

1. EXCAVATION AND ARCHITECTURAL ANALYSIS OF THE BASILICA

The archaeological investigations presented in this chapter took place between July 2012 and September 2014 following the reconnaissance on the progress of works for the roofing of the Memorial of Moses on Mount Nebo. On that occasion, a series of preventive surveys was decided, limited to the main body and the presbytery of the basilica, to be carried out in the areas which had not been excavated in the previous campaigns directed by the archaeologists S. SALLER, V. CORBO and M. PICCIRILLO⁸¹.

The reason for the decision was the unique opportunity to collect new data, useful for understanding the individual actions of construction, reconstruction, adaptation and restoration which marked the vicissitudes of the sacred building and of the monastic complex of Siyagha (Fig. 13). Indeed, the new archaeological outcomes have allowed the confutation of the previous interpretations regarding the genesis and development of the basilica.

Without going over the very well-known phases of the building of the basilica in detail, it is important for a better understanding of the building to briefly recall its structure⁸² (Fig. 14). The church shows a layout of three naves with multiple lateral areas. At the end of the first quarter of the 4th cent. A.D., the demolition of some parts of the monastery on the northern side of the church allowed the construction of an ample rectangular hall with the function of baptistery, characterized by a baptismal font in masonry and paved with a fine mosaic dated to August A.D. 531⁸³. The *diakonikon*-baptistery was placed at a level approximately 1.10 m lower and was linked with the naves of the basilica by a flight of steps⁸⁴. A new baptistery, supported by the southern wall of the church, was built at a later phase, dated by the mosaic pavement to A.D. 597, in the time of the abbot Martyrius and the Bishop Sergius⁸⁵. On the same time horizon, the old baptistery was therefore buried and, after the level of the floor was raised to that of the nave, it was reconverted into a new *diakonikon*⁸⁶. The last significant addition to the ecclesiastical complex, a chapel dedicated to the Theotokos, in the area west of the southern baptistery, can be dated to between A.D. 604 and 609, under the episcopacy of Leontius of Madaba⁸⁷.

The archaeological contexts found in the latest excavations have confirmed the presence of significant traces of occupation in the Umayyad and Abbasid periods. These last phases are considered of great interest, as they allow the settlement of the site to be traced from the first centuries of the Islamic age to its decline and abandonment during the 9th cent. A.D.⁸⁸.

⁸¹ For the history of the site and the excavations, see the Introduction, 28–29.

⁸² The bibliography on the ecclesiastical complex of Mount Nebo is very extensive. Saller 1941 and Piccirillo – Alliaata 1998 remain fundamental. For a synthesis, see Piccirillo 1989a, 147–175; Piccirillo 1993, 133–15; Piccirillo 2002, 81–113.

⁸³ Alliaata – Bianchi 1998, 168–171.

⁸⁴ Alliaata – Bianchi 1998, 168.

⁸⁵ Alliaata – Bianchi 1998, 176–177.

⁸⁶ Alliaata – Bianchi 1998, 176–177.

⁸⁷ Alliaata – Bianchi 1998, 178–179.

⁸⁸ For a general discussion of the decline of monasticism, see Chapter 5.

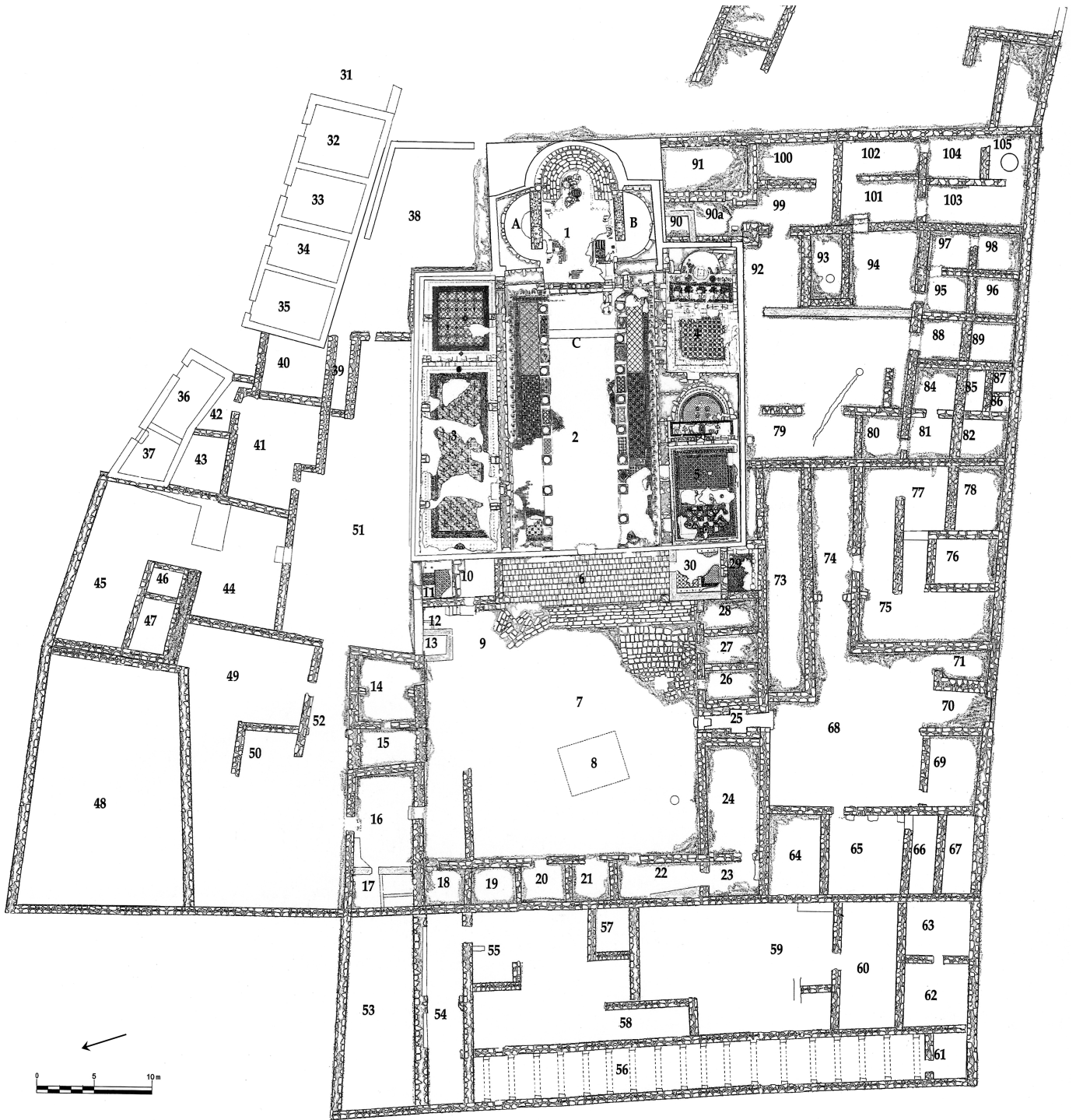


Fig. 13 Memorial of Moses. General plan of the site of Siyagha (drawing by G. MICALIZZI and C. PUGLISI).

1.1 THE EXCAVATION

The individual archaeological excavations were grouped into five distinct areas following a topographical criterion, from the *synthronon* to the west façade of the basilica (Fig. 15).

1.1.1 Area 1: survey under the *synthronon* and in the apse of the *cella trichora*

1.1.1.1 Demolition of the *synthronon*

The survey included the demolition of the northern half of the *synthronon*⁸⁹, consisting of five rows of steps made from *nary*⁹⁰ stones (Figs. 16–18). During the 1966 excavations, carried out by V. CORBO in the *cella trichora*, the survey was stopped in front of the *synthronon* so as not to compromise the stability of the architectonic structure⁹¹ (Fig. 19). However, in the section under it, the archaeologist documented the presence of a black layer containing pottery sherds which he believed to be of Roman date. The potential of this material therefore provided an impetus for new research. Although no work in this area was known⁹², after the two upper rows were removed, contemporary material was recovered in SU1 (some plastic fragments and two coins minted in the early 20th cent.⁹³) which would allow the hypothesis that recent work of consolidation of the structure had been carried out, possibly under M. PICCIRILLO's direction. During the demolition it became clear that some upper blocks of the steps show evident traces of reuse⁹⁴.

The next row (SU2) was mostly made up of many irregular stones used as a preparation for the surface on which the upper steps of the *synthronon* rested (Fig. 20). Sieving this layer revealed an abundant amount of sherds traceable to different types of pottery, the production of which covers a wide time period. Fragments of the common type of tableware and painted pottery of the Umayyad period – dated between the end of the 7th and the first half of the 8th cent. A.D. – are attested, characterized by orange-pinkish slipware with reddish painting and others which are black with a pinkish fabric (Fig. 21). The layer included numerous fragments of Byzantine pottery with a fabric rich in granular inclusions with a light or blackish slip, decorated with cords in relief, attested between the first half of the 5th and the end of the 6th cent. A.D. (Pls. 1–2). The organic findings, including coals, plant seeds, animal bones and vertebrae with signs of slaughtering, provided useful evidence for defining the diet common in the region⁹⁵. The inorganic materials include some pieces of vitreous paste and fragments of glass vessels, sherds of flint, iron nails, fragments of red, white and green plaster, mosaic tesserae of different sizes and colours (Figs. 22–25; Pl. 11; Pl. 12, nos. 1, 3), damaged tiles (Pl. 14, nos.

⁸⁹ The *synthronon* is the best preserved liturgical installation in the basilica of Mount Nebo. It is 80 m wide at the base, 1.27 m high and is based on a foundation 50 cm high. Probably only the last row was for the seating of the clergy and the central position was reserved for the celebrant or the hegumen of the monastery. The structure was originally faced with a coat of plaster, fragments of which were recovered during the excavation by S. SALLER. See Saller 1941, 48–49 pl. 81; Michel 1998b, 402–403.

⁹⁰ *Nary* stone appears as a light and porous tuffaceous encrustation which is very resistant to fire. It is noteworthy that the monastic complex of Mount Nebo was wholly built with stone material, using limestone and cretaceous tuff of local origin. Territorial reconnaissance in the valleys of Mount Nebo has allowed the identification of numerous quarries in the vicinity of the monastery precisely to optimize finding the building material. For an analysis of the building material, see Marino 2004, 47–48; Alliata – Bianchi 1998, 185 no. 33.

⁹¹ Corbo 1970, 273–281.

⁹² The area does not appear to have been excavated by the archaeological campaigns of S. SALLER or by those of V. CORBO; see Saller 1941, 23–44; Corbo 1970, 277.

⁹³ The coins are sub-units of five pfennig of the German Mark and one US dollar coin.

⁹⁴ Specifically: stone no. 31 showed signs of reworking; stone no. 15 was part of a door jamb and stone no. 16 showed typical working to be plastered.

⁹⁵ For further information on the dietary practices of the monks in the Byzantine age, see the discussion in Chapter 4, 178–183. For a more general overview on this subject, see Thomas *et al.* 2000, 1696–1716.

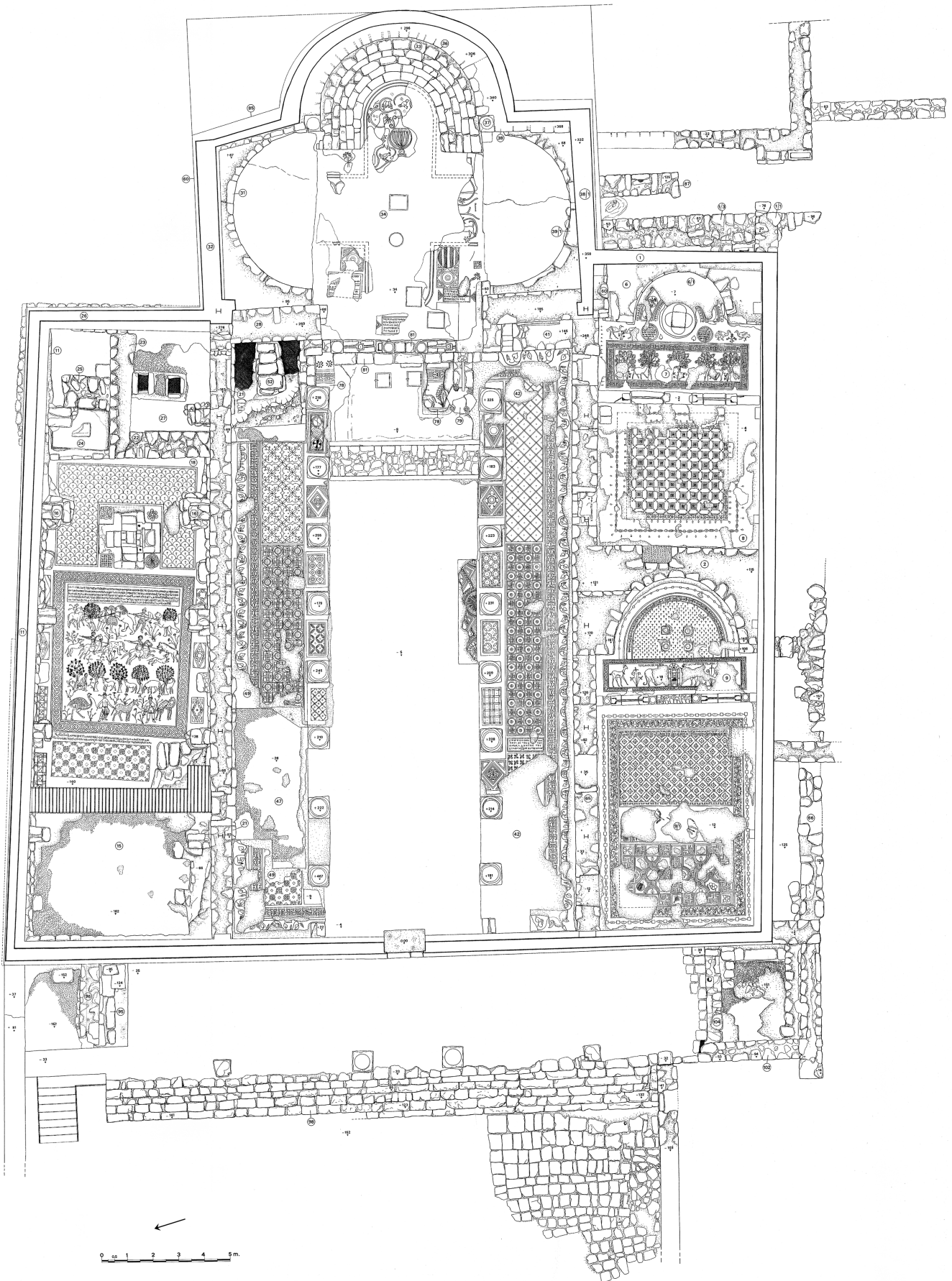


Fig. 14 Memorial of Moses. Plan of the Basilica.

5, 6, 7, 9) and two small bricks joined by lime, of the type commonly used for constructing windows (Pl. 14, no. 8)⁹⁶.

Of the stone materials, the layer revealed fragments of white marble with a fine and compact grain of the Paros type and a polished and shiny surface (Fig. 26). A second group is made up of fragmentary marble elements, perhaps belonging to the same liturgical feature, as they are decorated with sinuous plant clusters ending with indented leaves (Figs. 27–28). Two pieces, which were part of the lateral balustrade of the ambo, have Greek letters filled with a dark-coloured compound containing golden particles engraved on their surface⁹⁷ (Fig. 84; Pl. 13, no. 7). Lastly, some fragments (Pl. 13, no. 8) and the base of a column in local black stone, of the bituminous schist type, known in Arabic as *al-hajar neby musa* were found⁹⁸ (Fig. 29; Pl. 13, no. 9).

The only coin collected in this layer was a round piece of copper cut in an octagonal shape, the dating of which to the Umayyad or Abbasid period is uncertain due to its poor state of preservation⁹⁹.

On the other hand, SU3, placed underneath the column up to the level of the floor of the *synthronon*, contained pottery sherds dated to the early 6th cent. and inorganic material similar to that of the previous layer. Of the three coins which were found, the latest can be dated between A.D. 425 and 435¹⁰⁰.

Later, two distinct levels of the steps, which were completely demolished, were identified. SU4, on which the foundation of the *synthronon* rested, was made up of a compact layer of yellowish soil. The diagnostic pottery, including a fragment of a Byzantine oil lamp with decorations and a pinched type of handle, ascribe the layer to the same periods as the previous SU (Pl. 4, no. 11). The only coin collected, of Valentinian II (A.D. 383–392), was outside its context¹⁰¹.

After SU4 was removed, SU5 was recognized, corresponding to the black layer already known from V. CORBO's excavation¹⁰². The pottery finds include ceramic fragments of a pot lid (Fig. 31; Pl. 6, no. 11), rims and bottoms of cups used between the end of the 5th and the beginning of the 6th cent. A.D.¹⁰³ (Pl. 7, nos. 14–19), a fragment of *terra sigillata* with the print of a rosette¹⁰⁴ (Fig. 30; Pl. 7, no. 20), and a wall with two painted signs very similar to the Greek letters *Epsilon* and *Xi* (Pl. 5, no. 1). Sieving returned tesserae of mosaics, small pieces of plaster, vitreous fragments, plant seeds and coal.

The excavation continued with the identification of SU6, with compact soil and material mainly made up of fine fragments of pottery dated to the 4th cent. A.D. (Pl. 8), with the exception of the bottom of a receptacle attributable to the Middle Bronze Age (Pl. 8, no. 10). SU7, with softer soil of a blackish colour, developed in correspondence with the wall of the apse, being identified with the cutting of the foundation for the rebuilding of the latter. After having fully removed SU7 it was possible to examine the whole construction and appearance of the walls of the apse and identify blocks of stone, pertinent to the reconstruction of the structure¹⁰⁵ (Fig. 32).

⁹⁶ Other examples in the documentation of the excavation of the baptistery, see Bagatti 1985, 258 figs. 6. 4; pl. 4. Also see Saller 1941, 64–65 fig. 12.

⁹⁷ Acconci 1998, 525–527 no. 150. For the analysis of the architectural liturgical fragment, see below, 96.

⁹⁸ For a classification of this type of stone, see Marino 2004, 47.

⁹⁹ See coin no. 24 in the numismatic note.

¹⁰⁰ See coins nos. 3. 9. 14 in the numismatic note.

¹⁰¹ See coin no. 4 in the numismatic note.

¹⁰² Corbo 1970, 273–298 plan 2.

¹⁰³ Other examples in the documentation of the excavation of the northern hall or room of the catechumens, see Bagatti 1985, 265 fig. 10, 1; photo 12.

¹⁰⁴ TS-12-V-70. Also see in Bagatti 1985, 253 fig. 1, 4; photo 5, 2. Other comparisons in Hayes 1972, 232 nos. 34–40.

¹⁰⁵ The texture of the walls of the *cella trichora* presents numerous stone elements characterized by rusticated ashlar measuring between 45 and 60 cm, but in some cases up to 90 cm. The rusticated ashlar were constructed with a summary reduction of the mass and contoured by flat anathyrosis. See Marino 2004, 53.

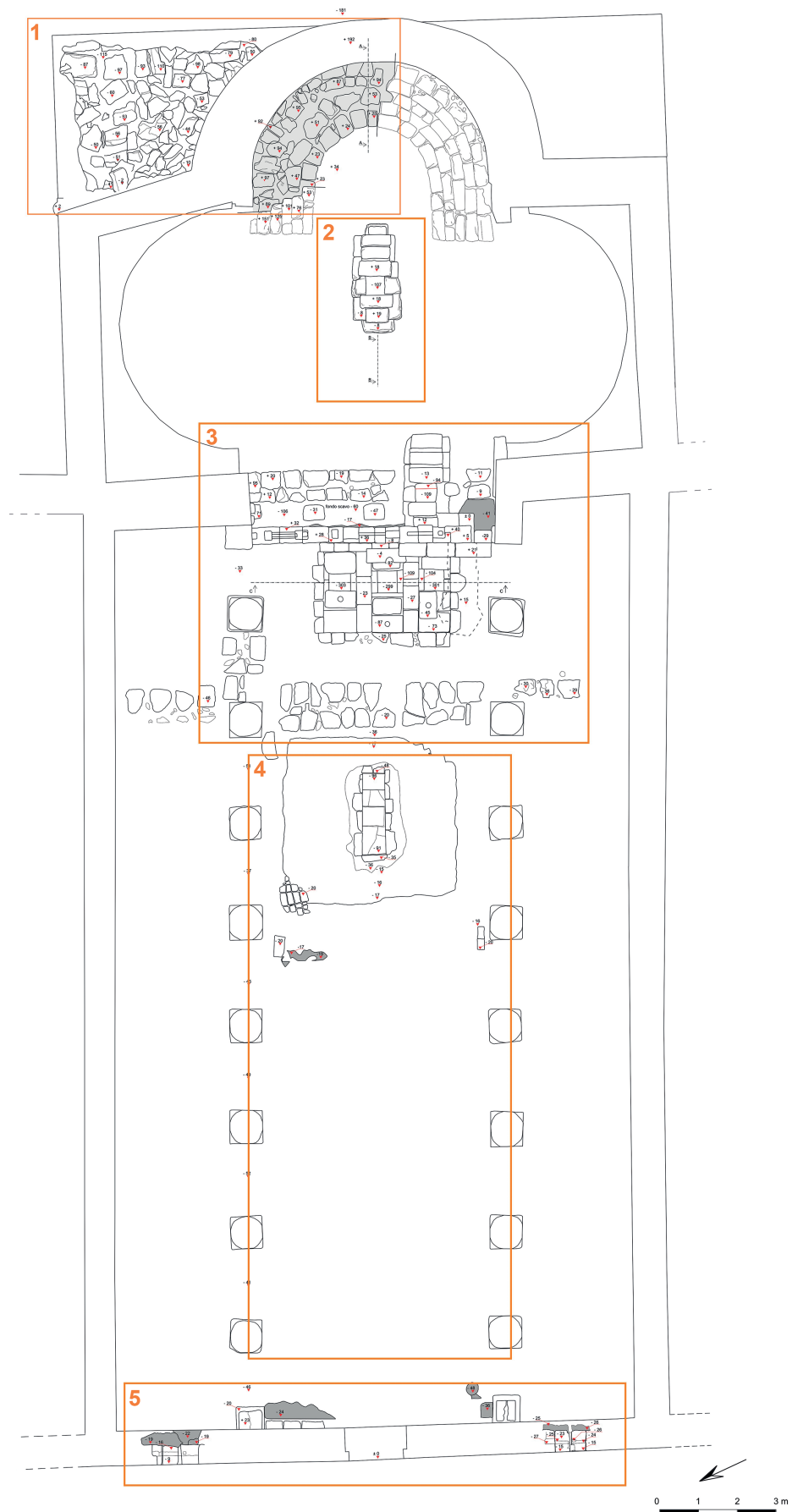


Fig. 15 Memorial of Moses. Plan with the areas of excavation.



Fig. 16 Memorial of Moses. Presbytery of the Basilica, demolition of the upper rows of the *synthronon* – layer SU2.



Fig. 17 Memorial of Moses. Presbytery of the Basilica, bottom of the excavation and foundation level of the apse.

