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Summary Report on the 2011 Season

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Summary Report on the 2011 Season

Northeast Insula Project

Hippos Excavations

By Prof. Mark Schuler

Concordia University Saint Paul

Nomenclature

As the work of the Concordia team has spread beyond the Northeast Church to assume a responsibility for a fifty by sixty meter area east of the Roman basilica and north of the *decumanus maximus*, this report begins by subdividing the renamed Northeast Insula Project (NIP) into zones and then labeling identifiable structures within those zones.

The NIP is subdivided by three narrow *cardines* (Cardo 2, 3, and 4 North) as identified in previous reports. These *cardines* provide a convenient way of delineating three excavation zones within the NIP: the Western Zone, the Central Zone, and the Eastern Zone.

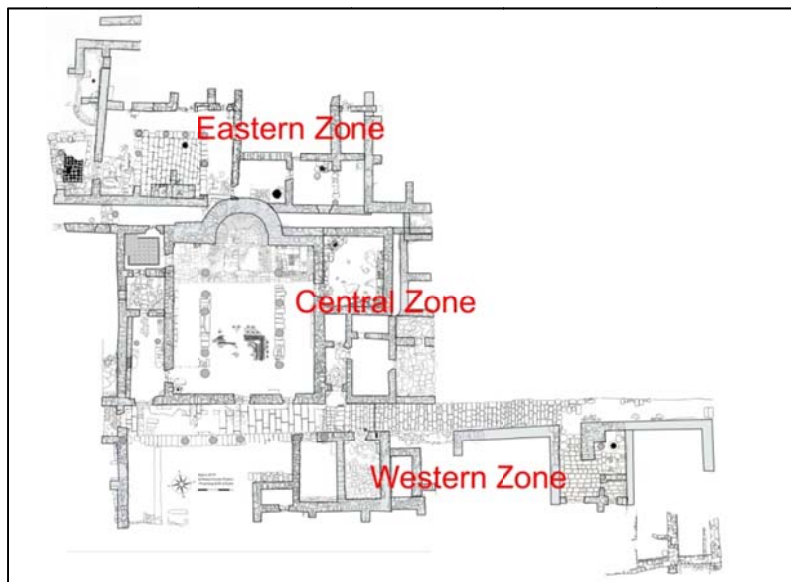


Figure 1. NIP zones

The Eastern Zone is bounded to the east by Cardo 4 North, a small section of which was identified in 2010, and to the west Cardo 3 North. In the Eastern Zone are the peristyle house and what may be a Umayyad structure. The Central Zone is bounded to the east by Cardo 3 North and to the west by Cardo 2 North (*via sacra*). The Northeast Church is the most prominent feature of this zone. The Western Zone is bounded to the east by Cardo 2 North (*via sacra*) and to the west by the Roman basilica. Within this zone seemingly are several buildings that we are labeling with Greek letters from south to north. Buildings Alpha, Beta, and Gamma are partially exposed. The foundation of a possible Building Delta

was previously identified (see 2008 report). The existence of a Building Epsilon is posited due to walls proceeding north from the current excavation area.

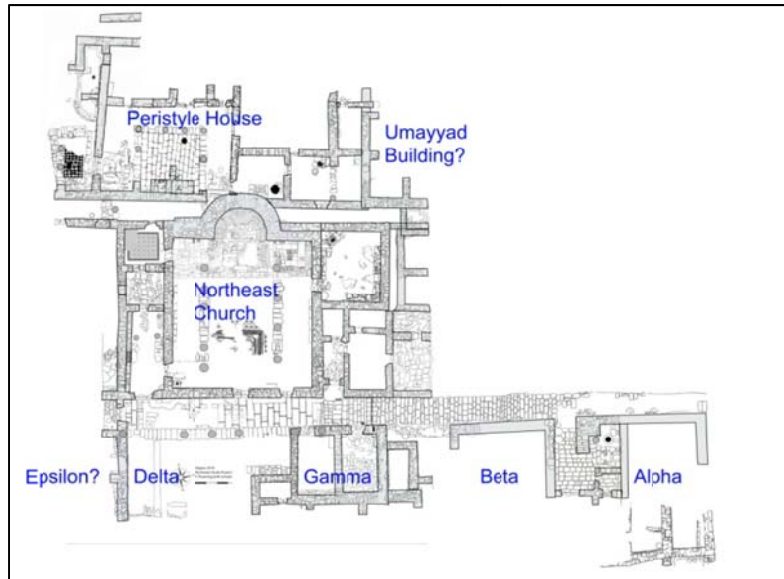


Figure 2. Major structures

Eastern Zone

2011 work in the eastern zone of the NIP focused in three areas: clarifying more of Cardo 4 to the north and a possible entrance into the garden to the west; identifying the function of the space east of W1910, south of W1266, west of W1298; and completing the excavation and conservation of the fountain and pool in the northerly garden.

Cardo 4 North and the Garden Entrance

Excavation of the cardo identified the west wall of a building (W1297) that bounds the east side of the cardo from the north boundary of the excavation area in a southerly direction. The wall was constructed of large but worn limestone blocks, many of which were unstable and removed. The southern corner is yet to be exposed and may be hidden in a balk ten meters from the north extent.

W1298 bounds the west side of the cardo. At its northerly end, we exposed a formal entrance into the garden through a doorway with its lintel stone still intact. The opening of the doorway is 1.16 m wide and 1.95 m tall. The top of the threshold is at 129.39, which is 26 cm above the level of the step next to the fountain (129.13). The lintel stone is 0.49 m tall, 0.22 m thick, and 1.51 m in length.

W1298 continues to the south and shows an offset of 15 cm to the west at the south line of W1913, 9.5 m from north side of garden doorway. The wall continues to the south, forming the eastern boundary of the House of Tyche.

The corner of an unidentified building to the southeast continues the easterly line of Cardo 4 North.

A catch basin was excavated next to W1298. It is elongated north to south (114 x 41.5 cm interior, 150 x 49 cm exterior, depth 14 cm south to 21 cm north). It provides water to the later pipe and channel feeding the fountain pool identified in a previous season

There is a series of steps in the cardo over which the catch basin was constructed leading down to the garden entrance as the bedrock drops off from an elevation of 130.70. The top step has a width 49 cm, a height 22 cm, at elevation 130.55. The second step tread is 43 cm deep, with a width of 53 cm, a height of 27 cm, at elevation 130.35. The third step is constructed of three stones with a tread of 38 cm, a width of 124 cm, a height of 30 cm, at elevation 130.08. The fourth step consists of two stones with a tread of 36 cm, a width of 121 cm, a height of 23 cm, at elevation 129.77. The fifth step is made of two stones with a tread of 32 cm, a width of 121 cm, at elevation 129.53. Further work in the area was closed due to the danger of the balk collapsing.

