## I. History of the research

The ruins of Sufetula were excavated mainly from 1907 to 1922, then, more sporadically, from 1942 to 1966. Currently, the excavations have stopped and only a few restoration works have been carried out recently. Please refer to refer to n° 1 of the bibliography for the history of the excavations (assessment stopped in 1971).

The knowledge of the topography is therefore very incomplete. Only the network network of streets has been uncovered in the center of the city, and still without archaeological archaeological supervision, so that the methods of clearing were rather arbitrary: the workmen are used to stop at the stone; they thus delivered, according to the case, streets of case, streets of different periods, more or less broad, and the levels higher than the paving were not examined. No insula has been completely excavated.

Similarly, no accurate topographic survey has been made since the surveys of EMONTS and DRAPPIER (who were not professional topographers) in 1911. In 1955, with J.-P. CÈBE , we had tried to survey the streets of the city center with the collaboration of a specialized topographer. But, for lack of time, and because of the defective results of the excavation, we could only draw up a very partial and perhaps debatable plan, which I reproduce however (fig- 4).

The overall plans that I have published since 1956 have been drawn from aerial photographs, the best of which is a photograph of the French Army's light aviation, which has also been reproduced (pl. I, l), but which is less complete than the photograph taken by the I. G. N. in 1963. These plans cannot therefore claim to be very accurate (fig. 2).

## II. Chronology of the foundation

Historically, the date of the foundation of the city is uncertain, the literary and literary and epigraphic sources are silent. The name Sufetula is a diminutive of Sufes, an ancient city that represents the neighboring stage to the north on the road to Kef and Mactar (fig. 1). It gives us only a very vague relative chronology. It is generally admitted that the foundation is contemporary of that of Kasserine (Cillium) and Haïdra (Ammaedara): it would date from the definitive pacification of the region after the war of Tacfarinas and the cantonment of the Musulames, a tribe located more to the west, i.e. from the Flavian period. Indeed the oldest datable inscription seems to mention Vespasian. But it cannot But it cannot constitute a terminus, the inscription itself being able to be posterior to Vespasian. The first dated monument is the door of the forum which is dedicated to Antoninus the Pious in 139 AD. We cannot know if the regular plan of the city (attested as a city (attested as a municiple in the 2nd century before becoming a colony) dates from the end of the 1st century or the first half of the 2nd century. Let us admit, for want of a better word, that it is approximately contemporary of that of Timgad founded by Trajan in 100.

## It seems that there are still traces of buildings that predate the establishment of the city on a regular plan. On the plans in Figs. 2 and 3 and on the aerial photograph in Pl. I, 1, one can see a monument (no. 13) whose orientation does not correspond to that of the cadastral survey. In the last state, it is a church, the first Catholic cathedral. But this basilica covers a mysterious monument of which it used the stones and part of the foundations. So far, we have recognized a portico in Pi with an exedra in the axis, probably contemporary with a peristyle, where the baptistery of the cathedral was later installed. A building in the middle of the esplanade is probably to be imagined, but it has not yet been located. The plan, as it is currently drawn, is difficult to interpret. It is obviously a public building, and one naturally thinks of a temple. According to the architectural fragments found on this site or replaced in the church, the date of the building that preceded it must be quite late: 3rd century? But, to explain the aberrant orientation, we will suppose that it covers in its turn an older construction, perhaps of indigenous origin. The cult of Saturn is attested at Sbeitla by a few stelae, but the temple has not been located until now.

## III. The choice of the site

The city was established on a plateau with no notable relief, which offered on at least three sides all the space desirable for an extension, and near the river (Oued Sbeitla) which enclosed it in a loop to the north and north-east. The difference in level between the plateau and the river bed was sufficient to protect the city from flooding, but its proximity had great advantages: from 500 m upstream, perennial springs fed the river; it was easy to tap them to feed the city by taking advantage of the difference in level which allowed a natural flow. This same place and the bed of the river itself at the foot of the city offered inexhaustible limestone quarries, often of rather poor quality it is true, while the subsoil and the ravines opened in the plateau of the left bank provided sandstone rubble (brown or black) for masonry constructions, and even colored stones (limestone, sandstone and marl) for mosaics: I had the opportunity to note that the modern restorers had no difficulty in finding materials identical to those of antiquity.

Sbeitla was a stage, distant from the neighboring cities (Cillium = Kasserine, Sufes = Sbiba, Cilma = Djilma) of the usual 30 to 40 km and an important crossroads of roads as shown on the map (fig. 1). But the layout of the city was not function of the roads: it is in fact located between the principal road junctions The location of the modern city of Sichuan is not a function of the roads: it is in fact situated between the main road junctions, and this characteristic is well reflected in the topography and the location of the main accesses (see below, p. 605). The location of the modern city of Sbeitla, born from the railway station at the beginning of the XXth century (whereas the very modest settlement of the 19th century was on the site) and also located at the crossroads of the track (which became road) of Kairouan and that of Kasserine in Sfax, is much more in connection with the layout of the communication routes. On the other hand, it is more distant of the sources.

