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in the Fertile crescent before Islam

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MICROCOSM OF TRANSITION: THE NORTHEAST *INSULA* PROJECT AT HIPPOS OF THE DECAPOLIS

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Abstract
Twelve seasons of work at Hippos of the Decapolis have exposed a 50 x 65 m quadrant north of the Decumanus Maximus containing structures from the three main phases of the occupation of Hippos: the House of Tyche -- a Roman peristyle house with a garden; the Northeast Church -- a small memorial chapel for a revered woman; and an Umayyad meeting hall. The quadrant also demonstrates the decline and intentional abandonment of this part of the city prior to the great earthquake of the mid eighth century CE.

INTRODUCTION

As of the summer of 2013, twelve excavation seasons are complete on the Northeast Insula Project (NIP) at Hippos of the Decapolis.

The excavation area of the Project is delineated by the orthogonal grid system on which Hippos is organized. The *Decumanus maximus* of Hippos shows evidence of first century construction. It is reasonable to presume that bisecting *cardines* followed in close succession as the city flourished in the second and third centuries CE. The Project is subdivided by three of these narrow *cardines* into the three excavation zones within the Project (Figure 1). Within each zone is a significant representative of the transitions at the site from Graeco-Roman to Byzantine to Umayyad [to abandonment]. At the north end of the Eastern Zone is a Roman era peristyle house ('The House of Tyche'). The Northeast Church, representing the Byzantine period, is the most prominent feature of the Central Zone. The Western Zone has several building complexes that are labeled with Greek letters from south to north. Complexes alpha and beta have structures dating to the early Umayyad period that were apparently abandoned prior to the earthquake in the mid eighth century CE.[1]

This paper will discuss these representative elements that illustrate the transitions impacting Hippos of the Decapolis during its primary period of occupation.

THE PERISTYLE HOUSE ('HOUSE OF TYCHE')

A peristyle house is located at the north end of the Eastern Zone (Figure 2). Portions of the southwest corner of the house, a peristyle court next to the western wall, two rooms to the east, and the southern section of a garden to the north of the house have been excavated.

The southern section of the home has both domestic and storage functions. In and near a small cubiculum, we recovered a crossbow fibula, two bottles, a glass lamp or beaker, a bone-carved maenad, a scarab, a glass ring, and a bronze pitcher with an iron handle.[2] Some of these finds are luxury items. In a neighboring storage room on the hard-packed floor (F1291) was a heavy deposit of

[1] 746, 748, and 749 CE have all been suggested as dates. For a summary of previous research and a defense of 18 Jan 749, see Yoram Tsafrir and Gideon Foerster, 'The Dating of the "Earthquake of the Sabbatical Year" of 749 C. E. in Palestine,' *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London,* 55.2 (1992), 231-235.

[2] Segal, Arthur *et al*., *Hippos-sussita: Eleventh Season of Excavations: June-July 2010* (Haifa, 2010), 51-60.

Byzantine common-ware shards including pieces of the shoulder of a late Roman amphora (form LRA1) with Greek writing (*dipinti).*[3]

In the northwest corner of the house is a three-sided peristyle court. Including the porticos, the space is approximately 11.3 m from north to south and 7.2 m from east to west. The courtyard is paved with rectangular basalt pavers and has a cistern.[4] Typical of a space with significant domestic usage, we recovered two lower 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.[5]

'The peristyle house has a long tradition in the East going back at least to the fourth century B.C.E.'[6] Nevertheless, 'the known distribution of the peristyle house in Palestine is quite limited.'[7] Yizhar Hirschfeld lists four sites from the late Roman and early Byzantine periods (Umm el-Jimal, Sepphoris, Aphek and Jerusalem).[8] At least two others have been subsequently published (Sepphoris[9] and 'Ein ez-Zeituna[10]). A three-sided peristyle is particularly characteristic of the evolution of the peristyle house in Roman North Africa,[11] although both the House of the Tragic Poet[12] and the House of Sallust[13] at Pompeii have three-sided peristyle courts. Simon Ellis has argued that the latest peristyle houses were constructed in the mid-sixth century.[14] Although we cannot yet date this structure with certainty, modifications to the house by the construction of the church to the west and its possible connection to this structure suggest a foundation in the third or fourth century, which fits within Ellis' timeframe.

A small room (3.70 m north to south and 4.69 m east to west) occupies the northeast corner of the house. The original mosaic carpet (F1939) is intact in many places. An inscription was discovered just south of a doorway in the north wall (W1266). We reconstruct the inscription to read: ΕΙΣΕΛΘΕΕΠΑΓΑΘΩ 'enter for good.' The inscription was to be read by persons entering through the doorway from the garden. Since the inscription is centered on the doorway, we therefore identify the space as an entrance foyer for the house. [The inscription from the foyer has parallels at Pompeiopolis (SEG 40:1177) and Krokodeilon Polis near Caesarea (SEG 56: 1891).]

