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*Architectural and Functional/Liturgical
Development of the North-West Church
in Hippos (Sussita)*

In July 2007, the eighth season of excavations was completed at the so-called North-West Church at Hippos (Sussita), one of the cities of the Decapolis. The church was explored by a Polish team within the framework of an international project devoted to the unearthing of the remains of that Graeco-Roman and Byzantine-Umayyad period town, headed by Arthur Segal of the University of Haifa. Despite the fact that as many as four churches have so far been uncovered at Sussita,¹ it is only the North-West Church (NWC) that became one of the examples discussed by A. Ovadia in his paper listing Byzantine-period churches excavated within the borders of the present-day Israel, in which architectural changes apparently reflect some liturgical modifications.² Unfortunately, A. Ovadia's interpretation of the NWC (published in 2005) not only was based on the reports of the early seasons of our fieldwork (2002, 2003), but also proved to be rather superficial one, a fact which calls for a careful re-examination of the excavation data.

Perhaps the most important fact about the NWC is that this has been one of rare instances attested for the region of a church that was still active as such during the Umayyad period. Archaeological contexts sealed by the earthquake of A.D. 749 provide us with a priceless record of the functioning of the church at that time: three reliquaries, a marble altar table, bronze *polykandelon* and hanging lamp, both of them found *in situ*, and numerous objects stored in the *diakonikon* including church furniture and many offerings presented by the faithful. This richness of the finds invited us to attempt at reconstructing the liturgical functioning of the church through the analysis of the archaeological material.³

The North-West Church was built in the centre of the town,⁴ at a place previously occupied by an Early Roman-period *temenos*. The church architects re-used foundations and parts of walls of the temple (notably, having incorporated *in extenso* the northern wall of the *cella* into the northern wall of the basilica), which had been constructed in the Augustan or early Tiberian period.⁵ While designing the atrium, they took advantage of the difference in elevation between the temple platform on which the church was to be built and the area outside the western *temenos* wall, with its walking level *c.* 2 m lower than that of the

¹ A. SEGAL, Die Kirchen von Sussita, *Welt und Umwelt der Bibel*, 1/2007, pp. 62–64.

² A. OVADIAH, Liturgical Modifications in the Early Byzantine Church in Eretz Israel. The Architectural and Epigraphic Evidence, *LA* 55, 2005 [= Modifications], pp. 363–376.

³ This research project ('Liturgical functioning of the North-West Church at Hippos') has been financed by Grant No. 1H01 B009 29 of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education for the years 2005–2007.

⁴ From a topographical description of the churches at Sussita as provided by A. OVADIAH, *Corpus of the Byzantine Churches in the Holy Land*, Bonn 1970 [= Corpus], pp. 174–178, Nos. 171–174, one would conclude that NWC should be identified as his 'Church a' (No. 171, Pl. 69); however, neither the description of visible remains nor the sketch plan do match our church.

⁵ For the remains of the temple, see: J. MŁYNARCZYK, M. BURDAJEWICZ, The North-West Church (NWC) [= NWC 2004], in: A. SEGAL *et al.*, Hippos – Sussita, Fifth Season of Excavation, September–October 2004, Haifa 2004 [= Hippos–Sussita 2004], pp. 67–68, Fig. 25; EAD., ID., North-West Church in Hippos (Sussita), Israel: Five Years of Archaeological Research (2000–2004), *Eastern Christian Art in its Late Antique and Islamic Contexts* 2, 2005 [= NWC Five Years], p. 53; EAD., ID., North-West Church Complex (NWC) [= NWC 2005], in: A. SEGAL *et al.*, Hippos – Sussita, Sixth Season of Excavations, July 2005, Haifa 2005 [= Hippos–Sussita 2005], Fig. 16.

temple platform, so that a cellar could have been arranged in the north-western part of the atrium.⁶ Ceramic and numismatic material associated with the foundation of the southern stylobate of the atrium indicates that the church could not have been built before the end of the fifth century; indeed, it is probable that its construction date was during the first half of the sixth century.⁷ An intriguing and still unanswered question is what the usage of the temple area was during the time that elapsed between the end of the pagan cult in this place (presumably not later than in the early fifth century?) and the construction of the church after A.D. 500? As to the final date of the church functioning, this is well-recorded by many destruction deposits clearly connected to the earthquake of A.D. 749, which happened while the building was still in use as a place of the Christian worship.⁸

The development of the NWC presents two main architectural phases, the latter of which can be divided into at least two sub-phases according to the spacial arrangement of the interior.⁹ In the first phase (Phase I) the church compound was designed as a three-aisled basilica flanked by side wings and preceded by a spacious atrium (**Fig. 1**). Since the closest parallel to such planning has been provided by the church at the nearby site of Kursi,¹⁰ we initially believed that in the original design of the NWC the lateral rooms flanking the apse (conventionally termed *pastophoria*)¹¹ were a replica of those at Kursi, the width (the north-south extent) of each of them spanning the joint width of an aisle and an adjoining side wing.¹² However, today, after eight seasons of fieldwork in the church (with the northern wing entirely uncovered and examined during the field season of 2005 and its original eastern wall identified in 2006 under a treading platform of a later winery),¹³ it seems that the width of the original *pastophoria* did not exceed that of the aisles and that the side wings were 4.50 m shorter than the long walls of the basilica.

Due to the presence of an inscribed central apse, the original *pastophoria* of the NWC must have been slightly trapezoid in outline, like e.g. those at the church of Amos and Kasiseos in Khirbet el-Mukhayyat, although there is nothing to suggest that in the NWC

⁶ EAD., ID., North-West Church Complex (NWC) [= NWC 2006], in: A. SEGAL *et al.*, Hippos – Sussita, Seventh Season of Excavations, July 2006, Haifa 2006 [= Hippos–Sussita 2006], p. 56, Fig. 65.

⁷ EAD., ID., NWC 2005, p. 46.

⁸ For a conclusive evidence, see: EAD., ID., North-West Church (NWC) Complex [= NWC 2003], in: A. SEGAL *et al.*, Hippos – Sussita, Fourth Season of Excavations, June–July 2003, Haifa 2003 [= Hippos–Sussita 2003], pp. 31–32.

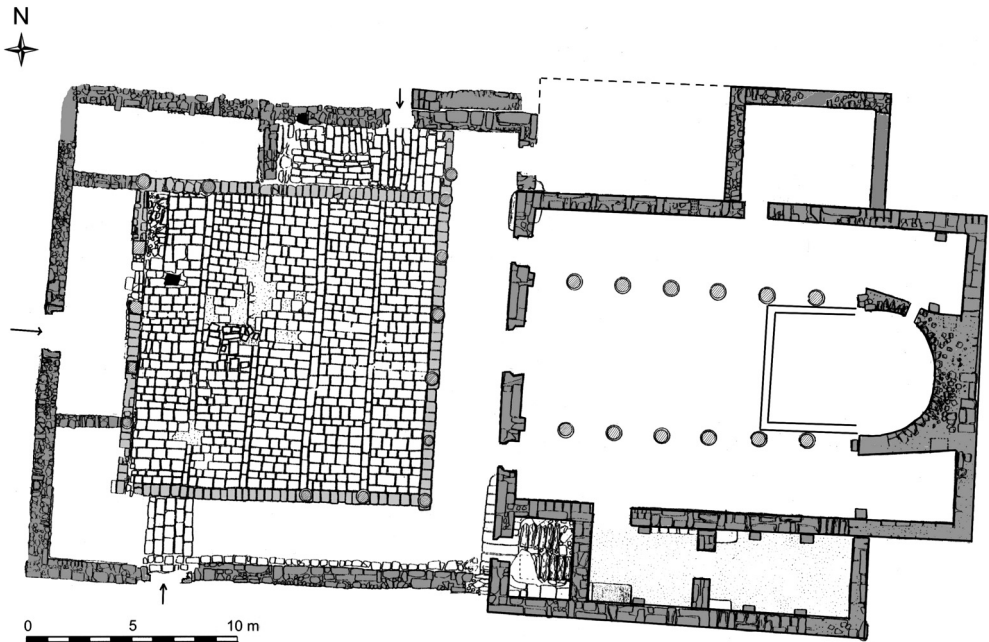
⁹ For a preliminary phasing of the church, see: EAD., ID., NWC Five Years, pp. 53–55.

¹⁰ V. TZAFERIS, The Excavations at Kursi–Gergesa, *Atiqot* XVI, Jerusalem 1983 [= Kursi], pp. 6–7, Plans 3–4.

¹¹ Thus termed rooms are mentioned in the *Constitutiones Apostolicae* of the latter part of the fourth century (*PG* I, cols. 509–1155); cf. J.W. CROWFOOT, The Christian Churches [= Churches], in: C.H. KRAELING, Gerasa, City of the Decapolis, London – New Haven 1938, p. 181. For a comprehensive discussion, see: G. DESCOEUDRES, Die Pastophorien im syrobyzantinischen Osten. Eine Untersuchung zu architektur- und liturgiegeschichtlichen Problemen, Wiesbaden 1983 [= Pastophorien]; see also: G. BABIĆ, Les chapelles annexes des églises byzantines. Fonction, liturgie et programmes iconographiques, *Bibliothèque des Cahiers Archéologiques* 3, Paris 1969.

¹² Such opinion expressed in: MŁYNARCZYK, BURDAJEWICZ, NWC Five Years, p. 54.

¹³ EAD., ID., NWC 2005, pp. 36–45, Figs. 11, 15; EAD., ID., NWC 2006, pp. 57–58 and Fig. 82.



