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Mosaics in the North Hall
of the
Basilica of Aquileia

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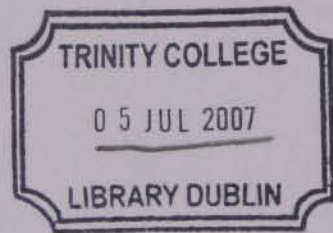
Master in Letters thesis

2007

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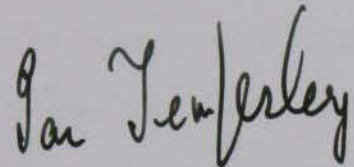


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DECLARATION

This thesis has not been submitted as an exercise for a degree at any other university. Except where stated, the work described therein was carried out by me alone.

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A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ian Temperley". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'I' and a long, sweeping tail on the 'y'.

Ian Temperley, April, 2007

Summary

This thesis is an appraisal of the mosaic floor of the north hall of the early church complex of Aquileia, an important city in the fourth century Roman Province of Venetia-Istria. The parallel south and north halls of the complex were virtually completed by 320 AD under the direction of Bishop Theodore. The north hall mosaic floor was buried by the foundations of a larger post-Theodorian church (? 345 AD), the floor of which was approximately one metre above the original floor. Following the sack of Aquileia by Attila in 452 AD the larger church was destroyed and its floor covered with debris. This floor and the earlier lower floor were exposed by archaeologists during 1893-1905. The mosaic floor of the south hall also survived the vicissitudes of the centuries. Largely intact, it is included in the present functioning Basilica of Aquileia. It is among the earliest and largest Christian mosaic pavements.

The lower mosaic floor of the north hall is divided into four sections. Each section is described and analysed in some detail. The description includes measurement of the sections and their mosaic frameworks. The mosaics are compared with those in the south hall and with third and fourth century mosaics in the surrounding Aquileian area and in the wider Roman Empire. The review includes on-site and museum visits locally and in many parts of what was the Empire. A particular study was made of mosaic floors in Proconsular Africa because of their suspected influence on Aquileian designs. Apart from textual communications associated with writing a thesis, a review of books displaying mosaic art in a number of countries included in the Roman Empire was also undertaken.

The most significant finding was that the mosaics in the north-east of the north hall had few similarities not only with local and the generality of mosaics but even with those sharing the same hall. This was mainly due to the enigmatic poses and accoutrements of the animals in this area. These mosaics were of a high quality both in terms of colour and design when compared with those in other parts of the same hall and also in the south hall. In this respect, some match the best in the Empire during the period investigated.

The question was posed as to whether the north-east mosaics were laid down at an earlier period than those in the rest of the two halls. To assist in deciding upon this a review of architectural aspects of the north hall was undertaken. Both halls were

bounded by walls of earlier buildings. It would appear that the edifice previous to the north hall was a long building which extended the full length of the later north hall but approximately only two thirds of its width. It was felt that a portion of this building, containing the unique north-east mosaics, was used as a third century 'oratory'. The remaining site of the long narrow edifice together with the floor of an adjoining portico to the south were incorporated at a later date to extend the area for liturgical purposes to the dimensions seen today.

Apart from three inscriptions which are postulated as being later additions, the mosaic images in the complete north hall could not be identified with a Christian message. Some authorities are of the view that north-east mosaics represent paradise; one believes that they represent Gnosticism. The writer of this thesis did not discover a sequenced 'message' in these mosaics but raised the likelihood that some were influenced by Hellenistic-Roman mythology and cosmology and Thracian demonology.

The majority of north hall mosaics, other than those in the north-east, can be identified with those in the south hall and those in the surrounding Aquileia and the wider Empire. An area of the north hall is given over to octagons containing repetitive paired confronting birds, mirror images of each other. These represent an ancient middle-east tradition of the tree of life accompanied by paired confronting animals. This thesis examines the background of this image in artefacts, painting, sarcophagi and mosaics into the fifth and sixth century AD when it was incorporated into Christian imagery.

The church complex at Aquileia was the first building in the north Adriatic region which can be clearly identified as a purpose built Christian centre. It has two parallel halls, one was a *catechumeneum* and the other was where the Eucharist was celebrated. Nine further fourth and early fifth century churches were visited in the region, two had clearly identifiable parallel halls, that is, 30 per cent including the Aquileian complex. From the end of the fourth century all the later churches were built with apses. This compares with later extensions of the north and south halls in Aquileia which maintained the strict rectangular tradition of the past.

Ian Temperley,
April, 2007

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In Italy, my thanks are due to Don Graziano Marini, previously Archaeological Director of the Basilica of Aquileia, for stimulating my interest in north hall pavement mosaics and presenting me, in 1995, with his *La Basilica Patriarcale di Aquileia*, an illustrated history, the contents of which have been liberally used in this thesis. I owe a debt of gratitude to Dottore Renato Iacumin for his supportive correspondence and for the many discussions we had during my visits to Aquileia. I sincerely regret not having the knowledge to pursue in depth his views on the Gnostic tradition of Aquileia.

I am especially grateful to Cristina Gregorin and her parents, Marisa and Nicolo, who did so much to make me feel welcome in Aquileia. I wish to record my appreciation of the contributions of Professor Louisa Bertacchi, Don Andrea Bellavite, Monseignor Mauro Belletti, Dott. Arnaldo Benci, present Director of the Basilica, and Dott. Franca Maselli Scotti, Director, National Archaeological Museum, Aquileia.

To my wife, Joyce, I owe everything. In the context of this thesis, I thank her for accompanying me during my many visits to museums, churches and on-site remains of mosaic floors

Ian Temperley

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Introduction

A mosaic is composed of individual pieces of material which when fitted together produce a design or picture. The pieces are termed, *tesserae*, the word derived from the Greek for a four-cornered cube. The material used may be stone, marble, glass, *smalti* (opaque glass) or gold or silver leaf surrounding a piece of glass. Other substances were or are in common use: ceramic tiles, plastics, pebbles, metals and shells. Because *tesserae* files have to follow a set pattern in mortar a mosaic is the product of a cartoon. In mosaic art the cartoon generally takes the form of an underlying drawing that provides the basic design for the finished work, either applied to the wall itself or worked out separately. It is, for example, known that Giotto made use of cartoons when preparing the 'Navicella', a mosaic representing Christ walking on the waters, now in the tympanum above the central entrance of St Peter's, Rome. With skill, a cartoon may be enlarged or combined with other cartoons to produce large mosaics. The artist, therefore, holds the key to a mosaic work of art. Due deference must be paid, however, to the skilled craftsman, the *musivarius*, who makes decisions about the number, size and flow of *tesserae*, the variations of colour and the precision of choosing and placing *tesserae* depicting key objects such as the eye or lip.¹

Up to and including the fourth century AD most mosaics were laid on floors. They provided a dual function acting as long-wearing carpets and as decorations. Religious and mythological themes were commonly used for decorative purposes and can

¹ M. Farneti (1993), 191. *Musivarius* is synonymous with *musearius* and *museiarius*.

be found from the time of the Macedonian fourth century BC pebble mosaics in Pella and the third century Punic effigies of Tanit and El in Tunisia to the elaborate scenes of Dionysus and his followers on villa floors from the second to the fourth century AD in such places as Antioch, Cyprus, Germany, England and North Africa. Christians adopted this tradition in the fourth century. Examples include the Basilica of Aquileia and the excavated Roman villa in Hinton St Mary, Dorset, England.² However, during the fourth century mosaics with a Christian message began to appear on the walls of churches and mausoleums as well as on floors. These presumably derived from earlier non-Christian traditions, as seen for example in the *opus musivum* on the walls and vaults of the *nymphaea* in Pompeii. Indeed, in the mid-fourth century, secular mosaics of the Mausoleum of S. Constantia, Rome, were placed on the barrel-shaped ceiling of the peripheral aisle.³ A decisive step was taken in the Basilica of S. Pudenziana, Rome, during the late fourth century when a large apsidal mosaic of a magisterial Christ flanked by his disciples and evangelists was constructed.⁴ In the future this movement was developed further by the Church to involve nave walls, arches, soffits and domes. Evidence of pavement mosaic with Christian imagery on the other hand declined after the fourth century. One reason was the dislike of walking on the symbols of Christ and his Church as evidenced by the decree of Valentinian III in 427 forbidding the rendering of the Cross on mosaic floors and ordering the removal of any such renderings as already existed.⁵ The Emperor was almost certainly not the first person to express this view and it

² Toynbee (1964), 7-14.

³ Beckwith (1979), 27.

⁴ Oakeshott (1967), 65.

is likely that his decree was the result of adverse comment over a substantial period of time. Another reason was the desire to represent Christian images as splendidly as possible, a task that demanded the raising of the pictorial display above the floor and the wholesale use of fragile glass and gold *tesserae*.

Early Christian signs and emblems were developed through paintings. Amongst the earliest extant Christian paintings are those in the Callistus catacomb, Rome, begun in approximately 220.⁶ There are a number of reasons for this late artistic development, one of the most significant being the close observance by early Christians of Old Testament concepts and regulations. The second commandment in Exodus 20,4 (King James' version) states 'Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or the likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth'. During the Severan dynasty (193-235AD) Jewish influence in the Christian Church waned and the Church, with increasing numbers of middle class Gentile adherents, was better organised and more confident. This was exemplified by Pope Callistus (217-222 AD) who is known for his political and administrative skills rather than his theological ability.⁷

The decoration of family burial catacombs with Christian frescoes continued throughout the third and fourth centuries. Those in the Callistus catacombs were

⁵ Corpus Iuris Civilis: Codex Iustinianus I, 8. The controversy continued into the twelfth century. Davis-Wayer, *Early medieval art* (1971), 170 translates a letter from St Bernard to William of St Thiery 'Do we not revere at least the images of the Saints which swarm even in the inlaid pavement wheron we tread? Men spit offensively in an Angel's face; often, again, the countenance of some Saint is ground under the heel of a passer-by'.

⁶ du Bourguet (1972), 74. du Bourguet is of the view that the earliest Christian painting was of the Good Shepherd in the Crypt of Lucina. The crypt was at an early date incorporated into the Callistus Catacomb [Grabar (1967), 81].

⁷ Frend (1984), 272, 343, 416.

concerned with redemption and salvation; the Good Shepherd, the baptism of Christ, the healing of the paralytic at Bethsaida, Jonah and the leviathan and Christ raising Lazarus. Towards the end of the century the catacomb paintings became more adventurous. For example in the Priscilla catacomb there is a painting of a lone woman praying with her arms raised, '*Donna Velatia, Orans*'.⁸ By the middle of the third century Christian art was not confined to the Roman catacombs. Yale University Art Gallery contains frescoes (c.235-250 AD) taken from the Christian baptistery in Dura-Europos, a Roman outpost on the west bank of the Euphrates. The paintings represent the Good Shepherd, the paralytic at Bethsaida, Christ walking on water and the visit of three Marys' to Christ's tomb after the Resurrection.⁹

The earliest known Christian mosaic, dated about 300 AD, is in the ceiling of a cubiculum in the necropolis of St Peter's, Rome, where Christ is represented in the form of the sun-god, Apollo.¹⁰ He is shown ascending to heaven in a *quadriga*, (only the left pair of horses and the left wheel can be seen). The Christian nature of the mosaic can only be affirmed by the surrounding imprints of mosaics which show similar themes to the paintings in the Callistus catacomb: the Good Shepherd, the miraculous draught of fishes (Mark 1.17) and Jonah the Prophet. The three themes are reproduced approximately fifteen years later in the mosaic floor of the south hall of the Basilica of Aquileia. None of the third century Christian paintings in the catacombs or in Dura-

⁸ du Bourguet (1972), 34.

⁹ Matheson (1982), 27.

¹⁰ Bertelli (1988), 46. The central theme of the mosaic is syncretic; representing the Romano-Hellenistic tradition, Mithraism and Christianity; probably the summation of Constantine the First beliefs in 313.

Europos provide any indication of what is revealed in the mosaics of the north hall of the Basilica.

The Basilica with its mosaics will be described in detail later. It was composed of two parallel halls connected by a west transverse hall. The major portion of the two halls was complete by 320 AD. The south hall was reconstructed and embellished during the middle and late medieval period. The north hall did not survive destruction by Attila in 452 AD. It was lost from view until the site was excavated at the end of the nineteenth century and the mosaics rediscovered and protected. A large section of the north hall mosaics was permanently destroyed by the foundations of an eleventh century campanile built to the north of the present Basilica.

A great deal has been written about the basilica complex especially by a group of scholars based in the Udine University-Aquileia-Trieste University academic triangle in the Friuli-Venezia-Giulia province of north-east Italy. Most of their publications are, naturally, in Italian, with a lesser number in French and German. Few if any of the original papers are in English. This is surprising in view of the fact that the south hall/Basilica contains one of the earliest Christian mosaics floors which to this day is among the largest Christian mosaic carpets.¹¹ The south hall is also important in that it represents a sudden flowering of figurative Christian pavement mosaics whose brilliance in churches gradually diminished during the fourth and early fifth centuries to be replaced by geometric designs and votive inscriptions.

The issues thrown up by the north hall mosaics are quite different in that they

¹¹ A mosaic floor of a third century Christian church has recently been discovered in Israel (The Art Newspaper, April 2006, p34).

relate to interpretation and dating. Other than three inscriptions, the floor contains no overt reference to the Christian religion. This has led to different religious interpretations of the many animals portrayed, some of which seem to represent mythological creatures while others take up distinctly odd poses. Another factor which has provoked controversy is the difference in quality, in terms of both form and colour, of the figurative mosaics in the north-east sector compared with those in the remaining hall. This, together with the lack of obvious religious orientation, has led to contrasting viewpoints as to the date of individual parts of the mosaic floor, many of which are questionable. The best that can be achieved is to make informed guesses from scanty and sometimes conflicting information. One must agree with Luisa Bertacchi that 'the hypothetical interpretation of most scholars does not appear convincing'.¹²

Aquileia is fortunate in being represented by two Christian fathers whose written works are available to us: Chromatius (born 335/350 AD, died 405/407) and Rufinus (345-411 AD). Rufinus is the more famous because of his greater and more varied literary output and his well publicised quarrel with St. Jerome, particularly in relation to the works and teaching of Origen.¹³ Both St. Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria, and St. Jerome visited Aquileia during the fourth century.¹⁴ In the course of their theological discussions references were made to variations of Christian doctrinal thinking. This has generated a large amount of secondary literature as to how these interpretations relate to

¹² Bertacchi (1986), 193.

¹³ Thelamon (1982), 256.

¹⁴ Kelly (1976), 32-33. Jerome maintained close contact with Aquileia throughout his life; For Athanasius; *Athan., Apol. Const.* 15. Athanasius spent the spring of 345 AD in Aquileia at the court of Emperor Constans. [Barnes (1993), 66.].

the Church in Aquileia. Except when reference to religion and its officers assists the main topic under review, this aspect of Aquileian life is not taken up in this study.

This work reviews the mosaics of the north hall. It compares them with the mosaics in the south hall and with those in Aquileian buildings surrounding the Basilica which belong to the second half of the third and the first half of the fourth century. A comparison is also made with mosaics in other parts of the Roman Empire during the same period. The purpose is to determine, firstly, whether these comparisons shed further light on motivation and interpretation of the north hall mosaics and, secondly, on the date of the mosaics. A short study of churches in the Roman province of Venetia and Istria - mainly in east Venetia and west Istria - was also undertaken to review the significance of churches with parallel halls like that at Aquileia and to ascertain whether the mosaics in the north hall had any influence on the choice of mosaics in the region of the Roman Empire influenced by Aquileia.

Literature Review

The first excavation of the north hall site was started in 1893 and five years later it came under the technical direction of George Niemann, an architect from the Polytechnic of Vienna, who reported his findings in *Der Dom von Aquileia, Sein Bau und seine Geschichte* (1906).¹⁵ The excavation not only uncovered the lower floor of the north hall (with the controversial mosaics) but also that of a later, larger church built about one metre above the original. Approximately one metre of the north and west walls was used as a base for the walls of the later church. When this church was damaged in 452 the

¹⁵ Von Lanckoronski, Swoboda and Niemann (1906), 21-29.

lowest portion of the walls of the original hall, being part of the foundations, survived together with its fresco remnant. Niemann described the mosaic frameworks of north hall Section 1, part of Section 2 and the north corner of Section 4 (see chapter 2 for description of these areas).

Further excavations and uncovering of the floors of both halls was continued by another Austrian, Anton Gnirs¹⁶ He completed the description of the south hall mosaics and photographed parts of Sections 3 and 4 of the north hall. From 1917 excavation continued under Italian supervision. By 1918 all the *in situ* mosaics visible today were cleared and in 1920 the north floor/hall was roofed with concrete. Progress from 1917 to 1933 was reviewed by Cecchini.¹⁷

The discovery of mosaics in the interior of the foundations of the eleventh century campanile (see above) was reported by Bertacchi in 1962.¹⁸ These mosaics were clearly on the same level and part of the carpet of mosaics in the remainder of the north hall. Speculation as to the buildings on the site prior to the establishment of the north and south halls is provided by Franco.¹⁹ One of Franco's more significant contentions is that there was an original wall in the middle of what became the north hall, parallel to both north and south walls but nearer the latter.

¹⁶ Gnirs, in 'Die christliche Kultanlage aus konstantinischer Zeit am Platze des Doms in Aquileia' (1915), 141-172).

¹⁷Cecchini in 'Gli edifice e i mosaici paleocristiani nella zona della Basilica' in *La Basilica di Aquileia* (1933), 109-118.

¹⁸Bertacchi in 'Il mosaico teodoriano scoperto nell' interno del campanile di Aquileia' (1962), 27-32.

¹⁹Franco in 'Un'interpretazione architettonica del complesso teodoriano di Aquileia' in *Atti del I congresso internazionale di studi longobardi* (1952), 331-340.

The mosaics of the south hall are easier to interpret because they contain images which can be identified by modern observers with those in classical or early Christian art. Perhaps the most penetrating communication is by Menis which reconstructs the thoughts of the clergy in Aquileia in the late third and early fourth centuries. Based on this evidence the author provides likely explanations of the images in both mosaic floors.²⁰ There is a strong emphasis on cosmology particularly in relation to the place of the Redeemer in the heavenly paradise. The concept that the flowers, branches and trees, birds, quadrupeds and fish in the mosaics of the north hall represent paradise is widely shared by other authors including Brusin,²¹ Bertacchi²² and Tavano.²³

The most contentious issue is whether the mosaic floor of the north hall was completed at one time, that is, between 313 and 319, as is the case with the south hall, or whether it grew from a modestly proportioned third century beginning in the north-east to full sized floor in the second decade of the fourth century. Intertwined with these different viewpoints is the observation, accepted by all disputants, that the mosaics in the north-east of the hall in Sections 3 and 4, are of a higher quality than those in Sections 1 and 2. These considerations have led to the proposal that there was an earlier third century 'oratory' to the north-east of the hall. Heinrich Swoboda, a co-author of *Der Dom*

²⁰ Menis, in 'Il pensiero teologico nelle prime basiliche Aquileia' (1982), 463-527.

²¹ Brusin and Zovatto, (1957), in 'Il complesso degli edifici culturali nella zona della Basilica di Aquileia' in *Monumenti paleocristiani di Aquileia e Grado* 20ff.

²² Bertacchi (1986), in *Da Aquileia e Venezia*. (ed) Carratelli, 193-197.

²³ Tavano (1982), 'La crisi formale tardoantica e I mosaico theodoriana,' 549-551.

²⁴ Von Lanckoronsky, Niemann and Swoboda (1906), 31-39.

²⁵ Gnirs (1915), 57.

von Aquileia, Sein Bau und seine Geschichte (1906) supported the oratory theory.²⁴ On the other hand Anton Gnirs supported the 'unitary' theory.²⁵ From the beginning, therefore, there was a split of opinion. Between the years 1933 and 1972 those on the side of an early 'oratory' include Cecchelli, Forlati, Brusin, Stucchi and Bovini.²⁶ Those who supported the unitary concept, that is, the laying down of the whole floor between 313 and 319 include Mirabella Roberti, Tavano and Bertacchi (see chapter 10).²⁷

Giovanni Brusin was the leading protagonist of the oratory explanation of the north hall mosaics. For almost seventy years until the early 1990s he studied and published on buildings and monuments of early Aquileia and the surrounding region. His most widely quoted communication on this specific issue was written in *Le vie d'Italia, Monthly Review of the Italian Touring Club* in 1950.²⁸ The article makes plain the author's view that mosaics of Sections 3 and 4 of the north hall were the floor of an early meeting place where, during periods of persecution, Christians could celebrate the 'sacred mysteries'. On the other hand the south hall was built by Bishop Theodore following the Edict of Milan in 313 AD when the Church became free to express itself. Mirabella Roberti in 1953 mounted the counter argument as his contribution to a series of lectures dedicated to Brusin! He based his views on architectural grounds and on the

²⁶ Cecchelli (1933), in 'Gli edifice e i mosaici paleocristiani nella zona della Basilica' in *La Basilica di Aquileia*. 109-272. Forlati (1933), in 'L'architettura della Basilica' in *La Basilica di Aquileia* 273 ff. Stucchi (1947-48) in 'Le basiliche paleocristiane di Aquileia' in *Rivista di Archeologia Cristiana* 23-24. 169; Brusin-Zovatto (1957) in *Monumenti paleocristiani di Aquileia e di Grado* 20 ff. Bovini (1972) *Le Antichità Cristiane di Aquileia* 98-105.

²⁷ Mirabella Roberti (1953), in 'Considerazione sulle Aule Teodoriane di Aquileia' in *Studi Aquilieisi offerti a Giovanni Brusin*, Tavano (1960), in 'Il recinto presbiteriale nella aule theodoriane di Aquileia', 106-121, Bertacchi (1977) in 'Nota sulla unità costruttiva dell' aula teodoriana Nord nel complessa culturale di Aquileia', 237-256.

²⁸ Brusin (1950), 1181-1187.

continuity of painting and plastering along the north wall. Using similar arguments based on masonry, the unitary viewpoint was supported by Luisa Bertacchi in 1977.

Contributions to this argument continue into the twenty first century. Bertacchi in 2000 maintains her original position though conceding that the west part of the north hall (Sections 1 and 2) was significantly altered between 317 and 340.²⁹ In 2003 Menis supported the concept of a pre-Theodorian north hall developing during the third century.³⁰ The contribution of Iacumin runs a separate though parallel course to Menis. His is devoted to an explanation of the north-east mosaics of the north hall in the light of the tenets of the Gnostic tradition.³¹ He maintains that an early Gnostic oratory was gradually developed and enlarged into a Christian place of worship by the end of the third century.³²

The position of a likely chancel screen separating Section 4 from the remainder of the north hall (see chapter 2) was first considered by Gnirs.³³ This significant aspect of the hall was studied in more detail by Stucchi and Tavano.³⁴ All contributors pay

²⁹ Bertacchi in 'Aquileia el il suo Patriarcato' (2000), 67-74.

³⁰ Menis in his introduction to *I Mosaica della Basilica di Aquileia* (2003), 7-9.

³¹ Iacumin in *La Crypta della Basilica di Aquileia* (1990).

³² Iacumin in *Le tessere e il mosaico* (2004), 142-143.

³³ Gnirs (1915), 158-159.

³⁴ Stucchi in 'La basiliche paleocristiane di Aquileia' (1948-49), 186-188. Tavano in 'Il recinto presbiteriale nella aula teodoriane di Aquileia' (1960), 106-121.

³⁵ Panciera in 'Osservazioni sulla iscrizione musive paleocristiane di Aquilei

deference to Panciera, a palaeographic expert, who commented on the three mosaic inscriptions in the floor of the north hall.³⁵

The influence of Romano-Hellenistic art (i.e. the continuation of Hellenistic influence on Roman and Italian art during the early to late empire), with its tradition of pictorial naturalism, on the mosaics of the north and south halls of Basilica has occupied the thoughts of many writers. Tavano, a supporter of the 'unity' concept, has argued that the laying down of mosaics in the north-east of the north hall was superintended by an Aquileian *musivarius* imbued by influence surviving from the era of Emperor Gallienus.³⁶ The Emperor (260-268 A.D.) is reputed to have been a supporter of traditional Hellenistic art and, in so doing, to have interrupted the tendency towards expressionistic, two-dimensional stylization. The argument that separate parts of the north hall floor were carpeted by different mosaicists with varying degrees of training and ability is common to authors who support the view that the north hall mosaics were confined to 313-319 AD. Observing the ebb of Hellenistic art in Aquileia, Bertacchi distinguishes the mosaics of the east section of the south hall as being 'late-Hellenistic' as distinct from the portraits in the west compartments of the hall as being representative of 'expressionistic' post-Hellenistic art.³⁷ She has related these portraits to the development of mid to late fourth century mosaic art in homes surrounding the Basilica.

³⁶ Tavano in 'La crisi formale tardoantica e i mosaico theodoriana' (1982), 559-569.

³⁷ Bertacchi in 'I ritratti nei mosaico di Aquilei'. 1998, 81-104). and in 'Architettura and Mosaico' in *Da Aquileia e Venezia* (1986).

There are a number of useful texts that allow us to place the mosaics of Aquileia in a broader historical and artistic content. Humphries provides a history in English of the advancement of Christianity in northern Italy from 200 to 400 AD: substantial sections of the text are devoted to the development of the Church in Aquileia.³⁸ An alternative is Bratož,³⁹ The social background of fourth century Aquileia is described by Chevallier.⁴⁰ The cartography of fourth century Aquileia and its surrounding area is provided by Bertacchi.⁴¹ Caillet enumerates and describes fourth and fifth century churches and their pavement mosaics in Aquileia, its hinterland and the surrounding north Adriatic coast.⁴² The best general review is by Bertacchi, which contains descriptions of mosaics in third and fourth century public buildings and homes in or near Aquileia.⁴³

Grabar, *The Beginnings of Christian Art* (1967) and du Bourguet; *Early Christian Art* (1972) provide, for comparison, a review of Christian catacomb art during the third and fourth centuries. Oakeshott, *The Mosaics of Rome* (1969) allows a contrast to be made between the development of fourth century Christian mosaic art in Aquileia with that in Rome. Reliance has been placed on White (*The Social Origins of Christian*

³⁸ Humphries in *Communities of the Blessed; Social and religious change in North Italy* (1999).

³⁹ Bratož in *Il cristianesimo aquileiese prima di Costantino fra Aquileia e Poetovia*, Institute Pio Paschini, (1999).

⁴⁰ Chevalier in *Aquileé et la romanisation de l'Europe* (1990). Chevalier provides a concise but informative picture of the people, institutions, religions, buildings and port and the business, military and bureaucratic life of the city.

⁴¹ Bertacchi in *Nuova Pianta Archeologica di Aquileia*, (2003).

⁴² Caillet in *L'Evergétisme Monumental Chrétien en Italie et à ses marges* (1993).

⁴³ Bertacchi in 'Architettura and Mosaico' in *Da Aquileia e Venezia* (1986).

Architecture Vol. I and II, 1990) in relating the architecture of the two Aquileian halls to similar Christian, Jewish and Mithraic edifices in the Empire and on Krautheimer (*Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture*, 1975 and *The Twin Cathedral at Pavia* in *Studies in Early Christian, Medieval and Renaissance Art*, 1971) for his views on twin churches in Aquileia and its hinterland.

The mosaics in both north and south halls were compared with those in other parts of the third and fourth century Empire. Because it seemed likely that the marine scene in the south hall was influenced by the artists and the *musivarii* of Proconsular North Africa the search was concentrated, though not exclusively, on this Roman province. *Mosaics of Roman North Africa* (1978) by Dunbabin provides useful material for the study of third and fourth century mosaics in this part of the Roman Empire. This was supplemented by Mohamed Yacoub's *Mosaics de Tunisie* (2002). Dunbabin has also provided an invaluable general reference background in the wider Roman Empire arena.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ Dunbabin in *Mosaics of the Greek and Roman World* (1999).

Aquileia, The City

Aquileia is situated at the head of the Adriatic some 20 kilometres west of Trieste. It was established as a Roman colony in 181 BC and is now sited about three kilometres from the sea on the right bank of the river Natisse. Originally, until it changed its course a larger river, the Natisone, flowed along the east wall of Aquileia. Its geographical advantages include a surrounding alluvial plain with good farming land stretching westwards from the Julian Alps. Together with the Natisone, the region is traversed by the Isonzo and the Torre rivers.

Aquileia became, as planned, a prosperous trade centre, catering for a hinterland which included Noricum (Austria), Pannonia (western Hungary and Slovenia), Istria (north-west Croatia) and north-east Italy. It had commercial, social and religious connections with these regions, the towns of the Adriatic coast and ultimately ports in the Mediterranean basin. The significance of the city may be estimated by the presence of a mint, only the second in Italy in the early fourth century.⁴⁵ Ausonius (died c. 393 AD) ranked Aquileia as the ninth most important city of the Empire.⁴⁶ In his review of the population, Chevallier found that estimates varied considerably, from 40,000 to 100,000. Based on the number of original Roman colonists, the extent of its suburbs, the size of its public buildings, including its aqueduct and port, and a study of the epigraphy in the necropolises he reckoned that 100,000 was a plausible figure for the fourth century.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Jones (1964), 437.

⁴⁶ Ausonius in Green, *Works of Ausonius* (1991), 569-570.

⁴⁷ Chevallier (1990), 45.

Aquileia was favoured by Constantine the Great who visited the city on a number of occasions.⁴⁸ During the first century BC it became the centre of the newly formed region of Venetia and Istria. By the fourth century it was an important administrative and military centre, the seat of the governor of the Province of Venetia and Istria and of the commander of the upper Adriatic fleet. At this time the province stretched from Verona to Pula in the Istrian Peninsula (fig. 81).⁴⁹ Following the invasion of the Lombards in 568 AD Aquileia became part of the Duchy of Friuli in north-east Italy. It is now incorporated into the Italian province of Friuli-Venezia-Giulia.

Though Aquileia continued to play an important role in ecclesiastical matters into the fifth century, the later part of the fourth century marked the beginning of a long period of decay. In 361 it was besieged and taken by the troops of Julian the Apostate. The river Natisone was diverted by his besieging forces.⁵⁰ A mere trickle of water, the Natisa, now flows through the massive foundations of the ancient and derelict port. The division of the Roman Empire by Theodosius I in 395 AD affected its central role as the entrepôt for southern mid-European trade. At the same time the invasion of the Visigoths and other Germanic peoples from the north-east disturbed established life. It was, however, the sack of Aquileia in 452 by Attila and his Huns which literally reduced the city to rubble, a blow from which it never recovered.⁵¹ Even today the inhabitants of the area speak of Attila as though he had only recently invaded their local territory.⁵²

⁴⁸ Menis (1987), 92. According to Menis, Constantine and his wife Fausta were engaged in Aquileia. [Fausta, daughter of Maximin, engagement in 307, Cameron (1993), 49.] Later Constantine used the city as an essential strategic base for the control of *Pannonia* and *Dalmatia*.

⁴⁹ Cameron (1993), xiii. Map of Diocletianic Dioceses and Provinces of the later Roman Empire.

⁵⁰ Ammianus Marcellinus, Book 21, 12.

⁵¹ Bury (1958), 1, 294.

⁵² Personal conversations on-site.

Christianity and other beliefs in Aquileia

Christianity was almost certainly present in Aquileia by, at the latest, the second century. St. Paul in his *Epistle to the Romans* clearly demonstrates that Christianity was already established in Rome between 50 and 60 AD and goes on to state that he had proclaimed the good news of Christ 'as far as Illyricum'.⁵³ That a Christian community existed in Aquileia was first clearly defined in the acts of the Council of Arles in 314 AD called by Emperor Constantine. The subscriptions to Arles record the attendance of Bishop Theodore and a deacon, probably spelled Agathon, from the city of Aquileia in the province of Dalmatia (sic).⁵⁴ Information regarding the Aquileian church prior to this date is less certain. The *Martyrologium Hieronymianum*⁵⁵ and documents (including the lists of the *Chronicon Venetum*), letters, epigraphs and monuments which apply to the fourth or at the latest the fifth centuries can be provided as evidence for the existence of bishops Hilarius and Chrysogonus.⁵⁶ The former was probably martyred during the persecution of Emperor Numerianus in 284 AD and the latter in 303/305 AD on the occasion of Diocletian's visit to Aquileia.⁵⁷ A sarcophagus thought to contain the body of Chrysogonus can be seen today in an oratory about 200 metres from the church in Canzian d'Isonzo, within 10 kilometres of Aquileia. Earlier leaders associated with

⁵³ Romans, 16 and Romans 15, 19.

⁵⁴ *Consilium Arelatense, Consilia Galliae*, (ed.) Munier (1963), 14-22.

⁵⁵ Picard (1988), 654-6. A list of saints' festivals.

⁵⁶ Tavano (1986), 33.

⁵⁷ Menis (1987), 87.

Aquileia, St Mark and his successor Hermachora, a martyr/ bishop, are mentioned in episcopal lists of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.⁵⁸ However, to understand the advance of the Christian church and the development of its buildings, it must be stressed that there were periods of peace (interrupted by occasional short or ineffective persecutions) during the third century from the reign of Gallienus in 260 to the start of the persecution of the Tetrarchs in 303.

The subsequent history of the fourth century suggests that Aquileia was an early and important Christian centre. The church is likely to have had a bishop by the middle of the third century.⁵⁹ There may have been a *domus ecclesiae (titulus)* sited in the region of the church complex.⁶⁰ This would have followed the pattern whereby individual *domus ecclesiae* developed within the homes of more wealthy Christians, subsequently becoming a *aula ecclesiae* or a basilica.⁶¹ The Basilica at Aquileia was erected at much the same time as St John Lateran in Rome and formed part of the expansion of Christian architecture that followed the triumph of Constantine in 312.⁶²

The Basilica consists of two parallel halls which were constructed or completed (see later discussion) during the rule and probably at the instigation of Bishop Theodore (308-319 AD) sometime between 313 and 319.⁶³ The unusual precision of dating is based on two inscriptions dedicated to Theodore on the floor of each hall. The large marine

⁵⁸ Bovini (1972), 42. Reproduction of episcopal lists.

⁵⁹ Chevalier (1990), 110.

⁶⁰ Mirabella Roberti (1953), 216.

⁶¹ White (1990), 127.

⁶² du Bourguet (1972), 142.

⁶³ Von Lanckoronski, Neimann and Swoboda (1906). *Der Dom von Aquileia. Sein bau und seine Geschichte* In page 41 there is a list of fourth century bishops copied from the *Chronicon Venetum* (Dandolo). In this list the date of his reign is given as 308 to 319.

mosaic panel of the south hall, contains a *clipeus*, bearing a Chi-Rho monogram, in which is inscribed:

'THEODORE FELI[X]
[A]DIVVANTE DEO
OMNIPOTENTE ET
POEMNIO CAELITVS TIBI
[TRA]DITVM OMNIA
[B]AEATE FECISTI ET
GLORIOSE DEDICAS
TI'

(O blessed Theodorus, with the help of almighty God and the flock given to you from on high, you have blessedly accomplished and gloriously dedicated all these works)
(Fig.1)⁶⁴

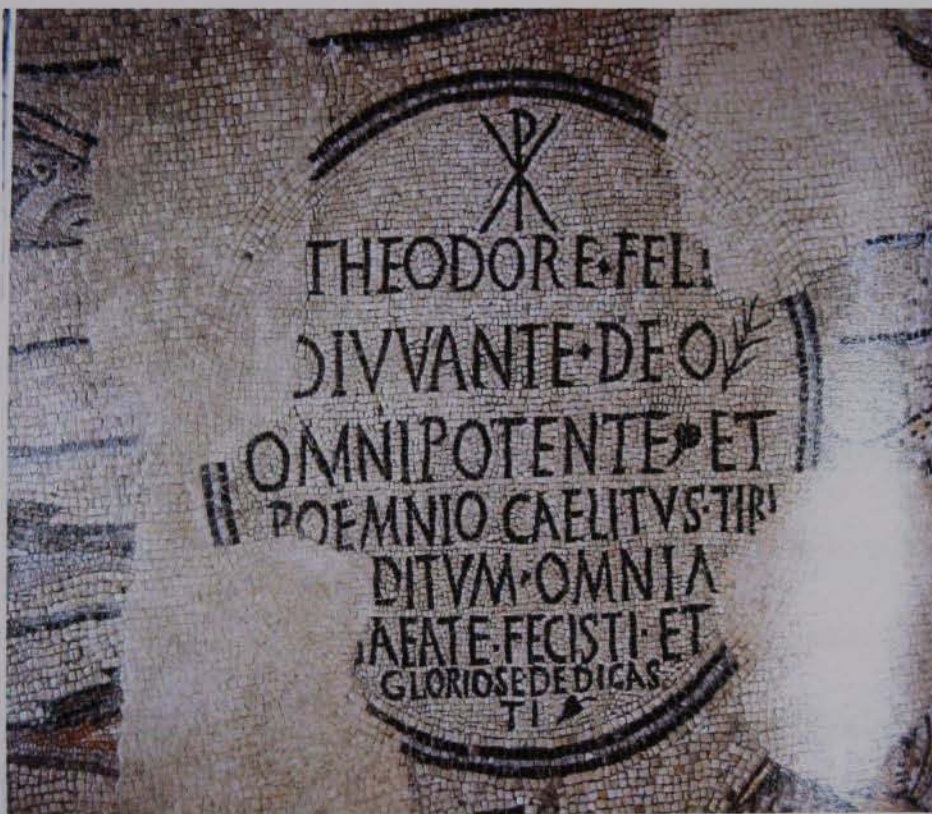


Fig. 1

Clipeus in the marine scene (Compartment 7) in the south hall.

See text above for the script

Note the Chi-Rho sign, the palm branch, the ivy leaf and ? lotus flower

⁶⁴ I thank J. V. Luce, Professor of Classics (Emeritus), Trinity College, Dublin for these translations. They are similar to those in Italian by various contributors including Panciera (1975), 217-233. He, like Panciera, has translated this as a retrospective salutation suggesting that it was laid down after the death of Theodore. The date of the death of Theodore is not certain. It is listed by Marini (1994), 127 as 315 AD but 319 is more commonly quoted as in *Chronicum Venetum*. The likely additional letters are from Marini (1993), 48.

In Section 1, floor(b) of the north hall is inscribed in mosaic:

'[THEODO]RE/ FELIX/HIC CREVISTI/ HIC FELIX' (O blessed Theodorus, you have grown up here, and here you have been happy) (Fig.11).

To the information obtained from these inscriptions may be added the evidence of Theodore's attendance at the Council of Arles in 314 (see above).

While there may have been an unostentatious Christian meeting place in the location, it is highly unlikely the prominent double hall basilica would have been built during the persecuting reign of the Tetrarchy (303-311 AD) or before the Edict of Milan (313). On the other hand, it is possible that the concept and planning of the building were given serious consideration during the later part of the reign of Emperor Maxentius (306-12 AD) when Theodore became Bishop (308). Maxentius, a usurper controlling Italy and North Africa, was known for his leniency to Christians compared with his contemporary fellow caesars/emperors other than Constantine.⁶⁵ It is of interest that a Greek cross appeared on coins minted in Aquileia during the reign of the usurper.⁶⁶ The north hall was enlarged during the fourth century. There are two schools of thought regarding timing: one supports the middle of and the other later in the century. The former is largely based on a visit by Athanasius of Alexandria to Aquileia in 345 AD at the same time as Emperor Constans was holding court in the city. Athanasius in his *Apologia ad Constantium* mentions that he attended a Eucharistic mass in a building under

⁶⁵ Eusebius, *Eccles. History*, VIII, xiv.