From the point of view of colonization, this city of the High Plateau, with its semi-arid climate, could hope to feed itself by cultivating cereals, especially thanks to irrigation. But it found its true vocation in the olive tree which took an extraordinary development in all the region as the hundreds of presses still preserved nowadays prove it.

## IV. The cadastral core: the city of the 2nd century

### The overall plan

I have tried on fig. 3 to reconstitute the cadastral plan of the city dating from the Flavians or the first Antonines, which can be compared to the reconstitutions of the plans of Carthage and Timgad. For the most part, it is well attested, either that the streets have been cleared, or that they can be easily identified thanks to the alignments of "hastes" (reinforcement of the rubble walls) of the facades. But to the northeast, along the river, a part of the city, covered by the embankments of the beginning of the century, was only touched by the excavation - and the southwestern fringe, beyond the modern road, was mistakenly excluded from the perimeter of the site in the 19th century and has almost completely disappeared due to cultivation and, in recent years, the construction of the high school.

The dimensions are approximately 445 m in the direction of? East-West for 425 m in the North-South direction, that is to say nearly 19 ha. One will compare with Timgad which covers a lesser surface (approximately 11 ha).

The orientation of the cardinals is N.-N.E. - S.-S.E. (angle of about 22°).

The location of the forum that we identify without absolute proof with the courtyard that precedes the three temples would be quite comparable to that of the forum of Timgad in the cadastral core. Like it, it interrupts the decumanus maximus, but a passage for pedestrians is nevertheless provided since one leaves the courtyard by the back (the two doors at the end of the corridors that separate the three temples) (see infra, p. 606).

If our reconstitution is exact, one would count 36 insulae of the strigatae type as in Carthage, Utica and Lepcis. The dimensions of the insulae are for the majority a little more than 100 m (341 feet approximately) for 45 m (152 feet): in Carthage, they measure 142 X 35 m 50, in Utica: 86 m 50 X 39 m 57.

The streets seem to have an average width of 5 m.

### 2. The insulae

But all this is theoretical. In fact, if one believes the results obtained, perhaps involuntarily, by the obtained, perhaps involuntarily, by the diggers, and the survey of the topographer confirmed by the aerial photograph (pl. I, 1), the dimensions of the insulae were not equal, and probably from the beginning.

To the east, the first series of insulae is particularly "thin" (39 m) and so is the last one to the west (not precisely measured). The two insulae which frame the forum (Reg. Y, 2 and 5 on fig. 4) are shorter (about 70 m for insula 2 and as much for insula 5 if one admits that the forum was less extended primitively: see infra, p. 606) but wider (52 m approximately) as if one had wanted to compensate partially for the losses in the length (the surface is 3650 m2 instead of 4.000 to 4.500 m2 normally). It follows that this maximum width was adopted also for the two outer insulae of the of the series.

### 3. The streets

Like the insulae, the streets, as they have been cleared, are very irregular. The widths vary from 4 m to 7 m and, above all, the layouts are not straight. The decumanus 4, which is an essential artery since it leads to the western gate of the city, presents numerous decreases, of small extent it is true. It has been assumed that these offsets were voluntary, but I prefer to think that they result from an encroachment, variable according to the insulae, on the public road. One can also wonder if the decumanus 3, axial street that I consider as the decumanus maximus, possessed from the beginning this oblique layout from the cardo 2 towards the East, layout materialized by the existence of a triangular median in front of the temple that became basilica III (n° 21 of fig. 2; fig. 7a; pl. III, 3; IX, 14). Two solutions are theoretically possible: either the orientation in front of the forum is the right one and the street would have been then deviated towards the South for unknown reasons; or the axis at the level of the theater is the primitive axis (it corresponds indeed roughly to the axis of the forum) and one would have moved the section close to the forum towards the North to adapt it to the location of the door. The first solution is preferable because the street extends along the same axis to the west of the forum, but, in any case, we have proof here of a "failure" in the plan which is also noticeable in the plan of the forum (see below, p. 606).

The layout of the cardo 2 as it appears at the edge of the monument already mentioned (n° 20 of fig. 2) is perfectly aberrant (pl. V, 7). Along the building, the sidewalk presents a curved line (which does not seem to be found in the west of the street), then the west of the street), then the street diverges into two sections: an oblique section joins the decumanus 4 and the other section, which must represent the primitive route, comes up against a building. We suspect that there have been many alterations, perhaps arbitrarily reshaped by a fanciful excavation.

