

1-1-2008

Summary Report for the 2008 Season

Mark Schuler

Concordia University, St. Paul, mark.schuler@csp.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.csp.edu/nip-reports>



Part of the [Ancient History, Greek and Roman through Late Antiquity Commons](#), [Classical Archaeology and Art History Commons](#), and the [Historic Preservation and Conservation Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Schuler, Mark, "Summary Report for the 2008 Season" (2008). *Excavation Reports*. 12.
<https://digitalcommons.csp.edu/nip-reports/12>

This Report is brought to you for free and open access by the Northeast Insula Project at DigitalCommons@CSP. It has been accepted for inclusion in Excavation Reports by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@CSP. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@csp.edu.

North-East Church Complex (NEC)

(Supervisor: Prof. Mark Schuler, with a supplemental report by Kristina Neumann)

In 2008, excavation work continued on areas surrounding the *domus* of the North-East Church complex and expanded into areas west of *Cardo 2 North*. In addition, probes to bedrock were conducted in several areas of the site. Conservation efforts were completed on F538 in the north aisle and F580 in the *skeuophylakion*. This report will address work done in the following areas (Figures 1-2):

- *Cardo 2 North* (“*Via Sacra*”) and Related Buildings
- Structures to the South of the South Hall and the *Diakonikon*
- The Areas West of the Portico
- Probe in the Nave
- The Eastern Street and Related Buildings
- Conservation Efforts

***Cardo 2 North* (“*Via Sacra*”) and Related Buildings**

With the excavation of the southern half of *Cardo 2 North* in 2007, the easterly faces of two block buildings were exposed. The report noted: “Between the two buildings is a gap of 1.75m. That gap coupled with possible changes in the patterns of the paving of the street may indicate that an alley or ante-chamber separated the two buildings.”¹ In 2008, excavation of the western part of square E8 revealed a paved surface upon which an L-shaped staircase had been built giving access to a second level or roof of the southerly block building (Plate 1).

The surface is paved with ashlar similar to those of *Cardo 2 North*, with some at the entrance having been robbed out (approx. 1 m). The paved surface spans the distance between the two block buildings (almost 6 m). Whether this surface follows the line of an earlier *Decumanus* is uncertain.

A staircase sits atop the paved surface. Its northerly face is 2.1 m south of W1250. The staircase is 1.15 m wide and rises to the east. Six stairs remain *in situ*. The treads range from 18-24 cm in depth (21.8 cm average) and 20-27 cm in height (24.2 cm average). The steps begin 3.42 m from *Cardo 2 North* (Figure 4).

¹ *Hippos 2007*, 86.

To the east of the staircase is solid base (1.9 m x 2.3 m) that marks the northeast corner of W1251. The staircase intrudes into the base about 0.5 m. We speculate that about 4 more stairs completed the staircase to a height of more than two meters. One who climbed the staircase would then turn south at the base and walk over the structures below to the second story or to the roof of the southerly block building. Perhaps there was an *exedra*² on the north side of W1252. A column drum and base sit in the corner of the “L” formed by the staircase. The moldings of the base are covered by the paving. Several basalt beams and column drums recovered from the fill may have been part of the *exedra*.³ Alternatively, the staircase could continue to climb to the south to a significantly greater height.

1.5 m south of the staircase is a Cistern E. A plastered channel and plastering on the north face of W1252 indicates that water from the roof of the southerly block building was routed to this cistern (Plate 2). The cistern is capped with limestone column base modified to serve as a cistern head by carving out its center. The head is notched for a 43 x 43 cm lid with a crossbar. Its height is 50 cm. It shows a rubbed area for a rope, and a part of its base is cut to allow water to enter the cistern.

To the west of the cistern is a doorway through W1252 into the southerly block building (3.24 m from *Cardo* 2 North). Several nails were recovered from the fill. A feeding trough, a grinding mill, and various column fragments were recovered in the fill.

To the north, the western half of square E6 was excavated, revealing the northeast corner of the northerly block building. However, the precarious condition of the walls (tipping to the west and south) and the collapse of the interior of the corner prevented complete excavation.

