Jerónimo Sánchez Velasco

# The Christianization of Western Baetica

Architecture, Power, and Religion in a Late Antique Landscape

Amsterdam
University
Press

The Christianization of Western Baetica

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# The Christianization of Western Baetica

*Architecture, Power, and Religion in
a Late Antique Landscape*

*Jerónimo Sánchez Velasco*

Amsterdam University Press

To my dear wife, Carmen,
and to my British friends,
Colin, Janet, Viv, and Pauline,
who never succeeded in having me master
the English language.

*When you are studying any matter, or considering any philosophy, ask yourself only what are the facts and what is the truth that the facts bear out. Never let yourself be diverted either by what you wish to believe, or by what you think would have beneficent social effects if it were believed. But look only, and solely, at what are the facts.*

BBC's 'Face to Face' interview with Bertrand Russell (1872–1970) in 1959.

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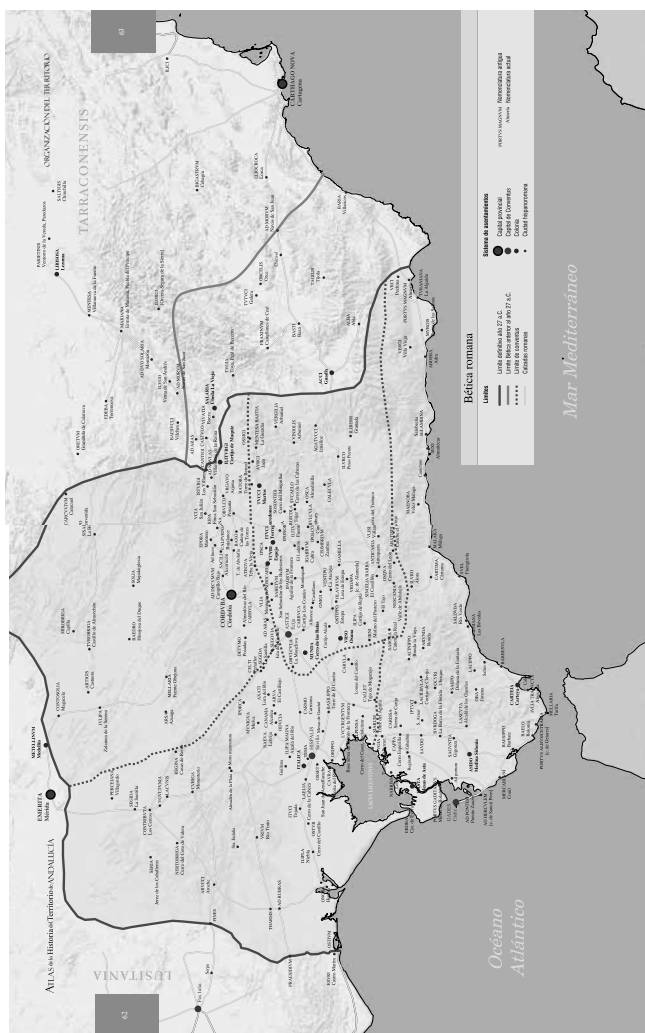
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# List of Abbreviations

| | |
|---|---|
| AAA | Anuario Arqueológico de Andalucía |
| AAC | Anales de Arqueología Cordobesa |
| AEspA | Archivo Español de Arqueología |
| AE | Année Épigraphique |
| BMAN | Boletín del Museo Arqueológico Nacional |
| CIL II | *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* II |
| CILA | Corpus de Inscripciones Latinas de Andalucía |
| CLE | Carmina Latina Epigraphica |
| CuPAUAM | Cuadernos de Prehistoria y Arqueología de la Universidad Autónoma de Madrid |
| ERBeturi | Epigrafía Romana de la Beturia Céltica |
| HAE | Hispania Antigua Epigraphica |
| HEp | Hispania Epigráfica |
| ICERV | Inscripciones Cristianas de la España Romana y Visigoda |
| IHC | Inscriptiones Hispaniae Christianae |
| ILCV | Inscriptiones Latinae Christianae Veteres |
| ILMMálaga | Inscripciones Latinas del Museo de Málaga |
| MM | Madrider Mitteilungen |
| MEFRA | Mélanges de l'École Française |
| PLRE | The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire |
| RIT | Die römischen Inschriften von Tarraco |

