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Ian Elliot McElroy

Buildings interact with, influence, and are influenced by other adjacent and nearby buildings and landscape features. Whether intentionally or not, complex spatial, architectural and experiential relationships were created when early churches were built adjacent to non-Christian religious buildings. The cathedral at Gerasa, in northern Jordan, was built adjacent to a Temple of Artemis complex and can only be satisfactorily understood by exploring both the architecture of each complex and the relationships that existed between them. This is achieved through architectural analysis in combination with a user experience-led method, focussing upon how users experienced each complex in light of the other and by considering the impact of civic and religious memory on user understanding. The comparative architectural experiences impacted user understanding of each complex and the institutions represented, while knowledge of the past was appropriated to create bridges between known non-Christian and less well-known Christian contexts and hierarchies.

Keywords Gerasa, Jerash, Jordan, early Christian architecture, memory, experience, temple-church

Introduction

Throughout the Eastern Mediterranean, examples can be found where early Christian church builders utilized temple remains in various ways, ranging from churches inserted within standing temple *cellae*, to churches constructed adjacent to temple remains without any physical interaction (Bayliss 2004 and Hahn *et al.* 2008 demonstrate the broad scope of temple-church conversion study and the variety in how this was expressed architecturally). Such processes of conversion did not represent conscious adherence to type or a unified phenomenon, but were the result of local requirements that created, sometimes intentionally on the part of converters, complex experiences for users (McElroy 2017). To build a church adjacent to a temple that could still be identified, experienced, or even entered, was to create architectural interactions and relationships of contrast and comparison. Whether intentional or not, this in turn contributed to how users experienced and understood churches and the landscapes in which they were found, as well as influencing how users understood and perceived Christianity, non-Christian cult and the past.

This article looks to conduct a detailed architectural analysis of the cathedral complex at Gerasa, in the north of modern Jordan, and to consider the significant role played by the immediately adjacent Temple of Artemis complex in shaping how users understood and experienced the cathedral. The church, commonly thought to have been the city's cathedral, and the large Temple of Artemis complex were located in the centre of Gerasa and were accessed primarily from the cardo, the main north–south artery of the city (Fig. 1). Owing to the considerable

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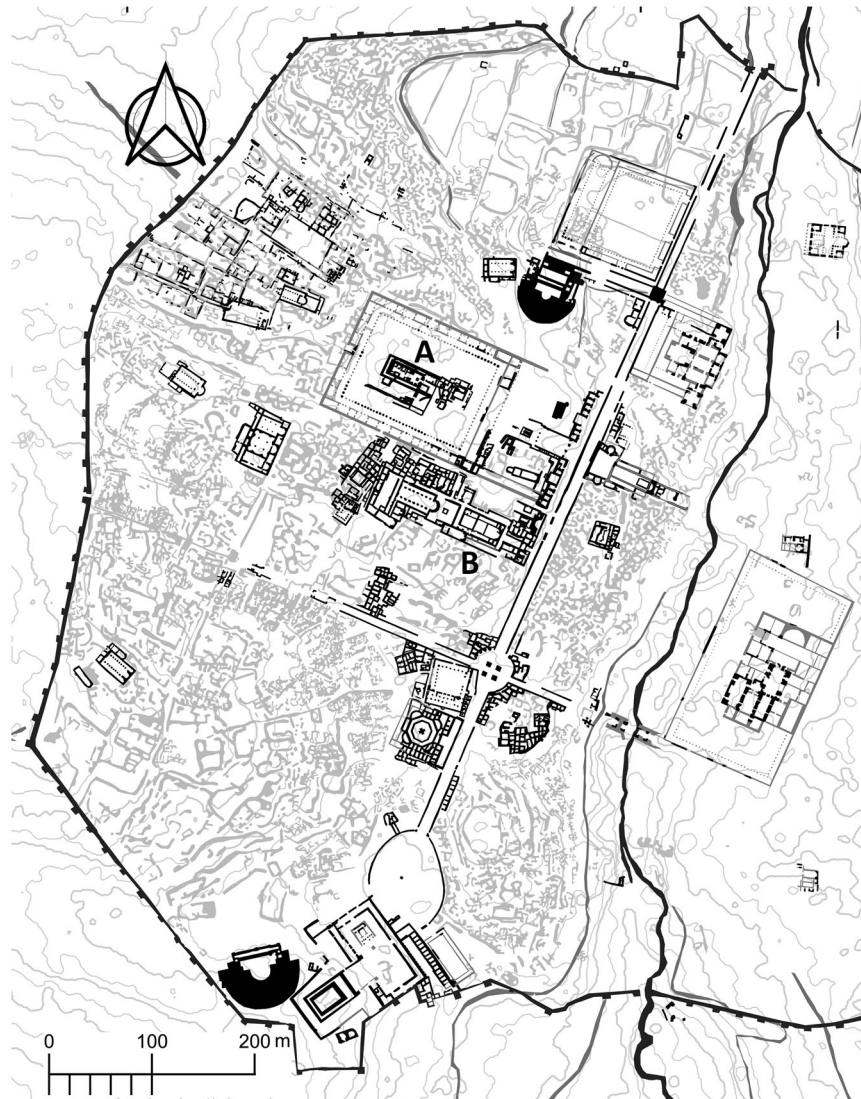
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Figure 1   **Plan of central Gerasa showing Temple of Artemis (A), cathedral (B) and cardo running north-east to south-west. The later basilica of St. Theodore abuts the cathedral to the north-west (after Lichtenberger *et al.* 2019: map 2).**

preservation of these neighbouring complexes, it is possible to identify and analyse the architectural relationships that existed between them and to consider how these relationships were created and the impact that they had on users. This allows for an understanding of how adjacent building practices impacted upon early church construction and the ways in which this could influence how users experienced and understood such sites.

A systematic user experience-led analysis of each complex, guided by the structures of encounter experienced by users as they left the cardo and moved into the deepest parts of each complex, is undertaken. This structure allows for a step-by-step close reading of the architecture. Firstly, the appropriation of the *in situ* propylon, built for the temple that had previously occupied the site of the cathedral, is

considered to reveal its role in bringing memories of civic and religious pasts together with the Christian present. Moving inside each complex, the ways in which users may have experienced the architecture and spaces of each complex and how this was influenced by the architectural and experiential contrasts created between both complexes is examined. It is demonstrated that relationships created through adjacent building practices moulded not only how users experienced this church, but also their understanding of Christianity in relation to non-Christian cult, creating a complex, living religion that could be more readily understood and accepted within appropriated and retained memories of non-Christian cult and practice. Finally, this example is placed within its urban context to assess the impact that it, and the relationships created between the two complexes,

had on the architectural development of the heart of the city.