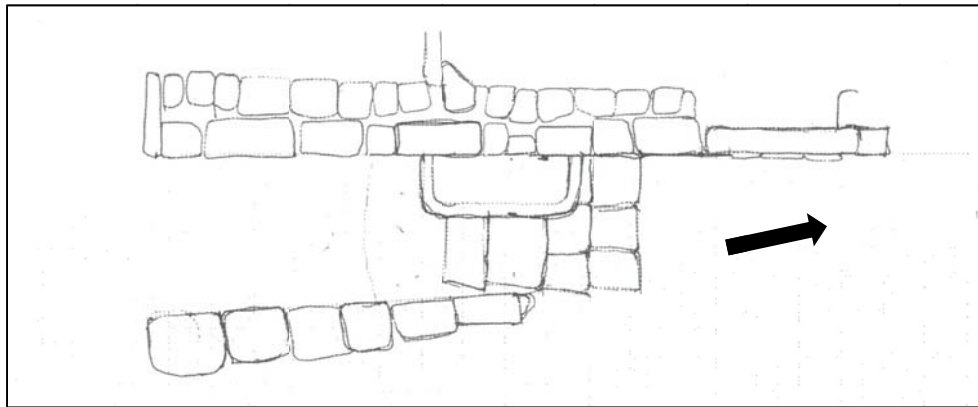


Figure 3. North section of Cardo 4 North

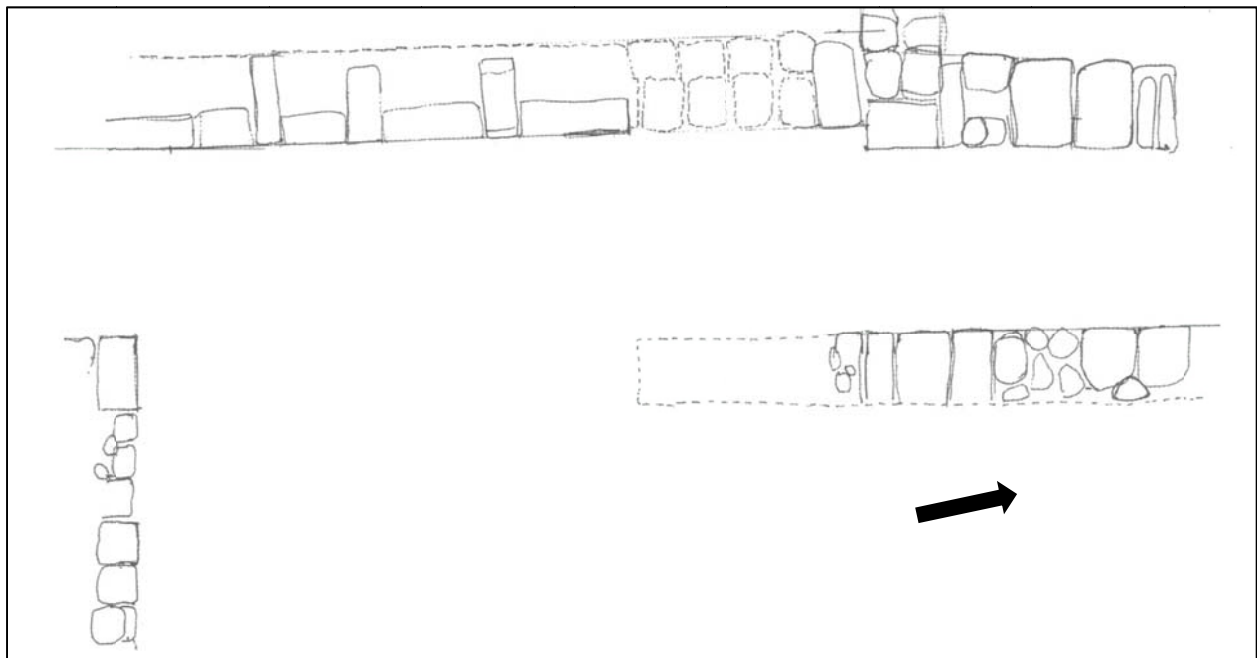


Figure 4. South section of Cardo 4 North

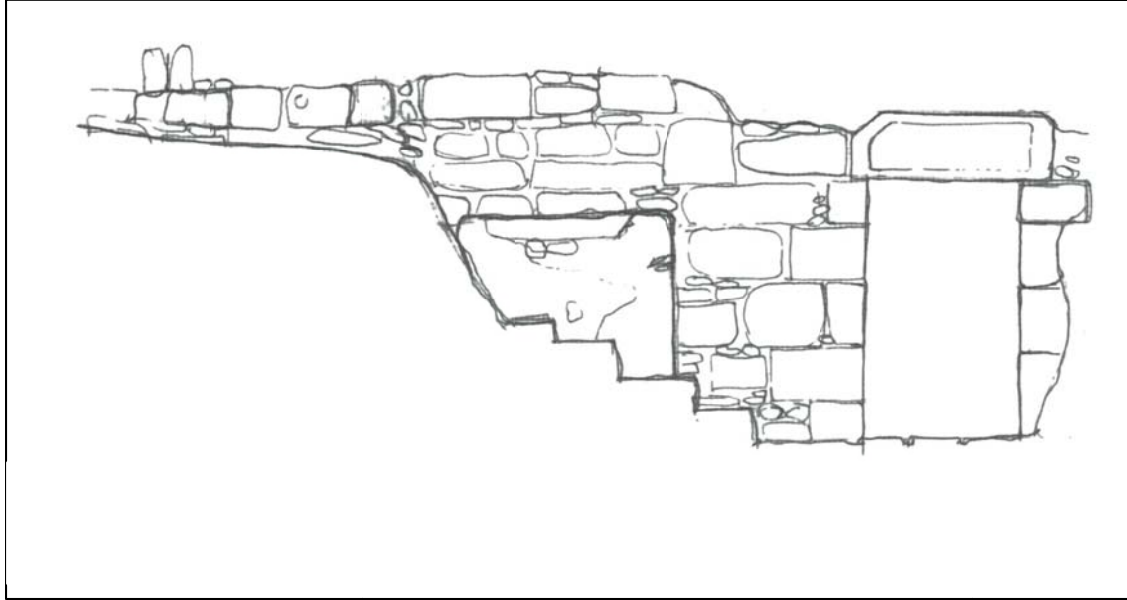


Figure 5. Cross section of stairs and garden entrance

An inscription in *tabula ansata* was discovered just inside the threshold facing those entering through the threshold. The Greek is ΕΥΤΥΧΩΣ / ΤΩ ΚΤΗΣΤΗ. The omegas are lower case formed large. The inscription is 97.5 cm wide counting the dovetail handles with the main frame 67 cm wide. It is 51 cm tall. The letters are 6-6.5 cm tall. The leaf is 11 x 17 cm. There are 41 tesserae/dm². The garden inscription has parallels at Tell el-Farama (SEG 37:1639) and Shiqmona near Haifa (SEG 37:1487, with the same misspelling).

