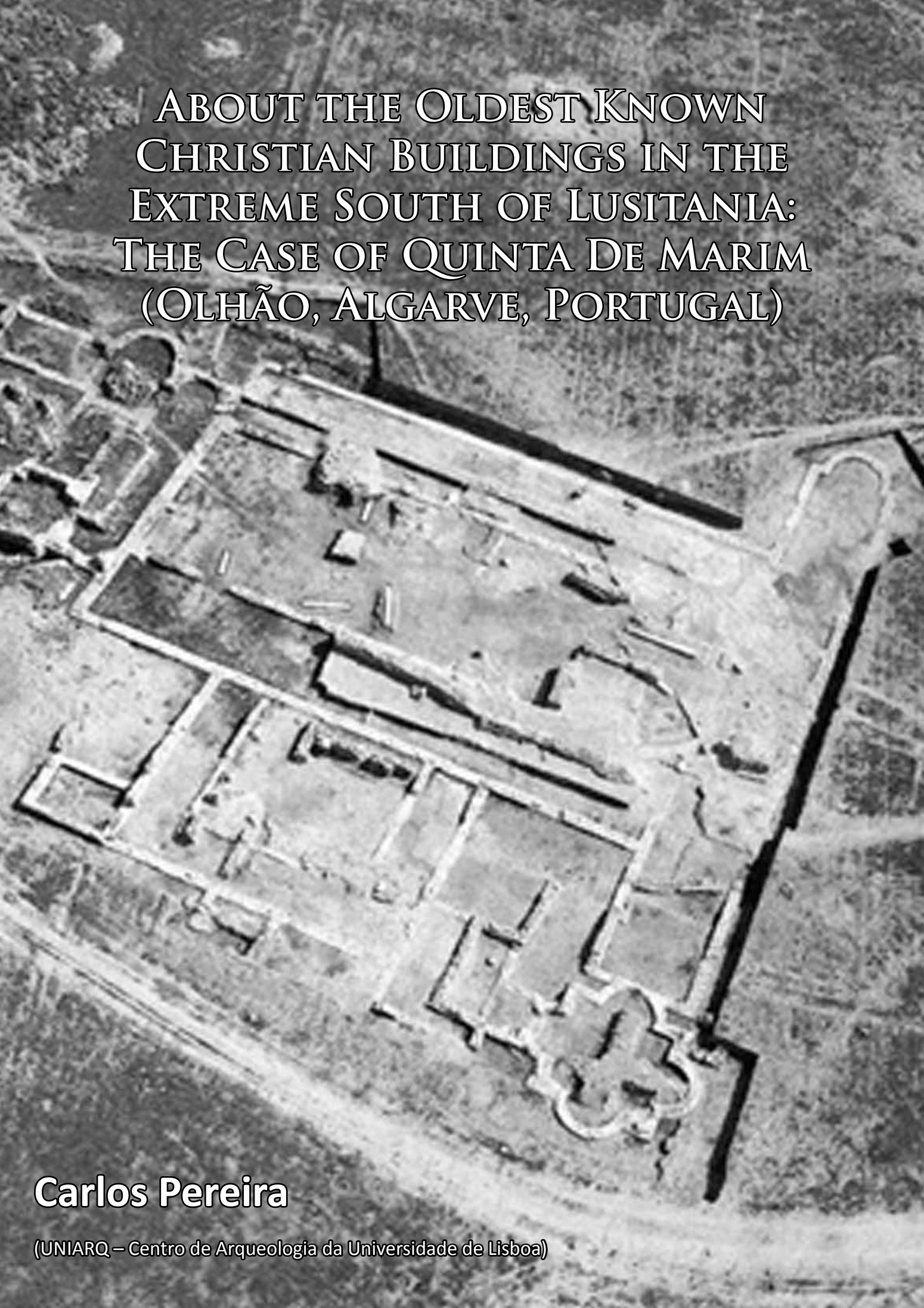

# About the Oldest Known Christian Buildings in the Extreme South of Lusitania: The Case of Quinta De Marim (Olhão, Algarve, Portugal)

**Carlos Pereira**

(UNIARQ – Centro de Arqueologia da Universidade de Lisboa)

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# Abstract

Quinta de Marim (Algarve, Portugal) always aroused the interest of researchers, but the ignorance on this site insists on staying. Although the contingencies, we can confirm much of what has already been written and come up with new interpretations that provide a new understanding of the archaeological site, particularly on the Christianisation of the current Algarve region. The fourth century represents the pinnacle moment in which villae spaces become liable to be Christianized, motivating the construction of religious buildings, including examples found in Quinta de Marim, serving, perhaps, funerary purposes.



**KEY-WORDS –** ALGARVE, QUINTA DE MARIM, CHRISTIANITY, FOURTH CENTURY, MAUSOLEUM.



# Resumo

A Quinta de Marim sempre suscitou o interesse dos investigadores, mas o desconhecimento sobre este sítio teima em permanecer. Embora as contingências, é possível confirmar muito daquilo que foi já escrito e avançar com novas interpretações que oferecem um novo entendimento sobre o sítio, nomeadamente sobre a cristianização da actual região algarvia. O século IV representa o momento auge em que as *villae* se convertem em espaços cristianizáveis, motivando a construção de equipamentos religiosos, dos quais encontramos exemplos na Quinta de Marim, servindo propósitos funerários.



**PALAVRAS-CHAVE** – ALGARVE, QUINTA DE MARIM, CRISTIANISMO, SÉCULO IV, MAUSOLÉU.

# Introduction and background

Somewhat to the image of the well-known Roman site of *Balsa* (Torre d'Ares, Tavira, Portugal) and *Ossonoba* (Faro, Portugal), Quinta de Marim (Olhão, Portugal, Fig. 1) is also initially mentioned by André de Resende, in the year of 1593, due to the presence of abundant traces of ancient occupations but, mainly, thanks to the emergence of a Roman inscription (1593, *Liber Quartvs*, p. 184). Nevertheless, it remained hidden from the looks of those interested in Algarve antiques for quite some time, deserving only brief passages in the memoirs of the Kingdom of Algarve, as is the case of Fernandes Sarrão, who refers to the existence of abundant materials at the site (1607, p. 164).

Figure 1 – Location of the archaeological sites mentioned by André de Resende (1593), and between them Quinta de Marim (Olhão, Portugal).

Just like with most of the archaeological sites from Algarve, it was Estácio da Veiga who ended up exponentially "exploring" Quinta de Marim, uncovering several building foundations and collecting a rich collection of archaeological materials. Indeed, the legacy inherited by this pioneer, born in Tavira, is abundant and rich. However, he is associated with a serious problem that persists in the study of sites that were not yet progressively excavated, as in this case. We refer to the impossibility of associating nearly all the materials to contexts, a problem potentiated by the death of this researcher before he could reveal the results and interpretations of the Roman sites in southern Portugal.

Thus, Estácio da Veiga left us a wide set of materials, namely a large collection of funerary epigraphy, some plants with the excavated areas (Fig. 2) and identified structures and also a few notes (Santos, 1972, pp. 249-277). The latter have been the basis of recent interpretations, more or less discordant.

Figure 2 – Quinta de Marim plan with location of excavated areas and structures discovered by Estácio da Veiga in the late nineteenth century (collection of the National Museum of Archeology, Lisbon).

Santos Rocha also "explored" Quinta de Marim, shortly after the death of the pioneer (Arruda & Pereira, 2012, pp. 135). However, that exploration resulted merely in the gathering of a few materials, which were published promptly. The great novelty of this intervention was the association of the materials to contexts, more or less detailed back then, giving special attention to the stratigraphy (Rocha, 1895a, pp. 113-115; 1985b, pp. 193-195).

In the twentieth century, one should mention the intervention of Carlos Tavares da Silva and his team in the reserve of the Ria Formosa Natural Park, where, in the year 1988-89, they excavated an industrial complex for fish salting, uncovering a set of *cetariae* (Silva et alii, 1992). After this intervention, carried out in an outlying area to the one "explored" by Estácio da Veiga, works invested on this site were confined to simple prospection or relocations (Marques, 1995, pp. 67-107).

Nevertheless, in 2002-2003, Dennis Graen, decided to contribute to the interpretation of one of the buildings excavated by the pioneer, and currently still visible, excavated once again what remained from a Roman mausoleum that was alongside with the so-called "temple" (Graen, 2005; 2007).

This is the building (Fig. 3) which has been interpreted as a Roman temple in the wake of what was proposed for the temples of Milreu (Hauschild, 1980; 1984-88; 1997; Étienne et alii, 1989;

Bowes, 2006; Teichner, 2001; 2008) and São Cucufate (Alarcão et alii, 1990), and to which a new functional interpretation was recently suggested (Graen, 2005a; 2005b; 2007; Graen et alii, 2008), which will constitute the basis of this study.