# Preface

No siempre es un ejercicio cómodo hacer una presentación de un libro de investigación de una importancia como el que nos ocupa. Cuando no lo es, se suele incurrir en tópicos, generalidades y lugares comunes que en realidad encubren la necesidad de cumplir lo antes posible con un encargo que no se ha podido rechazar. Afortunadamente no es este el caso porque el autor forma parte del círculo de investigadores más jóvenes a los que admiro por su capacidad de trabajo, su honestidad investigadora y una dedicación altruista que tiene que compaginar con un número elevado de horas de docencia en un instituto público. También por su intensidad intelectual que, en ocasiones y en el cara a cara, puede acabar con la resistencia del interlocutor más preparado, al que no le queda más remedio que solicitar una pausa con un buen vino de por medio. Y es que el autor de este trabajo es también el andaluz más irónico, ocurrente y divertido, con quien me he encontrado, de manera que, dada mi rigidez castellana, siempre he tenido que echar mano de mis mejores recursos verbales e intelectuales para procurar estar a la altura de sus retos dialécticos cuando debatimos sobre arqueología, historia u otras cuestiones más mundanas.

En lo que respecta al libro que aquí se presenta, se trata de la parte más sólida de una extensa, ambiciosa y bien trabajada tesis doctoral centrada en el estudio de la parte occidental de la provincia romana de la Bética en época tardoantigua. Precisamente un territorio económicamente sustancial para el Imperio romano, pero el más desconocido de la provincia pese a contar con un buen número de novedosas y rigurosas excavaciones arqueológicas en los últimos años que están abriendo nuevas perspectivas de estudio en la zona y ampliando sensiblemente el horizonte del conocimiento histórico. Sin embargo, y pese a esta riqueza informativa, faltaba por realizar un trabajo de estudio general, compilación, ordenación y síntesis de los materiales y datos elaborados a partir de ellos de manera individual y, a veces, dispersa. Faltaba el trabajo de conjunto capaz de facilitar la comprensión del contexto histórico general. Esta ha sido la labor principal del autor, labor difícil, exhaustiva y casi podríamos decir titánica, dada el volumen de información que ha manejado y conseguido aunar en un discurso coherente, reflexionado y bien trabajado. El elevado número de materiales arqueológicos que ha manejado para conseguir su propósito es sin duda indispensable si tenemos en cuenta la evidente y perturbadora falta de fuentes escritas para el estudio de esta época en este marco geográfico en particular y para todas las Hispanias en general. De manera que es la

arqueología y los estudios multidisciplinares que lleva aparejados la que se convierte de mano del autor en la esencia de los avances del discurso histórico de la Bética. Durante años el autor ha investigado materiales epigráficos, arqueológicos, artísticos de la Bética Occidental, algunos de los cuales por razones diversas ofrecían poca aportación seria a un trabajo de conjunto y dificultaban la labor del investigador.

Una empresa de estas características la ha podido llevar a cabo gracias a su experiencia y la sólida formación como arqueólogo, resultado del elevado número de excavaciones en las que ha participado y ha dirigido que complementa con publicaciones en revistas de prestigio académico sobre materiales arqueológicos del territorio meridional peninsular. Pero también por el especial carácter con que ha afrontado un estudio de esta envergadura, no siempre fácil y sin lugar a dudas voluminoso, que ha supuesto un reto importante pero necesario de emprender. Ímpetu y valentía son las dos palabras que definen los inicios de su trabajo, constancia y perseverancia caracterizan los años empleados en el estudio, y el éxito sin duda concluye el final del mismo. Pero es evidente que un trabajo de este calado no puede ser publicado en su totalidad por razones editoriales, motivo por el que el autor se ha visto obligado a reducir la publicación del volumen de sus investigaciones a las manifestaciones arquitectónicas vinculadas al poder imperial en la provincia y a los poderes locales predominantes en ella, en particular en el espacio más reducido pero visible e imperante del cristianismo que se convierte en la época de estudio en la religión dominante.