The streets do not appear to have been covered with multiple layers of slabs. The pavement currently visible (pl. V, 6. 7), with long slabs of limestone arranged mostly at an angle the creation of the roadway, but it is obvious that the roadway, but it is clear that it has been repaired or reworked many times. A sewer runs under the pavement in the axis of all the streets excavated.

The decumanus maximus n° 3 is the only street which, in the current state of the excavation, is framed of porticoes and stores in front of the forum (n° 19 of fig. 2).

### 4. Access and transit routes

If we project the situation of the 3rd-4th centuries to the ancient period (fig. 6), the main accesses to the city were to the S.-E. and N.-W. It was to the S.-E. that one left for all directions towards the East coast and towards the South: Carthage via Villa Regia, Hadrumetum, Thysdrus, Thenae and Capsa. Even today, these different routes diverge towards Kairouan, Sfax and Gafsa, either immediately at the exit of the modern city of Sbeitla (2 km east of the site), or even further east. In the same way, one might have gone out to the N.W. for the northern road via Sufes as well as for all the western directions: Ammaedara, Theveste, Thelepte. Here too, the modern network reproduces the ancient situation and the main crossroads of the road to Kasserine and Sbiba is located a few kilometers west of the site. However, the SW corner of the city, where the road to Kasserine passes today, is not well known, and one cannot exclude an exit towards Cillium and then Thelepte and Theveste; the NW gate would then be reserved for the directions of Sufes, Thala, Ammaedara. This solution would have the advantage to divert a good part of the traffic to the edge of the city. In any case, the city of Sufetula itself was not a real crossroads in the sense that it is generally understood: the north, bordered by a ravine with sometimes nervous waters and, beyond, by a rough terrain, does not have a natural communication route (a track has been traced there quite recently). At most, one crossed the wadi (perhaps by the aqueduct) to reach the villas on the left bank (see below, p. 616); towards the south, less rugged in the immediate vicinity of the city, but with no outlet beyond, there was no main road either, as is the case today. The traffic was essentially oriented East-West and the road junctions were located at some distance from the city.

If one adopts our hypothesis for the two principal exits of the city, one must suppose for the transit a way "in bayonet", similar to that of Timgad that I have materialized on fig. 3, not without a certain arbitrariness, since one can also admit several dropouts.

### 5. The monuments

Few ancient monuments have been excavated so far. The most important one is the forum (fig. 5; pl. IV, 4. 5), which we will call thus because it is located in the heart of the city, and on the main axis as we have seen. is situated in the heart of the city, and on the principal axis as we saw.

In fact, this enclosure of 70 X 67 m constitutes the court of three temples whose bases are aligned at the bottom of the esplanade and joined by a platform in which were arranged the two corridors which serve the doors framing the principal temple. It is thought that this ensemble constitutes the Capitol, although no inscription or statue of worship makes it possible to identify the temples. This arrangement, which thus answers practical needs, has only few equivalents: we know some examples of separate cellae joined by a frontage (Brescia in Italy, Tubernuc in Africa), but only one case of Capitol separated in three temples, in Belo in Andalusia. The monumental door is dedicated to Antoninus the Pious in 139, but it is possible that, according to their style, the temples are a little earlier. There are several irregularities in the plan of the square that have already been discussed: the axis of the main temple does not coincide with the axis of the gate, which is offset slightly to the north (see above, p. 605, about the direction of the gate). 605, concerning the direction of the decumanus maximus), but does not coincide either with the axis of the square, which passes clearly to the south: on this side a strip, 5 m wide, seems to have been added to the primitive enclosure, probably during the construction of a new square parallel to the forum (see infra, p. 612).

To the north, the forum communicated through side doors with a public building of which only the paved floor and some walls have been identified under the Christian basilica n° IV (n° 16 in fig. 2). Perhaps it is the civil basilica or a market.

To this short list of originally planned monuments can be added the courtyard temple (no. 20 on the plan) which was transformed into Christian basilica no. III (fig. 9; pl. XI, 16): although the architecture seems to date only from the 3rd century, it is not yet complete. Although the architecture seems to date only from the third century, it is clear that this site along the main axis had been reserved at the time of the foundation.

In the cadastral perimeter, only a few private buildings are known so far: some badly cleared and unpublished stores along the decumanus maximus, in front of the forum, and a group of houses which were destroyed at the time of the construction of the basilica II (n° 11 of the plan).

The water supply network is not precisely dated. The only point of reference is the replacement of an inscription of 145/146 in the apparatus of the pontaqueduct (pl. VI, 8. 9), but this replacement may be much later. I have preferred to put this work of art on the plan corresponding to the second period. The same is true for several small baths that have been identified but never completely excavated (nos. 9 and 15 of the overall plan, for example).

