

**A NEW BUILDING ON THE MAIN STREET
IN GERASA NORTH OF THE SANCTUARY OF ARTEMIS
A PRELIMINARY REPORT OF AN ARCHITECTURAL STUDY**

by

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In the period between winter 1991 and spring 1992, the area beside the northernmost shop of the Sanctuary of Artemis' frontage, to the west of the Main Colonnaded Street, was investigated.¹ The aim of the work was to understand the architectural design for the access to the upper storey of shops O, P, Q, R, since door S, to the north of them, suggested to serve that purpose (Figs. 1 and 2).² Furthermore, the existence of a building, Building X, adjacent to the north of the Sanctuary, was considered vital to the study of the city's topographic layout at that point. Considering the 'urban scale' of the Sanctuary one could have presumed the existence of a side street, like the one to the south, defining the Sanctuary's northern side.

Building X, whose very presence could be also deduced from the difference in style of the columns in contrast to those of the Main Street in front of the Sanctuary shops, protrudes 2.70 m from the alignment of the frontal façade, thus reducing the width of the *ambulacrum* from 8,50 to 5.80 m.³

The recent retrieval, in the archives of ACOR in Jerusalem, of a plan to the scale

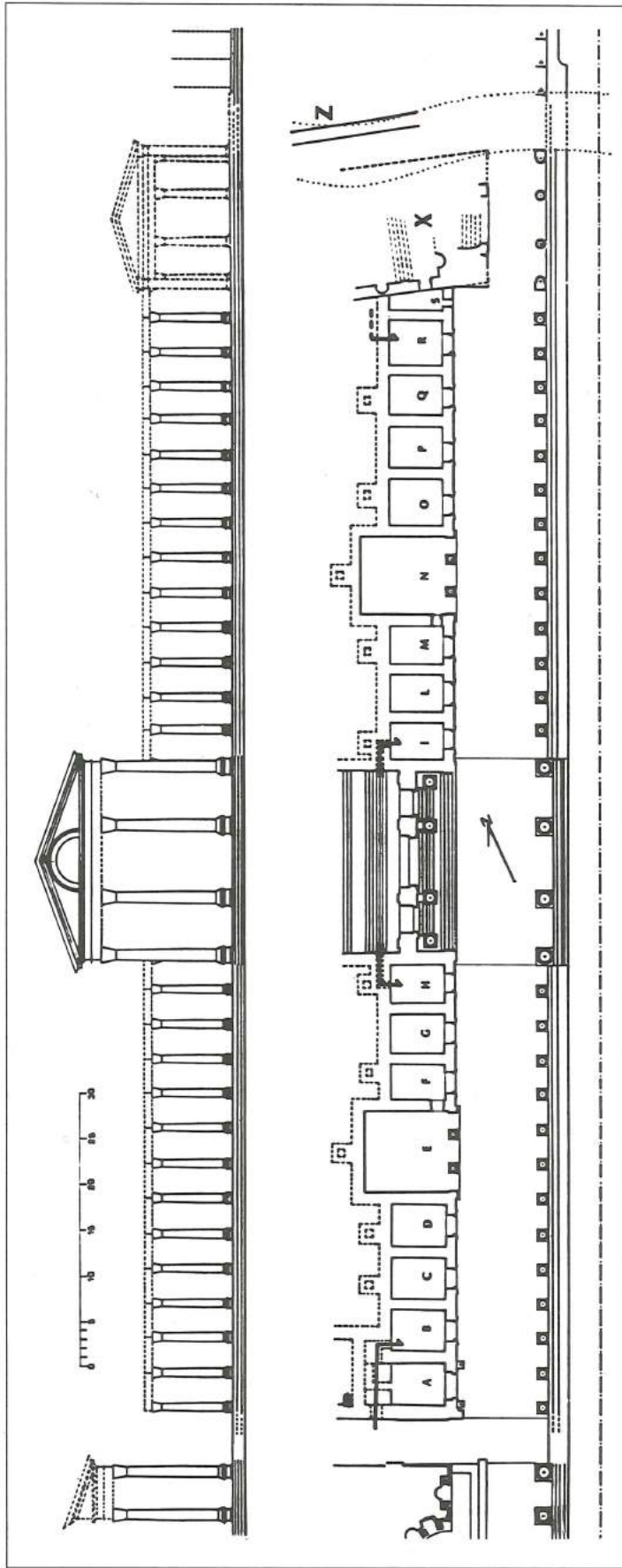
of 1:100, labelled "Area N-E of Mr. Horsfield house" (the present Jarash Department of Antiquities Office), is of remarkable interest. It shows a long wall, Z (Figs. 1 and 2), which forms an oblique angle with the Main Street. It is most likely, that this wall must have delineated one of the sides of the ancient street north of Building X - a street to serve both the northern entrance of the Sanctuary and of the North Theatre, the *summacavea*. This orientation of the street is in keeping with the one of the main North Transversal Street (the so-called North Decumanus) and signifies a common plan for this sector of the city, already established in the late first century AD.⁴ The recovery represents, indeed, the only record of the sounding done by the early American Expedition in this spot which has not been reported in publications.