1. Plan of the NWC compound in Phase I, early or mid-sixth century (Drawing: M. Burdajewicz).

they assumed the form of separate rooms divided from corresponding aisles by doors.¹⁴ Instead, they may have been simple extensions of the aisles, either identical in shape, as in the church of St Menas in Rihab, Arabia (built in A.D. 529)¹⁵ but also in nearby Khirbet Samra,¹⁶ or asymmetrical, with the southern lateral room distinguished from the northern one by a wide arched entrance, as in the church of ‘Ein Hanniya.¹⁷

Regardless of minor details of the original outline of our *pastophoria*, it is clear that they were designed to serve different functions from the beginning since only the northern room was connected with the apse by means of a low and narrow doorway (just 135 cm high).¹⁸ This door, definitely pertaining to the original construction phase of the apse (as evidenced by its lintel block), must have been a subsidiary one, since in this

¹⁴ M. PICCIRILLO, *Die Mosaiken von Justinian bis Jazid II*, in: H. BUSCHHUSEN (ed.), *Byzantinische Mosaiken aus Jordanien*, Wien 1986, p. 86, Abb. 81.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 100–101, Abb. 102.

¹⁶ V. TZAFERIS, *An Early Christian Church at Khirbet Samra*, in: M. HELTZER, A. SEGAL, D. KAUFMAN (eds.), *Studies in the Archaeology and History of Ancient Israel, in Honour of Moshe Dothan*, Haifa 1993, pp. 228–229, Plan 1.

¹⁷ OVADIAH, *Corpus*, No. 45; J. WILKINSON, *Christian Worship in the Byzantine Period* [= *Christian Worship*], in: Y. TSAFRIR (ed.), *Ancient Churches Revealed*, Jerusalem 1993 [= *Ancient Churches*], p. 19.

¹⁸ J. MŁYNARCZYK, M. BURDAJEWICZ, *North-West Church Complex* [= *NWC 2001*], in: A. SEGAL, J. MŁYNARCZYK, M. BURDAJEWICZ, *Hippos (Sussita), Second Season of Excavations, July 2001*, Haifa 2001 [= *Hippos–Sussita 2001*], p. 10.

first phase of the church the main access to the northern *pastophorion* was from the northern aisle.¹⁹ The respective functions of both lateral rooms during this phase still remain unknown; contrary to the belief of A. Ovadia,²⁰ one can hardly claim that they functioned as *prothesis* and *diakonikon*. It seems more probable that, as established by J. Lassus for the north Syrian churches from the fifth century onwards, the northern lateral space was a service room of sorts, while the southern one might well be a martyr's chapel from the very beginning, with its wide arched entrance characteristic of such chapels in Syria.²¹ The view that the martyr's chapel (*beit kadishé*) in Syrian churches was usually situated to the south of the apse, has been maintained by I. Peña who also says that such *arc est un element architectural si lié au culte des reliques, que sa seule présence dans une église fait supposer l'existence des reliques*.²² Indeed, there is nothing to suggest that the plan of the southern room underwent any changes throughout the activity period of the church.

During the first period the sanctuary (the chancel: *bema*, *presbyterion*, *thysiasterion*) was contained within the nave and corresponded to the length of two of its bays, raising two or (more probably) three steps above the floor level of the nave and the aisles.²³ If, as it seems probable, the apse did not have any *synthronon* yet, the floor of the *bema* must have been level with that of the apse so that the altar may have stood in the chord of the apse, as was the case with the so-called South-West Church at Hippos.²⁴ Exactly along the chord of the apse (i.e. following the north-south axis), and c. 1 m below its level, runs an Early Roman channel, which might have possibly been collecting waters of the *thalassa* (if there was one, under the altar).²⁵ No traces of an early chancel floor could have been preserved because it became levelled in the subsequent phase (see below). The original floor level outside the *bema*, evidenced only by some fragments of mortar bedding, must have corresponded with the top level of the plinths of the marble bases (doubtlessly, the *spolia* from some Roman-period building/s) upon which the basalt columns rested at c. 0.10 m below the mosaics of the second phase. There are two possible explanations of the fact that no traces of an earlier mosaic were found: either the original floor was of the *opus sectile* rather than the *opus tessellatum* type (as was the case with the so-called

¹⁹ During the first phase (first half of the sixth century) of the church in the nearby Kursi, each *pastophorion* was connected with the apse by a passage; these were subsequently blocked, presumably because the *synthronon* was built in the apse, or because of the transformation of the southern *pastophorion* into a baptistery, cf. TZAFERIS, Kursi, pp. 10–11, Plan 3 and Pl. V.2.

²⁰ OVADIAH, Modifications, p. 371.

²¹ J. LASSUS, Sanctuaires chrétiens de Syrie, Paris 1947 [= Sanctuaires], pp. 162 and 180.

²² I. PEÑA, Lieux de pèlerinage en Syrie, Jerusalem, 2000 [= Pèlerinage], p. 52.

²³ As recommended by the *Testamentum Domini* in the fifth century (*apud* CROWFOOT, Churches, p. 175); cf. MLYNARCZYK, BURDAJEWICZ, NWC 2004, pp. 62–63; EAD., Id., NWC Five Years, p. 54.

²⁴ A. SEGAL, M. EISENBERG, The South-West Church (SWC) [= SWC 2005], in: SEGAL *et al.*, Hippos–Sussita 2005, p. 20, Figs. 42–43.

²⁵ On this channel: MLYNARCZYK, BURDAJEWICZ, NWC 2003, p. 32, Figs. 19 and 57. Cf. KRAELING, Gerasa, p. 183: *The 'thalassa', which is not common feature, is a basin or piscina under the altar used to catch the water in which the Eucharistic vessels were cleansed and the celebrants washed their hands.*

‘cathedral’ of Hippos)²⁶ or the mosaic cubes of the earlier floor were removed to be subsequently re-laid at a higher level during the second phase of the church.

The presence of the galleries above the aisles is securely attested by large fragments of white monochrome mosaic floor found *c.* 0.20–0.30 m above the floor of the two aisles.²⁷ Of course, their remains have to be dated together with the final phase of the church, but there can be little doubt that the galleries existed from the beginning. As no relics of gallery banisters or colonnettes were ever found, we assume they must have been made of timber as was the case with St Lazarus church at Nahariya.²⁸ The galleries might have served as an *exorcisterium* mentioned in the fifth century *Testamentum Domini* as a place for catechumens enabling them to listen to the readings, psalms, and the sermon, before they were dismissed after the Liturgy of the Word.²⁹ Such function of the galleries is emphasized by the fact that the only access to them appears to have been not from the basilica, but from the outside north-east corner of the atrium, where a flight of steps was discovered; the stairs must have led to the balcony above the eastern portico of the atrium from where the galleries could be accessed.³⁰ Additionally, the galleries might have provided a place for *incubatio* to the pilgrims, if needed.³¹

In this original phase of the NWC, the southern and northern wings flanking the basilica were connected each with the corresponding aisle by a door. The plan of the southern wing, apparently unchanged throughout the history of the compound, comprised two distinct parts. The main unit, consisting of two rooms connected to one another, was accessible from the southern aisle through a single door situated at the mid-length of the aisle (although it seems possible that during the first phase another entrance might have been located in the eastern wall). It is most probable that the original function of these two rooms was the very same as that attested for the next (second) phase of the NWC (see below).

The western part of the southern wing was occupied by a square room, situated on the axis of the southern portico of the atrium and entered from there. There is no doubt that the room in question was originally planned as a funerary chamber, with twin cist tombs constructed below the floor.³² One of them might have belonged to Antona (misspelled for Antonia) the deaconess, whose inscription, commemorating an offering (*prosfora*, clearly a financial contribution to the paving of this portico) made for her eternal rest (*hyper*

²⁶ C. EPSTEIN, Hippos (Sussita), in: E. STERN *et al.* (eds.), *New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land* [= *NEAEHL*], Jerusalem 1993, pp. 635–636.

²⁷ MLYNARCZYK, BURDAJEWICZ, NWC 2001, p. 10; EAD., ID., *Exploration of the North-West Church Complex (Areas NWC and OPB) in 2002* [= NWC 2002], in: A. SEGAL *et al.*, *Hippos (Sussita), Third Season of Excavations, July 2002, Haifa 2002* [= *Hippos–Sussita 2002*], p. 20 and Fig. 36.

²⁸ MLYNARCZYK, BURDAJEWICZ, NWC Five Years, p. 41. For Nahariya church, see: C. DAUPHIN, G. EDELSTEIN, *The Byzantine Church in Nahariya*, in: TSAFRIR (ed.), *Ancient Churches*, p. 51.

²⁹ CROWFOOT, *Churches*, p. 175.

³⁰ J. MLYNARCZYK, M. BURDAJEWICZ, *North-West Church Complex (NWC)* [= NWC 2007], in: A. SEGAL *et al.*, *Hippos – Sussita, Eighth Season of Excavations, July 2007, Haifa 2007*, p. 65 and Fig. 102.

³¹ Cf. PEÑA, *Pèlerinage*, p. 72, mentions a room for *incubatio* situated above the chapel of martyr’s cult.

³² MLYNARCZYK, BURDAJEWICZ, NWC 2004, pp. 55–57, Figs. 18–19 and 61–63.

anapauseos), was contained in a square panel in the mosaic floor of the southern portico.³³ It is, however, difficult to tell how much time elapsed between the construction of the tombs (Phase I) and the execution of the mosaic floor (apparently Phase IIa, see below). In any case, an exact parallel to such location of a ‘funerary chamber’ is the crypt in the southern wing of the church at Kursi; a room above it, initially accessible both from the atrium and the southern aisle, has rightly been identified by V. Tzaferis as an original *diakonikon*.³⁴

The original plan of the northern wing of the NWC is less well known due to the fact that in the final phase of the church compound this wing was thoroughly re-arranged to accommodate a winery. An excellent state of preservation of the latter³⁵ virtually precludes any possibility to comprehensively study the underlying structures, which were functionally connected with the church. However, a few small probes below the eastern part of the winery allowed us to record a mosaic floor adorned with a very simple geometrical pattern (similar to that of the southern portico of the atrium) and belonging to a rectangular room.³⁶ The room, measuring 4.60–4.65 m from north to south and 6.60–6.65 m from east to west, was connected to the northern aisle of the basilica by a doorway; the function of the room, unfortunately, remains unknown. It is rather tempting to consider the location of a baptistery in this part of the compound (the baptistery communicating with the northern aisle has also been known from Khirbet Karak across the Sea of Galilee, not to mention the ‘cathedral’ of Sussita),³⁷ yet the above-mentioned probes yielded no finds possibly related to the use of that room which might support (or exclude) such an identification.

