

Roman Religious Structures in the Archaeological Site Tipaza

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Abstract:

Tipaza is an ancient and historic city with a rich cultural heritage. It was part of the Roman province of Mauretania Caesarea and is considered one of the most important ancient cities on the Algerian coast. It is an example of a complete Roman city with a central layout based on main axes that cross the city via two streets, intersecting at the Forum around which most of the architectural structures are concentrated. Through this study, we seek to highlight the Roman religious structures found in the ancient city of Tipaza. We examine the location of these structures and their history, reviewing the various designs that reflect the religious and ideological diversity that prevailed in the city during the Roman period, from the sacred pagan temples of the gods to the Christian basilicas.

Keywords: Tipaza, Roman, Religious Structures, Temples, Christian Basilicas.

Introduction:

Roman civilisation had the greatest influence on ancient Maghreb, given the urban structures built during that period, which are characterised by diversity in construction methods and architectural elements, reflected in most of the facilities that made up Roman Cities in ancient Maghreb Religious Structures were among the most important architectural structures that the Romans were interested in constructing, as they were equipped with various structural and artistic elements to form architectural masterpieces in which humans could communicate with the gods, in addition to holding religious ceremonies according to the prevailing religious beliefs during the Roman pagan and Christian periods.

Tipaza is one of the ancient and historical cities of Roman character whose ruins still bear witness to its rich history, especially the various religious structures that played a religious, political and social role in Tipaza during this period. The Religious Structures of Tipaza consist of a series of temples dating back to the city's founding during the 1st and 2nd centuries AD, including the Capitoline Temple built within the forum complex and intended for official Roman worship. In addition to the New Temple opposite the Unknown Temple overlooking Dukimanus Street, basilicas were used as places of worship in accordance with Christian Doctrine and rituals, with Christianity declaring the official religion of the Roman Empire. We find the Great Basilica in Tipaza, which is the largest basilica in Algeria, and the Basilica of Saint Salasa in the eastern enclosure. What are the most important Roman Religious Structures in the city of Tipaza?

1- Geographical and historical overview of Tipaza:

1-1 Geographical Location:

Tipaza is a city located between latitudes 47° and 48° and longitudes 35° and 36°, approximately 70 km west of the capital, Algiers, covering an area of 2219 km²¹.

It overlooks the Mediterranean Sea to the north, with a coastline of approximately 1,500 metres. The city of Cherchell borders it to the northwest, the city of Ain Taghouaït to the east, the city of Sidi Rached to the southeast, the city of Hadjout to the southwest, and the city of Nador to the west and southwest.²

1-2 Name of the city:

The city has had several names over the years. The first name dates back to the Phoenician period, when it was called Tepasa a Phoenician word meaning 'crossing' or 'passage.' This name is perfectly suited to the city's location, as it was then a harbour where the Phoenicians would moor their ships at night.³ The name Tafza is derived from the local language Tafsfa, meaning "crumbly sandstone". During the Islamic period it was called Tifased, and after the arrival of the French, the old name of Tipaza was restored, which remains in use to this day.⁴

2-History of the city:

Archaeological remains indicate settlements dating back to the Lower Palaeolithic period, including the sites of west Chenoua, the royal Mauritanian Mausoleum, the outskirts of Douaouda, and Bousmail most of the discoveries were bifacial tools.⁵ For the Middle Palaeolithic period, the Kouali Archaeological Site, located 2 km east of the city of Tipaza, revealed three archaeological levels indicating communication between the Aterian and Ibero-Maghreb civilisations.⁶

With respect to the late Palaeolithic period, research has revealed a significant number of sites, the most important of which is Rolande Cave in Chenoua, which has uncovered stone remains belonging to the Iberomaurusian civilisation, including finely polished scrapers and flakes, as well as bone tools such as awls.⁷ The site of the Rassal Cave in Chenoua, 6 km west of the city, has also been identified where traces of human habitation have been found in the form of human remains and stone tools such as scrapers, blades and chisels, as well as various bone awls, shell jewellery and decorated pottery shards dating back to the Neolithic period.⁸

For the Bronze Age, archaeological evidence is scarce, consisting of a bronze dagger found during an archaeological survey on the outskirts of the Russell Cave in Mount Chenoua, which demonstrates that humans during this period had mastered the techniques of extracting and shaping bronzes.

