

THE ECCLESIASTICAL COMPLEX OF SAINT PAUL AT UMM AR-RAŞAŞ - KASTRON MEFAA

Michele Piccirillo

The continuing research at Umm ar-Raşāş - Kastron Mefaa (أم الرصاص), within the urban sector between the Saint Stephen complex at the northern edge of the ruins to the north and the walls of the Kastrum to the south, has led to the discovery of yet another two ecclesiastical complexes. The southern complex that rotates around the church of the Lions, and the central complex that is apparently made up of the Church of the Peacocks and the church brought to light during three archaeological campaigns in 1995 to 1997 (Fig. 1).

We have called this latest sacred edifice the Church of Saint Paul, the name read in an invocation to the apostle incised on a roof tile picked from the collapse. Unfortunately the name is not confirmed by the inscriptions that accompany the mosaic.

Buried under the high rubble of the collapse, but dominating due to its raised position in the midst of the ruins, the church was easily identifiable by its apsed form. This can be seen from the schematic plan drawn by Fr. Bagatti in which the building is marked with the number "3". In spite of this, a photograph of one of the doors on the south wall was published in the Plates as part of a house (Saller and Bagatti 1949: 246, fig. 16, pl. 41,2).

The area, which was difficult to reach, had not been affected by the modern re-occupation by the families of the Salayṭa tribe, who might have limited themselves to raising, in dry stone courses, the north wall of the courtyard that is a continuation of the sacred edifice to the east (Fig. 2).

The ecclesiastical complex is part of a block surrounded on three sides by minor streets. Further excavations will clarify the relationships between the church and the surrounding environs particularly with the Chapel of the Peacocks in the southwest corner. To reach the church from the south side, using mechanized transport equipment to remove the discharge material, we have had to build an artificial platform upon the facade of the Chapel of the Peacocks, temporarily covering the ruins of some rooms. The complex is made up of the church with a service room and porch to the south, a yard to the east with a service room set against the church wall, and a second yard to the north upon which

living rooms developed on the west and east sides.

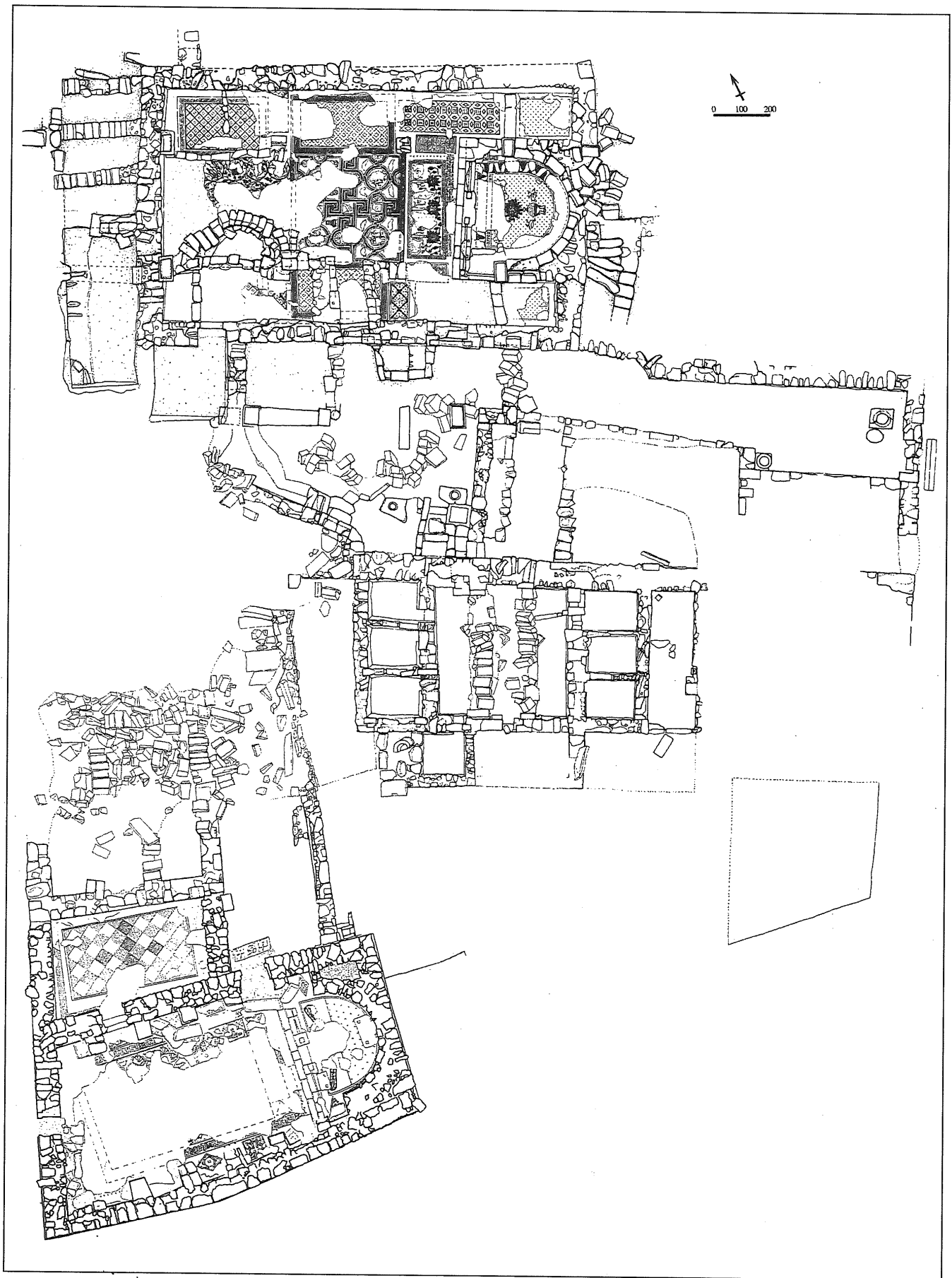
The block opens to the north on to the minor street that runs along the Saint Stephen complex. It seems to be the natural communication route between the two ecclesiastical complexes. The relationship with the surrounding areas is complicated by the presence of low walls, built during a period of re-occupation that preceded the final abandonment.

At surface level, the collapse of the church had the same characteristics encountered in the other edifices excavated to date at Umm ar-Raşāş. It had a northerly slant with the collapse of the north wall being more accentuated, followed by the falling of the arches in the same direction. On the other hand the porch arches had fallen in a southerly direction. The doors on the south wall were still standing in the 1940's with the lintels still *in situ*. At the start of our excavations we found the collapsed doors.

The Excavation

Having freed the fallen arches from the accumulated surface debris, which did not provide any element of importance, the stratigraphy of all of the north sector of the church turned out to be uniform enough (Figs. 3-4). The arches had fallen upon accumulated debris over a meter high. At the surface there was a stratum of stones and soil, followed by plaster and tiles that reached the mosaic floor, which was covered with a layer of yellow compacted earth (Figs. 5, 6: east-west section). The long fossiliferous limestone slabs that covered the north nave were found in the vicinity of the north wall (Fig. 6: north-south section). Pockets of ashes were found both at surface level, in the vicinity of the east pilaster of the north series, as well as at deep levels. These were found beneath the moulded ash-lars of the apse calotte in the presbytery area and in the northwest corner of the church. The thick accumulation and extension of this last pocket of ashes, which reaches the front door as can be seen from the remains of a hearth in use for a certain period, is to be placed in relationship with the re-use of part of the church prior to its collapse.

The new tenants used the west door on the south wall as an entrance. This led, through a corri-



1. Plan of the ecclesiastical complexes of Saint Paul (E. Alliata).

dor obtained by blocking the fall of the south nave's east sector, to a rectangular room constructed in the south nave and set against the church wall (Fig. 5).

The entrance to the room was in the centre of the north wall. A long sculptured lintel had been re-

used in the east wall. A low dry wall that incorporated the balustrade slab, still *in situ*, joined the presbytery to the corresponding pilaster in the nave. Besides, a low wall, set between the corresponding pilasters, isolated the northwest corner of the church in which there had been a hearth. The door in the west wall had been blocked.

The external porch was also occupied by the new arrivals. Here a service area was obtained in the southwest corner. The area had an east entrance, obtained by blocking the area between the west pilaster and the church door. A small quadrangular room was built in dry, set against the church wall between the doors.

The final collapse of the arches and the church's roof followed the abandonment of these structures, which ended up buried by the debris.

The Church

The plan of the edifice is that of a normal basilica with a raised apsed presbytery (Fig. 5). The access from the church to the outside was through a double entrance on the south wall, slightly shifted to the east. This led to a covered porch, the roof of which was supported by three arches, which lay upon two columns and two pilasters. A third door, on the same wall in the vicinity of the southwest corner, gave access from the inside to a service area outside the church, forming a continuation of the porch. The door on the west wall, off centre towards the south, led into another area that extended beyond the church's arris to the south. A white-plastered wall, to the north, divided this area from a facing room, having an arch-supported roof and an entrance from the north courtyard. Upon the subsidence of this dividing wall, part of the possi-