The eastern portico of the atrium provided access to the basilica through three doors; a door in the southern part of the portico led to the ‘funerary chamber’ mentioned above, while another door, in the northern part of the same portico, led to a space of unspecified function in the northern wing.³⁸ Of the three entrances leading to the atrium from outside (the west, south, and north respectively), at least the western one must have belonged to the original planning of the church. The floors of the eastern and southern porticoes were

³³ *Ibid.*, pp. 58–59 and Fig. 65; A. ŁAJTAR, The mosaic inscription of Antonia, a deaconess, in: SEGAL *et al.*, Hippos–Sussita 2005, pp. 51–53.

³⁴ TZAFERIS, Kursi, pp. 12–13, Plan 3, Pl. XI:5; in my opinion, the fragmentary mosaic inscription (Pl. XII:3) suggests that in the final phase of the church this was a chapel dedicated to the cult of St Conon the martyr.

³⁵ MLYNARCZYK, BURDAJEWICZ, NWC 2005, pp. 36–45.

³⁶ EAD., ID., NWC 2006, pp. 57–58, Figs. 66 and 81–82.

³⁷ P. DELOUGAZ, R.C. HAINES, A Byzantine Church at Khirbat Al-Karak, Chicago 1960 [= Khirbat Karak], pp. 17–18, Pl. 15 (a room parallel to ours existed there already during Phase I; however, the baptistery/*diakonikon* is epigraphically attested only for Phase III and later, i.e. from A.D. 529 on); C. EPSTEIN, V. TZAFERIS, The Baptistery at Sussita–Hippos, *Atiqot* XX, 1991, pp. 89–94 [= Baptisery]; examples from more distant areas include the Memorial of Moses at Mt Nebo (*vide infra*, n. 64) and the Central Church at Nessana (D. URMAN, Nessana Excavations 1987–1995, in: D. URMAN (ed.), *Nessana, Excavations and Studies* I, Beer-Sheva 2004, pp. 1–118). However, one should remember that there was no permanent location for the baptistery within a church compound, as evidenced by WILKINSON, Christian Worship, p. 18.

³⁸ MLYNARCZYK, BURDAJEWICZ, NWC 2005, p. 40, Fig. 71; EAD., ID., NWC 2006, pp. 48–49, Fig. 70. There is, unfortunately, no way to learn if there was any connection between this room and the mosaic room in the eastern part of the northern wing.

paved with mosaics;³⁹ in the northern portico at least the eastern half was paved with basalt slabs similar to those of the central courtyard.⁴⁰ As to the western portico, it seems that its main part was paved with irregular basalt slabs, some of which remained in place till the earthquake of A.D. 749.⁴¹

Important changes introduced into the plan of the church during the second phase (Phase IIa) embraced the northern aisle with the adjoining *pastophorion* as well as the sanctuary. Unfortunately, we miss any clue as to how much time elapsed between the construction of the NWC and the beginning of the second phase; anyway, it seems that this was not lengthy period of time. The northern *pastophorion* was cut off from the aisle by a secondary wall built without any foundation (**Fig. 2**).⁴² The only way to access a small room thus created was from the central apse, through the above-mentioned low and narrow door. This entryway, however, could hardly have been much frequented since in this phase it was located at a bottom of a narrow shaft, behind the steps of a *synthronon*, which apparently was constructed during the same period.⁴³ Therefore it is impossible to identify this isolated room with a *prothesis* (as proposed by A. Ovadiah)⁴⁴ because the latter was the place of preparation of unconsecrated elements to be subsequently offered on the altar. Much more logical function of such a room would be that of a treasury, *skeuophylakion*, for the safekeeping of church valuables, as additionally suggested by a presence of a large niche high in the southern wall of the room.⁴⁵

In front of the western wall of the newly-created *skeuophylakion*(?), i.e. at the eastern end of the northern aisle, an apse was built, clearly indicative of some important change in liturgy. At the same time the southern *pastophorion*, unlike the northern one, seems to have remained unchanged in its extent and appearance, including its wide arched entrance. Thus, the basilica became bi-apsidal with asymmetrical *pastophoria*, to which only few parallels are known in Arabia, Phoenicia, and Palestine (and not very faithful ones, at that).⁴⁶

The modification of the sanctuary area (*thysiasterion*) apparently included the construction of the *synthronon* inside the apse and slight enlargement of the *bema* both to the west and to the sides, so that its edges abutted two easternmost pairs of columns. At the same time, the chancel platform was lowered by c. 0.20 m in relation to the apse;

³⁹ EAD., ID., NWC 2004, pp. 58–59, Figs. 64–65, 67.

⁴⁰ EAD., ID., NWC 2006, p. 50, Figs. 71–72.

⁴¹ EAD., ID., NWC 2007, p. 62, Figs. 94–95.

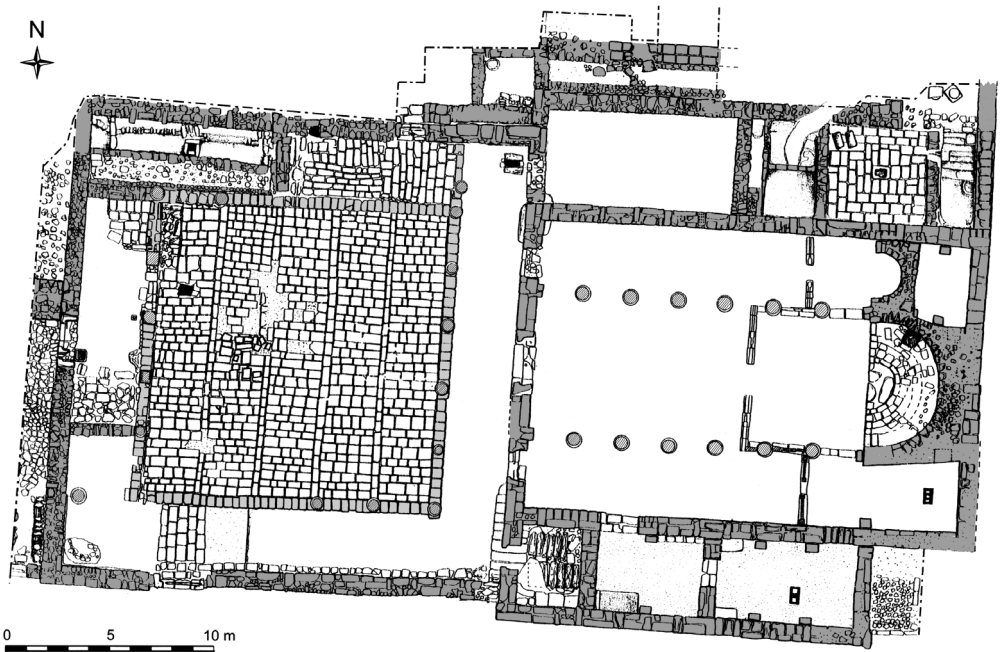
⁴² EAD., ID., NWC 2001, p. 10.

⁴³ EAD., ID., NWC Five Years, p. 54.

⁴⁴ OVADIAH, Modifications, p. 371.

⁴⁵ MŁYNARCZYK, BURDAJEWICZ, NWC 2001, p. 10. For *skeuophylakion*, see: DESCOEUDRES, Pastophorien, pp. XIV–XVII.

⁴⁶ The Church of St Stephen in Umm el-Rasas, Church III in Khan Khalde (both dated to the seventh century) and a church at Beit Gimal, cf. S. MARGALIT, The Biapsidal Churches, *LA* 40, 1990, pp. 325–329, n. 13 and pp. 332–334, Figs. 6, 12. The closest parallel remains the church at Khirbet el-Beyudat to the north of Jericho, cf. H. HIZMI, The Byzantine Church at Khirbet el-Beyudat in the Lower Jordan Valley, in: TSAFRIR (ed.), *Ancient Churches*, p. 156.



2. Plan of the NWC compound in Phase IIb, seventh century (Drawing: M. Burdajewicz).

however, no traces have been preserved to suggest the location of the altar (*hagia trapeza*) inside the re-arranged sanctuary.⁴⁷ There is no evidence for existence of any *ambon* either.

The chronology of these modifications has been based on the style of the mosaics which were laid in the *bema*, the nave, and the aisles. The floor of the nave and the *bema* has been severely damaged, with only a few patches of the mosaic still surviving, which contrasts with a good state of preservation of the floors in the aisles.⁴⁸ The mosaic decoration represents an ‘iconophobic’ repertoire of motives, which are limited to strictly ornamental/geometrical patterns, with just three simple floral motives found in the northern aisle only.⁴⁹ The floor of the southern aisle (adorned with even simpler ornamental motives) contains two mosaic inscriptions in Greek, which commemorate donations by two individuals; regrettably they do not mention any date at all.⁵⁰ It is the ornamental border of the northern aisle that seems to provide rather reliable dating evidence, since it has close parallels in

⁴⁷ On the location of the altar(s), see: N. DUVAL, *Architecture et liturgie dans la Jordanie byzantine* [= *Architecture et liturgie*], in: N. DUVAL (ed.), *Les églises de Jordanie et leurs mosaïques*, *Bibliothèque Archéologique et Historique* 168, Beyrouth 2003, pp. 35–114.