El volumen con el resultado de sus pesquisas se distribuye tres partes. La primera la componen los tres primeros capítulos que nos introducen en el contexto histórico y documental del tema que se va a desarrollar con la finalidad de que quienes no conocen bien la historia de la Baetica durante la Antigüedad Tardía puedan tener algunas referencias básicas.

La segunda parte se compone de siete capítulos, extensos y enjundiosos, donde se presentan los datos arqueológicos de los más de 30 complejos edilicios que se pueden fechar en esta época, analizados cada uno de ellos pormenorizadamente y con exquisita y cuidada referencia entre sí y en relación a otros edificios similares del antiguo Imperio Romano, de manera que ha logrado el primer trabajo de recopilación y análisis de los edificios no residenciales tardoantiguos en la Baetica que tiene como punto de partida las actuales provincias españolas.

Finalmente, la tercera parte comprende dos capítulos que a mi modo de ver son esenciales en un estudio de estas características. A través de ellos trata de reconstruir, en la medida de lo posible y con los materiales con que se cuenta, un panorama general de esta provincia en la época tardía,

panorama que hasta ahora era poco conocido. Es decir, que partiendo de la información arqueológica analizada de una manera crítica y exhaustiva, el autor se atreve a presentar una visión global e interpretativa de la historia de este periodo. Su finalidad principal es hacer Historia con los documentos que ha manejado, no quedarse simplemente en un estudio de los mismos, y con ello ir a la esencia de lo que persigue todo historiador que se precie como tal, el situar a su campo de estudio, en este caso la Baetica, en el contexto general del devenir histórico del Imperio de Occidente al que pertenece y al que no solo no es ajena, sino en el que tiene un papel importante. Aunque, como el autor reconoce, en este empeño queda todavía mucho camino por recorrer, muchos materiales que trabajar y mucha investigación que completar y por ello el último capítulo se centra en subrayar las ideas clave que se han expuesto en la obra y quedan abiertas las vías a través de las cuales se puedan generar nuevas expectativas de trabajo y las nuevas perspectivas que permitan en un futuro complementar y avanzar en la investigación y en los resultados que aclaren cada vez más el panorama histórico general de la Bética al final de la Antigüedad.

No quiero finalizar sin resaltar una vez más el enorme esfuerzo que Jerónimo ha realizado en los años de dedicación a una empresa de la que el primer resultado es el libro que ahora tenemos entre las manos y que permite dar a conocer al mundo académico y científico los avances de la investigación en el extremo suroccidental del continente europeo. Esperemos que este trabajo sirva de aliciente y de ejemplo para futuros investigadores y de interés para el colectivo científico que se dedica al estudio del final de la Antigüedad, ya que en él se demuestra el papel esencial de la provincia romana de la Bética en la historia general del Imperio romano.

*Rosa Sanz Serrano*
*Universidad Complutense de Madrid*
*Grupo Barbaricum*

# Acknowledgements

This is the most difficult section of this book to write. It would be practically impossible to thank every single person whose support has proven instrumental throughout the ten years of research presented here. The book that readers have in their hands ultimately derives from the interpretive part of my doctoral thesis, entitled *Architecture and Power in Western Baetica between the 4th and 8th Centuries AD: The Christianization of the Cities and the Territory*. This thesis includes the study of more than three hundred pieces of architectural and liturgical decoration scattered across more than twenty museums and private collections in five current provinces of Spain (Jaén, Córdoba, Seville, Huelva, and Badajoz); it also includes a catalogue consisting of tens of epigraphic inscriptions; and it fully studies thirty-four building complexes of Late Antiquity in western Baetica, an area of about 60,000 square km, only slightly smaller than Belgium and the Netherlands combined.