The historical period of the city of Tipaza was marked by the presence of Phoenician traders, as the city's sandy beaches, with their gentle slope, allowed ships to be pulled ashore, serving as a

¹ Cheurfi, A. 2011. Dictionary of Algerian Localities (City, Village, Ksar, Douar, Mechtas, Locality). Algiers: Casbah, Edition.p.1132.

² Bouchenaki, (M), Tipasa World Heritage Site, Algiers , 1988, p12.

³ Lancel (S), Bouchenaki (M), Tipasa of Mauritania, Algiers, 1990, p. 8.

⁴ Gsell (S), Inscription of Algeria, vol. 1, 1922, p. 177.

⁵ Aziz Tarek Sahed, Prehistoric Remains in the Tipaza Region: A Case Study, Journal of Scientific Research, Morsli Abdallah University Centre, Tipaza, Volume 1, Issue 2, 2013, pp. 24-25.

⁶ Briggs L.C. – Preliminary overview of the prehistoric site of Kouali, Bulletin of the Society of North African History, XLII, 1951, pp. 30–32.

⁷ Marchand (H), Faune préhistorique de la grotte de Chenoua, Bull, de la Soc, d'Hist. de l'Afr, Du Nord, vol. XXIII, pp. 73-75.

⁸ Brahimi. (C),- The bevelled tools of the Rassal deposit (Chenoua), Libya, vol. XV, 1967, pp. 65–70.

resting place and a point of trade with the local population. Archaeological evidence and carved tombs in the city, especially the eastern and western cemeteries dating back to the 6th and 5th centuries BC demonstrate that Tipaza was not just a station but a thriving city and capital under Carthaginian authority.⁹

Given the scarcity of archaeological sources that help us write the history of the Mauritanian Mamluk period and the nature of its political and social system, some written sources mention the city's prosperity in the 1st and 2nd centuries BC. In 105 BC, Bocchus I found himself at the head of the Mauritanian kingdom, which stretched from the Moulouya River in the west to the Grand Oued in the east. Tipaza thus occupied a central position within Bocchus II's territories.

In honour of Bocchus II's assistance to Julius Caesar in his war against Juba I, he annexed Tipaza to the Mauritanian kingdom. He made Yul its capital. After the death of the Mauritanian king Bocchus II in 33 BC without a heir, the Roman emperor Augustus appointed Juba II as king of Mauretania in 25 BC. He made his capital Yul and named it Yul Caesarea. After his death, his son, Ptolemy, took over the rule of the vast Caesarean Mauretania in 23 AD. However, Ptolemy's end came at the hands of Emperor Caligula, who summoned him to attend celebrations, imprisoned him, and then sentenced him to death in 40 AD.¹⁰ From the middle of the second century AD to the end of the third century AD, urban activity flourished in the city and began to expand east and west.¹¹ During the same period Christianity spread in Tipaza and took root, during the fourth century AD after a Catholic–Donatist religious conflict that left many martyrs and saints such as Saint Salsa of Tipaza.¹² Tipaza also suffered from siege and attacks by the rebel Firmus between 371 and 372 AD, who managed to take control of Ecosium and Caesarea¹³. At the beginning of the 5th century AD, the Vandals crossed the Strait of Gibraltar, and the city fell under their rule in 430 AD. Its walls were demolished during the reign of Genseric in 455 AD.¹⁴ In 534 AD, the Byzantines ended Vandal rule and imposed control over the city of Tipaza, during which time the city experienced no significant urban development. During the Islamic period, the city's name changed to Tefassed. Over time, the area became ruin, and the city experienced no urban development.¹⁵ Until the French colonisation of Algeria and during the reign of Napoleon III, the city was handed over to one of the French colonists Auguste Adolphe Demonchy, who built 50 houses and exploited 2672 hectares of agricultural land. During the same period, the city also saw the start of archaeological excavations, which led to the creation of a city museum.¹⁶

Chronology of archaeological research in the city:

The first archaeological research in Tipaza began in 1891 under the leadership of Mr. Gsell at the Tipaza Archaeological Site. This led to the discovery of the Church of Saint Salasa on the eastern side at Koudia al-Za'rour and the Church of Saint Alexander on the western side at Ras al-Kanisa. In 1892, archaeological excavations began under the leadership of Albert Ballu and Marcel Christofle

⁹ Lancel (S), Bouchenaki (M), op. cit., pp. 8-9

¹⁰ Bouchenaki (M), op. cit., pp. 19-20.