Structures to the South of the South Hall and the *Diakonikon*

Excavation work was conducted in squares C5 and D5 to reveal more fully the space to the south of the South Hall, especially since a doorway exits through W1231 to the south. Excavation revealed that the doorway had been intentionally blocked with a flat face to the south, even as many other doorways were blocked in the complex. Within

² Yizhar Hirschfeld, *The Palestinian Dwelling in the Roman-Byzantine Period* (Jerusalem: Franciscan Press, 1995), 265.

³ For a sample of such an *exedra* in a monastic complex, see Y. Magen and R. Talgam, “The Monastery of Martyrius at Ma`ale Adummim (Khirbet El-Murassas) and Its Mosaics,” *Christian Archaeology in the Holy Land New Discoveries* (Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press, 1990), 95, Fig. 5.

the destruction fill, a glass pendent of a lion was discovered.⁴ As it did not come from a sealed context, it does not assist in the interpretation of the North-East Church complex.

0.53 m below the threshold in W1231 is a surface (F1258) crudely paved with basalt and limestone (Plate 3). A small limestone feeding trough was in the fill near the surface. F1258 is 0.45 m below the surface of Cordo 2 North, suggesting that the street comes from a later period. The easterly extent of the surface is marked by W1263 through which a doorway gives access to another similarly paved surface (F1265) about 10 cm lower. W1229 marks the eastern limit of this surface. At its northern end the W1229 sits on bedrock that forms the northeast corner of F1265. W1229 survives to a height of more than 2 m.

Large concentrations of pottery shards were recovered at the floor level next to W1231. Most were dated from the fourth and fifth centuries, with one shard perhaps datable into the early sixth century (see pottery report). Also recovered from the surface of this small room were two mortars, several pestles, and portable bronze brazier (Plate 4).

Both mortars were of higher quality than typical pieces found in the destruction fill.

The first is a ring-based mortar 21 cm in diameter (Figure 4). It stands 6.5 cm tall. It is carved from regular gray basalt. Two of its handles have been broken off. The ring base is 4 cm thick and 14 cm in diameter. The handles are about 5 x 2.5 cm and 2 cm thick. The mortar lacks any decoration. A pestle was found 30 cm away.

The second is a tripodic mortar⁵ made from basalt with a finer grain (Figure 5). The mortar was carved from a cube of basalt (28 x 28 x 28 cm). In its finished form it is 34 cm in diameter and stands 28 cm tall. It has four handles that are 8 cm wide. These, and the lack of ash in the fill, rule out the use of this item as a votive stand. Its interior bowl has a ridge around the edge and is 22 cm in diameter. The ridge would help prevent the contents from scattering and so suggest it may have been used for grinding spices or another valuable commodity. However, no wear patterns are apparent. The bowl sits on three legs that are interconnected on the bottom forming a “Y” shape. A fourth leg joins the “Y” from the center of the bowl. The legs are 6-7 cm thick. Again, decoration is lacking.

⁴ See supplemental report for details.

⁵ Three-legged mortars first appear in Israel during the Bronze Age (W.F.A Albright, *The Excavation of Tel Beit Mirsim*, vol. 2, Annual of the American Schools of Oriental Research XVII, Plates 38-40) and become more prominent in the Iron Age (Harold A. Liebowitz, “A Unique Worked Stone Mortar from Tel Yin’am,” *Levant* 32 [2000]: 129-134).

A portable bronze brazier (*foculus*?⁶) was resting on the same floor (Figure 6). The pan of the brazier is almost square (13.3 x 14.4 cm) with a depth of 3.8 cm. The pan stands on legs (1.1 cm wide) that flair out from the corners adding about 1.5 cm to the height. Each corner is topped with a bulb (0.6 x 0.79 cm) although one is missing. The thickness of the metal is 0.37 cm. A hollow handle protrudes 14.5 cm from one side. The handle is mostly open on the bottom (for heat dissipation) and has a damaged decorative end with bulbs (6.2 x 2.7 cm). The sides are decorated with geometric openings to allow air in to the coals. One pattern is six or seven circles forming a triangle. The other is exploded sixths of a pie. On the side facing the handle are a curving row of round circles. Opposite the handle are five pairs of crude triangles. Due to its size, its usage was probably culinary.