To the north of the peristyle court and the foyer is a garden built on the declining slope of the mountain toward the wall of the city. Portions of three discernable areas have been excavated. The lowest area is in the west and is accessed by a staircase through a large doorway from the peristyle court. This lower section was a covered entrance porch paved in *opus sectile* bounded by two columns. To the north is a plastered fixture in the balk. It seems to be a basin or small pool. In North Africa, many gardens 'were filled with basins and pools.'[15] At times, fish were raised in such pools.[16]

The two steps up to the east of the *opus sectile* floor is another level. A single-niche fountain sits in the northwest interior corner (Figure 3). The fountain is semicircular. The structure is composed of

[3] Segal, Arthur *et al*., *Hippos-sussita: Tenth Season of Excavations: June-July 2009* (Haifa, 2009), 80-83.

[4] The head of the cistern 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.

[5] Segal *2010*, 63-65.

[6] Monika Trümper, 'Space and Social Relationships in the Greek *Oikos* of the Classical and Hellenistic Period,' In *A Companion to Families in the Greek and Roman World*, edited by Beryl Rawson (John Wiley & Sons, 2010), 37.

[7] Yizhar Hirschfeld, *The Palestinian Dwelling in the Roman-Byzantine Period* (Jerusalem, 1995), 86.

[8] Hirschfeld, 86.

[9] O. Sion and A. Said, 'A Mansion House from the Late Byzantine-Umayyad Period in Beth Shean-Scythopolis,' *Liber Annuus,* 52 (2002), 353-366.

[10] David Milson, 'Design Analysis of the Peristyle Building from 'Ein ez-Zeituna,' *Atiqot*, 51 (2006), 71-75.

[11] Yvon Thébert, 'Private Life and Domestic Architecture in Roman Africa,' in Paul Veyne, (ed.), *A History of Private Life*, i: *From Pagan Rome to Byzantium* (Cambridge, 1987-1991), 357-364.

[12] 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.

[13] Paul Zanker, *Pompeii: Public and Private Life* (Cambridge, MA, 1998), 43.

[14] Simon P. Ellis, 'The End of the Roman House,' *American Journal of Archaeology*, 92 (1988), 565.

[15] Thébert, 362.

[16] Thébert, 367.

reused roof tiles and floor pieces that have been plastered. Toward the top of the fountain a ceramic pipe provides water for the fountain. A mosaic floor proceeds north from the fountain and pool. The design of the floor is geometric and similar to other Byzantine floors at Hippos. After typical border bands of black and white, there is a guilloche (19 cm wide, Avi- Yonah pattern B2[17]) which runs north to south. An identical pattern follows the curve of the pool (black band, white band, and guilloche). The two guilloche bands are woven together when they meet in the southern part of the floor.

At the northerly end of Cardo 4 North, down several steps is a formal entrance into the garden through a doorway with its lintel stone still intact. An inscription in *tabula ansata* was discovered just inside facing those entering through the threshold. The Greek is ΕΥΤΥΧΩΣ / ΤΩ ΚΤΗΣΤΗ (Figure 4). [The garden inscription has parallels at Tell el-Farama (SEG 37:1639) and Shiqmona near Haifa (SEG 37:1487, with the same misspelling).]

While removing destruction fill from the mosaic floor north of the fountain pool, we recovered a limestone block (24 x 38 x 22 cm) to which was attached a partial face of a woman. It is a fragmentary fresco of the Roman goddess Tyche (Figure 5). The fragment preserves the upper right portion of the face and the crown. 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. The artistic style is realistic, suggesting third or at the latest a fourth century composition.[18]

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.[19] Elsewhere in the Project, an inscription was uncovered beginning with the words ΑΓΑΘΗ ΤΥΧΗ.[20] And she is invoked in the garden inscription just cited.

The peristyle house marks the beginning of the transitions illustrated by the excavations to date in the Project. It reflects the Roman period during which Hippos prospered and its elites built significant homes along several narrow streets east of the Roman Basilica. In subsequent years, the peristyle house would undergo numerous modifications. A hall to the east of the peristyle court would be subdivided by a Chorazin wall. The entrance foyer would be closed and converted to industrial usage. Constructions would be set upon the original surface of the peristyle court. Some doorways are blocked. The entrance to the garden from the street would be modified to provide a second source of water for the fountain. The dramatic entrance to the garden from the peristyle court would be narrowed by doorjambs and a door that locked from the garden side. A Byzantine domestic space was built over the collapsed southeast corner.

THE NORTHEAST CHURCH

Illustrating the Byzantine period at Hippos is the Northeast Church, a small nearly square church (12.5 x 13 m) with a single exterior apse (Figure 6). With its side rooms to the north and south, it is of similar size to the House of Tyche to the east.[21] The western portico of the Northeast Church was built over the line of one of the *cardines* that delineate the zones of the Project. [22] The street to the south is surfaced with basalt pavers and may have functioned as a *via sacra* for visitors to the venerated tombs

[17] M. Avi-Yonah, 'Mosaic Pavements in Palestine,' *Quarterly of the Department of Antiquities of Palestine,* 2 (1933), 135.