Despite the lingering uncertainty about its interpretation, we will try to dismantle this problem both from an historical and architectural perspective giving it an impartial reading.

FIGURE 3 – ROMAN BUILDINGS EXCAVATED BY ESTÁCIO DA VEIGA E AGAIN EXCAVATED BY DENNIS GRAEN.

# The problem

The big question that we refer, directly related to the interpretation of the famous building of this archaeological site, is the indiscriminate use of these buildings, either to argue its functionality as a pagan temple, or to support its eminently funerary function, thus corresponding to mausoleums . In the case of Quinta de Marim, the existence of a large occupational sequence, without the proper contextualization of the structures, hinders their reading and interpretation.

In fact, this interpretative ambivalence does cause some distrust and, above all, a lot of discomfort in the growing discussions. We hope to contribute, in some way, to the dissipation of this problem, regardless of the association, or not, of Quinta de Marim to the widely known, but not identified, *Statio Sacra*. Some authors have proposed the origin of this term to be somewhere during the Late Antiquity or the Byzantine period based on its absence in the *Antoninum* Itinerary (Trovar, 1976; Alarcão, 2005, pp. 301-303; Graen, 2007, p. 276).

It is therefore important to perform a synthetic framework of the building in a moment of clear transformation, the fourth century, which has been referred to as the time when this "late pagan temple" was built, just as it has been interpreted as a building with eminent funerary features associated with the cult of martyrs, therefore, associated with a time of increasing Christianisation.

The religio-political architecture characteristic of this time always seems to be located in the *suburbia* where they erected *martyria* and *monumenta* with a strong funerary Memorial nature (Martínez Tejera, 2006, p. 116). Authentic spaces of death quickly became associated with these buildings, many of them with obvious *ad sanctos* practices, where the buildings are not always the first to be built and sometimes do not even contain the eschatological remains of the martyr. This absence of the corpse is not unknown, often replaced by a relic with a high symbolic and prophylactic value.

These sites, although we know that many have been lost in human memory, acquired important cultic constructions that allowed them to achieve a high degree of importance, becoming important religious centres with wide reputation. In fact, it seems to have been during the fourth century that the cult of martyrs developed itself exponentially and in a suburban context, as evidenced in cities like Mérida (Fig. 4), Zaragoza and Valencia (Martínez Tejera, 2006, p. 116).

FIGURE 4 – SUBURBIA OF AUGUSTA EMERITA (MÉRIDA, SPAIN) IN THE FOURTH CENTURY A.D. WITH THE MAIN RELIGIOUS BUILDINGS (MATEOS CRUZ, 2000, FIG. 6).

It is possible that this reality may be applied to the case of Quinta de Marim in Algarve, where several buildings have been documented (Veiga, 1883; 1885). But even assuming that initially these buildings may have had an eminently funerary nature (Graen, 2005; 2007), they would eventually acquire a religious value which justified the occupation of a sacred place, as it has been assumed to be the case of this site.

The possible funerary functionality of this building is also proven by the previous operant of the site, attested by a monumental mausoleum, which would ultimately mark the landscape of the region until the turn of the third century to the fourth century. If this building was built to receive the cinerary urns of the owners (Graen, 2005, p. 268 ff.) in a much earlier time to that described, the construction that was made next to it (Graen, 2005, p. 259 ff.) perfectly fits in the period of theological-political change referred by Martínez Tejera (2006, p. 116), i.e. during the fourth century AD.

There are no infallible arguments that prove that this new building corresponded to a funerary monument (Mateos Cruz, 2003; Graen, 2005) or a *templum* (Hauschild, 1984/88; Étienne et alii, 1989; Bowes, 2006) and the parallels do not help to dispel this doubt either. However, it is certain

that it was built immediately next to another building that had that function, in a time of particular generalization of the cult of martyrs.

Doubts remain, mostly caused by the existence of similar constructions that have been interpreted either as *templa*, as is the case of São Cucufate, in Beja (Étienne et alii, 1989) and Milreu, Faro (Hauschild, 1984/88), or as mausoleums, as it happens with the structures absorbed by the basilica of Santa Eulália, in Merida, Spain (Mateos Cruz, 1992; Martínez Tejera, 2006), the basilica of St. Sebastian, in Rome (Tolotti, 1982) or even in the Roman town of Los Castillejos (Aguilar Sáenz et alii, 1993), although in this last site the two designations are taken into account.

It is also at this time that the *villae* become spaces open to Christianization (Martínez Tejera, 2006, p. 117; Heredia Bercero, 2010, p. 377 ff.). Perhaps this is the reason why we witness the construction of a series of similar equipment and possibly coeval with those observed in Quinta de Marim. We refer specifically to the cases of Milreu (Hauschild, 1984/88) and also of São Cucufate (Étienne et alii, 1989).

Perhaps these buildings, of dubious functionality, are precisely the reflex of the primitive Hispanic church from the second half of the fourth century which was in the process of formation and consolidation, a reality mirrored also in the ideological fragility and insecurity (Martínez Tejera, 2006, p. 117). In this regard, we can admit inclusively that these buildings may have played both roles (Aguilar Sáenz et alii, 1993).

Concerning the cities, there are few that currently fulfill the function of episcopal sees with religious equipments. This would be the case of *Ossonoba* (Faro, Portugal) which, although it was already episcopal see, we do not know if it had a religious building (Church or Basilica). It should be noted, however, that we know nothing, so far, on these equipments (Castellanos, 1999; Román Punzón, 2004), which motivates us even more to take them into consideration. In other words, at this time many cities already corresponded to Episcopal sees that, for being sites continuously occupied until the present day, leave us unaware of the existence of buildings dedicated to housing the new creed and its agents. From the fourth century in *Ossonoba*, we know the existence of at least two bishops: Vicente (Dias, 2003, pp. 19-21), in the first half, and Itácio Claro (Azevedo, 1967), in the second half. The body of the first turned out to be venerated until the present, a reality that earned him the "title" of Patron of the city.

Thus, besides the growing Christianisation of the rural elites (Palol i Salellas, 1978), a growing evangelisation could already be seen in the cities , even in those that were Episcopal sees since the third century, as is the case of *Augusta Emerita* (Mateos Cruz, 1993). There we find one of the most well-known *martyria* of the Iberian Peninsula, Santa Eulália (Caballero Zoreda & Mateos Cruz, 1995; Mateos Cruz, 1999; Caballero Zoreda, 2003), built during the fourth century and renovated during the following century.

In fact, the plan of the original building, the *martyrium* (Fig. 5) is completely identical to that observed at Quinta de Marim and, strangely, it has been ignored in the discussion of the functionality of this type of equipments, with few exceptions. It seems evident that the case of Mérida leaves no doubt as to the purpose for which it was built and to which the exceptional preservation of both the archaeological data and sources greatly contributed, stimulated by the traditional continuity of the worship.

FIGURE 5 – SANTA EULÁLIA, MÉRIDA, SPAIN (CABALLERO ZOREDA & MATEOS CRUZ, 1995).

However, the most recent case of reading and interpretation of a similar structure, supported by methodical excavations, is the case of Plaza Antoni Maura of *Barcino*, where a building of worship was uncovered (Fig. 6) around which a necropolis was arranged (Ripoll López, 2001; Heredia Bercero, 2010, pp. 382-383). In the Catalan case, it is proven that the building was placed over

the structures of the High-Imperial town with which it joined itself. Also here, the building shows an initial plant similar to that seen in the aforementioned sites, although it appears to have been continually reworked, which altered its primitive aspect, characteristic of the large mausoleums from the Constantine period (Fontaine, 1978, p. 437; López Quiroga, 2005, p. 220).

FIGURE 6 – PLAN STRUCTURES OF THE ROMAN VILLAE OF ANTONI MAURA, BARCELONA, SPAIN (HEREDIA BERCERO, 2010), WITH THE SAME FUNERAL BUILDING AND BURIALS IN AND OUTSIDE THIS.

The case of Milreu (Fig. 8) is in fact the one that arouses more doubt, much caused by a set of mosaics with characteristic decoration that forced the building to be related with the worship of water. Nevertheless, although it has been interpreted as a pagan temple dedicated to a water entity and in the meantime Christianised (Schlunk-Hauschild, 1978; Hauschild, 1984/88), there are clear similarities with the said mausoleums from the Constantine period which also find parallels in Merida and also in Rome, specifically in the *Via Ostiensis* and *Via Appia*.

Perhaps the graves from the fifth century AD, that were formed around it, used as an argument to the secularisation of the pagan temple, as well as the installation of a baptismal pool in the sixth century (Schlunk-Hauschild, 1978, p. 111 ff.; Fontaine, 1978, p. 436; Hauschild, 1984/88; Maciel, 1996, p. 114; Brogiolo-Chavarría, 2003, p. 19 ff.; López Quiroga, 2005, p. 206; Teichner, 2008; Bernardes, 2009, p. 333), can also be used as an argument when placing the possibility of corresponding to "*ad sanctos*" burials. It seems indisputable that these cult buildings always generated spaces of death around them.