Considerable archaeological research relating to the city and its urban development throughout the classical and late antique periods has been carried out (e.g. Kennedy 2000; Kraeling 1938a; Lichtenberger and Raja 2017; Charlie March 2009; 2013; Raja 2012). Much of the recent data regarding the cathedral is provided by The Jarash Cathedral Project (e.g. Brenk *et al.* 1995; 2009; Jäggi *et al.* 1997; 1998; see also, Brenk 2003; Crowfoot 1931; 1938), while a number of publications have focussed on the Temple of Artemis complex (e.g. Brizzi 2018; Parapetti 1997; 2002). Although much of this research does consider the monumental architecture of the city, no attempt has been made to understand the architectural and experiential relationships that existed between the cathedral and Temple of Artemis complexes, and how these were experienced by users.

The systematic user experience-led method employed presently is guided by three main theoretical approaches. This paper draws upon the extensive body of phenomenological research, which seeks to understand landscape through, and as, embodied experience: a development of philosophical enquiries into the nature of human experience, this has traditionally been adopted by archaeologists working in prehistory (e.g. Johnson 2012; Thomas 2006; Tilley 1994). Attempting to understand landscapes and places by questioning how they may have been experienced and understood by a subject, or subjects, is also applicable to historical periods and to buildings. For example, Johnson has successfully applied a phenomenological method to the study of Medieval and Renaissance English castles (2002). Importantly, phenomenology allows one to recognize possibilities and questions relating to how places were experienced, rather than providing a method through which one can reveal precisely the experiences of past peoples (Thomas 2006: 55).

It is not the intention of this article to conduct a fully phenomenological analysis of each complex. Instead, the methods and principals of the works cited above are integrated with understandings of archaeological memory and the agency of buildings to create a user experience-led method that allows for architectural analysis, site reuse and adjacent construction practices to be integrated into analysis.

The study of memory in archaeology is generally not that of individual recollection, but an attempt to understand social constructs of the past that are, in some way, communal and that need not be based upon accurate recollection (Alcock 2002: 1–35; Erll

2011: 8; Holtorf and Williams 2006). This is key to the present study as the manipulation of architecture is closely linked to the alteration of memory (Wendrich 2014: 423–24). It is not possible to analyse architectural alterations, especially those carried out at sites with religious significance, without an appreciation of the pasts associated with the sites and how these could be manipulated, or evoked, to shape how users experienced the site. Presently, such insights are achieved, where required, by considering how relevant buildings and spaces within Gerasa functioned and were understood prior to their abandonment, or to the construction of the cathedral, for example. This is then incorporated into the author's analysis of the cathedral and its relationship with the Temple of Artemis complex.

Buildings directly influence how users act and as such must be considered to exhibit a degree of agency (Osborne 2014; Wharton 2015). Wharton correctly summarizes that 'buildings exert a force on the world independent of human intention or even human consciousness' (2015: xxi). The architecture of the cathedral and that of the Temple of Artemis complex had the capacity to influence how users moved within, viewed and experienced each complex, in ways that were not intended by builders. An appreciation of this enables a phenomenology-based analysis that focusses upon how users actually experienced the site, rather than attempting to understand what its builders might have intended.

These approaches do not constitute a rigid method, but an approach that allows for structured architectural analysis and that permits a variety of evidence to be considered.

Propylon and cathedral

The cathedral at Gerasa was an east-oriented basilica, 42.2 m long, with a central nave and two aisles separated by 12 columns on each side (Fig. 2; Crowfoot 1931: 8). The columns were spolia, as was much of the stone used (Brenk *et al.* 1995: 220; Jäggi *et al.* 1998: 426; Moralee 2006: 198–99). At the east end there was an internal apse with two side chambers, while at the west end lies the fountain court which, prior to the later construction of the basilica of St. Theodore, was surrounded by colonnades forming an atrium. Access was from the east, via a staircase leading upwards from the cardo. This back to front layout required lateral passages to the north and south of the basilica to provide access to the side aisles and western atrium.

The staircase was accessed from the cardo via a propylon that had previously granted access to a temple
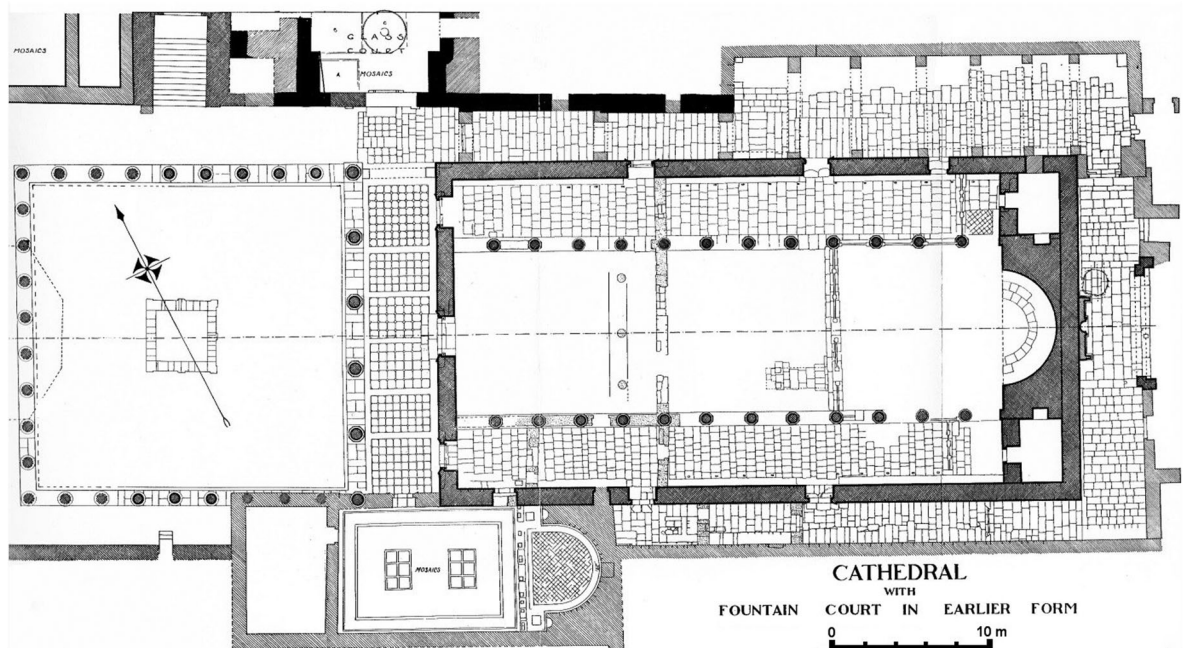
Figure 2 Plan of the cathedral at Gerasa showing fountain court to the west, the top of the staircase leading from the cardo at the extreme east and lateral passages to the north and south. Chapel to the south is a later addition (after Kraeling 1938b: plan XXXI).

that had stood on the site occupied by the cathedral. Remains of this temple have been found beneath the cathedral and excavators confirmed that its podium wall stood, and may have been identifiable, prior to construction of the cathedral (Jäggi *et al.* 1997: 312–16; 1998: 426). The propylon was the only feature incorporated *in situ*. A coin, dating to 404–435 CE, discovered in a layer beneath one of the stylobates, provides a terminus post quem of 404 CE for construction of the cathedral (Jäggi *et al.* 1998: 429).

