

EXCAVATIONS ON THE MOUNT OF OLIVES, 1965

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Excavations conducted during May and June, 1965 on the property of the Al Makasid Al Khairiyah Hospital on the Mount of Olives revealed a medieval church of unique design built partly upon a Byzantine mosaic floor. The existence of the sanctuary was unsuspected by modern scholars, although some cryptic references in the pilgrim literature apparently refer to it as a late ruin.

The church type is previously unknown in Palestine. (See plan, PL. XI)

Located on the western summit of the Mt. Olives facing the Golden Gate of Jerusalem, the church is situated some 30 meters south of the southwest corner of the Viri Galilaei enclosure (PL. XII) in the depression which seems to divide the mountain and which serves as the northernmost path leading up from Gethsemane.

The first evidence of ruins was the discovery of a vertical stone column *in situ* while construction of the new hospital was in progress. Notification of the Department of Antiquities brought a halt to construction operations, but unfortunately a large number of the stones from the structure had already been removed. It was our good luck, however, to be able to recover the ground plan largely on the basis of the scientific excavation of the foundations alone.

The project was undertaken as a joint endeavor by the Department of Antiquities of Jordan and the Near East School of Archaeology. Workmen were paid by the Government, while school personnel served as the technical staff. Responsibility for conducting the excavation rested with the writer, Resident Director of the Near East School for 1964-65, assisted by Annual Professor Dr. Wilbur Wallis of Covenant Theological Seminary.

The Department exercised general control over the entire project, being represented by Mr. Yousef Labadi, Assistant Inspector of Antiquities in Jerusalem. Work was started on May 18 and terminated on June 8, with six to fourteen workmen being employed. Visits were made by the Franciscan Biblical School and the British School of Archaeology. Particular thanks are due to Mr. Sami Madah of the Department of Antiquities for his interest in the project, and to Dr. Basil Hennessy of the British School, who drew the plans.

Results of the work were exceptionally interesting. The completed excavations (PL. XII) revealed a church of considerable size, dating from the eleventh or twelfth century, but lying over a Byzantine mosaic floor of the sixth century.

The overall dimensions were impressive: 28 meters long and 21.5 meters wide (approximately 70x90 feet). No known parallel exists for the curious arrangement of the apses. The typical Byzantine convention of three apses on the eastern end is augmented by two additional apses, one on the north wall and one on the south wall of the church--something never found in normal architecture of the period.

Certain features of the building are likewise similar to the massive crusader constructions, but again significant differences exist, (1) indicative of the employment of Eastern, rather than Western architectural traditions.

Slightly more than one-fourth of the area of the church was left unexcavated, although the ground plan itself can be considered essentially recaptured on the basis of the excavated portions. (See plates XVII-XX for photographs)

STRATIFICATION

Despite the disruption of the site caused by the modern builders prior to the beginning of archaeological work, it was possible to determine relative stratification of the excavated portion. It was fortunate that the construction progress of the hospital allowed a venerable olive tree to remain in what proved to be the SE corner of the nave. The circular section of earth around the base of the tree provided a very convenient index of the strata. In fact, it was the only balk contiguous to the area of excavation which had not been subjected to incursive activity. Such a key was of great value because of the previous extensive soil removal in the eastern half of the church and the pronounced slope in the Western half caused by erosion and the rapid decline in the elevation of the mountain. A bench mark was established at the base of this tree. Its age was variously estimated at between 400 and 600 years.

The following levels were distinguished:

LEVEL 1 CM 1-10	Characterized by dark red topsoil	Recent
LEVEL 2 CM 10-150	Light brown fill mixed with fallen stones; infrequent, scattered sherds	Late Arabic
LEVEL 3 CM 150-160	Mosaic floor level. Red or brown soil; rather abundant grey ash mixed with soil; some Crusader ware.	Arabic and Crusader
LEVEL 4 CM 160-175	Clean base fill; brown to red soil, well packed; fragmentary Mastebbeh floor.	Byzantine
LEVEL 5 CM 175-185	Mastebbeh of grey-white huwwar	Byzantine

Of particular importance in fixing the relative chronology of the strata in a historical framework was a Byzantine lamp sherd 165 cm. (level 4) in area 1-B, and a coin of the Zangids of Halab minted prior to A.D. 1173 from 150 cm. (level 3) in area 1-C.

