

North-East Insula Project (NIP)

By Prof. Mark Schuler with assistance from Adam Łajtar (epigraphy), Stephen Chambers (glass) and Kristina Neumann (*dipinti*)

By the eleventh season of excavations at Hippos of the Decapolis (2010), Concordia University had completed nine consecutive seasons of work on the North-east Insula Project (NIP). The NIP is subdivided by three narrow *cardines*. These *cardines* provide a convenient way of delineating three excavation zones within the NIP: the Western Zone, the Central Zone, and the Eastern Zone.

The Eastern Zone is bounded to the east by *Cardo* 4 North and to the west *Cardo* 3 North. In the Eastern Zone are the peristyle house and what may be an Umayyad structure. The Central Zone is bounded to the east by *Cardo* 3 North and to the west by *Cardo* 2 North. The Northeast Church is the most prominent feature of this zone. The Western Zone is bounded to the east by *Cardo* 2 North and to the west by the Roman basilica. Within this zone seemingly are several complexes that are labeled with Greek letters from south to north. Complexes alpha, beta, and gamma are partially exposed. The foundations of complex delta were identified.

This report summarizes work on the NIP through 2010. The report is organized according to the areas identified above:

- The street grid system
- The peristyle house
- The North-East Church (NEC)
- The western building complexes

The report will also discuss

- the cisterns
- the phasing of the NIP in so far as such may be determined to date.

Small finds will be discussed in their context of discovery. Additional reports on glass and ceramics are appended.

The Street Grid System

Apparently, around 120 CE the Legio VI Ferrata was moved from Syria to Galilee and stationed at Kefar 'Otnay, south of the Nazareth ridge. After the Roman victory in the Bar Kochba rebellion and the relocations that followed, the Romanization of Galilee progressed rapidly. Seemingly in this period, Hippos was (re)built on a grid system with a colonnaded *decumanus maximus* bisected periodically by smaller *cardines*. Evidence of the grid system persisted into the Byzantine period and frames the north-east insula.

The western portico of the North-East Church was built over the line of one of these *cardines*. The street to the south is 2.2-2.4 m wide and is surfaced with basalt pavers in rows 30 to 50 cm wide. Most pavers are 60 to 100 cm in length. Designated as *Cardo* Two North (2N), this street may have functioned as a *via sacra* for visitors to the venerated tombs in the North-East

Church.¹ Its full length of 34.3 m slopes down 2.17 m from the main gate of the church complex to *decumanus maximus* (elevation 130.83 to 128.66), a slope of about 8 cm per meter. The street narrows over its length from a width of 2.4 m at the gate of the church to 1.75 m at the junction with the *decumanus maximus*.² As pavers abut the walls of buildings on both sides of the street, the pavers may have been laid later. On the west side of the street are three building complexes discussed below.

Previous work clearing the *decumanus maximus* had revealed a second small northerly cardo (Cardo Three North [3N]) approximately fifteen meters to the east of Cardo 2N. The eastern wall of the North-East Church borders that cardo even as the western wall aligned with Cardo 2N. Cardo 2N is a perpendicular of 88.5° to the *decumanus maximus*; Cardo 3N forms an 88° perpendicular. The *domus* of the North-East Church is positioned between these two *cardines*.

W1230 and W1267 form the eastern boundary of Cardo 3N and the western side of a peristyle house. Over the southern wall of this house sits the north-west corner of a later Umayyad building the western wall of which follows the line of the cardo. Although W1230 of the peristyle house on the east side of cardo 3N and W512 of the church form the approximate boundaries for the cardo, the walls are not parallel. At the southern end of the easterly building, the cardo is 1.08 m wide. At the northern end of W512, the cardo is 1.4 m wide.³ To the north of the apse, there is an intentional blockage of cardo 3N (L1262) that likely was installed when the North-East Church was decommissioned.

To the east of W1298, we exposed the line of an alley (Cardo 4 North). In the 5 m section exposed, the alley varies in width from 1.55 to 1.32 m. At the *decumanus*, the center-to-center measurement from Cardo 3 North to Cardo 4 North is 16.65 m. The same center-to-center measurement at the north end of the streets is 16.9 m.

The peristyle house

Cubiculum

W1915 forms the southern boundary of a peristyle house bounded to the east by Cardo 4N and to the west by Cardo 3N. Next to this wall is a domestic space. This room has an interior dimension of 2.20 m from north to south and 3.30 m from east to west. W1236 of a later building was constructed over the line of W1915 and destroyed most of the south end of W1916. W1904 has a 77.5 cm doorway closed by a 90 cm door from inside the room. The doorway is 30 cm from W1288. The floor is packed earth with some plaster mixed in. Several nail fragments were discovered near floor level in the room. W1915 seem to continue to the east of W1904.

¹ In a Roman context, one would expect a *via sacra* to follow a route through the necropolis to a central shrine. The practice continued in Christianity. For example, the tomb of St. Crispine of Thebeste is approached by a *via sacra* entered through triumphal arches. J. Christern and E. Müller, *Das frühchristliche Pilgerheiligtum von Tebessa* (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1976).

² A street of this size might be more properly called a *semita* or an *angipontus*. Daniel Sperber, *The City in Roman Palestine* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 103.

³ A small *semita* such as this one may have branched off the *decumanus* between the portico's columns. Sperber 104.

The function of this small room may be hinted at by the small finds discovered in and near the room at floor level. Within the locus directly above the floor (L1906) there were some large pieces of Beisan jars, some cooking ware dating from 350-600 CE, and a partially restorable amphora. A coin and a fibula were also retrieved from the floor.

16 cm east of the entrance to the room and 17 cm south of W1917 we recovered a horde of pottery, glass, bronze, and bone on what appears to be a crudely paved surface (courtyard?). The pieces of this horde were hidden behind a worn but restorable storage jar. The horde included two bottles, a glass lamp or beaker, a figure carved of bone (dancing maenad), a scarab, a glass ring, and a bronze pitcher with an iron handle (see below for a more detailed discussion). The finds are luxury items of a domestic sort. Vitruvius distinguishes between the richly appointed *andronitis* and the more modest spaces for domestic activities called the *gynaikonitis*.⁴ We therefore conjecture that the space was a *cubiculum* from that private part of the house, either used for sleeping or storage. Osiek and Balch caution that the “eastern ideal of the seclusion of women expressed in Greek architectural design” is not always exhibited in eastern houses of the later Roman period, “perhaps indicating that social customs were changing in the East as well.”⁵

Conical lamp or beaker

Three fragments from the same straight-sided conical vessel were recovered in close proximity to one another. Their fabric is light aqua⁶ in color, and ranges for the most part between 1.1 and 1.3 mm in thickness.⁷ The two rim fragments have the same calculated diameter (110 mm). This, together with the diameter of the base fragment and the slope of all three fragments, produces a calculated height for the complete vessel of approximately 235 mm. This vessel could perhaps be dated to the 5th or 6th century.⁸

Mold-blown bottle

This vessel's fabric is aqua in color and relatively thick (approximately 2.5 mm at the neck). The vessel stands quite squarely on its slightly concave (approximately 1.5 mm) bottom, which features a wide, smoothed-off, slightly off-center pontil-mark approx. 33 mm in diameter. A

⁴ *De architectura* 6.7.1-5.

⁵ Carolyn Osiek and David L. Balch, *Families in the New Testament World: Households and House Churches* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 9.

⁶ A descriptive range of colors is provided by Robert H. Brill, “Scientific Investigations of the Jalame Glass and Related Finds,” in *Excavations at Jalame: Site of a Glass Factory In Late Roman Palestine* (ed. Gladys Davidson Weinberg; Columbia, Mo.: University of Missouri Press, 1988), p. 269. This particular color corresponds to Saldern's “fabric 1”: Alex von Saldern, *Ancient and Byzantine Glass From Sardis* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1980), p. 36.

⁷ Part of one fragment expands to 2.1 mm in thickness, a common variation arising from the manufacturing process.

⁸ In Baur's study of glass from Jerash, many conical lamps (= his Type E, including #13, which is morphologically similar to this one) are dated 5th to 7th century. P. V. C. Baur, “Glassware,” in Carl H. Kraeling, *Gerasa* (New Haven, Conn.: American Schools of Oriental Research, 1938), pp.523-524. Note also the strikingly similar vessel shown in Alex von Saldern, *Ancient Glass in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston* (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1968), #61, which is unprovenanced but dated by the author to “late 4th – early 5th century.”

small out-turn at the very top of the neck, right where it is broken off, suggests that it might have had a funnelled mouth. Its most prominent feature is a set of diagonal shallow ribs on its body. This pattern was probably created in two stages: first by inflating a paraison in a ribbed mold, then rotating (and possibly further expanding) the vessel after removing it from the mold, to create the spiralling effect.⁹ Mold-decorated bottles of this general type that can be more securely dated include one at El Bassa stemming from the late 4th century and one at Sardis from the 6th or early 7th century.¹⁰

A Carved Bone Maenad

From the hoard outside the *cubiculum* comes a maenad carved from bone. Maenads are women inspired to ritual frenzy by Dionysus. The piece is 10.05 x 3.22 cm with a thickness of 7 – 7.5 mm. The maenad is carved in medium relief with some vertical tool markings visible and no evident polishing. The right arm was raised and is missing. The left arm crossed the body. It is broken above the elbow as it bends up to the figure's right. The nose is missing. The break is quite smooth and may be intentional. Nose-cutting was a practice used both by Jews and Christians as a way of desecrating pagan statues, especially in the seventh century.¹¹ The head is oversized (1.63 x 1.58 cm). The eyes are large and lack detail. Both are “characteristic features of Oriental art.”¹² The maenad wears a Doric *chiton* in the form of a sleeveless dress.¹³ The overfold displays heavy folding and the motions of a dance. The garment flows to ankle level with both knees of the maenad flexed slightly inward, again to indicate motion. The feet are missing. Precise dating of bone carvings is difficult, especially in view of variations in form. “There is no evidence for an evolution from more ‘naturalistic’ to more ‘abstract’ pieces. Those pieces from reliable stratigraphic contexts indicate that both the finely modeled pieces and the schematic renderings appear together among late fourth-sixth century finds.”¹⁴ This conclusion accords with the identified stratigraphic context of the hoard found just outside the *cubiculum*.

A Crossbow Fibula

⁹ Saldern, *Glass From Sardis*, p. 89. Hayes presents a parallel vessel that has vertical ribs, probably indicating a bottle that was not rotated upon extraction from the mold (*Roman and Pre-Roman Glass*, p. 93 #311).

¹⁰ I have not been able to see the discussion of the piece from El Bassa (bibliography: Weinberg, “Glass Vessels,” p. 79 n.156). For the other, see Saldern, *Glass From Sardis*, p. 87. Note too the many similarly decorated—though considerably larger—items recorded by Dussart and sourced from tombs at Mahayy that are provisionally dated to the late 3rd/early 4th c (*Le Verre en Jordanie*, ##B.X.1111.b.1, B.X.42, B.X.631, B.XIV.131, B.XIV.4).

¹¹ F. R. Trombly, “Destruction of Pagan Statuary and Christianization (Fourth-Sixth Century C.E.),” in *The Sculptural Environment of the Roman Near East*, Y.Z. Eliav, E. A. Friedland, and S. Herbert, eds. (Leuven: Peeters, 2008), pp. 156–157.

¹² Renate Rosenthal, “Late Roman and Byzantine Bone Carvings from Palestine,” *Israel Exploration Journal* 26 (1976): 97.

¹³ Maenads are at times a partially nude. See Kurt Weitzmann, *Catalogue of the Byzantine and Early Mediaeval Antiquities in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection*, vol. 3 (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Center for Byzantine Studies, 1972), pp. 24–25, plate XII. See also Anthony Cutler, *The Craft of Ivory* (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library, 1985), p. 19, figs. 22–23. Other bone figures are often nude. See Goldfus and Bowes, “New Late Roman Bone Carvings from Ḥaluṣa and the Problem of Regional Bone Carving Workshops in Palestine.” *Israel Exploration Journal* 50 (2000): 190, 193, 196, 200–201; Rosenthal, Plate 22, but also see in contrast Plate 23.

¹⁴ Goldfus and Bowes 200–201.

A crossbow fibula consists of a transverse bar (the crossbar), a bow, a pin, and a catch or foot.¹⁵ The fibula from the *cubiculum* is 7.83 cm from the top finial to the bottom of the catch with a 4.56 cm crossbar also capped with finials. The shaft of the crossbar is relatively square in cross section (3.7 mm). Each finial is bulbous (1.04 cm) with a small knob at the top and flaring to a ring at the base. The bow is moderately arched, 3.6 cm long and 2.3 cm high. The pin is 5.87 cm in length and 2.7 mm in diameter. It is permanently hinged to the crossbar and secured in an open slot in the catch. The front surface of the fibula is flat and decorated with two rows of punched eyelets. Next to the bow there are four eyelets. An intervening bar (1 cm) is followed by six more eyelets. Alignment of the eyelets is imprecise. Overlaps suggest that the eyelets were punched left to right and then from the bow to the tip of the catch.

The crossbow fibula “was exclusively a male ornament, created to hold in place the heavy woolen cloak or cape that was the outer garment of a Roman soldier.”¹⁶ Although the first and second centuries CE saw a large number of shapes and types, “in the early decades of the third century, the crossbow fibula became the dominant type.”¹⁷ The length of the catch and the hinging of the pin to the crossbar suggest that this crossbow fibula is of a style from the early stage of the development of this ornament, namely 240-276 CE.¹⁸ However, transition among styles is fluid with 4th century examples betraying “a Byzantine spirit, and later ones ... sometimes so deeply embedded in classical traditions that they suggest an earlier origin.”¹⁹ In addition, crossbow fibulae also appear in non-military contexts and Christian contexts.

Storage room

West of the *cubiculum* in the south-west corner of the peristyle house is a storage room with an external doorway to *Cardo* 3N. The room is 6.75 m x 3.68 m and is subdivided into two sections by a crude stylobate with a pilaster to the east and a column to the west next to W1230. The room had an exterior door facing the street (blocked), and in turn may be entered from spaces to the north and east, the exteriors of the doors of which faced the room.

In the northern section of the room, the floor was degraded and removed to the level of its stone base. In the southeast of this section next to the pilaster is Cistern G. The head of the cistern seems to be a column drum (approximately 52 cm in diameter), the center of which is carved out. The drum is 48 cm tall. At its widest, the carved out area is 47 cm, and it narrows to a width of 27 cm. Plastering on the north face of the pilaster, a drainage hole to the north of the cistern opening and numerous drain tiles in the fill identify the means by which the cistern received water.

¹⁵ Pete Dandridge, “Idiomatic and Mainstream: The Technical Vocabulary of a Late Roman Crossbow Fibula,” *Metropolitan Museum Journal* 35 (2000): 72, fig. 3.

¹⁶ Barbara Deppert-Lippitz, “A Late Antique Crossbow Fibula in the Metropolitan Museum of Art,” *Metropolitan Museum Journal* 35 (2000): 41-42.

¹⁷ Deppert-Lippitz 42.

¹⁸ For more detailed discussion of dating, see E. Tóth, “Zur Datierung der Zwiebelknopffibeln,” *Folia Archaeologica* 31 (1980): 146-154; and P. M. Pröttel, “Zur Chronologie der Zwiebelknopffibeln,” *Jahrbuch des Römisch- Germanischen Zentralmuseums Mainz* 35.1 (1988): 347-372.

¹⁹ Deppert-Lippitz 67.

In the southern section of the room, a crude bench about 40 cm tall runs the width of the room next to W1236. On hard-packed floor (F1291) of this part of the room was a heavy deposit of Byzantine common-ware sherds including pieces of the shoulder of a late Roman amphora (form LRA1) with Greek writing (*dipinti*). The amphora was in a number of pieces.

Reconstruction revealed the majority of the shoulder still intact. The use of red ink for the *dipinti* ends further credence to this identification, as red ink was preferred to black on the LRA1 type.²⁰ The style of writing on the amphora appears to be from the sixth century CE, a date which agrees with the height of LRA1 abundance.²¹

The first inscription is the most worn of the three *dipinti*, missing a piece of the vessel itself and with much of the writing faded:

Line 1: Stylized script containing the indiction number among other indiscernible elements

Line 2: χμγ??? = 643 (according to the Greek numerical system; at the very least some cipher)

Line 3: ληδ??? = 38 ¼

This type of inscription often begins with some Christian symbol or formula, followed by information about the quantity the jar could hold.²² If the *dipinti* reads 643, it signifies the gematria for θεὸς βοηθός (“God the Helper”), which is a very common Christian cipher in Greek papyri and inscriptions. Following Fournet’s pattern, the number in the third line would thereby indicate the capacity of the amphora. A problem arises in determining what unit it actually represents because of the lack of metrological standardization in the LRA1 typology.²³

The second inscription on the opposite side of the amphora is better preserved, is difficult to decipher:

Line 1: προ() β = pro() 2

This number likely related to the customs process and perhaps, because of the stylistic similarities of the *dipinti* shown on other LRA1 vessels, was linked to the first inscription.²⁴

The third and best preserved *dipinti* on the amphora is centered under the handles. Two elements compose this type: a two-line name sequence in the genitive case followed by one, two or three numbers on individual lines. Such seems to be the case with this amphora, with possible exceptions:

²⁰ J.-L. Fournet, “Les *Dipinti* Amphoriques d’Antinoopolis” in R. Pintaudi, ed., *Antinoopolis*, Volume 1 (Firenze, 2008), 195, n. 42. Black ink was usually used on type e writing, or, when present only very rarely, either modified the original inscription in red or perhaps even showed reuse of a vessel.

²¹ On the dating of the script, Peter van Minnen. On the dating of the amphora, see J.A. Riley, “The Pottery from the Cisterns 1977.1, 1977.2 and 1977.3” in J.H. Humphrey, ed., *Excavations at Carthage conducted by the University of Michigan*, Volume 6 (Ann Arbor, 1981), 120.