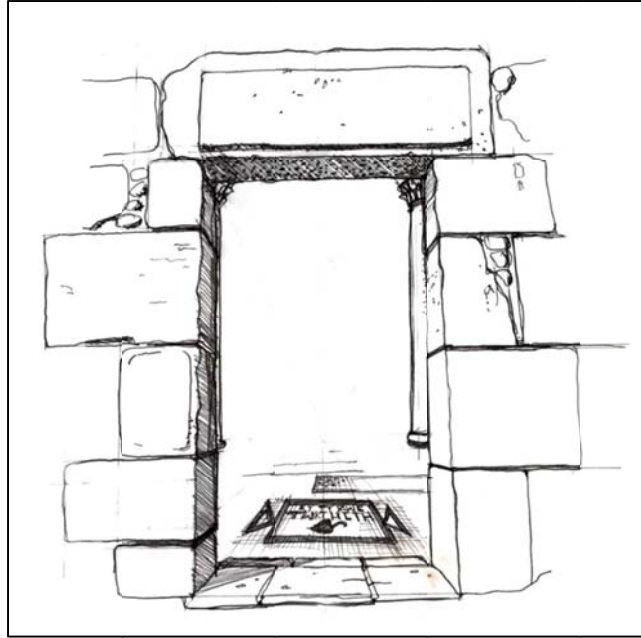


Figure 6. Garden entrance with inscription

Inside the entrance to the garden on the left (south) is W1922. On its north side is a small staircase rising to the west. The west end of W1922 is a broken column still *in situ*. A similar broken column is *in situ* 1.95 m to the north in the balk and is equidistant from W1298. We therefore speculate that W1922 and its staircase are a later addition. The column at the west end of W1922 and the column in the balk likely provided a covering for the entrance mosaic. As two small Corinthian capitals were recovered from the destruction fill, we presume these columns were so capped.

The entrance hall

A small room (3.70 m north to south and 4.69 m east to west) occupies the northeast Corner of the House of Tyche. It is bounded to the east by W1298, to the south by W1913, to the west by W1910 and to the north by W1266. There is a blocked doorway in the north wall (1.03 m wide). In the west wall is a doorway 0.89 m in width the exterior of which faces the peristyle court. Interestingly, the pottery profile during the excavation of this area was inverted, with significant deposits of late Roman overlaying the typical Byzantine profiles. We speculate that this inversion was caused by the digging of the Olive vat to the north of W1266.

When approaching the floor, three layers were identified. An upper plaster floor is visible in the southern half of the threshold and in the SW corner (elevation 130.14). The original floor is a mosaic carpet and located at elevation 129.85. Between these two is a layer of mud/plaster.

There is a pear-shaped catch basin (24 x 30 cm) next to the east wall 110 cm from the southeast corner of the room. There was some kind of fixture next to the north wall. Only the stone base remains, 110 cm wide and 50 cm from the west wall. Workers identified a thin line of plaster, indicating that the fixture

on the north wall had a comparable feature on the south. The features are 78 cm apart offset to the north.

Two ceramic tiles/pipes cross room on top of mosaic floor (12 cm in diameter). One comes through the blocked doorway in W1266 (the bottom elevation of the pipe at the blocked door is 129.92, the bottom elevation in the center of room is 129.90). Its continuance to the north of the blocked doorway is untraceable as the olive vat destroyed it. The other pipe comes from a catch basin next to the east wall. Both direct water to the southwest corner of the room. In the southwest corner is a small sedimentation? pool. It collects water from the two pipes crossing above the remains of the mosaic floor and from the external catch basin west of W1910. A third pipe also enters this area from a lower level. Its origin is unknown. Water from all of these sources then flows under W1910 presumably into the cisterns under the peristyle court. These pipes come from a later phase in the House of Tyche when this portion of the house was converted for more utilitarian usage.

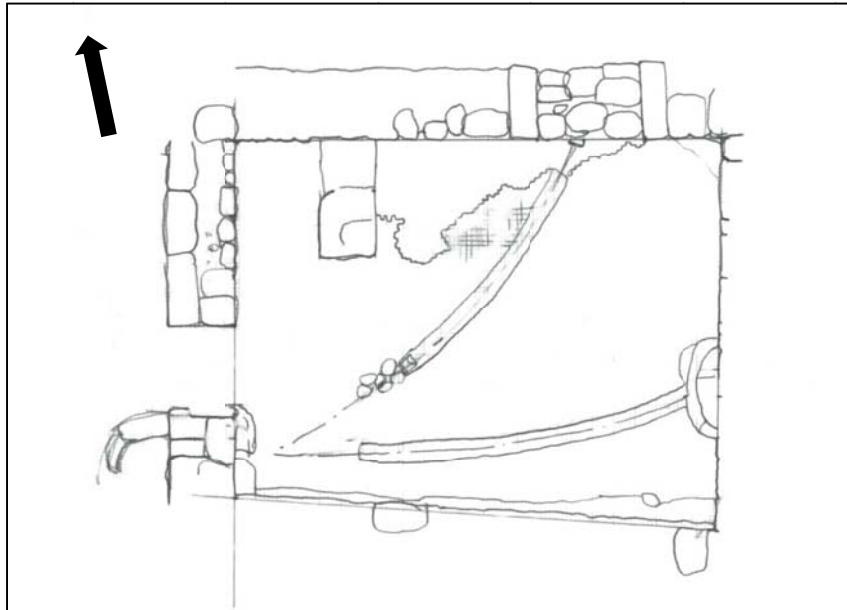


Figure 7. Pipes crossing entrance hall

The original mosaic carpet (F1939) is intact in many places. Geometric patterns are visible in blue and white. The mosaic was seemingly cut about half way across the room leaving most of the north side intact. An inscription was discovered just south of the blocked entrance in the north wall (W1266). It is almost intact. The third to last letter is missing and the second to last letter is partially gone. We reconstruct the inscription to read: ΕΙΣΕΛΘΕΕΠΑΓΑΩ “enter for good.” The inscription is .96 meters in length. The letters are 5.5-6.5 cm tall. The inscription was to be read by persons entering through the now blocked doorway from the garden. The inscription is centered on the doorway. We therefore identify the northeast hall as an entrance foyer for the house. The inscription from the entrance hall has parallels at Pompeiopolis (SEG 40:1177) and Krokodeilon Polis near Caesarea (SEG 56: 1891).

A geometric band crosses the room from east to west just south of the inscription. The band is 1.74 x 0.36 m. First decorative piece starts with 4 over 3 black block and then a double row of white, a double row of black, a double row of white, a double row of black, a double row of white, a double row of black. The second row of black from the outside forms into a left facing compound swastika the base which forms the frame for the next iteration of the pattern. Other iterations of the pattern have 2x2 black in the center, only the left pattern has 4 little and 3 large tesserae.

A repair band goes between the second box and the second swastika and takes out the alpha and part of the theta in the inscription. The repair is 10-16 cm wide. It starts 10 cm below the lambda of the inscription and curves to about 26 cm above the inscription.