### 6. The necropolises

The necropolises of Sufetula have been only partially explored, and neither the inscriptions, nor the monuments, nor the furnishings of the tombs have been classified chronologically. It is evident, however, that the necropolises, as they are located on the general plan (fig. 2), date mainly from the third and following centuries. The ancient necropolis has not been located with certainty. It was probably located mainly to the south and west.

## V. The city of the Late Empire

### 1. The extension of the surface

As in Timgad, the city was extended on an irregular plan outside the primitive cadastral core. This extension was done by "oil stain", especially along the two main access roads. I have tried to express this evolution graphically in Fig. 6, but like any such attempt, it is open to the accusation of arbitrariness. In particular, because of the existence of the embankments already discussed below, little is known about what is happening to the north, along the river. It is highly unlikely that this area was unoccupied. In fact, the route of a pipe shown in Fig. 2 revealed in 1957 masonry along a good part of the route and touched small, rather late, baths at no. 14. To the South, I suggested an extension that the nature of the ground justifies but which is hardly attested materially. The only relatively well-known new districts are those to the south-east and north-west.

In the 4th century, not including the amphitheater, which was probably in the middle of an undeveloped area, the city measured at its greatest extension about 1200 m and covered 50 to 60 ha.

I believe it is dangerous to calculate the number of inhabitants that can live on this surface. One knows the polemics to which this kind of calculation has given rise. It has always been considered, however, and probably with reason, that these medium-sized cities in the interior of North Africa could have a population of about ten thousand.

### 2. Transformations of the road system in the city center

These transformations are normal in a living city. Changes in the road system have already been mentioned above. I said that that the differences in the width of the streets and the staggering of the streets were encroachments on the public way, which one notes in all the ancient cities.

In two places, the changes were more serious. At n° 21 of the general plan (fig. 7a and pl. IX, 14), one interrupted the decumanus maximus to install on an esplanade a fountain on which the cardo 1 now abuts. Stairs allowed pedestrians coming from the forum or the theater to cross this esplanade transversally.

The cardo 2 has also undergone a transformation that I have already mentioned (supra, p. 605 and pl. V, 7). One does not know what becomes of it beyond the decumanus 4: perhaps it continues in its oblique direction which it took in the last place because opposite its theoretical axis one finds a small thermal group (n° 15 of the general plan).

### 3. Hydraulics and public fountains

The excellent springs of the Oued Sbeitla had been at the origin of the choice of the site in all probability. They must have been captured from the foundation. Two ancient pipes have been recognized by the public works engineers who proceeded from 1907 to 1911 to the modern catchment for the supply of the city of Sfax. It is probable that the one on the right bank is older than the other one since the aqueduct-bridge, linked to the pipe on the left bank, provides an underpass for it. I have already indicated that the aqueduct-bridge (pl. VI, 8. 9) cannot be dated at present. It can be assumed that its construction caused the installation of a water tower, probably to the northwest, and of various reservoirs. No group of large cisterns of the classical type has been located so far, but an open basin that appears to be one of these reservoirs has been excavated in 24 of the general plan (pl. VII, 11).

In the 4th century, the execution of a town-planning scheme of a certain size was reflected in the installation of three public fountains of the same type (rectangular basin framed on three sides by columns alternating with spillway niches) (fig. 7b and pl. IX, 14). All these fountains are used as a background for more or less vast squares. The first one (n°21 of the general plan) has already been mentioned in connection with the esplanade which interrupts the decumanus maximus. The second, near of the forum (n° 18), is undoubtedly located at the bottom of a place which doubles in the South the forum (it was not yet cleared; one only recognized the paving of it by surveys). It seems to be dated by an inscription engraved on the blocks of the crowning and which would name Valentinian and Valens. We deduce that the fountains of Sbeitla were built in the second half of the IVth century. The third one, a little further from the center, in 8 of the overall plan, dominates a small square that borders the decumanus 4, that is to say probably at this place the road to Cillium.

### 4. The transformations of the forum (fig. 5 and pl. IV, 4. 5; XI, 16)

As I have already pointed out above, the southern side of the forum was deeply modified, perhaps at the time when the esplanade with fountain no. 18 was built next to it. The boundary wall would have been pushed back 5 m further south. The connection with the neighboring esplanade is clearly established by the existence of numerous doors that connected the two squares (pl. X, 15). On the other hand, the terminal exedra of the southern portico of the forum was replaced by a hall covered with groin vaults, the use of which is not known, and a new hall was built in the S. -W. corner a new room preceded by a vestibule and ending with an apsidal niche, which could be the curia.