As these surfaces are significantly below the level of the street and the threshold in W1231, we dug deeper into the mud floor of the South Hall (F597) and its small anteroom to the east. In the anteroom, we reached bedrock and rough stones resting on bedrock within 20 cm. A 0.5 m section of a corroded lead drain pipe rested on the bedrock. In the South Hall next to W1201 and just west of the doorway in that wall, the remains of a large round oven were discovered (Plate 5). Its inside diameter is 1.45m and it was preserved to a height of about 0.5m. The fill within it was mostly soft ceramic chunks from the top of the oven, although two nail fragments, a pestle, and a button were retrieved from the fill. The oven is similar in dimension to those from the “oven room” east of the Hellenistic Compound.⁷ However, the latest shards were from the fifth century. The top of the oven is about 0.4 m below the level of the street to the west.

This oven plus the domestic items and the paved surfaces to the south, all at lower levels, suggest some sort of domestic or industrial use of this space prior to the construction of the church complex. These items antedate the ruins now visible and suggest that the construction of the latter took place no earlier than the late fifth or early sixth centuries.

⁶ Plautus, *Persia* 1.3.24, *Captivi* 4.2.67; cp., Erich Pernice, *Gefässe und geräte aus bronze* (W. de Gruyter and Co., 1925), 5, Abb. 5.

⁷ *Hippos* 2007, 20-22.

The Areas West of the Portico

Balks were removed from the two rooms in F3 and F4. The mud/plaster floor in F3 (F1202) was removed. There was no stone floor under it, as is the case in F4 (Plate 6). Squares F0 and F1 were excavated to the level of the mud/plaster floor (F1214) south of W553. No architectural features were identified.

As a result, a 1 m trench was opened along the south edge of squares E0 and F0 from the stylobate to the western edge of F0 (Plate 7). The top 35-50 cm of the trench was the mud/plaster layer identified as F1214.

At the east end of the trench, stones protrude from under the stylobate. Their protrusion is similar to those in the probe dug next to the stylobate in F2 in a previous season. They seem to be the inside surface of a wall over which the stylobate was laid down (Figure 7).

At the west end of the trench is an earlier wall (W1246) that runs north and south. Trenching on its western line reveals that its external surface is to the west and that it proceeds to the north under W553. The wall is 0.70 m wide.

A level of cobbles appeared about 50 cm below the top of the floor (F1214). Below the cobbles, the soil (L1248) was softer and contained heavy destruction fill. A coin (#265) was retrieved from the sifted fill. At about 1.1 m below the surface of F1214, bedrock was exposed through the length of the trench (Figure 8). Most of the bedrock is a soft marl/limestone, except at the west end, where the limestone is smooth and hard. To the east, the builders cut a foundation trench in the marl, filled it with stones and then built a wall, only one course of which remains under the stylobate (Plate 8). To the west, the builders erected the wall (W1246) directly on the hard limestone.

Two trenches were dug north of W553 in E0 and F0 in line with W1246 and with the stylobate. An east to west wall was identified forming a corner with W1246 and seemingly forming a corner on the east line of the stylobate. In the westerly probe, bedrock was reached (Plate 9). Two courses of stone sit on the cut bedrock on a layer of shards and small stones. The fanning of the tumble to the northwest suggests a collapse of earlier (and higher) parts of the wall in an earthquake.

W1246, the wall under W553, and the single course of stones protruding from under the stylobate are likely the surviving foundation of a building that antedated the stylobate and sat on the western side of *Cardo 2 North*. Evidence of a wall in D0 that runs under

the corner of W511 and W540 supports this hypothesis. This wall may have been part of a building on the east side of the *cardo*.

The pottery collection from these probes is helpful in dating construction. Shards sealed in the plaster floor are late 5th to mid-6th century material, including LRC f. 3C (ca. 460-490 CE) and LRC f. 3H (ca. mid-6th century). From beneath the floor came commonwares of the 3rd to 4th century (and one rim of LRC dish/bowl f. 10C, dated to the first half of the 7th century that may be a product of intrusion or mishandling). From the base of the foundation trench came commonwares of the 5th century and an ARSW f. 91 flanged bowl, probably variant B and dated to ca. 450-530 CE. We conclude that the early building was constructed in the 5th century to be replaced by the church complex (or at least F1214) in the late 5th or early 6th centuries.