The area excavated by the Italian Mission, ca 18 m (north-south) x 14 m (east-west), was limited to the north by the modern car track leading to Horsfield's house to the west, by an enormous dump, of the 1931 excavations.⁵ The *ambulacrum* between the street colonnade and the sanc-

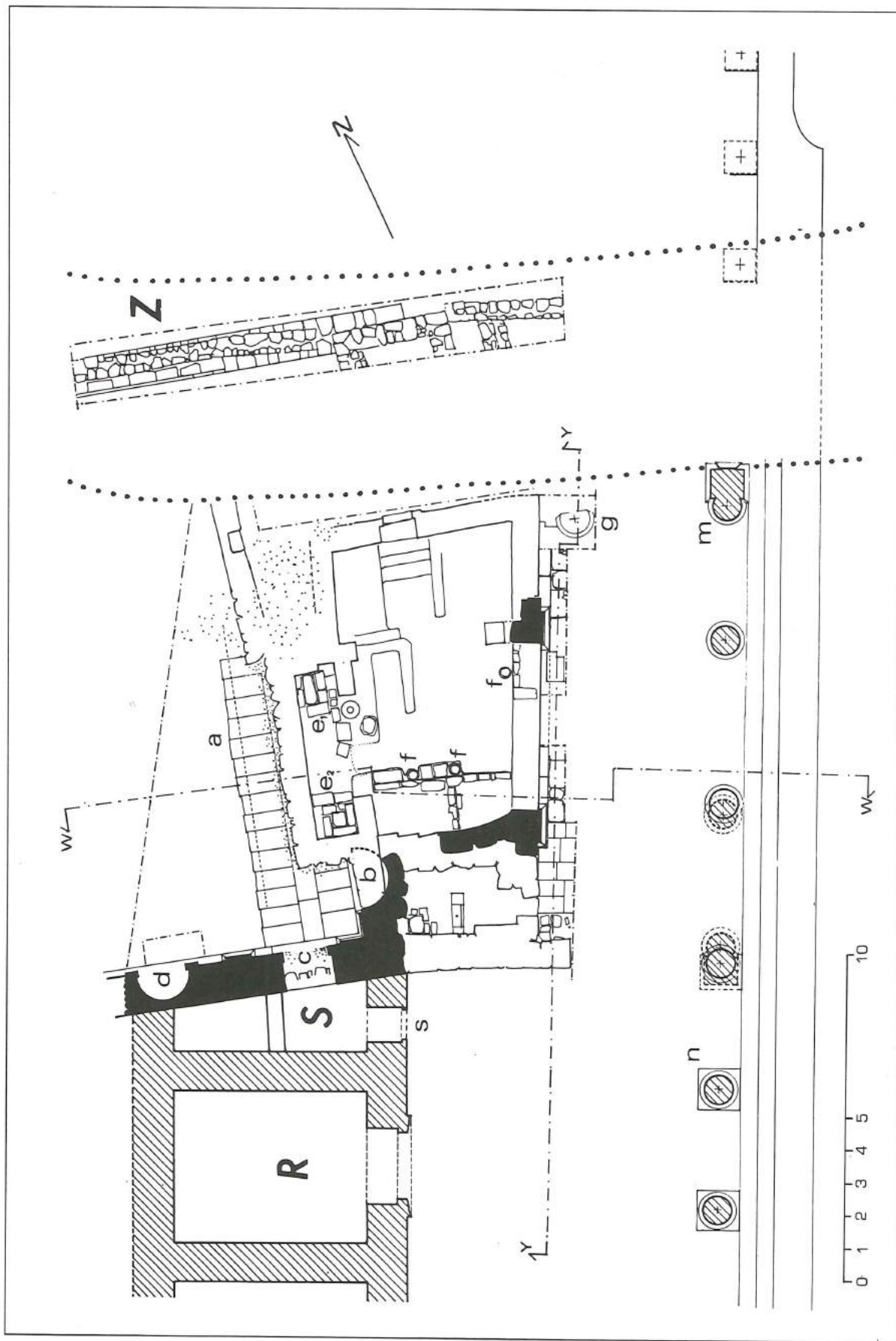
1. This work was part of the Italian-Jordanian Cooperation Project for the conservation of Historical Heritage. The excavation, that was begun by the author, was thereafter continued by Edoardo Pantanella. The preliminary study and dating of the pottery and other finds was done by Ina Kehrberg.
2. The upper storey of shops B, C and D, at the south end of the Sanctuary's frontage, are posited by a staircase that goes from room A and reaches the rear wall of shop B's upper storey; access to C and D upper storeys was, very likely, through doors in the partition walls between B and C, and C and D (Parapetti 1989: Tav I).
3. Parapetti 1983-84: 46, Cw3, plan in Pl. IV.
4. Ball *et al.* 1986: 392. Cuts in the bedrock for founda-