2. Umm ar-Raṣāṣ - Kastron Mefaa. The Church of Saint Paul prior to excavation (view from the west).



3. Church of Saint Paul after excavation, prior to the removal of the fallen arches.

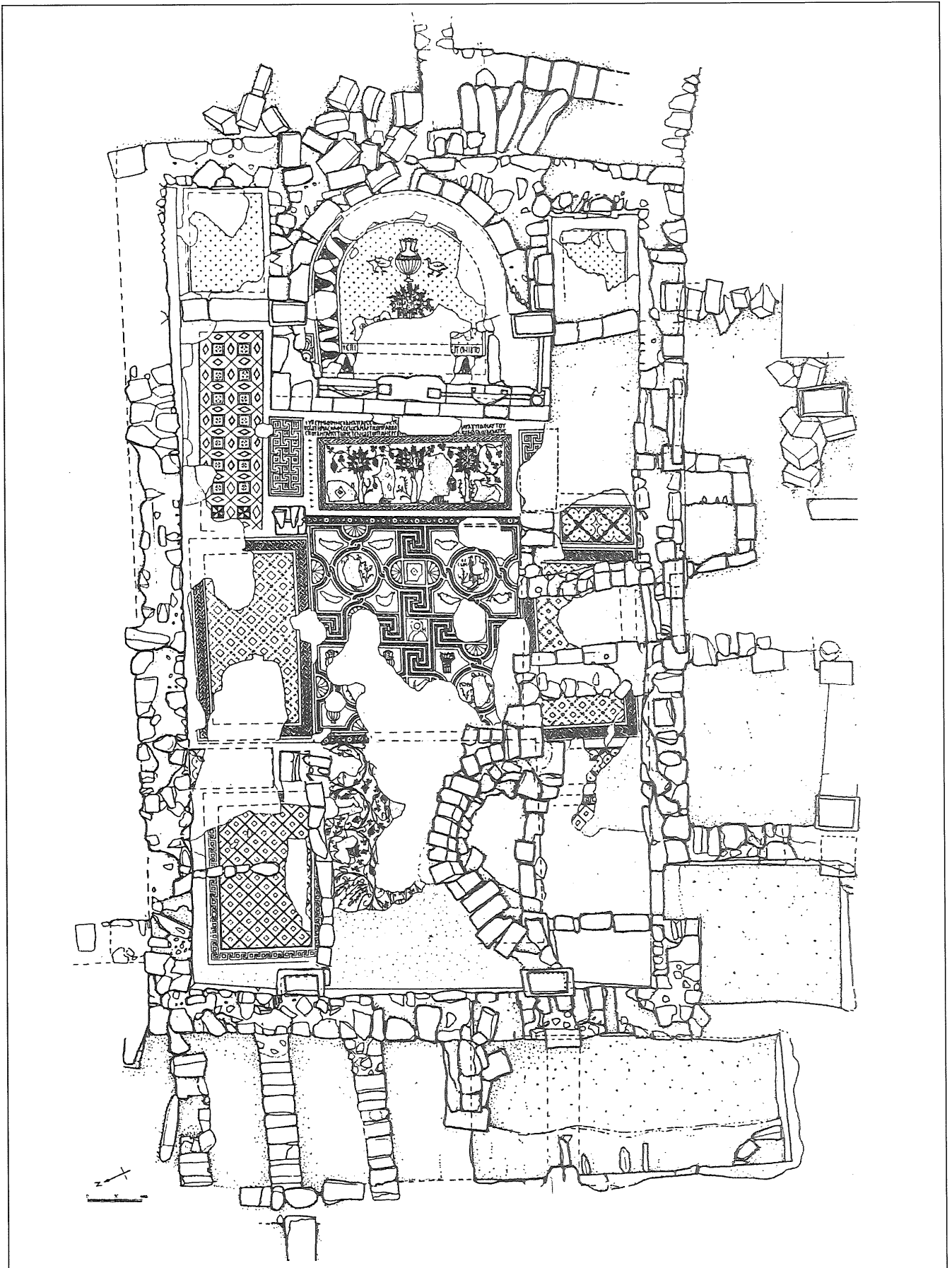


4. Church of Saint Paul after the removal of the fallen arches.

ble slabbed roof was still preserved, together with some courses of an overhanging low wall made of plastered crude stone blocks. The church's interior was uniformly plastered in white. This can be seen from the ample remnants of thick plaster still preserved and which witness to several phases of intervention.

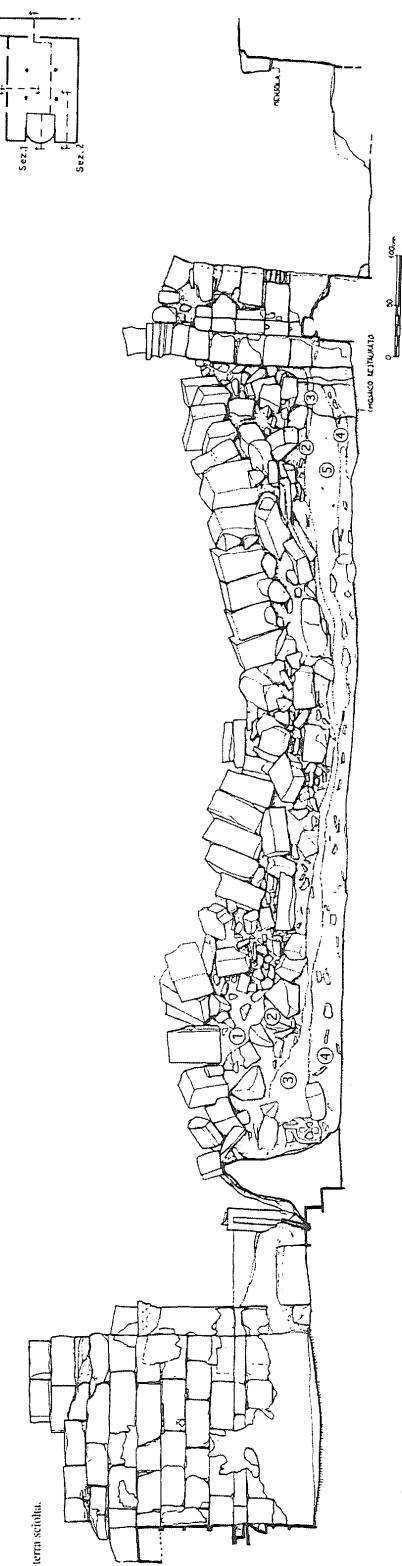
The plain jambs of the outer doors of the church ended with two jutting right-angled capitals with simple moulding upon which rested the two lintils. These were framed by a decorative element having

a serrated tooth motif and covered with an arch. Two crosses in relief on either side of a rosette superimposed onto a circle were sculpted on the east door lintel. The lintel of the nearby door had two circular cosmic crosses in relief set on either side of a worn out central square whose motive is unrecognizable. The lintels of the two interior service doors were simply decorated with a cross each. The large lintel, re-used in the room during the re-occupation, was still preserved within the church. It was decorated with two couples of Catherine-



5. Plan of the Church of Saint Paul.

Sez. 1 Sezione est-ovest attraverso la navata centrale (B. Steri).



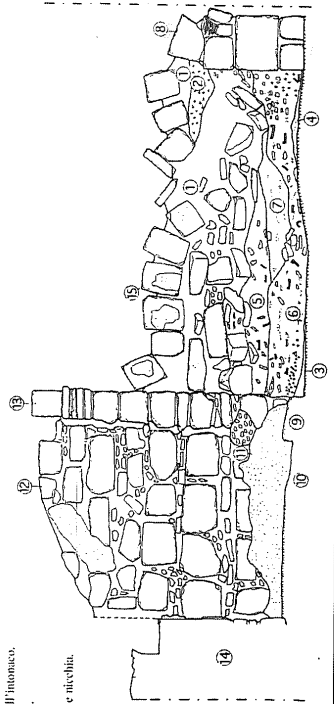
1. Crollo degli archi.
2. Piccole pietre, resti di intonaco in terra sciolta.
3. Sieno di cenere.
4. Calcinacci e tegole.
5. Terra compatta, resti di intonaco.

Sez. 2 Sezione est-ovest nella testata della navata nord (C. Sammori).

1. Terra gialla nel crollo.
2. Sacca di cenere.
3. Terra gialla molto compatta.
4. Calcinacci schiacciati sul pavimento.
5. Terra gialla con frammenti di intonaco e tegole.
6. Terra più o meno compatta con calcinacci, pietre e tessere di mosaico.
7. Lame di terra gialla molto compatta, frammenti a calcce.
8. Pilastrino nord-est della chiesa.
9. Soglia del pastoforio nord.
10. Letto del mosaico.
11. Strati di allentamento dell'intonaco.
12. Altro sud del pastoforio.
13. Pilastrino addossato a 12.
14. Altro est del pastoforio e nicchia.
15. Crollo dell'arco nord-est.

Sez. 3 Sezione nord-sud praticata al centro della navata sud (C. Sammori).

1. Crollo dell'arco centrale.
2. Muretto appoggiato al muro principale sud della chiesa con tegole riutilizzate.
3. Soglie est della porta centrale.
4. Soglia della porta.
5. Letto del mosaico.
6. Mosaico.
7. Fossa scavata di recente sotto il mosaico.
8. Terra gialla compatta.
9. Terra gialla compatta mista a pietre e intonaco polverizzato.
10. Calcinacci e tegole.
11. Terra gialla soffice.
12. Cenere con rari carboni.
13. Crollo con terra gialla e intonaci.



6. Sections through the Church of Saint Paul.

Section 1: east-west through the nave (B. Steri):- 1. fallen arches; 2. small stones, plaster fragments and soil; 3. ashes; 4. plaster flakes with roof tiles; 5. compact soil with plaster fragments.

Section 2: east-west at the top of the north aisle (C. Sammori):- 1. yellow soil below the fallen arches; 2. ashes; 3. compact yellow soil; 4. plaster flakes on the floor; 5. yellow soil with plaster and roof tiles; 6. soil with plaster, stones and mosaic tesserae; 7. compact yellow soil with plaster; 8. the northeast plaster of the church; 9. threshold of the northern service room; 10. mosaic bed; 11. different layers of wall plaster; 12. southern wall of the northern service room; 13. pilaster of the triumphal arch; 14. eastern wall of the northern service room with niche; 15. fallen northeastern arch.

Section 3: north-south in the middle of the southern aisle:- 1. the fallen central arch; 2. dry wall with roof tiles added to the south wall of the church; 3. east jamb of the central door; 4. door threshold; 5. mosaic bed; 6. mosaic; 7. modern hole into the mosaic bed; 8. compact yellow soil; 9. compact yellow soil with stones and plaster; 10. plaster flakes and roof tiles; 11. silty yellow soil; 12. ashes; 13. the fallen structure.

wheels and handled vases on either side of a central edicule, all closed by two lengths of twine.

Crosses in relief decorated the capital of the east column of the porch. The springers of the triumphal arch were decorated with a serrated motif. An acroterium was also recovered during the excavations. It was decorated with a sunken cross with traces of red paint. Two springers decorated with amphorae in relief that had fallen outside of the church were also recovered.

The walls have been preserved to a height that does not exceed one meter at the centre of the north wall, over two meters at the south and west walls, and over three meters in the apse with the maximum point being reached in the arched vault that covered the east head of the south nave (Fig. 7). A thick layer of white plaster hid the poor technique used in the stonework, where the ashlar were aligned with wedges and held together with poor quality mortar. The carefully squared up fossiliferous limestone ashlar had been reserved for use in the pilasters, arches and doorjamb.

Two steps raised the presbytery that juts slightly out into the nave (Fig. 8). Four bituminous schist chancel slabs closed off the jutting part. At the time of excavation, the south slab was still *in situ*, inserted between the apse pilaster and the corner columnette, which had a simple moulding on the frontal view face. The chancel slab was decorated with an encircled cross in relief, set in a sunken panel. Fragments from at least two chancel slabs were recovered during excavation: one had an inscription incised on its base, another was decorated with a small column in relief of which there remained part of the fust and the small foliated capital.

On the east head of the side naves, a step created a small reserved raised area characterized by a niche with jutting stone or plaster moulding set in the eastern wall. Most probably a barrel-vault or calotte covered both areas. Some ashlar of the roofing are still *in situ* in the south nave while those of the north nave were found among the debris. The niche in the south nave is still well pre-



7. The east head of the south aisle with the edicule on the east wall and the still standing chancel screen with a cross in relief.



8. *The presbytery with the altar and the offerings table, during excavation.*

served with its jutting stone moulding which imitates an arch supported by two small columns with capitals. The internal calotte had a double layer of lime mortar, the lower showed traces of paint while the upper stratum had sherds inserted in it. Only the lower part of the north niche survived.

Some holes found on the regular face of the apse splay are worth noting. These probably are to be placed in relation to a jutting plaster niche of which we recovered some elements from the debris of the collapse. The altar plinth was found at the centre of the conch. At least two phases in the development of the altar can be distinguished. The original altar was supported by four small columns inserted in housings hewn out of a stone base which was laid on a mortar mixture of lime and ashes and placed upon the mosaic floor. In a second instance, the small columns were removed and the altar table was supported by a masonry altar made up of soil bricks covered by a thick layer of lime plaster.

A quadrangular slightly moulded bituminous schist table, broken in two yet complete, was recovered, overturned on the initial part of the Greek inscription into the mosaic floor. This can be identified as an offering table, supposedly set within the balustrade at the northwest corner as indicated by the traces of its lodgings found in the mosaic. The excavations brought to light two small bituminous schist columns. One column is complete whereas the second has no base. The latter has holes for the application of a metal cross on its fust. These columns could be related to the offering table.

Also recovered were: a marble capital, the upper part of a basket capital decorated with a bird set be-

tween two lilies, and a roughly shaped-out capital. It is difficult to indicate the original functions of these elements within the church.