The same reality may perhaps be extrapolated to the case of São Cucufate (Fig. 7) (Alarcão et alii, 1990, 1995; Maciel, 1996, p. 115), although here the fact that it matches a pagan temple is not so evident. The differences found between the two plans, with the one from Milreu being more complex, may be a result of the greater longevity of use in the second case compared to the first. We remind you that the Roman *villae* of São Cucufate presents a dating of abandonment from around the middle of the fifth century (*Ibidem*). Regarding Quinta de Marim, the amalgam of data not supported by archaeological contexts allows only assuming the continuity of the occupation after this time, although displaced from the space where the building in question is (Graen, 2007).

FIGURE 7 – THE SIMILARITIES BETWEEN THE THREE ROMAN BUILDINGS LOCATED IN PORTUGAL.

## Continuation of Roman cult or first cult of martyrs?

It is evident from this discussion that much remains to be learned about the Christianisation of the classical world, especially on its early stage (Cerrillo Martín de Cáceres, 1995, p. 359). It is also clear that we must not fail to place all the possibilities in the reading of old and recent data, as is the case, even though sometimes that forces us to forget what we have for granted so that, afterwards, we can take readings from completely different prisms.

Accordingly, this data may confirm conjectures already advanced, where the most ancient Christian architecture of Hispania seems to serve funerary and martyrial cult purposes (Martínez Tejera, 2006, p. 130), although we know at the same time from written sources that the same architecture was also at the service of Eucharistic worship. We remind you that the cult of martyrs was a reality that, among other factors, was progressively taking root from human indignation, either face to the constant persecutions or the brutality of the sentences given to the new believers (*Lactantius*, *De Mortibus Persecutorum*, 13, 2-3). To these individuals, who aroused the admiration and veneration of the living, St. Isidore calls "... witnesses of Christ who fought to the death to defend the truth." (*Etymologiarium*, VII, 1,2), to whom buildings were dedicated, intended to recall their memory, but mostly to immortalize Christianity.

We must emphasize the chronological coincidence, or not, between the Edict of Milan and the construction of the buildings analysed here. From 313 on it was declared the neutrality of the state in relation to Christianity, besides returning properties and places of worship that had been confiscated, moment after which the buildings of worship must have proliferated.

But let us briefly address these different buildings and the rituals involved. With the growing importance of this cult, its main stakeholders made use of two essential tools to reinforce, but mostly to spread, the cult of martyrs, we are referring to the *inuentio* and the *translatio* (López Cuevas, 2011, p. 3). The first consisted in the discovery of the lost relics of a martyr through divine revelation, usually dreams, but actually these revelations are loaded with strong political or personal interests. The *inuentio* had no discerning foundation, in our view, it was only used intelligently at a time when the devotion to the martyrs was remarkable.

The *translatio*, more plausible, corresponded to the exhumation of a martyr's corpse from one location to another, strategically thought in order to attract more believers. However, although we know many cases in literature of transferring of martyrs (García Moreno, 2006, pp. 50-55), or their relics, in most cases we do not know if those remains actually belonged to the holy martyr.

We notice that most church histories, pooled based on the traditional memory with legendary nature, turns out to have a very limited historical interest (Dias, 2003, p. 18), exponentially complicating the interpretive overview of Christianity. There are many legendary stories that present themselves to us with a clear intention of relating the history of Hispanic Christianity with the early Christianity (Oliveira, 1964, pp. 80-90; Almeida, 1967, p. 11), without having any scientific rigor, but with the ultimate aim of enhancing a secular creed and attracting believers. It should be noted particularly that the transfer of the of the martyrs' corpses was made, usually, from the *suburbia* to the inner city, an important phenomenon to understand the content of this study.

Going back to the matter in hand, the classical sources indistinctly used several nomenclatures that should refer to buildings of cult of martyrs. It should be noted, however, that we followed the use that has been given to three essential terms, *martyrium*, *memoria* and martyrdom Basilica (López Cuevas, 2011, p. 3). We are especially interested in the first two, which, in addition to being the first buildings constructed, relate to different situations. The *martyria* correspond to sepulchres of martyrs that were made monuments, upon which the cult is centred, or to buildings that end up containing their

remains after a *translatio*, which is the case of Santa Eulália of Merida, Spain. The *memoriae* relate to buildings or enclosures constructed on a key site associated with the life or work of the martyr, usually without any relics or his mortal remains.

Both the *martyria* and the *memoriae* should be the oldest buildings built in honour and memory of the defenders of Christianity and some would eventually turn into authentic spaces of worship, evolving into *ecclesiae* and basilicas, while others have fallen into oblivion, especially those that were the original location of a sepulchre and were then subjected to a *translatio*. We should not be surprised with the location of these buildings in the *suburbia*, particularly stressing the prohibition of burials within the cities, still in effect at this time, and the persecution to followers of Christianity which only ended in 313 with the Edict of Milan. The martyrial basilicas should be slightly later, built during an evident conjuncture of extremely fast growth of the Christianity. With this data it is easier to understand the framework of the building of Quinta de Marim.

Concerning the buildings we are dealing with, we are not sure about how many of them originate from a cult of martyrs, nor if they correspond to *martyria* or *memoriae* without contexts that clarify that. Not all the cults of this kind gave birth to Christian buildings, and not all the buildings dedicated to the martyrs remained in continuous use. A well-known case is Santa Eulália, in Mérida, and more and more cases are being continuously added to this one in the Iberian Peninsula. It should be mentioned that the exceptional preservation of these contexts is due to the greater proximity to the cities, ending up being absorbed by the *urbs*, but also due to the continued use of this as sacred spaces.

Most of these structures, with chronologies from the fourth century, have been increasingly related with this reality proven by the archaeological data and, sometimes, supported by the sources. Nevertheless, the exception is not the rule and, in most cases, the sources are silent about these cults, especially those that had an origin in the periphery of the empire.

The most paradigmatic case is actually the building of Milreu which, chronologically consistent with the other buildings mentioned above, presents mosaics with classic iconography that have been brought up for discussion in order to defend its usefulness as a pagan temple. Nevertheless, as it has already been well concluded by André Carneiro, during the fourth century there were many Roman towns where major constructions were made still with classical decorations, although with obvious features of Christianity (Carneiro, 2009, p. 213). This is the case of the town of Carranque (Toledo) (Fig. 8), where the owner, a man of trust of Theodosius and therefore Christian, applies decorative motifs on his property with a clear pagan thematic. Incidentally, we remind you that it is with this Hispanic emperor that, during the fourth century, a generalized architectural renewal of the *villae* takes place. Once again, the coincident renewal of the *villae*, most of them suburban, with the construction of these buildings cannot be a mere coincidence.

Figure 8 – Aerial view of the Basilica of the Roman villae of Carranque, Toledo, Spain (Martínez Tejera, 2006).

I believe it is inevitable not to relate these three phenomena occurring during the same time, the first half of the fourth century, and which may have originated the construction of these buildings, i.e. the neutrality of the state towards the Christianity, the increment of the cult of the martyrs unobstructed in the meantime and a renewal of the *villae* throughout the fourth century, initiated by Constantine I and later encouraged by an Hispanic emperor assumedly Christian, Theodosius I.

Nevertheless we do not completely discard the reuse of a pre-existing and pagan structure, as it has been proposed for Milreu, but in light of current data, and especially pursuant to the vast parallels austerely equal with proven Christian use since its foundation, it seems clear that we are obliged to consider other readings.

We admit that the specific case of Quinta de Marim lacks other arguments that strengthen this interpretation. The architectural analysis and the establishment of parallels are not sufficient at the time of choosing one interpretation or the other. However, if we consider the two similar and geographically close buildings, such an interpretation does not seem unreasonable, and to them we may add the original structure of Santa Eulália of Merida (Fig. 9).

FIGURE 9 – IDEAL RECONSTITUTION OF MARTYRIUM OF SANTA EULÁLIA, MÉRIDA, SPAIN (MATEOS CRUZ, 2003).

We do not know if the absences noticed in Quinta de Marim, namely the inexistence of graves inside or outside the building, are the result of the former interventions of Estácio da Veiga or plundering that took place before the end of the nineteenth century. Recently the interior of the building was re-excavated (Graen, 2005) and unsurprisingly no relevant data was found. We cannot help but also wonder if this site may have been one of those subjected to a *translatio*, explaining the absence of mortal remains inside. Unfortunately this is a question without an answer in the same way that we cannot describe how or where the remains of the martyr would be located, not to mention that if it corresponded to a *memoria* it would not contain any mortal remains. In any case, if this building absorbed the corpse of a martyr we can suppose a similar situation to that observed in the case of Mérida.