Needless to say I could not possibly have done all this work on my own. Every visit to museums, archaeological sites, and research centres in both Spain and the rest of Europe was an opportunity to meet wonderful people, who have always been generously and selflessly willing to help. Naming who, where, when, and how all these people made my task easier would be a vast endeavour. To all of them my deepest appreciation for their support.

Various people have accompanied me throughout most of this long process of study. I would like to mention the directors of the Archaeological Museum of Córdoba, Francisco Godoy and M. Dolores Baena, who greatly facilitated my work; my dear colleagues and students of the Santos Isasa High School (Montoro, Córdoba), who patiently endured my absences; my colleagues at the University of Seville, especially Salvador Ordóñez and Sergio García-Dils, who share with me this (rare) interest in late antique Baetica; my dear Portuguese archaeologists, André Carneiro (University of Evora), Virgilio Lopes (Archaeological Site of Evora), and Mélanie Wolfram; also the German Archaeological Institute represented by its director Dirce Marzoli; I cannot forget Neil Christie (University of Leicester, England) and his always-interesting notes; the directors of research groups in which I participate, Helena Gimeno (Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum, Hispania), Javier Andreu Pintado (Los Bañales, Uncastillo Foundation), and Pilar García (University of Navarra); and, of course, my Catalan friends, from whom I have learnt so much, namely Pep Anton Remolà (Archaeological Museum of Tarragona), Meritxell Pérez (University of Rovira i Virgili), Gemma García, Antonio Moro, and Jordi López (ICAC).

Special thanks are due to my dear friends of the Barbaricum research group at the Complutense University of Madrid – the only research group in the Iberian Peninsula which studies *Hispania* in Late Antiquity through different disciplines: Rosa Sanz, David Hernández, Rosa García-Gasco, Emilio Gamo, Saul Martín, and David Álvarez. They are the lifeblood of a group in which I have been able to fully develop my expertise in Late Antiquity, and where I have grown as a researcher thanks to their support and friendship.

However, this book would not have been possible without the determination of three people. First, Jamie Wood (University of Lincoln), someone who really encouraged me to undertake this publishing project. Secondly, Erin Thomas Dailey, my long-suffering editor at Amsterdam University Press, blessed with a biblical patience displayed at every stage of the editing process. And finally, I must highlight the dedicated translation work of Pedro Santamaría and my dear wife, Carmen Cuadro. Heir to stoicism, they have translated a whole book about broken stones, destroyed churches, and people who have been dead for 1500 years.

I have robbed Carmen and my two daughters, Carmen and Irene, of a lot of time together. From now on, I will be able to give them back every single minute.

*Jerónimo Sanchez Velasco*
*Ante diem XVIII Kal. Ian. Era MMLIII*

# Introduction

The purpose of this book is to analyse the process of Christianization in western Baetica, part of the southern-most province of Roman *Hispania*. At present it corresponds with the western zone of Andalusia and the south of the region of Extremadura. The common history of this territory within the Roman Empire provides the context for a comparative study of six different episcopal sites: Córdoba (*Corduba*); Cabra (*Egabrum*) in today's province of Córdoba; Écija (*Astigi*) in today's province of Seville; Seville itself (*Hispalis*); *Italica* (adjacent to modern-day Santiponce), also in the province of Seville; and Niebla (*Ilipla*) in today's province of Huelva. The lack of historical sources of this period in Baetica forces us to work, almost exclusively, with data from archaeology, epigraphy, and numismatics.

Christianization has often been studied as a process of predominantly religious change. This is the traditional approach taken by 'Christian archaeology', the focus of which is on the expansion of the new religion and its liturgical modifications. However, this book analyses the process of Christianization in a very different way, from the point of view of social history. The central argument is that an exhaustive analysis of the earliest Christian architecture can provide us with a reliable picture of the transformations that triggered the end of classical society in Baetica, and that these changes happened faster and deeper than is generally admitted. In less than eighty years, a new architecture emerged that transformed cities and the countryside. Basilicas consecrated to the martyrs took over the necropolises. Churches and cemeteries arose in urban centres, on forums and baths, whose pagan decoration was destroyed. Episcopal complexes occupied large areas of the city. Monasteries controlled Roman roads and developed important economic activities.