[18] The fresco of Tyche is on display in the Israel Museum in Jerusalem.

[19] A. Spijkerman, *The Coins of the Decapolis and Provincia Arabia* (Jerusalem, 1978), 196.

[20] Segal *2009*, 74-79.

[21] The House of Tyche is approximately 335m^2. The Northeast Church is 372m^2.

[22] A street of this size might be more properly called a *semita* or an *angipontus*. D. Sperber¸ *The City in Roman Palestine* (Oxford, 1998), 103.

in the church.[23] Each aisle is separated from the nave by a row of columns with irregular intercolumnation (systyle on the north stylobate and areostyle on the south). There were two public entrances from the west and one from a north lateral chamber. Burials in the chancel are the most notable aspect of this architecturally marginal church.

To the north of the central axis of the chancel is a masonry tomb. Three basalt beams were *in situ* covering the western half of the tomb. The chamber of the masonry tomb is constructed of four courses of basalt ashlars. It is likely that the interior sidewalls of the masonry tomb were decorated with frescos. One larger piece of painted plaster (in several sections) showed four fingers of a near life-sized right hand (outlined in red). Outstretched hands feature prominently in depictions of saints and in frescoes from Christian catacombs.[24]

Between the second and third beams, a lead pipe extends down into the tomb. The lead pipe is rolled, not melted. Its top was hammered into a funnel. A plaster mound held the funnel to the level of the floor (F516).

At about 75 cm below the level of the stone floor (F516) is the limestone box of a sarcophagus covered by six flat stones. Notably, the box in the masonry tomb sits somewhat askew from level. 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 Byzantine lead coffins.[25] 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.[26]

Human remains were found in both areas: the sarcophagus (L537) held the remains of at least nine individuals, while area of the coffin (L543 and L599, beside and under the sarcophagus) yielded three individuals. [27] All the individuals found in these areas were adults, except one infant (age 0-1 years) which was found in the sarcophagus, and was represented only by teeth and pelvis fragments. As for the genders, the sarcophagus yielded the remains of at least three men and three women. The genders of the others could not be determined.

At the south end of the chancel is a rectangular surface raised 16.5 cm above the floor (Figure 7). It 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 were revetted with marble. On the north face was an incised cross (23 x 17 cm) with an alpha (5 cm high and 4 cm wide) and omega (3 cm high and 6 cm wide). A second inscribed cross was on the west revetment of the sarcophagus.[28]

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[23] 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, 1976).

[24] A. Grabar, *Martyrium: Rescherches sur le Culte des Reliques et l'Art Chrétien Antique,* ii (Paris, 1946), plates xxix – xxxii.

[25] A lead coffin from Caesarea is 31 cm in depth (L. 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 (L. Rahmani, 'Five Lead Coffins from Israel,' *Israel Exploration Journal*, 42.1-2 (1992), 81-102.).

[26] L. 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.

[27] 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.

[28] This 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, 1994), figs 8 and 9.

The installation of the sarcophagus[29] was contemporaneous with the building of the church and the laying of the original floor of the chancel (F517). In a later phase, the sarcophagus was opened by breaking the western marble face and its inscribed cross. 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?). Extraction of relics seems to be a logical explanation, perhaps done out of economic necessity, as the subsequent repair was of poor quality.[30]

The sarcophagus contained the bones of a single small woman of sixty-plus years (Figure 8). The bones were gathered under the anointing hole, long bones placed in a frame around fragments of the skull, pelvis and other smaller bones. In the earth at the east end of the sarcophagus were some fifteen metatarsals and phalanges of the foot. While the sarcophagus was originally used for her 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 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 church.'[31] The burial in the Northeast 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.

In summary, the positioning of two tombs within the chancel of the Northeast 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.

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). The second floor seems to have been entirely geometric in design (Avi-Yonah patterns F4 and F9[32]). A square-in-square pattern is similar to the one observed in intercolumnar panel 2 at Kursi.[33] The late sixth-century date of the mosaics at Kursi suggests a similar date for the geometric floor (F589) of the Northeast Church. As Karen Britt has discussed, geometric compositions and uniform carpet patterns are part of a 'stylistic shift in the pavements …. 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.'[34] The geometric patterns of the later floor (F589) covered over the complexity and beauty of first floor (F544).

Surviving from the first floor (F544) are a series of borders surrounding two rows of six overlapping medallions (Figure 9). Only fragments of the medallions remain. 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

[29] 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 Jean Lassus, *Sanctuaires Chrétiens de Syrie* (Paris, 1947), 231-232.

[30] V. Saxer, 'Cult of Martyrs, Saints, and Relics,' in *The Encyclopedia of the Early Church,* ii (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 533. In literary sources describing the invention of relics, there are scenes 'for which a generic iconographical formula was used. A sarcophagus is opened, and the saints body is disclosed intact, with a halo around the head. The earliest example occurs in the Menologium of Basil II, p. 391, for the Invention of the relics of the prophet Zechariah, commemorated on February 11. Three personages wearing a *phelonion*, one holding a censer and another a taper, stand beside the sarcophagus. Other examples are the Inventions of the relics of Cyrus and John, June 28, and of Bathrolomew, August 25, in the wall calendar of Cozia, as well as of Stephen, August 2, in that of Staro Nagoričina.' Christopher Walter, *Art and Ritual of the Byzantine Church* (London, 1982), 150.

