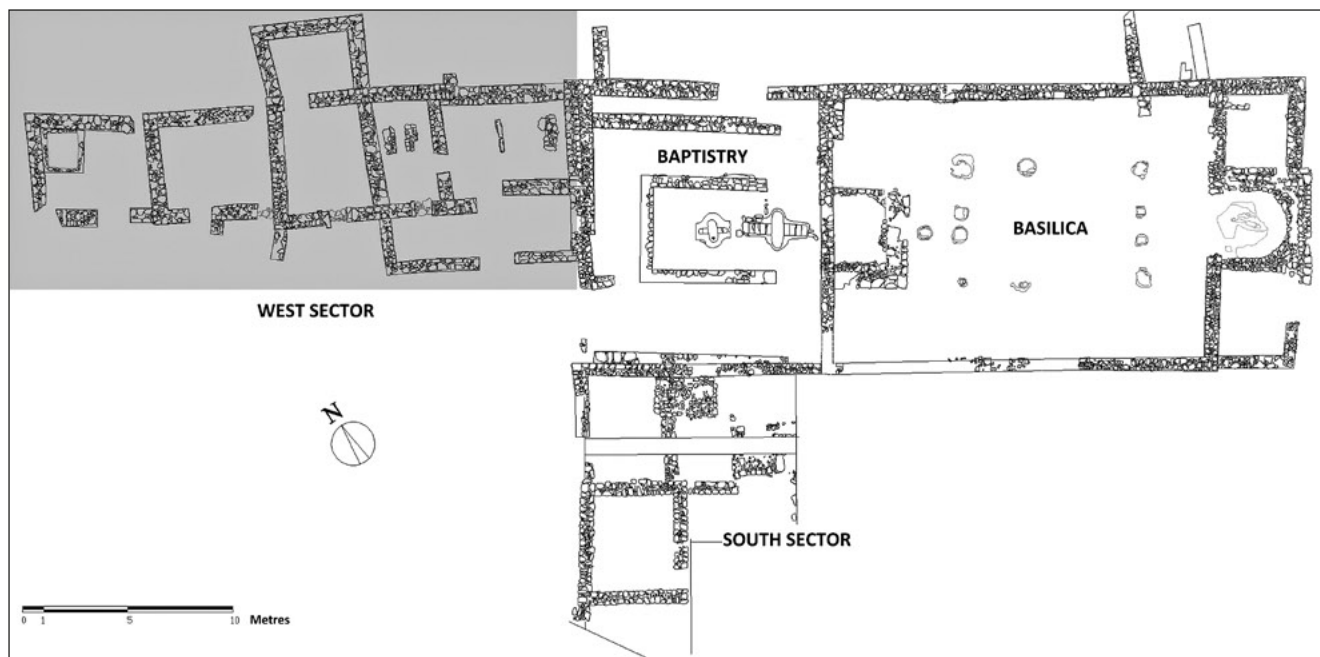


fig. 2 – Plan of the the early Christian complex of Son Peretó (Manacor, Mallorca) (authors: S. Alcaide and M. Riera).



fig. 3 – Photograph of Rooms I, II and III.

probably not be enough to cover the entire roof. We must therefore assume – if spoliation of roof tiles had not occurred – that the roofs were made of perishable materials, perhaps covered with a layer of clay. The rooms had a pavement of white clay, probably with small quantities of lime, which could correspond to the same type of pavement found, according to the earlier excavators, in one of the phases of the basilica.

4. CHRONOLOGY, EVOLUTION AND FUNCTION OF THE ARCHITECTONIC SPACES OF THE WEST SECTOR

4.1 THE FOUNDATION OF THE WEST SECTOR

The initial stage of occupation (phase A) (fig. 4) has been dated from materials found at the site, mainly ceramics located in the foundations of the walls excavated in this area. The diagnostic materials include a Vandal *nummus* from Carthage; an amphora LRA 1; cooking wares related to fabric 3.2/3.3 (CAU 2003) or Hand-made Ware 8 (REYNOLDS 1993) classified as

types Ca/Dau/3 or Cb/Dau/1 (MACIAS 1999) (fig. 5, SP-05-15-1); and a large Ebussitan bowl presumably with spout, probably of the series RE-900 (RAMON, CAU 1996; RAMON 2008) (fig. 5, SP-06-103-3), which would provide us a *tpq.* c. 450/475. A base of ARS form Hayes 99 (HAYES 1972, 1980) (fig. 5, SP-05-36) and a small broken fragment of Hayes 104 provide a *tpq.* c. 500. Also, in Room IV, in layer 133, a small fragment of rim that cannot be satisfactorily classified, but that may correspond to a plate of a *tpq.* c. 500, was found.

Ten tombs have been excavated in the West Sector of Son Peretó, out of which 4 child individuals and 7 adults (five females and two males) have been identified. The bodies were all oriented in the same direction, with the feet to the East and the head westwards, except for the 2006-7 burial, which was oriented North (head) to South (feet), positioned this way simply because the tomb could not fit the canonical orientation. The position of the corpses was supine, with the arms stretched to the sides of the body, either slightly crossed over the pelvis, or with an arm in each of the two positions described. All the tombs have a bathtub grave of trapezoidal form, sometimes with more or less straight or curved ends (fig. 6). All of them had a step to fit the flagstone covers (fig. 7). This cover usually comprised poorly worked limestone slabs, except for burial 2006-2, where the flagstones were more elaborated. The majority of the graves of adults, and the child grave 2006-1, had a cover made with lime plaster which remained at the level of the pavement. Between these upper covers and the flagstones, one or more layers of earth or clay with stones or gravel were found. One or two holes, undoubtedly of anthropogenic nature, of various shapes and sizes, usually located in the central part of the burial, could be identified in many of the preserved upper covers (burials 2006-1, 2006-2, 2006-4, 2007-1 2008-1 and 2008-9). Certainly they are reminiscent of the holes for libations in classical times, and even more so if we consider that they were filled with grey sediment⁷.

⁷ The funerary meal is still in practice until the mid 6th century (see for instance VIZCAÍNO 2009, 595). In the necropolis of Córdoba there is also evidence of such funerary practices (SÁNCHEZ RAMOS 2005, 175).