The Church was one of the main protagonists of these transformations, and demonstrated its power through an architecture that modified the landscape. This power was exercised by the figure of the bishop, as if he were the ruler of a small state, anticipating what is often considered a particularly medieval phenomenon. These bishops belonged to local aristocratic elites, and even formed episcopal dynasties. Archaeological, epigraphic, and numismatic data confirm the importance of episcopal control over society, politics, and the economy. Some proceedings of the councils that have come to us attempt to solve territorial problems and the balance of power between bishoprics, confirming the interpretation of the archaeological evidence offered here.

This book thus aims to achieve a fundamental reconsideration of existing historical and archaeological paradigms concerning the impact of Christianity on territories and societies, moving away from what we might call 'Christian-centrism'. The unusual social perspective used for the interpretation of the archaeological findings firmly guides the reader to the conclusion that it is not enough to talk about Christian archaeology in the traditional way; rather, we must talk about an archaeology of ecclesiastical power, since Christianity must be analysed as a phenomenon that certainly goes beyond faith.

This book addresses, for the first time and from the basis of social history, the process of Christianization in western Baetica. The concept of 'Christianization' is central to the argument of this book. The use of the term implies more than just narrow religious claims about doctrine or liturgical practice. Rather, Christianization is a paradigm, a thread that will guide us through a series of social, economic, and political changes. Just as such changes affected the whole Roman Empire, so they decisively affected the history of Baetica from the fourth century to the conquest of the Iberian Peninsula by Umayyad armies at the start of the eighth century.

The scholarly critique of previous publications has been a necessary task because in many of the studies a significant over-reliance on traditional historiographical discourse was far too obvious. It is common to find studies of Christianity that adopt a narrowly religious starting point: for example, archaeological publications include categories such as 'early Christianity' or '*archeologia Cristiana*' and focus on the appearance of new churches, the liturgy practised in them, or iconography.[1] Such studies, the origins of which can be traced to nineteenth-century Italy, were consolidated during the twentieth century thanks to the Pontifical Institute of Christian Archaeology and its publications (since 1925). Later, under the influence of French archaeologists, many of these publications studied the Christian topography of regions or the urban transformation of a specific city.[2] That is to say, these studies stressed the implantation of the new religion and its expansion. Another group of works emphasized the study of historical sources, for example hagiographies,[3] treatises about heresies,[4] ecclesiastical factions,[5] or other aspects of the life of Christian communities.[6]

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1    Testini 1980, 1:, 'L'archeologia cristiana è una scienza storica, che ha per compito lo studio delle testimonianze monumentali dei primi secoli dell'antichità cristiana.'
2    Duval 1971; Duval 1973.
3    Castillo 1999; Duval 1993.
4    Sotomayor and Fernández 2006.
5    Teja 1995.
6    Sotomayor 2006.

This approach has provided interesting results, but it has major limitations, since it focuses on the emergence and evolution of Christianity and disregards the society in which such processes occurred. It is true that some recent publications, under the influence of medieval archaeology, have studied the archaeological remains of churches and cemeteries in their social and economic contexts.[7] However, the traditional view has prevailed, with very slight changes in the way of approaching the problem. In this sense, in Italy there is talk of the 'archaeology of churches',[8] which focuses on technical analysis, expressly renouncing the study of the social and economic implications of these buildings.[9] In France these quantitative and technical studies have also been imposed.[10] And, finally, the largest European research project on the architecture of Late Antiquity is a catalogue of churches the aim of which is to create a large online database.[11]

The intention of this book is different. Christianization is understood as a phenomenon that best illustrates the process of transformation of the social, political, and economic order of Rome (in the fourth to seventh centuries). To be fully understood, this phenomenon must be studied from the perspective of social history.[12] The research presented in this book demonstrates that religious changes have causes and consequences that go well beyond a mere change of beliefs. In fact, Christianization must be related to the evolution of the Church as an institution that accumulated more and more social, political, and economic power. In less than eighty years, Christianity went from a persecuted religion (as evidenced by the laws of Diocletian and Galerius in 303–304 AD) to the official religion of the whole Roman Empire (as shown by the edict of Thessalonica, 380 AD). It is impossible to fully understand this process from a narrowly religious perspective or by studying the institutional history of the Church through documents such as the canons of church councils.