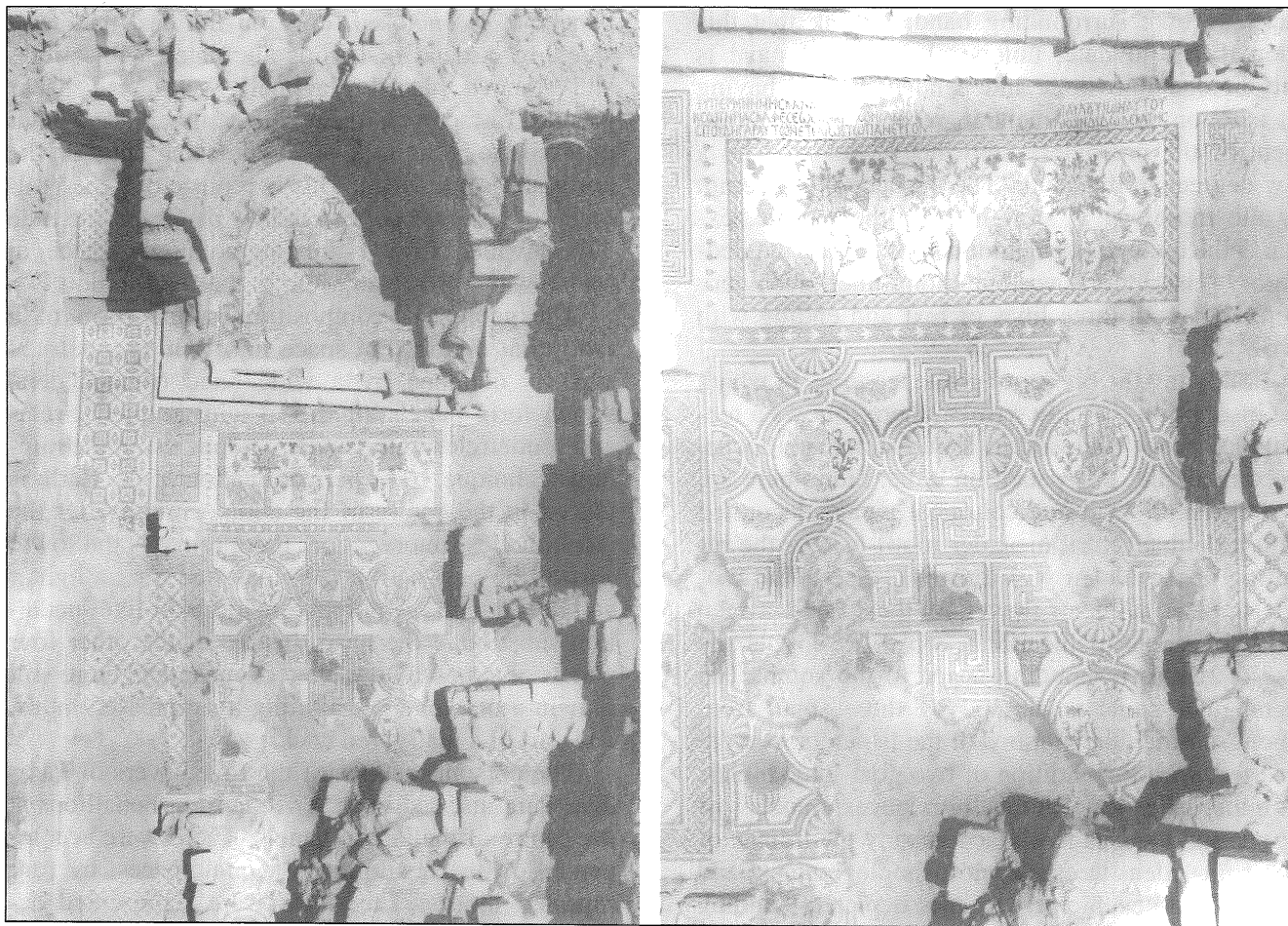
The marble lid of a reliquary, broken into three parts, was recovered during the excavation of the north nave in the vicinity of the step leading to the presbytery. The lid has the normal acroterium form. Worth noting is the hole at its centre, accurately formed by the marble-cutter.

The roof of the church was supported by two rows of three wide arches. The ashlar of the piers and the three south arches had fallen into the church together with the east arch of the north series. The other two northern arches fell outside the church, into the north courtyard. Here we recovered a keystone decorated with a cross in relief and some springers decorated with a handled chalice. The truss of the central nave was covered with roof tiles, the greater part of which ended up against the north nave wall when the roof collapsed. On the other hand, the side naves were covered with long fossiliferous limestone slabs preserved in the north nave.

The church was ventilated through a small loop-hole plastered window in the vicinity of the northwest corner on the north wall.

The Mosaic Floor

The church's floor is mosaiced in all its parts with a decorative programme that is new in respect to the already known mosaics within the churches at Umm ar-Raṣāṣ. Even if the programme is somewhat disorderly in its general plan (Fig. 9). Furthermore, the mosaic suffered heavily from the iconophobic mutilations and the damages due to



9a-b. *The mosaic floor of the Church of Saint Paul.*

the re-occupation of the church following its abandonment. Some motifs in the central nave were thus irreparably damaged. One can also note a singular detail in the vicinity of the door on the west wall and along the internal perimeter of the north wall. Here the mosaic had been re-laid with inferior quality larger-sized white stone tesserae. One could think of the mosaic breaking up as a result of the rebuilding of the wall due to unknown reasons or to the upheaval and removal of the original tesserae resulting from pressures exerted by the wall (a detail we have also noticed in the Chapel of the Peacocks).

The floor of the apsed presbytery was surrounded along its internal perimeter with a band containing an undulating wide ribbon, with small twigs set upright and upside down in the resulting spaces. The mosaic was executed with a wanted chromatic contrast in the alternating colours upon the background of black tesserae. A single line inscription, with black letters on a white background and framed within two lines of alternating coloured tesserae, runs alongside and internally to the band on the jutting side of the bema, parallel to the step.

A uniform field of flowers that decorate the carpet follows this. Two bulls facing a fruit-laden tree were inserted upon the geometric motif created by the grid of flowers. Continuing towards the apse splay, there is a handled amphora on pedestal between two facing birds. These were partially covered by the altar. Great care had been taken in the choice of colours for these motifs. The iconophobes disfigured the head of the bird on the left but spared the one on the right.

As a result of the destruction of the central part of the composition, only the hind side and tail of one of the disfigured — and later restored — bulls remain. One can still see, on the left bull, two polychromatic medallions carried out in the post-iconophobic restoration. An interlaced geometric motif, inserted between the band and the north side of the balustrade, formed part of the decorative programme.

The final result of the decorative programme within the church's body is much more complex and confused with the suppression of the intercolumnar panels and the not too justified extension of the motifs in the aisles into the central one, which

lacks its own surrounding band. I think that this anomaly is, to date, unique. The central nave is sub-divided into three independent panels having an autonomous alignment in respect to the alignment of the presbytery step that is deviated by a few degrees to the south. The unsuccessful attempt by the mosaicist at straightening the mosaic, explains the quite unusual anomaly of having the dedicatory inscription, written along the presbytery step, start with three lines of text and ending with two.

Following the border of white tesserae, in which the inscription is freely written, there follows a rectangular panel enclosed in a two-strand guilloche. Accompanying this panel, on either side, there are two different sized intercolumnar panels decorated with a double return meander motif having the resulting spaces laden with flower crosses. The mosaicist added a line of flowers in the space between the two panels to the north, which is double the size of the corresponding space to the south. The rectangular panel is divided by three small trees amongst which the pictures of the benefactors were inserted, with the addition of two goat-like animals on either side. Vine shoots with leaves, bunches of grapes and tendrils freely accompany the foliage of the fruit-laden trees (apples, pomegranates and pears). The benefactor Sergis is depicted standing on the left holding a censer in his right hand. The small censer with lobate cup, held by three small chains, could indicate that Sergis was the church's *paramonarius*.¹ A polychromatic medallion and a diamond set on point were added in the post-iconophobic restoration. Rabbus and his son Paul were represented standing between the second and third tree, while picking the fruits of the tree.² Rabbus was probably depicted while picking the fruit with his right hand while Paul, held by his father's left hand, followed carrying a basket full of fruit. The mosaic was executed with the usual care by the mosaicist. Rhomboidal diamonds and flowers were added on the disfigured motifs in substitution.

The central panel is iconographically the most elaborate and is also twice the size of the other two

panels. It is enclosed, only on the east and west sides, by a band of triflids alternated with circles and squares placed diagonally on a red background. In fact a characteristic of the quadrangular programme is the lack of an enclosing band on the north and south sides. This is replaced by the guilloche of the two corresponding panels in the side naves, which invade the intercolumnar space in such a way as to be adjacent to the central motif.

The geometric composition in the form of a cross that divides the space into four symmetrical parts is obtained by a wide band of meanders, which form panels alternated with knotted circles and semicircles with woven cordons using the rainbow technique.³ The personification of the Earth is placed in the centre of the composition. After the iconophobes' intervention, there remains the lower part of the bust with a red cloak tied over a lighter coloured tunic.⁴ A polychromatic halo-like medallion substituted the head. In two of the other four panels obtained by the band of meanders there still remain a diamond substituting a suppressed motif, and part of a disfigured cock.

The personifications of the four Rivers of Paradise were inserted in each of the four medallions at the centre of the lateral panels. These were accompanied, in the resulting polygonal spaces, by four repeated motifs. The rivers were represented according to the usual iconography, showing a semi-clad figure wrapped in a cloak and crowned with foliage sitting in a fluvial environment. He holds a cane stick in his right hand and a pitcher in his left hand, from which water flows. Ghion and Phison are in the top panels while Tigris and Euphrates in the lower ones.⁵ A shrub to the right, the leaves of the cane stick and the three rivulets of water are all that remain of the personification of Ghion and the surrounding four fish all of which were carefully disfigured. The workman had added a cross of flowers at the centre of the substitution that was carried out using the polychromatic tesserae from the disfigured motif. The personification of Phison is the better preserved. The upper part of the body with the face, the legs and the hand holding the

1. As in the figure of Ouadia in the Church of the Bishop Sergius (Piccirillo and Alliata 1994: 127) and at Jarash in the Church of Saints Cosmas and Damian (Piccirillo 1993a: 276), in the Chapel of Elijah Mary and Soreg (Piccirillo 1993: 296) and in the Church of the Bishop Isaiah (Clark 1986: 328, n. 12).

2. As in the Church of the Deacon Thomas on Mount Nebo (Piccirillo and Alliata 1998: 339).

3. The programme is used in the Theotokos Chapel within the Memorial of Moses on Mount Nebo (Piccirillo and Alliata 1998: 301).

4. The hand-held veil full of fruit is missing. This can be seen

in the bust of the Earth in the Church of Saint George and in the upper mosaic in the Chapel of the Priest John (Piccirillo and Alliata 1998: 328, fig. 138; 353, fig. 209).

