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CHURCHES AND SOCIETY IN BYZANTINE AND UMAYYAD-PERIOD HIPPOS

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Without archaeological sources, not much would be known about Christianity in Hippos, one of the bishoprics of the province of *Palaestina* and, from A.D. 400 on, of *Palaestina Secunda*, initially under the patriarchate of Antioch until that of Jerusalem was established in A.D. 451.[1] The acts of ecumenical councils mention only three names of the bishops of Hippos, specifically, those of Petros (present at Seleucia in A.D. 359 and at Antioch in A.D. 363), Konon (Jerusalem, in A.D. 518) and Theodoros (Jerusalem, in A.D. 536).[2] A "stupid bishop of Hippoi in Palestine" (whose name has not been written down) is mentioned in connection with an imperial edict of AD 564/565.[3] From the story of Maximus the Confessor (provided it is reliable) one may conclude that by the second half of the sixth century Tiberias was the capital of a district in which the Golan Heights were contained,[4] so it must have included Hippos as well. With the Muslim conquest of this region in A.D. 634, Tiberias (*Tabariyyah*) was established as the capital of the Jordan province (*Jund al-Urdunn*). Literary sources from the period between A.D. 793 and 1038 mention Tiberias as the seat of Monophysite bishops subject to the patriarch of Antioch.[5] Even during the first decades of the Islamic rule, in A.D. 684 (council at Reshaina in Syria), a Jacobite bishopric of the Golan is mentioned, with its seat in Paneas.[6] Considering the geographical proximity of both Tiberias and Paneas to Hippos (Early Islamic Sûsiyah), all three cities within the borders of *Jund al-Urdunn*,[7] as well as presumed presence of Ghassānid Arabs in some villages of the Gaulanitis, who converted to Monophysite Christianity in the sixth century,[8] one may cautiously suggest that Hippos (Susita, Sûsiyah) may also have been within the sphere of the Monophysite influence.

[1] Bagatti 1984, 85.
[2] *Ibidem*, 56 and 94.
[3] Honigmann 1951, 129, note 4.
[4] Brock 1973, 314.
[5] Honigmann 1951, 162, note 6; Honigmann 1954, 153, no. 23.
[6] *Ibidem*, 101-103 and 124.
[7] Walmsley 1992, 344.
[8] Gregg 2000, 522.

Archaeological evidence concerning the life of the Christian inhabitants of Hippos comes mostly from the churches, four of which have so far been excavated (**Fig. 1**).[9] The so-called **Cathedral** (or the South-East Church) was the subject of emergency fieldwork conducted in 1952-1955 by C. Epstein on behalf of the Antiquity Department of Israel (**Fig. 2**).[10] This is the biggest, but also the least known of all the churches at Hippos, since information about it has never been comprehensively published, and its atrium remains unexcavated. It has been called a "Cathedral" on account both of its size and of the presence of a large three-aisled and three-apsidal baptistery built in between the northern wall of the church and the main east-west street (termed *decumanus* by its excavators).[11] The Cathedral is a three-aisled basilica with a single apse inscribed in a protruding rectangle; the apse has a *synthronon*, and the chancel is contained within the nave.[12] The church was lavishly decorated: the granite columns and marble Corinthian capitals were *spolia* from some Roman-period building(s), the floor of the basilica was paved with *opus sectile* of multi-coloured stones set in geometric patterns, the walls had mosaics and marble revetment, and even the threshold of the central door leading from the atrium to the nave was inscribed with the Greek word *ekklêsia* (congregation, church).[13] Unlike the basilica, both the baptistery and the porticoes of the atrium (of which only the north-east corner has been unearthed) were decorated with mosaics.

Unfortunately, the spacious atrium of the Cathedral still remains to be uncovered and so does the area that provided access to both the church and the baptistery. It is supposed that on the west side this ecclesiastical complex was separated from what appears to be a Byzantine-to-Umayyad period bathhouse by a passage ascended from the level of the *decumanus* by a flight of four steps shadowed by a portico.[14] It is worthy of note that these *propylaea* seem to antedate the final paving of the adjoining section of the *decumanus*.

The Cathedral and the adjoining baptistery yielded important epigraphic finds and prosopographic/chronological information. The face of a marble slab (*pluteus*) belonging to the chancel screen of the church and dated to the sixth century[15] is decorated with a representation of a canopy (*ciborium*) with a globular ribbed vessel hanging under it, probably to be interpreted as a "Eucharistic reserve" container rather than as a lamp or censer. At the top of the panel a Greek inscription is carved, apparently recording the screen's installation during

[9] Segal 2007b.
[10] Epstein 1993, 635; Epstein, Tzaferis 1991, 89-90.
[11] *Ibidem*; Segal 2003, 21-23, figs. 14 and 39-40.
[12] For the plan of the basilica and baptistery, see Epstein, Tzaferis 1991, 89, plan I; Segal 2003, fig. 14.
[13] Epstein, Tzaferis 1991, 89-90.
[14] Segal, Eisenberg 2005, 10-11, fig. 31; Segal 2006, 12.
[15] Martin Nagy *et al.*1996, 175-176, cat. No. 23; Israeli, Mevorah 2000, 73 and 217.

the time of priest (*presbyteros*) Prokopios. It is logical to assume that Prokopios fulfilled his priestly duty in this very church. Apparently the same person is a dedicant of one of three mosaic inscriptions found on the floor of the baptistery. From this inscription, located in the baptistery's northern aisle,[16] it may be understood that Prokopios funded the mosaic in memory of those who were dear to him. It seems that he was not the only contributor, because another inscription, placed in front of the apse terminating the southern aisle, records a *prosphora* (offering) to St. Kosmas and Damian by "those whose names are known to the Lord". Finally, in the nave of the baptistery a rather fragmentary inscription was found which nevertheless preserved the date of the paving of the baptistery: year 654 according to the era of Hippos, which equals A.D. 591. The central apse of the baptistery houses a cruciform baptismal font, while in the centre of both lateral apses two Greek words, *phôs* and *zôê*, are arranged crosswise.

The dating proposed for the basilica by the excavators is the first half of the fifth century, while the baptistery would be "almost certainly a considerably later addition".[17] Such a chronological sequence may indeed be true (even if the mosaic floor of the baptistery might in fact have postdated its construction) as the building materials and technique of the two buildings differ from each other, and the floor of the baptistery is elevated above that of the basilica. Moreover, the lack of *pastophoria* in the basilica the aisles of which end in line with the chord of the apse suggests that its plan must have been conceived before the introduction of the Great Entrance rite to the liturgy which took place at some time during the sixth century.[18]

The so-called **North-West Church**, excavated by the Polish team in 2000-2008,[19] yielded a number of invaluable archaeological deposits securely sealed by the debris of an earthquake. There can be no doubt that the earthquake in question was that of January 18th, A.D. 749, since (apart from scores of typical Umayyad-period ceramic vessels) the latest coin, sealed on the floor of the northern aisle, was minted in Tiberias between A.D. 737 and 746.[20] Most importantly, the contents of destruction deposits prove that the church was liturgically active till that very moment.[21] It was built to the north of the *agora*

[16] For the baptistery and its inscriptions (including their exact location), see Epstein, Tzaferis 1991, 90-93, figs. 3-5.

[17] *Ibidem*, 93.

[18] This is believed to have happened during the times of Justin II (A.D. 565-578): Crowfoot 1938, 251.

[19] The institutions, represented by the team members, were the Research Centre for Mediterranean Archaeology (Polish Academy of Sciences), the National Museum in Warsaw and the Institute of Archaeology (University of Warsaw). The work was financially supported by Grant No 1H01 B009 29 of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education (2005-2007).

[20] Berman 2001, 38, cat. no. 31. The same earthquake largely destroyed Beisan, cf. Bar-Nathan, Mazor 2007, XIV.

[21] Mlynarczyk, Burdajewicz 2003, 31-32; cf. Mlynarczyk 2008a, *passim*.

(**Fig. 1**), the central public square (termed "Forum" by the excavators), on the site of an Augustan/Tiberian-period sanctuary,[22] not earlier than at the turn of the fifth century (based on the material associated with the stylobate foundation in the atrium)[23] or even during the first half of the sixth century. The church builders re-used parts of the *cella* walls (like the northern wall, *in extenso* incorporated into the northern wall of the basilica) as well as the stylobate of the eastern portico of the *temenos*.

A puzzling issue is that of the nature of the usage of the temple area in the period between the abandonment of the pagan cult (probably not later than the turn of the fourth century) and the construction of the North-West Church a century (or more) later.[24] At this point, I should like to emphasize the fact that very little is known about the early Byzantine (fifth-century) period at Hippos. At the present state of the excavations at the site, I can name just three places in which the fourth/fifth century constructions can be found. One of them is the so-called "pilasters' building", an elongated north-south hall situated on the eastern side of the paved forecourt which preceded the entrance to the temple *cella*.[25] This building, constructed directly upon the pavement of the *temenos*,[26] might still have been erected within the Roman period (possibly to serve as a banqueting hall for the sanctuary), but it was clearly posterior to the original plan of the Early Roman *temenos* since it encroached upon a stretch of the eastern portico of the latter.[27] Another construction which may date from the Late Roman/Early Byzantine period was discovered in the north-eastern part of the Forum, at its junction with the *decumanus*. An east-west flight of steps unearthed by the Israeli team was associated there with a floor dated by the coins to the fourth/fifth century.[28] Finally, a bathhouse built to the south of the Forum, its *caldarium* partly covering a section of an earlier Roman-period city wall, also appears to pertain to the Late Roman-Early Byzantine period.[29]

The North-West Church was a three-aisled basilica with an internal apse; it was preceded by a spacious square atrium and flanked by symmetrical side wings which were by ca. 4.5 m shorter than the long sides of the basilica.

[22] Mlynarczyk, Burdajewicz 2004, 67-68, fig. 25; Mlynarczyk, Burdajewicz 2005a, 53; Mlynarczyk, Burdajewicz. 2005b, 16.

[23] *Ibidem*, 46.

[24] Given this chronology, one can hardly accept the statement that the church "was erected in the very centre of the pagan sanctuary as a sign and symbol of the triumph of Christianity" (Segal 2003, 15). It must have been practical rather than ideological reasons that played a role in locating the church in that particular place.