The key to this rapid process is undoubtedly to understand how and why the Church became a powerful institution under the Roman State during

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7    Two examples of this type of publications are Pergola 2001 and Chavarria 2009. Medieval Archaeology developed studies focused on social and economic questions, leaving purely religious questions aside. This development is due in large part to scientific journals such as *Medieval Archaeology* (since 1957) in United Kingdom and *Archeologia Medievale* (since 1974) in Italy.

8    Chavarria 2009.

9    Chevalier 2010: 348.

10   Chapelot 2010.

11   Ripoll 2009.

12   Kocha 2008: 159.

the fourth century. When Roman imperial power no longer reached into the former western provinces in the fifth century, the Church, through its representatives, especially the bishops, became one of the few institutions, and perhaps the most widespread, capable of coping with this crisis. In fact, the prestige and influence of the Church grew in the absence of the State. Under the leadership of bishops, as key members and representatives of local elites, many cities survived an extremely unsettled era. Later, in the seventh century, ecclesiastical power continued to grow, linked to the new barbarian kingdoms and the emergence of what we could call 'national churches'.

This book offers a synthetic view of this important region during Late Antiquity. Any study of the province of Baetica in this period must confront the lack of historical sources. The history of the evolution of Christianity in Baetica is especially affected by this lack of texts. For this reason, the present study is largely based on archaeological evidence and epigraphic evidence. Archaeology and epigraphy provide valuable information that will allow us to analyse the extent to which the Christianization of the cities and the countryside of Baetica was the direct consequence of the extension and strengthening of the power of the Church.

Christianity is embodied in the archaeological record in a number of different ways, such as iconography, mosaics, funerary rites, and wall paintings. This book focuses on religious and funerary architecture, since not only is it archaeologically recognizable, but it also allows us to chart changes in the landscape.[13] The necropolises of late antique Baetica are a secondary focus, while the funerary archaeology of late antique Baetica is not a main concern of this study.[14] The subject of early Christian architecture has been approached from the theoretical concept of the 'architecture of power'. The work of Sudjic is particularly important in our application of the concept to Late Antiquity:

Building is not just about the practical provision of shelter, or the construction of the modern infrastructures of a state. Though it may appear to be rooted in pragmatism, it is a powerful and extraordinarily revealing expression of human psychology. […] It is a means of inflating the human ego to the scale of a landscape, a city, or even a nation. It reflects the ambitions and insecurities and motivations of those who build and,

13   The capacity of these buildings to determine the historical, social, and religious identity evolution in studies on Late Antiquity is widely recognized; an example in Chevalier 2011.
14   Carmona 1998.

because of that, it offers a faithful reflection of the nature of power, its strategies, its consolations and its impact on those who wield it.[15]

The relationship between architecture and identity is also important and, while the essential motivations may not have not changed, the processes, the materials, and the timescales that shape buildings may well have:

> On one level, architecture never changes. Despite the veneer of the contemporary, architecture is intimately concerned with the primal issues confronting us in our attempts to come to terms with who we are, and what life is. Architecture is constantly about the same things: power, glory, spectacle, memory, identity.[16]

How does the concept of the 'architecture of power' apply to Late Antiquity in western Baetica? The central argument of this book is that an exhaustive analysis of early Christian architecture (churches and funerary monuments) provides us with a reliable picture of the transformations that triggered the end of classical society in Baetica, and these changes are faster and deeper than generally admitted.[17] The changes are not related to the personal religious conversion of the population, a topic that the available data cannot enable us to address, but to the ability of the Christian Church to build complexes that reflected and displayed its increasing power.[18] In less than eighty years a new architecture emerged that transformed cities and the countryside. Necropolises were occupied by great basilicas consecrated to local martyrs, such as St. Acisclus (Córdoba) and Sts. Iusta and Rufina (Seville). These basilicas managed funeral spaces, establishing a clear hierarchy among the tombs. For example, there was stiff competition for burial near the relics of the saints (*ad sanctos*). This changed traditional Roman burial patterns, where gravesites were located outside the boundaries of cities and along roads.