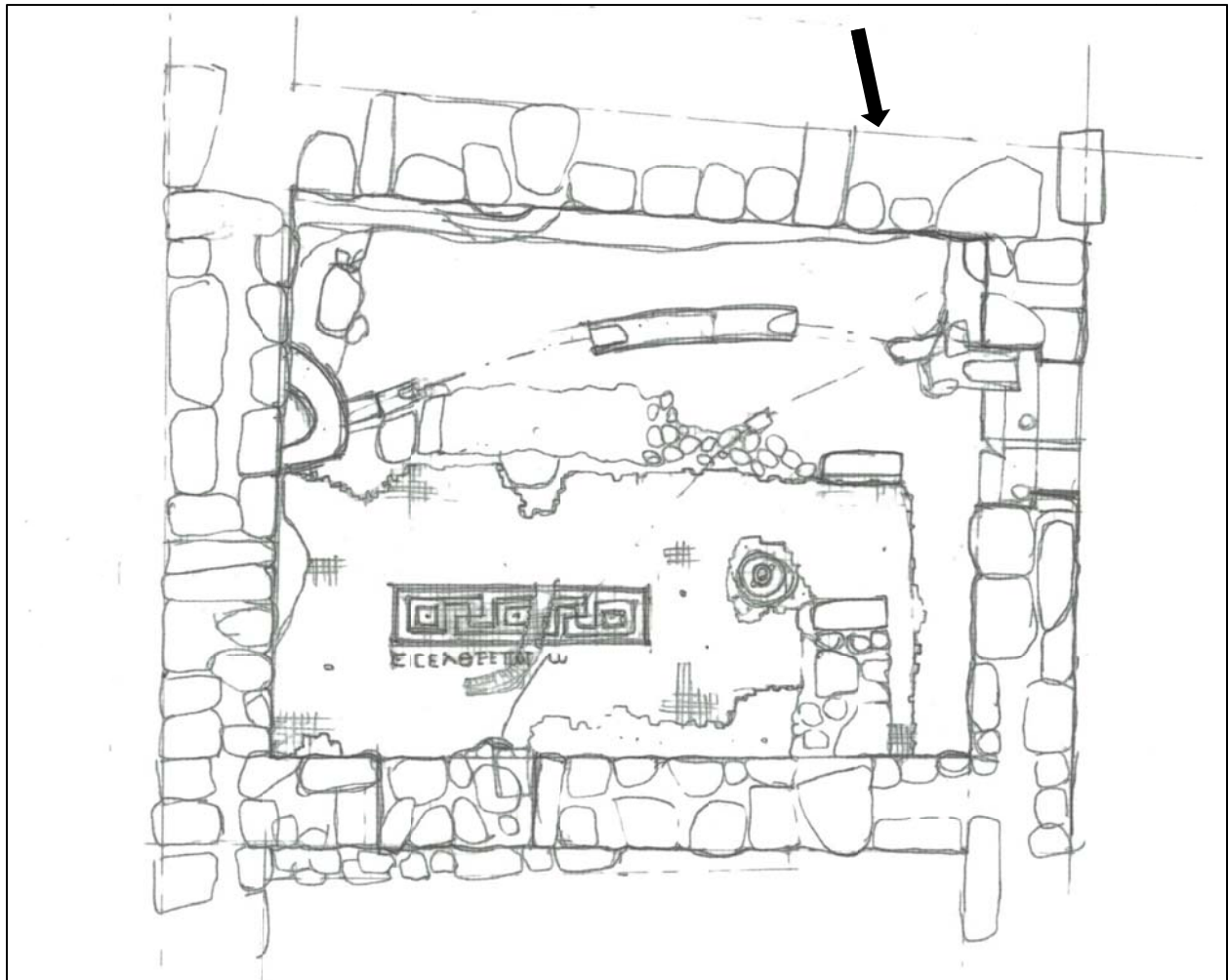


Figure 8. Top plan of the entrance hall with inscription

In a lacuna in the mosaic (F1939), conservators identified a pot buried into the floor. Someone had cut the mosaic to insert the pot. The pot is Kfar Hananya form C. The pot was located 1.17 m from W1266, 3.24 m from W1298, and 5.7 cm below top of mosaic. Interior mouth diameter of pot is 11 cm. The pot contained a layer of soil like that above it with tesserae and some plaster. At 6 cm down a more ashen soil occurred with greater sand content. A harder sloping layer appears at a depth of 10.5 cm into the

pot. The soil is quite ashen. At 13.9 cm below the top of the pot a nail and a chunk of burnt wood were recovered. At 14 more glass, bone, and perhaps some seeds. Subsequently, the lacuna cleaned to a depth of 20 cm high and 30 cm low. The dimensions of the lacuna are 40 cm (north to south) and 42 cm (east to west). The hole is oblong to the northeast with a diagonal of 48 cm. If the pot was used to hide anything valuable, those contents are now missing.

Two coins were recovered on or near the mosaic floor having been sealed by the fill and floor above. One had a diameter of 2.5 cm. It was heavily effaced. Likely it is a Roman provincial coin of the third century. A second coin was recovered near the west entrance to the room. It is a coin from 382 (CE) of Gratian, Valentinian II and Theodosius I (bust right on the obverse, on the reverse within a wreath: VOT/ X/ MVL/ XX; see coin report for details). The coins are consistent with the posited fourth to fifth century foundation of the house.

Fountain pool

In 2011 we finished excavation and conservation of the pool of the fountain. The pool is 110 cm deep with an interior shelf 78 cm below the top of the pool. The pool is 144 x 141 cm at the top and 110 x 109 cm at the bottom. The bottom curve to corner measurement is 114 cm. The interior shelf is 32 cm above the bottom. From the top of the marble slab onto which the water splashed from the fountain to the bottom of the pool is 115 cm. The base of the pool is limestone slabs. There is a 54 x 73 cm slab in the corner of the pool. Other slabs seem to go under the pool walls. A 4.5 cm pipe was discovered in fountain in southwest corner on west side. Whether it served as a drain or as a means of keeping a level with the cistern in the peristyle court is uncertain.