²² Fournet 184-187. The best comparison for the script of this type is found on the *protokolla* of Byzantine papyri.

²³ On efforts being made to understand the metrological system of LRA1 amphorae, see van Alfen, 189ff.

²⁴ Fournet 189.

Line 1: Προσφορίου = Prosphoriou (a proper name attested to this period, though not common; the ending of the name is faded and may also read Prosphoria)

Line 2: Ρανδα = Rhanda (a toponym likely, but a proper name possible)

Line 3: λη = 38

As with the other two, the final number could serve a metrical, fiscal or other commercial function. The names, however, carry the most potential for further study. Fournet proposes that they have less to do with the manufacture of the amphora itself and rather refer to individuals or places involved in the commercialization of its contents. Some interplay may even exist between an eastern indigenous name of the second line and a more common Greek name of the first or perhaps between a big buyer and little producer.²⁵

Sleeping chamber

To the north of the storage room is a small room (3.5 m x 4.2 m). The room abuts the apse of the church. Doors allow exiting the room to the north or to the south. Both doors were locked from inside the room. The floor of the room (F1284) is mud/plaster on cobbles and slopes to the north. The southern threshold is at elevation 130.77. The northern threshold is at 130.41. To the west of the southern door is a north-facing niche in the wall (55 x 70 cm) similar to that in the *diakonikon*. Next to the west wall of the room (W1230) and the exterior wall of the apse (W502) is a small platform. It is 87 cm wide and 180 cm long and is oriented north to south. It is 1.40 m from W1235 and 1.05 m from W1261. Its surface is 48 cm above the threshold in W1261. The dimensions would suggest it served as a sleeping platform. Its proximity to the apse may point to the importance of the occupant of this room. Below the level of the floor in this room is the remnant of an earlier small cistern (Cistern F).

Peristyle court

To the north of the sleeping chamber is a three-sided peristyle court. Including the porticos, the space is 11.24 m from north to south on its east side and 11.48 m from north to south on its south side. The space is 7.5 m from east to west at its southerly end and 7.04 m from east to west at its north end. The exposed surface of the courtyard (F1295, excluding the framing stylobates) is 5.2 m from north to south on its east side and 5.32 m from north to south on its south side. The surface is 5.04 m from east to west at its southerly end and 4.96 m from east to west at its north end.

At the south end of W1267 is a large blocked doorway (1.55 m), the southern jamb of which is incorporated into the exterior apse wall. As a consequence, we conclude that W1267 is an extension of W1230, both being constructed/modified at the same time as the apse. These walls are part of the peristyle house that formed a larger complex with the North-East Church.

There are two entrances to the south portico through W1261. The eastern entrance is 5.05 m from W1267. The doorway is 1.07 m wide with its exterior to the north.

²⁵ Fournet 198-199.

There are three entrances to the peristyle court from the east through W1910. The exterior of each of the doorways faced the west. At the east end of the southern portico there is a doorway 67 cm from W1261. The doorway is 1.00 m wide. To the north and 1.6 m from W1261 is W1911. It is crudely built and goes east from W1910. The room contained by W1261, W1910, and W1911 has a mud/plaster floor (F1912) is a likely another *cubiculum*.

3.90 m north of W1261 is a second threshold in W1910. The doorway is 1.70 m in width. Most of W1910 is gone in this area except for the base course. There are large flat stones to the west of the threshold in the east portico suggesting significant traffic through this doorway. If so, this space might be a *vestibulum*, providing an entrance to the courtyard from *Cardo 4 North*.

8.2 m north of W1261, there is a clear corner, as W1913 proceeds to the east. The function of the space between W1913 and the threshold to the south is uncertain, although portions of three partially restorable amphora were recovered from the fill. Fragments of one contained *tituli dipinti* of marginal legibility.

An extension to W1910 fills the gap between W1913 and W1266. In this section of the wall at the east end of the north portico is the third doorway. It is 72 cm wide and was closed by a 96 cm door. To the east of the threshold is evidence of a later plaster floor at the height of the top of the threshold. The exterior of the doorway is again to the west.

The surface of the porticos (F1920) is a combination of flat stones, mud, and plaster. The north portico slopes downward somewhat from W1910 toward the steps that lead from the north stylobate of the courtyard to the large western doorway in W1266.

The north stylobate is 2.72 m from W1266. The elevation drops 1 m from the north stylobate to the threshold in W1266. That change in elevation is navigated by two stairs down and a surface paved with irregular large flat stones (F1293) that slopes the rest of the way to the threshold. At the west end of the paved surface, an open drainage channel (dimensions 40 x 30 cm) runs from under the north stylobate through W1266. A row of limestone blocks were plastered to the surface of F1293 to the east of the channel, perhaps to contain overflow from the channel.

The courtyard itself is paved with rectangular basalt pavers. The pavers are laid out in rows with the longer dimension oriented east to west. A slightly raised stylobate surrounds the courtyard. There are pilasters at the west ends of the north and south stylobates. At the east ends of these stylobates there are column bases. Both stylobates have one intervening column base. On the south stylobate, the corner column is 42 cm in diameter. The intercolumniation with the central column is 2.04 m. Between the central column and the pilaster the distance is 1.65 m. On the north stylobate, the corner column is 44 cm in diameter. The intercolumniation with the central column is 1.16 m. Between the central column and the pilaster the distance is 3.12 m. The central column on the north stylobate is offset to the east likely because of the staircase to the north. On the east stylobate, there are two additional column bases between the corners. The intercolumniation between the columns is 1.58 m.

At the west end of the courtyard next to W1267 are the remains of a staircase around which the pavers are laid. It is slightly off center to the south. If we assume that the stairs ascended

toward the south and that the basalt paver in the middle of the staircase was one of the steps (1.07 m above the courtyard), the staircase would reach a height of 2 m at the southern end of the staircase. We therefore surmise that it led to an *exedra* that covered the space between the south stylobate and W1261. This hypothesis is supported by the plastered floor under the *exedra*. The pilaster and column(s) of the south stylobate supported the *exedra*. Assuming this reconstruction, the structures to the south would have been of at least two stories. Cistern H was discovered in the paved plaza.

“The peristyle house has a long tradition in the East going back at least to the fourth century B.C.E.”²⁶ Still, “the known distribution of the peristyle house in Palestine is quite limited.”²⁷ Hirschfeld lists four sites from the late Roman and early Byzantine periods (Umm el-Jimal, Sepphoris, Aphek and Jerusalem).²⁸ At least two others have been subsequently published from Sepphoris²⁹ and 'Ein ez-Zeituna.³⁰ A three-sided peristyle is particularly characteristic of the evolution of the peristyle house in Roman North Africa,³¹ although both the House of the Tragic Poet³² and the House of Sallust³³ at Pompeii have three-sided peristyle courts. Ellis has argued that the latest peristyle houses were constructed in the mid-sixth century.³⁴

A typical array of architectural and domestic small finds occurs in the destruction fill of the peristyle court. Several column drums of diameters from 32-47 cm were retrieved in addition to the two marble Corinthian capitals and a roof roller. Some fifty pieces of marble cornice (roughly 10.5 m in combined length) were recovered, the majority of which were found in the south portico. Widths and ornamentation patterns varied with most displaying one to three rounded or v-shaped grooves and occasionally one rib. Some twenty nail fragments were retrieved, many of which were bent. Fragments of wall plaster with some hints of color may point to decorative paintings, especially on the western wall of the peristyle court.

Typical of a space with significant domestic usage, we recovered two substantive lower or cone portions of hourglass grinding mills, other fragmentary grinding bowls and *mortaria*, two knives (16.5 and 17.5 cm), a cylindrical mount of carved bone, and a small two-headed flask.

A peristyle court is a strong indication that the structure is an urban house that continued to be used as such by one prominent family into the Byzantine period without the subdivision of space typical of that period.

²⁶ Monika Trümper, “Material and Social Environment of Graeco-Roman Houses in the East,” in *Early Christian Families in Context*, David L. Balch and Carolyn Osiek, eds. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), p. 37.

²⁷ Yizhar Hirschfeld, *The Palestinian Dwelling in the Roman-Byzantine Period* (Jerusalem: Franciscan Press, 1995), 86.

²⁸ Hirschfeld 86.

²⁹ O. Sion and A. Said, “A Mansion House from the Late Byzantine-Umayyad Period in Beth Shean-Scythopolis,” *Liber Annuus* 52 (2002): 353-366.

³⁰ David Milson, “Design Analysis of the Peristyle Building from 'Ein ez-Zeituna,” *Atiqot* 51 (2006): 71-75.

³¹ Yvon Thébert, “Private Life and Domestic Architecture in Roman Africa,” in Paul Veyne, ed. *A History of Private Life*, vol. 1: From Pagan Rome to Byzantium (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987-1991), pp. 357-364.

³² In this case the peristyle court is against the outside wall of the house. Bettina Bergmann, “The Roman House as Memory Theater: The House of the Tragic Poet in Pompeii,” *The Art Bulletin* 76 (1994): 225-256.

³³ Paul Zanker, *Pompeii: Public and Private Life* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), p. 43.

³⁴ Simon P. Ellis, “The End of the Roman House,” *American Journal of Archaeology* 92 (1988): 565.

Cylindrical Mount

A hollow cylindrical object fashioned of bone (tibia of a medium sized animal?) was recovered from the peristyle court. It is 3.98 cm tall, 2.54 cm in diameter with an interior hole of 1.4 cm. The surface is smoothed but not polished. Two shallow grooves divide the length of the cylinder into three bands. The middle band (9.8 mm wide) is plain. The top and bottom bands are decorated with a sharper groove around the outside of the cylinder 2.5 mm from each end and by a row of eyelets. One band has twelve eyelets; the other band has thirteen. Rosenthal suggests that “hollow bones with carving” were “used as handles.”³⁵ According to St. Clair, “surviving evidence documents the use of cylindrical and ring-shaped mounts primarily on furniture legs, which were assembled around an iron rod. Cylindrical members turned from a single length of hollowed bone ... [were] then drilled through to receive the rod. They vary considerably in size and are both undecorated and decorated.”³⁶

Small Two-headed Flask

Next to the south-east column base of the peristyle court, a small two-headed flask was recovered, sitting on the stylobate. The glass is 2 mm thick and light greenish grey (GLEY 1 7/5GY). The fabric is translucent with some granularity and small bubbles. The body is 4.5 cm tall and approximately 4 cm in diameter. The body was blown in a two-part mold with two heads set back to back. Seam lines are visible. Two rows of globules indicate long hair on the nearly identical figures. The faces are nondescript with large noses and chubby cheeks. The base is flat and shows some imprecision in the alignment of the two molds. The neck is cylindrical (1.5 cm) although the misalignment makes the neck appear in cross section more like a Cassini oval than a circle. The neck of the flask is broken about a centimeter above the body.

The flask is a common type with nearly identical examples in the Museum of Bosra,³⁷ the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston,³⁸ and the Royal Ontario Museum.³⁹ Hayes dates the flask he is documenting to the “late 3rd-4th century A.D.”⁴⁰ Von Saldern dates his example to “about 2nd century A.D.”⁴¹ All such dates are prior to the last active period of the house, making the find likely residual.

Garden

The space to the north of W1266 is the garden of the peristyle house. Portions of three discernable areas have been excavated. The lowest area is in the west, consisting of a covered entrance porch in *opus sectile* with a stone floor to the north bounded by two columns and a small above-ground pool. An intermediate area is two steps up to the east with a fountain in

³⁵ Rosenthal, p. 101.

³⁶ Archer St. Clair, *Carving as Craft: Palatine East and the Graeco-Roman Bone and Ivory Carving Tradition* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), p. 69.

³⁷ Dussart, pp. 175-176, fig. BXIII.31.

³⁸ von Saldern, fig. 37.

³⁹ Hayes, p. 50, n. 94. Hayes includes an extensive list of parallels.

⁴⁰ Hayes, p. 50, n. 94.

⁴¹ von Saldern, fig. 37.

the south-east corner and a geometric mosaic floor proceeding north. A third area is one step further up to the east. It has entrances from the house and from the alley, but also shows some additional phasing with a secondary channel feeding the fountain and a later olive vat blocking the entrance from the house.

The western entrance porch

The west section of W1266 is finely built *opus quadratum* 1.08 m in length and penetrating into W1267. An open doorway of 2.32 m in the wall was later closed by a door frame for a 1.72 m door of two sections. The eastern section of the door is wider (1.08 m) than the western section (64 cm). The exterior of these later doors is to the south. We posit that that the doors indicate a significant change in the function of the space making the garden area more private than the peristyle court.

Two steps down from the threshold is a porch opening onto the garden. The first step is 25 cm down with a tread depth of 54 cm. The second step is 17 cm down and 28 cm deep. The steps reach a floor (F1294). The floor of the porch is 1.5 m below the peristyle court, likely due to the topography of the hill. The floor is *opus sectile*. There is an 11 cm border next to the steps made of re-used local stones and marble. The floor consists of 21.5 cm squares in black and white set on their points (diamonds). The softness of the stone suggests that this area of the garden was roofed.

There is a plastered bench about 50 cm deep and 55 cm tall bordering the west and the south part of the room. Two larger stone slabs on the floor (F1294) next to the *opus sectile* (on the west) suggest that water at one time flowed from the channel over the bench and onto the floor. The channel was later plastered shut. The western bench runs from the southwest corner to the pilaster in W1267.

In line with the pilaster are two column bases each with an approximate diameter of 40 cm. To the north of the two columns, the floor is hard stone pavement (not *opus sectile*). The *opus sectile* is missing east of the second column. The *opus sectile* was likely arrayed only south of the two columns, providing a decorative entrance. In the south-east corner of this entrance space a small patch of industrial sized tesserae was discovered at a level 2 cm below that of the *opus sectile* floor. It was likely an earlier floor replaced by the *opus sectile* floor. Further to the east are the remains of a masonry podium 1.10 m north to south and 60 cm east to west. Only some of its base blocks survive to a height of about 90 cm. The podium has two stairs on either side that rise to the east. The first step of the north stairs has an elevation of 14 cm and a tread of 23 cm. A second step of 20 cm brings one to the level of a floor. The first step of the south stairs is 10 cm with a tread of 41 cm. The second step has an elevation of 20 cm. From W1267 to the stairs is 4.8 m. The intercolumniation from the west pilaster to the west column is 1.45 m; the intercolumniation between the two columns is also 1.45 m. From the east column to the stairs is 1.1 m.

There is a plastered fixture in the north balk extending west of first northerly stair. The easterly edge of the fixture is 3.43 m from W1266. The westerly edge is 3.53 m from the wall. The fixture is 1.43 m from east to west and is plastered with a hard plaster showing only minor

damage. The vertical edges curve in to the north. The plaster shows some slight curving onto the stone paving, on the top of which the fixture is situated. At 35 cm above the floor is a shelf 20 cm deep. The plaster curves down to cover the marble slabs used to make the shelf. The next level is an additional 56 cm higher. The top surface is again faced with marble slabs. 18-20 cm to the north into the structure the plastering curves down on the south and west sides, confirming that the fixture is some sort of basin or small pool. The east side of the fixture overlays the first step north of the podium (17 cm high and 24 cm deep). The second step rises to the level of the first shelf. Plaster from the fixture covers the west face of the second step. This second step is topped by a thin marble slab.

It is possible that the two columns and the basin standing on a stone floor may be the south edge of a small peristyle court. In North Africa, many courts “were filled with basins and pools.”⁴² In the House of Europa at Cuicul the *peristylum* has three complex basins. Four basins flank the porticos in the House of Castorius. At Bulla Regis in the House of the Fisherman, the peristyle court is given entirely over to water.⁴³ Basins could be decorated with marine motifs and, at times, fish were raised in such pools.⁴⁴

The fountain plaza

The two steps east of the *opus sectile* floor lead to another level including a mosaic floor and a fountain. The area extends 2.84 m to the east to a single step which aligns roughly with the line of W1910. The a single-niche fountain sits in the north-west interior corner formed by W1266 and a 1.44 m wall segment that roughly extends the line of W1910 north of W1266 with an offset of 40 cm to the east.

The fountain is semicircular. Its niche is 55 cm across with a depth of 33 cm. The structure is composed of reused roof tiles and floor pieces that have been plastered. At about 11 o'clock is a ceramic pipe that provides water for the fountain. The pipe has a 9 cm interior diameter and an 11 cm exterior diameter and passes through the wall to the east to a catch basin on the opposite side. The center of the pipe feeding the fountain is 36 cm from the top of the fountain. A decorative spout is missing. The fountain has a stone base 96 cm from the top. The base stone (marble) is broken in three parts and is 4.5 cm thick. The water to feed the fountain apparently came from the roof of the complex. A pipe brought the water down from the roof, as plaster evidence on W1266 indicates, to a shallow basin that then channeled the water through the extension of W1910 to the fountain.

The water from the fountain flowed into a pool (L1918). The pool is 1.67 x 1.67 m (interior dimension). The south and east faces follow the line of walls. The west face curves into the north face by a semi-circular route. The wall of the pool is 25 cm thick on the west and north. 20 cm of plastering lines W1266. Outside the pool and 54 cm below the top of the pool is a 25 cm “step” paved with stones (some reused marble) set into the plaster. Part of the north-west

⁴² Yvon Thébert, “Private Life and Domestic Architecture in Roman Africa” in *A History of Private Life*, vol.1: From Pagan Rome to Byzantium, Paul Veyne, ed., Arthur Goldhammer, trans. (Cambridge: Harvard University press, 1987), p. 362.

⁴³ Thébert 362.

⁴⁴ Thébert 367.

wall of the pool has been damaged by falling debris. There is at least one interior shelf in the pool. It is of similar width and is 77 cm below the top of the pool. Excavation of the pool is incomplete at this time of this writing.