This propylon was the first feature of the cathedral complex that users experienced from the cardo and played an important role in how users experienced the complex. While shops were added to its façade, these cannot be dated more precisely than to within a century of the turn of the 5th century CE, and, therefore, could be significantly later than the early 5th-century CE cathedral (Fig. 3; Jacobs 2009: 206). Inside, the staircase was rebuilt on a steeper gradient, because the apse was further east than the temple had been, and new walls were built on either side. This work was likely contemporary with the construction of the cathedral as the stonework of the walls is similar to that of the cathedral (Crowfoot 1938: 206).

It might be tempting to explain this retention as simply providing an imposing entrance without the need to build one, but it functioned as far more than this. Firstly, retaining the propylon likely helped avoid the cathedral being overwhelmed from the cardo by the neighbouring Temple of Artemis

complex (see Fig. 1). This was considerably larger, featured a large, lavish propylon and, when the cathedral was built, still retained its long entranceway that was later cut off by the Propylaea Church (Browning 1982: 148–49).

Secondly, retaining the propylon connected the cathedral to the cardo, the main north–south artery in the city, without damaging or changing the urban topography. The cardo itself functioned as a linear agora in the Roman period, at least as far north as the Temple of Artemis complex, with associated businesses, industries and social functions (Charlie March 2009: 125; see Bührig 2009: 375 for the similar use of the east–west axis at Gadara, around 50 km north-west of Gerasa). This likely continued, in some form, into the 4th or 5th century CE when shops were added in front of the retained propylon. The repetitive, regular architecture of the cardo should be seen as more than aesthetically pleasing. Such colonnaded streets regulated shop size and location, stopped private shops spilling into the rigid, public space and enforced order upon the urban landscape; to respect this regular architecture was to respect the public topography and existing social order of the city (Butcher 2003: 247–48; Charlie March 2009: 130–31; 2013: 362).

Avoiding damaging the cardo, the axis around which the city was built, minimized disruption to these functions and features and served to embed the cathedral within the undamaged urban fabric.
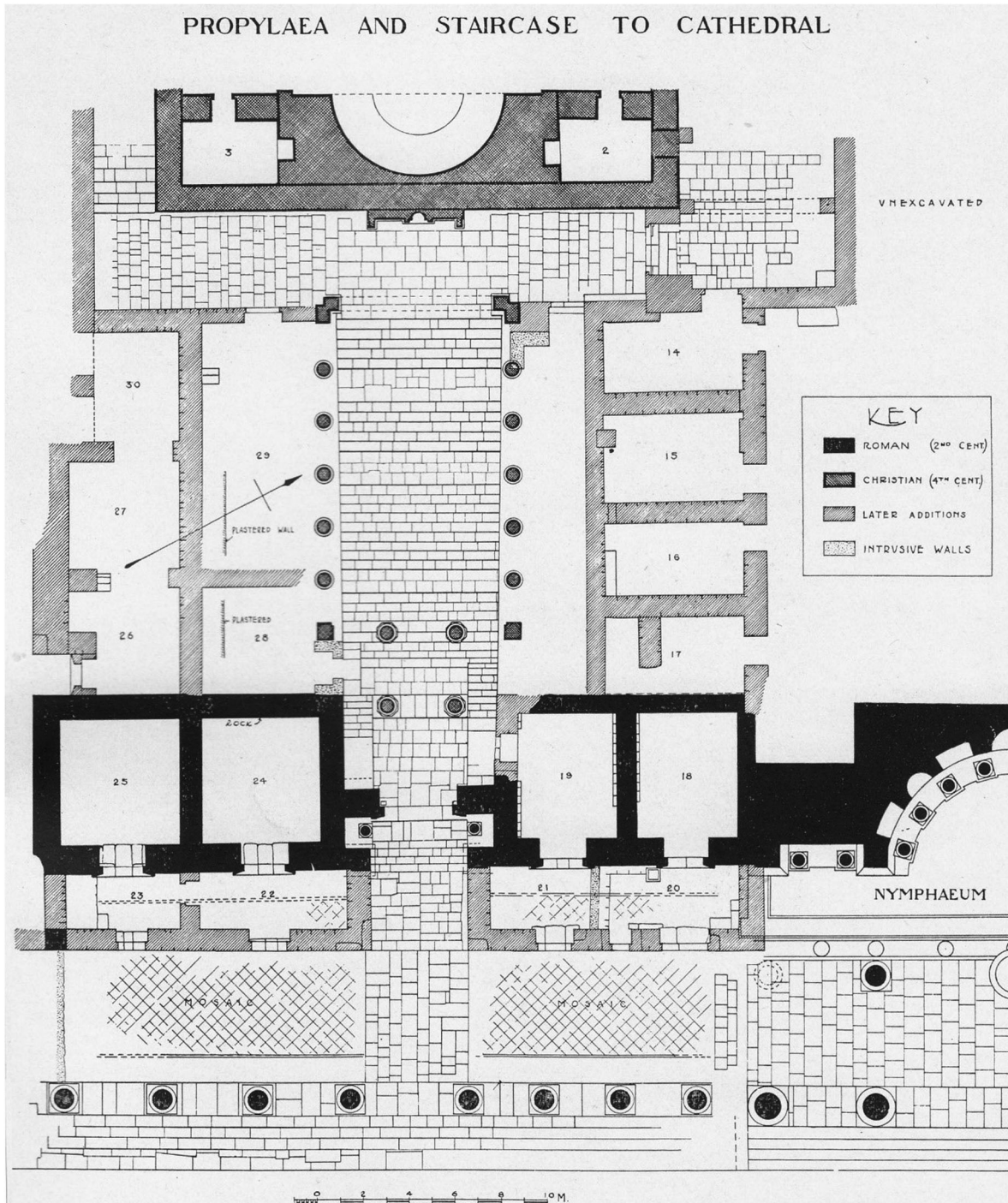
Figure 3 **Dionysus propylon and staircase to cathedral. Roman propylon in black, later shops in front (south-east) in hatching and labelled 20, 21, 23 and 24. Cardo runs right to left (north-east to south-west) at bottom of plan (Kraeling 1938b: plan XXIX).**

The continued importance of the cardo is suggested by its function as access route to the cathedral and later churches, and by the fact that the shops inserted in front of the cathedral propylon did not spill into the street (Fig. 3; Jacobs 2009: 206). Retaining the recognizable propylon and maintaining the ordered cardo also appropriated the visual function that propylaea could serve in urban areas by signalling the location of a landmark within the city (Bayliss 1999: 61). Had the cardo functioned as a processional route in the pre-Christian period, as is likely, this may have continued into the Christian period, further bringing together the cathedral, propylon and cardo (Raja 2012: 201).

