

THE CONVERSION OF CITY CENTRES IN FIFTH-CENTURY EGYPT

THE CASE OF THE EPISCOPAL COMPLEX AT HERMOPOLIS MAGNA

L. TÖRÖK

Archaeological Institute of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences
Úri u. 49, H-1014 Budapest, Hungary

In Alexandria, the monumental establishment of Christianity in the heart of the city and thus the transformation of urban life and cityscape had reached a significant stage by the middle of the fourth century, when the episcopal cathedral moved from the western city gate to the Caesarion in the city centre. The case of Alexandria is exceptional, however. The transformation of the traditional cityscape took longer in other regions of the Empire¹ and in the Egyptian countryside. A relatively well-documented case is that of Hermopolis Magna, capital of the Hermopolite nome, where the episcopal basilica² was built in the city centre around 450,³ more than one century after the Caesarion had been donated to the Church⁴ and transformed from the temple of the imperial cult into the Patriarchal Cathedral of Alexandria.

The episcopal church complex (*Fig. 1*)⁵ of Hermopolis Magna (modern Ashmunein, c. 320 km south of Cairo) was erected in the heart of the late Roman city⁶ at the junction of two colonnaded streets, viz., Antinoe Street, the main east-west road of the city, and the Dromos of Hermes, the north-south processional avenue lead-

¹ WARD-PERKINS 1998, 395ff.

² No textual evidence identifies the building as such, but its topographical position, architectural type, dimensions and luxury as well as the presence of the crypt under the main apse (see below) strongly suggest that it was the church of the bishop of Hermopolis. – Before the excavations in 1942, 1949, and 1949–1951, its remains were identified as the Roman agora of the city, even though the site was called by the inhabitants Kôm el Kenisa, “Kôm of the church”. Cf. E. BARAIZE: L’Agora d’Hermopolis. *ASAE* 40 (1941) 741–745. This identification still occurs in S. AUFRÈRE–J.-C. GOLVIN: *L’Égypte restituée III. Sites, temples et pyramides de Moyenne et Basse Égypte. De la naissance de la civilisation pharaonique à l’époque gréco-romaine*. Paris 1997, 213.

³ The basilica is dated traditionally to the 430s (F. W. DEICHMANN in: *RAC* IV [1959] 1262) or, in more general terms, to the first half of the fifth century with reference to its typological features and the style of architectural carvings associated with it, cf. GROSSMANN 1998a, 216. Recently, small test trenches were excavated in the area of the basilica. In one of them, made in the area of the columned room in front of the baptistery, a Ptolemaic or

Roman (?) well was found which was filled with debris when the basilica was built. The abandonment and filling of the well is dated by (so far unpublished) coins and pottery sherds from the upper part of the fill to the middle of the fifth century, see BARANSKI 1996, 102. – The reasons for a dating to the end of the 5th cent. suggested by H.-G. SEVERIN: *Konstantinopler Bauskulptur und die Provinz Ägypten*. in: U. Peschlow–S. Möllers (eds): *Spätantike und byzantinische Bau-skulptur. Beiträge eines Symposiums in Mainz, Februar 1994*. Stuttgart 1998, 93–104 101 remain unexplained.

⁴ The legal basis was secured by a law of 407/8 empowering the bishop to order the closing and destruction of temples, *C.Th.* XVI. 10.19.2,3.

⁵ GROSSMANN 1998a, fig. 2. – For the building, see recently GROSSMANN 2002, 36, 441ff.

⁶ G. MÉAUTIS: *Hermopolis-la-Grande*. Lausanne 1918; H. SCHMITZ: *Topographie von Hermopolis Magna*. Diss. Freiburg 1921; D. KESSLER: *Hermopolis magna. LÄ II* (1977) 1137–1147; ROEDER 1959; H. SCHMITZ in: ROEDER 1959 101–104; BAILEY 1984; SPENCER 1989; BAILEY 1991; ALSTON 2002, 131f., 238ff., 253f., 260ff.