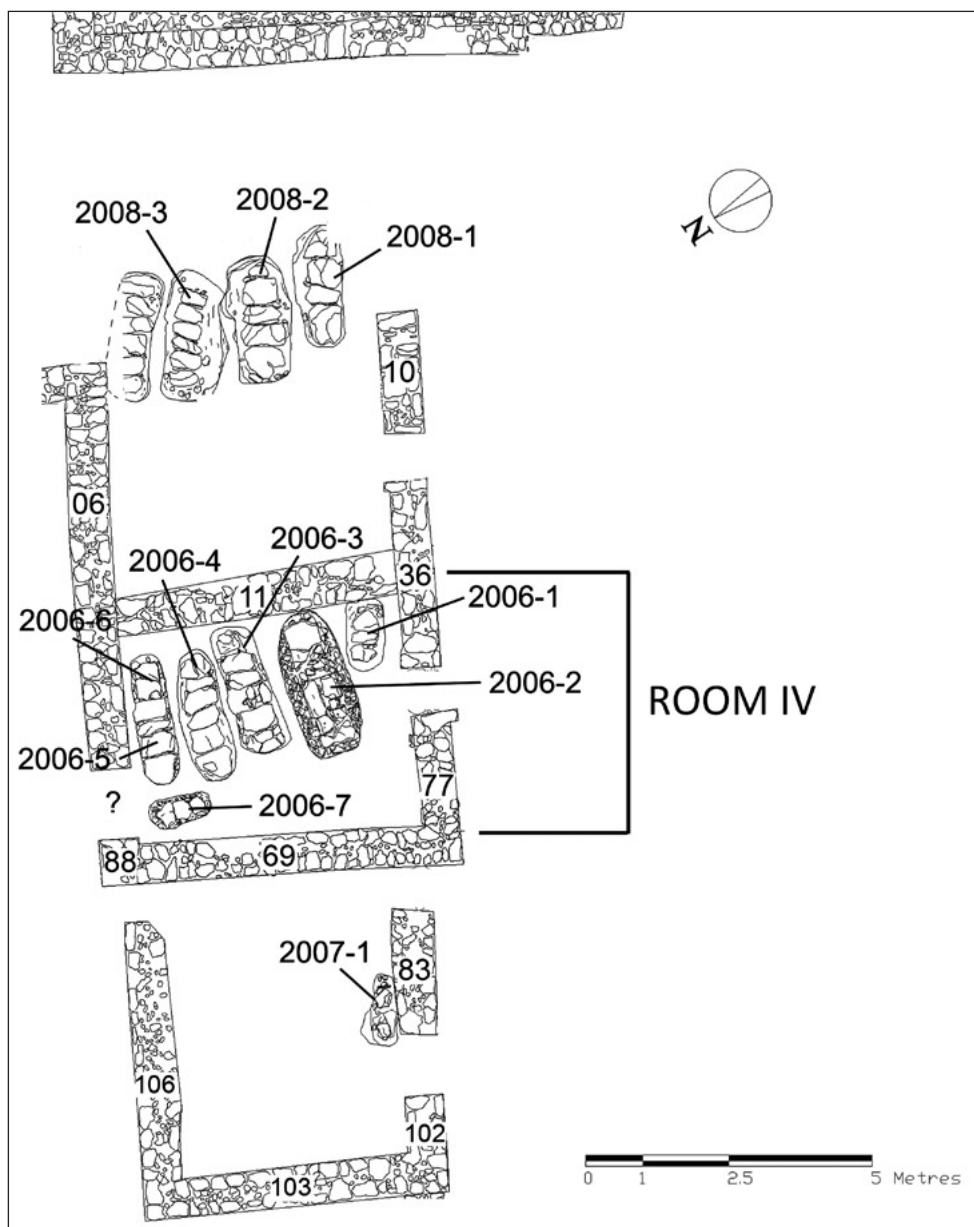


fig. 4 – Plan of Phase A (authors: S. Alcaide and M. Riera).

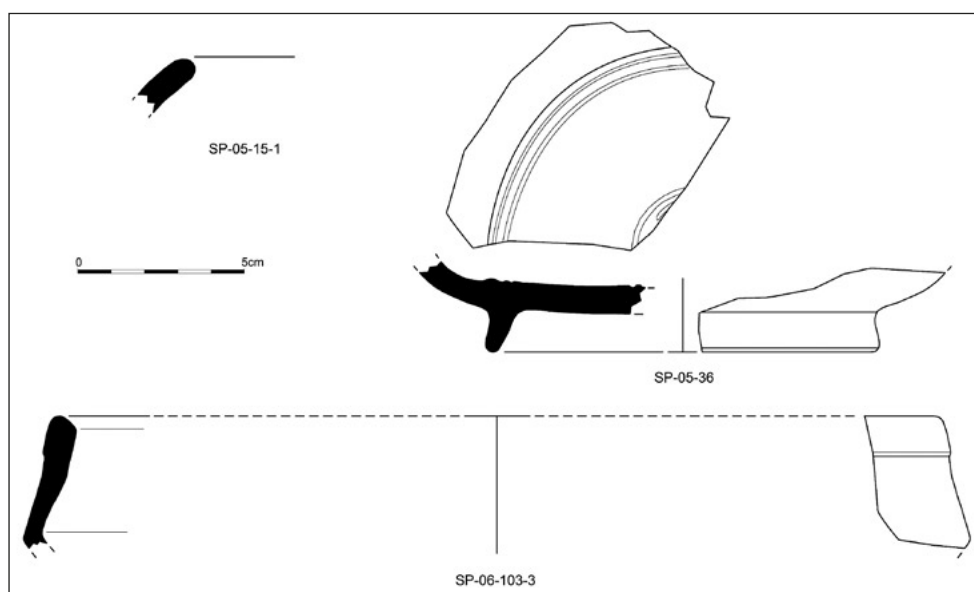


fig. 5 – Diagnostic ceramic materials associated to Phase A (authors: M. Riera, A. Martínez, M^a. J. Rivas, M.A. Cau, B Vallori, S. Munar, M. Trias).

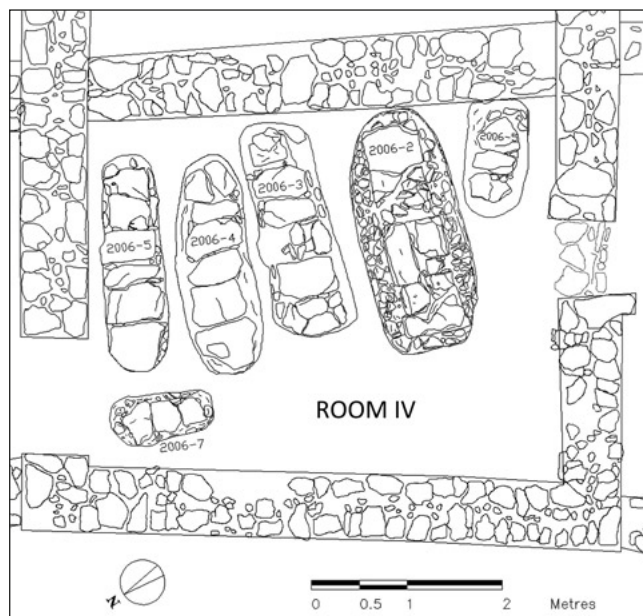


fig. 6 – Tombs recovered in Room IV of the West Sector (authors S. Alcaide and M. Riera).



fig. 7 – Photograph of the tombs recovered in Room IV of the West Sector (Mateu Riera).