tion trenches, below the floor level of shops B, C, D, with a similar orientation have also been observed (Parapetti 1989: 5, plan in Tav. I).

5. Following is an abstract from C. S. Fisher's diary, co-director of the expedition:
October 15th 1931, Thursday,a third group of men have been set to work laying the railroad along the eastern face of the Artemis East Colonnade (the 'decoville' trolleys can still be seen in the northern part of the upper terrace). Just north of Mr. Horsefield's house is a large break in the Artemis enclosure. Both the east and north retaining walls of the great terrace on which the temple stood are here broken away..... We intend to use this place for a dump....



1. Jarash, the front of shops of the Sanctuary of Artemis on the Main Colonnaded Street, Building X and wall Z.



2. Jarash, Building X-thermopolium and wall Z excavated in 1931. Dotted line is the suggested original position of the tripartite colonnade in front of Building X.

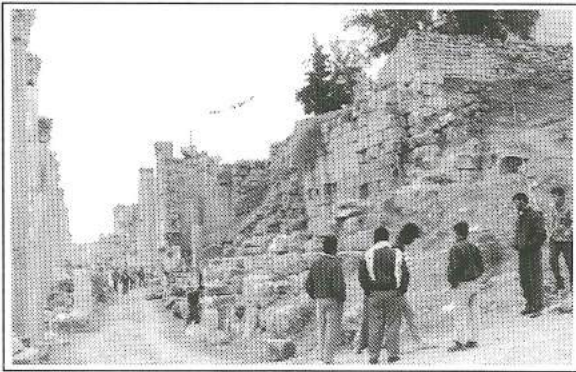
tuary Building X, was left unexcavated to permit passage for the equipment needed for our restoration works in the West Propylaeum area southwards, which was in progress at the same time (Figs. 3 and 4).