[25] In area HLC: Segal, Eisenberg 2005, 26-28, figs. 5, 57-59.

[26] Segal, Eisenberg 2004, 25 and 30.

[27] This western wall has tentatively been dated to the Byzantine period by Segal, Eisenberg 2004, 30.

[28] In area HLC IV: Segal 2007a, 26-27, figs. 41-43.

[29] In area SWL-I: Segal, Eisenberg 2005, 13-14, figs. 10 and 36-39; Eisenberg 2006, 25 (area SWL-I); Eisenberg. 2007, 43, figs. 69-71.

Unlike in the Cathedral, the colonnades of the basilica and most columns in the atrium were of basalt (although the colonnades of the *domus* contain a few marble bases in secondary use) with Byzantine-type Ionic capitals. The original plan of the compound (**Fig. 3**) is fairly close to that of the basilica in nearby Kursi which is believed to have been constructed in the late fifth/early sixth century.[30] Unlike the Kursi church, however, this one had galleries above the aisles as attested by large pieces of monochrome white mosaic floor found above their walking level.[31] The galleries might have been the place destined specifically for catechumens to participate in the liturgy of the Word (the *exorcisterion* mentioned in the fifth-century *Testamentum Domini*),[32] which seems to be confirmed by the fact that the only access to the North-West Church galleries appears to have been provided by the flight of steps constructed outside the north-eastern part of the atrium.[33]

In the architectural development of the North-West Church two main phases (I-II) were distinguished (the second phase divided into two sub-phases); they are followed by a third phase (III) which reflects decline rather than development in the life of the local congregation.[34] During Phase I (**Fig. 3**), the *pastophoria*, slightly trapezoid in outline, must have been simple extensions of the aisles, either identical in shape[35] or with the south *pastophorion* distinguished by a wide arched entrance.[36] The northern *pastophorion* was connected with the apse by means of a low and narrow doorway. The rectangular chancel, probably elevated two or three steps above the walking level of the basilica, was contained within the nave, as was that of the Cathedral. The side wings flanking the basilica were each connected with the corresponding aisle by a doorway. The southern wing, the plan of which apparently did not undergo any changes throughout the lifetime of the church compound, consisted of two parts: a large two-room unit entered from the southern aisle and a small square room entered from the atrium; the latter, containing twin cist tombs, must have been conceived as a mortuary chamber.[37] On the contrary, the plan of the northern wing is ill-known, since at the final phase of the compound it was transformed into a winery. A few probes, nevertheless, allowed us to

[30] Tzaferis 1983, 3-4, and plan 3.
[31] Mlynarczyk, Burdajewicz 2001, 10; Mlynarczyk, Burdajewicz 2002, 20 and fig. 36.
[32] *Apud* Crowfoot 1938, 175.
[33] Mlynarczyk, Burdajewicz 2007, 65, fig. 102.
[34] For the phasing of the North-West Church, see Mlynarczyk 2008a.
[35] As in Khirbet Samra on the shore of the Sea of Galilee (Tzaferis 1993, 228-229, plan 1) and in some churches in Arabia, e.g. St. Menas in Rihab (Piccirillo 1986, 100-101, Abb. 102).
[36] As in 'Ein Hanniya (Wilkinson 1993, 19). Such arched entrance in Syrian (and apparently also Palestinian) churches was a characteristic of martyrs' chapels (Lassus 1947, 162 and 180).
[37] Mlynarczyk, Burdajewicz 2004, 55-57, figs. 18-19 and 61-63. It is noteworthy that the funerary crypt in the Kursi church occupies the very same location (Tzaferis 1983, 12-13, Plan 3, pl. XI:5.

establish that the eastern part of the wing in question was occupied by a room with a mosaic floor accessible through a doorway in the northern aisle.[38] Due to the limited scope of the probes, there are no grounds to support the tempting hypothesis that this room may have served as a baptistery.[39] It seems that there was another room in the western part of the north wing, to judge from a blocked doorway initially connecting it with the atrium.[40]

The most important change that occurred in the plan of the church during the early second phase (Phase IIa) was the construction of a lateral apse in front of the east end of the northern aisle. It was doubtlessly dictated by the development of the liturgy, specifically, the introduction of the Great Entrance rite at some time during the second half of the sixth century;[41] apparently, the lateral apse was to serve as a *prothesis* chapel, a starting point for the solemn procession in which the Eucharistic gifts were being brought to the altar. The bi-apsidal plan of the basilica with asymmetrical *pastophoria* has only few (and rather distant) parallels in the provinces of Palestine, Phoenicia and Arabia.[42] With the construction of the lateral apse, the northern *pastophorion* became an isolated room, accessible only through the shaft situated behind the *synthronon* in the main apse. Therefore, we identify it as the *skeuophylakion*, the "treasury" of the church destined for the safekeeping of liturgical vessels, vestments and other valuables.[43] The chancel of this phase, still confined to the nave, became slightly enlarged on its three sides; however, nothing was preserved to suggest the exact location of the altar.

The atrium was entered from the outside through three doorways: one located in the western wall (apparently the main entrance, situated on the long axis of the basilica), another in the southern wall (accessible from the Forum area by a side street) and the third one in the northern wall. The eastern and southern porticoes had mosaic floors, while the east half of the northern portico, as well as the spacious courtyard, were paved with rectangular basalt flagstones.[44] The pavement in the entrance hall of the western portico consisted of irregular basalt slabs; a cubic *lavabo* of stone stood on the floor inside the southern doorjamb.[45]

[38] Mlynarczyk, Burdajewicz 2006, 57-58, figs. 66 and 81-82.

[39] Possible parallels would include Khirbet Karak across the Sea of Galilee (Delougaz, Haines 1960, 17-18, pl. 15) and the Cathedral compound at Hippos (although in the latter, the baptistery is a separate building); see also Mlynarczyk 2008a.

[40] Mlynarczyk, Burdajewicz 2005, 40, fig. 71; Mlynarczyk, Burdajewicz 2006, 48-49, fig. 70.

[41] See note 18 *supra*.

[42] Margalit 1990, 325-329, note 13, and 332-334, figs. 6 and 12; the closest parallel to the North-West Church is the church at Khirbet el-Beyudat to the north of Jericho, cf. Hizmi 1993, 156; cf. also Mlynarczyk, Burdajewicz 2002, 21 and note 4.

[43] Mlynarczyk, Burdajewicz 2001, 10; Mlynarczyk 2008a, note 45.

[44] Mlynarczyk, Burdajewicz 2004, 58-59, figs. 64-65 and 67 (mosaics); Mlynarczyk, Burdajewicz 2006, 50, figs. 71-72 (basalt pavers).

[45] Mlynarczyk, Burdajewicz 2007, 62, figs. 95-96.

The dating of Phase IIa was based on the style of the mosaic floors which are tied in to that architectural stage. The repertoire of their patterns is purely iconophobic, consisting of geometrical and geometrized floral motifs.[46] The floor of the northern aisle with its rich ornamental border can be dated to the last quarter of the sixth century on the basis of close parallels from two neighboring sites, both of them dated epigraphically: the "Cathedral" baptistery of Hippos, paved in A.D. 591,[47] and the baptistery of the church in Kursi, paved in A.D. 585.[48]

The mosaic floor of the southern aisle, which may slightly antedate that of the northern aisle, contains two inscriptions, each of them commemorating financial contributions (*karpophoria*) from an individual, specifically, Petros (possibly from *Kômê Kainê*) and He(lio)dora, the latter specifying the aim of her offering, which was the laying out of the mosaic floor.[49] No doubt contemporary with each other, these examples add to very rare instances of Christian inscriptions from Palestine that mention an actual sum offered to the church, which was regular practice with synagogue inscriptions.[50] A third mosaic inscription in the North-West Church has been placed midway along the south portico of the atrium and commemorates an anonymous offering (*prosphora*) for the eternal rest of *diakonissa* Anton(i)a. Again, this is one of only a few epigraphic attestations of the office of deaconess in Syro-Palestine; it is also worthy of note that an epitaph of another deaconess by the name of Nanna was found at Fîq, just a few kilometers away from Hippos.[51]

It seems that two individuals out of the three mentioned in the inscriptions of the North-West Church can be connected to those commemorated in the "Cathedral" baptistery at Hippos.[52] According to A. Lajtar, in the baptistery dedication made by Prokopios (probably the priest at the adjoining church) for the eternal rest of two persons apparently deceased by A.D. 591 (one of whom was Petros), the damaged name in the genitive (no doubt female) should be read as [*Anto*]*nas* ("of Antona"). This would provide us with the names of

[46] Mlynarczyk, Burdajewicz 2005a, 42-44.

[47] See note 16 *supra*.

[48] Tzaferis 1983, 28-29, pls. XI:3 and XII:4.

[49] Lajtar 2002; Lajtar 2008, 1-5 (revised reading in which the five letters following Petros' name would conceal the name of his native village: *Kômê Kainê)*. For the photographs of the inscriptions, see Mlynarczyk, Burdajewicz 2002, figs. 31-32; Mlynarczyk, Burdajewicz 2005a, 43, pl. 4.

[50] For discussion and references, see Lajtar 2008, 4-5 and notes 7-23.

[51] Mlynarczyk, Burdajewicz 2004, 58-59 and fig. 65; Lajtar 2005; Lajtar 2008, 6-7 (with the discussion of the office); for Syro-Palestinian epigraphic attestations of the office of deaconess, see Piccirillo 1981, 31 (tav. 19:24, from Gadara), 71-72 (tav. 57:16-17, from Rihab in Arabia); Meimaris 1986, 175-178, nos. 885-891 (with only two indubitable cases: those from Gadara and Silwan/Jerusalem); Gregg 2000, 535 and phot. 16 (from Fiq near Hippos), 541-543 (from Mansura in north/eastern Golan).

[52] This view, first expressed by A. Lajtar (Lajtar 2008, 7-9), seems very plausible to me.