MAIN OCCUPATIONAL PHASES

Two churches occupied this site during successive periods, the former one being marked by beautiful mosaic floors, and the later one by massive masonry foundations. Accordingly, two main phases may be distinguished.

PHASE 1

The largest section of preserved mosaic was found in the central apse of the medieval church, having been used by the later builders as a beautiful floor for

1. The most pronounced dissimilarity between the excavated church and Crusader architecture is obvious from a perusal of Enlart's monumental work, *Les Monuments des Croises dans le Royaume de Jerusalem*. No semi-circular side apses appear in the work of the Crusaders.

their sanctuary. It evidently belonged to a Byzantine church of about the sixth century, which measured an estimated 7 meters in width. The length could not be determined because the later builders had cut the mosaic and confined it to the apse, but there is no doubt that it originally extended longitudinally east and west from the apse. The discovery of tesserae embedded in the lime-and-ash mortar binding together the foundations of the main structure, and the non-alignment of the walls with the mosaic borders, indicated that the Phase 1 floors had been adapted for the huge Phase 2 church.

Remains of the former church were scanty indeed, although it was possible on the basis of accumulated evidence to picture a picture of the religious occupation of the site in the Byzantine period. Most significant among the finds were the numerous mosaics, and particularly interesting, a Greek tomb inscription of about the sixth century. Abundant Byzantine glass, pottery, and coins also pointed to the density of habitation during that era despite the effects of the subsequent erection of such a large building on the same site.

The Mosaics -

The Mount of Olives is a rich repository of mosaic art as both the existing churches and the **Dominus Flevit** excavations show. The 1965 excavations revealed no less than seven fragmentary mosaic floors, five of them various locations outside the church and two within the structure representing different periods of use. Three of these were discovered accidentally during the process of construction and not in the context of a controlled excavation. All were apparently unmatched and not contiguous. It seems probable that during the Byzantine period the entire region of the modern hospital contained an inter-related ecclesiastical complex consisting of a martyrium or oratory and convent.

Mosaic fragment number 1 (M-1) was located approximately 25 m. NE of the church at a depth of 1 m. It measured approximately 1 m. square and was made up of undecorated white tesserae of intermediate size. Very abundant Byzantine-Early Arabic pottery occurred in the same stratum, pointing to evident domestic use of this area.

The apse mosaic (M-2) was roughly 4.5 m. square, and was well preserved except for a section in the center near the column. It was decorated with red and black "sprigs" randomly arranged on a white field (PL. XVI). The border featured a repetition of stylized crosses, separated from the field by two rows of black stones. (1) The presumed limit of the Byzantine phase building was marked by a triple row of white tesserae arranged horizontally. This feature normally occurs adjacent to a wall, so the total width of the chapel could be estimated at slightly over 7 meters. The tesserae themselves range from 1 to 2 cm. square. Correspondence in workmanship and design is greatest with sixth-century patterns found throughout Palestine, notably with some of the churches near Jerusalem and on Olivet itself. Similar sprigs are to be observed on the **Dominus Flevit** mosaics, while the Russian

1. M. Avi-Yonah, "Mosaic Pavements in Palestine," *The Quarterly of the Department of Antiquities in Palestine*, Vol. II Nos. 2 and 3 (1932), pp. 136-162; Vol. II No. 4 (1932), pp. 163-181. The sprigs correspond to Avi-Yonah's No. F-19; the border to No. A-8; and the crosses to the "E-Diamond" variety.

compound church of St. John the Baptist exhibits a very early mosaic with identical crosses.

The crude mosaic in the nave (M-3) probably belong to Phase 2 rather than Phase 1. They were much inferior to the other mosaics in workmanship, being composed of comparatively large plain limestone tesserae from 2-3 cm. square. The preserved portion ran in an east-to-west direction in area 1-B roughly parallel to the north wall of the church, and measured 2.5x.50 m. A curved border of horizontal stones met the diagonal section in a style reminiscent of Crusader workmanship.