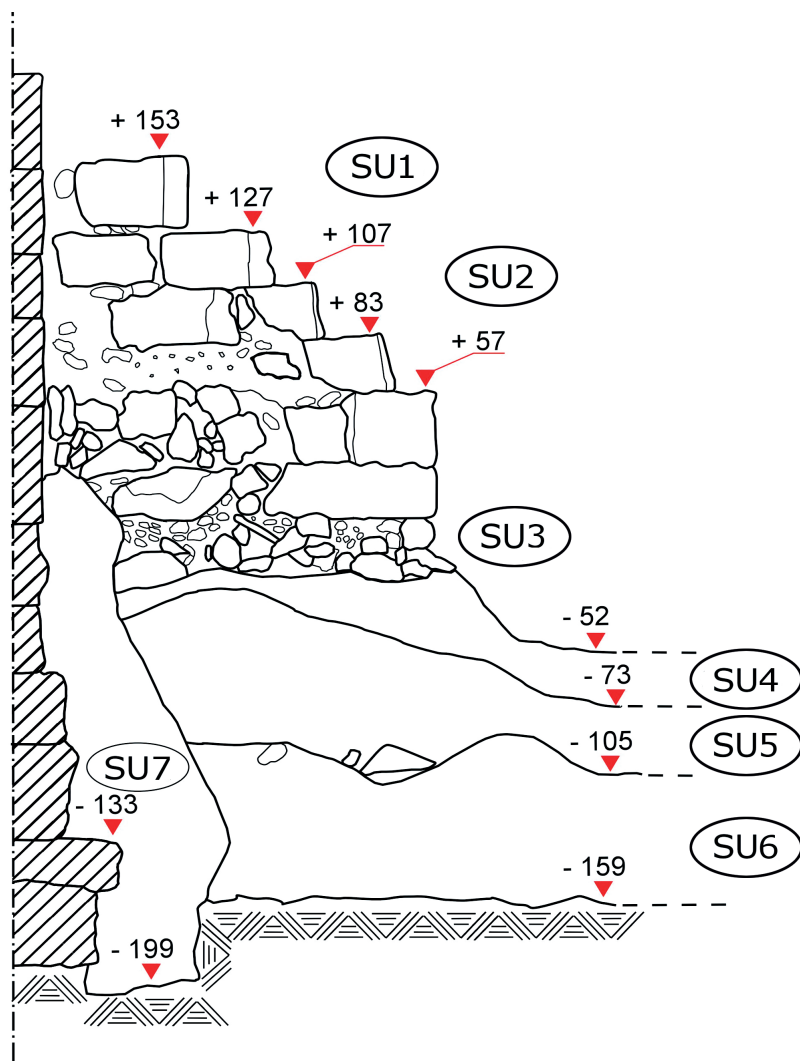


Fig. 18 Memorial of Moses. Presbytery of the Basilica, cross-section of the excavation of the *synthronon*.

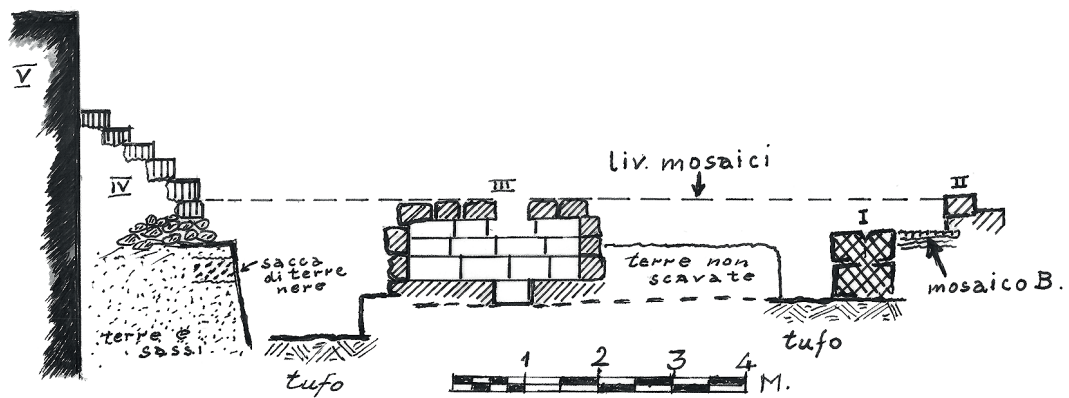


Fig. 19 Memorial of Moses. Presbytery of the Basilica and cross-section of the *cella trichora* after the excavations by SALLER (after Corbo 1970, 275, plan 2.).

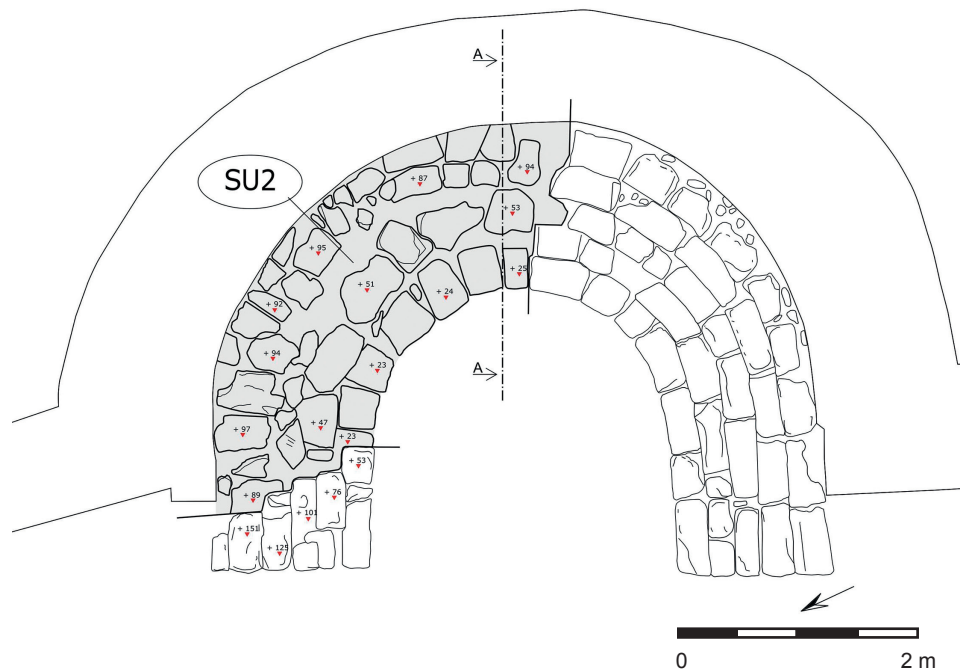


Fig. 20 Memorial of Moses. Presbytery of the Basilica, plan of the *synthronon* after the demolition of the upper rows.

The wall stratification analysis has also ascertained that the side of the stone blocks with bossage is generally on the outer side. In one case, at the level of the foundation, the bossage was however still visible on the internal side of the church. This element, attested on other walls of the monastery, suggested to scholars that the stones with bossages on the interior were salvaged elements placed on restructured walls, even in ancient times¹⁰⁶. However, it should be borne in mind that some architectural historians have seen in this type of decoration a motivation of a practical nature, as well as an aesthetic one¹⁰⁷. The stonemasons usually worked only on the

¹⁰⁶ In particular for room no. 56, see Marino 2004, 53 note 20.

¹⁰⁷ Marino 2004, 53.

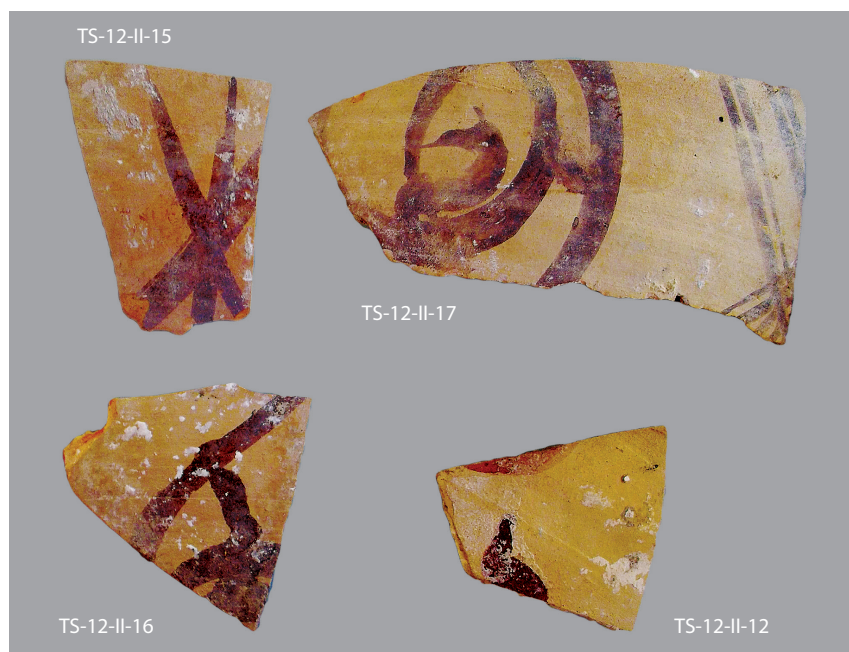


Fig. 21 Memorial of Moses. Umayyad pottery sherds from the excavation of the *synthronon*.

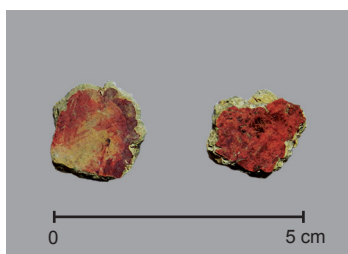


Fig. 22 Memorial of Moses. Plaster fragments from the excavation of the *synthronon*.

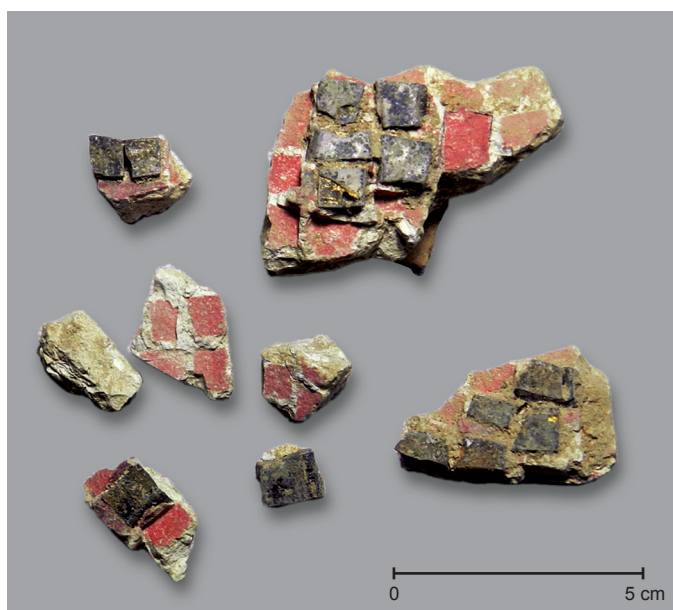


Fig. 23 Memorial of Moses. Mosaic glass tesserae from the excavation of the *synthronon*.

faces of contact, postponing the elimination of the excess rusticated ashlar to a second phase. However, the blocks to be buried or covered were laid immediately without further work.

The pottery sherds recovered in SU7 are heterogeneous from the morphological and chronological point of view, but fragments from the Umayyad period are absent (Pls. 9–10). Several sherds related to different types of oil lamps have been found in this layer (Figs. 34–35). The organic material included a fragment of carved wood in a good state of conservation (Fig. 33; Pl. 12, no. 4).

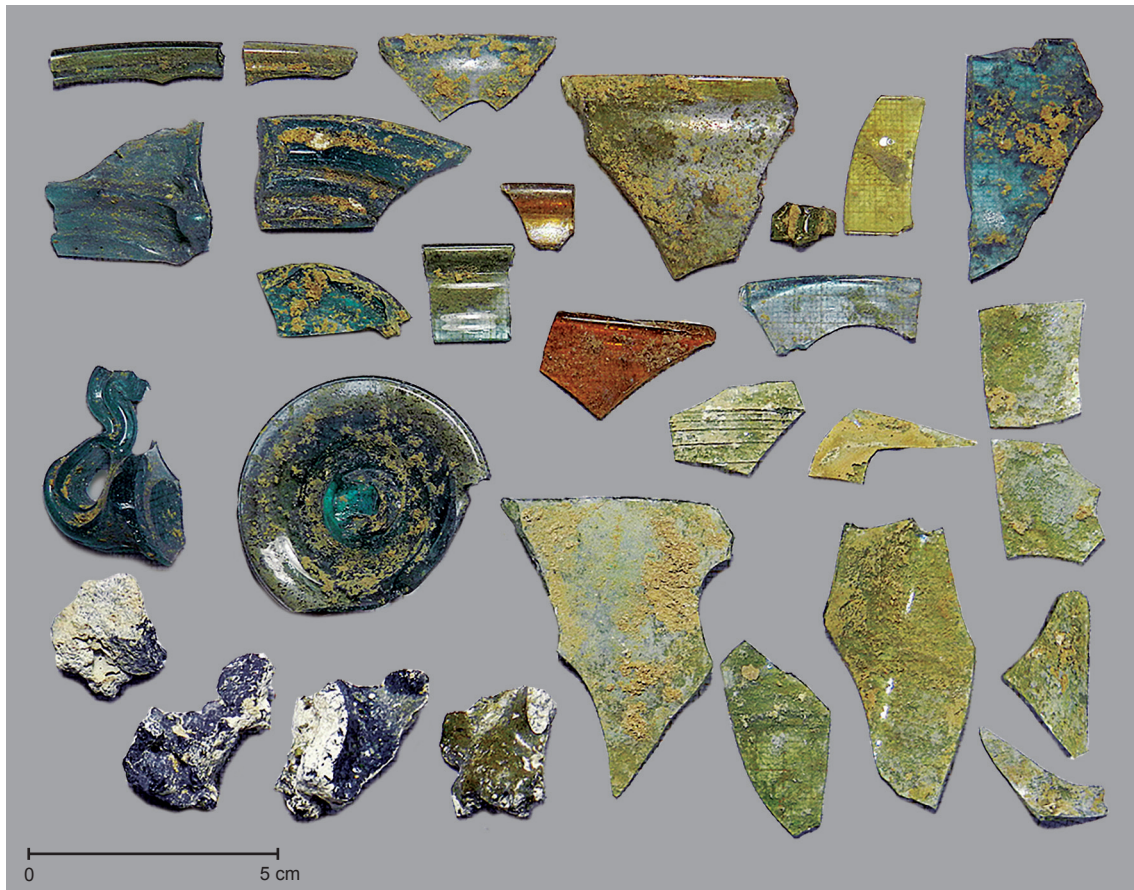


Fig. 24 Memorial of Moses. Pieces of vitreous paste and fragments of glass vessels from the excavation of the *synthronon*.



Fig. 25 Memorial of Moses. Iron nails and bronze chains from the excavation of the *synthronon*.



Fig. 26 Memorial of Moses. Fragments of white marble from the excavation of the *synthronon*.



Fig. 27 Memorial of Moses. Fragment of lateral balustrade of the ambo from the excavation of the *synthronon* and others from previous excavations.

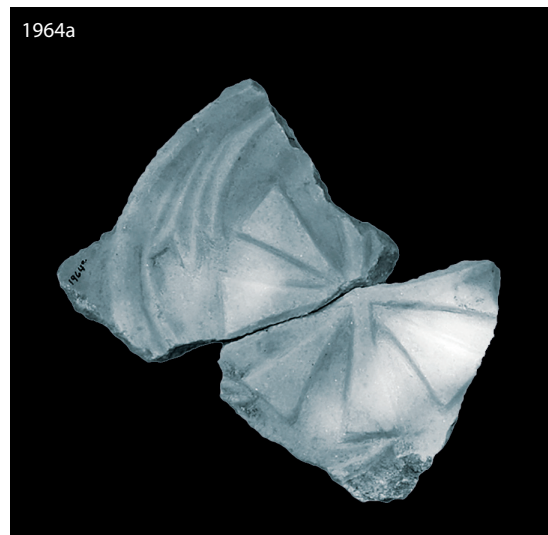


Fig. 28 Memorial of Moses. Fragment of lateral balustrade of the ambo from the excavation of the *synthronon* and others from previous excavations.



Fig. 29 Memorial of Moses. Base of bituminous schist column from the excavation of the *synthronon*.

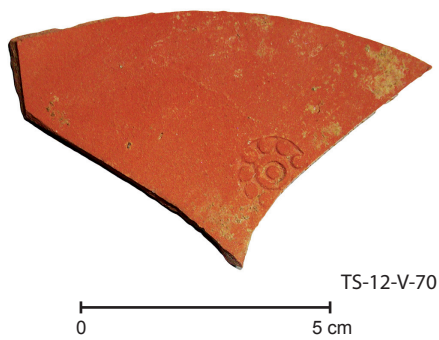


Fig. 30 Memorial of Moses. Fragment of *terra sigillata* from the excavation of the *synthronon*.



Fig. 31 Memorial of Moses. Fragments of one pot lid from the excavation of the *synthronon*.



Fig. 32 Memorial of Moses. Texture of the wall of the apse after the excavation of the *synthronon*.



Fig. 33 Memorial of Moses. Carved wooden fragment from the excavation of the *synthronon*.

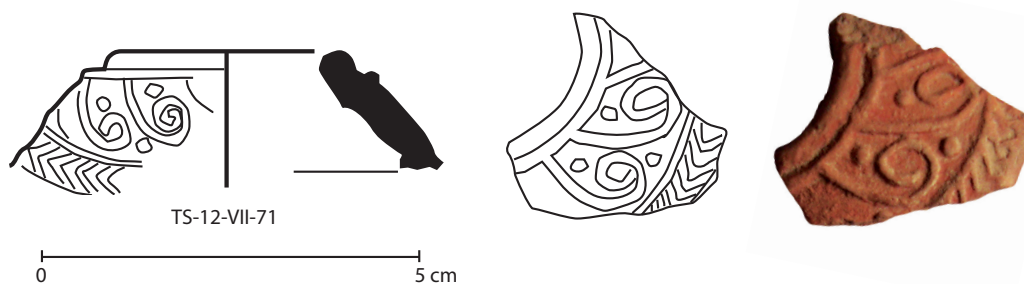


Fig. 34 Memorial of Moses. Fragment of oil lamp from the excavation of the *synthronon*.



Fig. 35 Memorial of Moses. Fragments of torches from the excavation of the *synthronon* and one intact torch found in previous excavations.

1.1.1.2 Excavation of the “buttness” in the north-eastern corner of the *cella trichora*

This survey concerned the north-eastern corner of the *cella trichora*. After removing a double layer of modern cement, a massive buttness was identified, made up of two distinct stratigraphic units (Figs. 36–37). SU8, which presented a series of stones of large dimensions arranged neatly against the external walls, returned a coin with the effigy of Augusta Aelia Flacilla and another more worn one, dated between the 4th and the 5th cent. A.D.¹⁰⁸. SU9, made up of an irregular agglomerate of stones of smaller sizes against and under the walls of the apse, returned a small quantity of pottery (from the diagnostic findings, the oldest is dated to the Umayyad period) (Pl. 15) and some mosaic and vitreous tesserae of various colours, of which one-third are golden.

Type - Colour	Weight of 100 tesserae (kg)	Average weight of 1 tessera (gr)	Total weight (kg)	Number of tesserae
Black	0.15	1.5	2.18 (calc.)	1453
Grey	0.18	1.8	0.48 (calc.)	267
Red	0.21	2.1	2.25 (calc.)	1071
Pink	0.21	2.1	0.39 (calc.)	186
Yellow	0.22	2.2	0.52 (calc.)	236
Beige	0.20 (calc.)	2	0.12	60
Small White (1 cm)	0.20	2	3.44 (calc.)	1720
Medium White (1.5 cm)	0.40	4	0.60	150
Large White (2 cm)	2.00 (calc.)	20	1.20	60
Vitreous tesserae	0.30	0.3	0.03	100

Table 1. Statistical survey of the mosaic tesserae found in the *synthronon*.

A statistical investigation on the quality of mosaic tesserae found in the excavation of the *synthronon* led to an interesting result regarding the chromatic use of the individual stones in mosaic floors (Table 1; Figs. 39–40). The black and white tesserae were used in large numbers, followed by red, whereas grey, yellow and pink ones were rare, and very few beige tesserae were used. A good number of vitreous and golden tesserae, confirmed by those found in the excavation of the external buttness of the apse¹⁰⁹ (Fig. 38) as well as with other discoveries during the excavations by V. CORBO and M. PICCIRILLO¹¹⁰, given their find-spot could be related to the hypothetical decoration of the apse of the church.

1.1.2 Area 2: survey of “unexcavated soil” west of tomb no. 70

The archaeological surveys concerned the evidence left by V. CORBO at the centre of the *cella trichora* near tomb no. 70¹¹¹ (Fig. 41). In this burial place, profaned in antiquity and already studied by S. SALLER¹¹² and C. SANMORI¹¹³, a detailed architectural survey was carried out,

¹⁰⁸ See coins nos. 2 and 23 in the numismatic note.

¹⁰⁹ See below, 50 Fig. 40.

¹¹⁰ Piccirillo – Alliata 1998, 548–549, pl. VI no. 6.

¹¹¹ The tomb structure is 82 cm deep and was made from square-shaped blocks of rock, including the bottom. The tomb was closed by a slab with *pellaikon*. The position of the tomb in the centre of the presbytery, probably under the altar, allows the hypothesis that it was reserved for a high prelate of the monastic community, perhaps a hegumen, or a particularly charismatic monk. Corbo 1970, 276 plan 2; Alliata – Bianchi 1998, 189 no. 70.

¹¹² Saller 1941, 35–39.

¹¹³ Sanmori 1998, 413–417.

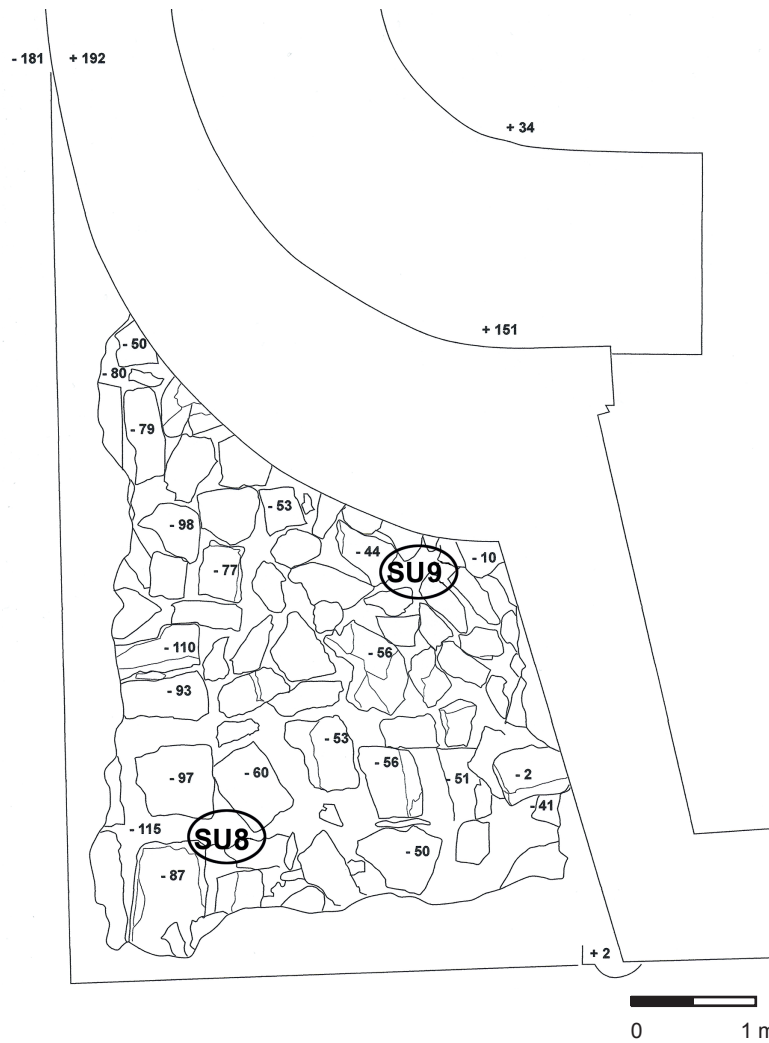


Fig. 36
Memorial of Moses.
Plan of the butters in
the north-eastern corner
of the *cella trichora*.