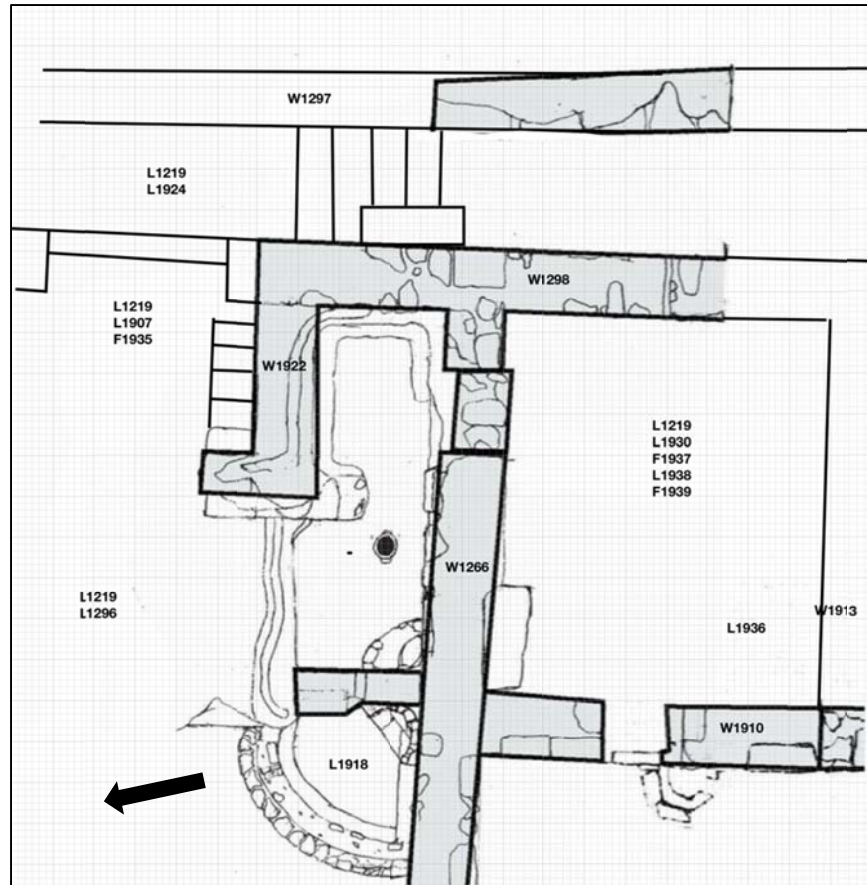


Figure 9. Loci Eastern Zone

Western Zone

2011 work in the western zone of the NIP concentrated on the southern-most building west of Cardo 2 North and east of the Roman basilica. The building is 12.9 m from east to west and 10.96 m from north to south. It is an I-shaped building with a portion of a plaza forming the northeast corner. The building is on the north side of the *decumanus maximus* and in one of four buildings in a south to north line. The building has been designated Building Alpha. Portions of the lowest level of this multi-storied block building remain. Building Alpha consists of four rooms: a storage room to the east separated from the central room by a window wall; a central room with a bend against the south wall, a southeasterly room with a southerly bench and two niches on the north wall and a northeasterly room likewise with two niches in the north wall. The only known access to the building is via an I-shaped staircase from the plaza to the north. There are no doorways providing access to the surviving rooms. The goal of the 2001 season was to identify the structure and function of Building Alpha.

While removing initial layers of destruction fill, we recovered a fragment of a Greek inscription at elevation 129.35. It is the third and missing portion of an inscription previously found by the Concordia team in 2009 and the Haifa team in 2008. The inscription provides the reasons for the honorific given to Tarius Titianus. The stone is basalt with an inscription face that is 29 x 36 cm. There is a large crude

hedera inscribed horizontally in the lower right corner. Titianus is honored as “patron and *euergetes* of the fatherland.” The stone is horizontally 29 cm at top and 30 cm at bottom. Vertically it is 36 cm on the right edge and 36.5 cm on the left edge. At its longest, the stone is 57 cm. Most of the letters are about 5 cm in height. The shortest letter is the delta in the last line. It is 4 cm tall. The tallest letter is the sigma in the last line. It measures 6 cm tall.

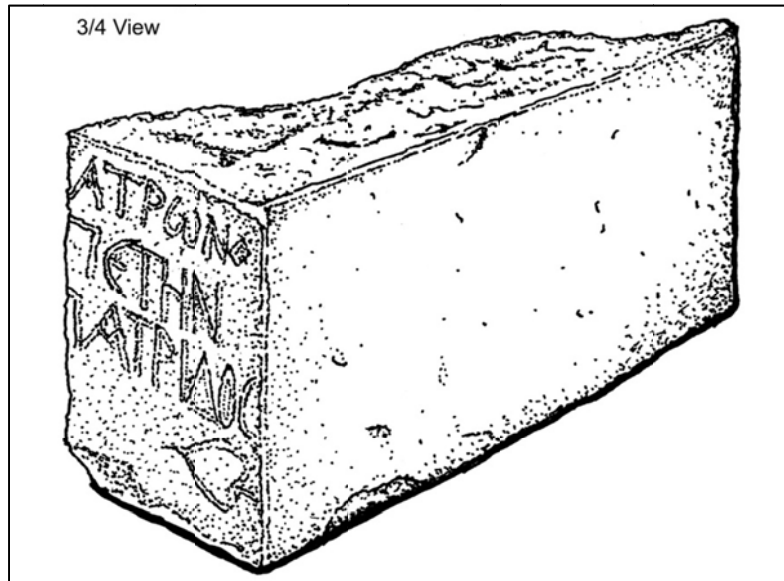


Figure 10. Portion of Tarius Titianus inscription

Eastern storage room

The easterly storage room is 6.34 m north to south and 2.0 m east to west. It is bounded to the east by window wall (W1926), as columns of stones appear at regular intervals (cp. Window-wall houses at Qazrin, Capernaum, and Chorazin). A few of the topping stones remain. There is a 0.73 m doorway from this storage room the exterior of which faces the central room. The doorway is 0.65 m from W1252.

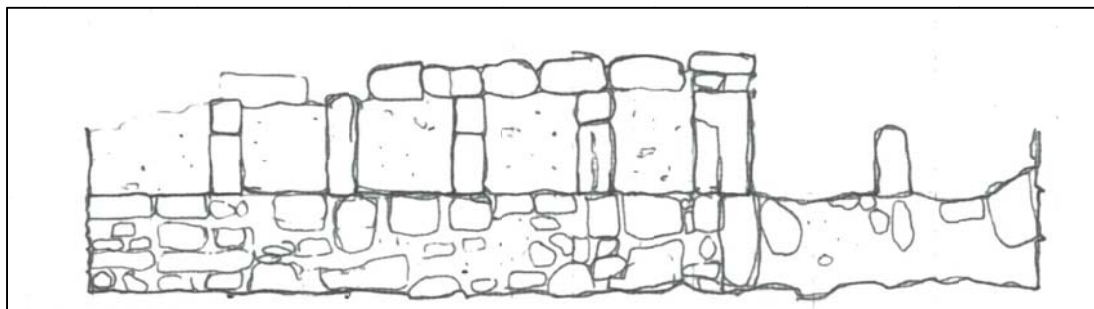


Figure 11. East face of window wall (1926)

The floor is extremely crude (F1929) of randomly distributed flat stones. Our hypothesis is that this area served as a storage room, as was supported by high concentration of Beisan jar fragments.