Another small section of mosaic floor outside the structure, (M-4) was found immediately east of the exterior wall of the Phase 2 church in close proximity to the new hospital. It was made of undecorated tesserae, generally similar in size to the apse mosaic (M-2) and laid in a criss-cross manner. This section was only 1 m.x.5m. in extent. Also east of the church was a separate patch labelled M-5 which as located 10 m. south of M-4 and on the same level. It as of about the same size, with yellowish white tesserae showing no design.

M-6 was one of two sections of mosaic found approximately 50 m. south of the church, both of which were beautifully decorated. A portion of a large geometric design was brought to light, perhaps having been featured in the center of the floor. The fragment measured slightly over half a meter square.

M-7 was located only 4 m. distant from M-6, being about 1x2 m. in size. It bore the motif of the sprig pattern of the apse, although in this instance it was used as a repetitive border and executed in a finer style, recalling the border of the magnificent *Dominus Flevit* oratory mosaic. These mosaics should probably be dated prior to the sixth century.

Except for the atypical crude segment and M-6 and M-7 above, a date in the latter part of the sixth century is indicated for all of these mosaics on both stylistic and archaeological grounds.

The Inscription -

A Greek inscription (pL. XX, No. 1) carved upon a stone slab which once sealed a Byzantine burial vault was discovered at a depth of 1.40 m. about 18 m. north of the church. It was broken and not *in situ* when first viewed by the writer, but likely had been moved in ancient times from the known necropolis inside the SE corner of the Viri Galilaei enclosure. Its text, "OHKH-HPIANOY," preceded by a cross, has an unfortunate lacunae, but would be translated as "(Burial) Vault of (Val?) erian," or a similar personal name.

Epigraphical considerations tend to date the inscription in the sixth century. This would relate it to the general period of the earlier church.

Pottery, Coins, and Objects -

As might be expected, a paucity of sherds was turned up within the sanctuary. This was in marked contrast to the numerous marble fragments and tesserae which constantly came to light inside the nave of the church. Rooms 1 and 2

were exceptions, as was the cistern area, which produced several baskets full of potsherds.

Very little pottery was found on the surface, (level 1) while there was likewise no indication of habitation on the site of the church during the period of level 2, except possibly in area II-C and III-B where late Arabic sherds became more frequent. Several portions of glazed and unglazed Crusader pottery were found in the hallway leading to room 1 in area I-C from level 3. Fragment of a Crusader bowl were also removed from the cistern area. Clear evidence of the earlier phase became apparent when the excavations extended down past the 160 cm. level. Pottery of the sixth to eighth centuries was comparatively abundant in this stratum.

It is true that the pottery subsequent to the Roman period in Palestine is less well known than that of the earlier archaeological ages, but it is also true that other factors useful for dating--such as architectural and numismatic criteria--are more abundant in the later levels. (1)

Further study of the ceramic materials will doubtless refine the chronological picture, but the main outlines of the history of the site are rather firmly fixed by converging lines of evidence.

The excavation yielded 13 coins, most of them dating from the period of the Arabic conquest down to the Latin kingdom of Jerusalem. A few were struck on flans corresponding to those used in the late Roman era but the inscriptions were completely obliterated. All were in such poor condition that they could only be classified generally by appearance and module, except for one of the era of Saladin, which has been alluded to above.

This particular coin was struck in bronze, and measured 24 mm. in diameter. The obverse was inscribed in Arabic:

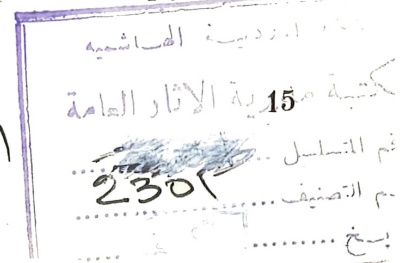
AL MALIK AL ADIL (الملك العادل)

while the reverse bore the name **MAHMOUD IBN ZINKI**. (2) (محمود ابن زنكي)

It dates from the reign of Nureddin Mahmoud ibn Zinki, Atabeg of Haleb between the years A.H. 541-569 (A.D. 1146-1173). The fortuitious circumstance of this discovery on the ash level at the top of stratum 3 helped to fix the date of the final destruction of the Phase 2 edifice.