[31] G. M. Fitzgerald, *A Sixth Century Monastery at Beth-Shan* (Philadelphia, 1939), 27.

[32] Avi-Yonah, 139.

[33] V. Tzaferis, 'The Excavations of Kursi-Gerasa,' *Atiqot* (English Series), 16 (1983), Plate 8.5.

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

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.[35] Britt suggests that the birds affirm the commemorative function of a ritual space space and 'should be interpreted as the blessed who take flight to heaven.'[36]

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. The easterly animal has small hoofs. It may be a gazelle or a ram. If the other medallions displayed similar animals, some calendric function may be implied.

In the northeast corner of the north aisle, a section of the mosaic floor (F538) is preserved. Next to the base of the chancel screen in the center of the aisle are four 20 cm squares. The squares have a white field with an equal-armed cross (5 x 5 tesserae). To the north of the chancel is a chamber which we identify as a *skeuophylakion*, while recognizing the tentative nature of using this label.[37] Next to the passageway to the chancel are two flared crosses some 35 cm in height. The upper and left rows and the flairs are red; the lower and right rows are black. In both cases crosses are on floors near entrances to sacred space.

Crosses in mosaic floors are important due to the prohibition against their use after 427 CE by the Theodosian code.[38] However, crosses continue to appear on mosaic floors into the sixth century.[39] Ernst Kitzinger, in discussing the plain red crosses in the floor of the Martyrion of St. Babylas at Antioch, proposes that '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.'[40] 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.'[41]

To the south of the *domus* next to the chancel and the tomb of the elderly woman is a large arched room (6.23 m east to west and 5.63 m from north to south) that likely served as a *diakonikon* (Figure 10). Three high benches were discovered next to the south, west and north walls of the vaulted chamber. On the south wall (W554) above the bench is a rectangular niche in the wall. In the northeast corner of the *diakonikon* is a well-preserved cistern head. 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 to address somatic diseases (Figure 11).[42]

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

[35] Fitzgerald, Plate XIV.

[36] Britt, 315.

[37] 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. Descoeudres, *Die Pastophorien im syro-byzantinischen Osten: eine Untersuchung zu architektur- und liturgiegeschichtlichen Problemen* (Wiesbaden, 1983) XVI.

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

[39] 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, 1901-1906), vol. 11, col. 975, no. 73.

[40] E. Kitzinger, 'The Threshold of the Holy Shrine: Observations on the Floor Mosaics at Antioch and Bethlehem', in P. Granfield and J. A. Jungman, eds., *Kyriakon. Festschrift Johannes Quasten*, ii (Aschendorff, Muenster, Westfalen, 1970), 640.

[41] Britt, 249. Britt cites examples from Kursi, Tabgha, Nazareth, and elsewhere.

[42] Segal, Arthur *et al*., *Hippos-sussita: Sixth Season of Excavations: June-July 2005* (Haifa, 2005), 69-71.

been drawn for healing purposes.[43] The discovery of the healing amulet, although pagan, supports this hypothesis.[44]

The Northeast Church is quite representative of the Byzantine period. Its mosaics show affinity with practice in the lower Galilee of this time, and its memorial burials find significant parallels in churches in the region of the Decapolis (`Ayn al-Kanisah,[45] Gadara,[46] Gerasa,[47] and Mount Nebo[48]). The church is one of at least eight churches identified at Hippos.

Probes beneath the floor levels of the complex consistently show ceramic assemblages dating no later than the late 5th or early 6th centuries. The Northeast Church was most likely built during that time frame. But the church was clearly situated within the pre-existing street grid of the city. In so doing, it is a witness to the transitions though which Antiochia Hippos went during its history. The Northeast Church used one street as its westerly portico. It incorporated walls of a previous building (W512b and W554), probably a house of similar design to the House of Tyche (see domestic remains under the south hall and in the plaza to its south; Cistern A may have served a peristyle court), and set some of its walls over foundations of earlier ones (e.g., W541). To the north of the church we have evidence of a two-story structure. The apse of the church interrupted the small cardo to the east and intruded into the western wall of the peristyle house. But the intrusion into the west wall of the House of Tyche retained the southern jamb of a large doorway into the south portico of the peristyle. That door was subsequently narrowed in a fashion similar to the narrowing of doors in the *skeuophylakion.* The retention of the doorway and its subsequent modification suggest incorporation of at least part of the house into the larger monastic complex.[49]

While many particulars remain unclear, we hypothesize that this former housing area northeast of the Roman basilica reached its 'fulfillment' as a monastery.[50] Paul Magdalino has argued that 'many, if not most, urban and suburban churches and monasteries were converted lay οἶκοι.'[51] 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 material as well as spiritual benefits to the founder and those of his [or her] descendants who inherited proprietary rights to the establishment.'[52]

Hippos itself would be destroyed by a major earthquake in the mid eighth century, after which it was never re-occupied as a city. However, well prior to that earthquake, liturgical rites ceased in the Northeast 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

[43] '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. Abbakyros 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.' A.-M. Talbot, 'Pilgrimage to Healing Shrines: The Evidence of Miracle Accounts,' *Dumbarton Oaks Papers,* 56 (2002), 154. Includes a bibliography of sources.