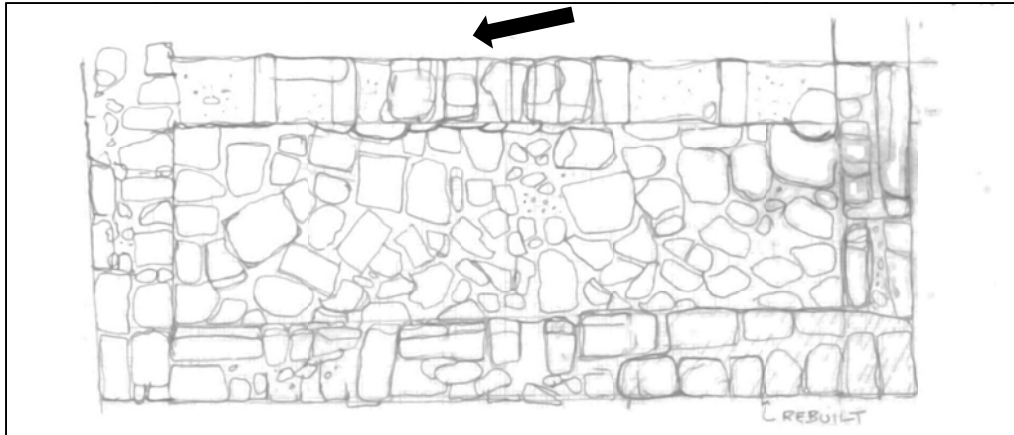


Figure 12. Top plan of the storage room

A five meter section of W1251 was reconstructed to a height of two courses from its junction with W1252 to the south.

Central room with bench

The central room is 6.13 m from north to south and 3.46 m from east to west. There is a bench against the south wall (W1888). The bench is 84 cm wide and 61 cm tall. It proceeds east from W1923 for 2.59 m. One either end of W1923 there is a doorway. The southern doorway has a width of 0.76 m. The northern doorway has its lintel stone *in situ*. The width of the northern doorway is 0.78 m and its height is 1.61 m. The lintel stone is 0.20 m thick, 0.43 m tall, and 1.92 m long.

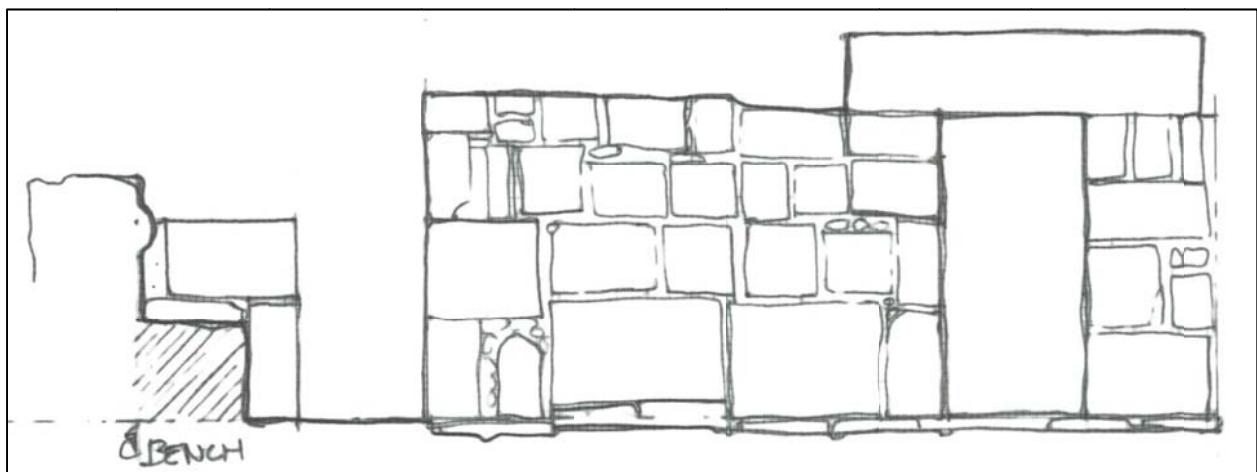


Figure 13. East face of W1923

The stone floor (F1934) consists of irregular flagstones and is somewhat uneven. Numerous nail fragments, hooks, pins, grinding stones and Beisan jar shards were recovered near the floor. The northern section of the floor appears to be a stylobate on a line with W1892. The stylobate is 0.89 m width, the southern edge of which is 2.29 m from W1952.

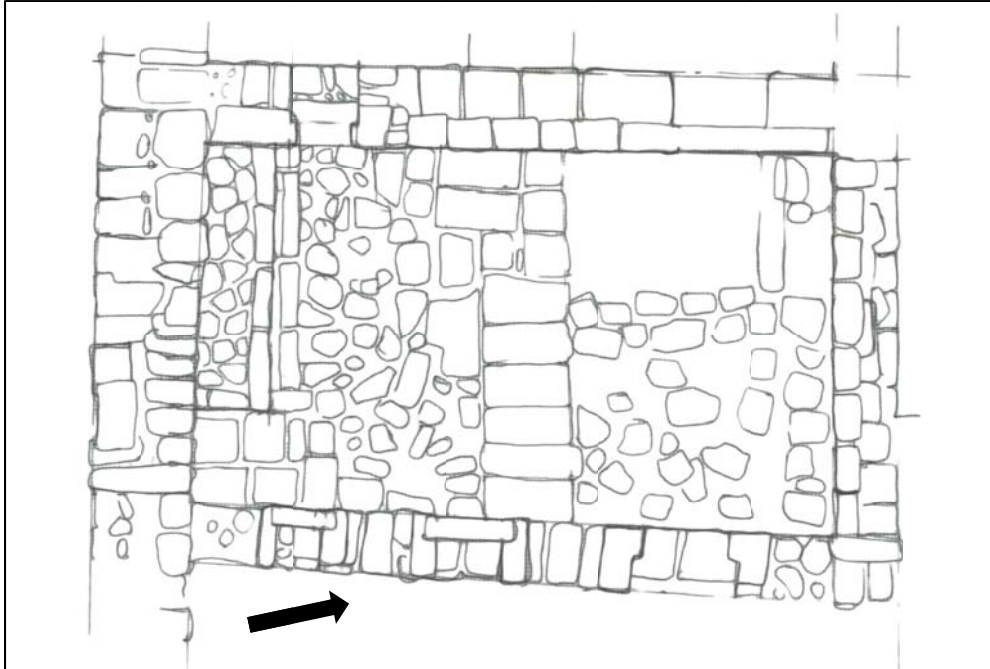


Figure 14. Top plan of central room with bench

Southwest room with niches and bench

The western section of the southwest room was previously excavated. The 2011 season exposed the rest of the room. The room is 4.69 m from east to west and 2.91 m from north to south. A bench lines the south wall (W1888) for the length of the room. There are two niches in the north wall (W1982) of the room. The west niche is 1.91 m from W1386. It is 60 cm wide and 50 cm deep. Its base is 87 cm above the floor. The east niche is 65 cm wide and 56 cm deep. It is located 32 cm from W1923 and its base is also 87 cm above the floor.

