

HIPPOS - SUSSITA

**Seventh Season of Excavations
July 2006**



**Zinman Institute of Archaeology
University of Haifa**



אוניברסיטת חיפה • המכון לארכיאולוגיה ע"ש זינמן
UNIVERSITY OF HAIFA • ZINMAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHAEOLOGY

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Seventh Season of Excavations

(July 2006)

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Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION	4
THE <i>DECUMANUS MAXIMUS</i> (DME) ARTHUR SEGAL	9
THE AREA EAST OF THE HELLENISTIC COMPOUND (HLC) ARTHUR SEGAL	14
THE SOUTH CITY WALL (SWL) MICHAEL EISENBERG	23
TWO GREEK INSCRIPTIONS FROM THE <i>DECUMANUS MAXIMUS</i> ADAM ŁAJTAR	35
AN EARLY ARABIC INSCRIPTION FROM THE <i>DECUMANUS MAXIMUS</i> MOSHE SHARON	43
NORTH-WEST CHURCH COMPLEX (NWC) JOLANTA MŁYNARCZYK & MARIUSZ BURDAJEWICZ	47
CONSERVATION WORK IN THE NORTH-WEST CHURCH COMPLEX JULIA BURDAJEWICZ	60
NORTH-EAST CHURCH COMPLEX (NEC) MARK SCHULER	66
CONSERVATION REPORT FOR THE 7 TH SEASON EWA RADZIEJOWSKA	79
RADIOCARBON AGE DETERMINATION DANUTA NAWROCKA, ANNA PAZDUR, DANUTA MICHCZYNSKA	82
POTTERY REPORT JOLANTA MŁYNARCZYK	91
GLASS FINDS FROM THE NORTH-WEST CHURCH COMPLEX MARIUSZ BURDAJEWICZ	127
THE COINS CATALOGUE ARIEL BERMAN	144

Conservation Work in the North-West Church Complex

Julia Burdajewicz

In accordance with the conservation schedule prepared for the 2006 season, a variety of treatments were applied to the structures uncovered in previous years, such as condition checking, consolidation of weakened or detached plaster and mosaic fragments, protection of the edges of plasters and mosaics, cleaning and protection of polychrome plaster surfaces. At the same time, the uncovering of new rooms of the church compound was accompanied by emergency protective actions. The team, supervised by Mrs. Ewa Radziejowska, was composed of Ms. Julia Burdajewicz, Ms. Maria Bator, Mr. Jan Morzycki–Markowski, students at the Conservation Department of the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw, as well as Mr. Michael Aniszewski, MA student at the Institute of Archeology, Warsaw University.

1. Wall plasters

a) Winery in the northern wing of the NWC

Conservation action in the winery began from the twin plastered compartments for storing grapes (L782-783). Since these compartments were unearthed only during the last days of the previous (2005) season, they had to be left virtually without any protective intervention. However, due to a fairly good quality of their plaster revetment, no serious plaster losses were recorded over the past months. Stabilization treatments conducted there in 2006 included strengthening of the broken plaster edges with bands of lime-based mortar as well as applying a number of glue injections (Primal AC-33). As a result, the preservation state of the plaster lining has been estimated as satisfactory; it is only in the northern compartment (L783), which was partly destroyed by a military trench, that a danger of partial plaster loss on the edges of the modern trench has not entirely been eliminated (see fig.1).

Stabilization treatments begun in 2005 season inside the wine collection pool (L776) had to be continued during the season of 2006 as well. Numerous voids and blisters recorded on the surface of the hydraulic plaster coating the walls were cleaned and consolidated with the use of a liquid mortar based on hydraulic lime, while the plaster edges were being fixed and reinforced by means of bands of lime-based mortar. The whole process was complex and time-consuming due to the fact that the pool coating

consists of as many as three layers of plaster differing in quality and thickness. Also the fragility of plaster layers, with big blisters hidden underneath, prevented us from injecting too much mortar at one time. These treatments need to be continued also during the next season (see fig. 2). Finally, poor remains of hydraulic plaster surviving on the walls of the wine press platform (L775) and the fermentation room (L210) were cleaned and protected by applying lime-based mortar bands.

b) Columns' drums and capitals stored in a *lapidarium*

Five drums (NWC06 – 11) and five column capitals of basalt (NWC03 - 05, NWC16 – 17) uncovered in the *basilica* during the seasons of 2000-2001 and buried since then under an earthen mound, were re-exposed during this season and moved to a safe storing place by the northern entrance to the *atrium*. All these architectural elements were covered with remains of plaster. During routine cleaning and removing of a thick layer of dirt, a green applied colouring was discovered on columns' drums, and a red one - on capitals. The surface was cleaned using dental tools, scalpels and soft brushes, after which the coloured plasters were protected with 3% Paraloid B-72 solution in acetone (see fig. 3).

c) Conservation schedule for plasters in 2007 season includes:

- Completing of the stabilization treatments in the collecting vat of the winery begun in previous seasons: consolidation of detached fragments and protection of the edges.
- Checking of the condition of plastered parts of walls treated during previous seasons and subsequent consolidation and strengthening actions on weakened or detached fragments wherever required.
- Recording and describing of any changes in the condition of the plaster that might have occurred since the end of 2006 season.
- Emergency work following exploration of new areas wherever required.