5. The motif is quite frequent in the mosaics of the Mādabā region. To date it is present in the Chapel of Saint Theodore in Mādabā (Piccirillo 1989: 27), in the Şunnā' Church (Piccirillo 1993b: plates 8-9), in the Chapel of the Theotokos Monastery on Mount Nebo (Piccirillo and Alliata 1998: 364) and in the Church of Saint Sergius at Umm ar-Raṣāṣ (Bujard, Piccirillo and Poiatti-Haldimann 1992: 291-299; Piccirillo 1993a: 241).

pitcher had been disfigured. There remained, wholly preserved, the arm and hand that carries the cane stick, the foliate crown on the head, the pitcher from which the water flows, the folds of the cloak that covers the lower part of the body as well as the isolated cane stick on the right and the shrub on the left. The river is surrounded by four disfigured animals (three of which survive). The outline suggests they were fish. The surviving details, a sort of horned head apart from the fish tail, render difficult the interpretation of these marine animals.⁶ Of the personification of the river Tigris surrounded by four handled amphorae (only three survive), there remain part of a cane and the substitution carried out using different quality white stone tesserae. The river Euphrates was surrounded by four baskets full of fruit (only one survives). What remain are part of the foot and cloak, the vegetable motifs, part of the pitcher and water and part of the foliage on the rivers' head. The restoration was carried out using mediocre white stone tesserae.

The third panel, in the vicinity of the west wall, was planned with vine scrolls sprouting from tufts of acanthus set in the corners. In the four registers of scrolls, judging from what survived the iconoclastic destruction, there were represented vintage and pastoral scenes inserted in some disorder. In the first scroll starting from the west after the breakage, there remains half the figure of a young shepherd, wearing a short tunic, with a slingshot in his right hand turned to the south. The hands of a vintager who is cutting a bunch of grapes using a pruning hook turned in a northerly direction can still be seen in the internal scroll of the third register. A farmer carrying grapes on a donkey's back, with the whip in his right hand and holding the reins in his left is a scene that develops in two scrolls on the north side. The figures face south and are thus moving towards the inside of the church.⁷

The geometric programme in the aisles is more disorderly. The programme is divided in three mirrored panels having different lengths and widths, interrupted by small panels that act as fillers. A field of flowers decorated the two slightly raised areas in front of the niches on either side of the apse. The first panel in the south nave is practically destroyed. The mosaic continues with a filler panel decorated with two adjacent polylobed hexagons, laden with flowers on a yellow background, intersected by a series of small squares set on point obtained with spindles in black tesserae. There follows a panel enclosed in a three-strand guilloche

decorated with a grid of flowers laden with diamonds. The panel extends towards the inside of the church reaching the central panel. Yet another filler panel with polylobed hexagons separated it from the west panel that was decorated by a grid of rhombi and diamonds enclosed within a swastika band.

In the better preserved north nave, the east panel is decorated with a motif of interwoven octagons forming lozenges and squares laden with diamonds and flower crosses. There follow the panel with a grid of rhombi and flowers enclosed in a three-strand guilloche as in the south nave, the filler panel with polylobed hexagons and the third panel that ends in the vicinity of the west wall. This last panel is a grid enclosed within a band containing a simple meander made of two lines of tesserae, one black the other red.

The Inscriptions

Four inscriptions in Greek were recovered during the excavations of the church. Two were found in the floor mosaic, one incised on a roof tile, and the fourth on a chancel slab.

1. *The Inscription in the Presbytery Mosaic (Fig. 10)*

The single line inscription, introduced by a cross, is set between two lines of tesserae. The letters are 15cm high. There remain the first and the final letters.

+ ΕΠΙ Τ[ΟΥ.....ΕΤΕΛΙΟΘΗ
ΤΟ] ΕΡΓΟΝ ΤΟΥΤΟ.

+ *At the time of the [.....] was completed] this work (in mosaic).*

Keeping in mind the inscription in the other churches at Umm ar-Raṣāṣ, it is probable that the name of the Bishop of Mādabā, at the time the mosaic was completed, was remembered. In all probability this was Bishop Sergius.

2. *The Inscription along the Step of the Presbytery (Fig. 10)*

We have already pointed out the anomaly, due to the irregular form of the presbytery as a result of which the inscription that starts on three lines ends in two. The text, introduced by a cross, is destroyed at the centre. The medium height of the letters, set in black tesserae, is 9cm.

6. A similar animal was inserted in the band in the vicinity of the well-curb of the cistern in the upper mosaic of the Priest John at Khirbat al-Mukhayyāṭ (Piccirillo and Alliata 1998:

353, fig. 208)

7. As in the central panel of the church of the Holy Martyrs in Mādabā (Piccirillo 1989: 113s.).



10. The two inscriptions in the presbytery and the nave of the Church of Saint Paul.

+ Ὑπὲρ μνήμης κ(αὶ) ἀναπαύσεωςΥΕΙ
 Παύλου..... υἱῶν αὐτοῦ
 κ(αὶ) σωτηρίας κ(αὶ) ἀφέσεως ἁμαρτιῶν
 Ραββου.....
 σπουδῆ γὰρ αὐτῶν ἐτελιώ(θη) τω πᾶν
 ἔργον τ[οῦτο....μην] Ἰουλίῳ ἰνδ(ικτιό-
 νος) δωδεκάτης

+For the memory and the repose [of...and
 of..... Sergis and] of Paul his sons
 and for the salvation and remittance of sins of Rab-
 bus..... through their care all

the work was completed [...in the month] of July
 the twelfth indiction.

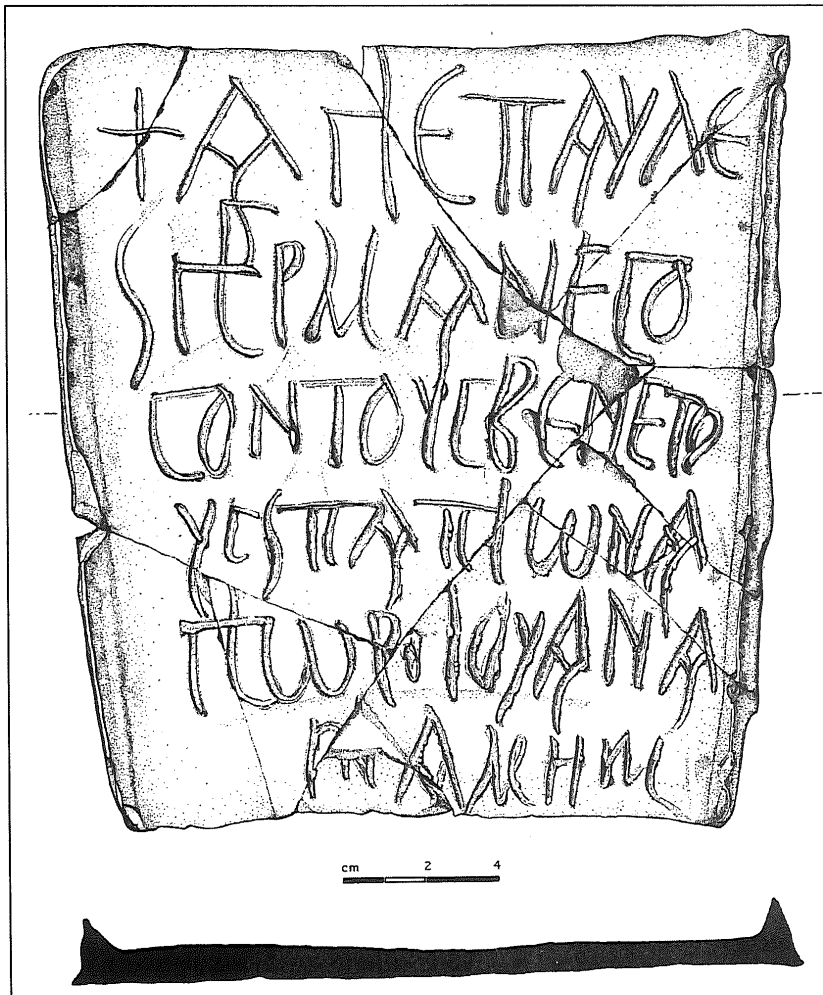
Ὑπὲρ μνήμης κ(αὶ) ἀναπαύσεως κ(αὶ)
 σωτηρίας κ(αὶ) ἀφέσεως ἁμαρτιῶν: The in-
 itial funerary form and what follows it are rather
 common.⁸

Rabbus is the benefactor pictured in the central
 nave together with his son Paul.⁹ The mosaic in the
 Church of Saint Sergius, within the Kastrom, was
 completed in the month of September of the
 twelfth indiction (Bujard, Piccirillo and Poiatti-
 Haldimann 1992: 300f).

8. The first formula recurs in the inscription of the lower mosaic of the bema in the church of Kaianos at 'Uyūn Mūsā (Piccirillo and Alliata 1998: 451, no. 58) and in the dedicatory inscription in the Church of Saint Stephen at Umm ar-Rasāš (Piccirillo and Alliata 1994: 244ff); the second in the

dedicatory inscription in the Church of the Virgin in Mādabā (Piccirillo 1989: 47).

9. The name recurs in different transcriptions (Rabbous, Rabou, Rebbou, Robab) in the Church of Saint Stephen (Piccirillo and Alliata 1994: nos. 5a, 7a-b, 5 d, 19a).



11. The roof tile carrying an invocation to Saint Paul.

3. The Inscription on the Roof Tile (Fig. 11)

An expert hand had incised the invocation, before baking, while the clay was still fresh. The text, starting with a cross, is spread over six lines. The letters are 4 to 5cm high.

+ Ἁγίε Παῦλε
(καὶ) γερμανέ σὸ-
σον τοὺς Βενέτο-
υς (καὶ) Παπιῶνα
Γεωργίου ἀνα-
γνώστου) Ἀμην

+ *Saint Paul*
and Germanos
save the Blues
and Papiona
(son of) George the

lector. Amen

The inscription is generally noteworthy for the elegance and agility of the cursive line. We notice particularly the *alphas*, with the long sinuous central line, and the superimposition of the *gamma* with the *iota* and *epsilon*. In the first occurrence, the *gamma* is written first followed by the *iota*, in the other two instances the *epsilon* is written first then the *gamma*. Furthermore the final line that closes the invocation is also noteworthy.

The name Paul accompanied a typical portrait of the apostle, found on a small ring during the excavations of the Church of Saint Stephen (Piccirillo and Alliata 1994: 267, no. 29).¹⁰

Keeping in mind that the verb that follows is in the singular, we prefer to interpret γερμανε as an attribute to Paul, even if a parallel is unknown to us.¹¹ The Blues, a sporting later turned into a polit-

10. A church in Jarash was dedicated to Peter and Paul “the principal apostles” (Kraeling 1938: 484, no. 326). Two separate churches were dedicated to the two apostles in the village of Rihāb (Piccirillo 1981: 78-82).

11. After a suggestion by Fr. Lino Cignelli, the Latin sounding

word in hyperbaton construction would have the affectionate meaning of “dear” (cf. Calonghi 1955). The invocation would be translated: “Dear Saint Paul, save ...”. In the Roman liturgy that uses a hymn by Prudenzio, Paul is called ‘germane Petri’ (?).

ical faction in Constantinople, that are mentioned and on whose behalf the apostle's intercession is begged, are already known in inscriptions found in Jordan. The name had been read on a lintel at Umm al-Jimāl and in a mosaic inscription in Jarash (Piccirillo 1981: 60; 1982: 508f; see also Jarry 1968).

The name Papiona recurs on Mount Nebo within the inscription of the Church of Kaianos at 'Uyūn Mūsā, and in the north church at Ḥisbān (Piccirillo and Alliata 1994: 453, no. 61; Lawlor 1980: 65-76).

During our excavations at the nearby Church of the Lions, we retrieved a fragment of a tile having the opening words of an invocation (Piccirillo 1992: 223). The Max Van Berchem expedition, during the excavations of the two churches within the Kastrum, found a second fragment of tile containing a list of names preceded by a cross (unpublished). A brick, apparently from a hypocaust, with an incised inscription of what appears to be the name Stephen (ΕΣΤΕΦΑΝΟΣ) was found during the excavations at al-Mafraq (RJ. n. A303). It probably belonged to the Umayyad castle at al-Fudayn. Photographs of the brick are held in the archives of the Department of Antiquities.