Other objects of significance in dating the earlier phase of the church included the base of a Byzantine glass bottle, a lamp sherd of the "sunburst" type from the same era, found at a depth of 1.60 m., and coins of fifth century module. Three curious little bronze cups were brought to light in the area of the main apse. They were conical in shape, rounded on the bottom, with one indentation on the rim of

1. The writer wishes to acknowledge the invaluable help of Fr. Saller of the Franciscan Biblical School in dating the pottery.
2. I. Ghalib Edhem, *Catalogue des Monnaies Turcomanes* (Constantinople: Musée Imperial Musulmanes, Mihran Imprimeur, 1894) P. 118, Nos. 155-158. Cf. Pl. VI. A similar coin is in the Franciscan Museum in Jerusalem. The writer is indebted to Fr. Spijkerman, museum-Curator, for his assistance in identifying this coin.



each. They were nested together when found. Their function is still a matter of conjecture, but a liturgical rather than domestic use is likely. Tentatively assigned to this phase also was the right rear portion of a human mandible with one tooth, found amid the foundation stones of the main building. Other important finds included a stone basin fragment with a handle similar to one found at Ras es Siyagha, and a handsome black diorite quern of undetermined date. A corner fragment of a Byzantine capital, which may not have been indigenous to the site, completes the inventory of materials marking the existence of the earlier church.

PHASE 2

Excavation of the massive foundations of the medieval church extended into five 7x9 meter areas and into five sub-areas of lesser size. Clearing operations were originally initiated in the center of the nave west of the vertical stone column. This area, labeled I-A, measured 7x9 meters as did the adjacent areas on the north and south. (These later had to be enlarged to 8x9 meters in order to recapture the exterior face of the walls on the north and south sides of the structure). Subsequently, the "E" areas were opened east of the three primary areas to facilitate exploration of the rooms flanking the apses and to locate the East wall. Areas II-B and III-B extended westward along the north wall of the edifice, while areas III-A and II-C, although only partially dug, enabled us to determine important architectural features. Sector I includes practically the entire eastern half of the church, being that part which was first dug. Most of the substantial finds and all of the mosaics from the church were contained in the areas denoted by the numeral I. Sectors II and III moved progressively nearer the stratigraphically disturbed slope at the western end of the church. (See plan, pL. XIV, for identification of the areas).

In area I-A, the lower part of level 2 (cm. 120-150) contained a mass of fallen stones, but no well-squared ashlar blocks similar to those surrounding the apse mosaic.

Practically no pottery was found in this level, as it consisted almost exclusively of rubble and fill. In level 3, the search for the mosaic floor outside the central apse yielded negative results. The preserved section of the mosaic appeared to have been cut off precisely where the apse entered the nave. The base for the mosaics was constituted of an ash-and-lime cement. An interesting trace of burning on the mosaic near the east end of the apse may indicate the marks of a destruction by fire, possibly that of the early church. Marble pieces had been used to patch the mosaic around the column, showing its reuse in the later church.

Of considerable significance was a column base from the apse, which is similar to the "Justinian" bases from the churches at Bethlehem and Gethsemane, (cf. PL. XV) both in configuration and in the type of beautiful pink marble (*mizzi ahmar*) from which they were carved. Since places which were uneven or chipped had been carefully covered with plaster, the base was doubtless re-used in the later church, probably in an inverted position atop the column as an altar or reliquary. The relatively small size of the Byzantine chapel of Phase 1 makes it likely that the column base, (57 cm. square) as well as the column, (39 cm. in diameter) were taken from the ruins of some more famous edifice in the vicinity for the purposes of the medieval builders. The question of the original provenance of the marble column and base, however, must remain open for the present.