⁶⁶ Laffranchi (1932) 45-52. However it cannot be assumed that a cross identifies a Christian background. The Cross was a relatively late entrant to Christian iconography and the only clear evidence of this form of Christian expression in the North Adriatic by the early fifth century is the cruciform shape of the Basilica del fondo Tullio (Ch.8).

⁶⁷ Athan. *Apol. Const.* 15.

construction which had not been consecrated.⁶⁷ It was thought that he stayed with Fortunatianus, Bishop of Aquileia, during his visit.⁶⁸

By 380 AD it is clear that Aquileia had become an ascetic religious centre with prestige and influence over neighbouring Christian congregations.⁶⁹ St. Jerome, who spent some time in Aquileia (370-373), describes the clergy as a *chorus beatorum*, a community of the blessed.⁷⁰ The Council of Aquileia held in 381 nominally under the presidency of Bishop Valerian was largely dictated by St. Ambrose, Bishop of Milan, who dedicated the Council to the humiliation of the Arian bishops.⁷¹ A mosaic *emblema* placed in panel 2 in the south hall, at the time of the Council is thought to commemorate this triumph of orthodoxy (Ch. 5).

The reputation of the Church at Aquileia reached its zenith during the reign of Bishop Chromatius (388-407?). During his period of office the south hall of the Basilica

⁶⁸ Menis (1987), 94.

⁶⁹ Humphries (1999), 140-145.

⁷⁰ Jerome, *Chron. S. a.* 374.

⁷¹ Frend (1984), 621. The main targets of Ambrose were the Illyric bishops Palladius of Ratiaria and Secundianus of Singidunum. Bishop Fortunatianus of Aquileia had flirted with Arianism following the Council of Sirmium in 351 [Humphries (1999), 132 and 141.].

was enlarged (fig. 4), he consecrated the large Basilica Apostolorum in Concordia, a town some 30 kilometres west of Aquileia (chapter 8) and befriended St. Jerome and Rufinus of Concordia.⁷² Chromatius is today best known for his published Sermons.⁷³ He lived to experience the invasion of the Visigoths and the visitation of the plague in the early fifth century (401). Following the incursions of the Huns, Goths and Lombards, Chromatius's Church experienced many vicissitudes and never regained the splendour it had at the end of the fourth century.

In relation to the mosaics in the north hall it is important to remember that Christianity was just one of several religions practised in Aquileia at the start of the fourth century. The institutional gods of the colonists and the empire are fully represented in sculpture and bas-reliefs found today among the ruins. There are numerous attestations to Isis and other Egyptian deities. The Phrygian cult of Cybele is also represented. Mithraism was practised in the third century by merchants and the military. There is a bas-relief of the traditional scene of Mithra Tauroclonas in the Archaeological Museum of Aquileia. It has been reasonably argued that there was a Jewish community in Aquileia, established at least as early as that associated with the Christian faith.⁷⁴ There is mention on late fourth/early fifth century inscription in the Palaeochristian Museum, Aquileia, of a certain Petrus, son of Olympia Iudaei, being

⁷² Thelamon (1981), 255-71.

⁷³ Lemarié (1969/1971), French translation. Todde (1982), Italian translation. The Sermons provide an understanding of the religious attitudes of the time. For example in Sermons 12 and 19 Chromatius relates the triumph of the Church to the victors in the circus or amphitheatre. Chevallier (1990), 102-103 suggests he was prompted in this by studying the mosaic *emblema* of the Triumph of the Eucharist in the south hall of Aquileia which resembles a charioteer victor.

⁷⁴ Campbell (1996), 53.

converted to Christianity.⁷⁵ This community must still have been present at the beginning of the fifth century as Chromatius continued to preach against the Jews even though the Visigoths were at his doorstep.⁷⁶ The possibility that part of the mosaic floor of the north hall was laid down in the third century will be discussed later. In considering this argument, it is important to note that the earlier the floor was laid down, the less likely it would be to represent either directly or even indirectly Christian themes. Given a sufficiently early date, such as the first decade of the third century, it is likely that the images were intended to represent, if anything, non-Christian beliefs. Irrespective of the date of the mosaics, evidence will be provided that Roman mythological figures and possibly a Mithraic morality scene were represented in the north hall.

The Basilica of Aquileia

The church, baptistery and campanile now standing are the composite of removals and additions to the original buildings over the centuries. The visitor, travelling south-west of Paris, is struck by the dominating position of Chartres Cathedral. For kilometres there appears to be nothing else in the landscape between field and sky. In a similar way the off-white campanile of the Basilica of Aquileia catches the eye (fig.2). The campanile,

⁷⁵ Chevallier (1990), 73.

⁷⁶ Frend (1984), 72. Sermon 9 [Todde (1982), 84-86]. Chromatius was equally censorious with pagans and heretics 'the heretics are in the bowels of what is the evacuation into the latrine', Sermon 21 [Todde (1982), 153.].

⁷⁷ Marini (1994), 99.

built in the 11th century by Wolfgang von Treffen, Bishop Poppo, was constructed with material taken from the destroyed Roman amphitheatre.⁷⁷



Fig. 2

**The campanile of the
Basilica of Aquileia**

**Consecrated in 1031
by Bishop Poppone**

**Restored by Marquadro
di Randeck (1365-81)
following the
earthquake of 1348**

The present campanile and church are no longer predominantly from the age of Poppo but substantially altered after the 1348 earthquake, principally, it is thought, in the 1360s, datable approximately from Vitalesque frescoes. The campanile represents a Quattrocento belfry. To the south the Basilica is similarly fashioned: high walls, powerful columns (eleven pairs), Byzantine capitals and a transept (figs.3 and 63). The building, consecrated in 1031, incorporates almost completely intact the original fourth century mosaic of the south hall.



Fig. 3 The Basilica of Aquileia, photograph taken from the north-west. The entrance to the basilica is approached through the two arches. To the right, is the passage to the late fourth century baptistery. To the left is the campanile. Foreground: Piazza Capitolo

The geographical environment today is very different from that of the fourth century. This can be exemplified by shrinkage of population, 3,200 in 2004. In 313 the Natisone, a medium sized river now replaced by the tiny Natissa, flowed to the east of the city. It then bent along the south walls in its journey to the nearby sea. The industrial area, warehouses and markets, was located in the bend. The area extended up-stream towards the north where the port was sited.⁷⁸ West of the city were the public buildings; the amphitheatre, the baths, the circus and the necropolis. The forum occupied a central area.

It was in the bend of the river and within the south-east city that the Christian complex of three halls, north, south and transverse were built to accommodate worship, ceremony and business. The halls were erected on a site of previous construction between

⁷⁸ Chevallier (1990), 61.

two streets in a U-shaped fashion with the closed loop to the west and the entrance (originally) from the east between the two halls (fig.4).⁷⁹ By approximately

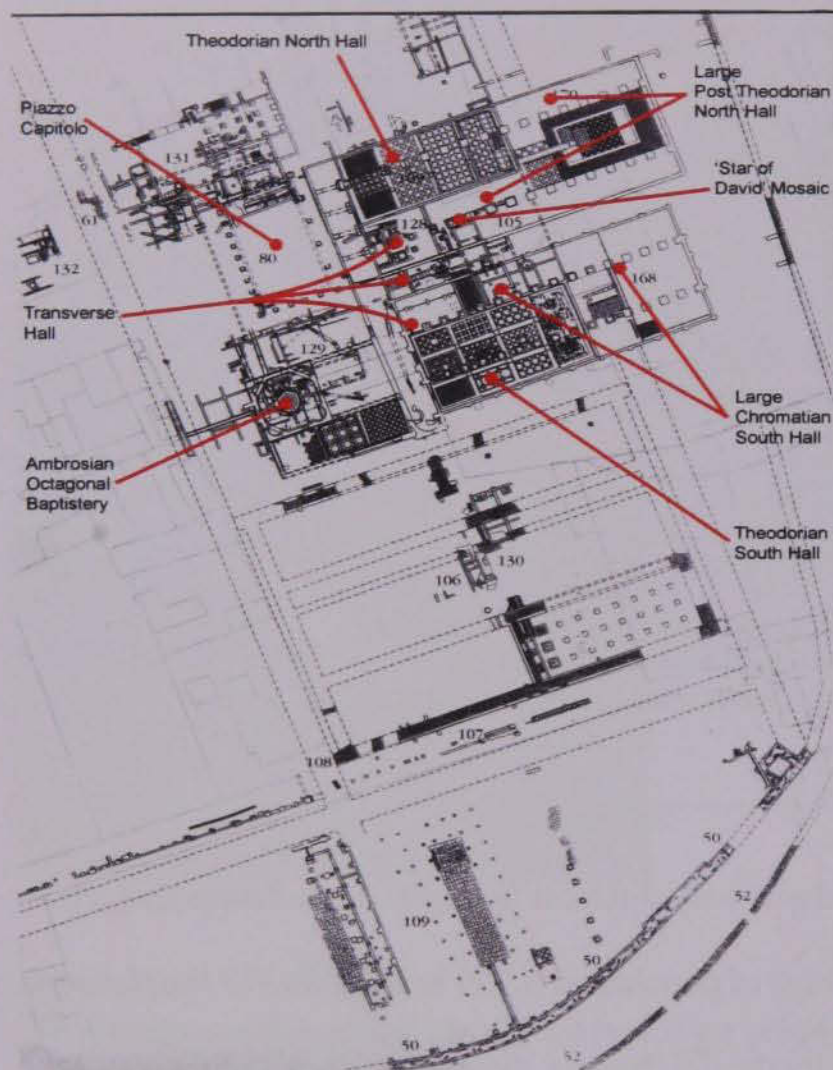


Fig. 4

Plan of the site of the fourth century Basilica of Aquileia and its environs

The enlarged halls were built later in the fourth century and were superimposed on the original sites

The complex was also enlarged to the west by atria and a large baptistery. The entrance changed to the west side as the fourth century progressed

Number 52 represents the Natisone river.

The Piazza Capito is still *in situ*

320 AD, the initial phase of the basilica complex of Aquileia was complete. There are many drawings available of the foundations of the north and south halls and of the intervening space between the two halls. All those quoted in the footnote below have individual merits and are based partly on fact and partly on extrapolation.⁸⁰ A modified version of the plan in *Nuova Pianta Archeologica di Aquileia* by Luisa Bertacchi is

⁷⁹ Chavallier (1990), 106

⁸⁰ Gnirs, (1915), 140, Mirabella Roberti (1953), 210, White (1990), ii, 201, Bertacchi (2003), Map 40.

shown in figure 4.⁸¹

The north and south halls of the early fourth century church of Aquileia ran parallel, east to west. The area east of the transverse hall served as an entrance to the complex with a connecting corridor to two (?three) of the halls, the adjoining rooms perhaps providing an ecclesiastical reception/administrative area. The damage caused by the foundations of the campanile is not shown because the map is based on a visualisation of the site up to the end of the fourth century. The early south and north halls measured internally 37 by 20 m. (740 sq.m) and 37 by 17 m (630 sq.m) respectively. According to Krautheimer both were capable of seating several hundred people.⁸² In both, six supporting columns separated the nave from the north and south aisles. Both are assumed to have flat wooden ceilings.

The north hall was extended probably in 345 AD and the floor was raised by about 1.15m burying the fine mosaics in the original hall. The Christians of the fourth century were obviously less than impressed with the art we so fondly treasure today. The length of the north wall was increased from 37 to 73m (fig. 4). A new south wall extending from and including the north portion of the transverse hall was built increasing the width of the hall to 31m. To sustain the wider roof fourteen pairs of columns were

⁸¹ Bertacchi (2003) Map 40.

⁸² Krautheimer (1975), 44.

erected. The chancel was enlarged and a *solea* was built (fig. 4). The later north hall has been termed post-Theodorian.⁸³ In c.390 Bishop Chromatius increased the size of the south hall. The length of the south wall was extended from 37 to 65m. A new north wall was built incorporating a substantial section of the southern part of the transverse hall extending the width of the church to 29m. The roof was also supported by fourteen pairs of pillars (fig. 4). During the occupation of the city by Attila and his Huns in 452 AD the north hall was completely destroyed leaving a rubble cover over the raised post-Theodorian floor. The south hall was badly damaged and deserted. During this period of neglect the mosaic floor of the south hall was covered with sediment from nearby uncontrolled springs. Eventually during medieval restoration this layer of sediment was covered with alternating red and white tiles.⁸⁴ In effect, both mosaic floors were concealed and protected for centuries.

⁸³ The terms 'Theodorian' and 'Post-Theodorian' north hall, first used in figure 4, Chapter 1 in this study, require definition. The north hall was virtually, if not totally, completed during the episcopacy of Bishop Theodore (308-319). In this respect it can be regarded as 'Theodorian'. However there are scholars who believe that changes in the extent of the building and the laying down of mosaic floors varied beyond the narrow confines of 313-319, for example, Iacumin (2004), 142. They question the 'Theodore' terminology. Provided their arguments are kept in mind then the terms 'the early north hall' and the 'Theodorian north hall' are interchangeable.

⁸⁴ Marini (1994), 30.

2

The visitor enters the present basilica (that restored by Poppone in the 11th century) by the main west portico. Stretching in front is the magnificent mosaic floor which leads to the altar set at a higher level (fig. 40). The entrance to the north hall area is to the left of a three dimensional reproduction of the Holy Sepulchre in the church of that name in Jerusalem. On leaving the present basilica the visitor passes along a gangway which traverses the original transverse hall between the north and south halls. To the left is a small excavation approximately 1.0m below the present gangway which reveals the black and white mosaic floor of a first century house. This floor is of simple designs: isosceles triangles and parallelograms. To the right is the second baptistery built later in the fourth century and further north, before the entrance to the early north hall, the remnants of the higher mosaic floor of the post-Theodorian enlarged north hall. Continuing along the gangway Section 1 of the north hall is entered by a break in the south wall. The gangway then leads on, veering to the right, to the remaining three Sections. The mosaics will be described as seen by the visitor, that is, from west to east.

Plan of the north hall

The mosaic floor of the north hall is divided into four sections separated by three bands (figs. 5 and 6).⁸⁵ Figures 5 and 6 are copies of a drawing of the floor taken from the recent volume entitled *I Mosaici della Basilica di Aquileia*.⁸⁶ Figure 5 is an altered

⁸⁵ When not specified all measurements of length are from west to east and of width from south to north.

⁸⁶ Marini (ed.) 2003, 27.

version containing measurements estimated by the author. Figure 6 is an unaltered copy of that found in the volume. The outline of the graded foundation of the campanile is included together with the likely continuation of the framework of sections 2, 3 and 4 and bands 2 and 3. Figure 5 includes an assessment of the areas occupied by the existing bases of the first three north pillars of the post-Theodorian building and the remains of surrounding its floor in the north-west. It can, with difficulty, be seen that the two western pillars of the early church were inserted into Band 1. The insertion of the remaining four pillars into Bands 2 and 3 can only be assumed. A band of plain *tesserae* completely surrounds the periphery of the mosaic floor. On average this measures 0.5m. Thus, to north-south measurements of the designed mosaics of Sections 1, 2 and 4 must be added approximately 1.0m.

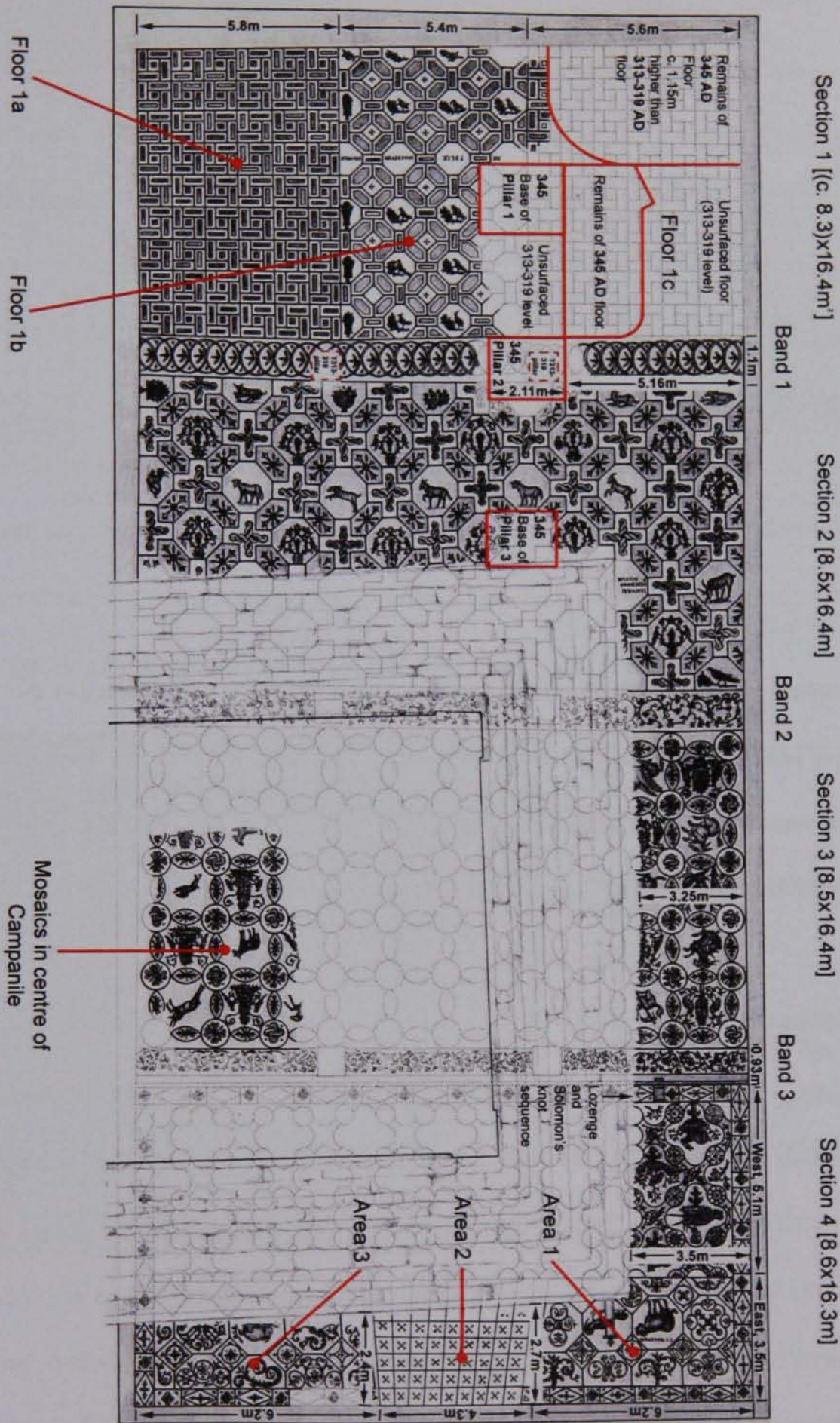


Fig.5 A drawing of the complete north hall of the basilica complex with measurements and explanation of subdivisions of sections. The foundation of the campanile faintly drawn.

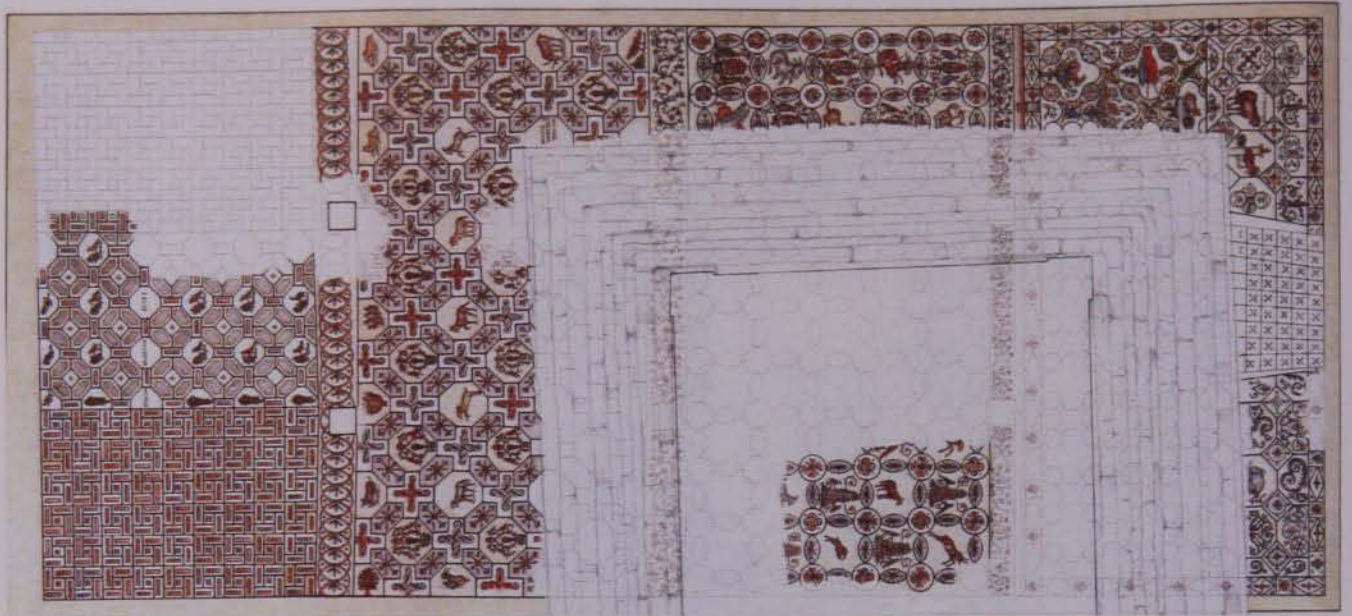


Fig. 6 A coloured drawing of the complete north hall of the Basilica complex.
From Marini (2003), 30-31.

Section 1 (8.3×16.4m):

This section is located at the west end of the north hall. In its south wall is the present entrance leading from the transverse hall of the Theodorian complex. Its width is bounded by the west wall and Band 1. The north wall was built on the remains of the original wall. The section is divided into three floors from south to north (fig. 5 and 6).

Floor[a] (8.3×5.8m)

This floor is sited in the south of section 1. It is the first mosaic floor encountered on entering the hall (figs. 5 and 6). The 3 by 3 square checkerboard design is the simplest pattern in the north hall (fig. 8). Each large square measures 0.86×0.86m and can be reckoned to be made up of nine small squares. Eight of the nine small squares are used to form four rectangles (0.58×0.28m). This leaves a remaining central square (0.3×0.3m). There are 54 large squares altogether. The squares, both large and small, and the rectangles are separated by two lines of black *tesserae*. The small central squares and

their surrounding rectangles contain even smaller squares and rectangles, which in the case of the rectangles are lined by a single row of orange *tesserae* within which are grey *tesserae*. The background *tesserae* are yellow. There are no figurative representations in this floor.

The checkerboard '3 by 3' design was commonly used during first four hundred years of the Empire to fill spaces between more imaginative floors. For this reason, areas containing the pattern would probably not have been the first choice for display in specialist books concentrating on mosaics. It is well explained by Field using the *cubiculae* of the Hospitium of Hadrian's Villa at Tivoli as an example.⁸⁷ The same design surrounds the famous black and white first century lozenge/cross mosaic in Fishbourne, West Sussex, England (75-80 AD).⁸⁸

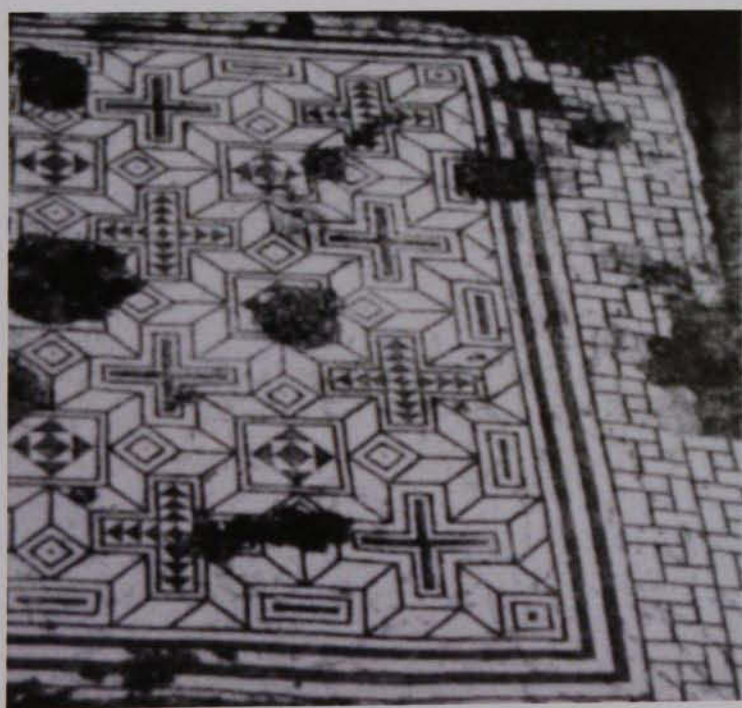


Fig. 7

The cross design.

**Mosaic floor in Fishbourne,
England,**

75-80 AD.

**Note also the 3×3 checkerboard
to the right (see also fig. 7)**

⁸⁷ Field (1988) 16-17.

⁸⁸ Dunbabin (1999), 85.



Fig. 8

Section 1, Floors [a] and [b] Looking west.

Left: 3×3 square checkerboard design of Floor [a]

Centre (Floor[b]): Wicker baskets along the left of Floor [b]. The octagon/rectangular/square/hexagon framework with birds perched on branches.

Right: Brick base of post-Theodorian pillar

Foreground: Band 1 with 'hooped' design. To the extreme left the probable site of the base of the south pillar of the early church.

Floor [b] (8.3×5.4m)

This floor is intermediary between floor [a] and the remaining bases of the first two of the fourteen north pillars of the post-Theodorian north hall. The insertion of these pillars damaged the original early church floor (figs.5 and 6). The more complicated pattern of this floor is based on large octagons (1.18×1.14m) in which there is a central square tilted 45° to the horizontal. From the angles of the square four equal

perpendiculars are dropped onto four sides of the surrounding octagon bisecting each side. This produces four internal hexagons (fig. 8). The central square contains four small fleur-de-lis whose stalks meet in a small central square. Each hexagon contains a smaller hexagonal composed of grey *tesserae* lined by orange *tesserae*. Background *tesserae* are yellow. As throughout the north hall each individual frame is separated by two files of black *tesserae*.

Four rectangles (0.58×0.28m), placed outside four alternating sides of each large octagon, link, transversely and horizontally, to four further large octagons (fig. 8). The space created by the remaining four sides of the large octagons and the smaller free sides of four rectangles, complete smaller octagons (0.85×0.87m). The rectangles contain smaller rectangles lined by orange *tesserae*.

From west to east there are five rows of large octagons (fig. 6 and 8). The number in each row varies from three to two and a half depending on the damage caused by insertion of the foundations of the post-Theodorian pillars to the north (Fig. 5). There are five rows of complete smaller octagons; two or three in each row again depending upon the pillars. Along the south rim of floor [b] are eight incomplete octagons of the smaller variety containing baskets similar to those between paired birds in Section 2. Along the east rim, lining Band 1, are three incomplete large octagons.

There are many variations of this design in mosaics floors throughout the Empire. The inner square may be at 45° (fig.79) or parallel (fig.80) with the horizontal and vertical. In either case the perpendiculars from the angles of the squares produce hexagons. Rectangles or squares may not be added allowing for interlinking of octagons. An example of this type of framework can be seen in the west panel of early Poreč church

(Fig.70) and in a late Hellenistic floor taken from Cos, now in the Laocoon Chamber, the Grand Master's Palace, Rhodes (fig. 9).⁸⁹



Fig. 9 Late Hellenistic floor originally from Cos, now in the Grand Master's Palace, Rhodes. Note the interlinked octagonal pattern in the foreground.

A pattern extension can be produced by the addition of squares or rectangles (as seen in Floor [b]) onto the sides of the octagon. An example of the former can be seen in the late third century mosaic of the 'Victor' in the Archaeological Museum in Aquileia (fig.71). Other examples include House 1, Emporiae, Neapolis, Spain (first century AD) and the Mosaic of the Planetary Deities at Orbe, north of Lausanne (third century AD).⁹⁰

The large octagons contain only a geometric design. The complete smaller octagons contain branches, leaves and flowers (\pm fruit) with birds (one bird to each octagon) perched on the branches. To enliven the image of the birds and baskets smalti (vitreous paste) were introduced. Potentially twelve octagons would have contained birds; as it stands there are now only nine due to damage. The birds in this section are less accurately defined than those portrayed in Sections 3 and 4 and it is difficult to

⁸⁹ Kolias (2001), 85.

⁹⁰ Dunbabin (1999), 145 and 82.



Fig. 10
Far right
background
Floor [c] Section 1

Near background:
Raised remains of
post-Theodorian
floor

Centre mid-ground:
Bases of the first two
post-Theodorian
church pillars (north
line)

Left foreground:
(i) Floor [b]:
octagons with birds
perched on a
branches

distinguish the species.

Similar third century mosaics with framed single birds on branches can be found the El Jem museum in Tunisia. They are numerous in the south hall of the Aquileian complex (Compartments 4, 6, chapter 6) and are to be found in south Fondo Cossar (fig.77) and north and south Fondo Cal in Aquileia (chapter 7).

Row two of the small octagons is given over to the Theodore inscription mentioned previously (chapter 1). There are three inscriptions in the north hall and one in the south hall of the basilica complex. The inscriptions are the only clear mosaic evidence of Christian influence in the north hall which may have a bearing on their dating. The wording in the *clipeus* bearing the Chi-Rho monogram in Compartment 7, south hall (chapter 1, fig.1) is similar to that in the inscription in Section 1, north hall, in terms of inspiration, will and celebrative tone (fig.11).



Fig. 11 The 'Theodore' inscription in Section 1, north hall. Note the letters are well positioned in the middle of the smaller octagons. A damaged octagon to the left contains the last two letters of Theodore's name and incomplete octagon to the right contains the words HIC·FELIX.

The letters of the two inscriptions belong to the palaeographic characters of the classical canon and there seems little doubt, according to Panciera, that the two inscriptions are contemporaneous.⁹¹ Translation of the inscription and its significance are discussed in Chapter 1. Both Panciera and John Luce believe the wording of both inscriptions implies commemoration and were inserted after the death of Theodore. One reason for this, as the former puts it, is that 'the recurrent epithet of *felix* confers on the words 'an exaltation' more suitable to the dead than to the living'. Bertacchi mentions that there is a body of opinion which supports the concept of commemoration based other inscriptions with similar wording.⁹²

The meaning of the inscription 'THEODO]RE/ FELIX/HIC CREVISTI/HIC FELIX' (O blessed Theodore, you have grown up here and here you have been happy) has been interpreted as representing the place he lived in as a child, that is, his original

⁹¹ I have followed Silvio Panciera (1975), 217-220, an acknowledged palaeographic expert, and sought the advice of Dr John Luce with regard to translation (see Ch. 1).

⁹² Bertacchi (1986), 197. However this is not her personal view. In an interview (May 3, 2004), she stated that, though the mosaics of Sections 1 and 2 were damaged after 319, this did not affect the inscription.

home, perhaps a *domus ecclesiae*, which was incorporated into the north hall of the church.⁹³ Another interpretation is that his professional status increased with the development of the church complex.⁹⁴

Larger pavement *tesserae* distinguish this section from the other three in the north hall, the appearance reaching a certain vivacity which may be described as pointillistic (fig.8).⁹⁵ Bertacchi described these *tesserae* as being rough and not 'planed' by being frequently walked on. The implication of these two findings together with the commemorative interpretation of the inscription is in keeping with the view that, if a choice has to be made, Section 1 floor was the last to be added to the north hall.

The above may be related to Cecchini's clearly expressed view that between 337 and 340 both the Thodorian complex and its surroundings were damaged in what he describes as a methodical and diligent manner.⁹⁶ This is supported by Bertacchi who maintains that the west of both halls was damaged and restored between 319 and 340; the west floor of the south hall was restored with mosaic portraits demonstrating expressionistic style compared with those in the earlier east 'late Hellenistic' floor.⁹⁷

⁹³ Bovini (1972), 104.

⁹⁴ Humphries M (1999), 193.

⁹⁵ Bertacchi (1986), 196.

⁹⁶ Cecchini (1933), 247.

⁹⁷ Bertacchi (2000), 73. In conversation, June, 30, 2005, she mentions disturbance by the Visigoths which might have been the cause the damage. Menis (1987), 94, states that Constantine II was killed near Aquileia in 339 during a civil war with his brother Constans. It is possible there was social and religious disorder in the city at the time.

Floor [c]

Measuring 8.3×5.6 , this floor extends from the bases of the two pillars, mentioned above, to the north wall of the hall. Remnants of the floor to the west of the base of north pillar one (post-Theodorian) and to the north of Floor [b] suggest that the original mosaic floor design was similar to floor [a], that is, the 3 by 3 checkerboard pattern (fig. 6). In Floor [c] there are walled off remains of the larger hall foundations (fig 118a). The difference of floor



Fig. 12
Section 1, Floor [c]

Left and in the background is the foundations and floor of the post-Theodorian hall.

Centre: The remains of the floor in the north-west of the early north hall

Foreground: Remains of Band 1

Right: North wall

levels varies from 1.08 to 1.22m. The exposed remaining early hall floor is damaged leaving only the foundations of the early floor in the form of a mortar base in some areas and a lower second stratum of broken stone in others. These layers are consistent with the foundations of a mosaic pavement and may be presumed that this would have been the continuation of the checkerboard pattern at the base of the first post-Theodorian pillar

(see above). Niemann discovered during the initial excavation that this part of the floor had already been damaged and attempts had been made at repair.⁹⁸

Domus Ecclesiae:

Three possible earlier structures are associated with the north hall. The least contentious is the first century Roman *domus* whose black and white mosaics can be seen to the left of the entrance to the north hall. This together with a warehouse(s) probably underlies or has become part of the Aquileian complex (see chapter 9).⁹⁹ The second is the possible existence of a third century oratory associated with the north-east mosaics. This will be considered later. The third is a *domus ecclesiae* thought to have occupied the area which now includes the mosaics of Section 1.

The main reason for supporting the last is the literal interpretation of the inscription placed in the mosaics of Floor [b] (see above), that is, Theodore had grown in or had been associated with a house located in the west section of the final early north hall which was, so it was proposed, a *domus ecclesiae*.¹⁰⁰ Bertacchi provides perhaps the most direct riposte to this-- Theodore was not Aquileian but Thracian.¹⁰¹ The concept that the inscription was commemorative lauding of the hierarchal advance of Theodore during his stay in Aquileia is supported by most contributors.¹⁰²

While there is agreement that Section 1, floor [c] had a checkerboard mosaic floor similar to that in floor [a] the disturbed surface of Floor [c] could be interpreted as being

⁹⁸ Niemann (1906), 23, in Von Lanckoronski, Niemann and Swoboda.

⁹⁹ Mirabella Roberti (1953), 232.

¹⁰⁰ Chevallier (1990), 106.

¹⁰¹ Bertacchi (1986), 197.

¹⁰² Cecchini (1933), 122-127. Caillet (1993), 130. Cecchini also emphasizes the birthplace of Theodore in Thrace.

the remains of an incomplete renovation of the floor of Section 1 during the change from a *domus ecclesiae* to the north hall. There is no doubt that there is something different about the floor of section 1 when compared with the other north hall floors. Some aspects of this are explored in different parts of this thesis. Niemann drew attention not only to the fact that the floor was damaged when first discovered during the excavation in the 1890s (see above) but to the fact that Floors [a] and [b] were covered by a pitch-like substance which could only be removed with a knife.¹⁰³ The application of pitch for whatever reason is likely to be related to the damage to the floor in the north-west corner and both may have occurred before or at the time of the raising of the floor for the post-Theodorian hall. Perhaps these changes were related to drainage problems which precipitated the need to raise the floor.

Thought must also be taken of Neimann's account of damage to the upper floor and re-utilization of the building in this area (Ch. 9). It may be that the same cause damaged both areas. An inappropriate or inadequate response may have added to the damage. Since this damaged area in the upper floor was resurfaced with mosaics this episode would have occurred before 452 AD.

Bertacchi found on examination of the walls no clear structural evidence of a *domus ecclesiae* and White in various passages is not supportive on present archaeological evidence of existence of such a building¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³ Niemann in Von Lanckoronski, Niemann, Swoboda (1906), 23.

¹⁰⁴ Bertacchi (1977), 245 and White (1990), ii, 200, 204-207.

Band 1

It is not difficult for the observer when properly orientated to recognise that the north hall is divided into four sections by three bands (figs.5 and 6). The first band extends from the south to the north wall separating Section 1 from Section 2. It measures 1.1×16.8m. It is interrupted by the second north post-Theodorian pillar foundation (figs. 5 and 10). It is also disturbed by the likely site of the first (west) pair of the six pillars of the early church (figs. 6 and 101). It has a 'hooped' pattern which is composed of circles, the circumference of each passing through the centre of its neighbour (fig. 13). The hoops are composed of alternating S-shaped black and orange bands when viewed from the east giving the impression of waves. This cleverly contrived combination of circles and waves contain a number of thin blossoms.



Fig. 13
Section 1, Floor [a]
(looking west)

Band 1--'hooped'
pattern
Cement to the right
is the likely site of
the first, south
early north hall
pillar

Section 2:
quadruped and
braided cross

Band 1 is quite different to Bands 2 and 3 which contain a similar tendril pattern. Its design is unique in the two halls. This might not be unexpected if the mosaic was laid down at the same time as those of Section 1 and Bands 2 and 3 were copies of an earlier design.

3

Section 2

In the absence of the campanile foundation, Section 2 would have measured approximately $8.3 \times 16.8\text{m}$. On the south side the remaining floor measures 5.1m from Band 1 to the foundations. From south to north, the mosaic floor, along the foundations from the south wall, measures 11.2m to the right-angle turn (figs 5 and 6). At the turn the west-east length of Section 2 is further narrowed by the third post-Theodorian pillar, the base of which is adjacent to the foundations. The undisturbed north Section 2 from Band 1 to Band 2, west to east, measures $8.3 \times 3.25\text{m}$ (figs.5 and 14).



Fig. 14 Section 2 viewed from the west
The 'corridor' created by the foundation can be identified leading to Sections 3 and 4
In the background is Band 2
The Januarius votive inscription is to the right beside the foundation and is read from the west
The pictures in the sequence in the octagons hexagons have to be viewed from the east.

The mosaic framework consists of alternating crosses (average space $1.4 \times 1.4\text{m}$) and octagons (average space $1.4 \times 1.4\text{m}$) linked both horizontally and vertically. This arrangement provides two 'free' sides of a cross at each of four angles and four 'free' sides on each of the octagons. These are deployed to make up hexagons in the interstices

completing the framework. Each cross contains a second braided (guilloche) cross. This takes the form of thick six-stranded lines of *tesserae*; two black, three brown and one white. The hexagons contain a bouquet of four blossoms and four leaves. The eight stems converge upon a small central circle. The circle contains orange *tesserae* outlined by a single ring of black *tesserae*. In the orange circle there is a cross of four small black *tesserae* meeting at a central fifth black.