Fig. 37 Memorial of Moses. The butters in the north-eastern corner of the *cella trichora* after excavation.

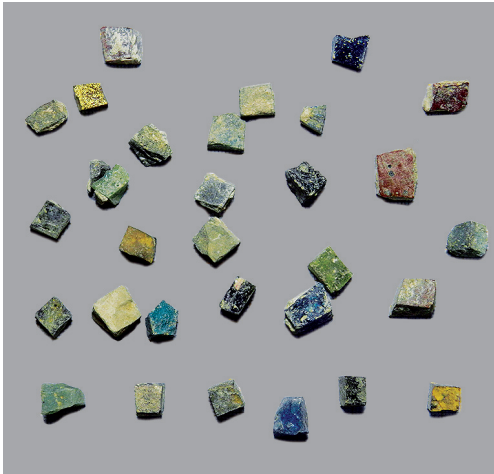


Fig. 38 Memorial of Moses. Mosaic glass tesserae from the excavation of the buttress of the *cella trichora*.



Fig. 39 Groups of coloured mosaic tesserae from the excavation of the *synthronon*; the step to the presbytery; the central nave.

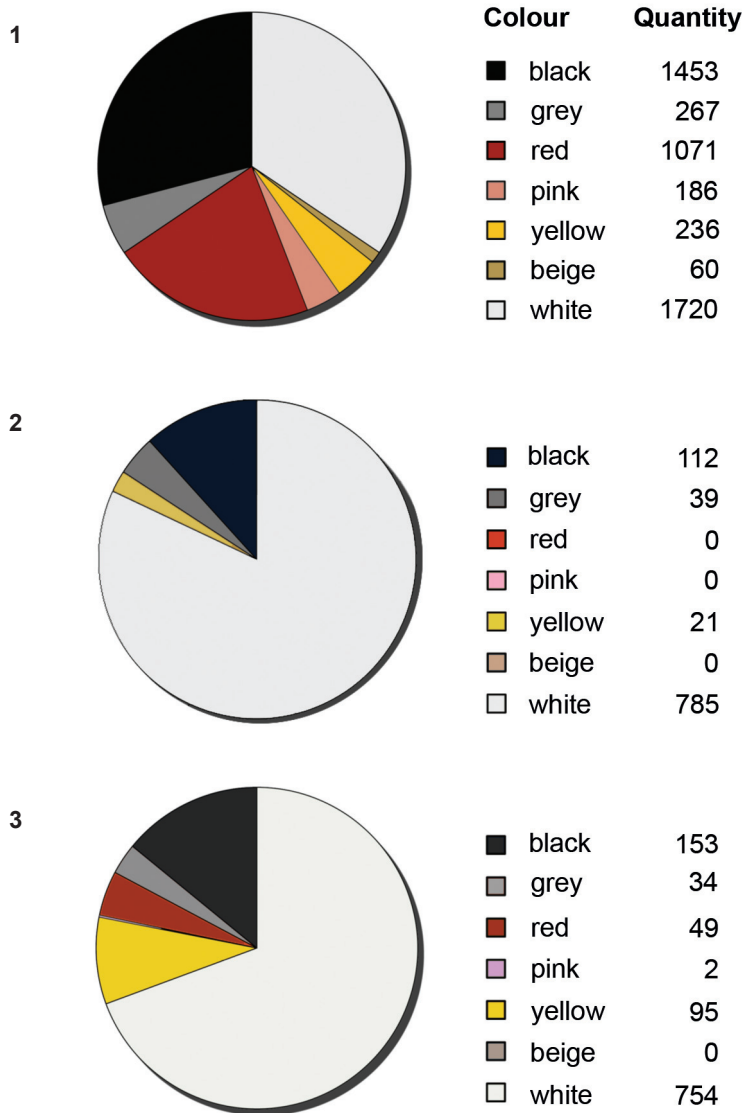


Fig. 40 Pie chart: statistics on the colours of the mosaic tesserae from three areas: 1: *synthronon*; 2: step to the presbytery; 3: central nave.

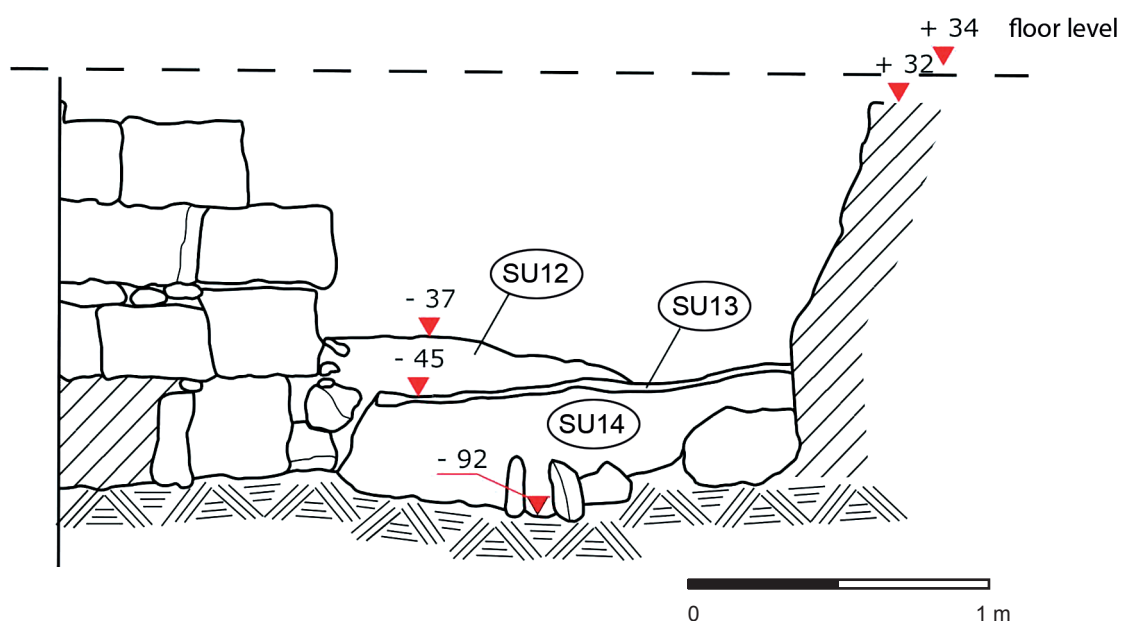


Fig. 41 Memorial of Moses. Section of the assay “unexcavated soils” west of tomb no. 70.



Fig. 42 Memorial of Moses. Lower jaw fragments from the tomb no. 70, frontal view.



Fig. 43 Memorial of Moses. Lower jaw fragments from the tomb no. 70, horizontal view.

as well as recovering the bones¹¹⁴ for their morphological study. The preliminary assessments allowed the recognition of two lower jaw fragments; nine fragments of skull bones; eight fragments of vertebrae of the backbone; general fragments of various dimensions which, however, due to the violation of the tomb, do not necessarily belong to a single individual¹¹⁵ (Figs. 42–44). After having removed the layer of cement, a surface layer made up of the modern filling SU10, containing different types of Byzantine tiles and bricks was identified (Pl. 14, nos. 1–4). Near the walls of the tomb, the soil appeared to have been disturbed by its excavation; this layer, SU11, returned pottery from the second half of the 5th cent. A.D. (Pl. 16, nos. 1–7).

¹¹⁴ The bones were placed in a wooden box during the 1933–1935 excavations.

¹¹⁵ Saller 1941, 36.



Fig. 44 Memorial of Moses. Fragments of skull bones from the tomb no. 70.



Fig. 45 Memorial of Moses. Assay west of tomb no. 70, layer SU13.



Fig. 46 Memorial of Moses. Assay west of tomb no. 70, bottom of the excavation.

In the portion to the south, it was possible to recognize three layers (Figs. 45–46). SU12, more recent, was laid over a fine layer of chalk without pottery (SU13) which can be interpreted as the ground surface in the building phases of the tomb. SU14, older because cut from the tomb, ended in correspondence with the rock of the mountain (Pl. 16, no. 8). The soil conformation of the layer and the finds found there put it into direct relation with SU6. The coin found in SU14 was minted in the 4th–5th cent. A.D. which allows the layer to be ascribed to this chronological context¹¹⁶.

1.1.3 Area 3: survey in the area of access to the *cella trichora* and to the three tombs

The archaeological investigations then moved to the area of access to the *cella trichora* to better understand its structure and in particular the relative connection with the areas of the nave (Fig. 47).

1.1.3.1 Trench between the bossage wall and the step of access to the presbytery

The survey was carried out to ascertain the presence of the mosaic with white tesserae identified by V. CORBO in correspondence with the bossage wall¹¹⁷ (Fig. 48). However, after having removed the cement and the filling gravel, only one row of tesserae placed under the step of access to the *cella trichora* was visible (SU15).

The investigations, continued with the opening of a complete assay in the area between the bossage wall and the steps of the presbytery, returned two distinct stratigraphic units. SU16, a soft and compact black layer rested on, and was therefore subsequent to, the masonry of the *cella trichora*, the bossage wall and the foundation of the steps of the presbytery. It appeared clear from the excavation that the foundation of the *cella trichora* was not linked with the bossage wall, but rested on it, therefore being posterior to it. The layer returned numerous mosaic tesserae, pottery sherds, carbon, glass, bones and a trapezoid block of rock with one face worked in bossage placed on top of another of foundation, perfectly parallel with the wall identified by V. CORBO¹¹⁸. The coin found was minted by Theodosius II/Valentinian III (A.D. 425–435) and therefore suggests a chronological context of the second quarter of the 5th cent. A.D.¹¹⁹. SU17, on the other hand, extended in the northern part of the excavation assay and was characterized by a different consistency of terrain. An ashlar of an arch, with grooves to pour in molten lead, placed on top of a foundation stone perfectly in axis with the rock block of SU15 and parallel to the wall in bossage (Fig. 49) was found in the layer. The two stones could therefore form the bases of the foundation of two parallel arches, and perpendicular to the wall in bossage, which would have formed the roof of area “B”¹²⁰ (Fig. 79).

The excavation assay south of tomb no. 71¹²¹ allowed the stratigraphic relationship to be verified between the wall in bossage and the perpendicular one placed under the subsequent outer masonry of the *cella trichora*. The two walls are linked by a layer of plaster in correspondence with the corner. After removing the modern cement, in the corner between the two walls a mosaic with large white tesserae SU18 with closing tesserae was found (Fig. 50).

¹¹⁶ See coin no. 13 in the numismatic note.

¹¹⁷ The remains of a mosaic pavement and very large white tesserae were identified by V. CORBO against the western side of the walls. Corbo 1970, 278 plans 1, 2.

¹¹⁸ Corbo 1970, 277–279; Alliata – Bianchi 1998, 185 no. 30.

¹¹⁹ See coin no. 8 in the numismatic note.

¹²⁰ It has been decided to keep the standard name proposed by E. ALLIATA and S. BIANCHI. See in Alliata – Bianchi 1998, 152.

¹²¹ Tomb structure placed south-east of the central burial of the *cella trichora*. The structure shows numerous architectonic analogies with the central tomb. It is worth remembering that during S. SALLER’s excavations, coins from the 4th–5th centuries were recovered, including two minted by the emperor Arcadius (A.D. 395–408), Alliata – Bianchi 1998, 189 no. 71.

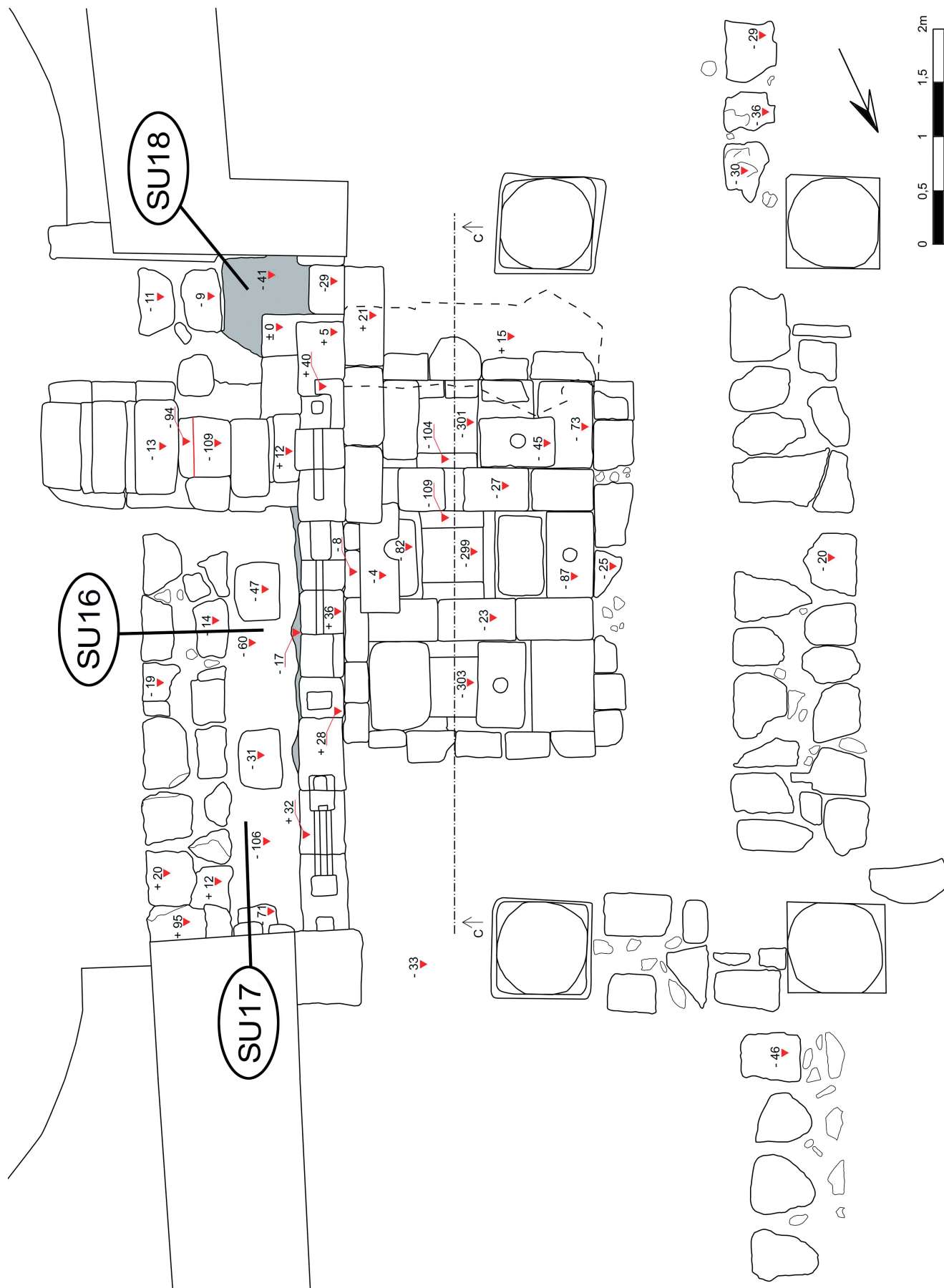


Fig. 47 Memorial of Moses. Plan of the area of access to the *cella trichora* and to the three tombs.

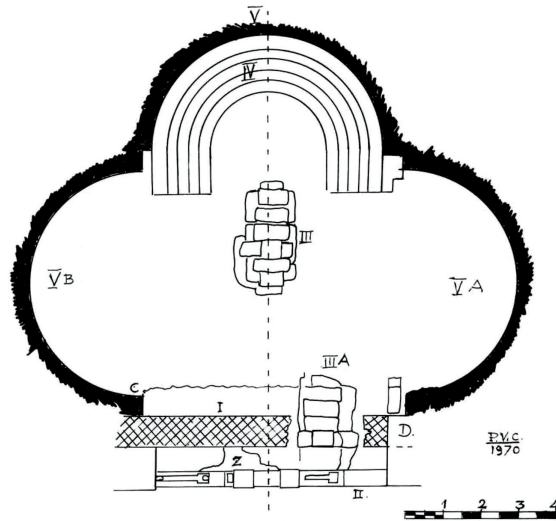


Fig. 48
Memorial of Moses. Plan of the *cella trichora* after the excavations by CORBO. Note the mosaic with white tesserae marked by Z and the wall in bossage with the letter I (after Corbo 1970, 274).



Fig. 49 Memorial of Moses. Arch ashlar with grooves for pouring molten lead found in SU17.



Fig. 50 Memorial of Moses. Detail of SU18.

The mosaic pavement, already documented by V. CORBO in photographs only¹²², is of reduced dimensions and ends on the western side in correspondence with a stone protruding from the step of the presbytery. Unfortunately, the northern side has been disturbed by cutting the tomb which prevents understanding how it developed. The most interesting element concerns the level; although it is typologically similar to the fragment under the step, the mosaic is at a lower level¹²³ identifying the fragment as part of the possible tub for washing the pavement.

The statistical survey of the mosaic tesserae, collected in a very small area and belonging to the building phase of the steps themselves, confirmed the wider use of white tesserae and definitely smaller quantities of black and grey ones; red, pink, beige, and small white tesserae are absent (Table 2).

Type - Colour	Number of tesserae
Black (1 cm)	112
Grey (1 cm)	39
Red	0
Pink	0
Yellow (1 cm)	21
Beige	0
Small White	0
Medium White (1–1.5 cm)	785
Large White (+2 cm)	216

Table 2. Survey of mosaic tesserae found in the foundations of the steps of the presbytery

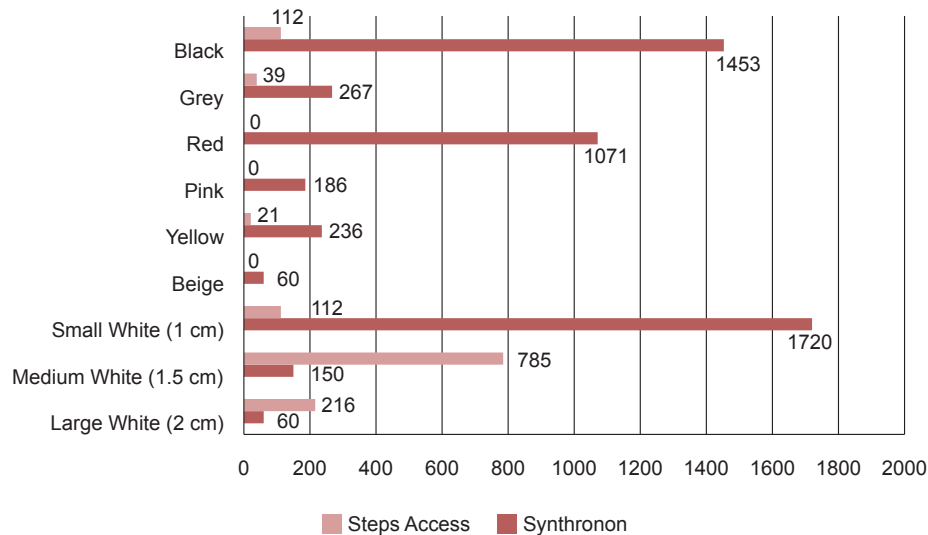


Diagram 1 Comparative diagram between the mosaic tesserae found in the excavation of the *synthronon* and those near the steps of access to the presbytery

¹²² Corbo 1970, 279.

¹²³ The level of the mosaic under the step is -17, that of the presumed tub is -41.



Fig. 51 Memorial of Moses. The area of access to the presbytery after SALLER's excavation.



Fig. 52 Memorial of Moses. Detail of the excavation in the area of access to the presbytery.

1.1.3.2 Investigation on the three tombs (nos. 72–74) and the area of access to the presbytery

Operations took place with the aim of carrying out the architectonic survey of the three tomb structures already known to S. SALLER¹²⁴ and to study them in connection with the development of the *cella trichora* (Fig. 51). The area to the north, near the steps of access to the presbytery and the area comprised between the tomb and the foundation of the wall to the west were also covered by the research (Fig. 52).

After having measured the levels of the tombs (Fig. 53), it appeared clear that the covering stones were placed at a higher level (–4) with respect to that of the white mosaic SU15 (–17), however, the excavation of the area in front of the steps of the presbytery returns a fragment of the same white mosaic which covers the tomb in one part (SU22) (Fig. 54). This therefore confirms the previous hypothesis of E. ALLIATA and S. BIANCHI, according to whom the mosaic

¹²⁴ Saller 1941, 38–39 pl. 161; Alliata – Bianchi 1998, 189 nos. 72. 73. 74.



Fig. 53 Memorial of Moses. Detail of the excavation in the area of the three tombs (nos. 72–74).

formed the floor level of the area “B” under which there were the three tombs¹²⁵. The three tombs have been documented photographically and graphically (Figs. 55–57).

1.1.3.3 Assay under the ambo

The excavation operations also concerned the area of the ambo to better clarify the stratigraphy under the two mosaics indicated by S. SALLER¹²⁶, of which the upper one, called “of the wild beast”, was discovered and torn during V. CORBO’s excavations¹²⁷. Under the modern cement layer there was the filling SU19 which obliterated the entrance of the south tomb; inside it a block of rock was found, used in antiquity as a support for the subsequent positioning of the ambo (Figs. 58–59). The later pottery sherds, found in the layer together with the white mosaic tesserae, can be dated to the middle of the 6th cent. A.D. (Pl. 17). The only coin found was minted in the second half of the 5th cent. A.D.¹²⁸. The southern portion of the excavation returned a layer without diagnostic materials which ended underneath with the rock of the mountain (SU20).

1.1.3.4 Investigation between the three tombs and the western wall

The excavation, extended in the area comprised between the tombs and the western wall, allowed the identification of the phase when the tombs were built. The layer SU21 returned two coins, one ascribable to the years A.D. 383–425, the other more generally to the chronological horizon comprised between the 4th and 5th cent. A.D.¹²⁹.

¹²⁵ The mosaic is made up of a set of tesserae of very large dimensions. See in detail the description in Alliaia – Bianchi 1998, 158. 187–188 nos. 50–51.

¹²⁶ S. SALLER describes the superimposition of two mosaic levels under the ambo. Saller 1941, 38.

¹²⁷ Fragment of figurative polychromatic mosaic belonging to the central nave of the basilica, located under the base of the ambo on the southern side of the stairs of access to the presbytery. The fragment (188 × 113 cm) has a field of white tesserae of about 21 cm and a band 55 cm wide with a double Greek key in two colours, red and grey. This band is followed by a wider field (100 cm) with the illustration of a wild animal in the middle of trees. Corbo 1970, 281 plans 1, 9; fig. 5.

¹²⁸ See coin no. 11 in the numismatic note.

¹²⁹ See coins no. 5 and no. 22 in the numismatic note.