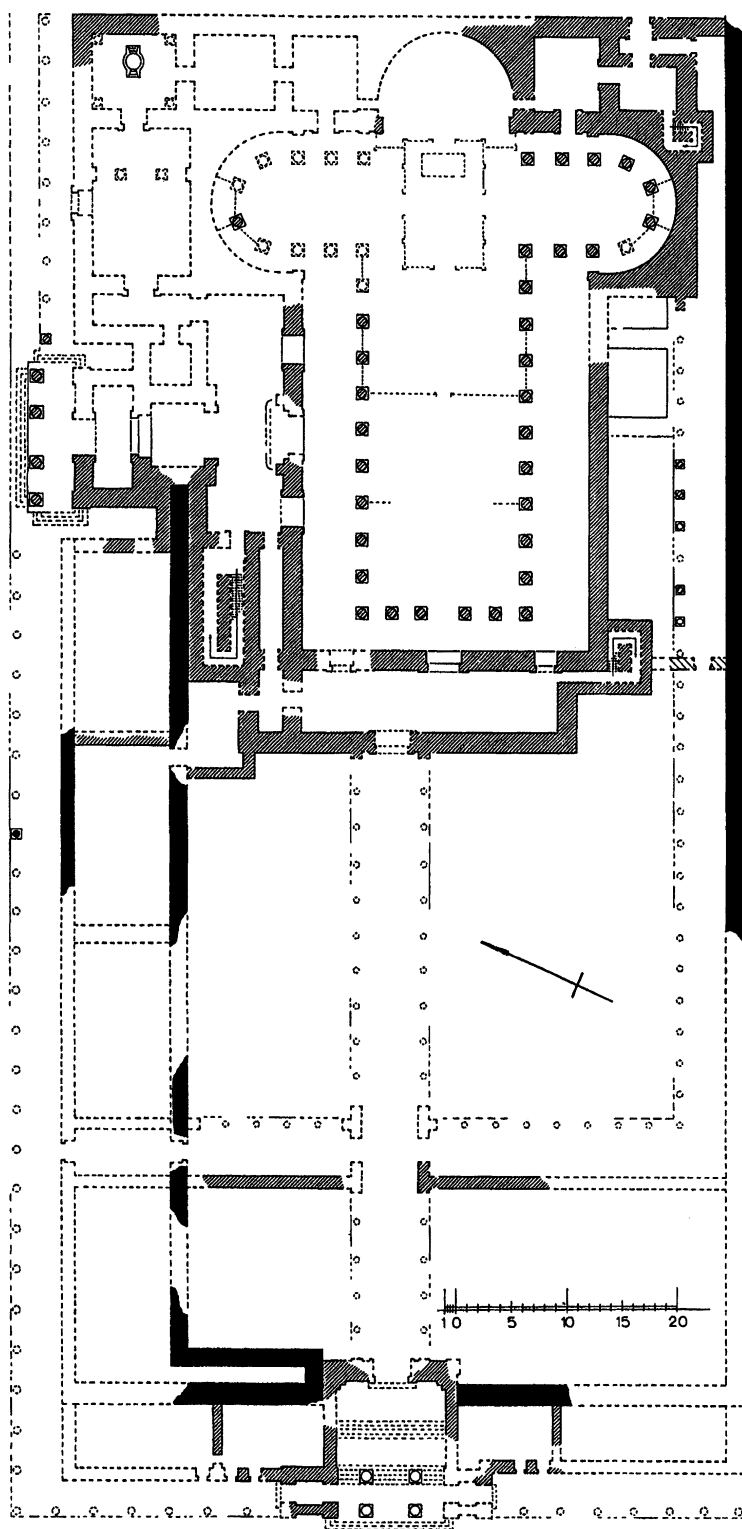


Fig. 1. Hermopolis Magna, episcopal church with the western and northern porticoes. After GROSSMANN 1998a, fig. 2

ing from the southern habitation quarters to the (late) Thoth Temple.⁷ The crossing was embellished by a monumental *tetrastylon*⁸ which is mentioned as “Great Tetrastylon” in *P. Vindob.* 12565, a papyrus dating from AD 267.⁹ It was dedicated by Prefect T. Pactumeius Magnus to the Emperors Marcus Aurelius and Commodus.¹⁰

To some extent, the Roman period topography of the area around the tetrastylon may be reconstructed on the basis of *P. Vindob.* 12565 and the finds of the excavations conducted there by the British Museum.¹¹ In AD 267, the south-west quadrant formed by the crossing of Antinoe Street and the Dromos of Hermes was occupied by the agora (?). In the north-east quadrant stood the Antonine *komasterion*, i.e., the building in which the processions formed, to then move along the Dromos of Hermes north to the Thoth (Hermes) Temple.¹² The southeast quadrant, where the Christian basilica was later erected, was occupied by a large walled enclosure.

This enclosure was built in the Ptolemaic period and remained in use throughout the Ptolemaic and Roman periods.¹³ It measured c. 60 m north-south, i.e., along the Dromos of Hermes; and more than 130 m east-west, i.e., along Antinoe Street.¹⁴ A recent hypothesis¹⁵ identifies the Ptolemaic and Roman period building complex enclosed by its walls as the Gymnasion and the Great Serapeum¹⁶ of Hermopolis. According to a building dedication inscribed in the blocks of a Doric entablature and discovered in the foundations of the Christian basilica, a sanctuary was erected here around 240 BC by the “cavalry soldiers established in the Hermopolite Nome” and dedicated to the cult of “King Ptolemy, son of Ptolemy and Arsinoe, the Brother Gods and to Queen Berenice, his sister and wife, the Benefactor Gods”, i.e., Ptolemy III and his sister-wife.¹⁷

Besides the inscribed entablature, the architectural members reused by the builders of the Christian basilica also included elements of splendid Doric, Ionic, and Corinthian buildings as well as architectural fragments from buildings in Egyptian style.¹⁸ Architectural elements originating from four different Ptolemaic structures were distinguished. They do not necessarily represent four separate edifices, but in the case that they do they may be identified hypothetically with the Hadrianeion, Antinoeion, Sarapeion, and Neileion listed in *P. Vindob.* 12565 as standing along Antinoe Street to the east of the Dromos of Hermes.¹⁹ One of these sanctuaries was probably identical with the re-dedicated Doric sanctuary of the cult of Ptolemy III and Berenice.²⁰

All these architectural elements were reused in the substructure of the basilica in a remarkably fine condition,²¹ suggesting that the Ptolemaic edifices in the temenos remained intact until the very moment when they were pulled down in order to make room for the Christian basilica which was to be built from their stones and in their place.²² Such a close chronology is also supported by the archaeological evidence.²³

The relationship between the pagan and Christian building complexes (*Fig. 2*) is also remarkable in other respects. The enclosure walls and most of the colonnades in the atrium were built precisely above the walls of the Ptolemaic-Roman temenos. The western portico building was built above and with the partial reuse of the walls and stairs of the Ptolemaic portico. Finally, the walls of the church complex were built largely from the stone material of the Ptolemaic-Roman complex. Besides the building material originating from the sanctuaries in the

⁷ H. SCHMITZ in: ROEDER 1959 100–105. – For the papyrological record, see the papyri quoted by ALSTON 2002, 131f., 261f. and esp. *SB X* 10299.

⁸ The fragment of the plinth of one of the columns, with the dedication inscription, was found *in situ* by Joseph Bonomi in 1831, BAILEY 1996, 162ff. The tetrastylon was probably ruined by the same earthquake which also destroyed the basilica. The date of the earthquake is unknown, but examining the area around the street crossing, D. M. Bailey found Egyptian Red Slip A sherds dating from the 7th century in the rubbish on which the columns of the neighbouring edifices destroyed by the earthquake are lying, BAILEY 1984, 46f.

⁹ C. WESSELY: *Corpus papyrorum hermopolitanorum*. Leipzig 1905, reprint edn. Amsterdam 1965 no. 127; BAILEY 1996, 162.

¹⁰ BAILEY 1991, 29ff.

¹¹ BAILEY 1984; SPENCER 1989; BAILEY 1991.

¹² BAILEY 1984, 42ff.; SPENCER 1989, 92, Pl. 3.

¹³ WACE–MEGAW–SKEAT 1959; BARANSKI 1996.

¹⁴ See below.

¹⁵ BARANSKI 1996, 104.

¹⁶ The “Great Serapeum in the Gymnasion” is mentioned in *P. Brem.* 46, 7–8, AD 110, and *P. Brem.* 47, 5–7, AD 118: ROEDER 1959, 113, 127.

¹⁷ For the dedication inscription on five blocks from the architrave of the Doric sanctuary, see WACE–MEGAW–SKEAT 1959, 4ff., Pls 10, 11.

¹⁸ WACE–MEGAW–SKEAT 1959, 6ff.; BARANSKI 1996, 103f.

¹⁹ H. SCHMITZ in: ROEDER 1959, 101ff.

²⁰ BAILEY 1984, 43.

²¹ For pieces with excellently preserved painting, see WACE–MEGAW–SKEAT 1959, 10, Pl. 1; BARANSKI 1996, 104.

²² WACE–MEGAW–SKEAT 1959, 4–11; BARANSKI 1996, 100ff.