The hole of the burial 2006-4 contained a sheep phalanx, and was covered by a well-fitted flat discoid lid made of stone (RIERA I RULLAN 2009, 107-108).

For the dating of the burials found in this sector, we have radiocarbon dates from bones of the three tombs of Room IV (tab. 1). In addition, ceramic materials contribute to a relatively precise dating. Under the cover of burial 2006-3, between the sediment surrounding the corpse, an Ebussitan common ware Gi/Eiv/1 (MACIAS 1999) (fig. 8, SP-06-121-1) and a jar/small amphora form RE-0314 (fig. 8, SP-06-121-2) (RAMON 1986, 2008; RAMON, CAU 1997) providing a *tpq.* of *c.* 425 and *c.* 500/535 were found.

In the plaster used to cover tomb 2006-5 a fragment of common Ebussitan pottery with 'polilineal' decoration (fig. 8, SP-06-112) was found, which is very similar to a vessel found in Cartagena (MURCIA, GUILLERMO 2003, 179, fig. 5, 32). The type of decoration points to a *tpq.* of *c.* 534. In Cartagena, this type seems to be present from 550 onwards. In the earth deposited in tomb 2006-5 a rim of African coarse ware type 62? from Bonifay (fig. 8, SP-06-129-1) with a *tpq.* *c.* 500 was

Burial 2006-3: 1535±25BP	Burial 2006-4: 1655±25BP	Burial 2006-5: 1625±25BP
68.2% probability 430AD (29.9%) 490 AD 530AD (38.3%) 570 AD	68.2% probability 350AD (9.8%) 370AD 380AD (58.4%) 425AD	68.2% probability 390AD (47.4%) 440AD 480AD (20.8%) 530AD
95.4% probability 430AD (95.4%) 600 AD	95.4% probability 260AD (2.2%) 280AD 320AD (91.7%) 440AD 490AD (1.5%) 510AD	95.4% probability 380AD (95.4%) 540AD
	99.7% probability 250AD (3.1%) 300AD 310AD (96.6%) 540AD	

tab. 1 – Radiocarbon dates of some burials found in the West Sector (Institut Royal du Patrimoine Artistique, Brussels).

found. Finally, just below one of the covers of the 2006-2 burial slabs, a fragment of ARS Hayes 99A (fig. 8, SP-06-167-1) was discovered (*tpq.* *c.* 480).

Taking into consideration the anteriority and posteriority relationships of the different tombs excavated in Room IV, it can be said that the construction of the room and the most ancient burials, such as for example 2006-2, have to be dated after 480/500. The radiocarbon dating demonstrated that the burials 2006-4 and 2006-5 cannot go too far beyond 540/550, and that burial 2006-3, the most modern of the adults, could not go much further than 600. Therefore, the burials of adults associated with Room IV must date between *c.* 500 to *c.* 600. On the other hand, we have not unfortunately obtained data that allows us to refine the dating of the children's burials in this area.

With regard to the burials found in what will later become Room II, it should be noted that we do not have as much data for a precise dating as in Room IV. Even so, inside the cover of burial 2008-1 a base of ARS Hayes 99 (fig. 8, SP-08-244-3) and two Ebussitan common ceramics with polilineal decoration (fig. 8, SP-08-244-1 and fig. 8, SP-08-244-2), which would provide us a *tpq.* *c.* 480 and *c.* 534 respectively, were found. During the excavation process it was clear that this cover was cut by the trench of the burial 2008-2, and therefore a *tpq.* of a minimum 480/534 for this second burial can also be established. However, the more recent *terminus post quem* for the graves of Sector West is given by an ARS Hayes 99C (SP-07-163-1) with a starting date of *c.* 580. This was found inside the earth of the cover of the burial 2007-1 of Room VI. In the northwest corner of the room, in a very similar stratigraphic position, a Hayes 101 (fig. 8, SP-07-174-1) which would provide a *tpq.* *c.* 533/550 was uncovered.

In short phase A corresponds mainly to a necropolis found outside the baptistery, with tombs dated in the 6th century, probably with a major date post 534, and therefore placing it in the Byzantine period, and some structures that seem to be linked to this necropolis.

4.2 A SECOND PHASE. PHASE B

Foundational data for phase B

During Phase B, new rooms and spaces were added to the West Sector (Rooms II, III, V and VII) (fig. 9). In this phase, the area was not used as cemetery, and the spaces were used for several activities.

The anteriority of the graves is based in several pieces of evidence:

- The fact that the northern wall of Room I, and the wall that separates Rooms I and II, are over the top of the burials 2008-1 and 2008-2.
- The stratigraphic sequence of Room VI, where it is clear that burial 2007-1 was build earlier than the silo 160 and the hearth 139.