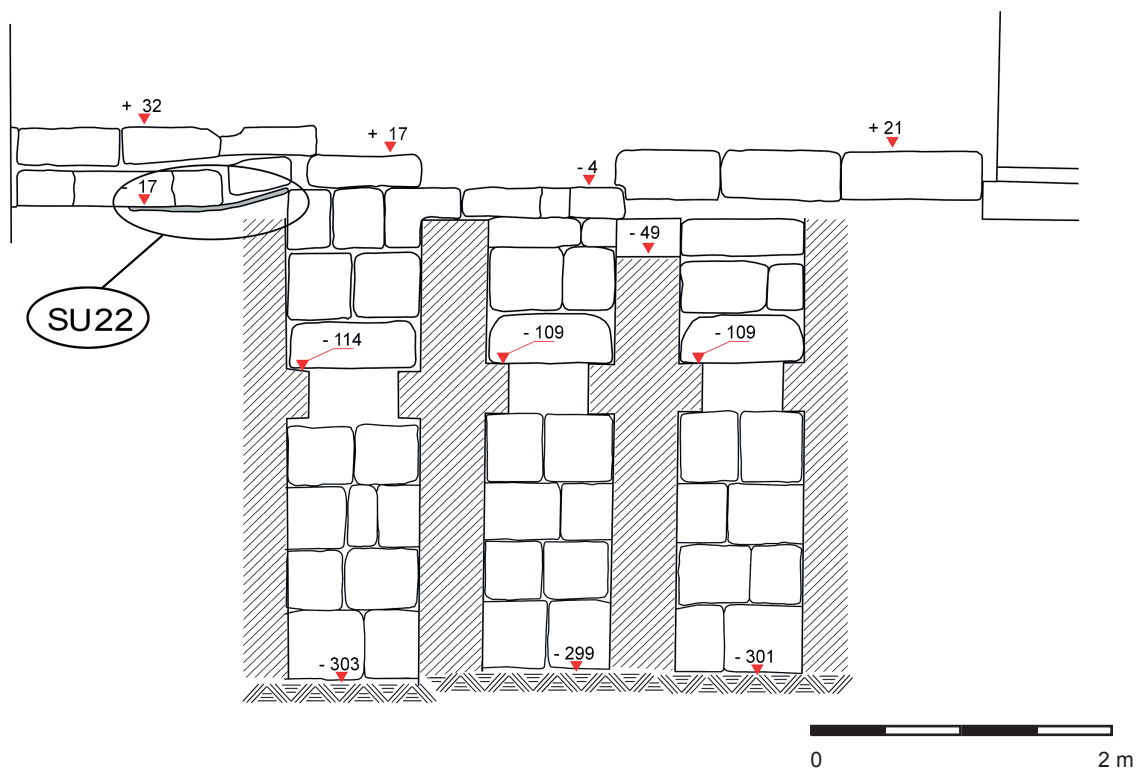


Fig. 54 Memorial of Moses. Cross-section of the area of the three tombs (nos. 72–74).



Fig. 55 Memorial of Moses. Interior masonry of the tomb no. 73.



Fig. 56 Memorial of Moses. Internal covering with *pel-laikon* of the tomb no. 73.



Fig. 57 Memorial of Moses. Tomb no. 73 after the re-opening.

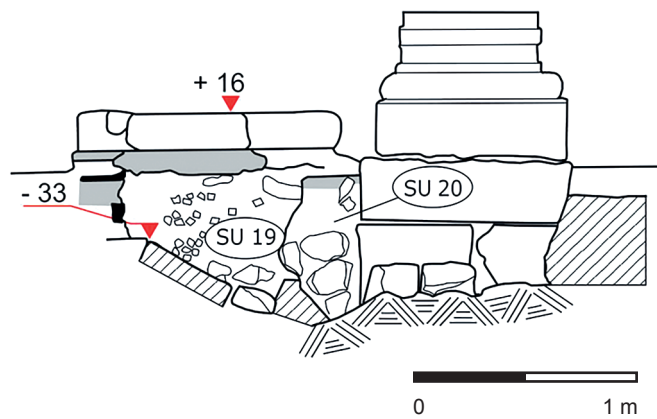


Fig. 58 Memorial of Moses. Cross-section of the excavation under the ambo.



Fig. 59 Memorial of Moses. Base of the ambo.

1.1.4 Area 4: survey in the central nave and in the northern intercolumns

The survey took place in the whole central nave and in the intercolumns of the north nave, already investigated at a superficial level by S. SALLER and V. CORBO (Fig. 60). The archaeological excavation, after having removed the modern cement layer, concerned the preparatory layer (SU23) of a fairly fine white mosaic, the remains of which are visible near the wall in the façade¹³⁰ and towards the middle of the church, on the northern side¹³¹. The layer, which ended with the rocky level of the mountain, appeared as a fine level, containing a good amount of waste from producing the mosaic tesserae and four coins, the most recent of which was minted under Arcadius-Honorius-Theodosius (A.D. 406–408) and one uncertain, perhaps Theodosius II (A.D. 408–423)¹³².

After removing the layer, five covering stones of an unfound tomb structure along the central axis of the nave, near the foundation of the eastern wall were found (Figs. 61–62). The tomb was in the centre of a square-shaped area, which the altimetric survey ascertained as being the highest point of the mountain of Ras Siyagha (Figs. 63–64). The structure is defined in its perimeter by a cut and in correspondence with the first stone, in the south-western corner, a fragment of an alabaster frame (Fig. 71; Pl. 21, no. 3) and a dark-coloured layer (SU25) were identified, containing pottery, the oldest pieces of which can be ascribed to the 1st cent. A.D. (Pl. 19). Internally, the tomb was empty; there were no organic remains or accompanying objects, these elements would suggest that the tomb was closed when it was built (Figs. 65–66). The base is made up of five slabs of pink stones 5 cm high. The lower row of the walls is in local stone and plastered with a red facing, while the upper one contains pieces of alabaster marble for filling¹³³ (Figs. 67–68, 73; Pl. 22).

Lastly, the excavation of this area extended to the northern *intercolumnia* from the third to the eighth¹³⁴; where, having removed the modern cement¹³⁵, the independent foundations of the columns of the nave were recognized. Amongst the pottery which can be dated to the second half of the 6th cent. A.D., a fragment of tubular channel of a clay *polycandelon* was found which enriched the information on the oldest systems of lighting of the basilica (Pl. 20, no. 21). Worthy of note are small fragments of plaster with some characters in the Syriac language painted on them, probably belonging to the decoration of one of the intercolumns (Fig. 69). During the survey in the nave, the mosaic fragments were photographed¹³⁶ (Fig. 70).

1.1.5 Area 5: survey in the area of the façade of the basilica

1.1.5.1 Examination of the southern door in the façade of the basilica

The masonry of the western façade of the basilica was re-examined (Fig. 75). After having removed the cement flooring, two small vertical red signs painted on the masonry at the centre of the south nave were identified, in correspondence with a recess of overhanging stones and under these two fragments of mosaic with white tesserae (SU30) were recognized¹³⁷. The three modern slabs of flooring were removed and the central section of the façade wall, already the object of contemporary restoration, was demolished.

¹³⁰ See paragraph 5 below.

¹³¹ For the discussion on this mosaic pavement, see Saller 1941, 223–224; Piccirillo 1976, 293; Alliata – Bianchi 1998, 189 no. 82.

¹³² See coins no. 7 and no. 10 in the numismatic note.

¹³³ The pieces are irregular, some show mouldings, others grooves which clearly prove how the blocks must formerly have been part of another building.

¹³⁴ The numbering started from the presbytery towards the western façade.

¹³⁵ The mosaic of the *intercolumnia* was removed by M. PICCIRILLO in 1976; see Piccirillo 1976, 289–293.

¹³⁶ See in detail Saller 1941, 223–224; Piccirillo 1976, 293; Alliata – Bianchi 1998, 189 no. 82.

¹³⁷ As found in the photographic documentation, the two red lines had already been indicated during the excavations by V. CORBO but without having been documented or interpreted.

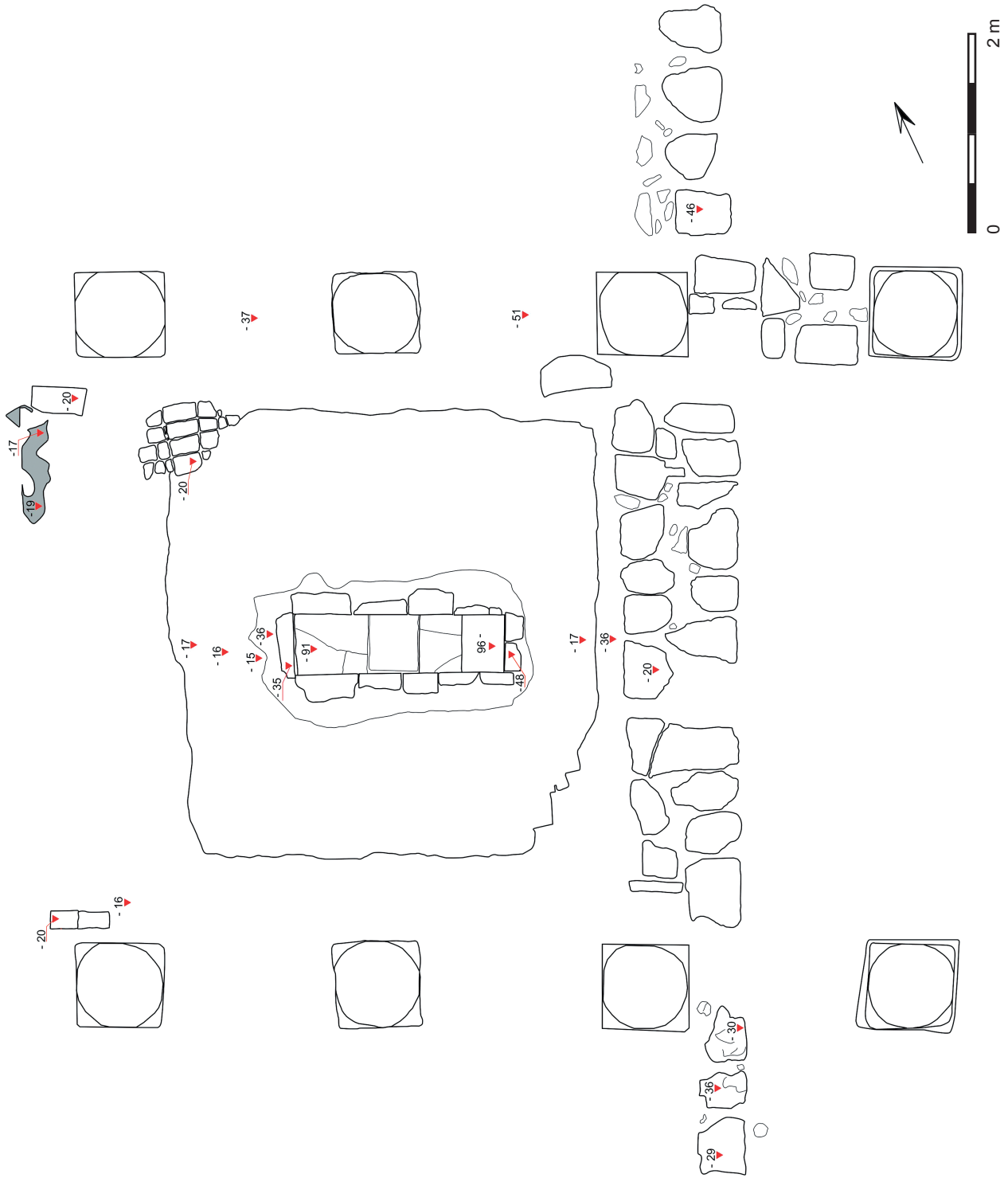


Fig. 60 Memorial of Moses. Plan of the excavation in the central nave.

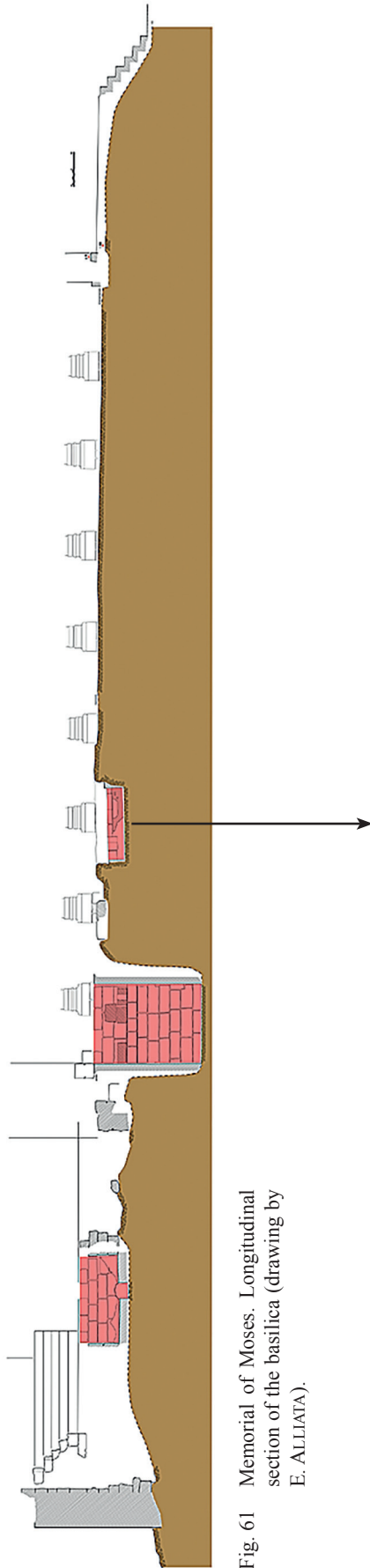


Fig. 61 Memorial of Moses. Longitudinal section of the basilica (drawing by E. ALLIATA).



Fig. 62 Memorial of Moses. Tomb in the centre of the nave at the time of discovery.



Fig. 63 Memorial of Moses. Tomb in the centre of the nave.



Fig. 64 Memorial of Moses. Tomb in the centre of the nave, detail of the rock square-shaped area.



Fig. 65 Memorial of Moses. Tomb in the centre of the nave, detail of the red plaster and of the marble row.



Fig. 66 Memorial of Moses. Tomb in the centre of the nave, detail of the five slabs of pink stones.

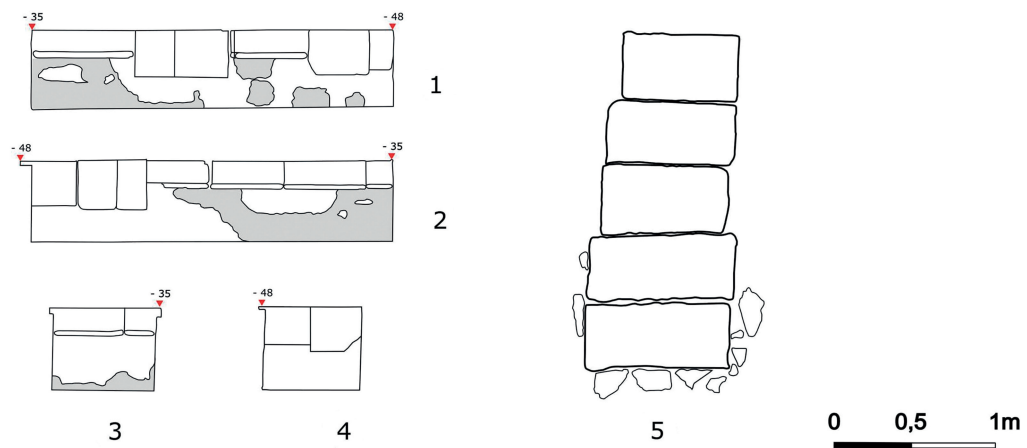


Fig. 67 Memorial of Moses. Graphic rendering of the internal prospect of the tomb and its covering.



Fig. 68 Memorial of Moses. Longitudinal view of the interior of the tomb.

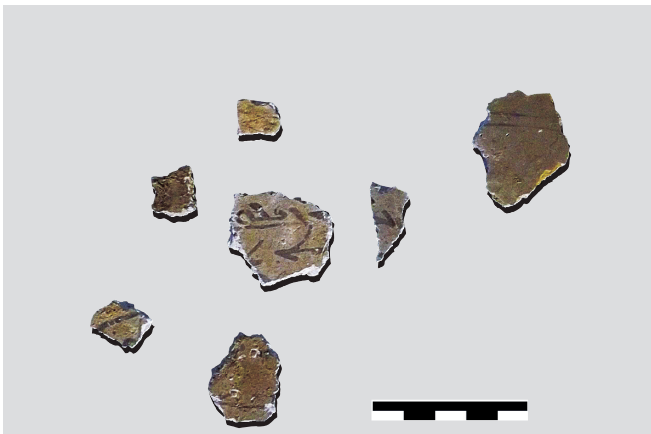


Fig. 69 Memorial of Moses. Fragments of painted plaster from the 3rd northern intercolumn.

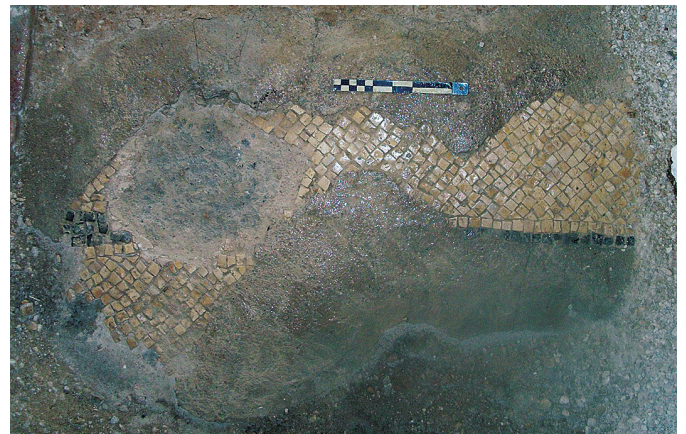


Fig. 70 Memorial of Moses. Fragments of mosaic floor with white tesserae and one decorative band in black tesserae found in the nave.



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Fig. 71 Memorial of Moses. Fragment of an alabaster frame found in SU25.



Fig. 72 Memorial of Moses. Marble architectural frame found by SALLER.



Fig. 73 Memorial of Moses. Detail of an architectonic element reused in the tomb.

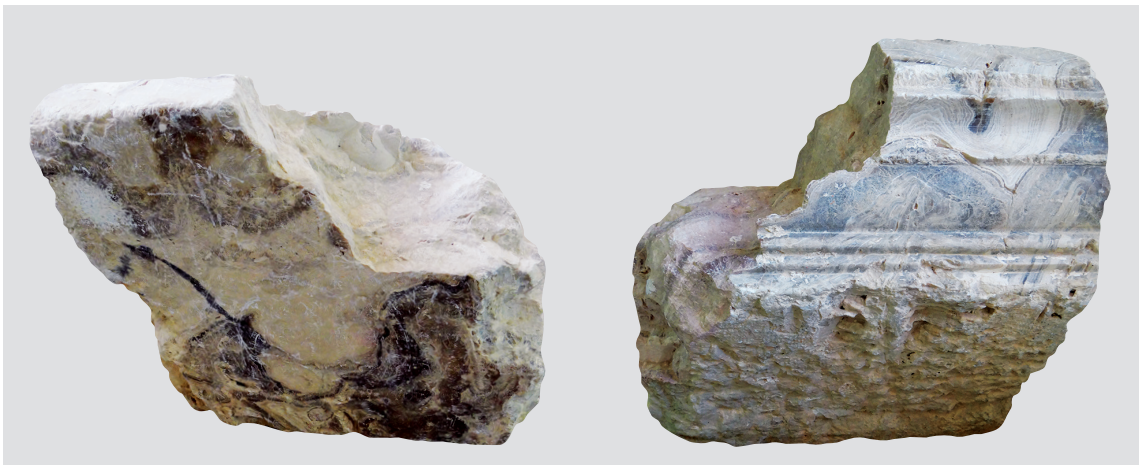


Fig. 74 Memorial of Moses. Marble architectural frame found by SALLER.

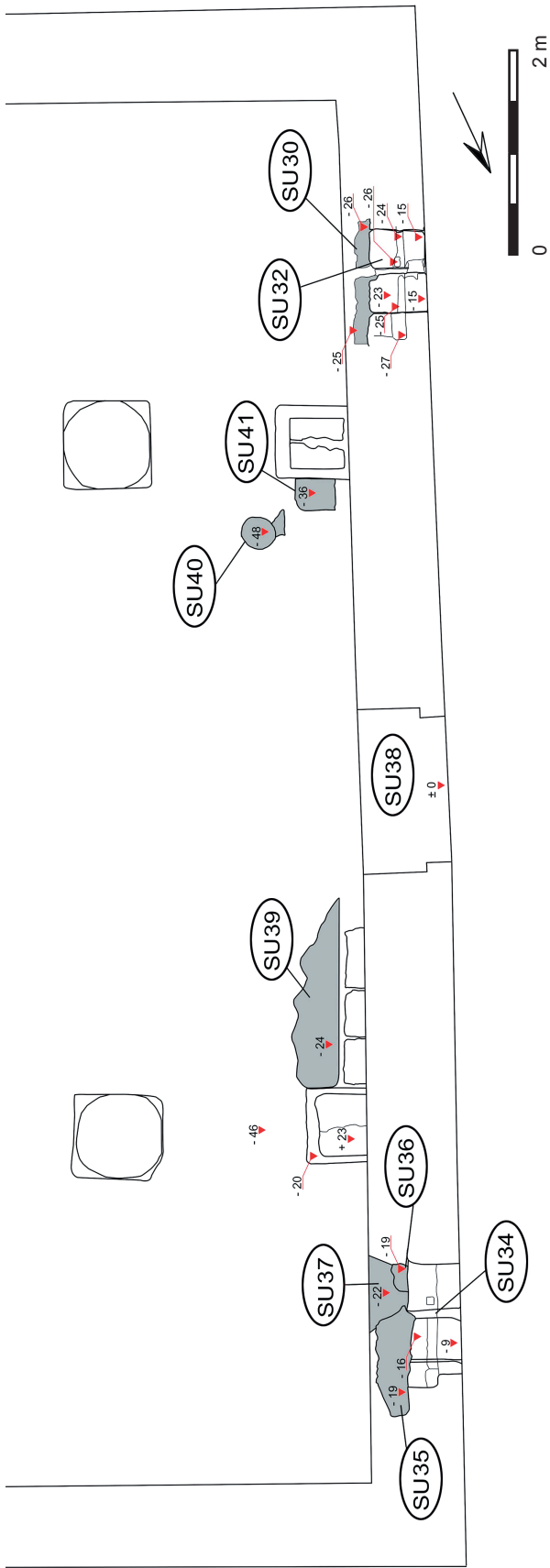


Fig. 75 Memorial of Moses. Plan of the southern side of the Basilica after the excavation.



Fig. 76 Memorial of Moses. Photo of the northern door after the excavation.



Fig. 77 Memorial of Moses. Photo of the southern door after the excavation.

Proceeding in depth, a threshold in *mizzy*¹³⁸ stones was found (SU32), divided into two parts by a groove and with the notches necessary for the insertion of the door (Figs. 75–76). The excavation ended after having brought to light the fragment of mosaic made up of small-sized tesserae (less than 1 cm), in correspondence with the start of the foundation SU33 which rested directly on the rock of the mountain (Fig. 77). A small row of tesserae, placed at the same level as SU30 (–25), was identified close to the base of the first column of the southern row (SU31).

1.1.5.2 Examination of the north door in the façade of the basilica

The modern slabs corresponding to the red marks left by V. CORBO were also removed in the northern nave and the central portion of the wall of the façade was demolished, necessary for further study. The lower row rested on the threshold SU34, made up of two stones with notches for the hinges and grooves for the door at the centre of which a square channel was recognized, to drain off water. After cleaning, it was possible to clearly recognize the ancient door of access to the northern nave, already closed up in antiquity, and three fragments of mosaic, two of which were at the same level (–19), but of a different type (Fig. 76). The first SU35, with small tesserae, could be the result of restoration in antiquity of the mosaic pavement of which the second fragment SU36 would remain with larger sized tesserae arranged in rows parallel to the wall. At a lower level (–22) a mosaic with tesserae arranged diagonally was identified, perhaps belonging to an older phase SU37.