Large numbers of tesserae occurred in the east end of the nave, but in a completely disrupted condition, mixed with stones, plaster, and ash. Abundant fragments of polished marble were found scattered throughout the center of the nave. A typical day of digging brought to light about three dozen pieces, ranging in thickness from 2 to 4 cm. Numerous worked fragments provided only a tantalizing glimpse of what the chancel rail and other appurtenances must have been like. No reconstruction was possible due to the lack of fragments of sufficient size. Probably the site served as a quarry for the voracious lime-kilns of several generations of Arabs. The remainder of the church was bare of any paving with the important exception of the crude stone mosaics found in area I-B.

A very slight amount of pottery was recovered from the floor level in level 3. Perhaps a dozen small bits of Roman-Byzantine type glass and a few pieces of bone appeared in this area. The most notable finds were two iron arrowheads from the center of the nave at a distance 5.50 m. and 7.80 m. west of the column in the apse, and on the 150 cm. level. They compare favorably in type with weapons of the period of the Muslim reconquest, (i.e., the era of Saladin).

East of the large central apse, (area E I-A) the wall fill extended to the cement walk adjacent to the hospital. Mixed in with the fill were mosaic tesserae of the type found in the apse floor. In one place we removed several foundation stones from the rubble fill, showing that mosaic fragments and ash-and-lime mortar similar to that in the apse continued under the east wall of the church. This was added proof that the apse mosaic was in existence prior to the erection of the masonry of the medieval church.

The patch of preserved mosaic (M-4) which was found in this area was just outside the church. It showed no sign of a pattern, although it was located only 3 m. east of the "sprig" patterned apse mosaic. The two were apparently unrelated.

Area I-B included the north side of the nave and the small NE apse flanking the central one. A contiguous stretch of mosaic pavement 10-20 cm. x 2.20 m. extended northward between these two apses, continuing the "sprig" pattern of the large mosaic section. Much to our good fortune, it also contained a broader fragment, which ran in the general direction of the longitudinal axis of the nave, but with a deviation of five degrees to the south.

Decoration of the border consisted of a repetition of schematic crosses of black and red tesserae set in the white field. The section of crude mosaics was also found in this area.

The NE arch was traceable only on the basis of the cement which had lain under the stones, but the north wall of the nave could be detected more easily because of the small stones which had been utilized to fill the foundation trench. Ironically, this section of the wall had been the best preserved of the entire structure before it was demolished by new construction. One worker reported that four courses of masonry had been removed. One course of the NE apse was reconstructed for photographs by replacing the original stones on the underlying mortar. Two large bala'at paving stones marked the place where a squared doorway had also been previously sighted. The absence of some of the foundation stones rendered uncertain the exact configuration of the northern complex of walls in this area, but they are rather obviously identical with those on the opposing side of the nave

The rooms were more easily discernible in the SE quarter of the church than in this area. The exterior face of the foundation, however, was clearly outlined on the north side, making it possible to trace the entire length of the wall from the NE to the NW corners, a distance of 28 meters.

Of the four rooms flanking the eastern apses of the church, two doubtless served liturgical functions as *prothesis* and *diakonicon*. Excavation in area I-C provided an indispensable pattern for interpreting the confused foundation level of the NE corner, where a corresponding arrangement of walls had originally existed. Conclusive proof of this similarity was obtained from aerial photographs of area I-B, which clearly showed the color difference between the foundation trench and the sterile earth, even where no stones remained.

The region of the small SE apse was entirely covered with a thick layer of ash at the floor level, but there was no preserved mosaic, perhaps because of the proximity of the olive tree. A coin found just outside the small apse on top of the ash level (150 cm.) constituted perhaps the most valuable single discovery of the excavation from the perspective of historical interpretation. The fact that it was struck under the "Zangids of Haleb" before A.H. 569 (A.D. 1173) is very significant. This evidence decisively places the final use of the church in the period of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem, with its apparent destruction in the time of Saladin. In all probability, the church was destroyed shortly after the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 1187.