### 5. The South-East suburb (pl. VII, 10; VIII, 12; XIII, 19)

Ce quartier comprend le secteur entre le cardo 1 et la rivière, puis s'étire le long de la voie qui sort de la ville au Sud—Est c'est-à-dire la route de Thenae et d'Hadrumetum.

To the north, two public monuments were excavated. In the South, we excavated along the road. Between the two, no excavation has been undertaken: the exploration is thus hardly begun.

The extended decumanus maximus, which bends to go along the theater, serves, before arriving there, a thermal group that is certainly the main one in Sufetula (pl. VII, 10). It was excavated in 1916-1922 and then after 1945, but the excavation is far from being finished and the first overall plan, which was published in 1973, is still only a schema . It is a question of double baths whose plan is not regular and which were often reworked like most of the baths. In the absence of an explicit inscription, it is difficult to date them: 3rd century without doubt with certainly repairs in the IVth century, as attested by a fragment of an inscription.

The theater, built on the side of the bank of the wadi (pl. VIII, 12) and of which only the stage is built, is very damaged: almost all the stands are missing and half of the stage building has probably fallen into the wadi that periodically gnaws at the cliff. The incomplete inscription engraved on an entablature of the stage wall, mentions a governor of Byzacene, which brings us back to the time after the reform of Diocletian. It has been questioned whether the theater was begun at that date, or was only repaired in the 4th century. It would be astonishing if a city of this importance had not possessed a permanent theater before, and for this reason we lean towards the latter solution.

The development of the S. -E. sector can be considered as dated approximately by the construction of the arch dedicated to the emperors of the first tetrarchy around 300 . At that date, the arch marked the entrance to the city and constituted the eastern gate.

Excavation has so far been limited to the immediate surroundings of the street (pl. XIII, 19). The only buildings that can be attributed to a period prior to the Byzantine period are the houses (?), of rather simple plan (a few rooms around a central courtyard), which would have been fortified later by the Byzantines (see below the forts, p. 622).

### 6. The North-West suburb

The construction of this quarter can be roughly dated by that of the arch which marked its limit at a given moment (n° 2 of the general plan): this "small arch", became a real door (fig. 8) which could be closed by leaves and seems to be connected to a continuous line of walls (not an enclosure, but rather, it seems, a series of blind walls of adjoining buildings); it is dedicated to Septimius Severus and his sons, between 209 and 211 . Logically, this district would have developed would therefore have developed in the III century before the southeast suburb.

There was very little clearing of debris. The ruins, still standing today, of a temple ruins, still standing today, of a temple (n° 3 of the general plan) of modest dimensions, oriented S. - W., which was never excavated and whose dedication could not be established until now. It has never been excavated and its dedication has not been established until now. Nearby, anarchic soundings brought to light several apses which make think of thermal baths (n° 7 of the plan) (pl. XII, 18). On the other side of the main street, which one can consider as the way of Cillium and Sufes, one excavated before the war of 1914 two joint houses, or rather one and half (nos. 5 and 6 of the plan), characterized by the abundance of the rooms with two apses, by an architectural plastic (corbels and capitals) and late mosaics. One of them, called "Edifice of the Seasons" after the motive of a mosaic, gave rise to many discussions because it was treated as an isolated building: it was taken for a Christian basilica then a room of corporation. However, there is no doubt that we are in the presence of a district of aristocratic houses that seems to have been inhabited from the fourth to the sixth centuries.

Beyond the gate itself, this quarter was to extend as far as the amphitheatre. In 1 of the overall plan, the explorers of the end of the XIXth century had spotted a peristyle at ground level which they had joined to a small nearby apse to make a Christian basilica. I think that it is also a house.

The amphitheater has not been excavated since the nineteenth century: two accesses were then cleared where honorary bases were found replaced, perhaps for a fortification, but perhaps also for a repair as it was the case in the amphitheater of Thuburbo Majus. It is impossible in any case to advance any date for its construction. One will notice its shape almost round.

### 7. Necropolises

I have indicated on Fig. 2 in a rather vague way, by a grid that encircles the city, that tombs were found from the N.W. to the S.E. of the city. As I said above, the exploration was never systematic and the reports of the archaeologists of the XIXth century and the beginning of the XXth century, who were especially looking for inscriptions, do not locate their discoveries except for rare exceptions of which I had the occasion to study an example.

As far as we can see at the moment, we have mostly found graves:

1°) around the amphitheatre. Traces of this can still be seen between the amphitheater and the wadi where the gravel exploitation has stripped the land, and especially along the road where the gullying of runoff water constantly brings to light burial tombs, most often built of plaster tiles or tiles.