Probe in the Nave

As mosaic carpets are missing in the north-east corner of the nave, a probe (1 x 2 m) was opened south of the north stylobate and next to the chancel screen base. Under the layer of cobbles was heavier fill, and within about 45 cm came limestone bedrock. The bedrock is about 52 cm below the top of the stylobate (Figure 9). The original cross section would be F589, F544, cobbles, heavier stone and earth, and bedrock. There is no indication of a previously existing structure. The latest datable material from the pottery assemblage is a Khan bowl f. 1E (not later than the early 5th century).

The Eastern Street and Related Buildings

During 2007, the line of *Cardo 3 North* was identified to the east and south of the exterior apse of the *domus*. We speculated then that the apse interrupted the line of the street. In the 2008 season, excavation to the east and north of the apse (Squares A99 to A3) identified additional structures that are part of the church complex. These structures were built along the line of the pre-existing street and may have incorporated elements of previous structures, as was the case to the south of the apse. These large structures, the easterly and northerly extent of which have not yet been identified, suggest that the North-East Church is part of a much larger complex.

Roughly following the eastern side of *Cardo 3 North* is W1267 (0.72 m wide). As it moves north from the apse, the wall skews slightly to the east from the line of W575 (approx. 15 cm over 10 m; Plate 10). At the south end of this wall is a large blocked doorway (1.55 m), the southern jamb of which is incorporated into the exterior apse wall (Plate 11). As a consequence, we conclude that W1267 is an extension of W1230, both

being constructed at the same time as the apse. These walls were parts of buildings to the east that were also part of the church complex. Only the walls of the “Umayyad structure” southeast of the church are later (W1220, W1221, W1224, W1236, W1249). The “alley” between W575 and W1267 allowed passage from the *skeuophylakion* or from areas to the north into the part of the complex to the east through the large doorway. While excavating this space between the two buildings, a large deposit of roof tiles, along with nails and several unidentified lead fragments, were retrieved. The quantity of room tiles was such as to allow an hypothetical reconstruction of their arrangement (Plate 12).

Portions of two rooms to the east of *Cardo* 3 North have been identified. A smaller room is directly east of the apse. It is bounded on the north by W1261 and on the south by W1235. W1261 has a 1.0 m doorway, the exterior of which faces north. Half of a doorjamb is visible in W1235 with its exterior to the south, to the west of which is a north-facing niche in the wall (0.55 x 0.70 m; Plate 13). The niche is similar to that in the *diakonikon* and reinforces the thesis that this room was part of the church complex. Possibly, this room served as some sort of dwelling or monastic cell, as both doors are locked from within the room. Next to the west wall of the room (W1230) and the exterior wall of the apse (W502) is a small platform (Plate 14). It is 0.87 m wide and 1.80 m long and is oriented north to south. It is 1.40 m from W1235 and 1.05 m from W1261. Its surface is 0.48 m above the threshold in W1261. The dirt floor in this room would be at about the same elevation as the later floor in the chancel (F516). The dimensions would suggest it served as a sleeping platform. Its proximity to the apse and to the tomb of the revered woman may also point to the importance of the occupant of this room. A single layer of stones gave a flat east surface to W1230 east of W512.

Below the level of the floor in this room is the remnant of an earlier small cistern (Figure 10). The head and neck of the cistern were removed in antiquity, leaving only the bell. The opening of the cistern is 1.2 m and its remaining depth is 1.55 m. The plaster of the cistern is grey in color. We speculate that this cistern was partially disassembled and filled when the church was constructed. The pottery assemblage from the cistern included a LR Amphora 1 which is particularly frequent in the late 5th and early 6th centuries. Such an approximate date for this assemblage conforms with previously cited finds that place the construction of the church complex in the late 5th and early 6th centuries.