The cross with an inner braided cross, alternating horizontally and vertically with octagons, is commonly found in floors of houses in the Empire. As already described this pattern automatically leads to the creation of hexagons. The early church in Grado (chapter 8) and the 'Fish' Oratory, Aquileia (chapter 7), both of the mid-fourth century, share this pavement pattern. A small room off the north corridor of the peristyle between the room of the 'Small Hunt' and the vestibule in fourth century Piazza Armerina, Sicily contains the same design.¹⁰⁵ Another example of this pattern can be seen in the vault of the Mausoleum of Constantia, Rome (340 AD). Here crosses and octagons contain inner replicas lined by double files of black *tesserae*. One of the earlier examples (second century AD) of cross and octagon sequence is in the floor of room Q, *domus* in via dei Mosaici, Oderzo, approximately 70 kilometres west of Aquileia.¹⁰⁶

Looking at the mosaics from Band 1, west to east, there are seven rows of crosses/octagons in Section 2. The crosses/octagons of first row are only four fifths complete being sectioned to the west by the east boundary of Band 1 and disrupted by the

¹⁰⁵ Kähler (1973) Pl.16 (b), room 12. The mosaics of Piazza Armerina have been widely reviewed, e.g. Wilson (1983). However not all the rooms are numbered, described and photographed by the authors. Furthermore each author uses his own numbering system which, for comparison purposes, adds to the confusion.

¹⁰⁶ George (1997) 54.

second post-Theodorian pillar base. Three octagons in this row contain various animals (a dog, rabbit and a ?deer) and three other octagons a bush, a basket of snails and a basket of the mushrooms. One octagon is sufficiently damaged to prevent identification.

Each of the six octagons in the second row contains paired confronting birds facing each other. Each octagon has a central stem branching to form an S-shaped acanthus pattern on the right and an inverted S-shaped acanthus pattern on the left. The paired birds are perched on an outer acanthus leaf on each side. The acanthus branches bear fruit and/or flowers. In the middle of the two branches is a round waisted basket with a stem spreading downward to a base.



Fig.15
Paired confronting
birds in Section 2

(looking from east to west)

There are 13
octagons in Section
2 containing paired
birds

It is presumed that a
further 5 octagons
with paired birds
were destroyed by
the foundations

There are various types of picked orange coloured fruit in the baskets. Branches, leaves and baskets are outlined by a single line of black or grey *tesserae*. Glass and gold *tesserae* were used sparingly. As in Section 1 Floor [b] it is difficult to identify the species of the paired birds.

The seven octagons of the third row contain six four-legged animals (two goats, two sheep, a deer and a dog) and one pair of confronting birds. The six octagons of the

fourth row (close to the campanile foundation) contain paired birds. The foundation has destroyed most of the remaining east part of section 2, (i.e. to the south), eliminating most of rows five, six and seven, apart from a north strip which measures 3.0×3.25m. The remaining part of the fifth row consists of a complete north octagon containing an antelope, a central cross with a damaged south octagon and the dedicatory inscription of Januarius already referred to in Chapter 1 (also see fig.14):

IANVARI[VS]

DEDEIDONOV[OVIT]

P(edes) · DCCCLXX [...]

'Januarius, of what God had given, an offering of 870 square (Roman) feet'.¹⁰⁷

The script used in the inscription referring to Theodore in Section 1, floor [b] and that of the *clipeus* in the marine scene in compartment 7, south hall is regarded as identical. However, that of the 'Januarius' votive inscription differs from both the *clipeus* and the 'Theodore' Section 1 inscription.¹⁰⁸ Nonetheless, a similarity exists with the 'Cyriace' inscription in Section 4. This will be demonstrated later. Panciera has implied that the date of the inscription is later than the surrounding Section 2 mosaics.¹⁰⁹ The votive Ianuarius-type inscription '*de Dei dono*' is not commonly found in the north Adriatic area until the late fourth /early fifth century.¹¹⁰ Apparently '*vovit*' was used locally in place of the usual '*dedit*'. It is possible that the 'Januarius' inscription was a

¹⁰⁷ The last prayer in the present Church of Ireland service, following the offertory hymn, includes the following; 'for all things come from thee and of thine own have we given thee'. This is an echo of numerous Christian mosaic donative inscriptions of the early fifth century and stems from the Old Testament; 1 Chronicles 29, 14. 'But who am I, and what is my people, that we should make this freewill-offering? For all things come from you, and of your own have we given you'; a prayer of David to the Lord.

¹⁰⁸ Panciera (1975), 219.

¹⁰⁹ While there is no obvious acknowledgement in the local literature, it seems that some scholars have information regarding the letters in the Section 2 inscription close to the campanile which appears to be covered by mortar (see fig. 121). For example, there are references to '*vovit*' but all that can be seen is the beginning of the letter 'v'. There are also references to a third 'X' making a total of 880 sq. feet.

¹¹⁰ Mazzoleni (1982), 303.

late addition to the north hall, perhaps related to the Bertacchi 'damage/restoration' episode after 319 AD. The complete north hall was 630 sq.m and Januarius was paying for about 76 sq.m which is nearly half the expected area of the full Section 2.

The remaining part of the sixth layer consists of a full middle octagon (with two confronting birds) and two truncated crosses on each side. The seventh layer consists of a cross interrupted by the straight line of Band 2 and, at each side, damaged portions of two octagons.

Quadrupeds in Section 2:

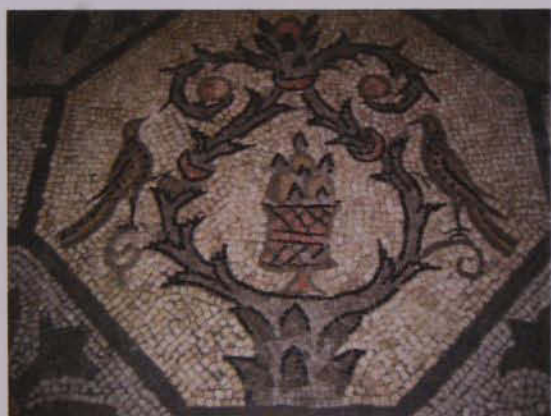


The poses of four-legged animals Sections 2 are similar to those in a large number of hunting, villa and grazing scenes found in mosaics from all parts of the empire during the second and third centuries AD.¹¹¹ Similar stereotyped animal representations are also to be found in the south hall. Resting and grazing animals in a scene which displays balance and perspective can be seen in a mosaic from Hadrian's villa, Tivoli, Rome now on the wall of the Room of the Animals, Vatican Museum. Aquileian mosaicists involved in the north hall shared a common repertoire, using the same or similar cartoons, with those in the remainder of the Roman Empire.

¹¹¹ Examples can be seen in the Hunting Dogs mosaic in Cirencester, England, in the hunting scenes in the House of Dionysus, Nea Paphos, Cyprus and in various framed pavements from El Jem, Roman North Africa now in the Bardo and El Jem Museums, Tunisia. Similar antelope and deer poses can be seen surrounding the Capture of Ganymede in the Sousse Museum, Tunisia and similar hound, deer and antelope poses can be found in the framed mosaics depicting the amphitheatre motifs from Thuburbo Maius, Roman North Africa, now in the Bardo Museum.

Paired confronting birds:

Birds predominate in Section 1 and are prominent in Sections 2, 3 and 4 of the north hall. They follow a schematic pattern in Section 2 where there are a number of octagons containing repetitious paired confronting birds, virtually mirror images of each other. Paired confronting birds of a high artistic quality are also present in the curvilinear octagons of Section 3. While these reveal a high degree of light and shade and a sense of volume and perspective, due to their pose and overall appearance of immobility and remoteness they cannot be described as entirely naturalistic.



The numerous paired confronting birds in Section 2 require some form of explanation as to their significance and background (fig.15). This part of the north hall, in terms of discussion of content, has been neglected by numerous commentators.

Their attitude, when it is expressed, can be summarised by quoting Mirabella Roberti 'the affronted birds, just like heraldry, are boringly repeated fourteen times. They signify a small financial output and therefore a lack of technical commitment rather than artistic shortcoming. Such shortcoming is not believable'.¹¹² It may be, however, that these writers are missing an important Aquileian link in the continuous chain of imagery of confronting animals with the tree of life which stretches from most ancient of times to become ultimately incorporated, from the fifth century AD, into Christian symbolism. That the birds are 'confronting' cannot be reasonably denied. Whether baskets, with a waist, containing fruit/flowers/leaves surrounded by acanthus stems and leaves (fig.15)

¹¹² Mirabella Roberti (1953), 209-244.

can be immediately regarded as a development of the tree of life is less certain. However, following later examples and explanation, it is argued that this is likely to be the case.

A remarkable feature of many of these confronting birds is that they appear to be mirror images of one another. 'Close-up' photography confirms that, within the skill of the mosaicist, this is true of other pairs in Section 2.¹¹³ The left leg of the left bird (as viewed by the observer) is raised matching the right leg of right bird. The paired birds in Section 3 display many of the characteristics of Section 2 confronting birds and other confronting animals described in this chapter; a stationary confronting pose and a central bush/tree/cantharus. Both purple gallinulae (fig.33) and one crow (fig 25, left) lift one leg, which is characteristic of confronting animals.

The Tree of Life

The tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil grew in the garden of Eden. The fruit of the tree of life endowed immortality.¹¹⁴ The myth of the tree of life was shared by the Hebrews with peoples in the Near and Middle East. In Mesopotamia the date palm, representing the tree of life, was the source of life and from its branches and leaves radiated its mystical power and virtue.¹¹⁵ Representations of the tree of life continued into the Christian era. In the form of a vine spouting from the Torah shrine, it is the centre-piece of the paintings on the west wall of the synagogue in Dura Europos sited on the west bank of the Euphrates, c.245-256 AD (Fig. 18).¹¹⁶ The vine is a standard metaphor for the Jews and equates with the tree of life which was also regarded as a

¹¹³ Marini (2003), 130 and 142.

¹¹⁴ Genesis 2, 9, and 3,12.

¹¹⁵ James (1966), 42.

symbol of the Torah.¹¹⁷ Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and David and all the generations of Israel are said to dwell in the shade of the tree of life.¹¹⁸

In the Book of Revelations the tree of life is association with paradise, a powerful emotive concept in the early Church.¹¹⁹ Following the introduction of pictorial art into the life of the Church (c.220) the vine, which had hitherto been associated with Dionysus in the Greco-Roman world, gradually became a Christian emblem. The concept was given authority by Old Testament references and the discourse of Jesus in John 15, notably the phrase 'I am the true vine'. Chromatius of Aquileia (388-408 AD) repeatedly asserts that the Cross is the tree of life.¹²⁰

¹¹⁶ Kraeling (1956), 62-63. Plate XVII. The paintings were transported to the National Archaeological Museum, Damascus, Syria in the 1930's and placed in a building simulating the original synagogue. They were available for viewing, but not for photography, by visitors in 1998.

¹¹⁷ Ezekiel 19:10. The strongest stem of the vine 'became a ruler's scepter towering aloft among the thickest boughs'.

¹¹⁸ Halevi (1972), 8

¹¹⁹ Revelation 22: 2 'On either side of the river is the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, producing its fruit each month, and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. Nothing accursed will be found there anymore.' *New Revised Standard Bible*.

¹²⁰ Todde (1982) 235 *Chromatio di Aquileia*, Sermon 38. Chromatius also quotes S. Ambrose as referring to the Cross as the Tree of Life, Sermon 43.



Fig. 16

**The early
Poreč
church**

**Central mosaic
panel**

**Vine tendrils
sprouting from
a cantharus**

**Mid-fourth
century**

Following classical and later Orphic examples, the cantharus, with sprouting vine tendrils, became a Christian representation of the tree of life. An early example can be seen in the central mosaic *emblema* of the mid-fourth century church in Poreč described in Chapter 8 (figs.16 and 87).¹²¹

The Tree of Life and Confronting Birds/Animals

Two animals of the same species and equal size and form confronting one another as a mirror image on opposite sides of a tree or plant have been represented in artefacts for at least three millenia. The frequent occurrence of these artefacts in Mesopotamia was continued into the Achaemenid Persian empire.¹²² An example is a bronze bowl of the Assyro-Kassite period with two bulls confronting a palm tree found near

¹²¹ Inscription: [Lu]picinus and Pascasia: 400sq.ft.(Roman). F refers to 'with family'(?).

¹²² James (1966), 42.



Fig. 17

Bronze bowl

Iran, 13-10 century B.C.

**The tree of life between
two confronting bulls**

Kermanshah, Iran, dated 13-10th century BC now in the British Museum. One of the front legs of each animal is raised parallel to the ground (fig.17).¹²³ This pose is similar to that of the paired confronting birds of the pavement in Section 2, north hall (fig.15). This traditional imagery was sustained into the Christian era. A large second century Dionysius-orientated mosaic in the Sousse Museum, Tunisia, concerned mainly with the courtship of a bacchante and a satyr, contains two confronting peacocks at its base. The peacocks are centred by a vase with two handles.

The painting (see above) of the Torah shrine with its tree of life in the Synagogue of Dura Europos was subject to revision and alteration. Earlier versions can be obscurely seen through the final painting. A drawing of an earlier painting shows confronting rampant lions on each side of a centrepiece and described by Kraeling as a modified

¹²³ Poranda (1965) 79.

¹²⁴ Kraeling (1956), 64. Plate XVII. 'Knops' is the word used to describe portions of the candlestick arms of a Menorah in the King James's version the Bible (Exodus 25:31). It is defined as a 'small rounded protuberance' in the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary (1973). The seated figure (top, central) is King David in Parthian dress. The lower left object in figure 18 is possibly a seat with a bolster. The empty seat may have had messianic connotation.

Menorah built up with 'knops' (fig.18).¹²⁴ According to Goodenough, the Jews put the Menorah on tombs to signify immortality. Specifically, the menorah became a symbol of God. In a similar manner the Cross on Christian graves became the symbol of immortality and the tree of life.¹²⁵



Fig. 18

Dura Europos

The Synagogue

245-256 AD

**The central painting of
the vine or tree of life**

**A drawing of the main
features of an earlier
version**

**Lower right: confronting
lions in the centre of
which is a modified
Menorah**

Students of heraldry will recognise the drawing as being very similar to the medieval concept of 'lions rampant'. It is interesting that Mirabella Roberti should use the same word 'heraldry' to voice his criticism of the repeated confronting paired birds in Section 2, north hall.

In a fourth century mosaic from Bizerta (Bardo Museum) two circus horses confront a golden and jewelled cylinder containing palm branches in a fourth century

¹²⁵ Goodenough (1988), 112-113.

mosaic(fig.19).¹²⁶ One of the front legs of each horse is raised in a mirror image fashion similar to the Iranian bulls in fig.96 and to the paired birds in Section 2, north hall,



Fig. 19 A fourth century mosaic from Bizerta, north Africa (Bardo Museum).

Two confronting horses in the centre of which is a jeweled cylinder containing palm branches.

Aquileia. The right horse, Aicides, has a prophylactic ivy leaf (*hedera*) below its head similar to that seen beside the tree of life in the south apse of the early fifth century church in Betika (chapter 8, fig.89) and lining the hexagram mosaic near the early north hall (fig. 98). By the beginning of the fourth century palm tree presentation of the 'tree of life' had metamorphosed into a more formalised and sophisticated form. The movement continued by the replacement of trees, even stylised trees, with canthari containing branches and leaves and later, in fifth century Christianity, with the Cross and/or the Chi-Rho Monogram. Another fourth century example is the impressive Orphic mosaic in Littlecote Park, Wiltshire, England which contains two confronting leopards (c. 360).¹²⁷ In the centre is a cantharus from which issues vines. One front limb of each animal is classically outstretched in a mirror image manner towards the central cantharus.

It is necessary to travel into the fifth century to confirm the relationship of confronting birds and the tree of life in a Christian context. In S. Apollinare in Classe, Ravenna can be found the richly carved fifth century sarcophagus of Bishop Theodorus.

¹²⁶ Fantar (1994), 193.

¹²⁷ Johnson (1995), 56.



**Fig. 20 The sarcophagus of
Bishop Theodorus**

**S. Apollinare in Classe,
Ravenna
Fifth century**

**The Holy Spirit with
confronting doves and central
vase and cross (lower)**

One of the transverse sides has two reliefs. In the lower is set a vase in which is placed the Cross; facing the Cross are two 'confronting' doves surrounded by vine scrolls (fig. 20). A characteristic 'dive-bombing' dove represents the Holy Spirit. The best example of the genre is the confronting lions centred by the tree of life in the sixth century Church of the Lions at Umm al- Rasmus, Jordan.¹²⁸

It was not until the sixth century that the churches along the north Adriatic coast offer further evidence of confronting birds with the tree of life. A sixth century altarpiece, stored in the museum of the Poreč Basilica, shows two confronting peacocks in the centre of which is the Cross. In the 579 AD Basilica of S. Euphemia, Grado, there is a relief of two peacocks facing a cantharus, also a discarded altarpiece.

¹²⁸ Piccirillo M (1993), 105.



Fig. 21

Basilica of S. Euphemia, Grado.

Sixth century

Confronting doves facing
branches[?], chalice and
representation of the Holy Spirit.

'Laurence, deacon, servant of Christ,
has discharged his vows'

There is also a rather modest mosaic in the nave floor of the S. Euphemia of two confronting doves in the centre of which are stylised leaves, a chalice and a representation of the Holy Spirit (fig.21). Included in the mosaic is the votive inscription of Deacon Lawrence, servant of Christ. This is the first extant pavement mosaic of its kind (known to the author) in the north Adriatic area appearing approximately two and a half centuries after the laying down of paired birds in Section 2, north hall. However, the image in this basilica shows Christian iconographic development not found in Aquileia.

Representations of confronting animals on pottery, bronzes, bas-reliefs, paintings and cylinders go back to the earliest antiquity. The tree of life may be represented separately but confronting animals always address a central object which usually took the form of a tree or some reductive form of a tree. Confronting animals adopt a 'mirror image' pose. The image is always frozen and there is usually no variation (apart from technical imperfections) in size, shape or pose. Representatives are to be found in third and fourth century paintings and mosaics in various parts of the Roman Empire. The

design can be found in fifth century North African Christian mosaics but none has been noted by the author, here or elsewhere, in the fourth century.

It is unclear as to the significance of the posture of these animals. A likely suggestion is that they guarded the tree of life, the symbol of immortality. It is unlikely that fifth century Christians literally thought of birds, such as doves, as confronting animals. They used the symbolism that came down to them from the past to demonstrate their own new concepts and beliefs. Doves, *per se*, were and remained the symbols of peace and peacocks an ancient symbol of immortality. It would have to be argued from the evidence that the symbolism of confronting animals with the tree of life was used by Christians to demonstrate their belief in life after death, the eternal truth of the Lord and Redeemer and the all-embracing and pacific nature of the Church. Apart from an occasional and regionally specific example such as the Church of the Lions in Jordan, only pacific animals such as birds, sheep and deer were used in paired confronting designs by Christians during the fifth and sixth centuries.

The baskets with stem and base containing fruit (with or without leaves) between the paired birds in Section 2 (fig.15) have as much right to be representative of a reductive tree of life as have jewelled cylinders and canthari, with or without sprouting vine. The baskets with fruit probably represent an offering. They together with their fruit are similar to those carried by boy and girl servers around 'Eucharistic Victory' in Compartment 6, south hall.

As with the remainder of north hall mosaics, apart from the inscriptions, there is no obvious evidence that the paired confronting birds in Sections 2 or 3 have a Christian implication or message. Assuming the same date for the inscription and the surrounding

mosaics, the donative inscription in Section 2, with its Christian implication, would suggest that the mosaics were laid down at a time benign to the Church, for example, after the Edict of Milan (313 AD) or even later according to Bertacchi.¹²⁹ In this circumstance it is possible that the paired mirror image bird/ basket might represent an early Christian adoption of the motif which was later developed to include birds centred by a cantharus, with the Cross and/or the Chi-Rho Monogram.

Just as it cannot be assumed that the paintings in the mid-third century Dura-Europos synagogue had a direct influence on the development of the Christian tree of life, so it is difficult to decide whether the paired birds with their central bush/basket in the north hall of the Basilica of Aquileia influenced the development of the tree of life theme in the Christian iconographic movement of the fifth century onward. They could both have been artistic cul-de-sacs. On the other hand there can be no doubt that both were influenced by previous interpretations of the tree of life with its two confronting animals and they are part of the broad compass of this symbolic movement. Bishop Chromatius of Aquileia waxed eloquent on the topic of the tree of life in his Sermons at the end of the fourth century (fn 120) but he does not mention the mosaics in early north hall of the Basilica. He was appointed Bishop of Aquileia in 388 and he may never have seen, at a discerning age, the mosaics in the north hall.¹³⁰

¹²⁹ Bertacchi (2000), 73.

¹³⁰ List of the Bishops of Aquileia in *Chronicum Venetum* as recorded in *Der Dom von Aquileia*, Lanckoronski, Niemann and Swoboda (1906), 41.

4

Band 2 (1.1×3.25m)

This band is composed of wavy tendrils with leaves and a small number of orange coloured berries. It is almost identical with the tendrill pattern in Band 3 (fig. 37) suggesting they were laid down in temporal proximity.



Fig. 22

**Band 2, north hall;
Tendrils with leaves and
fruit, viewed from the
east.**

**In the background is
Section 2.**

**Two files of black
tesserae separate Section
2 from Band 2.
There are three 'extra'
files of white tesserae just
inside Band 2**

Band 2 represents a significant division of mosaics in the north hall. If one stands on the band and faces west all the figures of birds and four-legged animals in Sections 1 and 2 are in their upright position and are immediately identifiable. If one turns around 180 degrees and faces east all the figures in Sections 3 and 4 are in their upright identifiable position. The immediate response is to assume the north hall is divided into two parts. It is of interest however that the two Section 1 and 2 inscriptions are read from west to east similar to all the figures in Section 3 and 4. The issue will be discussed further in terms of such factors as date, purpose and orientation.

Section 3

In the absence of the intrusive foundations, Section 3 would measure approximately $8.5 \times 16.8\text{m}$. The north remnant measures $8.5 \times 3.25\text{m}$. The mosaic framework consists of vertically and horizontally alternating round and elliptical medallions (figs. 5 and 6). Curvilinear octagons (the two longest diagonals average 1.05m) are the result of being surrounded by four roundels and four ellipses (fig.23). All the ellipses (long axis 0.73m , short 0.5m) contain the pattern of four blossoms/fleur-de-lis and four leaves similar to those in the hexagons in Section 2, though the central orange area is oblong rather than circular (fig.28). The roundels (diameter 0.77m) contain two patterns; alternating Solomon's knots and a floral design (fig.28). The latter comprises four orange blossoms (not fleur-de-lis) and four leaves which meet in a central circle.¹³¹

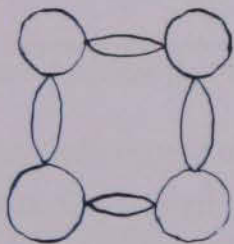


Fig. 23

Ellipse and roundel pattern, surrounding a curvilinear octagon, found in Section 3, north hall

In the 'ellipse and roundel' pattern of Section 3 the framework is based on a curvilinear octagon bounded by sectors of four circles and four ellipses (fig. 23). This is an uncommon pattern. The closest so far identified is in one of the small rooms between the Vestibule and the Room of the Small Hunt off the north corridor of the peristyle,

¹³¹ The blossoms are similar to the black and white first century AD quadripetal rosettes seen in the transverse mosaic pavement in the compound of the Archeological Museum of Aquileia.

Piazza Armerina, Sicily (c. 320 AD). The framework (fig.24) is demarcated by guilloche and two parallel lines of black *tesserae*. The roundels are lined by an elongated z-pattern. The concave octagons contain an undistinguished variety of floral designs.¹³² Another close example can be found in cubiculum ix, House of Bound Animals, Thuburbo Maius, North Africa (third century).¹³³ Again the roundels and ovals are lined by guilloche.

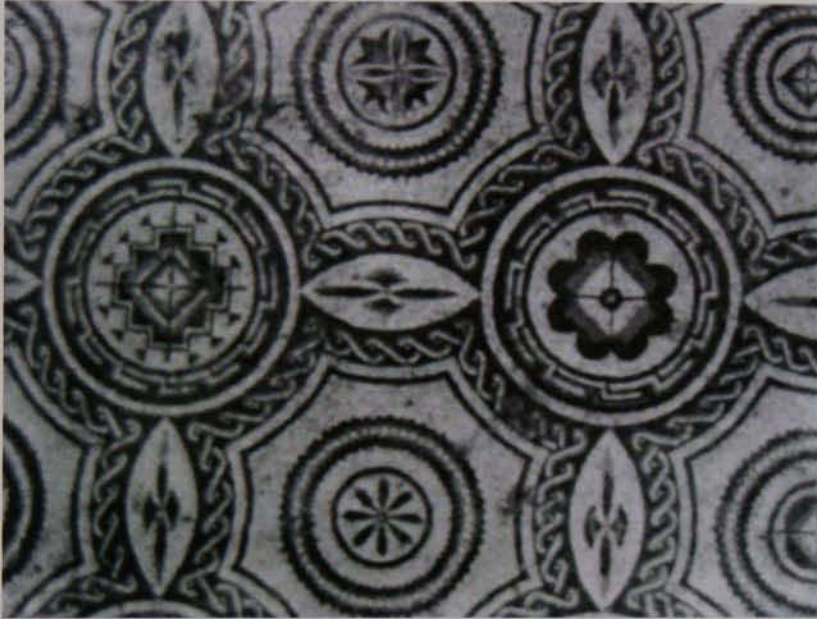


Fig. 24

**Ellipse and roundel
pattern.**

**Piazza Armerina,
Sicily c. 320 AD**

Following the disruption caused by the foundations there are five remaining pairs of curvilinear octagons, from stretching from west to east. Pictures of animals occur only in these octagons. All the five octagons along the foundations of the campanile (south) are damaged. The contents of the octagons are discussed as though the viewer, starting on

¹³² Kähler (1973), Pl. 17 (a), room 15.

¹³³ Dunbabin (1999), 111.

Band 2, walked towards the east. At the feet of the observer are, to the right a confronting pair of crows to the left a winged horse. For a general view see figures 5 and 6.

Two confronting crows (fig.25). These are perched on the tendril branches which sprout from the base of a bush/bouquet consisting of black and green leaves and orange pomegranates. There are four tendril branches with leaves and orange fruit. The bush is mid-way between the two crows. There is the hint of the rim of a vase at the base containing the bouquet.

The crows give the impression of an immobility of a pose similar to that caught in a nineteenth century family photograph. The legs and beak are black. While the overall impression is black there are almost equal numbers of black and dark brown *tesserae*. This gives an impression of shade and sheen. The birds are outlined by black *tesserae*. They are clearly identifiable as crows.



Fig. 25 Confronting crows

Fig. 26 A winged horse

The first two mosaics encountered in the Section 3 'corridor' approaching from the west. By chance the photographs almost approximate in the centre. Note the wall of the foundation on the right.

A winged horse (fig.26). The horse has a docked or bound-up tail from which hangs two ribbons. Its right side is presented to the viewer. The head and front legs cannot be seen because of foundation damage. The colour of the body, legs, tail and neck (that part undamaged) is orange-red. The tail and legs are demarcated by a single line of black *tesserae*, the haunch by two and the back by four. The back is foreshortened as though the animal were an ass or a pony. There are wings on each side of the animal. That on the right originates from the thigh of the front legs. The wings extend upwards and backwards and on the right side there are eleven outer feathers. The colour of the wings is light blue. They are lined by one or two lines of black *tesserae*. The image, which immediately comes to mind, is that of Pegasus. Like other quadrupeds in Section 3 Pegasus is something of a caricature with a short back and rear legs tucked under its belly.

A literature review of North African mosaics which refer to a picture of a winged



Fig. 27 (detail)

**Pegasus
The House of Nymphs**

**Nabeul Museum,
Tunisia**

Early fourth century

horse reveals a total of three. Of these only one is in Proconsular North Africa.¹³⁴ This mosaic belonged to the House of the Nymphs, Nabeul (early fourth century) and is now

¹³⁴ Dunbabin (1999), 111.

sited in the Museum of Nabeul (Neapolis). The colour of the body of the North African Pegasus is reddish and that of the wing feathers light blue (fig.27). Both are the same colours as those of the winged horse in Section 3. The North African horse is nearer to a natural animal; the length of the back is longer and the rear legs are not tucked under the body. Also the tail is not cropped or bound.¹³⁵ The raised right forelimb depicts the act of pawing.

The House of the Nymphs is concerned with mythological scenes as opposed to the majority of North African mosaics in the late third and fourth centuries which relate to contemporaneous themes.¹³⁶ Figure 27 illustrates part of a larger scene representing the myth of the spurt of the Hippocrene source under the hoof of Pegasus. The winged horse is in confrontation with three Nymphs. Clearly this belongs to the mainstream of Hellenistic-Roman mythology.¹³⁷

The similarity of the two winged horses does not necessarily confirm that the Aquileian mosaic is a copy of that from Neapolis (the opposite may be true if the date of the north hall mosaic is earlier than the fourth century) but it does suggest that they both originated from the same pictorial background of Hellenistic-Roman mythological art which probably would not have originated in North Africa.

¹³⁵ Dunbabin (1978), 101, plate 90, Yacoub (2002), 317-325. The docked/bound tail of the Section 3 'Pegasus' is adorned with ribbons. Mosaics of circus horses with docked/bound tails with ribbons have been found in Sousse, Carthage, Dougga and Bizerta (see fig. 19) dating from the early third to the late fourth centuries.

¹³⁶ Dunbabin (1999), 112.

¹³⁷ Among the myths associated with Pegasus is that Bellerophon, on Pegasus, who, attempting to fly to heaven on Pegasus, was unseated and killed by Zeus (Jupiter). Pegasus became a constellation and a servant of Zeus. In late antiquity it was interpreted as an allegory of the immortality of the soul.

The ass. The next pair of animal octagons contain to the left an ass and to the right a partridge. Figure 28(a) reveals a remarkable mosaic picture of a virile rearing ass in an extraordinarily agitated pose. It has the following asinine features: grey colour, long ears, short mane, transverse black cross just posterior to the neck, black stripes on its legs and a fan-like end to its tail. The effect is produced with grey-blue *tesserae* intermingling with darker grey and black to give an impression of light and shade. The body parts are sharply outlined by black *tesserae*. The hind legs are tucked under the body similar to those of all the other four-legged animals in Section 3. Two thin black rings close to one another on each shank are clearly visible. There is a pink tongue in an open mouth.



Fig. 28 (a) The ass (b) Paired pheasants



Fig. 30 ? a sheep



Fig. 29 A partridge

Its appearance leads to the assumption that it is a wild ass. There are two species of wild ass: African and Asian. Inspection of the Tunisian museums and review of the literature reveals at least three North African mosaics which contain wild asses (now in the Bardo and El Jem Museums). One third century mosaic shows two wild asses, one of which is being attacked by a tiger. The asses in the three mosaics are termed onagers by both Fantar and Yacoub.¹³⁸ This is surprising choice as the onager's natural habitat is in Central Asia.¹³⁹ While onagers have some features similar to those of an ass the Section 3 animal could not be described as an onager whether comparison is made from natural life or from art.

It is possible that the pose represents ass-demons which were sanctified in Thrace and Phrygia.¹⁴⁰ This would be in-keeping with other mythological identifications in Section 3 and might eventually have come within the repertoire of general Hellenistic-Roman imagery.

The partridge (fig.29). One (+ one) partridge faces a bush. The bird to the south is most likely to be missing due to damage caused by the foundation. Based on the colour of the legs it is probably a red-legged partridge whose distribution extends from south Europe to North Africa.¹⁴¹ The bush is composed of black leaves and orange flowers with a blue background and projects from a vase rim. There are two (+two) branches with leaves and flowers extending from the bush.

¹³⁸ Fantar (1994), 34, Yacoub (2002), 44.

¹³⁹ Larousse *Encyclopedia of Animal Life* (1967), 584.

¹⁴⁰ Leach and Fried, Funk and Wagnall's *Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology and Legend* (1994), 83. In Egypt, the ass was sacred to Typhon, termed 'a monstrous god'. It was also sacred to Dionysus.

¹⁴¹ Larousse *Encyclopedia of Animal Life* (1972), 396.

A panel on a third century El-Jem *xenia* floor contains two partridges marching one behind the other.¹⁴² According to Martial they were eaten as a delicacy.¹⁴³ According to Friedmann, both St Jerome and St Augustine believed the devil at times assumed the form of a partridge.¹⁴⁴ This they related to the partridges supposed excessive and unnatural fecundity. They were also thought to purloin eggs from other nests leading to the concept that they represented despoilers of homes.

A pair of pheasants (fig.28b). Moving eastward, to the left are two pheasants perched on tendril branches which extend from the base of a bush. The breasts of each bird face outwards while their heads are turned at almost 180° so that they look directly at one another. This is likely to represent an imperfect attempt at a more sophisticated confronting presentation than that of the two crows. The birds clearly represent the common ring-necked pheasant, *Phasianus colchicus*. The plumage shows a gradual change from red to yellow which succeeds in giving the impression of light and shade. There are brown spots and hints of metallic tints. The wings contain brown *tesserae* and the neck green. The birds are outlined by black and brown *tesserae*. The bush/bouquet sits in a vase/canthurus.¹⁴⁵ The body of the bush is composed of black leaves, magenta/pink flowers and a blue background. Two further thin branches with leaves and orange leaves project on each side from the upper part of the bush.

¹⁴² Yacoub (2002), 107.

¹⁴³ Martial, *Epigrams* III, 58.

¹⁴⁴ Friedmann (1980), 282.

¹⁴⁵ The relationship of the pheasants with their heads and backs positioned in a confronting fashion, is similar to the confronted doves with canthurus and vine in the presbytery of S.Vitale, Ravenna., Bustacchini 1987), 35.

The pheasant also appeared on the table in the time of Martial.¹⁴⁶ Clearly its popularity as a product for the table was widespread. It is represented on the floor, like the partridge, in a frame on the same mosaic *xenia* floor of the third century El-Jem triclinium mentioned above.¹⁴⁷ In the shadow of the peacock, it early assumed a connotation of immortality and as such was used as sepulchral ornament in early Christian art.¹⁴⁸

A ? sheep (fig.30). This octagon, beside the pheasants, reveals the backside of an animal with a shortened body and bushy tail. The coat is striped with black, brown and white *tesserae*. Though the front of the animal is absent due to damage, it appears to be a four-legged. It is difficult to identify this animal but it is likely that it is a sheep. Its tail is similar to that of the ram in Section 4, east (fig. 55) and its striped coat to that of another ram in Compartment 5, south hall. As with all four-legged Section 3 animals, its hind-legs are tucked under its belly as distinct from quadrupeds in the base of the campanile. The design of the outline of the scapula is accentuated like that of the ass and the 'bull'(see below). It would seem reasonable to assume that it represents some mythological or cosmological tradition like that attributed to 'Pegasus'.

The goat, (fig.31). Moving further east the fourth pair of octagons contain separately a goat and a missel-thrush. To the left is a rearing evil-looking, brown he-goat. On its back is an orange/red saddle-cloth extending from the neck to the haunch. A pastoral horn/cornucopia and a crook/*pedum* are tied together with a black string (black *tesserae*)

¹⁴⁶ Martial, *Epigrams* III, 58.

¹⁴⁷ Yacoub (2002), 107. The same floor contained the crayfish and electric ray frame discussed in chapter 5 in connection with the lobster and electric ray frame in Section 4 of the north hall.

¹⁴⁸ Friedmann (1980), 285.

which extends by two threads across the saddle-cloth. The tie extends over the back of the animal and the horn and crook is balanced on the left side by an indeterminate object on the left side of the goat. The saddle cloth is secured by a brown band around the neck and under the tail. It has a bearded chin and curved horns.



Fig. 31 The goat



Fig. 32 The missel-thrush

The head, chest and front are composed of mainly brown *tesserae* mixed with some black. The haunch and hind legs have grey *tesserae* as well as brown. The goat is one of the more striking artistic ventures of the north hall and has all the attributes already ascribed to the ass (fig.28a) namely solid volume, plasticity and sharp outlines.

A review of North African mosaics based on site visits and a scrutiny of pictorial text failed to uncover a direct comparison. However, a possible connection was found in a large early third century mosaic in the Sousse Museum which represents pictorially the months of the Julian calendar and the Seasons. Each month is illustrated by a Roman religious fete or an agricultural activity. The framed month of September is represented

by the treading of grapes by two men. To the left of September, personifying Autumn, is a frame containing a satyr in a red tunic with a *pedum* in his left hand and a cornucopia held aloft in his right hand.¹⁴⁹ Red to red/brown is the colour associated with autumn in mosaics demonstrating the personification of the Seasons (fig.32a).



Fig. 32a

Satyr with red tunic (detail)

**El Jem, Tunisia
(now in Sousse museum)
c. 230 AD**

Satyr, with crook (*pedum*) in his left hand and horn (cornucopia) in his right hand, representing Autumn

Satyrs and goats in mythology and folklore share many characteristics. The goat of Section 3 and the framed satyr share a *pedum*/crook and a cornucopia/horn and a red tunic/saddle cloth. Both portrayals represent the influence of Bacchus/Dionysus and are likely to be derived from a common Hellenistic-Roman mythological source. The appearance of the goat may represent the dance of the he-goat demon, a myth which originated in Thrace. The demon was characterised by cloven-hoofed, dionysiac satyrs, hence the relationship between devils and goats in medieval times.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁹ Yacoub (2002), 122.

¹⁵⁰ Leach and Fried (eds.) Funk and Wagnall's *Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology and Legend*. (1994), 456.

One (+one) missel-thrush (fig.32) faces a relatively tall thin bush placed in a definite cantharus. The south bird is missing due to foundation damage. The missel-thrush has a general European distribution.¹⁵¹ It feeds on the berries of the mistletoe. The bush is composed of black leaves and orange flowers. Vine-like tendrils with leaves and orange flowers project from the bouquet. The bird perches on a tendril branch. The rearing forelegs of the accompanying goat can be seen to the left.



Fig. 33

Section 3

Confronting
birds

European
Purple
Gallinules

(*Porphyrio
porphrio*)

Colour effect
due to increase
in number of
glass *tesserae*
and a decrease
in size of the
tesserae used.

The final and fifth pair of octagons in the artificial Section 3 corridor contain a pair of the European Gallinulae and a bovine-like creature.

¹⁵¹ Larousse *Encyclopedia of Animal Life*. (1972), 445-446.

