

# Buildings of faith: Early Christianity in the countryside of the Balearic Islands

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The Balearic Islands lie not far off the E coast of the Iberian Peninsula in a strategic position for navigation and trade routes (fig. 1 below). Classical writers considered them two groups of islands: Mallorca and Menorca (with adjacent islands and islets), forming the *Baliarides*, and Ibiza and Formentera (with other islets), considered the *Pityussae*.<sup>1</sup> In 123 B.C., the *Balearides* were conquered by the Romans and included first in *Hispania Citerior* and in *Tarraconensis* later. The unified archipelago became an independent province at the end of the 4th c., probably due to the re-organization by Theodosius.<sup>2</sup> In A.D. 455, the Balearics were conquered by the Vandals, while in 534, Apollinarius, sent by Belisarius, conquered the islands for the Byzantine empire. Theoretically, Byzantine rule lasted until the Islamic conquest of Isam-al-Jalawni in 902-3,<sup>3</sup> but it is difficult to draw a precise line for the end of late antiquity on the islands. The Muslim occupation at the very start of the 10th c. witnessed a clear shift. In this paper, we will consider the period from the 5th to the start of the 10th c., even if information for the 8th and 9th c. is scarce.

Ancient sources point to the consolidation of Christianity in Menorca from the start of the 5th c.<sup>4</sup> In the 19th c., a few Early Christian rural churches were discovered in different parts of the Balearics and Early Christian archaeology has continued to contribute to our understanding of the architecture, liturgical practices, and artistic aspects of these buildings which are the most emblematic material testimonies of early Christianity. The number of rural churches in this relatively small archipelago is remarkable when compared with the other areas of *Hispania*.<sup>5</sup> Recent years have also seen an increased interest in the relationship between the churches and their broader context and environment. The

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1 See, e.g., R. Zucca, *Insulae Baliares. Le Isole Baleari sotto il dominio romano* (Rome 1998); E. García and M. L. Sánchez León, *Roma y la municipalización de las Baleares* (Palma 2000).

2 J. Amengual, *Els orígens del Cristianisme a les Balears i el seu desenvolupament fins a l'època musulmana* (Palma 1991-92) vol. 1, 420-42.

3 For the historical context of the Balearics in late antiquity, see, e.g., Amengual *ibid.*; *id.*, "Ubi pars graecorum est: medio milenio de historia relegada de las Baleares y las Pitiusas," *Pyrenae* 36 (2005) 87-113; J. Signes Codoñer, "Bizancio y las Islas Baleares en los siglos VIII y IX," in *Mallorca y Bizancio* (Palma 2005) 45-102; M. Vallejo Girvés, *Bizancio y la España tardoantigua, siglos V-VIII. Un capítulo de historia mediterránea* (Alcalá de Henares 1993) 15-43.

4 Evidence for Christianity before the 5th c. is very scarce. In *Pollentia* (Mallorca), a gold signet-ring depicting two fishes hanging from an anchor was found in one of the burials of the necropolis of Can Fanals: J. Llabrés and R. Isasi, *Excavaciones en los terrenos donde estuvo enclavada la ciudad romana de Pollentia (Baleares, Isla de Mallorca, término municipal de Alcudia)* (Madrid 1934). It has been tentatively dated to the 4th c.: A. Castellano Hernández, "Joyas romanas de Pollentia (Alcudia, Mallorca) en el Museo Arqueológico Nacional," *BolMusArqNac* 25 (1997) 12-28, but it could be even earlier. During the early excavations of the basilica of Sa Carrotja, a funerary inscription dated to the 4th c. was documented: J. Gómez and M. Mayer, "Aproximación a un inventario de los mosaicos funerarios de época paleocristiana de Hispania," *CEA* 31 (1996) 68.

5 Some scholars have claimed that the Balearic Islands were the Hispanic territory possessing the largest relative percentage of rural churches: e.g., C. Godoy, "El cristianismo en las islas Baleares," in A. Ribera and L. Abad (edd.), *Los orígenes del cristianismo en Valencia y su entorno* (Valencia 2000) 253.

churches were an effective tool for diffusing Christianity and converting the population since they manifested the power of new religious beliefs and provided places where the faithful could gather as a community and participate in the rites of conversion. Where they were part of ecclesiastical networks providing services to the communities, churches also helped organize territories.<sup>6</sup> As the expression of the population's will to build a place of worship, they are usually located at strategic points in the landscape. Yet Christianity was not only a rural phenomenon. Churches, cathedrals and bishop's palaces will have existed in some towns, even if our understanding of the transformation of the pagan topography of towns to a Christian one is still in an incipient state.<sup>7</sup>

The chief aim of this paper is to present the rural basilicas as the main evidence for early Christianity on Mallorca and Menorca.<sup>8</sup> We will explore the rôle played by these buildings in the configuration of the landscape in order to gain insight into the Christianization of rural areas.

Written sources are scarce but we will first summarize information and interpretations in a body of literature that is often difficult to access and has not yet entered into the wider anglophone debate. The main text indicating the presence of Christian communities is the *Epistle* of Bishop Severus of Menorca dated A.D. 418.<sup>9</sup> In it, the bishop, based in *Iamona*

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- 6 See, e.g., G. P. Brogiolo and A. Chavarría Arnau, "Chiese, territorio e dinamiche del popolamento nelle campagne tra tardoantico e altomedioevo," *Hortus Artium Medievalium* 14 (2008) 11.
- 7 For a synthesis of the transformation of cities, see M. Á. Cau, "Urban change in late antiquity in the Balearic Islands," in N. Christie and A. Augenti (edd.), *Urbes extinctae. Approaches to archaeologies of abandoned classical towns* (Burlington, VT 2012) 115-44. In *Pollentia*, some buildings found early on were hypothetically connected to Christian buildings. At Can Fanals, a necropolis used from Early Roman times to the late-antique period or beyond, a large, poorly preserved building was interpreted as a possible basilica. Farther north, at Santa Anna de Can Costa, some graves and the epitaph of Arguta were tied to the presence of Christian buildings: Llabrés and Isasi (supra n.4). So far, however, there is no evidence for a basilica in *Pollentia*, although re-use of the Capitolium for Christian worship has been proposed: A. Arribas and M. Tarradell, "El foro de Pollentia. Noticia de las primeras investigaciones," in *Los foros romanos de las provincias occidentales* (Madrid 1987) 121-36. Excavations in Ciutadella (*Iamona*) discovered a mosaic possibly related to a church (information from the excavator). New basilicas have been discovered in Sa Nitja (*Sanisera*) in N Menorca: C. Bravo and F. Contreras, "Aproximación al estudio de la ciudad romana de Sanisera (Sanitja-Menorca)," in *V Jornades d'Arqueologia de les Illes Balears* (Palma 2013) 189-97. Some 50 m northeast of the new discoveries, a necropolis related to a place of worship was discovered in the 1980s: M. C. Rita, J. L. Latorre and J. M. Orfila, "Las excavaciones arqueológicas en el yacimiento de Sanitja (Menorca) hasta 1984," in P. de Palol (ed.), *Les Illes Balears en temps cristians fins els àrabs* (Mahón 1988) 38-50.
- 8 No traces of late-antique basilicas are yet known on Ibiza and Formentera. However, the attested bishop Opilius implies the existence of churches. Rings found at Sa Blanca Dona and Ca Na Marieta with the names of Florentius and Vifredus could be related to the ecclesiastical sphere: R. Zucca, "Il cristianesimo primitivo nelle *Insulae Baliares*," in P. G. Spanu (ed.), *Insulae Christi. Il cristianesimo primitivo in Sardegna, Corsica e Baleari* (Oristano 2002) 551-52.
- 9 For further information on this source, as well as editions, cf. G. Seguí, *La carta encíclica del Obispo Severo. Estudio crítico de su autenticidad e integridad* (Palma 1937); Amengual (supra n.2) 59-76; E. D. Hunt, "St. Stephen in Minorca. An episode in Jewish-Christian relations in the early 5th century A.D.," *JThSt* 33 (1982) 106-23; M. A. Cohen, "Severus' Epistle on the Jews: outline of a new perspective," *Helmantica* 35 (1984) 71-79; S. Bradbury, *Severus of Minorca, Letter on the Conversion of the Jews* (Oxford 1996), with the review by B. S. Bachrach at *Speculum* 73 (1998) 1167-69. For comments on different aspects of the *Letter*, see R. S. Kraemer, "Jewish women's resistance to Christianity in the early fifth century: the account of Severus, Bishop of Minorca," *JEarlyChristStud* 17 (2009) 635-65.