¹¹ Baradez. (J), Tipasa, ancient city of Mauretania, Algiers, 1952, p. 19

¹² Ibid. 5-59.

¹³ Lancel (S), Bouchenaki (M), op. cit., p. 16.

¹⁴ Bouchenaki (M), op. cit., pp. 25-26.

¹⁵ Baradez (J), op. cit., p. 21.

¹⁶ Natte (char), project to establish a village farm in Tipasa, Marseille, 1954, pp. 28–30.

under the supervision of the Algerian Historical Monuments Department. On the Sidi Bel-Aïch plateau, large parts of the city were uncovered, such as the public square and the judicial basilica.¹⁷ In 1914, Jérôme Carcopino described the mosaics covering the judicial basilica to prove that it was used during the Christian period. Ballu's excavations continued on the southern side of the forum, and in 1915, they revealed stairs leading directly to the forum, four metres from the southern wall. In addition, the restoration work carried out by Christofle Marcel in Covered Portico led to the forum from the western side and the Church of Saint Salasa.¹⁸ In 1930, Jacques Heurgon published an article on Recent Archaeological Research in Tipaza, focusing on the judicial basilica, in which he included a plan of the basilica and another of the stairs leading to the forum on the western side, as well as a comprehensive description of the Mosaics that covered the Apse of the basilica.¹⁹

Between 1948 and 1960, Archaeological Excavations were entrusted to Cintas (p), then to Colonel Baradez, whose excavations revealed several structures inside the villa defresque and uncovered the first archaeological finds that would form the city's museum.²⁰

After independence, Archaeological Excavations continued to identify the stratigraphic layers of the Archaeological Site. In 1968, researcher Mounir Bouchenaki and Mr Fevrier (P.A) excavated the lighthouse tower and the forum but found no results due to stratigraphic overlap. Excavations were then carried out near the forum beneath the Roman walls located on top of a rocky cliff, revealing a homogeneous stratigraphic layer containing remains of Campanian and local pottery dating back to the 1st century BC.²¹ In the same year, Mr Mounir Bouchenaki and Ms Sabah Fardi conducted archaeological excavations in the eastern and western cemeteries under the supervision of Serge Lancel, enriching the museum with archaeological finds.²²

In 1992, Mr N. Duval published a book entitled *Basiliques Chretiennes d'Afrique Du Nord*, in which he compiled several studies by various researchers. With respect to Tipaza, Duval discussed the archaeological research conducted on the judicial basilica and prepared a technical file containing its measurements, construction techniques, state of preservation, and history. He also drew up a plan of the basilica and the stairs leading to the forum.²³ Archaeological research in the city then experienced a notable hiatus, only to resume it at the beginning of 2020 by a research team affiliated with the University Centre of Tipaza. The investigations and archaeological surveys resulted in a study of Archaeological Sites along the eastern coast of Tipaza, including the site of Demonchy, which consists of lime kilns and the CET tourist complex and consists of water basins in the northwestern part, as well as the sites of Guilah and Ain Tagourait. A description of the architectural elements of these sites and their construction materials was provided. The investigation and survey process will continue in 2021 because a team composed of members of the Laboratory of Historical and Archaeological Studies of the University of Tipaza and members of the University of Murcia in

¹⁷ Leschi (L), *Tipaza of Mauretania*, Official Printing Office, Algiers, 1950, p. 15.

¹⁸ Ballu (A), *Report on the Excavations and Consolidation Work Carried Out in 1916*, Central Printing Office of the Stock Exchange, 1916, pp. 9-10.

¹⁹ Heurgon (H), *New Research in Tipaza, City of Caesarean Mauritania*, 1930, pp. 182-201.

²⁰ Leschi (L), *op. cit.*, p. 15-16.