A confronting pair of Purple Gallinules (fig.33): In terms of artistic content this frame of European Purple Gallinules (*Porphyrio porphyrio*) is the finest individual pavement mosaic in both the north and south halls of the Basilica of Aquileia and indeed in all other churches built during the fourth, fifth and indeed the sixth centuries in the wider north Italy area, that is, from Verona to Ljubjana . Substantial numbers of opaque glass *tesserae* (smalti) were used to produce a startling blue colour effect and it was not until these were used in the 'Blue Angel' mural mosaic in Sant' Apollinare Nuovo, Ravenna, c.520 AD, that the purity of colour can be equalled. Again as with the paired birds in Section 2 there is the impression of immobility and with no real sense of a natural pose. The striking black-blue hue of the bodies provides the tone for the remainder of the mosaic. The same technique is used as for the pheasants to provide light and shade; the plumage inferiorly is black, changing to blue and then under the wings to white. The smooth contours of the water-fowl are stylised with orange beaks and frontal shields. Clearly defined are the long orange legs and frontal toes.¹⁵²

The birds are perched on the lower two branches of a tree-like stem from which sprouts a thick bush/bouquet of black leaves and orange flowers /fruit. There are four branches with leaves and orange flowers. There is no semblance of a vase. The Porphyriions were recognised by Roman writers. The finest specimens of this gallinule are said by Pliny to have come from the Commagene.¹⁵³

The 'Bull'(fig.34): To the right of the Gallinulae is a bovine-like beast (a bull?) with a grey saddle-cloth around which is red-orange strap which encircles the belly. A scythe is

¹⁵² Larousse *Encyclopedia of Animal Life*. (1972), 406.

¹⁵³ Pliny *Naturalis Historia*, X, 63 (129).



Fig. 34
A 'bull' with sickle tied to top of pole. The pole is secured by a band surrounding the belly of animal

stuck between the strap and the cloth with its blade at right angles above the beast. The scythe has been described, more accurately, as a pole to which, at the top, is secured a sickle by an orange band.¹⁵⁴ The tail is upright with a fan-like end very similar to that of the ass. The position of the right hind leg under the belly is similar to the other four-legged animals in Section 3. It has two black rings on its shank. There is a tendency, shared by the other two animals damaged by the foundations, towards inflated volume distortion. The colour of the body is grey with outlining by black *tesserae*.

The bovine quadruped in Section 3 with a red rope tied around its belly into which is slotted a pole with a sickle has been identified with Saturn/Cronus.¹⁵⁵ Saturn was the

¹⁵⁴ Brusin (1950), 1181.

¹⁵⁵ Iacumin (1990), 81-85, has identified all the four-legged animals with various spheres or their archons in the hebdomed according to Gnostic literature particularly Pistis Sophia [Mead., transl., (1984)] He relates the beast in figure 34 with Saturn or Cronos, a member of the ancient cosmos. While it is difficult to substantiate his views on other animals it seems quite reasonable to consider his opinion here. The Sephira Binah in the Cabale *Tree of Life* represents bearded Cronos with a scythe as representing old age, [Halevi (1972), 66.]

Roman god of sowing or seed and was equated by the Romans with the Greek agricultural deity, Cronus. In Greek mythology the latter castrated his father, Uranus, with a sickle. Saturn was also identified with a sickle. A magnificent third century framed cosmological mosaic from Bir-Chana, Tunisia, now in the Bardo Museum, contains a central bust of a bearded Saturn, with his sickle, surrounded by the busts of the gods representing the six remaining days of the week with their representative animal icons (fig.35).¹⁵⁶ Further out are the signs of the Zodiac. This large cosmological mosaic is bounded by a hexagon within which is a hexagram.

According to Yacoub, El/Cronus/Saturn (summarised by the name Saturn) was a popular god in North Africa who was associated with an 'original native flavour' and represented on numerous stelai and sculptures.¹⁵⁷ Saturn was high in the pantheon of Phoenician gods transported to Punic North Africa. He is represented by a bull's head with laurel wreath in a mosaic in temple A, close to the sea, in the headland of Selinunte (*Selinus*), south-west Sicily (fig.36).

The aim of Mithraism was to permit the soul to rise from earth, through the seven planetary spheres that ring the earth, until it reached the sphere of Saturn.¹⁵⁸ This is a cosmological view not dissimilar to the explanation by Iacumen of the seven Gnostic planetary spheres.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁶ The gods also represented planetary deities. From six o'clock counter-wise: Sunday—Sun, Monday—Moon, Tuesday—Mars, Wednesday—Mercury, Thursday—Jupiter, Friday—Venus, Centre—Saturn. These deities are translated into planetary spheres by Mithraism around which the soul must negotiate to arrive at Saturn.

¹⁵⁷ Yacoub (2002), 126.

¹⁵⁸ Gordon (1996), 96-101.

¹⁵⁹ Iacumen (1990), 80.

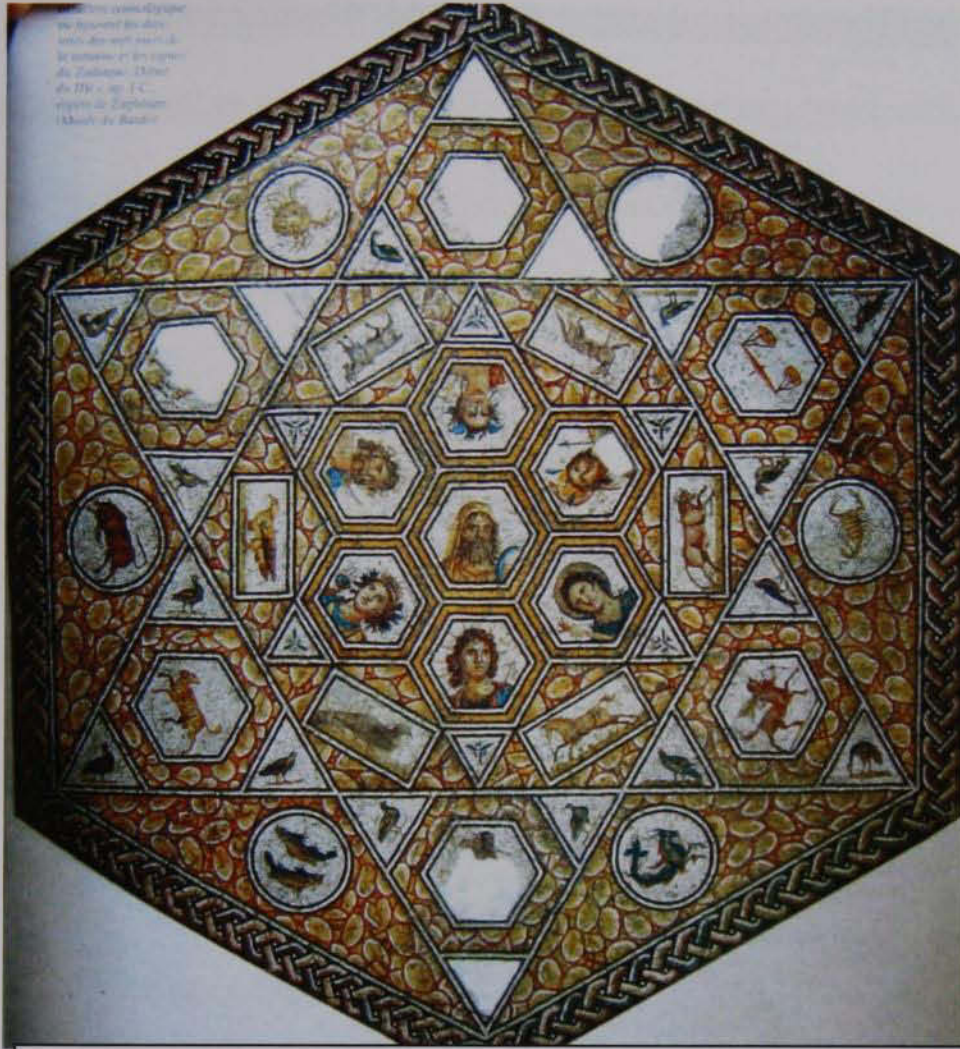


Fig. 35 Hexagram within a hexagon
Bardo Museum, Tunis
Beginning of third century

Saturn with sickle represents Saturday (centre), surrounded by representatives of the remaining days of the week (hexagons). The signs of the Zodiac are more peripheral (roundels and hexagons)



Fig. 36

The Punic god
El portrayed as
a bull

Selinunte, Sicily

Third century
BC

A mythological/cosmological explanation of this mosaic cannot be out ruled. It is not impossible that the beast can be identified by Cronus/Saturn as Iacumen suggests

Band 3 area (0.93×3.5m)



Fig. 37
Lozenge and Solomon's knot mosaic
sequence in Section 4
Note the inserted stone slab
Verona orange marble tiles
Seven files of white tesserae

Band 3
(c)Tendrill, leaf and fruit

Mosaics of Section 3

This area is composed of three horizontal layers (fig.37). From west to east there is a tendrill/leaf/orange fruit layer similar to Band 2 (0.67×3.1m) bordered by two files of black *tesserae*, a layer of seven files of plain white *tesserae* (0.15×3.1m) and a layer of orange/red tiles of Verona marble (0.11×3.5m), measured up to the north wall, (fig.38). The files of plain tesserae are outside the tendrill boundary as distinct from those associated with Band 2. There is only one file of black *tesserae* between the tiles and the mosaics, an unusual finding in the north hall. The tiles are a recent addition. Their depth is 0.1m and when removed a gutter is formed. According to Gnirs, a chancel screen would have fitted into the gutter.¹⁶⁰ To the east is a sequence of the alternating rectangles

¹⁶⁰ Gnirs (1915), 158.

with lozenges and squares with Solomon's knots. Near the campanile foundation, fitted into the sequence and crossing the tiles, is a stone slab measuring 0.68×0.28m. Gouged into the stone is an iron clamp surrounded by lead (about 0.08×0.08m). This was thought to anchor a support for the chancel screen (fig.38a).¹⁶¹ In line, there is a similar slab (0.68×0.19m), some 2.53m away, at the junction of the north wall and the band of plain



(a)

(b)

Fig. 38

- (a) Stone slab in the rectangle and square sequence. The photograph is taken to the east of the lines of orange tiles. Beside the square containing the Solomon's knot, just above the mid-line, is an irregular circle of lead in which there is an iron clamp.
- (b) The lead and clamp can be more easily seen in the slab beside the north wall in the band of 'white' *tesserae*. Across the slab the tiles are replaced by mortar.

tesserae which surround the mosaics of the whole hall (fig.38b). The rectangle and square on each side of the slab nearer to the campanile are shortened to allow the second stone to fit in (fig. 37).

The close similarity of the tendril design suggests Band 2 and 3 were laid down at about the same time.¹⁶² The middle sub-band consists of seven files of white *tesserae*

¹⁶¹ Tavano (1960), 106-107.

¹⁶² Menis (2003), 9. Menis relates this tendril design with a similar pattern in a mosaic, c. 300 found in the burial vault of the Julii in the cemetery under St Peter's, Rome. It contains a mosaic picture of Christ driving a *quadriga* represented as Apollo.

(0.15m) gave the mosaicist leeway in approximating Sections 3 and 4.¹⁶³ There is general agreement that the lozenge and knot sequence separates the presbytery from the remainder of the hall and that the sequence was incorporated into the north hall from the beginning. This means that at the time of the laying down of the mosaics, whether in an early oratory or during 313-319 AD, advisors would have recognised a difference, modest though it may have been, between the celebrants of the liturgy and laity. The erection of a chancel rail, however, would have made the separation more obvious and would probably have had a hierarchical connotation.

Mosaics in the cavity of the campanile

The natural assumption that the visible mosaic frameworks of Sections 2, 3 and 4 continued into the area destroyed by the campanile received support when mosaics in line with the north 'corridor' remnant of Section 3 were discovered in the internal cavity of the campanile (fig.39).¹⁶⁴ The framework of ellipses and roundels and the sequence of quadrupeds and paired mirror-image birds are the same as in the 'north corridor' (figs.5 and 6). There are, however, differences, the most obvious being the lack of originality, or perhaps absence of the bizarreness, of the images in the interior of the campanile. The detail of the mosaics in the campanile cavity will now be considered.

The 'blossom and leaf' design is commonly used by craftsmen and artists

¹⁶³ The files of white *tesserae* could be associated with changes in the mosaic floor associated the later addition of the chancel screen (see chapter 10).

¹⁶⁴ Bertacchi (1962), 27-32. A good three dimensional view can be found in Fantar *La Mosaique en Tunisie*. (1994), 252.(See fig.39). The mosaics are now stored in the Archaeological Museum of Aquileia.

from antiquity to the present. The full-scale 'blossom' has the appearance of being split into three, the most common natural example being the lily (*fleur-de-lis*). The basic design is of four blossoms, two on the long horizontal axis and two on the short vertical axis and ordinarily one leaf is interposed between each blossom. The stems of the four leaves and the four stalks of the blossoms meet in a common centre. The design of the centre varies but it is usually a circle or an oval, lined on the outside by one file of black *tesserae*. It is ubiquitous in both Aquileian halls (chapter 6, table 1). It occupies all hexagons in Section 2 and all the ellipses in Section 3 of the north hall 'corridor' and is present in the ellipses of the foundation cavity.

The most common variation is the interposition of vestigial blossoms in the vertical axis. This change is almost certainly due to shortcuts in craftsmanship caused by lack of space. Of the 'blossom and leaf' designs in the south hall, fifty two percent have vestigial or no vertical blossoms. In the foundation cavity all the blossoms in the vertical axial position are vestigial. On the other hand, in Sections 2 and 3, north hall, all the



Fig. 39

The mosaics in the cavity of the foundation of the Popponian campanile (see fig. 5 and 6).

The mosaics are in the same north-south plane as section 3, north hall

Note:

1. The vestigial blossoms in the short axes of the ellipses
2. The similarity of the four-legged animals to those in Section 2, north hall
3. The similarity of the paired, mirror-image birds to those in Section 2 rather than Section 3.
4. The systemised upper branches of the bushes above the paired birds
5. The eccentric position of the sheep in the left central curvilinear octagon

← NORTH

appropriate mosaics frames have a complete complement of fully formed blossoms.



Fig. 40

North hall

Section 2,

'Blossom and leaf' pattern with orange central circles lined by black *tesserae* and containing vestigial blossoms composed of five black *tesserae*.

In the hexagons of Section 2 the centres are circular and contain orange *tesserae* in which there are five black *tesserae* representing minute blossoms (fig. 40). In Section 3 the centres are oval and lined not only by the usual black file of *tesserae* but also by an inner white file. Inside the white file are orange *tesserae* amongst which nine white *tesserae* constitute vestigial white blossoms (fig. 41).



Fig. 41

**North hall
Section 3,**

**'blossom and leaf'
pattern, with
a central oval lined
by black *tesserae***

**The orange centre
contains a vestigial
floral design using
nine white *tesserae***

In the centre of the foundation it would be expected that the pattern would follow that in the Section 3 'corridor' mosaics. However, the foundation 'blossom and leaf' designs have the same circular orange centres, lined only by a file of black *tesserae* with five black *tesserae* representing vestigial blossoms as those in the hexagons of Section 2.

The floral designs and Solomon's knots show little difference between the north 'corridor' Section 3 and the campanile. Small sepals spread to the periphery from the flowers of the former (figs. 16 and 17). These are absent in the latter (fig. 39).

In the bush and confronting bird frames, the birds (fig. 39) displayed in the campanile cavity, apart, perhaps, from the crows in the north-east corner, are similar if

not identical with the paired birds, not in the Section 3 'corridor', but in Section 2 (fig. 15). They are smaller and lack the intensity of colour found in those in Section 3. They also have a stylised pose identical with those in Section 2.

In Section 3 ('the corridor') the stem of the bush between paired birds is planted in a vase in two instances, in two others there is a rounded rim, probably that of a vase, into which the stem enters and in the fifth instance (the Gallinules) there is no suggestion of a container. In the campanile stem-less bushes stand on what seems to be polished trays. The upper branches of the bushes in the campanile are reduced and systemised to a left and right spiral.

All four legged animals the animals in the 'corridor' of Section 3 can be regarded as esoteric. The animals in the undamaged octagons in that part of Section 3 found in the centre of the campanile are easily identifiable with normal country life: a leaping hare and antelope and a stationary sheep. The sheep is eccentrically placed in its octagon, poor



Fig. 42 Section 2, north hall (viewed from the east) :
A leaping horse (probably) and a leaping antelope.
Note similarity with mosaics in the cavity of the campanile (fig. 39).

craftsmanship not found either in the Section 2 or in Section 3 north 'corridor' frames. These animals are similar, not to the animals in Section 3 as might be expected, but to

those in Section 2. Figures 5 and 6 provide an outline of all animals in the undamaged mosaics in Section 2. All are related to country life. Figure 42 provides two examples in more detail of quadrupeds in Section 2. Their close relationship with the quadrupeds in the foundation (fig.39) will be noted.

According to the diagrams of the complete north hall floor, included in various communications, the framework for the mosaics of the north 'corridor' north hall, if it had not been interrupted by the campanile foundation, would have meshed seemingly perfectly with that in the cavity of the campanile (figs. 5 and 6). However, reviewing the diagrams in these significant communications, they all look as though they were copied from one original cartoon!¹⁶⁵

The mosaics in the north-east are different to those in the remainder of the north hall in terms of quality of form and colour and uniqueness of presentation. It might be anticipated that the mosaics in the newly discovered cavity of the foundation, being associated with Section 3, would display a similar high quality. This proved not to be the case and they can be more readily identified with those of Section 2.¹⁶⁶ This implies different teams were responsible for the mosaics in the north and the south of Section 3. We cannot be certain but the same group of mosaicists are more likely to have been responsible for both Section 2 and the centre of the campanile floors. The arguments surrounding this concept have been briefly introduced in chapter 1 under 'Literature review' and will be considered further.

¹⁶⁵ Marini (2003), 20., Bertacchi (2000), 69., Chevallier (1990) 10., Mirabella Roberti (1982), 414.

¹⁶⁶ Tavano (1982), 560. Tavano excludes the mosaics in the centre of the campanile from his analysis of the 'formal unity' of the mosaics in the north and north-east of the campanile.

The lozenge and 'Solomon's knot' sequence

The alternating lozenge and Solomon's knot sequence continues from the north end of Band 3 around the edge of the surviving Section 4, that is, along the north wall, then along the east wall and finally, turning at right angles at the junction of the east and south walls of the early hall, disappearing into the campanile foundations. It is not complete as it is interrupted by the encroachment of the *tesserae* of the 'trapezoid' area in the middle of Section 4, east (fig. 6). However, it is likely that the sequence would have originally surrounded the whole of Section 4. Rectangles contain each lozenge and measure on average 0.48×0.88m. Solomon's knots are contained in squares which measure 0.48 sq.m. *In toto* there are thirteen visible rectangles with lozenges surrounding Section 4. Each lozenge is bounded by two lines of black *tesserae*. There is a central circle which, in the majority of cases, is orange: blue and black are the alternatives. Between the lozenge and the central circle are a variety of patterns. The space between the lozenge and its containing rectangle is occupied by four acute-angle triangles. The variety of patterns is a tribute to the inventiveness of the *musivarii*. A similar sequence separates, but does not surround, the most easterly mosaic panel in the south hall from the remaining eight panels. The sequence probably signifies the separation of presbytery and the clergy from the main section of the nave containing the laity.¹⁶⁷ The lozenge and Solomon's knot sequence can be found in mosaic floors throughout the first five centuries of the Christian era. Reference will be made (Chapter 8) to a similar sequence close to the

¹⁶⁷ Marini (1994), 30.

altar area of two late fourth/early fifth century churches. However the sequence can also be found in non-Christian floors. For example the design occurs in Building z, Mosaic of Masks, Pergamon (second century AD) framing a central carpet of octagons containing masks.¹⁶⁸

Section 4

Section 4 occupies the remaining east part of the artificial north corridor created by the foundation and the full length of the extreme east portion of the early north hall from the north to the south wall (figs 5 and 6). The original area of Section 4 would have measured approximately $8.6 \times 17\text{m}$. Extrapolating the evidence of the remaining mosaics it seems that the section was divided, north to south, into two distinct floors by a straight 'dividing line' formed by two files of black *tesserae* (fig.51). This line meets the angle of the foundation just before it (the foundation) turns south (fig 5). The west floor would have measured about $5.1 \times 17\text{m}$ and the east $3.5 \times 17\text{m}$.¹⁶⁹

Section 4, west

This is now represented by an area of $5.1 \times 3.5\text{m}$ along the north wall from Band 3 (orange tiles) to the 'dividing line'. Its framework consists of rounded crosses with roundels fitted between each of the four arms of the cross. The end of one branch of the cross to the opposite branch measures, on average, 1.7m. The roundels have a diameter of

¹⁶⁸ Dunbabin (1999), 225.

¹⁶⁹ Measurement of the width of the hall quoted by Marini (1994), 17, is used here since an approximation is sufficient. Actual measurements for the study of the width of the framed carpet varied from 16.8 to 16.4m. There is also, around the margin, a strip of plain *tesserae* measuring 0.4 to 0.67m.

0.56m. Branches of four roundels and sectors of four circles present an internal curvilinear octagon. The length of the longest diameter of these octagons varies from 1.0 to 1.1m (figs. 43, 46, 47, 51).



Fig. 43 Section 4, west. (Looking east)

Upper right: Tree with 7 partridges

Centre:

Right: a turkey cock

Left: a goat on a bed of leaves on the top of a tree

The framework of rounded crosses, roundels and curvilinear octagons

The lozenge/knot sequence

Examples of the rounded cross with four roundels nestling in the angles of the cross are not common. The pattern can be seen on one of the third century AD mosaic floors housed in the Bardo Museum, Tunisia (fig. 44). More common, in the Sousse and El Jem Museums are third century pavement mosaics with the rounded cross, ovals and curvilinear octagon patterns (fig.45) Inclusions are predominantly of the 'fleur-de-lis' type with leaves attached to stems. A rather ill-constructed rounded cross with four roundels sited at the angles can also be seen in the 'Europe and the Bull' floor of the Lullingstone villa, Kent, England (mid-fourth century).¹⁷⁰

¹⁷⁰ Meates (1963), 76- 83.



Fig. 44 Rounded cross/ roundel/octagon
Third century, Bardo Museum

Fig. 45 Rounded cross/oval/octagon
Third century, Sousse and El Jem Museums

This pattern is present in Compartment 2, south hall and on the floor of the late fourth/early fifth century Betika church near Pula (fig.89). The roundels, crosses and octagons in this church contain geometric and fleur-de-lis designs.

The mosaics of Section 4, west, can be separated into three groups depending upon whether they are sited in rounded crosses, octagons or roundels.

Rounded crosses

The contents of these represent the dominating motifs of mosaics in the west floor. Various animals are bedded on the top of trees in the four preserved rounded crosses. From west to east these are a goat (fig. 43), two partridges and five chicks (perched rather than bedded) (fig.46), a lobster and electric ray (fig. 47) and an indeterminate beast, possibly a cow. Accompanying the 'cow' on the tree-top bed is a basket containing twelve white/blue discs (fig.51). The trees consist of a portion of a tree-

trunk with frond-like leaves/branches sprouting from the middle of the trunk and branches with narrow leaves from the top. The bed, on the top, is uniformly a platform of light green and blue *tesserae*.

The placid goat resting on its platform is more in keeping with the four-legged animals in Section 2 than those in Section 3. The proportions are naturalistic and there is evidence of light and shade. Grey *tesserae* predominate with black lines and brown on the haunches.



Fig 46

Section 4, west (middle area)

Upper left: the lobster and the electric ray

Upper right: a hooded crow

Middle left: a thrush

Middle right: a rounded cross with the family of partridges

Lower right: the wall of the campanile foundation

Lower left: the rounded cross with the goat on a tree.

The partridges are probably 'rock partridges' with a black throat band and no pendant breast feathers. The adult partridges are almost 'painterly' mosaics in their naturalism. The plumage colour is red and the mosaicist has followed the same pattern as that of the birds in Section 3 to demonstrate light and shade. The throat is white lined by black *tesserae* and there are prominent brown lines in the red plumage. Despite the distribution of the partridges in branches of a tree, partridges are not noted for their perching abilities.

The crustacean on top of its tree is one of the most striking mosaics of the north hall. The body is composed of alternating lines of light and dark orange *tesserae* and the back of alternating lines of brown and orange *tesserae*. It is a decapod with the four right orange/brown legs placed on the tree bed. Because of the lateral view the left legs are hidden. As is the case with decapods the front two legs have been modified into pincers and there are two pairs of antennae.



Fig. 47

Section 4, west:

**Lobster and electric ray
in a rounded cross.**

The lobster is red. Its legs suggest it is lying on its ventral side, i.e., upright. On the other hand its tail and claws are in the vertical axis.

Note the electric ray contains 5 'eyes'

The roundels contain representatives of all the geometric patterns in section 4, west: sun rays, 'Maltese' crosses' and four point stars

If the drama in colour in Section 3 is represented by the Purple Gallinules then that in Section 4 it is represented by this orange-red decapod. It must be assumed to be a marine rather than a fresh-water animal because it keeps company with an electric ray (see below); both found at various depths off the sea-shore. Its (fairly) well developed

pincers and divided tail-fan suggest a 'true' rather than a 'spiny' lobster (marine crayfish). The problem is that the colour of the exoskeleton of the true lobster in its natural state varies from black to blue to brown.¹⁷¹ It becomes orange-red due to release of carotene only when it is boiled. It is not an idle thought to consider that the mosaicist was only familiar with the cooked animal.

Criticisms to be levelled at mosaic representations in the south hall (chapter 6) must also be applied to this mosaic. The pincers are placed one on top of the other in a vertical manner. The image does not discern between the carapace which covers the head and thorax and the segmented exoskeleton which covers the abdomen. This poor definition has led to a claim that the creature is a combination of a lobster and a fish.¹⁷² Also at the end of the body, the tail-fan is displayed vertically rather than horizontally.

The triangular fish above the lobster in the same rounded cross represents an electric ray (the Common Torpedo). In natural life it has five 'eyes', a medium brown skin (not unlike that in the mosaic), a tail and measures from 30 to 60 cm. It can generate an electrical shock of up to 200 volts. Both the true lobster and the electric ray are common in the Mediterranean. A photograph of an electric ray may be seen in figure 48. It is accompanied by a marine crayfish so that comparison can be made with a blue/black true lobster commonly seen in Western Europe. A crayfish also turns red when boiled.

¹⁷¹ Dr Ian Lawler of the Irish Sea Fisheries Board has kindly provided the following information: The only clawed lobster found in NW Europe and the Mediterranean (*Homarus gammarus*) is normally blue. All spiny lobsters or crayfish in the Mediterranean are brown or shades thereof.

¹⁷² Marini (1994), 91.



Fig. 48 Left: Marine crayfish

Right: Electric ray

Mention will again be made in chapter 7 of fourth century mosaics of seas with abundant fish in Aquileia (fig.64), Piazza Armerina, Dezensano and Constantine. Many of these and similar mosaics in the Bardo and Sousse Museums, Tunisia, contain electric rays (torpedoes) and various types of crustaceans. The making of marine mosaics



Fig. 49

Top: Electric ray and a small crustacean

Middle: a fight between a lobster and a polypus

Naples Archeological Museum (Pompeii)

First century BC

containing a multiplicity of fish has a long tradition in the Romano-Hellenistic world. The marine study from the House of Faun, Pompeii (fig.49) is one of the best known mosaics in the Naples Archaeological Museum. It shows a fight between a lobster (probably a spiny lobster because of the lack of pincers) and a *polypus*. Numerous other

well-known fish are portrayed including an electric ray and another smaller crustacean at the top of the *emblema*. Framed in the same third century El Jem *xenia* floor (The Dice Players), already described in chapter 4 under the sections on ‘partridges’ and ‘pheasants’, is a mosaic of a spiny lobster (a marine crayfish), an electric ray and a



Fig. 50

Marine crayfish ('spiny lobster') and electric ray

Detail from a *xenia* mosaic

El Jem, Tunisia (now in the Bardo Museum)

Third century AD

The third object is probably a mollusc

mollusc (fig. 50). The images in this frame are mirror images of the lobster and the electric ray mosaic in Section 4, the crustacean faces left rather than the right and the tail of the electric ray trails to the left rather than to the right.

Why two mosaicists, one in Aquileia and the other in El Jem, should choose to put a lobster and an electric ray into a single frame is a difficult question to answer. The other contents of the *xenia* frames contain live or dead animals destined for the table, fruit, a candle-stick, bottles, a convivial party and animals associated with the amphitheatre, all without obvious mythological allusion. The menu of a dinner party often lists ‘lobster’ but it would be unlikely to include ‘electric ray’. It is ironic and entirely fortuitous that the Section 4 frame contains a cooked lobster! It has been suggested that the electric ray,

whose tail trails over the crustacean in each mosaic, is applying an electric stimulus to the crustacean.¹⁷³ This looks likely on examination of the two mosaics but probably does not provide a final interpretation. The mosaic from Pompeii is a reminder that a similar scene was displayed two to three hundred years previously and that the artistic background of both the El Jem and Aquileia mosaics was Hellenistic. It must be assumed that the relationship between the lobster and the electric ray would be understood in certain social groups in different parts of the Empire in the third and fourth centuries.

The contents of the most easterly rounded cross in Section 4, west, are the most enigmatic. An indeterminate well-rounded four legged animal rests on the left side of the tree bed. Its appearance is consistent with other animals in Section 4, west. Four projections arise from its head, probably representing two ears and two horns. The tail is



Fig. 51
Section 4, west, with Section 4 east and the 'dividing line' between Section 4, east and west in the background

(looking from the west)
Left: Rose-ringed parakeet
Right: Rounded cross containing
(i) tree with light green bed resting on the upper branches
(ii) beast with 2 ears and 2 horns
(iii) basket with 12 discs

short. The proportions are not perfect and the left foreleg is disarticulated. The colour of the body is brown-grey with lighter *tesserae* providing a 'light and shade' effect. It is

¹⁷³ Marini (1994), 91.

outlined by black *tesserae*. It is described here as a cow because of its large haunches and horns.¹⁷⁴ The discs in the basket have been variously described as stones, cakes and eggs.

Curvilinear octagons

Each of the four octagons contains a single bird. From west to east the pictures represent a turkey-cock (possibly a Purple European Gallinule, see fig.43), a thrush, a hooded crow and a rose-ringed parakeet (fig 52). The last is remarkable for the force of the colour of its green-blue feathers and the art of mosaicist in hinting at a metallic lustre.¹⁷⁵ It is evidently the same as the parrots of Indian origin described so thoroughly by Toynbee from written Greek and Roman sources and from remaining paintings and mosaics.¹⁷⁶ The remaining single birds in this sector are of a high technical and artistic standard in keeping with the birds portrayed in Section 3.

¹⁷⁴ Marini (2003), 44, identifies this beast as a goat. The flat surface at the top of the tree together with the trunk is considered by him to be representative of the Christian Cross and the twelve cakes of the Apostles. Brusin (1950), 1183 describes the animal as a 'kid'. According to Gnirs (1915), 161, it is a bull.

¹⁷⁵ The most discussed bird is that described above as a parakeet. This was labeled a Treron by Iacumen (1990), 51, who ascribes important Gnostic significance to the bird. Present information is taken from del Hoyo, Elligott and Sargatal, *Handbook of the Birds of the World* (1997), 399. The distribution of the rose-ringed parakeet extends from West Asia to South-East China. Dr Callaghan points out that birds such as parakeets were used as pets throughout the Roman Empire and too much importance cannot be ascribed to their natural distribution.

¹⁷⁶ Toynbee (1982), 247. Her account is in keeping with Dr Callaghan's observation regarding pets in the Roman Empire (see fn 175). This bird was most likely introduced from India following Alexander's Indian campaign.



Fig. 52

**A rose-ringed
parakeet in a
curvilinear
octagon**

**Note the green
plumage, the red
collar, large red
beak and the
spindly legs**

Roundels:

The roundels contain three distinct geometric patterns (fig.47). These are arranged in alternating progression vertically and horizontally. (a) Sun-rays: A varying number of orange rays extend from an inner circle. The latter is outlined by a line of blue and then white *tesserae*. The centre of the circle is orange with a black cross. (b) Maltese crosses: Four arms of the cross are outlined in black *tesserae*. The bases of the arms approach an inner circle lined by black and white *tesserae*. The centre of the circle is usually orange. Each arm of the cross and the space between each arm contain a pattern of four single *tesserae* sited at the angles of a central single tessera. (c) Four-pointed stars: the concave stars, outlined by black *tesserae*, reach the edge of the roundel at four points. Thus this pattern divides the outer roundel into four ovals. These contain varying designs but all are based on four black blossoms whose stalks meet in the centre. The centre of the star itself contains an orange square with a black cross or a blossom design. It seems likely that all these mosaics (a, b and c) represent stars.

Section 4, east

The width of this strip is c.17m. The length at the undisturbed north end, from the 'dividing line' of two black *tesserae* to the east wall, is 3.5m excluding the non-patterned white-tessellated surround (figs. 5 and 6). Further south the length of the panel varies from 2.7 to 2.4m depending upon the degree of the incursion of the foundation, again excluding the surround. The section can be divided, north-south, into three (fig.5). The first area (3.5 to 2.7×6.0m) contains mosaics of the same quality as in Section 3 and Section 4, west. The second area (2.7-2.4×4.3m) contains undistinguished small squares and the third (2.4×6.2m) is composed of a mosaic framework and designs similar to the first area.

Area 1

The basic framework is of straight-lined octagons contained by two lines of black



Fig. 53
The octagon pattern in
Section 4, east, area 1

tesserae (figs. 6 and 55). The 'dividing line' abruptly and decisively separates Section 4 west, from Section 4 east, leaving half roundels and severed crosses to its west and incomplete octagons to its east (fig.51). Moving further eastwards this row of incomplete octagons connects side-by-side with a row of three full octagons and a half octagon.

Further east the full octagons meet side by side with a further row of incomplete octagons (fig.6). These meet the surrounding lozenge/square sequence at the eastern extremity.

There are therefore three rows of complete or incomplete octagons from west to east. The interstices are occupied by two rows of squares tilted at 45° to the horizontal (fig.53). The complete octagon measures 1.42 (vertical) × 1.33 (horizontal) metres. Figure 53 provides an idea of the configuration immediately to the east of the 'dividing line'. There are eight complete squares (figs. 5 and 6). One angle of three of the west squares tips the 'dividing line'. The side of the squares measures 0.66m.

This framework is not uncommon. It is used in compartment 9, south hall, Aquileia, and in a panel, similar to compartment 9, in Villa d'Ivailovgrad, Bulgaria, (third century AD) to contain a large variety of relatively small floral and geometric designs.¹⁷⁷ Another example of this simple octagon design is the polychrome floral mosaic in Vienne (second/early third century) produced by an identified Gallo-Roman workshop in the area (fig. 78).¹⁷⁸ The more ornate three-strand guilloche-lined Blackfriars mosaic, Leicester, England (c.150 AD) is a fairly early example with more distinctive style.¹⁷⁹ There are also late second/ third century examples in Spain and North Africa.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁷ Mladenova (1983), 156.

¹⁷⁸ Dunbabin (1999), 74.

¹⁷⁹ Johnson P (1995), 22.

¹⁸⁰ Conimbriga, Spain, Dunbabin (1999), 153. El Jem, North Africa, Yacoub (2002), 139.



Fig. 54
The north complete octagon
of Section 4, east, area 1.

**Rounded cross containing
four floral shells with stalks
meeting at a central circle.**

The most significant feature of area 1 is the content of the three full octagons.

The pattern of the north full octagon can best be described as four convex floral shells with thick stalks which meet in a small orange central circle (fig 54). Each stalk sprouts two acanthus-like leaves. All this is encased in a rounded cross, each floral shell is located in one of the four branches of the cross. The remaining space outside the cross is filled with spirals. The last resembles that of *peltae* found in Roman and Celtic art.

The central 'ram' octagon, containing the letters *C y riace i bas*, holds pride of place because of its position in Section 4 at the head of the north hall, its forceful representation of a full-blooded animal with fully developed external sexual organs and the possible significance of its letters (fig.55).¹⁸¹ In a dominant but non-aggressive pose it

¹⁸¹ Sheep are commonly included in scenes of Orpheus with his lyre during the third/fourth centuries. Rams were included when the signs of the Zodiac were figuratively displayed (fig.35). Early Christian paintings in the Callistus catacomb (c. 220 AD) and later in the Dura Europos *domus ecclesiae* (c. 250) include sheep in 'Good Shepherd' scenes. Excluding the north hall ram, the first Christian mosaics portraying sheep are in the south hall of the Basilica of Aquileia (c.313). Sheep gradually came into their own as 'confronting animals' in Christian mosaics and on sarcophagi in the fifth century (chapter 3) and as the 'Lamb of God' in mosaics of the sixth century.

impresses itself on the viewer. There is an impression of solid volume with musculature beneath the woollen coat. The lines of the animal are clear. The proportions are not perfect in that its back is shortened. The distribution of red, brown and grey *tesserae* making up the body is pointillist providing an overall dark grey impression.

The ram has been described as 'the symbol of the guide of the flock' which in the opinion of some authors implies that the ram represents Christ the Redeemer.¹⁸² This view is based on the ram sacrificed by Abraham in place of his son, an event seen by Christians as an Old Testament prefiguration of the sacrifice of the Saviour.¹⁸³ A ram, Aries of the Zodiac, has also been represented as the Creative Force or God in Christian iconography of the medieval period.¹⁸⁴

Despite these considerations, there is no clear evidence that any of the figurative mosaics in the north-east of the north hall represent Christian theology or cosmology. The sleek bulky ram does not immediately strike the uncommitted observer as a representative of 'Christ the Redeemer' or as being at the side of the Good Shepherd. Probably the closest one can get to a simple explanation is that it represents Aries, the first month of the Zodiac year. This is in keeping with the suggestion that at least some of the mosaics in the north-east of the north hall are concerned with cosmology.

¹⁸² The term 'the symbol of the guide of the flock' was introduced by Brusin (1950), 1183. Marini (1994) 96, and Iacumin (1990), 96, related the term to 'Christ the Redeemer'.

¹⁸³ Child and Colles (1971), 214.

¹⁸⁴ For example, the thirteenth century nave of Peterborough Cathedral.



Fig. 55 Section 4 east: The ram with inscription

Above the ram is inscribed C Y RIACEV I BAS, the meaning of which has received much attention.¹⁸⁵ The simple translation into English, 'O Cyriacus (os), may you live', implying eternal life following death, seems to be a satisfactory explanation. Menis suggests that it would be anticipated that 'in Deo' would be added in the minds of contemporary Christians.¹⁸⁶ 'Vibas' has no meaning in Latin and it is assumed that 'b' should read 'v'. As the Roman church continued to use Greek in the third century and even later¹⁸⁷ attention has been drawn to the similarity of the Greek word 'kyriakos', meaning the Church, and the word 'Cyriace' suggesting that the latter does not refer to

¹⁸⁵ Caillet (1993), 133 reviews possible explanations from different communications.

¹⁸⁶ Menis (1982), 485.

¹⁸⁷ Beckwith (1979), 15.

one man but rather to Christians as a group.¹⁸⁸ Others, noting the gaps between C and Y and Y and R have suggested that the mosaic has been tampered with.¹⁸⁹



Fig. 56 Inscription in Section 4, east, area 1, north hall. Note the slope of the bar of the A's.