4. The Inscription on the Chancel Screen (Fig. 12)

The inscription was scratched by an artisan who was not too masterly in his trade. The letters of the inscription, found on the lower part of the screen, are 3cm high.

.....NIKENTOYAPHOYX

The Tile with a Witty Drawing

Among the tiles fallen from the roof that had traces of several interventions, such as hand-prints, incised crosses etc., we publish here the wittiest one of all. It can be paired up with the already published tile from Saint Stephen's and the unpublished one found by the Swiss expedition inside the Kastrum (Alliata 1987: 224, pl. 29, photo 43). The same hand, the invention of the same "naive artist" of Kastron Mefaa, supposing that the tiles were of local manufacture, incised the three graffiti. Unfortunately we were not able to complete the tile, even if the design is clearly identifiable (Fig. 13). A peacock seizes or pecks a serpent that frightens a girl. The anonymous designer, using a nail or stick, was able to create a scene sketched with great liberty.

Conclusion

The Church of Saint Paul presents the same characteristics found in the other sacred edifices at Umm ar-Raṣāṣ. Having two entrances on the south wall, it is similar to the Church of Saint Stephen. In

the latter, however, there is a paved courtyard with a portico on the east side that extends in front of the doors. The peculiarity of Saint Paul's is that the portico was in front of the doors. Furthermore, from the liturgical point of view, it is worth noting the two niches inside the church set in the east walls, with which we relate the reliquary lid found during the excavations.

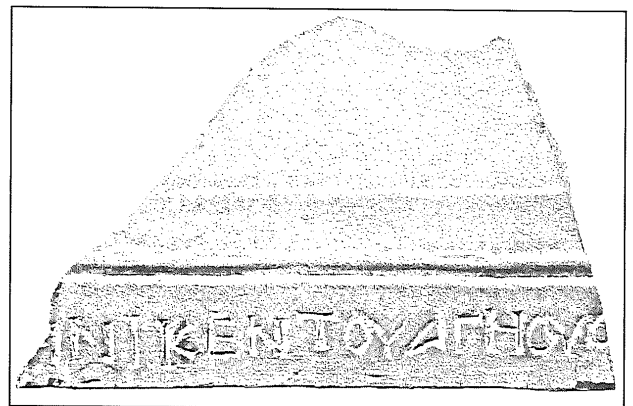
In spite of the doubt regarding the rebuilding of the walls, and missing the year and the name of the bishop, we must place our trust on stylistic criteria in dating the church and mosaic, which we think are contemporary.

Notwithstanding its peculiarities that are more concerned with the general line of the programme than the technical and chromatic characteristics of its execution, the mosaic fits well with the works carried out in the city at the time of Bishop Sergius (Piccirillo 1995). Of the two workshops we have identified as being active in the city, the mosaic would be the work of the one responsible for the mosaic found in the Church of the Bishop Sergius and the Church of Saint Sergius within the castrum.

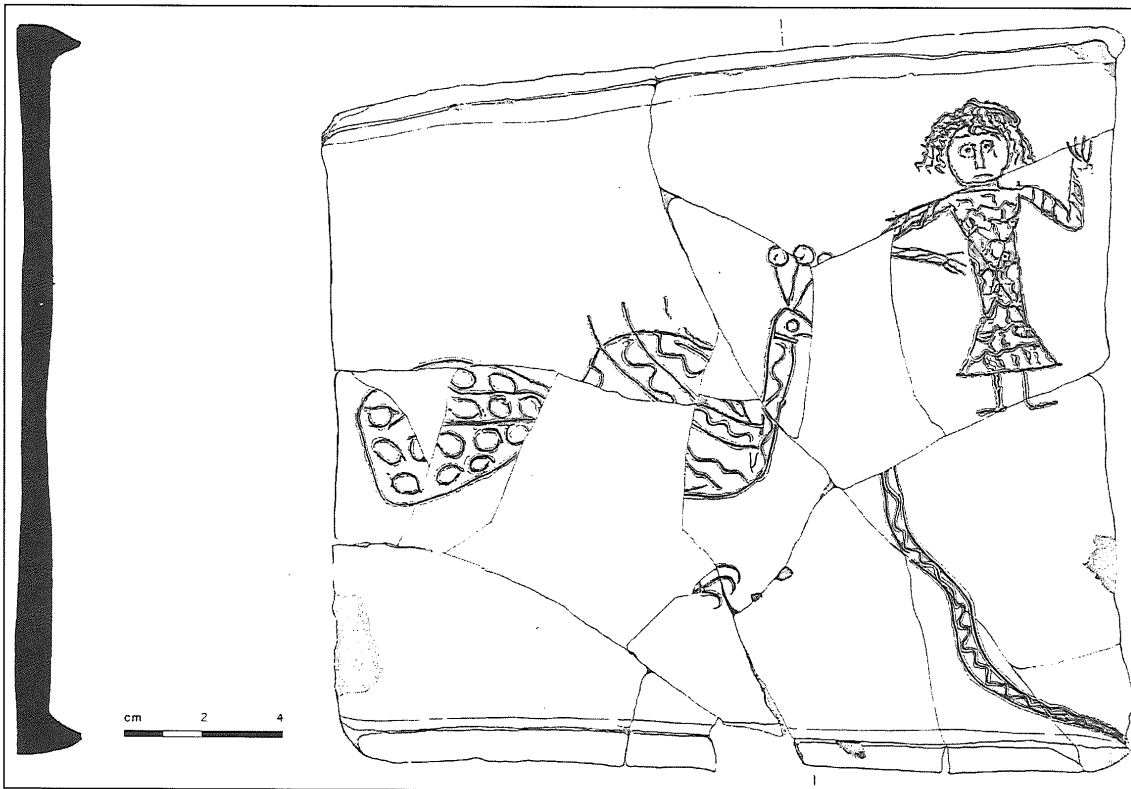
The twelfth indiction, which can be read in the inscription along the step of the bema and which we have already read in the inscription found in the Church of Saint Sergius, takes us back to AD 578 or 593. In the context of the other mosaics in Kastron Mefaa, I think that even here the former date is preferable. It is a time that saw intensive building activities in the diocese and at Umm ar-Raṣāṣ.

Even the Church of Saint Paul, like the other ecclesiastical buildings of the city, continued being officiated in after the iconophobic crisis that fell upon the figurative motifs in the mosaic. These were carefully substituted, by the workmen charged with the job, using the same tesserae or alternatively, tesserae obtained from the grayish white local stone.

When its liturgical use came to an end, the church was permanently re-occupied for a certain



12. The inscription on the chancel screen of the Church of Saint Paul.



13. *The roof tile with the witty drawing.*

period by a nomadic family. This can be deduced from the traces of utensils, some even set into the ground, recovered during the excavations.

Amongst the few pottery typologies found beneath the collapse we recovered the characteristic “Bedouin” pottery, similar to that recovered under the collapse in Saint Stephen’s, in the Church of the Lions and the Chapel of the Peacocks. At Umm ar-Raṣāṣ, we have identified this handmade coarseware pottery, produced using a rough black mixture, as being characteristic of the families who re-occupied the edifices after they were abandoned by the Christian communities. We date this abandonment to the ninth-tenth century AD.

The Church of Saint Paul, built and paved with mosaics in the second half of the sixth century at the time of the bishop Sergius, was used for liturgy at least up to the first half of the eighth century. Following its abandonment, a Bedouin family, who added new rooms both inside and outside of the church, permanently occupied it. This occupation would not have lasted beyond the tenth century, the time in which the roof collapsed. The fall of the arches upon the preceding accumulation followed during an undefined period.

The Chapel of the Peacocks at Umm ar-Raṣāṣ-Kastron Mefaa

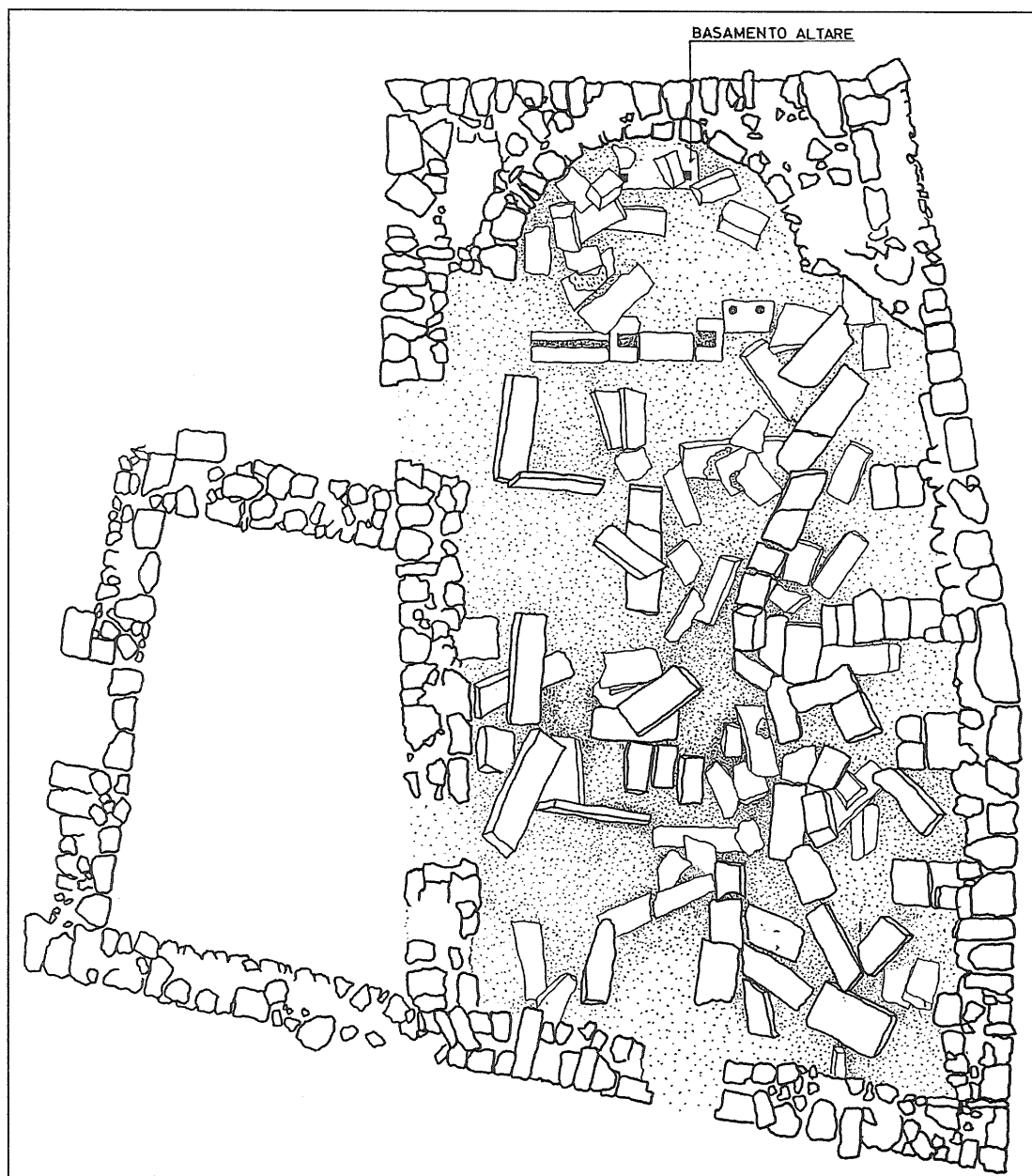
To the south of the Church of Saint Paul, one can see some underground arches. There is a possi-

bility that these arches supported the roof of a cistern for the use of a small chapel built in the southwest corner of the complex. We have called this small ecclesiastical building the Chapel of the Peacocks.