The pool has a second source of water. Over the top of W1922 is an open water channel. It originates in a pipe in W1298 about 30 cm south W1922. The pipe has an internal diameter of 9 cm and runs straight for at least 26 cm inside of W1298. From the pipe the water flows into a channel about 15 cm wide and 12 cm deep. The water flows north along the side of W1298 briefly and then flows west down the centerline of W1922. At the west end of W1922, some of the water is channeled down the west side. Part of the channel turns to the north. At the base of the west end of W1922 and 1.65m from W1266 the channel continues, running parallel with W1266. The channel is 9 cm wide and 6 cm deep. It curves away in a north westerly direction when it approaches the extension of W1910. The channel then curves back to the south-west in the form of a question mark. The water then flows through the wall of the pool into the basin through a 3.5 cm ceramic pipe.

While removing destruction fill from the mosaic floor north of the fountain pool, we removed a 2.91 m monolithic column from the square and balk. After lifting out the column, underneath it we recovered a limestone block (24 x 38 x 22 cm) to which plaster holding a partial face of a woman was attached. It is a fragmentary fresco of a Tyche *corona muralis*. The mouth and left side of the face are missing.

A mosaic floor proceeds north from the fountain and pool. Pieces of marble in secondary use form a western border for the floor at the top of the two western stairs. The design of the floor is geometric and similar to other Byzantine floors at Hippos. The concentration of tesserae is 34 per dm². A black border of three cubes parallels the curve of the wall of the pool demonstrating contemporaneous construction. From the west, the floor begins with a black band of three tesserae, then a white band of eight tesserae. Then a guilloche (19 cm wide, Avi-Yonah pattern B2⁴⁵) runs north to south. It consists of two five-tesserae bands (black, white, double blue, black; and black, white, double orange, black). An identical pattern follows the curve of the pool (black band, white band, guilloche). The two guilloche bands are woven together when they meet in the southern part of the floor. Inside each guilloche is a band of five white tesserae. Between the guilloche bands are triangular geometric patterns that continue under the balk to the north. As the plaza has a mosaic floor, it was likely roofed.

The eastern entrances

From the doorway to the western entrance porch, W1266 proceeds 3.94 m to the east to W1910 and then another 5.36 m to W1298. 72 cm from W1298 is a 98 cm doorway in W1266 that was subsequently blocked. W1298 is 90 cm wide and is constructed of ashlars. W1298 was exposed to a depth of about 50 cm on its eastern face, slightly exposing the second course of stones.

1.48 m north of W1266, W1922 proceeds west from W1298 for 2.55 m where it terminates at a vertical column, the base of which has not been reached. At the west end of W1922 is a pilaster

⁴⁵ M. Avi-Yonah, "Mosaic Pavements in Palestine," *Quarterly of the Department of Antiquities of Palestine* 2 (1933): 135.

on the north side of the wall protruding 60 cm to the north with a 30 cm bench on the east and west sides of the pilaster. We surmise that W1922 forms a corner with W1298 and that the space to the north of W1922 was some sort of entrance from *Cardo* 4N to the east. The small doorway in W1266 suggests that the space south of W1922 was an entrance vestibule from the private sections of the house.

At a significantly later time, an olive vat was constructed in the space between W1922 and the blocked doorway of W1266. The vat begins approximately 80 cm below the surviving surface of W1298. The previous walls were surfaced with smaller stones and plaster 20 cm thick. On the north side of W1266, there are at least two layers of plaster. The outer layer is 6 cm thick. North to south, the vat is 1.4 m. East to west, the vat is approximately 1.55 m, as the west wall of the vat was destroyed by a column shaft that fell against it. The vat is about 1.65 m deep. An hour-glass mill sat on the floor of the vat. It is 45 cm in external diameter and 24 cm internally slanting to that diameter over 15 cm. From the sifted fill at the bottom of the vat a dozen olive pits were retrieved. 20 cm west of the vat is the neck for a Cistern I.

Water Sources

The area to the north of W1266 is fed by three distinct sources of water. A channel (L1292) brings water through W1266 from the peristyle court. A second pipe from the roof feeds the fountain. And a third channel brings water to the pool of the fountain from the area of W1288.

These water features, the fountain, the small basin and the stone floor all suggest that the area is likely an elaborate garden (*hortus*). Row houses at Pompeii devote significant space to gardens.⁴⁶ The House of the Small Fountain at Pompeii places the single-niche fountain in a garden.⁴⁷ The House of the Moralist has an extensive garden in the form of a sacred grove.⁴⁸ Osiek and Balch point to several homes at Pompeii where the owners “placed priority on horticulture and outdoor living, being willing to live rather modestly indoors.”⁴⁹ Examples include the Houses of Diomedes and Epidius Rufus, the House of the Faun, of which the rear third of the property is taken up by a huge peristyle garden, and the House of D. Octavius Quarto of Loreius Tiburtinus, of which two-thirds of the property is occupied by a garden.⁵⁰

Tyche corona muralis

The fragment of a fresco of the Roman goddess Tyche, recovered from the northern garden, preserves the upper right portion of the face and the crown. The left cheek and half of the left eye are missing, as is everything below the upper lip. The wide eyes look off to the left. The right eyebrow is prominent. The dark brown hair is pulled back toward the ears, perhaps with plaited braids. Fortifications of a city form the crown. The main gate consists of a Roman arch. The tops of the towers appear bulbous – a most unusual configuration. We wonder if what look

⁴⁶ Trümper 34-35.

⁴⁷ Zanker, Plate 12.

⁴⁸ Zanker 163-165.

⁴⁹ Osiek and Balch 15.

⁵⁰ Osiek and Balch 227, n. 27; Lawrence Richardson, *Pompeii: An Architectural History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988), pp. 329-343.

like towers might instead be columns with capitals. The two possible columns next to the gate have identical elevations and the one closest to the gate has a square top (viewed from an angle). As mural crowns could reflect actual circumstances of the city to which the Tyche belonged, these standing columns might point to a time when some decline had already come to Hippos.

Tyche played an important role in the self-identification of Hippos. Four of the eleven city-coin types from Hippos enumerated by Spijkerman involve a representation of Tyche, two of which make specific connection by including a horse or a little horse.⁵¹ Elsewhere in the North-east Insula Project, an inscription was uncovered beginning with the words ΑΓΑΘΗ ΤΥΧΗ.⁵² But Tyche's importance extended far beyond Hippos.

“La référence à la *Tychè* était universelle dans les cités du Proche-Orient romain.”⁵³ Chance or fortune (*tyche*) was an element of life in Greek culture. Since fortune could be unpredictable and fate seemingly evil, cults devoted to Good Fortune (ΑΓΑΘΗ ΤΥΧΗ) developed. Tyche came to personify the fortune of a city or an individual.⁵⁴ As Greek colonists in the wake of Alexander settled in the east, “Tyche appeared in many guises, absorbing traits of other divinities in some cases, becoming simply an aspect of a stronger divinity in others.”⁵⁵ A head of a Tyche was discovered in the southern temple at Petra.⁵⁶ The Tyche of Dura-Europas sits next to the Tyche of Palmyra in a fresco from Dura.⁵⁷ At Caesarea, one statue of Tyche depicts her as an Amazon while also invoking images of Posidon, Demeter and the cult of Roma and the emperor; another statue seems to equate Tyche with *Fortuna*.⁵⁸ In Spijkerman's catalogue of Decapolis coins, almost every city has one or more coins types with Tyche. In view of social conditions and the uncertainties of life at the eastern fringe of the Roman Empire, “Fortune became an obsession.”⁵⁹

The fragmentary fresco from Hippos was recovered on top of a Byzantine mosaic floor, having been knocked down by a column collapsing during an earthquake likely late in the major occupational phase of the site. This Tyche becomes another example of the persistence of Tyche into and beyond the time of Christianity's intentional destruction of pagan worship and its images. Evidence for such persistence is widespread.

At Scythopolis on the west side of Palladius street is the Sigma Plaza, which according to a mosaic inscription was built in the beginning of the 6th century. The mosaic floor of one of the

⁵¹ Augustus Spijkerman, *The Coins of the Decapolis and Provincia Arabia* (Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press, 1978), p. 169.

⁵² *Hippos 2009*, 74-79.

⁵³ Nicole Belayche, “*Tychè* et la *Tychè* dans cités de la Palestine Romaine,” *Syria* 80 (2003):112.

⁵⁴ Susan Matheson, “The Goddess Tyche,” in *An Obsession with Fortune: Tyche in Greek and Roman Art*, ed. Susan Matheson (Yale University Art Gallery, 1994), p. 19.

⁵⁵ Matheson 23.

⁵⁶ Joseph Basile, “A Head of the Goddess Tyche from Petra, Jordan,” *Annual of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan* 41 (1997):255-266.

⁵⁷ P. Broucke, “Tyche and the Fortune of Cities in the Greek and Roman World,” *An Obsession with Fortune: Tyche in Greek and Roman Art*, ed. Susan Matheson (Yale University Art Gallery, 1994), p. 41.

⁵⁸ Rivka Gersht, “The Tyche of Caesarea Maritima,” *Palestine Exploration Quarterly* 116 (1984): 110-114.

⁵⁹ J. J. Pollitt, “An Obsession with Fortune,” in *An Obsession with Fortune: Tyche in Greek and Roman Art*, ed. Susan Matheson (Yale University Art Gallery, 1994), p.14.

twelve rooms around it has a round frame with a portrait of Tyche.⁶⁰ The Tyche of Madaba appears on a mosaic floor in the Hall of Hippolytus, an early 6th century mansion.⁶¹ In the Church of St. Bacchus at Ḥorbat Tinshemet is a marble medallion of Tyche. The frame of the medallion contains two inscriptions beginning and ending with crosses. “The lower inscription reads, ‘In the month of Xanticus Year 654.’ The year mentioned in the inscription probably follows the Pompeian indiction, so that the date corresponds to 582 CE.”⁶² These examples demonstrate that Tyche persists well into the period of the occupation of the north-east insula at Hippos.

The North-East Church

The North-East Church (NEC) is a small nearly square church (12.5 x 13 m) with a single exterior apse. Each aisle is separated from the nave by a row of columns. There were two public entrances from the west and one from the west end of a north lateral chamber. Burials in the chancel are the most notable aspect of this architecturally marginal church. There are no evident occupation layers above the floors of the NEC. Rather, the floors are covered by one to two meters of fill. The fill shows surprisingly little evidence of the massive earthquake of 748 CE as witnessed elsewhere on the site. Rather, the remains suggest abandonment and collapse over time.

Chancel

The apse wall (W502) is intact to seven courses above the *synthronon* (1.57 m) with some declination of the north side. It is approximately 4.5 m wide and 3 m deep. Basalt stones with a rectangular, stipple face comprise the lower courses. Destruction fill suggest that upper courses were of limestone. The dome was surfaced on its interior with plaster. Pigmented plaster fragments (red, yellow, and orange) suggest a fresco covered the dome. The apse wall is exterior to the building.

The chancel is clearly demarked from the rest of the *domus* by the base for a chancel screen that runs across nave and aisles in a north/south direction. Two chancel posts of divergent design were recovered from the destruction fill along with a fragment from the top of a third. The chancel screen was situated just west of the easterly column bases.

Against the apse wall (W502) is a highly eroded *synthronon* of soft limestone covered by plaster. Its depth of 1.0-1.12 m would accommodate one row of presbyters. The central section of the *synthronon* protrudes an additional 10-15 cm into the apse and rises 26 cm above the rest of the *synthronon*. The remainder of the apse floor (F516) is covered with irregular stone tiles. Most of the tiles are in secondary use. Although some variance in color is visible, no design pattern is discernable in the apse itself.

⁶⁰ Gabriel Mazor and Rachel Bar-Nathan, “The Bet Shean Excavation Project (1989-1991): City Center (South) and Tel Iztabba Area,” *Excavations and Surveys in Israel* 11 (1992): 42-44.

⁶¹ The Madaba Map Centenary, 1987-1999: Travelling Through the Byzantine Umayyad Period, eds. M. Piccirillo and E. Alliata (Jerusalem: Franciscan Press, 1999), pp. 246-248.

⁶² Uzi Dahari, “Ḥorbat Tinshemet, Church of St. Bacchus,” *Excavations and Surveys in Israel* 18 (1998): 68.

The section of the chancel at the east end of the north aisle has a discernable focus. A single panel of the chancel screen spanned the north/south dimension of this area, allowing an entrance to the chancel from the west just north of the easterly pillar in the north run. In an original phase of the church, access to this same part of the cancel was possible through a 1.06 m doorway. The doorway in the north wall (W521), which closed from outside the *domus*, was blocked in a later phase. The floor (F516) is of stone tiles of no clear pattern. There are two voids in the floor. One is centrally located in the middle of the axis of the northerly chancel screen panel. In it was a *loculus* for a reliquary (31 x 31 x 17 cm deep). Surrounding plaster suggests the lid was some 5 cm thick and rested some 10 cm below floor level. Next to the east wall (W520) and slightly south of the central axis was a second void. It too seems to a *loculus* for a reliquary, but its dimensions are smaller (20 x 20 cm) and its construction is poorer. Original wall plaster intact between the structure of this *loculus* and the wall confirms that F516 and both *loculi* are secondary to the original construction of the church.

Access to the central section of the chancel (at the east end of the nave) was gained through a central opening in the chancel screen. A 114 x 30 cm stone (in secondary use) spans the entrance. Although most of the floor (F516) had been destroyed, two bands (1x2.2 m) of stone tiles in a square-in-square pattern (dominant squares on end) are discernable on the north and south margins of the central section of the chancel. In the rest of the central section, some fragments of a decorative frame and one incised piece are suggestive of what is now lost. No evidence of an altar was found.

Under the level of the destroyed floor is the plaster layer of the first floor (F517). Many loose tesserae were recovered from the fill. Cut into the plaster layer (and thus part of a secondary phase) was another *loculus* for a reliquary (17 x 26).⁶³ Preserved partially, it sits on the central east/west axis of the church. Just to its south is another similarly sized *loculus* made of thin marble slabs. It had been plastered full.

The floor at the southern end of the chancel is of irregular tiles in local stone with some marble pieces in secondary use. The construction quality is poor.

Two short, perpendicular walls are constructed on top of this floor. One wall (W515) runs from the first column to the east wall. The other (W514) runs from the same column to the south wall, skewing somewhat to the west over the top of the channel for the altar screen. W515 has a small doorway toward its east end. The design of what remains plus doorjambs recovered from the fill above suggests that the door was not used for regular access. These secondary walls and the room itself seem to serve a protective purpose for what is inside.

Two burial sites were discovered in the chancel of the North-East Church. One was under the floor just north of the central axis. The other is a sarcophagus partially exposed above the floor of the chancel at its southern end inside the late-constructed room just detailed. Both burials are discussed below.

⁶³ For examples of similar *loculi*, see E. Baccache, *Églises de Village de la Syrie du Nord* (Paris: Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1980), plate 153.

Nave

The nave of the church has a fragmentary mosaic floor (F544). The original floor was overlaid by 3-4 cm of plaster and a second mosaic floor (F589). Two stone fragments of chancel screen panels were recovered from the destruction fill. Vine and cluster themes provide the background for the panel. The corner of the flaired arm of a cross may be visible on one of the fragments.

As mosaic carpets are missing in the north-east corner of the nave, a probe (1 x 2 m) was opened south of the north stylobate and next to the chancel screen base. Under the layer of cobbles was heavier fill, and within about 45 cm came limestone bedrock. The bedrock is about 52 cm below the top of the stylobate. There is no indication of a previously existing structure. The latest datable material from the pottery assemblage is a Khan bowl f. 1E (not later than the early 5th century).

Mosaics of the Nave

Only small fragments of the upper F589 remain. It seems to have been entirely geometric in design. At the east end along the chancel screen base and next to the southern stylobate was a border of crosswise arrangements (Avi-Yonah patterns F4 and F9⁶⁴) framed by a white field with random tesserae in orange and yellow and by a black square border two tesserae wide with decorative corners. Other major portions of the eastern section were covered with geometric patterns. The square-in-square pattern is similar to the one observed in the north aisle (see below) and in intercolumnar panel 2 at Kursi.⁶⁵ Western portions of the nave were apparently covered with Avi-Yonah pattern J3⁶⁶ beginning at about 6.8 m west of the base of the chancel screen. A white field some 14 tesserae in width abutted W511. The field is interspersed with randomly placed colored tesserae. A border of two bands of single rows of black tesserae separated by five rows of white tesserae initiate a field of diamond geometrics bordered by black tesserae. F589 has a density of 72 tesserae/dm². The late sixth-century date of the mosaics at Kursi suggests a similar date for the geometric floor (F589) of the North-East Church. As Karen Britt has discussed in her recent dissertation, geometric compositions and uniform carpet patterns are part of a “stylistic shift in the pavements of the fifth and sixth centuries. The compositional arrangement of fifth century mosaics displays a degree of spontaneity and liveliness that gave way to predictability and repetitiveness during the sixth century.”⁶⁷ The geometric patterns of F589 covered over the complexity and beauty of F544.

Only fragments of the western five meters of F544 remain. A complex series of borders surround two rows of six overlapping medallions on the east, south, and west. The outermost border is a band of three black tesserae. Inside is a double band of swastikas, the arms of which are a double row of black tesserae. Fourteen such swastikas would have spanned the width of

⁶⁴ M. Avi-Yonah 139.

⁶⁵ Vassilios Tzaferis, “The Excavations of Kursi-Gerasa,” *Antiqot* (English Series) volume 16 (Ministry of Education and Culture: Israel Department of Antiquities and Museums, 1983) Plate 8.5.

⁶⁶ Avi-Yonah 141.