²³ For the relationship of the Ptolemaic remains and the Christian buildings, see BARANSKI 1996, *passim*.

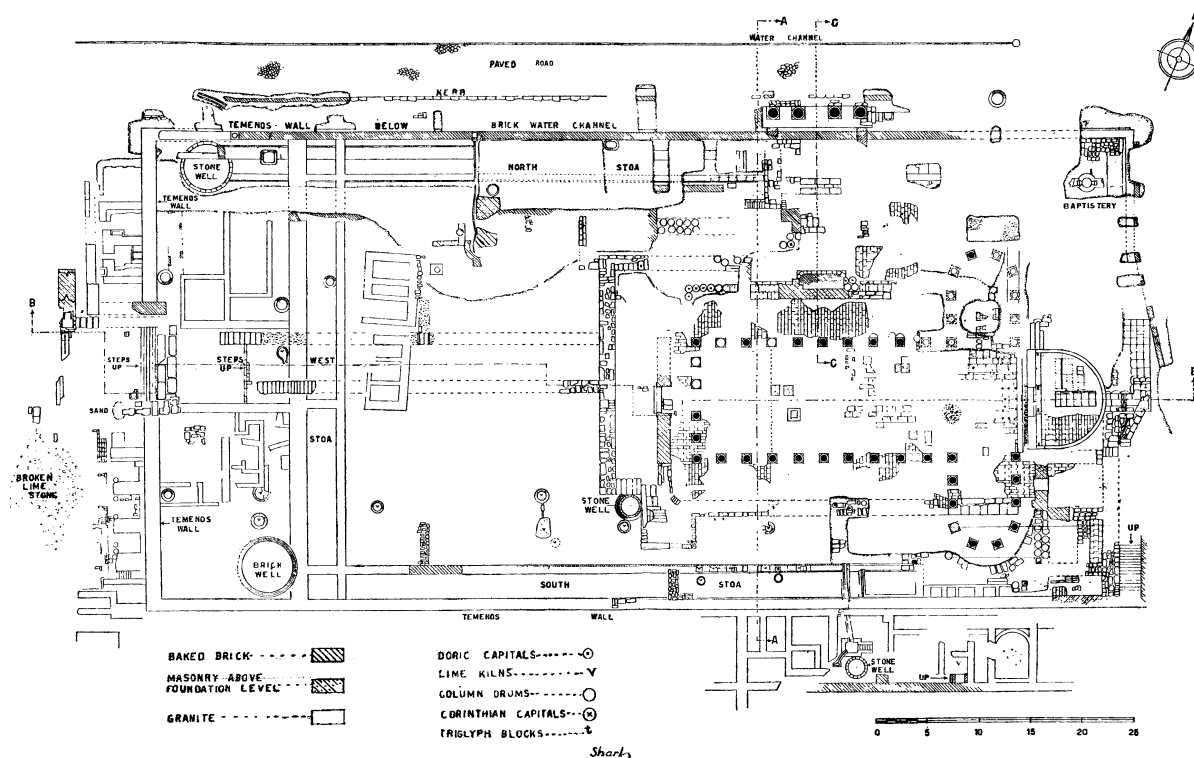


Fig. 2. Hermopolis Magna, Ptolemaic-Roman sanctuary and episcopal church. After WACE-MEGAW-SKEAT 1959, Pl. 2

enclosure, a great number of monolithic hardstone column shafts and limestone column bases and capitals from other monumental buildings²⁴ were also reused for building the basilica.

The Hermopolis basilica stood in a walled enceinte built over the antique temenos walls and it was part of a luxuriously executed representative building complex. Its western entrance was reached from the Dromos of Hermes through a monumental portico in the centre of the western enceinte wall. The portico front was in line with the street colonnade. The portico façade was formed by two columns carrying an arcuated lintel and placed between pillared antae with which they were joined by horizontal architraves. The central intercolumnium was larger than the distance between the antae and the columns. The axial emphasis of the portico, i.e., the A-B-A rhythm of the triple portico entrance,²⁵ emphasized and also corrected the monumental symmetry of the whole complex—the correction was necessary because of the axial asymmetry of the basilica's position caused by the baptistery (see below). With their arcuated lintels, the west and the north portico fronts repeat the *fastigium*, i.e., glorification façade type of representative imperial architecture (see Diocletian's palace in Split) and they also follow the type of the propylon of Theodosius II's Hagia Sophia (consecrated 415).²⁶

Returning to the north entrance, the steps leading up to the raised level of the basilica complex (c. 2.5 m above the street level of the Dromos of Hermes) started from the street front. A second pair of columns stood in line with the enclosure wall. Here a second flight of steps started, and there was a third flight of steps half-way into the portico building. The inner gate of the portico opened into a large (c. 48 × 50 m) atrium with colonnades dividing it into four quadrants in an unusual manner that was inspired, it seems, by the layout of the Ptolemaic predecessor building.²⁷ A colonnade running along the southern enceinte wall connected the atrium with a fore-

²⁴ DEICHMANN 1975, 60ff.

²⁵ For this "baroque" form cf. M. WILSON JONES: *Principles of Roman Architecture*. New Haven-London 2000, 118f.

²⁶ A. M. SCHNEIDER: *Die Grabung im Westhof der Sophienkirche zu Istanbul* (Istambuler Forschungen 12). Berlin 1941.

²⁷ For the hypothetical reconstruction of the atrium cf. WACE-MEGAW-SKEAT 1959, Pl. 2; GROSSMANN 1998a, fig. 2; GROSSMANN 2002, fig. 59.

room which communicated with the area behind the sanctuary of the basilica (see below). The western narthex of the basilica opened from the atrium.

There was another monumental portico on Antinoe Street. Its four-columned front protruded into the street colonnade. The central intercolumnium was wider than the flanking bays and the columns apparently carried a pediment of the same type as that of the western portico front, i.e., a pediment pierced by an arcuated lintel. A small transversal vestibule opened into a larger T-shaped vestibule from which the three monumental northern doorways of the basilica opened²⁸ and it also gave access to a monumental baptistery complex consisting of a vestibule, a columned hall which also seems to have had an entrance from Antinoe Street,²⁹ and the baptistery itself, with a marble-lined circular baptismal tank with two flights of steps entering it. The importance of the baptistery and the columned room in front of it, which was probably the scene of catechesis, is conspicuous: the basilica was shifted from the central symmetry axis of the building complex towards the south in order to provide a larger space for the baptistery complex. The monumental symmetry of the portico-atrium-western narthex-church entrance ensemble was thus sacrificed for the sake of a part of the building complex which was invisible from the outside.