The impact that retaining the propylon had on how local people understood the cathedral and Christianity in light of non-Christian memories, can be seen more clearly through a comparison with the early 5th-century CE basilica, built immediately to the east of the propylon, leading to the Temple of Asklepios at Epidauros in Greece (Sweetman 2015: 523). The use of such a location suggests that access to the site remained the same as it had been before the church had been built, with worshippers accessing the church in the footsteps of previous temple users, and with Christian processions utilizing the same route as their non-Christian predecessors. Sweetman argues that, as non-Christian cult activity continued well into the 4th century CE at the site, memory of this functioned as a 'bridging element between pre-Christian and Christian religious practice' (2015: 523). This is a convincing explanation of how the site was understood and suggests that users were encouraged to understand Christian Church hierarchies through memories of relatively recent non-Christian hierarchies, both of which were represented in processions that used the same spaces and routes to access the single cult area (Sweetman 2015: 523).

At Gerasa there is no evidence that the temple that stood on the cathedral site remained in use immediately prior to the building of the cathedral; however, the remains of the temple were likely still visible and possibly only cleared when the cathedral was built. It is very likely that the site's non-Christian past and significance would have been known to locals (Moralee 2006: 205). Furthermore, the monumental propylon on the cardo must have been a well-known feature within the urban fabric of the city that functioned as more than a physical portal between cardo and cathedral. In much the same manner as at Epidauros, the retained propylon functioned to draw memories of non-Christian processions that had passed through it, hierarchies associated with these and other civic activities that took place along this part of the cardo, together with the newly built cathedral, the Christian processions that passed through the propylon, on their way to the cathedral, and the Christian hierarchies represented in these. This necessitated reuse of the cardo, with its colonnades providing space for people to easily observe these processions and hierarchies. By making past religious and civic events present through such architectural reuse, Christianity was made less alien to non-Christians and recent converts. This encouraged users to understand a complex religion within existing, understood contexts.

That the integration of non-Christian memories with contemporary Christian architecture and practice, was both viable and potentially effective, can be seen when one considers the socio-religious situation in the city in the early 5th century CE. There had been a significant Christian population in the city from as early as 359 CE, when Exeresius, bishop of Gerasa, attended the Council of Seleucia (Raja 2015: 283 n. 28). This is reinforced by the slightly later reference by Epiphanius, bishop of Salamis, to the celebration of the Miracle at Cana taking place in the city in around 375 CE (*Panarion* 51.30.2; Boyer 2018: 70).

While there was a significant Christian population in the city in the second half of the 4th century CE, it is unlikely that the city was wholly Christian at this time. A synagogue built in the 4th or 5th century CE, which was later converted into the Synagogue Church, indicates that a Jewish population existed from at least that time (Dvorjetski 2005: 141). Elsewhere, the Temple of Artemis did not definitively fall out of religious use until the 5th century CE and the temple of Zeus remained largely intact until the later 5th century CE (Fisher 1938: 138; Kennedy 2000: 200; Chrystelle March 2004: 170).

Furthermore, the next known church built after the early 5th century CE cathedral was not constructed until 464/5 CE, while the substantial basilica of St. Theodore, adjacent to the cathedral, dates to the very end of the 5th century CE (Charlie March 2009: 256 table 7). Other cities in the region did not receive centrally located churches until the end of the 5th and beginning of the 6th centuries CE, which might again suggest a lack of Christian influence within higher levels of society in the area at this time (Moralee 2006: 188–89). While evidence of church construction should not necessarily be seen to accurately reflect either, the Christian population of a city, or, Christian influence on society, the evidence above does suggest that Gerasa was not wholly Christian in the early 5th century CE.

A number of laws and edicts of the late 4th and 5th centuries CE attempted to ban non-Christian cult and encouraged the destruction of temples throughout the empire (e.g. *Cod. Theod.* 16.10.10–11, 16.10.12, 16.10.25), while others outlawed violence towards non-Christians and instructed that temples be preserved (e.g. *Cod. Theod.* 16.10.8, 16.10.19, 16.10.24). The conflicting and repetitive nature of these laws suggests ambiguity in their interpretation and varying degrees of implementation across the empire (Hebert 2009: 93–94).

There is no evidence of significant violence having taken place between Christians and non-Christians, nor of violence aimed at religious buildings in

Gerasa (Charlie March 2009: 363; 2013: 386). Dvorjetski indicates that some degree of violence took place towards the synagogue prior to its conversion into a church (2005: 158), but it is unclear whether this was religiously motivated and also targeted the Jewish population, or was, instead, the result of architectural alterations following abandonment. Such violence would stand in contrast to the fate of the city's temples, the columns of which, in some cases, remained standing until the modern period (Charlie March 2009: 363).

Within this 5th century CE socio-religious framework, knowledge of non-Christian cult practice and hierarchies remained present, while the relationship between Christianity and non-Christian cult, and the relationships between followers of the different faiths represented by this, were still forming and evolving. In such an environment the shaping or inadvertent influencing of these relationships was possible, while the lack of violence indicates that the manipulation of memories of non-Christian cult and the reuse of non-Christian architecture would have been both viable and likely to have been understood, as at Epidauros, by a significant portion of the population.

The importance of appropriating the memories associated with the propylon to both anchor the cathedral in the urban landscape and to help locals comprehend Christian practices, is emphasized by the fact that, of the 19 churches that can be dated at Gerasa, the earliest is the cathedral (Boyer 2018: 68–69). At the earliest substantial church in the city, cathedral builders felt it necessary to legitimize Christianity, its practices and its hierarchies, and to familiarize users with known equivalents of these, through this appropriation of architecture and memory. In doing so, they also ensured that from its inception the cathedral was not associated with any hypothetical destruction of part of the cardo, and that the Temple of Artemis propylon was in some way counter-balanced.