Pancierera states that the palaeography does not furnish characteristic elements apart from the sloping of the bar of the letter 'A' from right to left which is remarkable, being similar to the 'A's in the 'Ianuarius' inscription in Section 2 (figs. 56 and 56)¹⁹⁰



Fig. 57 Inscription in Section 2, north hall. Note the slope of the bar of letter 'A'.

The epigraphic relationship between the 'Cyriace' and the 'Ianuarius' inscriptions hints that the former may have been inserted after that of the original surrounding mosaics in Section 4, east, area 1, though, according to Panciera, this relationship is not as close as that between the *clipeus* in the south hall and 'Theodore' inscription. The initial gaps and the later rush of letters are odd, suggesting that a change of programme was pressed upon the mosaicist or the inscription was changed at a later date.

It seems reasonable to assume that the inscription is an epitaph for an individual probably called Cyriacos.¹⁹¹ Caillet has reviewed the possible candidates for the name;

¹⁸⁸ Bertacchi (1986), 194.

¹⁸⁹ Iacumen (1990) 107. Iacumen believes that originally the word in place of 'Cyriace' was 'Kyriakos'; the 'Lord' or 'Redeemer' or 'Kyriake' the 'Day of the Lord'.

¹⁹⁰ Panciera (1975), 219.

none has received universal support.¹⁹² Clearly he was a man of prominence in the Christian society of the time. Iacumin has rather circuitously suggested that the epigraph may be dated to 280/290 AD based on the corrupt use of b for v in local communications at the end of the third century.¹⁹³

The south complete octagon contains a cock and tortoise confronting one another (fig. 58). The artistry and craftsmanship create an element of tension. The predominant colour of the cock is orange interspersed by brown and black lines in the neck. The comb is orange lined by brown *tesserae*. The *tesserae* in the body change from orange to white as they reach the wing and the tail. This technique is similar to that applied to birds in Sections 3 and 4, west providing an element of light and shade. The tail itself is dark with lines of brown and black *tesserae*. The tortoise shell is composed of criss-crossing lines of single strand black *tesserae* with a grey background. The head, similar to the animal's natural appearance, is composed of yellow and brown *tesserae*.

The two animals stand on an ill-defined line of brown earth. In the background is an insubstantial pillar which extends below the earth. The top is covered by a clearly defined slab (?stone), on which is placed an amphora. There is general agreement that the animals represent a fight between good/light (the cock) and evil/darkness (the tortoise) and that the amphora contains oil for the winner.¹⁹⁴ The tortoise was regarded as a

¹⁹¹ Bertacchi (1986), 194 associates Cyriace, as a possible alternative, with the Greek 'kyriakos' meaning the Church emphasising the vibrant nature of Christianity at the time. Iacumin (2004), 11 relates Cyriace with Kyriakè, the eighth heaven, and with Archè, the day of Lord, in Gnostic theology.

¹⁹² Caillet, (1993), 133.

¹⁹³ Iacumin (2004), 60.

¹⁹⁴ Chevallier (1990), 102



Fig. 58

Section 4 east, area 1

The tortoise and cock representing darkness and light. Note the amphora on a seemingly hollow pillar which extends below the ground.

symbol of Tartarus or Hell and Roman writers including Cicero and Seneca speak ill of the animal.¹⁹⁵ Later St Jerome writes of ‘the sluggish tortoise, burdened and heavy with its own weight signifying the grievous sins of heretics’.¹⁹⁶ Both the cock and tortoise were associated with Mercury, a planet associated in the Mithraic belief with the progress of the soul to Saturn.¹⁹⁷ The cock and tortoise mosaic scene is repeated, in a poorer version, in an *emblema* inserted into compartment 2 of the south hall at a later date than the surrounding mosaics.¹⁹⁸ Here there is, in the background, a pillar on top of which is placed a pouch of coins marked ∞CCC (1,300), the prize for the winner. It has been

¹⁹⁵ Toynbee (1982), 222

¹⁹⁶ St Jerome *Patrologia Latina* XXV, col.929.

¹⁹⁷ Toynbee (1982), 221 and 257.

¹⁹⁸ Cecchini (1933), 175 and Bertacchi (1986), 196

suggested that this second south hall mosaic was inserted at the time of the Council of Aquileia in 381 AD.¹⁹⁹ The late insertion of this *emblema* reminds us that mosaics are not immutable and it is desirable to remain open to the possibilities of tampering, editing and inclusion.

Cecchini could identify no further examples of a fight between a tortoise and a cock in ancient pagan or Christian art.²⁰⁰ The present author's survey of mosaics in Roman North Africa and other parts of the Roman Empire failed to add to the understanding or knowledge of the background of this image. Menis identifies the ideography of the cock and tortoise with the Mithraic religion which was prevalent in the merchant and military community in Aquileia in the early third century.²⁰¹ Mithraism became popular in the Roman Empire from 150 AD and at one time had more adherents than Christianity.²⁰² The movement was failing by 300 AD. There is archaeological evidence of the practice of Mithraism in Aquileia (see Chapter 1, 'Other beliefs'). Mithraic belief, of Persian origin, was greatly influenced by Zoroasterism which laid emphasis on the struggle between good and evil. Characteristic of Mithraic theodicy was the emphasis placed on the difference between justice and holiness on the one hand and

¹⁹⁸ Cecchini (1933), 175 and Bertacchi (1986), 196.

¹⁹⁹ Chevallier (1990), 102. Marini (1994), 34, is of the view that the monogram ∞CCC represents the infinite Trinity, the cock (the victor) the Catholic Church and the tortoise (the loser) the adherents of heretical Arianism (see comment by St Jerome above). The Council of Aquileia was dominated by Ambrose of Milan who manipulated the proceedings to engineer a serious defeat for followers of Arianism, Frend (1984), 621.

²⁰⁰ Cecchini (1933), 144.

²⁰¹ Menis (1982), 489.

²⁰² Gordon (1996), 92.

evil on the other. It is perhaps of significance that the cock was sacred to Cautes, one of the two acolytes of Mithra.²⁰³

All the remaining octagons are incomplete (figs. 5 and 6). They contain either elaborate spirals or acanthus scrolls. The basic designs inside the squares are either an outer circle (an outer file of black and an inner file of grey *tesserae*) with an inner concentric orange circle or an orange four-pointed star with concave sides (fig.55). The area between the outer ring and the sides of the square is embellished with fleur-de-lis or mounds. The area between the two circles contains further fleur-de-lis. In the case of the stars the four ellipses created by the circle and the concave star sides contain rudimentary fleur-de-lis.

Area 2:

This is a trapezoid area (with a longer west side) sited in the centre of the section 4, east. Its bare, crude, monochrome appearance comes as a shock following the splendours of Sections 3 and 4. While the photograph of figure 59 is poor (it was taken before there was adequate lighting) it gives some idea of carelessness of design.²⁰⁴ Not alone this but, as Cecchini points out, the quality of stone used to make the *tesserae* was poor 'giacchè il bianco fu fatto con calcare grigio del Carco, metre nel resto della campata è di buona pietra'.²⁰⁵

The area consists of small squares (average 0.44m) lined by single black *tesserae* (fig.59). There are six remaining squares along the north and five on the south edge. Nine squares can be counted close to the 'lozenge and square' sequence to the east. It is

²⁰³ Cumont (1975), 179-180.

²⁰⁴ In fact it is not an area which has attracted many writers or their photographers.

²⁰⁵ Cecchini (1933), 143.

difficult to count the total number of squares because of damage caused by the foundations to the west but fifty is a close approximation. Each square contains a pattern of four two-petalled rudimentary blossoms whose stalks (represented by a single black *tessera*) meet in a central square of black *tesserae*.

The linking between the octagon patterns of area 1 and 3 with the trapezoid area is indeterminate and cognisance must be given to Iacumen's view that this area originally contained similar mosaics to those in area 1 but was altered by the Church to meet new liturgical requirements in the late third or early fourth centuries.²⁰⁶ To the east, the lozenge and Solomon's knot sequence is complete replaced by the small squares of the trapezoid area (figs. 5 and 6). It has been suggested that the area represented by Sections 1 to 3 inclusive formed a *quadratum* for the congregation, separated from the clergy in the east by the lozenge and square sequence just to the east of Band 3 (figs. 5, 6 and 37). The clergy would have possibly concentrated their liturgical activities in this trapezoid area.²⁰⁷ This interpretation is further developed by the suggestion that the area, with its extension into the campanile foundations, acting as a flat *solea*, was covered by a carpet or a wooden low platform on which the bishop's chair was placed.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁶ Iacumin (1990), 100. The appearance of this area with minimal design is out of keeping with the remainder of the north hall.

²⁰⁷ Mirabella Roberti (1982), 431.

²⁰⁸ Caillet (1993), 129,



Fig. 59
Section 4, east,
area 2.

Looking to the
campanile
foundation (to
the left) from the
south-east

Note rude design
with multiple
small squares
containing
vestigial small
blossoms whose
stalks meet at the
centre

Area 3

The framework and designs of Area 3 are similar to those in area 1 though the craftsmanship is inferior (fig. 5, 6 and 60). There are five octagons to the west beside the foundation of the campanile; three were originally complete but later damaged by the foundation and two were originally incomplete (to the north and south). The north-south diameter of the originally complete octagons is larger than those in area 1, measuring 1.42 to 1.45m compared with 1.3 to 1.34m. The star-like centres are inappropriately



Fig. 60

Section 4, east, area 3

Looking into the base of
the foundation from the
east.

The same framework as
in fig. 31 but larger
octagons.

Note the lack of
alignment in the design of
the four-pointed star

aligned with their square frames (the squares are tilted 45° to the horizontal). The designs in the centre of the stars are also askew (fig 60). The middle octagon of the three originally complete but damaged octagons contains the figure of a blue rabbit; there are no other figurative mosaics in this area. This animal is unique among the singly framed animals in the north hall in facing north rather than south. There are four squares in the interstices between the first and second layers of octagons

The octagons link eventually link, to the east, with the lozenge and square sequence described above (figs. 6, 37 and 61). This sequence then turns west (fig.61) to form the south extremity of Section 4 before being engulfed by the foundation of the campanile.



Fig. 61
Section 4, east, area 3

The south-east corner of the north hall.

(a) The right/centre upper background is the level of the post-Theodorian floor.

(b) Left and centre are the remains of the east and south wall respectively

(c) The lozenge and knot sequence is in the foreground

(d) Between (b) and (c) the peripheral band of 'white' tesserae

The floor of the post-Theodorian hall, which extended some distance from the original east wall would have required demolition the original east wall leaving, at the most, one metre of wall (fig. 61). Evidently the present east wall must have been built on this remaining 1.0m at some time after 452 to provide view seen in figure 60. It was presumably completed in the early part of the twentieth century following the early excavations. The lower extreme south section of the east wall belongs to the original north hall and is similar to Bertacchi's 1977 photograph: a lower layer of brick and an upper of stone.²⁰⁹ According to Bertacchi this was part of a 'filled in' inlet extending 1.46m to the north of the pilaster in the corner which can just be seen in figure 61. The masonry of the eastern extreme of the south wall contains mainly flat bricks. This again agrees with Bertacchi's description and photography.

²⁰⁹ Bertacchi (1977), 239-44, fig.2.

6

The south hall of the Basilica of Aquileia

The description of mosaics of the north hall in chapters 2, 3, 4 and 5 contains comparisons with mosaics in other parts of the Roman Empire. Chapter 6 makes a more detailed comparison with the mosaics in the south hall, chapter 7 with mosaics in the Aquileia region during 250-400 AD and chapter 8 with those in nearby churches from the mid-fourth to mid-fifth centuries.

'Le basilica d'Aquilée, avec ses quelque 750 m² de mosaïques, le plus grand "tapis" du monde antique provoque toujours un choc dans l'esprit du visiteur'.²¹⁰ All perceptive visitors will concur. Not only is the floor of the basilica the earliest but also the largest extant Christian mosaic floor. There is general agreement that the south hall of the basilica complex was built during the second decade of the fourth century under the supervision of Bishop Theodore and that most of its mosaics were laid down during the same period.²¹¹ It can truly be named 'Theodorian'.

The mosaic floor of the original Theodorian south hall measures 37×20m. Like the north hall there were three pairs of pillars and a flat ceiling. Because of the c.390 AD enlargement by Chromatius, Bishop of Aquileia, the mosaic floor was damaged by the bases of the south file of new pillars (figs. 4 and 62).²¹² The damage was much less than

²¹⁰ Chevallier R (1990) 101. 'The Basilica of Aquileia, with some 750 m² of mosaics, the greatest 'carpet' of the antique world, always provokes a shock in the spirit of the visitor'.

²¹¹ e.g. Brusin (1950), 1183., Chevallier (1990), 106, Caillet (1993), 140., Menis in *I Mosaici della Basilica di Aquileia*, (2003), 9.

²¹² Marini (1994), 22. There is disagreement as to the date of the new larger south basilica. Bertacchi believes it was not built until after the siege of Attila in 452. [Bertacchi (2000), 74.]

that caused by the foundations of the campanile to the mosaic floor of the north hall. The mosaic floor is divided into ten compartments (fig.62). The figures face in different directions. To obtain an upright view they may have to be examined from each major point of the compass. A larger number are upright when viewed from the north. Nine compartments occupy the larger west section, the area allotted to the congregation: three

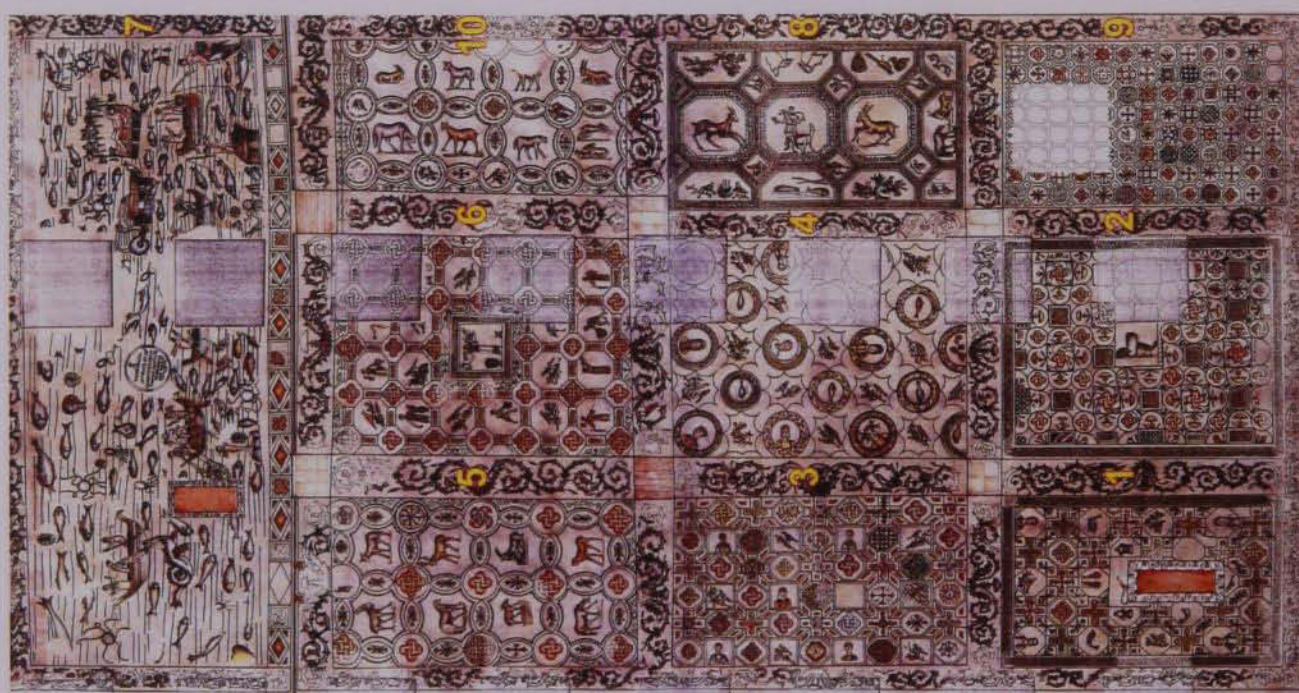


Fig. 62

Drawing of the mosaic floor of the south hall of the Basilica of Aquileia, 313-319 AD, from *I Mosaici della Basilica di Aquileia*, (ed) Marini (2003), 28-29.

**The ten compartments are numbered in yellow along their south side
The marine scene (Compartment 7) is to the east.**

panels to the south, three in the middle and three to the north. They lie with their long axis east/west. The tenth and largest compartment extends transversely (north/south) across the east end of the floor and the figures are upright when viewed from the west, that is, from where the laity would stand. It contains the famous oft-mentioned marine mosaic which is separated from the remaining nine by a lozenge and Solomon's knot

sequence.²¹³ This compartment is thought to represent the area used as a presbytery and confined to the clergy. It is the only compartment without a framework in both the north and south halls. Despite artistic and methodological imperfections the overall perception created by the complete mosaics floor in the south Theodorian hall, now the basilica, is one of lightness, action and joy when compared with those the north hall. Undoubtedly a substantial portion of this feeling is due to the high walls, the lighting and surrounding beauty of the Basilica. The mosaics in the south hall would appear to have looked forward to a confident Christian future.



Fig. 63

The mosaic floor of the south hall incorporated in the present Basilica of Aquileia (looking from the entrance to the east)

Mosaics are original and were laid down c. 313-319 AD

The pillars, bases and capitals belong to later enlargement (originally there were three pairs of pillars).

The Basilica was enlarged and embellished by Bishop Poppo (Wolfgang von Treffen) 1019-1042.

It was restored by Marquardo di Randeck (1365-1381) following an earthquake in 1348

²¹³ See Chapter 5 for description of the 'Lozenge and Solomon's knot' sequence.

The Christian message of the mosaics is less overt than those in some of the Roman catacomb paintings. In the south hall there are representations of Christian victory in the form of Nike, of an expected future increase in the numbers of faithful as portrayed by the number of fish in the sea available to the 'fishers of men' (cupids) and of the Resurrection by the story of Jonah. The figure of the Good Shepherd is shared by many third and fourth century paintings and mosaics.

South hall 'compartments' (fig. 62)

The south hall was originally entered from the east (chapter 9). By the end of the fourth century, however, there were two entrances in the west wall which have remained up to the present. All following directions assume that the observer is orientated to facing the altar from the main door. The following description is a brief summary for introductory purposes and does not attempt theological analysis.

1. Sited at the entrance to the passage leading to the north hall (Fig.62, right foreground)). Of the portraits included in this compartment Bertacchi writes 'The figures of the south hall show heads...still in the wake of the Hellenistic tradition. These are: the figures of the story of Jonah, excluding Orante; the 'amorini fishermen...the Victorious Eucharist...and the Good Shepherd. All of the others.....placed in the western panels (in this thesis, compartments) have completely different characteristics. They are much later and from the artistic perspective they are expressionistic (*espressionistici*)'.²¹⁴ The point being made is that the mosaics in this and other west compartments were added after the middle of the fourth century due to damage to the floor. This would fit in with the finding

²¹⁴ Bertacchi (1998), 98.

that the portraits and leaping fish in this compartment are similar to those in the octagons of the north Fondo Cal oratory (Chapter 7).

2. Directly to the south of Compartment 1. It contains the *emblema* of the cock and tortoise thought to refer to the Council of Aquileia (381AD) already mentioned in Chapter 5. On inspection, there is evidence of intrusion of the pre-existing mosaic pattern by the square *emblema* suggesting that, whatever is the significance of the mosaic, the *emblema* is a later addition.

3. Directly to the east of Compartment 1. It also contains portraits referred to by Bertacchi as 'expressionistic'.

4. Central position south of Compartment 3. Medallions contain portraits included in the same style as those in Compartments 1 and 3 alluded to by Bertacchi. Originally the four Seasons were included in the corner medallions; c.390 AD pillar bases reduced these to two, Summer and Autumn.

5. North-west of the marine mosaic. It and Compartment 10 (south-west of the marine mosaic) contain framed four-legged domestic or non-savage wild animals. Its framework is a more elaborate example of the roundel and ellipse sequence in Section 3 of the north hall. This it also shares with Compartment 10.

6. In the central position west of the marine mosaic. In its centre is a square *emblema* depicting the Eucharistic Victory, a female full-length Nike figure, holding a palm in her left and an ivy crown in her right hand.²¹⁵ It is surrounded by plastic figures bringing offerings.

7. The general effect of this large compartment with no framework is impressive. There are two themes: the story of Jonah and the Fishers of Men. Three scenes of Jonah's

experience with the Leviathan are haphazardly and crudely delineated amongst a multitude of fish. Fishing cupids are employed to express the New Testament report of Jesus' use of the work of fishermen to explain the future role to the Apostles (Matt.4, 18-19).



Fig. 64 (Detail)

The marine scene, south hall, Basilica of Aquileia. second decade, fourth century
 Cupids fishing in a sea teeming with a variety of fish and straight-line waves. Left upper: Jonah being fed to the leviathan (see fig. 80 for the ship's bow with Jonah in a sacerdotal pose). Right upper: *clipeus* extolling Theodore (chapter 1). Lower border: Rectangle/square (lozenge/Solomon's knot) sequence.

8. Commands the most important site in the middle of the three south compartments. The Good Shepherd is portrayed in an octagon surrounded by a variety of animals. He is slightly elevated and in his right hand is a panpipe (see below).

²¹⁵ Chevallier (1990), 102-103, provides a full description of the Eucharistic Victory and its significance.

9. Sited in the south-west extremity, it contains solely geometric designs.

10. Sited to the south-west of the marine scene. See Compartment 5.

Table 1

Comparison of mosaics in the two halls (fig.6, north hall, fig.62, south hall)*

Specific features in the north hall	Found in south hall (Compartment number)
Section 1:	
Floor [a]	
Framework: 3×3 square checkerboard design (fig.8)	None
Floor [b]	
Framework: Small and large octagons linked by rectangles (figs. 8,10,11)	6
Birds on branches (fig.8)	3,4,6,8
Section 2:	
Framework: Octagon/cross/hexagon (fig.14)	1 (i)
Braided cross (Fig.14)	1, 3
Blossom (fleur-de-lis) and leaf (figs.14, 40)	1 (hexagons) 3, 9 (octagons) 5, 10 (ellipses)
Mirror-image birds (fig.15)	None
Animals, quadrupeds (fig. 42)	5, 8, 10

* Notes on Table 1:

- (i). Compartments 1 and 9 contain the frameworks lined austere by two black tesserae. In this respect they are similar to all the Sections in the north hall. Frameworks in Compartments 2 and 3 are lined by double file of black *tesserae* but these are duplicated in the octagons and squares.
- (ii). A simple Solomon's knot is represented by one intertwined thread with one convolution. There are more complex knots in the south but not in the north hall
- (iii). There are a number of sheep in Compartments 5, 8 and 10 but these are modest beasts compared with the ram in Section 4, north hall.
- (iv). It is difficult to adequately describe the 'convex floral shell and stalks' mosaic in Section 4, east panel (fig. 54). Those in Compartment 2 are pedestrian in comparison; the edge of the shell is frilled and the leaves are less frond-like giving the appearance of a hellebore.

Section 3

Framework: Roundels and ellipses (fig. 28)	5, 10
Blossom and leaf (ellipses) (figs. 28, 41)	1 (hexagons) 3 (octagons) 5, 10 (ellipses)
Simple Solomon's knots (fig.28) (ii)	2, 3, 5, 6
'Floral designs' (fig.32)	None
Mirror-image birds (fig.33)	None
Abnormal or mythological animals (figs. 26, 31)	None

Section 4, west:

Framework: Rounded crosses/roundels/octagon (fig. 46)	2
Sun rays in circles (fig. 47)	None (in any frame)
Four-point stars in circles (fig. 47)	None (ditto)
'Maltese crosses' in circles (fig. 47)	None (ditto)
Birds and branches (figs. 43, 52)	3, 4, 6 & 8
Goats, 'cows', fish, birds on tree-tops (Figs. 43,46,47,51)	None

Section 4, east (Area 1 only):

Framework: Straight line octagons and squares (Fig. 53)	8 & 9
Spirals (Fig. 54)	5, 6 & 10
Beasts like the ram (fig.55)	None (iii)
Convex shells with stalks meeting at the centre (fig.54)	2 (iv)
Tortoise and cock (fig.56)	2 (probably a copy)
Circles/four-point stars within squares (fig. 55)	None

Comparison of the two halls

The most radical difference between the two mosaic floors is the presence of human figures in the south hall. This must have been due to a conscious decision taken by Theodore and his presbyters. Since both halls were virtually completed by 320 AD the absence of human forms in the north hall suggests that either its floor belongs to an earlier time, however short, (an argument which will be pursued further) or that the Theodore had a different objective in mind for the two halls. The latter is possible as

there has been controversy as to which hall was allocated to the instruction of catechumens. Caillet provides a detailed review of the varying arguments.²¹⁶

In planning the south hall mosaic floor Theodore, his clergy and their artistic advisors seemed unable or, perhaps, unwilling to express explicit Christian characters or Christian images which had already been in existence for nearly 80 years in the catacombs and in Dura-Europos.²¹⁷ The third century Callistus catacomb reveals representation of the baptism of Jesus, the raising of Lazarus, an Orante and the paralytic cured by Christ. Nor are Aquileian images as explicit as those of the frescoes from the baptistery of the Dura Europos *domus ecclesiae*, c.245AD (fig.65) (see chapter 1, p.4).



Fig. 65

The Healing of the Paralytic at Bethesda. Mark, 2, 1-13

A mural from the baptistery in the *domus ecclesiae* in Dura-Europos (c. 250 AD)

Christ is represented at the top and to the left the man with palsy carries his bed

²¹⁶ Caillet (1993), 128.

²¹⁷ Grabar (1967), 43.

Thus, the images they selected were dependent largely upon the pagan iconographic repertoire. A number of factors may account for the disparity. One would think that it is easier to experiment with painting than it is with mosaics which require the intermediary participation of craftsmen and the use of cartoons. It was not until towards the end of the fourth century that extant explicit Christian mosaics can be found in Rome and Milan.²¹⁸ Also the momentum of change in the variation of Christian orientated imagery in the catacombs increased into the fourth century after the Edict of Milan as witnessed by the paintings in the Via Latina.²¹⁹ Theodore and his colleagues starting from a Christian artistic *de novo* position might have hesitated to experiment. However, it must be pointed out that the Good Shepherd and the Jonah story were common in third century Roman catacombs.

It has been suggested above that the north hall mosaics were laid down earlier than those of the south hall. The lack of a clear or even a concealed Christian mosaic message in this hall may have been due to an intermittently threatening environment in the third century. For example, Bishop Hilarius and his fellow Christian Tatianus are thought to have been martyred in 283-83 (see chapter 1). Persecution associated with the Tetrarchy ended in 305/306 in the western part of the Empire. During this period of 20 to 30 years it is likely that the bishops of Aquileia would have adopted a discrete policy with regard to imagery. However, such considerations would not necessarily have

²¹⁸ Beckwith (1979), 27-31.

²¹⁹ Beckwith (1979), 24

²²⁰ Frend (1984), 475. In 311 Pope Miltiades is recorded as receiving back church property confiscated during the persecution.

prevented the gradually developing church edifice in Aquileia from being ransacked by the authorities during 303/305.²²⁰

Whatever the date or reason, the mosaics of the completed early north hall lack evidence of Christian iconography and give little indication of Christian aesthetic apart from the inscriptions. Against this, the south hall is the only mosaic floor with human forms among all those examined for this study during the fourth to mid-fifth century churches of the north Adriatic coast. Furthermore authoritarian disapproval was expressed in the early fifth century about incorporating Christian figures and concepts in mosaic pavements (chapter 1, p 2-3). It may well be that Theodore and his colleagues followed, with a Christian overlay, the example of third century Aquileian floors depicting the exploits of Dionysus and other mythological figures of the ancient world. It would seem that that the south hall pavement and indeed similar early to middle fourth century mosaic floors such as that in Hinton St. Mary in north Dorset represent early to mid-fourth century expression of Christian imagery which later became less popular with Church authorities.

The design of all the frameworks in the north hall, except for Section 1, floor [a], is shared by one or more compartments in the south hall (Table 1). Indeed those in Section 2, north Hall, and Compartment 1, south hall are almost identical. The constant difference between the two halls is a uniform demarcation line of only two files of black *tesserae* in the north hall. This austere dividing line is found only in Compartments 1 and 9 of the south hall. It will be noted though chapters 2 to 7 that the similar frameworks were used in different parts of the empire over the first four centuries of the Christian era.

Few conclusions can therefore be drawn from the comparison of the two halls. The frameworks in both halls demonstrated a sound knowledge of draughtsmanship by the *musivarii*.

A significant difference between the two halls is the orientation of figures of animals and, in the case of the south hall, humans. All singly framed animals in the north hall face to the south except for the rabbit in Section 4, in the south hall figures face in various directions. In the north hall all animals in approximately the west half are 'right side up' when viewed from the east and *visa versa* all those in the east half have to be viewed from the west. In this respect, figures in the south hall have to be looked at from the north, south, east and west to see them in the upright position. In terms of overall figurative design, therefore, the two halls do not complement one another. This difference may be due liturgical reasons or to different concepts behind the formulation of the design of the mosaics in the north hall.

The structure of Compartment 8 (fig.66), containing the Good Shepherd, is very similar to that of north hall, Section 4, east, area 1 (figs.5, 6, 55 and 66). They are exactly comparable in terms of number and position of whole and incomplete octagons and small squares (figs. 5, 6 and 62). The framework of south hall Compartment 8 is more complex: double black *tesserae* files surrounded by archettes and then by simple guilloche. Of all the images in the north hall sections, those of the mosaics of Section 4, east area 1, perhaps provide a hint of a religious connotation. The ram represents Aries, the beginning of the Zodiac year, and, according to Dean, representative of the 'Creative Force' or God Himself in Christian medieval cosmology.²²¹ One explanation of the inscription above the

²²¹ Dean (1995), 10.

²²² Iacumin (1990), 101. Bertacchi (1986), 194 suggests 'Kyriacos' as representing 'the church'

ram, though not the one supported in this thesis, has been ascribed to KYRIAKOS, the Lord or Redeemer (fig.56).²²² The octagon to the south of the ram contains the fight between the cock and tortoise, or that between day and night, good and evil.

Returning to Compartment 8 the three complete octagons are occupied by images of the Good Shepherd in the centre with a deer and an antelope placed symmetrically on each side (figs. 66), symbolism regarded by Menis in his seminal article on ‘*The*



Fig. 66
Compartment 8, south hall. 313-319, viewed from the north
The Good Shepherd with panpipe surrounded by a variety of quadrupeds, fish and birds.

theological culture of the Aquileia clergy at the beginning of the 4th century’ as representing in Christian cosmological terms, the reign of the Heavens, in which Christ

is first of all.²²³ As distinct from the geometric patterns in the semi-octagons in the north hall, Section 4, east, the corresponding frames surrounding the central octagons in Compartment 8 are filled with images consistent with a pastoral idyll; quadrupeds in fields, birds perched on branches and fish in water. These, including the images in the central octagons, represent the three elements of the cosmos: paradise, water and earth. There is some evidence, therefore, that the pattern of images in Section 4 and Compartment 8 are related in so far as they both express a concept of the cosmos.

The south hall has no mosaics with paired confronting birds seen in the octagons of the octagon/cross/hexagon framework in Section 2, north hall nor in the three curvilinear octagons of Section 3, north hall. Animals in the south hall appear tame or domesticated; the only suggestion of antagonism is the attack by storks on the snakes (or eels) in Compartment 8. The virile images of the ass and goat with strong lines and full volumes in the curvilinear octagons in Section 3 are not replicated in the south hall. The only strange or mythological beast in the south hall is the Leviathan which belongs to the Jewish tradition. There are three beasts in Section 3, north hall, including an image of Pegasus, which are thought to belong to the Hellenistic mythological repertoire (chapter 4). Finally, there are no animals on the tops of trees in the south hall. In Sections 3 and 4 of the north hall in the north-east area the colour used, particularly in the portrayal of birds, is not only forceful but lucid and uniform. This is not matched in the south hall. The message of certain mosaics or groups of mosaics in the south hall is clearer because

²²³ Menis (1982), 497.

the reader can draw upon his own beliefs and cultural background to provide likely interpretations.



Fig. 67 The compartment of the Good Shepherd (south hall, (detail) The incomplete right, central octagon. A goat with the long left hind-limb

Four-footed animals in the south hall, for example the Good Shepherd compartment (fig.66), are less convincingly drawn and appear languid in comparison with those in the north hall including the cavity of the campanile. There are more artistic errors. For example, the left hind-limb of the sheep at the feet of the Good Shepherd is disarticulated. The goat lying down in the right incomplete octagon of the same compartment has an unnaturally long left hind-limb (fig.67) very similar to the malformations in the mosaics of sheep in the apse of the church of Fondo Jullio (fig.82). The errors in the lobster mosaic in the north hall have already been noted.

In summary, the figurative mosaics in the two hall have some but not many common features and do not complement one another. This is particularly true of the confronting birds in Section 2 and the north-east mosaics of the north hall.

Mosaic production in Aquileia: 250 to 400 AD

It is important to review Aquileian mosaics during the period 250 to 400 AD in order to provide a background for issues raised in previous chapters relating to the mosaics in both the north and south halls. It was anticipated that the mosaics of both floors would be part of a continuous process of local artistic endeavour.

Perhaps the most important legacy of the Hellenistic period was a greater sense of pictorial setting of man in a real environment. It revived, reproduced and disseminated the naturalistic pictorial representation of the artists in the Classical period adding further to the development of perspective and shading. It also added new categories of painting: portraits, landscape, still life and athleticism. Among other developments it fostered the baroque style of epic struggles of great heroes and the depiction of mythical figures particularly those surrounding Dionysus.²²⁴

The use of *tesserae* for mosaic floors was first developed in the Hellenistic period during the third century B.C.²²⁵ The momentum of production of mosaics increased substantially in the second and first centuries B.C. to meet the requirements of the conquering Romans. Well known mosaics of this period come from Pompeii and are now to be found in the Naples Archaeological Museum. It is most likely that these were the works of Greek mosaicists. An example is shown in figure 68. It reveals an impossibly crowded scene but each animal appears active and natural.

²²⁴ Smith (1993), 155-158 in *The Oxford History of Classical Art*

²²⁵ Farneti (1993), 27.



Fig. 68 Nilotic scene, first century BC mosaic. Naples Archaeological Museum

After the second century A.D. the influence of Hellenistic art on mosaics waned and, in its place, a more expressionistic style was gradually employed with of the principle object of the mosaic accentuated, being clearly outlined and rendered in more vivid colours. This was accompanied by less regard for perspective, weight, shading and plasticity. These features were common to the arts of the Middle East even during the Hellenistic period and were later well demonstrated in the wall paintings in the Synagogue of Dura-Europos (c. 250 AD) now in the National Archaeological Museum of Damascus (fig.69). The reasons for the change are multiple and have been the subject of numerous reviews.²²⁶ It must be emphasised that conscious efforts were made periodically to revert to the Hellenistic/Roman tradition during the fourth and fifth centuries.²²⁷

²²⁶ Grabar (1967), 41-57., du Bourget (1972), 82., Huskinson (1993), 297-344 in *The Oxford History of Classical Art*.

²²⁷ This is exemplified by the early fifth century ivory plate, the Priestess of Bacchus, commissioned by the family of Symmachus now in Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Fig. 69
King Ahasuerus
and two counsellors

A wall painting in
the Dura-Europos
Synagogue (c. 250
A.D.)

A scene from the
story of Mordecai,
Esther and
Ahasuerus.

Note the frontality
of the figures, the
Parthian dress and
regal position

When the early Christians expressed their beliefs in paintings and mosaics they used the artistic style available to them on the contemporary market at any given time. During the fifth and sixth centuries they seemed to have developed a preference, by no means absolute, for expressionistic art which was better suited to convey messages in simple terms.

Despite the barbarian invasions from the early fifth to the seventh century, the region surrounding Aquileia has remained relatively undisturbed and underdeveloped during the intervening seventeen centuries. Because it was originally a populous and wealthy city subsequently reduced to the size of a village, many complete or incomplete mosaic pavements dating from late antiquity have survived and these are now preserved in the Archaeological and Palaeochristian Museums of Aquileia, in the north and south halls of the Basilica and in *in situ* floors exposed to or protected from the elements. However, the investigator will look in vain for some of the more important examples which are either purposely buried for preservation (see comments on Pula and Betika,

chapter 8) or are not exhibited, for whatever reason, by the municipal and regional authorities responsible for the Museums.

A number of mosaics in the National Archaeological Museum of Aquileia have been attributed to traditional Hellenistic style and motif including a second century representation of Europa and the Bull and an early third century beautiful delicate mosaic containing ribbons which interweave to include small amphorae and other decorative elements.



**Fig. 70 Aquileia Archaeological Museum, early third century,
Triton, surrounded by an intertwining guilloche braid and four *canthari***

The mythology of the Hellenistic period was perpetuated into the third century by, among others, the pavement mosaic of Triton now in the Archaeological Museum.²²⁸ The four *canthari*, sited at the four corners of the mosaic, anticipated the significance of the

²²⁸ The image is distorted by the angle of photography

four surrounding the much damaged Good Shepherd medallion in the centre of the mosaic *quadratum* of the mid-fourth century Fondo Cal, north. The *canthari* most likely represent libations to the god and at the later date chalices containing Eucharistic wine. Four *canthari* also surround the hexagram to the south of the north hall (chapter 9, fig.98) in the original east entrance to the Basilica complex suggesting mythological role.



Fig. 71

**Archaeological
Museum of Aquileia**

**Probably late third
century**

'The Victor'

One of the mid to late third century mosaics in the Archaeological Museum in Aquileia is the Victor with a palm in his left hand, a lotus flower in his right hand and a crown on his head (fig. 71).

Included in the mosaic is an amphora containing the oil of victory with a similar

significance to that above the tortoise and cock in the north hall, section 4, east, and gloves indicating the athlete to be a boxer. The framework is sparse with two files of black *tesserae* and a parallel one of dentils. The same frame lines the various contents of three out a possible nine compartments in the south hall. The pattern is composed of octagons and interconnecting squares similar to the pattern in floor 1b, section 1, north

hall and to compartment 6, south hall except that rectangles in the two halls replace squares.



Fig. 72

The Victorious Eucharist

South Hall, Basilica complex, Compartment 6 (313-319 AD)

An *emblema* containing a figure similar to the Greek goddess of victory, Nike, with a palm branch in her left and a crown of laurel in her right hand.

At her feet are two baskets, one containing bread, the other ? eggs. Upper left: A scroll of ivy leaves.

The scene is not dissimilar to that of the Eucharistic Victory in the south hall (fig.72). This square *emblema* is at the centre of Compartment 6 (fig.62). It is thought to represent the victory over sin following baptism and participation in the Eucharist. Both the Victor and the Victory represent Hellenistic themes, as Bertacchi puts it 'sulla scia della tradizione ellenistica'.²²⁹

Exaggerated volume of figures, gigantic and bloated, was also a temporary characteristic of the late third/early fourth century. This unnatural representation, referred to under '*volumi schematizzati*' by Tavano, is evident in the *Grand Terme* mosaics of athletes and of Neptune with sea-horses, discovered in the 1920s in Aquileia, now in the Archaeological Museum.²³⁰ It can be seen in the gross figures of dying Titans and

²²⁹ Bertacchi (1998), 98.