No excavations have been conducted in the area lying to the east of the sanctuary end of the basilica. What can be established, however, is that the northern and southern temenos walls of the Ptolemaic-Roman complex continued towards the east beyond the height of the basilica's end wall. Consequently, it may be supposed that the area lying to the east of the sanctuary end belonged to the Ptolemaic-Roman sanctuary complex and subsequently to the episcopal complex. This is confirmed by a narrow, corridor-like vestibule in the southeast corner of the basilica. It communicated with the basilica interior as well as with the atrium of the basilica (through the colonnade running along the southern enclosure wall) and the area lying to the east of the basilica.³⁰ I suppose therefore that the bishop's residence stood in this latter area. If so, its main entrance was probably from Antinoe Street. In this case, the episcopal residence (*episkopion*) of Hermopolis was located similarly to the episcopal residences in Ephesos (St Mary's), Salona, Philippi, and Tebessa.³¹ In the West, the early fifth-century episcopal palace of Geneva was built likewise in the area to the east of the episcopal church.³² The episcopal residence of Hermopolis, if it indeed stood next to the transept basilica, occupied a fairly large area. It is perhaps not irrelevant to note that while the patriarch of Alexandria still resided in what appears to have been modest upstairs apartments next to the church of St Dionysus in the fourth century, by the mid-fifth century he occupied a palatial residence.³³

The basilica of Hermopolis is one of the largest known churches in Egypt: it is c. 65 m long, and the central nave is 14.47 m wide.³⁴ The aisles—including the “return aisle”—are 5.62 m wide.³⁵ The three-naved transepts have apsidal ends and their colonnades form curving ambulatories in the apses.³⁶ The fourty-four monolithic red granite columns of the nave and the transepts, and the red granite columns of the porticoes were taken, to-

²⁸ “Let a church then be thus: with three entries in type of the Trinity”, *Testamentum Domini* I.19; C. MANGO: *The Art of the Byzantine Empire 312–1453 (Sources and Documents: The History of Art Series)*. Englewood Cliffs 1972 [reprint edn. Toronto 1986] 25. The *Testamentum* is a 5th-cent. Syrian text.

²⁹ Marked only in the corrected ground plan of Peter Grossmann, GROSSMANN 1998a, fig. 2 = my fig. 1. The partly reconstructed ground plans published by WACE-MEGAW-SKEAT 1959, Pl. 5; BARANSKI 1996, figs 1, 8; and GROSSMANN 1998a, fig. 2 differ as to the arrangement of the baptistery complex. I accept here Grossmann's reconstruction as the one which is most in line with the monumentality of the rest of the basilica complex.

³⁰ The traces of a doorway leading to the area behind the sanctuary end were identified by the excavators, see WACE-MEGAW-SKEAT 1959, 45, Pls 4, 5.

³¹ D. I. PALLAS: *Episkopion*. *RBK* II (1968) 335–371, 346 ff., figs 2, 3, 14.

³² C. BONNET: *Geneva in Early Christian Times*. Geneva 1986, 24ff.

³³ C. HAAS: *Alexandria in Late Antiquity. Topography and Social Conflict*. Baltimore–London 1997, 222f.

³⁴ ALSTON 2002, 299 ff. compares the area of the church: c. 1,195 m², to the 2,500 m² area of Constantine's basilica in Jerusalem and describes it, quite misleadingly, as a building with “a simple architectural plan: a wide nave and two narrow aisles”.

³⁵ Of similar dimensions are, e.g., the transept basilica of Hagios Demetrios in Thessalonica and the early 6th cent. (2nd period) Great Basilica at Abu Mena.

³⁶ For the form cf. R. KRAUTHEIMER: *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture*. 2nd rev. edn. Harmondsworth–Baltimore 1975, 54.

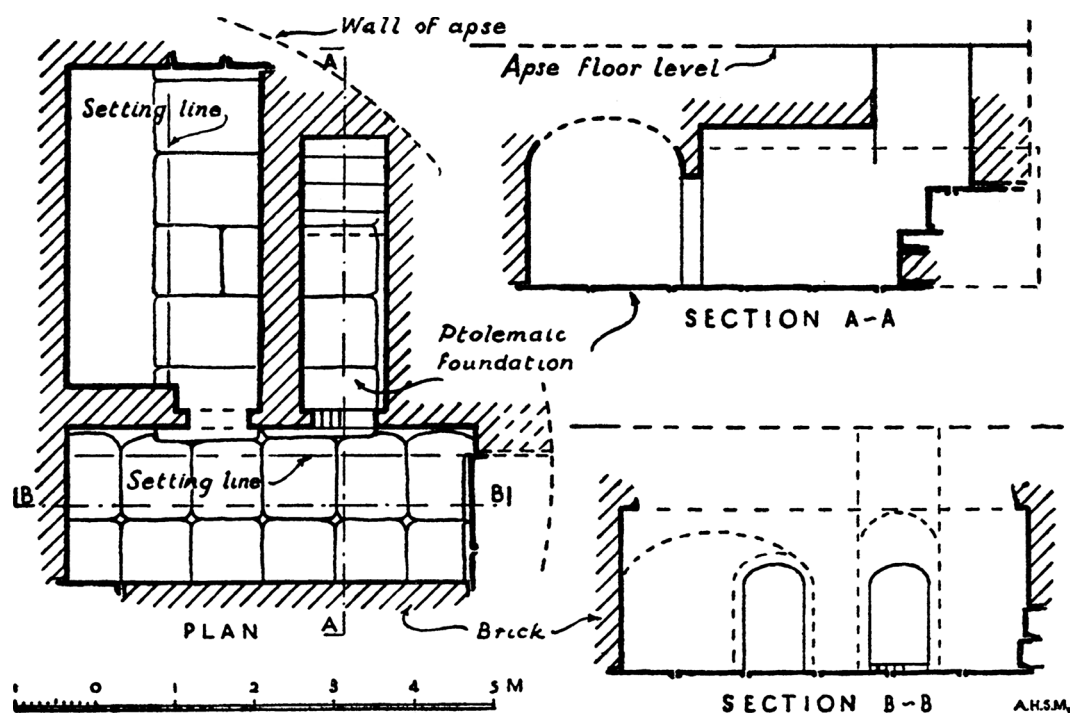


Fig. 3. Hermopolis Magna, episcopal church, crypt below the main apse. After WACE-MEGAW-SKEAT 1959, fig. 1

gether with most of their limestone Corinthian capitals,³⁷ from monumental late second- early third-century Roman buildings.³⁸ The limestone Corinthian capitals of the galleries were likewise Roman *spolia*.³⁹ Pilaster capitals supporting the triumphal arch of the basilica⁴⁰ and the pediment of the north portico⁴¹ were carved for the basilica.⁴² Late antique figural and ornamental niche heads⁴³ and various decorated architectural members⁴⁴ found in the area of the Christian enclosure seem to have been *spolia* taken from fourth-century edifices. Their context in the Christian building remains unknown.