⁶⁷ Karen Britt, *Mosaics in the Byzantine Churches of Palestine: Innovation or Replication?* (Bloomington, Indiana: unpublished PhD dissertation at Indiana University, 2003) 251.

the nave. A double row of eight swastikas separate the easterly and westerly bands. The swastikas alternate between left- and right-facing, some of which are more complex than others. Lacunae make it difficult to determine a precise pattern of alternation between the four forms (right-facing, left-facing, right-facing complex, and left-facing complex). The corners of each swastika and the outer borders are linked by diagonals composed of two by two clusters of black tesserae. In the center of the hexagonal spaces created by the diagonals and the edges of the swastikas are crosswise arrangements in Avi-Yonah pattern F2.⁶⁸ This border is somewhat reminiscent of the field of the south aisle at Shavei Zion which was dated by Avi-Yonah to the beginning of the fifth century.⁶⁹

Inside the band of mosaics are three plain bands: the first consisting of three black tesserae, the second of five white tesserae, and the third of three black tesserae. Moving inward, the next band is Avi-Yonah B8 in red, separated by a bank of four white tesserae from a guilloche (Avi-Yonah B4) with alternating strands of five tesserae.⁷⁰ One strand is black, white, pink, red, black; the other is black, white, yellow, orange, black. A single row of white tesserae separate the guilloche from a band of red triangles (Avi-Yonah A6)⁷¹. Two rows of white tesserae and two rows of black tesserae complete the border.

Only fragments of the medallions remain. Each medallion was surrounded by a border of eleven tesserae. The borders overlap neighboring medallions. Some borders were a spectrum of colors (black to blues to whites to pinks to reds to black). Others are a background spectrum (black to pink to red to pink to black) overlain by alternating half circles (white to gray to blue to white). Still others show gold and brown fish on a field of red.

The spaces between the medallions and the external border are filled with birds. Visible between easterly medallions are a duck with raised wings and a walking bird. Between the two southerly medallions, a head of another duck may be detected. These birds are strikingly similar to the birds adorning the floor of the Kyria Maria memorial chapel in a monastery at Scythopolis.⁷² Karen Britt writes that the birds confirm the commemorative function of the space and “should be interpreted as the blessed who take flight to heaven.”⁷³

In the center of the mosaic, the fragmentary borders of four medallions overlap leaving a field of thirteen by nineteen white tesserae bounded by a row of single black tesserae. In the center of the field is a cross made of a single row of black tesserae with a white center (Avi-Yonah F11)⁷⁴. Each corner arrangement begins with a white tesserae and proceeds outward through yellow to brown.

⁶⁸ Avi-Yonah 139.

⁶⁹ M. Prausnitz, *Excavations at Shavei Zion: The Early Christian Church* (Rome: Centro per le antichità e la storia dell'arte del Vicino Oriente, 1967) 51-53. See also the Portico of the Rivers in the House of Porticos in D. Levi, *Antioch Mosaic Pavements* (Rome: L'Erma di Bretschneider, 1971) vol.2, plate 98c.

⁷⁰ Avi-Yonah 138.

⁷¹ Avi-Yonah 138.

⁷² G. M. Fitzgerald, *A Sixth Century Monastery at Beth-Shan* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1939), Plate XIV.

⁷³ Britt 315.

⁷⁴ Avi-Yonah 139.

The two southerly medallions are partially intact. The westerly medallion seems to be a feline creature, perhaps a young lion, as suggested by the claws in the feet. In the background of the medallion is a palm tree with three branches. The easterly animal has small hoofs. It may be a gazelle or a ram. In the background is a palm tree of five or more branches. Likely, the other medallions displayed similar animals. Some calendric function may be implied by the presence of twelve medallions.

The lower F544 shows a density of 62 tesserae/dm² in the field with the swastikas. The density increases to 115 tesserae/dm² in the decorative banding to 196 tesserae/dm² in the medallions and in the spaces between the medallions that are decorated with crosses and birds. Claudette Dauphin distinguishes three types of Byzantine floors: course pavements (20-60 tesserae/dm²), intermediated pavements (60-110 tesserae/dm²), and fine pavements (more than 110 tesserae/dm²), with some pavements displaying of mixture of intermediate and fine carpets.⁷⁵ Most of the fifth and sixth century pavements of the Middle East show an intermediate or mixed density.⁷⁶ The mosaics of the nave of the North-East Church are consistent with this trend.

South Aisle

At the west end of the south aisle is an entrance 90 cm wide. Its door would close from inside the *domus*. It is the only access to the church that was not intentionally blocked in antiquity. At the east end of the aisle just west of the base for the chancel screen is a second doorway to the *diakonikon* to the south. It is 80 cm wide; its exterior faces the *domus*; and it was blocked during a secondary phase of the church.

Most of the floor (F526) was destroyed in antiquity. Only the pebble foundation and plaster remain in most places. Four meters from the west wall (W511) next to the south wall (W510) and running for 1.13 m to the west is a segment of the original mosaic floor. The background field is white. There is a black band of two tesserae, a white band of four tesserae, and black band of one tessera, and then a simple guilloche pattern (Avi-Yonah pattern B2)⁷⁷ in black, white, red, and yellow (approximately 1 cm² tesserae). At about three meters from the west wall (W511) the border turns to the north briefly. The border also runs to the east beneath a bench for four meters. West of this border is an 80 x 60 cm segment of tesserae in a circular pattern (portions of four circles). At the west end of the aisle, in the southwest corner, and in two fragmentary locations along the stylobate are segments of white mosaic tile of larger size (1.5 cm² tesserae). These seem to be a later repair.

The south aisle is separated from the nave by a row of four column bases set on a stylobate. The stylobate (97-93 cm wide, comprised of diverse stones some in secondary use) runs west from the base of the chancel screen to the fourth column. The intercolumniation averages 2.1 m (araeostyle intercolumniation). The shafts of the column bases are 52 cm in diameter with

⁷⁵ Claudette Dauphine, "Carpets of Stone: The Graeco-Roman Legacy in the Levant," *Classics Ireland* 4 (1997): 23.

⁷⁶ Britt 143.

⁷⁷ Avi-Yonah 139.

variant base profiles rising 30 cm and extending outward 10 cm.⁷⁸ At the west end of the line of the stylobate a single corbel sits next to W511 just north of the entrance to the south aisle. It may have functioned as a bench for someone controlling access to the south aisle (cp. similar use of a theatre seat at the entrance to the south aisle of the North-West Church).

Next to the south wall (W510) is a stone bench. It is 4.01 m long, 38 to 44 cm wide, and 26-30 cm high. It begins 47 cm west of the blocked south doorway and ends 4.2 m from the southwest corner. It is constructed of stones of various lengths (60, 40, 100 cm) and was plastered. Some remaining wall plaster curves onto the top of the bench. The bench is secondary to the original construction of the church as it sits on top of the original mosaic floor.

Benches are uncommon in the Byzantine churches of Palestine. Both the entrance hall and narthex of the church at the monastery of St. Martyrius at Ma'ale Adummim have benches. In the narthex, the benches were part of a 6th CE renovation.⁷⁹ Benches also are reported against the west wall in the church on the coast at Ostrakine⁸⁰ and in one of the three rooms of the monastic oratory at Wadi Fra'iyeh.⁸¹ In trans-Jordanian regions, benches occur occasionally. H. C. Butler notes a bench on the north side of the nave between the second and third columns in the west church at Bākirhā.⁸² At Gerasa, benches occur in a southern side chapel at the church of St. Theodore, against the north wall of the Synagogue Church, and on the north, west, and southern walls of the nave of the Mortuary Church.⁸³

In the destruction fill at the west end of the aisle, a basalt cross was discovered. The cross has flaring arms (40 cm high x 37 cm wide x 23 cm deep). The cross sits on a base (20 cm high x 23 cm wide x 56 cm deep). Cross and base are carved from one stone. Plaster on the edges of the base and numerous roof tiles in the fill suggest that the cross came from the peak of the western facade.

North Aisle

The north aisle is separated from the nave by a run of columns sitting on a stylobate. The stylobate is of similar construction and dimension to that of the south aisle. However, the column bases and placement show a significant variance. Visible are five intact column bases. Again the column shafts are 52 cm in diameter but the base profiles vary dramatically in form and height. The intercolumniation averages 1.1 m, except between the third and fourth bases from the east where the intercolumniation is 2.7 m. If a similar column base were placed in the midst of this gap, then all the intercolumniations would average 1.1 m (systyle

⁷⁸ Descriptions are similar to those published a more than a century ago. G. Schumacher, *Beschreibung des Dscholan*, *Zeitschrift d. Deutschen Palastine-Vereins* 9 (1886): 331, figs. 106 and 107.

⁷⁹ Yitzhak Magen, "The Monastery of St. Martyrius at Ma'ale Adummim," in *Ancient Churches Revealed*, edited by Yoram Tsafir (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1993): 178. Pachomian sources indicate that monks used three postures when praying the hours: standing, sitting, and prostration (Columba Stewart, *Cassian the Monk* [New York: Oxford, 1998]: 103).

⁸⁰ Elizer D. Oren, "A Christian Settlement at Ostrakine an North Sinai," *Ancient Churches Revealed*: 307.

⁸¹ Uzi Dahari, "Remote Monasteries in Southern Sinai and Their Economic Base," *Ancient Churches Revealed*: 347.

⁸² H.C. Butler, *Early Churches in Syria* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1929): 213.

⁸³ Carl H. Kraeling, *Gerasa: City of the Decapolis* (New Haven: American Schools of Oriental Research: 1938), plates xxxiii, xxxvi, lii.

intercolumnation). In that case, there would be six bases for the north aisle and four for the south aisle, making the church asymmetrical. Of further note, the stylobate ends 7.2 m west of the base of the chancel screen, as it does in the south aisle. But the westerly column base (of larger diameter) sits to the west of the stylobate on a plaster foundation.

During removal of destruction fill (L542) from the north aisle of the *domus*, several equally-sized corbels were recovered. Along with others teetering from their position, the corbels had been reused to build the north wall (W521). Identical corbels were used to create the bench along the north wall from the base of the chancel screen to the ridge of stones (3-4 cm wide x 5-7 cm high) in floor (F538) that separated the mosaic of the aisle from the mosaic of the north entrance next to the cistern 2.24 m from the west wall. The bench was plastered to the wall. This bench of corbels sits atop the original mosaic of the floor, suggesting that the corbels forming the bench and the corbels reused in the wall were installed as part of a major repair to the church.

The walls comprising the northwest corner of the church (W511, W521) stand to the height of two poorly constructed runs. There is no western door for the north aisle. Instead, in the northwest corner is the “wellhead” (65 x 60 cm) for a Cistern A on a platform of paving stones (1 x 1.5 m) perhaps the remainder of a peristyle court from the house previously occupying the site. The wellhead is a reused section of aqueduct pipe. Cisterns are commonly found in the atrium and narthex of a Byzantine church, not in the *domus*.⁸⁴

In the northeast corner of the aisle next to the base of the chancel screen, a section of the mosaic floor (F538) is preserved. Toward the east end next to the bench is a repair done with larger tesserae in no discernable pattern, probably from the same incident that required structural repair to the church.

The original mosaic floor was decorated with several patterns. Running parallel to the stylobate is a three-strand guilloche (Avi-Yonah pattern B2)⁸⁵. The guilloche matches the pattern discovered in the south aisle and is separated from the stylobate by roughly the same dimension as the guilloche from the south aisle is offset from the south wall. The gap was likely filled by the same banding of white and black stripes (four white, two black, and four white).

The bulk of the still visible pattern consists of 20 cm squares framed by a single row of black tesserae. On each of the four corners is an 8 cm framed square. The field of the small squares is a solid color (red, brown, yellow, black, pink). The field of the large square is filled by diagonal lines in five or six colors constructed of 2x2 blocks of tesserae. Minor variations to the diagonal

⁸⁴ A precedent does exist in the cave church at Khirbet ed-Deir at the head of the south aisle (Yizhar Hirschfeld, *The Early Byzantine Monastery at Khirbet ed-Deir in the Judean Desert: the Excavations in 1981-1987* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 1999), figs 37 and 43. However the location of the cistern in that monastery is most likely a consequence of topography. Of minor note is a 42 cm sump in the southwest corner of the church at Khirbat al-Karak; see Pinhas Delougaz and Richard C. Haines, *A Byzantine Church at Khirbat al-Karak* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960): 14.

⁸⁵ Avi-Yonah 139.

patterns can be seen. The rectangles between the corners are white.⁸⁶ The pattern was likely replicated down the aisle to the west.

Next to the base of the chancel screen in the center of the aisle are four 20 cm squares. The squares are framed mostly in red tesserae and are separated by 8 cm rectangles and squares. The central 8 cm square is framed in black and has a red field. Black framing continues to the west. The 20 cm squares have white field. In the middle of each field is an equal-armed cross (5 x 5 tesserae).

Crosses in mosaic floors are important due to the prohibition against their use after 427 CE by the Theodosian code.⁸⁷ However, crosses continue to appear on Mosaic floors into the sixth century.⁸⁸ Ernst Kitzinger, in discussing the plain red crosses in the floor of the Martyrion of St. Babylas at Antioch, proposes,

In early Christian times crosses placed more or less conspicuously on or near entrances served primarily an apotropaic function. They denied access to the powers of evil Two kinds of buildings were in need of particular attention – the house and the tomb. Since the Martyrion of St. Babylas was both a tomb and a church our mosaic crosses fit into this picture very well.⁸⁹

As we will note next, the North-East Church is both a tomb and a church. The appearance of crosses is in continuity with the apotropaic practice of other churches in the lower Galilee. “The placement of crosses near entrances to the church and sanctuary continues in the mosaics of this region.”⁹⁰ Evil must be kept at bay.

Masonry Tomb

To the north of the central axis of the chancel is a masonry tomb. Three basalt stones were *in situ* covering the western half of the tomb. The chamber of the masonry tomb is constructed of four courses of basalt ashlar. The interior opening of the chamber is 97 cm (width, north-south), 2.17 m (length, east-west), 1.42 m deep.

It is likely that both the sidewalls of the masonry tomb and the covering stones of the sarcophagus box were plastered, as a few small pieces of plaster were still adhering. One larger piece of painted plaster (in several sections) was recovered just above the stones covering the sarcophagus. It showed a dark band, a yellow background and the four fingers of a near life-

⁸⁶ General parallels can be found at Mt. Nebo and Jerash. Michele Piccirillo, *The Mosaics of Jordan* (Amman: ACOR, 1993), figs. 188, 521.

⁸⁷ *Nimini locere signum salvatoris Christi vel in silice vel in marmore aut sculpere aut pingere. Codex Theodosianus* 1.8.0.

⁸⁸ The prohibition was reaffirmed in the Code of Justinian and was even included in the canons of the Council of Trullo in 692 CE. J. D. Mansi, *Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima collection* (Paris: H. Welter, 1901-1906) vol. 11, col. 975, no. 73.

⁸⁹ Ernst Kitzinger, “The Threshold of the Holy Shrine: Observations on the Floor Mosaics at Antioch and Bethlehem”, in *Kyriakon. Festschrift Johannes Quasten*, P. Granfield and J. A. Jungman, eds., vol. 2 (Aschendorff, Muenster, Westfalen, 1970), 640.

⁹⁰ Britt 249. Britt cites examples from Kursi, Tabgha, Nazareth, and elsewhere.

sized left hand (outlined in red) on a parallel line to and below the dark band. The hand was likely part of a fresco in the area above the sarcophagus but below the original covering stones. By way of comparison, outstretched hands feature prominently in depictions of saints and in frescoes from Christian catacombs.⁹¹

Between the second and third covering stones, a lead pipe extends down into the tomb. The lead pipe is rolled, not melted. Its top was hammered into a funnel. The pipe is 72 cm long (partly broken at 16 and 35 cm from the top). The exterior diameter of the pipe is 2.44 cm. The thickness of the lead is 3.7 mm. The funnel end has a diameter of 4.58 cm. A plaster mound held the funnel to the level of the *opus sectile* floor (F516).

At about 75 cm below the level of the stone floor (F516) is the limestone box of a sarcophagus. The sarcophagus measures 200 x 60 cm.⁹² Its walls are 11-12 cm thick and its internal depth is 30-34 cm. The sarcophagus was covered by six stones 4-9 cm thick .

The tomb contained the disturbed remains of several individuals that had been interred sequentially over time. The pattern is similar to so-called “family tombs” at Beth Yerakh, Rekhovot-in-the-Negev, Khirbet Karkur, `Avdat, and Nesanna.⁹³

Notably, the box in the masonry tomb sits somewhat askew from level. Further excavation between the north side of the sarcophagus box and the north basalt wall of the masonry tomb (L543) showed that the sarcophagus box is perched on irregular stones 27 to 33 cm above the smooth limestone floor of the chamber of the masonry tomb. Recovered from the accessible fill at the bottom of the masonry tomb chamber were several nails and nail fragments. These are identical to those recovered at other Byzantine burial sites in the Hefer Valley and at Rammun and likely belonged to a wooden coffin.⁹⁴ The space between the bottom of the sarcophagus box and the floor of the masonry tomb (27-33 cm) is comparable to the depth of

⁹¹ André Grabar, *Martyrium: Rescherches sur le Culte des Reliques et l'Art Chrétien Antique*, vol. 2 ([Paris]: Collège de France, 1946), plates xxix – xxxii.

⁹² Comparative measurements to *sarcophagoi* on the surface in the cemetery east of the east gate at Hippos:

	Length	Width	Depth
#1	191	63	48
#2	198	66	49
#3	196	67	71
#4	212	89	unclear

See Schumacher (328-329) for further discussion of *sarcophagoi* from Hippos and their burial in a north/south direction.