The Chapel of the Peacocks

The chapel is built at a lower level than the road that runs along the south wall and partly on the facade. On the evidence of the strange sudden deviation of the southern wall of the chapel in a north-westerly direction, it can be assumed that the road pre-existed the chapel, which was built on the edge of the property (Figs. 14, 15). The door on the facade opened onto the road. The inner level of the chapel was reached by a flight of steps. A stone incised with Thamudic graffiti had been re-used in the building of the facade wall.

The chapel was made up of the apsed prayer hall and a northern service room that was accessed from the chapel through a door set in the north wall, close to the northwest corner of the chapel (Fig. 16). The lintel of this door was decorated with a cross in a circle set in its centre. A second door on the northern wall connected the chapel with an internal paved courtyard to the north. Water was stored in two stone basins, found still *in situ*, one in the small courtyard and set against the east wall, the second on the eastern outer wall of the chapel. The lintel on the door leading to the in-



14. The Chapel of the Peacocks before the removal of the fallen arches (A. Roncalli). Scale 1:100.

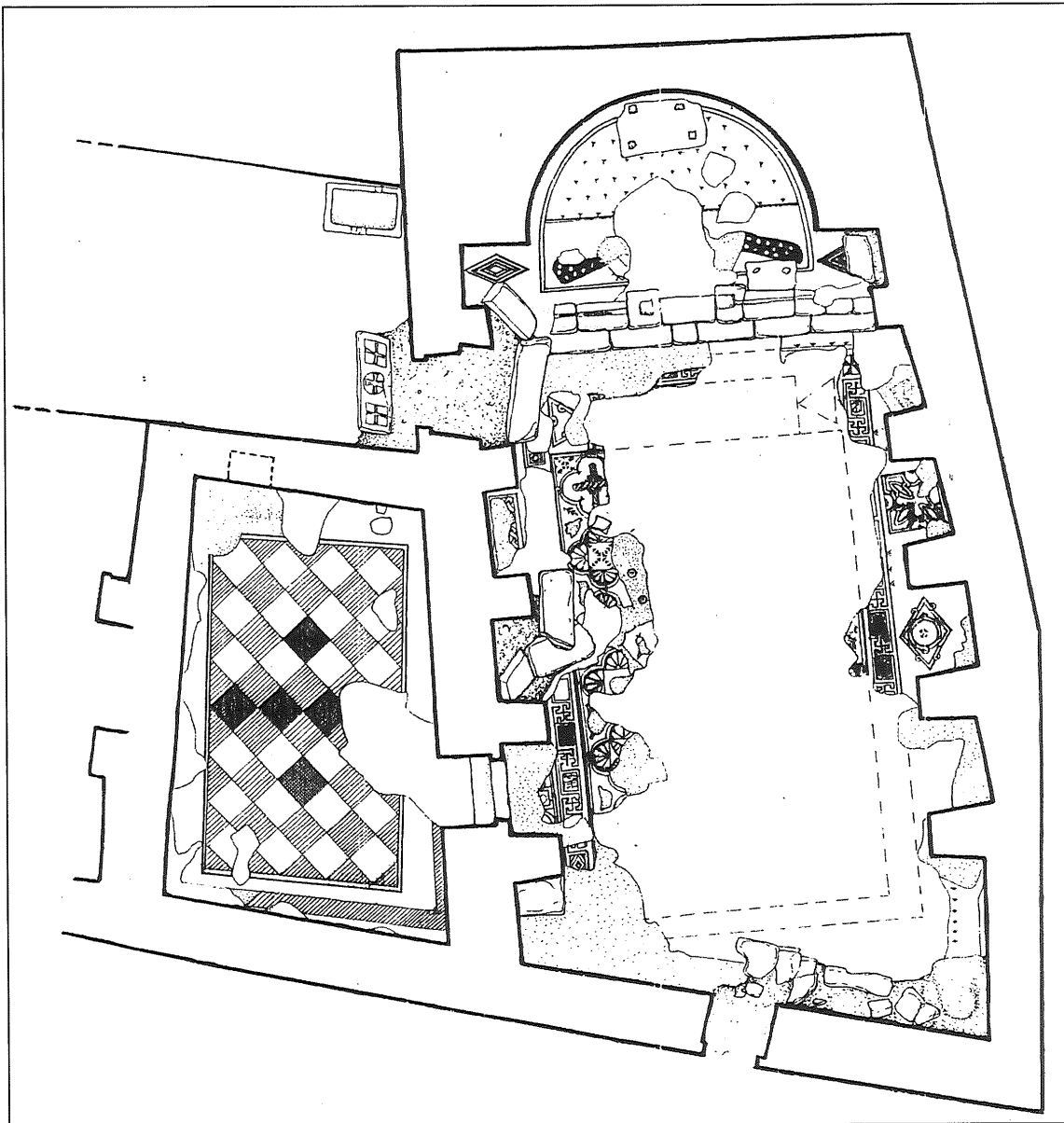
ternal courtyard was decorated with two crosses incised in a square panel on either side of a third Greek cross in circle in relief (Fig. 17). Another room, with its roof supported by two arches, was added on — externally to — the service room and set against its northern wall. This last room did not serve the chapel in any way but is to be placed in relation with the internal courtyard of the complex.

The perimeter walls of the chapel were still preserved up to a height of more than two meters. Five arches stretching in a north-south direction spring from the piers built against the inner wall to support the roof of the hall. The roof was covered with long rectangular beams of the local fossiliferous stone found in Umm ar-Raṣāṣ. We found the collapsed arches and stone beams inside the chapel (Fig. 14).

A chancel screen made of bituminous schist protected the raised sanctuary of the chapel (only 20cm high). In the apsed area there were two liturgical furnishings still preserved (Fig. 18). The base of the altar was found against the splay of the apse while the base of the offering table was recovered near the chancel screen, on the south side of the entrance to the sanctuary. A third element that can be related to the liturgy celebrated in the chapel is the small walled-in cupboard. This was found on the south wall of the apse, one meter from the floor.

In the northern service room, we noticed a small column inserted in the mosaic floor near the eastern wall, possibly the base of a table.

Witness to the reuse of the chapel as a dwelling, before the collapse of the roof, was a *ṭābūn* built in the southwest corner of the chapel. Here we



15. *The Chapel of the Peacocks after the removal of the fallen arches (A. Roncalli).*

brought to light sherds of a cooking pot made of coarse-ware pottery, a type already found in other churches at Umm ar-Raṣāṣ. The main evidence that the chapel was still standing after the Christian community abandoned it was the fact that the mosaic tesserae of the floor in the main nave had been removed.

The Mosaic Floor

The chapel and the northern service room had been paved with mosaics. Unfortunately, the central part of the mosaic floor in the nave was carefully destroyed and the tesserae taken away for some unknown reason. At the same time, the dedicatory inscription, set in a *tabula ansata* in front of the step of the sanctuary, was also removed (Fig. 19).

However, the surviving parts of the mosaic floor in the sanctuary and on the sides along the perimeter of the hall, give us the possibility to recreate the main decorative programme.

The main motif in the area of the bema was a semicircular composition, extending from the apse to the step, divided into two panels with a field of florets in the eastern panel, and two peacocks facing each other depicted in the western panel (which give the chapel its name). The two birds had already suffered the iconophobic mutilation before being partly destroyed. Of them only the two tails with the characteristic feathers and one leg of the northern peacock survived. On the north and south extremities, the mosaicists added two polychrome geometrical motifs.



16. *The Chapel of the Peacocks with the northern service room.*

The nave was wholly decorated with a single motif and surrounded by a band with a swastika meander alternated with squares knotted with the inner composition of superimposed polylobed squares. Of the dedicatory inscription inserted in a *tabula ansata*, only half a letter has been recovered. The resultant square spaces of the enclosing band as well as the resulting spaces within the main composition were filled with flowers, birds facing flowers, and geometric motifs. One polylobed square, set in the northwest corner of the main carpet, contained a large braided cross. The intercolumnar spaces on the sides, mostly preserved, were decorated with geometric knotted motifs.

The service room on the north was uniformly decorated with a checkered pattern with squares of white tesserae alternating with squares of yellow and red tesserae. (Fig. 20).

Basing ourselves on the surviving parts of the mosaic that are rather scanty, we can offer our conclusions. Artistically, we can say that the mosaic floor, of good workmanship, fits well in the works of the mosaicists who paved with mosaics the

churches of Kastron Mefaa at the time of Bishop Sergius in the last three decades of the sixth century (Piccirillo 1995: 391-398). Therefore, the Chapel of the Peacocks can be dated with confidence to that period.

The same surviving patches of mosaic witness to the fact that the chapel was still in use in the Umayyad period, since the mosaic floor was disfigured during the iconophobic crisis currently dated in the eighth century (Piccirillo 1996a: 173-191; Schick 1987: ch. IV). The damages had been repaired; therefore the chapel was still in use after that time.

Moreover, the chapel provides three interesting details to the history of the liturgy in the diocese of Mādabā, adding new evidence to its development in the late period. As in other churches of the region, the chapel was provided with a side service room in which we found the base of a table set in the vicinity of the eastern wall, possibly the starting point of the celebration where the offerings were prepared.¹² In the bema, we noticed that the base of the altar with four sockets for the small col-

12. The service room or diakonikon on the north side, accompany the Chapel of Bishop Marianos at Gerasa (Gawlikowski and Musa 1986: 139, fig. 2), and the chapel in the

monastery of the Theotokos in Wādī ‘Ayn al-Kanīṣah on Mount Nebo (Piccirillo 1994: 521-538, fig. 1).



17. The lintel of the northern door in the northern paved courtyard.



18. The presbytery of the Chapel of the Peacocks.

umns was positioned near the rear wall of the apse. The same position of the altar found in the Chapel of the Column in the Saint Stephen Complex, the latest dated chapel of the complex.¹³ The altar is new evidence for the late use of the chapel (Michel 1994: 111-119). Near the chancel screen on the southern side, there was, still *in situ*, the base containing two sockets of an offering table, as found in other churches of Umm ar-Raṣāṣ. In the other churches, the base for the offering table was found

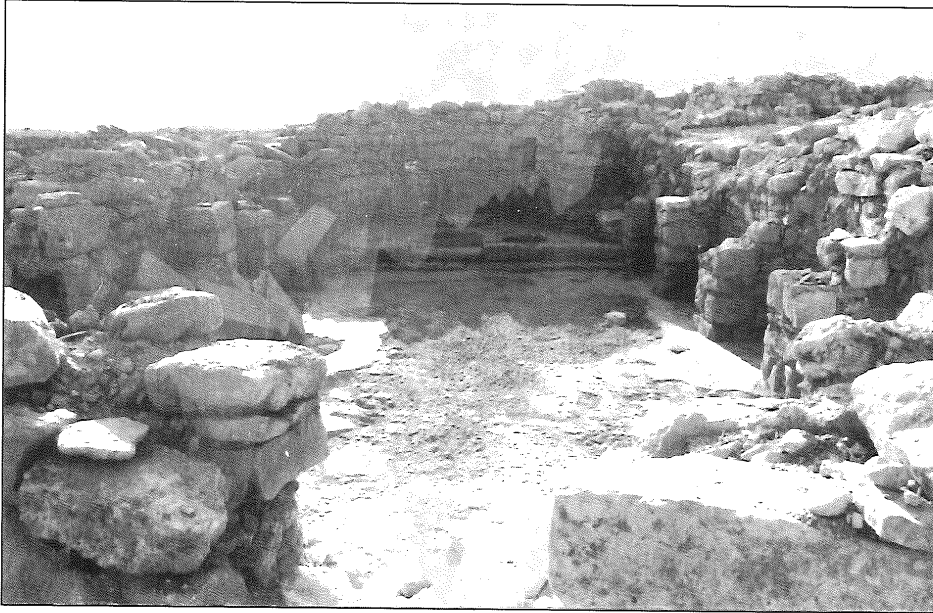
in the northern side of the chancel screen.¹⁴ Normally, in the churches of the Provincia Arabia, it is the ambo that is set in this southern position. Considering the small size of the chapel, we do not see the necessity to identify such a furnishing as an ambo.