2°) to the south-west, beyond the modern road and the high school, in the land planted with fruit and olive trees which extends for 500 m to a line of small heights. A few mausoleum foundations have been found there and, sporadically, during the cultivation of the land, numerous tombs that do not seem to be grouped together. I had the opportunity, in 1954-1955 to count a certain number of inscriptions which came from this necropolis and to see some material, especially vases of El Aouja dated from the IIIth century .

3°) Far enough towards the South-East, until nearly one kilometer of the arch of the tetrarchy, one found constantly at the same time, tombs, in particular under the small European cemetery. From there also comes some material of the same type as the one mentioned, notably lamps of the third century and vases of El Aouja .

It should be added that tombs were found at the beginning of the century in a ravine on the left bank of the Oued Sbeitla, having fallen from a landmine. One wonders if this is a necropolis of the city or a family cemetery to be linked to one of the installations we will discuss. There is also, at a greater distance from the wadi, at least one mausoleum rather well preserved.

From the point of view of typology, the funerary monuments that have been described, which are relatively few in number, can be classified in the following way:

1°) some steles with characters that can sometimes belong to the first century.

2°) cupulae, half-cylinders of limestone inscribed on a small side, they can be used to indicate can be used to indicate both cremations and burials and probably date probably date in majority from the IIIrd century and the beginning of the IVth century (we have some precise dates in the region of Tébessa and in Mauritania). They have been preserved in rather great number because they were used as stones of size in the foundations of the foundations of the Christian churches.

3°) a very small number of altars.

4°) some cippes placed upright, often informal

5°) a few slabs placed flat and perhaps a circular mensa .

### 8. The suburbia

In 1883, H . SALADIN had announced some ruins on the right bank of the river, in particular a building paved with geometrical mosaics whose fragments remained in 1963. The existence of villas or farms forming the suburbs of Sufetula is also confirmed by the rather dense network of drains which had been described at the beginning of the century by the engineers of Public Works.

### 9. The installation of Christianity in the city: the urban churches (fig. 6)

A bishop of Sufetula is attested as early as 256 at the time of s. Cyprian, but he is not a bishop. Cyprian, but the Christian settlements in the city do not seem to be earlier than the middle of the fourth century. The oldest preserved monuments were all established on public buildings and in the heart of the city: Basilica I, the first Catholic cathedral, on the Pi portico building mentioned above; Basilica III, perhaps the cathedral of a sect (Donatist?), in the courtyard of temple no. 20, whose cella was transformed into a baptistry; Basilica IV on the unidentified monument next to the forum (no. 16 on the plan), but after a notable filling in. It was necessary that these monuments were demolished or disused so that the land could be given to the Church or to the Christian Churches. In addition to the gradual or authoritarian extinction of pagan cults from the middle of the fourth century, one can invoke the effect of an earthquake which seems to have ravaged Byzacene, Tripolitania and Sicily in 365. I would like to attribute the collapse of the cella of temple no. 20 (which seems to have occurred after the installation of a Christian baptistery) to a catastrophe of this kind (fig. 9) or the damage suffered the damage to the surrounding wall of the forum, which was later summarily rebuilt (pl. X, 15).

Probably after a difficult period of life at the beginning of the Vandal domination, the Catholic community experienced a new expansion at the end of the 5th and beginning of the 6th century and the beginning of the 6th century. Feeling cramped in the old cathedral (Basilica I), it acquires the quasi totality of the neighbouring insula, occupied until then by houses, and builds there a new church, vast and well decorated of mosaics homogeneous as well as of the annex buildings (housing of the clergy?, baths, etc.).

### 10. The Christian necropolises and the martyrium

Very early on, people were buried in urban churches. On this point, research does not allow us to establish a precise chronology for Sbeitla. Most of the funerary inscriptions found in the basilicas date from the Byzantine period, but Bishop Jucundus, attested in 411 and 414, was buried in the baptistery of his cathedral as was frequently the case for bishops, and a priest Vitalis, whose epitaph was not found in place, was buried, probably in church II, at the end of the fifth century. In Hippo, it is certain that it was common practice to bury in the church in the Vandal period. In Sétif, in a suburban district, the churches contain burials dated to the end of the fourth century .

Most African funerary mosaics, most of which come from churches, are from the late fourth or fifth century.

However, there is no discontinuity, in all probability, between the pagan and Christian necropolises. An epitaph, of ancient type, from n° 32 of the plan proves the use of this part of the necropolis by the Christians and tombs are also crowded around n° 34, a place probably sanctified by the burial of martyrs.

A sixth century martyrium dedicated to the martyrs Sylvain and Fortunat was excavated there, covering an older chapel of which we have some walls and probably three inscriptions replaced in the Byzantine building. It is assumed that the two or three martyrs named in the votive inscription (there is a gap) are local martyrs, but the names are very common and difficult to identify .