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

[45] C. Sanmori and C. Pappalardo, 'Caramica del monastero della Theotokos net Wadi `Ayn al-Kanisah – Monto Nebo,' *Liber Annuus,* 50 (2000), 411-430. One of the burials may be a later Muslim intrusion.

[46] Michele Piccirillo, *The Mosaics of Jordan* (Amman, 1993), 328.

[47] Not yet published.

[48] Sylvester Saller, *The Memorial of Moses on Mount Nebo, Part 1 -- The Text* (Jerusalem, 1941), 35-39.

[49] Segal, Arthur *et al*., *Hippos-sussita: Ninth Season of Excavations: June-July 2008* (Haifa, 2008), 45.

[50] Segal *2009*, 71.

[51] Paul Magdalino, 'The Byzantine Aristocratic *Oikos*,' in Michael Angold, ed., *The Byzantine Aristocracy IX to XIII Centuries* (Oxford, BAR International Series 221, 1984), 94.

[52] Magdalino, 102.

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 and its compound became a mausoleum and were abandoned well before the infamous earthquake.

THE WESTERN BUILDING COMPLEXES

To the west of Cardo 2N are a series of building complexes with eastern faces of eight to nine meters in length and with spaces between those buildings of about six meters. They represent a third phase in the occupation of Hippos – the Umayyad period (661-750).

The Alpha building sits on the northwest corner of the junction of Cardo 2N and the *decumanus maximus* (Figure 12). The building is 12.9 m from east to west and 10.96 m from north to south. It is a rectangular building with a paved plaza on the northeast corner. The complex consists of four rooms. The only known access to the building is via an L-shaped staircase from the plaza to the north.

The easterly storage room (6.34 m north to south and 2.0 m east to west) is bounded on the east by a Chorazin wall (W1926) with a doorway on the north end. The floor is extremely crude (F1929) of randomly distributed flat stones. Our hypothesis is that this area served as a storage room, as was supported by a high concentration of Beisan jar fragments. In the central room (6.13 m from north to south and 3.46 m from east to west), there is a bench against the south wall (W1888) and two doorways to rooms to the west. The northern doorway has its lintel stone *in situ*. The stone floor (F1934) consists of irregular flagstones and is somewhat uneven. The southwest room (4.69 m from east to west and 2.91 m from north to south) also has a bench lining the south wall (W1888). There are two niches in the north wall (W1982) of the room. The floor (F2009) consists of tightly placed rectangular stones of irregular sizes. A watering bowl sits in the northeast corner the room. One stone of the bench near the doorway had a hole drilled in it, perhaps for tying an animal.

The northwest room (4.69 m from east to west and 2.84 m from north to south) also has two niches in the north wall. The east niche contained two nearly complete pots dated to the late seventh or early eighth centuries. The northwest room is subdivided by a limestone wall constructed of a single row of blocks set on end (W2002).

The surviving portions of the Alpha building likely served a storage function for whatever floor(s) stood above. The heavy basalt ashlars of the exterior walls suggest something substantive above, as does the presence of a staircase. The building's function was likely utilitarian or even industrial in view of its plain construction and surrounding installations.

In the northern section of the floor of the central room there appears to be the remains of stylobate running east to west. The stylobate is 0.89 m wide. In the northwest room, we exposed a second stylobate running north to south that continues under W2007. This stylobate likely formed a corner with the east-to-west stylobate in the central room. The outward face of the north-to-south stylobate is to the west and is 4.12 m from the line of the east face of the wall of the Roman *basilica*. The stylobate is 33 cm thick and sits on a foundation base. In the Roman period, a large public building likely stood in this location.

Although the Alpha building witnesses the final stage of the history of Hippos, within it are indicators of earlier Roman grandeur.

THE PLAZA

Excavation of the space between the Alpha and Beta complexes revealed a paved surface spanning the distance between the two block buildings (almost 6 m). The plaza itself is constructed of basalt pavers similar to those used in Cardo 2 North and extends 6.68 meters to the west of the *cardo* (Figure 13). A staircase sits atop the paved surface. The staircase is 1.15 m wide and rises to the east. Six stairs remain *in situ*. We speculate that about four more stairs completed the staircase to a height of more

than two meters. One who climbed the staircase would then turn south and walk over the structures below to the second story of the Alpha building.