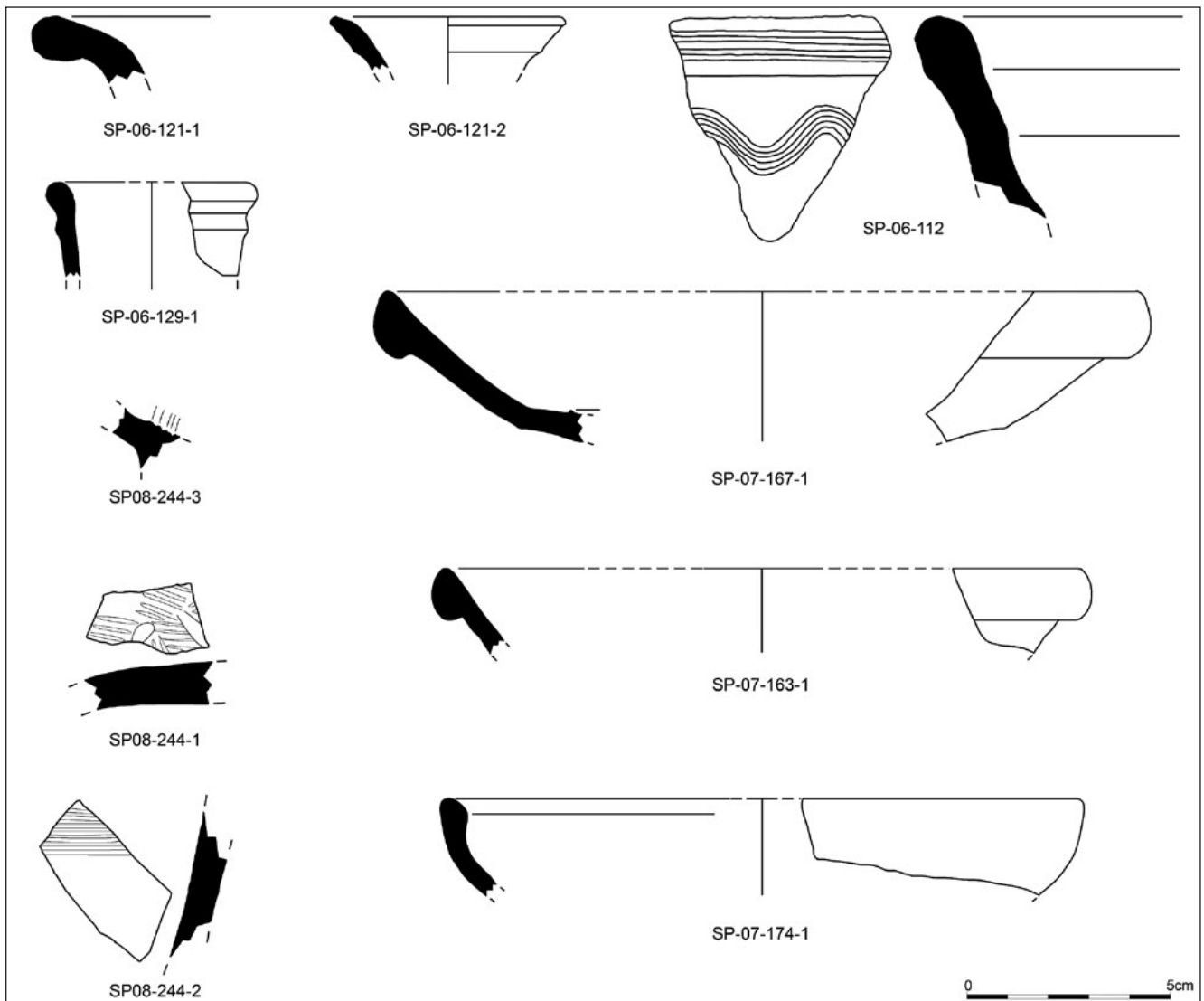


fig. 8 – Ceramic materials associated to some of the tombs of the West Sector (authors: M. Riera, A. Martínez, M^a.J. Rivas, M.A. Cau, B Vallori, S. Munar, M. Trias).

c) The evidence that Rooms I and V, where there are no burials but silos, are attached to Room IV, which is full of burials. Another detail in this respect is the thickness of the walls of Room I, which are around 50 cm, when the rest of the walls always exceed 60 cm.

d) Evidence that Room VII, where there are no graves, is attached to Room VI where there is one.

Unfortunately, there are not enough archaeological materials to fully understand which was the detailed process of constructive growth, since it seems that this did not occur at one point in time.

The only foundational materials found inside the foundations of the walls of this phase B are: a muscovite-rich cooking ware, probably related to hand-made cooking ware fabrics 1.6/1.7 as defined by Fulford and Peacock (1984) (fig. 10, SP-06-60) (*tpq.* c. 500), a Hayes 99 A or B (fig. 10, SP-05-07-2) (*tpq.* c. 500), a Hayes 91 C (fig. 10, SP-05-08) (*tpq.* c. 530), and a Ebussitan common ceramic with 'polilineal' decoration (fig. 10, SP-05-07-1) (*tpq.* 535). A fragment of Hayes 104 C (fig. 10, SP-05-22) (*tpq.* c. 530) was found in a prefoundational layer

below the wall 05 and structures 16 and 20 of Room II, and two fragments of cooking ware with vegetal temper (7th century?) were found inside pavement 173 of Room VI.

The use levels

The levels of use of Phase B are dated by several diagnostic sherds. A muscovite-rich cooking ware (*tpq.* c. 500) found inside SU 39 of Room I, and a rim of cooking ware with vegetal temper (fig. 11, SP-06-92-1), probably of the 7th century, found in the repair of the hole caused by the collapse of part of the cover of the burial 2006-3 from Room IV, were documented. Two vegetal temper cooking wares (7th century) in SU 167 and 195 were found between the cover and the sediment that covered the skeleton of burial 2006-2 of Room IV. An Ebussitan common ceramic with 'polilineal' decoration (fig. 11, SP-07-155-1) (*tpq.* 535); a possible common ceramic RE-0808? (fig. 11, SP-07-155-3) (*tpq.* 550?); a Hayes 101 (fig. 11, SP-07-155-14) (*tpq.* c. 533/550); a possible amphora from Tarraconense? Mataró 1? (CELA AND REVILLA 2004) (fig. 11, SP-07-155-5) (in Mataró appears in contexts of the end of the 6th century/1st third of

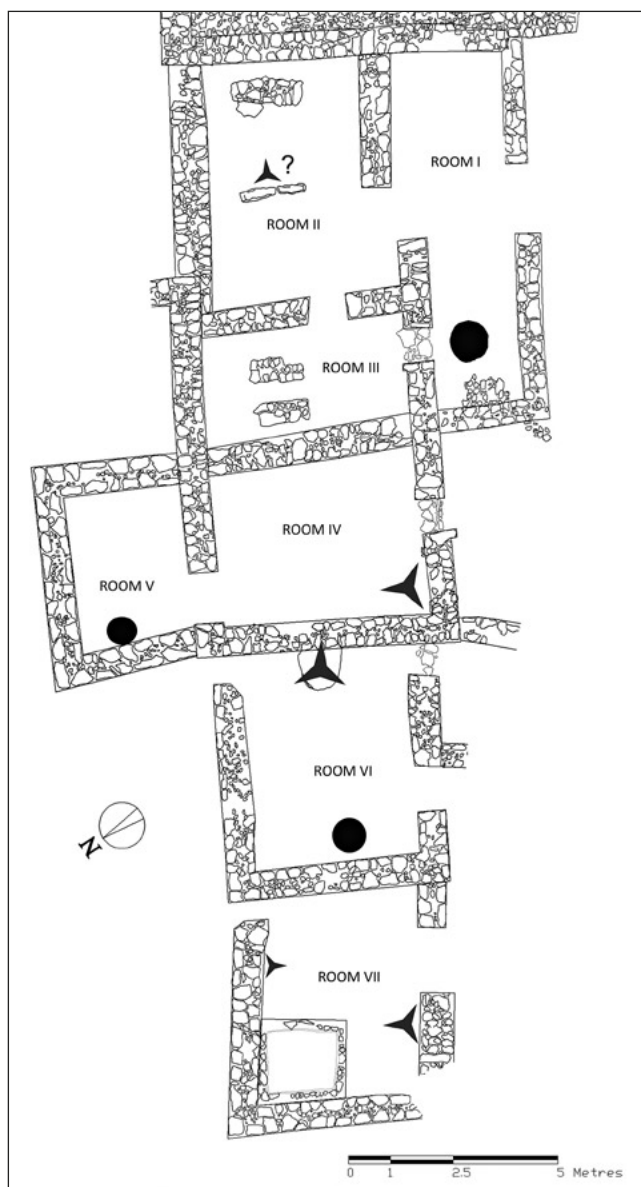


fig. 9 – Plan of Phase B. The circles mark the positioning of the silos and the stars the hearths (authors: S. Alcaide and M. Riera).

the 7th); and a possible African amphora Keay 62 (KEAY 1984) (fig. 11, SP-07-155-15) (*tpq.* c. 500) were found in layer 155 of Room VI. A possible RE-0202? (SP-07-190-1) (*tpq.* c. 535) and a possible RE-0310a? (fig. 11, SP-07-190-2) (*tpq.* c. 535) were found in the pavement of the silo of Room VI.