## VI. Sufetula in the high Byzantine period

One has the impression that the city continued to live, in the extension and with the physiognomy that the Lower Empire had given it, at least until the end of the sixth century: an open city preserving its network of regular streets, more or less modified (see supra, p. 611), but not radically transformed.

The sources are still silent about it, except for the lists of councils, but the Christian monuments at least show the existence of a certain prosperity: repairs, transformations due to changes in the liturgy, new pavements, beautiful funeral inscriptions, etc. Above all, the construction, probably at the time of Justinian, of the new martyrium of Saints Sylvain and Fortunat (no. 34 on the overall plan) reflects the vogue for the cult of these saints and the influence of oriental architecture, since the basilica is probably equipped with a dome. Byzantine officers from outside the city are buried there, and perhaps even one of Gregory's predecessors, the exarch Peter, which suggests that this road junction could have been the residence of a staff, perhaps, alternating with Thelept, that of the dux of Byzacene, although the city was never really fortified. This would explain why it was chosen as a center of operations by the patrician Gregory who proclaimed himself independent at the time when he was preparing to face the first Arab invasion of 647.

## VII. The last era of Sufetula

Everything changes at a moment that we cannot date for the moment objectively. We naturally tend - but perhaps this is perilous - to situate this break in 647 to situate this break in 647, since the capture and pillaging of the city by the victorious Arabs is the only fact that history Arabs is the only fact that history has retained. It has even assumed fabulous proportions in the late accounts of Arab sources. If one must attribute truth to these fables, they would confirm the prosperity (relative anyway) of which anyway) of which it was already made report. In any case, the city must have survived the disaster since, the Arabs having withdrawn, it was out of question, in the prospect of a new attack, that the Byzantine administration abandons this strategic point.

### Obliteration of the road network and backfilling (fig. 10)

The excavation was too incomplete and, where it was cleared, too inattentive to the late levels to be able to say if a new network of streets was born at this time, as for example at Thuburbo Majus and what was its layout, although although some directions can be guessed from aerial photographs and on the ground, especially in the south-east of the city.

In any case, it is certain that, at least in certain districts, the ancient network was buried and partly disused. This can be seen by the existence of thresholds about 1 m above the level of the pavement, in particular along cardines 2 and 3 (pl. IX, 13), by the installation of oil mills above the pavement of the main street, the Way of Thenae, near n° 25 (pl. XIII, 19. 20), by the very high level of the basilica V (n° 25), whose altar contained relics of the oriental saint Tryphon associated with those of the Milanese saints Gervais and Protais and whose construction I attribute for this reason rather to this "second time" Byzantine.

The pavements of these churches were all rebuilt at a higher level (but the difference in level is only a few tens of centimeters) and the surveys from the beginning of the century show walls founded at 80 cm or 1 m above the previous level (these walls have now disappeared) .

Elsewhere, the change in level is less obvious and the current soil, which is never more than 1.5 to 2 meters from the street pavement on this never more than 1.5 or 2 meters from the street pavement on this site, which is not very well filled in, is approaches the "classic" ancient ground to the NW of the city. Perhaps entire districts of the city have been abandoned.

This phenomenon of obliteration of the classic roadway is found in many cities of North Africa: I already quoted Thuburbo Majus which is the best known example of it, but one has just studied it also in Syracuse where it seems to date from the IVth century .

### 2. Fortifications

I have already said that the city had never been surrounded by a wall and did not include although George of Cyprus calls it a kastron (which can have the same meaning as castellum in (which can have the same meaning as castellum in the administrative language of the Romans). But it was punctuated at low time of support points, with the periphery especially.

In the center, the enclosing wall of the forum, a thin wall (50 cm) pierced everywhere by doors, must have suffered serious damage, either as a result of a natural disaster (earthquake like that of 365), or because of voluntary destruction (in 647?). At the time of the discovery of the site, one found it summarily rebuilt by a rather incredible piling up of blocks of any nature (many inscribed fragments) and the doors were blocked (pl. X, 15; XII, 17). I do not think, however, that this enclosure could have had any real military value unless one assumes that the wall had been lined with an earthen embankment and equipped with towers. But there is no trace of such work.

We have seen that the amphitheater may also have been fortified, i.e. the openings would have been blocked (with inscribed blocks). The temple anonymous n° 3 underwent a treatment of the same order. But this type of transformation (as for the forum) is by nature indatable, and it is not excluded that here that here the closing of the openings could have been carried out at a much more recent time more recent period, since European travelers noted in the XVIIIth and XIXth centuries and in the XIX centuries of the attempts of sedentary installations in this sector (it remains the "bordj" n° 4).