⁹³ In discussing the multiple burial phenomenon, Haim Goldfus writes: “In many churches – evidently private foundations, whether of a single family or several families – the tombs were used as a family burial receptacle. The ‘family’ could have consisted of members of consecutive generations or of several members of the same generation, as we have observed in churches of the Negev region such as Rehovot-in-the-Negev, Nessana, and `Avdat.” In monasteries, “This ‘family’ was not necessarily based on blood ties but rather on ecclesiastical kinship or monastic brotherhood.” Haim Goldfus, “Tombs and Burials in Churches and Monasteries of Byzantine Palestine” (Unpublished PhD dissertation at Princeton University, 1997), 240.

⁹⁴ Levi Rahmani, “A Lead Coffin from the Hefer Valley,” *Israel Exploration Journal* 24 (1974): 124. H. Taha, “A Byzantine Tomb at the Village of Rammun,” *Liber Annuus* 48 (1998): 342, plate 5.

Byzantine lead coffins.⁹⁵ When the sarcophagus was removed, we could see that the sarcophagus had been placed on rough stones that lined the north, west, and south edges of the masonry chamber. Discoloration of the remaining soil (2.5 YR 5/1) indicates the outline of a decayed wooden box. Twenty six fragments of iron nails are supportive of this proposal, as is a lead corner bracket (7 x 6 cm) recovered from the fill.

Complete excavation of the chamber allowed for clarification of its relationship to the North-East Church complex. The cross section shows that the gap between F516 and the plaster layer of F517 is 18-20cm. The gap between the plaster layer of F517 and the top course of masonry stones is 13-17cm. The plaster of F517 covers over the top course of the masonry tomb. The thickness of the covering stones is 18-20 cm, the middle surviving stone of which has a piece of floor tile adhering to its upper side. So the masonry tomb was constructed at the same time of the laying of the original chancel floor (F517). Subsequently, when the sarcophagus was inserted, a later floor (F516) was placed over the top of the tomb, likely reusing some of the floor tiles and holding in place the lead pipe used to reverence the burials below.

The human remains were found in two main areas: the first area (L537, interior of the sarcophagus) housed the remains of at least nine individuals, while the second area (L543 and L599, beside and under the sarcophagus) yielded three individuals. The skeletal remains were fragmentary and incomplete. All the individuals found at these areas were adults, except one infant age 0-1 years which was found in L537, and was represented only by teeth and pelvis fragments. The age estimation of most individuals was partial, mainly due to the fragmentary state of the remains. As for the gender, L537 yielded the remains of at least three men, three women and one infant and three adults for whom gender was undetermined.

<i>Ind'</i>	<i>Locus</i>	<i>Basket</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Sex</i>
1	537	1911, 1933	Adult	Female
2	537	1911, 1933	older adult	Male
3	537	1933	Adult	Female
4	537	1930	Adult	
5	537	1903	Adult	Male
6	537	1914	55+	
7	537	1914	0-1	
8	537	1923	Adult	Male
9	537	1923	Adult	Female
10	543	2039	Adult	
11	599	2047	Young Adult	

⁹⁵ A lead coffin from Caesarea is 31 cm in depth (Levi Rahmani, "A Christian Lead Coffin from Caesarea," *Israel Exploration Journal* 38.4 [1988]: 246). The coffin from the Hefer valley is 36 cm deep (Rahmani, "Lead Coffin" 124-127). Another collection of coffins have reported depths of 34 cm, 41 cm, 39 cm and 19 cm (Levi Rahmani. "Five Lead Coffins from Israel," *Israel Exploration Journal* 42.1-2 [1992]: 81-102).

12	599	2051	Adult	
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The inventory of the human remains found in the masonry tomb in the North-East Church.

All the skeletons are disarticulated with some individuals represented by only a few pieces. Even assuming significant decomposition over the centuries due to the low and wet location of the tomb in the ruins of the complex, the partial skeletal remains suggest that relics were extracted from the masonry tomb. The diminishing quality of the burials over time supports the hypothesis of relic extraction, as the sale of relics could fund a declining community and complex. Relics were important to the Christians at Hippos, for even after the North-East Church was abandoned, the veneration of relics continued in the North-West Church until the destruction of the city.⁹⁶

As we will discuss below, we propose that the North-East Church is part of an urban monastery. The presence of both males, females, and a child is not inconsistent with such an hypothesis. The some 15,000 bones in repository 6 of the St. Stephens monastery in Jerusalem contained both males and females⁹⁷ of which about a third were sub-adult.⁹⁸ At the Kyria Maria monastery at Bet Shean, the skeletal remains in the sarcophagus from Room E belonged to two males, a female, and one child.⁹⁹ The stature of two of the individuals may also be of note: a male at 168 cm and an undetermined adult at 175 cm. These seem tall for the typical averages from other Byzantine sites: 162 cm at Kursi,¹⁰⁰ 163 cm at Ein Gedi and Lavav,¹⁰¹ 166.5 at St. Stephen's,¹⁰² 167 cm at Khan el-Ahmar,¹⁰³ and 170 cm at Rehovot-in-the-Negev.¹⁰⁴ An interesting literary note comes from D. Chitty about a group of monks called the Tall Brothers who led the Origenist movement in Egypt at the end of the fourth century CE. They fled Nitria when Origenism was condemned in synod in 400 CE and about 300 monks went with them, many to Jerusalem and others on to Scythopolis.¹⁰⁵

Tomb of the Elderly Woman

⁹⁶ *Hippos 2003*, 26.

⁹⁷ "Sex Determination," *Byzantine St. Stephens: A Biocultural Reconstruction of Urban Monastic Life*, University of Notre Dame: Department of Anthropology: Laboratory of Biocultural Studies, 10 October 2007, <http://www.nd.edu/~stephens/sex.html>.

⁹⁸ Sue Sheridan, "Biocultural Reconstruction of Byzantine St. Stephen's," *ASOR Newsletter* 50.1 (2000): 14.

⁹⁹ E. Braun, "Soundings under a Sixth Century Monastery at Beth Shean," *'Antiqot* 17 (1985): 203. The author notes that the sarcophagus comes from an earlier period and may have been reused by the monastery, although an internment pre-dating the monastery is also possible.

¹⁰⁰ B. Arenburg, "A Short Review of Paleopathology in the Middle East," *Journal of the Israel Prehistoric Society* 18 (1985), 21-30.

¹⁰¹ B. Arenburg, *The People in the Land of Israel from the Epipaleolithic to Present Times* (Ph.D. dissertation, Tel Aviv University, 1973), 22.

¹⁰² "Statue Reconstruction," *Byzantine St. Stephens: A Biocultural Reconstruction of Urban Monastic Life*, University of Notre Dame: Department of Anthropology: Laboratory of Biocultural Studies, 10 October 2007, <http://www.nd.edu/~stephens/statue.html>.

¹⁰³ I. Herschkovitz et al., "The Human Remains from the Byzantine Monastery at Khan el-Ahmar," *Liber Annus* 43 (1993), 374.

¹⁰⁴ I. Herschkovitz et al., "Skeletal Remains From the Northern Church", *Excavations at Rehovot-in-the-Negev*, volume 1: The Northern Church, by Y. Tsafir et al. (Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 1988), 203.

¹⁰⁵ D. J. Chitty, *The Desert a City* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1966), 58.

Inside the room created by W514 and W515 is a rectangular surface. It is raised 16.5 cm above the F516 and 57 cm from the W510. The surface is a single limestone slab 76 cm wide (north to south) and 2.27 m long (east to west) that functions as a lid for the sarcophagus below it. The sides of the slab are revetted with marble 3 cm thick. On the north face is an incised cross. The lower member of the cross is hidden by the floor. W514 is skewed to the west because of the size of this stone. On the top of the plastered limestone slab is a small basin and hole. Its center is 36 cm from the south edge and 53 cm from the west. The shallow basin is 9 cm in diameter with a 1 cm rim and a 1 cm hole.

A section of the floor (F516) next to the cross was opened (L507). After a plaster subsurface, the fill was dirt and stones to a depth of 22 cm. At that level there was hard plaster identified as an earlier floor (F517). The piece of marble revetment is 62 cm wide and 52 cm high. It is incised with a Byzantine cross of a style that would come to be called “Teutonic” in the Middle Ages. The cross is 23x17 cm. Below the left arm is a capital Greek alpha (5 cm high and 4 cm wide). Below the right arm is a lower case omega (3 cm high and 6 cm wide). The cross is 7.5 cm from the top of the marble revetment. Only the top three arms of the cross are visible from F516. The entire cross and the alpha and omega would be visible above F517. Seemly, those who laid F516 were very poor and no longer knew the significance of the alpha and omega on the inscription.¹⁰⁶

To allow access to the sarcophagus, the west wall (W514) was removed. Portions of the floor tiles (F516) were removed to the north, west and south of the sarcophagus. Fill was cleared to the plaster base of F517. A 1 m section of mosaic tile from F517 was still intact next to W510. Visible was the same black band that characterized the border of the mosaic of F526.

The pieces of marble that revetted the sides of the sarcophagus were removed. These pieces were clearly embedded into the plaster of F517. On the east face is a single piece of unadorned marble revetment 3.5 cm thick and 65 cm wide. The top portion is broken and missing. On the south, two thicker pieces faced the tomb to the level of the top of the lid (142 x 45 x 6.5 cm and 63 x 44 x 6.5cm). On the west is a single piece of marble 3.5 cm thick and 65 cm wide. It too was broken at the level of the top of the sarcophagus box, with the top pieces coarsely plastered back. An inscribed cross was discovered under the crude plaster. As with the cross inscription on the north face, the cross is “Teutonic” in form, each of the arms flaring to points. Small disks or dots are inscribed just beyond each point.¹⁰⁷

Four pieces of marble revetted the north side. From east to west:

- 57 cm wide x 45 cm high x 3.5 cm, broken in three pieces and plastered back in place
- 34.5 x 29(45?) x 2.5 cm, the top half is missing and was filled in by plaster
- 61 x 51.5 x 4.5 cm, inscribed with “Teutonic” cross and alpha and omega
- 56 x 47 x 4.5 cm broken horizontally and repaired by plaster.

¹⁰⁶ Some inscriptions in the Negev show such ignorance. The alpha and omega are reversed below the arms of the cross. Segal Segal, *Architectural Decoration in Byzantine Shivta, Negev Desert, Israel* (BAR International Series 420, 1988), 154.

¹⁰⁷This style of cross is frequently used for bronze processional crosses. See J. A. Cotsonis, *Byzantine Figural Processional Crosses*, *Dumbarton Oaks Byzantine Collection Publications*, No. 10 (Washington: Dumbarton Oaks Center Studies, 1994), figs 8 and 9.

Plaster was used to fill the gaps between the facing pieces and to level the rounded top of the monolithic lid of the sarcophagus. This plaster also filled the gap between the east end of the sarcophagus and the east wall (W509) of the chancel.

The sarcophagus box¹⁰⁸ is a single piece of limestone. Its width varies from 61.5 cm at the west end to 64 cm at the east end. Its length is 2 m on center. The walls range between 10 and 12 cm thick. The interior is rounded at the west end, beginning 33 cm from the west. The interior depth slopes from 35 to 38 cm west to east.

The various layers of plaster and floor tiles, especially to the east to the east of the sarcophagus, and well as the gaps and broken pieces, suggest several phases. The sarcophagus is contemporaneous with the building of the church and the laying of F517, as its marble facing is set into the plaster of the floor. Subsequently, F516 was laid. Some plaster from W509 curves on top of the tile of this floor east of the tomb. In a third phase, the sarcophagus was opened by breaking the western marble face and its inscribed cross. Then the lid was pried up from the west (gap in NW corner, eastern facing broken above the level of F516, the breaking of two of the north facing pieces). If the sarcophagus had a marble top piece, it was lost/destroyed at this time. The lid was then lowered back into place. Plaster filled gaps left by broken pieces and leveled the top. A basin for holy oil was plastered over the hole bored into the lid (newly bored at this time?). The shattered western inscription was put back and plastered over. Extraction of relics seems to be a logical explanation for the third phase perhaps out of economic necessity, as the subsequent repair was poorly done.¹⁰⁹

When the sarcophagus was opened, it contained the bones of a single small woman of sixty plus years. The bones were gathered under the anointing hole, long bones placed in a frame around fragments of the skull, pelvis and other smaller bones. A small quantity of earth was also recovered from the sarcophagus (remains of decomposition). In the earth at the east end of the sarcophagus were some fifteen metatarsals and phalanges of the foot. Four white tesserae were also recovered. While the sarcophagus was originally used for burial, after it was opened, the remaining bones were arranged under the location of the anointing hole, except for the bones from the feet that were missed in the decompositional remains.

There is a possible parallel for the burial at the basilical church at Dor. A tomb of two venerated bodies is in the south aisle at the eastern end. Interestingly, the second of five slabs covering the tomb has a hole that enables an earthenware pipe (70 mm thick) to carry oil into the grave. C. Dauphin calls the tomb a tomb-reliquary.¹¹⁰ Another plausible parallel is the Kyria Maria church at Scythopolis. The chapel was part of an urban monastic community. There are tombs in the northeast and southeast corners of the chapel. A mosaic inscription over the tomb at the east end of the south aisle reserves the tomb for "Lady Mary who founded this

¹⁰⁸ The use of a sealed sarcophagus is without precedent in Byzantine churches in Palestine. For a discussion of the use of *sarcophagoi* in and near Byzantine churches of Syria, see Lassus, 231-232.

¹⁰⁹ V. Saxer, "Cult of Martyrs, Saints, and Relics," in *The Encyclopedia of the Early Church*, vol. 2 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992): 533.

¹¹⁰ C. Dauphin, "Sur la route du Pèlerinage en Terre Sainte: La Basilique de Dor," *Archaeologia* 180-181 (juillet-août 1983), 74.

church.”¹¹¹ The burial in the North-East Church at Hippos has the additional distinction of demarcating the tomb within the chancel, providing for on-going veneration, and according a degree of anonymity appropriate for a foundress/abbess. Should the hypothesis gain additional support, it could be suggestive of the function of the North-East Church and its surrounding structures.

In summary, the positioning of two tombs within the chancel of the North-East Church would suggest that the church functioned as a memorial chapel and as a place for the invention of relics. The tomb of the elderly woman was the more prominent of the tombs and continued as a site of veneration even after regular ritual practice in the church had ceased. The masonry tomb in the center of the chancel is also contemporaneous with the laying of the first floor (F517). It took on a second life as a family/community tomb when the sarcophagus was inserted over the original coffin that held the remains of three revered individuals.

North Lateral Chamber

Some 7 m from the northwest corner of the church is W539 that is the easterly extent of the north lateral chamber. The wall has a doorway (74 cm wide) that would close from the east. To the north is another wall (W540) that runs roughly east to west, skewing north somewhat from line of the north wall (W521) of the *domus*. Thought to be an exceptionally wide wall (1.3 m), W540 is in fact two walls: an northerly wall (W540) of typical Byzantine width (72-75 cm) and an inner wall (W555) of poorer quality and narrower dimension (44-47 cm). The west end of the chamber is W541 which has a wide entrance (1.47 m) from the atrium. The floor (F549) of the lateral chamber is hard plaster and packed earth. Structurally, the north lateral chamber is part of the original church building and not an annex as the remaining exterior stones of the western wall (W511) span the joint of what would be the northwest exterior corner of the *domus*.

Typically, the *domus* of a Byzantine church has three entrances from the west. In the North-East church, the expected northerly entrance from the west does not exist due to the location of Cistern A. Instead, entrance to the north aisle of the church was gained via the north lateral chamber through a doorway (98 cm) in the north wall of the *domus* just east of the head of the cistern. After entering this chamber from the atrium, individuals would turn right and then left into the north aisle. In a later phase, this north doorway was blocked. The southwest interior corner of the lateral chamber has a plaster basin that fed water through a channel in W521 into Cistern A inside the church.

2.8 m east of W541 is a rectangular opening to a cistern (45 x 120 cm) framed by ashlar (Cistern B). The opening abuts and runs parallel with W540. W555 apparently framed the opening to provide access to the cistern. Attached to W555 east of the cistern opening was a basin constructed of stones and plastered to funnel water into the cistern.

Next to the north wall (W521) of the *domus* and just east of the north entrance is a small staircase climbing in an easterly direction, The remains of the staircase terminate at a column

¹¹¹ Gerald. M. FitzGerald, *A Sixth Century Monastery at Beit-Shan (Scythopolis)* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1939): 27.

drum set on end (diameter 52 cm) and squared off with ashlar 1.8 m from W539. A second column drum is in the corner of W521 and W539 (diameter 43 cm), and a third is opposite the first next to W555. The stairs possibly provided access to platform held up by the column drums or provided access to the building to the north of W540. The staircase, column shafts and W555 are likely later additions to the chamber.

North Medial Chamber

To the east of the north lateral chamber is a square medial chamber (approx. 2.95 m). Passageways from this chamber to the north (1.35 m wide) and to the east (1.15 m wide) lack door jambs. The medial chamber thus functions to separate these inner rooms from the more public space of the north lateral chamber and to provide free movement between them. At least two additional rooms are to the north of the north medial and lateral chambers. During a later phase, presumably after the passageways to the north and east were blocked, a bench was installed in the southeast corner of the room next to the east wall (W560). The bench was 67 x 150 x 46 cm high.

The western doorways to the north lateral chamber and to the medial chamber were never intentionally blocked as were so many of the other doorways in the church complex. It seems then that these two rooms continued to be used after liturgical practice ceased in the North-East Church (by those who guarded access to the tomb of the elderly woman?). Large quantities of chopped animal bones and numerous shards of domestic cooking pots reinforce this hypothesis.