1.1.5.3 Examination of the ancient central door in the façade of the basilica

The examination of the doors to the northern and southern naves allowed the observation that the threshold of the central door, made up of a single stone, but with reused jamb, is at a higher level (± 0) with respect to the two lateral ones (Fig. 75). The door SU38 would appear to belong to a more recent phase even though it seems to rest directly on the rock of the mountain and not on lower foundations (–15 and –16).

¹³⁸ *Mizzy* stone is a particular type of local limestone characterized by considerable hardness and very clean breakage. Two types are known: *mizzy jehudi*, very hard and with little sensitivity to the action of water with colours from white to yellow, and *mizzy helu* with a whitish colour and yellow veins. See Marino 2004, 47.

1.2 INTERPRETING THE EXCAVATION

1.2.1 The phase of construction of the first basilica (second half of the 5th cent., after A.D. 408/423)

The excavation data of the areas nos. 3, 4 and 5, supplemented by the in-depth interpretation of the monumental evidence, allow a new hypothesis to be formulated regarding the oldest building constructed on Mount Nebo (Fig. 78). Specifically, the excavation of the nave allowed the previous interpretation – which saw the space in front of the *cella trichora* as an external courtyard with a mosaic pavement – to be confuted¹³⁹.

Much more coherently, the ecclesiastical building would have been structured in a rectangular space, probably divided into three naves by two series of pilasters, according to the fairly common practice in the churches in the region¹⁴⁰. As for the perimeter walls ascribable to this phase, it is possible to observe on the northern and western sides two overhanging rows which can be identified under the elevated walls today preserved (nos. 30 and 21 in Fig. 79). The northern wall¹⁴¹ in *nary* stone with an east-west alignment, perpendicularly joins the western wall¹⁴², as already suggested by E. ALLIATA and S. BIANCHI¹⁴³. The southern wall (no. 58 in Fig. 79), perfectly parallel to the northern wall, is perpendicular to the foundation no. 44 in Fig. 79 and in all probability had to join and end with the eastern façade characterized by the three doors¹⁴⁴. The preparatory layer of the mosaic pavement connected with this phase, made of even and compact limestone (SU23), was laid directly above the rocky level of the mountain. Whether the individual surviving mosaics belong to the same mosaic remains uncertain because they are limited to some small portions close to the western façade of the church. In particular, fragment SU39, which links the northern pilaster strip and the protruding row of the western wall, is placed at the level of –24, while those in correspondence with the southern door (SU30) and the northern one (SU37) are at levels –26 and –22. The small difference could be due to slight altimetric variations caused by the natural geological movement of the mountain. Going back to the finds in the preparatory layers of the mosaic, the coins (which provide a *terminus post quem* between A.D. 408 and 423) and the pottery sherds (Pl. 18) date the construction of the pavement to the second half of the 5th cent. A.D., suggesting the same chronological horizon for the building of the church as well.

The three areas¹⁴⁵ (identified as *D – B – C* in Fig. 79) east of the foundation of the eastern wall of the basilica (no. 44 in Fig. 79), already interpreted by E. ALLIATA and S. BIANCHI as the internal partition of the building limited by the northern and eastern perimeter walls are also

¹³⁹ The structure and the development of the *cella trichora* with the relative rooms open on to an external mosaic courtyard were the object of hypothetical studies by the architectural historian C. CALANO and then again by E. ALLIATA and S. BIANCHI. The same authors, due to the lack of stratigraphic data, expressed themselves with great caution. For the previous hypotheses, see Alliota – Bianchi 1998, 158–159.

¹⁴⁰ There are numerous examples attested in Jordan, in particular in the diocese of Madaba. For a repertoire of the churches and their study, see Michel 2001, 18–33.

¹⁴¹ Wall of blocks of *nary* stone of which one row and part of the foundation is preserved, which protrudes with respect to the profile of the masonry above. It forms the northern perimeter of the oldest building identified so far in this survey. See Alliota – Bianchi 1998, 184 no. 21.

¹⁴² Wall structure made up of blocks of *nary*-stone of the bossage type, rectangular, combined dry and arranged in regular rows of which two/three are visible today through a hole. The wall has the same typology and construction technique as the northern perimeter wall. The wall was incorporated in new masonry when the *cella trichora* was built. See Alliota – Bianchi 1998, 185 no. 30.

¹⁴³ Alliota – Bianchi 1998, 151–154.

¹⁴⁴ The western position of the structure of the southern wall is preserved solely at the foundation level, unfortunately this element does not allow the elevation to be determined.

¹⁴⁵ The three rooms are conventionally called “*B*” “*C*” “*D*” in the interpretation of E. ALLIATA – S. BIANCHI. See Alliota – Bianchi 1998, 152.

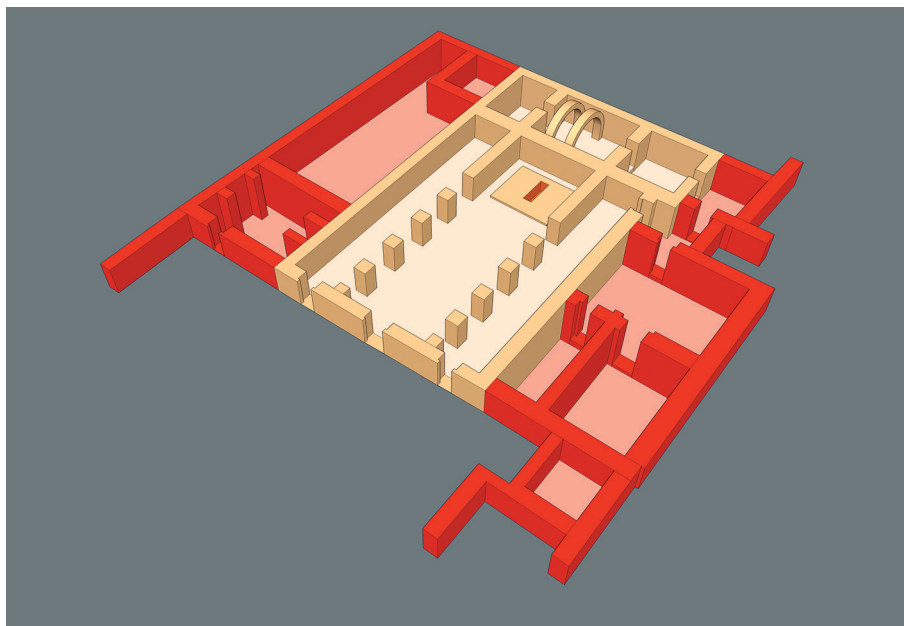


Fig. 78 Memorial of Moses. The phase of building the first Basilica – second half of the 5th century, (after A.D. 408/423) (3D reconstruction by the author).

an integral part of the complex¹⁴⁶. The excavation of SU21 returned a coin minted between A.D. 383 and 425¹⁴⁷, which would suggest dating the building of the three tombs in area “B” to after the middle of the 5th cent. A.D. The three tombs were then covered by a mosaic pavement with white tesserae of which the mosaic fragment SU22 (layer of mosaic which covers the tombs in correspondence with the step) would be related, in type and level, to those found in areas north “D” and south “C” already identified in the previous excavation campaigns by S. SALLER and V. CORBO¹⁴⁸. In addition, the coins and the pottery found above the mosaic and in the soil that covered the surface of the perimeter walls of area “C” confirm a dating to the mid-5th cent.¹⁴⁹. It is worth recalling that the quality of the mosaic of area “C”, decorated with a cross with white and black tesserae, matches the excavation data¹⁵⁰. The central area “B” would have had a cover with arches of which the two blocks of the foundations have been identified and the walls would have been faced with plaster as observed in the south-eastern corner¹⁵¹.

¹⁴⁶ The foundation with a north-south trend is parallel to the eastern perimeter of the complex. The structure is made up of small and medium-sized stones put together dry. See Alliaia – Bianchi 1998, 187 no. 44.

¹⁴⁷ See coin no. 5 in the numismatic note.

¹⁴⁸ The mosaic in room “D”, made up of very large white tesserae, rests on the eastern perimeter of the ecclesiastic building; the mosaic of room “C” also in white tesserae but arranged in a diagonal pattern, has a central decoration in black tesserae made up of a cross inside of which there is a braid. The fragment rests on the foundation of the eastern wall of the first basilica. In detail, see Alliaia – Bianchi 1998, 187 nos. 43. 50. 51, 1; Saller 1941, 50 and Corbo 1970, 278 pl. 2, z.

¹⁴⁹ For the mintages, see the study in Gitler 1998, 556, nos. 30. 47. 55. 57. 58. 61; for the pottery, Bagatti 1985, 256–257 fig. 3.

¹⁵⁰ For an analytic description of the mosaic, see Piccirillo – Alliaia 1998, 268.

¹⁵¹ Numerous rooms with a roof resting on arches have been identified in the monastic complex of Mount Nebo. The arches could be isolated as in rooms nos. 105, 301 and 305 or as arch-walls arranged in series and parallel with one another. Of this type, the bases in the walls of the *diakonikon*, and arches preserved in their entirety in cistern no. 9 and above all of room no. 56, which have been the object of modern anastylosis.

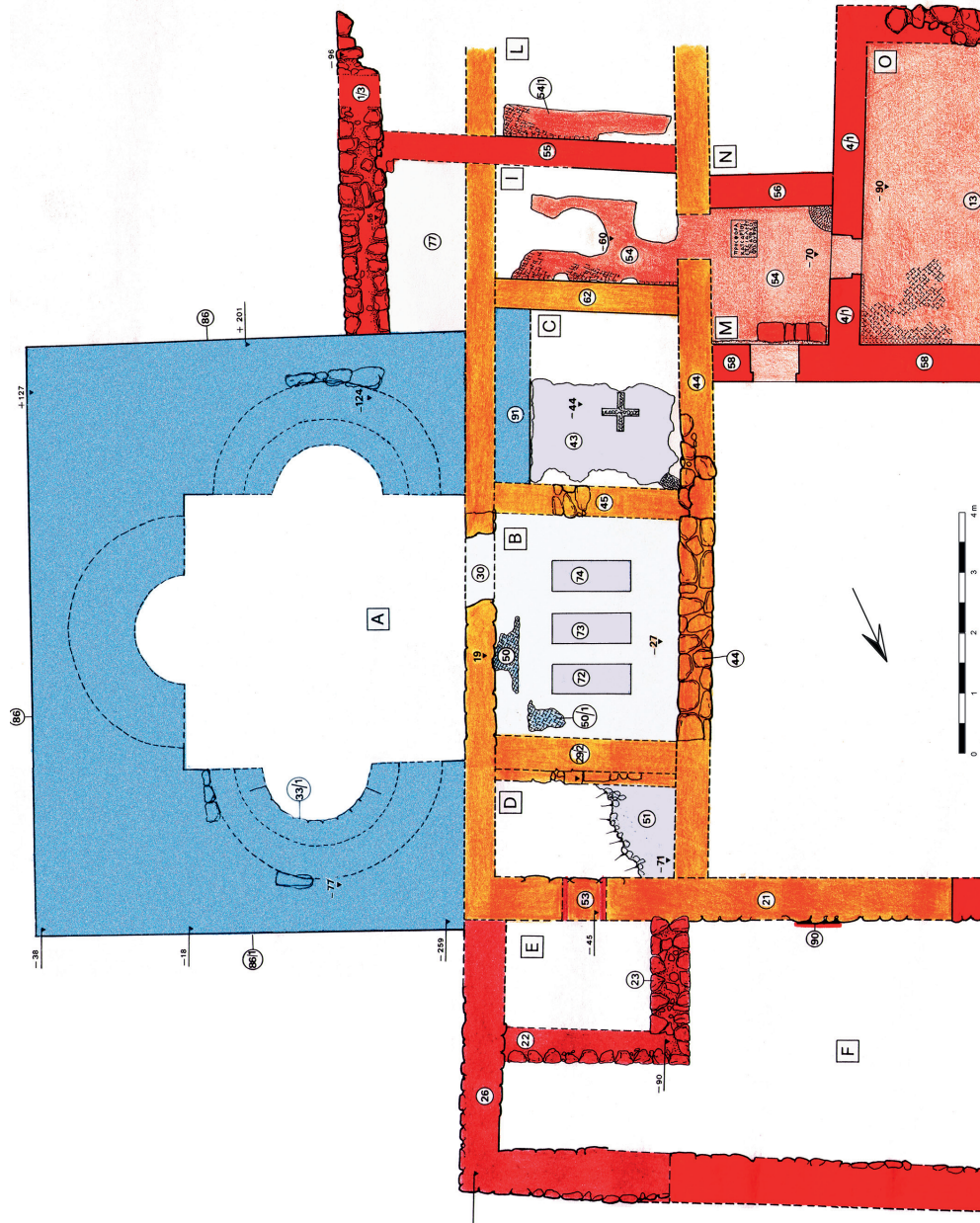


Fig. 79 Memorial of Moses. Plan with the detail of the three rooms. Graphic rendering after the excavations by PICCIRILLO (after Alliaia – Bianchi 1998, 152.)

Given the numerous fragments of bricks for roofing found during the excavation and above all the distance of the pier of the arch it is possible to conjecture that wooden scaffolding was used¹⁵².

A presumed funerary function is ascribed to the three distinct areas built behind the basilica's hall due to the presence of the burials in area "B"¹⁵³. Nor should it be forgotten that the central tomb (no. 73 in Fig. 79) seems to have been destined for the burial of an important person as it contained the skeleton of only one individual, whereas in each nucleus of the two lateral structures, interpreted as ossuaries, the skeletal remains of eight corpses were identified¹⁵⁴. This data finds interesting parallels in other contemporary monastic contexts, in particular as S. SALLER recalls in the case of a monastery near Gaza where the sources inform that the Bishop Peter the Iberian was buried in a tomb at the sides of which his companions were buried¹⁵⁵.

It is therefore possible that the tomb structures of the area "B" can be identified with the well-known type of tomb *ad sanctos*, a hypothesis which is further reinforced by the vicinity of the recently discovered empty tomb. For an understanding of these three rooms, the study should not however be limited to the sole ecclesiastical building, but has to be put into relation with the more complex structure of those areas which formed the primitive nucleus of the monastic coenobitic complex on Mount Nebo.

The burial place, identified along the axis of the nave of the church, can also be ascribed to this first phase, because it is sealed by the level of preparation of the mosaic and due to the presence in SU25 of pottery which, although there are some exceptions belonging to the 1st–2nd cent. A.D., is dated to the first half of the 5th cent. A.D. (Pl. 19). The tomb was dug in a portion of the mountain rock in a square shape which is at a higher level with respect to the level of the nave. The cut, shallow and with softer soil that developed around the rocky area, suggests the presence of a step which in antiquity allowed climbing up from the nave to the area with the tomb (Figs. 63–64). It is possible to recognize in this area the presbytery, perhaps accompanied laterally by two rooms used as *pastophoria*, according to the architectonic typology of the "*sanctuaire carré*" which was widespread in the Christian Orient, especially in the Syrian region of Hawran and western Jordan, but with offshoots in Egypt, Nubia and Ethiopia, between the middle of the 5th and the early years of the 7th cent. A.D.¹⁵⁶.

Another element supporting the identification with the presbytery is the indication that above the tomb recalling the death of Moses, another altar had to be built to be used for the celebration of the office, as seen from a passage in the *Life of Peter the Iberian*. The text says:

«There at that time we learned from those who were dwelling on the mountain how those who built the temple had been fully assured that the body of the holy Moses was laid there, above which the temple was built, the table and the altar set up, and under the altar the vessel of oil and mercy, even though the divine Scripture clearly says thus, "Moses the servant of the Lord, died in the land of Moab according to the word of the Lord..."»¹⁵⁷

The reference to the vessel containing oil¹⁵⁸, as a clue relative to the veneration of the prophet's tomb under the altar of the basilica, had already been highlighted by S. SALLER,

¹⁵² However, it is not possible to state with certainty that the fragments of tiles are connected with the roof of this room or for the subsequent basilica.

¹⁵³ On this subject, see Alliata – Bianchi 1998, 151–154.

¹⁵⁴ For the analytic study of funeral practices, see Sanmori 1998, 419–422 and most recently Bianchi 2018, 39–47.

¹⁵⁵ Saller 1941, 38–39.

¹⁵⁶ For a full and updated discussion of the subject, with a catalogue of the sites that present this classification, see Weber 2010, 207–254.

¹⁵⁷ Joh. Rufus. V. Petri. Ib. 87. Trans. by C. B. Horn – R. R. Phenix Jr, 177–179.

¹⁵⁸ This practice can be assimilated with the well-known one for the sarcophagi of martyrs in which oil used to be poured which flowed over the bones of the deceased and leaked out laterally. The liquid thus sanctified was then mixed with powder, water and relics of the saint and with soil taken from the holy places to form the eulogies dear to the faithful. See Payne Smith 1994, 149; Gessel 1988, 183–202. For in-depth discussion of the subject, see Vikan 2010, in particular 13–17.

but without having the possibility of correctly identifying the place, now known through the archaeological survey¹⁵⁹. The use in the Syriac text of the term ܚܝܟܠ [hykl] to designate the type of building constructed for the memory of the prophet and seen by the Bishop Peter in his journey to Mount Nebo should be noted. The term distinguishes linguistically a building as important and for this reason it may at times also mean palace¹⁶⁰. This element is confirmed in the text of John Rufus, who indicates how the Memorial built on Mount Nebo increased its fame and prestige because it was connected with the memory of the prophet¹⁶¹.

The type of the alabaster blocks in the tomb clearly appear to be reused elements already attested in the Roman imperial period (Pls. 21–22). The question is therefore raised regarding the origin of the lithic elements, i.e. whether they belonged to a previous building, and what function the tomb which was discovered empty played. The joint examination of the archaeological data and of the literary accounts allows two hypotheses to be proposed:

1. The preliminary analysis of the marble pieces has allowed the recognition of three moulded angular bases, thin slabs with protrusion and three fragments of frame. Given the incompleteness of the architectonic fragments, it is impossible to know with any certainty their original position, however it can be hypothesized that they were part of the external or internal marble facing of a building that the proportions of the pieces suggest was of modest dimensions. If production for Mount Nebo was attributed to them, the alabaster finds could have decorated the oldest funerary symbol or building commemorating the death of Moses built in Roman times¹⁶² (Fig. 80).

In a second phase, the elevated structure could have been dismantled and the alabaster reused for the creation of the first row of the tomb which the monks thus wanted to ennoble. In this regard, it is interesting to recall the description of the church saw by the pilgrim Egeria whose visit was probably in A.D. 384¹⁶³:

«So we arrived at the summit of that mountain, where there is now a church, not a large one, on the very summit of Mount Nebo. Inside that church, in the place where the ambo is, I saw a slightly raised place, occupying as much space as graves are accustomed to have»¹⁶⁴

In the Latin text, the description *ecclesia non grandis* designates the building as modest without specifying its actual dimensions, and it occurs again in the description of the pre-Justinian church on the summit of Jabal Musa at Mount Sinai. Recent archaeological surveys show that this church was much smaller than the first basilica on Nebo, of which we do not possess certain archaeological data¹⁶⁵. Although mentioned by Egeria, during the excavation survey it was not

¹⁵⁹ Saller 1941, 343, note 3.

¹⁶⁰ I thank M. PAZZINI for mentioning this term and the useful considerations. See also in Payne Smith 1994, 103; Pazzini 1999, 152; Sokoloff 2009, 340.

¹⁶¹ Joh. Rufus. V. Petri. Ib. 87. I would like to thank E. VERGANI for helping me reflect on the Syriac term *rab, rabbā*. The root, connected to the meaning of “big”, can have various connotations, including “important”. Therefore, as *d-saggī rab* is followed by ‘*al šmāhā da-nbiyā*, it could mean “that it is very important due to/in regard to the name of the prophet”.

¹⁶² The use of the signs is attested in numerous funerary contexts of Late Antiquity. The many examples include the most significant ones of the Trophy of Gaius elevated above the tomb of St Peter on the Vatican hill and, to remain in an oriental context, the monument built on top of the tomb of St Philip Apostle in Hierapolis of Phrygia. In this regard, see Gualandi 2000, 391–397; D’Andria 2011–2012, 1–52.

¹⁶³ The dating of Egeria’s journey is not accepted by all scholars; however, the majority tend towards a chronological horizon comprised between A.D. 381 and 384. In this regard see Fabbrini 1990, 21–75 and Gelsomino 1990, 243–304. For the linguistic and philological issues Löfstedt 1980, especially 67–73; on the linguistic question also see Löfstedt 1911.

¹⁶⁴ It. Eg. 12, 1. “*Pervenimus ergo ad summitatem montis illius, ubi est nunc ecclesia non grandis, in ipsa summitate montis Nabau. Intra quam ecclesiam, in eo loco ubi pulpitus est, vidi locum modice quasi altiorem, tantum hispatii habentem quantum memoriae solent habere*” trans. by A. McGowan 2018, 125.

¹⁶⁵ It. Eg. 3, 3. For an analysis of the Sinai in Egeria’s itinerary, see Rubin 1990, 177–191. For an updated picture of the archaeological research in the church built on the summit of Jabal Musa of Mount Sinai, see Kalopissi-Verti – Panayotidi 2010, 73–105; Dahari 2000, 28–37.