Conclusion

The excavations have provided us with evidence to: the late liturgical use attested by the altar,

13. Cf. Piccirillo and Alliata 1994: 96-99. The altar was placed near the eastern wall in the chapel of the monastery at Khirbat al-Kursī in 'Ammān (Piccirillo and 'Amr 1988: 361-382, plan I).

14. It was found in the church of the Lions (Piccirillo 1992: 207; tav. 7, foto 15), and in the church of Priest Wa'il (Piccirillo 1993c: 318, fig. 15).

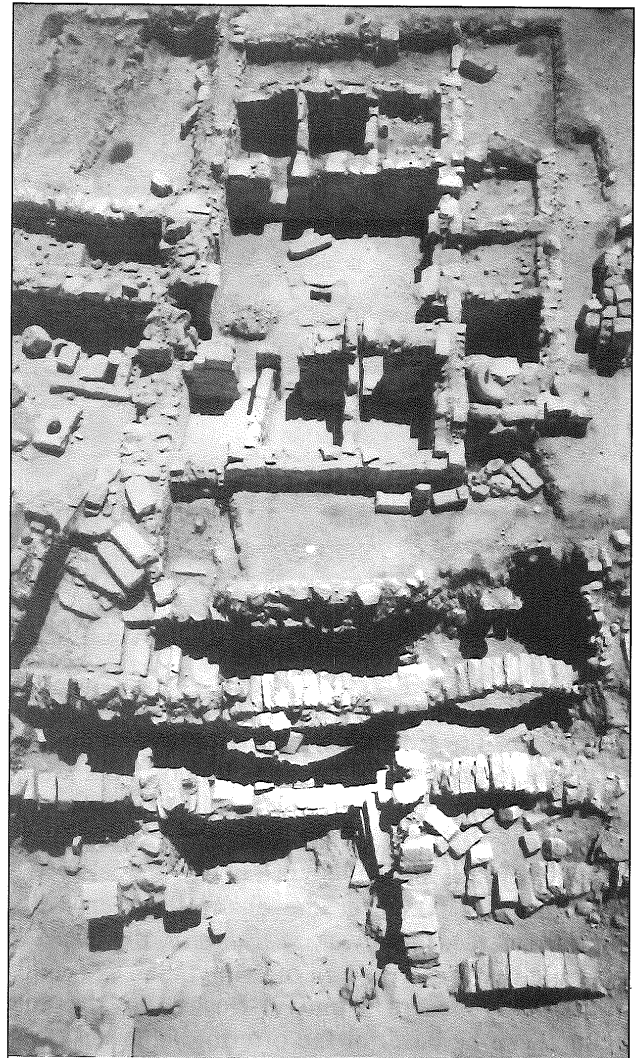


19. *The Chapel of the Peacocks seen from the west entrance.*



20. *The Chapel of the Peacocks seen from the northwest.*

the damages of the iconophobic crisis and their repairs, the despoiling suffered by the mosaic floor in the centre of the chapel, and the re-use of the chapel as a dwelling attested by the oven in the south-west corner. Moreover, we recovered a cooking pot



21. *The winery between the Church of Saint Paul and the Chapel of the Peacocks.*

of the so-called coarse-ware dated to the ninth-

tenth century.¹⁵ We may conclude that the evidence gathered from the Chapel of the Peacocks parallels the chronological evidence gathered from the excavations carried out in the nearby Church of Saint Paul as well as from the other excavated complexes in the outer quarter of the ruins of Umm ar-Raṣāṣ; the Saint Stephen Complex on the north, and the Complex around the Church of the Lions to the south.¹⁶

The Porch of the Church of Saint Paul and the Winery in the Internal Courtyard between the Two Sacred Edifices

The 1997-1998 archaeological campaigns were centred on the northern and southern flanks of the Church of Saint Paul.

To the north of the church, work was primarily carried out to clean the area from the accumulated debris and to possibly trace any structure therein. During this phase we noted that the northern external face of the northern wall of the church was greatly damaged and we decided not to expose it completely. Some of the areas on the northern flank of the church were only partially excavated while others were only excavated up to the first treading level encountered. The area was only cleaned at surface level except for two sectors next to the east-west road, that runs along the southern limit of Saint Stephen's Complex. These two areas (courtyards?) turned out to be interconnected through a doorway whose threshold survived. The eastern courtyard was only partially excavated (not to block the entrance to the ruins from the east). We did not, therefore, reach the eastern perimeter wall of the area. Besides the door in the western wall this area had another door in the southern wall. On the beaten earth floor, in the southwestern corner of the area, a marble fragment with an inscription was recovered, while towards the centre of the area a lintel decorated with crosses was found. The second area (to the west) resulted in an elongated (12.50 x 37.5m) east-west open space (no sign of pillars were found) that also had a door on the south wall. The only pottery sherds coming from this area were recovered from a drop in the floor at the northeast corner. An almost complete small amphora was recovered here. We have also noted that the area next to the cistern in the presumed north courtyard of the Church of Saint Paul was transformed into various small rooms during a later period. A stone ball (missile?) was recovered next to the northern wall of the Church of Saint

Paul. Work is to be continued there.

The Porch of the Church of Saint Paul

Excavations were extended to the south area adjacent to the Church of Saint Paul. This area covers the space between the Chapel of the Peacocks and that of Saint Paul's. We proceeded in a stratigraphical analysis of the area to better understand the subsequent stages of the structures and the continued usage of the area. Besides the excavation of the visible structures, we also excavated some in-depth trenches.

The structural remains, which were unearthed, belong to the stylobate that separated the courtyard from the two south entrances of the Church of Saint Paul. The stylobate (ca. 9m long, 63cm deep and 115cm in its foundation) did not contain any rising structure. It was formed by medium sized rectangular blocks of stone erected on a foundation made up of stones of different sizes and quality. It was 2.86m from the threshold of the church. On this stylobate, a portico was formed by three arches supported at the centre by two stone columns while on the eastern and western extremities it rested on two pillars. The whole collapsed structure emerged. Towards the eastern extremity, next to the collapsed arch and column, a stone ionic type capital-springer with a large quadrangular abacus was found. A similar example had already been noted among the ruins of Umm ar-Raṣāṣ. The lower portion of the western column (cubic base and bulging *torus*) is *in situ* and had been incorporated in the southeast corner of a room subsequently built in the western area of the portico (area 01). The eastern arch had a span of three meters — identified by the distance existing between the column base and the western pillar (which was also subsequently incorporated in the south wall of area 01). A very fine treading floor was in use in conjunction with the original porch. This had an upper layer (ca. 10cm thick) of lime and small stones laid on a well prepared fill of about 60cm. This floor and its structure were identified through the two excavated trenches, one in area 01 and the other in front of the western entrance of the south perimeter wall of the Church of Saint Paul. The fill that rests almost directly on a cistern (tomb?) contained sherds from the Roman period to the end of the sixth century. Mosaic tesserae and waste of different sizes (small and very small) and colours were found in this layer.

Two cisterns were excavated in relation to an

15. Some objects were found in the Church of the Lions (Alliata 1992: 248f "Vasi da cucina"); and in the Church of the Priest Wa'il (Alliata 1993: 336, fig. 2, 35.44-45).

16. For the final abandonment of the Complex of Saint Stephen, cf. Piccirillo and Alliata 1994: 282-286.

open courtyard laying in front of the porch which also had a beaten earth floor. The northern one was found at a distance of 3.15m from the external facade of the stylobate. The cistern lies at the centre of the two entrances to the church. It is 6.50m deep, having a diameter of around 90cm. Its opening was raised by about 80cm, which was probably due to the area being used again at a later stage.

A small channel runs under the doorway leading to the wine press excavated on the south side, and pours into a small stone basin (73cm x 50cm and 26cm deep). The basin has two holes at the bottom from which the water poured into two rectangular cisterns-reservoirs whose walls are covered with waterproof plaster. These reservoirs are more than 2m deep and had their openings at floor level.

A very thick layer of soil completely covered the reservoirs, the basin and the channel. The sherds coming from inside the channel date to the late Umayyad period. The presence of three fireplaces was noted in the upper part of the stratum next to the reservoirs.

Furthermore, the two cisterns discovered almost under the winery's doorstep have no connection whatsoever with the winery, although the "water channel" from the cisterns leads in that direction (south). This channel lies about 20cm below the floor of the central room. To date we do not have further explanations for these cisterns.

On the western part of the porch, a small area was found (Area 01) that belongs to a later period of use of the porch. The western and eastern walls of the area are made up of irregular rows of reused stones — they enclose the western arch of the portico encompassing the column and the pillar. A new floor of beaten earth was laid atop the original flooring upon a 30cm deep fill. The sherds found in this fill are from the Umayyad period.

The Winery

At about 2.25m from the porch excavations to the south, towards the Chapel of the Peacocks, there came to light a winery complex (Fig. 21).¹⁷

The winery turned up to be made up of a central roofed room around which nine wine pressers, without roofs, are located in three groups. These lie three to the west, three to the south and three to the east. The northern wall was the limit in this direction, while a 170cm wide corridor flanked the pressers to the east and west. To the south the pressers were flanked by a courtyard, which we only partially excavated. This south corridor was 18cm higher than the eastern corridor. A stone step

placed in relation to the southern enclosing wall of the southeast winepress led from the corridor to the courtyard.

All six completely excavated wine pressers presented the same characteristics: a thick layer of white plaster covered the walls of the presses. Large traces of this plaster had been preserved. White mosaic floors (tesserae of 2-2.5cm) were laid in a slight incline towards the central room, or better still towards a hole in the wall that divided the pressers from the central room, from where the must flowed out. Three pressers, two on the southern wall, and one on the eastern wall, were only partially excavated. These same three pressers had their entrances blocked during a successive use after the abandonment of the area.

All the pressers are linked to the central roofed room (10.90m x 5.20m x ca. 1.50-1.95m) through an opening of 75-90cm. Two north-south arches supported the roof. The lack of roof stone slabs during excavations leads us to suppose that the roof was made up of wood covered with beaten earth. The walls of the central room are preserved to a height of almost two meters, which walls were also plastered. Over three of the openings to the pressers, the lintel was still *in situ*. Furthermore in the walls flanked by the pressers (west, south, and east) there remains the niche for the settling of the must. These were made up of a semi cupola hewn out of a block of stone and a small stone basin connected to the pressers through a hole. The central one on the southern wall did not have the niche but only a small stone basin under an opening in the wall. The niches are well preserved and have traces of plaster.