Skeuophylakion

W540 continues to the east and forms an exterior corner with W575. W575 runs parallel to and abuts W520 to the exterior wall of the. These walls create a third side chamber east of the medial chamber and of similar size to it (3.15 m east to west by 3.43 m north to south). In addition to the passageway in W560, there is an exterior doorway (1.10 m) in W575 that could be closed from inside the chamber. A third doorway provides direct access to the chancel and suggests that the room functioned as a preparatory space for clergy. We identify it as a *skeuophylakion*, while recognizing the tentative nature of using this label.¹¹²

The doorway to the chancel through W521 displays two phases. An original doorway (1.13 m) with jambs provided a door that could be closed and locked from inside the *skeuophylakion*. Later that doorway was narrowed into a passageway (81 cm) without door jambs and with a higher threshold to accommodate the laying of the second floor (F516) in the chancel. In a third phase the passageway was intentionally blocked, as was the east door and the west passageway, thus sealing off the *skeuophylakion*. Similarly, the doorway in W575, was narrowed and then blocked..

¹¹² Ecclesiastical sources from the 5th to the 7th centuries specifically name such side rooms as the *diaconicon* and the *skeuophylakion*. The term *pastophoria* is used in a collective sense. See G. Descoedres, *Die Pastophorien im syro-byzantinischen Osten: eine Untersuchung zu architektur- und liturgiegeschichtlichen Problemen* (Wiesbaden: O. Harrassowitz, 1983) XVI.

The fortuitous sealing of the *skeuophylakion* in antiquity preserved the mosaic floor of the room. The mosaic carpet has an average of 38 tesserae/dm². It consists of an outer area paved with mostly white tesserae, a seven-tesserae border, and a simple geometric pattern (Ovadiah Type A¹¹³) filled with a geometric motif. The outer area is interrupted with a medial line of single black tesserae. About every 40 cm the line expands to a Avi-Yonah type E diamond (7 by 7) bordered in black. In the center of the diamond is a white Avi-Yonah type D crosslet surrounded by pink tesserae with a single black tessera in the center.¹¹⁴ The medial line and diamonds are interrupted in front of the exterior doorway in W575.

Next to W521 and east of the passageway to the chancel are two flared crosses some 35 cm in height. The width of the arms of each cross is two tesserae, flaring at the end to four tesserae. The upper and left rows and the flairs are red; the lower and right rows are black. Between the two large crosses is a black crosswise arrangement (5 by 5) with an Avi-Yonah F3 pattern of three peach tesserae and three red tesserae in each corner.¹¹⁵ These crosses likely had an apotropaic function, as discussed above.

Between the outer area and the main geometric pattern is a border of seven tesserae. From outside to inside, single rows of tesserae are black, red, peach, white, peach, red, and black.

The central Ovadiah Type A geometric pattern of the carpet is filled with the same geometric motif that appears between the two large crosses: a black crosswise arrangement (5 by 5) with an Avi-Yonah F3 pattern of three peach tesserae and three red tesserae in each corner. The geometric pattern replicates itself six times in each direction, filling the floor of the room.

In the northeast corner of the room against W540 is a bench that is 62 x 132 x 55 cm high. Although the mosaic floor is broken in front of the bench, while conserving the bench, fragments of the floor were discovered under it.

Other northern structures

W1267 continues further north from W1266. Similarly W575 continues to the north, with a blocked doorway visible in the wall, beginning 2.10 m north of the *skeuophylakion*. The exterior of this doorway faces the alley which formerly was *Cardo 3 North*. The alley itself is intentionally blocked (L1262). The south face of the blockage has a smooth face. Next to the blockage, a column drum and a plain capital are placed on the surface of the alley; another column drum was placed just north of the blocked doorway to the *skeuophylakion*. As has been seen elsewhere in the complex, systematic blockage of doorways and passages indicates the formal decommissioning of most of the complex prior to the earthquake that destroyed the site.

A second door with a threshold was discovered at the north end of W575, providing access to a room to the west. Unlike the door to the room located 2 m to the south, this door was not

¹¹³Ruth Ovadiah, *Mosaic Pavements in Israel* (Rome: L'Erma di Bretschneider, 1987), 166.

¹¹⁴Avi-Yonah 138.

¹¹⁵Avi-Yonah 139.

intentionally blocked. The blockage of the southern doorway and the blockage of the street were apparently sufficient to close off this section of the compound.

A significant collection of some twelve nails was recovered from the threshold of the unblocked door in W575. Intentional bending in a number of these nails suggests a door thickness of 9-11 cm. The nails are 10-16 cm in length. To the west of the doorway, a large section of mosaic (44 x 70 cm) was discovered well above floor level in the northwest corner of the square. The fragment was tilting at an angle. Smaller fragments were discovered upside down. These pieces are likely part of a floor from an upper story that has collapsed down from above.

To the north of W540 between W575 and W580, large quantities of tesserae and several clusters seemingly *in situ* at floor level indicate that the room was carpeted with mosaic. Further west, a section of mosaic about 1 x 1 m survives in a number of fragments between W583 and W539, north of W540 and west of the blocked doorway. It is at a level too high for a floor. As with the previously mentioned collapse, these fragments are testimony to a mosaic floor from the second story that collapsed.

Diakonikon

To the south of the *domus* next to the chancel and the tomb of the elderly woman is a large barrel-vaulted room (6.23 m east to west and 5.63 m from north to south). Two pilasters for the ribbing of the barrel vaults are still in evidence next to the south (W554) and the north (W510) walls. The bases for the ribs are the typical 2.2-2.4 m apart. Some of the collapsed ribbing was recovered resting on about 25 cm of fine fill.

Three high benches or platforms were discovered next to the south, west and north walls of the vaulted chamber. The north bench fills the space between the pilasters (47 x 171 x 41 cm high). A south bench (64 x 190 x 41 cm high) fills the corresponding space. A third bench fills the corner from the westerly pilaster on the south wall to the corner and from the corner to the north for 3 m (west section is 63 x 300 x 34 cm high; south section is 62 x 94 x 36 cm high). Lack of plaster between the stones of the bench and the pilasters may indicate that the benches were part of the original construction of the room. In the southwest corner of the room, a column base (69 cm diameter, 20 cm high) sits inverted. The presence of these benches would suggest that the room functioned as a *diakonikon*.

On the south wall (W554) above the bench is a rectangular niche in the wall. The niche is 2.44 m west of W512 and 86 cm above the floor. It is 43 cm wide by 51 cm tall by 46 cm deep. Partially intact plaster in the bottom of the niche would reduce the height to 36 cm. Nothing survives of the contents of the niche.

The floor of the chamber is covered in hard plaster on top of a pebble base. In several locations the plaster is still visible curving up from the floor onto the walls, benches, and pilasters, especially on W512. Likewise some plaster still clings to the joints between the benches and the walls. In its final phase, plaster covered walls, benches, pilasters, and the floor.

The easterly wall of the *diakonikon* is in two sections as there is a clear seam in W512 on the exact line of the southern edge of W510. The northerly section of the wall (W512a) must be distinguished from the southerly section (W512b). On closer examination W512b has a carefully blocked doorway providing access to the street level of Cardo 3N. The doorway begins 2.93 m from the south line of W510 and it about 90 cm wide. Plaster on the west side of W512b concealed this doorway from the *diakonikon*. The threshold of the blocked doorway in W512b is 6 cm above the level of Cardo 3N (elevation 131.49). The elevation of the plaster floor in the *diakonikon* is 130.88, requiring a step down of 65 cm from the threshold in W512 to the floor of the *diakonikon*. An additional step or two would have been necessary, for which there is no surviving evidence. W512b is likely from a preexisting structure that was later incorporated into the church.

In the northeast corner of the *diakonikon* is a well-preserved cistern head. The head is a finely worked square stone (66 x 66 x 49 cm high). The opening is 36 x 38 cm and space is provided for a 46 x 48 cm lid, now lost. The front of the head for this Cistern D faces the center of the room with one back corner 65 cm from W510 and the back other corner 37 cm from W512. The head sits on a platform about 25 cm above the floor. Several stones are plastered to the southeast side of the head creating a catch basin that feeds the cistern.

On the cistern platform in the northeast corner of the room, a small horde of gold jewelry was discovered hidden under a fragment of a ceramic jar. The horde included several belt elements and a magical amulet.

The belt elements consist of two nearly identical pieces 1.43 x 2.23 cm. They are made of two pieces of metal 0.7 mm thick with edges bent over and pressed together making a total thickness of 4.5 mm. On the obverse is an outer decorative border of quarter moons, arrows, triangles with small jewels inserted into the openings. There is scrolling with an entwined pattern in the center of the piece. The reverse has a lightly punched pattern. One of the two pieces has a protruding nodule on the obverse that is part of a 4.7 mm small pin through the tab (creating a catch?). A third element displays a distinctly different patterning. The shape of the obverse is similar to a tulip flower (2.12 x 2.21 cm). The metal is 1 mm thick. The bent edges yield a thickness of 3.6 mm. The obverse has an outer decorative border interspersed with squares and half moons. Tiny jewels seem to be impressed into the border. Within the border are outlines of two tears with their upper points turned outwards. Inside each tear are stylistic representations of a young plant coming forth from a bulb. On the reverse are two eyehooks protruding 1.1 cm from the metal. A small repair to one of the tear drops is also visible, marked with a cruciform jeweler's stamp. The fourth belt element is 1.48 x 1.61 cm. It is made of one piece of metal 1 mm thick with bent edges yielding a total thickness 2.9 mm. Its obverse is of similar pattern to the other two pieces. On the reverse are two eye hooks.

The belt elements are quite similar to a set of eleven pieces purchased in Constantinople but said to come from Syria and currently in the Dumbarton Oaks collection.¹¹⁶ A gold buckle (probably from Italy) with a similar entwined pattern is in Berlin.¹¹⁷ Similar belt elements have

¹¹⁶ M.C. Ross, *Catalogue of the Byzantine and Early Mediaeval Antiquities in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection*, vol. 2 (Washington: Trustees of Harvard University, 1965), no. 42.

¹¹⁷ Jeffrey Spier, Private correspondence 18 July 2005.

been discovered in widely scattered locations: Langobard Italy, along the Danube, Antioch and Cairo. The belt elements from Antioch were discovered with a silver candlestick with early seventh-century control stamps.¹¹⁸ A dating to the late sixth or early seventh century seems plausible.

The amulet is fitted into a gold Byzantine setting. The complete piece has a horizontal dimension of 2.23 cm and a vertical dimension of 2.37 cm. Its thickness is 2.2 mm. The hanging ring at the top of the amulet has a 9.2 mm outside diameter. The ring has a smooth inner ridge; both outer ridges are nodules 0.9 mm thick with 23 nodules around the ring. The amulet stone is held in a gold fitting hammered around the stone. The outer ridge consists of similar nodules – 64 around the ring. The setting is from the sixth or early seventh centuries.

The amulet itself is a well attested type.¹¹⁹ The amulet is likely made of haematite (an iron oxide), a material used for similar magical amulets. On the obverse is a long-legged bird, likely a crane (phoenix?), with rays (seven?) around the head. The bird stands on a crocodile. Above it is a winged scarab. On either side in descending order are a bird, a scorpion (the tail of which is partially hidden by the setting), and a stylized snake. The working of the animals is somewhat primitive and the identification is partially based on clearer parallels. The reverse reads, in Greek over two lines, πέπτε, meaning "digest." Its primary purpose is stomachic, although an effective amuletic design might be appealed to for broader purposes. Below the Greek lettering is the Chnoubis symbol, a stylized coiled snake with a lion's head likely referred to by Galen.¹²⁰ Of such amulets, Campbell Bonner writes, "There is reason to think that all came from Syria, through the subjects are Egyptian."¹²¹ As to dating, Jeff Spier writes: "Most of these amulets are second-third century in date, although I feel that this variety is slightly later, probably fourth century (as Michel also suggests) or even later, but not as late as the sixth century. Old magical amulets were occasionally reused in later times."¹²²

To find such an amulet in an ecclesiastical context is noteworthy. While early Christian writers inveighed against the practice of magic,¹²³ James Russell's survey of the archaeological evidence from the early Byzantine period led him to conclude, "Underlying this devotion to the new faith, however, there clearly remained a deeply engrained attachment to practices inherited from some timeless past involving various forms of magic."¹²⁴ Chrysostom may condemn amulets,¹²⁵ but Alexander of Tralles, a practicing physician of the sixth century,

¹¹⁸ M. C. Ross, "A Small Byzantine Treasure Found at Antioch-on-the-Orontes," *Archaeology* 5 (1952): 30-32.

¹¹⁹ Campbell Bonner lists seventy one medical amulets. Many are stomachic (77-107) with numbers 102-105 being the closest parallels. Campbell Bonner, *Studies in Magical Amulets Chiefly Graeco-Egyptian* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1950). See also Simone Michel, *Die magischen Gemmen im Britischen Museum* (London, 2001), no. 401.

¹²⁰ Galen, *De simpl.* 10, 19 (XII, 207 ed. Kühn).

¹²¹ Bonner 60.

¹²² Private correspondence 18 July 2005.

¹²³ For the views of the ante-Nicene fathers on magic: Francis C. R. Thee, *Julius Africanus and the Early Christian View of Magic* (Tübingen, 1984), 316-448; for Origen, Chrysostom, and Augustine: N. Brox, "Magie und Aberglauben an den Anfängen des Christentums," *Thierer theologische Zeitschrift* 83 (1974): 157-180.

¹²⁴ James Russell, "Archaeological Context of Magic" in *Byzantine Magic*, edited by Henry Macguire (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 1995), 37.

¹²⁵ *In epistulam 1 ad Corinthios*, PG 61, col. 38; *In epistulam ad Timotheum*, PG 62, col. 552.

condones the therapeutic use of amulets.¹²⁶ Whoever hid this horde in the *diakonikon* of the Northeast Church complex likely believed in the power of the amulet as much as in the power of the church to provide a safe hiding place.

The discovery of a healing charm in the *diakonikon* indirectly raises the question of the function of the room in which the horde was hidden. The room is oversized in comparison to the small size of the church. Its only entrance is immediately adjacent to the tomb of the elderly woman. The cistern in its northeast corner is in direct proximity to the tomb, prominently placed in the room, and at the same time is an unprecedented feature of a *diakonikon*. We suggest that the room served a local healing cult that grew from the veneration of the elderly woman. In such a cult, the waters of the cistern could have been drawn for healing purposes.¹²⁷ The discovery of the healing amulet supports this hypothesis.¹²⁸

The Western Portico

The North-East Church lacks the typical peristyle atrium of many Byzantine churches. Instead, it has a western portico build over *Cardo* 2N. The floor of the portico consists of flagstone pieces uniformly 60 cm wide and of varying lengths. It is roughly 60% intact, the southern half being the best preserved.

The flagstone floor is interrupted by three lacunae next to the exterior west wall of the *domus* (W511). In each lacuna, remnants of an earlier mosaic floor (F546) are visible (Avi-Yonah pattern B9).¹²⁹ In several spots, the plaster base of this floor (F546) curves up the side of W511, suggesting that the wall was plastered on its westerly face. The lacunae mark the location of benches installed at the same time as the flagstone floor, as evidenced by a surviving section of the bench near the entrance of the north lateral chamber (compare the benches in the atrium of the North-West Church). As two lacunae are balanced on either side of the blocked western entrance to the nave, that blockage occurred sometime after the laying of the flagstone floor.

On the west line of *Cardo* 2N is a stylobate for the columns that held up the roof of the portico. The stylobate is single course of basalt stones 18 m from north to south and varying between 90 and 110 cm in width. The stylobate rests on top of the foundation of a pre-existing building.

¹²⁶ Alexander von Tralles, edited by Theodore Puschmann, volume 2 (Vienna, 1879): 375, 475.

¹²⁷ In late antiquity Christians in search of miraculous healing began to visit the shrines of saints, usually their tombs or another place where their relics were preserved. Examples are Abu Mina in Egypt, dedicated to the martyr St. Menas and functioning by the late fourth century; Sts. Abbakynos and John at Menouthis in Egypt, which flourished between the fifth and seventh centuries; the shrine of St. Thekla in Anatolian Seleukeia (Meriamlik), which is attested between the fourth and sixth centuries; the pilgrimage complex of Qal'at Sem'an near Antioch, at the column of St. Symeon the Stylite the Elder, which was particularly active in the late fifth and sixth centuries; and the shrine of his later homonym, Symeon the Stylite the Younger, at the Wondrous Mountain (6th–7th century). These shrines are known through their extensive archaeological remains, through accounts of the posthumous miracles performed by the saints, and through pilgrimage artifacts or “souvenirs,” such as ampullae, designed as containers for holy oil or water, and clay tokens made from the dust of a holy site.” Alice-Mary Talbot, “Pilgrimage to Healing Shrines: The Evidence of Miracle Accounts,” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 56 (2002): 154. Includes a bibliography of sources.

¹²⁸ Alexander of Tralles advocated the use of any means in the interests of the sick. *Alexander* 319, 475.

¹²⁹ Avi-Yonah 138.

Six of a presumed eight column bases are still in-situ with an average intercolumniation of 1.96 m.¹³⁰

At both ends of the exposed floor of the portico (F545), thresholds are installed that are contemporaneous with the flagstone floor (F545). Both are architecturally problematic. The smaller gate to the north is approximately 1.4 m wide and was closed by two doors on pivots. The north gate spans the portico and connects a column at the east end of W553 to the northwest corner of the church, thus extending the line of W541 to the west. About 1 meter was exposed to the north of the gate, but there was no evidence of a paved street as at the south gate. The larger gate (1.6 m) to the south aligns with the southern wall of the *domus* (W510). The south gate also awkwardly abuts one of the column bases sitting on the stylobate of the portico. This column itself was incorporated into the east wall (W552) of building complex gamma (see below). Putting a gate between a wall and a column is a clear secondary construction and speaks to phasing in the life of the church. To the south of the south gate is the remainder of *Cardo 2N*, providing access to the church from the *decumanus maximus*. The paving of the *cardo* is contemporaneous with the gate.

Southerly spaces

To the south of the south aisle of the *domus* are two chambers, a hall, and an antechamber. They are architecturally part of the church building, but were accessible only from outside the southern gate.