(Ciutadella in the W part of Menorca) narrates the confrontation between Jews and Christians triggered by the arrival in *Magona* (Maò in the E part of the island) of Saint Stephen's relics which had been brought to the island by Orosius. The events related by Severus are also mentioned in the correspondence between Consentius of Menorca and Augustine of Hippo dating from 415 to 420.<sup>10</sup> The conflict ended with the massive conversion of the Jews in *Magona* and the burning of its synagogue. The document depicts a well-organized Christian community<sup>11</sup> and provides some insights into the organization and location of Christian worship on Menorca.<sup>12</sup>

After this, there is no information in the written sources until the late 5th c. The Vandal conquest in 455 probably implied the separation of the island church from that of *Hispania*. This would explain the absence of Balearic bishops from the numerous Hispanic councils in the following centuries. Nevertheless, the Balearics' political connection to the N African kingdom would not necessarily imply ecclesiastical dependence. The councils convened there do not mention Balearic bishops other than the Synod of Carthage in 484 where Macarius of Mallorca, Helias of Menorca and Opilio of Eivissa appear in the list of bishops called to Carthage by the Vandalic king Huneric.<sup>13</sup> The Balearic bishops are named after each island even though it is more common to mention the name of the episcopal town and find them listed with those from Sardinia. Each of the Balearic Islands had one bishop.<sup>14</sup>

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- 10 For the letters of Consentius, cf. *Sancti Aureli Augustini opera. Epistolae ex duobus codicibus nuper in lucem prolatae* (CSEL 88, 1981); *Consentius, Correspondència amb Sant Agustí*, transl. J. Amengual (Barcelona 1987) 63; Amengual (supra n.2) 191-215; id., *Judíos, católicos y herejes* (Granada 2008). Letter 11 shows that Consentius had some influence in the writing of, or was even the author of, Severus's Epistle. For details on his possible influence there, see, e.g., Amengual (supra n.2) 204-11; Bradbury (supra n.9) 57-69. Consentius' home town and religious rôle are unknown. We know that he went into voluntary retreat on Menorca looking for tranquillity. His letters reveal his anti-Pelagian and anti-Priscillianist theological positions and his intellectual detachment from the theological beliefs of the Christian islanders. He sought advice on this from Augustine of Hippo. He also had contacts with several actors in other W Mediterranean churches, such as Bishop Patroclus of Arles or members of the church of *Tarraco*: J. Amengual, "Fonts històriques de les Balears en temps cristians fins als àrabs," in de Palol (supra n.7) 16-20; id. (supra n.2) 179-255.
- 11 Amengual 1988 (supra n.10) 18; J. Amengual and M. Á. Cau, "Antigüedad tardía en las illes Balears," in F. Tugores (ed.), *El mundo romano en las illes Balears* (cat. expo.; Palma 2005) 131-38; J. Amengual and M. Orfila, "Paganos, judíos y cristianos en las Baleares: documentos literarios y arqueológicos," *Ilu. Revista de Ciencia de las Religiones* 18 (2007) 197-246.
- 12 Severus resided in *Iamona*, which could imply the existence there of an episcopal palace and a cathedral. In *Magona*, Christians met in a church on the outskirts where St. Stephen's relics were deposited (Severus 20.4). The church had an open space with grass in front of its doors. After the destruction of the local synagogue, the converted Jews erected a new church over its ruins (30.22). The monks mentioned in different parts of the letter (11.4; 20.4) suggest that there were one or more monasteries in the town or elsewhere on the island. In Amengual's opinion (supra n.2) 159-63; id., "Manifestaciones del monacato balear y tarraconense según la correspondencia entre San Agustín y Consensio (415-420)," in *Il monacheismo occidentale dalle origini alla Regula Magistri* (Rome 1997) 348, the urban context of these monks suggests that they were influential in both ecclesiastical and public matters. Unfortunately, the letter does not provide information on the monasteries' locations.
- 13 Amengual (supra n.2) 320-25; J. Orlandis, "Problemas en torno a la cristiandad balear en la época preislámica," *Anuario de Historia de la Iglesia* 8 (1999) 150; Amengual 2005 (supra n.3) 91.
- 14 This has been interpreted as a symptom of a decline in urban life contemporary with the rise of Christianity: Amengual (supra n.2) 323-24; id. 2005 (supra n.3) 91; Amengual and Cau (supra n.11) 133-34.

Using this document, some scholars have proposed the Balearic churches' adscription to Sardinia during the Vandal period, under the authority of bishop of Caralis.<sup>15</sup>

With the incorporation of the islands into the Byzantine empire in 534<sup>16</sup> and the conquest of part of the Iberian Peninsula in the mid-6th c.,<sup>17</sup> the few available sources suggest a re-establishment of the relationships of the church on the islands with Byzantine *Spania* and Rome.<sup>18</sup> At the end of the 6th c., Licinianus, bishop of *Carthago Spartaria*, responded to Vincentius, bishop of Ibiza, who had sent a letter to Licinianus concerning a supposed Letter of Heaven.<sup>19</sup> This correspondence has prompted the suggestion that the islands were under the ecclesiastical control of *Carthago Spartaria*. M. Vallejo suggests that with the Byzantine conquest of the Iberian Peninsula, the Balearics were included in the territories that formed part of the ancient diocese of *Hispania* in a province called *Mauritania II* under the Exarchate of Africa;<sup>20</sup> she takes the letter from Licinianus as a sign of the Balearics' dependence on *Hispania*. J. Amengual disagrees, suggesting that the letter is not necessarily proof of ecclesiastical dependence, that there was no metropolitan structure at the time, and that the Pope himself could have acted thus.<sup>21</sup> At any event, the organization of the Byzantine bishoprics and the extent of their territories are not well understood and remain debated.

The islands also served as a place of exile. The *Chronicle* of the bishop Victor of Tunnuna recalls the first exile that he suffered in the Balearics. His criticism of the religious policy of Justinian and the condemnation of the Three Chapters in an edict of 543-4 led to his exile in different territories. Perhaps the islands were also used as a place of exile during the persecution under the Vandal king Genseric, for instance, when we know that islands such as Sardinia were used for the exile of many Catholics.<sup>22</sup> The existence of a monastic congregation on the small island of Cabrera near the S coast of Mallorca is attested by the letter in 603 from Pope Gregory I to the *defensor* Johannes, ordering him to correct the licentious behavior of Cabrera's monks.<sup>23</sup>

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- 15 M. Vallejo Girvés, "Inserción de las Baleares en el orbe bizantino," in R. Durán Tapia (ed.), *Mallorca y Bizancio* (Palma 2005) 15-43. This is doubted by other scholars since there is no evidence to suggest that the Sardinian seats were metropolitan: Amengual (supra n.2) 427-28; Amengual and Cau *ibid.* 133. According to Zucca (supra n.8) 554, the list is not based on geographical criteria or ecclesiastical hierarchy (except for the first on the list, the bishop of Caralis), but on the antiquity of the episcopacy, just as at the meeting held in Carthage in 411 (where the bishops' list was further divided by *provinciae*).
- 16 C. Lillington-Martin, "Procopius, πάροδος / quaestor, Codex Justinianus, I.27 and Belisarius' strategy in the Mediterranean," in *id.* and E. Turquois (edd.), *Procopius of Caesarea: literary and historical interpretations* (Abingdon 2018) 172.
- 17 Vallejo Girvés (supra n.15); *id.*, *Hispania y Bizancio: una relación desconocida* (Madrid 2012); Lillington-Martin *ibid.* 164-66.
- 18 Orlandis (supra n.13) 153-54.
- 19 Amengual (supra n.2) 398-412.
- 20 Vallejo Girvés (supra n.15) 30-31.
- 21 Amengual (supra n.2) 429-38.
- 22 Amengual *ibid.* 132-33; M. Vallejo Girvés, "El exilio bizantino: Hispania y el Mediterráneo occidental (siglos V-VII)," in M. Pérez and P. Bádenas (edd.), *Bizancio y la península ibérica de la Antigüedad tardía a la Edad moderna* (Madrid 1994) 117-54.
- 23 Amengual *ibid.* 392-98; R. González, "Las cartas de Gregorio Magno al defensor Juan. La aplicación del derecho de Justiniano en la Hispania bizantina en el siglo VII," *Antigüedad y Cristianismo* 14 (1997) 287-98; Orlandis (supra n.13) 154-55. The Pope's intervention should not necessarily be seen as due to a weakness of the Mallorcan bishop since it was normal for the pope to intervene directly in affairs of the western church in different territories.