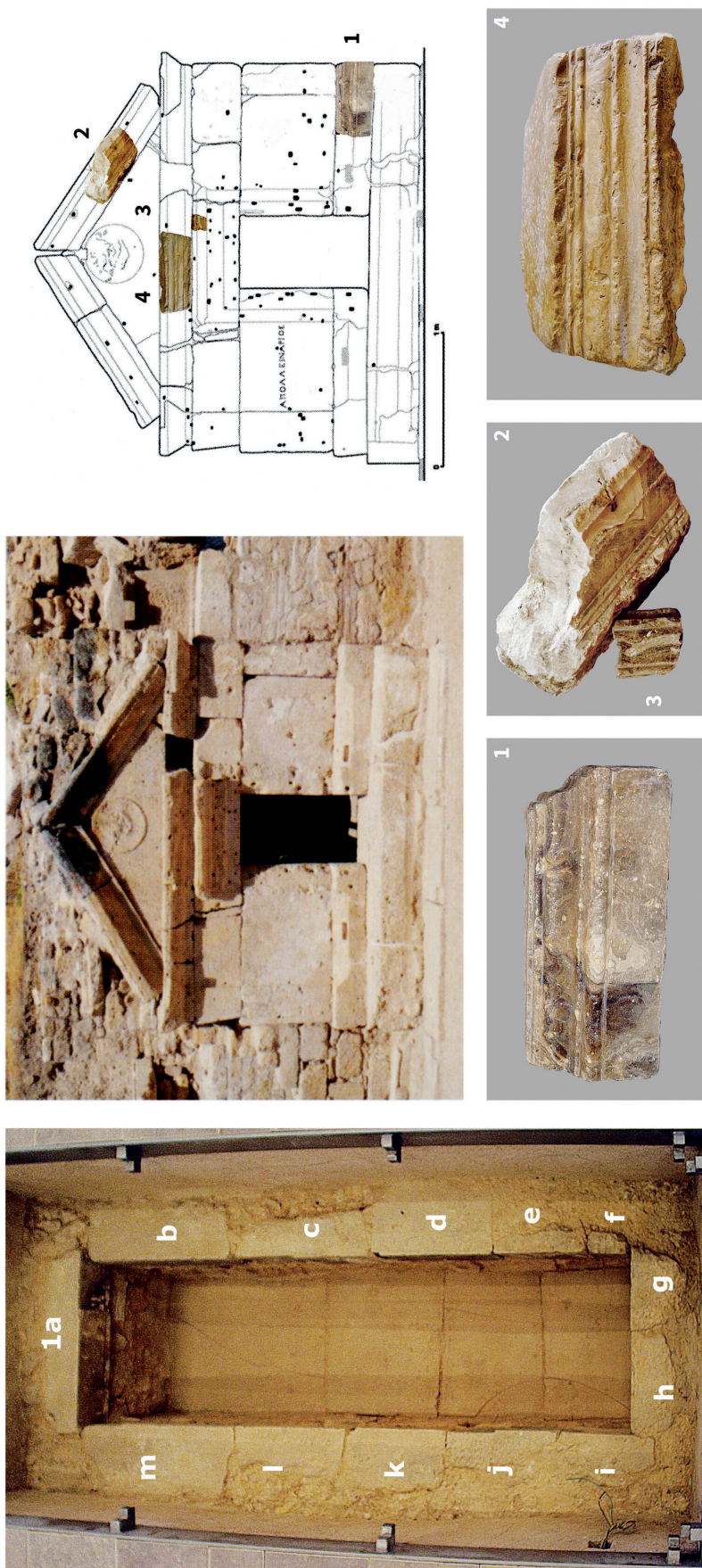


Fig. 80 Hypothetical contextualization of the architectonic elements found in the tomb of Siyagha. Comparison with the tomb of the Apostle Philip in Hierapolis, Turkey. (reconstruction by E. ALLIATA, pictures after D'ANDRIA 2011–2012, 19 fig. 12).

possible to identify any architectonic evidence or stratigraphic element relative to a building that can be dated with certainty to the time of the pilgrim's visit¹⁶⁶. However, the topography of the mountain, with the rocky area around the tomb placed at a higher level, would allow the hypothesis that the small church described by the pilgrim was circumscribed to this area. In reference to Moses' tomb, the pilgrim writes:

«For his grave, where he was laid, is not shown to this day, for as the place was shown to us by our predecessors who lived here, so always we point it out to you»¹⁶⁷

From the description, we learn that the monks did indicate to Egeria the general place linked to the prophet's burial place, but without showing her any tomb, perhaps precisely because of what the Biblical text says and noted by the pilgrim: «No man knows how he was buried»¹⁶⁸. The recovery of small pottery fragments dated to the 1st–2nd cent. A.D. in SU25 (Pl. 19) and of marble from the tomb therefore leaves the problem of a previous occupation of the place open, which is not confirmed according to present data by any masonry structures or other diagnostic material. The oldest evidence of coins and pottery date the preparation of the mosaic of the nave to not before A.D. 408/423¹⁶⁹ with a difference of more than thirty years from Egeria's visit. The only other element that attests that the summit of the mountain was frequented earlier is provided by a fragmentary inscription in the Samaritan language found *in situ* from which it would appear that funerary functions were held on Mount Nebo¹⁷⁰.

2. More certain are the circumstances that led to building the empty tomb in the nave of the basilica which we consider dating to the second half of the 5th cent. A.D. It has to be remembered that the tomb's structure, discovered intact in June 2013, excludes any violation in antiquity. Although the absence of human remains in the tomb could possibly suggest a subsequent removal, the shallow typology of the tomb, the absence of traces of fluids of decomposition and accessories inside it or of earth, would exclude this hypothesis. The tomb would therefore be identified as a cenotaph desired by the Christian monastic community to recall the place where, according to Biblical tradition, the prophet Moses died after having seen the Promised Land¹⁷¹. In this perspective, the position of the tomb in the primitive place of devotion joins the description by Peter the Iberian who dwells on the vision of the prophet which a local shepherd had.

The realization of this memory would therefore take on a particular symbolic function which allowed the Christian faithful to go on pilgrimage to a topographically defined site, destined for the devotion of the prophet Moses. The monastic complex of the memorial on Mount Nebo becomes fully part of a structured network of shrine monasteries dedicated to Biblical figures in Jordan which will be analysed analytically in Chapter Three.

The uniquely Christian prerogative of the cenotaph is also justified by the Jewish religiosity of rabbinic tradition and of the various *targumim* which, reinforcing what is stated in the Torah, considered the burial place of Moses unknown¹⁷². The detailed description of the tomb of Moses, present in the text by John Rufus, appears as a bold rhetorical exercise in support of

¹⁶⁶ The problem had already been raised by M. PICCIRILLO. See Piccirillo 1990b, 212.

¹⁶⁷ It. Eg. 12, 2. «*Nam memoria illius, ubi positus sit, in hodiernum ostenditur; sicut enim nobis a maioribus, qui hic manserunt, ubi ostensum est, ita est nos vobis monstramus*» trans. by A. McGowan 2018, 125.

¹⁶⁸ Deut. 34, 6. «*sepulturam illius nullus hominum scit*». The comment of V. HUNINK on the text deserves attention: «The passage is in some way not very clear. Probably it is a point that was usually indicated as the place where Moses was laid in the earth by the angels invisibly, but that could not officially be called 'tomb' because of the Biblical passage» in Hunink-Drijvers 2011, 176 no. 28 (I thank G. BENEDETTO for the information and the translation of the passage from the Dutch).

¹⁶⁹ See coins no. 7 and no. 10 in the numismatic note.

¹⁷⁰ For the translation and the interpretation of the funerary epitaph in Samaritan Hebrew, see: Saller 1941, 271–275; Bagatti 1965, 1129–1132; Yonick 1967, 162–221; Hüttenmeister – Reeg 1977, 656–667; Di Segni 1998, 464.

¹⁷¹ Deut. 34, 10; Psalm 90, 1.

¹⁷² A particularly interesting essay on the imitation of the figure of Moses by the Bishop Peter the Iberian is given by B. BITTON-ASHKELONY and A. KOFSKY. Specific references appear in it to the text by John Rufus and bibliographic indications on the Jewish tradition of the death of Moses and on the story of the discovery of the prophet's

the precise identification of the burial place of the prophet¹⁷³. Lastly, what Z. T. FIEMA, resuming the studies of L. DI SEGNI¹⁷⁴ says, on the monastery of Aaron on Jabal Haroun near Petra, which is a precise comparison with the Nebo complex¹⁷⁵ is of particular interest:

«Christianization could proceed through inventio – the miraculous finds, following a vision or dream, of tombs that preserved bodies of persons associated with the biblical tradition and/or the early Christian Church, which would then become a place of pilgrimage and the logical spot for the construction of a Christian edifice. Although inventio was not restricted to the association of a burial with a church to be built, many early churches were erected on holy places known in the Jewish and Christian tradition, which often contained very ancient tombs. In some cases, an ancient tomb is connected to a monastic church, either because of a local tradition identifying the tomb as that of some venerated figure or for practical reasons»¹⁷⁶

In this cultural and religious horizon, building a tomb dedicated to Moses, in the basilica, which was already an important place of Christian pilgrimage, should therefore not be understood as an isolated case.

1.2.2 The phase of partial rebuilding with the addition of the *cella trichora* (late 5th – early 6th cent. A.D.)

This phase could correspond with the restoration of the internal mosaic pavement shown by fragments SU31, SU35 and SU36, in relation with one another because they were found at the same level (–19). The presence of two tubs for washing SU40 and SU41, at different levels, would be a further clue of the new mosaic. The reason that probably led to restoring the pavement had to be connected with the replacement of the presumed pilasters with columns resting on independent foundations. Evidence of this are the small mosaic fragment SU31 which rests on the base of the column and the pottery found there. At the same level (–19) there is also the isolated mosaic fragment in the centre of the nave¹⁷⁷ (Fig. 70). The greatest modification of this phase consists of building a *cella trichora* at the eastern end of the previous complex. The three funerary rooms to the east were sealed up by obtaining a portion of nave with the addition of four columns. The slight divergence of axis of the three apses with respect to the basilica and the masonry of the cell resting on the perimeter walls of the three earlier rooms¹⁷⁸ are clear signs of subsequent building. The cell, with a square external perimeter and three internal apses, was formed as the *bema* of the basilica, keeping a funerary function expressed by the three-apse architecture, fairly common in the Egyptian regional context¹⁷⁹. The layers SU6, SU5, SU4 and SU3, under the *synthronon*, returned pottery sherds (Pls. 3–8) and coins¹⁸⁰ which allow dating the edification of the apse steps to the building of the three apses. The pottery (Pl. 16) and the coins found in the layers of the central tombs of the presbytery are of the

tomb. Bitton-Ashkelony – Kofsky 2006b, 62–81, in particular note 57 for the traditions on the death of Moses and also Tromp 1993, 115–123. See also Manns 1998, 65–69.

¹⁷³ Bitton-Ashkelony – Kofsky 2006b, 64–65. See also Satran 1995, 97–105.

¹⁷⁴ Di Segni 2006–2007, 381–401.

¹⁷⁵ I wish to thank Z. T. FIEMA for the useful indications and for providing me with the text of his works. See Fiema 2012, 27–38.

¹⁷⁶ Fiema 2012, 32.

¹⁷⁷ Fragment of mosaic pavement with white tesserae with a decorative band in black tesserae already identified by S. SALLER and then by M. PICCIRILLO. See in detail Saller 1941, 223–224; Piccirillo 1976, 293; Alliata – Bianchi 1998, 189 no. 82.

¹⁷⁸ This element was noticed during the latest excavations in correspondence with the foundation near SU15; the discovery confirms what was already supposed in the studies of E. ALLIATA and S. BIANCHI, see in detail Alliata – Bianchi 1998, 153.

¹⁷⁹ In this regard see at least Grossmann 1999, 216–236 and the more recent Grossmann 2007, 103–136.

¹⁸⁰ See coins nos. 4. 15. 16. 17. 18 in the numismatic note.

same chronological horizon, late 5th – early 6th cent. A.D.¹⁸¹, like other coins found under the preparation of the mosaic during the previous excavations¹⁸²; these elements ascribed to the same phase both the burial in the centre of the *cella trichora*¹⁸³, and that which cuts the wall in bossage¹⁸⁴. The mosaic pavement of the *cella trichora*, found *in situ*¹⁸⁵, the dating of which on an iconographic basis¹⁸⁶ is prior to the Justinian flourishing of the mosaic school of Madaba, seals the tomb structures and rests on the first row of steps for the clergy to sit on (Fig. 81).

1.2.3 The phase of rebuilding the basilica (late 6th cent. A.D.)

In the third phase the basilica was completely rebuilt, now with a new *diakonikon* north of the central nave¹⁸⁷ and two other rectangular rooms in the southern area¹⁸⁸ (Fig. 82). Chronologically the restoration in the nave can be ascribed to the end of the 6th cent. A.D., – i.e. after the building of the northern baptistery (dated to A.D. 530) but before the southern one (A.D. 597)¹⁸⁹ – as shown by the pottery found in SU19, under the preparation of the mosaic of the wild beast¹⁹⁰ (Pl. 17).

The restoration covered the rebuilding of the walls of the nave, with accesses to the new northern and southern areas, and the rebuilding of the *cella trichora*. The heterogeneity of the stones in the consistency of the walls, including in depth, in the foundation of the apse and layer SU7, which cuts vertically through all the previous layers are therefore the sign of its total reconstruction. The pottery found in this layer dates to the middle of the 6th cent. A.D. (Pls. 9–10). The steps of the clergy were spared from this renovation.

Lastly, the edification of the southern baptistery occurred under the patronage of the Bishop Sergius of Madaba and of the presbyter and hegumen Martyrius in A.D. 597¹⁹¹ and of the Theotokos chapel by Bishop Leontius of Madaba and the presbyters and hegumens Martyrius and Theorodus in A.D. 604–608¹⁹².

¹⁸¹ See coin no. 13 in the numismatic note.

¹⁸² Gitler 1998, 555–556 nos. 3. 5. 9. 35. 36. 48. 53.

¹⁸³ Tomb no. 70 placed in the centre of the *cella trichora*, found already violated during the excavations by S. SALLER, was again investigated during the latest archaeological investigations. See Saller 1941, 36; Alliata – Bianchi 1998, 189 no. 70.

¹⁸⁴ Tomb placed south-east of the previous burial place near the balustrade of the *cella trichora*. During the 1993 excavation, coins from the 4th and 5th centuries were found, including two minted in the time of the Emperor Arcadius (A.D. 395–408). Alliata – Bianchi 1998, 189 no. 71.

¹⁸⁵ Polychromatic mosaic pavement plan with a quadrilobate shape including geometric and figurative motifs. One of the descriptions in the mosaic mentions the name of the presbyter Alex(ios) which also appears in the mosaic found under the subsequent southern baptistery. From the excavation under the mosaic come 4th and 5th cent. coins of which those with the most recent date belong to the first phase of the reign of the Emperor Theodosius II (A.D. 402–408), see Alliata – Bianchi 1998, 186 no. 34.

¹⁸⁶ For the detailed iconographic study, see Piccirillo 1998c, 270–273.

¹⁸⁷ During these works, the funerary chapel and the previous baptistery were closed and the pavement level of the new room raised to the same level as that of the nave. The new chapel was divided into two parts separated by steps with a balustrade. The western part was decorated with a geometric motif closed in a braid in which a flower and a leaf alternate; the eastern one with lobate squares decorated with geometric motifs, bunches of grapes, birds and fish. For a more analytical interpretation of the part, see Alliata – Bianchi 1998, 168–171.

¹⁸⁸ Wall structure with an east-west trend made up of medium-sized blocks of *nary* stone, regularly squared off. It was used as a southern perimeter of the complex, see Alliata – Bianchi 1998, 174. 182 no. 1/1.

¹⁸⁹ Alliata – Bianchi 1998, 176.

¹⁹⁰ Saller 1941, 50. 219; Corbo 1970, 281–283 fig. 5; Alliata – Bianchi 1998, 189 no. 78.

¹⁹¹ The original funerary chapel was destroyed and replaced by a new room with a mosaic which, recovered, left its place in turn for the new baptistery. The quadrilobate font was placed in the splay of the apse divided from the hall of the chapel by a balustrade. Access to the chapel was originally allowed through a second door on the north wall and a third opening in the western wall. More in detail, see Alliata – Bianchi 1998, 176–177.

¹⁹² In the first decade of the 7th cent., the western door of the baptistery was walled up and three rooms of the monastery were destroyed; furthermore, the apsidal chapel was built on the area brought to the same level as the basilica and divided into two distinct parts by a balustrade. See Alliata – Bianchi 1998, 178–179.

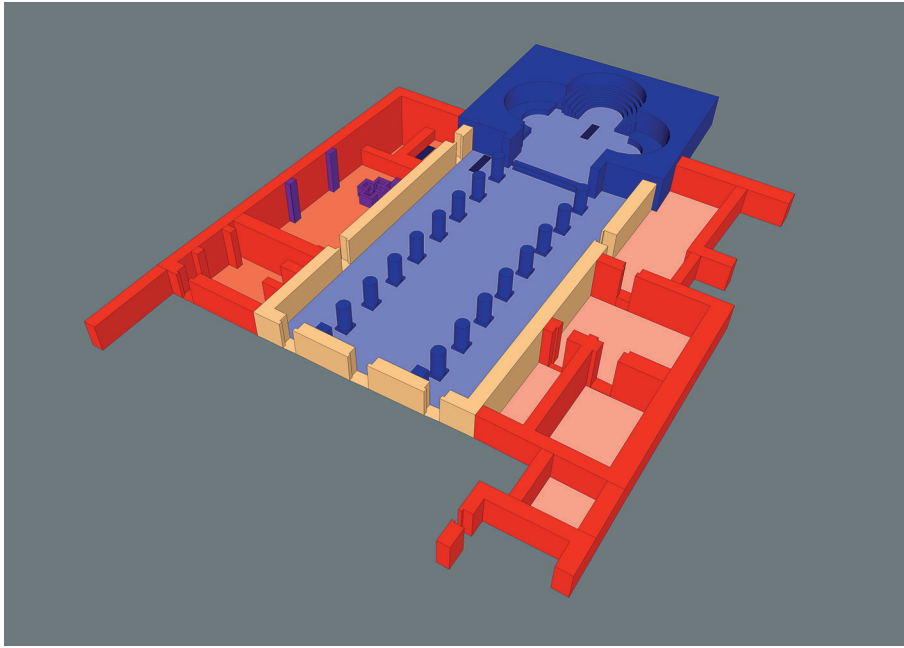


Fig. 81 Memorial of Moses. The phase of partial restoration with the addition of the *cella trichora* (end of 5th – beginning of 6th cent. A.D.) (3D reconstruction by the author).

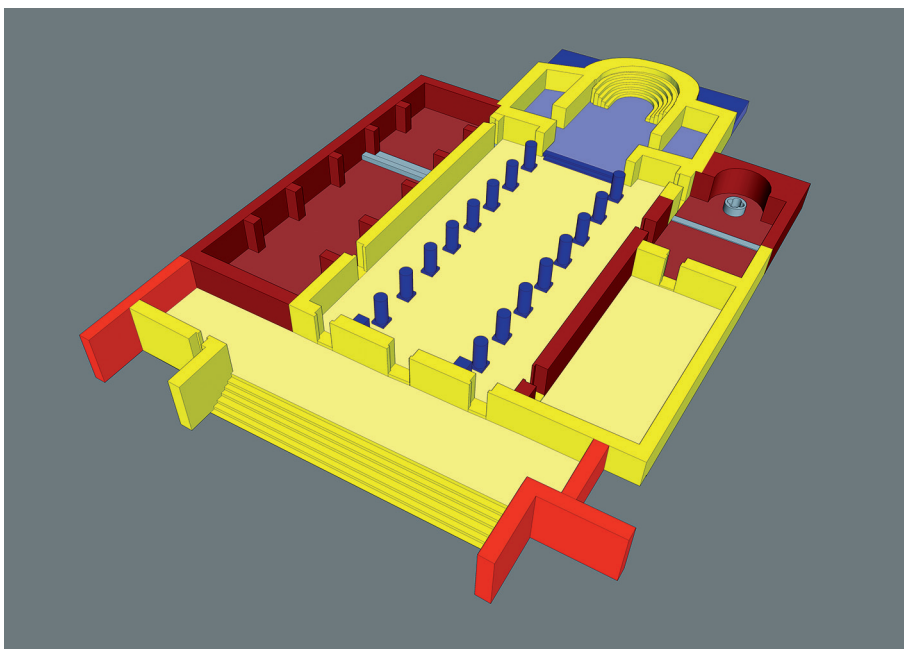


Fig. 82 Memorial of Moses. The phase of rebuilding the Basilica (late 6th cent. A.D.) (3D reconstruction by the author).

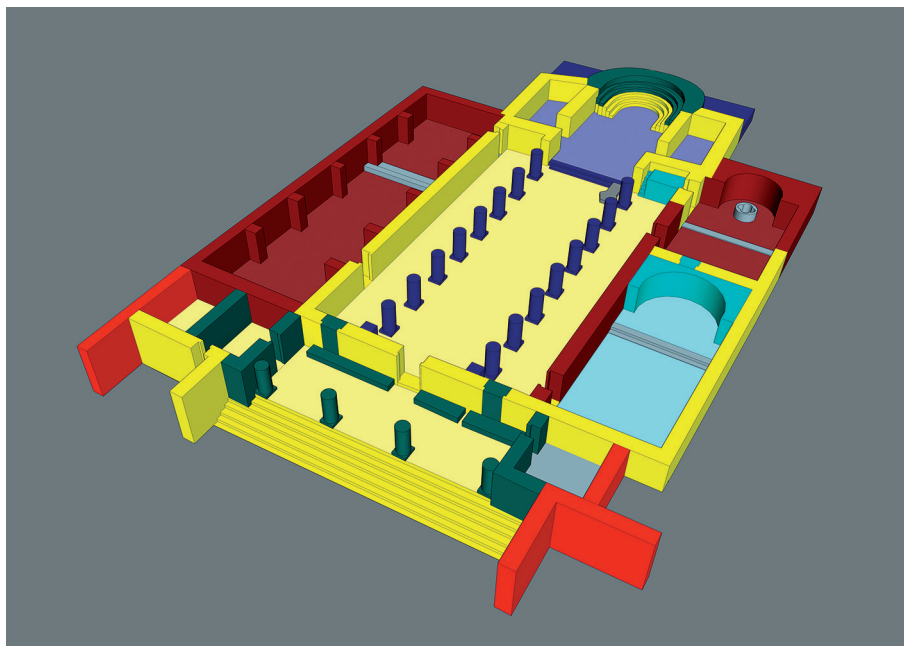


Fig. 83 Memorial of Moses. Umayyad phase with the partial restoration of the *synthronon* (middle of the 8th cent., after the earthquake of A.D. 749) (3D reconstruction by the author).

1.2.4 The Umayyad phase with the partial rebuilding of the *synthronon* (mid-8th cent., after the earthquake in A.D. 749)

The rebuilding of the last two rows of the *synthronon* and of the apse masonry from the corresponding level is attributed to the last phase. The large pottery sherds, the pieces of the marble *pluteum* and the base of the column found in layer SU2 (Figs. 21, 27–29; Pls. 1–2) as well as the disorderly arrangement of the stones near the apse in SU9 (Figs. 36–37) are the sign of rebuilding following destruction caused by a catastrophic event, probably to be traced back to the well-known earthquake which affected these areas in A.D. 749 (Fig. 83)¹⁹³. The structural static and the vicinity to the slope of the mountain certainly affected the stability of the structure of the apse. The dating proposed sees in this event the *terminus post quem* for the reconstruction of the apse which therefore must have taken place shortly afterwards. The pottery is part of the usual Umayyad production of the first half of the 7th cent., while the later forms of Abbasid context are absent (Pls. 1–2). The coin found in SU2 does not provide certain chronological data, except that it was an Arab mint. The closure of the door of access to the two lateral naves, perhaps to limit access to the sacred place by possible invaders, can also be ascribed to this phase.

¹⁹³ For a recent re-examination of the dating of the earthquake, see Tsafirir 2014, 111–120.

1.3 STRATIGRAPHIC REPERTOIRE OF THE EXCAVATION AREAS

The list of the stratigraphic units identified during the excavation is presented here in a table, which acts as a point of reference in the study of the material found, especially pottery and coins.