Petros and Anton(i)a, the very individuals active in the embellishment (if not the construction) of the North-West Church, who (according to the new reading of the baptistery inscription by A. Lajtar) would be the parents (and not the children, as proposed by L. Di Segni, nor the sons, as proposed by V. Tzaferis) of Prokopios.[53] If Lajtar's reading is correct (which I find very convincing), we are dealing with records of a local influential family who lived in sixth-century Hippos and was active in two churches: the North-West Church and the Cathedral. In the North-West Church, Petros and He(lio)dora (his sister or perhaps his daughter) jointly funded the mosaic of the southern aisle and apparently also that of the atrium's south portico, the latter commemorating Anton(i)a (possibly Petros' wife and He(lio)dora's sister-in-law or mother). Next, Prokopios, possibly the son of Petros and Anton(i)a, commemorated his deceased parents on the mosaic floor of the Cathedral baptistery in A.D. 591.

The respective locations and reading directions of the three mosaic inscriptions discovered in the North-West Church are certainly relevant for the functional identification of the corresponding parts of the church. The inscription of Petros runs across the east part of the southern aisle, to be read while looking towards the arched entrance of the south *pastophorion*, emphasizing the prominent status of that room (probably already a place of a martyr's cult). The inscription of He(lio)dora, in the fifth intercolumniation of the southern aisle, was meant to be read while facing (and walking) southwards, towards the two-room unit in the south wing which can confidently be identified as the *diakonikon* of the church (see below). Finally, the inscription commemorating Anton(i)a the deaconess is situated on the long axis of the south portico of the atrium, to be read while walking towards the "mortuary chamber" in which one of the twin tombs must have been hers.

In the next development phase of the North-West Church (Phase IIb), (**Fig. 4**) the chancel area was extended to the sides, embracing the eastern ends of the aisles and assuming a T-shaped outline.[54] This re-arrangement of the chancel clearly postdates the laying out of the mosaics of the church since the base of the chancel screen in the south aisle was inserted into the pre-existing mosaic floor; we believe that this phase should be dated to the end of the sixth or early seventh century. It was apparently also during the same period that the doorway between the northern aisle and the northern wing was sealed.

In fact, the North-West Church is the only church in Hippos to feature a T-shaped chancel outline. The chancel screen panels (*plutei*) in the aisles

[53] Lajtar, *loc. cit.*, with references to previous publications of the Prokopios inscription by V. Tzaferis (Epstein, Tzaferis 1993), L. Di Segni and *SEG*.

[54] Mlynarczyk, Burdajewicz 2002, 18-19, 23 and note 10; Mlynarczyk 2008a (the parallels include Khirbet Karak church, two churches at Pella: East Church and Civic Complex Church, two churches at Gerasa: church of St.Peter and Paul and church of Isaiah; two churches at Sobata: the North and South Church, the North Church at Oboda, the cathedral of Elusa).

(of the nave's chancel screen nothing has survived at all) were of imported Greek marble, but their decoration, repeating the patterns very common in Palestine, was sculpted in a local workshop.[55] Of the two chancel screen panels in the southern aisle, the eastern (inner) face of one has an unfinished decoration, while the eastern face of the other is left undecorated, which seems to mirror a certain decline in the economic status of the local community. Into the floor of the southern *pastophorion* a large reliquary of pink limestone was inserted, its face decorated with a "Greek" cross (which means that the reliquary was to be viewed by the faithful while approaching the chancel screen), and a marble *mensa* was installed above it.[56] There is no doubt that this room, with its wide entrance arch bearing richly-painted decoration, served as a chapel for the martyr(s) cult.

The final phase of the church (Phase III, **Fig. 4**) marked the decline of the basilica, apparently as a result of heavy damage caused to the building by some unspecified disaster. Most probably, it was one of the earthquakes of the second half of the seventh century or the early eighth century, which damaged Beisan (Bet Shean) and Pella of the Decapolis in A.D. 659/660, and Pella again in A.D. 717 or 718.[57] Indeed, in the southern lateral chancel we found evidence of the mosaic floor having been repaired, while a radiocarbon dating of wall plaster from the *martyrion* chapel indicated the late seventh or early eighth century as the time of the last renovation of its walls. This phase ended with the earthquake of A.D. 749 which sealed some most important archaeological deposits.[58] The lateral chancel screens, especially that of the southern aisle, were found in an excellent state of preservation, as was the mosaic floor of the aisles, strikingly contrasting with the thoroughly-destroyed floor of the nave. This fact, as well as the lack of presbytery furnishings in the nave and the fact that only a few roof-tiles were collected there, strongly suggests that by A.D.749 only the aisles served liturgical purposes, while the nave was used as a sort of inner ("indoor") atrium, all the more so because the original atrium was by then a place of domestic (food preparation) activity.

The small northern apse, which was found filled with broken elements of marble furniture,[59] apparently housed a Eucharistic altar. An originally-rectangular

[55] On the decoration of the panels and their parallels, see Mlynarczyk, Burdajewicz 2005a, 44-48, pls. 5-7; Burdajewicz, Mlynarczyk 2006, 15-19.

[56] Mlynarczyk, Burdajewicz 2003, 25-27, figs. 46 and 66; Mlynarczyk, Burdajewicz 2005a, 48, pl. 10; Burdajewicz, Mlynarczyk 2006, 22-23, ills. 8 and 10.

[57] For these dates, see Bar-Nathan, Mazor 2007, XIV-XV; Walmsley 1992, 349; Ognibeni 2002, 112.

[58] See notes 20-21 *supra*. Skeletal remains of victims of this earthquake include the skull of a young woman found in the shaft of the atrium's cellar (Mlynarczyk, Burdajewicz 2006, 54) and bones of a woman and a child found in the atrium's west portico (Mlynarczyk, Burdajewicz 2007, 62; Deutsch 2007, 97-98).

[59] About this find, see Mlynarczyk, Burdajewicz 2005a, 48-50.

marble *mensa* was lacking about one third of its top, yet the trapezoid outline of the imprints of its legs on the mosaic floor[60] proves that it was still used despite its incomplete state. A marble reliquary in the form of a miniature sarcophagus (with a glass *ampulla* inside) must have been placed under the *mensa* on a cylindrical support, its base still inserted into the floor. Other marble furnishings included a stand, probably for a ceramic basin to serve as a *thalassa* (i.e., to clean Eucharistic vessels and to wash the celebrant's hands).[61] A bronze dove-shaped lamp found on the floor doubtless used to hang above (or possibly in front of) the altar.[62]

The finds from the southern *pastophorion* prove that it continued to be the place for the veneration of the martyr(s). The visible signs of reverence were the silver votive crosses affixed to the two post-colonnettes of the southern chancel[63] and a *polykandelon* of bronze apparently suspended at the keystone of the entrance arch.[64] However, by A.D. 749 the altar, which used to stand above the reliquary, had been removed, probably to be melted into lime, which was of vital importance for current repairs. Instead, the pink limestone reliquary was topped by a smaller, sarcophagus-shaped chest made of marble, an exact replica of the one standing under the altar in the northern aisle. This upper reliquary, containing tiny pieces of bones, must have been a source of *eulogia* obtained by touching the relics with a long bronze pin which was found still inserted into the opening of the lid.[65]

Two interconnected rooms in the southern wing were identified as a *diakonikon*, with a masonry couch for a night guardian opposite the entrance. The rooms contained a variety of objects[66] concentrated in the outer room with fewer ones in the larger, inner room. The eastern part of the latter yielded some special items such as a large, rectangular marble board, remains of painted plaster, a glass *ampulla* and a bronze *pyxis*. We suppose that this part of the inner *diakonikon* room served some special purposes; for instance, it might sometimes have been used as a baptistery, if a bi-partite limestone chest found there was indeed used as a portable font for the infant's baptism. Other objects found in the *diakonikon* could have been part of the church equipment, but the

[60] Segal, Mlynarczyk, Burdajewicz 2000, figs. 34-35.

[61] Pallas 1952, 13, ill. 5 (classified as *thalassa-chernips*).

[62] Mlynarczyk, Burdajewicz 2001, 9, fig. 40; Mlynarczyk, Burdajewicz 2005a, 50, pl. 11.

[63] Mlynarczyk, Burdajewicz 2002, 19, fig. 35; Mlynarczyk, Burdajewicz 2005a, 47-48, pl. 8.

[64] Mlynarczyk, Burdajewicz 2003, 27, fig. 44; Burdajewicz, Mlynarczyk 2006, 28, ill. 14. For more details of the *martyrion* chapel, see Mlynarczyk 2008a, 164-165.

[65] Mlynarczyk, Burdajewicz 2003, 26, fig. 47; Mlynarczyk, Burdajewicz 2005a, 48, pl. 9; Burdajewicz, Mlynarczyk 2006, 25. See also Mlynarczyk 2008a, note 102.

[66] For a detailed account of the exploration of the *diakonikon* and interpretation of its contents, see Mlynarczyk, Burdajewicz 2003, 28-32, figs. 51-55; Mlynarczyk, Burdajewicz 2004, 52-55, figs. 24, 57-60; Mlynarczyk, Burdajewicz 2005a, 55; Mlynarczyk 2008a, 165-168 and fig. 4.

majority of them were ceramic vessels, once containing offerings in kind. The variety of vessel forms reflect a variety of foodstuffs brought by the faithful: wine, oil, cereals, meals composed of meat and vegetables. It may be interesting to note that the location of our *diakonikon* fits the instructions given by the *Testamentum Domini*[67] while its plan and multi-functional nature correspond with the description provided by Cyril of Scythopolis (sixth century) in the *Life of St. Euthymius*.[68]

During this final phase of the North-West Church's existence, only the nave and the southern aisle were connected with the atrium, which had already been excluded from liturgical use. The archaeological exploration of the atrium yielded a great deal of evidence that by that time it was a place of domestic activity, specifically of the processing of grain and wine. Besides mill stones, mortars, jars etc., the earthquake debris sealed remains of a threshing sledge of a type known as "Punic cart" stored in the eastern portico, probably the only portico that kept its roofing more or less intact.[69] During the Umayyad period, the whole northern wing of the church compound was transformed into a winery which included grape storage compartments, a treading floor, a must-collecting vat and a big fermentation room, a unique feature for Palestine.[70] It is apparently in connection with this winery that a cellar was arranged in the north-western part of the atrium and a room with big *pithoi* (barrels) added outside the northern entrance to the atrium.[71] Moreover, it is clear now that during the earlier part of the Umayyad period (?) human remains deposited in the twin tombs of the mortuary chamber at the west end of the south wing must have been transferred elsewhere so that one of the tombs could be re-used as an additional storage place for wine jars.[72]

In front of the entrance to the basilica, a basalt cross was found that had collapsed from the peak of the façade during the earthquake. This find proves that under the Early Islamic rule at least some of the churches were still crowned with crosses despite reports by some Christian writers of repeated acts of Muslim hostility toward the cross.[73]

[67] Crowfoot 1938, 175-177. A closely similar location of the *diakonikon* within the church compound can be found at Kursi (Tzaferis 1983, 12-13 and note 24) and the East Church of Mampsis (Negev 1988, 47-48 and plan 9).