When the architectural elements were removed from the surface of the area, accumulated there from previous clearing operations,⁶ and the layers below that formed by multiple collapses, it appeared that the Sanctuary's frontage was built against Building X, evidently an earlier construction. Both front and rear walls of the last room of the Sanctuary, room S, were abut-

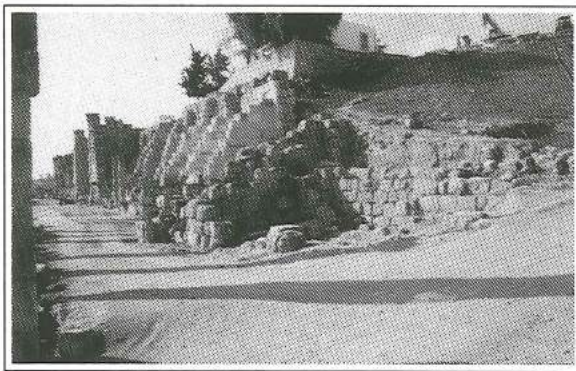
ting against what was in reality the south side wall of Building X. The latter wall formed an angle of 80° with the Main Street alignment, similar to the one estimated for Wall Z, mentioned above; the east front was aligned parallelly. Thus, Building X must have had a rhombic layout and room S was wedge-shaped (see Fig. 2).

Due to the precarious state of preservation of a partition wall, that divided in a later period the original room S, the excavation of that space was left unfinished, leaving unanswered the question of how the staircase reached the upper storey of the northernmost shops.

Likewise, the limited excavations of Building X and the poor state of preservation, did not reveal conclusive information about its original architectural design and function. From what can be detected by the structural remains, the front of the building on the Main Street had a tripartite design, the central part of which was a 5 m wide opening framed by pilasters (Fig. 5a). The interpretation of the western and northern sides remains uncertain. The central opening entered into an irregular trapezoid vestibule, designed to rectify the inner layout, only the south side of which is relatively well-preserved. Traces on the curvilinear wall of the latter indicate that there was a flight of steps which led to a second storey (Figs. 2 and 5). This upper vestibule, whose threshold is not preserved, was actually a narrow landing. A line, **a**, carved on the stone pavement of the landing provides evidence for a second flight of stairs, that must have been originally as wide as the entire inner width of the building. A semi-circular niche, **b**, and a door, **c**, are visible in the



3. Jarash, Building X north of the Sanctuary of Artemis' frontage on the Main Colonnaded Street, in 1991 before excavations.



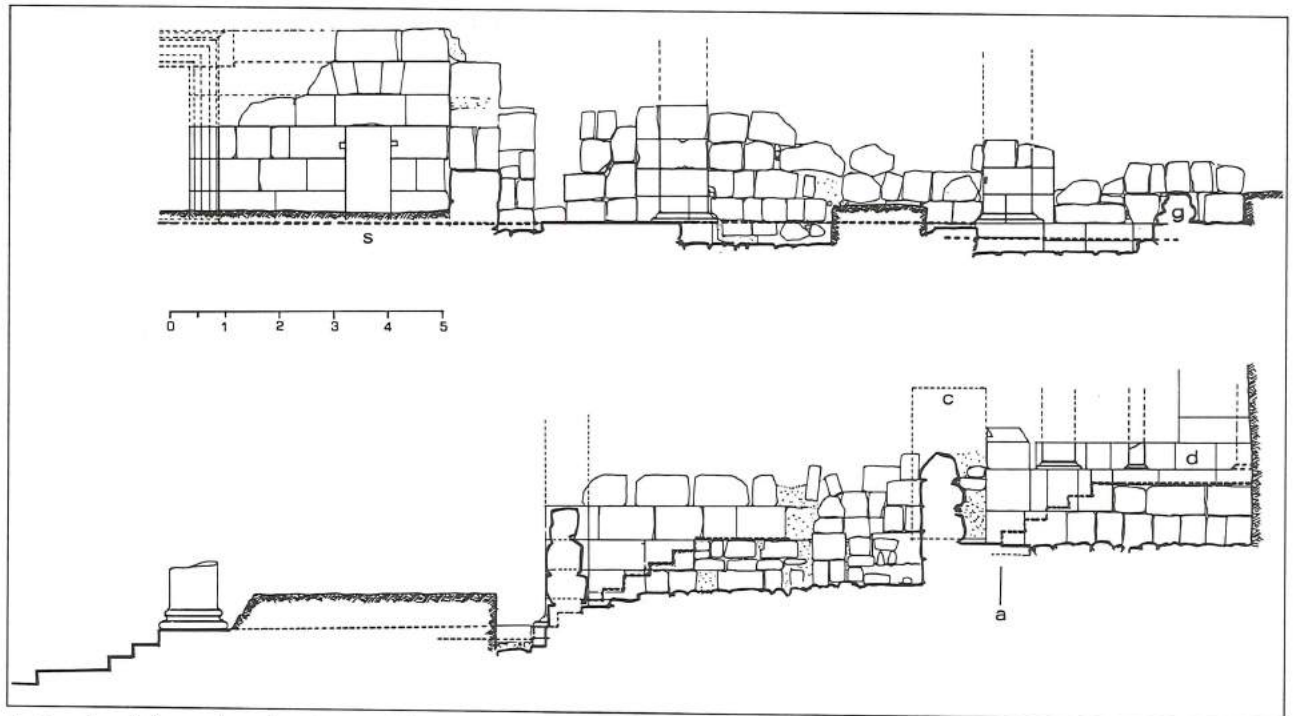
4. Jarash, Building X, after excavations. In the background are the reconstructed transversal walls of the northern shops.