Nevertheless, other questions are likely to find clarification, including whether or not there were graves involving the referred Constantinian mausoleum. Once again we do not know if the father of Portuguese archaeology may have excavated beyond the limits of the building structures. Regardless, we are convinced that the area surrounding it should contain inhumations subsequent to its construction, as in the cases of Milreu and São Cucufate. We know of the existence of graves between this building and another that was identified as a basilica (Graen, 2007, pp. 279-283). Santos Rocha, as we had mentioned, has also explored Quinta de Marim where he detected a set of late graves, possibly from the fifth or even the sixth century (Rocha, 1895b, pp. 193-195). These are the graves that we have located between the two buildings without us knowing if they belong to an extension of the necropolis located northeast of the site, thus belonging to the potential basilica, or to the Constantinian mausoleum. It does not seem unreasonable to propose, in case it truly is a basilica, that its construction was due to the pre-existence of the building dedicated to a martyr.

Reflecting on the presence of a High-Imperial Roman mausoleum, we are not so sure about the presence of incineration graves of this chronology. The existence, at that site, of a High-Imperial mausoleum indicates that the owners of the *villa* would be buried therein, or at least influential individuals, which contrasts with the presence of the common necropolis. Generally, even though they were near, the owners' and the servants' necropolises were separated. We remind you the case of Milreu and also the Roman town of Pisões (Pereira et alii, 2013).

We notice, therefore, that this *villa* seems to have considerably changed the architecture, the spaces of death and the mentality. It remains to verify whether this change also extends to the everyday life or even the production, confirming the paradigmatic change from an aulic environment to a *simpliciori* living (Carneiro, 2009, pp. 216-217). Finding out the causes that boosted this apparent change is a lot more troublesome, demonstrating the absence of an ambitious project to look into this site.

The close relation of the architectural features of these buildings with the funeral world present throughout the Iberian Peninsula is quite clear and, in some cases, their construction to fulfil the function of *martyrdom* or *memoria* is proven. However, in most cases, the building associated or not with a necropolis is merely identified, without being able to prove its function. This is the case of Quinta de Marim and may also be the case of Quinta da Torrinha, in Almada, where part of a similar building was uncovered, although of smaller dimensions (Barbosa & Aldana, 2006).

These buildings would eventually mark the Christian cultic imagery, evolving or quickly originating far more complex and expanded buildings, but they arguably maintained a tradition that seems to have reached our days. In fact, even today we can find hermitages or chapels with an architecture that seems to be a copy, more or less faithful, of the erstwhile Constantinian mausoleums, and which, curiously, or not, are often dedicated to all martyrs or to Our Lady of all Martyrs (Fig. 10). This is the case of the ruined hermitage of Santiago de Albuquerque (Caballero Zoreda, 2003; Caballero Zoreda & Arce, 2005), the basilica of San Blas (Caballero Zoreda, 2003) and also, although with the due discretion, the hermitage of Los Santos Mártires, in Cáceres (Corrales Gaitán, 1998), Spain, which was moved from its original location.

Figure 10 – Some existing hermitages with apparent architecture inspired in Roman martyria and memoria of the Late Antiquity. From left to right, Santiago de Albuquerque, San Blas (Caballero Zoreda, 2003) and the hermitage of Los Santos Mártires (Corrales Gaitán, 1998), all in Spain.

# Thoughts

It does not seem unreasonable to think that there was a similar building that served as a disseminating model, although it is not easy to argue that possibility. Certainly, the high Iberian profusion of buildings with these characteristics, more or less similar, must have been introduced in some way, leaving a more or less clear trace concerning their expansion.

We also risk pointing out a curious chronological coincidence between all these buildings and the celebration of many of the ecumenical councils and plenaries that, in the fourth century, were becoming more and more frequent and began to have a special emphasis on the fixation of the Christian faith. An example of that is the Council of Iliberris (306), which gathered bishops and presbyters from all the Episcopal sees, including Évora, Faro and Mérida (Carneiro, 2009, p. 208). Perhaps these may have been the main carriers of a new Christian landscape destined to perpetuate those who fought for the new creed.

We must emphasize, however, that this new image characterised by a semicircular apsidal chevet is not originated with Christianity. Enrique Cerrillo Martín de Cáceres already properly clarified that this characteristic is pre-existing, although serving other domestic and non-cultic purposes (1995, pp. 363-364).

Besides the coincident presence of bishops from the Episcopal sees where these buildings are located in Hispanic Christian meetings, we cannot fail to notice the equally coincident chronology of construction and death of the holy martyr. This relation has already been proven for the case of Mérida (Mateos Cruz, 1999), and we could not fail to mention an identical situation for the case of São Cucufate (304), a martyr who died one year after Santa Eulália and that persisted in human memory until today.

The cases of Algarve, Portugal, however, are more complex. In Estoi (Faro) we only know that the Patron is São Martinho de Milreu, who is clearly associated with the Roman town, and the case of Quinta de Marim seems to have been completely lost in human memory. In fact, the building of Quinta de Marim seems to be the one that remained in use for the less time, although there are proposals for the existence of a basilica in the vicinity (Graen, 2007), but that still lack evidence. Milreu or São Cucufate subsisted longer, which allowed, in the latter case, the settlement of a community of monks at the location, who stood there until at least the twelfth century and had São Cucufate as Patron.

We talked already, albeit very briefly, about São Vicente, Bishop of *Ossonoba*, who may be somehow related with these buildings in Algarve, and certainly with the evolution of Christianity in the far southwest of the province of Lusitania. Unfortunately, the variables are endless, preventing the establishment of more concrete and indisputable answers. At the moment, we do not intend to take these conjectures for granted, much less to say that the Roman *villa* of Quinta de Marim may be related to the bishop of *Ossonoba*, we merely want to alert for possibilities which, like many others, are on the table.

Still regarding the dissemination of these buildings, initial subject of this chapter, it is not easy to point out its geographical origin. The Italian peninsula also has an abundant amount of mausoleums with such characteristics. However, it was already advanced by other researchers that the martyrial building of Santa Eulália of Mérida may be the source of this type of building in the Iberian Peninsula (Fig. 11) (Cerrillo Martín de Cáceres, 1995, pp. 365-366), proposal that we share although the chronology is, in most cases, too identical.

Figure 11 – The different types of semicircular apsidal chevet of sacred buildings, being the case of Santa Eulália, Mérida, one of the oldest (according with Cerrillo Martín de Cáceres, 1995).

In fact, it is in the large suburban towns that we find the first evidence of Christianity (Cerrillo Martín de Cáceres, 1995, pp. 365-366; Mateos Cruz, 2005, p. 53; Heredia Bercero, 2010, pp. 382-384), renegade therein by the pagan elites of a society which has the cities as main administrative and dynamising centre. Although it may seem that the spread of Christianity was tried to be devalued through the main urban centres, we do not refuse, in any way, such a possibility. On the contrary, we merely try to demonstrate that if it is already difficult to prove the Christian cultic functionality of these buildings in the suburbia (Fig. 12), then in the cities such task would be even more difficult, difficulty which is potentiated by the continuous overlay of occupations and by the great stratigraphic complexity.

Figure 12 – Representativeness of buildings with semicircular apsidal in Lusitania and their chronologies (according with Cerrillo Martín de Cáceres, 1995).

Not everything is a conjecture, the importance already marked of the suburban *villae* of the main dynamising centre of Algarve (Fabião, 1992-93, pp. 238-245), i.e. *Ossonoba*, certainly contributed to the spread of Christianity in this corner of the Iberian Peninsula, which, when Christianity was openly accepted as official religion, must have centralized the cult, or at least its administration.