With the loss of Byzantine positions in the most of the W Mediterranean during the 7th c., the written and archaeological evidence from the islands drops significantly. The recent discovery of a lead *bullā*, dated to the second half of the 7th or 8th c., of a Sardinian bishop at the so-called castle of Santueri (Felanitx, Mallorca) suggested Mallorca's ecclesiastical dependence on Sardinia.<sup>24</sup> The few available documents mention the first Muslim attacks in the 8th c. Some kind of pact or treaty was clearly established. In this period, we know that the islanders requested protection from Charlemagne.<sup>25</sup> Other documentary sources include the bulls of Popes Formosus (891) and Romanus (897), in which the bishop of Girona claimed ownership of Mallorca and Menorca. J. Orlandis has pointed out that the claim from the Girona bishopric was more a matter of territorial than ecclesiastical jurisdiction.<sup>26</sup> The papal bulls do not imply any concession over the islands to the Bishop of Girona, but they are not specific. Amengual has argued that Rome did not wish to involve itself in conflicts with the Byzantine emperor, who was the islands' political ruler.<sup>27</sup> They probably remained under nominal Byzantine sovereignty until the effective Muslim conquest (902-3).<sup>28</sup> Amengual also suggested that the seats were vacant in this period and that the decay of the towns debilitated the entire structure of the Church, something that would lead to their progressive disappearance after the Muslim conquest. That conquest would change the history of the islands, but the possible presence of Christian communities under Muslim dominion is open to debate.<sup>29</sup> In part this is argued because there is no indication that the Muslims had to concede any rights as a community to Christians, a practice relatively common in territories with well-organized Christian communities.<sup>30</sup> We

24 J. Nadal, "Las bulas de plomo bizantinas del Castillo de Santueri," *Bolletí Soc. Arq. Lul.liana* 62 (2006) 330-33.

25 The Royal Frankish Annals in 798 and the Metz Annals in 798-799 claim that the Balearic Islands were devastated by the Muslims. The Balearics therefore turned to Charlemagne, whose campaign was successful. The Metz Annals and the Saxon Annalist specify that before the end of the 8th c. the islands were relieved of attacks and the insignias were recovered from the pirates: see, e.g., Amengual 2005 (supra n.3) 103; Signes Codoñer (supra n.3) 208-12.

26 Orlandis (supra n.13) 156.

27 Amengual (supra n.2) 475; id. 2005 (supra n.3) 104.

28 G. Rosselló, "Los siglos oscuros de Mallorca," *Mayurqa* 10 (1973) 92; Amengual (supra n.2) 461-63; id. 2005 (supra n.3) 103-5; Vallejo Girvés (supra n.15) 347; Orlandis (supra n.13) 155; Signes Codoñer (supra n.3) 45-100.

29 The survival of Christian communities after the Muslim conquest has been the subject of debate in local historiography as only one (controversial) source suggests their presence. A document of 1058 concerning the consecration of the cathedral of Barcelona states that Alí of Denia had conceded the rights over the churches of the taifa of Denia (which included the diocese of Denia, Orihuela and the Balearics) to Guislabert, bishop of Barcelona: T. Bruce, "An intercultural dialogue between the Muslim Taifa of Denia and the Christian county of Barcelona in the eleventh century," *Medieval Encounters* 15 (2009) 1-34. It is possible that the Balearic episcopate had vanished or was debilitated, but the document may suggest that some Christians still lived there in the Muslim period. Recently, a large necropolis over the forum area in *Pollentia* has been dated to the Muslim period. However, all bodies were buried in a supine, not lateral, position (the latter is the norm for Muslim burials). This could be a sign of a non-Muslim community buried in the necropolis of the Roman town. There are no grave-goods or other elements that could help to ascribe these individuals culturally, so it remains unclear whether they were Christians or Jews, and whether they descended from late-antique communities or were newcomers (possibly slaves brought in by the Muslims?): M. Á. Cau *et al.*, "Christians in a Muslim world? Radiocarbon dating of the cemetery over the forum of Pollentia (Mallorca, Balearic Islands)," *ArchaeolAnthropolSci* 9 (2017) 1529-38.

30 Amengual (supra n.2) 494.

would be more sceptical on this regard; there are a few indications that the rural churches may have been used later than previously thought.

The written sources that we have briefly outlined help frame the period in which Christianity consolidated in the islands but they hardly contribute to an understanding of the organization of the countryside and the effect of the spread of rural churches on the landscape. The rural buildings are the main manifestation of early Christianity and ecclesiastical organization, and we need to rely on the archaeological evidence as the source of a first insight into the implantation of Christianity.

### Late-antique rural churches: the archaeological evidence

On Mallorca, the main basilicas are those of Cas Frares (Santa Maria del Camí), Son Peretó (Manacor), Sa Carrotja (Porto Cristo, Manacor) and Son Fadrinet (Campos). Menorca has the churches of Es Cap des Port (Fornells), Fornàs de Torelló (Mahón), Son Bou (Alaior), and Illa del Rei (Maó) (figs. 1-2). Most of these churches were discovered in the 19th or at the start of the 20th c., and the early excavations did not employ stratigraphic methods. Some have since been revisited to assess basic questions such as chronology, plan and architectural evolution, and re-excavations have been conducted or are still in process in churches such as Son Peretó,<sup>31</sup> Son Bou<sup>32</sup> and Illa del Rei.<sup>33</sup> Some scattered discoveries and several place-names suggest the presence of more churches.<sup>34</sup>

Rural churches on Mallorca normally have three naves beneath a wooden framework (fig. 2). The apse can be square or tripartite. At Son Peretó, the first phase had a square apse (semicircular internally) to which two lateral chambers were later added, resulting in a tripartite header. Cas Frares also shows a square apse. Son Fadrinet and, probably, Sa Carrotja have tripartite headers. Churches on Menorca show a wider architectural variety. Fornàs de Torelló (fig. 3) and Cap des Port have modest dimensions and rectangular floors. The single nave was surrounded by lateral annexes which had different functions,

31 For the re-excavation of the basilica of Son Peretó in 1981-82, see P. de Palol, "La arqueología cristiana en la Hispania romana y visigoda. Descubrimientos recientes y nuevos puntos de vista," in *Actes XIe Congrès int. d'Archéologie chrétienne, 1986* (Rome 1989) 1975-2022. For a more recent project in the same basilica, see M. Á. Cau, M. Riera Rullan and M. Salas, "The early Christian complex of Son Peretó (Mallorca, Balearic Islands): excavations in the 'west sector' (2005-2008)," *ArchMed* 39 (2012) 231-43.

32 M. Orfila and F. Tuset, "La basilica cristiana de Son Bou," in de Palol (supra n.7) 21-24.

33 M. Á. Cau *et al.*, "El conjunto eclesiástico de la Illa del Rei (Menorca, Islas Baleares)," *Hortus Artium Medievalium* 18 (2012) 209-16.

34 For instance, the place-names Alconàsser (Valle de Sóller, Mallorca; from the Arabic al-ko-násia, meaning 'the church') and S'Esgleiaassa (Alcúdia, Mallorca; meaning "the little church") point to the possible existence of basilicas in these areas: J. Mascaró, *Corpus de toponima de Mallorca*, vol. V (Palma 1966-67). At Aubenya (Randa, Mallorca; Aubenya derives from an Arabic word meaning building), an incense-burner and remains of mosaics were found, suggesting the presence of a church that was possibly still visible in the Muslim period: P. de Palol, "Los incensarios de Aubenya (Mallorca) y Lladó (Gerona)," *Ampurias* 12 (1950) 1-19; B. Font, *Historia de Lluçmajor*, vol. I (Palma 1972). On the small islet of Illa d'en Colom off the W coast of Menorca, remains of building materials, architectural decoration and furniture imply the existence of another church: J. Mascaró and J. C. Nicolás, "Carta arqueológica de Menorca, término municipal de Mahón," in J. Mascaró (ed.), *Geografía e historia de Menorca* (Ciutadella 1982) vol. III, 70; P. de Palol, "La basilica des Cap des Port, de Fornells, Menorca," in *Actas II Reunión de Arqueología Paleocristiana Hispánica, 1978* (Barcelona 1982) 353-404.

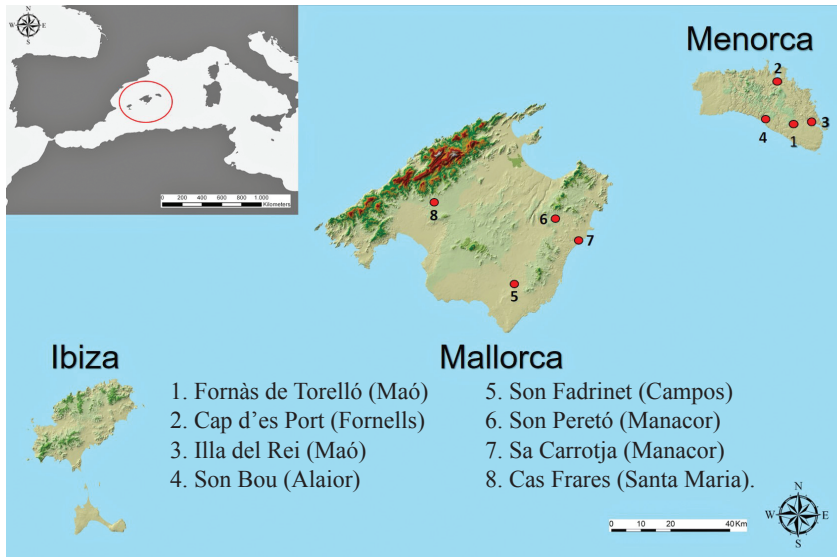


Fig. 1. Location of the Balearic Islands in the W Mediterranean and the locations of Early Christian basilicas excavated in the Balearics (C. Mas Florit).