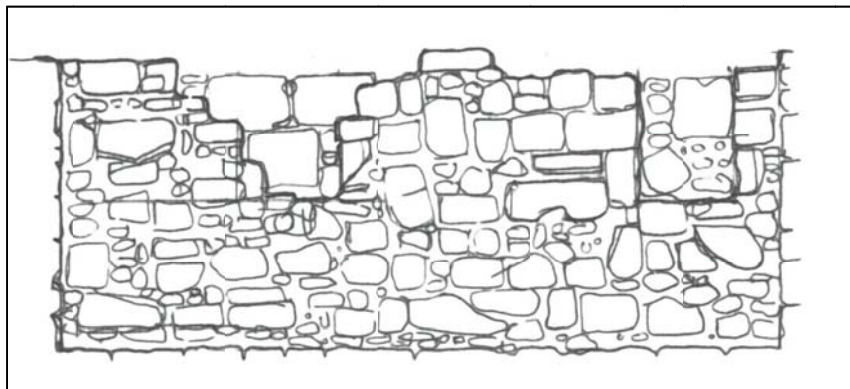


Figure 15. South face of W1892 with niches

The floor (F2009) consists of tightly placed rectangular stones of irregular sizes. A watering bowl sits in the northeast corner the room. The bowl has an internal diameter of 41.5 cm and an internal depth of 15-18 cm. It was seemingly made by modifying an anta of an hourglass mill. Numerous nail fragments

and a hook lock were found near the doorway. One stone of the bench near the same doorway had a hole drilled in it, perhaps for tying an animal.

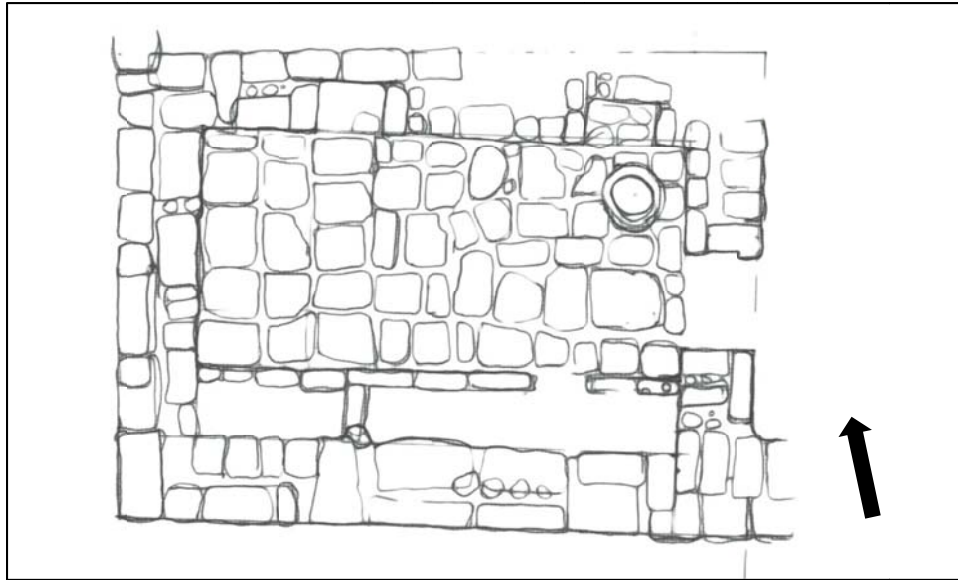


Figure 16. Top plan of southwest room

In its final phase, the room seems to have functioned as a place for storing animals due to the presence of a watering bowl and an animal tie up on the east side of the room. However, the door frame was designed to close and lock the door from inside the room. Such would not be the case for an animal pen, thus suggesting that evidence be sought for a prior function of the room.

Northwest room with niches and dividing wall

The northeast room of Building Alpha is 4.69 m from east to west on its south wall (W1892) and 4.76 m on its north wall (W2007). It is 2.84 m from north to south. As with the southwest room, there are two niches in the north wall. The west niche is 1.0 m from the west wall (W1388). It is 72 cm wide and 54 cm deep. The east niche is 34 cm from W1923. It is 57 cm wide and 61 cm deep. The niche contained two nearly complete pots dated to the late seventh or early eighth centuries. In front of the western niche in W2007 and west of W2002, there seems to be a low bench (dimensions 155 cm x 46 cm deep x 24 cm high). The top of the bench is 81 cm below the top of W2007.

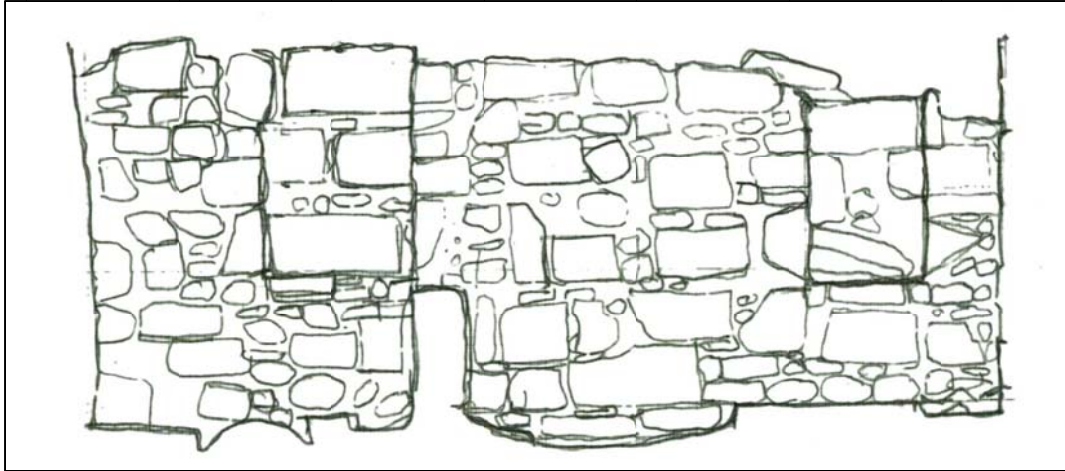


Figure 17. South face of W2007 with niches

The northwest room is subdivided by a limestone wall constructed of a single row of blocks set on end (W2002). There is a slight easterly curve in the wall and it is clearly a later addition. Its function is uncertain. To the east of this wall, we exposed a stylobate running north to south that continues under W2007. Its western line is 1.44 m from W1923. This stylobate likely formed a corner with the east to west stylobate in the central room. The outward face of the stylobate is to the west and is 4.12 from the line of the east face of the wall of the Roman basilica. The stylobate is 33 cm thick and sits on a foundation base. In the Roman period, a large public building likely stood in this location.