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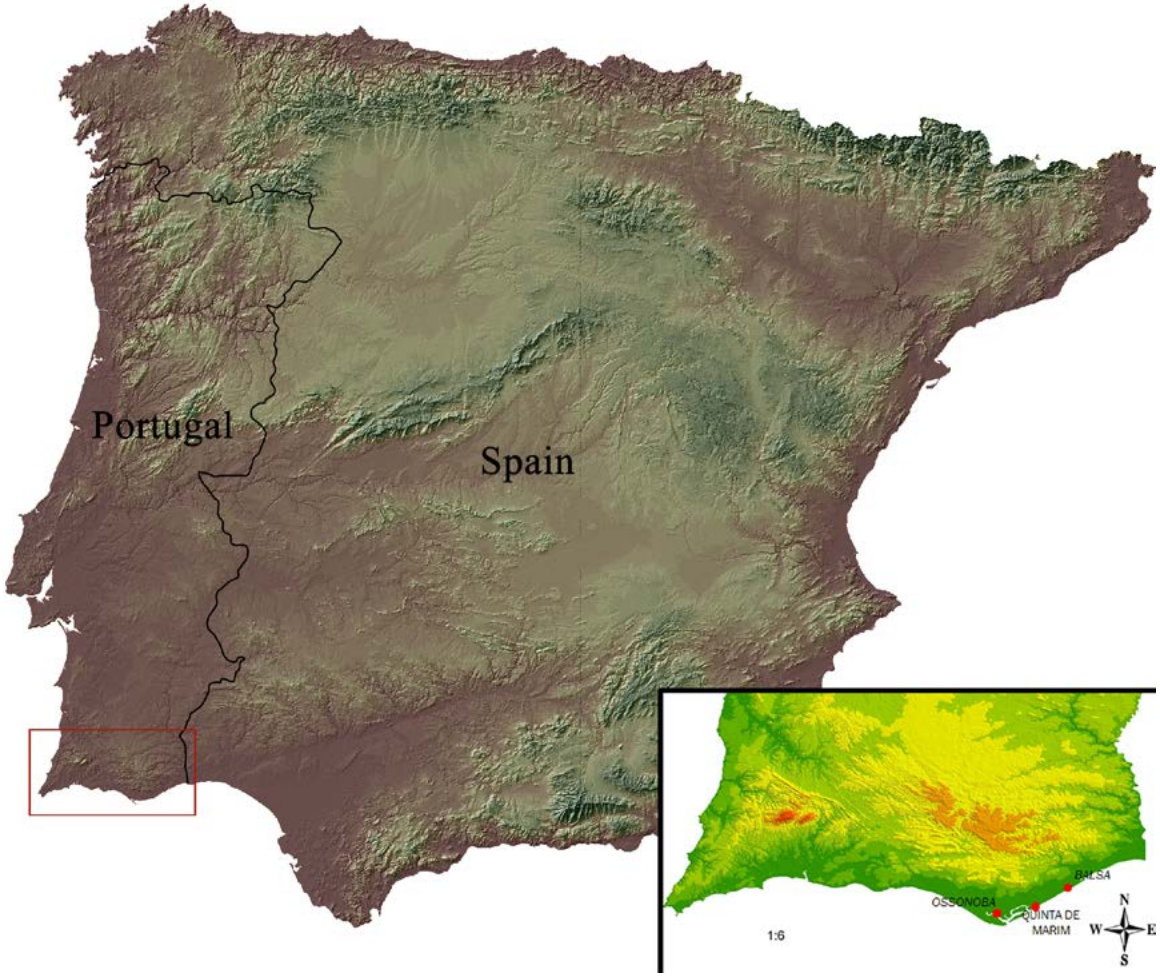


**Figure 1** – Location of the archaeological sites mentioned by André de Resende (1593), and between them Quinta de Marim (Olhão, Portugal).

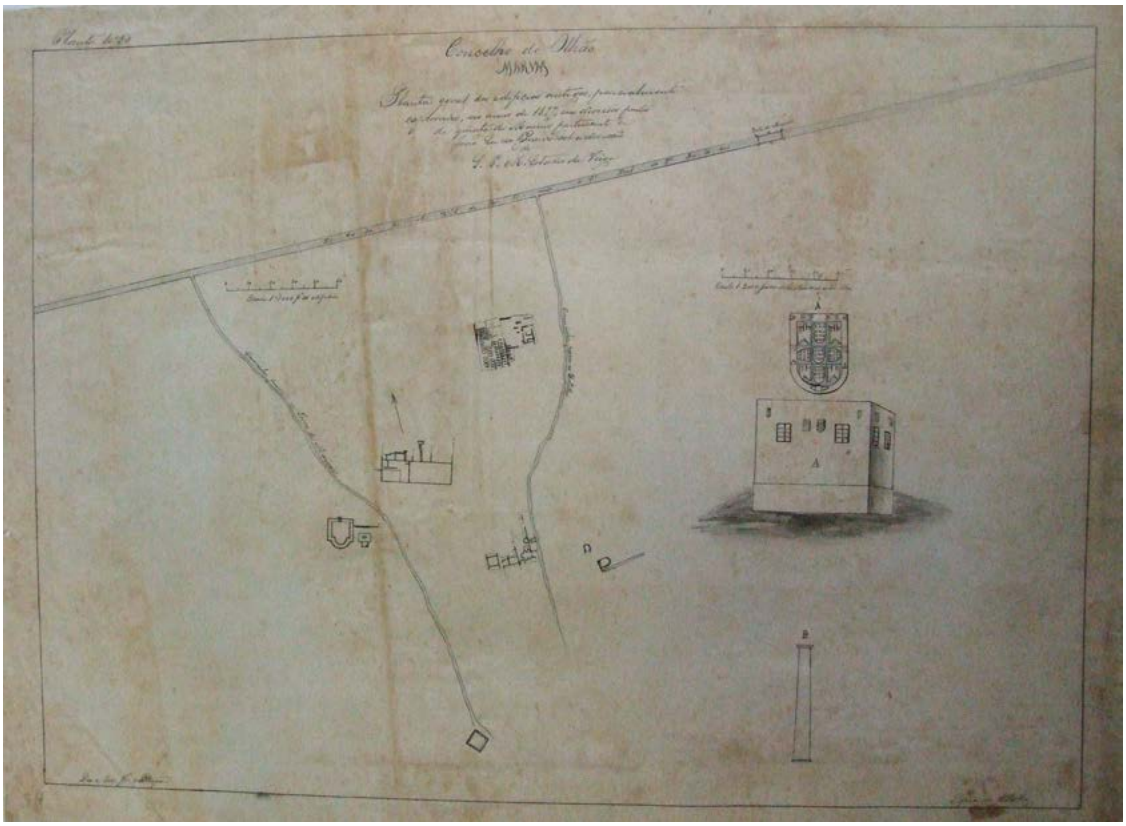

**Figure 2** – Quinta de Marim plan with location of excavated areas and structures discovered by Estácio da Veiga in the late nineteenth century (collection of the National Museum of Archeology, Lisbon).