There are no analogues in fifth-century Eastern or Western church architecture for the form of the apsidal transept as it occurs in the Hermopolis basilica. The type reoccurred in Egypt in the monumental⁴⁵ sixth-century (or earlier?) transept basilica at Hauwariya-Marea⁴⁶ near the Mediterranean coast.⁴⁷ It would seem that the transept basilica at Hauwariya-Marea had its model in the early church architecture of Alexandria.⁴⁸ The rarity of this type and its association with two churches of exceptionally large dimensions and luxurious execution may also indicate that it went back to a model with special liturgical connotations and special prestige.

³⁷ For a capital carved for the basilica, see DEICHMANN 1975, 61ff.; H.-G. SEVERIN: Frühchristliche Skulptur und Malerei in Ägypten. In: B. Brenk (ed.): *Spätantike und frühes Christentum. Propyläen Kunstgeschichte* Suppl. 1. Berlin 1977, 243–253; 249, no. 276/c.

³⁸ WACE-MEGAW-SKEAT 1959, 64f., Pl. 24/3, 27/6; K. RONCZEWSKI in: ROEDER 1959, 281f.

³⁹ WACE-MEGAW-SKEAT 1959, 65, Pl. 24/2.

⁴⁰ WACE-MEGAW-SKEAT 1959, 67, Pl. 24/4, 6.

⁴¹ WACE-MEGAW-SKEAT 1959, 67, Pl. 24/5.

⁴² DEICHMANN 1975, 60ff.

⁴³ WACE-MEGAW-SKEAT 1959, 68ff., Pl. 25/1–4.

⁴⁴ WACE-MEGAW-SKEAT 1959, Pl. 26/1–7.

⁴⁵ The church was 50 m long, 45 m wide at the transepts; the nave was 13 m wide.

⁴⁶ For the town site of Marea (modern Al Mina) on the southern side of the Lake Mareotis opposite Alexandria, see F. EL-FAKHARANI: Recent Excavations at Marea in Egypt. in: G. Grimm-H. Heinen-E. Winter (eds): *Das römisch-byzantinische Ägypten (Aegyptiaca Treverensia II)*. Mainz 1983, 175–186.

⁴⁷ GROSSMANN 1998a, fig. 4.

⁴⁸ P. GROSSMANN: Die Querschiffbasilika von Hauwariya-Marea und die übrigen Bauten dieses Typus' in Ägypten als Repräsentanten der verlorenen christlichen Architektur Alexandrias. in: N. Swelim (ed.): *In Memoriam Daoud Abdu Daoud (BSAA 45)*. Alexandria 1993, 107–121.

The early transept basilicas were built for the cult of martyrs in the West⁴⁹ as well as in the East.⁵⁰ It is traditionally suggested that the transept arms were designed to accommodate masses of pilgrims visiting the tombs of the martyrs, to enable them to participate in the liturgy performed in the sanctuary area. It seems that the episcopal basilica of Hermopolis, too, has features which suggest that it united the function of a congregational church with that of a martyrium and pilgrimage centre. It is not unusual in Egyptian churches that the apse floor was elevated above the rest of the basilica and flights of three steps led up to the apse to the north and the south of the presbitery. It is unique, however, that there was a crypt below the apse on the main axis of the basilica (Fig. 3).⁵¹ It measured 5 × 2 m and was covered with a brick barrel vault. From this crypt a somewhat larger, north-south oriented, similarly barrel vaulted⁵² side chamber opened on the north. It measured 4 × 2.4 m. The crypt was approached from the north through a narrow, north-south oriented passage with a shaft at its northern end close to the apse wall. The shaft was reached from the apse by a trap door in the apse floor and two high steps that rendered the lowering of coffins easier.⁵³ Though there is no text or archaeological find to prove it, there can be little doubt that the crypt and the side chamber were destined for burials. If we consider its place on the main axis “behind” the altar,⁵⁴ the crypt could only have been built for the burial of a martyr and not for that of the church-founder bishop, whose burial place was more likely in the side-chamber, i.e., “by the saint” or *sub altare*.⁵⁵

It was suggested in the foregoing that the architectural model of the Hermopolis transept basilica may be found in Alexandria’s early church architecture. The Alexandrian origin of the form of the transept with apsidal ends and ambulatory colonnades also seems to be indicated by the colonnaded exedra type occurring in the western narthex of Shenoute’s “White Monastery” and, after Hermopolis, in the Justinianic “transitory narthex” connecting the Tomb Church with the Great Basilica at Abu Mena.⁵⁶ If we consider this special type of transept in the liturgical context of the crypt, we may perhaps identify more concretely some of the models which may have influenced the Hermopolis layout directly or through an Alexandrian mediation. As possible inspirations, we can cite the Church of the Holy Apostles in Constantinople with the imperial mausoleum and the pilgrimage church of St John in Ephesos, built in the late fourth-early fifth (?) -century. The former is supposed to have been built with a cruciform layout.⁵⁷ The latter was a transept basilica in which the three-aisled transepts had straight ends. The tomb of St John—which exuded a miraculous “manna”—was below the centre of the crossing and it was approached through a shaft with a trap door.⁵⁸ Finally, we find transepts with straight end walls and colonnaded ambulatories in the pilgrimage shrine of St Demetrios in Thessalonica. The church was founded in 412–413, but only completed towards the end of the century. The relic of the saint was buried in a crypt under the crossing.⁵⁹

We have seen that the gymnasium (?) and the pagan sanctuaries mentioned in *P. Vindob.* 12565 as Hadrianeion, Antinoeion, Sarapeion, and Neileion (?) were probably closed down around the middle of the fifth century and the building site on which they stood was donated, together with the buildings themselves, to the bishop of Hermopolis Magna. It cannot be excluded that the episcopal church in the town centre replaced the “South

⁴⁹ Rome, St Peter’s, St Paul Outside the Walls, cf. A. FRAZER: *Architecture*. in: K. Weitzmann (ed.): *Age of Spirituality. Late Antique and Early Christian Art, Third to Seventh Century*. New York 1979, 640–647, 642f.

⁵⁰ GRABAR 1946/1972, I 422ff.

⁵¹ WACE–MEGAW–SKEAT 1959, 23ff.

⁵² For the vaults of crypts with burials of saints, see GRABAR 1946/1972, I 521ff.