To the north of this room is a large hall some 12.5 m in length. The room is bordered on the north by W1266. Entrance to the room is gained through a large doorway at the south end of W1267. Two pilasters are visible on the east side of the wall. The southerly one is next to the doorway (Plate 15). The pilaster is 0.57 m wide and protrudes into the room 0.36 m. Its construction is similar to the wall. The northerly pilaster is 3.8 m from W1266 (Plate 16). It is 0.70 m wide and also protrudes into the room about 0.35 m. However, this pilaster is constructed of finely cut ashlar, four courses of which remain (17, 18, 26, and 18 cm from bottom to top). The pilaster sits on a high quality stone surface, although pavers north and south of the pilaster have been robbed out. It also intrudes into the wall to an unknown depth. The quality of the pilaster suggests that it comes from an earlier structure on the east side of Cardo 3 North and was incorporated into W1267.

Between the two pilasters are the remains of what may have been a staircase, rising from the entrance of the room to the north (Plate 17). 1.5 m north of the south edge of the south pilaster is a step that is 23 cm high. 80 cm further north is another step/platform that is 26 cm higher. 1.84 m from the first step is a basalt beam at the midpoint between the two pilasters. It is 47 cm higher than the second step. Two other basalt beams of similar dimensions were removed from the fill (110 x 18 x 40cm and 110 x 18 x 33 cm).

Between the south doorjamb and the south pilaster (i.e., east of the blocked doorway) is a stone platform 1.95x 0.50m that is 20 cm tall. It sits on a paved surface. The pavers are of similar quality to those in Cardo 2 North and continue to the north to the staircase. Both the platform and pavers show evidence of having been plastered. A marble Corinthian capital (top is 55 x 45 cm), two column drums (one of which was marble), and a roof roller were recovered from the fill. The latter is 23 cm in diameter and 66 cm long. On each end is a 5 cm drilling that is 3 cm deep.

Too little of the hall has been exposed to determine its size or function, but it is somewhat reminiscent of the refectory complex at Ma`ale Adummim.⁸

W1267 continues further north from W1266. Plastering on the north side of W1266 and on the east side of W1267 indicates the interior corner of another room. Similarly W575 continues to the north, with a blocked doorway visible in the wall, beginning 2.10 m north of the *skeuophylakion* (Plate 18). The exterior of this doorway faces the alley which formerly was Cardo 3 North. The alley itself is intentionally blocked (L1262).

⁸ Magen and Talgam, 100-104.

The south face of the blockage has a smooth face. Next to the blockage, a column drum and a plain capital are placed on the surface of the alley; another column drum was placed just north of the blocked doorway to the *skeuophylakion*. As has been seen elsewhere in the complex, systematic blockage of doorways and passages indicates the formal decommissioning of most of the complex prior to the earthquake that destroyed the site.

To the north of W540 between W575 and W580, large quantities of tesserae and several clusters seemingly *in situ* at floor level indicate that the room was carpeted with mosaic. Further west, a section of mosaic about 1 x 1 m survives in a number of fragments between W583 and W539, north of W540 and west of the blocked doorway (Plate 19). It is at a level too high for a floor. A distinct possibility is that these fragments are testimony to a mosaic floor from the second story that collapsed.

Conservation

The primary focus of conservation efforts in the 2008 season were the mosaic carpets in the *skeuophylakion* (F580) and at the east end of the north aisle of the *domus* (F538). The work was supervised by Mrs. Ewe Radziejowska with the assistance of Mrs. Nancy Endicott (Plate 20).

F580 was first revealed and discussed in 2005. Since the pattern is geometric, it was possible to restore several damaged areas (Plate 21). However, a repair done in antiquity next to the door in W575 was preserved. The floor was then covered with alternating layers of sand, felt, earth, cloth, and more earth.

F538 was first revealed in 2004 and was subsequently damaged by moles. Work in 2008 finished repairs and reconstructed some lacunae with tesserae salvaged that year (Plate 22). Two ancient repairs were preserved. The floor was similarly covered with alternating protective layers.

In Square E8 the south face of W1250 tilted dangerously. It was disassembled and reassembled to give stability to the wall and to prevent erosion of the unexcavated area to the north.

Conclusion

The 2008 season added substantively to our understanding of the North-East Church complex, especially in terms of the size of the complex and its likely dating.