Contrasts and comparisons

Beyond the propylaea, the relationship between the cathedral and the Temple of Artemis complex became more complicated. The Temple of Artemis was set within a massive temenos on a hill above the cardo, north of the cathedral, and was probably hexastyle peripteral with 11 columns to a side (Fig. 4; Brizzi 2018; Charlie March 2013: 182). While some of the surrounding temenos architecture had been dismantled (Jacobs 2013: 292), a considerable amount remained standing, leaving the spaces within the

complex and their general form fundamentally intact when the cathedral was built. It has been postulated that Christian builders, by building the cathedral adjacent to it, intended to leave the temple as a 'symbolic trophy over paganism' (Charlie March 2013: 368). Such assertions of triumphalism should always be questioned regarding the reuse, conversion and adaption of non-Christian cult places by Christians, as many other factors played important roles (McElroy 2017). Regarding the cathedral at Gerasa, such a statement does not attempt to explore how users experienced and compared two contrasting, adjacent architectural complexes.

Wharton has successfully carried out an architectural comparison of the two complexes, as each would have appeared when complete and in use, that breaks the architectural contrasts down into three oppositions between temple/cathedral. The first, visual/physical, demonstrates that the temple complex visually dominated and appeared to be highest point of the city. Within it, users could understand the space visually from any point along the central axis of approach. In contrast, understanding the spaces within the cathedral required repeated experience of them. The second, centred/decentred or multi-centred, illustrates that the goddess Artemis was both subject and object of the temple complex. The cult statue was the culmination of a central axis; even the altar was placed to the side of this to maintain this central focus. The cathedral differed significantly in having multiple routes and destinations. The final contrast, presence/absence, contrasts the visually present Artemis cult statue and deity within the cella with the divine having no permanent, visible presence within the cathedral (Wharton 1995: 68–74).

These are insightful comparisons, between architectures and uses, that highlight key differences between the two complexes, but this paper takes a different approach. The two complexes are not only comparable by archaeologists as they were when complete and functional; both temple and church have been continuously viewed, compared and, to varying degrees, explored by visitors, starting with the very first users of the cathedral, at all stages of construction of the cathedral and abandonment of the temple. One has, therefore, the opportunity to examine what the architectures and spaces of each complex meant to, and how they were understood by, users that actually experienced both complexes in their various states of completion and abandonment. Employing the theoretical method explored earlier enables consideration of how a user's direct experience of a church

complex, adjacent to a temple complex, could influence their interpretation of both the architecture and the religions or cults represented.

It appears that the Temple of Artemis fell out of religious use between the middle of the 4th and some point in the 5th century CE. Parapetti dates a mosaic laid in the cella to the middle of the 4th century CE, and found no evidence of religious use in that context (1997: 522). Later, in the 5th century CE, pottery kilns and industrial buildings were built over the centre of the inner court and partly over the site of the main altar, signalling a definitive end to religious use of the site (Fisher 1938: 138; Kennedy 2000: 200).

Given the likelihood that the cathedral was built before 435 CE, it is possible that there was a brief overlap of religious use between the two complexes. Indeed, Moralee believes an overlap took place until the late 5th or early 6th century CE (2006: 194). Even a short overlap would have allowed both non-Christians and Christians to experience both complexes while in use, as non-Christians were often able to attend the first part of Christian services before the uninitiated were removed and the Eucharist celebrated (Wharton 1995: 71). Had the Temple of Artemis ceased to function by the time the cathedral was built, Christians and non-Christians still had the opportunity to experience both complexes. For example, if the inner court of the temple had been abandoned to pottery production, then associated workers that frequented the inner parts of the temple complex also likely used the cathedral as baptised Christians, catechumens or non-Christians witnessing the beginning of services. It might also have been common for Christian cathedral users to simply explore the neighbouring disused temple complex, for children to play in the remains, for locals to continue to visit out of tradition rather than religious obligation, or any unarticulated combination of these. If Fisher's belief that the pottery kilns produced objects for the Christian users of the cathedral, and as evidence he cites two lamp moulds depicting Christian scenes (1938: 138), then this provides further evidence that users of the cathedral frequented the Temple of Artemis complex. Finally, Brenk has suggested that the cella structure functioned as the seat of the city curator, which would certainly have given people reason to approach it (2003: 12). This suggestion is speculative, but it would explain the preservation of the cella structure while the surrounding peristyle was at least partly dismantled along with parts of the temenos architecture (Brenk 2003: 12; Jacobs 2013: 292; Parapetti 2002: 33).
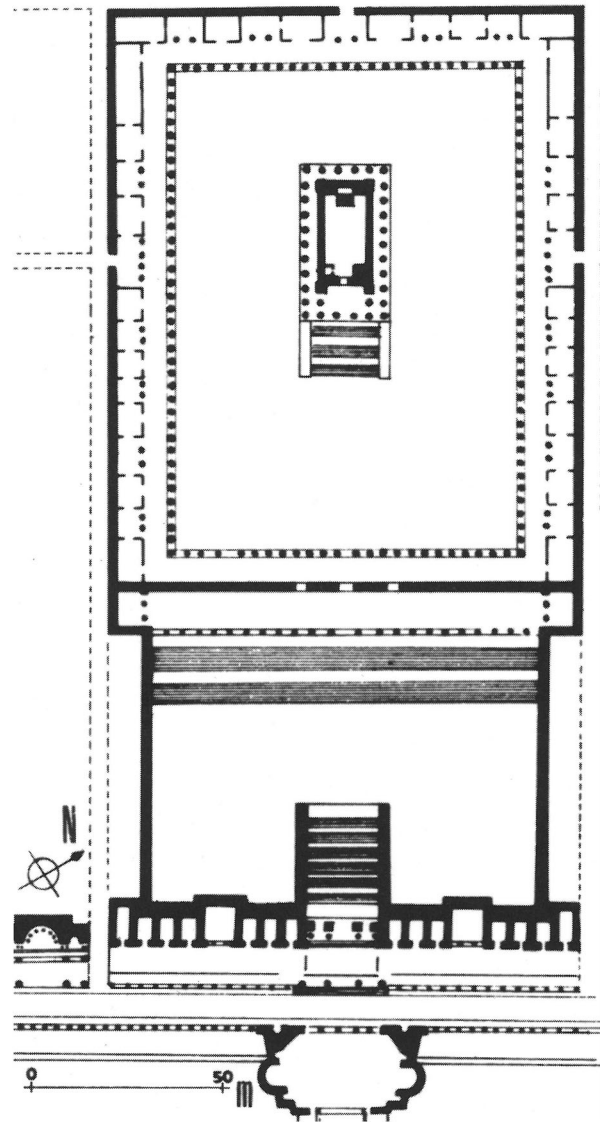

Figure 4   Plan of Temple of Artemis complex. Cardo runs right to left (north-east to south-west) at bottom of plan (after Segal 2013: fig. 267 – reproduced with permission of Oxbow Books).