[68] Festugière 1962, 123-125 (*Vita Euthymii* 69.1-23).

[69] Mlynarczyk, Burdajewicz 2004, 60, figs. 68-69; Mlynarczyk, Burdajewicz 2005, 35-36; for other finds connected with the domestic activity in the atrium, see Mlynarczyk, Burdajewicz 2006, 50, figs. 69, 71,73; Mlynarczyk, Burdajewicz 2007, 63.

[70] For the winery, see Mlynarczyk, Burdajewicz 2005b, 36-45.

[71] Mlynarczyk, Burdajewicz 2006, 56-57, fig. 74-80; Mlynarczyk, Burdajewicz 2007, 64-69, figs. 100-101.

[72] Mlynarczyk, Burdajewicz 2004, 56-57, figs. 61-63.

[73] Mlynarczyk, Burdajewicz 2005, 33-34, fig. 63; sources concerning the prohibition of exposing crosses are discussed by Ognibeni 2002, 130-132.

A closely similar cross from the building's façade was also found in the western extremity of the **North-East Church** (**Fig. 5**),[74] the history and nature of which was quite different from both the Cathedral and the North-West Church. Firstly, this small church, situated to the east of the North-West Church and to the north of the *decumanus*, and excavated by a team from Concordia University, St. Paul (MN), seems to have been a part of an urban monastic complex.[75] Secondly, this was clearly a *martyrion* church, containing several reliquaries and burials, all of them located in the chancel area. Thirdly, unlike the North-West Church, this one ceased to function well before the earthquake of A.D. 749.

The basilica itself is an almost-square three-aisled *domus* with a single exterior apse.[76] The church had an exterior portico (*exonarthex*, originally of eighth columns) along its western façade, on the prolongation of a possibly-earlier north-south street; the southern and northern ends of the portico were closed by gates.[77] A row of three interconnected rooms, belonging to the original plan of the compound, was adjacent to its northern wall, and there were apparently a few more rooms to the north of them (which have not been excavated). The southern aisle and the nave were entered from the west, but the access to the northern aisle was from the north, through a room connected with the *exonarthex*, because the aisle's western end was occupied by an opening of a pre-existing cistern.[78] Another doorway at the east end of the aisle's northern wall connected the chancel with a small room to the north. The latter, its mosaic floor adorned with two crosses by the entrance to the chancel, has been identified as a *skeuophylakion*.[79] Similarly, at the east end of the southern aisle (but outside the chancel) a door led to a large vaulted chamber with high benches (plastered all over, like those in the *diakonikon* of the North-West Church) along the walls; this room was identified as the *diakonikon*.[80] The complex of rooms to the south of the basilica is a part of the original layout of the church compound; they were entered from the south end of the portico, without having been connected either to the *domus* or to the *diakonikon*.[81] The western extent of the compound, which continues on the western side of the entrance portico with rooms constructed during the compound's later phase, has yet to be identified.[82]

[74] Schuler 2003, 41 and fig. 71.
[75] Schuler 2007, 82.
[76] For the plan of the basilica, see Schuler 2004, fig. 26-27.
[77] Schuler 2005, 72, fig. 98; Schuler 2006, 66-67, fig. 83-84.
[78] Schuler 2004, 89, fig. 26-27.
[79] Schuler 2005, 66-68, figs. 20 and 94 (crosses are also depicted on the mosaic of the east end of the northern aisle, by the chancel: Schuler 2004, fig. 90).
[80] Schuler 2005, 68-71, figs. 21-22 and 95.
[81] Schuler 2006, 68-69, figs. 83-84 and 87-88; Schuler 2007, 83.
[82] Schuler 2005, 72-73, figs. 21 and 96-97;Schuler 2006, 70; Schuler 2007, 84.

The chancel area of the North-East Church, with two distinct phases of its floor, is of exceptional interest. The chancel screen, provided with three openings, spanned the width of the basilica transecting it on the same north-south line.[83] In the southern part of the chancel an exposed sarcophagus of limestone was found, inserted into the original floor and containing the incomplete skeletal remains of a small woman of above 55 years of age. The sides of the sarcophagus had a revetment of marble slabs; a cross was carved on a slab of the north side (flanked by A and Ω) and on the western one, i.e., on those sides that could be viewed by the faithful while approaching the chancel screen. The plastered top of the lid has a kind of small bowl near its west end, with a tiny hole in the centre of its bottom, bored throughout the lid.[84] The contents of the sarcophagus bore testimony to the extraction of the relics: significant parts of the skeleton were missing, while the remainder were orderly arranged under the tiny opening of the lid which allowed ongoing veneration.[85]

In the central part of the chancel, just slightly to the north of the east-west axis of the church, an underground cist tomb of very careful construction was located. It housed a stone sarcophagus of the same type as that exposed in the south part of the chancel, which, however, instead of being covered by a lid was sealed by basalt beams holding in place a lead pipe 72 cm long, the upper part of which formed a funnel at the level of the upper floor of the chancel.[86] According to the anthropologist's report,[87] the sarcophagus contained the incomplete skeletal remains of at least nine adult individuals (three men, three women, three adults of indeterminate gender) and a few bones of an infant. Moreover, it was placed above an earlier burial, of which only some bones remained belonging to two adults and one young adult, accompanied by what appears to have been traces of a decomposed wooden coffin with many iron nails.[88] Apart from this two-phase burial in the cist tomb and that in the exposed sarcophagus, the *opus sectile* floor of the chancel housed several small *loculi* for relics: two *loculi* in the northern section and three in the centre, all of them already emptied of their contents.[89]

The excavations of the North-East Church compound revealed three distinct phases of its history. During the first phase, the basilica with its annex chambers

[83] Schuler 2003, 43: Only two chancel posts and small fragments of panels have been found, cf. Schuler 2004, 86.

[84] For this sarcophagus, see Schuler 2002, 33-36, figs. 53-54; Schuler 2003, 46-47, fig. 75; Schuler 2004, 94.

[85] Schuler 2003, fig. 22d.

[86] *Ibidem*, 45, fig. 22a-c; Schuler 2004, 83-85, figs. 28, 91.

[87] E. Deutsch, *apud* Schuler 2007, 77-81.

[88] Schuler 2006, 72-75, fig. 92; the excavator believes that the missing bones were either placed in the sarcophagus above, or they were extracted as relics to be distributed among other churches.

[89] Schuler 2003, 43-44 and fig. 21; Schuler 2004, 93.

to the north (including the *skeuophylakion*) and the *diakonikon* to the south were constructed as a memorial church the focus of which must have been the burial of the woman (perhaps an abbess) in the sarcophagus exposed in the south chancel. After having studied the stratigraphy and the cross-section of the cist tomb, the excavator concluded that this construction was tied also in to the original floor of the chancel, which means that "the church must have been built to house both tombs".[90] If so, what could explain the difference between the two contemporaneous burials, both in terms of the burial type (exposed sarcophagus *versus* underground cist tomb) and its location (southern and central part of the chancel respectively)? It seems to me that the answer must have been the different statuses of the deceased. While the remains of the woman in the exposed sarcophagus were to be the object of veneration for the faithful, the cist tomb seems to have been the resting place of the church founders or benefactors and their descendants, who only wanted to benefit from the proximity of the altar. Indeed, the arrangements made during the second phase in this part of the chancel are in favour of this view (see below).

The walls and floors of the second phase, according to the excavator, bear evidence of repairs made during the sixth century and, at the same time, of the poverty of the local Christian community.[91] Nevertheless, it was at that phase that the apse received a *synthronon* in the form of a single bench with a larger and higher central section[92] Not only was a new mosaic laid in the nave, but the chancel was also paved with a new *opus sectile* floor (at some 25 cm higher than the level of the earlier floor).

This second-phase floor in the chancel is contemporaneous with the placing of the sarcophagus in the cist tomb, with a lead pipe which would "convey liquid offerings into the sarcophagus".[93] At the same time, however, the pipe "was not meant to guarantee delivery of all the oil to the burial" since it was only rolled, not melted.[94] In my opinion, this fact along with the location of the grave suggest that the latter was used as *thalassa*, that is, a pit (a catching basin) placed under the floor level of the altar in order to collect the waters used to cleanse vessels and to wash the priest's hands during the Eucharistic service.[95] In the cluster of the three *loculi* for reliquaries which are adjacent to the southern side of the grave, the biggest one obviously marks the location of an altar as it is placed exactly on the east-west axis of the chancel. Had the

[90] Schuler 2006, 75; the stone sarcophagus was placed inside the cist at the second phase.

[91] Schuler 2004, 87-88, suggesting that the damage might have been a result of the earthquake of A.D. 551.

[92] Schuler 2003, 43, fig. 21.

[93] Schuler 2006, 72.

[94] Schuler 2003, 45.

[95] For this type of *thalassa*, classified as *thalassa-bothros*, see Pallas 1952, 41-72; quoted Palestinian examples include the basilica in Emmaus and that of St. Stephen in Jerusalem, cf. figs. 34 and 38 respectively.

individuals buried in this tomb been entitled to religious veneration, the tomb would have been constructed right under the place destined for Eucharistic altar, so that no additional relics would have been needed. In the present case, however, the incomplete state of the skeletal remains in the sarcophagus (and under it) might be explained not necessarily by the extraction of relics[96] but by their advanced decomposition due to the frequent pouring of water during the Eucharistic service.

The case of the woman's remains in the exposed sarcophagus was clearly different. There is sound evidence that the sarcophagus was opened and the relics extracted, probably contemporaneously with the second-phase floor (perhaps the later sixth century), after which it continued to be a focus of veneration. As to the bowl-like depression with a hole in the sarcophagus lid (exactly above the re-arranged bones of the deceased), it is only a question of interpretation as to whether it served to anoint the remains of the saint[97] (with perfume, olive or wine) or for a pilgrim to receive a blessing by touching her bones with a long stick and transferring it onto an object provided.[98] In any case, M. Schuler may be right when he emphasizes a possible role of water drawn from the cistern (located in the north-east corner of the *diakonikon*, not far from the sarcophagus) for healing purposes;[99] this very water might have been distributed as *eulogia* after some ritual at the tomb of the saint.