⁴⁸ J. BURDAJEWICZ, *Patterns of the mosaic pavement in the nave of the NWC*, in: SEGAL *et al.*, *Hippos–Sussita* 2005, pp. 61–64, Figs. 87–88.

⁴⁹ MLYNARCZYK, BURDAJEWICZ, *NWC Five Years*, pp. 42–44.

⁵⁰ A. ŁAJTAR, *Two Mosaic Inscriptions from the North-West Church in Hippos* [= *Two Inscriptions*], in: SEGAL *et al.*, *Hippos–Sussita* 2002, pp. 60–63.

two other mosaics in our area, which are precisely dated by the inscriptions. One of them comes from the baptistery adjoining the ‘cathedral’ of Hippos and paved in A.D. 591, while the other, dated to A.D. 585, is found in the baptistery of the Kursi church.⁵¹ Based on these parallels, we are strongly in favour of dating the second phase of the arrangement of the NWC to the last quarter of the sixth century. However, there is a possibility that the northern aisle was paved only some time after the southern one.

This dating of the modified arrangement of the church (of which the mosaic floors are just one element) coincides with the introduction of the Great Entrance rite into the liturgy.⁵² We may therefore be right in assuming that the small northern apse was built in order to accommodate a *prothesis* table as a starting point for the Great Entrance procession, in which the oblations were being brought to the main altar situated in the *bema*. In other words, we may indeed speak about the *prothesis* room on the northern side of the sanctuary, but only from the end of the sixth century on, when a small apse was constructed there.

As to the southern lateral room, it probably served as a chapel for the martyr’s cult, as suggested by its wide entrance arch, the western face of which had painted decoration of a floral garland.⁵³ Some time after the mosaic floor had been laid, a large reliquary of pink limestone was inserted in the floor of the chapel.⁵⁴ A very similar reliquary of the same stone but of slightly smaller dimensions was installed in the mosaic floor of the *bema* of another church at Sussita, the so-called South-West Church.⁵⁵ Since the latter appears to have been destroyed in the earlier part of the seventh century (perhaps during the Persian occupation of Palestine in A.D. 611–629?), the dating of these two comparable reliquaries to the sixth or early seventh century does not seem to be unfounded.

As to the *diakonikon* of our church, there can be no doubt that it was located elsewhere than in the southern *pastophorion*, contrary to the belief of A. Ovadiah.⁵⁶ It has been more than 20 years ago already that V. Tzaferis noted that *the name ‘diakonikon’ was transferred to the southern ‘pastophorium’ when a ‘diakonikon’ as a separate chapel was no longer needed and that the functions of the ‘diakonikon’ were transferred to the northern ‘pastophorium’ (‘prothesis’) while the designation ‘diakonikon’ became associated with the southern ‘pastophorium’.*⁵⁷ It is obvious that the terms *diakonikon* and *prothesis* were designating the respective functions rather than locations of the rooms in

⁵¹ C. EPSTEIN, V. TZAFERIS, *Baptistery*, 1991, pp. 92–93, Figs. 3–4 (Hippos baptistery); TZAFERIS, *Kursi*, pp. 28–29, Pls. XI.3 and XII.4; MŁYNARCZYK, BURDAJEWICZ, *NWC* 2002, pp. 22–23.

⁵² This is believed to have happened about the reign of Justin II (A.D. 565–578), cf. CROWFOOT, *Churches*, p. 51.

⁵³ MŁYNARCZYK, BURDAJEWICZ, *NWC* 2003, p. 25

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 26–27, Fig. 46; EAD., ID., *NWC Five Years*, p. 48, Pl. 10; M. BURDAJEWICZ, J. MŁYNARCZYK, *Elements of the Liturgical Furniture in an 8th-century church (NWC)*, in: *Hippos (Sussita), Israel, Series Byzantina IV*, 2006 [= *Furniture NWC*], pp. 22–23, Ils. 8 and 10.

⁵⁵ SEGAL, EISENBERG, *SWC* 2005, pp. 17–18, Fig. 42.

⁵⁶ OVADIAH, *Modifications*, p. 371.

⁵⁷ TZAFERIS, *Kursi*, p. 11, n. 16 and p. 13, n. 24. For the *diakonikon*, see: DESCOEUDRES, *Pastophorien*, p. XVII.

question. As J. Lassus notes, *Le terme < prothesis > est absent des textes, au moins jusqu'au VI siècle*.⁵⁸ According to the *Testamentum Domini*, which reflects the Syrian practice of the fifth century, the place for gifts from among which the Eucharistic offerings were to be chosen was called *diakonikon* and should have been situated to the right of the southern of the three entrances to the church.⁵⁹

In the *Life of St Euthymius* by Cyril of Scythopolis (composed during the sixth century), the *diakonikon* appears to be a multi-functional room (or a set of rooms). In Cyril's story about the death of St Euthymius (A.D. 473), we hear about the Saint summoning all the monks to the *diakonikon* in which he was staying and where he eventually died,⁶⁰ this means that the *diakonikon* functioned as a kind of a common room, which sounds rather logical since by the time of Euthymius' death his monastery was still of a *laura* type. Relating events of c. A.D. 542, when the monastery was already established as a *koinobion*, Cyril of Scythopolis mentions the *diakonikon* as a two-room unit, where the valuables (both material treasures and holy relics) were kept and where the *hegoumenos* entertained his guests for meals.⁶¹ Moreover, the archaeological remains provide some important examples of epigraphically attested *diakonika* which were omitted by A. Ovadia in his paper. In at least two instances dated to the sixth century, specifically the Memorial of Moses at Mount Nebo (the province of Arabia) and Khirbat Karak (*Palaestina Secunda*, not far from Hippos), the mosaic inscriptions and the presence of the baptismal fonts prove that the *diakonikon* could have been combined with a baptistery. In both cases the *diakonikon*/baptistery is outside the basilica, on its north-eastern side, instead of the southern *pastophorion*, which A. Ovadia has regarded as an established place for the *diakonikon*. As to Khirbat Karak, during the original phase of the church there was a single annex room connected with the northern aisle; in the third phase an apsed room was built to the east of it and identified in a mosaic inscription (laid in A.D. 528/529) as *diakonikon*, while the original annex was styled as *mesaulon* ('inner yard', to be understood as a 'connecting room').⁶² Since the *diakonikon* contained also a baptismal font, R.C. Haines has suggested that this room, initially destined for the preparation of the oblation and for the proper robbing of the clergy, was converted into the baptistery only when the chancel became enlarged so that it could take over the function of the *diakonikon* and released the *diaconicon* of A.D. 528/29 for use as a baptistery; this would have happened presumably in the second half of the 6th century.⁶³ However, at Mount Nebo the installation of the *diakonikon* and baptistery in the same room is contemporary, as a dedicatory inscription of A.D. 530 states (*the sacred 'diakonikon' of God was reconstructed and adorned, with the*

⁵⁸ LASSUS, Sanctuaires, p. 163, n. 1.

⁵⁹ CROWFOOT, Churches, pp. 175–177.

⁶⁰ *Vita Euthymii* 57.24–25, in: A.J. FESTUGIÈRE (ed.), *Les moines d'Orient III.2, Les moines de Palestine*, Paris 1962 [= Moines], p. 112.

⁶¹ *Vita Euthymii* 69.1–23, in: FESTUGIÈRE, Moines, pp. 123–125.

⁶² DELOUGAZ, HAINES, Khirbat Karak, pp. 16–18, Pls. 15–16; C.H. KRAELING, The Mosaic Inscriptions, in: DELOUGAZ, HAINES, Khirbat Karak, p. 53 and Pl. 51A.

⁶³ DELOUGAZ, HAINES, Khirbat Karak, p. 24 and n. 12, Pls. 15–16.

holy pool of rebirth and the beautiful ciborium).⁶⁴ It is striking that this date corresponds to that of the paving of the *diakonikon* at Khirbet Kerak, exactly in the same location in relation to the basilica.

In a partially preserved mosaic floor of a christian basilica in Ashkelon, an inscription records the completing of a *diakonikon* in A.D. 499; since the inscription is located in the northern aisle, one can guess that the *diakonikon* was close to it, i.e. situated in a northern annex(?) of the church.⁶⁵ In the church at 'Evron to the north of Akko (the province of *Phoenicia Maritima*) renovated, according to a mosaic inscription, in A.D. 442–443, a room identified by the excavators as a *diakonikon* adjoins a *photisterion* (baptistery) and both of them are found in the western part of the northern wing (*in the 'diakonikon', a depression in the floor was found that apparently had served as a basin for washing the agricultural tithes presented to the church*).⁶⁶ A similar location of the *diakonikon* has been identified in the Church of Bishop Marianos in Jerash; this is a room attached to the north-west part of the church, entered from the northern aisle and added after the church itself had been completed in A.D. 570.⁶⁷ It probably functioned as a *prothesis* room at the same time,⁶⁸ since against its eastern wall a broken marble *mensa* was found, originally supported by a colonnette 0.90 m high. This must have served as a *prothesis* table, and could have been used by a priest only while facing east. It is possible that another example of such a specific location of the *diakonikon* is provided by a church at Horvat Kenes in the western Galilee: a room abutting the western part of the northern aisle was connected both to that aisle and the north-east corner of the atrium.⁶⁹

However, such a spatial arrangement of the church compound (*diakonikon* situated in the northern annex, whether combined with a baptistery or not) was not the only possible one; according to the above-mentioned recommendation of the *Testamentum Domini*, the *diakonikon* should be located in the southern annex, not far from the entrance door. A good parallel to such location comes from the East Church of Mampsis where a long trapezoid room with plastered benches has been identified as a *diakonikon* and a chapel at the same time.⁷⁰ Also at the church of Kursi, in close vicinity of Hippos, the location of the *diakon-*

⁶⁴ M. PICCIRILLO, in: M. PICCIRILLO, E. ALLIATA, Mount Nebo, New Archaeological Excavations 1967–1997, Jerusalem 1998 [= Mount Nebo], pp. 273–274, II. 12; L. DI SEGNI, The Greek Inscriptions, in: PICCIRILLO, ALLIATA, Mount Nebo, pp. 429–430, No. 6.