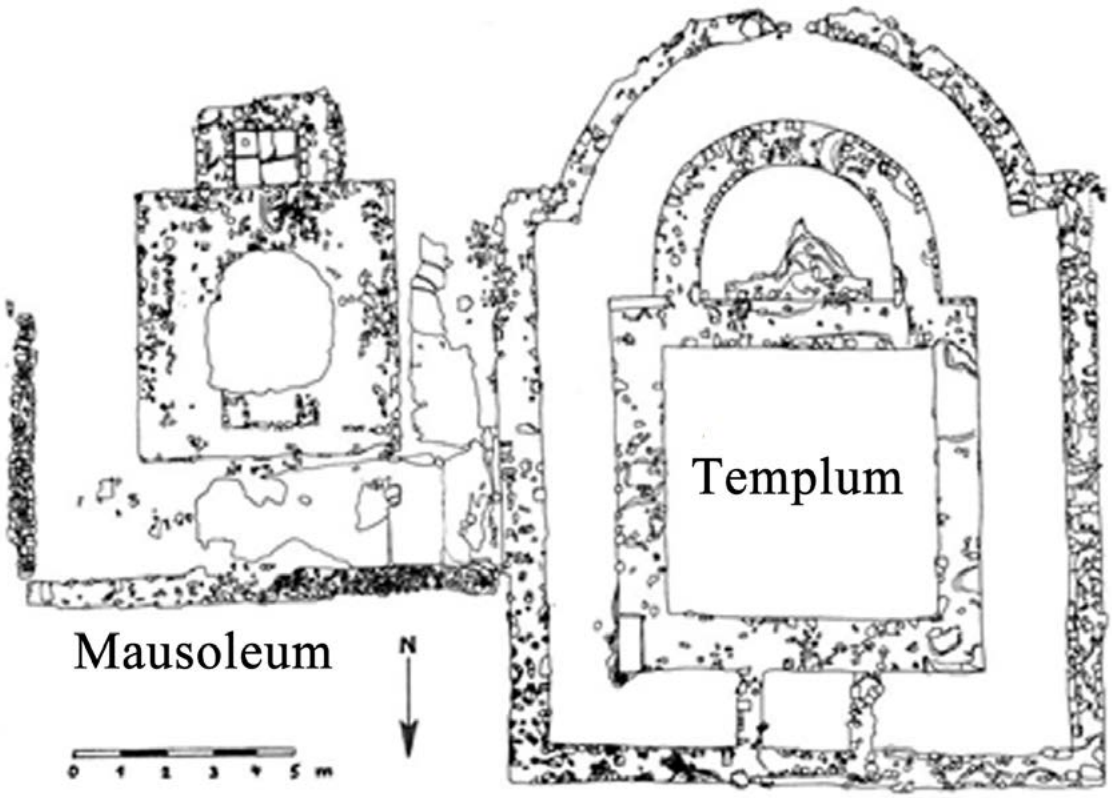


**Figure 3** – Roman buildings excavated by Estácio da Veiga e again excavated by Dennis Graen.

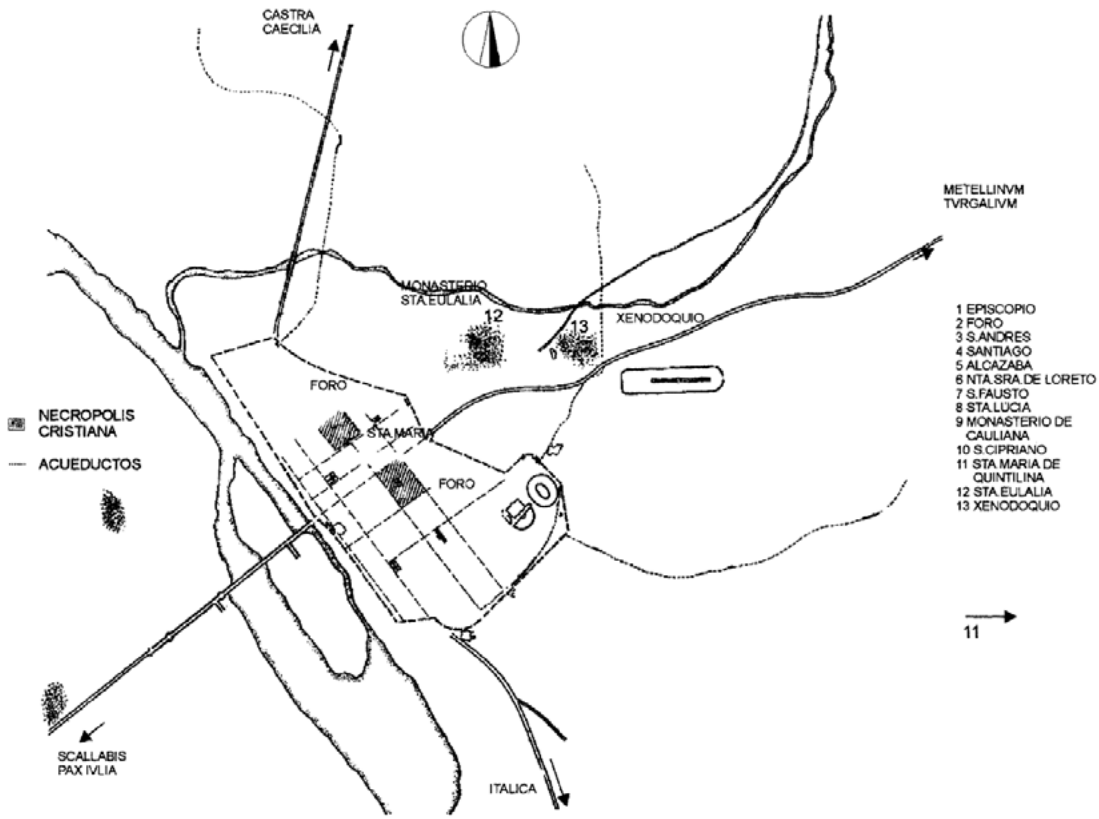


**FIGURE 4** – *SUBURBIA* OF *AUGUSTA EMERITA* (MÉRIDA, SPAIN) IN THE FOURTH CENTURY A.D. WITH THE MAIN RELIGIOUS BUILDINGS (MATEOS CRUZ, 2000, FIG. 6).