Finally, during the same phase masonry benches were constructed in the basilica, along its northern and southern walls,[100] as well as along the western façade in the *exonarthex*; the latter received basalt flagstones instead of mosaics.[101] Rooms were built on the western side of the portico the roofing of which had been removed, and some *intercolumnia* were blocked.

During the third and final phase, which must have followed further major damage to the compound (possibly due to an earthquake), the church ceased to function. It seems, however, that the debris was cleared out and all the doorways to the basilica were sealed except for the entrance to the southern aisle which provided access to the venerated sarcophagus. After the chancel screen had been removed, two low walls were built to protect the sarcophagus on its west and north sides, suggesting that the place continued to be visited by the pious. Moreover, two of the three northern (originally interconnected) chambers

[96] Schuler 2007, 81-82.

[97] Schuler 2003, 47 and fig. 75; Schuler 2004, 94.

[98] As apparently practiced in the *martyrion* chapel of the North-West Church, see above, note 65.

[99] Schuler 2005, 69-71 and notes 5-16 (including discussion of a small hoard of gold jewellery hidden behind the cistern which included a medical "stomachic" amulet), see above, note 64.

[100] A feature uncommon in the churches of Palestine, cf. Schuler 2003, 40-42, and references in notes 21-25.

[101] Schuler 2004, 90-92; note that a bench also exists outside the mortuary chamber of the North-West Church.

accessible from the former portico underwent several alterations and appear to have served domestic purposes (to judge from numerous sherds of cooking and storage vessels as well as animal bones), probably as the dwelling of an individual who guarded the church remains housing the saint's tomb.[102] The same wish to protect the sacred place is also reflected by the fact that the street (*Cardo* 2 North) originally leading to the *exonarthex* gate seems to have been blocked some 19 m south of it (with the paving slabs to the south of this blockage mostly having been removed).[103]

The absolute chronology of the North-East Church's phasing has very few points of reference. Of two superimposed mosaic floors in the basilica, the upper one (pertaining to the second phase) has been dated on stylistic considerations to the late sixth century.[104] The discovery of an earlier mosaic floor (first phase) in the nave made its excavator believe ("on account of the beauty of the original mosaic floor") that it was laid as early as the early fifth century.[105] Based on the examination of the pottery finds from a probe beneath the nave's floor (admittedly a limited sample), a construction date of the church within the fifth century (although not necessarily the early fifth century) is indeed probable.[106] Again, the pottery finds connected with the function of the church suggest that it ceased to fulfill its liturgical functions at some time during the seventh century which means that the third phase of the North-East Church (when it was no longer active but still accessible to those wishing to worship at the exposed sarcophagus) covers the Umayyad period.

On the excavation reports' plans, the walls described as "floating" (mostly dismantled during the exploration of the area) were those constructed in various spots above the North-East Church compound but without any connection to its original walls (in other words, their construction postdated the abandonment of the compound). According to M. Schuler, they might have been "part of later agrarian use of the site", e.g., animal pens.[107] The pottery finds seemingly associated with these late structures point to their usage during the Umayyad period, with nothing to indicate any occupation postdating the mid-eighth century.

The **South-West Church** (**Fig. 6**), excavated by the team of the Zinman Institute (University of Haifa),[108] was located within the habitation quarter of the south-western part of the town, unlike the three other churches of Hippos

[102] *Ibidem*, 90; Schuler 2005, 65-68, figs. 21 and 91-93.
[103] Schuler 2007, 85, figs. 118 and 120-122.
[104] Schuler 2006, 75-78; Schuler 2007, fig. 128.
[105] Schuler 2006, 76-78, figs. 84 and 95-101. Initially, it was believed that the North-East Church was constructed in the late fifth or early sixth century, cf. Schuler 2004, 92.
[106] Mlynarczyk 2008b, nos. 170-180.
[107] See Schuler 2004, 90; Schuler 2006, 66-68 and fig. 83; Schuler 2007, 83.
[108] Segal, Eisenberg 2005, 15-29, figs. 42-49.

built in the city centre. At the initial phase of its exploration, especially after a basalt lintel decorated with motifs typical of the Byzantine-period Jewish art was discovered, the excavators were inclined to believe that the church was built upon the remains of a synagogue.[109] However, the probe opened below the mosaic floor of the southern aisle revealed two earlier floors, both of them made of lime mortar and both clearly pertaining to the same church building.[110]

The South-West Church, the exploration of which is still to be completed, is a three-aisled, mono-apsidal basilica, although it is not yet clear if its apse was inscribed or external.[111] The apse, unlike the other churches of Hippos, has no *synthronon*, and the *bema* is contained within the nave (as in the case of the Cathedral and the phases I-IIa of the North-West Church); it was closed by a screen (consisting of two elongated panels) on the west only. The plan of the eastern part of the building is not symmetrical: on the east extension of the northern aisle there is a doorway (complete with its lintel) leading to a sacristy (possibly a *prosthesis* room, which has not yet been excavated) while there is no corresponding room to the south of the apse. At the east extremity of the northern aisle's north wall, under the wall plaster, a blocked entrance to another subsidiary room can be seen (within the North-East Church compound, a room in a similar location has been identified as a *skeuophylakion*: see above). In an unexcavated part of the basilica's southern wall, the outlines of two doorways are visible, leading to southerly rooms, one of which should probably be identified as the *diakonikon* (on the basis of comparison with both the North-West and North-East churches). In all probability, the church had a triple entrance on the west and, given the topographical features of the site, it is possible that the *domus* was preceded by an *exonarthex* rather than an atrium.

The basalt colonnades separating the nave from the aisles, with their Byzantine-period Ionic capitals, resemble those of the North-West and North-East churches. The well-preserved mosaic floor[112] displays geometrical patterns (octagons, squares and rhombuses) in the southern aisle, *xenia* motifs (fruit and plants) in the nave, while in the northern aisle the mosaic is undecorated. The *bema* floor, adorned with a fish-scale pattern, has on its northern edge a representation of two fish in a heraldic composition, obviously marking the direction from which the priest was approaching the altar and the Eucharistic offerings were being brought in. The position of the altar on the chord of the apse is indicated by a reliquary, inserted in the mosaic floor, with four square stone tiles at the

[109] *Ibidem*, 16-17, fig. 49; for the Jewish community at Hippos during the Roman and Byzantine periods, see *ibidem*, 15 and note 11.

[110] Segal 2007a, 35, fig. 52-53.

[111] Segal, Eisenberg 2005, 17-21 and fig. 7 (the church plan which, however, lacks a number of elements).

[112] For the mosaics of the South-West Church, see Segal, Eisenberg 2005, figs. 44, 47-48.

corners to receive the legs of the *mensa*.[113] Right inside the chancel and on the axis of the apse, a mosaic inscription in Greek records an offering (*prosphora*) by *presbyteros* (priest) Simonios, probably on duty in this very church.[114] However, this three-line inscription is clearly posterior to the execution of the mosaic, as it is devoid of any framing and very clearly inserted into a pre-existing *guilloche* border, which means that the dedication by Simonios must have regarded not the mosaic floor (as suggested by A. Lajtar)[115] but something else situated in the chancel area, perhaps a reliquary and/or altar, or the chancel screen panels. The only fragment of the chancel screen panel that has survived *in situ* depicts two sheep adoring a cross; faithful parallels of it come from Beit Ras (Capitolias of Decapolis) and Horvat Karkara in the western Galilee, a distribution that is suggestive of the foreign manufacturing source and their importation through one of the Phoenician harbours such as Tyre or Akko-Ptolemais.[116]

The most interesting issue is that of the chronology of the South-West Church. The execution of its mosaic floors (at least that in the southern aisle) can be dated on the basis of pottery retrieved from the probe (which was sealed by the floor in question) to around the mid-sixth century.[117] The two earlier lime mortar floors, however, attest to a much longer history of the building which might have been constructed during the fifth century. Even more interesting are the circumstances of the destruction of the church. It was caused by a fierce fire, apparently not connected to any earthquake, as not only have most of the columns been preserved standing *in situ*, but also some of the walls still stand to a height of 2.5 m or more; moreover, the roof collapse left a thick layer of burnt wooden beams and rooftiles.[118] The excavators concluded that the conflagration must have preceded the earthquake of A.D. 749;[119] this agrees with the chronology of the few ceramics sealed upon (and above) the floor that lack typical Umayyad-period examples. The church must have still been active in the sixth/seventh century, to judge from its reliquary of pink limestone which is an exact (if slightly smaller) replica of that from the *martyrion* chapel at the North-West Church. Notably, both the reliquary and the chancel screen of the South-West Church[120] must have been damaged (and the marble panels removed) before the conflagration. In fact, it seems that the church was devastated and desecrated and, finally, burnt down, which might have

[113] *Ibidem*, figs. 42-43 and 101.
[114] Lajtar 2007, 57-59, fig. 54.
[115] *Ibidem*, 58.
[116] Piccirillo 1981, tav. 23:27 (Beit Ras – Capitolias); Israeli, Mevorah 2000, 73 and 217 (Horvat Karkara).
[117] Mlynarczyk 2007, 129 and fig.9:127-129.
[118] Segal, Eisenberg 2005, figs. 42-45.
[119] *Ibidem*, 18.
[120] For the state of preservation of the chancel screen, see Segal, Eisenberg 2005, 19, figs. 43 and 46.

happened during the Persian invasion and occupation in the second decade of the seventh century.[121]

The method of accessing the thoroughfare of Hippos, the *decumanus*, from the South-West Church is not yet known, unlike that from the other churches. The North-West Church was linked up with the *decumanus* at a point just to the west of the Forum by a short Byzantine-period street, ca. 4 m wide, ascending towards the south gate of the atrium.[122] On the east, this street abutted a Byzantine/Umayyad-period industrial complex at the site of the Roman-period *temenos*, while on the east it was bordered by a building, the extent or nature of which are not known, with the threshold of a doorway. At the site of the North-East Church, two more north-south streets (or rather alleys) have been uncovered. One of them, *Cardo* 2 North (already mentioned above), slopes and narrows down from 2.4 m at the gate of the church portico to just 1.75 m at the junction with the *decumanus*. The second "street" (actually a passage 1.08 m to 1.4 m wide), designated as *Cardo* 3 North, runs ca. 15 m further to the east and abuts the east wall of the church *diakonikon*, which was initially connected with this passage by a doorway, later sealed.[123]