Work in the north-east section of the complex in 2008 has dramatically altered our understanding of the place of the North-East Church complex in the urban tissue of Byzantine Hippos. What once appeared to be a small memorial/monastic church situated between Cardo 2 North and Cardo 3 North, now appears to be the north-westerly component of a much larger complex. To the north of the church we had posited two sets of small rooms. We now entertain the possibility of a two-story structure to the north. Access to the second story would have come via the staircase next to W521 and a balcony (*exedra?*) over the east end of the room. W555 may have been added to W540 to help support the second story. To the east of the church we had posited no related structures east of Cardo 3 North. Now it seems that the North-East Church Complex incorporated the space of Cardo 3 North as a hallway or passageway for members of the community to move from the church or from the two story building to the hall to the east. With another church some fifty meters to the east, we now ask whether these two churches might both be part of a common urban ecclesiastical or monastic complex. Substantive excavation to the east is necessary to answer this question.

Probes beneath the floor levels of the complex in Squares A2-A3, the north-east corner of the nave, Squares C4-C5 and D4-D5, and in Squares E0-F0 consistently show ceramic assemblages dating no later than the late 5th or early 6th centuries. Remains under the church are meager and lack any indication of substantive Roman-era construction, at least between Cardo 2 North and Cardo 3 North. The North-East Church likely was built during the late 5th or early 6th centuries, was still being repaired in the second half of the 7th century, and likely went out of substantive usage by the early 8th century. Veneration of the tomb of the revered woman continued after the church was not longer in formal usage.

“The Lion Pendant from the North-East Church”
By Kristina Neumann

With diverse colors and imagery, the stamped pendants of the Late Roman and Byzantine period are distinctive pieces of artistry. Most commonly unearthed in tombs, these flat, disk-like pendants usually measure between 1.6 and 2.2 cm and can range in color from red and brown to green and blue.⁹ A glass loop at the top allows for suspension of the image, which could be Classical, Jewish, Christian or pagan in content. Excavations at the North-East Church (NEC) complex revealed such a pendant from the destruction fill of D5 (3.12 m south of W1231 and 1.52 m west of W585). It measures 20.04 mm in diameter, 22.5 mm tall and 3 mm thick. The glass is a dark amber color with white streaks and partly translucent.¹⁰ While the reverse side of the pendant is blank, the obverse is stamped with the profile of a walking lion, centrally placed. Its open mouth faces to the left and the tails curls along the right edge, with no chips or breaks marring this image. A suspension loop protrudes from the top of the circular disk, which was once fitted with a string or chain and hung around a person’s neck (Figure 11; Plate 23).

The stellar condition of these characteristics allows the NEC pendant to be placed neatly within the chronology of stamped glass pendants. According to the classification recently developed by Dan Barag, three divisions of type exist. Type A exhibits the highest level of workmanship as the designs are carefully created and centrally placed on a vertical axis. The suspension loops are flattened in the front with the curve extending backwards. Barag dates this group to the middle of the fourth century through the early fifth century AD. Type B is less accomplished in decoration and sometimes lacks a vertical alignment; its convex suspension loops are heavy, rounded and annular. This group dates to around the late fourth to fifth century AD. The disks of Type C are smaller in size than Types A and B, with simplified designs and careless, off-centered stamps.¹¹ This last type appeared from the fifth century to the

⁹ Dan Barag, “Stamped Pendants,” *Ancient Glass in the Israel Museum: Beads and Other Small Objects*, edited by Maud Spaer (Jerusalem: The Israel Museum, 1991), 173.

¹⁰ The closest color is 2.5YR 4/2 in the Globe Program Edition of earth colors (Chicago: Color Communications, 1996).

¹¹ Barag, “Stamped Pendants,” 173-174. For an excellent comparison of these three types, see Dan Barag, “Late Antique and Byzantine Glass,” *Reflections on Ancient Glass from the Borowski Collection*, edited

early sixth century, when the production of stamped glass pendants tapered off. Of these three types, the NEC pendant is best considered under Type A, as it exhibits a vertically-aligned, carefully-constructed design and its suspension loop is flattened in the front.