The mosaic floor of the pressers is 20-30cm higher than the floor of the central room. Thus a stone step within the wall filled the gap. The floor of the central room was laid in mosaic using large sized tesserae (2-2.5cm). Two-three lines of tesserae bordered the diagonal filling. On the southeast corner there is a rectangle (60cm x 35cm) with an enclosing border and horizontal filling. The mosaic also enclosed a rectangular stone slab (20cm x 15cm) placed beneath the stone step of the entrance to the central room. The door in the north-west corner of the central room, together with two steps (15cm each), lead up and out of the central room.

A monolithic block of stone (115cm x 60cm) with a hewn out hole (62cm x 52cm x 25cm) was embedded in the floor at the centre of the room. This served to hold the wooden winepress. Large

17. For winery complexes see Ahlström 1978: 19-49; Ayalon 1983: 17-30. For a very similar wine press found on Mount

Nebo, see Piccirillo 1996b: 393f.

stone slabs around which there is the mosaic border, which mosaic was also used to fill up the remaining spaces, then blocked this stone. The mosaic floor towards the northwest corner was patched with stones of different sizes. The floor is inclined toward the northwest corner, towards a hole, that poured into a collecting basin for the must obtained within the wall (between the north arch and the door). More than half the length of the basin (80cm x 120cm x 105cm) is buried under the door and it is completely under the floor level.

Excavations showed that the hole for the wooden winepress was full of ashes that spilled around the area. The pottery found in the abandonment level above these ashes, and also directly on the mosaic floor, belongs to the Umayyad period. The central room had been reused at a later period, blocking off three pressers and leveling the abandonment stratum of yellowish soil (ca. 20cm thick) to create a treading level on which a *tannūr* (oven) was built. The oven was found very badly damaged. This helped explain the quantity of ashes found at this stratum. The complete abandonment of the winery brought with it the filling up of the structures with rubble. The arches were the last to fall down on top of all the rubble. The excavations revealed that a beaten earth floor unearthed in front of the porch of the Church of Saint Paul, containing Umayyad sherds, was the treading level for those going in or out of the winery.

A continuous wall delimits the pressers to the west. Outside this wall a beaten earth floor leads from the south towards the southern courtyard of Saint Paul's. A small (35cm diameter) circular oven made up of refractory earth (*tannūr*) was unearthed infixed in this flooring — thus revealing a later use of this space. This floor lies at about 40cm below another beaten earth flooring that exists next to the Chapel of the Peacocks. It is interesting to note that no walls or other structures were encountered between the two levels of floorings. Further investigation also revealed that the lower flooring made up of chipped stone, lime and soil, whitish in colour, lies on yet another beaten earth flooring, some 15cm below. This passage was delimited to the west by a wall that runs from the Chapel of the Peacocks towards the courtyard of Saint Paul's, some 180cm wide. To the north the winery had a door (ca. 65cm wide) that led directly to the courtyard outside the church's portico — the door is actually blocked by rubble.

In the filling of the wine pressers the pottery comes from the late eighth-ninth century. In this regard, the discovery of two different oil lamp fragments, which have vine scrolls filled in with grapes, pomegranates, cantharus and a bird, is very

significant. Both these belong to the second type (Arndt 1987). The fragments of one or more cups are also noteworthy. These are of the type with geometric decoration in reddish-brown paint on a white background, already found at Umm ar-Raṣāṣ and of which various pieces were found even inside the Church of Saint Paul (Alliata 1994: 278-289).

The Various Phases

The excavations carried out so far have revealed that the actual porch of the church was built over the bedrock, lying 115cm below the level of the original beaten floor of the same portico. A layer of about 15cm covered this, made up of silt soil and ashes. The research also revealed at least two other later phases of usage of the area of the portico and the courtyard annexed to the church. These are documented first of all by the construction of a northeast-southwest wall. The accentuated difference in levels was covered by three steps, which were laid on the original beaten earth treading level. Future research might clarify better this phase and the subsequent use of the main part of the courtyard, outside the church's portico, as part of the winery.

There follows, on a higher level, the last beaten earth treading level that lies directly under the fallen structures and on which also rests a re-used basin towards the centre of the courtyard, almost in front of the southern entrance to the church. It is interesting to note that the southern nave of the Church of Saint Paul had been transformed into a dwelling place at a later date after it was abandoned, and this entrance leads directly into this "new" dwelling. A very irregularly shaped low wall rests on this higher beaten earth flooring, partially closing the area to the southeast.

A further phase results in the collapse of the porch structure which must date back to the period when the place was completely abandoned, as witnessed by the thick layer of soil on which the collapsed arches rest. The presence of fireplaces is further documented in various points of the area lying between the second phase flooring and the last flooring of the area.

Excavations to the East of the Porch (North of the Winery)

By extending the excavation to the east of the porch of the Church of Saint Paul we were able to locate an entry corridor for the church which came from the street flanking the buildings. The corridor is delimited to the south by two walls, one of which is out of axis, and goes directly to rest on the

southeast corner of the porch. The door (120cm) for this corridor had a lintel decorated with crosses and was found at 14m from the eastern facade of the porch of the church. A cistern with well-curb was situated in the northeast corner of the corridor while a round stone basin (55cm outer radius) raised on a rectangular plastered platform was situated towards the centre of the corridor, in a corner resulting from the junction of the two east-west southern walls. From under this stone basin a water channel led to the cistern. All the area was reorganized with various modifications and additions.

The trenches revealed various treading floors belonging to the various modifications of the area with some being cut for the insertion of the various additional walls:

- 1) In a trench towards the centre of the corridor (near the round stone basin), we noticed that in 48cm there were 5 superimposed treading levels, three of lime and two of earth. The lower three lime treading levels (being also the most ancient) were cut to insert the southern enclosing wall, while the upper two beaten earth floorings rest directly on the same wall. The small stone basin and the water channel were laid directly on top of the most ancient floor. No significant sherds were collected to be able to date the different phases.
- 2) Another trench (on the outside of the southeast corner of the Church of Saint Paul) revealed that even parts of the church walls were re-laid. Under a 20cm lime treading level, which is attached directly to the church walls, there is a beaten earth flooring which had been cut to insert the stones of the church wall. It is interesting to note that on the surface of this floor various roof-tiles splinters were found, splinters that result from the work carried out in the laying of the roof-tiles. The trench also revealed that the lowest filling, which is directly attached to the church wall's foundation, contains pottery sherds belonging to the first decades after the mid-sixth century. The thick layer of lime, present on all the surface of the porch, preserved some fine white smooth plaster with which the outer walls of the church were covered.
- 3) Another trench next to the north wall of the winery revealed that the area next to this wall had been completely re-laid by removing two superimposed treading levels. The lower one was laid on a bed of rounded stones. The fill, from the bedrock, was made up of earth containing Umayyad pottery sherds.

M. Piccirillo
Franciscan Archaeological Institute

Bibliography

- Ahlström, G.W.
1978 Wine presses and Cup-Marks of the Jenin-Megiddo Survey. *BASOR* 231: 19-49.
- Alliata, E.
1987 Nota sulla ceramica dello scavo. *LA* 37: 221-239.
1992 Ceramica e piccoli oggetti dallo scavo beila chiesa dei Leoni a Umm al-Rasas. *LA* 42: 227-250.
1993 Ceramica dello scavo della chiesa di Wa'il a Umm al-Rasas. In F. Manns and E. Alliata (eds.), *Early Christianity in Context. Monuments and Documents*. Jerusalem.
1994 Ceramica romana, bizantina e araba. In M. Piccirillo and E. Alliata, *Umm al-Rasas- Mayfa'ah I. Gli scavi del Complesso di Santo Stefano*. Jerusalem.
- Arndt, M.B.
1987 Lucerne arabe con decorazione "a vite" dallo scavo della Probatia (1956-1967). *LA* 37: 241-290.
- Ayalon, E.
1983 Roman-Period Wine Presses Excavated in the Haaretz Museum Center. In R. Zeevy (ed.), *Israel-People and Land*. Haaretz Museum Yearbook I. Tel-Aviv.
- Bujard, J., Piccirillo, M. and Poiatti-Haldimann, M.
1992 Les églises géminées d'Umm al-Rasas. Fouilles de la mission archéologique suisse (Foundation Max van Berchem). *ADAJ* 36: 291-306.
- Calonghi, F.
1955 *Dizionario della lingua latina*. Torino.
- Clark, V.A.
1986 The Church of Bishop Isaiah at Jerash. In F. Zayadine (ed.), *Jerash Archaeological Project 1981-1983, I*. Amman.
- Gawlikowski, M. and Musa, A.
1986 The Church of Bishop Marianos. In F. Zayadine (ed.), *Jerash Archaeological Project 1981-1983, I*. Amman.
- Jarry, J.
1968 *Hérésies et factions dans l'Empire Byzantin du IVe au VIIIe siècle*. Paris.
- Kraeling, C.H.
1938 *Gerasa City of the Decapolis*. New Haven.
- Lawlor, J.I.
1980 The Excavation of the North Church at Hesban, Jordan: A Preliminary Report. *AUSS* 18: 65-76.
- Michel, A.
1994 Le installazioni liturgiche. In M. Piccirillo and E. Alliata, *Umm al-Rasas- Mayfa'ah I. Gli scavi del Complesso di Santo Stefano*. Jerusalem.
- Piccirillo, M.
1981 *Chiese e mosaici della Giordania Settentrionale*. Jerusalem.
1982 Ricerca storico-archeologica in Giordania II - 1982. *LA* 32: 461-513.
1989 *Chiese e mosaici di Madaba*. Jerusalem.

- 1992 La chiesa dei Leoni a Umm al-Rasas - Kastron Mefaa. *LA* 42: 199-225.
- 1993a *The Mosaics of Jordan*. Amman.
- 1993b Ricerca storico-archeologica in Giordania XIII - 1993. *LA* 43: 447-516.
- 1993c La chiesa del Prete Wa'il a Umm al-Rasas - Kastron Mefaa in Giordania. In F. Manns and E. Alliata (eds.), *Early Christianity in Context. Monuments and Documents*. Jerusalem.
- 1994 Le due iscrizioni della cappella della Theotokos nel Wadi 'Ayn al-Kanissah - Monte Nebo. *LA* 44: 521-538.
- 1995 The Activity of the Mosaicists of the Diocese of Madaba at the Time of Bishop Sergius in the Second Half of the Sixth Century. Pp. 391-398 in *SHAJ* 5. Amman.
- 1996a Iconofobia o iconoclastia nelle chiese di Giordania. In *Bisanzio e l'Occidente: arte, archeologia, storia. Studi in onore di Fernanda de' Maffei*. Roma.
- 1996b Ricerca storico-archeologica in Giordania XVI - 1996. *LA* 46: 391-242.
- Piccirillo, M. and Alliata, E.
- 1994 *Umm al-Rasas- Mayfa'ah I. Gli scavi del Complesso di Santo Stefano*. Jerusalem.
- 1998 *Mount Nebo. New Archaeological Excavations 1967-1997*. Jerusalem
- Piccirillo, M. and 'Amr, A.
- 1988 A Chapel at Khirbet el-Kursi - Amman. *LA* 38: 361-382.
- Saller, S. and Bagatti, B.
- 1949 *The Town of Nebo*. Jerusalem.
- Schick, R.
- 1987 *The Fate of the Christians in Palestine during the Byzantine-Umayyad Transition, A.D. 600-750*. University of Chicago.