= October 17th.....a few men have been set to work trenching for walls in the hollow below Mr. Horsefield's house in the spot which will ultimately be concealed under the dump.
October 19 -21st Below Mr. Horsefield's house a heavy wall of fine masonry has been found running east end west (what we call wall Z) and they are now following this up toward ei-

ther ends.....

October 23rd We have reached the lowest step of the long flight of the Artemis Temple.....All this earth will have to be carried up hill to the railway line).

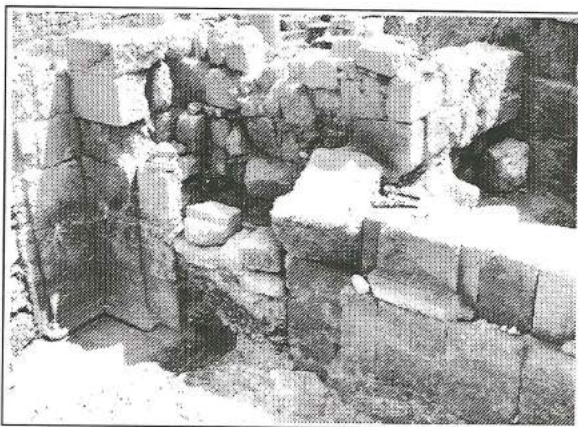
6. by G. Horsfield in 1925-31 and by the Department of Antiquities in 1960-62 and 1976-82.



5. Jarash, a) front elevation (y-y) of door s and Building X; b) cross section (w-w) of Building X-thermopolium. Dotted line is the reconstruction of the staircase.

south-eastern corner of the landing at the sides of a hinge-like pilaster (Fig. 6). A second semi-circular niche, **d**, flanked by slender pilasters (Fig. 7) and also situated on the south wall of the building, suggests a further landing higher up. The base of an isolated pilaster on a high skirting board, between the door and this latter niche, indicates the level of this upper landing (Figs. 2 and 5).

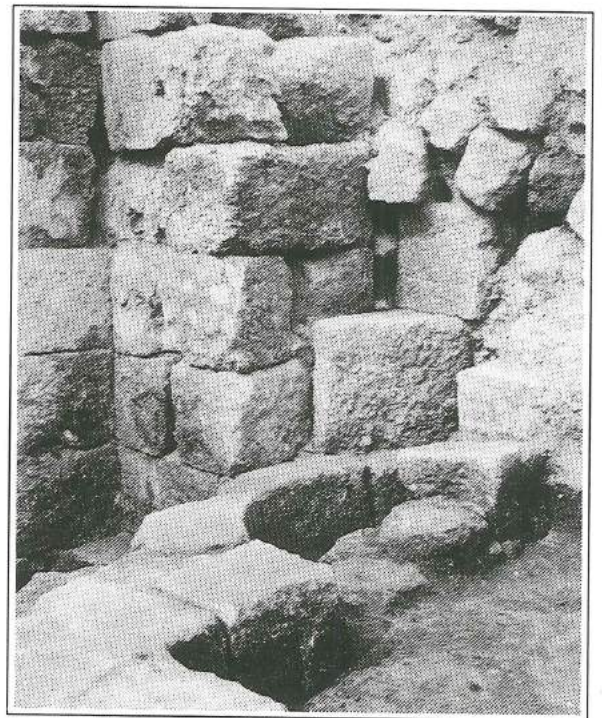
The function of such a monumental building, as indicated through its architecture may have been reserved for cultic