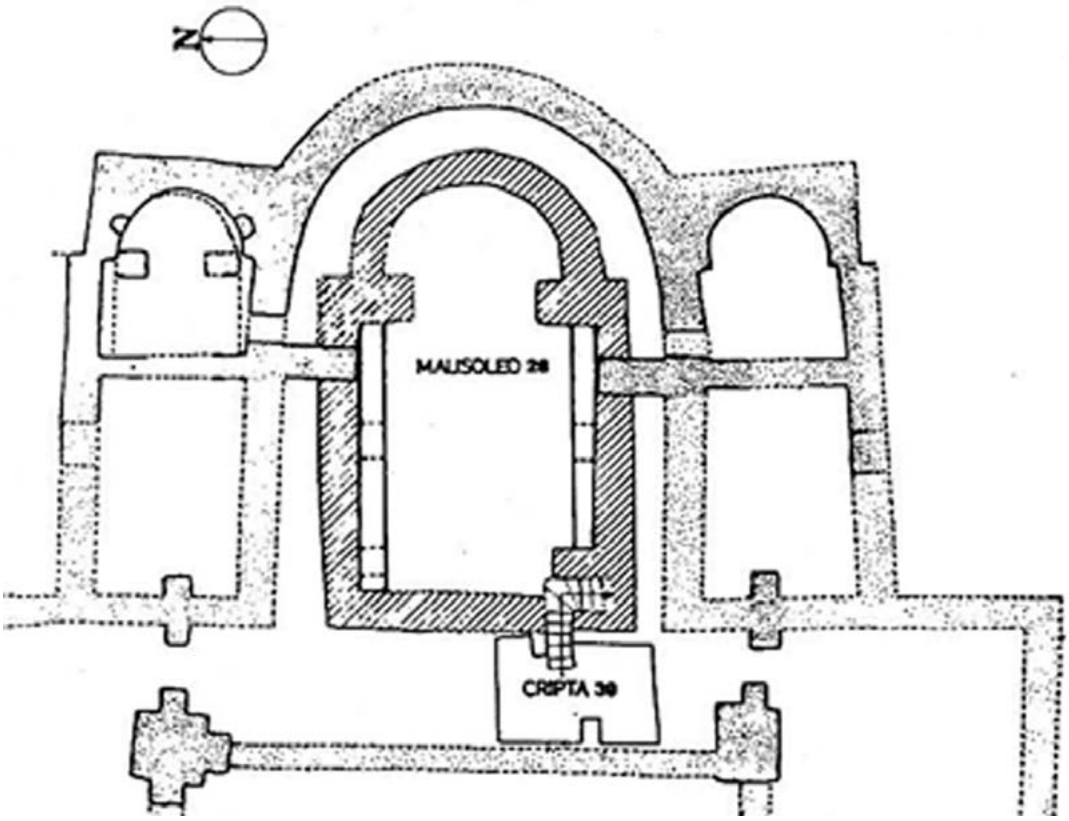


**FIGURE 5** – SANTA EULÁLIA, MÉRIDA, SPAIN (CABALLERO ZOREDA & MATEOS CRUZ, 1995).

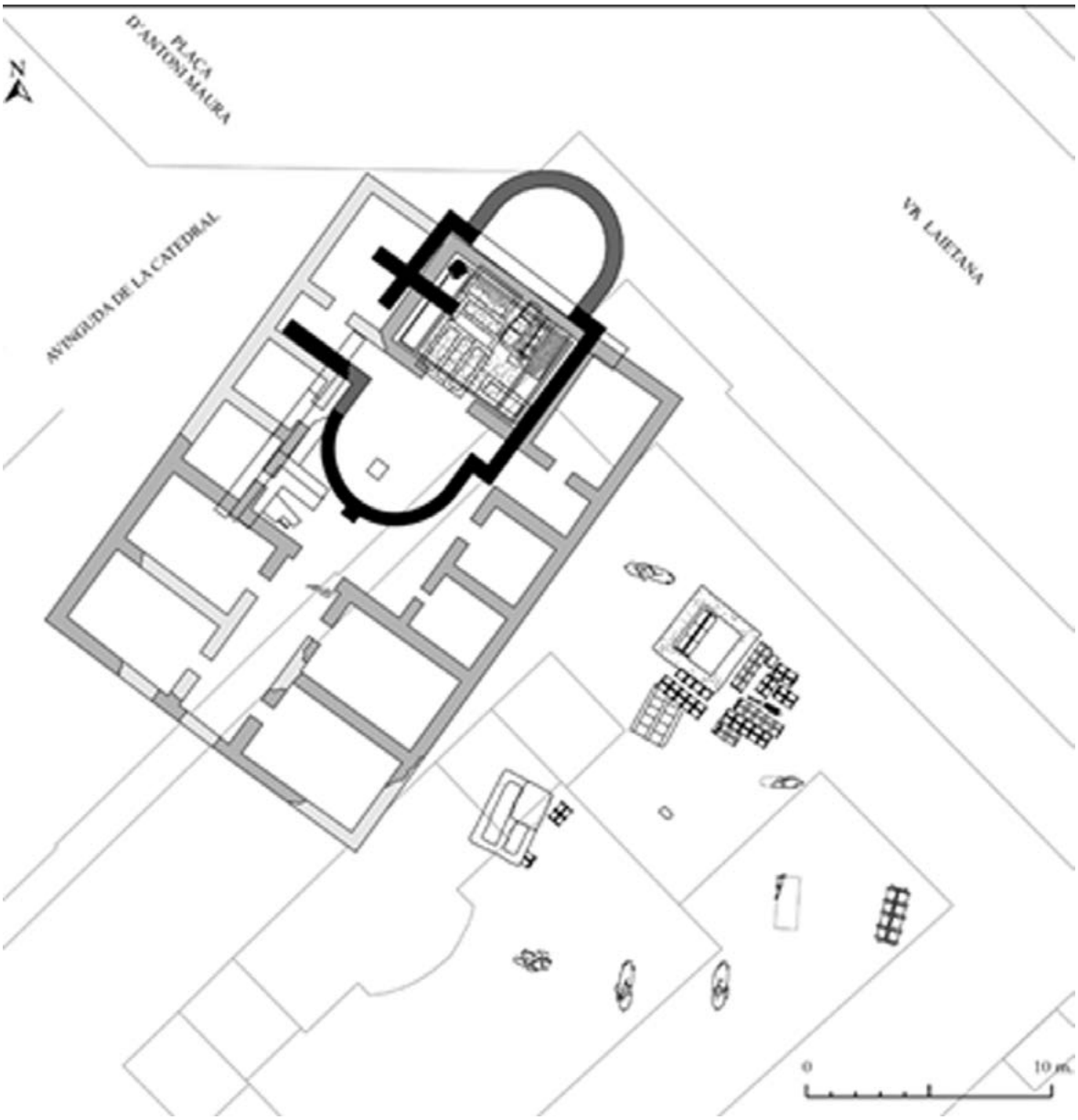


**FIGURE 6 –** PLAN STRUCTURES OF THE ROMAN *VILLAE* OF ANTONI MAURA, BARCELONA, SPAIN (HEREDIA BERCERO, 2010), WITH THE SAME FUNERAL BUILDING AND BURIALS IN AND OUTSIDE THIS.

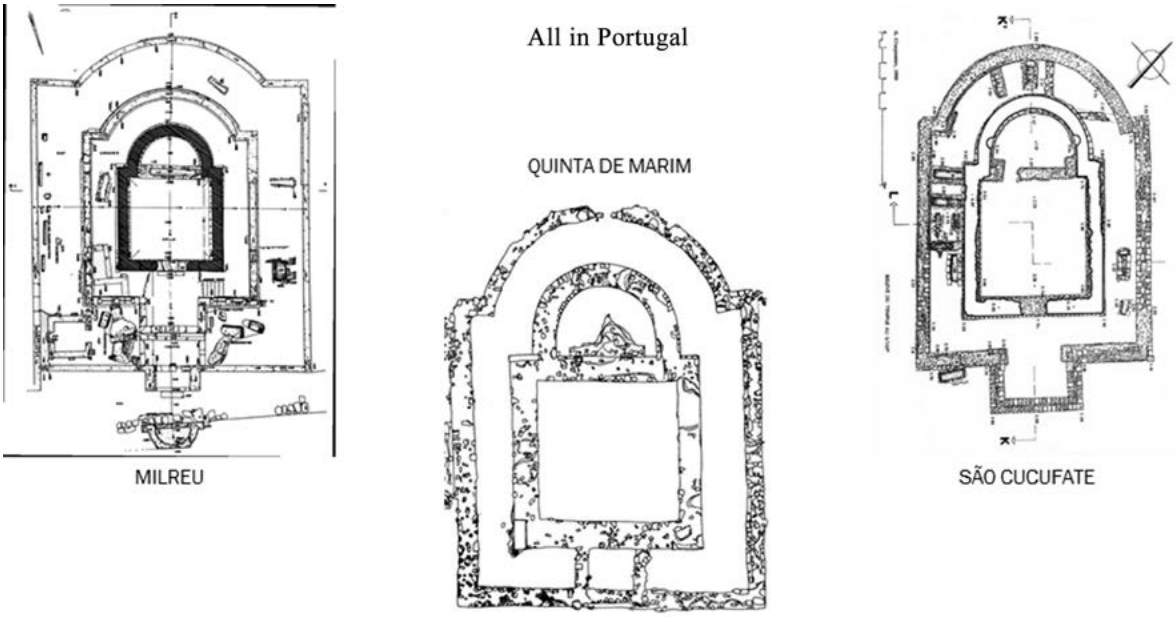


**FIGURE 7 –** THE SIMILARITIES BETWEEN THE THREE ROMAN BUILDINGS LOCATED IN PORTUGAL.

**FIGURE 8 –** AERIAL VIEW OF THE BASILICA OF THE ROMAN *VILLAE* OF CARRANQUE, TOLEDO, SPAIN (MARTÍNEZ TEJERA, 2006).

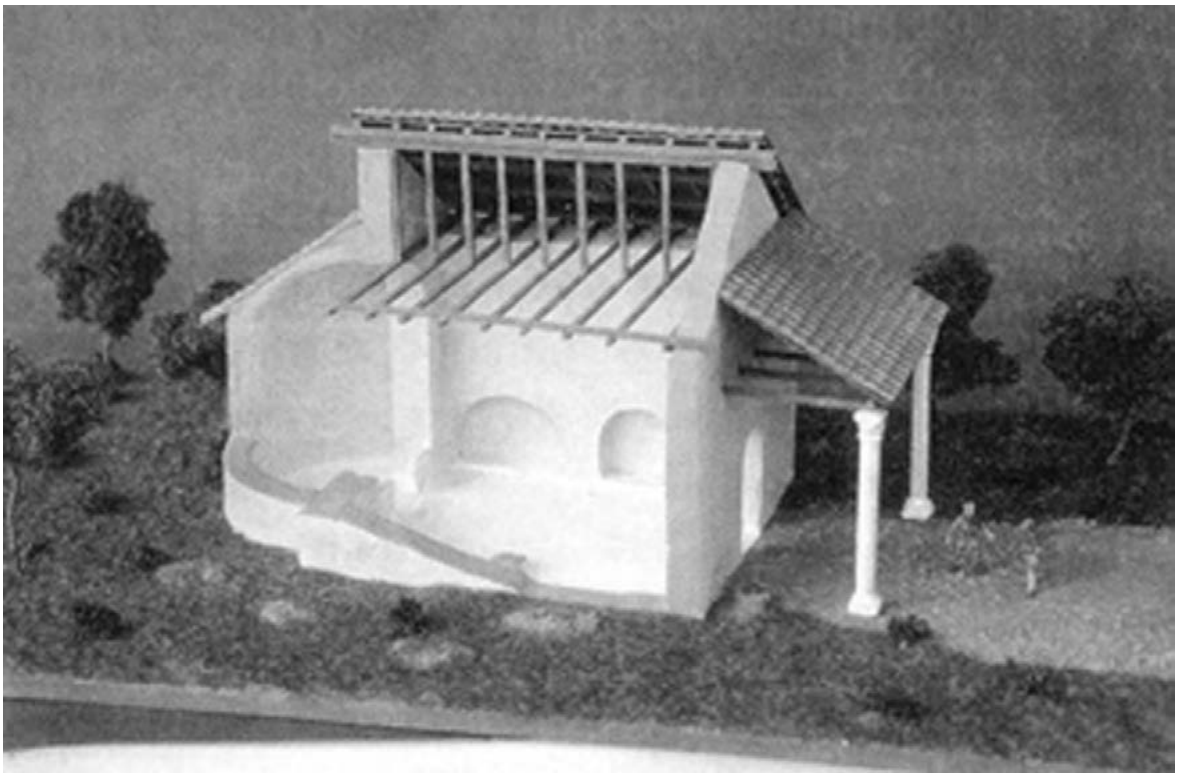

**Figure 9 –** Ideal reconstitution of *Martyrium* of Santa Eulália, Mérida, Spain (Mateos Cruz, 2003).

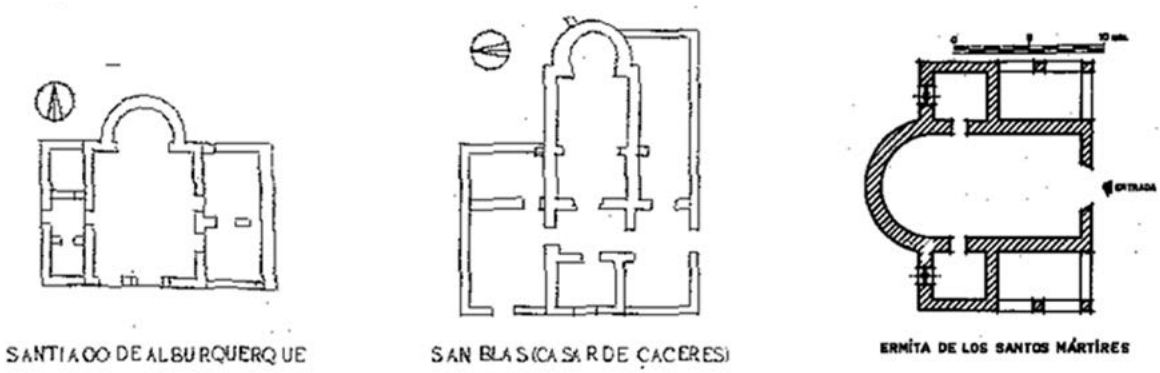


**Figure 10 –** Some existing hermitages with apparent architecture inspired in Roman *martyria* and *memoria* of the Late Antiquity. From left to right, Santiago de Albuquerque, San Blas (Caballero Zoreda, 2003) and the hermitage of Los Santos Mártires (Corrales Gaitán, 1998), all in Spain.