The walls forming hallway and rooms on the south side of the nave in this area stood to an extreme height of four courses, and were exceptionally well preserved. The interior wall was 1 m. in thickness, while the exterior one measured 1.22 m., compared to the foundation course of the eastern exterior wall, which proved to be some 15 cm. wider, or 1.37 m. in width. The west wall of the church, however, was substantially thicker, (2.40 m.) and the piers which surrounded the inscribed apses were even more massive.

At a distance of 4.75 m. west of the NE apse, a doorway 1.15 m. wide occurred in the interior wall which provided access from the nave into the corner rooms. (On the north side, the *bala'at* paving stones indicated most clearly the position of the doorway, but the hallway and room complex was more easily detected on the south side.) It was fortunate that the two sides complemented one another, in this way enabling the crucial features of the ground plan to be recovered with some certainty.

The hallway was .75 m. wide. After extending 2.32 m. east from the doorway, it widened into a space 1.60 m. wide by 2.43 m. long which was termed room 1. This room was bounded on the north by a thin cross wall only .57 m. thick which contained two large stones evidently forming the threshold for a door .85 m. wide. The ledge on the doorsill would have allowed the door to open eastward into the next room (room 2). Room 2 was a rather large L-shaped area which filled the space between the SE apse and the corner of the structure.

The square portion of the room measured 3.90x5.32 m., while the doorway area was 1.45x1.60 m.

West of the olive tree, several objects were reported in the various levels as follows:

Level 1, a brass cartridge shell of perhaps World War 1 vintage;

Level 2, a bronze bracelet fragment;

Level 3, three poorly preserved bronze coins of uncertain date, but falling perhaps within the Early Arabic period; and

Level 4, a glass bottle handle of Byzantine type.

Room 2, being outside of area I-C, necessitated the extension of the work eastward for another 3.5 meters (area EI-C). This move brought the excavations up to the sidewalk surrounding the west wall of the new hospital. In fact, the S E corner of the church's exterior wall was covered by the edge of the sidewalk! Contents of the room included some bits of glass, a few mosaic tesserae, some Byzantine sherds, marble fragments, and a concentration of ash in the NE corner, all from the bottom of level 3 (1.60 m.). Also important were two coins of small module and a fragment of another human jawbone.

Nearness of these objects to the floor level in this context suggests that this mandible also be assigned to the earlier destruction.

The appearance of dark brown unstratified soil outside of the east wall of the church indicates that there were on this side no contemporary (Phase2) occupational levels adjacent to the structure.

Sector II on the grid was excavated only in the northern, or "B" area, with the exception of II-C, which was partially dug. This portion of the church contained the feature which, combined with the triple eastern apse, made the structure so distinctively different from anything previously found in Palestine--a large side apse in the north wall. It was preserved, like the eastern apses, to a height of only one masonry course of well-laid ashlar blocks. The size of the apse, however, was somewhat smaller than that of the central apse, (4.98 m. as opposed to 5.72 m. in width).

The search for a symmetrical apse on the south side of the sanctuary in area II-C was successful only in recovering a portion of the rubble core of the original pier, the squared stones from this section apparently having been robbed in antiquity. Conclusive proof of the existence of an apse on the south side, however, was produced in the form of one finely-cut building stone, concave in both horizontal and vertical orientation, which had obviously fallen from the top of the apse.

A large octagonal cistern curbstone in area III-B apparently had been used from Byzantine down to modern times. The disturbed condition of the foundation level near the cistern, together with the late sherds in the vicinity, made it clear that relatively recent intrusive activity had occurred. This would explain the complete break in the foundation stones of the north wall between the cistern and the side apse. Adjacent to the cistern cover was found a cylindrical plaster basin (measuring 1.10 m. in diameter with a depth of .60 m.) similar to those used in Palestine from the Iron Age down to the Late Arabic period. The writer excavat-

ed one of this type previously at Dothan, dating from circa 700 B.C. (1) Certainty concerning the function and use of the plaster basin is complicated by the fact of the intrusions. Its location and general appearance suggests the function of a baptistry, but the archaeological context indicates that it was used as a settling basin in the Late Arabic period. The contents of the basin relate entirely to the later periods, but the pottery taken from around the cistern at a depth of 20 cm. points again to the Crusader era.