Churches and cemeteries arose in urban centres, in *fora*, temples, and baths, the pagan decoration of which was destroyed. In Córdoba, a church was built on the site of a Roman bath, while in Écija the temple of the Roman imperial cult was destroyed and its entrance converted into a huge cemetery. Episcopal complexes occupied large areas of cities such as Seville

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15    Sudjic 2011: 323–324.
16    Sudjic 2011: 324.
17    Sotomayor 1994; García Moreno 2007.
18    Papaconstantinou, McLynn, and Schwartz 2015.

and Córdoba, and were embellished with colonnaded streets, sigma-plazas, and arches. All these architectural forms were highly charged with symbolic meaning and invested with power by reusing great columns (*spolia*) in an obvious attempt to imitate ancient Roman public architecture loaded with prestige.[19]

The monasteries functioned as architectural complexes that controlled important Roman roads. This is the case of El Germo and La Losilla, sites that were strategically located on the road between the city of Córdoba and the mines of Almadén. The monasteries also controlled important economic activities, such as in Seville, where a monastery took over activity within the port in the city.

The Church was one of the main protagonists of these transformations, demonstrating its power through an architecture that modified cities and the landscape. This power was exercised by the bishop,[20] as if he were the ruler of a small state, in some ways anticipating the Middle Ages. These bishops belonged to local aristocratic elites, and even formed episcopal dynasties. Perhaps the best known episcopal dynasty in Baetica is that of Isidore of Seville and his brothers, who controlled the bishoprics of Seville and Écija for decades. Archaeological, epigraphic, and numismatic data confirm the importance of episcopal control over society, politics, and the economy. Some proceedings of the church councils that have come to us basically deal with how to solve territorial problems and the balance of power between bishoprics. This was what happened, for example, in the Second Council of Seville (619 AD).

This book urges us to deeply reconsider current historical and archaeological paradigms concerning the impact of Christianity on particular territories and societies. The characteristic focus of this study on interpreting archaeological findings within their social context firmly guides the reader to the conclusion that we must do more than talk about Christian archaeology merely in the traditional way. Rather, we should also consider the archaeology of ecclesiastical power, since Christianity must be analysed as a phenomenon that undoubtedly goes beyond faith.

The structure of this book presents in detail this process of Christianization using the available evidence, particularly the relevant archaeological information. The first part of the book, 'Baetica in Late Antiquity', gives a brief historical overview to help to contextualize the archaeology of western Baetica. It is divided into three chapters. Chapters 1 and 2 focus on the

19   Jacobs 2014; Jacobs 2015.
20   Fear, Fernández, and Marcos 2013.

Roman period, on imperial interactions with Baetica, and on provincial responses to increasing integration into the Empire. The production of raw materials and food made the province prosperous. Baetican cities raised important monuments and experienced considerable urban development during the late Republic and early Empire. The archaeological remains of these imposing cities are explained in the second chapter. Chapter 3 introduces the reader to the history of late antique Baetica, beginning with the fourth century, moving on to the end of Roman rule during the fifth century, and ending with the Visigothic period. The intention is not to provide an exhaustive history, but to point out the main historical events and interpretations in order to contextualize later arguments based on the archaeological evidence.