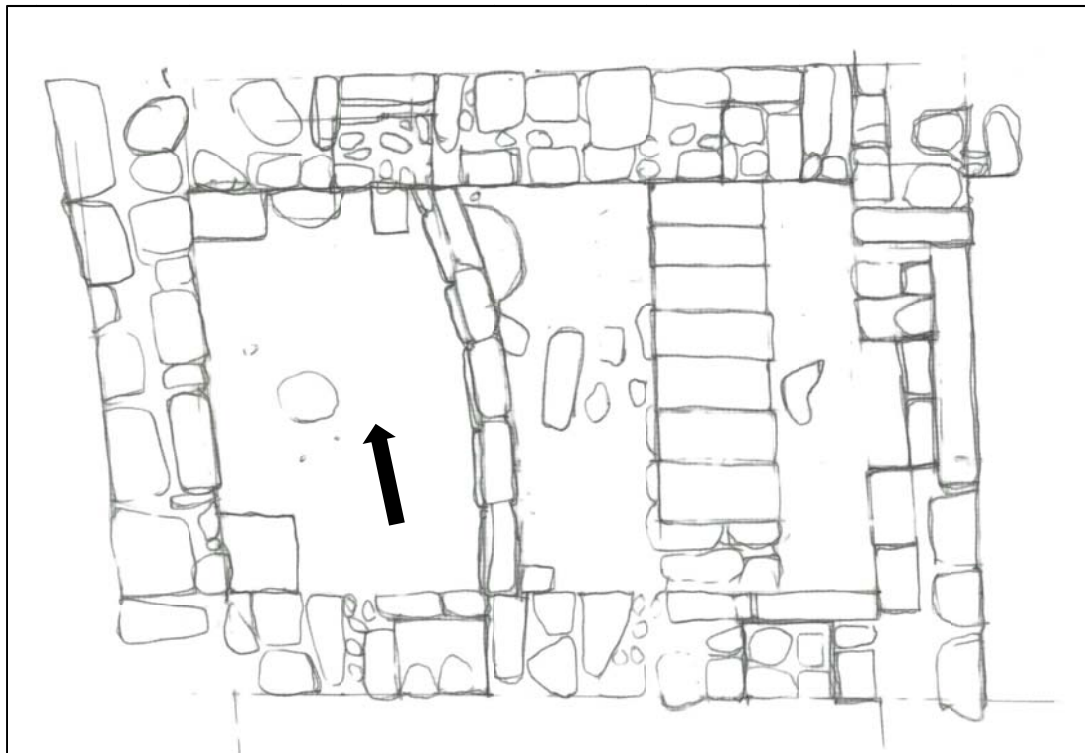


Figure 18. Top plan of northeast room

The rest of the floor is compressed earth.

Of note, the alpha building has no external entrance to the occupational level represented by the current remains. The most plausible location for a staircase to the level from above is the space between the north-to-south stylobate and W2002. Many limestone blocks were recovered from the area tipped to the east. But there were no clear remains of a staircase.

We also observe that the south face of W2007 is 3.4 m south of the north face of the wall of the Alpha Building as seen from the west (area of the basilica). Apparently W1286 is the north wall of the Alpha Building. If so, the space between W2007 and W1286 is 1.8m. It is hardly the space for a room, but may be a staircase, as may be indicated by some steps at the east end of the space. A parallel wall runs next to it to the north and forms the south wall of the Beta Building complex. That building extends to the north for 10.5 m on the west side (and perhaps further). The corresponding dimension of W1239 on the east side is 12.5 m.

The surviving portions of the Alpha Building likely served a storage function for whatever floor(s) stood above. The heavy basalt ashlar of the exterior walls suggest something substantive above as to the presence of one and possibly two staircases. The building seems to have been in use up to the last days of Hippos, having replaced an earlier Roman structure intimated by the remains of two stylobates. Its function was likely utilitarian or even industrial in view of its plain construction and surrounding installations.

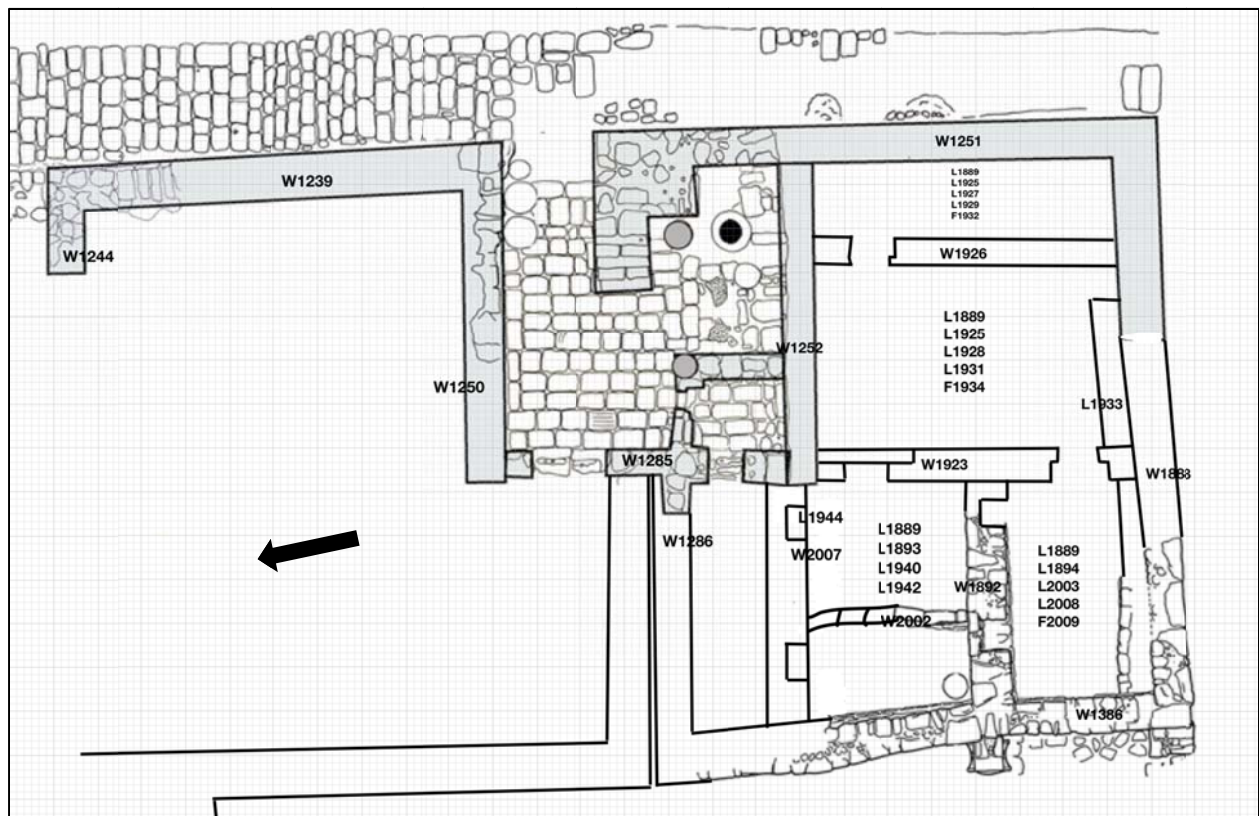


Figure 19. Loci of the western zone