In Room VII a large irregular hole (SU 134) of unknown function was sealed after 580, as shown by the presence of a Hayes 107, with a repair, located in one of their infilling strata (fig. 11, SP-07-135-1 and 154).

Therefore, all the evidence makes it plausible to consider Phase B as dated to the 7th century, while not ruling out that some elements could be from the end of the 6th century.

The silos found in Rooms I, V and VI would probably be used for the storage of cereals or legumes. Later, these silos were used as rubbish dumps. Materials found inside of the layers filling the silos include three African mortars of the form 11 B or C (BONIFAY 2004) of coarse wares (fig. 12, SP-06-85-2, SP-07-166 and 189, and SP-07-187-1) (*tpq.* c. 525/550); three

common Ebussitan ceramics with polilineal decoration (fig. 12, SP-06-123, 166 and 170) (*tpq.* c. 535.), an Ebussitan mortar 1 of Mataró (CELA and REVILLA 2004) (fig. 12, SP-07-166-1) (*tpq.* c. 500?), two possible jars/small amphorae RE-0314c? (fig. 12, SP-07-179-3 and SP-07-179-4) (*tpq.* c. 535), a Hayes 12/102 (fig. 12, SP-06-85-1) (*tpq.* c. 530), a Hayes 99B (fig. 10, SP-07-172-1) (*tpq.* c. 530), a late variant of Hayes 105 = 'Bonifay 88' à 'décor lustré' that dates from the 7th century (fig. 12, SP-06-66-1).

In the three areas where the silos were excavated, several elements that could be related to the processing of food stored in silos have been documented. In Room 1 a horseshoe shaped structure (SU 43), similar to a hearth, but with no coal, ashes or other signs of fire was found. Inside the silo of Room V (fig. 13) a fragment of a rotation mill was found. Finally, in Room VI, a large mortar was also documented.

4.3 THE LAST MOMENT AND THE ABANDONMENT

During the most recent period of occupation of the rooms in the West Sector, areas VI and VII (K1N) had hearths, as was probable for Rooms II and IV (room of the 'roof-tiles') (fig. 9). In Room VII two hearths were identified, one to the North for cooking activities, the second towards the South, where metalworking took place. The hearth in Room VI was in the eastern end of the space. The discovery of glass slags on three strata of this area (172, 187 and 189) suggests that this material was worked there. Most dubious are possible hearths in Rooms II and IV. In the latter, in the levels that show evidence of destruction, several quite complete kitchen ceramics were found in old excavations.

The discovery of several jars in Room III suggests that this room may have served mainly as a storehouse. This space perhaps had a double floor sustained on the structures 18 and 19 (fig. 9).

Observing the doors of the different rooms of the West Sector, two structural complexes can be clearly defined. The first, so-called, Structural Complex 1, would be formed by Rooms I, II and III, and it would be connected to the exterior through the southern door of Room I (SU 53). From this 'Room' I, which may actually have been a passageway, there was a connection to Rooms II and III, but later in order to arrive at Room III, it was necessary to cross Room II, as its southern door was closed. Door 53 gave also access to an area with a stone pavement that could have been outside of the complex, or in a courtyard. The second group of rooms, Structural Complex 2, was formed by Rooms IV and V. To access Room V it was necessary to cross Room IV, so this reinforces that both are part of the same structural complex.

Unfortunately, we do not know whether the southern gate of Room IV connected to the exterior, or to a different room. So far, we do not know if Rooms VI and VII would have also been linked to other complexes. In any case, the general structure of the West Sector, the presence of several doors and walls that extend to the North and South of both chambers, would foreshadow that they would have been connected to other rooms.

The end of the West Sector was probably caused by a fire, meaning the abandonment of all the rooms, which it can be dated at the end of the 7th century or the beginning of the 8th century, as suggested by the pottery assemblage, which consists of: African amphorae type Keay 61 (fig. 14, DA08-03-HA) and *spatheion* type 3 from Bonifay (fig. 14, Nic. 23792); Ebussitan amphora RE-0103 (fig. 14, CE08-3-SP82-K1N); globular jars/small amphora/probably Ebussitan of the type RE-0206 =

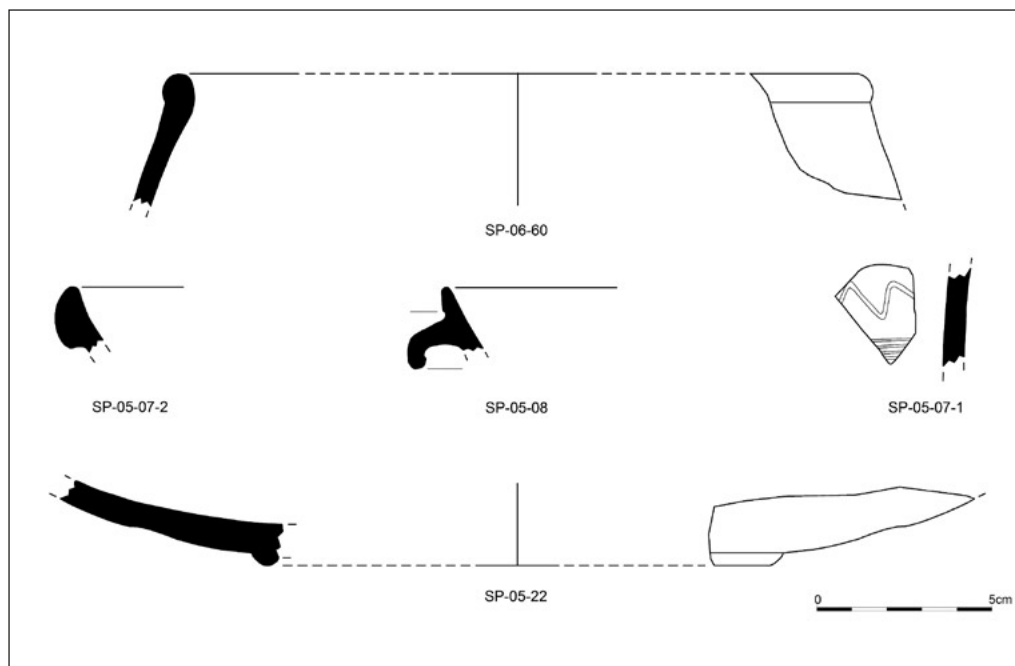


fig. 10 – Ceramic materials associated to the foundation of Phase B (authors: M. Riera, A. Martínez, M^a. J. Rivas, M.A. Cau, B Vallori, S. Munar, M. Trias).