Regardless of who the dual or multi-experiencers were, it is certain that a variety of individuals directly compared both complexes, through autopsy and experience, from the earliest stages of the cathedral's biography.

Two contrasting structures of encounter were experienced. To enter the temple complex was to follow a linear approach from the cardo, through the monumental propylon, up the first staircase, into the lower terrace (from the south-east of Fig. 4). A second staircase then led to the inner courtyard, where one experienced an open space of stone walls and sky, that created a 'sensation of delineated space, of light and of being on the level' (Browning 1982: 92). Encountering the cathedral was markedly

different. One would climb the stairs from the propylon, with their enclosing walls, before coming up against a stone wall, the eastern outer face of the apse (Fig. 5). This striking difference would have been notable to those that had experienced both complexes and entries; to enter the temple complex was to enter openness and light, to enter the cathedral was to ascend an enclosed staircase towards a wall.

The experiences when entering each building were also dissimilar. Once the Temple of Artemis had fallen out of religious use, the cella structure would, likely, have been more easily accessible than it had been in the past. Indeed, if it functioned as the seat of the city curator, as mentioned above, then one would expect it to have become more public than private. Without the barriers and restrictions maintained by priests while the temple was in use, users could have passed through the large spaces, with wide views and generally unencumbered lines of sight, directly to the cella structure. There were no deeper mysteries or previously sacred inaccessible points, enabling a direct understanding of the spaces and the experiences created. Such an open experience contrasted sharply with entry to the cathedral.

Upon reaching the wall at the top of the stairs leading to the cathedral, users were forced to move left or right, into lateral passages that afforded access into the aisles and to the western fountain court. Charlie March believes that this wall 'makes a claim to exclusivity and interiority' (2009: 276), while Wharton states that experience was required to understand the spaces (1995: 69). Indeed, access was immediately a more complex experience. The lateral passages, aside from providing a practical solution to allowing access from the east while maintaining an eastern apse, may have functioned as a form of lateral *catechumenon* as suggested by Crowfoot (1938: 180, 213–15). Lateral features that may have served to house catechumens are also found at the basilica of St. Theodore and that dedicated to St. Cosmas elsewhere in Gerasa (Crowfoot 1938: 179), while the basilica at Kourion on Cyprus also featured linear *catechumena* that provided access from the east (Megaw 2007: 158–59). To enter the cathedral was to experience subjugation to the architecture of admittance that dictated access routes, entry points and the areas to which different users might be permitted access. This was in complete contrast to the open spaces of the adjacent temple complex, where user movement was guided by the axial placing of the imposing temple cella within the open space, rather than by physical barriers.

Once inside the cathedral, further hierarchical divisions existed. Genders may have been segregated within the two aisles (Butler 1969: 27, 29; MacMullen 2009: 5, 15), however, research by Mulholland suggests gender segregation did not take place in the Early Byzantine period in Israel and Jordan (2014: 139–75). If regional practice was as MacMullen suggests, then the congregation may only have been allowed into the aisles, with the nave reserved for use by the clergy (2009: 17). Physical divisions, detectable as jambs, thresholds and dowel holes in paving, further dictated access and enforced subjugation to the architecture (Crowfoot 1938: 214–15; Wharton 1995: 69, 71).

Further, one must not overlook the fact the cathedral was roofed, while the temple temenos, which made up the majority of the Temple of Artemis complex area, was not. While this is clearly true of churches and temple complexes generally, the contrast created would have been notable at this site owing to the two complexes being immediately adjacent to one another. Aside from the physical differences, such as shade or protection from rain, the enclosing roof excluded the natural world from the religious experience. This contrasted with many non-Christian cults where gods existed in the natural world and where burnt sacrifices created physical connections to the godly realm above (Charlie March 2009: 6).

Such internal barriers that limited sight, layers that dictated access, and architecture that controlled light and excluded the sights, sounds and smells of the natural would, on their own, shape an individual's experience and opinion of Christianity (Sweetman 2010: 210–11), but, through the direct architectural comparison with the temple complex available at this site this became something more complex and mysterious. Complex architecture and multiple focal points within the cathedral would have contrasted sharply with the expanse of open spaces, direct linear access and open perspective views of the temple complex; the former enforced subjugation to complex architecture and Christian hierarchy from the moment the user left the cardo, the latter permitted physical and visual exploration. This inverted the ease with which users would normally be able to access functioning churches and temple *cellae* since access to the interior of a church was more open than access to a functioning cella. Such contrasts, and even inversions of access, influenced how users understood and thought of complex Christian hierarchy and liturgical practice, not simply the spaces and architectures created.

To create the complicated and enclosed cathedral adjacent to the temple complex was to create a duality of religious architecture that functioned to invest the cathedral with complexity, while portraying

Figure 5 **Photograph looking through the Dionysus propylon showing staircase rising to the eastern outer wall of the cathedral apse (Jacobs 2013: fig. 143).**

Christianity as a hierarchically sophisticated, functioning religion. This need not necessarily require intentional design on the part of the cathedral builders, although it is impossible to discount whether they were motivated by a desire to create such architectural contrasts. As stated earlier, buildings can influence how people function within and around them in ways unintended, or unthought of, by their creators (Wharton 2015: xiv–xxi). While it might be tempting to associate the effects of these architectural and experiential contrasts with new converts to Christianity, elements of mystery and a continued reinforcement of the vitality of Christianity, in comparison to non-Christian cult, were equally important in the retention of Christian worshippers.

Evidence does exist elsewhere of early Christian church builders utilizing, and even curating, monumental temple architecture in the Eastern Mediterranean to intentionally manipulate user experience. At Heliopolis, in Lebanon, a church dedicated to St. Peter was built within the temenos of the Temple of Jupiter, at the heart of the city, immediately in front of the temple itself (Fig. 6). It seems likely that this church was constructed in the 5th century CE (Lassus 1947: 246), while the temple remained at least partly intact until 555 CE (Chuvin 1990: 142).