Area 1: survey under the <i>synthronon</i> and in the apse of the <i>cella trichora</i>	
SU1	<i>Synthronon</i> . Superficial modern soils
SU2	<i>Synthronon</i> . Layer comprised between the second row and the base of <i>neby musa</i> column
SU3	<i>Synthronon</i> . Layer comprised between the <i>neby musa</i> column to the pavement level on which the first row of seats rests
SU4	<i>Synthronon</i> . Compact yellow layer on which the foundation of the <i>synthronon</i> rests up to the “black-soil layer”
SU5	<i>Synthronon</i> . Strongly anthropized layer already identified by V. CORBO who defined it a “black-soil layer”. Comprised between the two yellow layers
SU6	<i>Synthronon</i> . Yellow layer comprised between the “black-soil layer” and the rocky level of the mountain
SU7	<i>Synthronon</i> . Cut of foundation of the apse
SU8	North-east corner block. Series of blocks of rock placed in correspondence with the external perimeter
SU9	North-eastern corner block. Indistinct agglomerate of stones in correspondence with the apse

Area 2: survey of “unexcavated soil” west of tomb no. 70	
SU10	Superficial layer collected during the phases of initial cleaning with ancient material
SU11	Covering layer near the masonry of the tomb
SU13	Limestone layer
SU14	From the ground level in limestone to the rock of the mountain

Area 3: survey in the area of access to the <i>cella trichora</i> and to the three tombs (nos. 72–74)	
SU15	Fragment of the white mosaic reported by V. CORBO under the steps of the presbytery
SU16	Soft black layer in the southern portion of the assay between the wall in bossage and the steps of the presbytery. Comprised between the tuff rock and the subsequent modern filling
SU17	Layer in the northern portion of the assay between the wall in bossage and the steps of the presbytery. Comprised between the tuff rock and the subsequent modern filling
SU18	Mosaic fragment in the corner between the wall in bossage and the masonry of the <i>cella trichora</i>
SU19	Layer under the ambo comprised between the level of the mosaic of the wild beast and the rock of the mountain
SU20	Southern layer of the assay under the ambo
SU21	Assay under the three tombs and the western wall, layer comprised between the cement pavement and the rock
SU22	Mosaic fragment which faces the tomb no. 71 in correspondence with the steps of access to the presbytery

Area 4: survey in the central nave and in the northern intercolumns	
SU23	Central nave, fine preparatory layer of the mosaic of the central nave comprised between the tuff level of the mountain and the modern cement covering
SU24	Central nave. Tomb along the axis
SU25	Central nave. Layer of dark soil in the south-western corner of the burial place
SU26	Third intercolumn starting from the presbytery. Layer comprised between the modern cement and the tuff rock/filling foundation third column
SU27	Fourth intercolumn starting from the presbytery. Layer comprised between the modern cement and the tuff rock/filling foundation fourth column
SU28	Fifth intercolumn starting from the presbytery. Layer comprised between the modern cement and the tuff rock/filling foundation fifth column
SU29	Sixth intercolumn starting from the presbyter. Layer comprised between the modern cement and the tuff rock/filling foundation sixth foundation sixth column

Area 5: survey in the area of the façade of the basilica	
SU30	Fragment of mosaic in correspondence with the threshold of access of the southern nave at level
SU31	Row of white tesserae in correspondence with the eighth southern column of the nave
SU32	Threshold of the door of access to the southern nave
SU33	Foundation of the south door comprised between the threshold and the rock
SU34	Threshold of the door of access to the north nave
SU35	Probable restoration of the mosaic with small white tesserae in correspondence with the north door at level -19
SU36	Mosaic fragment with large white tesserae arranged near the north door at level -19
SU37	Mosaic fragment with white tesserae with diagonal pattern of the north door at level -22
SU38	Threshold of the central door
SU39	Mosaic fragment with white tesserae at level -24
SU40	Mosaic tub at level -48
SU41	Mosaic tub at level -36

1.4 NUMISMATIC NOTE

The study of the coins found during the excavation was carried out by B. CALLEGHER. Here the synthetic data related to the dating of the coins are presented (Pls. 45–46). For further information, see his article¹⁹⁴.

SU2 – <i>Synthronon</i>	
no. 24	Undetermined authority – Umayyad or Abbasid period (8 th –13 th cent.)

SU3 – <i>Synthronon</i>	
no. 3	Valentinian II (A.D. 388–392)
no. 9	Undetermined mint
no. 14	Undetermined authority (4 th –5 th cent. A.D.)

SU4 – <i>Synthronon</i>	
no. 4	Valentinian II (A.D. 388–392)

SU5 – <i>Synthronon</i>	
no. 15	Undetermined authority (4 th –5 th cent. A.D.)
no. 16	Undetermined authority (4 th –5 th cent. A.D.)
no. 17	Undetermined authority (4 th –5 th cent. A.D.)
no. 18	Undetermined authority (4 th –5 th cent. A.D.)

SU7 – <i>Synthronon</i>	
no. 12	Undetermined authority. Imitation of the “ <i>salus reipublicae</i> ” type (end 4 th – beginning 5 th cent. A.D.)
no. 19	Undetermined authority (4 th –5 th cent. A.D.)
no. 20	Undetermined authority (4 th –5 th cent. A.D.)
no. 21	Undetermined authority (4 th –5 th cent. A.D.)

SU8 – <i>Trichora</i> , north-east corner blockage	
no. 2	Aelia Flacilla under Theodosius I (A.D. 383–388)
no. 23	Undetermined authority (A.D. 4 th –5 th cent.)

SU14 – Survey to the west of tomb no. 70 (in the centre of the presbytery)	
no. 13	Undetermined authority (4 th –5 th cent. A.D.)

SU16 – Survey of foundation of presbytery step	
no. 8	Theodosius II, Valentinian III (A.D. 425–435)

SU19 – Survey under the base of the ambo	
no. 11	Undetermined authority. Imitation type “cross” without legend (second half of 5 th cent. A.D.)

¹⁹⁴ The numbers refer to the article by B. CALLEGHER (Callegher 2020, 71–80).

SU21 – Survey under the three tombs and the western wall	
no. 5	Valentinianus II, Theodosius I, Arcadius, Honorius, Johannes (A.D. 383–425)
no. 22	Undetermined authority (4 th –5 th cent. A.D.)

SU23 – Survey of central nave, in the preparation of the mosaic	
no. 1	Iulianus Caesar under Constantius II (A.D. 355–361)
no. 6	Undetermined mint and authority. Type: <i>salus reipublicae</i> .2 (4 th –5 th cent. A.D.)
no. 7	Arcadius, Honorius, Theodosius II (A.D. 406–408)
no. 10	Undetermined authority: Theodosius II? (A.D. 408–423)



Fig. 84 Memorial of Moses. Inscribed marble fragments found in the excavation of the *synthronon*.

1.5 INSCRIPTIONS

The excavation of the *synthronon* provided two further marble fragments¹⁹⁵ with inscriptions of Greek capital letters which allow the completion of an already-published inscription¹⁹⁶. The piece TS-12-II-29 joined with another identified in S. SALLER's excavation¹⁹⁷ completes the *Mi* and adds two other letters which suggest reading the term Μάξι[ιμου] (Fig. 84; Pl. 13, no.7). The inscription on fragment TS-12-II-28 has the three letters ουδ (Pl. 13, no.7). A new interpretation is thus proposed¹⁹⁸:

+ Προσφο[ρὰ ---] ου πρε[σβ](υτέρου) καὶ Μάξι[ιμου] --- [σπ]ουδ[ῆ]? ---

+ Offer by ... priest and by Maximus ...

The epigraphic contribution found thus consists of the addition of the proper name of the second dedicant of the marble *pluteum*. The recurrences of the name Μάξιμος, transliteration of the Latin surname *Maximus*¹⁹⁹, are fairly common in the three provinces of *Palaestina* and *Arabia*, in particular in the Hawran²⁰⁰. Specifically for the Transjordan area, the spread of the name in Rihab²⁰¹, in the mosaic pavement of the church of St Cyrus in El-Quweisme (south-east of Amman)²⁰² and in the region around Mount Nebo in the mosaic inscription in the third northern intercolumn of the church of 'Uyun Musa dated to the 4th cent. A.D. should be mentioned²⁰³.

A prudent interpretation of the last term is also offered which could coincide with the Greek term σπουδῆ due to its fairly common recurrence in the dedicatory inscriptions in the region²⁰⁴. The lack of other fragments does not allow a more exhaustive reading.

¹⁹⁵ For the analytic description of the pieces, see below in the catalogue 91.

¹⁹⁶ The epigraphic reading of the inscription appears in Saller 1941, 268–269; Gatier 1986, 96 no. 85, pl. XIX, 69; Di Segni 1998, 435 no. 17; Acconci 1998, 525–527 no. 150.

¹⁹⁷ Saller 1941, 289–290 no. XVI.

¹⁹⁸ The first part of the inscription agrees with what L. DI SEGNI argues, but the finding of the new fragments allows the terms μοναχοῦ and μονάζοντος to be excluded. See Di Segni 1998, 435 no. 17.

¹⁹⁹ For an in-depth study, see Kajano 1965, 30. 71–72.

²⁰⁰ For a pertinent bibliography, see Sartre 1985, 214–215; Sartre-Fauriat 2001 vol. I, 90–92 nos. 1–2; 96–97 no. 1; 249–250 no. 5; Di Segni 1997, 206. 259 no. 19; Meimaris – Kritikakou-Nikolaropolou 2005, 145–146 no. 51 with an extensive bibliography.

²⁰¹ Gatier 1998, 399–400 no. 105; 403 no. 118; 404, no. 123.

²⁰² Gatier 1986, no. 54c; Piccirillo 1984b, 329–340; Meimaris 1986, 149 no. 771; 192 no. 958.

²⁰³ Piccirillo 1984a, 309–310 no. 1; pl. 24,5; Piccirillo 1988, 199 fig. 1; SEG 34 1984, no. 1510, Gatier 1986, 100 no. 96; Piccirillo 1989a, 210 no. 6; Di Segni 1998, 456 no. 67.

²⁰⁴ In particular, for the occurrences in the region of Madaba, see Piccirillo 1989a 47. 74. 106. 156. 164. 192. 214. 245. 280. 292. 310.

1.6 CATALOGUE OF FINDS

The catalogue brings together the list of archaeological finds from the excavations. The objects are divided into different groups depending on the different areas of excavation studied. For each layer, first the pottery finds are presented in order, starting with the closed shapes, then the open shapes, and lastly the special shapes. The examination of the pottery fragments concerned the visual inspection relative to the macroscopic data of the fabrics and the morphology of the vessels without using an archeometric study which is referred to elsewhere. The terminology of classification, coherently with the previous publications on Mount Nebo, has followed the model used by E. ALLIATA and C. PAPPALARDO which shows the fabric, the colour of the fragment, and any decoration. These are followed by the lithic, metallic and vitreous materials. The abbreviation is made up of the abbreviation of the area, the year of excavation, the number of the layer and that of the find. Each individual stratigraphic unit is accompanied by a short reference, on its origin and composition, and by the reference to the relative graphic plates at the end of the volume. The progressive number which precedes the abbreviation of each find corresponds to its figure in the plates of drawings.

1.6.1 Area 1: survey under the *synthronon* and in the apse of the *cella trichora* (TS-12)

SYNTHRONON (TS-12)

SU2 Origin: memorial of Moses; presbyter: TS II soil "above the column" (Pls. 1–2)

The context of this group of objects, including pottery, marble, glass, wood and many tesserae of mosaic is that of a work of restoration which entailed the rebuilding of the steps of the *synthronon* and probably also of the apse masonry starting from the corresponding level. Umayyad painted pottery is attested only in this layer and can be dated with certainty to the middle of the 8th cent. A.D.²⁰⁵. Chronologically, it is possible to situate this phase shortly after the earthquake of A.D. 749. The only coin found is a round piece of copper cut into an octagonal shape, in a poor state of preservation, which can be generically dated to the first Islamic period²⁰⁶.

1. TS-12-II-05. Amphora. Fine fabric; colour: grey; medium firing. Decoration: beige slip on the outer surface.
2. TS-12-II-11. Amphora. Fine mix fabric; colour: grey; strong firing.
3. TS-12-II-03. Amphora wall. Fine fabric; colour: red; beige slip; strong firing. Decoration: comb-like incisions.
4. TS-12-II-06. Pot. Fine fabric; colour: pink; external red slip; medium firing.
5. TS-12-II-08. Jug. Fine fabric; colour: grey; light grey slip; strong firing.
6. TS-12-II-09. Bottom of oil lamp, with double ring base. Fine fabric; colour: pink; strong firing.
7. TS-12-II-01. Plate. Fairly fine fabric; Diam. 28 cm; colour: red; medium firing. Decoration: polished inside.
8. TS-12-II-16. Amphora wall. Fine fabric; colour: pink; external beige slip; medium firing. Decoration: dark red paint with circular patterns.
9. TS-12-II-17. Amphora wall. Fine fabric; colour: pink; beige slip; medium firing. Decoration: painted lines which cross one another and concentric circles in scarlet red. The upper breakage appears to have been done deliberately (not caused by normal breakage), perhaps to use the amphora as an open vessel.
10. TS-12-II-12. Amphora wall. Fine fabric; colour: pink; external beige slip; medium firing. Decoration: red paint.

²⁰⁵ Schneider 1950, figs. 2, 2, 2, 4 for Mount Nebo, but not following the author in the dating; Arndt 2004, fig. 3; McNicoll *et al.* 1982, pl. 143, 1, for Pella; Alliata 1991, fig. 15, 1 for Umm er-Rasas; Daviau – Beckmann 2001, 262, for the state of the question.

²⁰⁶ See coin no. 22 in the numismatic note.

11. TS-12-II-14. Amphora wall. Fine fabric; colour: grey; beige slip; strong firing. Decoration: dark red painting of bands.
12. TS-12-II-15. Amphora wall. Fine fabric; colour: pink; external beige slip; medium firing. Decoration: scarlet red painted lines that cross one another.
13. TS-12-II-22. Pot. Granular fabric; colour: red; external grey slip; medium firing. Abundant traces of fire. The vase has been graphically and completely reconstructed starting from three pieces that did not correspond with one another but which partially overlapped. Another complete specimen was found, also in an Umayyad context, in the excavation of the eastern sector of the monastery (Alliata 1990, no. 30).

SU3 Origin: Memorial of Moses; presbytery: TS III “soil under the column” (Pl. 3)

The point of reference for the change of layer refers to the position of a small “column”, or fragment of it, placed at the level of the first step of the *synthronon*, with which the material of the Umayyad era ended and that of the Byzantine period started. In particular, the frequent presence of parts of pottery torch, recognizable in the foot for the less careful working of the inner part and in the upper receptacle due to the presence of traces of internal burning, begins to be apparent. These elements, when present, are used to distinguish that form from other similar ones like bowls and jugs. Chronologically, the material refers to the period when the *synthronon* was built, probably at the beginning of the 6th cent. The latest of the three coins found is dated between A.D. 425 and 435²⁰⁷.

1. TS-12-III-05. Vase. Large but with fairly fine walls. Very fine fabric; colour: pink, red externally; medium firing. Decoration: a marked line near the rim. Appearance similar to sealed earth.
2. TS-12-III-14. Bowl. Fine fabric; colour: pink, black in cross-section; strong firing. Traces of burns.
3. TS-12-III-01. Bowl. Granular fabric; colour: pink, grey in cross-section; strong firing.
4. TS-12-III-19. Basin. Fine fabric; colour: pink, grey in cross-section; strong firing.
5. TS-12-III-10. Torch foot. Fine fabric; colour: pink; strong firing.
6. TS-12-III-06. Torch foot. Fine fabric; colour: pink; external red-violet slip; strong firing.
7. TS-12-III-09. Plate. Fine fabric; colour: pink, red externally; strong firing.
8. TS-12-III-13. Base of oil lamp. Fine fabric; colour: grey; strong firing.

SU4 Origin: Memorial of Moses; presbytery: TS IV yellow soil - first layer (Pl. 4)

Yellow soil on which the foundation of the *synthronon* rests. The pottery collected includes a prevalence of cups and a small fragment of one oil lamp decorated with a fabric of various designs on the shoulders. The chronological horizon is the same as the upper layer. The only coin collected, of Valentinian II (A.D. 383–392), would seem to be found out of context²⁰⁸.

1. TS-12-IV-15. Portion of rim of a small jug. Very fine fabric; colour: red; medium firing. Working of the pottery very similar to the Nabataean one.
2. TS-12-IV-23. Small portion of rim of a jug with spout. Fine fabric; colour: pink; violet-red slip; medium firing²⁰⁹.
3. TS-12-IV-02. Pot. Fine fabric; colour: pink; medium firing.
4. TS-12-IV-21. Globular cup (?). Fine fabric; colour: red; external white slip; medium firing.
5. TS-12-IV-10. Cup. Fine fabric; colour: pink; medium firing. Red painting inside.
6. TS-12-IV-16. Cup. Fine fabric; colour: pink; medium firing.
7. TS-12-IV-03. Cup. Fine fabric; colour: pink, grey in cross-section; strong firing.

²⁰⁷ See coins nos. 2, 8, 13 in the numismatic note.

²⁰⁸ See coin no. 3 in the numismatic note.

²⁰⁹ Alliata 1988, figs. 11, 6, 12, 4. Fabric, slip and shape characteristic of the pottery found in the levels under the mosaics of the 6th cent. A.D.

8. TS-12-IV-01. Cup. Granular fabric; colour: pink; strong firing.
9. TS-12-IV-13. Torch. Fine fabric; colour: beige; medium firing. Abundant traces of burning inside and on the rim.
10. Clay censer. Fine fabric; colour: pink; strong firing. Remainder of decorative incision in the upper part and presence of a hole in the lower part. Traces of burning inside.
11. TS-12-IV-17. Oil lamp. Fine fabric; colour: beige; medium firing. Decoration: various small marks (crosses, circles, palms) arranged slightly casually. Here, as in the other layers, it can be deemed prior to the second half of the 6th cent. (TS-12-VII no. 24; TI-13 no. 8)²¹⁰.

SU5 Origin: Memorial of Moses; presbytery: TS V black-soil layer (Pls. 5–7)

This black-soil layer corresponds to the one already identified by V. CORBO and of which the pottery was presented by B. BAGATTI²¹¹. However, in the light of the new excavations, the dating of the finds of the layer (together with those already published) can be situated between the end of the 5th and the beginning of the 6th cent. A.D. The various coins found do not offer any indication except the vague one of belonging to the 4th–5th centuries²¹².

1. TS-12-V-92. Dolium wall. Very fine fabric; colour: red; light-coloured slip; strong firing. Decoration: remains of pinkish paint and the two Greek letters “EX”.
2. TS-12-V-40. Clay bath with a fairly large diameter (about 100 cm). Fine fabric; colour: pink, grey in cross-section; external beige slip; medium firing. Decoration: series of three deep undulated horizontal incisions just under the rim. The inner wall has numerous residues of limestone. A second fragment (TS-12-VII-64) is joined with the first one.
3. TS-12-V-79. Amphora. Fine fabric; colour: pink, grey in cross-section; strong firing.
4. TS-12-V-02. Amphora. Fine fabric; colour: grey; external lighter grey slip; strong firing.
5. TS-12-V-38. Small jug (?). Very fine fabric; colour: pink; external red slip; medium firing.
6. TS-12-V-13. Pot. Very fine fabric; colour: beige; external black slip; medium firing.
7. TS-12-V-17. Pot. Fine fabric; colour: beige; external red slip; medium firing.
8. TS-12-V-85. Pot. Very fine fabric; colour: beige; external, brown slip; medium firing.
9. TS-12-V-61. Pan. Fine fabric; colour: pink; external violet-red slip; medium firing. Horizontal “bent” handle.
10. TS-12-V-60. Pan. Fine fabric; colour: beige; external red slip; medium firing.
11. TS-12-V-18. Lid. Fine fabric; colour: pink; external red slip; medium firing. Various other fragments (TS-12-V-82 and TS-12-V-76) belong to the same lid, allowing its complete graphic reconstruction.
12. TS-12-V-27. Plate. Very fine fabric; colour: red; strong firing.
13. TS-12-V-74. Plate. Very fine fabric; colour: red; strong firing.
14. TS-12-V-05. Cup. Granular fabric; colour: grey; external beige slip that detaches easily; strong firing.
15. TS-12-V-80. Cup. Fine fabric; colour: pink; external beige slip; strong firing.
16. TS-12-V-28. Cup. Fine fabric; colour: red; medium firing. Decoration: internal and external blacking slip near rim.
17. TS-12-V-46. Cup. Very fine fabric; colour: pink; internal red slip; medium firing.
18. TS-12-V-32. Cup. Fine fabric; colour: pink; strong firing. Decoration: external and internal black slip near the rim.
19. TS-12-V-29. Cup. Fine fabric; colour: grey; external beige slip; strong firing.
20. TS-12-V-70. Base of plate. Fine fabric; colour: red; strong firing. Decoration: there is a rosette print on the base²¹³.
21. TS-12-V-19. Cup. Very fine fabric; colour: grey; strong firing.

²¹⁰ As at Khirbet el-Mukhayyat, see Alliata 1988, 359.

²¹¹ Corbo 1970, 276; Bagatti 1985, 252–253, fig. 1.

²¹² See coins nos. 14. 15. 16. 17 in the numismatic note.

²¹³ Bagatti 1985, fig. 1, 4.

22. TS-12-V-87. Torch. Fine fabric; colour: brown, grey in cross-section; medium firing. The internal surface shows countless signs of blackening. There are, as in SU7, (nos. 18–21), also a considerable number of fragments of torch recognizable by the extensive traces of burning on the inner wall of the vase. The fragments belong more often to the part of the vase corresponding to the rim, but also to the shaft foot. A complete specimen was found at Mount Nebo in the 1970s²¹⁴. Open vases specifically interpreted as a torch were also identified in Capernaum, which S. LOFFREDA classifies according to their shape “like a lid” or “like a pan”²¹⁵. Those of Mount Nebo fall under the “cup” and “bowl” type²¹⁶.
23. TS-12-V-12. Central part of torch. Fine fabric; colour: grey; strong firing. Signs of blackening due to fire both externally and internally.
24. TS-12-V-47. Small part of the shaft of a torch. Fine fabric; colour: pink, grey in cross-section; strong firing. Several other fragments from the same part of the vase have been collected but, not joining the receptacle at the top or the foot at the bottom, or with one another, and not having particular connotations, they are not shown here. This piece has a series of horizontal ring incisions and has some traces of burning externally.
25. TS-12-V-20. Torch. Very fine fabric; colour: pink; light-coloured slip; strong firing. Note the high relief in shaping the walls which appears to be characteristic of most of these vases.
26. TS-12-V-25. Torch. Rather granular fabric; colour: beige; lighter beige external slip; strong firing.

SU6 Origin: Memorial of Moses; presbytery: TS VI yellow soil second layer (Pl. 8)

This layer can be considered as the base layer, prior to any building activity. Only very small fragments of vases were collected in it. The fine thickness of the walls, the light-coloured fabric covered with red or grey slip are attributed to the late Roman period: end of the 4th or beginning of the 5th centuries. The only exception is a large shard from the Iron Age.

1. TS-12-VI-2. Pot. Fine fabric; colour: pink, red exterior; medium firing.
2. TS-12-VI-6. Pot. Fine fabric; colour: pink, beige in cross-section; medium firing.
3. TS-12-VI-13. Pan. Very fine fabric; colour: beige; external grey slip; medium firing. Horizontal “bent” handle.
4. TS-12-VI-3. Basin. Very fine fabric; colour: beige, grey-violet internally; strong firing.
5. TS-12-VI-9. Basin. Fine fabric; colour: beige; external red slip; medium firing.
6. TS-12-VI-11. Cup. Slightly granular fabric; colour: pink, grey in cross-section; strong firing.
7. TS-12-VI-8. Cup. Fine fabric; Diam. 9.8 cm. colour: grey; strong firing.
8. TS-12-VI-1. Amphora wall (?). Fine fabric, colour: pink, medium firing. Decoration on the outer side done with a comb, with horizontal and undulating lines.
9. TS-12-VI-5. Base of jug. Fine fabric; colour: beige, grey externally; medium firing.
10. TS-12-VI-15. Base of krater (?). Granular fabric; colour: pink; black in cross-section; medium firing. Rare fragment (for Siyagha) of the Iron Age²¹⁷.

SU7 Origin: Memorial of Moses; presbytery: TS VII trench cut of apse foundation (Pls. 9–10)

This set contains a certain vagueness as the filling soil of the foundation trench of the apse consists to a great extent of the soil of the layers which were cut. Umayyad pottery is absent. The layers cut contain Byzantine pottery and presumably belong to the first construction of the *cella trichora*.

1. TS-12-VII-06. Amphora. Fine fabric; colour: pink, grey in cross-section; strong firing.
2. TS-12-VII-10. Amphora wall. Fine fabric; colour: red; external black slip; very strong firing. Decoration: white painted horizontal line.

²¹⁴ Bagatti 1985, fig. 9, 4; photo 4.

²¹⁵ Loffreda 2008, types Luc 11–12, 82–83.