The second part, 'Early Christian Topography', forms the core of the book. This is the fruit of over ten years of research into the material record of late antique Baetica. It is divided into seven chapters that follow the ecclesiastical organization of the western part of the province. Chapter 4 seeks to establish the limits of the bishoprics of western Baetica. A chapter is then dedicated to each of the six bishoprics of western Baetica: Córdoba, Cabra, Écija, Seville, *Italica*, and Niebla. Each of these chapters follows the same structure. Firstly, we study the episcopal seat and then, later, each of the cities or places with remains that can be linked to Christianity. This is the first time that the detailed relationship of the Christian topography of Baetica has been published. Also for the first time, all the archaeological and epigraphic materials relevant to the process of Christianization over these four centuries has been collected together. What is more, the comparison of the findings with their analogues in *Hispania* and the Mediterranean allows us to offer a critical and accurate view of the type of archaeological evidence that we face.

In order to explore further the introduction of Christianity and the architecture that mirrors it, we have found it convenient to sum up in this section those places where we believe there to have been a church. Thanks to certain elements of architectural decoration (such as the remains of altars) or epigraphy (foundation inscriptions), we have been able to discern the location of these churches. By attending to their distribution, we have been able to approach the organization of the territory and establish hypotheses about how and why churches were founded in certain places.

The last part of the book, 'Christianization: An Archaeology of Ecclesiastical Power', is composed of two chapters that synthesize the evidence for the Christianization of the cities and the landscape of western Baetica and address the social repercussions of Christianization. Chapter 11 offers a

technical summary of the archaeological evidence for the different types of early Christian architecture in the region. Although the chapter aims to determine how Christian architecture developed in western Baetica in particular, it has also been possible to compare this to contemporaneous developments in Christian architecture elsewhere in *Hispania* and further afield. The chapter is organized according to the religious importance of each building. It begins with episcopal complexes and a discussion about their characteristics and location in the city. Then we analyse the different types of churches and the influences they received. Baptisteries and baptismal buildings are analysed from a liturgical and symbolic point of view, especially highlighting that new data allows for a comparison with funerary monuments. The monasteries are treated subsequently, distinguishing three basic types, and emphasizing how their architectural features conformed to their religious and economic functions. In the next section we provide data on three types of buildings unknown in Baetica: towers, atriums, and colonnaded streets. Funerary monuments close the catalogue of building types and demonstrate their relationship with the baptisteries of Baetica. The last section revisits early Christian architecture, establishing its relationship with contemporary architecture from the rest of the Mediterranean region. Finally, Chapter 12 synthesizes the data and summarizes the overall argument that the Christianization of western Baetica resulted from the evolution of an ever more powerful Church across Late Antiquity. The origin of this power differs across time, but it is clear that the support of the Roman imperial government and the Visigothic state were fundamental to the process.

This powerful Church transformed urban spaces and rural landscapes. Over time, each bishopric shaped the layout of important cities to its interests, appropriated the most emblematic spaces, and took control of suburban areas and cemeteries. Bishoprics demonstrated and reinforced their power by controlling strategic routes and places through the founding and expanding of monasteries. Likewise, we will see how bishoprics administered the abundant economic resources of the territories that surrounded cities and competed to preserve their interests, sometimes against one another. Recent investigations have raised the possibility that some cities, or perhaps their bishops, minted bronze coins in Visigothic times.[21] This would be a demonstration of political and economic independence. In short, this chapter offers a new interpretation of the end of the classical world in Baetica, in which the Church is one of the main protagonists and

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21   Pliego 2015–2016.

undoubtedly one of the great beneficiaries of the profound changes that occurred.

Due to lack of space, we have not been able to include in this book the complete list of all architectural decoration and inscriptions studied. However, we have incorporated them into the maps presented so that the reader can have an idea of their distribution. As will be seen, despite being a book based on archaeological data, this study still performs the much needed exercise of historical interpretation. In our case, we have tried to unite, consistently, the three main sources of information on this type of architecture: epigraphy, architectural decoration, and buildings, in order to unify aspects that have hitherto been treated independently. This book can thus serve as a unifying document upon which future research and interpretation can build. Detailed studies of buildings, towns, necropolises, grave goods, ceramic contexts, and domestic areas will further refine the findings presented here.