⁶⁵ M. AVI-YONAH, R. COHEN, A. OVADIAH, Early Churches, in: STERN *et al.* (eds.), *NEAEHL*, p. 309.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 310.

⁶⁷ M. GAWLIKOWSKI, A. MUSA, The Church of Bishop Marianos, in: F. ZAYADINE (ed.), Jerash Archaeological Project 1981–1983, I, Amman 1986, pp. 139–141, Fig. 2.

⁶⁸ In accordance with the suggestion of R.C. HAINES, in: DELOUGAZ, HAINES, Khirbat Karak, p. 24 and n. 12, that the function of the *diakonikon* was originally identical with that of the *prothesis* (i.e. serving the preparation of the oblations).

⁶⁹ M. AVIAM, Churches and Monasteries from the Byzantine Period in Western Galilee, in: M. AVIAM, Jews, Pagans and Christians in the Galilee: 25 Years of Archeological Excavations and Surveys: Hellenistic to Byzantine Periods, Land of Galilee 1, Rochester 2004, Fig. 17.13. That church had also a baptistery which was located at the eastern end of the southern lateral 'wing' of the church; it was equipped with an apsis and a cruciform font.

⁷⁰ A. NEGEV, The Architecture of Mampsis II. The Late Roman and Byzantine Periods, Jerusalem 1988, pp. 47–48 and Plan 9.

ikon in the westernmost part of the southern wing (connected both to the atrium and the southern aisle) exactly matches that prescribed by the *Testamentum Domini*.⁷¹ Also at Zaharani (in *Phoenicia Maritima*, south of Sidon) the *diakonikon*, combined with a baptistery, is located in the southern annex; its function is attested by two mosaic inscriptions dated to A.D. 524 and 535 respectively.⁷² Actually, there can be little doubt that also the *diakonikon* of the NWC was located in the southern wing.

Two inscriptions found on the mosaic floor of the southern aisle of the NWC shed additional light on the functioning of this part of the church. Even if the texts contain few information (only the names of the donors with the sum offered, which in both cases was half a *nomisma*, i.e. of gold *solidus*; in one case the inscription specifies the aim of the contribution: ‘execution of the mosaic’),⁷³ their respective location is certainly not accidental. A shorter inscription, composed of bigger letters, commemorates a financial contribution by Petros. The one-line text runs across the aisle at the height of the second intercolumniation (from the east) and was destined to be read while facing east, towards the arched entrance to the chapel. The other inscription, composed of smaller letters, but longer, commemorates the contribution of a woman by the name of Hedora (abbreviated version of Heliodora?). It has been placed parallel rather than perpendicular to the aisle’s long axis, at the southern edge of the fifth intercolumniation (counting from the east) in order to be read while facing south, towards the entrance to the southern wing.

From such distribution of the inscriptions some conclusions can be drawn. At the time when the mosaic floor was made, the southern aisle was apparently considered more prestigious as compared with the northern aisle where no inscription has ever been placed (we shall never know if there were any inscriptions inside the nave and the chancel, since the mosaic floor in that part of the church has been deeply damaged). If the separation of sexes (as recommended by *Constitutiones Apostolorum* and *Testamentum Domini*)⁷⁴ was observed by the congregation of the NWC, the southern aisle would be destined for men, at least by the time when the mosaics were laid. However, all the faithful (including women), wishing to deposit their offerings, had to cross the aisle in order to reach the door of the *diakonikon*. Thus, the very location of the inscription of Hedora at the intercolumniation opposite the entrance to the southern wing is strongly in support of identification of this two-room unit (which during the second phase of the church existence was accessible only from the southern aisle) as *diakonikon*.⁷⁵ Since this unit is a part of the original planning of the church compound, there is really no reason to believe that during the previous (original) phase of the church the *diakonikon* was situated somewhere else.

⁷¹ TZAFERIS, Kursi, pp. 12–13 and n. 24.

⁷² P. DONCEEL-VOÛTE, Les pavements des églises byzantines de Syrie et du Liban, Louvain-la-Neuve 1988 [= Pavements], pp. 424–434. One should note, however, that the Zaharani church has its apse on the west which means that the southern annex is on the left side of the basilica.

⁷³ ŁAJTAR, Two Inscriptions, pp. 60–62.

⁷⁴ Cf. LASSUS, Sanctuaires, p. 192; CROWFOOT, Churches, p. 176.

⁷⁵ For a detailed account of the exploration of the *diakonikon* at the North-West Church and its interpretation, see: MŁYŃARCZYK, BURDAJEWICZ, NWC 2003, pp. 28–32, Figs. 51–55; EAD., ID., NWC 2004, pp. 52–54; EAD., ID., NWC Five Years, p. 55.

Therefore, any attempts to identify the southern chapel in the church as an original *diakonikon* are obviously unfounded. As emphasized by J. Wilkinson, in *early churches in Palestine (...)* the ‘*diakonikon*’ may have been situated anywhere, and it is a mistake to use the late Byzantine term ‘*prothesis*’, especially as the latter chamber was used for other purposes, such as the veneration of a martyr.⁷⁶

The next stage of the second phase (Phase IIb) in the church history is marked by an extension of the chancel – to embrace the eastern ends of both aisles, and to assume a T-shaped outline (Fig. 2). This modification must have post-dated the execution of the mosaics, since the base of the south lateral chancel screen (composed of two re-used marble friezes of the Roman period) had been deeply inserted into the pre-existing mosaic floor; the corresponding screen base in the northern aisle was constructed of limestone blocks put directly on the floor. The chancel screens (*plutei*), chancel posts, and post-colonnettes framing the upper part of the entrance were all of marble. Their rather simple decoration has many parallels in the provinces of Palestine and western Arabia.⁷⁷ A certain decline in the material status of the local congregation is illustrated by the fact that inside the southern chancel the eastern (invisible to the faithful) face of one screen depicting the Cross on Golgotha mount has never been finished, while that of the other screen is altogether plain. The passages through the chancel screens used to be closed from inside by low wooden doors as attested by iron rings fixed onto the eastern faces of the inner posts: two rings for hinges at the southern post and a single ring for a hook at the northern post.⁷⁸

The T-shaped plan of the chancel has parallels in a number of churches in Palestine; the nearest of them is the church at Khirbet Karak in its third phase, tentatively dated to the second half of the sixth century where, similarly as in the NWC, low partition walls were built, leaving narrow passages between the main chancel and the lateral ones.⁷⁹ Other examples of T-shaped chancels of the sixth–seventh centuries include two churches from Pella (also in *Palaestina Secunda*),⁸⁰ two churches from Gerasa (in the province of Arabia),⁸¹ and several churches in the Negev (*Palaestina Tertia*) such as the North and South Churches at Shivta (Sobata), the North Church at Avdat (Oboda), the cathedral of Elusa.⁸² As to Hippos, however, the NWC is the only church to present this feature, while in two other churches (the ‘cathedral’ and the South-West Church, the latter destroyed by fire appar-

⁷⁶ WILKINSON, *Christian Worship*, p. 21; according to the epigraphical sources, the term *diakonikon* becomes associated with one of the *pastophoria* only in medieval Byzantine context, cf. DONCEEL-VOÛTE, *Pavements*, p. 437.

⁷⁷ MŁYNARCZYK, BURDAJEWICZ, *NWC Five Years*, pp. 44–48, Pls. 5–8; BURDAJEWICZ, MŁYNARCZYK, *Furniture NWC*, pp. 15–20, IIs. 4–7.

⁷⁸ MŁYNARCZYK, BURDAJEWICZ, *NWC 2001*, p. 9 (northern aisle); EAD., ID., *NWC 2002*, p. 19.

⁷⁹ DELOUGAZ, HAINES, *Khirbat Karak*, Pls. 16 and 25. See also n. 62–63, *supra*.

⁸⁰ A. MICHEL, *Les églises d'époque byzantine et Umayyade de la Jordanie V^e et VIII^e siècle. Typologie architecturale et aménagements liturgiques*, Turnhout 2001 [= *Églises*], Fig. 66 (East Church), Figs. 72 and 74 (Civic Complex Church).

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, Fig. 236 (Church of St Peter and Paul) and Fig. 245 (Church of Isaiah).

⁸² WILKINSON, *Christian Worship*, p. 20; A. NEGEV, *The Cathedral at Haluza (Elusa) [= Elusa]*, in: TSAFRIR (ed.), *Ancient Churches*, pp. 286–293.

ently during the seventh century) the chancel is contained within the nave, and in the North-East Church (during its second phase, probably of the seventh century) the chancel rail runs in straight line across the whole width of the basilica. Commenting on such an arrangement at the church of bishop Genesisus (built in A.D. 611) in Jerash, J.W. Crowfoot noted: *this chancel was evidently planned for the celebration of the liturgy with the Little and Great Entrances* (a view adopted subsequently for the church of Khirbat Karak).⁸³ If such was the reason for the extension of the chancel in the NWC (which is plausible, given the fact that it must have happened not earlier than at the turn of the sixth into the seventh century), the starting point for the Great Entrance would be the northern, apsidal part, with the *diakonikon* in the southern wing used in the preliminary reception of the offerings.