²¹ *Research and Work in 1968-1969 in B.B.A*, Vol. IV, Algiers, 1970, pp 15-16

²² Lancel (S), Bouchenaki (M), *op. cit.*, p. 18.

²³ (N), Gui (I), Caille (JP), *Christian Basilicas of North Africa*, Text Inventory, Institute of Augustinian Studies, Paris, 1952, pp. 27-28.

Spain will conduct investigations to determine the relationship between the city and the neighboring Archaeological Sites and to record the chronological sequence of the Sites located on the coast of Tipaza.²⁴

In 2023, the Laboratory of Historical and Archaeological Studies at the University of Tipaza, in collaboration with the Centre for Research in Astronomy and Astrophysics in Algeria and the University of Aix-Marseille, conducted an archaeological survey and discovery in the eastern courtyard of Tipaza. This survey led to the recovery of several archaeological finds, most dating to the period between 2 BC and 6 AD, confirming the region's long history of human settlement. A geophysical study was also conducted in the eastern enclosure, revealing submerged architectural remains and structures, particularly in the southern part²⁵. In the same year, an underwater archaeological survey was conducted on the western coast of the Sidi Belais plateau, during which time submerged architectural remains and scattered artifacts were observed. The survey also highlighted the erosion affecting the Archaeological Site of Tipaza.

3- Religious Structures in the city of Tipaza:

3-1 Temples:

Religious temples are among the oldest structures known to the civilisations of the ancient world and held a special place in ancient societies as they were constructed to serve as a link with the deities worshipped. These temples or sacred places were prioritised in construction within Roman cities before public buildings such as Theatres and Roman Baths, as Roman places of worship in the early period were square spaces defined by priests through religious rituals.²⁶ The Latin word “templum” means a space on earth that corresponds to a specific space in the sky, determined by the high priest with a crooked staff called a Lituus.²⁷ The priest would observe the flying birds and passing clouds, which the Romans believed were signs from the gods indicating the choice of this space for worship. Roman temples took two forms: either a rectangular structure with a portico and halls for the gods or a circular structure with a portico and a cylindrical chapel. These temples were completed with a central hall. They took two forms: either rectangular, consisting of a portico and halls for the gods, or circular, consisting of a portico and a cylindrical Prayer Hall. These temples were distinguished by the presence of a central hall known as the Holy of Holies, Cella or Naos,²⁸ which in most cases had no roof so that the light of the gods could shine in.

A. Capitoline Temple:

The word Capitole refers to the Sacred Wall, and the Capitoline Temple symbolises the official pagan religion in Rome. It is therefore the most important temple in Roman city. It was built in the heart of

²⁴ Fella Tafrihat, Ben Ouda Najib, The Dynamics of Archaeological Research in Algeria and its Stages of Development – The Archaeological City of Tipaza as an Example, Rawafed Journal for Scientific Studies and Research in Social Sciences and Humanities, Vol. 7, No. 3, 2023, p. 630.

²⁵ Khaleef Rafiq, Tawatiya Amraoui, Othman Lamali, Ben Saïdani Youssef, Archaeological Investigations in the Eastern Enclosure of the Archaeological Site of Tipaza, Campaign 2023, Tafza Journal of Historical and Archaeological Studies, Volume 03, Issue 3, pp. 40-43.

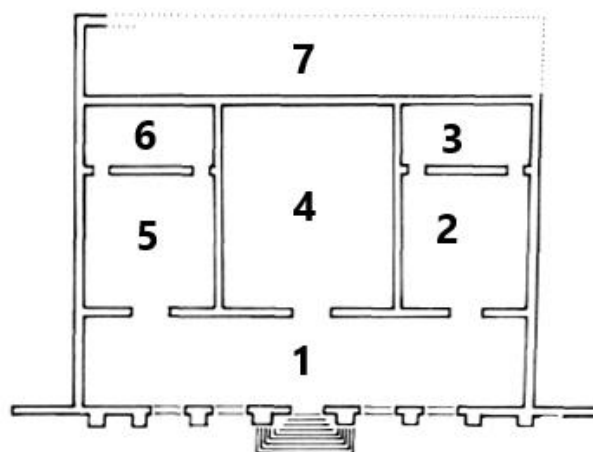
²⁶ Gros (p), Roman Architecture, From the Beginning of the 3rd Century BC to the End of the High Empire, Public Monuments, Second Edition, 1996, p.122.