Building a church in such a location certainly demonstrates that its builders sought to create a relationship between church and adjacent temple,
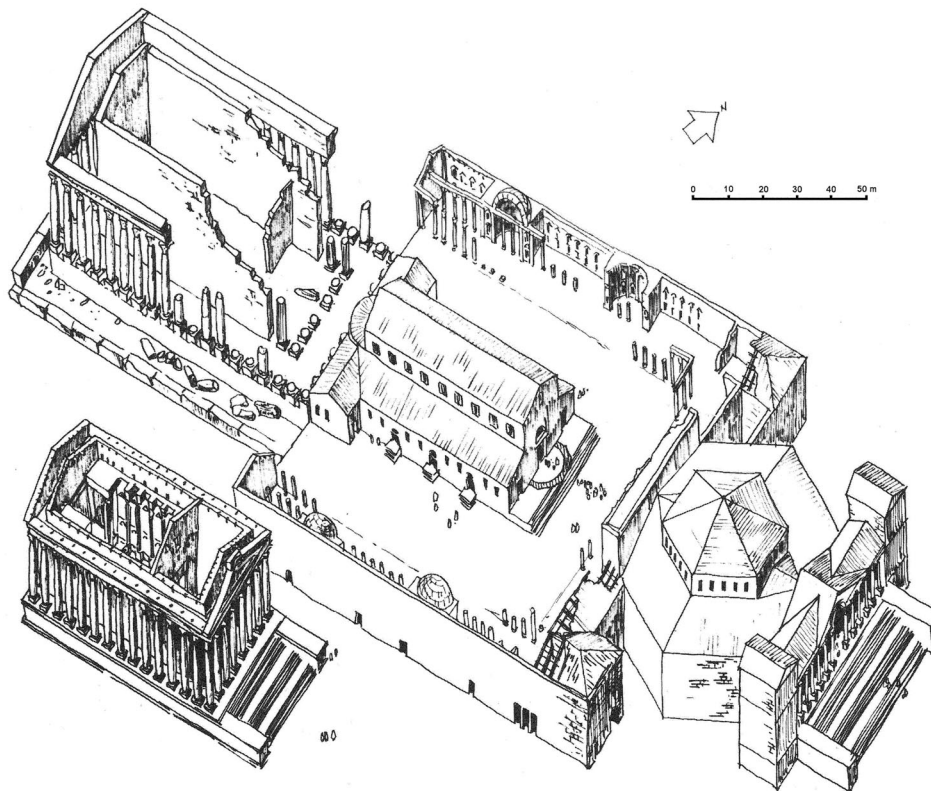
Figure 6 Reconstruction of church built within Temple of Jupiter temenos at Heliopolis with hexagonal court and propylon to the east (after Ragette 1980: 70).

but the treatment of the surrounding temenos walls and entry architecture reveals further evidence of architectural re-utilization and of the appropriation of experience. The foundation of the church was raised by about 2 m during construction, using spolia taken mostly from the demolished altars and the colonnaded temenos walls. Importantly, spolia were removed from the temenos walls in such a way as to suggest careful partial dismantling from the top down, rather than simply removing sections of the wall (Bayliss 2004: 24–25; Ragette 1980: 69, 71). Such careful *katastylosis*, or dismantling, meant that the walls retained their general form and continued to create an enclosed courtyard space.

To access the church, worshippers left the bustling city by climbing the staircase leading to the retained propylon, passing through this monumental gateway and navigating the hexagonal court before bursting into the sunlight of the temenos courtyard. Within this raised courtyard, worshippers experienced a space separate from the city and outside world. Only the east end of the basilica rising in front of the worshipper, masking the bulk of the temple remains behind it, the enclosing stone temenos walls and the sky, were visible. This enforced supplication to the architecture of admittance and required Christians to re-create the same structure of encounter as their non-Christian predecessors. Christian builders at Heliopolis intentionally preserved the non-Christian architectural envelope to ensure that worshippers continued to experience the pre-Christian journey, from everyday city into the disconnected otherness of the retained temenos space.

These created and appropriated experiences were dissimilar to those created at Gerasa, where experiences of approach and entry were created that contrasted strongly with those of the adjacent Temple of Artemis complex, but this further demonstrates the importance of applying a user experience-led approach when analysing appropriated and adjacent architecture. The example from Heliopolis also demonstrates that the intentional and considered creation of relationships between churches and adjacent non-Christian religious architecture, could be a deliberate aspect of church construction in the 5th century CE Eastern Mediterranean.

Wider civic context

Having explored the architectural and experiential relationships created between the cathedral and temple complexes, which had the effect of manipulating user understanding of Christianity and non-Christian cult, and of helping to facilitate the transition from the latter to the former through the

retained propylon, one should also consider the cathedral's place within the wider civic context. Doing so suggests that the cathedral was integral to how Christianity was monumentalized in Gerasa, and to how citizens understood and interacted with their architectural and religious pasts, presents and futures.

As stated earlier, it is perhaps surprising that the cathedral appears to be the earliest of the 19 churches that can be dated in the city (Boyer 2018: 68–69). One might expect the construction of churches to have begun outside or at the edge of the city, with monumental churches at the centre appearing later, but the evidence suggests this was not the case. Indeed, only two of the known churches are found outside the city walls (Charlie March 2009: 260). This is made more notable by the fact that the construction of centrally located church complexes only became a general trend in the surrounding urban areas in the late 5th and early 6th centuries CE (Moralee 2006: 188–89), with construction of the cathedral dated to as early as 404 CE. A lack of understanding of the wider street plan of the city hinders more detailed analysis of exact spatial relationships between churches, streets and other buildings (Lichtenberger and Raja 2017: 13; Charlie March 2009: 297), but further analysis is certainly possible.

Kennedy explores the urban development of late antique Gerasa by contrasting it with that of Scythopolis, around 45 km to the north-west. At Gerasa, a number of churches were built in the heart of the city from the 5th through to the start of the 7th centuries CE, while theatres and bath-houses appear to have been abandoned (Kennedy 2000: 200–01). In contrast, at Scythopolis no comparable church development took place in the centre of the city, but a new major bath complex was built and the odeon was demolished and replaced by a semi-circular plaza rather than being left to ruin (Kennedy 2000: 202–03). Kennedy suggests that these contrasting developments were caused by political factors; Scythopolis was the capital of the province of Palestine, while Gerasa was a provincial town. At the former, governors paid for new buildings and adhered to laws requiring the maintenance of buildings and the status of the city. At the latter, without the patronage of a governor, public funds were not spent on maintaining the classical urban fabric, and it was the Church and citizens who paid for church construction (Kennedy 2000: 204).

This is a convincing explanation for the, perhaps, unexpected development of the urban fabric of Gerasa, however, specific analysis of the role that churches played in this urban and topographic development can be undertaken.

There is no evidence that churches were inserted within standing temple remains in the city, but spoliated material was incorporated into churches and some of this originated from temples and *temene* walls. Material from the temples of Artemis, Dionysus and Zeus was removed and used elsewhere in the city, as well as in the construction of churches (Artemis: Charlie March 2009: 174; Dionysus: Brenk *et al.* 1995: 220; Jäggi *et al.* 1998: 426; Zeus: Chrystelle March 2004). Spolia from other, secular structures were also incorporated into churches (Charlie March 2009: 366–67). As mentioned earlier, much of the fabric of the cathedral consisted of reused stones from earlier non-Christian buildings and this included five stones with Greek inscriptions. Two of these served either as lintels or revetments, two were built into walls and one was incorporated as a support for the altar in the slightly later chapel attached to the southern side of the cathedral (Moralee 2006: 198–99).