The southern *pastophorion* doubtlessly served as a martyr (or martyrs') cult chapel, with a large reliquary inserted into the mosaic floor. On the western side of the reliquary a 'Greek' cross was carved; at its centre there is a grooved square with a circular hollow, possibly for inserting a gem. This decoration proves that the reliquary was meant to be viewed and venerated by the faithful who approached the chancel screen. The same idea was evident in the case of the southern *pastophorion* of the cathedral at Elusa where a reliquary apparently stood on a small marble *mensa*.⁸⁴ In the NWC, however, the reliquary was placed under the *mensa*, doubtlessly a subsidiary altar; square holes for its marble legs were sunk into the mosaic floor at the four corners of the reliquary. Two of the legs were recomposed from smaller fragments to their total height of 1.10 m; of two others only parts remain.⁸⁵

On the other hand, the southern *pastophorion* of the NWC might have also functioned as a starting point for the Little Entrance procession, in which the Holy Book was being brought to the main sanctuary. An important element of this room had been a niche in the northern wall which, at the moment of its discovery, still had traces of painted decoration as well as thin marble slabs (revetment of its floor?); fragments of iron hooks found during the exploration suggest that the niche might have had a wooden door and/or shelves to serve as a closet.⁸⁶ It seems probable that this was used for safekeeping of the Holy Gospel books.

Other changes introduced in the circulation system of the church compound most probably during this architectural phase included sealing of the doorway which used to connect the northern aisle with the corresponding northern wing. However, we lack information as to whether the northern wing was transformed into winery right then or at a later period?

The final phase of the church (Phase III) was that of decline of the basilica which must have been a result of some unspecified disaster, of which date is unknown, but which clearly caused a serious damage to the nave; it was probably one of the earthquakes, which

⁸³ CROWFOOT, Churches, p. 182; DELOUGAZ, HAINES, Khirbat Karak, p. 24.

⁸⁴ NEGEV, Elusa, p. 287.

⁸⁵ MLYNARCZYK, BURDAJEWICZ, NWC 2003, p. 27 and Fig. 66; EAD., ID., NWC Five Years, p. 48, Pl. 10.

⁸⁶ EAD., ID., NWC 2002, p. 22; EAD., ID., NWC 2003, p. 25.

affected this region in the second half of the seventh century or at the beginning of the eighth century.⁸⁷ A final blow was given to the church compound by the earthquake of A.D. 749; indeed, the latest numismatic find in the church was an Umayyad coin minted in Tiberias and dated to A.D. 737–746, discovered in a securely sealed context on the floor of the northern aisle.⁸⁸ A number of important destruction deposits, tightly sealed by the masses of building stones, make it clear that at the moment of the earthquake the basilica was still in use as a place of the Christian worship. One exception was the nave and the central chancel which apparently were not repaired after an earlier damage. During the exploration of the nave, only a few fragments of rooftiles were collected, which means that by A.D. 749 some parts of the roof must have already collapsed. The destruction of the roof, however, was probably not complete in the western part of the basilica, because a basalt cross, once crowning the top of the roof above the western façade, collapsed only during the final earthquake.⁸⁹ This find, pertaining to the mid-eighth century, contradicts the common belief about removing the crosses under the pressure of the Muslims.⁹⁰ Also the presence of the columns in the eastern portico (unlike the remaining porticoes) of the atrium suggests that the latter was still keeping its roof-balcony, enabling the access to the galleries. As to the nave and main chancel floor, its extremely poor state of preservation strongly contrasts with very good state of the floors in the aisles (**Fig. 3**). Moreover, no remains of the screens and/or posts were found in the central chancel, not to speak about the emplacement of an altar, of which no traces remain.

In striking contrast to this were the contents of the aisles allowing to describe the liturgical functioning of the church during the final years (decades?) of its existence. There seems to be no doubt that, while the nave was used as a mere kind of inner atrium (*me-saulon?*), the cult focused on the aisles. A deposit of broken marbles found in the small northern apse contained a fragmentary rectangular *mensa*⁹¹ with its four legs in form of colonnettes, a twisted support (for a *phiale?* or pulpit?) and a reliquary.⁹² The imprints of *mensa* legs on the mosaic floor trace the shape of a trapezium instead of a rectangle and, as about one third of the *mensa* was never found, there is no doubt that an incomplete tabletop was being used. Under the altar a reliquary must have stood on a limestone stem-like support, its lower part still *in situ* in the floor. The reliquary has the common form of a miniature sarcophagus with a circular opening in the centre of the lid and three compart-

⁸⁷ S. OGNIBENI, *Umm al-Rasas: la chiesa di Santo Stefano ed il „problema iconofobico”*, Roma 2002 [= Problema iconofobico], p. 112, mentions earthquakes of A.D. 658 and 717 or 718 as the causes of damages at the West Church in Pella of the Decapolis.

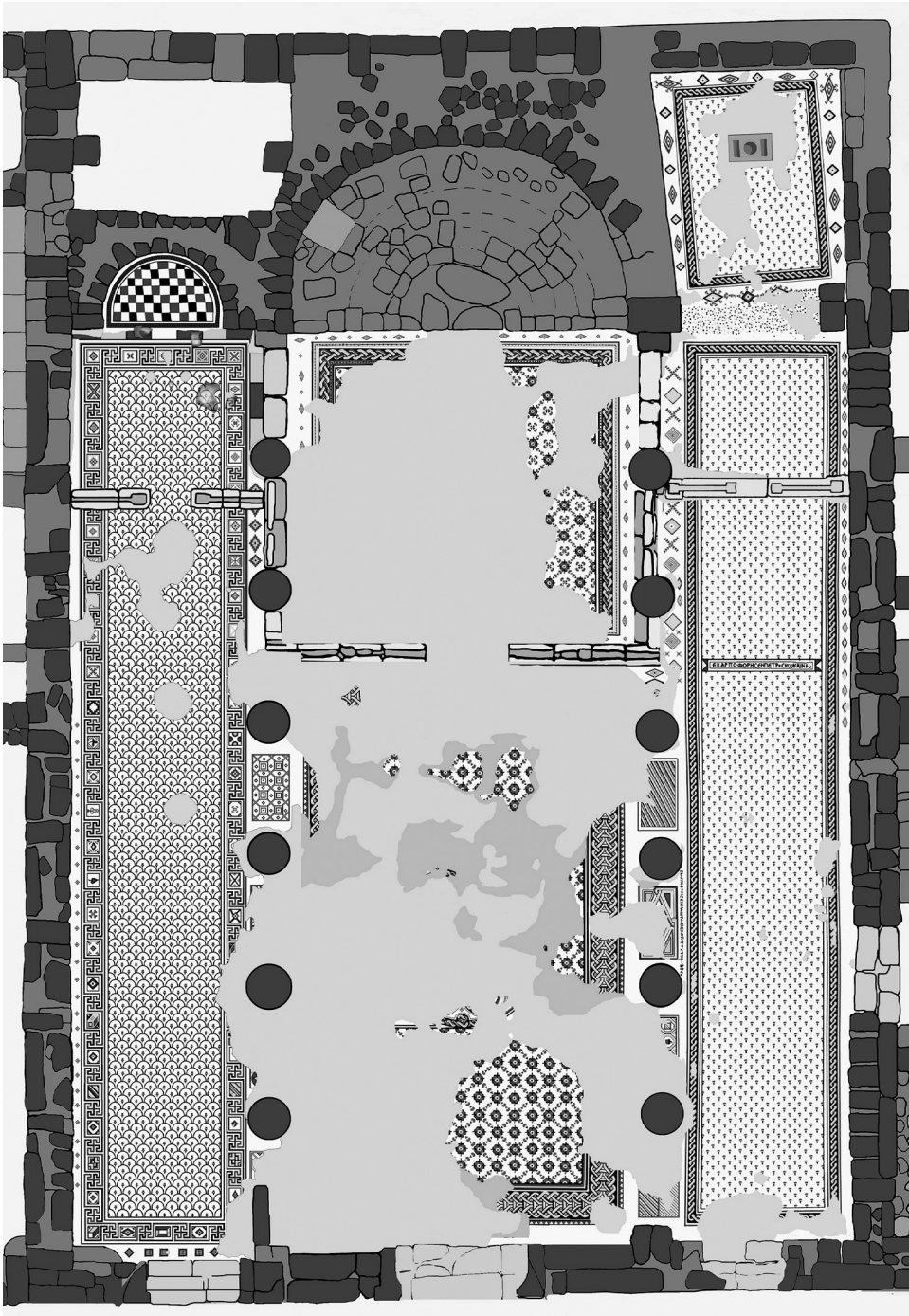
⁸⁸ A. BERMAN, *The Coins Find Catalogue*, in: SEGAL, MLYNARCZYK, BURDAJEWICZ, *Hippos–Sussita 2001*, No. 31.

⁸⁹ EAD., *Id.*, *NWC 2005*, pp. 33–34, Fig. 63. For a parallel cross found at the North-East Church, see: M. SCHULER, *North-East Church (NEC)*, in: SEGAL *et al.*, *Hippos–Sussita 2003*, p. 41, and Fig. 71.

⁹⁰ Records discussed by OGNIBENI, *Problema iconofobico*, pp. 130–132. Crosses occur also on the gable roofs of churches depicted on the mosaic in the lower church at Quwaysmah laid in A.D. 718/719, cf. M. PICCIRILLO, *The Mosaics of Jordan, Amman 1997*, Fig. 454.

⁹¹ The altar belongs to type F according to the typology of altars by E. CHALKIA, *Le mense paleocristiane, Tipologi e funzioni delle mense secondarie nel culto paleocristiano*, *Studi di Antichità Cristiana XLVII*, Città del Vaticano 1991 [= *Mense*], p. 54, F:It 2.

⁹² About this find: MLYNARCZYK, BURDAJEWICZ, *NWC Five Years*, pp. 48–50.