²⁷ Patricho (N), The Temple and its Symbolism, Albin Michel, 1997, pp. 97-98.

²⁸ Ginouvés, (R), Methodical Dictionary of Greek and Roman Architecture, Volume III, Architectural, Buildings and Complexes, E F R, Rome, 1998, p.38.

the Roman city, adjacent to the forum or in an elevated area so that it would be visible to the inhabitants. It was dedicated to the three gods: Jupiter, the father; Juno, the mother; and Minerva, the daughter.²⁹ Three Prayer Halls characterise the Capitoline Temple, or a single Prayer Hall consisting of three Prayer Halls dedicated to the gods.³⁰

The Capitoline of Tipaza is located to the north of the city's forum and overlooks the city on one side and the sea on the other. The temple is accessed from the east via two steps and a 1.90 m high door.(plan 01)



Plan 01: Plan of Capitoline by Haillier (G),Euzennat (M), 1986,p78. adapted

Currently, only some of the foundations remain, consisting of a rectangular southern portico that shares its southern wall with the northern wall of the public square. Its northern wall is 24.80 m long, 4.80 m wide and 2 m high and is built with regularly sized stones (opus quadratum). This is followed by the second hall, which is adjacent to southern Portico on the north-eastern side. It is square, with sides measuring 7 m and 2.60 m, whereas the third hall, adjacent to the second hall on the northern side, is rectangular, measuring 24 m. This is followed by the fourth hall, which is 11:55 m long and 9 m wide. The fifth hall is located on the western side of the fourth hall and is square, with sides measuring 6.60 m. Adjacent to it on the northern side is the sixth hall, which is rectangular in shape, measuring 6.60 m in length and 3 m in width. Parallel to southern Portico is a northern corridor measuring 24 m in length (photo 01,02).



Photo 02: Sub-basement of the Capitoline

Photo 01: the remains of the Capitoline

²⁹Safar Ahmed, The City of Maghreb in History, Vol. 1, Dar al-Nashr al-Bousalama, Tunis, Bibliotheca Alexandrina, p. 424.

³⁰ Djelti (F), Ferdi (S), Ancient Site of Tipaza, A.N.A.P.S.M.H, Central Agency for Publication and Advertising, Algiers, 1996,p.27.

B. Unknown Temple:

This temple, located opposite the New Temple, consists of a courtyard with the foundations of a sacrificial altar in the center. The courtyard is surrounded by three Porticoes, the bases of which are still in place. The courtyard was previously protected by a wall with three entrances: the main entrance in the center and two side entrances overlooking the Decumanus Maximus. There is a hall for the gods, the cella, south of the courtyard. Only a marble column has been found, and the identity of the deity worshipped in this temple remains unknown because of the lack of inscriptions or statues that could indicate the god to whom it was dedicated.³¹ (Photo 03)



Photo 03: Unknown temple

C. The New Temple:

Located at the intersection of Cardo and Decumanus in the southwestern corner of the public square, it was built during the Severian Era. Three steps on Decumanus Street lead to the temple, which has three entrances: a main entrance 3.30 m wide and two side entrances 1 m wide. It is semi rectangular in shape, with the western wall measuring 30.80 m and the eastern wall 26. 60 m long. The same applies to the temple's southern and northern walls. The temple courtyard is semirectangular in shape and paved with large stones. It is surrounded by porticoes, including the entrance portico and porticoes on the south, west and east sides, but the columns supporting the porticoes are no longer present.³² There are no traces of the Altar except for its foundations.³³ (photo 04).



Photo 04 :New temple

³¹ Gsell (S), Tipaza, City of Mauretania, Interior and Fine Arts, Algiers. ,p 27.

³² Lancel (S), Bouchenaki (M), op. cit., p. 25.

³³ Baradez (J), op. cit., p. 30.