Barag also distinguishes six categories from the assortment of symbols, designs and decorations stamped upon the pendants: classical traditions (the head of Medusa, the bust of Victory, Heracles),¹² biblical themes (Adam and Eve, Sacrifice of Isaac, the Good Shepherd), Jewish symbols (menorah, *shofar*, *etrog*), Christian symbols (*chi-ro*, the cross, stylite saints; the orant posture), animal motifs (lion, frog, bull) and miscellaneous stamped motifs (seven-rayed star, wine leaf)¹³: “These small examples of ancient art demonstrate, in one and the same medium, very different traditions: Classical Graeco-Roman heritage of a rapidly vanishing culture versus that of both the Jews and of a triumphant Christianity.”¹⁴ This broad spectrum of images matches the variety of functions these disks could have. Some were merely used as decoration, appearing either alone or strung together on a necklace.¹⁵ The majority of the pendants, however, are believed to have been amulets serving as charms to bring good fortune or apotropaic symbols to protect the wearer from evil.¹⁶

It is unclear whether the NEC pendant was such an amulet or simply decoration, because so many different artistic renderings of this creature appear in the archaeological record.¹⁷ All present the full body of the lion, but some are in full profile,

by Robert Steven Bianchi (Mainz: Verlag Philipp Von Zabern, 2002), 305-321. Barag is able to limit the production of stamped pendants between c.350 and 550 CE because of the lack of these items in the wealthy tombs of either the 3rd-mid-4th centuries or the 6th-early 7th century tombs (Barag, “Stamped Pendants,” 176).

¹² Barag comments that the images, themes or motifs of the Olympian deities are not depicted, as Christianity had already triumphed by the time of the pendants’ creation (Barag, “Stamped Pendants,” 174). However, minor deities like Pan and Victory continued to be portrayed.

¹³ Barag, “Stamped Pendants,” 174. According to Barag, animals form the largest and most diverse category of design.

¹⁴ Barag, *Reflections on Ancient Glass*, 307.

¹⁵ Excavations of a fourth-century tomb at Tarshiha revealed five glass amulets buried together and the suggestion was raised that they may have formed a necklace rather than being strung individually. Ma’im Eff. Makhoully, “Rock-cut Tomb at Tarshiha,” *Quarterly of the Department of Antiquities of Palestine* (1934): 9-16.

¹⁶ Barag, “Stamped Pendants,” 175.

¹⁷ The lion has long served as a universal symbol of royalty and/or power, appearing in monumental form at the entrance to a temple at Nimrud and on the pediments of the Hekatompedon on the Acropolis in Athens. In Roman funerary art, the lion played the role of “the ravening power of death and man’s victory

while others have a body in profile but a frontal-facing head. The lions are portrayed in varying degrees of realism, from a careful detailing of muscle and mane to the more symbolic quality of the NEC pendant. Some of the lions appear alone on the pendants and may simply reflect folk beliefs in the lion as an apotropaic symbol. Many, however, are joined by an additional written phrase or design. For example, three lion pendants from the Corning Museum collection are marked with the Greek declaration EICΘEOC or “One God,” which suggests a Christian origin.¹⁸ Barag believes that a pendant with a lion pawing a bull’s head and its retrograde inscription IAW may have Gnostic significance. The most common element is a star and crescent or sun and moon located directly above the lion and imply the use of the pendants as amulets.¹⁹

A few pendants come close stylistically to the NEC pendant and are also considered Barag Type A, Category 5.²⁰ Although facing in opposite directions, the three pendants are similar in the separated strokes of the mane coming forth from the head, the gaping mouth and a protruding eye. All three tails curve up and over the body and the legs curve into overlapping feet with no discernable joints. A possible crescent appears above the lions’ heads, but there is no evidence of a star. The NEC pendant is in overall better condition, with its loop still intact and with many more carved details apparent along the body. Furthermore, the provenance of the two Corning Museum pendants is unknown.²¹

The manufacture of these pendants began mainly under the Late Roman period (4th-5th centuries) and continued into the Byzantine period (5th-7th centuries). Glass

over it” (J.M.C. Toynbee, *Animals in Roman Life and Art* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1973), 65). Throughout Jewish and Christian literature, the lion is also used as an example of real and figurative power (Hosea 5:14; 1 Peter 5:8). This flexibility of the lion as a symbol leads to the ambiguity in the pendant’s meaning. Cf. Ori Soltes, *Our Sacred Signs: How Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Art Draw from the Same Source* (Cambridge, MA: Westview Press, 2005), 21-22.