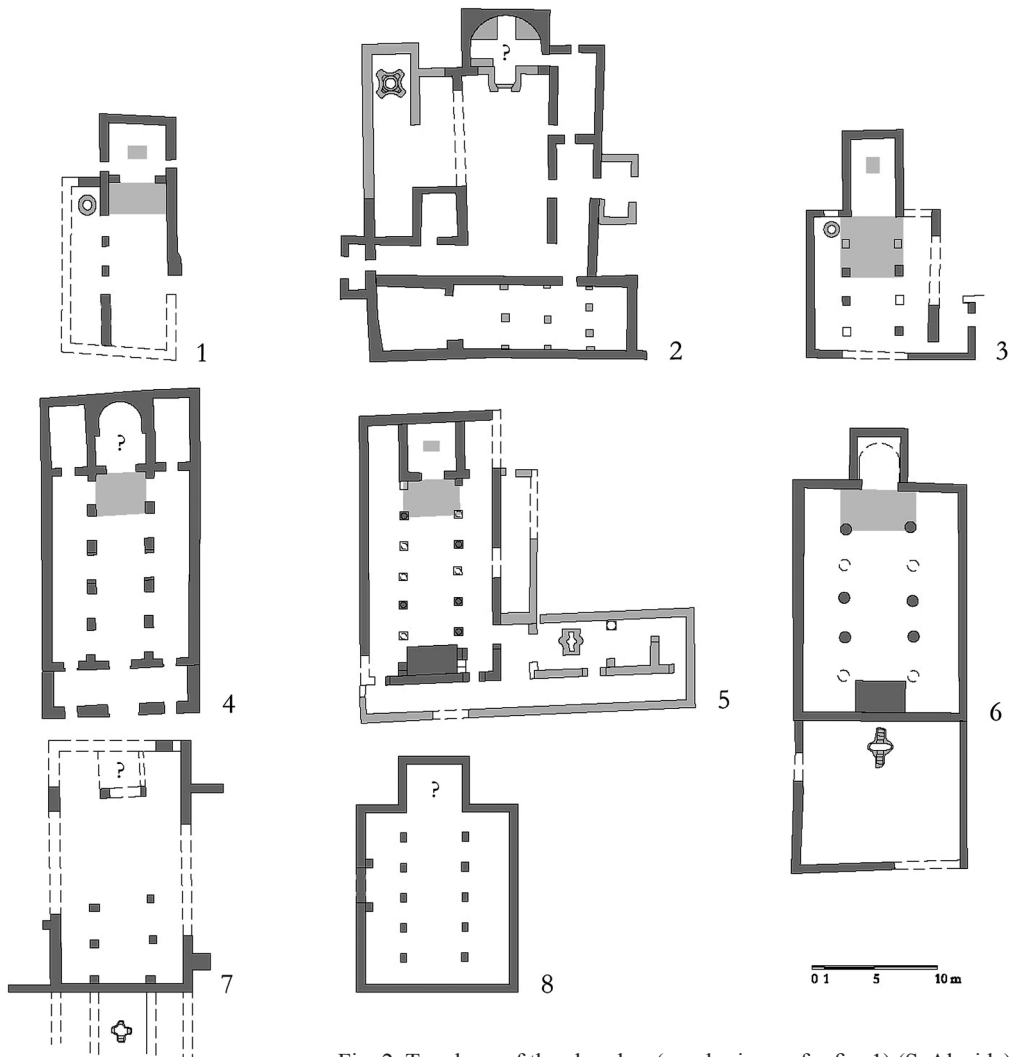


Fig. 2. Typology of the churches (numbering as for fig. 1) (S. Alcaide).

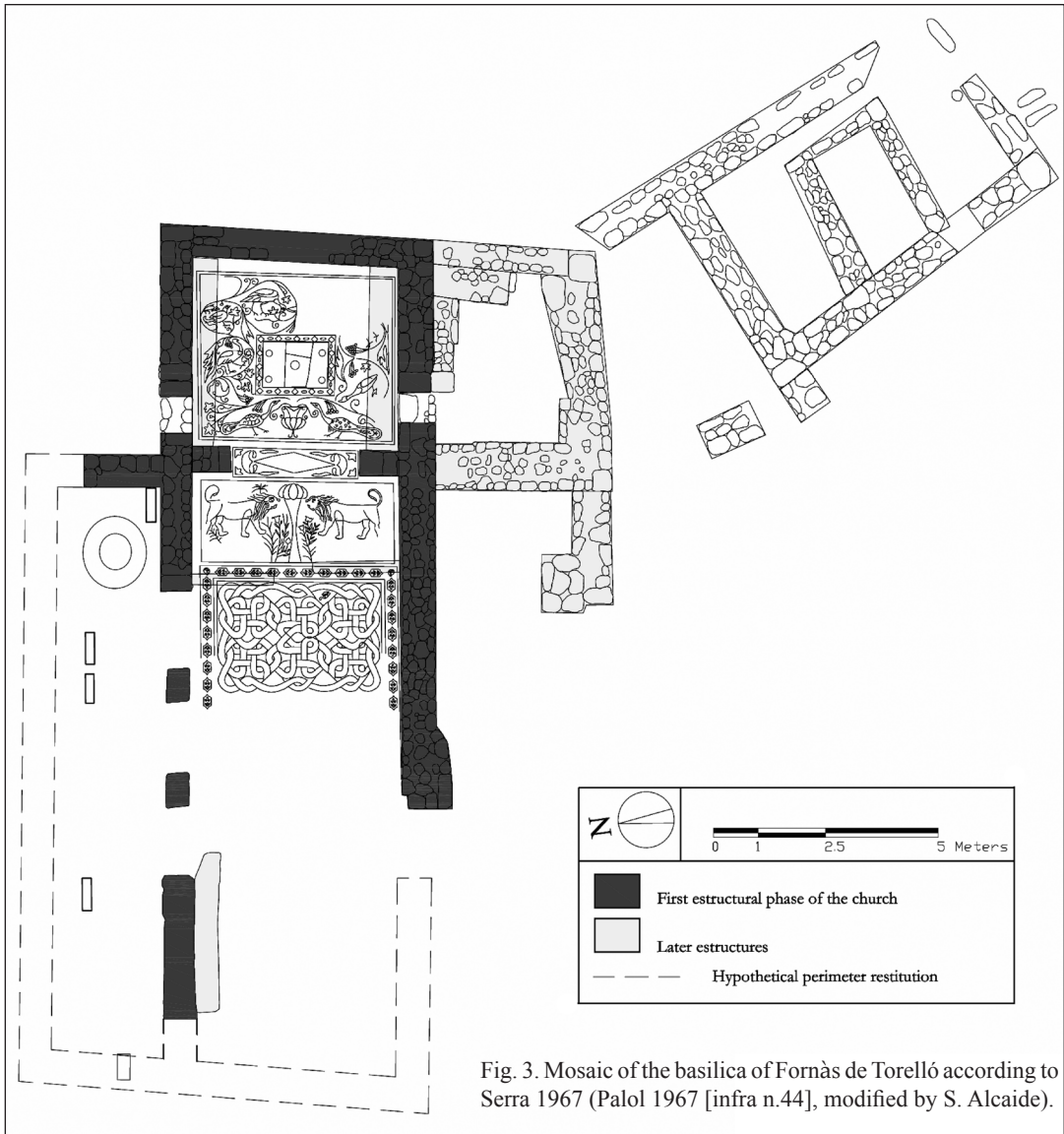


Fig. 3. Mosaic of the basilica of Fornàs de Torelló according to Serra 1967 (Palol 1967 [infra n.44], modified by S. Alcaide).

including baptism. At Es Cap des Port the apse is rectangular outside and semicircular inside; it also has a cruciform crypt, the only one so far documented in the islands, the sanctuary level being originally above the crypt<sup>35</sup> (fig. 4). Illa del Rei is a small basilica with a square rectangular apse. The Son Bou basilica has three naves covered by wooden roofs. The head is tripartite with an elongated semicircular central apse. A vestibule accessed from a portico runs along the W façade. The four central pillars of the central naves were reinforced with pilasters on the inside during construction (fig. 5). Some fallen arches were found in the excavations of the 1950s. The unusual support arrangements for the central nave have prompted different interpretations of the elevation.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>35</sup> de Palol *ibid.* 357-60.

<sup>36</sup> S. Alcaide, *Arquitectura cristiana balear en la Antigüedad tardía (siglos V-X d.C.)* (Ph.D. diss., Universitat Rovira i Virgili, Tarragona 2011) 315-18 and 323-24, available at <http://www.tesisenred.net/handle/10803/32933>; de Palol (*supra* n.31) 1975-2022; *id.*, "L'arqueologia cristiana hispànica després del 1982," in *Actas III Reunión de Arqueología Cristiana Hispánica, 1988*





All the known churches on the islands except for the basilica of Cas Frares<sup>37</sup> had baptisteries. The spaces dedicated to baptism show great variety, although on each island there is some consistency in their layout. On Mallorca the baptismal fonts are cruciform and occupy an annexe in front of the church's W façade (Son Peretó and Sa Carrotja) or in a baptismal complex southwest of the church (Son Fadrinet). On Menorca, the baptismal fonts, which are smaller and circular or quadrangular, lie on the NE side of the church, sometimes in a side N aisle (Illa del Rei) or in a long annexe (Fornàs de Torelló



Fig. 4 (above). Apse of the basilica of Cap d'es Port, view from the west (Palol 1982 [supra n.34]).