The head of a statue of a god was found in the temple and is believed to be Jupiter, although the god to whom this temple was dedicated has not been identified.³⁴ Several structures were built at this temple site. It was first built as a temple for pagan worship; then, a church was built on its Ruins, and during the Byzantine period, it was converted into a market.³⁵

3-2 Christian Basilicas:

The word Basilique comes from the Greek Stoa Basilike, meaning royal meeting hall. Some studies suggest that the basilica was an extension of the Greek Agora; however, other opinions suggest that the origin of the basilica dates back to the Roman period and that there is no connection between it and the Greek forum, except for the derivation of the name from Greek to refer to the kings of the Hellenistic period during the third and second centuries BC. Basilica Catinia is considered the oldest Roman basilica, built in 184 BC.³⁶ Basilica represents the link between Roman architecture and Christian architecture.

A. Basilica of Saint Salsa:

The Basilica of Saint Salsa is located on the eastern plateau in the center of a Christian cemetery, 300 meters from the Roman wall. It is named after Saint Salsa, after the discovery of mosaic tiles mentioning a person named Potentius, who decorated and expanded the basilica in the middle of the third century AD.³⁷ Saint Salsa was a 14-year-old Christian girl who threw the head of a sacred statue from a Roman Pagan Temple into the sea, angering the locals, who threw her into the sea. Three days later, the girl's body appeared on the surface of the water near the port, and a shrine was built over her grave in her memory.³⁸ Between 372 and 430 AD, the saint's remains were transferred to the basilica, and a funeral stake was placed next to the coffin in the memory of Saint Salsa³⁹. (Photo 05)



Photo 05: Basilica of saint Salsa

³⁴ Siddiq Hussein, translated by Faiza B., Guide to the Province of Tipasa, Dar Al-Bayazin, Vol. 1, Algeria, 2008, p. 88.

³⁵ Lassus (J), Around the Christian Basilicas of Tipasa, MEFRA, 1930, p. 223.

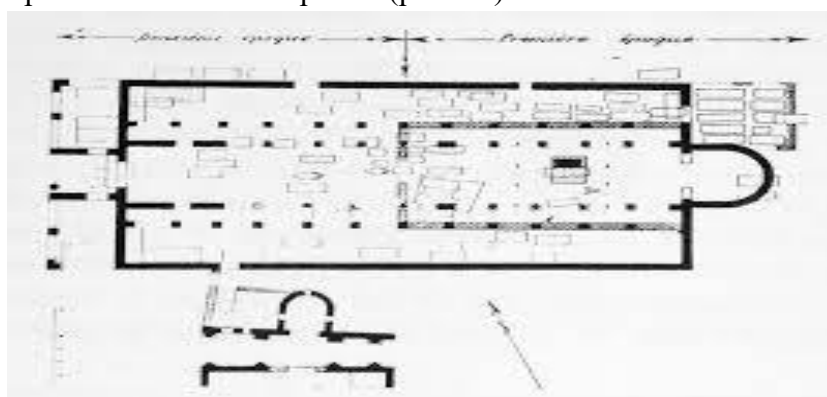
³⁶ Rachet, (G), Dictionary of Archaeology, Robert Laffont, 1994, p. 137.

³⁷ Gsell (S), Ancient Monuments of Algeria, tom I, Paris, 1901, pp. 323-327.

³⁸ Lancel (S), Bouchenaki (M), op. cit, p. 92-95

³⁹ Haji Yassin Rabah, The Worship of Saints in Tipasa during the Byzantine Christian Period, Proceedings of the Tipasa History and Archaeology Conference, Journal of Scientific Research, Tipasa University Centre, 2013, p.59

The basilica building plan underwent several modifications in four stages Initially, the basilica was rectangular, with a central nave ending in a north-facing apse, the burial place of Saint Salasa. In the second stage of expansion, the main basilica was built on an area of 19.62 m × 15.06 m, characterised by three wings separated by a row of columns with mosaics dating back to the works of Bishop Potentius. At the beginning of the 6th century AD, the basilica expanded to an area of 35.10 m × 15.06 m, and a baptistery was added to the western façade with stairs leading ⁴⁰ to the upper floor at a height of 20.4 m from the ground floor. In the fourth phase, during the Byzantine period, its area was reduced to 19.12 x 8.57 metres, the upper floor was demolished, the height of the ceiling was reduced, and a wall was built between the outer rows of columns and a new wall for the façade, starting from the Apse at the base of the pillars (plan 02).