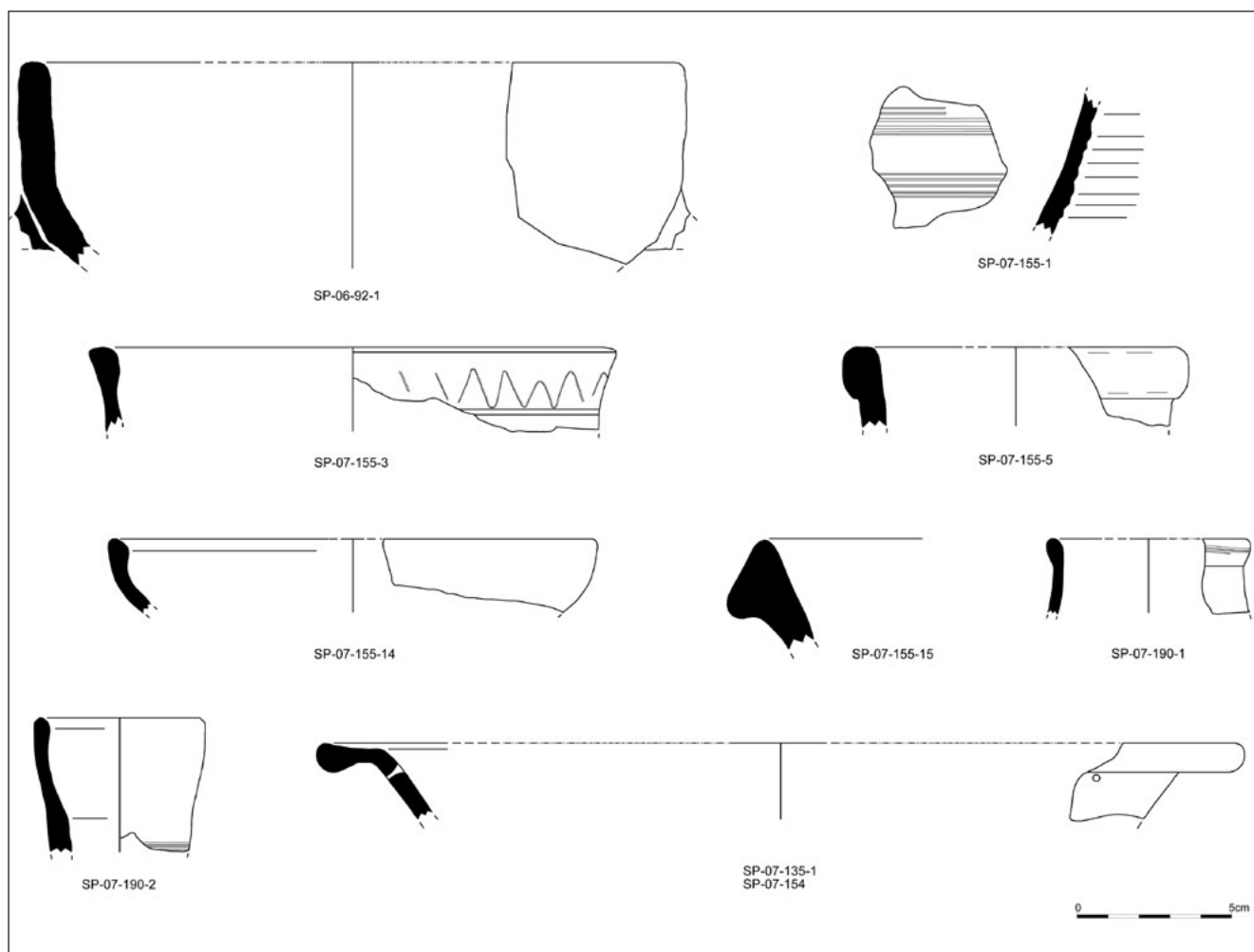


fig. 11 – Ceramic materials associated to the use levels of Phase B (authors: M. Riera, A. Martínez, M^a. J. Rivas, M.A. Cau, B Vallori, S. Munar, M. Trias).