6. Jarash, Building X, the south-east corner of the upper vestibule.

purposes.

The trial trench, that was dug in front of the upper niche down to 1.20 m below the level of the stone pavement mentioned above, supplied evidence for a *terminus*



7. Jarash, Building X, the niche in the south wall; in the background the rear wall of room S.

post quem of, at the latest, the period within the first decades of the second century AD. Building X was thus built shortly before 150 AD, the date of the Sanctuary's frontage west of the Main Colonnaded Street.⁷ The soft calcareous *nari* stone used for the construction, even in the moulded parts of the building, may be a further indicator for an earlier date. Such a building practice was much reduced from the Trajanic period on, when the *malaki* hard stone was often preferred.⁸

According to the chronological span of dated material from the excavation in Building X, sometime between 551 and 659 - the dates of two earthquakes that devastated Gerasa,⁹ a thermopolium was established in the lower sector of the building. This drastic change of Building X, that in all probability followed a long period of abandonment, which in turn had been brought about by seismic events between the fourth and sixth centuries.¹⁰ The latter complicates a comprehensible study of the transformations of the building, associated with the Sanctuary. One can but wonder, for example, whether door *c*, which was sealed at an unknown date, was in use during the Sanctuary's life. If so, it could have served to reach the upper storey of the shops through the staircase of Building X. Furthermore, in observing the layout of the door *c* jambs of, one should deduce that, from a technical point of view, such a door must have led to a room adjacent to the south. That room that must have been demolished when the shops of the Sanctuary were built.

During the later reorganization of the site

in the Byzantine period, the steps as well as the north side of the first vestibule were demolished and a retaining wall was built against the upper vestibule, thus defining the space of the new commercial activity. The large opening to the east was sealed and an entrance was provided from the north (Fig. 2 and below Fig. 9). Judging from the evidence of the ceiling visible in door *c*, and starting 1 m above the threshold, it can be presumed that also the area of the upper level of Building X, though not otherwise preserved, was reused (see Fig. 5).

Internally, on either side of a recess situated against the inner west wall, were two places for cooking (*e1*, *e2*) (Fig. 8). Plastered benches and platforms were organized in the inner space for the comfort of the customers (Fig. 9). Three containers (*f*) were also available for waste (see Fig. 2). In the absence of material after the seventh century, it should be assumed that the thermopolium suddenly ceased to operate as a result of the earthquake in 659 AD.

A narrow trial trench dug in the *ambulacrum* along the east front of Building X brought to light the moulded bases of the pilasters originally flanking the central opening, that were partly concealed by a later *malaki* pavement. A gap in the pavement allowed excavations to reach - 45 cm below - the original *nari* pavement connected to the building, and to design the bases with a *cyma recta torus*. Furthermore, resting on the upper pavement, the base of an engaged three-quarter column, *g* (Fig. 10), similar to the one *in situ* (*m*) (see Fig. 2) belonging to the northern pillar of the colonnade in front

7. The inscription on the West Propylaeum of the sanctuary (Kraeling 1938: 402) likely dates the entire frontage including the street colonnade.

