

# Northeast Insula Project

2019 Study Season

A small team from Concordia University Saint Paul conducted a study season during July of 2019 at the Northeast Insula Project of the Hippos Excavations.

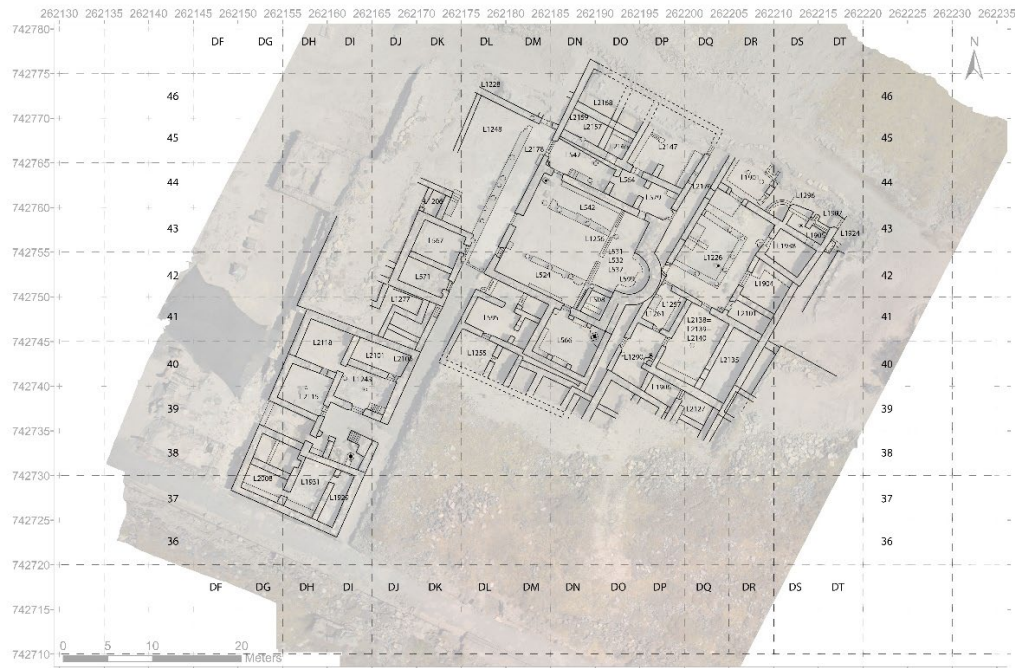


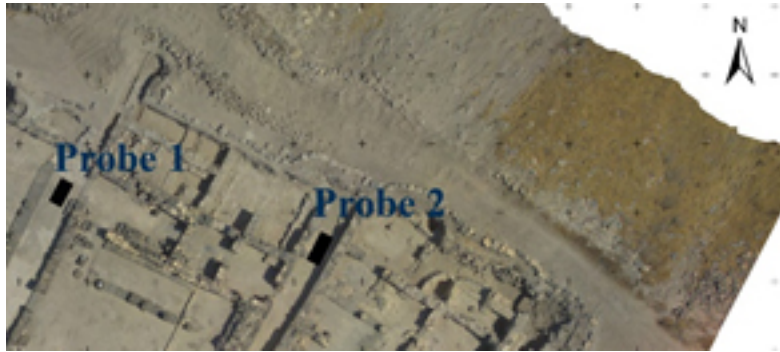
Figure 1 Key loci of the NIP

The purpose of the season was to revisit and document for a second time the excavation area to compose a comprehensive descriptive narrative. Attention was devoted to the relationships between adjoining walls and the reuse of pre-existing phases. Due to the generosity of Mott MacDonald, LLC, the team brought to the site a Leica BLK360 digital scanner to assist in the documentation process. 181 scans were made of various subsections of the site. In addition, Michael Eisenberg employed a drone to produce a new orthographic photo and DEM image of the NIP.



Figure 2 Ortho and DEM of NIP

In addition to documentation work, two probes were opened.



*Figure 3 Location of Probes*

Probe 1 was in the western portico of the church. We sought to determine if additional mosaic survived under the flagstone paving, as well as if there were any earlier phases under the portico.

Prior to opening the probe, we cleared three lacunae on the west side of the west wall of the church where benches had previously been located. Fragments of the earlier mosaic paving survive to about 60 cm from the wall in places. The mosaic was geometric. The east border of the mosaic was Avi-Yonah pattern B9.



*Figure 4 Avi Yonah pattern B9*

After an additional six rows of white tesserae are a series of half circles consisting of two half circles of red tesserae, three half circles of white, one half circle of yellow, and a central cluster of black tesserae. The half circle is capped by a row of black tesserae and seems to rest on a small stand of three black half tesserae. These half circles form a parallel band to the guilloche, recurring every 54 cm on center.



*Figure 5 Band of Half Circles*

Further to the west, after eight rows of white tesserae, there is seemingly a third band of geometric figures, although only one sample survives. This geometric figure is a full circle, with a similar sequence of tesserae circles: two red, three white, one yellow and a black center. On the four compass points are black inserts that extend beyond the circle in a form like the base of the previous half circles.



*Figure 6 Band of Full Circles*

Probe 1 was located toward the north end of the portico, 1.9 m south of the northern threshold. The probe was 1.6 x 1.15 m. We discovered no additional surviving tesserae surface. But there was a cobble base, affirming that the portico had been surfaced with tesserae prior to the installation of the surviving flagstone surface.



*Figure 7 Cobble base for tesserae*

We removed the cobble base and excavated to bedrock, which at its lowest point was 76 cm below the surface. We found no evidence of a previous surface for this small cardo. However, we did find a line of stones running parallel with the stylobate and sitting on the bedrock with a possible perpendicular pattern as well. We presume these stones were so positioned to help stabilize the fill over the bedrock in order to provide a stable surface for the portico.



*Figure 8 Probe of the Portico*

A second probe was opened in the north end of the small cardo in front of the now blocked west entrance to the House of Tyche, the top of which entrance was revealed in 2016. The purpose of this second probe was to determine earlier phases of the small cardo and to identify the threshold of the doorway.

We opened 4.4 m section of the small cardo and dug to bedrock some 80 cm below and dropping off rapidly to the north. The possible earlier entrance to the House of Tyche turned out to be the reuse of the lintel stone and part of the door frame from another structure as wall stones in the west wall of the house. Limestone blocks below the surface of the card sat directly on bedrock.



*Figure 9 Lintel stone in secondary use*

We did expose a plastered drainage channel covered with crude stones 45 cm from the west wall of the house and running parallel with it. The drain is 24 cm wide at the south end of the probe and widens about 40 cm at the north end. The source of the drain is unknown. The bottom of the drain is 60 cm below the surface at the south end of the probe and 79 cm below the surface at the north end.



*Figure 10 Model from photogrammetry of the drainage channel*

Field readings of pottery identified byzantine fragments in the drain including a fragment of a 6<sup>th</sup> century oil lamp. The fill at the level of bedrock was exclusively Roman including a fragment of an early Roman oil lamp. We surmise that the foundations set on bedrock date from Roman times with the drain having been added in the Byzantine period.

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