²³⁰ Tavano (1982), 555-6.

²³¹ Dunbabin (1999), 136-137.

Thracian horsemen in the triple-apsidal dining hall of Piazza Armerina and in the mosaics lining the Baths of Caracalla.²³¹ This trend is not seen in the north hall (or indeed in the south hall) though the bodies of the ass and the goat in Section 3, north hall and the ram in Section 4 have a full but not a bloated appearance.

One of the panels of the *Grandi Terme* is the mosaic of a draped youth playing a long and complicated wind instrument (fig. 73). His demeanour, poise and aspects of his clothing are very similar to those of the figures in octagons in compartment 6, south hall,



Fig. 73 The musician, Archaeological Museum **Fig. 74 The offerer, SH, Compartment 6**

surrounding the square *emblema* containing the Eucharistic Victory (fig. 74). These figures express activity and plasticity again representing Hellenistic tradition.

Realistic subjects such as hunting and the amphitheatre acquired a new popularity in the Empire in the late third and fourth centuries and mosaics were assembled according

to the methods of North African mosaicists.²³² There is an example of a hunting scene among the mosaics in Aquileia: the late third/early fourth century, Mosaic of Wounded Animals excavated near the Monastero.²³³ Roundels, with a rich surround of interlacing dentil, wave, guilloche and laurel wreath bands, contain wounded and dead wild animals. The corners were occupied by personified Seasons; all but one has been destroyed. The



Fig. 75

**Detail of the Mosaic
of the Wounded
Animals**

**Late third/early
fourth century**

**The figure is
immersed in a field of
wheat. In the left
band he holds a
basket of wheat, in
his right hand a
sickle. He has also a
crown of wheat**

remaining figure of Summer (fig.75) is justly praised; his face is finely drawn, the eyes are sharp and the flesh shows variation of tone. None of the mosaic portraits in the south hall or in the mid-fourth century Aquileian 'oratories' reaches this quality of depiction of the human face. The face has such a refinement of expression that it would be almost incongruous to compare with the impressive animal mosaics in the north hall.

²³² Dunbabin (1978), 214.

²³³ Bertacchi (1998), 87-88.

Bertacchi includes the mosaic of the Good Shepherd (compartment 8, south hall) as belonging to the late Hellenistic tradition (chapter 6, fig.66). The first extant painting of a Christian Good Shepherd carrying a lamb can be seen in the Callistus catacomb in Rome (c.220 AD). This painting reveals a degree of plasticity and liveliness which is not evident in the mosaic in the south hall. There is an obvious frontality of presentation in the latter. Also the large dark eyes of the shepherd are fixed into the distance, a characteristic of eastern facial expression from the first to the fourth century. The Shepherd's feet are elevated (fig.66) demonstrating a wish to move from the natural to the desired; a step towards non-naturalistic art. These features are more in keeping with eastern expressionistic art and suggest a turning point in Aquileian mosaic art.

Attention has already been drawn in this chapter to the popularity of realistic subjects such as hunting, the circus and amphitheatre introduced, by North African mosaicists in the later third and the fourth centuries, and the effect this development had on Aquileian mosaics. The effect of North African workshops on Italian mainland mosaics in the fourth and fifth centuries has been reviewed by Dunbabin.²³⁴ An impetus was given to polychromy which, as it happened, had not been abandoned in north Italy. Compartmentalisation by frameworks was reduced and large scale scenes of villas, hunting scenes and amphitheatres were introduced. The very fact that the marine scene in Compartment 7, south hall has no framework suggests North African influence (chapter 6 fig. 64). This scene is the most likely example of North African influence on the mosaics in the north and south halls of the Basilica complex. Mosaics in the villa of

²³⁴ Dunbabin (1978), 212-215. The sites obviously influenced are Torre Nuova, Rome, the Domus dei Dioscuri, Ostia and the Villa Romana, Desenzano on the shore of Lake Garda.

²³⁵ Wilson (1983), 44. For a recent assessment of the date of Piazza Armerina see Dunbabin (1999), 130.

Piazza Armerina, central Sicily, built approximately in 320 AD, were greatly influenced by, if not the products of, African workshops.²³⁵ The cupid fishermen working in a sea crowded with fish, seen in Compartment 7, closely resemble those in the mosaics of the semicircular portico in Piazza Armerina and in the Triumph of Neptune and Amphitrite mosaic, originally from Constantine, Algeria, now in the Louvre Museum, Paris. All belong to the first half of the fourth century. Another example of North African influence can be found in the mosaics, including a scene of fishing cupids, in the Roman Villa in Desenzano, a town some 220 kilometres west of Aquileia.²³⁶ According to Kollias, the mosaic of a fishing cupid from Cos, now in the Grand Master's Palace in Rhodes, belongs to the late Hellenistic period.²³⁷

Bertacchi is of the view that the mosaics already described in the east of the south hall; the marine scene, the Eucharist victory and the Good Shepherd (see above), come under the influence of late Hellenistic art. However, in contrast, she believes that the portraits in the west of the hall have completely separate characteristics, they belong to later in the fourth century and from an artistic perspective they are expressionistic (fig. 76).²³⁸ They are certainly quite distinct from the portraits in the east of the hall.

²³⁶ Scagiarini Corlaita (1992), 38. The main developments relating to architecture and mosaics in the villa took place in the first half of the fourth century.

²³⁷ Kollias (2001), 110.

²³⁸ Bertacchi (1998), 98. 'Tutti gli altri.....collocate nelle due campate occidentali, hanno carattere completamente diverso. Essi sono tutti molto più tardi e sono espressionistici dal punto do vista artistico.'

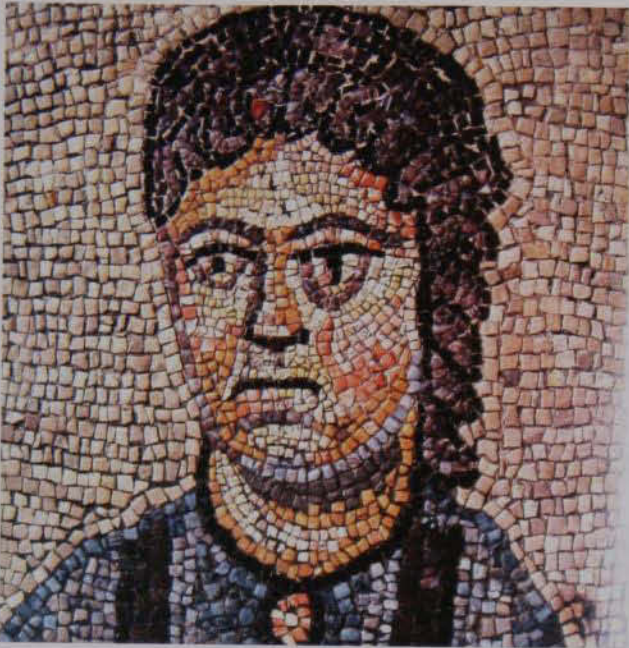


Fig. 76

South Hall

Compartment 1:

An expressionistic portrait

A female representing nine portraits in Compartments 1 and 3, west of the hall.

These portraits, whether male or female, when viewed in sequence, have the same fixed facial expression and are without a distinctive character. Artistically how far removed they are from Hellenistic influence compared for example with the Good Shepherd, is less easy to assess. The craftsmanship is of a quite high order.

Private Oratories

Numerous domestic houses dating from the first to the fourth centuries have been excavated in Aquileia. These and others in northern Italy have been documented and tabulated.²³⁹ Separate rooms, paved by polychrome mosaics with some allusion to Christianity, have been referred to as 'oratories' implying places of private worship.²⁴⁰ The Italian word 'fondo' refers to ground ownership, for example, a farm or a residence. The fondo dei fratelli Cossar (north of Piazza Capitolo) and fondo della Cal (just west of Via Giulia Augusta) sites were excavated in 1954.²⁴¹ Four floors reveal evidence of

²³⁹ George (1997), 39-41.

²⁴⁰ Mirabella Roberti (1987), 360-362.

²⁴¹ Brusin and Zovatto (1957), 189-230.

Christian motifs or designs, two in each site. The *quadrati* are either rectangular or square. The two in Fondo Cal have apses which are thought to be later additions.²⁴² The floor areas range from 48 to 81sq.m. Apart from the more elaborate mosaics of the north oratory in Fondo Cal, the mosaics are now open to the weather. Brusin was of the view that the floors were not laid down before the middle of the fourth century (a time generally accepted).²⁴³



Fig. 77 Fondo Cossar, south oratory.

A pheasant perched on a branch.

Probably mid fourth century.

Note framework similar to Section 2, north hall and Compartment 1, south hall

The south oratory of Fondo Cossar is also termed the oratory of the fishes because the mosaic in the central square, demarcated by chain guilloche, is a modest copy of the south hall marine scene with cupids fishing from a boat. The mosaic is badly damaged. Surrounding the central square is a framework consisting of octagon/cross (with guilloche)/hexagons similar to that in section 2, north hall and in compartment 1, south hall (figs.14 and 77). Each octagon contains an animal, quadruped or bird. The birds, perched on branches (fig.77), and the domestic animals are similar to those in sections 1

²⁴² Bertacchi (1986), 268.

²⁴³ Brusin and Zovatto (1957), 213.

and 2, north hall and in all compartments in the south hall except 2 and 9. This is the only floor, either in the north and south halls or in the oratories which includes carnivorous wild animals, in this case a lion and a tiger.

The north oratory of Fondo Cossar, (fig.78) has been entitled the 'Oratory of the Good Shepherd with singular clothes'. In this floor the Good Shepherd is placed in the centre of two concentric circles. Accompanying him are a sheep, a goat, a bird and a tub of butter. This group is surrounded by a guilloche circle. The outer circle is bordered by chain guilloche. In between the two circles is a vine scroll containing two peacocks, two moor-hens and small birds. The outside circle is encased in a square the angles of which contain personified Seasons. The odd title of the Good Shepherd refers to the fact that he and his clothes have been 'restored' in late antiquity (sixth century?) resulting in a mixture of garment styles from different centuries.²⁴⁴ The vine scroll and birds provide a link between the scrolls surrounding the south hall compartments, the vine tendrils in the north hall 'bands'(figs.22 and 37) and those in the apse of the Basilica del fondo Tullio (fig.82). The mosaic also shares with that in the apse of Fondo Tullio and the marine scene in the south hall (fig. 64) the property of not being rigidly compartmentalized. Associated with the Good Shepherd, who represents the Redeemer, are two peacocks representing eternal life.

²⁴⁴ Bertacchi (1986), 266.



Fig. 78 Fondo Cossar, north oratory; a peacock

Probably mid fourth century.

The Good Shepherd is upside down in this photograph

Note blue smalti in the neck and breast of the peacock. Red-brown smalti are also used in the clothes of the Good Shepherd

The mosaic pattern of the south oratory of Fondo Cal, which includes an apse, is relatively featureless. The framework is identical with that in compartment 2, south hall (octagon/cross with guilloche/square). Only one square contains an animal; a bird perched on branch similar to those in section 1, north hall.

The square floor of the north oratory of Fondo Cal makes it the most interesting of the four 'oratories'. The framework is based on large squares, lined by single bands and waves, which enclose smaller squares. The latter are lined by single strand guilloche. In the centre of smaller squares is an interior octagon which contains figurative images. The design, unusual in Aquileia, is similar to that of the great mosaic of Dionysus in the Römisch-Germanisches Museum in Cologne (c.200 AD) and those in some fourth century Romano-British floors, for example, Kingscote, Gloucestershire, England.²⁴⁵ There are no mosaic figures in the apse which is lined by mosaic *archettes* and ivy leaves.

²⁴⁵ Personal observation of Roman mosaics in Upper Germany.

²⁴⁶ Bertacchi (1998), 98.



Fig. 79

Aquileia, Fondo Cal, north oratory

Portrait of young female

Probably mid-fourth century.

Only one of three portraits in the north oratory remains intact. This is of a young girl of modest demeanour (fig.79). Her hair is kept in place by a band which is impressively woven in diagonal files of *tesserae*. She wears a tunic which leaves her arms bare. The dress is similar to that worn by the female servers of the Eucharistic Victory in the south hall. Her face is more finely drawn than expected and Bertacchi suggests that the mid-century mosaicist may have used an old cartoon influenced by late Hellenism.²⁴⁶

In the centre of the *quadratum* is a medallion in which there is a much damaged Good Shepherd. This is presumably influenced by the Good Shepherd mosaic in the south hall of the Basilica. Two trees at the side and animals at the Good Shepherd's feet can just be made out. The medallion is surrounded by four *canthari*. The surrounding octagons contain human busts (only one, see above, is not damaged) and animals (birds perched on branches, fish, a peacock and wader birds). There is also a mosaic of a pair of two blue birds drinking from a receptacle. All these have much in common with the

²⁴⁷ Bertacchi (1998), 93.

mosaics in the south hall. The perched birds are similar to those in Section 1, north hall and in various parts of the south hall.

Jonah

Towards the left of the marine scene in the south hall Jonah is represented twice in a boat. He can be seen being thrown to the leviathan by naked sailors. Further to the left, in the stern of the boat, there is a figure in sacerdotal vestments standing in the *orant* praying pose (fig.80). According to Bertacchi, the latter is another representation of Jonah and was a later insertion into the mosaic.²⁴⁷ She argues that, while there is a technical joining, the figure, from the '*storico-artistico*' point of view, is inconsistent with the main Jonah scenes, the emphasis being on preaching rather than resurrection. Jonah, following his release from the leviathan, preached to the people of Nineveh at the request of the Lord. They responded to his threatening sermons.²⁴⁸ She emphasises that this mosaic was carefully restored in 1987/88 and that evidence of late fourth century addition would have been made less obvious.²⁴⁹ Because of his vestments and attitude of prayer, it is unique in the mosaics of the south hall, the oratories and the late fourth/early fifth century Monastero and Beligna churches and is the only explicit Christian figure in the south hall. His praying posture and his white garment (with pallium) are very similar to those found in fifth/sixth century North African mosaics of Christian dignitaries. The advance in mosaic representation of ceremonial attire and the stylised posture of the

²⁴⁸ The Book of Jonah, Chapter 3.

²⁴⁹ Louisa Bertacchi was Director of the Archaeological Museum of Aquileia, 1953-1991. In 1991 she was appointed Honorary Conservator for life of the Museum. She was Professor of Greek, Roman and Palaeochristian Topography in the University of Trieste, 1971-89.



Fig. 80

Detail of the famous marine mosaic in the presbytery of the south hall (Compartment 7).

The general sea scene with the story of Jonah and the Leviathan

The stylised sacerdotal praying figure may be an insertion later in the fourth century

figure is supportive of the view that it is an example of the development of expressionistic Christian art.

Conclusion

The evidence presented above supports the view that the mosaics in the south hall belong to the continuity of work produced in the Aquileian region from the third to the late fourth century. When the floors of late fourth/early fifth century Aquileian suburban churches, Monastero and Fondo Tullio, are examined this continuity will be seen to reach into the early fifth century (chapter 8). Production would have received a serious blow with the invasion of Attila in 452 AD. However, there is clear evidence that mosaics floors continued to be laid later in the fifth and in the sixth centuries in Grado (chapter 8), a town about 10 kilometres from Aquileia. Indeed, there is ample evidence that mosaic floors were laid down in the precincts of the Basilica of Aquileia following Attila.²⁵⁰

²⁵⁰ Cecchini (1933), 239-240.

It is most likely that the marine scene in the south hall was influenced by developments in North African mosaics on two accounts: the general theme and the absence of a framework. The sea teeming with fish and Cupid fishermen represents Hellenistic influence by way of North African art and the resting Jonah, like many mosaics, sculptures, stelli and objects d'art of the third and fourth centuries, is represented by the classical picture of the sleepy Endymion. Nike, representing the Victorious Eucharist, and her acolytes are in accord with Hellenistic influence. The animals surrounding the Good Shepherd are not very dissimilar to the Nilotic mosaic from first century BC Pompeii (fig.68).

There are sufficient mosaic examples in the National Archaeological Museum of Aquileia to identify Hellenistic influence from the first to the late third century AD. The south hall depiction of the Good Shepherd *per se* can be identified with eastern expressionistic art and seems to represent a turning point in Aquileian mosaic art. Identification of the change to expressionistic representation is heavily dependent upon Bertacchi's interpretation of the mosaics in the west floor of the south hall and the *orant* depiction of Jonah in the marine scene (see above). She is supported by Tavano who refers to a 'schematic solution' associated with these portraits and regards them as showing signs of degenerating artistic endeavour in the late Constantine or post-Constantine period.²⁵¹

The 'Christian oratory' floors, most likely of the mid-fourth century, represent varying qualitative examples of mosaic art. Overall they were certainly not of the standard of the best of the south and north hall figurative mosaics. It cannot be consequentially assumed that this was due to further adoption of expressionistic art by

local mosaicists. The floor in the south hall was most likely planned by Bishop Theodore and his presbyters and funded by a number of wealthy donors. The 'oratories' were private ventures probably dependent upon the south hall mosaics for inspiration. For the more natural or lively figurative images such as the girl in figure 79, Bertacchi raises the question of the use of early cartoons. It might be reasonable to conclude that figures in the 'oratories' share the trends apparent in the south hall.

Lack of human figures and portraits in the north hall makes the task of relating its mosaics to the generality of Aquileian mosaics difficult. However, this can be made easier by following the line taken by Tavano who separates the mosaics in the area north-east of the campanile from all the remaining north hall mosaics including those in the centre of the campanile.²⁵² To be precise, this area represents Sections 3 and 4 in the 'north corridor' and Section 4 along the east wall from the north wall to the trapezoid area (fig. 5 and 6).

The main figurative feature of Section 1, north hall is the presence of single birds perched on branches. This representation is commonplace in the south hall and in the 'oratories'. Though less common, it can be found in late third century Aquileian mosaics. This is in accord with dating Section 1 mosaics to 320 AD or slightly later. The figurative mosaics in section 2 and the centre of the campanile may be divided into frames containing quadrupeds and those containing paired confronting birds. The former, in general, share similarities with those in the south hall, the oratories and the late fourth/early fifth century church of Fondo Tullio (chapter 8). The most important

²⁵¹ Tavano (1982), 566-568.

²⁵² Tavano (1982), 559. Tavano also specifically excludes the rabbit to the south of the trapezoid area (Section 4, east, area 2) in Section 4, east (p.560).

difference is the greater degree of activity and plasticity of the animals in Section 2 and the centre of the campanile. Domestic or non-aggressive wild animals were not noted in available pre-300 AD Aquileian mosaics. There are no parallels in Aquileia to the schematic paired confronting birds in Section 2.

The animals in the mosaics north-east of the campanile have been described in chapters 4 and 5. Here, only their relationship with other Aquileian mosaics is considered. Tavano regards these mosaics as belonging to the period of Emperor Gallienus (253-268). By this he may be interpreted to mean that a master mosaicist either lived from this time to work (or to advise) during 313-319 AD or who used cartoons from this period.²⁵³ He was not prepared to add an obvious alternative, as others have, that the north-east mosaics were laid down in the third century.²⁵⁴ Most animals are finely proportioned and are strikingly coloured using a variety of coloured smalti and have solid but not distorted volumes. These features Tavano associates with Hellenistic art. The pictorial naturalism of this artistic movement is represented by some mosaics for instance the single birds and the seven partridges in Section 4, west. For most of the remainder the term 'naturalism' must be defined. For example, while the two purple gallinules in Section 3 may belong to pictorial naturalism, their immobile mirror image pose is by no means natural. Their like was not seen in the south hall, the museums or the oratories of Aquileia. The contorted pose of the ass and goat was not repeated in mosaics between 250 and 400 AD.

²⁵³ Tavano (1982), 559.

²⁵⁴ Cecchini (1933), 153.

Two quadrupeds in Section 3, 'Pegasus' and the 'bull-Cronus', were thought to belong to Romano-Hellenistic mythology (Chapter 4, figs. 27 and 34). There are many examples of mythological figures in the mosaics of the Archaeological Museum belonging to the third century: Triton, Neptune with the sea-horses and the transportation of the Nereids. There are also examples outside the Museum including Lycurgus and Ambrosia and the Seasons. There is little similarity between these figures and those in Section 3 of the north hall. There was no other example of Pegasus. With regard to the two quadrupeds, i.e. the goat and 'cow', in Section 4, west, resting on the top of trees there are no repeats of this pose in Aquileia or indeed in the rest of the Roman Empire during 250-400 AD. The red lobster on top of a tree is unique in the Aquileian area. None of these elements were repeated elsewhere. The difficulty of placing north-east mosaics of the north hall among the mosaics of Aquileia may conceivably be due to selection over the years with the eventual deposition of favoured pieces in the Archaeological Museum. Figurative mosaics are represented in the museum by large mythological scenes, the gods and busts of athletes to the exclusion of simple creatures such as birds and domestic animals.

The mosaics of the north hall least identified with those in the south hall and in the surrounding Aquileian area, are those in the north-east. Also, there are no other examples of the paired confronting birds in Section 2. However, there is evidence from other parts of the north hall, the single birds of Section 1, the quadrupeds of Section 2 and the campanile and possibly the birds in Section 4, that the mosaics of the north hall were involved in the continuity of Aquileian mosaic art.

8

Churches in the north Adriatic region

The first identifiable church in the north Adriatic region is the paired halls of Aquileia. In 320AD the halls were rectangular with no apse and no structural *solea*. They had a rectangular segregated area to the east, the presbytery, and a *quadratum* to the west for the laity. The evidence strongly suggests that there were chancel screens, murals, three pairs of pillars in each hall and painted flat ceilings. As both were likely to have been developed from older buildings and were not fully basilical as defined by White, they may be described as *aulae ecclesiae*.²⁵⁵

Excluding the 'oratories', within the suburbs of Aquileia the remains of ten other churches, martyria and smaller religious edifices have been discovered.²⁵⁶ The best known and studied are the Basilica Apostolorum (in the Fondo Tullio, Beligna), to the south and the Monastero to the north-east, both belonging to the late fourth/early fifth centuries. The floor mosaics of these churches provide an end point to the review of Aquileian mosaics during 250-400 in chapter 7.

Towards the end of the fourth century the Church at Aquileia exerted substantial ecclesiastical influence in the provinces of Venetia/Istria and Mediterranean Noricum.²⁵⁷ During the middle of this century four other churches and, during the late

²⁵⁵ White (1990), i, 136. The halls, including the transverse hall, are described by local historians as the 'Basilica complex' or the 'Basilica of Aquileia' from 320 AD onwards. Renovations to the south hall with the addition of an apse and transept undertaken by Bishop Massensius (811-838) changed the building to conform with the strict architectural definition of a Basilica as defined by White (1990), i, 18.

²⁵⁶ Chevallier (1990), 108-109.

²⁵⁷ Menis (1976), 375-420.

fourth/early fifth centuries, a further eight were built in the north Adriatic region. In distinction to the Aquileian Theodorian basilica complex the later group of churches included external or internal apses. If the church is levelled with only the foundations remaining the internal apse appears as a semicircle and the enclosed area is referred to by Caillet as the 'hémicycle du presbyterium'.²⁵⁸

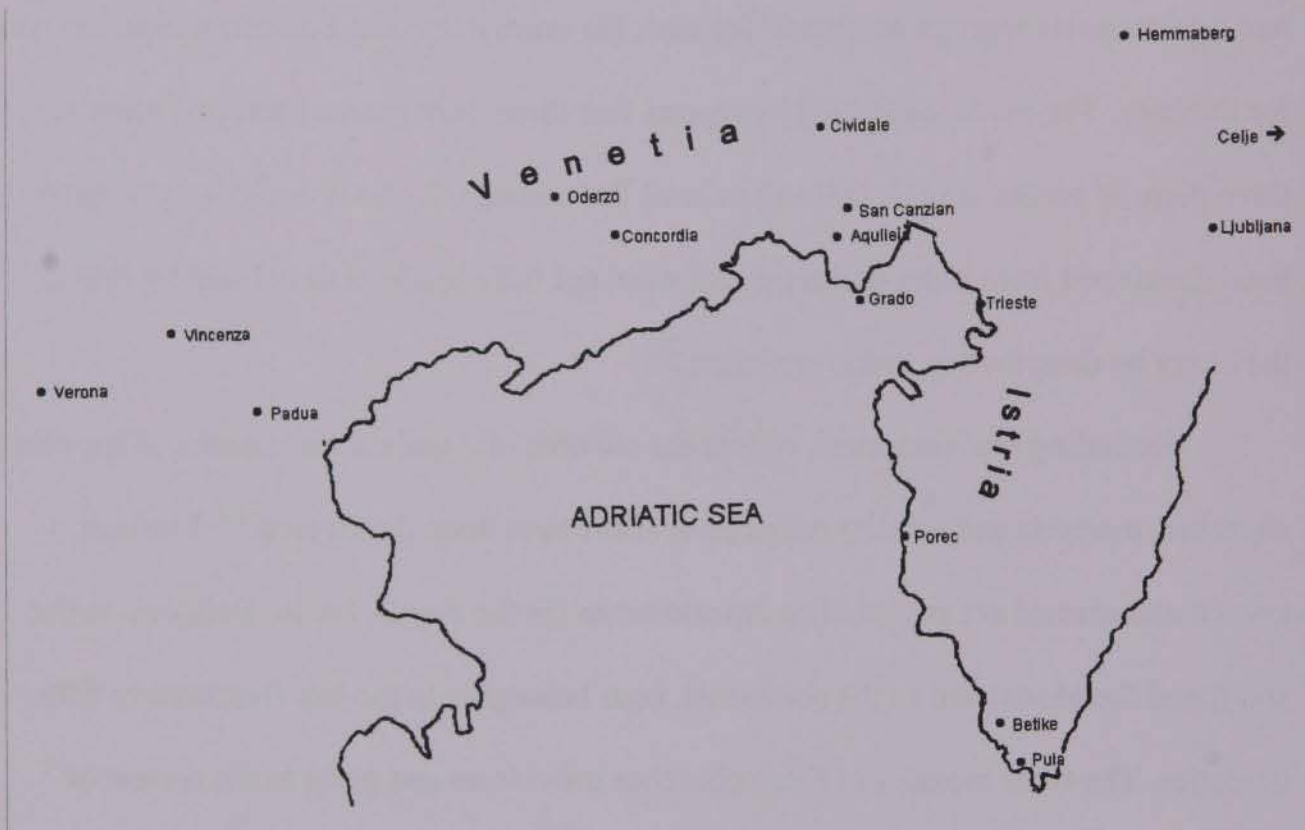


Fig. 81 Venetia and Istria: Sites mentioned in text

The main emphasis in this chapter is on mosaic floors though some consideration is given to architecture and parallel churches.²⁵⁹ The following analyses of fourth and fifth century churches are to a considerable extent dependent upon the study by Caillet of the

²⁵⁸ Caillet (1993), 146.

²⁵⁹ Krautheimer (1975), 485.

early churches of Italy.²⁶⁰ However, there is additional comment from other authors and personal observations.

Aquileia

Church del Fondo Tullio (alla Beligna). This church was sited about 2.0 kilometres to the south of Aquileia and was built in the late fourth-early fifth century. The original site is located with some difficulty today because of the absence of remains.²⁶¹ It had an

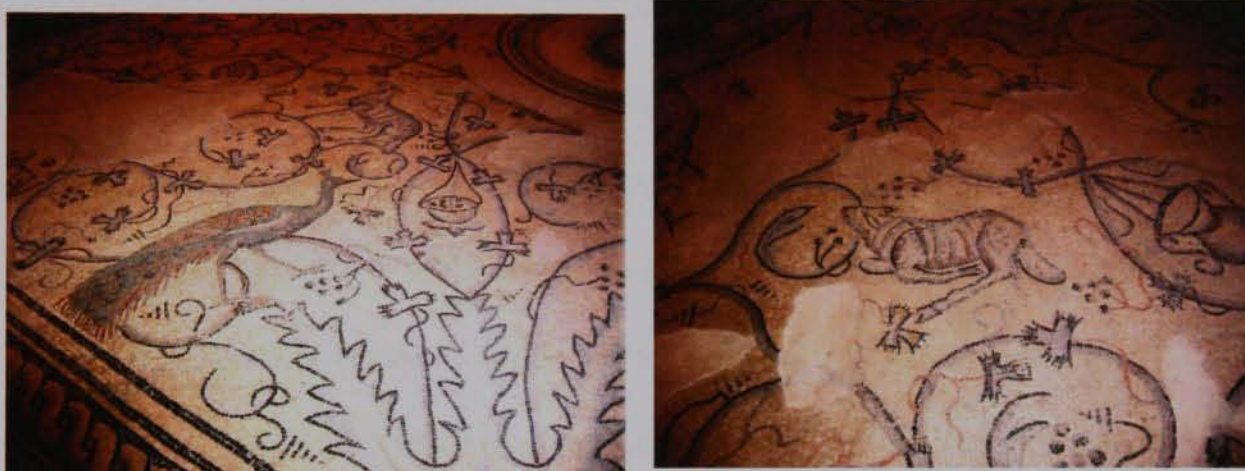


Fig. 82 Details from the apse of the Basilica del fondo Tullio. Late fourth/early fifth century.
On the left is a peacock, on the right one of the sheep representing the twelve apostles.
Note the lack of frames and the unnatural pose and elongated hind leg of the sheep.

external apse and transepts and was the earliest known church in the north Adriatic area to be built in the form of a Roman cross. This was a large church, the *quadratum populi* measured 53×25m (1,325sq.m.). The area of the *quadratum* and the *presbyterium* of the enlarged late fourth century south hall of the Basilica complex was 1,880 sq.m.

²⁶⁰ Caillet, (1993), *L'Evergetisme Monumental Chrétien en Italie et ses Marges*. Caillet comments on the history, architecture, mosaics, inscriptions and dates of the early churches; Theodorian Basilica 123-141, Fondo Tullio 142-158, Monastero 158-192, Piazza della Vittoria 192-200, Santa Maria delle Grazie 200-214, S. Euphemia 218-257, S Canzian d'Isonzo 257-265, Concordia 113-123, Trieste 270-290, Porec 293-335, Betika 335-340, Pula 340-346. An extensive bibliography is provided.

²⁶¹ Caillet (1993), 142-158. Despite a thorough search of the indicated site the author could not find evidence of foundations or remnants of wall or pillars. This may have been due to the energies of landowners or detailed removal by enthusiastic archaeologists or both.

The remains of the apsidal pavement mosaics are now in the Palaeochristian Archaeological Museum, Aquileia. Compared with those found in mid-fourth to the fifth century churches in the region, they have a lightness of touch found in late Hellenistic art. Spirals created by vine shoots sprouting from tufts of acanthus entwine a variety of birds including a peacock and twelve sheep (assumed to represent the twelve apostles). The peacock and birds are similar to those included in the vine scroll around the 'Good Shepherd with peculiar clothes' in the north Cossar oratory (chapter 6, fig. 78).

The depiction of quadrupeds in the mosaic floor of the Fondo Tullio Church reveals that, by the beginning of the fifth century, mosaic artistic skills in Aquileia had deteriorated when compared with those associated with the animals in the north hall. The inability to present animals with appropriately sized or properly articulated limbs (fig.82) is akin to but even more pronounced than that in Compartment 8, south hall (figs.66 and 67). Figure 82 presents only one among many examples of poor craftsmanship in Fondo Tullio.

The apsidal mosaic is a single creation dispensing with the compartmentalized rigidity seen in mosaic floors of the north hall and of the other remaining late fourth/early fifth century churches. In this respect it is similar to the mosaic in compartment 7 (marine ensemble) in the Theodorian south hall and that in the Fondo Cossar north oratory floor. This change is in keeping with a movement popularised by North African patrons and mosaicists (chapter 6). The remains of the nave mosaics reveal a section of the floor containing a framework with a simple octagon sequence as seen in Section 4, east, area 1, north hall.²⁶²

²⁶² Caillet (1993), Fig.111.

Church del Monastero (del fondo Ritter). Situated in the northern suburbs of Aquileia close to the river Natissa, this edifice had a chequered history which included acting as a stall for domestic animals. It was thought to have become part of a monastery in the ninth century. The monastery was suppressed in the eighteenth century. Eventually it was used to house Christian stelae, sculptures and mosaics collected in the region of Aquileia and referred to as the Palaeochristian Archaeological Museum. All the exhibits belong to the late fourth century onwards and do not greatly assist the assessment of the north hall. The original edifice was built in the early fifth century. As first built it comprised a single hall with an internal apse. Rectangular rooms were added to the east and west of the building, presumably housing a baptistery and a martyrium.²⁶³ The original *quadratum* measured 48×17m (816sq.m.). It is divided into twelve bays each containing compartmentalised mosaics. Despite numerous inscriptions bearing Syriac, Palestinian and even Jewish-sounding names it is generally agreed that this church was not originally a synagogue.²⁶⁴ The church was close to the port and most likely the congregation were of mixed ethnicity.

Two bays (2 and 3) contain the same mosaic framework as section 2, north hall, that is, cross (with an included braided cross), octagon and hexagon interstices. While these frameworks are identical with those in the north hall, the octagon frames contain mainly geometric designs with an occasional dedicatory inscription. Many of the

²⁶³ White (1990), 128.

²⁶⁴ Chevallier, (1990), 73.

geometric designs resemble those in Compartment 9 of the Theodorian south hall. Each hexagon contains four small blossoms whose stalks meet in a small central square. This appearance closely resembles that in the church in the Piazza della Vittoria in Grado (see

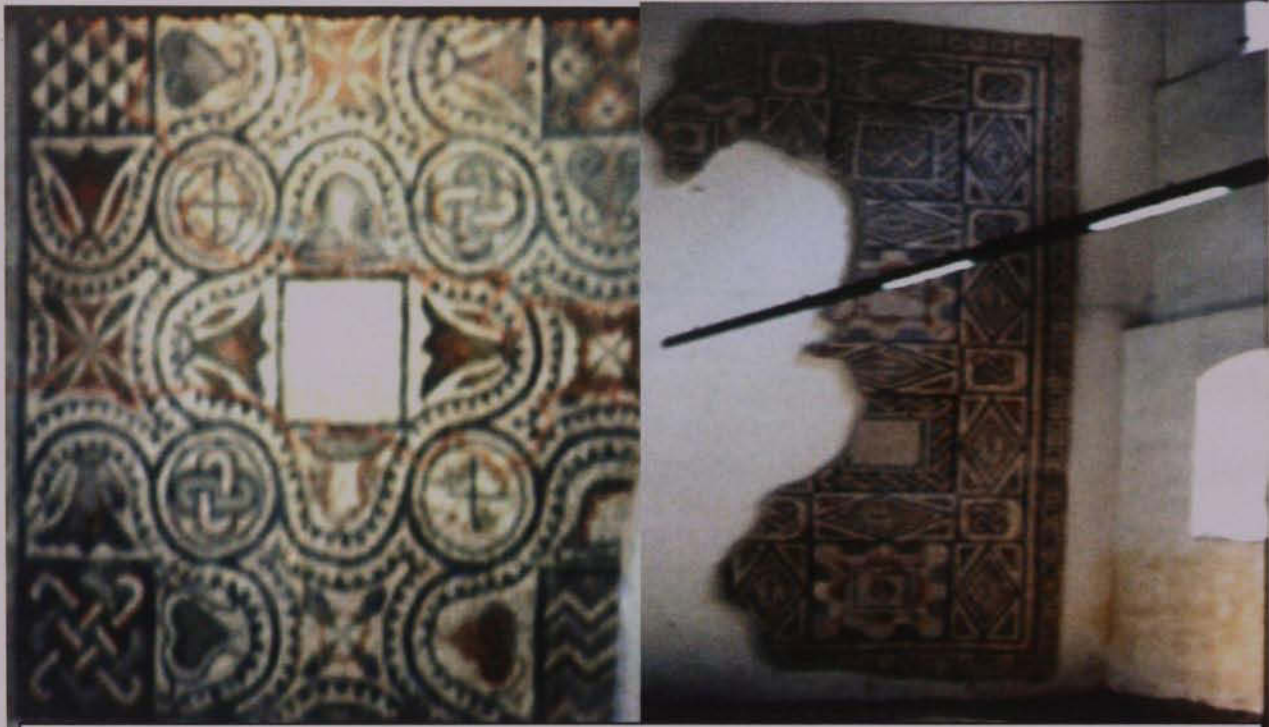


Fig. 83 Monastero, Bay 12, early 5th century Phase 1 **Monastero, Bay 12, 5th century Phase 2**

below) and both have some similarity with the inclusions in the hexagons in section 2, north hall, Aquileia.

Mosaics now hanging on the east transverse wall, which excludes the original apse from the main body of the church, were lifted from the floor of bay 12, just southwest of the presbytery (fig. 83). The carpet of mosaics on the left was taken from the first phase of development of the church. It is dated to the early fifth century. It has the same framework as those in section 4, west, north hall, that is, rounded crosses, roundels and curvilinear octagons. These contain various geometric designs including Solomon's knots and canthari. The artistic content is insignificant compared with those in the north hall.

The carpet of mosaics on the right is taken from the second phase of development of bay 12, 40cm higher, and is dated to the mid-fifth century.²⁶⁵ Here there is a lozenge (rectangle) and Solomon's knot (smaller rectangle) sequence similar to that surrounding Section 4, north hall.

In the context of Aquileian mosaic art during 250-400 (chapter 7) the Fondo Tullio and the Monastero churches may be viewed in the following manner. Architecturally two changes are apparent compared with the Aquileia Basilica complex. Firstly, the church at Fondo Tullio adopted a Roman cross design which anticipated the basilical development, with apse and transepts, of the south hall (the later Basilica) of Aquileia by 400 years. Secondly there was the introduction of an apse in both churches, an addition not included in the later enlarged churches of the Aquileian complex.

The mosaic floor of church at Fondo Tullio continues the design of open, as represented in the south hall marine scene, rather than framed planning in the remainder of the south hall. The artistic content of this mosaic floor does not reveal any advance on the mosaics in the south hall or the mid-fourth century oratories. The mosaics in the Monastero have been subject to much abuse over the centuries. While recognising this, they, nonetheless, remain uninspiring. It is likely, but not certain, that frameworks from the south hall were copied. The contents of the frames, however, show lack of artistic inspiration. The evidence we have today is one of diminution of requirements or finances on the part of patrons and/or skill of artists and *musivarii* during the early fifth century in Aquileia. It is important to bear in mind that the Aquileian hinterland would have been seriously affected by the invasion of the Visigoths at the beginning of this century

²⁶⁵ Bertacchi (1986), 230-244.

Grado

Grado is an island 10 kilometres south of Aquileia with which it shared a close and turbulent ecclesiastical history during the early and middle medieval periods.²⁶⁶

The church in the Piazza della Vittoria (fig.84). This is the earliest known church in Grado.²⁶⁷ It was built in the middle of the fourth century inside the *castrum* of the city. The entrance leads to a vestibule and then a single nave. To the east there is an internal apse. In front of which there is a rectangular presbytery and a *solea* extending west into the nave. The whole is enclosed within a rectangle measuring 30×11m (330sq.m). The excavations, which are excellently displayed, are now the main tourist attraction in the piazza. A later fifth century church, built over the first church, is marked out by a white line but the results of excavations are not on display. It measured 34×21m (735sq.m).