Plan 02: Plan of the Basilica of saint Salsa by Gsell, S, 1901,2 ,p.324

B. Basilica of Paul and Peter:

Located in the eastern cemetery outside the city walls, facing north, where a martyrological inscription was found in the northern row of columns bearing the names of the martyred saints Peter and Paul. The basilica is 13 m long and 12 m wide, with one main entrance. In the second phase, a secondary entrance 2 metres wide was added on the western side, parallel to the defensive wall (plan). Cement was used to pave the floor, which is not prominent and is semicircular, with access via three steps. Basilica dates back to the second half of the 4th century AD and the beginning of the 5th century AD. (Photo 06)

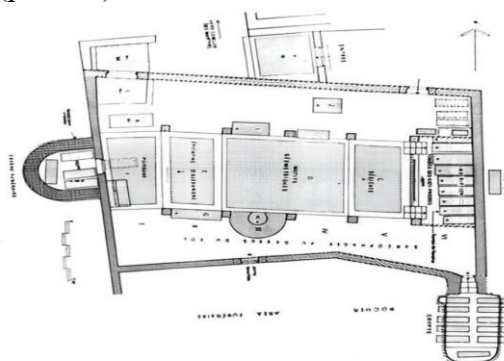


Photo 06: Basilica peter & paul

⁴⁰ Gsell, (S), Ancient Monuments of Algeria op. cit, pp 323-329.

C- Basilica of Alexander:

It was built west of the city on a plateau in the middle of a Christian cemetery, approximately 200 metres from the western walls of the city. Its construction dates back to the 4th and 5th centuries AD, when it was built to bury the bishops of Saint Justi priories, who preceded Bishop Alexander in the city of Tipaza.⁴¹ The basilica's layout was designed to fit the site's topography. It is 22.80 m long and 16 m wide, with three entrances, two entrances in the north and one in the south. Its floor was entirely decorated with mosaics, with panels bearing inscriptions in the central aisle and cement in the side aisles. Owing to the site's nature, the eastern Apse was replaced with a platform to cover the remains of the bishops buried there.⁴² (plan 03)



Plan 03: plan of the Basilica of Alexander by Duval (N),Gui (I),Caillet ,op.cit,p38

The basilica is divided into three aisles, the central aisle and two lateral aisles, partitioned by two rows of five-cubic-shaped ashlar stone supports. The width of the central aisle is 6.50 m, whereas the southern and northern aisles measure 2.50 m and 3.50 m respectively. The Basilica of Saint Alexander is distinguished by a rock-cut crypt located in its southern corner. At the far end of this crypt, a sarcophagus is hewn into the rock, positioned atop a stone mensa.⁴³ An aperture was hewn to allow light to fall directly on the tomb that constitutes the Altar. In Roman architectural terminology, these light wells are known as luminaria. Additionally, a niche was carved into the western wall, presumably intended for the placement of liturgical objects. (photo 07,08)



Photo07: Basilica of Alexander

Photo08: Crypt of Basilica Alexander

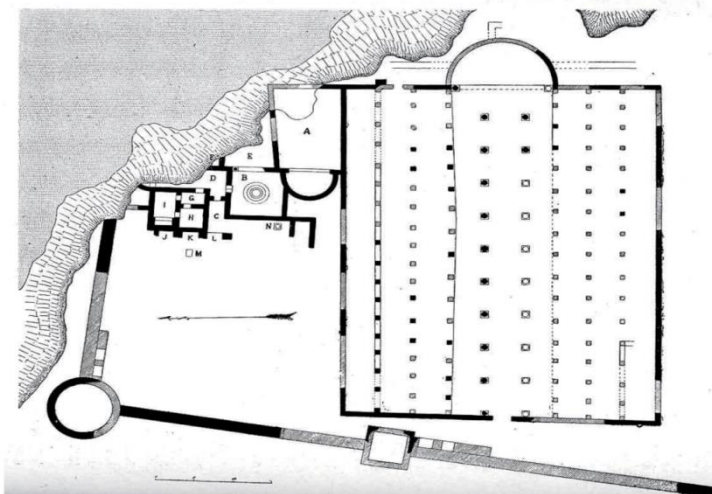
⁴¹ Hamza Mohamed Al-Sharif, *Mosaics of Mauritania, Caesarea Funeral Tiles – An Analytical, Technical, and Artistic Study*, Doctoral Thesis in Ancient Archaeology, University of Algiers 2, Institute of Archaeology, 2011-2012, p. 186.