3. State of preservation of the sixth century mosaics in the basilica (Drawing. J. Burdajewicz).

ments inside; one of them contained a miniature glass bottle with tiny pieces of bones.⁹³ In front of the altar, a bronze hanging lamp in a shape of a dove was found, complete with its chains;⁹⁴ it must have collapsed during the earthquake either from the keystone of the apsidal semi-dome or from the lintel of the chancel entrance. The northern one of the chancel screens and the two post-colonnettes were robbed out during the modern times, apparently when a military trench was dug out across the northern wing of the NWC compound during the World War II(?);⁹⁵ however, the discovery of the precious lamp *in situ* proves that the destruction deposits on the floor have remained untouched.

The southern *pastophorion* preserved eloquent testimony of its on-going use as the place of the cult of martyr(s). The mosaic floor right under the arched entrance to this room bears traces of repairs done after it was damaged, probably during an earthquake (maybe the very one which damaged the roof of the central nave?).⁹⁶ A radiocarbon dating of a sample of wall plaster from this room has suggested A.D. 685–730 as the most probable date of the final covering of its walls with plaster; it might have been done after the earthquake of A.D. 717–718.⁹⁷ A bronze *polykandelon* was found *in situ* under the painted blocks collapsed from the entrance arch; at the time of the disastrous earthquake it was still in use as evidenced by dense traces of burning and fragments of two glass lamps recovered from the context.⁹⁸ It must have been suspended at the keystone of the entrance arch, across which a thick iron rod was installed, probably to carry the curtains.⁹⁹ Another proof of reverence were the silver crosses fixed onto the two post-colonnettes of the southern chancel.¹⁰⁰ Upon the top of the reliquary of pink limestone another reliquary, a marble one, was placed; shaped as a miniature sarcophagus, it is identical to the one found in the northern apse. Two of its three compartments contained tiny pieces of bones, and in the opening of the lid a long bronze pin was found.¹⁰¹ The latter has provided a clue as to the way in which the saint's relics were becoming the source of *eulogia* to the faithful: they were being touched with the bronze pin in order to transfer the blessing onto the objects provided, be they *ampullae* filled with water, oil or wine, pieces of fabric, or something else.¹⁰² It is difficult to tell whether the lower (pink limestone) reliquary was by that time

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 48 and n. 54. For this form of the reliquary in the churches of *Palaestina* II (example of Pella, East Church) and Arabia, see: MICHEL, *Églises*, pp. 75–77.

⁹⁴ MŁYNARCZYK, BURDAJEWICZ, NWC 2001, p. 9, Fig. 40; EAD., ID., NWC Five Years, p. 50 and Pl. 11.

⁹⁵ EAD., ID., NWC 2005, p. 39.

⁹⁶ EAD., ID., NWC 2003, p. 26.

⁹⁷ D. NAWROCKA, A. PAZDUR, D. MICHZYŃSKA, Radiocarbon Age Determination, in: SEGAL *et al.*, *Hippos–Sussita* 2006, pp. 82–90 (sample Hip10). For A.D. 717–718 as the date of an earthquake which may have damaged the NWC, *vide supra*, n. 87.

⁹⁸ MŁYNARCZYK, BURDAJEWICZ, NWC 2003, p. 27, Fig. 44; BURDAJEWICZ, MŁYNARCZYK, *Furniture NWC*, p. 28 and Il. 14.

⁹⁹ For 'eternal light' and curtains in front of the martyr's chapel, see: PEÑA, *Pélerinage*, p. 52.

¹⁰⁰ MŁYNARCZYK, BURDAJEWICZ, NWC 2002, p. 19; EAD., ID., NWC Five Years, pp. 47–48 and Pl. 8.

¹⁰¹ EAD., ID., NWC 2003, p. 26 and Fig. 47; EAD., ID., NWC Five Years, p. 48, Pl. 9.

¹⁰² BURDAJEWICZ, MŁYNARCZYK, *Furniture NWC*, p. 25; similar way of obtaining the *eulogia* might have been used in the East Church at Pella, cf. MICHEL, *Églises*, p. 122 and Fig. 37. Examples of receiving the blessing by touching the holy relics (a practice more rare in the East than in the West) are quoted by PEÑA, *Pélerinage*,

emptied of its original contents. All of its three compartments, each with its own lid, contained only red soil which might in fact be weathered pink limestone.

The marble altar which used to stand above the pink limestone reliquary, however, was dismantled by A.D. 749. Minor parts of its legs were found under the wall of the chapel, other parts were abandoned in the west end of the nave; moreover, the tabletop was discovered in the western part of the northern aisle with a thick layer of pure lime. Apparently, by that time those elements of the marble furniture which were not considered vital for the functioning of the church, were removed out of need to obtain more lime for current repairs of the building. It seems that no altar stood above the reliquaries in the martyr(s)' chapel anymore, although a thick and dense layer of clay was noted during the exploration in the eastern part of the room; this might have pertained to an altar built of dried clay as those used in some churches of the province of Arabia, from the second half of the seventh century on.¹⁰³ If such an altar did exist, however, the reliquaries could not have been entirely encased inside; the upper reliquary clearly remained accessible to a priest administering *eulogiai*.

To conclude, it seems certain that by the mid-eighth century the liturgical space of the NWC was limited to the aisles. I believe that the northern apse can be identified as a place of the Eucharistic altar with the reliquary under it and the dove-shaped lamp of bronze lit as an eternal light in front of it. The imprints of the altar legs and the emplacement of the support for the reliquary prove that the altar stood in front of the apse leaving enough place for the priest to celebrate while facing the congregation.¹⁰⁴ The southern *pastophorion* functioned as a martyr(s)' chapel, but at the same time both the Little and Great Entrances must have started from there during that very final phase of the church. The marble *mensa* above the reliquaries (and, after it had been dismantled, maybe a dried-clay altar?) would have served as a *prothesis* table. The niche in the northern wall may have been used for keeping not only the Holy Books, but also the Eucharistic reserve;¹⁰⁵ situated at the convenient height of 0.95 m, it may have even functioned as a *prothesis* niche if no altar or table was available in the room anymore. Finally, in front of both lateral chancels (the northern and the southern one) a modest terracotta lamp with dense traces of burning was found in identical position attesting to the custom of lighting lamps (and probably candles) by the faithful.

The most interesting part of the church compound in its last days is certainly the two-room unit of the *diakonikon* in the southern wing; the numerous objects discovered in it emphasize the importance of the economical aspect of the congregation life.¹⁰⁶ The *diakonikon* contained a variety of objects, mostly common pottery (many cooking pots of different sizes, a number of casserole with lids, a few storage jars, also accompanied by

pp. 70–71 (for the Antioch region?) and pp. 74–75 (for Chalcedon). On *hagiasma* and *eulogia*, see: FESTUGIÈRE, Moines, n. 149–150.

¹⁰³ MICHEL, Églises, pp. 62–68 and Fig. 34.b–c; DUVAL, Architecture et liturgie, p. 66.

¹⁰⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 108–110.

¹⁰⁵ LASSUS, Sanctuaires, p. 195.

¹⁰⁶ Cf. *supra*, n. 74.

lids) and no coins at all, proving that the gifts brought by the faithful were in kind. Early Christian sources do mention such offerings as bread, water, and oil (in *Sacramentarium Serapionis*); olives, oil, cheese, and variety of fruits (in *Traditio Apostolica*).¹⁰⁷ In the NWC *diakonikon*, although no analyses were made, the ceramic vessels types suggest that, besides some oil and wine (only a few containers for liquids were found), the offerings were made of home-made dishes: stewed vegetables(?) and soups, brought in casseroles and cooking pots of various sizes. Beside those, there were some tools like iron pruning hooks and knives, as well as a bronze bottle or jug, some glass vessels and elements of the church furniture of bronze: a bell, a censer, and a large chainless *polykandelon*. A unique feature of the *diakonikon* is the presence of a masonry couch situated in the first room opposite the entrance from the southern aisle. It is impossible to tell whether this couch belonged to the original phase of the *diakonikon* or it was added later. There is no doubt that it was destined for a night guardian (*prosmarios*) who was supposed to safeguard the goods stored in the *diakonikon*. A custom of sleeping at church has been mentioned in a story of priest Loukianos (early fifth century) from Caphargamal near Jerusalem who used to stay for the night in the baptistery.¹⁰⁸

The goods in the *diakonikon* were stored along the walls on the floor, on masonry benches (a fairly long one in the first room and two short ones right inside the entrance to the second room), and probably on wooden shelves, at least the one which must have been hung above the masonry couch to judge by the position of the vessels which collapsed from it. The pattern of the distribution of finds in the *diakonikon* is very interesting (**Fig. 4**): while the first room was overcrowded with objects (mostly ceramic vessels), in the second one these were notably fewer and definitely concentrated in its western part.¹⁰⁹ The farther to the east, the fewer were the finds, which is puzzling because at the same time some of the vessels with gifts in kind were left outside the *diakonikon*, against the wall of the southern aisle, instead of having been brought inside. It would seem that the eastern end of the inner room had a special function. A large marble slab was found there against the eastern wall with remains of painted plaster in front of it. It was tentatively interpreted as remains of a canopy (*ciborium*) and alongside a bi-partite limestone chest, clearly destined for liquids, it might indicate the place of administering the baptism to infants, provided the chest served as a portable baptismal font and that the baptism was administered by the sprinkling of water rather than by immersion.¹¹⁰ Other unusual objects associated with the eastern part of the room were a phiale and a pyxis, both of bronze, and a miniature bottle of glass. Finally, in the western and central parts of the room, fragments of timber were

¹⁰⁷ Sources collected in: CHALKIA, Mense, p. 115. See also: PEÑA, Pélerinage, p. 77.