The floor of the nave of the early church has a framework pattern similar to that in section 2, north hall (cross and octagon with hexagon interstices). Each cross contains secondary braided crosses as in secondary braided crosses as in Section 2. The octagons contain (a) simple geometric designs (b) Solomon's knots (c) donation inscriptions.²⁶⁸

²⁶⁶ Because of natural silting and land reclamation it is now virtually part of the mainland. The strip of sea protected Grado from the Goths, the Huns and the Lombards, whereas life in Aquileia was perpetually interrupted by these invaders. For this reason, Grado was able to maintain close contact with the Eastern/Byzantine Empire until well into the ninth century

²⁶⁷ Caillet (1993), 194.

²⁶⁸ The inscription (foreground) reads 'Paulinus and Marcellina with their all (family), 1000sq.ft.'



Fig. 84
Grado

Church in
Piazzo della
Vittoria.

Mid fourth
century.

Internal
apse,
presbytery
and nave

The hexagons contain four small fleur-de-lis whose stalks meet in a small central square. The design in the hexagons closely resembles that in the Monastero hexagons and has therefore a lesser but definite similarity with section 2, north hall. The *tesserae* used were red and black with white as a background.

Santa Maria delle Grazie. This church, sited in the old part of the city, is within easy walking distance of Piazza della Vittoria. It was built in the middle of the fifth century approximately 100 years after the original church in Piazza della Vittoria.²⁶⁹ It is a rectangular building measuring 19×11m (210sq.m) and has an internal apse. The presbytery projects into the central nave. It is still standing but during 2003-04 was closed for renovations. It is in the same square as and parallel to the larger Basilica of S. Eufemia, built in 579.

²⁶⁹ Tavano (1986), 401.

The surviving mosaics are not similar to those in the north and south halls of the Basilica of Aquileia apart from a profusion of Solomon's knots. Lozenge-circle sequences can be found in the east section of the south aisle with Solomon's knots in the circles. There are a large number of donor inscriptions.²⁷⁰

San Canzian d'Isonzo

This village lies about six kilometres east of Aquileia on the west bank of the Isonzo river. The Isonzo now accepts the Natisone as a tributary to the north of San Canzian. However in antiquity the latter flowed along the east wall of Aquileia directly into the sea. In the fourth century the Via Gemina, an important highway from Aquileia to Poetovia (Ljubjana) and the east, ran through the village. At the side of this ancient road, about 200metres to the west of the original church, are housed, in a single oratory, the separate sarcophagi of SS Chrysogonus and Protus thought to have been martyred in 303-305. The early church was built in the middle of the fourth century. It was a rectangular structure containing a single room without an apse and measured 32×16m (512sq.m). There are now a few scattered remains of the church, the outer walls of which are marked by lines close to the present functioning church.²⁷¹

The few remaining pieces of the mosaics in the original church can be inspected in a small *antiquarium* at the side of the present church. New mosaic pavements were laid

²⁷⁰ Caillet (1993), 203-211.

²⁷¹ The early church probably started out as a *martyrium* in memory of the local martyrs Cantius, Cantianus and Cantianella, members of a local noble family who were executed in 303. During the period of the Tetrarchy the village was know as *Aquae Gradatae*.

down in the fifth and sixth centuries.²⁷² Neither the original or later patterns are similar to those in the north or south halls of Aquileia.

Concordia²⁷³

This Roman colony was founded about 42 BC to protect the via Annia and the via Postumia. It is about 30 kilometres west of Aquileia on the river Lémene. It became an important military centre during the barbarian invasions from the third century onwards. Like Aquileia, Christianity probably arrived in Concordia because it was a port and a military centre and therefore had a comparatively large immigrant population. The city was abandoned in 589 following a disastrous flood.



Fig. 85
Concordia

Trichora Martyrium

Mid fourth century

Background: the tri-apsidal area
Foreground: the basilica added later with two files of pillars

To the left is the wall of the Basilica Apostolarum

Trichora Martyrium. A tri-apsidal building was constructed in the middle of the fourth century with the purpose of housing relicts of martyrs.²⁷⁴ Later a small basilica was added

²⁷² Mirabella Roberti and Tavano (1981), 6.

²⁷³ The site is open to visitors on payment of a modest entrance fee. The features are well displayed and explained.

²⁷⁴ Bertacchi (1986), 325.

with two lines of four pillars. The enlarged version was probably used as a church towards the end of the century. The total area was approximately 200sq.m. (fig.85) The Martyrium is likely to have evolved from a nearby pagan (and later Christian) burial ground containing numerous inscribed sarcophagi.²⁷⁵ The few fragments of mosaic have no similarity with those of Aquileia.

Basilica Apostolorum. The Basilica was built in 390- 400, parallel to and adjoining the north side of the Trichora Martyrium.²⁷⁶ It is now located under the present St. Stephen's Basilica. It is rectangular measuring 40×20m (800sq.m). It contains a raised *solea* leading to a raised presbytery and apse (fig.86). All this area, constructed with white marble, was probably not added until the middle of the fifth century. The photograph, perhaps, gives some idea of the *solea* in the post-Theodorian north hall in Aquileia.

The Basilica was dedicated by Bishop Chromatius of Aquileia, an account is given in his 26th sermon. It is likely, therefore, that Concordia, at the time, came under the ecclesiastical wing of Aquileia. Below the altar is a *loculus* which is said to have contained relics of Saints Andrew, Thomas, Luke and John the Baptist and John the Evangelist.²⁷⁷

²⁷⁵ Eusebius, *Eccles. History*, IX. i. II. During the late persecution of Maximian (310-13) he is reported to have restrained the celebration of Christian martyrs in cemeteries. These assemblies probably continued after 313 and *martyria* were eventually built at the cemetery site.

²⁷⁶ Caillet (1993), 113-23.

²⁷⁷ Chromatius, Sermon 26. Translation by Todde, *Sermoni Liturgica* (1981), 176-81. The Sermon is entitled 'The Dedication of the Church of Concordia'. Chromatius describes the saints emphasising that their relics are conserved at Concordia.



Fig. 86

Concordia

Basilica
ApostolorumLate fourth
centuryLooking from
the solea
towards the
presbytery

The framework of the mosaics of the naves is unlike those in the north and south halls of Aquileia. The central nave is decorated by a single design: octagons joined together vertically and horizontally with swastikas. They contain various designs including Solomon's knots and inscriptions.

Trieste

The ancient city of Tergeste was located about 30 kilometres south-east of Aquileia where the Julian Alps meet the Adriatic coast. It was founded as a Roman colony in 52/50 BC on the main land route from Aquileia and San Canzian d'Isonzo to the Istrian Peninsula. In the fourth century it was part of the Roman Venetia-Istria province.

Basilica in via Madonna Del Mare. This edifice was built outside the walls of the city in the form of a basilica with a single nave (*quadratum populi*), a transept and an apse. Due to encroachment of more recent buildings only the north section of the nave can now be seen in what can only be described as a crypt. The presbytery remains are more complete

though there are no mosaics.²⁷⁸ The dimensions of the nave were probably 31×11m (there has been difficulty in locating the extent of the western section) and those of the raised platform of the presbytery 6.0×7.25m.²⁷⁹

The most complete surviving mosaics are found in the nave below the presbytery and along the north wall. There are two layers of mosaic; the lower is dated late fourth/early fifth and the upper the middle of the fifth century.²⁸⁰ The remains of the mosaics on the lower floor measure 7.6×6.0m. The framework of the north panel in the lower floor is of the octagon/cross/hexagon type found in section 2, north hall. The octagons contain Solomon's knots and crosses are braided (guilloche). To the west this panel is completed by three squares each containing inscriptions. Occupying the centre of the nave from the presbytery, is a separate 'middle' panel, 7.6×2m, containing a lozenge and circle sequence which surrounds a narrow one metre wide strip extending from the presbytery. This may have acted as a flat *solea*.

The link with Aquileia was close; two of the twelve inscriptions in the upper mosaic floor contain dedications to three separate individuals who were described as 'defenders of the holy church of Aquileia' and the name of another donor 'Cantius' was probably influenced by one of the patron saints of Aquileia.²⁸¹

²⁷⁸ The site is poorly presented. There is an entrance in the via Madonna del Mare. The visitor is prevented from walking into the nave which can only be viewed from the altar area. The protective roof is so low that the viewer has to stoop. It is evident that parts of the mosaic floor have been removed leaving a number of small mosaic islands. There were clearly two mosaic carpets, one laid upon the other at a later date.

²⁷⁹ Caillet (1993), 272.

²⁸⁰ Caillet, (1993), 288-289.

²⁸¹ Cuscito (1973), 127-166, provides a description and explanation of 17 dedicatory inscriptions in the floor of the Trieste Basilica. Apart from Chrysogonus, Cantius was the most prominent Aquileian martyr who died during 303-305. He was probably an aristocrat with estates in or near San Canzian d'Isonzo (Aquae Gradatae).

Poreč

The large peninsula of Istria was conquered by Rome in the later part of the second century BC. Parentium or Poreč is a town on a small west coast peninsula approximately midway between Pula and Trieste. Christians must have been very sure of their status by the time they built their early church because, though small, it is in a prominent position and on a scenically beautiful, elevated site with the sea close by to the north.

The early church. It is very difficult to be sure of the boundaries of the earliest church, either from study of local site plans, from the description provided by Caillet or by personal inspection.²⁸² It seems reasonably certain that the church was rectangular measuring *in toto* 20×8m (160sq.m.) with originally no apse. Contiguous to its south wall was a similarly sized hall giving the overall impression of a twin church.²⁸³ It is likely the north hall was the main worshipping area (fig. 87). There were adjunct rooms along the north wall and a later extension to the east. Local site information indicates a *domus ecclesia* in the south east room suggesting a Christian presence earlier than the fourth century (figs. 87 and 92). Site information indicates the early basilica was built in the middle of the fourth century. White summarises his information by suggesting approximately 370 AD.²⁸⁴

The south hall (better envisaged in fig.92) was thought to be a *martyrium*. About half its area on a north-south axis was incorporated into a large basilica built in the fifth

²⁸² Caillet (1993), 295.

²⁸³ White (1990), ii, 188 and Krautheimer (1971), 165.

²⁸⁴ White (1990), ii, 194.

century to the south of the two halls.²⁸⁵ The larger church is in fact parallel with the early church and gives rise to confusion as to which churches are to be compared when considering a twin church. Final major enlargement to the west took place in the sixth century and the whole complex was entitled 'the Euphrasia Basilica' which is still functioning today.



Fig. 87 The early Poreč church floor, mid fourth century. The right background is thought to be the site of the *domus ecclesiae*. The original north wall is about 0.5m from the mosaic panel and the south wall is just seen in the right background. Central to this is a parallel fifth century wall interrupting and damaging the mosaic floor. The west panel, in the foreground, contains the interlinking octagons. The cantharus can just be seen in the central panel. The east panel is the dark area in the background.

²⁸⁵ White (1990), ii, 188.

All mosaics in the early church hall and rooms have been lifted and placed in the basilica museum. They have been replaced by replicas which are open to the weather. The mosaic patterns are simple but artistically effective. The floor of the early church contains three mosaic panels. The east panel is composed of squares demarcated by a heavy guilloche meander. The squares contain matting patterns and Solomon's knots. One square contains a remarkable picture of a pike-like fish (fig.88) which presumably relates to the well-known Christian symbol.



Fig. 88

Poreč

**The early church
east panel**

c. 370

The fish mosaic

In the central panel the mosaic framework has a swastika meander. In the centre of this there is a square *emblema* containing a cantharus with leavy vine tendrils issuing from its mouth (chapter 3, fig.16). This is an early representation of a cantharus with vine tendrils in a Christian church in this region. There is always the likelihood that the *emblema* was imported from a workshop outside Poreč and therefore does not necessarily represent indigenous art. There are three inscriptions associated with this mosaic panel.

The main pattern of the west panel is one of interlinking octagons. The centre of the octagon contains a square with a 45° tilt and from its angles perpendiculars are dropped to the middle of four sides of the octagon creating four internal hexagons

(chapter 2, fig.9). Each hexagon contains four vestigial fleur-de-lys blooms whose stalks meet in the centre (see below). In the centre of the interlinking octagonal area is a large square, surrounded by four stranded guilloche, with a geometric design producing a *trompe-l'oeil* effect.

Betika

The remains of the Monastery of St Andrew are sited on the west coast of the Istrian peninsula 10 kilometres north of Pula beside Barbariga village.²⁸⁶ According to Caillet the church was built in two phases during the early part of the fifth century.²⁸⁷ It was rectangular (30×12m) within which, to the east, is an internal triple apse along the style of the Trichora Martyrium in Concordia. Three naves extend some 18m from the apsidal area. The monastery complex continued to develop for the next eight centuries suggesting an active Christian centre in this area.

²⁸⁶ The monastery site when visited was securely barriered. There is an explanatory placard and it is possible to identify the church with its triple apse through the wire netting. I was informed by a local hotelier that the mosaics discussed above were *in situ* having been 'covered with earth'.

²⁸⁷ Caillet (1993), 340.



Fig 89
Betika
South Istria

Early fifth century

The south apse containing the tree of life, volutes and two ivy leaves

The centre of the tri-apsidal area contains rounded crosses, circles and a curvilinear octagons and a dedicatory inscription

The remaining mosaics are to be found in (a) the north and south apses (b) the body of the tri-apsidal area and (c) the central nave. The south apse and most likely the north apse (fragment only) contain a stylised tree with many branches and leaves (fig.89). Two ivy leaves can be seen in the south apse; one attached to the tree, the other to volutes at the right side. The trees may represent the tree of life (Chapter 3) and the ivy leaves apotropaic symbols against evil (see hexagram in the entrance to the early Aquileian Basilica complex, chapter 9). In the body of the tri-apsidal area and of the central nave are panels containing rounded crosses, roundels and curvilinear octagons similar to those in Section 4, west, north hall. The rounded crosses contain dedicatory inscriptions and geometric patterns only; there are no animal forms.

Pula

Pula is sited on a west coast sea inlet near the southern tip of the Istrian Peninsula. The remains of two parallel churches in the harbour area close to those of Roman municipal and temple buildings can still be seen. Both have been dated to the early part

of the fifth century.²⁸⁸ The larger north hall can be reviewed by examining the remains of archaeological excavations. In May 2004 the eastern section of the north church was screened off. However, some restrictions could be circumvented. It was possible to identify the internal east apse, the presbyterium, steps leading up to the choir from the central nave and the pillars and pillar bases of the nave. It is rectangular measuring 50×20m. The remaining fifth century mosaics are either buried in situ or transported elsewhere (most likely the former). The south church was a rectangular building, measuring 40×12m, and had an internal apse according to the site drawing provided by Caillet.²⁸⁹ It was thought to have been a martyrium.²⁹⁰

Mosaics have only been found in the North Church. These are mainly confined to a central corridor in the west of the central nave leading to the steps of the choir and to the concavity of the semicircle. The pattern of the former is based on



Fig. 90

**Sta Maria Assumpta
Pula
South Istria**

Early fifth century

**The south of two
parallel churches
(viewed from the west)**

**The north church is to
the left (out of picture)**

²⁸⁸ Tavano (1972), 270. Date of construction is supported by Caillet (1993), 346.

²⁸⁹ Caillet (1993), pl. 258. Measurements of both north and south churches were calculated from the drawing of church sites provided by Caillet using the included scale. By May 2004 the parallel church complex was termed Sta. Maria Assumpta. The south church is standing and roofed. From the outside it appears to have an external apse and small transepts. It appeared shorter than Caillet's drawing.

²⁹⁰ Mirabella Roberti (1947-48), 215.

of the latter is composed of alternating small and large intertwining circles. According to Tavano²⁹¹ this pattern is characteristic of floor mosaics of the first part of the fifth century in the region. There is a vague resemblance to the framework in Section 3, north hall.

Conclusion

The number and quality of living creatures displayed in the mosaic floors of north Adriatic churches decreases towards the end of the fourth century compared with those in the Aquileian north and south halls. Figurative images are replaced by geometric designs or donation inscriptions. Animals are not represented on the floors of Monastero, San Canzian d'Isonzo, the church in the Piazza della Vittoria and Santa Maria delle Grazie, Grado, Trichora Martyrium and the Basilica Apostolorum, Concordia or in the churches of Poreč (apart from the fish), Trieste, Betika and Pula, all built between the mid-fourth and mid-fifth centuries. To these should be added the floor of the post-Theodorian north hall. The exception is the apsidal mosaics of the Basilica of Beligna. Chevallier, reviewing palaeochristian mosaics, describes four periods of artistic endeavour, the first, the golden age, under the Tetrarchy and Constantine, the second associated with Julian in the middle of the fourth century, the third from Theodosius to Honorius and the fourth in the fifth century which he described as 'très artisanale'.²⁹² He goes on to describe new pavement mosaics in Aquileia after Attila as being aniconic with a reduced colour range and a concentration on intertwining knots. Church animals make their reappearance in the sixth century in the north Adriatic area as confronting doves in altar-pieces as seen in the

²⁹¹ Tavano (1972), 270.

²⁹² Chevallier (1990), 105

Poreč Basilica Museum, the Palaeochristian Museum in Aquileia and the Basilica of S. Euphemia, Grado.

The 'Ianvarius' mosaic in Section 2, north hall (fig.12) is the only inscription in both the Aquileian halls which clearly mentions a donation. It has been reasonably suggested that the portraits in the south hall Compartments 1, 3 and 4 represent patrons and donors of (presumably) the south hall (fig.91).²⁹³ If this is true, they must have provided serious financial support because the cost of the south hall mosaic floor would



Fig. 91
'A patron'
Aquileia Basilica
South hall
Compartment 4
313-319 AD

have been substantial (fig. 62). The number of separate donative mosaic inscriptions on the floors of mid-fourth century Piazza della Vittoria in Grado, San Canzian d'Isonzo and the early church in Poreč and the late fourth/early fifth century churches at Trieste and Monastero (Aquileia) is five, seven, seven, eighteen and forty respectively. This form of recognition clearly increased in the north Adriatic from the mid-fourth to the mid-fifth centuries. Many of the fifth century inscriptions displayed in the Palaeochristian Museum, Aquileia and in Cuscito's communication *Le epigraphi Musive della Basilica Martitale di Trieste* contain spelling errors and poor spacing of letters.²⁹⁴ This may be in

²⁹³ Marini (2003), 76-93.

²⁹⁴ Cuscito (1973), 128-156.

keeping with artistic (and clearly educational) expectations at the time as outlined above.

It is noted that all eight late fourth/early fifth century churches in the north Adriatic region have an apse. Indeed of those allocated to the mid fourth century only one out of four, S. Canzian d'Isonzo, has no apse. This might be expected in view of the trend towards basilical forms during the century.²⁹⁵ On the other hand the late fourth century expansion of the south hall of the Aquileia Basilica complex under Bishop Chromatius continued to follow the same rigorous rectangular design of its predecessor.

Parallel Churches

The survey of churches was limited to those surrounding the north Adriatic coast from Concordia in the west to Pula in the east. It extended only to those built between the second decade of the fourth century to a less precise date in the middle of the fifth century. All sites were visited by the author. The Aquileian buildings were visited on numerous occasions though the church at Beligna could only be assessed from the literature and from the mosaic remains in the Palaeochristian Museum because the site itself did not reveal excavated remains. The author was extended special privileges only in the Basilica of Aquileia. Betike and Pula in Croatia could only be cursorily examined physically because of restrictions by the authorities. Within these limits and limitations ten churches were assessed.

There is no evidence of twin churches in Monastero, Beligna (Fondo Tullio), Trieste or Betika. Later churches were built near or on the site at S. Canzian d'Isonzo and at the Piazza della Vittoria, Grado but these were not built in parallel. According to

²⁹⁵ White (1990), i, 136-138.

Krautheimer 'essential to the genuine twin church is the arrangement of approximately equivalent structures parallel to each other and separated only by a narrow passage-like court into which a baptistery or chapel was sometimes inserted'.²⁹⁶ The two halls of the Aquileia complex and the twin churches at Pula fit this definition.

Two Concordia churches are contiguous: Trichora Martyrium and the Apostolorum. Close to the Trichora Martyrium was the local cemetery as attested by nearby non-Christian and Christian sarcophagi. The tri-apsidal *martyrium* was probably built earlier rather than later during the fourth century and the pillared 'basilica' was added later for ordinary worship (fig. 85).²⁹⁷ The Apostolorum, built towards the end of the century, catered for the religious needs of the rapid increase in the newly baptised.²⁹⁸ These churches do not fulfil the requirements of Krautheimer with regard to size: the *martyrium* was 200sq.m., the Basilica Apostolorum was 800sq.m. Furthermore they were not built under the same plan.

In Grado Santa Maria delle Grazie was built during the middle of the fifth century.²⁹⁹ It is parallel to the Basilica of S. Eufemia (consecrated 579 AD) in the same square. The distance between the two churches, is approximately 100m. The former occupies an area of 210 sq.m., the latter 2,000sq.m.³⁰⁰ According to Krautheimer's definition in terms of intervening space and size these churches cannot be regarded as twins.

²⁹⁶ Krautheimer (1971), 165.

²⁹⁷ Caillet (1993), 113-23.

²⁹⁸ Bertacchi (1986), 310.

²⁹⁹ Tavano (1986), 401.

³⁰⁰ Caillet (1993), 151 and 163.

The position in Poreč is more complex. According to White the original church consisted of two contiguous rectangular halls placed side-by-side.³⁰¹ The north hall would appear to have been the functioning church. The south hall can be conceptualised



Fig. 92 The twin church halls, Poreč
Mid-fourth century

The north assembly hall is to the left (see fig 70). The disrupted remains of the south hall (?*martyrium*) are to the right.

The remains of the dividing wall are about 0.5m to the right of the mosaic floor in the background. The partition/wall to the extreme right represents the invading wall of the fifth century basilica.

Site information suggests that the area in the right background once contained a *domus ecclesiae*

³⁰¹ White (1990), ii, 192.

by studying figures 87 and 92. In the fifth century a large monumental three-aisled basilica was built to the south of and parallel to the two earlier halls incorporating about half of the south hall along an east-west axis into the main building.³⁰² It is clear that Krautheimer regards the early halls as genuine twin halls though the system does not entirely blend with his definition as there is no gap between the two halls.³⁰³

Of the ten sites belonging to the fourth to mid-fifth century reviewed in the north Adriatic, two obey the criteria required by Krautheimer for a genuine twin church: the Aquileia Basilica complex and the Pula churches. The early church halls in Poreč almost come within his criteria. While they were contiguous, the churches in Concordia do not meet his criteria. Krautheimer, by implying that S. Maria delle Grazie in Grado was built in the sixth century, includes this edifice and that of the Basilica of S. Eufemia as twin churches.³⁰⁴ However, these two buildings are about 100m apart and the floor space in the latter is ten times that in the former. In summary, accepting the argument for the inclusion of Poreč, 30% of the sites examined had twin churches using Krautheimer's criteria.

Marini represents the view that the north hall of the Aquileia Basilica complex was the practising church because (surprisingly considering his other opinions) it was the church of the first Christian community.³⁰⁵ He bases this on the allusions to biblical stories in the mosaics the south hall providing a suitable background for the instruction of catechumens. Others are of the view that the north hall was where catechumens imbibed

³⁰² White (1990), ii, 195.

³⁰³ Krautheimer (1971), 165.

³⁰⁴ Krautheimer (1971), 166.

³⁰⁵ Marini (1994), 19.

the basic Christian doctrine.³⁰⁶ Judged by the number and splendour of Christian-orientated images and the number and variety of portraits presumably of donors and supporters, the south hall is the site which would be chosen by the modern mind to celebrate the Eucharist. Against this, present conceptual thinking finds it difficult to appreciate the time and effort expended in the preparation of catechumens in the early fourth century Church. Iacumin mentions four 'double churches': Aquileia, Pula, Poreč and Hemmaberg. He believes that in each case one of the two parallel buildings was devoted to the instruction of catechumens. According to Iacumin, the Alexandria/ Jewish Christian tradition was deeply imbedded in Aquileian theology, a tradition that emphasised the instruction and teaching of catechumens.³⁰⁷ Caillet devotes a full page to the topic of which hall was used for the celebration of the Eucharist and which for the *catechumeneum* without arriving at a conclusion.³⁰⁸ The issue still remains open (see chapter 10).

³⁰⁶ Bertachi (2000), 70 and Iacumin (2004), 132. Both agree that the early and the later larger north hall were reserved for catechumens; one of their few points of agreement.

³⁰⁷ Iacumin (2004), 132.

³⁰⁸ Caillet (1993), 128.

Architectural Aspects

Early excavations

The history of the north hall in Aquileia has been left at 452 AD (chapter 1), the date of its destruction by the Huns. Apart from the blind intrusion of the campanile, it lay buried until the excavations of George Niemann and his Austrian team between 1893 and

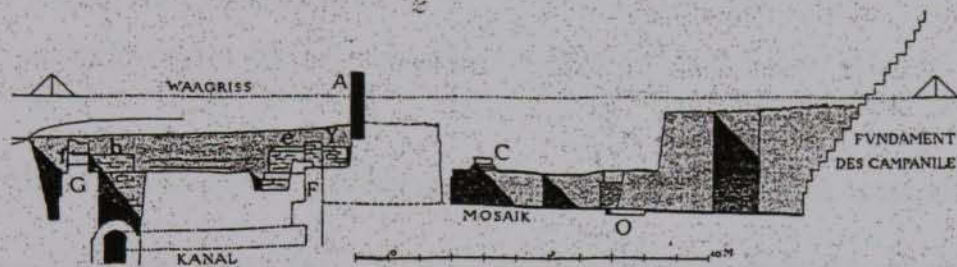


Fig. 27 Westöstlicher Schnitt durch das Ausgrabungsgelände

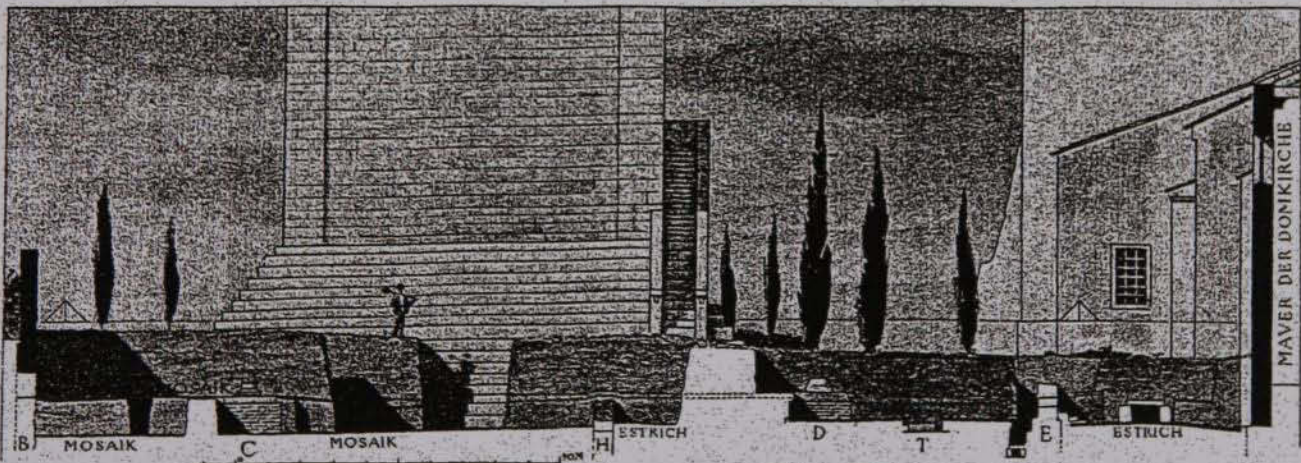


Fig. 28 Nordsüdlicher Schnitt durch das Ausgrabungsgelände

Fig. 93

Drawings of the 1893-1905 excavations by Niemann. The scale is approximately 0.4 cm : 1.0m. Figs. 27 and 28 (Niemann) are referred to in the present text as 93a and 93b respectively.

(‘ESTRICH’ refers to mortar. ‘MOSAIK’ can be seen above and to the left above base C

1905. The results of their work were published in *Der Dom von Aquileia...*(1906).³⁰⁹ The archaeologists exposed a substantial part of the early north hall mosaic pavement. Sectional drawings of the excavations from the west wall (**G**) of the atrium of the post-Theodorian church to the campanile (west-east, fig.93a) and from the north wall (**B**) to the north wall of the present Basilica (north-south, fig. 93b) were made. The word 'mosaik' can be seen at two levels drawing attention to the two mosaic floors of the early and the post-Theodorian churches, one superimposed over the other (fig. 93b). The present basilica is to the south, the left of figure 93b.³¹⁰ Expansion of the later church included the construction of an atrium with porticos along the west wall of the early building and at least two entrances from the atrium into the larger church.

B represents the north wall of both churches, **H** the south wall of the early church and **E** the south wall of the post-Theodorian church. The west wall serving both buildings is marked **F** in figure 93a. **C** and **D** represent the first north and south pillar-bases of the post-Theodorian church. The measurement of the difference between the two floors in the north hall, Section 1, taken for this study, averaged 1.15m. (fig.10). The topsoil and debris above the upper mosaic pavement is reported by Neimann as measuring 1.0 to 1.5 m.³¹¹ Niemann's measurements appear to have been very accurate as shown by fresh measurements taken for this study (2004). For example, the distance from the south wall

³⁰⁹ Von Lanckoronski, Niemann and Swoboda (1906), 21-30. Fig. 93 (present work) includes figures 27 and 28 belonging to the 1906 text. Niemann's figure 27 is referred to in the present text as 93a and his figure 28 as 93b.

³¹⁰ The basilica and the campanile together with the cypresses (or their successors) can be identified today. Reference has made in chapter 1, p.27, (fig.4), and the topic will be expanded later in this chapter, to the post-Theodorian edifice built over the early north hall.

³¹¹ Niemann (1906), 21. (see fn 309).

(of the larger hall) to the centre of the second post-Theodorian south pillar base was 6.7m (Niemann 6.5m), from the centre of the second south base to the centre of the north pillar base 17.0m (Niemann 17.0) and from the north pillar base to the north wall 6.67m (Niemann 6.5).³¹² In his drawing (fig. 93b) there is a parallel line just below that representing the upper mosaic pavement. This is termed level 'K' and described by Neimann as a separate foundation layer. A gap of 20-30cm was measured by him between this layer and the upper mosaic floor.³¹³

Fig. 61 shows the south-east corner of the early north hall with the floor lozenge and Solomon's knot mosaic sequence. Recent structural changes allow the visitor to progress through the south wall into the area between this wall and the south wall of the post-Theodorian church. Here the floor is mainly that of the larger hall. Excavations in this area reveal the contents of the larger hall foundation between the two floors (fig. 94).

Bertacchi recorded the contents of the in-fill between the two mosaic floors in the cavity of the campanile.³¹⁴ In her report the distance between the floors was given as 1.05m. The debris was divided into two layers: the lower contained scattered fragments of plaster with frescoes (presumably from the early ceiling), the higher included pieces of ceramic of every type. Gnirs records that the lowest layer between the two mosaic pavements contained the remains of painted plaster of the ceiling followed by a layer of clay and a layer of masonry debris. Masonry debris close to the bases of the post-Theodorian pillars contained fragments of mosaic pavement, due to disturbance of the

³¹² Niemann's measurements have been calculated on the basis of the scale he provided in his 1906 drawing (see fig. 93b).

³¹³ Lanckoronski, Niemann and Swoboda (1906), 27.

³¹⁴ Bertacchi (1973), 10-11. In conversation, 30th June, 2005, she suggests that a layer in the upper section of the in-fill may correspond to 'level K'.

early floor in the areas at and adjacent to the pillars (see floor beside the pillar base in fig. 49).³¹⁵



Fig. 94

Outside the early hall (south-east).

Looking south towards the post-Theodorian south wall

The coarse large tesserae in the foreground represent a tessellated floor in the eastern entrance of the church complex at the same level as the early north hall

The mosaics in the background are the floor of the post-Theodorian north hall

Between the two tessellated floors is the filling between the floors. Note the foundation levels of mortar before the final floor.

Figure 94 demonstrates the difference in height between the two floors in a different part of the Basilica complex. The lower plain mosaic floor contains large irregular *tesserae* suggesting an undistinguished passage-way used during the early fourth century. It is at the same level as the floor of the early north hall. The gap between the two levels is largely filled in with rubble composed of broken bricks and pottery, small stones and pebbles. Niemann noted a foundation layer of mortar 20-30cm below the surface of the

³¹⁵ Gnirs (1915), 160.

upper mosaic pavement.³¹⁶ This he described in his paper as 'level K' (figs. 93b and 94). This is approximately 30cm. below the level of the post-Theodorian pavement. The existence of two separate mortar beds could be the result of two separate attempts to provide a mortar bed for the *tesserae*. The mosaics of the early north hall may have been destined for a shorter life than reckoned by the probable date of the post-Theodorian hall in 345 AD.

Several other points in Niemann's 1906 Report are worthy of note. The badly damaged floor in Section 1 Floor [c] (fig.12) was already in its present state at the time of the initial excavations. In Section 4, east, areas 1 and 2 both surfaces left the impression that the floor was not 'planed' by being frequently walked on. This impression was enhanced by the finding of dots of paint close to the north and east walls which as Niemann observed must have come from the painting of the adjacent wall. Niemann also confirmed that the entrance to the north hall discovered during the first excavation is in the same position as the present entrance. The west wall, Wall F, of both early and the post-Theodorian churches contained, in its lower, levels masonry that belonged to the oldest preserved period going back to a period before it was used as a boundary of the north hall. It meets walls B and H, the north and south walls of the early north hall respectively and forms a continuous line with the west wall of the transverse hall and with the western wall of the south hall.³¹⁷ This is in keeping with the view that the Theodorian complex metamorphosed from buildings (? *insulae*) which were bounded by

³¹⁶ Von Lanckoronki, Niemann and Swoboda (1906), 28.

³¹⁷ Von Lanckoronki, Niemann and Swoboda (1906), 21-24.

an east and a west street (fig. 4).³¹⁸ The west wall of these buildings became the limit of the north, transverse and south halls and, later, its lower 1.0m became the foundation of the west wall of the north post-Theodorian church (fig.95). The west wall of the south hall was incorporated into the present basilica.

It is possible to state with virtual certainty that all the walls of the early north hall were destroyed above the level of 1.0m to make way for the post-Theodorian larger hall. The first excavation revealed that the builders of the larger hall retained approximately the first metre of west and north walls as a foundation for the new walls and lower portion of the south and east walls were retained for the general foundation (figs. 93a and 93b). The remaining walls of the early building (figs. 61 and 95) can be seen today.

The south wall of the early north hall west of the entrance measures 0.84 to 0.86m. in height. The masonry includes brick and stone. The stones are smaller than those in the north wall and it has been suggested that this is because it was designed as an interior wall. Extending from the west wall is a partially hidden pre-existing wall which provided the base for the south wall of the early church.³¹⁹ Niemann's drawing (Fig. 93a) suggests that what was left of wall F (west) was approximately in line with the top of the base of the first of the north file of post-Theodorian pillars (C) and the upper mosaic floor (fig. 95). The line of grey cut stones in fig.47 is thought to represent the lowest layer of

³¹⁸ White (1990), ii, 207.

³¹⁹ Bertacchi (1977), 246.



Fig. 95
The west wall of the north hall.

In the foreground are floors (a) and (b), Section 1

The line of large grey cut stones is thought to represent the lowest layer of the new west wall of the post-Theodorian church. Below is the wall of the early hall

the larger church wall and also the threshold of the entrance into the new church from the portico. Below this line are the remains of the wall of the early hall, above the line probably represents a mixture of post-Theodorian and twentieth century walls.³²⁰

According to Niemann the existing garden wall is built on the foundations of the north wall of the early north hall (B, fig. 93b). The 'garden wall' separated the cemetery, which includes the area around the campanile, from the garden to the north. The lower orange-tinted north wall of the early hall measures 0.96 to 1.07m. from the lower floor. The north wall of Section 1 (i.e. to the west) is uniformly made up of large stones. This is somewhat different to the remainder of the north wall which reveals a homogeneous mixture of large stones and brick.

Along the north wall as far as Band 1, painted plaster was observed by Niemann up to one metre from the floor. The lower part of what remained of the early hall wall was painted grey. Above this there is the beginning of imitation coloured marble

³²⁰ The height of the early church west wall rises (south to north) from 0.93m to 1.17m to meet the surface of the post-Theodorian mosaic floor in the north-west corner of Section 1 (chapter 2, figs 10 and 12, this chapter fig. 96).

cladding. Painted plaster was preserved, up to 0.8m high, on the south wall. It, too, revealed imitation marble cladding. The lower part of the west wall revealed 'painted plaster' though Niemann failed to elaborate on its character.

Further information about the painting can be derived from other sources. Gnirs elaborated on the frescoes on the south wall by providing a drawing.³²¹ This suggests a similar pattern to that of the north wall. Perpendicular lines are shown dropping from the 'imitation marble area' to the base dividing the surface into vertical bands alternating between 0.5m and 0.8m in width. These and other details can be seen in photographs taken in 1963 by Bertacchi which are included in her 1977 article.³²² When examined in the twentieth century the evidence suggests that the painting with its plaster base was continuous along the north and the west wall. It continued along the south wall to the entrance into the hall.³²³ It is most likely that all four walls of the hall were covered by paintings of a similar design.

The post-Theodorian '345' floor

In *Apologia ad Constantius*, 15, Athanasius, Patriarch of Alexandria, makes a brief reference to Aquileia. Constans, the brother of Constantius and his co-emperor, took part in a synaxis (mass) in Aquileia which Athanasius, himself, attended. The mass took place in building still under construction. The need to use an incomplete building was due the large number of people. The large crowd had gathered on a holiday (?Holy

³²¹ Gnirs (1915), 159, fig 122.

³²² Bertacchi (1977), 250-52. In conversation (30th June, 2005) Louisa Bertacchi described how the frescoes were removed and stored in the Archaeological Museum. They were badly damaged following their return to the north hall for a short period and have now been returned to the Museum.

³²³ Mirabella Roberti (1953), 209-216.

Day). The mass was not a dedication (probably meaning not a consecration) but 'a simple Eucharistic assembly of prayer'.³²⁴ Other facts and interpretations have been added to this short comment by Athanasius. Emperor Constans and his court were in Aquileia in 345 AD and at that time, though there is contrary evidence (fn 325), Fortunatianus was Bishop of Aquileia.³²⁵ It is assumed that it was the north hall which was being modified because it was the first of the two halls to undergo major change. The mass (synaxis) and 'the holiday' have been identified with Easter. The wording has been interpreted to mean that the church under construction was unconsecrated at the time.³²⁶ The assumption that it was the larger post-Theodorian church under construction is dependent upon relating the great (?too great) concourse of people with the edifice.