⁴² Gsell (S), *Ancient Monuments of Algeria*, op. cit, pp. 335-337

⁴³ Bouchenaki,(M), op. cit,p 70.

D. Great Christian Basilica:

Located on the western hill adjacent to the outer Roman wall, the site is known as Ras el Kanissa.⁴⁴ It was built during the 4th century AD and is the largest basilica in North Africa, covering an area of 2184 m², excluding the Apse, with a length of 58 m and a width of 42 m. It has seven naves, the central nave measuring 14 m and covered with mosaics covering an area of 700 m².⁴⁵ The basilica floor plan consists of an irregular rectangle, a shape dictated by the site's topography.



Plan04: plan of the Great Christian Basilica by Gsell ,S,1901,2 ,p318

In the later period, the central nave is divided into three porticoes by two rows of columns topped with arches to support the ceiling, which was at risk of collapse. Consequently, the basilica has nine wings. Their presence is confirmed by the bases placed on the mosaics of the central nave. Most of the columns were derived from pagan buildings. Faced east to west like other Christian Churches, its Apse is semicircular, with an opening of 13.4 metres. Located on its eastern slope, it has five entrances, three in the west opposite the Apse, in addition to a southern and northern entrance.⁴⁶

At the end of the 4th century AD, construction began on extensions to the north of the basilica, consisting of a small Prayer Hall with a single mosaic-decorated portico and a west-facing apse dedicated to the prayers of new converts to Christianity. To the west of the Prayer Hall is a baptistery as well as a square room measuring 6 meters on each side, with Mosaics on the base. Access is provided through an entrance in the northern wall, characterised by a threshold increase of 0.40 m above the floor level. The baptismal font, with a diameter of 3.40 m, is constructed of rubble stone and mortar and is covered with white marble; it features three steps descending into the basin. Additionally, three interconnected rooms with brick flooring, alongside a low-ceiling room not exceeding 2.10 meters in height, were utilised to generate the steam required to heat the bathhouse. Furthermore, the remains of a hall were discovered, which functioned primarily as a cistern, fostering water (Photo 09,10)

⁴⁴ Gsell (S), *Ancient Monuments of Algeria*, op.cit.,p. 317.

⁴⁵ BouchenakiI (M), op. cit, p. 62.

⁴⁶ Lassus (J), op.cit, p. 223.



Photo 09: Rows of columns in the central aisle

Photo 10 : view of the Great Basilica

Conclusion:

Religious structures in Tipaza have varied since the Roman Empire took control of the city in 42 AD. Geographical location played a role in the construction of religious structures on high hills to give the place a more sacred image and bring it closer to the gods.

Their presence on a plateau also made them visible to the city's inhabitants, thus contributing to the consolidation of religious belief. Sacred temples to Roman gods were built in the Romano-Etruscan Architectural Style, such as the Capitoline Temple of Jupiter, Juno, and Minerva, the New Temple, and the Unknown Temple, and their planning was adapted to the city's urban topography. With Christianity declared the official religion, basilicas were adopted as places of worship between the third and fifth centuries AD, with some modifications to accommodate the new Christian Doctrine. The basilicas of Tipaza are characterised by their irregular layouts, which are a result of the site's complex topography. However, most of these structures follow a rectangular plan with three aisles, except for the Great Christian Basilica, which features nine aisles. Within these basilicas, the central nave is wider than the lateral aisles.

Furthermore, these basilicas exhibit a diversity of apsidal forms rather than a standardised type. Moreover, their location is not restricted to a specific area, as they are distributed both within the city's urban fabric and beyond its limits. Moreover, their distribution between the eastern and western suburbs made Tipaza a diocese that bore witness to the population's adherence to and faith in the Christian religion.

Given the importance of these buildings, it is necessary to preserve and protect these archaeological structures, which still hold witness to the cultural succession and religious diversity that prevailed in the city, which is part of our national identity and an important source of tourism in Algeria.

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