¹⁰⁸ S. VANDERLINDEN, *Revelatio Sancti Stephani* (B.H.L. 7850–60), *REB* IV, 1946, pp. 190–193; for *prosmarios*, see: PEÑA, Pélerinage, p. 73.

¹⁰⁹ For the distribution of finds, see: MLYNARCZYK, BURDAJEWICZ, Report 2004, Fig. 17.

¹¹⁰ EAD., ID., NWC 2004, pp. 52–55, n. 3–6, Figs. 24, 59–60. It sounds logical that in mid-eighth century Hippos only newborn members of the local community were baptised. For an alternative interpretation of the limestone chest as a reliquary, see: BURDAJEWICZ, MLYNARCZYK, Furniture NWC, p. 24 and Fig. 9.

found which might have belonged to table(s) or cupboard(s); according to the analysis, they pertained to coniferous trees, either fir or cedar of Lebanon.¹¹¹

In this final phase of the church the entrance to the basilica seems to have been provided only by the central and the southern doors, while the northern one was partially (and rather carelessly) blocked. Right above the threshold of the central door a big bronze hinge was discovered suggestive of the presence of wooden door-wings still in use by that time, even if no corresponding hinge was ever found. The hinge(s) of the southern door was not preserved but, in order to guard the entrance to the southern aisle, a half of a high-backed chair of basalt seat was placed by its northern doorjamb.¹¹² It was marking the division between the zone of the *sacrum* and that of *profanum* since by the mid-eighth century the whole atrium appears to have been a place of domestic activity connected mainly with food processing (grain, olive oil, and wine). One of the twin cist tombs in the original 'funerary chamber' from where, at some moment in the past, the human remains were probably transferred to be deposited elsewhere, was re-used as a cellar for wine from one of two neighbouring wineries, probably the one abutting the church compound on the south.¹¹³ The central part of the southern portico was divided into smaller compartments by two makeshift walls against which a number of wine jars were found. In the eastern portico virtually no traces of original mosaic floor have survived; its rough, uneven walking level has been eloquent proof of heavy use of that part of the atrium, the only one which probably had its entire roofing preserved. Under this portico's roof, a threshing sledge (of a type dragged by animals) was kept¹¹⁴ at the time of the earthquake on the 18th of January, 749, i.e. a few months after the harvest, when it was last used on the basalt-paved area of the atrium courtyard; other finds from the eastern and northern portico include parts of basalt grain mills and portable oil pressing bed.¹¹⁵ In the western portico two distinct phases of use were distinguished, the final of which yielded a variety of finds ranging from storage jars and cooking vessels to stone bowls, basins, and spindle whorls.¹¹⁶ The chronology of the wine cellar, arranged in the western half of the northern portico, is not clear.¹¹⁷ However, there is no doubt that its storage function should be considered in connection with the winery installed in the northern wing of the church. The same applies to a small room attached to the outer northern wall of the atrium, specifically in between the northern wing (the winery) and the northern entrance to the atrium.¹¹⁸ The winery was active till the very moment of the earthquake; it seems very probable that it belonged to

¹¹¹ D. NAWROCKA, Z. OW CZAREK, A. NOSKOWIAK, Identification of wood fragments from the *diakonikon* of the North-West Church, in: SEGAL *et al.*, Hippos–Sussita 2004, pp. 80–81.

¹¹² MŁYNARCZYK, BURDAJEWICZ, NWC 2004, p. 60 and Fig. 68.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 56–57, Figs. 61–63. For the southern winery, see: EAD., ID., NWC 2002, pp. 27–28, Figs. 46–48; A. SEGAL, M. EISENBERG, The Hellenistic Compound (NNMP), in: SEGAL *et al.*, Hippos–Sussita 2004, pp. 20–23, Figs. 41–44; ID., The Hellenistic Compound, in: SEGAL *et al.*, Hippos–Sussita 2005, pp. 23–24, Figs. 5 and 50–52.

¹¹⁴ MŁYNARCZYK, BURDAJEWICZ, NWC 2004, p. 60, Fig. 69; EAD., ID., NWC 2005, pp. 35–36.

¹¹⁵ EAD., ID., NWC 2004, p. 60, Fig. 68; EAD., ID., NWC 2006, p. 50, Fig. 71.

¹¹⁶ EAD., ID., NWC 2007, p. 63.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 65–69; also: EAD., ID., NWC 2006, pp. 56–57.

¹¹⁸ EAD., ID., NWC 2007, pp. 64–65, Figs. 100–102.

the church (as suggested by the fact that the storage cellar for the wine was apparently located within the church premises and accessible from the atrium), or to the *élite* of the congregation.

The earthquake's testimonies recorded in the church included also human remains: the skull of a young woman found in the shaft of the cellar in the atrium and damaged skeletons of an elderly woman and a child discovered in the debris of the central room in the western portico of the atrium.¹¹⁹

Among the conclusions we may draw from the examination of the remains of the NWC compound, it is important to note that the design of the church followed the recommendations of the *Testamentum Domini*: the *diakonikon* in the southern wing (to the right of the southernmost of the three entrances from the atrium), the special rooms (the galleries) which might serve as an *exorcisterium*, the original *bema* (Phase I) raised three steps up. An original function of the northern *pastophorion* (the eastern extremity of the northern aisle) is not known. In Phase II, the small apse constructed there might have served as a *prothesis*. The same apse apparently accommodated an Eucharistic altar in the final Phase III. The southern *pastophorion* served as a chapel of martyr(s)' cult most probably throughout all the phases of the church history. Additionally, in Phase II it may have played a part in the rite of the Little Entrance(?) and, when the central part of the church went out of liturgical use in Phase III, it may have been used as a *prothesis* in the Great Entrance rite.

The final functional arrangement of the church was dictated by practical factors: need to improve the economical situation of the congregation after partial destruction of the church and necessity to carry out the most urgent repairs. The atrium was used for domestic activity, mainly grain processing, and the northern wing was occupied by the wine-press complex, with wine jars stored in the cellar under the north-western part of the atrium. Therefore, as regards the final years of the functioning of the NWC compound, we may speak about the reduction of the liturgical space and the expansion of the domestic-activity area.

Another question, still unanswered due to the unsatisfactory state of interpretation of archaeological material and lack of written sources, is that of the identity of local congregation worshipping in the NWC: were they chalcedonians or monophysites? Why the NWC differs in its planning and decoration (extremely 'iconophobic' character of its mosaic floors) from three other churches excavated at Hippos so far?

Not much is known about the history of Christianity in Hippos. The town was one of the bishoprics of the province of *Palaestina* and from A.D. 400 on of *Palaestina Secunda*, with the metropolis in Scythopolis (Beth Shean). From the patriarchate of Antioch, it passed under the jurisdiction of that of Jerusalem as soon as the latter was established in A.D. 451.¹²⁰ Acts of the councils mention only three names of the bishops of Hippos: Petros (present at Seleucia in A.D. 359 and at Antioch in A.D. 363), Konon (Jerusalem, in A.D. 518) and

¹¹⁹ EAD., ID., NWC 2006, p. 54; EAD., ID., NWC 2007, p. 62.

¹²⁰ B. BAGATTI, *The Church from the Gentiles in Palestine*, Jerusalem 1984, p. 85.

Theodoros (Jerusalem, in A.D. 536).¹²¹ A ‘stupid bishop of Hippoi in Palestine’ (whose name remains unknown) has been mentioned in connection to an edict issued by Justinian in A.D. 564/565.¹²² From the story of Maximus the Confessor (provided it is reliable?) one would conclude that in the second half of the sixth century Tiberias was the capital of a district in which the Golan Heights were contained,¹²³ so this must also have included Hippos. The latter town must have been conquered by the Islamic troops of Shurahbil at the same time as Tiberias, in A.D. 634. It was Tiberias (*Tabariyyah*) that was established as the capital of the Jordan province (*Jund el-Urdunn*); however, the district (*kurah*) of Susiya (still known to Ya’kubi in the latter ninth century) clearly derived its name from (Hippos) Susita,¹²⁴ a town which by that time did not exist anymore. Literary sources regarding years A.D. 793 to 1038 mention Tiberias as the seat of the monophysite bishops subject to the patriarch of Antioch.¹²⁵ Even earlier, in A.D. 684 (the council at Reshaina in Syria), a jacobite bishopric of the Golan is mentioned, with its seat in Paneas.¹²⁶ Given the geographical proximity of Hippos to both Tiberias and Paneas, one may cautiously suggest that also Hippos was within the sphere of the monophysite influence, and it is fairly probable (although impossible to prove at the present state of our knowledge) that temporarily it was the seat of a monophysite bishop(s). Any further archaeological research in the area of Hippos should consider that possibility and aim at restoring the life of the local Christian community during the seventh–eighth century, a period for which we virtually lack epigraphical sources so that it is to the archaeology to play a main part once again.

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¹²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 56 and 94.

¹²² E. HONIGMANN, Evêques et évêchés monophysites d’Asie Antérieure au VI^e siècle, *Corpus Christianorum Orientalium* vol. 127, Subsidia tome 2, Louvain 1951 [= Evêques et évêchés monophysites], p. 129, n. 4.

¹²³ S. BROCK, An Early Syriac Life of Maximus the Confessor, *AnBoll* 91, 1973, p. 314.

¹²⁴ G. LE STRANGE, Palestine under the Moslems. A Description of Syria and the Holy Land from A.D. 650 to 1500, Boston 1890, p. 540.

¹²⁵ HONIGMANN, Evêques et évêchés monophysites, p. 162, n. 6; E. HONIGMANN, Le couvent de Barsauma et le patriarcat jacobite d’Antioche et de Syrie, *Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium* Vol. 146, Subsidia tome 7, Louvain 1954, p. 153, No. 23.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 101–103 and 124.