⁵³ WACE–MEGAW–SKEAT 1959, 23ff. and see GROSSMANN 2002, fig. 60.

⁵⁴ For the archaeological remains of the presbyterium screens and the altar, see WACE–MEGAW–SKEAT 1959, 31ff.

⁵⁵ H. LECLERCQ: *Ad sanctos*. *DACL* I.1 (1908) 479–509; F. W. DEICHMANN: *Martyrerbasilika, Martyrion, Memoria und Altargrab*. *RM* 77 (1970) 144–168; KÖTTING 1982; Y. DUVAL: *Auprès des saints corps et âme. L’inhumation ad sanctos dans la chrétienté*

d’Orient et d’Occident du III^e au VII^e siècle. Paris 1988; REBILLARD 1993. – For crypts in 5th-cent. basilica-type martyria cf. GRABAR 1946/1972, I 430ff., 436ff. For the presumed pre-Justinianian *ad sanctos* burials in the hypogeum under the Crypt Basilica of Abu Mena cf. GRABAR 1946/1972, I 442; see also GROSSMANN 1998b, 284.

⁵⁶ GROSSMANN 1998a, fig. 10; GROSSMANN 1998b, 282.

⁵⁷ Completed around 370, cf. C. MANGO: *Le développement urbain de Constantinople (IV^e–VII^e siècles)*. Paris 1985, 23ff.

⁵⁸ For the church before its re-building by Justinian, see M. RESTLE: Ephesos. *RBK* II (1968) 164–207, 179ff.

⁵⁹ GRABAR 1946/1972 I 450 ff.; P. LEMERLE: *Saint-Démétrius de Thessalonique et les problèmes du martyrium et du transept*. *BCH* 77 (1953) 660ff.; C. MANGO: *Byzantine Architecture*. New York 1976, fig. 59.

Church” built in the late (?) fourth century in the forecourt of the temple of Ramesses II.⁶⁰ The “South Church” was a three-naved basilical church with a return aisle.⁶¹ To the south it was adjoined by an octagonal baptistery with an apsidal hall for the catechumens (?) and a partly subterranean chapel. A room opening from the chapel was probably prepared for the burial of a martyr. It may have been this church outside the gates of which the late (?) fourth century Bishop Plousianos arbitrated publicly in a dispute.⁶²

The closing of the pagan sanctuaries, the donation of the building site, and the erection of the episcopal complex seem to have represented a concerted action of the imperial government, the town council, and the bishop⁶³ to transform the civic and symbolic centre of the city by replacing the ancient pagan cult institution(s) of great prestige by an episcopal cathedral.⁶⁴ There can be little doubt that the maintenance of significant features of the pagan building complex, such as the place and partly the form of the monumental western portico or the colonnaded architecture of the atrium, were intended to *superscribe* pagan cult with Christian worship. The considerations underlying the visual combination of *continuity* and *replacement* may be better understood if we recall Shenoute’s great church at Sohag with its fronts presenting a “paraphrase” of the traditional Egyptian temple.

If the side chamber of the crypt was indeed prepared for the burial *ad sanctos* of the bishop who founded the basilica, we are confronted with a remarkable case of ecclesiastical display. The case is especially significant when it is viewed from the perspective of a competent contemporary, Abbot Shenoute. Shenoute argued in works written towards the end of his life⁶⁵ for the cult of the *true* martyrs (ΜΑΡΤΥΡΟΣ ΝΑΜΕ) on their official feasts and at their *topos*, i.e., grave, stressing that the service at the *topoi* of the martyrs should not differ from the service in the church. He fiercely condemned, however, the epidemic spread of the cult of spurious martyrs (ΜΑΡΤΥΡΟΣ ΝΝΟΗΧ) with their euphoric festivals and was most decidedly against the introduction of martyr cult into the congregational church and the *incubatio* at the tombs of martyrs.⁶⁶ The great abbot—who visited relics of martyrs in Constantinople and Ephesos in 431⁶⁷—also says that he has not heard of a [congregational] church in Egypt which was built over the dead body of a martyr except for one single church in Panopolis; but, he adds, if such a thing also occurred in other churches, it was, and remains, “the greatest madness”.⁶⁸ Eventually, this “madness” also occurred elsewhere in Egypt and Shenoute’s attempts were late and without success—like similar attempts made somewhat earlier by Augustine.⁶⁹ In the last quarter of the fourth century, Ammianus Marcellinus already writes about the burial of martyrs in Alexandrian churches⁷⁰—breaking the Eastern law of Theodosius which prohibited the translation of martyrs’ remains from their burial places outside city walls:

No person shall transfer a buried body to another place. No person shall sell the relics of a martyr; no person shall traffic in them. But if anyone of the saints has been buried in any place whatever, persons shall have it in their power to add whatever building they may wish in veneration of such a place, and such building must be called a martyr.⁷¹

⁶⁰ For the building, see D. M. BAILEY–P. GROSSMANN: The South Church at Hermopolis Magna (Ashmunein). A Preliminary Report. in: K. Painter (ed.): *Churches Built in Ancient Times. Recent Studies in Early Christian Archaeology*. London 1994 49–71; GROSSMANN 2002, 437ff.

⁶¹ GROSSMANN 2002, fig. 58.

⁶² *P. Lips.* I 43, cf. ALSTON 2002, 307.

⁶³ *C.Th.* XVI.10.19 of 407/8 granted bishops the authority of enforcing the law ordering the destruction of pagan temples, cf. G. FOWDEN: Polytheist Religion and Philosophy. in: *CAH XIII* 538–560, 553f.

⁶⁴ For the larger context cf. G. FOWDEN: Bishops and Temples in the Eastern Roman Empire. *JThS* 29, 33–59; WARD-PERKINS 1998, 394ff.

⁶⁵ Between his visit to Constantinople and Ephesos in 431 and his death in 451. For the dating, see HORN 1986, 4f.

⁶⁶ G. ZOEGA: *Catalogus codicum Copticorum manu scriptorum qui in museo Borgiano Velitris adservantur (Opus posthumum)*. Romae 1810 [facsimile editions Leipzig 1903 and New York 1973] 421–424, 424–427; AMÉLINEAU 1907–1914, I.2 159–224.

⁶⁷ For the evidence cf. HORN 1986, 1ff. with note 28.

⁶⁸ AMÉLINEAU 1907–1914, I.2 212,12–216,1; 217,10–218,3.

⁶⁹ Augustine, *Sermo Dolbeau* 18.6–7, B. Flusin: Martyrs. In: G. W. Bowersock–P. Brown–O. Grabar (eds): *Late Antiquity. A Guide to the Postclassical World*. Cambridge, Mass.–London 1999, 567–568 568.