Fig. 5 (left). Central pillars and pilaster of the basilica of Son Bou (S. Alcaide).

and Cap des Port, where it is preceded by an antechamber).<sup>38</sup> Confirming that the baptisteries were built contemporarily with the churches is not always possible. Recent excavations at Son Peretó (fig. 6) have demonstrated the presence of graves that predate construction of the baptistery.<sup>39</sup> A re-organization of the baptistery was also identified, a large font being later replaced by a smaller one. Excavation beneath the small font revealed fragments of

(Barcelona 1994) 10; Orfila and Tuset (supra n.32) 23.

37 The church of Cas Frares was covered with earth after the last excavations in 1928, making it impossible to check its current condition or investigate whether there was a baptistery.

38 Alcaide (supra n.36) 353-54.

39 C. Mas Florit and M. Á. Cau, "Christians, peasants and shepherds: the transformation of the countryside in late antique Mallorca (Balearic Islands, Spain)," *AnTard* 21 (2013) 226.



Fig. 6. Central area of the baptistery of Son Pereto, view from the west (M. Á. Cau).



Fig. 7 (right). Mosaic of Balearia over a tomb in the basilica of Son Peretó (Manacor) (M. Riera Sureda, courtesy Museu d'Història de Manacor).

another font that were used in the infilling of its foundation. Archaeometric analysis<sup>40</sup> of these fragments and comparison with the mortar *in situ* in the larger font demonstrated that they were chemically and petrographically the same. The larger font was partially dismantled and re-used in the construction of the smaller font. It may coincide with a change in ritual from immersion to affusion (pouring). Some of the churches had *contra-chorus*, as is clearly the case at Son Peretó and Son Fadrinet. The function of these structures is debated; some are related to the commemoration of martyrs.<sup>41</sup> Although the chronological evolution and extent of the associated funerary areas are not well known, the number of graves at Son Peretó (fig. 7), Sa Carrotja, Son Fadrinet and Cas Frares are significant.

Some churches were decorated with mosaic pavements<sup>42</sup> which, displaying both N African and Eastern influences, allow for a date between the middle and the end of the 6th c.,<sup>43</sup> but some mosaics correspond not to the original phase of the building but to later refurbishments, as at Son Peretó and Son Fadrinet. Based on mosaic parallels and the plan of an apse with chambers on each side (tripartite header), P. Palol has proposed N African influence on the Christian architecture of the islands.<sup>44</sup>

40 D. Miriello *et al.*, "Compositional analyses of mortars from the late antique site of Son Peretó (Mallorca, Balearic Islands, Spain): archaeological implications," *Archaeometry* 55 (2013) 1101-21.

41 C. Godoy, *Arqueología y liturgia. Iglesias hispánicas (siglos IV al VIII)* (Barcelona 1995) 87.

42 Th. Ulbert and M. Orfila, "Die frühchristliche Anlage von Son Fadrinet (Campos, Mallorca)," *MadMitt* 43 (2002) 239-98; J. Aguiló, *Basílica i Ciutat de Cunium a Manacor* (manuscript held in the Historical Archive of the City Council of Manacor) 124 and 160; Alcaide (supra n.36) 437.

43 P. de Palol, "En torno a la iconografía de los mosaicos cristianos de las islas Baleares," *Actas de la Reunión Nacional de Arqueología Paleocristiana, 1966* (Valladolid 1967) 133; P. de Palol, A. Alomar, J. Camps and G. Rosselló, "Notas sobre las basílicas de Manacor en Mallorca," *Bol. Sem. Estud. Arte y Arqueología* 33 (1967) 37; H. Schlunk and Th. Hauschild, "Die christlichen Denkmäler auf den balearischen Inseln," in *id.* (edd.), *Die Denkmäler der frühchristlichen und westgotischen Zeit* (Mainz 1978) 75-85; M. Guardia, "Les basíliques cristianes de Menorca: Es Fornàs de Torelló i S'illa del Rei i els tallers de musivària balears," in de Palol (supra n.7) 65-71.

44 P. de Palol, *Arqueología cristiana de la España romana, siglos IV-VI* (Madrid 1967); *id.*, "Los





Fig. 8. Detail of mosaic of the basilica of Illa del Rei (Schlunk and Hauschild 1978 [supra n.43]).

The initial chronology of most of the buildings is problematic: for many, only architectural parallels or stylistic considerations based on the mosaics provide an approximate date. At Illa del Rei, the recent discovery of a large plate of ARS Ware in the preparatory *rudus* for the mosaic suggests a *terminus post quem* in the mid-6th c. for the foundation of the church.<sup>45</sup> Stylistic considerations regarding the mosaic (fig. 8), which displays similarities with that from Es Fornàs de Torelló, and the similarities of a marine scene with that of the “chapel of Asterius” at Carthage, also suggest a date at the end of the 6th c.<sup>46</sup> At Son Fadrinet, the mosaic has been dated to the end of the 6th or early 7th c.,<sup>47</sup> but it belongs to the second phase of the building when the *contra-chorus* was also remodeled.<sup>48</sup> ARS Hayes forms 103A, 104 and 105 found in the preparation of a pavement of this second phase suggest a date around the late 6th or first half of the 7th c., but the original foundation date is unknown. At Son Peretó, we are gaining information on the evolution of the site, but the initial chronology remains unclear as the new excavation has not yet extended to the entire basilica. At Cas Frares, a date of the end of the 6th c. has been suggested from the mosaic

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monumentos de Hispania en la arqueología paleocristiana,” in *Actas VIII Congreso int. de Arqueología cristiana, 1969* (Vatican City 1972) 167-85.

45 The ARS plate is of a fairly uncommon type, either J. Baradez, “Grands plats chrétiens de Tipasa: céramique africaine orangée et ‘sigillata chiara’,” *MÉFRA* 79 (1967) 231-68, drawing 23, datable to the mid-6th c., or a larger version of Fulford type 67 (M. G. Fulford, *New Forest Roman pottery: manufacture and distribution, with a corpus of pottery types* [BAR 17; Oxford 1975] 66, fig. 20), dated to 550/570: Cau, Riera Rullan and Salas (supra n.31) 419.

46 N. Duval and A. Lézine, “La chapelle funéraire souterraine dite d’Asterius à Carthage,” *MÉFRA* 71 (1959) 339-57.

47 M. Orfila and F. Tuset, “Descripción, paralelos y análisis de los mosaicos de la iglesia de Son Fadrinet (Campos, Mallorca),” *Mayurqa* 29 (2003) 200.

48 T. Ulbert, “El yacimiento paleocristiano de Son Fadrinet (Campos, Mallorca),” *Mayurqa* 29 (2003) 182.

and paleographic considerations.<sup>49</sup> For Sa Carrotja, we have insufficient information to suggest a date. Most scholars suggest a date in the 6th or 7th c. for Son Bou, mainly due to the fact this unusual building has parallels in Basilica II at Cornus (Sardinia).

If the initial chronology and evolution are problematic, so too is the date of abandonment of buildings. Recent excavations in the W sector of the basilica at Son Peretó and the re-study of ceramic materials from old excavations in the area have provided a date of the end of the 7th or beginning of the 8th c. for the site's destruction, perhaps in connection with the first Muslim raids which occurred then,<sup>50</sup> but some pottery types could even suggest a date well into the 8th c. The basilica at Son Fadrinet (Campos) is famous for the discovery of two gold *solidi* dated 737/738 and 739.<sup>51</sup> Inside the pit created by the removal of the altar, a deposit of pottery and animal bones was dated to c.990-1030.<sup>52</sup> No liturgical furniture was found, but perhaps the altar was deliberately saved by the Christian community. Alternatively, the pit may relate to the salvaging of materials for re-use, but the special care taken in extracting the altar and sealing the pit with what may be the remains of a meal or banquet raises the possibility of a voluntary relocation since no signs of destruction were found in the layers excavated. This would also allow for a possible frequenting of the place following the Moslem conquest. At Son Bou, renewed excavations in the 1980s outside the basilica identified a soil accumulation that seemed to represent earth taken out from the interior of the basilica in the 1950s. This redeposited stratigraphy contained a layer with ashes, some fragments of pottery and a coin of Abd-al-Raman I (783).<sup>53</sup>

The lack of precise chronology for some of the churches makes it more difficult to understand the process of Christianization in rural areas.<sup>54</sup> It is only in recent years that these buildings are being treated from a wider perspective, to try to understand their rôle in the wider context of settlement patterns and the late-antique landscape, especially on Mallorca where most of the projects have been undertaken.