2. Mosaic floors

During the season of 2006 the conservation actions on mosaic floors embraced the following areas: the northern wing (F768 in the fermentation room 210W as well as F785 in a small corridor L780 and under the military trench L796), the south-western

corner of the *atrium* (F449), and the southern aisle of the church. In the fermentation room, the mosaic floor F768 has been preserved in a very good condition, as its industrial character required strength and resistance to possible damage occurring during the exploitation. Conservation treatment focused on the south-western corner of the room where intentional gap in the mosaic was provided with a sort of sink. The edges of this gap have been protected by means of a lime-based mortar. The bedding under the mosaic was also strengthened using Primal E-330 injections. In the coming season, it is recommended to reconstruct an original arrangement of mosaic cubes in the missing part of the framing to the “sink” area, due to its significance for understanding of this room’s functions. Basic stabilization treatment was applied also to the mosaic of an original northern annexe of the church (F785) the parts of which were discovered under the small corridor (L780) and military trench (L796). The undertaken actions included the edges’ reinforcement with lime-based mortar bands and injections with Primal E-330.

In the south-west corner of the porticoes of the *atrium*, where an “industrial” (made of big cubes) mosaic was discovered, the actions were virtually limited to the cleaning. Despite the scanty cube wastage, mosaic floor in this area is in bad condition due to the low quality of the bedding and probably to ground movements during the earthquake and throughout the years. As a result, the whole floor structure became wavy with many bulges and depressions. Moreover, the whole mosaic surface in this area is covered by a thick and very hard layer of probably calcium salt incrustations. Wide range of cleaning tests, including the use of mechanical and chemical means, were made in order to find the best cleaning method and identify the pattern of the floor. The mosaic turned out to be plain white. No further cleaning actions were taken due to a time-consuming character of this intervention. Mosaic was covered with 20 centimeters of sieved earth.

Protective layer of sand and fabric covering the floor of the southern aisle of the church was lifted during this season in order to record condition of the mosaic and any changes that may have occurred since year 2004 when it was covered. All structural and surface conditions as well as results of the previous conservators’ interventions have been described and recorded both as a text and as graphic documentation (see fig. 4).

Conservation schedule for mosaic floors in 2007 season includes:

- Completing of work in the south-west corner of the fermentation room: reconstruction of the mosaic border of the sunken area and overall documentation of the mosaic floor in this room.
- Uncovering of the mosaic floor in the southern aisle at the places where damage processes were noticed during the 2006 season and undertaking stabilization actions.
- Recording of the condition of the mosaics throughout the church complex and proceeding with further documentation activities, especially in the northern aisle of the church.

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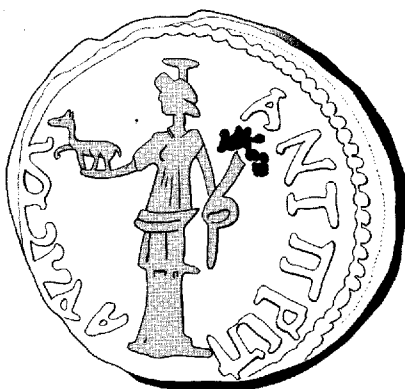




Fig. 1, Twin plastered compartments for storing grapes in the winery in northern wing of North-West Church. State of preservation after treatments conducted in 2006 season. Note military trench in the northern compartment.



Fig. 2, Collecting vat in the northern annexe of the North-West Church. State of preservation after the conservation treatments applied in 2006 season.



Fig. 3, Remains of green-coloured plaster covering columns' drums stored in the *lapidarium* by the northern entrance to the *atrium*. State of preservation after routine cleaning and removing of a thick layer of dirt (close-up).

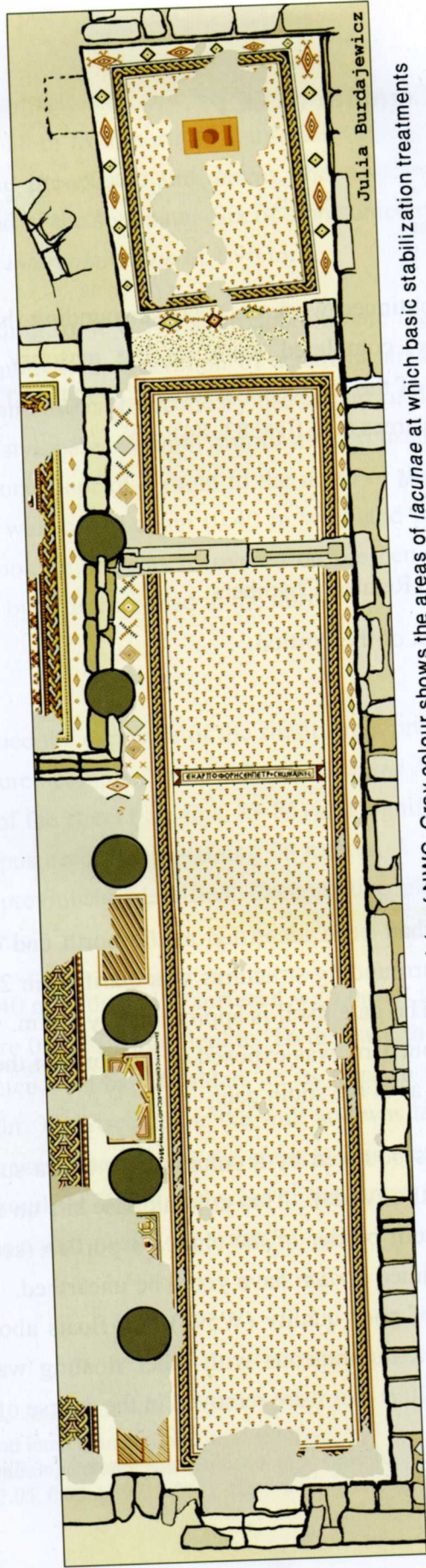


Fig. 4. Plan of the mosaic as preserved in the southern aisle of NWC. Gray colour shows the areas of lacunae at which basic stabilization treatments were conducted during previous seasons.