The greater part of its mosaic floor has been destroyed. This has been ascribed by Niemann mainly to destruction by tombs and sarcophagi. It is also likely that excavators sacrificed, where thought necessary, the upper to expose the more attractive earlier lower floor. Niemann reports a depression in the floor of the left aisle of the later church which he suggests may have been due to a fall of heavy stones.³²⁷ He casts doubts as to the strength of the later building because of the width of the central aisle and the slight

³²⁴ Athanasius, *Apologia ad Constantium*, 15, trans. Szymusiak (1958), 104. The notes in this thesis are from the French translation by Szymusiak. Athanasius met Constans in Aquileia but wrote later to his brother Constantius.

³²⁵ Athanasius mentions Fortunatianus in *Apol. Const.* 2 but not in 15. According to the *Chronicon Venetum* [Von Lanckoronski, Niemann and Swoboda (1906), 41] Fortunatianus did not become Bishop of Aquileia until 353 AD. However, he is recognised by some as having been bishop from 342 to ?357 [Menis (1987), 94. Marini (1994), 127. Bovini (1972), 731.]

³²⁶ Cecchini (1933), 233-234. The interpretation of the short passage in *Apol. Const.* is discussed in some detail. White (1990), 202, is of the view that the building referred to is the completion or renovation of the original north hall. This is possible but the Athanasian account suggests otherwise. Local historians are firmly of the opinion that the enlarged north hall was built in 345 AD, see Menis (1987), 94 and Marini (1993), 22.

³²⁷ Von Lanckoronsky, Niemann, Swoboda (1906), 28.

strength of its columns. The north wall was only 0.5m. thick. It is not clear what happened to the post-Theodorian hall before, during or after the invasion of Attila in 452. The depression was 'full of rubble and covered by a rough monochrome mosaic'.³²⁸ Niemann goes on to state that this part of the post-Theodorian floor indicates destruction and re-utilization of the building. The affected area is likely to have been over the damaged north-west floor of the earlier hall (chapter 2, Floor [c], (fig.12). Here again Niemann records attempts at repair. It is possible that the ground to the north-west of the north hall was unstable requiring constant restoration. This might account for the need to raise the floor of the larger hall by one metre.

Reasonably extensive pieces of the upper mosaic floor are to be found (a) in the left aisle to the north of the first and second north pillar bases.(fig. 5, 10, 12 and 96), (b) in the nave, to the north of the third of the south file of columns of the post-Theodorian church (fig.97) and (c) in the right aisle to the south-east of the south file of pillars bounded by an extension of the east wall of the early hall (fig. 94)

³²⁸ Lanckoronski, Niemann, Swoboda (1906), 28.



**Fig. 96 North Hall,
Section 1, floor [b]
(Looking towards the
north-west)**

**First north base and
pillar of the post-
Theodorian hall
Humidifier to the left**

**In the left background
and to the right of the
pillar, the remnants of
floor of the later hall.**

**Brick support for the
base of the pillar**

Mosaics of the early hall

The post-Theodorian edifice measured 73×31m, excluding the atrium, and there were fourteen columns (fig 4). Figure 96 shows the first north pillar base surrounded by the higher floor to the north-west.³²⁹ The lower part of the pillar support contains long thin bricks of Roman and Byzantine type on top of which are stone slabs supporting the pillars. Three of the north file of pillar bases can be seen in this area. The third, in Section 2, is impinged on by the foundations of the campanile (the second can be seen in fig.10) and five, contained with the early north hall boundary further east, were destroyed by the campanile.

Figure 97 relates to (b) above. The mosaics have a geometric design composed of squares and lozenges surrounded by guilloche with a simple black design of four blossoms in the centre. In others, there are rectangles with rosettes. All frames are lined by a single file of black *tesserae*. There are no figurative images and the mosaics are of

³²⁹ Niemann's base 'C' (fig. 93b).



Fig. 97
The mosaic floor of
the post-Theodorian
church

In the background:
the south wall of the
early church. Only
the lower west
portion belongs to
the 4th century.
In the mid-ground:
the mosaic floor

To the right: the
third base and pillar
of the south row of
pillars.

inferior quality to mosaics in all sections of the early north hall apart perhaps from Section 4, east, area 3. The wall in the background represents of the outer side of the south wall of the early north hall. Only the lower stone slabs at the west extremity belong to the early hall. The entrance to the north hall is the black area, upper left.

The hexagram mosaic

Not excavated during the initial work is a mosaic situated between the third and fourth bases of the post-Theodorian south file of pillars (fig. 98). The level conforms to that of the early north hall and the 'large *tesserae*' passageway south of the south-east corner of the north hall (fig. 94). It was most likely sited in the centre of the east entrance corridor leading to the early basilica complex (fig. 101). The mosaic would therefore have been central to the early basilica.



Fig. 98 A hexagram sited in the nave between the fourth and fifth south file pillars of post-Theodorian hall, outside the earlier north hall and likely to be in the east entrance to the early Basilica complex. The line of ivy leaves extending along the corridor is not part of the hexagram mosaic

The pattern is not typical of the mosaics in the north hall. True, the framework is lined by two files of black *tesserae* but the ‘heavy’ guilloche interior framework is more reminiscent of Compartment 8 south hall, which is, according to Menis, associated with Christian cosmology, and Fondo Cal, north oratory.³³⁰ Four *canthari* surround the hexagram in the same manner as those around the central medallion of the Good Shepherd in Fondo Cal. This particular symbolism is not confined to Christianity. In the Archaeological Museum of Aquileia there is a third century mosaic of four *canthari* and guilloche braids surrounding the head of Triton (Chapter 7, fig. 70).

³³⁰ Menis (1982), 497.

The line of ivy leaves is remarkable and is not solely connected with the mosaic as it continues to the west and east. In late antiquity, *hederae* leaves, in both Christian and non-Christian mosaics, have been interpreted as apotropaic or prophylactic symbols against evil spirits and bad luck. They were identified with Dionysus, the protector against evil.³³¹ See also the ivy leaves beside the tree of life in the apse in the early fifth century Betika church in the Istrian peninsula (fig.89), above the figure of the south hall Eucharistic Victory (Fig.72) and in the marine *clipeus* (fig.1).

The mosaic so centrally placed in the Theodorian complex would suggest some Christian connotation. The use of its design was not, however, confined to Jewish or Christian iconography. In the Bardo Museum, Tunis, there is a large hexagram encompassed in a hexagon. This third century cosmological mosaic contains busts of the seven gods of the planetary spheres and symbols of the Zodiac (Fig.35). It may be that the Aquileian Christians used the design to remind their followers of Christian cosmology.³³² It is also possible that this mosaic preceded the Theodorian buildings.

³³¹ Dunbabin (1978), 170-171.

³³² Iacumin (2004), 41-43. Iacumin is of the opinion that the design represents the 'Star of David' and the symbolism is a reflection of the Jewish-Christian influence on the Aquileian Church. He recognises that that the 'Star of David' symbol only came into more common use in medieval times. He quotes references to its appearance in a first/second century tomb in Israel/Palestine. It is not certain, however, whether or not this was influenced either by Judaism or Christianity.

Earlier buildings in the north hall area

The west and south walls of the north hall were built on earlier walls.³³³ There is evidence that the hall was built in an area which contained mixed warehouses, shops and private habitation dating from the second century AD. Franca, in 1952, drew up a plan of

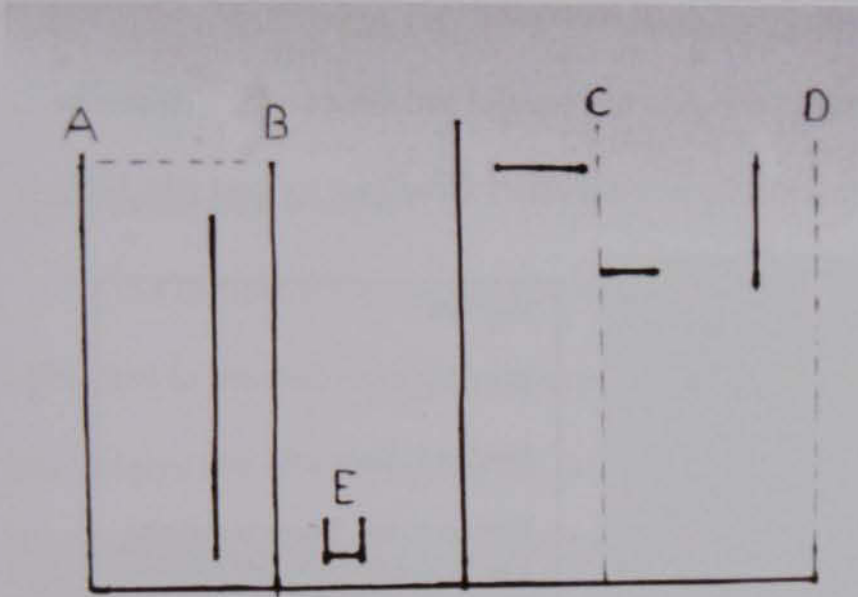


Fig. 99

Suggested original walls or foundations of walls in the area occupied later by the three halls of the basilica of Aquileia (not to scale). Plan is based on that of Franco (1952), 331.

The continuous lines represent definite foundations, the interrupted lines those of likely walls. The area between A and B to the lower line represents the area in which north hall was developed and that between C and D the south hall. E represents the past (and present) excavations of a first century Roman *domus* (not to be confused with proposed 'oratories' and '*domus ecclesiae*' in the north hall). The area to the west (the lower line represents the west) between line B and C is where the transverse hall was located. The parallel wall between A and B probably represents the 'M' wall discussed below.

³³³ Bertacchi (1977), 246. Von Lanckoronski, Niemann and Swoboda (1906), 24, mention that the lower part of the west wall belongs 'to the oldest preserved period'.

foundations of early walls of buildings in the area (fig.99).³³⁴ Bertacchi writes of ‘happy intuition’ of some aspects of Franco’s plan but in the context of this thesis a brief summary is provided (see above).³³⁵

North hall excavations have revealed that 11.7m along the east wall from the north wall the foundations of an east-west wall meets the east wall (fig.99). This wall has been followed under the mosaics stretching to the west of the campanile.³³⁶ It can be identified by a slight rise in the mosaic floor in section 1 from east to west (fig.100).



Fig. 100

North hall

Section 1, floor [a]

Background: There is a slight rise in the floor which meets the west wall just north of the large pale slab. This is taken to be due to the foundations of a buried east-west wall delineated in fig. 114.

Summing up her examination of the walls of the north hall Bertacchi believes that there was a warehouse bound by wall A for 37m, that is, the length of the north wall, its width being approximately 12m extending to the intermediary wall termed ‘M’ (fig. 99). Partly based on evidence of two pilasters in the south-east and south-west corners of the present

³³⁴ Franco (1952), 331.

³³⁵ Bertacchi (1977), 251.

³³⁶ Mirabella Roberti (1953), 210-11, Fig. 1.

hall she suggests that there was a portico, supported by the pilasters, extending about 5.0m to the south of wall M, that is, as far as the south wall of the early church.³³⁷

The floor of the first century *domus* is sited approximately 1.0m. below the floor of the transverse hall. The black and white mosaics are in keeping with the Roman style of the first century of the Empire. They match none of the mosaics in the north hall.

The Theodorian complex

As distinct from careful drawings of the individual halls many authors have attempted to provide a graphic concept of the early twin church complex without the superimposition of drawings of the larger mid to late fourth century halls.³³⁸ While

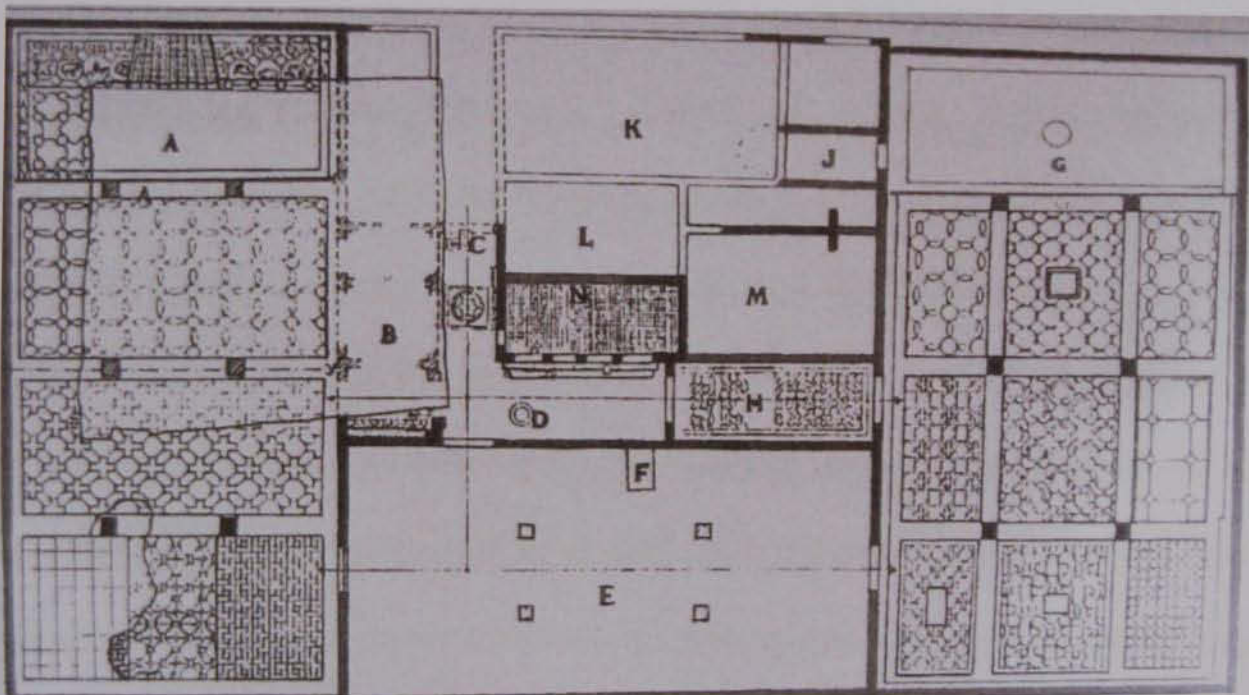


Fig. 101 The Aquileia complex c. 320. Drawing in White (1990), ii, 201-203.

³³⁷ Bertacchi (1977), 242 and 252-253.

³³⁸ Gnirs (1915), 140, Cecchelli (1933), 153, Mirabella Roberti (1953), 210, White (1990), 201, Bertacchi (2000), 69.

derived from clear physical evidence, these nonetheless involve an interpretive view of archaeological remains. To illustrate some points in this thesis the drawing of White has been chosen from among others (fig.101). The entrance to the complex was from the east (C). Turning north immediately on entry there would have been the floor with the large *tesserae* seen in figure 94. The hexagram (fig.98) with the separate line of *hedera* leaves had a prominent position in this entrance corridor (below the letter C). It is quite possible, on viewing this drawing, that it might have been one of a number of separate mosaics along the corridor. The corridor ends in a long hall-like atrium (D) which leads to an entrance to the transverse and south halls. It would seem reasonable to propose that there would be have been a corresponding entrance to the north hall along the atrium as suggested (among others) by Bertacchi.³³⁹ The entrances to the north and south halls from the transverse hall (E) are sited as they are today. It seems more likely that F represents the post-Theodorian baptistery and is incorrectly included in this particular diagram.³⁴⁰

White has designated N as a peristyle. This area, enlarged in all directions, was chosen by Mirabella Roberti, as the peristyle of a large *domus* upon which he thought the Basilica complex was constructed.³⁴¹ The rooms off area N to the south-east (J-M) are likely to belong to a pre-complex building. They have been assigned by White as the episcopal residence, a common explanation for obscure areas in the complex. During the period embraced by the last century BC to the end of the third century AD it is most likely that the area, near the port and industrial centre would have be utilised and re-utilised for a variety of different enterprises including a large private residence.

³³⁹ Bertacchi (1986), 189.

³⁴⁰ Conversation with Don Andrea Bellavite, Gorizia, 2004. The early baptistery was apparently nearer the north wall of the south hall.

³⁴¹ Mirabella Roberti (1953), 218-219.

Summary of structural information

The north hall was built using walls or their foundations of an earlier period. It would seem that the hall was based on an elongated hall, perhaps a warehouse, measuring approximately 37×12m. This was bounded to the south by a wall which is referred to as wall 'M' now identified by a slight bulge in the floor of Section 1. The entrance to this hall was probably via a southern portico which measured 37×5m. At a later date the south wall of the warehouse was removed and a new south wall was built incorporating the portico thereby providing an area of 37×17sq.m. The new south wall was built on the foundations of an earlier wall (fig.99).

Based more on mosaic than architectural evidence it is conceivable that Section 1, the west quarter of the final early hall, was added at a later date, perhaps about 320. The *tesserae* are of a larger size in its floor and the type of stone used to make many of the *tesserae* is coarser (chapter 2, fig.8). It is more likely that the structure was in place and the mosaics floor was added after 319 AD. Both Cecchini and Bertacchi are insistent that the west end of the north hall was damaged at a later date.³⁴² The former ascribes the date to 337-340AD and describes the damage as 'methodical and diligent'. The latter believes the damage was provoked by Constantine II who reigned from 317 to 340AD. It is quite possible that the floor or part of the floor seen today was laid down during the following reconstruction. Indeed Floor [c] may represent this damage and incomplete replacement of the mosaic floor.

Since there is evidence of paintings (similar to those on the north wall) and supporting plaster on the west wall it seems likely that the inner walls of the hall were

³⁴² Cecchini (1933), 247. Bertacchi (2000), 73.

painted (query repainted) in one throw after the incorporation or tessellation of Section 1.³⁴³ As judged by the remnants of the early church roof found in the foundations of the later larger edifice it seems that the ceiling was plastered and painted perhaps in a similar style to the frescoes on the wall.

The floor of the new church was approximately one metre higher than that of the old hall. Above this level the walls of the early church were destroyed to make way for the post-Theodorean church.³⁴⁴ Below, the walls were either used as foundations for new walls or left *in situ* to add to the general foundation. It is important to be reminded that all studies of walls and frescoes of the early north hall are based on the preserved one metre. The base of the first and second north file of pillars of the larger church damaged the mosaics of the lower floor particularly in Section 1, floors [b] and [c]. As already discussed in Chapter 2 there is some evidence that floor [c] was covered by 3×3 checkerboard mosaic design but insertion of the first base and further unexplained damage has made this uncertain.

There is no reliable account of how much damage was done to the walls of larger hall before, during or after the time of the invasion by Attila. The ground level at the time of the 1893-1906 excavation was 1.0 to 1.5m above the higher floor. As described above, over the years the floor was damaged by various types of graves. It is surprising that there is no obvious damage was noted (query apart from floor [c]) to the lower mosaic floor

³⁴³ Bertacchi (1977), 250.

³⁴⁴ Because of its *solea* and large presbytery some writers, use the term 'cathedral' for the larger church. Certainly from the observation of Athanasius (*Apol. Const. 15*) the bishop must have presided on some occasions if there was a large congregation.

due to this type of activity. Niemann especially mentions further damage and reconstruction in the north aisle of the later church perhaps over Section 1, floor [c]. This may have occurred prior to the invasion of Attila because of evidence of repair of the mosaic floor.

Liturgical considerations

The specific liturgical function of the north hall has been considered in Chapter 8 (parallel churches). Recent opinions of experts have not resolved past diverse views. Bertacchi and Iacumin are both agreed that the north hall was used as a *catechumeneum*.³⁴⁵ On the other hand Menis and Marini are of the view that the Eucharist was celebrated in the north hall and that the south hall was devoted to instructing *catechumens*.³⁴⁶ In other regions where the people were served by one building catechumens and penitents left the synaxis prior to the celebration of the Eucharist.³⁴⁷ While this uncertainty is unhelpful, the bishop would have, at least, presided over many ecclesiastical functions in the north hall including celebration of the mass. It is relevant to learn on good authority that the Eucharist was celebrated either in this hall during renovations, or in the new post-Theodorian church built in its place, in 345.³⁴⁸

The 'trapezoid' area in Section 4, east, area 2 has been described in Chapter 5 (figs. 5, 6 and 59). It is not disputed that, in the fourth century, the clergy are likely to have concentrated their activities in this area. It is suggested that this area was covered by a carpet or a platform either of which could have acted as a *solea*.³⁴⁹ The lozenge and Solomon's knot sequence has been described in Chapter 5. It seems likely that it would have surrounded Section 4. However, there is difficulty in explaining its replacement by the trapezoid area near the eastern wall (figs. 5 and 6)

³⁴⁵ Bertacchi (2000), 70., Iacumin (2004), 132.

³⁴⁶ Menis (2003), 7., Marini (1994), 19.

³⁴⁷ Frend (1984), 407.

³⁴⁸ Athanasius. *Apol. Const.*, 15, trans. Szymusick (1958).

³⁴⁹ Caillet (1993), 129.

and calls into question the possibility of replacement of earlier area 2 mosaics.³⁵⁰ A similar sequence separates but does not surround the marine scene from the rest of the floor in the south hall (Ch. 6, fig.64). Both have been interpreted as separating the area of the clergy from that the laity.

The gutter and supports for a chancel screen in the area associated with Band 3, between Sections 3 and 4, have been considered in Chapter 4. It is sited just to the west of the lozenge and knot sequence. The screen seems to have ended flush with the north wall as judged by the northern stone slab into which the support was inserted. It seems likely that the chancel screen extended across the hall though, again, the campanile foundations prevent full certainty. It may be that the trapezoid pattern was extended to meet the chancel screen in the centre of Band 3 at the entrance (query gate) to the new presbytery.

According to Beckwith, there is no evidence of fixed altars in Rome before the fifth century and portable wooden altars must have been the general rule in early times.³⁵¹ The likely position of the altar in the north hall was within the presbytery. However, the altar in the south hall is said to have caused damage to the mosaic of the Eucharistic Victory which is centrally sited to the west of the presbytery beyond the lozenge and knot sequence (see fig.72).³⁵² On these grounds, it is possible that on certain occasions the altar in the north hall was positioned to the west of the chancel railing in the centre of Section 3.³⁵³

For ritualistic purposes, the bishop would be seated on his *cathedra* in the trapezoid area. He would be surrounded on each side by his presbyters, deacons, sub-deacons, acolytes, exorcists and readers. It is presumed that the clergy would have

³⁵⁰ Mirabella Roberti (1950), 192 and Iacumin (1990), 100.

³⁵¹ Beckwith (1979), 14. A wooden movable *mensa* or table is supported by Krautheimer (1979), 5.

³⁵² Marini (1994), 42.

³⁵³ Bertacchi (2000), 73, believes that the altar and bishop's seat were fixed and the sacerdotal figure of Jonah (see chapter 7) inserted in the south hall at the time of the enlargement of the north hall.

entered in procession from the transverse hall entrance, the women laity standing in the left aisle and the men in the right. A possible alternative entrance for the clergy was from the south via the atrium as envisaged in Chapter 9 (fig.101). Whether this ceremonial process obtained throughout the complete existence of worship in the north hall area is unlikely but it would have been the procedure towards the third decade of the fourth century.

Single animals in the north hall, including those in the centre of the campanile but excluding the rabbit in Section 4, east, area 3, all face south (figs. 5 and 6). From the liturgical viewpoint, no explanation has been found in the literature for this. The animals in the south hall do not reciprocate by all facing north. Comparing the diverse positions of animals in the south hall with the stereotyped position of those in the north hall suggests that the two halls were not planned with a concerted exegetic vision in mind. As mentioned in chapter 1 a number of authors have conceived of the north hall mosaics as representing paradise. Toynbee mentions two fifth century 'paradise' mosaics in Seleucia, the port of Antioch: in one the animals 'move' in the same direction towards the east and in the other they all advance westwards.³⁵⁴

Viewed from Band 2, all animals to the west face to the east and all animals in the eastern area face to the west (fig 6). Again this is quite unlike the variety of positions of animals in the south hall (fig .62) and must again argue for the lack of a combined plan for the mosaics of the two halls. By an extension of the argument mentioned above in relation to the position of the altar it may be, perhaps for a time, that liturgical activities in the north hall were centred at Band 2, that is, the centre of the hall, providing a panoramic view of all the mosaics. This might be given more credence if there was an entrance in the south wall near Band 2 as suggested in

³⁵⁴ Toynbee (1982), 286.

Chapter 9. However, the position of the chancel screen to the east, for which there is clear evidence, must detract from the strength of this proposition.

The 'Theodore' inscription in Section 1 and the 'Ianuarius' inscription in Section 2 must be read from the west whereas the surrounding animals in these sections are upright when viewed from the east.. The third inscription, 'Cyriace', is appropriately rotated with the surrounding figurative Section 4 mosaics. All the inscriptions therefore can be read by a congregation facing east, the normal position of the laity. The disparity might be explained by the insertion of the inscriptions after the completion of the mosaic floor, including Section 1. With regard to the latter it is possible that the planners had the option of orientating the figurative mosaics by 180° but decided to the position of the birds and baskets in keeping with the figures in Section 2.

Conclusion regarding the date of the north hall mosaics

In chapter 1 it was pointed out that the main issues thrown up by the mosaics in the north hall related to interpretation and dating. The problem of dating turns on the marked artistic superiority of mosaics in the north east compared with those in the remainder of the hall. Resolving the problem is not made easier by the muted evidence of apparently systematic messages in the same north-east mosaics which, despite much research, have not been interpreted to the satisfaction of all. If the mosaics revealed evidence of a Christian message, as does the south hall, dating would be relatively simple despite variation in the quality of mosaics. In these circumstances, conclusions regarding interpretation and dating remain elusive.

There are numerous theories as to the development of the north hall and its mosaic floor (chapter 1). The most straightforward is that both the north and south

halls were started, completed and floored with mosaics between 313 and 319 under the direction of Bishop Theodore using pre-existing older walls.³⁵⁵ This is termed 'unity of construction' in some reviews. A more complex view is that there was smaller building or a section of a building which surrounded the north-east mosaics of Sections 3 and 4. This was eventually encompassed by the later north hall, the mosaic floor spreading to the south and the west. There are variations of both views.

In this study north hall mosaics have been compared with those in the south hall (chapter 6), on Aquileian floors outside the Theodorian complex during 250-400 (chapter 7), on floors in other parts of the Roman Empire during the third and fourth centuries (chapter 2, 3, 4 and 5) and on those in fourth and early fifth century churches in the North Adriatic region (chapter 8). Repeats of the figures and their poses in most mosaics of the north-east are absent or infrequent. On the other hand figurative examples of mosaics in Sections 1 and 2 and in the centre of the campanile are common either in mosaics or paintings. This finding isolates the north-east mosaics from those in the remainder of the hall in terms of background and consequentially time.

The studies of the walls by Bertacchi, carried out after the removal of the frescoes and their plaster bases, suggest that the major portion of the north hall incorporated an earlier warehouse or some similar building measuring 37×12m. This was expanded to the south by incorporating a portico (37×5m) stretching the length of the warehouse (chapter 9, 'Early buildings in the north hall area'). This addition provided the complete area of the north hall (37×17).³⁵⁶ The entrance to the earlier

³⁵⁵ According to the *Chronicon Venetum* [in Von Lanckoronski, Neimann & Swoboda (1906), 41.] Theodore was succeeded in 319 by Agapitus. Marini (1994), 127, quotes a date of ?315 with regard to the succession. Bovini (1972), 42, quotes 319(?).

³⁵⁶ Bertacchi (1977), 252-253.

building would have been via the portico. According to Bertacchi there is no evidence that the north wall of the north hall was transversely partitioned by masonry.

As already pointed out, the main impetus leading to the view that there was an early mosaic floor in a section of the 'warehouse' building termed the 'oratory', is the figurative quality expressed in the mosaics of the north portion of Section 3 and Section 4, west, and the north-east part of Section 4, east ('the north east mosaics'). This contiguous area is bounded to the south by the foundations of the Popponian campanile and the 'trapezoid' area and to the north and east by the walls of the hall (figs 5 and 6). It is surrounded, as is the remainder of north hall mosaics, by a band of white *tesserae* about 0.5m wide. The size of this area with its impressive mosaics is undetermined because of the insertion of the foundations. It was unlikely to have included the south of Section 3, which contains the mosaics in the centre of the campanile. These mosaics are akin to those in Section 2 and are not of the same quality as those in the north Section 3 (chapter 4, figs.39, 40, 41 and 42). It may have included the trapezoid area depending on whether earlier mosaics similar to those in Section 4, east, area 1 were replaced by a cruder monochromic gridiron pattern (chapters 5 and 10, figs. 5 and 59). It probably did not include Section 4, east, area 3 (chapter 5, fig. 60) with its poor mosaic craftsmanship revealed by large octagons and distorted designs. It is also significant that this area contains the only singly-framed animal in the north hall which faces north. If only the width of area 1 was included, the floor of the oratory would have been a narrow rectangle measuring 19×6m, on the other hand if areas 1 and 2 were included the measurements would be approximately 19×11m (chapter 4 and fig. 5). The latter width is close to that of 12m suggested by Bertacchi as being that of the early warehouse mentioned above. The measurement of

length, 19m, includes the width of Band 2 whose tendril design suggests that it was laid down contemporaneously with that of Band 3 (chapter 4, 'Band 3').

Bovini and others have suggested that an early oratory occupied a 'square' area of $19 \times 17\text{m}$.³⁵⁷ This represents the length of Sections 3 and 4 from Band 2 (see above and fig.5) and the full width of what became the north hall. The position of Bovini was criticised by Mirabella Roberti who, among other expressed viewpoints, hypothesised that if there was an early oratory it would have to be rectangular and bounded to the south by wall 'M' (see above).³⁵⁸ Following up this suggestion, Iacumin proposed that the third century oratory was rectangular bound to the south by wall 'M' and limited to the west by Band 1 ($27.5 \times 12\text{m}$).³⁵⁹

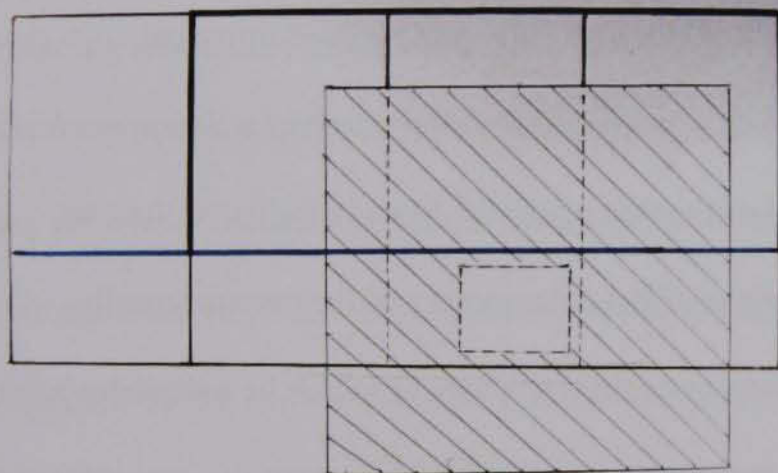


Fig. 102

A diagram outlining the oratory as proposed by Iacumin. The thick black line represents the west, north and east walls and the blue line the south wall (wall M).

The hatched area represents the future campanile and the blank area the mosaics in the cavity of the campanile.

Below the blue line is the south portico suggested by Bertacchi.

This area would include the north of Section 2 and would be entered from the south through Section 2 by the portico suggested by Bertacchi (fig.102). The entrance suggested by Bovini for his proposed square oratory is also into Section 2 from the corridor and atrium delineated in White's map of the early basilica complex (chapter 9, fig.101).

³⁵⁷ Bovini (1972), 98.

³⁵⁸ Mirabella Roberti (1953), 215.

³⁵⁹ Iacumin (2004), 141.

This and other hypotheses relating to an oratory must accommodate the lozenge and Solomon's knot sequence and the obvious evidence of a chancel screen which separates Section 3 from 4 (chapter 4, figs. 37 and 38). These elements run transversely in the centre of the area which includes the 'north-east' mosaics. In the north Adriatic area there is the remains of a lozenge and knot sequence near the presbytery in the Monastero church, Aquileia and in the Basilica in via Madonna del Mare, Trieste but the relationship between separation of clergy and laity is less certain than in Aquileia (chapter 8, fig. 83). The sequence was used in non-Christian floors and it cannot be assumed that it had specific Christian liturgical significance.

By approximately 250 AD important western churches in Rome and Carthage were likely to have had a low wooden railing (chancel screen) separating the clergy from the laymen.³⁶⁰ It is not expected that this elaborate form of liturgical embellishment would have been introduced into the equivalent of a *domus ecclesiae* in Aquileia even towards the end of the third century. Stucchi believed that the chancel screen was added at the time of the enlargement of the area originally occupied by the oratory.³⁶¹ He draws attention to changes which he associates with later insertion of the stone slabs to provide support for the screen: the presence of a single file of black *tesserae* (invariably two in this hall) associated with the square and rectangle of the knot and lozenge sequence encompassing the stone slab to the east of the chancel, the shortening of the square and rectangle at each side of the slab (chapter 4, figs. 37 and 38) and the irregularity of *tesserae* to the west and east of the slab. Removal of white *tesserae* files, west of the gutter, to accommodate the gutter would have presented little difficulty. This being said, Tavano, surveying the same evidence, reached the opposite point of view thereby supporting the 'unity of

³⁶⁰ Krautheimer (1979), 5.

³⁶¹ Stucchi (1947-48), 186-188.

construction' theory.³⁶² The implications of the chancel screen have not been adequately addressed by either the advocates or critics of the oratory hypothesis.

The Iacumin hypothesis of a rectangular oratory bounded to the south by wall 'M' requires an explanation of the mosaics of Section 2. He argues that, if the larger northern part of this section, included in the oratory, was tessellated, it was replaced when the mosaic floor was enlarged to the south and west at the time of the inclusion of the southern portico with the original 'warehouse'. This would be in keeping with the observations in chapter 4 on the mosaics in the centre of the campanile. Section 4, east, area 3 would also have been tessellated at the time of expansion imperfectly copying the design of the mosaics in area 1. It may also have been at this time that the rough *tesserae* of the trapezoid area (Section 4, east, area 2) were inserted replacing an earlier mosaic floor and the adjacent lozenge and knot sequence.

Moving away from the north-east mosaics, the complete floor of the north hall may now be considered. It would not be difficult to guess that south hall was built after the Edict of Milan in 313 because of the mosaic allusions to Christianity as witnessed by the *emblema* of the Victorious Eucharist (fig. 72). If the north hall was built at the same time it would seem appropriate that its mosaics should also contain references to Christian exegesis. In addition, it might be anticipated that there would have been a concerted presentation of Christian belief in the two halls. It is possible to associate the paired confronting birds in Section 3 with serene religious decoration but it is most unlikely that Bishop Theodore and his presbyters in 313-319 would have chosen the images of the five four-legged beasts in this section to represent Christianity in a new church (chapter 6, 'Comparison of the two halls'). In fact, a substantial degree of critical latitude is needed to arrive at any conclusion regarding

³⁶² Tavano (1960), 106-108.

the significance of the mosaics in the north hall. The best which can be offered is to suggest that these mosaic images refer to Romano-Hellenistic mythology and cosmology, Mithraic cryptology, an eastern tradition of the tree of life and Thracian demonology.

The conclusion to be drawn is that all the mosaics in the north hall were laid down before the second decade of the fourth century with the exception, perhaps, of those in Section I. It is logical to assume that this would have occurred before the persecution of the Diocletian in 303-305. Christian leaders would have needed time to recover and the assurance provided by the Edict of Milan before moving forward with an overt programme of church decoration. Thinking along these lines leads to the solution proposed by Iacumin that south and west mosaic expansion (or replacement) occurred in the later third century.³⁶³ This would fit in with the 260 AD edict of the much quoted Emperor Gallienus (260-68) which restored to the churches their property, their buildings of worship and cemeteries and their right of assembly.³⁶⁴ Indeed this association may have led Tavano towards the view that the mosaics in the north-east were directed by a master *musivarius* who survived from the time of Gallienus.³⁶⁵ He uses such phrases as 'prototheodorian' and 'cryptochristian figures' to describe these mosaics. As already pointed out, he comes close to describing them as belonging to the third century, a position supported by Menis in his forward to the Basilica's 2003 official illustrated publication.³⁶⁶

While a late third century bishop may not have sanctioned *de novo* the five beasts referred to above he may have agreed to the expansion of the already utilised north-east oratory to accommodate his ever-growing flock particularly if the

³⁶³ Iacumin (2004), 142.

³⁶⁴ Eusebius, *Eccles. History*, VII, xiii.

³⁶⁵ Tavano (1982), 559.

³⁶⁶ Menis (2003), 8-9. Menis alludes to the 'more splendid and earlier Christian mosaics in the north hall' belonging to the late third century.

remainder of the 'warehouse' and its portico extension were made available by the generosity of a Christian donor(s). The new mosaics surrounding those in the north-east were anodyne and non-controversial. The whole floor, including the north-east mosaics, would have been unlikely to attract adverse comment from imperial representatives investigating Christian practices.

Viewed from the distant eye of a 21st century observer, the two halls are different. As pointed out in chapter 6 there are no human figures in the north hall. Since they are present in the south hall and in the mid-fourth century Christian oratories close to the north hall this factor supports without validating the thesis that the mosaics in the north hall were laid down before those in the south hall. The form and brilliance and hue of colour of the mosaics of confronting birds in Section 3, north hall are not matched in the south hall suggesting that either they were laid down at a different time or by different mosaicists. The orientation of the animals in the north hall suggests some forgotten imperative guiding its planners which was not followed by Theodore in 313 when planning the mosaic floor in the south hall. The marine mosaic in the south hall with its open framework is an innovation which is carried forward into the oratories. On the other hand the north hall retains the older pattern of framing each design or figure.

The north hall would have been completed by Theodore or his successor. It is presumed that any reconstruction to accommodate the area known in this study as Section 1 would have been completed during the 313-319 period and that the mosaic floor was laid by the early third decade. The evidence from the original excavations is that the four walls were plastered and painted, Niemann mentioning the north, west and south walls and Gnirs the east wall (chapter 9).³⁶⁷ This would have been carried

³⁶⁷ Gnirs (1915), 159.

out when construction/reconstruction of the walls were complete.³⁶⁸ However these frescoes *per se* tell us little about earlier walls and floors. By this time the north hall became truly 'Theodorian'.

This study takes the view that there was a third century oratory, perhaps a section of a larger building termed 'a warehouse', which contained the north-east mosaics. The date can only be guessed but it may well have been present at the time of the 260 Edict of Gallienus (see above). Apart from the 'Cyriace' inscription there is no evidence that it was Christian. Before the end of the third century more of the warehouse and an area 37×5m to the south were utilized to provide an extended place of worship. At this time a chancel screen was included which indicated Christian use by this time. By approximately 320 whole area of the original building together with its south extension was incorporated to provide the boundary of the north hall. The mosaic floor was completed about the same time. During 237-240 AD, Section 1 floor may have been damaged and partially re-tessellated. All the inscriptions are thought to have been included at a later rather than an earlier date.

³⁶⁸ Von Lanckoronski, Niemann and Swoboda (1906), 24. Niemann mentions finding traces of paint on the floor of Section 1 between the west wall and the entrance suggesting that the mosaic floor was completed before the frescoes were painted.

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AAAd Antichità Altoadriatiche
 AqN Aquileia Nostra
 RAC Rivista di Archeologia Cristiana

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