The antechamber is 2 x 5 m and provides access to the street from the other rooms. It consists of two sections separated by a wall with a doorway (W1210). Only traces of the pivots for the doorway remain. The outer section next to the street is 2 x 1.2 m. In the north-east corner of W510 and W1210 and in the south-east corner of W1210 and W1201 are two basins of hard plaster. These basins collected water from the roof and channeled it under the street to another channel running under the western edge of the street to Cistern C. The channels confirm the use of Cistern C during the active phases of the North-East Church.¹³¹

The inner section of the antechamber is 2 x 3.3 m and has a stone surface (F1213) overlaying an earlier floor of soft ceramic tiles. At its east end is a threshold leading to a chamber (2 x 2.6m). A lacuna in W510 indicates that the wall (W1217) of which the threshold is a part was constructed at the same time as the south wall of the *domus* (W510). The door for the chamber locked from the inside, suggesting that the chamber served as sleeping quarters for an individual.

¹³⁰ Column diameters and intercolumniations are listed from south to north. Those measurements in parentheses represent missing column bases and assumed intercolumniations. 0.52, 1.74, 0.54, (2.1, 0.53, 2.1), 0.55, 1.94, 0.53, 2.05, 0.52, (1.92, 0.53, 1.92), 0.53.

¹³¹ The drainage channel leading to cistern C on the surface of the street has no apparent function, although it terminates at the mouth of the cistern. While it may have provided a means of catching overflow and runoff from the street, it seems more likely that the pavers here were reused and the channel had an earlier use now unknown due to relocation.

In the south-east corner of the antechamber is a threshold providing access to a large hall to the south. The south hall is bounded on the north by W1201. W1201 runs from the street to W559 of the *diakonikon*. Again a lacuna in W559 indicates that W1201 and W559 were constructed at the same time. The lacunae in W559 and W510 are significant, for they confirm that these southerly chambers were part of the original construction of the church. From the beginning, the *domus* was part of a significantly larger complex.

The southerly wall of the hall is W1231. The wall abuts W559 to the east, but is not a continuation of W554 as it is positioned about 10 cm to the south. The hall is bounded to the east by W1218. The internal dimensions of the South Hall are 3.23 m by 5.30 m. 2.6 m from the southwest corner of the hall is a 90 cm doorway to the south that closed from inside the room. It was intentionally blocked, as were most of the doors in the church and the rooms to the north. The floor is packed mud and plaster. Next to W1231 at approximately floor level was a substantial deposit of shards. The bulk of the shards were cooking pots and casseroles of similar types, along with Late Roman, Cypriot, and ARS shards. No Umayyad shards were recovered. Similar deposits are at approximate floor levels in both small chambers. From the small chamber between W1201 and W510, many of the recovered potsherds were burnt, although no ash pits or cooking areas have been revealed. A blue loom weight was recovered from the fill.

A threshold in W1218 provides access to another inner chamber between W1218 and W559. The threshold is of poorer quality than those previously mentioned in this section. But this threshold also would hold a door that locks from inside the small chamber. The chamber is 1.5 x 3.2 m. It, too, seems to be a chamber that served as sleeping quarters for an individual.

Probes were dug into the mud floor (F597) of the south hall and its small anteroom to the east. In the anteroom, we reached bedrock and rough stones resting on bedrock within 20 cm. A 50 cm section of a corroded lead drain pipe rested on the bedrock. In the south hall next to W1201 and just west of the doorway in that wall, the remains of a large round oven were discovered. Its inside diameter is 1.45m and it was preserved to a height of about 50 cm. The fill within it was mostly soft ceramic chunks from the top of the oven, although two nail fragments, a pestle, and a button were retrieved from the fill. The oven is similar in dimension to those from the “oven room” east of the Hellenistic Compound.¹³² However, the latest shards were from the fifth century. The top of the remains of the oven is about 40 cm below the level of the street to the west.

53 cm below the threshold in W1231 and to the south is a surface (F1258) crudely paved with basalt and limestone. A small limestone feeding trough was in the fill near the paved surface. F1258 is 45 cm below the surface of Cordo 2 North, suggesting that the street comes from a later period. The easterly extent of the surface is marked by W1263 through which a doorway gives access to another similarly paved surface (F1265) about 10 cm lower. W1229 marks the eastern limit of this surface. At its northern end the W1229 sits on bedrock that forms the northeast corner of F1265. W1229 survives to a height of more than 2 m.

¹³² *Hippos* 2007, 20-22.

Large concentrations of pottery shards were recovered at the floor level next to W1231. Most were dated from the fourth and fifth centuries, with one shard perhaps datable into the early sixth century. Also recovered from the surface of this small room were two mortars, several pestles, and portable bronze brazier.

Both mortars were of higher quality than typical pieces found in the destruction fill. The first is a ring-based mortar 21 cm in diameter. It stands 6.5 cm tall. It is carved from regular gray basalt. Two of its handles have been broken off. The ring base is 4 cm thick and 14 cm in diameter. The handles are about 5 x 2.5 cm and 2 cm thick. The mortar lacks any decoration. A pestle was found 30 cm away.

The second is a tripodic mortar¹³³ made from basalt with a finer grain. The mortar was carved from a cube of basalt (28 x 28 x 28 cm). In its finished form it is 34 cm in diameter and stands 28 cm tall. It has four handles that are 8 cm wide. Its interior bowl has a ridge around the edge and is 22 cm in diameter. The ridge would help prevent the contents from scattering and so suggest it may have been used for grinding spices or another valuable commodity. However, no wear patterns are apparent. The bowl sits on three legs that are interconnected on the bottom forming a “Y” shape. A fourth leg joins the “Y” from the center of the bowl. The legs are 6-7 cm thick. Again, decoration is lacking.

A portable bronze brazier (*foculus*?¹³⁴) was resting on the same floor. The pan of the brazier is almost square (13.3 x 14.4 cm) with a depth of 3.8 cm. The pan stands on legs (1.1 cm wide) that flair out from the corners adding about 1.5 cm to the height. Each corner is topped with a bulb (60 x 7.9 mm) although one is missing. The thickness of the metal is 3.7 mm. A hollow handle protrudes 14.5 cm from one side. The handle is mostly open on the bottom (for heat dissipation) and has a damaged decorative end with bulbs (6.2 x 2.7 cm). The sides are decorated with geometric openings to allow air in to the coals. One pattern is six or seven circles forming a triangle. The other is exploded sixths of a pie. On the side facing the handle are a curving row of round circles. Opposite the handle are five pairs of crude triangles. Due to its size, its usage was probably culinary.

The oven under the floor of the south hall plus the domestic items and the paved surfaces to the south, all at lower levels, suggest some sort of domestic or industrial use of this space prior to the construction of the church complex. These items antedate the ruins now visible and suggest that the construction of the latter took place no earlier than the late fifth or early sixth centuries.

The Monastery Hypothesis: The Peristyle House and the North-East Church

¹³³ Three-legged mortars first appear in Israel during the Bronze Age (W.F.A Albright, *The Excavation of Tel Beit Mirsim*, vol. 2, Annual of the American Schools of Oriental Research XVII, Plates 38-40) and become more prominent in the Iron Age (Harold A. Liebowitz, “A Unique Worked Stone Mortar from Tel Yin’am,” *Levant* 32 [2000]: 129-134).

¹³⁴ Plautus, *Persia* 1.3.24, *Captivi* 4.2.67; cp., Erich Pernice, *Gefässe und geräte aus bronze* (W. de Gruyter and Co., 1925), 5, Abb. 5.

In this report we have intimated that the North-East Church is part of an urban monastic compound. It served as a memorial church for significant members (and benefactors?) of the community and later evolved into a healing site centered on the tomb of the elderly woman, the commemoration of which continued after formal ritualistic use of the site had ceased and the facility had been decommissioned (witness the intentionally blocked doors). The small chambers around the South Hall support this hypothesis. Rooms of similar small dimensions can be seen in the plans of the Kyria Maria Monastery at Scythopolis¹³⁵ and in the plan of the Monastery of St. Martyrius.¹³⁶ Y. Hirschfeld points to an internal dimension of about 7 m² for cells in the cenobia at Khirbet et-Tina and Khirbet ed-Deir.¹³⁷

We also noted earlier that the west wall of the peristyle house (W1230/W1267) and the apse of the North-East Church are constructed together. Such would be the case if both were eventually part of an urban monastery. Magdalino has argued that “many, if not most, urban and suburban churches and monasteries were converted lay οἴκοι.”¹³⁸ A monastery “in more ways than one was the *alter ego* of the secular οἶκος. Far from being a negation of the extended household... the religious foundation was the household’s ultimate fulfillment... The foundation and endowment of a family monastery was a sound economic investment, capable of bringing materials as well as spiritual benefits to the founder and those of his [or her] descendants who inherited proprietary rights to the establishment.”¹³⁹

Our working hypothesis is that the peristyle house reached its “fulfillment” as a monastery and the North-East Church was constructed in the neighboring block using some walls of a previous house (W512b and W554). In that construction, the apse interrupted *Cardo* 3N and required some rebuilding of W1230/W1267 to provide a passageway from the house to the neighboring church and its northerly rooms.

The western building complexes

To the west of *Cardo* 2N are a series of building complexes with eastern faces of eight to nine meters and with spaces between those buildings of about six meters. The alpha complex is on the north-west corner of the *decumanus maximus* and *Cardo* 2N. To its north is a paved plaza and the beta building complex. Seemingly another plaza or gap intervenes to the north of which is the gamma complex, a multi-roomed structure west of the south gate of the NEC. Another plaza and building complex delta were further north as indicated by surviving foundations.

Complex Alpha

¹³⁵ G. M. Fitzgerald, *A Sixth Century Monastery at Beth-Shan* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1939) Plate 2.

¹³⁶ Yitzhak Magen, “The Monastery of St. Martyrius at Ma'ale Adummim,” in *Ancient Churches Revealed*, edited by Yoram Tsafrir (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1993) 171.

¹³⁷ Yizhar Hirschfeld, *The Judean Desert Monasteries in the Byzantine Period* (New Haven: Yale University press, 1992) 177.

¹³⁸ Paul Magdalino, “The Byzantine Aristocratic *Oikos*,” in *The Byzantine Aristocracy IX to XIII Centuries*, ed. Michael Angold (Oxford, BAR International Series 221, 1984), 94.

¹³⁹ Magdalino 102.

The southern building sits on the northwest corner of the junction of Cardo 2N and the Decumanus Maximus. 12.9 m to the west of the cardo is the south west corner of the building. The south wall is constructed of ashlar that are three to five courses high, as the *decumanus* slopes down to the west. The easterly face of the building is 11.9 m.

Alpha plaza

Excavation of the space between the alpha and beta complexes revealed a paved surface upon which an L-shaped staircase had been built giving access to a second level or roof of the alpha building complex. The plaza itself is constructed of paved ashlar similar to those used in Cardo 2 North and extends 6.68 meters to the west of the cardo. The paved surface spans the distance between the two block buildings (almost 6 m). The plaza slopes slightly to the east (about 5 cm) and is essentially intact except for some pavers robbed out of a 1 m section next to the cardo.

A staircase sits atop the paved surface. Its northerly face is 2.1 m south of W1250. The staircase is 1.15 m wide and rises to the east. Six stairs remain *in situ*. The treads range from 18-24 cm in depth (21.8 cm average) and 20-27 cm in height (24.2 cm average). The steps begin 3.42 m from Cardo 2 North.

To the east of the staircase is solid base (1.9 m x 2.3 m) that marks the northeast corner of W1251. The staircase intrudes into the base about 50 cm. We speculate that about 4 more stairs completed the staircase to a height of more than two meters. One who climbed the staircase would then turn south at the base and walk over the structures below to the second story or to the roof of the southerly block building. Perhaps there was an *exedra*¹⁴⁰ on the north side of W1252. A column drum and base sit in the corner of the "L" formed by the staircase. The moldings of the base are covered by the paving. Several basalt beams and column drums recovered from the fill may have been part of the *exedra*.¹⁴¹ Alternatively, the staircase could continue to climb to the south to a significantly greater height. 1.5 m south of the staircase is a Cistern E.

To the west of the cistern is the east jamb of a doorway through W1252 into the southerly block building (3.24 m from Cardo 2 North). It was later blocked and to west jamb has not yet been identified. Several nails were recovered from the fill.

The plaza (F1296) is bounded on the west by a wall (W1285) of which only the foundation course remains. Set in the wall is a threshold provided access to a space to the west. The exterior of the doorway faced east toward the plaza. At this point the space to the west has not been excavated, although a perpendicular wall (W1286, 60 cm wide) proceeds west of W1285 from a point south of the threshold. One course of the north wall of the plaza (W1250) is visible in most places.

¹⁴⁰ Hirschfeld, *The Palestinian Dwelling* 265.

¹⁴¹ For a sample of such an *exedra* in a monastic complex, see Y. Magen and R. Talgam, "The Monastery of Martyrius at Ma'ale Adummim (Khirbet El-Murassas) and Its Mosaics," *Christian Archaeology in the Holy Land New Discoveries* (Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press, 1990), 95, Fig. 5.

A feeding trough, a grinding mill, and numerous architectural fragments were recovered from the destruction fill in the plaza, including three small diameter drums, a plain capital, and a roller.

One paver of the plaza was inscribed side to the top. The stone is located six meters west of the street in the second row of pavers east of W1285. It is the fourth paver from the north. The top of the inscription faces east. The context in which the stone was found is definitely secondary. Originally it was probably set up in a public space within the city of Hippos. In its present state the stone measures 37 cm in height and 55.5 cm in width. The inscription occupies the entire surface of the stone with exception of the left-hand side where a margin of a considerable width is observed. A large and crude *hedera* is placed in the margin horizontally level with the space between lines 1 and 2. The inscription was neither nicely nor carefully carved. The letters are of uneven height varying between 4 and 5 cm.

The inscription may be transcribed as follows:

Ἀγαθῇ Τύχῃ
Τάριον Τιτια-
νὸν τὸν λαμ(πρότατον)
4 ἡμῶν ὑπατικὸν
Αὐρ(ήλιος) Ἡράκλειτος

To the Good Fortune. Aurelius Heracleitus (honors) Tarius Titianus, our illustrious consularis.

It is likely part of a larger inscription another fragment of which has been recovered. The fragment names Tarius Titianus as “patron and founder of the city.”¹⁴²

Aurelius Heracleitus, obviously a rich and influential citizen of Hippos, honored Tarius Titianus, a governor of the province of Syria Palaestinae, to which the city of Hippos belonged, for his being patron and founder of Aurelius Heracleitus’ native city. ‘Patron’ (πάτρων) and ‘Founder’ (κτίστης) must have been official honorific titles of Tarius Titianus conferred on him by Hippos in recognition of his benefactions towards the city.¹⁴³

In the southwest corner of the plaza is a crudely build small room with interior dimensions of 1.6 m x 2 m. It is bounded to the south by W1252. A column with two remaining drums forms the northeast corner of the room, from which W1274 proceeds to the south and W1271 to the west. This column aligns with the column next to the staircase, supporting the theory that there was an *exedra* on the north side of W1252. The doorway has a 64 cm opening and 71 cm door that closed from inside the room. The construction is quite poor as the doorway lacks a western door jamb. The paving of plaza was removed to set threshold, walls, and pedestals of small room. On the south side of the room is a sleeping platform (or bench) spanning the room’s width. At the west end, the platform is 60 cm wide; at the east end it is 75 cm wide. Several nails, small column drums, and a small mill were recovered from the fill. The

¹⁴² Adam Łajtar, “Two Honorific Monuments for Governors of Syria Palaestinae in Hippos,” *Palamedes* 5 (2010): 177-186.

¹⁴³ Łajtar 180.

construction of this room is characteristic of the Byzantine custom of creating low-status structures by subdividing disused spaces.¹⁴⁴

Complex Beta

On the west side of the newly excavated portions of the street are two block buildings. The beta building complex has a westerly face of 10.9 meters that is preserved to a height of four to five courses in places. It is located 9.75 m from the gate of the church complex. Part of the north-east corner of the building has been exposed. However, the precarious condition of the walls (tipping to the west and south) and the collapse of the interior of the corner prevented complete excavation.

Beta plaza

In 2009 we excavated square F5 and the western half of E5 between WW569 and W1244 to test the hypothesis that this space was a plaza similar to the paved plaza (F1296) previously described.

On the west side of *Cardo 2 North*, we identified a wall (W1273) blocking access to the space. Its construction is very poor, essentially stones and some architectural fragments piled up in a line with only some pieces of the lowest course indicating the line of the wall. We postulate that this wall was constructed in conjunction with the other blockages of doorways done in the decommissioning of the site.

The remaining walls identified on the plan (W1272, W1278, W1280, W1281) survive only to the level of the base of W569 which sits on top of W1278. They attest to earlier structures on the site prior to its leveling to create a plaza. However, there is no evidence that the plaza was paved. Rather, in similar fashion to the space west of the church's portico (F1214), the plaza had a mud surface mixed with some plaster (F1275). We propose the following detailed sequence of construction, although we cannot state any firm dates for the phases. Earliest seem to be a walls on north (W1278, under W569) and on the east (W1272, 1.60 m from the street). Contemporaneous to these walls is the lower floor (F1280, elevation 129.70). Next were constructed the east/west wall in the south of square (W1281) and a second wall (W1282) proceeding to the south from W1281. The bottoms of both walls are roughly level with F1280). Subsequently, W1278, W1272, W1281 and W1282 were taken down leaving a course of two. F1275 was laid at the level over the top of the reduced walls creating a plaza (elevation 130.10). The base of W569 is at this level. Later, a blocking wall closed the area (W1273). The floating walls (W1269 and W1282) were built on about 30 cm of destruction fill and at significantly later time.