¹⁸ Nos. 891-893, David Whitehouse, *Roman Glass in the Corning Museum of Glass*, Volume 3 (Corning, New York: The Corning Museum of Glass, 2003), 21-22.

¹⁹ Barag, “Stamped Pendants,” 174.

²⁰ Nos. 889 and 890, Whitehouse, *Roman Glass in the Corning Museum*, 20-21.

²¹ According to Dr. David R. Whitehouse, executive director of the Corning Museum, the pendants were formerly of the Ray Winfield Smith collection. The museum has no further information as to where Smith obtained them (David Whitehouse, [director@cmog.org], “Glass Pendant with Lion,” private e-mail message to Kristina Neumann, [neumankm@email.uc.edu], 20 August 2008). The 1957 publication from the Corning Museum of Glass, *Glass from the Ancient World: the Ray Winfield Smith Collection: A Special Exhibition*, states this particular collection was obtained from Egyptian and Lebanese sources (*Glass from the Ancient World* (Corning, New York: Corning Museum of Glass, 1957), 195-196).

production along the Syro-Palestinian coast had already enjoyed a prolific history, but during the third century onwards, the region exploded with a domestic production of looped pendants, bracelets and trailed beads.²² The looped and stamped pendants were inexpensive to manufacture, which accounts for their proliferation.²³ After the glass itself was created from a soda-lime-silica composition at a glass factory, the pre-melted material could be transported to another workshop for crafting.²⁴ Barag explains the process for creating the stamped disks:

The pendants were formed by gathering a small quantity of hot glass on the end of a metal wire or very thin rod. The glass, drop-like in shape, was then put on a flat surface and stamped with a small, round metal stamp, the front side thus bearing a design in relief and the back side becoming flat. The wire was then removed, having formed a small suspension loop.²⁵

This same stamping process was also used without the inclusion of a loop, as is demonstrated by the discovery of numerous imprinted disks. Other pendants began as disks, with a loop added on later.²⁶ The NEC pendant belongs to the first category, as its loop appears to be an intrinsic part of its construction.²⁷

An overriding homogenous quality to the pendants in terms of material, technique and style has led Barag to suggest one or only a few manufacturing centers within the Eastern Roman provinces. He points to Antioch on the Orontes in northern Syria as having the necessary combination of glass technology and Greco-Roman, Christian and Jewish culture to create such stylistically variant pendants.²⁸ The concentration of similarly stamped bracelets in the north of Israel open up the possibility

²² Maud Spaer, *Ancient Glass in the Israel Museum: Beads and Other Small Objects* (Jerusalem: The Israel Museum, 1991), 31. Cf. *Glass from the Ancient World*, 107-108.

²³ Barag, *Reflections on Ancient Glass*, 307.

²⁴ Spaer, *Ancient Glass in the Israel Museum*, 36-37. Local glass manufacture sites include Beit Shearim, where an eight-ton slab of unworked glass was created, and were less widespread than glassware workshops. Cf. Anita Engle, *Ancient Glass in its Context*, Volume 10 (Jerusalem: Phoenix Publications, 1978), 66-71.

²⁵ Barag, "Stamped Pendants," 173.

²⁶ Whitehouse, *Roman Glass in the Corning Museum*, 13. The Roman Glass Collection at the Corning Museum of Glass exhibits all three types: stamped and looped pendants, stamped disks and former disks with the addition of a loop. The collection also contains a number of damaged pendants, where the presence or absence of a loop cannot be determined.

²⁷ The two pendants of the Corning Glass collection are both missing their loops, possibly because of the later addition of it to the stamped disks.

²⁸ Barag "Stamped Pendants," 175. Cf. Yizhar Hirschfeld and Orit Peleg, "A Glass Pendant from Tiberias," *Israel Exploration Journal*, Volume 56:2 (2006): 204.

for a production site in the Galilee or the Golan region as well.²⁹ Yet despite the likelihood of only a few manufacturing centers, the pendants experienced a wide circulation across most of Israel, Lebanon, Syria and Egypt. They have even been found outside the Eastern Mediterranean in Rome and even the Iberian Peninsula.

²⁹ Maud Spaer, "Pre-Islamic Glass Bracelets of Palestine," *JGS*, Volume 30 (1988): 58.