⁷⁰ Ammianus Marcellinus 22.11, in the description of the execution of the Arian Bishop George of Cappadocia. – After the destruction of the Serapeum a martyrion of St John the Baptist and a church were built above its ruins (*ibid.*).

⁷¹ *C.Th.* IX.17.7, trans. M. MAAS: *Readings in Late Antiquity. A Sourcebook*. London–New York 2000, 138f.

Shenoute argued in Egypt against a practice which could not be halted by traditionalists⁷² in other regions of Christianity either.⁷³ Moreover, what he might have been worried about was not only the entry of martyr cult into the congregational church but also its association with the burial *ad sanctos* and, in more general terms, the increasing authority of the bishops over the cult of martyrs.⁷⁴ In Egypt, the practice seems to have had deep roots. According to the late fourth-century (?) Acts of Peter I, Bishop of Alexandria (302–311), Peter erected a church *ob martyrium coemeteria* where he also prepared his own burial place.⁷⁵ From the second half of the fourth century, there were official church regulations in the East and the West concerning the burial of presbyters in the church apse and deacons before the apse.⁷⁶ *Ad sanctos* burials are attested in the south church at Pelusium, erected before 383–395, which was complemented with a martyrium south of its sanctuary apse,⁷⁷ further in a late fourth–early fifth-century church erected at Kôm al-Ahmar in Sharouna above an earlier tomb chamber containing the burial of a saint.⁷⁸ Some time in the early fifth century, the holy monk Apa Bane⁷⁹ was buried in the centre of the nave in his monastery church situated in modern Abu Fano a few kilometres to the northwest of Hermopolis Magna.⁸⁰ Considered a saint already in his lifetime, Apa Bane's tomb became before long a goal of pilgrimages, where miracles occurred.⁸¹ The monastery church containing his tomb was enlarged in the early fifth century and privileged monks were buried under its pavement around Apa Bane's burial,⁸² a development that Shenoute would certainly have preferred to prevent.

The splendor of the episcopal basilica of Hermopolis Magna is a telling witness to the wealth and status of the bishop of an important see in the middle decades of the fifth century.⁸³ The influences and information amalgamated in its functional and artistic design reflect, moreover, the education and outlook of a bishop sponsoring new forms in the display of episcopal status. It is worth noting here that two bishops of Hermopolis Magna are known to have participated in the Christological struggles of the first half of the fifth century.⁸⁴ In 431, Bishop

⁷² The sacramental celebration of the eucharist was prohibited in martyria in the late 4th century, see the collection called the “canons of the council of Laodicea”, quoted by REBILLARD 1993, 980f. with note 40.

⁷³ Cf. Jerome's defense of the cult of martyrs against the early 5th-cent. writing of Vigilantius, Jerome: *Against Vigilantius*, trans. LEE 2000, 293ff. and see the story on the conversion of the Jews on the island of Minorca (AD 418) brought about by the deposition of the relics of St Stephen in the church of the town of Magona, SEVERUS OF MINORCA, *Letter concerning the Jews* 4–8, 12–14, LEE 2000, 163ff.

⁷⁴ For the rivalry between bishops and holy men and the bishop's growing control over asceticism, cult of the martyrs and other saints, and the central role of the bishop's cathedral in the cult life of the congregation in the 4th–5th cent. cf. P. HEATHER: *State, Lordship and Community in the West (c. A.D. 400–600)*. in: *CAH XIV* 437–468, 457f.

⁷⁵ For the evidence, see REBILLARD 1993, 986f.; for Peter, see also C. D. G. MÜLLER: *Geschichte der orientalischen Nationalkirchen*. in: B. Moeller (ed.): *Die Kirche in ihrer Geschichte. Ein Handbuch IV*. Göttingen 1981, 269–367, 322f. note 10.

⁷⁶ For the evidence, see KÖTTING 1982. The notable church of the priest Felix unearthed at Kelibia in Tunisia presents a splendid illustration, see J. CINTAS–N. DUVAL: *L'église du prêtre Felix. Région de Kélibia. Karthago* 9 (1958) 157–269 esp. 235f.; and see also the burials discovered in the martyrium at Cincari, near Thuburbo Minus, N. DUVAL–J. CINTAS: *Études d'architecture chrétienne nord-africaine III. Le martyrium de Cincari et les martyria triconques et tétraconques en Afrique. MEFRA* 88 (1976) 853–927, fig. 39/a.

⁷⁷ C. BONNET–M. ABD EL-SAMIE: *Les églises de Tell el-Makhzan. Les campagnes de fouille de 1998 et 1999. CRIPEL* 21 (2000) 67–81; GROSSMANN 2002, 475f., fig. 90.

⁷⁸ GROSSMANN 2002, 428f., fig. 50/1.

⁷⁹ Apa Bane was still alive at the time of the death of Theodosius in January 395. For his *vita*, see M. CHAINE: *Les manuscrits de la version copte en dialecte sahidique des Apophthegmata Patrum (Bibliothèque d'Études Coptes VI)*. Le Caire 1960, 75ff., 146ff., nos 243–249; G. GABRA: *Zur Vita des Bane (Abu Fano), eines Heiligen des 4./5. Jahrhunderts. BSAC* 29 (1990) 26–42; for the texts concerning Apa Bane cf. also R. S. BAGNALL: *Archaeological Work on Hellenistic and Roman Egypt, 1995–2000. AJA* 105 (2001) 227–243, 238 note 76.

⁸⁰ For the site, see H. BUSCHHAUSEN et al.: *Die Ausgrabungen in Abu Fana in Ägypten im Jahr 1988. JÖB* 39 (1989) 241–259; *id.*: *Die Ausgrabungen von Abu Fana in Oberägypten im Jahre 1989. Äg. Lev.* 2 (1991) 121–146; *id.*: *Ausgrabungen von Dair Abu Fana in Ägypten im Jahr 1990. Äg. Lev.* 4 (1994) 95–127; *id.*: *Die Ausgrabungen von Dair Abu Fana in Ägypten in den Jahren 1991, 1992, und 1993. Äg. Lev.* 6 (1996) 13–73; for the saint *ibid.* 38ff.; and cf. also H. BUSCHHAUSEN in: H. Buschhausen–U. Horak–H. Harrauer: *Der Lebenskreis der Kopten. Dokumente, Textilien Funde, Ausgrabungen. Katalog der Ausstellung im Prunksaal der Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek... 23. Mai bis 26. Oktober 1995. Wien 1995*, 208–228.

⁸¹ For the archaeological evidence of Apa Bane's burial, see BUSCHHAUSEN 1996, 62f., fig. 3.