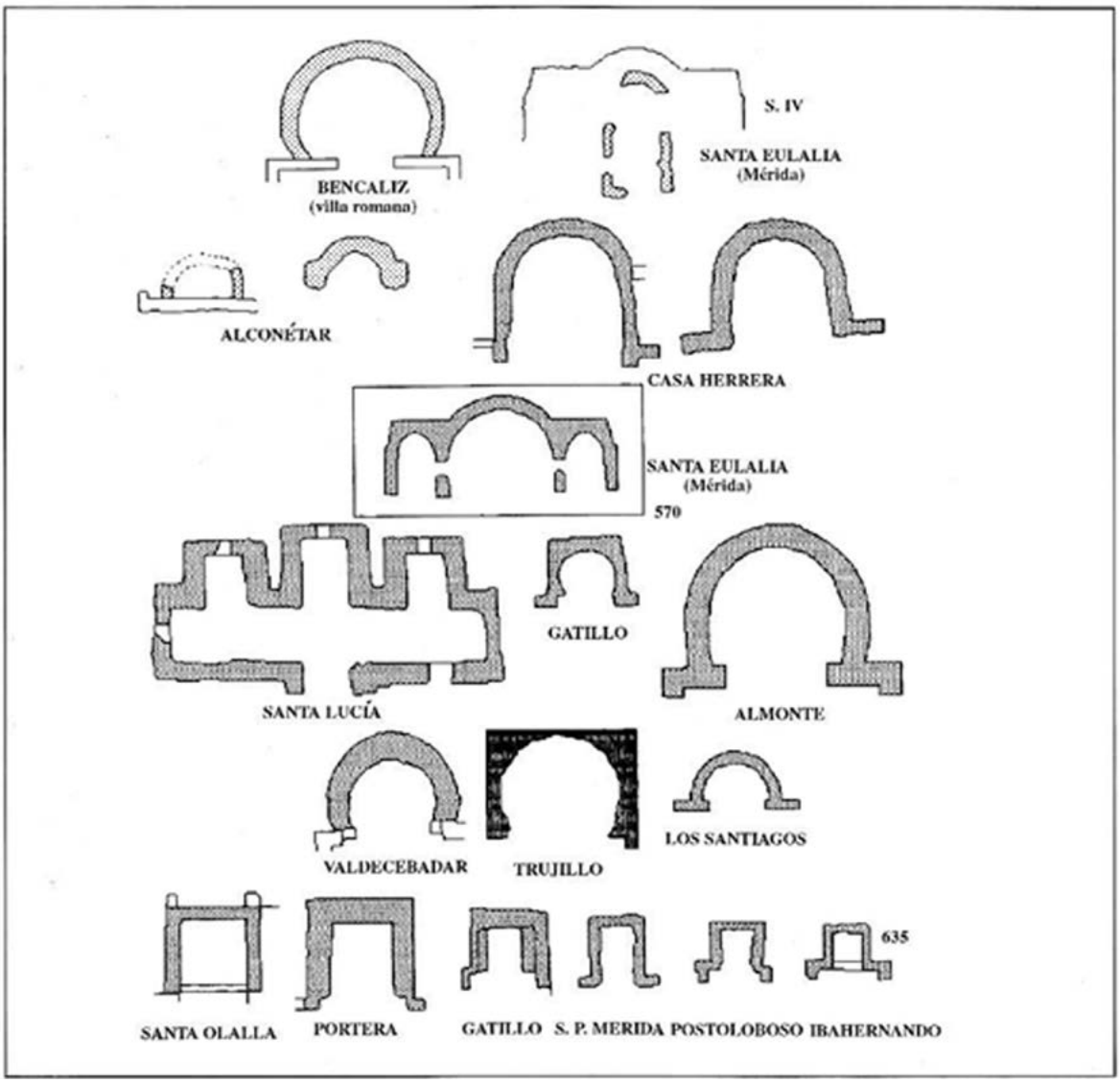


**FIGURE 11** – THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF SEMICIRCULAR APSIDAL CHEVET OF SACRED BUILDINGS, BEING THE CASE OF SANTA EULÁLIA, MÉRIDA, ONE OF THE OLDEST (ACCORDING WITH CERRILLO MARTÍN DE CÁCERES, 1995).

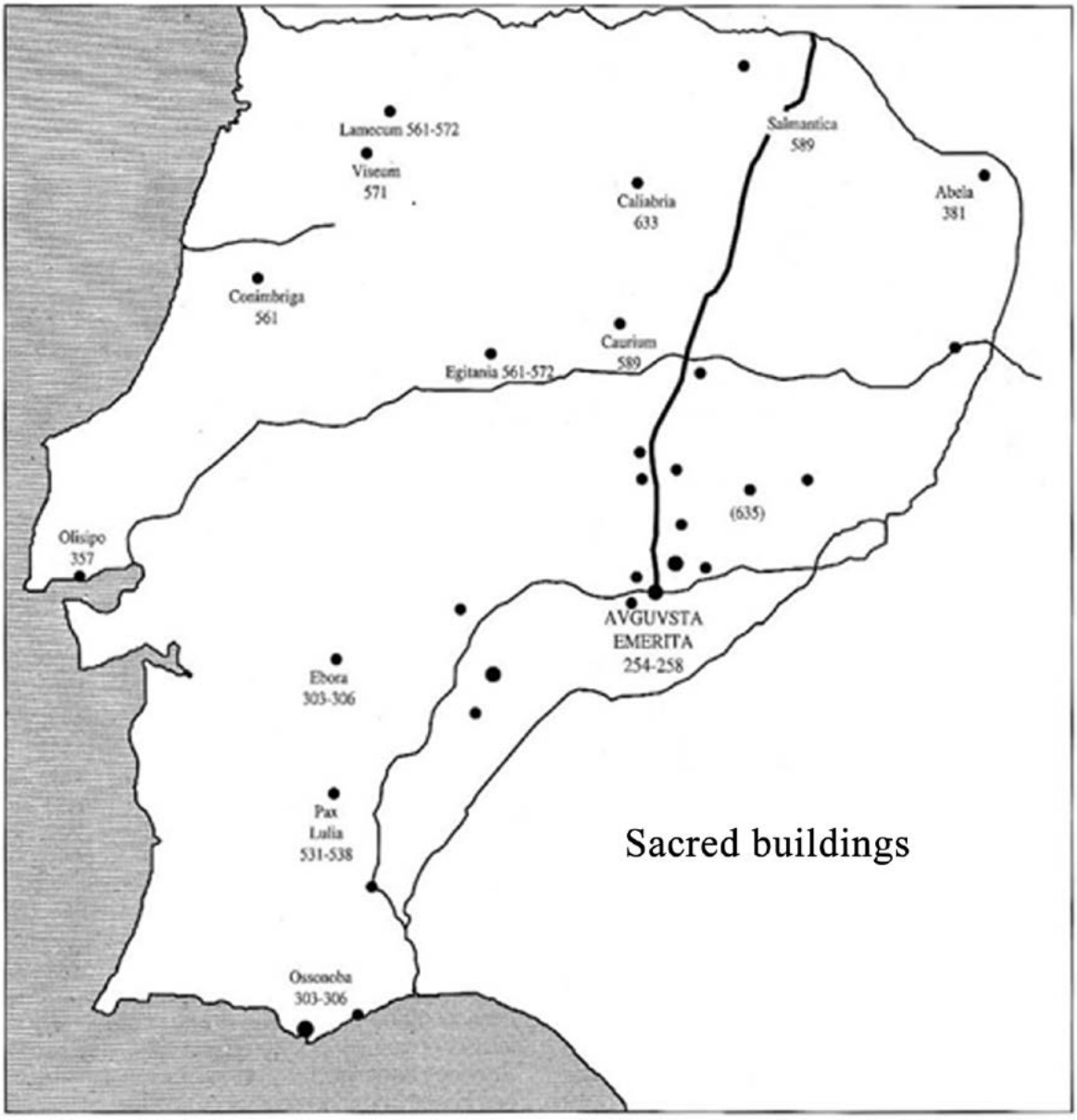


**Figure 12** – Representativeness of buildings with semicircular apsidal in Lusitania and their chronologies (according with Cerrillo Martín de Cáceres, 1995).