However, it is clear that at the end of the Byzantine and in the Umayyad periods the *decumanus*, devoid of colonnades and only 4.4 m wide (in its stretch east of the Forum) no longer presented a monumental aspect.[124] Many of the entrances visible on both sides of the street were blocked up; they pertained to buildings supposedly of the Byzantine and (mostly) Umayyad periods.[125] Exploration of the area of the Forum (which in the Roman period measured 42 m × 42 m) yielded evidence of its shrinkage in size during the Byzantine and Umayyad periods, although a big underground reservoir reached by a stairway apparently continued to be used.[126] For instance, a building of an unspecified nature on the eastern border of the original plaza, south of the *decumanus*, encroached upon the Forum pavement by as much as 3 m by the Umayyad period.[127] The same phenomenon was taking place in the north section of the eastern border of the Forum, as well as along the northern border, adjacent to the south wall of the Roman-period *temenos*. Especially at the latter location, the space of the Roman-period *stoa* was occupied by stores and workshops.[128]

[121] The passage of the Persian invaders through the Golan region took place in A.D. 613-614, cf. Gregg 2000, 522.

[122] Segal 2001, 6-7 ("North-western Complex"); Segal 2002, 6-9; Segal 2003, 12-13, figs. 8 and 30.

[123] About these streets, see Schuler 2007, 85-88, figs. 115, 118.

[124] Segal, Eisenberg 2005, 8-12, figs. 30-32.

[125] Segal 2006, 10 and figs. 5-7; Segal 2007a, 26-27.

[126] Segal, Eisenberg 2004, 14-15.

[127] Segal 2001, 3-5, figs. 2-3, 8 and 42; Segal 2003, fig. 3.

[128] Segal 2003, 5-6, figs. 25-27; Segal, Eisenberg 2004, 13 and 17; Segal 2007a, 27 and 31, figs. 41-43. Umayyad-period walls at the north-west part of the Forum have been removed, cf. Segal, Eisenberg 2005, 8 and figs. 28-29.

On the other hand, one should note that the position of granite columns collapsed from the north and east stylobates suggests that the Forum kept a part of its colonnade(s) till the earthquake of A.D. 749.[129]

In the Byzantine and/or Umayyad period a stairway resting upon the south wall of the *temenos* connected the walking level of the Forum with the industrial area which occupied the southern half of the former *temenos* (termed HLC for "Hellenistic Compound").[130] This vast complex included several walls considered to be Umayyad, which mostly run parallel to the southern and western porticoes of the earlier *temenos*, to the south of the *cella* podium,[131] as well as some installations of an unspecified purpose, such as an oven in the south-west corner of the enclosure and two inverted-cone vessels of stone.[132] Another stone vessel, cubic in shape, was found associated with an elongated platform arranged on the steps of the *cella* podium and with corresponding Umayyad-period earthen floor.[133] The platform and the vessel were very clearly a part of an important winery (which we describe as the "south winery" to distinguish it from the "north winery", arranged in the northern wing of the North-West Church).

The south winery, abutting the southern wall of the very same church, was an elaborate installation equipped with two threading platforms and two must collecting vats, the latter re-using the space of two ancient barrel-vaults upon which the Roman-period *cella* was constructed.[134] The winery's detailed chronology remains obscure, but based on the analysis of a few ceramics retrieved from this area, I would suggest that its *floruit* was during the sixth-seventh century, probably antedating the activity of the north winery. The installation of the winery (perhaps contemporaneous with the construction of the North-West Church) necessitated dismantling the parts of the *cella* which were still standing. Indeed, a section of an *anta* of the *cella*'s stairway was used in the blockage of the doorway of the "pilasters building"[135] to disconnect the latter from the winery area. Right on the southern edge of the winery's eastern threading platform, a small oil-press facility was installed; it consisted of a pressing table of basalt and a collecting basin of limestone. Of two floors recorded in this area, the upper (earthen) floor, apparently of the Umayyad period, seemed

[129] Segal 2003, 9-10, figs. 2-3.

[130] *Ibidem*, 5, figs. 3 and 5; Segal, Eisenberg 2004, 31..

[131] Segal 2002, 7-8, figs. 3 and 17-18; Segal 2003, 13-14; Segal, Eisenberg 2005, 26 and fig. 56. These walls were subsequently removed by the excavators in order to expose the elements of the original *temenos*, cf. Segal 2003, 13.

[132] *Ibidem*, 13, fig. 8 and Segal 2002, fig. 4, respectively.

[133] Mlynarczyk, Burdajewicz 2002, 27, fig. 44.

[134] Segal, Eisenberg 2004, 31. On the exploration of the south winery, see: Mlynarczyk, Burdajewicz 2002, 27-28, figs. 9-10 and 44-48; Segal, Eisenberg 2004, 20-23, figs. 9-10 and 41-49; Segal, Eisenberg 2005, 23-24, figs. 5-6 and 50-52.

[135] *Ibidem*, 27.

to have been connected with the oil-press activity, while the lower pavement (just 2.5 m wide), composed of irregular basalt slabs, postdated the Roman-period pavement of the *temenos*, but antedated the latest arrangement of the site, so probably should be dated to the Byzantine period.[136]

Another installation of the Byzantine to Early Islamic period was a bakery situated outside the north-eastern corner of the Forum, abutting the eastern extension of the south wall of the ancient *temenos*. It consisted of at least two rooms, of which one housed four ovens (including an oven with two distinct phases), and another had at least one more oven. Built on a basalt pavement from an earlier period, they were accompanied by a basalt grain mill of the "hourglass" type.[137] The pottery associated with the ovens proves that the bakery was active during the seventh century (and perhaps up to the mid-eighth century).[138] North of the bakery, in the area between the North-West Church and North-East Church, some late walls were found above the remains of a Roman-period gate-like structure; they include the south-west corner of a large building of the Byzantine (or Umayyad) period whose character, however, remains undetermined.[139]

To sum up the picture of the central part of Hippos during the later Byzantine and Early Islamic periods: its most prominent feature was the presence of ecclesiastical compounds (**Fig. 1**). While nothing can be said about the usage of the so-called Cathedral in the period after the sixth century, the presumed monastic complex with a venerated tomb in the North-East Church was probably active until the second half of the seventh century and even after its abandonment, the place itself was apparently guarded and might still have been visited. At the same time, the North-West Church was liturgically active until the earthquake of A.D. 749; however, the increasing poverty of its congregation is reflected by the emphasis put on the economic aspect of the church's life (the atrium as a place of domestic activity, the north wing transformed into a winery, the original "mortuary chamber" used to store wine from the southern winery, judging from the type of jars found in both locations). However, it is not clear whether the two wineries were owned by the North-West Church or whether that was only the case with the northern one. The installations connected with food production apparently played a major role in the functioning of the central part of Susita; the oil-press adjacent to the southern winery, as well as the bakery by the junction of the *decumanus* with the Forum (**Fig. 7**), must also be mentioned.

[136] Mlynarczyk, Burdajewicz 2001, figs. 37 and 49; Mlynarczyk, Burdajewicz 2002, 25-26.

[137] Segal 2007a, 19-21 and figs. 22-26.

[138] Mlynarczyk 2007, 108-109 and 115-117, nos. 1-16.

[139] Segal 2007a, 19 and. 23-25, fig. 35.

Another piece of evidence of the declining urban status of Hippos during the Umayyad period is an Arabic inscription (an invocation to God) incised on a shaft of a column possibly belonging to the entrance portico of a passage separating the Cathedral from the "central bathhouse". It seems to have been written on the column after it had already collapsed; however, on paleographical grounds, the inscription should be dated to the early eighth if not the late seventh century, so well ahead of the A.D. 749 earthquake.[140]

Therefore, the archaeological data provides a picture of the Umayyad-period Hippos-Susita as lying partly in ruins (which agrees with the observations regarding the final phase of the North-East Church site),[141] with food-producing installations constituting a vital part of this village-like settlement and at least two places of the ongoing cult of martyrs. These places of worship could potentially act as local centres of pilgrimage ensuring additional income for the members of the impoverished Christian society of this once-proud city of the Decapolis.

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[140] Sharon 2006; on the location of the column, see Segal 2006, 12.

[141] Cf. Schuler 2007, 87-88.