8. The use of *nari* stone in ancient Jarash for moulded or decorated architectural members is considered by some as a subsidiary 'boundary element' between the first and second centuries AD (cf. Seigne and Morin 1995: 179; Brenk *et al.* 1995: 214 and 219, *idem*, in this volume). Later second century architecture built of *nari* stone

are e.g. the entire building of the hippodrome (Ostrasz 1989:71) and the temenos wall of the upper Temple of the Zeus Sanctuary (Braun 1997: 24 and 1998).

9. The two seismic events are elsewhere witnessed in Jarash (Ostrasz 1989: 74-76).

10. The earthquake of 363 can be actually assumed as the main causes of dedeciation of the building decay; see above.



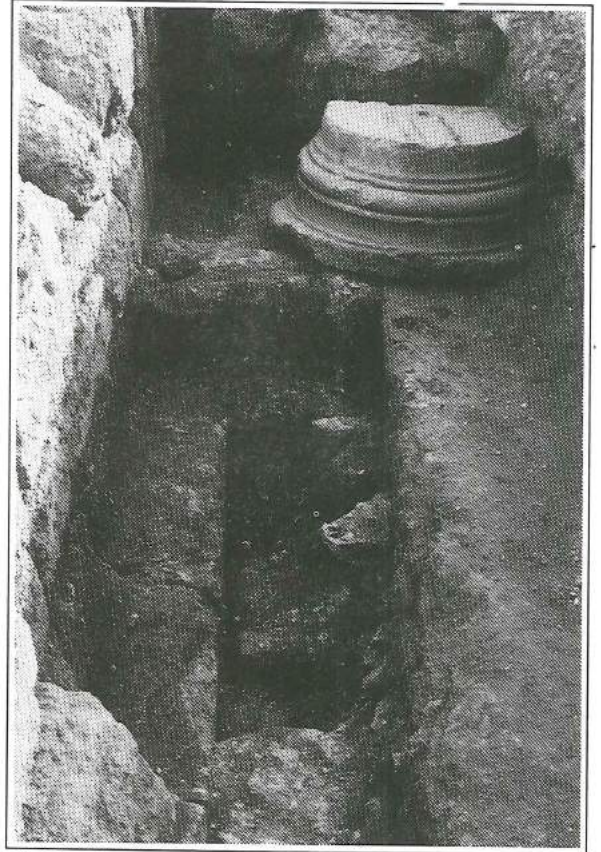
8. Jarash, thermopolium, benches, platform and steps to the northern door.



9. Jarash, thermopolium, cooking place e1.

of Building X, was discovered. This find made possible to revise the reconstruction of the architectural organization of this last segment of the colonnade, reasserting that the reassembly work of the early '60s on the colonnaded streets was often erroneous. At present, in front of Building X are three columns and a three-quarter column en-

11. A similar embarrassing misplacement of architectural elements was observed (and repaired) in



10. Jarash, the original pavement in front of Building X and the 3/4 column base g.

gaged in a square pillar, north of the former. The four-pillar system is distinguishable from the long colonnade facing the shops of the sanctuary frontage (whose columns rest on pedestals), by the plinthless Attic type base of the four vertical elements resting directly on the stylobate. The original layout of this tripartite system must have been a couple of columns sided by three-quarter columns engaged in square pillars, spaced according to the tripartite façade of Building X (see Fig. 2). The southern column base of the group, put in position in the '60s, belongs in reality to the northernmost column (n) of the colonnade facing the shops, whose base was replaced by one of cast cement.¹¹ Thorough exploration on the ground, could have located two three-quarter capitals and two whole ones. Further careful examination would have made

the Tetrastyle Gateway in front of the West Propylaeum (Parapetti 1997: 111).

clear the similarity of the column bases of both the colonnaded system (identical profile and dimensions), and could have avoided the errors made in the restoration.¹² Furthermore, the bases' similarity (see above) proves the contemporary manner of construction of the two colonnades: the four-pillar system in front of Building X

was built during the construction of the colonnade in front of the Sanctuary shops.

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12. Such a misplacement, that I thought correct at first sight, brought about my wrong recons-

truction on paper (Parapetti 1983-84: 46, Cw2, elevation in *TAV*. IV, C w 2, Cw3).