²¹⁶ Alliata 1988, fig. 8, 36.

²¹⁷ Amiran 1970, pl. 64, 24 (krater) or 84, 3 (jug).

3. TS-12-VII-07. Amphora wall. Fine fabric; colour: red; with nuances towards grey; very strong firing. Decoration: two comb undulated incisions which partially overlap.
4. TS-12-VII-24. Pot. Fine fabric; colour: pink; external grey-violet slip; medium firing.
5. TS-12-VII-03. Lid handle (knob) Fine fabric; colour: pink; medium firing.
6. TS-12-VII-01. Cup. Rather granular fabric; colour: red, grey in cross-section; beige near the rim; strong firing.
7. TS-12-VII-39. Cup. Granular fabric; colour: beige; medium firing.
8. TS-12-VII-44. Jug. Granular fabric; colour: grey; strong firing.
9. TS-12-VII-48. Small jug (?). Fine fabric; colour: red; dark red slip; medium firing.
10. TS-12-VII-69. Large open vase. Granular fabric; Diam. 57 cm. colour: pink; hand worked.
11. TS-12-VII-18. Basin. Granular and porous fabric; Diam. 44 cm. colour: greenish; medium firing.
12. TS-12-VII-20. Plate. Fine fabric; Diam. 40 cm. colour: pink; beige slip on rim; strong firing.
13. TS-12-VII-27. Basin. Fine fabric; Diam. 28 cm. colour: pink; external grey slip; medium firing.
14. TS-12-VII-49. Basin. Fine fabric; colour: red, grey in cross-section; beige slip on rim; very strong firing.
15. TS-12-VII-04. Plate. Rather fine fabric; colour: red, grey in cross-section; beige at rim; strong firing.
16. TS-12-VII-41. Plate. Fine fabric; colour: pink; medium firing.
17. TS-12-VII-73. Cup. Granular fabric; colour: beige, grey in cross-section; strong firing.
18. TS-12-VII-35. Torch. Fine fabric; colour: pink; medium firing. With abundant signs of burning.
19. TS-12-VII-33. Fragment decorated with palm of a torch. Fine fabric; colour: beige; medium firing. Traces of burning inside.
20. TS-12-VII-31. Torch. Fine fabric; colour: beige; medium firing. Traces of burning inside. It is joined with another fragment (TS-12-VII-57).
21. TS-12-VII-42. Torch. Fine fabric; colour: beige; medium firing. Abundant traces of burning inside.
22. TS-12-VII-54. Torch. Fine fabric; colour: beige; medium firing. Abundant traces of use.
23. TS-12-VII-67. Bottom of torch. Fine fabric; colour: pink, grey in cross-section; strong firing.
24. TS-12-VII-71. Oil lamp. Fine fabric; colour: red; medium firing. Decoration: printed with a series of curls towards the rim and a herring-bone band towards the outside.
25. TS-12-VII-70. Oil lamp, part of shoulders or base (?). Fine fabric; colour: pink; medium firing. Decoration: a small circle in relief.

Miscellaneous Materials

Glass vases

(Pl. 11)

1. TS-12-V-96c. Rim of glass vessel. Decoration: with a horizontal line in relief on the outside. Vessel deformed or with an irregular shape.
2. TS-12-VII-82. Handle of glass lamp.
3. TS-12-V-96b. Glass handle.
4. TS-12-VII-82a. Base of glass vessel.
5. TS-12-V-96. Base of glass vessel.
6. TS-12-V-96d. Base of glass vessel. Made up of multiple superimposed lines.

Metals and wood

(Pl. 12)

1. TS-12-II-51. Three iron nails.
2. TE-12-I-8. Two bronze hooks.
3. TS-12-II-47. Bronze chain.
4. TS-12-VII-77 Wood carved in the shape of a half lily.

Marble*(Pl. 13)*

1. TS-12-II-25 Altar table. White marble, very fine, with high-edge moulding²¹⁸.
2. TS-12-II-30 Fragment of *pluteum*. Light grey marble with sculpted decoration on the front face; traces of yellow colour on the rear cut.
3. TS-12-II-33. Fragment of *pluteum*. Veined white marble, with decoration of woven leaves. The fragment joins others of the old excavation²¹⁹. The fragment belongs to the group containing the inscription discussed in no. 7. The finding of known fragments in a well-defined context (Umayyad reconstruction of the *synthronon*, and probably of the apse as well) establishes that the *pluteum* was used in the Byzantine church, but no longer in the one rebuilt in the Umayyad period.
4. TS-12-II-32 *Pluteum*, lateral part. White marble. Yellow colour in the rear cut. Bevelling on the flat side with the aim of helping insert the piece into the corresponding recess in the small pilaster.
5. TS-12-II-40 *Pluteum*, upper part. White veined marble.
6. TS-12-II-27 *Pluteum*. Light grey marble. Traces of yellow in the rear cut. Many other similar pieces were found in the old excavation in places very far apart from one another²²⁰. The positioning of this very decorative element has been proposed as in the ambo of the church²²¹. For the chronology, the same applies as for no. 3.
7. TS-12-II-26, 28, 29 *Pluteum*, upper part. Large grain white marble. Strongly coloured yellow-red in the rear cut. Two show a floral decoration and two have a Greek inscription. The letters appear filled to a good effect with a substance mixed with sparkling gravel or particles²²².
8. TS-12-II-34 *Pluteum*. *Nebi Musa* black stone. Fragment corresponding to others collected in the old excavation of the area of the atrium²²³.
9. TS-12-II-41 Lower part of a column, *Nebi Musa* black stone; A horizontal stripe of red paint is present on the lower scape. The diameter of the column of 22 cm recalls many other marble columns of various kinds found in the first excavation, but none is in *Nebi Musa* stone.

Tiles and bricks*(Pl. 14, nos. 5–9)*

The presence of a certain number of fragments of tiles supposes that at the same time repair work was carried out on the roof of the basilica. One of the specimens, recomposed, appears almost whole, at least in its width. Some other edges offer a wide sample of possibilities for this element.

5. TS-12-II-23. Tile. Fine fabric; colour: pink; strong firing. Series of parallel stripes on the rear deriving from the type of material that formed the mould used.
6. TS-12-II-20. Tile. Fairly fine fabric; colour: pink, beige in the upper part; very strong firing.
7. TS-12-II-18. Tile. Fairly fine fabric; colour: pink; strong firing.
8. TS-12-II-21. Small brick (for column?). Granular fabric; colour: pink, black in cross-section; strong firing. On the use of these small bricks in the basilica for the division of windows S. SALLER spoke widely as many were found, including piled up and plastered, particularly in the northern nave²²⁴.
9. TS-12-II-19. Tile. Fairly granular fabric; colour: pink; strong firing. Piece restored to a great extent from numerous fragments. Almost the complete width is obtained at one point.

²¹⁸ Acconci 1998, nos. 56–58.

²¹⁹ Saller 1941, 268–269. 289–290, pl. 121, 1; Acconci 1998, no. 150.

²²⁰ Saller 1941, 288.

²²¹ Acconci 1998, no. 151.

²²² For the epigraphic considerations, see above 85.

²²³ Saller 1941, 71, pl. 61, 2; Acconci 1998, no. 138.

²²⁴ Saller 1941, 64–65, fig. 12.

CLEANING THE BUTTRESS IN THE NORTH-EAST CORNER OF THE *CELLA TRICHORA***SU9***(Pl. 15)*

Under two levels of modern cement, there appears a massive block of stone in the interstices of which old soil is deposited containing only a small amount of pottery, where the latest is Umayyad.

1. TB-14-5 Amphora. Fine granular fabric; colour: pink, grey in cross-section, white slip on the external and internal surfaces at the rim; strong firing.
2. TB-14-4 Amphora. Fine fabric; colour: pink, external white slip; strong firing.
3. TB-14-8 Amphora wall decorated with dark red paint in the Umayyad style. Very fine fabric; colour: pink, medium firing.
4. TB-14-9 Small amphora. Fine fabric; colour: pink; external white slip; medium firing. The oval-shaped handle, without ribbing, recalls the Umayyad period.
5. TB-14-7 Plate. Granular fabric; colour: pink, strong firing. The flat bottom was not smoothed.

1.6.2. Area 2: survey of “unexcavated soil” west of
the tomb no. 70 (TE-12)

SU10 (material collected on the surface during the phases of initial cleaning)*(Pl. 14, nos. 1–4)*

Before reaching the undisturbed layer, many tiles and bricks were found thrown into the filling with which the previous excavation was closed, to the extent of being able to obtain a fairly complete type made up of four types: roof tiles, tiles, rectangular small bricks and polygonal small bricks which are presented in succession.

1. TE-12-3. Roof tile, with a semi-cylindrical body. Slightly granular fabric; colour: pinkish-light brown; interior greyish, externally there is a pink and grey colouring; medium firing; internally there are traces of white lime.
2. TE-12-2. Flat tile. Fine fabric; colour: reddish-light brown; interior greyish; greyish slip; strong firing.
3. TE-12-4. Small brick. Fine fabric; colour: pinkish, interior greyish, light-coloured slip; medium firing; the object is fractured, numerous residues of lime can be seen.
4. TE-12-1. Two superimposed small bricks and united by rather thick mortar. Fine fabric; colour: pinkish; beige slip; medium firing.

SU11*(Pl. 16, nos. 1–7)*

Near the masonry of the tomb, the soil looked disturbed by the excavation of the tomb and most of the pottery came from this layer, made up of small fragments, all belonging to open shapes, with very fine fabrics and tending to be lighter in colour. These forms certainly belong to some of the oldest Byzantine settlements of Mount Nebo.

1. TE-12-in-3. Pan with bent handle. Fine and homogeneous fabric; colour: light brown, interior greyish; grey slip; strong firing.
2. TE-12-in-11. Basin. Very fine fabric; colour: pinkish; light-coloured slip; medium firing.
3. TE-12-in-7. Basin. Very fine fabric; colour: pinkish; light-coloured slip; medium firing. The fragment is made up of two small pieces.
4. TE-12-in-9. Basin. Fine fabric; colour: pinkish; reddish slip; medium firing.
5. TE-12-in-16. Plate. Very fine fabric; colour: pinkish; medium firing. The fragment is made up of two pieces.
6. TE-12-in-2. Cup. Very fine fabric; colour: pinkish; grey slip; strong firing.

7. TE-12-in-1. Amphora wall. Fine and homogeneous fabric; colour: light brown-yellowish; soft firing; Decoration made up of undulating lines.

SU12 (fine layer up to grey beaten soil) (Pl. 12 no. 2)

2. TE-12-I-8 Bronze hooks.

SU14 (Oldest layer, under the grey beaten soil) (Pl. 16 no. 8)

8. TE-12-II-6 Plate. Very fine fabric; colour: light brown-pinkish; medium firing. The fragment is made up of two pieces; the edge shows a decoration in relief.

1.6.3 Area 3: survey in the area of access to the *cella trichora*
and to the three tombs

SURVEY UNDER THE AMBO

SU19 (TP-13) (Pl. 17)

The base of the pulpit and the “mosaic of the wild beast” underneath hid the entrance to the southernmost tomb of the three in front of the presbytery. Part of the original filling remained *in situ*. Of the pottery, the latest object seems to be the pan TP-13-22 (Pl. 17, no. 11) which is not usually found before the middle of the 6th cent.²²⁵ and which had a final use as a container of chalk, of which ample traces remain. The only coin found belongs to the second half of the 5th cent. A.D.²²⁶.

1. TP-13-19 Amphora. Slightly granular fabric; colour: pinkish, greyish nucleus; strong firing.
2. TP-13-1 Amphora. Fine fabric; colour: reddish, beige slip; strong firing.
3. TP-13-6 Amphora. Fairly granular fabric; colour: reddish-light brown; medium firing. It is a fragment of the rim of the famous amphorae for transport, with a double handle at the rim, already found on Mount Nebo in contexts prior to the Byzantine basilica²²⁷.
4. TP-13-5 Wall of amphora. Fine fabric; colour: pinkish; medium firing; decorated with deep comb lines, alternately horizontal and undulating.
5. TP-13-20 Jug handle. Fine fabric; colour: pinkish; dark brown slip; medium firing.
6. TP-13-3 Small amphora. Slightly granular fabric; colour: light brown; greyish slip; medium firing.
7. TP-13-17 Jug. Slightly granular fabric; colour: brown-greyish; brown slip; medium firing.
8. TP-13-11 Pot. Fine fabric; colour: pinkish; external brown slip, medium firing.
9. TP-13-9 Pot. Very fine fabric; colour: pinkish; brown slip; medium firing.
10. TP-13-15 Lid. Slightly granular fabric; Diam. 24 cm; colour: pinkish; greyish slip; strong firing.
11. TP-13-22 Pan. Granular fabric with quartzite; colour: brown; strong firing.
12. TP-13-18 Cup. Slightly granular fabric; colour: pinkish; strong firing.
13. TP-13-16 Cup. Fine fabric; colour: grey; light brown slip; strong firing. Internally and externally under the rim there are signs of blackening due to fire (torch?).
14. TP-13-14 Cup. Fine fabric; colour: pinkish; medium firing.
15. TP-13-7 Plate. Very fine fabric; brown, grey nucleus; dark brown slip; strong firing.

²²⁵ Alliata 1988, 328.

²²⁶ See coin no. 10 in the numismatic note.

²²⁷ Bagatti 1985, 270 fig. 15, 1–2; photos 7 and 24.

1.6.4 Area 4: survey in the central nave and in the northern intercolumns

EXCAVATION OF THE NAVE

SU23*(Pl. 18)*

In the western part of the central nave, the preparation layer of a prevalently white but fairly fine mosaic is preserved. Remains of the mosaic are visible near the façade wall and towards the midpoint of the church, on the northern side. This layer contained a good quantity of the mosaic tesserae, and some coins, the latest of which can be dated to between A.D. 408 and 423 (?)²²⁸.

1. TN-13-6 Amphora. Slightly granular fabric; colour: pinkish; medium firing. The various fragments, which cannot be materially joined to one another but probably belong to the same vase, were collected in different parts of the layer. The vase, originally for the import of food, given the non-local fabric, had its final use as a container of lime for works, as shown by the considerable amount of limescale which has remained on the inner walls of the lower parts.
2. TN-13-13 Jug, probably with a spout. Very fine fabric; colour: light brown; dark brown slip; strong firing.
3. TN-13-7 Bent pan handle. Very fine fabric; colour: pinkish; red slip; strong firing.
4. TN-13-17 Pot. Very fine fabric; colour: brown; medium firing.
5. TN-13-8 Pot. Very fine fabric; colour: pinkish; dark brown slip; strong firing.
6. TN-13-9 Pot. Very fine fabric; colour: brown; strong firing.
7. TN-13-3 Pot. Very fine fabric; colour: pinkish; dark brown slip; strong firing.
8. TN-13-11 Cup. Very fine fabric; colour: pinkish, blackish nucleus; dark grey slip; strong firing.
9. TN-13-23/4 Cup. Medium fabric; colour: grey, pinkish nucleus; grey slip; strong firing.
10. TN-13-2 Cup. Very fine fabric; colour: pinkish; strong firing.
11. TN-13-18 Plate. Very fine fabric; colour: grey; brown-greyish slip; medium firing.
12. TN-13-1 Plate. Very fine fabric; colour: pinkish; medium firing.

TOMB EXCAVATION

SU25*(Pl. 19)*

Fragments of pottery collected in a layer of black soil at the south-west corner of the tomb, outside, and perhaps contemporary with its construction. Numbers 7–9 originate from the 1st cent., like the fragment of alabaster marble frame (Pl. 21, no.3). This period is well testified in the nearby site of Khirbet el-Mukhayyat²²⁹. The other specimens of pottery are later, i.e. dating to the 5th cent., and date the layer.

1. TC-13-4 Amphora. Fine granular fabric, including quartziferous material; colour: grey, blackish; grey slip; very strong firing.
2. TC-13-9 Pot. Slightly granular fabric; colour: pink; outer grey slip; strong firing.
3. TC-13-16 Handle. Slightly granular fabric; colour: pink; red slip; medium firing.
4. TC-13-11 Amphora. Fine fabric; colour: yellowish; weak firing.
5. TC-13-7 Cup. Fine fabric; colour: pinkish; medium firing.
6. TC-13-6 Cup. Very fine fabric; colour: pinkish; outer grey slip; medium firing.
7. TC-13-12 Bowl. Fine fabric; colour: pinkish; strong firing²³⁰.
8. TC-13-3 Pot handle. Very fine fabric; colour: dark brown; medium firing²³¹.

²²⁸ See coin no. 9 in the numismatic note.

²²⁹ Saller 1967, 8–26.

²³⁰ Lapp 1961, Type 54, C, G; Loffreda 1996, Group 54.

²³¹ Saller 1967, 11 for the particularity of the handle with a central groove and raised edges.

9. TC-13-5 Pot handle. Very fine fabric; colour: grey; brown slip; strong firing. The ribbon handle and the fairly fine pottery fabric recall the types of the Herodian era of the 1st cent. A.D.²³².

EXCAVATION OF THE *INTERCOLUMNIA*

Excavation limited to the northern side between the intercolumns from the third to the eighth. Under the mosaic of the intercolumns, removed in 1976, there is a filling which goes down as far as the rock and appears to have been laid there after the series of independent foundations for the bases of the columns were placed. The chronological horizon is in the second half of the 6th cent. A.D.

SU26

(Pl. 20, nos. 1–6)

1. TIIIi-13-5 Pot. Slightly granular fabric; colour: greyish; brown slip; medium firing.
2. TIIIi-13-6 Handle. Very fine fabric; colour: pinkish; strong firing.
3. TIIIi-13-3 Deep pan. Very fine fabric; colour: light brown; dark brown slip; strong firing. Numerous traces of burning are present on the surface.
4. TIIIi-13-1 Plate. Slightly granular fabric; colour: pinkish; greyish slip; medium firing.
5. TIIIi-13-2 Small cup. Very fine fabric; colour: grey-blackish; dark brown slip; strong firing.
6. TIIIi-13-7 Small cup. Very fine fabric; colour: pinkish; strong firing.

SU27

(Pl. 20, nos. 7–8)

7. TIVi-13-4 Pan. Fine granular fabric; colour: reddish; strong firing.
8. TIVi-13-5 Oil lamp. Very fine fabric; colour: pinkish; strong firing.

SU28

(Pl. 20, nos. 9–10)

9. TVi-13-1 Amphora. Fine fabric; colour: pinkish, external beige slip; strong firing.
10. TVi-13-3 Torch foot. Very fine fabric; colour: reddish, external light brown slip; strong firing.

SU29

(Pl. 20, nos. 11–21)

11. TVIi-13-11 Dolium. Fairly granular fabric; colour: pinkish-reddish; medium firing.
12. TVIi-13-9 Amphora. Fine granular fabric; colour: brown; strong firing.
13. TVIi-13-5 Amphora. Very fine fabric; colour: pinkish, yellowish nucleus; internal grey slip; strong firing.
14. TVIi-13-7 Pot. Very fine fabric; colour: pinkish; light brown slip; medium firing.
15. TVIi-13-4 Pot. Very fine fabric; colour: pinkish; external black slip; strong firing.
16. TVIi-13-1 Pot. Fine granular fabric; colour: pink; external brown slip, strong firing.
17. TVIi-13-14 Jug with spout (fragment). Fine fabric; colour: pink, external and on the rim grey slip; medium firing.
18. TVIi-13-10 Cup. Fine fabric; colour: pink, grey in cross-section; external beige slip; strong firing.
19. TVIi-13-12 Basin. Granular fabric; colour: pinkish, grey in cross-section; beige slip; strong firing. Handmade.
20. TVIi-13-6 Basin. Fine fabric; colour: grey; dark grey slip; strong firing.
21. TVIi-13-18 *Polycandelon* (fragment only of the tubular shaft). Fine fabric; colour: pinkish; grey slip; medium firing. Similar to the one found under the mosaics at the eastern end of the northern nave, today in the Museum of the Studium Biblicum Franciscanum in Jerusalem²³³.

²³² Lapp 1961, Type 71, N2; Loffreda 1996, groups 37–42.

²³³ Bagatti 1985, 254–255, fig. 2, 1; photo 2.

1.6.5 Catalogue of architectonic fragments

Alabaster marbles of various origin

(Pl. 21)

1. Frame. Regular moulding of stripe and quarter circles arranged in a direction opposite to one another. It appears polished on all sides except the lower one, showing that it must have been placed in an eminent position, for example, crowning the tympanum. The piece was already shown in a photograph, although with some uncertainties²³⁴.
2. Frame similar to the previous one, but with the lower part smooth to be positioned in view.
3. Frame Moulding made up of a quarter of a circle and gutter. A piece similar to this one was found “under the steps leading to the presbytery” by S. SALLER²³⁵. His piece, today lost, however has a double moulding, in front and behind, perhaps due to reworking.

Catalogue of Alabaster Marbles of the Tomb

(Pl. 22)

The pieces in marble used again in the highest row of the tomb are presented here. The catalogue collects together the analytical data only of the sides visible of each element, as they are still *in situ*. For a detailed description of the parts and of the mouldings not visible, please refer to piece number thirteen. The measurements refer to the maximum values of the polished side.

1. Base of a rectangular shape made up of a rod with a fine vertical fracture in one point; the supposed continuation of the decoration is buried. The moulded side is smooth and polished, the other shows typical rough working to be laid against a wall. 16 × 60 cm.
2. Slab with *lesena*. Rectangular shape with an irregular profile, smoothing on the main face, the other is rough. Originally placed on the façade. 26 × 54 cm.
3. Base of frame with corner *lesena*. Same moulding and work as piece no. 1. The rod rotates in correspondence with the *lesena*. 13 × 44.5 cm.
4. Rectangular-shaped slab with an irregular profile with a clean oblique cut on one of the short sides, smoothed on one side, rough on the other. Originally placed on the façade. 25 × 33 cm.
5. Rectangular slab with an irregular profile similar to the previous one. Same working. Originally placed on the façade with the previous piece. 21 × 13.5 cm.
6. Rectangular slab with an irregular profile. Same working. Originally placed on the façade with pieces nos. 4 and 5. 27.5 × 22 cm.
7. Rectangular slab with an irregular profile. Same working. Originally placed on the façade with pieces nos. 4, 5 and 6. 25 × 33.5 cm.
8. Rectangular slab with an irregular profile. Same working. Originally placed on the façade with pieces nos. 4, 5, 6 and 7. 26 × 34 cm.
9. Part of *lesena* of rectangular shape with an irregular profile similar to piece no. 2. One side is smooth, the other rough. 28.5 × 39.5 cm
10. Rectangular base. Smoothed on the moulded side, rough on the other. The decoration is the same as pieces nos. 1 and 3, the rod is fractured in the final part. 16.5 × 36 cm.
11. Rectangular base. Smoothed on the moulded side, rough on the other. Same moulding as based 1, 3 and 10. 42.5 × 16.5 cm.
12. Rectangular base with corner *lesena*; the rod is fractured in many points, polished on the moulded side, rough on the other. Same moulding as pieces nos. 1, 3, 10 and 11. 16.5 × 62 cm.
13. Base of *lesena* the moulding of which is the classic one of a base of building that the proportions show as having been of modest dimensions. The work includes the right corner of the façade or, perhaps, the jamb of a door. The piece was recovered in September 2014 from the west side of the tomb in the centre of the basilica, where it was situated in an upside-down position with the moulded side fixed in the wall. Its constructive characteristics could be observed with precision only by removing it.

²³⁴ Acconci 1998, no. 154b. 154c.

²³⁵ Saller 1941, 296 no. 161; fig. 14, 4; pl. 127, 2.