The octagonal curbstone was found to have a rough equipoised cross inscribed on its north side. It is likely, therefore, that it was placed by the Byzantines and re-used by the Crusader period builders. At some point, probably when the massive structure was built, the curbstone had been propped up on other large stones to compensate for the gradual rise in the surrounding terrain. (2)

The corner of the building was discovered in area III-B (Sector III) by tracing the foundation level westward from the cistern area. The west wall of the church was an amazing 2.40 m. wide! Exceptionally large stones had been utilized as footers at the corner because of the slop of the hill. A curious "splayed" effect could be observed when sighting down the north wall, so that the wall curved inward noticeably in the center, possibly a building convention to offset the effect of the tremendous thrust of the stone piers, apses, and dome of the edifice.

One architectural feature remained to be found--the doorway. It was at last uncovered near the end of the season due to the persistent efforts of Dr. Wallis. It was located at the midpoint of the western wall, and measured 2.60 m. in width. Numerous marble fragments were found in the doorway, as well as a nicely preserved section of the original wall plaster. The trench cut across the north wall where the doorway was located extended into area III-A, and completed the archaeological work on the site. Subsequent construction by the hospital has included a west wing built precisely over the ancient church, as the writer observed during a visit to Jerusalem in June of 1966. No trace of the excavation now remains.

HISTORY OF THE SITE

As reconstructed from the excavations, the history of the site is interesting indeed. The earliest church was evidently built during the heyday of Byzantine ecclesiastical construction late in the sixth century. By A.D. 570, the anonymous Pilgrim of Placenza saw the mountain covered with a multitude of churches and monasteries. We know that the vicious Persian invasion of 614 martyred 1207 monks and nuns on the Mount of Olives alone, and the Byzantine Chapel of level 4 would likely have been a victim of this catastrophe.

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1. See J. P. Free. "The Sixth Season at Dothan," **B A S O R** 156, p. 24 .
 2. Similar octagonal curbstones were employed in the monastery at Bir-El-Qutt. See P. Virgilio Corbo, **Gli Scavi Di Kh. Siyar El-Ghanam (Campo Dei Pastori E I Monasteri Dei Dintorni)**. (Gerusalemme : Pubblicazioni Dello Studium Biblicum Franciscanum No. 11, 1955) . See especially, "Capo VIII - 11 Monastero Di S. Teodoro A Bir-El-Qutt. "

A date in the 6th Century or later is indicated on the basis of re-use of materials from other churches, but a later date is possible since no terminal date is suggested .

The site probably lay dormant or experienced greatly restricted use until the eleventh or twelfth century when the large structure was erected. While the terminal date is quite well established for the later church, it is difficult to ascertain the actual time of construction of the building.

It was, however, probably built after the ravages of the Caliph Hakim in A.D. 1010, because the archaeological evidence, particularly the pottery does not indicate a date as early as the tenth century. (1) By the same token, it is unlikely that a church built prior to Hakim would have continued in existence down to the Crusader era without apparent stages of destruction and rebuilding. The political and religious situation in the eleventh century was, of course, not conducive to church building, although the Georgians are known to have built in Jerusalem prior to the Crusades, notably at the site of the present Armenian patriarchate where the Crusader church of St. James now stands (2) Thus is it most likely that, in view of the historical situation, the church was built sometime after the advent of the Crusaders in A.D. 1099, but a date in the eleventh century or before is not absolutely out of the question. (3) It is certain, however, that the church was utilized and repaired during the Crusader era, as attested by a carved Crusader-type of lintel and the bowl fragments and sherds alluded to above. If the column and base found in the apse can be attached to a definite period of a definite church such as the Eleona or Imbomon, then we may have a *terminus post quem* for the Medieval Church. The date of the building of the main structure must remain open at present.

ARCHITECTURE

It has been pointed out that this particular plan is unique in Palestine. First of all, it is obvious that the church was built by and for Eastern, rather than Western, Christians.