We approach a better defined and more interesting phenomenon with the installation of several forts in the southeastern sector, along the ancient road of Thenae (pl. XIII, 19). Two of them remain today (nos. 27 and 28) which were excavated after 1945 and restored in recent years, plus a third (no. 29) which is really only a tower designed to protect a house. CH . DIEHL and H . SALADIN, at the end of the XIX E century, had seen several others beyond the Arch of the Tetrarchy in the direction of the modern city.

These forts, 20 to 30 m on a side, are very frequent in the whole region, from Sufetula to Cillium and Thélepte, from Thélepte to Théveste and south of Théveste. They have never been studied in the Sufetula region but quite often on the southern border and in the region of Tebessa (this had become the specialty of French officers of indigenous affairs). Those of Sbeitla have the particularity of not having doors (there are others of the same type in the vicinity): one reached the floor by a staircase or a wooden ladder as in the modern tower-houses, still standing in certain regions (I think of Corsica or Albania). It is necessary to restore at least one floor to the Sbeitla forts (which is well attested in the two excavated monuments). Inside (fig. 11), the enclosure, very thick, is lined with cells as in the forts and barracks. In the center, a second wall, of "civilian" thickness and construction, delimits the dwelling itself, which some have thought was pre-existing. This fortified house naturally has its own well, cisterns and silos. The plan of the fortress n° 27 is very confused (it seems that the ground floor of the central part, very often reworked, was finally filled in. It contains several curious features (light slits on the upper floor and latrines on the curtain wall with a drain through the wall). The clearer plan of no. 28 (fig. 11) groups a series of rooms around a skylight. It should be noted that each of these monuments has several lines of troughs whose true purpose is still unknown . In any case, these In any case, these forts were essentially used to protect their occupants. In addition, they were able to sound the alarm. But the network of support points is too to be able to speak of an organized defense. We did not find precise dating elements: inscribed fragments from the theater have been replaced in the walls, but fragments from the theater, but also perhaps a raven borrowed from house 5 at the other end of house 5 at the other end of the city. It is obvious that this type of construction implies the death of the open city of the classical period.

### 3. Survival of the Christian buildings. Necropolises in the city

I have already mentioned the construction of a new church in the S.E. district (basilica V: n° 25) particularly modest in its dimensions and its apparatus.

It has undergone at least one major remodeling, proving a certain duration of use (cf. n. 53).

The churches built earlier do not seem to have been abandoned, except perhaps the martyrium of the necropolis. The churches of the Catholic cathedral group, in particular, may have been repaired in this late period (see supra, p. 620).

In two of the churches (Basilica IV and Basilica V) were even found fragments of fragments of ceramics that are generally dated to the tenth or XI th century, in facilities that are still certainly Christian. There is nothing to prevent that, after the definitive occupation by the Arabs, the churches continued to be used at least continued to be used at least until the Hilalian invasion, which put an end to sedentary life in sedentary life in these regions: the necropolises of Tripolitania and the inscriptions of Kairouan attest to this survival of Christianity. But the traditional dating of glazed ceramics can be challenged and I prefer not to conclude from these clues alone.

A mark of the decadence of the city is the existence of burials, which seem to be late, in the middle of the city, apparently without any connection with a cult building (but this connection can escape us temporarily): a sarcophagus is seen in the paving of the forum: several were found to the south near fountain 18, in a construction that has not been identified (one of the tombs is that of a Byzantine magister militum); others were buried in the apses n° 7 that I hypothetically attribute to a thermal bath (pl. XII, 18).

### 4. The habitat of low period

Apart from the tower-houses described above, the balance sheet is particularly poor for housing. This silence undoubtedly reflects the inadequacy of the exploration, but it may also be due to the scarcity of "solid" constructions in this final period. I see to announce only small thermal baths incompletely cleared with a basin of frigidarium decorated with amusing mosaics, in 26 of the plan, and other constructions, undoubtedly thermal also, in the North of the fortress n° 27. It is perhaps not a chance that an important part of the evidence of late activity is concentrated in this part of the city, a former suburb, to the detriment of the center. The installation of wine presses near the basilica No. 25 also shows that an attempt was made to group the activities necessary for daily life under the protection of forts or "towers" (pl. XIII, 19, 20).

When we compare this assessment to the first syntheses presented by the excavators of the XIXth and the beginning of the XX centuries, we can measure the progress made in excavation in excavation and perhaps even more in interpretation. It still remains It remains meager in comparison with what could provide the systematic exploration of this site, relatively destroyed because it is little covered, but almost entirely free of modern of modern constructions. With Timga d and Utique, Sufetula represents one of the privileged cases where one can follow in Africa the birth, the development and the deformation then obliteration of a regular plan.