One paver of the plaza shows a worn inscription on its surface. The inscription may be transcribed as follows:

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

It reads:

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

The paver was cut from a larger inscription, the other two fragments of which have been discovered providing the reason for the honorific, as 'patron and builder of the fatherland.' The former Graeco-Roman culture is trod underfoot.

In the southwest corner of the plaza is a crudely built small room with interior dimensions of 1.6 m x 2 m. The paving of the plaza was removed to set threshold, walls, and pedestals of small room. The room blocked access to the space between the Alpha building and the Beta complex and is characteristic of the Byzantine custom of creating low-status structures by subdividing disused spaces.[53]

THE BETA COMPLEX

The Beta complex is an L-shaped structure the wraps around the northwest corner of the paved plaza (Figure 14). Its southern room (interior dimension is 4.5 x 5 m) is one half meter below the paved plaza and is itself similarly paved with basalt pavers upon which the northern wall is set, suggesting that an outdoor plaza was later enclosed. A double sized doorway to the east gives access to the plaza, and a doorway to the north gives access to the northwest room, albeit at a higher elevation (by 0.65m). The roof of the room was held up by a double arch with a central column and a capital used as a pilaster to the south. The arch used the north wall as it base, because a third arch to the north supported the roof for that room. The northwest room (5.1 x 5.5 m) in the complex is more poorly constructed and was abutted to the south room (secondarily). The exterior faces are basalt ashlars with crude and sometimes undefined interiors. There was a second small doorway from the northwest room into a courtyard to the east. The floor is compressed earth. The northeast room (6.1 x 2.7 m) is of similar construction. It has a single doorway in its southeast corner to a courtyard. Directly south is a crudely paved courtyard that was at least partially roofed. In the southeast corner is a makeshift limestone staircase which led to the roof or a second story. This unremarkable structure probably served a domestic purpose and was utilitarian at best.

Remarkable in the excavation of the rooms of the Beta complex was the relative paucity of ceramic finds. No restorable vessels were found. Some heavy stone bowls were pushed against a wall and doorways were intentionally blocked. The Beta complex was abandoned prior to the earthquake of the mid eighth century CE. The westerly structures not only illustrate the extreme poverty of the Umayyad period, but they also mark a trend notable throughout the excavation area of the Project. This quadrant of Hippos, located as close as it may be to the center of the city, was essentially abandoned well before

[53] G. Dagron, 'The Urban Economy, Seventh-Twelfth Centuries,' in *The Economic History of Byzantium*, A. E. Laiou, (ed.) (Washington, D.C., 2002), 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.

the earthquake. Such would likely be true of much of the rest of the city. The glories of Antiochia Hippos were in the distant past.

CONCLUSION

The twelve seasons of the Northeast Insula Project have uncovered a microcosm of the transitions through which the city passed during its history: from Graeco-Roman to Umayyad, from pagan to Christian, from wealth to poverty, from Polis to abandonment. During its last years, Hippos did not benefit from its proximity to the Umayyad center of power in Damascus, and with the shift to Abbasid rule of 750 CE no reconstruction followed. Hippos was a memory at best until the arrival of the archaeologists.