Clearly, spolia played a role in the relationship between church construction and the pre-Christian city. However, it is important to note that the use of identifiable non-Christian spolia, such as inscriptions, increased significantly towards the end of the 5th century CE, with twice as many such inscriptions incorporated into the late 5th century basilica of St. Theodore, as were incorporated within the early 5th century cathedral (Moralee 2006: 207).

In the early 5th century CE Christians in Gerasa did not feel the need to insert churches within standing temple remains, or to destroy such standing remains when constructing churches. While identifiable non-Christian spolia use in the cathedral was minimal and difficult to interpret, Moralee convincingly argues that its use in the later basilica of St. Theodore created links to non-Christian pasts and that by contrasting spoliated inscriptions with new Christian inscriptions, a sense of Christian domination was achieved (Moralee 2006). It appears that at the earliest stage of church construction, the use of identifiable spolia was less important than the physical location of the church itself.

Jacobs suggests that churches built in central and raised positions, such as the cathedral at Gerasa, were intended to dominate their surroundings (2013: 213). While this is certainly often true, such an analysis of the location of the cathedral offers only a partial understanding in relation to the development of Christian Gerasa. Construction of the cathedral created complex and challenging contrasts that impacted upon Christians and non-Christians at the time of construction, as already demonstrated, but it

also seems that doing so at the genesis of monumental Christian architectural expression in the city had a wider and longer lasting effect.

In the centuries following construction of the cathedral, the desire to create relationships between adjacent Christian and non-Christian architecture shaped much of the architectural development of the city centre. Indeed, while the Church of the Prophets, Apostles and Martyrs was built to the north of the city, near to the walls, in 464/5 CE, the Temple of Artemis became the 'cluster-point' for a further 10 churches built in and around the complex (Charlie March 2009: 256 table 7, 260–61). A significant example of this can be found immediately south-east of the Temple of Artemis propylon, where part of the monumental approach road to the temple was roofed and transformed into the Propylaea Church in approximately 565 CE (Fig. 1; Crowfoot 1938: 227–34; Jacobs 2013: 323–24).

The available evidence suggests that the complex relationships created through the construction of the cathedral adjacent to the Temple of Artemis complex represent the earliest manifestation in the city of a local attitude towards the past and towards non-Christian architecture. Citizens of Gerasa, from around the turn of the 5th century CE, sought to integrate their Christian architectural present with the existing architecture of the city, including non-Christian cult buildings, through the creation of relationships resulting from adjacent building practices, rather than through the demolition and replacement of temples or *in situ* temple reuse. The Synagogue Church, created within the *in situ* remains of a synagogue in 530/1 CE, is a notable exception (Dvorjetski 2005). While this was located close to the Temple of Artemis complex, cathedral and the basilica of St. Theodore, its conversion took place in the following century in a correspondingly different context. At that time the Emperor Justinian advocated the removal of synagogues and their replacement with churches, and Christians were in a stronger situation politically than had been the case in the early 5th century CE, when adjacent building practices appear to have developed in Gerasa (Dvorjetski 2005: 159).

The importance that the builders placed on constructing the cathedral adjacent to the Temple of Artemis complex can be seen in the compromises in layout that were accepted to achieve this. To accommodate a basilica with an eastern apse on a site that featured a main access route from the cardo to the east, compromises were required in entry architecture. A staircase that led up from the cardo directly towards the blank eastern exterior wall of the apse was necessary, as were the two long lateral passages that guided visitors the length of the cathedral, to the western fountain court and entrances.

Towards the end of the 5th century CE, the use of spoliated inscriptions and architectural members became more common and through this a new method by which Christian presents could be brought together with non-Christian pasts developed. Even so, the basilica of St. Theodore, which featured significant examples of this, was located immediately adjacent to both the cathedral and the Temple of Artemis complex.

It is unclear whether this attitude towards the past and the built environment originated in the monumental and successful contrasts and comparisons created at the cathedral, or if this instead represents the first monumental manifestation of such an attitude towards adjacent construction.

Conclusion

The cathedral at Gerasa represents a complex example of early Christian monumental architecture, that can only be satisfactorily understood when considered in relation to the adjacent Temple of Artemis complex. By exploring the retention of the propylon with an understanding of the importance of memory in shaping user experience of architecture, it was possible to detect and unpack the appropriation of non-Christian cult contexts and practices. As at Epidauros, in Greece, this reuse encouraged users to frame and understand their new religion, its practices and its hierarchies, within known local contexts and reference points.

This paper demonstrates that the adjacent nature of the two complexes meant that many users of the cathedral did so with a first-hand understanding of the structure of encounter and the spaces of the neighbouring temple complex. Architectural and experiential relationships were created, whether intentionally or not on the part of cathedral builders, which resulted in the creation of comparative and contrasting experiences for users. This directly impacted the various users of the cathedral, and indeed those of the temple complex, and shaped how they understood the cathedral, Christianity and non-Christian cult.

By integrating analysis with the wider civic architectural context of the changing Christian city, the cathedral was shown to have been a key early component of how Christianity was monumentalized in Gerasa. In the centuries that followed the cathedral's construction, it appears that citizens were inclined to integrate their non-Christian memories and pasts with their

Christian present and future through the creation of architectural relationships, rather than through extensive demolition and replacement, or *in situ* reuse of non-Christian religious architecture. Later, the use of inscribed spolia in church construction increased and served to create new connections to non-Christian pasts.

Two final points can be made in light of the above analysis. It has been demonstrated that the creation of relationships between adjacent buildings in the construction of early churches could be a very real, and in some cases intentional, phenomenon, that should be considered as having been as influential in directing and even manipulating user experience as those churches built within, or through the substantial incorporation of, standing temple *cellae*. While churches built near to temples are considered within temple-church conversion literature, they are often relegated to a separate form, or type, to those that incorporate *cellae* (e.g. Bayliss 2004; Milojevic 1997). Acknowledging that adjacent church construction created significant, valid and equally meaningful experiences for users, is to significantly widen the scope for identifying and understanding the Christian appropriation of pre-Christian religious architecture and the varied conversion of temples into churches.

Lastly, this research demonstrates the value of a user experience-led approach, guided by the considerable published research on phenomenology, memory and the agency of buildings, to the study of architectural relationships between adjacent buildings. Such an approach enables one to uncover and analyse how structures of encounter, created and appropriated spaces and architectural features, and architectural and experiential relationships shaped user experience and understanding of both the architecture and the institutions this represented.

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