### Basilicas in the rural landscape

Even though we are treating all these buildings as rural, a distinction should be made between inland and coastal basilicas. On Menorca, except for the inland basilica of Es Fornàs de Torelló, they are located near the coast (Son Bou, Es Cap des Port) or on small nearby islets (Illa del Rei and Illa d'en Colom). On Mallorca, however, most are located

49 J. Laurière, "Mosaique chrétienne des Iles Baléares," *BullMon* 57 (1891) 141-55; H. Leclerq, "Baléares (Iles)," in C. Cabrol and H. Leclerq (edd.), *Dictionnaire d'archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie* (Paris 1910) vol. 2.1, 161-64; J. Puig, *L'arquitectura romànica a Catalunya* (Barcelona 1909) vol. I, 290-92; Schlunk and Hauschild (supra n.43) 81; M. Guardia, "Qüestions iconogràfiques entorn al mosaic de la basílica de Santa Maria del Camí (Mallorca)," in de Palol (supra n.7) 73.

50 M. Riera, M. Á. Cau and M. Salas, *Cent anys de Son Peretó: descobrint el passat cristià* (Palma 2012).

51 H. R. Baldus, "Die frühchristliche Anlage von Son Fadrinet (Campos, Mallorca), vol. I. Die Goldmünzen," *MadMitt* 43 (2002) 289-92.

52 M<sup>a</sup> M. Riera Frau, M. Riera Rullan and G. Rosselló Bordoy, "Estudio preliminar del conjunto cerámico de época islámica," *MadMitt* 43 (2002) 293-95.

53 Orfila and Tuset (supra n.32) and pers. comm.

54 The only information in the written sources has to do with the anti-Semitic event of 418 and clearly points to tensions in the process. Nevertheless, Jews continued to live in the Balearic Islands after the dispute, as is clear from the Letter from Heaven of 582, which Vicentius of Eivissa (*Ebussus*) read out in church and for which he was reprimanded by Licinianus of *Carthago Spartaria*. It appears that no other repressive measures against Jews were taken, and perhaps pagans were tolerated.



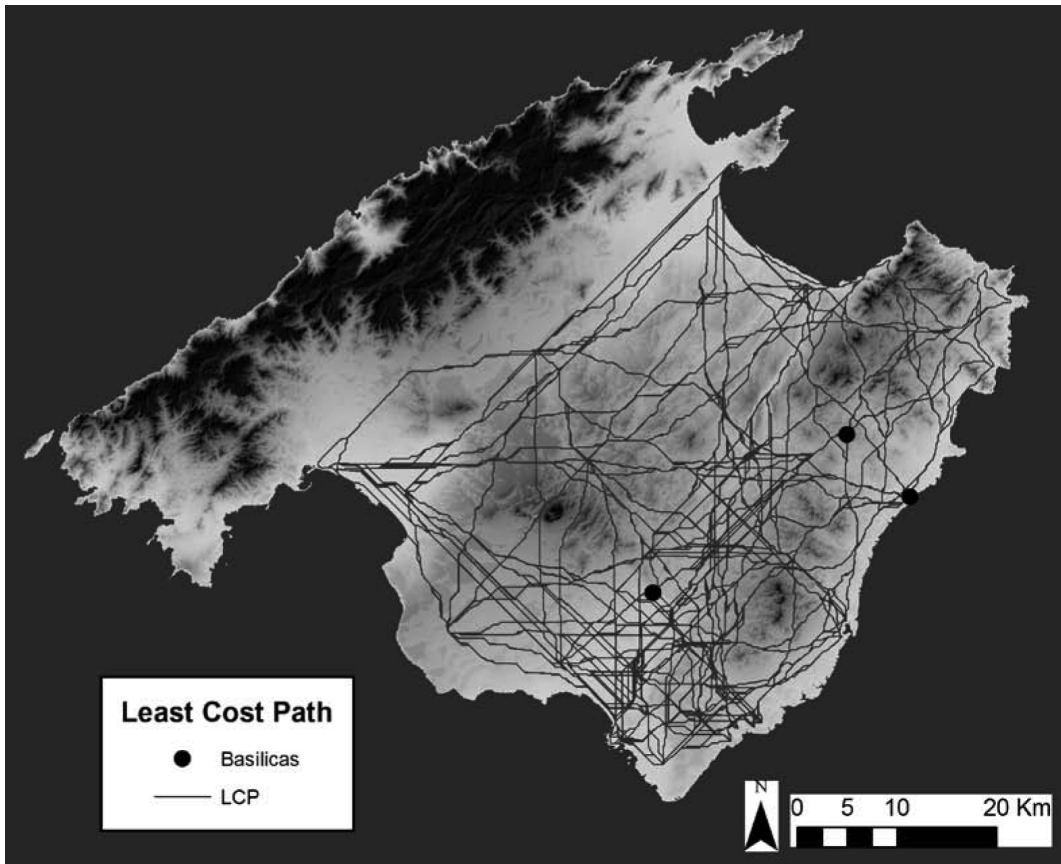


Fig. 9. Map showing the results of the least-cost path analysis and the location of the churches of Son Peretó and Son Fadrinet on a main route crossing the island, as well as the basilica of Sa Carrotja on the coast and along a natural corridor (C. Mas Florit and P. Murrieta Flores).

inland except for the basilica of Sa Carrotja in the port of Manacor on the E coast. The dynamics of the inland churches were probably different from those set on the coast. In the case of the latter, there was also a dichotomy between churches created to serve a port or a maritime community and basilicas erected as part of monastic foundations.

These churches have normally been studied in isolation, with more attention paid to architectural and liturgical features than to their place in the wider framework of settlement patterns. A few landscape projects provide new data to propose an interim interpretation of the rôle that rural churches played in the configuration of the late-antique landscape of the Balearics, especially Mallorca. In the E part of that island, a study on connectivity between basilicas, late-antique sites and possible communication routes was developed. The study made a simulation of routes using GIS-based spatial analysis, considering the least-cost paths to explore landscape accessibility and the dynamics of movement in each territory (fig. 9). The results showed that the basilicas in this part of the island were situated close to potential routes of communication.<sup>55</sup> Son Peretó and Son Fadrinet, both inland, stood along a major natural corridor running NE–SW that corresponds to the

55 C. Mas Florit, *El poblamiento de Mallorca durante la Antigüedad tardía: la transformación del mundo rural (ca. 300–902/903 d.C.)* (Ph.D. diss., Universitat de Barcelona 2013), available at <http://hdl.handle.net/10803/109048>.

easiest route in the E part of the island. Sa Carrotja is at a coastal port that was involved in maritime trade from the Early Roman period, but it seems also to be tied to a secondary natural route for traffic along the E coast. Some basilicas served as a point of origin or destination for a range of economic and social activities.<sup>56</sup> Locations with a high volume of traffic may have been more heavily populated, perhaps by people open to new ideas and influences,<sup>57</sup> and churches built at such well-connected sites could have attracted more followers. The proximity of churches to both sea and land routes as well as to settlement nodes developed earlier would help ensure their success.<sup>58</sup> In the Balearics, rural churches were indeed preferably located near inland routes of communication or ports. These build-



Fig. 10. Aerial view of the basilica of Son Peretó (M. Á. Cau).

ings placed at strategic points in the territory served as landscape and mindscape markers of the surrounding territory in the Christianization process. Regular worship reinforced common aims and shared experiences of neighborhood, and the church would have been strengthened by the social cohesion.<sup>59</sup>

Were these churches erected in pristine locations or in existing settlements? The reconsideration of old data and the results from new investigations suggest that inland basilicas were built in existing nuclei or close to them, as was probably the case on Mallorca with Son Peretó, Cas Frares and Son Fadrinet. Some of the rural churches could have been built in secondary agglomerations, serving a small community or those in villas, farms or factories. Since in the cases of Son Peretó and Cas Frares other sites exist in their surroundings, some churches seem to have been built in places with a concentration of population.<sup>60</sup> Close to the basilica of Cas Frares were found the foundations of an important building and a series of silos. Earlier research in the vicinity of Son Peretó revealed a series of sites with late-antique occupation.<sup>61</sup>

56 Brogiolo and Chavarría Arnau (supra n.6) 11.

57 R. Sweetman, "Memory, tradition and Christianization of the Peloponnese," *AJA* 119 (2015) 508.

58 E.g., G. P. Brogiolo and A. Chavarría Arnau, *Aristocrazie e campagne nell'Occidente da Costantino a Carlo Magno* (Florence 2005) 128; G. Cantino Wataghin, V. Fiocchi Nicolai and G. Volpe, "Aspetti della cristianizzazione degli agglomerati secondari," in R. M. Bonacasa Carra and E. Vitale (edd.), *La cristianizzazione in Italia tra tardoantico e altomedioevo: aspetti e problemi. Atti IX Congresso naz. di Archeologia cristiana, 2004* (Palermo 2007) 85-134; Sweetman *ibid.* 524.

59 R. Sweetman, "The Christianization of the Peloponnese: the topography and function of late antique churches," *J.LateAntiq* 3 (2010) 210.

60 Mas Florit and Cau (supra n.39) 225-27.

61 C. Mas Florit and M. Á. Cau, "From Roman to Byzantine: the rural occupation of eastern Mallorca (Balearic Islands)," *JMA* 24 (2011) 201.