⁸² See the preliminary report on the excavations in the church, BUSCHHAUSEN 1996, 62f., figs 6, 7 (inscribed memorial plaques marking monks' tombs in the floor paving) and cf. GROSSMANN 2002, 517f.

⁸³ LIEBESCHUETZ 2000, 217ff.

⁸⁴ E. SCHWARTZ (ed.): *Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum I*. Berlin–Leipzig 1933 7 (142), 60 (131), 81 (115), 88 (138), 116 (178), 185 (96).

Andrew attended the First Council of Ephesus (which Shenoute also attended) on the side of the Patriarch Cyril. His successor Gennadius appeared at the Second Council (the “Robber Council”) of Ephesus in 449 on the side of the Patriarch Dioscorus. Both of them may be imagined to possess the ambition, connections, wealth, and experience that enabled a fifth-century bishop to take part actively in the creation of a new liturgical and architectural framework for the new role played by the bishop in the Church and the city.⁸⁵

REFERENCES

- ALSTON 2002 = R. ALSTON: *The City in Roman and Byzantine Egypt*. London 2002.
- AMÉLINEAU 1907–1914 = F. C. AMÉLINEAU: *Oeuvres de Shenoudi I–II*. Paris 1907–1914.
- BAILEY 1984 = D. M. BAILEY: A Building of the Antonine Period. In: A. J. Spencer–D. M. Bailey–W. V. Davies: *Ashmunein 1983*. British Museum Expedition to Middle Egypt. British Museum occasional paper 53. London 1907–1914, 29–48.
- BAILEY 1991 = D. M. BAILEY: *Hermopolis Magna: Buildings of the Roman Period*. Excavations at el-Ashmunein 4. London 1991.
- BAILEY 1996 = D. M. BAILEY: *Honorific Columns, Cranes, and the Tuna Epitaph*. In: BAILEY (ed.) 1996, 155–168.
- BAILEY (ed.) 1996 = D. M. BAILEY (ed.): *Archaeological Research in Roman Egypt*. The Proceedings of the Seventeenth Classical Colloquium of the Department of Greek and Roman Antiquities, British Museum, held on 1–4 December, 1993. Ann Arbor 1996.
- BARANSKI 1996 = M. BARANSKI: *The Archaeological Setting of the Great Basilica Church at el-Ashmunein*. In: BAILEY (ed.) 1996, 98–106.
- BUSCHHAUSEN 1996 = H. BUSCHHAUSEN: *Das Münchswesen in Abu Fano*. In: M. v. Falck–F. Lichtwark *et al.* (eds): *Ägypten. Schätze aus dem Wüstensand*. Kunst und Kultur der Christen am Nil. Katalog zur Ausstellung herausgegeben vom Gustav-Lübcke-Museum der Stadt Hamm und dem Museum für Spätantike und Byzantinische Kunst, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin-Preußischer Kulturbesitz. Wiesbaden 59–68.
- CAH XIII = AVERIL CAMERON–P. GARNSEY (eds): *The Cambridge Ancient History XIII: The Late Empire, A.D. 337–425*. Cambridge 1998.
- CAH XIV = AVERIL CAMERON–B. WARD-PERKINS–M. WHITBY (eds): *The Cambridge Ancient History XIV: Late Antiquity: Empire and Successors, A.D. 425–600*. Cambridge 2000.
- C.Th. = T. MOMMSEN (ed.): *Codex Theodosianus*. Berlin 1905 [2nd edn. 1952].
- DACL = F. CABROL–H. LECLERCQ–H.-I. MARROU (eds): *Dictionnaire d’archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie X–XV*. Paris 1908–1953.
- DEICHMANN 1975 = F.-W. DEICHMANN: *Die Spolien in der spätantiken Architektur*. München 1975.
- GRABAR 1946/1972 = A. GRABAR: *Martyrium. Recherches sur le culte des reliques et l’art chrétien antique I–II*. Paris [reprint edn. London 1972].
- GROSSMANN 1998a = P. GROSSMANN: *Koptische Architektur*. In: KRAUSE 1998, 209–267.
- GROSSMANN 1998b = P. GROSSMANN: *Abû Mînâ*. In: KRAUSE 1998, 269–293.
- GROSSMANN 2002 = P. GROSSMANN: *Christliche Architektur in Ägypten*. Handbuch der Orientalistik Erste Abteilung. Der Nahe und Mittlere Osten 62. Leiden–Boston–Köln 2002.
- HORN 1986 = J. HORN: *Studien zu den Märtyrern des nördlichen Oberägypten 1: Märtyrerverehrung und Märtyrerlegende im Werk des Shenute*. Beiträge zur ältesten ägyptischen Märtyrerüberlieferung. Wiesbaden 1986.
- KÖTTING 1982 = B. KÖTTING: *Grab. RAC XII*. Stuttgart 1982, 366–397.
- KRAUSE 1998 = M. KRAUSE (ed.): *Ägypten in spätantik-christlicher Zeit*. Einführung in die koptische Kultur. Wiesbaden 1998.
- LEE 2000 = A. D. LEE: *Pagans and Christians in Late Antiquity. A Sourcebook*. London–New York 2000.
- LIEBESCHUETZ 2000 = J. H. W. G. LIEBESCHUETZ: *Administration and Politics in the Cities of the Fifth to Mid Seventh Century: 425–640*. In: CAH XIV, 207–237.

⁸⁵ S. G. HALL: *The Organization of the Church*. in: CAH XIV 731–744, 731ff.; LIEBESCHUETZ 2000, 218f.

- REBILLARD 1993 = E. REBILLARD: *KOIMHTHPION* et *coemeterium*: tombe, tombe sainte, nécropole. *MEFRA* 105 (1993) 975–1001.
- ROEDER 1959 = G. ROEDER: Hermopolis 1929–1939. Ausgrabungen der Deutschen Hermopolis-Expedition in Hermopolis, Ober-Ägypten. Hildesheim 1959.
- SB = F. PREISIGKE *et al.* (eds): Sammelbuch griechischer Urkunden aus Ägypten. Strassburg, etc., Wiesbaden 1913–.
- SPENCER 1989 = A. J. SPENCER: The Temple Area. Excavations at el-Ashmunein II. London 1989.
- WACE–MEGAW–SKEAT 1959 = A. J. B. WACE–A. H. S. MEGAW–T. C. SKEAT: Hermopolis Magna, Ashmunein. The Ptolemaic Sanctuary and the Basilica. Alexandria.
- WARD-PERKINS 1998 = B. WARD-PERKINS: The Cities. In: *CAH XIII*, 371–410.