Interesting researches in the Soviet Union show that parallels with this type of five-apse church occurred during the medieval period in Georgia and Armenia. (4) It is not certain that a relationship between church types in these widely-divergent geographical areas did indeed exist, but there are certain points of marked similarity.

For example, the churches of Armenia (termed "cross-domed basilicas") were also built of a core of rubble faced on both sides with squared blocks. Externally, the straight line was preferred, while devices which multiplied the foils and an-

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1. Unfortunately, the foundation trenches yielded little datable pottery. The Crusader sherds found within the building, of course, do not prove anything more than Crusader use.
 2. Eugene Hoade, *Guide to the Holy land* (Jerusalem : Franciscan Press, 4th ed. 1962), pp. 289-90.
 3. The opinion of Fr. Corbo that the structure dates from the period A. D. 800 to 1050, based on resemblances of the masonry to that of Qasr Hisham and on the central plan architectural type, merits consideration and may be valid. Fr. Bagatti has pointed out to the writer in personal conversation the historical probability favoring the erection of the church during the Crusader era.
 4. J. Arnott Hamilton, *Byzantine Church Architecture and Decoration*, (London : B. T. Botsford Ltd. 2nd ed., 1956)

gles internally were the architect's delight. (1) There is however no archaeological evidence for the four internal piers which would have been required to support the heavy stone dome and which is characteristic of these churches. Further research will perhaps establish a definite historical identification for the church.

TRADITION

The events in the life of Christ which the Gospels place on the Mount of Olives were commemorated by various churches, and often by several churches erected on the same site by separate communions.

The Eleona and the Imbomon were the most famous, but numerous other chapels, oratories, and convents existed as well.

Anastasius Armenius (7th century) mentions two Armenian convents on the Mount of Galilee (Mt. of Olives). One of these is probably the present church of St. John in the Russian Compound (the monastery of St. John the Precursor) mentioned in the *Kalendarium Hierosolymitarum* (7-8th century). This leaves the other unidentified.

The late pilgrim literature refers to a large church located west of the ascension on or near Mt. Galilee and near the road leading down to Gethesemane. The situation and size of the excavated church fits this description. Ignace de Smolensk (1389-1405) recorded that:

"A droite de la grande Montagne des Oliviers se trouve la Montagne de Galilee sur laquelle le Christ ordonna a ses disciples de l'attendre apres sa Resurrection; une eglise y etait batie". (2)

The tradition, then, refers to Christ's instruction of his disciples after his resurrection. (3)

The Pilgrim Grethenios (ca. 1400) mentions several significant items:

"Le mont de Galilee est une colline ronde a l'occident de l'Ascension ... il y avait la une grande eglise actuellement ruinee jusque dans ses fondements. Les chretiens adorent (cette place) et descendent par le chemin qui mene a Gethsemani". (4)

The church was thus evidently destroyed at the time of the Muslim reconquest, or pulled down shortly thereafter, following Saladin's presentation of the Mt. of Olives as a *waqf* to two loyal families. Thus the sanctuary was "lost to the chronicles of history until the evidence from the stones put it on record." (5)

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1. Hamilton, *loc cit*.
 2. Mme. B de Khitrowo, *Itinéraires Russes en Orient*, (Geneve, 1889), pp. 151-2 /
 3. Cf. for the tradition: D. Baldi, *Enchiridion Locorum Sanctorum*, (Jerusalem, 1955), 617; 643; 2:644; 1:645; 5:646; 3:647; 684, 649; 1:650; 2:651, 8. For the original Memory see: E. Testa in *Liber Annus Studii Biblici Franciscani XIV*, 1963-4, pp. 97-98.
 4. Khitrowo, *op. cit.* p. 180. The writer is indebted to Fr. Bagatti for calling his attention to these references.
 5. This apt remark by Dr. Wallis is quoted in a brief descriptive study of the finds published in *Near Eastern Archaeology*, the Bulletin of the Near East Archaeological Society, edited by J. P. Free. (Vol. X, 2 and 3, 1967).