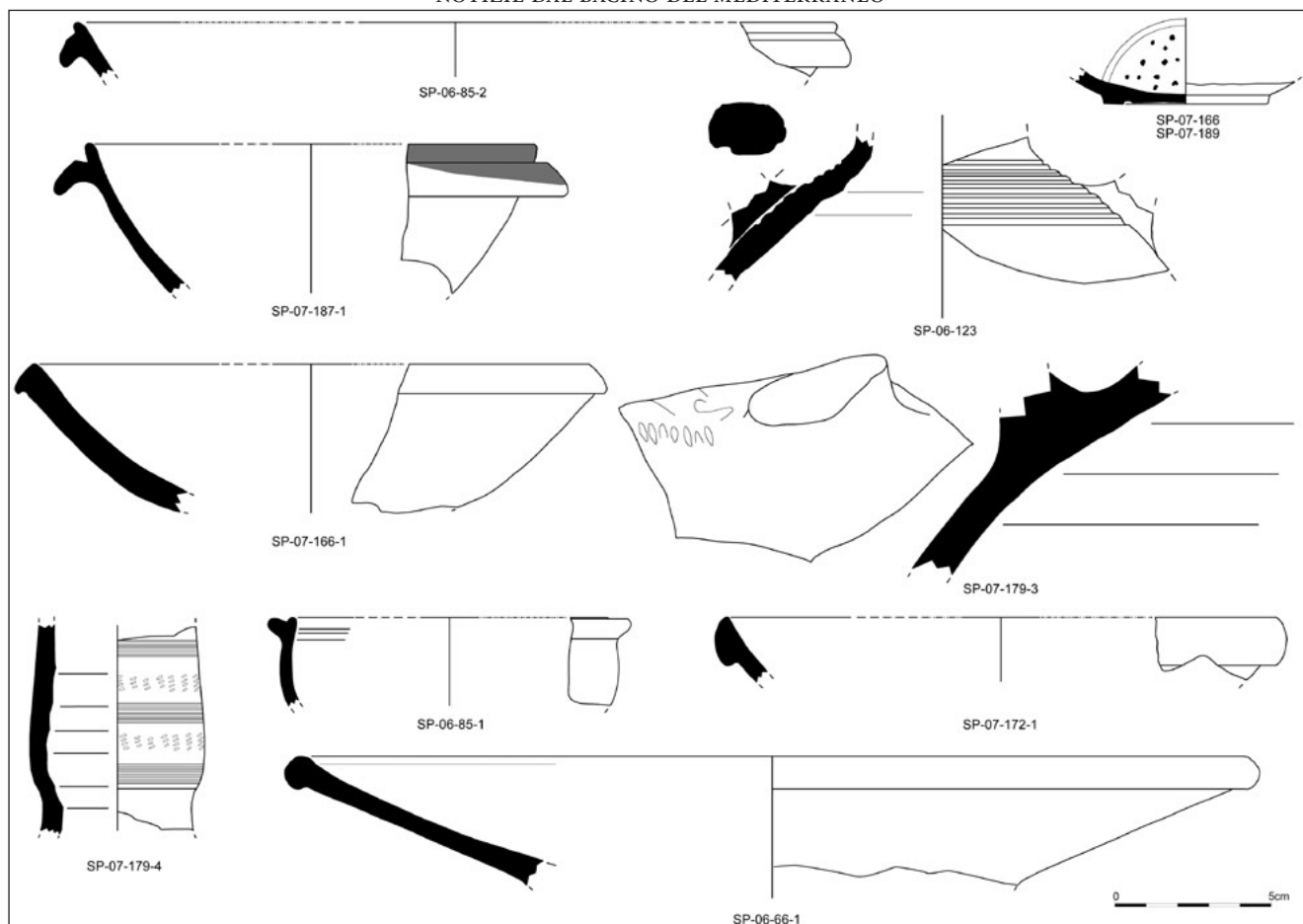


fig. 12 – Ceramic materials associated to the use levels of Phase B (authors: M. Riera, A. Martínez, M^a. J. Rivas, M.A. Cau, B Vallori, S. Munar, M. Trias).



fig. 13 – Photograph of the silo found in Room 5 (M. Riera).

Keay 72 (fig. 14, DA08-03-M-2 and CE08-3-SP82-KIN-52); an African mortar type Bonifay 11C (BONIFAY 2004) (fig. 15, CE08-3-SP82-KIN-56); small jars with incised 'monolineal' and 'polilineal' decoration (fig. 15, DA08-03-J-2; DA08-03-J-3 and DA08-03-PI-1); some amphorae lids (fig. 15, DA08-03-HA-1; DA08-03-J-1 and DA08-03-M-1) and cooking wares (fig. 15, DA08-03-HT-5 and DA08-03-J-5), some of them with vegetal temper (fig. 15, KIN), were reported (RIERA RULLAN 2009, 109, 150 and 151; RIERA RULLAN and MARTÍNEZ 2009).

5. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Despite the fact that much of the stratigraphy was excavated in 1982 and 1984, the new excavations have provided new data to fix the chronological development of the West Sector of Son Peretó and to establish two main phases (fig. 4 and 9). The first phase, corresponding to a funerary area, dates mainly from the 6th century. Instead, in the second phase, already in the 7th century, this sector was transformed into a domestic and productive area, where activities such as cooking, storage and artisanal production took place. Nevertheless, we cannot guarantee that these are two completely independent phases in terms of function. The presence of some burials once the sector was transformed into a dwelling cannot be denied. In any case, it is clear as we have demonstrated that both uses must have been very close in time.

Anthropological data obtained from the necropolis show evidence of the presence of males, females and children, and signs of physical stress dues to intense and repetitive work. These

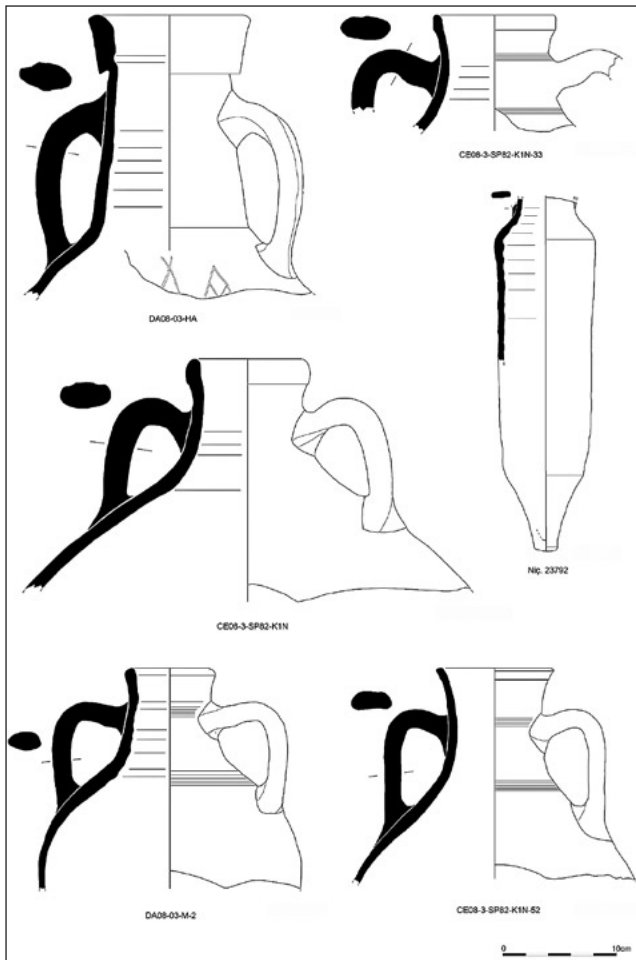


fig. 14 – Ceramic materials associated to the abandonment of the West Sector (after RIERA 2009, 150).