Complex Gamma

¹⁴⁴ G. Dagron, "The Urban Economy, Seventh-Twelfth Centuries," in *The Economic History of Byzantium*, A. E. Laiou, ed. (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2002), pp. 393-461. S. P. Ellis, "The End of the Roman House," *American Journal of Archaeology* 92 (1988): 565-576. H. Saradi, "Privatization and Subdivision of Urban Properties in the Early Byzantine Centuries: Social and Cultural Implications," *Bulletin of the American Society of Papyrologists* 35(1998): 17-43.

Easterly entrances to two rooms were discovered on the line of the portico's stylobate. The entrance to the southerly room is south of the gate. The internal width of the room is 3.2 m. Just inside the south gate is the entrance to a second larger room 3.9 m wide. The doors from both rooms could be closed and locked from the inside. A common wall (W591) serves as the westerly demarcation for both rooms, yielding in internal east-west dimension of 5.2 m. The common wall allows us to conclude that the southerly room is part of the North-East Church complex and not merely abutting it. The two rooms are subdivided by W562. The top surviving course of W562 is constructed with pavers from a plaza, one of which displays the mason marks *alpha* and *eta*. The southerly room had a 20-25 cm plaster floor (F568) overlaying a stone floor (F571) of basalt and limestone pieces. Cistern E sits in its south-east corner and may be the reason for the stone floor. The chamber inside the gate had a similar plaster floor but in poorer condition. Of note is a bench along the western wall of this larger room.

The North-East Church complex has benches of similar proportions in a large number of its rooms. In the *domus* benches line both aisles. The south vaulted chamber has benches on three walls. Small benches have been found in the north medial chamber and in the *skeuophylakion*. Lacunae for several benches can be seen along the east edge of the portico on the west side of W511. We suspect that the benches may be indicative of the memorial nature of the complex. The entrance hall for the church (L200) of the Monastery of St. Martyrius at Ma'ale Adummim has benches on three sides. At the center of the hall is a tombstone with the inscription, "Tomb of Paul, the priest and archimandrite."¹⁴⁵ Likewise, the mortuary church at Jerash has benches on three sides.¹⁴⁶

We further suggest that the large room inside the south gate had a particular function. We note, in addition to its size, that this room stands opposite the only entrance to the church kept open after other usage ceased. This entrance provided access to the tomb of the elderly woman, whose ongoing veneration has been previously discussed. We posited that the large *diakonikon* with its cistern may have been part of a healing cult centered at the tomb of the woman. We therefore speculate that this western chamber served as a place for *incubatio* – prayer, fasting and even deprivation of sleep prior to participation in healing rites.¹⁴⁷

To the north of the putative incubation chamber is a north-south wall (W1207) tied in to W574. It is the eastern wall of a small chamber (1.6 x 2.2 m) with a threshold facing west. The door closed from inside this cell and provided access to a paved surface where a hand mill was recovered. To the east of W1207 is staircase rising from the north on the east side of the room formed by W1216, W1207, W574, and W1208. Three steps are *in situ*. The average tread depth is 28 cm and the average rise is 24 cm. Since 2.9 m of steps have been robbed out, the staircase could have contained an addition ten stairs, rising to about 2.9 m above the first step and 3.4 m above the threshold of the small room. Such a height suggests that the stair gave access to a

¹⁴⁵ Magen 178.

¹⁴⁶ Butler 213.

¹⁴⁷For a parallel example of a place of incubation, see the discussion of the basilica at Dor along with pertinent citations from Greek and early Christian healing sources in Claudine Dauphin, "On the Pilgrim's Way to the Holy City of Jerusalem: The Basilica of Dor in Israel," in *Archaeology and Biblical Interpretation*, edited by John R. Bartlett (New York: Routledge, 1997) 159-160.

second story or roof over the large room to the south. Construction suggests that this small room and the staircase were later additions.

Delta complex

The area west of the stylobate of the portico is an open area with a mud/plaster floor (F1214). No architectural features were identified. Consequently, a 1 m trench was opened perpendicular to the stylobate 3.5 m south of W553. The top 35-50 cm of the trench was the mud/plaster layer identified as F1214. At the east end of the trench, stones protrude from under the stylobate. They seem to be the inside surface of a wall over which the stylobate was laid. At the west end of the trench is an earlier wall (W1246) that runs north and south. Trenching on its western line reveals that its external surface is to the west and that it proceeds to the north under W553. The wall is 70 cm wide.

A level of cobbles appeared about 50 cm below the top of the floor (F1214). Below the cobbles, the soil (L1248) was softer and contained heavy destruction fill. At about 1.1 m below the surface of F1214, bedrock was exposed through the length of the trench. Most of the bedrock is a soft marl/limestone, except at the west end, where the limestone is smooth and hard. To the east, the builders cut a foundation trench in the marl, filled it with stones and then built a wall, only one course of which remains under the stylobate. To the west, the builders erected the wall (W1246) directly on the hard limestone.

Two 1x2 m probes were dug north of W553 in line with W1246 and with the stylobate. An east to west wall was identified forming a corner with W1246 and seemingly forming a corner on the east line of the stylobate. In the westerly probe, bedrock was reached. Two courses of stone sit on the cut bedrock on a layer of shards and small stones.

W1246, the foundation under W553, and the single course of stones protruding from under the stylobate are likely the surviving foundation of a building (delta) that antedated the stylobate and sat on the western side of *Cardo 2 North*.

The pottery collection from these probes is helpful in dating construction. Shards sealed in the plaster floor are late 5th to mid-6th century material, including LRC f. 3C (ca. 460-490 CE) and LRC f. 3H (ca. mid-6th century). From beneath the floor came common wares of the 3rd to 4th century (and one rim of LRC dish/bowl f. 10C, dated to the first half of the 7th century that may be a product of intrusion or mishandling). From the base of the foundation trench came common wares of the 5th century and an ARSW f. 91 flanged bowl, probably variant B and dated to ca. 450-530 CE. We conclude that the early building was constructed in the 5th century to be replaced by the church complex (or at least F1214) in the late 5th or early 6th centuries.

The cisterns

Cistern A

Cistern A is located in the northwest corner of the *domus* of the North-East Church. The cistern is roughly bell-shaped. It is 2.95 m wide and estimated to be some 4 m deep. It is fed by a basin

that channels water through W521 and then into the cistern. At least two layers of plaster were visible in the throat area of the cistern. The top layer of plaster was pinkish in color. Based on the profile, we estimate the volume of the cistern to be fifteen cubic meters.

Cistern B

Cistern B is located on the north side of the north lateral chamber. As noted above, the cistern is fed by a basin to its south and east. The basin is plastered in to W555, which framed the cistern opening. Cistern B is also roughly bell-shaped. But as is indicated by both the floor profile and the cross section, the cistern is irregularly carved. In one place it shows a square corner. Elsewhere stone nodules protrude, especially from the ceiling. One possibility is that the cistern made partial use of a pre-existing fissure in the rock. Plaster recovered from the cistern is grayish in color. We estimate the volume of Cistern B to be just under thirteen cubic meters.

Cistern C

Cistern C is located 4.25 m south of the entrance to the atrium and on the west side of the street. It is on a line with the stylobate of the atrium. As noted above, Cistern C was fed by a channel that crosses the street from east to west. The cistern has an oval horizontal profile (2.2 x 4.7 m) and is bell-shaped. It is approximately seven meters and has an estimated volume of almost twenty nine cubic meters. Recovered plaster is grayish in color.

Cistern D

Cistern D is located in the north-east corner of the *diakonikon*. It is small with a volume of approximately 4.8 cubic meters. It was constructed by digging a pit down and slightly into the bedrock. Crudely worked stone blocks were stacked in layers to construct the cavity and neck of the cistern. The cistern was then sealed with two layers of plaster, the second perhaps being applied later. The initial layer was hard grayish plaster with fine agate particles (1-2 mm; medium sand No. 10-40). The secondary layer was softer and lighter with larger agate (4-7 mm; fine gravel).

Cistern D was excavated completely. The topmost part of the fill contained many large pieces of crumbling limestone and basalt. A large concentration of bones was uncovered in the southeast section of the floor. Several pieces of skull, a canine molar and numerous ribs and leg bones were among the pieces removed. Considering the size and shape of the bones, they may come from a dog or jackal. Other pieces of animal bones were found in the upper fill, including a large tooth (bovine?), several rat or small mammal skulls and some vertebrae (possibly goat or sheep).

Numerous pieces of a roof tile were removed from the southwest section of the cistern. Several large pieces and numerous small pieces of pottery were also taken from the floor. A field reading placed these as Byzantine/Umayyad. As the excavation continued downward, the soil became finer. Fewer pieces of pottery were unearthed, but more pieces of tesserae (some in clusters) were found. The number of bones also decreased, although many tiny bones from a

rat or mouse were still brought up. At elevation 128.44 m, a layer of highly-compact, grayish silt was found (L 1204), likely formed during the cistern's use as a collector of water in Byzantine times. The silt layer was no more than 20-25 cm thick.

Cistern E

1.5 m south of the staircase in the alpha plaza is Cistern E. A plastered channel and plastering on the north face of W1252 indicates that water from the roof of the southerly block building was routed to this cistern. The cistern is capped with limestone column base modified to serve as a cistern head by carving out its center. The head is notched for a 43 x 43 cm lid with a crossbar. Its height is 50 cm. It shows a rubbed area for a rope, and a part of its base is cut to allow water to enter the cistern. cursory examination suggests it is comparable in size to Cistern C and holds 27-30 cubic meters.

Cistern F

Below the level of the floor of the sleeping chamber east of the apse is the remnant of an earlier small cistern. The head and neck of the cistern were removed in antiquity, leaving only the bell. The opening of the cistern is 1.2 m and its remaining depth is 1.55 m. The bell has a volume of 2.74 cubic meters. The plaster of the cistern is grey in color. We speculate that this cistern was partially disassembled and filled when the church was constructed. The pottery assemblage from the cistern included a LR Amphora 1 which is particularly frequent in the late 5th and early 6th centuries. Such an approximate date for this assemblage conforms to previously cited finds that place the construction of the church complex in the late 5th and early 6th centuries.

Cistern G

Near the east wall in the storage room of the peristyle house is Cistern G. The diameter of opening to the cistern is 50 cm. The neck is about 68 cm in diameter. The cistern is about 4.5 m deep and oblong to the north. The cistern bell is some 4 m north to south and 2.5 m east to west. It is similar in construction to other cisterns in the insula (bell dug, lined with stones, and plastered). It appears as if a column drum was used by the builders as one of the framing stones. The plaster is grayish and delicate. Plastering on the north face of the pilaster, a drainage hole to the north of the cistern opening and numerous drain tiles in the fill identify the means by which the cistern was filled. We estimate the volume to be 12.7 cubic meters.

Cistern H

A cistern was discovered in the paved court of the peristyle house. Its head is a column drum that has been hollowed out. The inner diameter of the head is 37 cm with the wall about 6 cm thick. The drum was originally about 50 cm in diameter. The cistern is located 1.2 m from the north edge of the south stylobate and 4.2 m from W1267. Although we did not enter the cistern, the top of the dirt pile in the bell of the cistern is 4.5 m below the top of the cistern head. Two catch basins along W1910 likely drain into this cistern. We speculate it is slight larger than Cistern G with a volume of 14-15 cubic meters.

Cistern I

20 cm west of the olive vat constructed in the southeastern entrance to the garden of the peristyle house is the neck for Cistern I. It survives to a height of 28 cm above the floor of the vat. A tape measure showed a depth of at least 4.5 m. The neck of the cistern consists of two additional hour-glass mill stones. We surmise that the hour-glass mill found in the vat was used secondarily as the head for the cistern. When an earthquake toppled a column, that falling column broke the west side of the vat and pushed/toppled the mill into the vat, where it was recovered. We speculate that Cistern I has a volume of 14-15 cubic meters.

While work remains to be done on the cisterns of the North-East Insula Project, the average size of the cisterns in the range of 13-15 cubic meters. By comparison, the average size of the cisterns at Shivta is 46 cubic meters, at Sepphoris the average is 47 cubic meters and, and the cisterns of Hurvat Zikhrin averages 46 cubic meters.¹⁴⁸ Although its cisterns are smaller than other sites on average, the complex has water sources independent of the water system of the city.

The phasing of the NIP

Work on the North-east Insula Project began with excavation of the North-East Church. Probes beneath the floor levels of the complex consistently show ceramic assemblages dating no later than the late 5th or early 6th centuries. The North-East Church likely was built during that time frame. But the church was clearly situated within the pre-existing street grid of the city and may have incorporated walls of a previous building (W512b and W554) or set some of its wall over foundations of earlier ones (e.g., W541). The apse of the church did break the line of *Cardo* 3N and required reworking of W1230/1267 to incorporate the peristyle house into the larger church compound. Possibly a pre-existing home once occupied the site of the church (see domestic remains under the south hall and in the plaza to its south; cistern A may have served a peristyle court).

The North-East Church was apparently built as a memorial church housing two tombs in its chancel: a masonry tomb holding a coffin with three individuals and a sarcophagus for a revered elderly woman. In this original phase, the entire church (chancel, nave, aisles, and western portico) were carpeted in mosaics. Each stylobate had four columns.

In secondary phasing, major changes came to the NEC. In the west, the portico was paved with flagstones, benches were added on the west side of W511, gates were installed at each end of the portico, building complex gamma was constructed, and *Cardo* 2N was repaved. Within the *domus* the nave received a second geometric floor. Repairs to other floors are notable in the north aisle and in the *skeuophylakion*. The level of the chancel was raised with a floor of irregular stone tiles into which *loculi* for reliquaries were inserted and a *synthronon* was added. At this time a sarcophagus was inserted into the masonry tomb on top of the previous burial.

¹⁴⁸ Tsvika Tsuk, "The Water Supply System of Shivta in the Byzantine Period," in *Cura Aquarum in Israel*, Proceedings of the 11th International Conference on the History of Water Management and Hydraulic Engineering in the Mediterranean Region Israel 7-12 May 2001 (Siegburg 2002), 73.

In the aisles, benches were added to the north and south walls. As the north benches were made of corbels, as identical corbels were used in the north wall, as two additional columns were added to the north stylobate, and as the intercolumnation was changed from areostyle to systyle, we surmise that major damage was done to the church that required significant reconstruction. It is reasonable to suggest that much of this secondary phasing was of necessity done concurrently. The quality of the reconstruction is such as to suggest extreme poverty on the part of the community supporting the NEC. We would therefore surmise that the addition of the sarcophagus to the masonry tomb and the extraction of relics from the tomb of the elderly women served as funding sources for the reconstruction.

There are some hints as to the dating of this secondary phasing. As noted earlier, the late sixth-century date of the mosaics at Kursi (585 CE) and in the baptistery at Hippos (591 CE) suggest a similar date for the upper geometric floor (F589) of the North-East Church. "Textual documentation ... suggests that a disastrous earthquake on July 9, 551, wrought a path of destruction from the three provinces of Palestine through at least the province of Syria II."¹⁴⁹ Petra was never rebuilt after that earthquake. Perhaps damage from it led to renovations of the North-East Church culminating in the geometric floor. Alternatively, a section of wall plaster from behind the *synthonon* was dated by C-14 to approximately 675 CE.¹⁵⁰ If this plastering reflects the secondary phase repairs, its date aligns with literary reports on one or two major earthquakes in Palestine in 659/660 CE. According to the *Chronographia* of Theophanes: "a great earthquake throughout Palestine and Syria had given cause for an extensive collapse of the buildings of the East."¹⁵¹ The extensive 7th century reconstruction in the Monastery of St. Euthymius followed that earthquake.

Hippos itself would be destroyed by a major earthquake in 749 CE, after which it was never re-occupied as a city. However, prior to that earthquake, liturgical rites ceased in the North-East Church. All doors to the *domus* were intentionally sealed, except the entrance to the south aisle that gave access to the tomb of the elderly woman. Burials stopped. Reliquaries were removed. A crude wall was built around the exposed sarcophagus of the woman. A bench was installed inside the southwest entrance, and the North Lateral and Medial Chambers were converted to domestic use (guard?). The church became a mausoleum and was little used or abandoned by the earthquake of 749 CE.

What once appeared to be a small memorial church situated between Cardo 2 North and Cardo 3 North, after subsequent excavation of surrounding spaces now appears to be the north-westerly component of a much larger complex. To the north of the church we now entertain the possibility of a two-story structure. Access to the second story would have come via the staircase next to W521. W555 may have been added to W540 to help support the second story. Doorways providing access to this structure were also sealed. To the east is a peristyle house. The south door jamb in W1267 of that house was incorporated into the wall of the apse and thus constructed at the same time.¹⁵² This doorway also was intentionally blocked as was the

¹⁴⁹ Kenneth Russell, "The Earthquake Chronology of Palestine and Northwest Arabia from the 2nd through the mid-8th Century A.D.," in *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 260 (Fall 1985): 45.

¹⁵⁰ *Hippos* 2006, 84.

¹⁵¹ Russell 47.

¹⁵² *Hippos* 2008, 45.

exterior doorway to the storage room of the house in W1230. We hypothesize that this house reached its “fulfillment” as a monastery and was sealed off when the church and its related rooms were likewise sealed.¹⁵³ The appearance of pagan elements among the small finds from the house, especially the Tyche and the maenad, could argue against such a hypothesis. But counter arguments are possible. The maenad may be defaced, depriving it of any numinous power and religious significance. The Tyche may be little more than a symbol of civic pride and classical heritage. Although we cannot yet with certainty date the peristyle house, elements (architectural, ceramic, and artistic) do suggest that the peristyle house was earlier than the church. If so, we deem it a possibility that this home of a prominent family at Hippos became the starting point of an urban monastery that eventually took over a neighboring home to the west, removed most of it, and built the North-East Church, incorporating its apse into a reconstructed western wall of the house.

While this hypothesis is suggestive for future work, significant additional excavation is necessary before we can say with any certainty that this peristyle house actually found its fulfillment as an urban monastery that then expanded to construct the North-East Church.

¹⁵³ *Hippos* 2009, 71.