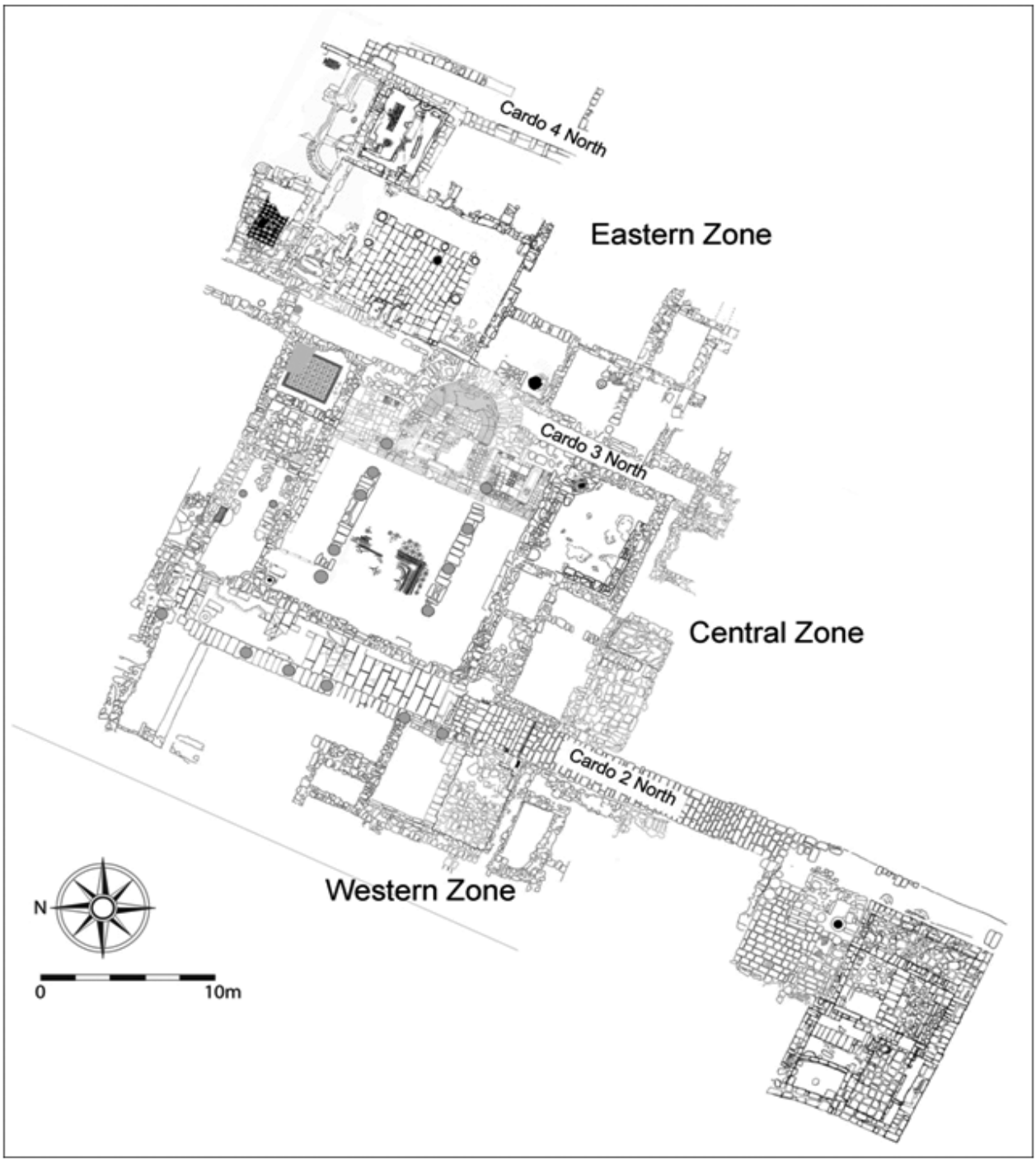
Cardo 4 North
Eastern Zone
Cardo 3 North
Central Zone
Cardo 2 North
Western Zone
N
0
10m