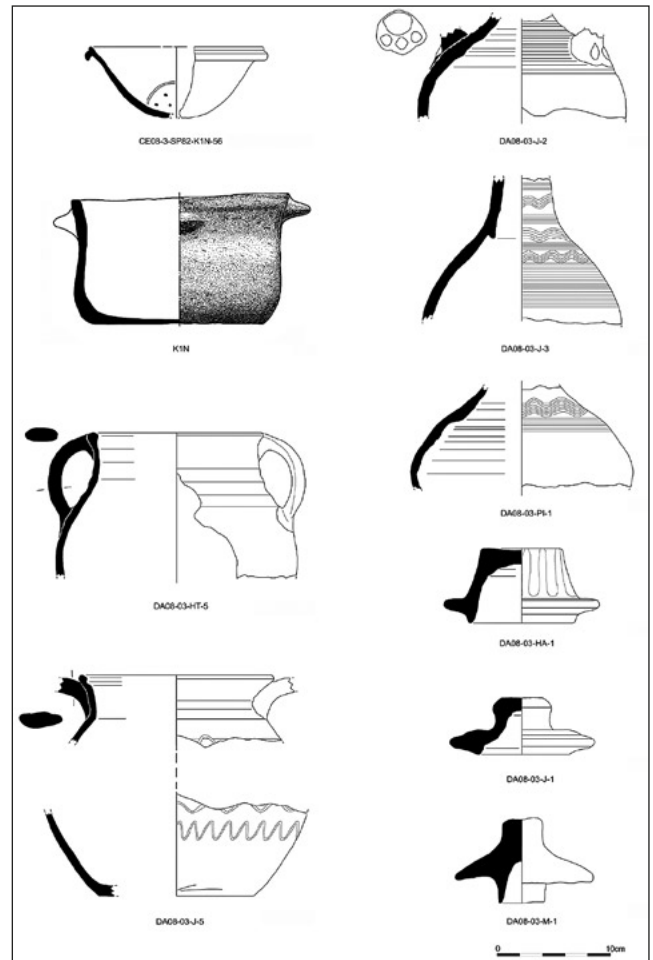


fig. 15 – Ceramic materials associated to the abandonment of the West Sector (after RIERA 2009, 151).



fig. 16 – Deposit found in Room VII.

seem to correspond to a community of peasants who have been buried around the church.

In the 7th century, the area occupied by a necropolis outside the church and the baptistery was used to create an inhabitation nucleus attached to the religious building, which resulted in the formation of a nucleated settlement. The last

image prior to the destruction seems to reflect a community in a small agglomeration, attached to the religious building, living there and exploiting the surrounding landscape. The archaeozoological study shows that the community subsistence was based on a mixture of livestock and farming. Herds of goats and/or sheep and pork, as well as poultry, may have been present in the site or its vicinity. Cattle were also part of the diet, but they were probably not butchered at the site. Hunting and fishing – as well as collection of wild species – complemented the diet (rabbit, snails, hare, turtle, birds; also cuttle-fish and other marine products are present). Agricultural activity is also secure, as evidenced by the presence of silos. Moreover, inorganic analysis of a deposit found in one of the rooms (Room VII), seems to open the possibility of the production of wine and oil at the site (fig. 16). Local products were complemented by imports, as demonstrated by the presence of African, Hispanic or Eastern Mediterranean amphorae. The site was well-connected to the main commercial networks of the Mediterranean. Finally, metalworking, in particular with iron, and traces of glass transformation or manipulation were documented.

All seem to indicate that the church was built in this location as a focus of Christianisation in an already populated area, but it is clear that an inhabitation area was attached to the religious building at a later date. Whether this was in origin a church related to a secondary agglomeration, a villa, a monastery or to any



fig. 17 – West Sector of Son Peretó after finishing the work in 2008 (author: M. Riera).

other type of dispersed settlement is still unknown. It has been argued elsewhere (MAS, CAU 2011, 200-201) that the presence of pre-existing indigenous and Roman sites in the surrounding territory may indicate that the basilica was built there to serve an existing site or concentration of settlements. In addition, the presence of sites with signs of Late Antique occupation in the vicinity may indicate that the church acted as a nucleus of attraction of a later dispersed settlement.

Overall, the excavations of the West Sector of Son Peretó contribute to understanding the nucleus attached to the Christian building. This in turn advances understandings of the transformation of Christian complexes in Late antique Mallorca, emphasising other structures, not only the sacred spaces that have been the traditional focus of Christian archaeology in the islands. In addition, the archaeological excavations carried out, and their public display, have helped to recover a fundamental site that was in the process of abandonment (fig. 17).

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Summary

This paper presents the results of archaeological excavations carried out at the early Christian complex of Son Peretó (Mallorca, Balearic Islands) between 2005 and 2008. The work concentrated in the so-called West Sector, a series of rooms annexed to the church and baptistery. The data obtained allows us to establish the evolution and function of this part of the site. A necropolis related to the church occupied the area in the 6th century. Later, in the 7th century, a dwelling formed by several rooms with silos and hearths, as well as clear signs of domestic and productive activities, developed. The site was abandoned at the very end of the 7th or early 8th century, probably due to a violent

episode. Overall, the paper offers a preliminary picture of this important Late Antique site, by focusing not on the sacred constructions, but on a series of rooms, where excavation provided an insight into the daily life of a Christian community.

Riassunto

Il complesso paleocristiano di Son Peretó (Maiorca, Isole Baleari): gli scavi nel 'Settore Ovest' (2005-2008).

Questo articolo presenta i risultati degli scavi archeologici condotti presso Il complesso paleocristiano di Son Peretó (Maiorca, Isole Baleari) tra il 2005 e il 2008. I lavori si sono concentrati nel cosiddetto Settore Ovest, una serie di ambienti annessi alla chiesa e al battistero. I dati ottenuti permettono di stabilire l'evoluzione e la funzione di questa parte del sito. Una necropoli relativa alla chiesa occupava l'area nel VI secolo. Più tardi, nel VII secolo, si sviluppa un'area abitazionale formata da camere con silos e focolari, così come risulta da chiari segni di attività domestiche e produttive. Il sito è stato abbandonato alla fine del VII secolo o all'inizio dell'VIII, probabilmente a causa di un episodio di violenza. Nel complesso, questo contributo offre una prima panoramica su questo importante sito tardoantico, con particolare attenzione non alle costruzioni sacre, ma ad una serie di

stanze il cui scavo fornisce una prima idea della vita quotidiana di una comunità cristiana.

Resumen

El complejo paleocristiano de Son Peretó (Mallorca, Islas Baleares): excavaciones en el 'Sector Oeste' (2005-2008).

Este trabajo presenta los resultados de las excavaciones arqueológicas llevadas a cabo en el complejo paleocristiano de Son Peretó (Mallorca, Islas Baleares) entre 2005 y 2008. El trabajo se concentró en el denominado Sector Oeste, una serie de habitaciones anexas a la iglesia y al baptisterio. Los datos obtenidos permiten establecer la evolución y función de esta parte del yacimiento. Una necrópolis relacionada con la iglesia ocupó la zona en el siglo VI. Más tarde, en el siglo VII, se desarrolló un núcleo habitacional formado por varias habitaciones con silos y hogares, así como claros signos de actividades domésticas y productivas. Este sector fue abandonado a finales del siglo VII o inicios del siglo VIII, probablemente debido a un episodio violento. En general, el artículo ofrece una síntesis de este importante yacimiento de la Antigüedad tardía, prestando atención no a los edificios sacros, sino a una serie de habitaciones, cuya excavación proporciona una primera visión de la vida cotidiana de una comunidad cristiana.