Ongoing geophysical surveys undertaken in the area accessible around the excavated basilica demonstrate the existence of structures that could be extensions of the Early Christian complex, and the remains of what could be a relatively large villa or another kind of agglomeration were found not far from the church. Analysis of the anomalies detected so far suggests that a Roman villa was the origin of a secondary agglomeration that became Christianized with the construction of the basilica.<sup>62</sup> The extension of the necropolis, the capacity of the church, its refurbishment over time and its baptistery suggest that Son Peretó was an important center for administering Christian cult in the territory (fig. 10).<sup>63</sup> This is supported by the funerary inscription of a priest of the Roman Church named Bassus.<sup>64</sup> At Son Fadrinet, geophysics has again revealed remains in the vicinity of the excavated church. In addition to the necropolis, anomalies indicate other buildings not distant from the church to the north. A grave located below the floor of the baptistery suggests the presence of a necropolis prior to the construction of the basilica,<sup>65</sup> reinforcing the idea of a pre-existing nucleus.

Son Fadrinet, Cas Frares and Son Peretó on Mallorca and Es Fornas de Torrelló on Menorca had nearby land suitable for cultivation. Those communities will have exploited the adjacent resources and were interconnected with surrounding sites. Field surveys show the presence of other contemporary sites in the vicinity of these buildings. New excavations in the W sector at Son Peretó show that in the 7th c. a habitation nucleus grew up that adjoined the baptistery: in an area occupied by a necropolis there were different rooms with silos, hearths and signs of productive activity, which all probably ceased in the 8th c.<sup>66</sup> At Sa Carrotja, the remains of buildings hypothetically associated with a small settlement were found north of the church. The basilica of Son Bou was placed in a coastal setting along Menorca's S coast. Near it on the seashore are visible remains of structures (pavements, walls foundations, ceramic materials) and large blocks of stone that became covered by sand due to the progressive sinking of the coastline, while building materials and Roman amphora sherds are attested on the seabed.<sup>67</sup> Near the basilica, a circular structure, with signs of regular exposure to fire, and a room paved with ceramic mortar, was interpreted as a possible lighthouse.<sup>68</sup> Some have related the location to a paved path supposedly forking off the supposed Roman road from Magona to Iamona.<sup>69</sup> These coastal basilicas could have served as places of special worship following a maritime journey and as regular centers for the maritime population; they may even have included lighthouses.

All these churches, except for Cas Frares, had baptisteries and necropoleis. In most cases (Son Fadrinet, Son Peretó, Cas Frares, Fornás de Torelló), inland basilicas were surrounded

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62 M. Á. Cau, C. Mas Florit, E. Parés *et al.*, *Teledetección, prospección geofísica y reconstrucción paleoambiental para el estudio de la transformación del mundo rural en la isla de Mallorca desde la Antigüedad a la Edad Media. Memoria de los trabajos realizados en la campaña 2016, FBiG proyecto 303863* (unpublished report, Barcelona 2016).

63 Alcaide (*supra* n.36) 441.

64 Amengual (*supra* n.2) 437.

65 Ulbert (*supra* n.48) 181-82.

66 M. Riera Rullan, M. Á. Cau and M. Sales (edd.), "El conjunt paleocristià de Son Peretó (Manacor, Mallorca). Excavació i adequació de les habitacions del sector oest," *Musa* 8 (Museum Manacor 2013) 32-81.

67 J. Mascaró, "La basílica paleocristiana de Son Bou y sus alrededores," *Ibérica* (1954) 302-3.

68 M. Orfila, pers. comm.

69 Orfila and Tuset (*supra* n.32) 22.

by sites with evidence of occupation from the Early Roman period down to late antiquity.<sup>70</sup> This suggests that these were parish churches providing baptism and burial to the faithful in their community. These churches were dependent on the dioceses of the bishops of Mallorca and Menorca; written sources suggest that each island had a single bishop. In many cases, churches were built near populated areas at strategic points in the territory or roads.<sup>71</sup> We do not know whether the initiatives for creating the first rural churches were chiefly religious or civil; the tendency is to think of a range of agents, including bishops, local leaders, even merchant élites, all making use of established networks.<sup>72</sup>

The capacity<sup>73</sup> of some of the buildings could help shed light on their nature and the size of the community behind the construction,<sup>74</sup> although we can expect differences between parochial, monastic and funerary churches. Based on the space devoted to the faithful, churches with a larger capacity are Son Peretó (187 minimum/374 maximum), Son Bou (140/280), and Son Fadrinet (115/230). If the total area of the nave is considered, Son Peretó has the major capacity (223/446), while Cas Frares (158/316), Son Fadrinet (152/304) and Son Bou (162/324) are rather similar, with nave surfaces of 152-162 m<sup>2</sup>. Much smaller are Cap des Port and Illa del Rei (both 100/200) and Fornàs de Torelló (60/120). Those with a greater capacity seem to correspond to the ones we suggest as parochial (Son Peretó, Son Fadrinet, Cas Frares and Son Bou). Es Fornàs de Torelló with its relatively small size is the only church that does not fit this interpretation, but we suggest a parochial rôle due to its location and the existence of other sites in its surroundings.

Field surveys in the E part of Mallorca suggest that a profound re-organization of the landscape took place at the end of the 5th and most probably in the 6th c. The construction of the rural basilicas may have run parallel to that process;<sup>75</sup> at least the two phenomena seem to coincide chronologically. It would seem that the Christianization of the countryside occurred later than in the other Mediterranean lands.<sup>76</sup>

### Rural churches and monasticism

The presence of monks on Menorca is well documented in the written sources at the start

70 Mas Florit and Cau (supra n.61) 200-1; C. Mas Florit, M. Á. Cau, J. M. Gurt and M. Sales, "El poblamiento rural de Menorca durante la Antigüedad tardía: primera aproximación," *Revista de Menorca* 90 (1997) 177-215.

71 See J. F. Reynaud, "Aux origines des paroisses," in Ph. Pergola (ed.), *Alle origini della parroquia rurale (IV-VIII)* (Vatican City 1999) 83-100; G. Ripoll and I. Velázquez, "Origen y desarrollo de las parrochiae en la Hispania de la Antigüedad tardía," *ibid.* 101-65; V. Saxer, "Le chiese rurali prima che fossero parrocchiali (IV-VIII sec.): proposte per una storia di quelle di Provenza," *ibid.* 17-42; G. P. Brogiolo, "Luoghi di culto tra VII e VIII secolo," in *id.* (ed.), *Le chiese rurali tra VII e VIII secolo in Italia settentrionale* (Mantua 2001) 199-203; *id.*, "S. Stefano di Garlate e la cristianizzazione delle campagne," in *id.*, G. Bellosi and L. Vigo Doratiotto (edd.), *Testimonianze archeologiche a S. Stefano di Garlate* (Garlate 2002) 285-315; Brogiolo and Chavarría Arnau (supra n.58) 285-315; *ibid.* (supra n.6) 7-29; Cantino Wataghin, Fiocchi Nicolai and Volpe (supra n.58) 85-134.

72 Sweetman (supra n.57) 509. Some scholars have suggested that the basilicas in the Balearic Islands were built by the merchant élites: Amengual and Orfila (supra n.11) 242.

73 This calculation is based on a minimum average of 1 m<sup>2</sup> per person and a maximum of 2 persons per m<sup>2</sup>. These dimensions would allow freedom of movement during worship.

74 Alcaide (supra n.36) 261-63.

75 Mas Florit (supra n.55) 229.

76 Elsewhere, churches of the 4th and 5th c. are common in Cyprus, N Africa and Asia Minor: Sweetman (supra n.57) 501.



of the 5th c. and some of the buildings briefly described above could form part of monastic complexes. At the start of the 7th c., the epistle of Gregory the Great mentions a community of monks who inhabited the island of Cabrera south of Mallorca. Field surveys have documented several archaeological sites dating between the 5th and 7th c., leading to the proposal of intense occupation of the island in that period.<sup>77</sup> Close to the port of Cabrera, recent excavations uncovered deposits possibly related to the production of purple dye. Nearby, at Es Pla de Ses Figueres, a few pits revealed layers and structures along with three graves dated by carbon-14 to the end of the 6th c. or first half of the 7th c. that contain inhumations of adult males. These remains have been linked to the monastic community mentioned in the written sources and M. Riera Rullan has hypothesized the presence of a *cenobium* with a church and necropolis in the area. On the same island at Es Clot des Guix and Es Picornells there are small buildings, areas for water storage and a fence that would have enclosed a fairly small piece of land, also interpreted as belonging to hermitages.<sup>78</sup>

It has already been suggested that the ecclesiastical complex of Es Cap des Port on Menorca was inhabited by a monastic community.<sup>79</sup> It lies at the foot of Fornells bay. The Christian complex was made up of a small church with a crypt, baptistery and some funerary chambers. The liturgical buildings were embedded in a complex of rooms for habitation set mainly on its N and W sides, along with some production and storage areas. This direct relationship, along with the storage area and limited capacity of the church, suggests a monastery.<sup>80</sup> The complex offered both baptisms and burials. The proportions of the church seem to match a pattern found in churches in the Levant.<sup>81</sup> According to Gurt and Buxeda, the church follows a golden ratio based on a radius of 6 Greek cubits of 46.24 cm. The circle that generates the internal radius of the apse extends out of the apse to enter the spaces of the nave, as occurs in basilicas in E Mediterranean lands. This led to the interpretation that it was a monastic community from the E Mediterranean that built the religious complex.<sup>82</sup> The community lies on maritime routes and the imports discovered here (amphoras, marble tables, the large ARS plates) suggest that it was well connected to Mediterranean trade. Archaeometric study of the pottery suggests the occupants also made use of locally-made common and cooking wares, as well as imitations of the DS.P.