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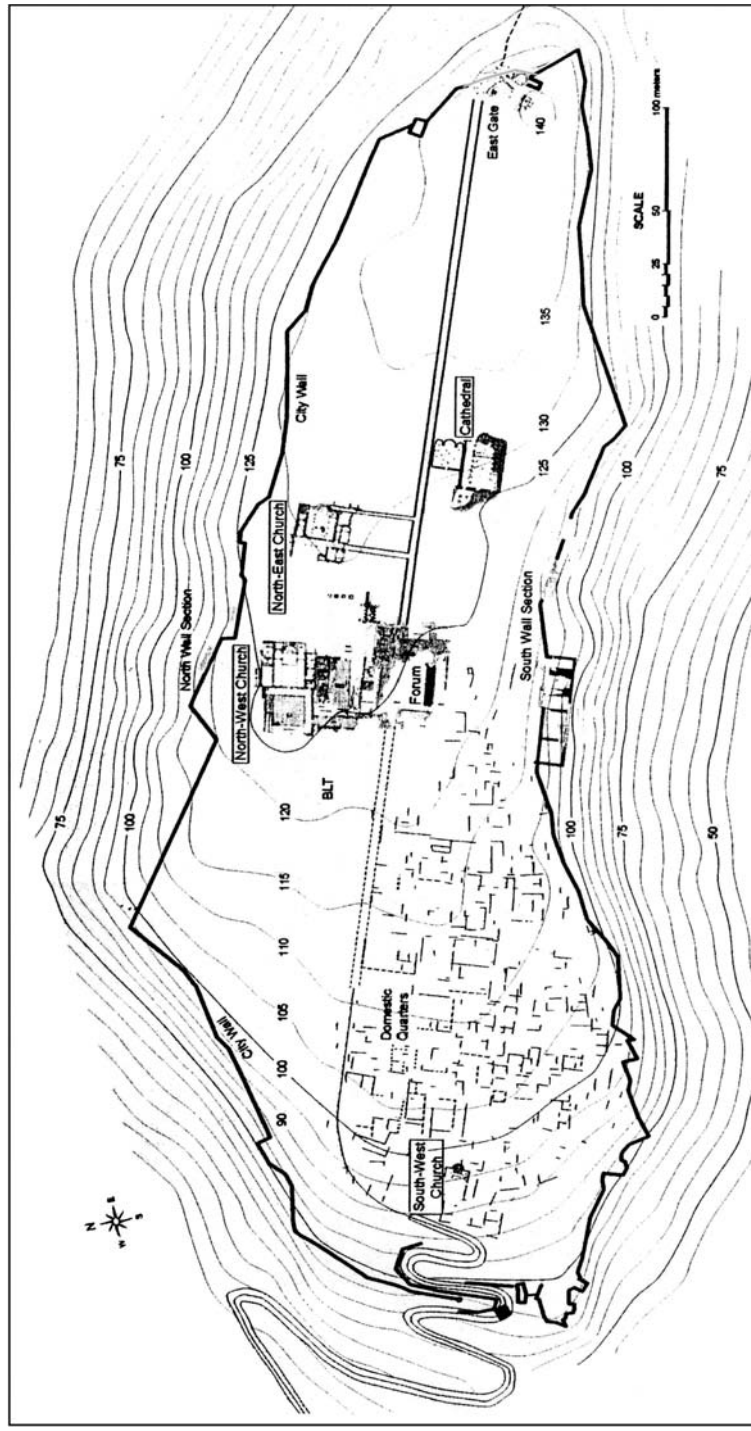

Fig. 1. Plan of Hippos (Susita) with locations of the four excavated churches (after Segal 2007a, fig. 1).

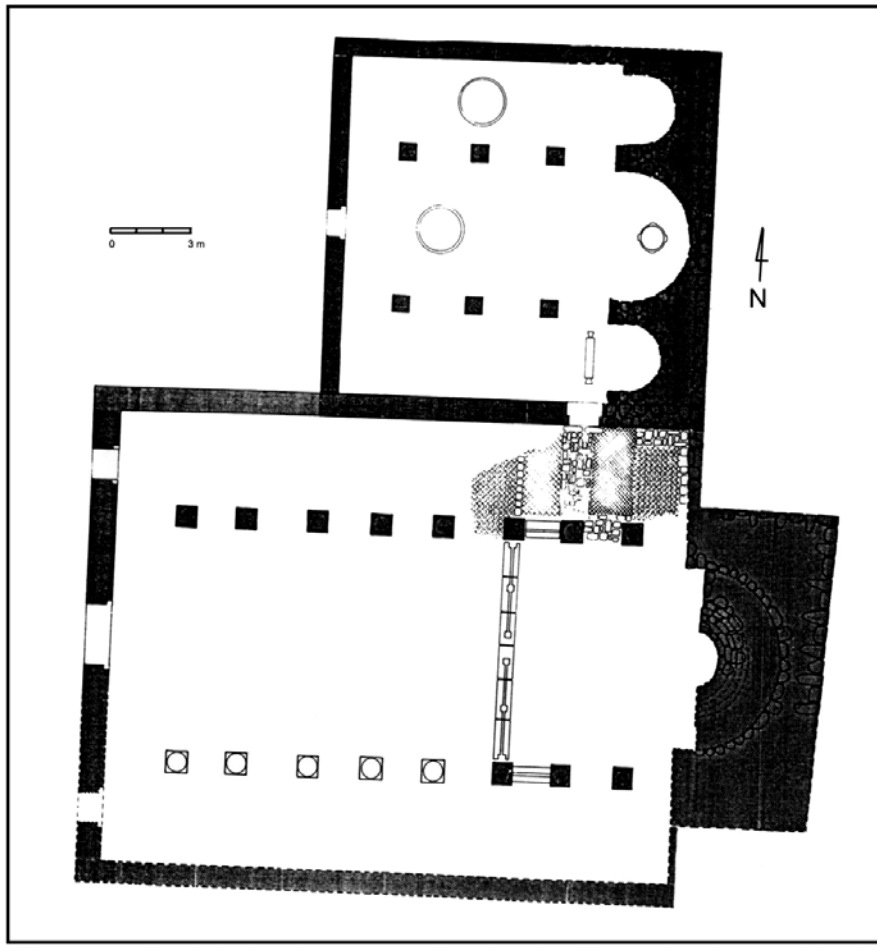

Fig. 2. So-called Cathedral (South-East Church) with baptistery to its north (after Epstein, Tzaferis 1991, 89, plan I).

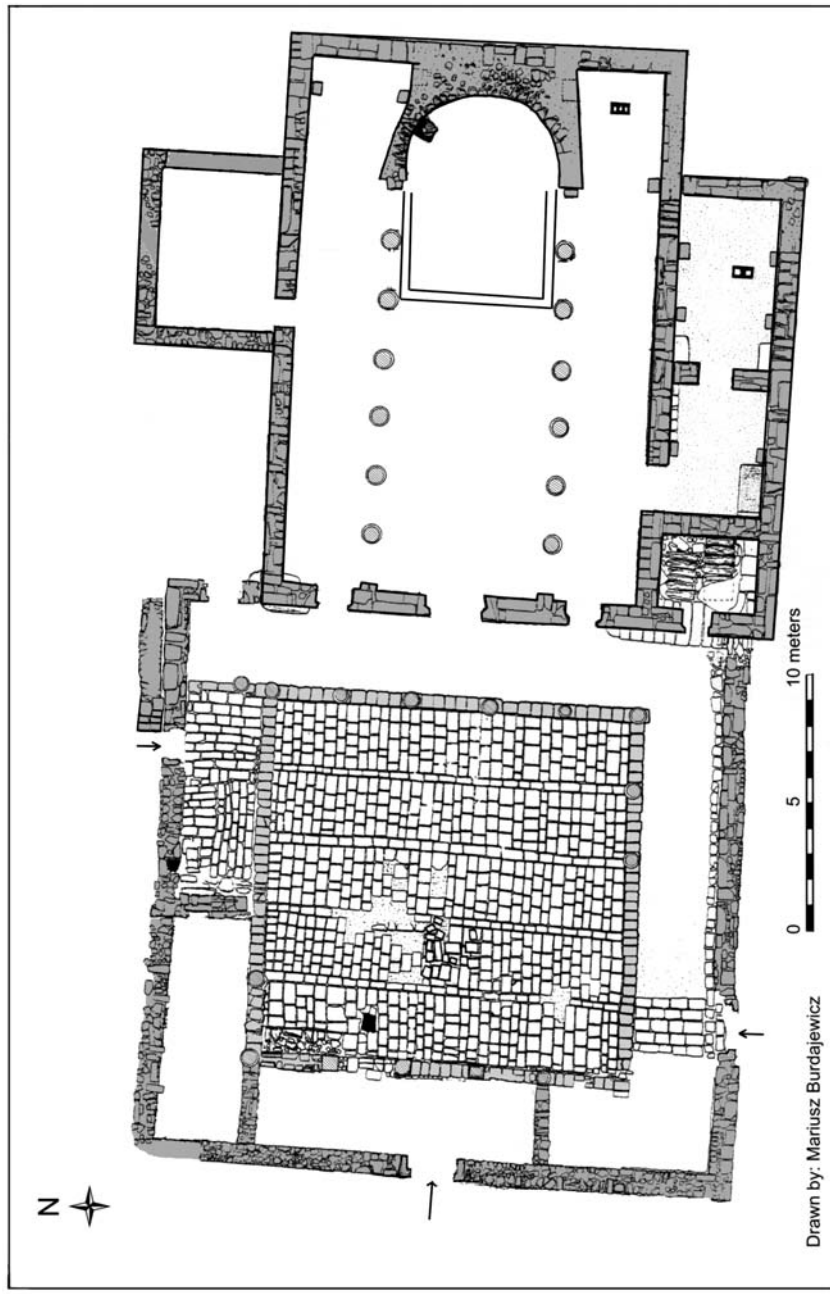

Fig. 3. North-West Church compound during Phase I, first half of 6th century (drawn by M. Burdajewicz).