Figure 1

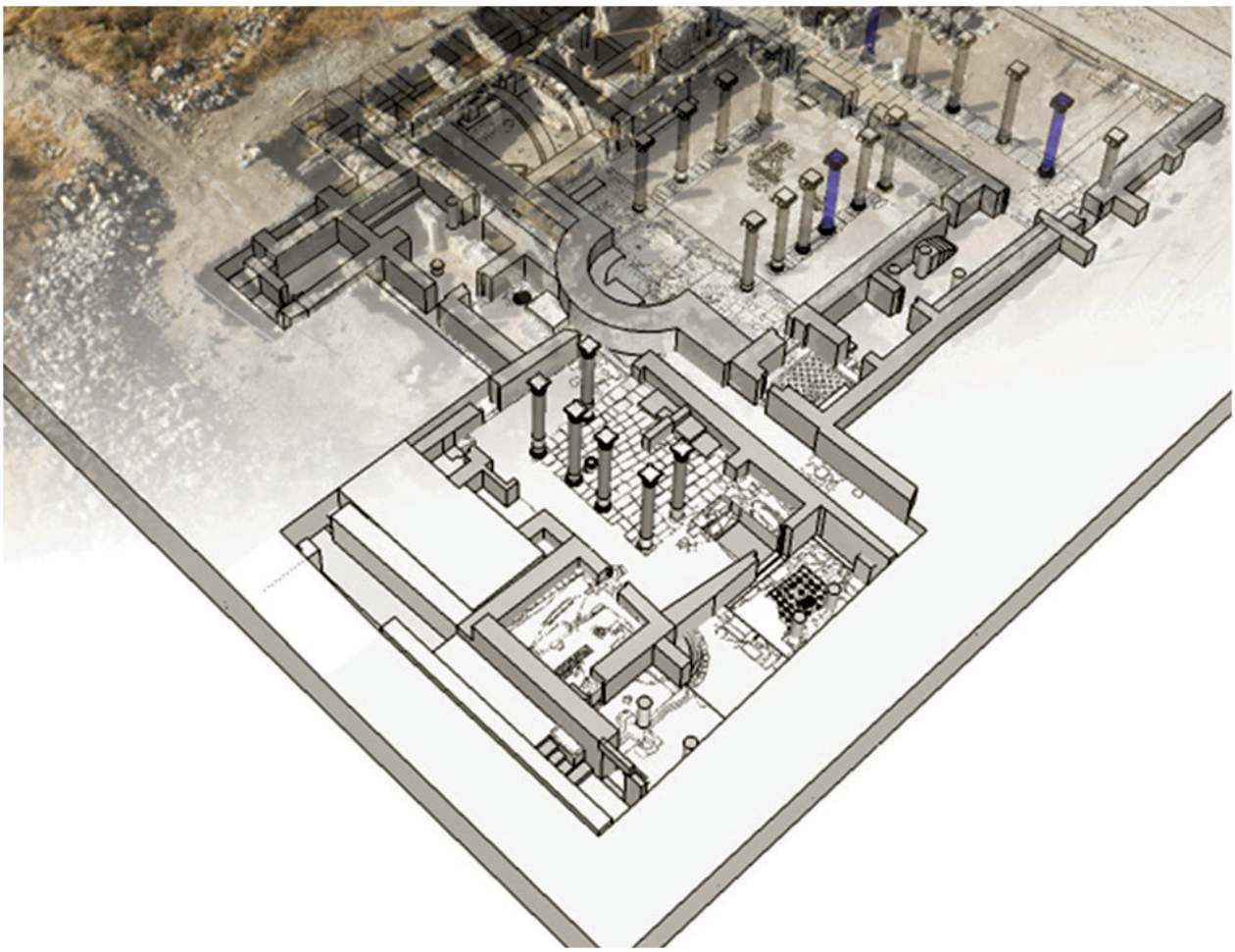

Figure 2

Figure 3

Figure 4

Figure 5

Figure 6

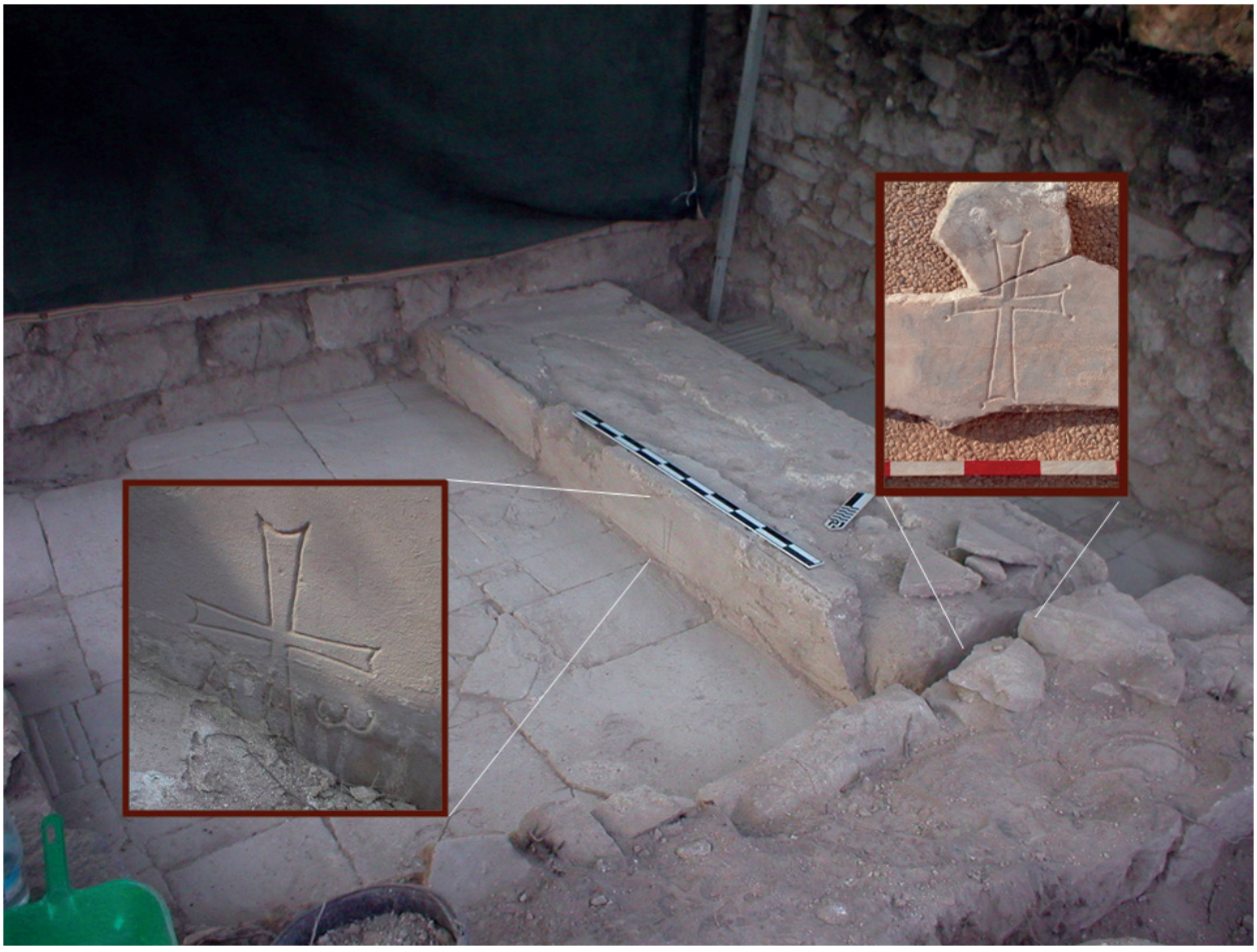

Figure 7

Figure 8

Figure 9

Figure 10

Figure 11

Figure 12

Figure 13

Figure 14

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