77 See M. Riera Rullan, *El monacat insular de la Mediterrànea occidental. El monestir de Cabrera (Balears, segles V-VIII)* (Barcelona 2017) 89.

78 M. Riera Rullan, "El monasterio de la isla de Cabrera (Islas Baleares, siglos V-XIII). Testimonios arqueológicos de los monjes reprobados por el papa Gregorio Magno," *Hortus Artium Medievalium* 19 (2013) 47-61. For Cabrera, see also Riera Rullan (supra n.77) 580-86.

79 J. Buxeda *et al.*, "Late Roman coarse ware and cooking wares from the Balearic Islands in late antiquity: archaeology and archaeometry," in J. M. Gurt, J. Buxeda and M. Á. Cau (edd.), *Late Roman coarse wares, cooking wares and amphorae in the Mediterranean: archaeology and archaeometry* (Oxford 2005) 224; Amengual and Cau (supra n.11) 137.

80 Alcaide (supra n.36) 443; S. Alcaide and M. Á. Cau, "Les esglésies de domini bizantí de la costa oriental d'Espanya i les Balears. Les esglésies de l'Antiguitat tardana a les Illes Balears," in J. Guitart, M. Pagès, I. Rodà and J. M. Sans (edd.), *L'arquitectura cristiana preromànica a Catalunya. Edició facsímil i textos d'actualització* (Barcelona 2016) 542.

81 J. M. Gurt and J. Buxeda, "Metrologia, composició modular i proporcions de les basíliques cristianes del Llevant peninsular i de les Balears," in *Spania. Estudis d'antiguitat tardana oferts en homenatge al professor Pere de Palol i Salellas* (Barcelona 1996) 152.

82 J. M. Gurt, "Complejos eclesiásticos no episcopales: función y gestión," in J. L. Quiroga, A. M. Martínez Tejera and J. Morín de Pablos (edd.), *Monasteria et territoria. Elites, edilicia y territorio en el Mediterraneo medieval (siglos V-XI)* (Madrid 2007) 207.

Gallic tableware.<sup>83</sup> A geophysical survey<sup>84</sup> identified rooms and possible pottery dumps, together with several possible kilns. A ceramic workshop related to the ecclesiastical complex would reinforce the idea of a permanent community. The study of ceramic materials recovered during field surveys seems to suggest the presence at other sites of products from Fornells.<sup>85</sup>

On Illa del Rei, recent research has proposed that the church's foundation took place at the end of the 6th c. Other rooms are extended east of the apse and southeast and southwest of the church. These annexes include a *stibadium*, one of the few in the W Mediterranean.<sup>86</sup> Two deposits and stone handmills suggest that production activities were carried out by the community inhabiting rooms in the complex. In 2008, a single high-status grave (previously robbed) was found in the sanctuary directly behind the altar. This suggests that the church was built in memory of a particular individual. The whole complex may have been a monastery devoted to the memory of the person buried in the church.<sup>87</sup> Baptismal fonts in both complexes (Fornells and Illa del Rei) and the privileged grave suggest that the monks and monasteries played an important part in the Christianization of the territory aided by their engagement in activities such as pottery-making, production and distribution of agricultural products and/or their participation in maritime trade.

The councils held on the Iberian Peninsula indicate that fighting idolatry continued during late antiquity.<sup>88</sup> According to some scholars, pagans remained in the Balearic Islands for some centuries after Theodosius' law of suppression in 423.<sup>89</sup> Clear archaeological evidence for pagan practices during late antiquity is lacking, but the celebration of Christian rites in pre-Roman buildings could indicate the persistence of pagan elements within Christian practices or the persistence of ancient sacred places in the collective local memory. There may have been some re-use of prehistoric or protohistoric sites, in some cases perhaps linked to the practices of hermits. It has been suggested that some protohistoric *hypogea* on Menorca could have been used as hermitages in the Byzantine era.<sup>90</sup> On Mallorca, late-antique occupation is attested at the Iron Age staggered turriform of Son

83 J. Buxeda, M. Á. Cau and F. Tuset, "Las cerámicas de la habitación 39 de la basílica de Es Cap des Port (Fornells, Menorca): primeros resultados," in M. Comes, J. M. Gurt *et al.* (edd.), *Contextos ceràmics d'època romana tardana i de l'alta edat mitjana (segles IV-X)* (Barcelona 1997) 229-48; M. Á. Cau, *Cerámica tardorromana de cocina de las Islas Baleares. Estudio arqueométrico* (BAR S1182; Oxford 2003).

84 P. Murrieta Flores *et al.*, "Prospección geofísica en la basílica de Es Cap des Port, Fornells (Mercadal, Menorca): resultados preliminares," *Revista de Menorca* 91 (2012) 59-82.

85 Gurt (supra n.82) 207-8.

86 At Son Fadrinet, a circular structure in the baptistery could potentially be a *stibadium*: Ulbert and Orfila (supra n.42) 177; Alcaide (supra n.36) 87.

87 Cau *et al.* (supra n.33) 429.

88 M. Sotomayor, "La penetración de la Iglesia en los medios rurales de la España tardorromana y visigoda," in *Cristianizzazione ed organizzazione ecclesiastica delle campagne nell'alto Medioevo: espansione e resistenze* (XXVIII Settimana; Spoleto 1982) vol. 2, 630-70.

89 Amengual and Orfila (supra n.11) 198.

90 This has been suggested for Es Bouer Vell de Sant Joan Gran, as well as others nearby, such as Es Pastell d'enfora. A church could have been located in the central square of Es Lloc des Pou-Sant Joan Gran. For these sites and the evolution of their place-names, as well as for the discovery of an important Byzantine seal from an 8th-c. *archon* of Mallorca, see C. Nicolás and B. Moll, "Sellos bizantinos de Menorca. Un arconte mallorquín para las Baleares en el siglo VIII," in A. Mastino, P. G. Spanu and R. Zucca (edd.), *Tharros Felix*, vol. 5 (2013) 537-82.

Ferrer (Calvià). This site first served a ceremonial center in the Early Iron Age, before being used mainly as a necropolis in the Late Iron Age. A few pieces of pottery (Late Roman C, ARS ware, including a base with the stamped decoration of a cross in Style E[ii], point to occupation in late antiquity. The presence of only tableware, the forms (mostly large plates which could have a liturgical function) and the decoration suggest a deliberate Christian re-use of a prehistoric site in the 6th c.<sup>91</sup>

## Conclusions

Understanding the process of Christianizing the Balearic islands is still in its initial stages. Fieldwork needs first to be increased to understand better the rôle of the early churches. Insufficient work has been done on Roman villas to know whether *domus ecclesiae* existed in some of them, although it would not be unusual in light of the situation elsewhere.<sup>92</sup> On Mallorca, there was a shift in settlement patterns in the 3rd c. with a reduction in the number of Roman sites, interpreted as signs of a possible concentration of property. This changed at the end of 5th c. when new sites are found across the territory. Probably from this moment the construction of churches contributed to further changes in the configuration of the territory. Despite the early arrival of Christianity in some towns and ports, the phenomenon of church construction in rural areas seems to belong to the late 5th and 6th c. The capability of providing burial and baptism as well as hosting many worshippers suggests that the basilicas were centers scattered across the diocesan territory to serve the faithful of a region. The only church without a baptistry is Cas Frares, which contains a mosaic with motifs from the Old Testament that may have been built in a community with a strong Jewish influence. At *Magona*, a synagogue was destroyed and a new church built above it. It is not strange to think of a Christian society with a strong Jewish influence since scenes from the Old Testament appear in a few other pavements of rural basilicas (Son Fadrinet, Illa del Rei and Fornas de Torelló). They may relate to the catechism, as does the *Epistle* of Severus which shows that after the dispute the Jewish texts were in the hands of the Christians.<sup>93</sup>

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91 Mas Florit and Cau (supra n.39) 230. According to local tradition, some caves were used for worship by early Christians, such as that of St. Martí (Alcúdia), not far from *Pollentia*, or that of Santa Agnès in Eivissa: L. Pérez, "Mallorca cristiana," in J. Mascaró (ed.), *Historia de Mallorca* (Palma 1973) vol. I, 139.

92 Cf. K. Bowes, "Christianization and the rural home," *JEarlyChristStud* 15 (2007) 143-70.

93 Amengual and Orfila (supra n.11) 233.

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