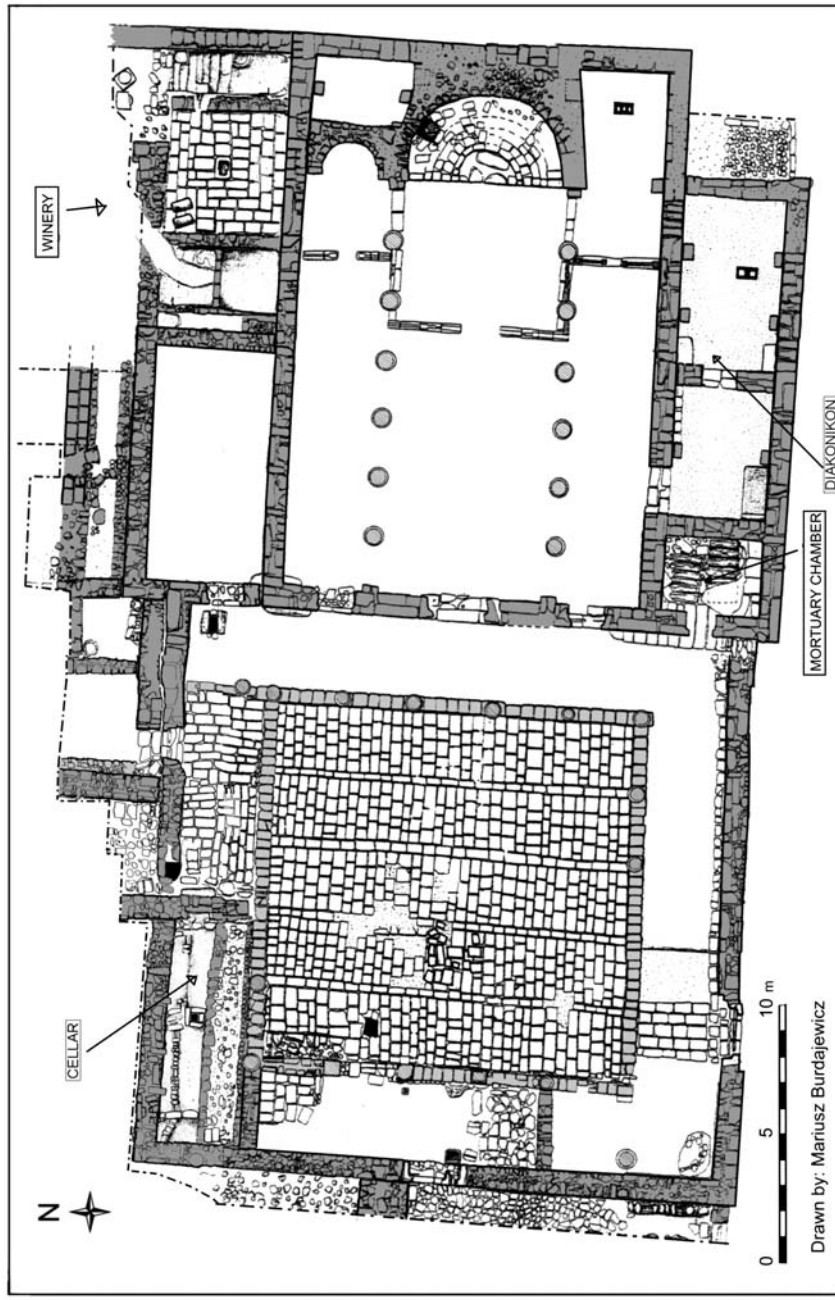

Fig. 4. North-West Church compound during Phases IIb and III, 7th to mid-8th century (drawn by M. Burdajewicz).

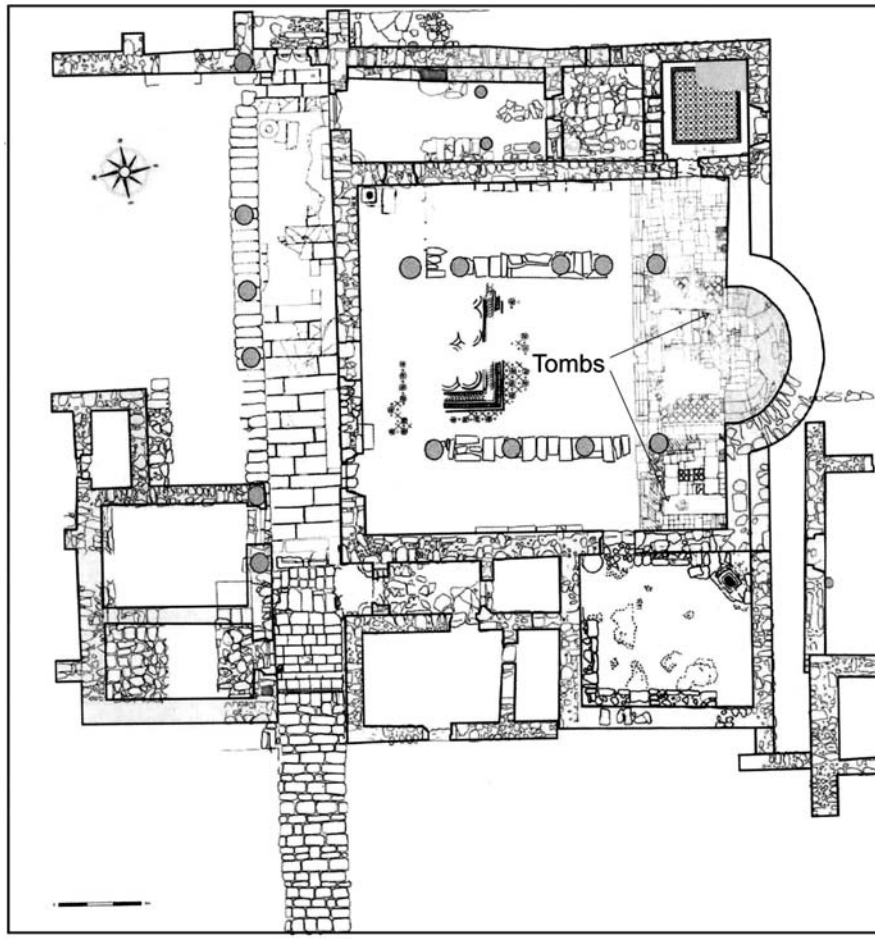

Fig. 5. North-East Church compound (after Schuler 2007, fig. 116).

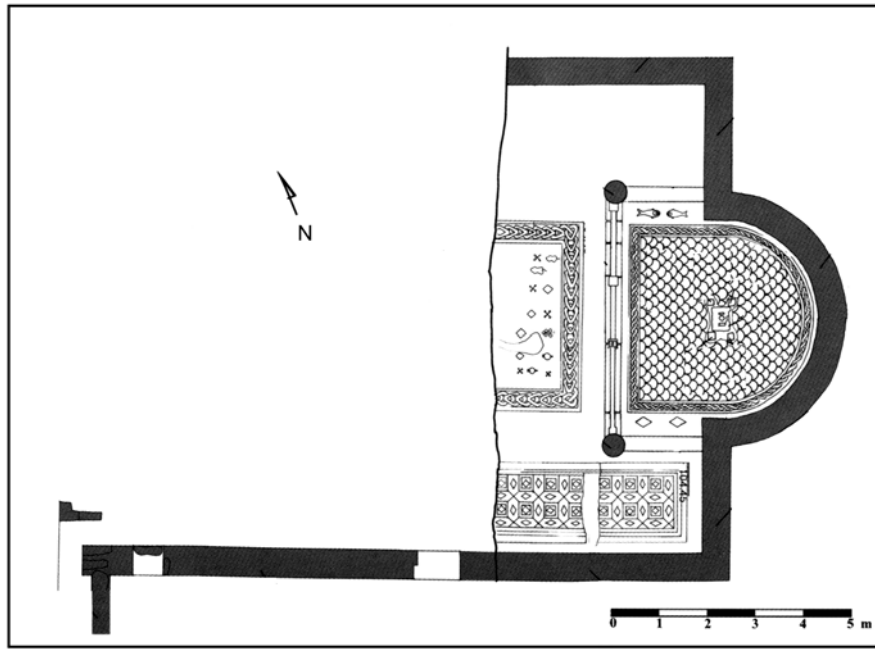

Fig. 6. South-West Church (after Segal, Eisenberg 2005, fig. 7).

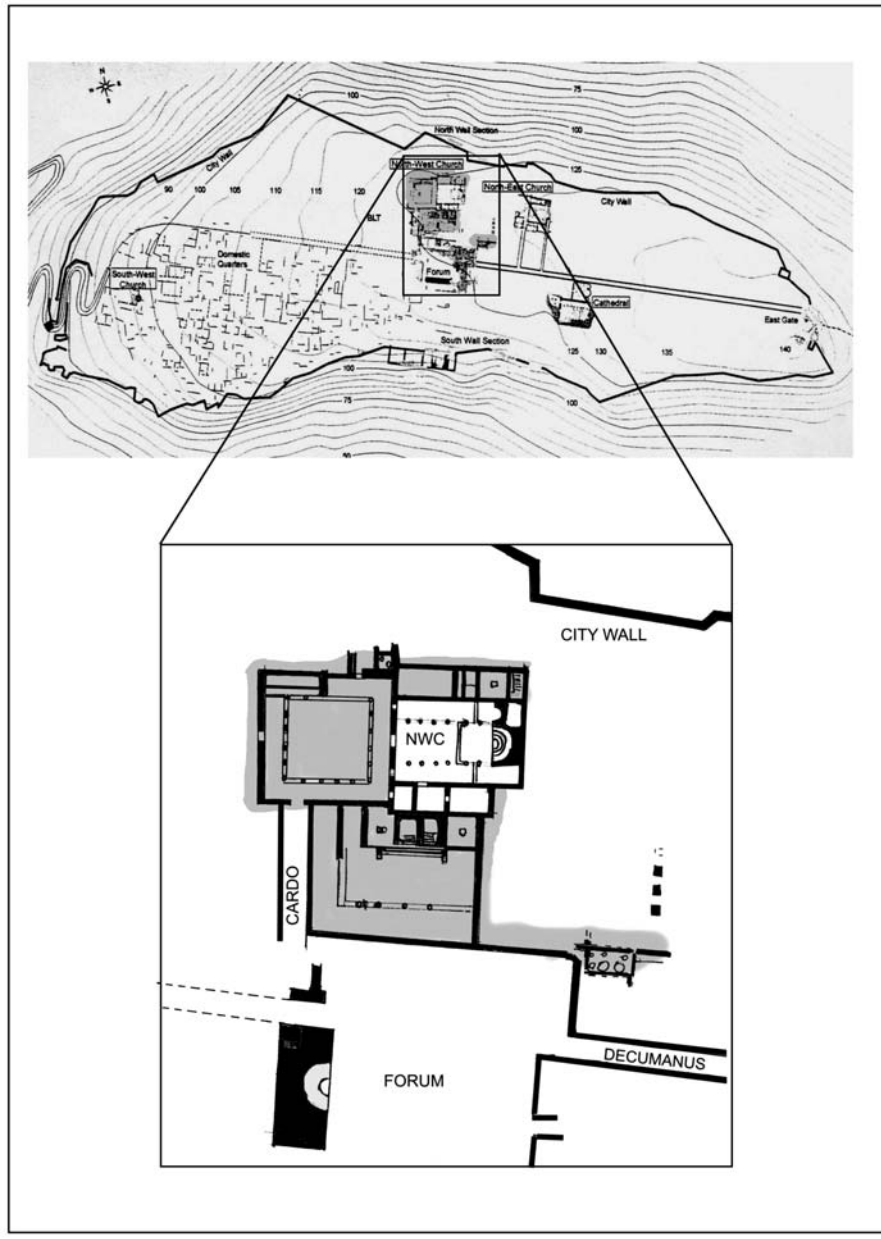

Fig. 7. The central part of Hippos (Early Islamic Sûsiyah) with the areas occupied by foodproducing installations (wine and olive-oil production, grain processing, bakery) marked grey (drawn by M. Burdajewicz).